

# ***NOTEBOOK***

Number 156 November, 2003

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**Colin Breddy**

Adapted from an article appearing in *The Collectors Club Philatelist* March-April 2003 Volume 81 Number 2, using the illustrations therein, with thanks.

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**Mail Sent From South Africa**

**Richard Stroud and Robert Johnson**

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## ***EDITORIAL.....***

This issue contains a long article by Colin Breddy on the IRELAND handstamps. For those with an interest it will be a challenge to what they believe to be the circumstances under which these marks were introduced and as to where they were, in fact, used. For those who do not collect them, it is the opportunity to read a detailed research study, which might, perhaps, encourage the production of some pet project of their own. It does, of course, contain much which has to be conjecture due to the lack of most of the official records which must have existed and now, alas, are no longer available to lovers of postal history.

The opportunity is taken to remind all members of the additional meeting this year at PHILATEX, which will be at the Royal Horticultural Halls, Greycoat Street, Westminster. We are in Room 33, 12.45 - 14.45, on Saturday November 1<sup>st</sup>., with the subject of London Maritime Mail, although any purchases at the show, whatever their subject, will be welcome.

.....

WE OFTEN HAVE SMALL GAPS, LIKE THIS, AT THE FOOT OF A PAGE.  
WHY NOT ADVERTISE YOUR WANTS OR ITEMS FOR SALE?



## MICHAEL M. ENGLISH

It is with much regret we record the death of Mike English on Easter Monday, 21<sup>st</sup> April. As several readers will know Michael had a double heart bypass operation some twelve years ago which gave a new lease of life until the last few years when it became necessary for him 'to take things easy'.

Mike was not only active with L.P.H.G., he was Hon. Treasurer for many years, regularly attended meetings and gave several displays from his collection. In addition he was a stalwart of the Kent Postal History Group, having been a most successful editor of their journal 'The Kent Post'. He launched the Kent Group into their pattern of auctions, which have continued ever since.

Besides collecting Bromley and Beckenham postal history, of which he gave displays not only to LPHG members but also the Kent Group and the local societies. Emsworth was added to his collecting interests and, as these included the Rye / Hastings Road, naturally he was a member of the Sussex Postal History Society. He was also a keen local historian and, moving to the Portsmouth area, acted as a local tour guide.

Michael leaves a widow, Jo, daughter Sarah, son in law and three grandchildren to whom we send sincere condolences.

His fellow collectors will remember him.

(Based on information given by Ray Haffner)

## ANTHONY JOHN POTTER

Tony was a frequent visitor to L.P.H.G. meetings and, at most, displayed some of his varied collections. He was known for his fund of jokes and ready smile at the banter from others. With a Mass to say on Saturday evenings, he sometimes - when he could not get the services of a fellow priest - either cut short his stay or just could not make the meetings. It was largely rumoured that weddings on dates for L.P.H.G. meetings were sometimes transferred to more 'suitable' times, though it is stressed this is only a rumour. His humour was illustrated on the occasion of assisting at the preparation - he was no cook - of dinner. Invited to gently stir a large pan containing spaghetti bolognese, he did so with a plastic ladle. Upon taking it from the pot, or at least just the handle, he enquired seriously 'Should it be like this?'.

He collected many aspects of London and, in later years, built up a well researched machine cancellation section, containing many fine examples of the genre.

It is nearly ten years since Tony was found to have cancer and treatments provided a remission until last year. Although he was hopeful of a further return to health this was not to be and he died on the 6<sup>th</sup> May. His fortieth anniversary of ordination was to have been in June this year, for which celebrations were already planned.

He will be missed not only by his parishioners but by all those friends in the postal history world.

P.F.S.



## LONDON TWOPENNY POST CHARGE MARKS

Although included, by Jay, under 'Charge Stamps', this paid mark (l. 643) has much in common with the three paid and unpaid stamps listed under 'Instructional'.

Attributed to Islington, by virtue of the place given by the writer, it is thought to be the only recorded example.

The letter is addressed to :-

Mrs Martha Leigh  
at Mrs Scotfields  
Ship Salford  
Manchester

Post Paid / June 1<sup>st</sup>

It is not known whether 'Ship' is the name of a tavern or 'Ship Salford' refers to a ship.

Manchester, with Salford as one of its Penny Post Receiving Houses (stamps known from 1806), at some 186 miles from London was rated at 9<sup>d</sup>, this being the amount, entered in red alongside the framed P<sup>d</sup> 2<sup>d</sup>

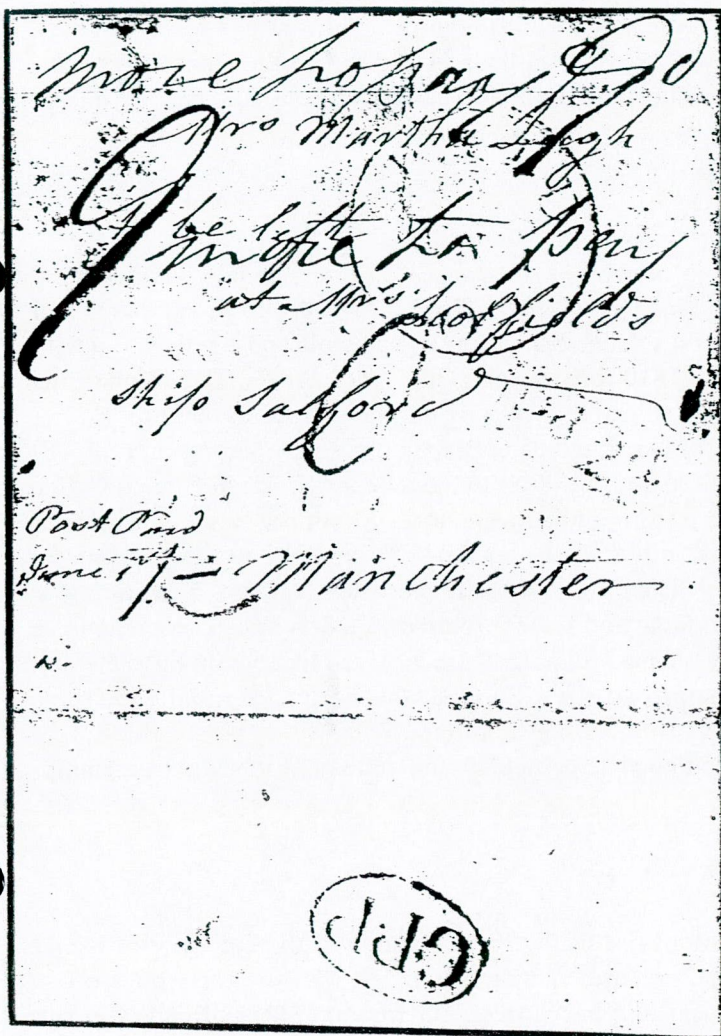
The oval framed GPP applied to signal a prepaid letter being transferred from the Twopenny Post to the General Post.

The London PAID date stamp for JUN 1 / 1802<sup>7</sup>. The charge of 9<sup>d</sup> was, nevertheless, applied twice, in black ink, in different hands.

From the text it is clear the letter contained an enclosure.

There are no arrival marks.

The recipient drafted the reply at the foot of the letter.



'Sir,

We rec<sup>d</sup> your letter of the 31<sup>st</sup> May with the rec<sup>d</sup> inclosed & herein send you Jones & Co Draft for 9.8.6 - We had ~~post~~ to pay for your letter. The letter was so small that they must suspect it being double and by it's being sealed at the edge for the seals at the edge were loose so that for they might see very plain that there was another paper inclosed.

Postage is 0 - 0 - 9 (Presumably the recovery of the postage due.)  
Stamp 0 - 1 - 0  
Bill 9 - 8 - 6  
Writing letter 0 - 0 - 3' 9.10.6

£ 643 Pd 2d



# THE MYSTERY OF THE 'IRELAND' HANDSTAMPS

Colin Breddy

## *Introduction*

For twenty-five years, between 1784 and 1810, some of the mail crossing the Irish Sea from Ireland to mainland Britain was impressed with a handstamp bearing the single word 'IRELAND'.

No other part of the United Kingdom was ever issued a handstamp bearing the country name. Until now it has been an unexplained mystery why these handstamps were employed and even where and when some of them were applied, particularly since not every letter was struck with this mark.

The main object of this article is to propose some new theories regarding the purpose for which they were issued and to establish exactly where and when they were applied. As a result of the research into the different types, sizes, ink colours, usage dates and locations of these handstamps, a full and definitive account of this fascinating aspect of British and Irish postal history is presented.

## *Previous Listings of These Handstamps.*

The basic red ink, small, medium and large marks and the large 'S' (for Sunday) variant were illustrated by Daniels<sup>1</sup> in 1898 and the same illustrations were used by Hendy<sup>2</sup> in 1905. Both authors stated all the marks were applied in Dublin. In 1937 Robson Lowe<sup>3</sup> showed only the small and medium types in red and gave usage dates of 1777 to 1790 and 1791 to 1810 respectively. One year later the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of his book<sup>4</sup> thoroughly confused the whole issue by listing five various types by height, instead of length.

Although the entry did include the three basic sizes, the usage dates were completely wrong and the 'S' variant was omitted. In 1940, the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition noted 'It is now believed to have been a Foreign Branch Office London stamp applied to incoming mail to England passing through London'. About the same time Alcock and Holland<sup>5</sup> noted the early specimens were struck in black ink 'but in 1790 or 1791 a change seems to have been made to red ink'. In 1948 Robson Lowe<sup>6</sup> listed black and red specimens and an 'S' variant but made no reference to the size of the handstamps. Feldman and Kane<sup>7</sup> produced a much more comprehensive listing in 1975 which included the three basic sizes and the 'S' variant struck in red in London but stated all specimens in black ink were applied in Scotland, listing two sizes. Barrie Jay<sup>8</sup> repeated essentially the same listing in 1983 although he added the completely new, small sized 'S' variant.

All of these listings from 1937 onwards continued to perpetuate the statement that the handstamps came into use in 1777.

## *Primary Research and Sources of Information*

It seems reasonable to accept that, as a result of the shelling and Burning of the Dublin Post Office in 1916 and further fire damage in 1922, virtually no records remain in existence of the early days of the Irish Post Office. Mairead Reynolds' book<sup>9</sup> provides useful background information but no direct reference to the 'IRELAND' handstamps.

In the Post Office Archives in London there are three volumes of Irish Post Office copy letter books relating to the administration of the Irish Post Office between 1784 and 1814<sup>10</sup>. They contain not one single direct reference to these handstamps, although useful information relating to the Irish Sea packets and the mails to England may be found there. In addition, they contain a most useful report written by Lord Cloncarty in 1807 describing, in great detail, his plans for improving the running of the Dublin Post Office. Since these plans were based on the running of the London Inland Office, they provide a useful insight into the way the system operated.

There are a further fourteen volumes of the Inland Office administration copy letter books covering October 1794 to October 1810; twenty-eight volumes of the Inland Office orders and notices books, covering February 1794 to October 1810 and the 'Private letter copy book' of Daniel Stowe, Superintending President of the Inland Office<sup>11</sup>. All these were searched and, with the exception of two very brief but notable entries, no comments or references directly relating to these handstamps were found. However, the



order books do contain information, relating to the sorting of the Irish letters and of Sunday working, which is very pertinent.

In the absence of 'hard' information it has been necessary to rely on the evidence of the actual covers acquired or recorded and from these it has been possible to deduce a number of new theories relating to the usage of these 'IRELAND' handstamps.

#### *New Theories:*

#### *Why Was an 'IRELAND' Handstamp Required?*

In 1782, weakened and humiliated by the loss of the American Colonies, Britain agreed to a new deal for Ireland, when the self styled 'Irish Volunteer Army' demanded some form of self government or threatened an Irish War of Independence. Under this new deal the Irish Parliament became independent in 1783 and, in the following year, an Act was passed to form an independent Irish Post Office, which came into being on 1<sup>st</sup> August, 1784. By this Act the two administrations were to receive, in respect of letters passing between the two countries, their own proportion of the postage. An agreement was made that, until the Irish Post Office could establish its own packet boats, the mails would continue to be conveyed by packet boats hired by the British Post Office. The cross channel element of the postage was credited to the British Post Office and the Irish Office received from the British Post Office 'in lieu as well as of the profits of the said packets as in compensation for other purposes' an annual sum of £4.000<sup>12</sup>. In fact, apart from a few weeks in 1813, the Irish Post Office never did establish their own packet boats.

At the same time, the first 'mileage' marks were being introduced in England to assist the postmaster in checking the computation of postal charges by adding his mileage to London, which he would know, to that appearing on the letter giving the mileage to London from the office of despatch, thus allowing the total charge to be confirmed or entered on the letter, having also checked, if he could, the number of sheets in the letter.

The packet charge made for carrying letters across the Irish Sea were always part of the 'British' charge but for letters between Dublin and London, up to 1797, there was an 'All In' rate of 6d per single sheet, increased to 8d in January that year before being replaced, in April 1801, by a specific packet rate and new mileage rates<sup>13</sup>.

When this 6<sup>d</sup> charge was first introduced in 1653 it was 2<sup>d</sup> more than the highest inland rate and had remained so until 31<sup>st</sup> August, 1784 (after the Irish Post Office became independent), when the English rate for distances above 150 miles was raised to 6<sup>d</sup> without any change being made in the Dublin to London rate.

Did this initially create a problem under the new system? After all, there was only a single charge marked on an unpaid letter from Dublin to England and all of this was credited to the British Post Office, whose local postmasters collected it. Since the £4,000 allowance had presumably been calculated and agreed in the light of the rates prevailing before the end of August 1784, did the Irish Post Office now feel they were not being sufficiently recompensed for their work?

Possibly 'IRELAND' handstamps were associated with the introduction of mileage marks. However, might it not be the Irish Post Office decided to monitor the number of unpaid letters being sent to Britain by the two different routes and, as part of the exercise, deemed it necessary to apply a handstamp to them?

It is possible the answer to this may yet be found in some dry and dusty tome of the Receiver General's and Accountant General's records<sup>14</sup>.

#### *When Were the Handstamps Introduced and Where?*

It is contended the first two of a series of 'IRELAND' handstamps were manufactured and came into use, not in 1777 as previously stated, but in September 1784, after the Irish Post Office became independent on 1<sup>st</sup> August, 1784 and the British Post Office introduced new charges on 31<sup>st</sup> August, 1784.

In 1784 there were only two packet routes across the Irish Sea. The main route for mail to England was between Dublin and Holyhead, then on to London via Chester. An 'All In' rate of 6<sup>d</sup> per single sheet was charged on the route. A northern packet route from Donaghadee, in County Down, to Port Patrick carried mail to Scotland and, occasionally, from the North of Ireland to England via Dumfries and Carlisle.



On this route there was a 2<sup>d</sup> per single sheet packet charge in addition to the charges incurred in Ireland and mainland Britain.

As already recorded, the 1777 date for the 'IRELAND' handstamp is disputed and bearing in mind postmarks with a year date did not come into use until May 1787, it is suggested the 1777 year was the result of misreading a manuscript year written on a letter. A letter is recorded as late as 2<sup>nd</sup> October, 1784 sent from Dublin to *London* without any sign of an 'IRELAND' mark.

Contrary to previous listings and statements there is convincing evidence to claim the two sizes of handstamp were, at first, applied in Dublin.

The earliest 'IRELAND' mark recorded is on a letter, dated 22<sup>nd</sup> September, 1784, from Dublin to *Edinburgh*. The letter shown here (fig. 1), bearing an identical mark, is from Waterford to *Edinburgh*, passing through Dublin on 27<sup>th</sup> September, 1784. The mark is 40 mm long and struck in a distinctive pale claret colour on the back on the letter, which shows also the earliest recorded use of red ink at Donaghadee to denote unpaid charges on letters to Scotland.

It is suggested this was done to simplify the accounting between the Irish and British Post Offices. Two more letters, both with a Dublin Bishop mark OC/4 (dated 1784 internally), expand the picture. The first, from Galway to Salisbury has, on

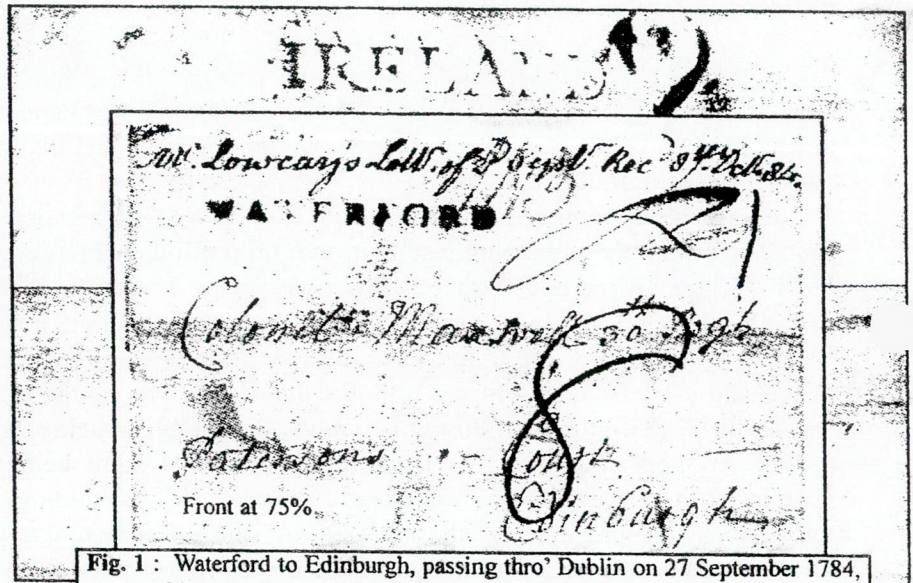


Fig. 1 : Waterford to Edinburgh, passing thro' Dublin on 27 September 1784, with 40 mm long IRELAND struck in pale claret ink on the back.

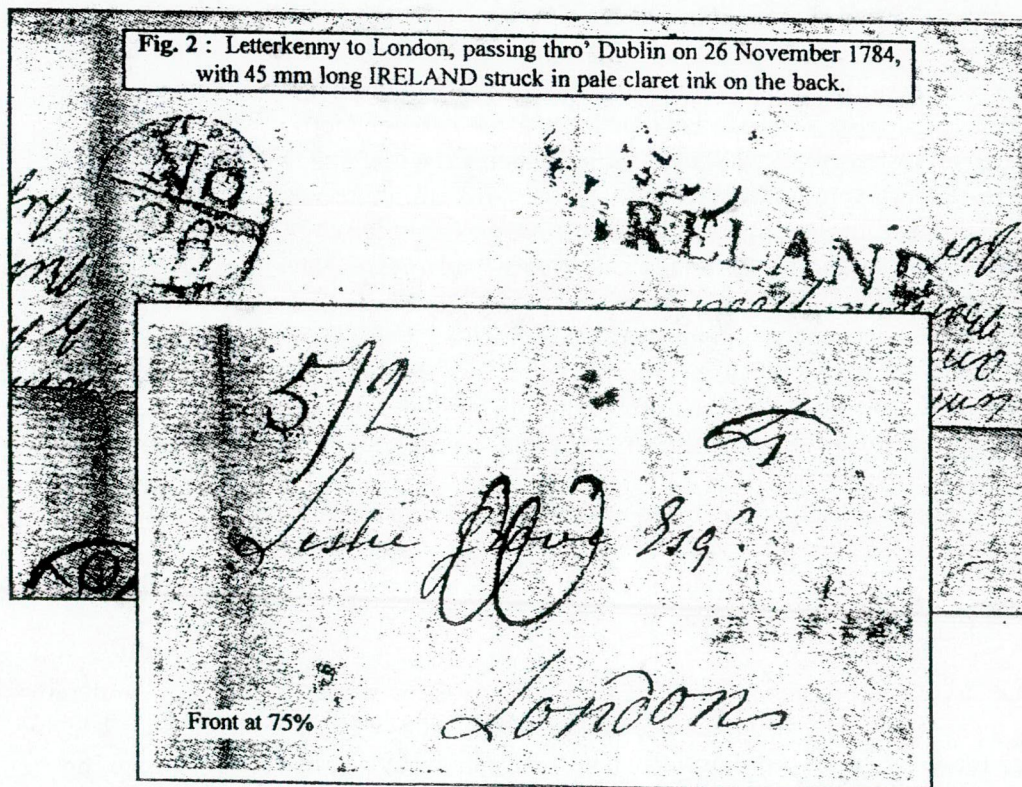


Fig. 2 : Letterkenny to London, passing thro' Dublin on 26 November 1784, with 45 mm long IRELAND struck in pale claret ink on the back.

the back, very feint but still there, a quite different 45 mm long 'IRELAND', struck in claret. This is the earliest recorded usage of this particular mark. The second example from Dublin to Glasgow by Donaghadee also had a 40 mm 'IRELAND' struck in claret, again on the back of the letter. No later date for this size and colour has so far been seen. This confirms the use of the 40 mm type on the northern route. There are two more letters, both from Letterkenny to London passing

through Dublin on 26<sup>th</sup> November (fig. 2) and 29<sup>th</sup>. Both have 45 mm 'IRELAND' marks struck on the back



in pale claret and a slightly deeper claret. It is very important to note these are the only three covers found bearing the 45 mm mark struck on the back of the cover in the same manner as the 40 mm.

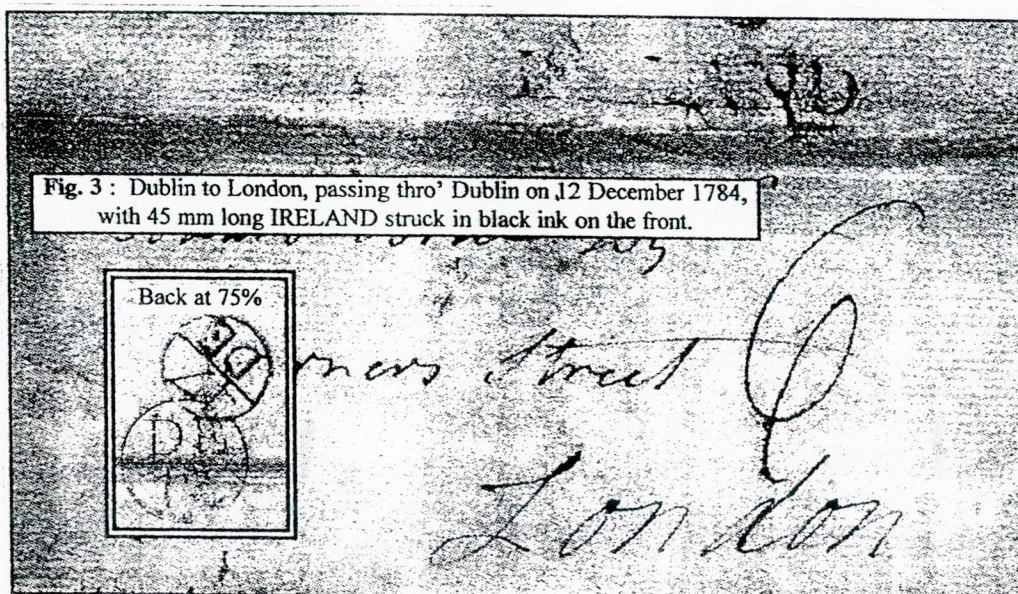
This period between late September and early December 1784 is also the only time when the same ink is used for both sizes and neither has been recorded previously in this colour. In particular, the 40 mm type (sometimes called the 'Scottish' type) has been recorded only in black after this period.

It is convincing evidence from these five, with two others recorded, that Dublin was the only common transit point and the two initial sizes of the handstamp originated in Dublin.

At least up to the end of November 1784 they were definitely struck in Dublin after the letters had been separated into those to be sent by the southern and northern routes. The colour of the ink is further supporting evidence; it is very similar to that used for the Dublin 'POST/PAID/D' and 'FREE/D' handstamps and quite unlike any colour used in London at the time.

There can be no doubt these two sizes of the 'IRELAND' handstamp, struck in pale claret are a significant and previously unreported addition to the list of Irish postmarks.

### *A Change of Ink Colour and Usage.*



By December 12, 1784, a major change had occurred. On letters to London via Holyhead, the 45 mm 'IRELAND' mark was now being struck in black ink on the front of the letter (fig.3): after this date the 45 mm type has never been found on the back of a letter. Probably in December 1784, certainly by the 23<sup>rd</sup> February 1785, letters by the

northern route to Scotland also had the 40 mm type applied in black ink, although it continued to be struck on the back of the letter.

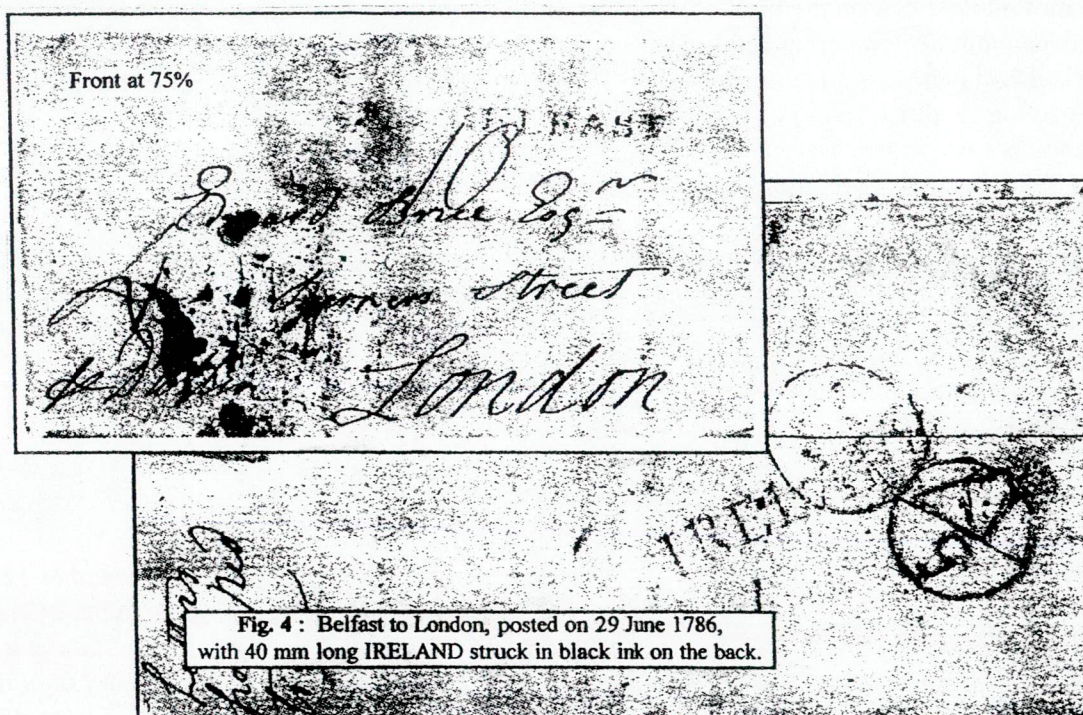
By using transparent overlays it has been possible to confirm these black impressions are identical in shape and size to the earlier claret marks and were struck by the same handstamps. It is contended the 45 mm type continued to be used at Dublin for the next two years, because the majority of examples found are in the same crisp, almost blue-black, ink, very like the accompanying Dublin dispatch Bishop marks, quite unlike the muddy brown-black of the London arrival Bishop marks. The handstamp also continued to appear on letters originating outside Dublin but passing through there en route to London.

It is also quite clear from the matching ink colours of the Dublin Bishop marks and the 40 mm type, found on the back of letters to Scotland up to the end of 1785, the two marks were struck at the same time, using the same ink pad, indicating this handstamp remained at Dublin during this period.

With only two notable exceptions, all of the marks have been found on unpaid letters. It is contended this is because the postage would have already been received for the prepaid letters, making it unnecessary to mark them specially for accounting purposes. As already noted it is argued the initial purpose in marking unpaid mail to Britain was in pursuit of a potential claim for a greater part of the income on such letters. The author has a letter dated 26<sup>th</sup> September, 1785, Dublin to Inverary, which is one of the two exceptions for prepaid mail. Both went by the Donaghadee to Port Patrick route. Both carry the 40 mm type and Dublin Bishop mark, on the back of the letter, in identical black ink, confirming application in Dublin.



### *The 40 mm Handstamp Is Sent to Belfast*



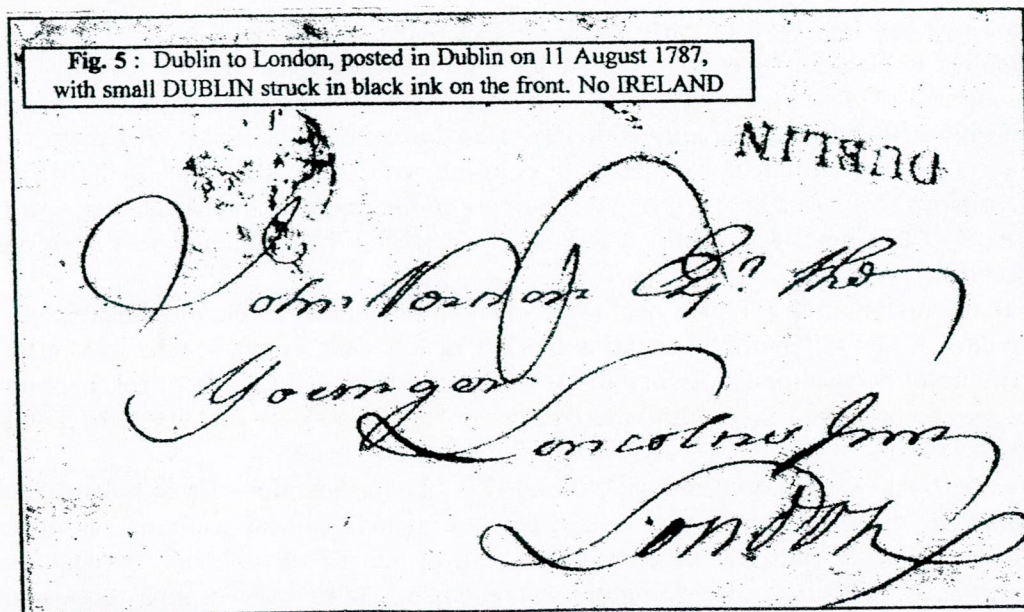
Although letters from the north are known to have been sent to London by the Donaghadee to Port Patrick packet, this one of 29<sup>th</sup> June, 1786 from Belfast to London (fig. 4), with a 'p. Dublin' endorsement, was clearly intended to follow the southern route. However, unlike the other letters to London via Dublin, it bears the 40 mm black 'IRELAND' mark on the back, with a Dublin Bishop mark confirming the route taken. This letter and several others, recorded but not seen by the author, suggest by early 1786 the 40 mm type had been transferred to Belfast and was applied there to letters from the north of Ireland to Britain, whether routed via Donaghadee or Dublin. More evidence that the handstamp had been transferred to Belfast is provided by a letter of December 3, 1786, from Donegal in the north of Ireland to Edinburgh. It quite clearly never went anywhere near Dublin, since there is no Dublin Bishop mark. Its direct transmission to Donaghadee, via Belfast, is confirmed by the rate charged. Secondly, the 40 mm type, still struck on the back, can be shown by careful examination of the size of individual letters to be the same mark as before, although now struck in brownish-black ink, leaving a weak and smudgy impression.

### *The 45 mm Handstamp Apparently Disappears*

In early 1787 something else happened. On the front of a letter of May 9, 1787, there is a small 'DUBLIN' mark and, very unusual for a letter from Dublin to London, there is absolutely no sign of an 'IRELAND' stamp. For a few months in 1787, letters originating in Dublin had this small 'DUBLIN' mark struck on the front instead of the 45 mm 'IRELAND'. Since the previous use of this 'DUBLIN' mark had ended some thirty five years earlier, the most satisfactory explanation for this reintroduction is because the 45 mm 'IRELAND' was unavailable. So far the latest use of the small 'DUBLIN' is on a letter to London dated August 11, 1787 (fig. 5). In fact, during May and June, letters to Scotland from Dublin via Belfast received both the 'DUBLIN' mark on the front and the 40 mm 'IRELAND' on the back. This practice had stopped by November and the usage of the 40 mm handstamp continued as before.

These letters, showing the short term reuse of the small 'DUBLIN', support the theory that the 45 mm type disappeared at this time. The presence of the 'DUBLIN' mark would have confirmed the origin of the letter while the 'IRELAND' stamp was unavailable. Was the 45 mm type sent to London at this time? In fact, during fifteen years of collecting this material, the author has been unable to acquire, locate or even record any letter at all from Dublin to London between January 1787 and March 1790. Without this information it is not possible to know where the handstamp was during this period.





#### *The End of the 40 mm Handstamp*

The 40 mm handstamp continued to be struck in black ink on the back of letters passing through Belfast until at least April 1790. At some point, shortly after this, the handstamp disappeared from use entirely and all letters sent via Donaghadee had no special handstamp applied. The practice of using red ink at Donaghadee for unpaid charges continued until 1824.

Again it is argued these 'IRELAND' marks in both 40 mm and 45 mm sizes, struck in black ink during this period, definitely should be added to the list of Irish postmarks.

#### *The Reappearance of the 45 mm Handstamp*

The 45 mm mark reappears, still struck in black ink, on a letter dated 27<sup>th</sup> March, 1790 from Dublin to London. From the colour of the ink it is believed the handstamp was, by this time, being applied in London. Using transparent overlays it is clear this is the same stamp formerly applied in Dublin. Where it had been, as already noted, is not known, nor why it was brought into use again. Assuming no record of use means not in use, its reappearance, it seems likely, was due to some new requirement. Was it now being used to check on the number of letters arriving in London from Dublin or merely as an added indication of their origin?

At least up to January 1787 letters by the Dublin and Holyhead packet, from towns beyond Dublin travelling to London and places beyond, had the 45 mm type applied. In early 1787 this ceased to happen, with the 'IRELAND' mark found only on letters originating in Dublin. Might this be because letters from these other places all displayed a town stamp on the front?

Although most letters from Dublin to cities and towns in England circulated through London, some were sent directly from Chester, as the cross posts developed, to towns in the West Country, the Midlands and the North. This type of letter is quite rare but, when found, they do not have the 'IRELAND' mark struck on them. For letters not passing to or through London, the 'All in' rate of 6d. covered the charge to Chester only and an additional charge was made for the distance from Chester to the destination.

There are several letters from Dublin to London, or beyond, bearing the 45 mm type, stuck in black at London, during April and May 1790 and one, dated in London 11<sup>th</sup> August 1790, is the latest recorded normal usage known, again struck in black.



### *The Change to Red Ink*

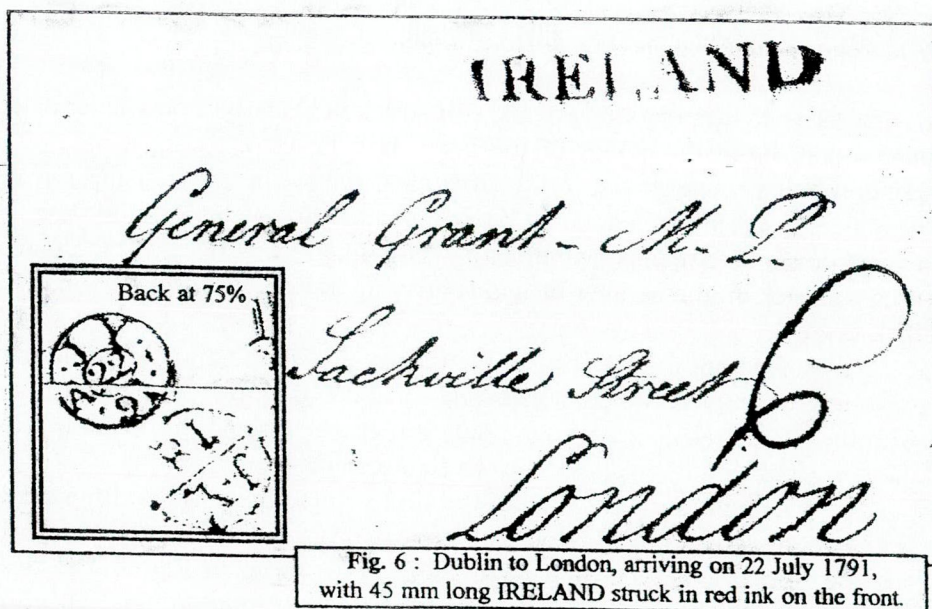
At some point in late 1790 or early 1791, another major change took place. The 45 mm stamp ceased to be applied in black ink and from then on all normal strikes are in red ink. So far, a letter with a London datestamp of 14<sup>th</sup> March, 1791 is the earliest recorded usage of the mark in this colour, although the actual colour of this strike seems to be a transitional stage between black and red. Why there was a change to red has not yet been determined. It appears to coincide with the withdrawal of the 40 mm type at Donaghadee. Perhaps there was a subtle change of purpose in the usage of the handstamp, since the use of red ink at London, at that time, was confined to Post Paid and Free handstamps; most town name stamps were applied in black.

Was red ink used to give a 'higher profile' to letters from Dublin? Could the shock waves created by the French Revolution of 1789 and the formation in 1791 of the Wolf Tone 'Society of United Irishmen', with its avowed aim of persuading the French to invade Ireland, have led to a 'political' need to track Irish letters? Far-fetched perhaps but bear in mind the *Traitorous Correspondence Bill* was passed only two years later in 1793.

Another pertinent change occurred on 1<sup>st</sup> June, 1791, the introduction of a code letter in the London datestamp. Although different datestamp code letters are found, careful examination of the 45 mm 'IRELAND' marks, using a transparent overlay, shows all of the strikes, although varying in clarity and intensity, to be virtually identical, confirming only one such handstamp existed. It has been stated the code letters, A to E, of the London datestamps introduced in 1791 referred to different tables, in the Inland Office, at which the letters were sorted and datestamped. However, letters and orders in the London archives indicate different tables for the incoming morning mail duty were not introduced until January 1798, when a different arrival datestamp was also introduced. The earlier datestamp with code letters A to E have been found used in conjunction with the 'IRELAND' mark. They are obviously not related to the days of the week and probably relate to the identification of staff employed as stampers.

### *'Free' Letters and the 'IRELAND' Handstamp*

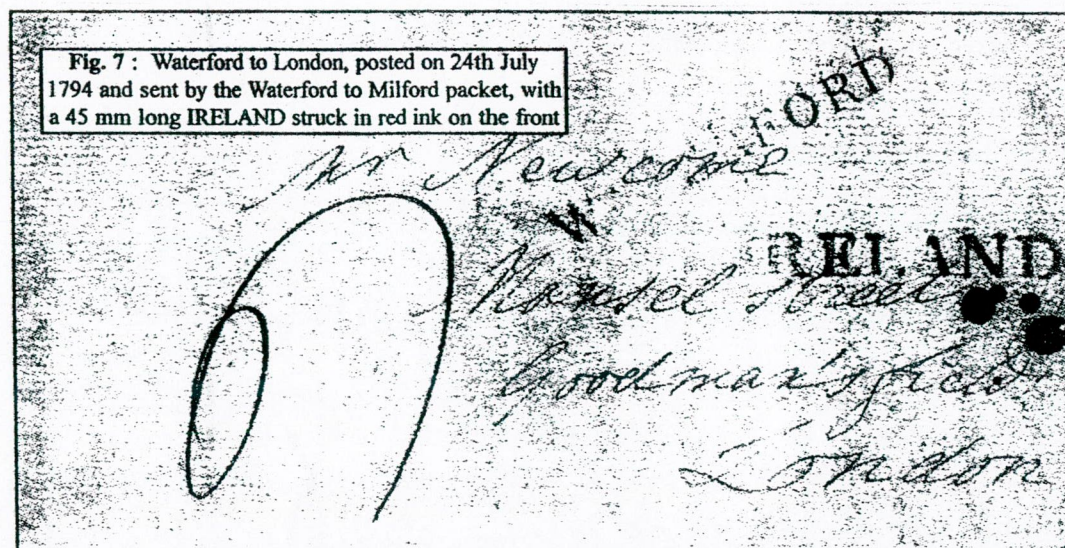
Fig. 6 shows a very fine strike of the 45 mm 'IRELAND' mark in red on a letter datestamped 22nd. July, 1791, code A. Parliamentary franking was not allowed on letters between Ireland and Britain from August 1784 to June 1802, which accounts for the comparative scarcity of 'Free' Letters from Dublin during this period. It also explains the charge levied on this letter, which is quite clearly addressed to an M.P. Where franked letters from Dublin are found, normally they do not carry the 'IRELAND' mark, presumably because there was no unpaid postage to account for. Only two franked covers bearing an 'IRELAND' mark have been found, both from the early 1800s and which are described later.



### *The Waterford to Milford Packet Service and the 'IRELAND' Handstamp*

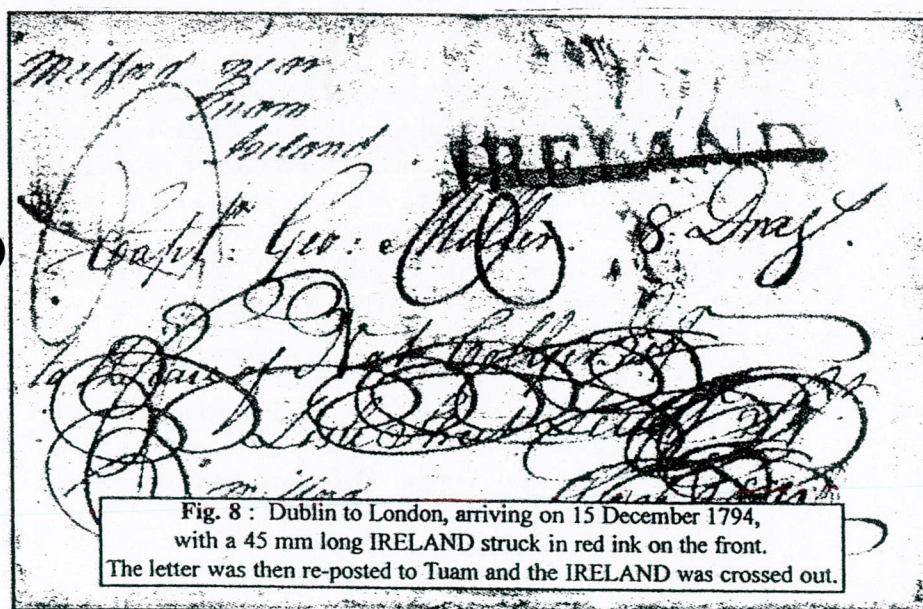
In 1788 a new packet route had commenced between Waterford, in southern Ireland, and Milford, in Wales. With one known exception, letters by this route were not stamped with the 'IRELAND' mark on





arrival in London. This was possibly because they generally bore a town name stamp, also because they would have arrived in a different bag. The packet rate on this route was set at 6d. per single sheet, plus the Irish and English charges. However, there was a proviso the charge on letters to London was not to exceed the Dublin to London rate via Holyhead. The letter (fig. 7) dated internally 24<sup>th</sup> July 1794, bearing both a 'WATERFORD' town mark and a red 45 mm 'IRELAND', was sent by the Waterford to Milford packet, the route being confirmed by the absence of a Dublin datestamp and by the 6d. rate. This means the letter can only have received the 'IRELAND' mark on arrival in London, which confirms the stamp was in London by this date. Unusually, there is no London arrival datestamp on the back. This is the only known cover, sent by this route, with this mark.

#### Other Usage



A letter, dated 10<sup>th</sup> December 1794 (fig. 8), Dublin to London, re-posted to Tuam, provides more evidence of the possible purpose of an 'IRELAND' handstamp. The letter received the red 45 mm type on arrival in London and it was then paid for and re-posted to Ireland. The significant fact is the 'IRELAND' mark was crossed out, presumably when the letter was re-posted, confirming it was associated with accounting for unpaid postage on letters from Ireland to Britain.

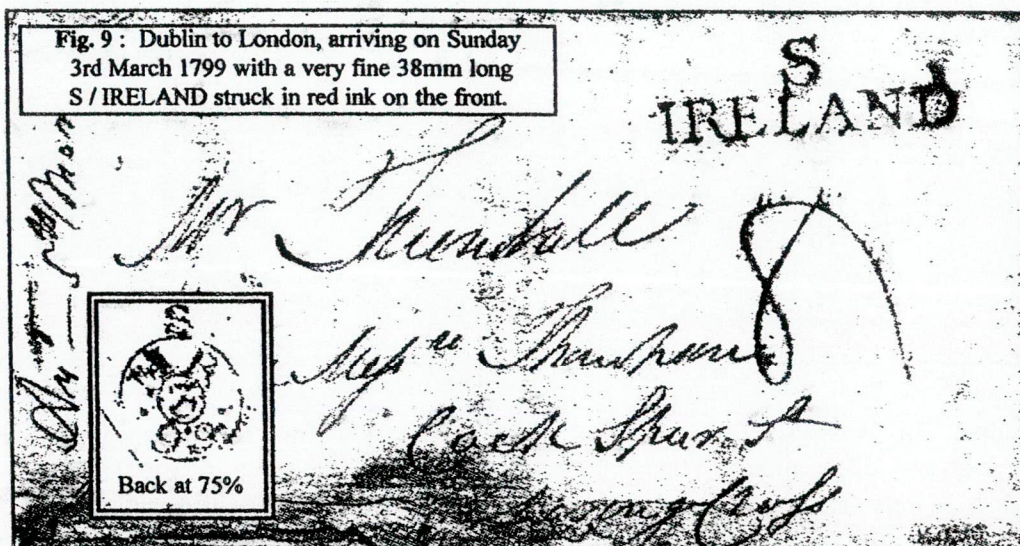
From 1<sup>st</sup> January, 1795, the London datestamps used for the morning duty and evening duty were distinguished by single and double outer rims. From this date until January 1798 only code letters A to C are recorded for the single rim morning duty datestamp. So far the 45 mm red 'IRELAND' mark has been found only in conjunction with London datestamp code letters A and B between January 1795 and January 1798.

Although the 45 mm 'IRELAND' handstamp had, normally, ceased being struck in black in early 1791, there is one letter known datestamped 20<sup>th</sup> January, 1797, code B, definitely struck in black ink. This



is not oxidization of red ink but the result of the wrong ink pad being used or because there was no red ink pad available that day.

#### *The Small Size 'S / IRELAND' Handstamp*



The great rarity of the 'IRELAND' handstamps and irrefutable proof of the place where it was applied is afforded by this mark. A letter is known which arrived in London on Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> February, 1798, which received an entirely new 38 mm long 'S / IRELAND' mark, the 'S' signifying a Sunday arrival. Before 1798 mail arriving in London on a Sunday was held over until Monday for sorting but, from this time on, officers attended on a Sunday to sort any mail which arrived (mainly from Ireland) and a new datestamp was code letter 'S' outside was also used. Examples of this London Sunday datestamp are very scarce and, even rarer, is the 'S / IRELAND' mark, of which this is the earliest known example. From 17<sup>th</sup> June, 1798 letters arriving from Ireland on a Sunday would be collected from the 'Window' of the Post Office in Lombard Street (this special service was probably provided because of the Irish Rebellion which began in early 1798) and was announced in the newspapers<sup>15</sup>. Another - and perhaps the very finest - strike of the 38 mm red 'S / IRELAND' mark applied in London on 3<sup>rd</sup> March, 1799, albeit on an unfortunately water damaged cover (fig. 9). This is the latest known usage of the mark so it appears it was either irreparably damaged or lost soon after this. This small 'S / IRELAND' handstamp was not discovered and recorded until the early 1980s. So far, only four covers bearing this mark have been recorded.

A report to Francis Freeling shows more than 20,000 letters arrived in London from Ireland via Dublin and Holyhead during January 1798, almost one in six of these arrived at the Inland Office on a Sunday<sup>11</sup>. This gives some indication of how few have survived.

But why was a special handstamp required for Irish letters arriving in London on a Sunday? Why was not the application of the ordinary 45 mm handstamp in conjunction with the newly introduced 'S' for Sunday datestamp sufficient? Perhaps the introduction of this further mark was just bureaucratic and technological overkill, a sort of 18th century 'toys for boys' syndrome. On the other hand, as was suggested earlier, there may have been deeper, non-postal, reasons for marking these letters.

#### *London Inland Office Sorting Table Codes*

In January 1798 seven tables, listed A to G, were brought into service at the Inland Office in London to deal with the incoming mail. Each of these was given a new type of London datestamp with an identifying code letter outside the circle. Normally the Irish letters were dealt with at Table A<sup>11</sup>. Significantly, a letter is known which shows the London datestamp for 6<sup>th</sup> April, 1898, code B, that is sorted at Table B: there is no sign of an 'IRELAND' mark. This suggests, at this date, there was only one 45 mm 'IRELAND' handstamp available and this held at Table A.



### *Another Small Handstamp*

Fairly recently an entirely new 43 mm 'IRELAND' was discovered in use by 30<sup>th</sup> May, 1798, in conjunction with a code A datestamp. Again the use of transparent overlays has shown the mark on the front of this particular cover is quite distinctly smaller in length and shorter in height than the normal 45 mm mark. So far this is the earliest recorded usage of the previously unrecorded 43 mm type. Although this new size had been introduced, another letter with the London datestamp for 1<sup>st</sup> October, 1798, code A, shows the 45 mm type had not been permanently lost or destroyed at this time, although this is latest known date for which it has been found.

### *Irrefutable Information About the Introduction of the 68 mm 'IRELAND' Handstamp*

Earlier it was stated only two references to the 'IRELAND' handstamps had so far been found in the London archives and no apology is made for reproducing them in full because of their great significance. From the Presidents Order Book, vol. 247, page 142.

26th. February 1799

When Mr S. was lately in the Inland Office on account of the late arrival of the Mails, he recollects being told that the Irish Stamp for Morning Letters had been discontinued at the A Table. Mr S. presumes that no Clerk or Messenger could have done this of their own accord & therefore trusts that the Presidents will account for it & give immediate & positive advice for all that the Irish letters to be stamped as usual. There is no estimating what losses may have been sustained to the revenue as many allowances have been made by the Deputys, not knowing from whence the letter came.

and alongside this.....

Williams the Messenger says the Irish Letters inwards have not been stamped for about two months, that he discontinued it at the desire of Mr. Cook & Mr. Browning who he understood had communicated with Mr. Thinger respecting it..

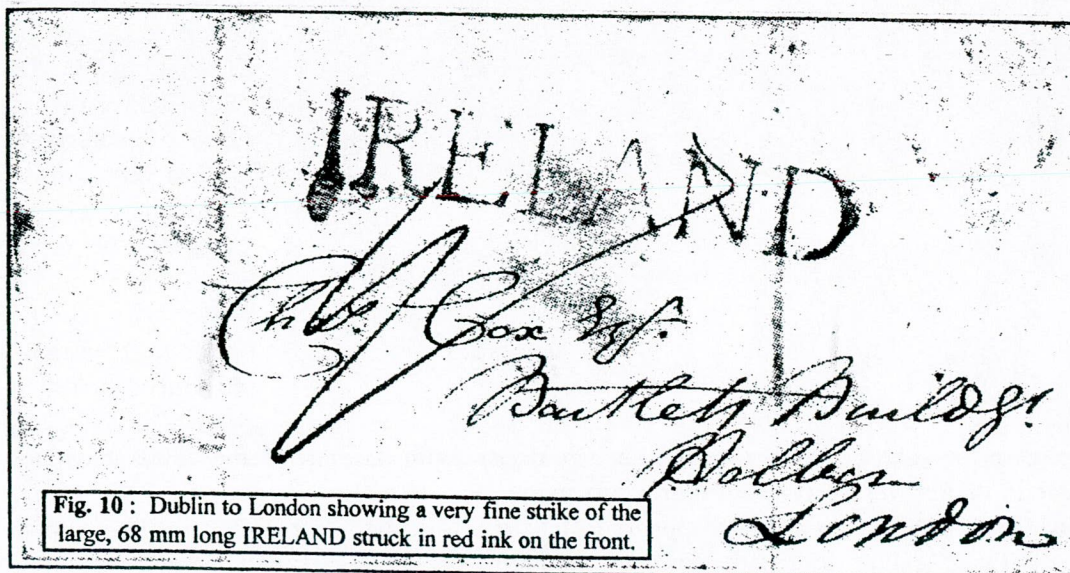
Then nine days later, on page 162

7th March 1799

Mr Stow has ordered a Stamp to be given to the Stamper of each Table for the Irish letters & requests that the Presidents will see that the Dublin letters are always stamped in the manner they used to be formerly.

Alongside this a comment from an unknown source:

*I think if the Irish Stamp had been only half as large it would have answered the purpose better.*





- What a wonderful understatement - The earliest recorded example of usage for this new handstamp is 18<sup>th</sup> March, 1799 and this letter (fig. 10) shows exactly how large it was. At 68 mm the new type was significantly larger than any other, single line, handstamp ever used by the British Post Office. Why it was necessary, or desirable, to use such a large handstamp is another unsolved part of the mystery. Possibly

Daniel Stowe the 'Mr. S' of the order, was just making sure the clerks did not lose it again.

The next cover (fig. 11) from Dublin to London is possibly unique. There is no dispatch or arrival datestamp present but the correct manuscript rate of 8d confirms its carriage by the Post Office; it is dated internally 24<sup>th</sup> August, 1799. Whatever the reason for the lack of an arrival mark, it also appears the 'IRELAND' handstamp was not

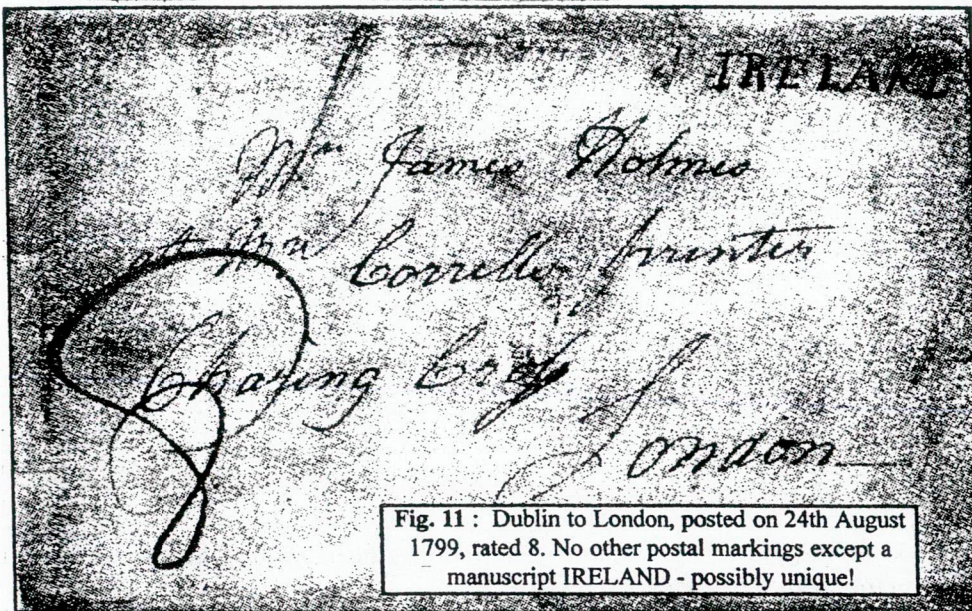


Fig. 11 : Dublin to London, posted on 24th August 1799, rated 8. No other postal markings except a manuscript IRELAND - possibly unique!

available either but, apparently, so important was its presence the post office clerk who dealt with it wrote the word 'IRELAND' in block capitals in the top right hand corner, clearly imitating the handstamp. He was probably terrified what Mr. S. would say if it went out unmarked!

### The Large Sized 'S / IRELAND' Handstamp

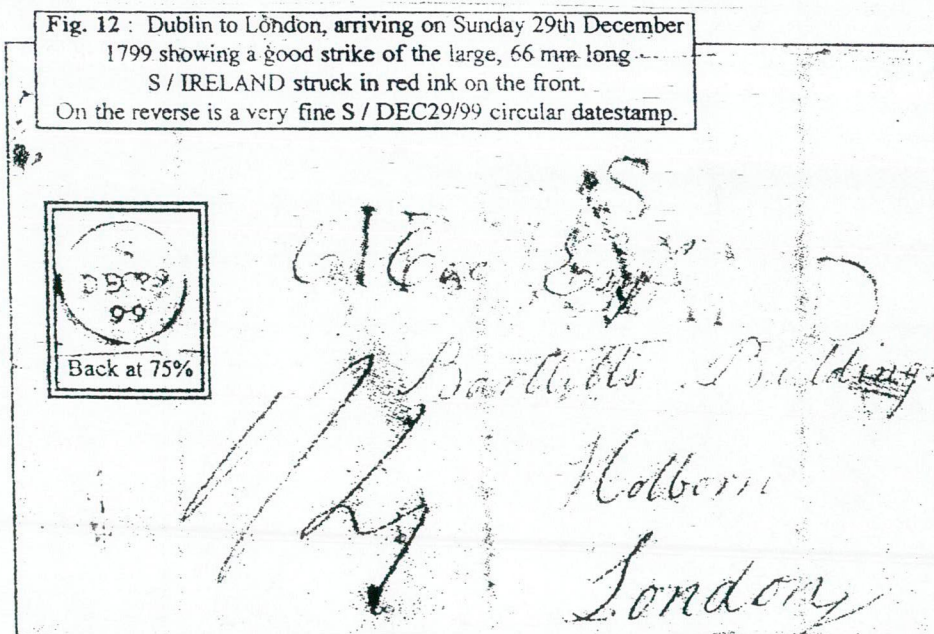


Fig. 12 : Dublin to London, arriving on Sunday 29th December 1799 showing a good strike of the large, 66 mm long S / IRELAND struck in red ink on the front. On the reverse is a very fine S / DEC29/99 circular datestamp.

The apparent loss of the earlier small sized 'S / IRELAND' handstamp was obviously so serious another new version for the Sunday service was brought into use in late 1799. Once again, the example shown here (fig. 12) dated 29<sup>th</sup> December, 1799, with a two digit year numeral datestamp, code 'S', is a very rare strike, this being one of only two recorded, the earlier being for 17<sup>th</sup> November 1799. When the single circle London datestamps were introduced in July 1799, the colour of ink used was

changed to red but the year numerals remained as two digits. With the start of the 1800s, the datestamps in both Dublin and London were given four digit years numerals.

This 'S / IRELAND' handstamp appears to be almost identical to the 68 mm type with a letter 'S' above. Initially it was not known whether this was an entirely separate new handstamp or a composite type



with an 'S' being inserted, in a frame, above the normal 68 mm type. Careful examination of this and later examples indicates this was a new handstamp, since it is definitely shorter than the 68 mm 'IRELAND'.

#### *The Final Addition - the 57 mm 'IRELAND' Handstamp*

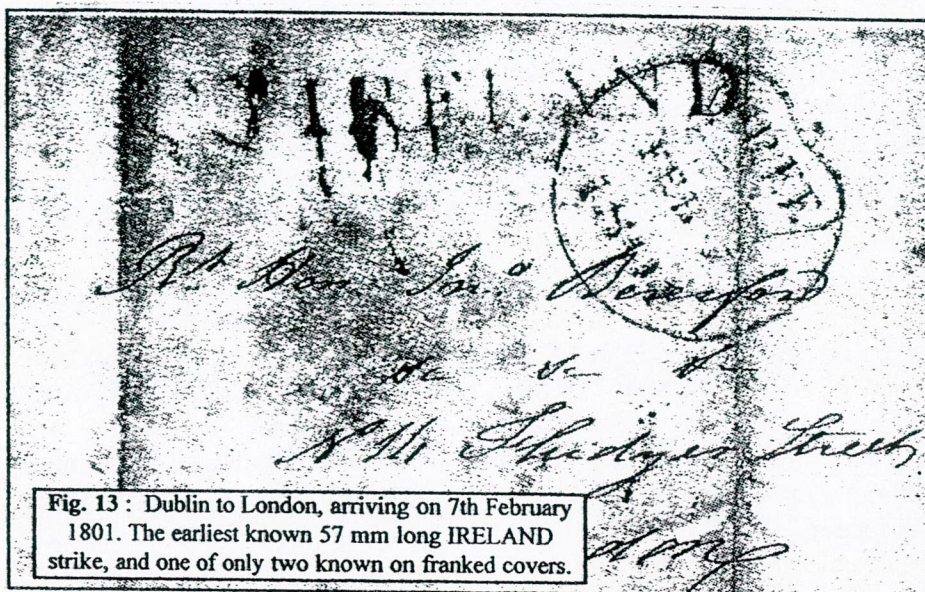


Fig. 13 : Dublin to London, arriving on 7th February 1801. The earliest known 57 mm long IRELAND strike, and one of only two known on franked covers.

Another very rare and important letter dated 3<sup>rd</sup> February, 1801 (fig. 13). Firstly because it bears the earliest known example of the 57 mm long red 'IRELAND' and, secondly, because, for some unknown reason, this handstamp was applied to a Free letter. Since subsequent letters show at least two of the previous 'IRELAND' handstamps were still in use, it appears another new handstamp was required, possibly due to the

increasing volume of letters.

It seems this new stamp was also issued to Table A because examples on ordinary unpaid covers are found only with the London 'A' code datestamp, possibly in place of the 68 mm type thus far not recorded for 1801, 1802 or 1803. Despite not being able to find examples of the 68 mm 'IRELAND' during this period, the large 'S / IRELAND' mark continued in use and,

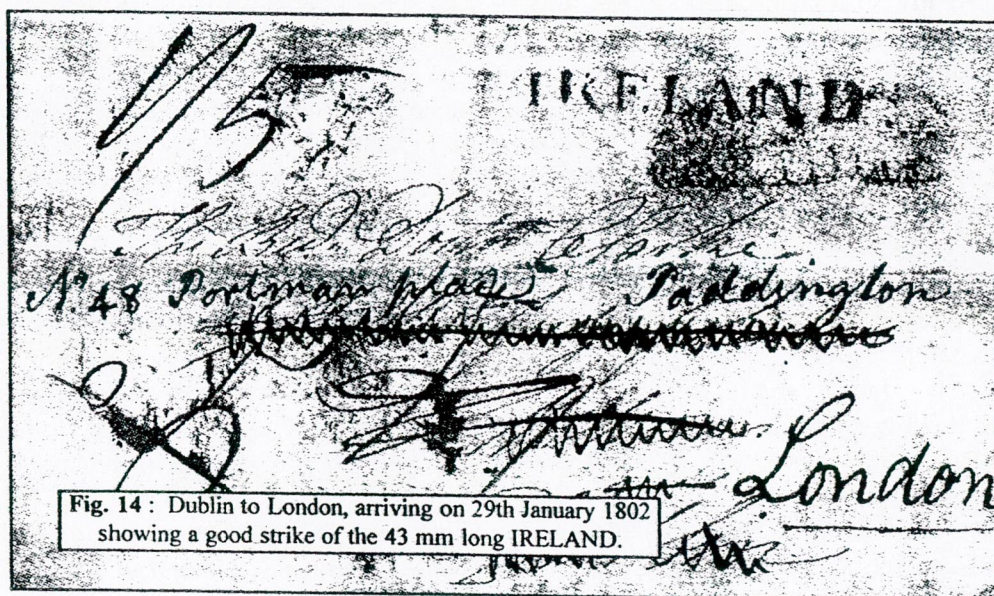


Fig. 14 : Dublin to London, arriving on 29th January 1802 showing a good strike of the 43 mm long IRELAND.

so far, the latest positively identified date for this particular type is 18<sup>th</sup> July, 1802.

A new set of postal rates was introduced on 5<sup>th</sup> April, 1801. There was now a specific packet rate of 2d. per single sheet for the Dublin to Holyhead crossing, the distance travelled in Britain fully charged for but the handstamps continued to be used.

Although the 43 mm 'IRELAND' handstamp seems to have been replaced for all normal usage by the 68 mm version, it was evidently not lost. It occurs on a letter of 16<sup>th</sup> January, 1802 from Leighlinbridge to Dublin, redirected to London (fig. 14). This late usage of a small handstamp is quite rare and, possibly, this 43 mm type was only used where there was something unusual about the postal charges applied to the letter. So far only three instances of late usage of the 43 mm type have been identified, all during the first quarter of 1802. One of these is the second known instance of an 'IRELAND' handstamp being used on a franked letter, whilst the third and latest is datestamped 18<sup>th</sup> March, 1802. It has only been found in conjunction with a code letter 'A' datestamp. However, it is quite clear, at this time, there were at least two



and possibly three ordinary types of 'IRELAND' handstamps and one Sunday type all being used concurrently.

#### *Usage of the 57 mm 'IRELAND' Handstamp on Sundays.*

The latest recorded use of the large 65 mm 'S / IRELAND' handstamp is 18<sup>th</sup> July, 1802. After this, the ordinary 57 mm 'IRELAND' was used on mail arriving on Sundays. So far the earliest recorded use of this on a Sunday, in conjunction the a London 'code S for Sunday' arrival datestamp, is 6<sup>th</sup> December, 1804. Further examples of both types need to be found in order to ascertain the actual changeover date. The 57 mm 'IRELAND' has, with one exception, so far been found only in conjunction with the London arrival datestamps codes 'A' and 'S'. This indicates there was probably only a single 57 mm 'IRELAND' handstamp located at Table A.

A cover, with the London datestamp for 12<sup>th</sup> July, 1804, code F (table F) , shows the 68 mm type reappearing again after an apparent break of three years. A note, dated 14<sup>th</sup> January, 1801, in the Order Book refers to the Irish Mails only being dealt with at Tables A, C and F. So far the 68 mm type has been found in conjunction with the letter A up to 1800, A and C in 1800, then C and F from 1804 on. It would appear the 57 mm type was kept at the main Table A, with the code letter A datestamps. The larger 68 mm size was probably used only when the volume of mail required other tables to be employed. This might explain the relative scarcity of the large size marks after the medium size was introduced in 1801. The latest recorded date for the 68 mm type is January 1809.

Occasionally mistakes occur which resulted in unusual applications of the handstamp. On a cover with the London datestamp 14<sup>th</sup> December, 1807, code A, both the 57 mm 'IRELAND' and the London datestamp have been struck in black ink instead of the usual red. While all the London datestamps were normally struck in red ink during this period, some other instructional marks such as 'More to Pay' and 'Postage to London not paid' were usually struck in black ink, so black ink pads would have been on the sorting tables.

Another remarkable error. At first the cover appeared to be the only recorded instance of the 68 mm handstamp being used on a Sunday, since the London datestamp was 'S / AUG 2 / 1808'. However, when a perpetual almanac was used to check the day, it was found the 2<sup>nd</sup> August, 1808 was a Tuesday. The 'S' datestamp had been set up for use on the wrong day, further evidence the 68 mm handstamp was probably used only when large volumes of mail arrived, necessitating the use of several tables.

A disproportionally large number of the covers found during this period show a Sunday arrival datestamp. The reason for this is not known and it may only represent the collecting interests of earlier postal historians.

One cover with the London datestamp for 2<sup>nd</sup> February, 1810, code C, instead of either code A or S, is the only example known used in conjunction with the 57 mm handstamp. In this case the ink of both the 'IRELAND' mark and the London datestamp is heavily oxidized, further proof they were applied at the same time. A cover bearing the latest known usage of the 57 mm 'IRELAND' handstamp in red was posted in Dublin on the same day as the previous letter but, since it bears a Dublin 'TOO LATE' mark, obviously missed the Tuesday evening packet and, consequently, arrived in London a day later, receiving the 3<sup>rd</sup> February, 1810, code A datestamp.

Perhaps it is fitting the latest cover identified with an 'IRELAND' mark is once again a mystery. This letter has both the 57 mm 'IRELAND' mark and the 'code S for Sunday' datestamp of 6<sup>th</sup> May, 1810, struck in black ink instead of the normal red, probably due to a mistake.

#### *The End of the Line*

The 'IRELAND' stamps ceased being used in 1810. This appears to coincide with the opening of a 'British Mail Office' in Dublin, which had been established as a result of the efforts of Lord Cloncarty (Joint Irish Postmaster General 1807-9) to improve the Irish Post Office. The records do not identify a reason or even seem to show an order instructing the clerks to stop applying the handstamp. Thus, although several matters are now clear and sound theories advanced for other questions, some aspects of Irish and British postal history are just as much a mystery.



# IDENTIFICATION OUTLINES FOR THE "IRELAND" HANDSTAMPS

including latest known details as at January 2003

45 MM LONG

IRELAND

APPLIED IN DUBLIN IN PALE CLARET INK  
EKD - 4 Oct 1784 LKD - 29 Nov 1784

APPLIED IN DUBLIN IN BLACK INK  
EKD - 13 Dec 1784 LKD - 19 Jan 1787

APPLIED IN LONDON IN BLACK INK  
EKD - 27 Mar 1790 LKD - 11 Aug 1790

APPLIED IN LONDON IN RED INK  
EKD - 14 Mar 1791 LKD - 1 Oct 1798

1 cover known in black for 20 Jan 1797,  
due to wrong inkpads being used

40 MM LONG

IRELAND

APPLIED IN DUBLIN IN PALE CLARET INK  
EKD - 22 Sep 1784 LKD - 4 Oct 1784

APPLIED IN DUBLIN IN BLACK INK  
EKD - 23 Feb 1785 LKD - 26 Sep 1785

APPLIED IN BELFAST IN BLACK INK  
EKD - 29 Jun 1786 LKD - 14 Apr 1790

43 MM  
LONG

IRELAND

APPLIED IN LONDON IN RED INK  
EKD - 30 May 1798 LKD - 18 Mar 1802

SMALL  
'SUNDAY'  
TYPE  
38 MM  
LONG

S  
IRELAND

APPLIED IN LONDON IN RED INK  
EKD - 25 Feb 1798 LKD - 8 Mar 1799

68 MM  
LONG

IRELAND

APPLIED IN LONDON IN RED INK  
EKD - 18 Mar 1799 LKD - ? Jan 1809

LARGE  
'SUNDAY'  
TYPE  
66 MM  
LONG

S  
IRELAND

APPLIED IN LONDON IN RED INK  
EKD - 24 Nov 1799 LKD - 18 Jul 1802

57 MM  
LONG

IRELAND

APPLIED IN LONDON IN RED INK  
EKD - 7 Feb 1801 LKD - 3 Feb 1810  
APPLIED IN LONDON IN BLACK INK  
EKD - 14 Dec 1807 LKD - 6 May 1810  
These 2 black strikes are due to the  
wrong inkpads being used.

Note - the earliest known usage of a London "S" (for Sunday) circular datestamp in conjunction  
with this 57 mm handstamp is 16 Dec 1804

Would all readers who have examples of the usage of these handstamps or other relevant covers from this period contact the author with details. Given it is extremely unlikely any further archival references will come to light, it is only by gathering further evidence from actual covers, this 'mystery' will ever be solved. Direct contact by e-mail to: colinbreddy@aol.com or via *Notebook* will always be answered.

Thank you.

## Notes:

1. J.H. Daniels, *A History of British Postmarks* (London: L. Upcott Gill, 1898, 99-100)
2. J.G. Hendy, *The History of the Early Postmarks of the British Isles* (London: L. Upcott Gill, 1905) 153-5
3. Robson Lowe, *Handstruck Postage Stamps of the Empire 1680-1900 1st edition* (London: Herbert Joseph Ltd. for Robson Lowe Ltd., 1937) 123.
4. ob. cit., 2nd edition (1938), 155.
5. R.C. Alcock and F.C. Holland *The Postmarks of Great Britain and Ireland* (Cheltenham: R.C. Alcock Ltd., 1940), 132.



6. Robson Lowe, *The Encyclopædia of British Empire Postage Stamps* - Vol. 1 1st. edition (London: Robson Lowe Ltd., 1948), 62.
7. David Feldman and William Kane, *Handbook of Irish Postal History to 1840* (Dublin: David Feldman Ltd., 1975), 24-26.
8. Barrie Jay, *The British County Catalogue of Postal History, Vol. 3 - London* (London: R.M. Willcocks, 1983), 23.
9. Mairead Reynolds, *A History of the Irish Post Office* (Dublin: McDonnell Whyte Ltd., 1983), 28-33.
10. British Post Office Archives, Post 15, vols. 154-156.
11. British Post Office Archives, Post 14, vols. 238-266, vols. 362-372 and vol. 390. All volumes searched, specific references are vol. 245: 61-220; vol. 363: 116-140 and vol. 364: 182-244.
12. Herbert Joyce, *History of the Post Office from its Establishment Down to 1836* (1893), 378
13. David Robinson, *For the Port and Carriage of Letters* (Scotland: published by the author, 1990), 54
14. Jean Farrugia, *A Guide to Post Office Archives* (1986), 1-8.
15. Michael M. Raguin, *British Post Office Notices 1666-1899, Vol. 1 Pre-1800* (published by the author, 1991), 202

## MEETING DATES FOR 2004

Members might care to make a note of the meeting dates for 2004, all on Saturday afternoons with the room available from 1.30. Lunch / tea and biscuits available in the bar at the Club before meetings.

January 17th  
 March 13th.  
 May 15th.  
 July 17th.  
 September 18th.  
 November 20th.

Your suggestions for subject matter for these would be most welcome. Offers to lead with a display, as well as the usual contributions from those attending, much appreciated.

## MAIL FROM SOUTH AFRICA

Query from Richard Stroud via Robert Johnson

Richard Stroud, an old friend of Robert Johnson's, is a very well known Orange Free State and Boer War collector and has run into a problem demonstrated by the covers shown here. The point is why and how the British stamps were put on and why they were cancelled in London. There are too many of them from different places and dates to be oddities and more are known. They are all addressed abroad, that is, out of the UK and are all Boer War South Africa in origin. So.....

- Did the Post Office put the stamps on without charging anyone as there would be no real loss as they were put in a bag going abroad?
- Or did the persons or even the Army have an account with the PO which could have been debited?
- If so did the senders pay cash in South Africa?

Is the 'Via London' or 'England' [then crossed out] endorsements significant on one of the covers so it went through London to get the stamp put on?



One has to remember UPU regulations demanded a stamp to indicate prepayment so without the stamps the addressees would have been charged postage due.

Your Editor, with very little knowledge on the matter, did offer a few comments in response to the letter from Robert Johnson, given here for someone who actually does have the answer an incentive to get into print with the actual state of affairs.

The stamps were clearly applied on receipt in London, demonstrated by the 'OAS' (On Active Service) and 'No stamps available' endorsements. This was the standard practice and quite early on in the war the British Post Office ceased charging postage due on soldiers' AND officers' mail coming into the UK, all of which was, it is believed, routed through London, even when addressed elsewhere.

More significantly, the stamps are cancelled with one from the set of date stamps issued to the Ship Letter Office for dealing with mail from abroad, which usually carried a foreign Paquebot mark.

It seems unlikely the Post Office would have put stamps on letters without having both the authority so to do and charging someone, being very particular in ensuring someone, somewhere, paid. After all they were, until 1969, an arm of the Treasury, an organisation not known for a belief of providing a service gratis.

Given that state of affairs, since the mail was destined for delivery outside the UK, could it not be that the War Department had all the mail sent to them before it went to the Post office and they, the War Department, put on the stamps and then sent the mail back into the post system. This would have the merit of keeping the costs in the correct Treasury jam jar and may well have been provided for in a discrete sub section of the annual vote for prosecuting the war in South Africa.

All the London cancellations are for 1900 or 1901.

Normandy Park  
Army Form C. 398 *Gulford* Date. Rate.  
Despatched *10* h. *10* m. *10* M.  
Received *10* h. *10* m. *10* M.  
Signature of *[Signature]*  
Receiver *[Signature]*  
To *Lt Col Gordon R.E.*  
*International Legation Rome*  
*Office*  
*XXI*  
This envelope to be returned to bearer



*in active Service*  
*I.L.H.*  
*Mr J. G. G. G.*  
*102 Rue Royale*  
*Brussels*  
*[Signature]*





~~England~~ U.S. America

Capt Money  
Oakland  
Berkeley  
New Jersey

PAID  
JUN 10 1900  
NEW YORK

2½

Post Office  
Oakland  
Calif  
June 10 1900  
New York

PA<sup>5</sup>

Mrs Marden

118 Rua de S. Bernardo

Lisbon

Portugal



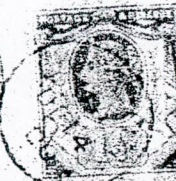
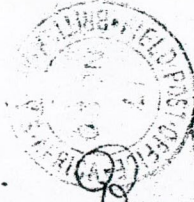
no stamps available at Melbourne  
in the morning, sent by  
S. J. Smith



Messrs. J. G. Macquethan & Co  
87 Nassau St  
New York  
U.S.A.



11



Nonie Powell  
Villa Duval  
Menton

