

MIDLAND MAIL

THE JOURNAL OF THE MIDLAND (GB) POSTAL HISTORY SOCIETY

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Number 156, August 2008

CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations to Chris Jackson who was awarded a Vermeil with 78 marks (two short of a Large Vermeil) at the National Philatelic Exhibition at Harrogate in May for his entry 'Worcestershire Penny Posts up to 1840' in the single board competition. The judges gave very high marks for 'Research and Knowledge'

NEW MEMBER

We extend a cordial welcome to Stuart Geddes of Mitchel Troy, Monmouth who collects material from Wales, Waterford and the Forest of Dean.

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

The first meeting of our new season will be held at Kington St Michael on **20th September** and will take the form of an all day meeting. Full details are enclosed with this issue.

Then on **18th October** we meet at the premises of Messrs Warwick & Warwick in Warwick. The meeting which begins at **1.30 pm** will be titled '*Large Lumps*' - that is items that will not fit onto the usual display sheet. The meeting will be preceded by a committee meeting beginning at 11.30 am

A future date to note in your diaries is 19th September 2009 when our meeting will be an all day affair in Northampton.

THE OXFORDSHIRE LOCAL POSTS

Because of a computer program incompatibility, the second page of the write-up on the Enstone Penny Post in the last number of 'Midland Mail' became corrupted. The illustrations of the postal markings wandered from their intended position and the illustration of the cover was lost entirely. Consequently, both pages are repeated in this number on pages 4 and 5. I apologise for any inconvenience caused to members.

The series, which is intended to provide information missing from the Society's 'local posts' book, continues on pages 6 and 7 with a description of the Witney Penny Post. This will be followed by Banbury Penny and 5th Clause Posts in the next 'Midland Mail'.

HELP!

YOUR SOCIETY NEEDS YOUR HELP

The real work of updating the British County Catalogue for the Midland Counties has begun in earnest. A recent meeting of the County Editors resulted in agreement on the format of the data collection and presentation. The County Editors are now looking for EVERY MEMBER to assist in what is a mammoth task. We need everyone to go through their collections and pass relevant information to us so that the information is as accurate as possible when we go to print.

It is intended to cover all the types of mark currently listed in each midland county of the BCC, updating them with Information gleaned over the years since the catalogues were produced. In the case of Staffordshire this was twenty years ago, and for Gloucestershire, Herefordshire and Worcestershire just slightly less at eighteen years. All the remaining counties were included in the combined Volumes 1 & 2 in 1966 so are already twelve years old.

One main difference from the BCC is that we intend to show, where possible, full dates of use as we have done in our other publications. To achieve this we need some information from the collections of members.

The information required fall into three areas.

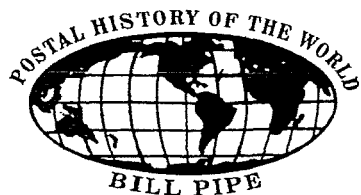
MARKS - Full details of new marks are needed: - mark, size colour and dates of use (preferably with a photocopy)

COLOURS - Existing marks which have been recorded in another colour to that listed in the BCC.

DATES - We need full dates of use for the earliest and latest years listed in the BCC and in particular any dates of use which fall outside these years. In addition we intend to separate the dates of use for each colour in which a handstamp was used, and the dates of use of the Penny Post Receiving House marks.

Please take some time out from this terrible 'Summer' to go through your collection and let the relevant County Editor have the information as soon as possible. After all this will be a SOCIETY publication.

If you are unable to see the relevant County Editor please send any information to the Co-ordinating Editor, Chris Jackson, at 49 Mason Road, Headless Cross, Redditch B97 5DT.



THE MAGPIE

*POSTAL AUCTIONS & LISTS
POSTCARDS & EPHEMERA
PAPER COLLECTABLES
POSTAL HISTORY*

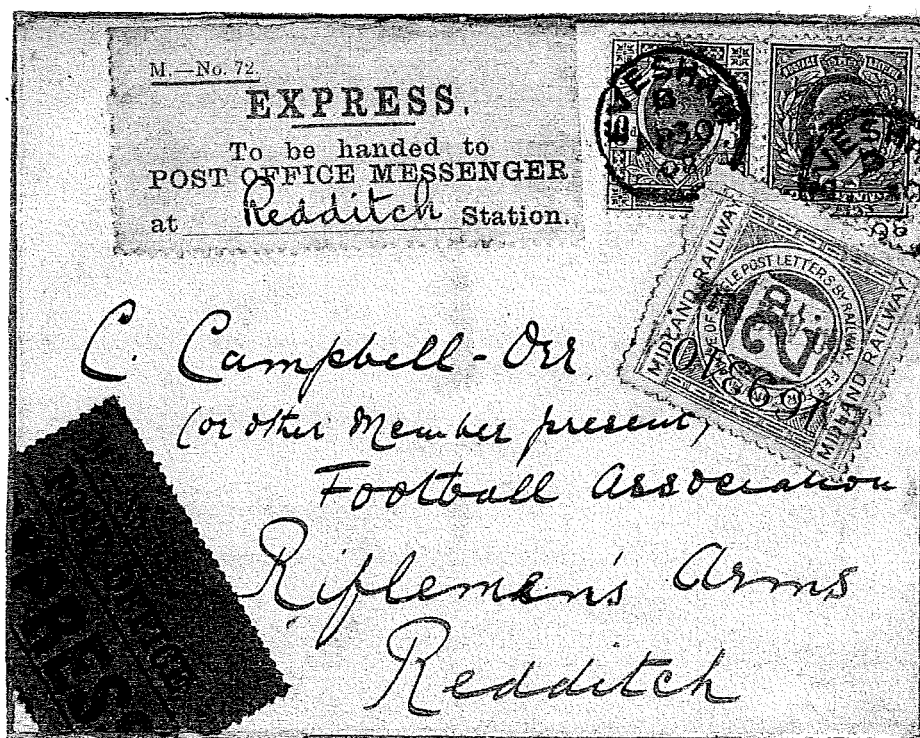
W.T. PIPE
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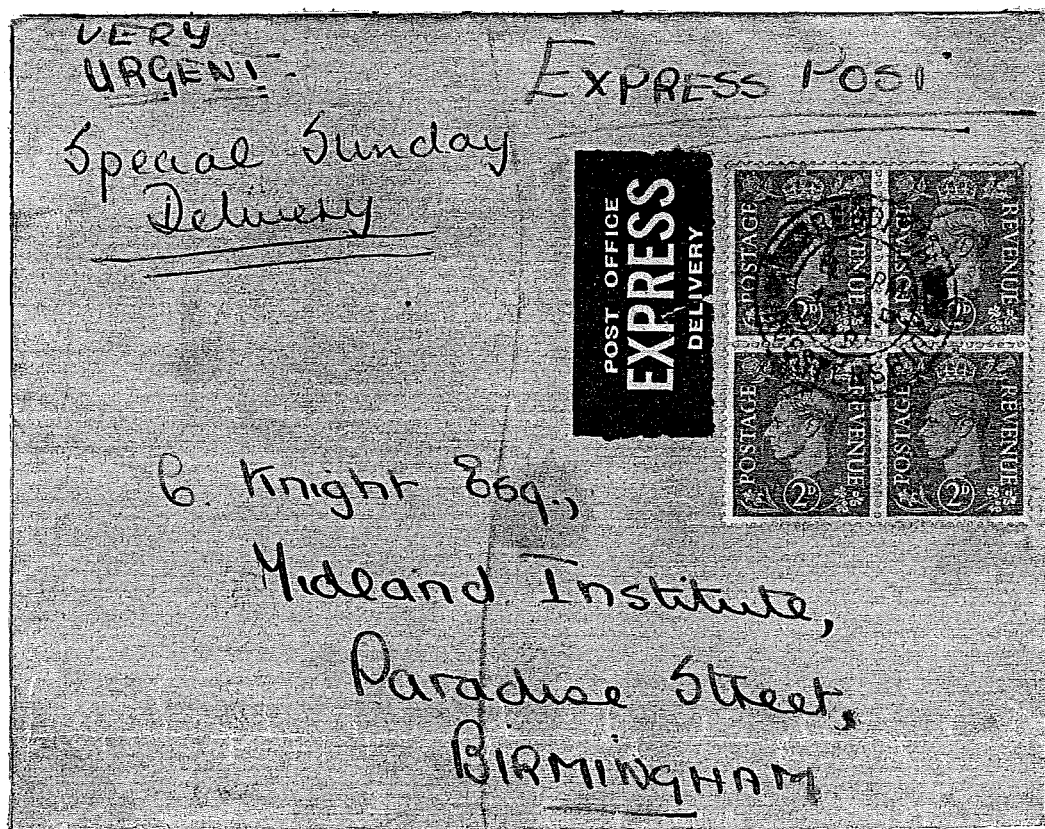
TWO EXPRESS COVERS

by Chris Jackson

The first cover was sent from Evesham to Redditch on 30th April 1908. It carries stamps with a total value of 4d - 1d for the postage and 3d for the Express Delivery. The letter was taken to Evesham railway station where a further 2d was paid and a 2d Midland Railway stamp affixed.. The cover also shows the red EXPRESS label no. 55 as well as label no. 72 which carries the instruction "To be handed to/POST OFFICE MESSENGER/at Redditch Station."



I pose a question regarding the second item which was sent from Redditch to Birmingham on 15th April 1949. The total charge was 1/8½d which included the fee for 'Special Sunday Delivery'. At the time the postage rate was 2½d so the fee was 1/6d, but how much of this was for an Express and how much was the premium for Sunday delivery? So far I have not been able to find the answer.

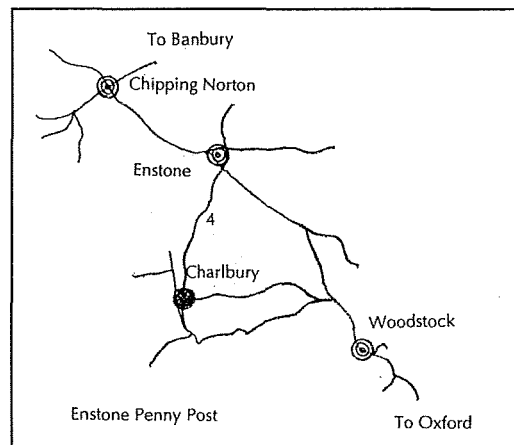


ENSTONE PENNY POST

1810 - 1840

The Enstone Penny Post was established on 6th July 1810, notwithstanding a major procedural irregularity. The Surveyor, Mr Woodcock, had obtained the agreement in principle of Francis Freeling, Secretary to the Post Office, to his proposal to try a Penny Post at Enstone but had not then made a formal report of the projected expense. In fact, it was 24th September before he did so, probably because he wanted to see if it had come up to expectations. He had to report that it had not done so but that he expected it to improve. He believed it to be worth at least a twelve months trial.

The new post ran between Enstone and the village of Charlbury, a distance of about four miles. The duty was to be performed daily on horseback at a cost of 2/6d a day (17/6d a week, £45-12-0d a year). To that was to be added a salary of £10 a year to the postmaster at Enstone, which had apparently already been agreed. According to Mr Woodcock, a receiver at Charlbury was already being paid £6 a year by the postmaster of Woodstock and he proposed it should simply be transferred to the Enstone account. The c1770 map of the English postal system does indeed show an office at Charlbury, exclusively served from Woodstock. However, all letters seen, dated between 1779 and 1808, from Charlbury were routed through Enstone, whether going north or south.



The Surveyor admitted the new Penny Post was not without its teething problems. A Mr Stratton of Rangers Lodge received numerous letters and parcels for himself and his visitors and he said he would either send his servant to Enstone to collect them or proceed with a previously agreed arrangement he had with the receiver at Charlbury, who would bring them to him for a payment of five guineas a year. These were early days for provincial penny posts and Mr Woodcock was seeking guidance as to whether Mr Stratton would be allowed to continue avoiding payment of penny postage, now that he could be served by an official post. He also pointed out that the Duke of Beaufort had a hunting lodge less than a mile from Charlbury and yet sent to Woodstock for his letters. A letter would be sent to the Duke to advise him that he "had better have his letters by the Penny Post".

Freeling wrote to the Postmasters General on 28th September, excusing the procedural lapse as being due to Mr Woodcock "not being much used to such establishments". He recommended the establishment of the Enstone Penny Post, even though the receipts appeared a little less than the expenditure, which he said would be £49-12-0, thereby indicating that he believed the £6 to be paid to Charlbury would be included in the £10 paid to Enstone. In this he was mistaken. He said it was in the nature of penny posts for them to improve.

On 19th April 1812, Mr Woodcock reported on the progress of the Penny Post in its first year of operation. The total received for inward and outward letters had been £51-4-0. He described this as "not much under the estimated expense of the establishment", which he quoted as £55-12-0, thereby confirming that the sum of £6 paid to Charlbury was, indeed, additional to the £10 paid to Enstone and not part of it. When Freeling conveyed the content of the surveyor's report to the Postmasters General on 22nd April, he noted that almost every penny post had made a profit but Enstone was an exception.

However, with the proceeds and expense being so nearly equal, he felt sure their Lordships would not hesitate to continue the post, subject to an annual report on its progress. The Enstone Penny Post ran successfully through to 1840. Up to 1838 at least, It does not appear that the pay of the messenger or of the Charlbury receiver was ever increased.

Two handstamps are known at Enstone. There was no handstamp at Charlbury; as the sole receiving house, it was unnecessary.

References

Post 40/86S/1810

Post 40/102/1812

Post 9/132

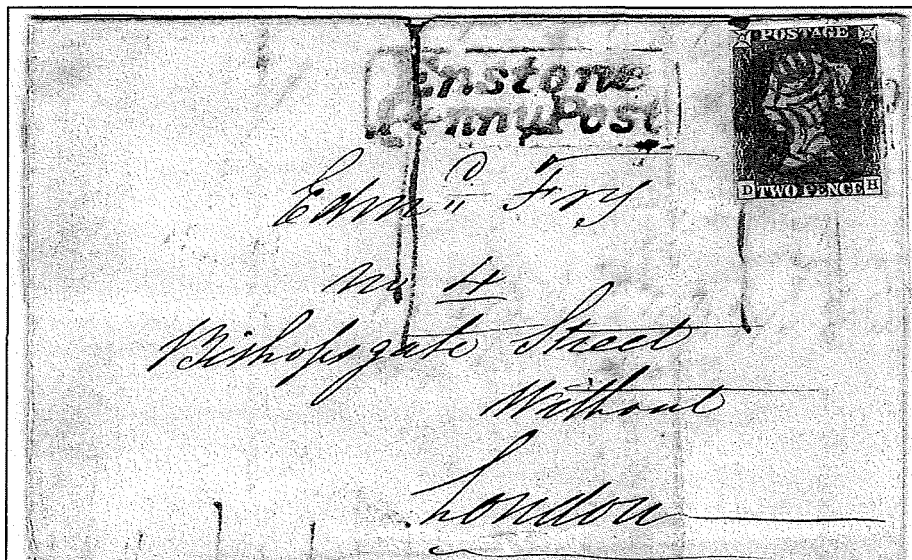
HANDSTAMPS OF THE ENSTONE PENNY POST

Post town: Enstone

Receiving house: Charlbury

MLP1108	ENSTONE Penny Post	B	(18)14-13JUL34	B
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MLP1109		B	27DEC37-14MAR42	C/C
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Post-1840 use of the second Enstone Penny Post handstamp by a 2d blue adhesive. There is good evidence that this handstamp was held at Charlbury, possibly from 1837.

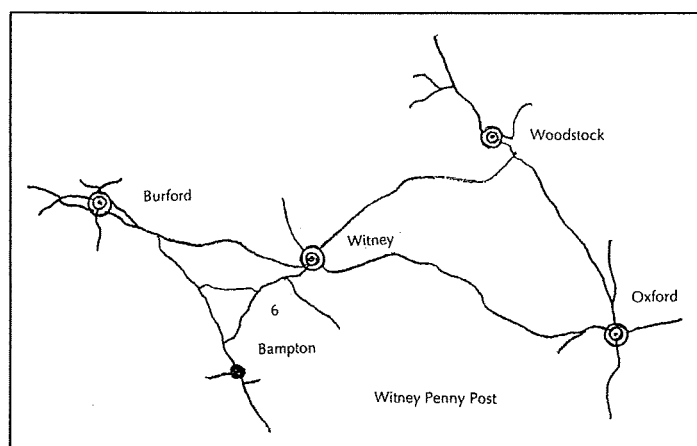
WITNEY PENNY POST

1817 – 1840

It was the death of the private messenger who carried letters between the post town of Witney and the village of Bampton that led to a petition from the inhabitants of Bampton for an official penny post to be established. The Surveyor, Samuel Woodcock, wrote to Francis Freeling on 21st January 1817 and gave him some details of the number of letters likely to be carried in such a post, information he had obtained from the postmaster of Witney. In a period of fourteen days, 151 letters and 75 newspapers had been sent to Bampton and 81 letters had been received. If this were typical, a penny post could be expected to generate receipts of something over £31 a year.

The distance between Bampton and Witney was said to be six miles, much as it is today, and the petitioners had suggested the messenger (who could also be appointed receiver) should be paid 2/6d for each journey. However, Mr Woodcock appreciated that, if he were to be paid 17/6d a week, the post would probably operate at a loss but, if 2/- a day were paid, the post would be in profit. Appreciating that the viability was only marginal but likely to improve, he suggested a trial of the new post.

It is interesting that the Surveyor further requested, if the Postmasters General approved the post, that a penny post handstamp be ordered for Witney and a 'No. 1' stamp for Bampton, notwithstanding it being the only receiving house.



Within a week of Mr Woodcock writing his letter, on 27th January 1817, Freeling sent a minute to the Postmasters General, seeking their permission to establish the post for an experimental period (which was normally one year). It might seem unusual that he devoted more than half his minuted letter to making the familiar point that, whereas a small penny post such as this might be of only marginal viability, it inevitably generated extra General Post revenue. He may have done this because, although the Earl of Chichester had been in office for many years, the Marquess of Salisbury was a recent appointment.

Approval must have been quite swift because, when the Surveyor wrote again on 16th March, he said he had established the Witney Penny Post on Thursday 14th March. He said it was giving the inhabitants of Bampton great satisfaction and, if early indications were maintained, the post would turn out to be financially much better than anticipated. The residents were keen for one Edmund Cork, "a sober, steady man", to be the messenger and Mr Woodcock had temporarily employed him, pending the approval of the Postmasters General. There was to be an open receiving box at Bampton, this being a penny post and not a 5th Clause post, and the Surveyor asked for a small salary of £2 a year to be allowed for a receiver. Thus the confirmed cost would be £36-10-0 per annum for the messenger (2/- a day, seven days a week) and £2 for the receiver, less £6 then being paid to the Witney postmaster for a private messenger to Bampton, making the total annual cost £32-10-0.

On 7th April of the following year, 1818, the postmaster of Witney gave the Surveyor a detailed breakdown of the receipts of the Witney Penny Post on a month-by-month basis. These were remarkably consistent and the good news was that receipts for the year totalled £44-12-4d, £12-2-4d more than the cost of the post. Mr Woodcock passed this information to Francis Freeling on 9th April and, although admitting the profit was not large, noted that the Witney Penny Post was at least paying its way and was expected it to improve further. Freeling minuted the Postmasters General on 10th April, writing "I presume your Lordships will not hesitate to order (the post) to be made permanent". It continued until penny posts ceased in 1840.

Three penny post handstamps were used at Witney and the Bampton receiving house had both a 'No.1' and, later in 1839, a type 5 penny post stamp.

References

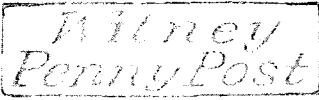
Post 40/19/1817
Post 40/58/1817
Post 40/160/1818

HANDSTAMPS OF THE WITNEY PENNY POST

Post town: Witney

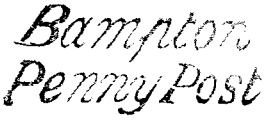
Receiving house: Bampton

MLP1112  B 23FEB19-20FEB28 C

MLP1113  B 29NOV28- 6DEC37 C
N.B. Side lines disappear from 1834.

MLP1114  Issued 17JUL39 but not known used.

MLP1115  B 23FEB19- 1APR38 B

MLP1116  B 25AUG40-22MAY46 D

THE FIRST 100 YEARS OF THE POSTMARKS OF NOTTINGHAM - 1700-1800

by Alan Marshall

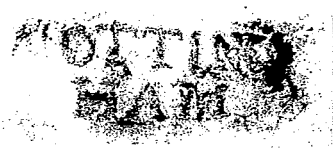
Firstly, I must acknowledge that this information largely exists in Hall's book *'The Post Office at Nottingham'* and in *'The British County Catalogue of Postal History'*. Although much hard work clearly has been carried out to provide such information, this exercise is intended to take matters a stage further in the time up to the introduction of the boxed mileage marks in 1801.

Secondly, it should be appreciated that the manufacture and material of the early town stamps mean that any claim for the use of a stamp over a lengthy period of time must be viewed with some suspicion.

Hall's earliest recorded handstamp is in 1740 whereas the County Catalogue (CC) commences with a two-line (36x12mm) stamp in 1712-13 with which I concur and upon which I can offer no further data.

The next CC listing is a two-line mark 'NOTTINGHAM' (NG119) recorded in 1721. In fact the CC listing is incorrect but understandably so when one considers the poor quality of the strike which is now in the writer's possession. Two other examples of this mark are now known. One of poor quality is in New Zealand, while the other, on a letter dated 28th May 1720, is of excellent quality and is in the author's collection. In the two strikes of poor quality show only the 'G' of Nottingham on the top line is readily visible. Inspection under a powerful magnifying glass shows that some of the other letters can just be identified as albino impressions. Superimposition of the good quality mark results in a perfect match and reveals that the mark measures not 24x10mm as listed but 22x10mm. Of importance and real significance is the fact that there is only one 'T' in the name of the town. With two 'T's of this particular size the stamp would measure 28x10mm. The usage can now be recorded as 28th May 1720 to 1st November 1721.

NG117



3rd October 1713

NG119



28th May 1720

The third stamp recorded in the CC (NG122) appears in 1740 after a gap of nineteen years, and is claimed to have been in use until 1760. The same claim is made under the illustration in Hall. However, on the descriptive page the earliest and latest recorded dates are 14th March and 24th October 1759, so why the extra year to 1760?

Although the measurements of the marks generally appear accurate on the illustrations in Hall, I question the size of this stamp which is listed as 31x11½ mm. I consider that: i) the length is 30mm rather than 31mm and ii) the letters listed as 4½mm in height appear to be 4½/5mm on the top row and 5/5½mm on the bottom row. The letters in the bottom row provide a good identification feature for they are certainly larger. The narrative text in Hall points out that the mark is scarce with only four copies recorded.

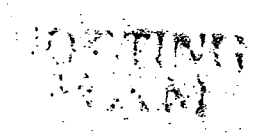
The author now owns three of the four copies referred to by Hall with provenance in the form of typewritten display sheets by a subsequent owner of Hall's material. These write-ups contain references to Hall and his findings. A detailed study including tracings for superimposing purposes actually prove Hall's finding to be incorrect. Thus what has for many years been the accepted catalogue reference NG122 needs now to be changed as shown below.

The item of Hall's latest date - 24th October 1759 - is larger in both directions at 31½x12mm. Although both rows of letters are 4½ mm in height, there is a very obvious identification feature of a much wider gap of 2½ mm between the two rows of letters. The mark does not fit when superimposed on the other three items. The latest date of 1759 for NG122 is, therefore, incorrect. (It is later referred to as NG131).

Item two - dated 15th January 1745, although not a very clear mark, measures 30x10½ mm, i.e. smaller in both measurements, and with the letters 4½ mm in height. Again, this mark does not fit when superimposed upon any of the others. Although very similar to the Hall illustration, the 'HAM' is displaced further to the right in relation to the upper row of letters. Easily noticed is the large gap between the 'H' and the 'A', and a deep V-shape in the letter 'M'. (This item is referred to as NG126).

The third item is a worn mark of 30x11½ mm with letters 5mm in height. Without a rather cramped 'G' it would measure 31½ mm and when allowance is made for the 'G', although it does not superimpose on the other three items, it does superimpose on a number of items dated 1750. The letter is undated but its content ties in with another letter between the same two persons, and suggests it is circa 1753. A very obvious feature of this mark are the very elongated vertical serifs on the cross-bars of the letter 'T'. (This item becomes NG127).

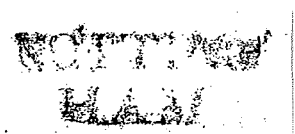
Postmarks referred to by Hall



15th January 1745
(NG126)

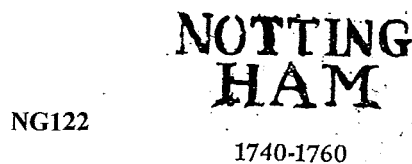


Undated but circa 1753
(NG127)



24th October 1759
(NG131)

By a process of elimination the illustration in the book must be the fourth item (not located) and thus dated 14th March 1740. (NG122)



NG122

1740-1760

The illustration
in Hall's book

I now move out of chronological order to consider NG132 - a two-line mark listed in Hall from 1760 to 1765, and as 36x12mm with letters 6mm in height. The CC shows a length of 35mm. This is a relatively common mark, the writer owning and/or locating sixteen covers carrying this mark (and others that have been allowed to pass by) mainly because it appears on numerous items in the 'Plumbe Correspondence'. Seven of these display double or even triple marks (referred to in the section on the Tempest-Plumbe letters), and it is clear that this mark measures 35x11½ mm. (12 or 13 mm can occur because of vertical movement of the stamp on application or because of the contents of the wrapper. Of greater importance for recognition purposes is that the top row of letters is 5½/6mm in height while the bottom row measures 5mm, a good visible difference.



NG132

5th Sept 1762

Both the CC and the dates under Hall's illustration quote 1760-65, whereas Hall's descriptive text gives 17th July 1762 to 1765. The earliest date is verified by ownership and the latest found is 15th November 1764. However, eight items from the Plumbe correspondence are undated with three of these addressed to Capt. Plumbe at Fulwood Camp, Preston where the Lancashire Militia held camp in 1760, 1763 and 1765.

We now turn to the content of the letters to date them. In one letter the writer states "*at a most brilliant ball last night £15,000 fell to my lot!*". A fair assumption is that this was a coming-out ball on her 21st birthday and so dates the letter as 1760. In another of the letters the writer states "*little Bess my dear little baby is well*". 'Bess' - Elizabeth was born in July 1764, proving the letter was written in 1765 given the Fulwood Camp dates. Usage is thus confirmed as 1760-65.

NG130 is the well-known misspelled handstamp with one 'T'. Hall records this as used from 17th May 1765 to 19th September 1769, and gives the dimensions as 38x13½ mm with the letters 6mm in height. The CC extends this usage from 1756 to 1771, a period of fifteen years, and with which the writer concurs. Thirteen examples are owned or have been seen with dates from 4th June 1756 to 25 May 1771.

The illustration in Hall is the one dated 17th May 1765 (ex Hall with provenance). This is a badly distorted example, and a better example indicates the mark to be 38x14mm with 6½ mm letters on both top and bottom rows. It so happens that this particular letter is also addressed to Capt. Plumbe at Fulwood Camp and with its contents also helps to confirm the 1765 date of NG132 in the preceding paragraph.

Illustration
in Hall



17th May 1765

NG130



1764

Hall states that the second 'T' of Nottingham was omitted to save a letter. Presumably he thought this was to save money but that must be highly improbable. It is considered that the real reason is that it is simply an error by the carver in the same way that the stonemason had carved 'GOAL' over the door of the Town Gaol. Further, it is argued that once the error had been noticed this stamp was kept as a spare possibly for use during the replacement of a stamp in use and/or at times of increased postal activity. This is supported by the use of the handstamp in a few isolated periods e.g. April to June 1765, October 1768, March 1770 and March to May 1771. There may be others of course, time will tell. Further credence to this theory is given by the fact that these dates overlap with the use of three other stamps during that time, i.e. NG132 and two other marks identified in September 1756 and January 1758 to October 1759.

I now return to the middle period of 1740 to 1756, and given the corrected information on NG122, there are without doubt five different marks on fourteen items from the period. This compares with three marks in the CC and only one in Hall.

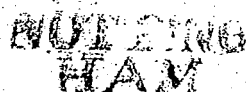
No more examples of the Hall illustration listed as NG122 now found only in 1740.

Three examples of a mark 30x10½ mm with letters 4½ mm occur in 1738-42 (NG125).

Two copies of a mark 30x11mm with letters 5mm in height and showing a large gap between 'H' and 'A' as well as a deep V-shape in the 'M' are found in 1743-45 (NG126).

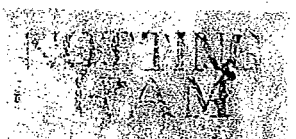
Six examples of a handstamp 31x11½ mm with 5mm letters and showing very elongated vertical serifs on the 'T' cross bars are found in 1749-53 (NG127).

NG125



20th February 1742

NG126



2nd November 1743

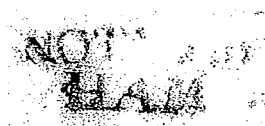
NG127



16th October 1749

One mark, although poor, does superimpose fairly well with the 1741-42 mark. Dated fourteen years later on 30th September 1756, it is possible it could be a re-use of NG125, but it is felt that this is improbable. This is on the basis that three other handstamps are now known in the intervening period 1741-53 and surely one of these would have been used if they were still in any way usable. If not the NG130, that with the one 'T', which had already been used four months earlier at the beginning of June 1756 could have been used. Questionably then, this should now be classed as a different stamp, NG128, which was in use from 1756 until a new stamp, NG131, was issued in 1758.

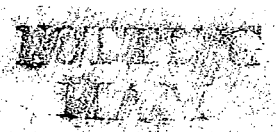
NG128



30th September 1756

Two copies occur in January 1758 and October 1759 of a mark 31½x12mm with letters 4½ mm in height, and with a gap of 2½ mm between the two rows of letters (NG131). (See second page of this article.)

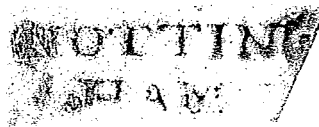
NG131

7th January 1758

The next handstamp, NG134, is listed in both Hall and the CC in use from 1772 to 1775 (black 1772-73 and purple 1774-75). The earliest and latest dates in black, as listed in Hall (16th December 1772 - 13th July 1773) are in the writer's possession and so confirmed. Hall lists only one example in reddish purple as 12th August 1775 but a subsequent owner of Hall's material notes that this copy is not the same mark, which apparently rules out the 1775 date. The author does, however, possess one item of this same mark, not in purple but in a definite shade of red, dated 2nd May 1774, and has seen another in purple dated November 1774. Recorded use is thus confirmed to November 1774.

However, a close inspection of the mark on the letter dated 12th August 1775 shows that, although the first 'N' and 'G' of Nottingham are barely visible, the remaining letters do coincide exactly when superimposed on a template of NG134. Although the height of the impression is 13mm and not 12mm, and the letters are much heavier with increased serif size as well as the paper being ribbed, it is possible that it is after all the NG134 stamp, by now in a well worn state.

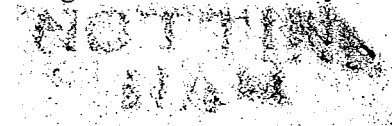
NG134

2nd May 1774

Three covers, dated 1st January 1776, 19th October 1776 and one undated, display a mark not listed in Hall or the CC and which occurs in reddish purple ink and measures 48x13mm (NG135).

These are followed by NG139 which is given the rarity Z in the CC i.e. only recorded on archive material. Three copies of this mark, all in purple ink, are now in the writer's possession. One of these is undated and the other two are dated 11th September 1779 and 14th May 1780, confirming the CC dates but clearly dispensing with the Z rating.

NG139



Undated Example

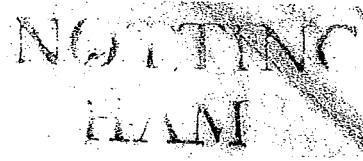
Another intriguing and confusing entry in Hall is a mark measuring 45x16mm with 5½ mm letters, reddish purple in colour and found only in 1783 - from 8th January to 20th April. The CC lists under NG141 a purple mark 45x16mm in use from 1779-1784. Logically, one would expect these two marks are the same one with the CC showing extended usage. However, I argue that this not the case as can be seen from a comparison of seven covers from this particular period. Accurate measurement of the marks of the marks shows that none measure 45x16mm. Four (NG140) measure 45x15mm and three (NG141) measure 44x16mm. When superimposed the 'NOTTING' is almost identical one with another, the one millimetre difference in length being associated with the size of the serifs, mainly on the 'G'. What is very noticeable is that the 'HAM' of the 44x16mm mark is displaced to the left by 5mm. Of the 45x15mm marks (that illustrated in Hall) all are purple, two are undated while the other two are dated 7th March 1781 and 9th June 1782. I have seen another example dated 1783.

The three 44x16mm marks are in purple ink and are dated 5th December 1783, 7th April 1784 and one on piece (very red purple in colour) displays only 1784.

NG140

7th March 1781

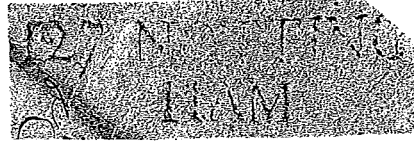
NG141

5th December 1783

The following five handstamps NG143, 145, 147, 149 and 151 are mileage marks. Their usage dates have been published by the Midland (GB) Postal History Society but their dates and other relevant information are included here to ensure a complete coverage of the Nottingham marks of the eighteenth century in this article.

NG143 is a first-type mileage mark. The size is more accurately given as 51x13mm rather than 51x12mm found in both the CC and Hall. Furthermore, although listed as purple, among seven examples the colour varies quite distinctly from red, through reddish purple to very purple. Recorded dates are from 6th November 1784 to 13th November 1787.

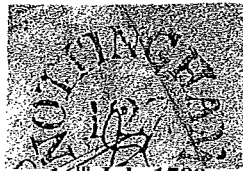
NG143

12th February 1785

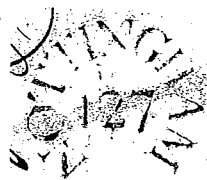
NG145 is a 25mm diameter horseshoe mileage mark. Hall under the illustration gives dates 1784 to 1794, but the latter is clearly a mistake as in the explanatory text he lists it in reddish purple ink 17th March 1787 to 1790 and in black (CC - NG147) 21st April 1790 to 4th April 1791. Other marks in the CC are not assigned a different number because of a change in colour and, therefore, it is suggested that the entry NG147 be deleted. Current information means that NG145 can now be listed as reddish purple 17th March 1787 to 16th July 1789 and in black 14th January 1790 to 4th May 1791.

Similarly, NG149 a 23mm horseshoe mark is listed in Hall as red 7th January 1793, purple 20th August 1794 to 27th April 1795 and in black 1793 (CC - NG151). In this case NG151 should be deleted since no example in black ink has been seen. Therefore, NG149 can be listed as reddish purple from 12th September 1791 to 14th September 1795.

NG145

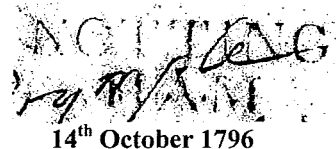
16th July 1789

NG149

29th February 1792

With NG153 we return to the marks with no mileage. Both Hall and the CC record this as 38x12mm, purple and used between 1795 and 1798. Fifteen of sixteen items recorded between 8th August 1795 and 22nd December 1798 are purple in colour with only one clearly struck in black on 15th October 1796.

NG153

14th October 1796

The CC lists a mark in 1797 (NG155) with dimensions of 40x12mm but to date no example has been located. Since 1797 falls within the period of use of NG153, this is probably an erroneous report and should therefore be invalidated.

The final mark (NG158) is typical of the standard type issued at the time being in one line with small letters. It measures 56x4mm and is recorded by Hall from 9th January 1799 to 9th June 1801 in colours "red to purple". However, among five items seen two - 1st February 1800 and 22nd May 1801 show no sign of a purple colour, both being brownish-black.

NG158

1st February 1800

This research shows that the rarity ratings of the Nottingham marks in the CC are in need of re-evaluation. Because the number of letters from this period is limited, some effort has been made to list the number of items referred to in the research.

The illustrated marks in the following list are with the exception of NG122 constructed by tracing and overlay. In some cases they have been created by the use of a number of the same mark, where available. This is necessary owing to the relatively poor quality of strikes from worn wooden handstamps.

NOTTINGHAM MARKS 1700-1800 AS NOW IDENTIFIED

<u>NG No.</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Identification Details</u>	<u>Size mm</u>	<u>Colour</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Example</u>
117	NOTTING/HAM		36 X 12	Black	1712-13	NOTTING HAM
119	NOTING/HAM	One 'T' spelling	24 x10	Black	1720-21	NOTING HAM
122	NOTTING/HAM	Letters 4½-5mm top, 5-5½mm bottom. Shallow 'V' in letter 'M'	30x11½	Black	1740	NOTTING HAM
125	NOTTING/HAM	Letters 4½mm	30x10½	Black	1738-42	NOTTING HAM
126	NOTTING/HAM	Letters 5mm, large gap H-A. Deep 'V' in letter 'M'	30x10½	Black	1743-45	NOTTING HAM
127	NOTTING/HAM	Letters 5mm elongated serifs on cross bars of letter 'T'	31x11½	Black	1750-53	NOTTING HAM
128	NOTTING/HAM	Letters 4-4½mm Possible re-use of NG 125	30x10½	Black	1756	NOTTING HAM
130	NOTING/HAM	One 'T' spelling	38 x 14	Black	1756-71	NOTING HAM
131	NOTTING/HAM	Letters 4½mm 2½mm gap between top and bottom	31½x12	Black	1758-59	NOTTING HAM
132	NOTTING/HAM	Letters 5½-6mm top row. 5mm bottom row	35x11½	Black	1760-65	NOTTING HAM
134	NOTTING/HAM		38 X 12	Black Red/ Purple	1772-73 1774-75	NOTTING HAM
135	NOTTING/HAM		48 X 13	Red/ Purple	1776	NOTTING HAM
139	NOTTING/HAM		45 x 13	Purple	1779-80	NOTTING HAM

140 NOTTING/HAM 45 x 15 Purple 1781-83

NOTTING
HAM

141 NOTTING/HAM 44 X 16 Purple 1783-84

NOTTING
HAM

143 127NOTTING/HAM 51 X 13 Red/
Purple 1784-87

127 NOTTING
HAM

145 NOTTINGHAM 127 Horseshoe 25mm Purple
Black 1787-89
1790-91

NOTTINGHAM
127

149 NOTTINGHAM Horseshoe 23mm Purple 1791-95

NOTTINGHAM
127

153 NOTTING/HAM 38 X 12 Purple
Black 1795-98
1796

NOTTING
HAM

158 NOTTING/HAM 50 X 4 Purple
Black 1799-01
1800-01

NOTTINGHAM

NOTTINGHAM MARKS 1700-1800 AS NOW IDENTIFIED

County Cat. No.	Earliest	Latest	No. of items checked
NG 117		13 Oct 1713	2
119	28 th May 1720	1 Nov 1721	3
122		14 Mar 1740	1
125	16 July 1738	20 Feb 1742	3
126	2 Nov 1743	14 Jan 1745	2
127	16 Oct 1749	Circa 1753	6
128		30 Sept 1756	1
130	4 June 1756	25 May 1771	12
131	7 Jan 1758	24 Oct 1759	2
132	Circa 1760	Circa 1765	18
134 Black	16 Dec 1772	13 July 1773	4
134 Red/purple	2 May 1774	12 Aug 1775	3
135	1 Jan 1776	19 Oct 1776	3
139	11 Sept 1779	14 May 1780	3
140	7 Mar 1781	23 May 1783	6
141	5 Dec 1783	7 April 1784	4
143	6 Nov 1784	13 Nov 1787	10
145 Purple	17 Mar 1787	16 July 1789	10
145 Black	14 Jan 1790	4 May 1791	4
149	12 Sept 1791	14 Sept 1795	11
153 Purple	8 Aug 1795	22 Dec 1798	16
153 Black		14 Oct 1796	1
158 Purple	9 Jan 1799	9 Jun 1801	4
158 Black	1 Feb 1800	22 May 1801	2

AS SHOWN CURRENTLY IN THE COUNTY CATALOGUE

NG 117	NOTTING/HAM	36X12	Black	1712-13
NG 119	NOTTING/HAM	24x10	Black	1721
NG 122	NOTTING/HAM Letters 4½ mm	31x11½	Black	1740-60
NG 125	NOTTING/HAM	30x10	Black	1742
NG 127	NOTTING/HAM Letters 5½ mm	31x11½	Black	1750
NG 130	NOTTING/HAM Note spelling	38x13½	Black	1756-71
NG 132	NOTTING/HAM Lines close together	35x12	Black	1760-65
NG 134	NOTTING/HAM G defective later	38x12	Black	1772-73
			Purple	1774-75
NG 139	NOTTING/HAM	45x13	Red	1779-80
NG 141	NOTTING/HAM	45x16	Purple	1779-84
NG 143	127NOTTINGHAM	51X12	Purple	1785-87
NG 145	NOTTINGHAM 127)	25	Purple	1787-90
NG 147	NOTTINGHAM 127)	25	Black	1790-91
NG 149	NOTTINGHAM 127) Horseshoe types	23	Purple	1791-95
NG 151	NOTTINGHAM 127)	23	Black	1793
NG 153	NOTTING/HAM	38x12	Purple	1795-98
NG 155	NOTTING/HAM	40x12	Purple	1797
NG 158	NOTTINGHAM	50X3½	Purple	1799-1801

PRIOR PARK

THE HOME OF RALPH ALLEN

by John Calladine



Prior Park, Bath – the central block of the house.

In a recent debate held at the British Postal Museum & Archive, Ralph Allen was voted ‘the greatest Englishman in postal history’. Few would question that conclusion. For more than sixty years he worked for the Post Office, beginning his employment in the early 1700s and reputedly being appointed postmaster of Bath at the age of 19. In any other instance that would be regarded at best as unlikely and more probably apocryphal but when one considers what Ralph Allen went on to achieve, perhaps his genius was evident at that remarkably young age. From the age of 27, he farmed the Cross and Bye Posts and, by the time he died in 1764 at the age of 71, he had transformed the English postal network. In the process, he made himself a fortune.

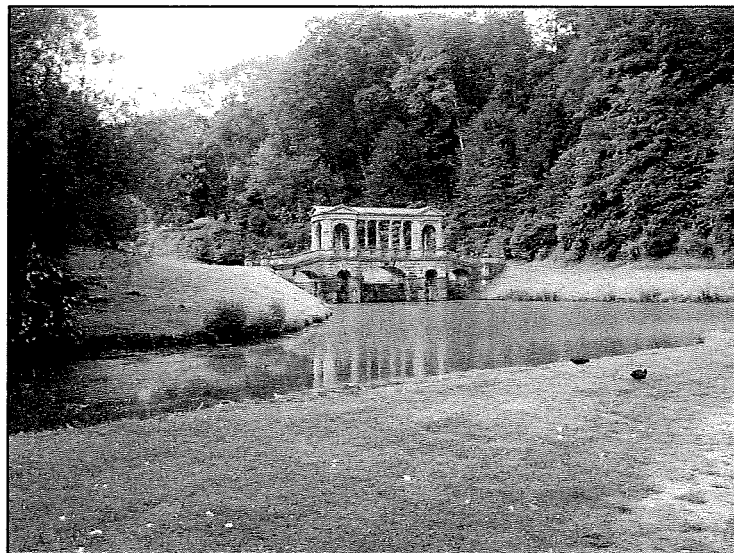
If we are familiar with Allen’s postal achievements, we may be less familiar with his other ventures and the source of his second fortune. He began to buy land in and around Bath from 1726, the most important of which was the stone quarry on Combe Down, above the city. At the same time, he pioneered the Avon navigation scheme, which enabled blocks of stone to be shipped to Bristol (and from Bristol to London) along the river. He went further and built a railway track down the valley from Combe Down to a wharf on the river.

Up to the time Allen acquired the Combe Down quarry (and another at Bathampton Down), blocks of stone were roughly hewn and used with an uneven surface. This is familiar in many Cotswold stone cottages, which are built or faced with what an architect will always describe as “rubble”. Allen knew that the elegant classical house then being built in London required the stone to be of a regular size and clean cut, with crisp and accurate faces. This was not something the stone-masons of Bath were familiar with and, faced with their obstinacy, he brought in labour from the north of England. In 1728, he attempted to win the contract to supply cut stone for a part of the new Greenwich Hospital but, in spite of the reduced cost the navigable river had made possible, he failed to do so.

At about this time, Ralph Allen struck up a working partnership with John Wood, the son of a Bath builder, who was an architect and builder enthusiastic about the new Palladian style. Allen decided, if he was to persuade the architects of London to use his Bath stone, he had better show them its capabilities. He began by engaging John Wood to remodel his post house in Bath, taking off the rubble frontage and replacing the stone with the new crisply-cut blocks. He went further and, in the same year (1728) that he had failed to win the Greenwich contract, he and Wood began to plan a grand mansion, built of Bath stone, on the slope below the Combe Down quarry, adjacent to his railway. Work began in 1734 and Wood described the site of the house as being on “natural terraces rising above one another, like the stages between the seats of a Roman theatre”. However, John Wood and Ralph Allen fell out in the late 1730s and Wood was dismissed. Richard Jones, previously the clerk of works for the project, was put in charge and the construction of much of the house above basement level was his responsibility. It was not to Wood’s original design. Prior Park, the name of the new house, was ready for Ralph Allen’s occupation in 1741.

Prior Park was said to be, on its striking hillside location, a house “to see all Bath and for all Bath to see”. It is a somewhat severe building with two large wings forming an arc at the head of the steep valley. It is currently the home of Prior Park College and not open to the general public. However, the National Trust is responsible for the garden and this has been the subject of considerable restoration work in the past two or three years. The 28 acre landscape runs down the slope of the valley from the house to lakes and a Palladian Bridge, on the very edge of Bath, and the garden can be entered from Ralph Allen Drive (which follows the course of the old railway). There is no car park at the garden so be prepared for a stiff uphill walk – or a less environmentally friendly taxi ride.

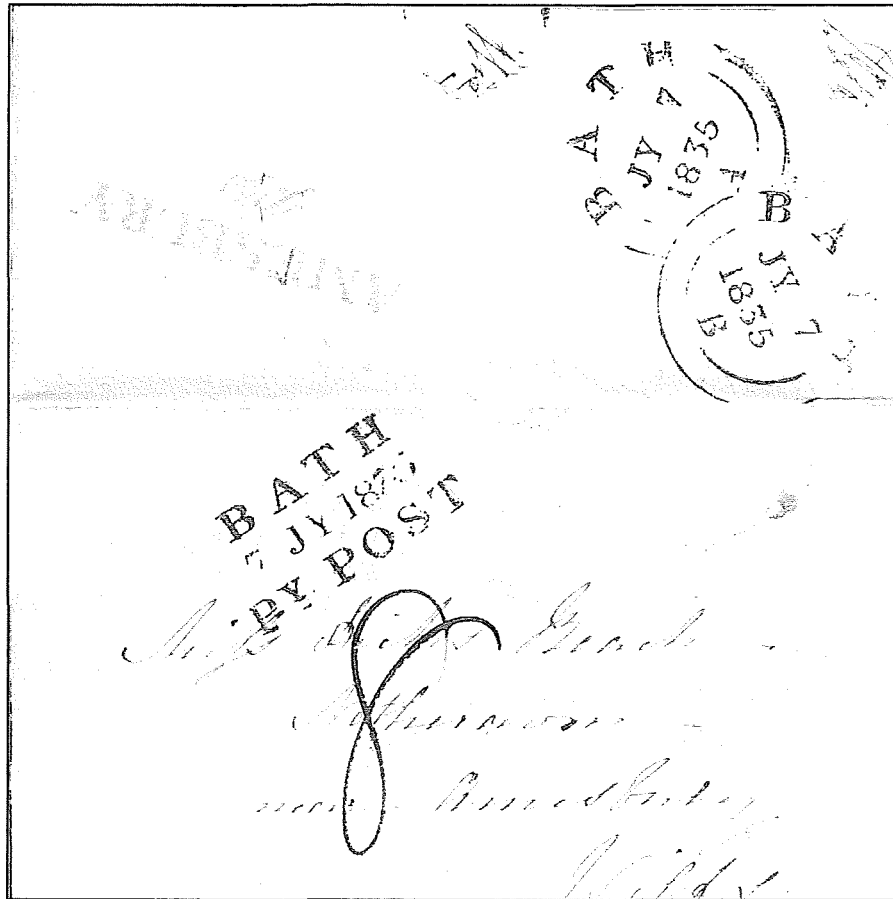
The garden at Prior Park was developed in three stages, the first by Alexander Pope between 1734 and 1744, the second by Sanderson Miller and others from 1744 to 1760 and, perhaps most famously, by ‘Capability’ Brown between 1760 and 1764. What is remarkable about the Prior Park Landscape Garden is that, although it had decayed over the intervening 250 years, very little had changed. Thus it is much as it was when Ralph Allen died in 1764 and therefore considered by the National Trust to be worthy of extensive restoration as a rare survival of a mid 18th century garden. The planting of new trees and shrubs, to replace the originals, will take some years to mature until they are able to reproduce the original scheme of a series of framed views of the lakes and bridge from the paths above.



The Palladian Bridge at Prior Park.

The Palladian Bridge at Prior Park was not the first in England but followed the construction of similar bridges at Wilton and Stowe. They copied the original covered bridge designed and built by Andrea Palladio over the River Brenta at Bassano in Italy. That was built of wood and two bridges were similarly constructed in England, one at Hagley Hall in 1764, but neither survives. The Prior Park bridge is on the first of three dams forming a cascade through its central arch. The impression when viewed from the valley above is that the bridge stands over continuous water.

Ralph Allen's Bath stone transformed the city of Bath and today can be enjoyed as a tangible monument to a man who will always be remembered as one of the great names of English postal history. That his home and garden survive intact is a remarkable and fortunate bonus.



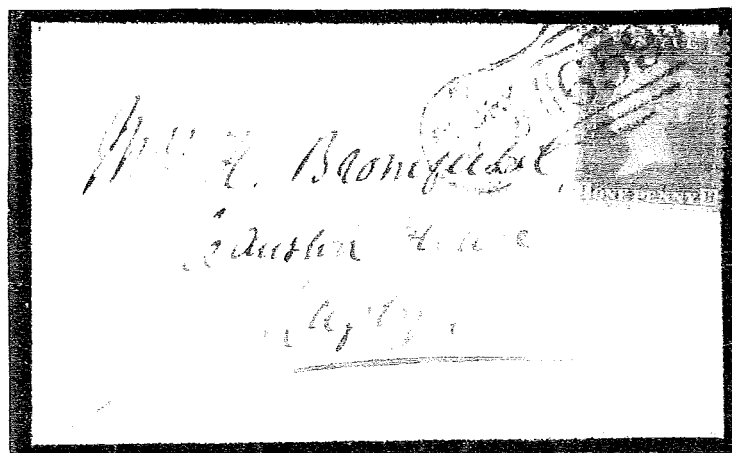
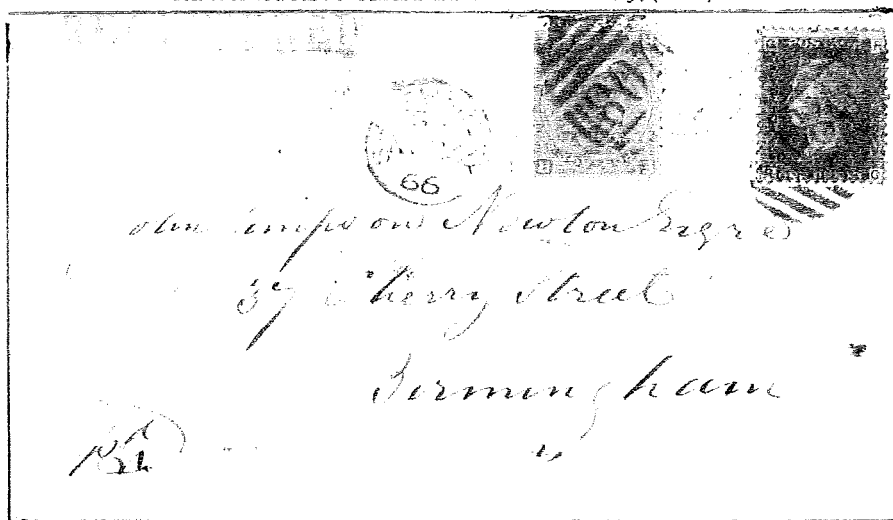
A letter sent from Prior Park, Bath, to Amesbury, Wiltshire, and posted on 7th July 1835. Note the dated Bath Py Post handstamp, which is not exactly as described in the BCC, and the straight line Amesbury stamp, struck in blue ink, with 'PP' added in manuscript. The BCC lists an 'Amesbury Penny Post' stamp used from 1832 but Oxley gives a date of 1835 (struck in blue) and this letter appears to suggest that a penny post stamp was not issued to Amesbury until some time after July 1835, confirming Oxley's listing.

* * * * *

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Next Sale - 11th September. Worldwide including specialised Great Britain

Unrecorded REGISTERED mark of Shrewsbury, (1866)



Nice Rugby 'shoe' duplex (1858) with UDCs of Bilton and Newbold on Avon

Contact James Grimwood-Taylor or Ken Baker

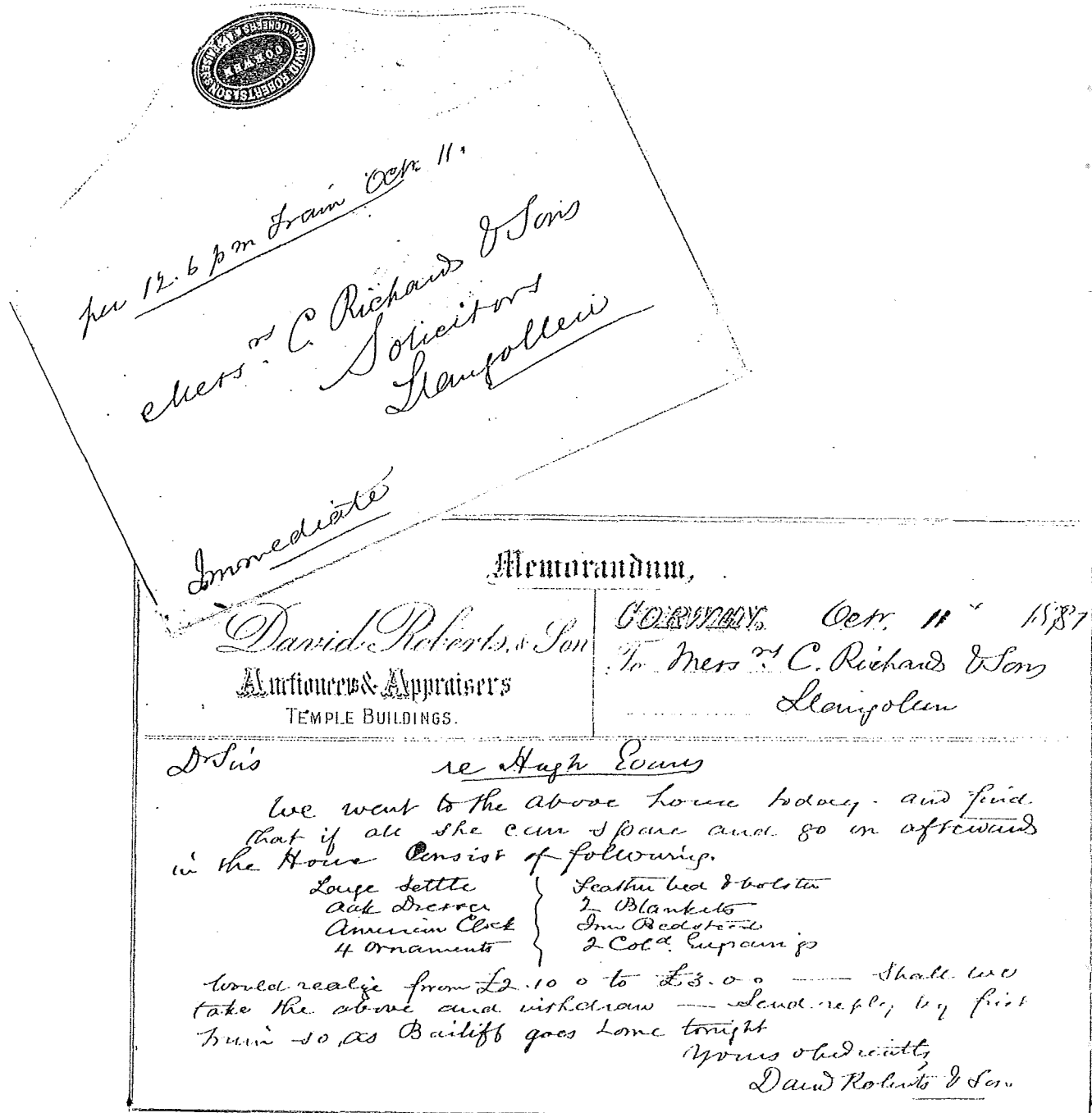


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A MESSAGE CONVEYED BY TRAIN IN 1887

I am indebted to Elizabeth and Eric for the copy (reduced in size) of a memo sent in an envelope endorsed 'per 12.6 pm Train' and requesting a reply 'by first train as [the] Bailiff goes home tonight'. The practice of sending private correspondence by rail was against Post Office regulations prior to 1891.



THE NEXT MIDLAND MAIL

This will appear in early November. It will contain more on the Oxfordshire local posts plus a variety of items. However, there is an urgent need for articles to be sent to:

John Soer, 51d Barkham Road, Wokingham RG41 2RG