

HARRY ROUNTREE

by Alan Jackson

Harry Rountree was one of the foremost illustrators of his time, and he was a New Zealander. He also had many postcards of his work published. Yet, few collectors of New Zealand postcards have heard of him, and even as an artist he is little known in the country of his birth. His forte was comic studies of animals but he was also a fine landscape artist, and the range of his work is vast (as will become apparent).

He was born in 1878. He grew up in Auckland and was educated at Queens College. While still a schoolboy, he received his first art lessons (in the early 1890s) from the prominent cartoonist, William Blomfield ("Blo"). On leaving school, Harry was first apprenticed to the *New Zealand Herald* as a lithographic artist. After several years with this newspaper and the *Auckland Weekly News*, he decided to go to London in 1901 in an attempt to break into the magazine and book illustration market then flourishing there. For some time, he studied illustrative art under Percival Gaskell at the Regent Street Polytechnic. Initially, he struggled to make his way as an artist in London. Then, in 1903, he received a commission to illustrate an animal story in a well-known children's magazine, *Little Folks*. His work for this proved so popular that he became an almost overnight success, in demand by nearly every publisher in London. For the next 40 years, he pursued a very successful career in England, illustrating all manner of books and magazine stories. He also wrote many books (especially children's books) with his wife Lynda and of course illustrated them himself.

Soon after his first magazine commission, he was busy illustrating books for S. H. Hamer (the editor of *Little Folks*) and other publishers. Among the many books he was responsible for illustrating were: *Fairy Tales* by Dumas (1904), *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1908; the 90+ colour plates included one of Maori, - possibly the first and last time they have featured in Lewis Carroll's work!), *The Magic Wand* (1908), *The Wonderful Isles* (1908), *Peep in the World* (1908), *The Dolomites* (1910, a travel book about Italy), and *The Golf Courses of the British Isles* (1910, - this work sells today for many thousands of dollars on the sports bibliophile market).

Apart from Lewis Carroll, well-known authors whose work Rountree illustrated included Arthur Conan Doyle, H. G. Wells, Joel Chandler Harris, Edith Nesbit, A. B. Paine, Frank Stockton, and Enid Blyton.

His work appeared regularly in virtually all the most prominent illustrated magazines of his day, including *Punch*, *The Strand*, *Cassell's*, *Pearson's*, *The Graphic*, *The Sketch*, and the *Illustrated London News*. In addition, his work for children's magazines like *Little Folks* and others was prolific.

Rountree had several series of postcards of his water-colour studies published in England in the period 1903 to 1918. Some at least of these were imported into New Zealand and were on the market here prior to World War One, as we have seen examples postally used here at the time, but despite this they are far from easy to find today. Even in England, the cards are scarce and it is a real challenge to complete even one set of six. Most of Rountree's postcard designs are of animals in comical situations. The only non-animal designs we have seen are a set published by Valentine on the subject of football. A catalogue follows of all Rountree postcards known to us. As can be seen, our list has many gaps and we would appreciate hearing from anyone who can provide relevant additional information. Readers familiar with British comic postcards will know that all the publishers in this list were industry leaders and invariably produced cards of high quality.

POSTCARDS OF HARRY ROUNTREE PUBLISHED IN BRITAIN 1903-1918 (All coloured)

A. c1903 [untitled series, depicting adventures of a bear cub] publ. C. W. Faulkner & Co. Series No.236 ("Printed in Germany"). At least two editions. Seen postally used 23 Dec.1903.

- 1) 236.A "It's awfully cold here" [bear cub climbing mountain]
- 2) 236.B "I am coming up to see you" [cub climbing towards man in tree]
- 3) 236.C "The weather is perfect" [cub floating in a tub]
- 4) 236.D "I'm feeling a bit off colour" [cub in same tub in rough waves]

B. c1905 "Shakespearian Play Titles, Series 1". publ. British Showcard & Poster Co.. Seen postally used July 1905.

- 1) "Love's Labour Lost" [pigeon and weathervane]
- 2) "Much Ado About Nothing" [2 lions fighting]

C. As B, but Series 2.

- 1) "Measure For Measure" [dog chasing fox chasing duck chasing frog chasing insect]
- 2) "Romeo & Juliet" [two rabbits, another watching]

D. c1905 "Sporting Duckling" Series, publ. British Showcard & Poster Co.. Seen postally used July 1905.

- 1) "Cricketing" [duckling chasing cricket]
- 2) "Fishing" [duckling chasing fish under water]
- 3) "Running" [duckling running, kitten in background]
- 4) "Yachting" [duckling on floating old boot]

E. c1905 "Quotations" Series, publ. British Showcard & Poster Co.. Seen postally used August 1905.

- 1) "By outward show let's not be cheated. - Gay" [crow befriending scarecrow]

F. c1907 [untitled - Football Series], publ. J. Valentine. Seen postally used Feb.1907.

- 1) "An Unexpected Attack" [broken goalposts striking keeper]
- 2) "Beg pardon; thought you were the ball" [player kicking opponent's posterior instead of ball]
- 3) "Too Much Headwork" [two players attempting to head ball at same time and bursting it]
- 4) "What It Feels Like - Keeping Goal for the First Time" [giant forward approaching small goalkeeper]
- 5) "Where do I come in?" [keeper watching action at other end of field]

G. c1915? [No.695 untitled, -uncertain if part of series], publ. E. Mack. Seen postally used Sept. 1915.

- 1) "AND ALL I DID WAS TO GROWL A LITTLE" [muzzled puppy looking unhappy]

H. c1916 "London Opinion" Series No.5034, publ. Lawrence & Jellicoe. Seen postally used August 1916.

- 1) "FUNNY - I DON'T THINK!" [bulldog pup with firecracker on end of string tied to tail]

I. c1918 Series No. 1077, publ. A Vivian Mansell & Co., Seen postally used 1918.

- 1) "Daylight Robbery" [ducklings drinking puppy's milk]
- 2) "Frightfulness!" [caterpillar and small bird]
- 3) "Hi! Don't look!" [male and female owl]
- 4) "I may be wicked, but I am beautiful" [baby chimp and broken bowl]
- 5) "The Flirt" [two fieldmice with linked tails]
- 6) "The Hedgehog. Come on, coward, why don't you hit me" [curled up hedgehog, puzzled boxing opponent with spikes stuck in gloves]

J. c1918? Series No.1198, publ. A. Vivian Mansell & Co., Not seen postally used.

- 1) "Fed up and far from Home!" [dog on road carrying pup on back].

All 27 of the above postcards by Harry Rountree are reproduced in this issue on the front cover and pages 13-15.

A major work on Rountree and his career as an illustrator is to be published in the near future by American writer William Stout. A much earlier study was "Harry Rountree and his Work: The Art of the Illustrator" by Percy V. Bradshaw (1916). Bradshaw was himself a well-known comic illustrator, whose work was reproduced on postcards.

Harry Rountree died in Cornwall in 1950.



The weather is perfect



I'm feeling a bit off color
What did you do to me?



It's awfully cold here



I am coming up to see you



MEASURE FOR MEASURE



CRICKETING



YACHTING



RUNNING



FISHING



An Unexpected attack



"Beg pardon; thought you were the ball."



What It Feels Like—Keeping Goal for the First Time



Too Much Headwork



Where do I come in?



"FUNNY-I DON'T THINK!"



"By outward show let's not be cheated."



Fred Poirer.
"Fed up and far from Home!"



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"AND ALL I DID WAS TO GROWL A LITTLE."