

Nineteenth Century Maritime Mails to and from West Africa

- Ship Letters
- Early Packets – Royal Navy (1847 - 1850)
- General Screw Steam Shipping Company (1850 - 1852)
- African Steam Ship Company and British and African Steam Navigation Company (Elder Dempster) (from 1852 / 1868)
- Other Packets
- Missent Mail

Packet Rates for Half Ounce Letter to UK

- 1847 to 1855 1/- (NB Ship Letter 8d)
- 1855 to 1879 6d
- 1879 to 1891 4d
- 1891 to 1898 2½d
- 1898 to 1918 1d

Ship Letter (London), rated at 8d

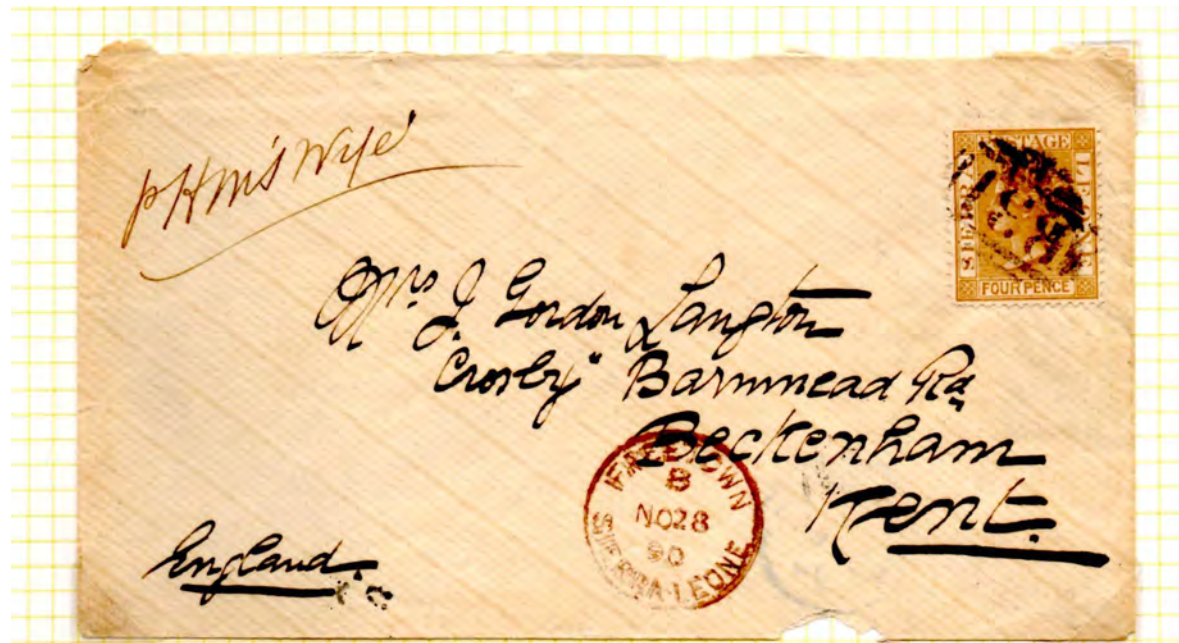


1851. Cover sent on 6 September from Sierra Leone to the United Kingdom. Postage of 8d for a letter of not more than half an ounce is shown by the manuscript '8'.

Postage would have been 1/- if sent by Packet.

The item arrived at London where a mark reading 'SHIP LETTER' was struck in red. On the reverse a datestamp for 20 October was applied. The 44 day voyage was around twice the length of time for a typical Packet in 1851.

1890. item at 4d rate carried by Royal Navy vessel



1890. Cover franked at Freetown on 28 November and sent to England at the 4d rate. On the back there is a Beckenham postmark for 13 December.

The item was carried on HMS 'Wye', a Royal Navy storeship of 1370 tons, launched in 1873. She was taken out of service in 1906 and scrapped in Dunkerque, France.

Royal Navy Packets

- Three of the Royal Navy ships which carried packet mail in the 1840's and 1850's



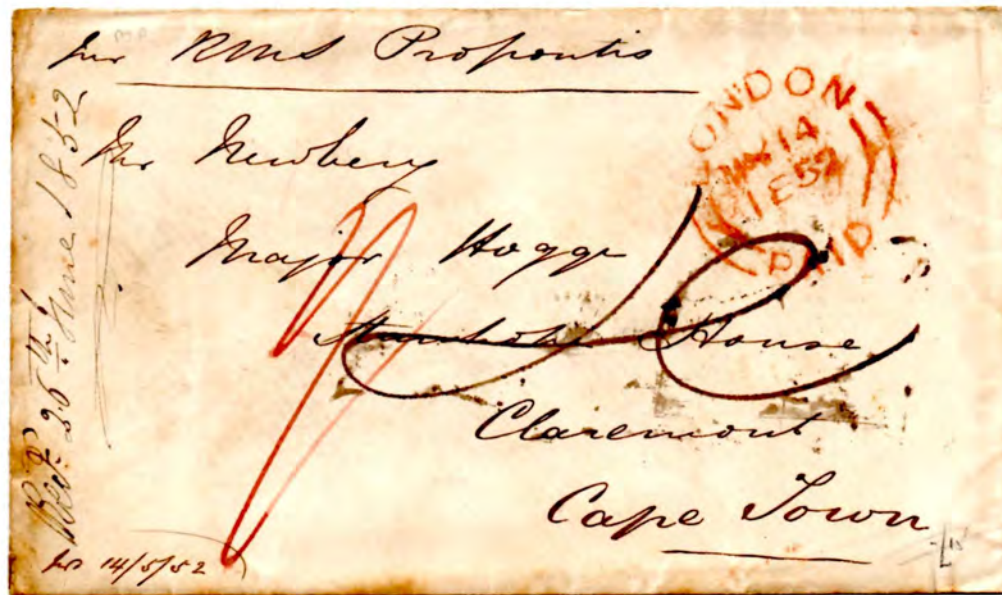
Private Schooner

- Early packet mail in 1850. As Royal Navy ship had not called at Freetown for some time authority was given for *Copy* to assume the status of Packet vessel. Postage 1/-, lasted until 1855.

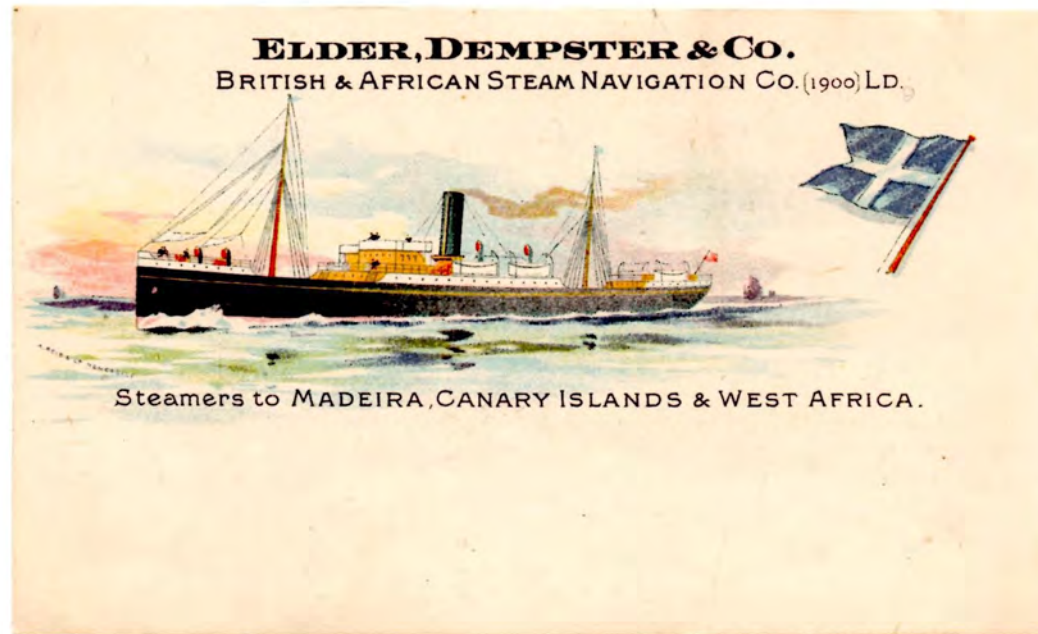


General Screw Steam Shipping Company

1852. Item carried by SS *Propontis*. Postage 1/- for the first half ounce. Though the ship called at Freetown, the item was destined for South Africa.



Publicity Postcard issued for Elder Dempster c1900

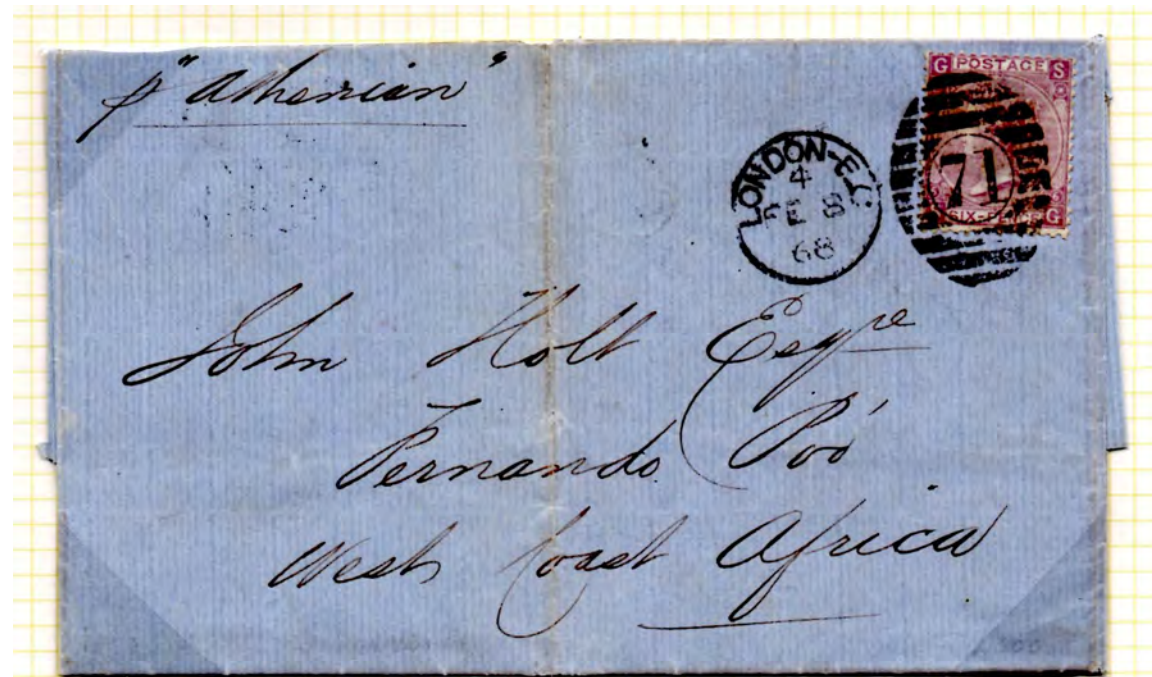


1859 London to 'West Coast of Africa' via Liverpool, 6d Packet mail



1859. Cover sent from London to Henry Martin RN on board HMS 'Spitfire' 'on the West Coast of Africa'. He was Acting Mate on the ship, second in command to the Lieutenant and Commander C O D Allingham.

1868. African Steam Ship Company to Fernando Po



Wrapper sent from London to Fernando Po and carried by SS Athenian on her first voyage in 1868. The 6d postage was the rate to west Africa for a letter not exceeding half of an ounce.

1873. African Steam Ship Company

- 6d postage, introduced in 1855. Accountancy mark '5' shows 5d due to UK, who provided the packet.



African Steam Ship Company

- 1893. ½d provisional overprint, strip of five paying 2½d rate, carried to UK on SS *Benin*. Stamps issued to cover shortage of ½d stamps for printed papers rate.



British and African Steam Navigation Company

- 1888. Sierra Leone to UK, carried by B&A vessel, SS *Opobo*. The addressee was President of RPSL 1929 to 1931 (when he died). 4d postage for first half once, prevailed 1879 to 1890.



British and African Steam Navigation Company

- Registered mail carried by SS *Volta* of the British and African Steam Navigation Company. 2½d postage plus 2d registration.



British and African Steam Navigation Company



1898. Registered cover sent from Sierra Leone to London. The postage rate was $2\frac{1}{2}$ d for a letter not exceeding half an ounce and registration was 2d, total $4\frac{1}{2}$ d. The item was carried on SS Accra to Liverpool where a registered datestamp for 31 January was applied, 14 days after leaving Freetown. It arrived in London later that day.

British and African Steam Navigation Company

- Internal mail. Liverpool to West Africa. Item put on SS *Lagos* at Freetown, landed at Sherbro. 6d for heavy packet, five to six ounces.



Other Shipping Line - French

- No Elder Dempster ship due at Freetown. Mail taken by French ship *Stamboul* to Marseilles, then overland and across the Channel. Saved seven days in transit.



Other Shipping Line - German

- The Woermann Line of Hamburg was an important operator in the West Africa trade. This postcard was sent from Togo, a German territory, to Hamburg



Missent to Sierra Leone

- 1890. Conakry to Germany per Woermann ship. Instead went to Freetown where franked with 'Missent' mark.



Other Shipping Line - Belgian

- Compagnie Maritime Belge du Congo, operated from Antwerp as far as Belgian Congo. This Printed Paper item was taken to Belgium *en route* to Switzerland



REFERENCE

- British and West African Mail Packets to 1900
 - Rates, Routes and Ships Out and Home
 - Colin Tabeart

Thank You