The 1891 surcharges of South Australia

Purpose: As a consequence of its intention to join the Universal Postal Union in 1891, the South Australian Post Office needed stamps of 2½d and 5d denominations for single and double rate postage on overseas letters. This exhibit aims to show the provisional stamps issued between 1891 and 1893 to pay those rates.

Plan: Following this title page the exhibit is arranged as follows:

Production, page 2

South Australia's policy of preparing new stamp issues at short notice, as related to these stamps.

The issued 2½d stamps, pages 3-11

The first issue perforated 10 (line), pages 3-5; The second issue perforated 10 (comb), pages 6, 7, 9 (part)
The third issue perforated 15 (comb), pages 8,9 (part); The Official stamps, pages 10, 11

The issued 5d stamps, pages 12-15

Perforated 10 (comb), pages 12-14; The Official stamps, page 15

The 'Specimen' overprints, page 16

Treatment: Mint and used stamps are shown, with a preference for multiples. For each denomination the regular issues are arranged chronologically, and are followed by the Official stamps. Covers are included to show usage. Mint stamps and covers are outlined, used stamps are not unless they too are considered noteworthy.

Rarity/Importance: Items considered the most important have been given a **blue** backing. The large multiples also are inherently scarce. There are examples of perforation or overprint varieties, some of which are unrecorded, and some of the 'value page numbers', which occur only once per sheet of 240 stamps, are also unrecorded. That accountancy system is unique among Australian Colonies/States stamps.

Research: Has included a study of the complex perforation methods used for the 2½d stamps [ref. (2)], and discriminating between the two perf 10 gauges - line and comb – used on those stamps. That difference is not recognised in catalogues, but helps to explain which printings received which Official (O'S') overprints.

Main References:

(1) *The Shilling Violet*, journal of the South Australian Study Group, various issues
(2) *Thoughts on the First Printing of the 1891 2½d Surcharge*, H Lower, *The Shilling Violet* no.65
(3) *The stamps of South Australia*, chapter 5: draft prepared by the South Australian Study Group
(4) *Specimen Stamps of the Australian Colonies*, Millennium Philatelic Auction Sale No. 50 (2011)

Production

From 1868 the policy of the South Australian Post Office, when new values were needed at short notice, was to surcharge existing values, usually of higher denomination. That strategy was applied again for these two values.

(a) the 2½d value

In the case of the 2½d stamps the contemporary 4d value, *issued* in shades of violet, were first printed in **green** in sheets of 240, four panes of 60 (6x10). Surcharging of "**2½d**" in **brown** was done on full sheets, the overprint plate having 8 blocks of 30 impressions (6x5). Consequently overprint varieties occurred eight times on each sheet

De La Rue proofs of the 4d stamp in colour similar to the issued stamps.

(b) the 5d value

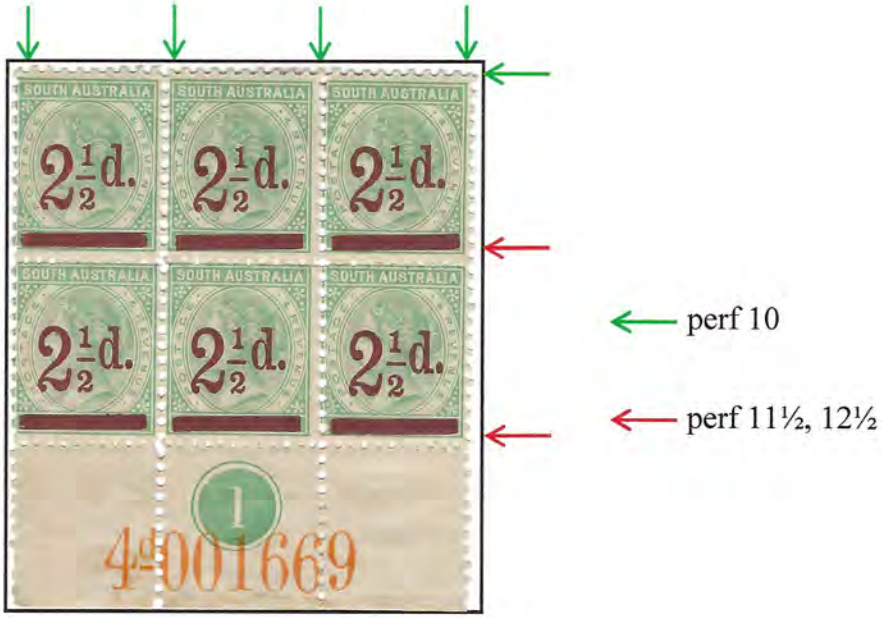
For the 5d stamps the contemporary 6d value, *issued* in shades of blue, were first printed in **brown** in sheets of 240, four panes of 60 (6x10). Surcharging of "**5^{D}**" in **red**, with a **red arc** to obliterate the words "SIX PENCE, was done using a sheet-sized overprint plate, so overprint varieties occurred only once per sheet

De La Rue proofs of the 6d stamp in issued colour.

'2½d' surcharge on four pence

First issue: 1 January 1891 (*pale green*) **watermark:** *all* crown over 'SA' (close)

Perforation: Two perforators were used for this printing. The main one was the perf 10 rotary line machine with eleven wheels imported in 1870 from Messrs. Latham Bros., Boulton, U.K. This machine was used in combination with the earlier perf 11½-12½ single-line machine in such a way that in each pane of 60 the three right-hand vertical perf. lines and the two bottom horizontal perf. lines gauged 11½-12½, all other lines gauging 10. Each sheet therefore consisted of **162** stamps perf.10 (*line*), **2** stamps perf.11½-12½ (*line*), and **76** stamps with compound perfs.



compound perf block from the bottom *left-hand* corner of the sheet

The South Australian Study Group (ref.3) recorded **one** other 'value page number' on 4d paper (ref. 3).

bottom *right-hand* corner block showing for the [1]*normal* arrangement **the only two stamps perf 11½, 12½** (numbers 239 and 240)

240

the main overprint variety:

'2' and '½' closer together, #7 on the overprint plate, paired with normal stamp

[1] but see uncatalogued variety on next page

Perf 10 (line)
/compound
continued

***variety:**
'missing fraction bar'

*only occurred early
in the first printing.

perf 10

2½d surcharge

perf 10

all compound perf

uncatalogued perforation varieties:

(varieties probably due to subsequent perforation correction after some lines had been omitted inadvertently)

perf 10 x 15

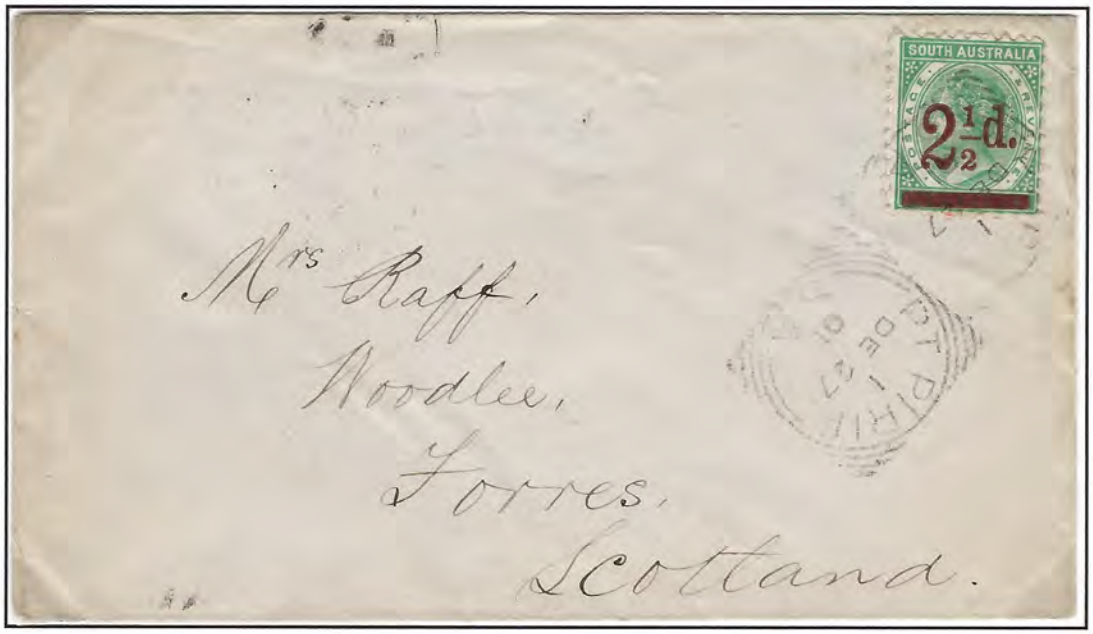
(RPSV certificate no. 3698)

'**2**' and '**½**' closer*

perf 11½, 12½

(RPSL certificate no. 178281)

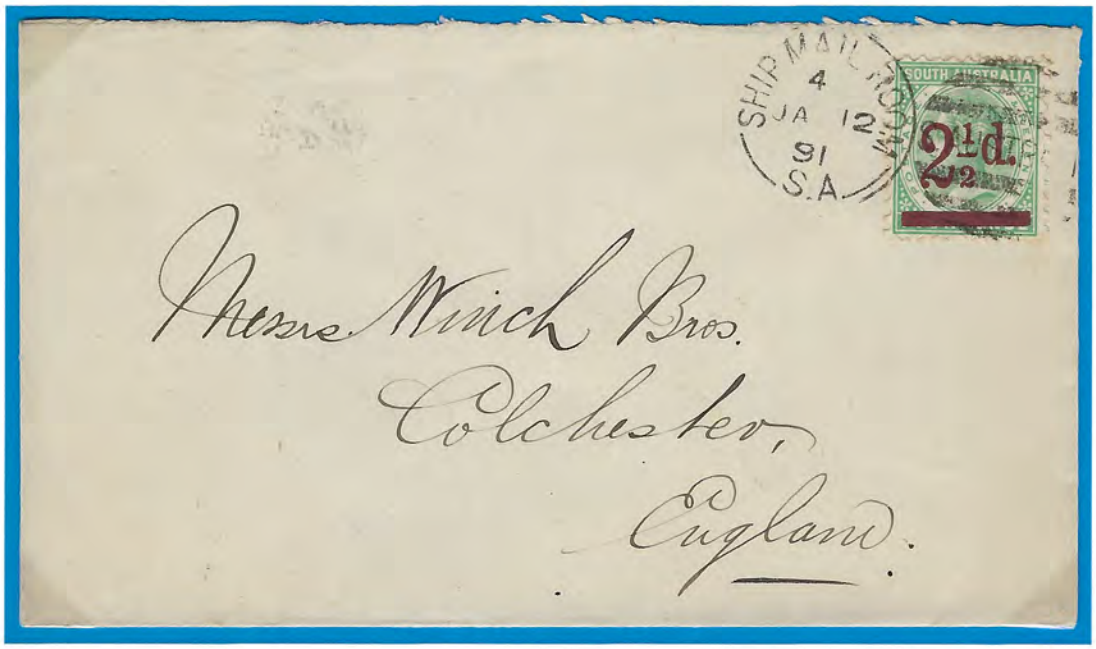
*as this variety only occurs on stamp position no. 7 on the overprint plate, stamps perf 11½, 12½ cannot be possible with the *normal* perforation arrangement (see previous page).



stamp **perf 10** (line) paying the U.P.U. letter rate to Scotland, 27 Dec. 1891

Perf 10 (line)
/compound, *continued*

***compound perf varieties on cover**



stamp perf **11½, 12½ x 10** paying the U.P.U. letter rate to England, 12 Jan. 1891
this letter was posted just **11 days** after the introduction of the U.P.U. rate and the 2½d stamps

vertical pair perf **10 x 11½, 12½ x 10 x 10** paying double letter rate to U.S.A. for ½ - 1oz
one penny stamp pays **late fee**

***The South Australian Study Group had recorded *no covers* bearing the compound perf stamp** (ref 3)

2½d surcharge

Perf 10 (comb)

1891: two shades can be identified; *green* (as below) and *deep green* (see next page)

top left-hand half-pane + first column of adjoining half-pane
one of **five** 'value page numbers' on ½d. paper recorded by the S.A. Study Group (ref. 3)

the S.A. Study Group had recorded
no 'value page numbers' on 2½d paper

unrecorded 'value page number' on ½d. paper

2½d surcharge

Perf 10 (comb)
continued

(deep green)

bottom right-hand pane from the sheet of 240 comprising 2 overprint blocks of 30

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varieties (used):

#7

#15

#22

#15: off-centre '1' in '½'

#22: round stop after 'd'

2½d surcharge

Perf.15

1893 *(pale green)*

#7 →

top right-hand pane
from the sheet of 240
comprising 2 overprint
blocks of 30

record mint multiple
of the perf. 15 stamps

#7 →

varieties (used):

#7

#15

2½d surcharge

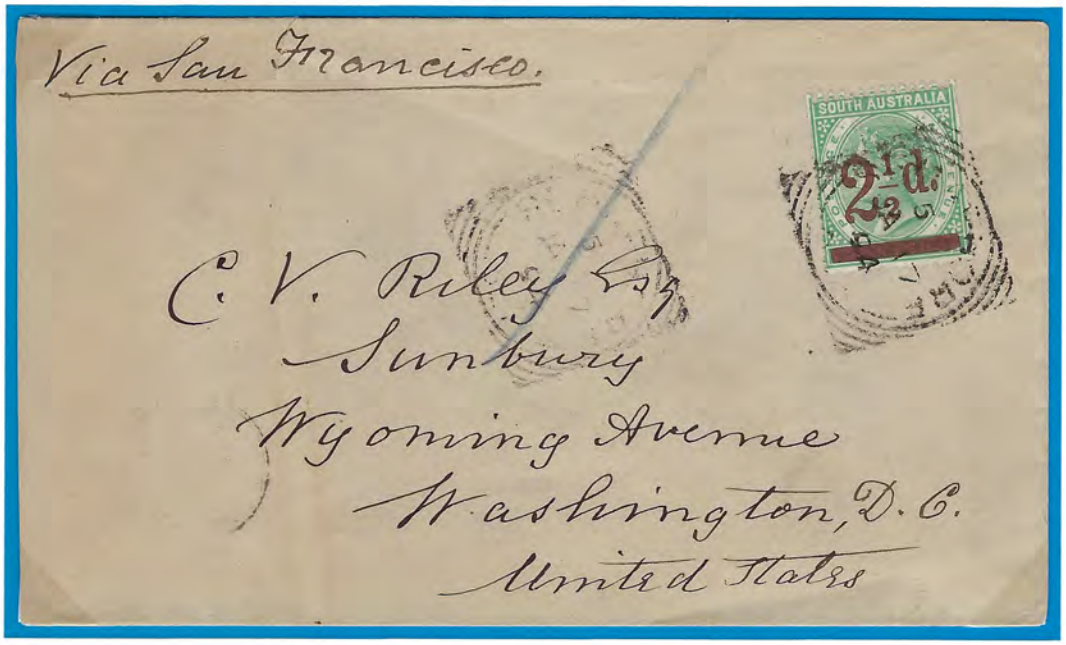
perf. 10 (comb)

(deep green)

pair paying combined inter-colonial letter rate (2d per ½oz) to Victoria, plus registration fee (3d), 7 Nov. 1891

perf. 15

NB: the stamp has double comb perforation
(1mm between the horizonal perf lines)



paying U.P.U. foreign letter rate to U.S.A., 7 Feb. 1894

one of only **three** recorded provisional 2½d perf.15 covers (ref. 3)

2½d surcharge

Officials, perf 10 (block 'O.S.') This setting is found only on the **perf 10 (line)**/compound printing.

perf. 10 mint, with variety split stop after 'S'

Officials, perf 10 (narrow 'O.S.') This setting is found only on the **perf 10 (comb)** printing.

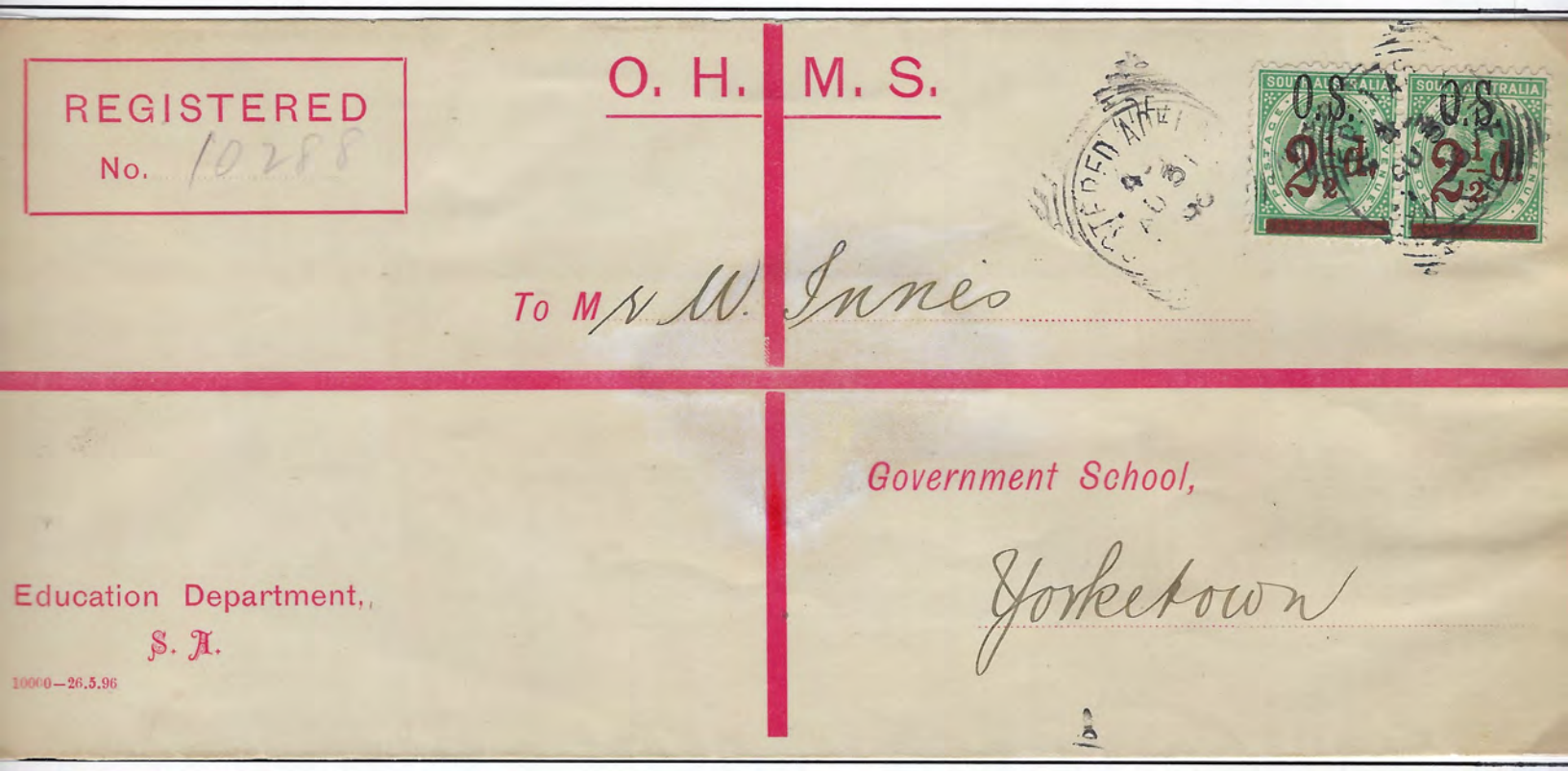
variety: **no stop after 'S'**

This block is **the record used multiple** (ref. 3)

2½d Officials, (narrow **O.S.**), continued

paying U.P.U. foreign letter rate to Ceylon, 23 Oct. 1893

This cover was addressed and signed by the Earl of Kintore, Governor of South Australia 1889-95.



pair paying combined 2d local postage + 3d registration fee.

'5D' surcharge on six pence

1 Jan. 1891 *(brown – shades)*

Perf 10 comb (only)

Wmk. crown over 'SA' (close)

Number surcharged **240 000**.

Equal record mint multiple

← bottom right-hand pane

Variety: no stop after '5D'

(#24 in top right pane)

mint

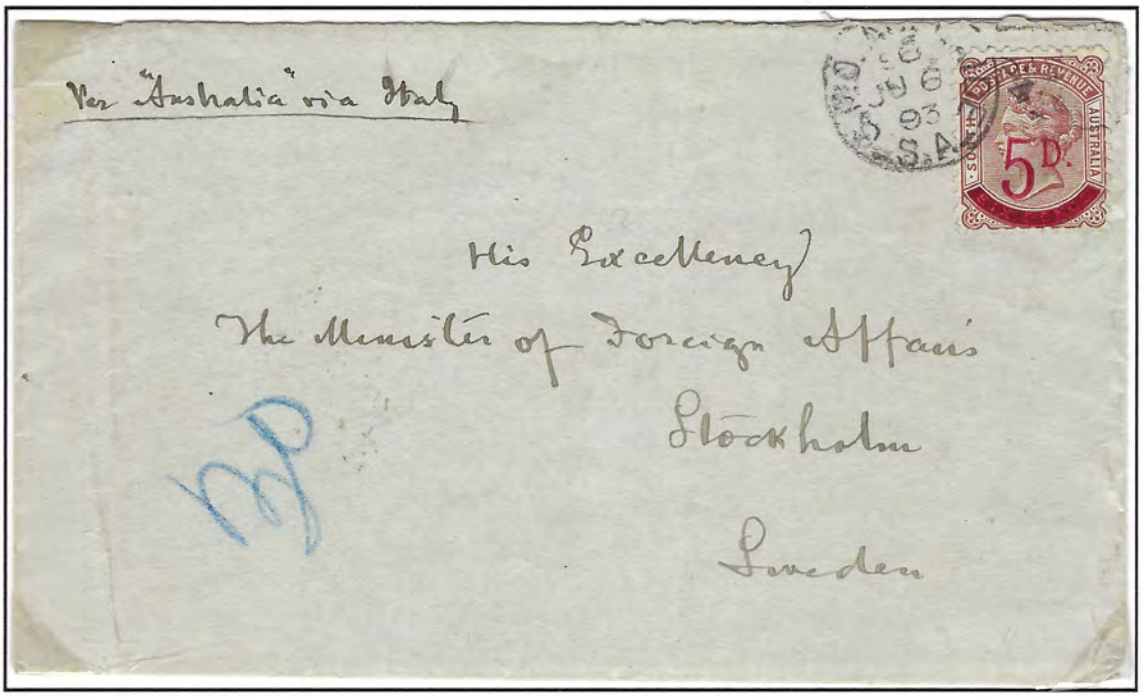
*used

*unpriced by SG

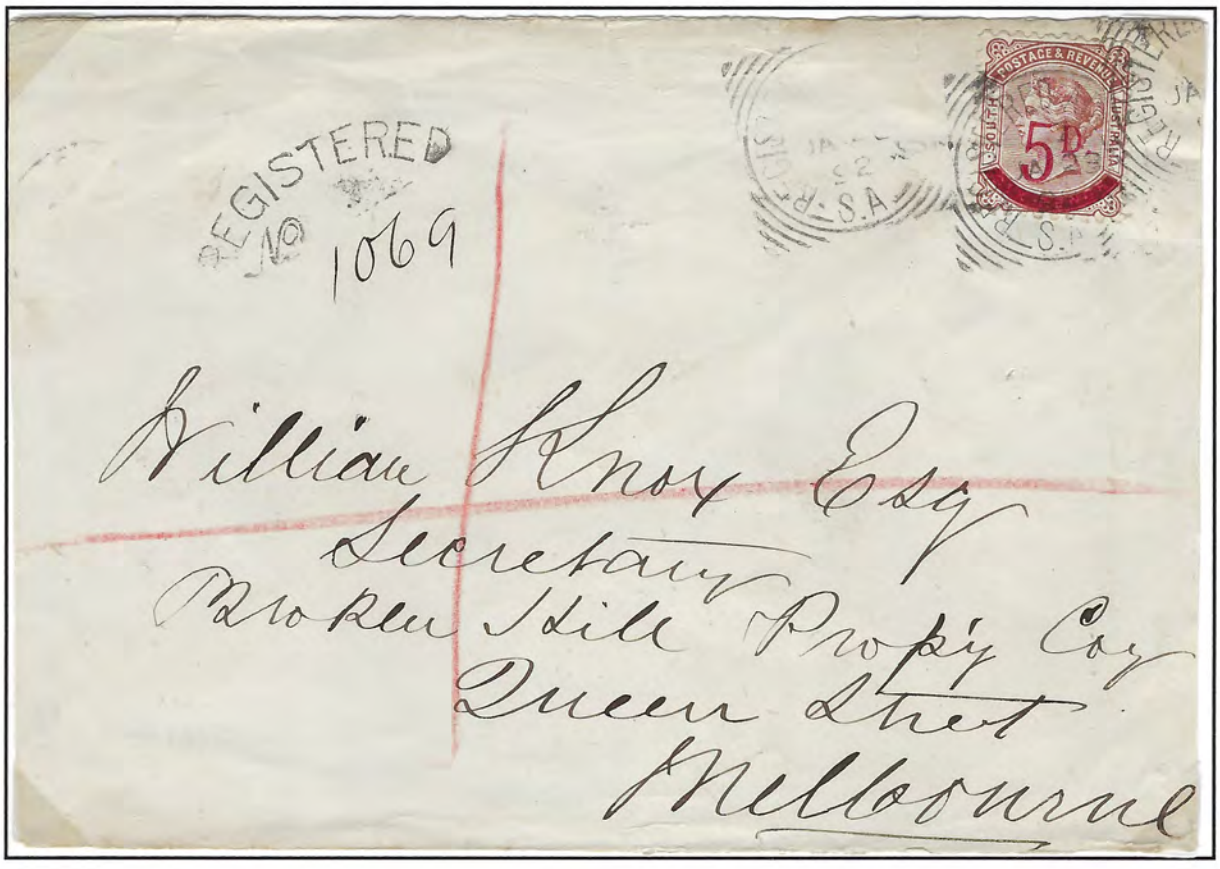
used multiples are rare (ref. 3)

5d surcharge

The two main <u>solo</u> uses for the 5d surcharge:



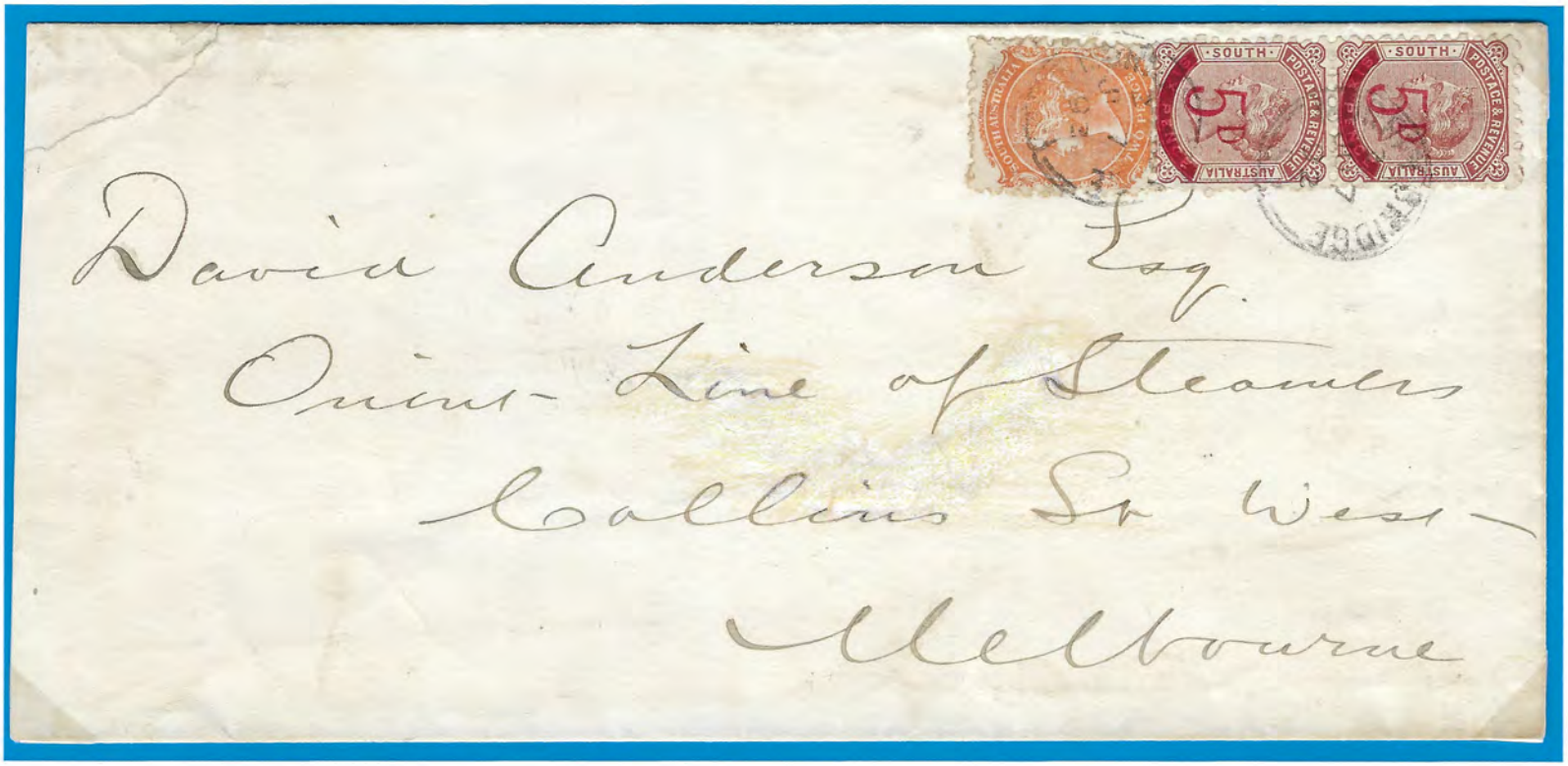
Primary: paying **double U.P.U. foreign letter rate** on a ½-1ounce overseas letter; this one to Sweden



Secondary: paying **combined 2d postage plus 3d registration fee** on a 0-½ounce domestic letter

Examples of use as a <u>make-up value</u>:

with additional ½d paying combined 2½d U.P.U. foreign letter rate to Germany plus 3d registration fee



pair with additional 2d paying one shilling postage to Melbourne for a **6th weight step** letter (2½-3oz)

5d surcharge

Officials, perf 10

(narrow 'O.S.' only)

Top right-hand corner block from the right-hand pane. Positions # 12 and 16 with **variety 'no stop after 'S''**

the largest known mint multiple *(ref. 3, 5)*; used multiples are also scarce

"**O.S.**" varieties:

---- no stop after '**S**'----

bottom half of '**O**' missing

2 x 5d + ½d paying 7½d postage for 1-1½oz to U.K., plus 3d registration fee. *(RPSL certificate no. 121060)*

2½d and 5d surcharge 'Specimens'

From 1884 'SPECIMEN' overprints were applied to some of South Australia's contemporary issues. In 1891 **291** complete sets were distributed *in triplicate* to 97 Universal Postal Union members (as below examples).

with **'type 2' 'SPECIMEN'** (18½ x 2½mm):

perf. 10 (line)

perf. 11½ x 10

perf. 10 (comb)

The 'type 2' overprint has been recorded on only 5 values of the colony's small De La Rue stamps.

From 1892 distribution to the U.P.U. was required *in quintuplicate*. The 2½d and 5d surcharges were among several contemporary issues which were **reprinted on the De la Rue hand-made paper watermarked Crown and 'SA' (wide)** and overprinted with **'type 4' 'SPECIMEN'** (12½ x 2mm).

7 →

perf. 10 (line)

perf. 11½-12½*

vertical strips of five as distributed to fellow U.P.U. members

***Note:** The original 5d surcharged stamps were only perf. 10 (comb)