



A Prize Agent, A Naturalist, and A Navy Captain: A Penny Black Story

By Mike Wilson



**Presented to the Philatelic Society of
Lancaster County (PA)**

September 27, 2023

“GB #1 VF on
folded letter
tied by red
Maltese Cross
cancel”





 The Philatelic Foundation				No. 587390 05/17/2022
22 East 35th Street • 4th Floor New York, NY 10016 EXPERT COMMITTEE				
We have examined the enclosed item, of which a photograph is attached, and <i>described by the applicant</i> as follows:				
<u>Country:</u> GREAT BRITAIN				
<u>Cat. No.</u>	<u>Issue</u>	<u>Denom.</u>	<u>Color</u>	
1	1840	1p	black	
Scott's unless otherwise specified.				
SINGLE, TIED BY MALTESE CROSS CANCEL ON AUG. 4, 1840 FOLDED LETTER TO LONDON, INDISTINCT RED PMK. AT LEFT, "SWANSEA" PMK. IN BLACK ON REVERSE.				
AND WE ARE OF THE OPINION THAT: IT IS GENUINE, PLATE 7 *****				
				
587390			K347489	
For The Expert Committee Photocopies of this Certificate are not valid.				
Submitted by MICHAEL L. WILSON				

Plating the Penny Black

Each sheet contained 240 letter combinations, starting with AA at the top left and going down to TL at the bottom right

AA	AB	AC	AD	AE	AF	AG	AH	AI	AJ	AK	AL
BA	BB	BC	BD	BE	BF	DG		BI	BJ	BK	BL
CA	CB	CC	CD	CE	CF	CG	CH	CI	CJ	CK	CL
DA	DB	DC	DD	DE	DF	DG	DH	DI	DJ	DK	DL
EA	EB	EC	ED	EE	EF	EG	EH	EI	EJ	EK	EL
FA	FB	FC	FD	FE	FF	FG	FH	FI	FJ	FK	FL
GA	GB	GC	GD	GE	GF	GG	GH	GI	GJ	GK	GL
HA	HB	HC	HD	HE	HF	HG	HH	HI	HJ	HK	HL
IA	IB	IC	ID	IE	IF	IG	IH	II	IJ	IK	IL
JA	JB	JC	JD	JE	JF	JG	JH	JI	JJ	JK	JL
KA	KB	KC	KD	KE	KF	KG	KH	KI	KJ	KK	KL
LA	LB	LC	LD	LE	LF	LG	LH	LI	LJ	LK	LL
MA	MB	MC	MD	ME	MF	MG	MH	MI	MJ	MK	ML
NA	NB	NC	ND	NE	NF	NG	NH	NI	NJ	NK	NL
OA	OB	OC	OD	OE	OF	OG	OH	OI	OJ	OK	OL
PA	PB	PC	PD	PE	PF	PG	PH	PI	PJ	PK	PL
QA	QB	QC	QD	QE	QF	QG	QH	QI	QJ	QK	QL
RA	RB	RC	RD	RE	RF	RG	RH	RI	RJ	RK	RL
SA	SB	SC	SD	SE	SF	SG	SH	SI	SJ	SK	SL
TA	TB	TC	TD	TE	TF	TG	TH	TI	TJ	TK	TL

In total, 12 different plates were used to keep up with demand - including two versions of the first plate (1a and 1b), which required extensive renovation because of excessive wear.

Plate	Date registered	Number of stamps issued
1a, 1b	15 Apr 1840	10,052,400
2	22 Apr 1840	7,659,120
3	9 May 1840	4,786,800
4	19 May 1840	6,701,760
5	1 June 1840	8,616,480
6	17 June 1840	9,095,040
8	31 July 1840	7,180,320
9	9 Nov 1840	3,840,000
10	9 Dec 1840	1,920,000
11	27 Jan 1841	168,000

Comparisons of “BH” Combination by Plate





Unfolded
Letter Sheet

Posted in Swansea, Wales August 4,
1840, Arrived in London August 6, 1840





The
Edinburgh
and London
Royal Mail,
1838

Sir

We are happy to inform you that we have prevailed on Mr. F. Hickay to act as Executor jointly with us, & we therefore wish you to once to furnish us with the necessary Papers of and ready either to qualify with him before the Commissioners or otherwise as you think best.

From the information which you have given us that the Foreign Stock must all be included in the Estimate by which the Probate Duty is regulated, the amount must now considerably exceed 18,000, & as all sums between 20, & 25 thousands are charged alike we had better take it to be under 25,000. That we may be better informed in this point, we shall have been obliged by your sending us a list of the personal Estate of your late Friend with the present values attached to each Item.

As we are both likely to leave home for a considerable time at the beginning of September we hope that there will now be no delay in obtaining probate from the Commissioners of your Executorship affairs.

Very an Sir

Shelby Hall

Aug. 24. 1840.

W. Lamb Hill to.

Yours &c

W. Dillwyn

Proctor

Content of Letter

Transcript of Letter

Sir

We are happy to inform you that we have prevailed on Mr. F. Hickey to act as Executor jointly with us, & we therefore wish you at once to furnish us with the necessary Papers and are ready either to requalify with him before the Commissioners or otherwise as you think best.

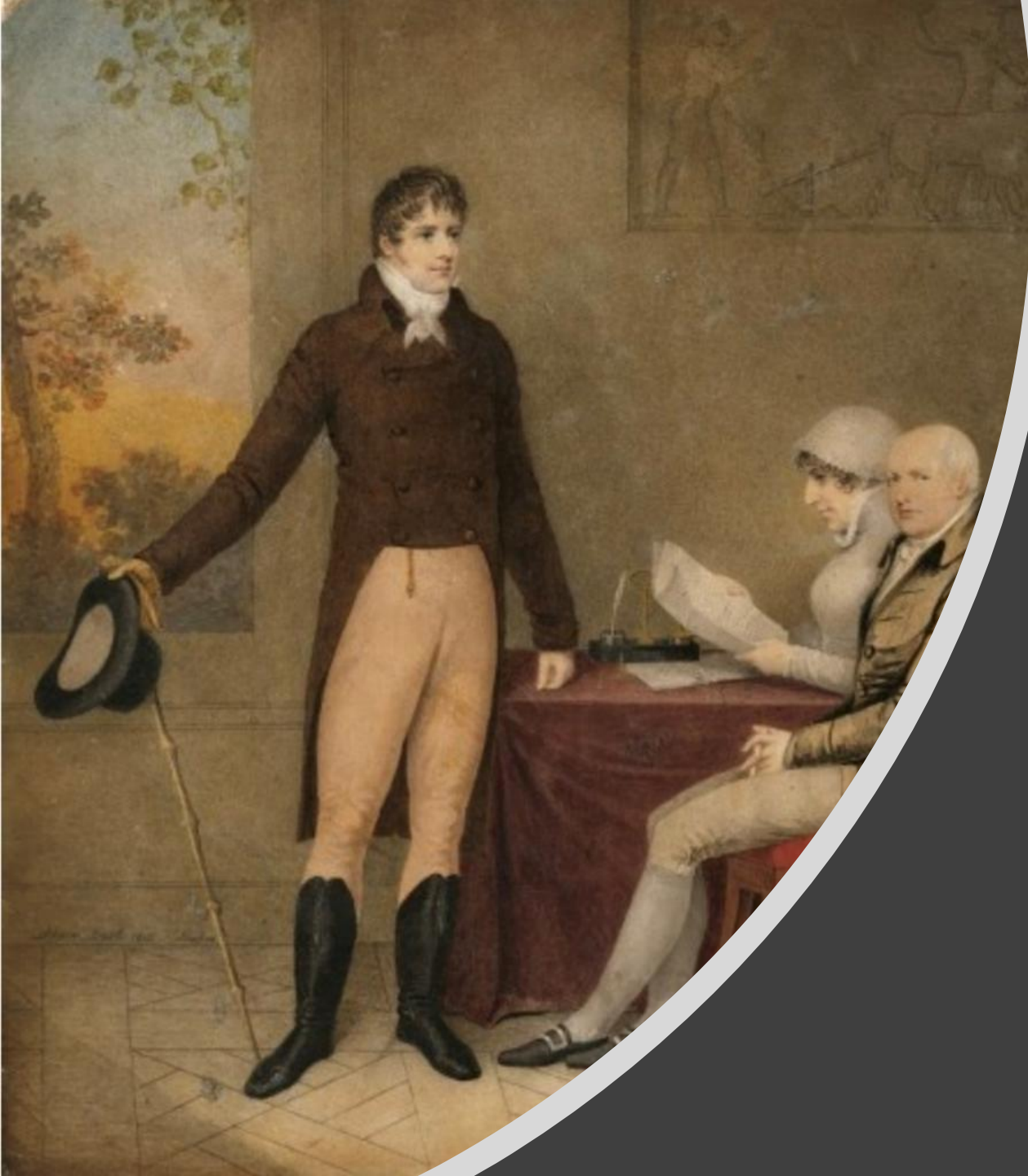
From the information which you have given us that the Foreign Stock must all be included in the Estimate by which the Probate Duty is regulated, the Amount must now considerably exceed 18,000, and as all Sums between 20, & 25 thousand are charged alike we had better take it to be 'under 25,000. That we may be better informed on this point we shall hence be obliged by your sending us a List of the personal Estate of our late Friend with the present Value attached to each Item.

As we are both likely to leave home for a considerable time at the beginning of September we hope that there will now be no delay in obtaining probate & in the Settlement of our Executorship affairs.

We are Sir
Yr. ob. frs.

Sketty Hall
Augt. 4. 1840.
W(?)d. Lamb Will &c.

L W Dillwyn
Thos Eden



John Hinxman, A Prize Agent (1784-1847)

John Hinxman was a Prize or Navy Agent. As a Navy Agent, Mr. Hinxman acted as a financial agent for naval officers, especially in the distribution of prize money.

It was a very lucrative profession that afforded him the opportunity to own several properties in London, as well as a country estate.

He was also an entrepreneur and art collector and patron.

But he died a most horrific death as reported in the September 1, 1847, evening edition of *The Globe and Traveller*...

John Hinxman, Esq, a gentleman of considerable property, residing in Queen Anne-street, London...met his death on the North-Western Railway, at Sudbury.

On Monday night, the unfortunate gentleman, having been dining with some friends in the neighbourhood, proceeded to the station at Sudbury, for the purpose of returning to town.

Hearing a train...he proceeded hastily across to reach the platform, believing it to be the train for which he had been waiting. However, it was the express train from Newcastle, which...was proceeding at great speed.

The unfortunate gentleman was struck by the buffers, and carried several yards, when the wheels of nearly all the carriages passed over his body mangling it in a frightful manner.



Lewis Weston Dillwyn, A Naturalist (1778-1855)

Lewis Weston Dillwyn of Swansea was a British porcelain manufacturer, naturalist, and Whig member of Parliament.

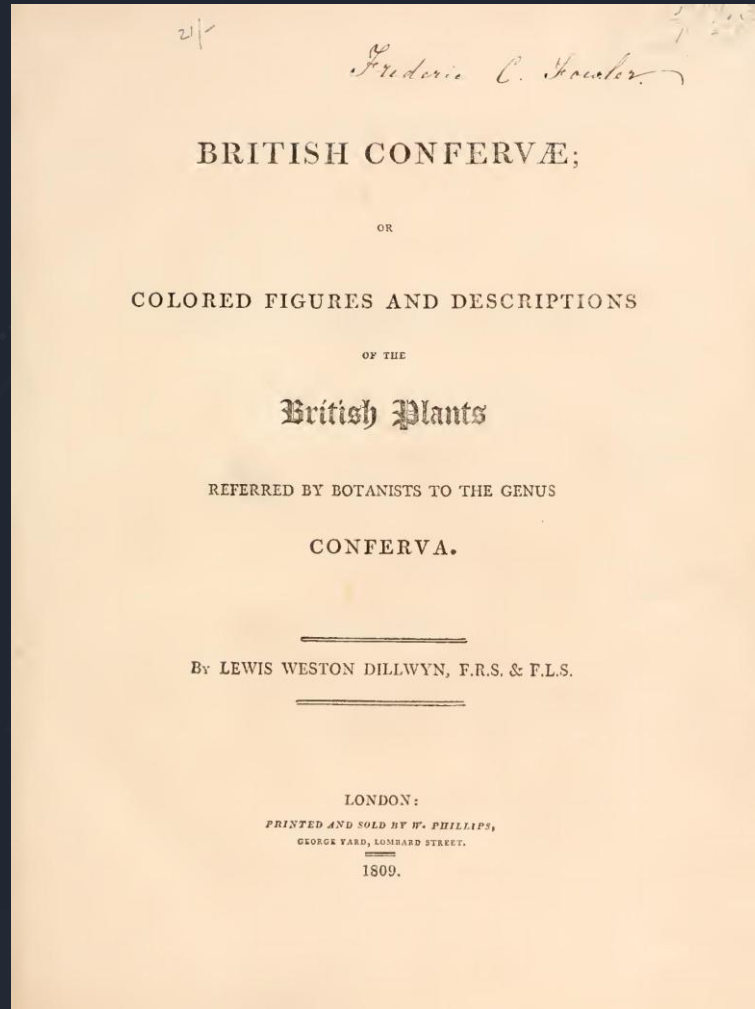
Lewis Weston Dillwyn's father was born in Philadelphia and was a leading member of the Quaker abolitionist movement. He moved to Britain in 1777.

Lewis Weston Dillwyn owned Sketty Hall in Swansea, which stands to this day and is used to host social and business functions.

Dillwyn & Co.
Upmarket Porcelain
Circa 1811



Dillwyn's 500-plus page book titled, *British Confervæ or Colored Figures and Descriptions of the British Plants Referred by Botanists to the Genus Conferva* was published to great renown in 1809



Dillwyn also has a genus of sea snails named after him – *Dillwynella*.

“Our Late
Friend”?

The recipient of the folded letter
was obvious from the address –
John Hinxman

The sender signed his name –
Lewis Weston Dillwyn – and
included his home – Sketty Hall

But who was “our late Friend”?

Excerpts from Lewis Weston Dillwyn's 1840 Journals

May 19: Between 9 & 10 at night Mr. Jackson Pirie arrived to inform us of the Death of my old Friend Capt. Hickey at Bath.

May 20: Met my Co Executee Mr. Eden &c at Parkwern immediately after breakfast, & in the afternoon drove to Swansea about poor Hickeys affairs.

May 23: Drove in the afternoon with my Co-Executor Mr. Eden & had some Tea at Burrows Lodge. About ½ past 8 the Steamer with the Body of my late Friend arrived, & we followed the Hearse on which it was taken to Parkwern.

May 27: Mr. Eden & I as Executors attended Edward Hickey as Mourners at his Father's Funeral at St Marys.

Royal Naval Biography, 1829

Connection to John Hinxman became clear when a search on Captain Hickey led to his biography in a monumental work by John Marshall titled, *Royal Naval Biography* published between 1823 and 1835.

At the bottom of Captain Hickey's biography in "Post-Captains of 1814, Supplement Part III (1829)," his Navy Agent is identified as "J. Hinxman, Esq."

Frederick Hickey, A Navy Captain (1775-1840)

Captain Hickey commanded several ships during his 32-year Royal Navy career, including during the War of 1812 when he captured several valuable American ships and commanded the HMS *Lawrence* on Lake Ontario during the war's final year.

While returning from Canada after the war, he was apprehended in America to stand trial for causing damage to an American schooner in 1810 with his ship the HMS *Atalante*.

He retired in 1819 and moved to Swansea where he lived at Park Wern.



One of Captain
Hickey's Prizes
Netted Him
About \$57,000
in Today's
Money

London, April 11, 1816.

Notice is hereby given to the officers and company of His Majesty's sloop *Atalante*, Frederick Hickey, Esq. Commander, who were actually present, on the 31st July 1812, at the capture of the *Perseverance*, that they will be paid their respective proportions of prize-money, at No. 70, Great Russell-Street, Bloomsbury, on Friday the 19th instant; and the shares not then demanded will be recalled at the same place for three months, pursuant to Act of Parliament.

First class	-	-	£ 471	1	4
Second class	-	-	117	15	4
Third class	-	-	58	17	8
Fourth class	-	-	28	10	3
Fifth class	-	-	19	0	2
Sixth class	-	-	9	10	1
Seventh class	-	-	6	6	8 $\frac{1}{4}$
Eighth class	-	-	3	3	4 $\frac{1}{4}$

John Page, Agent.

HMS *Atalante*



Living the Good Life

Park (or Parc) Wern in Swansea was a grand mansion (it's since been converted into luxury flats), and Captain Hickey often enjoyed outings and dinners with Lewis Weston Dillwyn. He even seems to have caught the botany bug, winning awards at the Swansea and Neath Horticultural Society flower shows with his good friend Lewis.

Capital Hickey passed away in Bath on May 18, 1840. In his death notice, he was described as “a truly affable and benevolent gentleman and who had seen much service in the four quarters of the globe during a long period.”

Questions, Questions, Questions?

Did Lewis Weston Dillwyn and Capital Frederick Hickey chat about the design of an earthenware Swansea plate manufactured by Dillwyn & Co. in 1835 depicting a Royal Navy warship at sea over an array of nautical images including a cannon, trident, and barrel?



Questions, Questions, Questions?

What about the others mentioned in the letter: Thomas Eden, one of Captain Hickey's co-executors who was the 3rd Treasurer of Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) from 1816 to 1822, and Captain Hickey's namesake, his son Frederick William Hickey, who was a Lieutenant-Colonel in the British Army and died in Jamaica in 1842?

Did John Hinxman ever meet Sir Rowland Hill, the famous postal reformer and inventor of the Penny Black? John made a habit of getting to know many high-level and influential people in the armed forces, politics, business, science, and the arts, so it is certainly possible that he did.

Several times in his journals, Lewis Weston Dillwyn records taking the mail coach to Bristol or London. What was that experience like?

Questions, Questions, Questions?

Lewis mentions in his diaries the ascension of Princess Victoria to Queen when her uncle William IV died in 1837. What did Lewis think of her image adorning the first adhesive postage stamp that he used to post his letter to John Hinxman? He must have been aghast at this little ditty on the Penny Black that ran in the London tabloid *The Town* on June 6, 1840:

You must kiss our fair Queen,
or her pictures, that's clear.
Or the gummy medallion
Will never adhere.
You will not kiss her hand,
You will readily find
But actually kiss little Vicky's behind.

Final Thought

This is what makes stamp collecting so enjoyable to me. It's not just about collecting small pieces of paper stuck to envelopes. It's learning about the lives of the people who stuck those small pieces of paper on their correspondence.