

In Part 1 of this article, published in October, Harry Layne covered the origins of the Telegraphic codes, explained how they were allocated and began a review of the various markings incorporating them which may be found applied to postage stamps. Here, he concludes his study of those cancellations looking at other postal markings in which they were used and gives some information on the book on the subject which is in preparation.

The Triangular Marks of Great Britain Revisited—the Telegraphic Codes—Part 2

By Harry Layne BSc

Small triangles

At the turn of the 20th century, in around 1904, a series of much smaller triangles were brought into use, which were primarily intended to be struck on duplicated circulars, subject to inspection, to ensure they complied with the regulations laid down for this type of mail.

Although it was not intended, many adhesives were, in fact, cancelled by these handstamps, probably due to a lack of clear instructions being given.

Like their larger counterparts, they were soon being used on all kinds of printed matter and were later employed on reduced rate mail other than printed circulars. They were subsequently replaced by similar handstamps having the Post Office index number. Obsolete handstamps were however not always withdrawn immediately as some of them continued in use into the late 1960s and perhaps later.

When postal rates were reduced during 1922, postal stationery was re-rated and the reduced value was indicated by a small triangular mark being struck alongside the postage stamp to indicate that no further charge was to be levied. The writer has seen these incorrectly referred to as inspection marks, but it is not unusual to find them used as cancellations on mail where the normal postmark is missing (Fig 25). The shape of the triangles varies a little (Fig 26), and the one used at Carlisle is unique in having a small inverted triangle enclosed within a circular frame (Fig 27). This may be found in use during the late 1930s, although the frame is not always evident on some examples seen.

Triangular machine dies

These marks have also been referred to in my earlier articles, so only a brief account will be given here. Triangular dies were part of the equipment supplied with cancelling machines, which until 1924, when the numbering system was introduced, used the telegraphic codes, although some offices kept their codes in use for a much longer than others.

The Columbia single impression machines in use at the Mount Pleasant office, may be found with five wavy lines or six or seven straight lines in the cancelling portion. Serifed letters were used in the triangular dies of this machine, which are not seen in use with any other machine, and are therefore easily recognisable (Fig 28).

Other machines (Krag and Universal) also

used triangular dies and those employed at the Mount Pleasant office had sans-serif letters with a numeral placed below the telegraphic code (Fig 29). Many of the other London offices had triangles with additional letters above or below the telegraphic code (Fig 30) and collectors have in the past been baffled as to their status. They have been referred to previously in the philatelic press, but possible uses are repeated here for convenience as follows:-

- Mail in time for the night mail.
- Bulk mail collected from certain firms, too late for the night mail.
- Bulk postings consisting of over 5000 circulars.
- Bulk postings consisting of under 5000 circulars.

Triangular marks have also seen use as cancellations on adhesives which had missed cancellation in the normal fashion, whereas in recent times a quick scribble with a pen seems to suffice



Fig 25



Fig 26

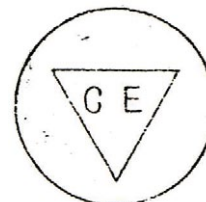


Fig 27

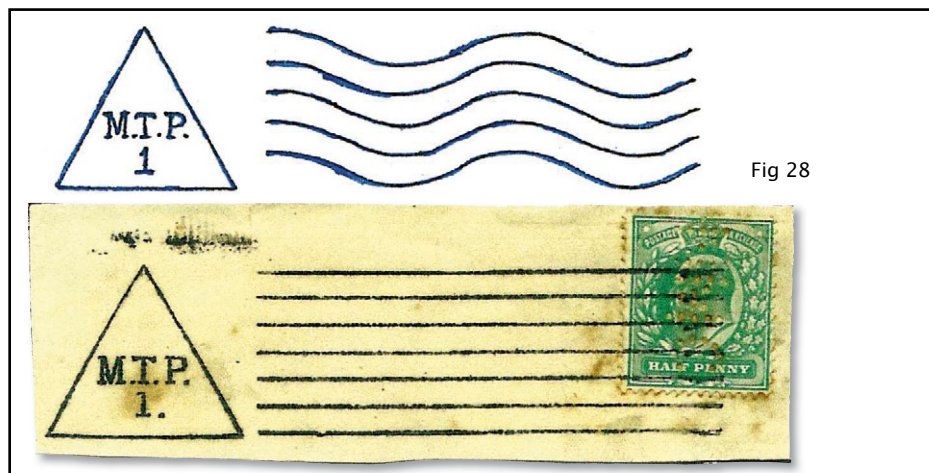


Fig 28

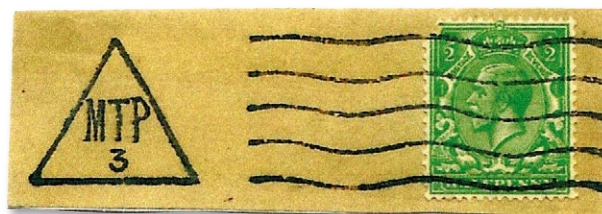


Fig 29

Much like the London dies, a few provincial offices have also been noted as having triangular dies with mitred corners (Fig 31) and machines also used triangles in conjunction with slogan cancellations. In 1969 when special rates for printed matter and duplicated circulars were abolished, the use of triangular marks also ceased, but there are instances where they have been used for counting the mail during the annual census (in place of the diamond-shaped mark) and they have also seen use as cancellations on adhesives which had missed cancellation in the normal fashion, whereas in recent times a quick scribble with a pen seems to suffice.

Telegraphic codes in cancellations

In addition to the duplex handstamps that showed the telegraphic code in the obliterating portion (Fig 32), London district offices used the codes in a series of large steel circular datestamps from 1873, introduced to cancel adhesives and printed impressions on newspaper wrappers.

There were also stamps inscribed 'SE', 'SW', 'WC', etc, and those stamps in use at St Martin's Place, WC; were denoted by 'SMP' (Fig 32), but the sub-district and branch offices generally used their index numbers instead.

The date appeared in the centre of the handstamp, between twin parallel lines and the month of use was denoted in numerals, rather than the usual two letter abbreviation. A combination of a letter and a number at the bottom of the stamp was used to denote the duty (Fig 33).

From 1895, when clock time was introduced, impressions are seen with a stamper's number placed below the time (Fig 34). From the turn of the 20th century the WC district office had some stamps in use without the twin parallel lines (Fig 35). These datestamps were contemporary with the undated 'Killer' type cancels inscribed 'NPB' (Newspaper Branch), 'IS' (Inland Section), 'FS' (Foreign Section), 'FB' (Foreign Branch) and 'EC' (East Central District Office), but as these were not telegraphic codes they are outside the scope of these notes, and are only mentioned here as confusion has arisen in the past.

One provincial office, however, did use a newspaper cancellation with its telegraphic code (BS = Bristol), placed over an identifying letter, in a series of small undated stamps (Fig 36).

Travelling post offices

There are a number of datestamps associated with TPOs, which display the telegraphic code instead of a place name, and this was most probably initiated for reasons of space.

The earliest types were the small circular dies known as 'Thimbles', first issued in 1872 to the Glasgow-Greenock Sorting Tender, the town name of Greenock being abbreviated to 'GK', which was its telegraphic code, and Sorting Tender was shown as a simple 'ST' (Fig 37).

From the late 1890s until 1917, Greenock was denoted by its code 'GK' in some of the datestamps of the Greenock and Ardrishaig Packet (Fig 38). Charing Cross railway station had its telegraphic code at the foot of the datestamp used on the Continental Night Mail (Fig 39), while the code used by



Fig 30 (Reduced)



Fig 31



Fig 33

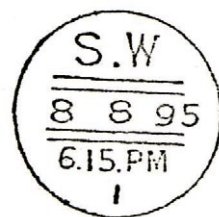


Fig 34



Fig 35



Fig 36



Fig 37



Fig 38



Fig 39



Fig 40

Bournemouth had serifed letters above the date in the stamp in use by the South Western TPO Night Down service (Fig 40).

In more recent times the telegraphic codes for Edinburgh, Glasgow and Peterborough may be found in single as well as combined

datestamps used on Travelling Post Offices (Fig 41).

Normal datestamps

There are only a few instances where telegraphic codes have been featured in everyday datestamps, and it may be that the letterings appeared by mistake or that they were purely coincidental.

The letters 'SMP' (St Martin's Place) are known in both single (Fig 42) and double stamps of the 1870s, while the letters 'CX' (Charing Cross) are found at the foot of the Squared Circle cancels (Fig 43), from 1885 to 1906. A single-circle cancellation was also in use during the mid-1940s at Newcastle, Staffs, BO showing the letters 'STK' at the foot of the stamp (Fig 44).

The 1909 code book shows 'STK' as being allocated to Stonehouse, Gloucestershire. Newcastle was a branch office under Stoke-on-Trent, whose telegraphic code was ST, but by the time this datestamp was in use, it is likely that the code 'STK' was intended to signify the head office.

It is quite possible that this was a telegraphic code and used as such in the 1940s, but as no evidence has been secured by the writer, it cannot be ascertained.

Skeleton datestamps

Where space did not permit an office name to be quoted in full, a few of the Skeleton type datestamps, of the early 20th century had their head office name denoted by its telegraphic code, as follows:-

Aberdeen= AB, Glasgow= GW, Kilbarnock= KK and Manchester = MR (Figs 45 to 48)

Rubber stamps

Telegraphic codes are also known on undated rubber stamps that were originally intended for the cancellation of adhesives on parcel labels.

Birmingham used a single inner arc type, which was in current use at the turn of the 20th century (Fig 49), and many London district offices used the type with vertical bars at the time of the First World War. As late as 1928 a stamp of this type was issued to the London Northern District Office (Fig 50), while Birmingham has had similar stamps of varying sizes displaying its telegraphic code, for the purpose of cancelling both packets and envelopes that had missed cancellation by machine (Fig 51).

Explanatory marks

The early explanatory marks gave no clue as to where they were applied, and from the 1870s it became customary to include the initial letter of the office of origin within the stamp. This was somewhat confusing when two office names had the same initial, such as Margate and Maidstone, both in Kent, which are recorded in the proof books, and doubtless there are others.

It was not long before this system was replaced by one using the index numbers, but in the interim a few stamps were issued having telegraphic codes, such as 'B.O.T.'—Burton-on-Trent (Fig 52), 'DN' Dublin (Fig 53), 'GHH'—Waterloo Street,

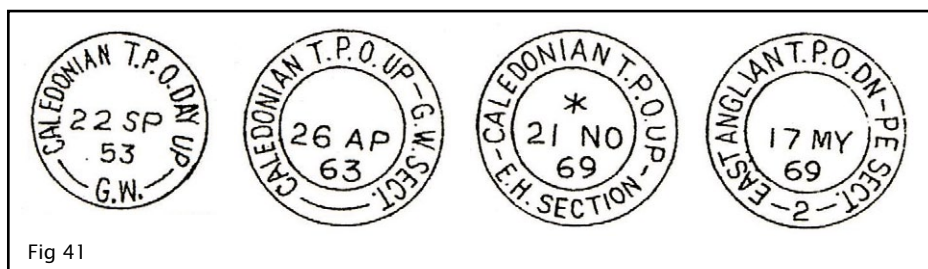


Fig 41

There are only a few instances where telegraphic codes have been featured in everyday datestamps



Fig 42



Fig 43



Fig 44



Fig 45

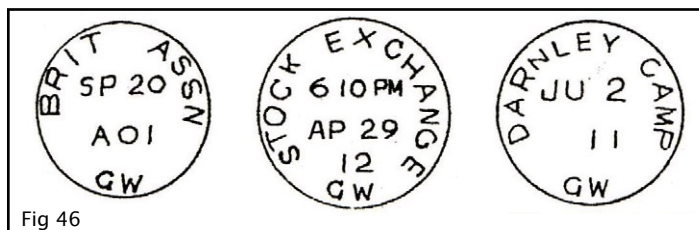


Fig 46



Fig 47

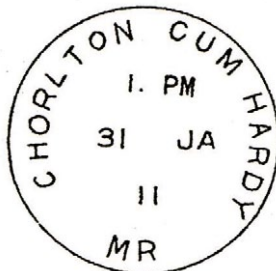


Fig 48

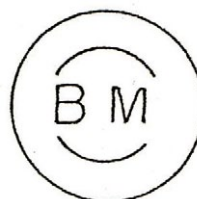


Fig 49



Fig 50

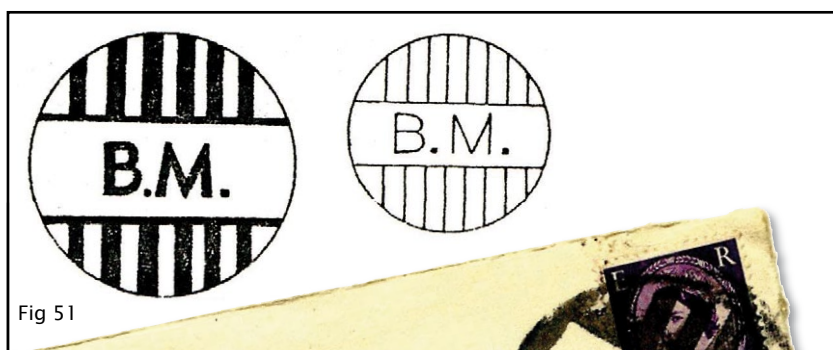


Fig 51



Contains a communication
of the nature of a Letter
B.O.T.

Fig 52

Insufficiently Addressed
DN

Fig 53

More to pay
above 2 ozs
GHH

Fig 54

More to pay
above 4 oz
N.H

Fig 55

Posted out
of course. W.C.

Fig 56

LIABLE TO LETTER RATE
SXU

Fig 57

OVER 2 OUNCES
KO

Fig 58

GONE NO ADDRESS
KI

NOT KNOWN
KI

Fig 59

POSTED-WITHIN-3-MILES-OF-G.R.P.
2d
W.C.

Fig 60

D TO PAY
2 POSTED
WC UNDERPAID

Fig 61

1 1/2d
TO PAY
DN.F

Fig 62

10d
EH

Fig 63

T 10 DR
T 10 MR
T 2lc S.O.

Fig 64

L.V.

Fig 65

S.E.

Fig 66

N.W.
7
D

Fig 67

CX

Fig 68

GW

Fig 69

GW

Fig 70

RETURN TO SENDER
UNDELIVERED
FOR REASON STATED
Gone Away Deceased
Not Known Reissued
Not Occupied
Not Called For
No Such Address
Insufficiently Addressed
OW
595

Fig 71

Glasgow (Fig 54) and 'N.H'- Northampton (Fig 55). Some of the London district offices showed their codes (Fig 56), although in Scotland the system lasted much longer and many of the larger offices at the turn of the 20th century, had stamps inscribed 'LIABLE TO LETTER RATE' with the telegraphic code placed below (Fig 57), many of which were used on novelty type pull-out postcards that were charged at the letter rate.

Oddly enough, the majority of the other explanatory stamps used in Scotland employed the office index number, but there were a couple of exceptions at Kelso, 'KO' (Fig 58) and Kirkcaldy, 'KI' (Fig 59). Many of the 'Liable to Letter Rate' stamps may be found in use until 1969, when the two-tier system that distinguished between letter and postcard rates, was abolished.

Charge marks

Telegraphic codes may also be found incorporated into charge markings, showing the amount of the deficiency (Fig 60). The London district offices made extensive use of the system and many types of marking may be found.

In preference to the index numbers, some of the more modern rectangular stamps may also be found incorporating telegraphic codes (Fig 61).

Dublin had quite a long series of unframed charge marks showing the telegraphic code at the base, which is usually followed by an additional letter to denote the stamper who applied the mark (Fig 62). A full stop was placed after the code ('DN.') to avoid confusion with other offices codes such as 'DNF' (Downfield).

Edinburgh and Glasgow also used varieties having larger than normal script

type numerals that were placed above the telegraphic code, which was also in sloping script type capitals (Fig 63).

Hexagonal-shaped stamps were also put to use by offices handling a large amount of overseas mail, and these had their values expressed in International Gold Centimes (T = Taxe). The telegraphic code appeared in many styles and was placed outside the hexagonal frame at the base of the marking (Fig 64).

A single variety of the hexagonal mark in use at Liverpool started life as an international charge mark, but later had its inscription within the frame erased, and was subsequently employed as an examiner's mark. However, the telegraphic code was retained at the base of the stamp (Fig 65). The writer has seen these Liverpool marks referred to as errors, described as 'T' and value omitted, but in fact they are quite normal.

Examiner's stamps

To ensure that mail complied with the rules and regulations of the post, random

spot checks were made and small markings were applied to signify this. They were not prominent enough to alert the public, but were distinctive enough to be recognisable by postal officials.

Some of these rather unobtrusive devices contained telegraphic codes, of which some have been identified in use at the South Eastern District Office (Fig 66), the North Western District Office (Fig 67) and Charing Cross (Fig 68).

The letters 'GW' within an eight-pointed star was in use at Glasgow during the 1880s on letters missent to the Glasgow and Carlisle Sorting Carriage (Fig 69), and the same lettering may also be found within a circle placed inside a rectangle with a saltire cross adjoining the circle (Fig 70). This type was in use at Glasgow head office for the purpose of cancelling 'to pay labels', and may have represented an envelope as there are similar elongated stamps in use at other offices, without any code. A few more modern types of these explanatory marks may be found incorporating the telegraphic code as well as the obsolete index number (Fig 71).

Other markings

Quite early in the 20th century, Liverpool had rubber stamps that were applied to overseas mail (Fig 72), with town names below the telegraphic code.

There is also at least one example of a telegraphic code appearing within a machine cancel.

West Kensington had a paid die of the early Krag Machine type (Fig 73), showing the code 'WKB', which was applied to mail emanating from the Post Office Savings Bank.

Rubber roller cancellers for cancelling adhesives on soft packets are also known with telegraphic codes (Fig 74).

A few odd and probably unique examples recently acquired, were probably made locally for temporary usage where an office had not been issued with a stamp. These had the telegraphic code placed above the letters PPO (Parcel Post Office), but they are very difficult to find (Fig 75).



Fig 75

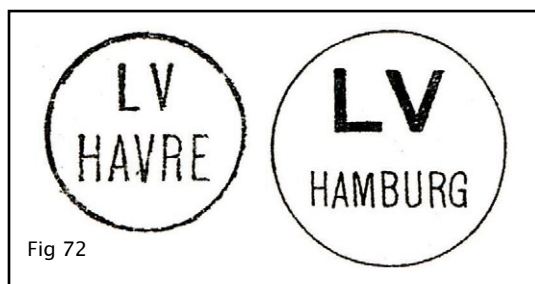


Fig 72

LONDON(WKB)
PAID
JUL 6 06

Fig 73

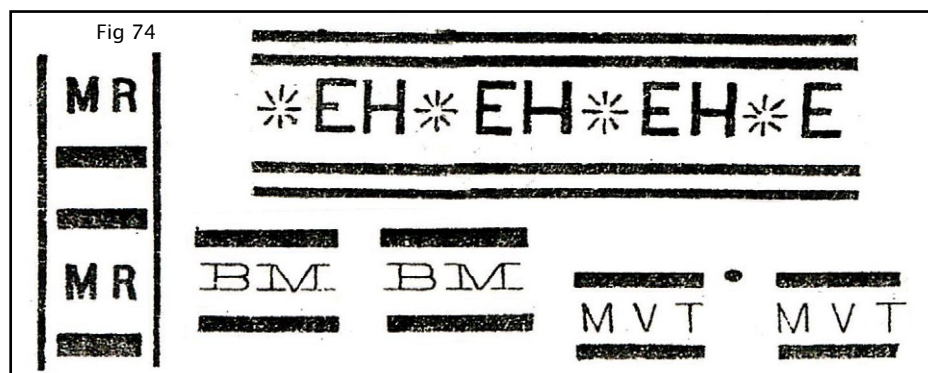


Fig 74

References and acknowledgements

- 'Triangular Marks of GB', GSM June, July and August 1998.
- *Triangular Marks of Great Britain* (Book), published 2003 by the writer.
- The writer's late father's note-books and diaries.
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- The Post Office Record Books staff.
- Various up-dated information, from various writers in the Philatelic Press over the years from time to time, far too many to warrant individual mention. Also all the collectors who have sent bits and pieces of information and diagrams.
- Hugh Jefferies for his kind encouragement, from time to time.

About the book

All the two- and three-letter telegraphic codes are listed in alphabetical order under with the allocated office of use. All other information which collectors will find useful is listed under the 'notes' column, e.g.: 'ABE = Abbeydale, office closed 31-12-1912, see JCH'.

There are also many instances in the proof books where the original allocated office name has been struck through in ink and this has been denoted by the words 'struck through' in the notes column. Where this had happened, a new entry was sometimes inserted in manuscript (as were some late entries), some of which have been difficult to decipher, and these are also referred to in the notes column, as 'entered by hand'. In very difficult cases an attempt has been made to enter what may have been the original correct information.

Although an office was allocated a code and issued with a triangular die or other form of handstamp containing a code, it does not necessarily follow that it was ever used. Some stamps, although issued, spent the whole, or most of their life in a drawer, and never saw the light of day, only being used by chance, or on rare occasions when needed.

With the above in mind a scarcity guide has also been included.

By popular request, a simplified price guide has been included as these triangular marks are not rated highly by some collectors, and even some of the more recent examples are very scarce indeed.

Where the office list is blank it can safely be assumed that no office was issued with that code, although a few were, and these will be indicated in the 'use' column, preceding the code

with an 'X'. Collectors may wish to insert a 'Y' in the column when a particular code is seen or acquired. Many of the three-letter codes are very scarce, and some are quite rare, but they can still be bought quite cheaply, as a reliable price guide for the different codes in these marks has never been issued, and most are just referred to as triangles.

The basic prices referred to in the book are for single triangular examples with clear strikes on cover. Where they are found with machine cancels, etc, the price should be doubled. Obviously, superb strikes will command a premium and weak strikes or those on adhesive or piece only should be rated at about 50 per cent of the price quoted. Cover prices are dependent on other factors too, especially where adhesives are present and the price of a cover will be a combination of adhesives and postmarks.

A single page from the listings is shown—just one of the 350 double sided pages, and 40 plus pages of text and diagrams.

As already mentioned, the work will be printed to order only, therefore an actual price cannot yet be quoted as this will depend on printing costs and finding a printer that does not charge an arm and a leg for their services, but is estimated to be in the £70–100 range, inclusive of postage and packing to anywhere.

Therefore, if you are interested in owning a copy, which may be presented in two volumes (text and lists), the writer would appreciate notification (via the editor), as it will be too late after the work has gone to press.

For local collectors who only require the listings for a certain letter of the alphabet, say 'A' or 'B', etc, sets of these only may be made available at copy price plus postage and packing.

USE	CODE	OFFICE	NOTES	Y/E
5	CA	CARNARVON.		
3	CAA	Caerleon		Y
3	CAB	Caerphilly		
3	CAC	Castle Carrock		
3	CAD	Cadithhead		
3	CAE	Caerwys		
3	CAP	Caernarfon		
4	CAG	Caistor		
3	CAH	Caen House		Y
3	CAI	Calverley		
3	CAJ	Calverley		
3	CAK	Castle Douglas, Auction Mart. 85881/421 ??	Struck through Number entered by hand	Y E
3	CAL	Calverley		
1	CAM	CAMBERLEY. Not to be used see CIM, Camock	Struck through Entered by hand.	Y
3	CAN	Callington		
3	CAO	Cape (Barry)		
3	CAP	Cambridge		
4	CAR	CALNE		
5	CAS	Cambswell Green B.O. London, S.E.		Y Y
3	CAT	Catlock		
3	CAU	Cae Ailwys		
3	CAV	Can		
3	CAW	Coln St. Aldwyns		
3	CAX	Cambo		
3	CAY	Castle Ashby		
4	CAZ	CAMBORNE		Y

* CAK was originally allocated to CASTLE DOUGLAS, Auction Mart. Castle Douglas was struck through and a number was entered by hand. Although it is not stated, Castle Douglas may have used the code CAM to match the initials of Castle Auction Mart. CAM was originally allocated to CAMBERLEY but this was struck through and "not to be used see CIM" was inserted by hand. CIM was however allocated to Croyly. The alterations to both CAK and CAM appear to be in the same handwriting.