

Non British Empire Countries Qualifying for the Universal Penny Post Rate

December 11, 1936 to July 26, 1938

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. In recent months we have received considerable encouragement and assistance from members of the Postal History Society and others interested in this period of New Zealand philately in response to the Half Penny Study Paper published last year. This has resulted in items being identified that filled some of the gaps we noted in the Study Paper including the discovery of two 1938 One Penny King George VI Postal Stationery Envelopes (Commercial sized) as reported in the April 2011 edition of the Mail Coach ⁽¹⁾.

Over the past few months we have been conducting background research into various aspects of the One Penny Issues and Postal Rates in preparation for the next in the series of Study Papers covering the King George VI era. A key document upon which we rely to determine the postal rates in effect at the start of the King George VI reign is the June 1937 New Zealand Post and Telegraph Guide (No. 159) ⁽²⁾. Commencing on page 70 of the 1937 Guide, one finds an alphabetical list of countries where Rates and Conditions are described for each country under the generic heading "Overseas Postal Services".

Mail Coach readers will be familiar with the fact that, during the early part of the King George VI Period, the surface letter rate to British Empire destinations was 1d. per oz. Appendix 2 of the Half Penny Study Paper gives the listing of British Countries that enjoyed the 1d. Empire rate until it was replaced with the 1½d. Empire Air Mail Service rate July 26, 1938; the exceptions being Australia, its dependencies and New Guinea where the rate remained 1d. per oz.

"Certain Foreign Countries"

It came as a surprise to us however as we reviewed the postal rates to Overseas destinations, that there was an extensive list of non British Empire Overseas countries that qualified for the 1d. each oz. "Universal Penny Post" surface letter rate in the early part of King George VI's reign. These countries are referred to as "certain foreign countries" in the 1937 Guide where they are linked to the Empire rate by the phrase "British Empire and certain foreign countries" in the summary schedule entitled "Principal Rates and Charges" found on page 5 of the 1937 Guide.

A review of all the non Empire countries in the Overseas Postal Services – Rates and Conditions section of the 1937 Guide reveals the following extensive list of “Certain Foreign Countries”.

Afghanistan, Argentine Republic, Azores, Brazil, Cameroons (British Sphere), Cape Verde Islands, Chile, Columbia, Costa Rica, Dutch Guiana, Dutch West Indies, Eritrea, Estonia, French India, French Indo-China, French Settlements of Oceania (inc: Tahiti), Iraq, Italy (inc; Italian Somaliland, Sardinia & San Marino), Ivory Coast, Liberia, Libya, Luxemburg, Macao, Madagascar & Dependencies, Mexico, New Caledonia, Nicaragua, Panama Canal Zone, Panama Republic, Paraguay, Peru, Philippine Islands, Portugal (inc: Madeira, Portuguese East Africa (Mozambique), Portuguese India, Timor, Portuguese West Africa (Angola)), Reunion, Roumania, Siam, Syria, Tibet, United States (inc: Guam, Hawaii, Pago Pago (American Samoa), Puerto Rico, US Virgin Islands), Vatican City State, Yugoslavia,

“Other Foreign Countries”

To complete the picture, surface letters to the following list of Overseas destinations, referred to as “other foreign countries” in the 1937 Guide, required 2½d. first oz., 1½d. each additional oz. in postage. This rate remained in effect for these destinations until the general changes in postal rates which came into effect October 1, 1939.

Abyssinia (Ethiopia), Albania, Algeria, Austria, Belgium Congo, Belgium, Bolivia, Bulgaria, Cameroons (French Sphere), Canary Islands, Caroline Islands, China, Chosen (Corea), Cuba, Czecho-Slovakia, Dahomey & Niger, Danzig, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Faroe Islands, Finland, France (inc: Corsica, French Equatorial Africa, French Guiana, French Guinea, French Somalia Coast, French Sudan, Monaco, French Morocco, Senegal, St. Pierre & Miquelon, French Togoland,) Germany, Greece inc: Crete, Greenland, Guatamala, Hayti, Holland (inc Dutch East Indies), Honduras, Iran, Japan (inc: Formosa), Latvia, Lithuania, Manchukuo, Mauritania, Norway, Poland, Salvador, Saudi Arabia, Soviet Socialistic Republics (inc: Russia), Spain (inc: Balearic Islands, Spanish Guinea, Spanish Morocco), Sweden, Switzerland (inc: Liechtenstein), Tunis, Turkey , Uruguay, Venezuela, Yemen

Certain Foreign Countries – Postal History Examples

One Penny postal history examples of letters forwarded to the United States during the early George VI Period are very common. Figure 1, while philatelic, demonstrates the Universal Penny Post rate applied to letters mailed to United States destinations right up to the day it “Died”, July 25, 1938. Other than the United States, examples of one penny postage paid to destinations in “Certain Foreign Countries” appear to be quite

difficult to come by. We have but a single example of such a cover to a non USA destination and that is a First Day Cover with the 1938 King George VI One Penny “Red” stamp mailed to the Philippines.

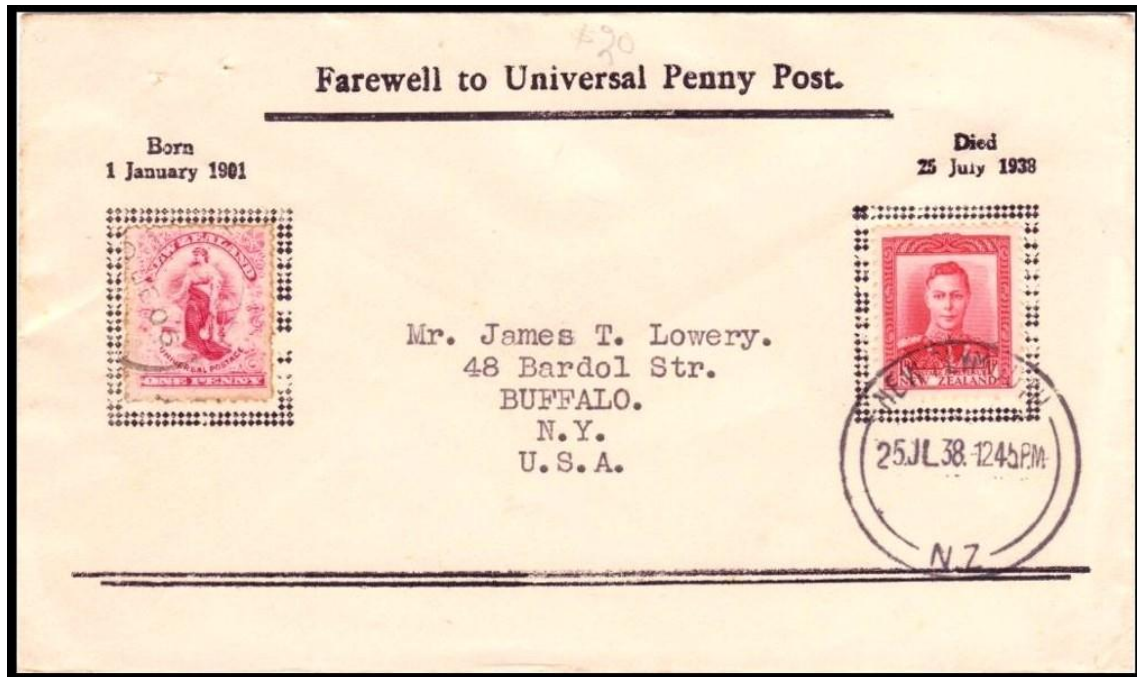


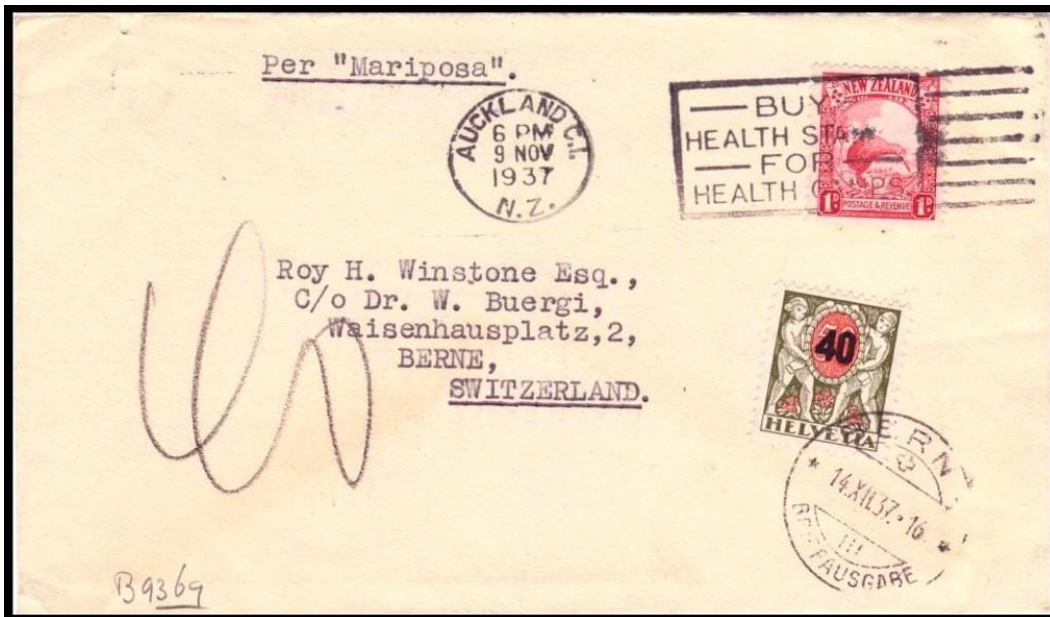
Figure 1. 1938 King George VI One Penny Red postage stamp on a Souvenir Letter mailed from Newmarket July 25, 1938 to Buffalo, New York that bids “Farewell to Universal Penny Post”.

We have, however, seen a cover mailed to Argentina, a “Certain Foreign Countries” destination, between December 1936 and July 1938 bearing 2½d. in postage, i.e., the rate that applied the “Other Foreign Countries” as defined in the 1937 Guide (see Figure 2.). This letter was mailed from Timaru on April 19, 1937, that is, a little more than two months before the issue of the 1937 Guide which states on the inside leaf that the information presented herein is “correct to 30th June”. The use of a 2½d. 1935 “Mt. Cook” Pictorial stamp on this letter appears to have overpaid the required 1d. rate but this is an assumption on our part as, other than the 1937 Guide, we have not been able locate other evidence that the Universal Penny Post rate applied to “Certain Foreign Countries” other than the United States and its dependencies in the early part of the George VI Period.



*Figure 2 1935 Twopence-Halfpenny “Mount Cook” Pictorial overpays the Universal Penny Post rate in effect on surface letters to “Certain Foreign Countries” up to July 25, 1938
Letter mailed from Timaru April 19, 1937 to Buenos Aires, Argentina*

Figure 3 is an interesting example of a letter franked with a 1935 One Penny “Kiwi” Pictorial stamp that was mailed in November 1937 to Switzerland. Switzerland was defined as an “Other Foreign Country” in the 1937 Guide. The letter emanated from Alexander, Bennett, Sutherland & Warnock, Barristers & Solicitors, based in Auckland. This letter did not attract the attention of New Zealand postal authorities as being underpaid. Both these observations seem to confirm that, in general terms, franking of letters to foreign destinations with a single one penny stamp would not seem out of the ordinary even though, in this case, the letter was incorrectly franked. The Swiss postal authorities took a somewhat dimmer view of this underpaid letter however and applied a 40 centimes deficiency charge on the letter having determined that letter was franked with 10 centimes equivalent in New Zealand postage which was 20 centimes short of Switzerland’s 30 centimes rate then prevailing for letters outgoing to foreign destinations.



*Figure 3. 1935 One Penny “Kiwi” Pictorial underpays the surface letters to “Other Foreign Countries” attracting a deficient postage charge of 40 centimes on arrival
Letter mailed from Auckland November 9, 1937 to Berne, Switzerland*

Concluding Thoughts

We plan to pursue other avenues of research to bring further clarity to this topic of the application of the Universal Penny Post rate to “Certain Foreign Countries” during the December 1936 to July 1938 period in the lead up to our drafting the One Penny Study Paper in the coming year. We are hopeful that other members of the Society might be able to assist in this endeavour by sharing with us postal examples of one penny paid letters to one or more of the “Certain Foreign Countries” in the period under review.

Alternatively, perhaps some members have information to indicate that the Post and Telegraph Department reclassified some of the “Certain Foreign Countries” and placed them in the “Other Foreign Country” list prior to July 1938. In either case, we would be most interested hearing from other members their thoughts on this topic either via email at stephen.prest@gmail.com or by regular post through the kind auspices of our Editor.

References:

- (1) One Penny Envelopes & Lettercards forwarded via the Empire Air Mail Scheme, S. F. Prest and P. J. Skinner; *The Mail Coach* Vol. 47, No 4 April 2011 pp 128-131
- (2) *New Zealand Post and Telegraph Guide* – June 1937 (No. 159), by Government Printer, Wellington, New Zealand, 1937 pp. 5, 70-116