

Stamps and Postal History of German New Guinea/ Territory of New Guinea 1888-1952

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The Island of New Guinea is the second largest island after Greenland. Geologically, it is part of the Australian Continental plate, like Greenland is part of the North American continental plate. But New Guinea is the largest fully inhabited island. European explorers visited the island beginning in the 1500s, but colonization began in 1828 when the Dutch annexed the western portion of the island to the Netherland East Indies, west of the 141st meridian.

This article will briefly describe the stamps and postal history of German New Guinea (later, the Territory of New Guinea) up to the issuance of "Papua and New Guinea" stamps in 1952, as a result of the joint administration of the two Australian Territories in 1949. Papua New Guinea became independent from Australia in 1975.

The German Navy began establishing trading posts on the northern coast of New Guinea sometime in the 1860s. In 1888, the German New Guinea Company was established, and issued a private issue 2 Mark parcel stamp labelled *Protectorate of New Guinea Company Parcel Stamp*.

Deutsche Neu-Guinea Issues

Soon after emergence of German New Guinea Company parcel stamp, the German Empire stamps of 1880 and later were issued for use in German New Guinea without any overprints or additional markings. The first post office was opened in Finschhafen on 15-Feb-88 and although seven post offices were opened in

the 19th century, only four post offices were in operation in 1900.

Figure 1 is a cover sent to Berlin on 13-Mar-94 from Friedrich Wilhelmshafen (later known as Madang) franked with two 1890 rose 10 Pfg. The letter arrived in Berlin on 3-May-94, almost a two-month voyage. The letter rates before 1-Apr-00 were 20 Pfg for 50 grams and 5 Pfg for each additional 50 gr. Postcards were 10 Pfg; registration was 20 Pfg.



Figure 1: 13-Mar-1894 New Guinea Company envelope used for letter from Friedrich Wilhelmshafen to Berlin, franked with two 1890 10 Pfg Rose.

In 1897, the 1889-1890 German issues were overprinted "Deutsche-New-Guinea" in Berlin. These were valid for use until 30-Sep-01, but German Empire stamps not overprinted were still valid for use until 1901 as well.

Figure 2 is a 20-Jun-99 Deutsche Seepost cover to Salzuflen, Germany (forwarded to Minden) franked with a pair of 1890 10 Pfg stamps overprinted "Deutsche-Neu-Guinea", arriving in Minden 18-Jul-99.



Figure 2: 20-Jun-1899 Deutsche Seepost cover to Salzuflen, Germany (forwarded to Minden) franked with a pair of 1890 10 Pfg stamps overprinted Deutsche-Neu-Guinea.

Germany issued new stamps for all its colonies in 1900, featuring Kaiser Wilhelm II's yacht "Hohenzollern", and the issue for New Guinea was inscribed "Deutsche-Neu-Guinea". These colonial issues are known as the Yacht Issues, and they replaced all previously issued stamps in the German colonies. Thirteen values were printed for New Guinea from 3 Pfg to 5 Marks. Figure 3 is a registered cover from Rabaul



Figure 3: 17-Jan-1914 registered cover from Rabaul to Berlin franked with a 40 Pfg Yacht stamp, paying 20 Pfg postage and 20 Pfg registration.

to Berlin franked with a single 40 Pfg, paying 20 Pfg postage and 20 Pfg registration. Letter rates to Germany after 1-Apr-00 were 10 Pfg up to 15 grams and 20 Pfg up to 250gr. Postcards were 5 Pfg, but 3 Pfg if less than 5 words as they were considered a printed matter rate.

Australian Occupation Provisional Issues

Deutsche Neu-Guinea was quickly captured by Australia in September 1914 during WW2. The post office in Herbertshohe held most of the New Guinea Yacht Issues and these were destroyed before evacuation. Australia decided to make use of the small stocks found in Rabaul, Kavieng and other small towns. These towns overprinted the Yacht Issue "G.R.I." for George Rex Imperator followed by a value, in October 1914. Different settings with spacings of 5mm, 6mm, and 7 1/2 mm between the value and GRI exist. Marshall Island stamps were also overprinted G.R.I. and used in New Guinea due to scarcity of Deutsche Neu-Guinea stamps.

The G.R.I. overprinted stamps are scarce as only a few thousand were made of each value up to 2 1/2d. Shilling values each have only double-digit totals. The 3 Pfg brown was also overprinted "OS G.R.I. 1d" for Official Service and was one of the largest printings of GRI stamps; 9,258 3 Pfg brown stamps were overprinted. Figure 4 is a military cover franked



Figure 4: Military mail from Rabaul (16-May-1915) to Surrey, England franked with a revalued 1d on 3 Pfg G.R.I. overprint. Military rate.

with the 1d on 3 Pfg Official Service stamp, sent from the 3rd Battalion posted in Rabaul to a Mrs. Cox in Surrey, England. The oval Rabaul cancel was introduced on 4-Jan-1915.

The random use of Australian stamps personally carried by soldiers were not sanctioned but were allowed to pass in the mails. At times when stamps were scarce, mail was accepted with a "No Stamps Available" notation. The Australian military officially brought Australian stamps to New Guinea consisting of Kangaroo and some KGV Head values all perforated OS. Figure 5 is a 1914 cover sent from Herbertshohe to the Sydney Morning Herald in Sydney franked with a ½d and 2d Kangaroo, both with small OS perfins, and cancelled with a straight-line Herbertshohe. Straight-line cancels are scarce and are also known from Rabaul and Simpsonhafen in 1914.



Figure 5: 1914 cover from Herbertshohe (now Kokopo) to Sydney, franked with an Official ½d and 2d Kangaroo, both with small OS perfins. 2½ d letter rate to Australia.

No documentation exists as to exactly which OS stamps or how many were taken to New Guinea, but most Kangaroo OS stamps to 1 shilling appear included. I have Kangaroo examples of the ½d small perfin OS, the 1d small perfin OS, the 2d large and small perfin OS, the 5d large and small perfin OS, the 6d large and small perfin OS and KGV ½d and 1d small perfin OS on cover. Franklin only mentions the 1d and 2½d Kangaroos and the 2d and 4d KGV, without mention of OS type.

As stamps were scarce, use was made

of registration labels by monetizing them for the 3d cost of registration by overprinting the registration labels "G.R.I. 3d". Figure 6 is a double-rate registered cover to a gold bullion company in Oakland, California franked with 6d in stamps (3d being the international letter rate) and a 3d-overprinted registration label paying the 3d registration fee.

Gold found in the mountains of New Guinea was quite influential in dictating the development of New Guinea and Papua postal services. The development of airmail in New



Figure 6: Double-rate (2x3d) registered cover from Rabaul to a gold bullion company in Oakland, CA with a G.R.I. 3d overprinted registration label, postmarked 11-Jun-1915.

Guinea happened early, necessitated by a need to access remote mountainous mining camps, and that is an interesting story in and of itself. The transfer of gold necessitated the eventual need for a £5 postage stamp for parcel rates.

On 15-Mar-15, Australia issued provisional postage stamps which were overprinted "N.W. PACIFIC ISLANDS" on the current Commonwealth of Australia stamps. The Commonwealth stamps used were both Kangaroo and KGV Heads. These were only used in New Guinea and Nauru but were initially meant for all the German colonies in the Pacific, hence the broad label of Northwest Pacific Islands. These were the workhorse stamps for 10 years, and later printings used then current Commonwealth stamps resulting in a series of provisional stamps with different watermarks, colors and overprint settings as the years progressed. Figure 6 illustrates both KGV and Kangaroo usage of these stamps, dated 11-Jun-15, three months after issuance.

Territory of New Guinea Issues

In 1921, the League of Nations gave custody of New Guinea to Australia which was renamed the Mandated Territory of New Guinea.

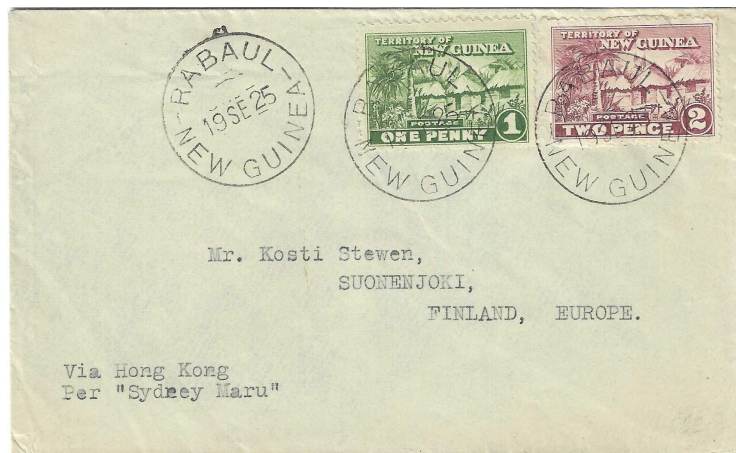


Figure 7: 19-Sep-1925 cover to Finland franked with a 1d and 2d Native Huts issue.

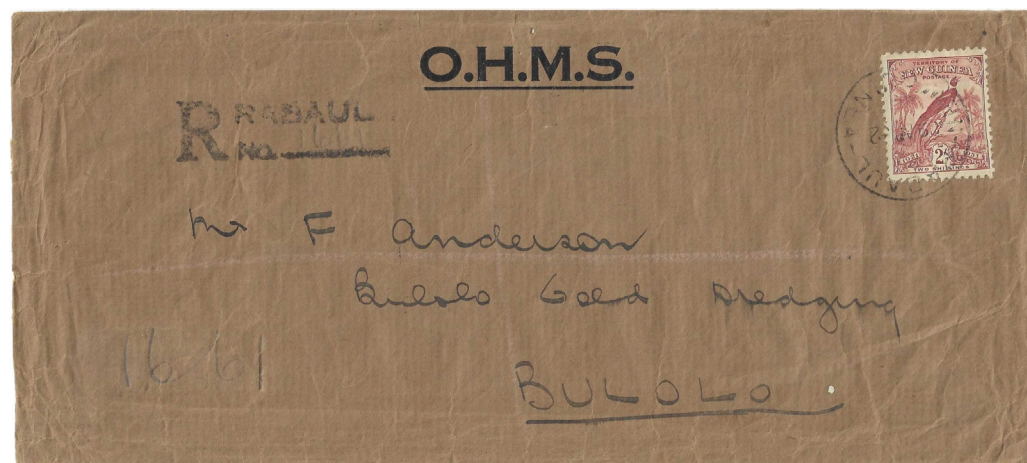


Figure 8: Bird of Paradise Commemorative Issue 2 shilling franking on a 29-Apr-1932 local registered official cover from Rabaul to *Bulolo Gold Dredging* in Bulolo (mountain mining town). Nine times the 2d letter rate plus 3d registration plus 3d airmail (not indicated, but required).



Figure 9: Registered airmail from Rabaul to India (8-Feb-1932), franked with the 1931 Commemorative issue airmail stamps. Eight pence paid 3d registration, 2d postage and 3d airmail within Australia from Sydney to Perth.

It now deserved its own postage stamps, but the use of NWPI provisional stamps continued until the issuance of Territory of New Guinea stamps in 1925. This new set of stamps consisted of thirteen values from ½d to £1 illustrating thatched huts found in native villages. Figure 7 is a 1925 cover to Finland featuring the 1 penny and 2 pence stamps of the Native Huts issue paying the 3d international letter rate. The Native Huts series had an overprinted OS issue in 1925 (9 values), and an overprinted Airmail issue in 1931 (13 values).

On 2-Aug-31, Australia celebrated the 10th Anniversary of the Mandated Territory of New Guinea by issuing commemorative stamps featuring a Bird of Paradise with scrolls of "1921-1931" (13 values, 1d to £1). The 1931 Bird of Paradise series also had an overprinted OS issue (11 values), and an overprinted

Airmail issue (14 values, including ½d). Figure 8 is an official registered cover to the mountain gold mining town of Bulolo, addressed to Bulolo Gold Dredging and sent on 29 Apr-32. It is franked with one 2 shilling 1931 commemorative stamp paying nine times the 2d letter rate plus 3d registration plus 3d airmail (not indicated, but required).

Figure 9 is an airmail cover sent from Rabaul to Calcutta, India franked with 1931 commemoratives dated 8-Feb-32. Eight pence paid 2d postage, 3d registration and 3d airmail within Australia. The cover sent by ship to Sydney (17-Feb), air from Sydney to Melbourne then Adelaide, then West Australian Air to Perth (29 Feb), and finally ship to India (13-Mar-32). The fledgling airmail service within Australia in 1932 was limited to short city-to-city flights only.

On 30-Jun-32, Australia issued a definitive issue of the Bird of Paradise set of stamps which were recut to remove the scrolled dates of 1921-1931. Thirteen values were initially printed, with two additional values issued in 1934. As with the 1931 Commemorative issue, a set of overprinted Airmails (with ½d values) and a set of overprinted OS stamps were issued on the same date.

It may seem odd that a large definitive issue would be printed a year after a large

about what values were printed for the current stamp issue and what stamps were available, as well as enclosing some stamps purchased.

In commemoration of the Silver Jubilee of King George V, 120,000 each of the 1d and 2d 1932 Birds of Paradise values were reprinted on different paper and overprinted "HIS MAJESTY'S JUBILEE. 1910-1935" and were first issued in Rabaul on 27-Jun-35. The letter referenced in Figure 10, sent by the Chief Postmaster, states that

the Jubilee Issue was sold out (as of 10-Nov-36), just over one year from issue. Commercial use of this issue is not common. Figure 11 is a 2s/1d airmail cover to Germany, utilizing the 1d Silver Jubilee commemorative, paying the correct rate from New Guinea.



Figure 10: Official cover (10-Nov-1936) from the Chief Postmaster at the Dept. of Treasury franked with 4 shillings of the 1932 Bird of Paradise airmail issue paying the China Clipper rate to California, via Manila (1-Dec) and Honolulu (8-Dec).

commemorative issue was printed! Well, in February 1933, all existing stocks of the 1925 Native Huts issue and the 1931 Commemorative issue were destroyed, including stamps in all territory post offices. There are no totals of stamps destroyed, thus there are only estimates as to the number of stamps sold, which defines the number of stamps put into circulation. This makes used copies of higher values a bit rarer than normally expected, especially for the commemorative issue which was only available for purchase for 18 months. Use of these issues was still valid for the stamps already sold.

Figure 10 is an official cover sent 10-Nov-36 from the Chief Postmaster at the Dept. of Treasury franked with 4 shillings of the 1932 Bird of Paradise airmail issue paying the China Clipper rate to California, sent via Manila (1-Dec) and Honolulu (8-Dec). The accompanying letter from the postmaster answers questions from a collector

King George VI was coronated on 12-May-37, and Australia issued a commemorative stamp issue for the Territory of New Guinea on 18-May-37 consisting of four values of 2d, 3d, 5d, and 1s. These stamps were withdrawn from sale on 31-Dec-37, thus only available for just over six months.



Figure 11: A 2 shilling 1 pence airmail cover sent 19-Oct-1935 from Lae to Germany franked with a 1d 1935 Silver Jubilee commemorative and two 1 shilling 1932 Bird of Paradise airmail stamps. 1s/9d was the airmail rate from Australia, and 2s/1d was the corresponding rate from New Guinea.

Commercial use of these stamps is not common. Figure 12 is an airmail cover from Wewak to Vienna, Austria posted on 5-Jul-37 and franked with all four KGVI commemorative stamps with



Figure 12: Airmail cover from Wewak to Vienna posted on 5-Jul-1937 and franked with all four KGVI commemorative stamps plus 2d, paying the correct 2 shilling airmail rate via Australia and Greece.

an additional 2d paying the correct two shilling airmail rate via the Australia-Greece mail route.

As mentioned earlier, the gold mines of New Guinea were in the mountains and the need for easy access was a driver for early implementation of New Guinea air transport, not just for mail but to ship gold. Initially there was a limit of 11 pounds per parcel, which was increased to 47 pounds per parcel, which cost £11 registered to transport. On 1-May-35, Australia issued two postage stamps valued at £2 and £5, featuring a plane flying over the Bulolo Gold fields.

Many list or refer to these stamps as airmail stamps even though they say "postage", and they were issued as postage stamps intended for use for parcel rates, and specifically for use on parcel tags. But the parcels just happened to be transported from the gold mining towns by air, and just happen to depict an airplane on them! Figure 13 is parcel tag from the gold mining town of Wau, franked £5/5s/1d. Although the CDS year did not print on the tag, this was undoubtedly sent on 18-Nov-35 due to the current use of the 1d KGV Jubilee commemorative stamp. Mint and used examples of these two stamps are both very scarce, and this is one of two known usages of the £5 postage stamp. The other known use is also a



Figure 13: Parcel tag from the gold mining town of Wau, franked £5/5s/1d. This is one of two known uses of this £5 postage stamp. Most likely sent on 18-Nov-1935 due to the current use of the 1d Jubilee.

parcel tag, and any mining town parcel tag from New Guinea is extremely scarce.

On 1-Mar-39, Australia issued the first and only definitive airmail stamp issue for the Territory of New Guinea. It used the same design as the 1935 £2 and £5 postage stamps but are labeled "Air Mail Postage" (14 values, ½d to £1).



Figure 14: Registered cover sent on 16-Jun-1939 from Rabaul to Sydney franked 11d in airmail stamps, paying two times the 3d airmail rate per ½oz, 2d per 1oz postage and 3d registration.

Figure 14 is a registered cover sent on 16-Jun-39 from Rabaul to Sydney franked 11d in airmail stamps, paying two times the 3d airmail rate per ½oz, 2d per 1oz postage and 3d registration.

As mentioned earlier, airmail usages in the 1930s from New Guinea to various parts of the world, and within New Guinea, is a fascinating subject. It is also part of the larger story of airmail development within Australia in the 1930s. Hopefully this will be the subject of another article in the future.

Post-WW2

Australian stamps were used by the Australian military during the war, and when New Guinea and Papua returned to civil administration on 30-Oct-45, Australian stamps continued to be used, but only three post offices were operational, and they were all in the Territory of Papua. During 1946 eighteen additional post offices were established within

politics got in the way, and discussions regarding the future administration of Australia's two territories on the island of New Guinea had to be resolved first.

The Parliament of Australia passed the *Papua and New Guinea Act of 1949* which replaced both the *Papua Act of 1905* and the *New Guinea Act of 1920*. This Act changed the status of both territories of Papua and New Guinea by merging their administrations to form a single "Papua and New Guinea". Therefore, a new series of "Papua & New Guinea" stamps was finally issued on 30-Oct-52. Australian stamps were not accepted for postage after 2-Mar-53.

The *Papua New Guinea Independence Act of 1975* allowed for Papua New Guinea's independence from Australia, and Papua New Guinea (PNG) became an independent country on 16 September 1975.



Figure 15: Airmail cover sent 22-Dec-1951 from Madang to New York paying the 1s/6d airmail rate, franked primarily with a selection of 2½d Australian postage stamps.

the two territories, and by 1949 thirty-four post offices were operating.

No pre-war Territory of New Guinea stamps were sold after the war and the New Guinea and Papua stamps held in the Treasury were destroyed. Beginning in 1947, only Australian stamps issued from 1937 onwards were valid for postage because the 1937-49 series of stamps were "still current" within Australia. Any new or future Australian issues would also be valid. This added a new dimension to collecting post-war Australian postal history.

Figure 15 is a philatelically inspired airmail cover sent 22-Dec-51 from Madang to New York paying the current 1s/6d airmail rate, franked primarily with a selection of 2½d Australian postage stamps.

There was not a lot of urgency regarding the issuance of new stamps for the Territory of New Guinea, even though there were lots of opinions and design ideas. It turns out that

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