

KGVI Period Inland Short-paid Registered Mail - Part 1

Inland Letter charged Single Deficiency Registration Fee

by Stephen F Prest and Patrick J Skinner

In recent months we have acquired two interesting Inland covers that the Post Office determined were subject to postage due charges in transit. At first glance, both covers fall into the “philatelic enigma” category. Our first thought on seeing them was “what do we have here?” Our second thought was, well this is obviously in the “too hard” category to solve up front but, as both covers were date stamped in the 1936 – 54 King George VI period, we had better just acquire the items and do some research as time permits.

The cover illustrated in Figure 1 depicts an Inland letter mailed in Nelson 6 March 1949 for delivery to Morrison, Spratt and Taylor, Solicitors in Wellington. The cover also has a pair of 2d 1939 New Zealand postage due stamps affixed tied with a Wellington – Registered date stamp 8 March 1949 cancel. The Wellington – Registered date stamp also appears on the reverse side of the cover.



*Figure 1. Inland Letter mailed from Nelson 6 March 1949
charged 4d. in Postage Due on processing in Wellington 8 March 1949*

This item was described at the March meeting of the Society in Auckland and reported by our Editor in the Society Notes column of the April Edition of the *Mail Coach* ⁽¹⁾. Further notes regarding this letter are provided below.

First, some background. A few years back Stephen had occasion to spend a few hours in the Christchurch Philatelic Society Library and was pleasantly surprised to discover a copy of the “Rules and Regulations” handbook published for the “Guidance of Officers” by the New Zealand Post & Telegraph Department ⁽²⁾. This book, published in 1922, was the complete handbook covering Departmental operating procedures in place at the time and remained so until replaced by the updated “Rules and Regulations” published in 1953. Changes to the 1922 Edition were introduced over its 31 year life span and references to these changes can be found periodically in the Post and Telegraph Official Circulars.

Coming back to the Nelson letter, Rules 557 (a.), (b.) & (c.) describes in great detail the procedures for handling the contents of incoming registered-letter mail bags. The Post Office staff in Wellington would have opened the bag received from Nelson and determined that the letter above was not recorded on the registered-letter list or letter-bill enclosed in the sack. In the case of such a discrepancy, the matter would be reported to the Postmaster or his appointed deputy for further action.

This is where Rule 551 (b.), referred to in April's Society Notes and which reads as follows, comes in.

551. (b.) Every article received in a registered-letter bag or packet must be treated as a registered letter, the absence of an indication of its having been registered or its non-entry on the list not exempting it from this treatment.

Clearly the letter was placed in the registered-letter bag in error by Nelson postal authorities but, rules being rules, this letter must be treated as a registered letter. The amount of deficient postage was determined as 4d., i.e. the prevailing registration fee in 1949. This single deficiency charge was determined in accordance with Rule 546 which reads as follows:

546. Registered articles posted in New Zealand are not liable to be surcharged on account of deficient postage, the officers who receive them from the senders being responsible for seeing that the proper amount of postage and the fees are prepaid. If any such registered article is observed in transit to be short-paid, the necessary additional postage is to be affixed and the Chief Postmaster informed in order that he may collect the deficiency from the dispatching Postmaster or officer at fault.

At the end of the day, supported no doubt by considerable paperwork up and down the Post Office chains of command, a Nelson Post Office employee's pay envelope was presumably docked 4d, to cover the costs for having placed a regular Inland letter in an outbound registered-letter bag. No doubt the rules as to how the paperwork dealing with these matters are also well described in the 1922 "Rules and Regulations" but that has to be left as a story for another day.

The next article in this series will look at a case where a registered inland letter was irregularly posted. Initially this example was also in the "too hard" category but the 1922 "Rules and Regulations" revealed just how this letter was processed by the Post Office.

References:

- (1) "Society Notes, March meeting - Auckland", The Mail Coach, Vol. 51 No. 4, Whole No. 396 (April 2015) p. 122
- (2) "Rules and Regulations for the Guidance of Officers (General and Postal), by the New Zealand Post and Telegraph Department, Publisher, the Government Printer, 1922

Footnote: The authors have assembled various references to the rules and regulations pertaining to Registered-Letter mail in a summary document for future reference. This document can be made available to members of the Society by contacting the authors either by email at stephen.prest@gmail.com locating it via the Topics & Research / Registered Mail links on the New Zealand King George VI website at www.kgvi.co.nz or through the kind auspices of our Editor.