

WESTERN AUSTRALIA'S LAKE LEFROY GOLDFIELD 6d STAMP, 1897

Ronald Sudbury describes the cycle service in his "Stamp Collecting for the Cyclist", 1981, as follows:-

"Organised by F.E. Maskell and H.L. Hillier, between Lake Lefroy and Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie, between February and June 1897.

"A six pence red on green stamp showing the famous black swan was issued in April 1897, but the service was suppressed when a Government Mail Coach was provided. Although about 1000 copies of the stamp were produced only a small number is known to exist."

A letter written by Frederic E Maskell on 14 February 1898 from Palace Hotel, Kalgoorlie, to an unknown recipient; auctioned by Christie's in Geneva on 26 April 1979, described the service.

"I have much pleasure in acknowledging your letter of Dec 30th '97. The Lake Lefroy Cycle Service after a career of about 4 months from Feb to June 1897 has ceased to run since the latter date; there is now a Govt. subsidised mail-coach running bi-weekly to Red Hill the new township and centre of the district. In February last year there was a big alluvial "rush" to the place & in company with Mr H. L. Hillier, I started the cycle service between the rush and Coolgardie 45 miles distant, we made a charge of 6d per letter each way for posting and collecting these at the Coolgardie Poste Restante, and in April we had these stamps printed. We did not care to wait to send over to the other colonies for an elegantly engraved stamp, but we were able to have the present stamps printed in Coolgardie by the photo-zinco process at the "Miner & Pioneer" printing office, & I think considering the youth of the town, that they are creditable.



Fig. 1 ABOVE Mint copy

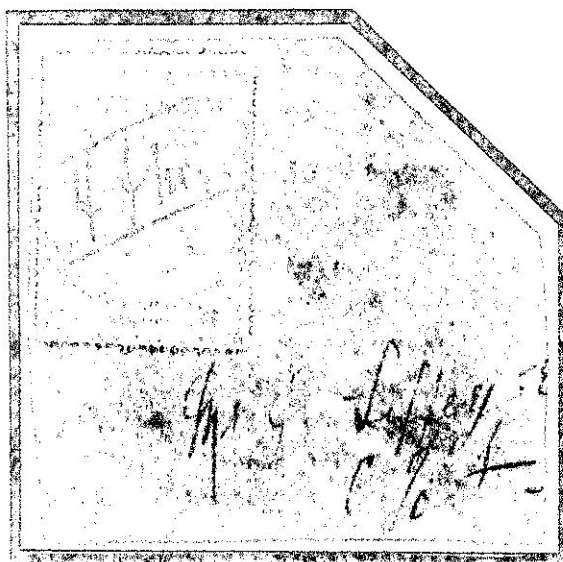


Fig. 2 RIGHT Used copy on piece cancelled H & M in red

"We had just 1,000 printed by special agreement & we took care that no others were obtained; one block only was made from which all the stamps were printed & the block then defaced by a line across it & handed over to us, so that we are confident that the limited quantity of stamps will enhance their value. We only had the stamps in use thro' the post for 1 month when we were stopped by the Postmaster General

who regarded them as an infringement of the Govt monopoly; still from the end of April until June we used them for local letters only. Our usual obliteration was by signing the initials of the firm across it so (i.e. the initials "H & M" for Hillier and Maskell - with a line above and a line below and "Coolgardie" under the letters) but we also got a number stamped with the ordinary date-stamp, tho' the W.A. govt. never recognised these stamps at all of course.



Fig. 3
Copy of tête bêche pair

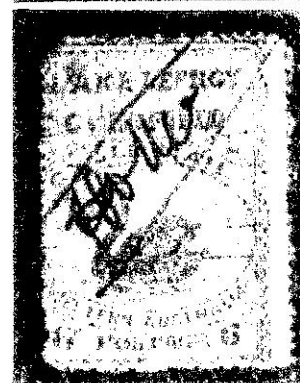
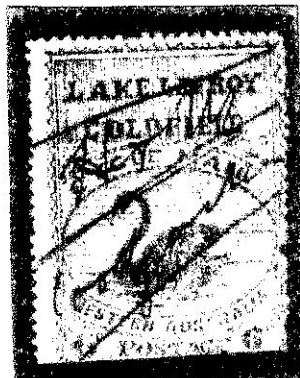
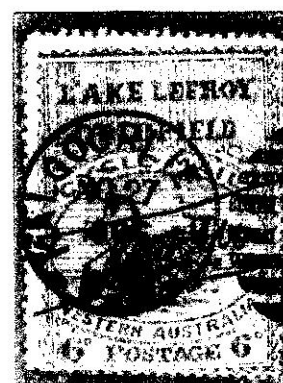


Fig. 4
c'd H & W Coolgardie
Fig. 5
c'd H & W in black



Figs. 6 & 7
circ h/s Coolgardie
May 11 97 WA
H&M + h/s Kalgoorly
No 27 1896, by favour?

"We have a few hundred of the unused stamps still left over which we sell at 2/6d each now, as you ask for 10/- worth I enclose 4 unused, and I hope you will accept as a present 2 of the used ones which I also enclose. We do not sell the latter under 5/-d each but as you might not have expected them to be as much I wd rather make you a present of them. We should be very pleased to receive a copy of your article in the philatelic journal if you wd be so kind as to send us one. I do not know of any other very authentic issue of cycle postage stamps but there were some stamps used as frank stamps I believe for cycle messages at one time. I believe a set of 4 or 5 can be obtained for 17/6d.

I remain
Yours truly "

Yrs truly.
Frederic E. Maskell. Address, P.O. Kalgoorly

Fig 8. Copy of F E Maskell's signature

The letter was one of 4 Lake Lefroy Cycle Mail items included in the sale of John Gartner of Melbourne's Gold medal collection of Western Australia on 26 April 1979, by Christie's/Robson Lowe at the Hotel Richemond Geneva.

1. The letter was estimated at 300 Swiss Francs and sold for 850 Swiss Francs.
2. The only known tête bêche pair of Lake Lefroy stamps was estimated at 3,250 Swiss Francs and sold for 5400 Swiss Francs, which was the equivalent of £1687 at the time.
The pair of stamps was sold subsequently by the Australian stamp dealer, Glen Stephens, to a Californian collector for \$A5,000 in late 1985. (Fig.2)
3. An unused Lake Lefroy stamp was estimated at 350 Swiss Francs and sold for 450 Swiss Francs.
4. A used Lake Lefroy stamp with the manuscript initials H & M was estimated at 175 Swiss Francs and sold for 2,100 Swiss Francs.

In January 1943 an article by Sir John Wilson, Bt., appeared in the London Philatelist under the heading "The Lake Lefroy Stamp".

"Some time ago Mr H W Edmunds showed me a Lake Lefroy Gold Field Cycle Mail stamp on part of cover and some documents which belonged to a friend of his, and through his introduction I met the owner, Mr J R Hoade, who had acquired the piece and documents from his mother-in-law, and he kindly permitted me to purchase them for the Royal Collection.

"The existing knowledge of the Lake Lefroy stamps is printed in two paragraphs in the *Australian Philatelist*, Vol IV of 1897 and 1898; it is curious that these paragraphs are not detailed specifically in the index, and it is a wonderful tribute to the late Sir Edward Bacon's thoroughness that in spite of this they appear in his list of articles on Western Australia which appeared in the *Journal of the Philatelic Literature Society*.

"The first paragraph of December 24, 1897, is as follows:

'Another Westralian Local. We have seen a large stamp issued by the proprietors of the Lake Lefroy CYCLE MAIL. The words 'Lake Lefroy Goldfield' on a lined ground occupy the upper portion of the design. Below this is a swan in an oval frame, inscribed 'Cycle Mail' above and 'Western Australia' below. At the base of the design is the word 'Postage' with '6d.' in each of the lower angles. A scalloped frame surrounds the whole design, which is very roughly executed, and apparently lithographed. The stamp is printed in red on green wove paper, perf. 12**

'This is doubtless issued by another of the 'pioneer posts', which serve outlying mining settlements not reached by the Government mails. Its fate will probably be similar to that of the Coolgardie Cycle and Camel Express, which had to cease operations as soon as regular mail communication was established.'"

"The second is in the issue of April 25, 1898, and reads:

'Lake Lefroy Cycle Mail. Whilst upon the stool of repentance we have another apology to make. This time it is Mr J F Hambly, who kindly wrote under date February 25th (just to late for the February number, but in ample time for the March issue):

**"In a recent number you spoke of a West Australian local cycle mail established at Lake Lefroy. Under date of February 14th, Mr Frederic E Maskell writes me

'The mail service is not now in existence. We were running from February to June, 1897, since which date there has been a Government service. We had only one issue of stamps, consisting of 1,000, after which the block was defaced'. You may think this of sufficient interest to insert in the shape of a paragraph.'

"It is curious that after so many years further information should come to light from documents belonging to the other partner in the concern, and I print these documents as an appendix to these notes just as they are.

"The Lake Lefroy stamp is in my experience very rare, and although I had a specimen in my collection of its brother the Coolgardie Cycle Mail (1/- value), on a portion of a cover, used with the Western Australia 2d grey stamp, I do not recollect having before seen the Lake Lefroy used with a specimen of a Western Australian stamp on piece. It is clear from the letters, however, that there might be, if they have not all been destroyed, quite a quantity of these stamps in unused condition (remainders), which could eventually turn up.

"Strangely enough, our Hon. Secretary, Mr Gilbert-Lodge was in the goldfields at the time this stamp was in use and kept a used specimen. A good many years ago, Mr Gilbert-Lodge gave me this stamp, and it is in my private collection of local posts."

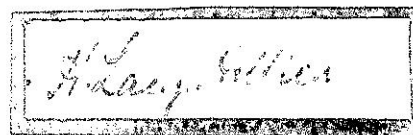
Then followed the wording on a postcard by Albert Green, Registration Branch, Kalgoorlie. Dated 15 September 1898 sent to H Lacy Hillier (Maskell's co-partner) at Niagara, W.A., Green acknowledged receipt of a letter from Hillier and a copy of *Stamp Collectors' Fortnightly*, from England, with details of the Lake Lefroy stamp previously recorded in the *Australian Philatelist*. Green said the details of the stamp would appear in his journal and in Bright & Sons's catalogue, (but this did not happen).

On the following page of the January 1943 *London Philatelist* there was an undated short account of the Lake Lefroy Goldfield cycle mail stamp by the surviving proprietor H Lacy-Hillier.

"This stamp was designed by "H & M" at the end of 1896. A Zinco block was made and 1,000 stamps printed off in sets of four, dark pink on green paper. Immediately after printing this thousand the Z block was most effectively obliterated by cutting with a knife a deep line across from corner to corner making it quite impossible for others to be printed off without showing a line in the printing. These stamps were used in connection with the Cycle Mail service from Lake Lefroy to Coolgardie and several hundred passed through the post, being affixed to letters in the right hand bottom corner, the Govt. stamp being in the usual place. The face value of these stamps was 6d. Sometime after they had been in use the Chief Postmaster Mr Scholl, Perth, W.A. early in 1897 wrote a letter to the proprietors of the "Mail" pointing out that they were infringing the Postal regulations by issuing a private stamp, his attention having been drawn to the fact, also informing us that we must desist or a penalty would be enforced for the offence. I regret to state that I am not in possession of this letter. Soon after this, a notice warning people not to affix these private stamps to their letters in future was posted up conspicuously at every Post Office on the W.A. Goldfields, having the effect of well advertising our stamps, with the result that fancy prices were offered for specimens 2/6d to 7/6d being obtained, however we held onto the remainder. I must mention that 50 stamps were given to a man named Albert

Green employed at the Kalgoorly P.O. in consideration of his getting our stamps placed in the London Catalogue, although he assured us that had been done, we found out that it was not the case. The Postmaster Coolgardie Mrs Thompson handed us several letters he had received, asking him to procure for the writers specimens of our stamp. Of the two of us who ran the Lake Lefroy Cycle Mail F Maskell died early in 1900, what became of the few hundred stamps & the defaced zinco-block he had in his possession I cannot say. H Lacy-Hillier"

Fig. 9. Copy of signature on a handwritten version of the letter from Norman Williams' papers.



A copy of a letter from C A Philippotts of Ealing, Middlesex, dated 17 Sept. 1898 was also reprinted. Mr Philippotts requested 2 unused specimens of the Lake Lefroy stamp and enclosed a Postal note for 3/-d to cover the cost of the stamps and postage.

In December 1989, members of the Cinderella Stamp Club gave a joint display at the Royal Philatelic Society London. Two exhibitors each displayed an example of the Lake Lefroy Cycle Mail 6d stamp of 1897. Both stated that only 1,000 stamps had been printed but only "about 20" examples were recorded as existing. Patrick Pearson, President of the Royal Philatelic Society London, suggested when commenting on the display, that a census of existing examples might be compiled to establish more accurately the number still existing.

Norman Williams, Editor *The Cinderella Philatelist*, took up Patrick Pearson's suggestion and shortly afterwards wrote to the editors of many philatelic magazines requesting photocopies of any known Lake Lefroy stamp in members' collections and in auction catalogues.

Mr Williams received a few replies, including one from Brian Pope, Editor of *Black Swan* in Western Australia. Brian Pope was already compiling a "Lake Lefroy Stamp Register" and sent 2 sample pages with photocopies of mint stamps and used items. In April 1993 Norman Williams wrote to Brian Pope, citing a heavy legal workload in addition to his regular Cinderella writings for not responding earlier. He was able to report only one item for sale at Christie's New York on 7 May 1993.

Geoff Kellow of Victoria, Australia also responded in February 1990 saying he had attempted a census of the Lake Lefroy stamp 18 months earlier. He had worked entirely from magazines and auction catalogues and sent Norman Williams full details of the 30 Lake Lefroy stamps he had found. Most of the stamps were illustrated. The purpose of his study was to plate the stamps. He had assumed that the stamp was printed from a block of 4 zincos. Working from 3 stamps with a proportion of the adjoining stamp at right or left he found that the gutter spacing was different in every case. Geoff Kellow considered that this was impossible if a block of 4 zincos was used. Therefore each stamp must have been printed singly, direct from the die (a zinco) by 'print and turn' thus creating the tête bêche pairs in sheets of 4. Norman Williams replied on 1 March 1990, accepting that only a single line block was used in production of the stamps, "For a print as few as 1,00 it would have been too costly to make a block of four".

The Western Australia Study Group published Monograph No 5 "A Guide to the Goldfields Locals" by Max Reynolds and Brian Pope on the occasion of the Gold Centenary Stamp Show at Freemantle 22-26 September 1993. The Lake Lefroy

Register forms part of the Monograph. It had been started in *Black Swan* December 1988 and many individuals, members and dealers had provided photocopies and information. New information was included in subsequent issues of *Black Swan* and all the photocopies were consolidated and brought up to date in the Monograph. The number of items recorded was 1 tête bêche pair, 32 mint items and 28 used items. The authors admitted that there were some gaps and invited details of any new specimens and better illustrations of known copies. A copy of the monograph is in the Library of the Royal Philatelic Society London, 41 Devonshire Place London W1 6JY

The address shown at the time was
Western Australia Study Group, PO Box 423, Claremont, Western Australia 6010.

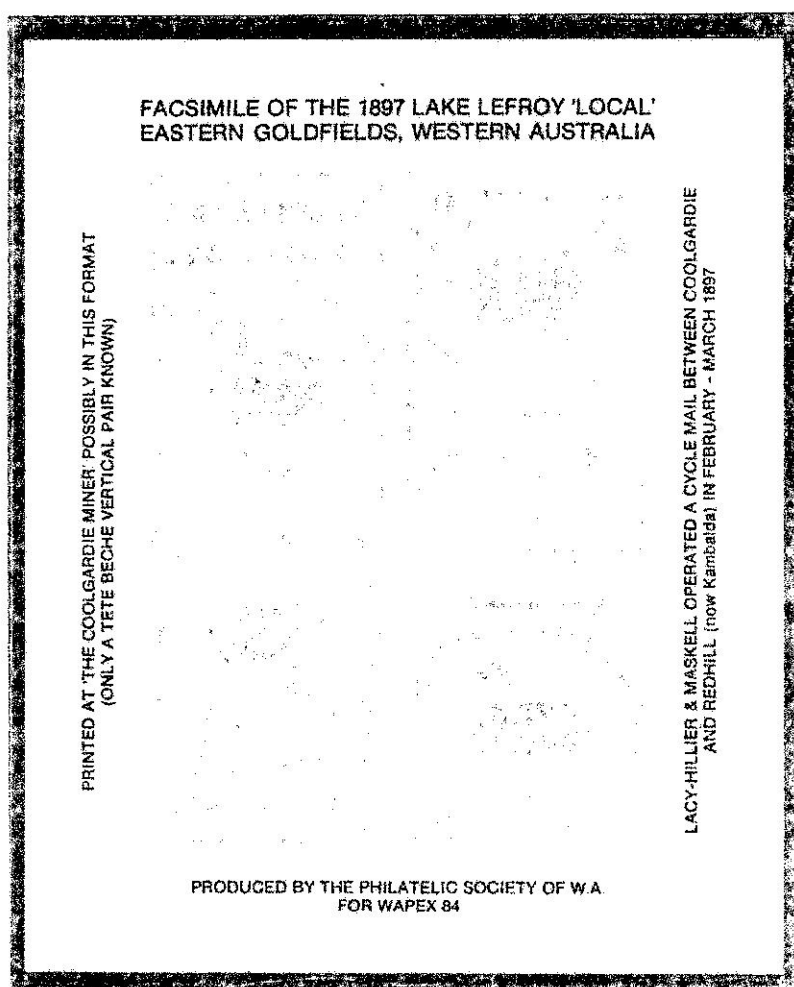


Fig 10

The Philatelic Society of Western Australia produced a facsimile of a block of 4 Lake Lefroy stamps for the exhibition WAPEX 84. At the back of the sheet, behind each stamp, the words "FACSIMILE 1984" appear. (fig. 10.)

Ralph Ashetton of Kalgoorlie produced a reproduction of the Lake Lefroy stamp in sheets of 36 (6X6) on white unwatermarked gummed paper, perf 11. for the Gold Centenary Stamp Show at Freemantle 22-26 September 1993. (fig. 11.)



Fig. 11

Brian Sole September 2014