

RHODESIA RAILWAYS NEWSPAPER STAMPS

By H.C. Russell.

The combination of being a keen philatelist with a desire to search for facts and a railwayman with fairly long service naturally attracted me to the unusual "Rhodesia Railways Single Newspaper Stamps".

My interest was aroused when I read an article on this subject by Peter Ibbotson which appeared in "Stamp Collecting" dated November 6th, 1969. Later I was informed by Mr. F.P.B. Howes, a friend with similar interests but who concentrates on philately with a Railway theme, about an article by Alan Johnson which appeared in "Railway Philately" dated September, 1971, Vol. 5, No. 4. I have ascertained that some information and some of the material used in both of these articles may have originated in recent years from the Public Relations Office of the Rhodesia Railways through the assistance of Mr. R.C. Hopf. Reference to Rhodesia Railways Single Newspaper Stamps is also contained in Robson Lowe's Encyclopaedia, Vol. 2.

Whilst the contribution of the foregoing is most interesting, I consider the information to be very scanty, and it occurred to me to investigate as far as possible the reasons leading up to the issue of these quaint "Single Newspaper Stamps," and to unravel other relevant information. The details in this article, which are still incomplete, may interest railwaymen and philatelists in general and collectors of "railwayana" in particular. It is hoped, by publishing these details, to obtain more interesting facts, especially concerning the earlier issues and, where possible, to add specimens - be they in mint condition or used on piece - to my collection of this fascinating series of non-postal material.

When the full story is known it is intended to publish the details in "MAGNIFY", a local philatelic magazine produced by the Royal Philatelic Society of Rhodesia for the wider interest of philatelists.

The earliest reference to Newspaper Stamps in Rhodesia is to be found in the Official Railway Tariff Book No. 2 issued during September, 1903. The appropriate sections read as follows :-

"The Rhodesia Railways, Limited, and the Beira and Mashonaland Railways.

RATES AND FARES

C.G.R. (Cape Government Railways) and Rhodesia Railways, Vryburg to Gwelo and Wankie Line.

Newspapers - Parcels of Newspapers and similar publications published and issued not less frequently than once a month, are carried at half parcels rates for 200 miles, Unless charging the full parcels rate for actual distance, or the rate of $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per newspaper amounts to less.

Single newspapers $\frac{1}{2}$ d. each any distance.

Parcels of newspapers and periodicals must be open at both ends the Company reserving to itself the right of examining the contents of such parcels whenever it may think fit to do so.

Newspaper parcels are carried station to station in every case.

The Beira and Mashonaland Railways and Rhodesia Railways, Gwelo to Salisbury Section, and of an additional railway line to be constructed.

Newspapers - Parcels of Newspapers are carried at half parcels rates. Single papers are carried at a charge of 1d. per copy, to be franked by stamps obtainable from the Administration of the Beira and Mashonaland Railways at Umtali."

GEOGRAPHICAL DIVISIONS

It should be borne in mind that in those early days the Railway Headquarters was in Umtali. Furthermore, it should be noted that, the two sections relate to separate geographical divisions, the 1d. Single Newspaper Stamp being valid in the eastern sector only. Why was this necessary? What was valid in the Western sector? I suggest that at that time (before the formation of the Union of South Africa) separate legislation was essential because the western sector of the railwayline transversed Rhodesia, Bechuanaland and the Cape Province and, therefore, it would not have been diplomatic to use this special stamp in those territories bearing in mind the complicated procedure in splitting the revenue between the territories concerned, whereas a system does apply to postage stamps. For this very reason I suggest that as the rate in this sector was a 2d. normal postage stamps were used. DO ANY EXAMPLES EXIST TODAY on wrappers to prove this theory?

Your attention is drawn to the provisional issue of "Half-Penny" postage stamps at Livingstone during August, 1917 - see "MAGNIFY" dated July and August, 1971 - where this rate covered the postage of one "Livingstone Mail" once per week.

It is also interesting to note that the rate of 1d. per single newspaper in 1903 is almost the same as the 1c. per single newspaper today. This factor alone is quite amazing when related to continuous changes in the cost of living. On the otherhand we should not lose sight of the relative value of a penny in those early days and the value placed on reading matter and newspaper of that era.

An understanding of the changes of ownership, title and operation of the Railways is necessary in order to appreciate the alterations in design and areas served.

1892 July

Beira Railway Company formed. (Fontesvilla-Umtali).

1893 May

Formation Bechuanaland Railway Company Limited. (Vryburg-northwards).

1894-1904

Vryburg-Bulawayo-Victoria Falls Section of the Rhodesia Railways progressively worked by the Cape Government Railways.

1895 April

Beira Junction Railway Company Limited formed. (Beira-Fontesvilla).

1897 April

Formation of the Mashonaland Railway Company Limited. (Umtali-inland).

1899

Bechuanaland Railway Company re-named Rhodesia Railways Limited.

1900

(Beira-Umtali) Salisbury sections of the Beira Railway Company and the Mashonaland Railway Company combined under one management at Umtali and became known as the "B.M.R."

1902

The "B.M.R." operated the newly opened Salisbury-Gwelo-Bulawayo sections on behalf of the Rhodesia Railways.
Ayrshire Mine and Lomagundi Railway Company constructed the Salisbury-Banket-Ayrshire line.

1903 February 1.

The Cape Government Railways took over the operation of the Bulawayo-Gwelo section of the Rhodesia Railways.

1905.

The Cape Government Railways handed over the operation of the Bulawayo Station and the lines north thereof to the "B. & M. R. & R.R." Administration at Umtali.

1910 September - 1911 March

The Headquarters of the "B. & M.R.R." transferred from Umtali to Bulawayo.

1927 October 1.

Title of the Beira and Mashonaland and Rhodesia Railways system changed to Rhodesia Railways Limited. The title "B. & M. & R.R." however continued to appear on the Annual Reports until 1936.

1936/7

The Mashonaland Railway Company absorbed by Rhodesia Railways Limited. Until 1947 the Annual Reports bore the title "Beira and Rhodesia Railways".

1947 April 1.

Southern Rhodesia Government purchased Rhodesia Railways Limited for £23,642,266.

1949 April 6

Port of Beira transferred to Mocambique Government.

April 6

Beira-Umtali section transferred to Mocambique Government.

October 1

Mocambique Railways took over the working of Beira-Umtali line.

November 1

Rhodesia Railways became a statutory body.

1953 March 31

The Shabani Branch was acquired by Rhodesia Railways from Shabani Railway Company limited.

1959 November 30

Rhodesia Railways took over full operation of the Bulawayo-Mahalapye Section from the South African Railways.

December 1

Vryburg-Ramatlabana Section sold to South African Railways for £1,350,000.

1960

Operation of Machipanda-Umtali Section (six miles) taken over by Rhodesia Railways.

1961

Beit Bridge (centre of bridge) to Beit Bridge Station (one mile) taken over by Rhodesia Railways from the Federal Government.

1964

Ownership of the Rhodesia Railways unitary system passed to the Governments of Rhodesia and Zambia on fifty-fifty basis.

1966 September 26

Rhodesia Railways took over operation of the 200 mile Mahalapye-Mafeking section of the line through Botswana from South African Railways.

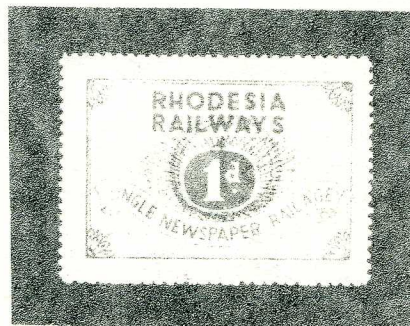
1967 June 30

Division of unitary system and establishment of two separate railway systems: Rhodesia Railways and Zambia Railways whereby the Zambia Railways own and operate the lines north of the Victoria Falls Bridge, and the Rhodesia Railways the lines in Rhodesia and Botswana.

TO BE CONTINUED.....

In this edition we publish the following photographs of all Rhodesia Railways Newspaper Stamps which are referred to by Mr. Russell in his two articles. The second article will appear in the July 'Magnify'.

EDITOR.



NOV. 1972.

MAGNIFY

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RHODESIA RAILWAY NEWSPAPER STAMPS

by H.C. RUSSELL

Continued from our June Issue:

The records from the 26th June, 1957, to the present time are complete and details are given in the paragraphs which follow.

The firm "Rhodesian Printers (Pvt.) Ltd., Bulawayo" was printing these stamps at that time. The name of the firm has changed over the years, and it must be significant to philatelists who collect the postage stamps of modern Rhodesia to know that the firm is now "Mardon Printers (Pvt.) Ltd." Although the Newspaper Stamps have always been printed in Bulawayo by this firm the postage stamps have been printed in Salisbury on far more sophisticated machinery.

DETAILS OF PRINTINGS

JOB No.	DATE OF ORDER	ORDER No.	QUANTITY REQUIRED	PARTICULARS	DATE OF DELIVERY
RHODESIAN PRINTERS (PVT) LTD., BULAWAYO					
R854	26. 6.57	54690	2 000 Sheets	1d Stamps	?
R1691	26. 6.59	18637	2 000 Sheets	1d Stamps	1. 8.59
R1812	12. 10.59	28753	4 800 Sheets	1d Stamps	4.11.59
R2562	14. 2.61	?	2 000 Sheets	1d Stamps	23. 3.61
			500 Sheets	"ONE CENT"	23. 3.61
			of above)		
MARDON RHODESIAN PRINTERS (PVT) LTD., BULAWAYO					
R3401	21. 5.62	11844	500 Sheets	"ONE CENT"	26. 6.62
MARDON PRINTERS (PVT.) LTD. BULAWAYO					
R4484	17. 1.64	2930	1 000 Sheets	1d Stamps	4. 2.64
R6044	7. 3.66	5740	2 000 Sheets	1d Stamps	13.5.66
R6045	7. 3.66	5741	1 000 Sheets	"ONE CENT"	13.5.66
R7530	30. 9.69	25829	300 Sheets	1d Stamps	31.10.69
R8054	21. 6.71	87610	1 000 Sheets	1c Stamps	19.7.71

Now that we have the background to the issue of these stamps let us examine the stamps more closely and note some of the problems the printers had to overcome. Four examples of the main groups are illustrated, life size:- (Fig. 8, Fig. 5, Fig. 6, and Fig. 4).

It has been confirmed by the printers that ALL the 1d stamps were prepared in a sheet of 12 rows of 4 stamps equalling 48 stamps per sheet. (Fig. 8) The first of the "ONE CENT" overprint stamps was also prepared in the same (Fig. 6) sheet lay-out. At a later date, however, steps were taken to modify the lay-out and produce 10 rows of five stamps equalling 50 stamps per sheet, which would simplify the accounting procedure when decimalisation was introduced. As only 48 stamp impressions existed in the original letterpress plate the printers had to manipulate the original plate to meet the

new need. This was achieved by cutting one complete vertical row from the plate and dividing it into one strip of five and seven single impressions. It is of interest to note that the main block of 12 x 3, the vertical strip of five and five of the single plate impressions are now held by the Rhodesia Railways Historical Committee for eventual display in the Railway Archives.

In order to create the 10 x 5 sheet lay-out two printing runs were required; the first being the normal 12 x 4 with the top and bottom rows trimmed off and the second to add the fifth vertical row of ten stamps. The loose letterpress plates were re-arranged for the second run and set in place with a special fixative. If a sheet of the "ONE CENT" stamps is carefully (Fig.6) examined it will be noted that the FRAME of each stamp in the fifth row is OUT-OF-LINE in relation to the rest of the sheet on the left. The printers confirm that no sheet of stamps exist in this lay-out without the overprint.

Up to this point these stamps had been printed letter-press.

When preparations were being made for the latest 1c stamp (Fig.4) advantage was taken to convert to offset lithography. Baryta pulls of five of the 1d stamp were taken and two rows of five were pasted up. A member of Mardons staff modified the 1d stamp by "touching up" copies with red ink and taking out the downstroke of the "d" to make the "c". The new master positive was stepped and repeated by camera to provide a litho-positive 10 x 5.

Decimalisation

Now that we understand how the printers provided the stamps let us examine the changes which have taken place in recent years and how this affects the use of the stamps.

The 1d stamp is the most common and was in use for many years (Fig. 8).

The first change to take place, on the 14th February, 1961, coincided with decimalisation in South Africa, Basutoland, Swaziland and Bechuanaland. Why was this necessary? How did decimalisation in these other territories affect Rhodesia? The Rhodesia Railways Newspaper Stamps were being used at Mafeking, in the northern part of the Cape Province of South Africa! They were possibly used for the despatch of the "Mafeking Mail" to points in Bechuanaland, where the railway line had been Rhodesia Railways owned but South African Railways operated. The details of Railway ownership have been extensively covered in the first part of this article.

The chief accountant, South African Railways, Johannesburg, wrote to the chief accounting officer, Rhodesia Railways, Bulawayo, on the 2nd February, 1961, and requested the supply of 1c R.R. Newspaper Stamps, but was informed, on the 8th February, 1961:-

"...that it will be some time before the 1c R.R. Newspaper Stamps will be available for issue to Mafeking.

"In view of the above, it is suggested that the 1d R.R. Newspaper Stamps on hand at Mafeking on the 14th February, 1961, and any further stocks issued after the 14th February, 1961, could be over stamped "1c" by the Station Master before they are sold to the public at a cost of 1c per stamp..."

This overprint was, therefore, prepared specifically for issue to the station master, Mafeking, to meet decimalisation and could only have been available from the end of March, 1961, at the earliest. Examples of the temporary measures in force during February and March, 1961, are unfortunately missing from my collection.

It should be noted that the stamps ordered on the 30th September, 1969, amounted to only 300 sheets. This was possibly because of the anticipated transition to decimal currency, which was to take place in Rhodesia on the 17th February, 1970. It should also be noted that no more stamps were ordered until the 21st June, 1971, long after the introduction of decimalisation.

Obviously surplus stocks on hand had to be used up. The accounts office, who controlled the sale of these stamps to newspaper vendors and members of the public, arranged for a rubber handstamp to be made, which was to be applied to all stamps as they were sold, (Fig. 7) and in this manner conform with the latest requirements.

Prior to the mauve rubber handstamp becoming available the accounts clerk, as a temporary measure, had to inscribe 1c manually on all stamps issued. It is not proposed to illustrate how this was applied because other specimens may as a result suddenly appear. Mint copies are scarce, and the handstamp would have been applied as required on the sheets of 1d stamps in the 12 x 4 lay-out. This measure was in force during February and March 1970.

Photostat copies of the record of sales from November, 1961 to October, 1971, are now in the Railway Archives, and it is interesting to note the sequence of sheet numbers and the main users of these stamps, which are listed for your information:-

Newspaper Vendors

1. Rhodesian Printing and Publishing Co.
2. Rhodesia Herald, Salisbury.
3. Rhodesian News Agency, Gatooma.
4. Archibald Brothers, Gwelo
5. Bulawayo Chronicle.

Various Stations

6. Station Master, Mafeking
7. Station Master, Gatooma
8. Station Master, Salisbury
9. Station Master, Victoria Falls
10. Station Master, Banket
11. Station Master, Gwelo.
12. Station Master, Que Que
13. Station Master, Sinoia
14. Station Master, Mahalapye

Other People

15. B.J. Iackie, Cape Town.
16. Rose Stamps and Postal Stationery, Johannesburg.

17. D. Brown, Pretoria.
18. H.C. Russell, Bulawayo
19. B. Morrison, Salisbury
20. P. Howes, Bulawayo
21. Mr. Perry, Bulawayo

(Incidentally, Newspaper Stamps of recent years were not normally cancelled, and specimens should, for preference, be collected on piece).

The nature of the stamps, the simplicity of design and colour, and the purpose for which they were issued meant that no elaborate machinery was needed in their production. Perforations were made by passing the sheets through a perforating machine more than once in each direction, as a result some stamps are wider than others because of the angle the sheets entered the perforator.

The information which is now available should be sufficient for readers who collect such items to distinguish between the various printings.

I wish to record my thanks to Mardon Printers, Bulawayo, for their assistance in providing the printing details and to Messrs. Cloete, Gordon, Harvey and McNeill of the Rhodesia Railways accounting branch, who have assisted in my research in this field, and who have been patient with my many queries.

(Both articles published with acknowledgement to
The Rhodesia Railways Magazine).

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