



PHILATELIC OPINION

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No. 0417

July 2016

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DESCRIPTION

1840 1d Black lettered IG on entire letter obliterated by a Maltese Cross of Colchester.

OBSERVATIONS

Comparisons with the letter positions and descriptions in Nissen indicate that the stamp is from Plate 1a. I believe the stamp IG illustrated by Nissen (both in the original work, and in the SG reprint edition) as Plate 1a is from Plate 2 (and that of Plate 2 is a duplicate of Plate 7); however, the letter positions on the stamp in question match the Nissen example from Plate 1b, and match none of the other plates.

The letter is headed 'Dedham 15th May 1840' and is addressed to Mistley. It bears a Colchester datestamp of 15 May 1840 in a similar ink to that of the Maltese Cross which obliterates and ties the 1d Black. Dedham and Mistley are both about 10 miles north-east of Colchester, and about five miles from one another — so the letter went a long way round, necessary because, according to the 1838 Post Office Map, there was no connecting post route between Dedham and Mistley. Dedham had been a receiving office in the Colchester Penny Post and, according to Oxley, was Receiving Office No. 2. The only other postmark on the cover is a small illegible boxed mark in a pale yellowish brown which I believe was probably applied by the Dedham receiving office, and thus could be a boxed 'No.2' of the type used by such offices at that time. Alternatively, but I think less likely, it might be a boxed 'PAID'.

The Phillips Collection (Vol. XI, p. 14) in The Postal Museum, contains a cover from Colchester dated 11 May 1840. The colour of the Maltese Cross appears to be very similar to that on the letter in question, and was described by Phillips as 'Lilac-rose', with an observation that 'through lack of experience and material for comparison they have been classified as "Magenta" in days gone by'. When compared with various colour guides, including SG's and the *Methuen Handbook of Colour*, there is not enough blue in the colour for it to be accurately described as 'lilac' or 'lilac-rose'; however, I believe the ink is in an unusual and distinctive shade. The Phillips cover together with the letter in question demonstrates that Colchester was using a distinctive ink at the beginning of the Maltese Cross period in May 1840. A cover dated 1 Sept. 1840 shows that by then a more usual red ink was being used.

The shape of the obliteration is that of a normal Common cross. Careful examination of the ink of the obliteration under UV light and under high magnification revealed no evidence of the colour of the ink being enhanced.

SOURCES

Charles Nissen, *The Plating of the Penny Black Postage Stamp of Great Britain 1840, 1922*.

S. David Rockoff & Mike Jackson, *Encyclopaedia of the Maltese Cross*, Vol. 3, 2011.

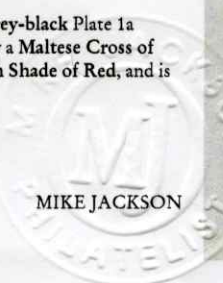
Stanley Gibbons, *Great Britain Specialised Catalogue*, Vol. 1, 16th edn, 2011.

CONCLUSION

In my opinion, the item is an 1840 1d Grey-black Plate 1a lettered IG on entire letter obliterated by a Maltese Cross of Colchester in a Distinctive Pale Pinkish Shade of Red, and is genuine. SG Spec. AS2.



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