

THE FORT RICASOLI MUTINY

Following the publication of the letter detailing the Mutiny on Fort Ricasoli in 1807, two members wrote putting forward their opinions regarding the explanation of the postal rates on the entire. Correspondence is reproduced hereunder. We also reproduce the entire showing postal manuscript rates as well as an engraving of Fort Ricasoli.

From George Coates, Rickmansworth, Herts, England.

"I have just received my copy of the P.S.M. Magazine for Winter 1980 and much enjoyed reading the 1807 letter from Malta.

I applaud your initiative in attempting to sort out the charge marks on the cover. I believe that I may be able to help. The letter I have taken to weigh two ounces and if sent as a "Ship Letter" would as you say have been charged $2/8$ plus the Captain's Gratuity (which in fact appears to have been 2d at this date). However Royal Naval Captains did not usually claim the "pence" — this one seems for some reason to have claimed 1d only — I don't know why.

The letter would have been landed at Portsmouth, where the Ship Letter mark was struck. It would then have been sent to London (72 miles) at 28d per oz. = $4/8d$... this is possibly the mark you note as $4/3d$, these figures are so often difficult to decipher. Next from London to Edinburgh (396 miles) when the charge was $8/8d$.

For some reason the $2/9d$ and $8/8$ have been added to give a sub-total of $11/5d$, in fact the total charge was $16/1d$. This seemingly high rate was not unusual for heavy letters such as this.

Had the writer sent his two ounce letter by packet (which as you know operated from 1806) the cost would have been: Malta to London = 26/- plus London to Edinburgh = $8/8$, a total of no less than $34/8d$!

Isay the letter travelled from Portsmouth to London as there was as far as I know, no mail coach route from Falmouth to Edinburgh.

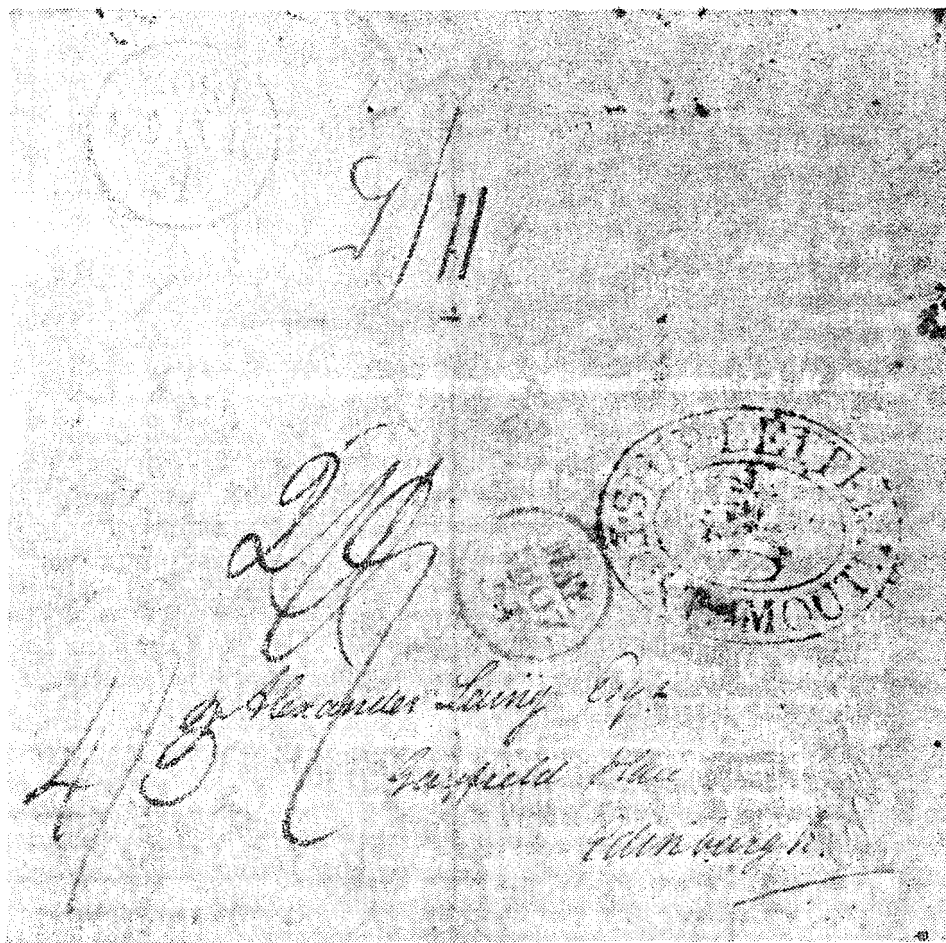
The rates that you mention on page 14 are in fact for a single rate letter whereas yours is x 8.

I do hope that all this is of some interest! — in my case I have enjoyed trying to work it out."

From John Birkett Allan, Bristol, England

I can explain at least the $2/9d$ and $11/5d$ charges. Dr. Bonnici correctly explains the $2/9d$ for a Ship Letter — 2 ounces at $1/4d$ per ounce = $2/8d$ plus Captains Gratuity of 1d gives $2/9d$.

The $11/5d$ represents the total charge for the letter — postal rates were



extremely high in the early part of the nineteenth century. Portsmouth to Edinburgh was between 400 and 500 miles, the rates for which was increased in 1805 to 1/1d for a single letter. An ounce was charged quadruple rate, therefore 2 ounces = $1/1d \times 8 = 8/8d$. Add this to the 2/9d ship letter charge to give 11/5d total charge for the letter. I cannot explain the 4/3d, but may be able to do so if I could see this letter.

The "F/May 28/1807" datestamp was applied at London, not at Falmouth. The "F" merely is a code letter and does not indicate Falmouth. There would be no purpose in routing the letter south west from Portsmouth when scheduled to go north to Edinburgh (Portsmouth to London, then London to Edinburgh were main coach routes).

Hope the above comments are helpful."

