



Issue No:
June - 2

EDITORIAL

It seems hard to believe that another 'collecting season' is behind us. You may be one of those who are active throughout the year but certainly for my part I do like to try and get out more in the summer months, enjoy our beaches, the cricket field, see a little more of our planet and take advantage of whatever good weather the summer may bring to us if only to give my front door a coat of paint!

The 'season' closed with the London 2010 International Show and our own AGM at which I was pleased to see so many old faces and meet some ones. Particularly, I must thank those who showed their appreciation of our Journal.

Next, some good news. John Lennon has kindly agreed to take over as co-ordinator for the 'Beyond the Catalogues' series in succession to Graeme Murray whose work commitments preclude his continuing. You will find John's first contribution, this on the 1934 GAA stamp, on pages 46 to 48. He will welcome all the information you can give him his next project - the 1937 US Constitution issue. John is reached by email at johnglennon@eircom.net. I would urge you, please, to support him with whatever information you have on this issue that is 'beyond what is to be found in the catalogues'.

I am not sure how many of you got to the London Show in May (The Festival of Stamps to give it its full title). Living as I do in the Philatelic Desert of Guernsey, I was amazed by the sheer quality of many of the exhibits and the scale of the specialisation of many of the exhibitors. It is only right that I add my congratulations to our member Des Quail on his Gold Medal, rightly awarded for a display of Irish Postal History which may well have never previously been matched and which will be hard, very hard, for the collectors of tomorrow to equal.

I was sad that Des's display was the only Irish home-based display to have been accepted, although there was one other contribution of Irish material, this from UK based Joanna Williamson with a specialised look at the three map stamps of the first definitive set. The lack of Irish material was a disappointment, in that, along with what I felt to be a general under-representation of British material, there was perhaps too little to encourage the 'home countries' audience. The show was, of course, an 'International' and is targeted at a worldwide audience but for myself, I did find the Gulf area somewhat over-represented and the need for two exhibits of mail from the Chaco War of the 1930's was surprising, this being a highly specialised subject which is surely unknown to 99% of collectors. Sadly, much of the lighting was dreadful. That said, it is wrong to speak ill of the organisers and the many helpers, including our own committee member Peter Wood, who collectively must have voluntarily spent many thousands of hours providing a fantastic exhibition of the highest quality material that one could hope to see. Well done to all involved.

Looking ahead, I shall need contributions from you for our next issue in September (and beyond). As ever all contributions will be gratefully received for the cupboard is all but bare at present.

Thus ends another 'season'. I hope you have found some useful new items last year and after a summer break will feel stimulated to search pastures new in the autumn. Please enjoy the summer and I suspect I shall next see many of you at Stampa in Dublin in October (15th to 17th), an event I always look forward to – why not make a note of the dates now?

Stan - 24 May 2010

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POST & GO MACHINES AT BELFAST - Brian Warren



Belfast Machine 1 : 017704 -1



Belfast Machine 2 : 017704 - 2

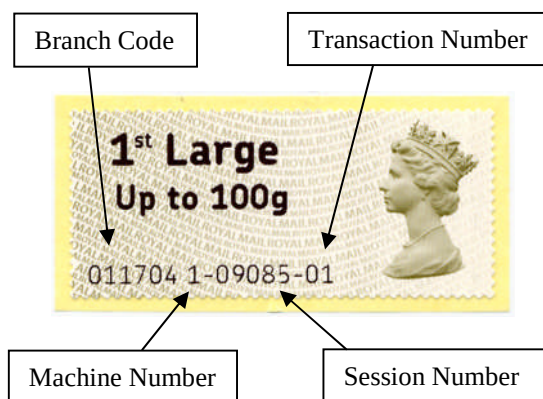
Regular readers of my TWTYTW supplements will be aware that I have taken great interest in the new stamp vending machines introduced by An Post at various locations throughout Ireland. However, as I collect Irish stamps on an all Island basis, I have also started to collect the stamps produced from the equivalent UK machines based in Northern Ireland. Most of the An Post machines have been installed at locations where people regularly congregate, i.e. shopping centres, hospitals and airports. The UK has yet to use them at such locations. Instead most machines have been installed at post offices with only one Northern Ireland location to date at the main office in Bridge Street, Belfast.

The first UK machines were installed on 8 October 2008 in Bristol. Two machines were installed inside the Belfast office on 15 October 2008. I include above photographs of the two machines taken in April 2009. At the time, the machines were positioned back-to-back and the postbox was not in use. During a more recent visit in March 2010, the machines are now repositioned side by side and the postbox is now in use.

In the UK they are known as "Post & Go" machines and like the ROI machines they are distributed and installed by the German firm Wincor Nixdorf ¹. The ProPostal 2000 machines are manufactured by the Portuguese firm NewVision ². They accept all coins, notes (£5 and £10) and major credit/debit cards (minimum card transaction £2).

The UK machines differ in that they vend two distinct and very different self-adhesive labels. The first type of postage label is known as a "faststamp"

and incorporates a preprinted Machin portrait of the Queen plus a repeated Royal Mail underprint all printed in gravure by Walsall. The various number references printed by the machine on each label are illustrated and explained below. It will be noted that unlike the ROI labels there is no printing date included.



Branch Code

- Code of the branch where the label was printed. 011704 is for Bridge St. P.O. Belfast.

Machine Number

- Belfast has two machines. Currently the left hand machine is number "1" and the right hand machine "2". Referred to as a "kiosk" on receipts (see next page).

Session Number

- From the point where a customer starts a series of transactions to the point where the various labels in the "basket" are paid for is called a session.

Transaction Number

- The number of the transaction within the overall "Session" – the maximum is 99.

¹ see http://www.wincor-nixdorf.com/internet/site_EN/EN/Products/Hardware/PostalSystems/postalsystems_node.html

² see http://www.cotecportugal.pt/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=232&lang=en



Strip of five labels showing all faststamp rates purchased from Belfast machine 1 - note transaction numbers 01 to 05.

As the 'Faststamps' have two pre-printed phosphor bands, they are only available in 1st Class and Overseas variants. The labels measure 50mm x 24mm and are perforated on all four sides. There are four pre-set values available for purchase – 1st Class, 1st Class Large, Europe (all three for the first weight step) and Worldwide (i.e. outside Europe) up to 20g (the second weight step). A fifth value for Worldwide up to 10g (first weight step) is also available but this can only be obtained by using the "post an item" function on the machine.

In practice, this means that anybody posting a letter for a destination outside of Europe weighing less than 10g will probably unnecessarily purchase a stamp to cover the 20g rate given that this is the default choice. It was only on my second visit to the Belfast machine that even a seasoned user of such machines like me realised how to purchase this fifth faststamp label. I knew it was available from illustrations seen in the various British philatelic publications.



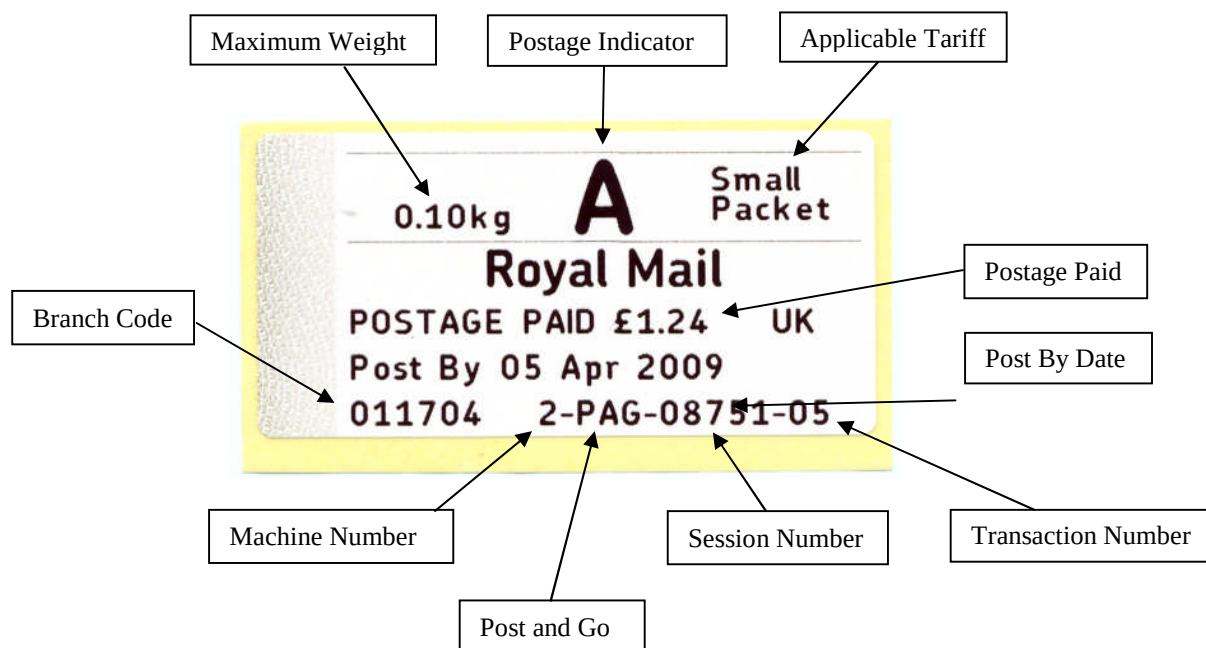
Pair of labels purchased from Belfast machine 2.

The maximum number of stamps available in a single strip is 5. If for example you purchase 7 stamps then the labels will be issued in 2 strips i.e. strip of 5 + strip of 2 (like the ROI machines). The faststamps can be used at any time and, as they show the service instead of the monetary rate, they have an indefinite period of use.



Matching receipt from machine 1 for strip of five faststamps.

You can opt to obtain a receipt which is smaller than the type dispensed by the An Post machines. Unlike the ROI machines, the receipts include the actual location address. Note "Post Office Ltd." appears on the receipt below a blank space at the top of the label. This is the Royal Mail subsidiary which operates all UK post offices. The blank space may have been a printing error as receipts from machine 2 had the Post Office oval logo printed on the top of the receipt (not illustrated).



The second larger type of label (82mm x 40mm) is for items to be posted 'immediately' - they have a 'Post By' date on them indicating their validity. Full details of all the information printed on the label is given below. "Branch Code", "Machine Number", "Session Number" and "Transaction Number" have already been referred to above.

Weight

- Maximum weight for rate paid.

Postage Indicators – Inland Rates

- 2L - 2nd class letter
- 2LL - 2nd Class large Letter
- 1LL - 1st Class Large Letter
- 1PK - 1st Class Packet
- 2PK - 2nd Class Packet

Postage Indicators – Overseas

- A – Airmail

Applicable Tariffs for Overseas Rates

- Small Packet
- Printed Papers

As "Letter" is considered the standard tariff the space is left blank for this rate.

Postage Paid

- Amount of postage paid in £ and p.

Post by Date

- Date of purchase plus 1 day.

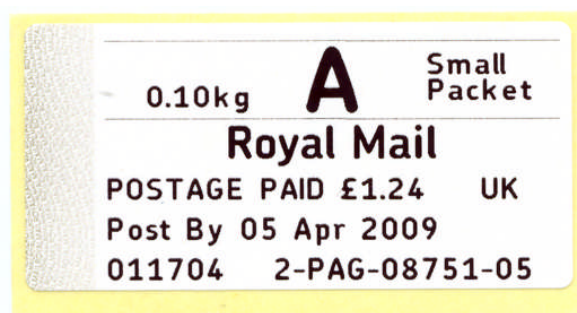
As the stamps do not incorporate any phosphor they are not recognised by the mail processing equipment and normally pass through the post uncanceled. In the absence of a postmark, the "Post By" date is included to deter re-use.

PAG

- This signifies that the label has been printed and issued by a "Post & Go" machine.

As can be seen from the foregoing listing there are a total of five inland and three overseas labels. There is no 1L label as all letters over the initial 100g weight step are classified as 1LL (Large Letters). All multiple transactions for "weigh and pay" labels will print out each one as an individual label. You cannot obtain these labels in multiple strips.

The Airmail indicator and Applicable Tariff information for the Overseas Rates do not differentiate between Europe and Worldwide although the rates differ. Royal Mail still offer a cheaper surface service for letters, printed papers and small packets sent to destinations outside of Europe, but there is no facility on the "Post & Go" machines to print labels for these surface rates.



Type 1 label for European airmail small packet rate purchased on 4 April 2009 from machine 2.

The initial type 1 label had rounded corners with no perforations and a continuous Royal Mail vertical strip at left. On my first visit on 4 April 2009, machine 2 was still issuing type 1 labels.



Type 2 label for Inland 2nd class letter rate purchased on 4 April 2009 from machine 1. Second class values (letter, large letter or packet) can only be obtained using the "weigh and pay" function.

As part of an overall programme of alignment of the various counter and machine postage labels produced for use in Royal Mail's postal systems, the Post & Go machines commenced to dispense partly perforated labels in 2009. All Post & Go sites migrated across to these new labels once the existing rolls were used up. It is believed that the first site to use these labels was Clapham Common in early February 2009. I do not know when the changeover occurred in Belfast but by the time of my visit on 4 April 2009, machine 1 was using the new label. This second type of label has square corners and is perforated top and bottom.

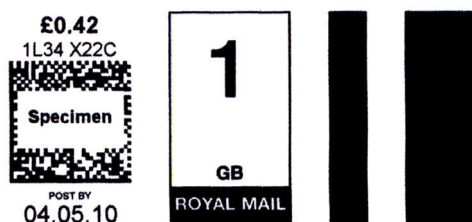


Type 2 label for 1st class large letter rate (second weight step 101g to 250g) purchased on 25 April 2009 from machine 2.

By the time of my second visit three weeks later, machine 2 had also changed over to the perforated label type. In order to obtain a "weigh and pay" type label for either a 1st class large letter (1LL) or an Airmail letter (A) you must ensure that you place a weight above 100g (1LL) or 20g (A) on the scales i.e. in excess of the relevant first weight step otherwise the machine will dispense a faststamp label for the first weight step. Again it was only on my second visit that I twigged on how to print labels for these two rates.

In a further quest towards a unified set of labels and to aid operational processing, Post & Go machines started to be upgraded to print labels that conform to the existing 'SmartStamp' and online postage format from 30 June 2009.

Royal Mail launched 'SmartStamps' on 15 January 2004. Currently for a fee of £4.99 per month or £49.99 per year (in addition to the postage cost), UK subscribers can use a personal computer to print postage on their own envelopes or labels from the comfort of their own home or office.



Specimen SmartStamp from initial trial software



Current SmartStamp – 1st Class – 2nd weight step

The system prints the value and a service indicator, a code number, and the date by which the item must be posted. This is known as a 2D barcode. You can personalise your envelope with your logo or other message. I illustrate both a trial specimen and current example.



Type 3 label for 2nd class packet (initial weight step to 100g).

The third type of Post & Go label matches the SmartStamp format and like type 2 is perforated top and bottom. Derby was the first office to use the new type of label. I'm unaware when they were introduced in Belfast as it was not until 27 March 2010 that I next used Belfast machine 2. Machine 1 was out of order on that day. On enquiry, I was informed that the technician to service the kiosks comes from Britain and, as a result, machines can be out of order for up to a week at a time. This type of label also exists with rounded corners but I have not seen any examples from the Belfast machines. The receipt for the above postage label is shown on the next page. As can be seen, the receipt now includes

a sub-total and refers to the VAT amount which is always "nil". All receipts seen on this visit incorporated the oval Post Office logo.



New format receipt which incorporates Post Office logo. Note the reference to VAT!

The machine still generates the same set of five faststamps and eight type 3 "weigh and pay" labels. Since 6 April 2009, the same tariffs apply for both overseas printed papers and small packets but the software/labels have not been altered to combine the two services.

Used Examples



Cover sent from Belfast to Dartford with partial Belfast IMP slogan of 25 April

I have attempted to obtain genuine used examples of the faststamps but to date any examples posted on cover from Belfast have usually failed to obtain a postmark. Most covers go through the IMP sorting machinery and bear the usual orange coloured tag indent but no postmark. My sole example of a partly cancelled stamp is shown above.



Cover sent from Belfast to Dublin on 27 March 2010 with a "Royal Mail Northern Ireland" cancel. The then current European rate of 56p is made-up of 26p in stamps plus a 30p "weigh and pay" label.

As stated earlier, the "weigh and pay" labels are normally not cancelled due to their limited validity and absence of phosphor. However, by adding additional stamps to make-up a higher rate, you can sometimes obtain a postmark on the cover as illustrated.

Possible Type 2 Label Variation

A report in Stamp Magazine in October 2009 stated that just prior to the changeover to the SmartStamp format in June 2009, a smaller typeface was in use for a few days on type 2 "weigh and pay" labels. I'm not sure if this variation affected the Belfast machines. Has anybody seen such a label with 011704 office designation?

Previous Experiments

This is not the first use of automatic "Post & Go" machines in Belfast. In 2007, Royal Mail piloted three types of machines at a number of UK post offices. Belfast received two Fujitsu machines, the first of which was installed on 13 February 2007. As far as I can ascertain, there was only a "weigh and pay" option and it was limited to inland 1st and 2nd class letters and packets. I have never seen examples of the types of "stamps" produced and I'm not aware for how long they operated or if the machines printed a receipt. If any member can enlighten me, I would be pleased to hear from them.

Acknowledgments

The photographs of the two Belfast machines were supplied by Michael McNamara. Details of the various types of labels and general information about the introduction of "Post & Go" machines was obtained from a website "Postal Labels of the UK" which is maintained by Brian Sinnott (<http://postagelabelsuk.com/?p=367>). Further information was provided by Ian Billings of Norvic Philatelics and Vinay Patel.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

Your March 2010 editorial is music to the ears of those, such as myself, who are computer illiterate through age or indifference. Thus I feel constrained to urge you to read (in hard copy as you advocate) Journal 1975 No 2 at page 46 – Fr John Brennan's account of a talk (tape recorded) by Dr Stafford Johnson to the IPC AGM at which I was present, as an enlightening postscript to Héloïse Mitchell's interesting short biography.

To give but a taste of an unforgettable event, the Doctor showed his two Dockra covers – explained that he and a friend had manufactured the typewritten 1922 overprints – cast doubt on all inverted overprints except the ½d and 2d – explained how and why and by whom the 'missing accents' were officially inserted.

Fr Noonan's delightful reminiscences. I had the great pleasure of meeting him once or twice at Stampa or AGMs in the early 1970s. My recollection is that he was interested in ephemera connected to the Troubles and having visited a Sinn Féin stall in a market off St Stephen's Green he also tried (unsuccessfully) to gain entrance to the offices of Sinn Féin to acquire philatelically connected publicity items. The next day he was surprised to be interviewed about his intentions by the Irish Special Branch. Philatelists are fearless in the pursuit of their hobby!

Yours sincerely

Patrick Williams
Birkenhead
Cheshire

PS. I recall Andy Ballard at Royale and visiting him with Cyril (Dulin).

Editor's Note: A lovely story and it was with some trepidation that I let Fr Noonan have an advance copy of Patrick Williams's letter asking for his comment. There follows below his charming e-mail response:-

*Dear Editor,
Delighted to hear that some members found something of interest in the article. I was amused in the recollections of my 'brush' with the IRA. What actually happened was this; at the time the Provisional IRA had overprinted a number of English stamps for use in Northern*

Ireland. I decided that I would try to get some of these stamps and since I didn't know where else to get them, I decided to visit the Provisional IRA Headquarters in Kevin St. Dublin. Their offices were on one of the top stories of the house, and the IRA man in the office was a bit surprised when a priest walked in the door. However, he sold me some of the stamps and I went away happy with my purchase. A few days later a Garda friend of mine in Carlow told me that the Garda Headquarters had my photo. When I expressed surprise, he told me that the IRA headquarters were under surveillance at all times and that all who entered were photographed and investigated. It was then that he admitted that inquiries had been made among my acquaintances as to whether I had "Republican tendencies". This amused me, until I realised that at the time, on my desk, was the "History of the IRA", by Tim Pat Coogan, which I was reading about this time. Luckily the Gardai hadn't called to my office. I would have found it hard to explain my 'tendencies'. My sole interest was in getting the stamps. I have no objections to you publishing the letter you mentioned, even if the 'facts' are slightly different. I find it amusing still.

Sincere good wishes and many thanks for doing such a good job with 'Irish Philately'. I have most of the early editions of the Irish Philately and also of The Irish Philatelic Circle magazine, the forerunner of Irish Philately and I am considering dumping them. I presume that no-one would be interested in them, now that they are being republished on DVD. They are very bulky and take up a lot of space. I also have a copy, and some pages from 'Green Isle Philately'. Shanahan's publication when they were holding those auctions with Dr. Singer. Would anyone like to have them? Sincerely, M.Noonan, Portarlinton, Co Laoise.

A FAVOURITE ITEM – Florence McCarthy

CROOKHAVEN WIRELESS STATION



Crookhaven is a small village about 3 miles from the Mizen Head in Co Cork, which is the most southwesterly point of Ireland. The Post Office in Crookhaven (known locally as 'Crook') opened in 1833 but sadly closed in November 2007. It was a sub office of Skibbereen some 30 miles away to the east.

In 1900 Guglielmo Marconi visited the Mizen Head area to try and establish a site for his first Radio Signal Station. He had been working in England in 1896 and was granted a Patent there in 1897 for a system of Telegraphy using Hertzian Waves. He had successfully transmitted a signal from the Isle of Wight to Bournemouth across The Solent. However his major ambition was to try and transmit a signal across the Atlantic Ocean.

A mast was erected in Crookhaven in 1900 and the Telegraph Station was established there in 1902.



In 1904 the Telegraph Station was moved to nearby Brow Head. By September 1909 British post office Marine Radio Communications Service had been established and the stations were taken over from the Marconi Company and Lloyds Shipping Company.

Up until it closed in 1914 it was the main means of communication between both cargo and passenger ships and their owners. There were six operators working in pairs for shifts of eight hours at a time giving 24 hour cover. When the station closed the service was moved to the telegraph station at Valentia Island, Co. Kerry, where the service continued until 1966.

I was delighted to find this Post Card of The Wireless Telegraph Station at a postcard fair in Sussex a few years ago. It is the only one I have ever seen. If any other member of the Circle has another postcard of the Station I would be delighted to receive a photocopy. The reason why it is such a favourite item is that I was born and reared less than 15 miles from Crookhaven and heard many stories about it from both my parents and grandparents. I am sure it was a place of great wonder and interest to the local population at the time.

This post card was posted in Crookhaven in December 1912 to Hailsham in Sussex. The sender was a (Mr) R.J. Smith who is actually listed as being a Telegraph Operator at the Station in Guys Postal Directory of 1912. I feel very lucky to have found this card hence it is My Favourite Postal Item.

The card shows, respectively, Wireless Mast, Power Station Switchboard, Wireless Station Engine Radio, Wireless Tower and Brow Head.

THE MYSTERY OF THE FIRST ARAN ISLANDS HANDSTAMP

David MacDonnell and Nigel Aldwell

The Aran Islands are situated in the mouth of Galway Bay in the Atlantic Ocean, about 30 miles from Galway City by boat. There are three main islands, Inishmore (to the west), Inishmaan (in the middle) and Inishere (to the east).

These islands have been inhabited since antiquity and in the third century AD were part of the lands of the King of Thomond. The islands became independent from all Irish kingdoms in 546 AD and were a haven for monastic orders, Inishmore being known as "Arran of the Saints". In 1587, the English Crown asserted a right to the islands and the islands were reinforced with various armed garrisons to protect Galway Bay from pirates and coast plunderers.

No postal service existed in the early 1800s between the island and the mainland, letters having to be brought to Galway by boat and put into the mails there. In 1853, the inhabitants petitioned the Postmaster General asking that a twice weekly post be established to Galway for the use of the 3,000 inhabitants, saying that such communication could be established for about £35 per annum. It was suggested that as the islands had a coastguard station, a lighthouse and a constabulary station, the inhabitants were put to great inconvenience by the lack of regular postal contact with the mainland. The Post Office calculated that postal traffic of about 45 letters a week would be too insignificant to provide a regular mailboat service and refused the petition.

However, Hendy (*The Postmarks of the British Isles from 1840: pub c1906*) RECORDS THAT THE Post Office relented in 1858 and established a regular service based on the boat owners receiving a gratuity of a halfpenny per letter carried and a Post Office Receiving House was established on the main island. Hendy reproduced an illustration of the undated circular postmark issued to Arran (Inishmore) – fig 1.

As Hendy was a Post Office official and was writing from sources within the official records it had been assumed in the past that his illustration was correct. Bill Kane records the same handstamp, Kane type 4E (*Undated Handstamps of Ireland 1823-1860: pub FAI 1986*) but as he does not give a date of use, he has probably just copied Hendy's record.

We now illustrate an example of a different undated circular postmark of the Aran Islands, letter ARRAN ISLAND (fig 2). This is Kane type 4C and is not recorded by Hendy or Kane. It is struck on

the face of a cover sent from Aran to Colombo, Ceylon prepaid 6d by six penny red plate 80, for the single letter rate by the Southampton Packet. The stamps have been cancelled by the diamond numeral obliterator <232> of Galway when the letter reached that office as the Post office on Aran had not been supplied with an obliterator of its own. The cover (fig 3) is dated in transit with the Galway cds for September 18 1866 and arrived in Colombo on October 22 1866.



fig 1



fig 2



fig 3

As it appears that no one has been able to report a sighting of the original Hendy ARRAN ISLAND/GALWAY (Kane type 4E) we are unable to say whether it was ever delivered to Aran or put into use. Until we can find a proving example, the cover illustrated at fig 3 with the ARRAN ISLAND (Kane type 4C) remains the earliest recorded item of mail posted through the Post Office on the islands.

The editor would welcome hearing from any reader who can shed light on this elusive early marking. It may be the case that more examples exist in collections but have not been recognised due to the illegibility of a poor strike of the handstamp.

Editor's note: The earliest Arran Island postmark your editor has seen is dated 1883, this being very similar to fig 2 above but dated. The office was renamed Kilronan in October 1901. Meanwhile, an office had been opened on Inishere in 1882 and that at Inishmore was opened on 1 January 1901.

SOME NOTES ON SKELETON POSTMARKS - Editor

This issue sees on page 40 a listing of the known skeleton postmarks of County Antrim which has been prepared by Jim Rankin and whose book on the postmarks of that county received a silver medal at Stampa last October.

I have looked at back issues to see what had been written in Irish Philately (IP) in the past on the subject of skeleton postmarks and it was to my surprise that I can find no article since Jim Howley, for many years the recognised expert on the subject, did an update for the December 1990 issue – all but 20 years ago. Other articles and listings in IP on the subject appeared between 1979 and 1987. So far as I can trace, no listing of skeletons of any county in Northern Ireland has previously appeared in our pages. Our membership changes as the years roll by and I would suggest that it is time for an update as new information will have come to hand in the intervening years.

For the benefit of our newer members, a few words as to the nature and uses of skeleton postmarks are appropriate (and I must confess that in writing this article I have leant very heavily on parts of an article written by Jim Howley for the September 1986 edition of IP).

A 'Skeleton' is a temporary handstruck postmark that is made up by inserting individual letters into slots provided around its outer frame. The format of a blank skeleton (with time/date left in situ) is shown at fig 1. Inside that outer frame there are additional slots for the date to be inserted (as in any other conventional postmark) and in some earlier versions, also for the 'number' of the postmark. Fig 2 shows a 'numbered' skeleton (1) used at Limavady in 1899. The number of rows for time and date varies. Three is 'normal' but there are many exceptions (note figs 3 and 4) and as often one or more rows are not used (note fig **) it would be wrong to try to determine differences or sub-types based on what you see inserted in the centre of the datestamp.



fig 1



fig 2

Skeletons, sometimes known as 'travellers' or 'travelling postmarks', are designed to move from

office to office as needed, and are generally made of steel but 'Rubber Skeletons' are also known, these being considerably scarcer and are discussed later in this article.

Skeletons are intended to be short lived 'emergency' use and in consequence examples are relatively hard to find. The period of maximum use was from the mid 1890s into the 1930s. Most of those that members are likely to find will date from the early days of the 20th century through the years of the Troubles into the 1930s, the need for such use frequently arising as a result of the need to replace or recut poor quality steel postmarks, although thefts undoubtedly also played their part. More recently, typically, in the years to c2000 when almost all individual sub offices were cancelling their own originating mail, perhaps just two or three of Ireland's c1600 offices would be using a skeleton at any moment in time. It is believed that use has now ceased following the consolidation of mail into the mail centres at Dublin, Cork, Port Laoise and Athlone. My own latest dates are December 1999 but others will surely have later examples.

Skeletons can be identified by their even widely spaced lettering, size and style of typeface. Some times a standard issue steel handstamp is wrongly identified as a skeleton. That particularly applies to the c27mm diameter postmarks employed in the period from c1895 to c1920. Look hard at the spacing, the wear and spacing of the letters and the size of the postmark. A little practice should make one perfect!

The reasons for the use of skeletons are several and include:-

- On the opening of a new office (until the 'proper' postmark arrives)
- The 'normal' postmark is broken or has been stolen (until a new one is supplied)
- The office is particularly busy for a short period (at Christmas or for a special event)
- The office is only temporary (such as at a Convention)

Certainly originally, skeletons appear to have been issued from a central pool, presumably maintained at Dublin Stores. My argument for this is that examples of the same numbered skeletons are found used at a variety of offices in different parts of the country and one must assume that the postmark was returned to Central Stores in between periods of use rather than being retained at a local Head Office, as might have been expected.



figs 3 and 4

Figs 3 and 4 show skeleton 18 used at Mallow in September 1904 and then at Downpatrick in August 1905. One must assume that this is the same datestamp with the office name changed. In later years, it may have been the practice for the larger Head Offices to maintain one or more skeleton in reserve.

That brings me to the question of what an office did when they needed a postmark in a hurry. Perhaps a few of the appallingly poor and illegible postmarks sometimes found are examples of datestamps which have lost their handles or have otherwise become damaged but remain in use waiting for the skeleton to arrive? Most Head Offices would surely have had a spare postmark that could have been sent to a sub office for a day or so pending receipt of a skeleton. Perhaps members have come across examples of this happening in practise?

The period of use for individual skeletons has varied enormously. A typical period is perhaps 4 to 6 weeks but use for a week or even less is known. Short duration postmarks are particularly hard to document in that one will need examples of the 'old' postmark, the skeleton and the replacement to be found over a short period and it would also be necessary to satisfy oneself that the office only employed one postmark at any one time. This was the case at the vast majority of rural offices but amazingly at a number of the smaller head offices, certainly until the late 1930s, there would have only been no more than three circular datestamps, one showing time in the sorting office and one or two used on the counter. Other skeletons remained in use for a year or more, presumably because the order for the replacement got lost somewhere in the system. A good example of this can be found at Tubbercurry, Co Sligo when a skeleton was in continuous use from June 1944 to March 1945. (correct spelling is Tobar an Coire Co Sligigh). In this particular case several of the individual letters must have fallen out of the slots provided during the period of use and were wrongly reinserted (figs 5 and 6). Such errors of nomenclature are by no means rare and a further well documented example is the mark in use at Clara, Co Offaly which reads Coilrtheahc in place of Cloirtheach amongst other variations. This mark was in use from January 1978

to November 1981 – a remarkably long period of use for a skeleton postmark. (fig 7).



fig 5



fig 6

In a few cases, without the benefit of additional information, it is all but impossible to identify the office of use – fig 8 shows such use at Newtowncunningham, Co Donegal in August 1984, the location being proven by the same mark having been seen on a postcard with the sender's address on the reverse.



fig 7

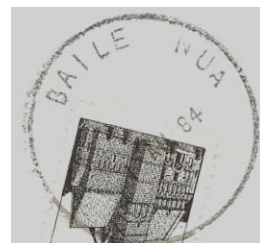


fig 8

The earliest skeletons are known in England from before 1840, an example being shown in fig 9 (illustration courtesy of The Postmarks of Great Britain and Ireland – Alcock and Holland pub c1940). The author has also seen reference to a similar mark being used at Frenchpark, Co Roscommon with a Maltese cross at the base in place of the '2'. Whether this type was used elsewhere in Ireland is not known.

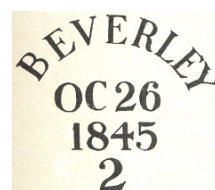


fig 9

The above series apart, four basic types of Steel Skeleton postmarks have been used in Ireland, which I will refer to types SK1 to SK4.

Type **SK1**, (fig 10) known from c1849, is relatively scarce and normally found on the backs of envelopes, examples cancelling a stamp being exceedingly rare. Diameter is generally c35mm; lettering is large and well spaced. At least one example has been found with a large number added (fig 11) and the letter 'A' at the base. The number is presumably the number of the postmark and the 'A' may mean 'Afternoon' but more examples are

needed to have any certainty. Interestingly, James Mackay shows in his book 'The Postmarks of England and Wales' a similar example from Richmond (Yorks) with a large 7 in similar type and size suggesting perhaps there was one series covering the whole British Isles and that these marks originated in England. In all examples seen, this type has two lines for date and year.



fig 10



fig 11

SK2, the double rimmed skeleton, is a type believed not to have been employed elsewhere in Britain and dates from the late 1870s. Early examples (pre 1895) are hard to find and were smaller (c27/25mm – 27mm outer rim; 25mm inner rim). Initially the rims were about 2mm apart but later the gap reduced to 1mm or less, the postmarks themselves becoming larger, 31mm to 35mm outer rim being the norm. An early example is shown at fig 12 – what the 'O' at the base indicates is unknown.



fig 12

This is a common type and the majority of skeletons found in the years to c1910 are of this. They continued in use long after the establishment of the Free State Post Office in 1922 with residual use in the early 1950s being known by which time the outer frames had become very worn. Examples are shown at figs 13 and 14 and can be found in both English and Irish. It will be noted that some show clock time.



fig 13



fig 14

Occasionally the gap between the two rims became clogged with a combination of wear of accumulated ink/ fluff etc and one could be fooled into thinking that one had found a new 'broad rim' type. I believe this not to be the case and show an example of what I believe to be a 'clogged' mark at fig 15.



fig 15

Whilst a few examples inscribed in Irish are known from 1922-23 examples with the town name in English are found up to the late 1920s. These are not cases of an old postmark being reused; there is no doubt new skeleton postmarks were sent out inscribed in English up to at least 1928. Fig 16 shows an example of use at Athy, Co Kildare which has been seen used in December 1927 and January 1928. From May to July 1928 Athy was using a type SK3 skeleton inscribed in Irish. This town has made substantial use of skeletons over the years – I have 9 different in my collection between 1901 and 1937 with further examples in 1966 and 1979 – enough for an article on their own! Other offices have been equally as heavy users.

Sometimes the name of the post town or head office is shown at the base but this is not the case in respect of marks from larger offices. However, an unusual variant is found at Galway in 1933, showing both town and county name 'Gaillimh/ Co na Gaillimhe'. (fig 17)



fig 16



fig 17

SK3, the single rimmed skeleton is found from the late Victorian period but is relatively scarce before c1905 when it appeared to become 'standard issue' for all new skeleton marks. This type has larger letters and size ranges from 31mm to about 37mm with c33mm being the norm. Found both inscribed in English (to about 1927) and Irish, examples are

particularly common from the 1930s. Some show time and date, others date only, the date being found both in one line and in two. Late use is known into the 1950s. (figs 18 and 19). This type was the forerunner of type SK4 and the last 'new issues' appear to have taken place c1936.



fig 18



fig 19

SK4, with smaller lettering, was first introduced by the British Post Office, possibly as early as 1922, it being a type that is known use in England from c1919. An early example used in Northern Ireland in 1928 at Enniskillen is shown at fig 20. Use is known in the Free State from c1938 and from c1952 was the standard type for all new issues. Diameter is a standard 30 to 31mm and in all earlier examples originally the date is all on one line. The basic frames may well have been supplied by the British Post Office as supplies of type SK2 and SK3 were gradually exhausted. An example of early use south of the border is shown at fig 21 (this from Rathmore in Co Kerry) whilst fig 22 shows use at a Dublin sub office, Morehampton Road, in 1986. It was originally the custom for the month to be shown in Roman numerals but from the 1980s, possibly earlier, the abbreviation reverted to English in some examples. With a long period of use the type is common although most were in use for short periods.



fig 20



fig 21



fig 22

Surprisingly a handful of examples have appeared in English from time to time from offices as diverse as

Blanchardstown, Co Dublin (fig 23) and Kildysart, Co Clare. These were clearly made up in error and form interesting discoveries for the collector. The Blanchardstown error was in use from April 1972 to May 1973, this office also using a skeleton inscribed in Irish, Baile Bhlainseir BAC/ X from 1980 to 1982, both uses both long by normal standards.



fig 23



fig 24

A handful of skeletons remained in use certainly to c2000 and perhaps may still be found in occasional counter use following breakages or robbery. My own latest examples are all dated December 1999, these from Abbyfeale (Mainistir na Feile), Croom (in English – fig 24) and one that is a complete mystery to me, apparently reading BAIL EIMH (this part inverted) AN DAIN – your explanations requested! Copies of any examples seen after 2000 would also be appreciated.

The existence of 'Rubber Skeletons' is noted above. These postmarks, although easy to spot and not easy to find, particularly on cover, and clear impressions are frequently the exception. These are known used in Ireland from c1911. Use in England is known only between c1909 and 1915 but continued in Ireland until the 1950s. Generally c31 to 33mm in diameter, often much distorted and poorly struck, with very rare exceptions these postmarks can only be found from offices that normally employed a Rubber rather than a Steel postmark – ie: non-Money Order Offices.

Rubber postmarks may well be the subject of an article another day, it being sufficient to note at this time that these postmarks were withdrawn from all offices still using them between 1951 to 1953 and this signalled the demise of the Rubber Skeleton. Rubber Skeletons are easy to distinguish, the type being set in one, two or even three lines, horizontally, sometimes above and sometimes below the date. Many of us would have had 'John Bull' printing kits in our youth and it is believed that the type was made up in similar fashion as required, sometimes with errors and presumably some kind of 'bung' at the end of each row of type. These marks were employed between the use of the standard circular rubber postmarks and use at any individual office rarely exceeded a month. Peak usage period appears to be the 1920s and 1930s. Some indication of scarcity can be gauged from the fact that the

average rural ‘rubber’ office at this time rarely processed more than 100 letters a day, for if they had been busier they would have been upgraded to Money Order offices. Found both in English (to c1925 and exceptionally to about 1929 and also in Irish (from c1924). An early example from Killinardrish, Co Cork is shown on the front cover. Note that the office name extended onto the second line. An example of a Rubber Skeleton with the name of the office omitted was shown in the March 2010 issue as a part of the biographical article on Dr Stafford Johnson. Further examples of Rubber Skeletons are shown at figs 25 to 29 from, respectively, Coralstown Killucan, Moyasta (Magh Sheasta) Ennis, Caherlistrane (2) and Lisnegar Camp, Co Cork. The two marks from Caherlistrane show in 1944 an example that is without an outer frame and in 1945 with the date at the base, this latter example being not untypical of the condition these marks are often found in, all too often making deciphering the office of use problematic.



fig 25



fig 26

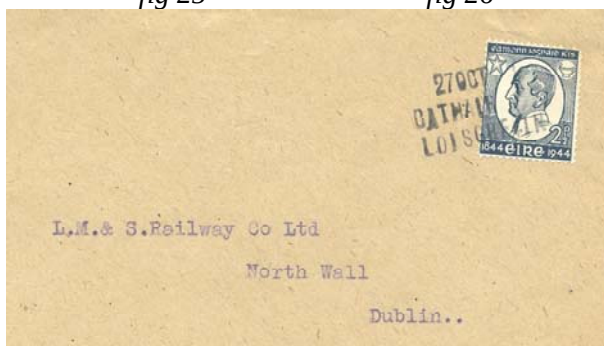


fig 27



fig 28



fig 29

Before leaving the subject of skeleton postmarks, consideration must also be given to ‘PAID’ skeletons. In attempting to describe these one is opening a potential minefield, not helped by the relative scarcity of these marks, rarely saved in that

there was no stamp to save. Always struck in red, ‘PAID’ skeletons are known from about 1910.



fig 30

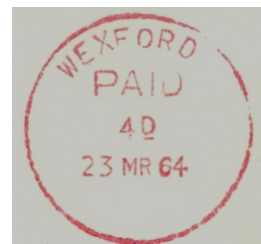


fig 31



fig 32

Figs 30 and 31 above show a standard type, approx 30mm diameter, examples of which can be found inscribed in both English and Irish, many offices using English into the 1980s which is surprising in that it would have been very easy to make up the postmark in Irish. ‘PAID’ is a standard ‘slug’ and a further slot existing for the price paid to be inserted, this practice ceasing on the introduction of decimal currency in 1971. No time is shown and the date and year appear in one line.

Fig 32 is a ‘red herring’. This type is known from perhaps 30 or more offices. The mark may well look like a skeleton, however, although I have not had the opportunity to inspect such a mark, I believe the town name (always in Irish) and the word ÍOCHTA (Paid) are fixed but there are slots into which the date is inserted, like any steel datestamp. There is a further slot below Íochta for the price paid to be inserted but I have not seen this used since 1971. This type has been seen from c1960 and remained in use until in early years of this century.

Moving ahead, I would like to see the Circle build up definite listings of skeletons on a county by county basis. Jim Rankin has given us a fine start with Co Antrim – see pages 40 and 41. It would be good if we could tackle one county per issue, giving us an eight year project with perhaps a book on completion. May I please have volunteers to act as project co-ordinators to work on a county by county basis? I have recently mounted my own collection of Co Wicklow and suggest that we start there in the September issue. In consequence, please let me have details of any WICKLOW skeleton postmarks you have using the same format as is used for the Co Antrim listing. Target date is by 15 August please. Thank you!!

THE SKELETON POSTMARKS OF COUNTRY ANTRIM - James Rankin

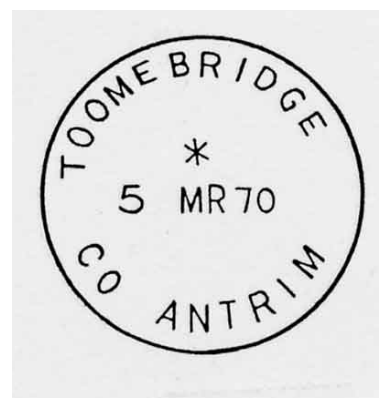
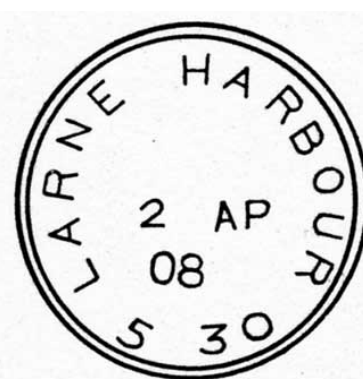
I have been collecting the postmarks of Country Antrim for some 20 or more years now.

The country has, of course, used a number of skeleton postmarks over the years. The earliest I have seen is dated July 1849 (from Antrim) and other than an exceptional use in 1970, I have not seen anything dated after 1925. That exceptional use is believed to have followed a robbery at the

office at Toomebridge. I was surprised to find how many different skeletons have been used at Lisburn. The illustrations have been drawn by me and more detail of the postmarks of the county can be found in a booklet I have produced 'The Postmarks of County Antrim'. I welcome further information and can be contacted at jamesmrankin@btinternet.com

CO. ANTRIM			SKELETON POSTMARKS			
Office	Type	Size	Inscription	Earliest	Latest	Notes
AHOGHILL	DR2	31mm	AHOGHILL	14.7.1914		code `18` & time
ANTRIM	SR1	36mm	ANTRIM	26.7.1849		blue
ANTRIM	DR2	31mm	ANTRIM	14.9.1912	28.9.1912	code `10` & time
ANTRIM	SR3	35mm	ANTRIM	20.9.1917	28.9.1917	with & without time
BALLYCASTLE	DR2	34mm	BALLYCASTLE/CO ANT	8.8.1908	13.8.1908	
BALLYCASTLE	SR3	34mm	BALLYCASTLE/CO ANTRIM	7.5.1920	21.5.1920	
BALLYCLARE	DR2	33mm	BALLYCLARE	1.7.1910	13.7.1910	
BALLYMENA	DR2	31mm	BALLYMENA	11.5.1912	18.6.1912	code `15` & time
BALLYMONEY	SR1	36mm	BALLYMONEY	28.5.1859	4.6.1859	codes `A` & `B` green & blue
BALLYMONEY	SR3	34mm	BALLYMONEY	27.10.1909	22.11.1909	time
BALLYMONEY	DR2	32mm	BALLYMONEY	10.12.1911	22.12.1911	code `18` & time
BALLYMONEY	SR3	36mm	BALLYMONEY	21.9.1915		time
BALLYMONEY	SR3	34mm	BALLYMONEY/CO ANTRIM	7.4.1919	20.5.1919	
BALLYMONEY	SR4	28mm	BALLYMONEY/CO ANTRIM	16.7.1925		time
BUSHMILLS	DR2	33mm	BUSHMILLS	11.4.1906	20.4.1906	code `17` & time
CARNLOUGH	SR3	35mm	CARNLOUGH/CO ANTRIM	3.7.1913		time
CARRICKFERGUS	SR3	34mm	CARRICKFERGUS/CO ANTRIM	23.7.1912	24.8.1912	time
CRUMLIN	DR2	34mm	CRUMLIN/CO ANTRIM	25.5.1905	4.7.1905	
CRUMLIN	SR3	31mm	CRUMLIN SO/ANTRIM	3.7.1907	18.7.1907	code `5` & time
CRUMLIN	SR3	34mm	CRUMLIN/CO ANTRIM	16.9.1912	19.10.1912	time
CULLYBACKEY	DR2	34mm	CULLYBACKEY/SO	5.3.1906	11.4.1906	
DOAGH	DR2	29mm	DOAGH	25.2.1909		
DUNMURRY	DR2	32mm	DUNMURRY	? .10.1909		
GLENARIFFE	SR3	35mm	GLENARIFFE	28.6.1915		time
LARNE	SR1	35mm	LARNE	15.11.1853		red
LARNE	DR2	34mm	LARNE	19.6.1903		code `1`
LARNE	SR3	31mm	LARNE	12.6.1923	22.6.1923	time
LARNE HARBOUR	DR2	34mm	LARNE HARBOUR	2.4.1908	30.4.1908	time around lower rim
LISBURN	DR2	33mm	LISBURN	16.11.1903	17.12.1903	code `6`
LISBURN	DR2	32mm	LISBURN	27.11.1905	1.12.1905	code `23` & time positioned above year
LISBURN	SR3	31mm	LISBURN	22.3.1907	16.4.1907	code `14` time, reused 1919-1920
LISBURN	DR2	33mm	LISBURN	4.4.1908	2.6.1908	time, similar in 1914
LISBURN	DR2	33mm	LISBURN	20.10.1910		time, similar to 1908
LISBURN	SR3	34mm	LISBURN	28.6.1911	7.8.1911	time, similar to 1915
LISBURN	SR3	31mm	LISBURN	26.4.1913		code `14` & time, similar to 1907
LISBURN	DR2	33mm	LISBURN	12.6.1914	14.6.1914	time, previously used 1908
LISBURN	SR3	31mm	LISBURN	26.6.1915		code `6` & time
LISBURN	SR3	34mm	LISBURN	19.8.1915	7.9.1915	time, similar to 1911

Office	Type	Size	Inscription	Earliest	Latest	Notes
LISBURN	DR2	32mm	LISBURN	14.7.1916	16.10.1916	code `20` & time
LISBURN	SR3	31mm	LISBURN	27.11.1919	15.1.1920	code `14` & time, previously used 1907 time
LISBURN	SR4	29mm	LISBURN	3.3.1924		
LISBURN	SR4	28mm	LISBURN/CO ANTRIM	31.5.1925		time
PORTRUSH	DR2	32mm	PORTRUSH	18.10.1909	17.11.1909	code `15` & time
PORTRUSH	SR3	34mm	PORTRUSH	30.12.1909		time, year slug missing
RANDALSTOWN	DR2	32mm	RANDALSTOWN	30.10.1911	15.11.1911	code `18` & time
RANDALSTOWN	SR3	34mm	RANDALSTOWN/CO ANTRIM	17.9.1915		
SHANES PARK CAMP	SR3	34mm	SHANES PARK CAMP/ BELFAST	29.1.1915	11.2.1919	
SHANES PARK CAMP	DR2	34mm	SHANES PARK CAMP	30.8.1919	22.9.1919	
TEMPLEPATRICK	DR2	34mm	TEMPLEPATRICK	3.11.1906		
TOOMEBRIDGE	SR4	29mm	TOOMEBRIDGE/CO ANTRIM	5.3.1970		month denoted by 2 letters
WHITEHEAD	DR2	33mm	WHITEHEAD	23.7.1906	11.9.1906	
WHITEHOUSE	DR2	34mm	WHITEHOUSE	2.7.1903		code `8`



Editor's note: It is worth noting that Jim is a professional draughtsman, hence the high quality of these illustrations. Jim's drawings, shown at approximately 1.5 times true size, provide fine templates of the basic types of skeleton postmark used throughout Ireland. These are, moving across the two rows, respectively types SK1 (or SR1 to use the types that Jim has used), SK2 (or DR2) – three examples, SK3 (or SR3) and SK4 (or SR4) respectively. The 'SK' type numbers are used in the article covering skeletons in use throughout Ireland on pages 35 to 39.

W.R. LANE JOYNT F.R.P.S.L., R.D.P. (1855-1921)

A short biography by Heloise Mitchell



A Limerick man and a barrister by profession, William Russell Lane Joynt was educated at Windermere College, and in Bonn, graduating at Trinity College, Dublin. A fine shot, he was Revolver Champion of Ireland on four different occasions. He married in 1882 and had two children, a daughter, Evelyn, and a son, William, who was also a practising barrister.

Lane Joynt started with a general world collection - in about 1869 when he was at school - and continued collecting right up to the time he died. He had a very good collection of Britain, including Penny Blacks plated, Twopenny Blues and all the subsequent issues, one of the gems being a used 1d voided corner. He also collected the West Indies, Mauritius, Natal, Victoria, the 1855 Penny Postage Stamps of New Zealand and the United States. His collections of Britain and the Colonies were his prime favourites.

An outstanding leader and organiser in the cause of philately, he founded the Irish Philatelic Society in 1901 and was elected its first President, a position he held until 1920.

Lane Joynt helped Gerald Fitzgerald, the 5th Duke of Leinster, to form the famous Leinster Collection, which the Duke later bequeathed to the Dublin Museum of Science and Art (now the National Museum) in Dublin. After the Duke's death Lane Joynt arranged and organised this collection for display in the Museum and was appointed its Honorary Curator.

Election to the British Roll of Distinguished Philatelists is regarded internationally as the world's pre-eminent philatelic honour. The Roll was instituted at the Philatelic Congress of Great Britain in 1920 and was first signed in 1921 by His Majesty King George V and 39 others, who were the leading philatelists in the world at the time. Lane Joynt had the honour of being a signatory at this inaugural ceremony which took place during the Philatelic Congress at Harrogate on 6 May 1921. As one of the twenty-five candidates proposed by the initial jury in 1920, he can be regarded as one of the Roll's founding fathers. Unfortunately, he had the doubtful distinction of being the first Distinguished Philatelist to pass away, shortly after he had signed the very impressive parchment. He was the first Irishman to sign the Roll, the only other Irish signatory to date being LE Dawson who signed it forty-nine years ago - in 1961.

Awards and achievements

- He was a Fellow of the Royal Philatelic Society of London, which he joined in 1889.
- He won the 1d Cape Woodblock Error of Colour in a competition conducted by the South African Stamp Co. in the advertisement pages of the ***Stamp Collectors' Fortnightly*** circa 1902. This was the most valuable philatelic prize ever offered in a competition.

Lane Joynt died in June 1921. He had directed in his will that the portion of his collection on view at the National Museum should be added to the Leinster bequest and this added greatly to its interest in subsequent years. The rest of his collection, including the Great Britain, was auctioned in London by Plumridge & Co. on 19 and 20 January 1922, and in later auctions. His British collection was one of the best ever offered at public auction, the catalogues themselves being excellent handbooks for specialists of Great Britain.

Editor's note: Lane Joynt's name is not generally associated with Irish Philately. I have seen but a handful of covers addressed to him, these from the Irish convention of 1917-18. Yet, at the time of his death he had surely the finest collection of classic material in Ireland. One is only left to wonder what he might have achieved had he lived through the overprint years. Would he have treated them as new fangled nonsense (as many of us consider new issues today) or would he have been swept up into the enthusiasm which those overprints created? We shall never know!

AUCTION WATCH – Erinman

It is been a busy quarter with a number of sales including useful Irish material.

In the USA, many choice and specialised items from the Estate of Joseph E Landry Jr. were on offer in the Daniel F. Kelleher Co. Inc. sale of 10 February..

A stunning upper left corner block of 20 of the 1907-16 Sinn Fein Hibernian L19 in unmounted mint condition realised \$900.



Also on offer were complete sheets of 40 of the 1922 5/- Thom overprint from plate 4A (SG65) described as “very fine o.g. mostly never hinged” (hammer price \$4500) and 1925 10/- from plate 2A (SG85) which includes the “Runnels” re-entry which sold for \$7250.

Very rarely offered for sale are Specimen overprints of the first permanent definitive series SG71/82. On offer was a part set lacking the 1½d and 10d values. Perhaps because of this and without an expertising certificate the lot sold for a bargain \$800.



Another rare and scare item in the sale was a fresh, well centred 10/- Seahorse with Thom overprint (SG 46 var) in very fine condition with original gum and the “barest trace of hinge” with variety “strokes over 10”. From plate 5A, the item sold for \$3000. It is thought that only 5 such copies in mint condition may exist.



The David Feldman auction of 13 April included a fine collection of early British registered mail, with a good sprinkling of Irish covers. Some remarkable realisations were achieved.

An 1843 cover addressed to London with a pair of 1d reds cancelled with the Mullingar Maltese Cross and the 1/- registration fee paid in cash fetched no less than Euro7,000, whilst a neat and attractive registered cover (1853) from Newcastle West to Limerick bearing three 2d blue and a single 1d red, all almost complete four margins and neatly cancelled with the <353> diamond, estimated at Euro400-500, sold at a quite staggering Euro3,400.

Perhaps more reasonably, a most unusual pair of 1875 covers both addressed to Kanturk with the stamps cancelled by the Guinness Brewery mailbag seal fetched Euro600 and a pleasant 1874 envelope to the USA franked with a 6d grey and a 1d red showing an absolutely superb strike of the scarce REGISTERED/CORK octagonal mark made a somewhat surprising Euro420.

There were few lots of Irish material in the Grosvenor sale of 19/20 May but it did include one of Ireland’s outstanding errors of missing colour.

On offer was an unmounted mint vertical pair from the top of the sheet of the 1964 New York worlds fair 5p value with variety missing brown on the top stamp SG201a with accompanying Hamilton-Bowen certificate (2004). Estimated at £4,200-£4,500, the item went under the hammer for £4,000 plus premium.



Also for sale was an unmounted mint single of the 1976 American Bicentennial issue with silver omitted. This popular variety sold for the lower estimate of £700.

On offer in the Corbitts sale of 11 March was an unusual "1882 Proof impression of vertical oval cancels with numerals 1 to 10 between two bars & coggled edge, struck on a piece of laid paper with various annotations incl. (made by) 'G De Lacy & Son' & 'made for GT. Western Ry of Ireland' from the De La Rue archives with their dater for 3 July 1882."



Against a pre-sale estimate of £300 the final hammer price was £700

The offers on eBay continue to be mixed but one item which caught my eye was an unmounted mint example of the 1922 1/2d green proof printing red overprint with variety date on top. The item selling for a highly respectable £236. A normal example of the red overprint in a later sale in unmounted mint condition sold for £169.

Offerings for the aero enthusiast continue to be plentiful. A neatly addressed "Smye" 1929 Galway first flight cover to Croydon signed by the pilot Charles Russell made £64 (up from the usual £50 for this item) and if you wished to have a matching autographed photograph of the pilot this would have cost £103.

One of 25 stated covers to have been flown by GWS airlines in 1946 between Dublin and the Isles of Scilly made £75. In similar vein a 1947 Russ Sabor round the world air flight cover sold for £49.

Not everyone collects air letter forms but an example of the first issue dark blue print on grey paper with first day cancel dated 1st September 1945 climbed to £76.

A growing collecting theme is that of American armed forces covers with an Irish connection or postmark. An example of the seldom offered 1942 rubber postmarked Naval Operations Base Londonderry made £27.

Some rare items have been offered for sale in used condition. These included 2d values of the 1933 Holy Year and 1934 GAA both with inverted watermark and accompanying RPS certificates and the 1½d se wmk definitive with inverted watermark. Each had a starting bid of £1,000 but none of the lots attracted a buyer.

For military enthusiasts a 1941 Curragh Camp censor cover addressed to Germany sold for £89.

ROCK ISLAND

Florence MacCarthy's article on page 33 of this issue reminds one of a long forgotten office across the haven from Crosshaven at Rock Island (or Rockisland), just a few hundred yards as the crow flies. The office had been opened as long ago as 1856 under the control of Skibbereen. By 1922 Rock Island comprised a row of Coastguard cottages and a further row of cottages occupied inter alia by a pub and the Post Office. Entirely destroyed in 1923 during the Civil War, the Coastguard cottages have today been rebuilt as holiday homes but nothing remains of the former Post Office. Officially recorded as closed in October 1923, the closure had effectively taken place some nine months earlier. The one recorded postmark is shown below; I fear it may not copy well.



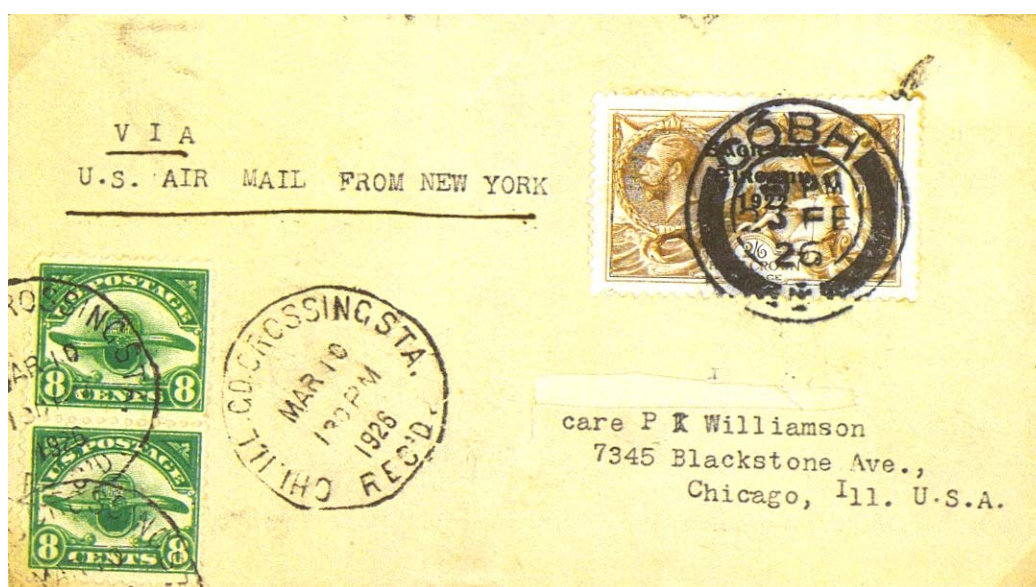
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS and THE EDITOR'S CHALLENGE

I have had no response to any of the three questions raised in the last issue. When at the AGM in London, I did, in fact, meet with Tony Best who had asked two of the questions. Tony expressed to me his disappointment that no member is able to help him so I would ask that you overprint collectors do take a further look and see if you can throw any light on his queries.

Likewise I have received no queries/ questions, hence I have to assume that all our readers have no problems with their collections and are quite content!! Please prove me wrong and let me have some ammunition for this page in the September journal.

In our March issue, a further note on Late Fees appeared (page 15). No more in this issue but I have had a telephone call to advise that some information is en route to me although it will be too late for this issue. It is a good topic and has not been fully explored. Incidentally, please never be frightened to pick up the telephone and call me if you wish to discuss a query/ article/ whatever (+44-1481-724486).

My challenge in the March issue (page 5) has however yielded a most interesting response from our Swiss based member Ronny Vogt. He has sent me copies of two covers.



Above is an item from 1926 which would appear to be totally philatelic, there seemingly being no need for the 2/6d overprint stamp. Sadly the actual name of the addressee has been excised. That the item is posted at Cobh on 23 February would imply that the sender might have been a transatlantic passenger although that fact is probably insignificant. One must assume that the two 8c US airmail stamps were affixed by the sender.

Although the item is philatelic, what it does demonstrate is that a service potentially existed as early as 1926 whereby items could be sent from Ireland to the USA and be taken out of normal channels on arrival at New York and be transferred into US internal airmail. That the US stamps are cancelled at Chicago rather than New York does leave a doubt as to whether that actually happened to this cover (and the 15 day transit time does not help to prove anything either). For all that, it indicates that the service surely existed.

Ronny's second cover, which I will not show here as it effectively duplicates what appeared on the front cover of our March issue, is from the same correspondence to same addressee in San Francisco but posted in Dublin on 11 March 1929 and stamped at 1s2d in Ireland PLUS the 5c US airmail stamp. The US stamp is at the top right and is cancelled in Dublin, a fact which to my mind implies that it was definitely affixed by the sender but whether the stamp was provided by the Irish Post office or the sender personally remains unclear. Reference to the 1928-29 PO Guide (Eolai an Phoist) shows on page 64 an airmail fee of 1/- for airmail to the USA. That guide goes on to state that airmail provides a gain of about 2 days to San Francisco/ Los Angeles. Thus, Ronny's delightful cover shows a totally correct charging of the airmail fee and that the cover shown in the March issue was incorrectly prepaid in Ireland but given priority treatment in the USA, there being no effective mechanism to do anything about such an underfranked item in Ireland.

GAELIC ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION JUBILEE ISSUE 1934

Co-ordinated by John Lennon

The Gaelic Athletic Association was founded in Thurles on 1st November 1884. In early 1934 many local Councils sent resolutions to the Executive Council requesting that they seek a commemorative stamp for the 50th anniversary.

The Secretary of the GAA wrote to the Minister of Posts & Telegraphs on 29th January. "I have been asked by my Council to make very strong representations to you with a view to having your Department issue a Gaelic Athletic Association Jubilee Stamp this year. We will only be too glad to submit artistic designs if you approve of the suggestion." An impression of the All Ireland medal was included (Fig.1).



Fig 1

The Minister forwarded this to his Department for examination and in their reply on 21st February it said "there would be no great objection". "It is pointed out, however, that there has been a special commemorative issue of stamps in each of the past five years, and it seems questionable whether it is judicious to continue to issue commemorative stamps so frequently." The design submitted was thought to be too similar to that issued for the Eucharistic Congress (both being based on the Cross of Cong) and that a more distinctive design would be preferable. The reply ended "it seems questionable whether the issue . . . would be worth while." 'worth while' was amended by hand to 'warranted'. A Memorandum was sent to the Executive Council (Government) for approval and included an estimate of the costs for a single value, 2d. (Fig. 2)

Approval was given on the understanding that the design would be submitted for their approval.

The cost of production of the proposed new stamp is estimated to be approximately:-

	£	s.	d.
Artist's Fee as proposed	50.	0.	0
Engraving one Die, Rollers and Working Die	60.	0.	0
Two Printing Plates, 240 set	60.	0.	0
Miscellaneous Expenditure	10.	0.	0
Total	180.	0.	0

The cost of two Printing Plates only is included in the estimate as the Commissioners have no information as to the quantities of stamps which will be required.

Fig 2

The prize of £50 was to cover all the artist's work in connection with the engraving of the design for reproduction as a stamp and was to lead to a difficulty between two Ministers. When sanction was sought from the Minister of Finance for the expenditure of £180 he didn't agree with the £50 prize and would only sanction £25. On 28th March the Minister for P&T wrote "the preparation of a design suitable for reproduction as a stamp is an art requiring talent of an exceptional kind which is rare in this country and the opinion of the Selection Committee is that a prize of £50 is the minimum which would attract artists with the requisite ability. . . in order to ensure a satisfactory reproduction of the design as a stamp it will be essential for the successful artist to supervise the process of engraving of the master die at the Mint, and this may necessitate at least one visit to London. Much of the artistic value of the design for the Holy Year stamp was lost through the artist's lack of the technique of stamp production. The prize offered for the Holy Year stamp was £50 and even for that amount few of the designs submitted had any artistic merit or distinction. Mr. Leo Whelan was invited to send in a drawing but he intimated that he did not enter such competitions but was prepared to undertake the commission for £100. The fee of £25 to Mr. Atkinson for the RDS stamp was to complete a design submitted by the Society. A prize of £50, to cover all the artist's expenses, was in no way excessive".

The Minister for Finance wouldn't alter his opinion and when it was pointed out to him that the Executive Council had approved the proposal which included the £50 prize he was asked why he was altering this decision. It was now 14th April and "an early reply would be appreciated as the production of the stamp was a matter of urgency". It was ten days before the reply came, excused by

urgent work on the Budget. It claimed that Executive Council decisions normally applied to the principles only, with the Departments sorting out the details. The Selection Committee was an interested body so their recommendation was biased. On 14th May the Department of Finance wrote to the Revenue Commissioners sanction an expenditure of £155.

In the meantime a small news note appeared in the Irish Independent on 26th March announcing that the stamp was to be issued. "Designs will be invited from Irish artists and a prize is being offered." It was about this time that the invitations were sent out. Three days later a comment appeared in The Irish Times 'Irishman's Diary' (Fig. 3).

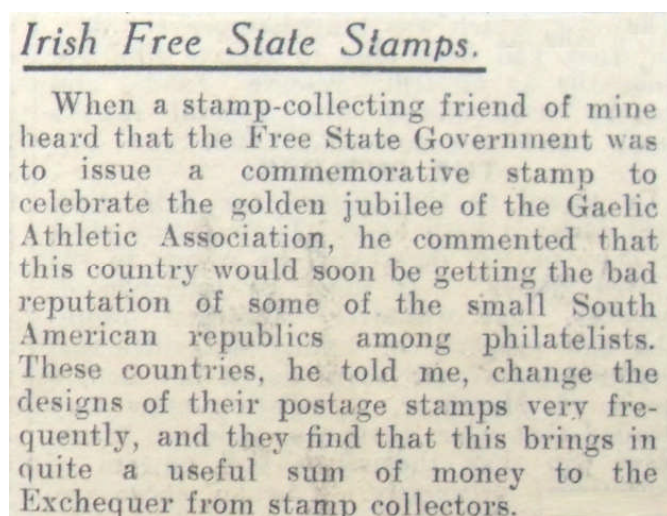


Fig 3

It was over three years before the next special issue. Harry Kernoff submitted four designs on 18th April and commented ". . . how one is expected to visit London on the £25 fee, several times, is a profound mystery to me."

The Selection Committee's Report was received by the Dept. of P&T on 18th May. Twenty-seven artists had been invited to compete for the prize of £25. Three wrote definitely declining and ten others did not respond. Thirty-seven designs had been received, including some uninvited. The report read...."The Committee was unanimously of opinion that none of the designs submitted would make a suitable stamp. In view of the urgency of the matter it was accordingly decided to request three of the artists whose designs showed artistic merit to submit further drawings. Of the three amended drawings so obtained the Committee is unanimously of opinion that the design submitted by Mr. R.J.King, 10 Charlemont Place, Dublin is the best and most suitable." Austin Molloy of Clontarf was one of the other two. Richard King's original submission was a parade of athletes (Fig.4).



fig 4

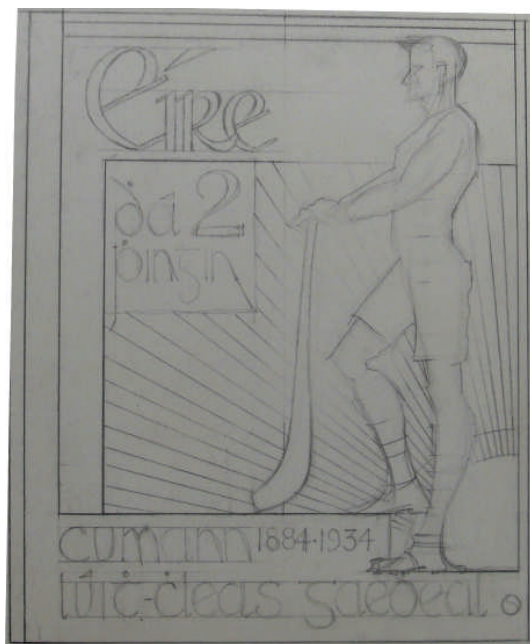
The Report continued " the artist members attributed the poor response to the invitation to the inadequacy of the amount (£25) of the prize offered. All the thirteen artists who refused the invitation competed for the prize of £50 offered for the Holy Year stamp". It concluded " ... it is in the best interests of the State that every inducement should be given to attract the most competent artists which the Country can produce."

The final design for the stamp is not on file but there are sketches for superimposing on the framework of the first submission. (Figs. 5,6,7,8,9 – see back page **).

On 17th May, Revenue Stamping Branch sent four colour Essays to the Dept of P&T. "It is understood that some slight amendments are to be made such as the introduction of curved lines in the bottom panel, the strengthening of the body lines of the figure, the opening up of the outer verticals and the removal of one of the curved lines at the bottom and top of the background. It is thought that the strengthening of the words "Da Pingin" might also be done." The design received Government approval on 22nd May.

To help decide on the quantity of stamps to be printed, the Director of Stores was asked for the number of sheets of 2d stamps that were supplied between 16th July and 31st December 1933. The total was 203,326 of which 76,520 were of the Holy Year stamp. The total for the same period in 1932 was 171,105 sheets, the difference being due to the special issue.

The plates were received on 13th July and arrangements put in place to have the stamp issued on 27th July. There is no record in the file on the quantity printed.



Figs 5 to 9 showing the sketches submitted by R.J. King to the Selection Committee.