

# Cinderella Corner

## Backstamps (Correction)

In December last year, I credited Dr. Roger Day for his feedback on some cinderella labels aligned with early Australian Philatelic dealers. The only problem is that I meant to credit *Dr. Ross Eggleton* instead! My humble apologies for this error.

## Australia: The Earliest Australian Red Cross Cinderella?

Welcome to the April edition of Cinderella Corner. This slightly briefer than usual issue focuses on one label, and a close derivative of it, to help explore and better understand what is, perhaps, Australia's earliest Red Cross cinderella. Given the cinderella's centrally placed EASTER GREETINGS message, it is a fitting item to investigate this month, with Easter falling on Sunday April 16. It also draws upon one of the main (and widest) collecting interests for worldwide cinderella collectors: The Red Cross. It is therefore anticipated that some proactive discussion points will be generated and shared by readers, thereby adding breadth to this intriguing topic. Parts of this piece are reproduced from an article I wrote for a United Kingdom philatelic magazine in early 2015.

At the birth of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the production and disposal of anti-tuberculosis (anti-TB) labels were successfully used by the Dutch and Danish in awareness-raising efforts. Almost exclusively released at Christmas time, these labels were meant to adorn the reverse of envelopes with specific instructions to not be placed on the front. Several of the rarer varieties of early issued Australian anti-TB labels were il-



Figure 1

lustrated and discussed in last year's December Cinderella Corner column. A number of charities embraced this trend and fundraised through the distribution of a wide range of cinderellas, hoping to replicate the success of the early anti-TB label movement. Of these charities, the Red Cross began to produce a variety of cinderellas and seals dating as early as the 1870s. Then, in 1914, Australia's Red Cross counterpart was established with the arrival of the First World War. Subsidiaries and branches then quickly spread countrywide and national and local labels were

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Figure 2

produced in the millions.

Cinderellas affiliated with the Melbourne-based *Denyer's Medical Supplies* are presented in Mosbaugh's 1930s/1980s Red Cross catalogue as the likely candidates for the first Australian Red Cross label. Mosbaugh references one of these two labels, assigning it No. 121 under the heading *SOCIETY UNKNOWN*, with an incomplete date of 191X. Some research, along with postmarked examples of the two *Denyer Medical Supplies* labels, have since identified that these incredibly scarce items are dated 1915 and were therefore released soon after the Australian Red Cross was formed.

One noted curiosity in Mosbough's catalogue is the Prince Alfred Hospital's Easter Greetings cinderella (assigned No. 111), which is also cautiously listed as 191X. To date, a common belief is that the label sits around the First World War period. Decorated in olive, red and white,

the label frame size is 37mm x 24mm with 11 ½ perforated edges. The label itself displays a nurse holding an extended banner reading *EASTER GREETINGS*. The text above reads *ROYAL PRINCE ALFRED HOSPITAL, SYDNEY N.S.W.* Most importantly, adorning the centre of the image is a pronounced red cross, and hence the platform for the label's inclusion in Mosbaugh's revered catalogue. An example of this cinderella is illustrated in Figure 1.

To my own delight, a postcard was purchased a couple of years ago, which was addressed from Sydney to New Zealand with an example of the *EASTERS GREETINGS* label surprisingly postmarked 26 April 1909. The front of this postcard is illustrated in Figure 2. This remarkable date spurred further investigation; this humble *EASTER GREETINGS* label could be, potentially, the earliest Australian Red Cross cinderella.

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Figure 3

It has been verified that in 1909 these cinderellas helped raise money for 32 new hospital beds. It was further confirmed that they sold for 1d each, 100,000 were ordered and that they were to be placed on the outside of postal stationery items. Along with assisting the hospital with its bed shortage, the labels helped shape the tradition of sending Easter greetings in the mail to family and friends near and afar.

Another early mention of the label appears in a charming extract from the *Evening News* dating 12 June 1909. In this piece, the label is mentioned as having washed up in a bottle, with a note describing events leading up to 5 May 1909.

Adding to the allure of the EASTER

GREETINGS label is the existence of a similar cinderella produced by the Tasmanian Consumptives Sanatorium (as illustrated in Figure 3). The hospital itself catered for consumption and TB patients from 1906 until its closure, 40 years later, in 1946. In 1910, the Sanatorium began fundraising efforts for their patients. As Christmas approached the decision was made to release a cinderella that adopted many similar design elements, including nearly identical colours, to the aforementioned EASTER GREETINGS label. Its banner is thicker and displays the title CONSUMPTIVE'S SANATORIUM, with the interesting use of the possessive apostrophe, along with the addition of the slogan A LIFE SAVED IS A LIFE GAINED and the phrase THE PURCHASE OF THIS STAMP HELPS TO SAVE A LIFE. Unlike the EASTER GREETING cinderella, its price of 1D is printed. Produced in blocks of 6, an order of 100,000 was placed. *The Mercury*, dating 8 October 1910, reported that despite efforts sales were slow. This article offered further details about the lacklustre performance of this cinderella and referred to it as a 'Red Cross stamp'.

It is perhaps not surprising that this version of the Easter Greetings label is far scarcer than its predecessor.

When considering the findings on the EASTER GREETINGS and CONSUMPTIVES labels, and, most importantly, the inclusion of the former in Mosbaugh's catalogue, they appear to possibly represent the Red Cross and, if they are genuine Red Cross labels, they are two of the earliest used in Australia. Alternatively, the red cross on the labels may rather serve as a component of the design of health fund cinderellas (including those from hospital) of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century; no less interesting for that proviso, though. The question remains: are these the earliest Australian *Red Cross* cinderellas?

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