

A postscript to the 1895 provisionals

Jon Higgins

The provisionals were not replaced until 1900 (4c) or 1902 (10c), why wait so long? Probably money, North Borneo, which also administered Labuan for the Crown and was responsible for its stamps, was on the brink of bankruptcy having spent too much on the railway and a cross country telegraph (the poles eaten by termites and the copper wire locally 're-purposed') and in fact was only saved by the rubber boom of the early 1900's. The provisionals did the job, had cost very little to produce and used the excess stock of the \$1, therefore it was only after North Borneo joined the Imperial Penny Post scheme in 1899 that a 4c stamp was issued. 4c was the equivalent to 1d and would become the most used stamp as it paid the letter rate to almost all destinations in the Empire including the U.K. while continuing to be the overseas postcard rate.

The company called upon the services of Waterlow and Sons to produce the new two colour 4c stamp depicting a Orangutan, 'unfortunately' choosing colours for both North Borneo and Labuan which did not conform to the UPU recommended colour for overseas letters so requiring a rapid reprint – and more sales to collectors? The 10c was not issued until 1902, possibly because there was not such a pressing need for this value as 10c became the rate for 'foreign' (non Imperial) letters and maybe there was a still good stock of the 10c and higher value provisionals. The 10c depicted a Sun Bear, another example of the exotic fauna of Borneo, was accompanied by a 16c stamp which had no obvious postal use, but was possibly issued to mark the opening of the North Borneo metre gauge railway, the train on the stamp looking distinctly 'toy town', but the railway has been recently upgraded, with Chinese assistance, and still operates daily.

Although it looks like the North Borneo stamps have been overprinted 'LABUAN' this is not so, as with the 1894 and 1897 Waterlow definitives 'LABUAN' has been engraved on the vignette plate so positioned to cover the words 'NORTH BORNEO' which is part of the design of the frame plate, a rather nifty way of avoiding a third pass through the press. Unlike the previous issues the colours of Labuan and North Borneo stamps are the same, which would have saved a few dollars more.

There was little postal need for the 20c 30, and 40c values so it wasn't until 1925 that a 20c on 18c provisional appeared, this to use up the redundant 18c value, 1939 for the first regular issue. 1949 for a 30c (part of the UPU omnibus set) and never for a 40c. From 1906 until the Japanese invasion Labuan used the stamps of the Straits Settlements as it was under their administration.

I hope you enjoy the display.

1900 New Values: 4c

There was no 4 cents value in the 1894 or the 1897 sets, when the postal rates were changed in 1895 provisionals were issued that included the 4c value, the rate for foreign postcards. In 1899 North Borneo joined the Empire Penny Post reducing the letter rate from North Borneo and Labuan to any destination in the Empire, including the U.K. to 4c per ½ oz.

4c black and green

Green presumably chosen to comply with the UPU colour for stamps for postcards, but prior to issue 4c became the letter rate for Imperial destinations. This prompted the reprint of the 4c in black and carmine as red was the recommended UPU colour for overseas letters.

Specimen Stamps

Overprinted 'SPECIMEN' in serif capitals



Additionally hand stamped 'ULTRAMAR' in blue for distribution to Portuguese colonies.



In a strip of five as distributed by the Portuguese postal authorities, very unusual

Stamps intended for issue

It is believed that none of the 4c in black and green were officially dispatched to North Borneo. Available mint or C.T.O. only from London.

Perf. 13½ x 14



1900; NEW VALUES, 4 CENT

Imperf. Plate Proof

On the same thin un gummed paper as the printers samples and in the same colour green, scarce thought to be from a sheet of nine. No other die or plate proofs of this value have been recorded (North Borneo Handbook vol. 2 pg. 507)



Printers' Samples

Miniature sheets of nine, line perforated 12½, each stamp opt. diagonally 'WATERLOW & SONS LTD. / SPECIMEN' and punched with a 2mm hole in the lower left corner. Known in two frame colours blue-green and green.



NORTH BORNEO

1900: NEW VALUES: 4 CENTS, CARMINE AND BLACK

Issued to comply with the U.P.U. colours for the letter rate.

SPECIMEN STAMPS: Opt. in Serif capitals.

P13 $\frac{1}{2}$ -14



P13 $\frac{1}{2}$ -14, compound 12-13



Issued Stamps.

Perf. 13-14



Perf. 14 $\frac{1}{2}$ -15



Perf. 13 $\frac{1}{2}$ -14, compound 12-13.

Perf. 16 (C.T.O.)



1902, Ten Cent and Sixteen Cent

The ten cents value was required for overseas mail to foreign (non Imperial) countries. There appeared to be no requirement for a sixteen cent value, possibly issued to mark the opening of the North Borneo metre gauge railway. Design: Horizontal format, same overall frame design apart from figures and words of value. Vignette printed separately; 10 cents depicts the Honey Bear, 16 cents shows a 2-6-0 locomotive of the North Borneo State railway heading a train of four carriages. The recently upgraded railway continues to run daily.

Cut down die proof of the frame of the 16c value in black on thin card
(as per the normal Waterlow & Sons practice the card has been punched with two 3.5 mm holes)



Specimen Stamps



Additionally hand-stamped 'ULTRAMAR' in blue for distribution to Portuguese colonies



1902, Ten Cent and Sixteen Cent

10 Cent: Issued Stamp: Perf. 13½ – 14

The North Borneo Handbook (part 2, pg 462) lists two shades, Brown & Slate-Grey and Red-Brown & Grey-Lilac, I believe I have examples of both these shades, but the S.G. Specialised catalogue (5th edition) also lists two but as Brown & Slate-Lilac and Brown & Slate-Blue, the latter I do not have, are there three shades?

Red-Brown and Grey-Lilac: Corner block with printers guidelines



Brown and Slate-Grey



16 Cent: Issued Stamp, Perf. 13½ – 14



Print registration guide marks and sheet number



Perf. 14½ -15



1900-1902 Colour Changes and New Values

New Values: 4c Empire letter rate, 10c Foreign letter rate.

New Colours: 2c, 4c and 5c frame colours changes to green, red and blue respectively to conform to UPU recommendations. The 4c black and yellow brown was not sent to Labuan as the frame colour did not conform to the UPU guide lines.

Specimen Stamps



Blocks of six 10c and four 16c: Most unusual as usually multiples are in strips of three or five. Probably from part sheet excess to the UPU requirement.



1900-1902 Colour Changes and New Values

Issued Stamps

Perf. 13½ – 14

The 10c is only recorded perf. 14½ – 15

2c, 4c, 5c in U.P.U. recommended colours



4c with yellow brown frame was not sent to Labuan but would have been available from London. There was no postal rate that required a 16c value, it was probably issued to mark the opening of the North Borneo Railway



1900-1902 Colour Changes and New Values

Issued Stamps

Perf. 14½ – 15

Only recorded for the 4c black & carmine, the 10c and 16c (the 16 is scarce)



Perf. 13 ½ -14, comp. 12-13

Recorded for all values except the 10c but scarce for 2c and 5c

