

Hong Kong Small Broken-ring Datestamp Webb Type 12 Census – update

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The original article was published in Hong Kong Study Circle Journal 403 in October 2022. Since then more information has turned up and I would like to take this opportunity to do an update on type 12 c.d.s.

Background

Webb described his type 12 c.d.s. as "A 20mm single-lined circle broken in the upper half by HONG KONG, and date in the centre; the letters are unseriffed". He thought that the datestamp was sent out to be used with the small Crown PAID AT HONG KONG Webb type 11; the rationale being a Crown Paid mark and a matching datestamp was usually sent as a pair¹. For instance, the two Large Crown PAID AT HONG KONG were accompanied by Webb type 7 c.d.s. and the medium Crown PAID AT HONG KONG was sent with the Webb type 9 c.d.s. It is strange that in June 1852, only one small Crown PAID AT HONG KONG was sent without a datestamp. Perhaps, a matching datestamp was planned initially but something went wrong, for instance, clerical error or imperfection found on the datestamp die that led to delay in sending.

The small broken-ring c.d.s. was a common design at that time for British colonies, a proof strike can be found in the 1857 London G.P.O. Proof book p.14. As can be seen on the same page shown here, other colonies had similar designs.

1857 Small HK CDs

To what Place	Date when sent	Stamps
Teneriffe	23 Oct	TENERIFFE NOV 9 57 PAID AT TENERIFFE
Hong Kong	14	HONG KONG NOV 17 57
St Thomas		ST. THOMAS NOV 13 57
Amara	24	RAMBLE NOV 13 57 JAMAICA MONTPELIER NOV 13 57 JAMAICA
Antigua	44	ENGLISH HARBOR NOV 10 57 ANTIGUA PAID AT ENGLISH HARBOR
Malta	75	TOO-LATE

Date of Delivery

Looking through the London G.P.O. Proof book page by page, one can see that the dispatch date was usually noted in the second column or sometimes was the same as the date on the c.d.s. This is not so on this page. In fact, there is only one date visible i.e. "23 Oct." at the top of the middle column. Does this mean all the datestamps on this page were sent on this date, irrespective of the date on each c.d.s.?

Proud states on page 305 of his Hong Kong 1841-1997 book that the c.d.s. was dispatched from London on 17 October 1857². Clearly Proud based his assertion on the date of the c.d.s. impression in the proof book and it is logical that the dispatch date was near the sailing date of a mail ship leaving Southampton.

Post office supplies were invariably sent by the direct Southampton mail rather than the supplementary mail sent across the English Channel and then by train to Marseilles. Assuming the dispatch date was "October 17", the ship carrying the datestamp must have been P&O *Indus*, which left Southampton on 20 October 1857 and arrived in Hong Kong on 13 December on P&O *Cadiz*. If the datestamp had been sent out on "23 October", it would have had to wait until 4 November for the next mail ship to sail from Southampton. Indeed, Webb's earliest date of use "15 December 1857" agrees with Proud's date of dispatch.

Recorded dates

Type 12 c.d.s. is found struck on both outgoing and incoming letters:-

ERD in Webb, Schoenfeld³ and Proud is 15 December 1857

LRD in Webb is 1 June 1859

Dr. Hans Schoenfeld (HKSC NL 295, Oct. 1995) sub-divided the c.d.s. into two sub-types:-

Type 12 - no index letter, **day before month** configuration.

Type 12a - fitted with index letter C, **month before day** configuration.

ERD in Schoenfeld type 12a is AP 12 59

LRD in Schoenfeld type 12a is JU 5 59

Webb recorded one example in the Patrick Pearson RDP collection with an arrival postmark of 9 May 1859 on a letter from Guernsey to Hong Kong and three other examples (his earliest and latest date plus another). Since then, more letters have turned up in dealers' stock, private collections and stamp auctions. Including the two I do not have photographic record of, i.e., Mr. Pearson's example and an LRD letter from the Michael Goldsmith archive⁴, I have now recorded 38 examples (*Appendix*). Some examples are only partly illustrated due to the practice of auction houses in the past showing only the portion containing the salient feature.

Schoenfeld "Type 12a" is known only from April 1859 onwards. Proud suggested that introduction of index letter was related with the introduction of a "time code" on the datestamp.

1857 period

I have recorded only two examples in 1857, probably the one mentioned by Webb dated 15 December 1857 (*Figure 1*), and the incoming letter from London to a well-known addressee in Shanghai shown in *Figure 2*. This was sold as Lot 661 of Interasia's "Nostalgia Collection" in June 2016. An unclear impression of a type 9 c.d.s. and a partial impression of a type 12 c.d.s. are on the back of this letter.

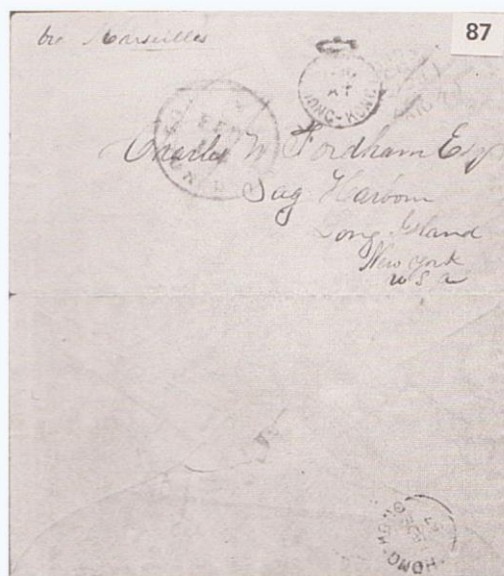


Figure 1 Earliest Recorded Date

The type 9 c.d.s. is likely to be the arrival c.d.s. since the type 12 c.d.s. is found on outgoing letters together with the small Crown PAID AT HONG KONG. In this case, an agent paid for 4d inter-port postage to Shanghai, after he collected the letter from the post office. It would have been put on the next ship to Shanghai, the P&O *Lady Mary Wood*, which sailed on 31 December.



Figure 2

1858 period

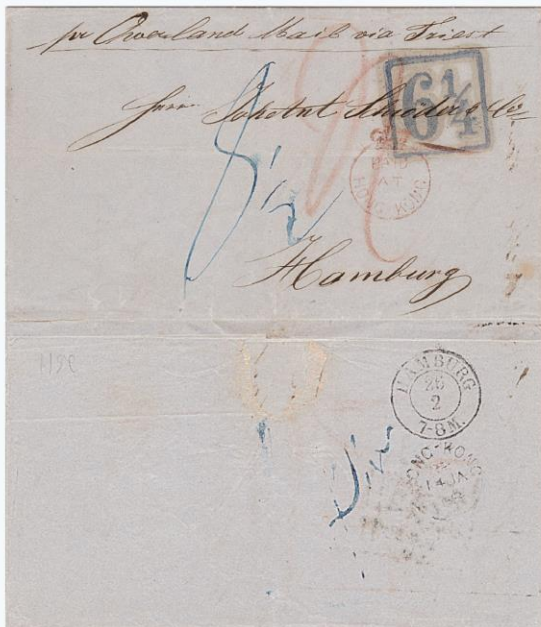


Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5

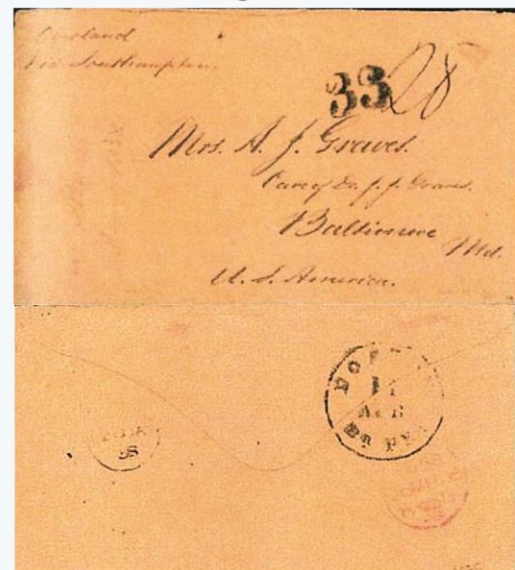


Figure 6



Figure 7



Figure 8

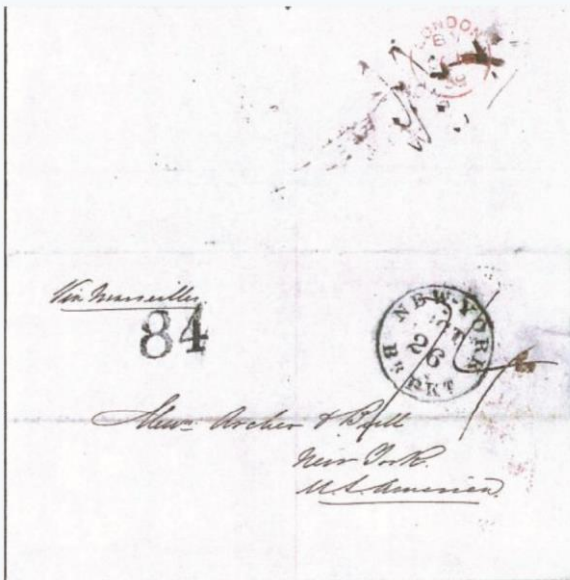


Figure 9



Figure 10



Figure 11



Figure 12

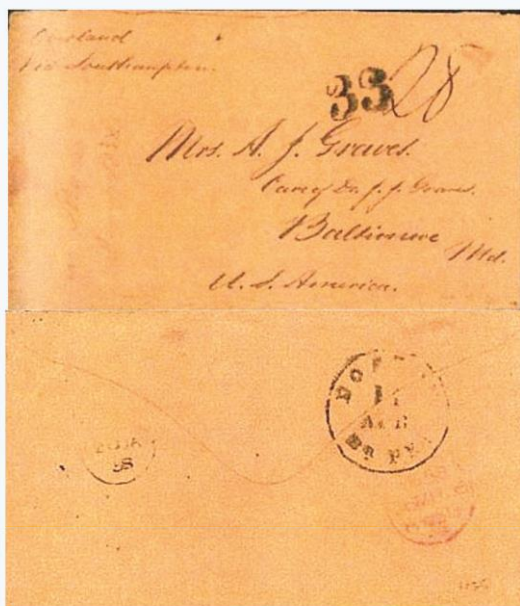


Figure 13

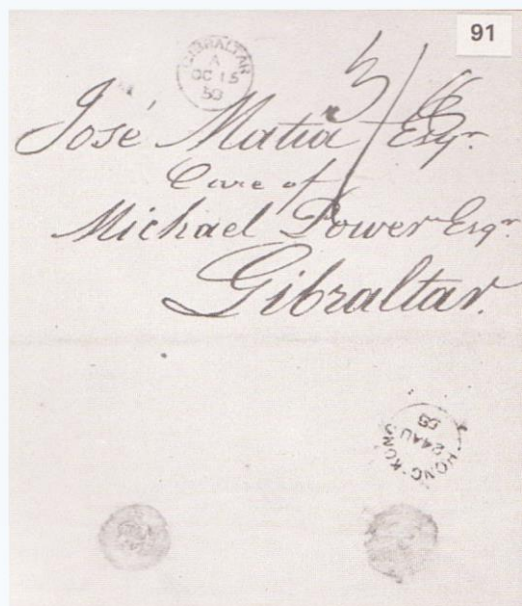


Figure 14



Figure 15



Figure 16

1859 period

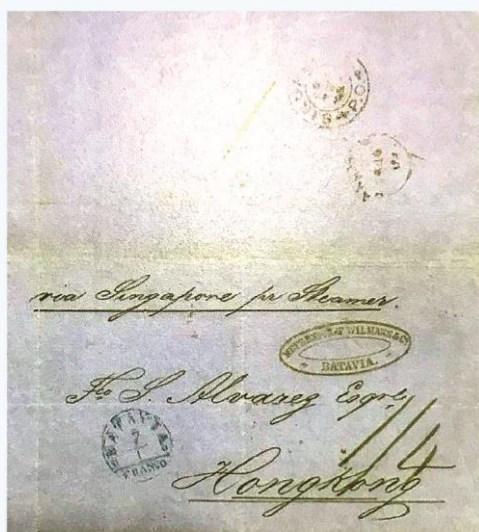


Figure 17



Figure 18



Figure 19

(The c.d.s. was struck between the joint, the date can only be deduced from the P&O itinerary which is most likely to be 19 March 59)



Figure 20



Figure 21



Figure 22



Figure 23



Figure 24



Figure 25



Figure 26

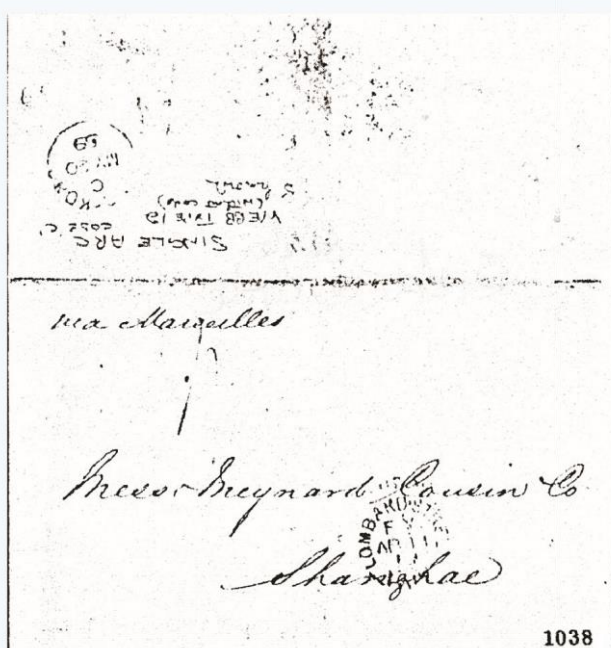


Figure 27

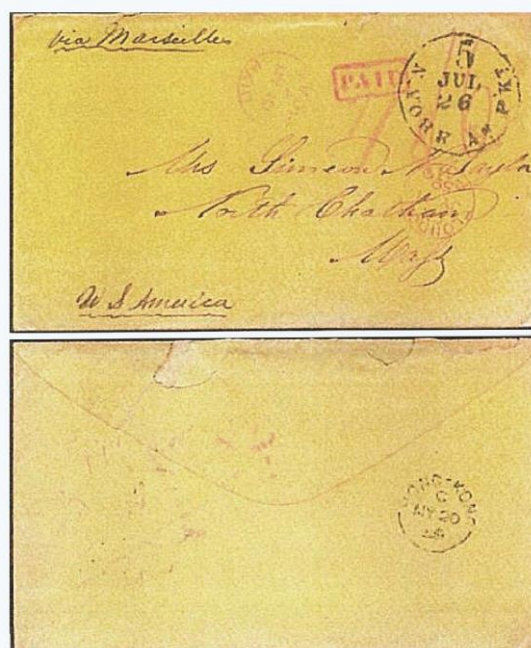


Figure 28



Figure 29

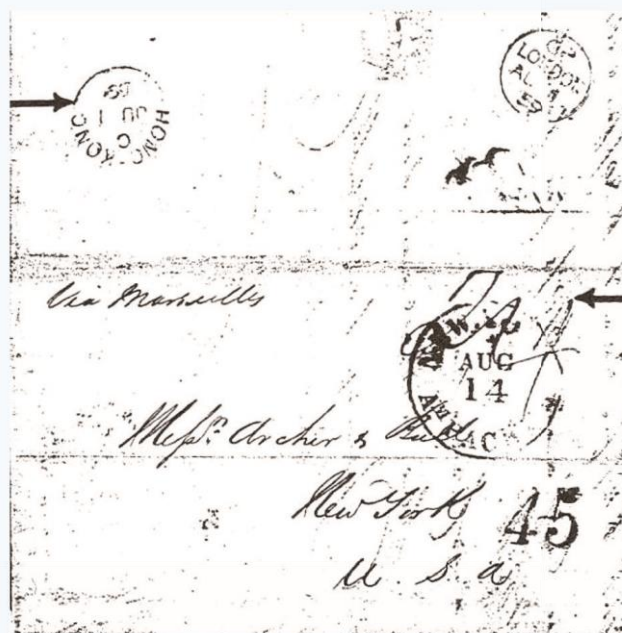


Figure 30



Figure 31



Figure 32

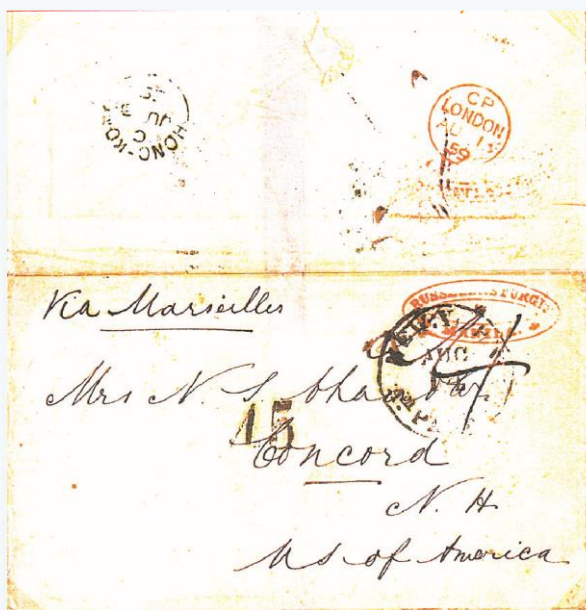


Figure 33



Figure 34

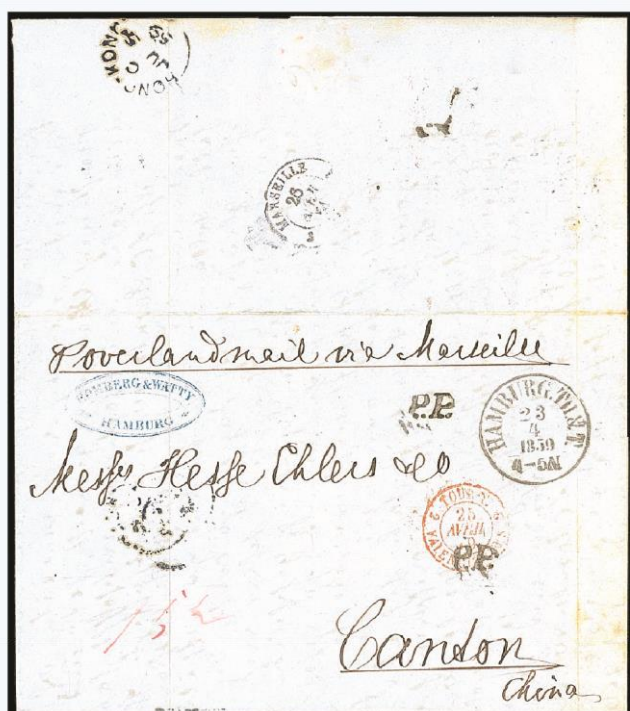


Figure 35



Figure 36



Figure 37

1860 period

The only known example is struck on the reverse of a letter from Leeds franked with a one penny red star, a two penny blue and 6d lilac cancelled Leeds "447" obliterator. The letter is addressed to a Reverend on HMS Melville and sent via *Marseilles*, annotated "Recd. 25 Nov. 60", which is consistent with the arrival of P&O Pekin from Galle. The c.d.s. is in black with index letter "C" but the day/month are not visible.

HMS *Melville* was a 74-gun third rate ship of line of the Royal Navy launched on 17 February 1817 at Bombay Dockyard. From 1 September 1837 to 1841, she was the flagship of Rear-Admiral George Elliot. The ship was involved in the Opium War campaign and later it was converted to serve as a hospital ship in 1857 at Hong Kong.

This letter appeared in a 2018 German auction; the letter is genuine except the type 12 c.d.s. on reverse is a forgery. The original letter does not have a receiver datestamp since it was sent in a navy mailbag. The HMS *Melville*, being a hospital ship, must have had enough mail to warrant its own mailbag. The absence of a Hong Kong arrival c.d.s. thus gave an opportunity to the forger.

The chance of a genuine "1860" usage is remote since by this time, several circular datestamps had arrived and which replaced the three broken-ring (type 7, 9 and 12) datestamps.

From Webb's record of four to the commonly quoted "six known" in the recent auction catalogues, my record of thirty-eight is a big jump. This is not surprising even though the type 12 c.d.s. was only used for around two years; the volume of mail at that time must have been quite substantial to warrant employment of an extra clerk on some days of the week. Lee Scamp suggested that the supervisor could have been using this datestamp during busy time⁵. My census showed almost same number of inward and outward covers known with type 12 c.d.s., obviously a larger sample could show a different trend.

Monday (7)	Tuesday (6)	Wednesday (3)	Thursday (6)	Friday (4)	Saturday (6)	Sunday (5)
28 DE 57 (O)	15 DE 57 (O)	JU 1 59 (O)	14 JA 58 (O)	22 JA 58 (O)	21 AU 58 (I)	27 FE 59 (I)
23 AU 58 (O)	24 AU 58 (O)		11 FE 58 (I)	11 FE 59 (I)	MY 21 59 (O)	JU 5 59 (I)
AP 25 59 (I)	15 MR 59 (I)		27 JA 59 (I)	MY 20 59 (I)		
MY 9 59 (I)	29 MR 59 (O)					

(O) outward mail; (I) inward mail



Why was the datestamp withdrawn?

I am unable to find official record to explain why this datestamp was taken out of use. Perhaps the following fact is the *raison d'être* - Hong Kong Post Office was administered by G.P.O. London until asked by the Colonial office to transfer control to local government in 1859. Hong Kong Government finally assumed control of the Post Office on 1 May 1860.

No. 61.

GOVERNMENT NOTIFICATION.

It is hereby notified that, under Instructions from the Secretary of State, the Post Office Department is placed from this date under the Control of the Government of this Colony, and that, until the return of William Chapman, Esquire, Post Master General of Hongkong, the duties of the Department will be conducted by F. W. Mitchell, Esquire, Assistant Post Master General.

By Order,

W. T. MERCER,
Colonial Secretary.

Colonial Secretary's Office, Victoria, Hongkong, 1st May, 1860.

This change of administration likely led to withdrawal of all the Crown Paid handstamps and broken-ring datestamps. As a result of this, single-ring Hong Kong Paid c.d.s. (Webb type 14, 14a) and Hong Kong c.d.s. (Webb type 13, 13a) inscribed HONG KONG *without hyphen* in between G and K were supplied in 1859.



Figure 38 (added 20 March 2023)

Date	Inward/ outward	Origin/destination	Index	Remarks	Source	Figure
15 DE 57 (Tues.)	Outward	HK to New York	-	HK Paid type 11	Webb, JB Feb. 1985 WH Lu Collection #87	1
28 DE 57 (Mon.)	Outward	London to Shanghai	-	HK Paid type 11+Webb type 9	IA Nostalgia Collection June 2016 #661	2
14 JA 58 (Thurs.)	Outward	Foochow to Hamburg	-	HK Paid type 11	Private collection	3
14 JA 58 (Thurs.)	Outward	Macao to Gibraltar	-	c/o agent for Cadiz rated 1/10	ex. Goldsmith archive, IA June 2016 #4021	4
22 JA 58 (Friday)	Outward	HK to Batavia	-	HK Paid type 11	Private collection	5
28 JA 58 (Thurs)	Outward	HK to Baltimore	-	Unpaid rated 33 via S'hampton	ZA Jan. 2004 #1505	6
11 FE 58 (Thurs.)	Inward	Boston to HK to Canton	-	London 17 DE 57 transit	ex. Bolton, Siegel Magnolia June 2022 #5001	7
11 FE 58 (Thurs.)	Inward	Boston to HK	-	Via NY, US 1857 perf. 1c, 10c pair	ZA Nov. 2006 #1004	8
21 AU 58 (Sat.)	Outward	HK to New York	-	Unpaid rated 84 via Marseilles	IA Feb 2011 #1384	9
21 AU 58 (Sat.)	Inward	Arbuthnot to Foochow	-	c/o agent in HK	Cavendish Gilbert Wheat June 2009 #679	10
21 AU 58 (Sat.)	Inward	Washington to HK	-	To Frigate Powhatan	Matthew Bennett Jan. 2005 #1558 ex. W. Spicer	11
23 AU 58 (Mon.)	Outward	HK to London	-	HK Paid type 11	JB Oct. 2008 #810	12
23 AU 58 (Mon.)	Outward	Macao to Baltimore	-	Unpaid rated 33 via S'hampton	ex. Goldsmith archive	13
24 AU 58 (Tues.)	Outward	Macao to Gibraltar	-	c/o agent for Cadiz	JB Feb. 1985 WH Lu Collection #91	14
24 AU 58 (Tues.)	Outward	HK to Bombay	-	HK Paid type 11	Zurich Asia 2007 #816	15
21 SP 58 (Tues.)	Inward	NY to Shanghai	-	US 1857 perf. 1cx2, 3c, 10cx4	Zurich Asia June 2005 #647 ex. Caspary	16
27 JA 59 (Thurs.)	Inward	Batavia to HK	-	Via Singapore, rated 1/4	JB Clement Edwards June 2011 #1147 Selzer's Malaya CRZ 6 November 1986 #3314	17
11 FE 59 (Friday)	Inward	Aberdeen to Canton	-	DE23, GB 1d+4d pair	Photo c.d.s. only, ex. Goldsmith archive	18
27 FE 59 (Sunday)	Inward	Washington to HK	-	To Frigate Powhatan	ZA June 2005 #648	20
19 MR 59 (Sunday)	Inward	Batavia to HK	-	Via Singapore	Selzer's Malaya CRZ 6 November 1986 #3315 SG HK sale March 1987 #604	19
19 MR 59 (Sat.)	Inward	Guernsey to HK	-	GB2d+6d+1d removed 324 duplex	Sun Philatelic Dec.79 #27, ZA Nov. 2001 #1033	21
29 MR 59 (Tues.)	Outward	Macao to Gibraltar	-	c/o agent for Cadiz rated 1/10	IA Feb. 2011 R. Huggins Macau #2269	22
AP 12 59 (Tues)	Outward	Macao to Gibraltar	C	Large Crown Paid, C facing down	JB Feb. 1985 WH Lu Collection #103	23
AP 25 59 (Mon.)	Inward	Washington to HK	C	To Frigate Powhatan	Private collection	24
MY 9 59 (Mon.)	Inward	Liverpool to Shanghai	C	To Brig Granada	Cavendish Gilbert Wheat June 2009 #683	25
MY 9 59 (Mon.)	Inward	London to Shanghai	C	GB2d+6d+1d	Robson Lowe Oct. 1981 Antonia sale Tokyo #12	26
MY 9 59 (Mon.)	Inward	Guernsey to HK	C	No photo	ex. Pearson, mentioned by Webb	-
MY 20 59 (Friday)	Inward	London to Shanghai	C	London AP 11 59 dispatch	ex. Goldsmith archive	27
MY 20 59 (Friday)	Inward	Hartford to Hong Kong	C	NY 30MR59 Ship NB Palmer	eBay 5 March 2023 "taco"	38
MY 20 59 (Friday)	Outward	Amoy to USA	C	Amoy Paid c.d.s.	Cavendish March 2003 #104	28
MY 21 59 (Sat.)	Outward	HK to New York	C	Unpaid letter, blue-black	Private collection	29
JU 1 59 (Wed.)	Outward	Shanghai to New York	C	Unpaid letter, blue-black	DF Nov. 1986 #50323 ex. Peter Shek	30
JU 1 59 (Wed.)	Outward	Shanghai to Valreas	C	Unpaid letter, blue-black	Spink Nov. 2005 #1702	31
JU 1 59 (Wed.)	Outward	Shanghai to Lyon	C	Unpaid letter, blue-black	IA June 2005 #682	32
JU ? 59	Outward	Manila to Concord USA	C	Day unclear "3" or "5"	ex. Goldsmith archive	33
JU 4 59 (Sat.)	Outward	HK to U.K.	C	Boxed PAID in red	SG J. Parker Feb. 1994 #1243	34
JU 5 59 (Sunday)	Inward	Hamburg to Canton	C	Blue-black	Spink, China January 2022 #1442	35

JU 5 59 (Sunday)	Inward	St. Brieue to HK	C	Blue-black	IA June 2005 #682	36
JU 5 59 (Sunday)	Inward	London E.C. to Shanghai	C	? blue-black GB6d+1d+2d	No photo of c.d.s., SG Nov. 1997, #26	37

Updated 20 March 2023 by the author

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank collectors and auction houses who helped compile this census. I am particularly grateful for the information in the Michael Goldsmith Hong Kong archive that includes an extensive photographic record of Hong Kong material culled from dealers' stock and stamp auctions over the last fifty years or more. I am also indebted to Dr. Jeffrey Schneider who shared with me his comprehensive record which added another nine covers to my original list published in the October 2022 Hong Kong Study Circle Journal 403. I would also like to thank Nick Halewood, editor of the Hong Kong Study Circle for allowing me to publish an update on the same subject. Finally, I must reiterate that this census still does not claim to include all known letters with type 12 c.d.s., therefore I ask for your help if you have further examples not on my listing. Please let me have a complete scan of the letter if possible.

References

1. F.W. Webb, *Philatelic and Postal History of Hong Kong and the Treaty Ports of China and Japan*
2. E.B. Proud, *The Postal History of Hong Kong 1841-1997*
3. Dr. Hans Schoenfeld, *Cancellations of Hong Kong, The first 100 years 1841-1941*
4. Michael Goldsmith archive donated by Jane Goldsmith
5. Lee C. Scamp, *Far East Mail Steamship Itineraries Volume 1, page 245*

