

THE BIRTH OF A STAMP

The arrival of a letter from Post Office Headquarters with the invitation to submit designs for a proposed set of stamps is one of the most exciting prospects any stamp designer can experience.

The letter arrives without any prior knowledge, and the subject matter, number of stamps and reasons for the issue are also a surprise, so the privilege of being involved in the creation of a new set of stamps is tempered by the knowledge that a lot of work has to be undertaken before your designs have been submitted.

An added challenge is knowing that two other designers have been invited to submit for the same issue.

The range of subjects for stamps is infinite, and in my experience of over thirty years of stamp designing includes such subjects as Centennials of cities and towns, Law Societies and University, fishing resources, vintage transport covering aircraft, trains, trams and ships, firefighting, Maori portraits, Health and Christmas, Anzac, etc., also stamp issues for Tokelau, Cook Islands, Niue, Ross Dependency and the United Nations.

In each case, a vast amount of research is required to find out as much as possible about the subject for the stamp issue, so that the final designs give a clear and accurate depiction of the subject, whether there be one or six stamps in the issue.

Many hours will be spent by the designer writing, phoning and calling on Museums, libraries and research centres, also individual people who can give specialist knowledge.

Only when this is completed can the designer think of how he can design the stamp, its presentation, the treatment he will use, number of colours and wording required.

In November 1983 I received a letter inviting me, along with two other designers, to submit designs for a new series of stamps on "New Zealand Military History", and in this case, on the NZ Army.

The thought of trying to depict the 140 year history of the NZ Army on a set of four stamps was indeed daunting, and so began a programme of reading and research on its origins, development, actions within New Zealand and overseas, and its technological and personal development over the years.

Fortunately most of the important events in the course of the Army's history have been painstakingly recorded by authors, and this had to be read.

Visits to Army Public Relations Officers and the Museum at Waiouru were made and notes and sketches made of significant items.

Also visits to the National Museum, Alexander Turnbull Library and the RSA produced more important information and photographs, and finally, interviews with 'old soldiers' proved helpful.

Only after this research had been completed could I think of how to condense it into a set of four stamps.

This could be done in several ways; by showing progress over the years by changes in uniforms, weapons and equipment; by depicting involvement in significant wars and theatres of operation; by showing medals, badges, banners related to various Corps, Units etc.; or through symbolism and visual impressions of soldiers, operations and places.

So many ways to consider. This I do by doing many small 'thumbnail' sketches of the stamp, same size. Also to be included in each design is the wording 'New Zealand', the denomination, a caption on the subject and the logo of the NZ Army — quite a lot within the finished stamp size of 40mm x 29mm.

After many pages of sketches and layouts, hopefully a theme emerges that covers all the requirements.

These final selections are now enlarged four times stamp size, and drawn in full colour, complete with lettering, for submission to the Post Office Selection Panel.

In this case, my designs were approved, after evaluation by many authorities on the subject. Now finished artwork had to be completed, but before doing so, some alterations had to be made, and a further visit to the Army Museum at Waiouru to check details on a General Stuart tank on display there.

Artwork for the four stamps completed and all wording Letraset on clear acetate sheets in correct position and size.

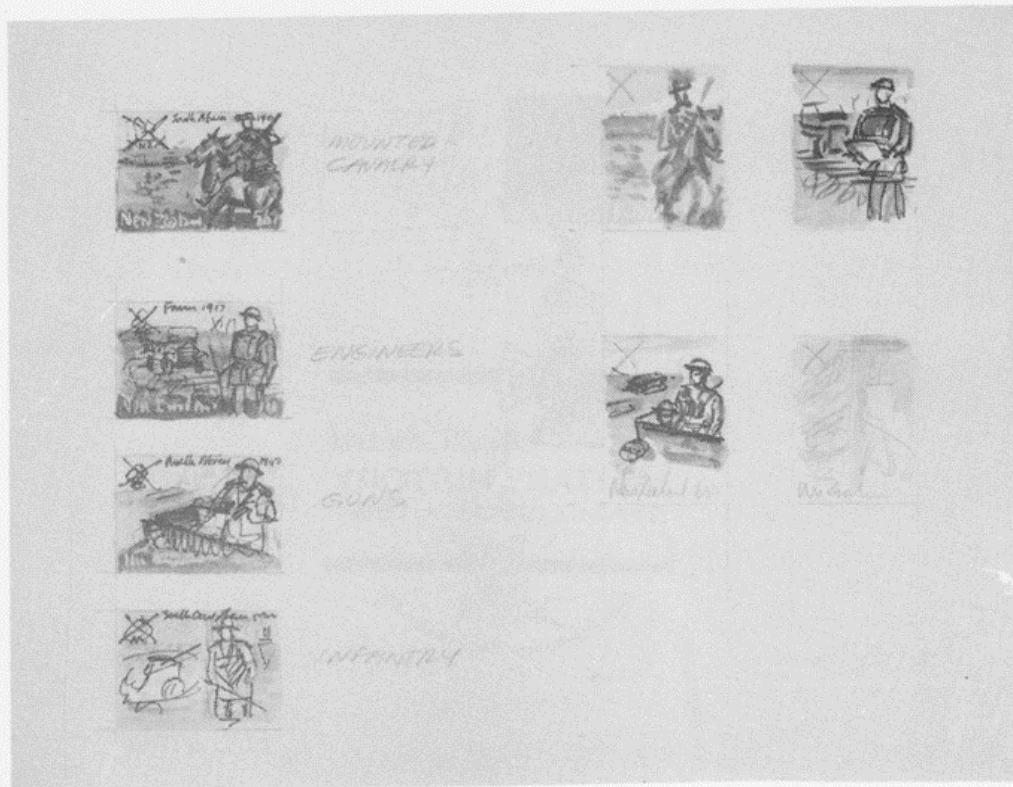
With final checking, all is ready for returning to the Post Office, who will forward it to the printers in England, Harrisons & Sons Ltd.

Why not try and design a stamp yourself?

Maurice Conly



Initial Sketches



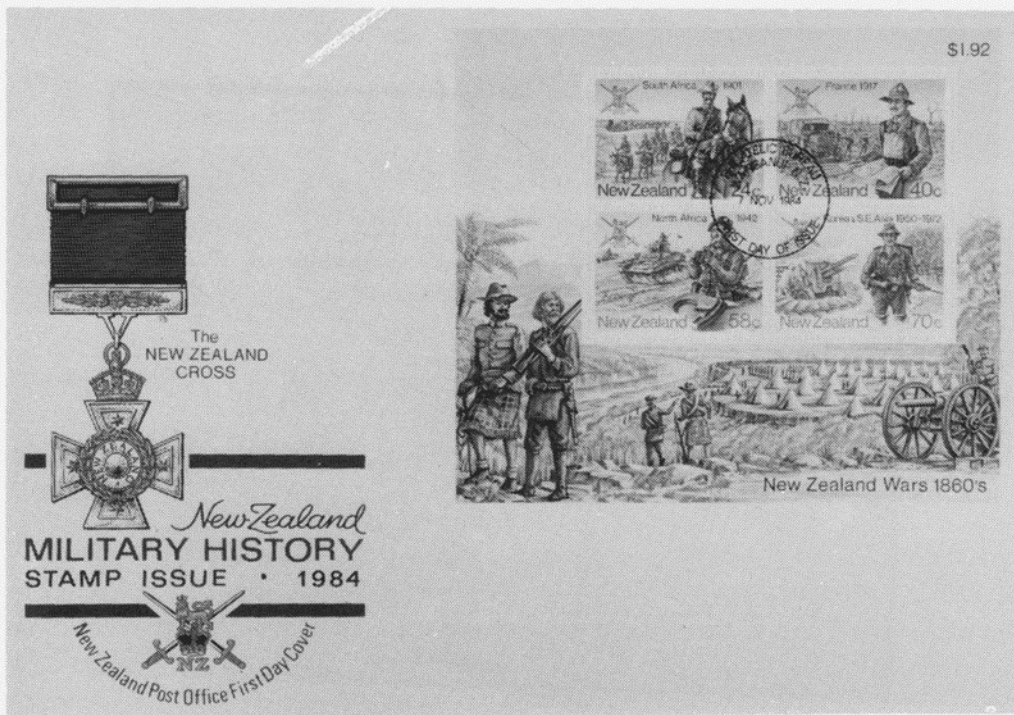
Watercolours



Submitted design.



FDC artwork



Finished product