

THE NORTH BORNEO AND LABUAN PROVISIONALS OF 1895

The display that follows was originally a 9 page entry into my local society competition, having purchased (as an unsold) the two 4 cents on \$1 essays at a virtual auction during lock down I have expanded the display to 16 frames. If I wanted to enter it in a competition the question would what category? As it is mainly stamps would expect it to be traditional, but it cannot be one country as it includes the stamps and postal history of two, albeit closely linked, countries. As there are only 10 face different stamps I have included a lot more covers than would normally expect to see in a 'traditional' display, hoping that you and any future judges agree that they do indeed add something worth while to the display and not just padding. There are also two covers which at first glance appear to have nothing to do with the 1895 provisionals, but they both illustrate the previous letter rate in force for just a year from June 1894 to June 1895 which on its replacement prompted the issue of the provisionals.

Waterlow and Sons two colour pictorials of 1894 and 1897

The two covers mentioned above are franked with examples of the pictorial issues of 1894. Because North Borneo was a protectorate and not a crown colony its stamps did not need to include the portrait of the monarch therefore they were able to utilize for their new definitives the two colour printing process newly developed by Waterlow and Sons; thereby becoming the first territory within the empire to issue two colour pictorial stamps. These were very popular with collectors and a very welcome source of revenue for the British North Borneo Company, therefore the Company decided to use the same designs, but in different colours, for Labuan which the Company administered on behalf of the Crown. In order to minimize costs 'LABUAN' was engraved on the vignette plate so that only two passes through the press were required, once for the frame/duty plate and once for the vignette. The word 'LABUAN' was positioned so that it covered the words 'NORTH BORNEO' which were part of the design of the frame/duty plate.

The 24c values of North Borneo and Labuan and the Labuan die proof of the 24c vignette plate below illustrate this.



North Borneo 24c value



Labuan die proof of the 24c vignette 'LABUAN' added



Labuan 24c value

At least that was meant to happen and did so for the 1894 issue, but in the 1897 issue with redesigned frames three of the stamps ended up being visibly inscribed both 'LABUAN' and 'NORTH BORNEO' – but that's another story!

The 4c and 10c provisionals were not replaced in either country by definitives until 1900 and 1902 respectively, 20c, 30c and 40c stamps were never issued. I have therefore added as an addendum some pages from my collection of the 4c and 10c definitives, they were part of two issues prompted by changes to U.P.U. rates and guidance on preferred colours. The North Borneo P.O. was caught out by the latter recommendation which led to the rapid reissue of the 4c definitives.

THE NORTH BORNEO AND LABUAN PROVISIONALS OF 1895

Introduction: Five provisionals, 4, 10, 20, 30 and 40 CENTS were notified by the North Borneo Government on the 19th July 1895 (N. Borneo Handbook No.2). They were all surcharged in London by Waterlow and sons (who had supplied the 1894 pictorial set) on the \$1 scarlet of the 1894 high value issue. There was a valid postal requirement for the 4c and 10c values due to the increase in July 1895 of the overseas postcard rate from 3c to 4c and the overseas letter rate from 8c to 10c, values that hadn't been included in the 1894 issue, but the only justification for the three higher values was to pre-pay higher weight overseas letters. Labuan, a small Island of the coast of Borneo had been administered by the North Borneo Company for the British Crown since 1886 but the policy of issuing separate stamps for Labuan was continued. As postal rates were unified there was a similar requirement for the provisionals in Labuan that was met by surcharging the same 1\$ stamp of North Borneo.

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Labuan Specimens in strips of 4 +1

Labuan Issued stamps, a variety and a cover

Labuan Cancellations and a forged postmark

Labuan provisional cancelled in Singapore and North Borneo

Commercial Usage of the Labuan 4c and 10c provisionals

Date of Issue: Probably late July 1895, the date of issue given by Gibbons of June 1895 is probably the date of release in London. A card from Sandakan (the capital & postal headquarters of North Borneo) addressed to L. B. Moens, a stamp dealer in Brussels dated and postmarked 27th July, 1895 includes the message "The stamps have not yet arrived, they will be forwarded as soon as they do. E.H.B." (Sarawak Journal 32, 182) It is therefore probable that the cover below was posted on the first day of issue or very soon afterwards.

31 July 1895 Registered cover to London franked with the complete set of the 1895 provisionals



RATE CHANGES

On the 1st June 1894 the overseas letter rate from Labuan and North Borneo to all U.P.U. Countries including the U.K. was increased from 8c to 10c per ½ oz. As there was no 10c stamp the current \$1 stamps of Labuan and North Borneo were surcharged '10 CENTS'. A 10 cent definitive stamp for either country was not issued until 1902.

Rate prior to June 1895: 29 January 1895 registered cover from North Borneo to the U.K.
 Franked at 22c for a 1 oz letter (8c per ½ oz plus 6c registration)



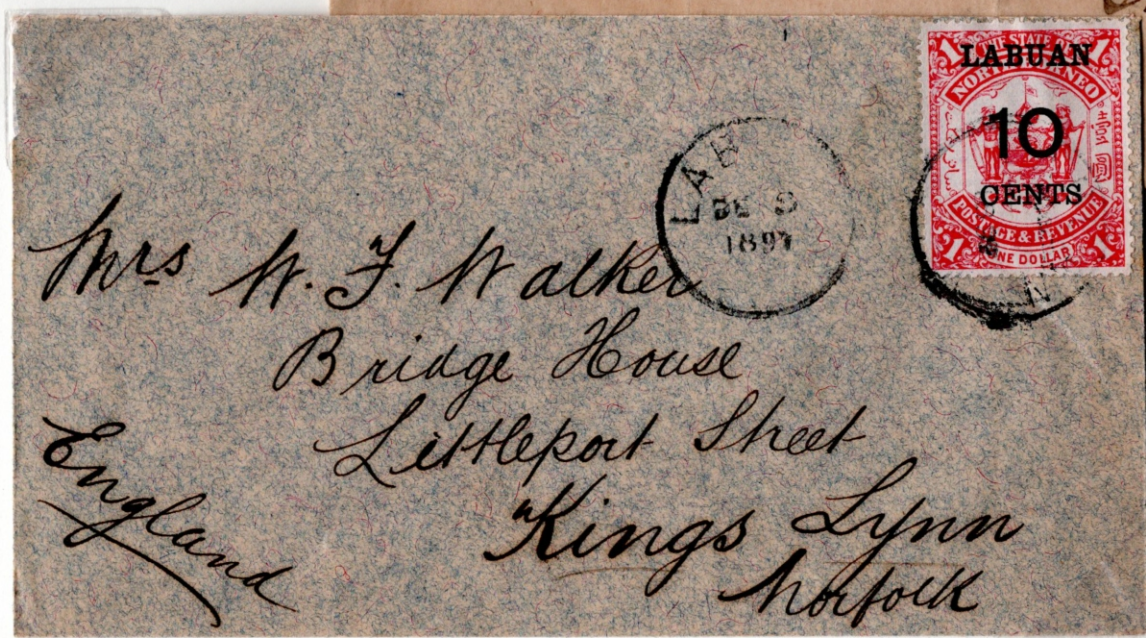
Rate from June 1895: 8 January 1897 registered cover from North Borneo to the U.K.
 Franked at 18c for a ½ oz letter (10c per ½ oz plus 8c registration)



RATE CHANGES

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Rate prior to June 1895: 19 July 1894, Registered cover to the U.K. Franked at 22c for a 10z letter (2x 8c U.P.U. letter rate plus 6c registration). Rate current from June 1894 to June 1895.



Rate from June 1895: 9 December 1897 single rate letter to Kings Lynn, Norfolk franked with the 10c value of the 1895 provisional

ESSAYS

A number of trial printings were made to decide the kind of type to be used for the surcharge and also which stamps to utilize. The 18c and 24c values of the 1894 Waterlow pictorials and the \$1 of the 1894 high value stamps printed by Blades East and Blades were used. Essays of the 4c and 10c surcharges are the only values recorded (Shipman 432-4). Because of their dark vignettes the pictorial stamps were deemed unsuitable and the \$1 stamp used.

18c value of the 1894 pictorial set surcharged '4 CENTS' or 'FOUR CENTS' in a variety of types

The top stamp has two overprints 'FOUR / CENTS' and 'FOUR CENTS'

*A double strip, i.e. block of ten, of the essay on the 18c identical to this one is known
(private communication, name withheld by request)*

The 18c of the 1894 pictorials



1895 4 cents on \$1

The issued '4 CENTS' provisionals were a composite of '4' from row 2 and the 'CENTS' from row 5

ESSAYS

On the the \$1 value of the 1894 high value. The setting is the similar across all four strips except for the bottom stamp of the left hand FOUR CENTS essay. Two other examples of these essays recorded by Shipman.

*Two rows of five of the \$1 surcharged
4 CENTS' or 'FOUR CENTS' in a variety of settings,
Only the bottom row of the two strips vary*

*Two rows of five of the \$1 surcharged
10 CENTS' or 'TEN CENTS' in a variety of settings,
Only the bottom row of the two strips vary*



Partial albino impression of the surcharge in
the right hand margin of the bottom stamp

THE SURCHARGE

In one operation on sheets of 50 of the 1894 \$1 stamp (transfer 'D' only), 3.5mm between the value and 'CENTS'.

*Half sheet of
25 of the 4
cents on \$1*



Reprint: *The 10c value only with a narrower (2.5 mm) spacing between the '10' and 'CENTS'*



Only found CTO
with either the North
Borneo oval of thin
bars or the Labuan
oval of thick bars



NORTH BORNEO SPECIMEN STAMPS

North Borneo as a member of the U.P.U. was obliged to send examples of all new issues to the U.P.U. head quarters in Berne. The 1891 U.P.U. Congress agreed that five copies of all new stamps would be distributed to member states. For distribution to the U.P.U. Waterlow additionally overprinted all five values of the provisionals 'SPECIMEN' (Samuel Type NB3) vertically reading upwards.

Specimen stamps in strips of five as distributed to U.P.U. members



NORTH BORNEO: ISSUED STAMPS AND VARIETIES

Five Values: Surcharged 4, 10, 20, 30 & 40 CENTS



Constant flaw: On lithographic plate of setting D of the \$1 value (position 11)



Handstaff of right hand
figure broken
(positions 11, 12 & 21, 22)



Double Overprints: Two recorded by Shipman (p 435) but only one is listed in Gibbons

Double surcharge, second
applied diagonally (B.P.A.
59, 193)

One sheet affected of which 27
stamps received the diagonal
overprint



Double surcharge both
horizontal, second displaced
vertically by 1mm
(status is unclear, possibly a
Fournier forgery)



Broken '0' in '20': Stamp plated as Transfer D position 22, recorded by Shipman (p 435) but not known if it is a constant flaw or caused by foreign matter adhering to the printing plate.



NORTH BORNEO PROVISIONALS: CANCELLATIONS

Town Cancels:

Sandakan c.d.s (Proud D3) is by far the most common



Dated: '31 JUL 1895' which is believed to be first day of issue in Sandakan



Kudat c.d.s. (Proud D2, 'A' omitted)



Singapore c.d.s: Applied to uncanceled mail arriving in Singapore,



Oval of thin bars: *Applied in London to pre-cancel stamps for sale to the stamp trade*



Forged Cancel: *Kudat 'A' c.d.s. dated 'AU 15 1899' are believed to be Fournier forgeries (S.G. Pt1)*



COMMERCIAL USAGE OF THE 4c AND 10c PROVISIONALS

The 1895 provisionals were the only 4c & 10c stamps available until the issue of the 4c and 10c definitives in 1900 & 1902 respectively, therefore are frequently found on covers during this period.

Cover franked with 2 x 10 cents for a letter up to 1 oz plus 2 x 4 cents for registration
 15 JAN 1896 registered cover to the well known dealer Paul Kiderlin, Germany; boxed registration cachet (Proud D2)
 Reverse: transits: 'Napoli 3 MR 96 and Ulm Bahnhof 5 III 96



Cover franked with 10 cents for a letter up to ½ oz
 3 JUL 1896 cover from Sandakan to Germany
 Hamburg arrival 12 / 7. 96

COMMERCIAL USAGE OF THE 10c AND 20c PROVISIONALS

Although the 4c and 10c provisionals are frequently found on North Borneo and Labuan mail from 1895 to the early 1900's commercial use of the 20c provisionals is seldom seen, I have never seen the 30c and 40c values commercially used.

Cover franked with provisionals totalling 50 cents for a foreign letter up to 2½ oz plus 8 cents of the 1894 issue for registration
15 APR 1896 registered cover from Sandakan, North Borneo to Holland, reverse 26 MAY 1896 arrival c.d.s.



LABUAN: SPECIMENS STAMPS

Labuan was administered by the North Borneo Company but continued to issue stamps. As postal rates were unified there was a requirement for the provisionals in Labuan that was met by Waterlow & Sons surcharging the same 1\$ stamp of North Borneo, but with the addition of 'LABUAN' to the 50 set forme so that it is printed over the inscription 'STATE OF NORTH BORNEO' on every stamp of the sheet.

Specimen Stamps: For distribution to the U.P.U. Waterlow additionally overprinted all five values of the provisionals 'SPECIMEN' (Samuel Type NB3) vertically reading upwards. Distributed in strips of five.

Strips of four plus one



LABUAN: ISSUED STAMPS

Issued Stamps: Five Values: Overprinted 'LABUAN' additionally surcharged 4 , 10 , 20, 30 or 40 CENTS all in one operation.



Constant variety on bottom left stamp: Broken staff to right hand figure (Row 2/1)



Variety: Imperf between bottom stamp and bottom margin. This does not appear to have been previously recorded for either the original 1894 \$1 or the North Borneo or Labuan provisionals.



LABUAN CANCELLATIONS

Up to 1941 there was only one post office, in Victoria the only town in Labuan, but two Labuan cancellations were in use during the period the provisionals were in normal use.

Proud D5: Date in two lines year in full, recorded in use until December 1897
Various dates between September 1895 to April 1897



Proud D7: Date in three lines, year last two digits only, recorded in use from January 1898 to July 1905

'27 SEP 00' Registered cover to Singapore franked with four copies of the 4c provisional to pay for a double weight (1oz) letter (4c per 1/2 oz) + registration (8c)
Registration cachets: Proud R2 (oval 'REGISTERED') and Proud R8 ('R' in oval)



Photocopy of
Proud D7



Forged Postmark: Dated '28 JUL 1910' a Double ring inscribed 'POST OFFICE / LABUAN'. Similar to Proud D11 but with larger lettering. Would have been very late usage of the provisional as Labuan was administered by the Straits Settlements from 1906 and used their stamps. (Ref: Proud Pg 279)

Photocopy of
genuine c.d.s.



LABUAN PROVISIONALS: CANCELLATIONS

Singapore Cancellations

As there is no Labuan cancellation probably indicates that the cover was posted on board ship and received the Singapore cancellation on entering the Singapore postal system.

Small letters, Proud D28 (1894-7)



Medium size letters, 'G' with short horizontal, Proud D30 (1894-7)



Large letters, 'G' with long horizontal, Proud D32 (1897-99)



North Borneo Cancellation

Labuan stamps were permitted to be used in North Borneo, but are seldom seen.

Small portion of a cancellation inscribed 'NORTH' presumably North Borneo and probably a fiscal cancellation



LABUAN: COMMERCIAL USAGE OF THE 4c AND 10c PROVISIONALS

Frequently found on covers of the period as they were the only 4c & 10c stamps available until the issue of the 4c and 10c definitives in 1900 & 1902 respectively.

AP 26 1896 cover from Labuan to London franked with a Labuan 10 cent provisional for a letter up to ½ oz
Reverse : flap printed 'H.M.S. PIQUE', London arrival 'MY 26 97'



OC 28 1897 cover from Labuan to London franked with a Labuan 10 cent provisional for a letter up to ½ oz plus 2 x 4 cents for registration
Registration cachets: Obverse, Labuan Proud R2 & R8; London 24 NO 97
Reverse, London SE 26 NO 97

