

New Zealand

The 1873-1895 ½d Newspaper Stamp

A display by Michael Wilkinson

25th October 2025

“This humble stamp, though modest in appearance, has an interesting history and provides more scope for study than might at first be expected.”

Background

- **1840-1864** : no charge for newspapers sent within New Zealand – so newspapers >>> paid letters
- **29 December 1864** : 1d rate introduced
- **9 March 1865** : 1d rate discontinued in face of determined opposition
- **1 January 1867** : 1d rate reintroduced following recommendation by Parliamentary Committee
- **1872** : rate to be reduced to ½d from 1 January 1873
– **but there was no ½d stamp**

The ½d Newspaper Stamp– design, die and plate

- No time to commission design, die and plate from UK
- So Government Printer, John Davies, created a design using the contemporary British ½d stamp as a guide. He had previously worked for Perkins, Bacon & Co.
- Design carved on woodblock in Melbourne
- Die and electrotypes for a plate of 240 stamps made by W H Kirk in Wellington

The British ½d stamp issued on 1 October 1870



The New Zealand ½d stamp issued on 1 January 1873



The ½d Newspaper Stamp – paper

- With paper in short supply, the Government Printer had to use whatever was available - over the stamps' lifetime, three different papers were used
- **1872** : Paper made by De la Rue for the NZ Duty stamps – a wove paper with watermark **NZ** in 10 rows of 10 and **NEW ZEALAND STAMP DUTY** in the margins
- **1875** : New paper specially designed for the ½d stamp with 240 impressions of a watermark of a **6-pointed star** arranged in register with the stamps and **NEWSPAPER POSTAGE** in the top margin
- **1892** : Paper made by de la Rue with 240 impressions of the “**NZ and star**” watermark for the Second Sideface issue. A new plate was made to better align the stamps and the watermarks.



1872



1875



1892

The ½d Newspaper Stamp – edge watermarks



strip of 5 showing

EALEND

from 1873 issue



NEWSPAPER POSTAGE

from 1875 issue

The ½d Newspaper Stamp – presentation copy



Presentation copies are invariably mint/unused.

This stamp has perf 12½ and an “NZ and star” watermark and so comes from the third (1892) printing.



The 1/2d Newspaper Stamp

overprinted O.P.S.O. in violet - perf 12½, unused

No. 189303

THE ROYAL PHILATELIC SOCIETY
LONDON

41 Devonshire Place
London W1G 6JY

Meeting of 27 OCT. 2004

AFTER COMPARISON
In the OPINION of The EXPERT COMMITTEE the item
described as

New Zealand 1891-1906 S.G. No. 0.1

1/2d Rose - Perf 12½ with Violet overprint

O.P.S.O. - Unused - i.e. Posthumous Reprint
prepared for Presentation purposes using the
original handstamp.

[Signature] Chairman

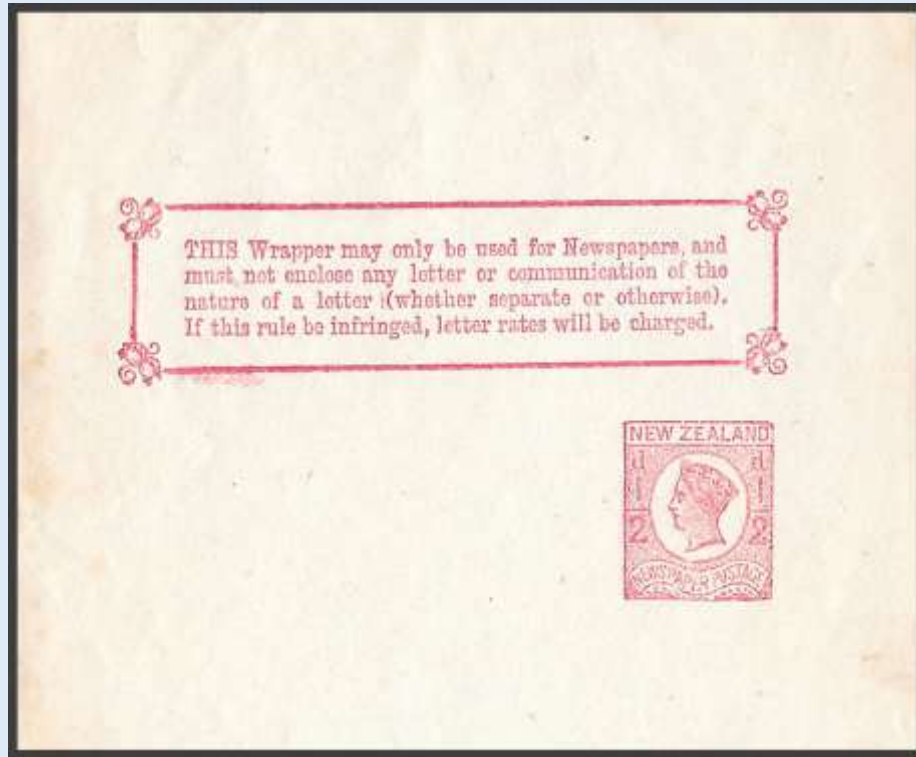
[Signature]

[Signature]

Submitted by *Peter Singer*

RPSL certificate dated October 2004 states this *"is a posthumous reprint prepared for presentation purposes using the original handstamp"*.

The ½d Newspaper Stamp – newspaper wrappers



4-line inscription : frame with straight lines
1878 : unwatermarked paper
1881 : watermarked paper



4-line inscription : frame with wavy lines
1889 : watermarked paper

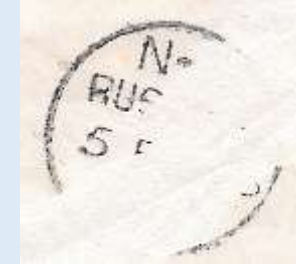
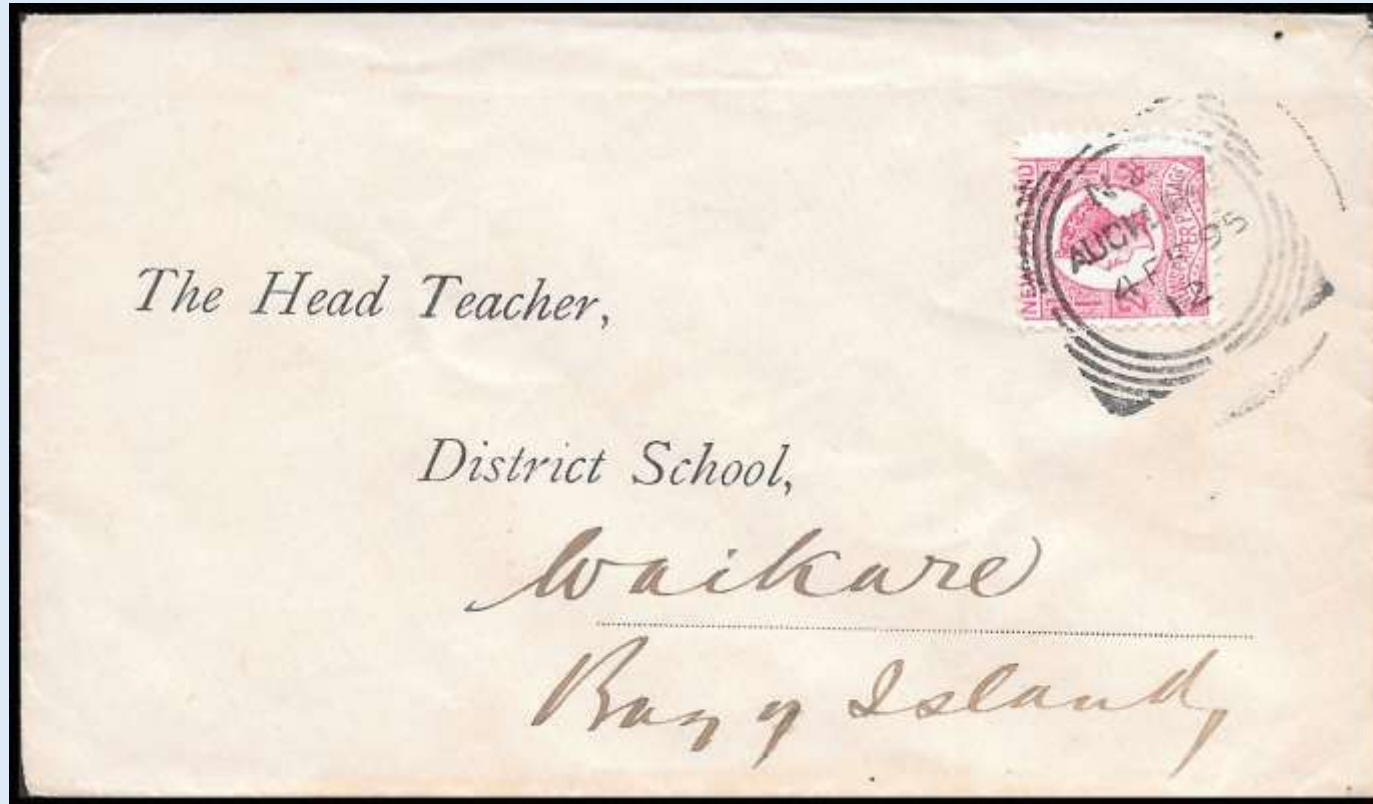
The ½d Newspaper Stamp – newspaper wrappers



5-line inscription : frame with wavy lines
WITHIN NEW ZEALAND added
1892 : watermarked paper

newspaper wrapper watermark
actual size : 16cm x 9cm

The ½d Newspaper Stamp – use on other postal items

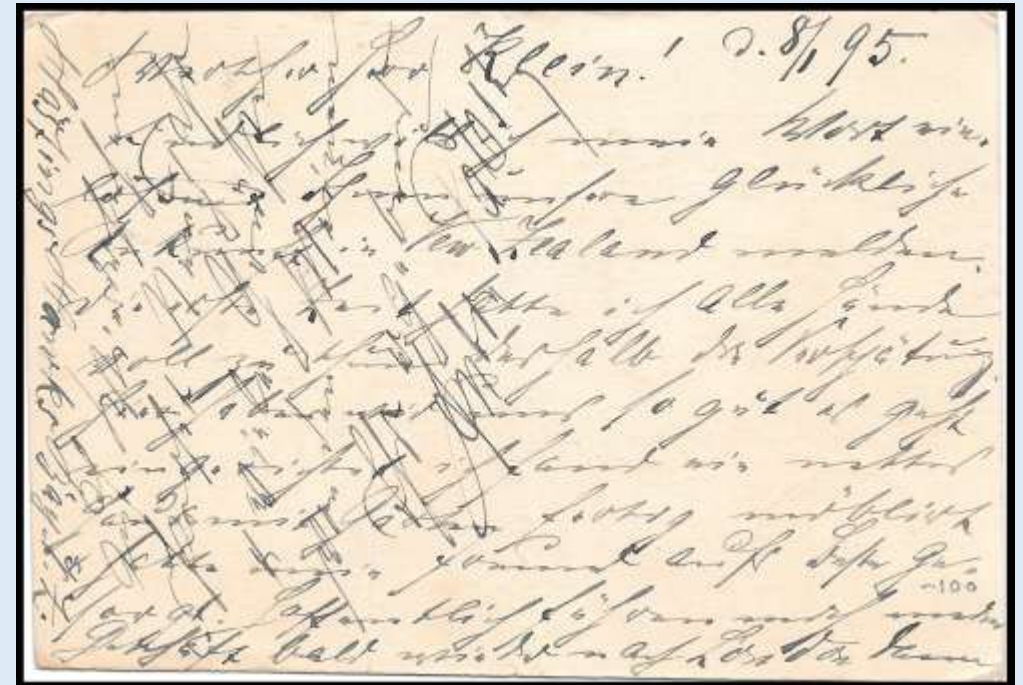


cover with ½d newspaper stamp to the Head Teacher, Waikare School, Bagg Island

Postmark : Auckland 4 February 1895

Backstamps : Opua and Russell (Bay of Islands) 5 February 1895

The ½d Newspaper Stamp – use on other postal items



Postal Stationery 1d postcard from Hastings to Klein's Hotel, Finsbury Square, London
with additional ½d newspaper stamp
Postmark : Hastings 9 January 1895
Transit Mark : Napier 9 January 1895
No arrival mark – message on back in crosswriting

The ½d Newspaper Stamp – use on other postal items



covers with ½d newspaper stamp and two 1d Second Sideface stamps – via San Francisco

Dunedin to Sale, Cheshire

Postmark : Dunedin 7 September 1892

Backstamp : Manchester 12 October 1892

Transit time to UK : 36 days

Gisborne to South Kensington

Postmark : Gisborne 18 March 1895

Backstamps : Auckland 19 March, London SW 25 April 1895

Transit time to UK : 39 days

The ½d Newspaper Stamp – use on other postal items



With two 1d Second Sideface stamps on cover from New Zealand to Canada
Postmark 8 August 1893 : **DUNEDIN**
Backstamp 5 September 1893 **KAMLOOPS**
Transit time : 29 days

Alexander McGlashan was born in 1846 in Kilmorich, Argyll and died on 3 March 1927 in Kamloops, British Columbia age 81. He married Annie Hay (1864-1908) in New Zealand in 1881. His second wife was called Catherine (1874-94), a resident of Kamloops.

The ½d Newspaper Stamp – use on other postal items

Correspondence from Christchurch, New Zealand, to William Edward White, Manningham, Bradford



In 1891 William White (1857-1931) and his wife Caroline (born 1857) lived with her parents, James and Susannah Wilson, at 6 Rose Street. They both worked in the woollen trade. Their son Arthur was born in 1884 and their daughter Lilian in 1893. By 1901 they had moved to Morecambe.



Postmark : Kaiapoi 18 May 1892
Transit mark : Christchurch 19 May 1892
Receiving mark : Bradford 22 July 1892
Transit time : 36 days



The ½d Newspaper Stamp – use on other postal items

Correspondence from Christchurch, New Zealand, to William Edward White, Manningham, Bradford



Postmark : Kaiapoi 6 September 1892
Transit mark : Christchurch 6 September 1892
Receiving mark : Bradford 12 October 1892
Transit time : 36 days



Postmark : Kaiapoi 28 December 1892
Transit mark : Christchurch 28 December 1892
Receiving mark : Bradford 1 February 1893
Transit time : 36 days

The ½d Newspaper Stamp – transition to ½d black



10 July 1894

1895 : the newspaper stamp was superseded by the ½d black
Second Sideface value, so ending the use of special stamps for newspapers.



10 October 1895

The ½d Newspaper Stamp – 150th anniversary

In 2023 the New Zealand Post Office marked the 150th anniversary of The ½d Newspaper Stamp - the first stamp printed in New Zealand - by issuing a miniature sheet incorporating a modern stamp, face value \$6.90, surrounded by advertising from an 1873 newspaper.

