

## 1932/33

**SYMBOL:** A hyphen at lower centre.

**COLOURS:** Black on a very light orange base.

The legacy of this issue is the potent overhaul that took place - almost as if a new broom had been brought in to evict the delusional transgressions of the past seven years - which culminated in three momentous refinements.

The prime, and most visually striking, novelty was the ushering in of a spanking new die to be feasted on by all registrations. While there would be no modulation per se to the elevation of the 3½-inch numbers, the majority were now rejuvenated by deferring to a more rotund but slimmer (and some would say 'cleaner') format. Single prefacing letters too were restyled but here their loftiness was dilated a whisker to 2¾ inches, an aspect that would be inviolable until the collapse of the system.

Secondly, the inconsistency demonstrated so far concerning the deployment of the annual emblem was at last blitzed by hereinafter making its disclosure mandatory on every plate, whether prefixed or not, this immaterial of how many characters visible. Something too must have been arbitrated about its setting for, with this series, it would be ousted from its until then ancestral mid-central post to a lower position for ten issues in a row.

Also reformed was how registrations would be dispersed countrywide, a state of affairs that had become bogged down in a monotonous rut. Up to now allocations to post offices had steadfastly clung to the same hackneyed benchmark whereby northerners had systematically looted the premier plates of every issue (chiefly looked upon as the most appealing because of their low serials) and, after winding down both islands, subjecting southernmost folk to scavenge over the dregs. Starting straightaway therefore the partitioning of every series was to become more even-handed by varying it every twelve months among the then 17 postal districts as summarised in [Appendix 3](#).

Meanwhile, on the commercial scene, Parliamentary patriarchs had passed legislation last year (to come into force on 1 June 1932) whose design it was to blockade the accruing influx of road carriers at whose hands their own New Zealand Railways had capitulated to grave financial losses. This deed though was but an offshoot of events whose seeds had been sown in the rudimentary 1920's when the popularity of trucks and buses first began to exert itself. And, with the ongoing unrepressed propagation of the mercantile fleet over the next decade, it was of course the rail networks that felt the pinch as they saw a snowballing avalanche of freight being diverted into the predatory clutches of the motorised sector. To their added detriment, passenger numbers too had gone into decline as fewer in the citizenry were lured into journeying by train other than on urban commuter tracks.

But in essence it was trucks that had made the hugest impact for they were able to scour rural expanses far beyond the railheads where, in the bid to keep pace

with New Zealand's ever unfurling farming frontiers, they had afforded fast, efficient and thrifty transport just at a time when it was most required. Moreover steady improvements to thoroughfares and the advent of the pneumatic tyre were to rocket their speeds, loads and zones of operation thus reaping them even greater advantage over their steam powered rivals. This was most evident when it came to the transfer of farm animals (even to secluded localities) and the timber business also was to profit munificently from the versatility put at its disposal by motor-driven log haulers relative to what the opposition could offer.

When it finally soaked up this competitive supremacy was too downright decisive, the Government barged in with the "Transport Licensing Act" of 1931 which plotted to curb further ingress into the industry and, in so doing, extend some protection to the beleaguered railways. Even though since March 1925 all privately owned traders had been the target of a yearly road tax (not only according to whether their contrivance was a truck, bus or service car but also by class within each category), as of now stricter controls were to be instituted to stall how many more entrants could chase a heavy traffic license. Naturally this became the catalyst for the filling in of countless more forms when applications were made, much nervous loitering while they were processed plus all the other confounded aggravations to be defied when straining to untangle miles of red tape.

And, in terms of plates, there now likewise came the insistence all existing conveyances adept at carting merchandise and/or people acquire distinctive registrations to ratify what occupation they were engaged in. Hence another five prefixes were enrolled whose virtues are delved into later in the chapter. Concurrent with their undraping on 1 June another edict was un-muzzled under the banner of the "Heavy Motor-vehicle Regulations, 1932" (which became binding on the same day) with the mandate to deposit even more harassment in the path of private carriers.

Effective immediately therefore came a tactic to torpedo the principal boon bulk transporters had relished to date over the railways, namely their ability to gain admission to every nook and cranny in the land served by an arterial by-way of some kind. So, in a motion to curtail this sheer freedom of movement, every thoroughfare in the nation was henceforward to be ranked from one to five at which phase certain



appliances, in concert with their most profuse laden weight capabilities, were to be banned from some of them. This paved the way for the copious mushrooming of hundreds of round, ten-inch diameter, metal discs along the perimeters of all public roads, each bedaubed

with a black Roman numeral on a dusky brown backdrop. These would have the job of warning drivers of all heavier machines how that stretch had been classified and, as such, whether they had legal accountability to be cruising on it. The classes were designated as follows:

- Class I roads - no weight limit.
- Class II roads - overall weight not to exceed 8 tons.
- Class III roads - overall weight not to exceed 6½ tons.
- Class IV roads - overall weight not to exceed 4½ tons.
- Class V roads - overall weight not to exceed 3 tons.

At the outset the roundels were steel based but over the course of many years lighter compounds were ennobled and the dark brown base ceded to a patchwork of more bleached varieties, this the result of many production runs. In fact, not long after this registration scheme went kaput, they were to progress into ones where the characters became white and the background black. It should also be grasped the above limits were thoroughly fiddled with as the eons went by and many subsequent permutations perpetrated. For instance by 1940 a clause had been prescribed concurring to a half-ton increment if the deliverer was relocating livestock during a preordained season. And by 1950 Class V roads had vamoosed altogether.

On receipt of his license (the remittance for which could be made in four instalments) every operator had to stick a circular paper permit to the inside of his unit's windshield or, if there was none, to some other prominent part of the cab with the help of a receptacle. Defined by the Regulations as 'indication-discs', each was 3½ inches across where all exuded the following details:



*An example of an indication-disc, albeit this one is from a later year.*

- A disc serial number.
- The class of the vehicle.
- The owner's license number.
- The expiry date of the license.
- The prefix and serial on the plates.
- How many passengers (inclusive of the driver) could be conveyed. In the case of trucks this meant the number of persons condoned to sit in the cab which was usually limited to three.
- The name of the issuing council.
- The signature of the authorised issuing officer.
- The top speed limit for a vehicle of that type.
- And boldly on the face a different coloured digit between 1 and 4 to signify up to the end of which quarter the license had been paid for.

In this, the inaugural year of implementation, the hues assented to for the numbers on 1932/33 indication-discs, which from then on would fluctuate annually, were:

- Scarlet for the number "1" (indicating expiry on 31 August 1932).
- Emerald for the number "2" (indicating expiry on 30 November 1932).
- Yellow-Ochre for the number "3" (indicating expiry on 28 February 1933).
- Cobalt Blue for the number "4" (indicating expiry on 31 May 1933).

**Passenger** - If indeed a new broom had been whisked in to purge bygone sins, then there is the genuine likelihood it was short of a bristle or two. For how else can



one construe the utterly gob-smacking dictate (and no fitting excuse has yet been uncovered) to forbid these registrations from proceeding on their merry and uninterrupted trek to **100,000** and points yonder? No, instead some bright spark now ruled serials could no longer mosey into six-figure terrain but had to recommence at **1** where they were to be lorded over by a 2¾-inch tall **X**. So, of the 131,600 pairs to



come aboard, the leading 99,999 had a normal appearance whereas the other 31,601 were left to be assailed by this most prosaic of initials. However one tiny consolation was not one of them, in either sect, was ever dispossessed of its symbol.

### Motorcycle



*\_1 to 27\_000*

**Large Vehicle Dealer** - Owing to the dynamics of the revised typeface, the **D** on the 1,600 sets became rounder and leaner and had its height raised to 2¾ inches.



**Motorcycle Dealer** - If the 11 August 1931 prognosticated drawing for these plates is anything to go by, the two-inch **D** should have hosted a more bulbous contour than the one on its passenger-sized compatriots. Yet this does not gel if we are attentive to its profile on later series (admittedly after they had been doctored horizontally in 1935/36) where they are no more than miniature



reproductions of those found on larger dealer registrations. That aside, of the 250 pairs to make the grade, all would have been chuffed to treasure a hyphen.

**Exempt** - The **E**, deservedly yoked to an emblem on all the 1,450 sets, now took on the same 2¾-inch height as the other monastic letters and, at variance with former years, also had its middle arm elongated a mite.



**Government** - The whole component of the chichi looking diagonal **Govt** (which it is postulated may have been remodelled somewhat from the one seen over the last two years) also stepped up to being 2¾ inches and all the 1,750 pairs doled out were compliant to being branded with an emblem. To now there is cognisance of only a solitary example.



**Heavy Vehicle** - One of five new players off the bench were plates headed by an **H** where the 15,500 sets were to be convivial purely with trucks as long as these were licensed to deal in nothing other than goods and their load capacity tolerated over two tons.



**Light Vehicle** - Nudged into life too were 23,000 pairs of registrations with an **L** at the helm for commercial utility vehicles and covered vans whose gross weight did not surpass two tons.



**Bus** - Also teeing off was a **P** (for Passenger) prefix destined for commuter buses. This intrinsically denoted those contrivances wholly restrained to navigating downtown and suburban streets where standing room for a fixed few of their patrons was acceptable. Of the 1,250 sets with hyphens released it seems just one melancholy remnant can be counted on at this time.



**Service Vehicle** - What had originated as the service car (and later developed into the motor coach) are euphemisms reserved to typify conveyances skilled at long distance or inter-city travel but where, due to the length of the average trip, everyone had to remain seated. Apart from personal luggage they were also able to hold token lightweight commodities and in this capacity became revered as internal mail carriers. All were henceforth glorified with pairs of plates dominated by an **S** yet, of the 1,500 pairs campaigned for, thus far not one has condescended to come out of concealment.

**Taxi** - And not to be disregarded were taxis which, in their hunt for fare paying customers, were appraised to be just as revenue oriented as their burlier colleagues. These were now propelled into forming a separate division where each bagged one of a set of 2,150 registrations brandishing a **T**.



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