

# THE ANATOMY OF AN UNDERPAID AIRMAIL COVER

## INTRODUCTION:

Making sense of the various primary and secondary markings on an airmail cover, and the complex calculations that go into determining the dues is a vexing issue for philatelists. This requires knowledge of prevailing postal rates in the country of origin and destination as well as the rules that govern how underpaid airmails need to be taxed. This is what also makes it so satisfying.

## PURPOSE:

This exhibit is intended to show a single cover and how all the primary and secondary markings need to be read together to understand ***Underpaid Airmails***.



1. Franked 7a 3p (1a 3p + 6a) and cancelled WELLINGTON / 22 DEC 35. The prevailing postage rate to England was 7a 6p for the first  $\frac{1}{2}$  oz; hence the letter was understamped by 3p.
2. Blue BY AIR MAIL / PAR AVION label affixed.
3. '1/5' endorsed in blue ink. The '1' means that the letter was within the first weight stage (up to  $\frac{1}{2}$  oz.), and the '5' indicates the postage deficiency in Centimes (100 Centimes = 1 Gold Franc) which was the unit adopted by UPU for calculation of postage dues between countries. This deficiency was calculated using ordinary letter rate base of 2a 6p = 25 Centimes (being the applicable), hence double the deficiency ( $3p \times 2 = 6p$ ) of  $6p = 5$  Centimes.
4. The postage due handstamp T in a black circle applied in India (Karachi) with a 5C in pencil to indicate to the English post office to recover the local currency equivalent of 5 Centimes when delivering the letter.
5. Upon arrival in England, the cover received the ' $\frac{1}{2}$ d I.S. / K' handstamp in black indicating that  $\frac{1}{2}$ d is the amount of dues to be recovered from the addressee. This was calculated using the base Empire rate for a letter of  $2\frac{1}{2}d = 25$  Centimes, so 5 centimes works out to  $(2\frac{1}{2} \times 5)/25 = \frac{1}{2}d$ .
6. Upon reaching the destination post office a green  $\frac{1}{2}d$  postage due label was affixed and cancelled upon collecting the amount.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY & REFERENCES:

- Various Indian Postal Notices & Director General's circulars
- Indian Air Mail Postage Rates until 1956 by Jeffrey Brown.
- International Postage Rates 1890s – 1957 by Michael Furfie.