

# ICELAND PHILATELIC MAGAZINE

An independent journal for collectors of Iceland stamps and postal history



## Leith Ship Letter

Copyright © Jakob. S. Arrevad 2023



EDITOR  
Brian Flack  
E-mail address  
flackbp@gmail.com

Special Issue August 2023

## **SPECIAL # 33– LEITH SHIP LETTER –V1 2023**

Compiler: Jakob S. Arre vad: [jsa@agadvokatfirma.dk](mailto:jsa@agadvokatfirma.dk)  
In collaboration with Ebbe Eldrup: [ebbe.eldrup@gmail.com](mailto:ebbe.eldrup@gmail.com)

**This is a part of a series, supplemented by recent discoveries, which summarizes information published over the years in IslandsKontakt and elsewhere<sup>1</sup>. We must all be grateful for the sustained efforts of all those who, over the years, as Editors or Authors have contributed to the gathering and dissemination of information relevant to the philately of Iceland.**

**This is a part of seven studies:**

<b>IslandsKontakt Special # 29 V1 2021</b>	<b>GRANTON SHIP LETTER</b>
<b>IslandsKontakt Special # 31 V1 TO COME</b>	<b>EDINBURGH LARGE SHIP LETTER</b>
<b>IslandsKontakt Special # 32 V1 TO COME</b>	<b>EDINBURGH SMALL SHIP LETTER</b>
<b>IslandsKontakt Special # 33 V1</b>	<b>LEITH SHIP LETTER</b>
<b>IslandsKontakt Special # 5 V1 2016</b>	<b>LEITH PAQUEBOT</b>
<b>IslandsKontakt Special # 3 V2 2018</b>	<b>EDINBURGH PAQUEBOT</b>
<b>IslandsKontakt Special # 37 V 1 2023</b>	<b>LONDON SHIP LETTER</b>

**Compilations of other British postmarks and other issues in the series “IslandsKontakt Special” can be accessed for free at <https://www.nfvskandinavie.com/artikelen-ijsland.php>**

### **1. HISTORY**

Robertson<sup>2</sup> writes about the post offices of Edinburgh and Leith:

“The use of maritime handstamps at **Edinburgh** and **Leith** is divided into three distinct periods”, and it might be almost correct when describing handstamps with the name of the town – except for the round Leith Ship Letter described here.

When it comes to the two octagonal SHIP LETTER handstamps it is not so clear – and it is further distracted by the use of GRANTON SHIP LETTER.<sup>3</sup>

For a period partly overlapping the LEITH SHIP LETTER (Robertson S.5) and after 1840, Leith used an oval ship letter, one with the crown (S.4 until 1844) and two without crown (S.6 and S.7 used up to 1858).

Thereafter is a gap until 1887<sup>4</sup> with the round LEITH SHIP LETTER. From 1858 until 1868 there are no stamps to fill the gap.

From 1868 until 1877 it might be filled in with the big octagonal SHIP LETTER, but again in 1878 and 1879 there are nothing to fill in. From 1880 until 1887 it might be the small octagonal SHIP LETTER – or the big one used again from 1885 until 1889.<sup>5</sup>

As examples prior to the round LEITH SHIP LETTER, here are letters from 1818 and 1829:

---

<sup>1</sup> See for example IslandsKontakt SPECIAL # 5, v.1, 2016 - Ship Letter/Paquebot Leith – Iceland. Original manuscript by Jakob S. Arre vad, Mike Tuttle and Ole Svinth.

<sup>2</sup> Robertson, Alan W.: “A History of the Ship Letters of the British Isles” Reprinted Edition Volume II E.76 and E.141

<sup>3</sup> See GRANGEMOUTH Islandskontakt Special # 27 v.1 2022. I deal with the other two cancellations in separate studies together with Ebbe Eldrup.

<sup>4</sup> First known use

<sup>5</sup> The present IslandsKontakt Special # 33 is a part of the SHIP LETTER study on mail from Iceland.



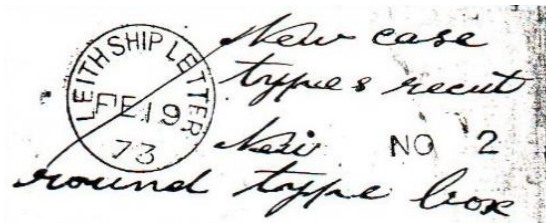
1818 Cover to Edinburgh "Pr Lincoln" showing a LEITH SHIP LETTER, charged 8d Ship Letter plus 1d Leith to Edinburgh, Robinson S 5 (indicated use 1817-1840).



1829 Folded entire LERWICK to EDINBURGH. Same framed LEITH SHIP LETTER in blue.; LEITH in blue and EDINBURGH in red single circles on reverse.

## 2. Round LEITH SHIP LETTER

The round LEITH SHIP LETTER is in our opinion used from 1887 until 1909 plus 1912, but it appears in the Kirkwood proof book I 1873:



The reason for not being used until 1887 is unknown. It is a long period.

Orla Nielsen indicates in IslandsKontakt # 80 the use from 1894 until 1909, but in the same issue, the editor shows the end use in 1912. Mackay "Scottish Postmarks" shows as # 1668 the stamp drawn with the date NO 4 1869, but writes in the text that the "ship letter" stamp was from 1875 but does not mention anything specific about Leith (page 124).

The use in 1868 must be a mistake. Robertson indicates the use to 1887-1903. Schilling writes 1889-1912 and shows a Brjefspjald with 10 aur from AU 7 1889 sent to Vienna. Mike Dovey & Keith Morris (# 315) say the use is from 1894-1908, but with the note: "Studd s. 12 first used in 1887"

And 1887 is – until now the right starting point:

**1887**



10 øre postcard from Norway to London cancelled LEITH SHIP LETTER JY 27 87.





Norwegian 10 øre card cancelled with 3-rings number "92" (Vosse-banen) transit cancellation LEITH SHIP LETTER AUG 24 87" sent to Ashfield, England.

1889 First LEITH SHIP LETTER – from Iceland

1889



Stationary sent from Akureyri 30 JY 1889. (date on the back) to Vienna with LEITH SHIP LETTER - AU 7 89. No postal handling in Iceland. The carrier from Akureyri is unknown – but it is not the official coastal ship SS Thyra or the mail steamer SS Laura.

Akureyri (Island) 30. Juli 89.  
 noerlicher Eimeer

---

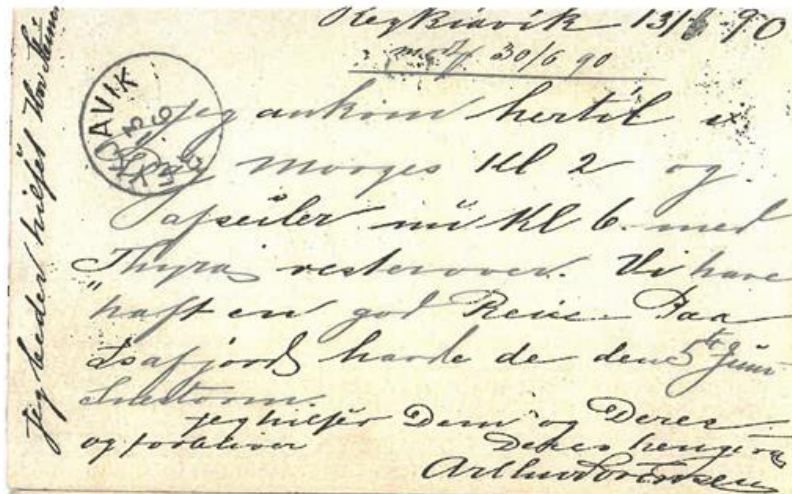
Mein lieber alter Freund!  
 Ich will mich entschließen, die  
 mit letzter Theile eines postlich  
 Brief zu senden. Was ich für dich für  
 gesch sehr v. die ganze Art zu sein  
 ich einzig in seiner Art v. noch ich  
 abzugeben noch niemande wieder  
 sehen. Wenn du mich wieder ein  
 mal in Briefen besuchst, so will  
 ich dir auf mein nächstem Tagebuch  
 die Hand selbst geschickter Briefe,  
 postlich und postlich bringen. Ich  
 sehr erwartungsvoll nicht nur  
 von dir gehört, sondern schriftlich  
 ab mir gelegentlich im September  
 einmale. Ich dir zu kommen bitte  
 bitte von einem alten Otto Lohscheim

1890  
6



<sup>6</sup> The period from 1890 until 1893 is also described in LONDON SHIP LETTER IslandsKontakt Special # 37 V1 2023





Stationary 8 aur with added 3 aur from Reykjavík 13 6 90 to Copenhagen. LEITH SHIP LETTER JU 27 90 and black – but unclear – LONDON SHIP LETTER. The text tells, that the sender arrived at Reykjavik 13 6 90 and the next day will continue with S/S THYRA, and THYRA left on the 13<sup>th</sup> west on a coastal trip. Written “received 30 06 90”. LAURA arrived in Reykjavik but left east and north and returned 26<sup>th</sup>. The newspaper Ísafold 21 6 90: “Magnetic , Slimon's steamer, left here the night of the 19th”. So, it was probably sent with S/S Magnetic, arrived in LEITH JU 27 and overland to Denmark arriving 30<sup>th</sup> June 1890. S/S Magnetic belonged to R.& D. Slimon, Leith and was not a “mail ship”.<sup>7</sup>

**1891**

Newspaper Ísafold 13 06 91: “Steamer Magnetic, Slimons, arrived here yesterday and leaving again tonight west of the country and north.”



Letter from Reykjavik 13.6.91 to Copenhagen with LEITH SHIP LETTER JU 22 91 and red SHIP LETTER LONDON JU 23 91, probably with SS Magnetic.

-o-o-

<sup>7</sup> See further in IslandsKontakt # 104.

“Steamer Magnetic, Slimons, arrived here Sunday evening 4th., and with her few foreign tourists, .... The ship left from here directly to Scotland last evening with over 400 horses,”  
 (Newspaper Ísafold 8.7.1891)



Reykjavík via LEITH SHIP LETTER JY 10 91 – red **LONDON SHIP LETTER** JY 11 91 - sent to Germany.  
 -o0o-

The next two were also with S/S Magnetic.



10 aur stationery card from Reykjavík 20.7.1891 per S/S Magnetic via England to Copenhagen. Two different ship cancels "LEITH SHIP LETTER JY 24 91" and in red **LONDON SHIP LETTER** JY 25 91. Arr. mark "K.OMK 1 27.7.91".

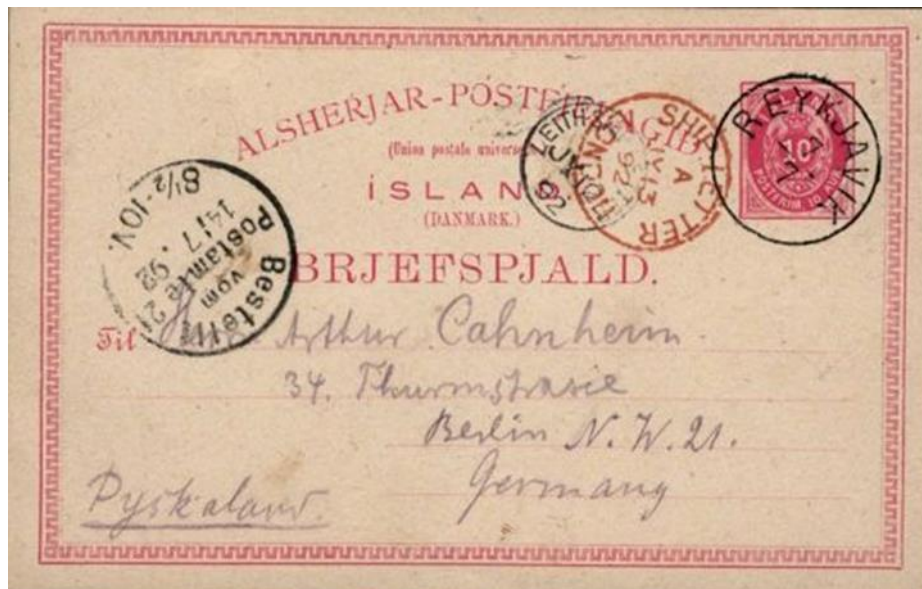




10 aur stationery card canc. REYKJAVÍK 20.7 sent to France via England with transit canc. LEITH SHIP LETTER JY 24 91, red **LONDON SHIP LETTER JY 25 91** and CALAIS 25 JUL 91 as well as arrival canc. TOURS INDRE ET LOIRE 26 JUL 91.

### 1892

Ísafold, 6 7 92: "The steamship Stamford, partly the property of Mr. L. Zöllners in Newcastle, came here this morning from the north and the west. Had left England 23. last month, with calls at Seyðisfjörður, Vopnafjörður, Húsavík, Akureyri, Hofsós and Sauðárkrók. Took some fish to the east. Here it takes horses. Going directly to England the next evening. Mr. Zöllner himself is with the ship."



Stationery from Reykjavík 7 7 92 to Germany. LEITH SHIP LETTER JY 19 92 and red **LONDON SHIP LETTER JY 13 92**.

1893



SHIP LETTER from THORSHAVN 4.2, franked with a Danish 20 øre, arms. Directed "Pr. Føringur, via Leith". LEITH SHIP LETTER, MR 1 93, sent to Denmark.



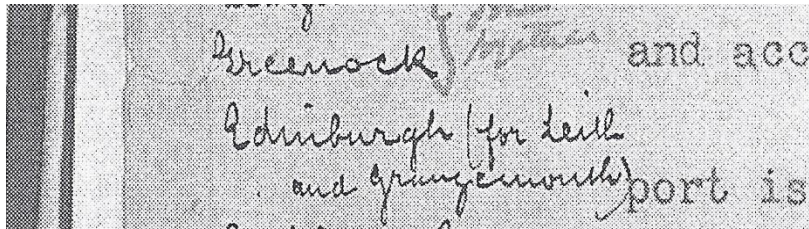
COMMERCIAL STREET LEITH on a letter from UK with UK stamps and addressed to Denmark<sup>8</sup>:

<sup>8</sup> We include it as the cancellation in Leith is round!



1894

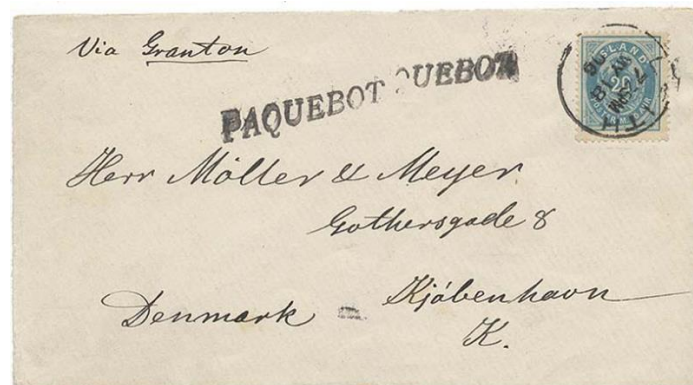
The omnibus paquebot was sent via Edinburgh to Leith on January 9<sup>th</sup>, 1894.



It looks like it was not delivered until 1896 – at least we have seen two examples from 1895, where it is used in Edinburgh: **FE 11 1895**:



PAQUEBOT was not used on the following cards from 1894, 1895 and beginning of 1896 – apparently, in Leith they were satisfied with SHIP LETTER LEITH. The first use of PAQUEBOT in Leith is on a letter cancelled 18 MY 1896 and it is cancelled with a Leith Town cancellation. Hosking 2nd edition # 7 and Dovey/Morris # 22 both have a period of use from 1896.



We have only seen two examples of LEITH SHIP LETTER and PAQUEBOT – see below JY 22 97 and DE 15 97.

<sup>9</sup> See GRANTON SHIP LETTER IslandsKontakt Special # 29 v. 2021





Stykkishólur (Island) 5. 8. 1894.  
 Dear Mr. Pleyru.

You will, I am sure, be astonished on receiving this card - Instead of going, this year, to the west coast of Norway, as I intended to, I sailed to Iceland, where I am since a few weeks, and will remain here during the month of August.

The country is the most splendid and most wonderful I ever saw, and I do not regret for the moment my old Europe.

Most sincerely yours  
 Mauritz Sørensen.

5 aur stationery card written in Stykkishólmur 05 08 94 and sent from Reykjavík 13 08 94 to Norway. Transit cancelled with round LEITH SHIP LETTER AU 18 94 and arrival cancelled KRISTIANIA 22 08 94. (The stamp does not belong to the card it has been affixed instead of another stamp that has been removed.)



Same transport – here to Belgium

The transport from Reykjavík with cards cancelled 13 AU 94, might be with SS STAMFORD belonging to L. Zöllner the Danish businessman living at that time in Newcastle

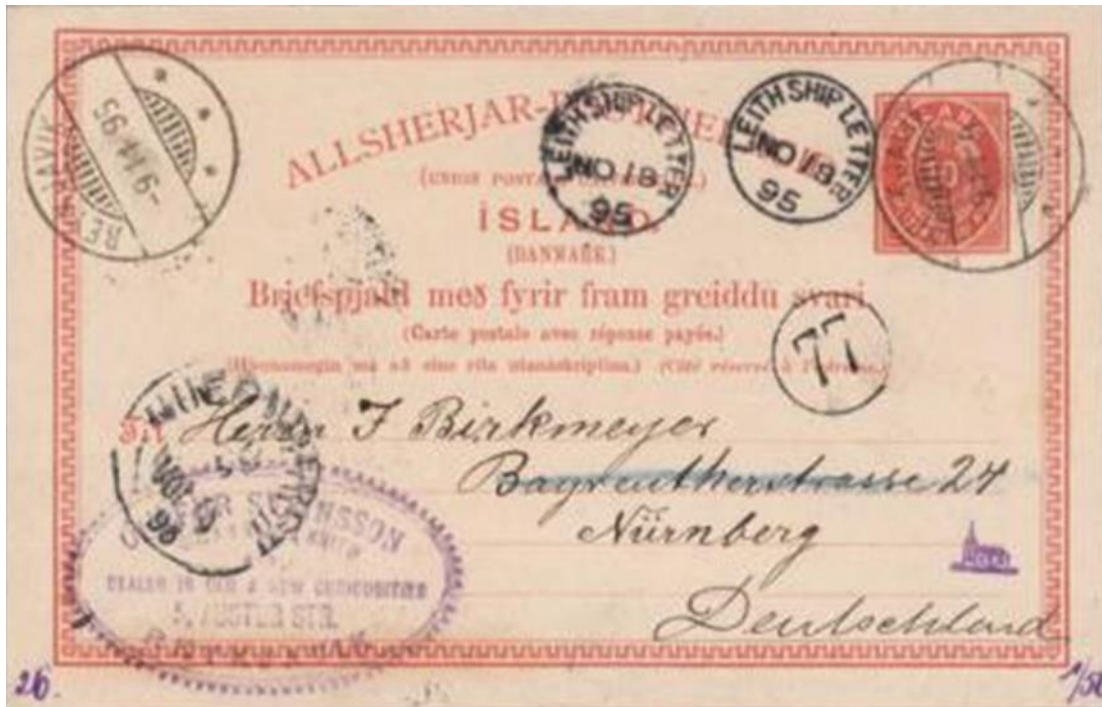


10 aur red, perf. 14 on ship letter from “REYKJAVÍK 8.10.94” to. Copenhagen. Transit mark “LEITH SHIP LETTER ? OC 94”, “pr. Princess Alexandra”.

Ísafold - 08. October 1894: “Steamship "Laura" can barely get out today because of bad weather, and »Princess Alexandra« did not succeed in reaching the island. Neither will leave until the latter part of the day tomorrow.”



1895



Post card REYKJAVÍK 9.11.95, LEITH SHIP LETTER 18.11.1895 to Nürnberg Germany.

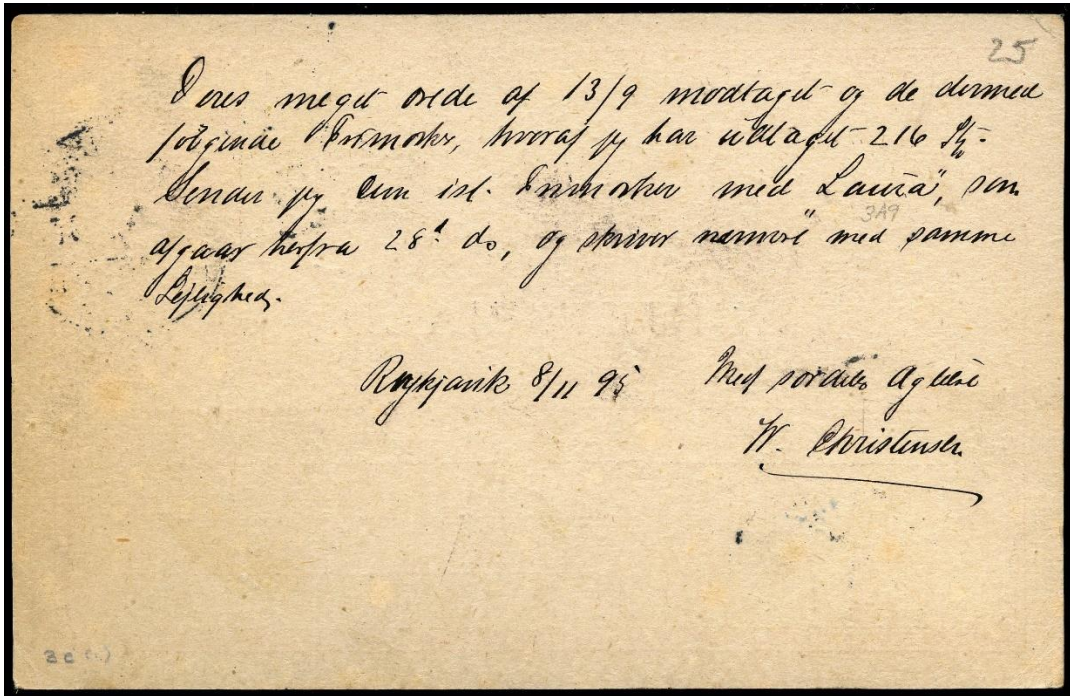


Post card REYKJAVIK 10.11.95, LEITH SHIP LETTER 18.11.1895 to Denmark. 20.11.95.





20 aur greenish blue of printing III of 1891 on cover sent to Denmark via Scotland canc. "REYKJAVÍK 12.11.95". Transit canc. "LEITH SHIP LETTER NO 18 95" and arrival canc. "KJØBENHAVN 21.11.95".





Reykjavík 19.12.1895 (Must be a mistake – see the following), LEITH SHIP LETTER DE 18 95 to Copenhagen Denmark.



Pair of 10 aur red carmine canc. "REYKJAVÍK 9.12.95" on cover sent to Denmark. Endorsed "Via Scotland" and with "LEITH SHIP LETTER DE 18 95".



1896



MR 26 96  
And the same day:



3 aur brown orange 5th printing, perf 14 as additional franking on 8 aur stationary card sent from ÍSAFJÖRÐUR 17.3 via ÖNUNÐARFJÖRÐUR and LEITH to COPENHAGEN arr. 29. 3 96. LEITH SHIP LETTER, MR 26 96.

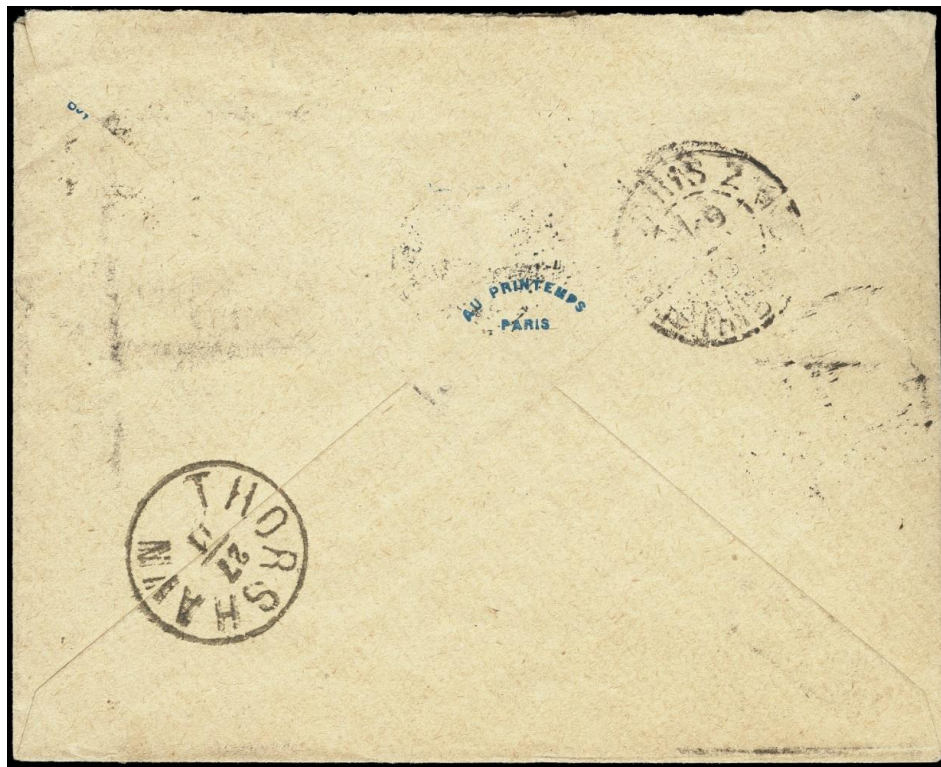


Two Stationary cards from the same day to the same recipient



Stationary from Reykjavik 3 6 86 – LEITH SHIP LETTER JU 19 96

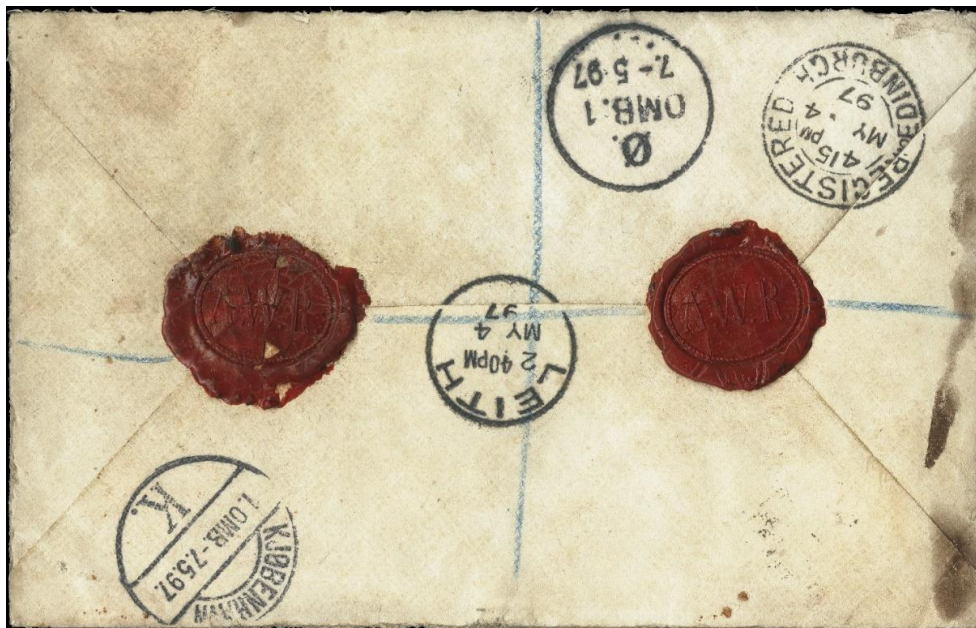




Coat of arms 10 øre carmine in horizontal pair, tied by 2 clear strikes of star cancel "SMIRIL" on preprinted reply-envelope of the 'GRANDS MAGASINS DU PRINTEMPS, PARIS' with adjacent lapidar "THORSHAVN 28/11", "LEITH SHIP LETTER DE 8 96" and French railway mark.

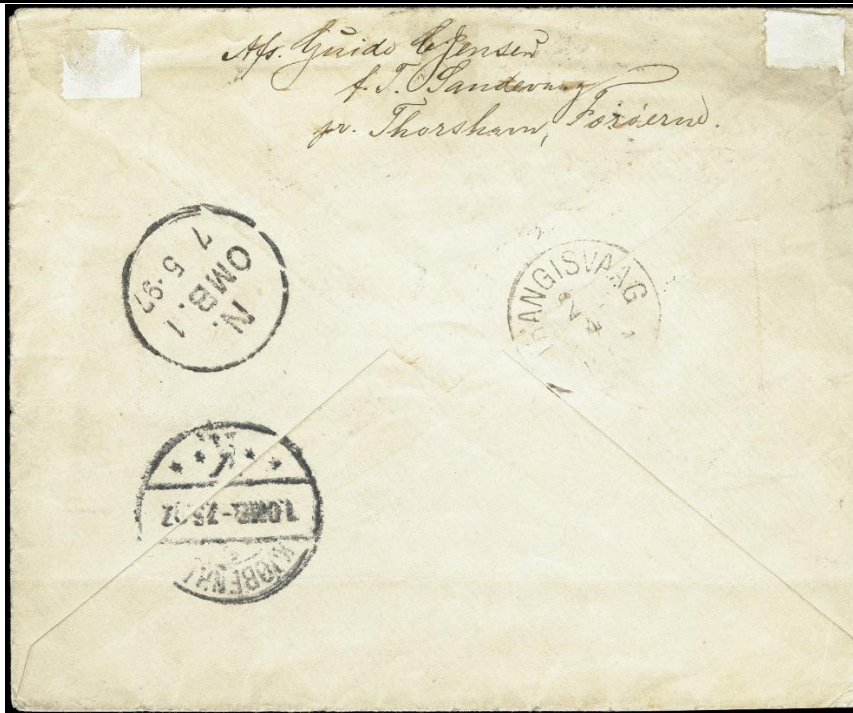


1897



6 øre brown/grey with horizontal pair 1882, 20 øre blue, tied by lapidar cancel "THORSHAVN 28/4" on registered double rate linen envelope with adjacent boxed "DANEMARK / R / No. 9" to Copenhagen. Via LEITH and LEITH SHIP LETTER, MY 4 97, LEITH, EDINBURGH and LONDON transit and arrival marks on front and reverse.

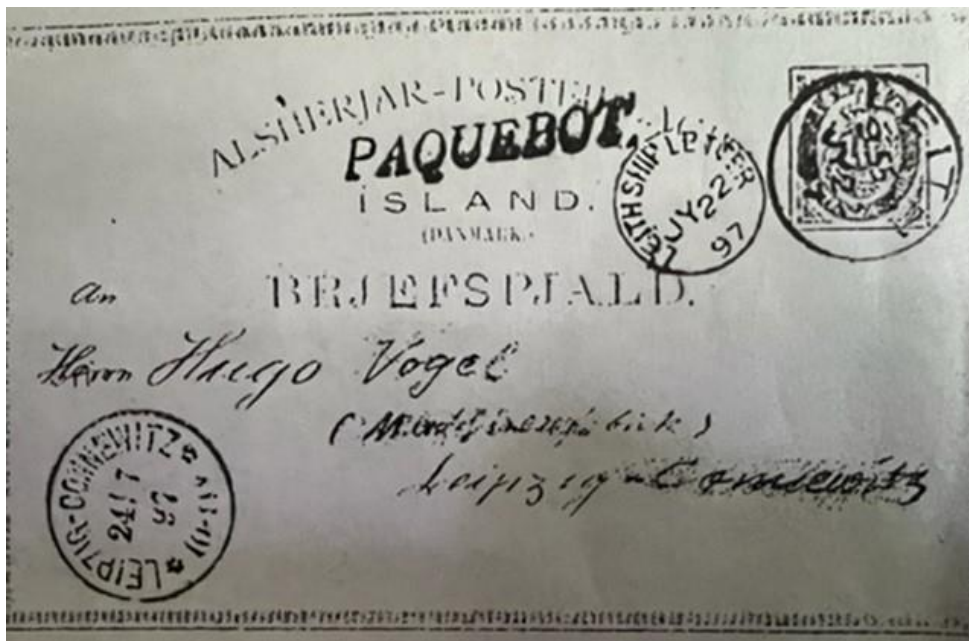




20 øre blue, star cancel "SMIRIL" with handstamp "TRANGISVAAG 30/4 1897" and LEITH SHIP LETTER MY 4 97 to Copenhagen, endorsed "per Smiril via Leith"; on reverse transit and arrival marks.



21 April 1897. Smiril star cancellation, TRANGISVAAG 30 4 1897 and LEITH SHIP LETTER, MY 4 97.



Heinrich Schilling shows JY 22 97 with both Leith Ship Letter and Paquebot.





1898







1899





1900

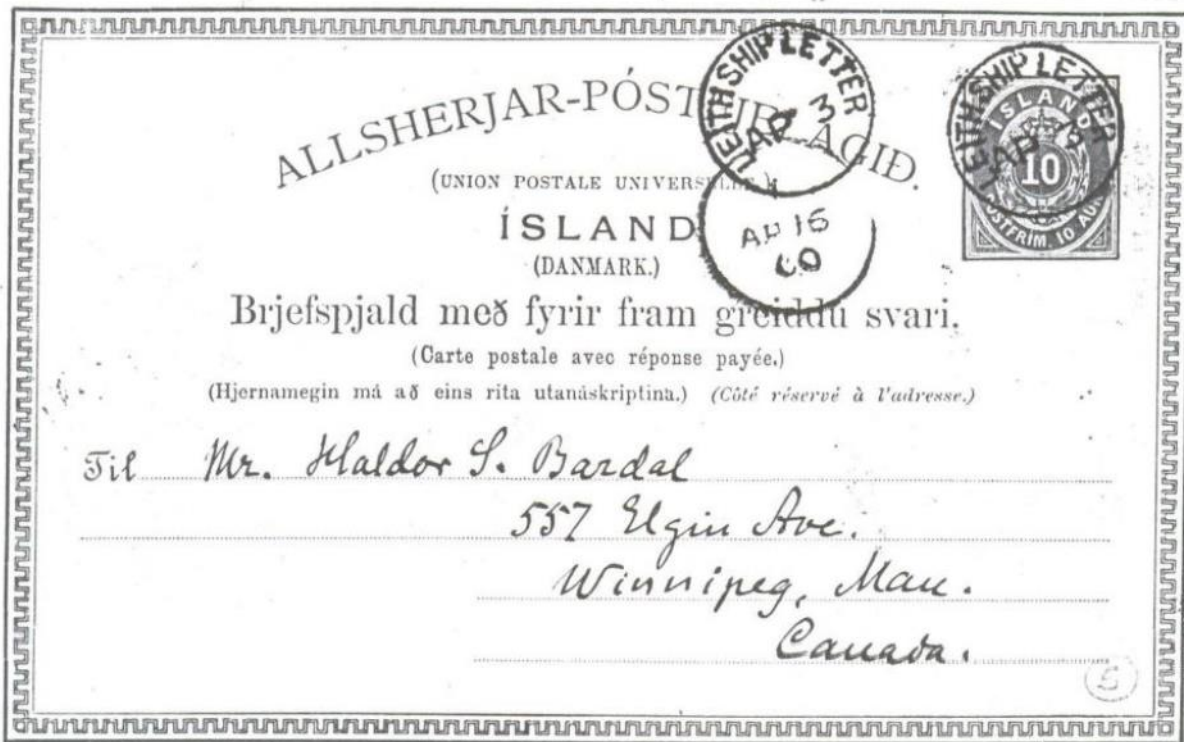
AP 3 – it is without 00<sup>10</sup> The actual missing year for AP 3 - has been; 1900. A fact stated by Ole Svinth – and proven by him.<sup>11</sup>



<sup>10</sup> As far as I know AP 3 (1900) is the only example without a year (I don't believe the example from MY 05 by Orla Nielsen in IslandsKontakt # 80 is without year)

<sup>11</sup> It was (and it is) a fact. You can read more about the establishment of the fact – and the proof – in Iceland Philatelic Magazine Nr.55 March 2023 – original in IslandsKontakt Nr. 78 2010

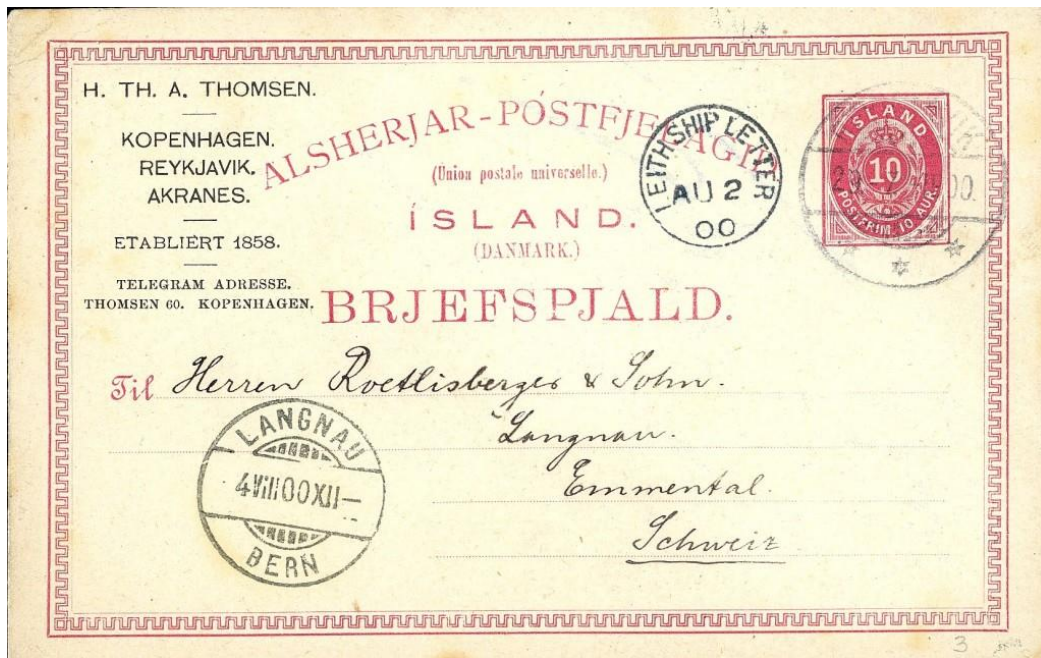




Ríki 22/II 1900.  
 Hittinu vin! Bestu þetta fyrir aðskildu yður  
 í brjefspjaldi þínu 2/2. - sönuleiðis fyrir 75 kr. gegnum  
 Loff. Eym. - Mótin sem þú hefur um sendt í  
 míni, en þú veitst vantar jan. 1898, það er  
 ekki til í sérstöðum niðurstöðum, heldur aðrir hliðir  
 árgangur innheftir, og hefi ég þú aðit að láta  
 þess bláð vanta. Tegnirgefur!  
 Með bestu kveðjum!  
 Jónhildur

Later that year the "oo" is correct.





Two with AU 18 and one with AU 8. Why?



The number of examples is increasing as the competition is increasing: DFDS, Thore, Wathne – so only few examples is shown.

And it continues – and only some years have been included for illustration



1902



1903





1905



1906





1907



1909



End of the continuing use.

1912

And suddenly again – the latest known examples from AU 6 09 and SP 25 09:





It is interesting that there are EDINBURGH, LEITH SHIP LETTER and a PAQUEBOT used in LEITH.

## Overview.

Ship letter postmarks used on mail from Iceland in Edinburgh, Leith and Granton.

Year	SHIP LETTER Large	SHIP LETTER small	SHIP LETTER GRANTON	Round LEITH SHIP LETTER
1868	1868			
1869				
1870	1870			
1871				
1872				
1873				
1874				
1875				
1876				
1877	1877			
1878				
1879				
1880		1880		
1881				
1882				
1883				
1884				
1885	1885			
1886			1886	
1887				1887
1888				
1889	1889			
1890				
1891				
1892		1892		
1893				
1894				
1895			1895	
1896				
1897				
1898				
1899				
1900				
1901		1901		
1902				
1903				
1904				
1905				
1906				
1907			1907	
1908				1909
1909				
1910				
1911				
1912				1912



## References

- Alan W. Robertson: A History of the Ship Letters of the British Isles. Reprinted Edition Volume I and II
- Claes Arnrup; "Iceland - The Earliest Franked Letter – Send to M in Iceland Philatelic Magazine # 37 page 5 ff – an article from London Philatelist, Volume 127 issue 1457 page 263-268 from 2018.
- Daebel Roland Wensickendorf: "Ship Letter – Paquebot - Eine postgeschichtliche Entwicklung aus England in alle Welt", Sonstiges 2006 / PN 135 p 117-120
- Ebbe Eldrup: IslandsKontakt # 13
- Heimit Þorleifsson: Póstsaga Íslands 1873-1935
- Heinreich Schilling: "Fremde Anlandstempel auf Islandpost" (1996).
- Hosking: "Paquebot Cancellations of the world" (2. Edition)
- Ib Karup Rasmussens study: "Den danske Regerings postkibsfart mellem København, Færøerne og Island 1839-1880 under indflydelse af den islandske selvstændighedbevægelse" (1986)
- Ib Krarup Rasmussen: "Sejlplaner fra den danske regerings postskibsfart mellem København, Færøerne og Island 1839 – 1880" (1986)
- Ib Karup Rasmussen study: "Den danske Regerings postkibsfart mellem Danmark og Island 1774-1880" (2004)
- James A. Mackay "Scottish Postmarks"
- James A. Mackay: Scottish Twin-arc Postmark with stampers number
- Jakob S. Arrevad, Mike Tuttle and Ole Svinth. Ship Letter/Paquebot Leith – Iceland. IslandsKontakt SPECIAL 2016.5 v.1
- Jón Aðalsteinn Jónsson: "One hundred years of Icelandic Stamps 1873-1973"
- Kurt Bliese: "Skilling und aurar-Marken im Oval» - Handbuch 1991
- Mike Dovey & Keith Morris: "Paquebot Cancellations of the world" (Hosking 4. edition)
- Mike Tuttle: Rapport #165, December 2012 page 18
- Mike Tuttle: "Scandinavian Contact" June 2001 p. 360
- Mike Tuttle: Iceland Foreign Port-of-Arrivals & Transit Marks (part 10), Scandinavian Contact, volume 18, Numbre 7 Whole number 193, June 2001 page 361.
- Mike Tuttle: The Scottish Post, number 85 – January Marts 2000, page 1028 ff., with editorial notes Iceland Philatelic Magazine Nr.55 March 2023 from Ron Stables.
- Ole Svinth: Iceland Philatelic Magazine Nr.55 March 2023
- Orla Nielsen IslandsKontakt # 80
- Paquebot.info
- Per Eirik Danielsen: "Sjø-Posttruter på utlandet» (1991)
- Robin Morton FRPSL: «An Introduction to Postal History Relation to Edinburgh and Leith" Royal Philatelic Society London (2016).  
<https://timarit.is/>
- IslandsKontakt Special # 29 V1 2021 GRANTON SHIP LETTER
- IslandsKontakt Special # 31 V1 2023 EDINBURGH LARGE SHIP LETTER
- IslandsKontakt Special # 33 V1 2023 LEITH SHIP LETTER
- IslandsKontakt Special # 5 V1 2016 LEITH PAQUEBOT
- IslandsKontakt Special # 3 V2 2018 EDINBURGH PAQUEBOT
- IslandsKontakt Special # 37 V1 2023 LONDON SHIP LETTER
- IslandsKontakt Special # 32 V1 2023 EDINBURGH SMALL SHIP LETTER