

L3: PENNY-HALFPENNY

Campbell Paterson's Notes

Extracted from Campbell Paterson NZ Bulletin—Oct 1964

1935 1½d Maori Cooking.

This stamp has a design that could hardly apply anywhere but in NZ – and even there only in Rotorua or some other spot on the geological fault that stretches from White Island in the Bay of Plenty to Lake Taupo and the Central Volcanic Plateau. The thermal area is so well known that I need hardly take up space here in describing it with its geysers (guysers, not geezers!), its bubbling mud-pools, boiling lakes and hot springs.

Not so widely known is the use that Maoris make of the natural source of heat for cooking (not to mention clothes washing and bathing). On the 1½d stamp we see a Maori woman lowering a woven flax-basket or kete of prepared food into a hot pool. The food would most likely be vegetables including probably the sweet potato or kumara. I ought at this stage to make it clear that few Maoris will be found today cooking by means of a hot pool; generally, they prefer an electric cooker; still, if one chances to have a natural hot-spot in one's back-garden it seems foolish not to make use of it!

The stamp is found in four major variations. The original stamps of 1935 had perforations gauging approximately 14x13½ and had colourless gum. The perforating machine used gave normal, regular corners. The second and third issues, L3b and L3c, were both experimental. Whereas the first issue L3a was printed on dry, pre-gummed paper, the two experimental issues were printed on damp paper -- presumably in an endeavour to get better results – and it follows that the gumming had to be done after the sheets had been dried. The gum used was a heavy brown type, easily rec-

ognized and even in used stamps usually pretty obvious. This gum and the fact that the perforation was different, 13½x14, together make the two experimental issues readily recognizable; we are further helped by the fact that as was described in the case of the 1d Kiwi 13½x14 last month, this perforating head gave an odd result in the corners of each stamp. This is not easy to describe but is easily spotted when it has once been seen.

We thus have L3a, b and c all with Single watermark. L3c looks just like L3b but has the watermark inverted & reversed -- not an accidental variety as might be supposed but the result of the paper being deliberately used "wrong side up", again presumably in an attempt to improve the printing. The inverted & reversed watermark is easily seen.

Finally, the 1½d stamp appeared on the multiple watermark paper. This paper had a horizontal mesh and so is infallibly recognizable from the earlier issues by the mesh method. Two plates only were used throughout the issue of this stamp and one, numbered 1A had three stamps showing similar reentries. In all three cases the doubling was to the string of the basket. It is most clearly seen on R10/2 and less clearly on R9/2 and R8/2. This is a pleasing variety and the more so as it is the only one recorded in a stamp which is unusually lacking in philatelic varieties. No accidental watermark or perforation varieties are known.

