

GREAT BRITAIN

CANCELLATIONS OF THE VICTORIAN ERA

The Exhibit: Follows the development of cancellations used to prevent re-use of the stamps, from the 'Maltese Cross' of 1840, to the everyday use of the duplex cancel during the Victorian period of Great Britain.

Format: Presented in two parts. Part 1: Single handstamp devices

Part 2: The combined obliterator / date-stamp types.

Purpose: To provide an overview of the different types of cancels and to show how, from the introduction of the adhesive postage stamps in 1840, the earliest cancels were developed, through much experimentation, into a single, combination handstamp/obliterator in order to speed up the handling of the mails.

Background: By the time Uniform Penny Post was established in January 1840, the practice was to strike each letter with a double-ringed circular datestamp containing the town of origin, date and code letters. Other c.d.s. or instructional marks could be applied when passing through a GPO town or on arrival. Upon the introduction of adhesive, pre-paid postage stamps in May 1840, various obliterating marks were applied to prevent re-use, with the c.d.s. usually struck on the back. From the early 1850's these were combined with the town/datestamps in order to speed up the handling of the letters. There then followed a period of experimentation to establish the best combination of datestamp and obliterator, which resulted in the everyday use of the common duplex to identify the origin, date, time of day and 'stamping' clerk as well as obliterating the postage stamp. From 1879, later trials were carried out using a 'Squared-Circle' design, and from 1882 a 'Hooded Circle' was introduced. However, the Barred-Numerical duplex continued in use throughout this period and into the early 20th century.

Scope: From 1840 to the end of the nineteenth century, with emphasis on the various experiments, including the major varieties and errors. Roller cancel trials and Scottish 'Locals' are included. Machine cancels and Foreign Offices are not. Wherever possible, the more difficult offices have been chosen to display common types.



One Penny Mulready envelope cancelled with a London 'Maltese Cross' in Red, on the 6th May 1840, the **First Official Day** of use (Cert)