

# The 1929 and 1930 New Zealand Health Stamps

John Watts concludes the special series of articles written by members of the New Zealand Society of Great Britain

**T**he Health Camp movement in New Zealand started on 25 November 1919 when 55 children boarded a train at Wanganui which took them south to Turakina, near Marton. There they would spend three weeks under canvas in the charge of the Wanganui School Medical Officer, Dr Elizabeth Gunn, and her assistant, School Nurse, Winifred Wise, at 'Annbank Farm'.

The camp was a great success with Dr Gunn proving that she could improve children's health with the aid of plenty of food and fresh air. She continued to hold camps almost every year through to 1930 and the experiment caught the imagination of other groups throughout New Zealand, who followed the Gunn example and held similar camps.

Running the camps required funds and an immigrant to New Zealand from Denmark, Kirstine Nielsen, living in Norsewood, remembered the Christmas Seal issues in her home country being introduced in 1904 and that they were successful in raising funds to build a hospital for children suffering from tuberculosis. With the support of the Norsewood Women's Institute, she approached Lady Fergusson the wife of the Governor General with her idea for fund raising. She also enlisted the help of her son, who had a better command of English, to write, on 10 May 1926, outlining her proposal to the local Member of Parliament, Sir George Hunter.

The MP sent a memorandum to the Postmaster General at the end of June 1927, outlining the recommendation. The Minister approved of the principle but considered that it should take the form of a combined 'postage and charity stamp', and that the Post office should retain five per cent of the postage value of the stamp.

A cabinet minute of 19 July 1927 stated, 'Scheme to be submitted with object in view before authority to proceed approved'.

Discussions took place between the Post Office and the Health Departments to consider if other organisations that supported children's welfare should be considered as recipients of any funds raised from the proposed scheme. Also, whether monies raised in particular parts of the country go to benefit those areas. Eventually it was recommended to the Postmaster General in August 1927 that 'the proceeds of the first appeal should be devoted to the establishment of Health Camps for children who have been in contact with cases of phthisis.'

In September 1927 Cabinet directed that the matter 'stand in abeyance'.

## Approval

On 23 September 1929 the matter of issuing charity stamps was again placed before the Postmaster General with the recommendation, 'that the stamps each having a charity value of 1d. be issued and that the

amount recovered from the sale of such stamps, less 5 per cent, be devoted to the treatment of tuberculosis'. The Postmaster General took the matter to the cabinet on 12 October 1929, where it was given approval. An amendment was made to the Finance Act on 25 October 1929—Section 34—to validate the sale of a postage stamp for an amount greater than its postal value.

Instructions were given to the government Printer on 25 October 1929 to proceed with the preparation of a design embodying the following features, photograph of a nurse, the slogan 'Help stamp out tuberculosis', 'Postage 1d.', 'Charity 1d.' and an International Anti-Tuberculosis cross.

The design was drawn by Stanley Davis of the Advertising Branch of the New Zealand Railways Department, who was responsible for the vignette in conjunction with Mr L.C. Mitchell, a member of the drafting staff of the Government Printing Office, who was responsible for the frame.

The image of the nurse was taken from a photograph of a recently qualified nurse, Nell Burt, who was staying with her uncle, Mr P.N. Cryer, who held a senior position in the Post Office at Wellington (he was later appointed the Director General).

The plate was 'cut' at the Government Printing Office and, as it was not planned to make a large printing, it was decided to experiment by using a zinc plate.

There were four essays prepared for the 1929 stamp issue, as illustrated. The issued stamp has almost no shading on the left cheek and a narrow band of shading on the right cheek, there were no circular patches.

*Kirstine Nielsen, nee Bruun, 1873-1938*



*Mrs N R Jones holding the photograph of herself used for the 1929 stamp*





1. Left facing head in narrow rectangle. medal on left breast. Side borders of the stamp—thick short lines. Rafter pattern in two blocks near top either side of the image frame



2. Full face in shield with step in frame left. medal central. Partial shading behind shield

The Government printer's records state that on 30 November 1929, 'Two penny Charity Stamp—zinc line block—were designed and made by the Litho Department.' The design was drawn to size about 6in x 5in, this was then reduced to a third of its size by photography. 80 reproductions of the print were taken and then assembled in eight horizontal rows of ten with spacing between each print. The sheet was then further reduced by photography to bring the prints to the stamp size required. A print was made on to the zinc plate which was then etched to form a printing plate.

Cowan chalky paper with NZ and Star watermark was used to print the stamps. It was supplied in two lots, 12,500 sheets on 26 November 1929 (Q231539-Q219039), to produce the original order of 2,000,000 stamps. A further order of 2,000,000 was issued on 5 December 1929, requiring a further 12,000 sheets of paper (Q219040-Q231539). 3,973,840 stamps were delivered to the Custodian of Stamps, 163% sheets having been damaged. Records state that the ink used was 'M and M ink (Morrisons)'.

The sheets of paper supplied would have been of the same size as those used for the George V definitive surface printed issue. The definitives were smaller than the health stamp and were printed from plates that produced 240 stamps. Therefore it is assumed that the Cowan paper sheets were halved vertically prior to printing. The right-hand side of the uncut sheet contained a sheet serial number, which is why sheets will be found with no number.

### Plate modification

During the printing of the stamps it was noted that there was plate wear at the point of contact with the pressure roller. The stamps affected were denser in colour and showed a filling-in of the finer lines of the design. To overcome this characteristic 'buffer bars' were added to the printing plate—12 in total—which printed as red oblongs across the full width of the sheet in the top selvedge. It is not known at what stage in the printing this modification was

introduced. Sheets were perforated 14 gauge using a comb machine that had been used for the 2s. and 3s. 'Admiral-type' stamps.

The stamps were issued on 11 December 1929 and withdrawn on 28 February 1930. The total gross value accruing to the Health Camp organisation, based on the number of stamps sold, was £2470.4s.0d.

To publicise the stamps the Post Office issued a poster which suggested that the stamps could be a sign of 'Christmas Goodwill' and be used for the postage of Christmas parcels and letters, for some people they represented a 'Christmas stamp'.

### Adverse comments

However, not all New Zealanders were happy with the stamp design. A cable was received from the High Commissioner in London on 24 January 1930 stating that adverse comments were being made in the UK and the words, 'Help stamp out tuberculosis' on the stamp, could suggest that the New Zealand butter and cheese industry might be prejudicially affected.

A memorandum was sent from the Postmaster of Mount Eden on 18 February

1930 relaying the complaint of one of his female customers, in which she stated, 'She had availed herself of the opportunity to help the cause by purchasing Health stamps, but has refrained from sending them to some of her friends and relatives who are unfortunately afflicted with the disease (tuberculosis)'.

On 24 March 1930 a design for the 1930 Health stamp (Smiling Boy) for which Filmercraft Ltd, Wellington, was paid £6.6s., Mr L C Mitchell being the actual designer, was submitted. The design had been agreed with the Minister of Health and was sent to the Commissioner of Stamp Duties requesting that the die and plate should be manufactured in England. The Post Office forwarded the design on 7 April 1930 to the High Commissioner in London, suggesting that the die and plate should be prepared by the Royal Mint.

A memo received from the High Commissioner provided details of the following quotation: Perkins Bacon—£65, Royal Mint—£95, Waterlow and Sons—£229.2s.6d. The tender of Perkins Bacon was accepted, the die would cost £30 and the plate £35. The work to be completed by 31 August 1930.

### The issued stamps of 1929 and 1930





3. Full face head in shield. Full shading behind shield. Circular patch on left and right cheeks of nurse



4. Full face in shield. Circular patch on right cheek of nurse

### Substitution

By 18 August 1930 die proofs had been submitted on three separate occasions and all had been unsatisfactory. Because of time constraints in having the plates available to print the 1930 stamp, the order with Perkins Bacon was cancelled and an alternative design to the 'Smiling Boy' was considered. A memo dated 19 September 1930 was sent to the Government Printer requesting urgently a proof of the 1929 'Charity' stamp but with the slogan, 'HELP PROMOTE HEALTH' substituted for 'HELP STAMP OUT TUBERCULOSIS' and the year '1930' substituted for '1929'.

On 16 October 1930 the Postmaster General approved the design of the stamps and they were released for sale on 29 October 1930 and withdrawn on 28 February 1931. Total gross value accruing to the Health Camp organisation, based on the number of stamps sold, was £898.1s.11d.

Considerable controversy was raised when the Chief Postmasters were advised on 5 December 1930 that supplies of the 1929 Charity stamps were still available and could be supplied on application to Head Office. Stamp dealers were to be specifically informed of the fact and the information was also given to enquirers. Approximately £10 worth of stamps was sold from Head Office after the withdrawal date of the 1929 stamp.

The matter was taken up with the Postmaster General by the New Zealand Philatelic Council. They made the case that the stamp collecting fraternity depended on the philatelic integrity of stamp issuing countries, stating that the sale of the 1929 Charity stamps after their withdrawal date would adversely affect New Zealand's deservedly earned high reputation among philatelists, putting it in the same category as some South American states who had 'remaindered' certain issues. It was considered that there had been a breach of faith on the part of the Post Office relating to the stated dates for the sale of the 1929 issue.

### Adverse effect

A reply signed by Mr J B Donald, Postmaster General, stated that, in regard to the special object for which the stamp was produced and the fact that the main demand for the stamp for postage purposes was restricted to a short season, it was unnecessary to hold supplies of the stamp at all post offices indefinitely, backed by the announcement that the stamps would only be on sale at post offices for a short time. And as such it was never intended that the stamp should become obsolete within a few months of issue. Unfortunately the philatelic public and dealers were not placated, and the re-issue of the 1929 stamp had an adverse effect on sales of the 1930 Health stamp, also the 1931 'Smiling Boy' pair, which were further effected by the economic slump of the 1930s.

During the annual examination of the Custodian's stock of stamps in September 1931 it was noted that among the stocks of obsolete stamps were: 1929 Charity stamps—2,633,840 and 1930 Charity stamps—484,720. It was recommended that the stock be destroyed.

A memo was sent to the Commissioner of stamp duties on 31 October 1931 agreeing to this action being carried out. There is something of a mystery regarding the accounting for the first two issues of Health stamps:

	Number printed	Number damaged	Number sold	Number destroyed	Number unaccounted for
1929	4,000,000	26,160	592,848	2,633,840	1,340,000
1930	1,000,000	8880	215,545	484,720	506,400

## The re-issue of the 1929 stamp had an adverse effect on sales of the 1930 Health stamp

Knowing how careful the Post and Telegraph Department were in accounting for stamps and stamp paper used during this period, the large number of stamps not accounted for is something of a mystery.

Health stamps continue to be issued annually by the New Zealand Post Office, raising a welcome financial contribution to the Health Camp movement.

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This article concludes the series written specially for GSM by members of the New Zealand Society of Great Britain in recognition of the 50th anniversary of the Society in 2002.

The Society caters for all levels of collecting and holds a main meeting in London every other month, as well as regional meetings in Scotland, the North and Midlands. Member benefits include a circulating packet, annual auction, competitions and a comprehensive library, not to mention the Society's award-winning bi-monthly journal, *The Kwi*.

For further information please contact the Honorary Secretary, Keith C Collins, 13 Briton Crescent, Sanderstead, Surrey, CR2 0JN; telephone 0206 657 4566 or through the Society's website: [www.cs.stir.ac.uk/~rgc/nzsgb](http://www.cs.stir.ac.uk/~rgc/nzsgb)