

Christ Church Library, Carroll Collection

Digitised image notes and captions by Edward Wakeling

Carroll-2-Postage-stamp case

Introductory notes:

The first mention of the *Wonderland Postage Stamp-Case* was in Dodgson's diary for 29 October 1888 when he wrote:

Invented a "stamp-case," which I got Louisa to make for me. I hope to get it published. (It was published July 2, 1890).

Louisa was Dodgson's sister. As Dodgson's appended note indicates, the stamp-case was published in 1890 by Messrs. Emberlin and Son, 4 Magdalen Street, Oxford, and was accompanied by a booklet entitled *Eight or Nine Words about Letter-Writing*. There is evidence that it was manufactured in March 1890. A sample stamp-case exists with Dodgson's manuscript addition "cut as pattern. Ap. 19 /90 C.L.D." (Lindseth). His entry for 2 July 1890 says:

Sent Emberlin, in order to begin sale of the *Wonderland Stamp-Cases*, 75 of them, with 150 *Wise Words*, and 950 envelopes.

Printed on the stamp-case's back cover, it states clearly that this was invented by Lewis Carroll in 1889, although Dodgson's diary entry given above contradicts this date. Dodgson used the colour printer, Edmund Evans, to print the covers for the stamp-cases. Presentation copies are known dated March 1890, but these are the first issue. The final published examples date from 8 June 1890 when he gave a presentation copy to his sister, Louisa. A letter from Dodgson to Evans concerning the front illustration of the stamp-case for the second issue says: "Sir, At last I have received samples cut to pattern from the new die - they seem to me to be exact" (Lindseth). Dodgson wished to add a transformation to the cover - the outside cover shows a coloured picture from Tenniel's illustration of Alice holding the Duchess's baby. When the postage stamp-case is withdrawn from its outer case, the baby turns into the pig. There is a similar transformation on the back cover - the outside cover shows the Cheshire Cat. When the postage stamp-case is withdrawn from its outer case, only the grin of the Cheshire Cat remains.

In a sense, this was an early form of merchandising to advertise *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. Dodgson was an entrepreneur when it came to marketing. For *Through the Looking-Glass* he used a biscuit-tin illustrated with images from the book.

For further details, see:

The Lewis Carroll Handbook revised by Denis Crutch (Dawson, 1979), pp. 170-173

Carroll-2_001_stamp case_cover:

The Christ Church copy, probably the second issue, has an outer protective case in black cloth which is not standard with other *Wonderland Postage Stamp-Cases*, and was probably custom-made. There are stitched pockets for 12 stamps ranging from $\frac{1}{2}d.$ to 1s. Two of the pockets are for the same amount - 1d. - mainly because this was the standard price for a letter. (12d. is equivalent to 1s. in pre-decimal money). Stamps for all these pockets were available from the Victorian Post Office. The *Wonderland Postage Stamp-Case* came with a printed envelope - this appears to be missing from the Christ Church copy.

Carroll-2_002_stamp case_front:

This shows the transformation of baby to pig. The outer case is backed onto linen, giving it extra strength.

Carroll-2_003_stamp case_back:

This shows the transformation of cat to grin.