

LONDON CANCELS – Development during the Victorian

Introduction

The purpose of this exhibit is to trace the development of London postal markings from the Maltese Cross to the relatively sophisticated machine applied Duplex cancels and the combined Date and Obliterator cancels of the final decade of the nineteenth century. With the first postage stamps in 1840 came the need for a cancel to obliterate the stamp so that it could not be re-used. Also it remained necessary to record the date on which the letter was processed for forwarding to the addressee.

The London Maltese Cross cancel was in use for about five years, it was replaced by two separate series of cancels, a number in a diamond and a number in a circle, both surrounded by horizontal lines forming a horizontal oval. In all three types the date cancel was applied to the back of the cover, this required two separate and time consuming operations. To speed up the process, in 1853 a hand applied Duplex cancel was developed that placed dated and numbered obliterator side by side.

This mailing method proved too slow and required too many postal clerks. In 1858 a machine was selected from two types submitted. This made possible a machine applied Duplex cancel that in one form or another would persist for most of the rest of the century. This comprised a circular date stamp to the left of an obliterator consisting of horizontal bars above, below and on either side of one or more numbers, letters or a combination of both.

Although many types of experimental cancels were used in London during the later years of the nineteenth century most of these were short lived. A few did evolve into some of the common cancels of the twentieth century. The dominant cancel up until 1900 remained the machine applied Duplex. The last cancel introduced during the Victorian period was the Boston in 1898; this cancel was in service for the next ten years. The exhibit ends with examples of the specialized cancels that needed to be introduced to cover situations such as Late Mail/Late Fee/Too Late/Miss Sorted/Registered/Returned Letter and Charge Marks.

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	Introduction and Prologue Before the Postage Stamp	1
1	Introduction of the Adhesive Postage Stamp Maltese Cross	1
2	The Introduction of the Barred Cancel Horizontal Oval	1-2
3	The need to speed up the process Hand Stamps/Roller/Hill/Cresswell	2-4
4	The merger of the London Post and District Post Central/District and Suburban markings	4
5	The need to find a more reliable method Rideout/Sloper/Azemar	4
6	How to get all the information in one obliterator Squared Circle/Octagon/Hooded/Hoster/Divided Arc/Double Rim/Ethridge/Hey & Dolphin/Triangle	4-5
7	Last of the Experimentals Imperial/Bickerdike/Boston	5
8	Solutions to cover different situations Ancillary Marks	5-6
	Epilogue	6



Magnifying Glass indicates
original Research

Significant items included
in the exhibit are
highlighted with a blue
border and **Blue Bold
Print**

The exhibit is in chronological
order based on introduction
of the type of cancel and not
by date of use