

New Zealand Railway Newspaper, Parcel & Freight stamps

1890-1928



© Adam Miller FRPSNZ

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Version 10 (NZR cancels, imperf between vertical pairs, "D" label varieties)

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Introduction

These stamps, used to prepay railway carriage charges for newspapers, were introduced in early 1890, with the parcel and freight stamps following in 1894. The last stamps were finally withdrawn in 1928 when the Railway Charges stamps came into in full use.

Two major works deal with the stamps production and use. The first was a chapter in Volume VI of *The Postage Stamps of New Zealand*, (1977, RPSNZ), which also covered the Railway Charges stamps. In 1979 the chapters relating to railway and revenue stamps were released in monograph form as *New Zealand Railway and Revenue Stamps*. Both are still reasonably frequently available, and so a lot of information contained in them is not repeated here.

More recently, the stamps have been catalogued at a specialised level in the *Kiwi Catalogue of New Zealand Revenue and Railway Stamps* (8th Edition, 2023, Mowbray Collectables), and also online by Dave Elsmore at www.ozrevenues.com (since 1997).

This document aims instead to give a broad coverage of the stamps, and illustrate interesting features and examples as a permanent online record. Cinderella items based upon the design are also included.

Most illustrations are at 150%.

1. The Newspaper Stamps

The stamps were issued in six values, to a common design. The colours below are the usually accepted catalogue colours.

½d black

1d violet

2d blue

3d brown

3d yellow

4d rose

6d green

There were multiple printings of all values, with a variety of perforations, papers and shades found.

The first printing are known as Scroll Type A. The later printings of the ½d and 1d were made from new plates, where the design differed by a broader scroll between NEWSPAPER and the value. These are Scroll Type B, dated copies first seen from July 1916.



½d Scroll Type A



½d Scroll Type B



Proofs exist in a variety of colours, such as this 3d in brown. All are very scarce.

A page of SPECIMEN overprints is held in the NZ Post archives (ex Government Print) at Te Papa Tongarewa. Perforated specimens held are ½d, 2d, 3d lemon-yellow, 4d & 6d. Imperf items held are 1d, 4d and 3d yellow. No 3d brown is held.



A 1d with a larger SPECIMEN handstamp in violet was offered in the Classic Stamps Ltd Private Treaty sale in 2003.



All were printed by the Stamp Printing Branch of the Government Printer. Full printing records are not extant, but what records do exist allow a picture of the relative number printed to be determined.

Value	Printing dates	No. Sheets	No. Stamps
½d	12/10/91 – 4/5/14	58,000	6,960,000
1d	7/1/92 – 24/1/06	26,500	3,180,000
2d	12/10/91 – 30/4/06	7,650	918,000
3d	8/92 – 27/7/05	1,450	174,000
4d	1/2/92 – 27/7/05	2,550	306,000
6d	8/92 – 30/4/06	1,450	174,000

All were printed in sheets of 120, made up of a base unit of 15 stereotyped clichés. Full details of the creation of the printing plates can be found in Brodie (1977). The plates were broken up for scrap in late 1928.

Cancellations

Used stamps are found with a variety of cancellations.

1. Coloured pencil or crayon cross or lines. This is by far the most common.
2. Handmade “X” canceller
3. NZR Cancelled
4. Straight-line station-name cancel
5. Newspaper office handstamp e.g. NZ TIMES.
6. Other handmade cancellers
7. Postal cancellations

Pencil/crayon cross lines

The instructions to District Managers issued by the Railways Commissioners on 17th December 1889 on the “Carriage of Newspapers” explicitly instructed “that sending stations cancel the stamps by drawing the pen diagonally across them: thus **X**.”

Most stamps found bear such cancellations, in lead pencil, indelible pencil (violet), various inks (most commonly black), and coloured pencils or crayons (blue, green and red mainly).

“X” markings





Mint full gum examples cancelled with "X" are known, implying some station-masters pre-cancelled their stamps.

Grid of lines



Lines





Squiggles



Initials etc



9/3/90

Handmade “X” canceller

“X” canceller



Generally found on the earliest (perf 12½) stamps.

NZR Straight-line station name

CHRISTCHURCH



DUNEDIN



Also recorded in a smaller font c.4mm tall, usually as two stampings forming a cross.

DUNEDIN PARCELS



Font 4.3mm and 6.2mm tall recorded.

HAWERA



(Brodie, 1977)

NELSON



WESTPORT



WAIMANGAROA



WINTON



DARFIELD, FEILDING, MARTON, MOSGIEL, NEW PLYMOUTH
WAIKOUAITI, WAIMATE, WELLINGTON and WESTPORT are also
recorded.

NZR Railway Charges-type cancellations

CANCELLED and
N.Z.R. CANCELLED



Generally found on the earliest (perf 12½) stamps.

NZR



Oval station cancel



OAMARU station overprint, Type B scroll.

Very late use – January 1928 – just as the first ½d Railway Charges stamps were being placed into use.

PARCELS



... ARTMEN.../
HEAD OFFICE



“Clock” cancel



HAMILTON station overprint, Type B scroll

Newspaper offices

NZ TIMES



N.Z. Times / WELLING-/TON / N.Z. Mail.
In purple, green, black or blue



NZ TIMES



N.Z. TIMES / PUBLISHING DEPARTMENT
Recorded in black, green, purple and green.

THE DOMINION



THE DOMINION / PUBLISHING DEPARTMENT

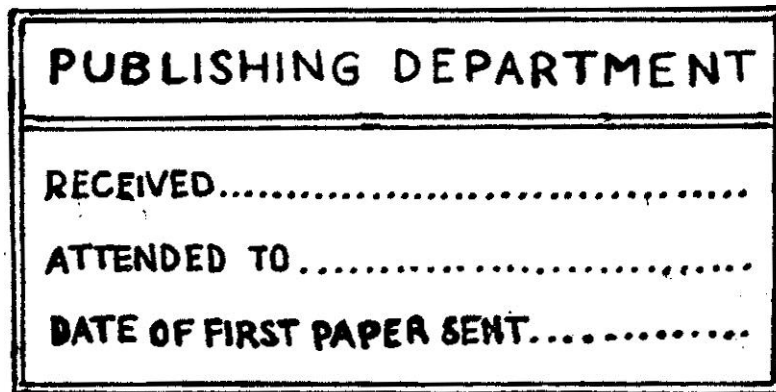
R. BROWN
Lumsden
c.1907



R. BROWN
NEWS
FANCY GOODS
LUMSDEN

Also known in a bi-convex design as a "Bookseller and News Agent"

Unknown



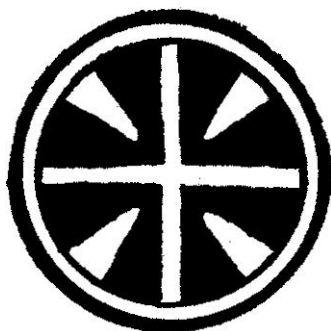
Note right-hand stamp pre-cancelled before being affixed.

PUBLISHING DEPARTMENT audit stamp

Geometric obliterators

Circular geometric

There are several variants, one at 28mm diameter, others at 25mm.



9-barred oval



Post Office cancellations

The stamps were not valid for the carriage of mail by the Post Office, but some examples are known with postal cancellations.

WINCHESTER
22 JL 91



Earliest recorded postal cancellation

RICHMOND
12 JE 94



(David Holmes Postal Bid Sale 12 June 2001)

BELGROVE
3 MY 95



Indecipherable
31 MY 97



Indecipherable
6 JA 02
(ebay)



DENNISTON
7 SP 10
(TradeMe)



DENNISTON
7 SP 10



(Brodie, 1977)

OPUA
12 FE 16



CHRISTCHURCH
TRAFFIC RAILWAY
27 MY 16

(also a block of 4 1d
scroll type B dated
17 JL 16 is recorded)



LOWER HUTT
13 MR 17

The whole set is
recorded "per
favour" with this
cancel and date,
including pairs of
the 1/2d and 2d. The
1/2d and 1d are
scroll type B.



RICHMOND
12 JE ?



HILLGROVE
22 DE ??
(*ebay*)



The Railway Charges-type Station overprints

At least 21 stations used the stamps with horizontal overprints exactly the same as the Type I overprints from the first issues of the later Railway Charges stamps. These were applied through an inked ribbon using a vertical forme. The stamps so overprinted were the ½d black and 1d violet Scroll Type B.

All are scarce and the Kiwi catalogue prices them at \$150-200, against \$1.50 for the stamp without a station overprint.

Stations originally recorded by Brodie were Dunedin, Milton, Nelson, Pukekohe, Taihape and Woodville. To that can now be added Balclutha, Dargaville (DARGA'VLE), Hamilton, Lambton, Lumsden, Marton, Morrinsville (MRNSVILLE), Oamaru, Ohakune, Te Kuiti, Timaru, WN CBO, Wanganui, Westport and Winton. Marton is also known as a double overprint.



LAMBTON



NELSON



DUNEDIN



MARTON



MARTON doubled, believed unique



WESTPORT



TIMARU



(Brodie 1977)

Perforations & Paper

Five perforations exist - 12½, 11, 14, 10, and 10x11.

They are not equally common, and not all values exist with all perforations.

The combinations are:

Perf.	Scroll Type A	Scroll Type B	Paper type	Dates ¹
12½	All	-	Wove, Laid ²	1890-1898
11	All but 3d brown	-	Wove, Laid	1899-1916
10	½d, 1d only	-	Wove	1900?
11x10	½d only	-	Wove	1900
14	All but 3d brown and lemon	½d, 1d only	Wove, Laid	1905 (Laid) 1910-1917 (Wove) 1916-1928 (Type B)

¹ Dates from recorded dated copies - manuscript, receiving cancel or Post Office datestamp.

² The perf 12½ Laid is elusive, far more so than indicated by its catalogue value.

The Wove paper can be found both thick (c.4.5/1000") and thin (c.3/1000") papers.

The Laid papers are found in both Vertical and Horizontal.

There are four main perforations encountered:



10



11



12½



14

Perf 11 and 14 are the most commonly encountered, with perf 12½ somewhat scarcer and the perf 10 is much more difficult. The ½d perf 11x10 is rare.

Double Perforations

Double perforations are scarce.

½d perf 11 double perf.

(ex www.completestamp.co.nz)



1d perf 11 imperf between and double perf.

(Ashford Stamps auction #24
20 Sept 2001)



½d and 1d perf 11 imperf between vertical pairs.

(Classic Stamps auction #100,
10 August 2023)



Imperf at side

For reasons as yet unclear, the perf 11 Laid paper stamps are frequently found with their left side and/or base imperforated. So much so that perforated ones are decidedly scarcer. The right selvedge and top seem normally perforated.

Furthermore, this imperforate selvedge is only very rarely seen on any other paper type and perforation.

Vertical Laid p11

Left selvedge



Horizontal Laid p11

Left selvedge



Horizontal Laid p11

Bottom selvedge



p11 Laid paper with
“normal” selvages



Other perforation problems

P11 wove 1d with
sloping horizontal
perforation row



P11 wove 2d with
misaligned vertical
perforations



P11 wove 3d with
misplaced bottom
horizontal
perforations



Distinctive Shades

Apart from the usual variations within printings, there are some distinct shade variations between printings (Wove paper unless noted).



1/2d black Scroll B p14



1/2d grey Scroll B p14



1d violet p11



1d deep violet p11



2d bright blue p12½



2d blue p11 Vert. Laid



2d deep blue p11



2d milky-blue p14



3d lemon p12½ (rare)



3d deep yellow p12½



3d yellow p14



4d rose p14



4d red p11 Vert. Laid



6d yellow-green p14



6d green p11

Sheet Numbers

The number was found above the last stamp on the first row, printed in black.

Some have a code letter following the number, printed in the colour of the stamp.



Brodie's Panpex '77 Literature entry held a page of pasted-in black & white photographs of various examples of plate numbers.



a.



a.



a.



a.



b.



c.

Plate Numbers

- a. Seriffed
- b. Sans serif, large
- c. Sans serif, small

Flaws

For full details of the flaws and the process of producing the plate that gave rise to them, see *Brodie*.

Missing dot

Many stamps have no dot between “N” and “Z” at the top.



These are common and should command no premium.

No scroll



Completely missing scrolls are uncommon, many on close inspection reveal tiny spots of ink.

Cut “R” in RAILWAYS



Usually combined with the Line below Value flaw. 

Break in RHS ornament



This occurs in various states.

NFWSPAPER (broken first "E")

Occurs in second-last stamp in the top row



Raised Metal between



Items on piece

Stamps still on piece, especially showing a clear cancel, are desirable, even more so if a "mixed" franking.



Large blocks

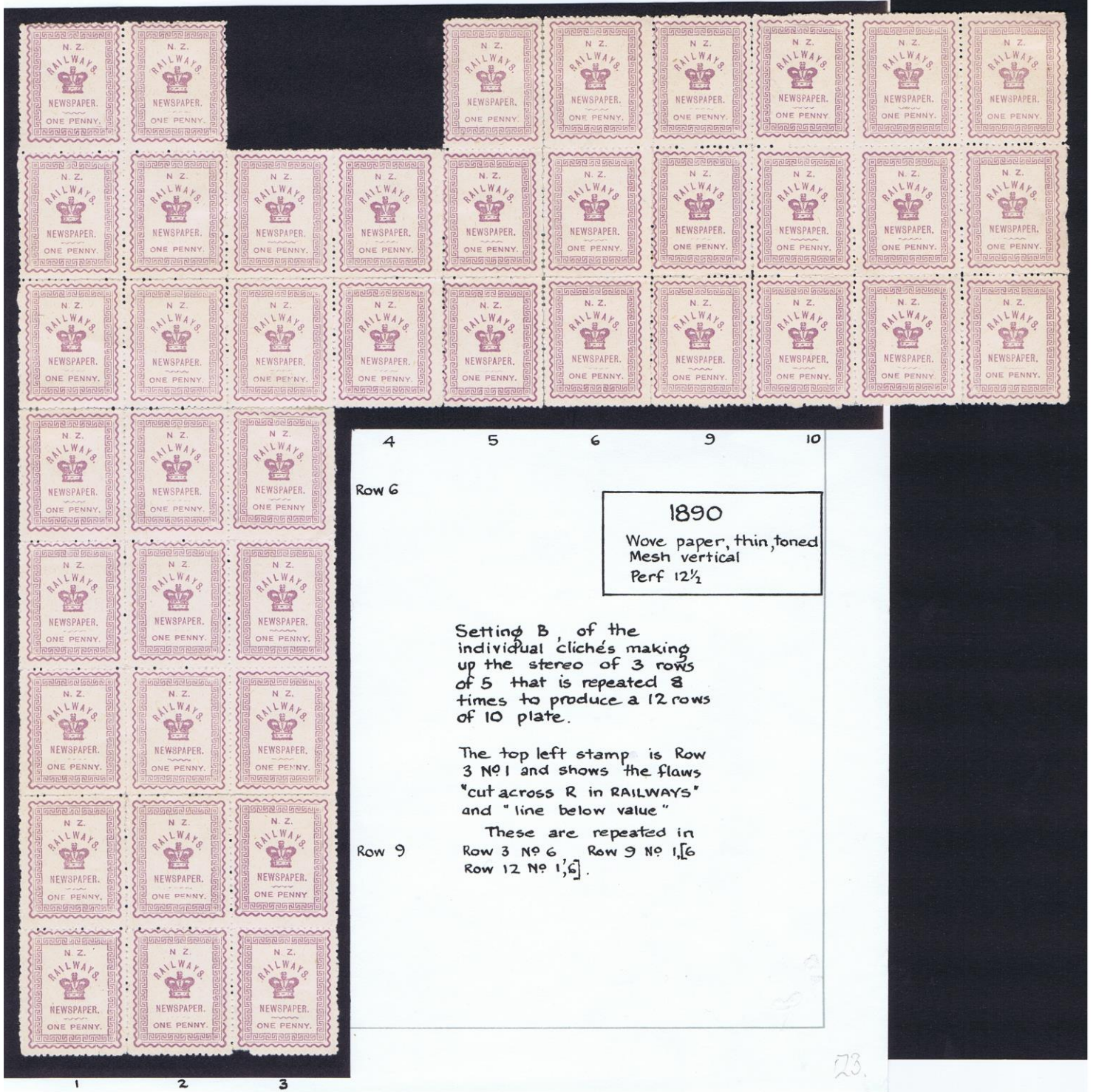


perf 11, Laid paper





(ex minch7 TradeMe)



A large part sheet (ex Brodie) of the 1d first printing, 1890.

2. The Parcel & Freight Stamps

In 1894 a trial using stamps to prepay parcel and freight was introduced on the Whangarei rail section. The District Traffic Manager at the time was H.B. Dobbie, and his initials are to be found on most copies. The experiment apparently ended in 1897, but most date-stamped examples show a September or October 1894 date (latest being 18th October).

Brodie in the Volume 6 handbook noted the earliest date seen of 24th April on a 1s Freight, but examples of the 3d and 6d Parcel stamp have now been sighted dated 4th April 1894. Brodie also notes “One datestamp of 6th February 1897 has been seen” but gives no further detail.

Both the Parcel and Freight stamps were of a similar design to the Newspaper stamps, but with a different decorative border, and the Coat of Arms replacing the crown. It is assumed they were printed in sheets of 120, as 12 rows of 10.

Parcel Stamps

The Parcel stamps were issued in two values – 3d black and 6d green, both found perf 12½ and 11. None are common.



A used strip of four of the 3d, showing clear “HD” initials and the Whangarei datestamp of 24 SEP 94 was sold in the RPNSZ postal bid sale, November 2008.



14 SEP 94, ebay July 2023 (\$322)

Freight stamps

The Freight stamps have an additional wavy outer border, and are slightly larger in size. They were issued in two values – 1s pale blue and 5s red, perf 12½. The 1s is very scarce, and Brodie noted only two copies of the 5s had been recorded - it is currently catalogued at \$7500 Mint and \$5000 Used (Kiwi catalogue, 8th Edition, 2023). A mint copy of each is recorded.



The Parcel & Freight stamps as illustrated in *The Postage Stamps of New Zealand*, Vol. VI.

Recorded copies of the Freight Stamps

1s Freight



1. RPSNZ Handbook
Volume VI



2. Stirling auction
11 May 1987



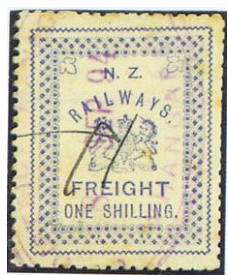
3. Stirling auction
9 Feb 1988



4. Stirling auction
23 May 1997



5. Ashford Stamps #9
26 Mar 1998



6. Classic Stamps
auction Feb 2001



7. ozrevenues.com

5s Freight



1. RPSNZ Handbook
Vol VI



2. Stirling auction
9 Feb 1988



3. Alan Craig coll.

3. Modern Forgeries

Unfortunately, as at April 2019, eBay seller scottvisnjic (Taiwan) is successfully selling a wide variety of forgeries of scarce New Zealand stamps, including Railway Parcel & Freight stamps. Those sold go for between NZ\$5 and \$10.

Those illustrated below are perf 13. Note the entirely bogus 9d Parcel and 10s Freight stamp.



Per eBay's rules, they are clearly marked as forgeries on the back, and advertised as such:

Gummed Aged MNH
Modern Reproduction
This Stamp is a Modern Reprint Stamp

參考品 / 複製品

Why are we selling replica/fantasy stamps for the collector?

Because some stamps are too expensive.
Not every collector can buy the original stamps,
so they need replica to complete their collection.

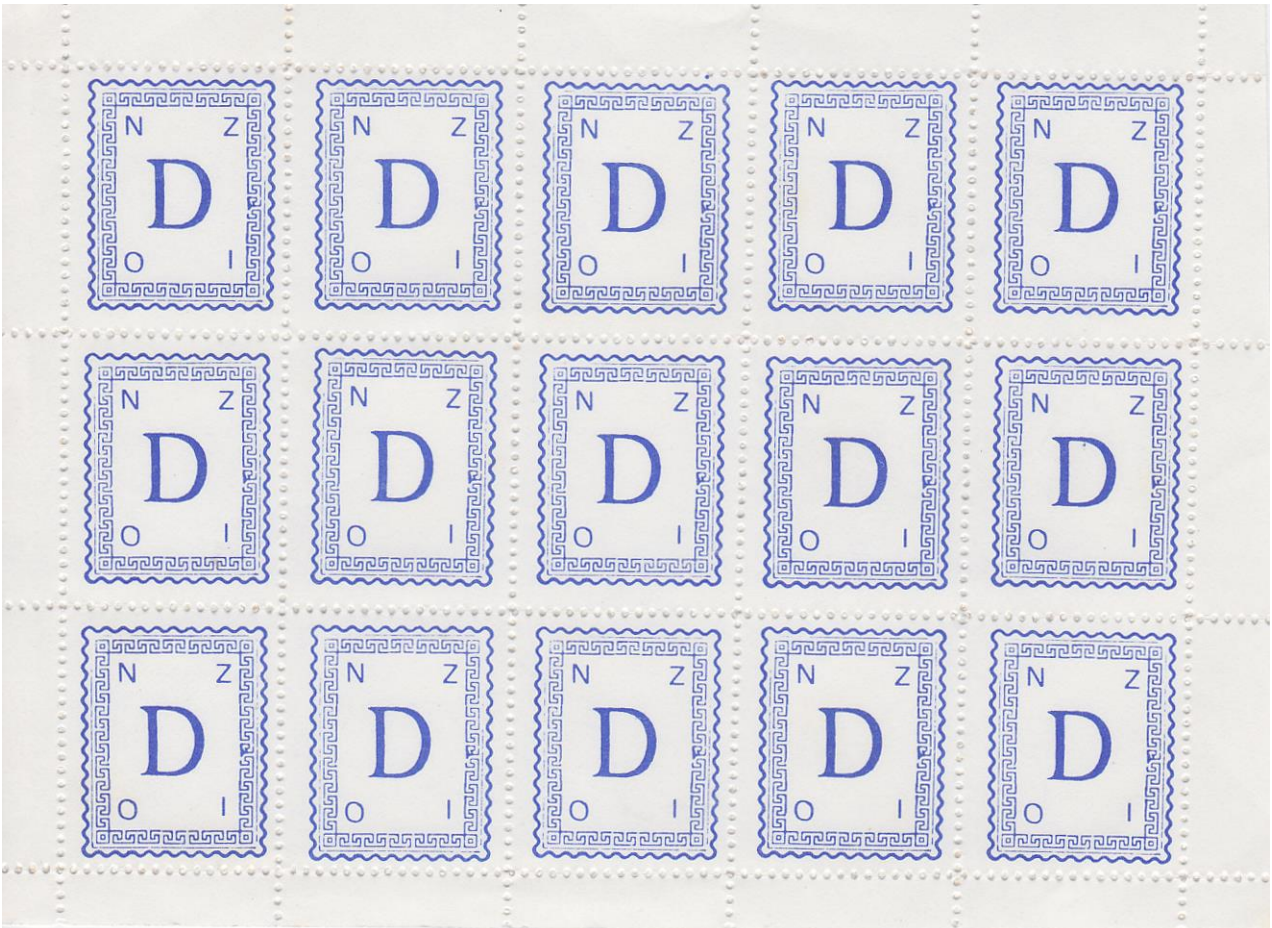
All Reproduction Stamps items are marked "FORGERY" on the back as required by eBay.

The red "FORGERY" handstamp appears easily removable as other stamps have been seen offered for resale with no backstamp.

4. The Cinderellas

a. The “D” Mail Labels

Between 1958 to 1977 Jim Brodie was the Director of the New Zealand Oceanographic Institute (NZOI). During that time, messages between Government Departments were delivered by the Government Messenger Service and were highlighted by writing or hand-stamping a large “D” in the top right corner of the envelope. Jim amused himself by producing sheets of 15 labels as below, ostensibly to be used to mark inter-departmental mail.



The labels occur in two shades and sizes, blue 29x35mm and light blue 25x30mm, and are found both perf 11 and roulette 12.5.

He also produced a similar series based on the Postal and Stationery Department Postage Free labels of the late 1800s.

A longer article on these labels, by Des Hurley FRPSNZ, is in the *New Zealand Stamp Collector* v90/2 June 2010 p40.

b. Ferrymead Railway Letter stamp

In 1987 the Ferrymead Historic Park (now Heritage Park) in Christchurch, issued a railway letter stamp to be affixed to covers carried on their tourist-focussed steam railway.

This was based on the Railway Newspaper stamp, and was printed in blue in miniature sheets of four 50c labels.



Most used items seem to be cancelled in August 1987. There are several different “CARRIED ON TRAIN” cancellations.



5. Acknowledgements

1. The Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa for the image of the 3d yellow imperforate with the Specimen overprint, held in the New Zealand Post Museum Collection.
2. S. Jones for images of some Railway Charges type I station overprints, postmarked example and the 3d brown proof.
3. Dave Elsmore (www.ozrevenues.com) for a variety of cancellation examples, two sheet number examples and the 1s Freight.
4. Darryl Keegan and Mike J. for various cancellations.
5. A. Craig for the 5s Freight, and station cancels information.
6. Various online auction sellers' images of items¹

6. References

1. *The Postage Stamps of New Zealand Volume VI*, 1977, RPSNZ, Chapter XXII
2. *New Zealand Railways Newspaper and Freight Stamps*, J.W. Brodie, Panpex '77 Literature Entry (copy held in RPSNZ Library)
3. *New Zealand Railway and Revenue Stamps*, RPSNZ, J.W. Brodie, 1979.
4. *The 1890 3d N.Z. Railways Newspaper stamp perf 12½*, The New Zealand Stamp Collector V94/2 June 2014, A. Miller
5. *The Kiwi Catalogue of New Zealand Revenue and Railway Stamps*, 8th edition, 2023, Mowbray Collectables, D. Smitham (Ed.)
6. www.ozrevenues.com (since 1997), Dave Elsmore
7. J.W. Brodie research notes held in RPSNZ Archives, section 4.8
8. Classic Stamps Ltd Auction catalogues 1997-2012
9. Ashford Stamps Ltd Auction catalogues 1995-2020
10. David Holmes Philatelist Postal Bid Sales 1997-2006
11. Stirling Auction catalogues, 1987-1997

Finally, collectors with information or images to update this monograph are invited to contact the author at nz78adam@gmail.com.

A 300dpi (or better) scan is appreciated.

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