Wednesday, February 17, 1999 at 12h00

Offer for Sale by Public Auction
at the Swissótol, Zurich Oerlikon

The First Cover
May 1, 1840
Acknowledgements and Bibliography

The Royal Philatelic Society London
Certificate No. 169,274 14 May 1997

B.P.A. Expertising Ltd London
Certificate No. 37,834 31 July 1992

Peter Holcombe Luzern, Switzerland
Certificate No. 5816/92 19 March 1992

Michael George Hall Solihull, England
Certificate 28 May 1991

"1 May 1840: The Story of an Investigation" by P.C. Pearson
(pub. Fakes, Forgeries, Experts, October '98)

"The Famous First Day of Use" by James A. Mackay
(pub. The Stamp Magazine, January '92)

The World's First ...

"The earliest recorded cover to date bearing an adhesive stamp" Peter Holcombe

"A genuine 1st May usage" Robson Lowe

"One of the greatest philatelic items in existence" D N Jatia  F.I.P. President
Introduction

The World's First Cover

Philately is one of those fields where knowledge, academy and just plain experience has a long tradition in validating its greatest items and thus its most valuable ones also. Hence, no great surprise when in 1978 a cover dated May 1, 1840 bearing a penny black stamp appeared and was immediately the subject of great speculation.

It would be, if found genuine, the very first item in the world ever to bear a stamp, since, until this time the very earliest date for a postal item bearing a stamp (also a penny black) was May 2, 1840. Passionate collectors were excited, experts held their breath awaiting confirmation.

The world's very first postage stamp introduced by Rowland Hill had been printed and delivered to Post Offices for official sale to the public on May 1, 1840 but not for valid postage use until May 6, 1840, known universally as the First Day of Issue.

Returning to the story of our May 1st cover: the experts did not agree; some believed back in 1978 that the stamp did not originate on the cover, while others were convinced it was absolutely genuine. Including Robson Lowe, who published an article about it in the Philatelic Journal of Great Britain in 1981. For almost a decade, little was heard about the item. However, renewed interest in postal history and cover collecting and the importance of having "earliest dates" as "starting point items" in exhibit collections raised demand and prices for this area in philately. In a 1991 public auction, a Penny Black used on cover dated May 2, 1840 was adjudicated at almost £2 million, an astronomical figure!

Publicity about this auction result encouraged the owner of the May "First" Cover to represent it for expertisation. An expert at the Government Forensic Laboratory confirmed the genuineness of the item and that the stamp originated on the cover. This expertise was further confirmed and validated by Peter Holcombe and soon after by the British Philatelic Association, Robson Lowe being one of the signatures on the certificate.

The most important validation was still to be done: that of the Royal Philatelic Society who had already examined the item on previous occasions. This time, however, and thanks to the dedication of Patrick Pearson, Chairman of the Expert Committee, their study and research was to leave no question unanswered. Mr. Pearson documents the episode in a special article "1 May 1840 - The Story of an Investigation" which we have the pleasure to reprint in this catalogue.

The conclusion of the Royal Philatelic Society Expert Committee this time was categorical: the item genuine in every respect and the stamp not only originating on the cover but states at the end "The 1d Black is obliterated by a Maltese Cross in red a small portion extending on to the cover tying it" - obviously the very first time the Maltese Cross was used to cancel a stamp or a cover and the very first time in the world a stamp was ever cancelled.

So there is no doubt anymore. What is on offer in this auction is an item loaded with palmares:

- The very first usage of a stamp in the world
- The very first usage of a cancellation
- The very first postal use of the Penny Black and of the Maltese Cross
- The very first stamped item of Great Britain and the World

It is the only known. It is the first time it is offered for public sale.

Illustrated and described in its properly deserved place in the Guinness Book of World Records, it is now acknowledged to be one of the most important philatelic items in the world.

David Feldman
RDP(I)
Geneva, September 1998
A small number of lettersheets are known with the One Penny Black attached dated during the period immediately prior to their issue on 6 May 1840. The earliest of these may well be the one now described. It is dated 1 May and is sent from London to Mrs Andrew Smith at Mauchline in Ayrshire.

**Illustration of cover** (see figure 1)

Although correctlycharged 2d per ounce, the One Penny stamp not being valid for postage at that date, it is unusual in that the stamp itself is obliterated by the Maltese Cross.

I was first submitted to the Expert Committee of the Royal in 1978, again in 1992 and finally again in 1997. On the first two occasions it was given a ‘bad’ certificate as the stamp was believed not to have originated on the lettersheet.

It has also been studied by BPA Expertising in 1992 and by Peter Holcombe in the same year; both were of the opinion that the cover was genuine.

The ink on the stamp and the trace on the lettersheet were independently examined by a forensic expert, Mr Michael Hall of the Government Forensic Laboratory, on behalf of the owner who had originally submitted the lettersheet to the Expert Committee in 1978. Mr Hall considered that the ink on the lettersheet and along the foot of the stamp were the same.

Since 1978, when the lettersheet was first examined, an article in The Scotsman had been identified which might provide a provenance for the item. Also computer based imaging equipment was available which had not been developed in the 1970s. In view of this a detailed investigation of both the lettersheet itself and the circumstances surrounding the sale of the Penny Black in May 1840 was carried out.

The lettersheet had been submitted by a member of the Society who wrote

I wish to submit the attached cover and one penny Black for your judgment as to whether it is authentic.

I purchased it thinking that it must be a forgery, and after much deliberation carefully took the stamp off the cover. Upon examination after this, I found the stamp was tied to the cover in two places, firstly by a very small piece of the Maltese Cross on the left hand side, and secondly by the manuscript along the edge of the base of the stamp.

This proves the stamp was on the cover before the manuscript was written.

The one penny Black being issued on 1st May 1840, but not officially usable until the 6th May 1840, I can only surmise that the stamp was purchased on the day of release, placed on cover, cancelled by Cross and despatched.

The journey to Glasgow starting February 1st took 42 hours, and thence to its destination, say another day, probably arriving Monday/Tuesday 4th or 5th May 1840, in which case 2d, unnamed post would be charged.

The letter weighs 4.2 grams (.1822 ozs). The stamp is from Plate 2.

I have spent a great deal of time on researching this letter, and am very intrigued by it, for I realise it could be one of the earliest covers known stamped, or indeed the earliest.

When first examined the lettersheet, in a very fragile state, was reinforced with cellotape both on the inside and outside, the gum from which was causing the folds to deteriorate even further. This had been removed by 1992; however fortunately no additional cleaning has been attempted which could have made it difficult to examine and compare the markings on the lettersheet and stamp. Examination in 1979 had proved that the stamp was from an early impression from Plate 1A and not 2 as suggested by the submitter.
When submitted in 1907 it was supported by copies of the BPA and Holcombe opinions, the opinion of the forensic expert, and copies of articles by Robson Lowe and by James Mackay. The latter referred to an article in *The Scotsman* dated 5 September 1959 describing a correspondence from the Smith family of Mauchline who were the creators of the famous Tartan Wares of the Victorian period. A copy of the article was obtained from the Edinburgh City Library.

The key points in this article was that the letters had been 'charred by a fire which in 1933 destroyed the Boxworks' at which the Tartan Ware was produced and that 'The first letter (in the series) was a personal one, written from London to his wife Nanny in Mauchline. Its only interest is that it is dated May 1840 and bears the new 1d black stamp.' The article was written by Edward and Eva Pinto who were interested in the Tartan Ware and the Smith family but were primarily interested in correspondence referring to the ware's manufacture. The Pintos were not without philatelic knowledge. They lived at Pretty Corner near Watford, and they knew that two miles away was the Mill where sacks of Stock Exchange forgeries were found. Many of the items they collected were 'stamp boxes' and had 'Penny Blacks' worked into the design. At that date they owned the Smith correspondence including the May 1840 lettersheet.

The lettersheet is dated internally London 1st May 1840, it refers to Andrew Smith having received a letter from his wife the previous day and that he had hoped to set out on the return journey the same day but had been prevented and would not be leaving until the following morning. The state of the cover, although not actually charred, is in a condition where it could well have been affected by the fire which burnt down the 'Boxworks' in 1833.

While it has not been possible to confirm that this letter is the one referred to, the inference is that it is likely to be: there is no reference to Smith having visited London again in May 1840. Thus there is at last a probable provenance earlier than the first submission to the Expert Committee of the Royal in 1978.

Next the circumstances surrounding the issue, and possible purchase by Andrew Smith, of a Penny Black on 1st May.

That these were available can be deduced from Wright & Creeke *History of the Adhesive Stamps of the British Isles*, supported by Sir Edward Bacon in *The Line-Engraved postage stamps of Great Britain* and from recent articles in the *GB Journal*. Printing from plate 1 had started on 11 April and the first deliveries were made by Perkins Bacon on 15 April when each sheet of the penny postage and VR stamps were sent to Charles Pressly, Secretary of the Commissioners of Stamps and Taxes, and Rowland Hill respectively. This is recorded in the Perkins Bacon 'Postage Day' book which was then in private hands.

**Illustration of page from book (Figure 3)**

800 sheets were delivered to the Stamp Office on 21 April and further supplies on most days thereafter including additional sheets to Mr Pressly, including 13 sheets of the VR stamp to the Post Office and one sheet to make up a shortfall. The first delivery to the Post Office was made on 27 April when 13 sheets were sent to the General Post Office by the Stamp Office.

These and the five sheets supplied on the 29th were almost certainly used on the Post Office Circular of the latter date. On the 29th also 1950 sheets were supplied by Perkins Bacon each to Somerset House and to the Sea Policy Office in the City. On the following day Wright & Creeke in an extract from the *original issue book of the Storekeeper of Stamps at Somerset House* show a further 1799 sheets of the one penny as being sent to 88 office within England: however care must be taken of these figures as they almost certainly include Mulreadies and the figure of 286 sheets for the Two Pence, if...
P.C. Pearson Story continued...

Correctly interpreted, could only be sheets of the Two Pence Mulready (Ref. Samuel & Haggins Specimen Stamps and Stationery of Great Britain). In our opinion the records in the original issue book of the Storekeeper of Stamps at Somerset House almost certainly refer to the warrants the storekeeper received for delivery and not the date when the warrants were executed.

A supply of the Penny Black was certainly available to the public on 1st May. Care must however be taken in interpreting Rowland Hill's comment in his Journal ‘May 1 Stamps issued to the public today for the first time. Great bustle at the Stamp Office.' While this will have included the Penny Black a proportion and perhaps the greater amount were the one penny Mulready which Hill and the Commissioners of Stamps and Taxes also called 'stamps' and which were bought by firms and for resale through licensed outlets. The comment on May 2 '2,500 worth of stamps said yesterday was more than the number of sheets of the Penny Black at the Stamp Office. However Smith would have been able to buy a Penny Black on May 1 when he found could not travel home that day.

At this time there is a prima facie case that the stamp could have originated on the cover and not be a later addition, even added a comparatively short time after the letter had been delivered to Nancy Smith. In the past an opinion that the Maltese Cross was not used prior to May 6th has been held by some authorities. The Committee believe this to be a misinterpretation of the instruction in the Post Office notice of 25 April which gave instructions for application of the new cancelling device and instructed postmasters on the preparation of ink for its use. There is no statement that it should not be used prior to May 6, rather that it was to be used then when the stamps became valid for prepayment of postage. Before that date the covers were to be marked paid (1d if paid in cash) or unpaid (collect 3). Most examples of the Penny Black or Mulready posted before May 6th have either the tombstone Paid mark or are endorsed 2d if the postage was to be collected, the stamp being uncancelled or just fed by the Paid marking. On May 1st the post office window clerk may have thought that he should cancel the stamp although it did not pay the postage. At the same time the figure 2 was added.

At this stage recourse was made to technical inspection using the Foster & Freeman VSC Imaging analysis system at the British Library by courtesy of their Manuscript Department. This allows comparison of ink colour and composition (fluorescence, etc) under a range of UV and Infra Red lighting conditions and also superimposition of stored images.

Three specific points were examined in detail as well as confirmation that the dates on the letterhead were as appeared. First the date written inside the letterhead had not had a figure removed (i.e. it had not been sent on 11th May), nor had the datestamp on the reverse been similarly tampered with. It was also agree that the letterhead did not show any sign of clearing or other manipulation other than where the cello tape had been removed. The three points of particular interest were the
The First Cover May 1, 1840

P.C. Pearson Story continued ...
minute speck of red ink to the left of the stamp which could have come from the Maltese Cross, the top of the figure 2 where it touched the stamp and on the reverse of the bottom left corner of the stamp the offset of the loop of the letter H of Smith on the back of the stamp where this overlapped the writing. The speck of red appeared to have the same characteristics as the Maltese Cross, however the amount showing would not have been enough to confirm that the stamp originated on the cover. This however agreed with the opinion of the forensic expert. There was no removal of ink from above the flattened top of the figure 2 where it touched the stamp thus indicating that the stamp was on the letter sheet when the figure was written and finally the offset on the back of the stamp had the same characteristics (i.e. it faded at the same rate under different lighting conditions) as the top loop of the letter H on the cover.

The opinion of all who witnessed the examination was that the letter sheet was genuine. One concern was how the figure 2 which is very unusual, was written, and as this was the key recognition feature it was closely examined. It consists of two halves with a break below the top twist. It was suggested that the bottom half may have been written first starting at the top loop then the top section, which touched the stamp, written starting at the bottom at the end of the top of the lower figure. The figure appears to have been written with a steel pen and both halves show the same light reaction.

Subsequent research has identified a one penny Maltese wrapper used on May 5 from London to Jersey with a similarly styled 2 (Grunn sale lot 61). This would support the suggestion that the figure 2 was applied in London.

The opinion of the Committee is now that the cover is genuine and that the Penny Black originated on it although did not pay the postage. There still remain a few questions to answer, perhaps the most surprising is why a conny scoop should pay One Penny for what did not pay the postage. This can almost certainly be explained by his need to send a letter urgently to tell his wife that he would not arrive when she expected and his ignorance of the date the stamps became valid for postage. The letter would have preceded him to Mauchline.

It is probable that Smith wrote the letter in the morning he writes we intended to leave this afternoon rather than we had intended to leave. The date stamp on the reverse is the Morning Duty type with 1840 in a straight line. Perhaps neither Smith nor the Morning Duty window clerk realised that the stamp was not yet valid. The Afternoon Duty clerks, who were used to handling outgoing mail, would have been aware of this.

The next question is where the Maltese Cross was applied. It is suggested by Robert Lowe and also on Holcombe's certificate that it was applied in transit in Glasgow due to its colour. However the colour is not the watery Glasgow purple which is recorded from later in 1840. Glasgow used a purple colour for its handstamped Paid markings early in 1840 but by April was using a standard orange red.

There is no Glasgow transit date stamp (none would be expected as can be confirmed by the celebrated May 8 cover from London to Kirkcudbright with a block of ten of the penny black) and it seems to the Committee highly unlikely that the obliteration was applied in Glasgow. In its opinion it was applied by one of the Afternoon duty clerks in London at the same time as the figure 2 was written. No supply of the new stamps would have been received or seen in Mauchline; they were not despatched to Edinburgh for distribution in Scotland until May 5th and would not have been received until May 7th at earliest.
**Transcript**

May 1. Rose at 8: Stamps issued to the public today in London for the first time. Great bustle at the stamp office.

May 2. Rose at 7.45. £2500 worth of stamps sold yesterday.

The above remarks verify the sale of the Penny Black Stamps to the public from May 1, 1840. The sales value would have also included the One Penny Mulready which Rowland Hill also called 'stamps'.

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David Feldman  
February 17, 1999
The Famous

First Day of Use

Readers will doubtless recall the record-breaking sale at Hambro's in Lugano, Switzerland on May 2 when a Penny Black on cover fetched the equivalent of £1,350,000, the highest bidder being a Japanese collector. The cover was widely described as being the earliest usage of the Penny Black, but was it?

First of all, it is necessary to clear up one or two misconceptions. Although the Penny Black was a postage stamp its production and distribution were masterminded by the Board of Stamps and Taxes (the forerunner of today's Inland Revenue). They took on this responsibility because they were the only government department up to that time which had had any experience in the handling of stamps, albeit for fiscal purposes. The incontrovertible facts are that the Penny Black became valid for postage on May 6, 1840, but was on sale at Stamp Offices and at the General Post Office, London from May 1. Sale at other major post offices in the capital began shortly thereafter, as soon as the requisite licences from the Board of Stamps and Taxes had been issued.

It was an argument over who should pay for the licences required by the workmen at the General Post Offices in Edinburgh and Dublin, and the deputy postmasters at the major branch post offices which delayed the issue of the new-framed stamps, especially outside the London area. In the early days, therefore, sales were virtually confined to the Stamp Offices which were completely separate from post offices. The labels were sold mainly by one government department, but were intended for use by another. This little known or appreciated fact may explain the confusion which arose over the correct procedure to be adopted in the cancelling or processing of the adhesive postage stamps, especially in the days prior to May 6 itself. The same remark, of course, applies to the Mulready envelopes and letter sheets.

The world record price was paid for a Mulready 1d letter sheet which had been turned inside out and used as a blank wrapper. To this was affixed a Penny Black. The letter was posted in London on May 2 to an address in Redington, Northumberland. The recipient then refolded the sheet and used the Mulready wrapper for a letter which was sent on May 4 — still two days earlier than the official date.

It has been stated that on neither occasion was the 'stamp' accepted for prepayment. Unfortunately, I have not seen an illustration of the Mulready side of the sheet, so cannot say how it was actually treated; but the evidence of the inner side, used on May 2, points to the contrary.

The cover bears the manuscript endorsement 'pre-paid' in the bottom left-hand corner and the Penny Black has been cancelled with the Paid 'tombstone' handstamp of May 2 of the afternoon (A) duty. This datetamp, applied in red ink, was normally used on letters prepaid in cash, the actual amount being denoted by a red 'I', either handstamped or in manuscript, in red ink or crayon to indicate that no further postage was required from the addressee. The Penny Black in this instance was additionally cancelled by a handstuck 'I' in red, and because this was irregular — the clerk obviously being unsure of how to treat this item — the 'I' was struck a second time at the side, well clear of the adhesive. This does not indicate, as some experts have averred, that the cover was treated as unpaid and that the 1+1 = 2 meant that twopenne was to be recovered from the recipient. In my view this is utter nonsense. Had the cover been treated as unpaid, a '2' in black ink, either handstamped or written in manuscript, would have been applied, to indicate the deficient postage plus a fine of the same amount. It seems to me, therefore, that this cover of May 2 was treated as prepaid, if prematurely so, and handstamped in such a manner as to indicate the fact to the staff at the delivery office in Morpeth.

I mention all this because there is actually an earlier cover, of May 1, 1840, which shows that the adhesive was treated as invalid, and a charge of twopenny was properly raised. The entire letter was written by Andrew Smith at London on May 1, 1840 and addressed to his wife Nancy in...
Mauchline, Ayrshire. The letter is fortunately intact so we can see that it was properly dated inside.

It merely informed Mrs Smith that her husband had been delayed in London and would be setting out for Scotland by coach the following day, so that he would see her on Tuesday night or Wednesday morning. To do this, the wrapper, Andrew Smith affixed a Penny Black of Plate 1, lettered I-D, and then sealed it into the box at the London Chief Office. The sorting office staff neglected the adhesive and made no attempt to cancel, and treated the letter as unpaid by endorsing the front with a large manuscript "2" in black ink. The datestamp of the Chief Office (code W) was applied on the back, slightly overlapping the flap.

The letter was then sent on its way. It would have reached Glasgow on the morning of May 6th and then been conveyed to Mauchline by coach. It was at Glasgow head office that a postal clerk noted that the Penny Black had not been cancelled and now applied the Malette Cross. Regrettably, no corresponding datestamp was applied to the back of the wrapper before it was sent on to Mauchline when on May 6th, Mr Smith had to stamp up twopence for the letter.

The wrapper has been known of for over 30 years and is currently in the possession of a prominent Midlands collector. Some years ago he tried to obtain a "Royal" certificate for it but the Expert Committee refused to pronounce on its genuineness. The reasons for caution are fairly obvious. On some point the adhesive was removed from the cover to examine it, but it had not been replaced. The Penny Black bears a genuine cancellation — there can be no doubt about that — but unfortunately the clerk who applied it did so very neatly, too neatly, for it is not so much the shape of the stamp on the envelope which will determine its desirability, as the fact that the letter was a genuine article.

1. There is the outline of a stamp on the envelope. This outline matches the shape of the Penny Black stamp.

2. This letter was written on a sheet of paper and then enclosed in an envelope. The envelope is then sealed, and the stamp is applied on the back of the envelope.

3. The top of the figure '2' on the envelope has a straight edge to it. Clearly there was a raised surface with a straight edge at the top of the envelope when the '2' was written.

4. The Penny Black cross mark goes across the left hand edge of the stamp. There is a small trace of material in the envelope similar in colour and appearance to the ink of the frank mark ('2') on the stamp.

5. When the mark on the envelope is lined up with the edge of the Malette Cross on the stamp, the top of the figure '2' on the envelope lines up with the ink mark on the stamp.

6. The writer of the letter would have mentioned in his correspondence that he was using the new stamp. Here again, this is to apply the thinking of a much later era. Andrew Smith might not have thought of the matter of sufficient importance. I cannot imagine him writing, here, "I have used a new-fangled Penny Black." It is not clear who would have been using the envelope or the stamps at this time.

In my opinion, therefore, the omission of any reference to the stamp in the letter is inconclusive.

The postal routing at the time would have been conveyed from London to Birmingham by rail and thence by mail coach via Preston and Carlisle to Glasgow. From there a ferry service went by coach to Kilmarnock and then a foot post conveyed mail to Mauchline.

By an odd coincidence, I have recently completed a history of Kilmarnock, which was commissioned by the district council to celebrate the quatercentenary of the burgh next year, so I am familiar with the procedures at that time.

Furthermore, I can actually tell you quite a bit about the writer of the letter. Andrew Smith and his brother William started business as manufacturers of horns for sharpening razors. In 1823 they set up a factory in Mauchline to make the wooden cases for these horns. Soon afterwards they began diversifying into the manufacture of small boxes and cases of all kinds. The Smith Brothers, in fact, invented that form of popular Victorian souvenirs known as Mauchline ware.

By the late 1830s the firm had agents in Birmingham and London and Andrew Smith frequently travelled there. The Smith Boxworks was destroyed by fire in 1833 and the firm then went into business. Some of the firm's papers, including private correspondence of the Smith family, were as a result lost at that time and eventually came into the hands of Edward and Eva Pinto of Birmingham, the renowned authorities on Mauchline ware. An article in The Sotheby's of September 3, 1950 by the Pintos mentions this correspondence. The first letter was written on May 6th, 1840 and the second on May 8th, 1841. The collection of letters is sold as part of the purchase of Mauchline ware. The period of the correspondence is of especial interest, as the letters were written by a new and unusual material — the Penny Black.

As a matter of interest, does anyone know of any early Penny Black engravings in which the writer mentions the new stamps? In any case, Andrew Smith had probably already written and sealed his letter before he made his way to the stamp office or the General Post Office to purchase some of the new labels. From point 2 above it is obvious that the name and address of the recipient had already been written when Andrew affixed the adhesive. Indeed, the ink may have still been slightly wet, hence the partial offsetting of the ink on the back of the adhe-

JAMES A. MACKAY

David Feldman
February 17, 1999

65
Michael George Hall's Certificate

I am a Forensic Handwriting Expert and an Examiner of Questioned Documents. This has been my sole occupation for nearly 27 years.

I have examined a letter addressed to Mrs. Smith and a penny black stamp attached to it by a stamp hinge on the instruction of Mr. W.C. Earl. The object of my examination was to determine whether or not the stamp was attached to the envelope when the figure '2' was written on the envelope and the stamp was franked with the "Maltese Cross".

I have noted the following:

1. There is the outline of a stamp on the envelope. This outline matches the shape of the penny black stamp.

2. The letter 'h' of Smith runs into the stamp outline on the envelope and is copied on the back of the stamp.

3. The top of the figure '2' on the envelope has a straight edge to it. Clearly, there was a raised surface with a straight edge at the top of the envelope when the '2' was written. There is an ink mark on the edge of the stamp of a similar colour to the ink of the figure '2'.

4. The "Maltese Cross" frank mark goes over the left hand edge of the stamp. There is a small trace of material in the envelope similar in colour and appearance to the ink of the frank mark on the stamp.

5. When the mark on the envelope is lined up with the edge of the "Maltese Cross" frank mark on the stamp, the top of the figure '2' on the envelope lines up with the ink mark on the stamp.

6. I have compared the ink of the mark on the envelope with the ink of the franking mark on the stamp and the ink of the figure '2' with the ink on the bottom of the stamp with infra red and ultra violet light. I have not been able to distinguish between them.

I conclude from the above that the Penny Black stamp was at some stage stuck to the envelope and that it was on this envelope when the figure '2' was written. Whilst the evidence regarding the franking stamp is by no means conclusive I also consider it possible that the stamp was on the envelope when it was franked with the "Maltese Cross".

M.G. Hall  28/5/91

Michael George Hall  as:
Forensic Handwriting Expert
Examiner of Questioned Documents

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Peter Holcombe’s Certificate

PETER HOLCOMBE
PHILATELIC EXPERT
LUZERN, SWITZERLAND.

Certificate No. 5816/92 March, 19th 1992

GREAT BRITAIN.

A lettersheet written from London on May, 1st. 1840, bearing an
1840, 1d. black, lettered LD, watermark small Crown, imperf.,
S.G.Spec. Al(2), Scott 1, addressed to Mrs. Andrew Smith, Mauchlin,
Ayrshire, North Britain.
The 1d. black was not accepted by the Post Office as pre-payment
of the postage and a manuscript charge of "2"(d) was written on
the cover below the adhesive just tying the stamp to the cover at
the extreme top curve of the figure (1d. postage plus 1d. fine).
It was then backstamped across the flap 1 May 1840; it is known
that postage stamps were already distributed to some of the main
Post Office’s from May, 1., they were not officially supposed to be
used for the prepayment of postage until May, 6. The letter would
have been sent via Glasgow where the stamp was almost certainly
cancelled by a Maltese Cross in a very deep ruby red shade (a
colour peculiar to that Office), just fractionally tying it to the
cover. It was then forwarded to Mauchlin, Ayrshire and the re-
cipient was required to pay the 2d. postage due.
The cover is rather age stained and soiled and has been re-inforced
at its folds by sticky tape. The 1d. stamp has been roughly taken
off the cover at some time and has been re-hinged, leaving traces
of the original lettersheet on the back of the stamp which can
be matched up with the original. As such it is in my opinion
genuine.
A very unusual use of a 1d. black intended by the sender to pre-
pay postage which was however not accepted by the Post Office al-
though cancelled by a postal clerk somewhere in transit.
The earliest recorded cover to date bearing an adhesive stamp.
British Philatelic Association Certificate

No. 37, 834

B. P. A. Expertising Limited
London - England
EXPERT COMMITTEE

31st July, 1992

The Committee is of the opinion that the

GREAT BRITAIN 1840 (May 1st) entire letter, from London to Ayrshire, backstamped London 1st May 1840, bearing 1840 1d black, WMK Small Crown, Imperf, Plate 1a, lettered L-D (SG2), which has been removed for examination and replaced, tied by manuscript ‘2’, denoting 2d due and non-acceptance for postage of the 1d black, and cancelled with Maltese Cross, applied in transit at Glasgow.
A genuine 1st May usage.

Neither the Company nor the members of the Expert Committee can accept any liability, either collective or individual, for any opinion expressed.
Royal Philatelic Society Certificate

THE ROYAL PHILATELIC SOCIETY
LONDON

41, Devonshire Place,
London, W1N 1PE

Meeting of 14 MAY 1997

In the OPINION of The EXPERT COMMITTEE the item submitted as

Great Britain 1840

S.G. No. A51 (SG N° 2)

Lettersheet with a 1st Black, plate 1a lettered D,

knauging to top right corner, was sent through the

post on 1 May 1840. The 1st Black was not accepted

for prepayment of postage and the letter was

charged 2 (pence) as an unpaid item. Genuine

The letter is stained and the folds had been

repaired by cardboard which has now been removed

The 1st Black is obliterated

by a Maltese Cross in
red, a small portion extending onto the
corner fixing it.

Observations

Chairman

Submitted by DAVID FELDMAN SA

David Feldman February 17, 1999
London 1st May 1840
My Dear Wife,

I read your letter yesterday letting me know the happy termination of your Courtship. We intended to leave this morning, but since then all is to arrive tomorrow morning before ten. I am going off this time and I hope present the smart meeting with you on Tuesday night at Wednesday soon thereafter.

My dear Nancy

Your truly,

[Signature]
May 1, 1840: Entire Lettersheet tearing 1840 Penny Black Plate 1A lettered LD, cancelled and tied to the entire by red Mallese Cross. For full technical details refer to the following documents fully reproduced in this catalogue:

Certificates: The Royal Philatelic Society, The British Philatelic Association, Peter Holcombe, Michael George Hall.


“The Famous First Day of Use” (pub. The Stamp Magazine, January ‘92)

**The first known item in the world bearing a stamp, considered by many as the most important cover in all of postal history.**

(Exhibited many times at Court of Honour, International Exhibitions 1994-97)

Note: The cover is invited as star of the Court of Honour at PhilexFrance July 2-11, 1999 and it is expected that the new owner will accept this honour.

**Estimate**: SFr. 400'000 - 800'000 (GBP 170'000 - 340'000)
Conditions of Sale

BIDDERS - VERY IMPORTANT

1. OFFER indicates the estimate is left to the discretion of bidders as to the quantity, special character or quality of a lot.

2. Bids should in no case, however, be regarded as indicating a bid plus of the lot.

3. If you cannot attend the auction personally, please send us your bids as early as possible. All bids are to be made through the telephone or in writing. The minimum bid will be the reserve price set for the lot, and the maximum bid will be the maximum price specified on the catalogue. The bidding must be made in increments of £50 for lots not exceeding £500, and in increments of £500 for lots exceeding £500.

4. The auction will be held in English, subject to the interpretation of the auctioneer.

CONDITIONS OF SALE

This auction takes place in the United Kingdom. Bids are accepted from UK residents only. Bids must be made either in person, by telephone, or by fax. All bids are to be made at least 24 hours before the auction. The auctioneer reserves the right to accept or reject any bid at their discretion.

1. THE AUCTION LOTS ARE OFFERED

1.1 As presented in the catalogue, each lot is subject to the conditions set out in the catalogue and the conditions of sale. Any lot that is sold at auction is subject to the resale price guarantee.

1.2 As viewed: Before and during the auction, all lots may be examined as scheduled in the catalogue. Persons attending the auction and/or who have seen any lots before the auction and/or who have seen any lots before the auction are not under any obligation to bid on any of these lots.

2. AUCTION BIDS

2.1 The auction closing times are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lot</th>
<th>Closing Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lot 1</td>
<td>10:00 AM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lot 2</td>
<td>11:00 AM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lot 3</td>
<td>12:00 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lot 4</td>
<td>01:00 PM</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bids in between these times will be accepted.

2.2 DAVID FEDELSTEIN S.A. is authorised to bid for clients in accordance with the bidding instructions. DAVID FEDELSTEIN S.A. may also bid on behalf of vendors in cases where reserve prices have been fixed. In these cases, the vendor is required to submit a written confirmation in order to authorise the auctioneer to bid on their behalf.

2.3 Written bids are accepted at DAVID FEDELSTEIN S.A. before the auction and are subject to the conditions set out in the catalogue. Bids in excess of the reserve price are acceptable, but are subject to the conditions set out in the catalogue.

3. THE AUCTION

3.1 The auction will be held in the auction room and subject to the conditions set out in the catalogue.

3.2 Bidders' representatives and auction agents are permitted to bid on the account of a third party, but only for their own benefit. Bids may not be accepted for third parties.

3.3 At the conclusion of the auction, the auctioneer will announce the successful bidder. The successful bidder must pay in full upon the fall of the gavel, and the lot will be removed from the premises of the auctioneer upon payment.

4. GUARANTEE

4.1 Extent of the guarantee: Subject to paragraphs 4.2 and 4.3, the guarantee applies only to the items purchased by the buyer and paid for in full. The purchase price is subject to the minimum bid, and the reserve price is subject to the maximum bid.

4.2 Exception: No guarantee is given in the case of a lot that has not been sold at auction.

4.3 Exception: No guarantee is given in the case of a lot that has been returned to the auctioneer.

5. APPLICABLE LAW AND JURISDICTION

This auction takes place in accordance with the applicable law of Switzerland. Any dispute shall be submitted to the exclusive jurisdiction of the courts of Geneva, subject to appeal to the Swiss Federal Court in Lucerne.

In every case, David Fedelstein S.A. shall be entitled to its full fee and the remuneration due, as a matter of principle, in accordance with Swiss law.
Conditions of Sale French

INFORMATIONS IMPORTANTES À L’INTENTION DES ENCHÉRISSEURS

1. La mention "OFFER" n’est que si le vendeur est déjà parti à la date des enchères. En revanche, les dates de vente ne sont pas indiquées dans le tableau des enchères proches du lieu où les enchères exceptionnelles de ce type.

2. Dans les cas douteux, les enchères doivent être enregistrées une fois par jour, avec une marge de sécurité pour éviter les accidents de la circulation.

3. Si vous ne parvenez pas à atteindre le vendeur personnellement, vous pouvez laisser un message par téléphone. Vous pouvez également demander à être remboursé si l’objet n’est pas dans le temps de livraison ou si vous ne pouvez pas le trouver. Les dates de livraison sont indiquées dans le tableau des enchères proches du lieu où les enchères exceptionnelles de ce type.

4. Les ventes sont effectuées dans les mèmes conditions, sauf en fonction des dispositions des enchères proches du lieu de vente.

CONDITIONS GÉNÉRALES APPLICABLES À LA VENTE AUX ENCHÈRES

Les ventes se déroulent en public et en public, en présence du vendeur, dans les mèmes conditions que les ventes des enchères proches du lieu. Les enchères ont lieu dans les mèmes conditions que les ventes des enchères proches du lieu. Les enchères sont effectuées par le moyen d'une enchère par l'intermédiaire d'un acheteur ou d'un vendeur, et sont effectuées par le moyen d'une enchère par l'intermédiaire d'un acheteur ou d'un vendeur, dans les mèmes conditions que les ventes des enchères proches du lieu.

1. LES LOT SONT MIS EN VENTE

1.1 Sur la base de leur présentation dans le catalogue. Les lots sont établis avec le plus grand soin et sont vendus aux enchères par le moyens des enchères proches du lieu.

1.2 Sur la base de leur présentation sur place. Tous les lots peuvent être visionnés, avant de les acheter, en fonction du catalogue de vente. Les enchères auront lieu entre les lots et participeront personnellement à la vente aux enchères.

2. LES OFFRES D’ENCHÈRES

2.1 Chaque enchère doit être précédée d’une formule privée, sans intention d’engagement, qui comprend la date de l’enchère et la forme d’enchère.

2.2 API 100 - 10 - SF 18 - 100 - SF 50 - 200 - SF 50

2.3 API 100 - 10 - SF 18 - 100 - SF 50 - 200 - SF 50

2.4 API 100 - 10 - SF 18 - 100 - SF 50 - 200 - SF 50

2.5 API 100 - 10 - SF 18 - 100 - SF 50 - 200 - SF 50

2.6 API 100 - 10 - SF 18 - 100 - SF 50 - 200 - SF 50

Les offres d’enchères sont mises en vente à la formule privée, sans intention d’engagement, et sont vendues aux enchères par le moyen d’une enchère par l’intermédiaire d’un acheteur ou d’un vendeur.

2.7 API 100 - 10 - SF 18 - 100 - SF 50 - 200 - SF 50

2.8 API 100 - 10 - SF 18 - 100 - SF 50 - 200 - SF 50

2.9 API 100 - 10 - SF 18 - 100 - SF 50 - 200 - SF 50

2.10 API 100 - 10 - SF 18 - 100 - SF 50 - 200 - SF 50

2.11 API 100 - 10 - SF 18 - 100 - SF 50 - 200 - SF 50

Les offres d’enchères sont mises en vente à la formule privée, sans intention d’engagement, et sont vendues aux enchères par le moyen d’une enchère par l’intermédiaire d’un acheteur ou d’un vendeur.

3. LA VENTE AUX ENCHÈRES

3.1 La vente aux enchères se déroule sur le principe de l’offre la plus basse. Les offres d’enchères sont mises en vente à la formule privée, sans intention d’engagement, et sont vendues aux enchères par le moyen d’une enchère par l’intermédiaire d’un acheteur ou d’un vendeur.


4. L’Enchère : Chaque enchère est valable pour un mois à partir de la date de l’enchère.

5. VA (Vente à la vente) : Note éspectante.

Les enchères doivent être mises en vente par le moyen d’une enchère par l’intermédiaire d’un acheteur ou d’un vendeur. Les enchères sont mises en vente par le moyen d’une enchère par l’intermédiaire d’un acheteur ou d’un vendeur.


8. Droit de gré : Lorsque le droit de gré est demandé, les lots sont mis en vente par le moyen d’une enchère par l’intermédiaire d’un acheteur ou d’un vendeur. Les adjournements des enchères sont les mises en vente par le moyen d’une enchère par l’intermédiaire d’un acheteur ou d’un vendeur.

9. GARANTIE


9.5 Droit applicable et forcément : La vente aux enchères ainsi que tous les règlements juridiques qui en découlent seront soumis au droit français exclusivement. Toute action légale ou procédure concernant la vente aux enchères ainsi que les rapports juridiques qui en découlent seront soumis à la juridiction exclusive des tribunaux de Genève, sous réserve d’appel au Tribunal fédéral suisse à Lausanne. Dans tous les cas, le Ministre David Feldman S.A. au nom du droit de l’acheteur et pour toutes les ventes aux enchères, acquitte les frais de tous les honoraires, juridiques et autres liés à la vente aux enchères.
The First Cover May 1, 1840

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Lydia Stocker Assistant

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20 February 17, 1999 David Feldman
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Auction Programme

Monday 15 February
15.00 h Egypt & Sudan

Cat. No. 1

Tuesday 16 February
09.30 h Bosnia, Montenegro, Turkey, Middle East and Greece
16.00 h The Americas

Cat. No. 2

Wednesday 17 February
09.00 h Asia
10.00 h Great Britain
12.00 h The First Cover, May 1, 1840
13.00 h British Commonwealth
17.00 h Western Europe & Scandinavia

Cat. No. 3

Thursday 18 February
09.00 h Eastern Europe
12.00 h Austria & Levant, Germany & Switzerland
18.00 h Collections

Cat. No. 4

Friday 19 February
09.00 h Airmails
11.00 h Olympics

Cat. No. 5

Viewing Arrangements

January 20 - February 9 ....................... GENEVA offices (175, route de Chancy)
by appointment

February 14 - 19 ............................... ZURICH, SWISSÔTEL
(Feb. 14 12.00 h-20.00 h; Feb. 15-18 08.00 h-20.00 h; Feb. 19 08.00 h-12.00 h)

David Feldman SA
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David Feldman  February 17, 1999
Specialised Catalogues

David Feldman
(With prices realised)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Price</th>
<th>Straits Settlements, November 1986</th>
<th>50</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The P. H. Tay Grand Prix Collection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>(No. of lots: 265)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Switzerland, Helveticus 1, November 1991</td>
<td>50</td>
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<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>Hardbound, Switzerland Collections (No. of lots: 83)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Switzerland, Helveticus 2, November 1992</td>
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<td>Hardbound, Switzerland Collections (No. of lots: 77)</td>
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<td>The &quot;Treskillings&quot; Yellow, November 1996</td>
<td>50</td>
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<td>Hardbound, the Swedish 3k yellow (No. of lots: 1)</td>
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<td>Rarities of the World, Ameripex, May 1986</td>
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<td>50</td>
<td>(No. of lots: 571)</td>
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<td>Rarities of the World, November 1991</td>
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<td>Hardbound (No. of lots: 89)</td>
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<td>Rarities of the World, November 1992</td>
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<td>Hardbound (No. of lots: 81)</td>
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Burrus
(Price each SFr. 30 / $25 / £12)

* Without prices realised

- British Empire, 3.4.63
- British Empire, 23/24.7.63
- British Empire, 27.11.63
- British Empire, 29.11.62
- Levant, Turkey, Morocco, 20.5.64
- Portugal & Philippines, 5.5.64
- Austria, 15.4.64
- Cape of Good Hope, 27.11.62
- B.N.A., 2.4.65 British Guiana, 26.11.63
- Hawaii (Harmers), 27.5.63
- Mexico, Nicaragua, Liberia, 7.6.64
- Mauritius, 1.10.63
- Brazil, 4.4.63
- French Colonies & Rumania (Balasse), 20.10.62
- Belgium & Belgian Congo (Balasse), 2.3.65
- Europe, 8.4.64
- Netherlands, 10.12.63
- Australia, Tasmania, 28.11.62
- Switzerland, 16/18.4.64
- Greece, 30.11.62
- Sweden, Hungary, etc. (Mohrmann), 13/16.11.62

Exhibition
Rare Stamps/Collections of the World

- Claridge’s London, 1995 (hardbound 148 pages) 50
- Claridge’s London, 1997 (hardbound 160 pages) 50
- Amphilex, New York, 1996 (hardbound 148 pages) 50
- Monaco, 1997 (clothbound 128 pages) 50

(Please enclose SFr. 5 ($4) for surface mail or SFr. 10 ($8) for airmail postage for each book)
Swissôtel Zurich

International Congress Centre
Am Marktplatz, Zurich-Oerlikon

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Direct line to auction: Telephone 01/317 30 36 - Fax: 01/317 30 37

The hotel is well located, next to the Zurich-Oerlikon Station, only 15 minutes from the Main Station by tram 7 or 11. By car, the hotel is only 5 minutes away from Zurich-Kloten Airport. It has its own bus service which runs frequently between the hotel and the airport. The 700-bed first class hotel has parking space for 200 cars. It also offers a Swissair office, Hertz car rental, a Bucherer jewellery and watch shop, restaurants (Panorama Grill 31st floor and snack restaurant Marmite), bars, nightclub and a rooftop swimming pool and sauna.

Reservations may be made through David Feldman S.A.


Die Reservierungen können durch David Feldman S.A. erfolgen.

L'hôtel est situé en face de la gare Zurich-Oerlikon, à 15 minutes de la gare centrale de Zurich (tram 7 ou 11), et à 5 minutes de l'aéroport de Zurich-Kloten où l'autobus de l'hôtel vous attendra. Si vous arrivez en voiture, un garage souterrain de 200 places est à votre disposition. Vous trouverez aussi dans cet établissement première classe de 700 lits, une agence Swissair, un service location-auto Hertz, le célèbre horloger - bijoutier Bucherer, des restaurants (Panorama Grill au 31e étage et le snack - bar Marmite), des bars et un night - club. Enfin, au sommet, la piscine et le sauna.

Vous pouvez adresser vos demandes de réservation à David Feldman S.A.

PAYMENT BY CREDIT CARD

Please contact us in advance if you wish to make payment by means of any of the following Credit Cards:
VISA, MASTERCARD, EUROCARD, AMERICAN EXPRESS and DINERS CLUB

David Feldman
February 17, 1999