

London Railway Stations: Late Fee (Night) Mails to Europe

Scope: To show the postal history of posting Late Fee mails for the night mails to Europe at the London Railway Termini.

Presentation: Commercial and private correspondence with emphasis on postal rates and Late Fees, methods of despatch, the treatment of the postal material. Train Stations and Railway Carriers are identified.

Postal History: *Late Letters are such as are posted after the ordinary time and which cannot therefore be sent forward by the mail then in preparation, unless extra payment be made* (Post Office Guide 1857, page 15). Great Britain had an extensive system for the treatment of Late Mail, London in particular had a most complex one. Railway Late Fees form a distinct group. In 1879 Late Fee Mail to Europe became possible either in the Station's Late Box or in the Sorting Carriage. The **Railway Termini** accepting such mail were (3 & 4 much more elusive than 1 & 2):

1. **Cannon Street Station** (1879 – 1914) – Night Mails to Europe via France
2. **Charing Cross Station** (1879 – 1914) – Night Mails to Europe via France
3. **Holborn Station** (1886 – 1914 and from 1923) – Night Mails to Europe via Holland
4. **Victoria Station** (1886 – 1914 and from 1923) – Night Mails to Europe via Holland

Late Fees: 6d (1879 – 1885), 4d (1886 – 1905), 2d (from 1906), 1d (on Sundays)

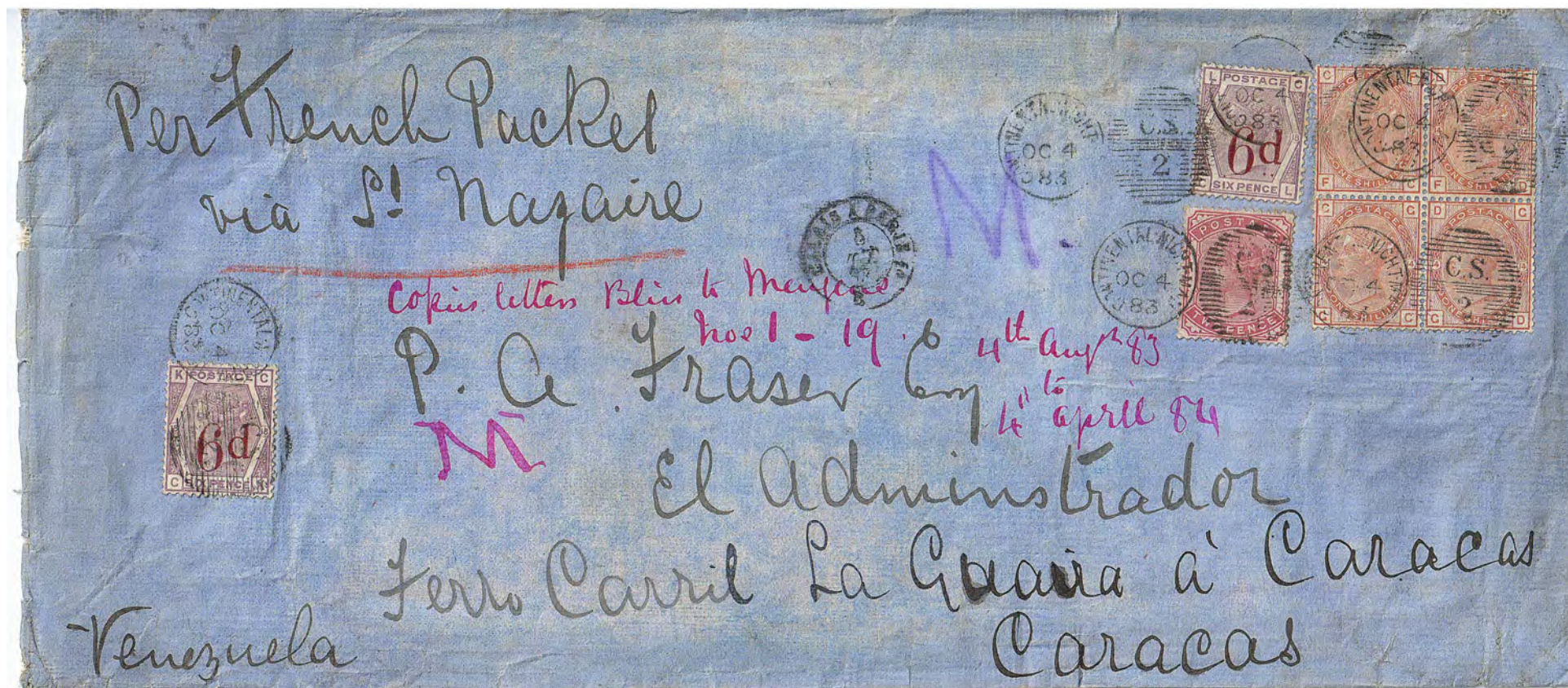


Items shown: Commercial and private covers and postcards (and even one printed matter wrapper!) posted in the Late Box or in the Sorting Carriage of the trains in these four Stations. All four different Late Fees are represented, as well as mail sent by Express and Registered post. As expected, all mail is addressed to European countries, except an early example to Venezuela (then again of course via France).

Bibliography: Various Post Office guides and circulars have been consulted from those available at the excellent GBPS web site. In addition, the two most important books on the covered subject:

1. John Parmenter *London Late Fee and Too Late Mail 1840 - 1930*. 2002, the Rossiter Trust and the British Philatelic Trust for the London Postal History Group.
2. Harold S. Wilson, *The Travelling Post Offices of Great Britain & Ireland*. 1996, The Railway Philatelic Group.

Cannon Street Station: South Eastern Railway
London & Dover S.C. (Continental Night Mail)



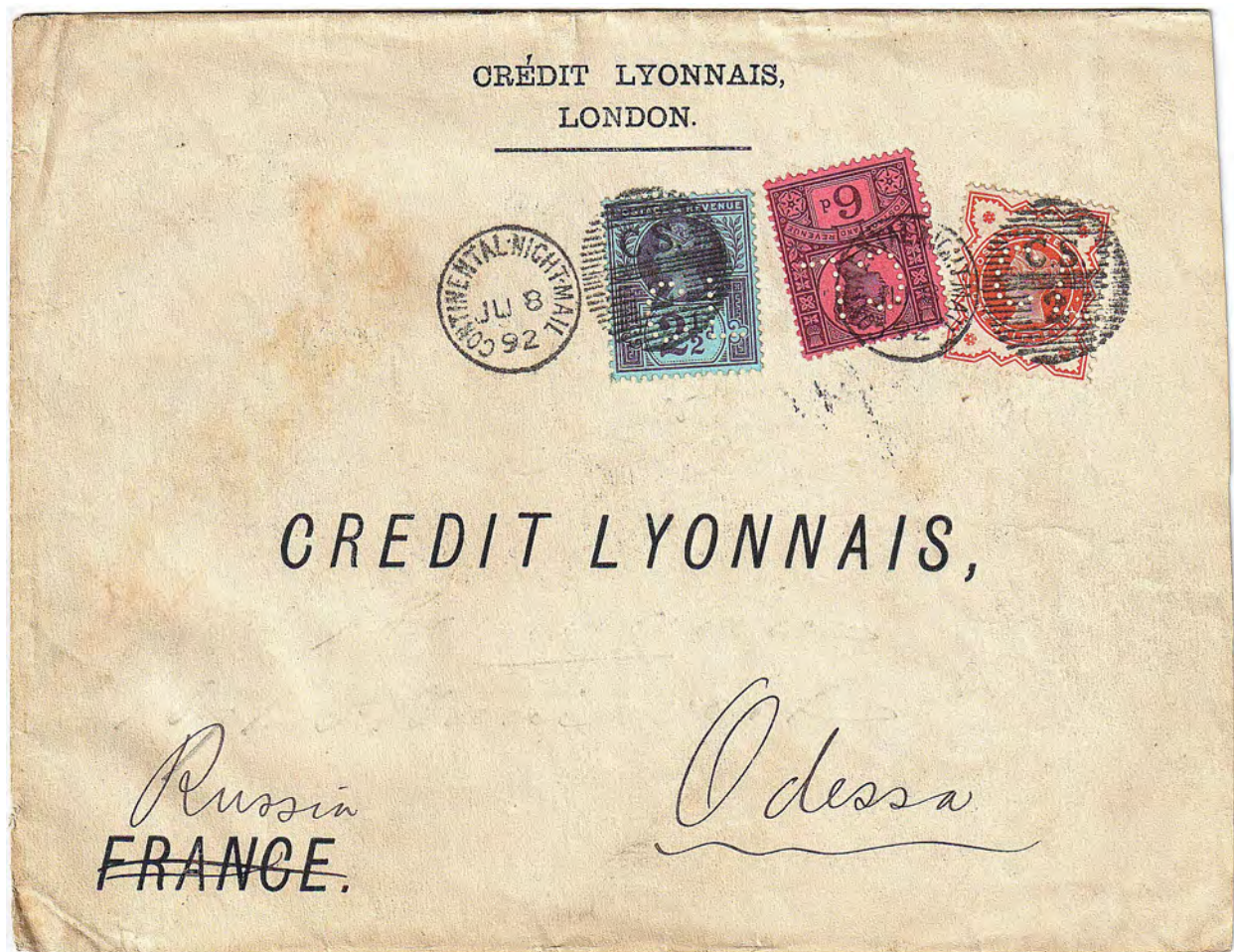
“Per French Packet via St Nazaire” commercial cover sent with **CONTINENTAL NIGHT MAIL OC 4 83 / CS 2** to Caracas, Venezuela via ambulant **CALAIS A PARIS 5 OCT 83, PARIS ETRANGER 5 OCT 83** and maritime **LIGNE A PAQ. FRANCAISE 6 OCT 83**.

Postage: 4 s 8 d (7 oz weight band = 14 times the basic 4 d rate), **6 d Late Fee** for the Continental Night Mail.

Few covers are recorded with the early 6 d Late Fee, this combines elusive franking and unusual destination. Ex Gilbert Wheat collection.

Cannon Street Station: South Eastern Railway London & Dover S.C. (Continental Night Mail)

Even though Late Fee letters for Russia were advertised in the Post Office Guide as "...should only be posted in the boxes at Holborn Viaduct or Victoria Station for despatch via Flushing...", in practice this seems to have been largely ignored by the public and Cannon Street was used instead.



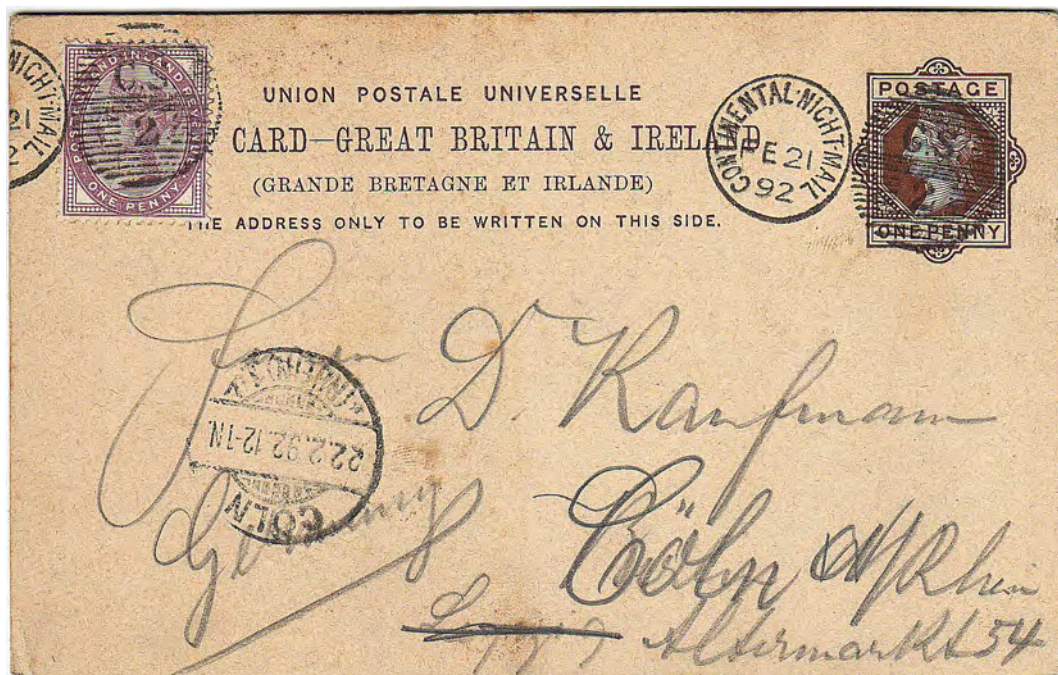
CREDIT LYONNAIS, LONDON banking cover sent with **CONTINENTAL NIGHT MAIL** **JU 8 92 / CS 2** to Odessa (31/3 OS calendar arrival backstamp), Russia (now Ukraine).
Postage: 5 d foreign double rate, **4 d Late Fee** for the Continental Night Mail.

Stamps perfined "CL" for Credit Lyonnais.

Cannon Street Station: South Eastern Railway London & Dover S.C. (Continental Night Mail)

Sunday Late Fee

A collection of letters, postcards and newspapers for Europe bearing an extra fee of 1 d was made at 6.00 p.m. on Sundays.



One Penny postal stationery card postmarked **CONTINENTAL NIGHT MAIL**

FE 21 92 / CS2 to **CöLN 22 2 92**, Germany. **FE 21 92** is a Sunday.

Postage: 1 d foreign postcard, **1 d Late Fee** for the Continental Night Mail.

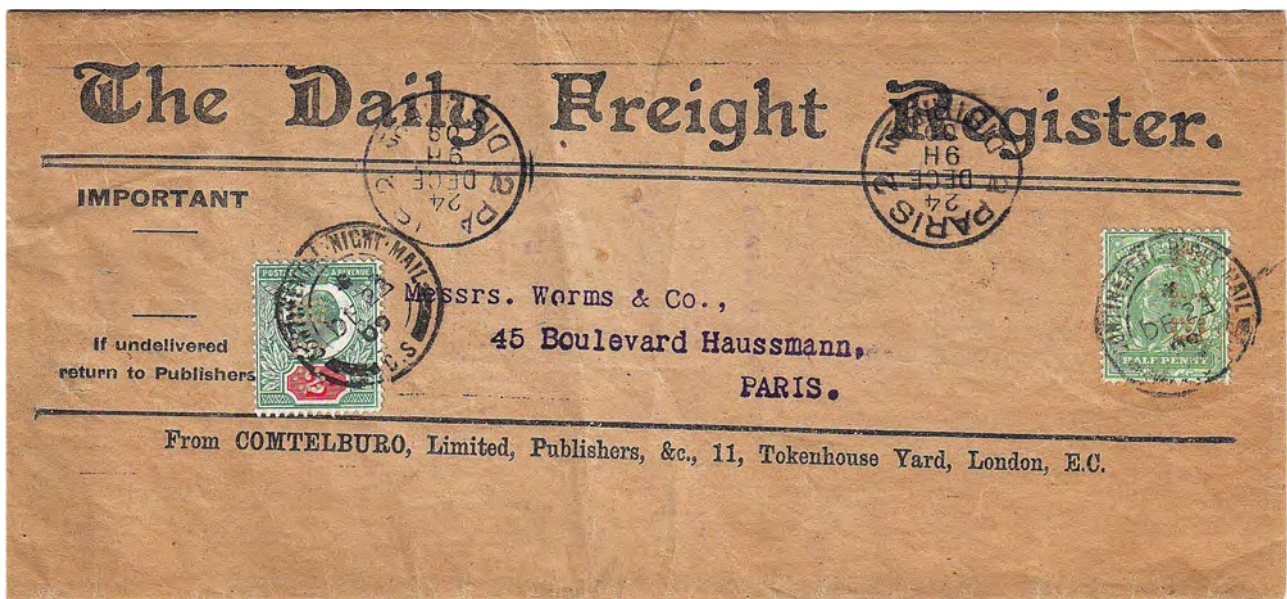
Sunday Late Fee mails posted in Railway Stations is generally more unusual than other Late Fee mail. Cannon Street Station is most elusive.

Cannon Street Station: South Eastern Railway London & Dover S.C. (Continental Night Mail)

Printed Matter

Newspapers could be posted in the Station Letter Box at just ½ d Late Fee in addition to the usual newspaper postage. It is understood that this reduced Late Fee applied only to actual newspapers, not to other forms of printed matter, as the following example shows.

I have never seen a newspaper posted in the Station Letter Box.



The Daily Freight Register complete wrapper postmarked **CONTINENTAL NIGHT MAIL DE 23 09 / CS** to **PARIS 24 DECE 09**, France. Stamps perfined CTB of the *Commercial Telegram Bureaux*.

Postage: ½ d printed matter, **2 d Late Fee** for the Continental Night Mail.

This is the only example of a wrapper posted in the Late Box of a Station that I record.

Cannon Street Station: South Eastern Railway London & Dover S.C. (Continental Night Mail)

Express Service

The Express Service was available at the train platforms. The sender had to pay the ordinary postage, plus the usual Express Fee, plus the Late Fee.



COMMERCIAL TELEGRAM BUREAUX Express cover posted with
CONTINENTAL NIGHT MAIL JY 31 05 / CS to ZURICH 3 / 1.VIII.05 /
FIL.BAHNHOF, the Zurich Train Station, Switzerland.

Postage: 2 ½ d foreign letter, 3 d Express Fee, 4 d Late Fee for the Continental Night Mail.

Stamps perfined "C T B" for Commercial Telegram Bureaux.

Cannon Street Station: South Eastern Railway London & Dover S.C. (Continental Night Mail)

Registration

Registered letters could be received in the Sorting Carriages at a few Railway Stations on payment of one shilling in addition to the usual registration fee and postage.



Three Pence postal stationery registered envelope postmarked **CONTINENTAL NIGHT MAIL JA 13 13 / CS** to **BERLIN SW 15.1.13**, Germany. With additional postage of 1 s and 1 ½ d, a total of 1 s and 4 ½ d.
Postage: 2 ½ d foreign letter , 2 d registration, **1 s Late Fee** for the Continental Night Mail.

Registered Late Fee mail posted in Sorting Carriages is exceptionally elusive. I have only seen another couple of items.

Charing Cross Station: South Eastern Railway London & Dover S.C. (Continental Night Mail)

Insufficient Late Fee

In rare cases the sender did not pay the full amount of the Late Fee. The offending letter would be returned to the Foreign Branch in London and despatched with the next mailbag, thus treated as common mail. The following example shows just that.

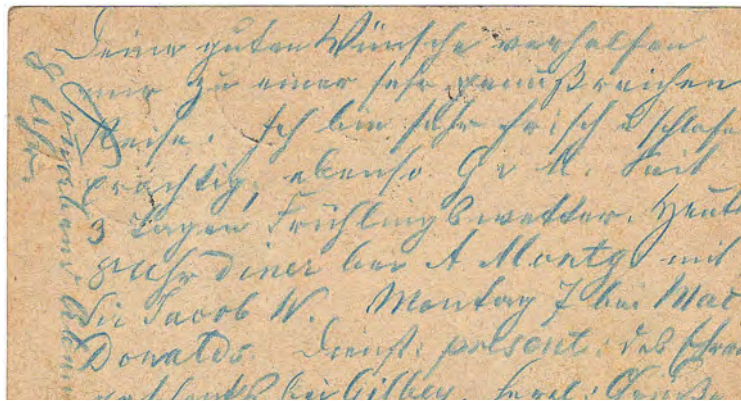


One Penny postal stationery envelope with additional 2 ½ d stamp postmarked **CONTINENTAL NIGHT MAIL AP 16 91 / CX1** to **PARIS 17 AVRIL 91**. As the letter pays only 1 d Late Fee instead of the required 4 d it was returned to the London FB (**LONDON AP 17 91**), to be despatched with the next mails. **Postage:** 2 ½ d foreign letter, **1 d Late Fee** shortpaid by 3 d for the Continental Night Mail.

Charing Cross Station: South Eastern Railway London & Dover S.C. (Continental Night Mail)

In a real hurry to send a postcard

Postcards (postal stationery cards or picture postcards) posted for the CNM are usually found with the 1 d Sunday Late Fee or the 2 d Late Fee (after the reduction of the much higher 4 d in 1906). Before 1906, one must have been in a real hurry to send a 1 d postcard with the 4 d Late Fee, representing four times the postcard rate to abroad.



One Penny postal stationery card with additional 1 d x 4 stamps postmarked
CONTINENTAL NIGHT MAIL FE 28 91 / CX 1 to Ranzin near Züssow,
Prussia.

Postage: 1 d foreign postcard, **4 d Late Fee** for the Continental Night Mail.

Charing Cross Station: South Eastern Railway London & Dover S.C. (Continental Night Mail)

Sunday Late Fee

A collection of letters, postcards and newspapers for Europe bearing an extra fee of 1 d was made at 6.00 p.m. on Sundays.



One Penny postal stationery card postmarked **CONTINENTAL NIGHT MAIL**
NO 22 96 / CX to Berlin **24 11 96**, Germany. **NO 22 96** is a Sunday.
Postage: 1 d foreign postcard, **1 d Late Fee** for the Continental Night Mail.



2 ½ d postal stationery envelope postmarked **CONTINENTAL NIGHT MAIL**
DE 16 00 / CX to Munich **18 DEZ 00**, Germany. **DE 16 00** is a Sunday.
Postage: 2 ½ d foreign letter, **1 d Late Fee** for the Continental Night Mail.

Charing Cross Station: South Eastern Railway London & Dover S.C. (Continental Night Mail)

Picture Postcards



Picture postcard sent with **CONTINENTAL NIGHT MAIL SP 6 08 / CX** to **OSTENDE 7 SEPT 1908**, Belgium.

Postage: 1 d foreign postcard rate, **2 d Late Fee** for the Continental Night Mail.



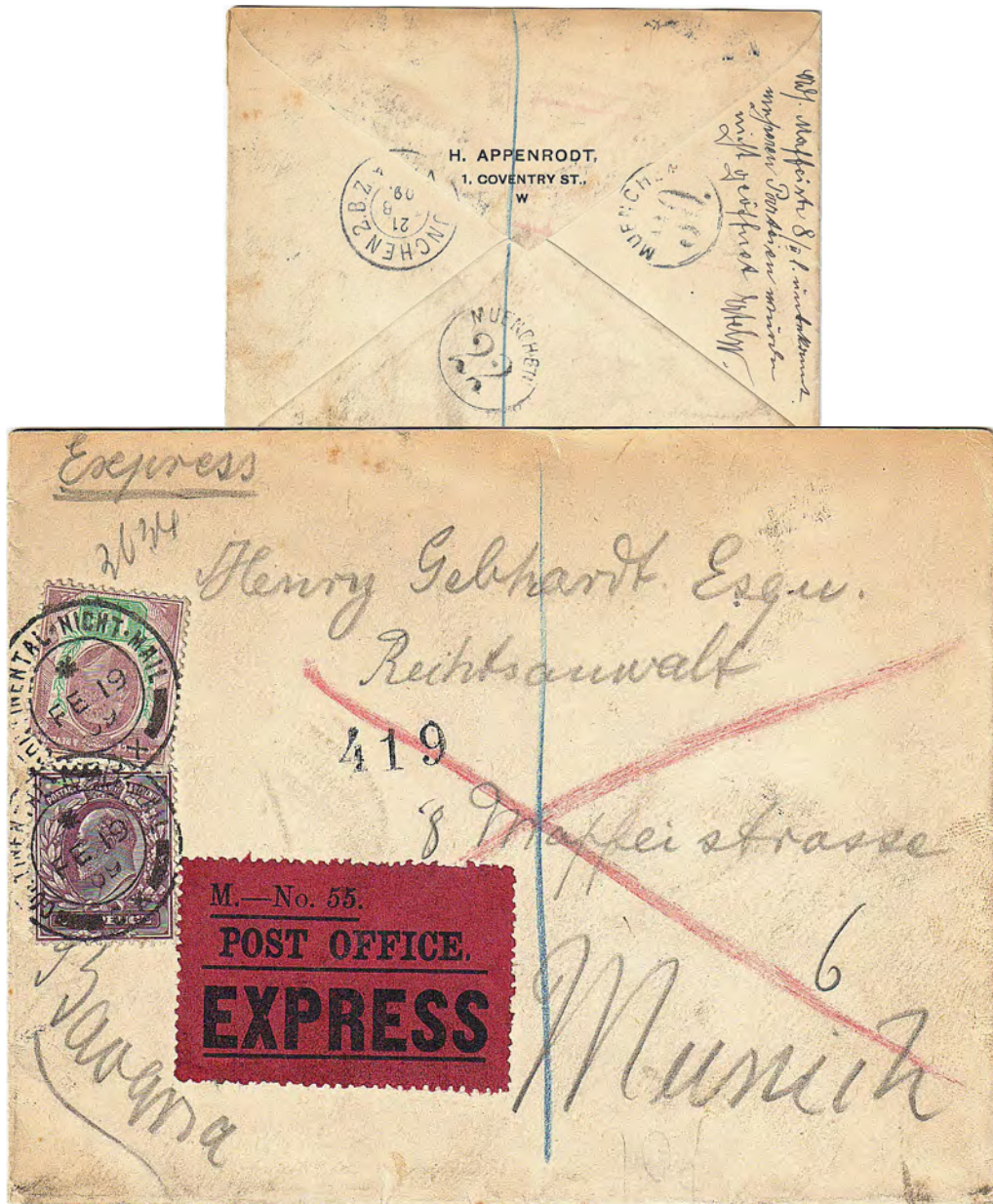
Picture postcard sent with **CONTINENTAL NIGHT MAIL MY 26 08 / CX** to **PARIS 27 SEPT 08**, France.

Postage: 1 d foreign postcard rate, **2 d Late Fee** for the Continental Night Mail.

Charing Cross Station: South Eastern Railway London & Dover S.C. (Continental Night Mail)

Express Service

The Express Service was available at the train platforms. The sender had to pay the ordinary postage, plus the usual Express Fee, plus the Late Fee.



Express cover posted with **CONTINENTAL NIGHT MAIL FE 19 09 / CX** to **MÜNCHEN 21 FEB 09**, Germany.

Postage: 2 ½ d foreign letter, 3 d Express Fee, **2 d Late Fee** for the Continental Night Mail.

Holborn Station: London, Chatham & Dover Railway London & Queenborough S.C.

There was a 4 d Late Fee from Holborn Station between 1886 and 1906 (when it was reduced to 2 d) for the night mails to the Continent of Europe via Queenborough and Flushing (Vlissingen in the Netherlands). Such Late Fee mail was posted at the Holborn Viaduct Late Box and carried on the London, Chatham & Dover Railway.



Private envelope with a total franking of 6 ½ d postmarked **HOLBORN VIADUCT STATION / NO 23 93 / L.C & D. RLY**, stamps cancelled by a “milled edge” date-stamp of the Newspaper Branch type, but here with the code “HV” (Holborn Viaduct), to Doos near Nürnberg, Germany.
Postage: 2 ½ d foreign letter rate, **4 d Late Fee** for the night mail to Europe.

This the fourth example that I record with this “HV” cancellation.

Holborn Station: South East & Chatham Railway London & Queenborough S.T. (Sorting Tender)



THOS. COOK & SON, LUDGATE CIRCUS, LONDON envelope with a total franking of 4 ½ d stamps cancelled **LONDON & QUEENBORO S.T. JY 13 10** to Berlin. The sender's address indicates that it was posted in the Late Box at the Holborn Station rather than that of Victoria. *Stamps perfined T.C. & S., the sender's initials.*

Postage: 2 ½ d foreign letter rate, **2 d Late Fee** for the night mail to Europe via Queenborough and Flushing.

Note the printed info under the sender's details: "Official Agents of the Passion Plays at Oberammergau, 1910". Indeed, it is thanks to the entrepreneur excursion salesman Thomas Cook, who discovered the play for himself in 1880 and began selling passion play package tours, that it has such a big following abroad.

Victoria / Holborn Station: South East & Chatham Rly
London & Folkestone S.C. (Sorting Carriage)



Printed commercial stationery envelope with two imprinted stamps totalling 4 ½ d, cancelled **LONDON & FOLKESTONE S.C OC 3 11** to Leipzig, Germany.

No sender's details so impossible to determine if it was posted in Victoria or Holborn Station.

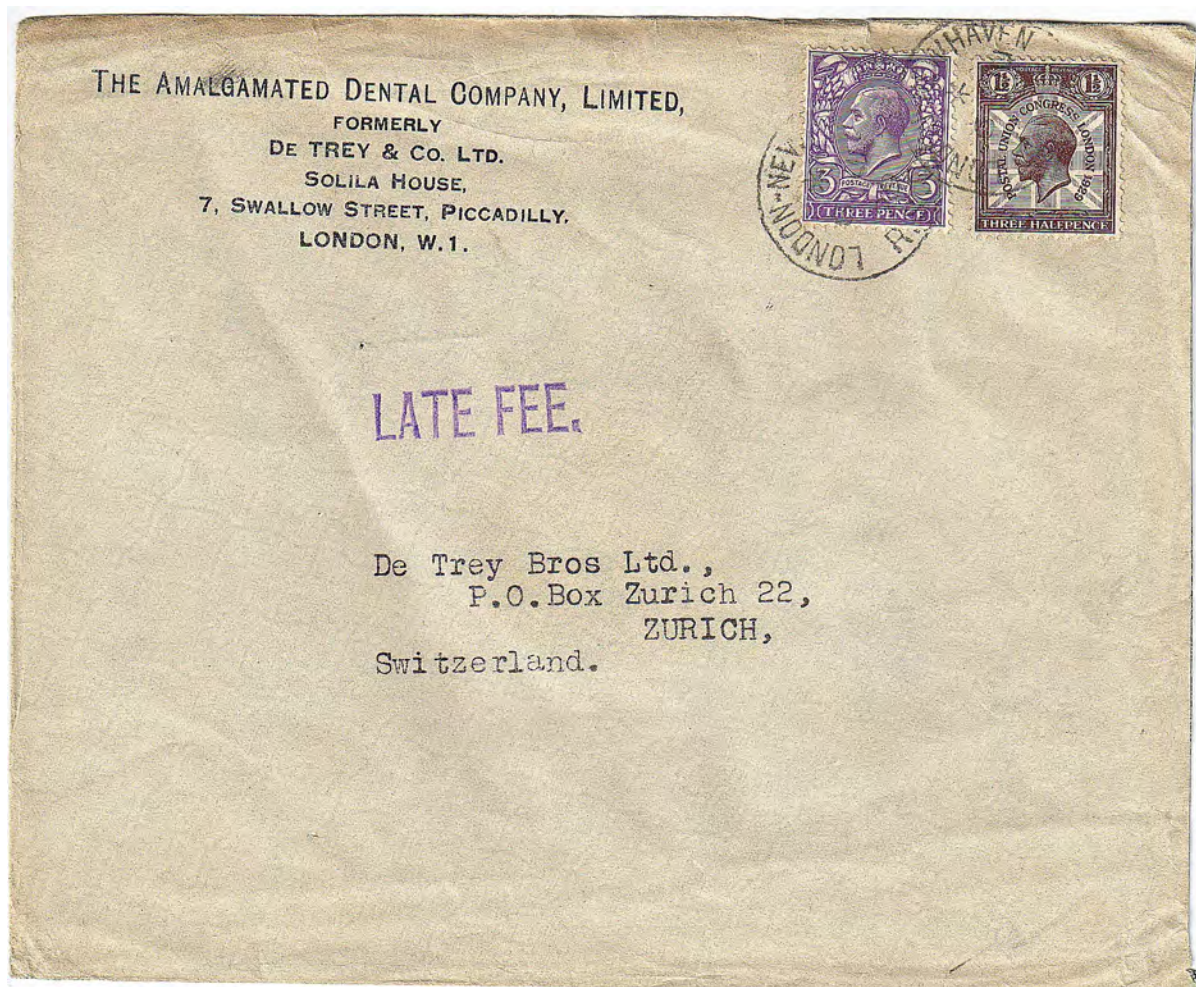
Postage: 2 ½ d foreign letter rate, **2 d Late Fee** for the night mail to Europe via Folkestone and Flushing.

The Post Office circular of 18 April 1911 announced: "On and after 18 April Packets performing the N.M. Services between this country and the Netherlands will sail between Folkeston and Flushing, in place of Queenborough and Flushing. In consequence the title of the Sorting Carriage running in connection with these packets will be altered from London & Queenborough S.C. To London & Folkestone S.C..."

Victoria / Holborn Station: Southern Railway London & Newhaven R.S.C. (Railway Sorting Carriage)

Postwar Arrangements

Railway Late Fee mail to Europe ceased in 1915 after the outbreak of WW1. In January 1923 such mail was again accepted, this time to be carried on trains of the newly formed Southern Railway. The usual prewar charges applied (1 d Sunday Late Fee or the 2 d Late Fee).



THE AMALGANATED DENTAL COMPANY LTD, 7 SWALLOW STREET, PICCADILLY envelope with two stamps totalling 4 ½ d, cancelled **LONDON – NEWHAVEN R.S.C. 6 JU 29** to Zurich, Switzerland. Piccadilly was halfway between Victoria and Holborn Stations, so impossible to determine in which of these two stations the letter was posted.

Postage: 2 ½ d foreign letter rate, **2 d Late Fee** for the night mail to Europe via Newhaven.

The service ceased after the outbreak of the WW2 in September 1939, never to be resumed.