

The Story of a Wayward Cover

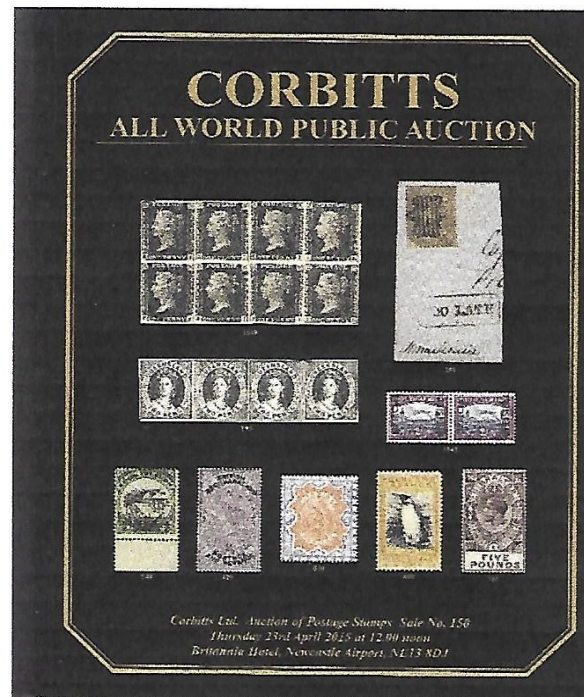
– GB to Canada, 2015

The cover on the right was sent by a company in Newcastle Upon Tyne, England to Calgary, Canada in March 2015. It contained a catalogue for Corbitts Auction of Postage Stamps scheduled for Thursday 23rd April 2015 at 12:00 noon.

While it is easy to dismiss this cover as a philatelic creation it tells an interesting story of modern Great Britain postal history which is the theme of this one frame exhibit.

Firstly, the cover did not reach the recipient in time to bid on the sale (Herdzik, 2016). The story of why the cover took so long to reach Canada is the subject of the first part of this exhibit.

Secondly, the cover bears a variety of valid postage stamps to cover the postage to Canada; the variety of stamps, their designs, denominations, shapes, colours and formats provide a look at historical and modern day events, social issues, and the postal services of Great Britain.



The glossy auction catalogue enclosed in the cover has the following dimensions:

Width: 8.25"(21cm)

Height 10.65" (27cm)

Thickness 0.5" (1.1cm)

Weight 1lb 12oz (800gms)

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THE ASHES ENGLAND WINNERS 2005



Mr Walter Herdzyk
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CANADA

URGENT DATED CATALOGUE

Stamps are identified on
pages by #'s below:

- #1 J.M.W. Turner (Painter), 1975, 4½P x 2
- #2 Pillar Box, 2002, E
- #3 Circus, 2002, E x2
- #4 England's Ashes Victory, 2005, MS
- #5 British Explorers, 2003, E
- #6 Classic Locomotives, 2004, E
- #7 Golden Jubilee, 2002, E
- #8 Christmas, 1975, 6½P
- #9 Christmas, 1976, 6½P
- #10 Magenta Machin, 1975, 2½P x 2
- #11 Magenta Machin Scotland, 1971, 2½P
- #12 Christmas, 1971, 2½P



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URGENT DATED CATALOGUE

Cover GB to Canada, March 2015

Damaged Cover

While the cover was still in the possession of the Royal Mail it became damaged. This was hardly surprising since the cover is extremely flimsy to carry such a heavy catalogue. A preliminary repair with transparent tape in the upper right was made after the stamps were cancelled. Subsequently, the Royal Mail placed the cover in a plastic bag and forwarded it with their 'sincere apologies'.

Our Sincere Apologies

We are very sorry that this item has reached you in this condition.

If anything is missing or the contents are damaged, you can report this to us by completing a 'Lost, Damaged and Delayed Inland Mail Report a Fault and Claim Form', available from any Post Office®, on line at www.royalmail.com, or by calling our Customer Service team on 08457 740 740 .

If your item was posted with another postal operator (who subsequently passed it to Royal Mail for final delivery), Royal Mail Customer Services may not be able to investigate your claim and may need to refer you to the sender of the item.

Further information about Royal Mail's service standards is available in our Mail Made Easy booklet available at any Post Office® or online at www.royalmail.com

Once again, please accept our apologies for any inconvenience caused.

Royal Mail Customer Services



WARNING
PLASTIC BAGS CAN BE DANGEROUS - TO AVOID
DANGER OF SUFFOCATION KEEP THIS WRAPPER
AWAY FROM BABIES AND CHILDREN

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Royal Mail Postal Rates

Royal Mail introduced a **Pricing in Proportion (PIP)** method to determine postal rates in 2006 these take into account maximum allowable dimensions and weight of item. Additional controls over price include destination, speed of delivery and any security requirements (Registered, Signed-for, additional insurance).

Five categories of PIP mail are used to determine rates: **Letters, Large Letters, Small Parcels, Medium Parcels and Large Parcels**. Royal Mail provides a *handy* 52 page guide to determine current postal rates.



Above, shows a cover from 2011 sent through the Greenford Windsor Mail Centre to Calgary, Canada with postage paid using 2 x 1st Large letter stamps and a 2nd Class stamp for a then total of £1.86 – apparently overpaying the £1.65 (20-40g) rate. (Ref. GBPS Postal Rates).

PIP was not introduced for International mail until 30th March 2015 – the week after the catalogue was mailed. It would have rated as a **‘Large Letter’ based on physical dimensions**. However, the **800 gram weight of the catalogue moved the rate into the ‘Small Parcel’ category**.

Air mail rate for a Small Parcel or Printed Papers weighing between 750 grams and 1 Kilogram to Canada between 31st March 2014 and 29th March 2015 was **£12.85** (Royal Mail, 2014). **This is the applicable rate for this item**.

Rate was confirmed with Corbitts, who also confirmed that catalogues for this auction were sent during the week of 23rd March 2015, **before rate increase of 30th March 2015 when rate would have increased to £12.95**.

E – Mail

Stamps #2, 3, 5, 6 and 7

Non-denominated stamps in Britain are called **No Value Indicated (NVI)**; domestic stamps were introduced for 1st and 2nd class mail in 1989. The validity of NVIs was extended to all international mail in 1995.



An NVI definitive stamp was issued to pay the **European minimum letter rate (<20 grams)** on 19th Jan, 1999. Stamp is designated with an **‘E’** and was priced at 30P. It remains in effect regardless of the actual postal rate (GBstamps.com, 1999). New issues of E stamps were priced at the then effective European postal rates. They were discontinued in 2004 but remain postally valid at the current European <20g rate:

From	To	European Rate (<20g.)	European <20g. Rate March 2015
1 st Nov 1993	24 th Oct 1999	30P	97P
25 th Oct 1999	26 th Apr 2000	34P	97P
27 th Apr 2000	1st Jul 2001	36P	97P
2 th Jul 2001	7 th May 2003	37P	97P
8 th May 2003	31 st Mar 2004	38P	97P

E-stamps were discontinued because customers thought the stamps had something to do with the *Euro*, which was not adopted in Britain.

This cover includes 7 ‘E’ stamps; six were issued when the European rate was 37P, while the locomotive stamp was issued in January 2004 when the price was 38P. **The face value of each ‘E’ stamp in March 2015 when this cover was sent would have been 97P – a total of £6.79 compared to a value on issue of £2.25.**

Postage Paid on this Cover

The postage for this cover to be sent to Canada is made up of 19 stamps of various denominations and designs.

4 x 2½P stamps = £0.10 (stamps #10, 11, 12)

2 x 4½P stamps = £0.09 (#1)

2 x 6½P stamps = £0.13 (#8 and 9)

7 x E stamps = £6.79 (#2, 3, 5, 6, 7)

(based on the value of £0.97 for an E stamp in March, 2015)

1 miniature sheet (#4) consisting of:

2 x 68P stamps = £1.36

2 x 1st stamps = £1.26

(based on the value of £0.63 for a 1st Class stamp in March, 2015)

Total Postage = £9.73

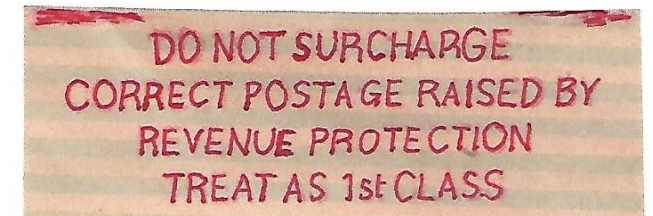
Corbitts confirmed the postal rate for this package should have been £12.85 so the cover has been underpaid by £3.12.



As inflation has impacted postal rates, higher value stamps were issued such as the £10 stamp (1993). Only stamp dealers have continued to use stamps while labels that could be printed to order are a much more efficient solution since they include the date, price, service type and posted location. The mundane labels (2006) were replaced by gold labels with the Machin head in 2009.

Revenue Protection

Royal Mail thought the cover was underpaid and forwarded it to the Revenue Protection Office (RPO) for review. The RPO cancelled each stamp with a circular hand-stamp 'REVENUE PROTECTION, DORSET, 27 MAR 2015' and applied a red hand stamp to the left of the cover (photocopies highlighted below):



1. Why would mail from Newcastle-Upon-Tyne in north-east England be sent to the RPO in Dorset, south-west England, when there are many RPO's around the country?

Corbitts (2016) advised that the catalogue was printed in Hampshire, responsibility for mailing was out-sourced locally so item was posted in southern England. (Dorset is just west of Hampshire).

2. If the cover was underpaid why did the RPO consider it to be fully paid?

Until 1995, outstanding postage and any fees were due from the recipient. Postage due stamps were applied and the recipient had to pay.



GROSPERRIN FASCE

32, rue du Collet

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FRANCE



Postage Due stamps 1914-1995

(1 Shilling = 5 New Pence)

After 1995, the Post Office held the item, billed the sender and only forwarded the item once outstanding charges had been paid. The hand stamp acknowledges that the postage on the envelope is short but indicates the correct amount has been collected and the item should not be assessed or delayed further.

Machin Definitives

Stamps #10 and #11

‘Machin’ refers to Arnold Machin, the sculptor of the Queen’s head that has been used on every British definitive stamp since 1967 (49 years and counting) with 100’s of billions of stamps produced, it is said to be the most copied portrait of any one person in the world.



40th Anniversary of the first Machin celebrated 5th June 2007 with a mini sheet showing Arnold Machin (1911-1999), including two £1 stamps and a facsimile of the original 4d stamp issued 5th June 1967. Note the 1st in the top corner of the stamp which would have cost 34P (equivalent to 81.6 old pence, the First Class postal rate having increased by 20.4 X in the intervening 40 years!

A pair of 2½P magenta Machins are included on this cover (#10). First issued on Decimalisation Day 15th February 1971 to pay the domestic Second Class rate. The original stamps had a single central phosphor band which enabled sorting machines to identify that the stamp was only valid for Second Class mail. The stamps on this cover have two side phosphor bands and were issued on 21st May 1975 to provide a makeup rate when the First class rate jumped from 4½P to 7P.



The oldest stamp on this cover is actually the 2½P Magenta single regional stamp (#11). This stamp bears the Scottish lion in the top left corner and was issued on 7th July 1971 along with similar stamps for use in Wales and Northern Ireland.

The Queen’s Head

Great Britain, as the first to issue stamps has had the privilege to print stamps without the country name. In lieu of the name it became tradition to incorporate the monarch’s head in the stamp design.

A previous page in this exhibit discusses the Machin head which has been used on definitives to identify the stamp since 1967. **The Machin head has never been used on British commemorative stamps.**

Early Queen Elizabeth II commemoratives incorporated the Wilding head, a three quarter face designed by Dorothy Wilding. Since the head was difficult to incorporate in many commemorative designs, David Gentleman designed a silhouette bust of the Queen based on the coinage which was first used in the Landscapes set of 1966.



Which way does the Queen face? By tradition, Britain’s coinage has alternated the direction the head (Queen Victoria faces left, Edward VII faces right, etc.). Stamps have never used this tradition and the head has faced left ever since the penny Black.

A review of the stamps on this cover shows ten stamps with the Queen facing left (#1, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12). Eight stamps with the Queen facing right (#2, 3, 4, 6) and one asterisk (#7 see next page). **When did the head change direction?**

The 1966 Battle of Hastings set has 7 stamps with the bust facing left while the 1/3d value faces right - the first stamp ever issued with this orientation.



The Queen's Head (2)

Stamp #7

The only commemorative stamps of Great Britain that do not have a silhouette of the Queen's head are those with the Queen as the subject and her image is readily visible. The 'E' stamp on this cover marking her Jubilee (50th year) is such an example. This stamp is also significant because it bears a sideways '50' watermark in the paper.



Every British stamp up to September 1967 was printed on watermarked paper. The 2002 Queen's Jubilee stamps are the only ones since that time to have been printed on watermarked paper.



The 40th Anniversary of Queen Elizabeth's succession in 1992 (above) is another example of the distinctive picture of the Queen not requiring a royal silhouette. A mini-sheet marking the 100th Birthday of the Queen Mother is an exception (below).



Halfpenny Postage

(Stamps #1, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12)

From 1st October 1870 to the beginning of WW2, certain mail services were available for a halfpenny (½d). ½d stamps continued to be used as make-up rates or for weight increments until 16th May 1965. The halfpenny ceased to be legal tender in 1969.



In old currency, £1 = 20 Shillings = 240 Pence (d). In decimal currency, introduced 15th February 1971, the shilling disappeared and £1 = 100 New Pence (P). The New Penny was too high a value for the lowest increment of currency so the ½P was introduced.



As inflation impacted postal rates in the 1970's and 80's the Royal Mail eased some of the pain by using increments in some of the postal rate increases. The most bizarre of which was the 20½P stamp which paid the International Surface rate ≤20 grams between 5th April 1983 and 2nd September 1984.



½P increments in postal rates ceased in September 1984 and the coin was demonetised in December 1984. ½P stamps were no longer required or valid, however higher value stamps with odd half penny values could still be used in pairs thus two 2½P stamps could be used to pay 5P worth of postage.

Postal innovation and development

Innovations, particularly during the Victorian era, allowed the efficiency and economic viability of the mail service to improve. Two such advances are illustrated on this cover.

Pillar boxes (#2)

These were first introduced on the Isle of Jersey in 1852 thanks to the influence of Anthony Trollope (Author). They were introduced in England in 1853. Pillar boxes along with pre-paid stamps allowed people to send letters at any time without having to go into the Post Office.



A 2002 set marked the 150th Anniversary of the First Pillar Box. A 1995 Christmas stamp has an unusual take on the same topic.

Trains (#6)

The first train dates back to 1825 when Stephenson's 'Rocket' began operation on the Stockton and Darlington Railway. The system evolved rapidly and played a huge part in the development of an efficient domestic postal system.



The 'E' stamp (#6) of the GCR 8K 2-8-0 is part of a five stamp set of Classic Locomotives issued in 2004.

'Traffic lights' (#2)

The term used for dots of colour printed in sheet margins. The colours correspond to the printed colours in the stamp design and are used by the printer to check colour quality and ensure no colours have been omitted. Traffic lights became more important in commemorative stamps as multiple colours were used in the printing process.

Stamp #5 was printed by the House of Questa, the company logo was a hot air balloon. The balloon logo has been used in lieu of the traffic light and shows the five colours (gold, black, magenta, greenish-yellow and new blue) used in the printing of the stamp.

Women on British Stamps

Stamp #5

A Queen's head has appeared on stamps for 71% of the years since stamps were first produced thanks to the longevity of Queen Victoria and Queen Elizabeth II. Excluding royalty, British women have lagged the men on commemorative stamps.

William Shakespeare, Winston Churchill, Joseph Lister, Robbie Burns, Francis Chichester, John Alcock, Arthur Brown and Gandi were all recognised on British stamps before **Florence Nightingale** became the first *identifiable* woman to be depicted on a stamp on the 150th Anniversary of her birth in 1970.



23 more men were depicted on stamps before **Jane Austen's Birth Bicentenary in 1975**. Five other female novelists were recognised in 1979-1980. In every case the stamps depicted characters from their work. It was not until **Vivian Leigh (1985)** and a set of **Famous Women (1996)** that women were recognisably depicted on stamps:



#5 is a pair of 'E' stamps from the **British Explorers set of 2003** illustrating **Freya Stark (1893-1993)**. She travelled extensively in the Middle East between 1927 and 1971 and authored a dozen books about her travels in the wilds of Afghanistan and Iran.

The Ashes, England Winners 2005

Mini Sheet (#4)

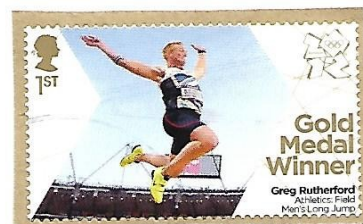
Cricket evolved in England and reflected British dominance in the Victorian era. Australia shocked England by winning a cricket match in London, 1882. A satirical obituary was published in the Sporting Times, that stated that English cricket had died, and "the body will be cremated and the ashes taken to Australia". Tests between England and Australia since that time have come to be known as contests for 'the Ashes'. In the summer of 2005, Australia visited England for a five test match series won by England.

#4 was issued on 6th October 2005 to commemorate the victory. The stamps are significant because they are the first British stamps to show identifiable living people (other than royalty) on stamps.

Prior to these stamps, events were illustrated using deceased people (Football legends) or stylised like the 1966 Football World Cup.



By the 2012 London Olympics each of the British Gold Medal winners in both the Olympics (29) and the Paralympics (34) got their own stamps with their names and pictures on them. A staggering total of 63 different 1st Class stamps!



Christmas Stamps and Old Masters

Christmas Stamps #8, 9, and 11

The first Christmas stamp was issued by Canada in 1898.



Great Britain issued their first Christmas stamp 68 years later with two stamps designed by children. The 3d rate covered the domestic rate for unsealed mail ≤2 ounces, this rate would have applied to most Christmas cards. The 1/6d stamp covered the Air Mail rate to Zone B (including Canada).



Since that time, Christmas stamps have been issued every year. Stamps from three different years are on the cover: 1971 (stamp #11), 1975 (#8), and 1976 (#9).

Old Masters Stamp #1

Famous paintings on commemorative stamps have been a very successful way for countries to demonstrate the talent of their countrymen and attract new collectors to the hobby.



J.M.W. Turner (1775 – 1851) is regarded as Britain's pre-eminent landscape painter of the early 19th Century. In 1975, the Bicentennial of his birth, he was the first British artist to have a complete set of 4 stamps issued. Pair of 4½P stamps showing his painting 'Peace - Burial at Sea' are included on the cover.