Franking 1652 - 1840

LONDON

POSTAL HISTORY GROUP

NOTEBOOK

No. 5

January 1972

Editor:

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to whom all correspondence should be addressed

EDITORIAL....

The reporting of Group meetings is one of our main functions and this issue is devoted to the Franking System, which was the subject of our last session.

We have been fortunate in receiving permission from R.C. Alcock Ltd. to reproduce the illustrations from their 1940 edition of the Alcock and Holland "British Postmarks - A Short History and Guide"; these have been supplemented by items from member's collections, together with supporting notes and comment.

Despite devoting so much to one subject, it is pleasing to report there is further material in the Editorial 'Stock Pot' relating for use in a future edition, though this welcome news should not deter those with information and comment in forarding their articles or short notes!

Members are invited to carefully examine their own collections of and for FREE's and to advise the Editor of any date extensions/corrections. The period 1807 - 1840 is to be the subject of a fuller article in a future 'Notebook'.

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THE FRANKING SYSTEM IN LONDON 1764 - 1840, by Frank Bottomley

For a study of the Postmarks used in the Franking System it is useful to refer to :-

- (i) The appropriate section in Alcock & Hollands' "British Postmarks, A Short History & Guide".
- (ii) Stamps for Free Letters or Franks in Robson Lowe's Encyclopaedia, and
- (iii) " A Short Account of The Franking System in the Post Office 1652-1840 " by George Brumell

The purpose of these special Postmarks was to mark the letters of persons holding the franking privilege.

Most of the handstamps used in this study are found on fronts or cut outs. These have often been taken from the albums of collectors of autographs and famous names. Covers, entire letters and wrappers provide examples, but wrappers with the original enclosure are scarce.

Persons entitled to the privilege of franking included

Members and Officials of the Houses of Parliament

Heads of Departments

Members of the Treasury

The Postmaster General and his Secretaries

Subordinate Members of Departments for their official business

At various times restrictions were imposed as to the weight and number of letters for privilege. For some the privilege was unlimited and even the usual requirement of writing the date and Post Town of origin on the outside of a letter was unnecessary. Letters for franking that did not conform with the regulations were, if detected, charged the ordinary letter rate. Handstamps and manuscript instructions were used to indicate these breaches.

The franking privilege did not allow exemption of the charges of the London Post or other Local Post. Handstamps were used in London to indicate this charge of 1d. or 2d. instead of the usual free handstamp.

Collectors wishing to extend their knowledge and interest in the great variety of 'FREE' handstamps should group their examples into the various main types and then place them in chronological order. In this way we can check the period of use for esch type of handstamp and similarly the period when the various instructional marks were used. Some groups have

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several varieties and sub-varieties. For example in the series in use from July 1807 to 1840 we see a variety as A & H No.208 and sub-varieties of this crown on circle design have a cross or the letter 'E' or 'N' under the year (see Brumell figs. 30,31 and 32 - A&H figs. 849,850 and 851). Postal Historians have advanced certain theories to explain the use of these sub-varieties but more material is required in the hope that fresh evidence may become available.

In the same series (1807 - 1840 (, a study could be made of the different crowns incorporated in the handstamp. Some are narrow, others are rounded whilst others are wide and flatter. The figure 3 is seen at first with a round top, later a flat topped 3 occurs in the year and day and sometimes in the day alone.

Examine the early crude, free in circle, handstamp of 1764-1784 and see how the size of the letters and the circle varies.

All the series, whether dated or undated, show differences in design so that one can fix the usage of each type with some accuracy. Some of the early marks bear the letters S, C, A and P, these are the initial letter of the name of the clerk using the handstamp.

An unusual side line to the study is the use of special seals bearing the Coat of Arms of the sender of the letter as an authority for the privilege of franking, instead of the more familiar signature.

-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-

LIST OF PERSONS WHO FRANK BY VIRTUE OF THEIR OFFICES..... from the British Imperial Calender for 1840.

N.B.- The Spiritual and Temporal Peers, and Representatives of the Commons in the Imperial Parliament, are entitled to frank ten letters each, the weight of which does not exceed one ounce, per diem, and to receive fifteen under the same limitation at 1st.Jan., 1840.

ENGLAND

Lord Chancellor
Secy. of State for the Home Dept
Under Secretaries
Secy. of State for the Foreign Dept
Under Secretaries
Secy. of State for the Colonial Dept
Under Secretaries
First Lord of the Treasury
The Lords of the Treasury, jointly

*Secy.to ditto Assist.Secretary Lord Cottenham
Marquis of Normanby
Hon.Fox Maule, S.M. Phillips
Visct.Palmerston
W. Fox Strangeways
Lord John Russell
Vernon Smith, James Stephen
Visct.Melbourne
Rt.Hon.F.T. Baring, Robert Steuart,
Thomas Wyse, J.Parker, H.Tuffnell
E.J. Stanley, R. Gordon
A.T. Spearman

Chancellor of the Exchequer
Speaker of the House of Commons
First Lord of the Admiralty
The Lords of the Admiralty

Secretaries to ditto
Commander of the Forces
Secretary to ditto
Master-Genl.of the Ordnance
Secretary to ditto
Secy.to the Board of Ordnance
Inspr.-Genl. of Fortifications
Adjutant-General
**Poor Law Commissioners

**Poor Law Commissioners,
from London only
Registrar of Merchant Seamen
Charities Commissioners
Tithe Commissioners
Revising Barrister to Friendly
Societies

Quarter-Master General
Secretary at War
Under Secy. at War
Judge Advocate General
***Commrs.for Auditing Public
Accounts

***Commrs.for Building Churches

**Society for enlarging and repairing
Churches

*** Secy.and Registrar to ditto

***Directors of the Greenwich Chest,

jointly

*** Paymaster of the Pensioners to ditto

Rt.Hon.F.T. Baring
Rt.Hon. Charles Shaw Lefevre
Earl of Minto
Vice-Ad.Sir C. Adam, Rear-Ad. Sir
W. Parker, Capt.Sir E.T. Troubridge,
Lord Dalmeny, Sir Saml. J.B. Pechell
Rich.M.O'Farrall, Sir John Barrow, Batr.
Genl. Lord Hill
Major-Genl.Lord Fitzroy Somerset
Lt.-Genl.Sir R.H. Vivian
Capt.W.J. Deans Dundas
R. Byham

Maj.-Genl.Sir John Macdonald John G. Shaw Lefevre, George Nicholls, George C. Lewis

Wm. Blamire, T.W. Buller, Rev. R.Jones

Lt.-Genl.Sir J. Willoughby Gordon Rt.Hon. T.B. Macaulay L. Sulivan Sir George Grey, Bt.

Francis S. Larpent, H.F. Luttrell, Sir J. Osborn, Bt., Henry Arbuthnot, Col.Sir Wm. L. Herries, K.C.H., C.B. Edwd. Rimilly Thirty-four in number

Rt.Hon.Sir H. Parnell Rt.Hon. H. Labouchere Rt.Hon. Rich. L. Shell

C.C.F. Greville, Hon. W. Bathurst Visct. Duncannon

Rt.Hon.Sir Hy. Parnell, Bt.
R. Neave
Rt.Hon.Sir H. Parnell, Bt., George
Tierney, Rt. Hon. Visct. Duncannon,
E.H. Locker, F.R.S., Hon. W.F. Cowper

*** Accountant of the Greenwich

Chest

*** Clerk of the Cheque to the

Hospital

***Commisrs.for the Issue of Exchequer Bills

*** Secy. to the ditto

***Receiver of Corn Returns

President of the India Board

Secy. to ditto

**Treasurer of the Navy

Serjeant-at-Arms

**The Three Chief Clerks to House

of Lords

**Five Clerks to the House of Commons

**Usher of the Black Rod

**Commrs.of Compensation for Abolition of Slavery

**Registrar of Births and Marriages

**Registrar of Designs

*Postmaster General

* Secretary

* Assistant Secretary
Surveyor and Supt. of Mail Coaches

The seven Surveyors

P. Carteret Le Geyt

Rt.Hon.Sir J.C. Hobhouse, Bt. Lord Seymour, M.P.

J.T. Briggs

Sir Geo.F. Seymour

Robt.Walmisley, Rt. Hon. Sir G. H. Rose,

Edw. Parratt

John H. Ley, J.E. Dorrington, W.G.

Rose, Jas.Gudge, S.W. Gunnell Sir Augustus W. Clifford, Bt.

Jas.Lewis, Jas.Stephen, J.G. Shaw Lefevre, R.W. Hay, Sam. Duckworth, T. Amyot, H. Elwin, H.F. Stephenson Thos.H. Lister

The Earl of Lichfield Lt.-Col.W.L. Maberly Thomas Lawrence

Geo. Stow

G. Karstadt, B. Churchill, E. Cresswell

E. Rideout, G. Neal, W. Johnson.

J. Tilley

SCOTLAND

Secretary and Surveyors to the Post Office

Sir Ed. S. Lees, Chas. F. Reeves, G.H. Creswell

IRELAND

Visct. Ebrington
Lord Morpeth
Capt. Romilly
Thomas Drummond
Aug. Godby

Lord Lietenant

Chief Secretary to ditto Private Secy.to ditto Under Secy. to ditto Secretary to the Postmr.-General

* Frank without dating

** Limited to the business of their office

*** Limited to the weight of two ounces in the letters they send or receive, and cannot send foreign or ship letters free.

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The following illustrations given below are those used as the working papers for the Group meeting and the notes given have been culled from several sources including information made available both at the meeting and since.

Members are urged to provide any additional information they have for early publication in the 'Notebook'.

The figure numbers and illustrations are those taken from the A & H 1940 edition of 'British Postmarks', reproduced with the kind permission of R.C.Alcock Ltd.



'F' larger than other letters of 'FREE' Recorded sizes 18mm and 20mm Recorded in Red Earliest Date 14. 5.1764

Later types with letters of equal size In Red



Fig. 828

Recorded sizes 20mm to 28mm;5mm to 9mm high Earliest date 4.11.1765 Latest date 17.10.1788

No regular pattern of the usage in the various sizes apparent.



Fig. 829

Recorded 1789



Fig. 830

Issued 1787
Recorded in Black (often confused with oxydised red); Dull Reddish Purple; Red.
The three central letters are the initials of the different officials.

C:	Charles Colston18.	6.1787	to 2. 7.1792
P:	J. Palmer	?.1789	to 2. 7.1792
S:	James Stafford	7.1787	to29.11.1789
	(Stafford died in November	1789	



Fig. 831

Issued 1789
Recorded in Dull Reddish Purple and Red after 1791

C: 20.12.1789 to 15. 2.1769 P: 13.12.1789 to 20.10.1790 A: 29.11.1789 to 14. 4,1791

A: as yet not identified; probably an unestablished clerk as the Department allowed for only two clerks.



Fig. 832

Issued late 1790 Recorded in Dull Reddish Purple and Red after February 1791

A: 31.10.1790 to 26.12.1790 P: 27.12.1790 to 25. 2.1791

Not used by Charles Colston

DATED FREE's



Fig. 833

Issued 1791

Inspector's initials at foot till mid 1797 In Red, as also Figs. 834 and 835 The outer band of Figs. 833 to 837 were made separate from the central dated portion and recut each day.

A: 22. 3.1791 to 15. 7.1792

C: 14. 3.1791 to 31. 5.1797

P: 30. 6.1791 to 29. 6.1795

S: 6. 2.1793

There is but one recorded example of the 'S' and it is exceptionally rare. It is not clear to whom it relates as Stafford died in 1789.

30mm and 32mm sizes have been recorded.

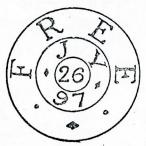


Fig. 834

There was a Departmental regulation in June 1797 to withdraw the initials, replaced by a diamond.

Also recorded in Purple Earliest date 1. 6.1797 Latest date 12. 7.1799 Single rim, morning duty.

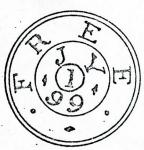


Fig. 835

Earliest 8. 6.1797 Latest 22. 7.1799

Double rim, evening duty.



Used for both morning and evening duty In Red Earliest date 27.7.1799 Latest date 24.10.1799

The Crown wore very easily, which might account for Foster's report of an 'L' above the date.



Late 1797 - used October to December Both morning and evening duty In Red

The dotted rings were away quickly due to there being no outer frame line for protection.



In red

Used from early 1800 until July 1807 except for a brief period July to December 1800, as Fig. 839.

Morning and evening duty

A second type with larger letters and figures was introduced in 1801



A short period of use, July to December 1800 Morning and evening duty
In red



In use from June 1806 to June 23rd.1807 Double rim, evening duty In red Very scarce.





Crown ON Circle
Recorded 10. 7.1807 to 5.12.1807
11 exemples only reported

Subsequent issues were twice yearly every year. These ran from October 1807 to 1840 with numerous differences in shape and detail of crown. Basic type of Crown ACROSS circle.



Single rim, morning duty.
The letters usually dated previous day.



Double rim, evening duty.
Usually found on London letters posted same day.
Latest use 7.10.1839, see fig.846



Additional stamp. Cross under year. July 1815
Morning duty



Fig. 845

Additional Stamp.Cross under year.
May 1814
Evening duty



Smaller figures than Figs. 841 to 845 Recorded use 26.10.1839 to January 1840



Recorded 1. 3.1803 then not till 14. 7.1820 then

17. 6.1825 then

10.8.1835

Possibly connected with Naval Intelligence. Faked at a contemporary date.



Dates of use June 1837 to 23rd. September 1837.



Dates of use November 1837 to 14th. May 1838



Dates of use 2nd June 1838 to 9.1.1840
'E' for 'Extra', according to Brumell.



Fig. 851

Used February 1838 to January 1840

According to Brumell used on letters brought to London by the "Grand Northern Railway Post Office", arriving early afternoon. This was also known as the "Flying Post Office"

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Fig. 852

Attributed by Brummel to East India Company Attributed by Robson Lowe to Naval Franks

Thought, however, to be for use by Foreign Branch, normally on incoming mail and very rarely on outgoing mail.



Fig. 38 .

Sunday stamp.
Period of use 1803 to 1832



Fig. 853

Introduced in 1832 - special type for Sunday stamping.

Examples recorded with 11,13,14,15,16,19, 20,21,22,23,24,26.
Used to explain difference between written date and the 'FREE' date, which was not applied on Sunday. Continued in use on Sundays after 1840.
Used at London Chief Office.

Branch offices, Charing Cross and Vere Street struck a C or V in circle and then sent to Chief Office, where the Sunday mark was applied early Monday morning.

Possibly L in circle used for Lombard Street.

SPECIAL MARKS

Used by Inspector of Franks at London
Chief Office

to indicate excess of 1-oz weight or number of letters a Member might send (10) or receive (15).

Above Privilege

Fig. 868

Above Privilege Number

Fig. 869

ABOVE NUMBER

Fig. 870

ABOVE WEIGHT

Fig. 871

LOCAL POSTS

Twopenny Posts: Franked letters posted in London Twopenny Post area were charged 2d for transmission to the General Post, as were other letters. After 1831 the charge was confined to letters posted in the Country area.



Used 1805 to 1839 Recorded in Black and Red



Several varieties noted, with 'ONLY' upright etc.

PROVINCIAL PENNY POSTS

Franked letters posted unpaid were marked there accordingly and the 'TOPAY' applied in London.

TOPAYlDONLY

Fig. 882

Used from 1818 Recorded in Black and Red

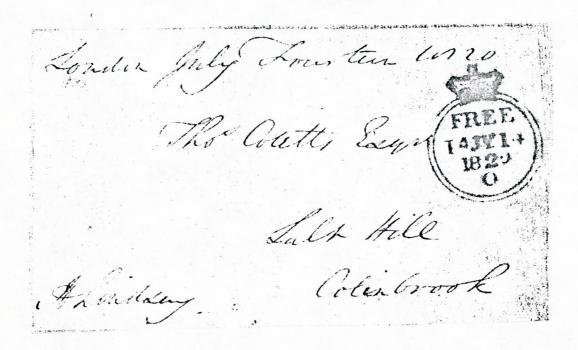
TO PAY I ONLY

Fig. 883

To Pay
1d Only

THE LETTER 'O' ... by J.A. Kirk

This would appear to be something of a mystery mark amongst the 'FREE's'. Apart from the obvious supposition that it has some official significance, there is little known as to the purpose it served.



It is known used once in 1803 and then does not appear generally till the 1820's. This item must therefore be a fairly early one. it will be noted the figures ' 2 ' and ' 0 ' in the date are different from the rest of the figures. It may be seen this was a special mark which when used had to have the year plug made up and the types available were used irrespective of size and matching. This mark is also known used sometimes later with the letter ' 0 ' on its side and it is fairly certain these were used in what might be termed an unofficial capacity.

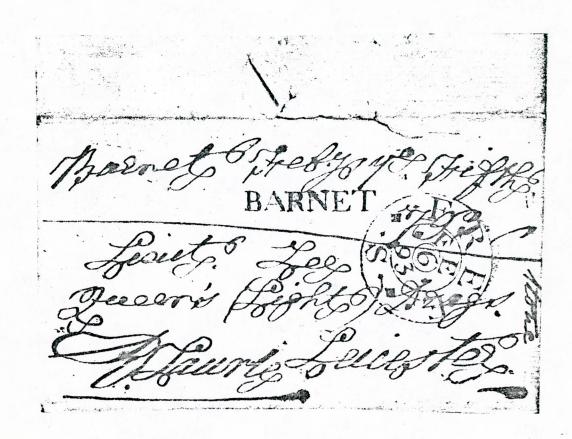
-0-0-0-0-0-0-

THE SIDEWAYS ' o '.....

This very interesting item certainly merits a more detailed report and all members are invited to carefully examine any material they have which might be an unobserved sideways 'O' or for that matter a recognised item (!) and send details of the item for correlation and then publication in 'Notebook'.

'S ' FOR STAFFORD ??? by Douglas Rivett-Carnac

The example below of A & H 833 with the inital 'S' and bearing the date FE 6 93. At the Group meeting it was reported, and duly recorded that Stafford died in November 1789, the latest date for a stamp with his initial appeared to be 29.11.1789 on the A & H 830.



Enquiries suggest this is the first recording of such an item and its use must be most exceptional. Should any members be in a postion to narrow the gap between November 1789 and February 1793, or even offer a later date, they are urgently invited to contact me.

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WANTED....

The signature below is that of Sir James Rivett-Carnac, Bt. who was M.P. for Sandwich for a few years around 1830.

If available for purchase or exchange you are asked to contact his Great Grandson:-

D.Rivett-Carnac, Haverford, Upper Sea Road, Bexhill on Sea, Sussex

PROOF IMPRESSION BOOKS...LONDON E.C. DISTRICT

Members will no doubt be pleased to read the following letter from A.G. Rigo De Righi, the Curator of the National Postal Museum. It is addressed to the Group Secretary.

Your Group may be interested to know that we have recently received in the Museum, from the EC Branch Sorting Office, 6 volumes which are in fact impression books of that office since 1897 up to about 1957. These books contain an impression of every hand stamp brought into use in those offices and give the date and the nature of use for which the hand stamp was intended. At the moment these books are in such bad condition of preservation that they will not be available for consultation by students until we have had them repaired and rebound, but I think you will agree that they will offer a vast field of research for members of your Group as they cover a good deal of the postal history of London following on after Westley's book of the postmarks of London which has taken the story up to 1890. I am hoping to get similar books if they still exist from the Mount Pleasant and Foreign Branch offices in due course.

Members are well aware of the value of access to this type of material and no doubt several, including the Editor, would wish to have an early opportunity of examining it. However, in view of the question of restoring the volumes to a usable condition the obvious course of contacting the Museum before putting in an appearance will commend itself. It is, of course, just up the road from the Post Office Records.

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FURTHER NOTES ON THE CROWN OVERLAPPING CIRCLE TYPE OF FREE.....

Early and Late Dates in 1839

Type

Large Figures ($4-4\frac{1}{2}$ mm)

....latest date

4 Nov 7 Oct 7 Oct 24 Oct

Small Figures (3mm)

....Earliest Date

9 Nov 5 Dec 26 Oct 21 Nov

Type a... Morning Duty Single Ring

b...Addl.Morning Duty.Single Ring +

c... Evening Duty, Double Ring

d...Addl. Evening Duty, Double Ring +

Any narrowing of the gaps between latest and earliest dates would be welcome.

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The Post Office Notice illustrated on pp 19 and 20 is by courtesy of Post Office Records.

No. 16.-FRANKS.

See No. 4 and 5 Printed Papers.

- 1. HE Peers of Parliament and the Members of the House of Commons are entitled to send and receive Letters free of Postage under certain restrictions—
- 2. They cannot receive above FIFTEEN, nor send above Ten Letters in any one Day.—For excess of number, those liable to the *lowest* rate of Postage are to be charged.
 - 3. No Letter must exceed the weight of one Ounce.
- 4. Letters cannot be delivered free to a Member unless he is at the Place to which such Letters are directed, excepting only those which are addressed to the usual Place of his Residence in London, or to the Lobby of the House of Parliament to which such Member belongs.
- 5. Letters sent by a Member, must, to entitle them to pass free, be superscribed wholly in the Hand-Writing of that Member, and must have endorsed on them the Name of the Post Town from which the same are intended to be sent, the Day, Month and Year when they are put into the Post-Office, the Day of the Month to be in words at length, and the Member must be within the said Post-Town, or within 20 Miles of it, on the Day or the Day before the Day on which such Letters are put into the Post-Office thereof.
- 6. All the Letters which Members can send or receive free must be to and from Places within the *United* Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland.
- 7. Foreign and Ship Letters are therefore excluded from the Privilege. All franked Letters put into the Twopenny Post, in London, are liable to the Twopenny Post Rates, and are also liable to the Penny Rate when going into or coming from any of the Country Penny Posts.
- 8. Postmasters are required to attend to the above particulars with respect to every Letter franked by or addressed to a Member of either House of Parliament which passes through their hands, and to be careful to charge those Letters which they observe deficient in any of the circumstances the Law requires, entering the Postage so charged in the proper part of the London or Bye Letter Bill, as the case may be.
- 9. The most common Instances in which to charge are, when Franks are over-number, over-weight, mis-dated, or when the Member is not within the Postmaster's Delivery. Letters addressed to an absent Member, if unopened, may be re-directed free to the Place where he actually is. In like manner Franked Letters may be re-directed by the first Post after their arrival. The Postmasters must perform exactly the Duties which the Law requires of them, and when a Member makes any Complaint or Application to them, they must be attentive and respectful in their Explanations.

See No. 3, of Printed Papers. 10. Persons privileged to send and receive Letters free, by Virtue of Office, are for the most part unlimited either in the Number or Weight of their Letters and Packets. A List of Privileged Persons is in every Postmaster's possession, and where there is any particular Restriction, it is noted against the Officer's Name. When printed Covers are not used, the whole Superscription and Dating must be in the Hand-Writing of the Officer, in the same manner as the franking of Members is regulated, excepting only that a few Persons, distinguished in the List, are not required to Date.

11. Persons who Frank "On His Majesty's Service," and in other manners not described above, are all in the Offices in London, and the London Free Stamp is a sufficient Guide and Authority to the Postmasters to pass their Letters free; whenever such Letters happen to be charged, the Postage is not to be refunded without reference to this Office.

12. The Act of 52d Geo. III. directs, that Copies of Parish Register Books, directed to the Registrars of each Diocese in England, shall be conveyed by the Post-Office free of Postage, they being Indorsed and signed by the Church Wardens, or Chapel Wardens of every Parish or Chapelry, in the following form—

To the Registrar of the Diocese of

at

A. B. Churchwardens, or Chapel Wardens, of the Parish or Chapelry of

(Or such other Description as the Case shall require.)

The Copies of Registers so Addressed and Certified, are to be conveyed without charge, but if they are directed in any other Form than as above, full Rates are to be charged, according to the weight of the Packets.

13. The Act of 54 Geo. 3, Cap. 169, Sec. 17. enacts, that it shall be lawful for every Member of either House of Parliament to receive by Post any Petition addressed to either House of Parliament, free from the duty of Postage, so as the same be sent in a Cover open at the sides, and that the same shall not exceed the weight of six Ounces.

FRANCIS FREELING,

Secretary.

GENERAL POST-OFFICE, June 1820.

The Postmaster is to cancel the No. 16. dated June 1813, and to use this instead.

Hartnell, Printer, Wine-office-court, Fleet-street, London.

LONDON POSTAL HISTORY GROUP

Chairman

Mr.P.A. Forrestier Smith, 6 Church Manor, Bishop's Stortford, Herts.

Study Co-ordinators

Franking System

Mr.D.C. Rivett-Carnac, O.B.E., "Haverford" Upper Sea Road, Bexhill on Sea, Sussex.

Twopenny Posts

Mr.C.J. Adams,
"The Lowe",
Worfield,
Bridgnorth,
Salop.

Inland Branch/Office

Mr.B.T. Smith, 42 Canterbury Avenue, Sidcup, Kent.

Cresswell and Similar Apparatus

Dr.D.H. Trapnell, "Brendon", Lyndale, London, N.W. 2

Hon. Secretary/Treasurer

Mr.M.M. English, 50 Somerden Road, Orpington, Kent. BR5 4HT

London Posts 1794 - 1801

Dr. Barrie Jay, M.D., F.R.C.S., 10 Beltane Drive, London S.W. 19.

District Posts

Mr. J. Parmenter, 3 Ashdown House, 17 Rydens Road, Walton-on-Thames, Surrey.

Examiners Marks, Missorts etc.

Mr.B.R. Smith, 19 Bentley Way, Woodford Green, Essex.

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