

RELIEF DATESTAMPS

I was pleased to accept the invitation from Derek to write a few words on the above subject, although I must admit I knew very little about the subject. I felt that when I agreed there was a sense of RELIEF at the end of the phone by Derek.

I then began to get the feeling that there were several different meanings for the word "RELIEF", and sure enough my copy of the Shorter Oxford dictionary listed more than ten! No wonder foreigners have difficulty with the English language!!

RELIEF

1. A payment. Ease of Pain. Aid or help. Assistance in time of danger. Release from some occupation or duty. Deliverance from some hardship. Alleviating some pain. Act of seeking food.

2. In art; An elevation of design. Contrast of colour. The contour of some part of the surface of the earth.

So what does the term RELIEF mean philatelically or Postal History wise? It implies that the Datestamps are TEMPORARY, in fact after 1925 every Chief Post Office in New Zealand, held at least one set of Relief Datestamps, that could be used in the postal district, whenever for some reason, the office is temporarily without the regular engraved datestamp.

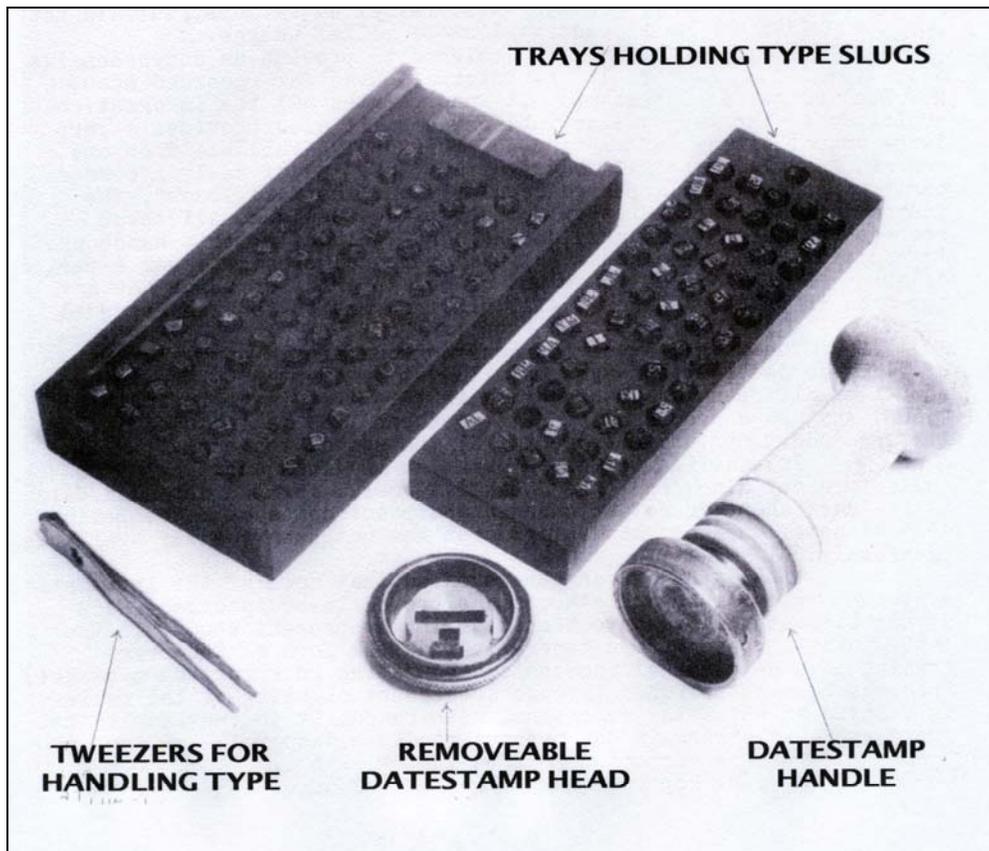
The three main reasons were,

- REPAIR If the normal datestamp had been damaged and required to be repaired
- REPLACED If the datestamp had been worn out and had to be replaced
- YEAR CHANGE Where the year wheel had to be replaced.

Other common reasons for Reliefs being used are;

- BURGLARIES
- FIRES
- NEW POST OFFICES
- CHANGE OF NAME
- TEMPORARY POST OFFICES & SPECIAL MAILS
- MILITARY CAMPS
- RELIEFS USED IN PACIFIC ISLAND TERRITORIES
- RELIEFS USED AT TELEPHONE OFFICES

So I guess you will now want to know what a Relief Datestamp is.



A photograph of a complete relief datestamp set.

Relief Datestamps were used at the HOWICK Post Office: -

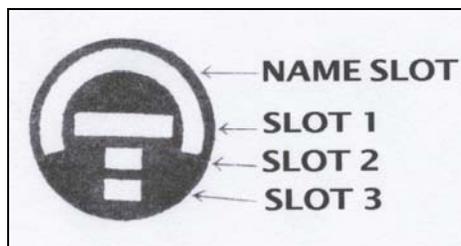
- 26 January 1951– 20 February 1951 Replaced “J” type Datestamp (26JA – 20 FE51)
The “J” type Datestamp, 30mm diameter was replaced with a 29mm.
The Proof date of the new datestamp was 14 February 1951
- 14 January 1969 – 21 January 1969 when the year was changed



Typical “J” Type Datestamp



A typical impression
Of a relief datestamp



A blank relief head

The following characteristics distinguish a “relief” from all other types of New Zealand datestamps.

- The diameter of reliefs varies only a little – between 29mm and 31mm
- The office name is set around the inside of the top circle (Name Slot)
- There are no inner arcs inside the bottom of the circle on either side of “NZ”
- The day, month and year appear in one line (Slot 1)
- The mail number index, if any is set below the dateline (Slot 2)
- The letters “NZ” are set horizontally at the bottom (Slot 3).

I hope the members of the

HOWICK PHILATELIC SOCIETY

Get as much enjoyment at reading this article on Relief Datestamps as I have had in researching and preparing this short article. For further information you are referred to the Postal History Society of New Zealand, Handbook Number 17, entitled “New Zealand Skeleton Relief Datestamps 1925 – 1980 by Alan Jackson, to whom I owe a big thank you for the information now before you. Any errors are purely mine, and a can now make a big sigh of relief at the completion of this task.