

MIDLAND MAIL

THE JOURNAL OF THE MIDLAND (GB) POSTAL HISTORY SOCIETY

President: Derek Smeathers

Chairman:
Mel Matthews
(0121 6898147)

Treasurer:
Eric Lewis
(0121 4291222)

Secretary:
Mick Gill
(01636 672868)

Programme Secretary: Richard Farman (01283 566515)

Number 169, April 2011

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

On 16th April we hold a meeting in conjunction with the Midland Federation Fair at Wombourne Community Centre WV5 9EZ. The meeting which begins at 10.30 am will consist of members' one board displays on the theme 'Recent Acquisitions'.

Our AGM and Annual Auction will be held on 7th May at St Germain's Church Hall B4 7SX. Viewing of lots will take place from 11am. The Annual General Meeting will be held at 1pm and the Auction will follow at 1.30pm.

A week later, on 14th May, Chris Jackson will display 'City of Worcester', beginning at 1.30pm. This meeting is held in conjunction with WORPEX at Oldbury Park School, Worcester WR2 6AA.

On 2nd July the Society will have a stand at MIDPEX which is being held at the Warwickshire Exhibition Centre.

THE JON BAKER TROPHY

The time has come again for you to vote for the article that you think was the best to appear in *Midland Mail* during 2010. Again the definition of best is left for you to decide. Please complete the voting slip that is enclosed with this issue and return it to me before the start of the AGM where the result will be announced. The list below contains some articles that may be worthy of the trophy but they may be others that I have overlooked, so please go through issues 163 to 167 and pick your favourite article.

163/6 *Midland Post offices Opened or Closed in 2009*
163/12 *The Mailcoach that never was.*
164/6 *Birmingham Registration Rotary Device*
164/8 *Two Routes between GB and New Zealand, 1872-8*
165/8 *The Post Office and the Cambrian Newspaper*
165/11 *Henley in Arden UDC*
165/12 *South Warwickshire UDCs*
165/15 *Another Aspect of Northampton*
166/3 *Use of Penny Post Handstamps after UPP*
166/10 *Stratford-on-Avon First Day Postmarks, 1964-89*

Ken Smith
John Calladine
Ian Baker
Brian Atkins
John Calladine
Bryan Jones
Bryan Jones
Derek Smeathers
John Calladine et al.
Bryan Jones

THE NEXT MIDLAND MAIL

I hope that this will appear by early June. I have some material in hand but there is plenty of space for more articles. So, please send your contributions to:

John Soer 51d Barkham Road, Wokingham RG41 2RG

Alternatively, they can be sent by email to Johnesoer@aol.com.

THE FEBRUARY MEETING

Twelve members plus four visitors (including two from the Wolverhampton Philatelic Society) attended the meeting at the Black Country Museum on 12th February. The topic for the day was "*Our Industrial Past*".

Peter Elms displayed invoices from companies in the Birmingham area and the headings on these invoices showed wonderful illustrations of the buildings occupied by the companies.

Alan Godfrey concentrated on John Elsley, a well known ironmonger, who traded in Alcester. The display included a carriage licence, telegraphs, dog licences as well as postcards, relating to the business, from mainly the Midlands but some from farther afield.

Eric Lewis, as usual, managed to find some interesting material. A superb item was an 1830 Petition from the Inhabitants of Dudley against payment to workers in truckle (payment in goods rather than cash). He also showed invoices from Chance Glass and Muntz Sheet Metal (Muntz was the inventor who developed a new alloy to replace the copper which had been used on the keels of ships). In the second half Eric produced documents relating to Sydney Raine's employment at the Mitchell and Butler Brewery. Eric also showed illustrated invoices from Avery's (The scale manufacturers) and material relating to the businesses operating in Birmingham's Summer Lane (These were usually workshops at the rear of residential houses).

Richard Farman showed "Tokens" given to workers in lieu of cash (These tokens could only be used in the Company shop). Enlargements of these "Tokens" showed some intricate designs which were much clearer than the originals. An item from Coalbrookdale proved to be an invoice from a company in Bristol. Maps of canals showed that many companies had their own wharves off the canal. Interestingly, a further document proved that boilers were sold by weight. Other illustrated invoices included one from a hat manufacturer.

Roy Summers was able to show us material from the Wolverhampton area. These included Merridale Works (Iron and Tin Plate Workers), Joseph Evans, (who manufactured steam pumps), S Griffiths, (Animal Traps) and various motor companies, including The Guy Motor Company.

Mike Gill's material came mainly from a mixed box which he had been given by a dealer in lieu of a discount. The display included many interesting items relating to Abbott and Company, boiler manufacturers. There was also much correspondence which had been sent to Abbotts. A visit to the present Abbott's works had resulted in Mike obtaining further material and also with Mike presenting photocopies of some of his material for their archives.

Alan Marshall showed material from Nottingham, including correspondence from Tideswell Carriage Manufacturers and a Soap Works making Ino Soap Flakes. While Chris Grimshaw showed in two separate displays postcards of the Dardanelles, including one with the address in verse.

Chris Jackson showed a variety of material which included invoices from Worcester Royal Porcelain Works, the Salt Works at Stoke Prior and Pardoe, Hoonan and Pardoe, carpet manufacturers of Kidderminster. An interesting item was an invoice from Francis Harper, wine merchant, who was trading out of Worcester Town Hall. Chris's second display showed material from Royal Enfield, who we discovered made motor mowers as well as motor cycles. We saw Bayliss advertising rings and invoices from Clarkes and Herbert Terrys, both spring manufacturers. Probably the most interesting item was an 1890 Postcard for the 50th Anniversary of the Penny Post. This was sent contrary to regulations, but also with no postage stamp, consequently it attracted a very clear 2d "to pay" mark.

THE MARCH MEETING

The meeting on 5th March at the Collingwood Centre surely set a record for we saw twenty-six displays, with the meeting going into a third circuit, on the subject of '*Postal Stationery Postcards or Postcards*'. Chris Jackson began the proceedings with a display of postcards of Worcestershire post offices along with a contemporaneous rubber handstamp some of which were struck on parcel post labels. Of particular note was Stockton where the label carried a strike of a rubber skeleton. Later, Chris produced postcards of Hewell Grange near Redditch which was to become the first private jail in the country and Tardebigge village hall when it was a First World War hospital with nurses and injured soldiers in view. Postcards of Redditch Railway Station were accompanied with tickets for various passengers and animals.

Bob Viney crossed the Atlantic to show us material from Newfoundland, in particular cards sent to or from the UK. These included the 1c postal stationery card uprated in value. In subsequent displays Bob showed cards of Rutland post offices arranged alphabetically from Ashwell to Whissendine,

The '*History of the Picture Postcard*' was Sadie Cole's chosen topic which began with examples business cards from the early nineteenth century. These were followed by examples of illustrated notepaper, privately printed cards and examples of foreign cards from 1875. Sadie illustrated the introduction in 1902 of the divided back and finished with postcards made of leather and of beer mats. In a further display Sadie showed postcards of Llandridod Wells.

Dentistry was featured in Stuart Geddes' displays. He began with material relating to a Mobile Dental Field Ambulance used in WWI. Next came cards from the National Museum of Dentistry in Baltimore followed by cards on the theme of dental health. Later, Stuart showed comic postcards involving dentistry.

Alan Marshall concentrated on postal stationery postcards sent from Nottingham. He began with two which differed in size from 1871. July 1875 saw the introduction of a special card for foreign postage costing 1½d. We saw examples sent to Paris, Leipzig and Milan. Alan also displayed examples of the 1d card introduced in 1879. In a further board Alan showed postcards cancelled with squared circles, duplex marks and double circles.

It certainly does not do justice to Mick Gill's display if I say that it consisted of cards of Nottinghamshire post offices for each card was accompanied by a detailed history of that particular office. Mick's second offering consisted of a wide range of instructional marks.

Eric Lewis began with examples of the Sloper cancellations in which postcards were cancelled by having a hole punched through the stamp (Birmingham, Edinburgh and Liverpool), by perforating an orb (London) or an arrow (Liverpool and London) through the stamp, or by clipping the righthand edge (Manchester). Eric also displayed examples of the OUS overprints and underprints. His second display featured Late Fee mail.

Among the items in Richard Farman's initial offering were: a postal stationery card from Austria dated 5th December 1869; one from the first day of use in this country – 1st October 1870; a 'balloon' card sent from Paris, during the siege of that city, at the 30c rate to London which was only 98 hours in transit; a Valentine sent on 14th February 1871; and a hand-painted card. Later, Richard showed postcards starting with a variety of different rates etc. uprated ½d pc's to Dewsbury; a 3d Empire rate to New Zealand. A card from Bath to Natal had been returned with a 'Postcards cannot be forwarded – not in U.P.U.' handstamp and the most expensive postcard rate of 8d which had a ½d postal charge with an additional 7½d embossed stamp for a Patent Application.

Peter Elms produced an album of early picture postcards from the Northfield area of Birmingham. Among the many places featured, in addition to a large number of superb street scenes, were the War Hospital, the Kalamazoo Works and the Austin Motor Works at Longbridge

Roy Summers showed Wolverhampton postcards which featured the trams of the town. Among the places featured were Lichfield Street with the post office and Grand Theatre, Queen Square and the horse tram terminus at Newbridge. An unusual item in Ray's second board was one of a house which had had a second storey added by means of putting a railway carriage on the roof of a bungalow! Inside the A.J.S. motor cycle factory and a captured German Field gun which was on show in Wolverhampton and Stafford Road Railway Works all caught the attention.

The post offices in Keresley, Fillongley, Meriden, Hatton and Shipston-on-Stour were among a number from Warwickshire in Alan Godfrey's display. Each card was accompanied by a cover showing an appropriate postmark.

Guy Bridges produced a miscellany of items. Notable among these were two with illustrated coded messages on the reverse – a rebus, a card of a lady wearing a dress made of penny reds and the 'Posted in Advance for Christmas' marks of Shrewsbury (1903) and Liverpool (1907).

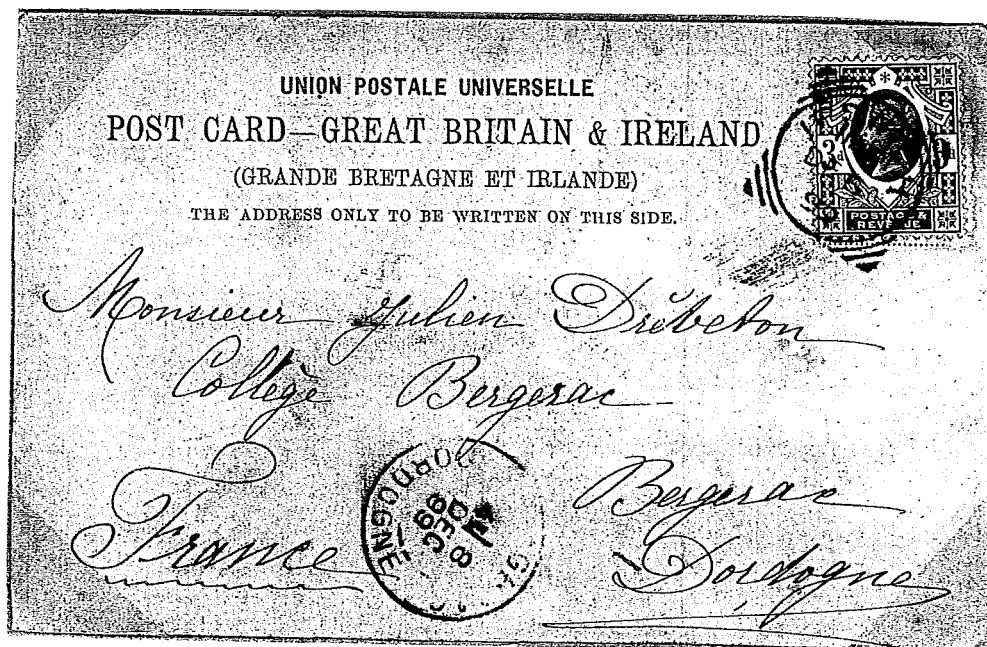
Eric Grimshaw concentrated on the cards issued by the Post Office, in particular the 1889 issue of reply paid cards. We also saw pre-addressed cards from a number of companies and organisations such as Brown & Polson and Church Quarterly Review.

Postcards from the Dardanelles Campaign were featured in Chris Grimshaw's two displays. Among the notable items here was a cover struck with the mark 'RECEIVED FROM HM SHIPS/NO CHARGE TO BE RAISED', an Army Post Office skeleton from 1915 and a card with the address written in verse.

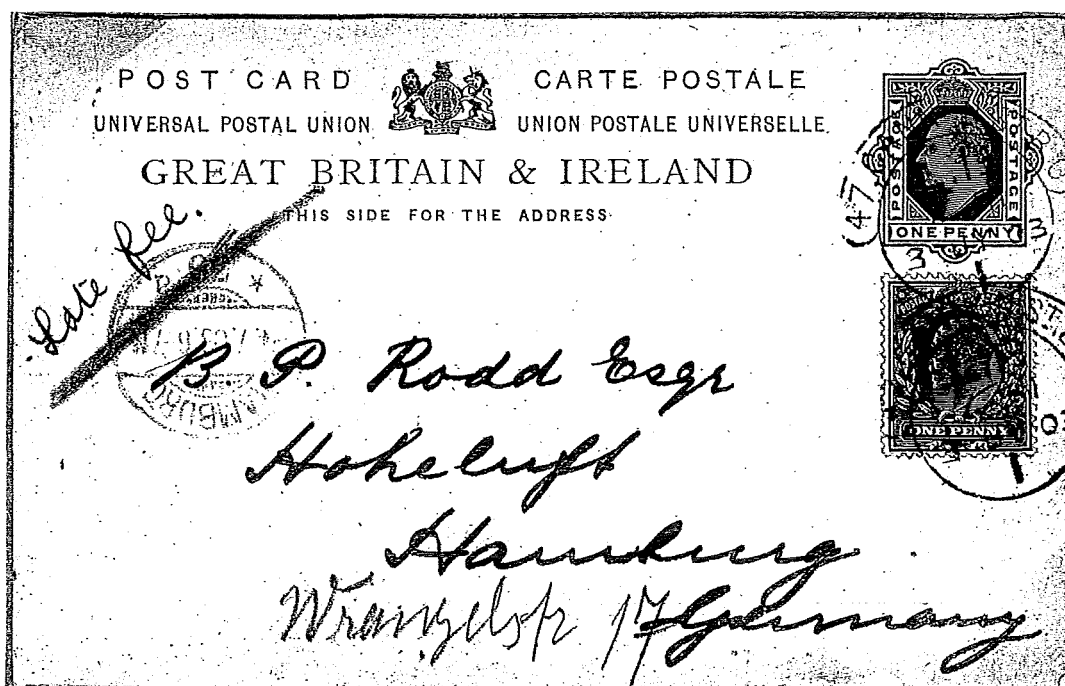
The variety of material seen during the afternoon was quite amazing and shows, yet again, the width of the interests of members. What a pity that more of it is not written up for *Midland Mail*.

SOME ITEMS FROM ERIC LEWIS' DISPLAY

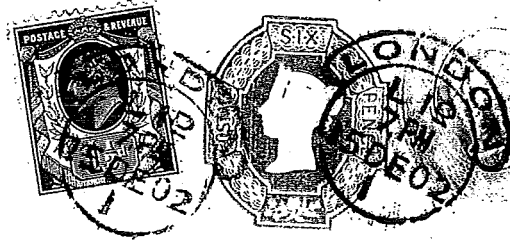
A postcard to France postmarked 11pm thus attracting a late fee of $\frac{1}{2}$ d which was added to the normal $2\frac{1}{2}$ d postage. The use of one adhesive stamp for the late fee plus postage is unusual.



A 1d adhesive added to cover the Late Fee for letters posted between 6 and 7pm. Cancelled with a hooded circle incorporating L 1^d for the Late Fee.



From 7.00 to 7.30pm the Late Fee was 6d although still shown here as 1d in the canceller.
The postage of 8½d is made up of 2½d postage to Saxony and 6d for the Late Fee.



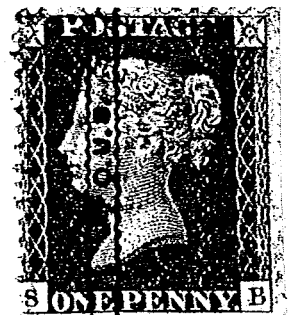
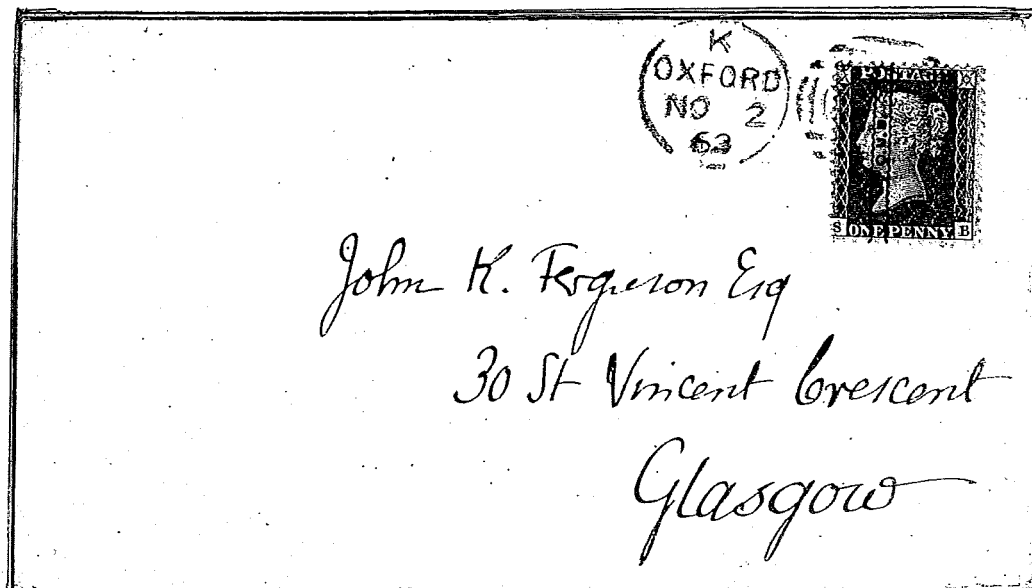
Herren Baader & Gerlach,

83, Elisen Strasse,

LEIPZIG,

SAXONY.

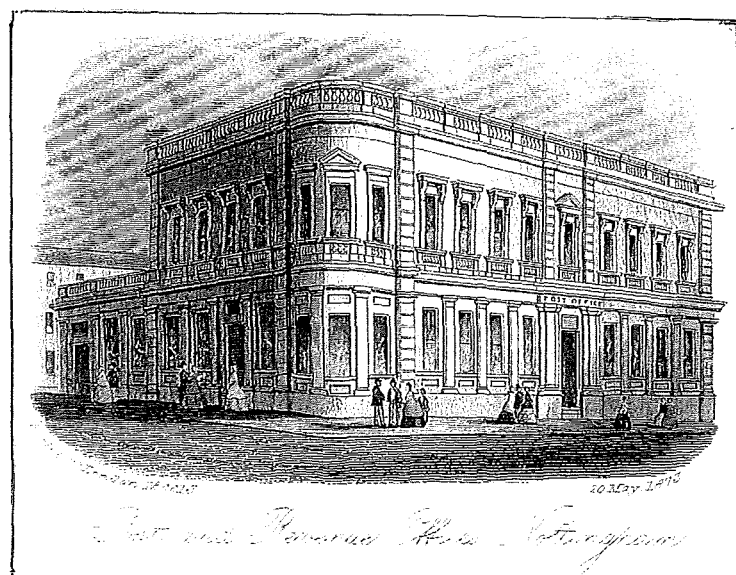
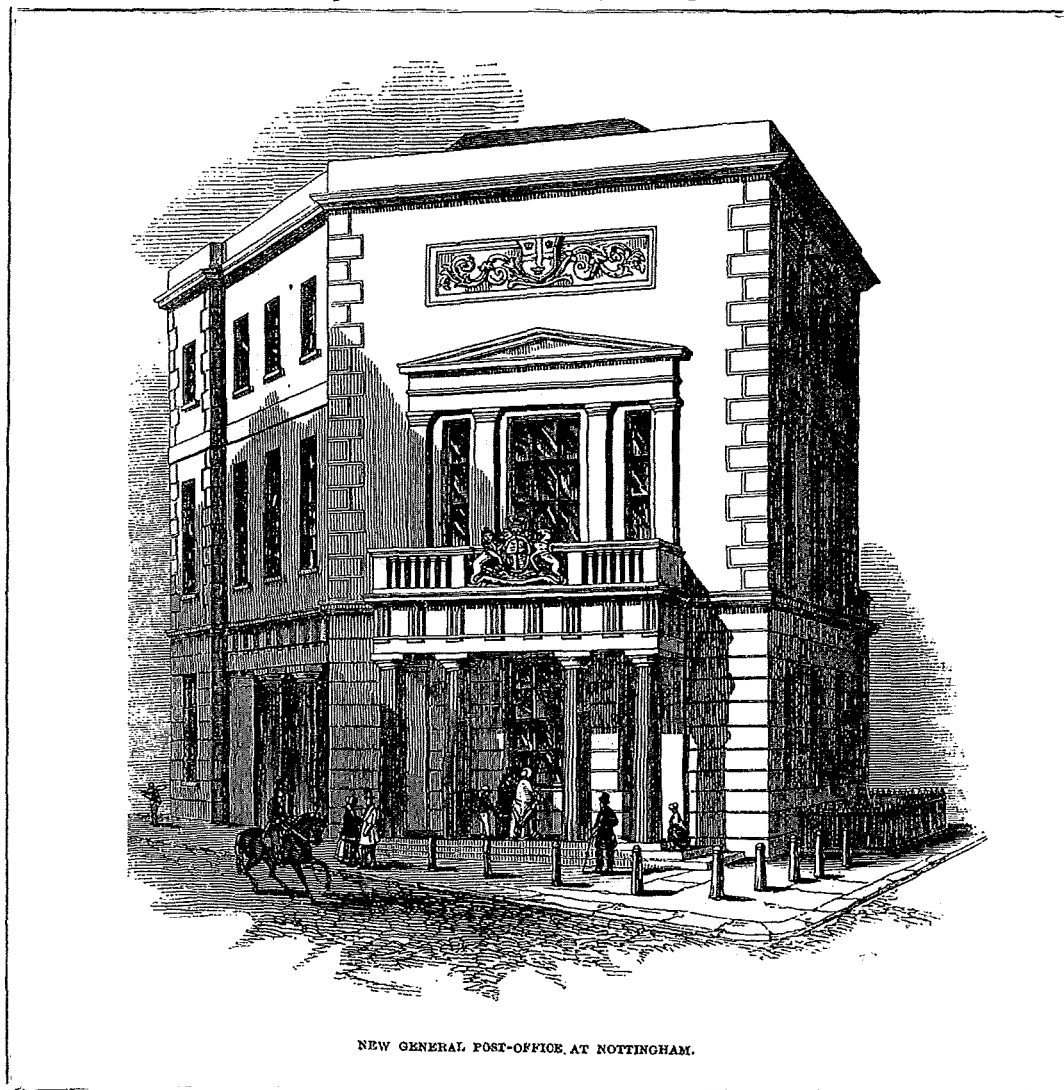
From the late 1850s the Oxford Union Society provided stamps free of charge to members for use on letters written in their own writing rooms. To prevent petty pilfering the Society overprinted their initials on the face of the stamps as, up until the introduction of postal orders in 1891, it was customary to remit small payments in postage stamps which could be cashed in at any post office.



NOTTINGHAM POST OFFICE

by Alan Marshall

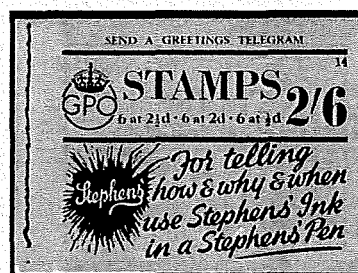
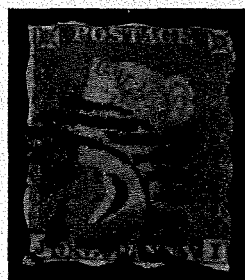
The first illustration and that on the lower left show the office in Albert Street which opened in 1848. The public was served through three windows under the portico. By the mid-1860s this office was inadequate for the business being transacted so in 1869 a new office was opened in Victoria Street (lower right).





June 2011 Auction

Our 22/23 June auction promises to be another exciting sale with interesting sections of South Australia originally from the John Forrest collection. China with First Day Covers, local issues & miniature sheets. - Great Britain with the usual wide array of stamps, postal history and an above average group of Victorian cancellations.



Catalogues for our June 2011 auction
available early May and on-line at
www.cavendish-auctions.com

Valuations ♦ Consignments
Phone **01332 250970** now and speak to
James Grimwood-Taylor or Ken Baker

Email: stamps@cavendishphilauc.demon.co.uk

**Cavendish House, 153-7 London Road,
DERBY DE1 2SY U.K.
Fax: 01332 294440**

SOUTHAM – MILEAGE REMOVED MARKING?

by Bryan A Jones.

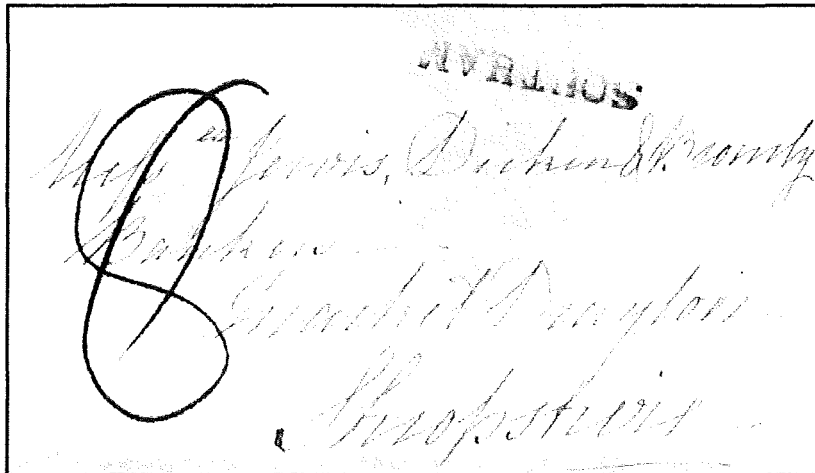
Why is there not, or indeed should there be, included in the MPH publication “The Midland Counties Mileage Marks 1784-1840” a reference to a Southam Mileage Removed marking?



The current entry includes details of the Southam 83 mileage marking (reference MMM11042 – illustrated on page 140), with recorded dates of usage 17 January 1826 through to 18 March 1831 in black, and then in Red from 12 September 1831 through to 28 June 1833. The footnote indicates that this was then replaced by a straight line script handstamp issued in 1837.



I have examples of the Southam 83 mileage marking dated November 1818 and September 1827, with examples of the next suggested marking, the attractive straight line script handstamp, dated July 1836 and June 1838. However what particularly interests me are two intermediate items, acquired relatively recently, which show a straight line “Southam” marking without any evidence of the second line mileage. These are dated June 1827 and April 1830 (illustrated).



The measurements of these straight line Southam markings are identical to those from the preceding Southam 83 mileage mark, suggesting that they were created by the removal of the second line mileage element from the mileage mark. Does this therefore indicate that the dates for the use of the Southam 83 mileage mark should be amended to mid 1827, with the insertion of a “Mileage Removed” marking from June 1827 through to June 1833?

Perhaps anyone with examples of either of these markings would forward details so that my suggestion can be explored.

**A COLLECTION RESURRECTED-
(And A Useful Addition to Midlands Postal History).**

by Bryan Jones.

Introduction.

Way back in the early 1970s I was introduced to a Czech collector seeking someone in the UK with whom to correspond. Over the next thirty years our correspondence generated a large collection of both stamps, covers and postcards, both current and from earlier times. Following a showing of a small part of this collection at a Solihull P.S meeting I was invited to meet the father-in-law of one of our members who had actually served in the Czech Forces in GB during WWII. This introduction led me to start to build a collection of material related to this "army in exile". Unfortunately the Czech connection faded and died around the turn of the century, my collection was then consigned to the bottom of a cupboard where it languished until recently, untouched and almost forgotten.

In the meantime my interests switched to my Stratford-on-Avon and South Warwickshire postal history collection, when almost by chance I realised that a part of my dormant Czech Forces collection could be resurrected and rewritten to form a valuable addition to this new interest. This is the story of that resurrected collection.

Czech Forces in G.B during WWII.

After the evacuation from Dunkirk elements of the Czechoslovak forces in various parts of Europe and the Middle East assembled in this country, the air force personnel amongst them were quickly absorbed into the R.A.F, the army personnel however were gathered together to form a number of Czech Battalions, which subsequently were renamed the "Czech Independent Armoured Brigade", with a total complement approaching 5,000 men.

During the next five years, until finally they left to join in the liberation of Europe, the Brigade were based in various parts of the country, and for various periods of time. Their movements were as follows:-

Cholmondeley Park (Cheshire)	July – October 1940.
Warwick & Leamington	October 1940 – May 1942.
Ilminster, Somerset	May 1942 – August 1942.
Lowestoft, Suffolk	August 1942 – May 1943.
Dovercourt, Essex	May 1943 – September 1943.
Desborough, Northants	September 1943 – May 1944.
Galashiels, Selkirk	May 1944 – August 1944.
Bridlington, Yorks	August 1944 prior to embarkation for Europe.

As can be seen from the above list, two of these locations offer scope for the Midlands Postal History collector, the time spent at Warwick & Leamington being by far the longest stay in any one area offering the greatest scope.

It should be remembered that these Czech personnel were intensely proud of their country and were determined to keep its memory alive, and that one way in which they set out, from the outset, to do this was through the creation of pictorial cancels generally featuring Czech anniversaries and the publicity that they could bring. It is this material which offers postal historians so much to look for.

The Warwick and Leamington Period.

This was a large military unit to descend on the Leamington area, and in consequence they were distributed not only in Leamington itself but also, as befits an Armoured unit, in the surrounding countryside. The Brigade's Headquarters were located in Harrington House (where the new Spa Centre now stands); with other support functions situated at Newbold Terrace (Nos 22/23 – now replaced by a block of flats). As an Armoured Brigade a large area was needed, not only to house those involved but also to provide space for training with a wide variety of weapons and transport. As a consequence units were spread over the surrounding countryside with units located at Barford; Butlers Marston (near Kineton) where A.A and Anti-Tank units were based; at Moreton Morrell Hall (Artillery Officer Training School) which is nowadays known as the Moreton Morrell Centre of Warwickshire College; at Moreton Paddox (a large house – demolished in 1959); at Walton Hall (the home of the Second Battalion); and at Wellesbourne (R.E.M.E). Members of H.Q staff were billeted in any suitable location in Leamington itself, such as the Masonic Rooms.



Walton Hall in the late 1930's.

The Field Post Office and its Operation.

The Czech Forces operated a Field Post Office whilst they were initially based at Cholmondeley Park but their activities were somewhat restricted as the commemorative cancellers that they produced were not accepted by the Post Office for any item entering the normal postal system. Hence regular mail was taken to the nearest post office to be posted in the normal way, free of any pictorial identification.

It is understood that the normal compliment of the Field Post Office comprised two officers (the senior officer was, at the direction of President Benes, to be someone who had been employed by the former Czech Post Office), a Sergeant; a Corporal and four other ranks.

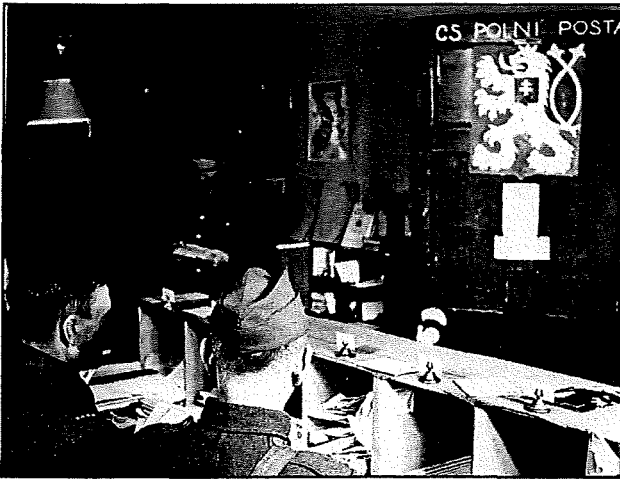
The Field Post Office during the "Leamington Period" was located at the northern end of the Parade, in facilities that were decidedly primitive.

At this relatively early period of the war there were significant concerns about anything which might disclose the whereabouts of Allied Armies within the UK, this led to the introduction of the "anonymous" Field Post cancellation (see Fig 1) on 28 May 1941 for use on outgoing mail.



The commemorative cancellers were however still produced and were used as arrival marks on incoming, and internal mail, and on some philatelic mail. However only a few months later, in October 1941, the use of the commemorative cancellers to cancel stamps on outgoing mail was permitted, without the application of a "normal" post office cancellation, although on many occasions the local cancellation continued to be applied.

The volume of mail delivered to, and posted by the Czech Forces was quite significant. It has been recorded that in the calendar year 1942 the Field Post Office handled over 440,000 items of incoming mail, plus 13,000 parcels, and over 10,000 registered letters, while at the same time despatching over 600,000 outgoing items, plus over 9,000 money orders and registered letters.



The photographs shown of the Field Post Office at Leamington are dated 23 August 1941, and come from the Richard Beith collection.

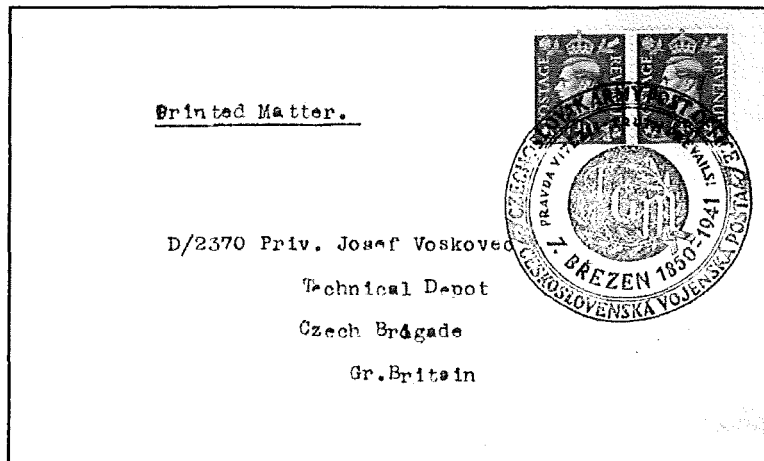
The Commemorative Cancellers.

No less than nine different commemorative cancellers were produced during "The Leamington Period", plus, of course the rectangular Field Post datestamp already referred to. These are dealt with in chronological order. Whilst the covers shown are reduced in size the commemorative cancellers are shown full size.

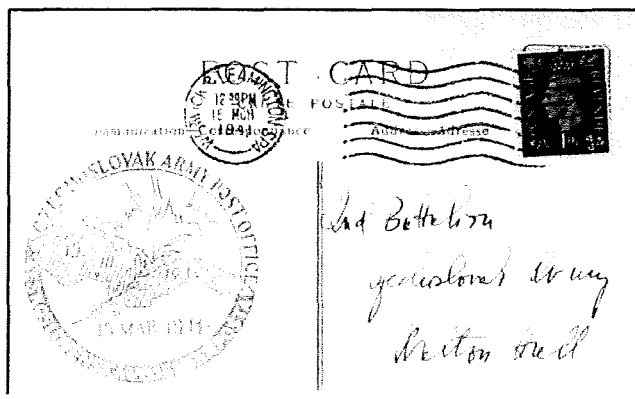
1. Dated 28 October 1940 and applied in Red. This canceller, the first to be produced after the move to Leamington, contains both the Leamington coat-of-arms and initially, the place name Leamington Spa. The name was excised before this canceller came into regular use.



2. Dated 7 March 1941 and applied in Red. Commemorates the 91st Birthday of Masaryk, Founder President of the first Czechoslovak Republic.



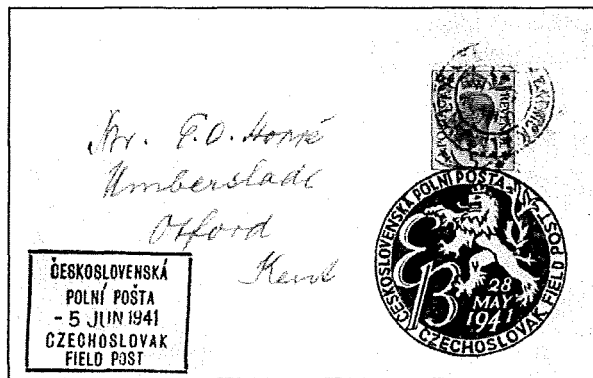
3. Dated 15 March 1941 and applied in Black. Second Anniversary of the German invasion of Czechoslovakia.



4. Dated 4 May 1941 and applied in Dark Blue. 22nd Anniversary of the Death of General Stefanik, the Slovak leader, killed in a 1919 plane crash.



5. Dated 28 May 1941 and applied in Red and Black. Birthday of President-in-Exile Dr Benes.

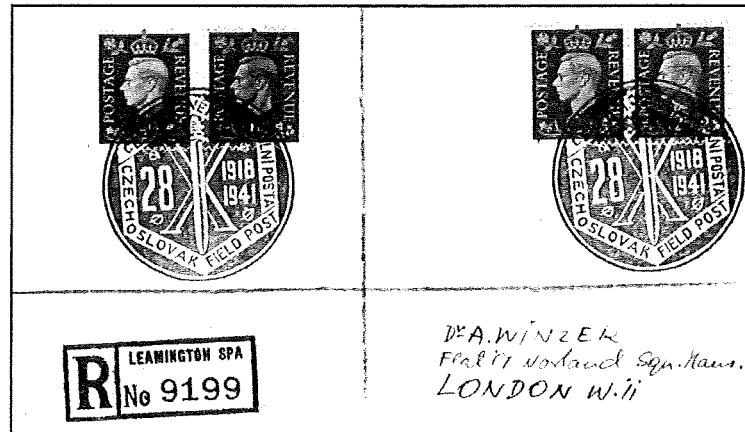


6. Dated 15 September 1941 and applied in Red. Birthday of national poet Petr Bezruc.

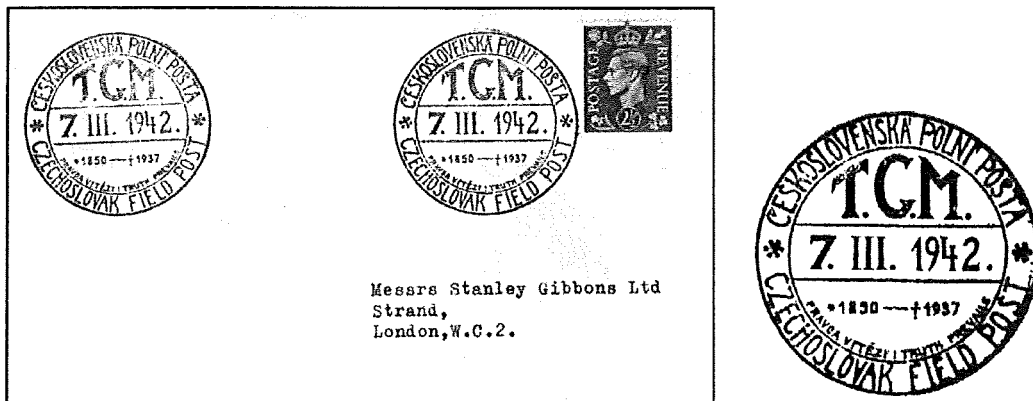


From this point on Commemorative Cancellers were deemed acceptable for use on outgoing mail.

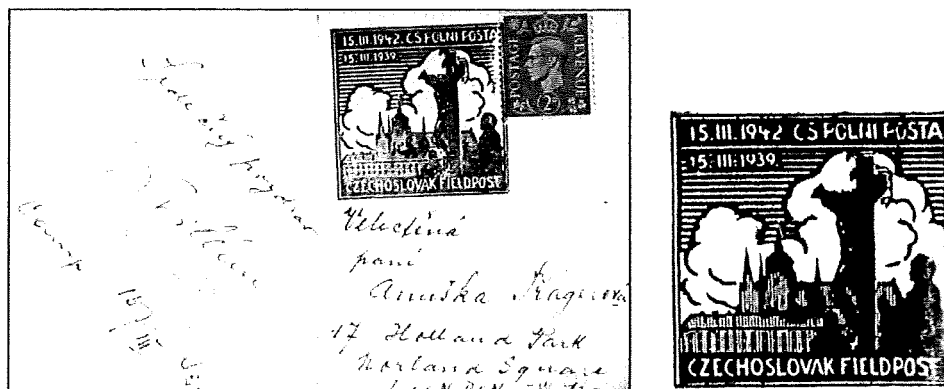
7. Dated 28 October 1941 applied in Red. 23rd Anniversary of the Founding of the Czechoslovak Republic.



8. Dated 7 March 1942 applied in Red. 92nd Anniversary of the birth of Masaryk.



9. Dated 15 March 1942 applied in Black. invasion of Czechoslovakia. Third Anniversary of the German occupation of Czechoslovakia.

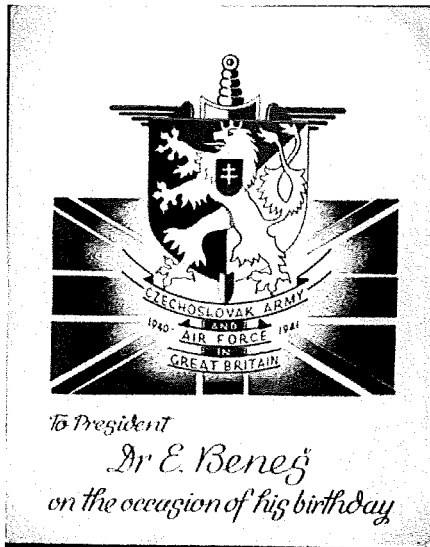


In addition a number of commemorative folders were produced, in limited quantities, to honour specific anniversaries. Those produced whilst at Leamington were as follows:-

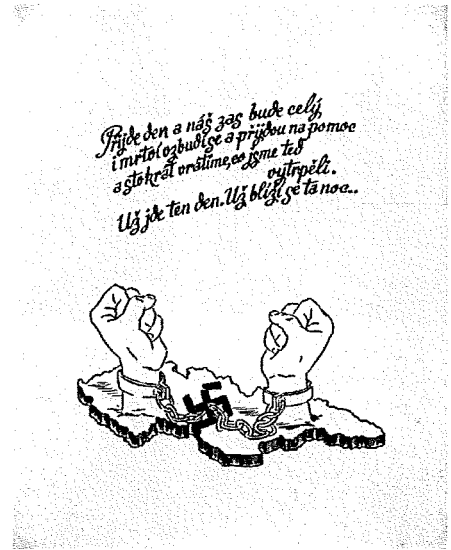
Folder 1. National Day of Mourning, Second Anniversary of German Occupation of Czechoslovakia, 15 March 1941. 500 numbered folders produced, each containing an example of pre-war Czech stamps and the special canceller issued on this date (No 3 above).

Folder 2. Birthday of President Benes, 28 May 1941. 1,000 numbered folders produced, again containing pre-war Czech stamps tied by the use of the special canceller issued on this date (No 4 above).

Folder 3. 23rd Anniversary of the Founding of Czechoslovakia, 28 October 1918. 1,111 numbered folders issued on 28 October 1941, again containing pre-war Czech stamps tied by the special canceller issued on this date (No 7 above).



ZA SVOBODU !



Folders 1; 2 & 3 – (Normal Size 8.25" x 6.5")

One of those based at Leamington, who was later to find international fame, a name known to many music lovers, was Vilem Tausky, the composer, conductor and teacher. Born in Moravia, Corporal Tausky arrived in this country in July 1940, and was appointed Military Bandmaster to the Czech Forces. Military musicians were always attached to the Field Ambulance in times of war, and he was billeted with his fellow musicians on the Parade at Leamington.



The photographs above, taken at the presentation of colours during the "Leamington Period" probably at Moreton Paddox, with General Sergej Inger the Minister of Defence, in the government-in-exile, making the presentation. My original contact, is one of the honour guard, it was he who gave me these photographs. He also drew my attention to the members of the honour guard in the background in paratroopers uniform, two of the individuals in the photographs he assured me, were part of the group which parachuted into occupied Czechoslovakia and assassinated Obergruppenfuhrer Reinhard Heydrich, the Nazi "Protector" of Bohemia & Moravia, in May 1942, and sacrificed their lives in so doing.

There were two other significant events which occurred during this period, firstly following the massive air raid which destroyed large parts of Coventry in November 1940 a commendation was given to the Czech Forces for the assistance that they provided to the local authorities in the aftermath of that catastrophe. The second, more pleasurable, event was a visit to the Czech Forces, who were assembled at Walton Hall and Moreton Paddox, by Winston Churchill on 19 - 20 April 1941, accompanied by President Benes; Mgr Sramek (Prime Minister in the exiled Government); Averil Harriman (US Special Envoy) and Major General Arnold (USAAC). Shortly after this visit, on 18 July 1941, official recognition was given to the Czechoslovak Government-in-Exile.



Pictures taken during a visit by President Benes to Walton Hall in December 1941.

A memorial to the Czech Forces as erected in Jephson Gardens, Leamington, in October 1968, in the shape of a parachute, honouring those members of the Czech Forces who, during their time at Leamington volunteered to be parachuted back into occupied Czechoslovakia to assist the local resistance.

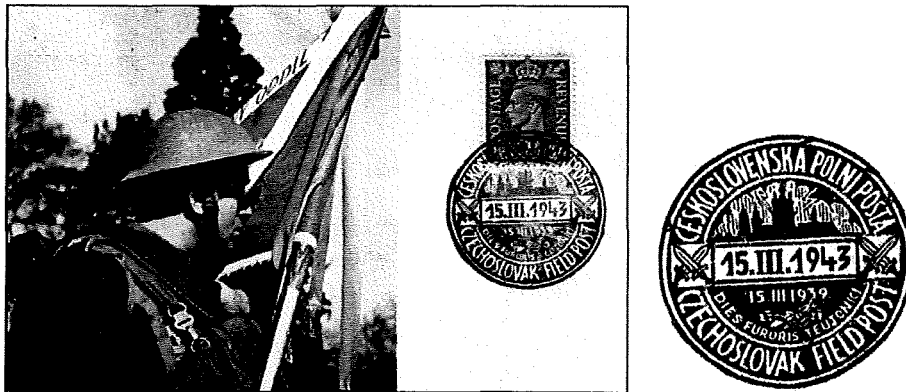
Late in May 1942 the Czech Brigade relocated to the Ilminster area of Somerset, a large training area bounded by Yeovil; Sidmouth, Seaton and Chard.

The Desborough Period – September 1943 – May 1944.

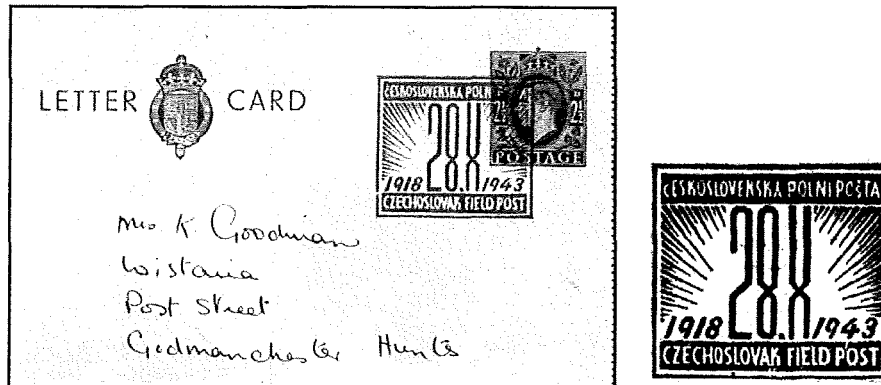
The Czech Brigade returned to the Midlands Counties in September 1943, with their head-quarters situated at Desborough, Northants. The training extensive area however meant that units were spread over a wide geographic area which included Peterborough; Huntingdon; Northampton and Market Harborough. I am unaware of the precise details of individual unit deployment and would welcome further feedback on this period.

What is known however is that the Czech Brigade continued to publicise their occupied country through the issuing of further commemorative cancellations. Those issued during the "Desborough Period" are as follows:-

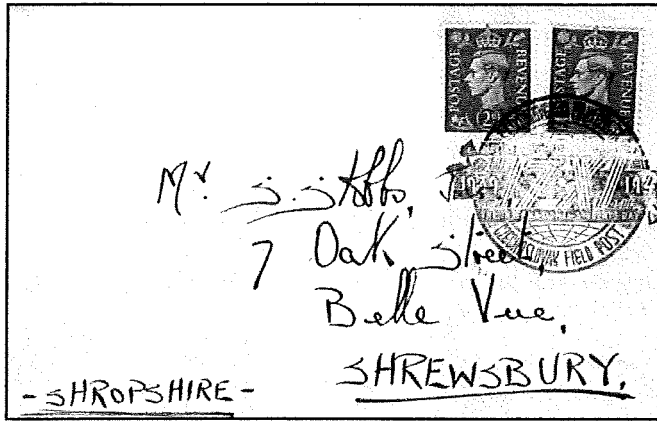
D1. Dated 15 March 1943. Fourth Anniversary of the German Occupation of the Czech Republic.



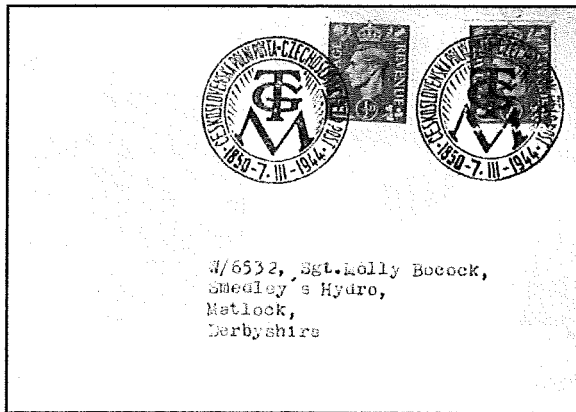
D2. Dated 28 October 1943. 25th Anniversary of the Founding of the First Czechoslovak Republic.



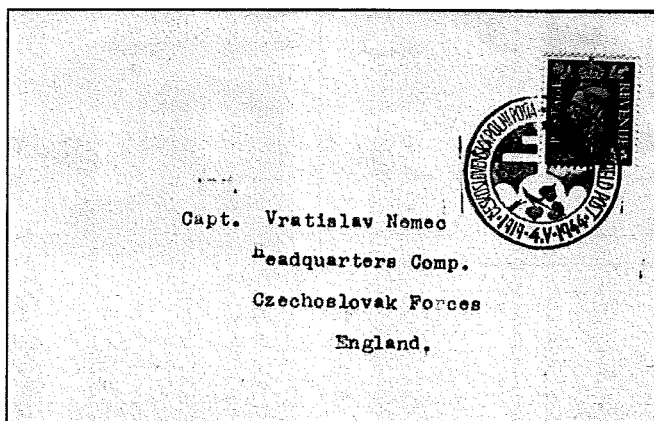
D3. Dated 17 November 1943. International Students Day.



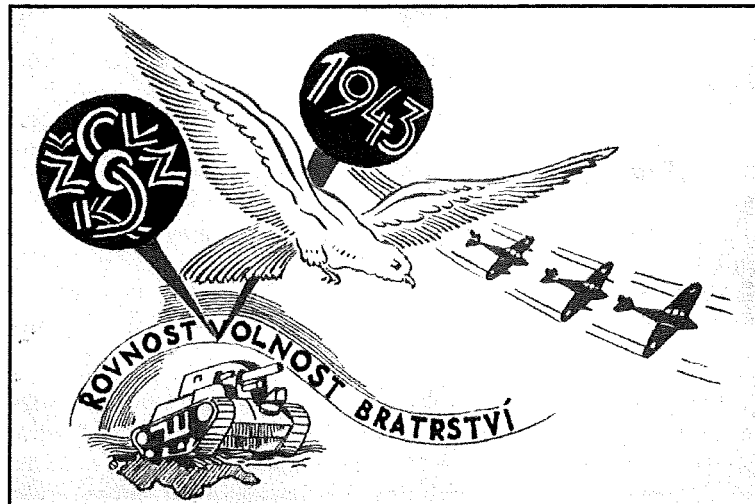
D4. Dated 7 March 1944. 94th Anniversary of the Birth of T.G.Maseryk.



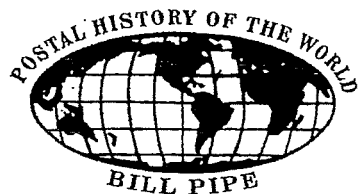
D5. Dated 4 May 1944. 25th Anniversary of the death of General.M.R.Stefanik.



Also whilst based in the Desborough area the Czech Forces produced the first of their own commemorative Christmas Cards. The front of the Christmas 1943 card (printed in national colours, red and blue) is shown (reduced in size).



A bi-lingual double circle datestamp replaced the original rectangular "Polni Post" datestamp on 1 September 1943, as the Brigade was preparing to relocate to the Desborough area. Three different date stamps have been identified, distinguished by minor differences in the lettering and solid segments around the periphery, their use continued until after the Brigade returned to continental Europe.



THE MAGPIE

POSTAL AUCTIONS & LISTS
POSTCARDS & EPHEMERA
PAPER COLLECTABLES
POSTAL HISTORY

W.T. PIPE
7 Richard Close
Upton, Poole
Dorset
BH16 5PY

Tel: 01202 623300
Fax: 01202 631149
Web: www.magpiebillpipe.com
Email: magpiebillpipe@free.uk.com

**TWO LETTERS FROM BRITISH POST OFFICES IN SOUTH AMERICA TO SHROPSHIRE,
MAY 1867 AND DECEMBER 1873**

by Brian Atkins

I'm sure you will be as surprised to read that title as I was to find these wonderful postal history items! Somehow it seems beyond belief that such unattractive, simple, even bland looking letters should travel from tropical, exotic South America to sleepy Shropshire in the later 1800s.

The first letter was put into the mail at MONTEVIDEO, Uruguay, at the end of May 1867. The date stamp is not clear but part of the word CORREO (POST in Spanish) can just be made out, which is evidence, I believe, that the letter was put into the local office and later transferred to the British office for forwarding, unlike the 1873 letter below, which was put directly into the British office in Valparaíso. The cover contains a letter written in English dated from Tuyu, Argentina (on the coast about 70 miles south of Buenos Aires) on April 17th 1867. Why the letter was taken to Montevideo on the northern side of the estuary of the River Plate, rather than being put into the mail in Buenos Aires is not clear.

The GPO Notice of 23rd November 1860 stated that from 1st January postage between Uruguay and the UK would 'revert to the former charge' of 1/-. Page 80 of Tabcart (referenced below) shows an illustration with a similar and equally poor MONTEVIDEO date stamp of 1874 on a letter to Dublin, rated 1/- on arrival in Liverpool, supporting the notion that the 1867 letter was charged 1/- collect on arrival in London. The 1 Jul 1859 Convention with Uruguay said that no postage was to be collected in Uruguay on letters to the UK by British packet. Whether this stipulation survived the rate rise on 1 Jan 1861 I do not know, but there are no markings on the cover to suggest a local charge, which could have been paid in cash and not marked.

The Royal Mail Steam Company ship *Seine*, with Captain Woolcott in command and Mr. W. S. Cuta, RN, as naval mail agent, picked up and left mails at Buenos Aires on 29th May, Montevideo on 30th, Rio de Janeiro 8th June, Bahia 11th, Pernambuco 13th, St. Vincent (Cape Verde Islands) 21st and Lisbon on 28th June before arriving at Southampton with 152 passengers on 2nd July 1867. The mails were transferred by train to London and the letter arrived in Shrewsbury the next day. The *Seine* carried £143,588 in specie (meaning 'in coin'), as well as diamonds, coffee, tobacco, tapioca and ipecacuanha, a medicinal preparation from the dried roots of the tropical American shrub *Cephaelis ipecacuanha*, used to induce vomiting in cases of poisoning and drug overdose and as an expectorant for conditions such as bronchitis. I well recall that strange name on the labels of medicines I took as I suffered badly from bronchitis as a youngster!

The letter is addressed to Messrs Wace, solicitors, in Shrewsbury and the writer, a woman (she refers to her husband) who signs herself M. Moran, wants to know why she hasn't received a legacy even though Wace has received documents to prove the legality of her marriage and she isn't very impressed with Wace's stalling tactics as related to her in a letter "just to hand"! Now there's a great postal history item from Shrewsbury, presumably lost in the mists of time! Furthermore she inquires "I likewise wish to know the amount of money in Lord Hill's hands at the time of my sister's decease"! I can find no trace of a wife of Lord Hill who died at this time, so the reference here is a mystery for now, though, of course, the reference doesn't have to be to a wife of Lord Hill. The seal is a fancy letter M; for Moran?

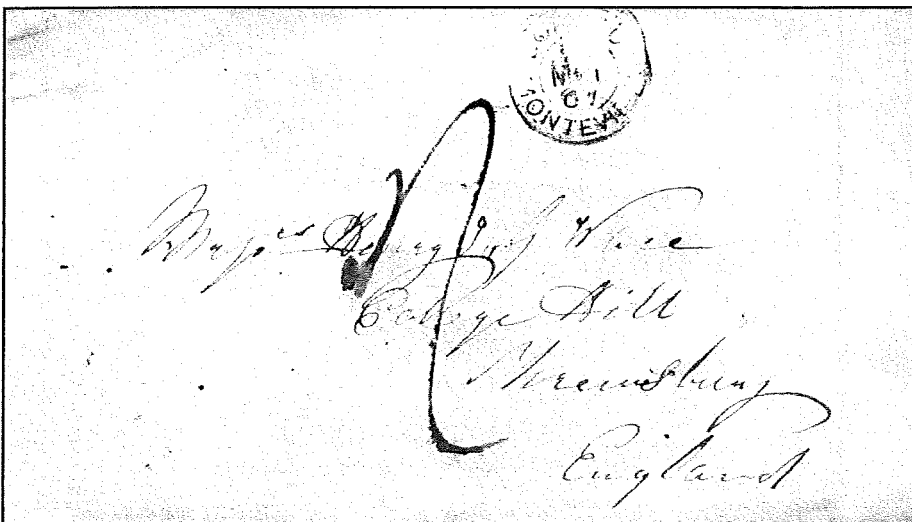
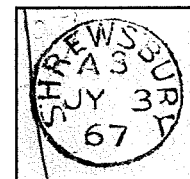


Fig 1, Front of letter from Montevideo to Shrewsbury, 1867



SHREWSBURY
date stamp on the
reverse. 3rd July
1867.

The second letter is datelined VALPARAISO Nov 6th 1873 and is addressed to Samuel B. (Betton) Gwynn (1822 – 1880), who lived in Noble Street, Wem. Noble Street is shaped like the blade of a sickle and curves to the north of High Street joining that street at both ends. Bradshaw's Directory of Shropshire (1851) describes Gwynn as a surgeon and in 1863 Dr. S. B. Gwynn is listed as secretary of the Shropshire Ethical Branch of the British Medical Association, though the subject of the letter is legal rather than medical. The writer is Robert Budge whose first sentence reads 'I have to hand your esteemed *letter* (my addition) of the 15th August'. Again we have a reference to correspondence from Shropshire. Wouldn't a letter *from* Wem to Chile in 1873 be a find!! Imagine the franking. The letter concerns the 'affairs of the late Mr. Walford' (the Walfords were a well-known Wem family of the time). Furthermore Budge writes about 'a paper in Spanish written by the lawyer in Concepcion' (about 300 miles south of Valparaiso) but infuriatingly he doesn't explain precisely what was going on, though there is a reference to 'the required power or powers', suggesting a Power of Attorney may be involved. What on earth Budge, Gwynn and Walford may have been up to on the western coast of South America in 1873 is beyond conjecture.

If it had been posted at a Chilean office it might have been franked with those lovely COLON / CHILE imperforate stamps produced in 1853 by Perkins, Bacon & Co. in the same colours as the British penny red and twopenny blue of the time. But no, it was put, unpaid, into the British office in Valparaiso, Chile on 14th November 1873, stamped as such with a typical British-type date stamp and arrived in Wem on New Year's Day 1874. There are no other marks, no London or Shrewsbury. Somewhere along its travels it was charged 1/6, probably in London similar to the letter from Montevideo. According to the last GPO Notice of 1869 (40/69) and the Treasury Warrant of 1st January 1870, the 1/6 to be collected is correct for ½oz letters between the UK and Chile. The British office at Valparaiso was given the number C30 in the 1874 Post Office list and Montevideo, incidentally, was given C28 at the same time.

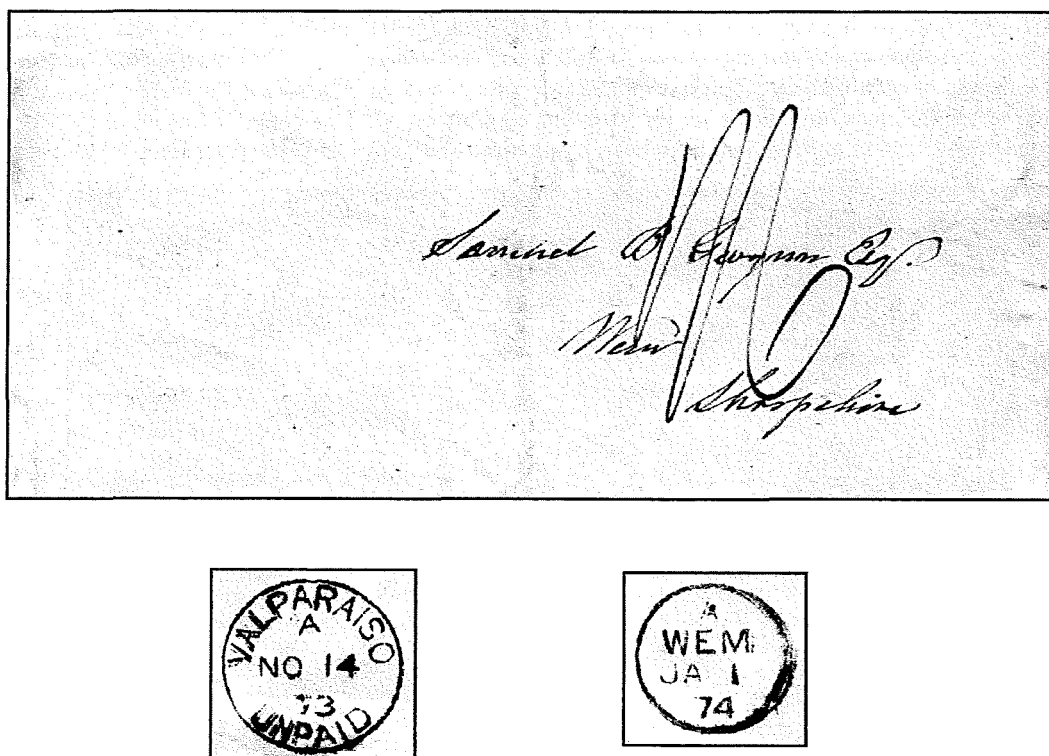


Fig 2, Front of November 1873 letter and date stamps on the reverse

But how did the letter travel from Valparaiso to Wem? The answer can be found in *The Times* of 31st December 1873. Although it is quite long, I have decided to quote the whole paragraph from *The Times* as it gives a wonderfully detailed view, not only of mail carriage at that time but of the riches, the exotic foods and other goods that ships were bringing back to Britain. On a more mundane note the printer at the University of Victoria, BC, cut off an inch of the right-hand side of the original making it impossible to follow, rendering a subsequent scan of no value! I will write it as it is written and spelled, it reads:

The Royal Mail Steampacket Company's steamer *Moselle*, Commander John. H. Jellicoe, arrived at Plymouth yesterday, at 12.30p.m (30th Dec 1873 - *my addition*). Her dates are – Tampico Nov. 29; Vera Cruz and Cartagena, Dec. 3; Colon, Dec 6; Georgetown (Demerara), Dec 8; Havannah, Dec 9; Port of Spain (Trinidad), Dec 10; Kingstown (Jamaica), Bridgetown (Barbadoes), Grenada, and St. Vincent, Dec 11; Jaemel (Hayti), St. Lucia, Gaudaloupe, and Martinique, Dec 12; San Juan (Puerto Rico), Dominique and Antigua, Dec 13; St. Kitts, Dec 14; and St. Thomas, Dec. 17. Her dates for the mails received at Panama are – Valparaiso, Nov. 20; Guayaquil (Ecuador), Nov. 24; Callao and Lima, Nov. 28; and Panama, Dec 6. Her specie amounted to £584,159, £345,259 being in gold, £236,899 in silver, £910 in platina (platinum in impure form – *my addition*) and £1,100 in jewelry. Her cargo consisted of 2,868 bales of tobacco, 1,594 bags of coffee, 1,534 packages of hides, 1,232 serons of bark, 689 serons of indigo, 566 cases of cigars, 425 logs of fustic, 311 bags of cocoa, 236 bags of minerals, 224 bales of ivory nuts, 126 cases of borax, 101 packages of indiarubber, 92 live turtles, 32 packages of plants, 9 serons of cochineal, and 252 packages of sundries. The total number of passengers on board was 73, 14 of whom landed at Plymouth. Sixty-seven bags of mail were landed at Plymouth and despatched by the 2.15 train.

What would the environmental lobby say today about the transportation of 92 live turtles? Some unfamiliar words; a seron is a bale, package or hamper, especially of spices or special commodities, of indeterminate size, and a fustic is a small tropical American tree (*Chlorophora tinctoria*) with wood that yields a yellow dye! Serons of almonds, medical bark and cochineal were quite common in the 19th century. Tampico (C63 in 1874 list) and Vera Cruz (C64) are on the Caribbean coast of Mexico and Cartagena (C56) is on the coast of Colombia. At Colon, Panama, the *Moselle* picked up the mails dropped originally at Panama City. Various ships brought these mails from the British offices on the west coast of South America to Panama City, from where they were taken by train across the isthmus of Panama to Colon on the Atlantic side, the Panama Railway having opened on January 28th 1855. If the dates quoted in *The Times* are correct, and in those days *The Times* prided itself on its accuracy, the *Moselle* then zigzagged across the Caribbean picking up goods and mails at various places before heading for a home port. But why would Commander Jellicoe have steamed from Colon (4) to Georgetown (5, now in Guyana), then up to Havannah (6, presumably Havana, Cuba), back down to Trinidad (7) and then up to Jamaica (8) and back down to Barbados (9)? Perhaps he was enjoying the cruise or keeping to a pre-arranged schedule of mail pick-up? The last quoted port of call was St. Thomas in the Virgin Islands (15) on December 17th from where Commander Jellicoe set for Plymouth arriving on 30th December 1873. The letter was on the 2.15pm train to London and arrived in Wem two days later, a total time of 48 days from the date stamp in Valparaiso.

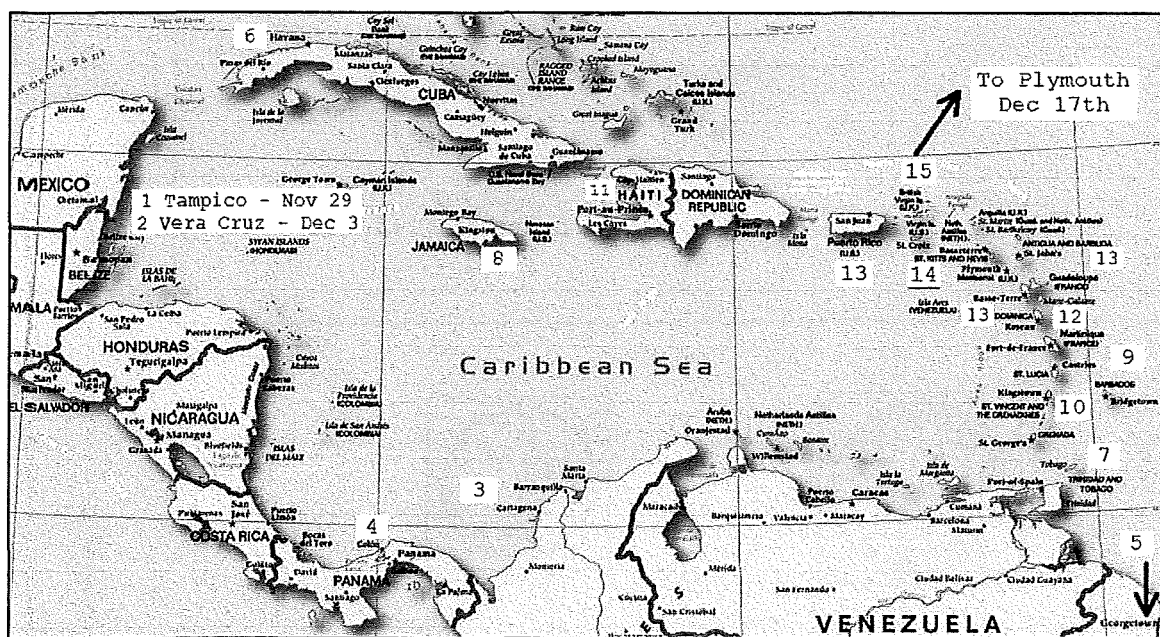


Fig 3, The steamer *Moselle*'s tour of the Caribbean in December 1873. The numbers refer to the sequence of ports visited, there are three '13's as three ports were visited on one day (some visits omitted).

References not stated in the text:

The Times 3rd July 1867 (digital version accessed at the University of Victoria, BC, Canada).

British Post Office Numbers 1844 - 1906, Brumell, R. C. Alcock Ltd., Cheltenham 1971.

United Kingdom Letter Rates Inland and Overseas, Tabcart, 2nd edition, HH Sales, Bradford 2003.

www.thefreedictionary.com (for definitions).