



Factsheet G20 General Series

Revised September 2010

House of Commons Information Office

The House of Commons Post Office

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Communications are vital to Members of Parliament and though nowadays, the telephone, the fax machine, and computer networks have an increasing role to play, the mail is still extremely important to them. In the past, of course, it was the sole organ of communication other than word of mouth, and the House took - and still takes - great pains to organise its postal service to the maximum utility to Members.

The idea of this **Factsheet** is to describe the current work and history of the Office, and to illustrate past and present examples of House of Commons prepaid envelopes and cancellations, about which numerous enquiries are received.

This Factsheet is available on the Internet through:
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The House of Commons Post Office Today

The staff of the Post Office consists of the Postmaster, Deputy Postmaster, Customer Service Manager, Counters Branch Manager and 37 staff.

It maintains the Members' post office in the Members Lobby, offering all the services available at an external Post Office counter. In addition, Members and their staff can collect incoming mail here.

The Central Lobby Post Office offers the same facilities to the Palace of Westminster passholders, but incoming mail is not available for collection.

The Post Office in Portcullis House building (which replaced one in 1 Parliament St), provides the same functions for the new Parliamentary building.

The sorting office located in the lower ground floor of Portcullis House, despatches outgoing mail collected in the posting boxes in the Palace. It also sorts, and, importantly, redirects as necessary, incoming mail for Members and staff of the House.

Mail is generally taken to the South London Mail Centre for despatch where it is afforded every priority. The Post Office picks up the outgoing mail in Star Chamber Court where a special mail-van turntable is in use.

This Factsheet now looks at the history of postal services in the House of Commons.

History of Postal Services in the House of Commons

It was possibly during the Civil War that the mail first assumed such an importance in the House, when at times the House was effectively directing the war effort of one side. Letters were brought into the Chamber, whether by special messenger or not, and might be taken into immediate consideration. On 24 August 1643, for instance, letters were received and read that had been written in Northampton and Warwick on the 22nd of August.

Naturally, most of this mail would have been received from army messengers, but there was also routine mail, from town corporations and private individuals - in 1644 the House appointed Edmund Prideaux to be Master of Posts, Couriers and Messengers for the whole country, charged particularly with "*keeping of good intelligence between the Parliament and their Forces*". He established a weekly conveyance for all mails to all parts of the country.

The practice of taking mail into the Chamber continued after the Restoration, with the postman (or letter carrier) visiting daily for the purpose. However, this delivery caused a certain amount of disruption. One can imagine Members acquainting their fellows of the latest news from the letters they had been given. Therefore, the House resolved on 20 December 1695, "*That the Post-Master attending this House do not at any time deliver out any Letters to any Member during the Sitting of the House*".

Instead, a series of boxes were provided outside the Chamber, from where Members could collect their mail at whatever times they wished. However, either the boxes did not have secure

locks, or they were not supervised, because in 1698, one Richard Frogatt was apprehended with a large collection of Members' letters in his rooms. Transmission of money by post was common in the years before cheques and no doubt Frogatt had stolen the letters in the hope of finding remittances. A select committee was appointed to investigate and found that Frogatt's thefts had taken place systematically over a fortnight: on 27 May 1698 they reported fully to the House, recommending:

That, as a proper Means to prevent the Intercepting of Letters belonging to the Members of the House, for the future, the Person appointed to bring them from the General Post-Office shall constantly every Post-day attend two Hours, at the least, at the Place appointed for the Delivery of the said Letters; and take care, during his Stay there, to deliver the same to the several Members, to whom they shall be directed, and no other.

That the said Officer, upon his going away, shall give such Letters as shall remain undelivered, to one of the Servants belonging to the House; who shall take care to deliver the said Letters to the several Members, to whom they are directed, their known Servants, or to such Persons who shall produce a Note under the Hands of the Members who shall send the same.

That a more convenient Place should be appointed, from whence the Letters may be delivered; or that the Place from whence they are at present delivered be enlarged.

The House agreed, and the Attorney-General was ordered to prosecute Frogatt (he had escaped but had been recaptured). The outcome of the case is unknown.

Thus effectively the first Post Office of the House was established and the order of 1698 survives, with modification, in Standing Orders Nos. 144 and 145 of today: especially the requirement at the rise of the House to *"lock up such letters as shall remain undelivered"*.

In 1727, in a change to the Sessional Orders, the hours of attendance of the postmaster were fixed so as to be 10 am to 1 pm and for two hours after the rising of the House. In 1729, 5 pm to 7 pm opening of the post office was instituted on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays (probably for the despatch of long-distance post).

An order (now SO No 146) was adopted in 1730 which provided that mail addressed just to the House, when opened by Mr Speaker, should be communicated to the House as a whole, if he thought fit. This is the first mention of "Insufficiently addressed mail"; then, no doubt, as now people wrote simply to "The House of Commons".

The House revised its rules on the opening of the Post Office in 1806 and instituted Monday to Saturday attendance from 10am to 7pm.

GPO records provide a glimpse of the duties of the Postmaster or "Deliverer of Letters" to the House at the turn of the 19th century. William Coltson Junior succeeded his father Francis (appointed 1768) in 1781. His duties were to sort letters into Members' pigeon holes and redirect them if necessary. His GPO salary was £560 per annum and he held also an appointment at the Lombard Street Head Letter Office which was supplemented by 6s 8d a day for attendance in the House.

The Committee of 1833, the great reforming committee which swept away much of the 18th century organisation of the House as a whole, had considered the postal system unsatisfactory.

They had recommended that “*a Person, to be appointed by the Postmaster General, and under the usual Post Office regulations ... should be in attendance during the Session ...*” This undoubtedly laid the cornerstone of the modern House Post Office organisation.

In 1835, the Committee on House Offices had resolved “*the delivery and despatch of general and 2d letters at the House are susceptible of general improvement*”. They requested the Treasury and Postmaster General to take action on the matter. In any case, in 1836, the House appears to have placed its own branch office in the charge of an Officer of the House. Records of this are scant but such an arrangement did not last beyond 1839. An officer of the Post Office, “of the senior class of Letter Carrier” was again appointed in 1839 and in 1841 this was Henry Kendal.

Two well-known House of Commons figures were involved in postal matters. Despatch of letters, which were taken to the Bridge Street Receiving House, had never been the Postmaster or Postman's responsibility and was in the hands of John Bellamy (see **Factsheet G19** The Refreshment Department of the House of Commons) who often haggled about payments due to him. Shortly before prepaid penny postage was introduced in 1840, Thomas Vardon, the Librarian of the Commons (who had made himself well-nigh indispensable in a number of areas not entirely within his responsibility) sold prepaid covers for Members' use (see below). Postcards were still supplied through the Library as late as 1904. Stamps presumably went on sale at the House after their advent in May 1840, though we have no record of who sold them.

The Post Office Counter in the House

An office for the sale of Money Orders was established in 1853, and in 1869 it was agreed they could be paid as well as issued. A curious Post Office regulation of 1864 provided that the Postmaster was to take no part in the election for any Member of the House - this of course being before the Secret Ballot was established.

In 1884, the Post Office moved from a small room at the south-west corner of the Members Lobby, where it had been established after the post fire rebuilding of the Palace, to a larger one at the south-east corner. It further expanded in 1892 when the Lobby Bar was moved to the Lower Waiting Hall. At the same time, the Telegraph Office in the Central Lobby was instituted. In 1901 and 1906 the offices were enlarged. There was no separate Post Office Counter for the Lords.

The business of the Office in Session in 1891 included 343 Money Orders issued, 127 paid; 7,429 Postal Orders issued, 453 cashed; 51,637 telegrams sent out, 17,258 received; 1,390 letters registered, 920 parcels despatched, and Express Pneumatic Messages, 220 sent (in 6 months).

By 1925, the establishment consisted of the Postmaster, eight CC & T clerks and 5 postmen. In an interview with the *Post Annual*, the Postmaster mentioned the problems of bulk mail. The sending of miscellaneous material to Members was then, as now, a problem. One week, 30 sacks of tins of toffees - one for each MP, had been received; followed a few days later with 30 sacks of cigarettes from the same source. The Postmaster remarked on the large increase in the numbers of lady secretaries collecting Members' mail. At this time the “tube” (the pneumatic despatch system) had been extended to the Press Gallery and the telegraph was still important - on occasions, speeches would have to be telegraphed from dictation. The last inland telegram from the Palace was despatched at 1700 on 1 October 1982, when the service was

discontinued.

After the bombing of 1941, the Post Office was temporarily installed in the blocked-off corridor between the Central and Members' Lobbies. The new office, on three levels, at the north-western corner of the Members' Lobby, was opened in 1950.

September 1950 saw the introduction of special uniforms and a distinctive badge (the former of worsted serge) for House of Commons postmen, by the personal order of the Postmaster-General, rather against the wishes of his officials. In October 1950 a claim for uniforms of a similar quality was received at St Martins-le-Grand from Buckingham Palace postmen.

Franking

In 1656, the House had resolved that letters sent to any part of England, Scotland and Ireland by Members, as well as those received by them, be free of postage. This continued until 1693, when the Postmasters-General issued a warrant permitting the privilege only to the Secretaries of State. Obviously the House took a dim view of this curtailment of its facilities and only two days later the Postmasters-General had to issue a retraction and allow Members to continue to enjoy free postage during the Session and for forty days before and after it.

Widespread abuse and forgery led to the imposition of new rules in 1705, when a weight limit of 2ozs was imposed and in 1715 when Members were required to write the whole address in their own handwriting. There is no evidence, however, that all the abuses ceased.

Up to 1764, the privilege was a matter of custom and practice but in that year by the Franking Act (4 Geo 3 cap 24) it was given a statutory basis (Forgers, incidentally, were liable to seven years' transportation).

An amending Act was passed in 1784 (24 Geo 3 [Sess 2] cap 8) to require a Member additionally to write, in his own handwriting, the name of the post town of despatch and the date in words. By an Act of 1795 (35 Geo 3 Cap 53) the maximum weight was reduced to 1oz, and among other restrictions, no Member was to send more than 10 nor receive more than 15 letters free a day.

Officers of the House generally had the same privileges as Members; they were not limited to any particular number of letters and their maximum weight was 2ozs. In 1837, there were 3,084,000 Parliamentary franked letters transmitted. The House of Commons Library possesses an excellent set of franks of the early 19th century. An example is illustrated as fig (a). The system came to an end on 9 January 1840 and franked letters posted on the 10th were surcharged. Ministers' franks continued (fig b) but their Departments were charged. However Departmental cyphers were retained for the Speaker and, through him, all officers of the House when using the inland post for official business. The last vestige of the franking system is the signing of envelopes in the bottom left hand corner by the Chief Whips (fig b¹).

Envelopes and Stationery

On 16 January 1840 special envelopes sold by Vardon (see p4 above) were issued headed "To be posted at the Houses of Parliament only". There were two main types, the more common bearing a printed heading "Post Paid - ONE PENNY - Weight not to exceed ½oz" (see fig c) and "Post Paid - Two pence. Weight not to exceed 1oz" both printed in black on whitish papers. Within these two main types there are minor varieties, such as the presence or absence of a line under the printed heading on the envelope and, if a line was present, its length and position in relation to the words. This shows that several printings took place, even though these, the first type of parliamentary envelope, were only in use for about three weeks. The latest date of use known to use is 6 FE 40 (a two-pence copy). New envelopes were issued with separate headings for the "House of Commons" and "House of Lords". A copy of the "House of Lords" envelope is known postmarked 23 January 1840. The "House of Commons" envelopes were issued early in February 1840 (exact date uncertain but copies are known postmarked 7 February 1840), printed in black on a variety of whitish papers. The "House of Lords" 1d envelopes were printed in an orange-red ink on cream paper. For each House a "One Penny" and a "Two-pence" value was issued. Very few of these envelopes have survived, so they are eagerly sought by collectors, particularly the very scarce twopenny values. Of these, the greatest rarity is the twopenny "House of Lords" envelope. The use of these free envelopes for Members of both Houses of Parliament was withdrawn at the same time as the use of postage stamps was introduced nationwide on 6 May 1840.

Notepaper and stationery, embossed "House of Commons Library" was provided free for use by Members in the Library of the House of Commons but postage had to be paid on these. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, probably after postcards had been introduced officially by the Post Office in October 1870, similarly embossed postcards were also provided for use by Members (fig d). Although the design of such stationery has been modified gradually down the years little changed and Members were provided with all the unstamped stationery they needed until 1969. Then prepaid envelopes in assorted sizes were issued free for use by Members of both Houses (see below).

Prepaid envelopes have been available during the present century. At first, their use was confined to Members (for items to Government Departments, nationalised industries, local authorities, etc) and to departments of the House (who used them for return mailings, acknowledgments, etc, not intended for posting in the House). Later, from October 1969 the House took the decision to provide them free for all purposes to Members. Similarly, postcards were provided from 1971. A present day example is shown at fig (e). Those for House of Commons departmental use (the earliest yet seen dates from 1939) bore a circular [later, to accommodate phosphor lines, a straightened out ellipsoid] device bearing the words "Official Paid" and the crown (see fig f). Very few of the earlier type have survived. After the advent of 1st and 2nd Class post the device was preceded by 1 or 2 in an oblong frame.

An interesting point is that in the first year under availability of Official Paid envelopes (1969-70) 1,400,000 1st Class were distributed, but only 7,000 2nd Class. The latter were therefore withdrawn for some years.

At the end of the eighteenth and throughout the nineteenth centuries mail from the Houses of Parliament was normally taken to the London Chief Office for date-stamping (although a few items were occasionally taken to the Westminster office for this purpose). The details of how the mails were taken to the Chief Office and by what route, so far as they are known, and their significance are discussed by Willcocks. In the early part of the nineteenth century, some of the mail was taken to Charing Cross and stamped there.

The first strictly parliamentary postmark is the handstamp "HP". This was used in the London Twopenny Post Receiving House at the Houses of Parliament. Two sizes exist, the smaller being approximately 7 x 13mm and the larger 9 x 19mm. Of those examples surviving today, the smaller type appears to be the more common, although both types are scarce. The small type is known on covers dated 1825-1834, while an example of the larger type is known on an 1843 entire letter sheet bearing an imperforated 1d red postage stamp (see illustration). These hand stamps were made of wood and tended to wear quickly, so it is not surprising to find that minor varieties of impression occur (fig g and h).

In the past it has been suggested that the initials "HP" stood for "House of Peers". Trapnell showed that this is not the correct interpretation and that "HP" stands for "Houses of Parliament". See at end for examples of various cancellations. The letters "HP" have never been in general use as an abbreviation for the Palace, but it may well have been the obliterator so marked which gave the idea for the brand name of the famous sauce.

The next Parliamentary postmark (fig j) is even more scarce now and, since only two copies, one in red and one in black, are definitely known, its purpose is uncertain. Issued on 10 February 1843, it consists simply of the name HOUSE OF COMMONS between double arcs around a blank (sometimes called "dumb") centre (see illustration). It is possibly significant that both the copies known are on letters to overseas addresses, the red copy to Corfu (18 MR 48) and the black to Frankfurt (29 JY 53).

On 23 March 1859 the next Parliamentary hand-stamps were issued. To cancel the postage stamps two obliterators, "HP/1" and "HP/2", were issued at the same time as a new circular date-stamp which, significantly, bore the inscription "HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT S.W." (fig k). The latter was primarily intended as a back-stamp both to put on the reverse side of other letters (as a back-stamp) to indicate when they passed through the post office. Judging by the small number of surviving copies, neither the obliterator nor the date stamp were often used. "HP/2" is known only from the Post Office issuing record book and has never been seen on a letter.

The Post Office made every effort to enable late letters from the Houses of Parliament to catch the last despatch of the evening. Some of those which arrived too late at the Chief Office to be cancelled with the usual handstamp were postmarked with a range of unusual ones, although none of these was exclusive to parliamentary mail. Among these special handstamps were a small group of similar marks designed by Levick for use in his "Rotary Obliterating Stamp" (fig l), approved for payment in 1869.

It was on 2 March 1882 that a new type of Parliamentary postmark was first issued - a so-called duplex mark because it combined in one hand-stamp an obliterator in the right-hand part to cancel the postage stamp and a circular date-stamp in the left part to record the place of origin and date of postage (fig m). In the centre of the obliterator part was the number 40 which was exclusive to the Houses of Parliament (and one of the second series of more than 900 individually-numbered hand-stamps issued to post offices all over the country). Most of the mail from both Houses was still taken to the London Chief Office for cancellation but a few items of parliamentary mail were cancelled with this duplex handstamp. The indications for its use are not known but it continued (perhaps intermittently) until at least 1911 and, probably, until the next new hand-stamp for Parliament was issued about 1912.

Before describing this, mention must be made of an unique series of postage due (surcharge) hand-stamps issued to the post office at the House of Commons on 28 March 1889. Each

includes the initials "HCSW" and the sum to be charged. The records issued book shows that 12 handstamps were issued with values from ½d to 6d, in ½d increments. We have only seen 1d and 1½d marks surviving on their original envelope. Such marks are very scarce. In the three examples known to us, each re-addressed to Lloyd George in North Wales, the charge was raised for redirection of the item to an address away from Parliament (at a time when forwarding of an item incurred the same charge as the original posting) (fig n).

One other type of nineteenth century parliamentary circular date stamp must be described here (fig p). These were probably primarily introduced for use on telegrams, but were sometimes used to cancel postage stamps on letters or parcel labels. The characteristic feature of these is the presence of a stop between each of the words thus "HOUSE · OF · COMMONS". In the nineteenth century two varieties are known, of 23mm and 25mm diameter. A similar 24mm one was used early in the twentieth century. Its original date of introduction is not known.

Twentieth century hand stamps

In spite of the growing quantities of mail posted at the Houses of Parliament, all items cancelled at the House of Commons post office there were struck by hand. More than another half century was to elapse before the House of Lords had its own postmark.

About 1912 a double-ring circular date stamp, with two 2mm wide arcs included between the inner and outer rings, was introduced including the words "HOUSE OF COMMONS S.W." (fig q). This continued in use until about 1932, when the next type began use, incorporating the initials "SW1". This had short 3mm wide arcs (fig r) and continued in use until 1946. In 1945 a third variety began use, having long 3mm wide arcs and "SW1" (fig s) which was used until 1960.

In 1956, for the first time, separate hand-stamps were introduced incorporating HOUSE OF LORDS SW1 and HOUSE OF LORDS SW1 OFFICIAL PAID (illustrated), both stamps having, new, thin arcs. About 1961 similar new hand-stamps with thin arcs were introduced with "HOUSE OF COMMONS B.O.S.W.1" and "HOUSE OF COMMONS B.O.S.W.1 OFFICIAL PAID". Each of these four handstamps exists in two different dies, numbered "1" and "2". The die 2 stamps show no time and are for use on 2nd Class mail, while die 1 handstamps do include the time of posting and are for first-class post (fig f¹).

Following a tradition established as far back as the early nineteenth century, even before postage stamps were introduced in 1840, postmarks are still applied in red for items prepaid {"Official Paid"}, while items needing a charge or bearing postage stamps were, and still are, cancelled in black.

For use on the post office counter a small (24mm) circular date stamp is used, "HOUSE OF COMMONS SW1", with a * above the date (fig t). This has been in use for many years. Its date of introduction is not known. At least four dies exist, individually numbered "1" etc at the foot. An earlier version, with "SW" at the foot, was in use in 1908.

A "HOUSE OF COMMONS" rubber packet hand-stamp also is in use. Its year of introduction is not known. Earlier versions of this bore the simple address at the foot "SW1" but more recent ones show the full post code "SW1A OAA" (fig f¹), the first parliamentary postmark to include this. The similar handstamp used for mail posted in parliamentary buildings separate from the Palace of Westminster, in line with other marks from such locations since 30 September 1991, simply has "SW".

Special rubber handstamps were introduced for registered mail in the second half of the twentieth century (probably circa 1960), having an oval form and bearing the inscription "REGISTERED HOUSE OF COMMONS B.O.". Two versions have been used, each having a code number, 1 or 2, in the top part (fig w). They are not often used because the postal clerks prefer to use the counter circular datestamp which is always on hand for a wide range of tasks (such as date-stamping certificates of posting) for registered and recorded delivery mail.

Parcel post has had its own special treatment throughout the century. Continuing a practice established in Victorian times, parcels had affixed to them a label indicating the place of posting. To this the postage stamp was applied and cancelled with a hand-stamp. So far as we are aware, only one such label is known from the House of Commons Branch Office (fig x), used in 1908. In this the postage stamp has been cancelled by a smudged continuous cancellation applied by roller. It appears to incorporate the initials "SWDO" ("South West District Office"), of which the House of Commons post office was a branch office.

More recently, in line with national practice, large rectangular rubber handstamps have been used for parcel post. The design for each successive hand-stamp has varied a little, but the basic information it includes is essentially the same - "HOUSE OF COMMONS B.O. PARCEL POST LONDON SW1" (fig y). Because these are made of rubber, they tend to wear out far more rapidly than steel ones and so need to be replaced more often.

Parliamentary Proceedings

Long after the free franking system for Members of both Houses was abolished, Parliamentary Proceedings continued to be despatched by post, free of charge to those entitled to receive them (fig z). Instead of a post-paid envelope or the free postmarking, proceedings were sent out in wrappers - lengths of paper to be wrapped around the printed matter. On one end of the wrapper was printed "Par. Pro. To be Posted at the House of Commons only POST PAID". Because the wrapper was normally torn open in order to remove the printed matter from within it, examples of complete wrappers are very scarce and even the printed part only (usually called a 'front') is now very hard to acquire. Excluding any particular variety, such wrapper fronts are about as common now as the special envelopes for Members of the House of Commons February-May 1840.

Even in the years 1840-1860 many minor varieties of these wrappers are known as a result of reprintings. The practice of mailing Parliamentary Proceedings in wrappers has continued ever since.

Machine Cancellations

The ever-growing quantities of mail necessitated the use of a mechanical method of cancelling and dating mail. Stamped mail, and most small items posted by Members in preprinted ('*Official Paid*' 1977-84) envelopes has since 1965 been put through an automatic facer and cancellator. Similarly mail bearing the official cyphers (Speaker, for the Commons, and Clerk of the Parliaments/Lord Great Chamberlain, in the Upper House) is machine stamped in red '*House of Commons SW1 Official Paid*'. Larger items in both categories are hand-stamped. Mail with the cyphers is weighed in bulk to ascertain the postage to be paid by the House authorities. The Departmental Cyphers (of which there are several [see appendix II]) (like Members' special envelopes) are good for transmission to Great Britain, the Channel Islands, Isle of Man, and Northern Ireland. Like the franks they replaced in 1840, they cannot be used on mail going

abroad. A vestige of franking remains with transmission of mail from the offices of the Whips, in both Houses, where the (printed) signature suffices. The cyphers can be used only for mail posted in the Precincts. Since the division of the service into 1st and 2nd class, the cyphers have been accompanied by a boxed 1 for first and 2 for second class mail. The Second Class variety are very rarely used.

From 30 September 1991, mail collected in the Parliamentary outbuildings has been cancelled "House of Commons SW", an interesting reversion to the pre-1916 practice, omitting the postal district number, but for the sake of differentiation.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to the Postmaster, Mark Pearce and Mrs Jean Farrugia, of the Post Office Archives for their help with this factsheet.

In addition, thanks to D H Trapnell for the section on on cancellations and help with previous revisions of this factsheet.

Archive Copy

Appendix A

Postmasters of the House of Commons

H Lawford	1871-9
E M Pike	1879-1903
J Lincoln	1903-15
W H Webb	1915-21
G H Broadbent	1921-6
T R Thirtle	1926-31
J G Roberts	1931-6
H J P Berry	1936-7
P J Harrison (acting)	1937
J E Webster	1937-44
D W White	1944-8
R H J Curran	1948-54
G W Barker	1954-62
W G Birch	1962-72
A Brazier	1972-9
C E Tomkins	1979-88
J Arnold	1988-97
L Ward	1997-2001
M Pearce	2001-2007
M. Morrish	2007- date

Letter Carriers to the House before 1871 (incomplete list)

Appointed 1768	Fras Coltson
Appointed 1781	Chas Coltson
Appointed 1799	Wm Coltson
<i>circa</i> 1841	Hy Kendal
Appointed 1854	Hy Lawford

Appendix B

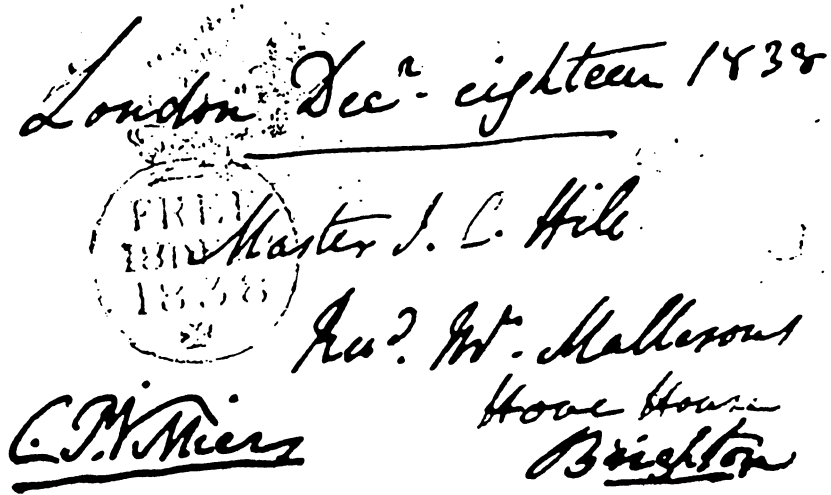
Franks

Archive Copy

APPENDIX

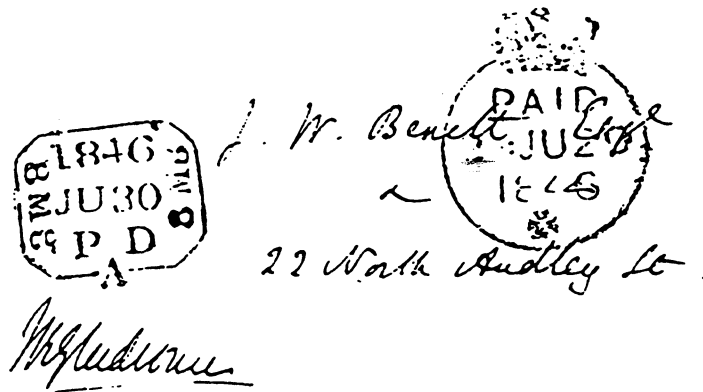
Franks

fig a



A frank issued by Charles Villiers MP on 18 December 1838. Villiers was still in the Commons in the '90s, when he was Father of the House.

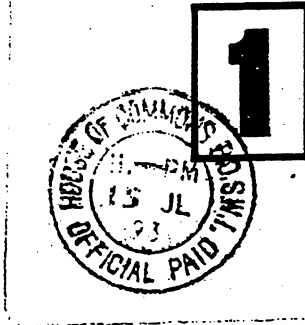
fig b



A Minister's frank, issued on 29 June 1846, after the end of the general franking system, by W E Gladstone, in his own hand.

fig b1

The frank of Chief Whip Richard Ryder, issued July 1993

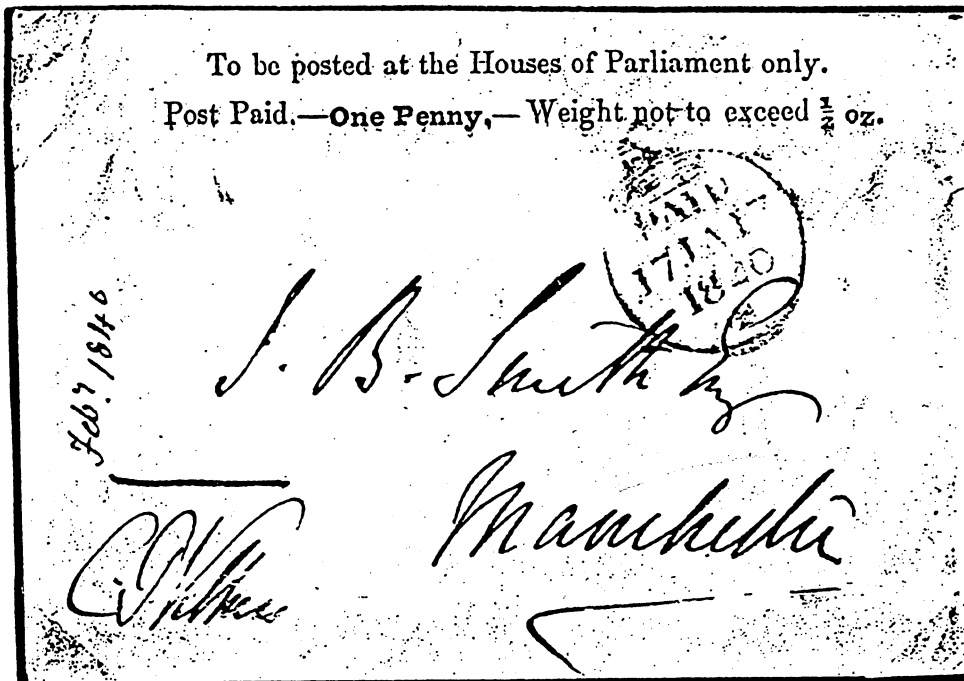


DAVID B. INNS ESQ
PUBLIC INFORMATION
OFFICE
HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON
SW1A 0AA

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Richard Ryder'.

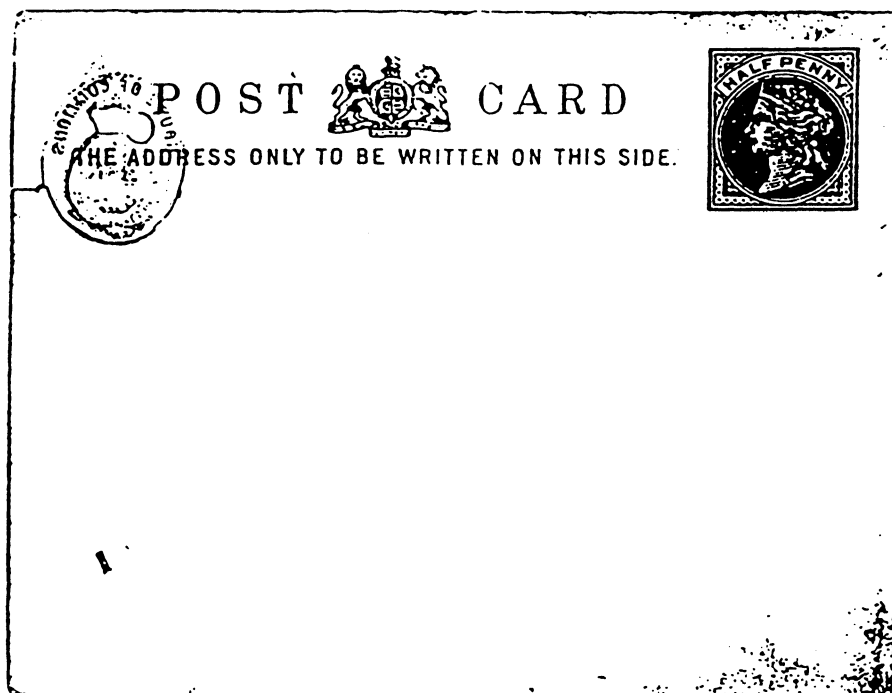
fig c

Cover to be posted at the Houses of Parliament only. Post Paid 1d.



Envelopes and cards

fig d



A prepaid postcard, from the 1890s

fig e



Dr. C. C. Pond
Head of Public Information
1 Derby Gate
Westminster
SW1A 2DG.

A present-day post paid cover, 1st class

On Her Majesty's Service

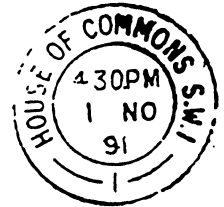
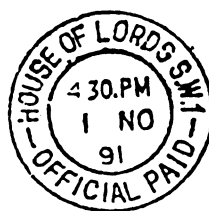
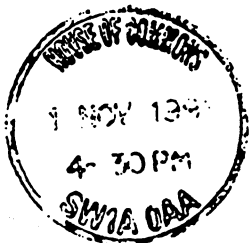
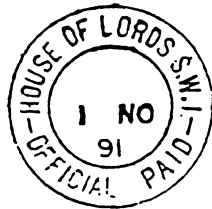
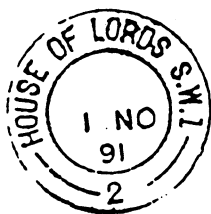


fig f

The Librarian
Reference Division,
Library,
House of Commons,
London, S.W.1

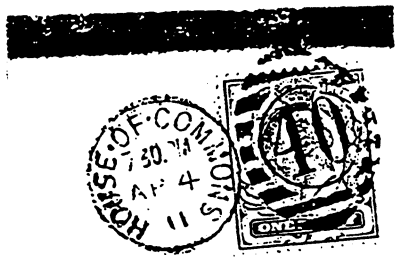
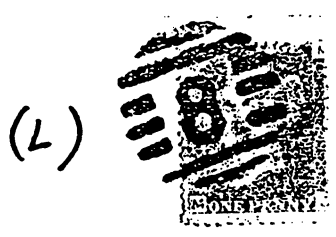
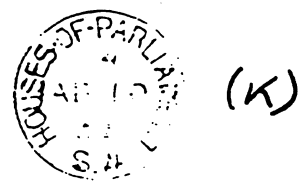
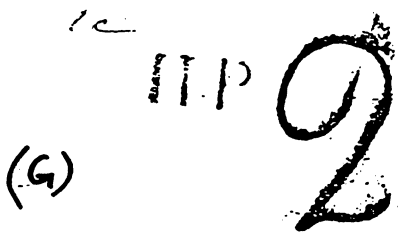
A departmental Official Paid envelope, dating from 1952

fig f'

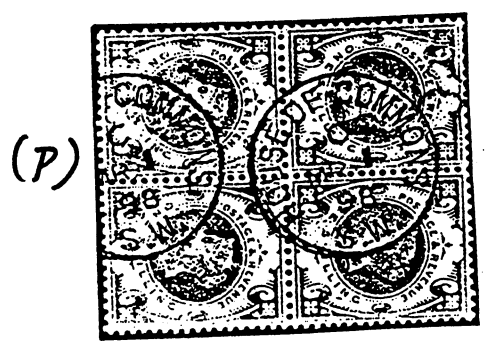
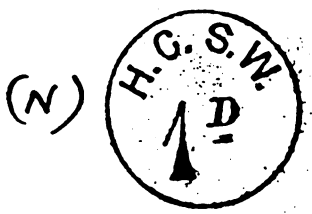


Present-day handstamps used in the Palace of Westminster

Cancellations



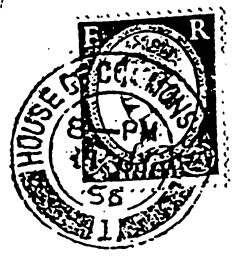
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POST PAID.

Mr. Alan Johnson

PAID
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1843

J. J. Peter M.

Departmental Cyphers (a selection)

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Gr.

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Further Reading

R M Willcocks
England's Postal History to 1840 with notes
on Scotland, Wales and Ireland
Published by the author, 1975

David H Trapnell
Some Question Concerning the Postal History
of the House of Parliament in the Nineteenth
Century
Postal History No 225 p7, 1983

HC Westley
The Postal Cancellations of London 1840-
1890, p44
London 1950

K F Chapman
Parliamentary Envelopes
British Philatelic Bulletin No 30, pp106-7
January 1993

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Factsheet G20 The House of Commons Post Office

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