

The 1875 2c on 3c Overprint

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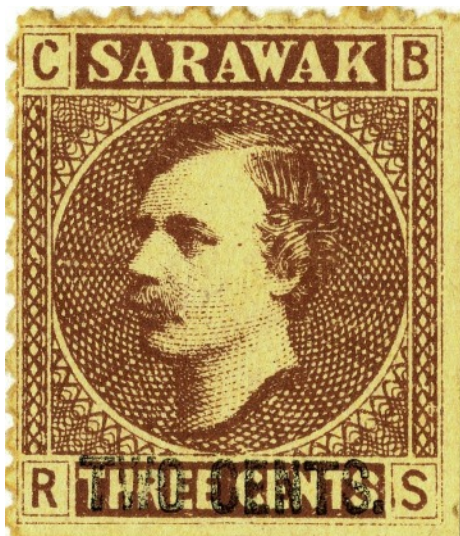
In the June 1874 issue of *The Sarawak Gazette*, a Government notification was made that '...on or after a date of which due notice would be given' new postal rates would apply within Sarawak and as far as Singapore:

Letters	6 cents per half ounce
Newspapers	2 cents each
Books	6 cents per four ounces
Registration	6 cents

The new postal rates were introduced on 1st January 1875 to coincide with the release of the new stamp issue (2 cents, 4 cents, 6 cents, 8 cents and 12 cents). A delay in the availability of this new issue would have caused a limited need for the 2 cents provisional. This delay is indicated by a mention of the new issue in the December edition of *'The Stamp Collectors' Magazine'* in which only the proofs are referred to (Hansford and Noble 1935).

The rate of 2 cents for Newspapers was the only one that could not be catered for by the current 3 cents stamp, issued in 1871. Consequently until the new 2 cents stamp was issued there was a very low demand for a 2 cents provisional. This overprint was applied on an 'as required' basis for a very short period of time in early 1875.

In the August 1876 edition of *The Philatelist* a listing of 'Recent and undescribed emissions on page 105 includes the following:



Pane F, #67

Sarawak

From default of supply of the 2 cents lilac, the current 3 cents has been utilised with the required value '2 cents' surcharged thereon in black.

This listing was based on an article which appeared the month before in the *'Timbre Poste'*. This article assumed the provisional had been issued in 1876 as a result of a shortage of the 2 cents stamp of the 1875 issue, rather than the absence of a 2 cents value at the beginning of 1875.

The provenance of this provisional was further blurred in the 1880s when a number of stamps with forged overprints were put on the market and accepted as genuine. These forgeries were identified in 1892 when an investigation into the activities of the London forgers, Benjamin, Sarpy and Jefferyes revealed dies for



London Forgery

the overprint, forged cancellation marks and a number of copies of the forged provisional in their workshops (Batty-Smith 1990).

In the first edition of Stanley Gibbons Stamp catalogue in 1879 the provisional is listed as:

1876. Surcharged. 2 cents, rect. (on 3 cents) brown on yellow.

However by the end of the trial of the London forgers in 1892 the provisional was

considered 'bogus' – never had any actual official existence – by the principal stamp catalogues; a status which still remains into the 21st century.

References

Hansford, GE and Noble, LA (1935). *Sarawak and her Stamps*. The Times Press, pp.35-41

Batty-Smith, William and Watterson, Neville

(1990). *Sarawak: the issues of 1871 and 1875*.

Neville Watterson. pp.124-135



Claire Scott FRPSL achieved two 'firsts' on 23 January when she presented 'On The Fringes of Eastern Seas: Brunei 1895 – 1988' to the members of the Royal Philatelic Society London. It was the first time that Brunei had been the subject of an entire display to the Society, and the first time that an afternoon display had been accompanied by a PowerPoint presentation.

The display revealed the fascinating philatelic story of the country, the study of the stamps being accompanied by essays, colour trials and proofs, as well as usage, while also

shown were airmails, forces mail, postal stationery and postcards.

Claire's illustrated presentation complemented the display by providing a clear insight into the historical and postal background of the country.

Giving the Vote of Thanks, Peter Cockburn FRPSL thanked Claire for her 'wonderful insight into how stamps and postal history impact on a country's history, the two being intertwined'. President of the Society, Richard Stock FRPSL, presenting Claire with the Society's 150th Anniversary Medal, further remarked that members had enjoyed 'an erudite presentation to support a magnificent display'.