

## V.

NOTES ON A COLLECTION OF IMPRESSIONS OF POSTAL STAMPS  
EXHIBITED TO THE MEETING. By WM. CRAMOND, LL.D.,  
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The present collection of impressions of Postal Stamps is believed to be unique in certain respects, especially as regards the early date of many of the specimens and the completeness of the sets of several northern burghs.

The specimens belonging to Scotland are 1333 in number, of which 588 are older than the present century, while of English specimens there are 593, and of these 288 are older than the present century. From Ireland are forty specimens, including Dublin from the year 1733, Bantry from 1745, and Belfast from 1775. There is an Isle of Man impression of date 1795 and an Isle of Wight 1787. The foreign impressions are about 150 in number, and among them are several specimens from the Cape, Ceylon, California, etc. One from Campvere is of date 1711. Others are from Besançon of the year 1765, Lille and New York 1769, Quebec 1775, Jamaica 1783, Stockholm 1786, and Paris 1814. The "Free" or Frank Stamps include many specimens commencing with the year 1765, being the year after franking became subject to legislative enactment. The oldest impression in this collection is a small one, considerably less than a threepenny piece, bearing within a circle only "FE 24," and occurs on a letter dated from Rotterdam, 23rd February 1694.

The total number of specimens is considerably over 2000. They are pasted on 300 pages of post paper, and are bound in two volumes.

With the Penny Post began the earliest form of postmarks in this country. It is to the enterprise of William Dockwra that we owe the putting the Penny Post into practical shape for the first time. That was in the year 1680. A facsimile of the Penny Postmark of 1681 may be seen in *Hist. MSS. Comm. Report*, p. 125, vol. ii. of 1885. These marks long retained the same triangular shape, having one or more initials in the centre, thus "L" for Lyme Street, and around were

the words: "PENNY POST PAID," one word occupying each side. So was it in 1681, in 1721, and even in 1794, the same stamp with spelling unaltered seems to have been in use. A separate impression of circular shape, indicating the hour of posting, thus, "10 o'clock, W.," also appears on letters of that time, and Dockwra encouraged his clients to complain if letters were not delivered in the busier parts of London within little more than an hour after the time denoted by the impression. A neat circular stamp, in regular use about 1770-1785, bore "PENNY POST NOT PAID." By 1795 the London Penny Post stamp was larger and of an elliptical shape, bearing, *e.g.*, "8 o'clock Morn., Feb. 28. 95. Penny Post Paid." In the collection are specimens of the London Penny Postmark from the year 1719.

Power was given to the Postmaster-General by Act 5 Georgii III. cap. 25 (1765) to establish a Penny Post in any large town of Great Britain or Ireland, and that such a scheme was carried out may be inferred from impressions in this collection, bearing, *e.g.*, "EDINBURGH PENNY POST," from 1779 to 1801. Specimens of Leith, Musselburgh, and Aberdeen Penny Postmarks also occur. We even find BANFF PENNY POST in the year 1832.

Peter Williamson, in his *Directory* for 1775-6, mentions that all letters delivered by his officers throughout Edinburgh were stamped either with the words "PENNY POST PAID" or "PENNY POST NOT PAID," and he further adds: "The public may depend that letters, etc., will be regularly sent by the Penny Post to Leith or any place within an English mile of the Cross of Edinburgh every hour thro' the day, a number of hands being kept for the purpose." Williamson did a great public service, and when the Penny Post was assumed by the Government, he was awarded a pension.

After a time Government introduced a Twopenny Post, and gradually made a distinction between district and other postal services. In 1802 the impression bore words such as these, arranged in an elliptical form, "Two Penny Post, Woolwich P.O."

A complete or nearly complete set of the regular stamps of several northern burghs, as Aberdeen, Banff and Elgin, occurs in this collection. The Edinburgh series here begins in 1708. That impression is of oval

form, scarcely half an inch by a quarter of an inch, usually in red ink, while the London one is circular and in black ink. The day and month alone appear, separated by a horizontal line thus "24 FE." Other towns in Scotland here represented from an early period are Brechin from 1743, Port Glasgow 1745, Aberdeen and Dunbarton 1746, Glasgow 1751, Elgin 1752, Perth 1753, Montrose 1755, Cullen 1760, Banff 1766, etc.

In the beginning of the present century the Aberdeen stamp was circular, and  $1\frac{3}{4}$  ins. in diameter. About 1880 it was but  $\frac{3}{4}$  in. in diameter. The present circular arrangement of the letters on postal stamps has developed in course of time. The original plan, as a rule, was to have the whole letters of the name of the town arranged horizontally, thus:—"DUMFERMLINE." Then the word was divided into two parts, one placed above the other, "DUM" and "FERMLINE," and afterwards into three parts, "DUM," "FERM," and "LINE." So early as 1801 some cases occur of the circular arrangement nearly similar to that presently in use. In 1720 we find "EDING BURGH," and about 1746 "GLAS GOW" and "LEAVER POOL." Occasionally a fantastic form was adopted, as in the Bristol impression, where the two semicircular expansions of the initial letter B are made to embrace respectively the letters "RIS" and "TOI." In the early years of the present century Ayr appears as "AIR," Arbroath as "ABERBROTHWICK." So at an earlier date we have "FOCABUS" for Fochabers and "BRIGHTELMSTONE" for Brighton.

The names of most towns of importance in Scotland appear in this collection. Even out-of-the-way places like Ballachulish and Fort William occur so early as 1767. It need scarcely be mentioned that the collection exemplifies the variety in the official stamps now used for obliterating postage stamps in Scotland, England, and Ireland, Scotland showing horizontal bars, England an oval, and Ireland a diamond-shaped arrangement of bars.

The system of marking the hour of posting, that began with the old Penny Post of 1680, continued in London at least till 1822 and probably later, but appears to have been discontinued. Several years ago a memorial to the Postmaster-General was signed by some 200 members on both sides of the House of Commons, asking that the postmark on

letters should state the hour of collection as well as the date. In course of time effect was given to this and similar representations. To business men it must be a source of gratification that the Post Office authorities have thus adopted, or rather re-adopted, a system of postal impressions to indicate the exact period of posting letters. To antiquaries and other readers of old correspondence it is of great consequence to be familiar with the postal impressions that have been in use at different periods.

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