

THOMAS PRINGLE

THE FIRST OF THREE ARTICLES BY WILLIAM MAIN



THOMAS PRINGLE - A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Thomas Pringle was born in Carlisle, England in 1858. He came to New Zealand in 1882 and eventually settled in Wellington where he and his wife opened 'Pringles', a fancy goods store on Lambton Quay. In 1895 he joined the Wellington Camera Club and participated in their activities for several years, winning acclaim as a first class photographer. When the Government founded the Department of Tourist and Health Resorts in 1901, it triggered off the production of souvenirs and trinkets for tourists. Besides his shop, Pringle worked for the Department of Tourism on a contract basis, helping them to build up their picture files with scenic views and studies of the Maori. Some years after they had been issued under his imprint, Tanner Bros. published a selection of his images in their real photo series. Business directories continued to list Pringle's shop in Lambton Quay until 1920, when it is assumed he retired. He died in 1931.

PRINGLE THE PHOTOGRAPHER

It is difficult to discuss a person like Thomas Pringle without taking into account his photography. By the mid 1890s, he was an accomplished photographer, winning competitions that were staged throughout the country. As a member of the Wellington Camera Club, he gave presentations on intricate and spe-



cialised processes which the average amateur found difficult to master. During a lecture on carbon prints, he compared the art of photography to the music of Richard Wagner, a German composer whose operas were very *avant garde* at the time - a reference which may have been completely lost on his audience. In 1896 he publicly attacked photo judges in Dunedin for their inconsistent approach to aspects of photography. By the turn of the century, he'd gained so many accolades for his work that he more or less withdrew from amateur camera club activities and concentrated on building up his collection of New Zealand scenic and Maori studies. A year or two before he decided to get his postcards mass produced in Germany, he'd ventured into real photo cards. These are very hard to find. The only examples I have seen are in the collections of Bert Eccles and Simon Crawford.

PRINGLE'S CHOICE OF SUBJECT

In contrast to most other postcard photographers, Pringle shunned urban views and street scenes in favour of those which illustrated New Zealand's scenic beauty and the Maori. Apart from a commissioned series on the Wanganui River, he spent most of his time in the Southern Alps and Rotorua building up his catalogue of views which were aimed at the tourist trade. He was an accomplished climber and be-

friended the guide Graham. In Rotorua he found no end of Maoris who were willing to pose for him. The addition of colour to all of his black and white studies added greatly to their appeal as postcards. Probably Pringle's most famous photograph was a *genre* study which as far as I know has never appeared as a postcard. It was one he called "Diogenes", after the legendary Greek figure. In this case the model was a Wellington hermit called 'Charlie', who lived in a old hulk on Thorndon Beach. He was an identity whom artists sought to 'sit' for them. The photo was exhibited at an Intercolonial Photographic Exhibition organised by the Wellington Camera club in 1901 and was subsequently published in the *Auckland Weekly News*.

PRINGLES FANCY GOODS
Pringles shop on Lambton Quay sold a variety of Fancy Goods, from smokers' requisites to fine embroidery. The person behind its success was his wife Elizabeth who managed the business while her husband was away on photographic expeditions or buying trips around the world. In 1900, Pringle travelled to Japan where he made photographs of Japanese life and culture. He mounted a selection of these in an album which he dedicated to his wife with a special inscription. This gesture reveals a thoughtful and caring husband. In 1906, he journeyed to England and the Continent where he not only negotiated amongst other things a bulk purchase of Minton's Seccessionist Ware, but saw to the production of his first set of postcards in Germany. The advertisement which revealed this information appeared in Wellington's *Evening Post* in January 23rd 1907 announced . . . "Ever heard of Pringle the Photographer? Well we're showing a most beautiful series of Picture Postcards. Copyright views from our own negatives. Unique Maori Studies. Scenic Gems. Charmingly Coloured. These were reproduced in Germany. We personally supervised the work. No collector can afford to miss these. Every stationer stocks them. The only high-class card on the market. Miles ahead of the usual commonplace. Ask your stationer for them. Insist on having Pringle's Copyright Cards. There's nothing else half as good".

PRINGLE THE AUTHOR/PUBLISHER

Pringle produced two books that were aimed at the tourist market. Measuring 305 x 250 mm they were called *Art Photos of New Zealand* and *Maori Studies*. The tipped in reproductions were a product of the carbon process, which allowed the finest tonal

gradations. They would probably have been printed during Pringle's buying trip to England in 1906. Pringle's selection of photographs dwelt somewhat heavily on Maori maidens, a popular topic for many printers and publishers involved in catering for tourists. Today we might think otherwise about this tendency. However, to balance these, Pringle included some very sensitive studies of kaumātua - images that link themselves with the romantic studies produced by the New Zealand painter Goldie.

PRINGLE'S COMMISSIONS
Sometime around the turn of the century, Pringle established a connection with the Department of Tourist and Health Resorts. This was a valuable outlet for his scenic work. One photograph which exists shows him loaded down with camera gear accompanied by a guide at Lake Tarawera. As a photographer, Pringle used three different cameras for his scenic work

with a whole plate predominating. But he also employed smaller format cameras. All required him to use a black focusing cloth and tripod.

THE COLLOTYPE PROCESS

Collotype printing (early 1870's to date) is a photomechanical printing process in which a metal or glass plate, coated with bichromated gelatin, was exposed to light under a negative. When the moistened gelatin dried, it reticulated, forming a fine-grained mesh-like structure on the surface, which took up greasy ink in proportion to the hardening produced by the solutions exposure to light. The ink was then transferred from the plate to paper, in a press. A number of processes based on this principle are still used for short run quality printing in art circles overseas. Collotype prints show a well-defined, very characteristic irregular grain pattern when magnified. The success of the

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the great Pottery People?
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YOU CANNOT BUY AT OUR PRICES ANYWHERE ELSE.
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that illusion. The prices are from 2/6 to 20.

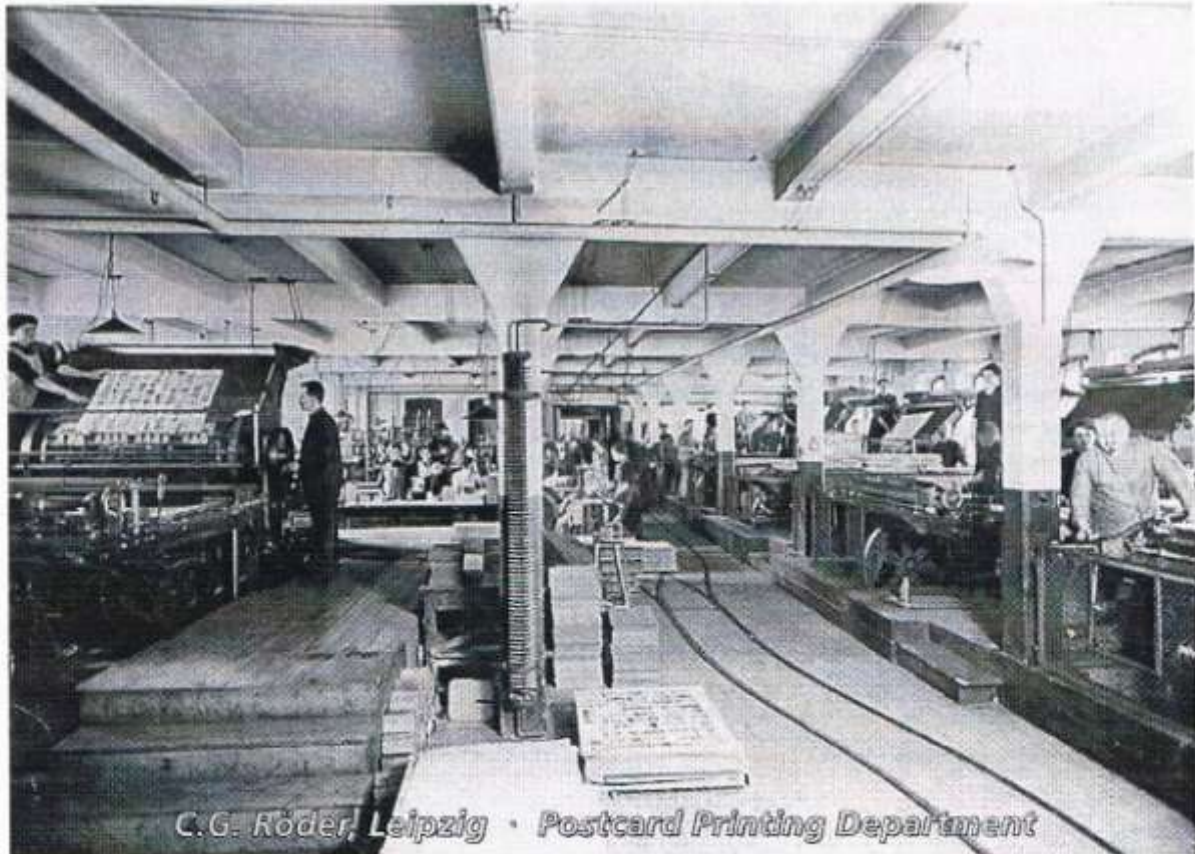
You've also heard of DOULTON?
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Wedding or Birthday Gifts.

Ever heard of PRINGLE, the Photographer?
Well, we're showing a most beautiful series of

Picture Post Cards.

Copyright views from our own negatives. Unique Maori Studies. Scenic
Gems. Charmingly Coloured.
These were reproduced in Germany. We personally supervised the work.
NO COLLECTOR CAN AFFORD TO MISS THESE.
EVERY STATIONER STOCKS THEM.

The only High-class Card on the market.
Miles ahead of the usual commonplace.
Ask your Stationer for them. Insist on having
"Pringle's Copyright Cards."
There's nothing else half as good.
A special line of POST CARD ALBUMS, to hold 100 Cards. Beautifully
bound, 1/9 each, or post free 2/-.
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process depended on the analysis of the colours chosen for printing and the order of their layering. For instance if an orange was required, a yellow would be laid down followed by red. The inks had to be transparent and finely handled to allow the fundamental black image to show through. How Pringle became skilled enough in this tricky technique to take control of these proceedings in Germany is a mystery! But knowing his dedication and background in trying photographic processes, the *Evening Post* statement informing readers of his personal supervision of his postcards can not be ruled out. Physical evidence that he was able to 'call the shots' regarding the production of his coloured postcards is seen in a card called "A Maori Poi Dancer". In this a Maori woman leans her head and arm over a wood carving which features a face with a Paua shell eye. I doubt if any German would have been able to select the right colours to use to for this particular part of the card.

PRINTING POSTCARDS IN NZ

While New Zealand's population did not reach a million until 1911, there was a steady demand for picture postcards prior to this which began in December 1897 when the New Zealand Post Office issued its first card which carried four beautifully coloured artist drawn vignettes of well known scenes. It was printed by the famous London printers, Waterlow and Sons Ltd. This attained a fine art standard which local printers were unable to replicate with such fidelity. But as time went by, those conversant with lithographic printing presses arrived in New Zealand

and began to apply their skills. One was Benoni White who worked for a firm in Wanganui owned by A.D.Willis, who also happened to be a member of Parliament. Between them they cornered the market in supplying quality artist drawn picture postcards for the New Zealand Post Office. Other firms who wanted to enter into the business of supplying editions of postcards at a level equal to that of the Post Office cards had two options. They could use local printers who generally lacked the skills and technology to reproduce postcards of the highest quality or they could go overseas. These offshore concerns were not idle in exploiting this market, sending their representatives with their suitcases full of samples. One German firm who did this was G.C.Röder.

G.C.RÖDER

The Leipzig firm of G.C.Röder was established in 1846 by Carl Gottlieb Röder (1812 -1883) as a small music engraving business. The business expanded rapidly due to his ability to adapt the latest print technology for his needs. In 1867 the work of composers who had died before 1837 could be printed without copyright restrictions. This led to editions at a lower prices and made Röder a wealthy man. In 1883, Röder died and the business was transferred to sons-in-law who immediately set about diversifying the company's interests by purchasing their first colotype press in 1890. This led to them employing innovative methods to improve the quality of their work. By the turn of the century, they had opened branches in France and England and

began sending trade representatives around the world for more business. By 1907 the Röder works employed about 1,100 people using a variety of over 130 printing presses for their music publishing, postcard production, and general stationery requirements. Unfortunately, the second world war saw most of their records destroyed in a bombing raid in 1943. The business continues today at the same site in Leipzig under other owners. The illustration (opposite page) shows one of Röder's printing rooms with postcards being put through the presses. It is thought that this photo could date from the early 1920s.

One of the problems associated with colotype printing which proved a hindrance for those who employed it was the fact that the gelatine used to bear the image could not stand up to large print runs. About a thousand or so passes through the press was the norm. There were ways of overcoming this disadvantage by producing plates large enough to accommodate a set of images two or four up or simply replace the plate with a duplicate. Every colour used to print Pringle's cards had to have a separate plate made by layering it against the original black and white impression and cutting stencils for every colour. Therefore, most of Pringle's cards required at least several plates to be used.

PRINGLE'S POSTCARD EDITIONS AND THEIR GENERAL POPULARITY

When we examine Pringle's postcards today we ask the question how many were printed? For a country with a small population like New Zealand, an edition of five thousand may have been acceptable $5,000 \times 36 = 180,000$ cards in total. Remembering that the Christchurch International Exhibition was in full flight in the summer of 1906/7 with over a million attendances, this might not be an unreasonable assessment of edition numbers. These figures may also explain why Pringle's cards still turn up fairly regularly in dealers' lists today. Despite the general availability of his scenic views, his Maori cards are much harder to find. Originally these would have only appealed to discerning buyers and often as not were put straight into albums. Therefore it is hard to assess the appeal Pringle's postcards held for the public by using the 'rule of thumb measure', that is taking into account the number of cards sent through the mail. Of the four series of cards issued by Pringle, the third seems to have been the most popular with 23 out of 36 in my collection being put through the mail or carrying a personal message on the back. In contrast to this it would seem that Pringle's "Maoriland" set - the last to be published - was the least popular. The reason why these cards didn't strike a chord with the public is difficult to explain. Perhaps the two images on one card just didn't appeal. This could explain why they ended up overprinted with a message which read "BALDWIN and HAYWARD act for inventors in obtaining PATENTS of all countries, Head Office, WELLINGTON, N.Z." who used them as a promotional card. I have not been able to verify if all of the 36 postcards in this set were overprinted because they now command high prices, being cat-

egorised as "advertising cards". Collecting variant postcards has never held any appeal for me.

TANNER BROS. AND THEIR INVOLVEMENT WITH PRINGLE'S POSTCARDS

Records kept at National Archives in Wellington indicate that in 1908-09 Pringle sold a number of his negatives and prints to the Department of Tourist & Health Resorts. This may explain how Tanner Bros. gained access to Pringle's photographs for their real photo series. This practise of postcard publishers using the Department's picture files for their material was quite common in the first decades of the 20th century. In 1965 Arthur Edwin Birch, secretary of the Tanner Couch publishing company, deposited 295 of Pringle's negatives with the Alexander Turnbull Library in Wellington. They were a selection of Pringle's work from the 1890s and contain a number of his whole plate postcard negatives. They were deposited on the condition that they should always be available to Messrs. Stanley Newcombe Ltd., Christmas Card Manufacturers.

By providing excellent photographs with top class printing, Pringle's postcards were unique in many ways and were models of excellence at a time when cheaper products flooded the market. I am sure that in time Pringle's work as a photographer will be recognised beyond the narrow confines of those involved in collecting postcards.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project is the result of work which started in November 1997 when I wrote an article for the *NZ Journal of Photography* on Thomas Pringle. At the time I only had a couple of Pringle's postcards. In fact I had more whole plate prints of his than postcards. I began collecting his postcards in earnest in 2001 when I put together a single frame entry for Brisbane's Centennial Stamp Show where it gained an award. All the time this was taking place I was on the lookout for further postcards and information on Pringle. All this work culminated in early 2005 when I finally purchased the final postcard I needed to complete my four sets of Pringle's postcards.

All this could not have been achieved if it had not been for cooperation two fellow collectors who encouraged me. They were Bert Eccles of Auckland, Patron of the NZ Postcard Society, and Simon Crawford of Wellington, who generously gave me many duplicate Pringle cards which he'd acquired while he was based in England. Then there were dealers up and down the country who helped me fill in gaps until the four sets of 36 were complete. I would also like to thank John Sullivan, curator of photography at the Alexander Turnbull Library who assisted me in my research by clearing the way that gave me direct access to Pringle's negatives in order to match them up with his postcards. Finally, I would like to register my appreciation to George Webber, whose research and articles on the Röder company appeared in *The Postcard Album*.

THOMAS PRINGLE

THE SECOND OF THREE ARTICLES BY WILLIAM MAIN

The first series of 36 postcards feature a mix of scenic and Maori studies. They are inscribed on the left-hand address side of the card "Copyright T. Pringle Wellington N.Z." and are numbered as a series from 101 to 136. Their factory batch numbering of 96041 - 90076 dates them to late 1906. The earliest postally used card I've seen is March 1907.

A second set of 36 postcards features Maori studies. They are inscribed on the left-hand address side of the card "Copyright Thos. Pringle Wellington N.Z." and are numbered 201 to 236 with the wording "G&G Series" added as another line of text under his name. Their factory batch numbering 121621 - 121656 dates them from early 1907. The earliest postally used card I've seen is June 1907.

Title	Series no.	Röder no.	Title	Series no.	Röder no.
Maori woman twisting flax.	101	96076	Maori Poi Dancer.*	201	121621
Onehe ra! (Departed Days).	102	96042	Guide "Bella", Whakarewarewa.*	202	121622
At the Cooking Box, Whakarewarewa.103		96043	Washing Day, Whakarewarewa.	203	121623
Maori weaving Taniko.	104	96041	Maori Woman with Mere.	204	121624
Washing Day, Whakarewarewa.	105	96044	A "Rangatira" Maori.*	205	121625
Te Hongi (Rubbing Noses).	106	96045	Maori Children in Hot Bathing Pool, Whaka.	206	121626
On Lake Te Anau.	107	96046	Maori Woman Weaving Flax Kits.*	207	121627
Head of Wakatipu from Glenorchy.	108	96047	Maori Woman Weaving Taniko.*	208	121628
Silver Birches, Paradise Rd. Wakatipu.	109	96048	Hot Washing Pool, Ohinemutu.	209	121629
West Arm, Manapouri.	110	96049	Rubbing Noses (Te Hongi) The Maori Salutation.*	210	121630
Lake Manapouri.	111	96050	Te Pukapuka (The letter).*	211	121631
Moonlight, Milford Sound.	112	96051	Rubbing Noses (Te Hongi) The Maori Salutation.*	212	121632
Maori Whare, Mokoia Island.	113	96052	Maori Children, Ohinemutu.	213	121633
Wanganui River.	114	96053	Maori Girls Playing Whai.*	214	121624
Hiruharama, Wanganui River.	115	96054	Maori Women, Ohinemutu.*	215	121635
At Atiamuri.	116	96055	A Penny Haka, Whakarewarewa.	216	121636
Champagne Pool, Wairakei.	117	96056	You like Haka, Pakeha?	217	121637
Aratiatia Rapids, Waikato River.	118	96057	You throw Penny, Pakeha?	218	121638
By the Hot Bathing Pool, Ohinemutu.119		96058	Hiamoe! (Sleepy).	219	121639
Maori Girls Bathing.	120	96059	Kapai te Torori! (Tobacco is good)	220	121640
Bathing Pool, Whakarewarewa.	121	96060	Maori Woman and Child.	221	121641
Maori Woman and Child.	122	96061	A Maori Girl's Toilet.	222	121642
Maori Children, Ohinemutu.	123	96062	A Group of Maori Girls.	223	121643
Maori Children, Whakarewarewa.	124	96063	An Arawa Girl.*	224	121644
Maori Wahine weaving Taniko.	125	96064	Maori Girl and Child.*	225	121645
A Rangatira Maori.	126	96065	Maori Girl with Canoe Paddle.*	226	121646
"The Challenge".	127	96066	Pretty Young Maori Girl.*	227	121647
"Defiance".	128	96067	Maggie, the Popular Guide, Whaka.*	228	121648
Kapai te Torori.	129	96068	A Beautiful Arawa.*	229	121649
Te Kaumatua.	130	96069	"Very Good Te Whakahua (The Photograph)*.	230	121650
The Arawa Belle.	131	96070	A Tohunga weaving an Eel Trap.	231	121651
Maori Girl with Taiaha.	132	96071	A Ngatihua Chieftain (Ngatiraukawa).*	232	121653
An Arawa Beauty.	133	96072	A Rangatira Maori.	233	121653
A Maori Poi Dancer.	134	96073	A Friendly Bout, Spear v Taiaha.	234	121654
Wahine of Arawa Tribe with Mere.	135	96074	A little nonsense now and then.	235	121655
A Maori Maiden.	136	96075	A Rotoiti Maori	236	121656

* = printed on a different type of cardboard. It seems that Pringle's postcards were printed on a press that produced 18 postcards to a sheet. This was deduced from the second set above, in which 18 were printed on a textured surface common to all the other cards in series 1, 3 and 4, while for some unexplained reason, the other 18 were printed on a smooth surfaced card.

Correction: In the last issue, we mis-spelt the name of Pringle's cards under the imprint of BALDWIN and HAYWARD. It should have read BALDIN and RAYWARD.

THOMAS PRINGLE

THE LAST OF THREE ARTICLES BY WILLIAM MAIN

The third set of 36 Pringle postcards features coloured scenic views. They are inscribed on the left-hand address side of the card "Copyright Thos. Pringle Wellington N.Z." and are randomly numbered. The factory batch number 132702 to 132737 dates them from mid 1907. The earliest postally used card seen in New Zealand is dated December 1907.

The fourth series of Pringle postcards simply bears the title "Dominion Series Art Postcards" on the left-hand address side of the card. This series differs from the others. First, all the cards are of portrait format. With one exception (no. 137683), there are two images to each card attractively arranged in a frame which is topped by a carved Maori panel bearing the word "MAORILAND". Finally, Pringle's name is not mentioned on any of the cards. The factory batch numbering 137651 to 137686 dates this series from late 1907. The earliest postal usage of a Baldwin & Rayward overprint card that has been seen is 10 February 1914. * = Baldwin & Rayward overprint.

Title	Series no.	Röder no.	Title	Röder no.
Mount Cook, 12349 ft., and Hochstetter Ice Fall.	254	132732	Looking up Milford Sound/South Fjord, Te Anau.	136651
Tasman Glacier from Maltebrun.	275	132727	Mitre Peak, Milford Sound/The Lion, Milford Sound.	136652
Amongst the Islands, Lake Manapouri, N.Z.	327	132707	Mt. Cook 12349 ft./Haidinger, 10054 ft. and Haast Glacier.	137653*
Lake Manapouri from "Murrells".	343	132712	Sunset, Upper Tasman Glacier/Tasman Glacier from Maltebrun.	137654
Lake Manapouri from Fairy Cove.	352	132723	Mt. Sefton, 10350 ft./The Hermitage, Southern Alps.	137655
Looking towards the "Narrows", Te Anau.	E355	132721	Mt. Maltebrun & Tasman Glacier/On the Great Tasman Glacier.	137656
Rere Lake Wakatipu.	367	132736	Skippers Gorge from "Lighthouse"/Skippers Gorge from Deep Creek.	137657
Head of Lake Wakatipu from Glenorchy.	397	132715	Ice Cave, Tasman Glacier/Haidinger from Glacier Dome 10054 ft.	137658*
Rees Valley from Glenorchy, Wakatipu.	402	132702	Lake Ada, Milford Track/Mount Barren, Milford Sound.	137659
Looking to Dart Valley, Wakatipu.	404	132724	Mt. Balloon, Milford Track/"Sandfly", Milford Track.	137660
Dart Valley from Paradise, Wakatipu.	409A	132716	Te Anau, mouth of Clinton River/Head of Lake te Anau.	137661
"25 Mile", Lake Wakatipu.	412	132733	Head of Wakatipu/Storm Clouds, Wakatipu.	137662
Kawarau Falls, Lake Wakatipu.	416	132726	On Arthur River, Milford Track/Mount Hart & Mackinnons Pass,	
Queenstown & Lake Wakatipu from Ben Lomond Track.			Milford Track.	137663
	432	132725	Silver Birches, Paradise Road, Wakatipu/Mt. Earnslaw, Wakatipu.	137664
Clinton River, Te Anau-Milford Track.	451	132734	Lake Wakatipu from Ben Lomond Track/The Remarkables, Wakatipu.	137665
Cleddau River & Mt. Tutoko, Milford Sound.	455	132720	Queenstown, Lake Wakatipu/Looking across Wakatipu to Kinloch.	137666*
The Devils Arm, Arthur River, Milford.	486	132717	Lake Manapouri from Circle Cove/Cathedral Peaks, Manapouri.	137667
On Arthur River, Milford Track.	488	132714	Hinemoa's Bath, Mokoia Island/Hamurana Springs, Lake Rotorua.	137668
The Highest Falls in the World, Sutherland Falls,			Maori Carver at work/Typical Maori group and whare.	137669
Milford Track, 1904 feet.	492	132704	Maori whare Ohinemutu/Maori woman and child.	137670
Sterling Falls, Milford Sound, 505 ft.	495	132713	The Mud Volcano, Waiotapu/Great Wairakei Geysir.	137671
Mitre Peak, (Milford Sound) 5560 ft.	499	132735	Ohinemutu & Mokoia Island/Victoria Monument & Native Church,	
Mitre Peak, Milford Sound, 5560 ft.	502	132728	Ohinemutu.	137672*
The Lion & Mount Pembroke, Milford Sound.	509	132729	Lake Waikaremoana/Lake Manapouri.	137673
In Skippers Gorge, Wakatipu.	524	132719	Wanganui River from Pipiriki/Hiruharama, Wanganui River.	137674
Huka Falls, near Taupo.	578	132711	Near Hiruharama, Wanganui River/On the Wanganui River.	137675
Tikitere, Lake Roto-rua [sic].	563	132737	The "Drop Scene", Wanganui River/Wanganui-a-te-ao,	
Maori Whare, Ohinemutu.	558	132558	Wanganui River.	137676
Tama te Kapua, Ohinemutu.	556	132703	No title / A pretty Maiden.	137677
Whakarewarewa Village.	E709	132709	Waimangu & Mt. Tarawera/Steaming Cliffs Rotomahana.	137678
Wairoa Geysir, Whakarewarewa.	712	132710	No title / Maori Children.	137679
Kereru and Pohutu, Whakarewarewa.	E713	132731	The challenge/Defiance.	137680*
Maoris Fishing, Lake Roto-iti [sic]	1001	132705	Champagne Pool, Wairakei/Aratiatia Rapids.	137681*
The Red Crater of Tongaririto & Nghaurohoe [sic.] Volcano.			Maori woman flax kits/Maori women and child.	137682
	1006	132730	New Zealand Bush.	137683
Pohutorea and Atiamuri.	2347	132706	Sanatorium & Malfroy Geysers, Rotorua/In the Sanatorium Grounds.	137684
Lake Wanaka, Otago.	2348	132718	Lake Manapouri from Fairy Cove/West Arm, Manapouri.	137685
South Fiord, Lake Te Anau.	2594	132708	Milford Sound from "Freshwater"/Government Hotel, Te Anau.	137686*