

The 1940 CAUTION Labels

by Stephen F Prest

Introduction

The first two articles in this series described the 1932 and 1938 CAUTION Labels that were affixed to compulsorily registered letters ^(1, 2). By 1940, a revised form of these CAUTION Labels was introduced by the Post Office. This article describes the salient features of the 1940 CAUTION Label which, as this writing, has an Earliest Known Use date of 27 June 1940.

The 1940 Caution Labels

The 1940 CAUTION Labels continued to feature the Post Office Form designator “ [Mail 6. ” in the upper right hand corner of these labels. Four possible Form designator text type combinations have been previously identified as follows:

1 - [Mail 6.

1a - [Mail 6

1b - Mail 6.

1c - Mail 6

Examples of the 1940 CAUTION Labels have been identified with Type 1 and Type 1a Form designators, that is, with the bracket with and without the full stop. To date, we have been able to examine six examples of the 1940 Labels, of which four exhibit the Type 1 Form designator while the other two feature the Type 1a designator.

The 1940 CAUTION Label illustrated overleaf shows the currently Earliest Known Use of these labels, being postmarked 27 JE 40 within in Nelson. The sender had failed to indicate a delivery address on the front, so the Postal Clerk would have likely opened the envelope to determine if a delivery or return address could be identified which, in turn, led to the discovery that the letter contained a £10 banknote. A message “Posted without address” in manuscript was written on the front and a 1940 CAUTION Label was duly affixed on the reverse with the annotations indicating the envelope contained a £10 banknote.

The 1940 CAUTION Label is characterized two single sentence paragraphs printed over eight lines in total. The message is brief and to the point – stating that the Post Office requires letters containing valuable items to be registered. Important dimensional characteristics of the 1940 Label are shown below.



While the letter, if forwarded, would have been subject to Compulsory Registration, it appears this did not actually take place as the letter has two Nelson “UNCLAIMED” date stamps, the required cross in blue pencil is absent and there is no evidence of the additional 8d. in postage to cover double the 4d. registration fee that would be due.



Earliest Known Use of the 1940 CAUTION Label (Type 1 – Bracket and Full Stop) affixed to an Unclaimed letter containing a £10 banknote - Postmarked 27 JE 40 within Nelson

The Earliest and Latest Known Use dates of the two types of 1940 CAUTION Labels are tabulated below.

<u>Earliest Known Use of the 1940 CAUTION “Mail 6” Labels</u>		
	Postmark	Route
Type 1 (Bracket & Full Stop)	27 June 1940	Within Nelson
Type 1a (Bracket & no Full Stop)	12 Aug 1952	Masterton to Hamilton
<u>Latest Known Use of the 1940 CAUTION “Mail 6” Labels</u>		
Type 1 (Bracket & Full Stop)	6 Jan 1966	Bluff to Brisbane, Australia
Type 1a (Bracket & no Full Stop)	22 Mar 1954	Cambridge to Pakaranga

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References:

- (1) S.F. Prest “The 1932 CAUTION Labels, CAPTAIN COOK, Newsletter of the Christchurch (NZ) Philatelic Society, Whole Number 776, Vol 44, No 7 (Aug 2016) pp 96-98
- (2) S.F. Prest, “The 1938 CAUTION Labels”, *ibid*, Whole No. 777, Vol 44, No 8 (Sept 2016) pp 109-110