

NEW ZEALAND DISASTER MAIL

OTHER INCIDENTS

**PRESENTATION TO
NZ SOCIETY OF GB**

ON

SATURDAY 20 APRIL 2024

BY BRIAN PEACE

1851 NEW PLYMOUTH POST OFFICE DAMAGED BY FIRE

On 28 June 1851 the New Plymouth Post Office was damaged by fire.

The hand-stamps were sent to Wellington for replacement or repair.

In the absence of hand-stamps the New Plymouth Postmaster applied the manuscript

P O N P (Post Office New Plymouth) and dated the cover.



This cover dated 26 July 1851 is the earlier of two examples recorded.

The other is in a museum archive.

Manuscript 2 in black denotes postage to be paid by the recipient, being the ½ oz rate from 1 April 1851.

Cover was sent via Wellington AU 4 1851 to be paid for on arrival at Nelson AU 12 1851.

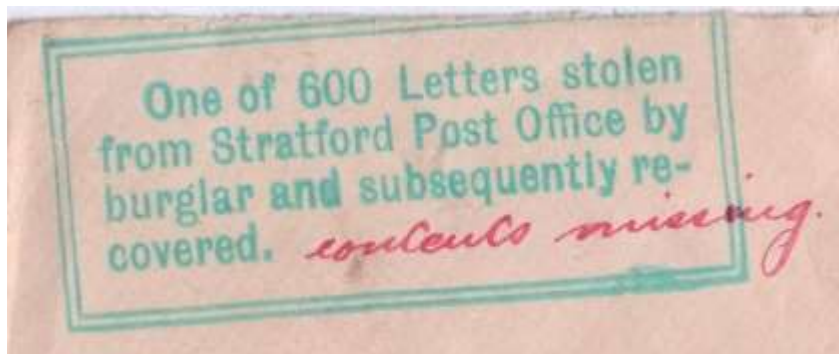
The replacement and repaired hand-stamps were in use by 1 September 1851.

Provenance: Woolfe and Gwynn

STOLEN FROM STRATFORD POST OFFICE, NZ, 1897



Cancelled Stratford 28 JL 97 1 back-stamped Stratford 28 JL 97 2



Three other examples of this cachet are recorded, one of which is cancelled at New Plymouth on 28 July

STRATFORD POST OFFICE ROBBERY.

[BY TELEGRAPH.—PRESS ASSOCIATION.]

STRATFORD, Monday.

THE letters stolen from the post office have been recovered. They were hidden in a stump by the side of the main road two miles north of the township. All the letters had been opened. Inspector McGovern has received word this afternoon of the arrest of a man named Roderick McKenzie at Eltham, on suspicion of being connected with the robbery.

NZ Herald 3 Aug 1897 page 5

THE POST OFFICE ENTERED.

[UNITED PRESS ASSOCIATION.]

WELLINGTON, July 30.

A daring burglary has occurred at Stratford.

The Post office was entered and every letter stolen, including those sorted into the private boxes. The drawer was broken open, and nearly £5 in cash and stamps stolen.

The thief was apparently disturbed opening another drawer, and decamped, leaving a brace bit on the counter. He took away a postman's bag. No attempt was made to open the strong room, in which registered letters and other valuables were kept.

Marlborough Express 31 Jul 1897 page 2



On the night of 28/29 July 1897, Roderick McKenzie broke into Stratford Post Office by forcing a window. He stole 600 letters, the remains of which were found by the roadside between Stratford and Midhirst

1911 BLENHEIM COACH ACCIDENT



Cancelled N.Z. CANVASTOWN 30 OC 11 A and bearing OFFICIALLY SEALED label applied at Blenheim



Posted Monday 30 October at Canvastown on the Nelson - Blenheim road and carried that afternoon east to Blenheim. The *Marlborough Express* was not published on 1 November but does, in early November, makes several references to road damage from *recent flooding*.

COACH ACCIDENT DAMAGED BY WATER

Official Post Office files for this period have long since been destroyed

One of two covers recorded
(the second cover is also registered and from Canvastown on 30 October)

1915 KILLED IN ACTION



Cancelled WELLINGTON 19 JUL 3-AM 1915

Believed dead

C O J 20:1:16

Killed in action

J W

Reported Killed
Return To Sender



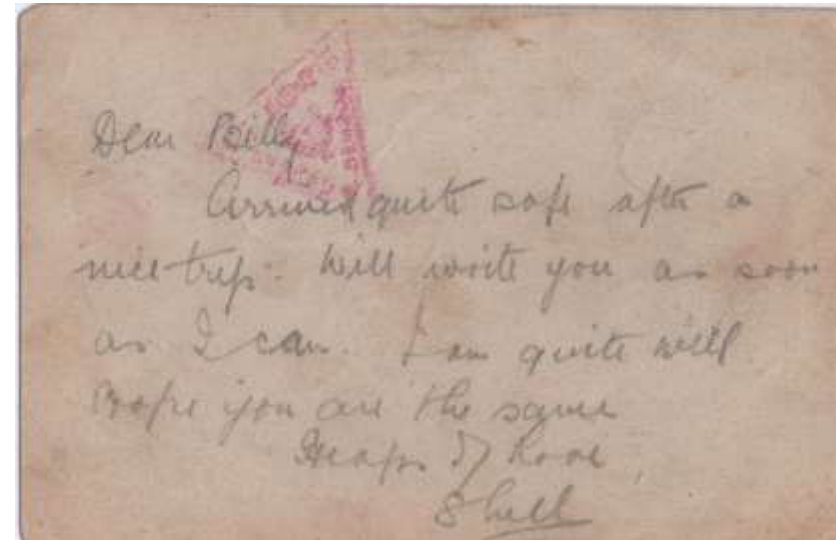
Cancelled DEAD LETTER OFFICE MR 30 16 NZ

NEW ZEALAND
ADVANCED BASE A.P.O.
FEB 1 1916
RETURNED
LETTER BRANCH

1915 DELAYED AS IMPROPERLY POSTED

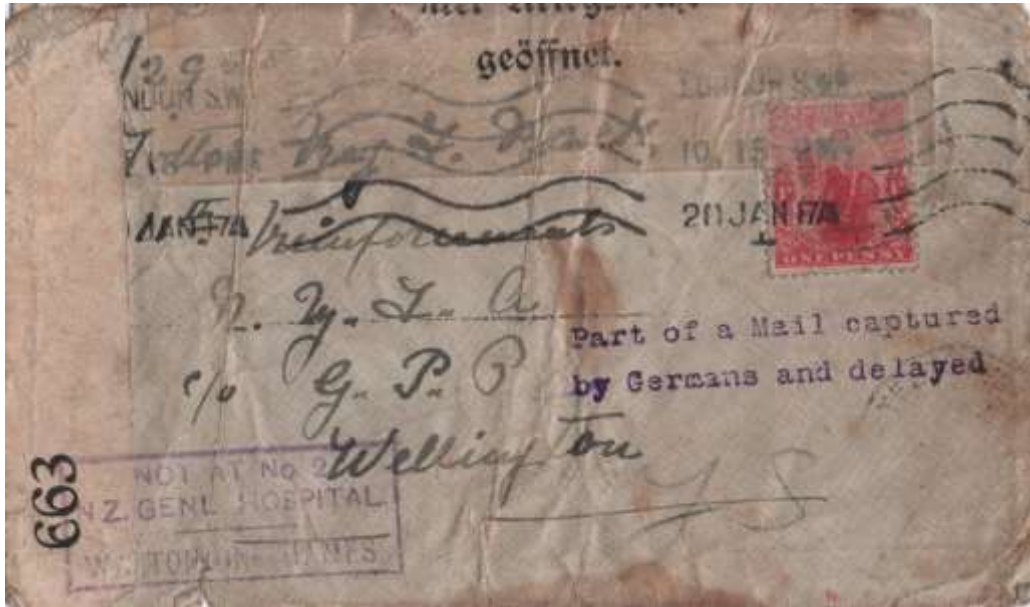


French Army 'Flags' postcard cancelled ARMY P.O.1 A 5 DEC 15



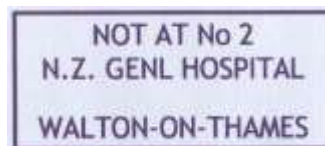
Cachet size 59 x 28mm

1917 MAIL CAPTURED BY GERMANS



Cancelled LONDON S W 1015 PM 20 JAN 17A
NZ despatch date-stamp indecipherable

Part of a Mail captured
by Germans and delayed
cachet size 56 x 9mm



cachet size 44 x 17mm



Back-stamped NEW ZEALAND 24-MA-17 BASE ARMY POST OFFICE

German and Allied censor tapes attached

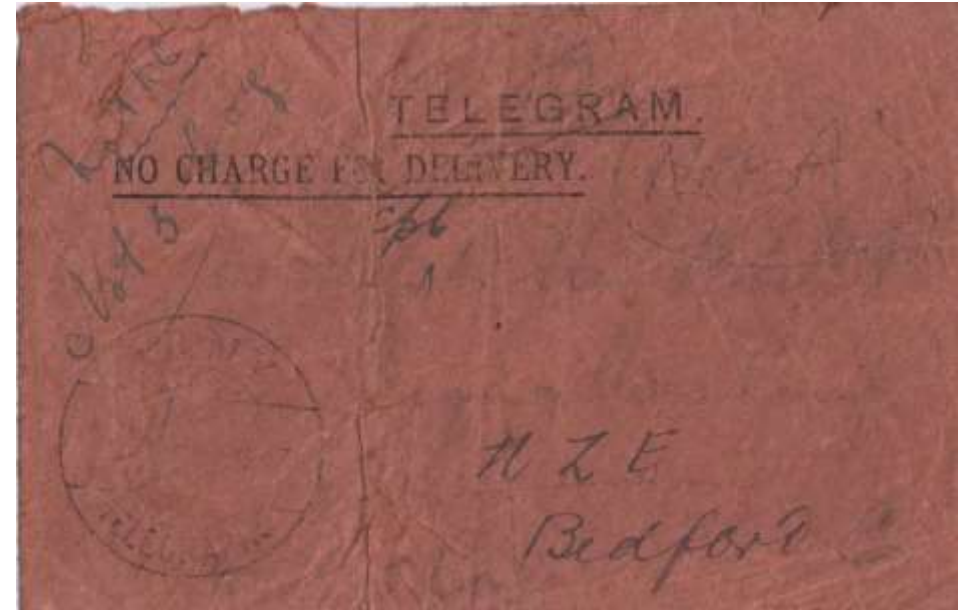
1917 DAMAGED TELEGRAM



Reverse of Telegram cancelled **ARMY 1129 15.XI.17 TELEGRAPHS**

Manuscript endorsement:

*Received in Sig office
in this condition. ACS*



Cancelled **ARMY .XI.17 TELEGRAPHS**

Various manuscript endorsements including:

Insertion of **cpl** to apply rank of corporal to addressee
N Z E Bedford to identify possible UK location
Not 5 Coy (Company)
Not B C (B Company?)
Not A C (A Company?)

1919 QUARANTINE OF PASSENGERS AND CREW FROM RMS NIAGARA

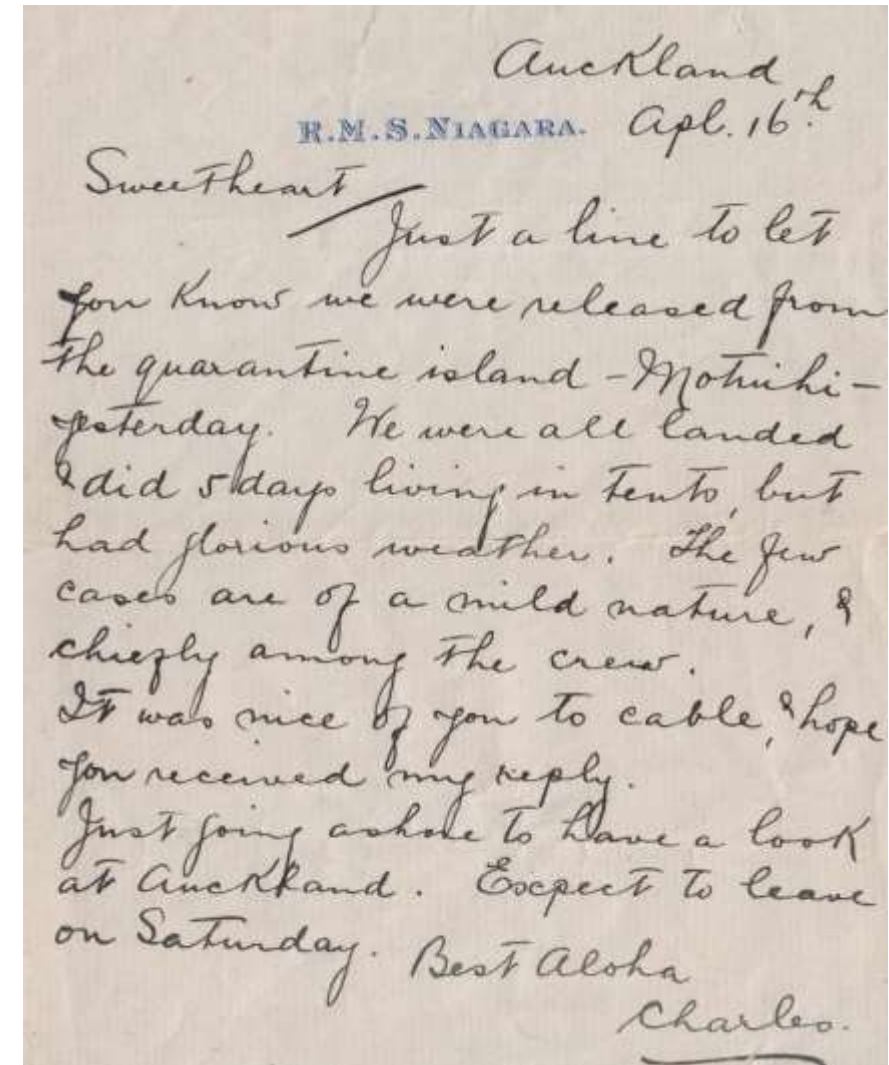


Cancelled AUCKLAND 4 30P 18AP 1919 on RMS Niagara stationery

The 13,415-ton steamer *Niagara*, of the Canadian-Australasian Line, Left Sydney on 30 March for Auckland. She was placed in quarantine on 2 April 1919 on arrival due to several cases of influenza occurring on board.

A total of 66 persons was landed at the Motuihi quarantine island, Auckland.

All were released in stages and the *Niagara* resumed her voyage to Vancouver at noon on 19 April.



Just a line to let you know we are released from the quarantine island - Motuihi - yesterday. We are all landed and did 5 days living in tents, but had glorious weather.

The few cases are of a mild nature and chiefly among the crew...

1934 STOLEN FROM POSTING BOX



Cancelled AUCKLAND 29JA34.745PM -N.Z.- Officially sealed with Mail 76 labels *tied by red oval date-stamps MAIL BRANCH G.P.O. 29JAN1934*

Endorsed in manuscript:

*Stolen from Posting box
and found on One Tree
Hill*



Endorsed on reverse in manuscript over Mail 76 labels

Received open

POSTAL BOX THEFTS POLICE COURT REFERENCE

MEN CHARGED WITH FORGERY

"If bail is granted, I ask that it should be very substantial," said Detective-Sergeant McHugh in the Police Court on Saturday when Charles Ross, aged 30, described as an entertainer, was remanded to February 24 on a charge of forging the name of T. Price to a postal note for 20s.

"Accused is charged with forgery, but I should point out that the particular document concerned had been stolen from a Post Office box," explained Mr. McHugh. "There has been an epidemic of such breaking into boxes."

New Zealand Herald 19 February 1934 p12

1936 UNKNOWN CAUSE



Cancelled **STUTTGART 3.12.36 UNTERTURKHEIM** back-stamped **SYDNEY 630AM 15 DEC 1936 N.S.W. AIR MAIL SECTION G.P.O** and Officially Sealed by the Wellington Post Office

This cover would have linked with Imperial Airways eastbound service IE 502 which left Croydon on 2nd and Brindisi on 4th December



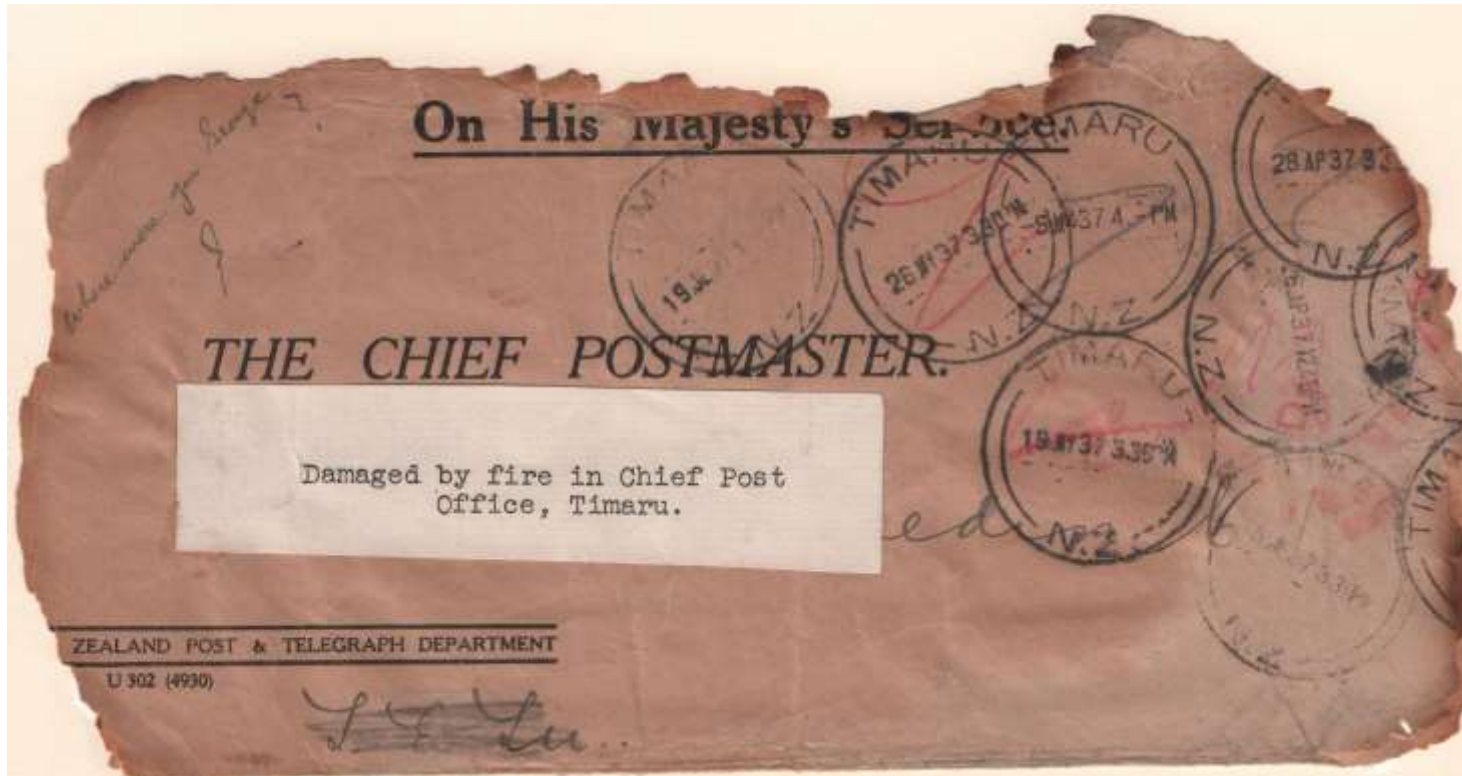
Bearing violet cachet size 50 x 18mm on front and reverse:

**RECEIVED AT
WELLINGTON
IN DAMAGED CONDITION**

Service IE502 terminated at Brisbane on 14 December, New Zealand mail arriving at Sydney the next day

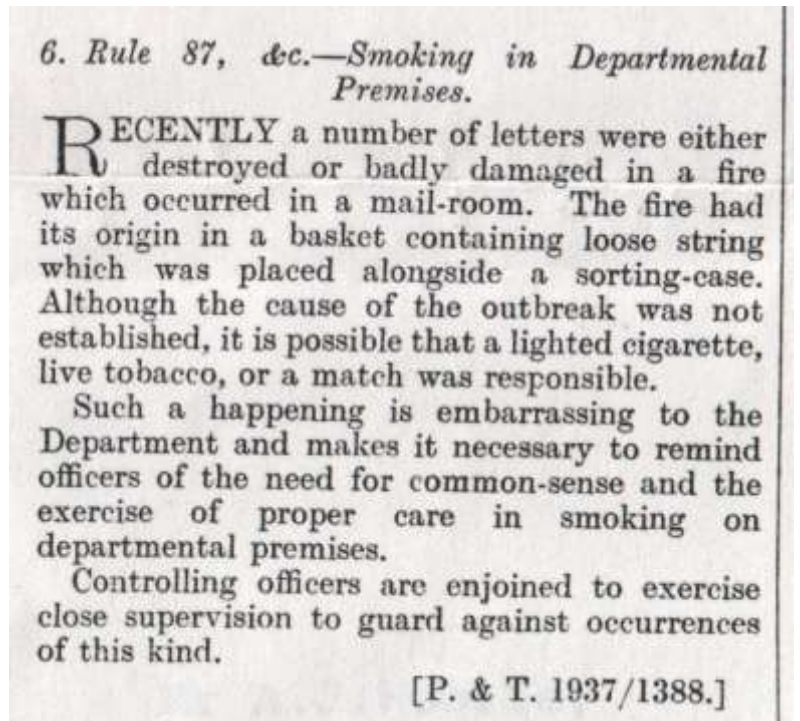
No delays or damage were reported to any of the four aircraft involved in this service. It is therefore likely the damage occurred after leaving the sorting office at Sydney and before leaving the GPO at Wellington

1937 TIMARU POST OFFICE FIRE



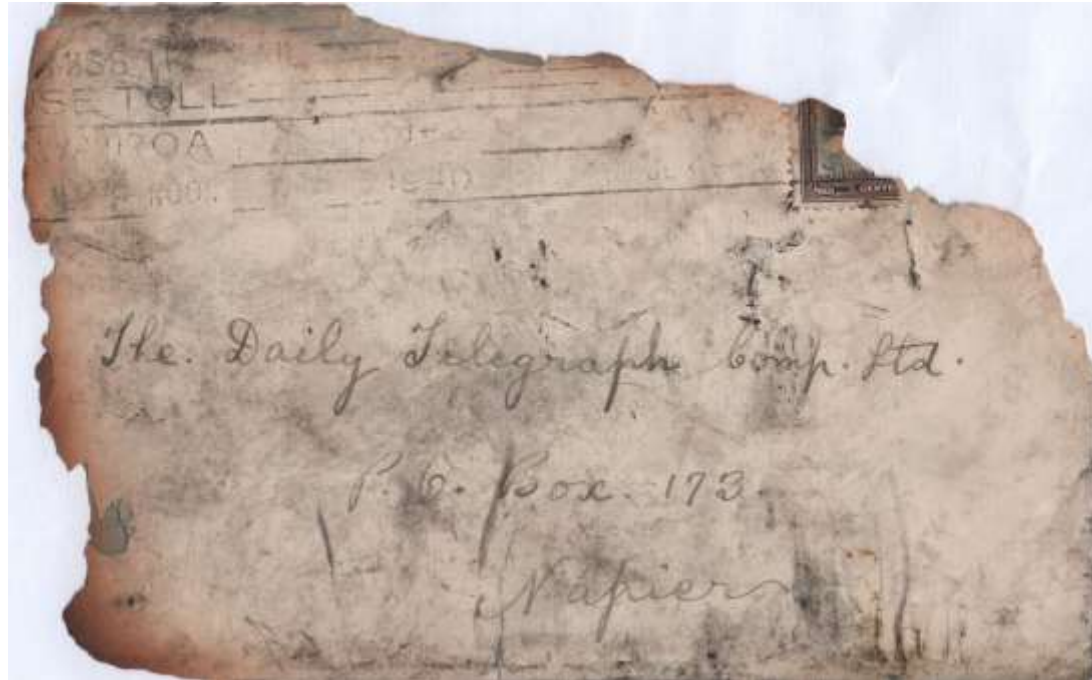
OHMS cover cancelled **TIMARU 26AP37** and subsequently 28 April, 6, 9 and 26 May, 15 and 19 June 1937

The *Post and Telegraph Official Circular* for 16 July 1937 advised that a fire, probably caused by smoking materials, damaged mail in a sorting case around the end of June 1937



P & T Official Circular 16 July 1937 page 60

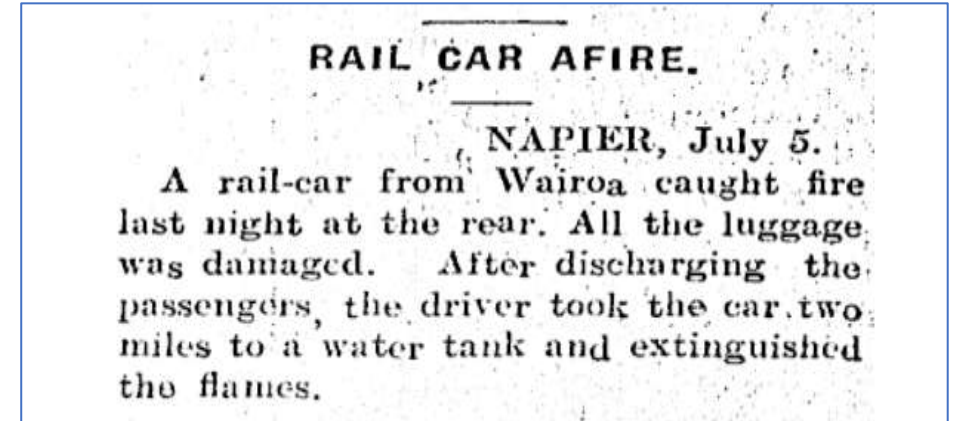
1940 WAIROA RAIL CAR FIRE



Cancelled **WAIROA JL 4 NOON 1940 N-Z**

The bags of mail were badly damaged when the rail car from Wairoa caught fire late on Thursday 4 July 1940. The driver saved the rail car by driving to the Waipunga Station water tower and then flooding the rear section after fire extinguishers had proved useless

Passengers lost most of their luggage, that which was not destroyed being badly damaged

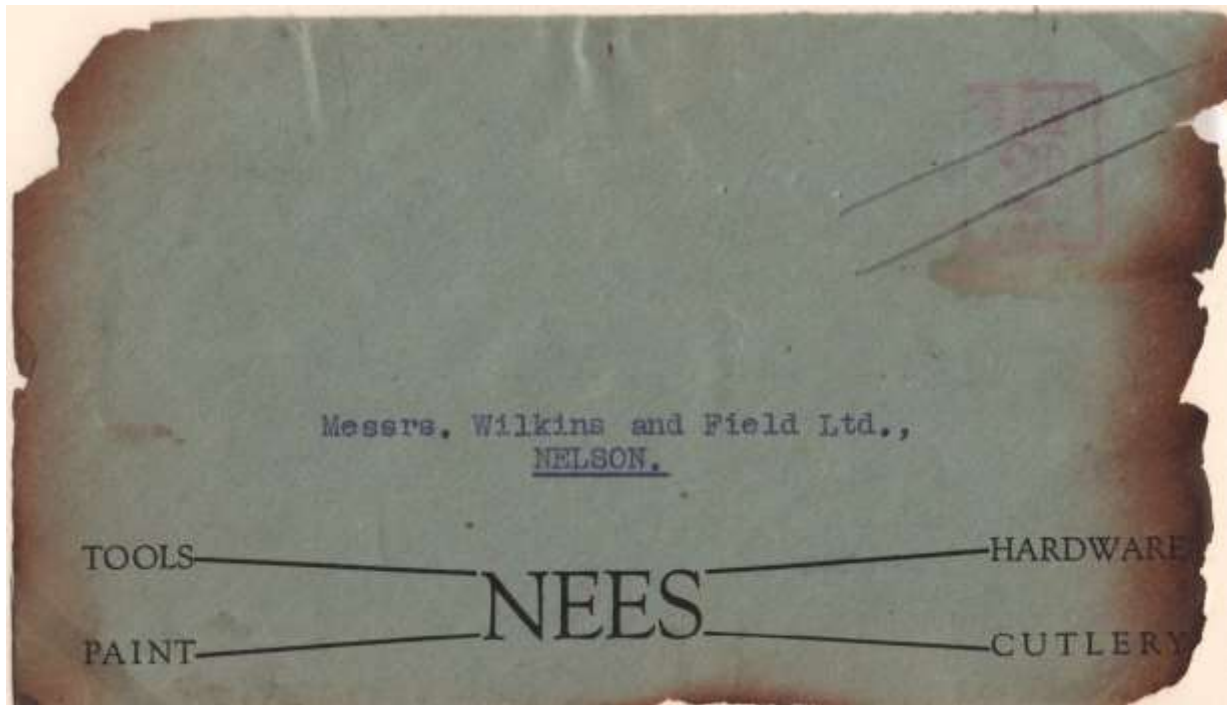


Hokitika Guardian 8 July 1940 page 4

A second example is recorded from this incident. It is to the same addressee bearing the same JL 4 NOON roller date-stamp, and is enclosed in an official forwarding envelope (Ref U405) size 166 x 108mm which is cancelled **NAPIER -8JL40 5.50PM** and bears a manuscript endorsement in red:

**Contents Damaged by fire
On Wairoa Rail Car**

1940 WELLINGTON POST BOX FIRE



This cover was among those partially burned when someone caused a fire in a posting box in Wellington on 17 September 1940

1970 TAURANGA POST BOX FIRE



Cancelled TAURANGA 30NOV70 10-AM and POSTAL BRANCH TAURANGA 30NOV1970

This cover was damaged by a firework thrown into a letter receiver in Tauranga. The NZ Post Office has a policy that should mail in a posting box be damaged by fire, no publicity will be given to the incident. They have found that should one such incident be given publicity, similar incidents will follow

1946 MANAWATU RIVER ACCIDENT



Addressed to Hastings cancelled **CHRISTCHURCH 11 AM 16 AUG 1946**
Explanatory cachet Type 1 size 60 x 12mm applied to letter mail

At 03:36 on 20 August 1946, a 140-ton K-class engine left Palmerston North for Hastings and Napier on the east coast. Behind the engine was a mail van and a string of wagons making up goods train No 902

In the Manawatu Gorge there had been a landslip caused by torrential rain and, at 04:10, the engine ran into an 8-foot boulder which de-railed it, the mail van and two wagons, which fell 60 feet into the Manawatu River. The remaining 21 wagons avoided the fall. The driver, B M Craghead, and the fireman, R F Hoskins, were killed



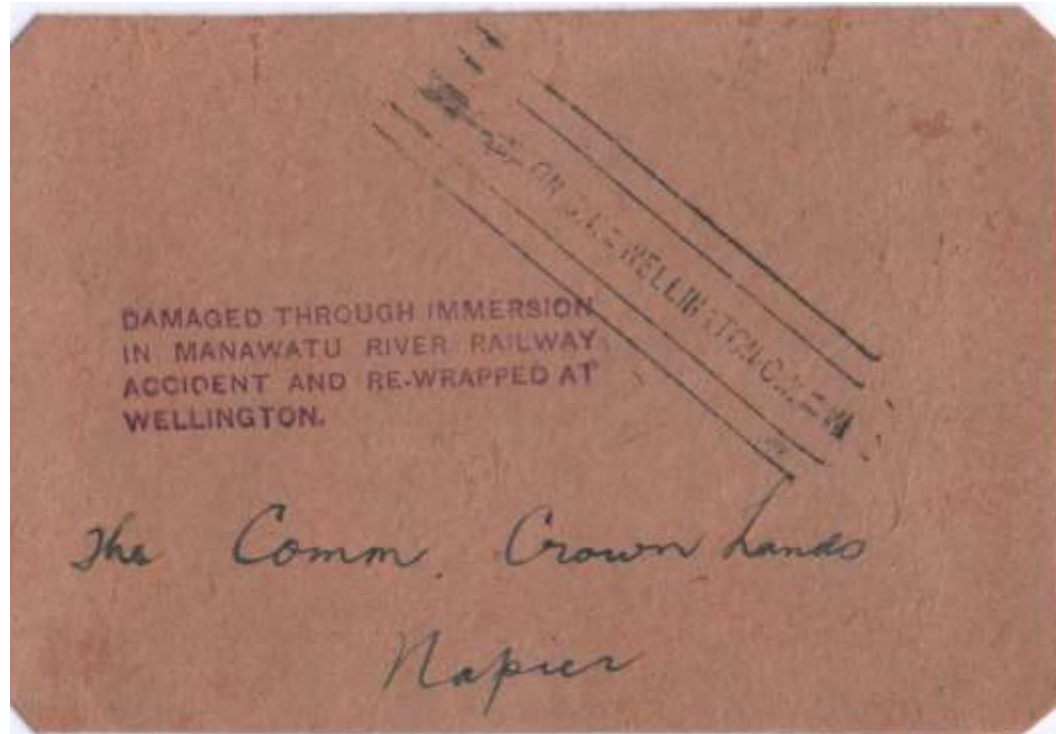
The engine exposed by falling water level

The mail van Xc1002 was completely submerged and it was some days later, when the river level had fallen, that the mail was recovered and taken to Wellington for processing

The mail consisted of five bags of letter mail for Gisborne, Hastings, Havelock North, Napier and Wairoa. There were also nine bags of newspapers and other articles. 39 parcel post containers and 33 loose parcels from Wellington and South Island offices were also in the mail van; these did not survive immersion as well as the letter mail

20 covers recorded with this cachet

1946 MANAWATU RIVER ACCIDENT



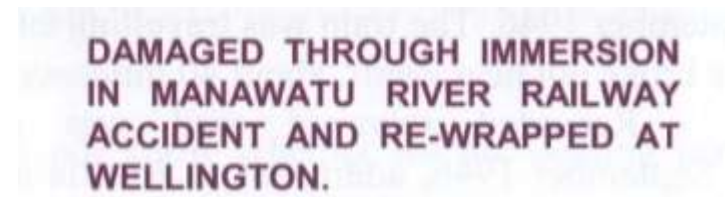
Explanatory cachet Type 2
Wellington roller cancel

The only example recorded



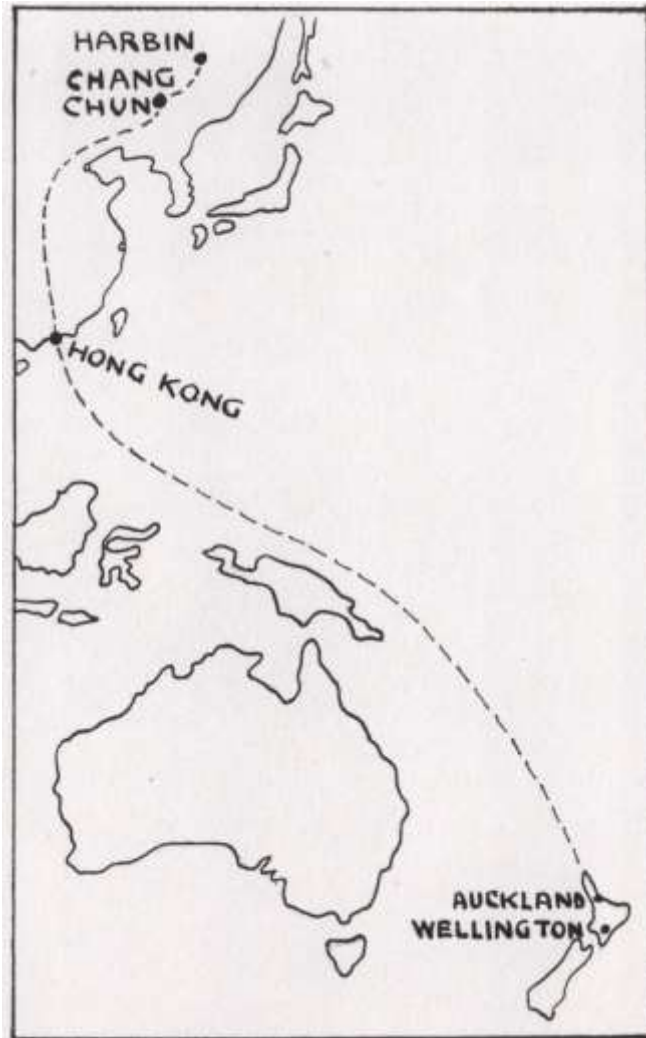
Wagons which avoided the drop

Cachet Type 2 applied to parcels



Size 61 x 16mm

1946 MAIL ROUTE BLOCKADED



Mail route to destination
blocked, return to sender

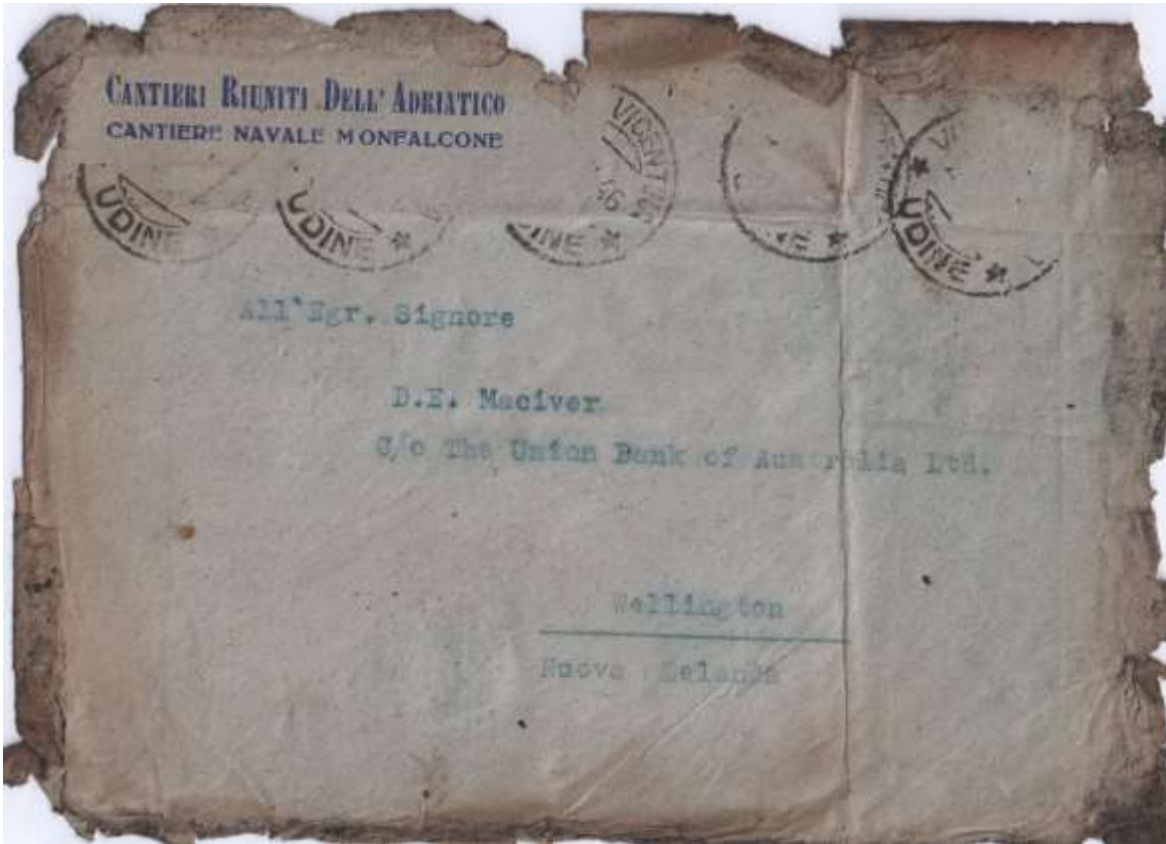
During the Sino-Communist Wars
the mail route was blockaded
after the investment of Harbin

Auckland **8 AM 1 AUG 1946**
(Chang Chun 1 October 1946)

Wellington C.1. Returned Letter Office
-5 MR 47.1

Received 12 March 1947

1947 FIRE AT PORT OF NAPLES



Cover from Monfalcone Northern Italy cancelled nearby at Udine in late 1946 forwarded to Wellington NZ in Italian P & T ambulance envelope cancelled ISPEZIONE P.T 30.1.47 and WELLINGTON C1 23AP47.8-PM

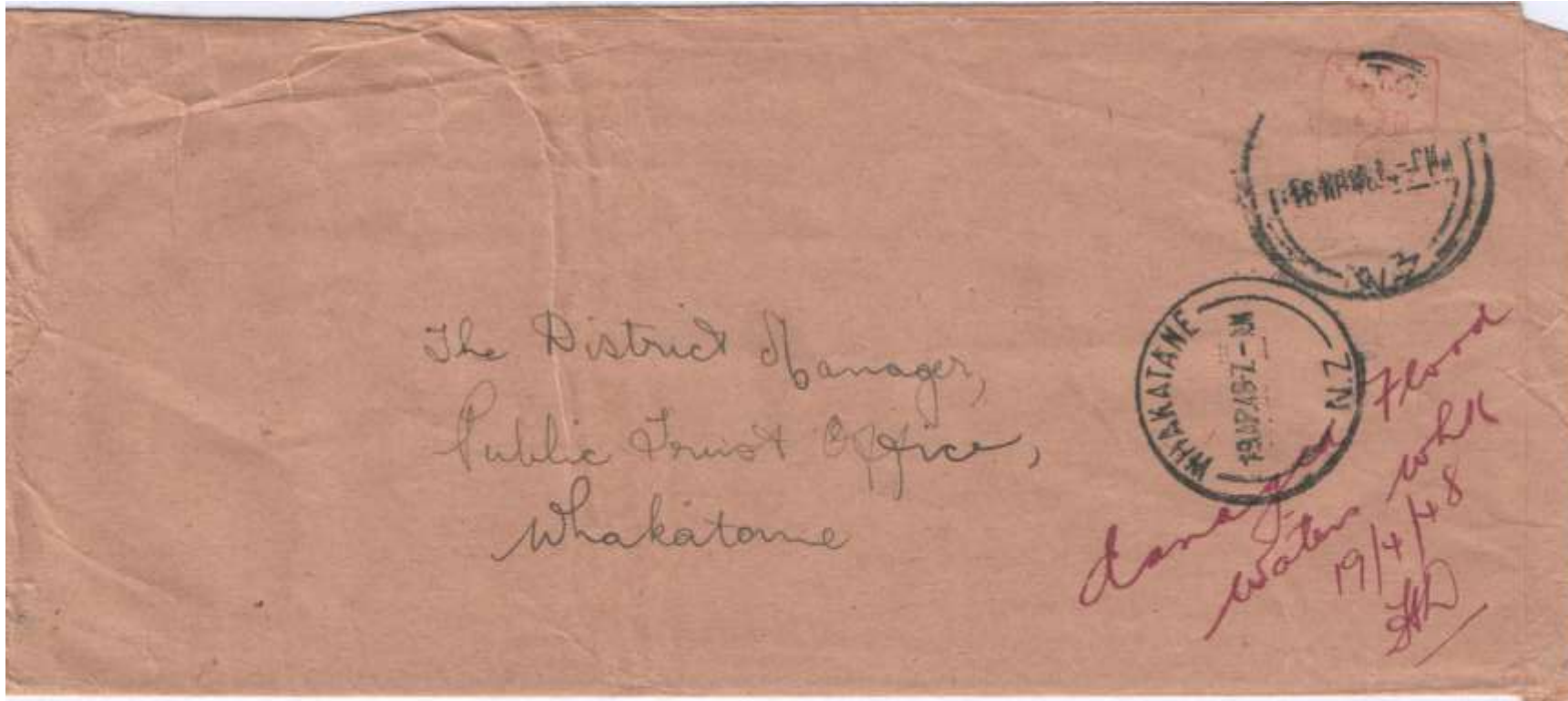


The ambulance envelope bears a three-line violet cachet on the reverse:

Oggetto recuperato - nelle condizioni in cui si trova - dall'incendio di Napoli Porto

This translates as: *Item recovered in the condition in which it was found after the fire at the Port of Naples*

1948 WHAKATANE FLOOD DAMAGE



Cancelled HAMILTON 16AP48 4.PM and WHAKATANE 19AP48 7.PM

Endorsed in red:
damaged Flood
Waters whk
19/4/48
HD

This flood-damaged cover is one of five recorded

On 19 April 1948, in turbulent weather, a NAC Lockheed Electra crashed at Tauranga, some 50 miles west of Whakatane. The storms were the worst for over 30 years

WHAKATANE AREA OPOTIKI'S ESCAPE

WAIHI BEACH DAMAGE
(P.A.) AUCKLAND, April 19.
Little business was done in Whakatane today as shopkeepers and County Council employees worked to repair the ravages of the violent electrical week-end storm that swept the Bay of Plenty and caused the worst flood in Whakatane since 1916.

Gisborne Herald 20 April 1948 page 6

1950 MAIL DESTROYED IN RAILWAY VAN FIRE AT MASTERTON



Charred piece cancelled MASTERTON 26JU50

The piece above is from an official parcel

On the night of 26 June 1950, second class mail was in a railway van at Masterton railway station ready for despatch to Wellington. Also in the van were drums of petrol or kerosene which were to be dropped off for railway workers en route

A railway employee was inspecting the van when a spark from the hurricane lamp he was carrying ignited spilled fluid. The liquid burst into flames and the other contents of the van caught fire

The flames attracted other workers to the scene and the fire was extinguished. However, of the seventeen bags of mail, five were rescued and the remainder were partly destroyed.





1951 DAMAGED BY INK

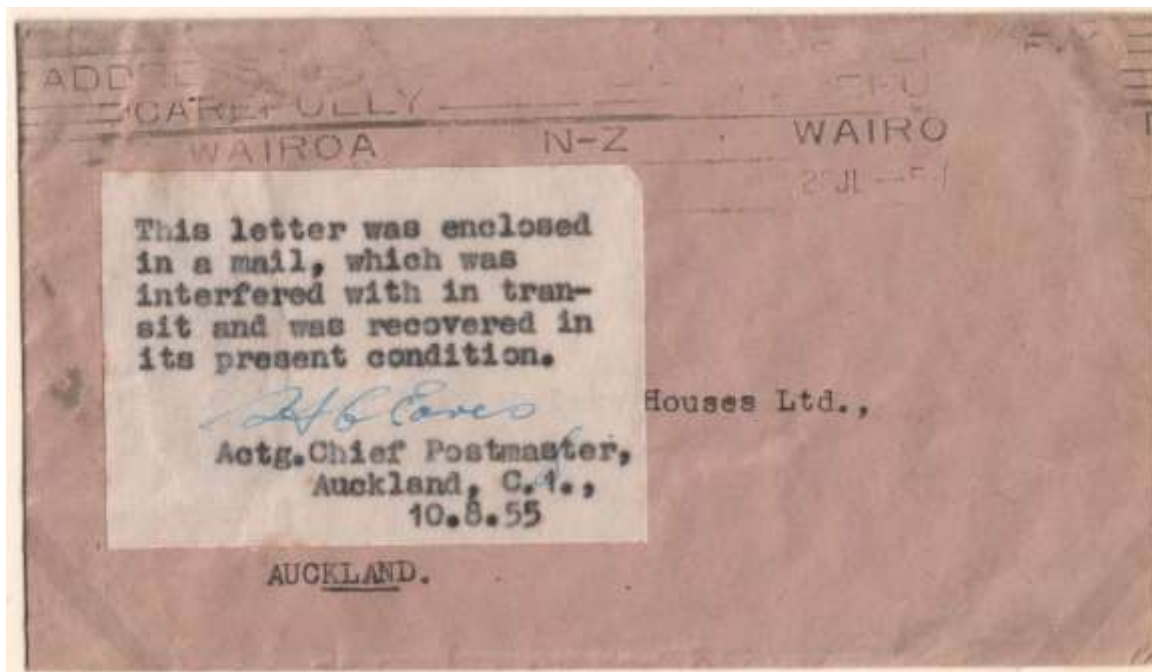
Registered cover cancelled TORONTO FE 1 51 (S.O.104) and VANCOUVER AM 5 II 51 B.C.

Cachet size 46 x 9mm
**RECEIVED AT AUCKLAND IN
 DAMAGED CONDITION**



Back-stamped TORONTO ONT. 20 FE 1 51,
 TORONTO FE 1 51 (S.O.104) and VANCOUVER AM 5
 II 51 B.C. REG.ON TERMINAL A

1955 INTERFERED WITH IN TRANSIT

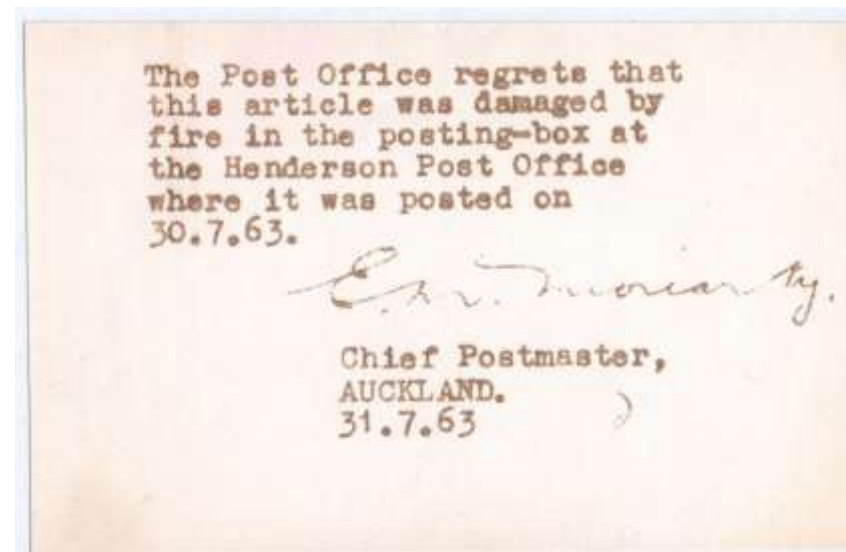
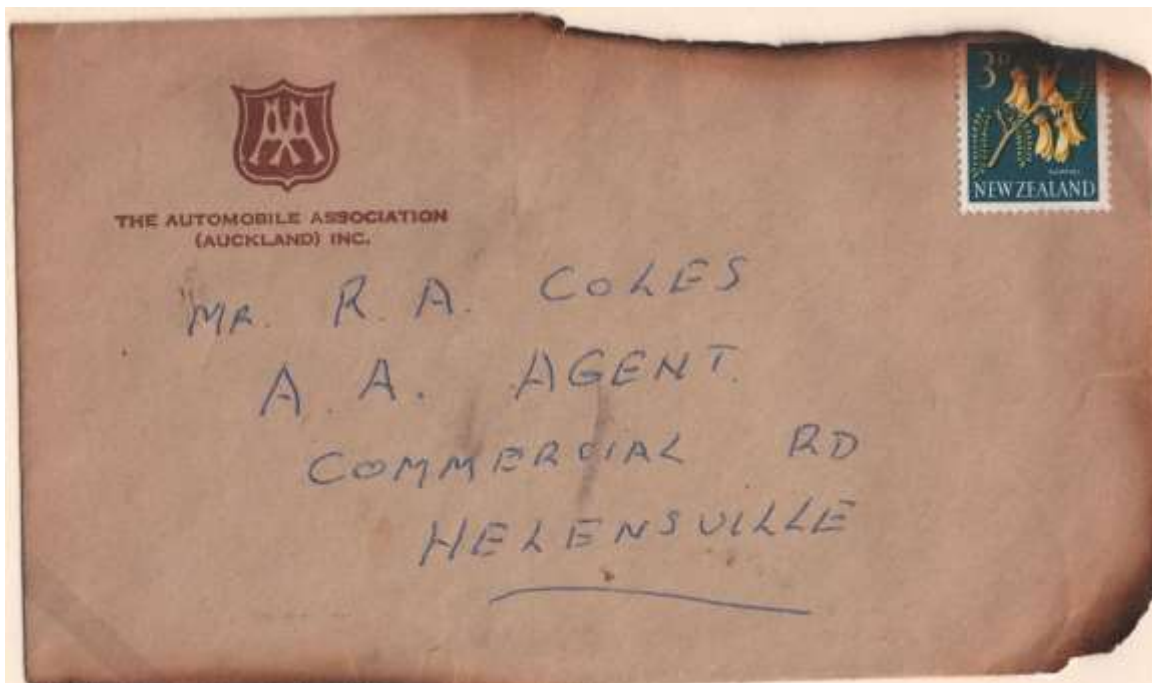


Cancelled WAIROA 28 JL 5-PM 1955

Explanatory typed label size 71 x 50mm (letters 64 x 42mm overall)
dated 13 days later at Auckland

Roneoed label dated 31 July 1963 size 109 x 70mm
(letters 71 x 50mm)

1963 HENDERSON POST OFFICE POST BOX FIRE



1961 FOUND UNDER FLOORBOARDS OF POST OFFICE 48 YEARS AFTER POSTING



Meter cancelled 25JL13.1 PAID and WAIMATE 21MR61 2-PM

The only example recorded



Back-stamped WAIMATE 1230PM 26 JL 13 and 21MR61 2-PM

Endorsed in manuscript:

*Found under floorboards when
new Private Boxes were being installed
at Post Office Waimate 21-3-61 (initialled)*

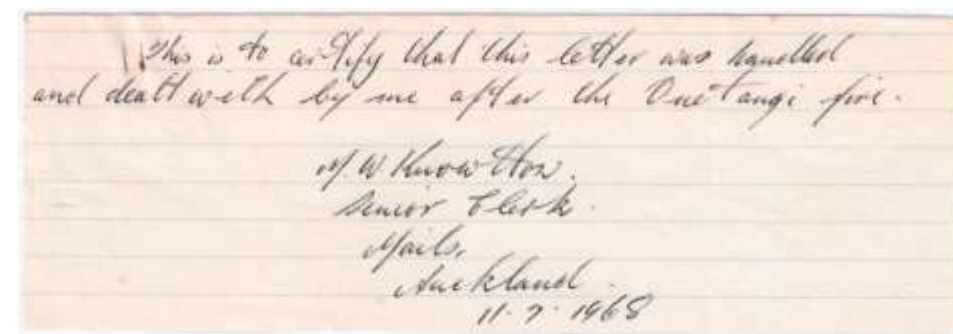
1963 ONETANGI POST OFFICE FIRE



Cover from Onetangi, Waiheke Island cancelled
AUCKLAND 10MY63 9-AM



New Zealand Herald 9 May 1963



Statement dated 11 September 1968 signed by a Senior Clerk at Auckland Post Office

1965 AMBERLEY VEHICLE FIRE



Cancelled ST KILDA 24JE65 2

It is regretted that the accompanying postal article was damaged when a mail service vehicle caught fire at Amberley on 25th June.

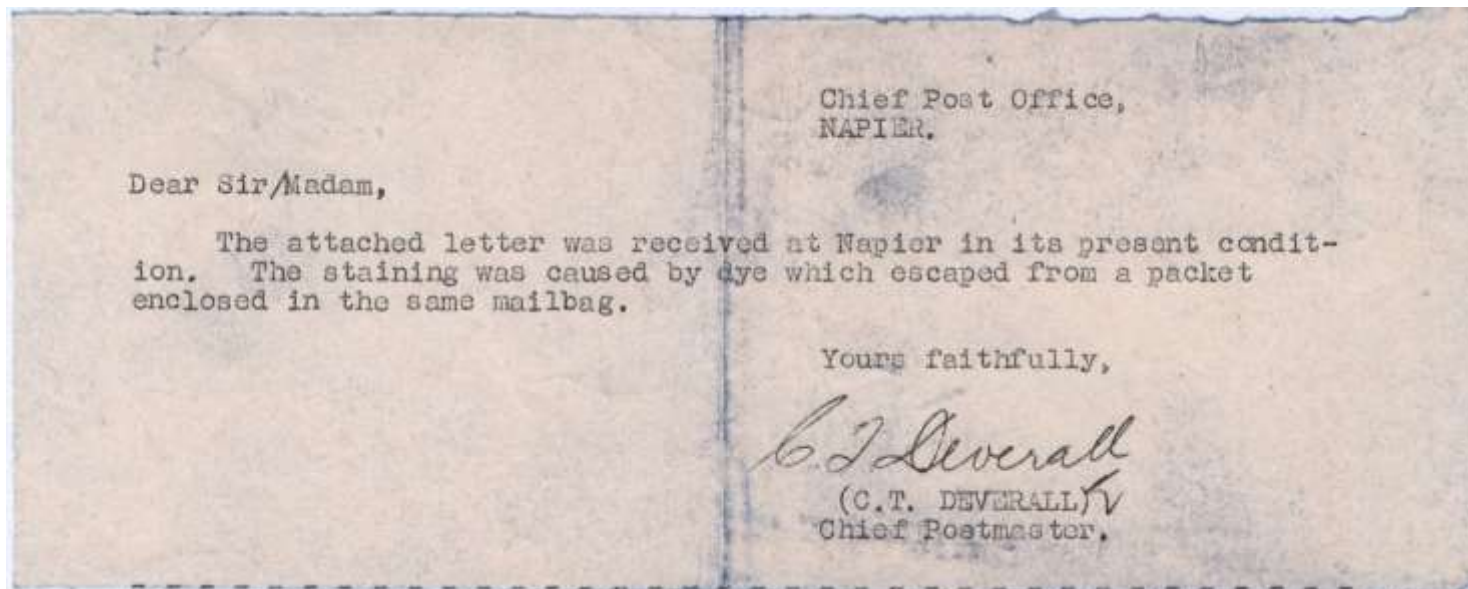
1967 DYE STAIN



Cancelled CHRISTCHURCH 11 45P 21 APR 1967



Size 166 x 109mm



1968 SENT TO ENGLAND IN ERROR



Cancelled CHICHESTER 18 MAR 68 SUSSEX

*This letter was found stuck
in another in Chichester
Sussex England.
Return to NZ WITH APOLOGIES
NOT TO SURCHARGE*

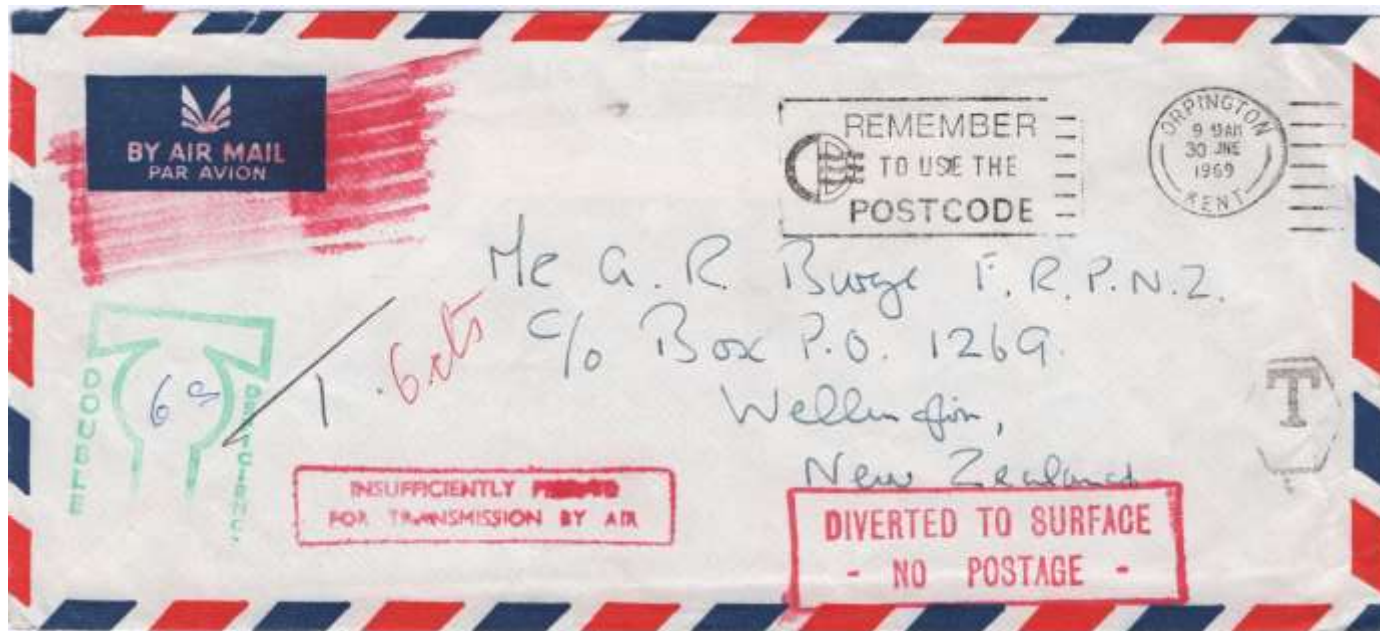
1975 DAMAGED BY VANDALS



Cancelled POSTMASTER 29 JUL 1975 WERRIBEE

Bearing manuscript endorsement:

**Damaged by vandals
(signed by Postmaster)**



1969 FOUND IN STREET BY MEMBER OF PUBLIC

Cancelled **ORPINGTON 945AM 30 JNE 1969 KENT**
and taxed 6c Double Deficiency



Back-stamped **ORPINGTON 30 JUN 69 TEL 24399 KENT** and
WELLINGTON 29AUG69 5.30PM REGISTERED

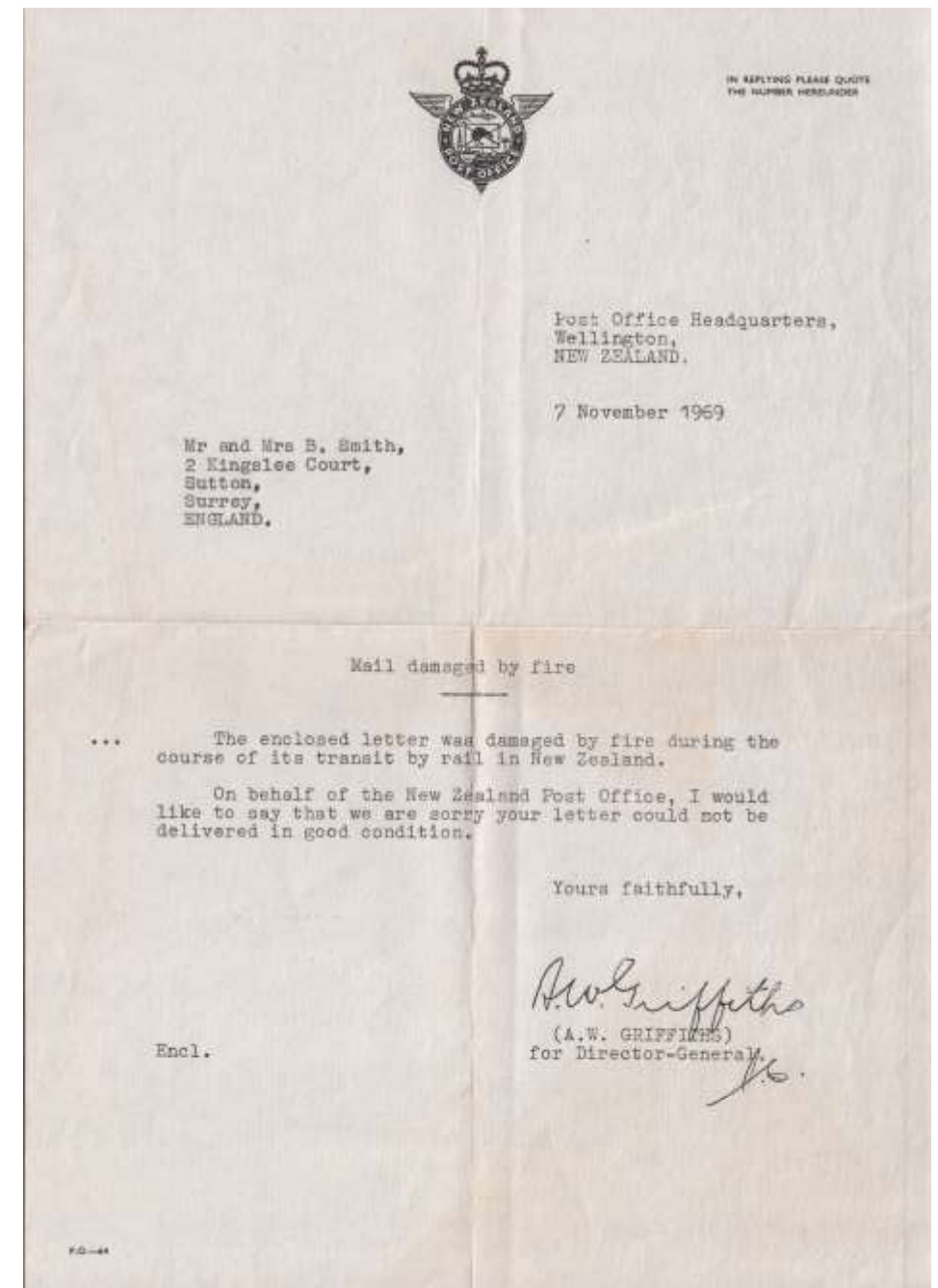
Endorsed:

*Found in Street
by member of Public
(initialled)*

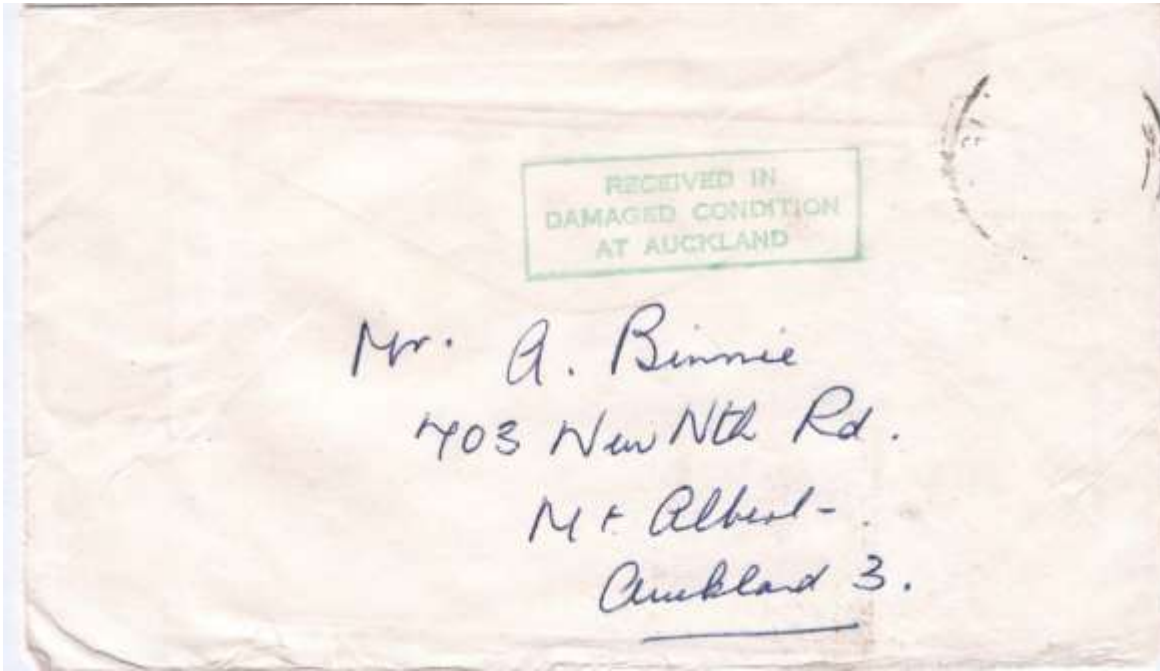
1969 RAIL VAN FIRE



Cancelled CHRISTCHURCH 8 PM 21 OCT 1969



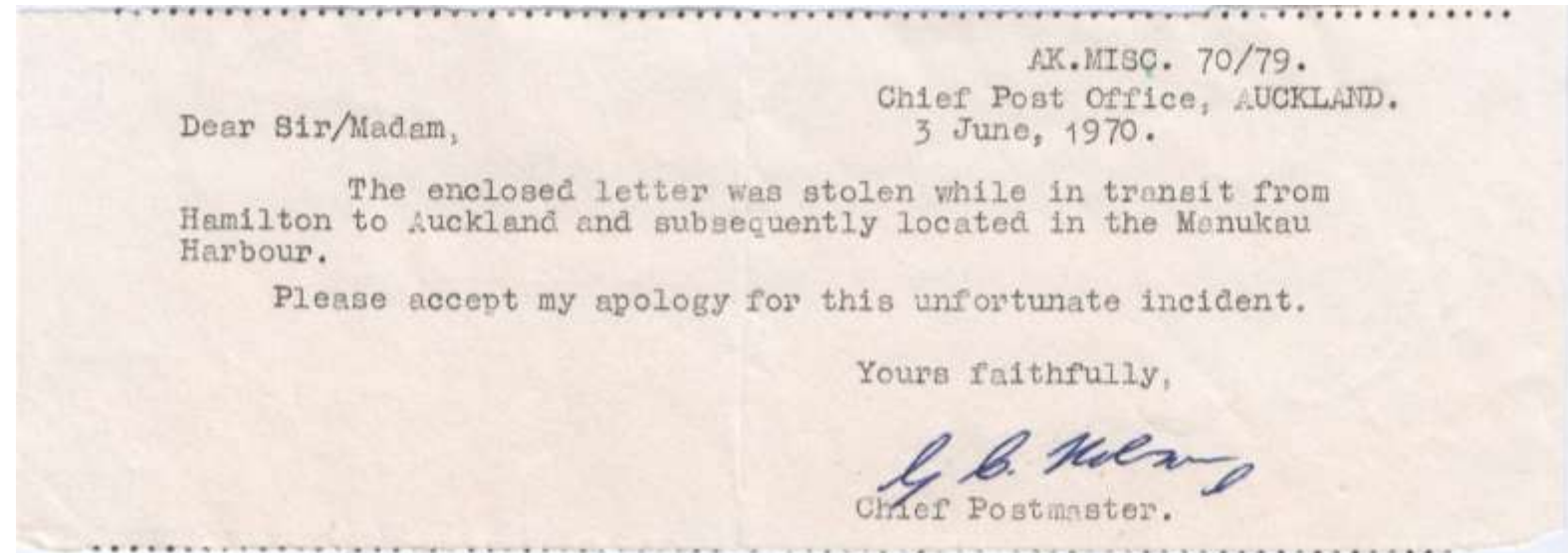
1970 STOLEN MAIL THROWN IN MANUKAU HARBOUR



Cachet Type 15 (*Postage Stamps of NZ Vol 3* page 509) but for Auckland not Wellington

Mail from Hamilton for Auckland was sent north by rail from Frankton Junction Station and sometimes by road on State Highway 1

The theft probably occurred on the train or from the mail van, and the opened mail was thrown into the Harbour to the west of the track at Papakura before arriving at Auckland



Duplicated explanatory slip size 210 x 73mm
Probably typed 4 per sheet