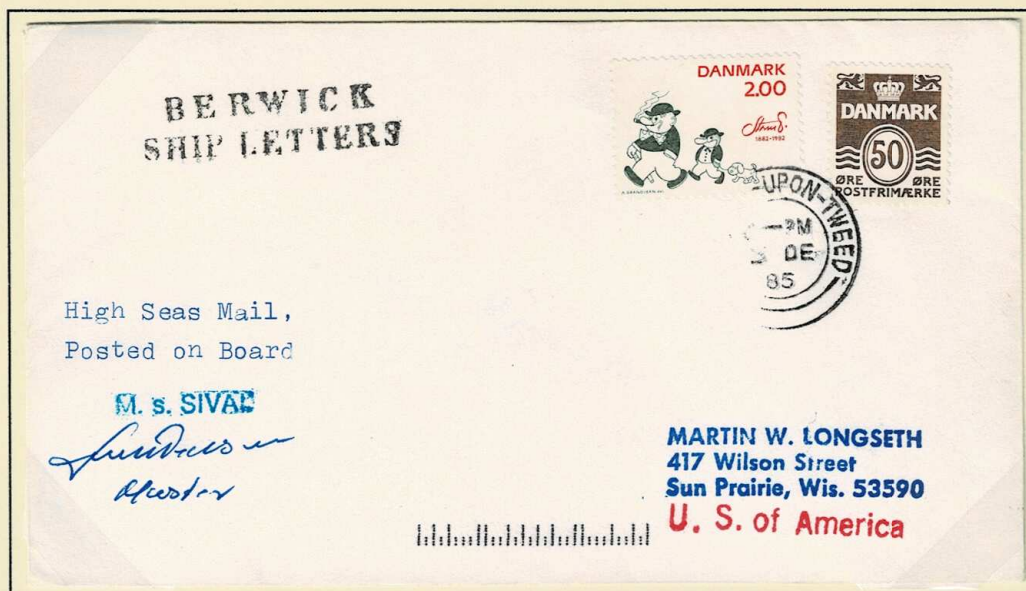


Ship Letters

1985

Two-line BERWICK/SHIP LETTERS measuring 10mmx42mm,
type PAQ5D.

BERWICK
SHIP LETTERS



In late 1985 a USA collector, Martin Longseth, organised for a number of covers to be mailed from European ports. In October 1986 the master of the first ship, MS Thurosund, requested that the two covers he carried be treated as Paquebot mail at Berwick upon Tweed.

On receipt of the request an employee at the Post Office couldn't find a Paquebot handstamp but found a BERWICK / SHIPS LETTERS handstamp issued in the 1830s and used that.

A few weeks later the MS Sival, carrying a three covers made a similar request, which were treated in the same way. The item shown above is one of these three. Later attempts to get further covers with this cancel failed as the Postmaster ordered a new Paquebot mark for use.

The Berwick Ship Letters handstamp came to the attention of UK collector Roger Hosking who wrote to the Berwick Postmaster to enquire about it. The Postmaster's reply stated: "*The stamp is in fact a museum piece which was used inadvertently on a few covers because a Paquebot stamp could not be located.*" He went on to say that "*...the amount of wear indicated some use...*" and ended by saying that "*There is no intention of reintroducing the stamp for ship's mail at this office.*"

Both Alan Robertson's "*The Ship Letters of Great Britain*" and Tabart's "*Robertson Revisited*" show that there is no known usage of the Berwick Ships Letters handstamp at any time in the period it should have been used (i.e. in the 1800s).



Post Office Telephone
23-10 WOLMARKET
BERWICK-ON-TWEED
TD15 1AA

Our reference Your reference
-5 FEB 1986

Dear Mr Horsberg

Thank you for your letter of 2 Feb 86 regarding the Berwick Ship Letters stamp. The stamp is in fact a museum piece which was used inadvertently on a few covers because the Piquet stamp could not be located. It has been withdrawn and it is hoped will be acceptable for the Post Office museum. No one currently employed at Berwick can recall the stamp being in regular use but I feel that the amount of wear indicates some

use over a long period, perhaps even as you suggest, in the last century. It is a simple stamp of brass construction with a wooden handle and has no other distinguishing feature. It has however created some interest as yours is the 3rd enquiry I have received. I trust this information will help to clarify the situation and I would add that there is no intention of reintroducing the stamp for ships mail accepted at this office.

Yours sincerely

D. Clark

POSTMASTER,
BERWICK-ON-TWEED.