
* CLASSIFICATION OF INDIAN POSTAL MARKINGS *

by MIKE SMITH and DAVID PADGHAM

(Explanatory Note: The writers approached this project from opposite directions, and came together by chance. David Padgham had the idea many years previously of incorporating into the "Handbook of Indian Philately" a standardised system of describing postal markings, but got no further than some outline notes. Mike Smith joined the I.S.C. some five years ago and, being keen to carry out some original research, found that no serious work had been done on postmarks later than Renouf's "classical" period, with the exception of Gog Horsman's study of Squared Circles. Contact with the latter member gave Mike an excellent grounding in the procedure to be followed, and a visit to the I.S.C. Librarian began an exchange of information and a detailed study of double-circle datestamps. It was eventually agreed that publication of this would fit in well as the second instalment of the wider scheme. Comments and suggestions on this first section will be welcomed and should be addressed to Mike Smith at 35 Sullivan Road, Tonbridge, Kent, TN10 4DD. Members interested in compiling detailed lists for further sections are invited to contact the Research Co-ordinator, Derek Lang.)

THE AIM OF THE PROJECT is to develop a system for the classification of Postal markings used in the Indian Postal Service from 1854, according to their pattern and purpose.

INTRODUCTION

The intentions of this classification are:

- (a) To provide a standard numbering system which can be adopted in all I.S.C. publications;
- (b) To provide a framework for the detailed study of sub-types and their classification;
- (c) To provide members, particularly newcomers, with an outline of the classification first published sixty years ago by Renouf, and modified by him in an Appendix to the Robson Lowe Encyclopaedia (1951), both being long out of print;
- (d) To incorporate to some extent new thinking derived from Post Office procedure into meaning and purpose of designs.

This is not a new study but an attempt to simplify a subject already studied in great depth, although some new facts may emerge by the very act of simplification.

The Post Office naturally used various technical terms to describe their own markings, to enable them to be referred to without ambiguity in rules for office procedure. Philatelists tend to use different, less precise, names. However, some philatelic expressions are too useful to be abandoned entirely, e.g. "Duplex", when the official phrase "Combined datestamp and obliterator" is cumbersome and includes later patterns such as the "Squared Circle" which are not duplex.

CLASSIFICATION

The broad classification, partly based on collecting habits, will emerge as the study progresses. Logically the office datestamps should come first, but here they follow Obliterators or "cancellations" (technically marks used to deface or obliterate postage stamps) which have had more study as they occur on loose stamps, which are more plentiful than covers. The word "cancellation" should be avoided where possible, and never used for a mark not on a stamp, since normally that is the only thing which can be "cancelled". Also, to

comply with philatelic practice, RMS/TPO marks and Military mail, need separate listings with cross-references where appropriate.

The list of categories proposed initially is as follows:

Section A: Obliterators and combined datestamps:

- Part I - All non-local types up to Independence;
- Part II - Urban and local types;
- Part III - Post-Independence.

Section B: Office datestamps - divided into the same three parts as Section A.

Section C onward (code letters to be allocated later), including:

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| Transit datestamps; | Slogans not combined with |
| Delivery datestamps; | datestamps; |
| Postage Due markings; | Miscellaneous; |
| Instructional and Remark stamps; | TPO/RMS and Airmail markings; |
| Dead Letter Office marks; | FPO marks; |
| Registration; | Foreign Exchange and Sea Posts. |

The section letters are intended to be used as a prefix to, and forming part of, the type numbers. Sub-types are distinguished where necessary by additional letters after the figures.

In the lists which follow, the heading against each type is the shortest unambiguous description, or popular name, and the characteristics contain detail to show the difference between similar types. The dates in brackets are the normal period of use, and not necessarily the latest recorded. Any other comments in the lists are confined to noting the development of one type from another, or indication of probable "trials". Definitions appertaining to a particular section will be found under that section heading.

TYPES AND SUB-TYPES

Marks of the same pattern differing only in office name should not be described as different "types" but as the same type used by different offices. The presence or absence of fleurons or stars, also significant variations in dimension, should be regarded as sub-types. Modified versions with added words indicating use in departments such as Registration, Insurance, and Parcels, will be dealt with as departmental sub-types of the basic pattern.

SECTION A - OBLITERATORS AND COMBINED DATESTAMPS intended for cancelling (defacing) postage stamps.

(Note: A number of office datestamps not incorporating any obliterating lines were frequently used for cancelling stamps over long periods, though not designed for the purpose. These will appear in category (B) and noted where necessary).

Part I - All non-local types up to Independence: Refer to types A1 to A32.

This includes types widely used in a Postal Circle (Province) or All India (occasionally a type was used outside the Circle of its adoption); also types which were apparently issued for trials at selected offices. The word "trials" is used here deliberately instead of "experimental" as there has been much confusion previously between experimental types and Experimental Offices. Examples of exclusions are those for suburban offices of the Presidency capitals, and District Post and locally made types.

Renouf's familiar numbering is basically retained as far as his type 20, but not his many sub-types. This will enable reference to be made to Martin's book "Numbers in Early Indian Cancellations" without a conversion table.

Definitions:

Obliterator: A mark designed to deface a postage stamp; normally a combination of heavy lines or dots, often with an identifying number or letter.

Combined Datestamp and Obliterator: (May be shortened to "Combined Datestamp" for convenience).

Any datestamp, including "duplex" types, which incorporates some form of obliterating lines, shading, "killer" arcs or dots for the purpose of defacing the postage stamp in the same operation as applying the date and office name.

Duplex: A philatelic name for a particular form of combined datestamp consisting of a single handle with a double head, one half of which is a date stamp and the other half an obliterator. A duplex handstamp could never be separated to use each half singly, though similar single handstamps may often be found resembling each half.

Bar: In describing a datestamp, the convention has been adopted of calling the two horizontal lines above and below the date (with or without hour) the bar; all the other lines are called lines if straight, or arcs if curved. In an obliterator, heavy shading lines are also known as bars, but this should not give rise to any ambiguity.

(Continued on the following six pages)

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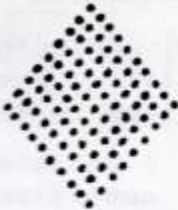





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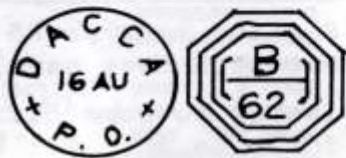



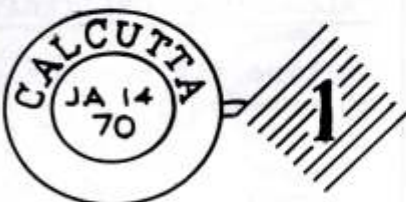
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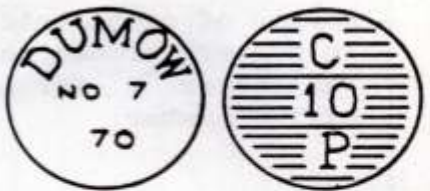

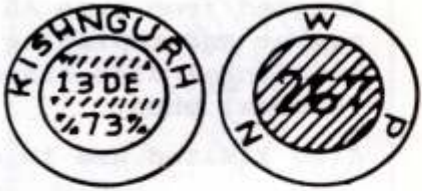



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| <p><u>OBLITERATOR OF DOTS:</u></p> <p>Shape varying, officially "lozenge-shaped"; commonest is a diamond, others include octagon, rectangle and circle. Dots vary in size and shape.</p> <p>(1854-56)</p> |  | <p>A 1</p> |
| <p><u>OBLITERATOR OF PARALLEL BARS:</u></p> <p>Forming a diamond. Bars normally slope up from right to left.</p> <p>(1854-56)</p> |  | <p>A 2</p> |
| <p><u>"BOMBAY" NUMBERED OBLITERATOR:</u></p> <p>As type A2, but bars broken in centre to contain a number identifying the office.</p> <p>(1855-73)</p> |  | <p>A 4</p> |
| <p><u>"BOMBAY" DUPLEX:</u></p> <p>Obliterator type A4, combined with datestamp formed from circle broken at top for office name.</p> <p>(1858-73)</p> |  | <p>A 4A</p> |
| <p><u>"NORTHERN" NUMBERED OBLITERATOR:</u></p> <p>Diamond of horizontal bars, parallel to longer axis, broken to contain the office number.</p> <p>(1855-60)</p> |  | <p>A 5</p> |
| <p><u>"MADRAS" NUMBERED OBLITERATOR OF DOTS:</u></p> <p>Diamond of dots, broken to contain at top the letter "C" and in centre the office number.</p> <p>(C = Carnatic, old name of province)</p> <p>(1856-73)</p> |  | <p>A 6</p> |

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| <p><u>"BENGAL" NUMBERED OBLITERATOR:</u></p> <p>Series of concentric octagons, varying in number, broken in centre to contain the letter "B" for Bengal above the office number.</p> <p>(1855-66)</p> |  | <p>A 7</p> |
| <p><u>"BENGAL" OCTAGONAL DUPLEX:</u></p> <p>Obliterator type A7 combined with a single-circle datestamp, having office name at top and "P.O." at foot.</p> <p>A rare sub-type has the octagons also enclosed in a circle.</p> <p>(1861-66)</p> |  | <p>A 7A</p> |
| <p><u>"NORTHERN" IMPROVED OBLITERATOR:</u></p> <p>Adapted from type A5 by framing the number and replacing the short horizontal side lines by tapering vertical ones.</p> <p>Also limited use in other Circles</p> <p>(1858-61)</p> |  | <p>A 8</p> |
| <p><u>"PUNJAB" DUPLEX:</u></p> <p>Obliterator type A8 combined with a single-circle datestamp, the office name horizontally above the date.</p> <p>(1861-64)</p> |  | <p>A 8A</p> |
| <p><u>FIRST "ALL-INDIA" DUPLEX:</u></p> <p>Adapted from type A8A. Obliterator enclosed in a circle, datestamp with office name at top and sometimes fleurons at foot (several sub-types).</p> <p>This is the first pattern of obliterator to be issued only in duplex.</p> <p>(1861-73)</p> |  | <p>A 9</p> |
| <p><u>"BENGAL" BARRED DUPLEX:</u></p> <p>Obliterator of parallel bars sloping up from left to right (i.e. opposite to normal type A4) broken to contain office number; double-circle datestamp linked to it by one or two short lines.</p> <p>Issued to some offices as alternative to type A9.</p> <p>(1862-73)</p> |  | <p>A 10</p> |

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| <p><u>"CENTRAL PROVINCES" DUPLEX:</u></p> <p>Obliterator of horizontal lines framed by circle. Lines broken in centre to contain initials of Province and office number; combined with single-circle datestamp. Only found in duplex form.</p> <p>Issued to some offices as alternative to type A9.</p> <p>(1867-70)</p> |  | <p>A 11</p> |
| <p><u>"MADRAS" NUMBERED OBLITERATOR OF BARS:</u></p> <p>Similar to type A5 of Northern Circle but with bars parallel to shorter axis.</p> <p>Issued to some offices as replacement for type A6. Not known in duplex.</p> <p>(1866-73)</p> |  | <p>A 12</p> |
| <p><u>"NORTH-WESTERN PROVINCES" DUPLEX:</u></p> <p>Obliterator of double circle; outer one contains initials of Province, inner one with diagonal lines passing through office number. Combined with datestamp of similar pattern; outer circle with office name, inner one with diagonal lines broken to contain date.</p> <p>(1871-73)</p> |  | <p>A 13</p> |
| <p><u>"PUNJAB" UNNUMBERED OBLITERATOR:</u></p> <p>As type A5 but without office number.</p> <p>(1863-72)</p> |  | <p>A 16</p> |
| <p><u>SECOND "ALL-INDIA" DUPLEX:</u></p> <p>A completely functional series, every line having significance. Each Postal Circle allocated a letter, each office a number or combination of numbers; the arrangement of figures and bars denoting status of office. Single-circle datestamp with name across centre.</p> <p>(1873-84)</p> |  | <p>A 17</p> |
| <p><u>"ALL-INDIA" OBLITERATOR:</u></p> <p>As type A17 but not combined with datestamp.</p> <p>(1873-84)</p> |  | <p>A 17A</p> |

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| <p><u>SQUARE OBLITERATOR WITH CIRCLE LETTER:</u></p> <p>A simplified type A17A without the office number.</p> <p>(1879-90)</p> |  | <p>A 18</p> |
| <p><u>DUPLEX SQUARE OBLITERATOR:</u></p> <p>Type A18 combined with single-circle datestamp, with the office name across the centre.</p> <p>(1879-80)</p> |  | <p>A 18A</p> |
| <p><u>ROUND OBLITERATOR WITH CIRCLE LETTER:</u></p> <p>A modification of type A18, without the sharp corners which would wear rapidly and might damage mail.</p> <p>(1880-1910)</p> |  | <p>A 19</p> |
| <p><u>DUPLEX ROUND OBLITERATOR:</u></p> <p>Type A19 combined with single-circle datestamp, with office name across centre.</p> <p>(1880-85)</p> |  | <p>A 19A</p> |
| <p><u>"ALL-INDIA" EXPERIMENTAL OFFICES OBLITERATOR:</u></p> <p>Heavy diagonal bars forming a square.</p> <p>Used at Experimental Offices not allocated a number in type A17 or A17A.</p> <p>(1873-84)</p> |  | <p>A 20</p> |
| <p><u>"CRESCENT" DUPLEX:</u></p> <p>Obliterator of six crescents framing a blank centre, combined with single-circle datestamp.</p> <p>Issued some years after other duplex types withdrawn; probably a trial type.</p> <p>(1892-97)</p> |  | <p>A 21</p> |

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| <p><u>"SQUARED CIRCLE":</u></p> <p>Combined datestamp and obliterator, formed by adding outside a single circle, several bars at a tangent tapering to squared corners.</p> <p>(1883-1910)</p> |  | <p>A 22</p> |
| <p><u>DOUBLE-CIRCLE COMBINED DATESTAMP:</u></p> <p>Date, without hour, on a bar across centre; segments of inner circle filled with vertical obliterating lines.</p> <p>A sub-type has the bar crossing the inner circle only.</p> <p>(1894-1926)</p> |  | <p>A 23</p> |
| <p><u>DOUBLE-CIRCLE COMBINED DATESTAMP, WITH HOUR.</u></p> <p>As type A23, but wider bar to include hour below date.</p> <p>(1896-1926)</p> |  | <p>A 24</p> |
| <p><u>DOUBLE-CIRCLE COMBINED DATESTAMP, WITHOUT BAR:</u></p> <p>Two concentric obliterating arcs in outer circle; hour, date and year in three lines in centre.</p> <p>Probably a trial type.</p> <p>(1906-10)</p> |  | <p>A 25</p> |
| <p><u>DOUBLE-CIRCLE COMBINED DATESTAMP, WITH OBLITERATING ARC:</u></p> <p>Date, without hour, on bar across centre; inner segments with vertical bars, and one heavy arc in outer circle.</p> <p>(1910-30)</p> |  | <p>A 26</p> |
| <p><u>DOUBLE-CIRCLE COMBINED DATESTAMP, WITH OBLITERATING ARC, WITH HOUR:</u></p> <p>As type A26 but wider bar to include hour below date.</p> <p>(1910-36)</p> |  | <p>A 27</p> |

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| <p><u>DOUBLE-CIRCLE COMBINED DATESTAMP,</u> <u>"F.P.O." TYPE:</u></p> <p>Office name made up from loose type in central bar above date. Segments of inner circle filled with vertical obliterating bars.</p> <p>(1929-32)</p> |  | <p>A 28</p> |
| <p><u>RECTANGULAR COMBINED DATESTAMP,</u> <u>WITH SLOGAN:</u></p> <p>Date and time in centre, flanked by wavy obliterating lines. Slogan across top and office name at foot.</p> <p>(1933-47+)</p> |  | <p>A 29</p> |
| <p><u>"COMET" TYPE COMBINED DATESTAMP:</u></p> <p>Single-circle datestamp, combined with long wavy obliterating lines to the right, touching the circle; resembling a machine impression, but actually handstruck.</p> <p>(1940-47+)</p> |  | <p>A 30</p> |
| <p><u>"Krag" MACHINE IMPRESSION:</u></p> <p>Combined datestamp and obliterator forming a continuous impression across the cover. A number of straight parallel lines broken to include office name, date and other details, arranged in a rectangular format, but unframed.</p> <p>(1910-15)</p> <div style="text-align: center; border-top: 1px solid black; border-bottom: 1px solid black; padding: 10px 0;"> INDIA _____ CALCUTTA _____ INDIA 1910 _____ 7-PM- 2 FE _____ 1910 </div> | | <p>A 31</p> |
| <p><u>"UNIVERSAL" MACHINE IMPRESSION:</u></p> <p>Combined datestamp and obliterator, producing a single impression on each cover. Office name, date and time (24-hour clock) in single circle. To the right, after a gap, either a slogan or wavy lines, or a combination of both.</p> <p>(1923-47+)</p> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center; gap: 50px;">  <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>SUPPORT INDIAN INDUSTRIES</p> </div> </div> | | <p>A 32</p> |