

# The only known SHIP LETTER cancellation from West Hartlepool on mail from Iceland

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The picture postcard shown below (Fig. 1) has a special place in my collection in several respects.



Fig. 1: The picture side of the picture postcard with the 10 aurar franking and cancellation of Reykjavik

Several years ago, the card was offered for sale on an internet platform under the category "Icelandic postcards". Although only the picture side of the card was visible, I bought it for a few euros.

However, I was very surprised and delighted when I received the card a few days later and realised that it was a genuine postcard.

On the image side, the picture postcard was franked with a red 10 Aurar stamp from the Kings Christian IX and Frederik VIII (Dobbelhoveder) series and cancelled in the Icelandic capital Reykjavik on 23 March 1909 (Fig. 1).

The text and address side (Fig. 2) show that the card was obviously written by a French fisherman, who was working in Icelandic waters, to his home in Le Havre. In Le Havre, the card received the unfortunately rather illegible arrival postmark of 8 April 1909.

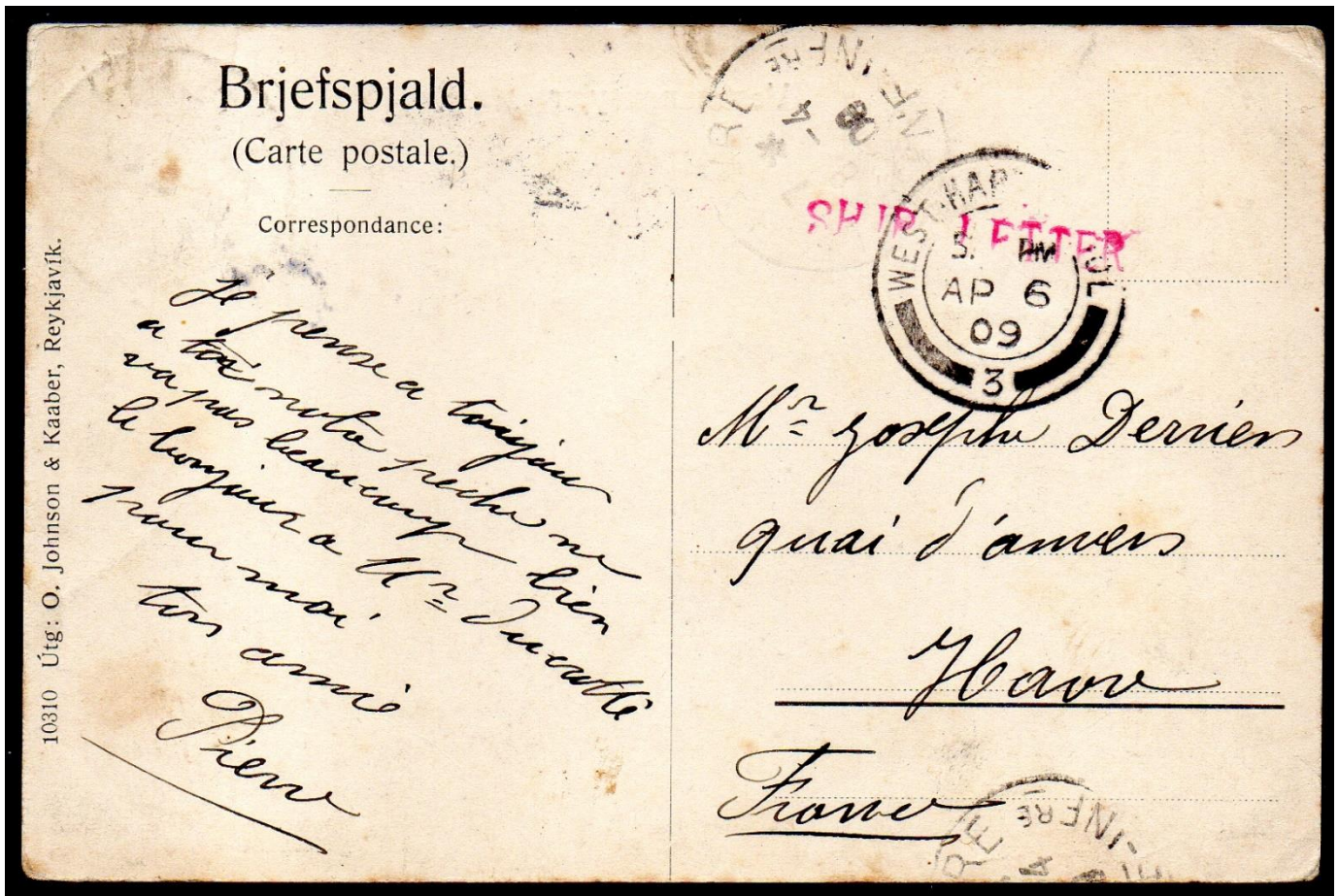


Fig. 2: The text and address side of the card with the West Hartlepool and SHIP LETTER landing stamps and the French arrival stamp cancellation.

However, the two other British postmarks used on the text page for the landing are extremely interesting (Fig. 3):

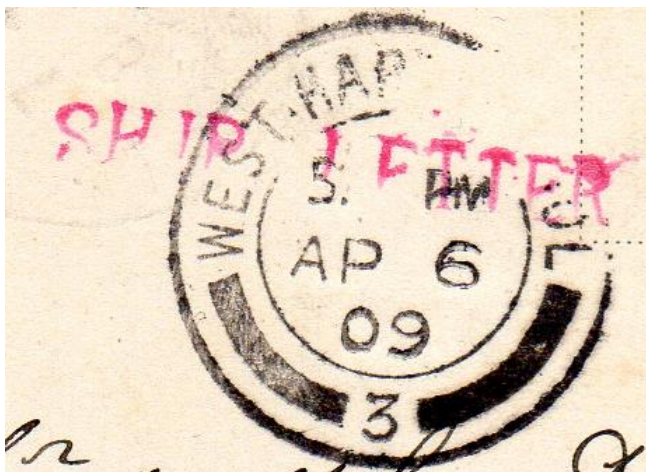


Fig. 3: The West Hartlepool and SHIP LETTER landing cancellations enlarged

The West Hartlepool day cancel, extremely rare on mail from Iceland, was struck on 6 April 1909. The harbour town in the north-east of England, which was only founded in 1839, became particularly well known for its connected railway line, a shipyard and large coal depots from which the steamships of the time could bunker.

Together with the aforementioned day cancellation, West Hartlepool also used the only line cancellation SHIP LETTER known to date on mail from Iceland. This has a length of only 33 mm and the height of the letters is only 3.5 mm.

Accordingly, this one-liner differs from the SHIP LETTER cancellations generally used in Great Britain, particularly in terms of size and design. The use of the red postmark colour is also very unusual. This was obviously chosen by the postal clerk to make the relatively small postmark easier to recognise.