

**THE BARRED OVAL NUMERAL CANCELLERS  
OF THE  
CAPE OF GOOD HOPE  
FROM 1863 – 1963**  
**Second Edition**

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## Introduction

So far no official list ascribing specific post offices to Numeral Cancellers of the Cape of Good Hope has been located. Thus the information that follows has been derived from proving covers, proving pieces and occasionally from individual stamps and/or blocks of stamps, by innumerable philatelists over many years.

The number of recorded dates for each numeral is solely the responsibility of the author from his records, and is given more to emphasize the accuracy of the ascribing of specific numerals to individual post offices, and also to emphasize the potential scarcity or otherwise of a specific BONC, than for any other reasons. Where a specific numeral has been ascribed more than once to the same post office, it can be assumed that the ascription is probably correct.

The first edition of this monograph incorporated all the accumulated data of the author on this subject up to 31 December 2016. This edition encompasses the data known to the author as at 31 July 2020.

Thus the total number of recorded dates in the First Edition was 3,330 – in this edition 5,507, an increase of 65%.

## Distribution of the BONCs

As at 31 December 2019, the breakdown and accumulated knowledge of the probable nine distinct BONC distributions is as follows:

Earliest Prominent Usage	BONCs	Total	Identified Post Offices		CGH + Other Territories		Total Unidentified	
			No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Year								
1864	1-39	30	39	100	0	0	0	0
1874	40-200	161	99	62	49	30	13	8
1877	201-400	200	162	81	34	17	4	2
1882	401-600	200	144	72	49	25	7	3
1884	601-800	200	131	66	61	30	8	4
1892	801-1000	200	117	59	66	33	17	8
1896	1001-1200	200	81	41	73	36	46	23
1901	1201-1400	200	44	22	54	27	102	51
1906	1401-2001	27	6	22	7	26	14	52
Totals		1427	823	57.5	393	27.5	211	15

This at end 2016, 55% of numerals had been allocated to post offices; now three years later 57.5%. So in the 3 years a further 36 BONCs have been allocated to post offices (including the elusive BONC 33 – the other elusive BONC 8 in the first allocation of 39, had been traced in 2015).

BONCs 1, 2 and 3 appear for the first time in 1864. BONC 1 of Cape Town has been reported once as used on 8 Feb 1863, but this may well have been a trial canceller used by the post office to test whether numeral cancellers were what they desired to replace the ageing Barred Triangular Obliterators (BTOs). The latter had been taken into the postal service when the Cape Triangular Stamps had been introduced in 1853. The BTOs had arrived at the Cape in 1837 to process fiscal documents, and in 1853 were transferred from the treasury to the Post Office.

There are a few anomalies to the above “Earliest Prominent Usage” timelines that require further elucidation. For example BONC 184 has been recorded used in 1870; BONC 965 in 1872; BONC 202 in 1874; BONC 530 in 1876; BONC 1338 in 1889; BONC 1112 in 1890; and BONC 1241 in 1896.

But other than these seven seeming exceptions, the above “Distribution of the BONCs” seems to be a fairly accurate representation.

It appears that after BONCs 1, 2, and 3 were issued to the three populous towns in the colony (namely Cape Town, Port Elizabeth and Grahamstown in the 1863/4 period) that further distribution of the BONCs was entirely at random from the BONC canceller stocks on hand, as and when it was deemed necessary to supply a numeral canceller to a post office. No noticeable pattern as to size of town or magisterial district can be gleaned. It is not even clear whether the BONCs were issued chronologically from lowest number to highest in the approximate 200 that were issued approximately every four years after 1874.

One BONC being used at two or more different post offices at the same time, probably indicates the movement of a postal official from one post office to another; in the process taking the cancelling instruments with him.

No attempt to edit the work of other philatelists has been made. Their reported findings have been recorded in this monograph and the author’s data bank. A few improbabilities may possibly have been caused by indistinct cancels, difficult to decipher accurately.

This monograph also enumerates the CGH BONCs that have been reported to have been used in territories other than the CGH. These encompass Basutoland, Bechuanaland, British Central Africa (Nyasaland, now Malawi), British South Africa Company (Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe), Orange River Colony, Swaziland, Transvaal, and Portuguese East Africa and Tanganyika. In total these amount to about 210 reports that could be allocated to numerals.

Occasionally BONCS appear to have been used as receiving cancellers at a post office, although they were supposed to be used only as dispatching cancellers. Even more rarely they appear to have been used as in transit cancellers. In both these cases it may have been that the dispatching post office failed to use an obliterator on a cover’s stamp.

#### Diameters of the Bars of the Cancellers

Previously only thick bars (about 2mm in diameter) and thin bars (0.25mm in diameter or considerably less) have been recognised. However, a study of bar diameters reveals a medium bar (about 1mm in diameter) is more prevalent than previously thought, especially in BONCs whose numbers exceed 1000, and therefore from 1896 onwards. Medium diameter bars also appear in earlier numerals, but only sporadically after BONCs 1, 2, 3, & 4, where a strike of BONC 2 with medium bars has been recorded as early as 13 March 1871.

#### Duplex Cancellers

In a Duplex Canceller, the BONC and the single circle town identifying cancel, are joined together to form one cancelling instrument. Only three Duplex Cancellers are known, two used in Cape Town with Numeral 1, and one used in Port Elizabeth with numeral 2. The earliest and latest dates of usage and configuration are recorded in the attached tables.

### Format of date

The earliest and latest dates are written according to the British system; day-month-year. The earliest date is in 1863; the latest 1963. A full century of usage!!

### Bibliography

1. Frescura F. and Nethersole M.J. (1991). The Postal Cancellers of the Cape of Good Hope.
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4. Jurgens A.A. (1943). The Handstruck Letter Stamps of the Cape of Good Hope from 1792-1853 and the postmarks from 1853-1910.
5. Putzel R.F. (1992 et seq.) The Postmarks of South Africa and Former States and Colonies. Vols. 1 – 10 (Vols. 8, 9 and 10 with Alex T. Visser).
6. Frescura F. (2015). The Cape Post Office Date Stamp. Patterns of Usage 1853-1910.
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8. Putzel R.F. (1986 et seq.) The Encyclopaedia of South African Post Offices and Postal Agencies Vols. 1 to 4.
9. [www.postmarks.co.za](http://www.postmarks.co.za)
10. Frescura F. (2018). Postal Cancellers of the Cape 1853-1910.

Typology of the Barred Oval Numeral Cancellers (BONCs) of the Cape of Good Hope (CGH)  
as Classified by Frescura and Updated for this Monograph

Typology	Basic Bar Diameter	Alternative Bar Diameter	Specifics
2-3-2	Thick		
2-5-2	Thick		
3-3-3	Thick	Medium	
3-4-3	Thick		
3-5-3	Thick	Medium	
4-4-4	Thick	Medium	
4-5-4	Thick	Medium	Two formats: Solid or Broken Bars
4-5-4	Thick	Medium	Serif Flat, Numeral Reversed
4-5-4	Thick	Medium	Serif Sloping, Numeral Reversed
4-6-4	Thick	Medium	
3.4 + 4.3	Thick + Thin		
2-5-2	Thick		Horizontal Format
3-3-3	Thick		Horizontal Format
4-4-4	Thin		
4-5-4	Thin		
4-5-4	Thin		Serif Flat, Numeral Reversed
4-6-4	Thin		
5-6-5	Thin	Medium	
6-6-6	Thin		
6-7-6	Thin		
5-6-5	Thin	Medium	Bars Broken
6-6-6	Thin		Bars Broken
7-7-7	Thin		Bars Broken
3-3-3	Thick		Duplex Canceller
6-6-6	Thin		Duplex Canceller, Bars Broken

Original Source: Frescura F. (2018) Postal Cancellers of the Cape 1853-1910.

Updated Mordant (2020)

Note: Bars solid, unless annotated as broken.

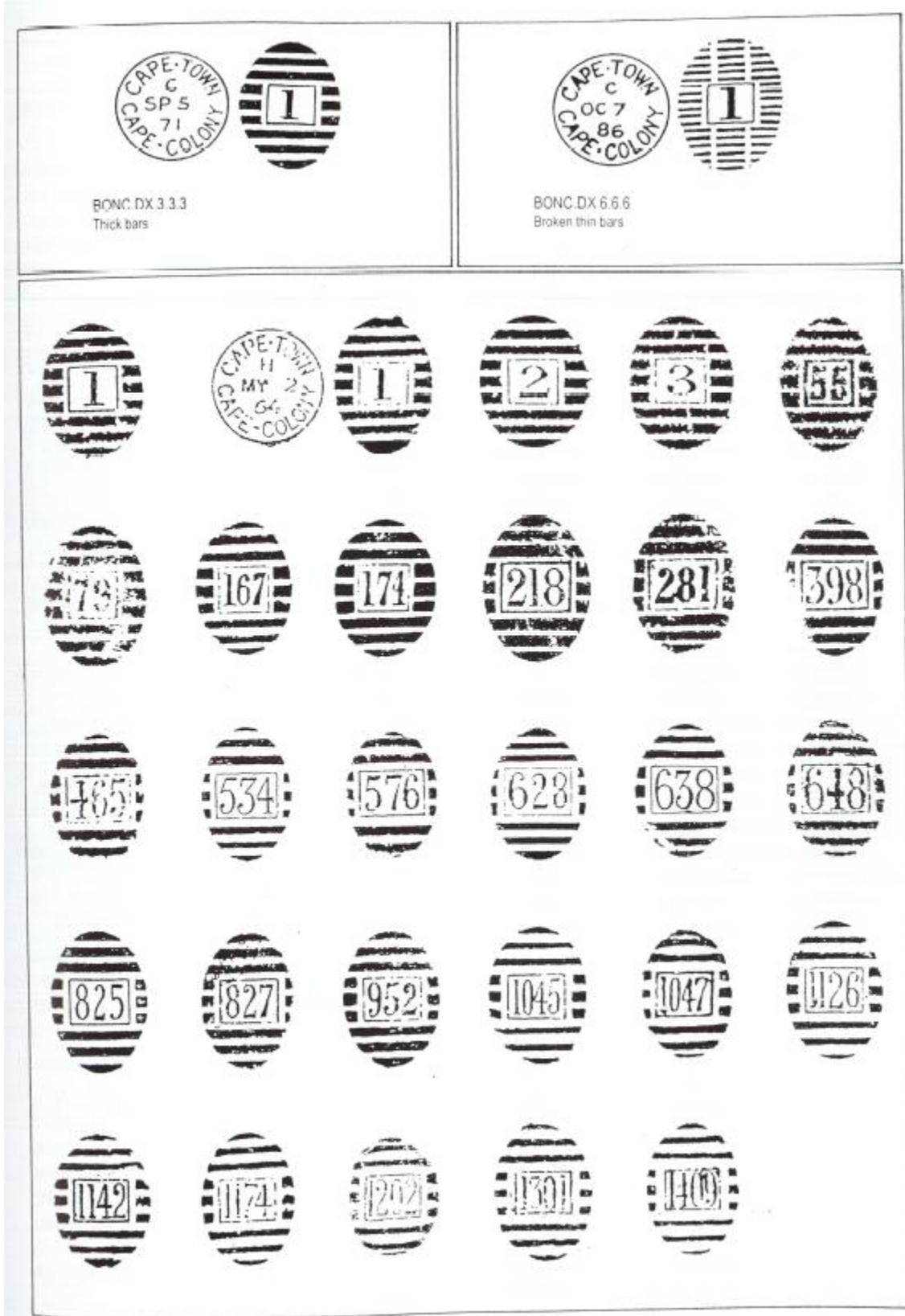
Average diameter of bars:  
 Thick 2mm  
 Medium 1mm  
 Thin 0.5mm or less

The Typology of the BONCs of the Cape of Good Hope

BONC 2.3.2 Thick bars	BONC 2.5.2 Thick bars	BONC 3.3.3 Thick bars	BONC.N 3.3.3 Thick bars Boxing line removed Used in Natal only	BONC 3.4.3 Thick bars
BONC 3.5.3 Thick bars	BONC 4.4.4 Medium bars	BONC 4.5.4 Medium bars	BONC 4.5.4 Medium bars Flat serif Number reversed	BONC 4.5.4 Medium bars Sloping serif Number reversed
BONC 4.6.4 Medium bars	BONC 3.4+4.3 Alternate thin and thick side bars	BONC 2.5.2 Thick bars Horizontal format	BONC 3.3.3 Thick bars Flat serif Horizontal format	BONC 4.4.4 Thin bars
BONC 4.5.4 Thin bars Flat serif	BONC 4.5.4 Thin bars Flat serif Number reversed	BONC 4.6.4 Thin bars	BONC 5.6.5 Thin bars Flat serif	BONC 6.6.6 Thin bars Sloping serif
BONC 6.7.6 Thin bars Flat serif Needs confirmation	BONC 5.6.5 Broken thin bars	BONC 6.6.6 Broken thin bars	BONC 7.7.7 Broken thin bars Needs confirmation	

PLEASE NOTE : THESE ILLUSTRATIONS HAVE BEEN REDUCED IN SIZE.

The Typology of the Duplex Cancellers of the Cape of Good Hope



Abbreviations Commonly Used in Texts of the  
Barred Oval Numeral Cancellers of the Cape of Good Hope

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JA	January	JY	July
FE	February	AU	August
MR	March	SP	September
AP	April	OC	October
MY	May	NO	November
JU	June	DE	December
mm.	Millimetres	AKA	Also known as
CGH	Cape of Good Hope	BSAC	British South Africa Company
PE	Port Elizabeth	BCA	British Central Africa
BB	British Bechuanaland	PO	Post Office
BP	Bechuanaland Protectorate	KE7	King Edward VII
NPB	Newspaper Branch	TVL	Transvaal
OFS	Orange Free State	ORC	Orange River Colony
R.O.	Rail Office	H.O.	Head Office
BONC	Barred Oval Numeral Canceller		

## THE 20 TYPOLOGIES AND TYPES OF BONC 1 OF CAPE TOWN

TYPOLOGY	DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTICS		EARLIEST DATE	PHILATELIST	LATEST DATE	PHILATELIST	RECORDED DATES
	BARS	OTHER					
GENERIC	VARIOUS	UNCLASSIFIED TYPOLOGIES	8-Feb-63	FRESCURA	20-Jan-01	FRANK	9
<u>THICK BARS (DIAMETER 2mm)</u>							
3.3.3	THICK SOLID		8-Feb-63	FRESCURA	20-Jan-01	FRANK	86
3.3.3	THICK SOLID	DUPLEX CANCELLER	18-Jun-64	SEEBA	30-Nov-72	MORDANT	34
3.3.3	THICK SOLID	HORIZONTAL ; NEWSPAPER BRANCH		FRESCURA			
3.5.3	THICK SOLID		8-Oct-77	MORDANT	2-Jun-81	MORDANT	6
4.5.4	THICK SOLID	HORIZONTAL SERIF	4-Aug-76	FRESCURA	31-Mar-86	FRESCURA	2
2.3.2	THICK SOLID		28-Jan-92	MORDANT			1
<u>MEDIUM BARS (DIAMETER 1mm)</u>							
4.5.4	MEDIUM BROKEN		14-Jul-76	MORDANT	28-Jan-82	MORDANT	19
4.5.4	MEDIUM SOLID		12-Oct-78	MORDANT			1
4.5.4	MEDIUM SOLID	NUMERAL REVERSED; SERIF SLOPING	13-Feb-83	FRESCURA			1
4.5.4	MEDIUM SOLID	NUMERAL REVERSED; SERIF HORIZONTAL	21-Jun-97	JOHNSON			1
5.6.5	MEDIUM BROKEN		12-Jun-73	FRESCURA	8-Oct-79	MORDANT	11
<u>THICK &amp; THIN BARS (2 + 0.5mm)</u>							
3.4 + 4.3	THICK + THIN SOLID		22-Sep-65	MORDANT	19-May-68	MORDANT	2
<u>THIN BARS (DIAMETER 0.5 mm)</u>							
5.5.5	THIN SOLID		8-Sep-79	MORDANT			1
5.6.5	THIN SOLID		16-Aug-73	FRESCURA	22-Oct-78	FRESCURA	13
6.6.6	THIN SOLID		15-Jun-71	MORDANT	22-Nov-81	FRESCURA	15
6.6.6	THIN BROKEN	DUPLEX CANCELLER	28-Dec-72	FRESCURA	07-Oct-86	FRESCURA	62
6.6.6	THIN BROKEN		19-Feb-73	MORDANT	6-Aug-92	DIESVELD	15
6.7.6	THIN SOLID		12-Dec-77	MURRAY	14-Jul-79	MORDANT	2
7.7.7	THIN SOLID		9-Mar-77	MORDANT	22-May-77	MORDANT	2
7.7.7	THIN BROKEN		29-Jan-78	MORDANT	6-May-81	MORDANT	4

THE 16 TYPOLOGIES AND TYPES OF BONC 2 OF PORT ELIZABETH

TYPOLOGY	DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTICS		EARLIEST DATE	PHILATELIST	LATEST DATE	PHILATELIST	RECORDED DATES
	BARS	OTHER					
GENERIC	VARIOUS	UNCLASSIFIED TYPOLOGIES	2-Aug-64	SEEBA	30-May-01	MURRAY	4
<b><u>THICK BARS (DIAMETER 2mm)</u></b>							
3.3.3	THICK SOLID	FLAT FOOT TO 2	2-Aug-64	SEEBA	9-Aug-76	MORDANT	39
3.3.3	THICK SOLID	DUPLEX CONCELLER	3-Aug-64	FRESCURA	15-Aug-64	MAXWELL JOSEPH	2
3.4.3	THICK SOLID		30-May-01	FRESCURA			1
3.5.3	THICK SOLID	GENERIC	17-Apr-73	MORDANT	13-Jun-97	MORDANT	8
3.5.3	THICK SOLID	WAVY FOOT TO 2	17-Apr-73	MORDANT	1-Oct-81	SOTHEBY'S	3
3.5.3	THICK SOLID	FLAT FOOT TO 2	12-May-90	MORDANT	13-Jun-97	MORDANT	2
<b><u>MEDIUM BARS (DIAMETER 1mm)</u></b>							
4.4.4	MEDIUM SOLID	WAVY FOOT TO 2	4-Dec-73	JOHNSON	7-Jun-78	MORDANT	4
4.4.4	MEDIUM SOLID	FLAT FOOT TO 2	18-Aug-75	COMBRINK			1
4.5.4	MEDIUM SOLID	GENERIC	13-Mar-71	FRESCURA	30-May-01	MURRAY	12
4.5.4	MEDIUM SOLID	WAVY FOOT TO 2	13-Mar-71	AAB	30-May-01	MURRAY	14
4.5.4	MEDIUM SOLID	FLAT FOOT TO 2	5-Apr-78	MORDANT	1-Sep-93	JOHNSON	10
4.6.4	MEDIUM SOLID	WAVY FOOT TO 2	9-Feb-74	FRESCURA	12-Apr-94	MURRAY	12
4.6.4	MEDIUM SOLID	FLAT FOOT TO 2	4-Aug-75	FRESCURA	18-Oct-90	HUTTERER	5
5.6.5	MEDIUM SOLID	WAVY FOOT TO 2	21-Apr-74	MORDANT	29-Dec-74	MORDANT	2
<b><u>THICK &amp; THIN BARS (2+0.5 mm)</u></b>							
3.4 + 4.3	THICK + THIN SOLID		16-May-68	MORDANT			1
						TOTAL	120











































Numerical	Post Office	Division	Earliest Date	Philatelist	Latest Date	Philatelist	Typology	Specifics	Recorded Dates
1418	ORANGE RIVER COLONY			SEEBA			3.3.3		
1420	CGH			LEEFLANG			3.3.3		
1501	DINGLE	VRYBURG		COMBRINK				SEE 1301, 1509	
1502									
1503	KROONSTAD	ORANGE RIVER COLONY	Jan-06	REISENER					1
1509	DINGLE	VRYBURG		SA PHILATELIST, FEB 1965				SEE 1301, 1501	
1540	CGH			MORDANT			2.3.2		
1601	CGH			FRESCURA			3.3.3		
1625	CGH			BULBRING					
2001	CGH			MORDANT			3.3.3		
2001	BECHUANALAND PROTECTORATE			HOLMES			3.3.3		