

How A Philatelic Cover Becomes A Non-Philatelic One

by Charles J. G. Verge

From 1937 on, major efforts were underway to establish a regular Trans-Atlantic air mail service between North America and Europe. Experimental survey flights were made in July of both 1937 and 1938 from New York via Canada, Newfoundland and Ireland to Southampton in Southern England. Two airline companies vied for the contracts to carry mail: Pan-American Airways Limited, a U.S. carrier and Imperial Airways, a British one. Agreements were signed and Pan-American started its regular service out of New York on June 28, 1939 with Imperial flying out of Southampton for the first time on August 5 of the same year. Because of World War II, which started shortly thereafter, both these Trans-Atlantic services were curtailed in the Fall of 1939.

This is the story of one registered cover (fig. 1) which was destined to be carried, amongst thousands of other covers, on the Pan-American leg from Shediac, the Canadian stop, to Foynes, the Irish stop-over. The cover originated in Georgetown, Ontario and was addressed to Glasgow, Scotland. F.B. Hutt, the sender, franked the cover with the proper rate by using five (5) 6 cents airmail stamps (Scott # C6) for the 30 cents airmail rate and one 10 cents stamp (Scott # 241) for the registration rate for a total of 40 cents of postage. The cover was then sent to the Postmaster at Shediac under separate cover and he registered the letter (fig. 2), cancelled (fig. 3) and backstamped the envelope (fig. 4) and added the flight leg's cachet (fig. 5). The Postmaster then put the letter with other registered mail, destined for the United Kingdom, in a secure mail bag instead of putting it in the secure mail bag for Foynes as requested by the sender in the upper left hand corner of the cover (fig. 6). So far, in its progress, the cover remained very philatelic. From this point on, however, it now becomes a very collectable item for an airmail collection of Canada, the United Kingdom and even Ireland.

On arrival in the United Kingdom the cover was not backstamped. This is typical of the British postal service, but

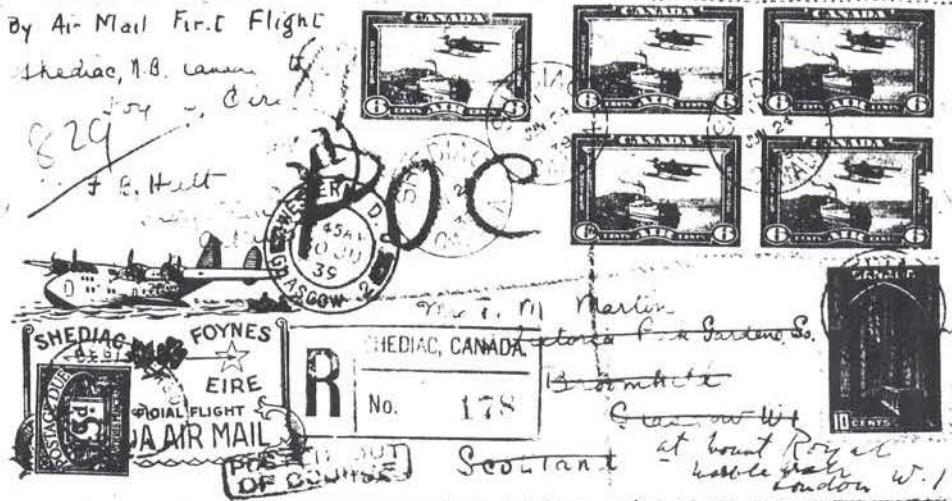


fig. 1

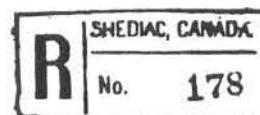


fig. 2



fig. 3

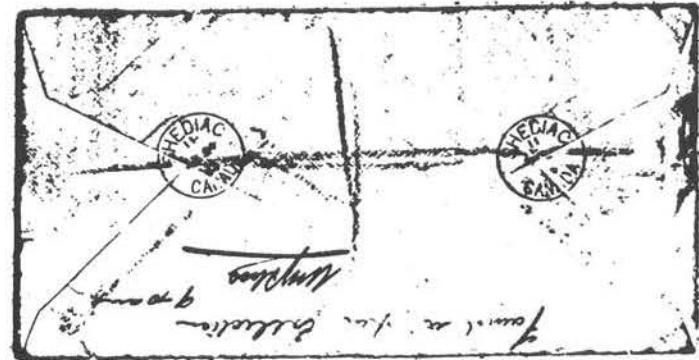


fig. 4 reverse of fig. 1



fig. 5

By Air Mail First Flight
Shediac, N.B. Canada to
Foynes, Eire

fig. 6

Found at open collection
Layphos 9-70 and

fig. 8



fig. 7

POC

fig. 9

it is possible that the smaller of the two blue crosses, indicating the cover's registered status, may have been applied in Southampton upon the opening of the registered mail bag. In Glasgow, however, a receiving CDS was applied (fig. 7) as well as the larger blue cross (or the smaller, if it was put on at this point) and the registration number 89 in the same blue pencil. The cover was then delivered and accepted at Mrs. Martin's address in Broomhill, Glasgow. For some reason, probably Mrs. Martin's absence, the cover was redirected to Marble Arch, London W.1. and was dropped in the local pillar box. Found there (fig. 8) at 9:10 AM on July 1, 1939 it was brought to Glasgow's Western District Office for processing by the mail carrier who probably also added the large orange POC (Posted out of course) notation (fig. 9). The postal clerk added the 3d. to pay (fig. 10) and Posted out of course (fig. 11) handstamps. At the registration desk a 3d. postage due label (Scott # J29) was applied and cancelled by a registered internal office stamp (fig. 12) on July 1, 1939. The large blue cross may have been applied at this point. Sent to London, an additional registration number (829) was added before delivery to Mrs. Martin.



fig. 10



fig. 11



fig. 12

There are two interpretations of the 3d. to pay indication. The first, subscribed to above, would indicate that the cover was re-registered in Glasgow. The Post Office figured that the original Canadian registration had ended with the delivery of the cover to Mrs. Martin's Glasgow address. Posted out of course and with no indication to the contrary, the postal clerk properly re-registered the cover. Another interpretation, using the same parameters as above, would have the clerk indicating double deficiency for the 1 1/2 d. first class rate. The first interpretation seems the more valid as the 3d. postage due label is cancelled by a registration handstamp.



EDITORIAL

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but are already typeset for the next issue. In this issue the authors' seemed to have hibernated for the Winter as I received virtually no correspondence between December and mid February. I even wondered if Irish Philately was dead or dying.

I try and reserve at least one page for chapter reports and the like. This time I was wondering if anyone was out there. I have a very fine article from Tony Finn for the next issue - THE DUBLIN JOURNAL. But I ask you, IS IRISH PHILATELY DEAD or DYING in the USA? Where is the action. Even our President has noted a lack of activity this season. I would like to get a report from all the chapters on what they are doing. If you are not doing anything please tell me that also. Is your membership falling apart? Is there inactivity? Do you have some plans for revitalization? What will it take for you to get off dead center and start something? Believe it or not even if you personally are disinterested or if your membership has lost heart, or if you would like to get out of the job, there are others in our organization who are

THE STORY OF THE STAMLESS FIRST DAY COVER

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Now what is so interesting about this letter? Why do I devote so much time to tell its story? Mr. Clerke, being a bank official, had of course neatly dated his report. It clearly reads "Skibbereen, 5th May 1840". The next day Clerke went to the post office and posted his letter paying one penny for the postage of a normal letter inside Ireland. The letter now received on its front a handwritten remark "Paid 1d" and on the back a round datetamp "SKIBBEREEN MY 6 1840". When the mail coach for Dublin left Skibbereen at 8:40 a.m. that morning it carried this letter to the Dublin GPO where a red double-framed box postmark was applied reading "PAID MY 7 1840" the next day. The letter then travelled to Downpatrick in the north where it arrived to receive a round datetamp on the back "DOWN MY 8 1840".

So far this letter's story. I did not only discover it at the dealers table, I also bought it. The price was reasonable because the dealer had not looked carefully at the date of this letter. Of course it is a real fine item and one does not often see such letters from the very day that the first postage stamps of the world were sold for the first time. MacDonnell Whyte Ltd., in Dublin, have recently offered a similar letter (lot 975) in their auction on 10th June 1989 originating from Dungannon, Co. Tyrone, to Dublin.

In order to find out a little more about my letter I did approach my good friend Bill Kane in Dublin and sent him a copy. This is what he wrote:

- "At this moment I could give several explanations, all based on supposition.
- 1. Did Skibbereen receive its supply of 1d black stamps on time?
- 2. It is well known that the new adhesive stamps of 1840 did not find favour with everybody, so many people continued to use the old system of the handstruck 1d.
- 3. Prepayment could still be made in cash, the use of the handstruck markings continued until 1851-52, when it was abolished, a period of approximately 12 years.
- 4. The above proves the point that the new adhesive labels had a reception that was anything but cordial.
- 5. It is also recorded that many people were very annoyed by the fact that they had to lick the gum of the adhesives.
- 6. Many philatelists believe that the supply of the 1d black stamps were not available at all the Post Offices in Ireland, on the 6th May 1840. Hence the rarity of first day covers for that date.
- 7. Even Dublin with the Head Office in the G.P.O. it is hard to find 1d black covers cancelled on the 6th May 1840.
- 8. It is established that the stamps (1 Penny Black and 2 Pence Blue) were issued on 1st May 1840, with instructions that they were not to be used until 6th May 1840.
- 9. I have read about some items with the 1d black adhesives used in England on the 5th May, but never so in Ireland.

No matter what you may think of the above, you have a very desirable item, which you can display with great pride.

And that is what I am doing here. I have no explanation for the fact that postmaster Daniel Crowley in Skibbereen did not use a Penny Black on this letter, early in the morning of that day. Had he done so, I would have been in a position to add a letter with a Maltese Cross from Skibbereen to my collection. Nevertheless, by keeping my eyes open I found a nice piece of Irish postal history, even if it is a first day cover without any stamp on it.



interested in how you feel about collecting Irish material. Even An Post is interested enough to send out questionnaires to their foreign subscribers to get their opinions on the Irish stamp programs. So let us know how you feel and where you stand.

Deadline for the Summer 1990 issue is 1 JUNE 1990.

