

# A Prize Agent, A Naturalist, and A Navy Captain: A Penny Black Story

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I acquired this item in January 2022. The seller accurately described it – “GB #1 VF on folded letter tied by red Maltese Cross cancel” – but its contents are much more fascinating.

The stamp is position “BH” from Plate 7, which was registered on July 8, 1840. This is one of more than 8.1 million “Penny Blacks” printed from that plate.



The letter was posted from Swansea, Wales on August 4, 1840, and arrived in London on August 6, 1840. It likely traveled by Mail Coach.

The identities of the writer, recipient, and subject are what make this folder letter so intriguing. The three individuals touched not only the history of Great Britain but the United States as well.

## The Recipient



### John Hinxman, A Prize Agent (1784-1847)

John Hinxman was a Prize or Navy Agent. As a Navy Agent, Mr. Hinxman acted as a financial agent for naval officers, especially in the distribution of prize money.

It was a very lucrative profession that afforded him the opportunity to own several properties in London, as well as a country estate.

He was also an entrepreneur and art collector and patron.

The Subject: “Our Late Friend.” Mr. Dillwyn was the executor of Captain Hickey’s will and Mr. Hinxman was the deceased’s financial manager.



### Frederick Hickey, A Navy Captain (1775-1840)

- Captain Hickey commanded several ships during his 32-year Royal Navy career, including during the War of 1812 when he captured several valuable American ships and commanded the HMS *Lawrence* on Lake Ontario during the war’s final year.

- While returning from Canada after the war, he was apprehended in America to stand trial for causing damage to an American schooner in 1810 with his ship the HMS *Atalante*.

- He retired in 1819 and moved to Swansea where he lived at Park Wern.

## The Writer



### Lewis Weston Dillwyn, A Naturalist (1778-1855)

Lewis Weston Dillwyn of Swansea was a British porcelain manufacturer, naturalist, and Whig member of Parliament.

Lewis Weston Dillwyn’s father was born in Philadelphia and was a leading member of the Quaker abolitionist movement. He moved to Britain in 1777.

Lewis Weston Dillwyn owned Sketty Hall in Swansea, which stands to this day and is used to host social and business functions.

This is what makes stamp collecting so enjoyable to me. It’s not just about collecting small pieces of paper stuck to envelopes. It’s learning about the lives of the people who stuck those small pieces of paper on their correspondence.