Prior to the Crimean War, the Admiralty was building up the strength of the Navy ships in the Levant. Turkey had declared war against Russia in October 1853, and prior to Britain and France joining Turkey on 28 March 1854, had dispatched 15 Royal Navy ships, under the command of Vice-Admiral Sir Charles Napier aboard HMS Westminster, 131 guns, to the Baltic to blockade the Russian Ports in the Gulf of Finland.

During the campaigns that followed, 55 Royal Navy ships were involved in the two areas, 28 ships in the Baltic and 27 in the Black Sea. In the Baltic, as well as the blockade, Bomarsund was attacked and captured, and Sveaborg was bombard and destroyed.
Whilst in the Black Sea, 27 British and 25 French ships bombarded Sebastopol on 17 October 1854. Prior to the bombardment, a Naval Brigade of 1,050 seamen, landed with 50 heavy guns and took up positions prior to the Artillerymen, their casualties in the actual assault out of 120 men were 14 killed and 46 wounded. Further Naval Brigades were provided to assist the troops, especially at Azoff.

The Baltic Medal, was awarded to officers, seamen and marines who had been engaged in the Baltic from March 1854 to August 1855. It would appear that men from over 90 Royal Navy ships received Crimean War medals, from both the Baltic and Black Sea campaigns, this included ships of the line as well as gunboats and mortar vessels.
POSTAL ARRANGEMENTS

The Admiralty made special arrangements for the postal services to the Baltic Fleet, at first a Royal Navy ship was commissioned to carry mail direct from England to the Fleet, however when the Fleet was stationed near Danzig, a service was introduced “overland” via Danzig, Aachen, and Ostend, later via Kiel, Hamburg and Ostend.

In the Crimea, the army had set up a British Post Office at Balaclava and Constantinople, where mail was carried on Transports and returning Royal Navy ships as the opportunity arose, but arrangements were made for mail to be sent overland by the French Post Office via Marseilles, the mail in the Mediterranean being carried on French Packets between Marseilles and Constantinople.

POSTAL CONCESSION RATES

From 5 May 1795, Seamen were able to send a half ounce letter for One Penny, subject to certain conditions, and this privilege was still available at all times during the campaigns, as and when ships were available, “but such opportunities will necessarily be uncertain”.

It was under these circumstances that special concession rates were introduced during the Crimean War, both in the Baltic and Black Sea., for both Seamen and Officers.

In this instance additional charges were included for travel by French Packets and transport through France, as well as through Prussia and Belgium.

Whilst Seamen still enjoyed the concession rates after the end of the Crimean War (13 September 1854), concession rates for Naval Officers were not introduced again until 1 June 1857, and for Army Officers not until 1 January 1868, with the concessions for all Officers being withdrawn on 1 January 1870.
BRITISH POSTAGE STAMPS

Great Britain introduced the use of Postage Stamps to prepay letters on 6 May 1840, however their use by seamen serving on overseas stations for their letters was not allowed until 31 August 1850, (G.P.O. Notice 28/1850), the stamps being made available by the ship’s Purser. This authorization was not extended to Naval Officers until July 1854, (G.P.O. Notice 44/1854).

31 August 1850, G.P.O. Notice 28/1850

BALTIC FLEET POSTAL RATES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>P.O. Notice</th>
<th>Route</th>
<th>Rate ½ oz (unless noted - ¼oz)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21 March 1854</td>
<td>19/1854</td>
<td>HM Ship/Pkt.</td>
<td>Seamen 1d Officers 6d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 1854</td>
<td>30/1854</td>
<td>Dantzic</td>
<td>Seamen 5d Officers 8d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 1854</td>
<td>64/1854</td>
<td>Dantzic</td>
<td>Route Discontinued</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 1854</td>
<td>64/1854</td>
<td>Kiel</td>
<td>Seamen 7d Officers 10d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 April 1855</td>
<td>22/1855</td>
<td>Kiel</td>
<td>Seamen/Officers 3d ½oz, 6d ½oz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 April 1855</td>
<td>22/1855</td>
<td>Dantzic</td>
<td>Seamen/Officers 3d ½oz, 6d ½oz</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Service to the Baltic Fleet ended on 17 December 1855, with the return of the Fleet.

13 September 1856  Special Concession Rates withdrawn. Seaman 1d remained.

GPO Notice June 1854 - For the British Squadron in the White Sea, arrangements were made for Private Steamers, in conjunction with the regular Norwegian Mail Packets, to carry the Navy mail; Officers were charged 1s.0d. ½oz and Seamen 9d. ½oz.
I have only recorded one letter posted at the 1d Rate from the Baltic, during the period of this campaign, March 1854 to 17 December 1855, dated 26 August 1854 from HMS Edinburgh
I have only recorded one cover via Danzig, dated 19 August 1854, prepaying the Seamen’s Concession rate of five pence during this period (May 1854 to 31 October 1854).

(Illustrated below)

I have details of one cover dated 26 August 1854, prepaying one penny which went via Danzig, arriving at Birmingham on 29 August 1854.

I have no doubt others exist, and details would be appreciated.
Letter sent by Seaman Edward Taylor, HMS *Impérieuse*, Baltic Fleet. Correctly countersigned by the Officer in command at the time.

The five GB One Penny Red on blue paper and perforated 16 adhesives, have been cancelled with the London 1844 type barred oval obliterator №. 35 Backstamped London cds BP/22AU22/1854 (orange) and “Indented type (A. & H. № 157) 10 F 10/ AU 22/1854 (orange). These were generally used on “Unpaid” mail. Accountancy Markings appear to be 1s. within circle (orange) crossed out. And manuscript figure “4” indicating the Fourpence (Foreign Rate) due to Prussia. Redirection fee waived in accordance with regulations for Concession Rate Letters (*Act 3&4 Vict. Cap 96*) Effective from 1 September 1840.

The Mail Service via Danzig was weekly, with the Frigate arriving in time for the mail to leave each Friday.

**BALTIC FLEET POSTAL ROUTE**

The via Danzig route was discontinued from 31 October 1854, GPO Notice № 64/1854, November 1854, when the British Fleet moved to Kiel Bay, and the mail went via Hamburg and Ostend. *(I have not recorded any mail from or to Seamen on this route.)* The Postal Rates for a ½oz letter via Hamburg was increased to 7d for Seamen, and to 10d for Officers. The Seaman’s 1d rate was still operable, subject to availability of British ships to and from England.
BALTIC FLEET POSTAL RATE

BALTIC FLEET HMS Edinburgh via DANZIG

Officers & Seamen Three Pence Rate, ¼ oz.

3 April 1855 to 17 December 1855

GPO Notice № 22 April 1855, reinstated the via Danzig postal route from the 3 April 1855, with a new concession rates being brought in line with those enjoyed by the British Forces serving in the Black Sea.

3d a ¼ oz and 6d for a ½ oz letter for both Seamen and Officers

The Baltic Sea Postal Service ended on 17 December 1855 when the Fleet returned home.

Danzig 25 May 1855, London & Lemington 29 May 1855

 Entire Letter dated 22 May 1855 (Off Revel [Reval]) sent by Midshipman Henry Waller, HMS Edinburgh, Baltic Fleet.

The three GB One Penny Red, adhesives have been cancelled with the London 1844 type barred oval obliterator № 42 within a diamond. Backstamped London cds GW/29MY29/1855 (red) and cds LEAMINGTON MY 29/1855/B (green).

Accountancy marking; manuscript figure “7” which was applied in error, has been crossed out. No doubt this was applied because of the previous rate of 10d. via Hamburg (October 1854) reduced in April 1855
BALTIC FLEET HMS Edinburgh via DANZIG

Officers & Seamen Three Pence Rate, ¼ oz.
3 April 1855 to 17 December 1855

Danzig 22 June 1855, London 26 June, Wragby 27 June 1855

Letter sent by Lieut. John Cartwright, HMS Orion, Steam Gunboat, 91 guns, 600 HP.
The three GB One Penny Red adhesives have been cancelled with London 1844 type barred oval obliterator №.19 within a diamond. Backstamped London cds CZ/JU26/1855 (red) and WRAGBY unframed cds JU27/1855 (green)
Accountancy Markings, Handstruck “3” indicating Three Pence to Pay (Overweight Letter) the Manuscript figure “1” for Redirection Fee crossed out as not applicable for Concession Rate Letters.

Details of other recorded Covers

Robson Lowe Auction 15 March 1988?
? June 1855 HMS Majestic - ½oz Letter 6d to Miss Nix, Birmingham.
29 June 1855 ½oz Letter 3d to Mrs. Ford, Southsea, Hants.
6 July 1855 ¼oz Letter 3d to Mrs James Bowden, Dawlish, Devon (10 July 1855)
27 July 1855 ¼oz Letter 3d to Mrs. Ford, Southsea, Hants (31 July 1855)

Information received from an Exhibitor in Germany.
6 July 1855 ¼oz Letter 3d. UNPAID to Miss Nix, Birmingham (10 July 1855)
27 July 1855 ¼oz Letter 3d to Miss Nix, Birmingham (31 July 1855)

Bill Barrell Ltd. Web Offers June 2008
7 September 1855 ¼oz Letter 3d to Mrs. Martin, Chislehurst, Kent (11 Sept. 1855)

All the above covers are from Officers
BALTIC FLEET HMS *Edinburgh* via DANZIG

Officers & Seamen Three Pence Rate, ⅓ oz.
3 April 1855 to 17 December 1855

Danzig 6 July 1855, Lemington 10 July 1855

Letter dated 22 May 1855 (Off Revel [Reval]) sent by Midshipman Henry Waller, HMS *Edinburgh*, Baltic Fleet.

The three GB One Penny Red, adhesives have been cancelled with the London 1844 type barred oval obliterator № 51 within a diamond. Backstamped with double strike of cds **LEAMINGTON JY10/1855/B** (green).

Accountancy Markings, Handstruck “3” indicating Three Pence to Pay (⅓oz letter?)
BLACK SEA FLEET

In May 1853, the British Mediterranean Fleet was ordered to join the French Fleet at Besika Bay (Located on the coast of Asia Minor, between Lemnos and Tenedos) in preparation of the pending aggressive actions of the Russians against Turkey.

It was not until Britain and France had declared war against Russia and joined Turkey on 28 March 1854 that Postal arrangements were made by the Army and the Admiralty.

The Army set up two Army Post Offices, at Constantinople and Balaclava.

Prior to the war, mail from Constantinople was normally sent overland through France and carried on French Packets across the Mediterranean.

On the 3 April 1854 this arrangement was changed and the French Packets only carried the mail between Constantinople and Malta, where the mail was transferred to British Packets to Southampton.

This change only lasted until 22 May 1854, when the mail reverted to the original route, with the mail being carried all the way by the French Packets, six times a month (GPO Notice N°29 – 22 May). In December 1854, the frequency of the French Packets was increased to twice a week.
BLACK SEA FLEET POSTAL RATES

Prior to the new route and Concession Rates being agreed with the French, Seamen were still able to send and receive their letters by British Packets for 1d if prepaid, 2d if sent unpaid.

When sent by Private Ship an extra 2d was required for the Master's Gratuity. This additional 2d could either be prepaid by Postage Stamps or if sent unpaid, payment was to be made by the recipient.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>P.O. Notice</th>
<th>Route</th>
<th>Rate ½ oz letter. (or ¼oz)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22 May 1854</td>
<td>29/1854</td>
<td>HM Ship/Pkt. Seamen</td>
<td>1d Officers 6d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 May 1854</td>
<td>29/1854</td>
<td>Marseilles</td>
<td>Seamen/Officers 3d ¾oz, 6d ½oz</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notice to the Public & Instructions to all Postmasters

Letters, &c., for the British Forces in Turkey and the Black Sea.

GENERAL POST OFFICE. May 1854

THE French Government having generously offered to place the British Forces in Turkey, and the Black Sea upon the same advantageous footing with the French Forces in respect of correspondence conveyed by French Mediterranean Packets, and Her Majesty’s Government having accepted this offer, Closed Mails will hereafter be sent to the British Forces in Turkey by the route of France, and all Letters and Newspapers upon which the requisite amount of postage has been prepaid will be sent in these Mails, unless otherwise addressed.

Upon the correspondence so conveyed the following combined British and French rates of Postage must be paid in advance, viz:—

For a Letter, addressed to an Officer in the British Army or Navy, or to a Non-Commissioned Officer, Private Soldier or Seaman in Turkey or the Black Sea—

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>Letter</th>
<th>2 oz</th>
<th>2 ½ oz</th>
<th>3 oz</th>
<th>3 ½ oz</th>
<th>4 oz</th>
<th>5 oz</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3 oz</td>
<td>3 ¼d</td>
<td>3 d</td>
<td>3 d</td>
<td>3 d</td>
<td>3 d</td>
<td>3 d</td>
<td>3 d</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 oz</td>
<td>4 d</td>
<td>4 d</td>
<td>4 d</td>
<td>4 d</td>
<td>4 d</td>
<td>4 d</td>
<td>4 d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 oz</td>
<td>4 d</td>
<td>4 d</td>
<td>4 d</td>
<td>4 d</td>
<td>4 d</td>
<td>4 d</td>
<td>4 d</td>
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<tr>
<td>7 oz</td>
<td>4 d</td>
<td>4 d</td>
<td>4 d</td>
<td>4 d</td>
<td>4 d</td>
<td>4 d</td>
<td>4 d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 oz</td>
<td>4 d</td>
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<td>4 d</td>
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<td>4 d</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 oz</td>
<td>4 d</td>
<td>4 d</td>
<td>4 d</td>
<td>4 d</td>
<td>4 d</td>
<td>4 d</td>
<td>4 d</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

And so on, adding 2d. British for each additional ounce, and 1d. French postage for every 2½ ounces.

As to the mode of charging postage in the quarter ounce, it is necessary that a Letter should be under a quarter of an ounce in weight in order to secure the advantage of the lowest rate.

The French Mail Packets leave Marseilles for Constantia on the 1st, 6th, 11th, 16th, 21st, and 26th of each month, and the latest period for posting in London, Letters and Newspapers intended to be forwarded by these Packets will be the evening of the 5th, 10th, 15th, 20th, 25th, and 30th, but when the month has 31 days, Letters, &c. may be posted on the 21st instead of the 26th.

Letters from Soldiers and Seamen serving in the British Army or Navy in Turkey or the Black Sea, may still be forwarded under the usual regulations for a postage of One Penny, in the British Packet by the route of Southampton and Malta, and thence by a vessel of War; but the opportunity for the transmission of these Letters beyond Malta are necessarily uncertain.

22 May 1854 GPO Notice No 29

13 September 1856 Special Concession Rates withdrawn. Seaman 1d remained.
HMS *Rodney* Rodney Class 1826, Second Rate 90/92 guns (two-deckers) Seppings design. Built at Pembroke Dockyard, launched June 1833; converted to screw line of battle ship; 1882 Broken up. Complement 720/830 men.

In 1853, HMS *Rodney* was listed as on “*Particular Service*” Mediterranean Fleet. On the 1 April 1855, at the request of Lord Raglan, 200 men from the ship were sent to replace the casualties suffered by the Naval Brigade.

HMS *Rodney* was in Malta from 27 February to 8 June, 1853, when she sailed for Bashilia, arriving there on 13 June 1853, where this letter was put into the Navy Bag.

*(Reference David Feldman Lot 10695, 1-6 November 1993)*
BLACK SEA FLEET HMS *Rodney* per Private Ship

Posted at Bashilia

Bashilia c13 June 1853, Liverpool 27 July 1853

Letter sent by Seaman John Carmichael, HMS *Rodney*, correctly countersigned by Commander George Walker, the Officer in command at the time. The GB One Penny Red on blue paper adhesive has been cancelled with the LIVERPOOL Barred Numeral Obliterator № 466. Accountancy Handstruck figure 2 indicates 2d due for the Master’s gratuity, as it was carried on a Private Ship. SS *Prosperita*, from the Black Sea, arrived Liverpool 27 July 1853. Backstamped rectangular boxed date stamp, (rounded corners) 27 JY 1853/LIVERPOOL/SHIP (green) known used 1853-55 and cds GLASGOW/ 28 JY/1853 (orange).

Letter posted at Besika Bay

Seaman John Carmichael has endorsed this next cover “Besika Bay”

Unlike the majority of mail from seamen serving overseas, generally there is no indication whatsoever where or when they were posted. Apart from some instances where mail was sorted en-route, the majority of the Navy Mail Bags remained sealed until they reached the United Kingdom.

The arrangements made by the Army Post Office was to carry all the mail in “Closed Bags”, after it reached either Constantinople or Balakava.
BLACK SEA FLEET HMS Rodney per Private Ship

Posted at Besika Bay

Besika Bay c20 August 1853, London & Glasgow 19 September 1853

Letter sent by Seaman John Carmichael, HMS Rodney, correctly countersigned by Lieutenant Francis P. Porteous, the Officer in command at the time.

The GB One Penny Red on blue paper adhesive has been cancelled with the London Barred Numeral Obliterator №. 67. Accountancy Handstruck figure 2 indicates 2d due for the Master’s gratuity as it was carried on a Private Ship SS Sarah, from Malta, which arrived Gravesend 18 September 1853.

Handstruck circular mark letters M/NR within a circle (red), used on the Travelling Post Office on the Great Northern Railway, the letter M indicating Morning Service. Backstamped with London date stamp ? Crown M/19SP19/1853 within circle, (red) and rectangular boxed date stamp, GLASGOW/ SEP 19N/ 1853 (orange).

In October 1853, HMS Rodney left Besika Bay for the Black Sea.
BLACK SEA FLEET HMS *Rodney* per P&O Packet

Posted at Bospheros

Bospheros November 1853, London & Glasgow 6 December 1853

Letter sent by Seaman John Carmichael, HMS *Rodney*, correctly countersigned by Lieutenant Francis P. Porteous, the Officer in command at the time.

The GB One Penny Red on blue paper adhesive has been cancelled with the London 1844 type Barred Oval Obliterator №. 29.

Backstamped with London date stamp *U Crown 8/6 DE 6/1853* in circle, (red) and circular date stamp, *GLASGOW/ 6 DE N/ 1853* (orange).

Mail carried on the regular P & O Mail Service Ship *SS Ripon*, which left Alexandria on the 20 November 1853 with the China mail per the P & O *SS Oriental* arriving at Malta on 24 November and at Gibraltar on 29 November , leaving the same day, and finally arriving at Southampton on 5 December 1853.

During the Crimean War, the British Government exercised their powers and either purchased or leased steamers from the P & O Mail Service, for operations in the Crimea, the Baltic and Indian Ocean.

This meant that the China Line was reduced to monthly from a fortnightly service and the Sydney Line was cut out altogether.
BLACK SEA FLEET HMS *Rodney* per P&O Packet

Posted at the Black Sea

![Image of letter](image)

Black Sea April 1854, London & Glasgow 3 May 1854

Letter sent by Seaman John Carmichael, HMS *Rodney*, correctly countersigned by Lieutenant Francis P. Porteous, the Officer in command at the time.

The GB One Penny Red on blue paper adhesive has been cancelled with the London 1844 type Barred Oval Obliterator № 31.

Backstamped with London date stamp PE/MY- 3/1853 in circle, (red) and large circular date stamp, GLASGOW/ MY 3 N/ 1854 (black).

Mail carried on the regular P & O Mail Service Ship *SS Colombo*, which left Alexandria on the 19 April 1854 with the China mail per the P & O SS *Oriental* at Malta on 22 to 23 April 1854, and at Gibraltar on 28 April 1854, and finally arriving at Southampton on 2 May 1854.

The Mail service organized by the Army and Admiralty, for the mail to be sent via Marseilles and carried by French Packets did not take place until April – May 1854 with the Rates set down from 22 May 1854. Post Office Notice No. 29/1854.
BLACK SEA FLEET POSTAL RATES

By HM Ships/British Packet: Seamen 1d, Officers 6d. (½oz Letters) or via Marseilles (French Packets) Seamen and Officers 3d ¼oz & 6d ½oz.

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Instructions No. 76, 1854, cancelling Instructions Nos. 29, 58, 59, 61 and 66 of this Year.

By Command of the Postmaster General.

NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC, AND
Instructions to all Postmasters.

Additional Mails to Her Majesty’s Forces in Greece, Turkey, and the Black Sea, and Alteration in Days for Despatch.

GENERAL POST OFFICE,
December, 1854.

The French Government having made arrangements for despatching a Mail Packet from Marseilles to Constantinople twice a week, instead of six times a month, as heretofore, Mails containing the correspondence for Her Majesty’s Forces in Greece, Turkey, and the Black Sea, will in future be made up in London, for conveyance through France and by the French Mediterranean Packet, every Monday and Friday evening.

The following are the combined British and French rates of postage chargeable upon this correspondence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weighing under 1 ounce</th>
<th>Weighing 1 oz and not exceeding 2 oz</th>
<th>Exceeding 2 oz and not exceeding 3 oz</th>
<th>Exceeding 3 oz and not exceeding 5 oz</th>
<th>Exceeding 5 oz and not exceeding 10 oz</th>
<th>Exceeding 10 oz and not exceeding 12 oz</th>
<th>Exceeding 12 oz and not exceeding 16 oz</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3d</td>
<td>6d</td>
<td>1s</td>
<td>2d</td>
<td>4d</td>
<td>6d</td>
<td>2s</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

And so on, adding 2d. British for each additional ounce, and 10d. French postage for every 2½ ounces.

The above rates of postage must be paid in advance, or the letters will be opened and returned to the writers.

Newspapers are chargeable with a postage of 2d. each, which must also be paid in advance; otherwise the newspapers, instead of being sent forward in the closed Mails via Marseilles, will be detained until an opportunity offers of despatching them by a Ship-of-War or other vessel in the service of Her Majesty.

Letters for Soldiers or Seamen serving in the British Forces in Greece, Turkey, or the Black Sea, upon which a postage of one penny only is paid, will in like manner be forwarded either by a Ship-of-War or other vessel in Her Majesty’s Service, or by the British Packets via Southampton and Malta, and thence to their destinations or opportunities may offer.

In order to prevent, as far as possible, the delay of letters and newspapers for Invalid Officers and Soldiers in the British Military Hospital in Turkey, which would result from such letters &c., being sent to the Head Quarters of the Army, a separate bag is made up for the correspondence referred to, and letters and newspapers are sent in this bag if addressed to—

"The Hospital, Scutari,"

December 1854 GPO Notice № 76, 1854
Cancelling Nos. 29,58,59,61, and 66 / 1854
BRITISH ARMY POST OFFICES

The Head Office at Constantinople was in operation from 20 June 1854 until August 1856, however a temporary office handling letters from the Black Sea Fleet was open in Constantinople during September 1856 and letters were cancelled with the “Star and Cyphers” obliterator and backstamped “CONSTANTINOPLE B.A.”

CANCELLATIONS and DATESTAMPS

The Crown & Stars Obliterator was sent out on 27 May 1854 and known used August 1854 – 26 April 1855.

The Star and Cyphers Obliterator, commonly known as the “OXO” type, was sent out in March 1855, and is known used 24 March 1855 – September 1856.

Date Stamp PO 1 is recorded used at Varna, Balaclava Army HQ, and on a ship, during the period June 1854 and August 1856, in black, blue and at HQ in green.

Date Stamp PO 2 is known used with Index Letters A, B & O, struck in red, green, black and blue, used at Constantinople, Balaclava, and Crimea Army H.Q. Period of use December 1854 to July 1856

Reference The encyclopedia of British Empire Postage Stamps, Volume One – Published by Robson Lowe Ltd. London. Second Edition 1952
BRITISH ARMY POST OFFICES

Star and Cyphers

Constantinople 17 May 1855, Brighton 20 May 1855

The three 1d GB 1d red adhesives cancelled with the “Star and Cypher “ obliterator, more commonly known as the “OXO” type obliterator.

POST OFFICE /BRITISH ARMY “MY 17/ 1855/A” (on reverse of cover above)

British Army Datestamp PO2 used at Constantinople, struck in green.

Identification of the reason for the red manuscript marking “XI” on both the obverse and reverse (adjacent to the datestamp) is not known, although it may be “The Eleventh (Prince Albert’s Own) Hussars” who were involved in the battle of Sevastopol, which is included on the “Honours” of their colours.
BLACK SEA FLEET HMS *Queen*

HMS *Queen*, Queen class 1833 Symonds design, 3249 tons, 150 HP, 110 guns, complement 950. ex *Royal Frederick* name changed 1839. Built Portsmouth Dockyard, launched 15 May 1839, converted to two-decker 1858–1859, 86 gun screw line of battle ship; 1871 broken up.

Letter addressed to Lieutenant John W. Whyte. HMS *Queen*, At Devonport, prior to his departure to the Black Sea

2 July 1853 Ryde, Isle of Wight

One Penny Postal Stationery Envelope, cancelled with the Ryde Isle of Wight Barred Obliterator No. 666, RYDE cds JY 2/1853 and London cds 1853/2 JY 2/D crown X (red)

Posted at the Black Sea

HMS *Queen*, posted on 10 December 1854

Constantinople, 15 December 1854
BLACK SEA FLEET HMS Queen

Letter sent by Lieutenant John W. Whyte. Endorsed “From HMS Queen Black Sea Fleet via France”, also inscribed “Dec 10th 1854”. The Three GB 1d reds, on blue paper adhesives have been cancelled with the Constantinople “Crown and Stars” obliterator, and at London with the 1844 type barred obliterator No. 24 in diamond. Backstamped with the type PO 2 “Post Office British Army” DE 15/1854 (Black) Receiving Date stamps missing (top and bottom flaps removed)

HMS Queen, 116 guns, Captain Frederick Thomas Mitchell took part in the first bombardment of the Sebastopol forts 17 October 1854. She was unable to take her assigned position originally allocated to her, and was in the position assigned to HMS Bellerophon, and HMS Rodney took up the position vacated by HMS Queen.

Seaward Defences of Sebastopol and the stations assigned to the Black Fleet
BLACK SEA FLEET HMS *Highflyer*

HMS *Highflyer*, screw corvette, laid down as a screw sloop, later reclassified as corvette in 1855, launched 1851, 1902 tons, 21 guns, broken up 1871.

Entire letter posted at Achmechett *(North West coast of Crimea)*

Achmechett, 15 January 1855, London 2 February 1853

Entire Letter sent by Lieutenant William Armytage, HMS *Highflyer*. Letter sent unpaid, manuscript figure “3” denoting three Pence to Pay. Endorsed "From Black Sea Fleet via Marseilles" and “Jany 20th” and further endorsed on receipt “Jany 17th 1855 Achmechet” Backstamped at Constantinople with cds “POST OFFICE: BRITISH ARMY/ JA 22/1855/A” (green) Index Letter “A”. London cds “FG/FE – 2/55” (red)

Armytage, records that the incoming mail had just arrived on board HMS *Stromboli*, 280 HP, 6gun, Paddle wheel steam sloop, which was carrying provisions and mail, 15 January, hence the quick letter home, which was taken back to Constantinople on the *Stromboli*, on 2 January 1855. At Constantinople the French Packet *Egyptus*, which left for Marseilles on 22 January 1855, arriving at Marseilles on 31 January 1855, with the mail finally arriving at London on 2 February 1855.

Armytage was transferred to HMS *Viper*, Screw steam vessel 160HP, 4 guns, as Lieut-Commander on 1 March 1855, promoted Commander on 16 May 1855, at which stage, Lieut-Commander Henry W. Comber took command of the *Viper* and Armytage returned back to England, and promoted to Captain 6 August 1860.

*The GPO Notice stated that letters would be returned unless prepaid (UK only?)*
Malta, 24 January 1855, Portsea 1 February 1855

Letter written by Edward Franklin. It appears that the three GB One Penny Red adhesives have not been cancelled as it was placed in the Malta postal System. Manuscript figure “6” has been applied, which indicates six pence to pay, being threepence underpaid and threepence Fine. Backstamped MALTA cds 24 January 1855, London cds (faint strike) ? 31 January 1855, PORTSMOUTH 1 February 1855.

The cover has been endorsed “via Marseilles” and the dates are consistent with the mail being carried on the French Packet Mentor which left Constantinople on 18 January 1855 for Marseilles via Dardanelles, Smyrna, Siros and Malta (24 January 1855) arriving at Marseilles on 29 January 1855, & London/Portsmouth 31 January 1855/ 1 February 1855.

Additional instructions inside the envelope

“& send me a dozen 1d & 2d Heads. Write on thinnest paper & it wont be an extra charge”
BLACK SEA FLEET HMS Sidon

HMS Sidon Paddle Frigate, 1329 tons, 8 guns, launched 1846, sold 1864.

Off Sevastopol – 27 January 1855

HMS Sidon, Entire Letter written at Sevastopol

Letter sent by Captain George Goldsmith, HMS Sidon, off Sevastopol.

The three GB One Penny Red on blue paper adhesives have been cancelled with the London 1844 type barred oval obliterator №45 in diamond.

Backstamped with the London indented type date stamp; (orange) “B – 8/FE 13/1855”, with the letter “K” breaking the lower frame line. Endorsed “via Marseilles” and “Sidon” etc.

The letter ends with a request to send him “5 shillings worth of stamps”

Mail carried to Constantinople by British Frigate, picked up by the French Packet Carmel on 1 February 1855, for Marseilles via Dardanelles, Smyrna, Siros and Malta, arriving at Marseilles on 10 February 1855, & London on 13 February 1855

George Goldsmith, 18 years War service, joined the service as a Naval Cadet on 20 June 1821, Midshipman 16 May 1824, Lieutenant 8 August 1828, Commander 1 May 1841, Captain 16 September 1842, Rear Admiral 19 May 1862, Vice Admiral 18 October 1867, and finally on 30 July 1875, promoted to Admiral, and probably died in office.
Letter from Captain George Goldsmith – HMS Sidon
BLACK SEA FLEET HMS Sidon

Sevastopol 9 February 1855

HMS Sidon, Entire Letter written at Sevastopol

Constantinople 12 February 1855 London 23 February 1855

Letter sent by Captain George Goldsmith, HMS Sidon, Sevastopol.

The three GB One Penny Red on blue paper adhesives have been cancelled with the London 1844 type barred oval obliterator No.44 in diamond.

Backstamped with the Constantinople Army Post Office cds POST OFFICE- BRITISH ARMY FE 12/1855/A (green) and London indented type date stamp; (orange) “12n12/FE 23/1855”, also London cds same date. Endorsed “via Marseilles” and “Sidon” etc.

Accountancy manuscript figure “3” denoting three pence due on delivery, over the ¼oz weight and under ½oz. (I have checked the weight of the cover and letter, and it is just slightly over the ¼oz and under the ½oz.)

Mail carried to Constantinople by British Frigate, and picked up by the French Packet Euphrate which left on 12 February 1855 for Marseilles via the Dardanelles, Piraeus, and Messina, arriving at Marseilles on 21 February 1855 and finally at London on 23 February 1855.
BLACK SEA FLEET HMS Sidon

HMS Sidon - Sevastopol 9 February 1855

Letter from Captain George Goldsmith – HMS Sidon
BLACK SEA FLEET HMS Sidon

Kayateh Bay – 20 March 1855

Officer’s Letter written at Kayateh Bay

Constantinople 22 March 1855, London 2 April 1855

Letter sent by Captain George Goldsmith, HMS Sidon, Kayateh Bay.
The three GB One Penny Red on blue paper adhesives have been cancelled with the Crown and Stars Obliterator, latest date of use recorded 26 April 1855.

Crown and Stars Obliterator

Backstamped with the Constantinople Army Post Office cds POST OFFICE- BRITISH ARMY MR 26/1855/A (green) and London indented type date stamp; (orange) “10 - 10/AP 2/1855”, with the letter ”A” breaking the bottom frame also London boxed date stamp, corners mitred, and London cds all same date (orange) . Cover endorsed “via Marseilles” and “Sidon” etc. Reverse top flap embossed “HMS SIDON”

Mail carried to Constantinople by British Frigate, and picked up by the French Packet Sinai which left on 22 March 1855 for Marseilles via Dardanelles, Smyrna, Siros and Malta, arriving at Marseilles on 31 March 1855 and finally at London on 2 April 1855.
BLACK SEA FLEET HMS Sidon

Off Sevastopol

Entire Letter written on 2 May 1855

Constantinople 5 May 1855, London 18 May 1855

Letter sent by Captain George Goldsmith, HMS Sidon, off Sevastopol. The three GB One Penny Red on blue paper adhesives have been cancelled with the London 1844 type barred oval obliterator Nº.43 in diamond.

Backstamped with the Constantinople Army Post Office cds POST OFFICE-BRITISH ARMY MY 5/1855 (black) and London indented type date stamp; 2 strikes (orange) “12N°12/MY18/1855”, Index Letters breaking the bottom frame line “A” & “B” (orange) also London cds same date “BS/MY-18/1855” (orange) Endorsed “Sidon” etc.

London indented type date stamp

Mail carried to Constantinople by British Frigate, and picked up by the French Packet Thabor which left Constantinople on 7 May 1855 for Marseilles via the Dardanelles, Piraeus, and Messina, arriving at Marseilles on 16 May 1855 and finally at London on 18 May 1855.
My honored Parents,

I concluded a letter to Mr. Turner yesterday which accompanied one to Colonel and Mrs. Turner. I will probably reach them a week or two days before this.

Events are fast opening upon us and active measures are about to engage our attention. This morning we all stood on the forecastle to receive orders, and I hope to hear his Majesty's orders upon an expected attack upon the forts.

We have been at night in the middle watch, so as to reach Balaklava at daybreak, where 300 tedders were then ready to embark with the field officers bringing their horses.

Letter from Captain George Goldsmith, HMS Sidon.
BLACK SEA FLEET POSTAL RATES

POSTAGE UPON LETTERS
TO AND FROM
BRITISH NAVAL & MILITARY FORCES.

THE Lords of Her Majesty’s Treasury have, by Warrant, repealed the reduced rates of Postage to which the Correspondence of Commissioned, Non-Commissioned or Warrant Officers, Soldiers, Seamen, and other persons in the Service of Her Majesty, engaged in the late War, as well as the Correspondence of Officers, soldiers and Seamen serving in Greece or in the Foreign Legion at Heligoland, were liable during the War; and all Letters addressed to, or forwarded by, the several classes of persons in whose favour those reduced rates of Postage were established, will hereafter be chargeable with full Postage as ordinary Letters.

In like manner, the arrangement made in October, 1855, under which the privileges of the Book Post were extended to the British Forces serving in Turkey, Greece, the Black Sea, the Baltic or the White Sea, to the Foreign Legion stationed at Heligoland, as well as to Seamen serving in the Transport Service in Turkey and the Black Sea, is now repealed.

The privilege which Seamen and Soldiers employed in Her Majesty’s Service, and Seamen and Soldiers employed in the Service of the East India Company, enjoy of sending and receiving by the Post, Letters not exceeding half-an-ounce in weight, subject to certain rates and restrictions, will, however, remain unchanged.

By Command of the Postmaster General
ROWLAND HILL, Secretary.

GENERAL POST OFFICE, 13th September, 1856.

13 September 1856 GPO Notice

BLACK SEA FLEET HMS Curacoa

HMS Curacoa, Screw Frigate, 1570T, 350HP, 23 guns. Built at Pembroke Dockyard, South Wales, launched 13 April 1854, BU 1869.
Complement 320.
In 1854-1855, HMS Curacoa was part of the Black Sea Fleet and was involved in the bombardment of Eupatotia and the capture of Kihburn.
BLACK SEA FLEET HMS Curacoa

Mourning Cover.

To Midshipman Henry J. Martin HMS Curacoa

Mediterranean Fleet

14 Sept. 1856 Ipswich, London 15 Sept. 1856, Malta 1 October 1856

Letter addressed to Midshipman Henry J. Martin, HMS Curacoa, Mediterranean Fleet, endorsed with the date “Sept. 14th” and “via Marseilles.”

The three GB One Penny Red adhesives have been cancelled with the IPSWITCH Duplex date stamp 14 September, 1856 and the barred oval Numeral “105” obliterator.

Handstruck “INSUFFICIENTLY/ STAMPED” in red additional marked with figure “6” which has been crossed out and the figure “8” added. This indicated that the sum of eight pence was to be paid on delivery.

Backstamped with London cds “O crown N/15sp15/1855” (orange) also MALTA cds 1 October 1855, receiving mark.

The Naval Officer’s rate of 3d via Marseilles to ships serving in the Crimean Campaign introduced on 22 May 1854, was withdrawn on 13 September 1856, the day before this letter was placed in the post!

The full Postage was required to be paid. The Postal charge for a ¼oz letter to Malta via Marseilles and British Packet was 11d, less the 3d paid, meant that 8d was payable on delivery, all as altered & indicated.
BLACK SEA FLEET HMS *Vigilant*

Screw Steam Gun-vessel, 200 HP, 4 Guns, built at Blackwall, built in 1854, and part of the Black Sea Fleet 1855-56. Sold 1869.

Entire Letter posted at Buyakdiva


Endorsed “*Vigilant Dec.*” and *Via Marseilles*


Manuscript accountancy markings figure “1” and “2” indicating in the first instance one shilling due and finally two shillings to pay. The Officers’ concession rates were withdrawn on 13 September 1856, and the standard rate via Marseilles by French Packet was 1s 0d for a ¼ oz letter and 2s 0d for ½ letter.

William Armytage, was promoted to Captain, 6 August 1860 and in 1872, received a Good Service pension. Honours included Knight of the Legion of Honour, Medjidie of the Fifth class.

Armytage was transferred to HMS *Viper*, Screw steam vessel 160HP, 4 guns, as Lieut-Commander on 1 March 1855, promoted Commander on 16 May 1855, at which stage, Lieut-Commander Henry W. Comber took command of the *Viper* and Armytage returned back to England, and promoted to Captain 6 August 1860.
HMS *Vigilant*


First Page mainly about Mail Routes.
William Armytage

William Armytage passed his examination 28 October 1840, and served as Mate, on the East India station, of HMS *Samaang*, 26 guns, Captain James Scott, HMS *Dido*, 18 Guns, Captain Hon. Henry Keppel, and HMS *Cornwallis*, 72 guns, flag-ship of Sir William Parker.

During the operations on the coast of China, he proved himself entitled to the best acknowledgment of Captain James Scott, for the gallantry and zeal he displayed at the forcing of the inner passage from Macao to Whampoa (a navigation never before traversed by European boat or vessel); in their advance on which place, the British, whose force consisted of the *Nemesis* steamer, and the boats of HMS *Samarang*, destroyed, between 3am on 13 March and 4pm on the 15 March 1841, five forts, one battery, two military stations, and nine war junks, which, collectively, were 115 guns and 8 ginjalls.

He acquired the rank of Lieutenant on 3 February 1845, and since 24 March 1845, has been attached to HMS *Vesuvius*, Steam-Sloop, Captain George William Douglas, O’Callaghan, on the North America and West India station.

In 1855-1856, he was serving in the Black Sea Fleet, two letters are known,

Letter dated 15 January 1855

On board HMS *Highflyer*, 21 Guns, Captain John Moore (26 March 1852)

He was promoted to Commander on 16 May 1855

Letter dated 15 December 1856

HMS *Vigilant*, Screw Steam Gun-vessel, sloop, 4 guns,

Commander         William Armytage, (18 March 1856)
Lieutenant        John R.D. Cooper,
Master            Frederick W. Rea,
Surgeon           Francis H. Blaxall
Mate              Edmond St. J. Garforth

He was promoted to Captain on 6 August 1860.

In 1868 He was appointed Captain of HMS *Prince Consort*, 31 Guns on the Mediterranean Station. (31 March 1868) In 1872 He received a “Good Service Pension”

Foreign Orders.

He was authorized to wear the following Foreign Medals

Knight of the Legion of Honour, Medjidie of the 5th class.
REFERENCES.

References include


By Authority – The Navy Lists. May 1805 (CD) July 1830 (CD), 1846, 1849 Naval Biographical Dictionary (CD), December 1860 (CD), Navy Lists 1869, 1872, 1881, 1884, 1891, 1896, 1905 (Personal Library) as well as the complete run December 1833- to date (Mitchell Library Sydney) – various publishers.


ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

During the course of time and with all research, there is always going to be an element of luck. In my case it is my fellow collectors who have willingly at all times provided me with information, and encouragement, who deserve my very warm accolades.

There is always the problem when naming names that someone is missed, and I apologize in advance for any such omissions. I duly acknowledge the help I have received from Colin Tabeart, the late Gerald Sattin, and especially my researcher at Kew, Margaret Frankcom. Recently I called upon David Beech of the British Library, who sent me details of some Post Office Notices by return mail, a great service.

I have also been inspired by the published work of other collectors, and one book in particular which I couldn’t put down was The Royal Marines by Bob Swarbrick, published by The Stuart Rossiter Trust, how things have changed since I first prepared a manuscript in 1990 on Royal Navy Mail, which at that time was considered “Too Social” even FIP have now adopted “Social Postal History”.

Illustrations

Maps have been taken from The Royal Navy A History – William Laird Clowes
Post Office at Constantinople from Tommy Atkins’ Letters – Peter B. Bowden

Gerald J. Elliott MNZM RDP FRPSNZ

Postal Historian

26 May 2011