

Printed Papers Half Penny Rates – New Zealand

October 1, 1939 to July 16, 1950

by Stephen F Prest and Pat Skinner

As collectors of King George VI era postal history we have been puzzled by what seemed to be the somewhat random appearance of Printed Papers envelopes dated during the 1940's and franked at the either a half penny or one penny rate. A trip to Thames about three years ago for discussions with the late Allan Berry revealed that there were certain classes of Printed Papers which remained rated at a half penny per each 2 ozs., but we did not arrive at any conclusions as to how the Post & Telegraph Department decided which sub-classes of Printed Papers qualified for the half penny rate. Allan, who was a keen collector of the 1940 Centennial issue, went on to say that the one category of cover he had been searching for many years to complement his collection was the use of a single 1940 Half Penny Centennial stamp overprinted "Official". As ourselves, he had a number of covers bearing a single regular issue 1940 Half Penny Centennial stamp, but so far no success in obtaining the elusive single 1940 Half Penny official on cover.

Printed Papers Rates following the October 1939 Rate Changes

Mail Coach readers will know that last year we published a Study Paper on the postal issues and rates during the George VI Period⁽¹⁾. Prior to October 1939, the first weight category for Printed Papers was ½d. for both Inland and Overseas destinations. During the course of our research for the Study Paper, we discovered that, at the time of the October 1939 increases in postage rates, the Post and Telegraph Department decided to retain the half penny rate for certain classes of Inland Printed Papers. In fact two classes of Printed Papers were created at the time as shown below.

The pre-October 1939 rate of ½d. each 2 oz. or fraction thereof was retained for Group 2 Inland Printed Papers while that for Group 1 Inland Printed Papers was increased to 1d. for the first 4 oz. and ½d. each additional 2 oz. The terms, Group 1 and Group 2, are the authors' designation for convenience as there is no evidence in the notice of change printed in the October 16, 1939 edition of the Post & Telegraph Official Circular⁽²⁾ that any particular terminology was employed to distinguish between the two categories other than the use of the word "Other" to describe Group 2 Inland Printed Papers.

***Inland Printed Papers - (Group 1)** include greeting and visiting cards etc., notices of meetings and notices generally; invitations; non-advertising circulars; photographs; printed music voting papers; postage Stamps (obliterated); Post Guide Company letters...*

***Other Inland Printed Papers - (Group 2)** include other printed papers including all printed advertising matter, books, periodicals, catalogues, price-lists, newspapers and magazines printed overseas, and unregistered newspapers and magazines printed in New Zealand.*

However the two categories were identified as Printed Papers (i) and (ii) in The Post Office Guide 1944⁽³⁾ and again in the 1948 Postal Office Guide⁽⁴⁾. The descriptions of Groups (i) and (ii) that appeared in the 1944 and 1948 Guides varied slightly from the 1939 descriptions and are reproduced in Appendix 1, Table 1.2 of the Half Penny Study Paper.

The rate for all classes of Overseas Printed Papers was increased in October 1939 to the same level as Group 1 Inland Printed Papers. Having said that, certain classes of newspapers could still be mailed Overseas at the half penny rate until the July 8, 1948 rate changes came into effect⁽⁵⁾. The Inland Group 2 Printed Papers fell away with the changes in rates introduced July 16, 1950⁽⁶⁾.

In Period Use of Half Penny Stamps for Printed Papers post October 1939

Section 4.6 of the Half Penny Study Paper describes the “in period” use of half penny stamps to pay the Group 2 Printed Papers half penny rate October 1, 1939 to July 15, 1950. There were five sub-periods noted in the overall timeframe between October 1939 and July 1950. Examples of in period use of half penny stamps alone on cover are somewhat difficult to obtain due to the limited number of postal uses after October 1, 1939, particularly so in period immediately following the October rate changes. This paper presents some examples of postal history that were not available to the authors at the time the Half Penny Study Paper was published.

October 1, 1939 to January 1, 1940

These dates reflect the period when the only half penny postage stamp on issue at post offices was the 1938 Half Penny George VI Green. Figure 1 shows the General Assembly Library use of this stamp overprinted “Official” to send a Group 2 Printed Papers envelope to an Inland destination on October 3, 1939.

January 2, 1940 to July 1941

These dates reflect the period when two half penny postage stamps were on issue, the 1938 Half Penny GVI Green and the 1940 Half Penny Centennial. The 1938 Half Penny GVI Green was withdrawn from sale in July 1940 but the 1940 Half Penny Centennial was only withdrawn from service March 30, 1946⁽⁷⁾. It is thought that the Post and Telegraph Department was faced with substantial stocks of this stamp as a result of the October 1939 rate changes which were brought into effect on relatively short notice as the Government looked for ways to raise funds in response to the commencement of hostilities in Europe. The Half Penny Study Paper explores this subject in some depth, and provides insight into the sudden reduction in mail franked at the half penny rate as a result of the October 1939 rate changes⁽⁸⁾.

Figure 2 was forwarded to us by Grant Feringa of Brisbane. It was mailed on November 29, 1940, to Readville, Massachusetts by the Meteorological Office of the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research in Wellington. The lower left hand corner of the envelope shows the Government Printers notation indicating a printing run of 3000 copies of this envelope took place in December 1938.



Figure 1 A 1938 King George VI "Official" Half Penny Green pays the Inland (Group 2) Printed Papers rate from Wellington to Dunedin on October 3, 1939



Figure 2 A 1940 Half Penny Centennial "Official" underpays the Overseas Printed Papers 1d. rate from Wellington to Readville, Massachusetts, November 29, 1940

But more importantly, this envelope was franked with a single 1940 Half Penny Centennial stamp overprinted "Official", in other words, the elusive in period use of this stamp so long sought after by Allan (Berry). Of course there is one "defect" with this example and that is, the stamp underpays the Overseas Printed Papers rate by a half penny and should have attracted postage due somewhere along the line. Sadly, Allan passed away before we could share this discovery with him. Nevertheless, the existence of this cover gives one hope that someday we might locate a similar envelope with a single 1940 Half Penny Centennial Official addressed to an Inland destination. In the meantime, this cover will have the standing as the First Example we have seen of a 1940 Half Penny Centennial "Official" used singly on cover!

The Overseas One Penny Printed Papers rate (October 1939 to July 1950)

Figure 3 is an example where a pair of 1940 Half Penny Centennial stamps are used to pay the 1d. Overseas Printed Papers rate on an envelope mailed to the U.S.A. in November 1942. This cover has a "Happy Christmas" seal affixed indicating a greeting card enclosed which were permitted to be forwarded as Printed Papers under certain conditions. It is thought that Postmasters were encouraged to "move" stocks of the 1940 Half Penny Centennial stamps for use to make up higher rates to reduce the surplus stocks of this stamp.

Concluding Thoughts

Printed Papers were required to be sent in unsealed envelopes to facilitate inspection by post office staff. In reviewing our collection of examples of Printed Papers sent to Overseas destinations, we have seen a number of unsealed envelopes incorrectly franked with a single half penny stamp.

However, to date we have not seen an example of an unsealed envelope marked as requiring postage due to be paid.

Conversely, we have seen a number of unsealed Printed Papers envelopes addressed to Inland destinations franked with a half penny stamp but charged 1d. double deficiency in postage due. These are thought to be examples where the sender considered the contents to be within the definition of Group 2 Printed Papers but the Post Office, upon inspection, decided the contents should be characterized as Group 1 Printed Papers.

The study of Printed Papers rates and second class mail generally is a philatelic by-way not often travelled by postal historians. Together with "Householder" Circulars, Printed Papers were the "junk mail" of the George VI Period and no doubt discarded without much thought to future postal historians wishing to research these items. In a curious way, this introduces an unlikely scarcity factor for such items.

New Zealand Post & Telegraph Department's decision to introduce two Groups of Printed Papers in October 1939 leads to some interesting variations as post office



Figure 3 A pair of 1940 Half Penny Centennial “Official” stamps pay the Overseas Printed Papers Id. rate from Auckland to Modesto, California, November 17, 1942

officials and the public wrestled with the proper classification of the contents of a Printed Papers mailing.

We would be most interested to learn of interesting examples of Printed Papers mail during the George VI Period other members might have lurking in their collections, particularly examples of Printed Papers sent Overseas attracting postage due and, of course, any examples of a single 1940 Half Penny Centennial overprinted “Official” used on cover to an Inland destination. Comments can be forwarded either via email at stephen.prest@gmail.com or by post through the kind auspices of our Editor.

References:

- (1) King George VI – New Zealand; The Half Penny Issues and Postal Rates, by S. F. Prest and P.J. Skinner; Feb 2010, (Prest & Skinner, Auckland, NZ)
- (2) P&T Official Circular Vol LVI No 10 (October 16, 1939) pp 70-71
- (3) Post Office Guide, 1944 No. 161 September 1944 (Government Printer, Wellington) p.8
- (4) Post Office Guide, 1948 No. 162 July 1946 (Government Printer, Wellington) p.8
- (5) P&T Official Circular Vol LXV No 14 (August 2, 1948) p. 73
- (6) P&T Official Circular Vol LXVII No 15 (August 15, 1950) p. 92
- (7) The Postage Stamps of New Zealand, Volume II, 1950 RPSNZ Inc, Wellington NZ pp 78-80
- (8) The Half Penny Issues and Postal Rates etc., pp 61-62