



# TRANSATLANTIC MAIL STUDY GROUP

OF THE

BRITISH NORTH AMERICA STUDY GROUP

Newsletter No. 43

Jack Arnell

November 1994

## U.S. LETTERS VIA HALIFAX DURING THE WAR OF 1812

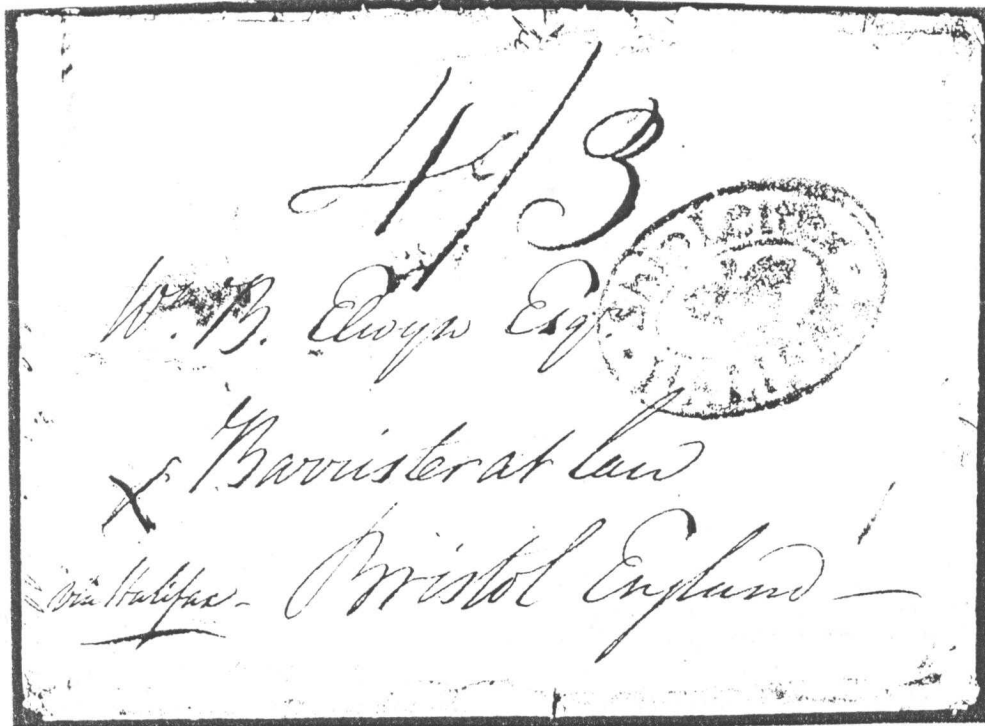
As a result of assembling material for the BNAPS video and the Washington slide show at the end of July, I realized that there was an interesting bit of B.N.A. transatlantic mail contained therein. With the British blockade, the Americans had considerable difficulty corresponding with family and business connections in Great Britain, and were forced to find alternate means of sending letters.

The following letter was written in Portsmouth, N.H. on 2 January 1813 by a resident to his lawyer brother in Bristol, England, enclosing a power of attorney for his four percent stock. This was being done

very hastily & [is] probably very incorrectly drawn – but I hope it will be sufficient – It is certainly very informal, but I wrote it a moment's notice & whilst Capt.

late of a Barque taken by one our Privateers was waiting for me. Allen has been some days at my house & is despatching a Cartel from this place for Halifax. His functions as Consul have ceased, but he remains here as Agent for prisoners: his acts & authentications as subjoined to my power have been attended to in England, tho he is no longer Consul in fact.

Towards the end of the letter, he added the following comment with respect to correspondence between Great Britain and the United States: 'Pray recollect that there are frequent opportunities of writing by way of Liverpool. & you will sometimes see Cartel & other vessels advertized.'



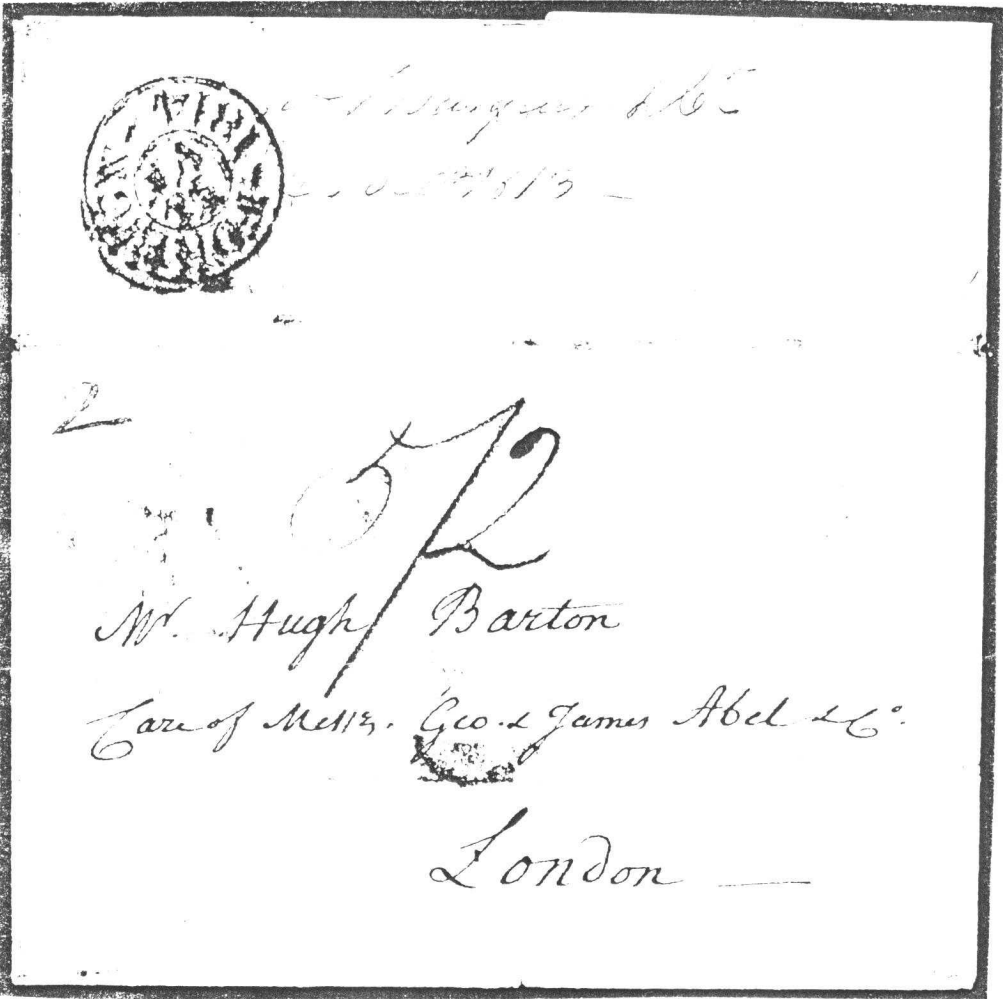
It must be assumed that this letter was carried by Capt. Hutchinson to Halifax on the cartel. Presumably the cartel had other letters, which were delivered to the Post Office and

entered as Ship Letters. This letter was backstamped at Halifax on 29 January and although no incoming ship letter fee is shown, this was apparently included in the subsequent postage due, as it was rated at 4s. 3d. Stg. (2 x 1/3 packet postage + 2 x 10d. inland postage from Falmouth to Bristol + 1d. incoming ship letter charge). It was carried by the *Chesterfield* packet from Halifax on 9 February to Falmouth.

Supporting the writer's comment about the opportunities for correspondence was the General Post Office notice of 11 March 1813 announcing the discontinuance of the packet service to New York, viz. -

His Majesty's Packet Boats having ceased to go to New York, you are to discontinue receiving any Letters with Packet Postage, addressed to Persons in the United States of North America. There may be occasional Ship Letter Bags, and it is only by those, that Letters can be sent direct to the United States.

A second letter, which was apparently carried by a cartel returning prisoners, but this time direct from Philadelphia to London. It was written on 23 October 1813 and enclosed a Bill of Exchange for £1,100 from a local company to be drawn on a London establishment (*at the height of the war!*)



The cartel route is presumed because of the lack of any markings other than the London Foreign Mail Office datestamp of 25 January 1814. The 5s. 2d. Stg. postage due is neither a multiple ship letter nor packet letter rate, and is presumed to be the collective postage due on a bundle of letters for the addressee, which arrived by the same means.

There was a second method by which letters from the United States could be sent to England via Halifax. Illustrated below is a licence issued by Sir John Sherbrooke, the Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia, for the import of essential materials from the United States. This permitted Nova Scotian trading vessels to pass through the Royal Navy's blockade of American ports.

IMPORT—No. 3—



signed,

Lieutenant-General  
Sir JOHN COAPE SHERBROOKE,

*Knight of the Most Honorable Order of the Bath, Lieutenant-Governor in and over the Province of Nova Scotia, and the Territories thereto belonging in America,*

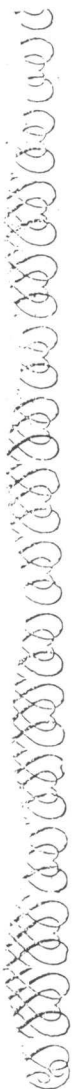
**I**N Pursuance of the Authority given to me by an Order of Council, bearing date the Thirteenth Day of October, 1812, Do hereby grant this Licence, and do hereby Authorise and Permit *Joseph Alison of Halifax Merchant* to IMPORT, in any Ship or Vessel, excepting a Ship or Vessel belonging to FRANCE, or the Subjects thereof, into the Port of HALIFAX, in NOVA-SCOTIA, from any Port in the UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, from which British Vessels are excluded, a Cargo of Wheat, Grain, Bread, Biscuit, Flour, Pitch, Tar or Turpentine, without Molestation, on account of the present Hostilities, and notwithstanding the said Ship or Goods shall be the Property of any Subject or Inhabitant of the UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, or of any British Subject Trading therewith.

GIVEN under my Hand and Seal at Arms, at HALIFAX,

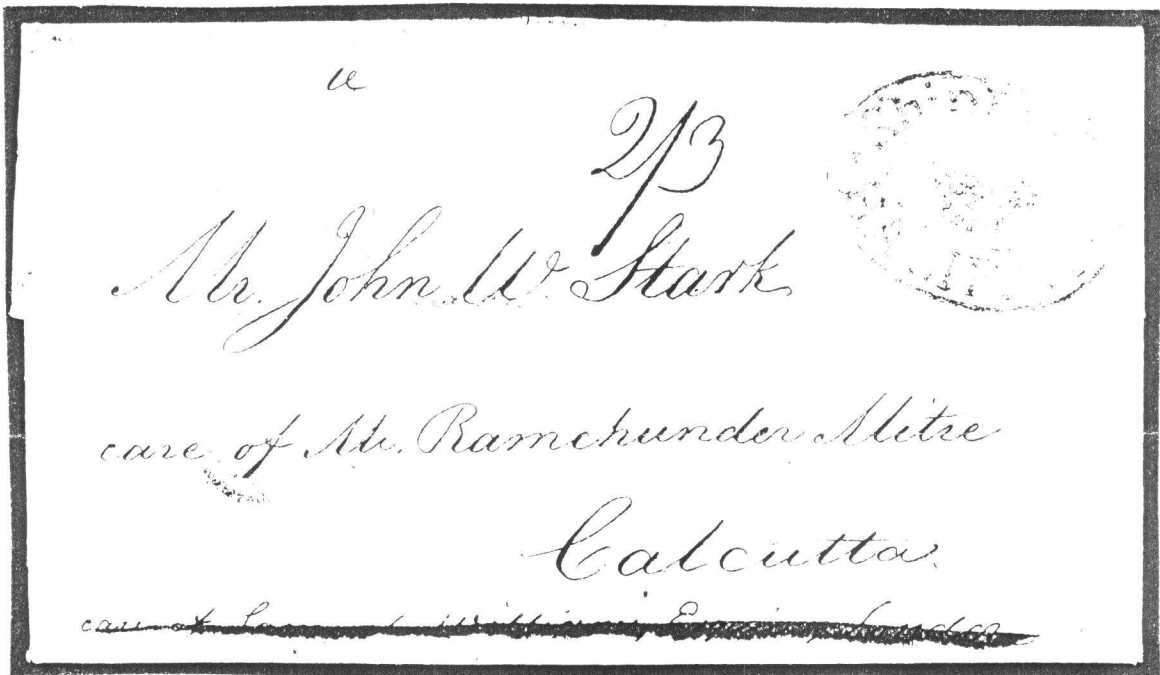
this *Fourth* day of *January*  
1813, in the Fifty-Third Year of His Majesty's Reign.

THIS LICENCE TO CONTINUE IN FORCE FOR *Two* MONTHS.

By His EXCELLENCY's Command,



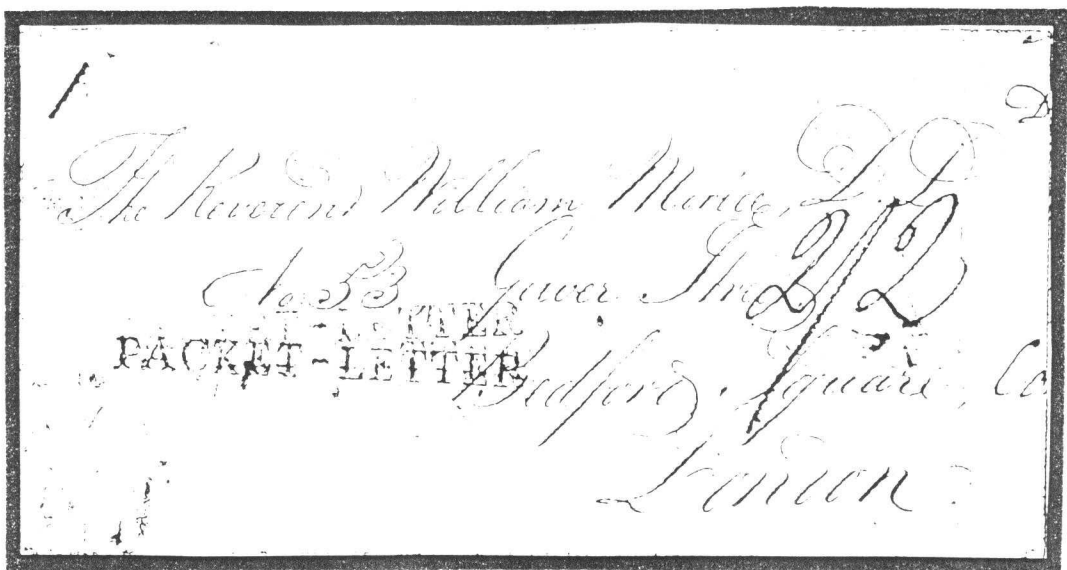
This following letter was written by Caleb Stark in Boston on 16 January 1814 to his son, who was his agent in Calcutta. It was sent to a forwarding agent in London.



It is presumed to have been carried to Halifax by a returning Nova Scotian vessel operating under a similar licence to that issued to Joseph Alison the previous January. It was back-stamped at Halifax on 15 March, indicating that the opportunities to send letters were not too frequent, and struck with an oval 'Ship Letter HALIFAX'. It was rated as an outgoing packet letter at 2s. 3d. Stg. postage due (1s. 3d. packet postage + 11d. inland postage from Falmouth to London + 1d. master's gratuity as a ship letter at Halifax).

#### LETTER FROM NEWFOUNDLAND DURING THE WAR OF 1812

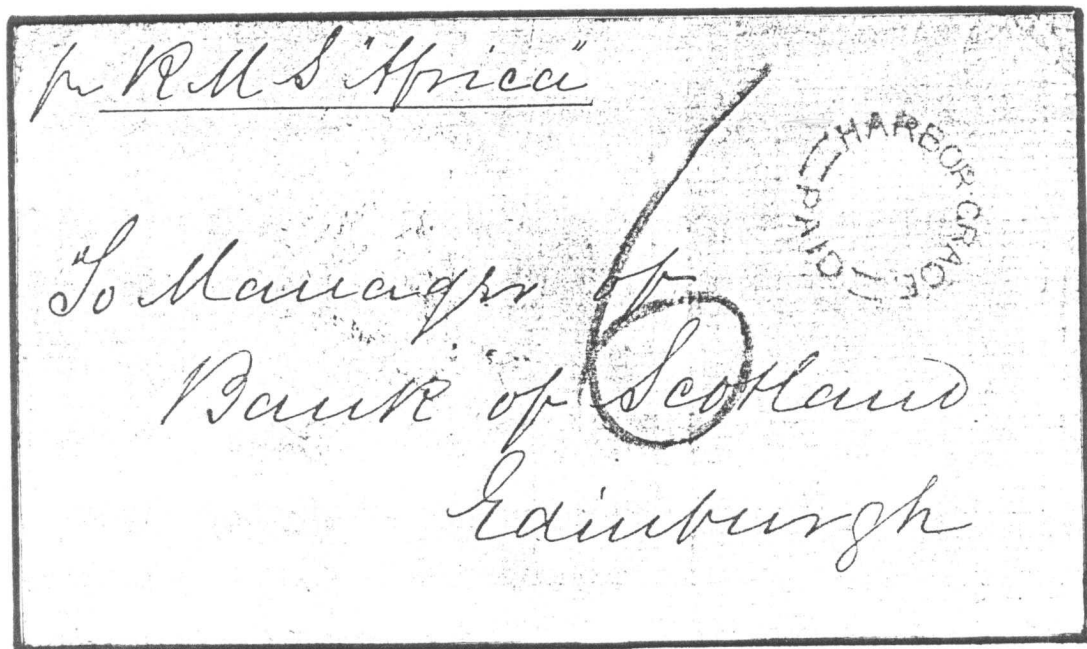
As a result of my mention of making slides of my War of 1812 letters, Capt. Douglas Campbell, RN (ret'd.) sent along a photocopy of a very interesting contemporary letter from St. John's, Newfoundland dated 24 December 1813.



The letter was sent to Halifax privately, where it was put in the Mail and rated 2s. 2d. Stg. packet postage to London. It was carried by the *Francis Freeling* packet from Halifax on 10 January 1814 and arrived at Falmouth on 5 February. As most Newfoundland letters reached England by private vessels and were therefore entered as Ship Letters, this must have been considered sufficiently unusual for London (presumably) to stamp it with 'PACKET - LETTER' to justify the higher postal charge.

### 1863 NEWFOUNDLAND TO SCOTLAND

The next letter was written some fifty years later in Harbor Grace, Newfoundland on 22 October 1863. It is from Allan Steinhart's collection.



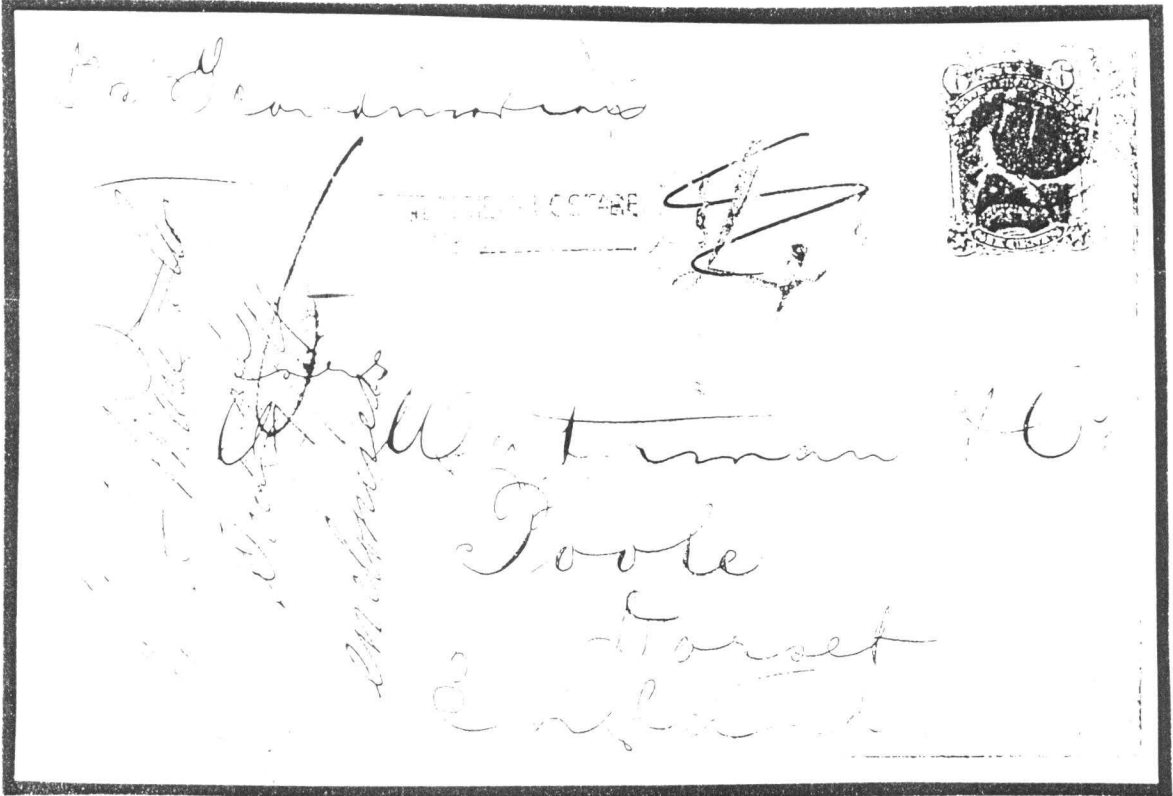
The letter was mailed with 6d. Stg. postage via mail boat from St. John's to Halifax and Cunard steamer from there to Queenstown. However, the Cunard *Africa*, which should have carried this letter, had been disabled off Cape Race, Newfoundland on her westbound voyage and had put into St. John's for repairs. HMS *Vesuvius* had assisted her and subsequently took her Mails on to Halifax and Boston. The Cunard freight and steerage passenger steamer *Olympus* was sent to Boston to take the *Africa's* British Mails, departing hence on 28 October. In the meantime, the Galway Line *Columbia* left New York on 20 October and called at St. John's on 25 October, where she collected the accumulated Mail which had been held as a result of the accident to the *Africa*. The *Columbia* reached Galway on 2 November and the letter was backstamped at Edinburgh the following day.

### OVERWEIGHT NEWFOUNDLAND LETTER WITH FINE

One more Newfoundland letter, this time from Malcolm Montgomery. This letter was mailed on 3 December 1874 at St. John's, Newfoundland, with single rate packet postage prepaid with a 6-cent adhesive. However, it contained enclosures and was overweight, resulting in it being stamped with

DEFICIENT POSTAGE 3 (ms.)  
FINE \_\_\_\_\_ 1<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> (ms.)

Although Malcolm suggests that the accompanying large handstruck '4' with the crayon '1/2' beside it were also applied at St. John's, I think it is far more likely that this was put on by the Ocean Mail Clerk on the Allan Line *Scandinavian*, when the Newfoundland Mail was picked up on the 1 December voyage from Halifax, which called at St. John's on the way to Queenstown, where it arrived on 9 December. It seems improbable that the St. John's post office would have applied two separate fine markings. If anyone has any further thoughts on this, please drop me a line, so that others can share.



CRIMEAN WAR PERIOD COVER



Another Steinhart cover, which was mailed at Montreal on 8 January 1855 to Reims, France. As this was during the Crimean war, when the Cunard service to New York had been discontinued and the Collins Line was carrying all the Mail, the letter was marked: 'per United States Mail Steamer'. It was sent unpaid in a closed bag via New York to London. It was carried by the Collins *Atlantic* from New York on 10 January and arrived at Liverpool on 22 January.

At London, the letter was struck with a boxed 'CANADA &c. ART. 12' to identify its category under the GB-France Postal Agreement. The postage under this agreement was 17 décimes per 7<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> oz. It was forwarded to Paris via Calais, where it was datestamped with 'ETATS-UNIS PAQ. AM. A.' on 24 January and backstamped at Reims the following day. This is a very unusual routing for a Canadian letter to France and is undoubtedly the result of the war.

## INDEX FOR NOS. 38 – 43

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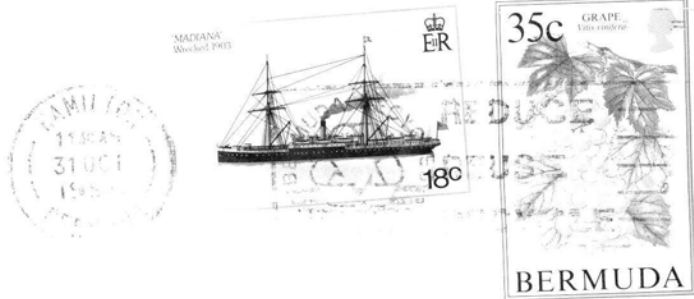
# LOOKING BACK OVER THE GROUP NEWSLETTERS

For the past year or so, there have been references in *Topics* and at meetings to the possibility of selecting items from the different group newsletters for consolidation into a Society publication. By the end of 1995, I shall have produced one short of fifty newsletters comprising about 300 pages of information. Buried in them are many items, which collectively could form articles on specific subjects, such as Freight Money. I would be surprised if any society-wide compilation could include all the detail in our newsletters. Should we be thinking about assembling these items into reference articles, either to form individual newsletters or as a separate Group publication? I would ask you to think about it from the point of view of its possible use and drop me a line.

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