MIDLAND MAIL

THE JOURNAL OF THE MIDLAND (GB) POSTAL HISTORY SOCIETY

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Number 136, August 2004

NEW MEMBER

We offer a cordial welcome to Mick,Gill of Newark whose postal history interests include Newark, Southwell, Ollerton and Tuxford.

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

We begin the new season on **18th September** with an all day meeting at Kington St Michael. From 10.15 to 11 a.m. there will be a standing display of "*Mail by Rail*" by Harold Wilson. At 11.15 a.m. John Forbes-Nixon will give a display on "*Eclectic Victorian Postal History*". The afternoon will be devoted to nine sheet displays by members of the Societies on the theme "*Queen Victoria*". If you intend to be at the meeting and have not yet returned the pro-forma to John Calladine, it would be appreciated if you could do so as soon as possible.

On the **16th October** we meet at the premises of Messrs Warwick and Warwick in Warwick. The meeting which begins at 1.30 p.m. will be devoted to members' displays on "*Other Collecting Interests*". There will be a Committee Meeting at 11 a.m.

Our meeting on **13th November** will be held at St Germain's Scout Hut, Portland Road, Birmingham when Alan Marshall will display "*Nottinghamshire*" beginning at 1.30 p.m.

SKELETON POSTMARKS

The British Postmark Society hopes to issue in 2005 a new edition of its publication "*Skeleton postmarks of England and Wales*" which was last produced in 1996. John Frost would be very grateful if we could examine our collections and let him have any further information about our "skeleton" cancellations, including exact wording, date(s), type, diameter (in mm) and time or code. In this context "skeletons" includes mid-nineteenth century "travellers". If there is any uncertainty as to what is, and is not, already listed , John would happily have more rather than less information. Members might care to send John photocopies of any strikes they have. His address is:

John Frost, 21 Ferrers Road, Lewes BN7 1PY

SUBSCRIPTIONS

If the box below contains a X, it means that your subscription has not been paid for this year. It would be appreciated if you could let Elizabeth Lewis (27 Rathbone Road, Smethwick B67 5JG) have a cheque for £8 at your earliest convenience.



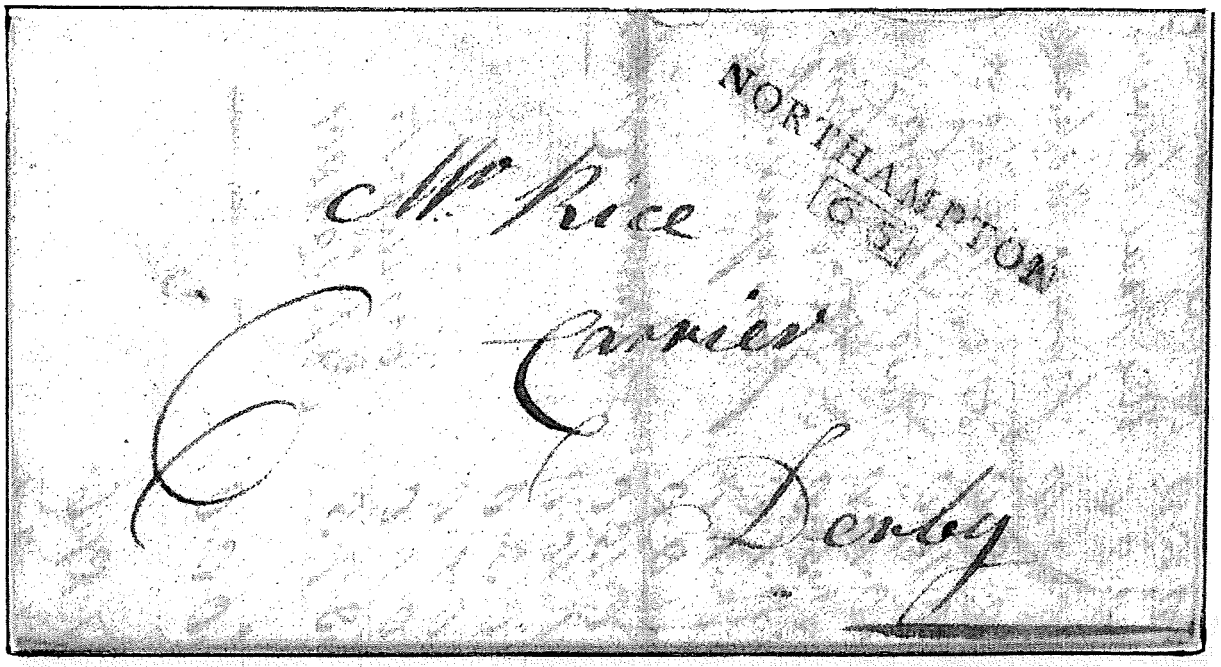
EVEN MORE TO FEED MY HORSE

by Derek Smeathers

John Calladine's lovely article in MM134, followed by the Lewis team's inn bills in MM135 have tempted me to offer a letter dated 28th October 1801 which supports the theme and may even add a little. It is from the village of Brixworth, north of Northampton, and addressed to a carrier in derby who apparently operates a service on this route, perhaps as far as London. It may be for goods or possibly a stagecoach. Two of his men (with servants) and quite a number of horses use Mr Hill's establishment on a regular basis, every week. The letter is on a large sheet with four columns of charges covering three months; the illustration on the next page shows the last column and a written message.

This is about the same period as John Calladine's examples and largely supports the same prices. A peck was a quarter of a bushel - equal to two gallons of dry weight (gardeners will remember the time we could buy a pint of peas for seed). The letter also supports John's assertion that in late 1801 prices fell a little; the written message on this item includes "*We have lowered our Price from Michaelmas to ...*".

Does anyone recognise the name Rice, a carrier of Derby? I have always thought this bill relates to a stagecoach , being so regular but there were "wagons" operating over quite long distances at this period. Any information would be appreciated.



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1801 Brought on 61 5 7

Sept 6 Jog Horse hay 0 9 0
12 Sacks Oat 0 16 0
1 Sacks Beans 0 10 0
2 Troufs hay 0 6 0
2 Men Eating 0 1 0
Servants 0 1 0
16 5 Horses hay 0 5 0
6 Sacks Oat 0 7 6
2 Sacks Beans 0 5 0
1 Troufs hay 0 2 6
Servants 0 0 10
23 8 Horses hay 0 8 0
12 Sacks Oat 0 15 0
1 Sacks Beans 0 10 0
2 Troufs hay 0 5 0
2 Men Eating 0 1 0
Servants 0 1 0
30 8 Horses hay 0 8 0
12 Sacks Oat 0 15 0
1 Sacks Beans 0 10 0
2 Troufs hay 0 5 0
2 Men Eating 0 1 0
Servants 0 1 0
£ 68 7 5

Aug 29 Rec'd by Draft 10 0 0

Sept 3 Rec'd by D° 7 17 6

£ 17 6

Balance due £ 20 9 11

Sir,

according to your Order I have sent your account with those I have yet to find rite I shall be glad of your future favours if you can make it convenient to call We have lowered our Price from Michaelmas to one Shilling a Sack Oats two Shillings a Beans & two Shillings a Trufs from your humble Servant Chas [illegible]

Bristol Oct 28 1801

THE HOLKHAM MAP

by John Calladine

The newly discovered map of the post roads of England and Wales, in the archive at Holkham Hall, Norfolk, was publicised in the June issue of 'Midland Mail'. At the time of writing (10th July), more than half the 100 available photographic prints have been sold but, perhaps surprisingly, the majority have gone to people outside the Society.

Our Bulletin Editor has spent a little time comparing the routes on the map with the information in Ralph Allen's narrative. The absence of a route between Manchester and Sheffield strongly suggests the map cannot be later than 1736. Again, there is no post from Lynn to Norwich (1736) but there is a link between Malton and Scarborough (also 1736). The posts between York, Beverley and Hull and between Manchester and Chester, both dating from 1735, are present. These routes confirm a date for the map of c1735, probably early 1736.

John noted faint lines on the map and suggested they might be pencilled additions, made at a later date. Examination of the original map confirms that they are, indeed, subsequent amendments.

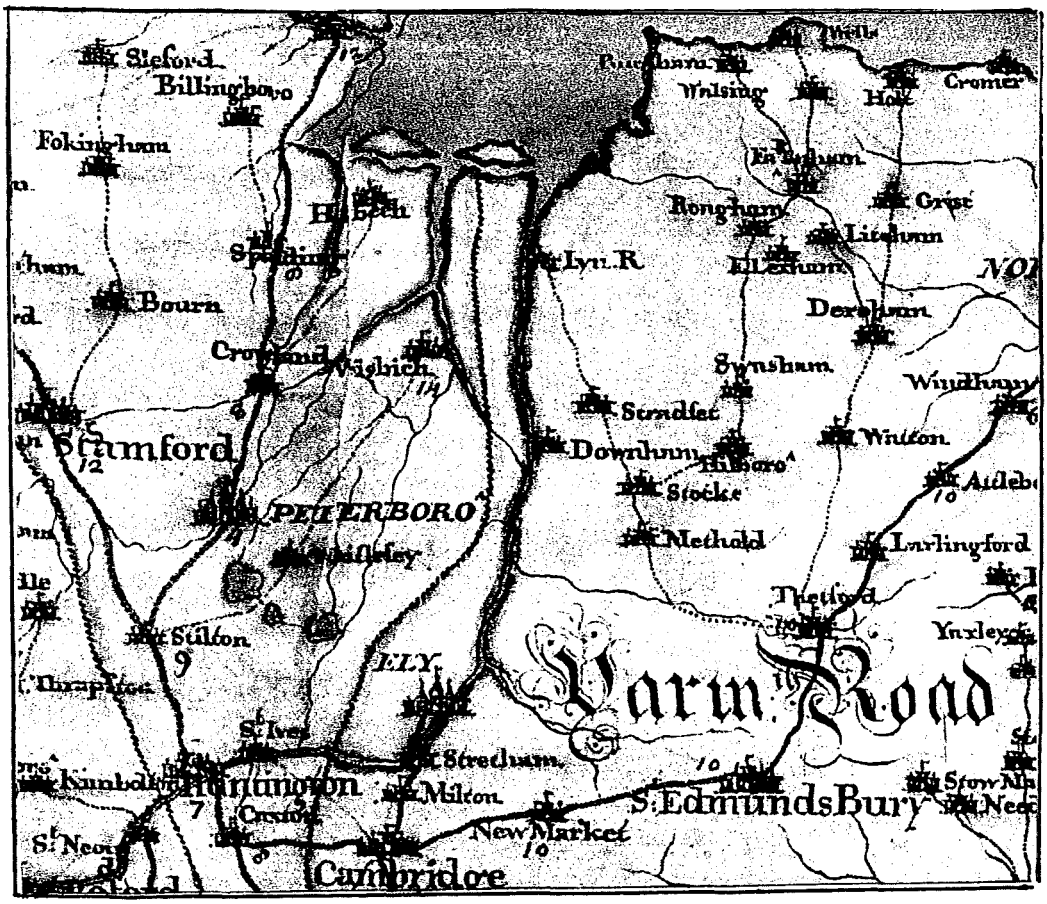
The map throws up some intriguing questions. What was special about the towns of Chichester, Hungerford and Highworth that required the flag or pennant on the town symbol to be larger than on other towns?

If the map dates from the mid 1730s, why is the town of Bewdley (1715) not shown on the route of the Great Cross Post? Why does the Great Cross Post by-pass Wotton under Edge?

Why are some town and city names in upper case and others in large script but lower case. What distinguishes them?

The map scale shows 30 computed miles to be equivalent to about 34 measured miles. The relationship in Ogilby varies considerably between different routes but an equivalence of 30 computed miles to 40 measured miles would be more typical.

Perhaps answers to some of these questions will emerge with increased familiarity. Members of the Society who wish to join in the fun should obtain a map while they remain available. By post, the cost is £23-50 - please make cheques payable to 'W.J.Calladine' - and send orders to 5, Skillins, Kington St Michael, Chippenham SN14 6RL.



MORE ON MISS ORDE

by Ray Woodward-Clark

With regard to the article '*The Travels of Miss Orde*' which appeared in the last issue of Midland Mail, I am able to identify the addressee on the covers as Eliza Margaret Orde who was born in June 1829. Kilmory Castle to which the last cover in the series was addressed was the home of the Orde family. It is a mansion house and not a castle, but is so called by the locals because of its castellated appearance. The building now serves as the headquarters of the Argyll and Bute Council.

Eliza Margaret's father, Sir John Powlett Orde acquired Kilmory on his marriage (in 1826) to Elizabeth Campbell who was the co-heiress of the estate, with extensive property in Jamaica and Scotland, of her father, Peter Campbell. Unfortunately, Elizabeth Campbell died in the same month that Eliza Margaret was born, almost certainly as a result of complications during or after the birth. In 1832 Sir John married his second wife, Beatrice James Edwards, and a daughter Beatrice Catherine was born in 1836. This half-sister of Eliza Margaret may have been the '*Bee*' referred to on the cover of April 1864.

Sir John Powlett Orde spent the last fifty years of his life (born 1803, died 1878) in rebuilding Kilmory, buying up adjacent property and improving the grounds; he even built a small village. The original Kilmory which was a simple thatched building was obliterated. Sir John also owned North Uist, a large island (75,000 acres) in the Outer Hebrides, which he bought from Lord MacDonald in 1856. Eliza Margaret's maternal ancestry can be traced back to Patrick Campbell, born 1644, who married Jean Penny more about 1669. They had strong connections with Jamaica and are believed to be the first Campbells to have settled in that island, although Scotland seems to have been always regarded as 'home'.

The Orde family seem to have originated in Morpeth, Northumberland. Eliza Margaret's grandfather, Sir John Orde (1751-1824), was created 1st Baronet of Morpeth on 9th August 1790. He was the Governor of Dominica, 1783-93, and MP for Yarmouth, 1807-12. He married Jane Frere on 3rd December 1793 at St Marylebone, London, and John Powlett Orde was his only son. Sir John Orde also had a distinguished career in the navy, rising to the rank of Admiral. He clashed with Admiral John Jervis who was a severe disciplinarian and on one occasion even challenged Jervis to a duel. Jervis who was ill at the time declined but when Orde persisted such a palaver occurred that eventually the King gave instructions that the matter was to be dropped. Sir John was also one of the officers who openly criticised the appointment of Horatio Nelson to the command of a Mediterranean fleet. They believed that the command should have gone to an older and more experienced officer.

Neither Eliza Margaret nor her half-sister married. In the 1881 census Eliza Margaret is living at 20 University Street, London with her occupation shown as '*Lady trainer at University College Hospital*'. Kilmory was still in the ownership of the Orde family at that time, probably cousins.

In the 1801 census Eliza Margaret is living with her half-sister, Beatrice Catherine, in the village of Milford near Godalming in Surrey. They were said to be living on their own means and had four servants to look after them in their old age.

I have been unable to trace any connection with Shrewsbury.

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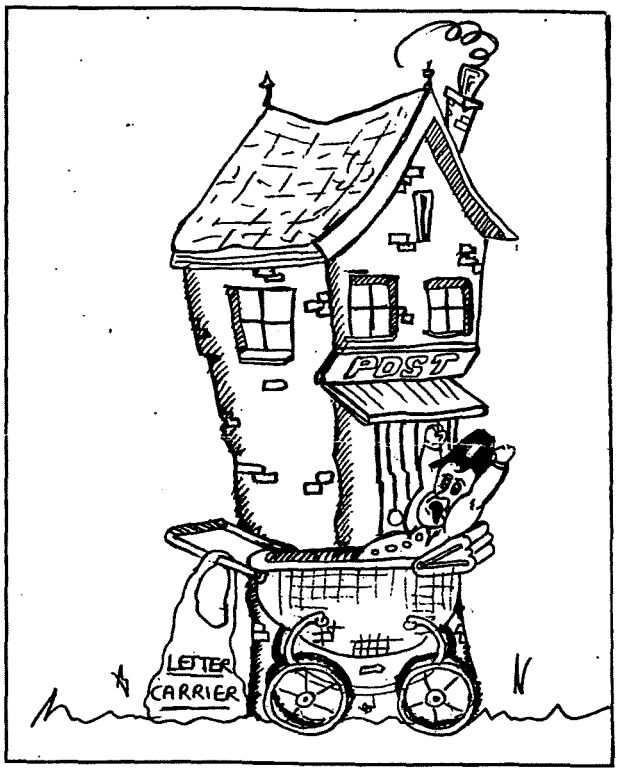
UNDER-AGE POST-BOYS

by John Calladine

Most of us are familiar with the concept of a 'post-boy' being someone, of indeterminate age, who was employed to carry the mail. (Although women were often 'deputies', i.e, sub-postmasters, the Post Office was generally averse to women carrying the mail, except for local delivery.) However, there are many instances of provincial postmasters employing, as post-boys, those whom we regard as children, probably aware they could pay them considerably less than an adult male would expect. The practice wasn't limited to provincial offices. In March 1797, Lord Leicester, a joint Postmaster General, approved the appointment of Mr August Godby - later to become a distinguished surveyor (1810-1822) - as a junior sorter in the Inland Office. He was just thirteen.

Circumstances suggest surveyors quite often turned a blind eye to the practice and it wasn't until a post-boy committed some offence that a problem surfaced. A typical misdemeanour might be that of delaying the mail by travelling at less than the required rate or, more seriously, of tampering with the mail. Thus it was, also in March 1797, that the Buxton and Sheffield post-boy found himself in Court at York, charged with Theft. Francis Freeling, Secretary to the Post Office, was aware that the case might prove embarrassing and warned the Postmasters General there could be what he described as "some awkwardness" when the judge discovered the age of the post-boy. An Act of Parliament already proscribed the employment of children under the age of 14. Indeed, Freeling's caution proved justified because a grand jury, on the direction of the judge and from "motives of humanity", threw out the indictment when they learned that the post-boy in the dock was just twelve years of age. At that age, it was said, "he could scarcely have a felonious intent". The jury suggested the offence be considered a misdemeanour but the Post Office declared it to be nothing short of a felony.

The judge made observations that further embarrassed the Post Office. He commented on the impropriety of employing anyone so young to ride with the mail and he reminded the Post Office of the Act of Parliament "enacting that boys under 14 years of age shall not be employed".



Original cartoon for 'Midland Mail' by Steven Weston

On 18th March, following these comments, reported to him by Mr Western, a surveyor who attended the trial, Freeling declared it highly improper for any postmaster to act in opposition to that regulation or for any surveyor to tolerate it. He asked the Postmasters General if, on reflection, they might consider directing that boys under the age of sixteen, not fourteen, should not be employed. They agreed that the Post Office would do all it could to enforce an order that boys under sixteen should not carry the mail.

In the same month, the Postmasters General made the first order that under-age post-boys were not to be employed to carry the mail. The surveyors, in turn, wrote to the postmasters in their district. A copy of a later instruction from George Hodgson, surveyor of the Northern District, survives. Dated 29th December 1800, it reads:

" My Lords, the Post-Master General, are pleased to order, that, for the future, no Boy of a less Age than Sixteen Years shall be employed by a Contractor for Riding Work, as a Rider with the Mails; nor by any Deputy-Postmaster, as a Letter-Carrier, or as an Official Assistant, in any respect whatsoever. - And, I am commanded by their Lordships to acquaint you, that if you act contrary to this Order, and any Circumstance thereby happens, to the Injury of the Public, of Correspondence, or of the Revenue to the Post-Office, you will be answerable for the Consequences, and must take them on yourself."

One might think this would be the end of the story but, knowing the fallibility of provincial postmasters, perhaps you wouldn't.

In September 1803, it became clear that allegedly under-age post-boys had been taken into custody, both at Barnard Castle (Co Durham) and Halifax (Yorks). Both offices came under Mr Hodgson and, in view of the positive action he had taken to remind postmasters of their obligations, he was acquitted of any censure. It was clear that the postmaster of Barnard Castle had disobeyed the surveyor's instruction and, in view of the severity of the offence, it was recommended he be dismissed. The postmaster of Halifax claimed that his post-boy had deceived him about his age. This was plausible because the youth was very nearly sixteen. Nevertheless, a severe reprimand was recommended for failing to check his age more thoroughly.

Francis Freeling wrote again to the surveyors that same month, reminding them of the age limit. George Western, the surveyor of the Eastern District, was aggrieved there had been an accusation that one of the post-boys in his district was only 14 years old. This, he said, was untrue and he had the boy's birth certificate in front of him, which showed that John Walsh was born on 25th October 1787 and was therefore within a few weeks of his sixteenth birthday. The postmaster had assured him that Walsh told him, when he employed him, that he was sixteen when, in fact, he was seven weeks short of that age. Perhaps he was unaware of the action taken against the postmaster of Halifax for a similar offence?

Samuel Woodcock, surveyor of the South Wales District, decided it was opportune to issue another circular to the postmasters in November 1804 and, certainly on this occasion, called on them to acknowledge it. Among those who did was Samuel Jenner, postmaster of Stroud (Glos), who wrote on 15th December:

"In answer to your Circular Letter I received yesterday dated Novr 1804 I have to observe that I shall not employ any Person in the Post Office or (as a) *Letter Carrier under Sixteen Years of Age".*

On 9th July 1806, Francis Freeling had to inform the Postmasters General that two letter carriers employed by the postmaster of Stroud had, on the representation of that postmaster, been fined £20 for wilfully delaying a letter. Nothing more might have been heard of the matter but the younger of the boys was unable to pay the fine and had been committed to Gloucester Gaol. It then came to light that, at the time of the offence in January 1806, the lad, Joseph Blake, was only in his 16th year. In fact, the postmaster of Stroud had first employed him in November 1802, when he was just 12½. Even when the Stroud postmaster acknowledged Mr Woodcock's edict in 1804, Blake was still only 14!

Freeling's annoyance was evident. The postmaster of Stroud had employed a post-boy under sixteen years old in defiance of an order circulated not once but three times and without justification of any kind. He made no recommendation but said he must leave the decision as to what action to take for their Lordships to decide. However, he did show sympathy for the post-boy and, noting he had already spent two months in prison, recommended his release, having learned his lesson.

If that were not enough, yet another case came to light in August 1909. This time, the offence was in Hastings (Sussex). Again, the offence concerned a delayed letter, which the recipient, a Miss Edwards, said was not delivered until 3.45pm but which the postmaster of Hastings claimed was delivered between 2 and 3pm. (Oh that this was considered a serious misdemeanour nowadays!) In fact, it was a misdirected letter and had been returned to the postmaster within ten minutes of its first delivery, allegedly before 1pm. While there was controversy over the circumstances of the delay, Mr Barry, the Hastings postmaster, made no attempt to deny that the post-boy involved was only 14. By 1809, the Hastings postmaster had been reminded of the order prohibiting the employment of under-age post-boys no less than four times and Mr Aust, surveyor of the Southern District, said he had proof of acknowledgment of the most recent circular. Freeling pointed out that the postmaster had committed two offences in that he had provided a most unsatisfactory account of the delay to Miss Edward's letter and he had blatantly disobeyed the Order of the Board concerning the employment of under-age post-boys. Again, he referred to the dismissal of the postmaster of Barnard Castle for a lesser offence but left it to the Postmasters General, of course, to decide the appropriate punishment. Their response was that "Mr Barry ought to be discontinued as postmaster of Hastings", contravention of the order concerning employment of boys under sixteen being, in itself, sufficient reason for dismissal.

Notwithstanding the laws prohibiting the employment of children under 14, it was to be 1875 before the practice of sending boys, often no more than 12 years old, up chimneys as chimney sweeps finally came to an end. Once again, as with the practice of employing women (albeit only spinsters and widows) as postmistresses, the Post Office had been in the vanguard of reform.

References include:
Post 42/75N/1779, Post 40/61.O/1803, Post 40/65.O/1803, Post 40/5.B/1806, Post 42/78.F/1809

SOME FURTHER THOUGHTS ON THE VOS HANDSTAMPS

by Ian M. MAY

The articles by Derek Smeathers and John Soer encouraged me to have a look at the use of the VOS handstamps for the area in the Midlands that I collect.

COVENTRY

Coventry was issued with a 3VOS on 18th December 1878 and as can be seen from the two covers shown, figs 1 and 2, it was used on registered mail together with the Coventry dated registered handstamp first issued on 20th September 1876. It appears that the 3VOS was only used for a short time as by 1884 the 'R' in an oval was used to cancel the adhesives, fig. 3. Within three years, the registered handstamp was being used for that purpose, fig. 4. Then a handstamp with 'CV' in an oval was used, before the registered handstamp came into use again.

My conclusion from the above would therefore be that the VOS handstamps were issued to cancel the adhesives on registered mail.

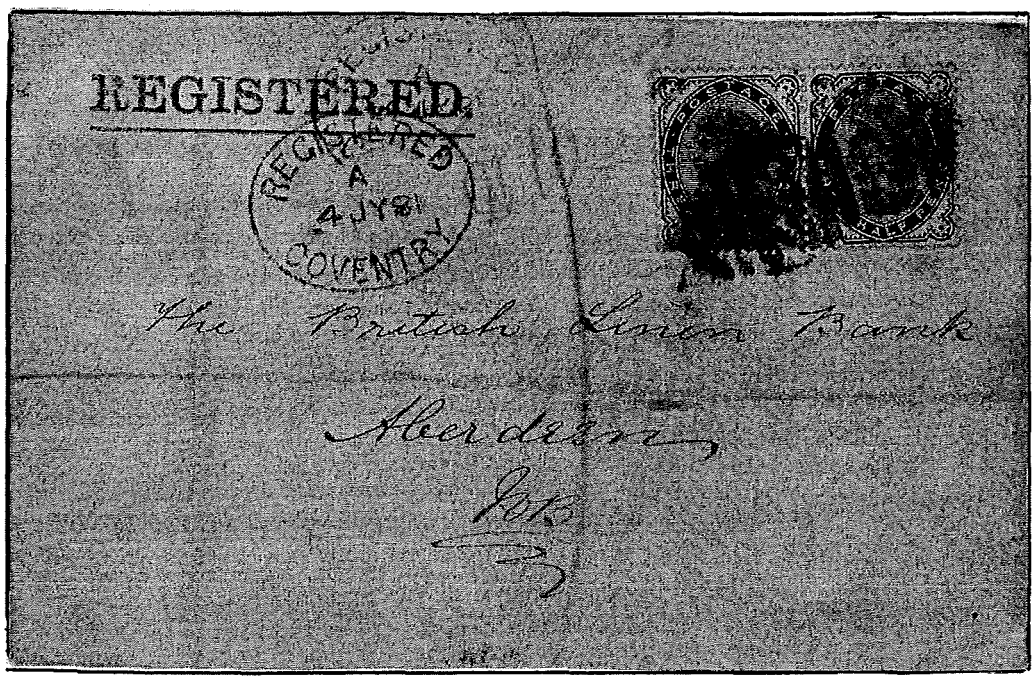


fig. 1

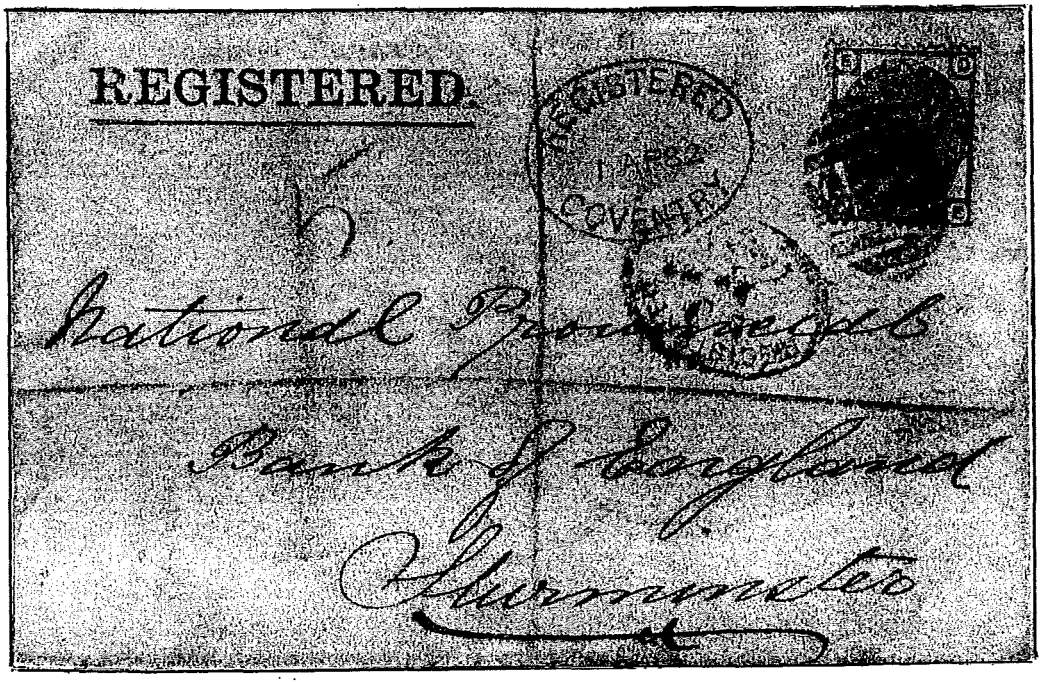


fig. 2

fig. 3

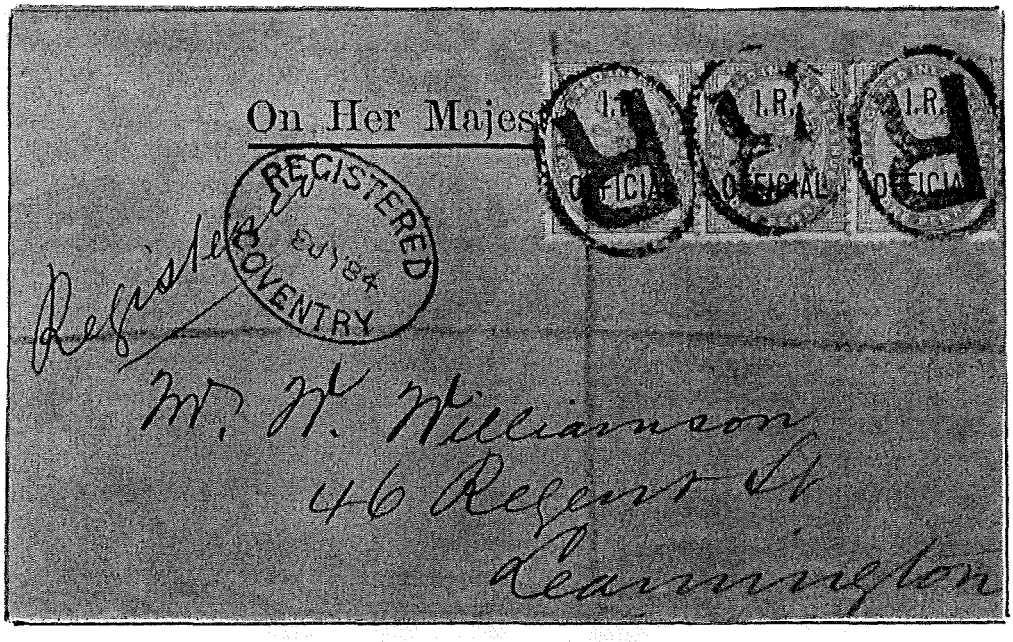


fig. 4

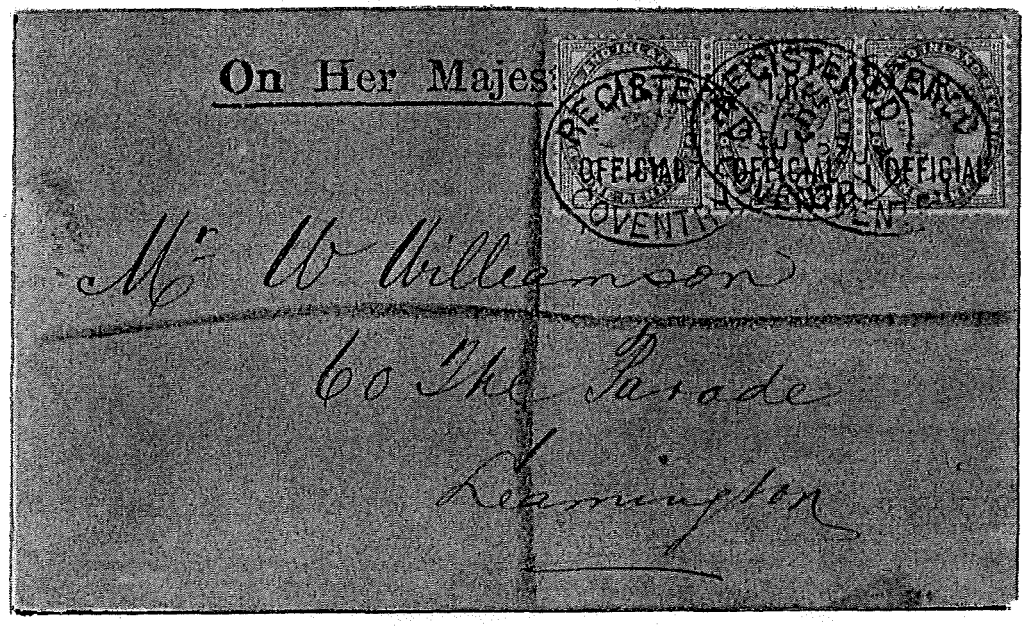
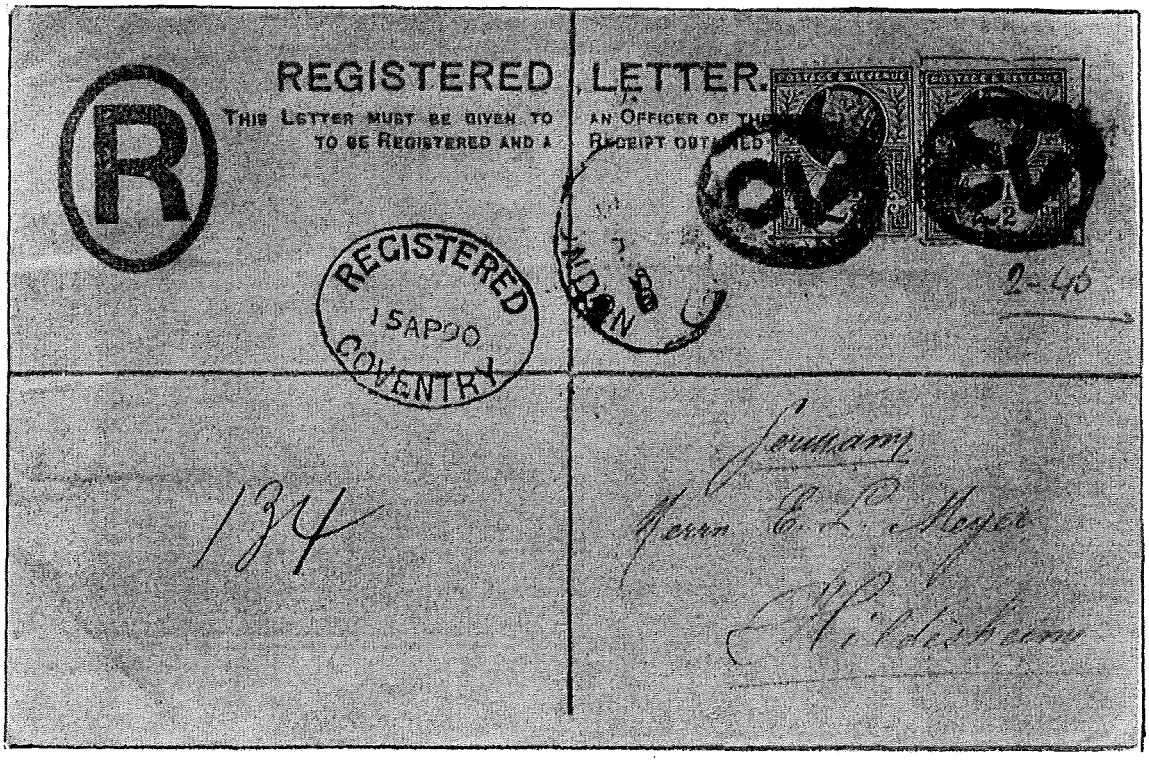


fig. 5



NUNEATON

A 4VOS which was issued to Nuneaton on 27th March 1866 was recorded in use by Parmenter et al.[1] from 23rd March 1867 until 15th October 1872. The copies shown in figs. 6, 7 and 8 extend this period of use to 17th February 1874. But of more significance is the fact that not one of the covers is registered so my conclusion above is obviously incorrect.

fig. 6



fig. 7

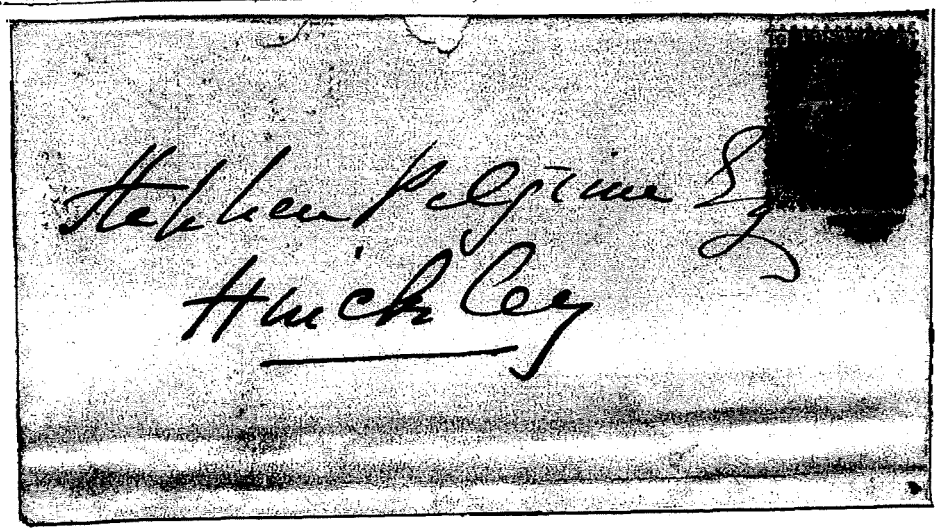
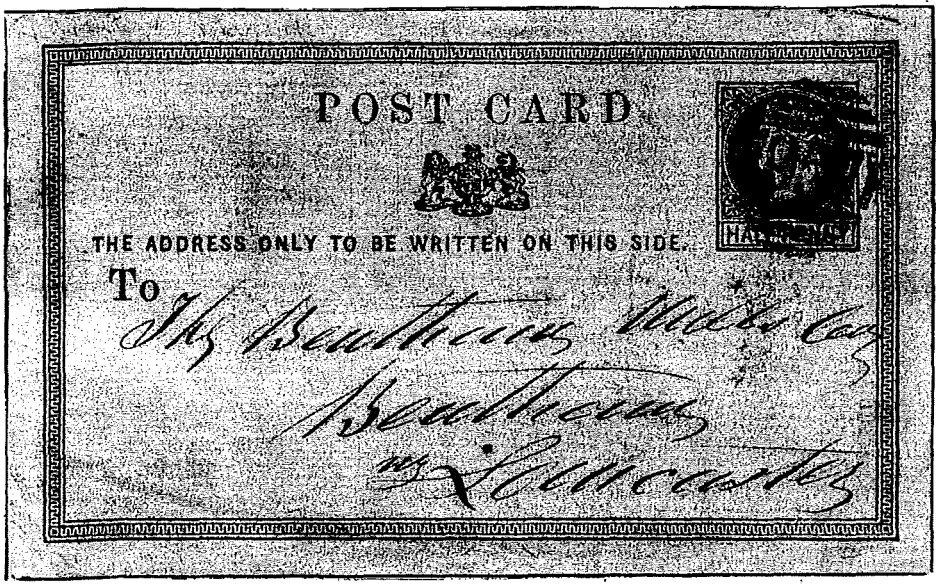


fig. 8



LEAMINGTON, KENILWORTH, WARWICK, SOUTHAM and COLESHILL

None of these towns appeared to have been issued with a VOS handstamp, although the mail handled by Leamington and Warwick was considerable

CONCLUDING REMARKS

I am unable to come up with an answer to John's query but I think the evidence tentatively points towards the VOS handstamps being issued to cancel the adhesives on registered mail. Certainly, the larger offices such as Northampton, Leicester and Coventry seemed to use it for such a task. It is possible that in the smaller offices - if they were issued with such a handstamp - the postmaster would use it for the small amount of registered mail they handled. However, to cancel the adhesives on other mail the postmaster just used whichever handstamp was nearby!

It would be interesting to hear of the use of these VOS handstamps in other offices.

REFERENCE

1. Parmenter, J., Goodman, M. and Saylor Jr, J. Barred numeral cancellations, Vol 6, England, Warwickshire to Yorkshire, publ., J. Parmenter, London, 1988.

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EARLY 18th CENTURY POSTAL MARKINGS

A few new discoveries and some problems with measurement

by John Calladine

During a visit to Holkham Hall in September 2003, the archivist offered a tantalising glimpse of two books of early 18th century letters sent to Holkham. There is a long established and active postal history group in East Anglia and it seemed more than likely that the Holkham material would have been examined for postal markings, perhaps many years ago. However, in case it had been overlooked, a couple of promising provincial marks were noted and, at a later date, compared with the British County Catalogue of Postal History (BCC). As expected, similar marks had indeed been listed and the dates of the examples at Holkham fell within the recorded bracket. Nevertheless, this small sample provided no conclusive proof that the correspondence had been examined previously so, more in hope than expectation, a return visit to the Hall was arranged in June 2004. Mrs Christine Hiskey, the archivist, allowed a second look at the two volumes but also turned up extra material including a box of loose uncatalogued letters from the 17th and 18th centuries.

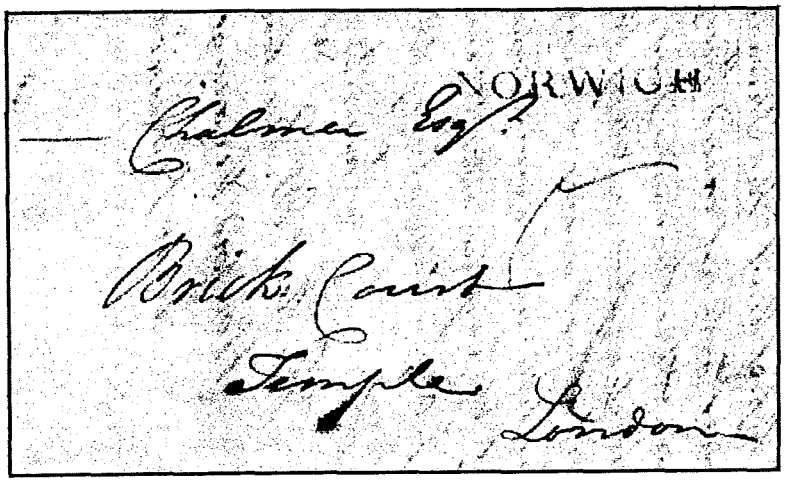
It now appears that this correspondence may have eluded the attention of postal historians. While most of the marks originate from outside our Midland region, they are surely worth recording for the benefit of others hoping to update their parts of the BCC. This is not an entirely straightforward exercise. When the marks listed in the BCC were recorded, there was some confusion as to how the measurements of straight line handstamps were to be made. Contrary to instructions, at least one county editor included the serifs in the overall measured length. In other cases, handstamps were recorded and measurements made by people unconnected with the BCC editorship. (I know because I was one of them!) In yet more cases, the few examples seen of the rarer marks were badly struck and the quoted measurements inevitably tentative. Because of this, it is not always clear whether a new 'discovery' is an unrecorded mark or whether the measurement of a mark in the BCC, of similar date, is suspect.

A good example is an early mark of DERBY, DY116 in the BCC, recorded in use between 1705 and 1713 and measuring 23x5mm. A second recorded mark is DY116b, known only in archives. Its measurements are given as 19x4½ mm and usage noted between 1708 and 1710. For good measure, a third Derby mark is DY117, measuring 24x5, used between 1710 and 1726. At Holkham, there is a clear example of a DERBY mark struck on 2nd November 1708, another struck on 31st August 1709 and no fewer than seven equally clear examples from 1711 (20th April, 4th June, 10th June, 21st July, 9th October, 29th October and 5th November). Using an engraved rule and a reading glass to make measurements, they all appear to be the same mark and to measure 20x5mm. The mark cannot possibly be 23mm long and, at first glance, DY116 can be ruled out. But DY116 is rarity 'H' and now many examples have ever been seen? Were they half-decent strikes; might the ink have been smudged? Perhaps the examples now noted are DY116b and perhaps they were previously recorded at Holkham? However, if that is the case, why no 1711 date? This was not a straightforward exercise.

In the BCC, only two 'type 4' marks of WARWICK are recorded before 1739. The first, measuring 37x5mm is known from 1706 and the second, measuring 40x7, from 1708. These leave plenty of gaps to be filled by new discoveries. The strike of a WARWICK stamp at Holkham is on a letter dated 28th January 1720. Unfortunately it is somewhat incomplete and the best guess at its size is 30?x5mm. It is unlikely that this stamp is the same as the two earlier records and it is probably a new Midlands discovery.

A new discovery from Yorkshire is undoubtedly a DONCASTER mark on a letter dated 10th January 1707. Again, this is a 'type 4' straight line stamp and, although somewhat indistinct, is complete and measures 42x6mm. The earliest stamp recorded in the BCC is a two-line stamp, type 5, used in 1720. (Manuscript marks are known in the 1680s and '90s.) Unless something new has been noted since Volume 4 of the BCC was published, this discovery should be of significance. Also from Yorkshire were a number of PONTFRACT marks, without the letter 'E'. The recorded mark in the BCC is YK2223 (40x5mm), known in 1706-08. The examples at Holkham are dated 22nd May 1706, 19th April 1707, 31st May 1707 and 16th July, also 1707. These are almost certainly the recorded mark in the BCC but a quoted length of 40mm is suspect. Finally, among the Yorkshire items, there was a letter from Ferrybridge. The earliest recorded mark of Ferrybridge is a FERIBRIDG (type 4, 42x6mm), known from 1707 to 1715. The Holkham letters provide an earlier example on a letter dated 28th March 1706.

There were a number of marks from East Anglia and this is where new discoveries appeared the least likely to be found. Indeed, two-line SWAFF/HAM marks of 5th and 23rd October 1707 (NK379) fell within the BCC recorded date span. A later HAR/LESTON stamp (NK161), the first mark from that town, has not been recorded before 1737 but it had a long life and, again, the Holkham example of 30th November 1743 failed to extend the recorded usage. Two strikes of IPS/WICH on letters dated 21st June and 26th July 1736 fared better. They appeared to measure 24½x12½mm and were therefore more likely to be SK 181 (25x12) than SK180 (23x10) but, whichever they may be, extend recorded usage. SK180 is only known in 1735 and SK181 between 1742 and 1750. The real 'eureka' was reserved for marks of Norwich. There are two very similar two-line NOR/WICH marks listed in the BCC as NK287 and NK288. The former is said to have letters "58mm" high (which must be 5.8mm, of course) and the latter to have letters 6mm high. I doubt that, with the best will in the world, this is a realistic difference to measure. The strike at Holkham is on a letter dated 19th November 1735 and seems likely to be NK287, recorded in use between 1736 and 1741. The first recorded mark of Norwich struck in red ink is another two-line NOR/WICH (NK289), first used in 1754. Whether red ink use is known from 1754 is not evident in the BCC, which combines all usage, red or black. The archives at Holkham provided an earlier red strike, but of NK288 rather than NK289, on a letter dated 20th November 1847. However, an even earlier strike in red ink was of a another two-line mark on a letter dated 7th March 1739. Logically, this should be NK287 but the BCC measurement is 26x13mm and this strike was only 24mm long. It could be both a new mark and a new colour but it needs further investigation by those more familiar with Norwich marks.



Not one of the marks recorded at Holkham but a Norwich straight line handstamp of 1800 (NK301b). Measurement of the original (not the reproduced image!) was straightforward, as it is a good strike and there are no large serifs.

If one has learned anything from this little investigation, it is probably the difficulty of relying on measurement as a means of identifying unfamiliar marks. It is to be hoped that the method employed in the Society's latest project of reproducing actual strikes, at true size, with extraneous material removed but nothing added, is as good as it gets. It is taking a long time to complete that task but, in the end, it is hoped that anyone faced with an unfamiliar Midland mileage mark will be able to identify it with certainty and not face the kind of problems apparent from the above. Ultimately, it may be possible to extend that process to all early Midland marks now listed in the BCC but no one should underestimate the task. John Hine's suggestion that the marks be illustrated "as is" may be the only practical solution.

*****

DOUBLE ARC DATESTAMPS USED AT BIRMINGHAM FROM 1829 TO THE EARLY 1850s

by Elizabeth and Eric Lewis

Members wishing to sort the various formats of these Birmingham datestamps will have looked in the County Catalogue and found just two entries for the seriffed version, namely with or without a code letter and the sans-seriffed handstamps are, of course, not listed.

Martin Willcocks dismissed both Chris Hall's (the originator of the Birmingham section) and our fairly detailed listing of these marks as being too involved for a general listing, even when he was seeking additional material to encourage sales of the updated catalogue.

He recent purchase of a quantity of covers, the majority of which originated in Birmingham during this period, encouraged us to take a fresh look at the subject while the covers were still in our possession. We purchased the auction lot for letters conveyed in Birmingham's local posts before 1840, and we will shortly be disposing of the remainder.

Our listing only extends at the moment up to the early 1850s as the greater part of the hoard consisted of covers posted prepaid with the postage indicated in manuscript rather than with an adhesive stamp.

Illustrations are from actual covers but all have been compared with the proof book impressions by means of Photostats on transparent film. (The only way we know to highlight immediately differences in handstamps of similar size and format.) With regard to sizes, we agree with several of the County Editors that if an accurately reproduced example is included with any listing it is unnecessary to state sizes. However, if this practice were adopted, complete listings for any particular county would undoubtedly be impossible, so a mixture of actual illustrations and sizes would result. In view of this we think it desirable to state an overall size for all items and of course illustrate them whenever possible.

Members will notice that we have included decimals of a millimetre in our listings. The reason for this is that the stamps were made in imperial sizes. If the sizes are quoted to the nearest millimetre, there could be some confusion. For instance, our type A is exactly 1inch in diameter which is 25.4 mm rather than 25 or 26 mm.

Letters in the first column are our temporary references for each type found and are by no means meant to be permanent references. Should the County Catalogues be updated, we trust that existing catalogue numbers will be retained with the use of 'a' and 'b' etc where insufficient gaps were left in the original numbering for later discoveries.

May we comment that, unlike John Hine in his excellent update of Rutland in MM134, we are against complete renumbering as the existing County Catalogue is now in extensive use by dealers, auctioneers and collectors. Likewise, we do not think that variations in colour should have a separate reference number such as R46a, R46b etc, but merely be shown as colour variations as in the County Catalogues.. The addition of new discoveries of handstamps needing a suffix such as 'a' etc would cause confusion with colour variations if they were numbered in a similar manner.

With regard to scarcity, we have shown in the last column the quantity found of each type. Where applicable this is split into pre-1840 and later usages. This could eventually be used as a guide to a scarcity factor after additions by others to our listings are taken into account. We welcome lists from other members.

We have been unable to locate in the proof books the issue of handstamps of our types 'A' and 'D', and it may be that these stamps were made locally in Birmingham. The proof books are generally unhelpful when it comes to what code letters were issued with each handstamp. We have noted in the second column any reference to such code letters shown in the proof books.

All of the marks that follow are taken from actual covers apart from **H** which is taken from the proof books.



A



B



C



D



E



F



G



H



J



K

OUR REF LETTER	PROOF BOOK VOLUME/PAGE AND DATE ISSUED	NOTES. INCLUDING CODE LETTERS SEEN	DIAM /mm	COLOUR	EARLIEST/ LATEST DATE IN THIS BATCH	NUMBER FOUND IN THIS BATCH
A	Not in the proof books	No code letters. Known used from 13/3/1829 in orange-red.	25.4	Orange-red Yellow-green	13/4/1829 - 24/12/1831 17/3/1829 - 28/3/1829	40 2
B	2/10 19/1/1833 2/11 21/1/1833	No code letters.	27.0	Orange-red	25/2/1833 - 03/4/1834	9
C	2/11 31/3/1834	B C D E and G.	31.8	Orange-red	20/4/1834 - 22/6/1838	20
D	4/7 01/2/1839 Noted in the proof book as "A repaired stamp". Original is **not** in the proof books.	B C D E and F Dates & codes positioned lower than in type C. B C D and G.	31.0	Orange-red Orange-red	19/8/1834 - 12/11/1838 29/2/1840 - 6/4/1840	33 5
E	2/15 13/11/1837 (Two stamps) 2/17 20/2/1838	B C D E F and G. E and G	31.8	Orange-red Orange-red	23/1/1838 to 8/6/1839 28/4/1840 - 19/5/1840	20 2
F	2/21 14/11/1838	C D F and G. F and G plus one with code letter omitted (18/4/1840).	29.4	Orange-red Orange-red	30/11/1838 - 24/12/1839 11/1/1840 - 22/5/1840	20 6

G	4/15 6/6/1840 4/16 3/11/1840 "A repaired stamp." 5/72 3/2/1842 (with letters A to L) 7/49 29/4/1844 "A recut"	F G and H plus one with code omitted (9/10/1840). B D F G H I and one with code omitted (28/11/1841).	28.6	Orange-red Black	21/7/1840 - 29/1/1841 14/8/1841 - 1/5/1844	8 37
H	4/17 12/1/1841 "A new stamp supplied with 8 letters"	C plus one which is not readable. Similar to type G but start of BIRMINGHAM and the day and month are higher.	29.0	Black	28/10/1841 - 25/5/1842	2
J	Note the change to sans-serif. 7/53 13/5/1844 (Two new stamps) For further dates of issue see the notes at the end of the table.	F G H I and one with the code omitted (19/10/1845). H I J K and M M	25.4	Black Blue-green Yellow-green	10/7/1844 - 26/11/1846 4/3/1847 - 4/8/1852 3/1/1853	19 21 1
K	9/8 2/2/1847 New with letters A - K For further dates of issue see the notes at the end of the table.	H J and K Similar to type J but longer arcs and shorter town name.	25.4	Blue-green	31/8/1847 - 13/8/1850	12

NOTES ON TYPES J AND K

Further dates of issue of type J:

7/217 - 5/3/1846 (two stamps) 9/14 - 22/2/1847 (a recut) 9/50 - June 1847 (a recut) 9/105 - 7/12/1847 (a recut)
9/142 - 10/4/1848 (a recut) 9/182 - 22/9/1848 (new) 9/194 - 27/11/1848 (new) 9/219 - 17/2/1849 (new)
9/233 - 19/3/1849 (two recuts) 10/49 - 27/11/1849 (new) 10/100 - 6/8/1850 (two new) 10/121- 18/11/1850 (2 new)
11/11 -27/12/1851 (two recuts) 11/42 - 21/4/1852 (two) 11/113 - 10/1852 (a recut) 11/115 - 10/1852
11/150 - Feb 1852 (two recuts) 11/169 - 4/1853 (a recut) 11/230 - 10/1853

Further dates of issue of type K:

9/110 - 23/12/1847 (new) 9/142 - 10/4/1848 (a recut) 9/182 - 22/9/1848 (a recut) 9/194 - 27/11/1848 (a recut)
10/49 - 27/11/1849 (new) 10/76 - 27/3/1850 (two recuts) (There are none in volume 11.)

Both of these types appear to have worn considerably faster than the seriffed handstamps, particularly round the outer edge sometimes giving a smaller diameter. Examination of photostats on acetate film show they fall into the two groups. Was the quality of the steel in the sans-serif stamps poorer or were they not hardened sufficiently?

As is to be expected, some of the recuts vary slightly in format, but it would be impossible to fit any particular strike to a particular proof impression.

It is possible that handstamps of type J, or other possible similar types, may occur in volume 12 of the proof books. We have not, as yet, examined that volume.

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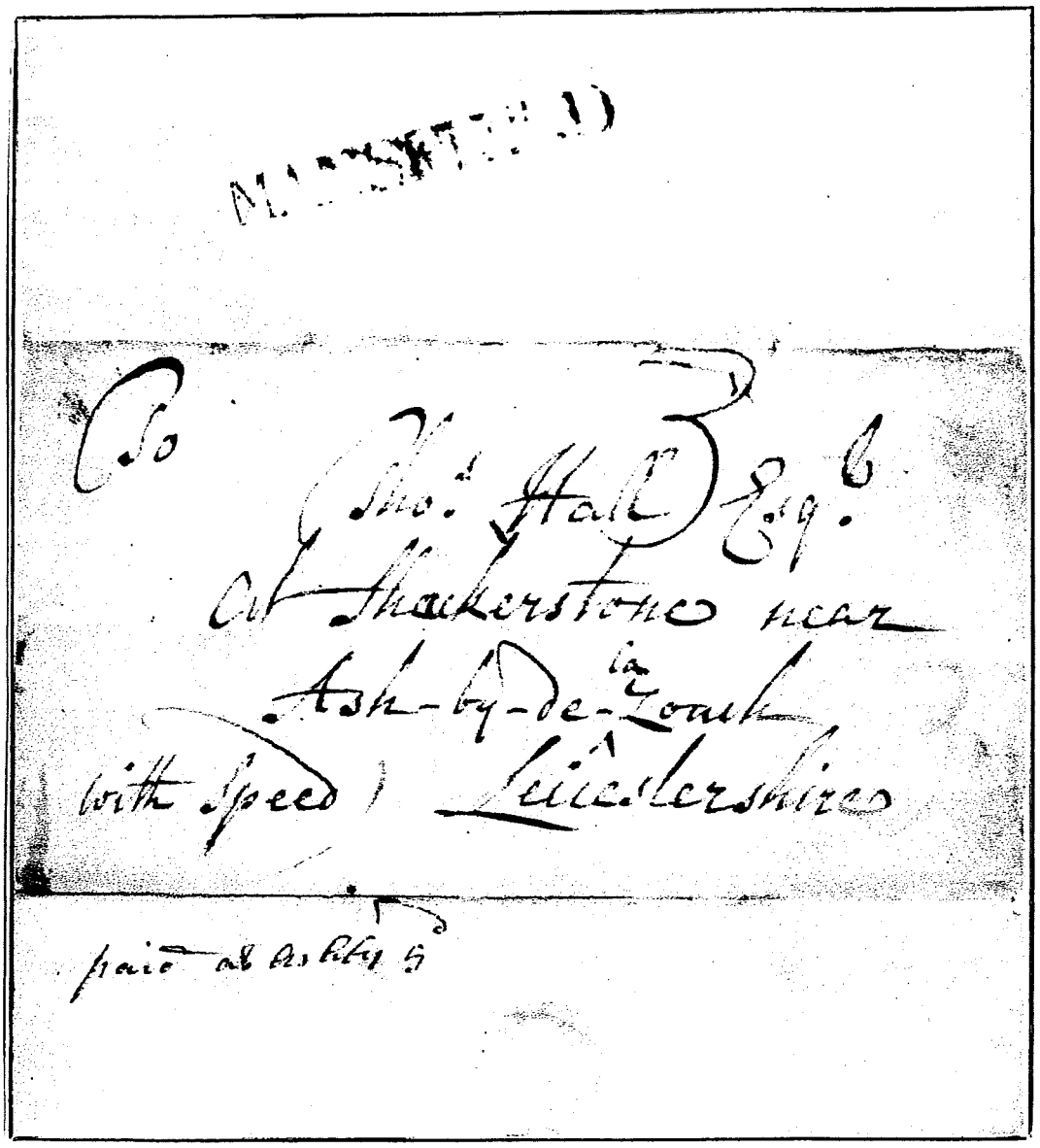
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A TWOPENNY DELIVERY CHARGE?

My thanks to Richard Farman for sending a copy of the cover illustrated below. It was written at Langwith in March 1762 and sent from Mansfield to Shackerstone which is about eight miles southeast of Ashby-de-la-Zouch. The charge on the letter is three pence, the rate for eighty miles and under at the time. But, why was the charge written twice? Then there is the endorsement "paid at Ashby 5^{d}". Does this denote a local delivery charge of twopence? At the time, Ashby received its mail from Loughborough by means of an unofficial post for which one penny was charged above the General Post charge. So does the extra twopence denote two separate local charges of one penny - Loughborough to Ashby and Ashby to Shackerstone?



THE NEXT MIDLAND MAIL

This should appear at the beginning of November. It will contain all the usual features plus one major article. However, there is room for much more so please send contributions to

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