

## Half Penny Postage Due

by Stephen F Prest

with grateful acknowledgement to Pat Skinner

One of the small pleasures in life is the little stack of *The Mail Coach* editions that await my return to New Zealand for the summer season. Laurie Dale's article<sup>(1)</sup> in the April 2009 issue of *The Mail Coach* and the accompanying Editor's note<sup>(2)</sup> immediately caught my attention as I have been puzzled for some time as to the need for a half penny postage due stamp in light of the "Double Deficiency" rule.

Well I fear my own limited knowledge of matters philatelic does not result in my being able to shed very much light on some of the specific matters raised in the April 2009 article, but I can add a few more pieces to the puzzle which *The Mail Coach* readers may find of interest.

I was particularly interested to learn that there was a "minimum" postage due fee of 1½ d. between one country and another in the 1920s. While not specifically mentioned in the Editor's note I gather that minimum may have increased to 2½ d. by the late 1930s. For my own research on postal rates during the George VI period, I have been looking for some time to obtain an item of postal history that featured the use of a single half penny postage due stamp on cover either solely on its own or in combination with other postage due stamps.

Two covers presented below show postage dues paid through the use of King George VI definitive stamps in the early 1950s after the use of postage due stamps had been discontinued. Both are franked with a 1944 1½d. It occurred to me that had the covers been dated a few years earlier, I would have finally found that elusive half penny postage due used alone on cover.



Figure 1. Inbound Airmail Letter mailed from Winnipeg, Manitoba, Nov 3, 1952, charged 1½d. in Postage Due on November 13, 1952 in Hastings

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The first shown in Figure 1, which I have had in my collection for a while, pays the deficiency of 6 centimes from which I infer the Post & Telegraph Department used an exchange rate of 4 centimes per 1d. For postal recipients, this represented a considerable increase in charges from the rate of 10 centimes per 1d. deficiency that prevailed in the late 1930s. After reading the Laurie's article and the Editor's notes, it seemed that maybe something like the 1½d. minimum payment rule might still have been applicable in this case.

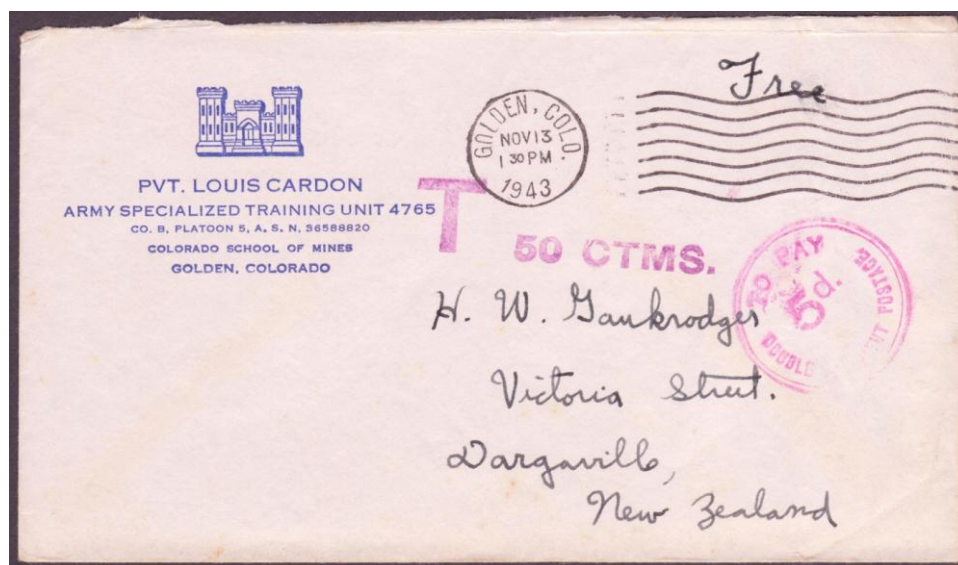
More recently, I acquired a second cover illustrated in Figure 2 below. The double deficiency determined in this case amounts to 150 centimes which New Zealand postal authorities converted to 3s. 1½d. (or 37½d.) which, of course, when divided into 150 centimes, results in a deficiency rate of 4 centimes per 1d. deficiency!



*Figure 2. Inbound Airmail Letter mailed from Toronto, Ontario, Nov 21, 1951, charged 3s. 1½d. (37½d.) in Postage Due on arrival in Whangarei*

So I believe one can conclude from this is that the conversion rate had indeed changed to 4 centimes to 1d. by the early 1950s. And this is where my philatelic knowledge abruptly ends and the assistance of other Mail Coach readers is sought.

I was wondering if any Postal History our Society Members could shed more light on the changes in conversion rates for deficient postage during the George VI Period. I do have a cover illustrated in Figure 3 below where the Post and Telegraph Department decided to reject the “Free” status of an inbound letter from the USA in 1943 and decided to charge it 5d. for an indicated 50 centimes deficiency. So from this we learn that the 10 centimes per 1d. rate was apparently still in force up to late 1943.



*Figure 3. Inbound Airmail Letter mailed from Golden, Colorado Nov 13, 1943, charged 5d. (T 50 centimes) in Postage Due on arrival in New Zealand*

In conclusion, these covers narrow down the time period when the conversion rate went from 10 to 4 centimes to one pence took place to a period of about eight years. I am sure there are other covers out there in member's collections that will narrow this gap. I would be interested to learn of any specific reference to the date this change in conversion rate took place and other aspects of this “philatelic puzzle” from other members as time permits via email at [stephen.prest@gmail.com](mailto:stephen.prest@gmail.com) or by regular post through the kind auspices of our Editor.

## References

- (1) “Half Penny Postage Due” by Laurie Dale, The Mail Coach, Vol. 45, No. 4, Whole No. 360, April 2009, pp 112-114
- (2) “Half Penny Postage Due” – Editor's Note, The Mail Coach, Vol. 45, No. 4, Whole No. 360, April 2009, pp 114 & 117