

The Queen Victoria Postal Stationery Postcards – by Johnny Barkley

25 October 2025

The study of New Zealand postal stationery is dominated by the works of the late Robert Samuel. His study of postal stationery resulted in the production of the catalogues and number system that bear his name, and which are still used by collectors to this day.

Laterally, just before his death, he worked on Volume IX of The Postage Stamps of New Zealand (2006).

While these works provide a superb foundation for the study of New Zealand's postal stationery it has become evident that there are still gaps in our knowledge that the author would like to try and fill.

These include:

- The earliest known use;
- The use of pre-1890 cards to destinations outside of New Zealand;
- Surviving numbers of some of the rarer cards.

1876 – 1d Red-brown Postcard



Believed to be the only known essay, printed in black and with a different font for 'NEW ZEALAND'.
(Courtesy Steve Schumann)

POST



CARD.

NEW ZEALAND.



THE ADDRESS ONLY TO BE WRITTEN ON THIS SIDE.

The earliest recorded postcards, sent by the
Postmaster General, 20th October 1876.

*The Postmaster-General has the
honor to forward a specimen of the
New Zealand Post Card, which will
be brought into use in this Colony on
the 1st of November next.*

*General Post Office, A.L.,
Wellington, 20th October, 1876.*

On Page 2 of Volume IX, it states:

“These cards were sent as specimens, possibly to postmasters, newspaper offices, or distinguished persons, prior to the first day of issue”

A search of Papers Past means we can partially quantify this statement to:

The cards were sent as specimens to newspaper offices. And possibly to postmasters and distinguished persons. In some cases members of the public were invited to view the postcards.

The Postmaster-General has forwarded us specimens of the New Zealand Post Card, which will be brought into use on the 1st of November next. The card is of a light cream color, and neatly got up, but we think the paper is rather thin. The specimens are on view at this office.

Wanganui Herald, Volume X, Issue 2949, 28 October 1876, Page 2

gaily.
We have received from the Postmaster-General a specimen of the new post card, which will be brought into use in the colony on Wednesday next. On one side is an impression of the penny stamp and the words "Post Card, New Zealand. The address only to be written on this side," and beneath is a blank space for the address. The other side is blank, and the number of words that may be written on it is only limited by the size of the hand writing. The cards are available for any part of the colony.

Nelson Evening Mail, Volume XI, Issue 233, 30 October 1876, Page 2

North Otago Times, Volume XXV, Issue 1418, 28 October 1876, Page 2



POST CARDS.--We are in receipt from the Postmaster-General of specimens of the New Zealand Post Card, which will be brought into use in this Colony on the 1st November next. The card is $5\frac{1}{2}$ by $3\frac{1}{4}$ inches, cream colored, and bears on the address side the imprint of a penny postage stamp within a neat border, and the words "Post Card, New Zealand," surmounted by the Royal arms; beneath which appear the words "The address only to be written on this side." They will, no doubt, prove a great convenience, but, in our opinion, the postage rate should have been $\frac{1}{2}$ d for intra-urban and 1d for inter-provincial delivery.

Note the feeling that the postcard rate should have been $\frac{1}{2}$ d, something that is echoed in some of the other newspaper pieces.

To-morrow, the 1st November, the new Post Cards come into use, and may be obtained at the Post Offices throughout the colony in packets of six cards for sixpence. The front or stamped side of the card is for the address only, and on the reverse side any communication, whether of the nature of a letter or otherwise, may be written or printed, except obscene, libellous, or obviously objectionable matter. The cards may be transmitted to any place in the colony of New Zealand, and with the addition of an extra penny stamp to any place in the colonies of Victoria and South Australia. Besides being used as a cheap means of transmitting messages, not necessarily private, the Cards will be largely used by commercial men for circulars, goods lists, and other similar purposes,



Westport Times, Volume X, Issue 1428, 31 October 1876, Page 2

There is a reference in Volume IX (pg 2) to the cards being sold in packs, with the only surviving wrapper being for 50 cards. The above reference makes it clear that they were being sold in packs of 6.

An Enigma?



1876 postcard printed in Blue – John Hepworth Collection

The Answer?

As the Postal Card system comes into operation in New Zealand on the 1st Nov., the following paragraph, extracted from the Post of Friday last, will prove interesting : —“The New Zealand Post Office Act Amendment Bill was the imposing name of a Bill which was last night read a second time on the proposition of the new Postmaster General, Mr Whitaker. To the relief of the members, the mystery involved in the name was explained by Mr Whitaker, who stated that its object was simply to enable the Post Office to issue post cards, such as had been adopted in England, and in other of the Colonies, and to give to them the same legal protection as was given to letters and newspapers. He had before him some samples of the post cards, which mem-

bers eagerly examined. They were experimentally printed in different colors—pink, blue, mauve, and brown—one of which will be adopted. They resemble ordinary colored printing cards, blank on one side. On the other side, within a border, are printed the words, “Post Card, New Zealand,” and the short instruction, “The address only to be written on this side.” The stamp is a facsimile of the penny stamp for letters, and at that price the postage is fixed. The cards will, no doubt, prove a very great convenience, as they have done in England and elsewhere, but if the postage had been the same as that for newspapers, it would have insured their more general use.”

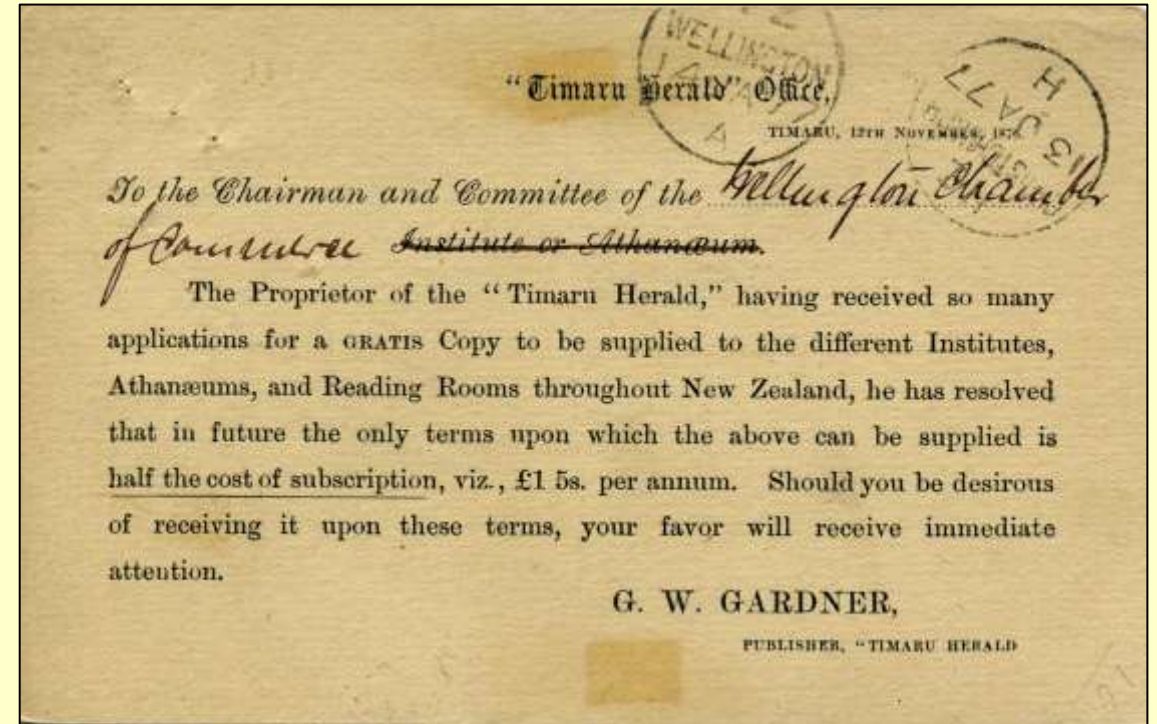


West Coast Times, Issue 2362, 23 October 1876, Page 2

This piece in the West Coast Times is actually very important with a line from the Post Office Act Amendment Bill.

There doesn't seem to have been any previous reference to “experimental” printings in difference colours, this would suggest the one in the Hepworth collection is the only known example. **Have the other survived?**

What is the earliest use of the card?



Issued 1st November 1876. This is the both, the earliest used card recorded and the earliest Privately Printed postcard that I can find.

The postal card system came into vogue this morning, and numbers of the cards were sold during the morning. Their introduction will be a great convenience to all, and business men in particular. The temptation to have a bit of fun by means of the cards proved too great for some practical jokers, and accordingly a certain grave signior in the Custom House was astonished during the forenoon at receiving a card with the following message : "Meet me to-night, dear ; oysters. Don't tell." An equally serious and important official on the Post-office received one at the same time with a message to the effect that the writer hoped the introduction of post cards was only the prelude to the introduction of another kind of correspondence at present peculiar to France. Both gentlemen we understand took the jokes in good part. Post cards can of course be used for annoying people, but it should be remembered that the Post-office authorities have power to refuse to transmit cards upon which offensive messages are

written



Auckland Star, Volume VII, Issue 2100, 1 November 1876, Page 2

At the very least there were First Day of use cards – have any survived?

If not The Post Master reported that over 92,000 cards were sold in the first 2 months. An 1876 use should still exist, somewhere.

1881 - 1886 – 1d Red-brown Postcards



Can we improve on the earliest dates of use for all of the 1d red-brown postcards?

Year	Samuel	Earliest	Notes
1876	AA.1a	13 January 1877 But FDI?	Issued 1 st November 1876
1881	AA.2a	1881	Issued 1881
1885	AA.3a	24 th October 1885	Volume IX
1886	AA.4a	?	Recorded as 1 July 1886 in Volume I
1886	AA.5a	26 September 1886	1886 (?)

1881 - 1886 – 1d Red-brown Postcards

Use outside of New Zealand?

Regulations with reference to the post cards, which will be issued to-day, have been gazetted. The post cards, whether official or private, having a stamp of one penny impressed upon them, may be transmitted between places in the Colony of New Zealand; and to certain other places, to be hereafter mentioned, at letter rates. On the blank side only of the card any communication not of an obscene, libellous, or obviously objectionable character may be written or printed, but nothing must be attached to the card, nor must it be cut or folded. No cards other than those issued by the Government, or private cards stamped by the Government with a penny stamp, under the special authority of the Postmaster-General, can be used for the purpose of making a written communication through the Post Office, unless such cards be prepaid the ordinary full letter postage. If there is an unusual influx of letters, the cards unless paid for and posted as letters, may be delayed until a future despatch. Post cards may be transmitted to the Colonies of Victoria and South Australia under the same conditions as they are transmitted within New Zealand, except that in addition to the impressed stamp they must have an extra penny stamp affixed to them. For private post cards, a week's notice must be given by the applicant, and a sample of the cards to be used should be forwarded for the Postmaster-General's inspection; and none but card of approved quality and color will be accepted. No charge will be made for stamping.

The postcards were not postally valid for transmission outside of New Zealand, with the exception of Victoria and South Australia – where a single penny could be added to the card.

This meant that if cards were sent outside of New Zealand they were required to be sent at the full 6d letter rate.

Alan Jackson (1984) also includes Tasmania in the list of Australian States – is this correct and where did this come from?



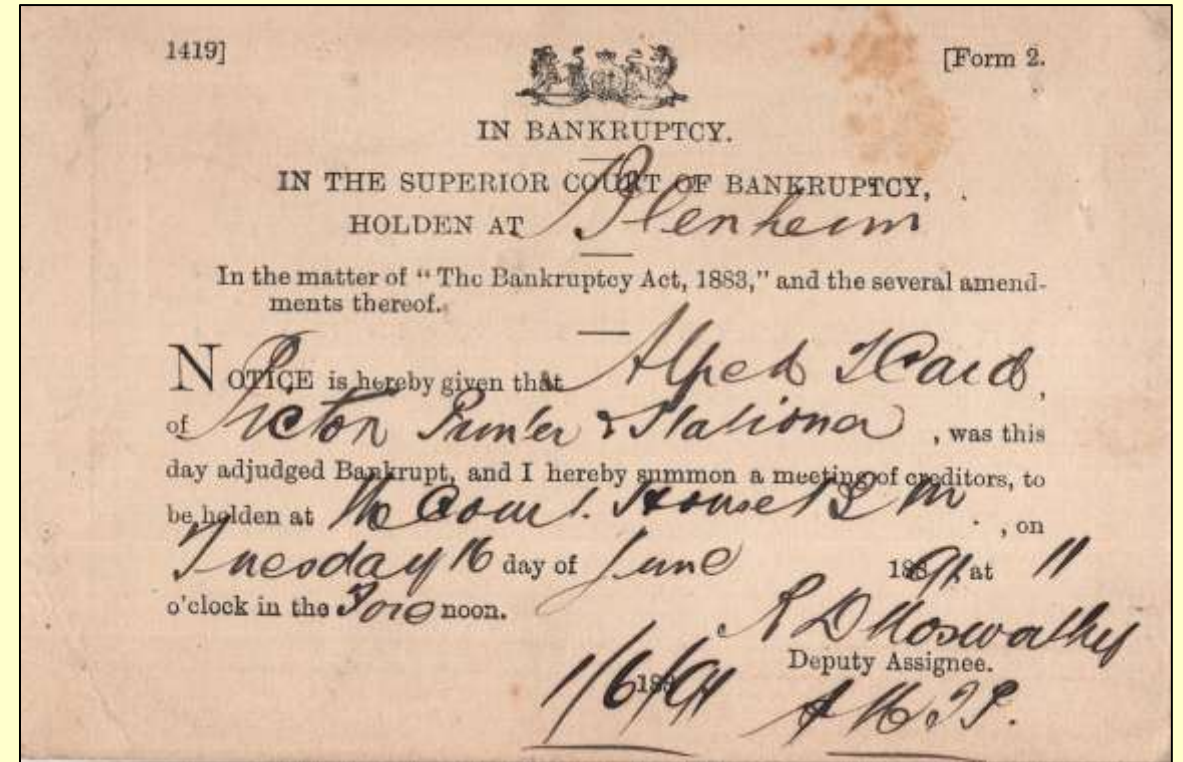
Grey River Argus, Volume XXI, Issue 2567, 1 November 1876, Page 2



Postcard sent from Nelson to Belfast, (Northern) Ireland in July 1890.

The sender assumed that the 1d postcard counted towards the postage and so they added 5d to make the card up to the 6d letter rate. Unfortunately, this wasn't the case and so the postcard was deemed to be 1d underpaid and so incurred a postage due charge of 1d postage due and 6d fine (i.e. one standard rate), so the receiver had to pay 7d to receive the card.

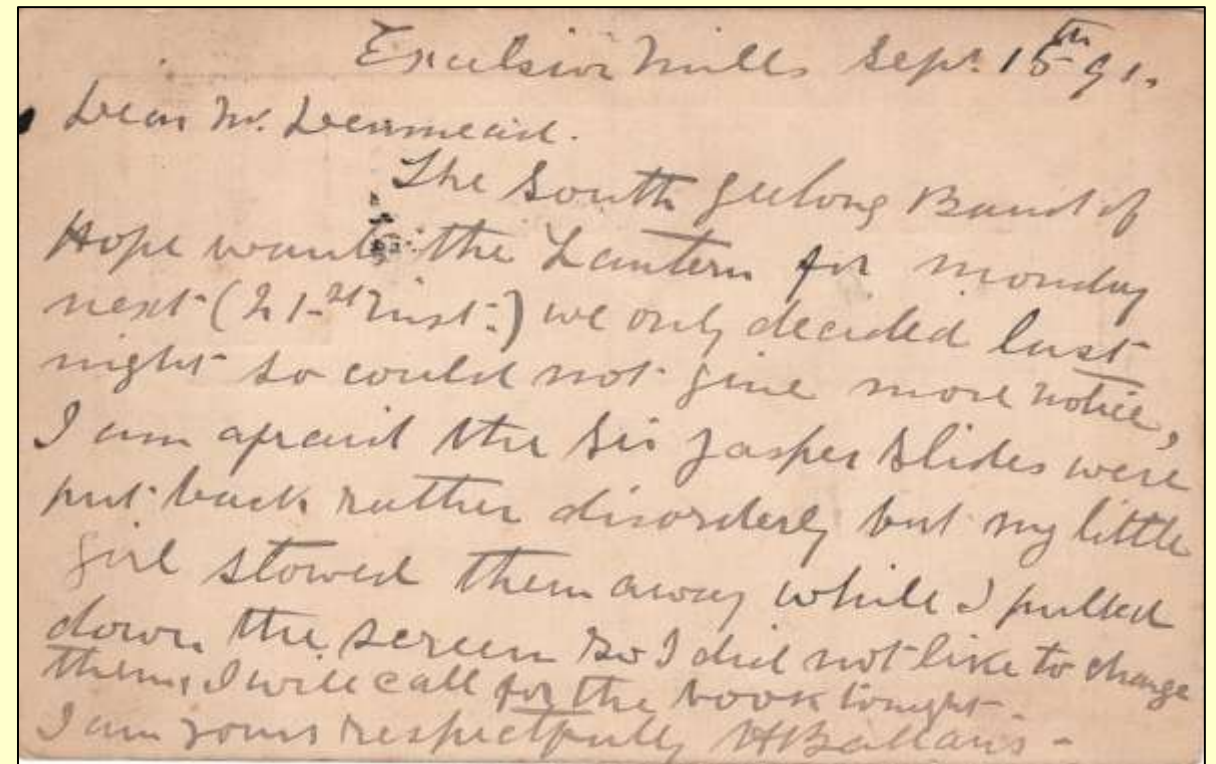
On the 1st November 1890 the rate was changed and the postcard rate to the UK became 2d – the card would have been accepted with a single 1d stamp added.



Postcard sent from Blenheim to London in June 1891 – at the new 2d postcard rate to the UK.

It would be interesting to try and establish how many of the 1d red-brown postcards (any printing) were sent outside of New Zealand during this period. Where they were sent to, and the rate that was paid. This seems to be an important postal history aspect to the cards that has been little studied.

Does anybody have cards correctly used to Australia during the period?



Postcard sent within Geelong, Victoria, Australia.

Unusual postcard used at Geelong, Victoria, Australia – the use appears to be commercial rather than philatelic.

Are there any other examples of unusual usages?

1886 – 1d Red-brown Postcard – With Capital Letters



In 1886 a version of the postcard with scroll border was issued but using the forme used for printing the Reply Cards. This left the wording with larger capital letters. These cards are rare.

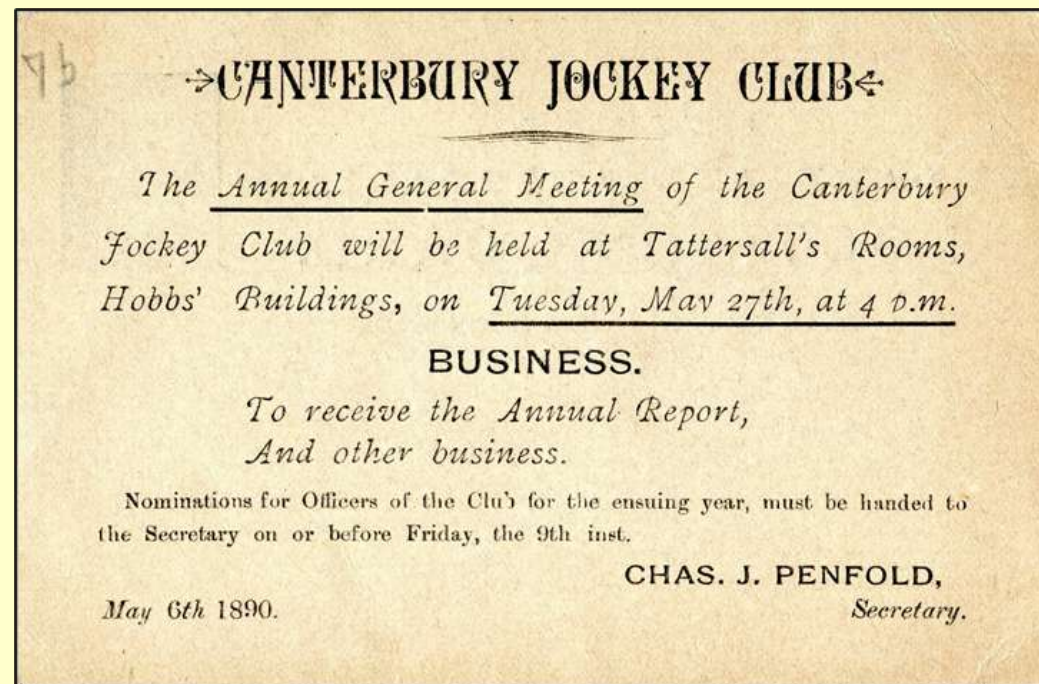
Volume IX states only 14 or 15 examples are known, of which 1 is mint / unused.

The table below records the 13 examples that I have recorded, plus the mint example makes 14.

Are there others?

Date of Use	Sent from	Provenance
26 September 1886	Waipukuraru	Samuel Catalogue – Earliest known date
11 October 1886	Wanganui	Schumann Collection
22 October 1886	Christchurch	Ex. Jackson Collection / Philips 1994 Lot 552
23 December 1886	Christchurch	Barkley Collection (Figure 2)
28 December 1886	Christchurch	Classic Stamps #38 Lot 1035
8 February 1887	Hokitika	Schumann Collection
26 April 1887		Ex. Samuel / Illustrated
	Kaiapoi	Mentioned in Samuel 1988 as place of use
	Rangiora	Mentioned in Samuel 1988 as place of use
	Reefton	Mentioned in Samuel 1988 as place of use
7 December 1887	Katikati	Ex. Jackson Collection / Philips 1994 Lot 553 / ex. John Sussex / Grosvenor May 2011 Lot 2393
26 December 1887	Katikati	Mentioned in Samuel 1988 catalogue as latest date
11 December 1894	Rakaia	ACS – April 2025

1890 – 1d Blue Postcard



Volume IX provides an earliest use date of May 1890.

From my own collection is a card printed for Canterbury Jockey Club and dated 6 May 1890.

Given the time required to supply the cards to the printer and have the message printed and returned to the club, it would suggest the possibility of the 1d blue being issued on 1st May 1890, if not earlier. Can others provide an earlier date?

1890 – 1d Blue Postcard – on Buff Card

PRICE LIST OF CANTERBURY MILLS Patent Roller Flour ASHBURTON REGISTERED BRAND "SUPREME" POSTAL ADDRESS: ROLLITT & CO. 145, HEREFORD STREET, CHRISTCHURCH. Date _____			
#5935			
FLOUR per ton, 200lb sacks	...		
" " 100lb bags	...		
" " 50lb "	...		
" " 25lb "	...		
WHEATEN MEAL	...		
(same price as flour)			
POLLARD per ton, sacks included			
BRAN " " "			



It is recorded that some cards were printed on deep buff stock, though the author would classify some of these as more akin to a brown to deep grey buff. Regardless, these cards are rare. As previous, it would be good to be able to quantify the number that exist, and whether they are mint or used, where they were used at, and the date.

1899 – 1d Blue Postcard – on Yellow Card



One of the scarcer cards used for the 1d blue is a yellowish mottled stock. The Samuel catalogue (1988) states only 1 mint and 1 used card known. By the publication of Volume IX of the RPSNZ handbook this has been changed to *“Late printings (1899) were on a yellowish mottled card with shiny surface, of identical quality to the card used for the 1899 scenic postcards, in green”*.

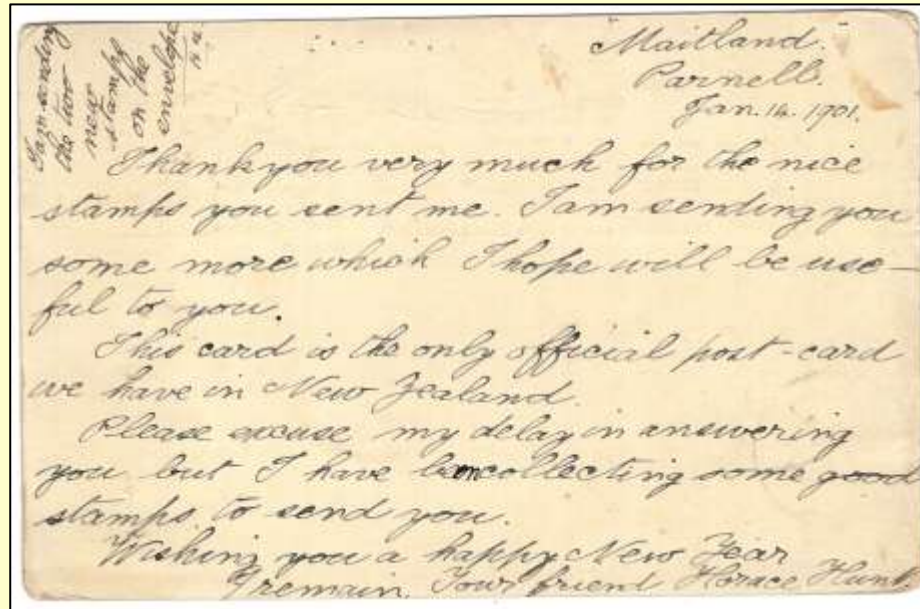


The research has shown that this card is not as rare as previously believed or recorded, in fact the majority of private printed or used cards post-1898 seem to be printed on this yellowish card (the author alone has accumulated 9 mint and 6 used cards). The earliest used example recorded, currently, is the 2nd February 1899.

This may suggest printings took place late 1898, very early 1899, is there an earlier use of this variety?

Does this also mean that rather than the 1d blue being printed on the card for the 1d Green Scenic views, this was just the then current card stock, as it seems to have been in use for nearly a year before the 1d Green was issued?

1901 – The 1d Brown Postcard

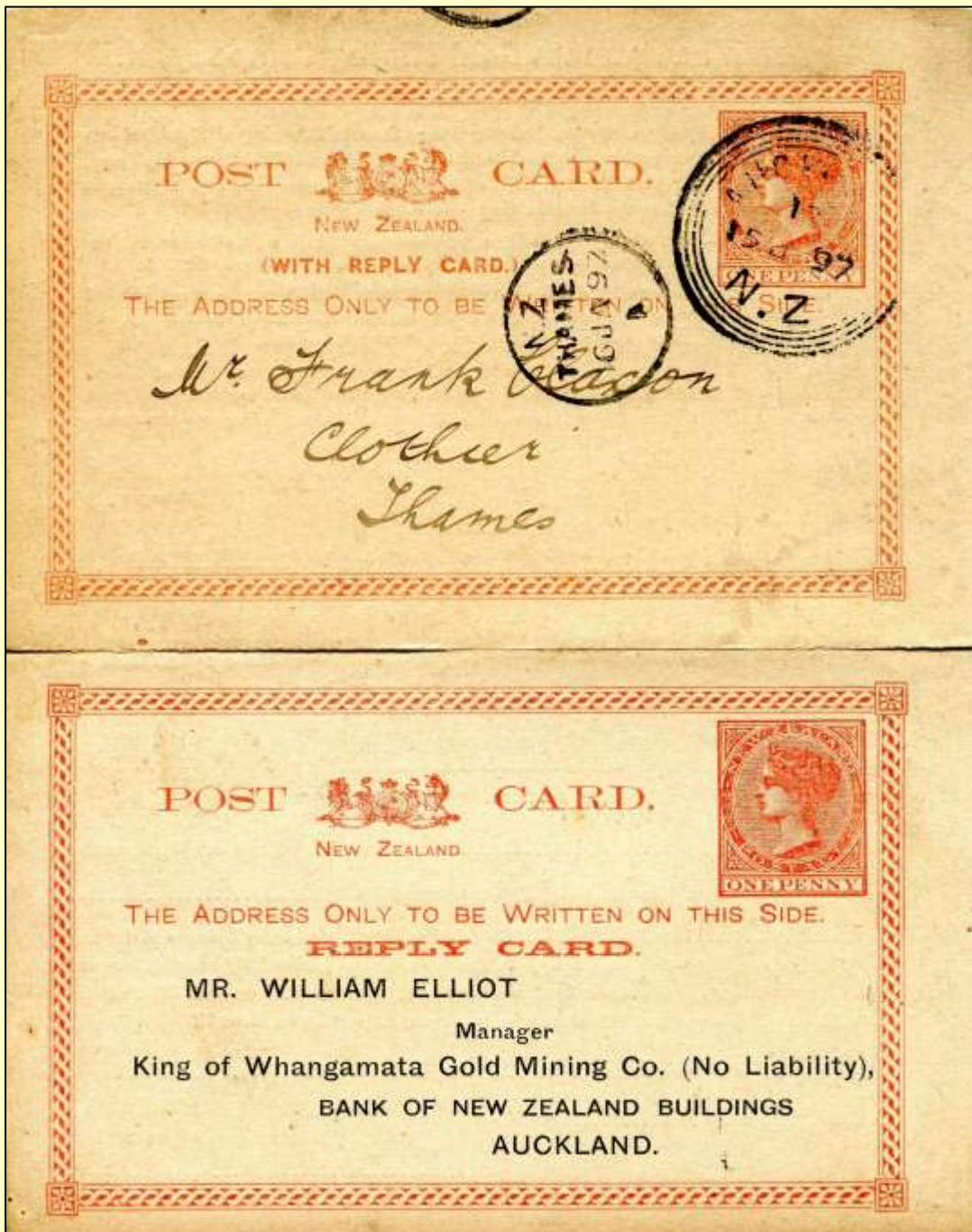


In Volume IX of the RPSNZ handbook it is suggested that this card was issued on 1st January 1901 to coincide with Universal Penny Postage. Volume I records the issue date as being September 1901, though Samuel (2006) indicates that it had to have been issued prior to this, and postulated that a 1st January 1901 card may, in theory, exist.

The card shown is used on the 14th January 1901. Are there any other January date cards, anything earlier than the 14th January 1901, and does anyone know of a first day of issue use?

In Volume IX it is also speculated that the Post Office still held stocks of the Boer War postcards and that is why so few 1d Brown cards are known used in 1901. However, the message on the reverse would suggest otherwise.

1886 – Reply Card



Issued in 1886 the first of the Queen Victoria Reply Cards comprised two sections the upper postcard inscribed '(with Reply Card)' and the lower postcard inscribed '(Reply Card)'.



(Paul Wreglesworth Collection)

Two used 'REPLY CARD' sections

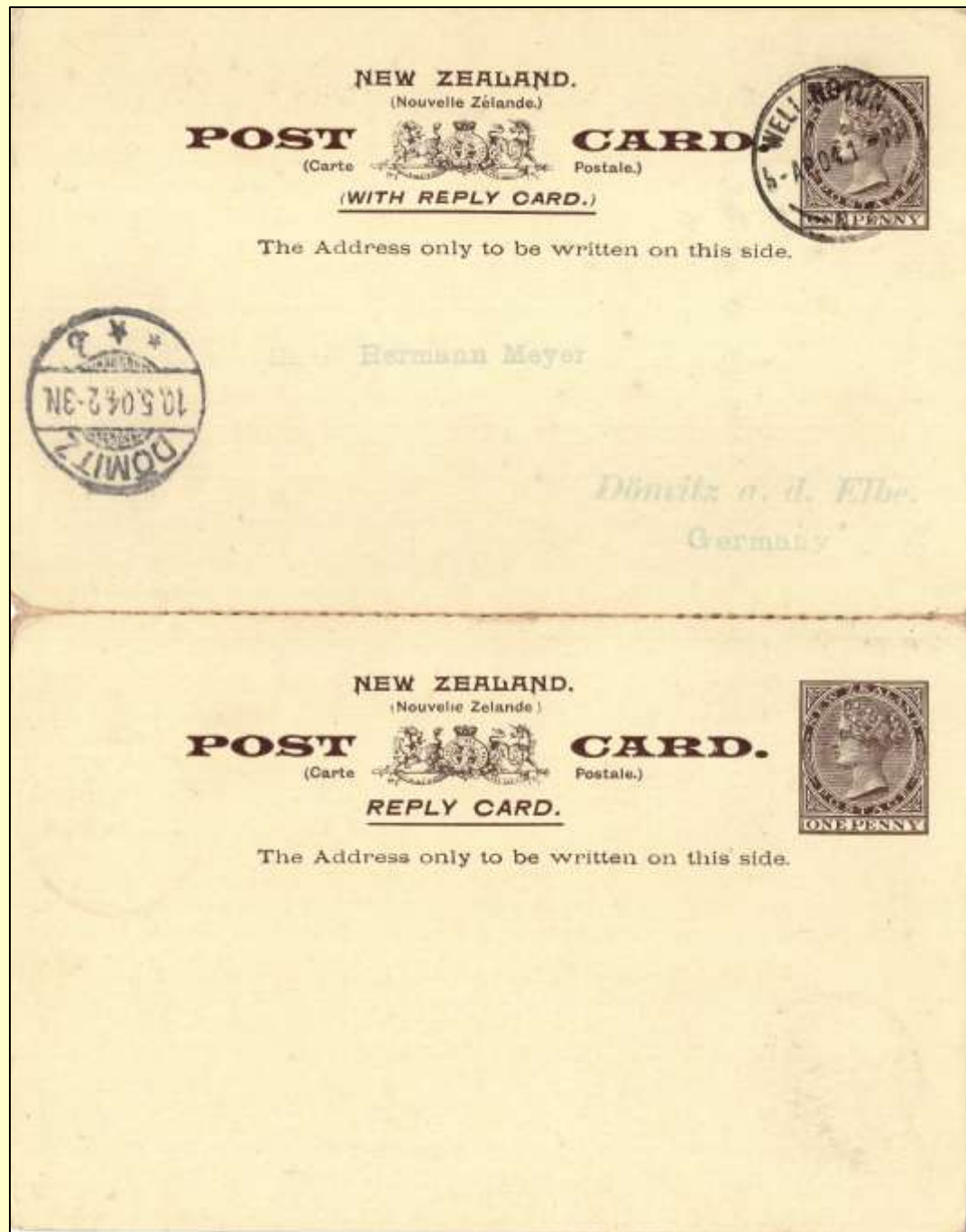
Date of Use	Sent from	Provenance
11 April 1892	Australia	Ex Samuel / Classic Stamps #38 Lot 1319 / Volume IX
5 February 1894		Ex Samuel / Classic Stamps #38 Lot 1321
April 1894	Germany	Schumann Collection
September 1896	Palmerston South	Barkley Collection
October 1896	Waitekauri Junction Gold Mining Co.	Wreglesworth Collection

In Part 1 of the Samuel catalogue (1988) the two individual sections of the card are priced the same having been used. From this it would be expected that the two are equally available. This is not the case.

Whilst used examples, in particular philatelically used, of the upper (with Reply Card) postcard can be found, the lower (Reply Card) postcard appears to be particularly rare.

So rare that between myself and Paul Wreglesworth we can only account for five used examples.

It would be pertinent to try and establish how many used examples of the (Reply Card) postcard exist.



1901 – Reply Card

Issued in 1901 the second of the Queen Victoria Reply Cards coincided with the release of the 1d brown postcard.

The use of this reply card seems to have been even more limited that the 1886 issue, very few genuinely, commercially used examples appear to have survived, of either section of the card.

In fact, the research can only seem to account for a single used Reply Card section in the Samuel Collection.

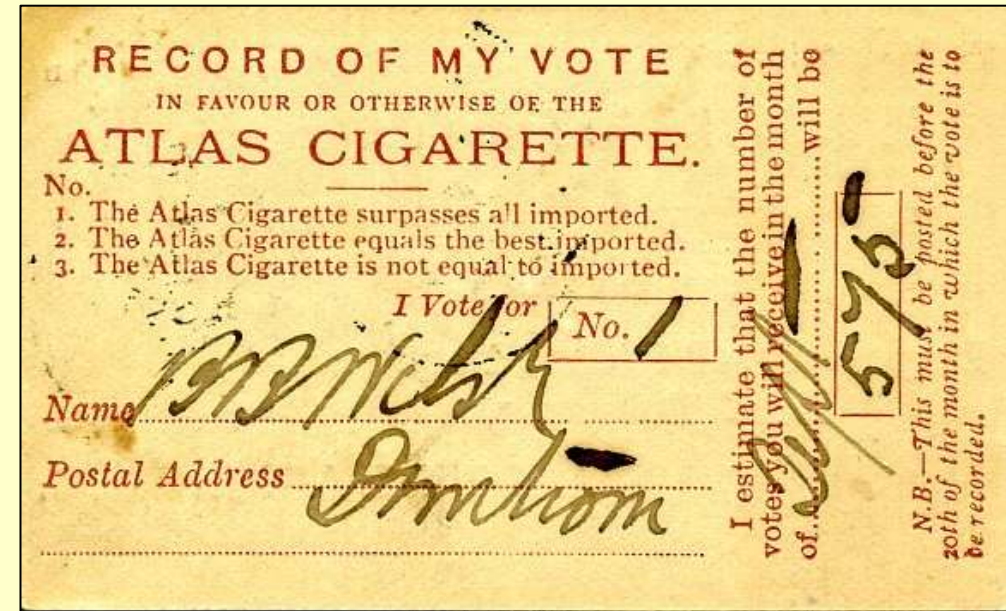
It would be good to try and collate all known used examples from this issue.

Printed to Private Order Postcards

The Post Office's Printed or Stamped to Private Order (PTPO or STPO) started in 1892 with the issue of Austin Walsh postcard. In total five were issued stamped with a Queen Victoria stationery die.

Most of these were printed in small numbers, and there doesn't currently seem to be any record of how many examples have survived.

Company	Date	Indicum	Number printed
Austin Walsh	1892	½d Newspaper Stamp	20,000
New Zealand Cyclists Touring Club	1897	1d Postcard die	2,155
Kempthorne, Prosser & Co	1899	1d Postcard die	1,988
Kempthorne, Prosser & Co	1901	1d Embossed die	2,600
Sargood, Son, & Ewen	1902	½d Embossed die	1,964



1892 Austin Walsh & Co. – STPO

The first STPO cards. Small size for inclusion in packets of Atlas cigarettes.

Believed to be the worlds smallest postcard.

Supply of this card on the market is relatively high in both mint and used condition and, given some auction realisations and failures to sell, would suggest that the catalogue price is slightly high.

POST-CARD.

NEW ZEALAND CYCLISTS' TOURING CLUB.

Chief Office: Wellington, N.Z.

EDMOND T. SAYERS, Secretary

The address only to be written on this side.



Aklurest Esq
Waimate

1897 New Zealand Cyclists Touring Club

2155 cards printed



Packages only just to hand
you will receive yours before
end of week. Kind regards

E.T.S.

12/7/97

POST-CARD.

NEW ZEALAND CYCLISTS' TOURING CLUB.

Chief Office: Wellington, N.Z.

~~EDWARD T. PILCHER, Secretary~~



The address only to be written on this side.

Ms. E. G. Pilcher
— Greymouth Coal Co,
City



The Annual General Meeting
of Members of the N.Z. Cyclists'
Touring Club will be held at 8 p.m.
on Wednesday, 2nd October, 1901,
at the Chief Office, Imperial Chambers, 6,
Featherston St., Wellington.

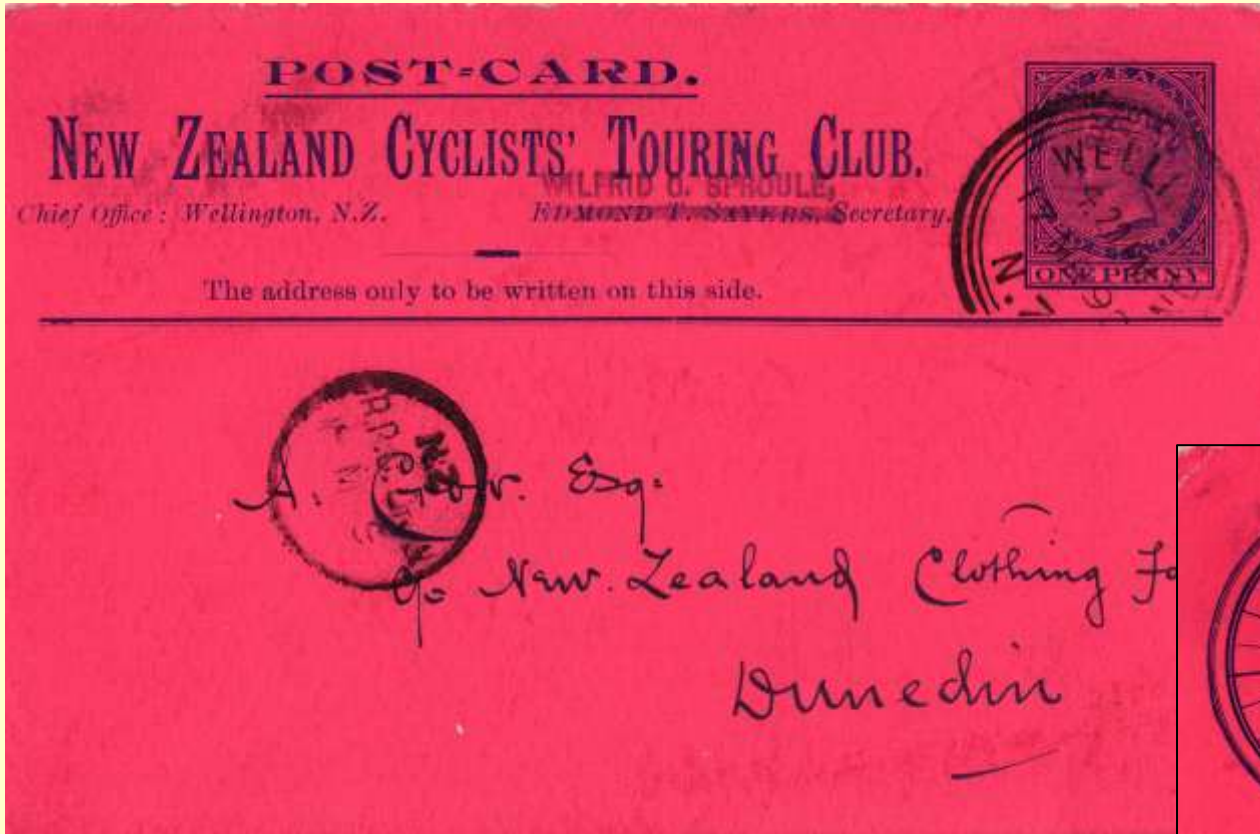
E. G. PILCHER,

14th September, 1901.

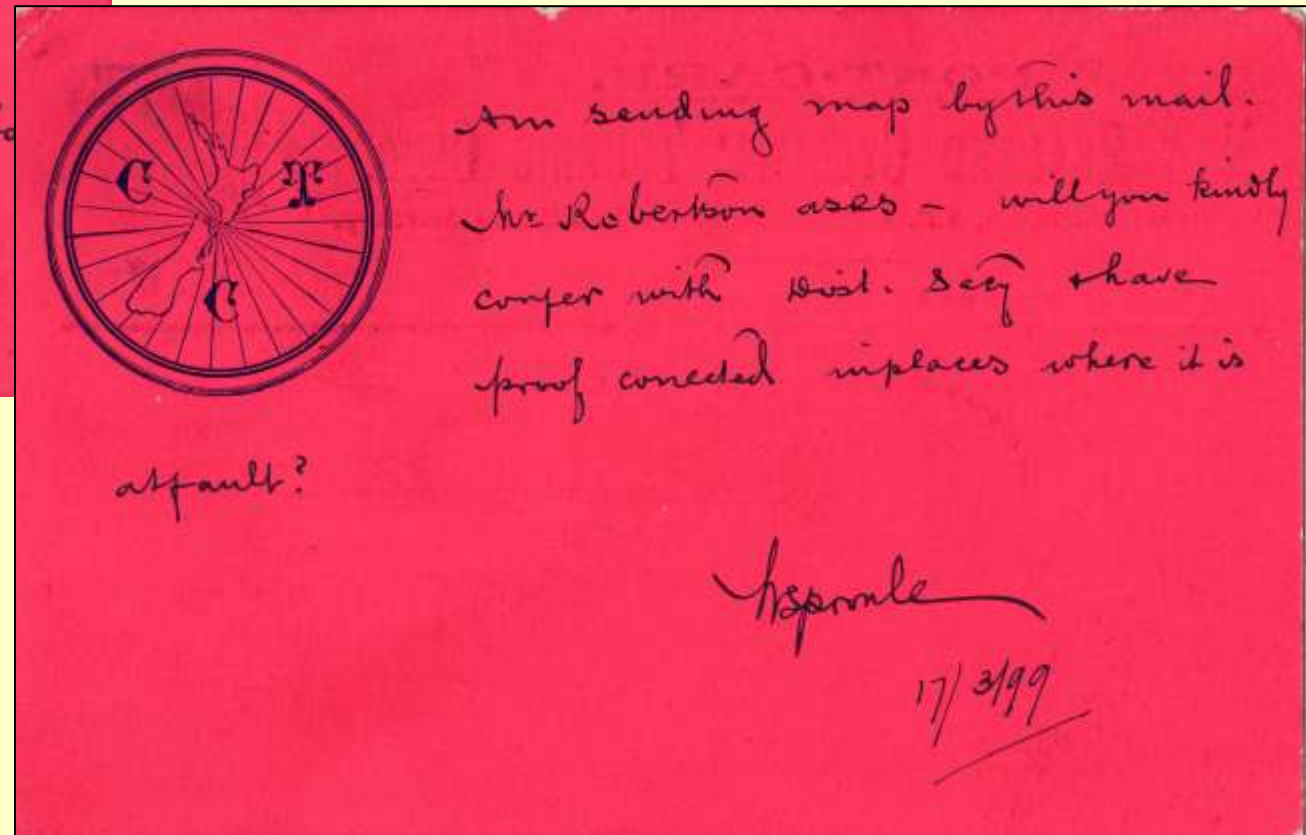
Hon. Sec.

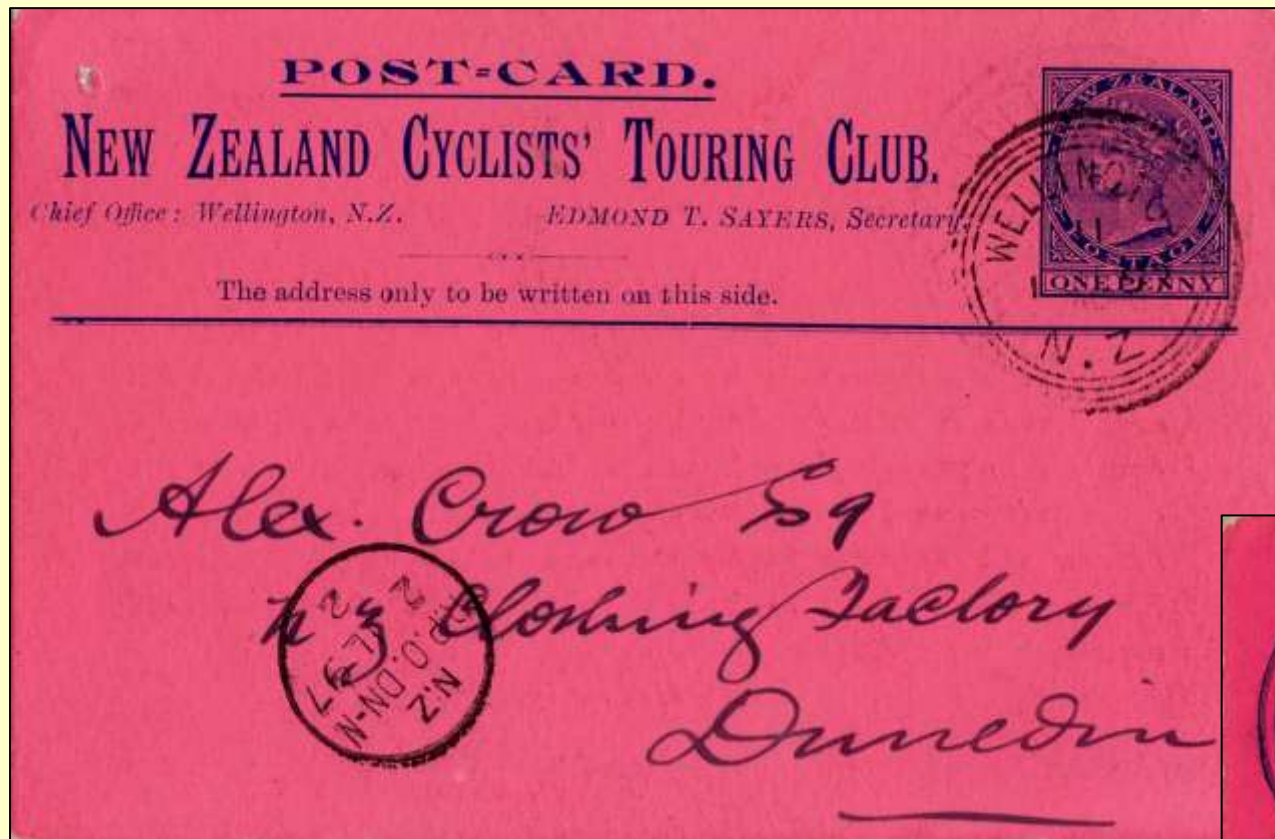
Samuel (1988) and Volume IX of the handbook state that a card is known with printed message on reverse for the 1901 AGM on the reverse and with the Secretary's name excised on the front.

However, there seem to be other varieties that haven't been recorded.



Card used in 1899 with Secretary's name changed using a rubber stamp.



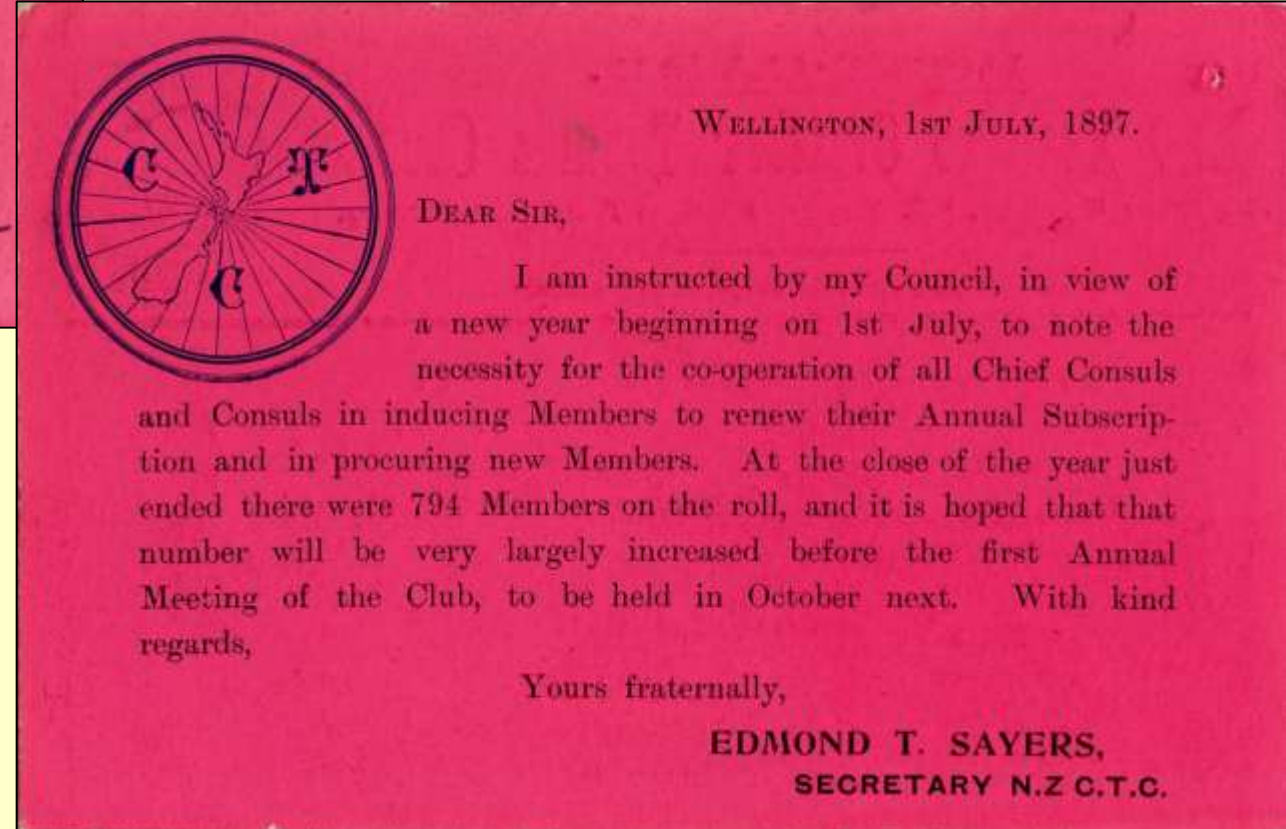


Card used in 1897 with printed message on the reverse.

(Courtesy Steve Schumann)

As can be seen there are at least four different varieties of this card.

- Original issue
- 1897 printed message
- c.1899 secretary's name changed
- 1901 printed message



ADVICE CARD *from the* MANUFACTURERS
OF THE
CELEBRATED WESTFIELD MANURES.



To

SUPERPHOSPHATES.
BONE-DUST PURE.
GREEN & STEAMED
BONE-DUST & BLOOD.
SPECIAL MANURES
FOR ALL CROPS
IN STOCK.
NITRATE OF SODA.
SULPHATE OF AMMONIA.
GUANOS, etc. etc.

KEMPTHORNE, PROSSER & CO'S
NEW ZEALAND DRUG CO LTD
HEAD OFFICE AUCKLAND.

CHEMICAL WORKS, WESTFIELD,

NEAR Auckland,

Sir,

We have this day consigned to

Station for you, by direction of

Tons Cwt. Qrs. Lbs.

bags : : : of

bags : : : of

bags : : : of

Freight prepaid.

Truck

Kemphthorne, Prosser & Co.'s

N.Z. Drug Company, Limited.

Mr.

1899 Kemphthorne, Prosser, & Co.

(Courtesy Steve Schumann)

ADVICE CARD *from the MANUFACTURERS*
 OF THE
CELEBRATED WESTFIELD MANURES.



To _____

SUPERPHOSPHATES.
 BONE-DUST PURE
 GREEN & STEAMED.
 BONE-DUST & BLOOD.
 SPECIAL MANURES
 FOR ALL CROPS
 IN STOCK.
 NITRATE OF SODA.
 SULPHATE OF AMMONIA.
 GUANOS, &c. &c.

KEMPTHORNE, PROSSER & Co's
 NEW ZEALAND DRUG CO. LTD
 HEAD OFFICE - ALBERT ST. AUCKLAND.

CHEMICAL WORKS, WESTFIELD,

NEAR *Auckland,*.....190

have this day consigned to.....

you, by direction of.....

	Tons.	Cwt.	Qrs.	Lbs.	
.....bags.....	:	:	:	:	of.....
.....bags.....	:	:	:	:	of.....
.....bags.....	:	:	:	:	of.....

Freight prepaid Truck.....

Kemphthorne, Prosser & Co.'s
N.Z. Drug Company, Limited.

Mr......

1901 Kempthorne, Prosser, & Co.
 (Courtesy Steve Schumann)



1902 Sargood, Son & Ewen.

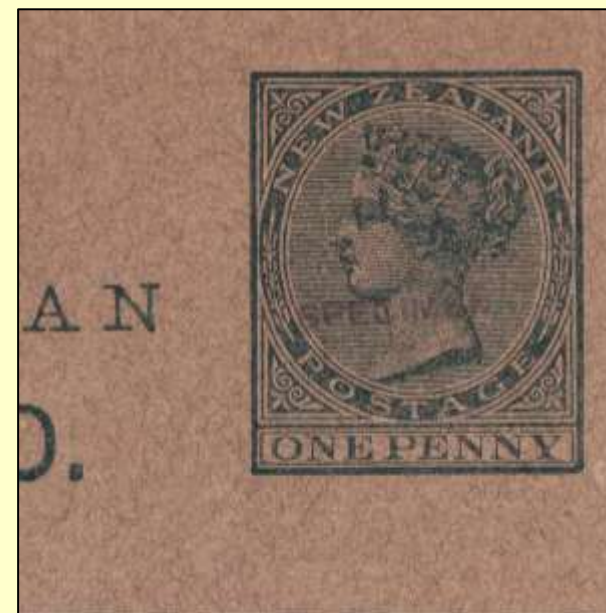
(Courtesy Steve Schumann)



Specimens

One aspect that seems to have been neglected within the literature is SPECIMEN overprints.

While auction catalogues do list examples with the overprint it would be a good exercise to collate all postcards with the overprint, and the size and type used in order to create a better understanding of these postcards.



Conclusions

Hopefully, this has shown that the development and use of the postcard during the reign of Queen Victoria is not quite as well understood as we may believe, and there are definite gaps in our knowledge.

What would be helpful is for collectors to examine their collections and to send through scans of any items that they may believe will fit into what has been discussed here.

What is needed:

- Details of all cards
- Scans of front and back

What I have presented is where I believe there are gaps in our knowledge, other collectors may have identified other issues or gaps that they consider require further research. Please make contact, it is better to pool resources and work on these things collectively.

The aim is to sub-divide this display and present it as a series of articles in The Kiwi, and potentially other philatelic journals. Once the articles have been published, and hopefully people have responded, the aim is to produce a research paper aimed on the use of the Queen Victoria postcards.

Bibliography

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Philips (November 1994). British Commonwealth and Specialised New Zealand – W. Jackson Collection Lots 515 - 740. London, England.

Classic Stamps Limited (September 2004). Sale Number 38 – Featuring the Robert Samuel collection of New Zealand Postal Stationery. Christchurch, New Zealand.

Grosvenor (May 2011). British Empire and Foreign Countries – The John Sussex RDP, FRPSL, Collection of New Zealand Postal Stationery Lots 2390 – 2457. London, England.

Auckland City Stamps (April 2025). Public Auction Number 28. Lots 940 – 978. Auckland, New Zealand.