

The Gatehouse Maltese Cross

1. The penny black was first issued in May 1840.
2. Previously letters were paid for by the addressee, who sometimes refused to pay.
3. A rubber stamp was pressed into an ink pad and then used to 'cancel' the stamp, aiming to avoid its re-use.
4. The rubber stamp became known as a maltese cross obliterator (MX).
5. Each MX was hand-made and hence was potentially different in appearance at each post office.
6. For the first few months the cancel was in red ink, which was sometimes capable of being removed.
7. Around February 1841, the red ink was replaced by black ink, although some post offices took some time to use up stocks of red ink.

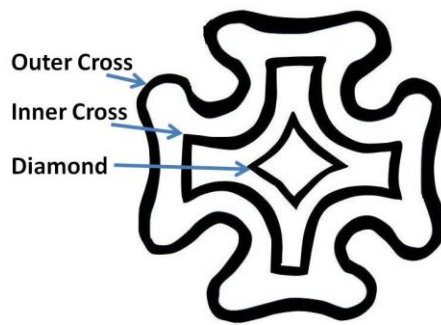


31st Jan 1841



2nd Mar 1841

8. The above scans are taken from wrappers which were posted and date-stamped in Gatehouse.
9. By coincidence both penny blacks above were on letters addressed to the same recipient, "The Anderston Foundry Co., Glasgow", they each have corner letters TH and were posted about 8 weeks apart.



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The statement below comes directly from the “**Encyclopedia of The Maltese Cross cancellations of Great Britain and Ireland**” by Rockoff & Jackson.

“The Gatehouse obliterator is a classic example of one that produced a defective ‘empty centre’ strike after only two years of use. Beginning as early as 21 April 1842, their obliterator had a very weak centre. This is evidenced by the fact that from that day forward the diamond and then the inner cross slowly but progressively disappeared from the Gatehouse Maltese cross, regardless of the adequacy of the inking and strikes. By June 1844, the end of the Maltese era, the Gatehouse cross had lost virtually all of its inner cross and diamond. The outer cross remained virtually intact during the entire period.”

10. The above 1d black that was cancelled on 2nd Mar.1841 seems to show wear to the diamond, yet the 1d black cancelled below on 8th March 1841 seems to show a complete MX.
11. It is possible that the earlier MX might have been used with a drier ink pad, and maybe this indicates a weakness in the manufacture of the obliterator.



8th Mar 1841

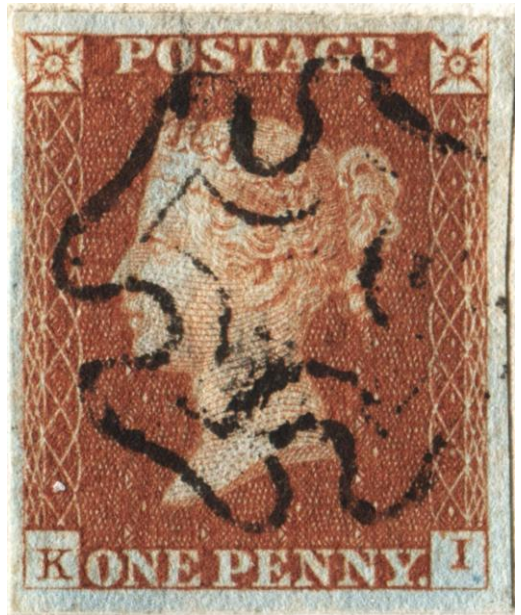


19th Dec 1842

12. The remaining 5 copies of 'obliterated' 1d reds show that the level of wear does not recover and that the damage is permanent.



10th Jan 1843



31st Jan 1843



7th Aug 1843



2nd Sep 1843