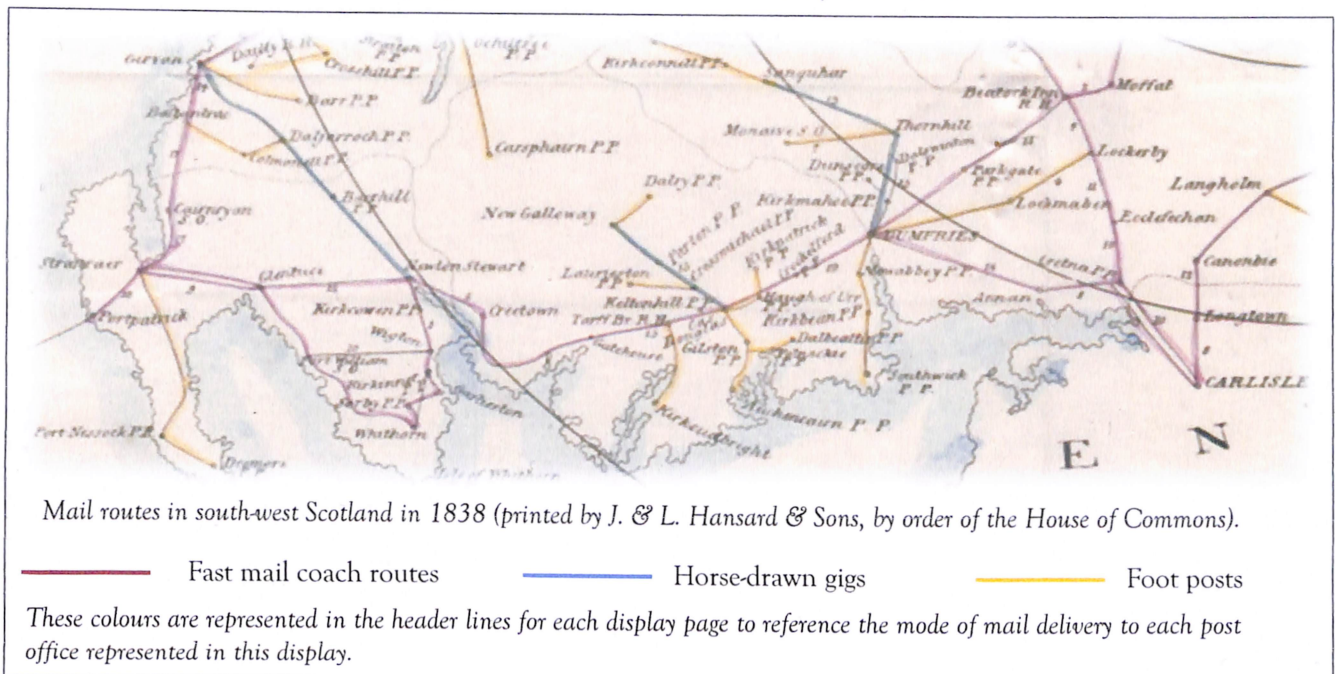


The Post Roads of South-West Scotland, c. 1750-1850

A horse-drawn mail coach service between Edinburgh and Portpatrick was introduced in 1805, a full twenty years after the first London to Edinburgh service, and connected with the Carlisle mail coach bringing post from London (via Annan) and with the mail routes from Edinburgh (via Moffat and Langholm). Prior to this the poor condition of many roads precluded its introduction. Mail coaches were withdrawn through the 1840s as the new steam railway network developed. Here, we represent the postal marks and postage stamps from post offices along these mail routes and from peripheral towns and villages served by horse- and foot posts. This period saw an extension and integration of communication links, from slow and expensive 18th century private mails on the rough tracks of the south-west, via the age of the fast mail coach, eventually to a network of high-speed steam railways. This was a period of revolution in mail services.

Material is displayed westwards along the axis of communication from Moffat and Annan to Stranraer. Sections group material from the counties of Dumfriesshire, Kirkcudbrightshire and Wigtownshire.

- Items of special interest are highlighted with blue dot in the lower left sheet corner.



Key dates

- 1664 First Direct postal service from Dumfries to Edinburgh.
- 1805 Introduction of the Dumfries to Portpatrick fast mail coach
- 1840 The Uniform Penny Post democratises mail communications. Postage stamps introduced.
- 1848 Railway opened north from Carlisle to Lockerby and Moffat
- 1856 Castle Douglas to Portpatrick railway opened

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- Rockoff, D. & Jackson, M. (2006, 2011, 2012) *Encyclopaedia of the Maltese Cross* (3 Volumes) MJ Publications.
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1. Dumfries-shire



A large county in which the first Post Office was opened in XXXX

Early Dumfries mileage mark

Scottish Post Offices introduced mileage marks in 1808, twenty-four years after their introduction in England and Wales. Uniquely within Scotland, Dumfries adopted a mark in July 1801 (DS74) in the English format with the office name unboxed and the mileage from London boxed. The earliest known date of use is two weeks before this example. The mark is known until October 1808 after which Dumfries adopted the Scottish boxed rectangle.



Early Dumfries name stamp with ligature 'MF'

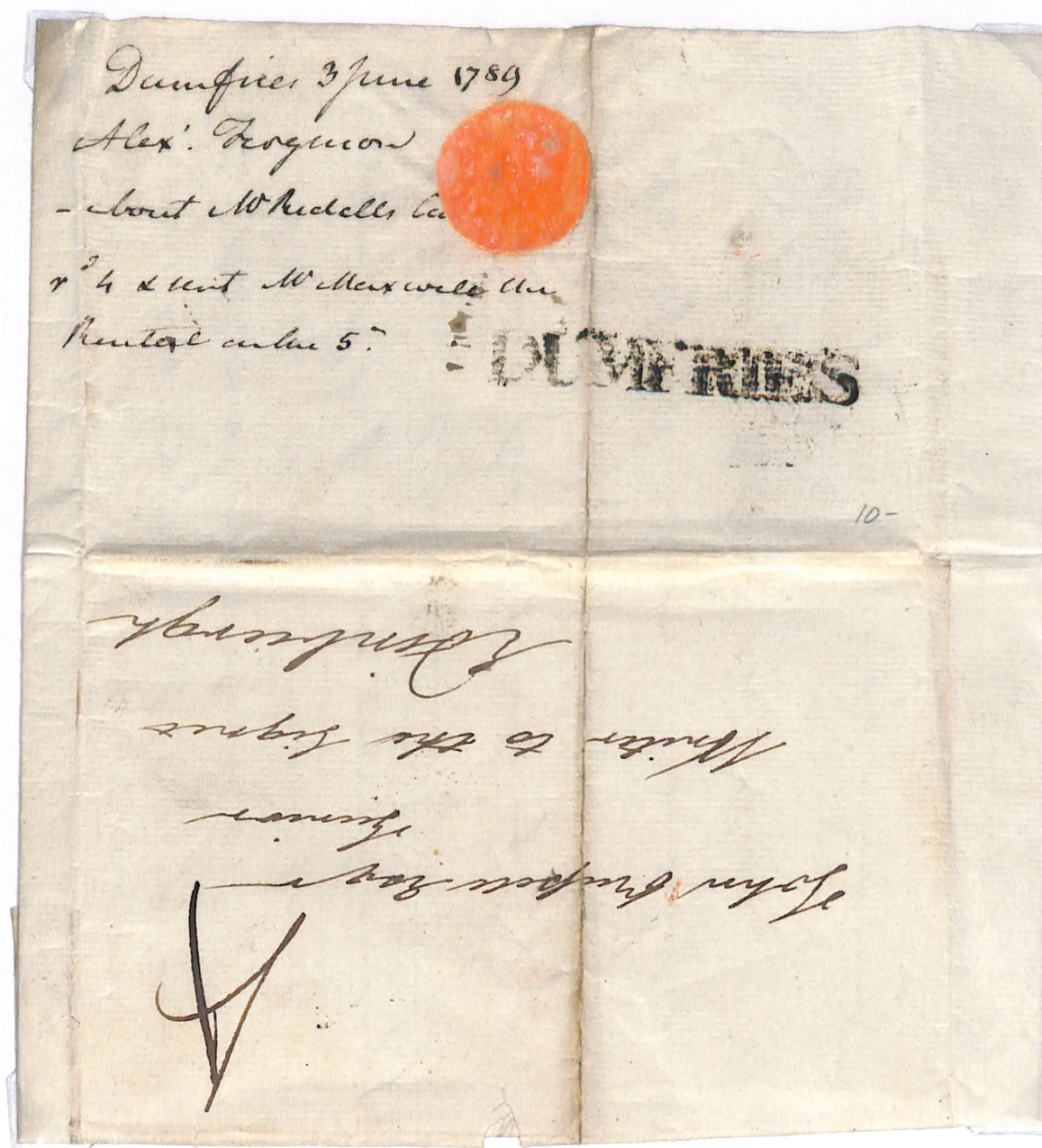
This is the second type of Dumfries name stamp (DS54) introduced in 1738 and known until 1761. It is distinctive for the sharing of a vertical stem by the letters 'M' and 'F'. Early examples are rare.



'DUMFRIES' name stamp with ligature 'MF'

Above an undated wrapper to Edinburgh, and below, a letter from Dumfries to Edinburgh, written on 12 December 1739. The letter was unpaid when posted to Edinburgh so a manuscript '2' was added to indicate the charge to be collected on receipt, the rate for a letter carried up to 50 miles.

Dumfries straight-line name stamp



'DUMFRIES' large-type name stamp

An unusually large name stamp was used at Dumfries and several types exist from as early as 1732. This wrapper dated 3 June 1789 carries the fifth in the series (DS60), with 6 mm tall letters and a wide 'U'. The letter was charged 4d to Edinburgh. According to Auckland & Stables, the earliest known use of this type was in January 1790, making this example, posted on 3 June 1789, the earliest known use by six months.



1796 wrapper to Gatehouse of Fleet

A wrapper posted to Gatehouse before the introduction of the fast mail coach. The wrapper, which presumably had inserted contents, was charged the exorbitant postage fee of six shillings and sixpence. This circular name stamp (DS64) was used between 1794 and 1798 and was the first of four similar types to be used at the Dumfries Post office. Mail transport at this time was hazardous, as this report from 14 April 1806 indicates:

"The mail coach was obstructed in coming out of Dumfries by some evil-disposed persons placing boughs or branches of trees acrossd the turnpike road, by which the ives of the passengers were put in peril and the mail much delayed." (Corrie 1912).

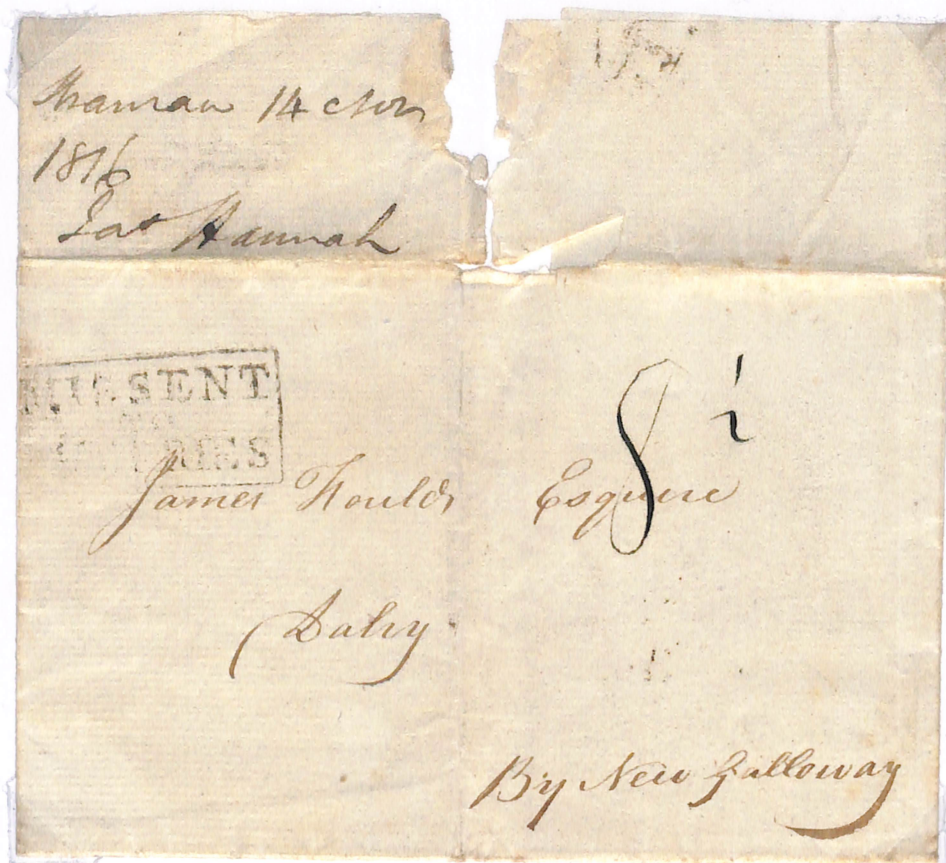
Dumfries '341 - C' and '341 - D' mileage marks

Dumfries mail generally carried the 'D' route code of the town, but 'C' for Carlisle strangely appeared between 1813 and 1818. After this the previous route code was reinstated and the distance reduced by one mile to 340 miles.



Posted on 12 February 1812 and stamped with the second type of Dumfries rectangular boxed mileage mark (DS78), along side a red dated circle showing transit through Edinburgh.

The date stamp appears to be 13 December 1812. This may be the earliest known date for this Dumfries mark. The high postage charge means the wrapper contained several inserted sheets.



An example of the rare 'MISSENT TO DUMFRIES' mark on an 1816 wrapper from Stranraer to Dalry which was mistakenly left on the mail coach at Castle Douglas instead of being transferred to the Ayrshire coach.



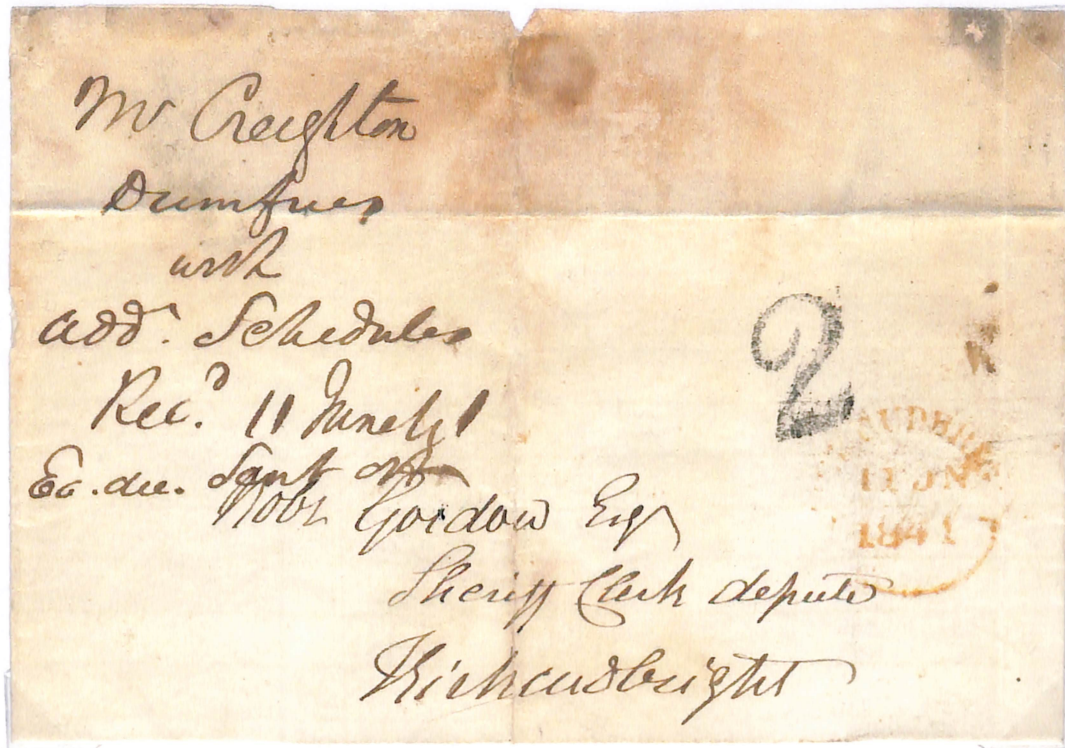
The third and latest type of the Dumfries boxed mileage mark (DS82) used from 1818 until early 1821. This example is dated 28 July 1818 in fluid brownish-black ink.



Letter from Rome via Austria to London redirected to Stranraer via Dumfries

An interesting letter bearing six different hand stamps from Italy, Austria, England and Scotland. The letter was posted in Rome on 31 December 1823 (large black 'ROMA' name stamp and passed through Austria (red boxed rectangle), collecting a dated circles on 19 January 1824 presumably on arrival in London. Here the address was corrected to 'Logan, Stranraer, By Dumfries' and a departure stamp of 20 January 1824 added. The three-line Dumfries mileage mark was stamped during transit through southern Scotland.

Dumfries handstruck '2'



Dumfries hand-struck '2' of the Universal Penny Post

A wrapper bearing a hand-struck '2' in black (DS140b), posted from Dumfries to Kirkcudbright on 11 June 1841 (Kirkcudbright dated circle receiving stamp in red). This mark was initially struck in red ink on its introduction in December 1839 (scarce) and in black from early in 1840. until 1849

The poor condition of many roads in south-west Scotland precluded the introduction of a fast horse-drawn mail coach until 1805, a full twenty years after the first London to Edinburgh service. The new service ran between Edinburgh and Portpatrick and connected with the Carlisle mail coach bringing post from London via Annan. Mail coaches were withdrawn through the 1840s as the new steam railway network developed.



THE DUMFRIES AND PORTPATRICK MAIL COACH (AT NINE MILE BAR, CROCKETFORD).

A very early but undated photograph of the mail coach from Dumfries taken at Nine Mile Bar (i.e. nine miles out from Dumfries) at the village of Crocketford, before arrival at Castle Douglas. (from Corrie, 1912). This service greatly improved communications with the far south-west of Scotland.

The 'common' Maltese cross of Dumfries

The common cross used in Dumfries has a large central diamond and one rather narrow inner cross arm, and the diamond and inner cross are seen in both thin- and thick-lined forms. This leads Rockoff & Jackson (p.94) to suggest that more than one canceller was used concurrently before 1843. However, variable line thickness (and indeed the length of the diamond's points) can be due simply to inking effects (the amount and viscosity of ink applied).



1d Black (Plate 3 SA)

A letter posted on 19 October 1840 from Dumfries to Annan. The stamp is cancelled by the red Maltese cross of Dumfries which pre-dated the introduction of the distinctive cross in 1843.

Distinctive Maltese cross of Dumfries

From 1840 to at least February 1843, Dumfries used a normal Maltese cross to cancel postage stamps. In June 1843 it began to use a distinctive cross of the style engraved by Kirkwood & Sons in Edinburgh, with similarities to other distinctive Scottish crosses such as Biggar, Kelso and Greenock. It is square-looking cross with almost straight sides and thin lines, a small short-pointed diamond and flared arms.



1d Red-brown Plate 26 TA to TD

A bottom-left sheet strip of four cancelled with three hurried and smudged strikes of the distinctive Dumfries cross, posted 16 June 1843 and thus early use of the new canceller.

Mulready lettersheet from Thomas Carlyle

The Dumfries Post Office used a common Maltese cross from May 1840 until early in 1843. Thereafter, the distinctive Maltese cross manufactured by Alexander Kirkwood in Edinburgh was employed. Two different cancellers were used in the early period. This example is a type described from 1841 by Rockoff & Jackson which was thick-lined and with a markedly pointed diamond.



A pencil portrait of Carlyle by Daniel Maclise (Fraser's "Gallery of Literary Characters" 1833).

A Mulready advertising sheet (Forme 2 A18) sent by the famous historian and philosopher Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881) from Dumfries to Ecclefechan. The reverse side is an advertising sheet for Scottish Provident Institution for Assurances and Annuities on Lives, printed in blue. A receiver's manuscript note reads "13 January 1841 Thomas Carlyle".

EDINBURGH,
No. 16 So. St DAVID St.

**THE
SCOTTISH PROVIDENT INSTITUTION,
FOR
ASSURANCES AND ANNUITIES ON LIVES**

GLASGOW,
No. 33 So. CHANAN St.

DIRECTORS.

Edinburgh Board.

JAMES HILL, Esq., Merchant.	CHARLES MORTON, Esq., W.S.
ALEX. GIFFORD, Esq., S.S.C.	ARCHD. THOMSON, Esq., Merchant.
ELIAS CHODD, Esq., W.S.	JOHN SCHEPHERD, Esq., Advocate.
THOM. HENDERSON, Esq., of Press.	JOHN LAUDER, Esq., Merchant.
ALBERT HEGGERT, Esq., Merchant.	WILLIAM FRASER, Esq., Printer.

Glasgow Board.

JAMES MARTIN, Esq., Merchant.	ROBERT BELL, Esq., Royal Bank.
ANDREW WINGATE, Esq., Merchant.	HUGH FLEMING, Esq., Merchant.
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LEX. JAMIESON, Esq., Merchant.

ROBERT TURNBULL, Esq., W.S.

JOHN HUNTER JUNR., Esq., W.S.

WM. JOHNSTON, Esq., Engineer.

J. SINCLAIR, Esq., City Chambers.

Rev. ROB. STEWART of Erskine.

ALEXANDER ABERCROMBY, Esq.

HENRY G. BELL, Esq., Advocate, Sheriff-substitute of Lanarkshire.

for Glasgow—DR JOHN G. FLEMING.

Bankers.—THE NATIONAL BANK OF SCOTLAND.

Medical Officer.—Sir GEORGE BALLINGALL, Professor of Surgery.

Solicitor.—WILLIAM POLLOCK, Esq., 13 York Place.

This is strictly a **MUTUAL ASSURANCE SOCIETY**, and its success has exceeded that of any similar establishment. Its profits are wholly divisible among the Members, on a new and equitable principle, peculiarly favourable to good lives. It is in any way to suit the convenience of parties.

The Constitution of the Society thus embraces every advantage which Life Assurance is capable of affording. It receives Premiums, and other provisions in behalf of the Members, and open new ones with this Office. This has been done, with profit, even with Policies of more than twelve years' standing.

Edinburgh, July 1840.

Until the establishment of this Institution, an intending assessor was compelled either to see the profits of his assurance go to raise the shares of a Proprietary Company, or, in joining a Mutual Assurance Society, to pay a rate of premium considerably exorbitant, and disproportionate to the risk.

To remedy these defects, the **SCOTTISH PROVIDENT INSTITUTION** was founded. It differs from the Societies previously existing, in the great reduction of the premiums, and in the more equitable division of the profits.

1. The Premiums have been deduced, by strict calculation, from the most recent and approved sources; and thus, besides being very much reduced, are more accurately adjusted to the several ages. At young and middle ages, the premium usually required to assure £1,000 will secure about £1,500 in this Office.

A comparative Table of the Rates of all the Scottish Offices will be found in the Edinburgh Directory, and in Blackwood's Magazine for July, and other periodicals. Copies will be forwarded on application.

No ENTRY-MONEY is charged by the SCOTTISH PROVIDENT INSTITUTION.

2. The principle adopted in the distribution of the profits, and which is its Office, is,—that the surplus should be reserved for those who survive the period at which their Premiums, with accumulations, amount to the sums in their Policies. The superior equity of this is stated in an article in the Quarterly Review for October 1839.

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Specimens of the Tables.

I.—SINGLE LIVES.—FOR ASSURANCE OF £100 AT DEATH.

Age.	Annual Premium to cease		Age.	Annual Premium to cease	
	After 14 Payments.	After 14 Payments.		After 14 Payments.	After 14 Payments.
20	£1 15 6	£2 7 10	36	£2 8 2	£3 0 11
22	1 16 9	2 9 0	38	2 11 3	3 3 6
24	1 17 7	2 10 1	40	2 14 9	3 6 4
26	1 18 6	2 11 3	42	2 18 8	3 9 5
28	1 19 11	2 12 10	44	3 3 3	3 12 10
30	2 1 6	2 14 6	46	3 8 5	3 16 10
32	2 3 5	2 16 4	48	3 14 8	4 1 6
34	2 5 7	2 18 4	50	4 1 7	4 7 2

II. JOINT LIVES AND SURVIVORSHIPS.

Annual Premium for £100.		Annual Premium for £100.			
To be paid on the death of either of two lives.		To be paid on the death of either of two lives.			
Age of A.	Age of B.	Age of A.	Age of B.		
17 11	30 25	£3 4 2	£1 1 1	£1 16 10	£2 11 9
1 1 2	30 30	3 8 5	1 3 3	1 15 3	2 7 0
4 4 8	35 30	3 13 4	1 5 4	2 2 9	2 15 8
4 8 2	35 35	3 17 9	1 7 10	2 0 9	2 9 10
4 12 0	40 35	4 4 5	1 10 7	2 6 6	3 1 2
4 16 2	40 40	4 10 6	1 13 10	2 5 6	2 13 11
5 1 3	45 35	4 12 0	1 13 2	2 17 6	3 14 9
5 7 4	40 40	4 17 7	1 17 2	2 16 4	3 5 2

Forms of Proposal, with all necessary information, will be forwarded on application to the Manager or Agents.

Agent for DUMFRIES—JOHN M'KINNELL, Bookseller.

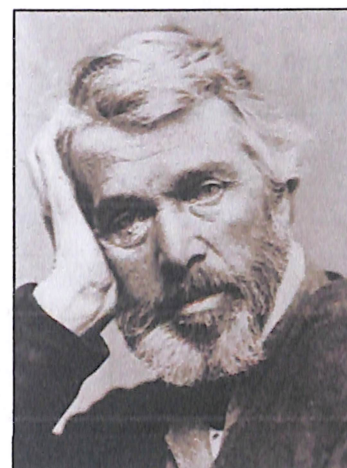
THORNHILL—JOHN WEBSTER, Merchant.

Agent for HAWICK—JOHN GOODFELLOW, Merchant.

The printed reverse side of the Mulready wrapper (Forme 2 A18). An advertisement printed in blue for the Scottish Provident Institution for Assurances and Annuities on Lives (Stanley Gibbons catalogue code MA140). The diagonal ink-free strip has been caused by a fold in the sheet of paper passing through the printing press.

Many commercial organisations took advantage of the advertising opportunities provided by the new lettersheets introduced with the 1d and 2d postage stamps in May 1840. This example has been trimmed along the base. It was sent by Thomas Carlyle and probably contained a separate sheet with his letter, no longer present.

A photograph of Thomas Carlyle in 1865 at the age of 70.



The last week of the Maltese cross cancellation, June 1844

The postal life cycle of the Maltese cross was four years and one month. Eventually, it was seen as inadequate because it gave no useful information about the origin of the mail, so numeral cancellations specific to each Post Town commenced in mid-June 1844 in Scotland

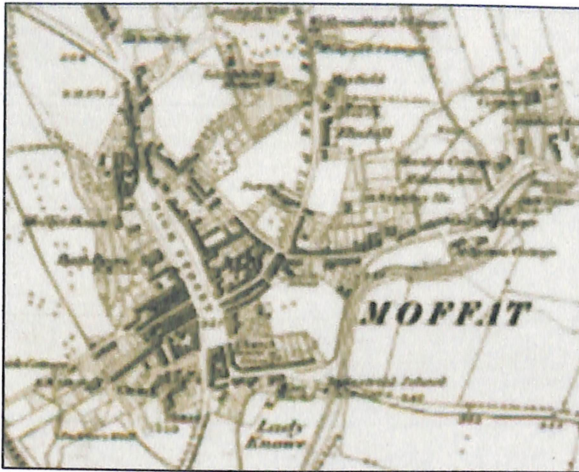


Late use of the Dumfries distinctive Maltese cross

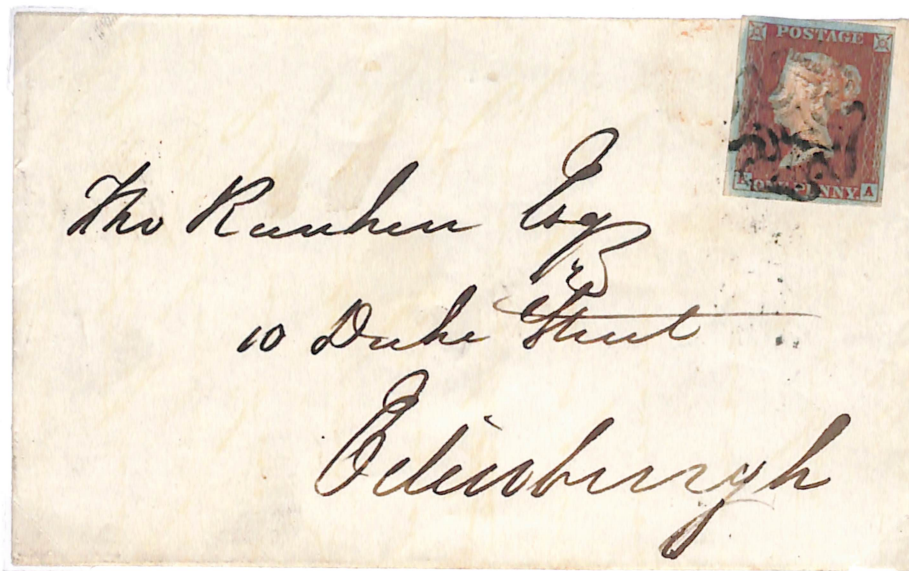
Dated 11 June 1844, the last week of use of the Maltese cross before the '108' barred numeral of Dumfries was introduced. The stamps are 1d Red-browns NJ NK from Plate 34, cut into across the top.

Moffat

Moffat's important location below the high route from the Annandale into the Tweed and on to Edinburgh made it an important staging post. It was a Post Town from 1715, and became a superior spa town in the 19th century, especially after railway construction in 1848. Consequently the town grew from 1413 people in 1841 to 2161 by 1881.



Famously, in 1838 two postmen died in a blizzard while trying to carry the mail bags from their snowbound mail coach across the Devil's Beef Tub near Moffat. Was this heroism, or a fear of sanction for failing to deliver the mail? The Postie Stone marks the spot where the unfortunate posties perished.



Maltese crosses of Moffat

A 1d Red-brown (Plate 30 EA) franking a wrapper sent from Moffat to Edinburgh, cancelled by a weak black Maltese Cross and with an arrival date of 26th July 1843. The paper is well blued by the reaction of prussiate of potash with the damped printing paper, creating an "ivory head" on the reverse of the stamp.

1d Red-brown (unplated AH) on a piece dated 17 April 1844 cancelled with a fine small-centred Maltese cross of Moffat.



1822 and 1827 letters to Edinburgh

A pair of letters both stamped with boxed 'LOCKERBY/327-C' mileage marks (DS222a). This mark was introduced around 1820 following revision of the distance from 322 to 327 miles from London. Several other offices in Dumfries-shire had similar recalculations made around the same time.



1d Red-brown Plate 19 FF.

A formal legal letter sent from Lockerby (sic) to Edinburgh, cancelled by the jet-black Maltese Cross of Lockerby. Boxed departure rectangle of 2nd May 1842. The ink used to cancel Lockerbie stamps is said to be different from inks used in other post offices.

Maltese crosses of Lochmaben and Langholm

Lochmaben

A short letter sent from Lochmaben to an Edinburgh solicitor, cancelled by a smudged black Maltese Cross. The Lochmaben defaced mileage mark (DS208b) is three years later than the last date recorded by Auckland & Stables. Date stamps of Lockerby (October 31 1841) and Edinburgh (November 1 1841). Lochmaben was designated a Post Town before 1715 and in 1838 was served by foot-post between Lockerby and Dumfries.



Langholme

A wrapper from Langholme to Newbury (Berkshire) on 6 May 1841. The stamp is from the Penny Black Plate 10 and shows the late-stage 'O'-flaw well. Langholme was a designated Post Town also from before 1715, a staging post on the Edinburgh-Selkirk-Carlisle mail coach route, with no direct connection to Dumfries to the west.



Bowholm and Canonbie



Bowholm

Bowholm was Canonbie's Post Office from 1808 until 1836. Its only postmark was a mileage mark, here in its defaced form from 1831. This wrapper was posted on 24 June 1834 to Langholm.

1d Red-brown Plate 19 NH NI pair

A letter from John Rutherford, a solicitor in Canonbie to a debtor George Scott Elliot in Penicuik written on 9 July 1842 but not posted until the 18 July. Cancelled by two strikes of the Canonbie Maltese cross in a blotchy black ink. Received in Edinburgh on 19 July. Canonbie was the southernmost Scottish post office on the mail coach route from Carlisle to Edinburgh via Hawick and Selkirk.



1d Black (Plate 2 PG)

A wrapper posted on 23 March 1841 from Annan to Edinburgh, the stamp cancelled by the common Maltese cross of Annan.

Transatlantic mail to Annan



Baltimore to Annan, 29 July 1845

A letter sent from Baltimore (Maryland) and charged 10 cents postage to Boston where it was carried on the Cunard ship *Britannia* to Liverpool. The five marks include three blue marks applied in America (10c oval, scarce Baltimore dated circle of 29 July, and a 'PAID' hand stamp), a fine 'AMERICA/LIVERPOOL' circle dated 15 August 1845, and finally an Annan arrival rectangle of 16 August 1845.

Thornhill

This planned village was constructed in 1717 by the Earl of Queensberry. An agricultural centre, the village lay about half way from Dumfries to Sanquhar on the Nithsdale mail gig route. It increased in size from just 430 inhabitants in 1791 to 1373 by 1831 and was subsequently improved by investment by the Duke of Buccleuch. The post office opened in 1783 but was discontinued from March 1815 until December 1838, though a boxed mileage mark remained in use during this period.

An early circular name stamp on a letter of 2 June 1799,. This mark was in use from 1799 to 1813.



1d Black Plate 2 RC

A maroon-brown Maltese cross in which the space between the inner and outer crosses is clogged with debris retaining the ink. Posted on 20 February 1841, with a faint red Thornhill departure stamp.

This cover is listed by Rockoff & Jackson.

Sanquhar

Famously home to the oldest continuously operating post office in Scotland, opening in 1712 and strategically situated on the route from Dumfries through the Southern Uplands to Ayr.

Mileage mark

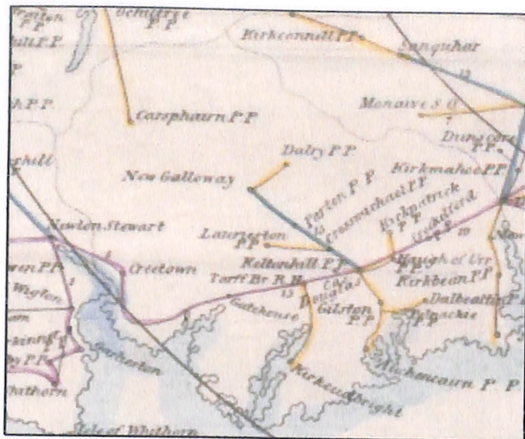
The Sanquhar 354-D mark used between 1820 and 1828, here on a wrapper posted on 9 May 1827.



Maltese cross

A 1d red-brown (Plate 21 PD) on a wrapper posted to Edinburgh on 27 May 1842 cancelled with a common cross at Sanquhar. A characteristic of Plate 21 is the missing frame line evident in the SE corner.

Kirkcudbrightshire



Kirkcudbrightshire straddled the mail coach route along Scotland's south coastal route. The County's earliest post offices to be established were Kirkcudbright and St John's Clachan (later Dalry) by 1715, followed by Monnigaff in 1744, Gatehouse in 1765, and Bridge of Cree around 1774. Monnigaff and Bridge of Cree were closed as the nearby town of Newton Stewart developed across the River Fleet in the eastern extremity of Wigtownshire.

Carlingwark



'CARLIN/WORK' name stamp

The third and latest of the three Carlingwark name stamp with a liberal rendering of this office's spelling! Dated 11 March 1792, the year before the office moved to the new town on Castle Douglas. This mark is known from 1790. The front bears a smudged Edinburgh Bishop Mark in red, and was charged the 5d rate for carriage. The next sheet displays the earlier two versions of this scarce name stamp.

Carlingwark

Carlingwark was a designated Post Town from around 1774, until the founding of the town of Castle Douglas by William Douglas in 1793. Mail was probably cancelled at Carlinwark House, a stately mansion on the west shore of the nearby loch. During this time it used three different name stamps, each with a different spelling of the place name. After Castle Douglas became the Post Town, no further mail was stamped using the Carlingwark name.



Carlingwark name stamps with different spellings

Above, a letter dated 10 June 1787 paid at a 4d rate to Manchester bearing the original single-line 'CARLINGWARK' name stamp (KK8) used from 1778 to 1792. Below, the second type 'CARLING/WORK' (KK9) on a letter dated 6 October 1779 to Edinburgh, the year before the earliest use listed by Auckland & Stables. This mark had a very short period of use and is the scarcest of the three name stamps from this office.

Castle Douglas boxed mileage marks



Earlier 'CASTLE/DOUGLAS/359 - D' boxed mileage mark

A letter charged 8d posted in Castle Douglas on 4 May 1812 and bearing the earlier of two three-line mileage marks from this post office. It superseded a fairly short-lived circular mark and was used from 1811 to 1815.



Later 'CASTLE/DOUGLAS/359 - D' mileage mark

A letter sent locally on 10 July 1830 with the later three-line mileage mark of Castle Douglas, used from 1822, with larger lettering. This letter is three years later than Auckland & Stables last known date for this mark.

Castle Douglas name stamps

The relatively late establishment of Castle Douglas as a town mean that only two different name stamps were used there; a two-line stamp known between 1794 and 1799, and a circular type between 1800 and 1811.



Above, the early two-line name stamp (KK24) on a letter posted on 16 June 1798 to Dumfries, charged 3d following a change in postal rates the previous January.

Below, the later circular name stamp on a letter dated 9 March 1802 from Barlochan via Castle Douglas to Liverpool, charged 10d.

Castle Douglas Penny Post

This significant market town was the first main coaching stop west from Dumfries at a distance of 18 miles. Its post office operated from 1793, the same year as the Creetown office was established.



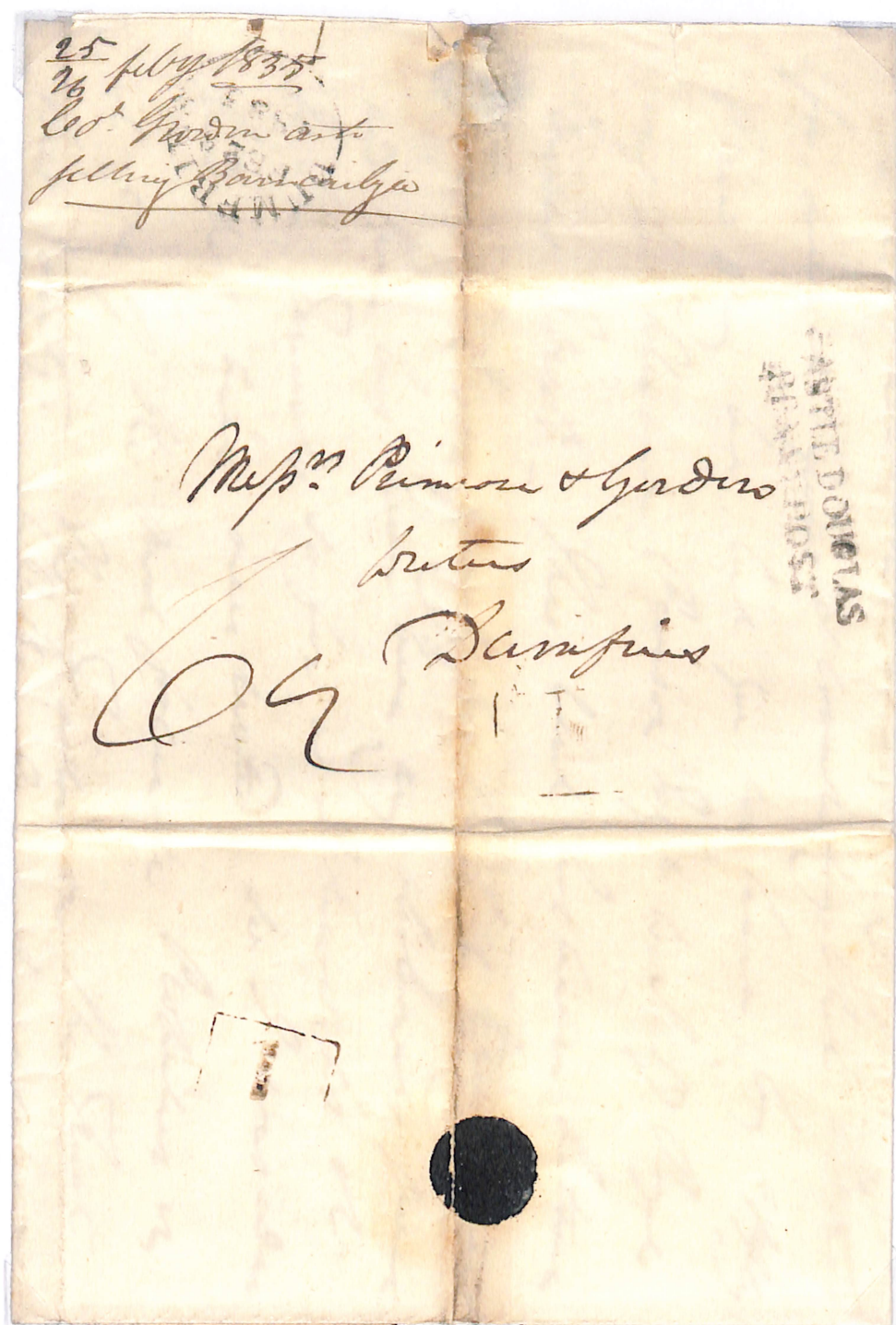
Earliest known use of 'CASTLE DOUGLAS PENNY POST'

A letter sent from Balcary to Castle Douglas on 20 May 1832 and charged 1d with the Penny Post hand stamp recording payment. This example pre-dates the earliest known date of January 1833 listed by Auckland & Stables and may thus be the earliest known use of a mark used until 1839.



Sub-offices of the Castle Douglas Penny Post

At various times, eight Penny Post offices operated under the Castle Douglas Post Office. Auchencairn (boxed '1') was the earliest to open in 1832. Other examples presented here (next sheet) are Dalry's boxed '4' (1839 to 1855) and Haugh of Urr's boxed '5'.



Boxed numeral '1' of Auchencairn

This small coastal village lies 8 miles south of Castle Douglas on the Solway coast, from where mail was carried daily by runner. The boxed numeral '1' is known to have been used between 1832 and 1841. It was the first of the Penny Post numerals to be introduced at Castle Douglas.



Sub-offices of the Castle Douglas Penny Post



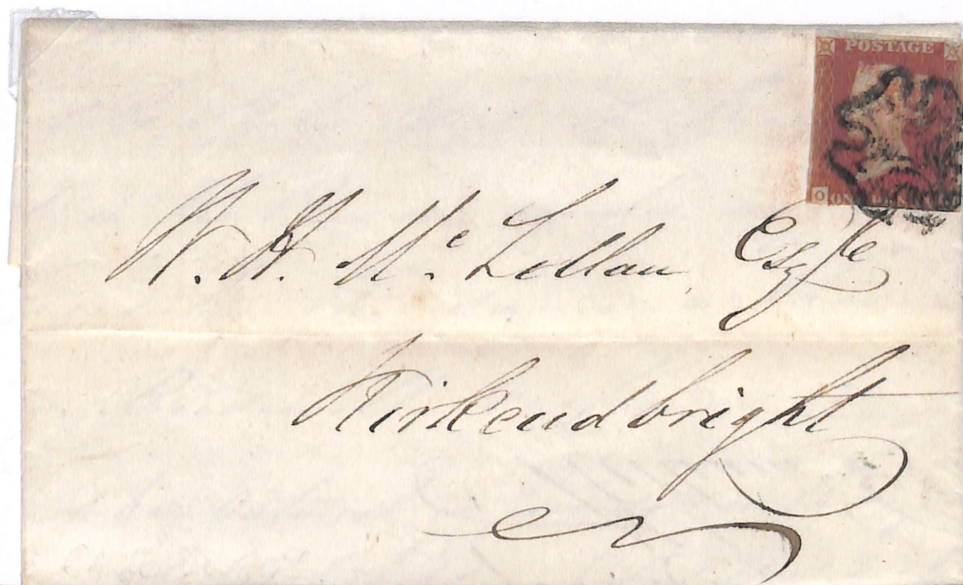
Boxed numerals of Dalry and Haugh of Urr Penny Posts

Above, a letter dated 20 August 1843 from Dalry to Castle Douglas with a boxed '4' and a handstruck '1' recording payment. Below, a final demand for payment of a bill to the bank dated 14 March 1836. The annotated "Refused" on the front indicates the addressee had no intention of paying! (Scans of each numeral hand stamps shown). The neat wrapper bears an Edinburgh date stamp and an 'Addl. 1/2' wheel tax charge, and a two line 'CASTLE DOUGLAS/PENNY POST' mark accompanying the boxed '5' of Haugh of Urr.

Castle Douglas Maltese cross

The blotchy appearance of Castle Douglas's Maltese cross is noted by Rockoff & Jackson, who suggest that "generally they appear to have taken very poor care of it." The two covers to Kirkcudbright shown here are typical examples of cancellations from this post office.

24 June 1842
(1d Red Unplated)



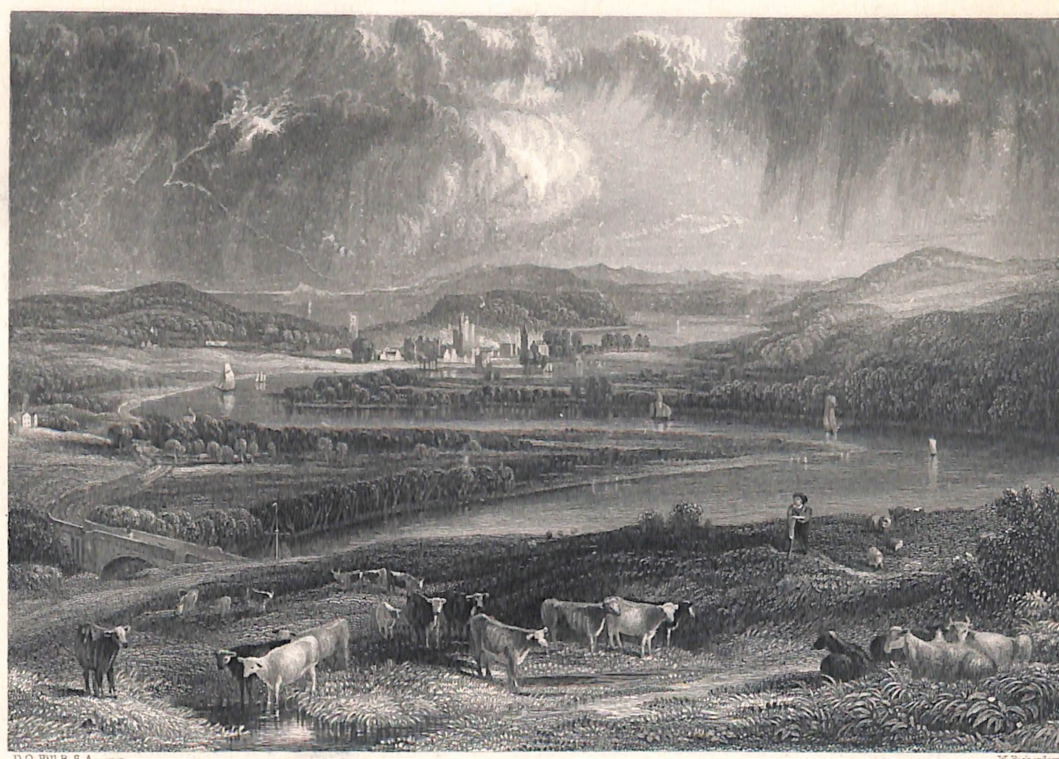
30 October 1843
(2d Blue Plate 3)

Kirkcudbright

Kirkcudbrightshire

The County Town, Kirkcudbright is situated at the head of the Dee Estuary and the town's population was 2,606 in 1841, remaining fairly constant throughout the century. Attempts to develop an industrial and commercial centre were largely unsuccessful. Indeed, in the late 18th century the 2nd *Statistical Account of Scotland* records that:

"Kirkcudbright by a strange infatuation refused to become a seat of cotton manufacture and sent away its would-be benefactors to found their cotton mills at Gatehouse of Fleet."



KIRKCUDBRIGHT

Published by Blackie & Son, Glasgow

Original lithographic print of Kirkcudbright (c. 1840)

A dramatised view of the Royal Burgh from the north by D.O. Hill. (Royal Scottish Academy, published by Blackie & Sons of Glasgow).



Kirkcudbright early name stamp

The County Town of Kirkcudbrightshire, Kirkcudbright is situated at the head of the Dee Estuary and the town's population was 2,606 in 1841. A post office was opened in 1689. In the late 18th century, "Kirkcudbright by a strange infatuation refused to become a seat of cotton manufacture and sent away its would-be benefactors to found their cotton mills at Gatehouse of Fleet." Instead, Kirkcudbright's incorporated trades included shoemakers, hammer-men, tailors and weavers.



Early two-line name stamp, 1754 letter to Perth via Edinburgh

This two-line name stamp was the earliest postmark used at Kirkcudbright, even though a Post office opened in the town in 1689. The smaller lettering of 'KIRKEUD/ BRIGHT' (KK106) was used from 1745 until at least 1771 and early examples are scarce. The letter, dated 1754, was charged 3d to Edinburgh and a further 2d for delivery to Perth (charges up to 1784) paid on arrival.



Two-line 'KIRKCUDBRIGHT' name stamp, 1791

This later mark (KK108) revised the spelling of the town's name and was in use from 1782 until 1800 when a circular name stamp replaced it. This example was posted on 27 December 1791. It is an outer wrapper addressed to the Secretary of the Bank of Scotland in Edinburgh (James Fraser) with a large manuscript annotation on the front of '1½ Oz - 2/6'.



Copy of the cover front with address and postage charge; the wrapper originally contained a document.



‘KIRKCUDE-/BRIGHT’ undated double ring from 1801

This scarce mark was used in Kirkcudbright only between 1800 and 1803 before being replaced with the more common single-line name stamp. The letter was posted top Edinburgh on 7 July 1801, four years before the fast mail coach began service.



Kirkcudbright

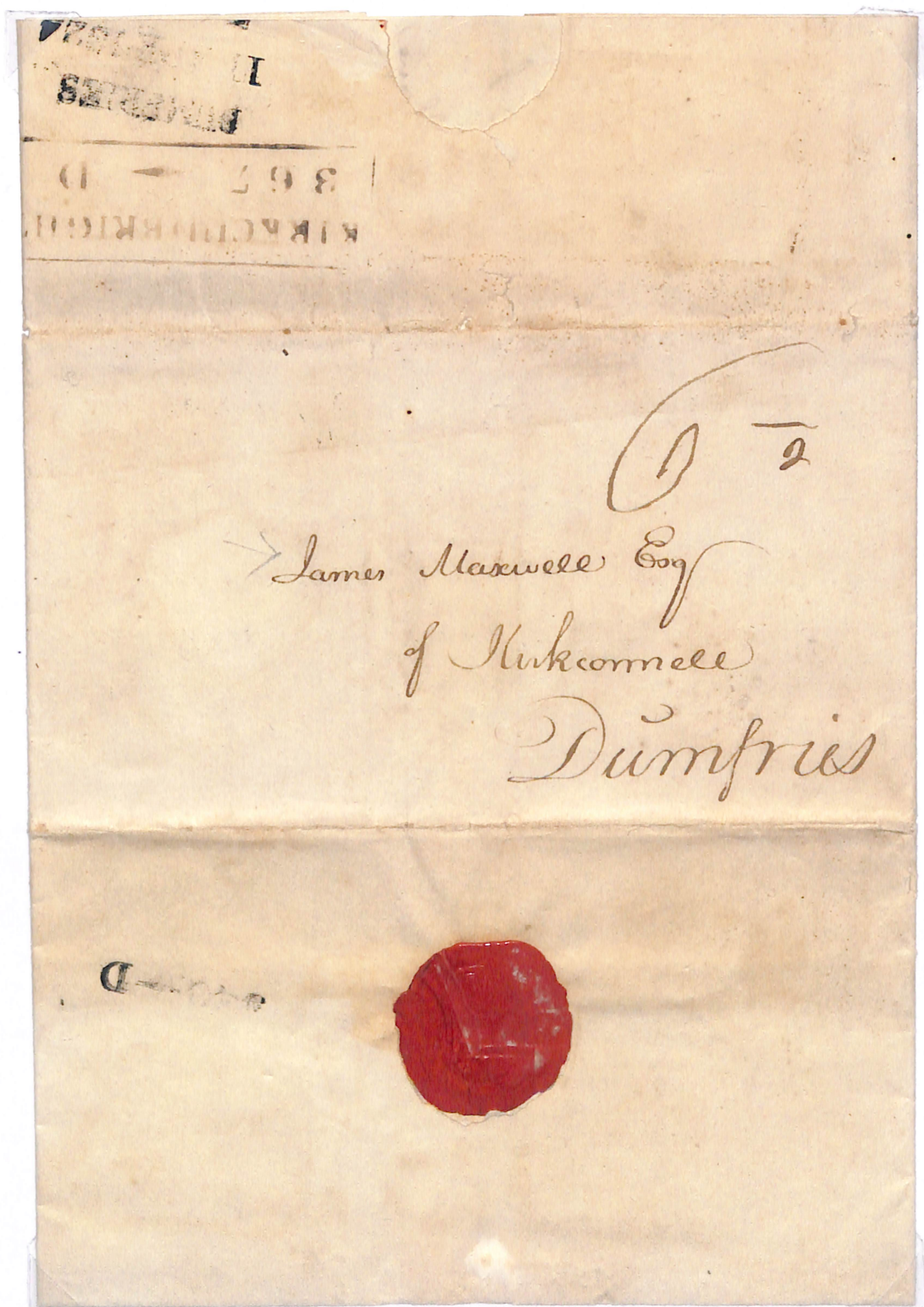
Kirkcudbright used only two mileage marks in the early 19th century, an earlier circular mark followed by the standard boxed rectangle. In 1827 this had the mileage, code, hyphen and box removed to leave a simple single-line names tamp.



Circular mileage marks, 1810 and 1814

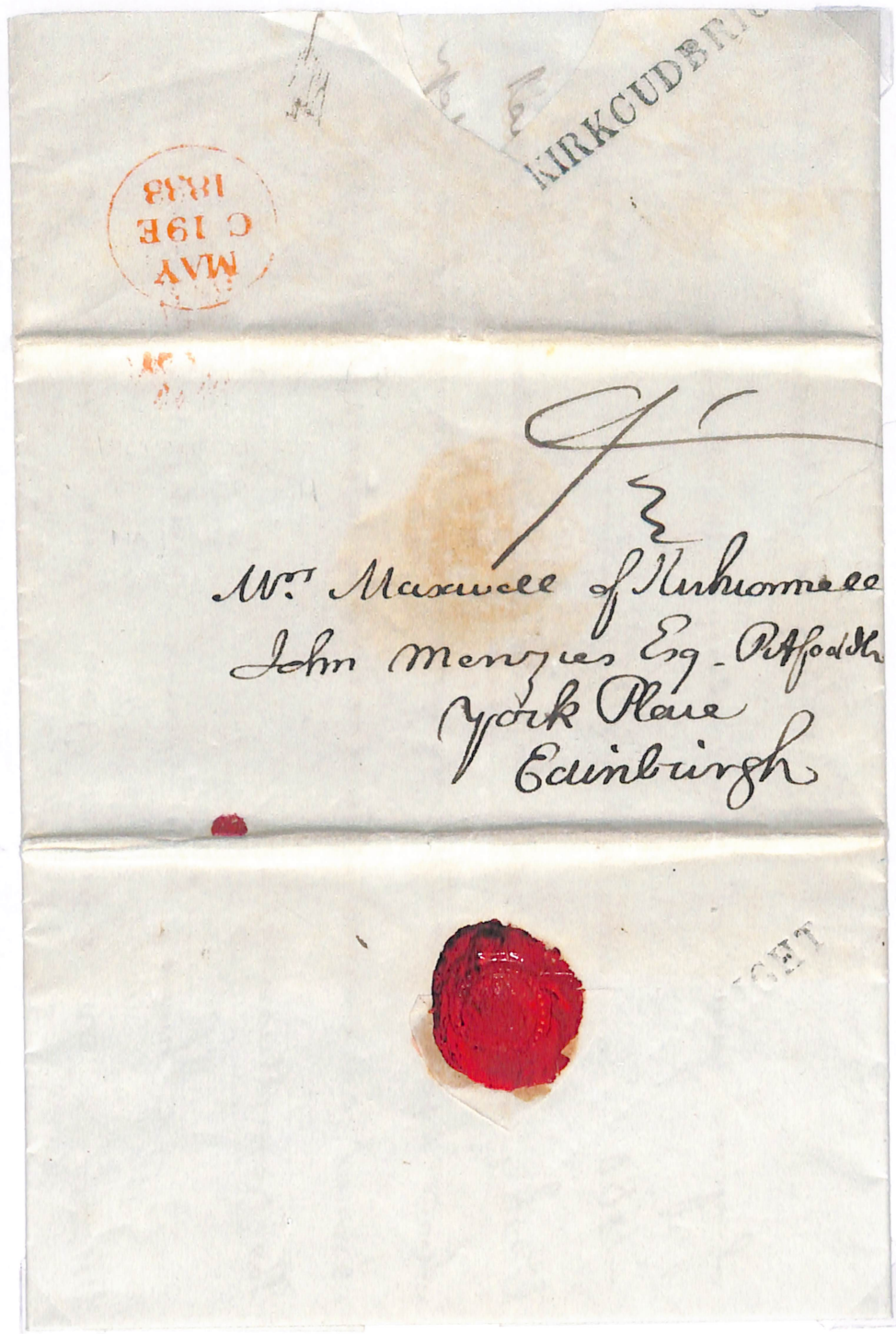
This early mileage mark was in use between 1808 and 1819. The distance from London was later revised from 369 miles to 367 miles when the rectangular mark was introduced in 1820. The Edinburgh letter bears a crisp early strike of this mark, while the letter to Dumfries shows degradation of the hand stamp. This was charged the additional halfpence wheel tax recorded in manuscript.

Kirkcudbright letter bearing two mileage marks



'KIRKCUDBRIGHT/367 - D' with 'DUMFRIES /11 APR 1824/340-D'

A business letter from Robert Gordon to James Maxwell; "There is a great deal of business at Dumfries this week", and "You were perfectly right in declining to have anything to do with Chalmers." Kirkcudbright's mileage mark was originally 369 miles, which was reduced to 367 in 1819-20. This letter bears the later mark which was in use until 1833 when the mileage stamp was defaced on the basis of its obsolescence. The wrapper was stamped on arrival with the three-line 'DUMFRIES /11 APR 1824/340-D' dated mileage mark and charged 6½d.



Single-line name stamp, 1833

A letter posted to Edinburgh on 18 May 1833 charged 9d plus an additional half pence, charges which were in force from 1812 to 1840. This name stamp (KK118) has different lettering from the boxed mileage mark and appears to be a true name stamp, not a mileage mark with the box and distance removed.

Kirkcudbright Maltese crosses

Two examples of this large-centred Maltese cross on stamps printed from the "Black Plates" during the transition to red stamps. In May 1841 the obliterator was choked with ink and debris, but by September it had been cleaned to give clear strikes of the cancellation.



1d Red-brown Plate 9 RE

A short banker's note sent from The Bank of Scotland in Kirkcudbright to the Southern Bank in Dumfries on 24 September 1841, arriving the next day. The stamp is tied by a fine and near-complete Maltese cross showing a distinctly narrow side to the outer cross (facing downwards here).



1d Red-brown from Plate 11 AH

On piece with Kirkcudbright dated circle of 31 May 1841 cancelled by a black Maltese cross with a printing inversion effect in which the ink had migrated to the spaces between the outer and inner crosses and between the inner cross and diamond but has not formed a solid diamond.

Mulready lettersheet from Kirkcudbright

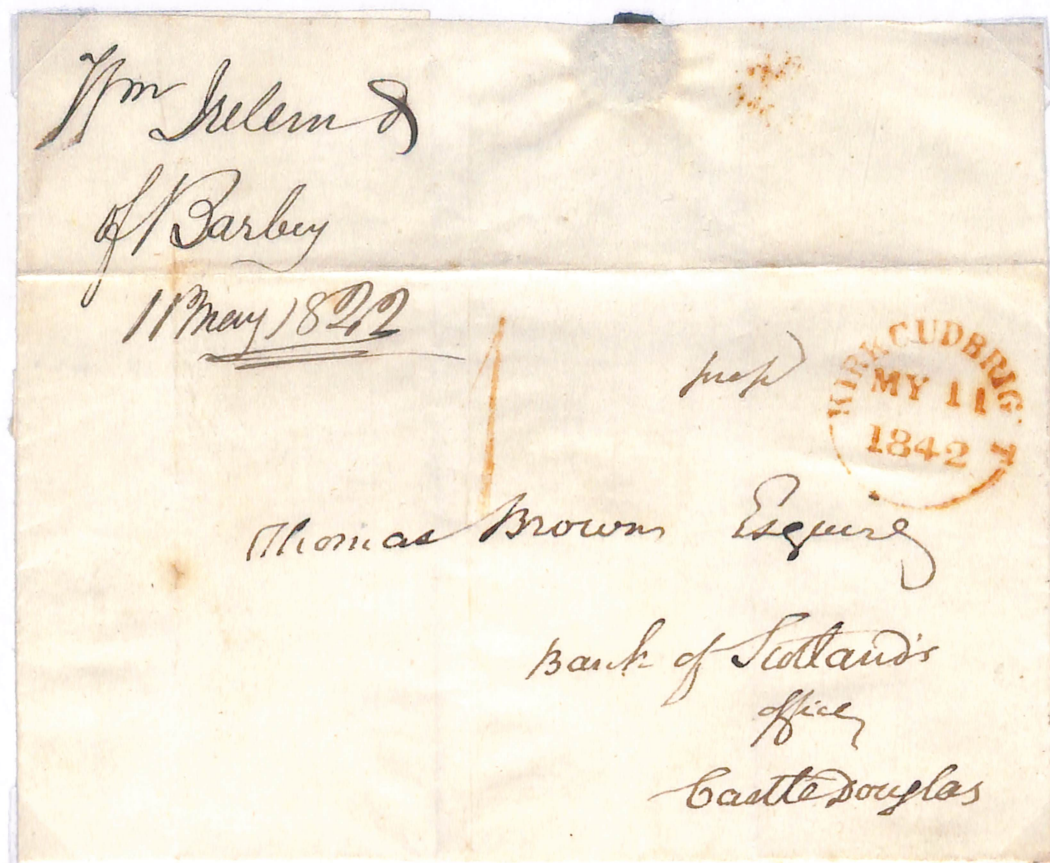


Mulready lettersheet Stereo Plate A 208

A letter posted in Kirkcudbright on 16 September 1841 to a solicitor in Ayr, cancelled with a black Maltese cross in Kirkcudbright and bearing a Kirkcudbright dated circle in black and an Ayr dated rectangle in red.

Kirkcudbright dated circle name stamps in red and blue

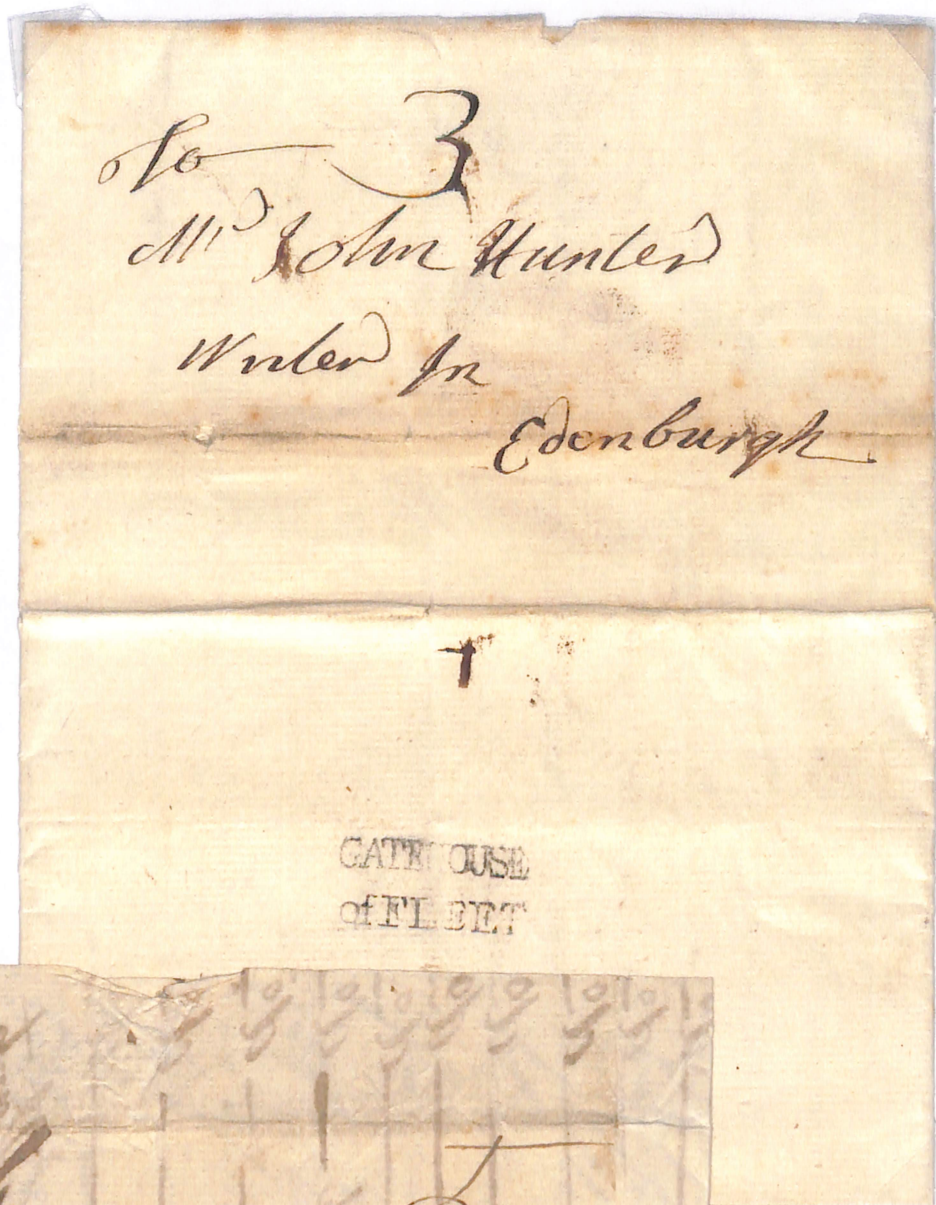
A pair of unstamped letters posted to Castle Douglas on 11 May 1842 and 8 October 1846 with pre-payment indicated by a handstruck '1' in red. In both cases the 'H' is missing from the place name.



Gatehouse of Fleet name stamps

Letter to Edinburgh, 1768

The first mark used in Gatehouse after its post office was opened in 1765 (KK82) known from 1761 until 1801, becoming more abundant over time. The letters were sent on 30 June 1768 to a Writer, John Hunter.



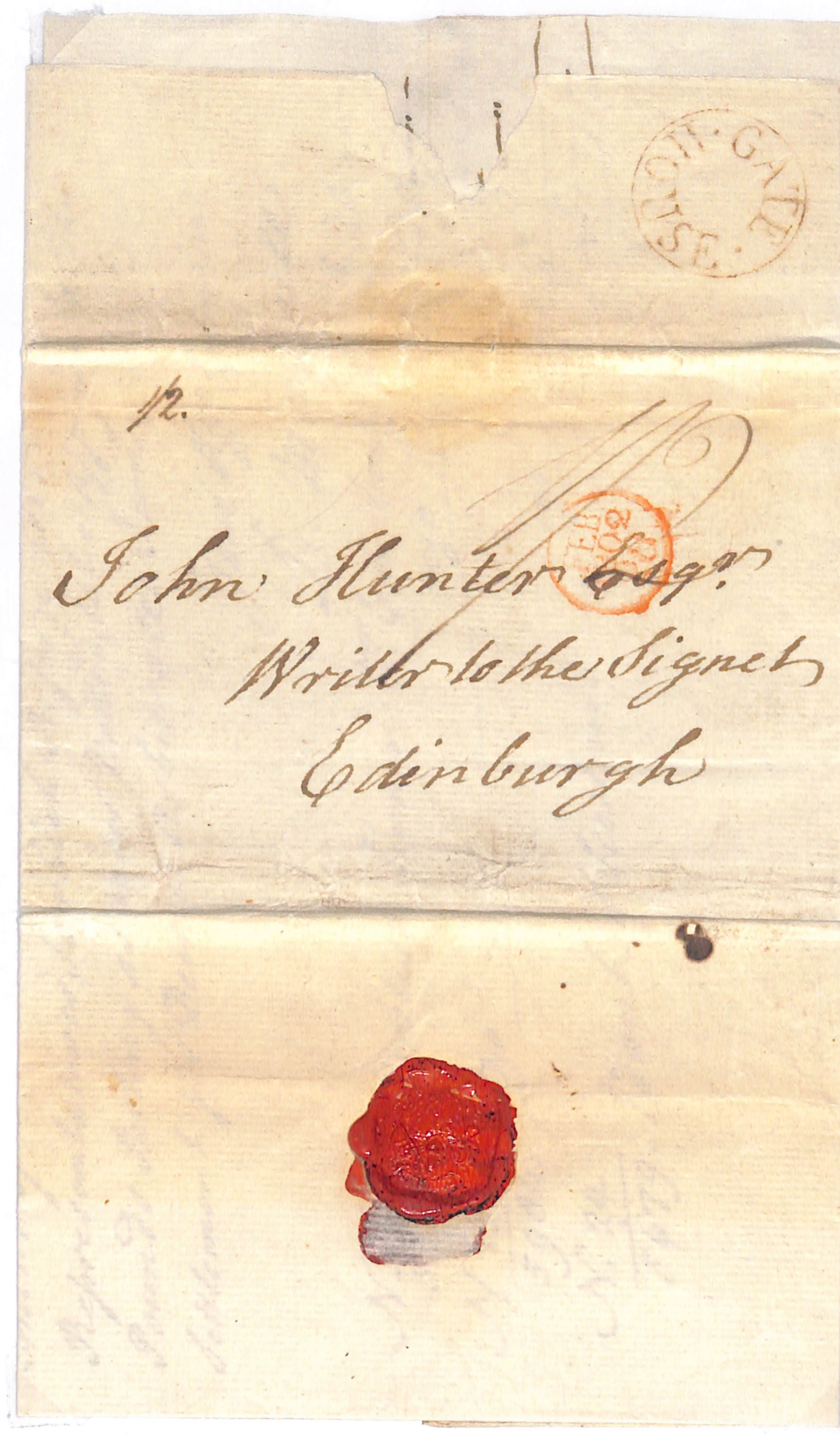
Letter to Wigton, 1805

A letter concerning the affairs of the Murray family at Cally House, and a catalogue of tree saplings for forthcoming sale at the estate nursery. Manuscript date of 1 August 1805.



The circular name stamp of Gatehouse is known in two colours. An earlier magenta ink is rare as it was used for just one year. The black type shown here was used between 1802 and 1807 (KK84b).

Gatehouse circular name stamp



1802 letter from Cardoness to Edinburgh

A letter from D. Maxwell of Cardoness (a hamlet below the castle of the same name) posted from Gatehouse to a solicitor for the British Linen Bank in Edinburgh. Concerning payment of a £45 invoice. It was posted on 26 February 1802 and stamped with a fine circular "GATEHOUSE" name stamp (KK84b). This mark is known from 1802, so this date may be the earliest known use.



Earliest known use of the circular mileage mark

A letter dated 3 March 1808 bearing a 'GATEHOUSE 374 - D' circular mark which Auckland and Stables first record in August of that year.



1d Black Plate 4 DK DL pair

A typical rusty red and rather poor strike of the Gatehouse Maltese cross on a letter from Rusko, a farm by the Castramont Bridge on the Water of Fleet. The writer is asking the Procurator Fiscal in Kirkcudbright to take action against a local gamekeeper for shooting near his house and endangering him and nearby road users. The wrapper originally contained a sketch of the situation, hence the 2 ounce postal rate. The Procurator has added a manuscript note to caution the gamekeeper.

New Galloway

A Post Town from 1705, the village was built in the 1630s by Viscount Kenmure as a market town. By 1841 the population was only 403 and little growth followed after this.



New Galloway's earliest mark

A letter from Edinburgh on 25 March 1799 to Castle Douglas with a manuscript note "Missent to New Galloway" where a two-line name stamp (KK138) was added. This mark was used from at least 1763 until 1800. The letter finally arrived on 27 March. There is no record of a "Mis-sent to..." hand stamp being used at New Galloway.



Circular mileage mark

A letter dated 19 July 1808 to Worthing, Surrey, with the circular 'NEW GALLOWAY/373/D' mileage mark used from January 1808 and only known in use until February 1809.

New Galloway coloured name stamps



Single-line name stamp in blue and red

A pair of letters written at Kells Manse and posted to James Lidderdale in Castle Douglas. The name stamp occurs in red ink on the 1843 letter pre-paid 2d, and in blue on the 1847 letter pre-paid 1d. Red ink was used from 1840 to 1845, then blue to 1850.

Maltese cross of New Galloway



1d Red-brown (unplated FD)

A tabulated proforma listing the "Return of Prisoners in the Prison of New Galloway" for prisoners interned during 1842. New Galloway name stamp, Castle Douglas orange rectangle dated 6 January 1843, and Kirkcudbright dated circle of 7 January 1843. Of those listed, one was imprisoned for theft, and eight for being drunk and disorderly (including three members of the Adair family, John, Mary and Elizabeth). All were released after a single day. A note records that "There were no prisoners in the year ending on June 1841."

It seems New Galloway was a law-abiding village!

Creetown early mileage mark

Creetown post office opened from 1793 and used black ink to apply its circular mileage mark between 1808 and 1818. Marks struck in red ink examples are also known from 1809 to 1811.



Circular mileage mark on 1811 letter

A clean strike of the 'CREETOWN 386 D' mark in brown ink (originally black?) on a letter to Thomas Hughan M.P. in London. No postal charge was made; a 'FREE' crowned date stamp was applied on 22 January 1811. The letter concerns farm improvements at Falbae Farm in the valley above Creetown.

Thomas Hughan (c. 1760 – 29 October 1811)

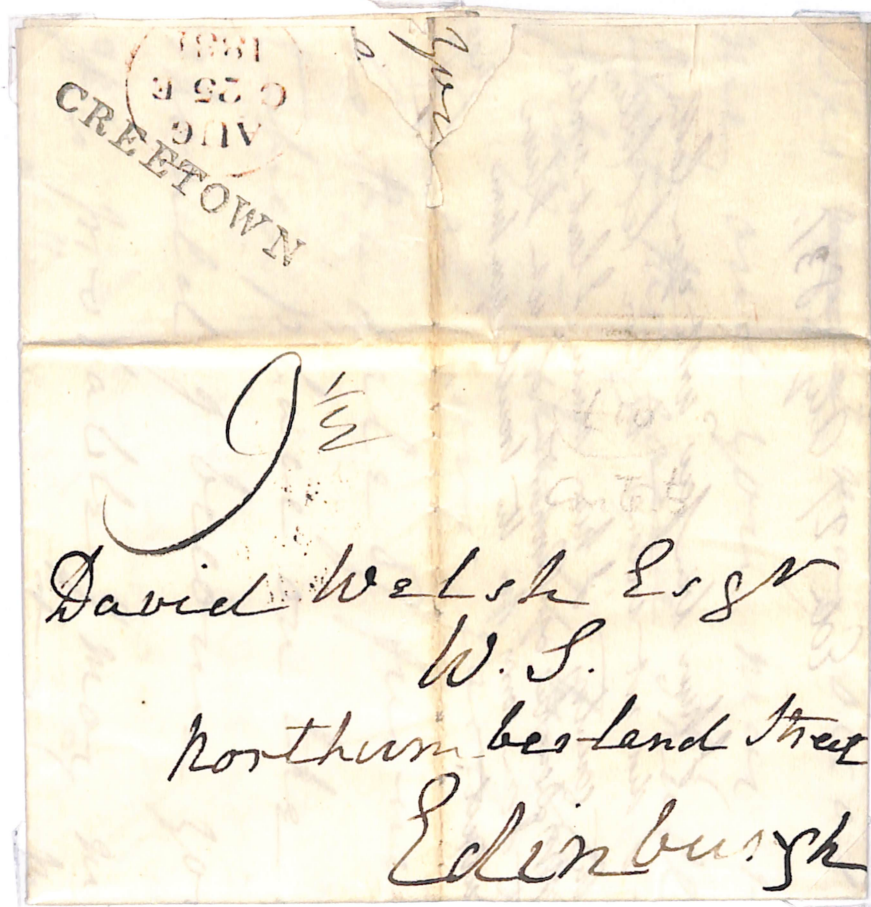
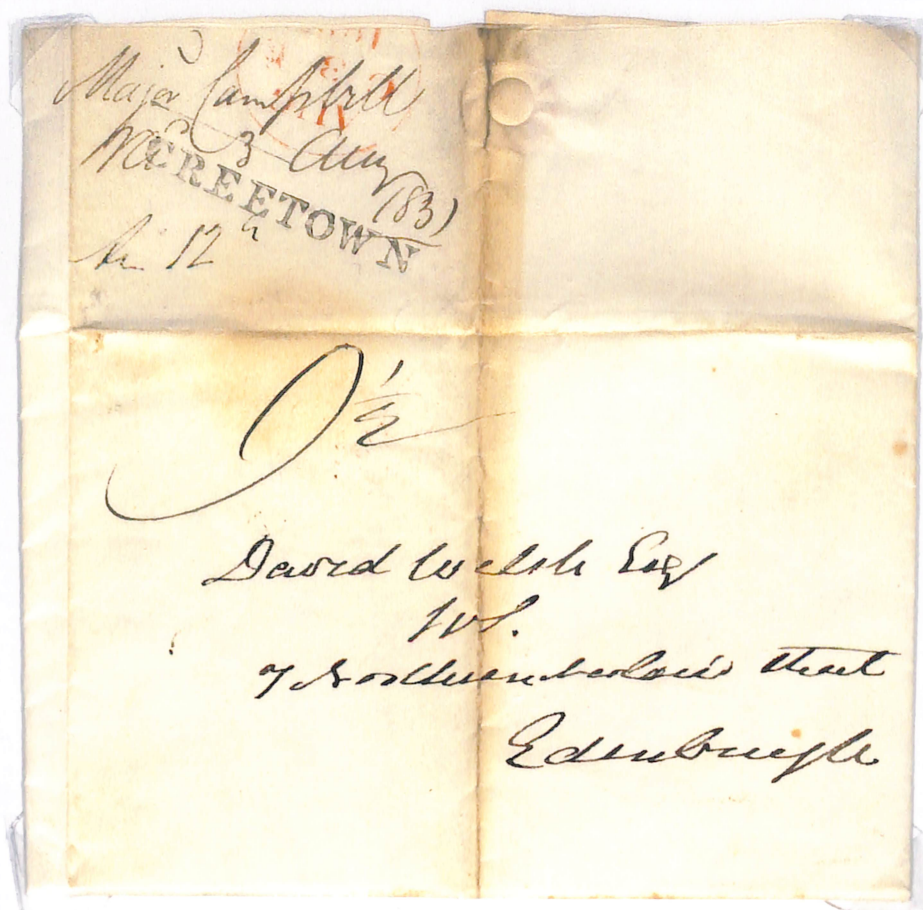


A slave trader, merchant and politician affiliated with the West India Dock Company. Hughan was the eldest son of Margaret and Alexander Hughan, a merchant from Creetown. He spent 12 years in Jamaica working for the West India Dock Company, and was a founding member and Director of the Imperial Fire Insurance Company.

Hughan served as a Member of Parliament twice, for East Retford from 1806 to 1807, and for Dundalk from 25 July 1808 to 29 October 1811. He used his maiden speech in the House of Commons to protest against the abolition of the slave trade, stating that the bill was "*fraught with ruin to the colonies and to the Empire*" and that "*there did not exist a more happy race than the slaves in our colonies*".

Hughan died following a short illness at Hampstead, London, on 29 October 1811, nine months after the date of this letter.

Creetown defaced mileage mark



Letters from the same correspondence dated 2 and 24 August 1831

Both bearing the same 'CREETOWN' single-line name stamp (KK72b) but showing different amounts of the rectangular border of the former mileage mark. The earlier letter above shows half of the top line, but the later letter below shows no border at all. The three-week interval between posting dates suggests the difference is an inking effect rather than a physical alteration of the hand stamp.

Maltese cross of Creetown



1d Black (Plate 4 KI)

A letter bearing a fine Penny Black posted to a Wigtown banker on 22 January 1841 and cancelled with a complete strike of the red Maltese cross of Creetown.

Bridge of Cree

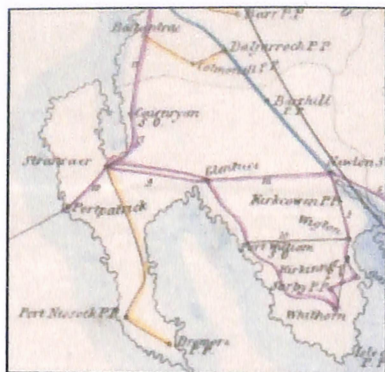
Before the stone bridge was built across the River Cree in 1812, a wooden bridge and ford linked Newton Stewart and Minigaff. The existence of a two-line 'BRIDGE/OF CREE' name stamp indicates that mail was stamped at this crossing. This name stamp is known to have been used between 1775 and 1783 in black ink only.



'BRIDGE/OF CREE' name stamp (KK3)

A letter written by Henry Codd on 20 October 1778 to a John du Moulin in London. The letter bears a manuscript '2' (shillings?) which has been crossed out and a free frank oval in red added in its place. On the reverse, the seldom-seen 'BRIDGE OF CREE' double-line stamp.

Wigtownshire



For a long time, Scotland's most south-westerly county had better connections to northern Ireland than to the rest of the mainland. A post office was established in Portpatrick in 1662 and ferries ran from here across the North Channel to Donaghadee and up the coast to Ayr. This pre-dated most other post offices by over a century. A fast mail coach (from 1805) and later the railway (from 1862) arrived late in the far south-west, a region which retains a sense detachment from the rest of the country.

Newton Stewart



1d Red-brown Plate 8 LE

A smudged and poorly struck Maltese cross on a wrapper posted on 10 December 1841 and delivered in Gatehouse of Fleet the next day. Boxed dated departure stamp in red ink. Plate 8 was used from printing Penny Blacks in July and August 1840, then later for the new 1d Red stamps in 1841. This stamp shows Stage 2 of the characteristic 'O'-flaw on this plate.

Newton Stewart

When the Post Office opened in 1793 the town was known as Newton Douglas and used this name for fifteen years until it was renamed Newton Stewart. The former name occurs on postal markings of that period.

Two-line name stamp

Posted to Ayr on 25 May 1819 and charged 1s 4½d. Auckland & Stables list this mark in black until the end of 1817., much earlier than this usage.



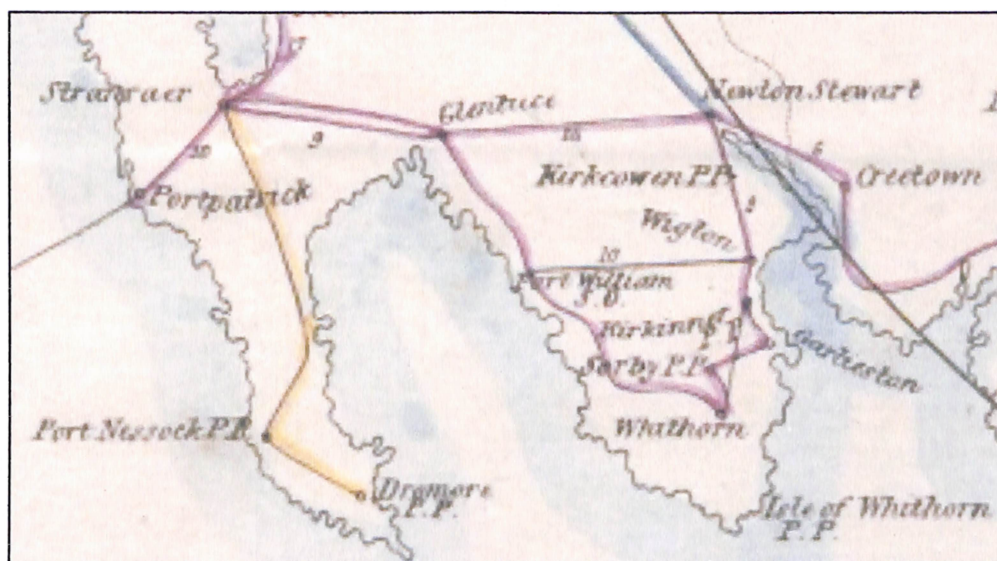
'NEWTON STEWART/393-D' mileage mark

Posted to Castle Douglas on 15 July 1814 and charged 7½d. A faint boxed mileage mark on the reverse side. Newton Stewart concurrently used mileage marks with distances of 388, 393 and 394 miles, and a route code of 'C' (Carlisle) instead of Dumfries between 1822 and 1828.



'WIGTON 400-D' mileage mark

A letter posted from Wigton (sic) to Edinburgh on 27 September 1827, with a discoloured red dated circle recording arrival the following day. A rather dry print of the 'WIGTON/400- D' mileage mark is the later and more common of two such marks used at this post town, the first from 1808 to 1810, and this type from 1811 until 1829 after which the mark was defaced. The weak strike may reflect a worn hand stamp nearing the end of its useful life.



The 1838 map of post office and postal routes shows that villages in the Whithorn peninsula were well integrated into the postal network with direct connections to the mail coach route between Newton Stewart and Glenluce. Wigton and Whithorn were issued with Maltese crosses in 1840.

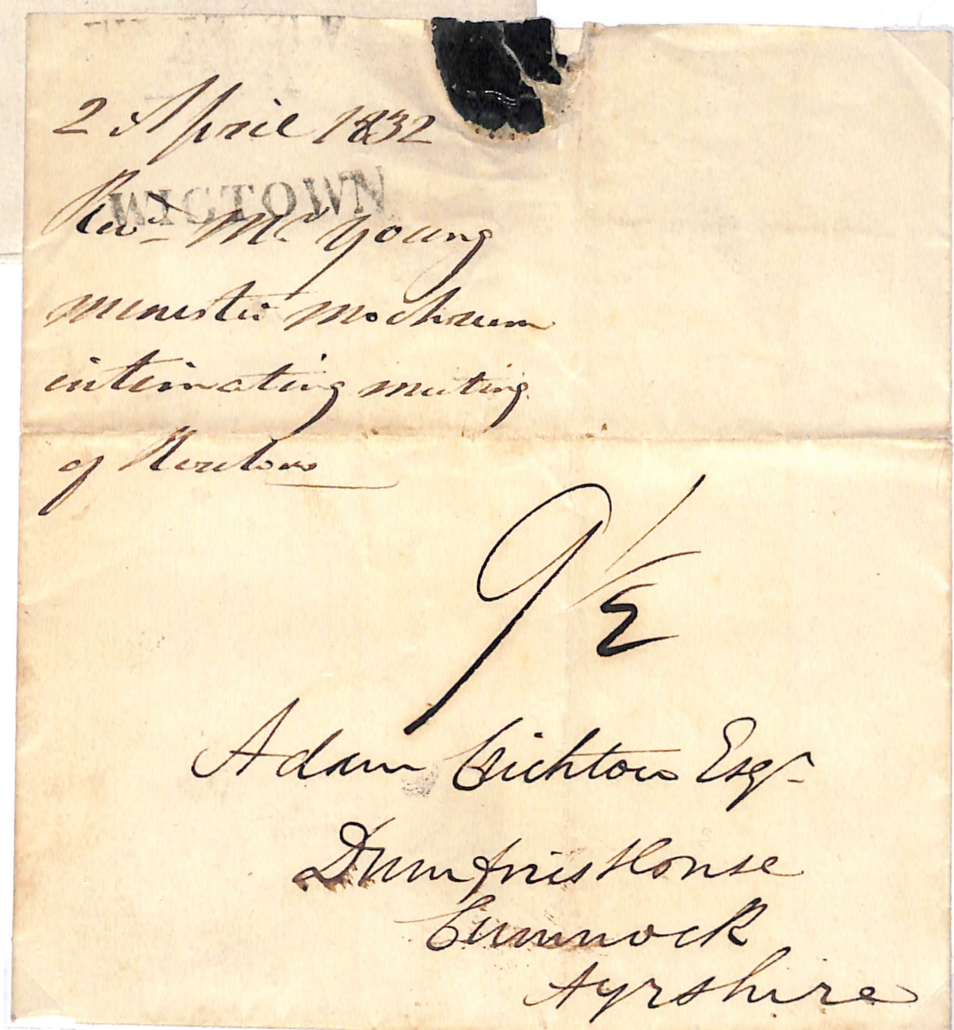
Wigtown name stamps; change in spelling

The first postmark used at 'Wigton' (WI198) was introduced in 1748 and was used for over 40 years. In 1790 it was replaced by a similar stamp with larger letters. Around 1829 the spelling of the town's name became 'Wigtown' to distinguish the town from the Cumbrian village of the same name. A new stamp (WI206) was employed until 1838.



Single-line name stamps

Above, the first 'WIGTON' postmark (WI198) introduced in 1748, before the spelling of the town's name changed, on a wrapper to Edinburgh posted on 4 November 1777 and charged 9d. Below, the later 'WIGTOWN' name stamp with larger letters on a letter to Cumnock charged 9½d and dated 2 April 1832.





1d Red-brown Plates 15 FH and 15 JB

Two strikes of the scarce Maltese cross of Wigtown cancelling two single Penny Reds on a letter posted to Creestown on 15 December 1841, arriving the next day. The cancellation shows an unusually straight-sided arm to the inner cross pointing downwards.



1d Red-brown Plate 38 SK

A good strike of the Maltese Cross of Garlieston a wrapper dated 29 April 1844 from David Rodger of Penkiln to George Guthrie at Culhorn House. Stranraer transit stamp of 30 April. The letter concerns famr affairs and rental of fields. On the reverse is a fine red Garlieston departure rectangle.

Discoloured red and black inks from Whithorn (Wigtownshire)

3. Colour variation

A good example of a village whose red and black cancellations have altered over time to rather similar grey colours. An original red Maltese cross has reduced to a pale pinkish-grey, and a later black cross to pale blueish-grey.



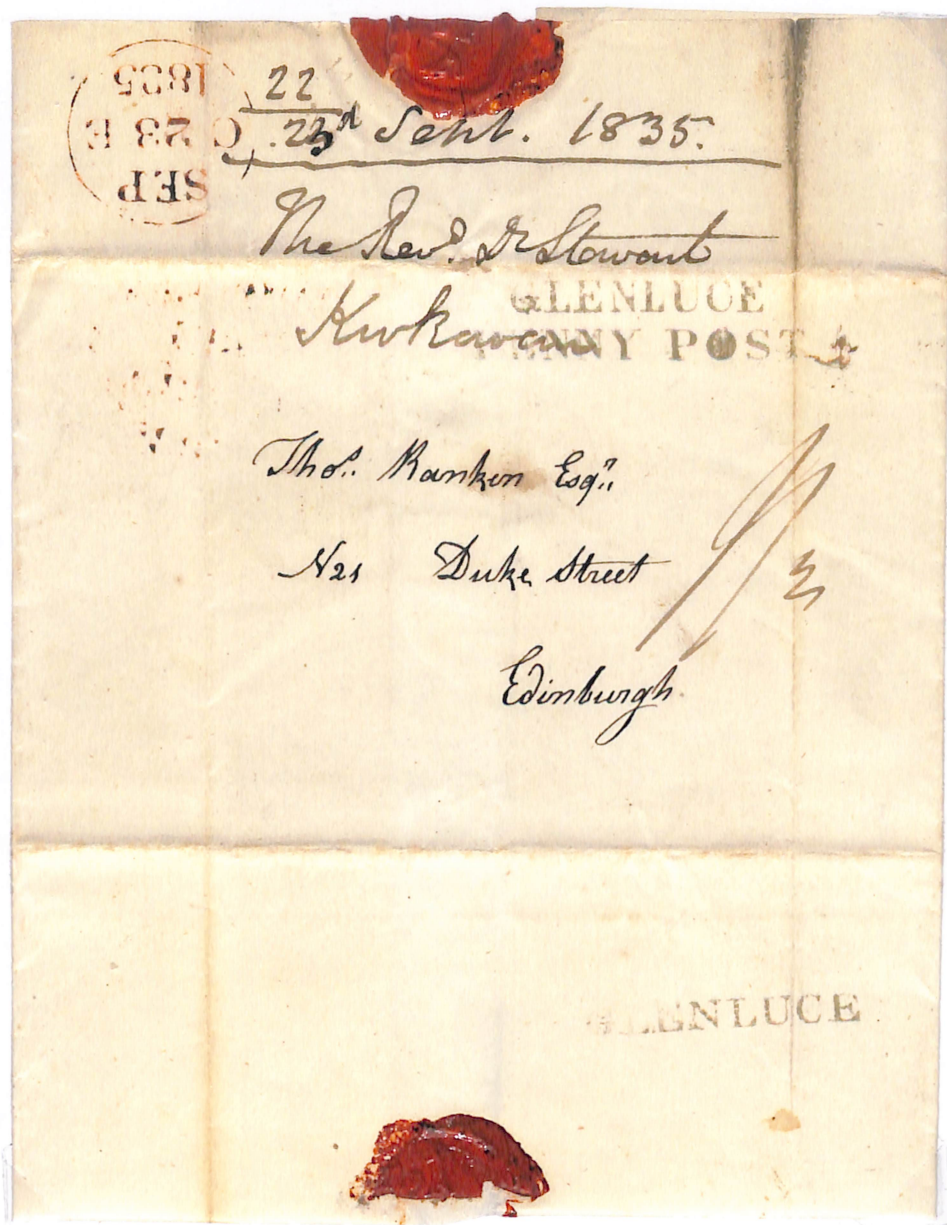
1d Black Plate 6 AD

Part cover to Glasgow dated 15 February 1841, just three days before the first black Maltese crosses were used in Scotland. The Maltese cross in pinkish-grey is a discolouration of the original red ink. The "Whithorn" date stamp is a different spelling from the 1842 cover below.



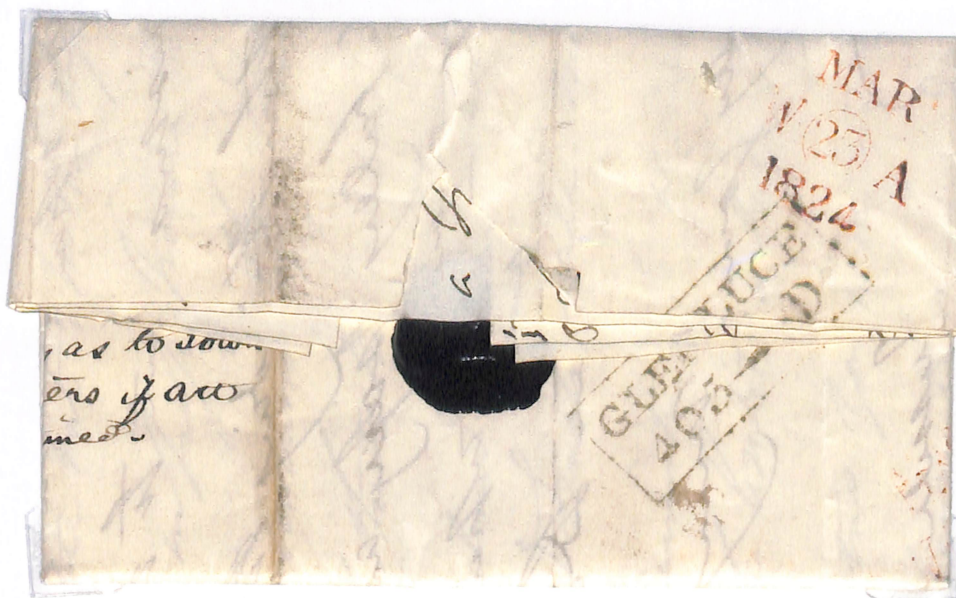
1d Red-brown Plate 22 IL

A letter from Whithawn (sic) to Stranraer posted on 5 September 1842 but with no receiving mark. The Maltese cross of Whithorn is in diffuse grey ink and stamped over a series of vertical grooves (possibly scratches) in the stamp.



'GLENLUCE/PENNY POST'

A wrapper posted from Glenluce to Edinburgh on 22 September 1835, stamped with a Penny Post mark (WI32) on departure as well as a single-line name stamp (WI29) and the usual Edinburgh red dated circle on arrival.. The Glenluce Penny Post is quite a scarce mark, used between July 1834 and September 1837.



Boxed 'GLENLUCE/403 - D' mileage mark

A letter posted on 21 March 1824 to Edinburgh concerning a trust fund.



Maltese cross

A wrapper posted on 10 March 1844 from Glenluce to Culhorn, near Stranraer. A poorly inked example of this scarce Maltese cross.



Single-line name stamp 1808

A wrapper posted from Stranraer arriving in Edinburgh on 22 January 1806 (dated circle in red) with fine single-line 'STRANRAER' name stamp in brown ink. This single-line version of this name stamp was in use between 1802 and 1822 and followed earlier originally introduced in 1773. In the early 1790s the town was mis-spelt "Stranrawer" on the postmark.

Distinctive Maltese cross of Stranraer



1d Black Plate 1b II

The earliest known example of the distinctive Maltese Cross of Stranraer on a letter posted on 31 July 1840 to Wigton with a manuscript instruction "via N. Stewart". Backstamped with the Stranraer dated circle. Rockoff & Jackson record the earliest known date for this distinctive cross as 2 September 1840. A good strike of this scarce cross which shows clearly the tapering narrow arm which distinguishes this cross from others. Very few examples in red ink are known; Rockoff lists one such cover, and three others have been seen dated between September and November 1840.

Castle Douglas to Portpatrick railway

The Castle Douglas and Dumfries Railway Company's extension 60 miles westwards to Portpatrick was the end of the line both literally and metaphorically, because it brought about the end of the horse-drawn mail service. The line opened on 11 March 1861 with a special train for shareholders.

1856 Shareholders notice regarding proposed line.

An encouragement for existing shareholders of the railway company to invest in the proposed extension to Portpatrick. A sum of £460,000 was raised to fund the new line which opened five years later and carried heavy freight in transit to Northern Ireland.

CASTLE-DOUGLAS AND DUMFRIES RAILWAY COMPANY.

CASTLE-DOUGLAS, 19th December, 1856.

SIR,

The Directors beg leave to bring under the notice of the Shareholders the Line of Railway now proposed to be made from Castle-Douglas to Portpatrick, in conjunction with their own Line.

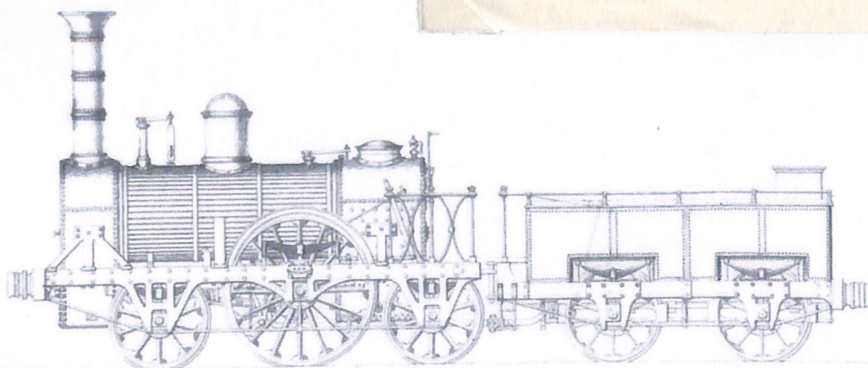
They are strongly of opinion that the connection will be a great advantage to their Line, and would respectfully and urgently recommend to the Shareholders the propriety of their *immediately* taking Shares in that undertaking, so as to secure its Promoters being enabled to apply to Parliament for an Act during next Session.

I am, Sir,

Your most obedient Servant,

WM. H. LIDDERDALE,
Secretary.

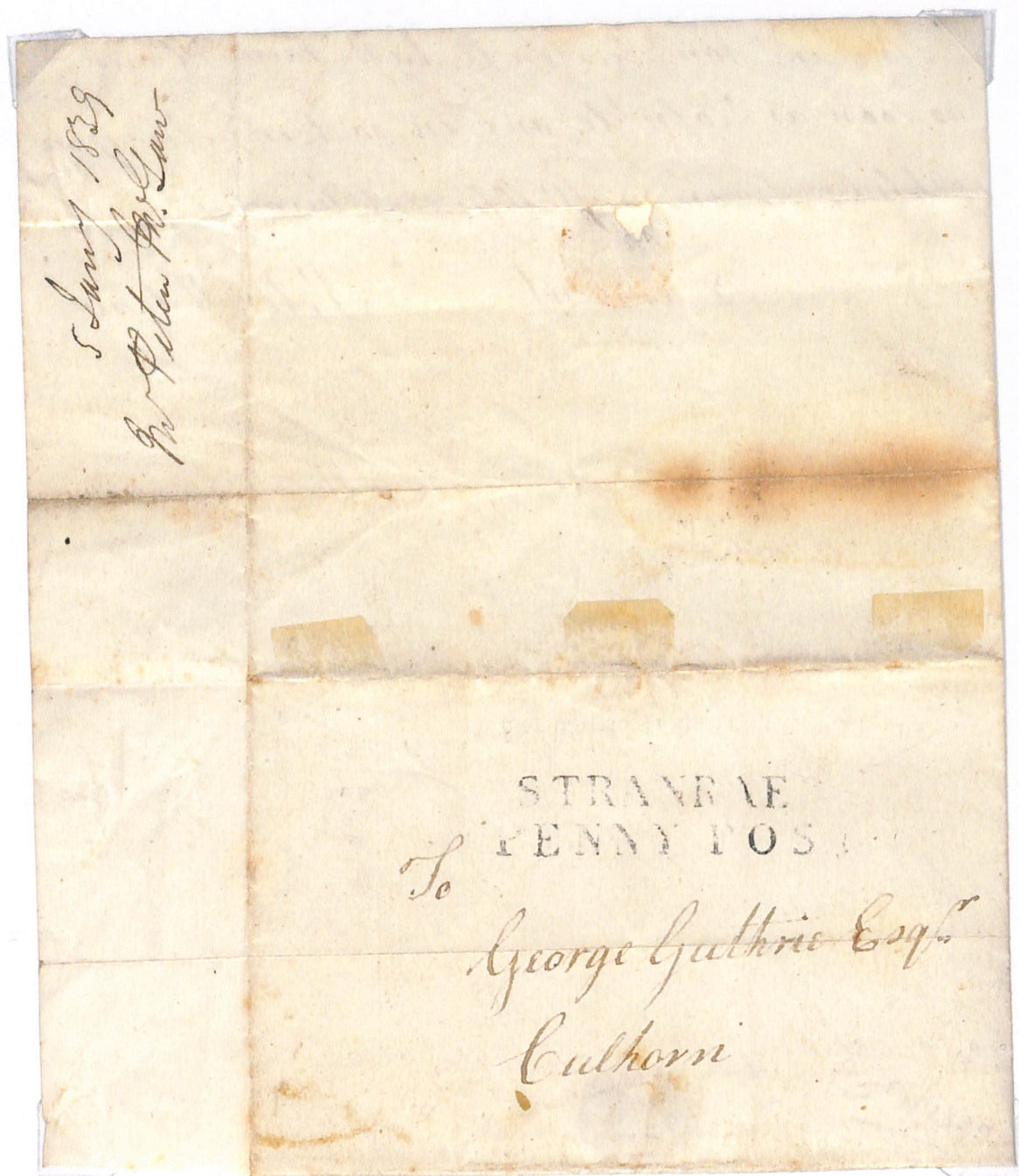
N.B. A Subscription Contract will lie here for Signature during Monday, the 22d current,—and any communication thereafter may be addressed to Mr. Alex. Ingram, Writer, Stranraer.



An 1856 Neilson 0-4-2 tender locomotive built in Newcastle and used on the Portpatrick railway.

A letter from Scotland's southernmost Post Office

Drummore Receiving House



'STRANRAER/PENNY POST' mark, 1839

A letter posted on 5 January 1839 addressed from Drummore, a village close to the Mull of Galloway, to George Culhorn in Stranraer, bearing a fine frontal hand stamp of the Stranraer Penny Post mark (W1150). This mark is known to have been used between April 1834 and December 1839. Drummore was a Receiving House for Stranraer from August 1833, but there are no known postmarks from there. It was connected to the mail network by foot post and lay further south than any other office on the Scottish postal network.