

BULOLO GOLDFIELDS

NEW GUINEA

For thousands of years Papua New Guineans have mined and traded stone implements and ochre, and used clay to make pottery. Accidental traces of gold were discovered in pottery from Redscar Bay in 1852. More substantial gold discoveries took place in the early 1900's. At the start of WW1, Australia took possession of the German colony of New Guinea based at Rabaul. In 1922, the area was made a Mandated Territory of Australia by the League of Nations. In the same year, a mining ordinance was put into place to legalise prospecting.

Bulolo township is situated in Morobe Province some 32 kms NW of Wau. It was established in about 1930, with gold dredging commencing in 1932 (in the Bulolo River at Bulolo Flats near the township). The area – Bulolo Flats - became referred to as the Bulolo Goldfields. Population in 2010 was estimated at 20,000. Annual rainfall in the area is an average of 1600 mms. The town is serviced by the Bulolo Airport which was built in June 1930 and has been enlarged and upgraded numerous times. Due to the difficult terrain and lack of alternate infrastructure, air transport was the preferred method of transporting equipment and supplies in to the gold producing areas and also to transport the 1000's of ounces of gold out.

There were no high denomination stamps available in New Guinea apart from the one pound issues of the Native Huts and Bird of Paradise series. Accordingly two new stamps (one a two pounds stamp and the other a five pound stamp depicting the Bulolo Goldfields) were produced by John Ash and printed at the Note Printing Branch in Melbourne. The stamps are shown underneath.



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NEW GUINEA (continued)

An Australian, Cecil John Levien (1874 - 1932) took out the first miner's right issued in the Territory in 1923. In 1923 24 he took out leases at Bulolo Flats. Levien had trained at the Royal Military College, Duntroon, and served as a Lieutenant in the military administration in New Guinea in 1919 - 21. In 1919 Levien opened a new government station at Buka. From there in 1921 he organised his posting as District Officer to Morobe. From here he began expanding his influence in the gold mining sector, subsequently resigning in late 1923 after realising the conflict of interest.

Further stamps in the Bulolo Goldfields series were commenced to be issued in 1939. The examples below are the 1/2d, 1d, 11/2d, and 2d issues. A cover from this period is also displayed.



BULOLO GOLDFIELDS

NEW GUINEA (continued)

Cecil Levien also became a director and major shareholder of Guinea Airways Limited, New Guinea's pioneer aviation company. Originally started under the name Guinea Gold, with a DH37 biplane called "Old Faithful", Guinea Airways Ltd was registered on 4th November 1927. During the next few years the company was to become the world's leading freight operator, carrying huge loads by 1930's standards, including complete motor cars. With a fleet of 4 aircraft Guinea could carry around 15 tonnes per day.

From 1932, Bulolo Gold Dredging, floated by a precursor of the international Canadian gold mining company Placer Dome, constructed eight dredges at Bulolo and Wau from dismantled parts flown in using three Junkers aircraft. This resulted in a total airlift of 39,417 tons of freight, for production of 1.3 million ounces of gold.

The 3d, 4d, 5d, and 6d values of the Bulolo Goldfields series follow together with a further cover showing usage.

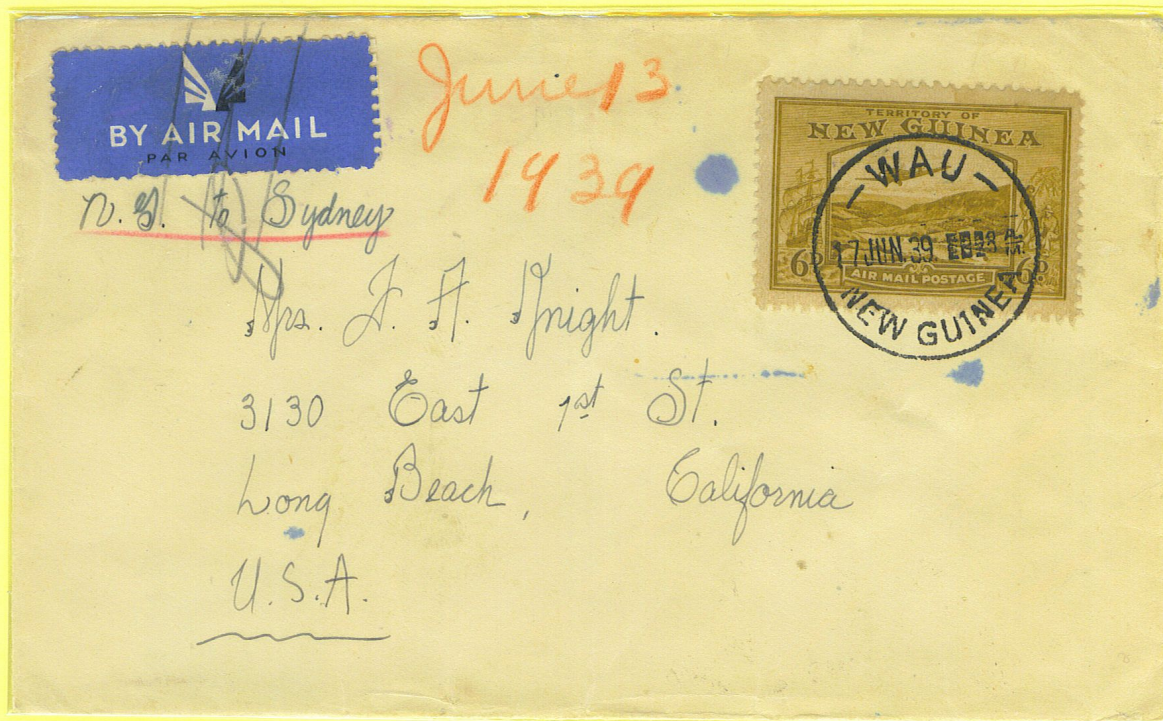


BULOLO GOLDFIELDS

NEW GUINEA (continued)

Dredging operations were interrupted by the war in 1941. The Junkers aircraft referred to earlier were destroyed by Japanese twin-engine bombers in 1942. Dredging resumed in 1947 until it petered out in the 1950's. Gold production in 1952 amounted to 122,035 ounces valued at LSD (Pounds) 1,311,241. This constituted 77 percent of the gold produced in New Guinea in that year.

Further issues (9d, 1/- and 2/-) are displayed from the series together with a further cover.



BULOLO GOLDFIELDS

NEW GUINEA (continued)

Apart from being a tourist attraction, the goldfields no longer operate as a gold dredging operation. The Bulolo area is nowadays an extensive timber harvesting, milling and extensive reforestation operation. In addition, there is an insect Farming and Trading Agency, which promotes insect farming and conservation.

Civil administration ceased in 1942 with the Japanese Invasion and did not resume until 1945 with the defeat of the Japanese. New Guinea stamps were not available during this period and did not resume, Australian stamps being used until the issues of Papua and New Guinea stamps in 1952.

The final three stamps of the Bulolo Goldfields series are shown hereunder, the 5/-, 10/- and 1 pound.

