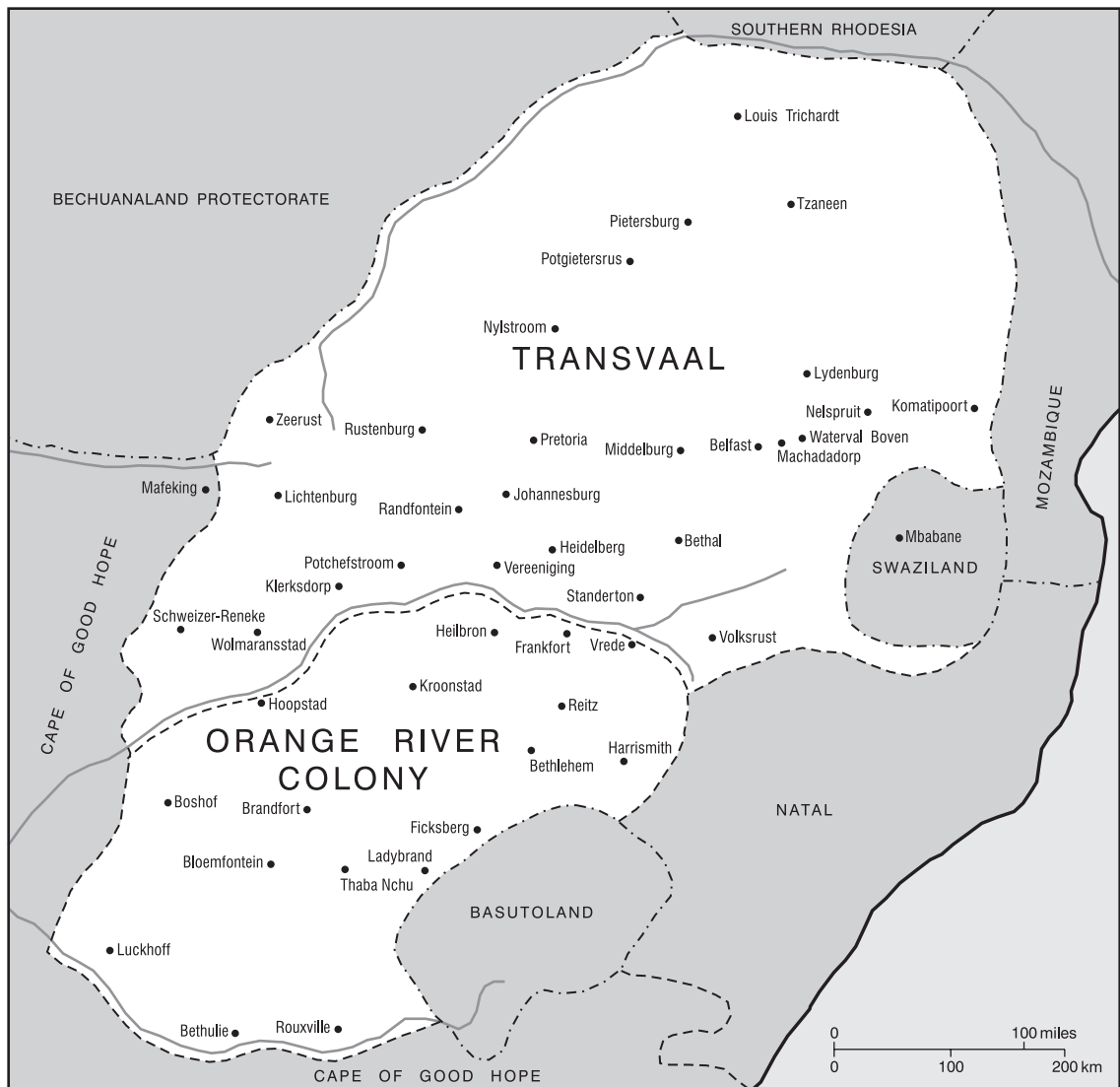


TRANSVAAL AND
ORANGE RIVER COLONY



The Orange River Colony and Transvaal.

20

Early Joint Development

Preamble

When the British forces occupied the Transvaal (previously called the South African Republic) and the Orange River Colony (previously called the Orange Free State), and set up civilian postal services, they resorted to the temporary measure of overprinting the stamps of the two former Republics with the letters V.R.I. There was, however, every intention to proceed with developing and printing appropriate stamps for each of the new colonies as soon as possible.

Adhesive Stamps

Although this was still prior to the Edwardian period, the story really begins with the plan for the issue of the new colonial stamps for the two new colonies. The earliest communication regarding the new stamps for these Colonies in the De La Rue Correspondence Book, is a letter from the Crown Agents dated 23 November 1900. This is titled 'Transvaal and Orange River Colonies Stamps' and reads:

We request you to furnish us, as soon as possible, with designs for Postage and Revenue Stamps for the above Colonies. The headings will be 'Transvaal' and 'Orange River Colony' and the words 'Postage and Revenue' should appear. The centre should be the Queen's Head, and we wish to adopt the system of doubly-fugitive centres and very wide borders and large duty tablets, like the new Fed. Malay States stamps, which give very good contrasts.

The probable duties will be ½d, 1d, 2½d, 6d, 1/-, 2/6, 5/- and 10/- for small stamps and £1, £5 and £10 large or Revenue size.

As it is probable that in each case the colours will be the same, it is very important that the designs should differ as much as possible. Possibly the adoption of a small size Queen's Head, at all events in the small stamps, might give scope for a greater diversity of design.

We should be glad to see alternative designs for both large and small stamps for each Colony – some with more than one duty tablet – in the case of the Transvaal possibly four could be introduced.

We request you to forward the designs at the earliest possible date, as we wish to settle the new stamps before the departure of the Secretary to the High

Commissioner who is leaving very shortly for South Africa. In order to do this we should have to receive the designs by the middle of next week.

Perhaps the suggestion for the four duty tablets for the Transvaal, while not making the same suggestion for the Orange River Colony, was due to the much shorter name to be accommodated on the stamps for the Transvaal.

De La Rue replied on 28 November 1900, enclosing design proposals and cost estimates. In all eight designs were enclosed, where the 'border contains the duty as in the case of the Federated Malay States'. These were:

- A & B, alternative Transvaal postage size stamps
- C & D, alternative Transvaal revenue size stamps
- E & F, alternative Orange River Colony postage size stamps
- G & H, alternative Orange River Colony revenue size stamps

De La Rue continued, explaining their long supply relationship with the former Orange Free State, and suggesting that the two Colonies may wish to consider having the ½d and 1d stamps of both Colonies 'printed in one operation from separate plates' to reduce costs. The proposed size of plates and costs of dies and plates was also given. They also explained that they had not had sufficient time to prepare any more design proposals, but pointed out that any of the four postage size designs would be suitable for stamps to be printed in one colour.

These original designs have not been seen, and were not in the De La Rue records. Presumably the designs would have been mounted on the typical De La Rue cards, usually measuring 89 mm wide and 104 mm high.

There is no record in the De La Rue Correspondence Books of photographic copies being made, however, that was what remained in the De La Rue Collection. These photographic copies show the head and shoulders of Queen Victoria based on the full length portrait by Angeli (Fig. 20.1). This had already been used on a number of colonial stamps, including India and Southern Nigeria. They are also mounted on similar De La Rue cards (89 mm by 104 mm), dated 28 November 1900 in manuscript, and numbered A to H, with a manuscript note that the 'Head' was in black, and the border in red for the Transvaal, and 'Head' in green and border in purple for the Orange River Colony (Fig. 20.1).



Fig. 20.1 Orange River Colony photographic design H from the De La Rue Collection.

There was quite a bit more correspondence. The Crown Agents asked for specimens on red paper printed in various inks, and expressed concern that the stamp proposal for the two new colonies were too similar. De La Rue then provided more proposals for the Orange River Colony stamps, and a ½d Southern Nigeria stamp printed in black on red paper to show the effect, and mounted it on an Appendix sheet. The Crown Agents, still not convinced, asked for the familiar Wyon Head showing the young Queen Victoria to be inserted on two of these designs. De La Rue then complied with this request.

However, all activity on the development of these stamps was halted on the death of Queen Victoria on 22 January 1901. (More details and illustrations of the Orange River Colony material appear in the third volume of *Stamps of the Orange Free State*.¹)

It is believed that the original designs were taken out to South Africa for Sir Alfred Milner, Governor of the two Colonies, to review, and they do not seem to have survived, while De La Rue kept the photographic copies for their records. The photographic designs of all the De La Rue proposals have survived, and were sold as part of the sale of the De La Rue material in the Robson Lowe auction in 1976.² The lot was described as follows:

A series of Queen Victoria photographic essays with the head as ½d Southern Nigeria imperf. colour trial black on red (included in the lot) each adhering to card (90 × 114 mm) dates 'Nov 28th 1900' and lettered A and B, different 1d values (both inscribed 'TRANSVAAL'), C and D different ½10 values, large design (both inscribed 'TRANSVAAL'), E and F different 1d values and G and H different ½10 values, all inscribed 'ORANGE RIVER COLONY', also K 1d value with head let into frame and two unlettered 1d values one with head similarly treated, on similar cards dated 'Dec 4th 1900', these last three inscribed 'ORANGE RIVER COLONY', all eleven with paper or colour (or both) details written on the card.

A few inaccuracies occur in the description. The card size is actually 89 × 104 mm. The card marked K is dated 28 November 1900, and not 4 December 1900. The Southern Nigeria colour trial is on a part Appendix sheet that is dated 4 December 1900. The other interesting point is that the letter K was also assigned to a proposed design for an embossed cheque stamp for the Orange River Colony which was submitted by De La Rue to the Crown Agents on the same day, 28 November 1900. (See section on Embossing Stamps later in this chapter).

Queen Victoria died on 22 January 1901, but that did not alter the need of the two new Colonies to introduce new Colonial stamps. As a further temporary arrangement, further stamps of the two former Boer Republics were now overprinted, but with the letters E.R.I., signifying the accession of King Edward VII to the British throne.

A few days after Queen Victoria's death, on 4 March 1901, the Crown Agents again wrote to De La Rue concerning the:

... previous correspondence on the subject of the new stamps for Transvaal and Orange River Colonies, we have to inform you that a telegram has been received by the Colonial Office from Sir Alfred Milner asking that steps may be taken to obtain designs for Stamps with the King's Head.

Some of the original designs were arranged with a view to providing the ½d and 1d stamps in one operation in order to save money, but Sir A. Milner in his telegram that he prefers to have Key plates for all denominations.

1 Buckley, G. D. and Marriott, W. B. *Stamps of the Orange Free State, Part III: Orange River Colony 1900–1913*, London: The Orange Free State Study Circle, 1976, pp. 74–79 and p. 86.

2 Robson Lowe auction catalogue, *Africa in Switzerland*, Basle 26–27 September 1976, lot 446.

This will enable the 1d stamps to be printed with black doubly-fugitive centres and red borders, but it would be as well to include in the new designs specimens of the half-penny stamps printed in whole green as well as in two colours, in order that the matter be thoroughly considered.

In the meantime we shall be glad if you will take any preliminary steps in your power and send up new designs as soon as the portrait of His Majesty has been decided on.

The letter also commented:

We would call your attention to the High Commissioner's remark about the engraving of the words 'Postage and Revenue' being indistinct – We hope this can be improved in the finished plate by making the letters clearer.

However, with the death of Queen Victoria, the entire British Empire was seeking to design and issue new stamps bearing the head of King Edward VII, and De La Rue had just gone through a process of designing new stamps for the Transvaal and the Orange River Colony, so, hoping to avoid yet another new design, they replied as follows:

We venture to suggest that you should telegraph out and ask to have the original hand-drawn designs returned, so that when the King settles which portrait is to be used, we may insert His Majesty's likeness in the designs. It is a very long job making these hand-drawings and the ones submitted could be back in time if they were telegraphed for.

It seems that none of the Orange River Colony designs were returned, as will be seen in Chapter 21, they were 'not admired'. Two, at least, of the Transvaal ones were, as one each of the large and small size were approved and returned for work to be commenced on preparing the duty plates so that they would be ready when the portrait of King Edward VII had been agreed upon.

However, not much happened for several more months, as it took quite some time for the King to approve an appropriate portrait to be used for the stamps of the British Empire.

Embossing Stamps

Along with the Crown Agents letter of 23 November 1900 regarding adhesive postage and revenue stamps was a separate letter of the same date, requesting an estimate for machinery to emboss with a 1d (or possibly higher) stamp, and requesting a specimen of a suitable stamp.

The Transvaal and the Orange River Colony were each to have their own design, and estimates were requested for both coloured as well plain embossing, and for hand and power presses. The Crown Agents also asked for a response as soon as possible (as the Secretary to the High Commissioner was leaving for South Africa soon), and advised that the estimate for the embossing equipment should only include the press, as 'driving, shafting and machinery would be provided in the Colonies'.

De La Rue, again along with the response regarding adhesive stamps, replied on 28 November 1900. With their letter they enclosed four proposed designs, these were:

- I Transvaal Colony Cheque Die (Fig. 20.2)
- J Transvaal Colony Embossing Die
- K Orange River Colony Cheque Die
- L Orange River Colony Embossing Die

The cheque die was a small embossing die for 1d value, and used only to pay the duty on cheques, while the embossing dies were larger and were intended to be used as an alternative to adhesive revenue stamps for all general revenue duties. De La Rue commented that should various duties of embossing dies be required, 'distinction is made by varying the shapes of the designs'. The cost of the plain and colour presses were the same, it was just that a different class of press would be required.

The cost of each die 'engraved with crown and pierced for plugs' was £7 10s, with date plugs being 10s extra for each. Presses for plain embossing were £18 each, while those for colour were £90 19s 5d each. The plain alternative was the one chosen by the Orange River Colony, and the colour alternative by the Transvaal. De La Rue also advised that 'steam embossing machines, such as we use in our factory for embossing envelopes', would be £285, and that Great Britain used date plugs, but that most of the colonies did not, as it was less costly. An example of an item embossed in colour was marked as Specimen A.

These designs formed part of the Transvaal and Orange River Colony lots in the Robson Lowe auction of 1976.³ These stamps did not depict the Monarch, so were not affected by the death of Queen Victoria. However, it was decided not to implement the use of these embossed stamps (other than the cheque stamps, although the Transvaal did later introduce embossed stamps of a different design). This decision may well have been influenced by the report from De La Rue on the advantages and disadvantages of using embossed stamps, which seemed to demonstrate the many disadvantages. (This report is reproduced in Chapter 8 on the Embossed Revenue Stamps of the Cape of Good Hope.)



Fig. 20.2 Cheque stamp design I from the De La Rue Collection.

³ Robson Lowe auction catalogue, *Africa in Switzerland*, Basle 26–27 September 1976, lots 1018, 1019, and part of lot 483.

