

# NOTEBOOK

Number 146 October 2000

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EDITOR

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## EDITORIAL.....

Due to pressing the wrong button at the wrong time, the nearly completed copy for this issue disappeared into that great cyberspace from which lost files never return. The obvious consequence is this version does not necessary contain the material or appear in the order of the original. Obvious rule, save to floppy as well as the hard disc.

This has not helped with the overlong delay in the issue of *Notebook* but the Editor finds that as the years advance, the time available in which to do things seems to shrink in proportion. Those who have retired from full time occupation all complain of this curious phenomenon, although this offers little consolation to an Editor painfully aware of his shortcomings. He would be greatly helped by readers sending in material for publication. In this respect it is pleasing to note a new members contribution in this issue. All are encouraged to follow the example.

Turning now to a matter which affects all collectors. If you have not yet read the two page article in *Stanley Gibbons Monthly* for October by the well known philatelic writer Ken Lake, do so.

A Roman Governor once asked the question "What is truth?", then washed his hands. It is hoped those responsible for Philatelic integrity do not do the same.



## LETTER RECEIVERS OF LONDON

Notebook Supplement No. 1

It is now some time since Hugh Feldman's monumental work on the London Letter Receivers, which received a richly deserved gold at the 2000 show, was published. New findings have been reported to him, or SHOULD have been, which - with his continued research - resulted in a first supplement: it is understood a second is planned. Until that appears, please make every effort to have any information which comes your way to be recorded for the benefit of others, to say nothing of the satisfaction of knowing THAT particular nugget was your contribution.

The Editor has been chipping in with a few 'dots and crosses' and offers the following :

### WIMBLEDON :

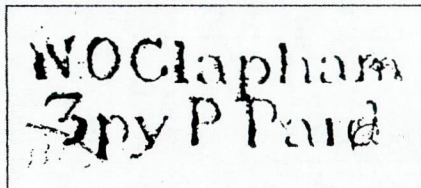
The Receiver Thomas Mason is shown as 'pre-1834' with a salary of £6. It seems Mr Mason was the Receiver on March 1<sup>st</sup> 1804, 'and for several years past', when he wrote seeking an increase to £6. This was granted effective from 5<sup>th</sup> July 1804.

### NEWINGTON BUTTS :

A predecessor to James M.B. Huggins (pre- 1834) was one Henry Franks. He too wrote seeking an increase of Salary on May 7<sup>th</sup> 1804, at which time he remarked '...it is now Nine Years since I first had the Receiving house...'. His £15 a year salary, determined in 17984, was increased to £20, also from 5<sup>th</sup> July 1804.

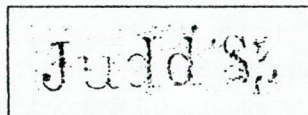
### N O CLAPHAM

No record of this office but an example of L508 on a cover dated 1817 noted



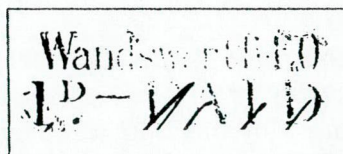
### JUDD STREET

No record of this office but an example of L514 on envelope dated 15 June 1855



### WANDSWORTH E O

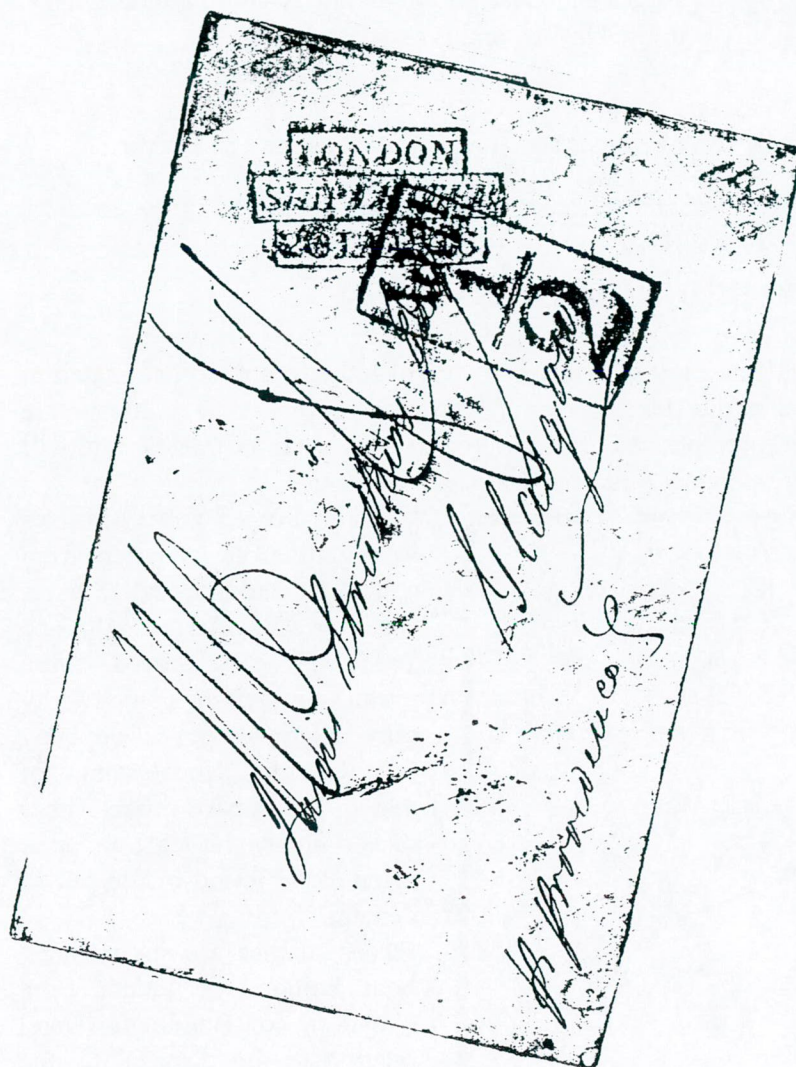
L510 Stamp unrecorded found used on envelope dated 1850





## LONDON SHIP LETTER STAMPS 32

A recent Cavendish sale carried an example of the scarce three line date ship letter for 20 JA 1816. The original illustration in Robertson's work on maritime mail used this date, albeit incorrectly rendered as 20 JAN 16. In *Robertson Revisited*, Colin Tabearnt provides some detailed notes of this stamp but, unfortunately, appears to have drawn the wrong conclusions, these being incorporated in the published listing.



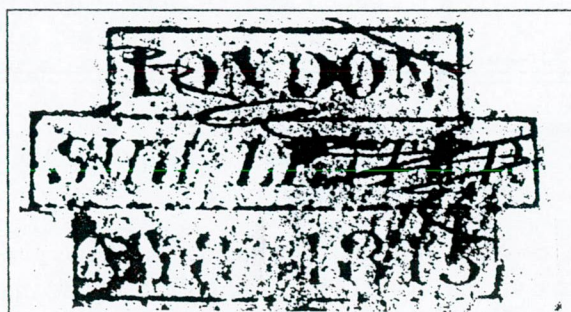
Letter written from  
Nassau New Providence  
30<sup>th</sup> Novem<sup>r</sup> 1815  
from Eason Mackie & Co.

London double rim code A for  
JA 20 816  
confirms the ship letter stamp date.  
Glasgow arrival stamp for 23<sup>rd</sup>.  
Over struck by large additional  
halfpenny stamp.

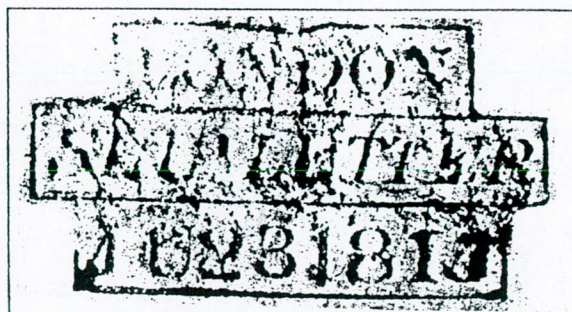
Mails, other than from East Indies  
and other eastern territories, were  
treated as ordinary ship letters.

Ship letter charge 8<sup>d</sup>  
This deleted and the postage  
London to Glasgow, 1<sup>2</sup><sup>d</sup>  
was added, making the  
'1/10' shown.

Obverse endorsed *pr Providence*  
A ship with that name is listed by  
Robertson as an East Indiaman

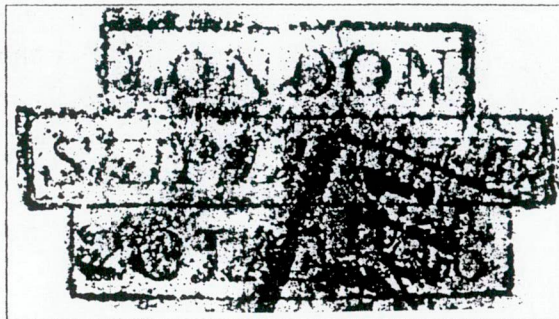


The First Staight Top Stamp



The Damaged Top Frame Line





The current position is that there are, indeed, two stamps but the one shown now as S32a is no more than a damaged variety of the original stamp, this having a straight top line. The first date for this is 20<sup>th</sup> March 1815 (in black ink) but by May 23<sup>rd</sup> 1815 (in red) the damaged frame line stamp was in use. The 1816 version, which differs slightly in size from the 1815 stamp, also shows distinctly sloping letters 'ND' in 'LONDON' and is struck in black.

For ease of recognition, enlarged copies of the stamps are shown, as well as the 1816 cover.

### **CROYDON TO BEDDINGTON BYE POST**

A search of local archives can sometimes result in the discovery of hitherto unrecorded material. Such was the case with the records stored in the Heritage section at Sutton Library. Few archivists are aware of the potential for postal history but are pleased to discover there is such an interest and will direct any enquirer to such manuscript/correspondence they may have.

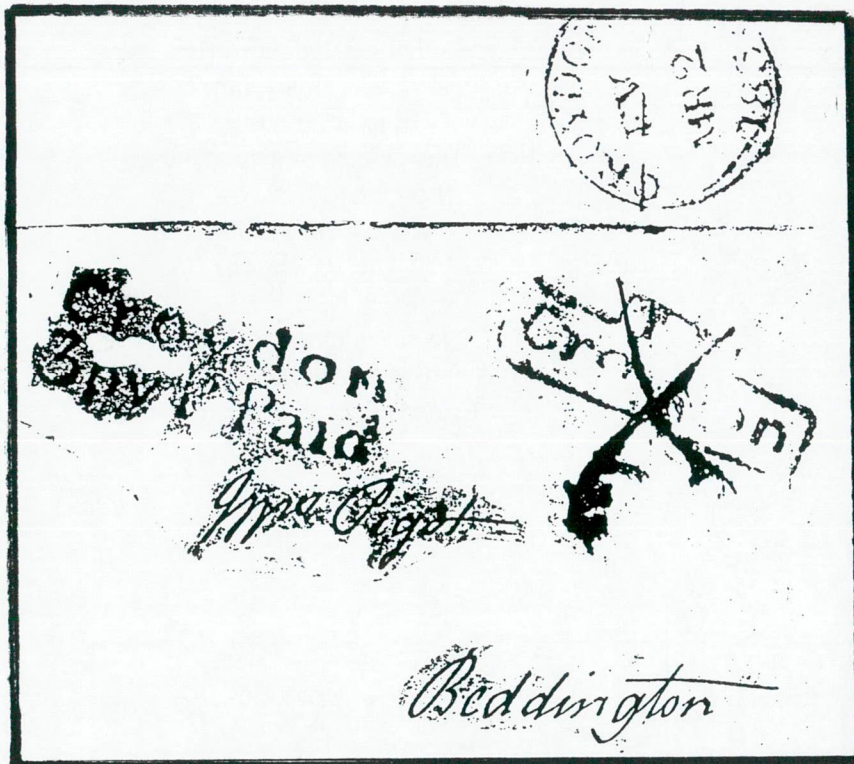


Fig. 1

The first (Fig.1), dated March 2<sup>nd</sup> 1835 from the contents and flap endorsements, shows the Croydon Country Sorting Office evening duty stamp for that date, the framed TP Croydon deleted and the Croydon / 3 py P Paid stamp substituted. The address *Mrs Pigot / Beddington* typifies the simplicity suitable in small local communities.

Contained in a number of boxes was a collection of letters from and to Beddington, Surrey, covering the period 1823 - 1837. These proved very rewarding, yielding some twenty plus examples of Twopenny Post Receiving House stamps of that all too elusive office. These remain elusive, at least as far as those to be found in the public domain.

Two examples are shown here, both being Bye letters from Croydon to Beddington and relating to the disposal by the Croydon Canal Company to the London and Croydon Railway Company (later part of the London, Brighton and then Southern Railways).



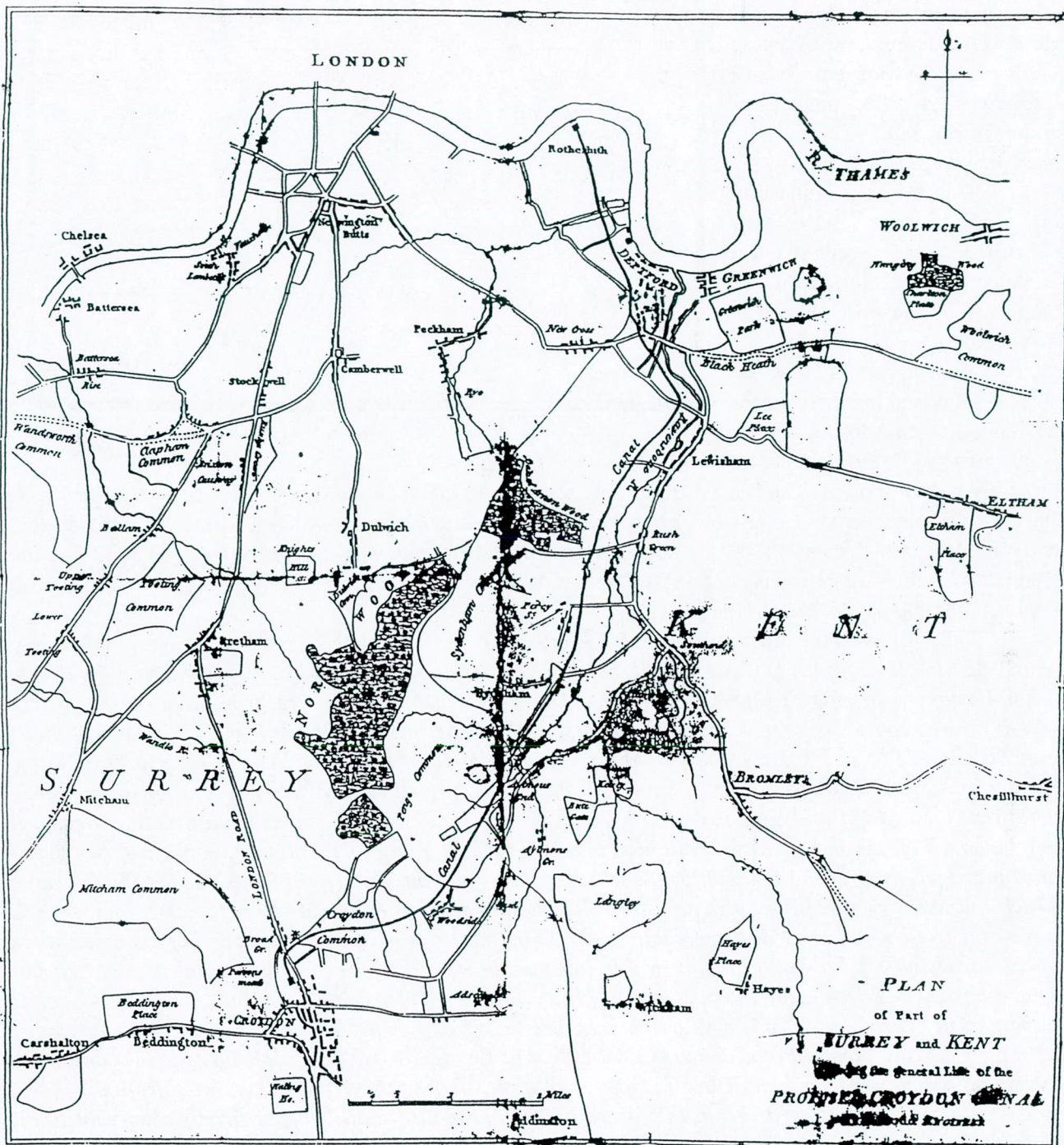


Fig. 2

There were three enclosures filed with the cover, one dated 1835, one 1836, the third a rather stained map of the area (Fig. 2) showing the canal route which was the subject of negotiations with the railway company.

The second letter (Fig.3), may be dated from both the contents and a flap endorsement as 28<sup>th</sup> April 1836. The canal was to be sold to the railway for £18,000, effectively marking the replacement of a long established method of freight carriage by the newfangled steam locomotion.



The interest in this second cover, with the slight variation in address, now reading Mrs Pigot / Beddington near / Croydon, is the manuscript endorsement *paid* with a P<sup>d</sup>l: there are no postal markings.

This raises the question of *why*? Peter Bathe was consulted and offered an explanation which turned on the dismissal of the post mistress: he wrote -

The suggestion that the absence of postal markings might be related to the dismissal the post mistress, Jane Bennett, is

probably near the mark. The file on the event showed it was at the end of March 1835 that problems started to be uncovered at Croydon. These required a detailed inquiry which lead the PMG to decide, early in April, to dismiss the Bennetts. However, this dismissal was delayed after a letter from Jane Bennett's brother, the postmaster of Bristol and, most unusually, some special pleading by Freeling, who kept sending the papers back to the solicitor.

In the file was this petition, dated 27 April 1836 - note the date - from Mrs Bennett to Freeling, which states: "I, doing the quietest part of the duty, in an almost distracted state of mind take the liberty of imploring you to interest yourself in my behalf with the Postmaster General from what I have heard I fear a severe report has gone in, to his Lordship, and I most earnestly entreat you, Sir, to solicit that I may be allowed to see, & know the substance of the report that I may be enabled to explain upon the subject. In a most distressed state of mind, I would throw myself on my Knees to his Lordship (were I permitted to see him) and supplicate his humane & favourable consideration in so peculiar a case; it will be an act of real compassion to allow us to retain our situation for the short remainder of our lives I have managed the Duties of this Office nearly 56 years! and am nearly 70! I was born in the House in which I now am (which I lament is not our own) where the office was held by my father & mother, and have ever lived with credit & respectability. You, Sir, have always shown me such kind consideration and I earnestly implore you to plead in this Instance in my behalf; it is of such vital import that our future existence is dependent upon the result; I have no other resource than our Situation: Mr Bennett is advanced in Years! - My Brother, who holds the Bristol office, has been in the Post Office as many years as myself, having gone into the General Post Office at the age of 16 - he has a large family and I can expect no assistance from him - I beg to state to you, Sir, that no or very little, is owing from us, at this present time, to the Office, and that the future period of my Life shall be most strictly observant to the duties of the Office. I have written this while shedding many tears and in a state of mind not to be described. The Incoherency of which, and the intrusion I humble hope & trust will be excuse by you, Sir - Oh! I trust and pray to the Almighty! that a favourable decision will be made of our case, it will restore peace and happiness to an unfortunate family. Let me implore you, Sir Frances, to make this appeal known to the Post Master General.

*I am Sir with very great respect Your Obligated Obedient Humble Servant, Jane Bennett,*"

One can imagine, with the threat of destitution hanging over her and probably little to look forward to but the workhouse, she would, quite possibly, have forgotten to stamp the letters. Such a dereliction of duty would have been minor considering the charges against her. Indeed, two days later, 29 April, the surveyor sent a list of 17 undelivered letters discovered in the Croydon office, one going back to 1827. Later another two, including a money letter of 1832, were discovered. This was the final straw

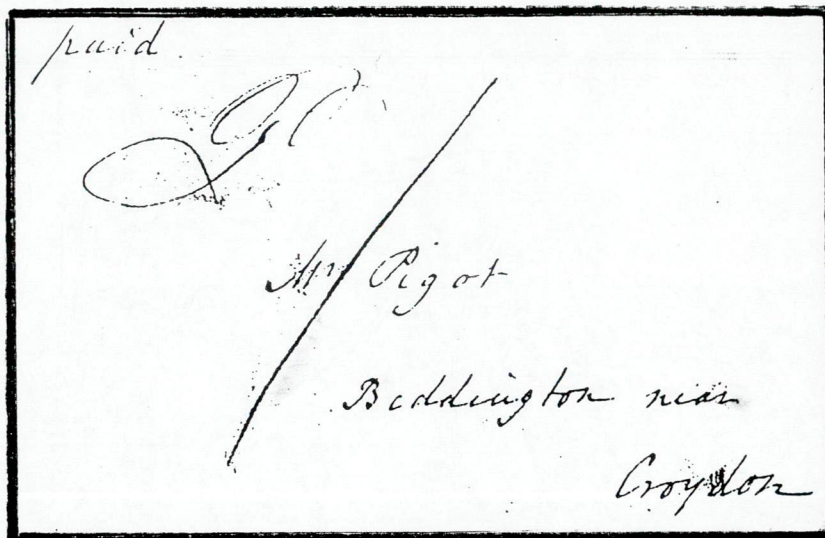


Fig. 3



and the Bennett's dismissal was confirmed on 30 April - even Freeling agreed they had to go. The unstamped letter appears to have been posted in the middle of all this turmoil.

The charge of just one penny deserves some thoughts. Four possible explanations :

1. Soldier's letter - no - this would require written authorisation on the obverse.
2. The dates quoted are wrong, i.e., it went after the introduction of the Penny Post or even, within London, the Four penny Post period. From the evidence cited this must be ruled out.
3. Stress related mistake - from the details of the Bennett chaos already outlined, a distinct possibility.
4. Local delivery charge perk - most likely.

The Croydon delivery was extremely complicated even before the Twopenny Post arrived in 1802 but it would appear, as a deputy of a General Post town, the Croydon postmaster was allowed to make local deliveries and charge 1d. When the *Ewell* post was diverted from *Croydon* to *Kingston*, some *Croydon* delivery perks were compounded into his salary in compensation. Later a *5th Clause post* was set up, which might have travelled the *Beddington road*. When the TPP arrived, there was all the debate on whether letters should travel by the cheapest means or the first available, so letters which one day were treated as General Post might the next have been treated as TPP, depending on when they were posted.

Finally, on 4 May 1836 [Post 42/137 Vol. 64, p.455, No. 209], after the Bennetts had been dismissed and arrangements were being made for all the new systems, this paragraph appears:

*The pence on the delivery of Letters in the Neighbourhood from which the Postm<sup>r</sup> has derived a considerable perquisite, will not be continued to his successor, as it will be right to take this opportunity of abolishing the extra charges or of serving the Neighbourhood by a Penny Post upon which the Surveyor will report.*

From the information provided by Peter one must agree it is not an example of a premature local Penny Post item. It certainly is not a Twopenny Post item. One must conclude it was prepaid for the private *perk post*, which fortunately reached its destination of a 20th century archive.

The file reference for this material is Acc. 180 Box 1 No.22 and is published by kind permission of the London Borough of Sutton Heritage Service, Archive & Local Studies Section.

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## **THE "O-CODE" FREE DATE STAMP FORGERIES**

**James Grimwood-Taylor**

This article appeared in the October 1999 edition of *LONDON PHILATELIST*  
and is reprinted, with minor changes,  
by kind permission of the Author and The Royal Philatelic Society London.

For many years, postal historians have been puzzled by the double ring crowned London 'FREE' date stamp with code "O" (sometimes placed sideways). Complex and fabulous theories about these marks have been developed; however, recent evidence proves they were never used by the Post Office, being merely created to decorate autographed 'free-fronts' destined for the albums of the 1840s and 1850s autograph collectors. This article is intended to make the facts better known and to end any confusion in collectors' minds about the status of the "O-code".

The early 19<sup>th</sup> century mania for collecting the autographs of the rich and famous (MPs and Peers) was akin to early 20<sup>th</sup> century stamp collecting in its popularity but its participants (often female) were generally of the 'upper middle class' and the aristocracy. It was only these 'upper' classes who had access to the rich and famous, or at least to those to whom the rich and famous sent letters and who, therefore,



had the opportunity to acquire the signed panels of their own letters (and to participate in the related sophisticated exchange/swaps network of the 'free frank collecting' world).

The "O-code" marks came into being as a direct result of this collecting mania; they were used to decorate free fronts that had never been through the post. How do we know ? Quite simply, because the "O-code" mark is of a very distinctive 1837 'crown on top' design, showing peculiar and consistent frame damage known to have occurred late in October 1839 (see below), whereas the known strikes are dated from 1802 onwards ! In addition, no example of the "O-code" mark has been found on a complete cover and many are found incorrectly used on cross country fronts of letters which would never have passed through London (it is a LONDON 'FREE' mark).

No amount of theorising can convince me that a single example of the "O-code" mark was used (even in the 'possible' 1837 to 1840 period) for a postal purpose. The most plausible example - dated 3<sup>rd</sup> July 1837 and endorsed 'official' with a cancelled postal charge - unfortunately (for its supporters as a postal use) has the usual frame damage known to have occurred in 1839 !

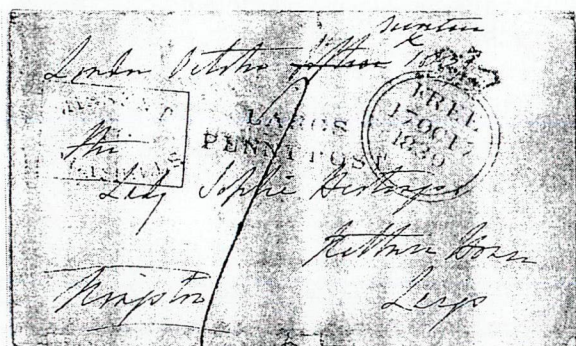


Figure 1: Genuine (17.10.1839) undamaged uncoded "FREE" two-ring cds.

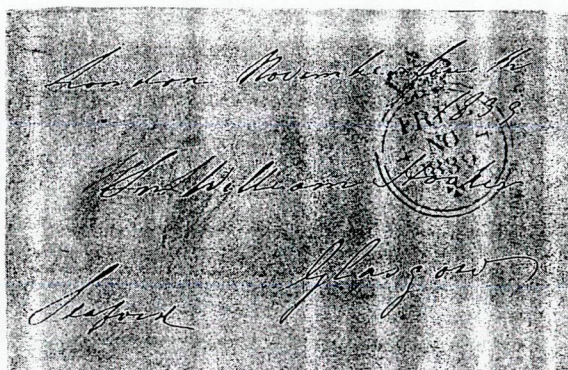


Figure 2: Genuine (4.11.1839) final state of damaged outer frame cds with "X"-code.

Dr Frank Bottomley has undertaken a thorough study of the frame breaks of the "O-code" mark and its first cousins, the "X-code" and "uncoded" crown on top 'FREE' marks. Between 17<sup>th</sup> October and 1<sup>st</sup> November 1839 this latter handstamp suffered progressive damage to its outer rim (at the 1:30, 4:00 and 10:00 positions, using clock face terminology). It appeared in the GPO Proof Books, dated 9<sup>th</sup> October 1839 (with undamaged outer ring); it has been recorded from 10<sup>th</sup> - 24<sup>th</sup> October 1839 with no code below the year (see Figure 1) and from 28<sup>th</sup> October to 4<sup>th</sup> November 1839 with a "+" below the year (see Figure 2). The frame damage had not yet begun by 18<sup>th</sup> October: on 19<sup>th</sup> October the frame's 1:30 position shows a break. A 10:00 break appears by 24<sup>th</sup> October and the third, 4:00, break by 1<sup>st</sup> November 1839. It is clear all the examples were struck from a single handstamp, which gradually deteriorated and was quickly withdrawn from use.

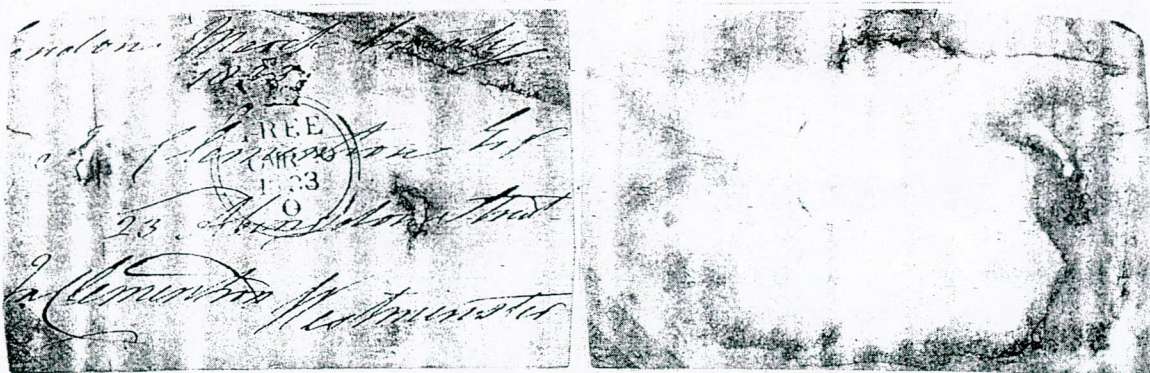
What is absolutely clear is

ALL THE "O-CODE" MARKS SHOW ALL THREE FRAME BREAKS

Hence, they must have been made AFTER 24<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 1839, by a person or persons unknown, with "dates" purporting to range from 1802 to January 1840. Likewise, it is clear these marks were not added to letters but to cut down fronts. One example of the "O-code" mark has been found which indented not only the paper of the free front on which it was struck *but also indented the paper of the scrap book page to which the front is still glued* (see Figures 3 and 4). Furthermore, two examples (one dated 10<sup>th</sup> January 1840) are known with the offset of a matching impression on the back of the free front itself (i.e. a pile of free-fronts without postmarks was being "improved" with the addition of the red "FREE" dated marks, wholesale) !

I have put forward a theory that the creator of the posthumous "O-code" 'FREE' marks was a free front dealer of the 1840s and 1850s by the name of John Gray Bell. He issued price lists of the 'franks'





Figures 3 & 4: Obverse & reverse of "1833" front, showing faked "O-code" mark (with 1839 outer frame damage) with indentation of mark right through Victorian album page (to which it was glued).

(free fronts) and letters in the 1850s and charged "4<sup>d</sup> each for Peers, and 3<sup>d</sup> each for Commoners" ! Even more significant is the distinctive orange-red ink in which his dealer's marks (see Figure 5) were applied to the reverse of many free fronts which have survived today. The colour is identical to that of all the "O-codes" 'FREE' marks (several dozen) I have seen ! Two albums of free fronts have survived intact with dozens of the "O-code" fronts and several addressed to the Countess of Lichfield (the 1835-41 PMGs wife), that must originally have been in one album. This is no coincidence !

No "real" usage of any "O-code" 'FREE' mark have ever been recorded and "O" was, quite simply, not a code used by the Post Office in the 1830s. Two supposedly P.O. endorsed "O-code" items have been found but both appear to have been spoofs created to amuse collectors at the time of J.G. Bell and/or his colleagues. The "O-code" marks were no more than the product of the death throes of the pre-1840 mania for collecting the fronts of autographed letters (of Peers and MPs especially). They were created to harmonize the "real" pre-1840 (probably postmarked) fronts in collectors' albums with those which were never posted but were provided (often after 9<sup>th</sup> January 1840 it seems) by amiable peers and MPs for those attempting to collect a full 'set' of the autographs of the "great and the good" of (mostly) the 1830s. It may be some of the autographed addressed on "O-code" front were also fabricated (forged?) by the dealers of John Gray Bell's time !

JOHN GRAY BELL,  
DEALER IN AUTOGRAPHS,  
17, BEDFORD STREET,  
COVENT GARDEN, LONDON

Figure 5: circa 1850 orange-red dealer's mark on back of 1838 face front.

#### Bibliography:

J. Grimwood-Taylor. 'An Early Victorian Dealer in "Franks"' *Stamp News* 21<sup>st</sup> November 1985.

Dr F. Bottomley: 'A Vindication of John Guthrie' *Postscript* journal of the Society of Postal Historians, 1994, pp 182-7

### THE STUART ROSSITER MEMORIAL LECTURE 2000

The Stuart Rossiter Trust Fund, by arrangement with the British Library, are pleased to announce that the Sixth Stuart Rossiter Memorial Lecture will take place on Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> November 2000 at 10.30 for 11.00 am and will be held in The Auditorium, The Conference Centre, The British Library, 96 Euston Road, London NW1 2DB.

The speaker will be David Beech, FRPSL, Head of the Philatelic Collections at the British Library, who will present a paper entitled "*Philatelic Research at the British Library - A guide to some of the untapped reserves*". This will describe the vast resources available to philatelists and include examples of research using directories, India Office files, maps, newspapers, official government publications, patents, timetables, etc., as well as philatelic literature and material.



Tickets, which will be issued early October, can be obtained free of charge from : Richard C.A. Payne, Anso Corner Farm, Hempstead, SAFFRON WALDEN CB10 2NU.


## PLUMSTEAD ROAD AND SUSSEX PLACE

Peter Bathe

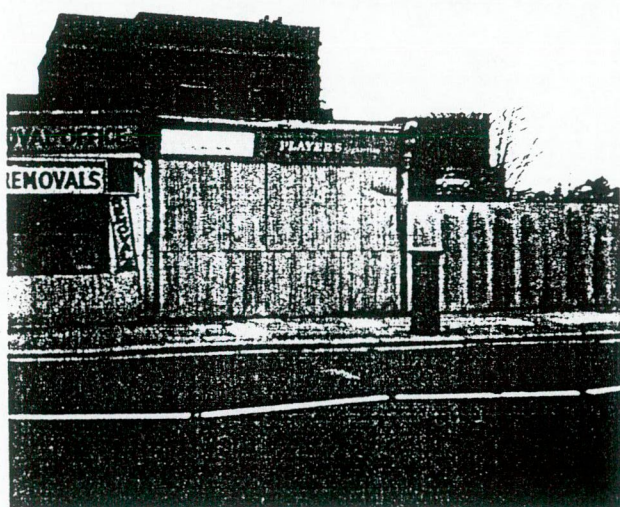
Between 1874 and 1878, Richard Powell, of gunsmiths, ironmongers and leathersellers Stevens & Powell, 77 Plumstead Road, took over as sub post master from Henry Edwards. The 1871 census gives Henry Stevens (43), gunmaker, and his wife Rachel (46) as residents at 77 Plumstead Road, with their daughter, Emily, a 21 year old schoolmistress. Emily later married Richard Powell and was appointed sub post mistress on his death in 1897.



Proof Book entry 19 August 1913

<b>PARCEL POST</b>  <b>London</b> Plumstead Road, S.E. (Woolwich)	X List Letter and Number.	POSTAGE S. D.	
	Insurance, Registration or Express Fee.		
FOR POSTAGE STAMPS.		DATE STAMP.	

A parcel post label (unused) from Plumstead Road which also includes district initials.



The opening years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century saw a large number of changes at the office. In 1901 Mrs Powell was succeeded first by H.R. Charman and then by R.G. Molyneaux of Molyneaux Brothers, printers, stationers and post card publishers of 86 Plumstead Road. Miss Christine R. McLeish, a stationer, took over the premises at No. 86 and was also appointed sub post mistress in 1903. Three years later she married Henry George Page and remained at the office until about 1917, when Mrs Irene Hand, tobacconist, of 71 Plumstead Road, was appointed.

On 1913 the whole of Woolwich and Plumstead was returned to the South Eastern District and a new date stamp with district initials was issued.

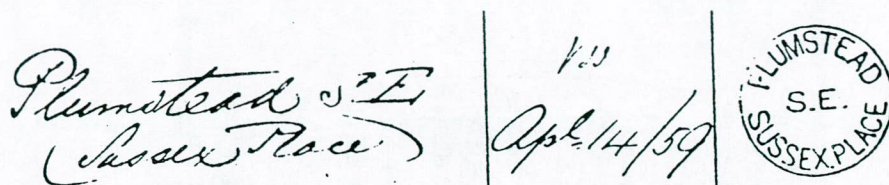
Mrs Hand remained sub post mistress until c.1939. Subsequent sub post masters included Bernard Dowding (c.1940-1960), A. Williams (c.1961), Daniel Graham (c.1962-1965) and, finally, Mrs B.A. Thornton, from c.1966 until 31<sup>st</sup> January 1969, when the office was closed prior to redevelopment of the area.

The photograph on the left, taken in December 1974, shows the last remains of the office at 71 Plumstead Road. In 1978 the VR pillar letter box which had been sited the office was moved to the junction of villas Road and Plumstead.



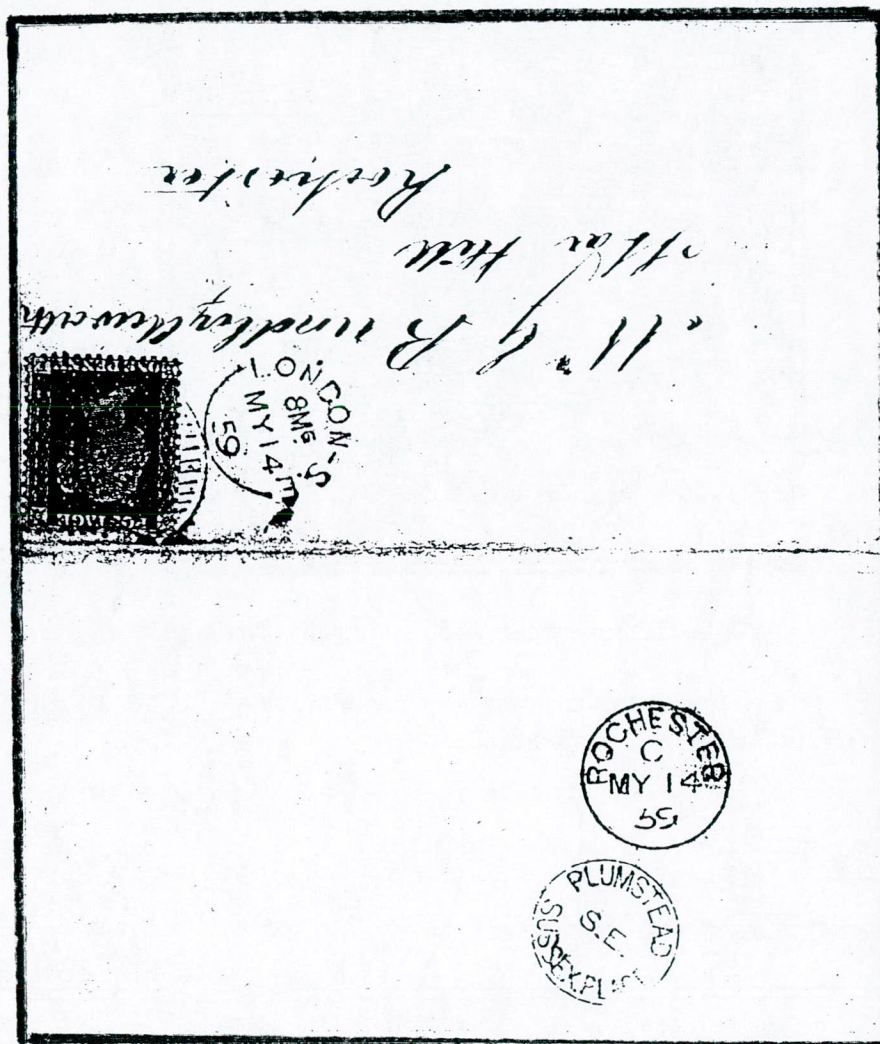
## Sussex Place.....

The first record of an office in Sussex Place - a terrace of buildings in Plumstead Road - is a proof book entry for 14<sup>th</sup> April 1859 for a small, circular undated name stamp.



Proof Book entry 14<sup>th</sup> April 1859

The only known example of this stamp in use dated exactly one month after the issue of the stamp.

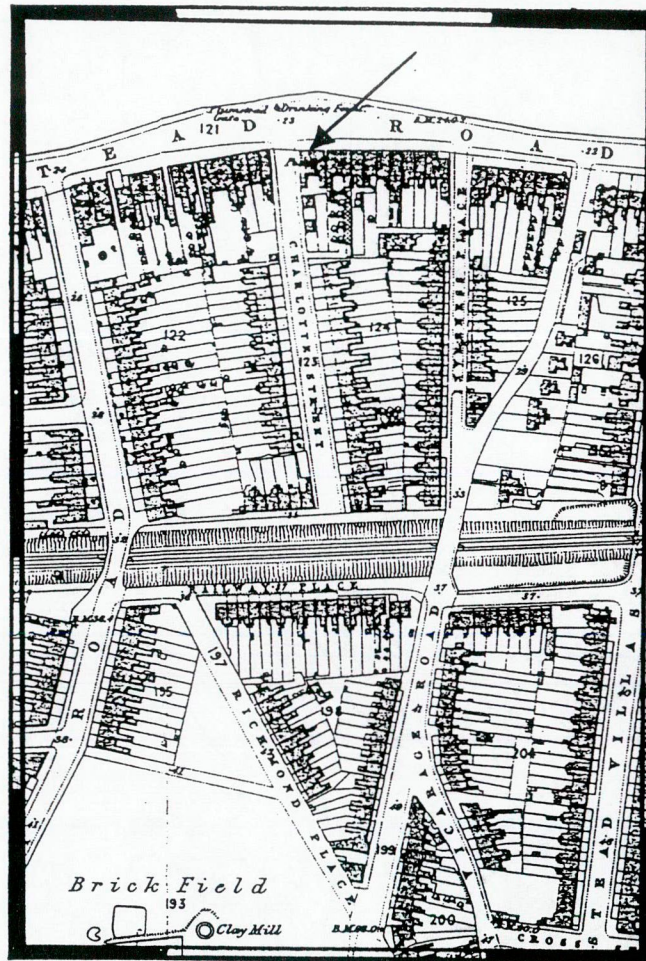


PLUMSTEAD / S.E. / SUSSEX.PLACE 14<sup>th</sup> May 1859

It was not until later that year - on 20<sup>th</sup> September 1859 - that the first known receiver was appointed: John Topley, a grocer of 14 & 15 Sussex Place. It is not known exactly when the office was established or who preceded Topley as receiver: he was succeeded by William Topley on 28<sup>th</sup> November 1862. Henry John Edwards, also a grocer, was appointed some time before 1866. He was quite a young

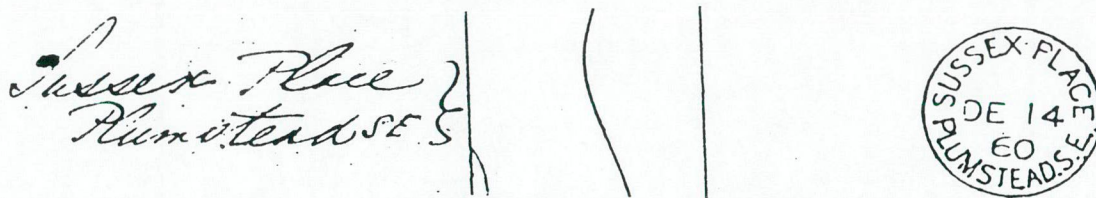


man, only 26 in 1871, according to the census. Edwards' shop was also in Sussex Place but the address was given as 73 & 74 Plumstead Road.



Ordnance Survey map 1866 : 25 inch = 1 mile

At the end of 1860 a circular date stamp was issued with the words SUSSEX PLACE in the upper segment and PLUMSTEAD S.E. in the lower portion.



Proof Book entry 14<sup>th</sup> December 1860

### ***Sussex Place - Plumstead Road.....***

In 1865 another date stamp appears in the proof books, this time with PLUMSTEAD in the upper segment and SUSSEX PLACE -S.E. in the lower half. A third date stamp was issued in 1870 in which the district initials appeared in the upper segment.





Proof Book entry December 1865



Proof Book entry March 1870

In 1875 the offices in Plumstead were removed from the South Eastern District of London and put into the newly formed Woolwich Postal District. In March 1880 a circular date stamp was issued without any district initials.

*Woolwich*

*3. 3. 80.*



Proof Book entry 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1880

Two years later the designation of the office was changed to Plumstead Road and a new hand stamp with this designation was issued on 30<sup>th</sup> March 1882. A similar stamp also appears in the proof books for 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1882.

*Woolwich*

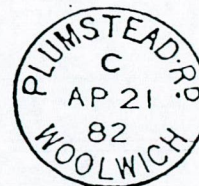
*30. 3. 82*



Proof Book entry 30<sup>th</sup> March 1882

*Woolwich*

*22. 4. 82*



Proof Book entry 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1882



## EAST DISTRICT SINGLE OBLITERATORS

A response from Noel Dickinson

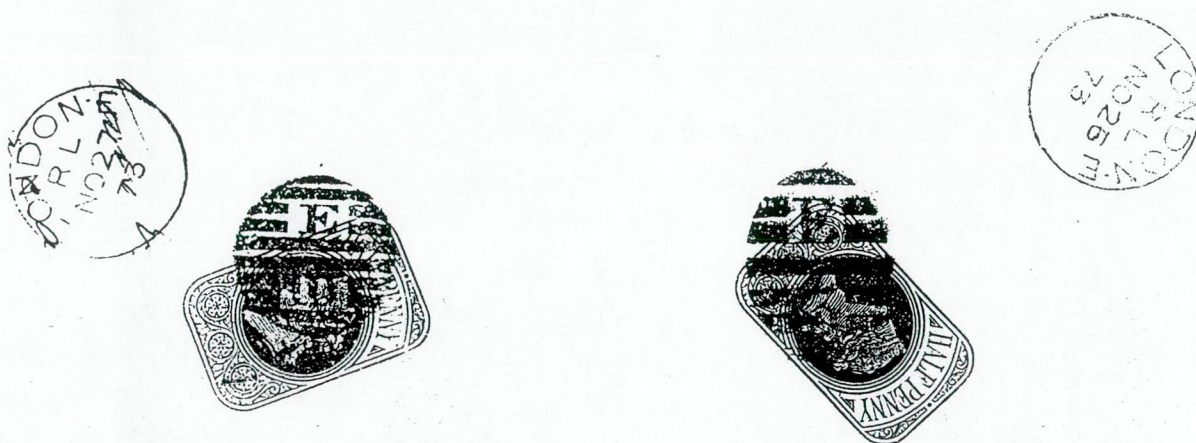
There have been a number of references in *Notebook* on the single obliterations and the Returned Letter Office date stamp. Examination of my collection turned up three of these, illustrated here.



The only comments are :

1. The 2D8 is the January 1872 issue.
2. The 3D8, which has a flat top three (*not on this keyboard - Ed*) looks like the illustration for the issue of February 1874. However, the RL date stamp is 1873, which makes it Dubus figure 58, the issue of January 1872.

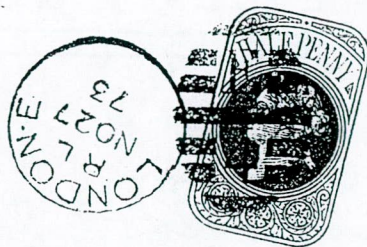
Then I was fortunate to obtain no fewer than 17 more copies of the RL stamp at a fair. These had a wide range of cancellations for both East and East Central, as shown below. It should be pointed out these were whole wrappers, not just the cut outs shown here. The reverse of these had various postmen's endorsements for non delivery *Gone away : Not known : No such building in Mile End Road: Not Wapping: Not as directed: No such number in William Street, Stepney Green* - all of which add interest.



10D6 - noted as unrecorded

3D8 - same impression as above example





4D8 - also shows missort quartered circle M/E/D/C

38D10 - noted as unrecorded

BD9 - noted as Rarity GPO

The type 9C all have the RL stamp for JA 29 74 (not illustrated).

**BICKERDIKE VR**

Jerry H. Miller

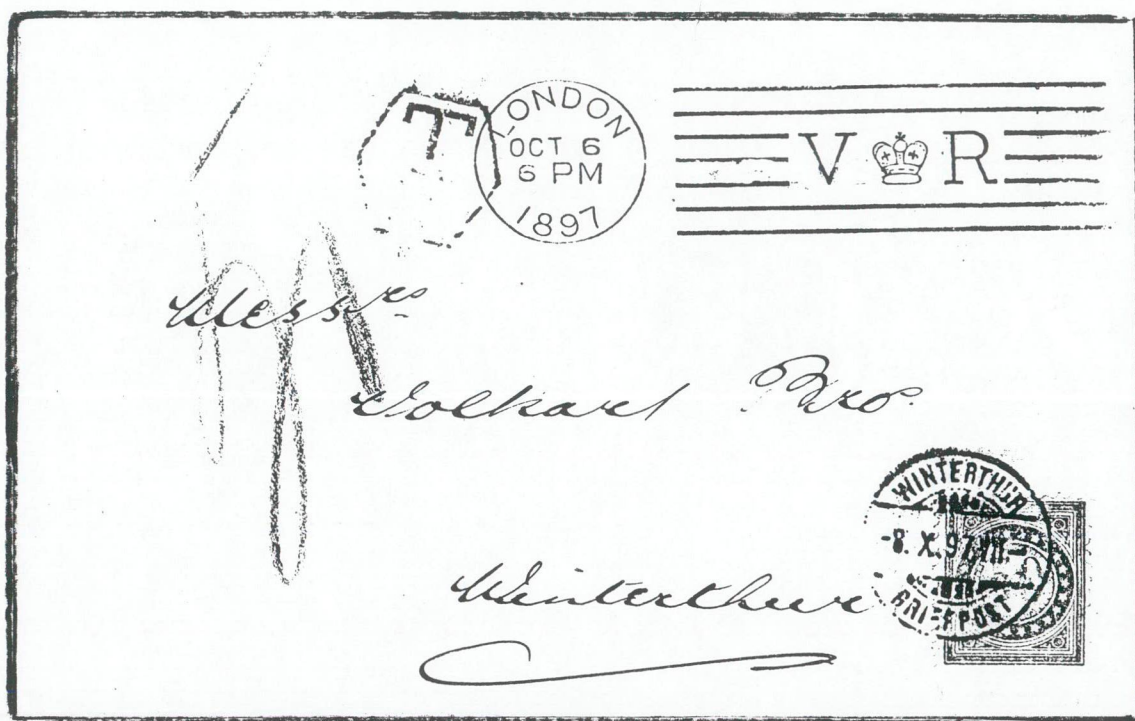
This item was bought earlier this year might be of interest to readers. It shows a Bickerdike 'VR', on a card posted to Switzerland but without prepayment. As a result a 50 centimes postage due was added.

The date of the 'VR' is important, OCT 6 1897 - the earliest known usage of the serif 'VR' and, as far as is known, the only example for an overseas destination from the first Bickerdike trial of 1897.

The card is shown on page 16

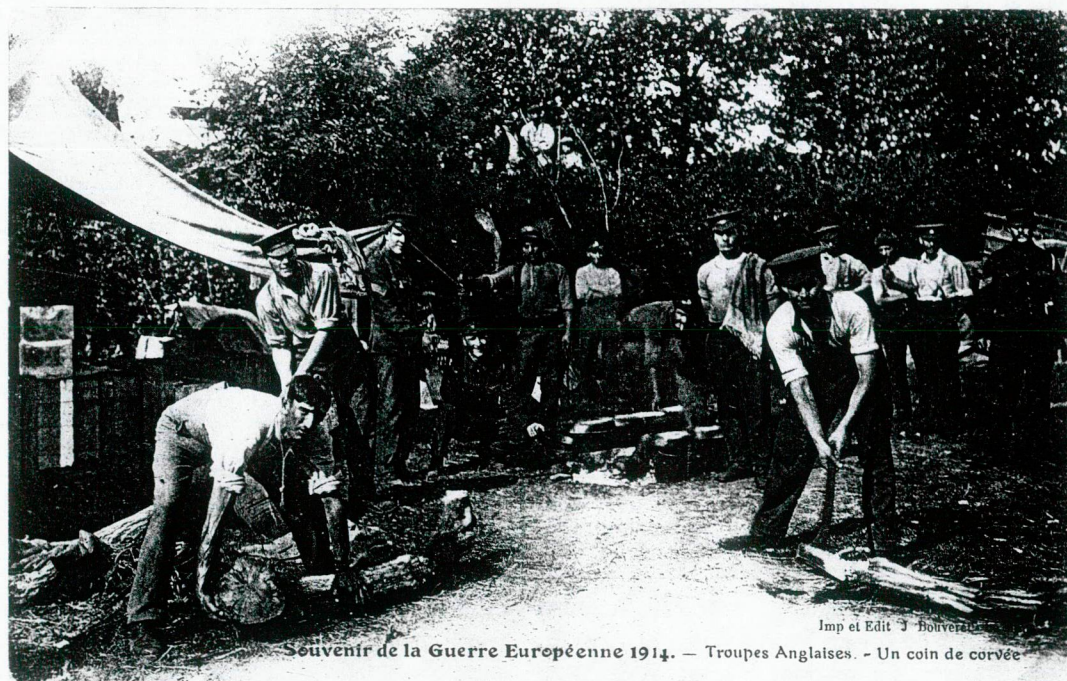


## BICKERDIKE VR



## MOBILE BOX IN TIME OF WAR

A recent purchase has provided some postal and military history on at least two points. The picture post card is print dated 1914 and shows "Troupes Anglaises" in shirt sleeve order attempting to look busy chopping up wood, with rather more supervision than seems really necessary.

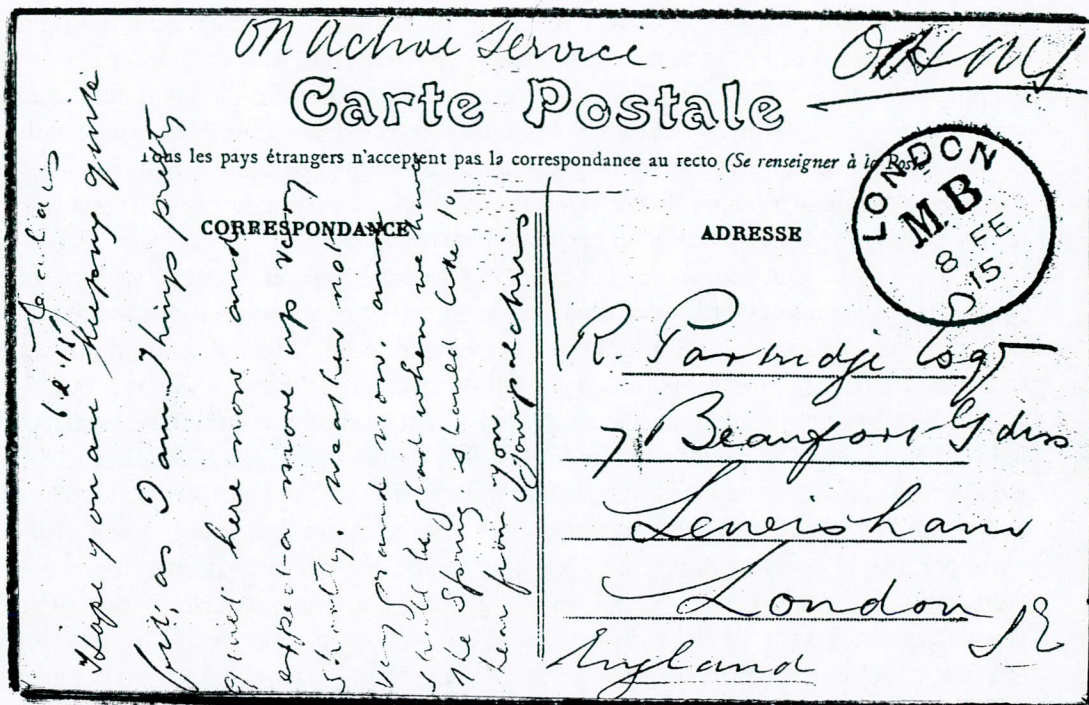


The card is dated as from Calais 6.2.15 and carries the line.. "Things pretty quiet here now and expect a move up very shortly." Kennedy and Crabb<sup>1</sup> note "things were fairly quiet for the winter until March 1915..." which fits in with the writer's remarks. The same authors record censor and other



military cancellations and markings in use by the time this card was written but it seems clear such niceties were avoided by the writer taking advantage of the mobile box available in Calais.

The MB stamp is recorded by Tabart<sup>2</sup> as continuing in use until 1935 but the casual availability of the facility by the military during wartime must be, at least, unorthodox.



<sup>1</sup> The Postal History of the British Army in World War I

<sup>2</sup> Robertson Revisited

## LETTER FROM A KING'S MESSENGER

From Michael Goodman

In the train en route from  
Prague to Vienna.



June 12 - 1920

CROXTON PARK  
ST NEOTS.

My Darling Muriel,

I am writing this letter in the train en route to Vienna, & as it is a very rough road my writing may be somewhat difficult to read. I have had quite enough of Prague, it is a very dirty dusty town full of Jews (40,000 or more). I stayed at a good hotel with water laid on in my room but of course no hot water as it is not to be had anywhere at present owing to a shortage of coal.

The food situation is much better than in Vienna, but it is very dear but obtainable.



Everything strikes one as being very badly run, on this train there are numbers of attendants, all very grimy dirty people who bring food, post & black bread. I had to throw away mine, & am eating the chocolate which you gave me, & which is most welcome & makes me think of you as it is so sweet. A man has now appeared & I have just bought a candle from him, as there is no lighting laid on, & we shall be running through 4/5 hours in darkness, I do not expect to reach Vienna before 3 a.m., although due at 11 p.m. I have a compartment for two & my fellow traveller is an American who is taking some American bags down to Vienna. I too am acting as Kings Messenger & taking down the official bag to Vienna. This is a great advantage as one refuses to allow the officious custom house officials to turn out one's baggage, it also gives one priority & help in certain other ways too.

My American friend has just taken in two bottles of red wine, & a bottle of fizz water, (this latter I opine for appearances only). He also has, so he tells me, a bottle of champagne in his suit case, but says it is too hot to open this until night falls. I have one bottle of red wine & one of water, so our carriage for two makes a fair show even as things go in this country. All this sounds bad, but be not alarmed. It is very rough travelling as the engine driver puts on a sort of spurt whenever he comes to a curve, & there are many sharp ones. The country is very beautiful, woods, little lakes, & all available land well cultivated. Everywhere one sees masses of labour in the fields, & it looks as if the country side is much overpopulated. The travelling dress of the peasants is most picturesque, some of the women in particular, who wear bright colours, short skirts and high black boots. I'm beginning to want to get home, & hope to start back at the end of next week. All being well I hope to get down to Buda-Pest early next week, but cannot say when as it all depends on Fitz & and visé on my passport. The latter occasions long delays. I am much looking forward to getting some letters from you when I get to Vienna as I've had no news, necessarily, since I went to Prague. The engines burn a most peculiar & particularly dirty type of bricquet (*sic*) which is horrid as one gets quite filthy when travelling. Well darling, I don't think I've anything else to say. the officials are now examining my passport, & seem very interested in it. One has to have so many visa, out as well as in, that it is almost impossible to conform to all their regulations. I find a blissful ignorance of the language the only way. This I've now pulled off successfully.

With every best love darling / Your very loving / DL

## **EARLY DATES FOR LONDON CANCELLATIONS**

Howard Hughes

I recently had the opportunity to purchase a complete set of *Notebook* and notice it is some time since any discussion has taken place with regard to the date of introduction of the London numerals in 1844: perhaps I might take the liberty of initiating this.

The following is a brief summary of my initial research :

The Proof Book entry for both the London Inland (horizontal diamond) and London District Post numerals was dated "May 184".

There is a receipt, dated 20/5/44, for the LDP numbers 1 - 72; this receipt signed by a principal clerk in the London District Office (*but was this signed before, after or simultaneously with first use?*)

The earliest use of a LDP numeral, of which I am aware, is 21/5/44 (source: John Parmenter by correspondence).

I am not aware of any signed receipt for the London Inland diamonds.

The earliest known use of a London Inland diamond numeral is 20/5/44 (nos. 3 and 8, Brian Smith: no.2, Keith Wood)

The London Inland diamonds were preceded by the "numbers in cross" cancellations. The latest known use is for 16/5/44, my collection.



It seems unlikely there could be any need to overlap the "numbers in cross" and the Diamonds. We can, therefore, claim the London Inland Diamonds were introduced between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> of May 1944.

The "number in cross" cancellations have featured over a number of years and the following table might prompt readers to re-examine their collections and update the information.

### **EARLY AND LATE USE OF THE LONDON NUMBERS IN CROSS**

Key :

PB Proof Book Entry  
 AH Alcock and Holland "Maltese Cross" monograph  
 G Letter to *Notebook* - Bernard Gledhill  
 HH Own collection  
 Kwx Keith Wood's associates, number identifies different source.  
 KW Keith Wood stock  
 AK? Alf Kirk's annotation  
 scot Scotia sales list

<u>No. in cross</u>	<u>Date of proof book entry</u>	<u>Earliest known date of use</u>	<u>Latest known date of use</u>
1	18/03/43	22/03/43 (AH)	11/05/44 (AH)
2	23/03/43	21/03/43 (AH)	10/05/44 (KW1)
3	Not entered	16/03/43 (AH)	11/05/44 (HH)
4	23/03/43	21/03/43 (AH)	03/05/44 (KW1)
5	23/03/43	30/03/43 (KW)	19/09/43 (G)
6	23/03/43	27/03/43 (AK?)	15/05/44 (KW2)
7	01/01/43	07/04/43 (KW3)	16/05/44 (HH)
8	01/01/43	10/04/43 (KW)	14/05/44 (AH)
9	01/01/43		16/05/44 (HH)
10	01/01/43	13/04/43 scot	07/05/44 (HH)
11	01/01/43		06/03/44 (G)
12	01/01/43	17/04/43 (G)	07/05/44 (G)

It would be useful to hear of any reader who can offer examples of either later use of the plain Maltese Cross - these not mentioned thus far - and London District Post numeral cancellation.

### **BOOKS FOR SALE.....**

The English Provincial Local Posts 1765 - 1840 by G.F. Oxley, with Rarity Guide  
 In original glassine wrap and envelope in excellent condition £5

The Local Posts of London 1680 - 1840 by George Brumell, second edition, hardback  
 in good condition £3



The Postal Cancellations of London 1840 - 1890 by H.C. Westley, with dust jacket  
in fine condition £10

The Encyclopædia of British Empire Postage Stamps, Robson Lowe  
Volume 1 : Great Britain and The Empire in Europe, hardback. Cover little worn  
but otherwise fine condition £7

Channel Islands Stamps and Postal History, Stanley Gibbons, 1st Edition  
Hardback with dust jacket £2

The Postal History of Great Britain and Ireland, R.M. Willocks.  
Hardback 1972 edition £3

British Post Office Numbers 1844 - 1906, G. Brumell  
Hardback, 1971 Alcock Edition £3

Price guide only ..... best offers please. Post and Packing extra will be advised with delivery

### ***MEETING DATES 2001***

The meetings will be on Saturdays afternoons (1.30 p.m. to 5.30 p.m.) at the Union Jack Club,  
Sandell Street, Waterloo. This is adjacent to surface and tube trains, with many bus routes passing close  
by. Car users are cautioned to examine notices on restrictions with care !

20 <sup>th</sup> January	Reserved Bar lounge
17 <sup>th</sup> March	Reserved Bar lounge
19 <sup>th</sup> May	Reserved Bar lounge
21 <sup>st</sup> July	Reserved Bar lounge
15 <sup>th</sup> September	Burns Room
17 <sup>th</sup> November	Burns Room

We will return to May for the auction but your suggestions for the other dates most welcome.