

THE POSTAGE STAMPS OF NEW ZEALAND - THE ROSS DEPENDENCY ISSUES

Scott Base was established as headquarters for the New Zealand Expedition party who participated in the 1955-58 Commonwealth Trans-Antarctic Expedition, the object of which was to cross Antarctica overland from the Weddell Sea to the Ross Sea via the South Pole. The Post Office at Scott Base was opened on 11 January 1957, with Sir Edmund Hillary as Postmaster and Arthur Helm as his Assistant.



Assistant Postmaster Arthur Helm cancelling first day covers at Scott Base in January 1957

This article features the four issues, first day covers and selected usage for Ross Dependency stamps issued by the New Zealand Post Office during the Scott Base Post Office period 1957-1987.

Following the closure of Scott Base Post Office on 30 September 1987, mail from Ross Dependency was subsequently cancelled on arrival in Christchurch. New Zealand Post issued three sets of NEW ZEALAND ROSS DEPENDENCY stamps between 1988 and 1992; these were New Zealand rather than Ross Dependency stamps however they were available at Scott Base and are found on mail dispatched from there, so are included in this display.

In 1994 New Zealand Post opened a Ross Dependency Agency in Christchurch for philatelic sales of "Ross Dependency" issues, mainly for the international souvenir market. These stamps were not valid for use in New Zealand. They are not included in this review.

1956-57 – FIRST ISSUE

On 21 June 1955 the Trans-Antarctic Expedition Ross Sea Committee wrote to the NZ Post & Telegraph Department requesting that a post office be set up in the Ross Dependency, that an issue of stamps be made and that Sir Edmund Hillary be appointed Postmaster. This was approved and the preparation of four stamps was authorized.

The stamps were recess printed by Thomas De La Rue of London on multiple NZ over Star watermarked Wiggins Teape paper and perforated 14, except for the 1/6 value that was perforated 15. There were 120 stamps to each sheet, with the plates numbered '1' on the bottom selvedge.

There are no recorded varieties, but shade variations occur in the 8d and 1/6 values:



NZRD SG1
3d surface mail rate within NZ



NZRD SG2
4d airmail rate within NZ



NZRD SG3
8d aerogramme rate to UK



NZRD SG3
8d shade variation



NZRD SG4
1/6 airmail rate to UK



NZRD SG4
1/6 shade variation

About 1 million stamps of each value were printed. The stamps (without first day covers) were released in NZ on Monday 14 January 1957 after Scott Base Post Office had opened on Friday 11 January 1957.

The reason for not producing a Post Office first day cover was that the Ross Sea Committee had earlier produced their own commemorative envelope: *"The Post Office was persuaded, as a special case, to sell these envelopes at all permanent post offices in the Dominion, and to accept addressed envelopes and place the requisite stamps on them. In all, the total printing of 100,000 covers was sold out."*

(Helm & Miller; 1964:396)

1965

Due to increased postal rates on 1 October 1964 and insufficient Ross Dependency values to cover these new rates, on 18 January 1965 New Zealand stamps were approved for use in the Ross Dependency.

1967 – SECOND ISSUE – INTRODUCTION OF DECIMAL DURRENCY

New Zealand changed its currency from pounds, shillings and pence to dollars and cents on 10 July 1967 and the Ross Dependency followed. The existing four ‘old currency’ stamps were reprinted with decimal values by Thomas De La Rue and made available for sale from Decimal Currency Day.



NZRD SG5



NZRD SG6

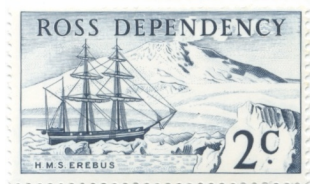


NZRD SG7

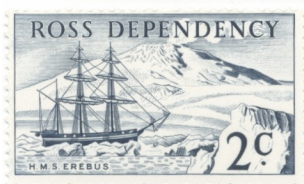


NZRD SG8

Mint stamps from this issue are considered to be quite scarce. The 2¢ has two shade variations and inverted watermark printings exist in the 3¢ and 15¢ values:



NZRD SG5
shade variation



NZRD SG5
shade variation



NZRD SG6
inverted watermark



NZRD SG8
inverted watermark

The new stamps and first day covers were flown to Scott Base on the 18 June 1967 midwinter flight. Processed covers were returned to Christchurch on the second midwinter flight on 3 September 1967.

1972 – THIRD ISSUE

Prior to the introduction of decimal currency issues, new definitive stamps had already been planned for the Ross Dependency. The stamps were designed by Mark Cleverley, issued with two plate numbers 111, 1a1a1a and printed in three-color lithography by Bradbury, Wilkinson & Co. Ltd. of London in sheets of 10x10 stamps. The stamps were sold at Scott Base from 18 January 1972, the 60th Anniversary of Scott's party reaching the South Pole. There are no recorded varieties of these stamps.

Plate 1



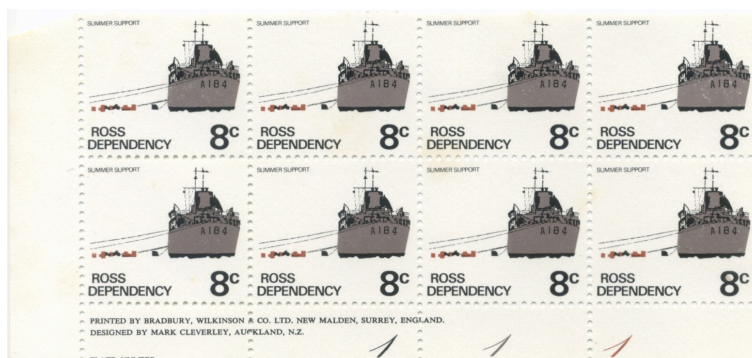
NZRD SG9



NZRD SG10



NZRD SG11



NZRD SG12



NZRD SG13



NZRD SG14

Plate 1a



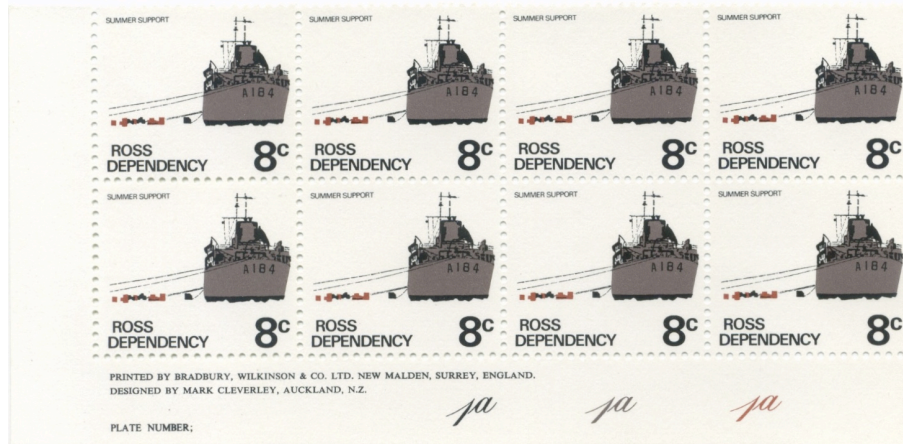
NZRD SG9



NZRD SG10



NZRD SG11



NZRD SG12



NZRD SG13



NZRD SG14

1979 – THIRD ISSUE REPRINT

In January 1979 reprints of all values were issued from new printing plates numbered 222. Stamps were reprinted on a thinner, white chalky paper. 10¢ & 18¢ values were perforated $13\frac{3}{4} \times 13\frac{3}{4}$ compared with

14¾ x14 for the 1972 issue. The four lower values of the 1979 printing can also be distinguished from the 1972 printing by differences in shade: the 3¢ is printed in a brighter blue; the 4¢ has a pinker background; the sky of the 5¢ is darker; and the ship is more purple in the 8¢ value.

Plate 2



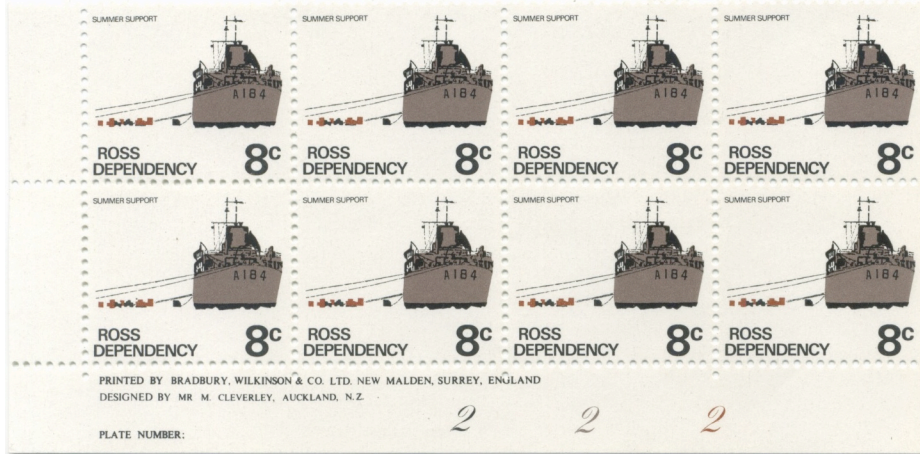
NZRD SG9



NZRD SG10



NZRD SG11



NZRD SG12



NZRD SG13



NZRD SG14

Plate 2a



NZRD SG13



NZRD SG14

1982 – FOURTH ISSUE

On 20 January 1982 special celebrations marked the 25th anniversary of the opening of Scott Base. New Zealand Post released a set of six Ross Dependency pictorial definitive issues. These stamps were designed by R.M. Conly and lithograph printed by Leigh Mardon Pty. Ltd. of Melbourne, in sheets of 10x10 stamps. They were printed on white unwatermarked paper, with perforations measuring 15½.



NZRD SG15



NZRD SG16



NZRD SG17



NZRD SG18



NZRD SG 19



NZRD SG20

Two million of each stamp was printed; there are no recorded varieties. This issue was withdrawn from sale in New Zealand on 31 December 1987, three months after Scott Base Post Office closed on 30 September 1987.

Scott Base Post Office closed on 30 September 1987 as, according to Postmaster General R.W. Prebble, it was “*just not paying its way.*” (letter to Secretary RPSNZ 23 October 1987).

1988 – FIRST “NEW ZEALAND ROSS DEPENDENCY” ISSUE

On 2 November 1988 a set of six stamps with whale and dolphin motifs were issued. Stamps were designed by Lindy Fisher and printed by the Government Printing Office using a lithographic process from plates comprising two panes each of 10x10 stamps, on Harrison & Sons unwatermarked paper with blue tinted gum. Sheets were perforated sideways from left to right by a single row comb gauging 13½.



1990 – SECOND “NEW ZEALAND ROSS DEPENDENCY” ISSUE

On 7 November 1990, a set of six stamps featuring Antarctic birds was issued. Stamps were designed by Janet Luxton and printed by Heraclio Fournier of Spain on 105 Phosphorescent HF2000 unwatermarked paper, in sheets of 10x10 stamps perforated by a single row comb gauging 13¼ x12¾.



1992 – THIRD “NEW ZEALAND ROSS DEPENDENCY” ISSUE

On 8 April 1992, a set of six stamps featuring Antarctic seals was issued. Stamps were designed by Lindy Fisher and printed using a lithographic process by Southern Colour Print in Dunedin. The stamps were printed in sheets of 10x10 and perforated by a single row comb gauging 13½x13¼.



References

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