

PENNY BLACK PLATES

THE STAMPS, VARIETIES AND USAGE

Great Britain issued the Penny Black on 6 May 1840. It was eventually printed from eleven plates, the last black printing occurring in February 1841. Seven of these 'black' plates were also used to print the Penny Red when the colour was changed for security reasons. The exhibit explores each plate in numerical order. (Items of particular significance are listed below in *Italics* and in the exhibit are framed in red).

Plate 1 is of more than average interest because it developed wear fast and was completely repaired by re-entry shortly after its introduction. Prior to the repair it is known as plate 1a, after as plate 1b. *A rare strip of four plate 1b penny blacks on cover* is shown. Later it was also printed in red and further repairs were made. Several examples of these repaired stamps are shown including *a very rare example on cover from the third repair*. Throughout the exhibit matched plate positions are to be seen. **Plate 2** was also printed in both black and red and matched positions both on and off cover are numerous. Many varieties are seen throughout both of these plates.

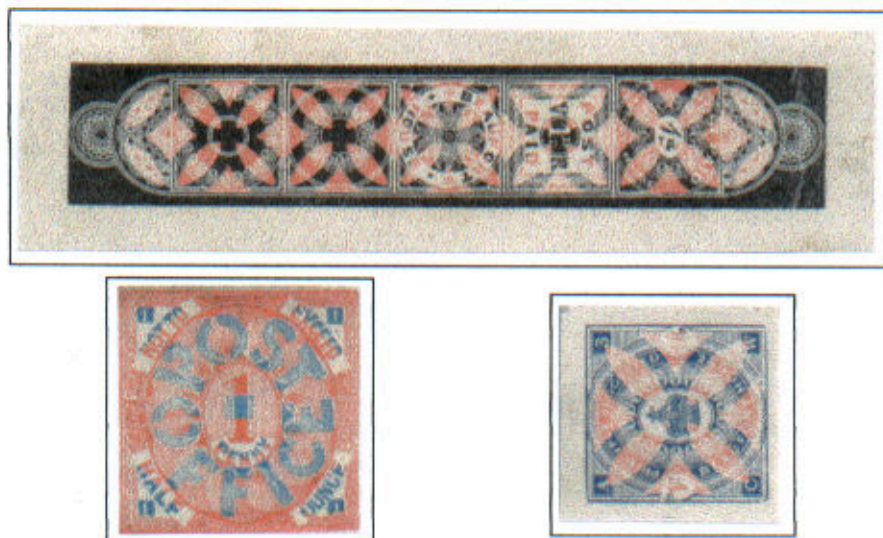
Plates 3 and 4 were not used to print penny reds. Both plates are nevertheless explored thoroughly with many varieties and several covers shown. The key item here is the very rare *Mulready letter sheet uprated with a plate 4 penny black*.

Plate 5 was one of the plates used to print reds as well as blacks so matched positions are shown. Several repairs were made to this plate and examples from the first, second and third are shown. Repaired states from all plates are scarce. An item of special interest here is a *cover bearing a plate 5 penny black redirected using a plate 10 penny red*.

Plates 6 and 7 were used only for black printings. As usual many varieties are found and a great many of these are shown. Plate 6 was repaired twice and examples from both repairs are shown.

Plates 8 and 9 are somewhat similar to each other. Both were used for both black and red printings and matched examples on and off cover are shown. *A rare strip of five plate 8 blacks* is a key item here. Plate 8 also shows several examples of repaired impressions. Of particular note is *the group showing both a red pre-provisional printing and a black provisional printing*. Most unusual.

Plates 10 and 11 are scarcer plates in black, plate 11 particularly so. They were both used for black and red printings. The key piece from plate 10 is the (probably unique) *unused block of thirty penny reds showing a large portion of the marginal inscription*. The key plate 11 item is a *penny black plate 11 stamp on cover*. Two are shown, both rare, but *the one with a re-entered stamp and a two-penny post postmark on the front* is significantly more important.



Examples of essays submitted by Charles Whiting
for the 1839 Treasury competition.