

The Buccleuch Block

THE GREATEST STAMP DISCOVERY IN MODERN HISTORY



TO BE OFFERED AT AUCTION ON MAY 28, 2026
IN CONJUNCTION WITH BOSTON 2026 WORLD EXPO
ESTIMATE \$5,000,000–\$7,500,000

SIEGEL INTERNATIONAL
IN ASSOCIATION WITH CHARLES F. SHREVE



The Buccleuch Block

THE GREATEST STAMP DISCOVERY IN MODERN HISTORY

As the Allies celebrated victory over tyranny in Europe in 1945, the 8th Duke of Buccleuch—pronounced *buck-loo*, from the Scottish Gaelic term for “deer ravine”—instructed his personal secretary, Alexander Martin, to inventory the contents of Dalkeith Palace, a Scottish Ducal Seat in Midlothian, Scotland. In the Palace Library, the Duke’s secretary discovered two large blocks of stamps issued by Great Britain in 1840 and 1841, neatly rolled up and stored in a compartment in an old leather traveling writing desk set on a table. One of the blocks immediately gained fame as the greatest stamp discovery in modern post-war history—*The Buccleuch Block*.



Walter John Montagu Douglas Scott, 8th Duke of Buccleuch and 10th Duke of Queensberry, KT, GCVO, TD, PC (1894-1973) —the stamps were discovered during the 8th Duke of Buccleuch’s ownership



Dalkeith Palace Library, photographed in 1902 (Malan)

<https://www.thecastlesofscotland.co.uk>

The world-famous Buccleuch Block is a spectacular part-sheet of 48 of the 1840 Two-Pence Blue. **It is the largest known multiple of one of the world’s first two postage stamps, issued in May 1840.**



Walter Francis Montagu Douglas Scott, 5th Duke of Buccleuch, 7th Duke of Queensberry (1806-1884)

The block was originally purchased by Walter Francis Montagu Douglas Scott, the 5th Duke of Buccleuch and 7th Duke of Queensberry (1806-1884). From 1842 to 1846, the Duke of Buccleuch was Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal.

Dalkeith Palace was built by the Buccleuch family during the first decade of the 18th century to replace the family’s 12th century medieval castle. The Buccleuch family stopped using the house as a residence in 1914. It was occupied by troops during World War I and World War II. Since 1986 Dalkeith Palace has been a residence for students from the United States. The current owner is Ricard Montagu Douglas Scott, the 12th Duke of Buccleuch.



The “Penny Black” and “Tuppence Blue” are iconic stamps. Blocks are rare, and only a few large unused (or “mint”) multiples of the Two-Pence Blue exist. The Royal Philatelic Collection owned by the British royal family contains a block of 38 from the upper left corner of the sheet. A part-sheet of 168 stamps, discovered in 1905 in Dublin and acquired by the Earl of Crawford, has since been divided into much smaller units. The discovery companion to the Buccleuch Block is a block of 55 of the 1841 One-Penny Red Brown.

The Buccleuch Block contains the bottom four rows of 12 from the sheet of 240 stamps, individually lettered Q-A through T-L. The plate number “2” appears in the corners (Plate 2 stamps are rarer than Plate 1). The imprint in the bottom margin states the price of the “Labels” per single, row and sheet, gives instructions for affixing the stamp on the letter, and advises care in “Wetting the Back” to avoid removing the “Cement.” The block is extraordinarily fresh and has original gum that has never been hinged by a collector.

Within one year after its discovery, the Buccleuch Block was sold privately for £6,500 through H. R. Harmer Ltd. to Gordon P. Bailey, a collector in Surrey, England. When the Bailey collection was dispersed, the block was again sold privately. The next owner of record was Renato Mondolfo (1918-1992). In 1985 the block was sold by William E. and Michael Lea, prominent British stamp dealers, to Hassan Shaida, an Iranian collector whose exhibit, “Queen Victoria: The Birth of the World’s First



Per Sheet. Place the Labels ABOVE the Address and towards the RIGHT HAND SIDE of the Letter. In Wetting the Back be careful not to remove the Cement. 2

Postage Stamps,” won the Grand Prix National in Stamp World London 1990. Soon after, the entire Shaida collection, including the Buccleuch Block, was purchased by Guido Craveri, a European dealer.

The Buccleuch Block was one of twenty items displayed in the “Aristocrats of Philately” exhibit at ANPHILEX 1996 in New York City, the Collectors Club centenary event. The block was shown “on loan” from Tito Giamporcaro, and subsequently was acquired by the current owner, a private collector.

The Buccleuch Block

THE GREATEST STAMP DISCOVERY IN MODERN HISTORY



The legendary “stamp finds” have been made in many ways.

A schoolboy rummaging through family papers found the British Guiana One-Cent Magenta.

William Robey bought the sheet of Inverted Jennys at the post office window.

The United States 1847 “Bible Block” was found tucked between the pages of a family bible.

Just 81 years ago, a recently released RAF officer serving as secretary to the 8th Duke of Buccleuch found what many consider to be the most important philatelic item extant—the block of 48 of the world’s first postage stamp.

On May 28, 2026—186 years after issue and 81 years after its discovery—the Buccleuch Block will be offered at auction for the first time ever. We invite the world of collectors to see it and to bid in what will certainly be a history-making auction, held in conjunction with Boston 2026 World Expo, the international philatelic exhibition from May 23 to 30.

For information about The Buccleuch Block auction on May 28, 2026,
go to siegelauctions.com

SIEGEL INTERNATIONAL
IN ASSOCIATION WITH CHARLES F. SHREVE

21 West 38th Street, 7th Floor, New York, NY 10018
Phone 212-753-6421 • Email: stamps@siegelauctions.com

siegelauctions.com