

THE GB JOURNAL

VOLUME 51 NUMBER 4 JULY/AUGUST 2013

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1d Die 2 Plate 64 — A Lucky Find

It is rare that great undiscovered rarities are found on Internet auction sites, but it does happen! Although not part of my usual collection, I noticed this unprinted unused block of four of SG Spec. C10, the 1857 1d rose-red, on Delcampe. On the final day of the auction, 14 February 2013, I decided to bid, hoping it might turn out to be from one of the better plates, and secured the block for 60 euros. Not having the relevant plating literature for this issue, I posted a query on the Mulready Group where the block was quickly identified as Plate 64. It now has an RPSL certificate



confirming the plate. Stamps IG and IH are missing from the registration sheet. Mike Williams thinks there may be one other mint block of Plate 64 known.

DENIS MAHON

Returned Unaddressed Letters

Bob Galland FRPSL & Ken Snelson

Early editions of the Postmaster General's Annual Report¹⁻⁴ highlight the problem of inadequately addressed letters. In 1860, two million letters were handled by the Returned Letter Office. During the years 1860–1866, between a half and three-quarters of non-delivery was due to an incorrect or incomplete address. Some 10,000–12,000 letters annually had no address. These unaddressed letters often contained valuables. In 1858 such a letter from a bank agent contained property worth £4,000! It was safely returned to the sender.

Articles by John Forbes-Nixon⁵ and others⁶⁻⁸ reported that few handstamps were known associated with letters inadvertently posted without an address. By contrast, there are many handstamps which could be applied if the address were inadequate — 'Insufficient Address', 'Insufficiently Addressed', 'No such Street/Place in . . .', etc.⁹⁻¹⁰. Several of these are quite common. Paradoxically, of address-related problems, the unaddressed handstamps are the only ones which have their own designated Returned Letter envelopes.

This article describes relevant handstamps, labels and envelopes which are known to us.

Specific handstamps

We have so far identified nine different handstamps, as shown in *Table 1*.

Multipurpose handstamps

Multipurpose handstamps show a variety of reasons for non-delivery. Many different types are described. We have seen them used during the years 1960–1988 (there are probably examples of their usage outside these dates). A few early examples include a section for unaddressed letters (*Figs 5a/b, 6*). We have seen six examples used 1961–1972. The 'Not Addressed' or equivalent section is generally not included.

Specific labels

The only specific label which we have seen is shown in *Fig. 1*, dated 1824 (Jay L300). However, there are also examples where labels have been altered to describe this reason for non-delivery (*Figs 2b, 7*).

Multipurpose labels

Self-adhesive multipurpose labels, which we have seen used from the mid-1980s, have a section for unaddressed letters on early labels (*Figs 8, 9*). It was excluded in later ones (*Fig. 10*), and never re-instated.

Table 1 — Handstamps so far identified

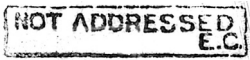


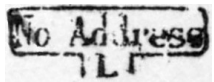
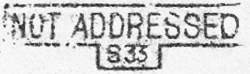
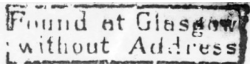


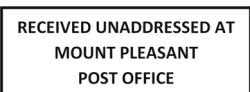
No.	Description	Approx. size (mm)	Colour	Years seen	No. seen	Provenance
	1. Asymmetrical, upper case letters, rectangular box.	52 x 11	Black	1888–1910	5	Refs 5–7, 9, 11 Ref. 12 (Illust. 5005)
	2. Upper case, rectangular box.	37 x 7	Black	1896–1903	2	Ref. 5 <i>Fig. 2a</i>
	3. Upper case, rectangular box.	35 x 9	Red	1901	1	Ref. 8
	4. Lower case, T-box.	23 x 9	Black	1907	1	Ref. 6 Ref. 9 (Illust. 3334)
	5. Upper case, T-box.	44 x 11	Black	1927	1	<i>Fig. 3</i>
	6. Lower case, rectangular box.	48 x 12	Black	1941*	1	Ref. 6
	7. Lower case, rectangular box.	38 x 20	Black	1965–1968	2	Magpie auction, June 2012, Lot 157. <i>Fig. 4</i>
	8. We have not seen an example of this handstamp.	37 x 11	?	?	0	Ref. 12 (Illust. 5066)
	9. We have not seen an example of this handstamp.	?	?	?	0	Ref. 13

Table 2 — Envelopes

Office	Number	Colour	Approximate size (mm)	Date	To	Provenance
London	21	Cream	150 x 85	20 Mar. 1873	Bedford Row, London	Fig. 11
London	21	Cream	146 x 83	1880	?	Ref. 14
London	35	Buff	130 x 100	1894 (ish)	?London	Fig. 12
Manchester	21	Buff	148 x 85	11 Feb. 1895	Manchester	Fig. 13
Bristol	21	?Buff	145 x 80	17 Aug. 1896	Bristol	Fig. 14

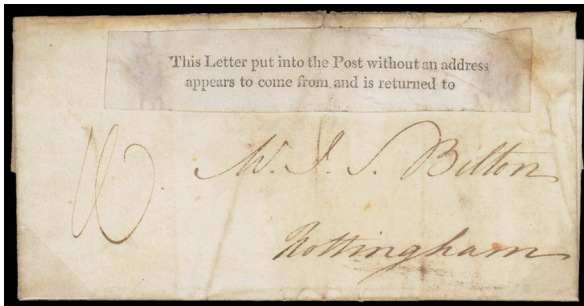


Fig. 1 — Specific label on cover dated 1824.
CAVENDISH PHILATELIC AUCTIONS, 30 MAY 2013, LOT 1366

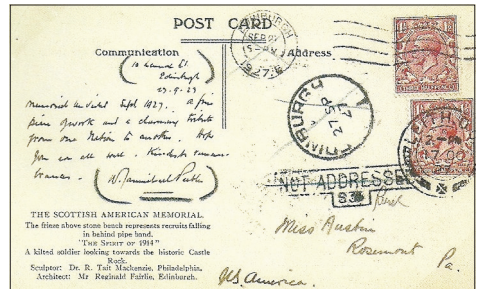


Fig. 3 — Posted in Edinburgh on 27 September 1927 without an address. Returned to sender and re-mailed from Leith with address and another stamp on 17 October.

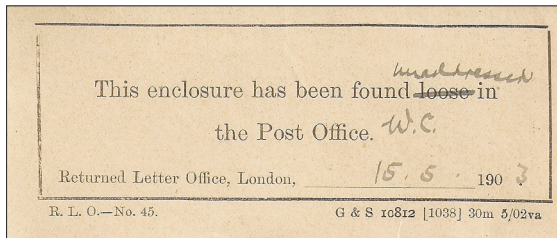


Fig. 2b — RLO No. 45 label altered in ink from 'loose' to 'unaddressed'. Originally attached to envelope shown in Fig. 2a.

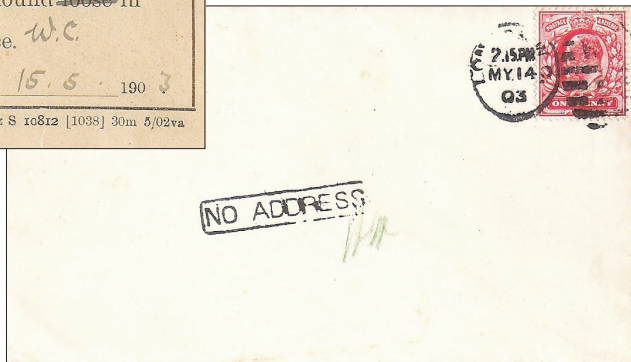


Fig. 2a

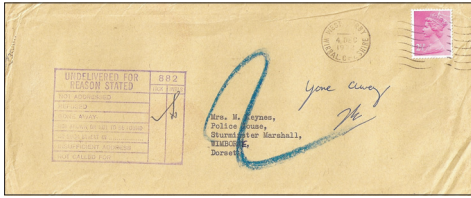


Fig. 5a



Fig. 4b

Fig. 4a

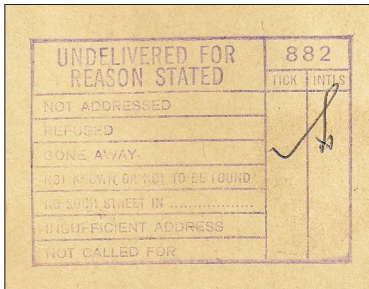


Fig. 5b — Similar to Mackay Illust. 5136 (Ref. 12) but with different office number. Mackay describes 060 and we have seen 080 (or could be 090 as the mark is unclear).



Fig. 6 — Multipurpose handstamp with 'Posted Unaddressed'. The town name is included in the handstamp, rather than a number. We have seen a similar mark for Ormskirk, Lancs.



Fig. 7a

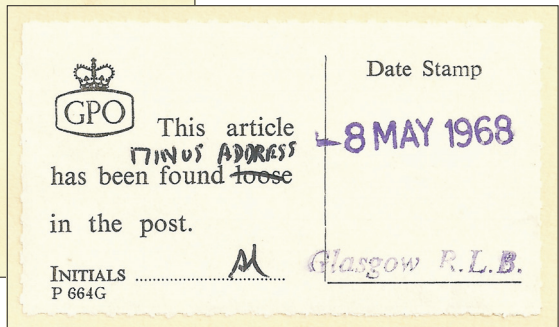


Fig. 7b

RETURNED UNADDRESSED LETTERS

Royal Mail
Undelivered for reason stated – return to sender

Gone away <input type="checkbox"/>	Not known at No <input type="checkbox"/>
Not addressed <input type="checkbox"/>	Incomplete address <input type="checkbox"/>
Refused <input type="checkbox"/>	Not called for <input type="checkbox"/>
No answer <input type="checkbox"/>	Deceased <input type="checkbox"/>

No such street/place in _____

Duty No _____ Date _____
Initials _____
P3860

Fig. 8 — Seen used
January 1986–February 1988.

Royal Mail
Undelivered for reason stated – return to sender

Gone away <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Not known at No <input type="checkbox"/>
Not addressed <input type="checkbox"/>	Incomplete address <input type="checkbox"/>
Refused <input type="checkbox"/>	Not called for <input type="checkbox"/>
No answer <input type="checkbox"/>	Deceased <input type="checkbox"/>

No such street/place in _____

Date 19/1/88 Initials ayf
Badge No 225
P3860

Fig. 9 — Seen used
November 1986–May 1994.

Royal Mail
We were unable to deliver this item because

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> addressee has gone away	<input type="checkbox"/> address unknown
<input type="checkbox"/> no answer	<input type="checkbox"/> refused
<input type="checkbox"/> address incomplete	<input type="checkbox"/> not called for

no such address in _____
date 26-10-93 Initials WJ
badge number 488 P3960 Feb 93/30343

Fig. 10 — The first label which we have seen without 'Not addressed' option. Seen used in October 1993.

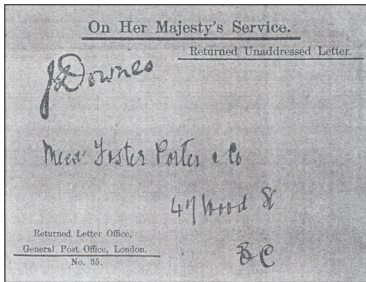


Fig. 12 — Facsimile signature of
J. Downes, Controller of the Returned
Letter Office from 3 January 1893.

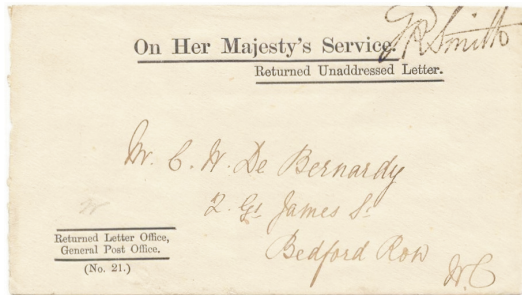


Fig. 11 (right) — Facsimile signature of
G. R. Smith, Controller of the
Returned Letter Office 1867–1892.

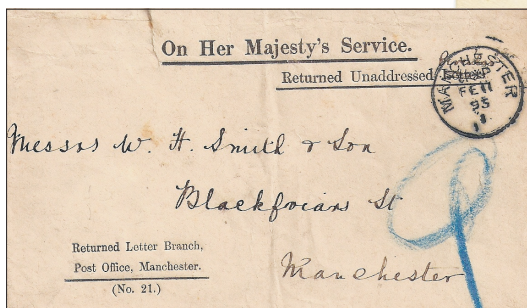


Fig. 13

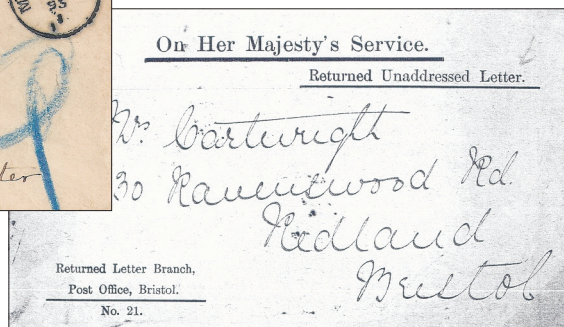


Fig. 14

Envelopes

Prior to 1911 all mail that required opening for return to sender was sent to Returned Letter Offices or Branches in major cities. Unaddressed mail with no sender's address on the outside was handled in these offices. Up to the late 1890s envelopes had printed on them the type of undeliverable mail that they contained. Some offices had special envelopes for returned unaddressed letters. In the late 1890s many specific categories were replaced by a generic returned postal packet designation. The use of special envelopes for returned unaddressed letters presumably ended as remaining stocks were used up. From the 1850s to about 1900 we have recorded more than 500 envelopes but only five are for unaddressed letters (*Table 2; Figs 11–14*). These come from London, Manchester and Bristol. Since Manchester and Bristol used these envelopes, it seems likely that other RLBs in large cities such as Birmingham, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Leeds and Liverpool would also have used them. However, we have not yet seen returned unaddressed envelopes from these offices.

Conclusion

So far we have identified nine specific handstamps, none of which are common. More must exist. We would be interested to hear of any others, either types not recorded here or further examples and dates of usage of those that are described. Similarly, we would like any information on Returned Letter Office/Branch envelopes for the return of unaddressed letters not recorded in this article. Information on other Returned Letter Office/Branch envelopes is also needed to add to our records. Reports, preferably with scans, can be sent to Ken Snelson by e-mail (ksnelson@rogers.com).

References

1. Postmaster General's Annual Report 1858.
2. Postmaster General's Annual Report 1860.
3. Postmaster General's Annual Report 1861.
4. Postmaster General's Annual Report 1866.
5. John Forbes-Nixon, 'Not Addressed', *GB Journal*, Vol. 46, pp. 1–2, 2008.
6. Bob Galland, 'Not Addressed', *GB Journal*, Vol. 46, pp. 32–33, 2008.
7. Martin B. Evans, 'Not Addressed', *GB Journal*, Vol. 46, p. 34, 2008.
8. Bob Galland, 'Not Addressed', *GB Journal*, Vol. 47, p. 61, 2009.
9. James A. Mackay, *English and Welsh Postmarks since 1840*, published by the author, 1980.
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11. John Tingey, 'Interrupted Mail, or is it?', *Postal History*, Dec. 2010, 336, pp. 124–125.
12. James A. Mackay, *Postmarks of England and Wales*, published by the author, 1988.
13. *British Postmark Society Quarterly Bulletin*, Jan. 1995.
14. C. F. Dendy Marshall, 'Returned Letter Covers', *London Philatelist*, Vol. 49, pp. 218–228, 1940. ☒

PENNY BLACK COVERS — 2
Envelopes and Seals

Nigel Sudborough CB, OBE

A Brief History

Seals have been used for many hundreds of years dating back as far the Roman Empire. Clay tablets were used and impressed by the seal of the originator after being inscribed with their message. Later in Europe they were used mainly for official documents and by the 17th century many in the upper classes had their own unique seals, applied in beeswax. Armorial seals were used on folded letters to ensure authenticity, privacy and security, as too were commercial seals.¹

Prior to 1840 most letters comprised a folded sheet with the message written on the inside and the address on the outside. The postal charge was partly based on the number of sheets, and the use of an envelope to contain the sheet would have doubled the charge; it was only after the introduction of Uniform Penny Postage on 10 January 1840 that weight became the sole criteria, thereby encouraging the use of envelopes which gradually took over from folded letter sheets. However, the Mulready letter sheets of 1840 were not gummed and the same was true of commercial stationery. Aside from the use of wax and other seals to secure these envelopes, wafer seals in the form of adhesive paper labels* were also used extensively to promote special interests, including Anti-Corn Laws, Anti-War, Free Trade, Religion, and Temperance. They are much sought after by cover collectors, are usually expensive, and are a study in themselves.

The Introduction of the Penny Black

The 1d black was introduced in the form an 'adhesive label', and was used by some as a 'seal'. On 7 May 1840, in a Notice to the Public, the Secretary of the General Post Office requested that such stamps be placed '*on the Front of the Letter and upon the right hand corner of the upper side.*' Should this request not be complied with '*it was likely that the recipient might pay additional charges for such irregularities*' and a subsequent delay in getting a refund. On the same day, a letter in the *Morning Star* suggested the new stamps '*were to serve as a substitute for a seal or wafer*' and that it would '*require no little ingenuity so to fold the letter as to make the edges of it join at the right hand corner!*'²

Unsurprisingly, as early as the first day of issue of the 1d black, correspondents used this 'adhesive seal' to secure the back or front of the envelope for both security and privacy. The matched pair in *Fig. 1* illustrates such use.

* Editor's note: These labels were known as 'wafers', but, from early in the 17th century to the middle of the 19th, the majority of letters were sealed with a small circular disc of paste, usually made of wheat starch, which was also known as a 'wafer' — see Ref. 3, pp. 561–562.



Fig. 1

1d black and 1d red used as seals on the join of letters by the same correspondent in Dublin to the same recipient within 10 days of each other (4/14 June 1841). Unlike many stamps used as seals, they are not torn.



Fig. 2

Another example (*Fig. 2*) originates from the Dorion Azouri Collection, and was sent from Echt to Aberdeen.

As intended by the sender, the stamp was to act as a seal, broken only by the recipient. Inevitably, many of these 'seals' were destroyed, badly damaged or torn through the middle on opening; thus ones remaining intact, as illustrated in *Fig. 2*, tend to attract high premiums. Some covers attracted a '2' in black to denote postage due at double the rate, only to be cancelled when the clerk noticed the adhesive on the reverse of the cover.

Tuck's Hermetic Envelope

As envelopes became widely used, the *Mechanics Magazine Journal* of 17 October 1840 reported that 'One evil attending their employment is the great facility with which access may be obtained without detection thus permitting the over-curious or the dishonest to rifle the enclosure of its secret, or its pelf [money]'.

Necessity being the mother of invention, in November 1840 Henry Tuck introduced an envelope which seemed to meet not only the needs of privacy and security but also the requirements of the General Post Office. The *Railway Times* explained that 'The Postage Stamp Label is affixed to the envelope in such a manner as to serve at once to seal and frank the letter'². Quantities of not less than 250 of various sizes, in neat paper boxes, from 10s to 15s per thousand, were available at 'all stationers in the Kingdom'. Use was intended for Bills of

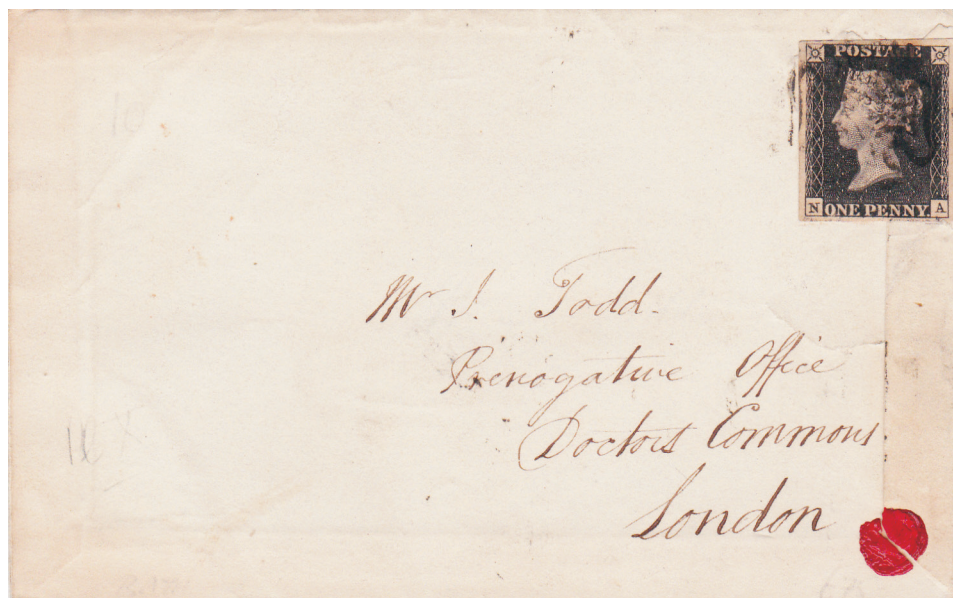


Fig. 3

1d black Plate 10 on 'Hermetic Envelope' sent from Bath to London on 8 August 1841. Again, the stamp is not torn. Interestingly, a wax seal has also been applied for good measure! (Although there is no sign of any publisher's imprint inside this envelope, the construction of it is the same as other Henry Tuck envelopes seen.)

Exchange, Confidential and Legal documents. Notwithstanding the obvious advantages, use was not widespread or few have been preserved; Tuck's envelopes are rare philatelic items.

Further Development of Envelopes

It was not until the Great Exhibition of 1851 that De La Rue demonstrated a machine that made envelopes, folded and gummed, at the rate of 2,700 per hour³, which was a considerable technical achievement for its time. With this development, the need for seals on everyday mail disappeared, and they are seldom seen after 1860.

References

1. Champness & Trapnell, *Adhesive Wafer Seals*, Chancery House Press, 1996.
2. Rockoff & Jackson, *Encyclopaedia of the Maltese Cross*, Vol. 3, Mike Jackson Publications, 2011.
3. Catalogue of the Great Exhibition of 1851 (quoted on BPMA's Web site). ✉

Specimen and Cancelled Stamps

Ray Simpson FRPSL

It is always good to welcome relative newcomers to the risky pastime of philatelic journalism, and David Leathart, who began his review of the literature on specimen and cancelled stamps in the last issue of the *Journal* (GBJ Vol. 51, No. 3) is no exception. The reason the pastime is risky is that there is never any shortage of those ready to dispute a contentious point, especially when it is made at some length. I hope, therefore, that David will forgive me if I express mild disagreement with his contention that the specimen stamps were necessarily of the highest quality, and his associated criticism of the late Tony Wiseman's comments on the subject.

Those with elephantine memories may be slightly surprised that I should, in effect, leap to defend Tony Wiseman, with whom I have had occasion to cross swords in print in years gone by, but I believe that his observations about the quality of at least some specimen stamps were well-founded. Wiseman, it should be remembered, was writing only about the stamps printed by De La Rue, not those of Perkins Bacon. He acknowledged the collectability and value of the specimen stamps, and simply made the point that they were not specially chosen for their function on grounds of their superior quality.

Whilst I am sure that others have expressed it better, the primary function of the specimen stamps was surely that they were properly representative of the stamps issued or proposed for issue. In that respect the minimum requirement was presumably that they should be properly printed on the correct paper so that they could serve as a recognisable sample of the relevant stamp.



Fig. 2

4d stamp CG should show a wing margin at left.



Fig. 1

Stamp NF should show a wing margin at right.



Fig. 3

Stamp at far right is from last column (note remnant of plate number) and should show a wing margin.




Fig. 4

There is at least one respect in which specimen stamps are often inferior to their issued counterparts, and that is perforation (for those that were perforated). This is certainly evident in the surface printed stamps of the early Victorian era. In general, perforation quality for these issues was good, and demonstrably much better than for the contemporary line-engraved stamps. It is very evident, however, that some of the specimen stamps derive from ordinary sheets that because of some fault, probably in the printing, had to be specially perforated out of their normal position (abnormal official perforation). It seems that most of these were rejected for issue, almost certainly on the grounds that the damage prevented their distribution as full ‘post office’ panes. In other words, the specimen use was effectively a salvage job on what would otherwise have finished up as waste paper. Examples are shown in *Figs 1, 2 and 3*. Those interested may wish to refer to the article that Peter Sargent and I wrote for the *London Philatelist*¹.

Since the majority of Victorian specimen stamps were reference or record copies held by the Inland Revenue or stamp printers, the perfection or otherwise of the perforations was totally irrelevant, and it is no surprise that virtually all the known abnormal officially perforated stamps are overprinted SPECIMEN.

My final exhibit (*Fig. 4*) takes us into more exotic, if not alien, territory so far as this journal is concerned, namely New South Wales. These two perforation-challenged specimen stamps are mounted on a piece from De La Rue’s 1866 sample book. I rest my case.

Reference

1. R. C. Simpson & P. J. Sargent, ‘Perforation of the De La Rue Printed Abnormals of Great Britain’, *London Philatelist*, Vol. 116, No. 1349, 2007. 

Specimen Stamps — Correction

Unfortunately the following sentence should not have appeared in David Leathart’s article in the last issue (bottom of page 58): ‘*They also referred to 2s Blue imperforate stamps and to Embossed envelopes having SPECIMEN across their stamps.*’ Apologies for any confusion caused.

MJ

Choose 'ME'!

Peter Young FRPSL

The notes on 'the creative use of the lettering on Victorian stamps to convey messages' (GBJ, Vol. 51, p. 54) made me smile. Whereas the two examples on line-engraved 1d stamps were subtle, De La Rue & Co may have tried some coercive subliminal advertising in 1879. Certainly, the lettering is suspicious.

The Tender Competition rules required the competitors to submit some sheets of surface-printed stamps and examples of their inks in May 1879, but not proofs in black. A number of draft heads had been engraved by Daniel Pound and David Turner during 1878–9, that were suitable for producing leads for plates capable of mass-producing the stamps for the four English, Revenue, Indian and Colonial Contracts.

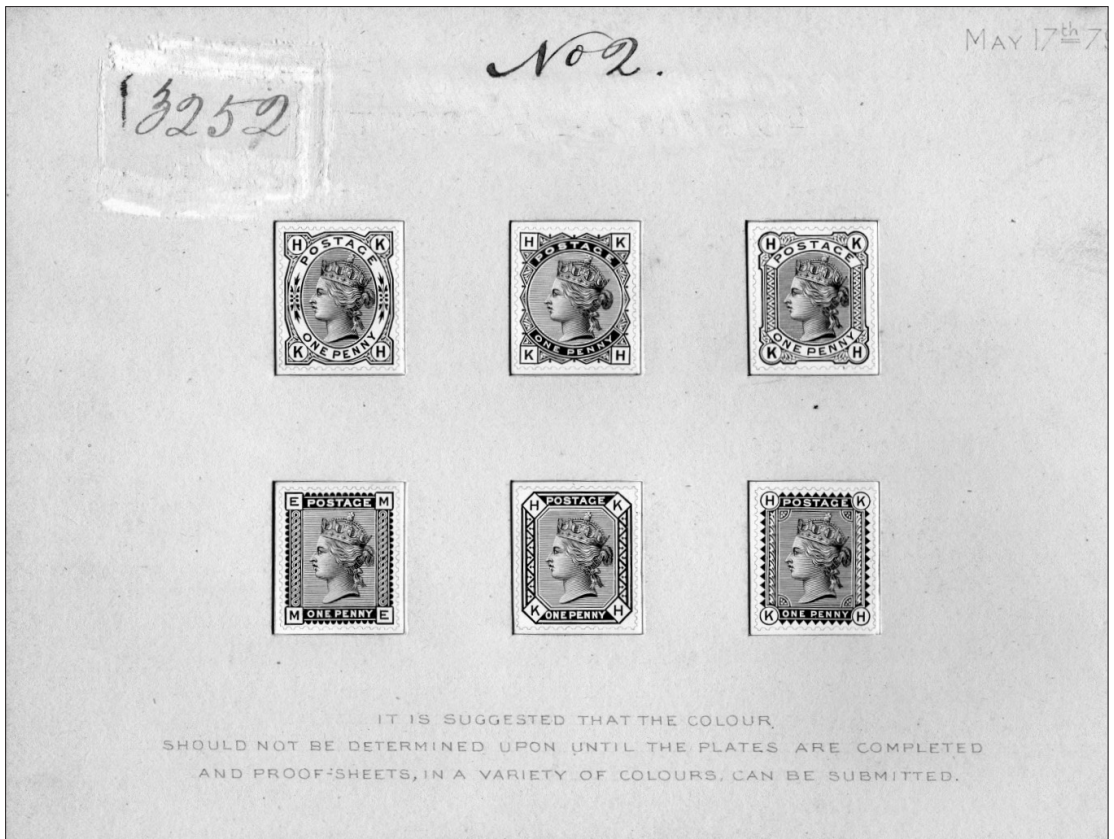


Fig. 1

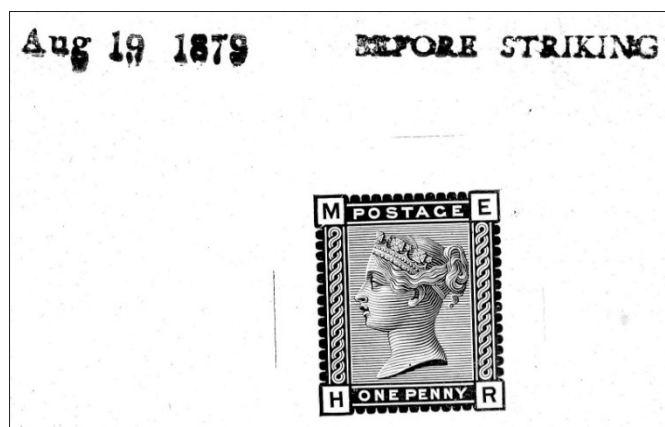


Fig. 2

On 17 May 1879 the firm prepared two sets of four cards — A, B, C, & D — to display the clarity of their ‘firmer’ engravings for letterpress, as well as their general professionalism. Each card bore die proofs of the same six frames but with one of the heads for the four Contracts. The name of De La Rue & Co. had been written on these eight cards, but the four submitted had it scratched out. The second set, retained in the firm’s archive, had a hand-written ‘Cancelled’ diagonally across each unit. The submitted cards A, B, & D were acquired by the National Postal Museum along with the copy of ‘Cancelled’ card C. My copy, the so-called ‘missing Card C’, but inscribed ‘No. 2’ and the Inland Revenue File Number ‘3252’, is shown (*Fig. 1*).

It must have been obvious to the officials involved that De La Rue had made these cards, but as engraver to the Board, Warren William De La Rue played a major role in the selection process. The only question was, which was the preferred design? After obtaining the Government Chemist’s comments on the inks, E. B. Robertson, the Controller of Stamping, reported to the Board that he was very impressed by this firm’s samples, and he particularly recommended the head and frame lettered D on Card A.

As each of the six frames was the same on each card, what distinguished frame D? All the other frames bore the bottom corner letters ‘KH’ while this frame bore the letters ‘ME’!

This was accepted by the Board on 27 June. Then, six weeks later, a Die 1 (of three) for the new 1d stamps was proofed on 19 August, just before striking leads, that also has the letters ‘ME’ in its top corners (*Fig. 2*). Was this another subtle suggestion to choose this Die as Die 1? ☒

Mystery Cancellations on Private Telegraph Stamps

Mark Talbot

The collecting of British private telegraph stamps is on the borders of GB philately, but it is a very interesting area and gives rise to number of in-depth areas to study.

The telegraph system for transmitting messages was advanced enough by the late 1840s to warrant the creation of the Electric Telegraph Company, followed by a number of other privately-owned companies, some of which issued their own stamps to pre-pay for the telegraph messages. The companies were effectively nationalised in 1870 and their operations taken over by the Post Office.

Some of these companies cancelled their used message stamps with a company obliteration: these included the Electric Telegraph Company, the Submarine Telegraph Company, the British & Irish Telegraph Company and the United Kingdom Telegraph Company. Some, for example the London District Telegraph Company and the South Eastern Railway Company, cancelled their used stamps with pen and ink. However, according to Lister¹ and Langmead & Huggins², four companies never used an obliterator or cancelled their stamps in any way:

- English and Irish Magnetic Telegraph Company;
- Bonelli's Electric Telegraph Company Limited;
- The British Telegraph Company;
- Universal Private Telegraph Company.

English and Irish Magnetic Telegraph Company

This company was founded in 1851/2. As a collector of their stamps, I was surprised to see a used copy of the 2s 6d blue on eBay so I bid for and acquired the stamp (*Fig. 1*). It is clearly a proof because the issued stamps had a control number and very little or non-existent margins at the top and bottom; Fig. 1 shows that my stamp has large margins all round. Also, the issued 2s 6d stamp was a mid- to dark blue, but my copy is a very light blue.



Fig. 1

MARK TALBOT COLLECTION

However, it is the 'official' cancellation that is most strange. Lister stated that he had never seen any used copies of this issue, and Langmead & Huggins stated (p. 21) that *'they are not thought to have been used'* but went on to say that *'an example of the 2s 6d (C04341) is known with an apparent cancellation'*. The cancellation on my stamp is of Totton Southampton, but the English and Irish Magnetic Telegraph Company never opened an office anywhere south of London! And the date on the cancellation is 4 August 1856 but the stamps are not thought to have been issued until 1857! More of these 'cancelled'

stamps exist because Cavendish had a number of them with the Totton Southampton cancellation on offer in their auction of 17 March 2010³.

Bonelli's Electric Telegraph Company Limited

This company was founded in 1861 but did not issue stamps until it was too late to use them! *Fig. 2* shows two examples of the 3d brown (which were issued in booklets) with pen cancellations which appear to be contemporary with the stamp. I purchased my copy (Control 6824) from Andrew Vaughan Philatelics, and a second stamp (Control 6823) appeared on eBay in May 2013 and was acquired by Mike Jackson. As can be seen from the perforations, and consecutive control numbers, the two stamps were originally joined together!



Fig. 2

MIKE JACKSON COLLECTION (LEFT), MARK TALBOT COLLECTION

Again, Lister stated that he had never seen any of these issues cancelled, and Langmead & Huggins do not mention any cancelled Bonelli stamps.

Was this cancellation just to deface the stamps, as the majority of these issues were remainders, or were they cancelled at some time in the past to try to improve their value?

Finally, *Fig. 3* shows a 6d grey of this issue with a clear postal cancellation — a London hooded datestamp. Possibly, this can be explained by the stamp having been affixed to an envelope (with or without the correct postage stamp) and cancelled as it passed through the post.

Having viewed the Langmead and Tapling collections at the British Library many times I have never seen cancelled stamps from these two companies, and this must confirm the views of Lister and Langmead & Huggins in their books. Why these stamps have cancellations on them remains a mystery, and if any GBPS members have any further information regarding the cancelling of these issues I would be delighted to hear from them.



Fig. 3

DR MARK GIBSON COLLECTION

Acknowledgements

Steve Panting from GB Precancels for allowing the use of the image in

Fig. 3 (stamp owned by Dr Mark Gibson). Steve's Web site is at <http://gb-precancels.org/Telegraphs/index.html>

The British Library Philatelic Collections.

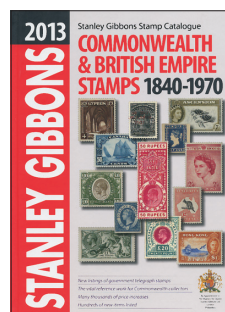
References

1. Raymond Lister *Private Telegraph Companies of Great Britain and their Stamps* (Golden Head Press, 1961).
2. Peter Langmead & Alan Huggins, *The Telegraph Stamps and Stationery of Great Britain 1851–1954* (GBPS, 2003)
3. Cavendish Philatelic Auctions, 17 March 2010, Lot 365 ‘small collection of telegrams/telegraphs including 1853 English & Irish Magnetic Telegraph Co. imperf. 2/6d, 4/- & 5/- (2, one stained) all with central “TOTTON/SOUTHAMPTON” c.d.s.’ ✉

Book Review

SG ‘2013 Part 1’ Commonwealth & British Empire Stamps 1840–1970, 115th edn. Size A4, hardbound, xxxv + GB1–42 + 1–616 pp. Published by Stanley Gibbons Ltd, 2012. ISBN 978-0-85259-851-1. Price £79.95.

This latest edition of ‘Part 1’ has the usual price revisions, and numerous new notes, listings and changes throughout. The most significant development in this edition is the inclusion of government telegraph stamps for many Commonwealth countries — but not all countries, yet, as this is a ‘work in progress’. It was decided not to include the Post Office telegraphs of Great Britain in this edition (although they are in the *Great Britain Concise Catalogue*).



Both the 1d and 2d ‘Post Office’ Mauritius stamps have had £100,000 added to their price — they are now catalogued at £1,100,000 and £1,300,000 respectively! The following prices of some key GB stamps may be of interest (2012 edition/2013 edition prices).

- 1840 1d intense black SG 1, used, £450/£525;
- 1840 2d blue SG 5, used, £700/£850;
- 1861 1d rose-red SG 42, Plate 225, used, £700/£800;
- 1881 1d lilac SG 172, used, £2.00/£2.20;

However, the prices of most Great Britain stamps, particularly those of the 20th century, remain unchanged. Two GB stamps have been added to the listings: SG 166b (1880 1d Venetian red error of watermark Orb); and SG Z75a (1867 5s rose used in Iquique, Peru — although this is described as ‘1857’ in the listing, and ‘1855’ in the Preface). The Parliamentary Envelopes of early 1840 are now listed and priced.

Those collectors whose interests extend to the British Empire and Commonwealth will find this impressive catalogue invaluable.

MJ

The 'Half-Crown' Priority Letter Scheme of WWI

Graham Mark

During the first twelve months of the war, censorship of the mail was being extended, though there were limitations because of the availability of suitable staff and the nervousness of the Foreign Office which feared upsetting foreign governments. The public realised that the process of examining the contents of foreign mail was leading to some delay so complaints were regular, but delays to shipping were probably more to blame than the 24 or 48 hours in the censorship system.

To try to reduce any delays a practice arose of taking letters to the censors' office to accelerate the system. If a business letter was put into a London post office in the mid-afternoon the chances of it being dealt with by the censors that day was probably quite small, but if instead the office messenger was sent to the censors' office, a day might be saved. Evidence of registered letters being carried to the censors can be gathered from the registration etiquettes which were either printed 'LONDON PC', or were overprinted with the initials 'PC' (*Figs 1a & 1b*), 'PC' meaning Postal Censorship. Unregistered mail offers no similar clues.



Fig. 1a



Fig. 1b

On 7 July 1915, this practice of letters being carried straight to the censors was banned, and it was announced that for urgent and important business correspondence, that would be subject to censorship, a special posting box had been set up at the London Chief Office (King Edward Street). Items posted there up to 2 p.m., with an additional fee of 2s 6d, would be sent to the censors and would receive priority in examination by them. Registered and insured mail could also receive this same service but they had to be handed over the counter by 1:45 p.m.

The two covers from which *Figs 1a & 1b* were taken were posted in 1916 and appear to have been taken directly to the censor, disregarding the new scheme. The cover carrying *Fig. 1a* was from a French bank in London to Copenhagen on 10 March 1916, while the cover of *Fig. 1b* was from Ewen's Colonial Stamp Co. Ltd, addressed to Rotterdam on 4 May 1916. Over the censor label, numbered 112, there is the wax seal of Mr l'Estrange Ewen's company. One can just imagine him standing at the censor's elbow waiting for the item to be closed and then putting his seal on it. It is surprising that this sort of behaviour was allowed at all.

A survey of 'half-crown covers' recently conducted has so far revealed thirty examples of outward mail under this scheme which was clearly extended beyond the special box in

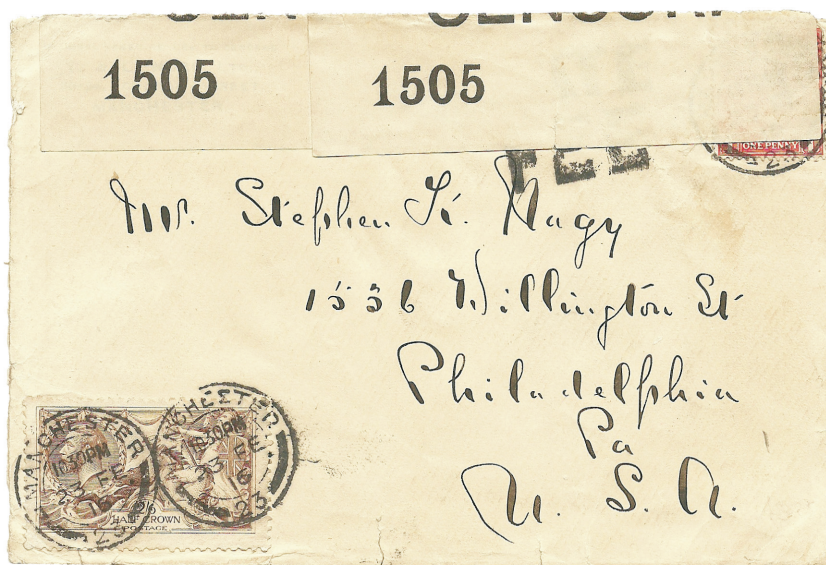


Fig. 2 — Manchester, 23 February 1916, to Philadelphia. The partly covered large 'LATE / FEE' mark is found on these 'Half-crown letters' from both Manchester and Liverpool.



Fig. 3 — Stornoway, 3 February 1917, to General Ounen at the HQ of the Internee Administration, at The Hague.



Fig. 4 — Throgmorton Avenue, London EC, 29 March 1919 (a Saturday) to Cologne, paid 2s 11½d (postage 2½d, special censorship 2s 6d and express delivery 3d).

London. When plans were being made to set up a censorship office at Liverpool (opened 1 December 1915) to handle trans-Atlantic terminal mails, the Post Office arranged for the scheme to be extended to that city and soon after to Manchester (*see Fig. 2*). Further extensions must have been made in view of two covers known from Stornoway (*see Fig. 3*) and one from Dublin.

Statistical inferences from the survey will be biased by the ten items recorded addressed to a newspaper office in Aarhus, Denmark. Another item which prompts questions is dated 29 March 1919, addressed to Cologne, Germany (*Fig. 4*). I have found no announcement that the service was extended to the British occupied area of Germany.

With the outward scheme becoming known to overseas correspondents there was some pressure to introduce a similar arrangement for incoming mail, but only one example of this is known. Requests were made through diplomatic channels for a reciprocal scheme and it began in August 1917, but only for mail from six neutral European countries: Denmark, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Sweden and Switzerland. The USA was invited to join the scheme but no arrangements were formalised.

The requirements for the inbound scheme were unusual. The sender had to affix, lightly to the first page of his letter, stamps to the value of 2s 6d and the cover had to be

Recorded Covers

No.	From	Date		Paid	To	Censor	Arrived
1	London FS	12 Aug. 15		2s 6d + 2½d + 1d + ½d	Stockholm S	229	
2	London EC	7 Oct. 15	Reg.	2s 6d + 4d + ½d	Christiania NO	434	10 Oct. 15
3	Liverpool	25 Jan. 16		2s 6d + ?	Chicago	1647	
4	Manchester	23 Feb. 16		2s 6d + 1d	Philadelphia	1505	(Fig. 3)
5	Manchester	28 Feb. 16		2 x 1s + 6d + 1d	Philadelphia	1647	
6	Aberdeen	7 Aug. 16		2s 6d + 1d	Boston USA	1774	
7	London EC	26 Aug. 16	Reg.	2s 6d + 2½d + 2d	Buenos Aires AR	1660	10 Oct. 16
8	London FS	6 Oct. 16		2s 6d + 1d + 1d	New York	1760	
9	London Ch. Off.	23 Nov. 16	Exp.	2s 6d + 3d + 2½d	Groningen NL	missing	
10	Liverpool	22 Dec. 16		2s 6d + 4 x ½d	New York	not shown	
11	Stornoway	3 Feb. 17	Reg. stat.	3 x 8d + 6d + embossed	Hague NL	PW 5	11 Feb. 17 (Fig. 2)
12	Liverpool	13 Mar. 17		2s 6d + 1d	Philadelphia	1731	
13	Stornoway	14 Apr. 17	Reg. stat.	2 x 1s + 6d + embossed	Hague NL	PW 5	not clear
14	London EC	4 June 17		2s 6d + 1½d + 1d	Zofingue CH	186	7 June 17
15	London W	19 June 17		2s 6d + 2d + 1d	California	3656	5 July 17
16	London FS	21 June 17	Exp.	2s 6d + 4d + 2½d + ½d	Aarhus DK	1418	7 July 17
17	London FS	26 June 17		2s 6d + 2 x 2½d + 2 x 1d	Aarhus DK	1418	
18	London FS	10 July 17		2s 6d + 2 x 2½d + 1d	Aarhus DK	1418	
19	London FS	11 July 17		2s 6d + 2 x 4d + ½d	Aarhus DK	1418	
20	London W	23 July 17		2s 6d + 1d	California	1839	
21	London FS	26 July 17	Exp.	2s 6d + 2 x 4d + ½d	Aarhus DK	1418	25 Aug. 17
22	London FS	2 Aug. 17		2s 6d + 3 x 2½d + 1d	Aarhus DK	?	
23	London E	3 Oct. 17		2s 6d + 2 x 2½d	Aarhus DK	1418	
24	London FS	10 Jan. 18		2s 6d + 2 x 2½d + 1d	Aarhus DK	1418	
25	Dublin	28 Feb. 18	Exp.	2s 6d + 1d	New York	1879	
26	London FS	4 May 18		3 x 10d + 2 x 2½d + 2 x 1d	Aarhus DK	1418	
27	London FS	3 July 18		4 x 10d	Aarhus DK	1418	
28	London FS	27 July 18		2s 6d + 2½d	Berne CH	4978	31 July 18
29	London EC	4 Oct 18	Exp.	2s 6d + 5d + ½d	Bienne CH	616	19 Oct. 18
30	London EC	29 Mar (19)	Reg.	2s 6d + 5d + ½d	Cologne D	4581	3 Apr. 19 (Fig. 4)
<i>Inbound</i>							
31	Bahnpost CH	23 Apr. 18	Exp.	70c + 12 x 2½d	Kidderminster	405	London, 27 Apr. (Fig. 5)

addressed to the ultimate destination care of the Chief Postal Censor, London. After examination of the contents the stamps were transferred to the cover which was then sealed and passed to the Post Office who handled it as an express delivery item (*see Fig. 5*).

An unanswered question arises: as the export of postage stamps to non-sterling areas was strictly controlled by permit arrangements, how did the stamps reach the European firms for them to use in their letters back to Britain for express censorship? Did they have to purchase stamps from local dealers, or could the British firm send the stamps, with a suitable explanation for the benefit of the censor, in an outbound letter?

Sources

1. Farquharson, Lt-Col. A. S. L. *Report on Postal Censorship during the Great War (1914–1919)*, paragraphs 279, 281 & 569, War Office 1920, National Archives Ref. DEFE1/131, Post Office Archives Ref. POST56/57.
2. Mark, Graham. *British Censorship of Civil Mails during World War I (1914–1919)*, pp. 151–152, Stuart Rossiter Trust Fund 2000, ISBN 9780953000418.
3. *The Times*, 7 July 1915 and 5 June 1917.
4. *Stamp Collectors' Fortnightly*, 17 July 1915, p. 119.
5. *The Philatelic Magazine*, 1 July 1917, p. 143.
6. *The Postage Stamp*, 29 January 1916, p. 229 and April 1917, p. 194. ☒

Editor's note: The author is Hon. Treasurer and Librarian (and a past Editor) of the Civil Censorship Study Group, and will welcome further reports of these covers. CCSG interests cover censorship and interruption of mails in times of war and civil unrest in all periods.

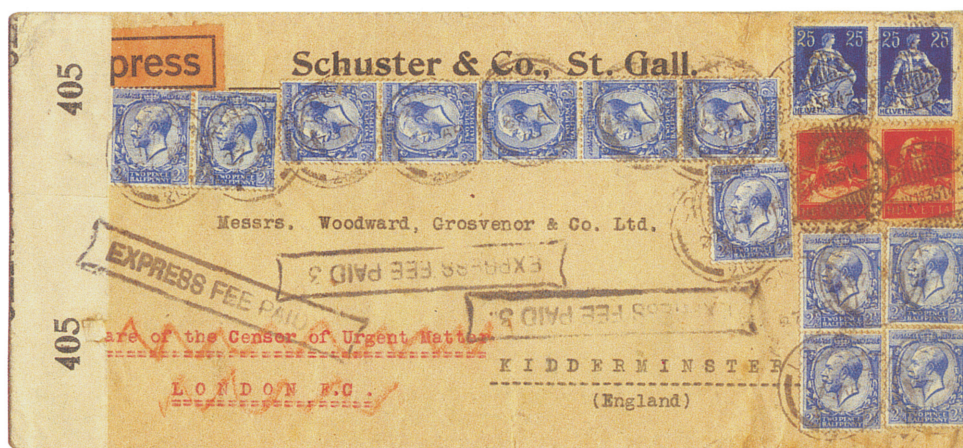


Fig. 5 — The only recorded example of an in-bound cover with the 2s 6d fee paid for express delivery (illustrated on the front cover of the author's book *British Censorship of Civil Mails during World War I*).

A Further Correction to Nissen — *1d Black TC Plate 6*

Paul Witham

Mike Jackson's article* in the last issue on the Nissen reconstruction of the 1d black was most interesting. I acquired a set of the 1922 Nissen photographs¹, together with the text, about 30 years ago. I wanted them for plating reds, and only now and then for blacks. There was no trace of the Corrigenda that Mike illustrated. I did not check any of the plating, believing that as McGowan had carefully done this they were thought to be correct.

Then in August 1987 I received a letter from Dr Wiggins concerning errors in his plating photographs of the 1d Die 2 Plates 1–21, and at the end of the letter he informed me that 1d black TC Plate 6 in Nissen was actually Plate 7. He also said *'there were about 12 originally'*, which must refer to the five corrections in the Corrigenda and possibly others.

Having compared notes with Mike, it transpires that his copy and my copy of the 1922 Nissen photograph of TC Plate 6 are different — his has the correct stamp but mine does not (see Figs 1–4). So, for anyone using an original edition of Nissen, it is worth checking TC Plate 6.

Reference

1. Charles Nissen (in collaboration with Bertram McGowan), *The Plating of the Penny Black Postage Stamp of Great Britain 1840*, Chas. Nissen & Co. Ltd, 1922; republished by Stanley Gibbons, 1998.

* Editor's note: In my article, I suggested that all of the original Nissen stamps might have been blacks. However, now having compared the original Nissen photographs with the coloured images of stamps from the Chartwell Collection on Spink's Web site, this is demonstrably not true, and many of Nissen's Plate 11 stamps were, not surprisingly, red.



Fig. 1 — From PW's copy of the 1922 edition showing a duplicate Plate 7 stamp in place of Plate 6.



Fig. 2 — From MJ's copy of the 1922 edition showing a correctly-plated Plate 6.



Fig. 3 — From the 1998 SG republished edition showing the same Plate 6 stamp as in Fig. 2.



Fig. 4 — From Spink's Web site, showing a different Plate 6 stamp.