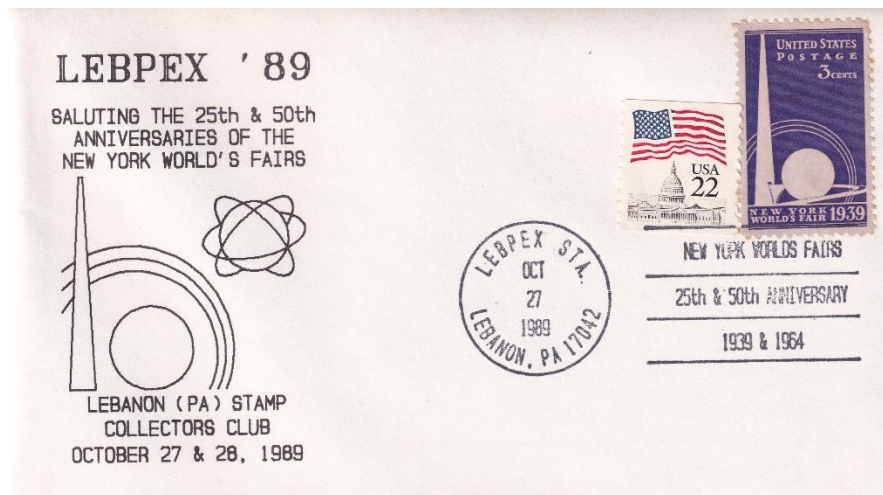*"Serving Lebanon and Berks Counties"*

THE PATENT - OVERPRINT

The combined monthly newsletter of the Lebanon and Reading Stamp Collectors Clubs

June 2025
Number 69

The June meeting of the Lebanon Stamp Collectors Club will be held on Tuesday, June 17, 2025, at 6:30 p.m. at Cornwall Manor. Please see below for directions on how to find us.

Stamps, Covers, and Ephemera of the 1939 New York World's Fair

Dr. Paul Petersen of the Philatelic Society of Lancaster County joins us for a special outdoor meeting on June 17, on the grounds of Cornwall Manor. The topic of his presentation is The Stamps, labels, postcards, covers, and other ephemera of the 1939 New York World's Fair.

Paul's presentation will be a hands-on experience through a variety of items from the fair such as postage stamps, labels, postcards, covers, paper ephemera, books, tchotchkes, maps, knickknacks, photos, and more, along with some of the history and stories of this a once in a lifetime storied event, the "World of Tomorrow". Thirty-two pages of Paul's exhibit will be featured. There will be party favors, door prizes, and give-away items for all.

The club would like to thank Dennis Shumaker for securing a meeting place for us at Cornwall Manor, at the pavilion next to the Bocce courts (see below for more details). There are three picnic tables which will provide seating for up to 18 people, and you are invited to bring along your own bag chair. Dennis has also promoted the meeting in the community, which will

hopefully bring some visitors from Cornwall Manor. And our friends from the PSLC received an invitation to join us in their June newsletter.

Anyone with questions is welcomed to contact Scott Ney at stnst2@aol.com or 717-383-1736.

How to find us on June 17

Here are directions from Lebanon:

Take Cornwall Road to the three-way intersection at the Cornwall Elementary School, and bear to the left, continuing to the stop sign at the intersection with 419 (the Root Beer Barrel and Rail Trail parking area are on the left). Continue onto Boyd Street, past the left turn onto 419 and the post office on the right, but do not use the first (main) entrance into Cornwall Manor, which is also on the right.

Keep following Boyd Street around, past the health center on the right, onto Rexmont Road, and drive a short distance until you see the Cornwall Furnace on the left (you will see Apple Hill Road is on the right). A few hundred feet further on the right is the old stone paymaster's building, where you want to make a right turn into the parking area.

The first seven spots to the right in the parking area will be marked with cones; they are reserved for stamp club member parking. The road to the maintenance building is to the right where you'll be parked and the Macadam path to the pavilion at the bocce ball court is right there, just behind a stone wall.

Here is a simplified set of directions, including a link to a map of the grounds:

We are meeting at the picnic tables by the Bocce Ball courts on the Buckingham Campus. Here is a link to the map or the grounds on Cornwall Manor's website:

https://cornwallmanor.org/content/uploads/2021/10/Buckingham-Woods-Campus-Map_October2021.pdf

A smaller detail of the map below; notice the landmark at the bottom of the map – the Cornwall Iron Furnace. The Bocce courts can be easily accessed from Rexmont Road, by turning into the Cornwall Manor campus opposite the old Iron Furnace.
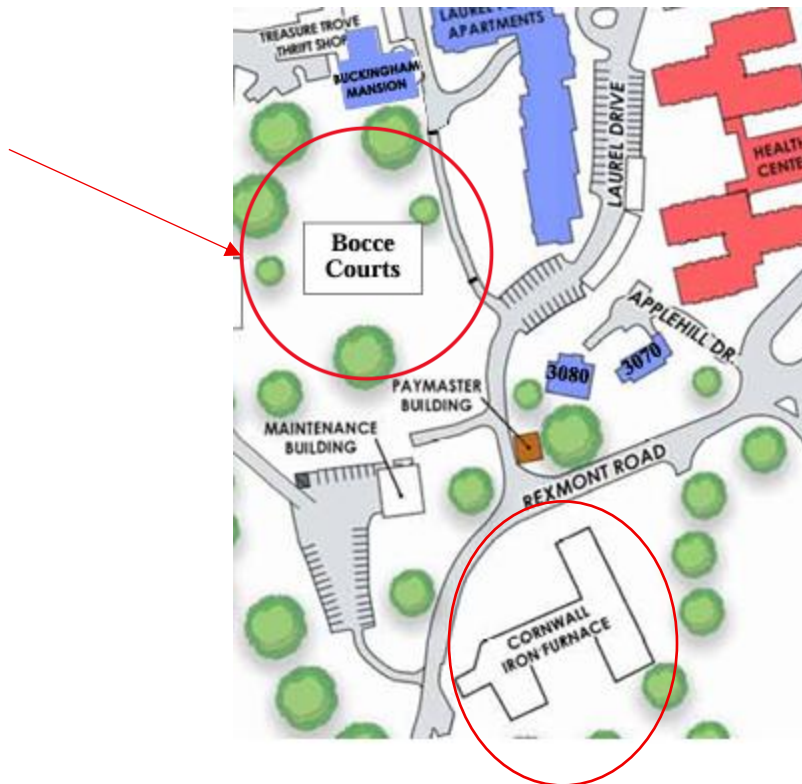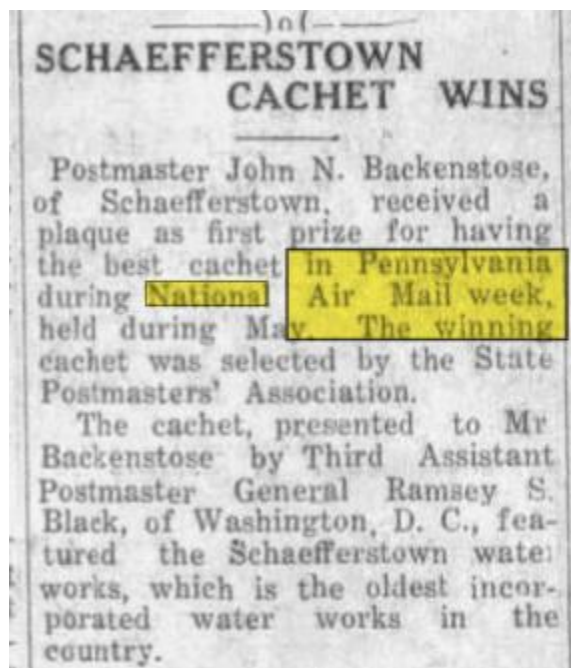
Here's a picture of the pavilion by the Bocce Ball courts where we are meeting:

Please come early! We'll try to have a sign and/or a person standing at the entrance off Rexmont Road to guide you there until about ten minutes after starting time.

You may call Scott Ney (717-383-1736) if you need any help finding us. We hope you can make it to our meeting to enjoy Paul's presentation!

National Airmail Week in Lebanon County

SCHAEFFERSTOWN CACHET WINS

Postmaster John N. Backenstose, of Schaefferstown, received a plaque as first prize for having the best cachet in Pennsylvania during National Air Mail week, held during May. The winning cachet was selected by the State Postmasters' Association.

The cachet, presented to Mr Backenstose by Third Assistant Postmaster General Ramsey S. Black, of Washington, D. C., featured the Schaefferstown water works, which is the oldest incorporated water works in the country.

The Ephrata Review, August 4, 1938

The PSLC website is hosting a non-competitive exhibit created by the late Erwin Herschkowitz, which features cachets from nine of Lebanon County's post offices. These special cachets were cancelled to commemorate National Airmail Week on May 19, 1938. Herk's exhibit also includes group photos of Lebanon County Postmasters and the pilot who participated in the festivities. You can find the exhibit on the LSCC's affiliate page.

The link to Herk's exhibit is here: Herschkowits-Erwin-National-Airmail-Week-Lebanon-Co-PA-Display.pdf

Lebanon Stamp Collectors Club Calendar
Please contact the editor if you are interested in presenting at one of our monthly meetings.

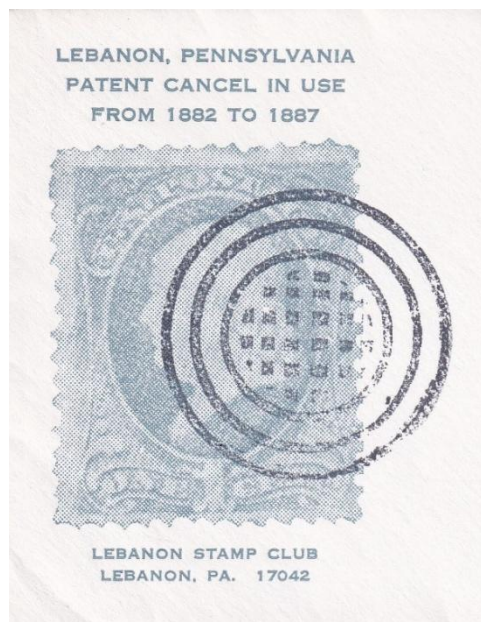| Date	Presenter and Subject
June 17, 2025	The Stamps, labels, postcards, covers, and other ephemera of the 1939 New York World's Fair – Paul Petersen (A special presentation at Cornwall Manor)
July 15, 2025	It's a Rum Tale – Mike Bach
August 19, 2025	Civil War Pension Philately – Scott Ney
September 16, 2025	

October 21, 2025	
November 18, 2025	
December 16, 2025	Holiday Dinner at The Rotunda Restaurant and Pub

The Lebanon Stamp Collectors Club thanks the Philatelic Society of Lancaster County for hosting our affiliate page, which is accessible by clicking the following link:

[The Lebanon Stamp Collectors Club – Philatelic Society of Lancaster County (lcps-stamps.org)](lcps-stamps.org)

The PSLC Events Calendar is located at the following link:

[Philatelic Society of Lancaster County – Award-winning, non-profit community organization dedicated to promoting stamp and postal history collecting as a hobby for education and fun. (lcps-stamps.org)](lcps-stamps.org)

LEBANON, PENNSYLVANIA
PATENT CANCEL IN USE
FROM 1882 TO 1887

LEBANON STAMP CLUB
LEBANON, PA. 17042

The Lebanon Stamp Collectors Club Lebanon, PA   17042 – 17046

The Overprint

Newsletter of the Reading Stamp Collectors' Club

Meetings held at Calvary Lutheran Church,
1009 Elizabeth Avenue in Laureldale.
Elizabeth Avenue crosses Kutztown Road in the Muhlenberg Township area.
(About a mile north of Rt 222)

Meetings are the first Tuesday of each month at 7:00 p.m.
(doors open around 6:30 for pre meeting social time)

TUESDAY July 1st

As the meeting is right before Independence Day

THE TOPIC IS: "Historic Events"

Presenter: All Members

Those attending this meeting should bring a philatelic item pertaining to a Historic Event to share with other members.

I totally blew it in May as our meeting was held on the 185th anniversary of the Penny Black, so this Overprint is a catch-up issue. The following article from Gibbons Stamp Monthly is a very detailed but very informative dive into the Penny Black.

But before that . . . here are some of our members' favorite covers they shared at our May meeting

Dave Hunt

Presented a cover from The Weston School (Quaker) from 1859.
The letter was written to his cousin in Philadelphia
David challenged us to guess the age of the student based on the handwriting.
Guesses ranged from 10 to 14 (I think) The student's actual age at the time of writing was 9

Georgina Smaglinski

Georgine loves animals and this is her favorite of a White Bengal Tiger. This is a FDC dated October 1st 1992 as id from the Wild Animals Series. It has with a rather nice cachet of a White Bengal Tiger

Jim Dormer
The is a cover dated March 16 1928 representing a rather new experimental postal delivery service.
The concept was that a plane, carrying a bag of mail would transfer the bag to someone on a motorcycle on the ground.
Looks like this didn't take off (sic)

Don Barron
Don's favorite topic is the Moon Landing and this cover commemorates the 20th anniversary of the landing on July 20th 1969.
Do you remember watching this intently on your TV.
Nice choice Don.

Scott Ney
Scott was visiting us from Lebanon SC but is also an RSCC member. He brought us 2 covers the first from S. Shoch of the Columbia Bank in Columbia to Reading and the second from Inklinberg (sorry Scott for misspelling this) in Reading back to S Shoch in Columbia. Both with very nice cancels.
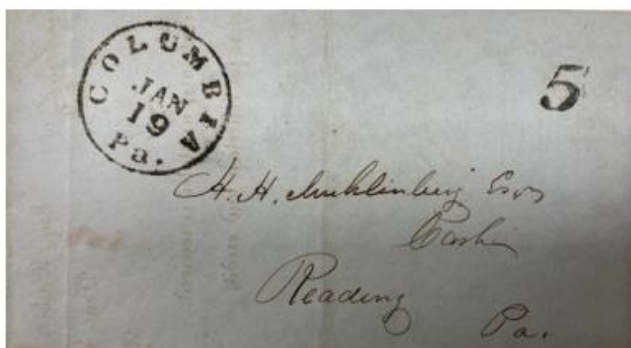
Pete Baney.

This is an FDC cover for the Mercury Mission from 1967.
Pete was serving in the Air Force in the recovery division. He was on duty at the time the Mercury capsule splashed down.
A good memory of the occasion.

Mike Bach

Mike brought a cover of the first flight of the Hindenberg from Lakehurst back to Frankfurt Germany dated May 11th 1936 and arriving in Frankfurt on May 14th (back cancel). It is extra special cover for him as it was addressed to his father (aged 15 at the time) and sent by a cousin who was residing in New York. Can you imagine his excitement as new collector to receive this!

Carl Madeira

Carl did not have any covers, so he brought is favorite country being the Vatican City.

The album contains many wonderful stamps and this page is an example from many in his collection.

Mike Smaglinski

Mike brought a folder representing the centenary celebration of the Statue of Liberty. This picture (which due lighting does not do it justice) has US stamps over the years featuring the Statue of Liberty.

This would make a great topical collection.
I wonder how many countries have issued stamps depicting the Statue of Liberty.

185th Anniversary of the Penny Black

By Michael Kogan in the Gibbons Stamp Monthly

This traces the development of the world's first adhesive postage stamp - the Penny Black, from design challenges to security features, printing innovations and eventual replacements. This article uncovers the journey behind Britain's groundbreaking stamp issue.

After Rowland Hill's proposal for a Uniform Penny Post was finally adopted in January 1840, the next step was to introduce a suitable way to facilitate plans to introduce the pre-payment of postage. The answer was, or course, the Penny Black stamp.

A competition to design a stamp and prepaid envelope had already been announced by the Treasury in 1839, but none of some 2600 entries were considered suitable. Most of the proposals were too complicated or too expensive to produce, some were written proposals only, therefore none of them were awarded the main prize. However, four of them received prizes of £100 each. One of the prizes was given to Benjamin Cheverton for his practical suggestions that stamps should be printed in rolls of 240 (240d. = £1) on security paper with watermark. To prevent forgery Cheverton suggested 'the embossment of a female head of greatest beauty to be executed by Mr Wyon' (the female head was a profile of Princess Victoria, who became the Queen in May 1837 at the age of 18) (Fig 1).

Hill accepted these proposals. The sketch of the stamp was provided by an English artist, Henry Corbould (1787- 1844), who reproduced a profile of the Queen engraved by William Wyon, a chief engraver at the Royal Mint in London, which was used on a medal to commemorate the Queen's visit to the city of London after her accession to the throne in 1837 (Fig 1). The engraved profile of the Queen on the medal was based on a sketch originally drawn in 1834 when Princess Victoria was only 15.

The portrait used for the Penny Black was engraved by Charles Heath and his son, Frederick, using Corbould's sketches. The portrait remained on British stamps until the Queen's death in 1901.

Security printing

Hill chose the leading security printing firm of Perkins, Bacon & Petch to print 1d. stamps in black and double rate, 2d., as dark blue - often called 'tuppenny blue', 'two pence blue' or 'two penny blue' (Fig 2). The company was probably selected because they used their own engine machine, called 'Rose', originally invented by Mr Perkins for making complicated backgrounds of banknotes and the Post Office was convinced it would make fraud nearly impossible.

Jacob Perkins (1766-1849) was an American inventor, mechanical engineer and physicist. He invented and sold 'soft steel' plates for engraving that were hardened after being engraved. The plates were between one and three inches thick, and some weighed over 22kg.

In 1819, Perkins, moved to London on invitation of the aforementioned Charles Heath, who was an engraver, a book publisher, and who convinced him to participate in the competition of Bank of England, who offered a prize of £20,000 for a banknote which was impossible to forge. Their firm, 'Perkins & Heath', produced very promising samples, but didn't win the competition. However, they did manage to secure smaller contracts for £1 banknotes, and later won more government contracts.

In 1829, after a complicated transaction in which Heath gave up his shares and Joshua Butters Bacon (Perkins' son in law) bought in, the firm became known as 'Perkins & Bacon'. Henry Petch joined in 1835, and thus, the firm printing the first stamps was actually known as 'Perkins, Bacon & Petch'.

Fig 1 The City Medal by William Wyon which commemorated Princess Victoria's visit to the Guildhall in 1837 (made in bronze and in silver). Alongside it is a farthing coin from 1840 - the profile of the Queen is similar to the one from the profile of the City Medal, but without the diadem on the Queen's head

Fig 2 The first two adhesive postage stamps introduced by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland in May 1840 for the prepayment of postage. The Penny Black - the first stamp in the world and the Two Pence Blue - the second stamp in the world

Fig 3 The star-like designs at the top corners of the stamps

Perkins, Bacon & Petch combined the engraved profile of Queen Victoria with the central band of a banknote plate, created for the reverse side of a specimen banknote the company submitted to the Bank of England around 1822 in the competition to print banknotes for the bank.

When the master die was prepared and proof stamps with the profile of the Queen were printed at the end of February 1840, it was sent to Queen Victoria for her approval.

The reverse image was engraved into soft steel to create the master die. The die was then hardened in a furnace. The master die was used to create plates of 240 stamps each. A soft steel roller was put in a transfer press and rolled under great pressure back and forth over the hardened die until the design was transferred to the roller.

The image of the die was transferred to the steel roller as a positive image. The roller was then rolled over the soft steel plate under pressure to create recessed images which retain ink.

Name omitted

The first stamps in the world did not need to show the issuing country, therefore no country name was included on them. Today, the United Kingdom remains the only country to omit its name on postage stamps.

The star-like designs at the top and words 'POSTAGE' and 'ONE PENNY' on the bottom were added by engraving at the beginning of March 1840 (Fig 3).

To make forgery complicated, it was decided to punch letters which indicated the position (row/column) of the stamp in the sheet from 'A A' to 'T L' (Fig 4). It was thought that, if every stamp on the plate had a different lettering, forgeries would likely be of one particular stamp only, and any considerable sale or use of stamps all of the same lettering might attract attention and lead to enquiry.

The letters on the corners of the bottom side were manually punched on the plates. This was precision work, because the size of the letters is about 1mm tall, and they had to fit tiny squares on the bottom side of the stamps of 119mm by 122mm in size, therefore no two pairs of letters are ever in precisely the same position. In some cases, the letters were significantly shifted from the centre of the square or placed crookedly.

These stamps were printed in sheets of 240: 20 rows, 12 stamps each, making accounting easier, on the watermarked paper. The margins of the sheet included the following explanatory text: 'Price 1d Per Label. 1/- Per Row of 12. 1£ Per Sheet. Place the Labels ABOVE the Address and towards the RIGHT HAND SIDE of the Letter. In Wetting the Back be careful not to remove the Cement.' The text on the margin of the 'TWO PENCE BLUE' stamp sheets was the same but with altered values: 2d., 2/-, 2£.

A Small Crown watermark appeared on every stamp. In 1854 the watermark was replaced by the Large Crown. The Large Crown was available in two very similar designs: Type I and Type II. Type I included two small lines in the lower arches, which were deleted in March 1861 (Fig 5). Occasionally, the paper

was loaded into the press in the rotated position, creating stamps with inverted watermarks.
The gum was made of potato starch, variable in colour (a rare variant was almost colourless), efficiency and taste and was applied while hot to the back of the stamps after the sheets were printed by the printers with brushes and then dried. Production of the first plate was completed on 8 April 1840. The imprimatur sheets were printed on 11 April and after approval by the General Post Office, the plate was registered and started to print stamps for production on 15 April. To increase productivity (one press machine was capable of printing about 400 sheets or 96,000 stamps per day) (Fig 6), Plate 2 was added and registered on 22 April 1840. Plate 3 was registered on 9 May 1840, three days after the issue of the Penny Black and another eight plates were added gradually during the year.

In total, there were 11 plates used for production of over 68 million Penny Black stamps by the end of January 1841, when the ink of the stamp was changed to red. The estimated survival rate of around 5 per cent makes the Penny Black to be not a particularly rare stamp. Most surviving stamps are used examples, which were removed from business correspondence, mint examples

Fig 7 The different characteristics of the Rays on Plate 1 and Plate 1b

Fig 8 The Penny Red (1841) - successor of Penny Black, printed from Plate 11

Fig 9 Two Pence Blue stamps from 1840 versus 1841. The later issue has added horizontal white lines above and below the words 'POSTAGE' and 'TWO PENCE'

Fig 10 This Penny Black has the inclusion of the letters 'V' and 'R' in the top corners replacing the star-like designs. It was prepared for official use but never issued for postage purposes

Fig 11 Red Maltese Cross cancellation mark (obliterator)

The plate number 1 printed the stamps in two variants, before and after extensive renovation due to excessive wear, because the plate had not been hardened. Due to extreme wear, the engraved lines of the Queen's head became very faint, and this required the restoration of every one of the 240 units on the plate. The plate was taken off the press to be repaired on 16 May and returned to production between 23 and 26 May (exact date is unknown), 1840 after hardening.

These variations are known as 'Plate 1a' and 'Plate 1b' accordingly. These stamps can be differentiated by the absent of rays at the top of the star-like design.

A characteristic of Plate 1a is the exaggerated appearance of the 7 O'clock ray and the near absence of the 5 O'clock ray. Plate 1b has a weak 7 O'clock ray and a stronger 5 O'clock ray. Plate 1 was withdrawn on 23 March 1841 and destroyed at the end of the year. Plate 11 was registered on 27 January 1841. Originally created to print the Penny Red stamps which were set to replace the Penny Black. The red stamps were printed on 29 and 30 January. On 1 and 2 February, due to the lack of red ink, the plate was used to print 700 sheets of the black stamps. From 3 February the plate was used to print Penny Red stamps only (Fig 8). Two Pence Blue The 2d. stamps were printed from two plates only (Plate 1 and Plate 2), which were destroyed in 1843. Plate 1 was registered on 2 May 1840 and the first stamps printed by this plate (619 sheets), came on sale in London on 6 May 1840. Plate 2 was put to press on 18 July 1840 and the earliest known used stamps of this plate are dated 18 August 1840.

A total of 6,460,000 stamps were printed until 29 August 1840 when their production was stopped – 3,916,000 stamps were printed by Plate 1 and 2,544,000 stamps were printed by Plate 2. The slightly modified version of the Two Pence Blue, printed by Plates 3 and Plate 4 went on sale in March 1841 - a horizontal white line was added below the word 'POSTAGE' and above the words 'TWO PENCE' on the top and bottom of the stamp respectively (Fig 9).

The blue stamp with these small modifications was in production until 1879. The penny stamps can be assigned to a special c plate based on the shape of the star-like designs on the left and right top corners (the rays have different lengths or are missing on some plates) and letter variations in the words 'POSTAGE' and 'ONE PENNY'/'TWO PENCE' (aws on some letters) as well as the check letters in the left and right bottom corners. The release of the first postage stamps The first adhesive postage stamp, commonly referred to as the Penny Black, and prepaid letter sheets and envelopes, known as Mulready postal stationery, went on sale in London on 1 May 1840, but were not valid until 6 May. The extra five days were required to print enough stamps and deliver them to all Post Offices of the UK. Even though the stamps were supposed to be accepted for postage on 6 May, there is some evidence that a few covers were sent earlier, starting on 2 May.

The Penny Black was sufficient for a letter with a weight less than half an ounce (14g), to be sent anywhere within the United Kingdom. It can be found in different shades of black from intense black (stamps printed by brand new plates) and black (the most common shade) to grey black (stamp printed by worn plates). The Two Pence Blue stamp went on sale on 6 May 1840 and was valid on the same day, making it the second stamp in the world. Except for its denomination the design of both 'Penny' stamps was exactly the same. Similar to the Penny Black, the Two Pence Blue stamp was printed in different shades of blue: deep full blue, blue, pale-blue, milky blue, steel-blue, bright-blue, deep blue, and violet-blue. In addition to the general issue there were Penny Black VR stamps, which were prepared for official use, but not issued for postage purposes (Fig 10). These stamps are the same as the normal stamps, but the letters 'V' and 'R' replace the star-like designs in the top two corners. Because the general public quickly accepted the postage stamps and ridiculed the Mulready postal stationery produced at the same time, vast supplies of Mulready's envelopes and letter sheets were given for

official use to government departments such as the tax office, and the idea of introducing an official stamp was abandoned. Almost all produced 'VR' stamps were destroyed and only a few unused stamps survived.

The stamps were printed imperforate on gummed greyish white paper, handmade by Stacey Wise, because the perforation machine had not yet been invented. The post clerk needed to separate them using scissors. Such a separating method was crude and resulted in many stamps being damaged. Due to the fact the distance between two stamps was very small, it was very difficult to cut it with good margins. Today, stamps with straight and wide margins on all four sides are most valued.

The Maltese Cross

To prevent reuse of these stamps, the General Post Office designed a cancellation mark to obliterate them. The earliest record of the proposed design of the cancellation mark is a Post Office memo written by William Bokenham, the Superintending President of the Inland Office, to Col. William Leader Maberly, who was Appointed Secretary to the General Post Office, dated 31 March 1840. The note contains three impressions of the handstamp in red ink. The design of this cancel mark includes three basic elements: outer cross, inner cross and a central diamond (Fig 11). This handstamp became known by collectors of Great Britain's postal history, as the Maltese Cross.

The mis-named term 'Maltese Cross', became widely used by the end of the 19th century, even though the postmark has nothing to do with the heraldic symbol of the Knights of the Order of Malta.

The shape of the handstamp might resemble the shape of the Tudor rose – the traditional floral heraldic emblem of England. However, it is unknown if the rose was used as a design source of the obliterator. The handstamp was cut in brass, mass produced in London and distributed to postmasters starting on 25 April 1840. When worn or broken, some postmasters preferred to order the replacement from local masters, rather than wait for delivery from London.

This practice caused many variants of the shapes and thickness of the lines of the cancellation mark. The Great Britain Specialised Volume 1 Part 1 Queen Victoria stamp catalogue (1st edition), published by Stanley Gibbons in 2020, shows 41 different designs of Maltese Cross cancellation marks. The use of red ink for the cancel was selected by the General Post Office in London, who rather than producing and distributing it, sent instructions to the postmasters on how to mix their own red composition obliterating ink. Therefore, many colour variants of the cancellation mark exist. The red cancellation mark was usually very visible on both Penny stamps and Mulready postal stationeries, but the ink made by postmasters was relatively easy to remove from the black stamp, because the ink used for the stamp was more stable than the ink used for the cancellation mark.

Some letter recipients were able to remove the cancel mark and reuse the stamp. Others even varnished new stamps with gelatine or other coatings to allow the cancel mark to be wiped off after use. To resolve the problem Rowland Hill, with help of several famous chemists, started to experiment with different colours of the stamp and ink for the cancelation mark, known as the 'Rainbow Trials'. In August 1840, at Rowland Hill's request, the London District Post conducted experiments using black ink for the

cancellation mark. In February 1841, when the Penny Black was replace by the Penny Red stamp, the standard cancellation ink was officially changed to black. At the same time, the General Post Office adopted the practice of supplying ink to the postmasters, rather than sending them instructions on how to replicate it. Every new batch of the black ink was tested before being distributed in tin bottles to post offices.

Fig 12 The Maltese Cross cancellation introduced in 1843 by the London Inland Office of the General Post Office with number '6' inside

Fig 13 Matched pair of Penny Black and Penny Red stamps printed from the same plate, Plate 8, position CE. The black Maltese Cross cancel is much clearer on the red stamp

Fig 14 An albino profile of the Queen can be seen on the bluish reverse side of these Penny Red stamps. The effect when the Queen's head shows white on the bluish reverse side of the stamp is known among philatelists as an 'ivory head'

In March 1843 modified Maltese Cross handstamps were introduced to the London Inland Office of the General Post Office. These new cancellation marks included a number (1-12) instead of the 'diamond' in the middle. An additional cross was added on the top, with the exception of the one numbered '3'. These numbers (probably) relates to desk numbers in the post office (Fig 12).

The first Penny Red stamps were printed on seven of the plates used to print Penny Blacks, plates: 1b, 2, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11 (Fig 13). In the same month Plate 3 of the Two Pence Blue replaced Plate 2 (Plate 1 was discarded in July 1840). To prevent their reuse the chemical prussiate of potash was added to the ink of the new stamps (Penny Rad and Blue) to increase the indelible component of the carbon black ink of the Maltese cross cancellation. This ink reacted with the water in the dampened paper and caused the paper on the reverse side to become bluish (Fig 14).

Perforations

The first trials to perforate stamps started in 1841. This was a rough perforation, possibly made by a sewing machine. Three years later the first mechanical device for separating stamps was designed, but it perforated the stamps on one side only and was complicated to use. In 1847, Irishman Henry Archer constructed his first machine that punched holes horizontally and vertically between rows of stamps.

Next year, after some improvements, he patented his perforation machine. Perforation trials on stamps were conducted in 1849 and 1850 under the auspices of the Post Office and stamps from these trials were first issued towards the end of 1850. In 1853, the Post Office purchased Archer's machines and started to use them for production of stamps.

On 28 January 1854, the first perforated Penny Red stamps were put on sale (Fig 15). Three days later perforated Two Pence Blue stamps followed. These stamps have perforation 16 (16 holes over 2cm length), but it was observed that the holes were too close together and the sheets fell

Between 1855 and 1857 stamps were produced with perforation 14 and 16. At the end 1857 it was decided to continue to produce stamps with perforation 14 only. Similar to the Penny Black and Two Pence Blue, Penny Red stamps exist in several colour variants, including rose-red (Fig 16). On 1 April 1864, the stars-like designs on the top corners were replaced with the same check letters as used in the lower corners, but in reverse order (see Figure 17).

This modification was done in an attempt to prevent the fraudulent use of the uncancelled portions of two stamps which might otherwise be patched together and reused. Alphabet font change The alphabet of the check letters was changed over time. The first time the alphabet was changed was in 1852, then in 1855 and 1861 respectively. The letters of these alphabets have a different form (font), size and thickness. It is clear to see that the check letters of a Penny Red from 1864 looks different to the letters of two other stamps as shown in Figure 17 from 1841 and 1854 respectively.

The Penny Red became one of the main stamps of Great Britain over the next 37 years, and it is probably the most common stamp in the world, because about 21 billion stamps were produced between 1841 and 1879. Due to the wear, over 400 different plates were used to print the Penny Red during this period. The rarest plate to print the Penny Red is Plate 77 (produced in 1863), from which it is believed that only one sheet of stamps was printed. According to Post Office records, printing plate 77 was rejected due to poor alignment, which meant that some stamps were misperforated in production. Although the only sheet printed by plate 77 was meant to be destroyed, some stamps survived and might cost upwards of £500,000 today.

Notes

Mint Penny Black stamps might cost a fortune, but used stamps in good conditions are more affordable. However, to be on the safe side, it is recommended to buy these stamps from reputable dealers, especially if they are members of Philatelic Traders Society (PTS). The red 'PAID' handstamp, used to mark the prepayment of letters before the introduction of the adhesive postage stamps continued to be used until about 1853. An example of a letter posted from Glasgow in 1845 is shown in Figure 18. Since 1853, the General Post Office of Great Britain officially required all inland letters to be prepaid with

postage stamps. This meant letters sent without stamps were either returned to the sender (if possible) or delivered with a penalty fee paid by the recipient.

Next Month I will cover the much-derided Mulready Stationery.