

From 29 June, as Officer in charge of the Telegraph Despatch Office, Dolton had to account for the monies received for collect telegrams. He first had to write a requisition for stamps for the relevant amount and hand the requisition and the collected money, to the Receiver of Public Moneys who would initial the requisition and pass it to the Stamp Issuer who would issue stamps for the relevant amount. The daily amount was £3 on average. Dolton then had to affix the stamps to a statement and deface them before handing the statement to Mr Stang. The latter noticed that some of the 10/- and £1 stamps were in two pieces but he could not say if they were from the one stamp. Although unstated, the implication is that Dolton was cutting the punctured stamps removed from cables to make up apparently complete stamps to put on his statements, and keeping the genuine stamps. These daily statements with stamps in two pieces were the false documents purporting to be a postage stamp referred to in the charge laid on 21 December. This charge was withdrawn pending further inquiries. The problem for the prosecution may well have been the decision in the Benjamin, Sarpy and Jeffries prosecution in 1892 when the judge ruled that a stamp was not a document and therefore could not be forged.<sup>7</sup> Dolton was committed for trial on the three remaining charges and was granted bail on a personal surety of £200 and two other sureties of £100 each.

The trial was held in the Criminal Court on 22 March 1906. Although Justice Burnside pointed out that the charges attracted a maximum of three years imprisonment, Dolton's lawyer, Mr R.S. Haynes, successfully argued for some leniency, and Dolton was sentenced to imprisonment for three months, with hard labour. Did Dolton sell any of the

Andrew Watson  
Collection



stolen stamps? The answer has to be yes. He mentions that stamp dealers in Melbourne and Sydney were paying 8/- each for the £1.<sup>6</sup> My survey of 100 £1 stamps revealed 87 used between 11 November 1902 and 30 August 1905. Of these, 63 were used at Kalgoorlie, 10 at Perth, 8 at smaller offices and 6 unknown. The remaining 13, used after 30 August, were cancelled at Perth, block of four (punctured), 29 September 1905, Registered Perth, 7 January 1908, at Kookynie, illustrated, July 1910, Katanning, 10 October 1910 and 8 April 1911, a pair at Bunbury, 13 October 1910, and three wholly undateable, including two with R Obliterators.

The sudden reduction of dated examples from 1 September 1905, the existence of multiples, a rejoined block of 6 from Kalgoorlie on 2 May 1905 being the largest used multiple recorded, and the near impossibility of reaching a £1 postal rate indicates the source being other than postal usage. It has previously been thought that gold parcels were responsible for the high number of goldfields cancels but most gold went by the gold escort and not by post. The high amounts for telegrams, cablegrams and internal dockets indicate that these were the major users of the £1 stamp. Dolton was issued with 316 £1 stamps over a period of 5 months. Ten from Perth, and the punctured block of four are cancelled with a Perth cds 3b not recorded in *PMI*. It was probably the canceller used by Dolton.

The date range of WA £1 stamps cancelled after the discovery of Dolton's theft, shows that some leakage continued and this is confirmed by the following prosecution relating to Kangaroo values, from August 1914.

A young clerk was fined 9/10d last month at Perth (W.A.), and bound over to be of good behavior for six months for taking stamps from telegraph vouchers and selling them to a dealer. The dealer took them afterwards to the post office, and inquiries resulted in bringing the offender to justice. The most serious feature of the case, it was stated, was the destruction of the voucher. Accused, in his defence, stated that he did not think he was committing a serious offence. The magistrate, no doubt, influenced by the accused's youth, treated him as a first offender. (*Australian Philatelist*, 4 September 1914, 157).

Hancock records a range of punctures with 5mm to 6mm holes, from all States up to 1937.<sup>8</sup> It is clear from the Dolton episode that genuine postal usage of the £1 stamp was excessively rare and that without Dolton's thefts, very few would now be available to collectors in used condition.

#### Sources.

<sup>1</sup> *West Australian*, 22 December 1905, 8f-g, and 23 March 1906, 6e. On line at <http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper>.

<sup>2</sup> Kellow, G. (Ed). *Kangaroos and the Early Federal Period, 1901-12*. Brusden White, Ultimo, 2004, 370.

<sup>3</sup> *Philatelic Bulletin*. December 1958, 21, for 1905, 1906; February 1959, 29, for 1910; June 1958, 5, for 1912.

<sup>4</sup> The *Blue Books* variously.

<sup>5</sup> The reports in the *West Australian* have *Strang* but *Stang* is given consistently in the *Blue Books* and in the report in the *London Philatelist*.

<sup>6</sup> The witness A.L. Johnson cited a dealer's price of 7/6d each.

<sup>7</sup> Herst, H. *Forensic Philately*, The Author, Oregon, 1986, 5.

<sup>8</sup> Hancock, B.J. *Australian Telegram Forms & Envelopes*. Cinderella Stamp Club, Sydney, 1991, 123