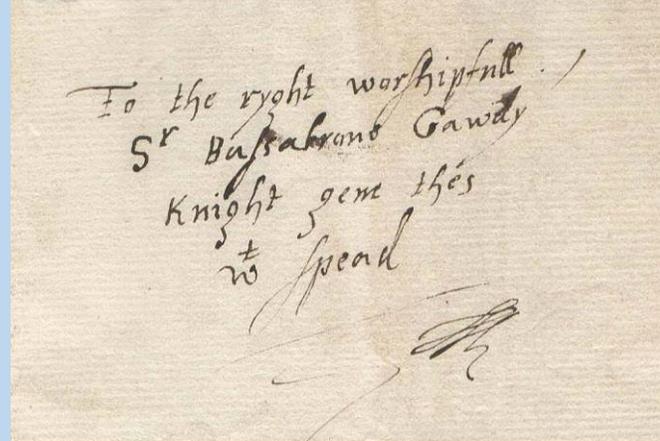


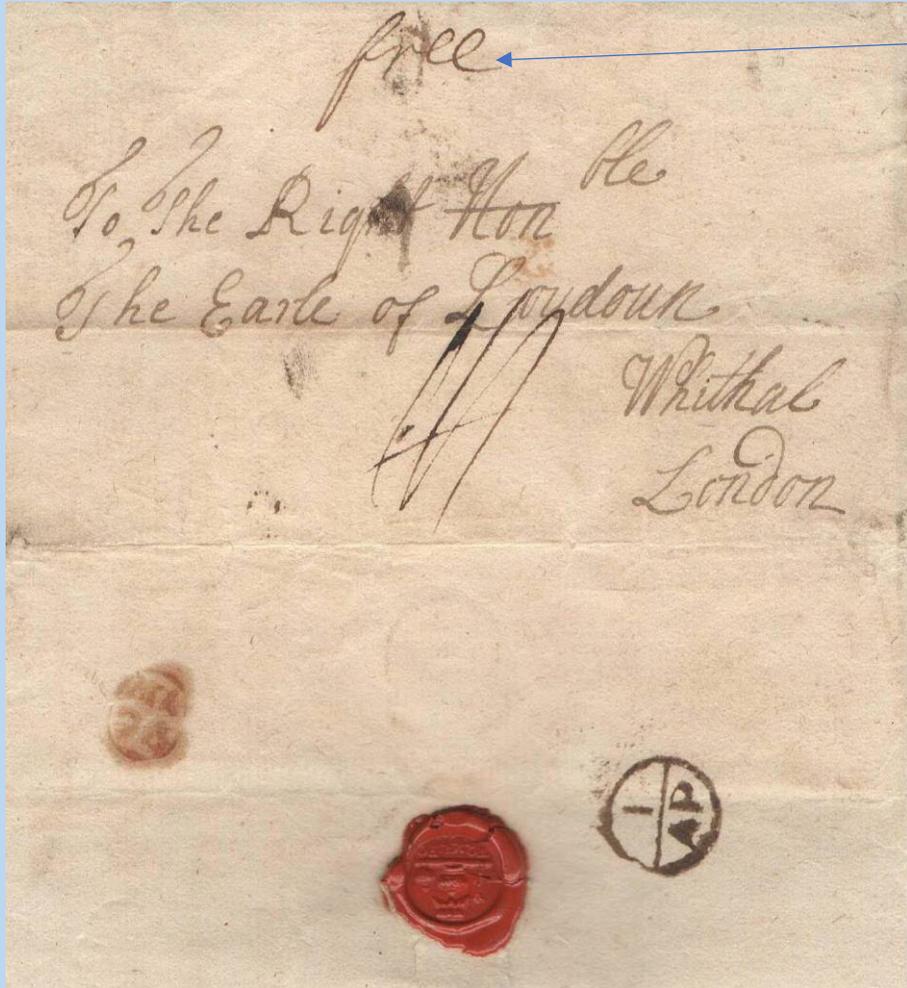
The British FREE franking system



The Court Post was established during the reign of Edward II (1307 – 1327) using court staff; special messengers and carriers were also employed. With there being officials representing the crown in each county, mail addressed to them was carried free of charge.

The letter, above, was sent to Sir Bassingbourne Gaudy, High Sherriff of Norfolk, in 1599 from Castle Rising. In it he is informed of the serious illness of their friend, Sir Robert Southwell, the former vice Admiral of the fleet against the Spanish Armada, who, in fact, died the day after the letter was carried to Woodrising, in the Breckland area of Norfolk.

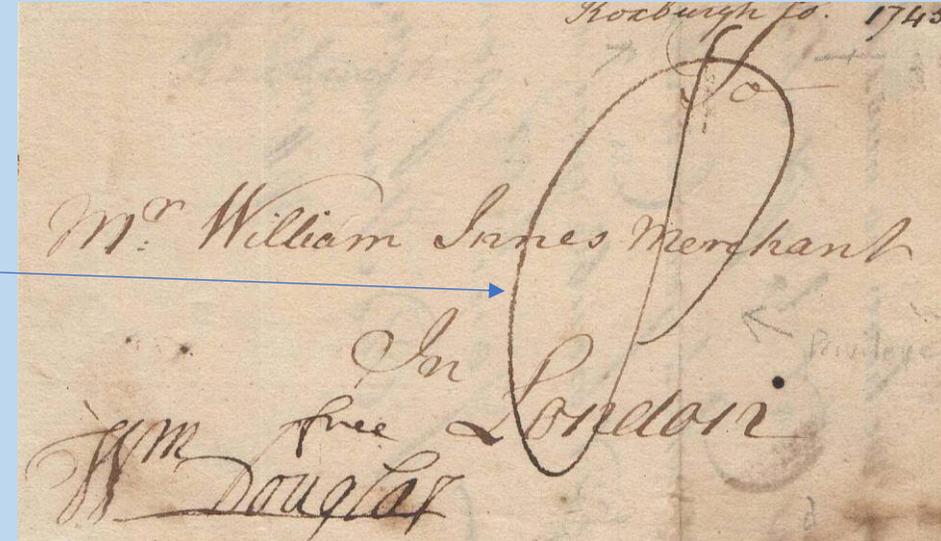
The English Free Frank System, Part 1, 1764 - 1807



1720

m/s free

m/s 'P'
privilege



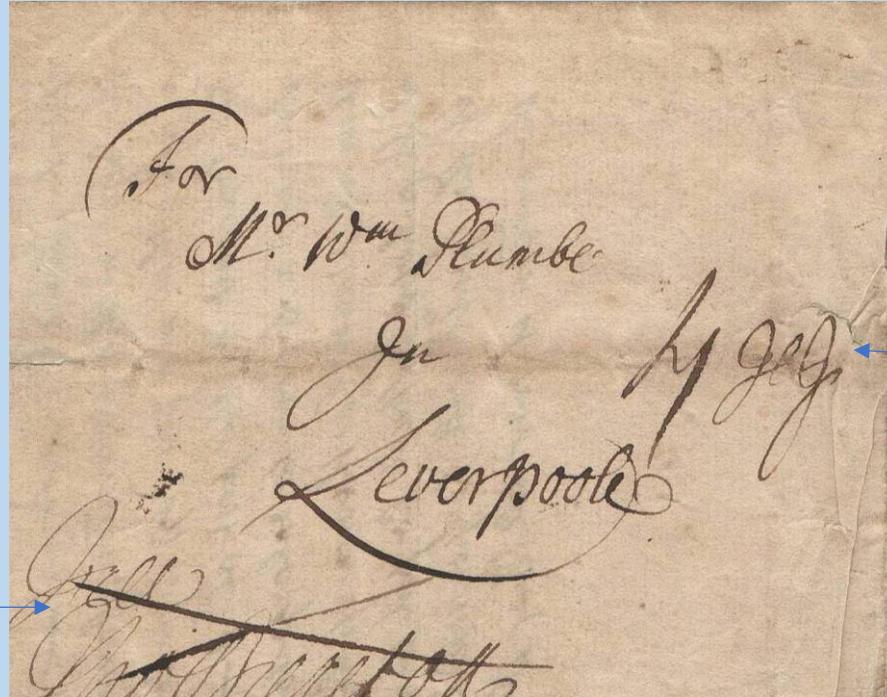
1743

- 1652** letters of MPs , Officers of State and Council should be carried free.
- 1653** add to a letter '*For the service of the Commonwealth*'.
- 1661** MPs 'Frees' from 40 days before, during and 40 days after sessions of Parliament.
- 1715** The writer to write address and be living in the area of posting. (weight restricted to 2 ounces).
- 1764** Crown surrendered the revenue of the Post Office in exchange for the Civil List. Sanction granted for a Franking system with severe penalties for breaches of the regulations
- 1784** post town and date to be included; member to be within 20 miles of post town.
- 1795** Weight of letters reduced to 1 ounce; limit of letters – 10 sent/ 15 received.

Abuse of FREE privilege, 1729



5th April Bishop mark



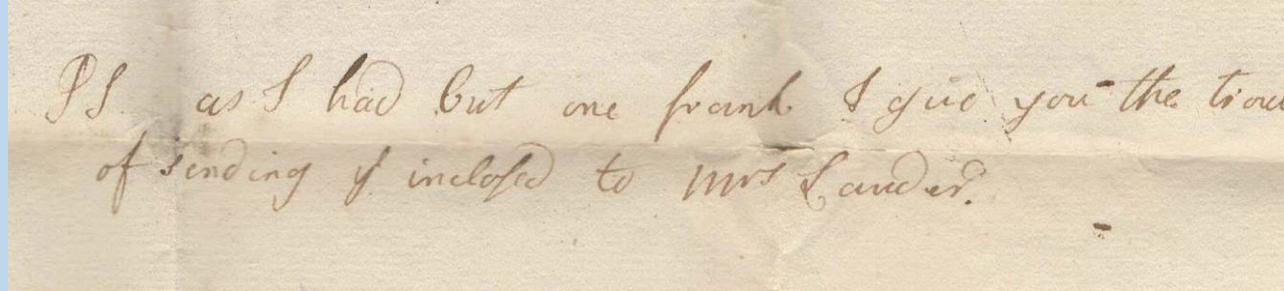
FREE and signature crossed out – privilege denied.

4d postage charged, Confirmed by postal clerk's signature.

Letter sent by James Plumbe from Windsor to his son, William. It passed through London on 5th April.

Abuse of privilege, ~1750

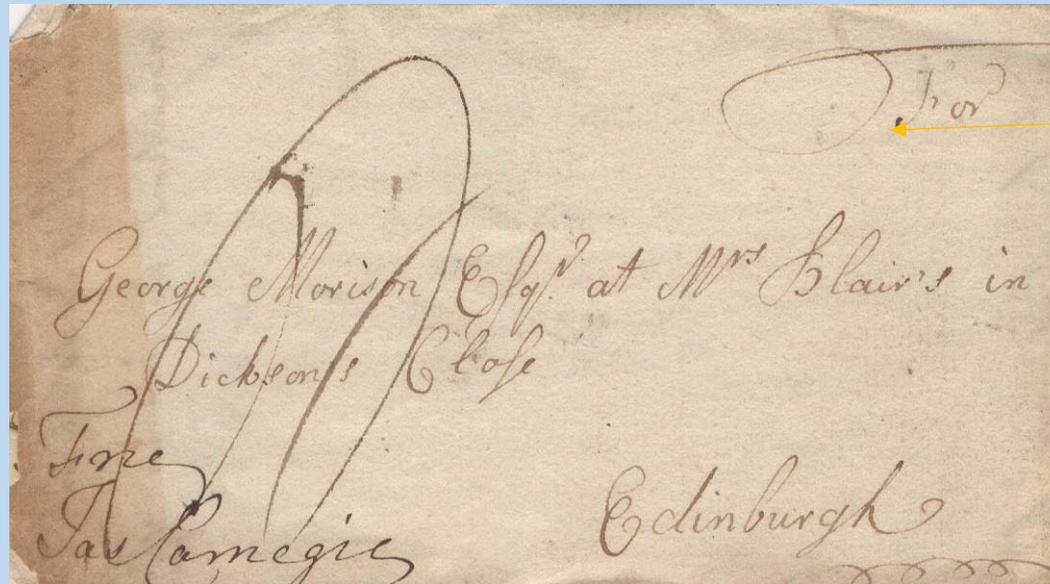
“PS as I had only one frank I give you the trouble of sending it ‘inclosed’ to Mrs Lander.”



PS as I had but one frank I give you the trouble of sending it inclosed to Mrs Lander.

James Carnegie has sent this letter, but it is addressed in a different hand.

Free/Jas Carnegie

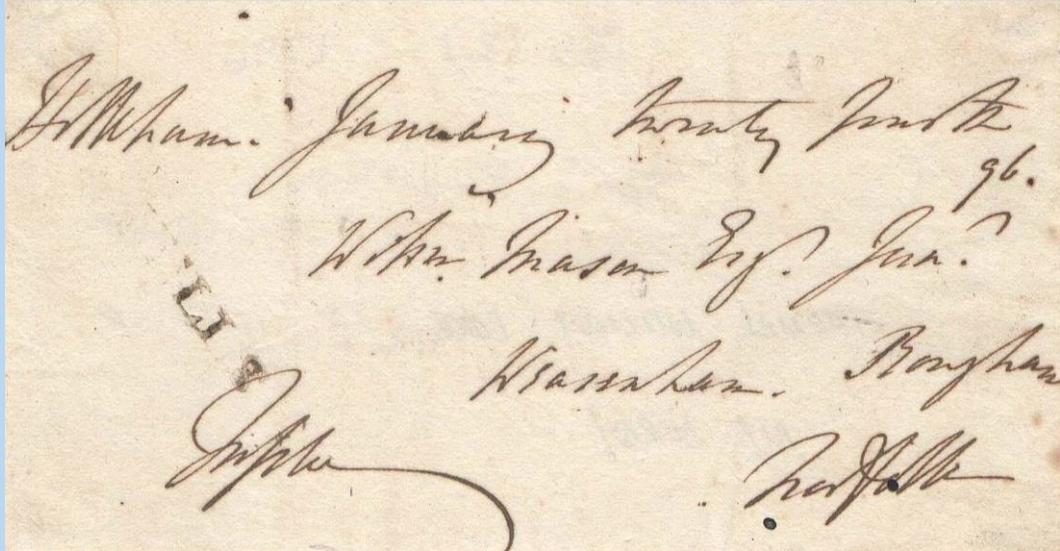


George Morison Esq^r at Mrs Blair's in
Dickson's Close
Free
Jas Carnegie
Edinburgh

It looks as if 6d postage has been charged – so why is the P for privilege NOT crossed out?

James Carnegie was MP for Kincardine, 3rd baronet Pittarrow, and later 5th Earl of Southesk.

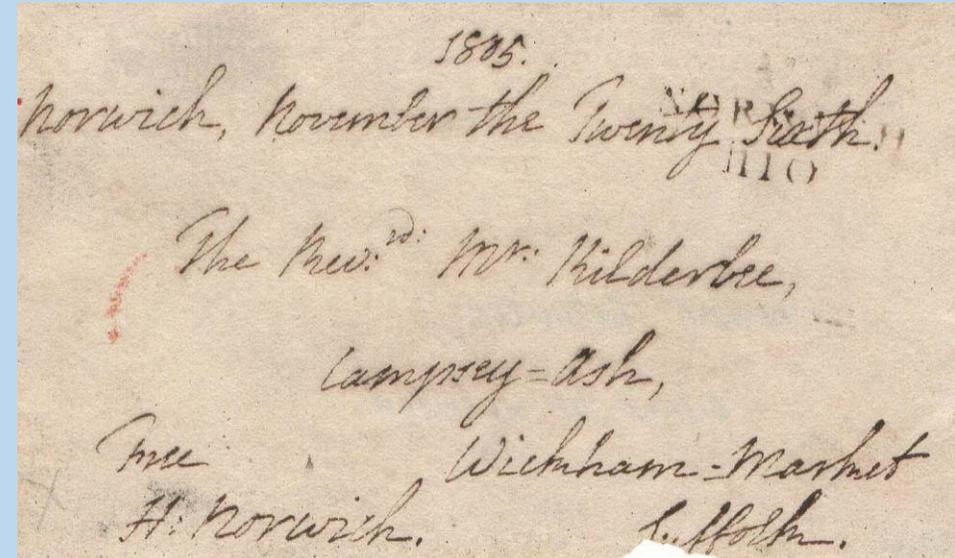
Free mail with NO hand stamp



A handwritten letter on aged paper. The text is written in cursive and includes the date 'January twenty first 1796' and the recipient's name 'Wm. Mason Esq. Junr'. The address is 'Weasenham. Rougham Norfolk'. There is a large flourish at the bottom left and a signature 'T. Coke' at the bottom right.

Sent by Thomas William Coke while in his second term of office as MP for Norfolk. He was known for his improvements to agriculture. Having declined a peerage for many years, he became Earl of Leicester in 1837.

The letter was sent from Holkham via **Wells** to Weasenham, near Rougham, Norfolk in 1796.

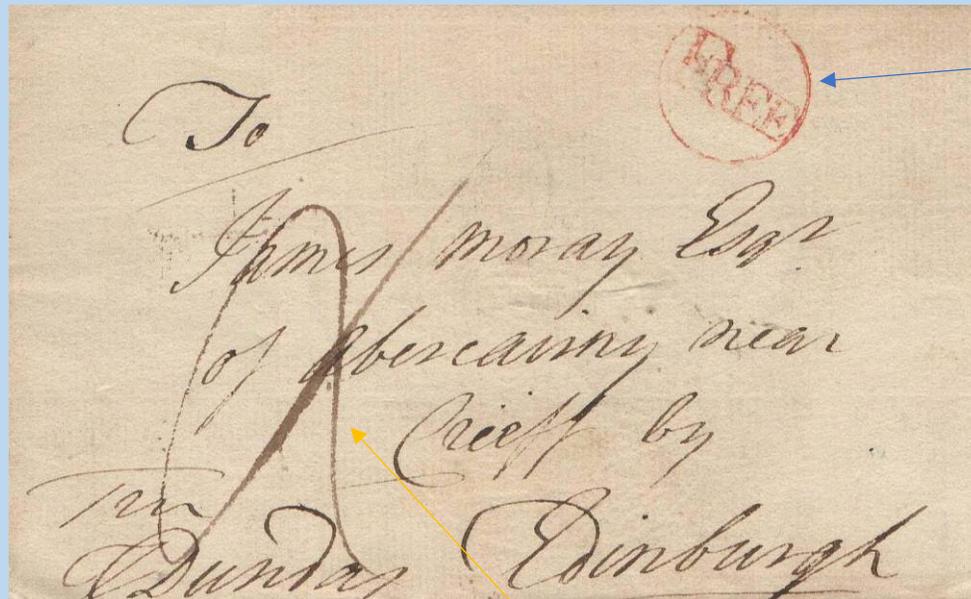


A handwritten letter on aged paper. The text is written in cursive and includes the date '1805' and 'Norwich, November the Twenty first'. The recipient's name is 'The Rev. Mr. Mildersee, Campsey-Ash, Wickham-Market, H. Norfolk, Suffolk'. There is a red wax seal on the left side of the letter.

Henry Bathurst – 1805 - had recently been consecrated Bishop of Norwich when he sent this letter to Campsea Ash, near Wickham Market. He served for 32 years and lived to be 92.

The letter bears a NORWICH/110 mileage mark, NK 303

FREE hand stamp, LF 1, 1764 - 1766



20 mm diameter



Reverse of letter showing a Bristol hand stamp, BS 18

The first FREE hand stamp, with a **large 'F'** was introduced in May 1764 and is recorded used for about two years.

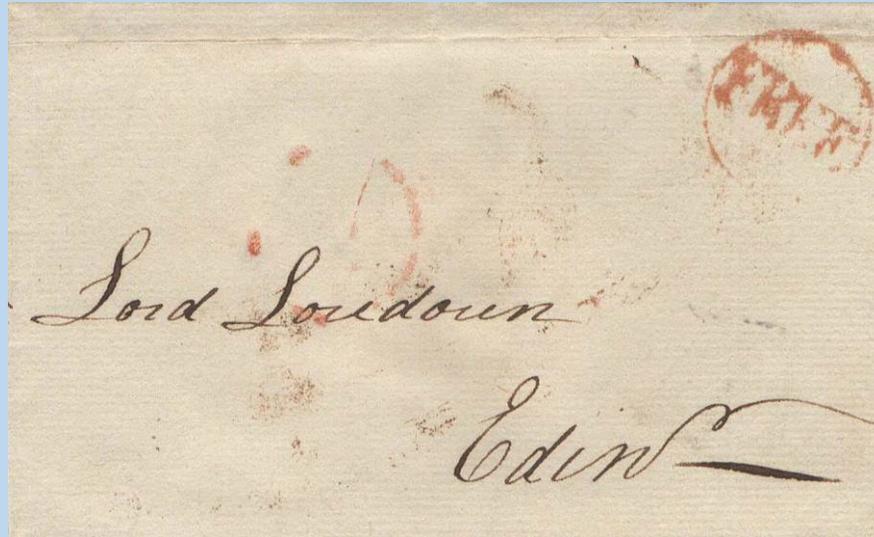
Diameters varied between 18 and 22 mm. The m/s 'scrawl' may be a 'P' for privilege.

FREE hand stamp, LF 2, 1765 - 1788

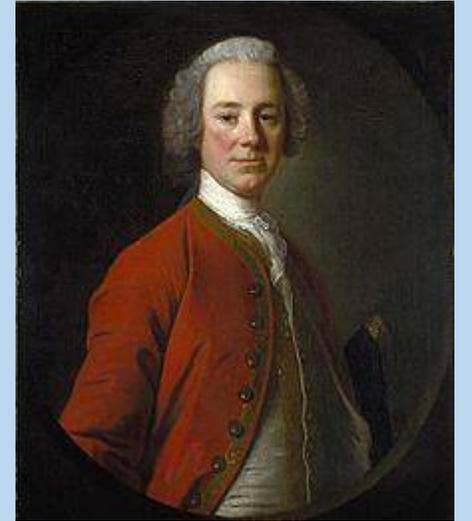


The second FREE hand stamp had **letters all the same size**. Lasting in this form for over 20 years, there are variations in the diameter from 18 – 28 mm, with the height of the lettering ranging from 5 – 9 mm.

FREE hand stamp, LF 2, 1765 - 1788



22mm diameter

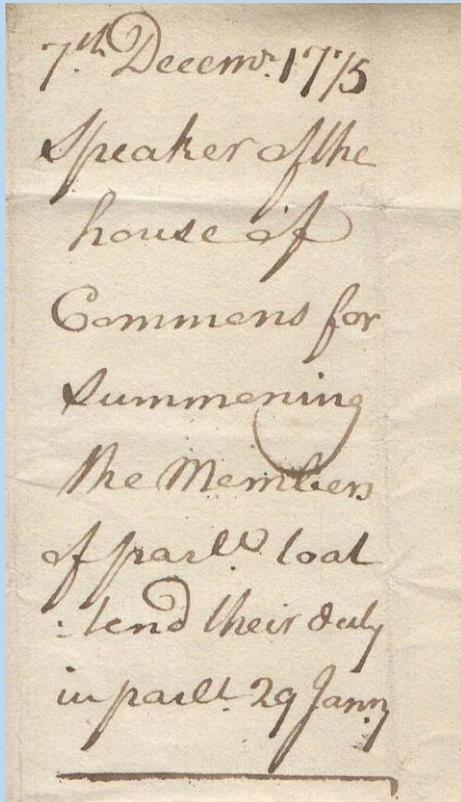


John Campbell, 4th Earl
of Loudoun, 1705 - 1782

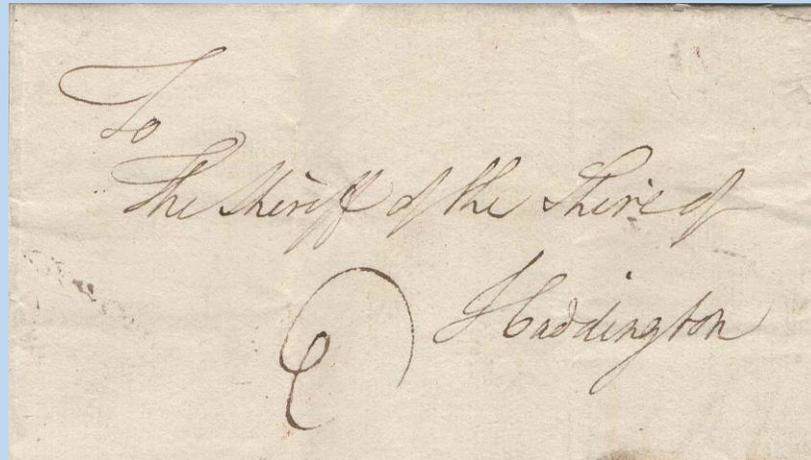
A letter sent from London to Edinburgh in 1778 and bearing both capitals' Bishop marks.

These **wooden** FREE hand stamps wore out or were damaged quite frequently and were replaced. Their diameter ranged from 18 to 28 mm and the height of the lettering varied from 5 to 9 mm.

Disallowed FREE from the House of Commons, 1775



7th Decemr 1775
Speaker of the
house of
Commons for
Summoning
the Members
of parlt. to at-
tend their duty
in parlt. 29 Janry

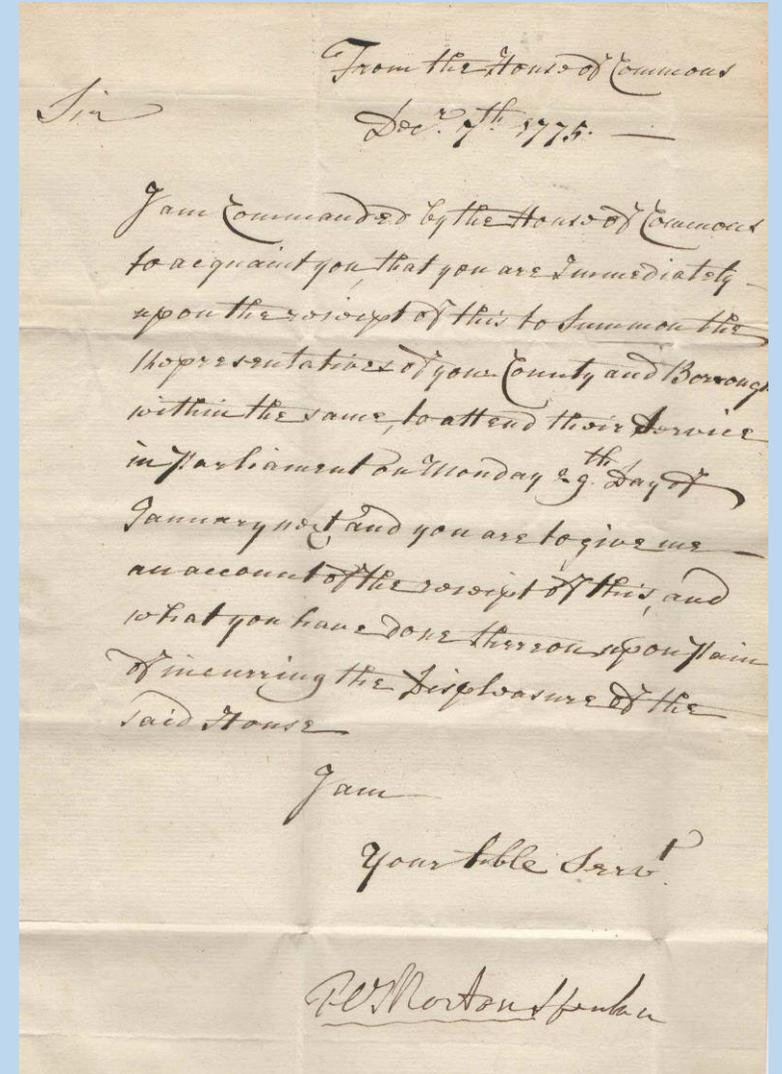


To
The Sheriff of the Shire of
Haddington

Letter sent from the House of Commons on 7th December 1775 asking the Sheriff of Haddington, south of Edinburgh, to notify his MPs of a recall of Parliament for 29th January 1776.

This is **53** days before Parliament was due to sit.

Postage was charged at 6d.



Sir
From the House of Commons
Dec^r 7th 1775 —

I am Comanded by the House of Commons
to acquaint you that you are immediately
upon the receipt of this to Summon the
the representatives of your County and Burrough
within the same, to attend their Service
in Parliament on Monday 29th Day of
January next and you are to give us
an account of the receipt of this and
what you have done thereon upon pain
of incurring the Displeasure of the
said House

I am
Your Obedt Serv^t

R^t Norton & Parker

Clerks of the Inland Office , 1782

Assistant to the Clerk of the Roads

Salary (and allowances)

Charles Colston	£60
John Irwin	£50
William Addison	£50
Francis Delaveaux	£50
James Stafford	£50
John Palmer	£50

Letter carrier to the House of Commons

Charles Colston	£60 (approx.)
-----------------	---------------

Inspector of Franks

Charles Colston	£50
-----------------	-----

Inspector of the Franks on Bye Nights

Francis Delaveaux	£30
-------------------	-----

Assistant Inspector of the Franks

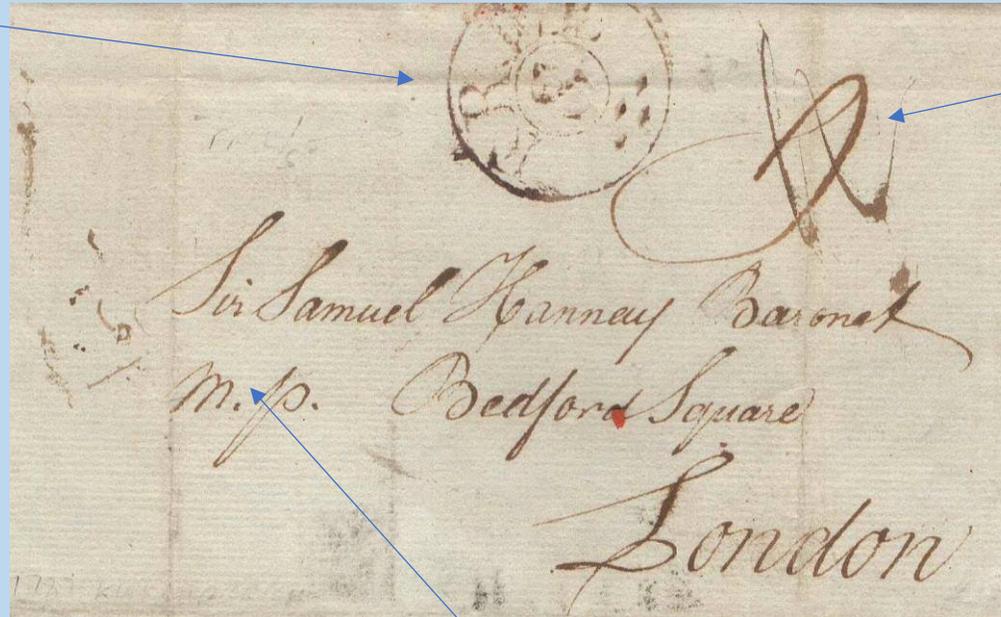
John Irwin	£20
------------	-----

Double ring FREE hand stamp, LF 3 S, 1787 - 1789

29 mm diameter



Sir Samuel Hannay, 4th baronet



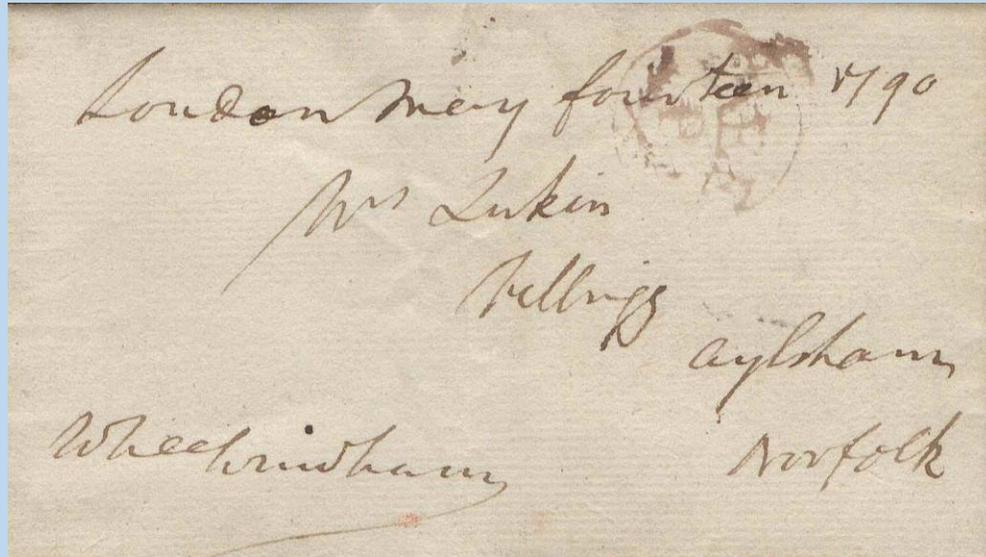
9d postage crossed out



James Stafford

Initially rated for postage of 9d to be collected on delivery, the Post Office clerk, presumably in London, noticed the m/s 'm.p.' on the second line of the address and correctly applied a FREE hand stamp, that of James Stafford, who retired in 1789.

FREE in a circle hand stamp, LF 4 P, 1789 - 1790



This version of the h/s has the letter 'P' for John Palmer, one of the assistant clerks of the roads.

This design of h/s lasted for less than a year from 15th December 1789 to the end of November 1790. Struck in blackish purple ink, it is seen here on a May 1790 letter to Felbrigg, near Aylsham.

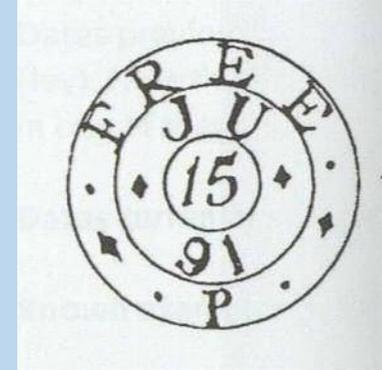


Felbrigg Hall

Two missing hand stamps, LF 5, 1790 -1791 and LF 6, 1791

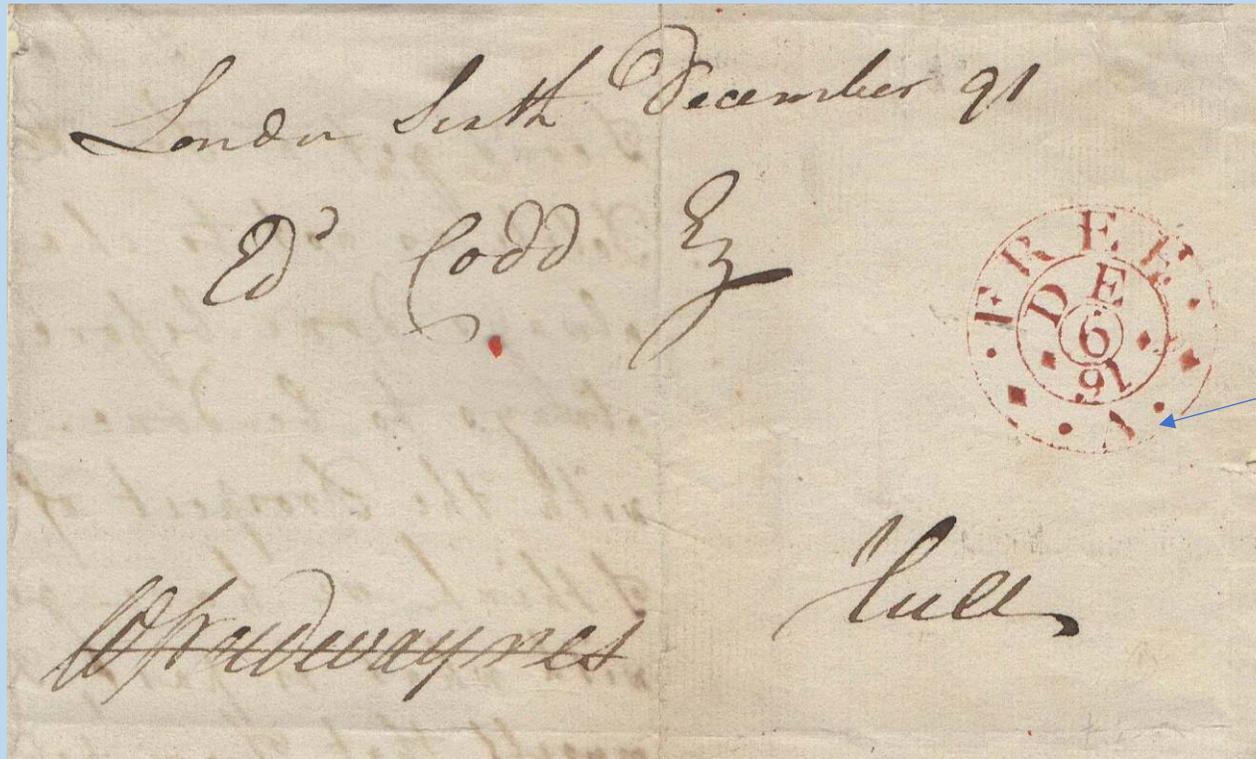


This hand stamp, LF 5, features a thin oval wreath emanating from a 2 mm circle at the base. The curved frame contains the word FREE and was produced for Addison in use from 31st October 1790 for 2 ½ months, Colston for 7 weeks from 30th October 1790 and Palmer for 5 weeks at the beginning of 1791.



LF 6 was introduced in March 1791 with either A or P, lasting until September of that year, with Colston's hand stamp coming in in May 1791 and used for less than a week. They had a diameter of 30 mm and are only recorded in red ink.

Triple ring FREE hand stamp, LF 7 A, 1791



This is the h/s of
William Addison

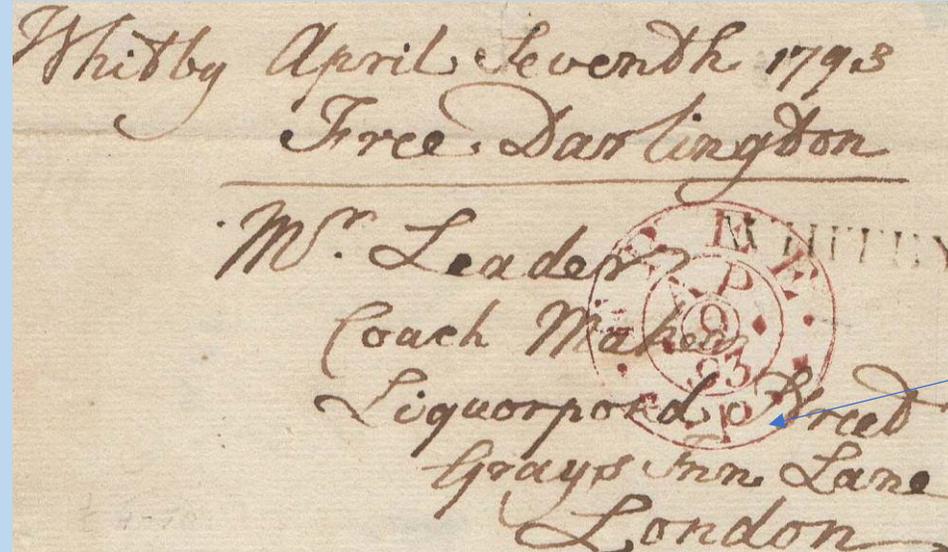
The first 3-ring hand stamp, LF 6, had been issued in March 1791 with a diameter of 30 mm. This larger hand stamp (33 mm) came into use in April 1791.

It is believed that these 3-ring hand stamps were mainly cut in **brass**, a rather soft metal, with the date letters and numbers being made of **wood** and so changed daily.



3rd Earl of Darlington

Triple ring FREE hand stamp, LF 7 P, 1793



John Palmer's h/s

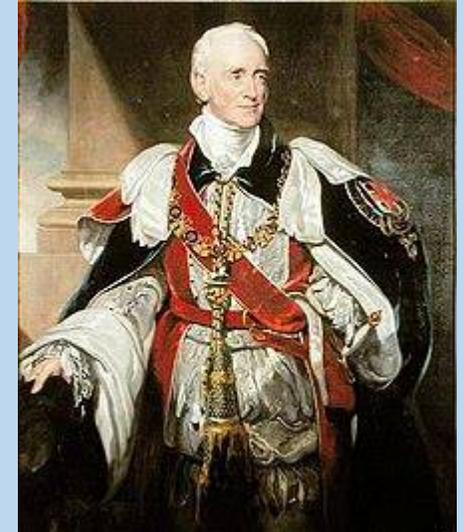
Another clerk's initial on this h/s, measuring 32 mm, struck in April 1793 in Whitby, straight line mark, YK 3163.

Darlington was William Harry Vane, 3rd Earl, born in 1766. He was the Whig MP for Totnes (1788 – 90) and Winchelsea (1790 – 1792) and then succeeded to his father's title in 1792, joining the House of Lords.

He also followed his father as Lord Lieutenant of County Durham, which he held until his death in 1842. In 1833 he had also been created Duke of Cleveland.

Triple ring FREE hand stamp, LF 7 C, 1795

Charles Colston's h/s



The Earl of
Hardwicke in his
robes of office

This letter was sent from Royston by the 3rd Earl of Hardwicke, whose subsidiary title, was Viscount Royston.

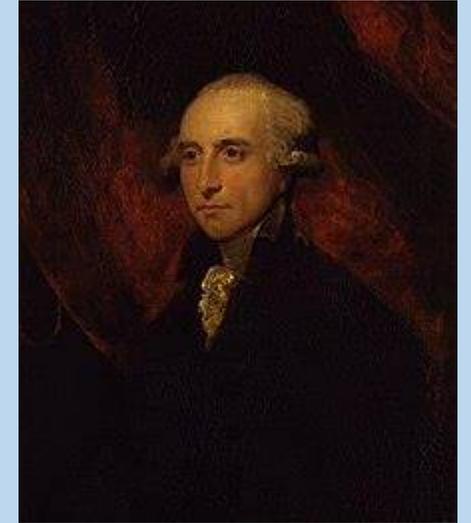
Born Philip York he served as MP for Reigate and Cambridgeshire, as Lord Lieutenant of the county and from 1801 to 1805 he was Lord Lieutenant of Ireland.

Triple ring FREE, LF 7P, 1795



Felbrigg Hall, near Aylsham

Built by John Wyndham (1588 – 1645)

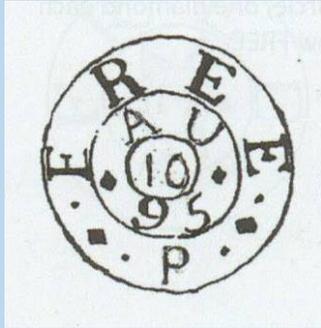


William Windham

1750 - 1810

William Windham was a brilliant academic whose powers were given to politics. He was MP for several constituencies from 1784 – 1810, was a Privy Councillor, secretary for war and the colonies and promoted both Catholic emancipation and the union of Ireland with England and Wales.

Some new discoveries, Types LF 8, LF 9 and LF 10

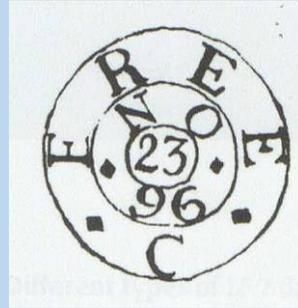


Type LF 8

FREE = half of circle

Diamond & 2 dots below FREE

Known only with 'P'

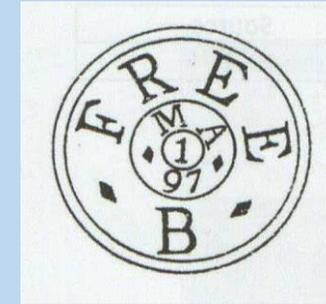


Type LF 9

FREE = half of circle

Diamonds only below FREE

In use for 10 months



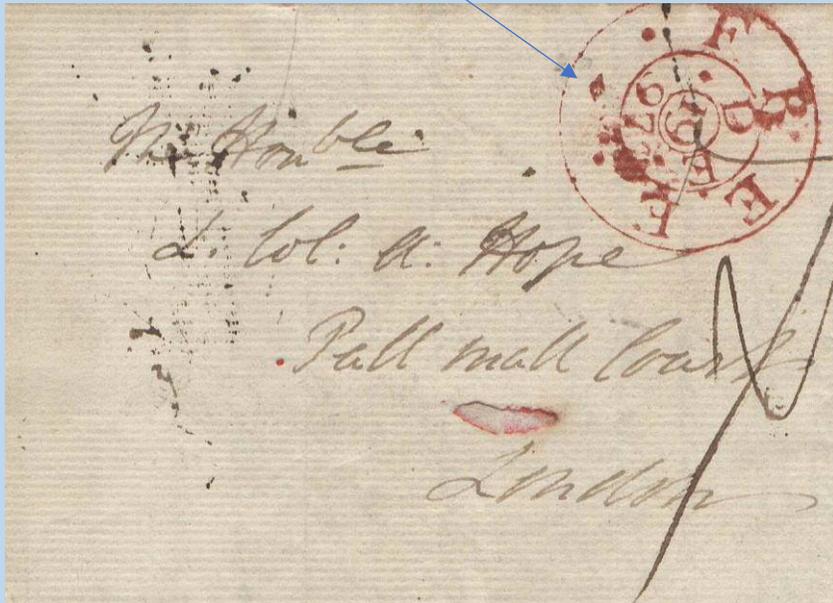
Type LF 10

Only known with 'B'

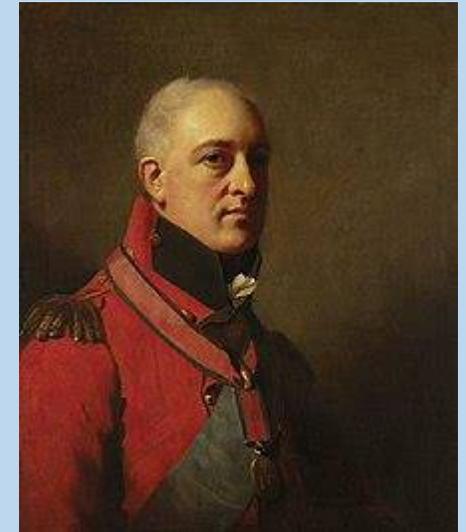
Diamonds only below FREE

Double ring only

Triple ring FREE hand stamp, with a diamond, LF 11, 1797 – 1799, morning duty



Ringwood h/s, HA 1102



Lieutenant Colonel, later Lieutenant General Sir John Hope, commander under Wellington in the Peninsular War.

The use of initials in these hand stamps was ended on 31st May 1797. The new design had a diameter of 32 mm with just one 'dot' between FREE and the diamond.

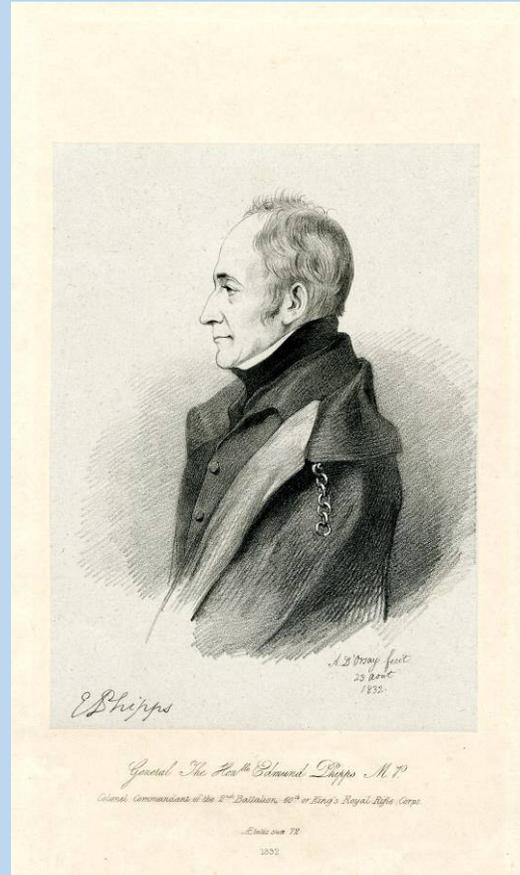
For the first time this single ring hand stamp indicated 'Morning Duty' with a double ring version, LF 11d, for evening duty.

Triple ring FREE hand stamp, with a diamond, LF 11, 1797 - 1799

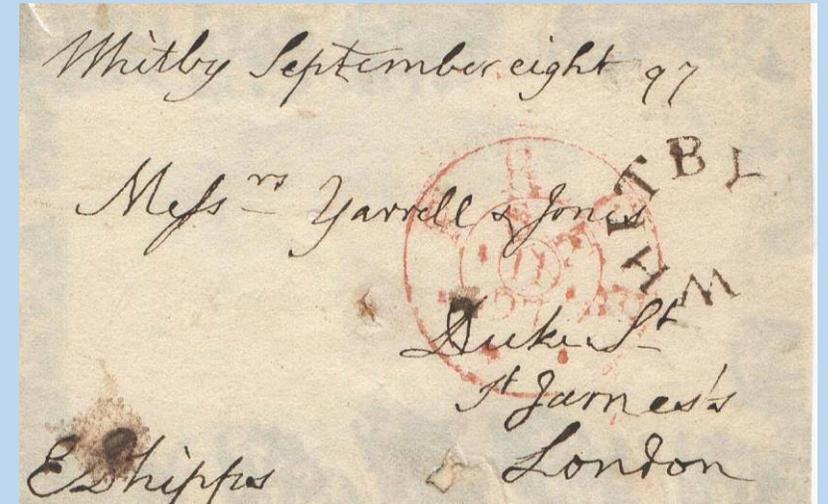


The Honourable Edmund Phipps was born in Mulgrave Castle, near Whitby in 1760. He was MP for Scarborough from 1794 -1818, and again from 1820-1832.

He had a distinguished military career during this time being a.d.c to the Governor of Gibraltar, a.d.c. to the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland and promoted to full General in 1819.



General Sir Edmund Phipps

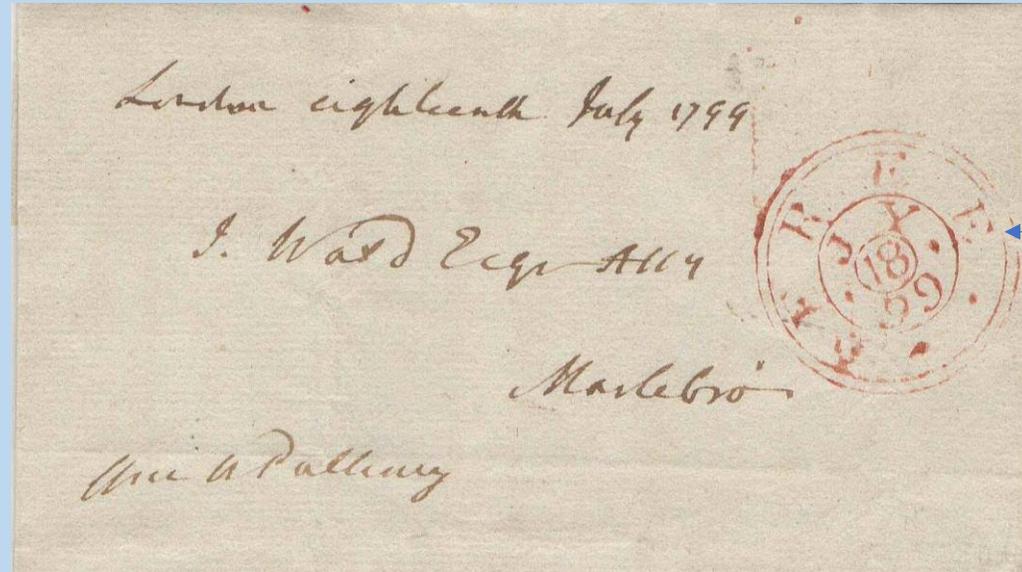


The **FREE** lettering is **more widely spaced** on this hand stamp, and is seen here combined with a Whitby horseshoe mark, YK 3167

Triple ring FREE hand stamp, with a diamond, 1797 – 1799, LF 11d evening duty



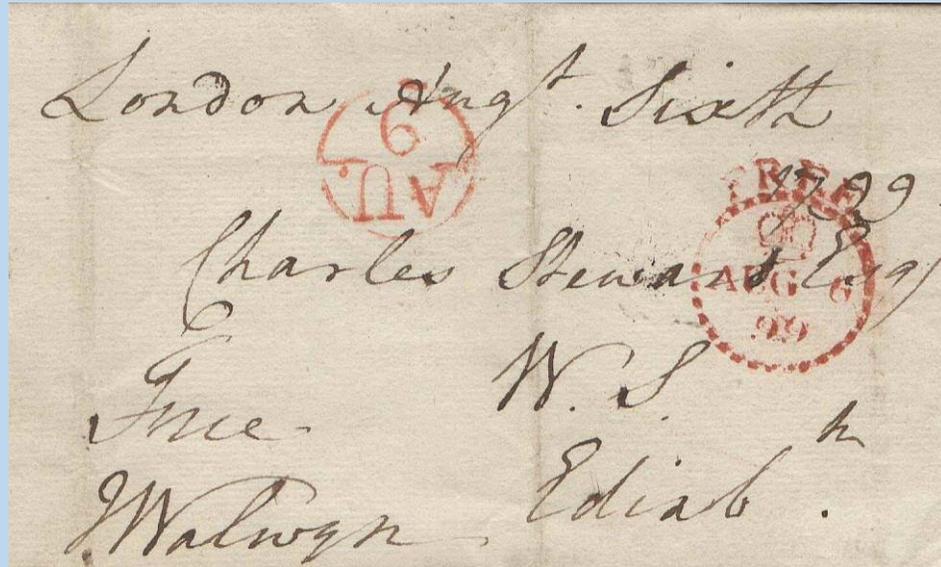
The Mayfair, double frame, mixed case hand stamp on the reverse of the letter is NOT listed in the County Catalogues (1983), though is probably recorded by now.



Double outer ring for evening duty

Sent from London to Marlborough on 18th July 1799, this is a late use (LKD 22/7/99) of this hand stamp.

Experimental dotted circle hand stamp, LF 13, 1799



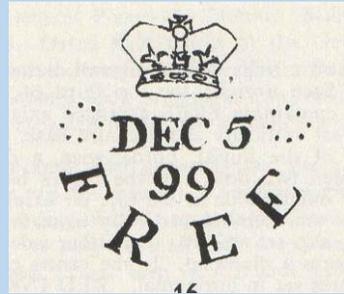
Free LF 12

In 1799 three 'experimental hand stamps were tried out. The first, LF 12 is only known used for two days, 23rd and 24th July.

The second, shown above, is recorded in use for 3 months from 24th July.

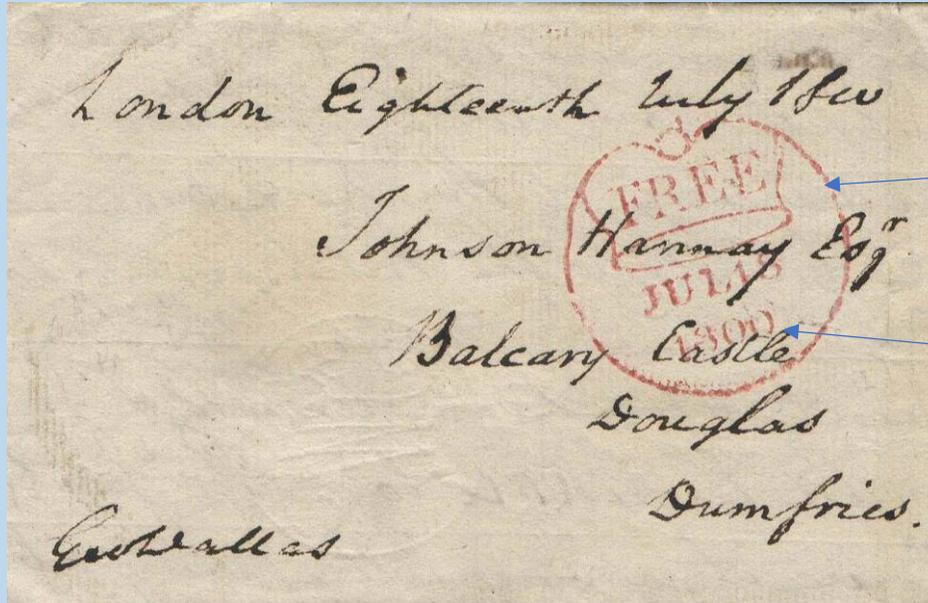
The 24 mm circle is pierced with holes, while the crown is simpler in design than that in LF 12.

Experimental crown, date, FREE hand stamp, LF 14, 1799



Introduced later, on 15th October, this third experimental hand stamp was in use until 31st December. The design, without a supporting circle, had a 'diameter' of 34 mm.

Experimental 'Apple' Free hand stamp, LF 15, 1800



Diameter 38 mm, FREE letters average 5.4 mm high, length 20 mm.

Small numerals

At the beginning of 1800 a new design of Free hand stamp was issued consisting of a circle indented at the top with a 'monde', or orb (monde) atop a simple crown.

This h/s lasted until late July, when a second trial hand stamp was issued.

Experimental 'Apple' Free hand stamp, LF 16, 1800

1/2 and 7d
postage charges
crossed out.



Edinburgh 'Bishop'
mark



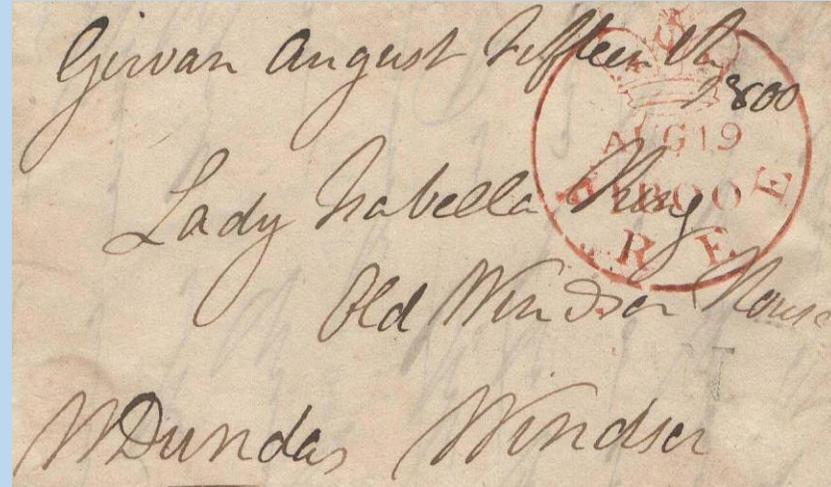
This **second** experimental design was issued at the end of July and discontinued at the end of December. It features a smaller, more complex crown and is the only 'Apple' mark where the 'FREE' is **NOT** within the crown.

The **dot** in the date is only seen up to the 9th of the month

Experimental 'Apple' FREE, LF 16, 1800



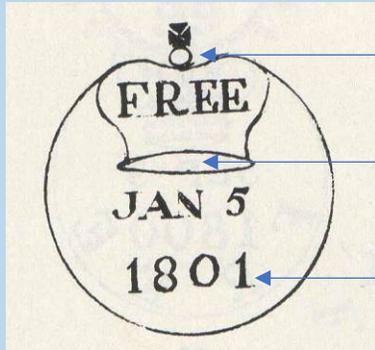
William Dundas, 1762 -1845



A second example of this FREE hand stamp, sent by William Dundas, MP, who over a period of 37 years represented 5 different constituencies while holding sinecures enabling him to receive annual payments, averaging over £2000 pa, and up to £7000 in one year – for doing NOTHING!

Features of the Apple FREE hand stamps, LF 17 & LF 18, 1801 - 1807

LF 17



Monde (orb) – diameter range 2 – 3.5 mm

Head circle – width range 18 – 24 mm, height varies too

Year date – larger - width 16 – 21 mm, height 4 – 5.8 mm

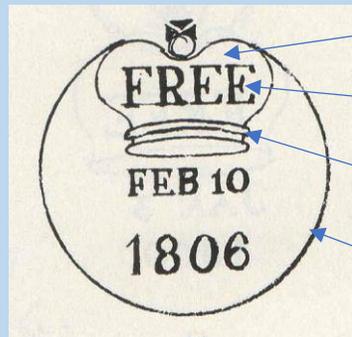
Crown – width 21.5 – 28 mm

FREE – length range 16 – 21 mm, height 4 – 5.8 mm

Extra circle on crown

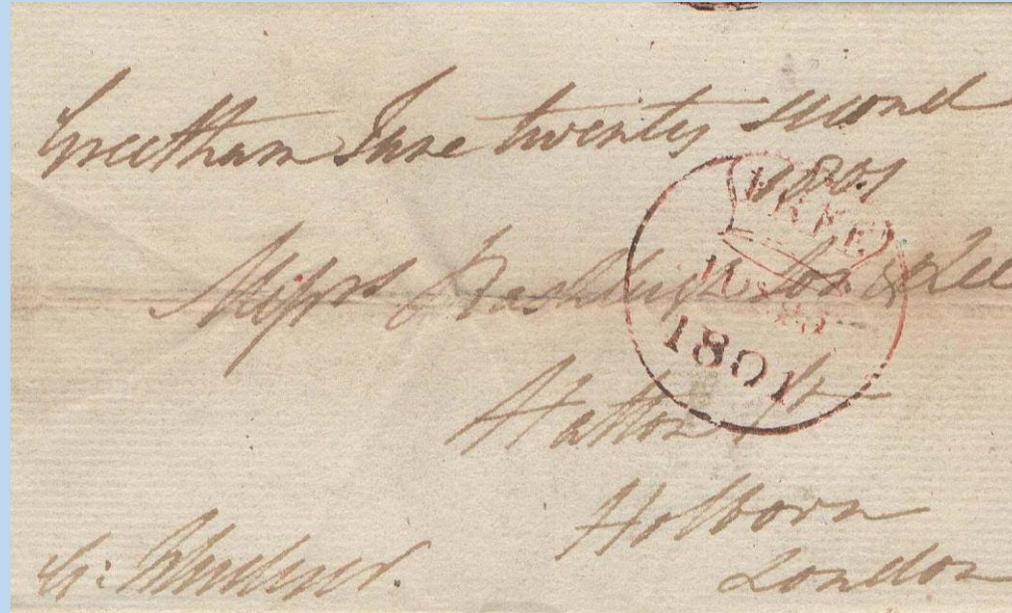
Circle – fairly consistent diameter - 38 mm; occasional flattening or buckling

LF 18



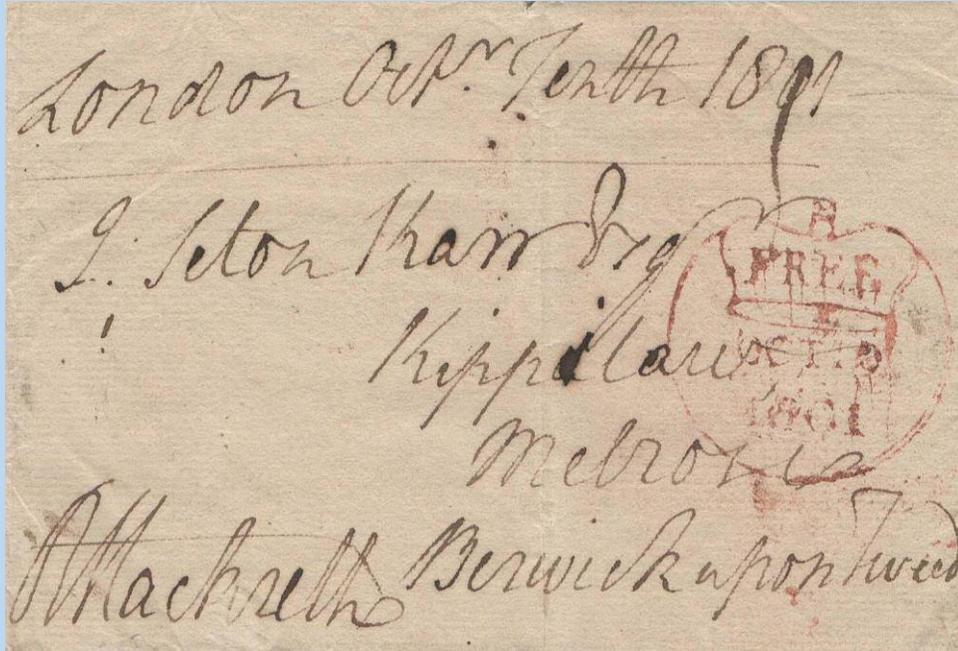
This group of hand stamps features a smaller crown than previously used and in 1806 a revised design was introduced featuring an extra circle or ring around the lower part of the design (LF 18).

Apple FREE hand stamp, LF 17, 1801 - 1807



An 1801 letter from Greetham, in Rutland, to a hat maker in Holborn, not quite on constituency business!

Apple FREE hand stamp, 1801, LF 17, Robert Mackreth MP



Ewhurst Park House , Ramsdell, Hampshire

Robert Mackreth started out as a waiter and billiard marker at Arthur's Coffee House; he became its manager, he then married the owner's daughter, she being an heiress.

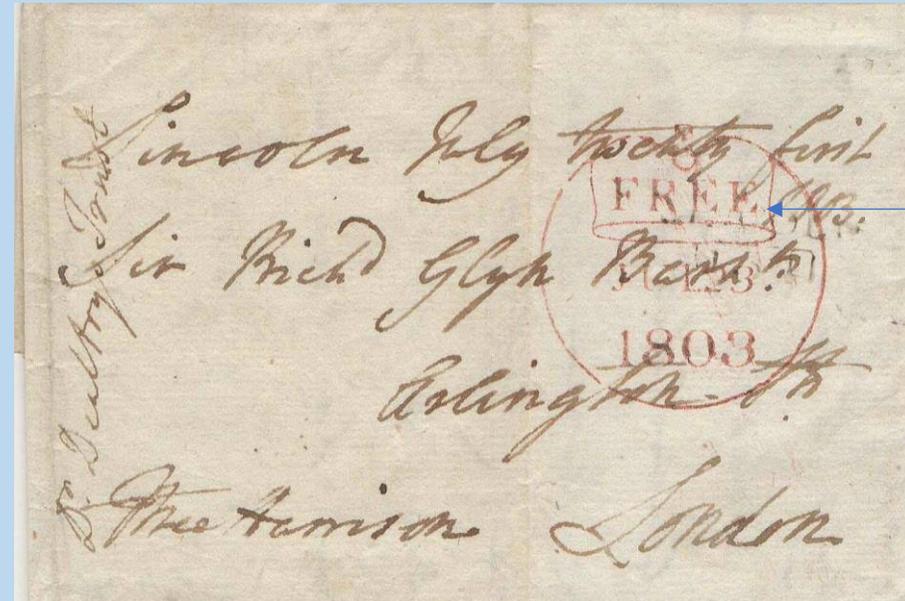
From 1772 to 1774 he was MP for Castle Rising, a rotten borough 4 miles from King's Lynn and probably never visited the village..

He lived at Ewhurst Park north of Basingstoke.

Apple Free hand stamp, LF 17, 1803



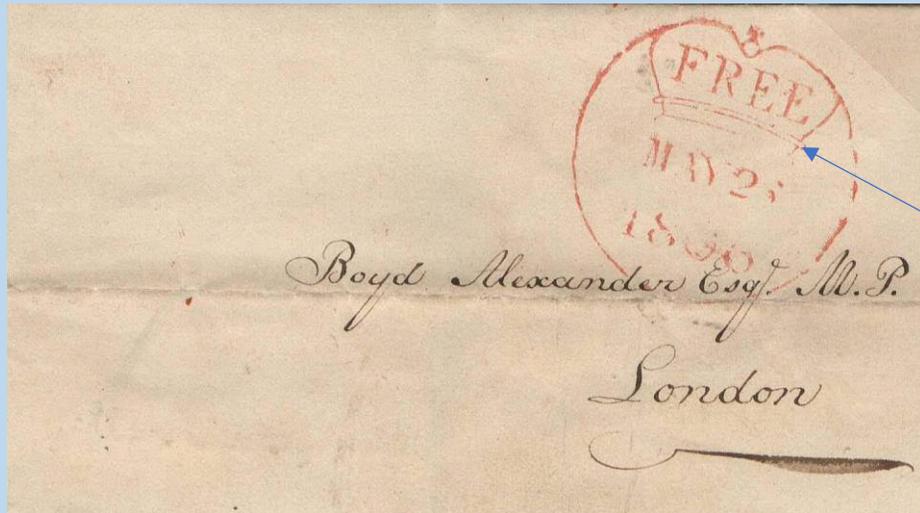
Sir Richard Glynn Bt.



The crown has **straighter sides** on this letter sent from Lincoln in 1803

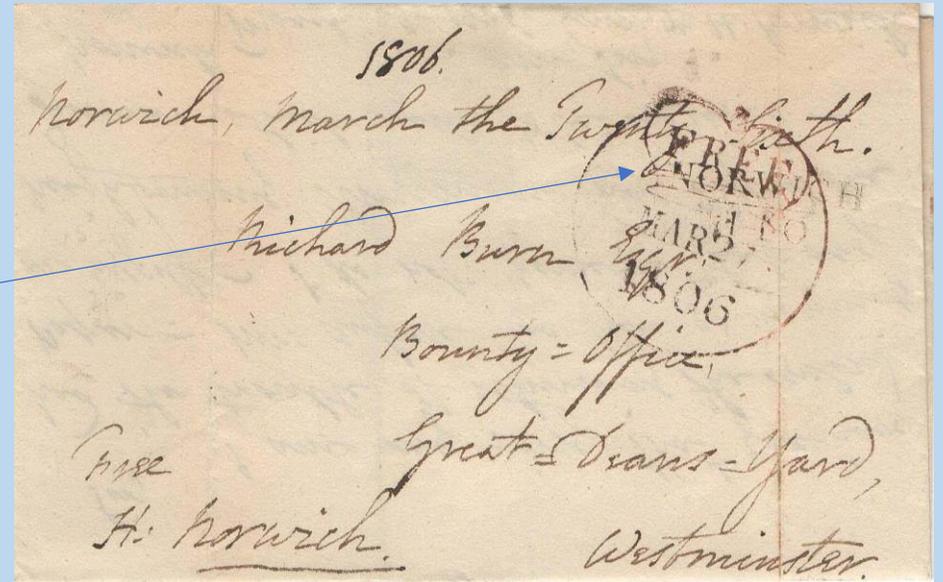
Sir Richard Glynn, Bt., 1755 – 1838, was a prominent banker and politician, and Sheriff of London, and later its Mayor.

Apple Free hand stamp, LF 18, 1806



Boyd Alexander Esq. M.P.
London

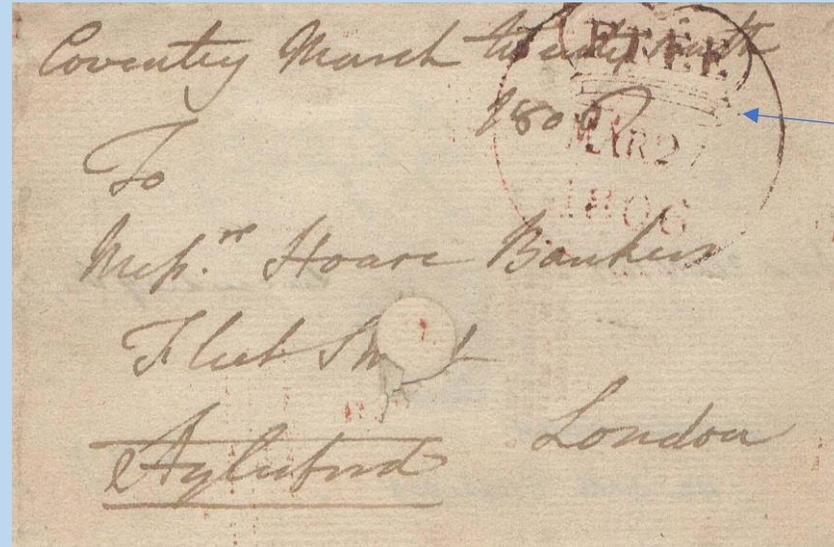
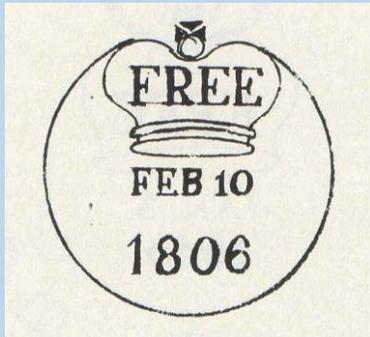
Extra
ring



Sent to the Queen Anne's Bounty Office by
Henry Bathurst, Bishop of Norwich

Sent within London, this letter features
the extra ring towards the bottom of the
crown in a strike of LF 18

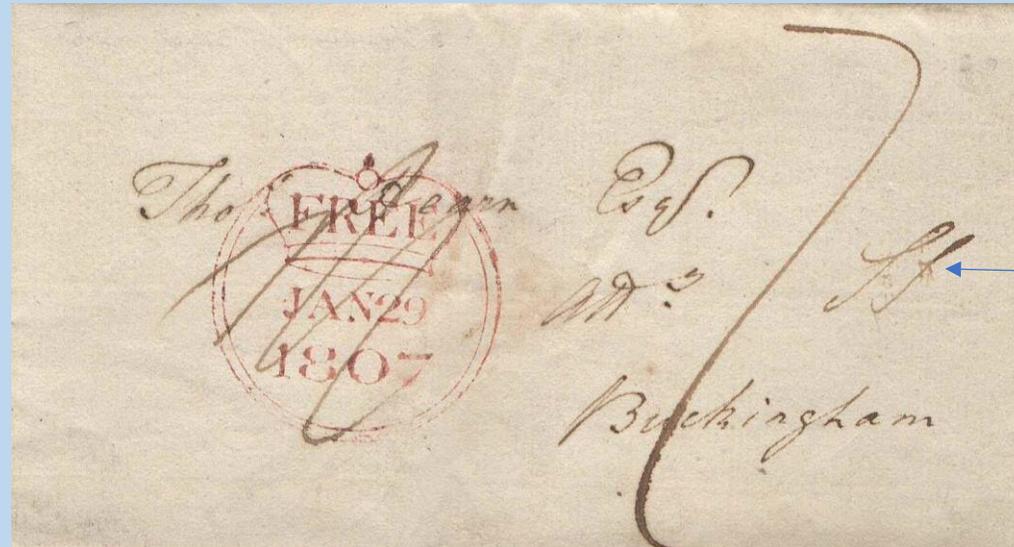
Apple Free hand stamp, LF 18, 1806



Extra ring

Heneage Finch (1751 – 1812) was styled as Lord Guernsey from birth, sat as MP of Castle Rising, 1772 – 1774, became a member of the House of Lords in 1777 when he followed his father, taking the title of 4th Earl of Aylesford. He held several senior positions in the Royal Household.

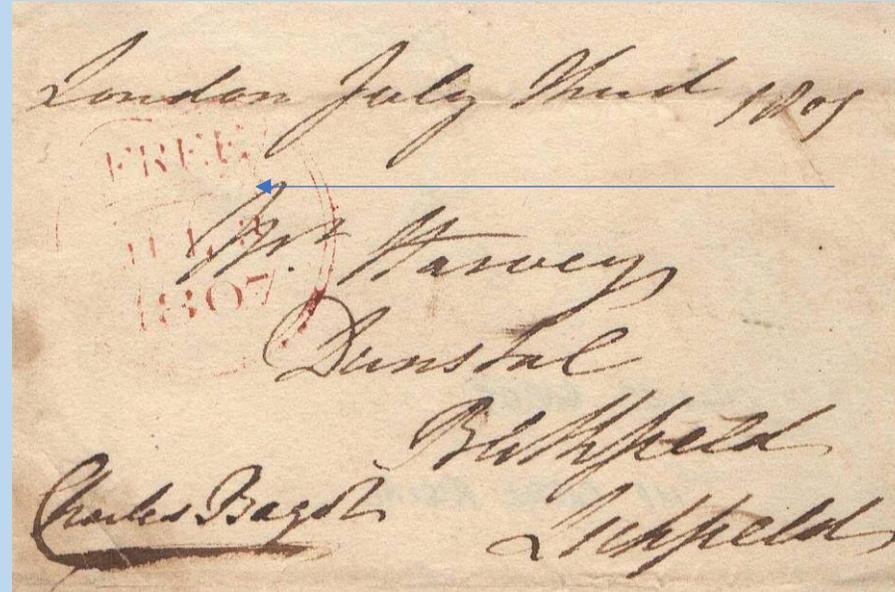
Apple Free hand stamp, LF 19d, evening duty, refused



Postal clerk's initials
confirming postage.
(SS)

A failed FREE entire sent from the House of Commons on 29th January to Buckingham and refused as there was no information regarding the post town, date or signature. It was therefore charged 7d, the rate for 50 – 80 miles under the 1805 postal rates.

Apple Free hand stamp, LF 19d, evening duty, 1807,



The base of the crown has a definite **head band** at its base.

This h/s was issued in June 1806 and is recorded in use until 3rd July, so this is a **last day usage**.

Charles Bagot (1781 – 1843) was MP for Castle Rising (1807 – 1808) and used this time as a stepping stone to a great political and diplomatic career. He was the son of William Bagot, 1st Baron Bagot and was educated at Rugby School and Christ Church Oxford.

This letter was sent from London to Blithfield , near Lichfield, his family home being Blithfield Hall.

Thank you for watching

What comes next?



Morning duty



Evening duty



Additional morning duty

The crown/Free hand stamps