

Great Britain

Queen Victoria: Line Engraved Imperforates

This display focuses on rarely seen imperforates of Queen Victoria's line-engraved stamps. These include imprimaturs (stamps removed from the first registration sheets printed from a new plate) as well as special pieces including: imperforate issued stamps, specimen overprints, fugitive ink trials, royal reprints, Neale's steam press trial, Dr Perkins trials on blued security paper and stamps on Dickinson paper with security thread.

Imprimatur sheets were sent to Somerset House for approval. Those that remain have a few individual stamps removed and those are now held in the Royal collection, private collections or lost. Some imprimatur sheets, such as those of the 1840 two pence issue, do not exist.

Prior to the halfpenny issue of 1870 with 480 stamps, each imprimatur sheet originally had 240 stamps arranged in 20 rows of 12 stamps each with position letters in lower corners. Plate numbers appear only on the four corner positions. Over the years, a very few stamps were taken from each sheet and their removal was noted on the reverse of the sheet by a post office official. With rare exceptions, fewer than 25 imprimaturs were removed from each sheet and at most three corner copies of each were removed. Plate registration dates are noted.

The presentation is organized as follows:

- One Penny Black (unused, used and "VR" Officials)
- Two Pence 1840 (unused and used)
- One Penny Red (unused, specimens, Neale's steam press trial and royal reprints)
- Two Pence 1841 (provisional sheet of 12, specimens)
- Two Pence Engraved Plate Numbers
- Three Halfpence (issued imperforates and Dr Perkins blued security paper)
- One Penny Engraved Plate Numbers (ink trials and Dr Perkins blued security paper)
- Halfpenny (issued imperforates)
- Secondary Die Proofs and a Postscript

Penny Black "VR"

**from first 1d black
"VR" sheet printed**



plate A was registered 15 April 1840

The sheet was registered the same day as the first plate of penny blacks. From the first "VR" registration sheet 33 stamps have been removed.

Great Britain

One Penny Black

Plate 1, Imprimatur / Issued Stamp / Imprimatur

Two registration sheets were printed. The first was registered on April 15, 1840. The second sheet, printed after the plate was hardened, was registered on April 27, 1840. Center stamp below printed between those two dates.

All position "TD"

from first 1d black
sheet printed



imprimatur
15 April 1840



issued stamp
15-27 April 1840



imprimatur
27 April 1840



The unused, original gum, issued stamp (above center), was printed before April 27, 1840 and shows modest plate wear but is not as much as on imprimatur shown above right.

Plate 1, Issued Stamp, after plate repair

On May 23, 1840 every position on plate 1 was re-entered because of the rapid plate wear. This is noticed most easily by the change in appearance of the left star.



before plate repaired



after plate repaired

issued stamp, position TH, unused, original gum

Great Britain

One Penny Black

Eleven plates, 1-11, were used to print the 1d 1840 issue in black.

Imprimaturs

The only registration sheets that have survived include sheets printed from plates 1, 2, 3, 5, 8 and the "VR" plate A. Two sheets, one before the plate was hardened and one after, exist for plates 1, 2, 5 and A. The corner copy shown below from plate 5, before hardening, is one of two in private hands. One remains intact on the sheet in the British Postal Museum and one is in the Royal Collection.

Plate 2



27 Apr 1840 (after hardening)
position TI

Plate 3



9 May 1840 (before hardening)
position TF

Plate 5, Corner Copy with plate number



1 Jun 1840 (before hardening)
position TL

Plate 8



31 Jul 1840
position TH

Great Britain

One Penny Black "VR" Official

Imprimatur

A special plate was prepared in April 1840 for use in printing an official stamp with the letters "VR" (Victoria Regina) in the upper corner squares replacing the stars used on the regular issue. The plate was designated plate "A" and was registered on the same day as plate 1 of the penny black, April 15, 1840. The plate was used to print 3,000+ sheets before it was decided not to issue the special stamps for government offices. However, some of the stamps had already been sent out as samples on notices sent to Postmasters. The plate was subsequently hardened and was registered again on May 9, 1840.

Plate "A" Corner Copy first 1d black "VR" sheet printed



15 April 1840 (before hardening)
manuscript initials "CP" of Charles Pressly, position TA

The endorsement on reverse of the first registration sheet from which the above stamp was removed was signed by Charles Pressly as Secretary of the Stamp Office.

The Impression on the other side of this paper of the Die or Plate intended to be used by the Commissioners of Stamps & Taxes in pursuance of the several powers and authorities vested in them for expressing and denoting the Stamp duty of one penny on the postage of Letters was taken in my presence and in the presence of a Commissioner the 15 day of April 1840

Chas Pressly Secy

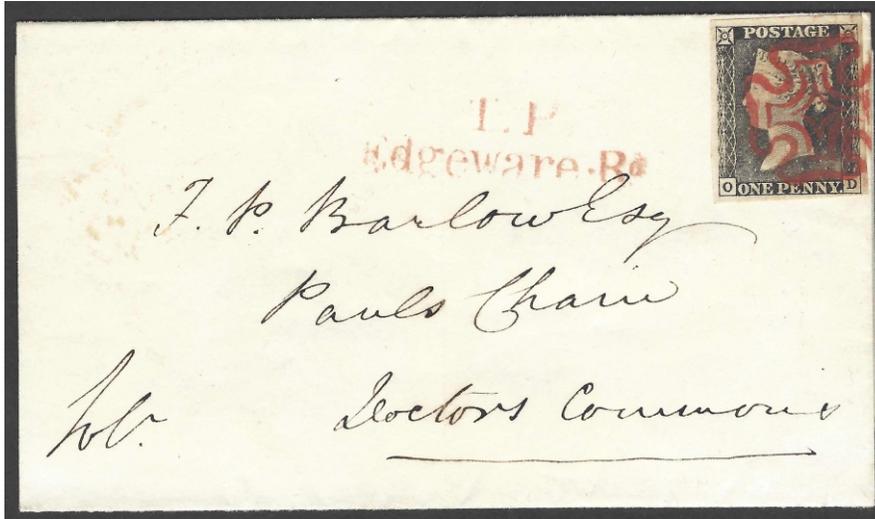
"The impression on the other side of this paper of the Die or Plate intended by the Commissioners of Stamps & Taxes in pursuance of the several powers and authorities vested in them for expressing and denoting the Stamp duty of one penny for the postage of Letters was taken in my presence and in the presence of a Commissioner the 15th day of April 1840.

Chas. Pressly, Secy."

Great Britain

One Penny Black

Used Examples



28 May 1840 (**first month use**)
Two Penny Post Receiver stamp
"T.P. Edgeware Rd"
London datestamp on reverse, 1d
grey black **plate 1a** (OD)
worn impression

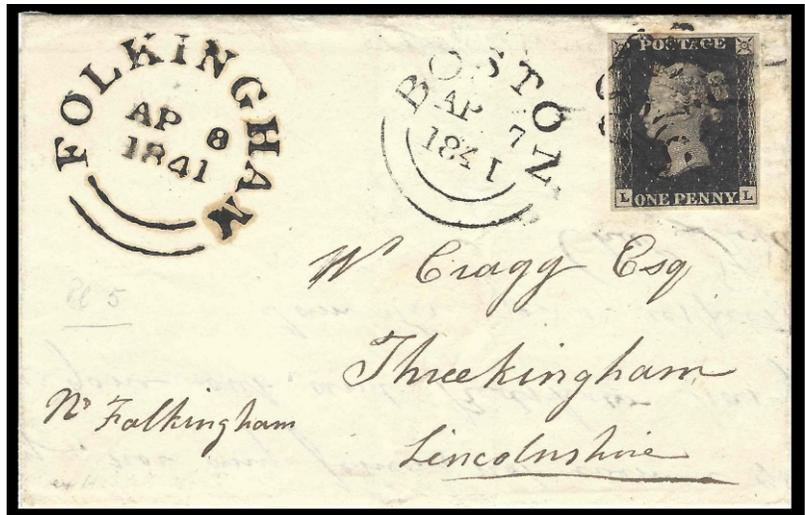
red Maltese cross cancel

manuscript "X" cancel
red Camelford town postmark
contrary to regulations
without Maltese Cross cancel
plate 4 (AH)



7 April 1841 Boston to
Folkingham, prepaid 1d
plate 5, repaired state (LL)
printed after the 4 February
1841 printing in red

black Maltese Cross cancel



Great Britain

One Penny Black

Used Examples

3 August 1840 letter
Preston Brook to Bakewell
Runcorn Penny Post
1d grey black **plate 1a** (GD)
worn impression
red Maltese cross cancel



4 January 1841
mourning letter sheet
London to Brighton
prepaid with pair 1d
plate 8 (IK-IL)
red Maltese Cross cancels

Great Britain

Two Pence 1840 Issue

Two plates, 1 and 2, were used to print the 2d 1840 stamps. There are no surviving registration sheets or imprimaturs.

Issued Stamps

Plate 2



pair (NH-NI), unused, original gum



block (QK/RL), used on piece

Plate 1



5 January 1841 use of 2d stamp plate 1 (KJ) on double weight letter from Edinburgh to Meigle
origin datestamp on reverse, orange-red Maltese cross cancel

Great Britain

Two Pence 1840 Issue

Issued Stamps on Cover

Plate 1



18 April 1842 London to the Royal Observatory, Cape of Good Hope
prepaid 8d outbound Ship Letter rate with strip 2d stamp plate 1 (LG-LJ)

Plate 2



10 November 1840 Wellington-Somerset to Tiverton
prepaid 2d plate 2 (position PB) paying double weight letter

Great Britain

One Penny Black and Red, Die I

The color of the 1d black was changed to red in 1841 to prevent reuse. From Feb 10, 1841 older black plates (1, 2, 5, 8–10) as well as new plates (11-204 and reserve plates R1-R14) were used for printings in red.

Issued Stamps

Printed from "Black" Plate 10



unused, original gum, block (QA/TD)
major original re-entry on TA
RA-RD with P converted to R by hand engraving

Plate 10:
registered in black Dec 8, 1840
printed in red from Feb 10, 1841

Printed from "Red" Plate 11



matched set of used pairs,
(DC-DD, position DD doubled)
only known set from plate 11

Plate 11:
registered in red Jan 27, 1841
printed in red Jan 29-30
printed in black Feb 1–2
printed in red on Feb 3
Dickinson "silk" paper trials May 1

Plate 133



unused, original gum

Great Britain

One Penny Red, Die I

Imprimaturs

Plate 15



23 Jul 1841

Plate 33



20 Feb 1843

Plate 34



7 Jun 1843

Plate 51



3 Dec 1844

Plate 108



1 Jan 1851

Plate 125



25 July 1851

Plate 148



4 Jun 1852

Plate 158



16 Sep 1852

Plate 189



12 Jul 1854
strong ivory head

Plate 190



11 Aug 1854
ivory head

Plate 194



21 Sep 1854
minor blueing

Plate 204



30 Nov 1854
final die I plate

The original paper used was grayish white. Prussiate of potash began to be used in the the inks in 1841. A chemical reaction between the damp paper and the prussiate of potash resulted in a bluish discoloration where the ink was heaviest. These so-called "Ivory Head" varieties can be very striking.

Great Britain

One Penny Red, Die I

Trial on Dickinson "silk" thread paper

Plate 11

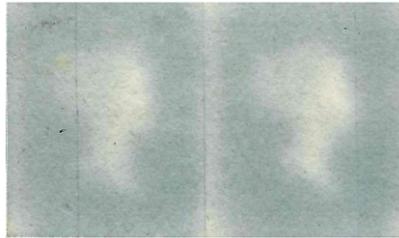


plate 11 was registered on January 27, 1841 in red, LE-LF pair without gum as produced

After the provisional printing of the 2d blue in March 1841, a trial was made of the 1d on Dickinson paper with embedded vertical threads (see arrows above) made of cotton on May 1, 1841. The deep red ink used blued the unwatermarked paper.

Specimen Overprints



Plate 90 was registered May 24, 1849 and defaced March 6, 1850, original gum block (AA/BI)

imprint at top: "90 Price 1d. Per Label. 1/- Per Row of 12. £1 ... Per Sheet. Place the Labels ABOVE the Address and towards the RIGHT HAND SIDE of the Letter. In Wettin(g)"

A least three sheets of the one penny red with "SPECIMEN" overprints were shipped to foreign postal administrations prior to February 1850. One sheet, plate 88, remains intact and is currently in a German museum. According to Edwin Hill's contemporary correspondence, sheets had also been supplied to the Neapolitan and Austrian Governments. The above block is likely from one of those two sheets.

Great Britain

One Penny Red, Die II

Die II, a new master die, was laid down by retouching of the original die. Beginning in January 1855 plates 1/69 and reserve plates R15/R17 were utilized.

Imprimaturs

Plate 14



Plate 15



Plate 16



12 May 1855 (AL, AL and AA), alpha II, wmk SC

Plates 14 to 20 were all registered on the same date, May 12, 1855. However, plate 14 was put to press on May 22, plate 15 on May 26 and plate 16 earlier on May 15th.

Plate 24



12 Nov 1855 (AA)
alpha III, wmk LC

Plate R19



12 Nov 1855 (JL)
alpha II, wmk LC

Four of the plates registered on November 12, 1855, including reserve plate R19 and 24, were the first to be printed on paper with large crown (LC) watermark which replaced the previous small crown (SC). Alphabet III corner letters began to be used with plate 23.

Plate 56



14 Jul 1856 (AL)
alpha III
wmk LC

Plate 40



2 Apr 1856 (AB)
alpha III, wmk LC
gray paper

Plate 63



11 Feb 1857 (AL)
alpha III
wmk LC

Plate 35



16 Jan 1856 (AA)
alpha III, wmk LC
blued paper

Plate 68



18 Jan 1858 (AA)
alpha III
inverted LC wmk

Great Britain

One Penny Red, Die II

Neale's Steam Press Trial

Plate 22



"Chase Bank" block
positions (EJ/GL)

"PRICE 1d. Per Label. 1/-
Per Row of 12. £1 ..."

Robert Neale's Steam Press Trial Prints: In 1855 and 1856 Perkins, Bacon conducted trials using Neale's patented steam printing press in an attempt to increase production speed. Stamp plates 16-18, 22 and 25 were used. The above block is from the unique "Chase Bank" sheet, endorsed as having been printed on August 15, 1855, found by Robson Lowe in the United States in 1957.

Great Britain

One Penny, Die II

South Kensington Exhibition Proofs

Plate 27



block (KA/LC) on card, printed in February 1872

Perkins, Bacon printed proofs, with official permission, for the International Exhibition at South Kensington in 1872. The printers were allowed to retain the single sheet.

The Royal Reprints

Plate 66



1d black with inverted SC watermark
block (MC/ND) printed September 1865



1d red with upright SC watermark
pair (JA/KA) printed September 1865

An application was made upon request of the Royal Family for specimens of the one penny black for the stamp collections of Queen Victoria's children. On September 1, 1865 Ormond Hill requested proofs be printed in black and he was supplied with plate 66 for the purpose. The reprints in black, possibly two or three sheets, have inverted large crown watermarks. Fewer examples are known in the carmine-rose color with upright watermark.

Great Britain

Two Pence With Lines

Provisional Issue, No Corner Letters



On January 15, 1841 a small plate of 12 subjects was specially made because the first full plate of 240 subjects of the new design with white line was not yet ready and specimens were required for distribution of the new postal notices.

Imprimaturs

Plate 3



25 Feb 1841
(SH)

Plate 4



6 Dec 1849
(AI)

Plate 5



6 Jun 1855
(AE)

Plate 6



11 Feb 1857
(AE)

Plates 3, 4 and 5 were printed on paper watermarked small crown while plate 6 was the first to be printed on paper watermarked large crown. Plate 3 and 4 bear corner letters in alphabet I, plate 5 is alphabet II and plate 6 is alphabet III.

Great Britain

Two Pence With Lines

Issued Stamps

Plate 3



block (MA/NB), original gum
imprint at left: "*Per Row of 12. £2 ... Per Sheet Pla(ce)*"

Specimen Overprints

Plate 3



block (FA/GD), original gum, never hinged
imprint at left: "*Back be careful not to remove Cem(ent)*"

A least three sheets of the 1841 issue two penny blue with "SPECIMEN" overprints were shipped to foreign postal administrations between 1849 and February 1850.

Great Britain

Two Pence Engraved Plate Numbers

Imprimaturs

Thick White Lines

The series of two pence blue stamps with engraved plate numbers at sides and letters in all four corners were printed from plates 7 to 9 and plate 12 between 1858 and 1868. Like the 1841 two pence issue, these stamps have thick white lines at top and bottom.

Plate 8

Plate 7



11 Jun 1858
(AF)



7 Jul 1859
(AG)

Plate 12



1 Jan 1868
(TF)

Thin White Lines

In 1869 a new series with thinner white lines at top and bottom was used for plates 13, 14 and 15.

Plate 13



31 Mar 1869
(AE)

Plate 15



3 Sep 1875
(AD)

Great Britain

Three Halfpence

A new denomination 1½d stamp was prepared in early 1860 in anticipation of a change in postal rates. After several thousand sheets were printed in rosy mauve color most were destroyed when the rate changes did not materialize and the stamps remained unissued. Plate 1, which did not incorporate a plate number, was used again in 1870 to print stamps in red shades. A second plate, plate 3, which includes an engraved plate number was used in 1874.

Imprimaturs

Plate 1

no plate number



22 Mar 1860

Plate 3

with engraved plate number at sides



13 Apr 1874

Imperforate Issued Stamps

Plate 1



original gum

Plate 3



original gum

Trial Print on Dr Perkins Blued Security Paper

Plate 1



Dr Perkins Blued Paper Trials: Described by Pearson Hill as "Printed on chemically prepared paper for Dr Perkins plan of chemical obliteration."

Great Britain

One Penny Engraved Plate Numbers

The series of 1d with engraved plate numbers at sides and letters in four corners were printed from plates between 71/22 commencing March 1864. Beginning with plate 98 in March 1865, the plate numbers were encircled and a "current" plate number was added.

Imprimaturs with current plate numbers

Plate 148
current plate 165



registered:
23 Dec 1870

Plate 167
current plate 200



registered:
24 Oct 1872

Plate 180
current plate 213



registered:
14 Oct 1873

Plate 212
current plate 254



registered:
16 Nov 1877

Imprimaturs, all position "AC"

Plate 78



plates 76-81
registered:
7 Feb 1863

Plate 82



plates 82-86
registered:
1 Mar 1864

Plate 88



plate 88
registered:
17 Mar 1864

Plate 92



plate 92
registered:
12 Apr 1864

Plate 100



plates 99-101
registered:
5 Jan 1866

Plate 149



plates 145-149
registered:
23 Dec 1870

Plate 166



plates 162-167
registered: 24 Oct 1872

Plate 167



Plate 169



Plate 170



Plate 172



Plate 173



plates 168-173, registered: 9 Apr 1873

Great Britain

One Penny Engraved Plate Numbers

Imprimaturs, position "AC"

Plate 174



Plate 175



Plate 176



Plate 177



Plate 178



Plate 180



Plate 181



plates 174-181, registered: 14 Oct 1873

Plate 182



Plate 183



Plate 185



Plate 186



plates 182-186, registered: 13 Apr 1874

Plate 191



Plate 192



Plate 193



Plate 198



Plate 199



Plate 200



plates 191-194, registered: 3 Sep 1875

plates 195-200, registered: 9 Mar 1876

Plate 203



plates 201-205
registered: 16 Nov

Plate 211



plates 210-212
registered: 16 Nov 1877

Plate 214



plates 213-216
registered: 25 Feb 1878

Plate 222



plates 221-225
registered: 31 Dec 1878

Great Britain

One Penny Engraved Plate Numbers

1868 / 1869 Dr Perkins Blued Paper Trials

Plate 121

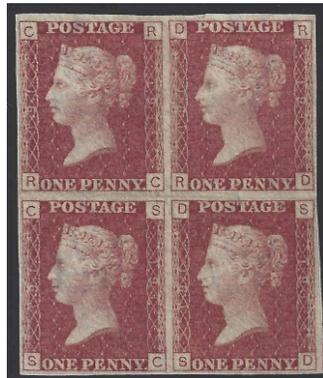


deep rose-red on blued security paper, original gum (SL)

Dr Perkins Blued Paper Trials: A 1½d stamp, plate 1, a 1d stamp, plate 121, and a 3d surface printed stamp, plate 5, exist on a blued paper that was noted by Pearson Hill as being "Printed on chemically prepared paper for Dr Perkins plan of chemical obliteration."

1878 / 1879 Fugitive Ink Trials

Plate 191



rose-red shade, block (RC/SD)
the largest known unused multiple

Ink Trials: Trials were conducted in 1878 and 1879 in an effort to test lighter and more fugitive inks. Sheets were printed imperforate and on watermarked paper. Plates currently in production were utilized and most examples bear trial cancels. The above block is the largest known unused multiple (an adjoining pair and three singles also exist).

Great Britain

Halfpenny Engraved Plate Numbers

A new denomination halfpence stamp was issued October 1, 1870. The stamps were printed in sheets of 480 (24 rows by 20 columns) with check letters running from AA to TX at foot. The watermark was a script "half penny" that extended over three stamps. Plates numbered between 1 and 20 were utilized.

Imprimaturs

Plate 3



28 Jun 1870
(TJ)

Plate 4



4 Jul 1870
(TO)

Plate 5



19 Jul 1870
(TO)

Plate 8



26 Jul 1870
(TO)

Plate 14



30 Apr 1875
(AJ)

Plate 19



16 Nov 1877
(TH)

Plate 20



31 Dec 1878
(AO)

Imperforate Issued Stamps

Plate 1



original gum
(SW-SX)

Great Britain

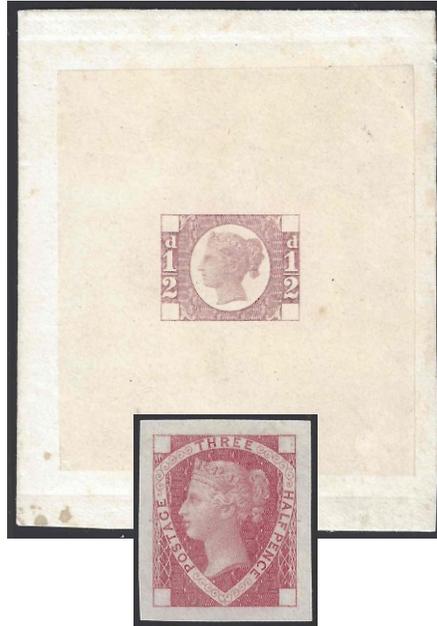


Secondary Die Proofs

In 1871 Perkins, Bacon & Co was requested to print die proofs for each of the ½d, 1d, 1½d, and 2d line engraved denominations. These proofs were secondary proofs from impressions taken from transfer rolls.



"OLD ORIGINAL"
(reversed) and "1" at foot



albino "NEW DIE" at top

Postscript

The final line-engraved plate was registered on December 31, 1878. From that point until 1913, all values were surface-printed. Afterward, from the 1913 series printed by Waterlow until 1970, all values over one shilling were recess-printed. No imprimaturs of the 1913 printing are in private hands. Below is the complete set of imprimaturs printed by De La Rue & Co. in 1915 from Waterlow plates. Each item has a "BPMA" backstamp of the British Postal Museum Archives.

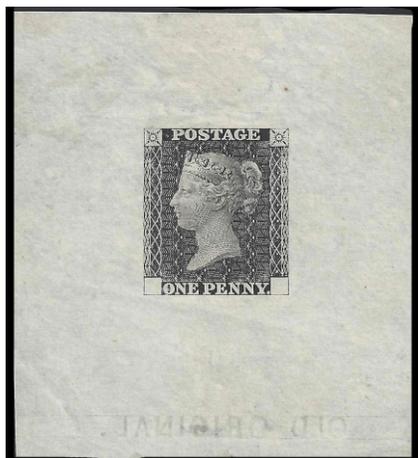
Imprimaturs



1915 set recess-printed by De La Rue & Co. from Waterlow plates, original gum, never hinged

Great Britain

Secondary Die Proofs



albino "OLD ORIGINAL"
and reversed "1" at foot
Die I



reversed "2" above

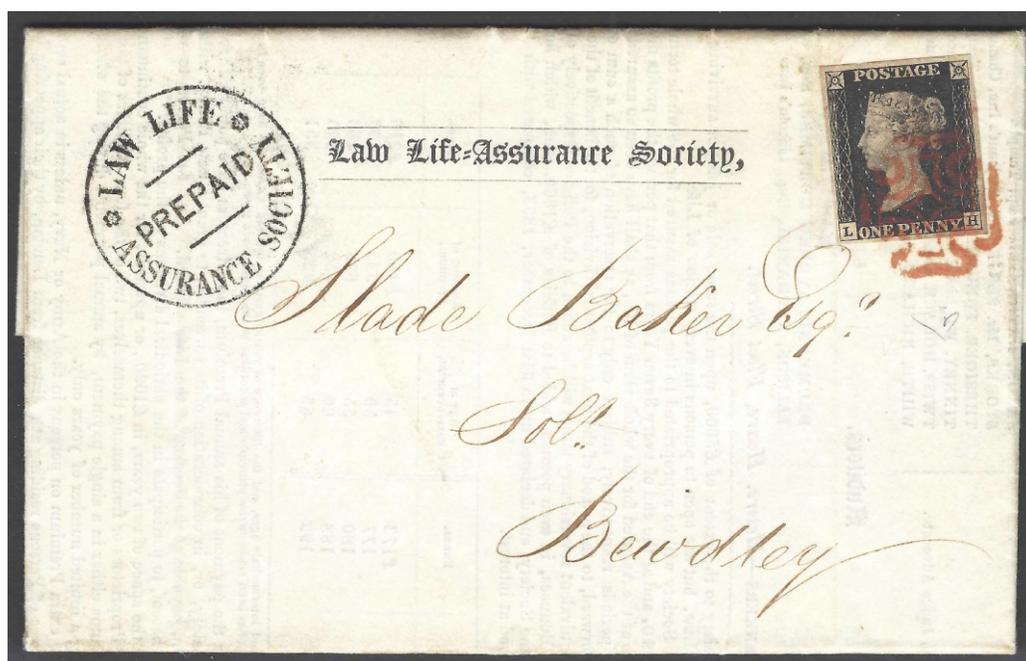
Great Britain

One Penny Black

Used Examples



2 November 1840 Exeter to Bristol, prepaid 1d, Exeter Penny Post datestamp
"Fore Street Penny Post" handstamp, Bristol arrival backstamp, **plate 5** (DH)
letter is an inquiry to agents of the Steamship *Great Western* regarding departure date

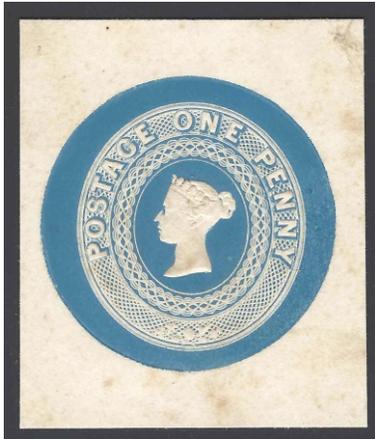


17 October 1840 London to Bewdley, prepaid 1d, **plate 6** (LH)
letter is renewal notice from Law Life-Assurance Society

Great Britain



Postal Embossed Envelopes



William Wyon 1d blue embossed essay on card that was proposed for use as a postage stamp in February 1840. Although not adopted for the 1840 issue of stamps, it was later utilized for the issue of first embossed postal stationery that replaced the unpopular Mulready designs.

13 February 1841 London to
Alveston, Warwickshire, prepaid
1d pink entire
a very early use
(issued 10 February 1841)



2d blue entire
13 March 1842
Exeter local use
a fine example
ex Yates