

MIDLAND MAIL

THE BULLETIN OF THE MIDLAND (G.B.) POSTAL HISTORY SOCIETY



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Glory, Glory

The award of bronze-silver medals to 'Midland Mail' and 'The Undated Circular Marks of the Midland Counties' at Stampex has provided another unanticipated boost to the Society's morale. Both these publications are very much a team effort. A quick scan of this number of 'Midland Mail' suggests that at least a dozen members made a contribution to it and the UDC book involved not only ten County Editors but tens of people who provided details of marks in their own collections or others they had seen. Since the book was published, almost a hundred letters and cards have been received submitting new information or, occasionally, correcting errors. This level of positive involvement by the members, and indeed by their friends, must be convincing evidence that huge is not always handsome and that enthusiasm wins hands-down. Of course, some contribute more than others but not everyone feels able to write a major article or has the opportunity to research something significant. An interesting illustration or a brief comment provides a welcome input to 'Midland Mail'.

With this encouraging prospect, it is a matter of some regret to the editor that his changed domestic circumstances make the next number of 'Midland Mail' his last, at least for the time being. The Society has proved itself quick to praise and slow to criticise and no pen-pusher could ask for more. To those of you who have provided the material, some of you for almost every issue of 'Midland Mail', the unsung praises of the membership can now be backed by metallic accompaniment. You, at long last, have some glory - hallelujah for that.

The Annual Auction

There is just time for a final reminder that details of Auction lots can be accepted by Elizabeth and Eric Lewis until 15th March. In fact, they are prepared to accept lists handed to them at the March meeting if you are among those of us who complete nothing until the hour is nigh. It is no secret that an earlier submission of your list would be helpful.

Antique Kiloware

The unusual sale of early postal history 'kiloware' in 'Midland Mail' No.42 was a resounding success. Everything was sold almost immediately and 10% of the proceeds paid to Society funds. Thank you for your support.

The January Meeting

Seventeen members arrived at Dr Johnson House on 18th January, fourteen of them armed with nine sheet displays of items selected to interest, amaze or infuriate their friends. Perhaps the theme proved harder to follow than many had expected but it did succeed in extracting a wealth of interesting material that might not have emerged in different circumstances. There is only space here to mention one or two sheets from each display; a more generous allowance might engulf the entire issue.

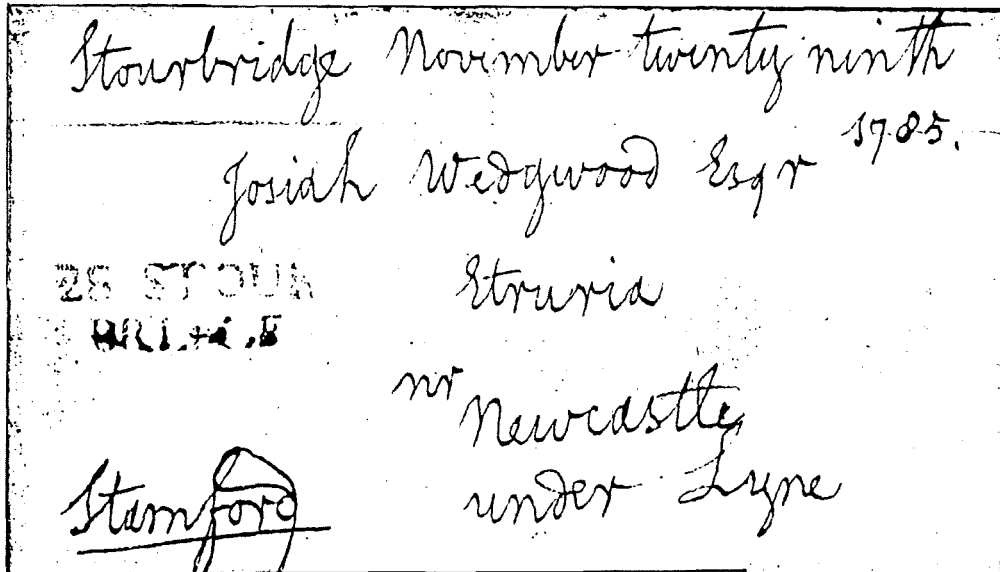
John Soer, with Chris Beaver's recent article in mind, had examples of letters sent between Ashby and Wisbeach with evidence of a different charge in each direction. A letter to the Carlton Chemical Company requesting more "drunkenness cure tablets" was, hopefully, pointed at no member in particular but a Northleach, Cheltenham, Krag cancel of 1984 was presumably chosen to illustrate the pace of new Post Office technology in the editor's hinterland. Ted Coles produced a hatful of Lichfield items as if to prove that even a display as comprehensive as Arthur Lloyd's must leave something out. There were free franks, a money letter, an early 'traveller', parcel post labels and a reminder of RAF Lichfield. Peter Sharp anticipated the latest Society exercise involving the town sub-office straight line namestamps and produced delectable examples of all those handsome marks of Leamington which will surely be a feature of our future publication. Trevor Clewley, aware that he could only infuriate the members further by breaking his own record for the number of items included in a nine sheet display, contrived to show 64 (yes, sixty four) single ring cancels from the Midland counties. Steph Stobbs would never infuriate anyone but he certainly amazed the men of Salop by turning up a previously unknown World War I cachet of the Attingham Park Auxiliary Military Hospital complete with the background research verifying its existence. He followed that with World War II material from the same source, much of it American.

Chris Beaver opened his contribution with a letter from Brierley Hill in the Stour-bridge Penny Post (wonder why?) and, for the Brummies, he had a Handsworth 'PP15' stamp on a letter from the principal of the first Methodist College, in Birmingham of course, which seemed a most appropriate ecclesiastical item. Frank Peach turned to 'Midland Mail' for inspiration and James Grimwood-Taylor's article on Bolsover Castle. Frank could turn the clock back a further six months and produced a letter to prove it (see a later item in this issue). For the Derby collectors, there was a letter 'mis-directed' (not 'missent') to Derby and the elusive Brook St straight line mark, the only such mark used in the town. Another Derby man, Harold Wilson, had predominantly registered items (where were you Vivien?) including some modern items incorrectly charged when put into a TPO where they should have paid 1st class postage + the registration fee + a 10p surcharge but didn't. He may well have infuriated someone with a Salt Brewery, Burton, letter of 1871. Ches set out to put down those of us who did not believe that mail coaches called at places off the main road by showing such letters with an extra 1d charge and then, in contrast, he produced an obscure philatelic handstamp used on 'first day' covers that, for some reason, had to be re-struck later. John Calladine tried to scatter his seed among all corners of the stony ground but to no avail as his letter to Josiah Wedgwood (illustrated) complaining about the glaze on his products, his very late use of a Birmingham Penny Post numbered stamp and his blatantly forged postcard to a Catshill postal historian were instantly rubbished by the assembled cognoscenti. Ian May restored order with nice examples of the Coventry sub-office straight line stamps but it was his Shipston on Stour letter with six illiteracy marks (to denote 6d) that went down best with members who cannot read or write.

We often keep the big guns until the end so that the meeting ends with a broadside rather than a backslide. The Secretary produced a picture of the "Burton on Trent Lifeboat", having been challenged to show us a Burton on Trent Ship Letter, but this boat was based at Redcar and not in the canal basin so it didn't count. However he did rather better with some fine Burton letter sheets with attractive engraved headings since he was able to show the original copper plates used to make them if not the aged inhabitant who worked the press. Eric, the Chairman's worse half, decided we

could best be infuriated if he dwelt on his new acquisitions thereby highlighting the gems we had allowed to slip through our fingers. There was an example of the elusive 1d added charge for collection of a letter, an endorsement which instructed the recipient "the porter to be paid 2/6d if delivered by 8 o'clock on Sunday morning" (that in 1846!) and a memorable address corruption (illustrated) - "Henley in Harding". Yet again, Chairman Elizabeth had saved herself until the end and she scored a bull by producing a 1d Paid stamp of Halesowen on a letter addressed to the house which is now the Steph Stobbs abode (see illustration - of the letter, not Steph) and she followed that with a letter of 1650 to Walsall via Birmingham rightly calculated to entertain, amaze and infuriate the members in roughly equal parts.

It had been fun but very informative and no one appeared sufficiently infuriated to refuse their cup of Dr Johnson House tea.



Your Polling No. is:

41275



W. R. H. Phillips
 28 Kestrelfield Ave.
 Quenby 32

Mr Lee Hendley

Henley in Harding

**SEE THAT YOUR MONEY
 IS SPENT WISELY!**

by Voting for :

WRIGHT

THE CONSERVATIVE CANDIDATE



The February Meeting

The winter weather can be expected to exact its toll during the fill-dyke month and so it was that human and mechanical breakdown reduced the anticipated number of entries for the annual Society Competition on Saturday 15th February. Nevertheless, fourteen members were present to enjoy four entries for the pre-1840 trophy and five for the post-1840 award. There was not an inferior entry among them and the Society is grateful to Jack Andrews who had the unenviable task of separating the winners from the almost-winners.

The entries for the (principally) pre-1840 trophy were judged first. Steph Stobbs' "Shrewsbury Gaol" was highly original and set a standard for the others to follow. It began with a letter of 1778 addressed to a lady residing "near Shrewsbury gaol", clearly a well-known landmark even at that time. Phonetic spelling came into its own in an 1807 instruction from a prisoner asking "Pleas tow derect tow me in Sosbrery Gooal". There were letters from the Hon Thomas Kenyon, Chairman of the Shropshire Quarter Sessions, about important penal matters of the day and communications from prisoners in letters of 1846, 1849 and 1851, one being on the prison's headed paper. From a piece of social history, we moved to pure and pertinent postmarks with Peter Sharp's "Missent Marks". There was a fine selection from Warwickshire including 'Missent to Leamington' in manuscript, black, blue and green ink; 'Missent to Shipston' in manuscript with a CDS; 'Missent to Stratford' in an oval struck in red ink followed by a 'John Bull' type mark, and 'Missent to Warwick' framed in what one can only describe as an 'unequal octagon'. There was more Warwickshire material in Ian May's "Coventry Handstamps, 1700-1840". Coventry appears to have been blessed with a rich variety of early marks but here were two more, as yet unrecorded, on letters sent to coffee houses in London. There were split spellings, one used from 1740-1753 and a rare one of 1757/8, later single line marks of the 1790s and a large circular handstamp similar to those supplied to the overseas colonies. Another unusual offering was a late use of a mileage mark with a manuscript 'Missent to' annotation. Chris Beaver was able to amass nine pages of "Postmarks peculiar to Staffordshire" for his entry. Leek boasted a sans-serif mileage mark, a mileage mark with the town's name in a box (as well as the mileage) and a unique small namestamp. Newcastle 5th Clause Post had several individual features including the use of red, orange and blue ink. Brewood had a strange handstamp in upper case lettering; Bilston a CDS with a square (peg?) below the date and Wolverhampton apparently sometimes used just half a 'spoon'. Yes, Staffordshire was peculiar. Mr Andrews announced that the award winner was Steph Stobbs' "Shrewsbury Gaol".

Ted Coles began the second competition with "Ship Letter Telegrams". Few members had probably ever seen an example of one before from a service which began in 1931 to pass messages from ships to radio stations and from thence to the addressee by post. Special stationery and forms were used and the earliest examples, from 1935, were exquisite. The service was suspended during the war but we saw a form and envelope used in 1946 soon after it restarted and more recent material, still of great esoteric interest. There were then two entries of 'spoons', the first being Steph Stobbs' "Shrewsbury Spoons". We saw the first type used within a very few days of issue, the second type, which is clearly much rarer than most of us realised, and the third type with what appeared to be damage. Mike Young could afford to limit himself to just "Worcester Spoons" for this city had its original issue recut no fewer than seven times. Mike was able to show us every recut, including the scarce 5th recut, and to highlight every distinguishing feature of each. It had to be the definitive display on the subject. Roger Broomfield's "Undated Marks of Herefordshire, 1840-1860" was beautifully presented and, dare one say it, perhaps underrated. There was the script type stamp of Eardisley, the Leintwardine circular mileage mark used until at least 1857, the scarce Eign St and Bridge St town sub-office marks of Hereford and the circular stamp issued as 'Crow Hall' but locally recut to 'Crow Hill'. Finally, Ian May followed his early Coventry marks with "Coventry Marks, 1840-1905". He had the Maltese Cross used on a 1d black and, incorrectly placed, on a Mulready. We saw Coventry's distinctive cross of 1842, its two numeral stamps, the double and single ring sideways duplex marks,

and some examples of its surprisingly limited range of upright duplexes. A highlight was a nice strike of one of its two very elusive squared circle stamps on a commercial railway letter of 1891.

This time, Mr Andrews found himself unable to separate the winners and announced a joint award of the post-1840 trophy to Ted Coles' "Ship Letter Telegrams" and Mike Youngs' "Worcester Spoons". Those of us who were only there to ogle the entries appreciated the work that had gone into the preparation of each and every one of them and it seems a pity that they could not all win awards. We congratulate the winners on their super entries and we hope our applause for the runners-up was sufficient consolation. Who knows what next year may bring?

Forthcoming Meetings

The next meeting will be at Dr Johnson House, Bull Street, Birmingham on Saturday 15th March at 2pm. The speaker will be the eminent postal historian Mr G.F.Oxley, best known for his work 'The English Provincial Local Posts 1765-1840'. On this occasion he has promised to display his fine collection of Scottish Postal History and there can surely be no doubt that it will be among the Society's highlights. Make a note of this date for it is not one to be missed.

The final meeting, also at Dr Johnson House, will be on Saturday 26th April at 2pm. There is probably no need to remind enthusiasts that the Annual Auction will begin as soon after 3 o'clock as our cup of tea allows. However, before the auction gets under way, we can enjoy the important Annual General Meeting and, if you would like to be Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, Editor - or even all four - just persuade a couple of friends to nominate you. The AGM is not a drawn-out affair and long speeches will be discouraged - by force, if necessary.

There will be a Committee Meeting at 1pm and County Editors are again invited to attend, particularly as the final printing and distribution arrangements for the revised UDC book will be discussed.

Solihull Philatelic Society

Solihull Philatelic Society will be holding their 1986 Spring Stamp Fair and Exhibition in the Central Library, Solihull, on Saturday 19th April. This event will have a special appeal to members of our society as the Exhibition will be provided by the Midlands Postal Board and the National Postal Museum. In addition, there will be a good representation of dealers from around the country. It sounds like a most enjoyable day out.

Have you seen this?

Later, in this number of 'Midland Mail', John Soer quotes from a 1785 newspaper account of the "illuminations" in honour of the King's birthday, extolling the virtues of the mail coaches. John would particularly like to know if any reader has seen a contemporary engraving of these presentations.

The Undated Circular Marks of the Midland Counties

One might reasonably hope that the Editor would know that Stampex is early in March and not in February. Clearly he did not or he would not have asked for additions, corrections and amendments to reach him before the end of February. A firing squad is being assembled but, while the volunteers are being reduced to a manageable number, amendments will be accepted for the 1986 Revision until 15th March.

THE 10th BIRTHDAY TREASURE HUNT

The Penultimate Question

This is the fourth (of five) questions in our Treasure Hunt, a valuable prize awaiting the eventual winner. Just note down the answer and the page number of the book in which you found it. You should now have a record of four such answers and page numbers (the third, if you recall, being the number of a facing page). If you have them all, the final question will be simple - if you don't, at least it won't be impossible. Here is the 4th question:

Of which post town in a Midland county was Englands Gate a penny post receiving house?

Books that may interest you - 14

From a new list compiled for the Society by Ted Heath

ALCOCK, R.C. 'Scots Local Cancellations Illustrated, 1854-60' From R.C.Alcock, 11 Regent St, Cheltenham GL50 1HJ, December 1984, 124 pages, 208 illusts, 29 maps, hardback, £15 (ISBN 0-900039-17-5)

AUCKLAND, Bruce 'Postal Markings of Scotland to 1840'. From B.Auckland: D.Canning, P.O. Box 6, Innerleithen EH44 6PA, October 1985, 190 pages, illustrated, hardback, £9 (ISBN 0-9506576-2-X)

BACHRACH, S 'Dames Employees: Feminization of Postal Work in 19thC France'. Haworth Press, USA: Eurospan, 3 Henrietta St, London WC2E 8LU, July 1985, 148 pages, hardback, £23-95 (ISBN 0-86656-205-2)

COLES, John H. and WALKER, Howard E. 'Postal Cancellations of the Ottoman Empire, Part 1: The lost territories in Europe'. From Christie's-Robson Lowe, 39 Poole Hill, Bournemouth BH2 5PX, December 1984, 108 pages, 675 illustrations, 10 maps, hardback, £12 (ISBN 0-85397-414-4)

DRECHSEL, Edwin 'Paquebot Marks of Asia and Japan's Sea Ports'. From Christie's-Robson Lowe (as above), November 1985, 64 pages, 535 illusts, paperback, £10 (ISBN 0-85397-367-9)

MACKAY, James A. (editor) 'Postal History Annual 1986'. From J.A.Mackay, 11 Newall Terrace, Dumfries DG1 1LN, October 1985, 104 pages, 527 illusts, paperback, £4-50 (ISBN 0-906440-36-X)

ROBINSON, Martin 'A Guide to Rare British Letter Boxes'. From the author at 31 Tuckwell Close, Stockton, Rugby CV23 8JP, 1985, illustrated, maps, £2-50.

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Part One

In succeeding numbers of 'Midland Mail', each mention of matters relating to a town on one of these postal routes will be quoted, complete with its date and reference in the Peover Papers. We shall proceed chronologically and, for our own convenience, the references will be serially numbered with a prefix to denote which of the four principal roads they concern ('C' for the Chester Road, 'Cd' for the Derby Road, 'N' for the North Road and 'Bg' for the Gloucester & South Wales Road - so designated because it was a subsidiary route leaving the Bristol Road at Maidenhead.) No more should be necessary by way of introduction except to emphasise that the writer of these letters was Colonel Whitley or occasionally a deputy.

The Extracts from the Peover Papers

C1 12DEC72 (i.e. 12th December 1672) Vol One, p17. A letter to Mr Cranck at Birmingham. The mail stayed 3 hours at Coleshill waiting for his bag. His branch is too large which occasions these neglects.

C2 24DEC72 Vol One, p24. To Mr Barber at Stone thanking him for his account of the obstructions due to the overflowing of the waters.

N1 27DEC72 Vol One, p27. To Mr Hawdon at Tuxford. He believes the constable was as wanting in his duty as Mr Hawdon was careful in forwarding the mail despite the great floods. However he does not know how to punish him unless by application to some Justice.

C3 9JAN73 Vol One, p41. To Mr Shurbrough at Daventry telling him that no postmaster has demanded allowance for the Irish mails.

Cd1 11JAN73 Vol One, p43. To Mr Pares at Leicester. It is not convenient for any of the clerks of the office to treat or be concerned for the postmasters, wherefore he may think of some other friend to come about his deputation.

C4 29JAN73 Vol One, p54. Again, to Mr Barber at Stone. Col Whitley will send him his resolution of Mr Barber's proposals and his opinion of Brereton and Knutsford. He is afraid that Lord Brereton will be much concerned for the first and Lord Delamere for the last. To write full and plain.

Cd2 25FEB73 Vol One, p69. To Mr Ives at Northampton. He finds, by Mr Ives' communication of 23rd, that he has settled a letter office at Wellingborough. He is to let him know if he will have a bag for there or leave the letters at large with the rest of his charge. There is a postscript to this letter asking Mr Ives to acquaint the widow at the George (Inn) that he has heard she uses horse travellers with guide and horn, not having authority to do so.

Cd3 8MAR73 Vol One, p76. Another reply to Mr Ives at Northampton to say it is convenient there should be a particular bag for Wellingborough.

C5 13MAR73 Vol One, p81. To Mr Barber at Stone. He is solicited, not only by Mr Hodgkinson, to bring the stage from Knutsford to Brereton greene "not but to take Knottsford in ye way to Warrington" and desires Mr Barber's opinion on its convenience. He is glad that Mr Barber has the other new branch in his thoughts.

Cd4 20MAR73 Vol One, p87. To Mr Ives at Northampton to let him know he will take the Wellingborough branch into account when Mr Ives' deputation is renewed. (Editor's note: When considering the meaning of the word "deputation", remember that all provincial postmasters were referred to as 'Deputy Postmasters'.)

C6 20MAR73 Vol One, p87. Once more to Mr Barber at Stone. He understands one of the neighbours overthrew Mr Cappur's boy (Nantwich) riding post with the King's Mail and killed his horse. He must desire the man's name and all particulars. Lady Gerrard has no privilege but must pay for her letters. Mr Barber must engage account with Mr Eccles (Manchester) for all letters coming thence for Ireland and so back again to Manchester and places adjacent and let Col Whitley have account of them in his bills. He is also to write to Mr Eccles to publish it in all those parts that all letters for Ireland shall be sent by way of Chester. Mr Barber is to consider how to arrange this but Col Whitley thinks he should have a particular bag for them and keep account also of them with Mr Warburton (Dublin) - it would be a better way than to keep account at Chester. Pray not to delay this new branch which he hopes will give him more content than by way of Knutsford.

(To be continued)

The Mail Coach Time-Bills



GENERAL POST-OFFICE.

The Earl of SANDWICH and The Earl of CHICHESTER
His Majesty's Postmaster-General.

London (thro' Shrewsbury) to Holyhead TIME-BILL.

by Denis Salt

Following the introduction of the Mail Coach in 1784, Time-Bills were produced for each route. These showed the distance and time allowed between each stage and spaces were left for the Guard to fill in the actual time of arrival at each stage, both by the official Time Piece which he carried and by the Town clock, and, where any business had to be carried out at a particular stage, the time of departure as well. In addition to any such business, there was the changing of the horses but this took place at every stage and was expected to be completed in no more than five minutes, which was allowed for in the journey time from the previous stage.

The Guard carried the official Time Piece which was numbered and for which he signed. The same Time Piece was carried throughout the outward and the return journeys, and

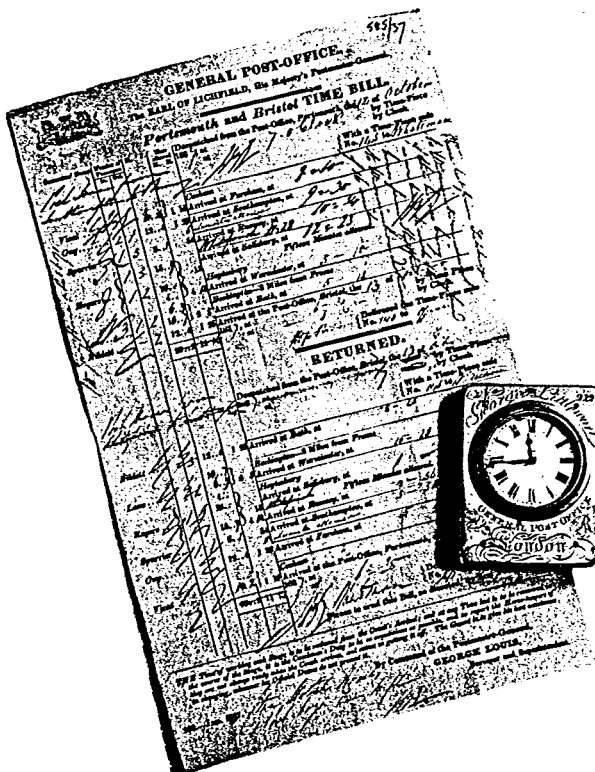
was handed-in on arrival back at the GPO. The Guard changed at certain stages where he handed over the Time Piece and the name of the new Guard was entered on the Time-Bill. The Guard was responsible for entering at each stage the time of arrival as shown by the official Time Piece and also the time as shown by the town clock but the official time of the coach was as shown by the Time Piece.

At certain stages, the coaches were also changed. Each coach was numbered and the number of the coach "sent forward" was also entered by the Guard in the Time Bill. At some stages, stops were made for Office Business, meals etc, which may have been carried out during the changing of the coaches but sometimes occurred where there was no change of coaches.

It will be seen, therefore, that the Time Piece and the Time-Bills were the only equipment or persons which completed the outward and return journeys without change.

As far as is known, few Time-Bills so filled-in by the Guards have survived but Time-Bills for the outward journey of the

London to Holyhead Mail Coach leaving London on 13 May 1815, and for the return journey of the Holyhead to London Mail Coach on 16 May 1815, have recently been seen



Reproduced by courtesy of Post Office Archives

by the writer. The following list, in tabulated form, shows only the stages at which stops were made (apart from change of horses) and the information regarding changes of coaches and guards as entered by the Guard at each such stage. For the convenience of readers, the dates and distances from London on the outward journey and from Holyhead on the return journey have also been shown. These are not given in the original Time-Bills but columns are included to show the names of the Contractors, the distance between stages and the time allowed for completion of each stage, including the change of horses. These columns are part of the printed Time-Bill. After the arrival times, the letter 'a' (for a.m.) and 'p' (for p.m.) have been added to indicate morning or afternoon to the reader. A reproduction of part of the original Time-Bill for the journey from London to Holyhead, starting on 13 May 1815, is also shown by kind permission of Post Office Archives.

London (thro' Shrewsbury) to Holyhead Time-Bill

Despatched from General Post Office the 13th May 1815 at 5 Min past 8.0PM. Coach No.56 sent out. With a Time Piece safe No.150 to Harding.

Date	Miles ex			Arrival Times			Despatch Guard
				T.P.	Clocks	Stops	
<u>May</u>	<u>London</u>	<u>Stage</u>	<u>Coach</u>				
13	-	London	56	dep 8.0p	8.5p	-	Harding
14	58½	Oxford	56	3.55a	3.50a	10 mins Office	Austin
14	98	Stratford-Avon "	"	9.0a	-	20 mins B'fast	Austin
14	121	Birmingham	244	12.15p	12.5p	½ hr Dinner, Office &c	Peters
14	147½	Shiffnal	244	4.25p	-	15 mins Office	Peters
14	166½	Shrewsbury	244	7.20p	7.15p	45 mins Office	?
14	-	Oswestry	"	11.0p	-	20 mins Supper	?
15	206½	Corwen	244	2.35a	2.15a	-	Thompson
15	251½	Bangor Ferry	254	9.30a	-	40 mins Crossing &c	Thompson
15	276½	Holyhead, arr	254	1.40p	1.25p	-	Thompson

Holyhead (thro' Shrewsbury) to London Time-Bill

Despatched from the Post Office, Holyhead, the 16th May 1815 at 12.15 by the Time Piece, 12 by the Clocks With one Irish Mails. Coach No.254 gone out With a Time Piece safe No.150 to Thompson.

Date	Miles ex			Arrival Times			Despatch Guard
				T.P.	Clocks	Stops	
<u>May</u>	<u>Holyhead</u>	<u>Stage</u>	<u>Coach</u>				
16	-	Holyhead	254	dep 12.15p	12 noon	-	Thompson
16	25	Bangor Ferry		3.45p	-	40 mins Crossing &c	Thompson
16	70	Corwen	56	11.25p	11.20p	-	?
17	110	Shrewsbury	56	5.20a	5.10a	1 hr. 50 mins.	Peters
17	129	Shiffnal	56	10.0a	-	20 mins Office and B'fast	Peters
17	155½	Birmingham	244	2.10p	-	1 hour Dinner, Office &c	Austin
17	218	Oxford	244	-	10.55p	20 mins Supper	Wilson
18	276½	G.P.O. arr	244	7.10a (due)	-	-	Wilson

There is a manuscript note at the top of the Time-Bill for the return journey reading "One Bag London: One Do. Salop". The heading reads "With One Irish Mails", the "One" being in manuscript and the other words printed. This probably refers to the daily Mails from Dublin, not to Bags: weather frequently delayed or interrupted the Packet services so the mails of more than one day might be carried on the same Mail Coach.

It will be seen from the tabulated Time-Bills that several changes of Guard and Coach occurred in the course of the journey. Between London and Birmingham, the guards may not always have worked on the same services as two services operated between these two

places on different routes. However, it appears that Peters probably normally operated between Birmingham and Shrewsbury and Thompson between Corwen and Holyhead. Between Shrewsbury and Corwen the position is not clear as, on the outward Bill, the Guard's name is quite illegible and it is by no means clear on the return Bill.

The coaches appear to have been changed at Birmingham and Bangor, where they remained for about 24 hours and continued or returned the following day. No doubt some servicing was carried out on all coaches at both Birmingham and Bangor. At Bangor, the passengers and mail were transferred to the ferry and Coach No.254 was used both ways between Menai Strait and Holyhead.

 GENERAL POST-OFFICE. The Earl of SANDWICH and The Earl of CHICHESTER His Majesty's Postmaster-General.		
London (thro' Shrewsbury) to Holyhead TIME-BILL.		
Contractors' Names Miles	Time allowed, H. M.	Dispatched from the General Post-Office, the 13 of May 1815, at <i>five</i> <i>12</i> <i>30</i> <i>PM</i> Coach N ^o 56 sent out <i>With a Time-Piece safe N^o 150 to Harding</i> Arrived at Green Man and Still at <i>8</i> — <i>35</i>
Willan ——— 18 1/2	2 25	Arrived at Uxbridge at <i>0</i> — <i>35</i>
Hart ——— 14	1 50	Arrived at Wycombe at <i>2</i> — <i>25</i>
Allen ——— 26	3 27	Arrived at Oxford at <i>3</i> — <i>35</i> by Time-Piece at <i>3</i> — <i>30</i> by Clocks <i>Ten Minutes allowed for Office Duty</i>
Wentworth ——— 8	0 45	Coach N ^o 56 <i>gone forward</i> Delivered the Time-Piece safe to <i>150</i> Arrived at Woodstock at <i>4</i> — <i>30</i>
Milward ——— 20 1/2	2 50	Arrived at Shipston at <i>7</i> — <i>40</i>
Wright ——— 11	1 20	Arrived at Stratford-on-Avon at <i>9</i> — <i>0</i> <i>Twenty Minutes are allowed for Breakfast</i>
Barke & Vyse ——— 12	1 30	Arrived at Hockley Heath at <i>10</i> — <i>50</i>
Vyse ——— 11	1 25	Arrived at Birmingham at <i>12</i> — <i>13</i> by Time-Piece at <i>12</i> — <i>5</i> by Clocks <i>Delivered the Time-Piece safe to Peters</i> Coach N ^o 254 sent forward <i>To be at Birmingham before 12 o'Clock where Half an Hour is allowed for Dinner, Office Business, &c</i> Dispatched from Birmingham at <i>12</i> — <i>25</i> by Time-Piece at <i>12</i> — <i>25</i> by Clocks

It will be seen that short stops were made for Breakfast, Dinner and Supper, in addition to Office Business. These stops have been shown in the tabulated Time-Bills but, where there is no Office Business, the Time-Bills have no space for inserting the Coach No. and the Guard's name as they are not changed there.

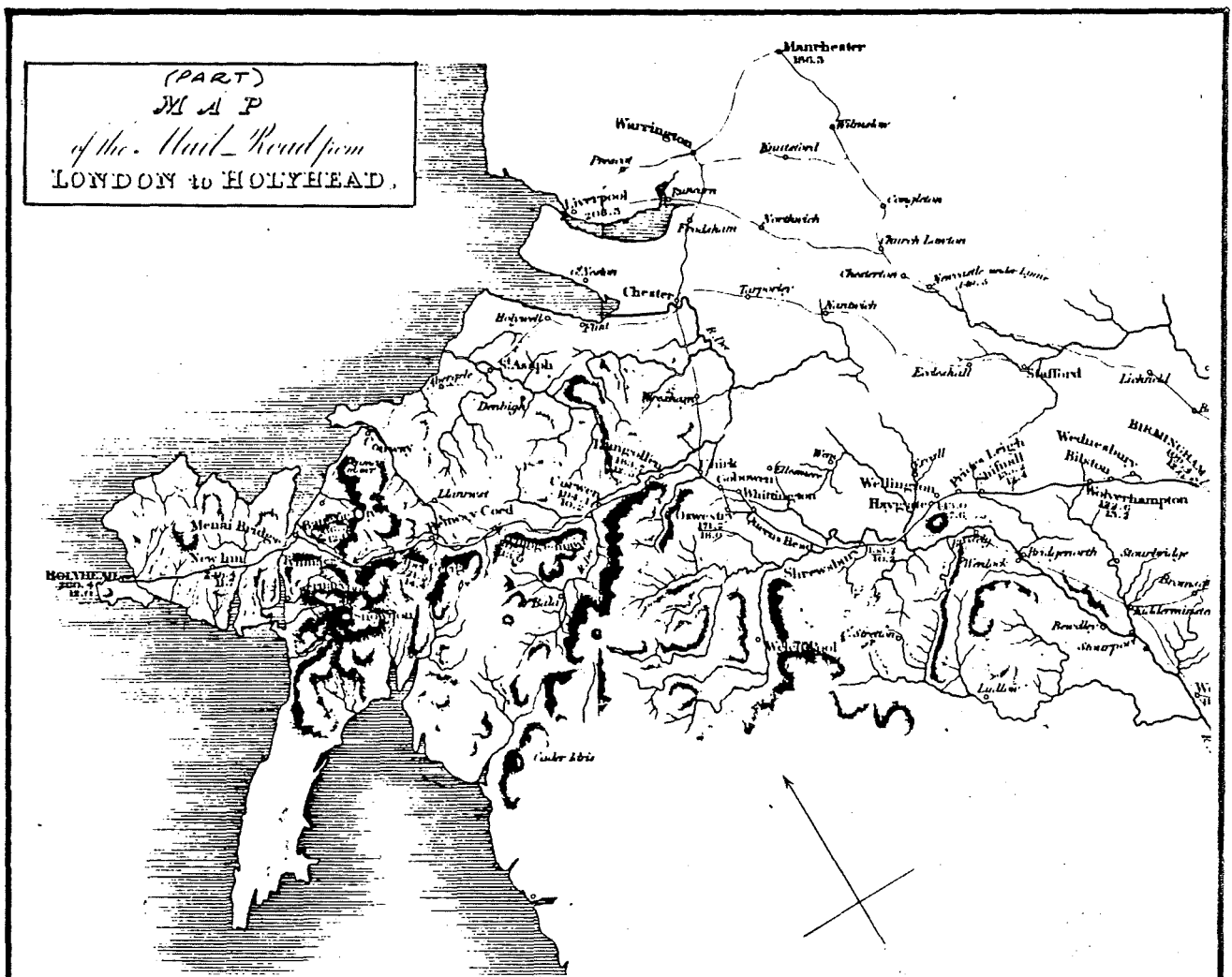
It may be of interest that, on the return journey alongside "Birmingham", there is a note by the Guard in the margin "Time Piece Silent. T.A." and, at Oxford, the time by the Clock only has been entered.

* * * * *

SOMELONDON - BIRMINGHAM - HOLYHEADCLARIFICATIONSby The Reverend Christopher M. Beaver

Two or three matters in the 'Ups and Downs' article ('Midland Mail' 43/5-43/8) call for comment and a correction as a result of discussion with members.

The London to Birmingham 'Short Bill', No.9 in the Earl of Chesterfield's collection of 1797, which gives Thomas Hasker's revealing observations about so many of the mail routes, does (on its own) suggest this was a continuous part of a longer route and it gives the mileage as 113½. However, comparison with the details in No.8 (London-Shrewsbury) and No.11 (London-Liverpool) makes clear that the 'down' Birmingham bag went on No.11 to Coventry and the 'up' bag all the way on No.8. There is no other short bill in the collection and no 'up' short bill would ever be required since the purpose was to inform the GPO within 36 hours of the first day's progress of 'down' mails. Whether this short bill was sent back from Birmingham via Coventry or Oxford would make little difference. Other evidence alluded to in the 'Ups and Downs' article makes it clear that there was a bye-mail connection from Coventry to Birmingham and the 'Short Bill' was not, therefore, covering a through journey from London to Birmingham.



274 miles 3 furlongs was, in fact, the stated mileage of the London-Oxford-Holyhead route immediately before the 1817 alteration to the Coventry route: the distance in 1808

when this service began is unknown, though a great deal of contemporary evidence concerning its early operation at Holyhead is referred to in Chapter Six of Edward Watson's 'Royal Mail to Ireland', published in 1917. For example, the Packets to Ireland were immediately made to work in with the arrival of this mail coach instead of with the one through Chester and the departure of the new 'up' coach was delayed only if a Packet due was actually in sight and able to get into harbour. The 1st Report of the Select Committee on Holyhead Roads (published 1810) is likely to reveal the mileage at that time, perhaps identical to the 273 $\frac{3}{4}$ miles given in Paterson's Roads of 1811 where the section from Shrewsbury to Holyhead is headed 'New Mail Coach Road'. There are also time-bills used in May 1815 (see Denis Salt's article in this number of 'Midland Mail') which show Birmingham as 121 miles, Shrewsbury 166 $\frac{1}{2}$ and Holyhead 276 $\frac{1}{2}$ from the GPO. The discrepancies are no surprise since work on the mail routes to Ireland was continuous, under pressure from Sir Henry Parnell and the committee that became the Parliamentary Commissioners. The map on the previous page, the other part of which was illustrated in 'Midland Mail' 43/6, is from Paterson's Roads of 1822 and shows some of the Commissioners' achievements or works in progress. Among them were great improvements at Holyhead harbour in about 1814, the elegant Waterloo Bridge at Bettws-y-Coed completed in 1815 and the Menai Bridge opened in 1826.

The map shows a London-Banbury-Birmingham route. Such a route apparently replaced the Birmingham Auxiliary after the Holyhead route via Shrewsbury was transferred to its route in 1817. However, the 1823 mail routes map (Post 10A/16 in P.O. Archives) shows its route through Bicester, not Buckingham, and Southam, not Kington. Not everything is yet crystal clear !

* * * * *

MORE ON THE 1812 BIRMINGHAM-LONDON MAIL COACH

by John Soer

There are a few points concerning the mail coach, mentioned in Chris Beaver's article ('Midland Mail' 43/5-43/8), introduced on 25th June 1812 to carry the Birmingham-London bag which may be of interest to members.

To speed up correspondence from Birmingham to Hinckley and Leicester, (this always seemed to be of concern to the Leicestershire towns) the coach from Coventry to Leicester waited at Coventry for the arrival of the coach from Birmingham.

The only effect on the Coventry mail from Birmingham was that it arrived half an hour later in the evening. However, the people of Coventry were anxious to use the new coach so as to give a further half hour to reply to letters from London. Freeling reported to the PMG: "I think it will be better for your Lordships to concede it as a grace to the town." He went on to stress that this would not create a precedent for other towns on the route and that bye-letters were not to be carried from Coventry so that "the principles on which your Lordships have consented to this demi-official coach may not be impaired". At the time, bye-letters from Birmingham to towns between Coventry and London remained in the Coventry office from 6pm until 3pm the next day.

In the accompanying report about measures taken so as to bring the mail from Manchester into Birmingham one hour earlier starting on 5th July 1812, it was stated that the coach would miss Walsall and travel via Wednesbury since the route via Wolverhampton and Penkridge was of greater importance than that via Walsall. It is not clear whether or not Walsall was to be served from Wednesbury. Hasker concluded that, by 5th July, the surveyor would arrange to bring up the Dudley branch to Wolverhampton "as it ought to have been always" in time for the Birmingham and Manchester mail.

* * * * *



WHAT THE PAPERS SAY (I)

Various writers have described the friction that existed between John Palmer and the Post Office authorities at the time of the introduction of the mail coaches. However, Palmer was not without his supporters, writes John Soer, as can be seen from this newspaper report of June 1785 describing the celebrations to mark the King's birthday.

"The mail-coach contractors, somewhat nettled by being frequently kept at the post-office beyond the time fixed for their departure, and hurt that the great end of their exertion should be defeated by the late delivery of the letters, which they are at so much pains to bring to town at an early hour in the morning, resolved to show their resentment by satirising the old system of conveyance, in their transparent illuminations, in honour of his Majesty's birthday. Willson, in Lad-Lane, who beside the Bristol and Bath road, has contracted for a variety of other roads in the kingdom that will be accommodated in the summer, had a very splendid picture, representing the mail-coach in full speed, toward which a highwayman advancing, is shot by the guard, and falling from his horse; in the background is seen the mail-cart drawn by an old rip of an horse, scarce able to crawl, and while the driver of it is supplied by a girl with a sup of the bottle, two of her accomplices are handing off the bags. Willan, in Bull and Mouth Street, who is shortly to launch mail coaches to Nottingham etc; presented somewhat similar to that in Lad-Lane, both having portraits of the King, but instead of a mail-cart he had an overgrown rider carrying an express, mounted upon the skeleton of a nag under poney size, whose retrograde motion seemed ill calculated to answer the purpose of expedition. But keen satire wore a countenance of severity in Slack's transparency in Piccadilly, which, besides his Majesty's portrait and the mail cart overloaded with game, fish and poultry added to the letter bags, furnished a freight that seems as much for the gratification of a private appetite, as it is for the accommodation of public correspondence. Born down by such a load of good things, the wheel cracks, and the raw-boned hack falls upon all fours; nor can the effort and art of the experienced driver, with all the inveteracy that marks his character, produce any thing like an appearance of his ever getting up again."

WHAT THE PAPERS SAY (II)

From The Leicester and Nottingham Journal, 30th July 1785:

"Since Tuesday a new spectacle has amused us, and to which great numbers resort, viz to see the NEW MAIL COACHES arrive. The splendour of the carriages; the velocity of their motion; the emblazoned arms; the coachmen and guards in scarlet and gold (the King's livery), their glittering arms; a blunderbuss flung over the guard's shoulders, with pistols in their belts; and whilst upon full speed firing a signal to announce their approach (which they never fail to do) altogether has so much of a novelty that on nights and mornings crowds attend to see their arrival."

The coaches mentioned were those to Leeds and Manchester.

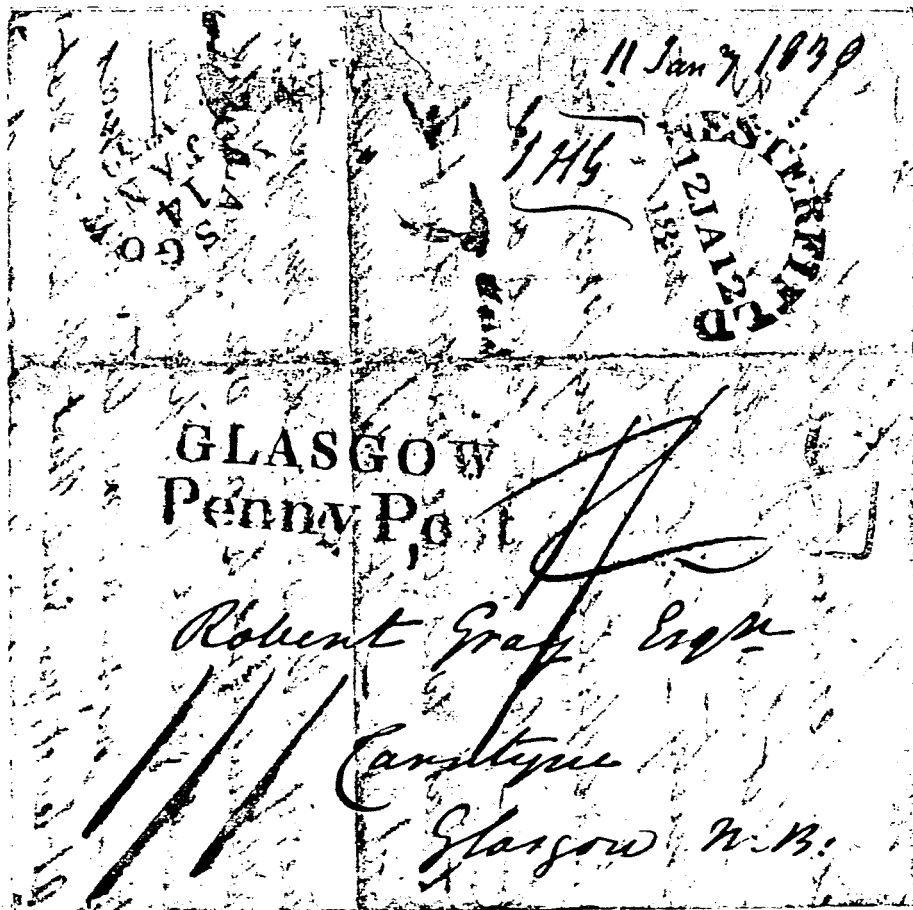


BOLSOVER CASTLE (Again)

- and a thought for the traveller.

James Grimwood-Taylor's item on 'Bolsover Castle' ('Midland Mail' 42/5) interested me, writes FRANK PEACH, because I have a similar letter written some seven months earlier on 11th January 1830 and also addressed to the writer's father at Carntyne, near Glasgow. However, the postmark used is the circular 'Chesterfield' with mileage removed and the last two digits of the year are missing. Like James' cover, it also bears the 'Glasgow/Penny Post' and a faintish '½' Scottish Additional ½d Mail Tax, or Wheel Tax, and is charged 1/- originally, amended to 1/1d. In this letter, the Vicar writes:-

"I delivered my evening lecture at Renishaw almost to bare walls . . . occasioned by the intense cold . . . On Wednesday we propose to set out again, first for Chaddesden, three miles from Derby, to visit Mr and Mrs Wilmot, & then to Sir Montague Cholmeley's at Easton near Grantham, and we expect to be back here at the end of next week. I have got the neighbouring clergyman to undertake my duty on the Sunday I shall be absent."



The journey to Chaddesden, near Derby, would have been at least 34 miles via Chesterfield and the continuation to Easton, near Grantham, a further 42 miles. The sight of an inn every few miles must have come as a welcome relief to travellers in those days if only to accommodate the wants of nature - especially as we learn in the letter of "the intense cold" !

* * * * *

. . . And the LEICESTER MERCURY.

by Jim Hammond

The 'Northampton Mercury' article by Derek Smeathers ('Midland Mail' 43/9) rang a faint bell and sent me scurrying for the drawer in which slogan postmarks and other modern 'waste paper' have been deposited over the years. The object of my search came to light after considerable rummaging. On the occasion of the centenary of the Leicester Mercury in 1974, a slogan postmark was sponsored to commemorate the event - the sort of local publicity slogan that was so commonly used in the '60s and early '70s. This slogan was used from January 24th until February 6th 1974 at Leicester and at ten other offices in the Leicester area. I discovered two in the drawer; the one illustrated from Loughborough and another (1st day) used at Rugby. One thing that is amply illustrated is the clear impressions that used to be obtained on the early machines (surely a pre-requisite for an advertising slogan) as compared to the results that are so often unreadable from the new MLOs.



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The
DATES OF OPENING
of some
VILLAGE SUB-OFFICES

by John Soer

The distribution of the dates of issue of the handstamps listed in 'The Undated Circular Marks of the Midland Counties' caused me to look more carefully at the dates of opening of village sub-offices in Leicestershire and Rutland. Shown below are the number of offices opened in each five year period from 1840 to 1899. The numbers in brackets show the number of villages in which an office was re-opened; these are included in the main total. So far, I have not been able to trace the date of opening of all the village post offices in these counties but, of the twenty or so outstanding, only five were in existence in 1879 so they are not likely to affect the pattern which emerges. Town sub-offices have not been included.

Years:	1840-	1845-	1850-	1855-	1860-	1865-	1870-	1875-	1880-	1885-	1890-	1895-
	1844	1849	1854	1859	1864	1869	1874	1879	1884	1889	1894	1899
Offices Opened:	28	68	14	27(1)	6(1)	7(1)	15(7)	21(2)	27(6)	12(2)	11(1)	10(2)

It is noticeable that the withdrawal of the UDCs in 1860 coincided with a marked drop in the number of offices opened. What these figures do not show is that no fewer than eighteen offices were closed in the 1860s so there was a decrease in the number of sub-offices in this period or, at best, no increase.

Is this purely a statistical quirk or does it reflect a deliberate policy on the part of the Post Office at that time? When an office was closed, the minutes usually mention that a wall-box was to be provided but I have not been able to find any mention of the fact that it was deliberate policy to replace sub-offices by wall-boxes. Can anyone help? Does anyone know if this pattern is repeated in any other county?

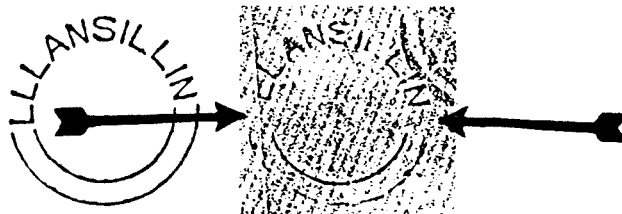
Incidentally, if Leicestershire is a typical example, the above data provide a very good reason for buying the UDC book since it gives an indication of the date of opening of 50% of the village post offices. (Now the editor will have to publish this.)

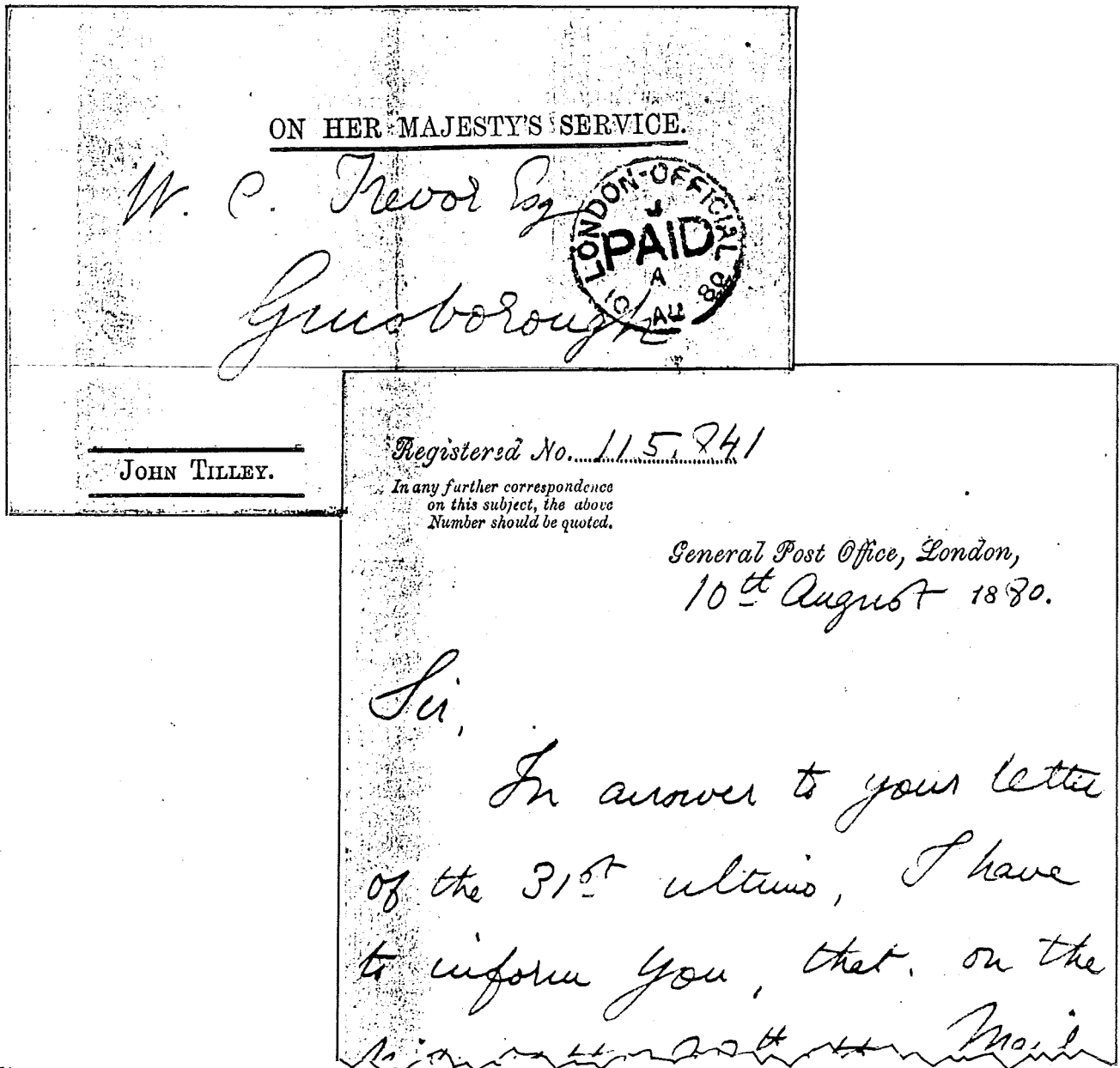
(. . . and he will, by jove.)

* * * * *

One Too Many

We are grateful to Guy Bridges for providing the first example of the undated circular mark which appears on the front of our UDC book - 'LLLANSILLIN', with 3 'L's at the beginning. Alas, the mark does not appear to have been used in that form but whoever excised the first 'L' neatly cut back the double arcs at the tail of the name to provide an unusual but balanced handstamp.



AN ACCIDENT ON THE MIDLAND RAILWAYItem submitted by David Hardwick

"Sir,

In answer to your letter of the 31st ultimo, I have to inform you that, on the 28th, the Mail from London, in which the letter in question was included, was detained by an accident on the Midland Railway at Market Harborough, and arrived at Derby upwards of three hours beyond the prescribed time. The Mail for Guisborough was despatched from Derby at the earliest opportunity, viz at 7.45am on the 29th ultimo, but arrived, of course too late for the letters to be included in the first delivery.

I am sorry for the annoyance caused to you by the delay.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

Henry B. Page

for the Secretary"

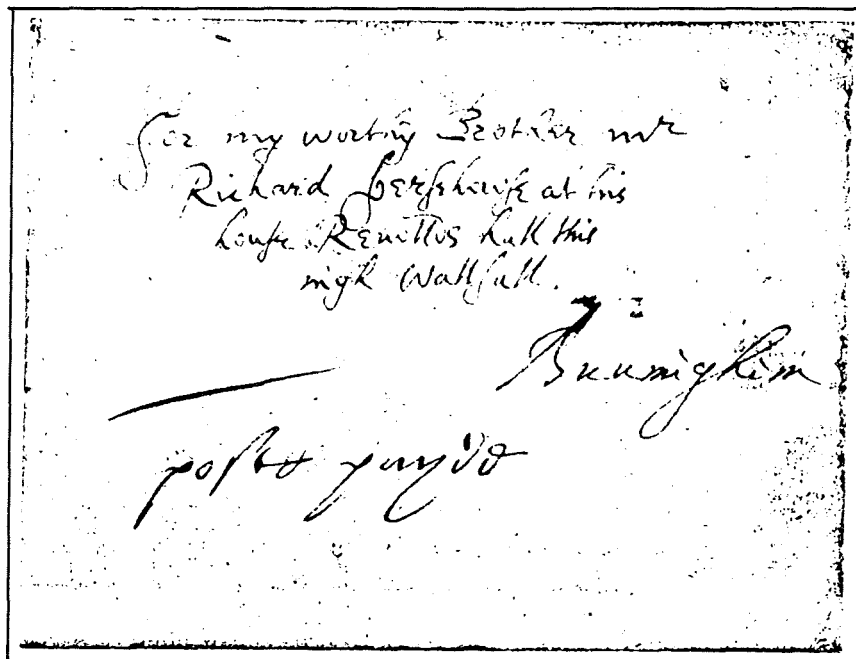
This letter is surely indicative of the high standards of mail delivery expected in the 1880s and the courtesy with which complaints, that would now be regarded as petty, were answered. Does any railway enthusiast happen to know what happened to the mail(?) train on the Midland Railway at Market Harborough on the night of 28th July 1880?

Civil War and Commonwealth Period Letters to Walsall

We are indebted to Michael Jackson for illustrations of two items from a correspondence he has acquired recently. The first is dated 17th January 1647, a date lying in that brief period of peace between the two Civil Wars. The address reads:

"For my worthy Brother Mr Richard Persehouse at his house Renollds hall this nigh Walsall"

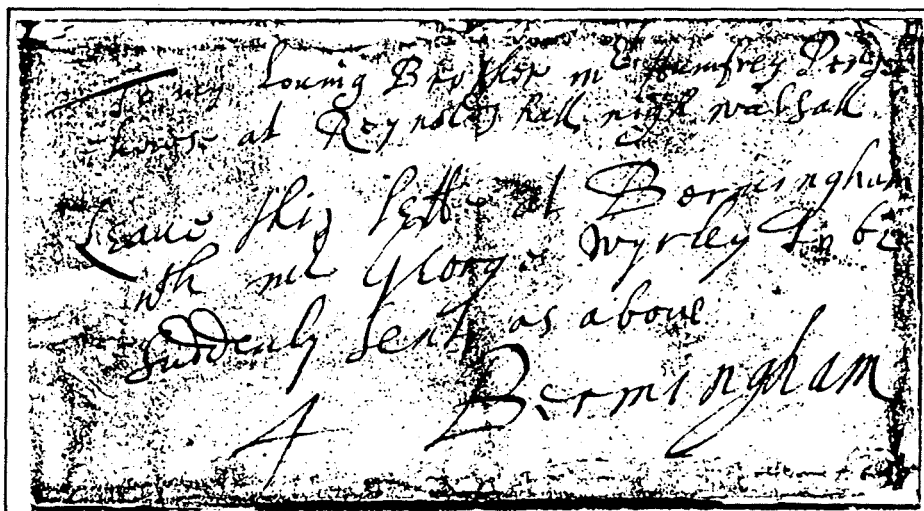
There is a manuscript direction 'Birmingham' and, in the same hand, 'post payde'.



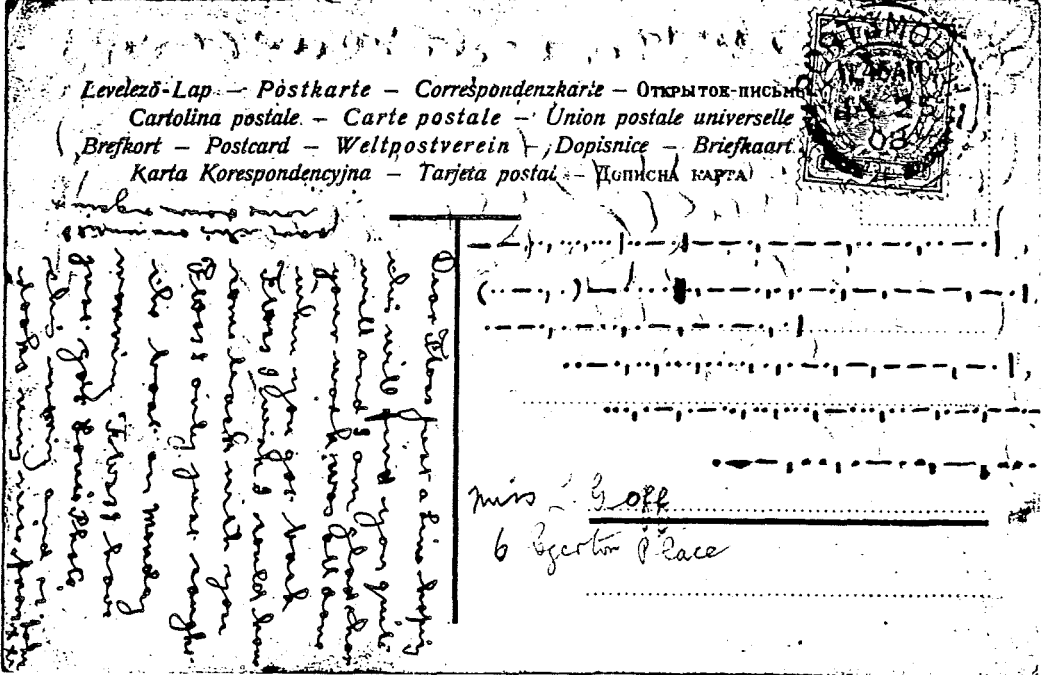
The second item, from London, is to the same address and dated 26th May 1651. This time it reads:

"To my Loving Brother Mr Humfrey Persehouse at Reynolds hall nigh Walsall Leave this letter at Birmingham with Mr George Wyrley to be suddenly sent as above"

It is endorsed with a manuscript 'Birmingham' and a '4' charge mark. The letter, from John Persehouse, begins "My last by the last post I hope you received". Letters from this period of our history are rarely seen and it must be said that the evidence here appears to support the belief that there was at least a limited operational postal system at the time, a subject that has given rise to contentious debate in recent years.



Tailpiece



It is appropriate that this postcard of 1908 should have originated in Portsmouth. Thanks to the telegraph office, perhaps, Floss got the message from her sailor (?) boyfriend.

Alcester K.G.

In 'Midland Mail' 42/11, an Alcester single ring stamp was illustrated with what appeared to be the letters 'K.G.' at the foot. Mike Young and Frank Peach have both suggested that it may have been an over-inked 'K.C.' and that the mark possibly came from a sub-office at (Kings) Coughton, Alcester. It sounds plausible.

The Next 'Midland Mail'

The next 'Midland Mail', the last of the season, will be sent out in May, complete with an index of all the articles that have appeared in issues 1 to 45 inclusive. There will be more extracts from the Peover Papers, news of the Midland TSO straight line namestamps, full details of the Auction realisations and a few novel words about mileage and mileage marks. It will all be there in your right-hand-justified, proportionally-spaced, non-word-processed, low-fat, calorie-free, medal-winning journal - 'Midland Mail'.

Great Britain Postal History

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