

# A New Zealand AR form with its covering envelope

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**S**HOWN in Figures 1 and 2 is a recently reconstructed pair of items, an AR form and the covering envelope that was used to return it to the sender of the original registered item.

Recall from [H1, H2] that AR stands for *avis de réception*, a service elaborating registration, that provides for a form or card to be signed and returned to the sender of the registered item, as an indication that delivery was successful. It was available on international mail between the original set of UPU members from 1875, and among all UPU members from 1879 on.

During the period of effectiveness of the Treaty of Vienna, 1 July 1892–31 December 1898, a registered item sent with AR would be so-marked, and the AR fee paid on the envelope (a moot point in this particular case, since AR was a free option from the United States). When the item arrived in the destination country, an AR form was prepared, and when the item was picked up or delivered, the form would be signed by the recipient, and the form returned to the post office of origin (in this case, Dayton, Ohio), which would then ensure that the recipient got it. Since the AR fee was paid on the cover, no stamps were applied to the form (in contrast, for domestic NZ AR, and later in the period, for AR mail between Australian states and NZ, stamps paying the AR fee were applied to the form [WL]).

New Zealand used AR forms that required covering envelopes (some countries, such as Canada, used forms that were returned as folded letter sheets, not needing a covering envelope).

Figure 1 shows the New Zealand AR form, for a registered letter sent from Dayton, Ohio. It had been mailed on 2 January 1897, and signed for by both the recipient and Auckland clerk on 3 February.

P.O. No. 17.]

**NEW ZEALAND.**  
NOUVELLE-ZÉLANDE

**ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF DELIVERY**  
AVIS DE RÉCEPTION

of an article registered under No. 24, and addressed to  
d'un objet recommandé enregistré sous le No. 24 et adressé à

M. J. M. at Auckland on the 3rd day of February 1897.  
à Auckland le 3 février 1897.

The undersigned declares that a registered article addressed as above and received  
Le soussigné déclare qu'un objet recommandé à l'adresse susmentionnée et provenant

from Dayton, Ohio has been duly delivered on the 3rd day of February 1897.  
de Dayton, Ohio a été dûment livré le 3 février 1897.

Stamp of the  
Delivering Office:

Signature  
of the Addressee:  
du Destinataire  
Thomas J. M. Hill

Signature  
of the Postmaster at  
the Office of Delivery:  
du Chef du Bureau Distributeur:  
S. B. Biss

This receipt should be signed by the Addressee and by the Postmaster of the office of  
Cet avis doit être signé par le Destinataire et par le Chef du Bureau Distributeur,  
delivery, then enclosed in an envelope and forwarded, registered, by first mail, to the office  
puis être mis sous enveloppe et envoyé, sous recommandation, par le premier courrier, au bureau  
of origin of the article to which it refers.  
d'origine de l'objet qu'il concerne.

20,000/10/92. [3608

Figure 1. NZ AR form returned to Dayton (1897)

Part of the Dayton correspondence, from a dealer in religious materials. Only reported internationally used nineteenth century NZ AR form. Print-order date is 10/92, with a run of 20,000.

Figure 2 illustrates the covering envelope. The date of posting is 5 February 1897, two days after the form (Figure 1) was signed.



Figure 2. NZ AR covering envelope for returning the form (1897)

Returned as registered mail (a practice that—for New Zealand—continued until sometime in 1917–20; for other countries, registration of the covering envelopes ceased at different times, e.g., Canada and UK, 1908). The ms 3088 is (likely) the registration number at Auckland, and the 6027 is (likely) that at Dayton. No backstamps and no print-order data.

Very few pairs consisting of an AR form together with its covering envelope (the specific one that returned the form) are known worldwide. Likely this is because neither the form nor the covering envelope was seen as collectible (especially since the latter has no postage stamps, and the former very often has no stamps). Normally, one would expect the two to be obtained together—in this case, however, I obtained them years apart.

The form and the covering envelope were mentioned in a price list of US dealer Greg Sutherland in the late 1980s (with a lot of other Dayton material, including a number of AR forms from around the world), and sold separately. The form resurfaced when I was offered it by Canadian postal history dealer Frank Hoyles, in the late 1990s. He knew my interest in AR material and had saved it for me. The asking price was only Can\$20. I told him that that wasn't enough, but he replied that he wasn't going to change it.

In September 2009, the covering envelope was offered on e-Bay. I carefully checked the dates of the form and covering envelope, and decided there was sufficient evidence to conclude that this was indeed *the* covering envelope for the form, and went after it—and got it. Now they are reunited.

## References

- [H1] David Handelman, *AR—avis de réception*, Postal History Society of Canada, Ottawa (2002).
- [H2] *ibid*, *AR in the British Isles*, London Philatelist 116 (#1346) June 2007, 157–181.
- [L] Jeff Long, *Avis de réception* New Zealand Stamp Collector 88 (3) September 2008, 74–75.
- [WL] Paul Wreglesworth & Jeff Long, *Early use of the 'AR' service in New Zealand*, New Zealand Stamp Collector 89 (3) September 2009, 82–85.