WHilst consulting the pages of the early English Philatelic publications, in order to see what light
they could throw upon the history of the stamps of the Cape of Good Hope, I was struck by the almost
total absence of information there is upon the postal issues of this Colony. Not one of the early writers
have, so far as I have been able to discover, ever published any paper, or given out to the Philatelic world
at large any facts they may have become acquainted with concerning these stamps: and, further, if we
consult the magazines of more recent years, we still find the same silence maintained with regard to their
history. It is true that in *The Philatelist*, Vol. IX, p. 35, “A Reference List” of the stamps may be found,
which was compiled by the Philatelic Society of London, in 1875, but the list can hardly be said to be
more than a plain catalogue of the various issues. I have been engaged for some months past collecting
materials for a paper on these stamps, and I venture to hope the new particulars I am enabled to lay before
you this evening may be found both interesting and instructive.

If we turn to the old “Reference List” of the Society I have drawn attention to, we find that the
date of the first issue is vaguely given as 1853 for the four values. Mons. Moens in the seventh edition of
his *Catalogue* puts January 3rd, 1853, for the one penny and four pence, and 1858 for the six pence and
one shilling. I am somewhat curious to know from whom Mons. Moens took his date for the two lowest
values, as he would, I feel sure, never venture to give such a precise date without some good authority for
so doing. The following notices extracted from *The Cape of Good Hope Government Gazette* for August
18th, 1853, proves his informant was certainly not to be relied upon, for we read: –

PROCLAMATION

*By His Excellency Lieut.-General Hon’ble Sir George Cathcart, Knight Commander of the Military
Order of the Bath, &c., &c., &c.*

WHEREAS, by the 8th Section of Ordinance No. 1, 1846, entitled “Ordinance for the Regulation
of the Post Office and Postage,” it is enacted that it should be lawful for the Governor of the Colony to
provide *Stamps*, to be affixed to letters, and to announce by Proclamation by whom, and at what places
such stamps should be receivable, in lieu of postage, at the several Post Offices within this Colony, –
Now therefore, I do thereby PROCLAIM, DECLARE and MAKE KNOWN the several matters
following, that is to say: –

1st, That certain stamps, of the value of 4d each, and certain other stamps of the value of 1d each,
have been provided by Government for the use and convenience of the Public.
2nd, That upon and from the 1st of SEPTEMBER NEXT, all persons desirous of purchasing any of the said stamps will be able to obtain the same from the Postmaster-General in Cape Town, and from the several Postmasters throughout the Colony.

3rd, That upon and from the said 1st of September, every letter, not exceeding half an ounce, which shall have affixed thereto one such stamp of the value of 4d., and if exceeding half an ounce, then so many such stamps as shall together amount to the postage which would by the said Ordinance require to be prepaid in money, in case no stamps were used, shall (provided none of the stamps so affixed shall have been used before) pass by the post free of postage.

4th, That upon and from the said 1st of September, newspapers, having affixed thereto, or to the cover thereof, a stamp of 1d., for each newspaper, will (provided none of the stamps so affixed shall have been used before) pass by the post free of postage.

5th, That persons licensed in any part of the Colony to keep retail shops, and who purchase for sale in such shops any of the stamps aforesaid, will be allowed a reduction of discount 2½ per cent upon all purchases to the amount of £1 sterling, or upwards.

(Signed) G. CATHCART,
Governor

(Countersigned) R. SOUTHEY,
Acting Secretary to Government.

The following Post Office Notice also appeared in the same number of The Gazette as the above Proclamation:

General Post Office, Cape Town,
17th August, 1853.

NOTICE is hereby given that the undermentioned parties have consented, and are authorised, to vend Postage Stamps from and after the 1st of September next, when the system of paying postage by means of such stamps will be introduced.

It will be necessary that these persons should make application to this office for such supply of the Stamps they may require, not less than 20s, upon which an allowance of 2½ per cent will be made to them.

Any other persons holding licenses for Retail Shops in Cape Town, who may be disposed to become vendors of Stamps, are requested to signify their wish in that regard to this office.

(Signed) J.A. Le SUEUR,
Postmaster-General.
At the foot of the notice there is a long list of names and addresses of tradesmen from whom stamps could be obtained.

The first of the notices gives September 1st, 1853, as the correct date of the first issue, which we learn consisted of two values only, one penny and four pence. The former stamp would be used for newspapers, while the latter prepaid a half ounce letter transmitted within the Colony.

The next notice, taken from The Gazette for February 19th, 1858, proves the date of issue of the six pence and one shilling values.

The Public are hereby informed that a supply of Six Penny and One Shilling Postage Stamps has been received, and are now procurable at the General Post Office.

(Signed)  
J.A. LE SUEUR,  
Postmaster-General.

General Post Office, Cape Town,  
18th February, 1858.

The six penny stamp prepaid the half ounce letter rate to Great Britain, while the one shilling value was employed to defray the higher postal rates to foreign countries. The half ounce rate to Great Britain was raised on April 1st, 1863, to one shilling by packet, and lowered to four pence for letters sent by private ships.

The first four values of postage stamps used in the Colony were printed by Messrs. Perkins Bacon & Co., and the design is, in my opinion, one of the most beautiful of their many striking productions. The original die, which had the value of one penny upon it, and from which the dies for the three other values were afterwards manufactured, was engraved by Mr. W. Humphreys, an artist employed by Messrs. Perkins Bacon & Co., for several of the early colonial stamps printed by their firm.

The plates from which the stamps were printed were steel, and each contained 240 specimens, in fifteen horizontal rows of 16 stamps, which were arranged in eight squares. All four plates were handed over to the Agents for Crown Colonies on January 28th, 1862, and Messrs. De la Rue & Co., have since held the contract for printing the Cape stamps.

Proofs in black upon white card struck from the dies, are known of all four values, and I possess proofs, also in black, of the one penny and one shilling, which were taken from the plates. Mr. Alfred Bacon, the secretary of Messrs. Perkins Bacon & Co., Limited, has been good enough to make me out a detailed list of all the Cape of Good Hope stamps printed by the Company, which shows the dates the various consignments were despatched from London. A copy of this interesting list will be found given as an appendix to the present paper.
On 15th September, 1860, a local delivery of letters was established in Cape Town, and the half ounce letter rate for that town was fixed at one penny. The Proclamation instituting these postal facilities appeared in The Gazette for 4th September, 1860, and the following is a copy of that document.

PROCLAMATION

By HIS EXCELLENCY SIR GEORGE GREY, Knight Commander of the Most Honourable Order of the Bath, &c., &c., &c. WHEREAS, by the 7th section of the Ordinance No. 1, bearing date the 7th day of January, 1846, the Governor is empowered to establish offices for posting and delivering letters within the limits of any town in this colony, as such limits shall be by him for that purpose fixed, and to fix the rate of postage to be charged and paid for such town delivery: I do hereby proclaim and make known, that, in pursuance of the power and authority so vested in me, I appoint the General Post Office in Cape Town to be a receiving and delivering office for and within the limits of the Cape Town Municipality, and do establish the Pillar Letter Boxes erected in the localities hereunder mentioned, as places for the posting and receipt of letters within the same limits, namely: –

1st. Near Castle Bridge.
2nd. At the corner of Long and Bloem Streets.
3rd. At the corner of Strand and Bree Streets.
4th. In Orange Street, at the top of the Government Gardens.

And further, that I do fix the rate of postage chargeable and payable upon all letters, &c., posted within the said limits, and intended for delivery therein, as follows, namely: –

On every letter not exceeding half an ounce, one penny.

On every letter exceeding half an ounce, and not exceeding one ounce, two pence.

On every letter exceeding one ounce, an additional sum of two pence for every ounce or fraction of an ounce.

The prepayment of such postage to be compulsory and effected by stamps affixed or impressed on such letters.

The Cape Town Penny Post deliveries will be three in each day. Sundays excepted, namely: –

The first to commence at 9¼ a.m

The second to commence at 1½ p.m., and

The third to commence at 3½ p.m.
Letters posted at Cape Town Pillar Boxes up to 9 o’clock in the morning, will be included in the first delivery; those posted up to 1 p.m. will be included in the second delivery; and those posted up to 3 p.m. of the third.

And lastly, I do hereby fix and appoint the fifteenth day of September next, as the day from and on which this Proclamation shall come into operation and have effect.

(Signed) GEORGE GREY,
Governor.

(Countersigned) WM. DE SMIDT,
Under-Colonial Secretary.

In the number of The Gazette for 23rd April, 1861, a similar Proclamation to the above appeared, establishing a Local Post for the town of Port Elizabeth, at the same reduced rates as those previously instituted for Cape Town. Mr. A. Wilmot was postmaster of Port Elizabeth at the time this local Penny Post came into operation there on the 1st May, 1861.

A one penny rate for half ounce letters came into force, between a few towns in the vicinity of Cape Town, on 1st February, 1864, and this rate was gradually extended to other towns at a more remote distance. It was not, however, until as recently as 1st January, 1889, almost fifty years later than Great Britain, that the penny rate became uniform over the whole of the Colony.