



TRANSATLANTIC MAIL STUDY GROUP  
OF THE  
British North American Philatelic Society

Newsletter No. 60

December 1997

SOLDIERS' AND SEAMENS' LETTERS (2)

This is the second of the two newsletters proposed for early military mails (you may consider that individual campaigns deserve special attention sometime in the future, and there is a wide field of research waiting to be ploughed in connection with trans-Atlantic correspondence during the two World Wars. For the time being I have gathered together more examples of Soldiers' and Seamen's letters (not 'Officers' letters) that have crossed the Atlantic.

Thanks to Martin Willcocks and Jack Arnell, I am also able to provide further extracts from various acts and regulations, so that you may form your own judgements with respect to individual covers you may find in the future. Once again I am indebted to those who have provided photocopies of covers in their collections (not all BNAPS, or Trans-Atlantic Newsletter members), as my collection of this material is not extensive.

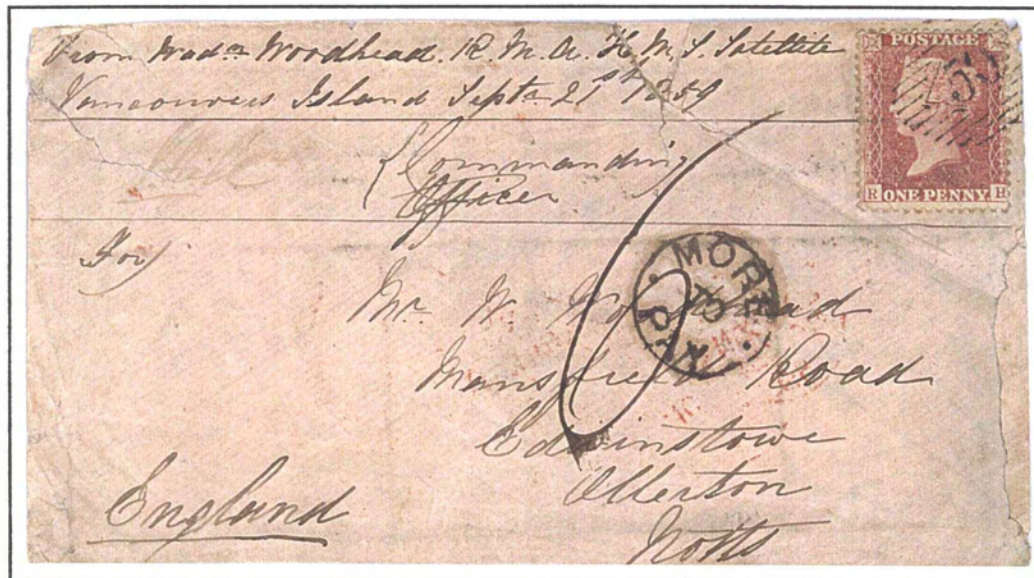


Figure 1: Vancouver's Island to England, 1859.

The colour front page illustration is of a cover, one of two which I have seen, from a Royal Navy ship HMS 'Satellite' stationed at Vancouver's Island. Like many such letters, it poses more problems than it solves - but an impromptu discussion after lunch at the Christmas Postal History Society meeting in London has helped to narrow down some of the possibilities. First the rate: a penny was the correct British rate, and this was prepaid by a penny stamp, normally supplied on board the

ship. After discussion about the possibility of the stamp having been added in England, this was considered unlikely in this instance. The cancellation was applied in London, to prevent the stamp being reused. A further charge of fivepence was raised. According to Geoffrey Osborn GM in 'Naval Officer's Letters' (page 24), Naval and Official mail from Vancouver's Island was routed to the British Consul in San Francisco to be forwarded to Panama and Colon for the Royal Mail Steamship Company to

England; this would incur a penny charge for the Panama transit, however, the letter Geoffrey illustrates is later, and he has not given a reference for this charge. If the illustrated letter had been directed through the United States Mails from San Francisco, it would have been charged fivepence (Post Office Instruction, 4<sup>th</sup> June 1859, illustrated in Newsletter No. 55).

## THE ACT OF 1795

In Newsletter 55, I asked for information on the original Act of 35 George III (1795). Martin Willcocks did rather better than supply information by providing the Act itself, and a number of other documents. These, supplemented by a number of extracts from acts and notices provided by Jack Arnell, pretty well complete the historical background, and I have reproduced the originals at some length, allowing you to be able to quote extracts first hand, as you need them.

*'Single Letters from Non-commissioned Officers, Seamen, and Privates, liable to 1d. Postage only, under certain Restrictions.*

*VII. And whereas it is expedient that the Non-commissioned Officers, Seamen, and Privates, employed in His Majesty's Navy, Army, Militia, Fencible Regiments, Artillery, and Marines, should, whilst on Service, be permitted to send and receive single Letters by the Post, on their own private Concerns, at a low Rate of Postage; be it therefore further enacted by the Authority aforesaid, That, from and after the passing of this Act, no single Letter sent by the Post from any Non-commissioned Officer, Seamen or Private, employed in His Majesty's Navy, Army, Militia, Fencible Regiments, Artillery, or Marines, shall, whilst such Non-commissioned Officer, Seaman or Private respectively, shall be employed on His Majesty's Service, and not otherwise, be charged or chargeable, by virtue of any Act of Parliament now in force, with an higher Rate of Postage than the Sum of One Penny for the Conveyance of each such Letter; such Rate of Postage of One Penny for each such Letter to be paid at the time of putting the same into the Post Office of the Town or Place from whence such Letter is intended to be sent by the Post: Provided nevertheless, that no Letter or Letters sent by the Post, from any Non-commissioned Officer, Seaman, or Private, employed in His Majesty's Navy, Army, Militia, Fencible Regiments, Artillery, or Marines, shall be exempted from the Payment of the Rate of Postage chargeable upon Letters according to the Laws now in force, unless there shall be written upon every such Letter, in the Hand Writing of, and signed by the Commanding Officer for the Time being of the Ship, or vessel, or of the Corps, Regiment, or Detachment, to which such Non-Commissioned Officer, Seamen or Private,*

*I believe that the Post Office has treated the letter under the clause 'Panama, or any other place on the Pacific side of New Granada' and charged the sixpence specified in the instruction. Unfortunately, I have no detail as to how the Post Office arrived at the sum of sixpence for the Panama route ....*

*employed in His Majesty's Service, shall respectively belong, the name of such Commanding Officer, and of the Ship, Vessel, Corps, Regiment, or Detachment, commanded by him.'*

*'as also Letters to them.*

*VII. And be it further enacted by the Authority aforesaid, That, from and after the passing of this Act, no single Letter sent by the Post, directed to any Non-commissioned Officer, Seamen, or Private, employed in His Majesty's Navy, Army, Militia, Fencible Regiments, Artillery, or Marines, upon his own private Concerns only, whilst such respective Non-commissioned Officer, Seamen or Private, shall be employed on His Majesty's Service, and not otherwise, shall be charged or chargeable, by virtue of any Act of Parliament now in force, with an higher Rate of Postage than the Sum of One Penny for each such Letter; which sum of One Penny shall be paid at the Time of the Delivery thereof: Provided nevertheless, that no such Letter shall be exempted from the rate of Postage chargeable upon Letters according to the Laws now in force, unless every such Letter shall be directed to such Non-commissioned Officer, Seaman, or Private, employed in His Majesty's Service, specifying the Ship, Vessel, Regiment, Troop, Corps, Company, or Detachment, to which he may belong; and provided also, that it shall not be lawful for the Deputy Postmaster of the Town or Place to which such Letter shall be sent to be delivered, to deliver such Letter to any Person except the Non-commissioned Officer, Seaman, or Private, to whom such letter shall be directed, or to any Person appointed to receive the same by the Commanding Officer of the Ship, Vessel, Regiment, Troop, Corps, Company, or Detachment, to which such Non-Commissioned Officer, Seamen or Private, to whom such Letter shall be directed, shall belong.'*

The significance of these words, beyond that which has been previously noted, is that letters from soldiers and seamen had to be prepaid, that is paid 'at the Time of putting the same into the Post Office', but letters to soldiers and seamen could be sent unpaid: 'which sum of One Penny shall be paid at the Time of Delivery thereof'. Presuming, that is, that the intention was delivery to the addressee, rather than to the Post Office.

ANNO REGNI  
GEORGGII III.  
REGIS

*Magnæ Britanniae, Franciæ, & Hiberniæ,*

TRICESIMO QUINTO.

At the Parliament begun and holden at *Westminster*, the Twenty-fifth Day of *November Anno Domini* 1790, in the Thirty-first Year of the Reign of our Sovereign Lord GEORGE the Third, by the Grace of God, of *Great Britain, France, and Ireland*, King, Defender of the Faith, &c.

And from thence continued, by several Prorogations, to the Thirtieth Day of *December* 1794; being the Fifth Session of the Seventeenth Parliament of *Great Britain*.

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L O N D O N :

Printed by GEORGE EYRE and ANDREW STRAHAN,  
Printers to the King's most Excellent Majesty. 1795.



VII. And whereas it is expedient that the Non-commissioned Officers, Seamen, and Privates, employed in His Majesty's Navy, Army, Militia, Fencible Regiments, Artillery, and Marines, should, whilst on Service, be permitted to send and receive single Letters by the Post, on their own private Concerns, at a low Rate of Postage; be it therefore further enacted by the Authority aforesaid, That, from and after the passing of this Act, no single Letter sent by the Post from any Non-commissioned Officer, Seaman, or Private, employed in His Majesty's Navy, Army, Militia, Fencible Regiments, Artillery, or Marines, shall, whilst such Non-commissioned Officer, Seaman, or Private respectively, shall be employed on His Majesty's Service, and not otherwise, be charged or chargeable, by virtue of any Act of Parliament now in force, with an higher Rate of Postage than the Sum of One Penny for the Conveyance of each such Letter; such Rate of Postage of One Penny for each such Letter to be paid at the Time of putting the same into the Post Office of the Town or Place from whence such Letter is intended to be sent by the Post: Provided nevertheless, that no Letter or Letters sent by the Post, from any Non-commissioned Officer, Seaman, or Private, employed in His Majesty's Navy, Army, Militia, Fencible Regiments, Artillery, or Marines, shall be exempted from the Payment of the Rate of Postage chargeable upon Letters according to the Laws now in force, unless there shall be written upon every such Letter, in the Hand Writing of, and signed by the Commanding Officer for the Time being of the Ship or Vessel, or of the Corps, Regiment, or Detachment, to which such Non-commissioned Officer, Seaman, or Private, employed in His Majesty's Service, shall respectively belong, the Name of such Commanding Officer, and of the Ship, Vessel, Corps, Regiment, or Detachment, commanded by him.

Single Letters from Non-commissioned Officers, Seamen, and Privates, liable to 1d. Postage only, under certain Restrictions;

VIII. And be it further enacted by the Authority aforesaid, That, from and after the passing of this Act, no single Letter sent by the Post, directed to any Non-commissioned Officer, Seaman, or Private, employed in His Majesty's Navy, Army, Militia, Fencible Regiments, Artillery, or Marines, upon his own private Concerns only, whilst such respective Non-commissioned Officer, Seaman, or Private, shall be employed on His Majesty's Service, and not otherwise, shall be charged or chargeable, by virtue of any Act of Parliament now in force, with an higher Rate of Postage than the Sum of One Penny for each such Letter; which Sum of One Penny shall be paid at the Time of the Delivery thereof: Provided nevertheless, that no such Letter shall be exempted from the Rate of Postage chargeable upon Letters according to the Laws now in force, unless every such Letter shall be directed to such Non-commissioned Officer, Seaman, or Private, employed in His Majesty's Service, specifying the Ship, Vessel, Regiment, Troop, Corps, Company, or Detachment, to which he may belong; and provided also, that it shall not be lawful for the Deputy Postmaster of the Town or Place to which such Letter shall be sent to be delivered, to deliver such Letter to any Person except to the Non-commissioned Officer, Seaman, or Private, to whom such Letter shall be directed, or to any Person appointed to receive the same by the Commanding Officer of the Ship, Vessel, Regiment, Troop, Corps, Company, or Detachment, to which the Non-commissioned Officer, Seaman, or Private, to whom such Letter shall be directed, shall belong.

as also Letters to them.



From Notes supplied by Dr JC Arnell, to which I have added a few comments:

When the Rates of Postage were increased by 41 Geo. 111, Cap. 7, the 30<sup>th</sup> March 1801 General Post Office, London, News Circular had the following exemption for Soldiers and Seamen's Letters:

*'N.B. There is no Alteration in the Rates payable for Single Letters to and from Seamen or Privates in the Navy Army, Militia, Fencible Regiments, Artillery, or Marines; nor in the Rates payable for Letters, Packets, or Covers, not exceeding an Ounce in Weight, containing Patterns of Cloth, Silk, Stuffs, &c.'*

The formal Table of Rates of Postage from the same Act, under the heading of 'FOREIGN LETTERS', had the following:

*'Single Letters to Soldiers and Sailors under certain restrictions by the Act of the 35<sup>th</sup> of his present Majesty, Cap. 53, are chargeable with One Penny only.'* (6<sup>th</sup> April 1801, GPOL).

*'By an Act passed in the present Session of Parliament, instituted: 'An Act for further regulating the sending and receiving of Letters, free of the Duty of Postage, for allowing Non-commissioned Officers, Seamen, and Private Men, in the Navy and Army, on Service to send and receive Letters at a low Rate of Postage, and permitting pattern and Samples of Goods, to be transmitted by the Post, at an easier Rate than is now a owed by Law. [Geo. III, Cap. 53, 1795]*

*No single Letter sent by the Post from any Non-commissioned Officer, Seaman, or Private employed in His Majesty's Navy, Army, Militia, Fencible Regiments, Artillery or Marines, shall, whilst such Non-commissioned Officer, Seaman or Private shall be employed on his Majesty's service, and not otherwise, be charged with an higher rate of Postage than the sum of one Penny for the conveyance of each such Letter, such Postage to be paid at the time of putting the same into the Post-Office of the town or place from whence such Letter is intended to be sent by Post.*

*Provided that no such Letter shall be exempted from Postage, unless there shall be written thereon, in the, handwriting of and signed by the Commanding Officer for the time being of the ship or vessel, or of the corps, or detachment, to which such non-commissioned Officer, Seaman., or Private shall belong, the name of such Commanding Officer, and of the ship vessel, corps, regiment, or detachment commanded by him.*

*No single Letter, directed to any employed or non-commissioned Officer, Seaman, or Private, upon his own private concerns, only whilst such non-commissioned Officer, Seaman, or Private shall be employed on his Majesty's service, and not*

*otherwise, shall be charged with a higher rate of Postage than one penny for each such Letter, which penny shall be paid at the time of the delivery thereof.*

*Provided, that no such Letter shall be exempted from the Rates of Postage chargeable upon Letters, unless any such Letter shall be directed to such Non-commissioned Officer, Seaman, or Private, specifying the Ship, Vessel, Regiment, Troops, Corps, Detachment to which he may belong: And provided also that it shall not be lawful for the Deputy-Postmaster of the town or place to which such Letter shall be sent to be delivered, to deliver such Letter to any person, except to the Non-commissioned Officer, Seaman, or Private to whom such Letter shall be directed, or to any person appointed to receive the same by the Commanding Officer of the Ship, &c. to which the Non-commissioned Officer, Seaman, or Private to whom such Letter shall be directed shall belong...'*

Article XVIII of the General Instructions to postmasters in British America, printed in the 1790s, outlined the rules for the above privileged letters:

*'Single letters from a Seaman in His Majesty's Service, or from a sergeant, corporal, drummer, trumpeter, fifer or private (on their own concerns only), may be sent by post for one penny - to be paid at the time the said letter is put into the post office - provided that on the cover of the said letter, the officer having the actual command signs his name, and the name of the ship, or regiment, corps or detachment he commands.*

*On a single letter to seamen, or to soldiers as above, the penny must be paid at the time the said letter is put into the office. Its direction must specify the class of the person and the name of the ship or regiment, corps or detachment to which he belongs - that is to say it must describe him as Seaman, Sergeant, Corporal, Drummer, Private, etc., as the case may be.*

*N.B. - All the foregoing descriptions must be legibly written - the initials of the name of any ship or regiment being insufficient.*

*Postmasters are enjoined to examine every letter purporting to be a Seaman's or Soldier's letter, and if not in all respects conformable to the above regulations, to charge it with full postage, at the time noting on the face of the said letter, the reason for doing so.'*

This is at variance with the British words, insofar as it was required that, on letters addressed to soldiers and seamen 'the penny must be paid at the time the said letter is put into the office.'

The Article continued with an outline of the proper format for addressing such letters. (6 May 1795 GPOL).

Modification of the Regulations Governing  
Soldiers and Sailors Letters.

*'ADVERTISEMENT. By an Act of Parliament, passed in the last Session, to repeal much of the Act of 35 Geo. III, Cap. 511, as related to the Letters of Seamen and Soldiers, the following Provisions have been made in lieu of those repealed, viz:*

*No single Letter sent by the Post, on his own private Concern only, from any Seaman in His Majesty's Navy, or any Serjeant, Corporal, Trumpeter, Drummer, Fifer, and Private Soldier in His Majesty's Army, within any Part of His Majesty's Dominions, shall, whilst such Seaman or Soldier shall be employed on His Majesty's Service, and not otherwise, be charged with a higher Rate of Postage than the sum of One Penny for the Conveyance of each such Letter; such Postage to be paid at the Time of putting the same into the Post Office of the Town or Place from whence such Letter is intended to be sent by the Post, Provided that upon every such Letter so to be sent, the Name of the Writer, and his Class or Description in the Ship or Vessel, Regiment, Corps, or Detachment to which he shall belong, shall be superscribed; and Provided that upon every such Letter there shall be written in the Hand-writing of, and signed by, the Officer having at the Time the Command of the ship or Vessel, Regiment, Corps, or Detachment, His Name, and the Name of the Regiment, Corps, or Detachment commanded by him.*

*No single Letter, directed to any such Seaman, or Soldier, upon his own private Concern only, within any Part of His Majesty's Dominions, whilst such Seaman or Soldier shall be employed on His Majesty's Service, and not otherwise, shall be charged with a higher Rate of Postage than One Penny, provided that such Penny be paid upon putting the Letter into a Post Office, established under the Authority of His Majesty's Postmaster General; and Provided also, that every such Letter shall be directed to such Seaman or Soldier, specifying on the Superscription thereof, the Name of the Ship or Vessel, Regiment, Corps, or Detachment to which he shall belong; and Provided that it shall not be lawful for the Deputy Postmaster to deliver such Letters to any Person, except the Seaman or Soldier to whom it shall be directed, or to some Person appointed to receive the same, by writing, under the Hand of the Officer having the Command of the Ship or Vessel, Regiment, Corps, or Detachment to which the Seaman or Soldier shall belong.*

*Nothing in these Instructions is to be construed to extend to Letters sent to or by Commissioned or Warrant Officers, Midshipmen or Masters' Mates in the Navy; or to Letters sent by or to Commissioned or Warrant Officers in the Army.*

*Any Person having the Command of the Ship or Vessel, Regiment, Corps, or Detachment, who is authorized to make his Endorsement in the Manner before specified on the Letter of the Seamen or Soldiers under his Command, will be liable for every Offence to forfeit and pay the Sum of FIVE POUNDS, if he shall wilfully and knowingly write his Name on any such Letter that is not from such Seaman or Soldier on his private Concerns only.*

*And any Person not having at the time the Command of the Ship or Vessel, Regiment, Corps, or Detachment, who shall write his Name upon any such Letter, in order that the same be sent at a lower Rate of Postage than by Law established, shall be liable to forfeit and pay the Sum of FIVE POUNDS.*

*And any Person who shall knowingly and designedly address a Letter to any Seaman or Soldier, which shall be intended for another Person, and which shall be concerning the Affairs of another Person, with the intent to evade the payment of the Rate of Postage by law established, every such Person so offending will, for every Offence, be liable to forfeit and pay the Sum of FIVE POUNDS.*

*And if any person shall procure any Seaman or Soldier to obtain the Signature of his Commanding Officer, to any Letter to be sent by the Post, which shall not be on the private Concerns of such Seaman or Soldier; or if any Seaman or Soldier shall himself obtain the Signature of his Commanding Officer upon any Letter which shall not be from himself, on his own private Concerns only, in order to avoid Payment of the Rates of Postage by Law established, each and every such Person so offending will, for every Offence, be liable to forfeit and pay the Sum of FIVE POUNDS.*

*One Moiety of the several Penalties and Forfeitures are for the use of His Majesty, and the other Moiety to the Person who shall inform, and they may be recovered before any one or more of the Justices of the Peace, for the County, City, or Place where the offence shall be committed; and, in default of payment, such offenders are to be committed to the House of Correction for any space not exceeding one month, or till the penalty shall be sooner paid.*

FRANCIS FREELING'

(1<sup>st</sup> August 1806 GPOL).

This amended the 1795 Act to require that letters to soldiers and seamen were also required to be prepaid.

*'On the Exemptions granted to Seamen in the Navy, and Soldiers in the Army, in respect of the postage of their Letters. By an Act of 46 Geo. 3 Cap. 92, Sec. 5, &c.*

1. No single Letter sent by the Post, on his own private Concern only, from any Seaman in His Majesty's Navy, or any Sergeant, Corporal, Trumpeter, Drummer, Fifer, and Private Soldier in His Majesty's Army, within any Part of His Majesty's Dominions, shall, whilst such Seaman or Soldier shall be employed on His Majesty's Service, and not otherwise, be charged with a higher Rate of Postage than the sum of ONE PENNY for the Conveyance of each such Letter; Such Postage to be paid at the Time of putting the same into the Post Office of the Town or Place from whence such Letter is intended to be sent by the Post, provided that upon every such Letter so to be sent, the Name of the Writer, and his Class or Description in the Ship or Vessel, Regiment, Corps, or Detachment to which he shall belong, shall be superscribed, and Provided that upon every such Letter there shall be written in, and signed the Officer having at the Time the Command of the ship or Vessel, Regiment, Corps, or Detachment, His Name, and the Name of the Regiment, Corps, or Detachment commanded by him.

2. No single Letter, directed to any such Seaman, or Soldier, upon his own private Concern only, within any Part of His Majesty's Dominions, whilst such Seaman or Soldier shall be employed on His Majesty's Service, and not otherwise shall be charged with a higher Rate of Postage than One Penny, provided that such Penny be paid upon putting the Letter into a Post-Office, established under the Authority of His Majesty's Postmaster-General; and Provided also, that every such Letter shall be directed to such Seaman or Soldier, specifying on the Superscription thereof, the Name of the Ship or Vessel, Regiment, Corps, or Detachment to which he shall belong; and Provided that it shall not be lawful for the Deputy Postmaster to deliver such Letter to any Person, except the Seaman or Soldier to whom it shall be directed, or to some Person appointed to receive the same, by Writing, under the Hand of the Officer having the Command of the Ship or Vessel, Regiment, Corps, or Detachment to which the Seaman or Soldier shall belong.

3. The Post Master General require Post masters to examine every Letter purporting to be a Soldier's or Seaman's Letter, and if it be not in all respects conformable to tax two preceding Clauses, to charge it with full Postage, recollecting that though the Law has given the Indulgence to Soldiers and Seamen, throughout his Majesty's Dominions, yet in such Parts of those Dominions with which there is no Communication by packet Boats, this Privilege cannot be enjoyed, as Letters to and from such Places pass as Ship letters, and are liable to

*the Ship letter Rates. - His Majesty's Forces whilst serving in Spain, Portugal, and Sicily and British Ships of War in the Harbours, and on the Coasts of those Countries, have the Privilege extended to them, and Single Letters of Soldiers and Sailors may accordingly pass for One Penny under the usual Restrictions.*

The following are Forms of Certificates to be written on each Letter from a Soldier or Seaman whether in the United Kingdom or in any of His Majesty's Dominions abroad, without which it cannot pass for One Penny, nor then unless the Penny be paid at the time of putting the said Letter into the Post Office, in conformity to the first Article.

SEAMEN: 'From A.B. Seaman on His Majesty's Ship

(Signed) C.D.

Commanding-Officer of His Majesty's Ship

'SOLDIERS: From A.B. Private in the Regiment  
(Signed) C.D. Commanding-Officer of the Regiment of

These Certificates are to vary in Names and Descriptions of Men, Ships, or Vessels, Regiments or Corps as the Circumstances of the Case may be.

4. Letters sent to or by Commissioned or Warrant Officers, Midshipmen or Masters' Mates in the Navy, or by Captains' Clerks, Schoolmasters, Caulkers, Rope-Makers, Armourers, Mates and Cooks, Masters at Arms, and Master Sail-Makers are precluded the Benefit of the Act, as are Letters to be sent to or by Commissioned or Warrant Officers in the Army; and Care must be taken that no Person in the Navy or Army, not entitled, shall obtain the Benefit of this Act by having their Letters addressed to themselves under the general Description of Soldier or Sailor.

5. If any Officer, having the Command of the Ship or Vessel, Regiment, Corps, or Detachment, who is authorized to make his Endorsement in the Manner before specified on the Letter of the Seamen or Soldiers under his Command, shall wilfully and knowingly write his Name on any such Letter that is not from such Seaman or Soldier on his private Concerns only shall wilfully and knowingly write his Name on any such Letter that is not from such Seaman or Soldier on his private Concerns only, he will be liable for every Offence to forfeit and pay the Sum of FIVE POUNDS.

6. If any Officer or other Person not having at the time Command of the Ship or Vessel, Regiment, Corps, or Detachment, shall write his Name upon any such Letter, in order that the same be sent at a lower Rate of Postage than by Law established, shall be liable to forfeit and pay the Sum of FIVE POUNDS.



N<sup>o</sup>. 13.

# On the Exemptions granted to Seamen in the Navy, and Soldiers in the Army, in respect of the Postage of their Letters.

By an Act of the 46th Geo. 3. Cap. 92, Sec. 5, &c.

1811 notice

1813 amendment

1. **N**O single Letter sent by the Post, on his own private Concern only, from any Seaman in His Majesty's Navy, or any Serjeant, Corporal, Trumpeter, Drummer, Fifer, and Private Soldier in His Majesty's Army, within any Part of His Majesty's Dominions shall, whilst such Seaman or Soldier shall be employed on His Majesty's Service, and not otherwise, be charged with a higher Rate of Postage than the Sum of ONE PENNY for the Conveyance of each such Letter; such Postage to be paid at the Time of putting the same into the Post-Office of the Town or Place from whence such Letter is intended to be sent by the Post, provided that upon every such Letter so to be sent, the Name of the Writer, and his Class or Description in the Ship or Vessel, Regiment, Corps, or Detachment to which he shall belong, shall be superscribed, and provided that upon every such Letter there shall be written in the Hand-writing of, and signed by, the Officer having at the Time the Command of the Ship or Vessel, Regiment, Corps, or Detachment, his Name, and the Name of the Regiment, Corps, or Detachment commanded by him..

2. No single Letter, directed to any such Seaman, or Soldier, upon his own private Concern only; within any Part of His Majesty's Dominions, whilst such Seaman, or Soldier shall be employed on His Majesty's Service, and not otherwise, shall be charged with a higher Rate of Postage than One Penny, provided that such Penny be paid upon putting the Letter into a Post-Office, established under the Authority of His Majesty's Postmaster-General; and provided also, that every such Letter shall be directed to such Seaman or Soldier, specifying on the Superscription thereof, the Name of the Ship or Vessel, Regiment, Corps, or Detachment to which he shall belong, and provided that it shall not be lawful for the Deputy Postmaster to deliver such Letter to any Person, except the Seaman or Soldier to whom it shall be directed, or to some Person appointed to receive the same, by Writing, under the Hand of the Officer having the Command of the Ship or Vessel, Regiment, Corps, or Detachment to which the Seaman or Soldier shall belong.

3. The Post Master General require Post Masters to examine every Letter purporting to be a Soldier's or Seaman's Letter, and if it be not in all respects conformable to the two preceding Clauses; to charge it with full Postage, recollecting that though the Law has given the Indulgence to Soldiers and Seamen, throughout his Majesty's Dominions, yet in such Parts of those Dominions with which there is no Communication by Packet Boats, this Privilege cannot be enjoyed, as Letters to and from such Places pass as Ship Letters, and are then liable to the Ship Letter Rates.—His Majesty's Forces whilst serving in Spain, Portugal, and Sicily, and British Ships of War in the Harbours, and on the Coasts of those Countries, have the Privilege extended to them, and Single Letters of Soldiers and Seamen may accordingly pass for One Penny under the usual Restrictions.

The following are Forms of Certificates to be written on each Letter from a Soldier or Seaman either in the United Kingdom or in any of His Majesty's Dominions abroad, without which it will not pass for One Penny, nor then unless the Penny be paid at the Time of putting the said Letter into the Post Office, in conformity to the first Article.

## SEAMEN.

## SOLDIERS.

From A. B. Scaman  
His Majesty's Ship  
(Signed) C. D.  
Commanding-Officer  
of His Majesty's Ship.

From A. B. Private  
in the Regt.  
(Signed) C. D.  
Commanding-Officer  
of the Regt. of

The Certificates are to vary in Names and Descriptions of Men, Ships, or Vessels, Regiments or Companies, as the Circumstances of the Case may be.

Letters sent to or by Commissioned or Warrant Officers, Midshipmen or Masters' Mates in the Navy, Captains' Clerks, Schoolmasters, Caulkers, Rope-Makers, Armourers, Mates and Cooks, Masters at Arms and Master Sail-Makers are precluded the Benefit of the Act, as are Letters sent to or by Warrant Officers in the Army; and Care must be taken that no Person in the Navy or Army not entitled, shall obtain the Benefit of this Act by having their Letters addressed to themselves under a general Description of Soldier or Sailor.

## THE ACT OF AUGUST 1811 (REDUCED)

7. If any Officer, having the Command of the Ship, Vessel, Regiment, Corps, or Detachment, who is authorized to make his Endorsement in the Manner before specified on the Letter of the Seamen or Soldiers under his Command, shall wilfully and knowingly write his Name on any such Letter, that is not from such Seaman or Soldier on his private Concerns only, he will be liable for every Offence to forfeit and pay the Sum of FIVE POUNDS.

6. If any Officer or officer Person not having at the time the Command of the Ship, Regiment, Corps, or Detachment, shall write his Name upon any such Letter, in order that the same be sent at a lower Rate of Postage than by Law established, he will be liable to forfeit and pay the Sum of FIVE POUNDS.

7. If any Person shall knowingly and designedly address a Letter to any Seaman or Soldier, which shall be intended for another Person, and which shall be concerning the Affairs of another Person, with intent to evade the Payment of the Rate of Postage by Law established, by paying the Penny, every such Person so offending will, for every Offence, be liable to forfeit and pay the Sum of FIVE POUNDS.

8. And if any Person shall procure any Seaman or Soldier to obtain the Signature of his Commanding Officer, to any Letter to be sent by the Post, which shall not be on the private Concerns of such Seaman or Soldier; or if any Seaman or Soldier shall himself obtain the Signature of his Commanding Officer upon any Letter which shall not be from himself, on his own private Concerns only, in order to avoid the Payment of the Rates of Postage by Law established, each and every Person so offending will, for every Offence, be liable to forfeit and pay the Sum of FIVE POUNDS.

9. If any Soldier or Seaman or other Person entitled to send single Letters for the Postage of One Penny, shall forge the Hand-writing of his Commanding Officer upon any such Letter in order to avoid the Payment of the higher Rate of Postage, he will be guilty of a Misdemeanor, and may be prosecuted by Indictment. In any such Cases, the Deputies are to apprehend the Parties, and report the Proceedings for the Postmaster General's decision as to Prosecution.

10. It having been a loose and irregular practice to permit Money Orders taken out for the use of Soldiers and Sailors to be folded up and passed as their Letters, for One Penny each, that practice is hereby strictly forbidden, as such Orders must be enclosed in Letters which are then liable to double or treble Postage, or if folded in the shape of Letters and sent singly, to full single rates of Postage.\*

11. The Postmasters are required to give their Attention to prevent any Letters being sent for the Penny Postage which relate at all to the Public Business of any Branch of His Majesty's Military or Naval Service, the Indulgence being strictly confined to the Soldier or Sailor's own private Concerns.

12. One Moiety of the several Penalties and Forfeitures are for the Use of His Majesty, and the other Moiety to the Person who shall inform, which Penalty may be recovered before any one or more of the Justices of Peace, for the County, City, or Place where the Offence shall be committed: and, in Default of Payment, such Offenders are to be committed to the House of Correction for any Space not exceeding One Month, or till the Penalty shall be sooner paid. And Postmasters must use every means in their power to obtain Convictions when any abuse is committed.

By Command of His Majesty's Postmaster General,

FRANCIS FREELING, Secretary.

GENERAL POST-OFFICE, }  
August 1811. }

\* When any Person applies to a Postmaster for a Money Order, the Party paying the Money should be desired to write his Name and Place of abode on the Back of the Order, or the Postmaster do it himself.

September, 1813.

N<sup>o</sup>. 13.

*On the Exemptions granted to Seamen in the Navy,  
and Soldiers in the Army, in respect of the Postage  
of their Letters.*

1. SEAMEN and Soldiers within any Part of His Majesty's Dominions, to and from which there are regular Mails, can send and receive single Letters, on their own private Concerns only, while such Seaman or Soldier shall be employed on His Majesty's Service, and not otherwise, for ONE PENNY.

2. On Letters FROM  
a Seaman,  
or from a Serjeant  
Corporal,  
Trumpeter,  
Drummer,  
Fifer,  
and Private Soldier

The Penny must be paid at the Time it is put into the Post Office.

The Name of the Writer, and the Name of the Ship, or Regiment, Corps or Detachment, must be written by himself.

And the Officer actually having the Command, must sign his Name, and the Name of the Ship, or Regiment, Corps or Detachment, he commands.

3. On Letters TO Seamen  
or to Soldiers, as above

The Penny must be paid at the Time the Letter is put into the Post Office.

Its Direction must specify the Class of the Person, and the Name of the Ship, or Regiment, Corps or Detachment, to which he belongs, that is to say—it must describe him, Seaman, Serjeant, Corporal, Trumpeter, Drummer, Fifer, or Private Soldier, as the Case may be.

N. B. All the foregoing Descriptions must be legibly written, the Initials of the Names of any Ships or Regiments being insufficient.

4. The Postmaster General require Postmasters to examine every Letter purporting to be a Seaman's, or Soldier's Letter, and if it be not in all respects conformable to the above Regulations, to charge it with full Postage, recollecting that though the Law has given the indulgence to Seamen and Soldiers throughout His Majesty's Dominions, yet in such Parts of those Dominions with which there is no communication by Packet Boats, this Privilege cannot be enjoyed.

*Note.—His Majesty's Forces whilst serving in Spain, Portugal, and Sicily, and British Ships of War in the Harbours, and on the Coasts of those Countries, have the Privilege extended to them, and single Letters of Seamen and Soldiers may accordingly pass for One Penny, under the usual Restrictions—They also pass for One Penny to Sicily, and to the Ships in the Mediterranean, being conveyed by the Packet Boats to Gibraltar and Malta, Places within the King's Dominions.*

The following are Forms to be used for each Letter from a Seaman or Soldier, and also to a Seaman or Soldier, whether in the United Kingdom or in any of His Majesty's Dominions abroad, without which it cannot pass for One Penny, nor then unless the Penny be paid at the Time of putting the said Letter into the Post Office, in conformity to the preceding Articles.

## SEAMEN.

From A. BOLD, Seaman, H.M.S. Victory,

(here the Direction of the Letter to be inserted.)

CHA'. DAUNTLESS, Captain (or other  
Commanding Officer) H.M.S. Victory.

To A. BOLD,

Seaman H.M.S. Victory.

(Here the Direction to be finished.)

## SOLDIERS.

From A BOLD, Serjeant (&c.) 60 Reg<sup>t</sup>. Foot.

(here the Direction of the Letter to be inserted.)

CHA'. DAUNTLESS, Colonel (or other  
Commanding Officer) 60 Reg<sup>t</sup>. Foot.

To A. BOLD,

Private 60 Reg<sup>t</sup>. Foot (or Serjeant,  
Corporal, &c.)

(Here the Direction to be finished.)

5. Letters sent to or by Commissioned or Warrant Officers, Midshipmen or Masters' Mates in the Navy, or by Captains' Clerks, Schoolmasters, Caulkers, Rope-Makers, Armourers, Mates and Cooks, Masters at Arms, and Master Sail-Makers, are precluded the Benefit of the Act, as are Letters sent to or by Commissioned or Warrant Officers in the Army; and Care must be taken that no Person in the Navy or Army, not entitled, shall obtain the Benefit of this Act by having their Letters addressed to themselves under the general Description of Soldier or Sailor.



6. If any Officer, having the Command of the Ship, Vessel, Regiment, Corps, or Detachment, who is authorised to make his Endorsement in the Manner before specified on the Letter of the Seamen or Soldiers under his Command, shall wilfully and knowingly write his Name on any such Letter, that is not from such Seaman or Soldier on his private Concerns only, he will be liable for every Offence to forfeit and pay the Sum of FIVE POUNDS.

7. If any Officer or other Person not having at the time the Command of the Ship, Regiment, Corps, or Detachment, shall write his Name upon any such Letter, in order that the same be sent at a lower Rate of Postage than by Law established, he will be liable to forfeit and pay the Sum of FIVE POUNDS.

8. If any Person shall knowingly and designedly address a Letter to any Seaman or Soldier, which shall be intended for another Person, and which shall be concerning the Affairs of another Person, with intent to evade the Payment of the Rate of Postage by Law established, by paying the Penny, every such Person so offending will, for every offence, be liable to forfeit and pay the Sum of FIVE POUNDS.

9. And if any Person shall procure any Seaman or Soldier to obtain the Signature of his Commanding Officer, to any Letter to be sent by the Post, which shall not be on the private Concerns of such Seaman or Soldier; or if any Seaman or Soldier shall himself obtain the Signature of his Commanding Officer upon any Letter which shall not be from himself, on his own private Concerns only, in order to avoid the Payment of the Rates of Postage by Law established, each and every Person so offending will, for every Offence, be liable to forfeit and pay the Sum of FIVE POUNDS.

10. If any Soldier or Seaman or other Person entitled to send single Letters for the Postage of One Penny, shall forge the Hand-writing of his Commanding Officer upon any such Letter in order to avoid the Payment of the higher Rate of Postage, he will be guilty of a Misdemeanor, and may be prosecuted by Indictment. In any such Cases, the Deputies are to apprehend the Parties, and report the Proceedings for the Postmaster General's decision as to Prosecution.

11. It having been a loose and irregular practice to permit Money Orders taken out for the use of Soldiers and Sailors to be folded up and passed as their Letters, for One Penny each, that practice is hereby strictly forbidden, as such Orders must be enclosed in Letters which are then liable to double or treble Postage, or if folded in the shape of Letters and sent singly, to full single rates of Postage. The Person applying to a Postmaster for a Money Order, should be desired to write his Name and Place of abode on the Back of the Order, or the Postmaster may do it himself.

12. The Postmasters are required to give their Attention to prevent any Letters being sent for the Penny Postage which relate at all to the Public Business of any Branch of His Majesty's Military or Naval Service, the Indulgence being strictly confined to the Soldier or Sailor's own private Concerns.

13. One Moiety of the several Penalties and Forfeitures are for the Use of His Majesty, and the other Moiety to the Person who shall inform, which Penalty may be recovered before any one or more of the Justices of Peace, for the County, City, or Place where the Offence shall be committed: and, in Default of Payment, such Offenders are to be committed to the House of Correction for any Space not exceeding One Month, or till the Penalty shall be sooner paid. And Postmasters must use every means in their power to obtain Convictions when any abuse is committed.

By Command of His Majesty's Postmaster General,

FRANCIS FREELING, Secretary.

••• The Postmaster is desired to cancel No. 13, dated August 1811, and to use this instead.

7. If any person shall knowingly and designedly address a Letter to any Seaman or Soldier, which shall be intended for another Person, and which shall be concerning the Affairs of another Person, with intent to evade the payment of the Rate of Postage by law established, by paying the Penny, every such Person so offending will, for every Offence, be liable to forfeit and pay the Sum of FIVE POUNDS.

And if any person shall procure any Seaman or Soldier to obtain the Signature of his Commanding Officer, to any Letter to be sent by the Post, which shall not be on the private Concerns of such Seaman or Soldier; or if any Seaman or Soldier shall himself obtain the Signature of his Commanding Officer upon any Letter which shall not be from himself, on his own private Concerns only, in order to avoid Payment of the Rates of Postage by Law established, each and every such Person so offending will, for every Offence, be liable to forfeit and pay the Sum of FIVE POUNDS.

If any Soldier or Seaman or other person entitled to send single Letters for the Postage of One Penny, shall forge the Hand-writing of his Commanding Officer upon any such Letter in order to avoid the Payment of the higher Rate of Postage, he will be guilty of a Misdemeanour, and may be prosecuted by Indictment. In any such cases, the Deputies are to apprehend the Parties, and report the Proceedings for the Postmaster's General decision as to Prosecution.

It having been a loose and irregular practice to permit Money Orders taken out for the use of Soldiers and sailors to be folded up and passed as their Letters, for One Penny each, that practice is hereby strictly forbidden, as such Orders must be enclosed in Letters which are then liable to double or treble Postage, or if folded in the shape of Letters and sent singly, to the full single rates of Postage. When a Person applies to a Postmaster for a Money order, the Party paying the Money should be desired to write his Name and Place of abode on the Back of the Order, or the Postmaster may do it himself.

11. The Postmasters are required to give their Attention to prevent any Letters being sent for the Penny Postage which relate at all to the Public Business of any Branch of His Majesty's Military or Naval Service, the Indulgence being strictly confined to the Soldier or Sailor's own private Concerns.

12. One Moiety of the several Penalties and Forfeitures are for the use of His Majesty, and the other Moiety to the Person who shall inform, which Penalty may be recovered before any one or more of the Justices of the Peace, for the County, City,

or Place where the Offence shall be committed; and, in Default of Payment, such Offenders are to be committed to the House of Correction for any Space not exceeding one month, or till the Penalty shall be sooner paid. And Postmasters must use every means in their power to obtain Convictions when any abuse is committed.

FRANCIS FREELING, Secretary'

(August 1811 GPOL).

1812 Increase in Postage Rates: When Francis Freeling circulated the increase in Postage Rates under the July 1812 notice, he included exemptions for Soldiers and Sailors in the following terms:

*'Foreign and Packet Letters.*

*For every single Letter from and to any Place within Great Britain, to and from Parts beyond the Seas, within or not within His Majesty's Dominions Two Pence, and so on in proportion for Double, Treble, and Ounce Letters.*

*You will therefore immediately upon the Receipt of this charge all Letters sent from your Office with the additional Rates, except those of Soldiers, and Sailors, which are to be conveyed under the usual Restrictions for One Penny each.'*

(9 July 1812 GPOL).

... and a second notice with additional Rates concluded with:

*'The rates upon single Letters sent by or to Seamen and Privates employed in his Majesty's Army, Navy, &c. are not increased.'*

(10 July 1812).

... but a further one on Ship Letter Rates had the following:

*'Letters to and from Seamen and Soldiers, when conveyed as Ship Letters, are liable to the full Rates, the Exemptions not applying in this Department.'*

(Instructions No.1, July 1812 GPOL).

Halfpenny Scottish Tax re Soldiers and Seamen's Letters: In modifying a 12<sup>th</sup> June 1813 instruction on the collection of the Halfpenny Scottish Tax, Francis Freeling added the following with respect to Letters from Soldiers and Sailors:

*'You will observe, that Soldiers and Sailors Letters to and from Scotland, when all the Restrictions of the Act relating to them are complied with, are to be charged one Penny only, as before, but when liable to full, single, or double Postage, &c. they are also liable to the Halfpenny.'*

(10 August 1813 GPOL).





EXAMPLES OF LETTERS FROM SOLDIERS AND SEAMEN IN  
BRITISH NORTH AMERICA

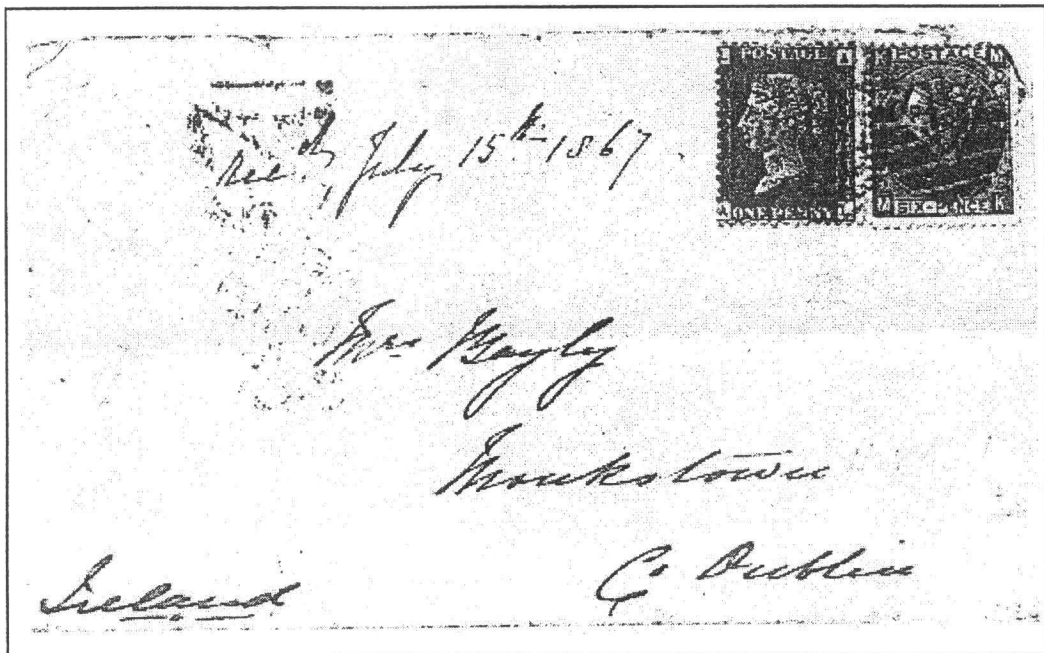


Figure 4: Vancouver's Island to Monkstown, Ireland, 1867; prepaid sevenpence.  
(Photocopy supplied by Allan Steinhart.)

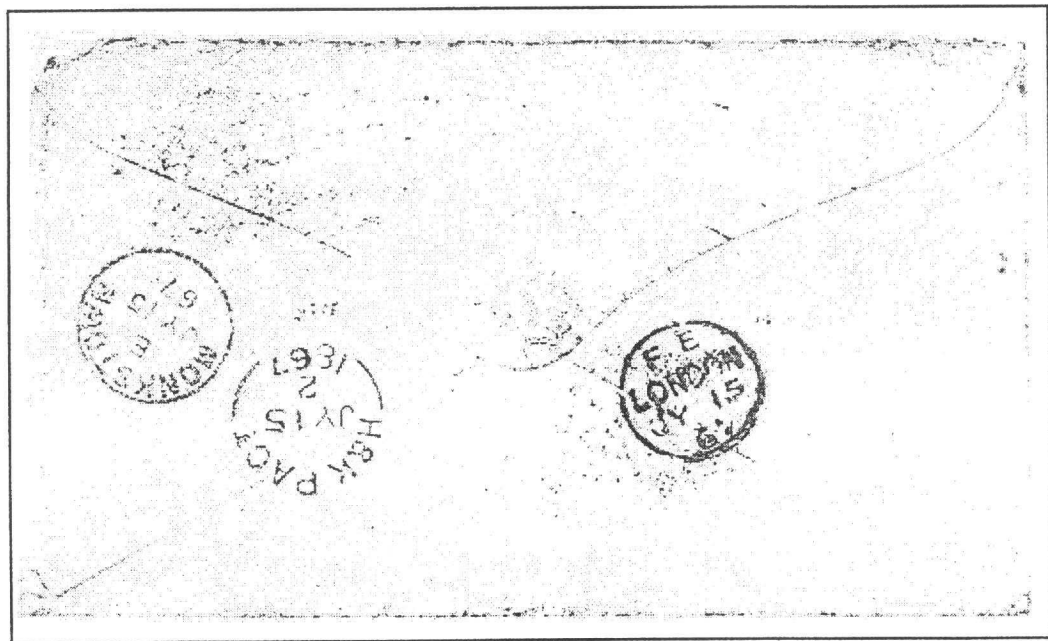


Figure 5: The reverse of the cover above.  
(Present location of the correspondence unknown, information would be appreciated.)

EXAMPLES OF LETTERS FROM SOLDIERS AND SEAMEN IN  
BRITISH NORTH AMERICA

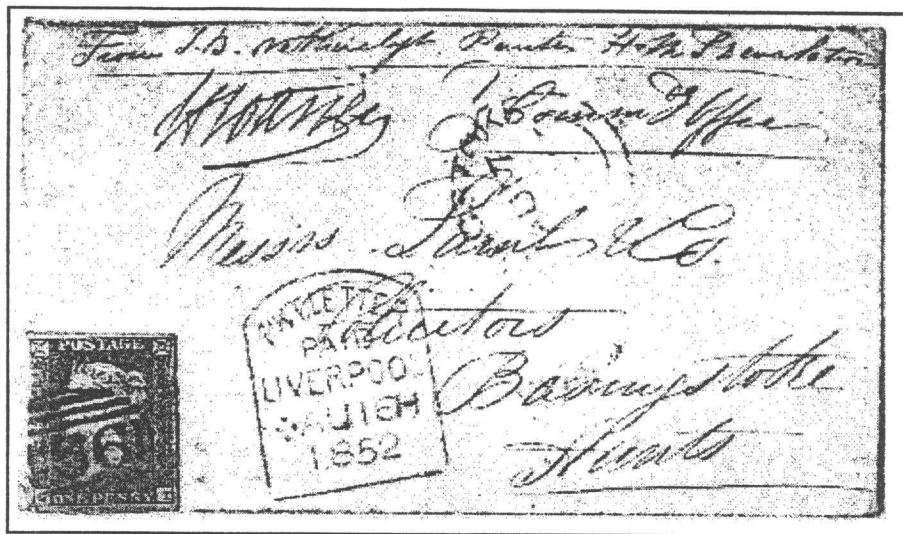


Figure 6: HMS 'Devastation' at Prince Edward Island to Basingstoke, 1852.  
(Courtesy of Captain D Campbell.)

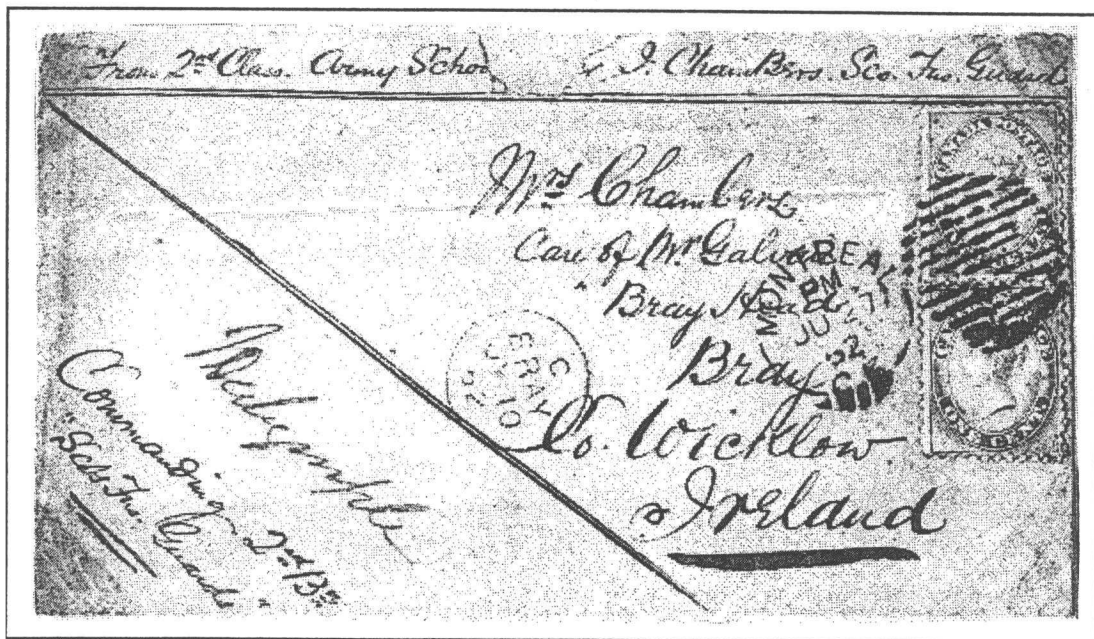


Figure 6: Montreal, Canada to Bray, Ireland, 1862, paid two cents.  
(Present location of the cover unknown, information would be appreciated.)


# POSTSCRIPT

This was to have been my Christmas message ... then I decided that it might be more 'politically correct' to refer to 'Seasons Greetings'. When the enclosed turned up in the mail, I realised that the indecision was a little academic - even if I finish writing quickly, anything posted in December was unlikely to arrive in time for Christmas 1997, and might not even make any of the festivals in 1998, particularly in the face of postal strikes. As it happened, pre-Christmas house decorating caused a near-total plaster collapse in my stairwell, and the last Newsletter of 1997 became the first of 1998 .... apologies!

I started with a letter to England from a marine on Vancouver's Island. I now illustrate a cover

from British Columbia to a soldier (retired) in England. Although the catalogue was from British Columbia, the package was posted in Washington DC on 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1997; it has been marked 'surface' and arrived here on 26<sup>th</sup> November. This is not good: 150 years ago the surface mails took 2-3 weeks; 100 years ago less than a week; 50 years ago mail underpaid for airmail was either forwarded by air and the difference charged against the addressee, or diverted to surface routes; it still took less than a week. I think that, without question, the earlier services had much to commend them!

If you happen to be celebrating a festival when you read this, please accept my very best wishes!



**RON LEITH**  
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Canada - Box 430, ABBOTSFORD, British Columbia V2S 5Z5

124

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United States Postal Service  
Customers - CN 22 (Old C 1)  
May be opened officially (Post être ouvert d'office)  
See Instructions on Reverse

Weight (Poids) \_\_\_\_\_ Value (Valeur) \_\_\_\_\_


☐ Q9 ☐ Merchandise (Marchandises) ☐ Commercial Sample

☐ I certify that this item does not contain any dangerous article prohibited by postal regulations.

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P8 Form 2978, Dec. 1996 CN 22 (Old C 1)

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