



MIDLAND MAIL

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



President: Elizabeth Lewis

Chairman:
Chris Jackson

Treasurer:
Elizabeth Lewis

Secretary:
Eric Lewis

Number 113, February 2000

OBITUARY

It is with sadness that we report the death last October of our member Paul Hill. Although Paul's main interest in recent years was 'Channel Islands Internee Mail' which he exhibited with considerable success, he still retained an interest in the postal history of Hinckley on which he wrote a book. Although his work prevented him from attending meetings, he helped with my book by providing me with much unusual material from Leicestershire. Eric and Elizabeth have written to Mrs Hill, extending to her the deepest sympathy of the Society.

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

On **19th February** our meeting will be held at the Worcester Guildhall in conjunction with the fair organised by the Worcester Philatelic Society. The meeting will start at 2 p.m. and will consist of displays of 'Hay on Wye' by Frank Bennett and 'Early Radnorshire' by Sadie Cole.

Our Annual Competitions will be held on **11th March** at Carrs Lane, Birmingham.

2000 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND NEXT COMMITTEE MEETING

The Annual General Meeting will be held at Carrs Lane Church Centre on **29th April**, commencing at 1 p.m. It will be preceded by a committee meeting at 11 a.m. Please note the above date and times in your diary now.

MATERIAL FOR THE ANNUAL AUCTION

In order that catalogues can be sent to our overseas members in good time for them to submit bids it is necessary to have auction lots in by 11th March at the very latest, i.e. the date of our March meeting.

It would however be appreciated if you could submit lots before that date, perhaps at the meeting on 19th February or by post to Mrs E. Lewis at 27 Rathbone Road, Smethwick, B67 5JG

Please include full descriptions together with estimated market values and your reserve price, or state no reserve. If you wish, the actual lots can be brought along to the auction but in this case please also state the condition of each item based on 'Poor', 'Good', 'Fine', or 'Superb' and also indicate clearly the number of items in each lot.

A gift of any surplus material that you may care to give to be auctioned for Society funds would, as usual, be much appreciated.

JON BAKER TROPHY

Nominations are needed for the best article to have appeared in Midland Mail during 1999. The definition of best is left to you, but all nominations should be sent to the Editor by the date of the March meeting at the latest. Possible nominations include: 'POSTAGE REDUCTIONS IN 1837-1838' (MM109/6), and 'UNCORRECTED MILEAGE - INCORRECT POSTAGE' (MM110/4) by Chris Beaver, 'FIFTH CLAUSE POSTS' by John Calladine (MM112/6), 'WHITCHURCH POSTAL HISTORY' by Brian Atkins (MM112/10). There may be others which I have overlooked so please peruse MM108 to MM112 and let the Editor know your decision.

Your editor would also be delighted if you try to win this trophy next year by submitting an article for Midland Mail in the coming months.

THE NOVEMBER MEETING

For some years after the Society was formed we had no members with a specific interest in the postal history of Nottinghamshire. If we thought we now had at least one knowledgeable enthusiast, we can be assured that we have at least two for, at Carrs Lane on 13th November, Alan Marshall provided us with a splendid and well-researched display of 'Nottingham.' Alan explained to us that his home was at the curiously-named Bunny, on the road between Nottingham and Loughborough. ('Bunny, as a name, is not so very unusual when you appreciate that 'Nottingham' is a reduced form of 'Snottingham'.) His interest was in both post and social history and he had headed his sheets accordingly. Families such as the Parkyns - and, yes, there was a Bunny Park as well as a Bunny Wood - featured in his well-ordered display which included much correspondence coming into Nottingham as well as that sent from the city.

Alan began by showing a selection of early maps and a 1670 plan of Nottingham, drawing our attention to the different 'true' distances from the city to London given on each map. His earliest letter was dated 1666 from Woodborough Hall and, unusually, he had discovered a family tree prepared in 1662 by the writer of that letter. There were other early letters of 1672 and 1674 with Bishopmarks and, the first of several surprises a letter of 1720 to Soho with a 'NOTINGHAM' stamp. (The only stamp with a single 't' in the current record was used more than thirty years later.) In fact, as in many other towns and cities, there remains much to be discovered about the earliest handstamps and Alan had examples of different size and very different dates from those noted in the BCC. One of those letters discussed stomach disorders and another the cost of pistols! As if to emphasise the point, Alan was able to produce not one but three examples of a mark of c1780 previously only recorded in archives.

Nottingham can be said to have had a 'purple patch' for the postmaster appeared to favour ink of that colour and it is often found on such as the early mileage marks. We saw several examples of its use, particularly on Nottingham's attractive horseshoe mileage stamps from 1787. One letter from 1789, to be turned at Macclesfield found its final destination, after redirection, at St Anne's Hotel in the well-known crescent at Buxton - familiar to your scribe as his father-in-law owned it for some years. From 1809, Alan had another apparently unrecorded mileage stamp and anyone who read his article in MM106 will know that the later dated circular mileage marks of Nottingham are a study in themselves. A scarce (unique?) item was the 1823 framed 'Missent to Nottingham'.

We arrived at the era of postal reform with examples of Uniform Fourpenny Post and Uniform Penny Postage including a Mulready and a Penny Black cover from Nottingham to Leicester. The change from the Maltese Cross to numeral cancels was illustrated with the earliest known usage of Nottingham's '583' on 13th May 1844. There was a handstruck '2' on a letter from Nottingham to Heanor and Nottingham travellers with a '2' and a '5'. Alan's display included a number of covers that would appeal to stamp collectors as well as postal historians, none more so than a vertical strip of five of the diminutive 1870 ½d with imperf selvedge (found on the 'A' or 'X' row) and a later ½d 'changeling'. There were several interesting duplex cancels - some inevitably still unrecorded - and one particularly remembers a trio from 1894 originating at three different fish and game dealers in Nottingham. Among a good selection of more modern items, a 1939 LMS railway letter from Stone to Nottingham and some unfamiliar 1956 helicopter mails caught the eye.

The second half of the display opened with seventeen examples, about half the known total, of letters carried in the unofficial local post at Nottingham between 1797 and 1838, these originating from such villages as Eastwood and, yes, Bunny. This unofficial local post (see the Society's book) was supposed to be confined to a twelve mile limit to ensure its viability. Although there was an official penny post between Nottingham and Mansfield, we were reminded that Nottingham never used a penny post handstamp. We saw an unusually large 'RL' on a ride letter that, unusually, had strayed beyond the limits of London, and had been sent all the way to Nottingham. A striking (and scarce) item was the front of an original Leech Mulready caricature sent to a vicar's wife at Southwell. The 1d black adhesive was not tied but Alan had explained in his write-up the presence of both an adhesive and a black 2d charge mark. Among other unusual items were a blue '504' numeral of Mansfield and an unrecorded handstruck 1d on a letter from Grantham to Nottingham. These were followed by a number of attractive letters to and from foreign countries such as Australia, France, Switzerland, Denmark, Transvaal and Spain. Then we saw registered covers and here one can pick out an early inland registration of 20th December 1842 and three envelopes cancelled with unrecorded barred numerals. Parcel post labels - undoubtedly included for Bill Toye's enjoyment - were confined to the city offices, a label of 1896 with manuscript 'Mansfield Road' pre-dating a printed label. We even saw mailbag labels.

Alan finished his display as he had begun, with the emphasis on Bunny. This time it was tongue-in-cheek with a display of rabbits on stamps - fair game, you might say. It was appropriate in an unintended manner for one had wondered where else, in a postal history display, one would have seen on cover an 1856 1d rose-red adhesive on white paper from plate 45 (and with an RPS certificate). It made an old stamp collector's heart skip a beat. It had been a varied and fascinating display from a member who has hidden a light under a bushel while he has built up a very useful collection.

W.J.C.

THE DECEMBER MEETING

On 11th December we met at the Bass Museum, Burton-on-Trent for annual get-together. The request that members bring material related to the afternoon's display met with a good response for there was much of interest to see and discuss in the morning. After an excellent lunch (They seem to get better every year.) we settled down to see a display on 'The Postage Due System of Great Britain' by Patrick Frost.

Patrick's display involved much, much more than the postage due adhesives for he explored in detail probably every reason for mail being surcharged since 1840. It is impossible in the space available to do justice to the material shown so what follows is no more than a brief account of a few of the items that caught your reporter's eye among so much material. Patrick started in 1840 with a letter of 7th January which weighed between one and two ounces but had not been prepaid so was charged at double the 1s/4d which should have been paid on posting. On the introduction of Uniform Penny Postage unpaid or underpaid mail was charged at twice the deficiency. We saw a '2' charge mark used on 10th January 1840, the dated '2' of Edinburgh which was only used between January and May 1840 and a Mulready weighing over one ounce and charged fourpence as well a variety of '2' marks. Also of note was the '3' of London used on unpaid and redirected mail.

The fact that the charges on mail to/from abroad were, up to the formation of the UPU, determined by individual treaties gives rise to all sorts of possible surcharges. Of particular note in a section devoted to overseas mail were the 'PAID ONLY TO ENGLAND' on letters sent from the USA to Italy and Spain, and mail sent via Brindisi when the Marseilles route was closed in 1870.

The year 1870 saw the introduction of the halfpenny rate for postcards and printed matter, and strict rules governed what could be sent at these rates. Patrick showed as a variety of possible infringements including one card with the corner torn off and a halfpenny postcard sent as a Valentine within Market Harborough in 1871 but the last few lines of the verse were written on the front. Consequently the item was treated as a letter but was wrongly charged at twopence.

Initially, redirected mail was treated as unpaid if the redirection had not been paid for and charged at the double rate, but after a few weeks this was reduced to the single rate. One item, posted in 1848, had been redirected five times and charged sixpence each time, giving a total cost to the recipient of 2s/6d. In 1860, a regulation came into force that letters redirected in the same postal district should not be charged. However some of the postal officials did not understand this for we saw examples of such mail being surcharged. Then in 1891, the redirection charge was withdrawn subject to certain regulations such as redirection should take place within one day, no messages were to be written, and the redirection was to be to the original addressee. Patrick produced examples of the infringements of these rules as well as instances of wrong charges, again showing that the officials did not understand the regulations.

In a section devoted to TPO's we saw examples of letters on which the sender had not paid the extra charge of a halfpenny and so were surcharged one penny. Patrick then turned to Maritime Mail. The sea postage was free on consignee letters but the inland postage had to be paid. Of particular note here was the 'T/U.K. - S.A./SEA POST' mark from post office in RMS Balmoral Castle on the last sailing in August 1914.

Patrick ended the first half of his display with a number of amusing or unusual charges. Of note among the latter was a postcard marked with a handstamp used at Southampton 'WORD POSTCARD OMITTED'. Apparently a regulation stated that postcards had to be headed as such; this was not the case on the item concerned.

Patrick began the next part of his display with items where the underpayment was not the fault of the sender. We were shown a 'CHARGED FOR ERROR' notice demanding sixpence from the postmaster of East Yell, Shetland who had rated a registered letter to South Australia at 1/- instead of 1/6.

Next came a number of sheets illustrating the use of invalid stamps among which were a letter, paid with a penny black, marked 'O.S.' (old stamp), bisects, mutilated stamps and demonetised stamps such as the Q.V. used in 1918. There was another example of the post office staff not knowing the rules for the 'Wembley stamps' used on a letter sent in 1928 were disallowed despite the fact that they were still valid.

We then saw examples of the measures to which a post office resorted when they ran out of a particular postage due such as bisecting higher values or using postage stamps.

In a section on registered mail there were items 'posted out of course', that is put into a letter box instead of being handed to a counter clerk, and thers which had been registered compulsorily as they contained valuables. Among material from the parcel post were a number of parcel post labels showing manuscript postage due charges. Patrick ended the afternoon with military mail sent between 1840 and 1918.

Chris Jackson expressed the feelings of all those present when he said that we had been treated to a fascinating and memorable display. Thanks are due again to Richard Farman for his work in arranging a most enjoyable day.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

John Calladine writes:

"Regarding the item in MM112/9 on early boxed mileage marks, the matter was thoroughly examined by the Postal History Society some years ago and it has since been 'accepted' that the earliest known strike was that of Sunderland on 26th May 1801. James' date of 14th May at Chesterfield is therefore 'one for the book'!

"As the Inland Office staff were being instructed to look for poor strikes immediately after the Act of 5th April, one might have expected April dates."

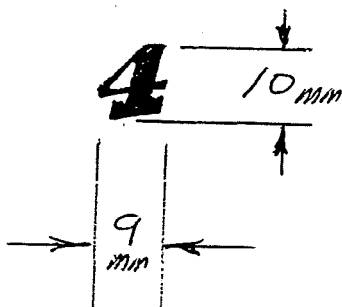
Eric and Elizabeth Lewis write:

Further to Brian Atkins' article in MM112 in which he was unable to provide an illustration of the 'traveller' handstamp, we illustrate below the one in our collection. This is the same one as recorded in his article as it was shown to and recorded by our Shropshire County Editor who passed the information onto Brian.

Since then a further example, but not such a good strike, has turned up in a recent auction and is dated 20th January, two days earlier than ours.

We would also like to correct the size and shape of the 1839 handstruck '4'. The correct size, as measured on a superb strike on a cover dated 9th December 1839 we handled recently is 9 x 10 mm not 9 x 8, the size given in the article and in the County Catalogue. We think Steph Stobbs or one of his friends must have measured a poor copy when he compiled the original Shropshire chapter.

One further note, we have an example of the 1840 cds (SH 786) in red which is also illustrated below. This extends the known colours to black, blue and red."



Eric and Elizabeth also point out that a typing error crept into the article - the date of the barred numeral should of course read 1844 (not 1840). Apologies to all from the Editor.



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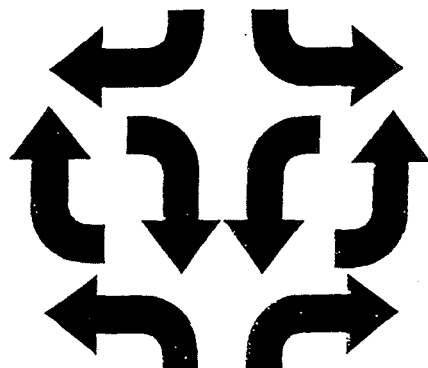
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MIDLAND POST OFFICES OPENED OR CLOSED DURING 1999

by Ken Smith

BIRMINGHAM

Bloomsbury, 7 closed 10/5/1999.
 Bristol Street, 5 closed 29/9/1999.

DERBYSHIRE

Brassington, Matlock reopened 5/8/1999.
 Clifton, Ashbourne closed 17/2/1999.
 Combs, Stockport closed 10/11/1999.
 Fenney Bentley, Ashbourne closed 29/1/1999.
 Lea Bridge, Matlock closed 24/11/1999.
 Palterton, Chesterfield closed 30/7/1999.
 Poolsbrook, Chesterfield closed 14/10/1999.
 Roston, Ashbourne closed 2/11/1999.
 Stanton-in-Peak, Matlock reopened 22/7/1999.
 Taddington, Buxton closed 30/6/1999.
 Tissington, Ashbourne closed 30/7/1999.

GLOUCESTERSHIRE

Adlestrop, Moreton-in-Marsh closed 31/12/1998; reopened 10/6/1999
 Ashchurch Road (TSO), Tewkesbury closed 21/5/1999.
 Barrington, Burford closed 29/9/1999.
 Cambridge, Gloucester closed 28/7/1999.
 Evenlode, Moreton-in-Marsh closed 31/8/1999.
 Greenway, Dymock closed 30/6/1999.
 Leighterton, Tetbury closed 17/9/1999.
 Leonard Stanley, Stonehouse closed 20/8/1999.
 Naunton, Cheltenham closed 29/9/1999.
 Sling, Coleford closed 30/11/1999.
 Swindon, Cheltenham closed 24/2/1999.
 The Triangle, Chepstow closed 15/12/1999 (had opened 26/2/1998, replacing Brockweir)

HEREFORDSHIRE

Checkley, Hereford closed 30/11/1999.

LEICESTERSHIRE

Ab-Kettleby, Melton Mowbray closed 4/3/1999.
 Buckminster, Grantham closed 15/8/1999.
 Burrough-on-the-Hill, Melton Mowbray closed 1/2/1999; reopened 16/7/1999.
 Claybrook, Lutterworth closed 1/7/1999.
 Fenny Drayton, Nuneaton closed 7/5/1999.
 Highfields (TSO), Coalville closed 9/6/1999; reopened 5/8/1999.
 Hallaton, Market Harborough closed 30/4/1999; reopened 9/6/1999.
 Horninghold, Market Harborough closed 6/10/1999.
 Medbourne, Market Harborough closed 13/3/1999; reopened 5/5/1999.
 Peggs Green, Leicester closed 30/7/1999.
 Sproxton, Melton Mowbray closed 31/8/1999.

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

Arthingworth, Market Harborough closed 22/9/1999.
 Benefield, Peterborough reopened (after temporary closure) 25/10/1999.
 Chipping Warden, Banbury closed 30/3/1999; reopened 13/4/1999 (Tuesdays a.m. only).
 East Haddon, Northampton closed 20/10/1999.
 Hargrave, Wellingborough closed 18/11/1999 (was at 'Old Nag's Head', Thursdays a.m.).
 Hemington, Peterborough closed 30/12/1999.
 Islip, Kettering closed 18/8/1999.
 Lowick, Kettering closed c. May 1999.
 Shutlanger, Towcester reopened 15/4/1999 (had closed 2/3/1984.)
 Weston, Towcester closed 12/11/1999.

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

Gamston, Retford	reopened 21/6/1999
Gunthorpe, Nottingham	closed 1/12/1999.
Holbeck, Worksop	closed 10/9/1999.
North Wheatley, Retford	closed 3/8/1999.
Rampton, Retford	closed 27/5/1999.
Upton, Newark	closed 29/7/1999.
West Stockwith, Doncaster	closed 11/8/1999.

OXFORDSHIRE

Ewelme, Wallingford	closed 25/8/1999.
Letcombe Regis, Wantage	closed 15/4/1999.
Lewknor, Watlington	closed 14/9/1999.
Littlewoods (FPO), Oxford	closed 27/11/1999.
Swinbrook, Oxford	closed 2/11/1999

RUTLAND

Empingham, Oakham	closed 17/4/1999.
Teigh, Oakham	closed 16/9/1999.

SHROPSHIRE

Knowbury, Ludlow	Temporary closure 15/9/1999; reopened 4/1/2000
Onibury, Craven Arms	closed 4/11/1999.
Welshampton, Ellesmere	closed 3/6/1999.
Welsh Frankton, Oswestry	closed 7/9/1999.
Weston, Shrewsbury	closed 21/12/1999.

STAFFORDSHIRE

Cliff Vale (TSO), Stoke-on-Trent	closed 29/9/1999.
Dilhorne, Stoke-on-Trent	closed 30/7/1999.
Edingale, Tamworth	reopened 20/5/1999.
Etruria Road (TSO), Stoke-on-Trent	opened 25/2/1999.
Kingstone, Uttoxeter	closed 16/11/1999.
Park Estate(TSO), Burslem, Stoke	reopened 18/11/1999 (had closed 1/4/1998).
Waterhouses, Stoke-on-Trent	closed 5/2/1999.
Whiston, Stoke-on-Trent	closed 31/3/1999.

WARWICKSHIRE

Baginton, Coventry	closed 3/11/1999.
Hampton Lucy, Warwick	closed 26/8/1998.
Keresley End, Coventry	closed 27/5/1999; reopened 29/7/1999.
Knightcote, Leamington Spa	closed 29/6/1999.
Long Marston, Stratford-on-Avon	closed 13/4/1999.
Minworth, Sutton Coldfield	closed 6/3/1999; reopened 24/5/1999.
Newton Regis, Tamworth	closed 4/3/1999.
Northend. Southam	reopened 29/11/1999 (had closed c. 1991)
Snitterfield, Stratford-on-Avon	closed 10/6/1999 (following robbery).

WEST MIDLANDS

Blake Street (TSO), Sutton Coldfield	replaced by 'Little Aston' 14/4/1999.
Tividale Road (TSO), Warley	closed 6/12/1999

WORCESTERSHIRE

Cleeve Prior, Evesham	closed 14/1/99 (following a robbery); reopened 4/3/1999.
Sedgebarrow, Evesham	closed 21/10/1999.
Spetchley, Worcester	closed 2/2/1999.
Wadborough, Worcester	closed 31/3/1999 (had been in the 'Mason's Arms').

MIDLANDS RIDES IN JULY 1838

by Christopher Beaver

It was not only the timings of mails which were altered as a result of conveying bags more quickly by railways. The list of mailcoach routes of the Midlands to 1840, in MM101, shows a considerable number of changes when the Grand Junction Railway opened in July 1837, and more as the London and Birmingham Railway came into use for the carriage of mail the next year. Early in July 1838, when this line was in use only as far north as Denbigh Hall, the surveyors sent in new lists of the rides in their districts. Evidently they had been asked more precisely for the mileage of all 'horse posts or other conveyance than Mail Coaches' that 'travel exempt from toll.'

Their responses do not seem to have been reproduced as such in any of the contemporary reports to Parliament, but original lists survive in Post 10/11. Benjamin Churchill and George Karstadt both distinguish mailcarts and horse-posts. Charles Rideout terms them as 'cart' or 'horseback' and adds there are 'no curricles in South Wales District; all the carts are drawn by one horse.' Also his last two entries are separately headed 'Penny Post messengers who are allowed a horse and consequently pass free of toll.'

As far as is known all mails did pass toll free in England and Wales except at a very few private toll-bridges, none of which are known to have been in the Midlands. Similarly, no curricles are evident in this part of the country. Whether the other two surveyors did not specify any two-horse carts or did not have any is more dubious.

Several of the rides on these lists ran on roads which had formerly been parts of mailcoach routes and others linked towns no longer on them with the railway. Three months later and mail would be carried by rail from London all the way to Preston as well as Liverpool and Manchester. Another eight years and there would be not a single London mailcoach left. Rides on the other hand would continue to function (and mean by horsepower literally) well into the twentieth century.

On the following lists which are not entirely in the order of the originals, **A** are mailcarts or carts, **B** are horseposts or horseback, and (2) means a particular ride is annotated as twice daily. In some other districts the distances are given much more precisely, whereas in these three districts the surveyors have probably been content to give the mileage for which the contractors were paid.

NORTH WALES DISTRICT

A Atherstone & Ashby	15	Oswestry & Welshpool	15
Birmingham & Kingswinford	13	Rugeley & Uttoxeter	12
Birmingham & Stratford	23	Stafford & Rugeley	9
Chester & Shrewsbury	40	Uttoxeter & Derby	18
Newcastle & Whitmore	6	Whitmore & Whitchurch	22
Oswestry & Llanfyllin	15	Wolverhampton & Bridgenorth	15
		Wrexham & Chirk	10
B Coventry & Atherstone	13	Newcastle & Tunstall	5
Coventry & Leamington	10	Rugeley & Shirleywich	7
Ellesmere & Oswestry	8	Shiffnall & Much Wenlock	14
Lichfield & Barton	8	Shiffnall & Newport	8
Lichfield & Stafford	17	Stone & Cheadle	10
Newcastle & Cobridge	5¼	Stone & Norton Bridge	3½
Newcastle & Lane End	5	Walsall & Bescott Bridge	2
Newcastle & Lawton	6	Welshpool & Bishops Castle	17

SOUTH WALES DISTRICT

A Abingdon & Wantage	11	Ludlow & Bishops Castle	20
Bromsgrove & Redditch	6	Ludlow & Knighton	16
Cheltenham & Gloucester	9¼	Moreton in Marsh & Stow	4
Chippenham & Sodbury	16	Oxford & Banbury	25
Chippenham & Tetbury	15	Oxford & Bicester	12
Chipping Norton & Stratford	21	Oxford & Newbury	28
Cirencester & Painswick	13	Oxford & Northampton	41
Evesham & Stratford	15	Stratford & Redditch	16
Faringdon & Cold Harbour	10	Tewkesbury & Evesham	13
Gloucester & Newent	9	Wolverhampton & Stourport	25
Gloucester & Newnham	12	Worcester & Malvern	8
Hay & Hereford	21	Worcester & Stourbridge	25
Hereford & Ross	14	Worcester & Upton	10
B Abingdon & Oxford	6	Newnham & Chepstow	16
Brackley & Banbury	9	Presteign & Kington (2)	6
Brecon & Hay	16	Stow & Winchcomb	14
Coleford & Lea	13	Stratford & Kineton	10
Evesham & Moreton in Marsh	14	Stratford & Warwick	9
Gloucester & Chalford	14	Swindon & Cricklade	8½
Kington & Willersley	7	Tetbury & Malmesbury	9
Moreton in Marsh & Campden	7	Wotton u Edge & Cambridge	11
P.P. Malvern & Malvern Wells	2½	Ross & Whitchurch	9

MIDLAND DISTRICT

A Ashborne & Derby	13	Northampton & Towcester	9
Derby & Ashby	15	Nottingham & Derby (2)	16
Leek & Newcastle	12	Nottingham & Lincoln	37
Mansfield & Nottingham	18	Peterborough & Crowland	16
Mansfield & Southwell	12	Sheffield & Bakewell	17
Newark & Southwell	8	Stamford & Melton Mowbray	22
Northampton & Kettering	18		
B Ashborne & Wirksworth	9	Newark & Newton	15
Leek & Buxton	12	Uppingham & Oakham	7
Macclesfield & Buxton	12	Wirksworth & Cromford (2)	2

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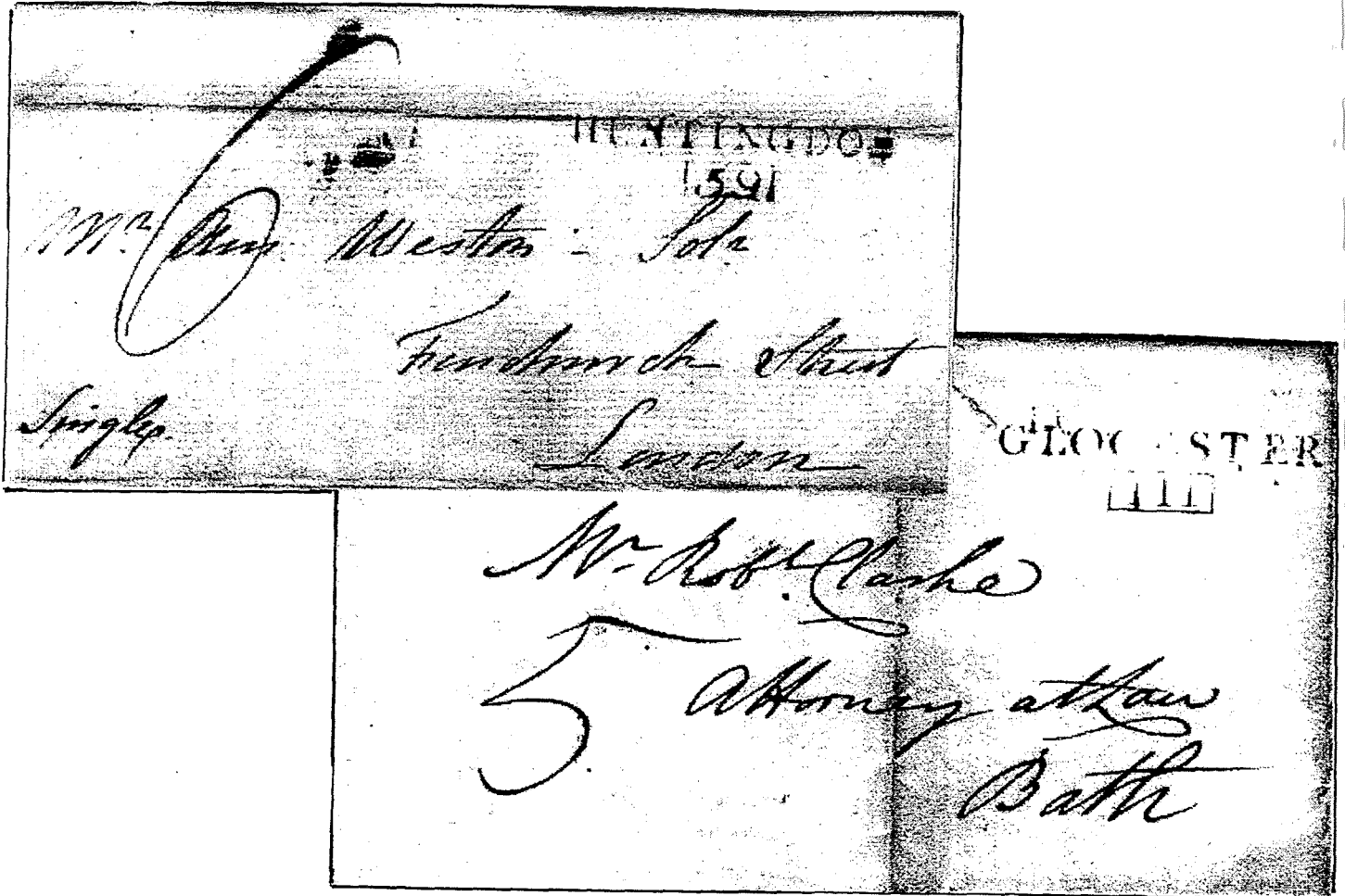
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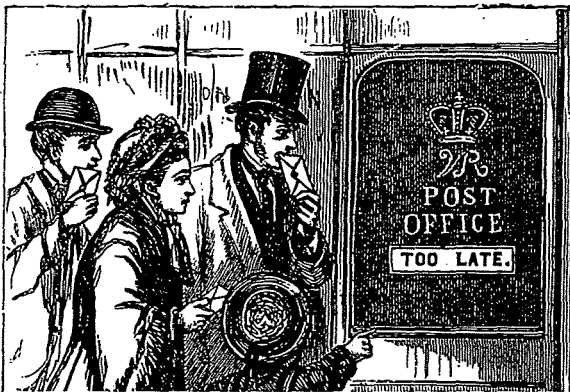
EARLY BOXED MILEAGE MARKS

Norman Higson has kindly sent two examples of boxed mileage marks. The first is on a letter dated 21st March 1801 on a letter sent from Huntingdon; the second is on a letter written at Newnham on 22nd July 1801 but put into the post at Gloucester.



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MORE ON THOSE HANDSTAMPS FROM THE 1790'S

by Brian Atkins

In MM106/3 it was noted that a new Shrewsbury handstamp was ordered on 17th November 1796, but on 16th February 1797 an instruction was issued "A new stamp for Shrewsbury to be made immediately".

A 'horseshoe' stamp, 26 mm diameter, is recorded used at Shrewsbury from July 1793 to September 1795 (fig. 1). Soon after this date something must have happened to this stamp to make it unusable for from late 1795 Shrewsbury began reusing SH 638 and by September 1796 this stamp was showing signs of wear (fig. 2, taken from an entire dated 12 September 1796) so it is not surprising that a request for a new stamp was made in November of that year.



fig. 1

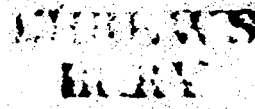
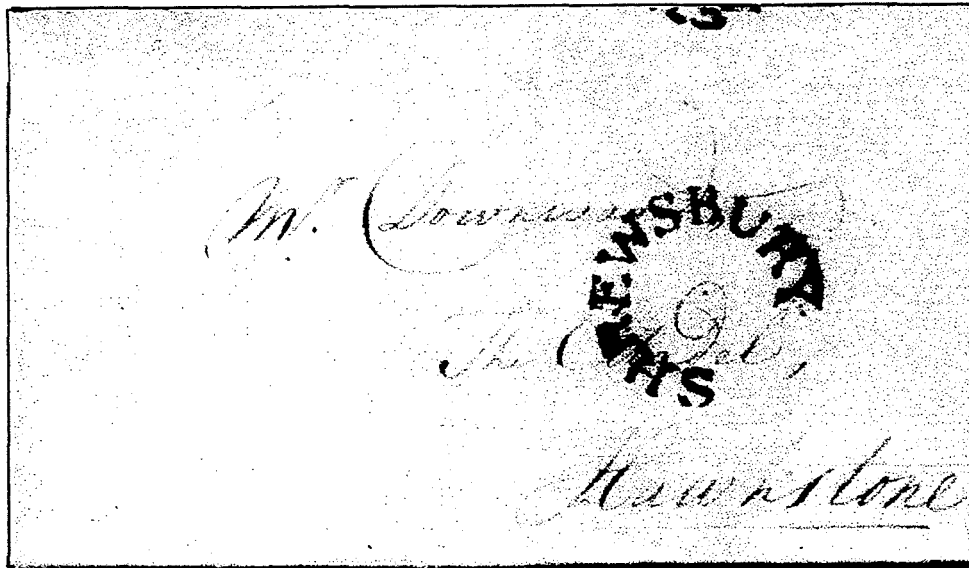


fig.2

I have no idea what caused the delay in requisitioning a new stamp but the end result was that a new, larger 'horseshoe' was issued to Shrewsbury and it is recorded in use from August 1797 to March 1800.



The 28mm Shrewsbury handstamp used on a letter dated 20th August 1799.

The entire has no manuscript charge. It is thought that the office at Shrewsbury kept an account for all letters related to the Hill family at Hawkstone (Downward was Land Agent) and the account was paid quarterly.

THE SURVEYORS' JOURNALS (Part 39)

Mr Churchill spent the first eleven days of 1830 at Rugeley, arranging for that place to become a posttown. Among the measures he introduced was a free delivery twice a day. A similar task then took him to Welford for ten days. [The extra facilities provided by the removal of the General Post Office from Lombard Street to St Martin's-le-Grand in September 1829 permitted the creation of a number of new posttowns.] An application from Edgbaston and Harborne for some form of official service led to Mr Churchill spending two days in that area. A complaint made against the postmaster of Burton-on-Trent then took Mr Churchill to that town. While he was there the postmaster died so Mr Churchill was forced to remain in Burton until 19th February, after the appointment of Mr Lees as postmaster.

The rest of February was taken up in making Leamington a posttown. This involved preparing an office at the house of Mr Bevington, the new postmaster; providing a delivery twice a day; discontinuing the ride to and from Warwick and replacing it with one from Coventry.

Towards the end of March, Mr Churchill travelled up the road from Chester to Stafford trying to find contractors to work a mailcart on the discontinuance of the Chester mailcoach. However, his efforts were unnecessary as he heard from Mr Johnson that the coach was to continue for the time being.

The journals for May and June are missing.

On 1st July, Mr Churchill was on his way to Chester when he was recalled to meet Mr Johnson at Birmingham to discuss possible alterations on the Holyhead road as well as the possibility of extending the Birmingham and Bewdley mailcoach to Worcester so as to improve the circulation from Liverpool and Manchester. After the acceleration of the Holyhead mail had been agreed to by the contractors, Mr Churchill went to Shifnal to prepare the office for the change and to alter the rides from Newport and Wenlock so that he arrived at Shifnal in time for the mailcoach. A similar alteration was made to the ride between Wellington and Hay Gate. The stop of the mailcoach at Shrewsbury for office duties was discontinued and the sorting transferred from there to Corwen. He also arranged for Chirk to be served by a footpost from Shrewsbury.

The only business in the Midlands mentioned in the journal for August was the withdrawal of the short letter bags between Bala, Oswestry and Shrewsbury.

Mr Churchill spent the whole of September and part of October in charge of the Tarporley office. For the rest of the latter month he was in North Wales. The November journal is missing.

From 6th to 9th December, Mr Churchill was in Coventry to establish a penny post to Foleshill. He then "attended to various matters concerned with that large office" at Birmingham. The next task, which took five days, was to make the necessary arrangements for Eccleshall becoming a posttown. Towards the end of the month, he arrived in The Potteries to investigate two instances of bank notes being removed from letters at Hanley. Suspicion fell upon the letter carrier but as no proof could be found against her she was not taken into custody but was not allowed to continue as letter carrier.

Mr Karstadt's duties took him outside the Midlands for the first three months of 1830. Towards the end of April, he inspected the rides between Newark, Lincoln and Spilsby and introduced a free delivery at Newark.

The journals for May and June are missing. For the whole of July, Mr Karstadt was in Lincolnshire.

On 23rd August, Mr Karstadt arrived in Buxton to arrange for the employment of a "regular Letter Carrier" as complaints had been made about the extra charges there. While in Buxton he inspected the Leek ride and reported on the effects of a proposed mailcoach from Manchester via Chapel-en-le-Frith. This matter took him to Manchester for several days in early September. He then went on to Sheffield as the mailcoaches from Birmingham and London were about to be accelerated. The acceleration of the latter coach then took him to Nottingham. Finally, in September, he established a free delivery at Tuxford.

From 21st November, Mr Karstadt was engaged at Stockport, Disley and Buxton arranging the introduction of a mailcoach from Manchester. However, on the 29th he had to go to Derby as there had been an explosion in the post office there. He was able to return to Buxton on 5th December and then spent a week on superintending the introduction of the mailcoach.

Mr Rideout began 1830 by visiting Stroud to investigate a complaint about a charge for delivery of letters and to fix the boundary of the free delivery. After he had made the necessary arrangements for Newnham to become a posttown, Mr Rideout reported on the possibility of Blakeney and other villages being served by a penny post. For the remainder of the month he was travelling around his district trying to overcome the difficulties caused by heavy falls of snow.

During February, Mr Rideout fixed the boundary of the free delivery at Evesham, sought tenders for the Kidderminster and Wolverhampton ride, dismissed the deputy and installed a replacement at Bicester, and, at Worcester, investigated the loss of letters containing money. The last of these continued through March and into April with the result that a man named Bedford was arrested. Also, in April, he reported on a request that the bags for Wotton under Edge and Minchinhampton should "turn" at Six Miles House instead of Chalford.

Only three of Mr Rideout's journals for the remainder of 1830 appear to have survived. In July he was in Worcester, attending the trial of the man accused of stealing a letter containing £100 from the Worcester office, before going on to Droitwich to give the necessary instructions for that place to become a posttown. At the end of September he arrived in Ross to transfer the office to the daughter of the postmaster - a business which carried over into October.

ADDENDA

THE MANCHESTER TO BUXTON MAILCOACH

In August 1830, Mr Karstadt reported that it had been suggested to him by some of the proprietors of the old Manchester and Sheffield mailcoach [See MM112/17] that a pair-horse mailcoach might easily be run from Manchester as far as Buxton. The route proposed was through Stockport, Disley and Chapel-en-le-Frith - a distance of twenty-seven miles - and the coach would leave Manchester at 3.30 p.m., take up the London letters at Stockport and reach Buxton at about 6.30 p.m. The return from Buxton would be at about 7.30 a.m.

Mr Karstadt went on to say that since the withdrawal of the Manchester and Sheffield coach Buxton had been served wholly by a ride from Leek which had accommodated the town well, except with its Irish correspondence which lost a day both ways because the relevant mailcoaches missed each other by about one hour at Manchester. The Irish families visiting Buxton had complained about this to the P.M.G. several times. However, the proposed mailcoach would bring these letters to Buxton on the same day that they had been received in Manchester and on its return reach Manchester before the departure of the mail to Chester.

Furthermore, as the coach would pick up the London bags at Stockport, it would be possible to dispense with the Leek ride, a saving of £108 p.a. It was true that the London mail would arrive in Buxton at about 6.30 p.m. instead of 3.30 p.m. but out of the annual revenue of £700 at Buxton the London letters accounted for only £120. By far the greater part of the correspondence of Buxton was with and through Manchester. The dispatch from Manchester via Leek was at 9.30 a.m. carrying for the most part letters received the previous day so a 3.30 p.m. departure would be more convenient for Manchester.

In a postscript to his report Mr Karstadt said that the difficulty of the road between Buxton and Leek was so great in winter as to make a change very desirable.

In a further report written in November, Mr Karstadt gave the date of the start of the mailcoach as 6th December and added that the benefits would be greater than he had anticipated for by means of the railroad from Liverpool a letter dispatched from Liverpool at 10 a.m. would be at Buxton the same evening.

[Refs: Posts 40/738/1830, 40/856/1830]

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AN EXPLOSION AT DERBY

At eight o'clock on the morning of Saturday 27th November 1830 Mr Bainbrigge, the postmaster of Derby, sent an Express Letter to Francis Freeling:

"I beg leave to report, for the information of the Post Master General,, that a quarter past one o'clock this morning this Office was blown up, with gunpowder, by a great quantity, being placed between card board, no doubt, a slow match [fuse?] affixed to it, and put down the Letter box. Myself and all the Inmates of my House were aroused from our Beds, by the tremendous explosion, every part of the House being immediately filled with dense smoke. On making my way down to the Office, I discovered the door, (tho' bolted and locked), blown open, the window and shutters smashed to atoms, and the interior of the Office in the greatest possible confusion, letters in every direction, many of them being ignited, some quite consumed, others partly, and a few without any injury.

"One of the Office Walls, a very strong one, is so completely shook, cracked and damaged, as to materially injure that side of the House. The first thing I did this morning was to request the attendance of our Chief Magistrate, the Mayor, and shewed him the state of the Office before anything was touched, and he has considered it his duty to bring the case to the knowledge of the Home Secretary of State, which letter accompanies this Express. The card-board which enclosed the powder, is now in the hands of the Chief [of?] Police, which we trust may lead to some discovery of this foul and diabolical act. At the time of the explosion a surgeon in Derby was returning home, and saw a person running from the direction of the Office but could not in any way distinguish him. The watchman was not more than two hundred yards off, round a corner up another Street, but saw no person; he states the explosion to have been a very violent one, he immediately sprang his rattle, and ran to the Office, where he found the Street full of smoke, and the window glass and broken shutter laying in the middle. The Town this morning is in the utmost state of confusion and alarm, but I hope to allay all distrust of putting Letters into the Office by signifying my intention of providing a night watch on purpose as a guard to the office till I hear from you, when I hope to receive your instructions how to act in this alarming case. ..."

In a postscript, Mr Bainbrigge added that the mayor and police thought that the business was connected with the "Incendiaries" and not done out of malice by the townspeople.

In a letter written on the following day Mr Bainbrigge informed Freeling that not a single letter of consequence had been destroyed as it was their usual practice to empty the letter box before going to bed and they had managed to put the office to rights so that a casual observer, unless he examined the walls, would hardly perceive that anything had happened. Mr Bainbrigge was unable to give any possible motive for the attack. He could only ascribe it to "sheer mischief or some connection with the Incendiary Gang, as I hear of Letters signed "Swing" with the London Post Mark having reached this neighbourhood ..." [Can any member explain the references to the "Incendiary Gang" and "Swing"?

Three weeks later, Mr Bainbrigge wrote that he had, immediately after the incident, engaged "a stout confidential Man" to watch from nine p.m. till six a.m., at fourteen shillings a week. In addition as a precautionary measure, five hundred special constables had been sworn in. He proposed to employ the watchman for a few more days until four weeks since the incident had passed. He did ask if, as some inhabitants wished, the box should be closed from 10 p.m. until daylight next morning but Freeling was not prepared to sanction this.

[Refs: Post 40/888/1830, 40/944/1830]

BUT NO EXPLOSION AT UTTOXETER

Mr Robert Richards, the postmaster of Uttoxeter, wrote in December 1830 to the surveyor:

"Some ill designing person has made an attempt to commit an injury at the Letter Box belonging to this Office. Though unattended by any serious consequences I think it proper to acquaint you with the circumstance.

"Yesterday morning (Wednesday 22nd) on going into the Office soon after 7 o'clock with a light, I first examined the Letter Box to take out what letters had been put in. I found a small packet with much soft paper about it, and well secured with thin twine, which I imagined was a small bottle intended to be left on the road by the Driver. I could not discover any Direction upon it, and laid it on the table until my Daughter came in to assist me. There being no Direction, I requested her to open it carefully, when to our consternation, it was found to contain a quantity of Gunpowder, which on being afterwards weighed was found to be nearly an ounce. Attached to this small Packet was a long twist of soft paper, about the thickness of the long part of a Tobacco Pipe, and 15 inches long, and which was a little burnt in two places.

"From the fear of another attempt, I last night would not allow it to be open later than 10 o'clock, our usual time of retiring to rest, and intend for the present observing this rule provided it meets with your approval."

Freeling made the point that this case resembled that at Derby and felt that it would be better not to publicise the incident so as not to induce others to commit the same offence.

[Ref: Post 40/962/1830]

THE CASE OF THE PAPER BAG

One would assume on coming across a paper bag in the Freeling reports that the object was the remains of an illicit lunch by a previous researcher, but an accompanying letter written by the postmaster of Cheadle, Samuel Keys, in December 1829 gives the real reason for the presence of such a mundane item in these papers.

"Last night as I was writing in the Post Office a little after Seven o'clock I heard someone come to the office as though with the intent to put in letters but was surprised at not hearing them fall in the Box upon which I called my son and sent him with a piece of whalebone to try if there was anything lodged in the slide and to our utter astonishment found the paper bag herewith sent containing two ltrs. The bag was neatly placed down the slide which is an exact fit in width. It was pasted at the top on the outside which you will perceive from the manner in which the top of the bag is made. I immediately caused two persons to watch from the time the bag was discovered than [until ?] midnight but without success. I shall take every precaution in future and try if possible to apprehend the parties. The slide measures nineteen inches in length and the letters fall from thence in the box which is fifteen inches deep. I consider it quite secure unless in depredations of this kind. I think this occurrence should be made known to the Postmasters in general, but I submit that to your superior judgement. ..."

Freeling reported to the P.M.G. that instances of a similar nature had occurred from time to time and they should not overlook the possibility of similar attempts being made as a consequence of keeping letter boxes open all night for the convenience of the public.

[Ref: Post 40/999/1829]

DUNCHURCH'S POSTAGE REDUCED

In December 1830, some of the inhabitants of Dunchurch complained to Freeling that the distance from the General Post Office in London to Dunchurch was under 80 miles and consequently the letters should be charged eightpence instead of ninepence. Freeling referred the matter to Mr Johnson who reported that the Dunchurch bag was sent on the Holyhead mailcoach and a measurement recently made by Cary gave the distance from the G.P.O. to Redbourne as 24 miles 2½ furlongs. This distance, taken from the new G.P.O., included the new roads at Barnet and St Albans. As the distance from Redbourne to Duncchurch was 54 miles 6 furlongs the distance from the G.P.O. to Dunchurch was 79 miles 4½ furlongs, "agreeably to both Cary's Book & the Time Bill." Consequently the postage had to be reduced. The 80 miles 4 furlongs was the measurement from the old G.P.O. and without the shortening of the roads at St Albans and Barnet.

Members might like to refer to MM61/9 for an account of an earlier attempt to reduce the mileage from London to Dunchurch. For those who do not have a copy of that issue it can be mentioned that in 1789 the surveyor came across a group of labourers removing the 80 milestone from the London side of the inn where the Dunchurch bag was dropped with the intention of replacing it on the Coventry side.

[Ref: Post 40/991/1830]

SOME FREE DELIVERIES

A John Foord wrote to Freeling in December 1829 asking if the inhabitants of **Stroud** should pay an extra halfpenny or, in some cases, a penny for each letter delivered. In early January 1830 Mr Rideout visited that town and reported that indeed it had been the custom of the letter carrier to charge one halfpenny on letters delivered within a certain line and a penny beyond it. He proposed that a free delivery should be provided, with one exception, within the halfpenny area and went on to give full details of this boundary which he marked on an accompanying sketch map which unfortunately is not on the microfilm of this report. The boundary as drawn did exclude from the free delivery the houses of some of the "most respectable gentlemen in the neighbourhood" but Mr Rideout said that these houses were not in the parish of Stroud and the occupants paid none of the Stroud rates. Also the letters were delivered by a separate letter carrier.

As the first delivery which started at 8 a.m. was seldom finished before 12.30 p.m. and often extended to 1 p.m., and the second delivery commenced at 7.30 p.m., Mr Rideout felt that the letter carrier could not have any other occupation and so a wage of £27.6.0. p.a. would be fair.

[Ref: Post 40/22/1830]

Philip Moore, the postmaster of **Buxton**, wrote to the P.M.G. in July 1830 saying that he was obliged to charge an extra halfpenny on letters and newspapers in order to pay a letter carrier. This annoyed many of the visitors who often refused to pay. Therefore he asked for an allowance for a letter carrier. The surveyor felt that, although the amount of letters varied during the year, £13 p.a. (5/- a week) was a reasonable remuneration.

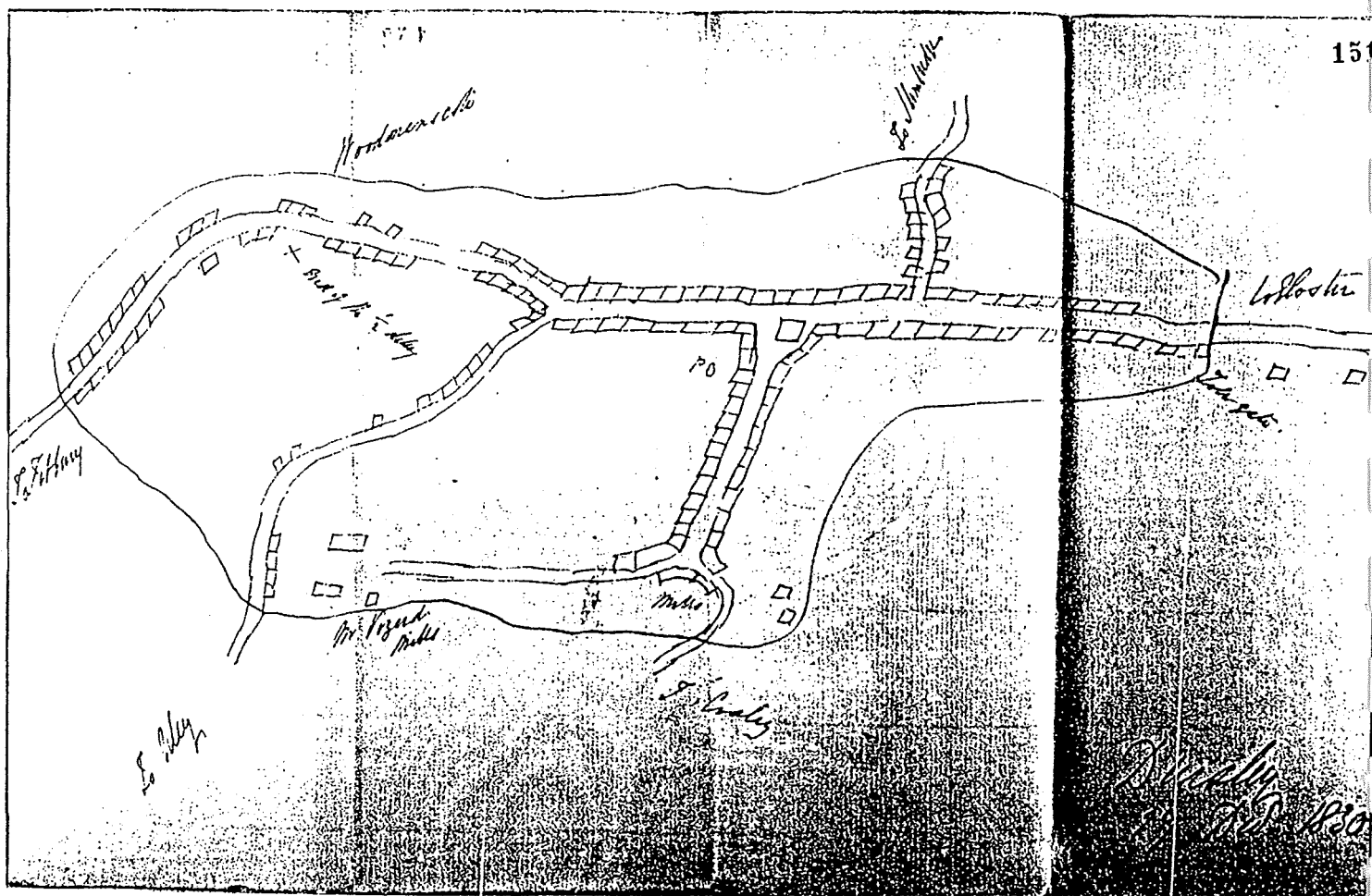
[Ref: Post 40/692/1830]

After a Captain Thompson had complained in December 1830 that the postmaster of Dursley charged an extra penny for the delivery of letters, Freeling asked Mr Rideout to investigate. He reported that Captain Thompson lived at Coaley from where the inhabitants sent a messenger to Dursley to collect their letters who charged twopence on each letter for her trouble. However, if the people of Coaley called at the office a charge of one penny was made but he had ordered the postmaster to hand over such letters for the legal postage only.

Mr Rideout said that Dursley was one of the towns in the area where an extra charge of a halfpenny was made for the delivery of letters and newspapers, and he gave details of the numbers of items delivered at Dursley over five days which averaged about thirty a day but he said that the actual receipts could be less than one shilling a day as, although a small portion of the town paid one penny a letter, many gave an annual sum in lieu of the halfpenny. He then went on to describe the limits of the halfpenny delivery - the toll-gate on the Gloucester Road, the mills at the edge of the town on the road to Coaley, Vizard's mills on the Uley Road and on the Tetbury Road the first part of Woodmancote, the further part paid an extra penny. Mr Rideout proposed that there should be a free delivery at Dursley within these boundaries but on the last road it was to extend to the edge of the town as shown on the map. The distance from the toll-gate on the Gloucester Road to the edge of the town towards Tetbury was about one and a half miles.

There were three deliveries each day. The first at 7 a.m. consisted of letters from the North and West brought by the ride from Cambridge Inn; the ride from Minchinhampton brought the London letters which were delivered at 10.30 a.m. and the third delivery at 3 p.m. consisted of the Berkeley letters brought by the messenger from that town. Since the deliveries would occupy the letter carrier for the greater part of the day, Mr Rideout felt that an annual wage of £15.12.0. would be appropriate.

[Ref: Post 40/970/1830]



In August 1830, a Mr Sorby wrote from **Tuxford** to ask Freeling if it was legal or customary to charge a penny upon the delivery of each letter or was it the duty of the postmistress to deliver the letters and within what time after the arrival of the mails should that be carried out.

In response to a letter from Freeling, Mrs Scott, the postmistress, said that the complaint made by Mr Sorby was "an entire falsehood" and malicious as the payment was optional. The real reason for the complaint was that she was not willing to allow Mr Sorby credit for his letters as she had done previously for upwards of twelve months. However she had been subject to such unpleasantness when trying to recover the arrears that for the past four months she had not allowed Mr Sorby to have his letters without payment of the postage, the extra penny not being charged. Mrs Scott added that there was not a shopkeeper in the town that would trust Mr Sorby, his creditors not having received fourpence in the pound the last time he had "failed". She then went on to say that the cause of the present dispute was that eleven letters had been delivered to Mr Sorby of which ten had not been paid for; the eleventh, on which the charge was 5s/8d, was for his apprentice and three visits were needed to obtain that money. Eventually Mr Sorby had paid for the ten letters but with great unpleasantness and had told her not to bring anything to his house again but to send him word when there was a letter for him in the office. Mrs Scott said that she was not willing to do this and could not afford to give Mr Sorby credit as she sent up the money daily and she had been a widow for over eight years and had five children to support.

Mrs Scott added that with respect to the extra penny her income would be reduced to a very small amount as out of the salary of £20 in addition to providing an office in "a front situation" with consequent higher rent and taxes she had to pay for pens, ink, paper, candles and string and wax for making up five bags daily.

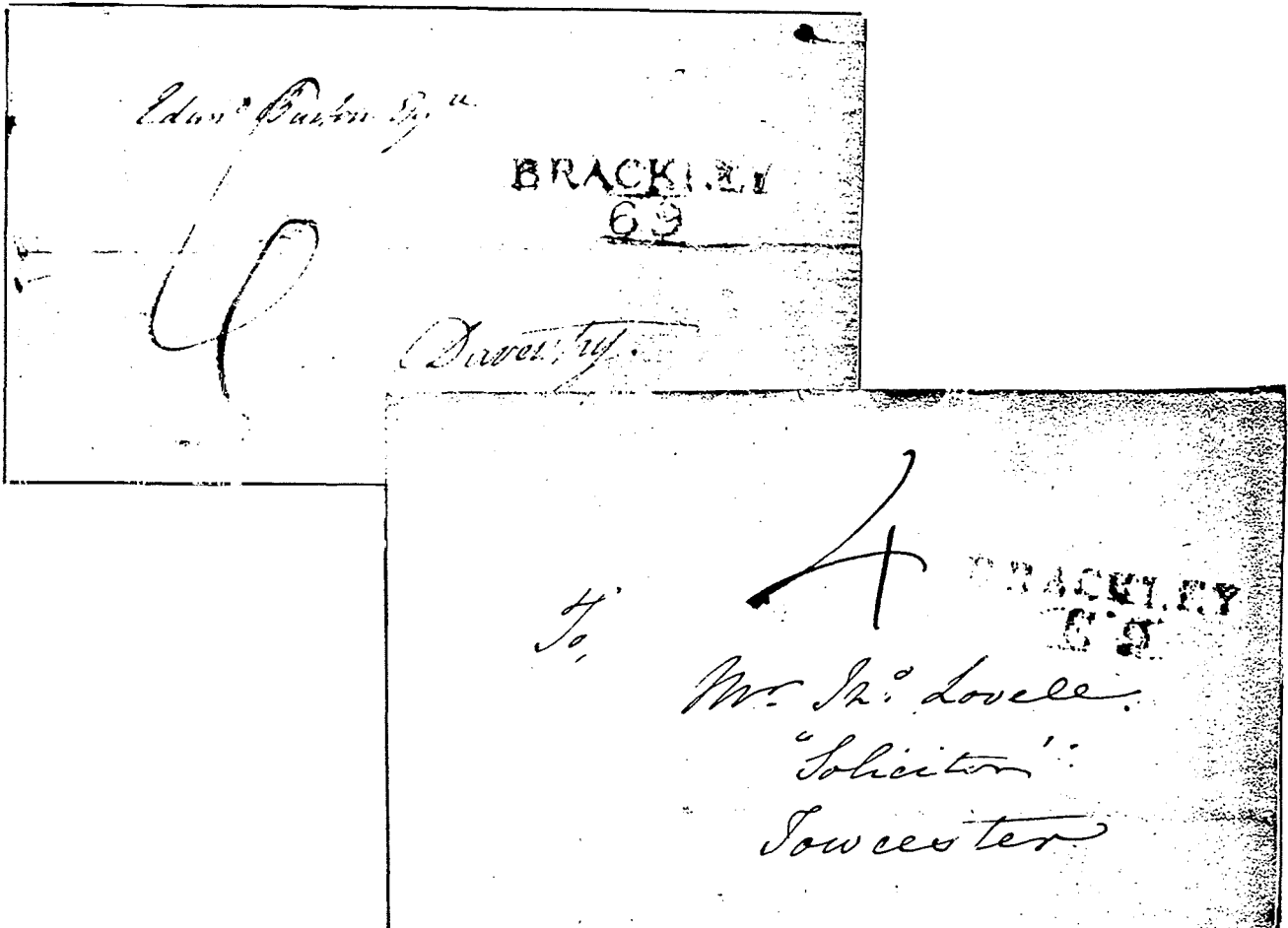
Mr Karstadt reported that the payment had always been considered optional but it would now be better to abolish it. He proposed an allowance of £6.10.0 p.a. (2s/6d a week) for making two deliveries a day, the mails arriving at 11.30 a.m. from the South and at 2 p.m. from the North. With reference to Mr Sorby's last question he said that the letters were ready within fifteen minutes after the arrival of the mail and the delivery was usually completed within the hour.

[Ref: Post 40/734/1830]

TWO BRACKLEY MILEAGE MARKS

Derek Smeathers has kindly sent copies of the two similar mileage marks with '69' between bars which can be found from Brackley.

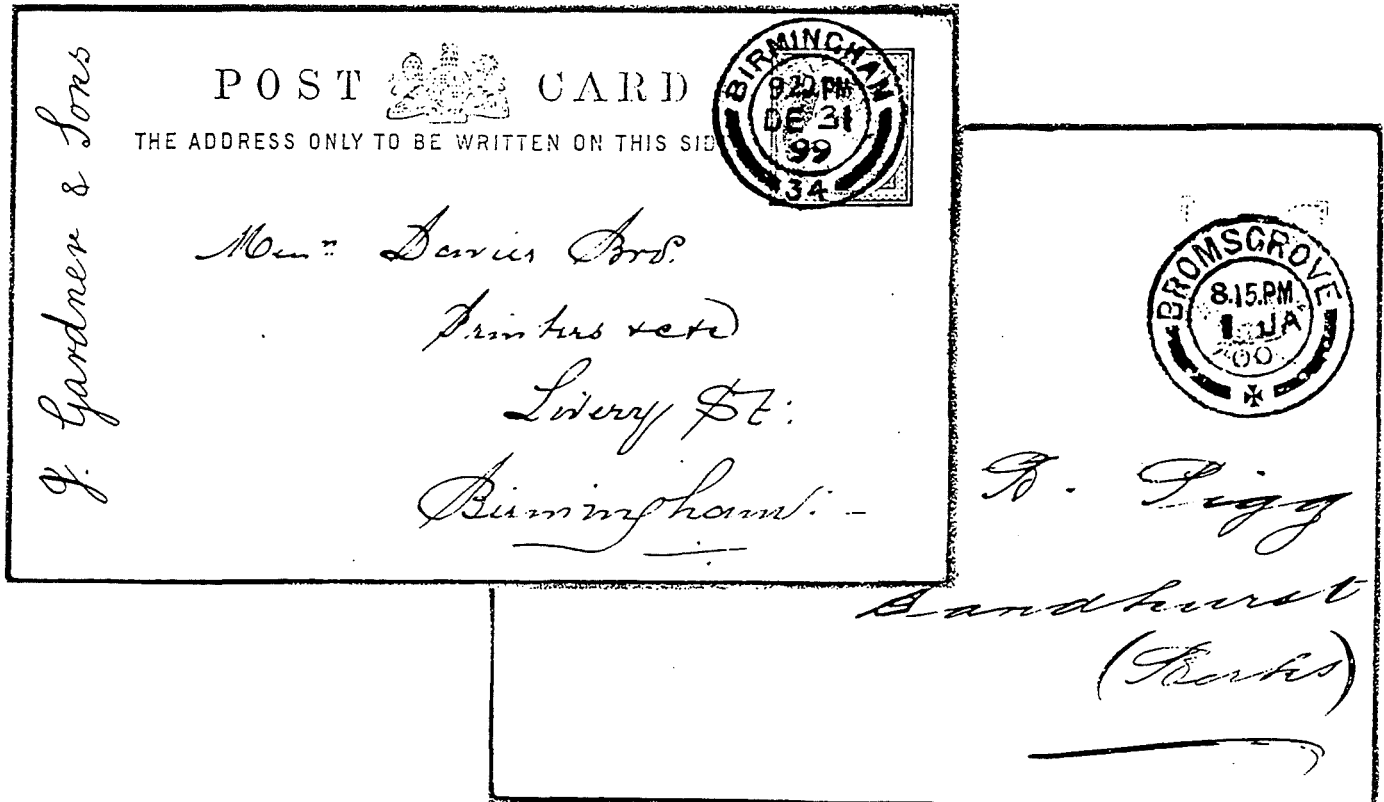
The upper one (BCC NN16) is known used from 1809 to 1817, while the other (NN17) in which the figures are further apart has only been seen used from 1818 to 1820. Can anyone extend these periods of use?



THE END OF THE NINETIES

Eric and Elizabeth have kindly submitted the two copies shown below and ask if anyone can produce a postmark later than 9.20 p.m. on New Year's Eve in 1899 or one earlier than 8.15 p.m. on New Year's Day 1900. It is clear that the country did not close down for over a week one hundred years ago for the postcard of 31st December requested delivery of goods on 1st January, the sender being confident of a postal delivery early on New Year's Day.

Eric and Elizabeth also challenge members to find the latest 1900's and earliest 2000's commercial postmarks from the Midlands.



A BUSY CHRISTMAS IN BIRMINGHAM

The recently opened sorting office in Newtown appears to have had a busy time on the run-up to Christmas, handling over seven million items in a twenty-four period between 13th and 14th December. This was almost twice its usual total of 3.7 million items. Not only was this the first Christmas that all the mail from the Birmingham postcode area had been dealt with in the same building but the office also dealt with mail from other Midland towns unable to cope with their workload.

However, this concentration of mail is bad news for collectors of modern postmarks for it means there will be no more temporary postmarks from the Birmingham area i.e. those with an inscription such as BIRMINGHAM/X2 in the dater die of a machine cancellation.

THE NEXT MIDLAND MAIL

It is hoped that this will appear in early April. It will contain the usual reports plus something on some unusual 'Free' letters. However, there is room for several more articles so why not write a few lines on one of your favourite covers or even pen a longer article and send it to:

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