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GOVERNMENT LIFE STAMPS - THE END OF AN ERA?

BY ANGELA NICHOLSON

The recent change of name of the Government Life Insurance Department to Tower Corporation has led many people to speculate on the likelihood of a new stamp release bearing the new title. On 1 December the current Government Life stamps were withdrawn from sale at all Philatelic outlets and this may indeed indicate that there is something new in the pipeline.

Government Life stamps were first issued in 1891 for use on all Insurance Departmental mail sent within New Zealand. The need for a special issue arose because of a dispute between the Insurance Department and the Post and Telegraph Department regarding the amount charged by the latter for franking services. It was decided that the Insurance Department should be permitted to use its own stamps to pre-pay postage - a situation which is still unique in the world today.

The first issue featured a design by W.B. Hudson of the Department and J.F. Rogers of the Government Printing Office. The central theme of the design - a lighthouse - has since appeared on every Life Insurance stamp issued. The stamps were printed in Wellington by the Government Printer. In this first issue two plate varieties are worthy of note: GQV for GOVERNMENT in R3/5 of the 1d. Blue (X2h) and NCF for INSURANCE in R10/2 of the 3d. Brown (X4a). Watermark and perforation varieties are also known, one of the most notable being the 2d. imperf. (X3g(Y)).

In 1905/6 new plates were produced for the 1d. and 2d. values - the old plates were beginning to show signs of wear. By this time, Queen Victoria was dead and the letters VR (for Victoria Regina) which had appeared on the original issue were now omitted. These two stamps had a very short life however, as Life Insurance stamps were withdrawn from use in 1907. Between January 1907 and January 1913, the Department used ordinary Official stamps on its mail.

1913 saw the issue of a complete set of "no VR" stamps, permission having once again been granted for the release of Life Insurance stamps. During the next 34 years this set appeared on various papers, with changes in watermark, perforation and colour. Major plate varieties include the 1/2d., R6/4 "line in sky"; 1 1/2d., R2/2 elongated T in "GOVERNMENT"; 2d., R1/2 P for R in "GOVERNMENT" and the 3d. R7/11 "HREE" for "THREE". Various areas of sky were retouched on the 1d. Red.

Breaking away from the simplistic lighthouse design, a new pictorial lighthouse set was released in 1947. Designed by James Berry, the stamps were produced by Bradbury, Wilkinson

& Co., and for the first time ever members of the public were able to use the stamps on the first day of issue. This set produced no major plate varieties, but variations in paper type and watermark are of interest to philatelists.

"I appreciate the time you have taken to answer the various points I raised, and the concern and courtesy your reply conveys." - Hamilton

With the coming of decimalisation in 1967, the 1947 pictorials were surcharged and once again the main area of interest for philatelists lies in the variety of paper types used. The First Day Cover of this surcharged set is quite scarce nowadays and copies fetch a respectable price, when available. It is believed that only 60,000 copies of X21b were printed (1¢ on 1d., W8 on cream vertical mesh paper) and thus, this is theoretically a scarce stamp.

The surcharged set was on sale for only two years before being replaced in 1969 by a new set of pictorials. This set of stamps was also designed by James Berry and printed by Bradbury, Wilkinson & Co. Unlike previous issues which were recess engraved, the 1969 pictorials were printed using the lithographic technique. In 1976 two new values were added to the original set of five stamps and the 2½¢ value was surcharged (25¢) in 1978. This issue was unwatermarked, but variations in perforation, paper and gum type are of interest. The following plate varieties are worthy of note: 4¢ Plate 1A1A R10/8 dot below "c"; 4¢ Plate 11 R2/3 "vapour trail" in sky; 15¢ Plate 111 R5/9 black flaw on tower; 15¢ Plate 111 R10/1 white flaw on tower. It is also interesting to note the existence of several rare plate numbers in this issue. On the 1976 printing of the 3¢ Baring Head, Plate Nos. 11 and 1a1a are scarce and similarly, on the 1976 printing of the 4¢ Cape Egmont, Plate Nos. 11, 1a1a and 2a2a are difficult to find. This situation is particularly intriguing in the case of the 3¢ Baring Head stamp as it would seem likely that the 11 and 1a1a plates were printed in tandem with the 22 and 2a2a plates, and therefore all plates should be equally common.

Another point worthy of note is the brief appearance in 1975 of the 15¢ Dog Island stamp, perf. 13½ x 13½, on chalky paper with horizontal mesh and dull PVA gum (X33b). This format lasted for only two years before a change to perf.14 took place. X33b stamps, both mint and used, are scarce.

The latest set of Government Life stamps, newly withdrawn from sale, was released in 1981. Designed by Allan Mitchell, all six stamps feature an identical lighthouse symbol, each one being in a different colour. The stamps were printed by Harrison & Sons Ltd., using the lithographic process. To date, no major varieties have been recorded in this issue. One characteristic feature of this set is its susceptibility to fading. Exposure to fluorescent lighting and sunlight can dramatically alter the appearance of the stamps, producing almost unrecognisable colour combinations.

The distinctive lighthouse symbol which has come to be associated with strength and reliability has been retained by the Tower Corporation. It remains to be seen whether an appropriately worded set of stamps will now be issued. Is this the end of a unique aspect of New Zealand philately or merely a temporary absence, as happened back in 1907? We await future developments with interest.

(Further reading: Gwynn, R, 1988 "Collecting New Zealand Stamps" - Heinemann Reed. This book provided valuable background material for the above article).

FOUR

The 5/- Mt. Cook Pictorial - From Ken Cosgrove The 5/- Mt. Cook Pictorial as we all know was first issued in 1898, but no issues were made by the Post Office after 1913. What is not generally known is that a re-issue was made somewhere about the time the Post Office re-issued the 1d. Universal Official in 1930. This re-issue of the 5/- Mt. Cook was not, however, made by the Post Office, but by the Stamp Duties Office, a branch of the Justice Department responsible for the sale of the higher denominations of stamps mainly for fiscal purposes. The procedure to obtain the stamps was, firstly, the purchaser would complete a requisition of the stamps required and lodge this, in duplicate, together with payment, in the Stamp Duties Office. This office would then pin the stamps requested to the copy requisition and return it to the purchaser. This would account for so many of the 5/- Mt. Cook having pin holes. No doubt some of these stamps would have been used for postal purposes. It would be interesting to know if any collectors have copies of this stamp postmarked somewhere around 1930.

America's Cup - LATEST We were amazed recently to see in the latest Scott Catalogue listings update, the following item:

"Comoro Islands

27 Dec. 1988 : Inventors and Sportsmen - portraits and modes of transportation : (Airmail):

Sc.416 750fr. Dennis Conner, captain of the 'Stars and Stripes', winner of the 1987 America's Cup.

Sc.417 1000fr. Michael Fay, patron of the 'New Zealand', an entry in the America's Cup."

For your information, Scott catalogues Mr Conner @ US\$4.75 and Mr Fay @ US\$6.50 (!!!)

FROM "THE LONDON PHILATELIST", 1912 (October)

The Record of Stamp Dealing "The pointer to what firm holds the record in stamp transactions has been much debated, nor has the last word been said. There are obviously two distinct records - one for the first to commence and the other for the longest period of dealing - the latter being one which will doubtless pass from one to another as the older firms drop out. Messrs. Alfred Smith & Son have, however, made an announcement in their journal that practically claims both records and is as follows:

"With the present month the firm of Alfred Smith & Son, formerly Stafford Smith & Smith - completes for the first time in the history of any philatelic business, either at home or abroad, a full half-century of existence. In the Times of Tuesday, 9th September, 1862, there appeared an advertisement (for the Stafford Smith Foreign Stamp Depot, Bath) of this catalogue, which was one of the earliest price lists of stamps ever published. No complete copy is known to us, but some cut-out portions are preserved in the library of The Royal Philatelic Society.

GOODS AND SERVICES TAX: All prices in this Newsletter are subject to the addition of GST where purchases are made within NZ. Overseas clients do not pay GST.

This is a long and honourable record, but we fancy "other rich ones in the field." It seems also that the record is not quite continuous, as for many years the late Mr Stafford Smith carried on a separate business and as he was, according to the advertisement above quoted, the founder of the firm it may in a sense be said to have ceased with his death.

There were certainly people trading in stamps in 1862 as in that year, to the best of his belief, the writer (who was then 12 years old) disposed of his collection to a dealer in Belfast through the medium of an advertisement in the "Boys Own" magazine.

DID YOU KNOW ...?

The "Privileged Post" in the nineteenth century was a statutory mechanism that provided for the free transmission of mail under a signature (or "frank") of designated public officials and Members of Parliament. It was supposed to cover the dissemination of official notices and proclamations from Westminster, the transmission of reports and returns back to London and for much of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries the collation of clandestine materials gathered through the routine surveillance of the population.

But the Privileged Post was systematically abused. The chief offenders were metropolitan bankers and merchants who used Members of Parliament to frank their everyday commercial correspondence. In just three months in 1794 more than 100,000 letters were franked by Members of Parliament who sat in the banking interests alone and a further 27,000 by those who represented mercantile interests. It was much the same thirty or forty years later. As one tea merchant observed, parliamentary franks were still "very much sought after by parties in the city. It is frequently deemed a matter of advantage to have the power of commanding those franks".

Members of Parliament also were able to send newspapers free of charge, but this concession eventually was extended to the public at large - not least because people forged newspaper franks "as a matter of course". Rowland Hill himself provides a vivid illustration of the practice: "In the year 1823, taking a holiday excursion through the Lake District to Scotland and wishing to keep my family informed as to my movements and my health (then in a depressed state), I carried with me a number of old newspapers and in franking these ... I indicated my state of health by selecting names according to previous arrangements; the more Liberal members being taken to indicate that I was better, while Tories were to show that I was falling back; "Sir Francis Burdett" was to imply vigorous health, while probably "Lord Eldon" would almost have brought one of my brothers after me in anxiety and alarm".

"It must not be supposed that in franking these newspapers I was usurping a privilege" Hill added hastily; "Anyone was at liberty to use the name of any peer or member of the House of Commons without his consent". This was at best a dubious claim, but whatever the rights and wrongs in the matter, by the 1830's newspapers were carried free of charge if the newspaper stamp tax had been paid. (From The American Philatelist, May 1989).

COVER MISCELLANY

660 (a)	<u>L5a, 1 May 1935, 2^{1/2}d. Mt Cook & Lilies</u>	On illustrated FDC - Maori maiden, typed address, clean	\$20.00
661 (a)	<u>S18c, 7 May 1935, 6d. S/J on FDC</u>	Plain envelope, postmark - Grey Lynn-Arch Hill	\$60.00
662 (a)	<u>T7a, 30 September 1935, 1d. Health</u>	On illustrated Health FDC: "Who said Health Camps?!" Invercargill machine-cancel - some marks on cover	\$20.00
663 (a)	<u>L1b, 14 April 1937</u>	Souvenir cover commemorating the Official Opening of the New Chief Post Office, Dunedin. Dunedin slogan cancel	\$2.00
664 (a)	<u>S25a/c. 13 May 1937</u>	Coronation set on illustrated FDC - clean	\$7.50
	(b) <u>S25a/c Ditto</u>	Registered New Plymouth, some marks	\$6.50
	(c) <u>S25a/c Ditto</u>	Registered St. Albans, cover folded and some marks, but unusual date stamp registration label..	\$7.00
	(d) <u>S25a/c Ditto</u>	Set in pairs on Australia Coronation cover	\$10.00
	(e) <u>S25a/c Ditto</u>	Set in pairs + registered: Gardens, Dunedin, plus pairs M1a, M2a, M4a franked arrival(?) Cancel North East Valley, 26 July 38	\$20.00
665 (a)	<u>T9a, 1 Oct. 1937, 1d. Health</u>	On illustrated Health FDC	\$10.00
666 (a)	<u>M4a, 31 Aug. 1938</u>	Cover Empire Air Service, inauguration of regular air service - a little untidy	\$2.00
667 (a)	<u>T12a/b, 1 Oct. 1940</u>	Health set. Plain FDC - neat .	\$40.00
668 (a)	<u>T13a/b, 4 Oct. 1941</u>	Health set FDC - clean	\$40.00
	(b) <u>T13a/b Ditto</u>	Slight marks	\$30.00
669 (a)	<u>T15a/b, 1 Oct. 1943</u>	Health set FDC - clean	\$3.50
	(b) <u>T15a/b Ditto</u>	Slight marks	\$2.00
670 (a)	<u>T16a/b, 9 Oct 1944</u>	Health set FDC - clean.....	\$3.00

NZ Post Collections : 1988 v. 1989

Item	1988	1989	% Increase
Year-Pack	\$17.75	\$28.50	60%
FDC-Pack	\$30.82	\$47.60	54%
Year-Book	\$49.00	\$53.00	8%

200	<u>RD3a, 1d. Victoria Land 1910-13</u>	
(a)	Single UHM	\$100.00
(b)	Single LHM	\$75.00
(c)	Single MNG	\$45.00
(d)	Block of four, fine UHM	\$500.00
(e)	RD3a(z). No stop after LAND. Block of four, 2 x LHM (error), 2 x UHM. Very fine	\$1025.00
(f)	RD3a(y). "Q" flaw - UHM pair	\$350.00

ARMS TYPE

711 (a)	<u>Z50d, £4 Light Blue, WT Paper VM</u>	UHM - superb	\$275.00
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EARLY OFFICIALS - USED1898 PICTORIALS

501 (a)	<u>EO6b, 2d. PEMBROKE PEAK, p.14</u>	
	Purple FU \$2: CU \$1: NSFU25
	Red Purple FU \$2: CU \$1: NSFU .....	.25
	Block of four CU Purple	\$5.00
	Ditto Red Purple	\$5.50
(b)	<u>EO9d, 3d. HUIAS, p.14</u>	
	Bistre-brown FU \$5: CU \$3: NSFU .....	.50
	Bistre FU \$5: CU \$3: NSFU .....	.50
	Pale Yellow-bistre NSFU .....	.50
	Block of four in Bistre	\$20.00
	Ditto Pale Yellow-bistre	\$15.00
(c)	<u>EO14g, 6d. KIWI, p.14</u>	
	Pink FY \$60: CU \$40: NSFU	\$5.00
(d)	<u>EO15b, 6d. KIWI (redrawn), p.14</u>	
	Carmine CU \$35: NSFU	\$5.00
(e)	<u>EO15c, 6d. KIWI Ditto, p.14 x 15</u>	
	Carmine FU \$60: CU \$40: NSFU	\$5.00
(f)	<u>EO18e, 1/- KEA and KAKA, p.14</u>	
	Orange-red FU \$25: CU \$15: NSFU	\$3.00
	Red FU \$25: CU \$15: NSFU	\$3.00
(g)	<u>EO20e, 2/- MILFORD SOUND, p.14</u>	
	Blue-green, FU \$95: CU	\$60.00
	Deep Green NSFU	\$15.00
(h)	<u>EO21e 15/- MT. COOK, p.14 (sideways watermark)</u>	
	Red NSFU	\$55.00
502 (a)	<u>FO4b, ½d. GREEN MT COOK - Original Plates, p.14</u>	
	Pale Green FU \$1.50: CU \$1: NSFU .....	.15
	Superb used block of four	\$7.50
	CU block of eight	\$12.00
(b)	<u>FO5c, ½d. Green Ditto - New Plates</u>	
	Deep Yellow-green FU \$2.50: CU \$1.75: NSFU .....	.40
503 (a)	<u>GO7a, 1d. UNIVERSAL - Booklet Plate FU \$20: CU</u>	
	\$12.50: NSFU	\$2.50
	Pair CU	\$40.00
(b)	<u>GO9a, 1d. Ditto, Waterlow Plates FU \$1: CU 50¢:</u>	
	NSFU .....	.15
(c)	<u>GO10a, 1d. Ditto, Royle Plates FU 75¢: CU 40¢:</u>	
	NSFU .....	.15
(d)	<u>GO11a, 1d. Ditto, Surface Plate FU \$2: CU \$1.20:</u>	
	NSFU .....	.20
	CU block of four	\$10.00
504 (a)	<u>HO1a, ½d. Green King Edward VII</u>	
	Green FU 75¢: CU 40¢: NSFU .....	.15
	Yellow-green FU 75¢: CU 40¢: NSFU .....	.15
	CU block of four	\$4.00
(b)	<u>HO3a, 3d. Chestnut Ditto, p.14 x 14½</u>	
	Chestnut FU \$3: CU \$2: NSFU .....	.35
	Deep Chestnut FU \$3: CU \$2: NSFU.....	.35
	Fine CU block of four	\$15.00

(c) H03c, 3d. Chestnut Ditto, p.14 x 13½	
Chestnut Fine CU \$125: CU \$70: NSFU	\$15.00
(d) H06b, 6d. Carmine Ditto, p.14 x 14½	
Carmine FU \$10: CU \$5: NSFU	\$1.00
(e) H07b, 8d. Indigo Blue, p.14 x 14½ - Scarce!	
CU \$30: NSFU	\$3.50
(f) H07c, 8d. Ditto, p.14 x 13½	
CU \$30: NSFU	\$3.50
(g) H08b, 1/- Orange-vermilion, p.14 x 14½	
FU \$45: CU \$25: NSFU	\$4.50

MODERN NEW ZEALAND PLATE VARIETIES

1970 PICTORIALS

1000 (a) P1a, ½¢ Glade Copper Butterfly	Bottom right selvedge block of ten (2 x 5), featuring Row 6/20. Flaw in right selvedge R8/20. Major retouch to the left of antennae R9/20. Retouches behind second "A" of "ZEALAND", left of upper segment left wing, Plate 1A(4)	\$10.00
(b) P1a, ½¢ Ditto	Plate 1A(4) top left selvedge block of four (6 x 2), R1/6 retouch under left wing. R2/1, horizontal plate scratch behind antennae.....	\$10.00
(c) P1a, Ditto	Plate 1B(4). Block of eight bottom selvedge. Row 10/5 retouch left of upper right wing. R10/8, early state. Flaw in black plate upper right right-hand wing.....	\$15.00
(d) P1a, block as above	This time featuring R10/8, the yellow flaw on the tip of upper right-hand wing has extended progressively down the centre of the wing. Progressive plate crack	\$12.50
(e) P1a Ditto	Plate 1B(4). Top selvedge block of six. R3/4. Retouching of white flaw on the fraction bar of "½". Good	\$8.75
1001 (a) P2a, 1¢ Red Admiral Butterfly, Wmk. W8	Plate 1B(4). Selvedge block of twelve. R7/3 retouch under "1¢". Row 9/1 retouch over "w" of New. Row 9/4 retouch centre top margin. Superb	\$10.00
(b) P2a 1¢ Ditto	Top selvedge block of ten. Row 3/10 retouch left of upper left wing. Row 5/9 background retouch top of left antenna. Plate 1B(4)	\$10.00
1002 (a) P3a, 2¢ Tussock Butterfly, Wmk. W8	Plate 1A(4). Bottom right selvedge block of 12. Row 9/18 massive retouch under second "A" of ZEALAND. Row 8/17 and R9/17 retouching behind the "2" of 2¢	\$11.50
1003 (a) 2½¢ Maggie Moth and 4¢ on 2½¢ (P4a, P30a)	Magnificent set including two blocks of ten from the first two rows. 2½¢ Row 2/14, break in small green stalk and P30a shows the flaw in the same position. Magnificent and scarce variety proving set	\$50.00
1004 (a) P5a, 3¢ Lichen Moth	Plate 1B(3). Top selvedge block of eight, including Row 2/14. Retouch right margin background under "3¢". Nice set of mint and commercially used	\$20.00