

FIFTEEN POINTS, AND MORE QUESTIONS THAN ANSWERS

Part of a somewhat roughly cut-down, part-torn, envelope (obvious looking at the back), doing duty as a newspaper wrapper? Sent from GB, franked 6½d (1: sixp'nce-hayp'ny as we used to say), presumably correct, we have no way of knowing for sure; nor where from, as apart from faint year 57, the postmark (2) is a fragmentary smudge – not so usual in those days.

Once into Hungary ... The fun begins as it attracts five rubber-stamps, three labels, a manuscript endorsement, and a 2Ft postage-stamp – and generates questions!

First to go on, perhaps, was the large red B (3: meaning?), as it and the country name (4) are part-covered by the Customs label (5: Vamkezelt = Customs clearance [- / Levél / Áruminta = - / Letter / Sample]); part of its top is missing, maybe torn off on delivery to expose the street name? It imposes a 1Ft 60 charge, plus handling and delivery 1Ft 40 (total 3Ft not filled in), presumably to be paid by the recipient. Was there a tax on imported newspapers?

It is Expressed (6), but why? Entering the realms of fantasy: Could conceivably have been applied by the sender if he had acquired a Hungarian label, or if the recipient had sent the pre-prepared wrapper through to Britain! Would the GB 6½d then pay for express plus postage? Seems an unlikely scenario! In fact the 2Ft stamp (7) covers the express fee – but who paid for it? Its postmark (8) is Bp (70?) 57 IV 30; the purple datestamp (9) top left appears to be the same date.

It is also registered (10) at Budapest East (office name rather than just a number), would be 1Ft 40, but (again) why, who paid, and how? Is it the Customs handling and delivery fee?

Which leaves the boxed word (11: VAM...ITES? – to do with Customs?), the illegible purple ring (12), the black 52 (13), and the manuscript (14: ver 24154 IV 9) – what do they all mean?

And why is the stamp-edging (15) there? Does not continue on the back. Presume British as perf 14½; red, so from a 2½d rather than the ½d stamp?

Would have been even better with a sixteenth item, an arrival mark at Zalaegerszeg!

