



JOHN ASH,
AUSTRALIAN NOTE AND STAMP PRINTER



From

COOBER PEDY
South Australia

The only Underground
Post Office in the World

H. Fort. 1. 176.

*Miss E. Jean West,
Pohara RD,
Te Kowa,
King Country.
New Zealand.*

Underground Post Office,
Cooper Pedy,
South Australia.

24.6.39.

Dear Friend,

Your order to hand, for which I thank you, and herewith despatch your covers, trusting same arrive in good order and condition.

The reasons for the Post Office and dwellings here being excavated in the hill-sides are many and varied, but the most logical explanation is because of the prohibitive cost of building material being conveyed from the railway 190 miles distant. In summer, when temperatures of 120 deg. and even higher are quite a common occurrence, dug-outs are surprisingly cool, and in winter quite warm and snug.

Cooper Pedy is situated in the Stuart Ranges, 650 miles nor'-west of Adelaide, the capital city of South Australia. We are served with a weekly motor mail, which arrives Friday night and departs again on the 190-mile return journey to Kingoonya Saturday night.

Accept hearty greetings from this unique Post Office.

Yours faithfully,

A.P. Hunt P.M.

June 21st 1939.

Post Office,
Cooler Pedy
South Aust.

Dear Miss West,

In answer to your welcome letter of April 2nd. Please forgive my seeming neglect but I've been right up to my eyes in back correspondence & still it rots in altho' I've been able to catch up with a fair amount owing to heavy rains which prevented our mailman getting through, he managed to get within 90 miles of Cooler Pedy & had to abandon the attempt to reach here. Incidentally only 65 points fell over a period of three days here. You enquired what one would first encounter on entering Cooler Pedy. Well if you'd spent as much time here as I have, a sense of boredom. How to try & be sensible, the approach to this unique place is over tableland country & one suddenly leaves the high rim & enters a gully & there sees the Store with its large brush meat house & two or three galvanized iron sheds that house the bulk stores & petrol & oil supplies, ten or twelve dugouts are visible dotted about the hillsides.

The motor mail draws into the front of one of these dugouts, the storekeeper's kitchen, & mail man & passengers partake of a cup of tea or coffee, the Post Office is only half a mile further round

21
in another gully, here the mail-bags are unloaded
& conveyed inside & then my work begins & after
checking, entering & sorting mail, delivery is available
for one hour regardless of the time of arrival. As if
by magic the residents (all men) appear from
seemingly nowhere to collect their letters parcels
& papers from far distant places. Guess all hands
will spring to attention this Friday night when
they hear the mail come in for it will be our first
for a fortnight. Our yearly average rainfall taken
over a period of 15 years was up till Dec. 31st 1937
4.98 inches just under 5 inches. Since that date
20 inches of rain gauged has transformed this
arid area into excellent pasturage & the fox &
dingo both of which are a pain in the neck to the
squatters, are once again most conspicuous. Bird life
too is on the increase, Martins (a specie of swallow)
larks, plovers, bush canaries, shell parrots & others
are to be seen & heard. Then of course there are eagles
of the wedge-tail variety & the inevitable scavenger
of the outback the crow, Oh & I mustn't forget to
mention the rabbits for they are now plentiful.
The population has decreased to 32 now & this P.D.
serves only 50 persons here & in surroundings.
Well Jean don't be afraid to ask any questions that
you wish answered for I quite understand how strange

3.

this place may sound to you.

When writing again just forget the Mr North,
Alf to all of my friends & please send me a photo
of yourself I'm enclosing a Complimentary Picture
Post Card of self outside of my den.

Best wishes & a hearty Cheerio from

Your sincere friend
Alf North.