New Zealand Railway Newspaper, Parcel & Freight stamps

1890-1928

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Version 7
Introduction

These stamps, used to prepay railway carriage charges for newspapers, were introduced in early 1890, with the parcel and freight stamps following in 1894. The last stamps were finally withdrawn in 1928 when the Railway Charges stamps came into in full use.

Two major works deal with the stamps production and use. The first was a chapter in Volume VI of *The Postage Stamps of New Zealand*, 1977 (RPSNZ), which also covered the Railway Charges stamps. In 1979 the chapters relating to railway and revenue stamps were released in monograph form as *New Zealand Railway and Revenue Stamps*. Both are still reasonably frequently available, and so a lot of information contained in them is not repeated here.

More recently, the stamps have been catalogued at a specialised level in the 5th Edition of the Kiwi Catalogue of New Zealand Revenue and Railway Stamps (2013, Mowbray Collectables), and also online by Dave Elsmore at [www.ozrevenues.com](http://www.ozrevenues.com) (since 1997).

This document aims instead to give a broad coverage of the stamps, and illustrate interesting features and examples as a permanent record. Cinderella items based upon the design are also included. Most illustrations are at 150%.

1. The Newspaper Stamps

The stamps were issued in 6 values, to a common design. The colours below are the usually accepted catalogue colours.

- ½d black
- 1d violet
- 2d blue
- 3d brown
- 3d yellow
- 4d rose
- 6d green

There were multiple printings of all values, with a variety of perforations, papers and shades found.

The first printing are known as Scroll Type A. The later printings of the ½d and 1d were made from new plates, where the design differed by a broader scroll between NEWSPAPER and the value. These are Scroll Type B.
Proofs exist in a variety of colours, such as this 3d in brown. All are very scarce.

All were printed by the Stamp Printing Branch of the Government Printer. Full printing records are not extant, but what records do exist allow a picture of the number printed to be determined.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Printing dates</th>
<th>No. Sheets</th>
<th>No. Stamps</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>½d</td>
<td>12/10/91 – 4/5/14</td>
<td>58,000</td>
<td>6,960,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1d</td>
<td>7/1/92 – 24/1/06</td>
<td>26,500</td>
<td>3,180,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2d</td>
<td>12/10/91 – 30/4/06</td>
<td>7,650</td>
<td>918,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3d</td>
<td>8/92 – 27/7/05</td>
<td>1,450</td>
<td>174,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4d</td>
<td>1/2/92 – 27/7/05</td>
<td>2,550</td>
<td>306,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6d</td>
<td>8/92 – 30/4/06</td>
<td>1,450</td>
<td>174,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All were printed in sheets of 120, made up of a base unit of 15 stereotyped clichés. Full details of the creation of the printing plates can be found in Brodie (1977).

Cancellations

Used stamps are found with a variety of cancellations.

1. Coloured pencil or crayon cross or lines. This is by far the most common.
2. Handmade “X” canceller
3. NZR Cancelled
4. Straight-line station-name cancel
5. Newspaper office handstamp e.g. NZ TIMES.
6. Other handmade cancellers
7. Postal cancellations

Pencil/crayon cross lines

The instructions to District Managers issued by the Railways Commissioners on 17 December 1889 on the “Carriage of Newspapers” explicitly instructed “that sending stations cancel the stamps by drawing the pen diagonally across them: thus X.”

Most stamps found bear such cancellations, in lead pencil, indelible pencil (violet), various inks (most commonly black), and coloured pencils or crayons (blue, green and red mainly).
“X” markings

Grid of lines
Handmade “X” canceller

“X” canceller

NZR Straight-line station name

CHRISTCHURCH
WINTON

NZR Railway Charges-type cancellations

CANCELLED and
N.Z.R. CANCELLED

Oval station cancel

OAMARU station overprint, Type B scroll.

Very late use – January 1928 – just as the first ½d Railway Charges stamps were being placed into use.
… ARTMEN…/
HEAD OFFICE

“Clock” cancel

HAMPTON station overprint, Type B scroll

Newspaper offices

NZ TIMES

In purple, green, black or blue
Unknown

Note right-hand stamp pre-cancelled before being affixed. PUBLISHING DEPARTMENT audit stamp

**Geometric obliterator**

Circular geometric
9-barred oval

Post Office cancellations

The stamps were not valid for the carriage of mail by the Post Office, but some examples are known with postal cancellations.

WINCESTER
22 JL 91

Earliest recorded postal cancellation

BELGROVE
3 MY 95

Indecipherable
31 MY 97

Indecipherable
6 JA 02

OPUA
12 FE 16
RICHMOND
12 JE ?
The Railway Charges-type Station overprints

At least 14 stations used the stamps with horizontal overprints exactly the same as the Type I overprints from the first issues of the later Railway Charges stamps. These were applied through an inked ribbon using a vertical forme. The stamps so overprinted were the ½d black and 1d violet Scroll Type B.

All are scarce and Kiwi 2013 catalogues them at $150-200, against $1.50 for the stamp without a station overprint.

Stations originally recorded by Brodie were Dunedin, Milton, Nelson, Pukekohe, Taihape and Woodville. To that can now be added Balclutha, Dargaville (DARGA’VLE), Hamilton, Lambton, Marton, Morrinsville (MRNSVILLE), Oamaru, Ohakune, Te Kuiti, Timaru, WN CBO, and Wanganui. Marton is known as a double overprint.
**Perforations & Paper**

Five perforations exist - 12½, 11, 14, 10, and 10x11. They are not equally common, and not all values exist with all perforations. The combinations are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perf.</th>
<th>Scroll Type A</th>
<th>Scroll Type B</th>
<th>Paper type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12½</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Wove, Laid*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>All but 3d brown</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Wove, Laid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>All but 3d brown</td>
<td>½d, 1d only</td>
<td>Wove, Laid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>½d, 1d only</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Wove</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11x10</td>
<td>½d only</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Wove</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The 12½ Laid is elusive, far more so than indicated by its catalogue value.

The Wove paper can be found both thick (c.4.5/1000") and thin (c.3/1000") papers.
The Laid papers are found in both Vertical and Horizontal.

There are four main perforations encountered.

![Images of stamps with different perforations](https://www.completestamp.co.nz)

Perf 11 and 14 are the most commonly encountered, with perf 12½ somewhat scarcer and the perf 10 is much more difficult. The ½d perf 11x10 is rare.

**Double Perforations**

Double perforations are scarce.

½d perf 11 double perf.

(ex [www.completestamp.co.nz](https://www.completestamp.co.nz))
1d perf 11 imperf between and double perf.

*(Stirling Auction 11/8/1987)*

**Imperf at side**

For reasons as yet unclear, the perf 11 Laid paper stamps are frequently found with their left side and/or base imperforated. So much so that perforated ones are decidedly scarcer. The right selvedge and top seem normally perforated. Furthermore, this imperforate selvedge is only very rarely seen on any other paper type and perforation.

Vertical Laid p11
Left selvedge
Horizontal Laid p11
Left selvedge

Horizontal Laid p11
Bottom selvedge

p11 Laid paper with “normal” selvedges
Other perforation problems

P11 wove 1d with sloping horizontal perforation row

P11 wove 2d with misaligned vertical perforations

P11 wove 3d with misplaced bottom horizontal perforations
**Distinctive Shades**

Apart from the usual variations within printings, there are some distinct shade variations between printings (Wove paper unless noted).

- ½d black Scroll B p14
- ½d grey Scroll B p14
- 1d violet p11
- 1d deep violet p11
- 2d bright blue p12½
- 2d blue p11 VLaid
- 2d deep blue p11
- 2d milky-blue p14
- 3d lemon p12½ (rare)
- 3d deep yellow p12½
- 3d yellow p14
Sheet Numbers

The number was found above the last stamp on the first row, printed in black.

Some have a code letter following the number, printed in the colour of the stamp.
**Flaws**

For full details of the flaws and the process of producing the plate that gave rise to them, see *Brodie*.

**Missing dot**

Many stamps have no dot between “N” and “Z” at the top.

These are common and should command no premium.

**No scroll**

Completely missing scrolls are uncommon, many on close inspection reveal tiny spots of ink.

**Cut “R” in RAILWAYS**

Usually combined with the Line below Value flaw.
Break in RHS ornament

This occurs in various states.

Raised Metal between
**Items on piece**

Stamps still on piece, especially showing a clear cancel, are desirable, even more so if a "mixed" franking.
Large blocks
A large part sheet (ex Brodie) of the 1d first printing, 1890.
2. The Parcel & Freight Stamps

In 1894 a trial using stamps to prepay parcel and freight was introduced on the Whangarei rail section. The District Traffic Manager at the time was H.B. Dobbie, and his initials are to be found on most copies. The experiment apparently ended in 1897, but most date-stamped examples show a September or October 1894 date. Both the Parcel and Freight stamps were of a similar design to the Newspaper stamps, but with a different decorative border, and the Coat of Arms replacing the crown. It is assumed they were printed in sheets of 120, as 12 rows of 10. The Parcel stamps were issued in two values – 3d black and 6d green, both found perf 12½ and 11. None are common.

A used strip of four of the 3d, showing clear “HD” initials and the Whangarei datestamp of 24 SEP 94 was sold in the RPNSZ postal bid sale, November 2008.

The Freight stamps have an additional wavy outer border, and are slightly larger in size. They were issued in two values – 1s pale blue and 5s red, perf 12½. The 1s is very scarce, and Brodie noted only two copies of the 5s had been recorded - it is currently catalogued at $5000.

A third, apparently unused, copy of the 5/- was illustrated as lot 370 in Stirling & Co’s auction of 9/2/1988.

**Modern Forgeries**

Unfortunately, as at April 2019, eBay seller scottvisnjic (Taiwan) is successfully selling a wide variety of forgeries of scarce New Zealand stamps, including Railway Parcel & Freight stamps. Those sold go for between NZ$5 and $10.

Those illustrated below are perf 13. Note the entirely bogus 9d Parcel and 10s Freight stamp.
Per eBay’s rules, they are clearly marked as forgeries on the back, and advertised as such:

**Gummed Aged MNH Modern Reproduction**

**This Stamp is a Modern Reprint Stamp**

Why are we selling replica/fantasy stamps for the collector?

Because some stamps are too expensive. Not every collector can buy the original stamps, so they need replica to complete their collection.

**All Reproduction Stamps items are marked "FORGERY" on the back as required by eBay.**

The red “FORGERY” handstamp appears easily removable as other stamps have been seen offered for resale with no backstamp.
3. The Cinderellas

a. The “D” Mail Labels

Between 1958 to 1977 Jim Brodie was the Director of the New Zealand Oceanographic Institute (NZOI). During that time, messages between Government Departments were delivered by the Government Messenger Service and were highlighted by writing or hand-stamping a large “D” in the top right corner of the envelope. Jim amused himself by producing sheets of 15 labels as below, ostensibly to be used to mark inter-departmental mail.

He also produced a similar series based on the Postal and Stationery Department Postage Free labels of the late 1800s.
A longer article on these labels, by Des Hurley FRPSNZ, is in the New Zealand Stamp Collector v90/2 June 2010 p40.
b. Ferrymead Railway Letter stamp
In 1987 the Ferrymead Historic Park (now Heritage Park) in Christchurch, issued a railway letter stamp to be affixed to covers carried on their tourist-focussed steam railway. This was based on the Railway newspaper stamp, and was printed in blue in miniature sheets of four 50c labels.

Most used items seem to be cancelled in August 1987. There are several different “CARRIED ON TRAIN” cancellations.
Acknowledgements

S. Jones for images of some Railway Charges type I station overprints, and the 3d proof.
Dave Elsmore ([www.ozrevenues.com](http://www.ozrevenues.com)) for a variety of cancellation examples, two sheet number examples and the 1s Freight.
Darryl Keegan and Mike J. for various cancellations.
A. Craig for the 5s Freight.