

THE GB JOURNAL

VOLUME 50

NUMBER 1

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2012

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Varieties of the 1d Venetian Red

John Curtis

The issue contains many frame breaks and constant varieties but they are mostly of minor significance'. This is a note in the SG *Specialised Catalogue* relating to SG Spec. K3 (SG 166), the 1d Venetian red of 1880. This article examines some of these varieties.

Published Information

The stamp (*Fig. 1*) was designed by De La Rue. It was on sale for only 18 months from 1 January 1880 to 11 July 1881 with 1,462,584,000 printed (Rikki Hyde's *Numbers Issued*). An article in *Stamp Collecting* on 14 September 1967 by G. E. Richardson went into considerable detail about watermark, perforation and plate varieties. I will make reference to some of these varieties later. An earlier article, which I haven't seen, appeared in *Stamp Collecting* on 21 January 1955. It was entitled 'A Penny Anniversary' and was written by Patrick Hamilton. Much detailed information on the background to the stamps and the preparation of the plates can be found in Volume 1 of Tony Wiseman's *De La Rue Years* (DLRY1), published by Bridger & Kay in 1984. On the subject of plate varieties, Tony mentioned the two minor varieties listed by SG, and was in no doubt that there are others, and that 'this stamp has received very little attention from specialists'.



Fig. 1

The SG *Specialised Catalogue* records two flaws and these were illustrated in an article by D. S. Purdom in GBJ, Vol. 8, No. 4, July 1970. In GBJ, Vol. 7, No. 4, July 1969, H. W. Fisher identified three different dies but only one seems to have been used. Stanley Gibbons also records the existence of the stamp printed on watermark Orb paper* instead of the Imperial Crown but will not list this variety until more examples are found, so this is one to look out for. The stamp is listed with inverted watermark; imperforate; and as imprimaturs from Plates 1 to 33, excluding 3 and 11. The dates that the plates were registered, put to press, taken from press, and destroyed are given in DLRY1. That the stamp exists in different shades of colour is indicated in the *Specialised Catalogue* but no distinctive shade is identified.

So, as far as I am aware, nothing new has been written about this issue for nearly 30 years. I hope the following information explores some new territory.

Categories of Varieties

For the purposes of this article, I have grouped varieties under (a) corner letter deterioration, (b) other plate wear, and (c) perforation varieties. One further variety I am including as (d) appears to be a re-engraved corner letter.

(a) Corner letter deterioration

In his 1967 article, G. E. Richardson noted from his examination of a great number of these stamps that the corner letter K was one of the most frequently damaged features. I would agree: my most striking variety in this category is the letter K in the north-east corner where the top arm has become completely separated from the rest of the letter (*Fig. 2*). Two less severe deformities of the letter are also shown.

Similar deterioration to the north-west corner letter can be found in the K column (*Fig. 3*), though I haven't yet found an example where the arm is fully detached. Some letters deteriorate by beginning to break through from any cavity shape in their structure. *Fig. 4* shows examples for E and F. Others deteriorate at the junction of a leg, for example the T (*Fig. 5*).

(b) Other plate wear

Fig. 6 shows breaks in the outer frame between the tabs; these breaks can appear in one or more places. Intriguingly, I have only ever found these frame breaks at the sides and never at the top or bottom. Can anyone suggest why this would be?

Breaks in the scrolls at each side of the design can also be seen in *Fig. 6*. These lines are thin and would be expected to be susceptible to wear as the plate deteriorates.

* The stamp with watermark Orb which generated the entry in the SG *Specialised Catalogue* was sold on 12 October 2011 for £10,000 at the Spink sale of the 'Chartwell' collection (Lot 583).



Fig. 2



Fig. 4



Fig. 3



Fig. 5



Fig. 6



Fig. 7



Fig. 8

Fig. 7 shows three examples of what seem to me to be cracks in the plate below the north-west corner letter.

Fig. 8 shows an example of a notch in the frame of the south-east corner letter and in the letter I itself in the north-west corner of the same stamp. There are numerous examples of such notches to be found in this stamp.

(c) Perforation varieties

Fig. 9 shows a very striking perforation variety resulting in a short stamp from position AA on the sheet. If this is a genuine perforation error and as perforation was by the comb method, then there must be a complete row of this variety. Are there any more out there?

Fig. 10 shows stamps with three blind perforations in Horizontal Position 3, top and bottom, and Vertical Position 7, in the H column. I have eight stamps (two on cover) with this variety. G. E. Richardson listed numerous examples of missing perforation pins in his 1967 article.



Fig. 9



Fig. 10



Fig. 11

(d) Re-engraved corner letter

I show in *Fig. 11* (with a normal for comparison) a distinctively-shaped letter R which I assume is characteristic of a particular plate. It occurs in the north-east corner of stamps lettered RG. The right leg of the letter is at a less steep angle and ends further to the right than the normal.

Fig. 12 shows three other examples of this variety. Is it possible to identify the plate which carries this style of R? Any contribution on this from readers of the *Journal* would be welcome. Does it merit an entry in the *Specialised Catalogue*?



Fig. 12

I hope this article has shown that there is considerable scope for study on this stamp and that it will encourage additional interest among collectors. Perhaps other significant varieties might then be discovered. ☒

Security Embossing By Novelli & Co. Again

Vincent West FRPSL

In earlier articles^{1, 2}, I recorded examples of security embossing on postage stamps by Novelli & Co. of Manchester, who embossed a variety of stamps with 'NOVELLI & CO.' (on the left, upwards) / 'MANCHESTER' (on the right, also upwards) in an oval.

Through the kindness of Andrew Claridge I am now able to add the 3d rose (SG Spec. J34) Plate 9 to the list. The illustrated embossed pair lettered LK-LL has a '[MAN]CHESTER/[?] JA 73' duplex (4[98]) postmark; on the back, where the embossing is more readily seen, 'Novelli Manchester' has been written upside down. The pair was part of Lot 105 in the Grosvenor Great Britain sale on 11–12 November 2010.

**References**

1. West, V. 'Security Embossing by Novelli & Co.', *GBJ*, 42(2), Mar./Apr. 2004, p. 29.
2. West, V. 'More Security Embossing by Novelli & Co.', *GBJ*, 43(6), Nov./Dec. 2005, p. 137. ☒

A Matched Pair of Turned 1d Pinks

Mike Jackson & John Randall

The authors recently discovered that they each had a turned 1d pink in their collection, and that by a curious coincidence the covers involved the same two correspondents. Both were sent from Leamington to a Mrs Aiklom (one to Charmouth and the other to Melton Mowbray), and then returned to a Miss Williams back in Leamington. Inexplicably, the writing is in a different hand on all four address panels!

The earlier of the two (*belonging to JR*), addressed to Mrs Aiklom in Charmouth, Dorset, was cancelled with a Leamington Maltese Cross on 29 November 1841. (The



cancellation is a good example of the thick-lined Leamington cross, which, although in our opinion not truly distinctive, is what could be described as 'a cross of interest'. The envelope also bears a London transit datestamp of 30 November 1841. The envelope was returned from Charmouth with a 1d red affixed, addressed to Miss Williams, on 6 December 1841, reaching Leamington the next day.

The second envelope (*belonging to MJ*) was also addressed to Mrs Aiklom but this time she was in Melton Mowbray. It bears a 'TOO LATE' mark and was cancelled with the Numeral 444 of Leamington on 22 July 1844, arriving in Melton the following day. The envelope was returned to Miss Williams with a 1d red affixed, cancelled with the Melton Numeral 522, reaching Leamington on 25 July 1844 (the Melton date is unclear). ☒



Surface Printed First Day Covers

Bob Galland FRPSL

The article by John Forbes-Nixon in the last issue (*GBJ*, 49(6)138–139) on first day covers of the 2½d rosy mauve has raised some interesting points. Firstly, to clarify the paper used for the 2½d value in rosy mauve: Plates 1–5 were *registered* on white Anchor watermark paper. Plates 6–17 were *registered* on Orb watermark paper. Plates 1–3 were *issued* on Anchor watermarked paper; Plates 3–17 were *issued* on Orb watermarked paper. So Plate 3 is known on both papers.¹ According to Wright & Creeke², paper provided for the first five plates was ‘. . . machine-made wove paper, then in use for the small One Penny Inland Revenue stamps’ and ‘The paper was frequently more or less blued, as is generally the case with that specifically made for fiscal stamps, which are intended to be obliterated with pen and ink.’

Secondly, none of the Surface Printed stamps are commonly found used on the first day of issue. The Table shows those of which I am aware. It includes another 2½d Plate 1.

The final point to make is that there remains debate about many of the dates of issue. Several formerly-accepted dates have been changed as more information has become available. There are a number of stamps and covers with postmarks which precede the official date of issue. These include 6d Plate 8, 6d buff Plate 11, 9d Plate 4 Emblems watermark, 1s Plate 6, 4d vermilion Plate 15 and 6d grey Plate 13.¹

References

1. Galland, R. B. & K. Louis. *Great Britain Surface Printed Postage Stamps 1855–1883 Low Values 2½d to 2s*. Great Britain Philatelic Society, 2009.
2. Wright, H. E. & A. B. Creeke. *A History of The Adhesive Stamps of The British Isles*. The Philatelic Society, London, 1899.

Acknowledgement

Andrew Lajer kindly provided the illustrations. ✉



Fig. 1

Surface Printed First Day Covers

<i>Stamp</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>From</i>	<i>To</i>	<i>Other stamps</i>	<i>Rate</i>	<i>Source</i>
4d Small Garter, pair. SG 62	31 July 1855	London	Amsterdam	1d red	Single via Belgium, plus late fee	1
4d large garter. SG 66	12 Jan. 1857 *	London	Bordeaux	—	Single	1
1s green Plate 4, HJ & JI. SG 101	19 Jan. 1865	London	Sicily	—	1 oz rate via Marseilles, French packet	<i>Fig. 1</i>
6d lilac Plate 5, II. SG 97	7 Mar. 1865 (originally, date of issue stated to be 1 Apr.)	London	Sicily	2 x 1s Plate 4. SG 101	1¼ oz rate via Marseilles, French packet	<i>Fig. 2</i>
6d violet Plate 8, FA. SG 108	8 Mar. 1869	London	Hamburg	—	Single, via Belgium	<i>Fig. 3</i>
6d violet Plate 8, CF. SG 108	8 Mar. 1869	Liverpool	Sicily	—	Double rate	1
6d deep chestnut Plate 11, PG. SG 122	12 Apr. 1872 (originally, date of issue stated to be 1 Apr.)	London	Sweden	—	Single rate plus late fee	<i>Fig. 4</i>
9d straw Plate 4, BF. SG 98	1 Dec. 1865 **	London	Constantinople	2d blue Plate 9, 1d red	Single rate via Belgium, plus late fee	1
2½d rosy mauve Plate 1, blued paper, KD. SG 138	1 July 1875	London	Palermo	—	Single (GPU)	<i>Fig. 5</i>
2½d rosy mauve Plate 1, blued paper, AL. SG 138	1 July 1875	London	Copenhagen	—	Single (GPU)	1
2½d rosy mauve Plate 1, white paper, LF. SG 138	1 July 1875	London	Lisbon	—	Single (GPU)	1
2½d rosy mauve Plate 3, white paper, DC, DD. SG 141	1 May 1876	London	Oporto	—	¾ oz rate by British packet	1
4d vermilion Plate 15, PH. SG 152	1 Mar. 1876	London	?	?	?	1
1s deep green Plate 8, DB. SG 148	1 Sept. 1873	London	Mexico	—	Single rate	1

* This is the earliest date known on cover. The actual date of issue is listed as January 1857.

** There is a discrepancy here as 30 Oct. 1865 is also stated as being the date of issue. (The date was changed from 1 Dec. to 30 Oct. in the 9th edition of the *SG Specialised Catalogue* (1989) — Ed.)



Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Fig. 4



Fig. 5

The Genesis of the Jubilee Envelope

John Davies FRPSL

The year 1890 saw the introduction of Great Britain's first commemorative postal stationery to mark the introduction of Uniform Penny Postage fifty years earlier. The success of the Guildhall letter card, prepared for the Jubilee Exhibition held there from 16 to 19 May, inspired the Post Office to prepare its own souvenir for the official Post Office Conversazione at South Kensington Museum on 2 July.

The story of the Envelope is well documented, as the archive of its production was sold virtually complete in the 1970s and remains in private hands — much of it relates to correspondence between the Post Office and W. T. Shaw of De La Rue. The archive was previously detailed by Alan Huggins in an article in *The Philatelic Journal of Great Britain* in 1977 and is reproduced with his permission.

It was only after the sell-out of the Guildhall letter card that the Post Office Jubilee Committee, at its meeting on 19 May 1890, considered a souvenir of their own for the Conversazione. The minute book of the official arrangements stated *'The proposed design for a Jubilee card to be sold on the 2nd July at South Kensington was discussed and Mr. Gary, from Messrs. De La Rue & Co was asked to prepare a proof. The question of having a cover printed instead of a card, was raised but the decision postponed.'*

At its meeting on 20 May, as recorded in the minute book, *'The Committee discussed the question of issuing a fresh special postal card, in connection with the South Kensington celebration, similar to that issued at the Guildhall. The Chairman rather favoured a foreign post card. It seemed there would be no difficulty under the Foreign Convention, provided a letter were written to the foreign postal administration concerned. Even the present card would probably pass without change, as the provision on the subject in the Postal Treaties is somewhat widely worded. Eventually it was decided that it would be unwise to have another post card of any sort, as it would probably offend the city authorities, and would lessen the value of the Guildhall card. It was therefore carried unanimously that instead of a special card a special envelope of a novel design should be issued at the time of the South Kensington Conversazione; that inside every envelope a correspondence card should be placed; that the charge for the envelope and correspondence card combined should be one shilling; that no more than the ordinary commission should be allowed to Postmasters on the sale of these envelopes which should be distributed throughout the kingdom; that, instead of offering an inducement to Postmasters to push the sale of the envelope by increased commission, an appeal should be made to their goodwill to sell it in aid of the Rowland Hill Benevolent Fund.'*

Sir James Whitehead, Chairman of the City of London Jubilee Committee, attended a further meeting in the afternoon and *'agreed that the city people would not like another*

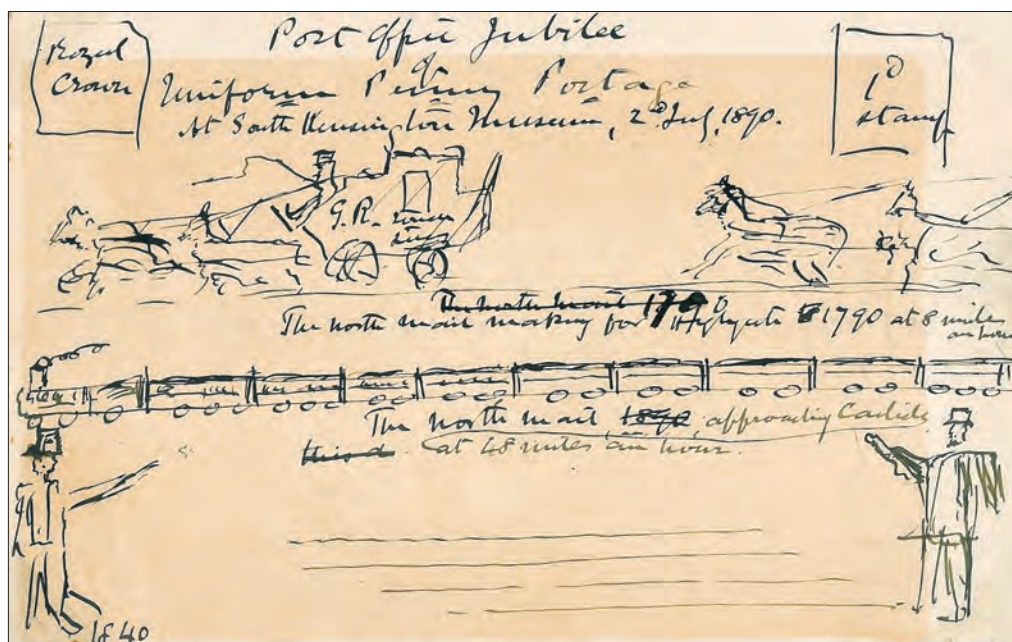


Fig. 1 — Pen-and-ink sketch of the preliminary design by F. E. Baines.

special postal card to be issued, but quite agreed to the idea of a special postal envelope.' It was further suggested that it might well be sold at one shilling all over the country; and at South Kensington on the night of the *Conversazione*.'

A telegram was sent on 20 May to De La Rue with some details of the proposed design: 'One consideration we think we must suggest more comparison between 1840 and 1890, the true comparison not after all between coach and mail or dress of postmen but postal rates in 1840 dates fourpence, ninepence, fifteen pence, two and twopence. In 1890 uniform penny. Can your artist think this offer any suggestion. It is as separate northern sketch. Think letters scattered about with old rates on them would do.'

Another telegram from the De La Rue archive shows that W. T. Shaw was invited by W. E. Gates of the Secretary's Office to join F. E. Baines and the rest of the Committee at 4 p.m. that day. 'Mr. Shaw of the firm of De La Rue & Co, here attended the committee by appointment to confer as to the design of the envelope and correspondence card. He pointed out that the great difficulty was time. It was very difficult indeed to produce in really large quantities any envelope save one of a comparatively small size which he submitted. The committee unanimously agreed that this size was too small, and they preferred to have a smaller supply of a larger envelope. Eventually the design which Mr. Shaw submitted was approved

with some alterations of detail and instructions as shown in the memorandum attached which were sent to him. Mr Shaw thought that he could manage a quarter of a million of a size equal to that of the foreign post card in time for 2nd July.'

Decisions of the Committee as regards the South Kensington Jubilee Envelope

The cover to bear an impressed, not an embossed stamp, of the value of one penny.

The envelope to be as near to the size of the Foreign Post Card as possible.

The paper to be cream wove.

The colour in which the design and stamp are to be printed shall be a blue.

The general design shall be as submitted on the tracing paper, initialled by the Chairman, with this slight modification — that the Postman on the right, that is to say the 1890 Postman, shall exhibit one letter only, marked '1d'. The Postman on the left, shall exhibit four letters, marked '4d', '8d', '1/2' and '2/6' respectively; and an attempt also to be made to work in the connection with the Railway train, a line of telegraph of several wires.

For every envelope, a correspondence card of good quality, of a tint to correspond with that of the envelope, to be provided; the card to bear the following design: On the upper left hand corner a portrait of Sir Rowland Hill, with the legend below — 'He gave us Penny Postage'. The design to be continued across the card, in harmony with the object label used at Guildhall, the words 'at Guildhall' being omitted altogether.

The envelope and card to be sold together for a price not less than 1/-, the issues at the South Kensington Museum being perhaps charged at a higher rate.

The quantity ordered shall not be less than a quarter of a million.

F E Baines 20th May 1890

A letter from W. E. Gates to Mr Shaw, dated 22 May 1890, sent a suggested design, stating: *'Here is the pen and ink sketch which you want. I suppose Mr. Baines wants it back again.'* The pen-and-ink sketch (*Fig. 1*) from the De La Rue archive, although not signed, is undoubtedly in the hand of F. E. Baines. Notably, it depicts the main features of the ultimate design, although the relative positions of the train and the uniformed postmen were reversed.

Obviously it was necessary to move rapidly since Baines had telegraphed De La Rue on 23 May to ask when the sketch for the Jubilee Envelope would be finished, and again on the 24th to inquire the result of a meeting with the Postmaster General to approve the design.

The design stages were:

More developed sketches, one initialled F.E.B., in either ink and/or pencil, detail the heraldic motif (upper left corner) and the other parts of the design, but still place the train above the postmen (*see Fig. 2*).

The source of these details is pin-pointed in a letter to Shaw from Baines dated 7 June which requests the return of three pictures described as ‘The Postal Train’, ‘The Leeds Mail Coach’ and ‘Postmen in Uniform’, sent for guidance in the final design being prepared by DLR.

The second sketch, initialled F.E.B., is specifically referring to a minute summarising the decisions made on 20 June by the Committee of which Baines was Chairman, concerning the design and sale of the Jubilee Envelope, which are detailed in the memorandum above.

A telegram was sent by Shaw to Baines on 24 May enquiring ‘*I am anxious to know result of . . . visit to PMG yesterday. Is design approved?*’

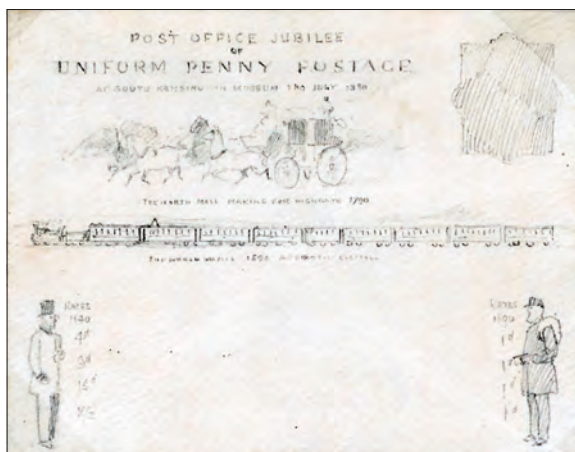


Fig. 2 — Pencil sketch in final size, prepared by De La Rue.

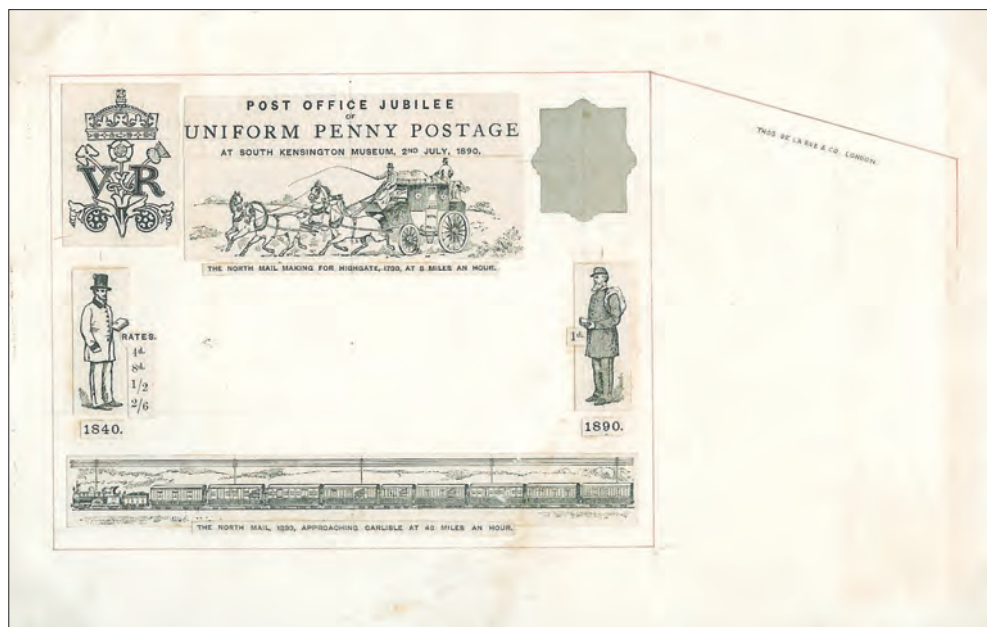


Fig. 3 — Paste-up of the final layout.

The separate features of the envelope design were proofed in black (in a group numbered 334) and then pasted up with the lettering to make the complete design (*Fig. 3*). The resulting zinco block was then proofed in black in both the cleared (*Fig. 4*) and uncleared state, the letter dated 4 June 1890, and endorsed 'No. 4' and '*This ought to be right now*'.

A final approved proof was signed off on 5 June 1890 as '*right for position*'.

The design for the Correspondence card (dated 28 May 1890 was approved on 29 May and final proofs in black taken on 11 June on wove paper. Another proof numbered 336 shows the design in an unfinished state with various guidelines still visible and is endorsed '*F.E.B. No. 1 June 9/90*'.

Parallel with these developments, the specification of the following ancillary items were decided or approved:

23.5.90 Envelopes to be printed 12 to a sheet, correspondence cards 18 to a sheet.

29.5.90 Letter from J. Purcell instructing that correspondence cards be put inside the envelopes and then banded in packets of 10. Then six packets to be made into a bundle.

30.5.90 Letter from J. Cardin instructed 10 packets and not six making up bundles.

31.5.90 Proofs prepared for wrapping papers for bundles of 100.

2.6.90 Size, quality and the text for the imprint on the envelope. Pattern of wrapper band (plain) for bundles of 100 (2500 supplied). Proof in black of text for adhesive labels for bundles of 100 (without border). These were typeset in a forme of four (printed in blue (2500 supplied)).

3.6.90 File note states that according to Baines, quantities cannot be reliably ascertained before 8th but could be as high as one million.

9.6.90 Letter from Baines to DLR stating that while earlier returns seemed to indicate a probable demand in excess of one million, later returns pointed to a very much smaller number. Suggests 150,000 with option to increase if necessary.

11.6.90 Proof in gold on cream of nine impressions vertically, of wrapper band for 10 envelopes — endorsed 3070 sheets. File also contained a paste-up for those proofs in black and two proofs on pale blue paper (from 'Master electro').

13.6.90 Instruction from Purcell to delay printing wrapper bands. Annotation by Shaw that they are printed already. A warrant for 150,000 sent by the Post Office.

16.6.90 Individual wrapper band (for 10) and gummed label for 100 approved by Purcell. Note stated quantity of envelopes not yet settled — thought to be 250,000.

F. E. Baines wrote a letter to W. T. Shaw at DLR on 30 June which reads: '*Our people are, as a body, a meritorious lot, but they do at times do the most perverse things. They have been told over and over again, in print as plain as a haystack, to take orders, to go on taking orders,*

until they are told to stop. We have orders up to tonight for 198,000. We reserve 25,000 for South Kensington and tomorrow we will make a decision as to the 14,000 or so left. If you have not already sent the "wastes" to the Conversazione we have begged Purcell to stay his destroying hand.'

The note from the archive of 2 July 1890 details the quantity delivered as:

Envelopes	248,220
Correspondence Cards	249,220

On 26 June, F. E. Baines sent a telegram to W. T. Shaw with a suggestion: *'What would you say to a proposal from me to make a function with the firm's consent of breaking up the plate in the presence of certain principal people and so cast a special halo around the whole issue. Saturday would do well for Mondays Times they might give an account of Bunhill Row works.'*

Later that day he sent again *'We would wish Sir Arthur Blackwood to be present and he cannot attend tomorrow so subject to the good pleasure of the firm we should like to propose twelve o'clock on Saturday. May we tell our colleagues that this time is agreed.'*

On 28 June 1890 the plate was broken up and the ceremony reported in *The Times* of 30 June.

The Times of 11 June 1890 had earlier carried a descriptive article on the forthcoming envelopes which were to carry a design by F. E. Baines, Assistant secretary at the Post Office. It also suggested that the likely demand would be greater than the proposed printing and that their value would rise to the same high premium of one guinea then being obtained for the 1d red Guildhall letter card issued less than four weeks earlier, the demand for which had far outstripped the supply.

The publicity surrounding these envelopes obviously led DLR receiving a lot of inquiries since they printed a standard reply letter indicating that the envelopes were only available from post offices or at the Penny Postage Jubilee Conversazione at South Kensington on 2 July, price 1s.

One example of the interest created is an order for 5,000 from the Alliance Assurance Company so that they could send one to each of their agents.

Whilst apparently a marketing success, the following report carried by the *St James's Gazette* underlines that the design did not find universal approval and in the event it was caricatured by Harry Furniss (of Punch).

From 'THE ART WORLD', *St James's Gazette*, 8 July 1890

'It was a happy thought of the postal authorities to take advantage of the present stamp mania and produce a Jubilee imitation Mulready envelope to be sold for the benefit of the postmen's charities. Its success from a monetary point of view was such that all were disposed of before the day of issue. But what of the artistic success. Never has there been anything more dampening to the hopes of those who believe that progress in art is just now both rapid and as-

sured. Surely upon an object which had to be compared with a really artistic work (although it did date from the benighted era of 1840), and which will go down to posterity as a specimen of what can be done in 1840, some little pains might have been taken by the monopolists of Government postage stamp productions. What is the good of a State-aided school of design if on such an occasion its services

cannot be called upon to produce something which, at all events, would not irritate, both in colour and composition, the veriest tyro in art knowledge.'

Nothing changes much in terms of the reception by the public of the offerings of the Post Office!

Finally, further information in the file relates to costs and numbers supplied (differing slightly from the earlier note).

<i>Account dated 4.7.90</i>	<i>Correspondence Cards</i>	<i>Jubilee Envelopes</i>
Quantity printed	252,000	252,000
Quantities delivered	249,220	248,220
Cost of: Artists' work	£4.0.0	£4.0.0
Block making	£3.17.6	£7.7.11
Card paper	£106.19.5	£123.19.2
Printing	£8.12.8	£12.4.9
Band and labels		£5.1.9
Approx. 10% addition	£13.16.1	£15.5.5
TOTAL	£151.16.8	£167.19.0
Overall Cost per 1000	12s 2d	13s 6d

Payment of the account, totalling £459 0s 6d was sent by the Treasurer, James Cardin, on 18 August 1890.

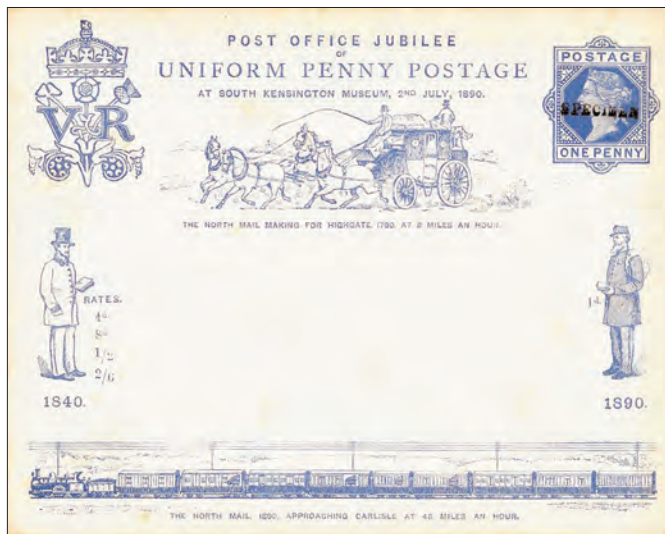


Fig. 5 — Specimen of the Jubilee Envelope.

The story of the Jubilee Envelope remains as a virtually complete story of the Post Office's response to the City of London's original idea of commemorative postal stationery. The pace of production from origination to printing is unlikely to be something that could be matched today.

The envelope itself (*Fig. 5*) may be something that you either love or hate. Hate it because it led to the introduction of the philatelic souvenir back in 1890 or love it for the quality of its production and its importance in the story of the commemoration of fifty years of Uniform Penny Postage and of course, our first postage stamp, the Penny Black!

Acknowledgement

Alan Huggins, *Philatelic Journal of Great Britain*, March 1977.

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Jubilee of Penny Postage: Minutes of the Committee (from 13 March 1890).

Account of the Celebration of the Jubilee of Uniform Inland Penny Postage, printed for the Jubilee Celebration Committee, General Post Office, 1891.

The Penny Postage Jubilee and Philatelic History by Phil, 1891. ✉

A Favourite Cover

George Cafetzoglou Hon.FPSJ, RDPSA

This 'outside-wrapper' is a charisma-filled, well-travelled, and 'full-of-postal-history' item that illustrates a number of Rowland Hill's regulations introduced because of fears that people would attempt to defraud the Post Office (an ever-disturbing factor in his life). It is also one of a handful of covers known to have been cancelled by both red and black Maltese Crosses, and the largest franking (1s) to be cancelled by both colours.

Franked by three pairs of the 1840 2d blue from Plate 1, lettered, AA-AB, GE-GF and BE-BF, this in itself a very rare franking. One shilling was the rate for a letter up to ½ oz from England to Corfu in the Ionian Islands. The islands — sometimes known as the 'Seven Islands' — were at this time under British rule which was sanctioned under the Treaty of Paris on 20 November 1815 at the end of the Napoleonic War, which had culminated with Wellington's victory at the Battle of Waterloo.

The letter left England at some time in July 1841 (it bears no datestamp of departure) and arrived in Corfu in August. The stamps were originally defaced by red Maltese Crosses which may be a late usage as black obliterating ink was introduced in February 1841 for cancelling the 1d red (however, the Post Office instructed the continued use of red until a supply of black was delivered). These red crosses are unclear and smudged, and will be discussed later.



Black-ink cancelling trials were already called for in mid-1840 at the London Twopenny Post Office (which became the London District Post in 1844), and several first day covers are known, dated 31 August 1840.

The cover is addressed to Captain J. J. Bert, 34 Hut, A.D.C. (Aide de Camp) of the 2nd Bty (Battery) Guns, Corfu, where it received the oblong/oval fancy-scroll-type Corfu

3 Guglio 1841 handstamp in black (*Ref. I*), being Type C of Zaphiriou¹, in use 1830–1845, size 43·5 x 14 x 18·75 mm.

Captain Bert had unfortunately already left for England, and therefore the letter was returned to sender, re-addressed to Gosport, and returned through Malta, receiving a c.d.s. (*Ref. II*) dated 30 July 1841, Type MLC-2² showing ‘cross at the bottom’.

As there was a cholera outbreak in the Middle East, the letter was issued with a clean certificate and shows disinfection slits on both sides of the letter (*Ref. III*). The requirement at the time for British letters returned to sender from Corfu (Ionian Islands) was, in Malta, to slit the letter twice with a perforating machine, dip it in vinegar, and then pass it over fumes whose nature is not fully known but assumed to be a mixture of sulphur and saltpetre. It is now evident why the red Maltese Crosses appear to be so faint: it is probably due to the action of the vinegar on the red ink, dissolving it, as referred to above. The same applies to the original address and Corfu receiver (*Ref. I*), as both of these have evidently suffered suffusion and weakening. The necessary clearance of the letter after purification is the black ‘PURIFIE AU LAZARET-MALTE’ with a clear rosette at the bottom (*Ref. IV*), being Meyer’s³ Sub-Type B. This ‘erasure’ of the ink brings to mind Rowland Hill’s fear of the removal of the red cancelling ink off the black stamp, and the stamp’s subsequent re-use, thus defrauding the Post Office of revenue.

The letter arrived in London and, due to the red obliterations now being indistinct, the stamps were defaced by five black Maltese Crosses (which was contrary to instructions, as the requirement was for each stamp to be defaced individually). The letter received a London datestamp of 9 August 1841 in black (*Ref. V*), and then went through a series of re-addressings as follows:

- (a) London transit, 9 August (*V*), as above; Gosport, 10 August (*Ref. VI*);
- (b) Returned to London, 11 August, to Cox & Co., Craigs Court (*Ref. VII*);
- (c) Forwarded to Maidstone, 14 August (*Ref. VIII*);
- (d) Finally forwarded to 10 Royal Crescent, Brighton, Sussex (*Ref. IX*).

The payment due on delivery is not clear, and there are several cancelled manuscript charges on the front of the cover.

This cover, I believe, illustrates all the aspects and regulations relevant in 1841, all due to the ingenuity of Rowland Hill — and almost without change, still in use today. A rare cover, and certainly quite unique in its overall use, travels, and health escapades (although little did they know at the time that paper does not carry germs as envisaged in 1841).

References

1. Dimitri P. Zaphiriou. *Postal History of the Ionian Islands*. Christie’s Robson Lowe, 1987.
2. *Malta Study Circle Handbook*. Robson Lowe, 1980.
3. K. F. Meyer. *Disinfected Mails*. 1962. ✉

The Mystery of the Horseshoe Specimen

David Leathart

‘**W**hat on earth is that doing on that?!’ Those words (or something similar) were uttered by the author to a probably bemused Douglas Muir at the BPMA on the occasion of my first visit to that amazing institution. What had occasioned this outburst? Well, two official OHMS envelopes which bore QV embossed stamps overprinted with the horseshoe ‘SPECIMEN’ Type 17. (Figs 1 and 2). No doubt most philatelists, very sensibly, would say ‘so what?’, but I wanted an answer to my question.

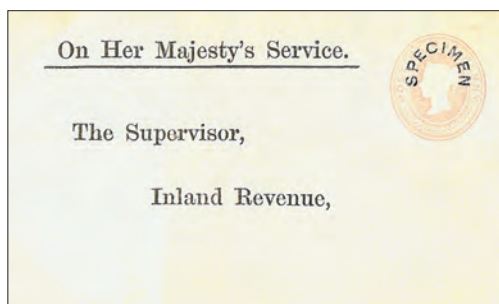


Fig. 1

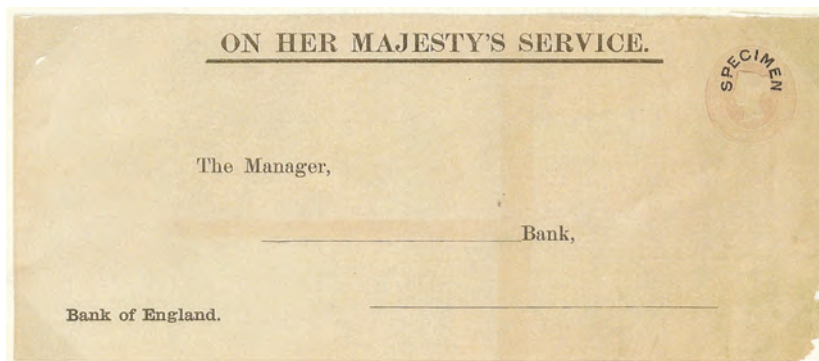


Fig. 2

The best place to start is the doyen of such overprints, Marcus Samuel, who wrote: ‘*The horseshoe form was no doubt adopted in order that the Monarch’s head should not be obscured. A hardened steel handstamp was supplied by De La Rue and Co. to the Inland Revenue “For Mr Colls” on 21 April 1904.*’ (Ref. 1, p. 10).

Therein lies the rub. Queen Victoria died in early 1901. What was a 1904 handstamp doing on a 1901, or earlier, envelope? A second visit to the BPMA led to several more questions:

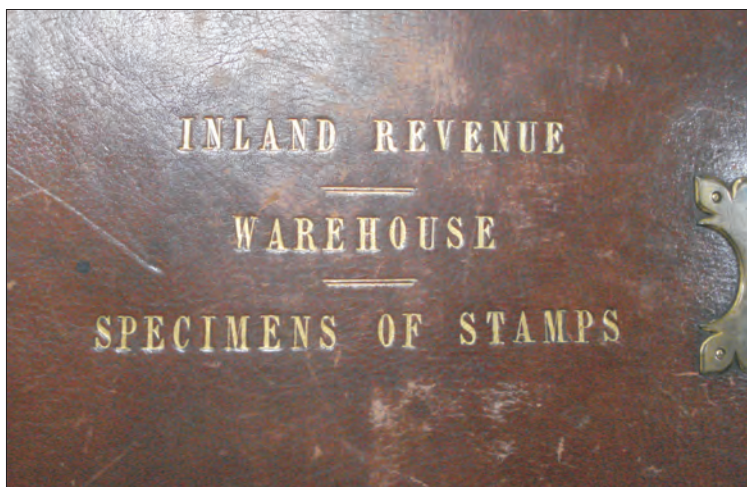


Fig. 3

1. Were the official envelopes in question still being printed in 1904? Huggins¹, on p. 212 under 'Envelopes', stated: '*The following items produced for the Inland Revenue have been seen overprinted with Type 17, the Victorian ones presumably retrospectively to their use but this is uncertain.*' He then listed only one envelope with a 1d pink: for 'The Surveyor of Taxes', size 7 x 12 in., with a queried date given as '1901?'

The sizes of Figs 1 and 2 are $5\frac{1}{6}$ x 3 in. and $8\frac{3}{6}$ x $3\frac{3}{4}$ in. respectively. (The nearest Huggins sizes are 'C' and 'I'.)

2. If they were still being printed, then why?
3. If they weren't, why put on the Type 17 overprint?
4. The only copies of these envelopes in the BPMA have QV embossed stamps with Type 17. Was there an additional print run in 1904? If so, why? I can find no evidence of QV items being printed that late into KEVII's time.
5. Is Samuel correct with his date? This is where it gets potentially interesting. In the BPMA there is a fascinating Victorian/Edwardian book² (Fig. 3) entitled *INLAND REVENUE / WAREHOUSE / SPECIMENS OF STAMPS*. In this book are most of the stamps of QV and KEVII overprinted with various types of SPECIMEN. All are dated and the book contains not only postage stamps but samples of Dog Licence and many Revenue embossed stamps and the exotic overprint 'British Protectorate Oil Rivers'. The dates that appear in the book seem to agree with known issue dates, e.g. KEVII 5d SG 242: issue date in Gibbons is 14 May 1902; in the Warehouse book it is '14 April 1902' in black with 'Issued to public 14 May 1902' in red.



Fig. 4

Samuel was positive that the Type 17 handstamp was supplied on 21 April 1904. However, an entry in the Warehouse book shows use of the handstamp clearly dated '14.8.03' (Fig. 4) (which was the earliest that Douglas Muir and I could find). The latest seems to be '14 July 1910'.

6. Was there an error, and QV rather than KEVII embossed stamps used? This must be open to speculation; however, I feel it is unlikely, given that KEVII 1d carmine Official envelopes exist from 1902.
7. Why were these envelopes added to the official archive? Could they have been found in the Inland Revenue warehouse and added to the archives?

So where does this leave us? Not a lot further forward! The only positive outcome is that the date of Type 17 will have to be taken back to 1903. It will also have to be brought forward to 1910 as Samuel gives 1907 as its final use date. So, the mystery of why two QV 1d pink envelopes in the archive have a Type 17 overprint remains. Huggins indicated that a number of 3d QV Official envelopes also have Type 17 but he didn't illustrate them. I have not seen any other copies, mint or used, of the two envelopes concerned so were they prototypes? Has anyone any ideas to take us forward or, better still, does anyone have some evidence?

References

1. Samuel, Marcus and Alan Huggins. *Specimen Stamps and Stationery of Great Britain*. The Great Britain Philatelic Society, 1980.
2. *Inland Revenue / Warehouse / Specimens of Stamps*. BPMA Ref. SP12.

Acknowledgements

My thanks to Douglas Muir at the BPMA for his help in finding me interesting material and his support. Photographs taken by the author.