

# NEW ZEALAND DISASTER MAIL

By Brian Peace to NZ Society of GB 26 April 2025

SLIDES 2 - 4 MAIL ROBBERIES

SLIDES 5-7 AIR CRASHES

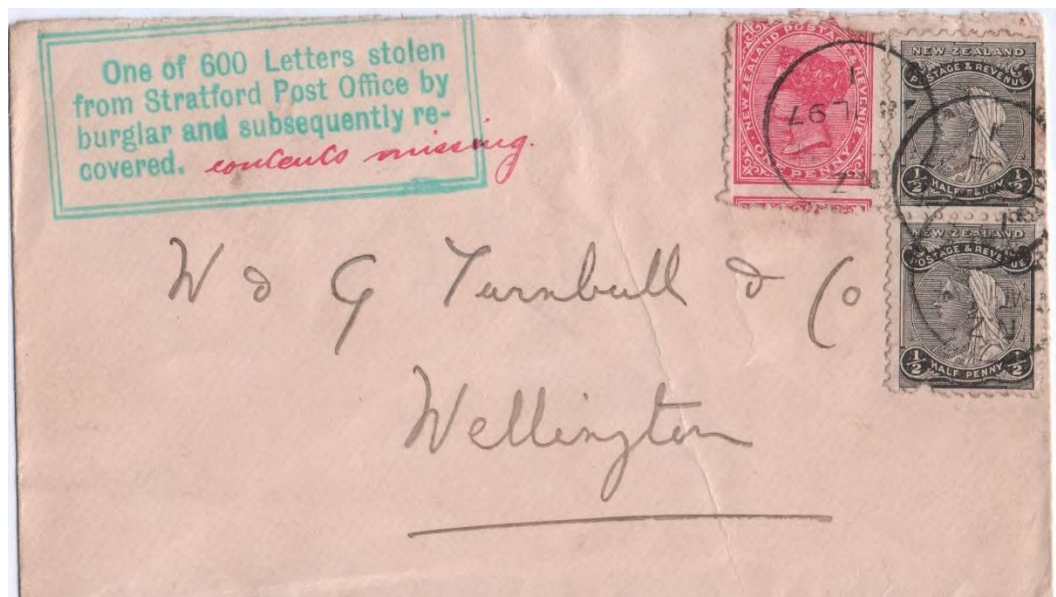
SLIDES 8 - 19 OTHER INCIDENTS



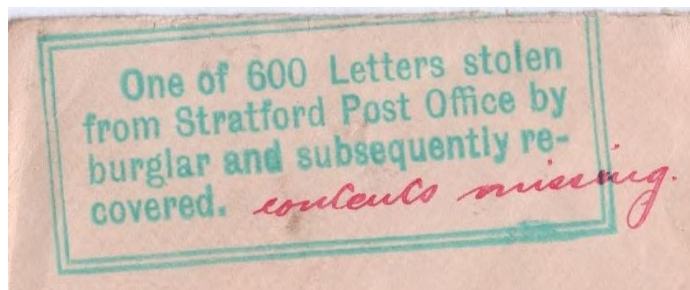
KAIKOHE 19 AP 48. 3 back-stamped  
Whakatane 7-AM 21 AP 48

**The only cover recorded**

## 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

## 1934 STOLEN FROM POSTING BOX



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."

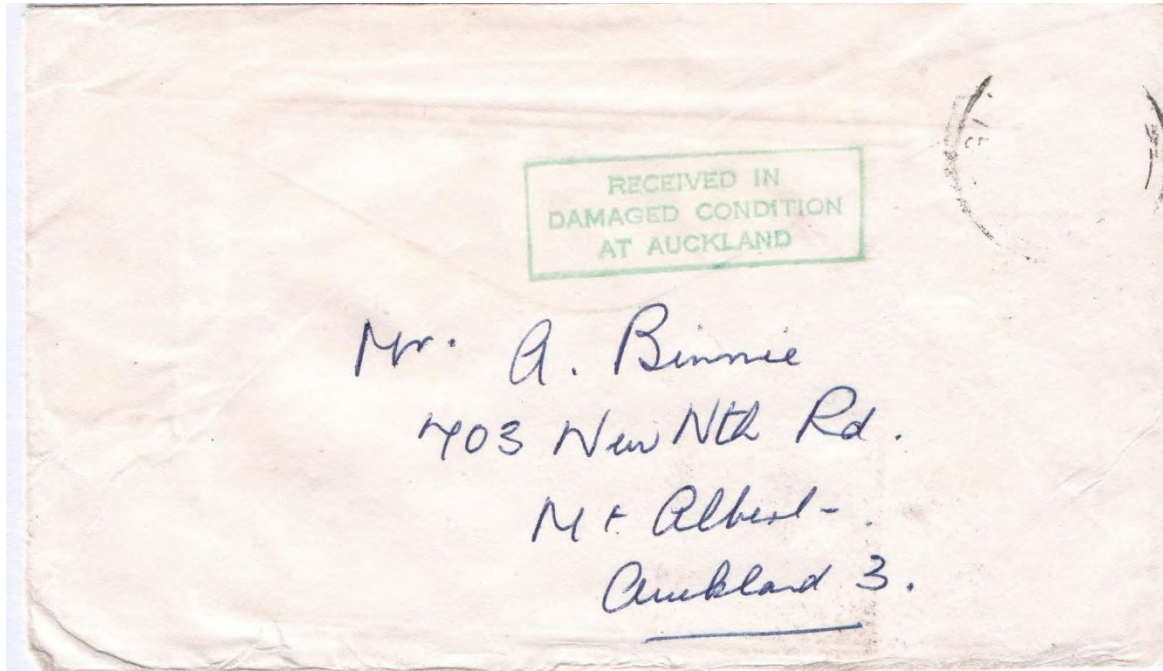
Cancelled AUCKLAND 29JA34.745PM -N.Z.- Officially sealed with Mail 76 labels *typed by red oval date-stamps MAIL BRANCH G.P.O. 29JAN1934*

Endorsed in manuscript:

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

*New Zealand Herald 19 February 1934 p12*

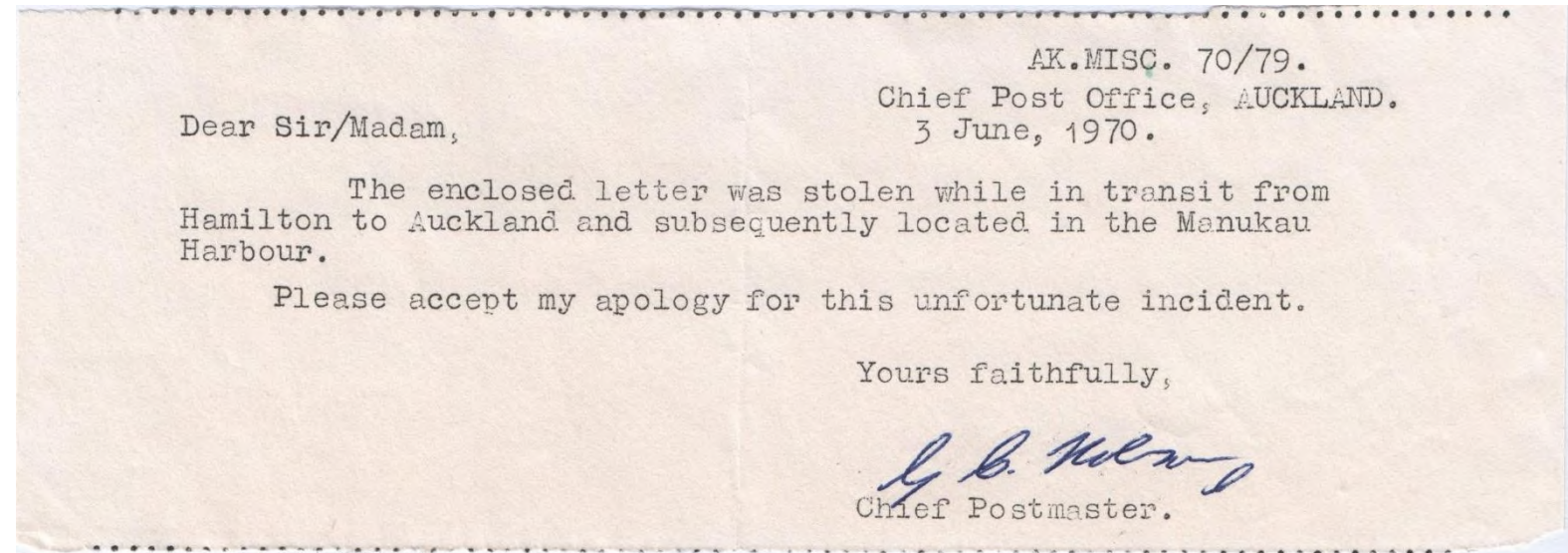
## 1970 STOLEN MAIL THROWN IN MANUKAU HARBOUR



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

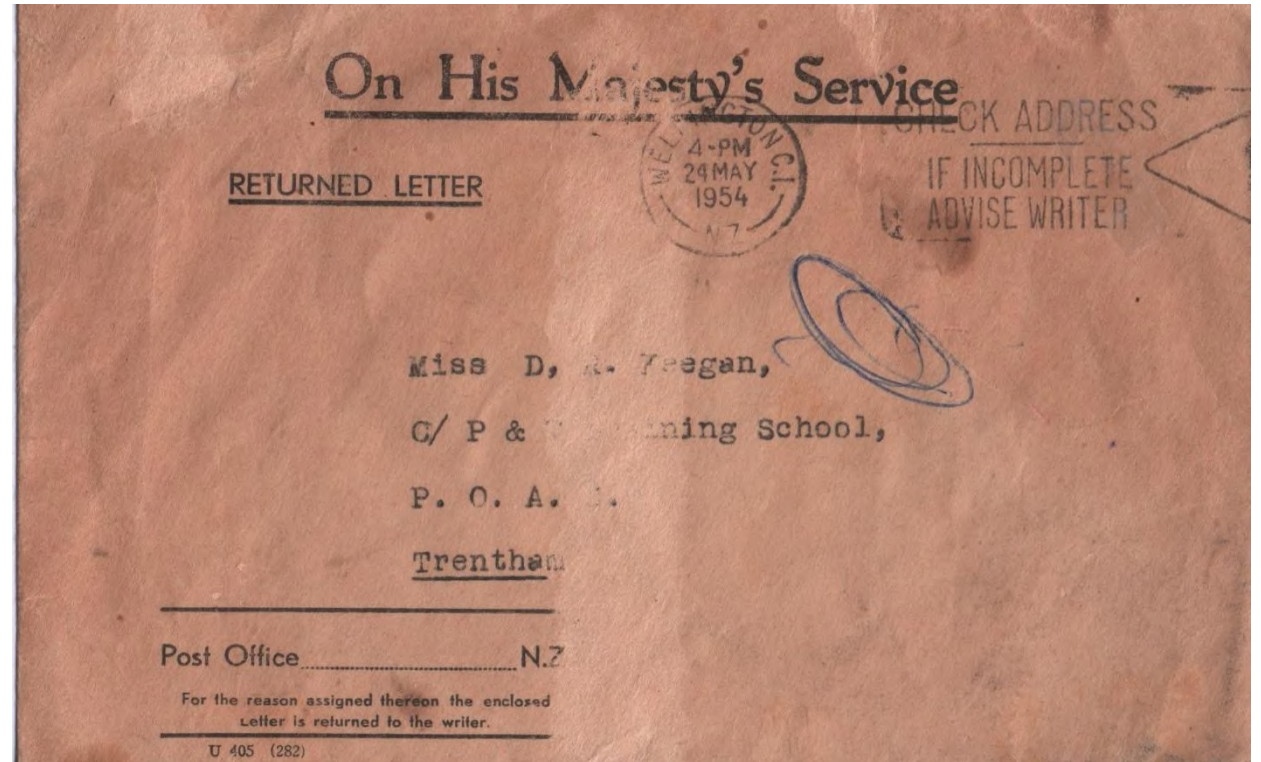
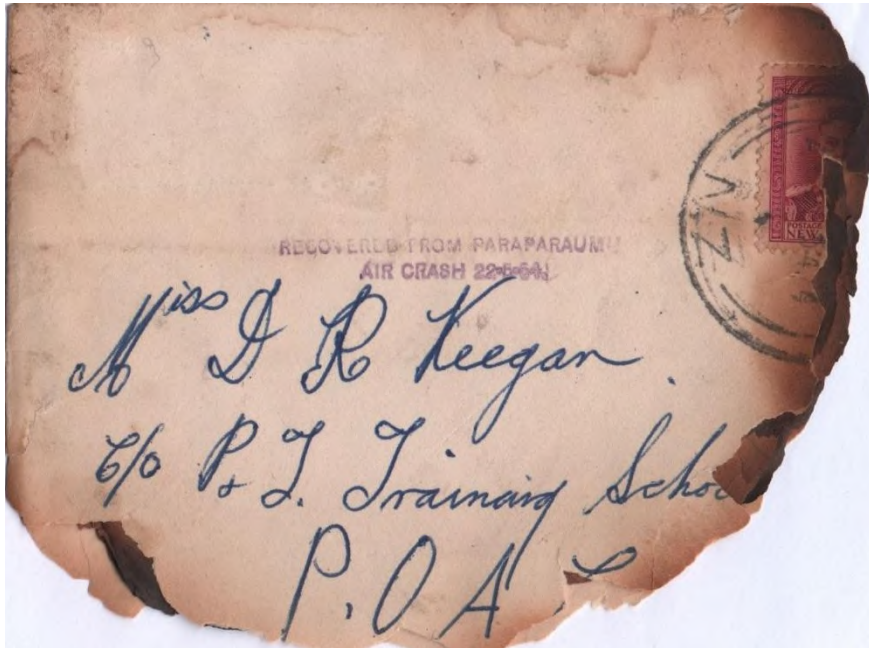


Duplicated explanatory slip size 210 x 73mm  
Probably typed 4 per sheet

1954 May 22

Route: Christchurch (Harewood) to Wellington (Paraparaumu)

Crashed short of Paraparaumu Airfield due to use of incorrect fuel selector



Cancelled WELLINGTON C 1 4-PM 24MAY 1954

Douglas DC3-D ZK-AQT *Piere* of NZ National Airways Corporation crashed on approach to Wellington (Paraparaumu) Airport on 22 May 1954. Three children died; 23 passengers and the two pilots survived

Purple cachet size 43 x 5 mm

RECOVERED FROM PARAPARAUMU  
AIR CRASH 22-5-54.

Digital version

1954 May 22

Route: Christchurch (Harewood) to Wellington (Paraparaumu)

Crashed short of Paraparaumu Airfield due to use of incorrect fuel selector

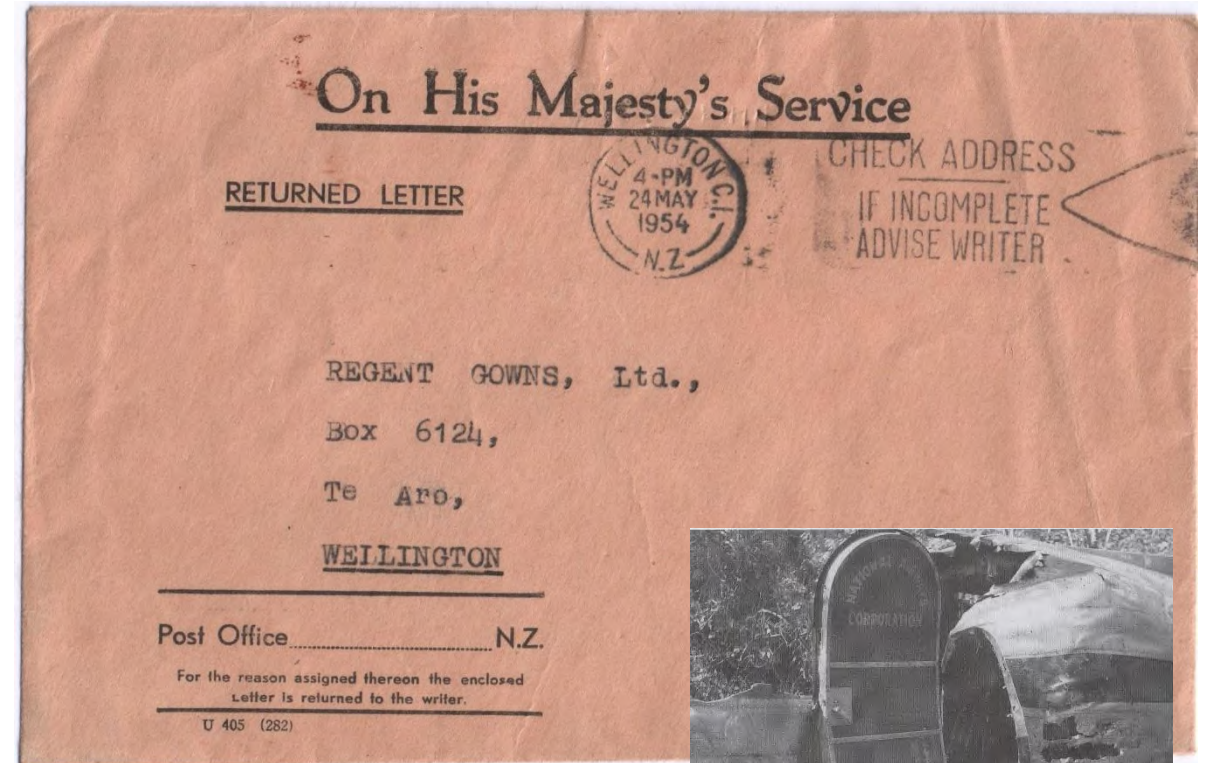


Cancelled **CHRISTCHURCH 11-AM 21 MAY 1954** and bearing purple cachet size 43 x 5 mm

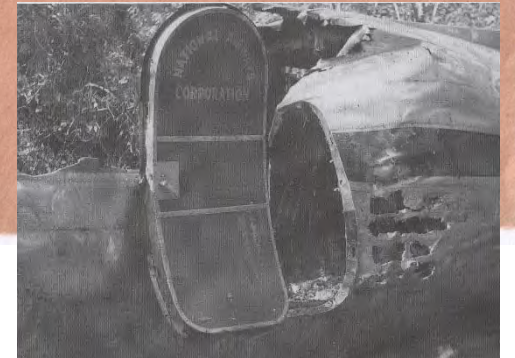
Six bags of mail were on board of which three for Auckland were undamaged and forwarded intact.

The other three bags were badly charred; those forwarded after treatment were:

|                          |             |
|--------------------------|-------------|
| For Wellington           | 123 letters |
| For Nelson               | 41 letters  |
| For Rotorua              | 22 letters  |
| For Masterton            | 7 letters   |
| <b>TOTAL 193 letters</b> |             |



Cancelled **WELLINGTON C 1 4-PM 24 MAY 1954**



Main passenger door forced open by Captain Peckett to allow escape

Ten covers are recorded from this incident of which two are to Nelson and the others to the Wellington district.

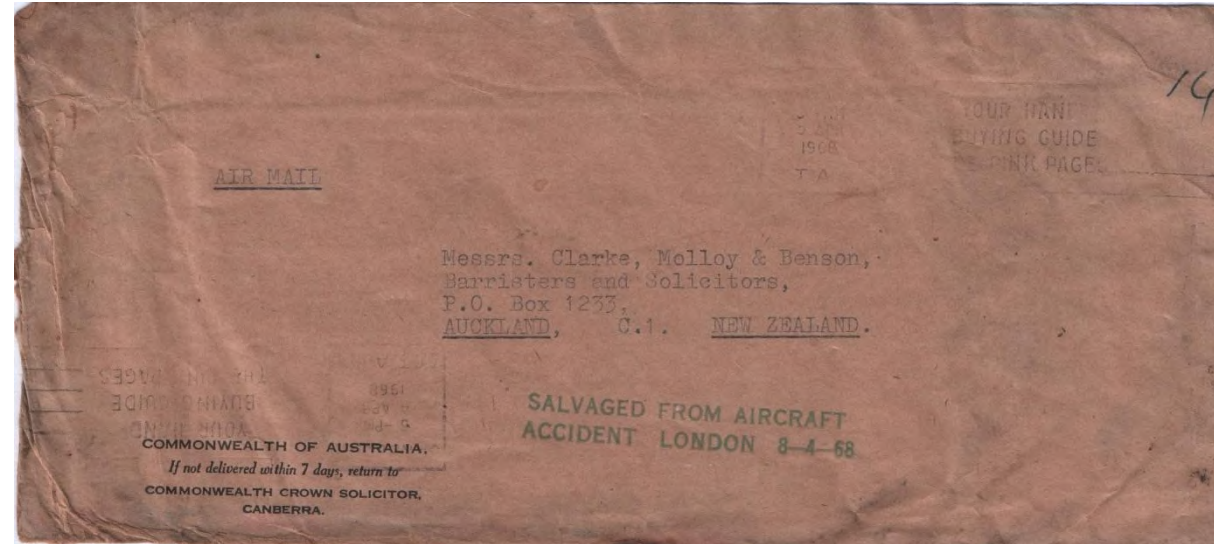
Forwarding envelopes are cancelled at Wellington at 4 pm on 24 May

**1968 April 8**

**Route: Canberra-Sydney-London Heathrow-London GPO Foreign Section-Heathrow-Auckland**  
**Engine fire at Heathrow, forced landing, aircraft destroyed**

**Sent from the Commonwealth Crown Solicitor and  
addressed to a legal practice in Auckland**

**Found its way into the mail bag for GB and arrived  
at the London GPO Foreign Section on 8 April**



**Cancelled CANBERRA 6-PM 4 APR 1968 (twice). Back-stamped LONDON FS 8AP 68**

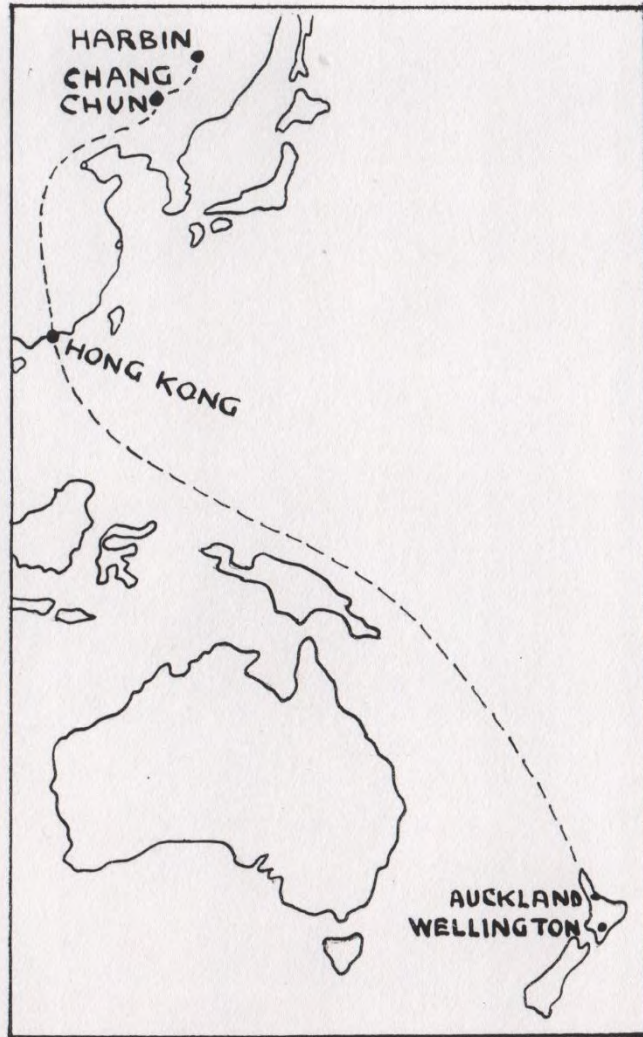


**About 347 lbs of NZ mail was destroyed, comprising 128 lbs first class,  
131 lbs second class and 88 lbs of parcels**

**total number of items which passed through Auckland was estimated by a  
postal official as being about 5,000**

**This is the only cover recorded which is addressed within  
Australasia and was involved in the Heathrow incident**

## 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)

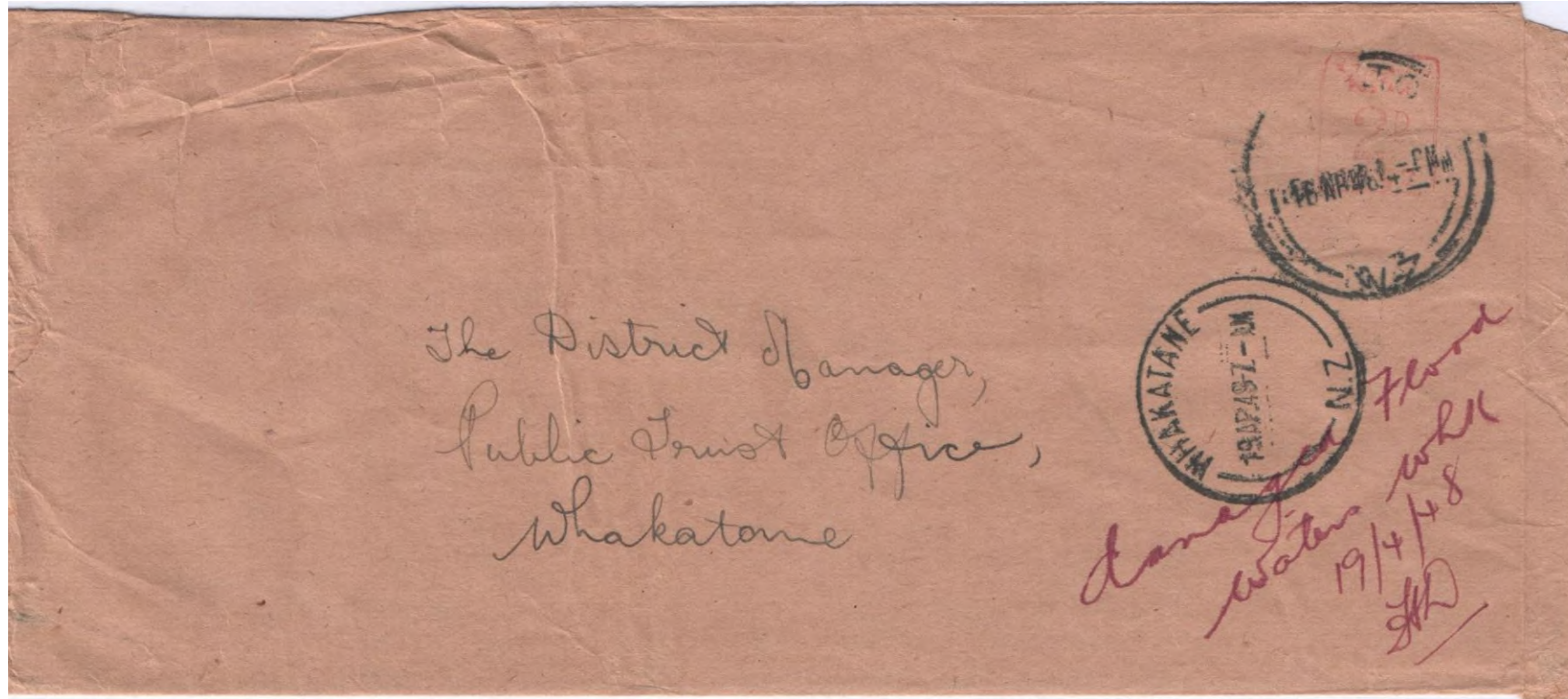
Wellington C.1. Returned Letter Office  
-5 MR 47.1

Received 12 March 1947

One other example from New  
Zealand recorded

5 examples of cachet recorded

## 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

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

One of five recorded

## 1950 MAIL DESTROYED IN RAILWAY VAN FIRE AT MASTERTON



Charred piece cancelled MASTERTON 26JU50

The piece above is from an official parcel

One of two examples of recovered mail

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.

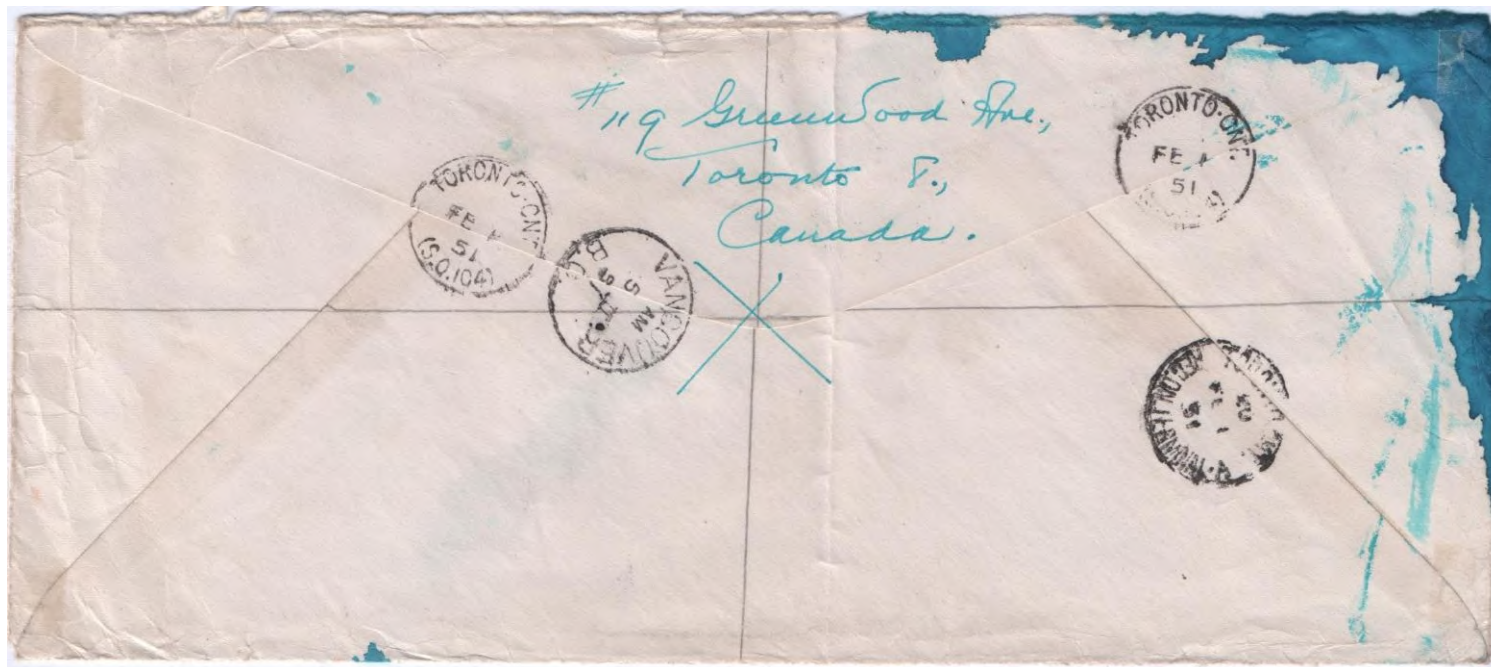




## 1951 DAMAGED BY INK

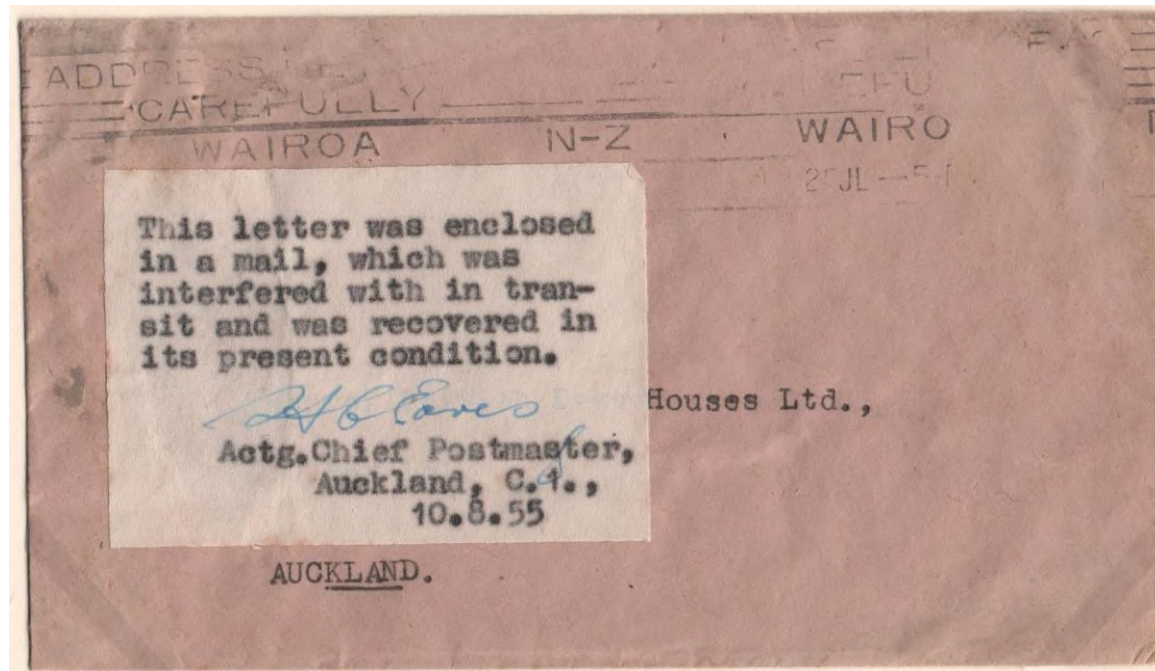
Registered cover cancelled TORONTO FE 1 51 (S.O.104) and VANCOUVER AM 5 II 51 B.C.

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

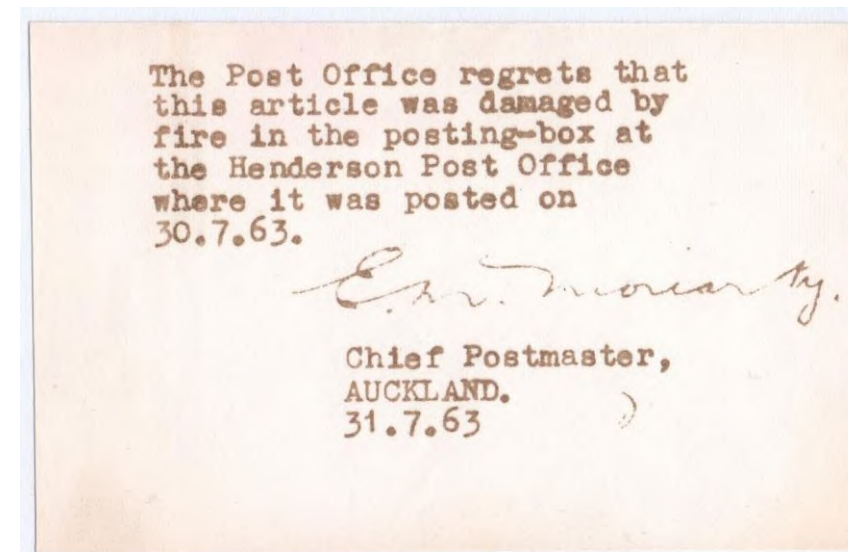
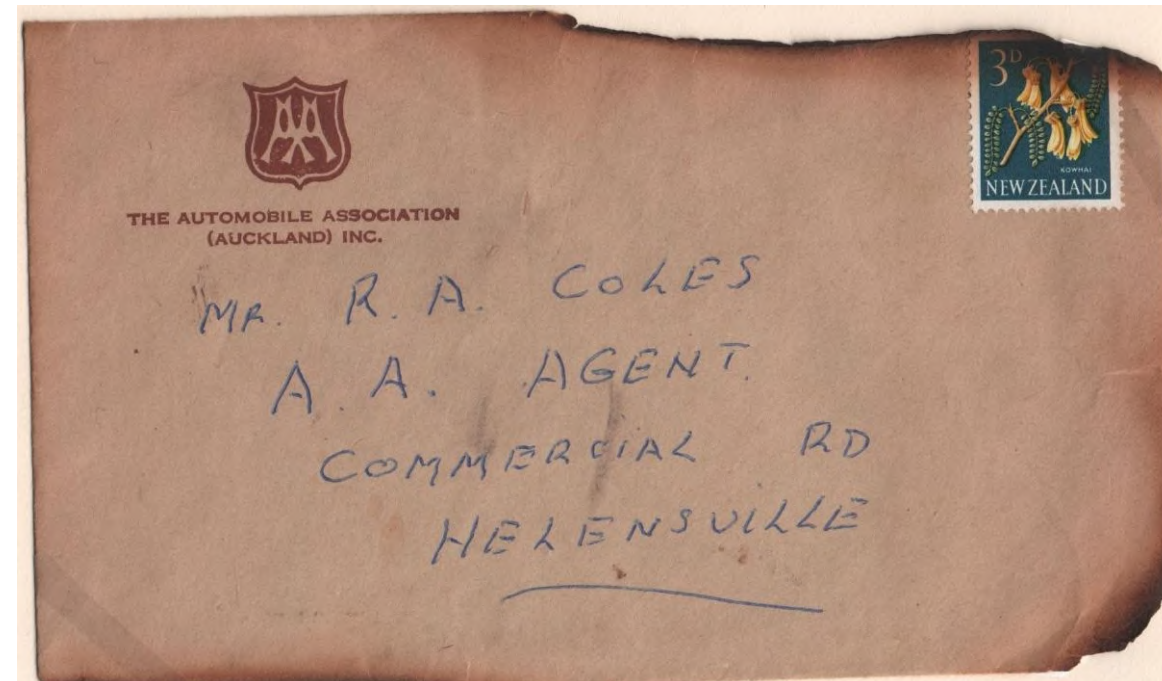


Cancelled WAIROA 28 JL 5-PM 1955

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

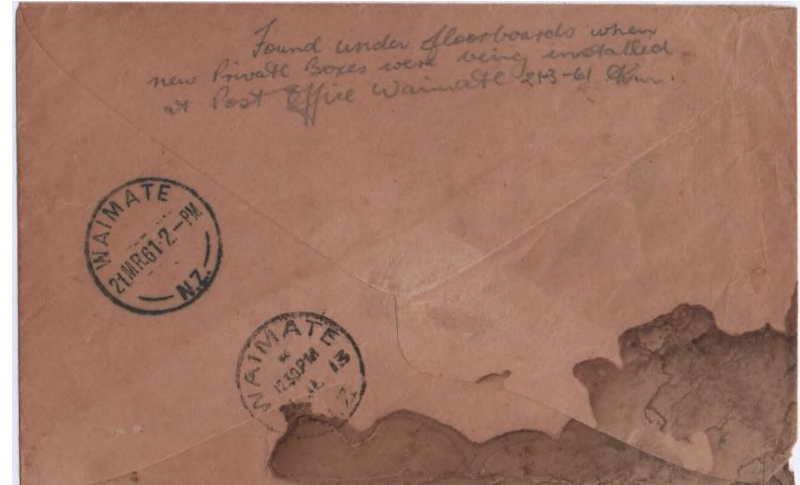


# 1961 FOUND UNDER FLOORBOARDS OF POST OFFICE 48 YEARS AFTER POSTING



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

**The only example recorded**

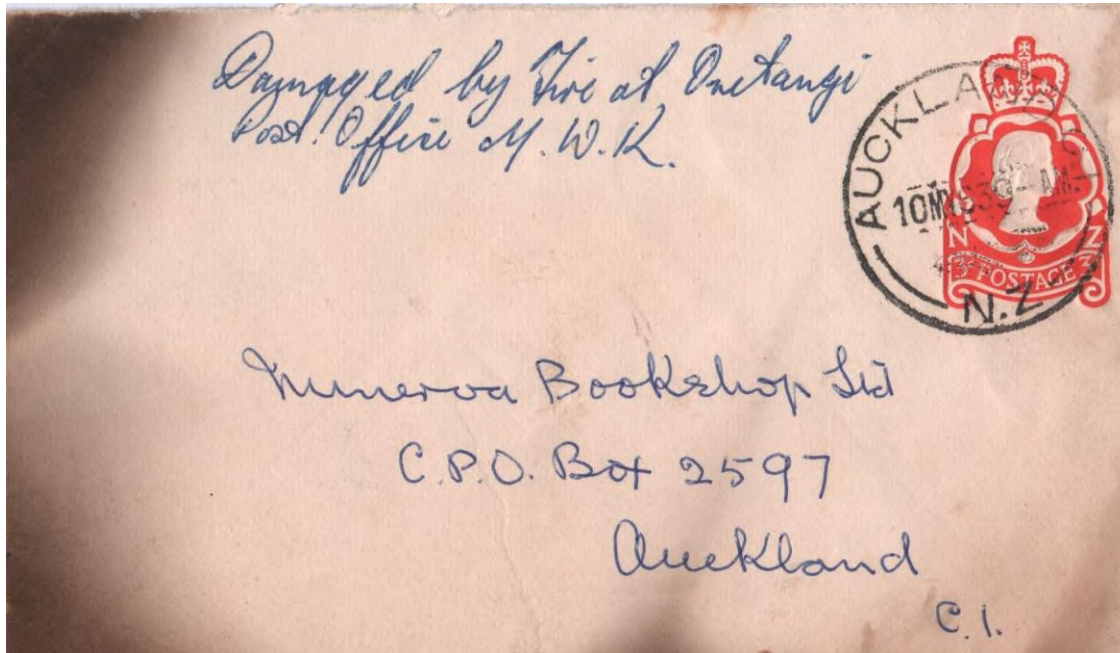


Back-stamped WAMATE 1230PM 26 JL 13 and 21MR61 2-PM

Endorsed in manuscript:

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

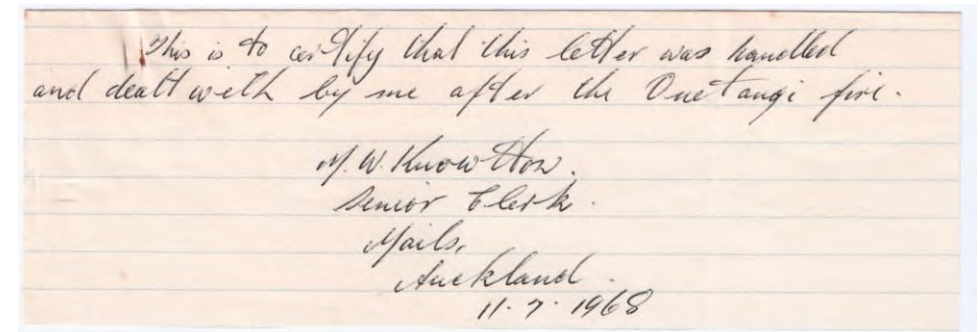
## 1963 ONETANGI POST OFFICE FIRE



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

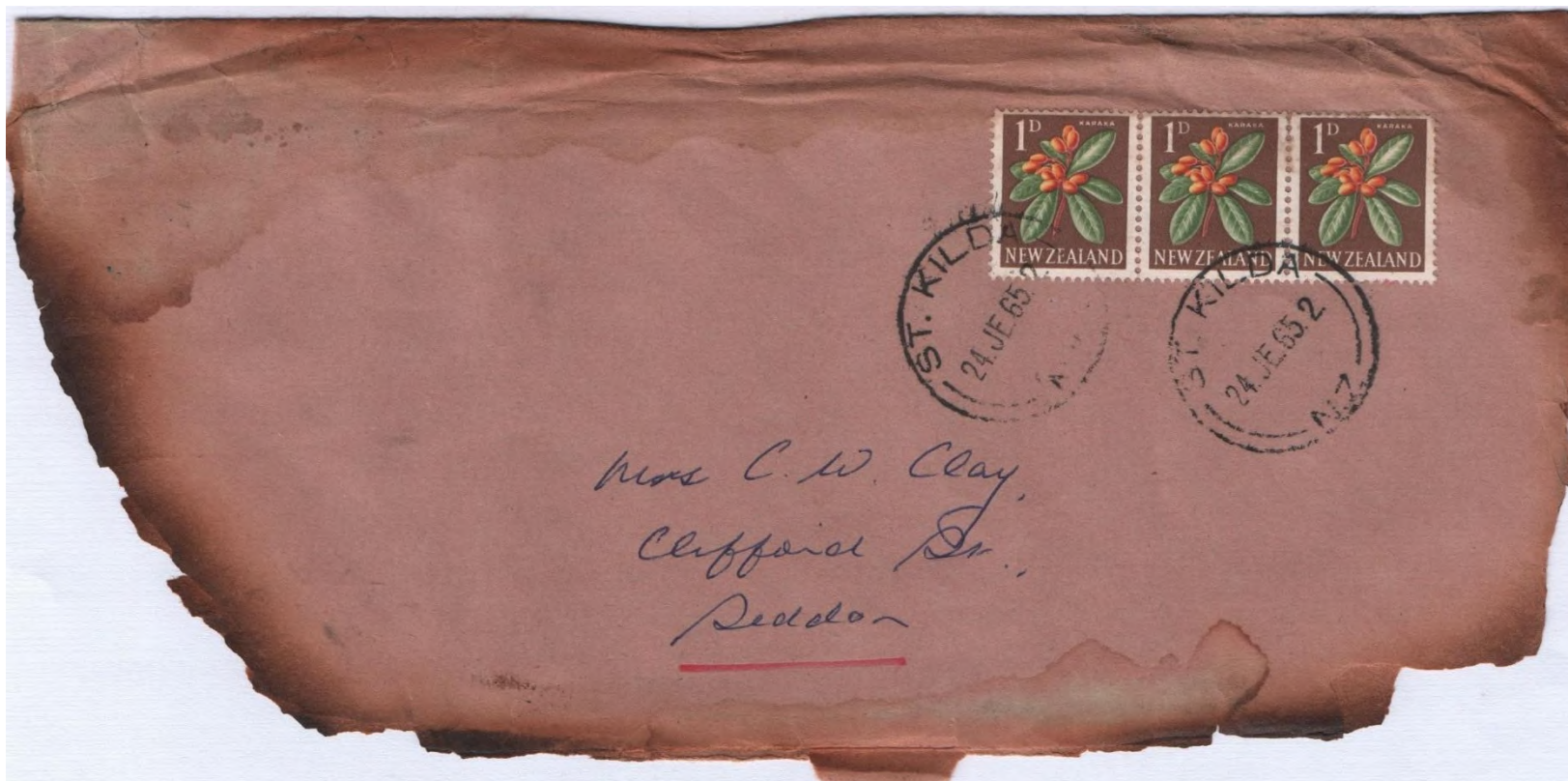


New Zealand Herald 9 May 1963



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

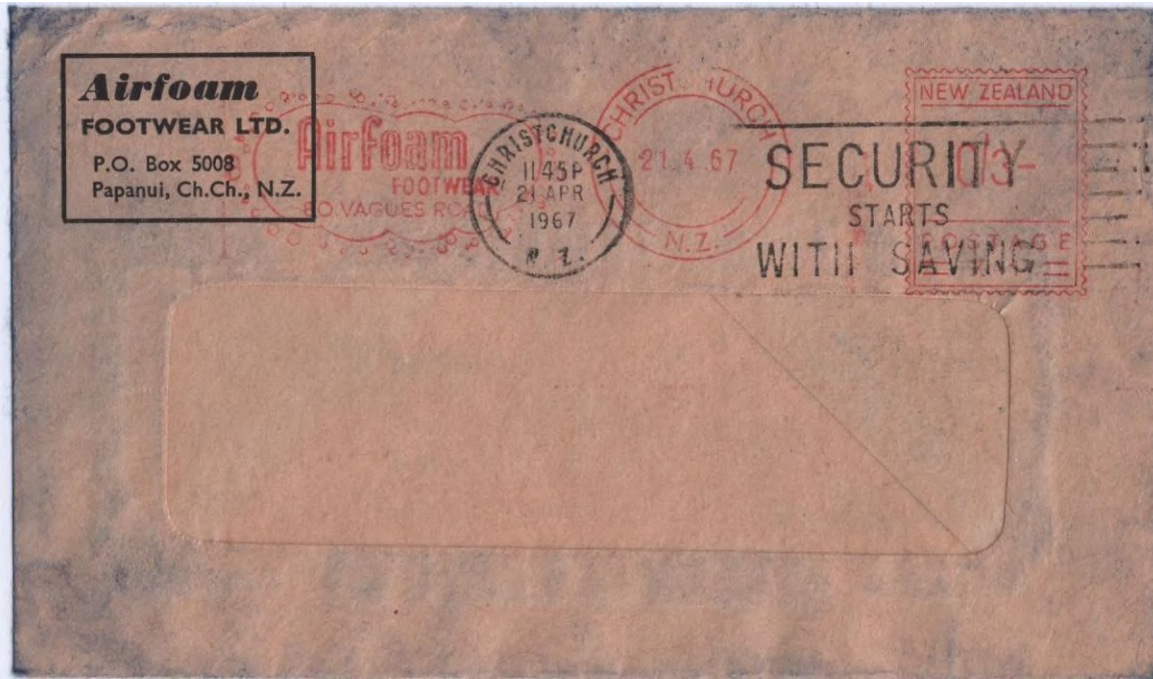
## 1965 AMBERLEY VEHICLE FIRE



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.

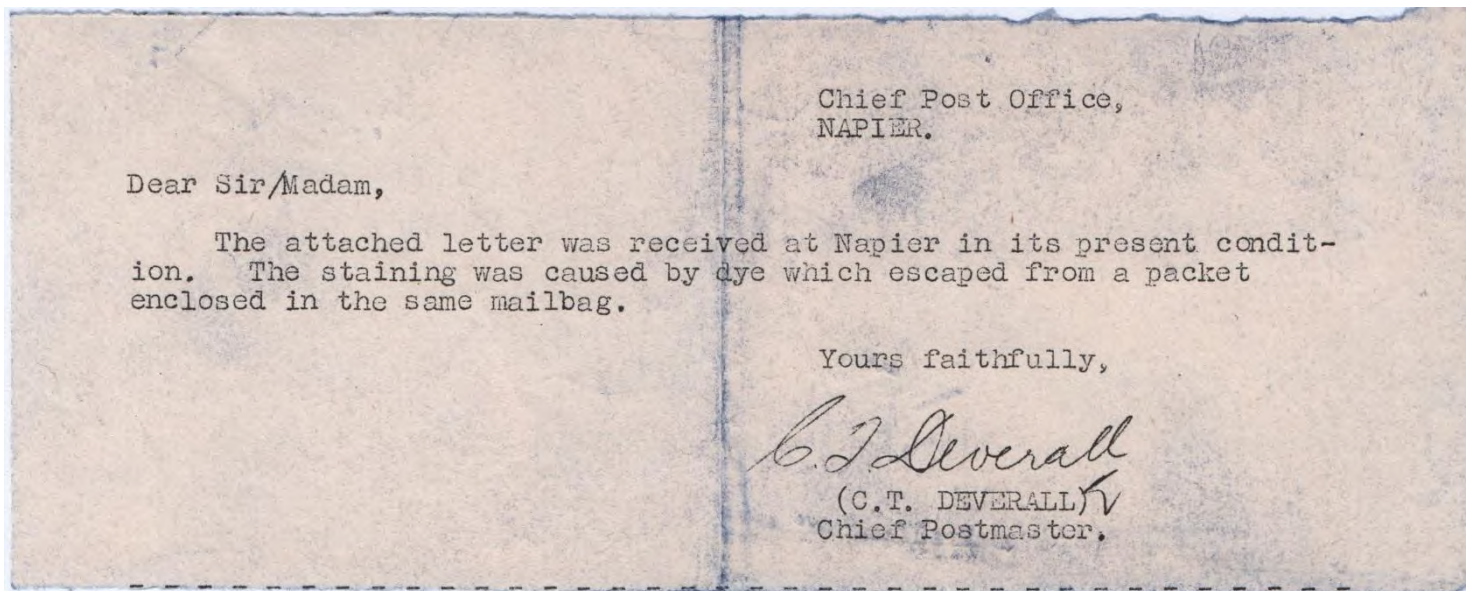
## 1967 DYE STAIN



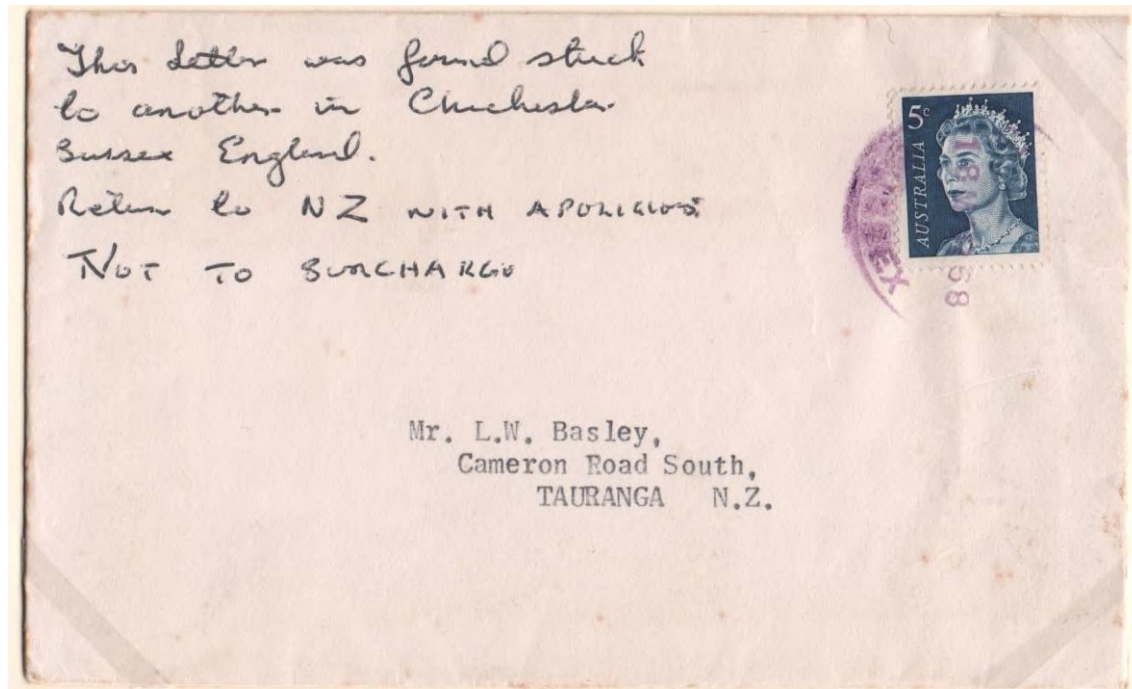
Cancelled CHRISTCHURCH 11 45P 21 APR 1967



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*

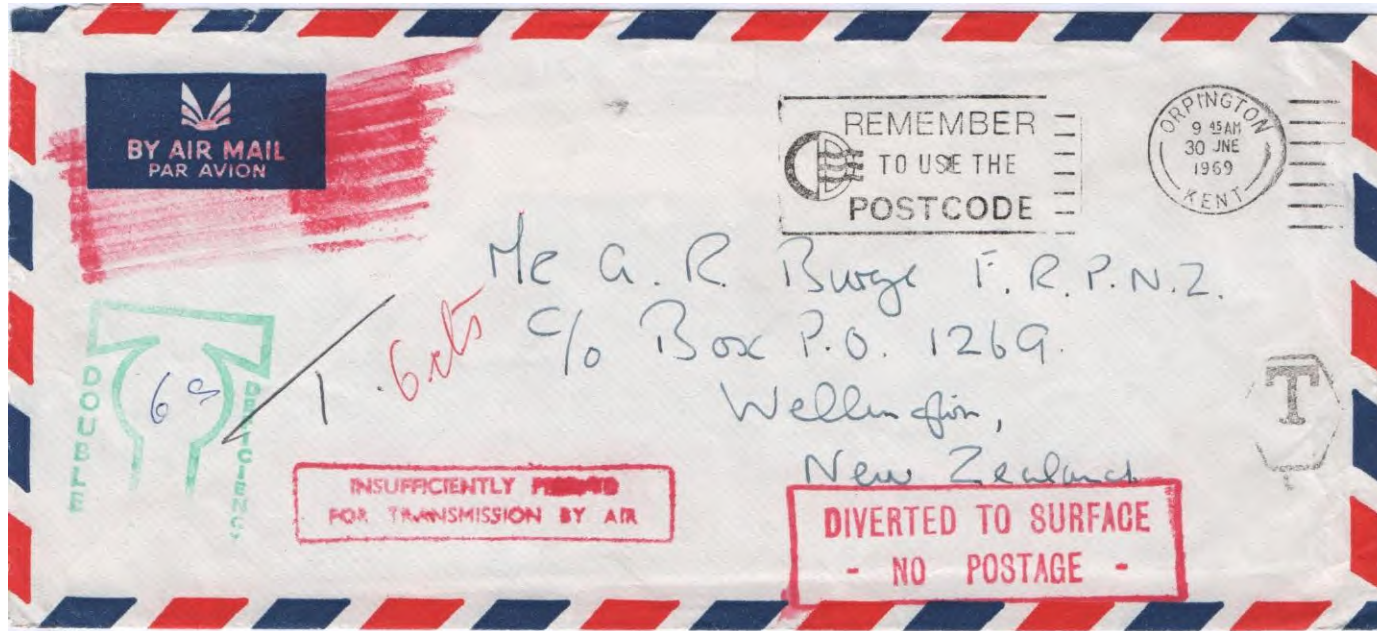
## 1975 DAMAGED BY VANDALS



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

