

PHILATELIC INFORMATION

BIGGEST "PENNY BLACK" STAMPS DISCOVERY

A block of ten "Penny Black" stamps on an envelope dated May 6, 1840, and discovered in Kirkcudbright, Scotland, are to be auctioned at Harmer's auction rooms in London on May 27.

This is the largest number of "Penny Blacks" to have been found on a first-day letter, and they are expected to realise a price of at least £1,000. The unique letter was from a London firm of lawyers and the 10d rate is explained by the reference in the letter to legal documents enclosed. It was found in a batch of old papers and documents.

The block, cancelled with the red Maltese Cross, has excellent margins on three sides and is of fine appearance. The May 6 date-stamp on the reverse is a remarkable clear strike.

HAWID STRIPS TO ANY SIZE

How often have you not been able to mount an unusual sized block because the right strip was not available, either because you had run out, or none were available on the island?

To overcome this, for me, frequent occurrence, I hit on the idea of making up the right size strips from two others. To do this you will need:— a small sheet of glass for a cutting board, a sharp rigid bladed knife and two steel rulers.

First take a very large size standard strip and cut off one of the joined edges, fit in your block. Then choose another size to fit over the uncovered portion with about a third of an inch of overlap. Carefully gum the backs together taking care not to spoil the gum on the block and then remove the stamps. Insert a steel rule between the transparent face and dark backing and position it under where the pieces overlap, using the second steel rule and the knife cuts through both pieces of transparency at once. So as not to waste any strips, you should trim the length before gumming.

You now have a custom made housing for your block which permits easy insertion and removal but still holds the stamps firmly.

R.J. Walley