
SECTION 6 -

POST OFFICES ASSOCIATED WITH ROYALTY



ST. JAMES'S PALACE

Aside from the official Court Post Offices there have been many normal public offices that have been used over the years for the speedy despatch or receipt of Royal Household mail and telegrams.

This section aims to detail those known to have provided facilities and to illustrate wherever possible the type of postal marking used. It does not claim completeness as many markings would have been in use for only very short periods of time and not always exclusively for use on Royal Household mail.

Some offices such as the SWDO will have used a phenomenal number of cancellations, most of which have not proved to be of any special significance unless highlighted as such in the text.

It always pays to check the reverse of any covers held in dealers stocks to see if there are any royal crests or the residence name on the envelope flap for towns detailed in this section as some items are lying undiscovered and as a result are priced cheaper than expected.

ABERDEEN

From the 1850's Aberdeen Post Office staff conveyed mail by Express Mail Cart to Balmoral and from 1874 postal facilities at the Castle were also provided by them. Additionally, staff were provided for Abergeldie Castle in 1955 for a fete in aid of the local church.

ALDERSHOT

Responsible for processing mail emanating from the Royal Pavilion (Aldershot) and for providing Postmen to deliver and collect mail in the first quarter of this century.

BADMINTON

Badminton handled mail from Badminton House during the evacuation of Queen Mary in the 1940's.

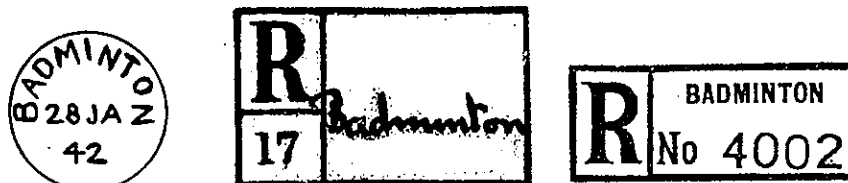


Fig. 6.1

6.1 BADMINTON single circle thimble. Seen 1942.

Registration Labels - Universal type with "Badminton" written in manuscript. "17" seen 1942.

BADMINTON "No. 4002" seen 1942.

BAKEWELL

This Post Office provided staff for the royal visit to Chatsworth House in 1904.

BALLATER

The Post Office at Ballater is used for mail from the royal residences at Balmoral.



Fig. 6.2

6.2 OFFICIAL PAID/BALLATER double circle with thick arcs. Issued April 1939. Seen 1986. Struck in red.

BILLINGSGATE, LONDON

The Tower of London used this Post Office as a back-up facility to Great Tower Street during the 1910's.

BRAEMAR

An Accelerated Day Mail Cart service was laid on from Braemar to Aberdeen in 1896 for the Balmoral mails.

BRIGHTON

Royal Pavilion (Brighton) mail was dealt with in the 1830's and 1840's by officials from Brighton Head Post Office.

BRISTOL

Bristol handled mail from Badminton House during the evacuation of Queen Mary in the 1940's.

CHARLES STREET, LONDON

Used by the Coronation (Executive) Committee in 1911 for the handing-in of telegrams during normal business hours.

CHESTERFIELD

Mail from Chatsworth House during December 1843 would have been cancelled at this office during Queen Victoria's visit. However, no mail has so far been discovered.

CHIPPENHAM

Chippenham handled mail from Badminton House during the evacuation of Queen Mary in the 1940's. When The Princess Royal and Captain Mark Phillips moved to Gatcombe Park in 1976 the mail arrangements were undertaken by Chippenham.

COUPAR ANGUS

A special mail gig service was provided from Coupar Angus to Balmoral during the stay of Queen Victoria from 1864.

COWES

From 1845 Cowes handled the mail arrangements for the residence of Osborne House until it became a Public Branch Office. It also is responsible for mail from the Royal Yacht when in port at the Isle of Wight.

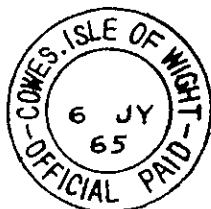


Fig. 6.3

- 6.3 COWES. ISLE OF WIGHT/OFFICIAL PAID** single circle with thin arcs. Struck in red. Used on mail from Britannia at Cowes. Issued 1965.

CRATHIE

"Post Office records show that an official Letter Receiving House was established in the village of Crathie in September 1842, a Mr Anderson guaranteeing to meet the Post Office's expenses of £5 a year.

"Crathie's first Receiver was Charles Thomson, head forester of the Balmoral Estate, who, realising soon after the introduction of Uniform Penny Postage in 1840 that the village needed a Post Office had set about building one.

"His new home and Post Office were very much like any other cottage in the area; thick granite walls and a low-pitched roof. It also possessed the usual bare wood dresser found in most highland cottages - but Thomson's dresser had a special drawer set aside for all the paraphernalia of the Post Office for forty-five years, until his death in 1887.

"Queen Victoria had become a frequent visitor, and upon Charles Thomson's death she expressed the wish that his son Albert, then following a successful commercial career in London, should take over the office. When she realised that he would have to accept a substantial drop in income if he agreed, she undertook personally to make up the deficiency. Thomson therefore became Postmaster of Crathie by Royal request.

"Later, the Queen suggested that the building was too small. Upon Albert informing her that his request for permission to extend the premises had been rejected, the Queen undertook to see to it - and permission was soon granted. Two rooms were therefore added, and the Post Office moved to the new wing.

"In 1887 an application was submitted for a Telegraph Office at Crathie (Aberdeen) and it was felt likely that it would be self-supporting. The expenditure was estimated at £77 and permission to go ahead was given on 21 March 1887.

"In December 1933, after forty-three years service, Albert Thomson died. His widow had already taken over the office in the preceding May, and she continued as Postmistress until her eldest son, Albert, was appointed Postmaster in 1947.

"Albert Thomson, aided by his brother Gordon, is still Postmaster, carrying on the business - in the same building - which has been part of the Thomson's family life for over one hundred years.

"The office is also well known to the many thousands of tourists who have visited the other building sited just a few yards away, Crathie Kirk, where Her Majesty the Queen worships when she returns to Balmoral Castle, her home in the Scottish Highlands." (Reproduced by courtesy of Post Office Archives, London)

It is quite clear that Her Majesty Queen Victoria thought very highly of the Thomson family. In her Highland Journal for Wednesday 1st September 1869, Victoria detailed a journey that she made from Balmoral to Ballater the carriage of which included both "Charlie" Thomson and "A Thomson" amongst its occupants.

DERSINGHAM

Until the Sandringham House Post Office was opened, Dersingham had been responsible for the delivery and collection of all the mails from the House.

DUBLIN

The visit in 1911 by the King and his entourage to Dublin Castle meant that the GPO at Dublin were instructed to provide postal and telegraphic services and staff.

EASTBOURNE

This Post Office was used during the stay of King George V and Queen Mary at Compton Place in 1935 and 1936.

EDENSOR

Facilities at Edensor Post Office were used in 1906 during the visit of Their Majesties the King and Queen to Chatsworth House, Derbyshire. Cycle Messengers conveyed telegrams from the House to Edensor.

EDINBURGH

The Palace of Holyroodhouse has utilised the sorting office located in Edinburgh for the processing of its mail since it first became a royal residence.



Fig. 6.4

6.4 EDINBURGH/OFFICIAL PAID double circle with thin arcs. Seen 1952 to 1976. Struck in red.

FORFAR

Glamis Castle uses this Post Office for the processing of all of its royal correspondence.

GREAT TOWER STREET, LONDON

This Post Office, sited near the Tower of London, was used by them as their local office for despatching mail in the early part of this century.

HOUSE OF COMMONS TELEGRAPH OFFICE

Used for the conveyance of telegrams from Westminster Abbey during the 1911 Coronation ceremony.

KING'S LYNN

The Royal Estate at Sandringham has its mail dealt with by the Post Office at King's Lynn.



Fig. 6.5



Fig. 6.6

6.5 OFFICIAL PAID/KING'S LYNN single circle. Struck in red.

6.6 OFFICIAL PAID/KING'S LYNN, NORFOLK single circle. Seen 1976 to 1981. Struck in red.

KINGSTON-UPON-THAMES

Hampton Court Palace came under the control of Kingston Post Office as early as the 1700's and continues to be responsible for postal arrangements to this day.

KNIGHTSBRIDGE, LONDON

Responsible for mails from Belgrave Square during the residency of the Earl Marshal's Office in 1952.

LONDON INLAND SECTION MECHANISED LETTER OFFICE

Since the mid-1980's this office has been used for processing mail from Buckingham Palace.

LONDON SOUTH WESTERN DISTRICT OFFICE

Used at one time or another for all mail emanating from London residences or offices of the Household.



Fig. 6.7



Fig. 6.8

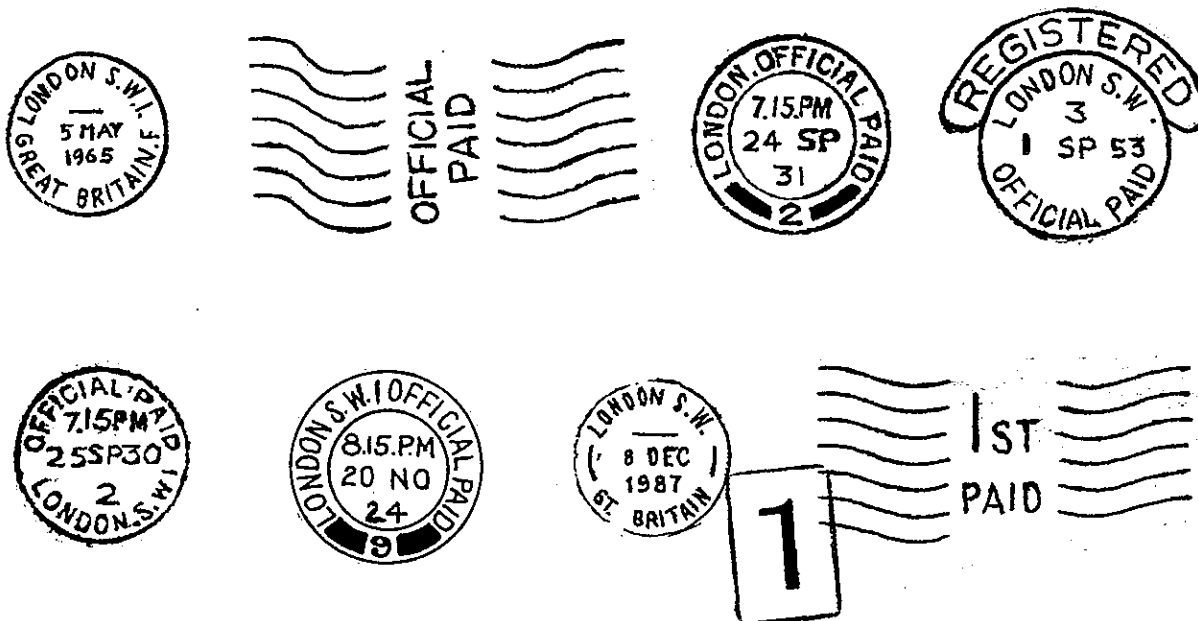


Fig. 6.9

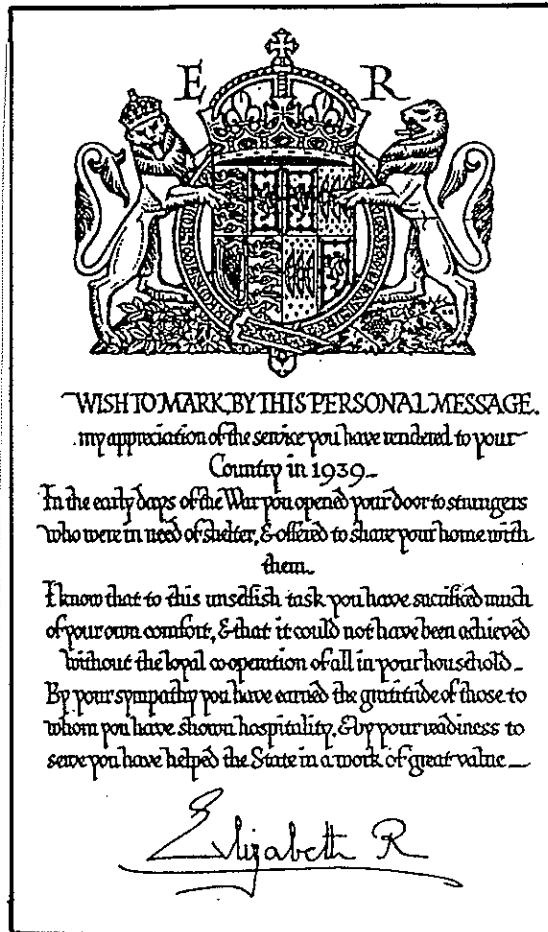
6.7 (CROWN)/PAID 1858 FREE cancellation issued for use on mail from the Royal Household. A miniature version of that used elsewhere in government, the place of use is not indicated. Withdrawn by late 1858. Struck in red ink.

6.8 BUCKINGHAM PALACE/S.W.1/PAID with GR and crown in centre. Single circle. Used on mail sent by the King and Queen to thank people for their kindness in housing evacuees from the air raids over London. Used without wavy lines from 26 March to 18 April 1940. A total of at least 320,000 items of mail were despatched but few appear to have survived. The envelopes enclosed a card measuring 11" x 7" (designed by G. Kruger Gray, FSA) and carried the good wishes of HM Queen Elizabeth. The cancellation was struck in black ink but the writer has seen a proof impression in red ink.

6.9 LONDON/SW1/GREAT BRITAIN C single circle. 1977 struck in red ink. Used on letters of thanks from the Silver Jubilee Appeal Fund and sent by Prince Charles, the Chairman of the Fund.



Examples of SWDO cancellations used over the years, none of which were for exclusive use on Royal Household mail.



Reduced copy of card that accompanied Fig. 6.8

NEWMARKET

The Court was often at Newmarket in years gone by and would have handed mail to officials of this office. King Edward VII used to attend the races and mail from 1906 is known bearing the royal monogram certifying stamp and local Newmarket postmark of the period.

OSBORNE

The Branch Office at Osborne was opened in 1904 but did not have "royal" connections. Details included for completeness only.



Fig. 6.10



Fig. 6.11



Fig. 6.12

- 6.10 OSBORNE B.O./COWES double circle with thick arcs. Issued 1904.
- 6.11 OSBORNE B.O./COWES, ISLE OF WIGHT rubber double circle parcel cancel. Issued March 1908.
- 6.12 OSBORNE B.O./COWES, ISLE.OF.WIGHT single circle. Issued 19 December 1908 for counter work.

RICHMOND, SURREY

The Royal Laundry took advantage of the facilities afforded by Richmond Post Office for the despatch of its mails from 1902.

ROYAL AIR FORCE STATION BENSON

During 1946 and 1947 the Post Office at Benson RAF Station despatched mail by aeroplane to Dyce for onward transmission by helicopter to Balmoral Castle.



Fig. 6.13



Fig. 6.14

- 6.13 BENSON R.A.F. STATION BENSON/OXFORD single circle. Not seen on Royal covers but as there is a Post Office based at the Station it is likely that some covers may exist.
- 6.14 ROYAL AIR FORCE/BENSON single circle. See note against above cancellation. Seen 1986 on the reverse of philatelic souvenir covers.

ST. JAMES'S STREET, LONDON

The Earl Marshal's Office used this Post Office during 1910 for the Coronation arrangements.

SANDRINGHAM

When Sandringham Post Office opened, a William Henry Mann was appointed Postmaster on a salary of £25 per annum. In 1900 Sandringham became a Railway Sub-Office for money order and telegraphic business from 8am to

midnight every day of the week.

On 30 September 1918 Mr Mann retired as Postmaster and John William Eastwick took his place the next day. On 24 July 1927 Mr Eastwick retired and Frederick Christopher Bunn took over. Then on 31 October 1952 when Mr Bunn retired an Antony Seaman Hanslip took over the position of Postmaster and remained until the office closed on 9 February 1968 due to lack of business. The retirement of Mr Hanslip due to ill-health also probably helped the Post Office reach its decision.



Fig. 6.15



Fig. 6.16



Fig. 6.17



Fig. 6.18



Fig. 6.19

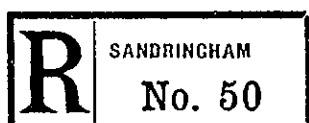


Fig. 6.20



Fig. 6.21

- 6.15 SANDRINGHAM single circle.
- 6.16 OFFICIAL PAID/SANDRINGHAM R.S.O. NORFOLK single circle. Issued on 28 August 1901. Seen 1902 to 1924. Struck in red.
- 6.17 SANDRINGHAM/NORFOLK single circle. Seen 1910 to 1919.
- 6.18 SANDRINGHAM/PAID/NORFOLK single circle skeleton. Seen 1924. Struck in red.
- 6.19 OFFICIAL PAID/SANDRINGHAM, NFK single circle. Seen 1925 to 1950 in red.
- 6.20 SANDRINGHAM/NORFOLK double circle with long thick arcs. Seen 1934.
- 6.21 SANDRINGHAM/NORFOLK double circle with short thick arcs. Seen 1956 to 1968.





- Registration labels - SANDRINGHAM** "No. 50" seen 1919.
- **SANDRINGHAM** "No. 225" seen 1924.
 - **SANDRINGHAM** "No. 84" seen 1934.
 - **SANDRINGHAM** "No. 2339" seen 1954.

TETBURY

The Post Office at Tetbury has handled postal arrangements at Highgrove House for mail from and to the Prince and Princess of Waleses' residence since 1980.

WEST STRAND, LONDON

Used by the Coronation (Executive) Committee in 1911 for the handing-in of telegrams after ordinary hours and on Sundays.

WESTMINSTER ABBEY

In 1902 at the Coronation of His late Majesty, arrangements were made at the request of the Earl Marshal for a staff of Telegraphists and of Messengers to attend at the Abbey to accept messages from Press reporters who were stationed in the Triforium in the North Transept.

A temporary office was built by the Office of Works at the back of the Triforium and connection was made between it and an office on the ground outside the Abbey by means of a cord-pulley and pouch. Messages taken by reporters by the Boy Messengers were handed in to the Office in the Triforium, thence lowered by the pulley to the office outside the Abbey and carried to the House of Commons Telegraph Office for transmission by pneumatic tube to the Central Telegraph Office

The assent of the Sergeant-at-Arms was obtained at the House of Commons; and the Chief Commissioner of Police made an arrangement by which the Messengers had free transit between the Abbey and the House.

The Abbey was also the temporary accommodation of His Majesty King George V on the day of his Coronation in 1911. A Court Post Office was established within the Abbey and Mr W G Stitt-Dibden in his article "A Coronation Collection" (see bibliography on page 178) quoted a Mr T Chandler who wrote

in 1937 about his connection with the Coronation. He wrote: "When I was detailed for the duty of Telegraph Messenger in Westminster Abbey, I was both proud and excited as may be expected of a lad of 16. On the day previous to the event I had to attend the Abbey for a rehearsal of my duties and to receive full instructions. This having been done, with the full approval of the Earl Marshal, I was issued with my pass card for the following day, without which, although in uniform, I should have been unable to obtain admittance to the Abbey. At the same time I was given a red rosette to be worn on the left breast of my tunic.

"A temporary Telegraph Office was erected in the Abbey, high up in the North Triforium, hidden from the view of those taking part in the Coronation ceremony but in a position from which I could obtain a good view of all taking place down below. This Office was for the sole use of Press representatives from all parts of the world, who were seated just to the front of the Office.

"My duty was to convey Press Telegrams from the reporters to the Telegraph Office for stamping and recording, after which they were transmitted to their respective destinations via the House of Commons Branch Office and the Central Telegraph Office."

Post Office Archive Minutes reveal that: "At the request of the Earl Marshal the Office of Works has this time duplicated the arrangements made at the last Coronation. The representatives of the Foreign Press have been granted facilities at the South Transept similar to those provided for the British Press at the North Transept; and, instead of the pulley and pouch system, pneumatic tubes have been provided to connect the Offices in the Triforium each with a relative Office on the ground outside the Abbey.

"The pneumatic tube arrangement is considered much better than the pulley arrangements provided last time, but the Abbey Authorities would not then consent to the arrangements now provided."

The Post Office Proof Book has two strikes of the die used possibly indicating that two separate cancellers were made (one for each Triforium) and despite showing a despatch date of 20 June, the cancels are dated 22 June. A set of date-type is, therefore, unlikely to have been supplied with the date-stamps.

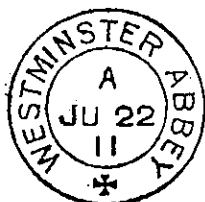


Fig. 6.22



Fig. 6.23

- 6.22 WESTMINSTER ABBEY/+ (cross pattee) double circle. Issued 20 June 1911. Code letter A. Seen on a telegraph form dated 22 June 1911.
- 6.23 WESTMINSTER ABBEY/+ (cross pattee) double circle. Issued 20 June 1911. Code letter B.

WHIPPINGHAM

This particular Post Office was sited close to Osborne House on the Isle of Wight and as soon as the House was acquired by Queen Victoria there was the need for postal facilities. The Postmaster (a Mr Groves) provided loyal service until his death in 1879 and there was clearly a close affinity between Victoria and Mr Groves and his family. Over a period of time she gave four £5 notes to them for services rendered and often called in for a chat and to purchase woollen items that they sold as a sideline.

WICK

Mail from the Castle of Mey is processed at this Post Office.

WILTON

Used by Edward VII on a royal visit to Wilton House, Salisbury in 1908.



Fig. 6.24



Fig. 6.25



6.24 WILTON/SALISBURY single circle undated and struck on registration label. Seen 1908.

6.25 WILTON/SALISBURY double circle with thick arcs. Seen 1908.

Registration Label - Universal type. "11" seen 1908

WINDSOR GREAT PARK

The Post Office was opened for use by the Royal Estate families on 17 January 1949. Its postcode is SL2 2HZ.

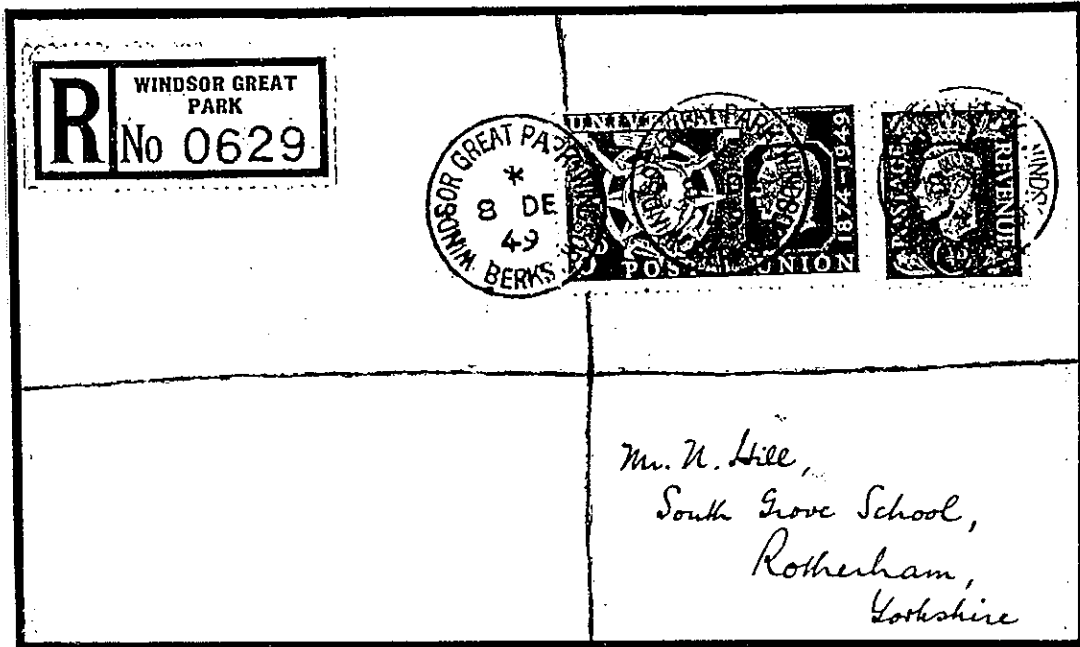


Fig. 6.26



6.26 WINDSOR GREAT PARK, WINDSOR/BERKS single circle. Issued 17 January 1949. Seen used on registered mail from 1949. Still in use in the 1960's.

Registration Label - WINDSOR GREAT/PARK "No. 0629" seen 1949.



Registered cover from Windsor Great Park Post Office

WINDSOR HEAD OFFICE

Postal facilities for all the royal residences in and around Windsor have been/are provided by this Office.



Fig. 6.27



Fig. 6.28

6.27 OFFICIAL-PAID/WINDSOR single circle. Issued 28 August 1901 to Windsor Head Post Office. Struck in red. Seen 1920.

6.28 OFFICIAL PAID/WINDSOR, BERKS double circle with thick arcs. Seen 1943/87. Struck in red.

NOTES