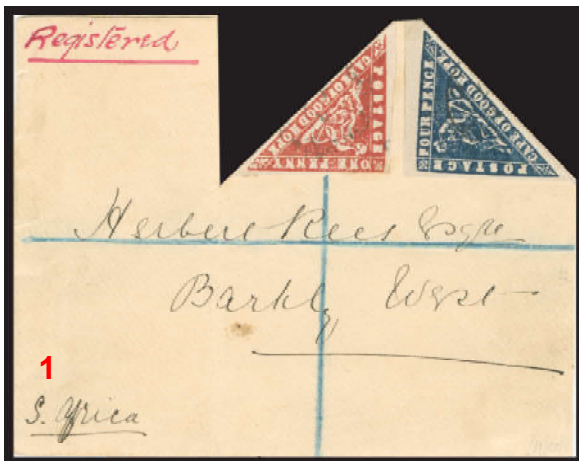
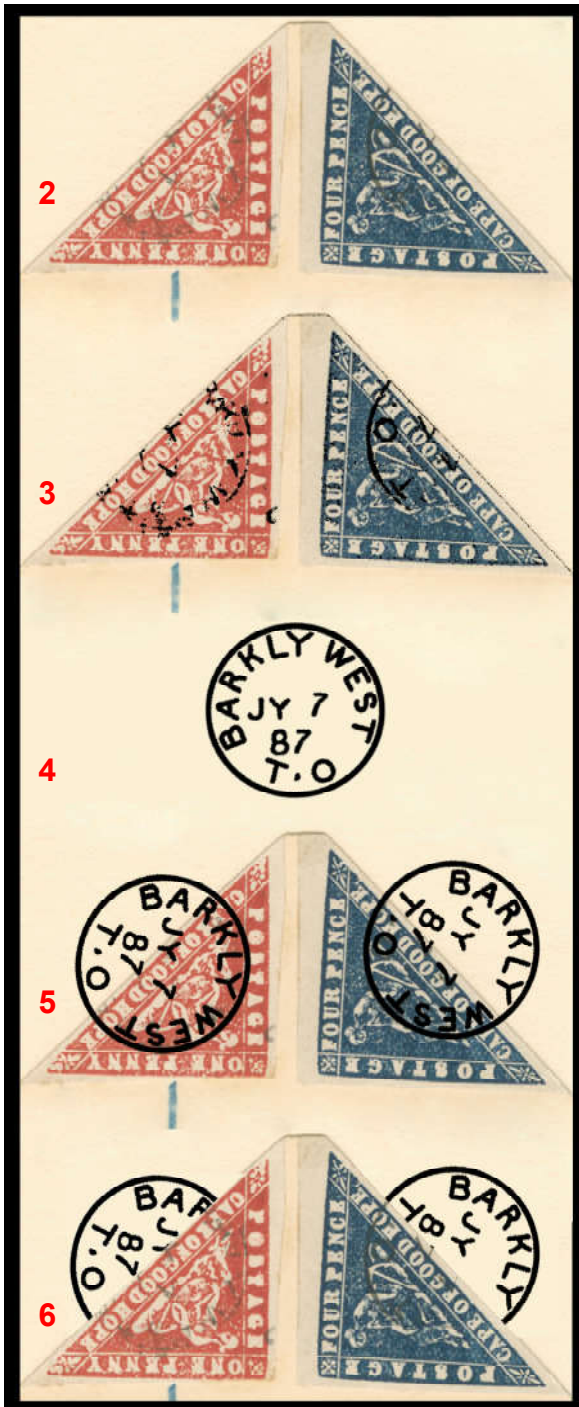


Postal Use of the 1883 Reprint



1887. Registered Cover to BARKLY WEST 'JY 7 87'.
1d and 4d 1883 reprints affixed. (One of each removed.)



When I purchased this cover the display page on which it was mounted stated that some reprints “*did postage duty but the badly tied examples on this cover have false cancellations though the stamps are genuine*”. That statement is wrong. The stamps and the postmarks are genuine. The postmarks are poor examples of the Barkly West T.O (Telegraph Office) datestamp.

The Question is: ‘*Why would someone send a Registered letter from Barkly West to Barkly West?*’

Known as 'Klipdrift' before 1873/74, Barkly became the centre of the Vaal River 'Diamond Fields' diggings once diamonds were discovered. It was renamed Barkly West in 1881 to avoid confusion with a town of the same name in the Eastern Cape. Officials connected with the Vaal River diamond digging industry were based in Barkly West. Herbert Rees (1866 - 1942), the cover's addressee, spent over 30 years in the District, serving as J.P. (Justice of the Peace), the Inspector of Native Locations (May 1886 to May 1889) and Inspector of Claims on the Vaal Diggings until appointed Commissioner of Mines in Klerksdorp, Transvaal, in 1916. In all these positions Rees would have received Registered letters pertaining to local legal matters.

This cover looks a questionable Registered letter. However, writing ‘Registered’ in manuscript was necessary in post offices without a REGISTERED handstamp in 1887. The 10d rate included 4d registration and 6d postage (the latter at 4d per half ounce or part thereof made it 2d overpaid, the price of adding two pairs for possible philatelic purposes). The reprints were affixed after the blue crayon Registered cross was made, a reversal of the typical process. Was the Registered letter posted uncanceled at a digging along the Vaal and sent to Barkly West where it was cancelled on arrival with its T. O datestamp? Did someone in Barkly West send this Registered letter believing that it provided some form of ‘proof of delivery’ to Rees? Is it a spurious attempt to create postally used 1883 reprints for philatelic purposes?

- 1]. Reduced original cover, presumably originally carrying 10d postage in two block pairs of 1883 1d and 4d reprints.
- 2]. The stamps at full size showing faint, obscure postmarks.
- 3]. The postmarks with black colour dropped into their pixels to enhance the detail. The 1d red shows an ‘R’, ‘K’ ‘Y’ ‘W’, and an ‘E’. (The ‘W’ shows it is Barkly West, not East.) In the 4d blue we can see the ‘T’ of ‘WEST’ and ‘O’ of ‘T. O’.
- 4]. Putzel’s No. 3 - the BARKLY WEST T.O datestamp.
- 5]. Putzel’s No. 3 - BARKLY WEST T.O datestamp overlaying the postmark to show that it fits. (The month could also be May but there appears to be not enough space for an ‘M’).
- 6]. How the postmark would have looked if it had been a better strike and the cover not vandalised by a stamp collector!

I hope that I have made a case for this cover’s 1883 reprints being cancelled by the BARKLY WEST T. O datestamp, Putzel’s No. 3, which is recorded used there at least between 1883 and 1895. Covers bearing postally used 1883 reprints are rare. Despite its obvious imperfections and hints of impropriety and philatelic use, this 1883 reprint cover is remarkable.