

Non British Empire Countries Qualifying for the Universal Penny Post Rate - Part 2

December 11, 1936 to July 26, 1938

by Stephen F Prest and Pat Skinner

Readers may recall our earlier article on the subject of New Zealand postal rates for letters forwarded to destinations in “certain other countries” in the early part of the King George VI period which appeared in the June 2011 edition of the *Mail Coach* ⁽¹⁾. In that article we noted that letters could be sent at a postal rate of 1d. per ounce to more than forty Overseas destinations between December 1936 and July 1938. We mentioned that examples of such mail to the US and its territories were fairly easy to come by but that we had not, to date, seen any examples of such letters to the many other destinations listed. Further, we had come across one cover postmarked 19 April 1937 destined for the Argentine Republic franked at the standard 2½d. rate for Overseas destinations despite it being listed among the countries in the “certain other countries” noted in the 1937 Postal Guide.

This latter discovery raised the question as to whether the one penny rate still applied to the “certain other countries” listed in the 1937 Guide. Further information has come to light over the past 18 months that seems to confirm the one penny rate to certain other countries remained in effect during the early King George VI period as discussed below.

The Post Office Circulars

A review of the Post Office Circulars for the period 1936 to 1938 revealed two interesting references to mail to certain other countries in late 1936. Both references refer to the same P. & T. 1936/1008 memorandum and are reproduced below.

Item 5, Post and Telegraph Official Circular; October 16, 1936

5. Surcharge of Correspondence for Overseas Countries

Two instances have recently come under notice of the surcharging at the Postal Union rate of 2½d. of letters addressed to the Argentine Republic and fully prepaid at the rate of 1d. per ounce. It would appear that some officers are not aware that the postage rate to certain foreign countries, including the Argentine Republic, is 1d. per ounce, and it is desired that officers generally should make themselves conversant with rate of postage to overseas countries.

[P. & T. 1936/1008]

Item 6, Post and Telegraph Official Circular: November 16, 1936

6. Correspondence, Short-paid, for Foreign Country

A considerable amount of correspondence for foreign countries, particularly China and Japan, to which the rate of postage is 2½d., is prepaid at the 1d. rate only and sent forward to destination surcharged 3d. If it is evident at the time of posting that a firm is under the impression that the 1d. rate of postage applies to any country to which the rate is 2½ d., the misunderstanding is to be brought to the notice of the senders with a view to having the

deficiency made good, if time permits, and to having the correct postage affixed to correspondence for that country in future.

[P. & T. 1936/1008]

As a general comment, we think that one can safely assume that there was considerable confusion at some local post offices as to which rate, 1d. or 2½d., was applicable for letters addressed to various foreign destinations. Some letters that should have been franked with 2½d., were accepted with 1d. in postage paid. Of these, some were surcharged 30 centimes in postage due prior to leaving New Zealand while some were marked and charged postage due in the destination country as was the case of the November 1937 letter to Switzerland illustrated in Figure 3 of our June 2011 article⁽¹⁾.

The safe answer of course was to require all letters to Overseas destinations to be franked with 2½d. in postage as this fully prepaid the rate for “certain other countries” even though such letters only required 1d. per ounce to be paid. This apparently was the approach taken by the sender/Timaru post office in the case of the letter mailed 19 April 1937 to the Argentine Republic as illustrated in Figure 2 of our June 2011 article⁽¹⁾. A similar example of a letter dated November 1936 addressed to Sombor, Yugoslavia, also a “certain other country”, was also mailed from Timaru as illustrated below.

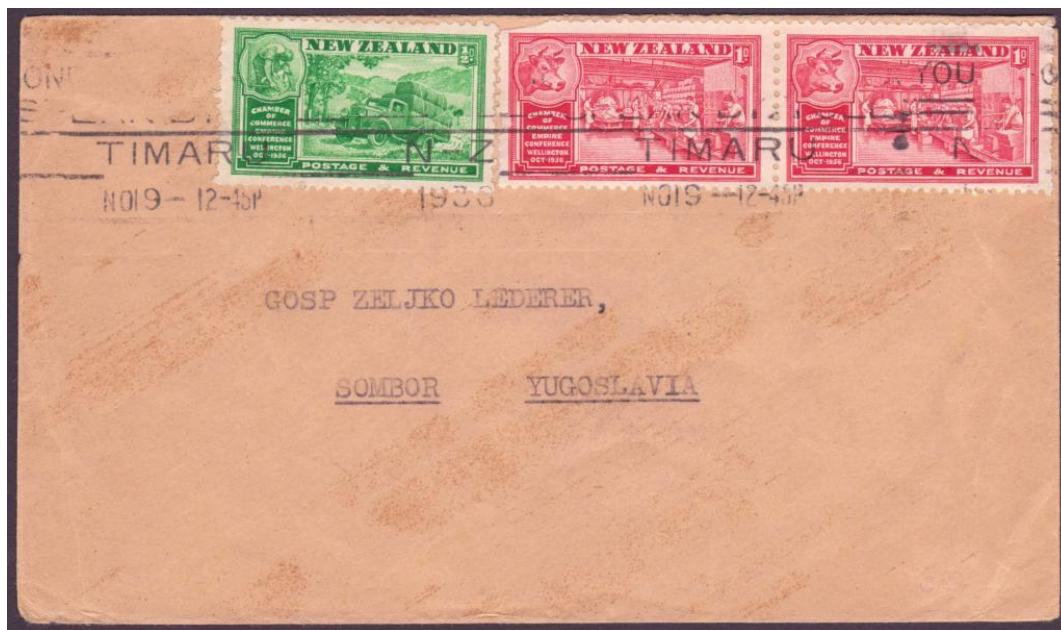


Figure 1. Letter mailed from Timaru November 19, 1936 to Sombor, Yugoslavia franked 2½d. which overpaid the ruling “Certain Foreign Country” 1d. rate

Certain Other Countries – Postal History Examples

Over the past 12 months we have been successful in locating two covers, illustrated respectively in Figures 2 and 3 below, one addressed to Italy in December 1936 and the second to Yugoslavia in June 1937 both of which were franked with one penny in postage as befitting their status as “Certain Other Countries” as per The Post & Telegraph Department’s rules at the time.



Figure 2. Letter mailed from Dunedin December 1, 1936 to Biella, Italy correctly franked at the 1d. rate for surface letters to “Certain Other Countries”.



Figure 3. Letter mailed from Auckland June 30, 1937 to Ljubljana, Yugoslavia correctly franked at the 1d. rate for surface letters to “Certain Other Countries”.

With these two examples in hand, we now have examples of one penny postage being paid on letters to five overseas destinations in the early years of the George VI period. These are highlighted below (**bold underlined italics**) in the listing of certain other countries we compiled from individual country descriptions in the 1937 Postal Guide.

*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**.*

It is perhaps noteworthy that a summary listing of certain other countries does not appear in the 1937 Postal Guide nor is the expression “Certain Other Countries” referenced to be found in the Index to the Guide. Rather, one finds the expression “**All places within the British Empire and certain other countries** (see **pages 70-118**)” on page 26 in reference to the rate for Letters and Lettercards being 1d. for each ounce or fraction thereof. Essentially it was up to each individual Postmaster to cull through some 50 pages of country listings to determine whether a particular overseas destination fell into the “certain other country” category, a cumbersome task indeed. This may go some way to explaining the variable assessment of the correct postage rates to overseas destinations by many Postmasters in the early George VI period.

Concluding Thoughts

Contrary to one suggestion we put forward in the conclusion of our earlier article, we now think, given the evidence above, one can now safely conclude the Penny Postal rate was alive and well for many overseas destinations up to its demise on 25 July 1938. We can also observe that there was considerable confusion as to the proper rate to be applied to letters addressed to Overseas destinations and that misapplication of postal rates occurred with such regularity it resulted in Post Office management having to specifically address these shortcomings and demand remedial action through special orders as documented in the Official Circular.

This confusion has left fertile ground for present day postal historians to catalogue the misadventures of letters forwarded to overseas destinations in the period leading up to July 1938 and we would be most interested hearing from other members as to their thoughts on this topic or about Penny Postage examples to “certain other countries” in their collections either via email at stephen.prest@gmail.com or by regular post through the kind auspices of our Editor.

Reference:

- (1) “Non British Empire Countries Qualifying for the Universal Penny Post Rate”, S. F. Prest and P. J. Skinner; *The Mail Coach* Vol. 47, No 5, June 2011 pp 170-174