

Irish Railway Express Letter Stamps

SUPPLEMENT No. 23

ÉIRE PHILATELIC ASSOCIATION

August, 1965



The first adhesive postage stamps issued officially in Ireland were the so-called "Railway Letter Fee Stamps." They have not been accorded the importance and dignity they deserve. Popular when first issued, they were soon relegated to the status of "Locals" and except for a few philatelic magazine articles some years ago, they are relatively unknown.

Prior to 1891, the railways of the United Kingdom were not authorized to carry letters for the public except as part of the regular mails carried by contract with the postal authorities. Thus when the regular mails closed, it was impossible to get a letter transported to another location. The railroads could carry parcels by the regulations and often an enterprising Irishman would send a letter as a parcel by the simple expedient of wrapping a string around the envelope.

Whether it was the desire of the Postmaster General to legalize this subterfuge or to provide prompter mail service is uncertain but in any event, he authorized such railway companies as desired to accept letters for transmission outside of the regular mails under certain regulations.

Originally, the letter could not be more than 1 ounce (raised later to 4 ounces) and must bear a 1d postage stamp. To this, upon payment of 2d additional, the letter might be carried by the railway to any station on the line there to be posted in the nearest post office box for local delivery. If the sender wished, he might write "Hold until called for" at the station. In this respect, they might be considered "locals" but actually they might be carried on by other companies in agreement with the initial railway so that they were somewhat more than mere "locals".

The regulations, sometimes breached, required that the 2d additional fee be evidenced by an adhesive stamp of the value of 2d and green in color and of an approved design. Each railway could issue its own stamps and collect the fee.

Although the Irish companies generally followed the instructions, there were some exceptions. A few companies used colors other than the authorized green. The Londonderry and Lough Swilly Railroad issued a 1d stamp in the mistaken impression that the 2d was a maximum fee. These had to be used in pairs, after the Postmaster General complained. The railway then came out with a 2d stamp which while correct in amount showed the Arms of Londonderry in the design and in rose color in addition.

Railway Company	Year	Value	Printer	Color	Perf.	# of Issues	Remarks
BALLYCASTLE RAILWAY	1891	2d	A	Green	11	16	[a] [b]
	1904	2d	A	Blue	11	2	[b]
BELFAST AND COUNTY DOWN RAILWAY	1891	2d	A	Green	11	19	[b]
	1920	3d	A	Green	11	1	
BELFAST AND NORTHERN COUNTIES RAILWAY [c]	1891	2d	A	Green	11	34	[b]
		2d	A	Olive	11		[b]
		2d	A	Grey	11		[b]
		2d	A	Yellow	11		[b]
CASTLEDERG & VICTORIA BRIDGE TRAMWAY COMPANY	1897	2d	B	Green	12 1/2	1	
	1897	2d	B	Pale Green	10		
	1920	2d	B	Green	12 1/2		3d [d]
	1920	2d	B	Green	12 1/2		4d [d]
	1920	2d	B	Green	12 1/2		4d [e]
CAVAN, LEITRIM AND ROS-COMMON LIGHT RAILWAY[f]	1891	2d	B	Green	10	1	[Forgeries known].
CAVAN & LEITRIM RAILWAY	1901	2d	B	Carmin	11	2	
	1910	2d	B	Carmin	11		[g]
	1920	3d	B	Carmin	11	1	
	1920	4d	B	Carmin	11	1	
CLOGHER VALLEY TRAMWAY CO. LTD. [h]	1891	2d	B	Yellow green	11		
CLOGHER VALLEY RAILWAY CO. LTD.	1898	2d	B	Dark green	10	1	
		2d	D	Blue green	11	1	Thinner"2"
	1920	2d	D	Blue green	11		3d [d]
CORK AND MACROOM DIRECT RAILWAY	1895	2d	E	Blue	12	1	[i]Type 1
	1898	2d	E	Green	12	3	[i]Type 2
	1900	2d	E	Green	12		[i]Type 3
		2d	E	Green	11		Retouched
CORK, BANDON AND SOUTH COAST RAILWAY	1891	2d	E	Yellow green	12	12	No control
	1891	2d	E	Yellow green	12		Control 195
	1893	2d	E	Green	12		No.195 [j]
	1896	2d	E	Green	12		Control 92
	1899	2d	E	Green	12		Control F92
CORK, BLACKROCK & PASSAGE RAILWAY	1892	2d	E	Dark green	12	5	[k]Type 1
	1898	2d	E	Blue green	12		[k]Type 2
	1904	2d	E	Dark green	12		[k]Type 3
	1920	2d	E	Dark green	12		3d [d]
	1920	2d	E	Dark green	12		4d [d]
	1920	4d	E	Dark green	12		[m]
FINN VALLEY RAILWAY COMPANY [n]	1891	2d	B	Yellow green	11		
	1897						[o][Reprints]
DONEGAL RAILWAY COMPANY [p]	1895	2d	F	Green	Roul.	2	
	1898	2d	G	Olive green	12	1	
	1900	2d	D	Gray green	11	2	
COUNTY DONEGAL RAILWAYS JOINT COMMITTEE [q]		2d	D	Gray green	11	1	
THE DOUNTY DONEGAL RAILWAYS JOINT COMMITTEE		2d	D	Green	11	1	
	1920	3d	D	Green	11		[r]
	1920	4d	D	Green	11		[r]
DUBLIN, WICKLOW & WEXFORD RAILWAY [s]	1891	2d	C	Green	10	1	
	1899	2d	C	Green	12	1	
	1905	2d	C	Green	11	1	

Railway Company	Year	Value	Printer	Color	Perf.	#of Issues	Remarks
DUBLIN & SOUTH EASTERN RAILWAY	1911	2d	C	Green	10	6	
	1911	2d	C	Blue green	11		
	1920	3d	C	Blue green	11		3d [t]
	1920	4d	C	Blue green	11		4d [u]
	1920	4d	C	Bright green	11		
DUNDALK, NEWRY & GREENORE RAILWAY	1891	2d	F	Green	roul.	4	
GREAT NORTHERN RAILWAY COMPANY	1891	2d	B	Green	11	16	
	1899	2d	H	Green	11		[Different details].
	1920	3d	H	Green	11		3d [v]
GREAT SOUTHERN AND WESTERN RAILWAY	1891	2d	B	Green	11	19	
	1899	2d	D	Green	11,10	1	
	1920	2d	D	Green	11		3d [d]
	1920	2d	D	Green	11		4d [d]
KANTURK & NEWMARKET RAILWAY CO.	1891	2d	B	Dark green	10	1	[some forgeries]
	1897			Green			[reprints]
LONDONDERRY & LOUGH SWILLY RAILWAY COMPANY	1891	1d	J	Blue	12	1	
		2d	J	Green, red	imperf.		[Essays]
	1898	2d	B	Red	10		[Essays]
MIDLAND GREAT WESTERN RAILWAY	1891	2d	C	Green	10	1	
	1899	2d	C	Green, emerald	11	4	
MIDLAND RAILWAY NORTHERN COUNTIES COMMITTEE	1906	2d	A	Green	11	2	
	1920	2d	A	Green	11		3d [d]
	1920	3d	A	Green	11	1	
	1920	4d	A	Green	11	1	
SLIGO, LEITRIM AND NORTHERN COUNTIES RAILWAY	1891	2d	A	Green	11	8	
	1908	2d	A	Blue	11	1	
		2d	A	Scarlet	11	1	
		2d	A	Yellow	11	1	
TRALEE & DINGLE LIGHT RAILWAY & TRAMWAY CO.	1898	2d	B	Green	10	1	
	1908	2d	A	Green	11	1	
	1920	2d	B	Green	11		3d [d]
	1920	2d	B	Green	11		3d[handstamped]
	1920	2d	B	Green	11		4d[handstamped]
							[Fakes]
TRALEE AND FENIT RAILWAY							
WATERFORD & CENTRAL IRELAND RAILWAY [w]	1891	2d	K	Green	12	2	
	1898	2d	K	Brown, red	11	1	
WATERFORD AND LIMERICK RAILWAY [x]	1891	2d	K	Green	12	1	
	1894	2d	K	Green	11,12	2	
WATERFORD, LIMERICK & AND WESTERN RAILWAY [w]	1896	2d	K	Green, emerald	11	7	
WATERFORD AND TRAMORE RAILWAY	1891	2d	K	Dark green	12	1	
	1920	2d	K	Green	12		3d [d]
	1920	2d	K	Green	12		4d [d]
WATERFORD, DUNGARVAN & LISMORE [y]	1891	2d	K	Red	12	1	
	1898	2d	K	Rose	11	1	
WEST CLARE RAILWAY COMPANY	1891	2d	B	Green	11	1	
	1920	2d	B	Green	11		3d [d]

[a] Die I : Small t in name. Die II : Normal t in name.

[b] Also imperforates. [c] Acquired by the Midland Railway in 1906.

[d] New value written in manuscript on the old value stamp.

[e] 4d new value handstamped on the 2d. [f] Name changed to Cavan & Leitrim

(g) Thicker "2". No stop after Railway (h) Name changed to Clogher Valley Railway Co. Ltd. (i) Type 1 - Three horizontal lines at top and two at the bottom. Type 2 - Three horizontal lines at top and bottom. Type 3 - Two horizontal lines at top and three at the bottom. Also retouched. (j) No comma after "Bandon". (k) Type 1. Normal. Type 2- Longer bar under "D". Type 3- Thicker letters. Stop after "Railway" on seven stamps of the sheet. (m) 2d stamp overprinted 4d in black. (n) On October 18, 1892, this railway was amalgamated with the West Donegal Railway. (o) Reprints in 1897 in green and black (imperf.) bluish green(perf. 11) and emerald green (perf. 13). In 1898, an issue of Finn Valley and West Donegal Railways was printed. It is considered to be an unauthorized issue for collectors. (p) Title changed to the County Donegal Railways Joint Committee. (q) Name changed to The County Donegal Railways Joint Committee. (r) Overprinted "3" in violet on the 2d; overprinted "4" in violet on the 2d. (s) Name changed on January 1, 1907 to Dublin & South Eastern Railway. (t) Overprinted large "3" in red. (u) Overprinted "4" in black over the "3" in red on the 2d stamp. (v) Overprinted large "3" on the 2d stamp. (w) On July 1, 1900 this railroad was amalgamated with the Great Southern & Western. (x) the Waterford and Limerick was changed to the Waterford, Limerick & Western Railway; On January 1, 1901 this last company amalgamated with the Great Southern & Western. (y) In 1898 the Waterford, Dungarvan and Lismore was amalgamated with the Waterford, Limerick & Western.

PRINTERS

A- Messrs R. Carswell and Son, Engravers, Belfast. Printed in sheets of nine (three rows of three); also sheets of twelve for Belfast and County Down Ry and sheets of eighteen for the Midland Railway Northern Counties Committee and Sligo, Leitrim & Northern Counties Railway.

B- Messrs Sealy, Bryers and Walker, Dublin. Printed in sheets of twenty-four (four rows of six); also sheets of 48 (six rows of eight) for Clogher Valley Railway Co.Ltd. and Great Northern Railway Co. and in sheets of thirty for the Londonderry Arms issue in rose for the Londonderry and Lough Swilly Railway Company.

C- Messrs Browne and Nolan, Dublin. Printed in sheets of twenty-four (four rows of six); also sheets of sixty (six rows of ten) for the Dublin and South Eastern Railway and the Dublin, Wicklow and Wexford Railway and the Midland Great Western Railway.

D- Messrs Alex Thom & Co. Dublin. Printed in sheets of 42 (seven rows of six) for the Donegal Railway Co. and in sheets of 48 (six rows of eight) for Clogher Valley Railway Co.Ltd.

E- Messrs Purcell & Co. Cork. Printed in sheets of 8 (Cork and Macroom), 12, 24, 60 (Cork, Bandon and South Coast Railway) and 12 (Cork, Blackrock and Passage Railway.)

F- Messrs McCorquodale & Co. Ltd. London. Printed in sheets of 10 for Donegal Railway Co. and sheets of 20 for Dundalk, Newry and Greenore Railway. They also printed the un-issued Finn Valley and West Donegal Railway issue of 1898.

G- Messrs McCorquodale & Co. Ltd. Glasgow. Printed in sheets of 12 (three rows of three) perf. 12 for the Donegal Railway Company.

H- J. Falconer, Dublin. Printed in sheets of 48 (six rows of 8) for the Great Northern Railway Co.

J- James Calhoun, Londonderry. Printed in sheets of forty (five rows of eight) for the first issue of 1891 for the Londonderry and Lough Swilly Railway Company.

K- N. Harvey & Co., Waterford. Printed for the Waterford and Central Ireland. Waterford, Dungarvan, and Lismore. Waterford and Limerick. Waterford, Limerick, and Western. Waterford and Tramore.