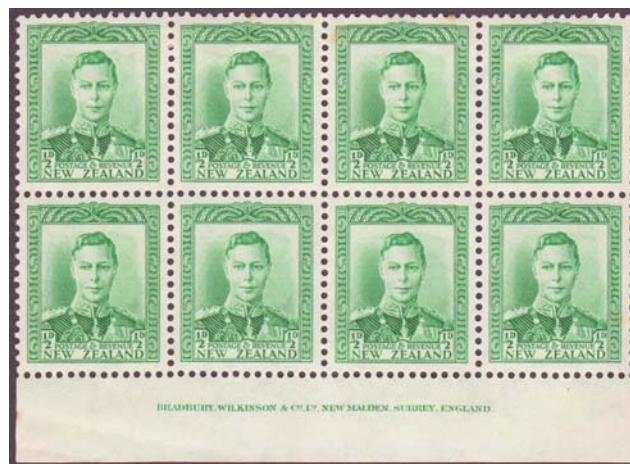


# **King George VI – New Zealand The Half Penny Issues & Postal Rates**

*A Study Paper*

## **Introduction, Summary & Conclusions**



*by*

**Stephen F. Prest & Patrick J. Skinner**

**February 2010**

**King George VI – New Zealand  
The Half Penny Issues & Postal Rates**

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# ***King George VI - New Zealand    The Half Penny Issues & Postal Rates***

*Note: Page numbers below refer to those found in the complete Study Paper as published*

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## **Preface**

For more years than one may wish to admit, we have been collectors of King George VI postage stamps. Upon retirement, Stephen had occasion to travel to New Zealand for the winter months to visit family. It wasn't long before he had established contact with Pat who was then the President of the Auckland Philatelic Society. As good fortune would have it, we had a shared collecting interests in the King George VI Period and so it seemed that fate had indeed intervened in a most helpful way.

As our collaboration commenced we discovered that we both had a similar view of the difficulty in laying one's hands on a definitive work that described the prevailing postal rates and the relationship these rates had on the issue of postage stamps and postal stationery during the New Zealand King George VI Period. Discussions quickly evolved into a thought that perhaps we could address this matter over time and so we set about the task of doing so. Pat had formed an important collection of postal history and postal stationery items of the George VI Period, while Stephen repatriated his New Zealand stamp collection from Canada to form the basis of a collaborative study going forward.

After reviewing the material in hand, we selected the Half Penny Issues and Postal Rates to be the subject of our initial endeavours. Our first presentation was assembled for delivery to the Auckland Philatelic Society in early 2006. A visit with Allan P. Berry in Thames, and helpful hints from Graham Robertson, Mark Benvie and Chris Foote of the APS and the Postal History Society of New Zealand along the way encouraged us to publish our findings. We would like to think that this paper will be the first of a series that, when completed, might become useful references for collectors and postal historians interested in the George VI Period.

With that, three things remain to be said.

First, many collectors and postal historians are very knowledgeable about the subject matters outlined in this Study Paper. It is our hope that, as time passes, they will be able to share their knowledge with us so that we may incorporate it into future editions of study papers on this subject.

Secondly, we readily admit to have only scratched the surface of previously published information related to the philately of the George VI Period. No doubt there are still important studies and findings to be referenced in the form of a more complete bibliography as time progresses.

Lastly, as with any study paper of this nature, the fault for any errors or omissions as they may occur herein rests entirely with the authors who will be, in turn, grateful to other philatelists for identifying such matters for correction in future editions.

In closing, we wish to acknowledge the assistance of a number of philatelists who have kindly granted us permission to reproduce items from their collections or previously published material, namely Laurie Dale, Allan P. Berry, Art Klass, Janet Klug, (Past President, American Philatelic Society) and, particularly, Stephen D. Schumann, (Chairman, FIP Commission for Postal Stationery). We would also like to acknowledge the assistance of many Members of the New Zealand Stamp Dealers Association and others who have assisted us over the years to collect the philatelic items that have formed the basis of this study.

Stephen Prest & Pat Skinner

February 2010

**King George VI - New Zealand**

*www.kgvi.co.nz*

**King George VI - New Zealand Website**

One of the drawbacks in producing a study paper in hard copy form is that useful additions, new discoveries and essential corrections do not see the light of day until a subsequent edition is produced. The King George VI - New Zealand website has been recently created to address this matter in the following fashion.

The approach taken will see each of the main sections of the Study Paper listed as a separate document accessible to all interested philatelists through links to the TOPICS & RESEARCH page of the website. As new information comes to light which merits inclusion in one or more sections of the study, these documents will be updated and reposted on the website for the immediate benefit and information of interested philatelists. At some stage, if the volume of new information warrants, consideration could be given to publishing a revised version of the current Study Paper.

In the meantime, readers of this Study Paper are encouraged, particularly as time moves along, to refer to the website to ensure the most up-to-date versions of the various sections are in hand.

The King George VI - New Zealand website is a private site with no formal ties to various philatelic or other organizations interested in or promoting New Zealand philately.

Finally, we would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge with great gratitude and appreciation the work of Geoffrey Prest who developed the King George VI - New Zealand website. Geoffrey, working with Stephen, created the BNAPS George VI Study Group website in 2003 and the current King George VI - New Zealand website is a logical extension of the earlier BNAPS site as Stephen's collecting interests gravitated more extensively towards New Zealand philately.

February 2010

**King George VI – New Zealand**  
**The Half Penny Issues & Postal Rates**  
*by*  
**Stephen F. Prest & Patrick J. Skinner**

**Introduction**

**Historical Background:**

The reign of King George VI commenced December 11, 1936 following by a day the abdication of King Edward VIII and concluded upon his death February 6, 1952.

The George VI Period was one marked by great geopolitical turmoil as events of World War II unfolded. Wartime shortages combined with the wholesale revision of postage rates in October 1939 resulted in some fascinating outcomes regarding the usage of New Zealand Post & Telegraph Department's half penny issues during this period.

New Zealand's King George VI definitive stamps remained in current use up to the release of the first Queen Elizabeth II definitive series March 1, 1954. The George VI Period for New Zealand has therefore been defined for the purposes of this study as commencing December 11, 1936 and concluding February 28, 1954.

**Objectives:**

The objects of this study are to identify the specific categories of postal rates requiring the use of half penny stamps and postal stationery during the George VI Period. Information is presented in chronological fashion such that the reader may come to appreciate the postal purpose for each then current issue of half penny postage stamp or postal stationery as time progressed through the period. Further, this approach allows some appreciation of the planning processes used by those in charge at the New Zealand Post & Telegraph Department as they went about the business of providing a full range of postal services to the New Zealand public both at home and, at times, overseas.

As a general observation regarding this study of half penny issues and postal rates during the George VI Period, this is the first in what is hoped will be a series of such studies which, when completed and taken together, might evolve into the equivalent of a handbook describing New Zealand philately of the King George VI era. As the first study, the content herein will no doubt be modified and corrected as additional information comes to light through further research and input from other philatelists knowledgeable in the George VI Period.

**Study Paper Structure**

The information assembled in producing this paper is organized into eight Sections which are briefly described below.

Section 1 outlines the half penny postal rates in force during the George VI Period between December 1936 and end February 1954.

Sections 2 & 3 provide respectively an overview of the half penny postage stamps and postal stationery items available at New Zealand Post Offices during the period.

Section 4 examines examples of relevant half penny postal history where specific half penny stamps and postal stationery are used "in period". The expression "in period" means the use of half penny postage stamps (or postal stationery as the case may be) corresponds to an exact use during the time period associated with a particular half penny postal rate. For

**Study Paper Structure (cont'd)**

example, the George VI Half Penny Postal Stationery Postcard, issued in July 1939 to pre-pay the Inland half penny Postcard rate, had an “in period” use of some 10 weeks ending October 1, 1939 at which time the Inland Postcard rate was raised to one penny.

Section 5 examines examples where there was a requirement to use a single half penny stamp in combination with other stamps or postal stationery items to meet a specific rate for mail service.

Section 6 deals with examples where half penny stamps are used in combination with other stamps to meet various rates, particularly airmail, registration and overweight categories.

Section 7 examines various philatelic byways, curiosities, and unexplained matters associated with the half penny issues of the New Zealand George VI Period. Topics covered in this section include Printed to Private Postal Stationery and Postage Due, Government Life and 1939 Health Issue stamps.

Section 8 summarizes the more important findings that have been noted throughout this Study Paper.

References to primary Post & Telegraph Department documents and to published philatelic literature found in each Section of this Study Paper are grouped together in the Bibliography at the conclusion of this Study Paper. Appendix 1 contains detailed tables of half penny postal rates in effect throughout the George VI Period. Appendix 2 is a listing of British (Empire) countries (and changes thereto) to which New Zealand mail could be directed throughout the George VI Period.

Post & Telegraph Department formatting convention of capitalizing proper names of classes of mail service has been adopted in this Study Paper. In addition, this convention has also been applied by the authors when referring to postal stationery items issued by the Post & Telegraph Department during the George VI Period. The acronym, “GVI”, when used, refers to King George VI definitive postage stamps.

Passages considered to be of particular interest or import by the authors are underlined for ease of reference.

New Zealand stamps and postal stationery were denominated in sterling during the George VI Period and the expressions “d.” and “s.” are used to refer to pence and shillings respectively throughout this Study Paper.

The acronym “CP” refers to The Catalogue of New Zealand Stamps produced by Campbell Paterson Ltd. who has granted the authors permission to reference the contents of CP in this Study Paper. The authors wish to gratefully acknowledge the assistance of Warwick Paterson for making this possible.



## **Section 8   Summary and Conclusions**

As with most research projects, this study has been a voyage of discovery for the authors. As various topics were explored and references sourced, the authors have been struck by the breath of previously published information on philatelic matters relating to the George VI Period of New Zealand. This, in a way, should not be surprising in that the George VI Period was one of great import to world affairs and events with New Zealand, together with other Empire Dominions and colonies, playing a pivotal role in these affairs.

### **The July 1938 Rate Changes**

The plan leading up to the introduction of the rate changes associated with the “All-up” Empire Air Mail Service seemed to have been well thought out in advance. Issue of the new George VI 1½d. definitive in both sheet and booklet form coincided with the introduction of the new Empire rate of 1½d. on July 26, 1938. Sufficient stocks of the new stamps were on hand to allow the Post & Telegraph Department to withdraw and destroy surplus stocks of the 1935 Pictorial 1½d. “Maori Cooking” stamp. Similarly, the introduction of the ½d. George VI Green and the 1d. George VI Red together with the withdrawal and destruction of stocks of the corresponding 1935 Pictorial Issues had proceeded smoothly March 1, 1938 and July 1, 1939 respectively.

### **The October 1939 Rate Changes**

By contrast to 1938, there is considerable evidence to indicate that the October 1939 rate changes occurred on relatively short notice as planning for this event seemed to be uncharacteristically haphazard when compared to the management of changes just one year previous. The changing world wide conditions brought about by the commencement of hostilities in Europe no doubt contributed to the decision to raise postal rates in October 1939 as a measure to raise general revenue for the war effort. Nonetheless the impact of these changes had far reaching impacts on the management of postage stamp and postal stationery stocks, particularly half penny denominated stocks, well into the 1940’s.

Using statistics for the full year 1938 as a guide, by mid 1939 post offices throughout New Zealand were selling upwards of 15 million half penny stamps and postal stationery items per month to meet the heavy demand for franking of Commercial and Printed Papers mail. Given that the preponderance of these items were postage stamps produced in Great Britain and a supply chain involving great distances by sea transport, prudent management practice would dictate that an inventory pipeline of some six months be in place to ensure uninterrupted supplies of postal stamps were available to post office outlets.

The October 1939 postage rates had the effect of reducing the demand for half penny stamps by about a factor of ten as the half penny rate fell away for Commercial and Postcards as well as most Printed Papers. This meant that a six month inventory of half penny stamps had suddenly been lengthened to about six years on very short notice! Even if the plans for the October 1939 increase had been put in motion in August, one was still looking at a 4 to 5 year inventory of half penny stamps, clearly not an outcome one would come to expect from an organization that had successfully managed similar changeovers in rates in the past.

Other anecdotal evidence that supports a rather rushed approach to the October 1939 rate changes includes the release of the George VI Half Penny Postal Stationery Postcard in July 1939. Substantial stocks of these postcards, both in the Department’s as well as the public’s hands needed to be subsequently uprated with an additional half penny stamp to meet the new 1d. Postcard rate after October 1, 1939. It is hard to imagine that the Department would have issued a half penny denominated postal stationery postcards in such quantities in the face of an impending rate increase in two months time. The George VI one penny die had been available since mid 1938 with the

### **The October 1939 Rate Changes (cont'd)**

1938 One Penny George VI Envelope being issued in November of that year. As such it would appear that there were no obvious production impediments preventing the Department from issuing a One Penny Postcard in October 1939 if that had been the plan.

Further anecdotal evidence of a sudden change of plans includes the printing of Printed to Private Order Half Penny Envelopes for Court Woodford in August 1939 and the printing of the Half Penny Health stamp which was then hastily overprinted to one penny before issue in October 1939.

While the evidence is circumstantial, it suggests nevertheless that the October 1939 rate increases were implemented on very short notice, possibly only having been set in motion in early September 1939.

### **Upated Postal Stationery**

One unexpected outcome flowing from the research undertaken for this Study Paper has been the discovery (at least on the part of the authors) of the important role half penny stamps played in the interregna between the changes of postal rates and the reissue of postal stationery items denominated at the new values for the intended Inland service. This represents an area of postal history study that, to the authors' knowledge, has not heretofore been pursued in any great depth.

These interregna have resulted in items of postal history scarcity (identified throughout the body of the study paper) that perhaps have not been fully recognized in the past and are deserving of further research on the part of New Zealand postal historians. Similarly, the special situation of uprated New Zealand postal stationery Lettercards and Envelopes to meet the required 1½d. rate for the "All-up" Empire Air Mail Service falls into this category.

It is hoped that this study paper will provide the impetus for New Zealand postal historians to review their collections and reference material so that this area of George VI philately can be better defined as a result.

### **Conclusions**

The objects of this study were to identify the specific categories of postal rates requiring the use of half penny stamps and postal stationery during the King George VI Period. This, the authors believe, has been accomplished with the assistance of research of Post & Telegraph Department publications and other sources known to the authors.

The research conducted to date provides a glimpse into the planning processes employed by the Department as it went about its task of providing a full range of postal services to the New Zealand public both at home and, at times, overseas. Further research into this facet of New Zealand's postal history appears to be warranted.

The scarcity of some notable items of New Zealand half penny postal stationery has been well documented in **The Postage Stamps of New Zealand - Volume IX** and commented upon further in this Study Paper.

Research conducted for this Study Paper has revealed hitherto unrecognized scarcity of a number of items of uprated half penny postal stationery that could have been in use during the New Zealand George VI Period. As these items required the combined use of half penny postal stationery and adhesive stamps, the possibility exists that such combinations were never actually used in fact. However, this outcome is viewed as unlikely in the majority of cases identified throughout this Study Paper, and it is postulated that examples of most of these scarce items might be identified with the assistance of New Zealand postal historians and postal stationery collectors as time passes.