

Short-paid Mail from Australia to New Zealand

December 11, 1936 to February 28, 1954 - Part I

by Stephen F Prest and Pat Skinner

As readers will know, our collecting interests lie in documenting the postal issues and rates of New Zealand during the King George VI Period which we have defined as commencing December 11, 1936 with the Accession to the throne to February 28, 1954, the day before the general issue of the first Queen Elizabeth definitive stamps. Last year in these pages we explored the possible usage of a single half penny stamp for postage due purposes ⁽¹⁾. During the course of our research, we discovered that, for postage due purposes, New Zealand devalued its currency versus the Gold Centime in early 1950 from an exchange rate of 1d. = 10 centimes to 1d. = 4 centimes ⁽²⁾. This change, reported in the March 16, 1950 P & T Official Circular, foreshadowed the possibility of a single half penny stamp used in combination with other stamps to make up a required payment for deficient postage.

As good fortune would have it, we came into possession of just such an example shortly thereafter where an incoming airmail letter from Australia was marked T30 C deficient (see Figure 1). This letter was duly marked 7½d. (30 centimes divided by 4 centimes per pence) and franked with the corresponding amount in postage due stamps by New Zealand postal authorities for collection before delivery.



Figure 1. Inbound Airmail Letter mailed from Melbourne, Victoria Feb 28, 1950, charged 7½d. in Postage Due on March 3, 1950 in Wellington

So, the elusive half penny postage due used alone on cover was finally discovered albeit in this case in combination with other postage due stamps to make up the 7½d. rate.

End of story? Well not quite! Our thoughts then turned to the question how did Australian postal authorities determine that this letter should be charged 30 centimes in double deficiency postage? On considering the matter, we came to realize that examples of postage due letters forwarded to New Zealand from an overseas jurisdiction involved a number of decision points along the way and that we needed considerably more information about the originating country postal rates and exchange rates versus the Gold Centime in order to put together a comprehensive picture of how New Zealand treated incoming short paid mail. As we had the example pictured in Figure 1 in hand, it seemed a good place to examine this subject in more detail would be mail between New Zealand and Australia.

The Short-paid Mail Process

The determination of deficient postage by the forwarding postal jurisdiction and the collection of postage due by the destination jurisdiction are governed in the first instance by a framework of U.P.U. regulations into which each jurisdiction would then put in place its own rules and regulations. The two most important sets of information used by both jurisdictions were the ruling postal rates and the ruling home country currency to Gold Centime exchange rate at any particular time. With these in hand, the respective postmasters would go about determining what would be the appropriate action in the case of a short-paid letter. In the current instance the decision points of Australia to New Zealand Short-paid Mail Process could be described as follows.

In Australia:

- First a letter would need to be recognized as being short-paid, say overweight, incorrectly franked for the service etc.
- Then the appropriate amount of deficiency would be determined (single, double) and the ruling pence to centime exchange rate applied.

In New Zealand:

- The letter would need to be accepted as being in a short-paid category (at least one example in the authors' collection indicates the New Zealand postal authorities may have declined to charge the recipient postage due).
- Then the appropriate amount of postage due would be determined using New Zealand's ruling pence to centime exchange rate.

This four step process presents numerous opportunities for error in interpretation or different interpretations of the rules and examples of such became all too evident as we developed our research.

Australian & New Zealand Postage Due Rates during the King George VI Period

So the first question we had to address was “Just what were the ruling Australian postal rates during the George VI period?” Seems a simple enough task, but one, which we soon discovered, was more difficult than first imagined. With the cover illustrated in Figure 1 in hand, we “Googled” “Australian Postage Due Rates” and quickly came upon Peter Granfield’s very informative website entitled “NSW Tax Marks”⁽³⁾. Peter has conducted extensive research into the postage due markings used in New South Wales from 1891 through to decimalization in 1966 and his Gold Medal exhibit (Sydney 2011) and other writings posted on his NSW Tax Marks website is a treasure trove of information in respect to Australian postal and postage due rates.

Turning to our area of interest, the New Zealand King George VI period, Peter’s research reveals that at the start of the King George VI Period, the ruling exchange rate for postage due purposes on shortpaid mail to British Empire destinations was 1d. Australian equals 10 Gold centimes. It is further revealed that Australia devalued its currency in the late 1940’s in two tranches, first to 1d. = 4 centimes on July 1, 1948 and then to 1d. = 3 centimes on December 1, 1949. The 1d. = 3 centimes exchange rate was previously reported to have occurred in late 1950 but Peter’s research⁽⁴⁾, and evidence flowing from our own research as documented in Figure 1 clearly demonstrate this change took place before December 1950.

As noted above, the New Zealand Post & Telegraph Department devalued from New Zealand 1d. = 10 centimes to 1d. = 4 centimes on March 1, 1950 for the purposes of determining postage due. The effective dates of the New Zealand and the two Australian devaluations during the King George VI Period did not coincide. This resulted in four periods of distinct pairings of exchange rates between the two countries in the period between December 1936 and February 1954 as illustrated in Table 1 below.

Table 1
Pairings of Australian and New Zealand Exchange Rates for Postage Due purposes during the New Zealand King George VI Period

<u>Period</u>	<u>1d. Australian</u>	<u>1d. New Zealand</u>	<u>Dates</u>
T10/T10	= 10 centimes	= 10 centimes	Dec 11, 1936 to June 30, 1948
T4/T10	= 4 centimes	= 10 centimes	July 1, 1948 to Nov 30, 1949
T3/T10	= 3 centimes	= 10 centimes	Dec 1, 1949 to Feb 28, 1950
T3/T4	= 3 centimes	= 4 centimes	March 1, 1950 to Feb 28, 1954

Australian Postage Rates to New Zealand during the King George VI Period

With thankful acknowledgement for the assistance of fellow PHSNZ member Paul Yap, we were made aware of a series of four articles published by Richard Breckon in the Australian Philatelist in the late 1980's ^(5,6). Australia changed its postal rates to New Zealand with relative frequency during the King George VI Period. In all there were some five surface letter rates and seven airmail rates at different times during the Period as listed in Table 2 below.

Table 2

Australian Postal Rates for Surface and Airmail Letters to New Zealand during the New Zealand King George VI Period

**Australian mail to New Zealand was conveyed by Surface Means
at the start of King George VI's reign in December 1936**

**Conveyance by domestic New Zealand Airmail service was available
for a 2d. per ½ oz fee.**

**Regular Trans-Tasman airmail service between Australia and New Zealand
was established April 30, 1940**

Surface Letter Rates

December 11, 1936:	2d. per 1 oz.	
December 10, 1941:	2d. per 1 oz.,	+ ½d. war tax
July 1, 1949:	2½d. up to 1 oz.,	2d. each additional oz.
December 1, 1950:	3d. up to 1 oz.,	2½d. each additional oz.
July 9, 1951:	3½d. up to 1 oz.,	2½d. each additional oz.

Surface Conveyance + New Zealand Inland Airmail

December 11, 1936:	2d. per 1 oz. + 2d. per ½ oz. (Airmail Fee)
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Airmail Letter Rates

April 30, 1940:	5d. each ½ oz.	
December 10, 1941:	5d. each ½ oz.,	+ ½d. war tax,
July 1, 1949:	5½d. first ½ oz.	+ 5d. each additional oz.
December 1, 1950:	6d. each ½ oz.	
July 9, 1951:	6½d. each ½ oz.	
August 1, 1952:	8d. each ½ oz.	

Concluding Thoughts

As the information contained in Tables 1 & 2 evolved and became more apparent to us, we realized the envelope illustrated in Figure 1 had particular significance. New Zealand devalued its exchanged rate for postage due purposes on March 1, 1950 and the postage due on this letter was collected Friday, March 3rd, just two days later. This may well be the earliest known example of a surviving shortpaid inbound letter to New Zealand at the new 1d. = 4 centimes exchange rate.

In all there were four tax periods for shortpaid letters between Australia and New Zealand during the King George VI Period. The envelope shown in Figure 1 depicts an early example of what we refer to as the T3/T4 Australian/New Zealand Period of paired tax rates for shortpaid mail purposes. Of particular note, the T3/T10 period was very brief, amounting to three months between December 1949 and February 1950. Surviving covers in this short period are likely to be very scarce indeed.

In Part II of this article, we will illustrate a number of further examples shortpaid Australian mail to New Zealand during the George VI Period. We would be most interested hearing from other members as to their thoughts on this topic either via email at stephen.prest@gmail.com or by regular post through the kind auspices of our Editor. In particular we would be most interested to receive scans of inbound Australian shortpaid mail to New Zealand which we would be pleased to acknowledge as our research on this topic evolves.

... to be continued

References:

- (1) "Half Penny Postage Due" by S. F. Prest, The Mail Coach, Vol. 46 No. 3, Whole No. 365 (February 2010) pp. 82-84
- (2) "Half Penny Postage Due No. 2" by S. F. Prest, The Mail Coach, Vol. 46 No. 4, Whole No. 366 (April 2010) pp. 134-136
- (3) "New South Wales tax rates 1891-1966" by Peter Granfield, (Gold Medal Exhibit - Sydney 2011) via www.nswtaxmarks.com
- (4) "Exchange Rate change to 1d = 3 centimes" by Peter Granfield, (January 2009) via www.nswtaxmarks.com/?cat=61
- (5) "Australian Commonwealth Postal Rates 1901-1966" Part 1 – Letters and Postcards by Richard Breckon, The Australian Philatelist (Nov/Dec 1987) pp. 4-9
- (6) "Australian Commonwealth Postal Rates 1901-1966 Part 3 - Air Mail Rates 1921-1966" by Richard Breckon, The Australian Philatelist, (October 1988) pp. 50-56