

# The Development of the London Stampless Letter Post in pre-UPU times

## Background

The first postal service in England was founded by the Romans in the first century AD. The carriers delivered messages directly from the sender to the receiver. This service was only for the government and the military administration.

When the Romans withdrew from England during the fifth century, their postal service was also terminated. The bishops, the abbots, the nobility and the cities developed postal services for their own purposes.

The trading increased during the Middle Ages and simultaneously multiplied the amount of the transporters of goods. At first, those transporters delivered letters locally but gradually they networked. Then letters could be sent far away using several couriers. This way of delivering messages turned out to be so reliable that even common people could trust those couriers. The central point of the transporters network was London.

## The aim of the collection

The exhibit illustrates the development and variety of postal markings and services of the most important Post Office of the British Empire. It comprises stampless letters sent to, from and within London by the Private and Public Posts before the founding of the UPU.

The development is illustrated through the postmarks, other markings made on the cover of the letters and postal

rates, because those were the things that were visible to the senders and receivers of the letter from the handling of the letter.

The exhibit also illustrates that, according to the regulations, the postage could still be paid for several years with money without using stamps, even though the stamps had been introduced.

## Abbreviations, typography and page layout

Mi = mile and d = penny. 1/- = 1 shilling (for example "2/5d" = 2 shillings and 5 pence). Single = postage for one letter sheet and double = postage for two letter sheets.

[ ] = References are in brackets giving the surname of the writer and the year of the issue.

L = The numbering of the London postmarks follows The British County Catalogue of Postal History 3 (London) [Jay 2005] which is widely established among the London postal history collectors; for example L501.


1. General Post

1.6. Paying

First paid handstamp, without date

The first London General Post Paid handstamp is on a letter dated 18 May 1713. The first version included only letter "PD".

The prepayment of postage was indicated with the complete words "Post Paid" in the next version of the Paid postmark.



**Route:** A letter from London (Lyons Inn) to Northamptonshire in 1739. **Markings:** PD postmark (L90, used 1712-1765; before the year 1740 this postmark was rarely used in domestic letters [Willcocks 1975]. Manuscript "G", means letter postage. Bishop Mark (L5) 12.5. on the reverse side. **Postal rate:** London to Northamptonshire 66 mi therefore max 80 mi, double (1.6.1711-9.10.1765): 6d.

The header shows where we are in the story.

The page title summarizes what is on the page

The story of the collection, the leading of the topic, is printed in this kind of letter type.

The items that deserve special attention – highlights – are framed with a wide cyan colored frame.

The reason for deserving attention is explained in the analysis in the cyan colored text.

The analyses of specific items are shown in this kind of letter type. The analysis is divided into three parts: route, markings and postal rate.

## Own research

There is no comprehensive study of the London postal history. Thus, the research demanded a study of wide range of sources.

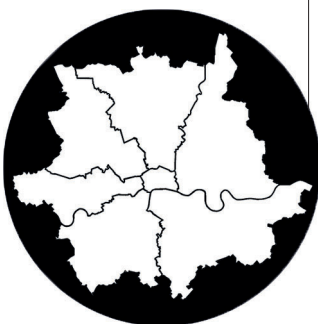
Even though the topic has already been studied quite carefully, I have been able to make new observations, discoveries. These are marked with a ★ in the Highlights listings of the table of contents.



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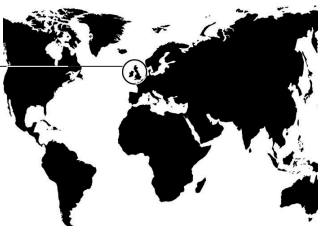
*Highlights: the letter during the civil war (p. 5) • a postmark known to have been used for only 11 days (p. 8) • the literature does not know the code letter ★ (p. 8) • date of use unknown in the literature ★ (p.13) • off type postmark (p. 17) • rare domestic usage (p. 22) • later use than known in the literature ★ (p. 23) • earlier use than known in the literature ★ (p. 25) • Uniform penny Post first day of usage (p. 46) • very early experimental use of the black ink (p. 48) • a postmark unknown in the literature ★ (p.49)*



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*Highlights: exceptionally rare postmark (p. 123)*

## The most important references

Alcock, R. & Holland, F., British Postmarks, 1960. • Christie's Robson Lowe, The Postal History of Western Europe and the Mediterranean 1571-1742, 1984. • Feldman, H., Letter Receivers of London I-II, 1998. • Jay, B., The British County Catalogue of Postal History 3 (London), 2005.

• Lovegrove, J., Herewith My Frank, 1989. • Robertson, A., Great Britain Post Roads, Post Towns and Postal Rates 1635-1839, 1961. • Tabcart, C., United Kingdom Letter Rates 1635 to 1900, 2003. • Willcocks, R., England's Postal History to 1840, 1975.