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## Postal Orders and Postal Notes of Australasia

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Postal Orders (called “Postal Notes” in some countries, including Australia and States, Fiji and New Zealand) were first introduced in Queensland in 1880, followed by Great Britain in 1881. By definition, a Postal Order/Postal Note is a type of money order form with both a fixed face value and (usually) an imprinted fee (or commission or poundage) stamp. They were intended to facilitate the transmission of small amounts of money by post in an era when it was uncommon for an individual to have a bank checking account.

A money order system typically operated in parallel with postal orders/postal notes. Larger amounts could be transmitted by money order, and the sender had some assurance the intended recipient received the funds. Sending odd amounts might require the purchase of two or three postal orders or postal notes, but only one money order. On the other hand, money orders were generally more expensive than postal orders, so the latter usually

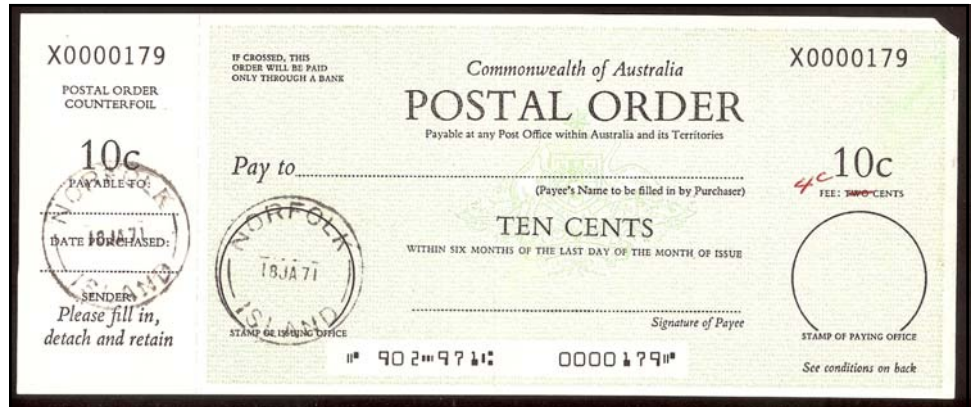


Fig. 1: Australian Postal Order issued Norfolk Island, 18 JA 71, revalued poundage.

made sense for smaller transactions.

Postal Orders/Postal Notes are recognized by the International Federation of Philately (FIP) as a sub-category of postal stationery for purposes of exhibition. Many recent postal stationery catalogs and literature include them where information is available.

There are two types of Postal Orders/Postal Notes issued by various Pacific area countries. The first type, “Inland” postal orders, are issued for use only within a given country or territorial area, and are not generally valid outside the country of issue. The sec-

ond type, “British Postal Orders” (or BPOs), are valid internationally to or from most countries within the British Commonwealth. Both types can be found from some countries and colonies. In cases where both Inland and BPOs were issued, a locally issued BPO could only be cashed if sent outside the country of issue. Since most of the commission paid to purchase a BPO was owed to the British Post Office, local postal authorities wanted fees generated by local usage to remain with them. Thus, they would not permit locally issued BPOs to be cashed locally.

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### The Informer has Changed!

From time to time, the Editor submits *The Informer* to a philatelic literature exhibition jury. One suggestion has been made several times: “omit the borders, and set your journal FREE!” So, behold! The more-or-less borderless look of *The Informer*.

In addition, we are moving from a primarily 2-column format to primarily 3 columns.

SAS/O

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This article is an attempt to introduce what is known about both Inland Postal Orders/Notes and BPOs issued in the Pacific area. It does not include the issues of New Zealand which are fully listed and described in the book *New Zealand Postal Notes 1886-1986* (available in our society library), or the issues of Australia and States, which are listed and described in several other publications or works in progress. Information from many of the territories covered in this article is difficult to obtain and sometimes impossible to confirm.

## Australian Island Territories

### Norfolk Island

- Not known to have issued BPOs.
- May have issued Australian Postal Notes inscribed NORFOLK ISLAND at top center. One essay is pictured in an Australian publication. No issued examples have been seen.
- Issued Australian Postal Orders in the 1960s and 1970s (Fig. 1, page 1). These may be identified by the serial number prefix “X” (serial number X0000179 in Figure 1). The “X” prefix was also used in New South Wales, so postal orders for Norfolk may have been obtained from NSW postal headquarters.

### Papua

- Not known to have issued BPOs.
- Issued Australian Postal Notes inscribed PAPUA at top center in the 1930s and 1940s (Fig. 2). Very scarce.

### New Guinea

- Not known to have issued BPOs.
- Issued Australian Postal Notes inscribed NEW GUINEA at top center, similar to issues of Papua. Very rare.

### Papua New Guinea

- Not known to have issued BPOs.
- Issued Inland Postal Orders, possibly as early as mid-1970s, discontinued

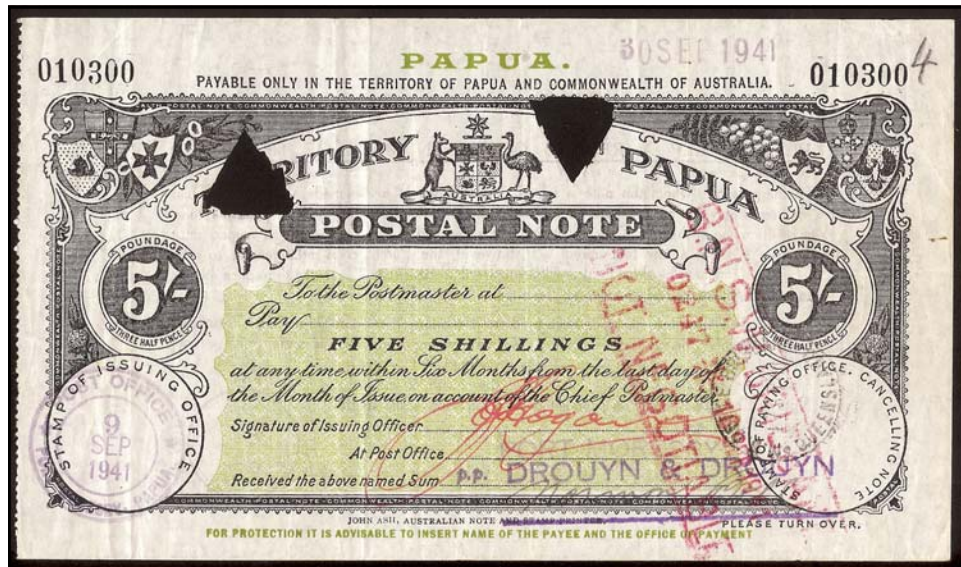


Fig. 2: Issued at Port Moresby, Papua 9 SEP 1941, and cashed at the Brisbane Money Order Office 17 SE 41 and triangular-punch cancelled.



Fig. 3: Papua New Guinea Inland postal order, issued at Ukarumpa, 19 NOV 1993.

continued December 1995 or January 1996. Denominations recorded include 10t, 15t, 50t, K1, K2, K5, K10 and K20. Other denominations likely exist (Fig. 3).

## New Zealand Island Territories

### Cook Islands

- May have issued BPOs overprinted POUNDAGE PAYABLE IN NEW ZEALAND. None reported.
- Not known to have issued Inland Postal Orders.

### Niue

- Issued BPOs overprinted NEW

ZEALAND. The only reported examples are from the 1970s, including both sterling BPOs converted to NZ decimal currency, and decimal BPOs converted to NZ currency. Denominations up to £2 (British) were available in New Zealand and possibly in Niue (Fig. 4, next page).

- Not known to have issued Inland Postal Orders.

### Samoa

- Issued BPOs without overprint (Fig. 5, next page). May have issued BPOs overprinted NEW ZEALAND prior to 1962 independence, but none reported.
- Not known to have issued Inland Postal Orders.

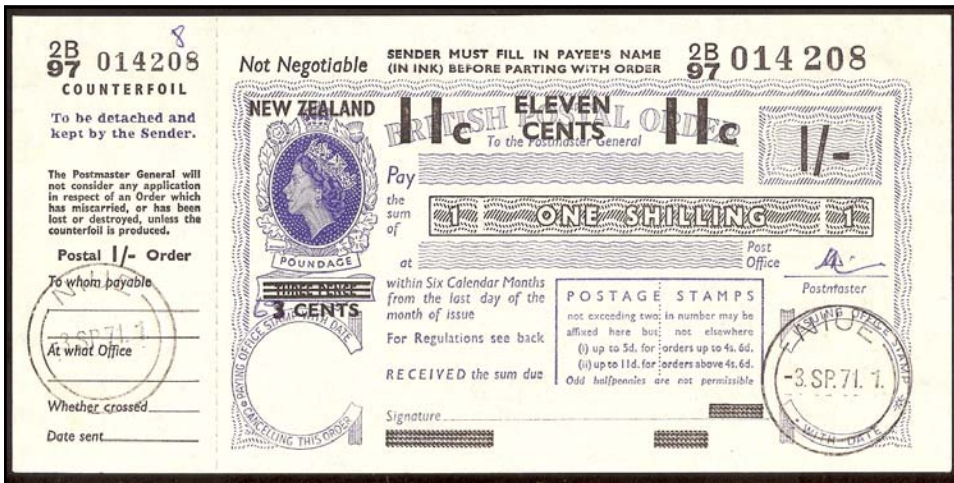


Fig. 4: British Postal Order overprinted NEW ZEALAND, issued NIUE 3 SP 71.

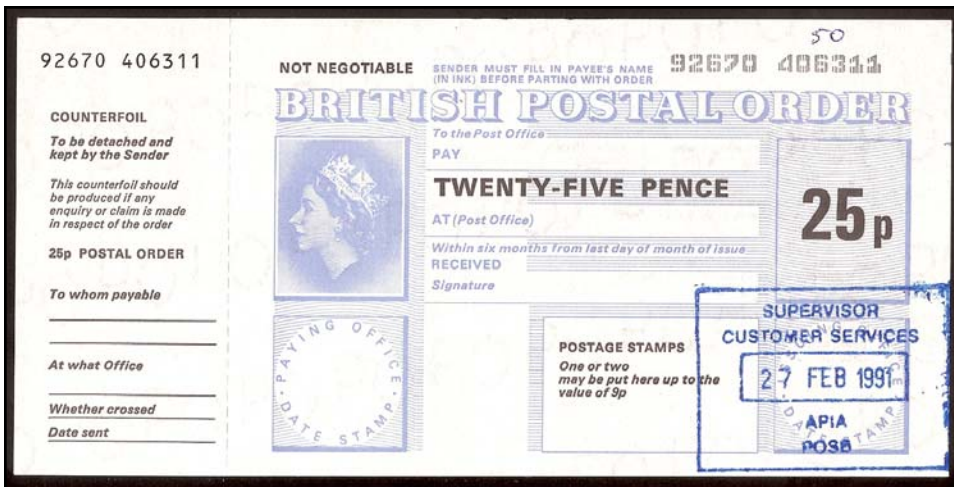


Fig. 5: British Postal Order without overprint, issued at Apia, Samoa 27 FEB 1991.

1984. Subsequent BPOs without overprint continued to be available after 1984.

- Machine issued BPOs were introduced in Great Britain in 2006. Issues of various British Commonwealth countries can be distinguished by the serial numbers along the bottom edge of the order. Issues of Fiji begin with serial number 000076, followed by 14 additional numbers.
- Inland Postal Notes were issued in the 1980s, and probably earlier, and remain available today. Denominations include 5¢, 10¢, 20¢, 25¢, 30¢, 50¢, 75¢, \$1.00, \$1.50, \$2.00 and \$4.00.
- In the mid 1980s, commissions were increased, and a handstamped surcharge applied to the commission. An erroneous surcharge was applied, reading “.05¢” in a circle (Fig. 8, next page). Properly read, this amount is five one-hundredths of a cent, obviously not the intention of the post office.
- By 1989, when commissions had again increased, the handstamps were corrected to read “06¢” (or the appropriate amount), without

## French Pacific Islands

- May have issued French Postal Orders (“Bon de Poste”), but none reported.
- No Inland Postal Orders known to have been issued by any French Pacific territory.

## British Pacific Islands

### Fiji

- Issued BPOs overprinted POUNDAGE/ PAYABLE IN/ FIJI as early as the 1920s, and perhaps earlier (Fig. 6, at right). Any pre-Elizabethan issue is rare. Issues of QEII were overprinted FIJI (Fig. 7, next page). All overprinting of postal orders with country name was discontinued in



Fig. 6: BPO overprinted POUNDAGE/ PAYABLE IN/ FIJI, issued by the Money Order Office, Suva, Fiji 2 JUL 1931.



Fig. 7: British Postal Order overprinted FIJI, issued by the Money Order Office, Suva, Fiji 9 JUN 71.



Fig. 9: Fiji Inland Postal Order with commission surcharged "06c" – unissued (no date stamp).



Fig. 8: Fiji Inland Postal Order with the commission surcharged "05c" issued by the M.O.O. Suva, Fiji 23 JUN 86.



Fig. 10: British Postal Order overprinted PITCAIRN ISLAND, issued by the Pitcairn Islands Post Office, SP 21 72.

the decimal point (Fig. 9). By the mid-1990s, no surcharges were applied, even though the actual commission differed from the amount shown on the postal notes.

### Gilbert & Ellice Islands

- Issued BPOs overprinted POUNDAGE PAYABLE IN GILBERT & ELLICE ISLANDS. Very rare.
- Inland Postal Orders were produced by the Crown Agents in 1955, and a Specimen set of five denominations exists in the Crown Agents archives at the British Library. These are inscribed GILBERT AND ELLICE ISLANDS COLONY. The poundage (fee) stamp at upper left depicts a bird above the sun rising over the ocean. The orders are printed in green, with black text. No surviving issued examples are known, and these items may or may not have been introduced within the colony.

**Kiribati** and **Tuvalu**, according to their respective postal authorities, have never issued Inland Postal Orders.

### Pitcairn Islands

- Issued BPOs overprinted PITCAIRN ISLAND (Fig. 10). The only reported examples are from the early 1970s.
- Not known to have issued Inland Postal Orders.

## Tasmanian Stamp Auctions

(Member - Australasian Philatelic Traders' Association)

conduct regular postal auctions featuring quality stamps, covers, postmarks, postcards, ephemera, literature, collections and postal history from

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## Solomon Islands

- Issued BPOs overprinted POUNDAGE PAYABLE IN BRITISH SOLOMON ISLANDS as early as 1915. Very rare. May have issued overprinted BPOs as recently as the 1970s, but none reported.
- Inland Postal Orders inscribed “British Solomon Islands Postal Order” initially issued August 1971, and withdrawn c1990. Seventeen denominations, including 20c, 40c, 60c, 80c, \$1, \$1.50, \$2, \$3, \$4, \$5, \$6, \$7, \$8, \$9, \$10, \$15 and \$20 (Fig. 11).
- Inland Postal Orders with “British” removed from the header were issued c1987. Six denominations, including \$2, \$5, \$10, \$20, \$50 and \$100 (Fig. 12). These are currently in use.

## Tonga

- Issued BPOs overprinted TONGA (Fig. 13). The only reported examples are from the early 1970s.
- Not known to have issued Inland Postal Orders.

This listing is probably far from complete. If you can add to the information presented here, please contact the editor or the author.

For further information on Postal Orders and Postal Notes of the Pacific area or other countries worldwide, you may wish to contact *The Postal Order Society* through USA Representative, Jack Harwood at:

[jharwood2@comcast.net](mailto:jharwood2@comcast.net)

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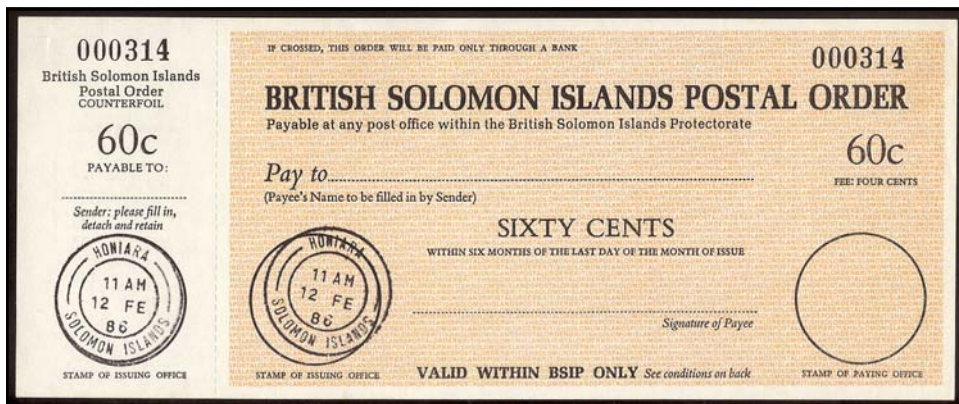


Fig. 11: Inland Postal Order issued at Honiara, Solomon Islands, 12 FE 86.

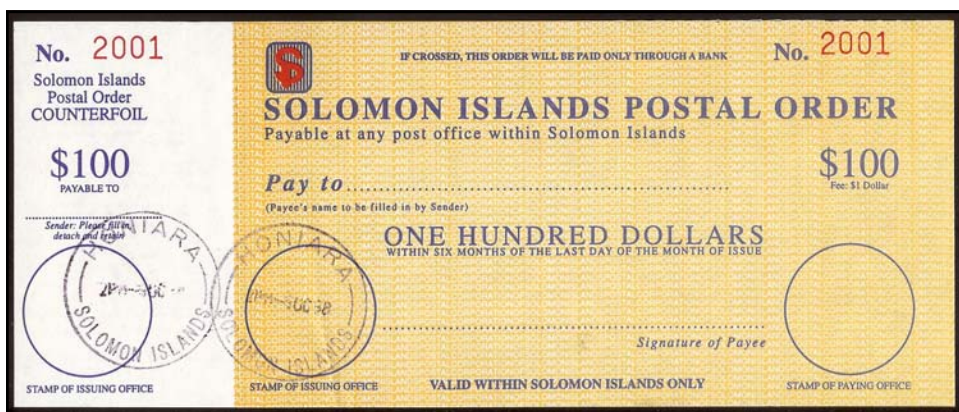


Fig. 12: Inland Postal Order issued Honiara, Solomon Islands, 4 OC 88.

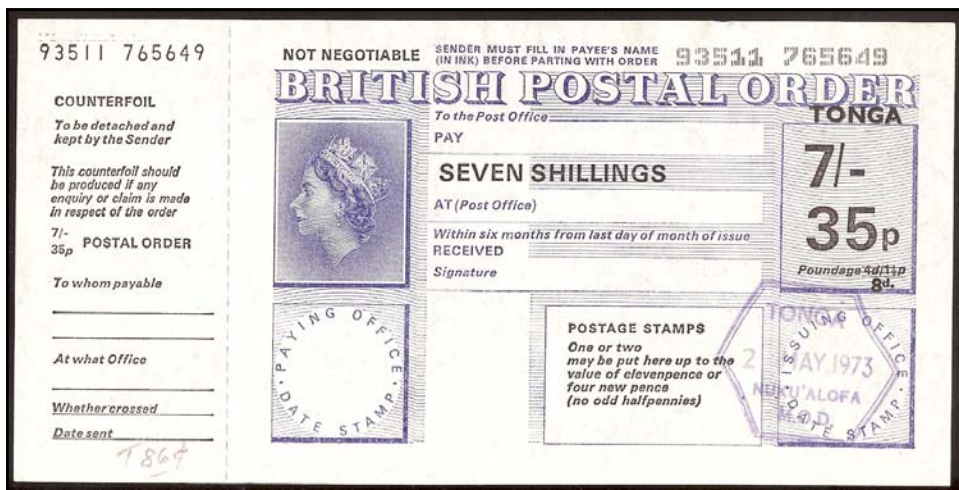


Fig. 13: British Postal Order overprinted TONGA, issued by the Nuku'alofa Money Order Department, 2 MAY 1973.

## Canberra Offset On Offer



Phoenix Auctions of Melbourne featured Lot 1375 on the cover of its *Auction No. 10* for 26 November 2011, describing the lot as “1927 pair with spectacular offset on 1 unit and part offset on the other. Unrecorded by BW [Brusden-White’s *Australian Commonwealth Specialists Catalogue*]. Only 3 other pairs known...”. The July issue of *The Informer* had an excellent article by John Wynns on the 1927 Canberra Booklet stamp, and this pair makes a nice follow-up. The pair was listed with an estimate of A\$2500. SAS/O