

NOTEBOOK

Number 112 August 1994

In This Issue.....

- page 2 **Bernard Richard Smith 1913 - 1994**
- 3 Holloway Road 1 py P Paid
- 4 Returned Letter Branch Stamp Rollo Kroesen
- 5 **Mail Missing the Post - Two responses**
- 6 Twopence FB Accounting Mark Philippa McIntosh
- 7 **The 81 Double Diamond** **FM. Johnson**
- London Maritime Mail
- Self Inking Date Stamps
- 8 **London Fancy Geometric Postmarks - A Study** **Maurice Barette**
- 13 Cuts
- 14 **The Disappearing London Sub Districts** **Colin Peachy**
- 15 Inspector's Crown Martin Townsend
- 16 **A Book Post Precancel ?**
- India Ship Letter London** **Dr med Wolf Hess**
- 17 Bexley Tram Letter Box Peter Bathe
- 19 London District Post 62
- 20 May 1994 Auction Results

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EDITORIAL

For those of us who have "retired" there is a very curious and frequently remarked phenomena, namely, "there isn't enough time to do all I want to". This is all too apparent in your Editor's case, having found the weeks and months slipping past without getting "Notebook" issued. It is understood "method and planing" are requisites to correct the position but where does the time come from for these ?

As for "writing up" one can only hope the several collections in the process of revision (and what a shock acquired knowledge gives when one reads some of the nonsense glibly offered in the past as the explanation of a charge rate or routing !) eneventually are fit to be displayed.

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BERNARD RICHARD SMITH

1913 - 1994

Bernard was born in Shrewsbury in 1913. His working life was spent with the Post Office, starting as a Messenger at his birthplace. He transferred to Whitchurch, Shropshire, as Assistant Head Postmaster, later becoming Head Postmaster, the youngest to hold that grade at the time.

Subsequently he was Head Postmaster at Swansea, Dudley and Ilford, retiring from the Post Office in 1973 when he moved to Charmouth with his wife, Dora.

It was during his time at Ilford Bernard became interested in the "London Twopenny Post", which earned him his first Stampex Bronze after his retirement. Another Bronze was won with a study of "Forty Years Experiment of the Duplex Cancel".

Other interests included Shropshire Postal History and a wonderful collection of Postal Ephemera which contained, amongst a wide range of material, many types of Letter Scales, Stamp Boxes, Post Horns and a Mail Coach Guard's Blunder Buss and Pistol.

Apart from the LPHG, Bernard's memberships included the Postal History Society, the Society of Postal Historians, the British Postmark Society, the Somerset and Dorset Postal History Group, the Letter Box Study Group and was President of his local Bridport & Charmouth Stamp Club.

During his years with the Post Office Bernard always joined the local society for the place at which he worked and held an assortment of posts with them over the years.

Bernard and Dora celebrated their Golden Wedding in 1988 and Bernard his 80th. birthday in August last year, at which celebration all the children and grandchildren were present.

Bernard also had a keen interest in his local Church and gardening Club and, unknown to most, gave time and energy to the Cheshire Homes and other charities, supported in all this by Dora.

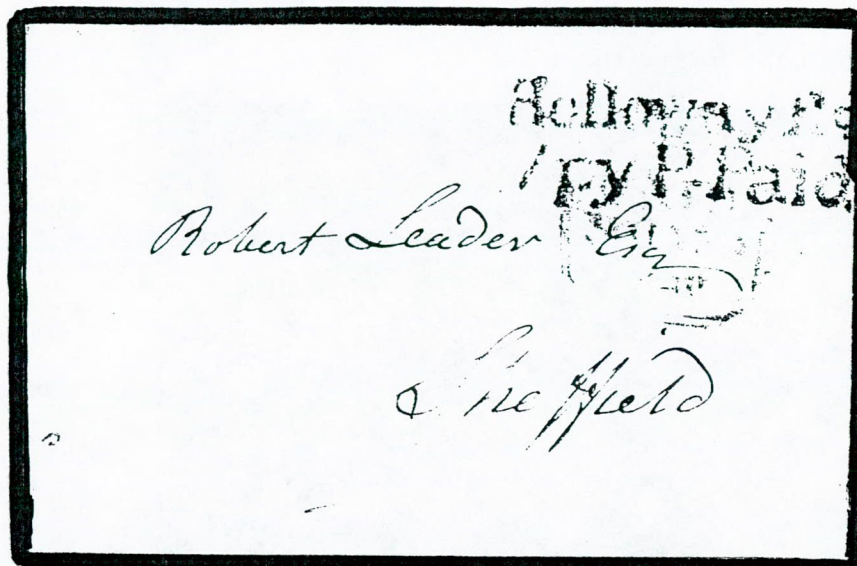
He leaves a widow, three children, Paul, Jane and Googie (in Australia), nine grandchildren and one great grandchild.

A Postal Historian and, especially, a Friend sadly missed.

David J. Eastman

*Holloway Road
1 py P Paid*

Listed in the Jay catalogue at L 506e, the sloping "1" in the Holloway Rd stamp is not illustrated and the recent purchase of a copy, shown here, does raise the question of whether this is an altered stamp or was it issued thus.



It is listed used only 1840-42, although in common with all others of this type it should have been available for use on newspapers and soldiers' letters from the opening of the office. The TP framed for this office is recorded from 1829.

This example is dated 30th. January, 1840. It appears to be slightly worn, rather more so than use since the previous 5th. December would occasion : this is common to most early extant examples from many offices.

Is it an original, a repaired stamp or converted from the now little required 2 or 3 paid stamps ?

On a different tack, the letter within records a local controversy and possibly of interest to collectors of the area.

Highbury Place
Jany 30 1840

Dear Sir,

I have read the printed sad account of what has transpired respecting the late unhappy affair at Queen St Chapel - I have had no communication with Mr Miller on the subject & thought it best to remain quiet - But Matters are now come to a crisis and I think it proper to inform you & other friends that I entirely disapprove of Mr M placing his name on a Committee of what I consider a political & persecuting Association - I am grieved that he refused to withdraw his name, and that for peace sake he has not resigned his office at the almost unanimous request of the Church Members -- He cannot stay with any prospect of comfort to himself, or usefulness to others --

I am Dear Sir
Yours respectfully
Thomas Wilson

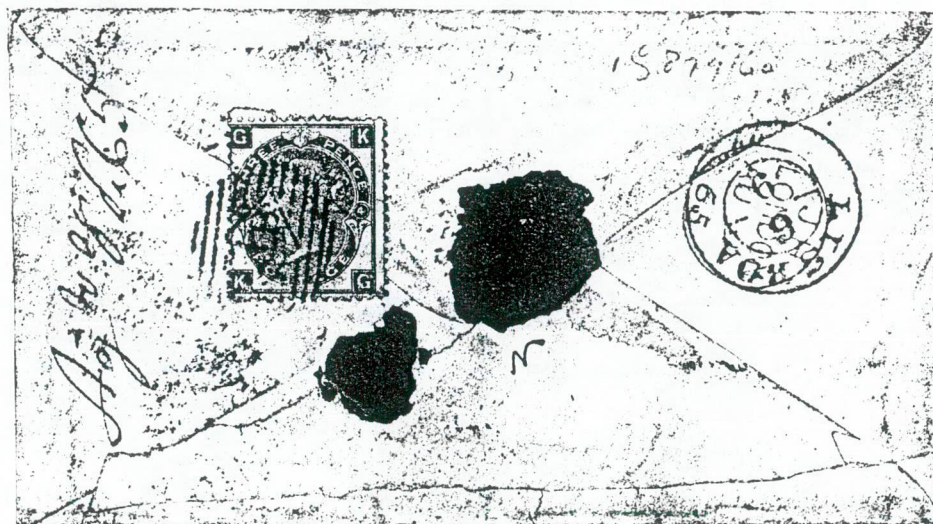
Rob Leader Esq

RETURNED LETTER BRANCH STAMP

by Rollo Kroesen

Although the "RLB" diamond cancellation has been featured before in Notebook, this particular example may be of interest to readers.

The letter, addressed to Portugal, was prepaid by the strip of three penny adhesives, these being cancelled by the London W duplex for 9th. August, 1865. Unfortunately, the rate for Portugal was 6d.



The deficiency was seen and the letter detained by the Circulation Department and handed to the Returned Letter Branch, where the letter was officially opened. One can see the flap carries a seal, this showing an oval garter emblem "Dieu et mon Droit". What looks like an "N" can be seen, presumably the official effecting the opening and resealing. The writer was "invited" to pay the 3d. The handstamp "RETURNED FOR POSTAGE/ /THE AMOUNT/DEFICIENT", in red, with a manuscript "3" entered in the space above "THE AMOUNT" appears on the obverse. According to Mackay, this stamp (fig 2134) was issued in 1856 and Johnson (fig G5) states it was used in London in the 1850s. The "1902" to be seen to the left of the London W dater die is (probably) the underpaid mail registration number.

The 3d was paid, the adhesive being applied to the reverse and this cancelled by the "RLB" in diamond, the deficient stamp deleted by pen and initialled "MA".

After due payment had been made, the letter would have been handed to the Foreign Branch on 31st. August, where the PAID date stamp, code C, was struck, "M" for "Midday" duty and the letter was then despatched, over three weeks delay.

It arrived in Lisbon on the 6th. September, paid to frontier only, charged with 40 reis for the internal tariff over 40 miles.

MAIL MISSING THE POST

Two responses here to Alf Kirk (Notebook 111 page 22).

Alistair Kennedy writes : "I have looked at Hendy's Postmarks of the British Isles 1840 - 1876" to see what he had to say about this date stamp. Pages 19/21, figs 92/119, show postmarks used in the Inland Section in 1859 and these include the L date stamp (fig.98). I noticed figs 117/119, which are presumably from different sources, all date stamps illustrated in this batch bear the date Ju 1 59 (a Wednesday) while the L stamp is dated JU 3 59 (a Friday). The source of these illustrations might, perhaps, be connected with papers relating to the appointment of an officer to inspect the stamping on letters, this mentioned on page 19.



Figs. 93-97. General Date Stamps.



Fig. 98. Used on Letters which Miss the First Delivery owing to getting out of course in the letter carriers' office.

Tony Potter sent in an example from Oxford (31st. January, 1859 - a Monday). The back stamp is the the following day, which rather destroys any suggestion of a weekend delay !!

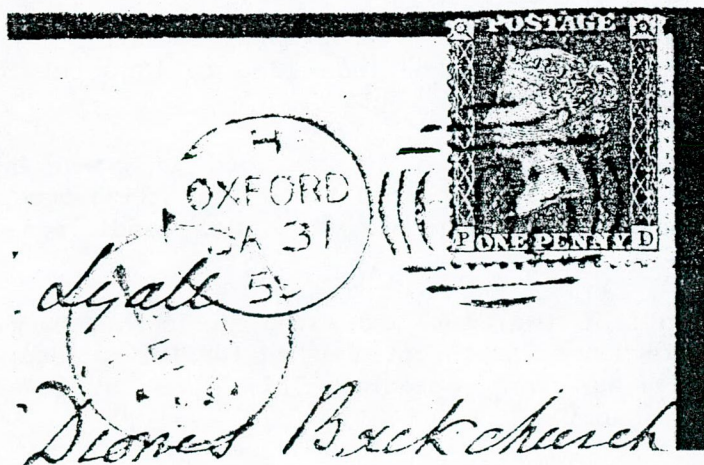
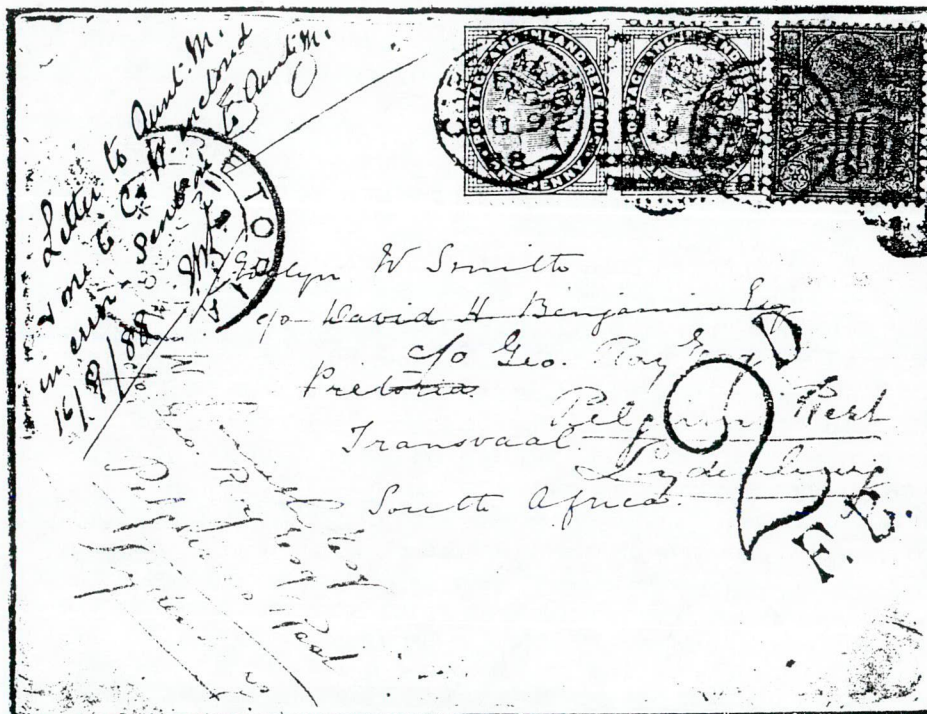


Illustration enlarged 41%

TWOPENCE FB ACCOUNTANCY MARK

from Philippa McIntosh

In Notebook 109 two covers were illustrated showing the 2^d/FB charge mark used as an accountancy stamp.



From the same run of correspondence I have a further example, the dating falling between the two already mentioned (August 9th, 1888). The postage charge comprised 6d to Cape, then 2d to Transvaal. There was no additional postage on redirected letters in the Transvaal. The inland post at this time, maintained by the Government of the Cape, included posts to the adjacent states. These comprised Natal, Orange Free State, SA Republic (Transvaal) and Br. Bechuanaland at a rate of 2d. per half ounce.

In 1877 a contract had been concluded between the Union Steamship Co. and Donald Currie & Co to carry letters to and from the U.K. and the Cape at 6d per half ounce. This rate was settled for all letters, whether conveyed by packet, private ship or Queen's vessel. The Inter Empire rate was also 6d from 1886 to 1888 but in 1889 this was reduced to 2½d., including the U.K. to Cape route.

On the matter of the redirection (mine is inscribed in green ink, the earlier example in red), it may be of interest to record there was active prospecting for gold at Pilgrims Rest. The note "Letter to Aunt M & me.." indicates family correspondence.

I recall seeing an example of this mark exhibited in Johannesburg about five years ago and a Mr Norman Watterson of Northampton asked for information on the use of the stamp some time ago in a stamp magazine. This gives at least five examples extant, assuming no double counting.

THE 81 DOUBLE DIAMOND

from F.M. Johnson

The Michael Goodman cover illustrated in Notebook 100 shows a fine example of the use of a 1d adhesive (SG43/4) to pay the late fee on late bulk posting. In this case it was to Amsterdam where the basic postal rate had been reduced from 8d to 3d (1865) and the 3d rate is shown in manuscript on the front. A further example of this appears on the front of Handbook Section E "The Horizontal Diamonds" showing the use of a 1d adhesive (SG40/1) to cover late fee bulk posting to France - the basic rate then being 4d (in manuscript on front or multiples of according to weight).

As with 50 and 51 in diamond, it would appear the double 81 was used also on late fee foreign bulk posting. The only difference between them is the double die, which suggests it was used also on mail bearing more than one adhesive: perhaps on late fee foreign mail not having the special bulk posting privilege.

The special bulk posting arrangement was extended to large commercial businesses in London, who were invoiced periodically with the total postal rates incurred over a given period, provided the 1d late fee was paid by an adhesive.

LONDON MARITIME MAIL

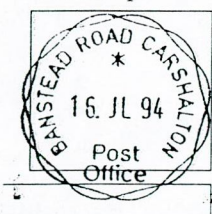
The Editor has been in correspondence with Colin Tabeart and, through him, James Bendon, who recently reprinted a special edition of Alan Robertson's opus and is planning a complete revision. Rather than duplicate effort and costs, it is proposed for LPHG to edit the London section for inclusion in the whole revised publication, with a separate publication subsequently a possibility. PLEASE do contact the Editor if you have ANY London Maritime Mail to be recorded.

This is the final "call": the draft will be sent off by the end of August.

SELF INKING DATE STAMPS

The Use in Small Offices

date stamp



Sometime in the late Spring this year, a change to a self inking date stamp was noted at a local sub office, namely Banstead Road, Carshalton.

As the Editor has often advised, if you do not know, ask a direct question, so he did.

These stampers are not normally to be found in small offices, so why should Banstead Road, Carshalton get one? Was this the start of a move to supply all offices with this quite expensive piece of equipment?

It appears this is not the case. Such SIDs are issued to smaller offices when, and only when the person operating the office has, through some medical condition, difficulty in wielding the normal handstamp, which - as you will be aware - requires a thump on the ink pad and another on the item being cancelled or otherwise stamped. Such was the case here, hence the SID. It does give a rather smart impression, doesn't it?

LONDON FANCY GEOMETRIC POSTMARKS - A STUDY

by Maurice Barette

The following pages are but a summary, intended for distribution to visitors to an exhibition held at a Royal Philatelic Society meeting on 14th. October last. The presentation was by the Societe Philatelique Franco-Britannique and included one from me covering London Fancy Geometric Postmarks.

I am working on a detailed study of these cancellations, to be published soon by LPHG, and am corresponding with a number of members already, as well as others outside the Group. The classification work is virtually finished but more recordings might help to clarify some points. Further information would provide a more reliable degree of rarity for the several types.

To assist in this, please let me have the following details of anything you have, be it a single item or a massive collection :

The information required is :

- Type, as illustrated below
- Code, 1 or 2 digits (if 1, is it left (L), centre (C) or right (R) ?)
- Date, as in the stamp
- Is the strike on adhesive, piece, cover ?

As always, photocopies are worth a thousand words of description.

Every contribution will be answered and significant points remarked.

Please reply to : Maurice Barette
32 rue Jean de La Fontaine
76800 Saint-Etienne du Rouvray
France

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LONDON FANCY GEOMETRIC POSTMARKS - A STUDY

An illustrated summary

1. - The Cancellations of the 1870s

In the 1870s the bulk of mail was cancelled by some form of duplex. Over time these had become larger, thicker and heavier and rightly called "killers" by collectors. They were applied by handstamp or the Pivot Machine. There were numerous complaints from postal officers on the drawbacks of these stamps, mainly weight, complexity and fragility (Fig.1).



Fig. 1

2. - The "Combined Stamp Experiments"

In 1878, T. Jeffery, Controller of the Circulation Department, was asked to propose patterns for "Combined Stamps", i.e. dater and canceller in a single die. In response he produced :

- A few experimental patterns (Fig.2), mostly to be found in Post office documents.
- Squared Circles (Fig.3) ; more than 4000 different ones were extensively used in England and Wales, in a period from 1879 to the end of the reign of King Edward VII.
- Hooded Circles, or Scrolls (Fig.4), in a period from 1882, more limited in their range but with some still in use in the 1980s.
- London Experimental Double Circles (Fig.5), in use from 1882 to about 1900.
- London Fancy Geometric Postmarks, the subject of this article.



Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Fig. 4

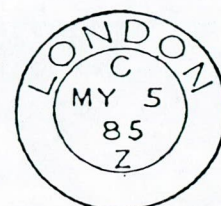
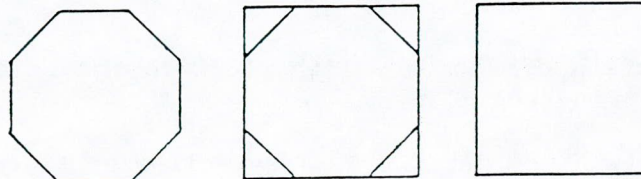


Fig. 5

3. - The London Fancy Geometric Postmarks

These postmarks are variations on a theme of squares and octagons. From these basic designs come those with lines doubled, tripled or thickened or lines added to enhance the cancelling efficiency.



These were known originally as "London Experimental Stamps". W.C. Stitt Dibden, and many who followed him, called them "Massey Trials". In fact, Massey had nothing to do with their introduction. The name "London Fancy Geometric Postmarks" and a clear classification were introduced in 1984 by Stanley F. Cohen and Daniel G. Rosenblatt.

Ten different patterns form the group. Most of these handstamps or machine dies were recut during their periods of use.

3.1 The Inland Branch



Type I A



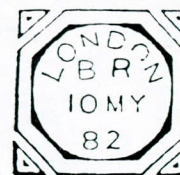
Type I B



Type II A



Type II B



Type II C

(Listing is given on the following page)

3.1 - The Inland Branch

3.1.1. - Type I A - 3 original handstamps - no recutting	MY - JY 1880
3.1.2. - Type I B - 7 original handstamps - 21 in all	1880 - 1909
3.1.3. - Type II A - 3 machine dies when recut they gave	1880 - 1882
3.1.4. - Type II B - 3 original dies - 6 in all	1883 - 1890
3.1.5. - Type II C - 18 original machine dies - 65 in all	1882 - 1895

3.2 - London E.C.



Type III



Type IV



Type V



Type VI



Type VII

3.2.1. - Type III - 9 original handstamps - 24 in all	1880 - 1897
3.2.2. - Type IV - 1 original handstamp - 3 in all	1882 - 1899
3.2.3. - Type v - 1 original handstamp - 3 in all	1882 - 1897
3.2.4. - Type VI - 1 original handstamp - No recutting	1882 - 1885

3.3 - The Lombard Street Branch Office

- Type VII - 2 original handstamps - 4 in all	1882 - 1906
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The following is detail covering Inland Branch II C (3.1.5)

On January 26th. 1882, the London Proof Book shows a strike of Type II C-N with the note : "18 supplied for Stamping Machines". these were identified by letters A to R.

An instruction of February 11th., 1882 in the Inland Branch Date Stamp Book gives the following detail :

3.1.5.1. - Window Late Fees : A, B, C, D. They followed Stitt-Dibden date code C5



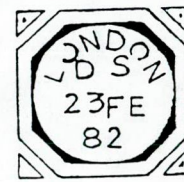
7th II C-A



3rd II C-B



2nd II C-C



1st II C-D

Type II C - A - 7 in all	AU 82 - MY 95
- B - 4 in all	MY 82 - MR 95
- C - 4 in all	MR 82 - MY 95
- D - 4 in all	FE 82 - MY 95

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Stitt-Dibden date code C5 : see "London Date stamps Codes", republished with additional material by LPHG in January 1979. No longer in print.

3.1.5.2. - Branch Office Late Fees : E, F, G, H, I, J, Date code C5



2nd II C-E



1st II C-F



II C-G



1st II C-H



1st II C-I

Type II C - E - 5 (?) in all	NO 85 - MY 94
- F - 3 in all	JY 82 - OC 93
- G - 1 only	JY 82 - DE 88
- H - 3 in all	FE 82 - NO 92
- I - 2 in all	AU 84 - SP 95
- J - Not recorded	

3.1.5.3. - Too Late Mail : K, L, M, N, O. Letter duty code (A, B, C).



2nd II C-K



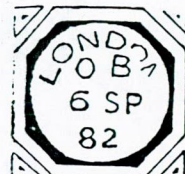
2nd II C-L



3rd II C-M



4th II C-N



1st II C-O

Type II C - K - 3 in all	MR 82 - JY 95
L - 3 in all	JU 83 - JU 95
M - 4 in all	MR 82 - AP 95
N - 4 in all	MR 82 - AU 95
O - 4 in all	MR 82 - JU 95

3.1.5.4. - Midday duty : P, Q, R. Letter duty code, then rotating figure code



1st II C-P



7th II C-P



2nd II C-Q



5th II C-Q



2nd II C-R

Type II C - P - 7 in all	AU 82 - DE 95
Q - 6 in all	JY 82 - AU 94
R - 2 in all	DE 91 - DE 95

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The following detail covering London E.C. Type III

This pattern does not appear in the Proof Books and no instructions have yet been found as to use (n.b. An E.C. Proof Book, with instructions, disappeared from the National Postal Museum many years ago. It is possible these stamps appear in that volume - Ed.)

They have been found without a stamp identifying letter (known as HI = Hammer Identification) and codes H, I, J, K, L, M, N, O, P. Time code is a figure plus X, Z, ZZ)



III, no HI



III-H



2nd III-I



2nd III-J



3rd III-K

Type III - no HI - 1 only (E, G, H) JU 81 - AP 84
 H - 1 only DE 81 - JA 83
 I - 2 in all FE 81 - AU 97
 J - 3 in all NO 80 - JU 97
 K - 3 in all DE 80 - MR 98



III-L



4th III-M



2nd III-N



1st III-O



1st III-P

Type III - L - 1 only DE 80 - NO 81
 M - 4 in all DE 80 - MY 97
 N - 2 in all AP 81 - JU 97
 O - 3 in all DE 80 - JU 97
 P - 2 in all AP 81 - JU 97

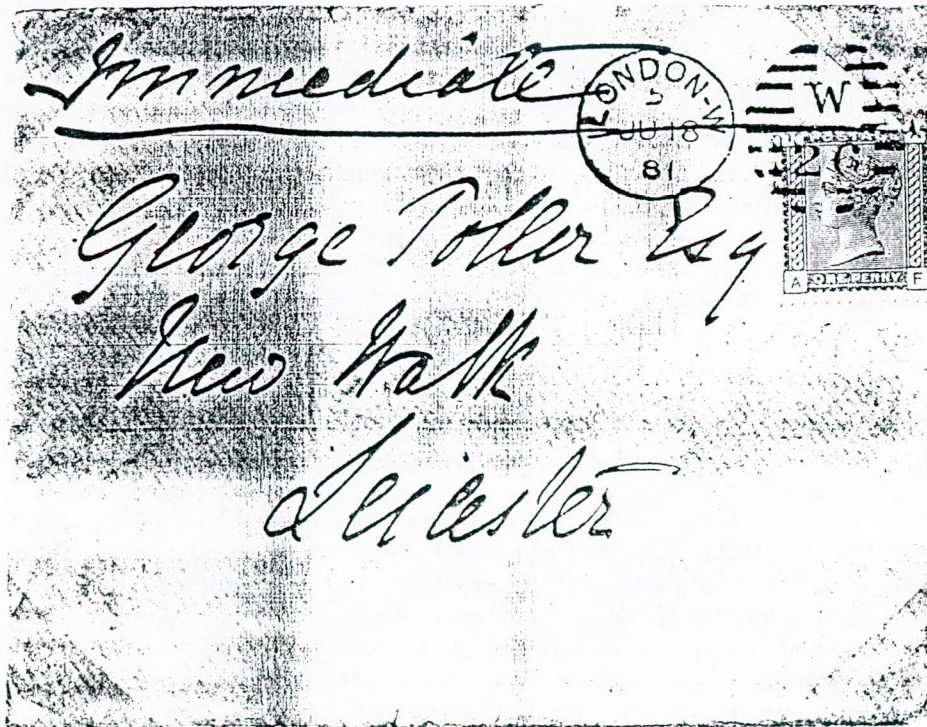
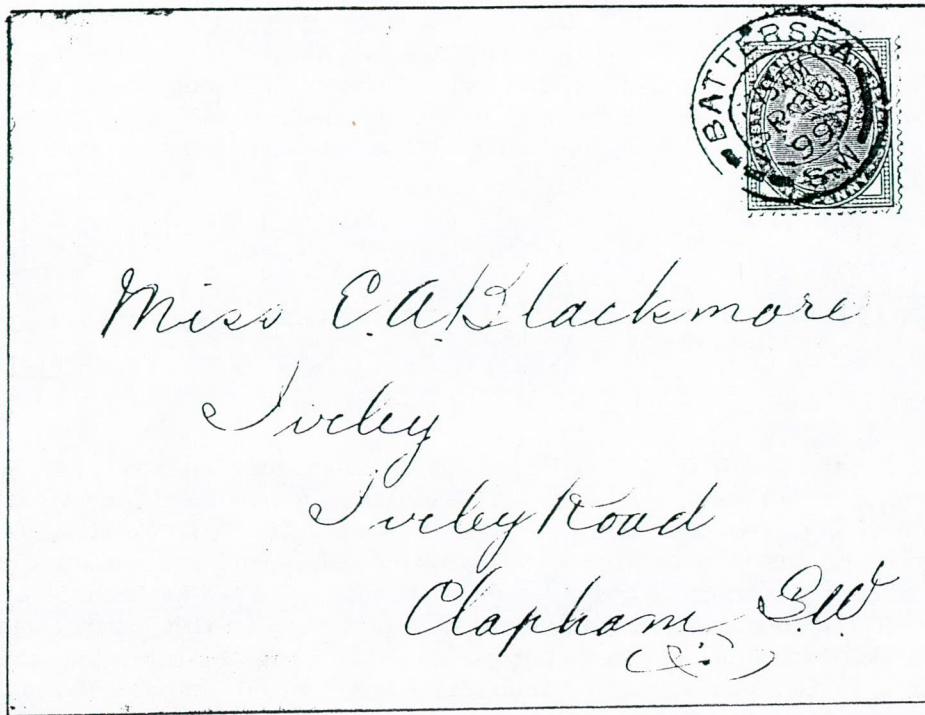
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A fine example of Inland Branch Type V
 Mid period date of JY 14 93

CUTS

The "Battersea Cuts" have been featured from time to time in Notebook and the opportunity is taken to illustrate a page showing a three segment Battersea of 1899, a fine example of Western District 26D7B and, on adhesive only, examples from Western and South Eastern Districts. A Watford 849 as an out of town stray is added.



THE DISAPPEARING LONDON SUB DISTRICTS

by Colin Peachy of the British Postmark Society

I fear the postmarks of the London sub districts are disappearing fast and we need to record as much detail as we can. I appeal for help in the form of reports of individual items or, better still, that news that one of the "London experts" has it all under control and has more detailed records than I have !

Firstly, what are the sub districts ? Forget the main District Offices which have become Mechanised Letter Offices (MLOs) and are equipped accordingly . These are : Mount Pleasant ("London IS MLO" postmarks), EC, WC (which ended as a postmark in 1993), E1 ("E1-E18"), N1, NW1, W1, SE1, SW1 ("London SW") and Paddington W2. That leaves all the sub districts of E2 to 18, N2 to 22, NW2 to 11, SE2 to 27, SW2 to 20 and W3 to 14. A recent addition is SE28 (Thamesmead) where a deliver office/sorting office only opened in 1992.



Let us go back to the 1970s. At that time, it is difficult to say exactly when, perhaps a reader can tell me, much outward mail handling in London began to be done by the main District Offices and the individual districts concentrated on handling inward mail. Economies could be achieved by allowing these offices to work a single morning shift for delivery purposes only. However, the same staff were able to make the first morning pillar box collection, typically at 9 am. This mail was postmarked at the individual sorting offices before onwards transmission to the District office for sorting. So the postmarks of them all have, by and large, remained untouched, even if obtainable only on mail posted for the first collection. this is now changing.

At this point, a mention on missorts. Remember there are a set of coded town dies, unique to London, with a code showing the office concerned. The specimen above shows 56 for South Woodford. A full list appears in "Collect British Postmarks" (also Notebook 19 and 20). What we can call "category A" is a sub district that no longer handles outward mail but whose machine is retained solely for stamping missorts. I believe around 1989 this is what happened in most of West London (except W5 and W8) and in East London apart from E10, 11, 12, 14, 15 and 17. Indeed, when I visited E18 in 1990 this change had taken place.

"Category B" is the term we will apply to the office that loses its machine altogether. It would appear in 1993 many London sub districts joined category B. In particular, most of SW and NW London have moved in that direction in the last few months.

A summary of changes from 1966 reads as follows. In 1966 SE11 disappeared, merged with SE17. In 1971 N13 merged with N21. E2 merged with E9 in 1977, then with E8 to produce a "triple postmark" from 1987, the sorting office being at E2. SW20 stopped, being taken over by SW19 about 1980. However, a few years later, the postmark was reinstated. SW8 is also an exception, this being the location of the Nine elms MLO but the SW8 postmark does appear now and again, shown above. Lastly, in 1991 E14 acquired a new generic postmark "Poplar and Isle of dogs" but this may prove to be short lived.

My inventory of recent machine postmarks of London sub districts is as follows: E10, N12, N17, NW3, NW9, NW10, SE5, SE6, SE7, SE11 and W5, the latter having disappeared and resurfaced from October 1993.

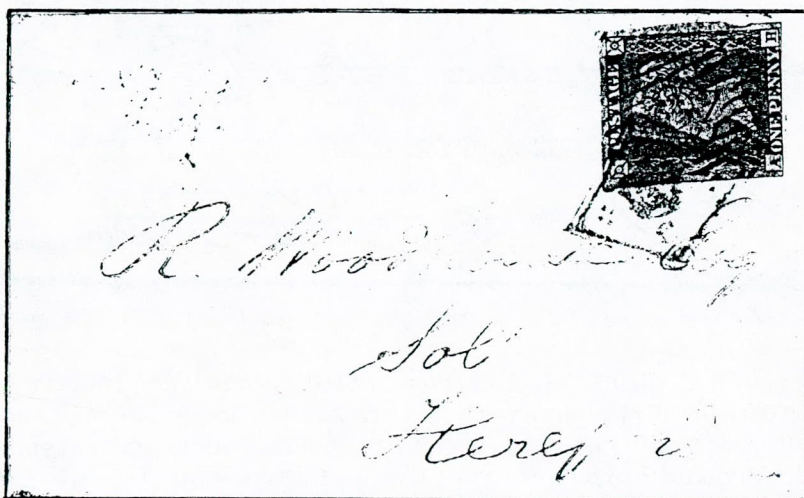
I would be interested in reports, preferably with a photocopy (or better still, the original !!) of the postmarks of any other sub districts in December 1993 or later. If I am premature in assuming most of the others have joined category B, I hope other collectors can put me right.

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INSPECTOR'S CROWN

from Martin Townsend

A very curious triangular mark, in deep red-brown, containing a crown with the initial C above and a small diamond of dots either side (cannot trace this in any reference books). appears tying the adhesive on this letter from London to Hereford.



There is no obvious reason for an Inspector's interest in the item which, otherwise, seems quite normal. The back stamps, London, in black, "AV/FE 22/1854" and a red "HEREFORD / FE 26 / 1854 / A" give no indication of any problem.

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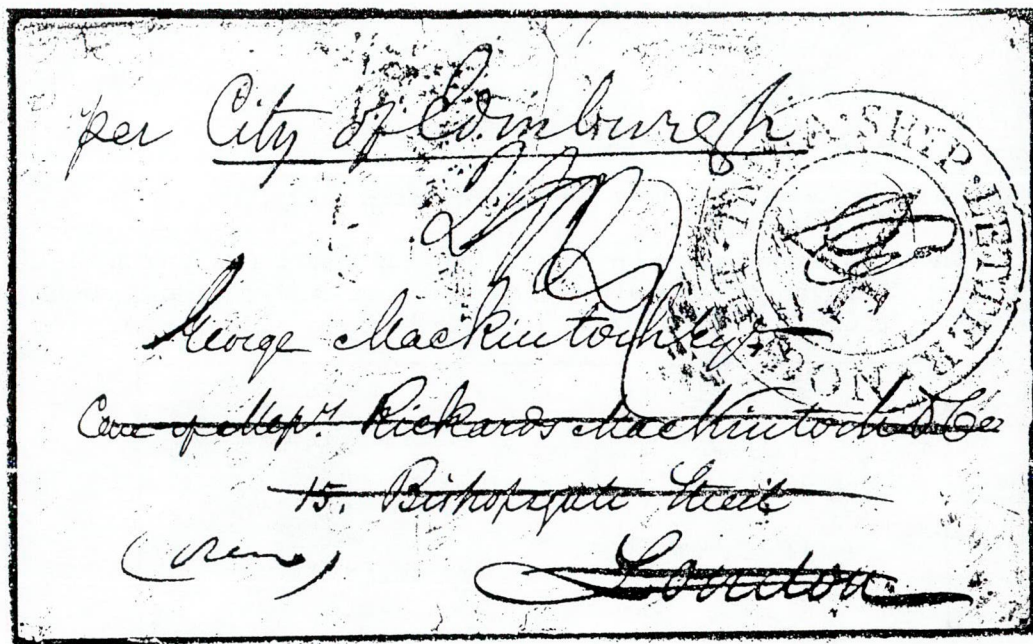
INDIA SHIP LETTER / 4 / LONDON

Dr med Wolf Hess

A very unusual example of the "4" in the range of India stamps. Although the stamp itself is uncommon, an example where the "4" is deleted and a double charge levied could be unique.

The story is simply told. It carries the Calcutta GPO stamp for April 1831 and, endorsed "per City of Edinburgh", it arrived in London on the 10th. December. It was redirected, in London, to Cheltenham (endorsed so on the reverse). Cheltenham, at 95 miles from London carried a charge of 9d for a single but, being a double, was charged 1/6d for the Inland charge, the 4d. sea post being also doubled, making the 2/2 as shown. It should be noted, however, the 4d rate covered up to 3 ounces (about five sheets of current day A4 paper) and the mere doubling of the Inland charge makes it clear the letter was less than 3 ounces. Surely, in such a case, the Ship Letter charge should not have been doubled?

Although the 4d rate was defined by 59 George 3 c111 (12 July 1819) for carriage by private or East India Company ships, the need for this stamp remains unclear. As Robertson observes, there were at least three other "India Letter London" stamps in concurrent use. If the stamp were to be found on London destination letters only, one might conclude destination was the reason for its use. However, covers are known for London addresses with a manuscript "4" and to non London destinations carrying the stamp, as well as the other stamps being employed.



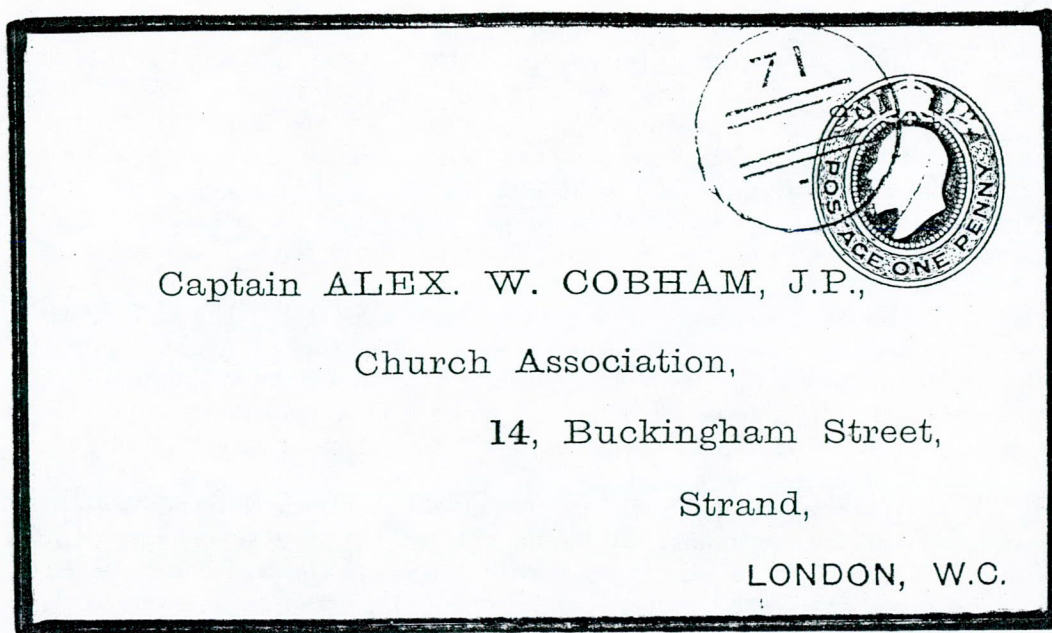
One interesting quirk of the regulations required letters under 3 ounces were to be given to the first approach to land; if above 3 ounces, they could be landed at the first port of call, as normal. In his book on rates, David Robinson thought this could "probably account for the relative scarcity of India arriving at ports such as London".

A BOOKPOST PRECANCEL ?

Alf Kirk, in response to the item in Notebook 110 of December 1993 produced a further example of the 71 Bookpost stamp, this time struck on a penny KE7 PS envelope. He remarks " It does not appear to have gone through the post. The gum on the flap is complete and the envelope gives every appearance of not being used. The item is a stamped to order printed envelope with an embossed KEVII red stamp, which was first used in 1902. The postmark, I suggest, cannot in any way be an official one. If the '96' shown is for 1896 it would not have been used in the Post Office as late as 1902 without the date being altered.

I would hazard a guess that someone has obtained an old stamp and used it to manufacture some interesting items."

Alf's letter was followed up with enquiries of the original owner of these two items, which appeared in the LPHG auction for 1992 and 1993. They came from an accumulation of material, in no way highlighted and were offered "as seen".



Unless a reader can offer a logical explanation for an 1896 date being used by the Post Office to cancel a 1902 plus envelope, they must be regarded as either "grace and favour" or bogus cancellations.

.....
BEXLEY TRAM LETTER BOX

by Peter Bathe

Notebook 109 showed a notice concerning this service and requested information. I hope the following will be interest to readers.

Between 1875 and 1913, Woolwich was a separate postal district outside London and a number of surrounding "London" and "Kent" towns and villages were "under Woolwich". These included Charlton, Eltham, Welling, Erith, Bexley and Bexleyheath. All these areas had been part of the London Twopenny Post, later London District Post - some since the 17th. century; others, including Bexley, since 1833. In 1913, Woolwich and other "London" suburbs returned to the London South eastern District, while the "Kent" towns came under Dartford. ¹

Bexley Urban District Council started operating its own tram service in the early years of this century. One service went towards Woolwich, at first terminating just inside the old L.C.C. area in Plumstead and then, from July 26th., 1908, extending to Beresford Square, Woolwich, ² very near the Woolwich District Post Office, at that time in Greens End.

The idea of putting letter boxes on trams and buses in Britain was first mooted in 1889, after such a service had been established in the USA a few years earlier. The system was in use in Paris before 1891 but the PMG did not like the idea of a similar scheme in London, although he did agree to tram and bus letter boxes being used in provincial towns. The first was in Huddersfield (20th. March, 1893) on its trams. By the outbreak of World War I, twenty towns and cities had tried letter boxes on corporation transport, including Bexley, which started in 1910. ³

A lot of the schemes were short-lived but the Bexley scheme survived into the 1930s.

Jean Farrugia, who shows a Manchester Corporation tramcar post box of 1935, ⁴ said : "Tramcar and omnibus letter boxes were never of any standard pattern, the majority being manufactured locally at the expense of the Post Office. Some boxes were fitted at the rear of the tram or bus; others were hung on the side, or even placed on the conductor's platform. Normally, the boxes were intended for use only after the last collection from ordinary street letter boxes had been made and on services coming into the centre of town from outlying parts." ⁵

Local sources are a little more specific. "It was at this time (just prior to World war I) that arrangements were made for the posting of letters up to 11pm in a special box fitted on the Bexley tram arriving in Woolwich at that hour. Only the usual 1d. stamp was required if the posting was done while the tram was at a stop but persons desiring to post between stops had to pay 1d. extra" ⁶

This appears to be not too different from the regulation which applied to the first tram letter boxes in Huddersfield: "A special charge of one penny was levied by the Council if a would-be poster stopped the tram merely for the purpose of posting his letter - the penny being dropped into the tram guard's fare box." ⁷

The original Bexley tramcars were produced in 1903. "these original cars as delivered...had very large copper cased oil head lamps with parabolic reflectors which were hooked on to the dash at whichever end of the car was leading, the intention being that these would continue to give illumination even if the power failed...

"Before these cars had been in service many years, certain modifications were carried out, for example, the ungainly oil head lamps were replaced by conventional electric ones set high on the dash with the car number painted beneath them...

"In 1924, the metal catches which had formerly supported the oil head lamps were refitted to a number of cars but to the left of their former position and used to support the letter posting box carried on the last car at night. Presumably one of the open topped cars so fitted had always to perform the last journey." ⁸

The source has an illustration which "shows clearly...catches for the letter box". ⁹

That the tram letter box was put on the late-night car from Bexley to Woolwich when it was established in 1910 is not surprising: Woolwich was then the head post office for the area which included Bexley. That it should continue long after Woolwich had been returned to London control and Bexley put under Dartford, is much more interesting. Bexley and Dartford operated their trams under a joint committee after a fire destroyed the Dartford trams in their depot in 1917. It would have been logical in postal and tram-operation terms for a Bexley late-night letter to have gone to Dartford by tram, rather than to Woolwich.

However, the Bexley-to-Woolwich service continued into the 1930s, as evidenced by the page from the 1932 Bexley Heath & District Local Handbook published in Notebook 109, p.15.

By 1929, it would appear there were a large number of nocturnal letter writers in the area and it is reported a later collection was introduced for ordinary street letter boxes. "It is thought that the later collection from pillar-boxes will reduce the posting in the tram letter box to an amount within the capacity of the box." ¹⁰

The letter box service may have ceased in 1933 when the London Passenger Transport Board took over the Bexley trams, or in November 1935 when LPTB replaced the Bexley trams with trolleybuses. ¹¹ However, at the outbreak of World War

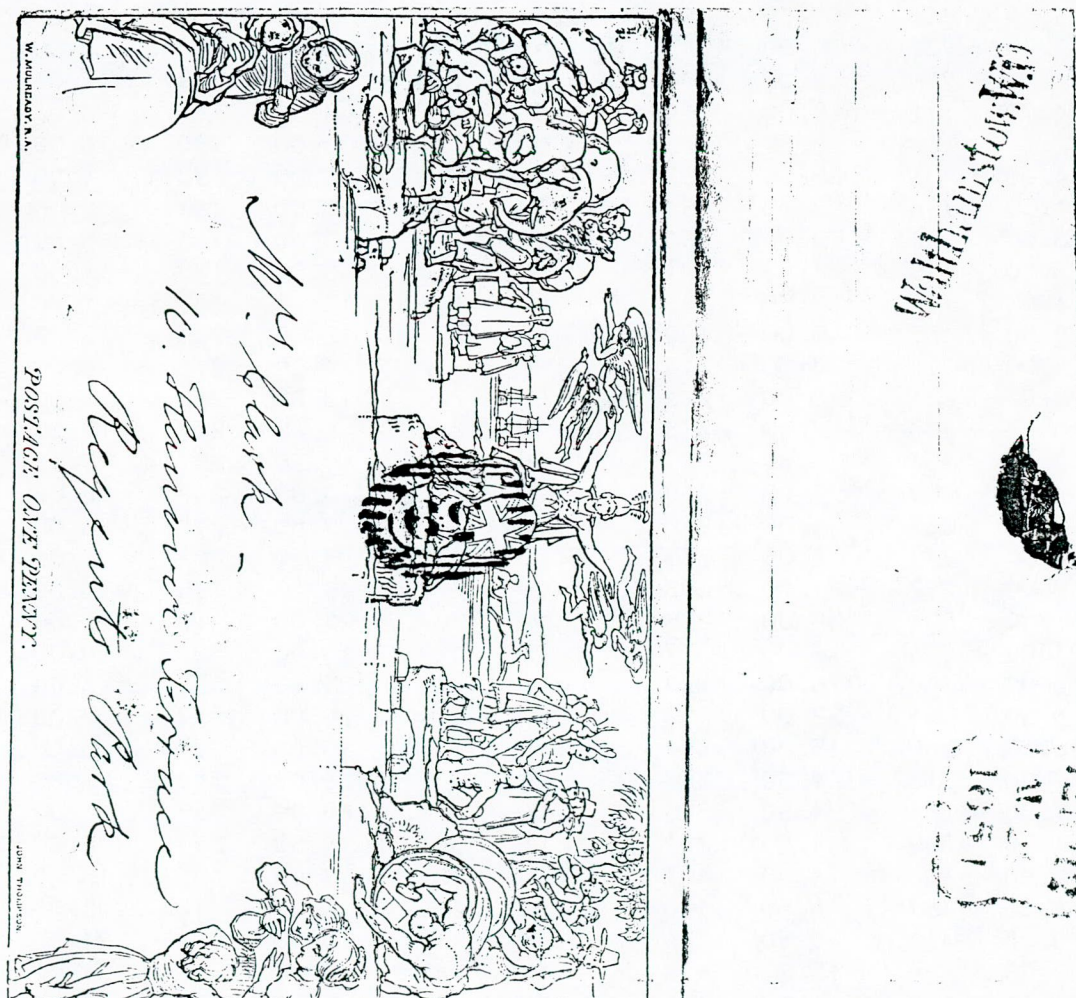
II, all such posting boxes which remained across the country were withdrawn, so the Bexley service must have finished by then. ¹²

REFERENCES

- 1 G.Brummell, "British Post Office Numbers", 1946, p12
- 2 E.F.E. Jefferson, "Woolwich and the Trams", Woolwich and District Antiquarian Society Proceedings, Vol xxx, 1954, p74
- 3 Jean Young Farrugia, "The Letter Box", 1969, pp 133-135
- 4 Ibid, plate 46
- 5 Ibid, pp 137-138
- 6 E.F.E. Jefferson, "The Woolwich Story", 1968
- 7 Farrugia, op cit, p 134
- 8 G.E. Baddeley, "The Tramways of Woolwich & South East London, Southeastern", The Light Railway Transport League & Tramway & Light Railway Society, 1962
- 9 Ibid, p 179
- 10 Record, Journal of the Bexley Chamber of Commerce, August 1929
- 11 Jefferson, "Woolwich and the Trams", op cit, p 81
- 12 Farrugia, op cit, p 137

LONDON DISTRICT POST 62

One of the items submitted for the auction in May was originally described as "London District Post number 62 etc etc", You can see why.



This caused no small amount of interest for the auctioneer as such a number in such a shaped oval is of extreme rarity. What was even more alarming was the use of this number in this shaped oval at Walthamstow.

Not believing that which was before him, other opinions were canvassed and the obvious truth emerged. Nevertheless, this is quite an unusual item and well worth the purchase price paid at the auction, the description being corrected by the way !!

If you are still puzzled, turn the page upside down and check Handbook Section D, part 1, page DS7.

MAY 1994 AUCTION RESULTS

Lot	Amount	Lot	Amount	Lot	Amount	Lot	Amount	Lot	Amount
2	3.50	3	3.50	4	3.50	5	3.50	6	4.00
8	7.50	9	7.00	13	12.00	18	5.00	20	4.50
22	8.00	24	25.00	26	9.00	29	15.00	30	14.00
31	40.00	35	7.00	37	15.00	38	4.00	39	5.00
40	5.50	42	3.00	43	6.00	44	7.50	45	4.00
46	13.00	48	42.00	49	5.00	50	8.00	51	3.00
54	13.00	56	3.00	57	4.00	58	7.50	59	5.00
60	3.00	62	10.00	63	3.00	64	14.00	65	4.50
66	40.00	67	30.00	70	4.00	71	6.00	72	4.50
73	5.50	74	6.50	76	6.00	78	24.00	79	10.00
82	15.00	85	9.50	86	6.00	88	5.00	90	2.50
91	3.50	92	5.00	94	7.50	95	8.50	96	7.50
97	4.00	99	3.00	100	5.00	102	6.00	103	5.00
107	24.00	111	8.00	112	8.50	114	5.50	115	8.00
117	13.00	119	8.50	125	45.00	128	30.00	130	16.00
131	14.00	136	35.00	137	12.00	152	10.00	153	4.00
154	4.50	156	3.00	157	11.00	158	3.00	161	2.00
163	8.00	164	3.00	166	5.00	167	3.00	168	5.00
169	3.50	170	4.50	171	7.50	172	3.00	173	4.00
174	4.00	178	9.50	185	10.00	186	12.00	187	9.00
188	8.00	189	10.00	192	7.00	193	12.00	201	25.00
210	5.00	213	8.00	214	11.00	217	24.00	218	6.00
220	8.00	224	8.00	226	9.00	227	12.00	228	5.50
229	10.00	238	7.00	243	10.00	246	8.00	247	7.00
253	7.00	254	7.00	255	9.50	256	9.50	257	5.00
258	5.50	259	7.00	260	6.00	261	8.00	262	8.00
263	7.00	267	8.00	268	12.00	269	9.50	270	20.00
271	6.00	272	8.00	275	5.00	279	8.50	282	5.00
289	7.00	292	21.00	293	30.00	294	10.00	295	78.00
296	6.50	304	30.00	305	15.00	307	25.00	310	25.00
320	21.00	326	7.00	327	15.00	329	15.00	331	50.00
333	8.00	340	20.00	343	60.00	345	25.00	346	6.00
347	8.50	351	52.00	353	8.00	356	20.00	357	7.00
359	10.00	360	15.00	361	10.00	365	10.00	374	8.00
375	7.00	376	7.50	377	9.00	379	6.00	380	8.00
383	7.50	384	4.50	385	4.00	386	40.00	387	21.00
388	4.50	389	4.50	391	25.00	394	8.50	397	5.00
399	12.00	400	6.00	401	10.00	402	3.00	405	15.00
406	4.50	497	6.50	408	5.50	411	14.00	412	5.00
413	5.00	414	9.50	416	21.00	418	3.50	421	21.00
423	2.00	424	15.00	426	5.00	427	8.00	428	61.00
429	11.00	430	6.50	431	6.50	432	3.50	433	4.50
436	17.00								