

# ICELAND PHILATELIC MAGAZINE

An independent journal for collectors of Iceland stamps and postal history



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## Iceland Philatelic Magazine

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Please let me have your articles if you want them in the next issue which will be July 2020. If you need help with translations let me know.

The editor will help with the English if necessary.

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Before the demise of Frímerkjasalan in late 2019 we had the benefit of a reliable source of information from Vilhjálmur Sigurðsson covering developments in the postal service, e.g. post office movements, closures, postmark cancellers etc. His help is sorely missed. I have tried without success to get a response from Iceland Post regarding the possibility of a resumption of this valuable service to collectors. I have not even had a reply to two separate enquiries. I regret to say that it seems it will be down to collectors “on the ground”, keeping the rest of us informed. I hope Iceland based readers of the magazine will “rise to the occasion” when news of changes become known.

### **Postal rates in Iceland 1873 to 2009**

Since the publication of the book, from time to time there has been the need for amended or additional pages. These were supplied by email to allow owners to update their copies of the book. A few years ago, after all the printed copies of the book had been sold, orders still came trickling in, and a decision was taken by the Scandinavia Philatelic Society, who own the copyright, not to authorize another supply of printed copies (which with hindsight they should have done), but to switch to a “print on demand” policy. I was required to provide a digital copy for the use of the designated printer, which has *2018 Revised and Updated* on the new front cover. That was the start of problems. Instead of offering further amendments to the fixed printed version as previously, I now had to provide amendments to a changing digital version. I will not make this more complicated than it needs to be. The only really significant issue I am aware of, is that a very few people will have been supplied with copies where the page numbers, after page 111 go adrift by one compared to the original. This needs to be borne in mind when amended pages are offered.

In early 2019, a number of amended pages became available for the book. Looking back, I appear not to have mentioned their availability in the pages of this magazine. I apologize for this omission. Therefore any book owners who did not receive amended pages by email over the period March to May 2019, please let me know and I will provide your new pages. The pages were 2, 42, 68, 69, 193, 194, Contents page, Appendices 7 and 8 and Bibliography. I am aware that there will be those who do not read IPM and have a copy of the 2009 book, and are unlikely to know about the revised pages. There are even some, I believe who may still have the original edition of 1998. They need to get an up to date book as there is little comparison!

Finally, on the subject of the postal rates book, page 44 is again revised following research by Armagan Ozdinc as mentioned in his article below. A revised page 44 is available on request, or alternatively, you can amend your own copy to read **NORWAY FROM 1.9.1922** in place of Norway from 1.6.1922.

### **Pósthús og Bréfhirðingar á Íslandi by Þór Þorsteins.**

Recent research in issues of *Póst og Símatiðindi* from 1936 to 1945 reveal discrepancies in the handbook *Pósthús og Bréfhirðingar á Íslandi*. Amendments to the handbook are suggested as follows:-

1. The date of opening of Vigur is incorrect. 1.1.1931 should be amended to 1.1.1937 (*Póst og Símatiðindi* Nr.10 1936): the date of closure of Keta is incorrect. 31.12.1941 should be amended to 30.9.1942.

Consequently the opening date for Hraun in Skaga should be 1.10.1942 and not 1.1.1942. (*Póst og Símatiðindi* Nr.12 1942).

2. Rates for sea parcels increased from? May 1937, 75aur per parcel over 10kg up to 15kg and 100aur per parcel between 15 and 20kg (*Póst og Símatiðindi* Nr.3 1937).

3. Parcel fees rose from November 1937 to 50aur from 5-10kg, 75aur from 10-15kg and 100aur from 15-20kg. (*Póst og Símatiðindi* Nr.10 1937)

## Philatelic cards and covers: Stamp dealer Paul Kiderlen

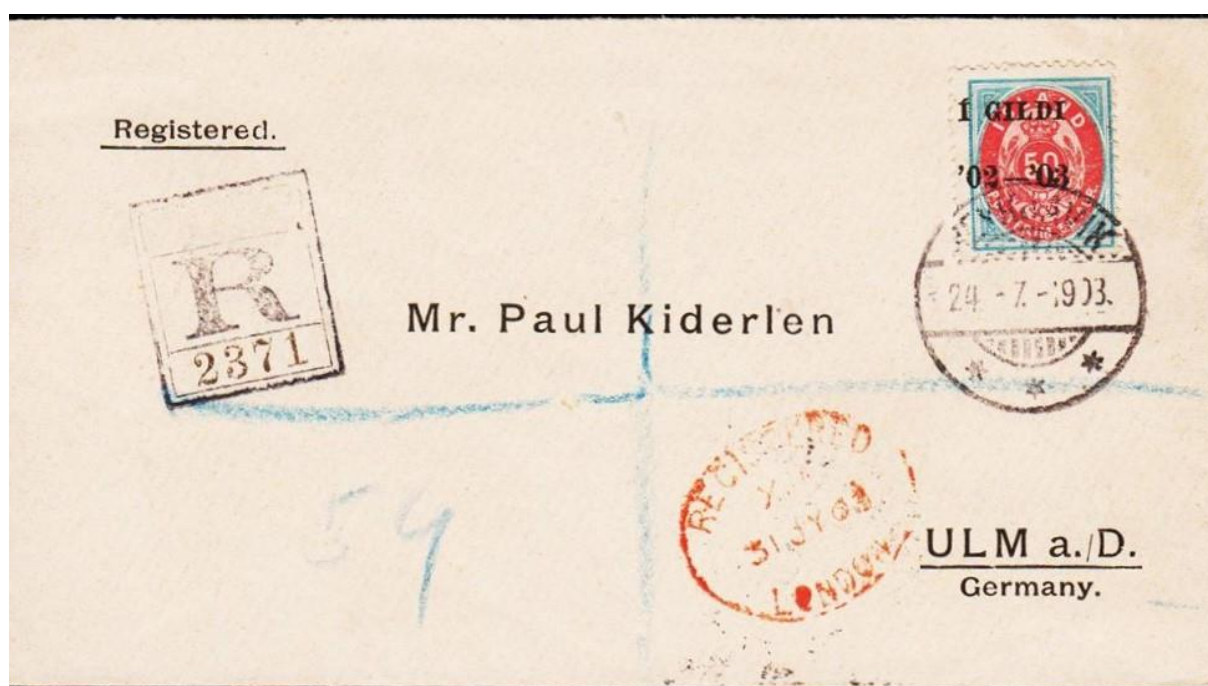
*Jacob Arrevad & Ebbe Eldrup*

Paul Kiderlen was a German stamp dealer who dealt from Ulm, Wurttemberg, Germany from about 1890 to 1910. According to Bernie Beston (1) cards and envelopes addressed to him are known from all the Australian States, the British Caribbean Islands, the Atlantic British Colonies and some French and Belgian Colonies as well, e.g. St. Pierre & Miquelon and Belgian Congo. But cards from India or Indian states or New Zealand are not seen.

In his article Bernie Beston does not mention that Mr. Kiderlen during 1903 also produced several uprated postal stationaries and some covers from Iceland. No more is known about his later life and fate.

Collectors of Iceland can therefore be faced with fancy items from Mr. Kiderlen's productions. Here are examples from our copy collections:

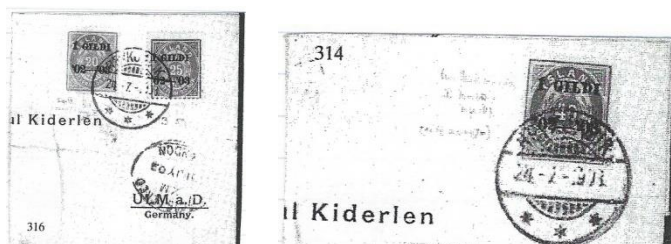
July 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> 1903 several covers and cards went off from Reykjavík to Mr. Kiderlen



Reykjavík 24-7-1903, cover went through Edinburgh and London, overfranked 15 aur



Back of above cover



Part illustrations from covers with 20+25 a and 40 aur





Reykjavík 23-7-1903



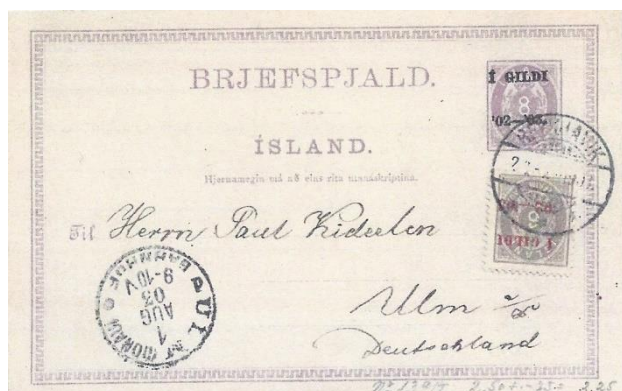
Reykjavík 23-7-1903



Reykjavík 23-7-1903



Reykjavík 24-7-1903



Reykjavík 24-7-1903



Reykjavík 24-7-1903

The correct rate for 1<sup>st</sup> class registered covers to Germany is 35 aur, while postcards were 10 aur.

It has been speculated how Mr. Kiderlen sold his philatelic products. Bernie Beston writes “Between 1890 and 1910 there were five stamp magazines circulating in Germany. One of these was the House Journal of the Senf Brothers “*Illustrierten Briefmarken Journal*” which was published from 1890 to 1912. Gebrüder Senf published the excellent Senf Postal Stationery Catalogues. However there is no record of Kiderlen advertising his stock in any of these stamp magazines (1).

Mr. Kiderlen did “however advertise on the reverse side of postal cards. Dr. John Higgins published details of two 1897 Sarawak Postal Cards [H & G 2a & 3a] in the *Philatelic Society of Kuching* [Feb.1999] Journal “*The Sarawak Philatelist*” which advertised his services thus:

*PAUL KIDERLEN, Postage stamp dealer, Ulm*

*Sends approval selections to Clubs, Collectors and Dealers in Stamps of all countries at cheapest prices*  
*Speciality: New issues.*



Wholesale price list and rules for new issues/Exchange Club are sent post free. Collection will be bought” (quote from (1)). We have never seen advertisements on the back of any Icelandic card nor have we seen advertisements where items from Iceland were put up for sale.

One other day, September 19<sup>th</sup> 1903, Mr. Kiderlen or his associate, who is unknown, sent several postcards via Lerwick to Ulm, Germany. All postcards are without text and solid philatelic products despite their attractive front:

Side: 6



Reykjavík 19-9-1903, Lerwick 29 SP 03,



Ulm 3 OKT 03    Reykjavík 19-9-1903



Reykjavík 19-9-1903



Reykjavík 19-9-1903

Bernie Beston is very kind in his article and writes:

*“The question for postal stationery collectors is whether such material as produced by these and other dealers is so scarce that without it, usage in the Exhibit is deficient? Or are other commercially used examples of the item in question on the market, and available? Perhaps when using such items the exhibitor should record just how many commercially used examples are recorded. For those collectors who have passed up Kiderlen or Bickel covers, waiting for items of real postal use, just stop and think before you pass up the next card or envelope. There may be no genuine commercial use known today. Or only one or two, and they are locked up in other collections”.*



Reykjavík 19-9-1903



Reykjavík 19-9-1903





Reykjavík 19-9-1903



Reykjavík 19-9-1903



Reykjavík 19-9-1903

**In the case of covers or cards from Iceland there are alternatives and the serious collector should choose them.**

(1) Bernie Beston. Messrs. Kiderlen & Bickel – friends or foe. POSTAL STATIONERY COLLECTOR Volume 11 No 2: Issue No 42 August 2005 page 42-47

(2) Photos from e-bay, IslandsKontakt, Rapport and auction catalogues.

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### Local posts - letter and printed matter

In my time, I have seen many local post covers, however I have no memory of ever seeing examples of local covers with franking higher than the basic weight rate. Most surviving local post examples come from the Reykjavík area, so maybe the short distances covered by the Reykjavík local post service, made it uneconomic for sending heavier items? Surely there must exist a few surviving examples? Hopefully our readers can provide some. I made the same appeal some years ago and there was zero response, so I am not optimistic. Maybe there are no surviving examples, or if there are they are rare.

## Inconsistent usage of 20 and 35 aurar denomination stamps on the Icelandic mail sent to Nordic countries in 1925 through 1939

by Armagan Ozdinc

I specialize in the traditional philately of Iceland's first pictorial stamps; 1925 *Views and Buildings* issue. One aspect of the traditional philately is to study the usage of stamps and gather the postal cover examples that show the proper usage as intended. Each stamp denomination is issued for either a single use to pay one or more specific service rates or to be used in combination with another denomination to make up a correct service rate. Some of the rates could be new effective rates while the others could be existing rates for which the previously issued stamp stock is depleted.

As I have been studying the usage of the *Views and Buildings* stamps, I came across observing an inconsistent usage of two denominations of this issue for the mail sent to Nordic countries from Iceland within the period of 1<sup>st</sup> October 1925 through 31<sup>st</sup> December 1939. These denominations are 20 aurar and 35 aurar (Figure1).



Figure 1 – 20 and 35 aurar denomination stamps of the *Views and Buildings* issue

When the *Views and Buildings* stamps were issued on 12<sup>th</sup> September 1925, the primary reason for this issue was the reduced postal rates between the Universal Postal Union (UPU) member states as agreed at the 8<sup>th</sup> Postal Union Congress in Stockholm in 1924<sup>(6)</sup>. Iceland had no previously issued stamps in denominations for two of these reduced rates; 7 aurar and 35 aurar. Therefore, they issued these new stamps along with three additional denominations for the existing rates. The new rates agreed at this Congress were set to be effective on 1<sup>st</sup> October 1925. This issue was released 19 days ahead of the new rate effective date. It is not known why the Icelandic Postal Administration did not wait until 1<sup>st</sup> October 1925 to issue these new stamps. Such timing surely created a rare 19-day usage for some denominations of the issue, which is a topic for another article.

Besides the UPU, there was also a regional postal union named Nordic Postal Union (NPU) formed in 1920 that defined special Nordic postal rates between its own member states independent of the UPU rates. Article 21 of 1906 UPU Convention<sup>(5)</sup> allowed member states to establish and maintain restricted unions with a view to the reduction of rates set by UPU. In 1925, Iceland, Denmark (including Faroe Islands) and Norway were the only member states of the NPU. Sweden joined the NPU later on 1<sup>st</sup> June 1928 and Finland did on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1935.

At the beginning of the circulation of the *Views and Buildings* stamps, there were three applicable rates for a single use of the 20 aurar denomination and two applicable rates for a single use of the 35 aurar denomination. Two relevant uses of the **20 aurar** denomination for the purpose of this article were the **NPU-defined surface letter rate to NPU-member countries** up to 20 gr. weight, which has already been in effect since the beginning of the NPU agreement from 1<sup>st</sup> July 1920, and the new **UPU-defined surface postcard rate to countries outside the NPU**, which became effective on 1<sup>st</sup> October 1925. A relevant use of the **35 aurar** denomination for the purpose of this article was the new **UPU-defined surface letter rate to countries outside the NPU** up to 20 gr. weight, which also became effective on 1<sup>st</sup> October 1925.



Before I explain the problem stated in the title of this article, let me provide some background information about how the international mail system of Iceland worked in that period to the best of my knowledge.

Per 1924 UPU Convention<sup>(6)</sup> Article 25, the liberty of mail transit was guaranteed throughout the entire territory of the UPU member states that honored maritime mail by cancelling the stamps, usually done at the first port of call of the ship. As Iceland is an island nation, the surface mail to overseas was transported on ships either directly or in transit via another country to the addressed destination of mail. Even airmail, after its very limited introduction in 1930, was first carried as a surface mail by ships to another country and then forwarded by a foreign air service to the final destination.

In the period of 1925-39, a majority of the ships for overseas left from Reykjavík and Seyðisfjörður. Akureyri, Ísafjörður, Vestmannaeyjar and Húsavík were the other ports, but with less overseas ship traffic. Those ships were either commercial cargo vessels or vessels that carried both passengers and cargo. In addition to cargo and passengers, they also carried mail. Fishing vessels occasionally carried mail as well, but this was fairly rare pre-WWII. That was more common practice during WWII due to lack of regular scheduled ship traffic and unwillingness of those ships with limited voyages to carry mail because of delays caused by British censorship.

The timetables, including routes, of ships for some companies were posted at the dockside in the harbor. In other cases, they were advertised in local newspapers so that the larger public would know. Post offices were surely knowledgeable about such timetables for their local ports or nearby ports.

In those years, international mail was posted by people in different ways; by going to a post office and handing the mail to a postal clerk, by dropping the mail into a mailbox outside of a post office, by dropping the mail into a mailbox located on the gangplank of a ship or on the dockside at the harbor, or by dropping the mail into a ship mailbox on board during the voyage of a ship on the high seas.

The unstamped mail handed to a postal clerk in a post office was franked with the correct postage by the clerk, cancelled with the local Icelandic postmark, and placed into a bag that would ultimately be sealed before delivered to the next scheduled ship to depart from the port. In general, clerks knew which ship was scheduled to depart next and what its route was. If the post office was not located in one of the port towns, the sealed bag would then be sent to the nearest post office located in a port town.

The pre-stamped mail dropped into a mailbox outside of a post office were collected by the post office personnel and checked for the correctness of the applied postage for the mail type and addressed destination. If the postage was underpaid, the mail would be marked with a circular 'T' postage due handstamp, cancelled with the local Icelandic postmark and placed into a bag that would eventually be sealed before delivered to the next scheduled ship to depart.

Another way of sending mail was that the sender would directly go to the harbor and drop the pre-stamped mail into a mailbox either located on the dockside or hanging off the gangway of the ship docked at the pier. The pre-stamped mails in the mailbox were taken aboard without postmarks and without any checks for correctness of the applied postage amount as the Icelandic postal personnel were not involved in this process. It was all handled by the ship crew. This mail would receive its postmark at the first port of call of the ship, which is a non-Icelandic foreign cancellation along with the maritime mail marking such as "Ship Mail", "Paquebot" or "Fra Island" (depending on the port) en route to its final destination. Mail posted aboard a passenger ship during its voyage would also fall in this category and thus go through the same process.

British, Danish and Norwegian ports were the ones where the majority of the overseas mail landed after leaving Iceland. Among those ports, Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Hull, Copenhagen, Bergen and Stavanger were the most common ones.

If a letter or postcard was addressed to an **NPU-member** country, one would think that the Nordic rate applied to such mail. However, that was not always supposed to be the case. The correct rate was determined by the traveling route of the mail as follows:

- a) The NPU-defined Nordic postal rate applied if the mail landed in the addressed NPU-member country directly, or went in transit through the ports of another NPU-member country. This rate was 15 aurar for postcards (Figure 2) and 20 aurar for letters up to 20-gram weight (Figure 3).



Figure 2- 15 aurar NPU-rate franked postcard sent to Norway via Copenhagen, Denmark in 1928



Figure 3 - 20 aurar NPU-rate franked letter sent directly to Denmark in 1926

- b) If the mail addressed to an NPU-member country went through the ports of a non-NPU-member country (e.g. United Kingdom, Germany), then the UPU-defined international rate to countries outside the NPU

applied. This rate was 20 aurar for postcards (Figure 4) and 35 aurar for letters up to 20-gram weight (Figure 5).

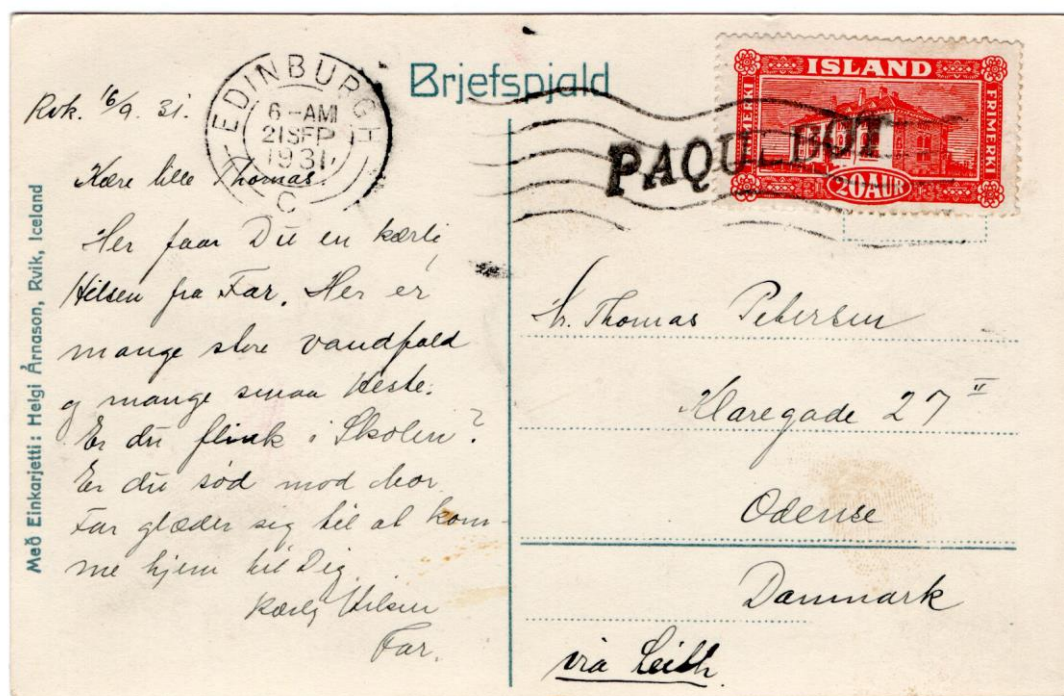


Figure 4 - 20 aurar UPU-rate franked postcard sent to Denmark via Edinburgh, Scotland in 1931

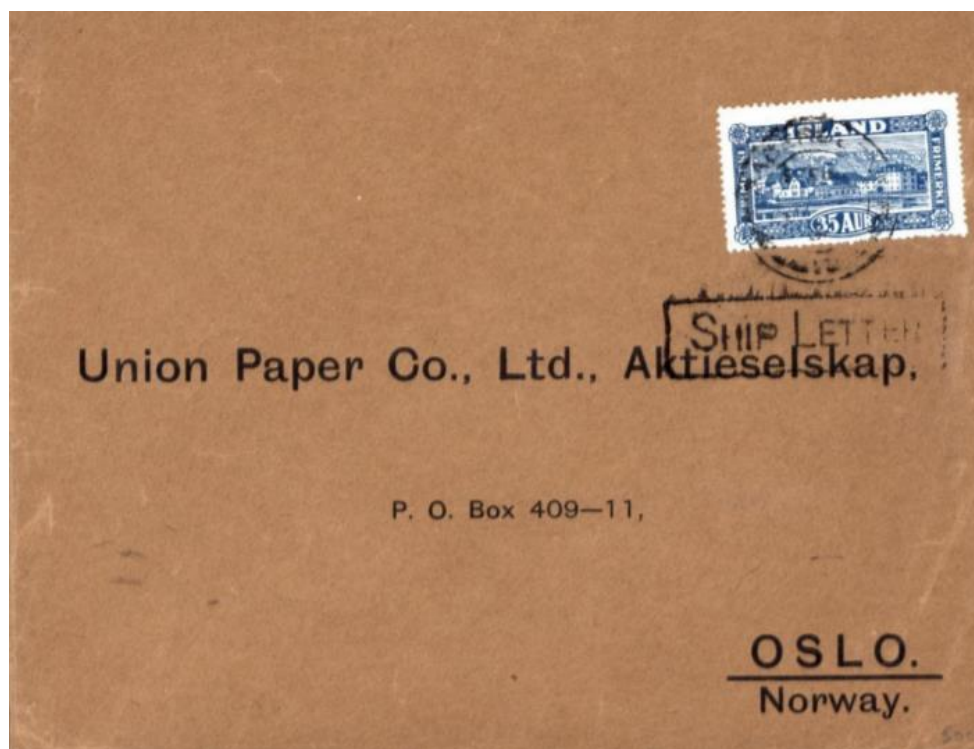


Figure 5 - 35 aurar UPU-rate franked letter sent to Norway via Aberdeen, Scotland in 1931

After this background information, let me explain the problem stated in the title of this article. Most of the time, the reality was different for the NPU-member country bound mail that went in transit through the ports of non-NPU-member countries. My observance was that such mail was quite often franked with the NPU-defined Nordic rate instead of the standard UPU-defined international rate and passed through those ports without any 'postage due' marking. This was true for many different ports. You can see examples of this in Figures 6 and 7.



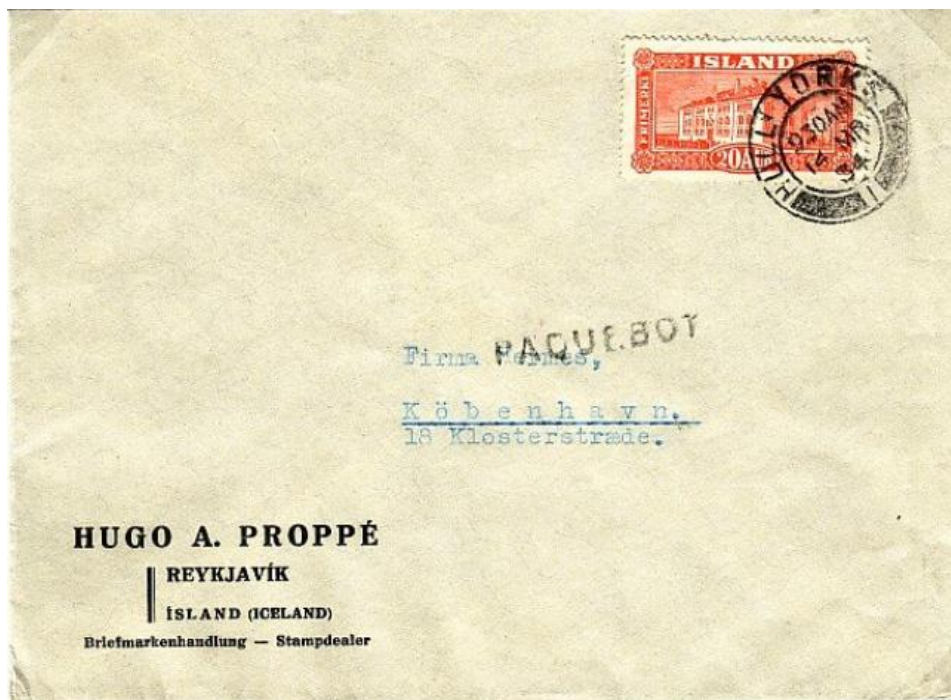


Figure 6 - 20 aurar NPU-rate franked letter sent to Denmark via Hull, England in 1934



Figure 7 - 20 aurar NPU-rate franked letter sent to Denmark via Hamburg, Germany in 1929

In order to confirm my observation, I had to check this with an Icelandic maritime mail specialist. I was referred to Jakob Arrevad, a Danish philatelist specialized in the Icelandic maritime mail that went through the Edinburgh port of United Kingdom (UK). I contacted Jakob and kindly asked him to provide me with a sampling statistic from his Edinburgh-cancelled Icelandic mail collection for the period of 1925 through 1939. The result was overwhelmingly confirming my observation. Jakob has 17 Icelandic covers addressed to an NPU-member country with Edinburgh cancels in his collection. Only two of these covers were franked with the UPU-defined international rate, which was only about 12% of the total. The rest (88%) of the covers were franked with the Nordic rate. This was not necessarily a full-blown statistical analysis, but it provided a good enough indicator. This result created further doubts in my mind in terms of what the correct rate was to be applied to the NPU-country bound Icelandic mail that went through a non-NPU-member country.

I contacted Brian Flack who is an expert for Iceland postal rates to get his input. His answer was that it was reasonable and *de facto*, as much as he was concerned, to say that pre-WWII standard rate for such mail was the UPU-defined international rate applied to non-NPU-member countries. I asked him if he had ever researched and confirmed this through the official Iceland government records by himself, his answer was “no”. This gave me an incentive to research this through the official Iceland government records and put the case to rest forever.

There are multiple official Icelandic sources that I could check. *Stjórnartíðindi* (Iceland Government Gazette) was produced in sections, with one section (usually B) used for postal regulations derived from the occasional postal laws. The Icelandic Postal Administration apparently extracted their *Gjaldskrá* (Postal Rates Notice), to be posted at the post offices for the public to see, from *Stjórnartíðindi*. However, the Government Gazette publications were long documents to read through and find the regulations I was looking for. Instead, I took an easier route and decided to read and research through *Póstblaðið* (Post News), a newsletter issued by the Icelandic Postal Administration multiple times a year to postal officials to enable them to carry out their instructions correctly. Each issue usually varied between one and four pages.

I could not find any specific mentioning of the valid postal rates for the NPU-member country bound Icelandic mail that went through a non-NPU-member country in the issues of *Póstblaðið* published in 1920 when the NPU was formed between Iceland and Denmark. However, I was able to find the related information in the later year issues of this newsletter. The first issue of *Póstblaðið* where I found relevant information is **Nr. 5 of YR 1922**<sup>(2)</sup>. This issue was published right before Norway joined the NPU. The extracted image of Section 1 of this issue is shown in Figure 8. The translation of the yellow-highlighted relevant part of the section follows the figure.

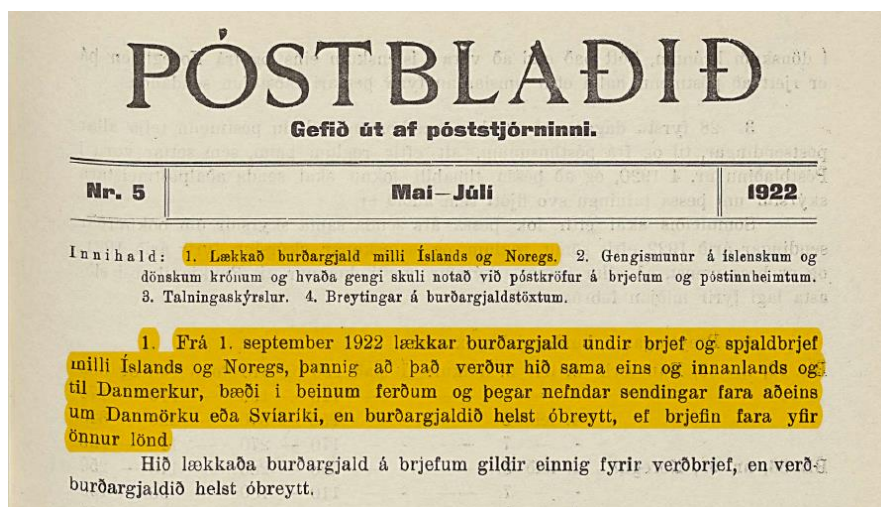


Figure 8 - *Póstblaðið* issue Nr. 5, YR 1922, Section 1

**NOTE:** Terms inside parentheses in the translated text in this article are my additions to clarify the meaning of the sentence.

*“As of 1<sup>st</sup> September 1922, postal rates for letters and postcards between Iceland and Norway will be reduced, thus it will be the same rates as inland and to Denmark, whether mail goes (to Norway) directly or via Denmark or Sweden. However, the postal rates will remain unchanged (as the UPU rate) if mail goes (to Norway) via other countries.”*

The second sentence of the above statement tells us that the postal rates for the mail going to an NPU-member country via other countries will remain unchanged. This clearly implies that the reduced rates for the mail addressed to NPU-member countries **DID NOT** apply if the mail went through other countries in the past. On the other hand, the same statement reveals two additional facts. They are as follows:



- The new NPU agreement with Norway went into effect on **1.9.1922**, not on **1.6.1922** as documented in *Postal Rates of Iceland 1873-2009*<sup>(1)</sup>, Page 44. Brian agrees to issue a correction to this page.
- As part of this new NPU agreement, an exception was given to the Sweden-transit mail by allowing the **application of the same reduced Nordic postal rates if the mail from Iceland to Norway goes via Sweden as if it goes directly to Norway or via Denmark**. Since Sweden was not part of the NPU until **1.6.1928**<sup>(3)</sup>, this was clearly a special case. This exception is unknown to Brian. It will be interesting to see if one could find any letter cover from Iceland to Norway via Sweden with 35 aurar franking between 1.9.1922 and 1.6.1928. I am sure that there are some outliers out there. The key thing to study is actually what the overall trend is. Are there more 35 aurar letter covers than 20 aurar letter covers or *vice versa*? In a perfect situation, there should be no letter cover with 35 aurar franking between 1.9.1922 and 1.6.1928.

The next relevant issue of Póstblaðið I found is **Nr. 9 of YR 1928**<sup>(4)</sup>. The extracted image of Section 1 of this issue is shown in Figure 9. The translation of the yellow-highlighted text of the section follows the figure.

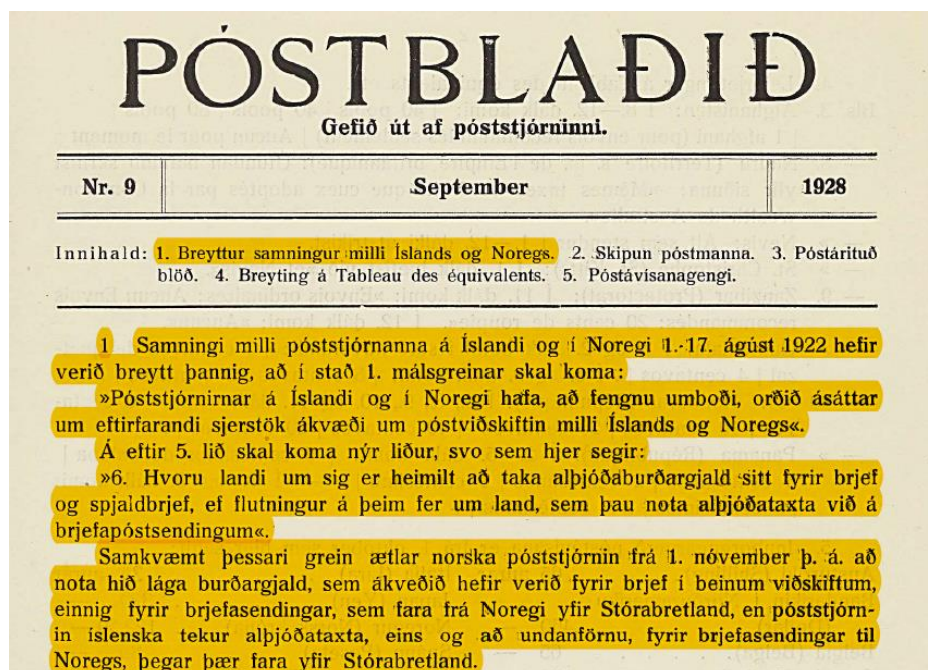


Figure 9 - Póstblaðið issue Nr. 9, YR 1928, Section 1

*“Agreement reached between the postal authorities of Iceland and Norway in 11-17 August 1922 is hereby amended to replace Paragraph 1 as follows:*

*»The postal authorities in Iceland and Norway have agreed, following a mandate, on the following specific provisions on the postal exchange between Iceland and Norway«.*

*After Paragraph 5, a new item is added as follow:*

*»6. Each country may charge its international rate for letters and postcards, if their shipment goes (between them) through the country to which they apply international rates on mail«.*

*Per this new added paragraph, the Norwegian Postal Administration intends to use the low postal rate that has been determined for direct mail, also for mail sent from Norway through the United Kingdom as of November 1<sup>st</sup>, but the Icelandic Postal Administration will continue using, as in the past, international rates for mail sent to Norway through the United Kingdom.”*

One thing that the above communication leads us to is the existence of a bilateral agreement between Iceland and Norway. This sounds like that these two countries signed a special agreement on top of the



standard NPU agreement. It would be worth to find out if Norway also made a similar bilateral agreement with Denmark.

This issue of the newsletter talks about the amended agreement between Norway and Iceland, that provides flexibility for both countries to determine whether they will use the UPU-defined international rate or the reduced NPU-defined rate for the mail sent between them, which travels through a non-NPU-member country.

The key words here are "**may**" in the new added Paragraph 6 and "**mandate**" in the amended Paragraph 1 of the agreement. This gives us a clue of that it was apparently **mandated** to use the UPU-defined international rate for the mail traveling between Iceland and Norway via a third country in the initial agreement of 1922. Now, this requirement is relaxed with this amendment by adding the new Paragraph 6 to the agreement and using the "**may**" modal verb in the sentence of this paragraph.

In this communication, the Icelandic Postal Administration is telling their personnel that, per amended agreement, the Norwegian Postal Administration will start using low postal rates reserved for direct mail between Norway and Iceland, also for the mail that goes via UK as of 1<sup>st</sup> November 1928, but this will not be the case for the mail going from Iceland to Norway via UK. They are reaffirming that UPU-defined international rates will still be in effect for the Icelandic mail going to Norway in transit via UK. This gives us the evidence that international rates have always applied to the Icelandic mail addressed to NPU-member countries that went through UK.

If we combine the statements made by the Icelandic postal authority in the Póstblaðið issues of Nr. 5 of YR 1922 and Nr. 9 of YR 1928, it becomes very clear without any doubt that the Icelandic mail sent to NPU-member countries via non-NPU-member third countries were definitely subject to UPU-defined international rates.

Having proven that the correct rate for the NPU-member-country bound letter via non-NPU-member country was 35 aurar, what then was the reason for most of such mail being under-franked with a 20 aurar stamp? Was it the lack of Icelandic public understanding of this rule? Was it the lack of knowledge by senders in Iceland in terms of which route that their mail was going to go through? Or, was it just intentional to get around the required UPU-defined international rates by knowing the fact that nobody was checking for this irregularity at the ports in transit? For example, if we refer to the cover shown in Figure 6, how would a well-known Icelandic stamp dealer of that time, who sent many letters overseas for his business, not know this rule? Readers may reach their own conclusions based on the background information I provided earlier in this article. Unless this has already been discussed and documented somewhere else in the literature that I don't have access, we will likely never find the answers to these questions given that most of the people in Iceland from that period have passed away.

One thing I noticed is that the UPU rate was enforced by the Icelandic postal personnel if the mail was processed through their post offices. An example of this is shown in Figure 10. The letter shown in this figure was addressed to Denmark and received the Reykjavik cancel dated 6.X1.31. The letter was franked with one 35 aurar stamp for the letter rate to non-NPU-member countries and the combination of one 20 aurar stamp and one 10 aurar stamp to make up the 30 aurar registration fee valid for all countries. When one looks at the front side of this cover would rightfully question why a Denmark-bound letter was franked based on the rates set for non-NPU-member countries. The answer is on the back side of the cover. If you look at the back side (right portion of Figure 10), you will see the Hull-Yorks transit cancel. This tells us that the mail clerk who processed this letter obviously knew that the next scheduled ship departing the Reykjavík port was going to England.



Figure 10 - 35 aurar non-NPU-rate franked letter sent to Denmark via Hull, England, UK

Another example of diligence by the Icelandic Postal Administration is seen on the cover shown in Figure 11.



Figure 11 – 20 aurar NPU-rate franked letter sent to Sweden

This letter was addressed to Sweden and received the Reykjavík cancel dated 21.VI.26. It was franked with one 20 aurar stamp for the Nordic letter rate. However, Sweden was not yet a member of the NPU on this date. The correct rate for this letter was 35 aurar. Therefore, it was marked with the circular 'T' postage due handstamp by the Icelandic postal personnel. It looks like this letter must have been dropped into a mailbox outside of a post office. The postage due amount accordingly was collected at arrival by the Swedish Postal authority.

Another question worth to ask is why postal officials at those non-NPU-member country transit ports, who cancelled the transit mail, did not bother marking those underpaid mail for 'postage due'. Did they lack the information about the correct postal rate for this type of transit mail or just not care about it? This might be another topic worth to study.

Before ending my article, I would like to take this opportunity and thank the following philatelists for their contributions to my research in different capacities: Jakob Arrevald, Brian Flack, Steinar Fridthorsson, Árni Gústafsson, Wilbur Jonsson and Ole Svinth.

## References

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2. Icelandic Postal Administration, *Póstblaðið Nr. 5 May-July 1922*, Reykjavik, Iceland, 1922
3. Icelandic Postal Administration, *Póstblaðið Nr. 5 May 1928*, Reykjavik, Iceland, 1928
4. Icelandic Postal Administration, *Póstblaðið Nr. 9 September 1928*, Reykjavik, Iceland, 1928
5. Universal Postal Union, *Final Protocol of 1906 UPU Convention*, Rome, Italy, 26 May 1906
6. Universal Postal Union, *Final Protocol of 1924 UPU Convention*, Stockholm, Sweden, 28 August 1924

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### 3 - Review of the series “Was this cancel used here?” (IPM Issues 10 to 26)

The cancels reviewed here are B1a Sævarland and B2a Valþjófsstaður which featured in Issue 24.

**B1a Sævarland:** Since the December 2017 issue of IPM, no evidence has been provided by readers to prove that Sævarland was used at Skiðastaðir, between 1.10.1935 and 1938. According to the þór þorsteins handbook it was located there for more than 2 years, which surely makes it likely that it was used, even though Skiðastaðir did have the numeral 86. The Sævarland bridge cancel in the Skiðastaðir period must be very scarce.



#### **B1a Sævarland** Skagafjarðarsýsla

Recorded use Sævarland 1.7.1930 – 30.9.1934

Hvammur 1.10.1934 – 30.9.1935

Skiðastaðir 1.10.1935 – 1938?



#### **B2a Valþjófsstaður** Norður-Múlasýsla

Recorded use Valþjófsstaður July 1930 – 31.12.1966

Viðivellir-Ytri 1.1.1967 – 26.9.1967

No evidence has been provided to show that Viðivellir-Ytri used the B2a Valþjófsstaður in the 9 month period before the arrival of its own cancel. Surely there must be a reasonable probability of such a use, as that office had no other cancel in that period? Please check your B2a Valþjófsstaður cancels for a 1967 strike. Regrettably Facit does not show bridge cancel usage at 2<sup>nd</sup> and subsequent offices, but an example of B2a Valþjófsstaður used at Viðivellir-Ytri would rate a far higher valuation than the 100 SEK shown in Facit for the basic cancel.

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## Letter from Down Under David Loe

### The Day Early Card

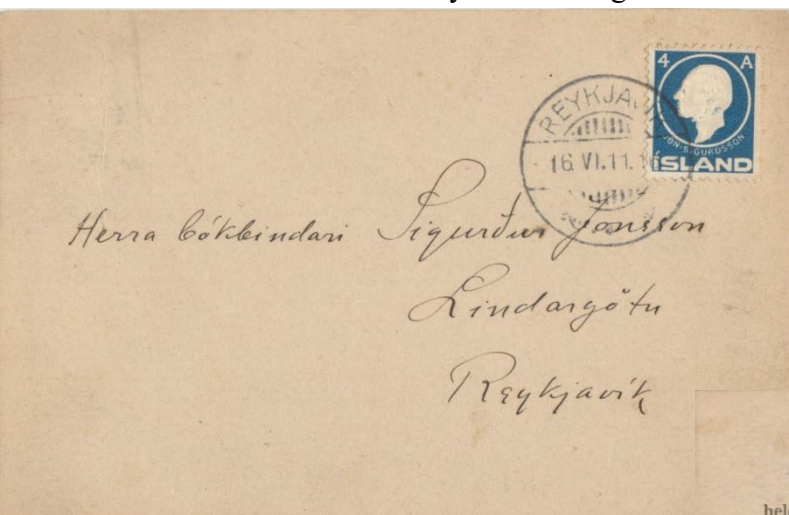
The first Icelandic commemorative stamp was issued on 17<sup>th</sup> June 1911 and featured a bust of Jón Sigurðsson. There is a long story about the advent of these stamps but suffice it to say that Jón Sigurðsson was Iceland's great leader in her struggle for independence from Denmark in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He occupied a seat in the Icelandic Parliament since its restoration in 1845 until his death in 1879. He was Speaker of parliament for many years.

I was lucky to purchase this item in an auction a year or two ago and it has sat in my collection since without me fully realizing the story behind it. Then one day recently I was doing some background reading in 100 Years of Icelandic Stamps by Jón Aðalsteinn Jónsson for a completely different reason and came across this account, repeated in full;

“It has not yet been mentioned that Jón Sigurðsson was for many years President of the Copenhagen division of the Icelandic Literary Society. It was through this office that he received the title under which he is still known in Iceland: *President Jón*. He certainly deserved it, for he was the driving force in all the Society's activities while he was alive.

On the occasion of the hundredth anniversary of Jón Sigurðsson, the Reykjavík division of the Literary Society honoured him with a special extraordinary meeting. In this connexion (sic), the committee obtained official permission to use on 16<sup>th</sup> June the new 4 aurar stamp on the Society's letters convening the meeting. *Visir* reports this on the same day, adding that other persons “will not be able to buy the stamps until tomorrow”. This action was natural, and in fact appropriate in commemoration of the famous President of the Society. It is likely that some of these invitations to the meeting of the Society in 1911 have been preserved, dated 16<sup>th</sup> June, and it will be obvious that they are now extremely precious

An invitation card sent out by the literary guild of Reykjavík calling for a special meeting the next day to commemorate the birth centenary of Jón Sigurðsson. The card is addressed to ‘bookbinder’ Sigurður Jónsson.



Correct use of a 4 aurar stamp for the local rate for a letter, but 3 aurar was the postcard rate.

However, who cares when you are celebrating Iceland's favourite son!



## Another interesting commercial use of postcards Jarle Reiersen



I just want to show this postcard I got in hand. Has anyone seen this post cancel used on shipments before? The postcard is a request sent to Gideon fellowship to require New Testaments. Gideon distributed New Testaments to all kids in primary schools in Iceland. But not any longer - not allowed to have influence on kids regarding their belief.



Skólaárið: 69-70 Nr. 222 A.

Barnaskóli Djúpavogs  
(Fullt nafn skóla)

Djúpavogur  
(Staður)

S.-Skul.  
(Sýsla)

Hefi móttekið 9 eintök.

Fjöldi 14 ára nemenda á yfirstandandi skólaári 7

Áætlaður fjöldi 14 ára nemenda á næsta skólaár 7

Djúpavogi 20/19 70  
Olafur Einarsson  
(undirskrift)

Ath.: Það er féluginu nauðsyn, að fá þetta bréfpjald útfyllt og sent um hæl, til þess að áframhald geti orðið af þessum gjafasendingum.

This postcard was allowed to be sent without stamps as the postage fees were charged at delivery. But I also have identical cards with a T-cancel as well as with stamps! I have shown the T-cancel above.

Jørgen Steen Larsen contributed:-

This is an interesting story. I have this cancel on a piece with handwritten date 5/2 1970 in the middle as on Jarle's copy + Facit 463 not cancelled.

I am not able to explain why the cancel is beside the stamp and not on top of the stamp. In my collection I have a letter with a usage of the B2c1 cancel 20.II.70. This seems to show, that the bridge cancel was in ordinary use at that period of time.

The T-cancel used on Jarle's postcard is of a special modern type with two rings around the "T".

Þþ writes in his handbook "Hjálparstimplar vadveittir í Póstsafninu, Kópavogi" that there are two of these T-cancels in the post museum.

I have copies of this T-cancel type from Eyrarbakki and Siglufjörður, and now we know that such a cancel was also delivered to Raufarhöfn.

This means that at least 3 of these T-cancels were distributed.

Best regards Jørgen



## Iceland Return-to-sender Handstamps & Labels

Douglas N. Muir RDP FRPSL

*This is based on an extract of an article in the London Philatelist (Ref. 1) with additional material.*

Return-to-sender labels (or handstamps) were brought into use by postal administrations in April 1887 at the behest of the Universal Postal Union to return undeliverable mail, following a suggestion by the Imperial German Post Office, under Heinrich von Stephan.

They were to provide the reason for non-delivery in both French (the international language) and the local language. For some countries they were used for all returned mail; in the case of most Scandinavian countries they were normally only used on mail to be returned abroad. Short phrases in French such as “*inconnu*”, “*refusé*”, “*non réclamé*”, “*parti*”, and “*décédé*” (unknown, refused, unclaimed, gone away, and deceased) would represent the most frequent causes of non-delivery. These could be printed as labels on gummed, transparent paper or impressed by a handstamp. Other reasons were to be added later. At the next UPU Congress, in Vienna in 1891, these instructions were regularised and incorporated into the detailed regulations.

Countries following the UPU example included Denmark whose labels had black text within a yellowish green border. Their introduction was announced in the Danish postal circular of 23 March 1887, coming into force on 1 April (Fig 1). (Ref. 2)

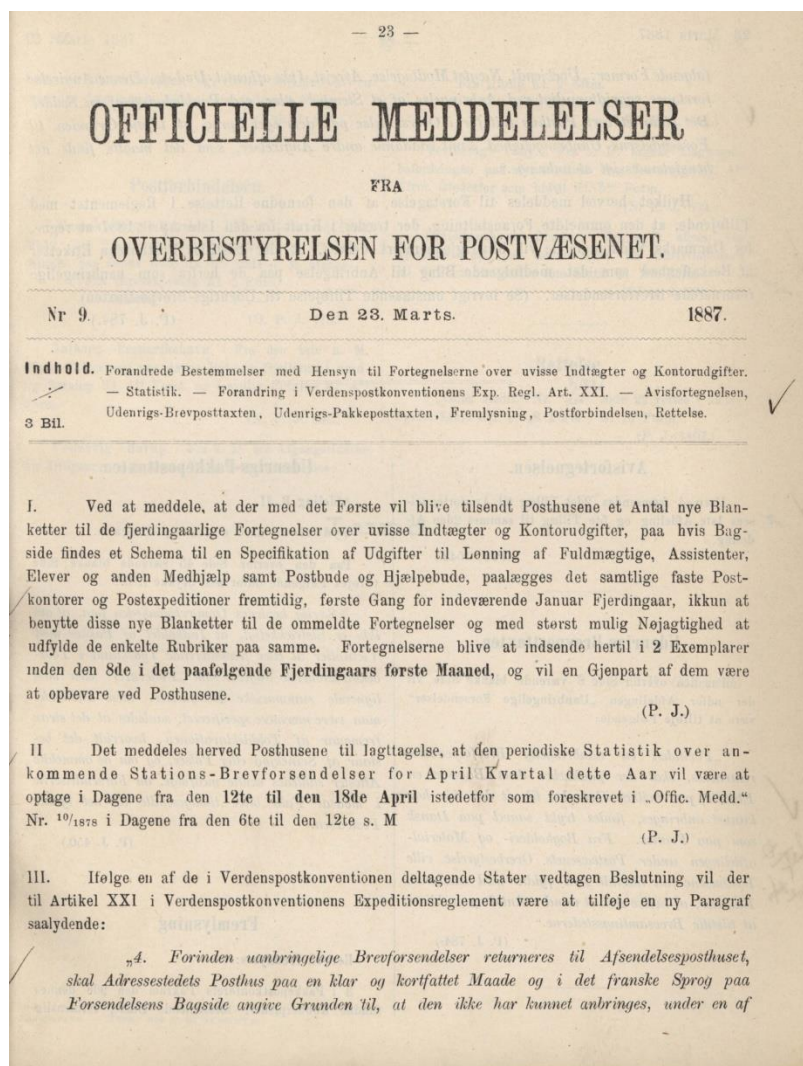


Fig.1



By 1887 Iceland had its own constitution and a measure of home rule from Denmark. However, in postal terms, it still received its instructions from Copenhagen. On 7 June that year the Icelandic Governor wrote to the Postmaster of Reykjavik enclosing the latest Danish official postal circulars. These were Nos. 7 to 12 of 1887 (that is including No. 9 with the Danish instructions about return-to-sender labels), stating that changes to foreign mail should be noted. (Fig. 2) (Ref. 3)

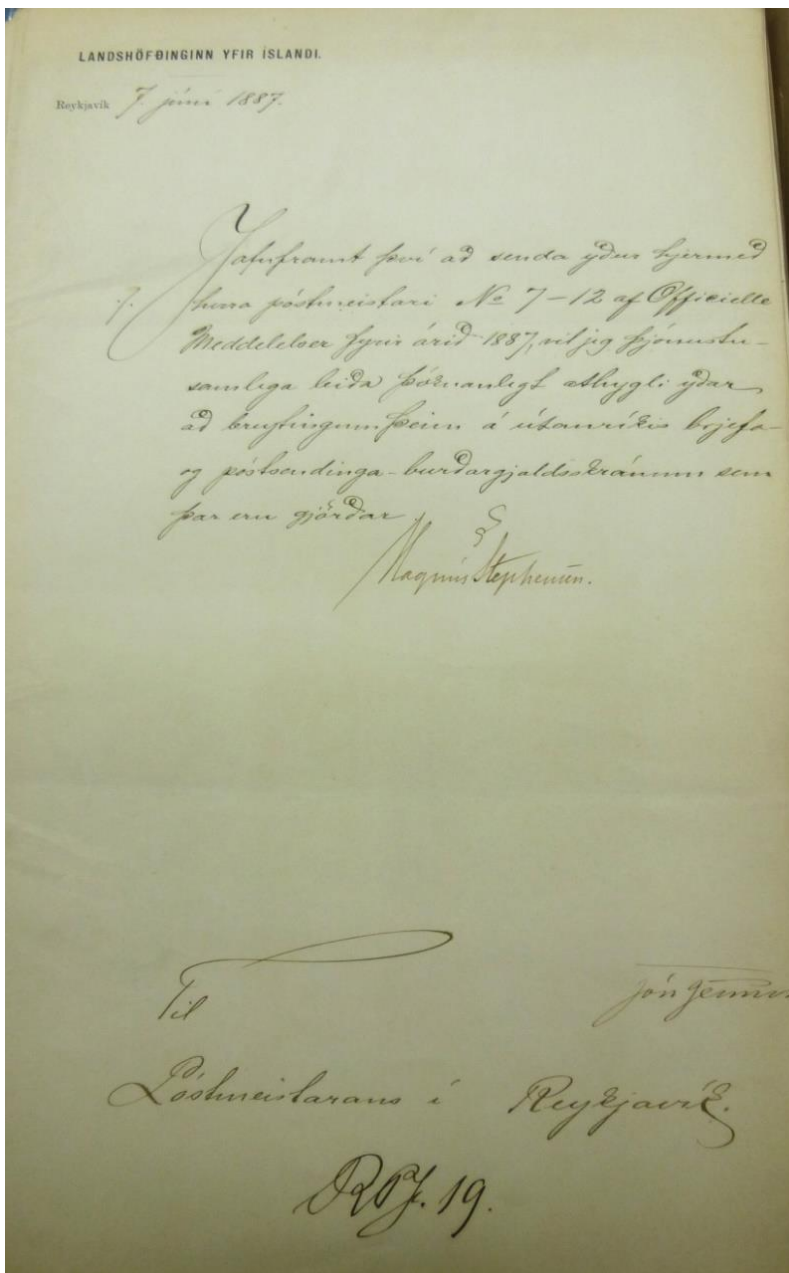
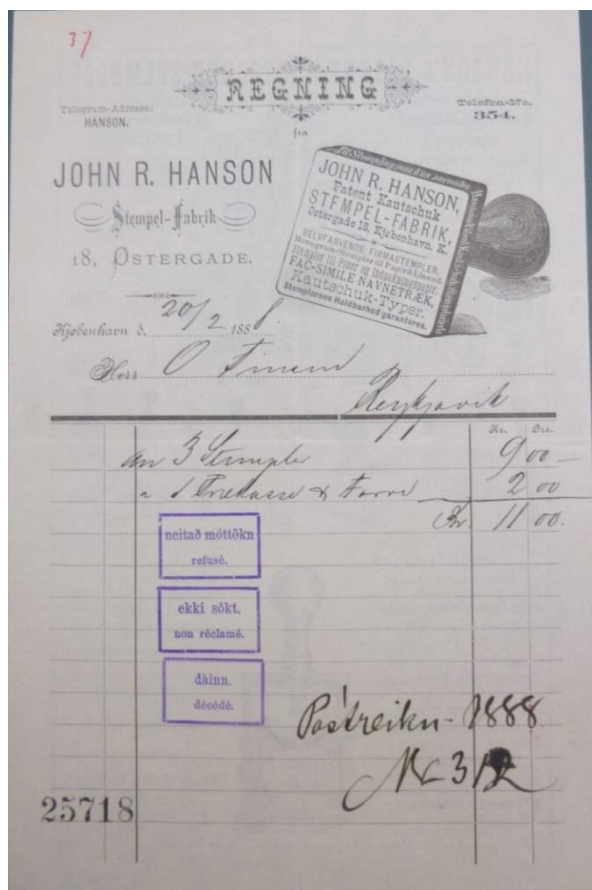


Fig. 2

Later, a postmaster asked if “Rebuts” should be put on the back of letters being returned both to Denmark and inland (yes it should) and in 1892 the details of the UPU Vienna Congress (where the instructions on return-to-sender mail were formalised) were transmitted, but without any of the detailed implementations appended. No instructions about the introduction of labels or handstamps have yet been found.

On the other hand, financial records (always a good if underutilised source) at the Iceland National Archives have provided at least part of the answer. Initially, bilingual rubber handstamps were ordered from the firm of John R. Hanson in Copenhagen who also provided other handstamps.



A total of five with the standard reasons were supplied in February and June 1888 with the invoices stamped with the images in purple. (Figs. 3 & 4) However, there were several spelling mistakes in nearly all of these, especially with accents in both French and Icelandic. Two more, corrections of the Icelandic words in the *inconnu* and *décédé* types, the latter with the accent still uncorrected, were sent in August, this time stamped in red but other mistakes remained apparently uncorrected and there is no consistency in the use of full stops. (Fig. 5) (Ref. 3)

Fig.3

20 February 1888. First invoice with Iceland handstamps including wrong spellings.

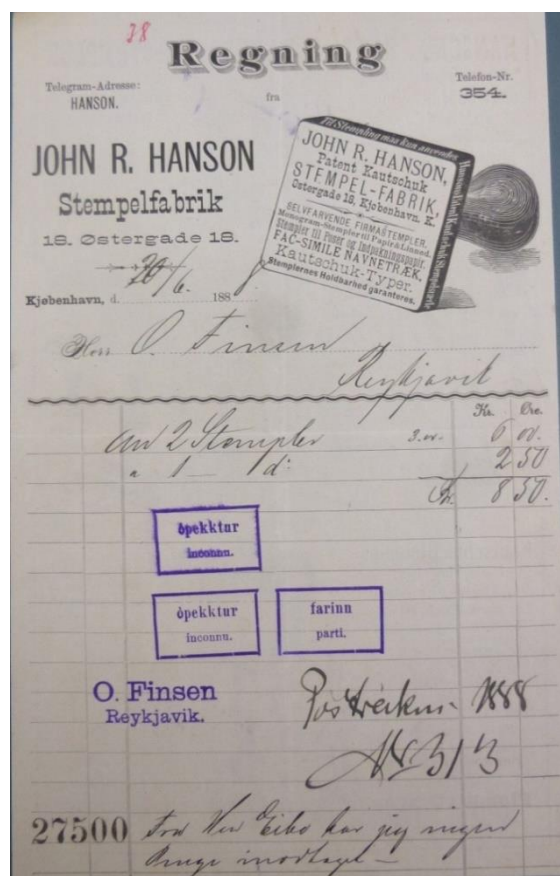


Fig.4 20 June 1888 with Iceland handstamps with wrong spellings.

The earliest examples yet found on mail are in red or purple, on the reverse of envelopes, dating from 1889. Perhaps understandably they are very scarce.

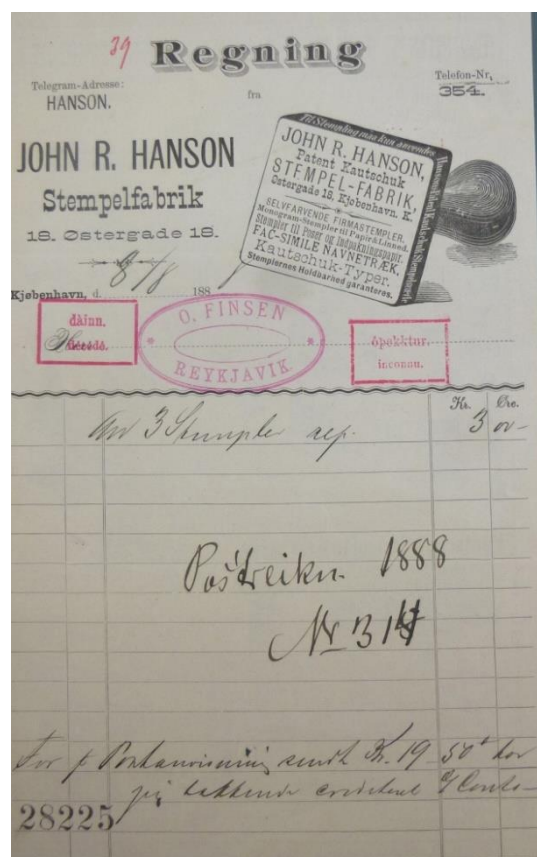


Fig.5 8 August 1888. This invoice with Iceland handstamps with partly corrected spelling.

## Original handstamps on invoices 1888



Fig.6 January 1889. Earliest known Iceland handstamp in red on piece

20 February in purple  
neitað móttökn/ refusé.  
ekki sókt. / non réclamé.  
dàinn. / décédé.  
20 June in purple  
òpekkur/ inconnu.  
farinn/ parti.  
8 August in red (corrections)  
dàinn. / décédé.  
òpekkur. / inconnu.

Neither the *neitað móttökn/ refusé* (instead of *neitað móttöku/ refusé*) nor *ekki sókt* (instead of *ekki sótt*) spellings seem to have been corrected at all, and the latter used on piece is illustrated here.

Then, on 30 October 1898, some 10 years later, another invoice indicates that labels had been ordered locally. Ísafoldarprentsmiðju, well known printers in Reykjavik, charged 12.50 kr for labels in Icelandic and French on gummed paper “(dàinn, ópekkur, farinn o.fl)” (Fig. 7) (Ref. 5) Sheet size and quantities are not clear. A very few such labels are recorded printed in black on white paper, imperforate with large margins, from 1901, but not all types. (Fig. 8)

All those known, bilingual handstamps and labels are on mail from abroad and are listed in the table. Others are surely still to be found. The use of labels may have ceased by 1910.

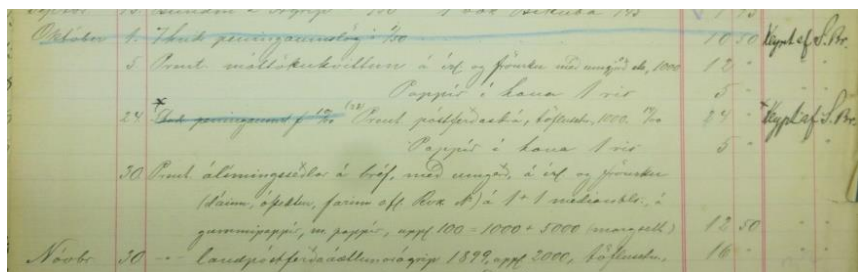


Fig.7

Fig 8.

Rare Ópekkur label on card from Germany





**Table: Original handstamps and labels as used in Iceland**

Date	Source	Text	Label	Handstamp	Notes
? January 1889	From abroad	ekki sòkt/ non réclamé		x	On piece in red
1890-1	From abroad	farinn/ parti		x	On reverse of envelope in red
March 1893	From abroad	óþektur/ inconnu		x	On reverse of envelope in purple
June 1901	From abroad	Ekki sótt/ Non réclamé	x		On front of card
January 1904	From abroad	Óþektur/ Inconnu	x		On reverse of envelope
March 1904	From abroad	Óþektur/ Inconnu	x		On reverse of envelope
June 1904	From abroad	Óþektur/ Inconnu	x		On reverse of envelope
September 1906	From abroad	ekki sótt/ non réclamé		x	On front of card in black
June 1907	From abroad	Óþektur/ Inconnu	x		On front of card
February 1909	From abroad	Óþektur/ Inconnu	x		On front of card

Interestingly, Icelandic spellings seem to vary and handstamps used lower case letters while labels had a capital letter. Quite how long they lasted is not at all clear, because of the paucity of examples. However, certainly by 1910 single language handstamps had come into use, in French only. (Fig. 9) But later, following the Danish example, pink multi-purpose labels have been in use at least since the early 1980s, for internal mail as well. (Fig. 10) By the 1990s they were self-adhesive. (Fig. 11)

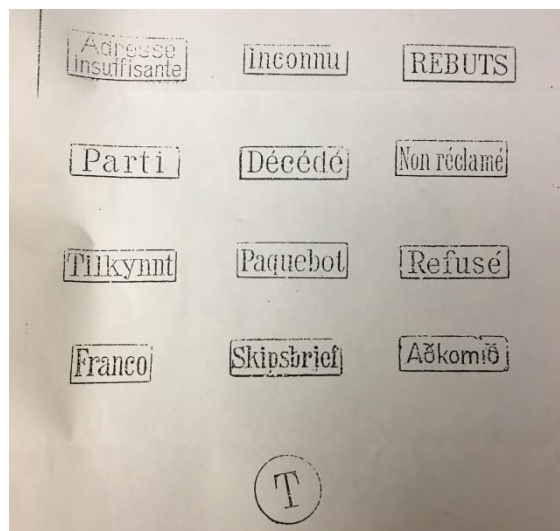


Fig. 9

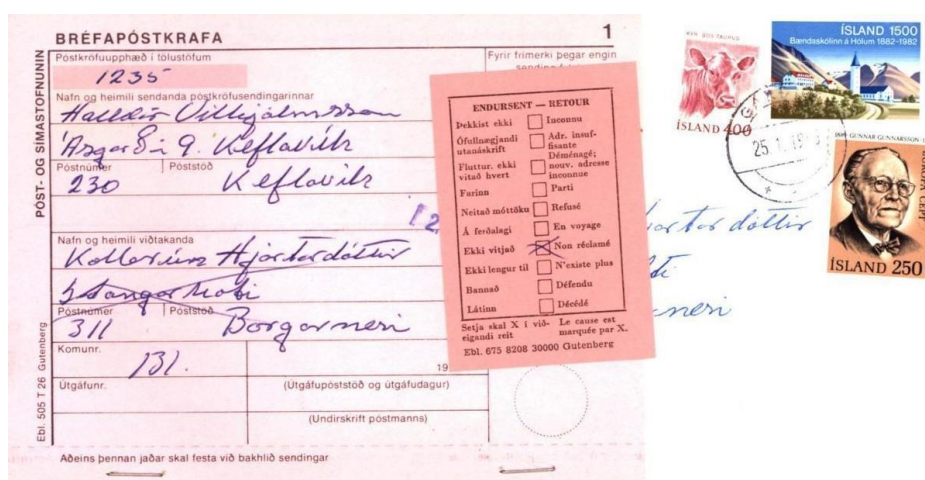


Fig. 10



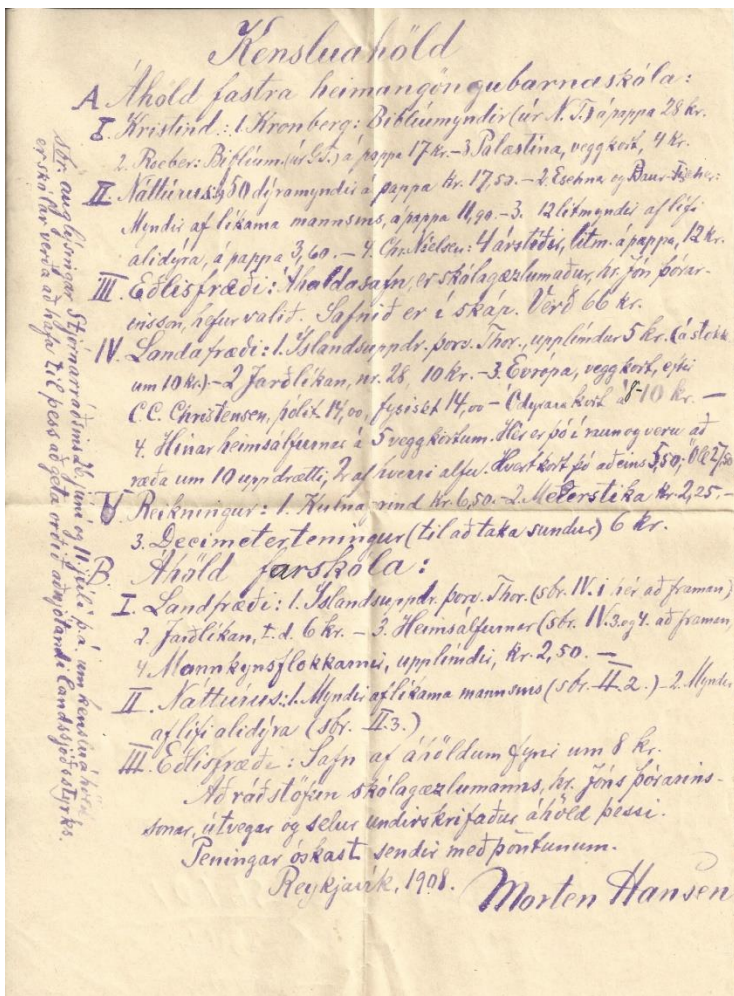
Fig. 11

*The author would be very pleased to hear of any further examples of either handstamps or labels.*

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1. Muir, Douglas N. "Return to Sender! The 'Retour' Etiquettes of Scandinavia" *The London Philatelist* [.....]
2. *Officielle Meddelelser fra Overbestyrelsen for Postvæsenet* No. 9 den 23 Marts 1887 – III/ pp 23-4.
3. Iceland National Archives (NAI): HA/6 – 1887 – 1888, 1887 Rp. Jn Nr. 19
4. NAI Endurskoðunarskjöl Postreikningar 1888
5. NAI Endurskoðunarskjöl Postreikningar 1898

## Unusual printed matter to rural destination *Wilbur Jonsson*



It is unusual to see a cover at the printed matter rate addressed to a place in the countryside in Iceland. The example here is franked with a 3 aur TK perf 12.3/4 sent from R'Vk on 08 08 1908 containing a price list of teaching materials addressed to:-

*Vilaerungur (right reverend), Prestur séra Ólafur Finsson, Kalfholtí, Rangárvallasýsla.* There is a backstamp of Hraungerði.

(Ed.) The search will be on for other printed matter examples to the countryside, but it is very unlikely there will be any with a list of the contents and as beautifully written as this!



## Póstkrafa questions

I am grateful to Armagan Ozdinc, for questioning a postal rate of 65aur on two registered Póstkrafa cards sent in 1928 and 1930. I did not know the answer, despite hours of searching for information. Eventually, as so often in the past, I referred the matter to Ólafur Eliásson for his advice. The flaw in my approach was that I was looking for evidence of the “parcel” that I was convinced must have been sent with each of the forms. I am unable to use Armagan’s images, but fortunately Ólafur sent the following images of his two 1934 Póstkrafa forms which also show the 65aur rate. Ólafur’s explanation follows.

<p><b>Afklippingur</b> sem viðtakandi má klippa frá, þegar hann tekur við borgun.</p> <p>Kr. 6.35</p> <p>Viðtakandi póstkröfusetningarinnar</p> <p><b>R</b> Reykjavík Nr. 683</p> <p>Hinn 15. 5. 34 193</p>	<p><b>Póstkrafa</b></p> <p>ad upphæð 6 kr. 35 aur., með bókstöfum</p> <p>Sex 35/100</p> <p>Þessi upphæð óskast innheimt hjá: Hr. Kristján Jónsson frá Garðsstöðum, Ís.</p> <p>Nafn sendanda og heimili: Afg. Stjórnartíðindanna Reykjavík</p> <p>Farar-nr. Komu-nr. 836</p> <p>Nr. Ofan nefnd upphæð er hér innborguð með kr. au.</p> <p>Póstafgreiðslan 193</p> <p><i>Rebuts</i></p>	<p>Eyðublað nr. 5</p> <p>Fyrir frimerki, þegar engin sending fylgir</p> <p>Móttökstimpill</p> <p>ÍSLAND 65 AUR 65</p> <p>Komu-stimpill</p> <p>ÍSLAND 19 V. 34</p> <p>Fararstimpill</p>
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Sent from Reykjavík 15.V.34 arrived Ísafjörður 19.V.34

<p><b>Afklippingur</b> sem viðtakandi má klippa frá, þegar hann tekur við borgun.</p> <p>Kr. 6.35</p> <p>Viðtakandi póstkröfusetningarinnar</p> <p><b>R</b> Reykjavík Nr. 642</p> <p>Hinn 15. 5. 34 193</p>	<p><b>Póstkrafa</b></p> <p>ad upphæð 6 kr. 35 aur., með bókstöfum</p> <p>Sex 35/100</p> <p>Þessi upphæð óskast innheimt hjá: Hr. Guðmundur Jónsson Anastöðum Hvt.</p> <p>Nafn sendanda og heimili: Afgreiðsla Stjórnartíðindanna Reykjavík</p> <p>Farar-nr. Komu-nr. 212</p> <p>Nr. Ofan nefnd upphæð er hér inn borguð með kr. au.</p> <p>Póstafgreiðslan 193</p> <p><i>Rebuts</i></p>	<p>Eyðublað nr. 5</p> <p>Fyrir frimerki, þegar engin sending fylgir</p> <p>Móttökstimpill</p> <p>ÍSLAND 65 AUR 65</p> <p>Komu-stimpill</p> <p>ÍSLAND 20 V. 34</p> <p>Fararstimpill</p>
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Sent from Reykjavík 15.V.34, arrived Hvammstangi 20.V.34

From Ólafur:- *those COD forms are a charge for subscription fee for official newspapers from the authorities; Stjórnartíðindi translates to “News from the Ministry” or something like that. (Lögbirtingablaðið on one of Armagan’s examples is more for short announcements or notices). There were no parcels accompanying those forms. I imagine they were for reminding the subscribers it was high time they pay their subscription. I imagine the subscription fee was 6kr, + the 35aur COD fee up to 12kr, and registration fee of 30aur, total 65aur. I have got two of these forms, both from 1934. Regards, Ólafur.*

Ólafur’s examples show various stamps marking the process. *rebutts itrekað* = reminder sent and *rebutts* = returned, manuscript *ekki vitjað* = not called for.

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### Late Silfurtún cancel (and Ásgarður-Garð) (Issue 37) Jørgen S. Larsen



Jørgen Steen Larsen offers late usages of B2c2 Silfurtún, from 19.X.58 and 11.IX.59 (both philatelic) so Eivind’s usage from 1960 seems unusual.



Jørgen adds with regard to B8e Ásgarður Garð: *I have a commercial airmail letter to Denmark with this cancel dated 18.IX.1959 with black ink – Facit (338 + 357\*3) and a commercial usage also dated 18.IX.1959 but with violet ink – Facit 371.*

*I also have a commercial usage dated 30.XI.1959 with violet ink on Facit 367. It is my guess that new violet ink was added during the day 18.IX.1959. At 6.X.1960 the color is again black.*

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

### Mystery mark Henk Burgman

Henk says he is having sleepless nights because of an inability to identify what the partial strike might be. Can readers help please?





## The Tip of the Crown *Ron Collin*

As you know, sometimes positive identification of some Crown cancels is difficult. I believe this was borne out with the article in IPM Issue #32. This article dealt with identifying the difference between GRUNDARFJÖRDUR and ØNUNDARFJÖRDUR.

The primary way of telling the difference between the two town cancelers, you actually need the first two letters of the cancel. There is also a minor difference which allows you to identify each cancel.

On GRUNDARFJÖRDUR the tip of the crown points between the R and F.

On ØNUNDARFJÖRDUR the tip of the crown points more toward the right leg of the R. That is why I said it was a minor difference. I have tried to provide clear enough examples from my collection, to show the differences. I hope they reproduce well.



In reviewing the cancels now being maintained in the Crown Cancel Database, I noticed two that were identified as FROSTASTAÐIR. Here they are.



When you only have the middle letters from a cancellation, it is sometimes imperative to be able to line up the tip of the crown with the letters in the cancel.

The tip of the crown is supposed to point to the middle of the town name. If there are a different number of letters in the two town names, the tip of the crown will point to two different areas of the cancels. I believe that these two cancels are FROSTASTAÐIR and HOLTASTAÐIR. FROSTASTAÐIR has 12 letters in the town name.

HOLTASTAÐIR has 11 letters in the town name. The crown tip points more toward the A in FROSTASTAÐIR, and the tip points toward the S in HOLTASTAÐIR, since the S is the middle letter in the name. I therefore submit that the second item has been mis-identified as FROSTASTAÐIR.



I have shown here, a much clearer example of HOLTASTAÐIR to emphasize the distinction.



(Ed. I think that although the positioning of the cancel on my stamp shown in IPM 32 does not help identify the RF very well, I am optimistic that it is Grundarfjörður. But I would say that, wouldn't I 😊?)

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### **Survey of crown cancels rated 5, RR and RRR in Facit**

This has been running for over 12 months and has made good progress. More than 800 strikes of crown cancels in the above categories have been recorded so far. If you have not yet contributed from your own collection, I invite you to do so by sending images to the editor.

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