

MIDLAND MAIL

THE JOURNAL OF THE MIDLAND (GB) POSTAL HISTORY SOCIETY

www.midlandphs.org.uk



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25 December 1857 cover from Ellesmere sub-office via Shrewsbury to Philadelphia with the 1/- treaty rate paid by the 1/- green, plate 1. Liverpool **5CENTS** accountancy mark credit to the USA for their inland postage (1849 Anglo-US Treaty). Carried on the Cunard *Africa* – see page 5 for an account of the meeting at Loughborough.

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FROM THE EDITOR – At the committee meeting in Loughborough on March 11th, I asked if anyone would consider helping me with taking notes of displays, particularly in the second half of meetings. The Committee appreciated that for one person to do an accurate write up of all the displays at a meeting allows for some inaccuracies of interpretation to creep in and possible error in reporting. Recent practice has been for those members who put up a display to provide a short paragraph on what they have shown. This works extremely well, provides accurate information and gives the editor the chance to view the material along with everyone else. The Committee agreed that in future when members display at ‘one board’ meetings they will be invited to also submit a few words about their display. If this doesn't happen, the simple fact that a display was given will be recorded in Midland Mail.

If sending articles or accounts of displays at meetings to Midland Mail by email use:

Microsoft WORD	I have opened all versions sent....so far!
Font	Times New Roman, Size 10
Margins	2.54cms (Top), 2.2cms (Right, Left, Bottom)

IMPERIAL SERVICE MEDAL – After receiving a copy of January's Midland Mail 193 **Nick Wraith**, who gave us such an excellent talk at Burton in December, replied that on reading Malcolm Allinson's article on page 23, he recalled that his father, John Wraith, was awarded the Imperial Service Medal (ISM) in 1968 after serving with the Post Office for 46 years except when in the Army during WWII. Nick still has his father's medal which is inscribed JOHN WRAITH around the rim, whereas Malcolm said that unlike many awards the ISM is not engraved around the edge; Nick wondered if that practice was stopped when the Post Office became a Corporation?

A WEIGHTY QUERY from **Malcolm Allinson**, who writes – I have a table of **letter postage rates** going back to 1840. It shows incremental prices in half and then one ounce multiples and states the max weight until 1847 was 1lb; and thereafter - *above 1lb, 2d per extra oz*. No upper limit is stated in any of the tables after 1847. My question is: what was the **maximum** weight of a letter after 1847, because at subsequent rate changes (1.4.1865; 5.10.1871; 1.7.1885; 22.6.1897; 1.11.1915; etc), various detailed increments up to 1lb 6oz; 1lb 10oz, etc. are shown, each then with further notes of *each additional oz - x pence*. No upper weight limits are stated. The only later reference to a **letter** weight limit comes with **Two Tier** postage in 1968 when Second Class had a maximum of 1lb 8oz. First Class was 4s for 2lb then 2s per lb thereafter, again no stated limit. *Any information gratefully received via the Editor.*

Nottingham Mail 1700 – 1900, its Postmarks and Inclusive Postal History by Alan Marshall – a review

The first one notices about Alan Marshall's privately produced 122-page book is the quality of its production; with a hard back, green cover and quality paper it is very well presented. It is clearly set out with an index of seven sections, the first six of which deal with postmarks from 1712 to 1908, and the last one with social history. All the illustrations of covers are in colour and have reproduced well. The discussion of the early marks is helped by the summary on pages 8 and 9; however these marks have been hand drawn, as have all the marks in the book. Scans of actual marks have not been used, so their individual characteristics are not to be seen, though some features are described such as '*long bars to letters T*'. A form of identification below each drawing in the later illustrations would have been very useful. There is a reliance on measurements to separate marks; it would have been helpful to have established the criteria used for making the measurements. Despite these minor points the book will be of great interest to postal history enthusiasts. The social history section is fascinating and forms half the book. There are poignant letter quotes, an 1875 example describing floods in Langesdoc, France states '*every fourth house in Toulouse is a ruin and every ruin is a tomb*'! Alan is to be congratulated on this venture; perhaps it will inspire others to produce something similar for their area of collecting.

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THE 18th FEBRUARY MEETING at the BLACK COUNTRY MUSEUM, DUDLEY

With **John Calladine** once more in the chair, 14 members and 1 guest gathered to display their postal items to the title of the day, which was *Non 1d Inland (Letter) Rates 1840 to 1897*, an intriguing title, which had clearly produced much scratching of heads, rubbing of chins and a lot of 'Well I don't know's'! Since the editor is responsible for producing the programme booklet, he has nobody but himself to blame for missing out the word *Letter*!

Richard Farman began the day with a frame full of ½d postcards with the editor already rueing his omitted *Letter*! Richard ploughed on nevertheless with a great display which began with a December 1869 card from Austria and a GB ½d first day card dated 1st October 1870. There was a pictorial card advertising card of 24th Dec 1870, a first Valentines card of 1871 with *Barkis is Willing*, and an 1871 cricketer, a folded card with 'Historical Rhymes' of 1876 and an 1878 card with the advert printed entirely in blue. He finished with a photographic related card from W.D. Downey, who took the photographs for the Downey Head stamps.

Stuart Geddes also produced ½d cards from Newport, Monmouthshire of 1871, 1876, 1878, and 1889. There were also commercial type cards and a wonderful 1874 indenture, sent at the printed matter rate, which was forwarded twice and had three ½d bantam stamps affixed, one for the original postage and one for each time it was forwarded.

Brian Purcell provided an 1894 newspaper wrapper from Cannock. An 1855 example had the postmark BRIDGETOWN, a sub-office of Cannock and the only mark known to Brian. He ended with an 1860 2d rate Liverpool to Worcester with a lovely WORCESTER traveller / skeleton.

Gordon Hardy began showing the 1½d letter rate for 1oz to 2oz (5 October 1871 to 21 June 1897) on an 1879 2d registered letter from Buxton to Preston and an 1880 letter from Derby to Bourne with a 1d venetian and ½d bantam. A legal 1896 letter from Matlock to Matlock Bath had a 1½d Jubilee. The 2d rate for letters from ½oz up to 1oz (10 January 1840 to 4 October 1871) was shown by two London paid letters of 1844 and 1846 with the number **2** in red, the 1846 letter was judged to be under 1oz and the **2** replaced by a **1**. 1855 letter with two 1d red stars from Alfreton to Ashbourne and an 1857 2d blue with a sideways duplex cancel of Derby. The 4d rate for letters weighing 1oz to 2oz (10 January 1840 to 4 October 1871) was illustrated by a block of 4 1d red stars cancelled with ALFRETON duplex. The 6d rate for letters from 2oz to 3oz (10 January 1839 to 31 March 1865) was illustrated with a registered letter of August 1848 from Wirksworth to Bakewell with a strip of three 1841 2d blues paying the postage; the registration fee, also 6d, is indicated by a manuscript **P6**. This combination of 6d adhesive and 6d cash payment only ran for just over 2 years (see illustration at foot of next page).

Alan Godfrey began with 31st March 1846 entire from Edmonscote (now Emscote), Warwick to London, with 2 x 1d reds. 6th September 1845 late use of Mulready 2d letter sheet from Warwick to Stratford on Avon cancelled with **848** numeral handstamp. 14th August 1840 cover sent from Alcester to Suttons, Romford, Essex with 2d blue cancelled with red Stratford on Avon red maltese cross. 31st May 1848 entire from Swanwick near Fareham to Kinwarton Rectory, Alcester, the 2 x 1d reds cancelled with **723** numeral of Southampton, the letter went via London and Stratford on Avon to Alcester. 30th June 1849 long envelope from Stow on the Wold, via Moreton in Marsh to Stratford on Avon, the letter was addressed to Kershaw Esq., Clerk to the Stratford & Moreton Railway Company; in Stratford the cover was marked *Missent* in manuscript and received the black UDC of TIDDINGTON and was redirected to Lapworth, Hockley with a manuscript 4 redirection for up to 2oz, the two pairs of 1d reds cancelled with the **535** of Stow on the Wold. 31st July 1894 long envelope containing legal documents from Warwick to Caudle Well Brewery, Shipston on Stour, the 3 x 1d lilacs cancelled with the **848** 3VOD of Warwick with coded time CB*P (3.10pm) for up to 9oz, the cover received a transit 4VOD **754** mark of Stratford on Avon with coded time DL*A.

Brian Atkins put up first an 1842 2d Mulready from Caernarvon to Shrewsbury with Britannia not cancelled, followed by an 1840 2d blue, plate 2, on an 1843 entire from Shrewsbury to Ellesmere. There were two reasons why an 1850 cover from Shrewsbury to London had four 1d red imperforates, either because it weighed up to 2ozs (possible but unlikely as it was small) or because Shrewsbury was one of 21 towns that had a 3d late fee from March 1849. 1850 and 1857 stationery envelopes were uprated with 1d reds for the one ounce rate, the 1857 one cancelled by a SHREWSBURY spoon, 1853 2d blue, plate 4, from Oswestry and an 1859 2d blue, plate 7, was cancelled with the OSWESTRY spoon, all for the ounce rate. An 1853 cover from Much Wenlock to Newark had three 2d blues, plate 4, for the 3 oz rate and an 1863 cover from Shrewsbury had three 1d red stars cancelled with the scarce Shrewsbury sideways duplex but was underpaid and had manuscript *Above 2oz* and manuscript 6^d for postage due.

Chris Jackson began with an 1846 cover with three 2d blues from Redditch to Henly-in-Arden, 1879 registered cover with ½d postage from Leominster to Worcester, 1866 4d registered with 2d postage, 1879 ½d cover Edinburgh to Warwick, much redirected, 1896 ½d cover postal stationery card, 1923 ½d cover from his needle makers display and an 1874 ½d card from Redditch to Pershore.

John Calladine showed items from Stourbridge beginning with an 1847 2d stationery envelope. An 1843 cover was registered at 1/- in cash and 1d cash postage. There were Stourbridge hand struck 2s of 1850 and 1856, an 1865 Book Post 2d cover, and 1875 Stourbridge Western Railway circular and an 1884 ½d Stourbridge wrapper.

Clive Jones' first half display showed different ways of paying the two pence rate. These included the local under 8 miles rate with the Uniform Fourpenny Post period (Bradford to Halifax), two penny marks from Leeds (Jan. 1840) an uprated 1d Mulready envelope (June 1840), a 2d Mulready lettersheet (Sept. 1840), 2d marks from York, including one altered from 1d to 2d. An obscure rarity was a redirection charge of two pence on a letter from Masham to Halifax in Feb 1840, which rate only existed from 10th Jan to 24th Feb 1840. The 'May date' 1840 Penny Black pairs were shown from Leeds (plate 1a) & Bedale (plate 2). Also shown were various two penny blues and a rare two penny stationery envelope from Bedale.

Clive Jones' second half display showed items with rates of zero and 3d (3 types), including the 'Notice' rate, and Railway Letter service. The Uniform 4d rate was shown by the Hawes 4 hand stamp and Leeds 4 in manuscript, both 4th January 1840. A rare York unpaid 4 mark from Feb 1840 led to a pair of 1840 2d adhesives on a Sept 1840 envelope probably containing coin in the period without registration. Further items showed the 3oz rate paid by 3 x 1840 2d adhesives. The embossed values were shown, paying postage plus registration, for postage rate of 2d, 4d, & 6d. Also, 8d & 10d rates were shown together with a one shilling postage rate paid by six 2d plate 3 stamps in 1844.

Brian Atkins began his second display with an 1861 2d rated cover from Wellington to London paid with two 1d red 'stars' and with the R in circle / 🌟 for redirection within the postal area, an 1858 6d rate for 2oz to 3oz paid by six 1d red 'stars' from Shrewsbury to Richmond, Surrey, a similar 6d rate from Whitchurch, an 1859 local cover to Pitchford with a 6d lilac, which contained a probate for a will, an 1867 4d rate for up to 2ozs from Oswestry with four 1d red 'stars', an 1869 OHMS 3d cover with 3d rose cancelled with a fine SHREWSBURY duplex. He finished with three 1½d rate covers, 1876 from Oswestry with 1½d line-engraved, 1884 from Ellesmere with 1d lilac and ½d green and 1885 from Shrewsbury with 1½d purple and green jubilee, all paying the 2oz rate.

Chris Jackson showed a November 1870 ½d stationery card from Redditch, a 1901 ½d postcard addressed to The Chief of Police, Sparkhill, an 1881 cover at 1½d to Bristol from Redditch and an 1854 2d rate with More To Pay in manuscript. He finished with nine examples of the use of the ½d bantam.

Richard Farman brought the displays to a close with an 1848 2d valentine, 1871 large 2d cover with a calligraphic address, an 1880 ½d postcard with a lady's portrait, 1871 ½d sample post, 1882 Book Post at 2½d, 1897 8d pattern post, 1880 ½d newspaper wrapper with advertising, 1893 ½d newspaper wrapper with the rate changes included, an extremely suitable item to bring the proceedings to a close.



Fig 1, Gordon Hardy's August 1848 registered cover from Wirksworth to Bakewell showing the 6d registration paid in cash (light P6 in red) and 6d postage paid with three 2d blues for 2oz to 3oz rate, a scarce cover.

THE MARCH MEETING AT LOUGHBOROUGH

The editor is indebted to **John Calladine** for this account.

It was a pity many more members were not at Lovatt House, Loughborough on 11th September to witness an exemplary PowerPoint display of Transatlantic Mail between Shropshire and North America by Brian Atkins. Whether potential parking problems in the streets near the venue deterred them or they simply saw the venue as unfamiliar is not known but this was a display not to be missed. Brian is a master of PowerPoint and many would feel it is surely the way postal history displays should be presented, with every detail clear on a screen. Furthermore, we had the option of examining the items he discussed on adjacent display boards.

Brian's display was in two parts, the first covering mail between Shropshire and Canada from the 1830s to the end of the 19th century and the second part mail between Shropshire and the United States from the end of the 18th century to the early years of the 20th century, but essentially in the 1840s to 1860s. If anyone thought the rates and markings would be straightforward, they probably finished the day somewhat wiser.

There were two ways to get mail to and from Canada. The first was by Cunard and the other, from 1854, by the Canadian Allan Line. Cunard ships to New York originally called at Halifax, Nova Scotia, but stopped doing so after September 1850 in order to speed their journey in order to compete with the US packets of the Collins Line. However a second Cunard route to Boston always called at Halifax, Nova Scotia. The Allen Line competitor sailed via Londonderry to Montreal or Quebec in summer and to Portland, Maine (USA), in winter, when the St Lawrence Seaway was icebound. From Maine, the mail was carried overland into Canada. The first cover we were shown, although from Shropshire had no British markings because it was carried across the Atlantic privately to New York and did not enter the mail system until in New York on 17th August 1833. By land, ferry and open sea, via St Andrews and St John (both New Brunswick), it continued to Sidney (sic) Mines in Nova Scotia.

We then saw a series of letters between Shropshire and Canada. One of 1847 was from Much Wenlock and carried by Cunard packet via Boston at 21/-, *eighteen times* the 1/2 rate for the packet via the US. Another of 1852 from Albion to The Lyches, Yockleton (a farm house!) paid 1/2d for carriage via New York and a third of 1854 paid only 8d because a GPO Notice of that year had reduced the rate to 6d direct or 8d via the USA. To and from Canada via the US added 2d to the rate charged. A letter of March 1854 from Oswestry via Quebec paid 6d because it had been carried directly into Canada by the Allen Line. Similarly a letter from Oswestry to Lunenburg, Nova Scotia, also paid 6d but this was carried direct to Halifax by Cunard, not the Allen Line. A registered letter from Claverley, near Bridgnorth, to Montreal by the Allen Line should have been charged 6d plus 4d for registration but was apparently overcharged 2d, which it would have paid by Cunard via New York. A further letter of 1868 from Ironbridge to Yarmouth, Nova Scotia, and also charged 6d, was annotated "per *Etna*" to indicate the ship it was intended to travel on. Brian warned us to beware of such markings because they were no guarantee of the ship used and research showed that this letter could not have used the *Etna* but was carried on another Cunard packet, the *Cuba*.

The rate to Canada was further reduced to 3d in 1870 and then, by UPU agreement to 2½d. One of the letters at the new rate was sent in 1879 to Vancouver Island, which would have involved it being taken by rail across America from New York to San Francisco and then overland into Canada via Oregon. Among more usual examples of that rate were a letter of 1881 from Victoria (BC) to Wrockwardine, 1882 from Toronto to Ledbury (but surprisingly mis-sent to the relatively obscure Lydbury North) and an 1891 double rate letter, with two 5¢ 'small queen' Canadian adhesives. We even ventured into the 20th century and enjoyed a letter from the ubiquitous Wem to Winnipeg.

This completed the Canadian section of the display and we were given the opportunity to examine all the items we had seen – approximately 40 of them - on the display boards. Each cover was handsomely written up and gave, inter alia, details of any British hand stamps, including their known dates of usage, and full details of the ship that carried the letter across the Atlantic, meticulously researched.

The second part of the display, mails between Shropshire and the United States, was eagerly anticipated by those of us with very limited knowledge of the subject who had previously heard a little of "retaliatory rates". Brian assured us the display would fully cover the transatlantic mail situation after 1839, to explain "retaliatory" and "restored" rates, discuss the important 1849 Anglo-US Postal Treaty and show the effects of subsequent treaties in 1868 and 1870, concluding with the UPU and the "Empire rate". We began in the 18th century with a 1796 letter from Boston to Ludlow, marked with a Cowes Ship Letter hand stamp, denoting carriage by a ship that was not an official packet boat. The ship would have been the *Outram* which arrived in Cowes on 26th April. However the letter was clearly marked with a 10d charge when the total should have been 11d, made up of 5d from Cowes to London, another 5d from London to Ludlow and a 1d ship letter payment. The likely explanation was that the 1d paid to the captain of the ship was paid directly and therefore not shown in the charge. It was followed by a typical pre-1848 letter from

the UK to the USA, albeit not from Shropshire, with 1/- paid in cash in the UK and 7 cents added in America; 2¢ for the ship and 5¢ inland postage.

In June 1847, however, the British started to charge 1/- on incoming letters from the USA that had been carried on an American ship rather than a British packet, regardless of postage paid in the USA. This was caused by pique that the Cunard monopoly on transatlantic packet ships had been broken by the introduction of American packets provided by the Ocean Steam Navigation Company. In July 1848, the Americans retaliated, charging a similar sum for letters arriving on British vessels. The dispute was brief (July to December with 52 retaliatory sailings) and examples are scarce but we saw a non-Shropshire example of this “retaliatory” rate. In December 1848 the dispute was resolved and rates returned to pre-dispute level. An example from that month at the “restored” rate, from Shifnal was seen. Negotiations in late 1848 and 1849 led to a new 1849 Anglo-US Postal Treaty, the charges on letters thereafter being accounted for in cents, with 24¢ (1/-) paying for a ½ oz letter to be taken, carriage paid, to destination. This charge was made up of 3¢ (1½d) UK inland postage, 5¢ US internal post and 16¢ sea post to the country providing the packet boat. (It is important to appreciate that part paid postage was treated as unpaid.)

There followed a comprehensive display of letters sent in both directions between Shropshire towns and the United States in the 1850s and 1860s, of which it is only possible to mention a few. Two sent from Market Drayton to New York in 1850 and 1851, one at double rate, illustrated how the charge was divided. There was therefore 19¢ (or 38¢ double rate) debit to the UK, 16¢ for the British packet boat and 3¢ UK postage. The marks that are struck on such letters in red or black do not indicate postage due but are simply the accountancy marks. For example, an 1854 letter from Ironbridge to New York State was prepaid 1/- in the UK and sent on a British packet, with 5¢ due to the US for their inland postage. The cover bore an embossed 1/- stamp, an adhesive created specifically for the packet routes. An unpaid letter of 1851 from Cambridge, Mass, to Ludlow also had a 5¢ debit to the USA for inland postage and 1/- due in the UK, struck at Liverpool but paid in Ludlow. A little more complex, a letter of 1852 from Ludlow to Milwaukee was sent at the 1oz (rather than ½oz) rate and therefore paid 2/- (in cash), with 42¢ due to the US for an American packet (2x16¢) and 10c inland postage (2x5¢). The total credit of 42¢ due to the US was, in this instance, marked in manuscript because there was no 42¢ hand stamp used at Southampton. A letter of 1859 from Wilmington to Shrewsbury was paid with two US 12¢ adhesives, sent on an American ship and therefore credited 3¢ to the UK. The last of the so-called Treaty covers we saw was sent from Indiana to Market Drayton in 1867 and again had 3¢ credit due to the UK.



Fig 1, 1861 Shrewsbury to Washington, DC, INSUFFICIENTLY PREPAID at 6d (rate was 1/-). The part payment was totally ignored under the 1849 Treaty, the recipient to pay full 24 cents. Carried on Havre Line *Arago* from Cowes on 21 August, arrived New York 3 Sep 1861.

A new Anglo-US Treaty of 1868 lasted two years and reduced the rate to a straightforward 6d from the UK, with no accountancy necessary, and 12¢ from the US, one November 1869 cover from Oswestry at that rate. In 1870 the rate was further reduced to 3d per ½ oz, or 6 cents from the US. An 1872 cover from Herbert Lloyd in the USA to Ludlow was very probably from a relative of the Lloyds solicitors' family, whose correspondence is well known to collectors and a triple rate part-cover of 1874 sent from Bridgnorth to Boston with a 9d straw, plate 4 (SG110). Finally Brian showed many UPU covers with different franking to pay the then 2½d (or 5 cents) rate.

The chairman thanked Brian for a magnificent display and presented him with a certificate of Appreciation from the Society. The applause was evidence of the enthusiastic appreciation of those fortunate enough to be present.

THE MIDLANDS AND INTERNAL AIR MAILS UNTIL 1940

by Ian May

It often comes as a surprise to collectors and researchers of the Postal History of the Midlands quite how involved the Midlands, and in particular Birmingham, was in the development of air transport for internal mail. This article will attempt to illustrate the involvement of the Midlands up to about 1940.

The first aeroplane flight was made by the Wright brothers in December 1903^[1], and the first official air mail at Allahabad, India in 1911^[2]. In the same year the first official British air mail took place with the Coronation Aerial Post^[3] which ran from September 9th until September 26th, although mail only carries hand-stamps dated from the September 9th to September 17th, the discrepancy being that because the event was so popular additional flights were required to deal with all the mail. Mail was transported in each direction between Hendon Aerodrome, London, and Windsor.

For the next few years most of the items that were flown were unofficial and usually comprised postcards that were flown and then put in the post^[4]. One or two of these “air mails” did have Midland’s connections but because of the unofficial nature of them they are not included in this article.

The next official air mail came about when the railway workers staged a strike from September 27th to October 6th 1919^[5]. Because most mail was transported by rail this caused considerable delays to the post. In order to provide a very limited emergency service an air mail was operated between London and Bristol, Birmingham, Newcastle, Manchester and Glasgow from October 1st to the 6th. An air fee of 2/- per oz was charged^[4]. Figure 1 shows a cover sent on October 2nd 1919 endorsed “By aeroplane” and “express delivery”, the total rate is 2/7½ comprising, postage 1½d, air fee 2/- and express fee 6d.



Fig 1, 1919 cover from Birmingham to London ‘By Aeroplane’ sent during the 1919 rail workers’ strike

It was not until 1933 that the Midlands was again involved with internal air mails^{[6],[7]}. The Great Western Railway, along with the other railway companies, had the power to operate internal airlines in their territories and, with some restrictions, elsewhere. The Great Western Railway initially operated a service from Cardiff, City Aerodrome, to Plymouth, Roborough Aerodrome, via Haldon Aerodrome, which would serve Torquay and Teignmouth using the companies ‘buses’. Imperial Airways supplied the aircraft, pilot and engineers whilst the railway company provided the other staff. A major attraction was that the service would fly over the Bristol Channel thus leading to a substantial saving in time. More details are given in references 6 and 7.

The railway companies were permitted to carry railway letters in order to expedite their delivery. Under this scheme a letter could be accepted at a station and then transported by train and then posted in the normal way on arrival at its destination. For this service there was, in addition to the usual postage, a charge made by the railway company, often indicated by a railway stamp.

A. Phillips, a dealer in flown covers, persuaded the company to use its railway letter privilege to carry covers on its air service. The first flights under the railway letter arrangement were from Cardiff, City Aerodrome, to Plymouth, Roborough Aerodrome, via Haldon and the return flight from Plymouth to Cardiff via Haldon on April 12th 1933. The company charged a 3d fee, shown by a suitable franking, and the mail was posted after the flight. There was some question about the legality of accepting railway letters for transport by air but the Postmaster General conceded the right to the company. An official air mail was set up to commence on May 15th 1933 and an air mail stamp produced to indicate payment of the company's 3d "railway letter" fee^[7].

On May 22nd 1933 the service was extended to Birmingham using Castle Bromwich Aerodrome. Mail had to be handed in at the "Air Booking Offices" located at Birmingham, Cardiff, Newport, Torquay, Teignmouth and Plymouth, presumably at the main railway stations^[8]. All items were to be charged 3d, shown by the air stamp, collected at the Air Booking Office, in addition to the normal postage. A typical first flight cover, in this case from Birmingham via Castle Bromwich Aerodrome to Haldon Aerodrome and from there to Torquay, where it was posted in order to continue its journey through the postal system to Surrey, is illustrated in Figure 2. The cover has the 3d airmail stamp, each of which were individually numbered, cancelled by the Great Western Railway at the Air Booking Office at Snow Hill Station, Birmingham. Additionally the cover has the normal postage of 1½d and has been signed by the pilot, F Dinsmore.

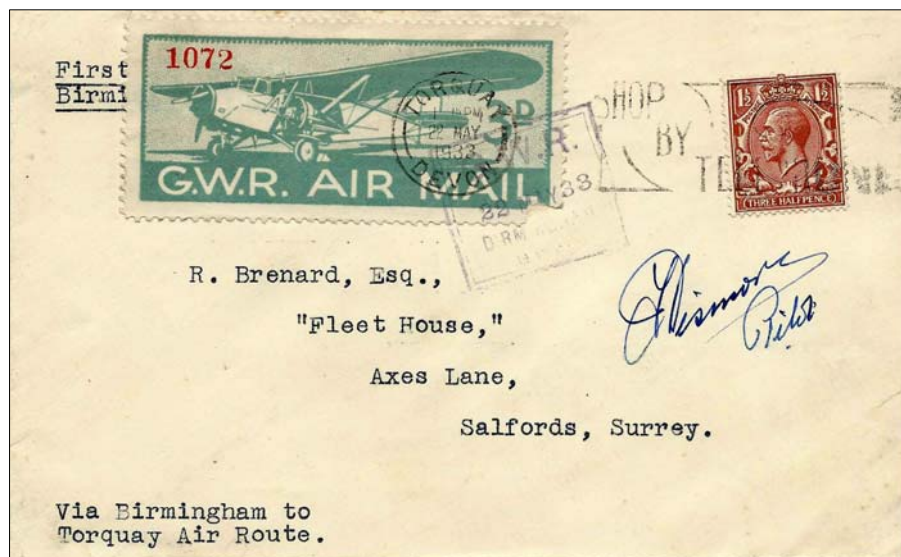


Fig 2, First flight cover, Birmingham to Surrey via airmail Birmingham to Torquay.

First flight covers were also flown from Birmingham to Cardiff, City Aerodrome, and Plymouth, Roborough Aerodrome, where mail was then posted. Similarly first flight covers were flown on the return legs to Birmingham, including from Haldon Aerodrome. However, covers signed by the pilot are not common. The service operated once daily seven days a week throughout the summer and Figure 3 (see next page) shows a cover flown on Sunday June 18th from Birmingham to Plymouth.

On July 17th and 27th 1933 the railway company bus connecting Haldon with Torquay and Teignmouth was diverted to call at Newton Abbot so mail was accepted from Newton Abbot, at, one assumes, a temporary Air Booking Office. It was therefore possible to send air mail to or receive air mail from all the participating towns and cities. Of course mail for air transport to Birmingham for posting, or from Birmingham for posting at Newton Abbot, Figure 4 (see next page), was included. It is likely that these were the only two days Newton Abbot was included. The final flight was on September 30th 1933, Figure 5 (see page 10). The aircraft flew from Birmingham to Cardiff and then took off for Haldon but due to fog could not land and so returned to Cardiff where mail for Torquay, Teignmouth and Plymouth were unloaded and transported by rail to their destinations. Mail northbound was not flown. The service was not a financial success but did give experience that was used in later internal air mail services.



Fig 3, Cover flown from Birmingham to Plymouth on Sunday June 18th.

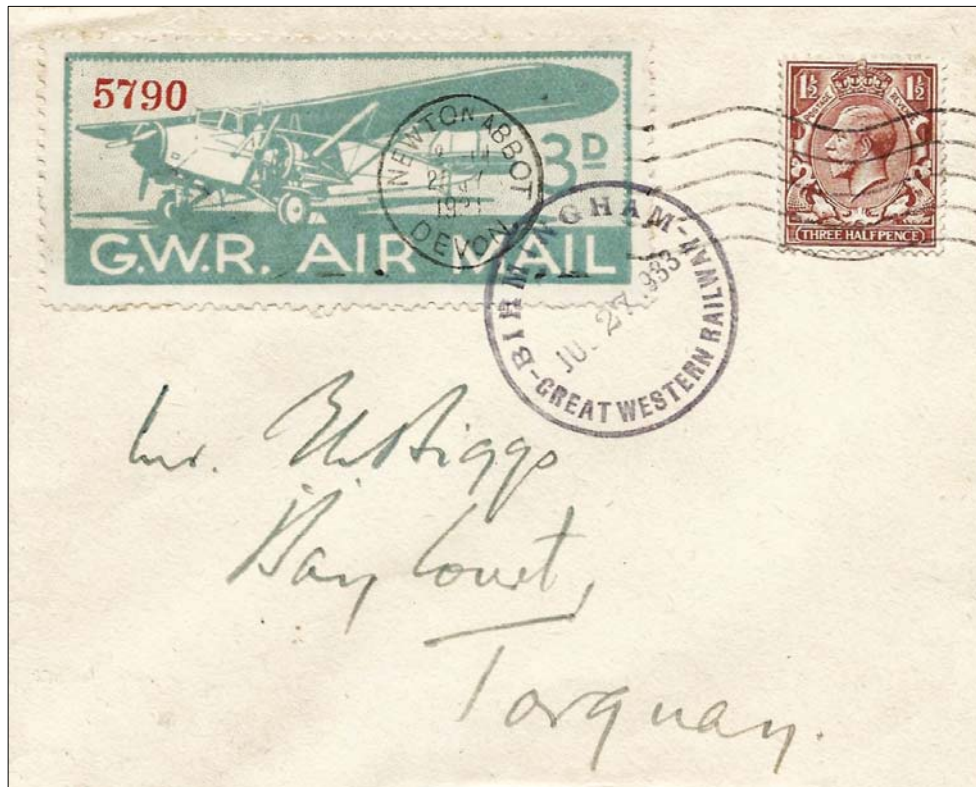


Fig 4, Cover flown from Birmingham to Torquay, via Newton Abbot on July 27th.

After the Great Western Railway had operated an air mail service using its railway letter privilege a number of airlines tried to operate air mails, during 1933 and 1934, by imposing a 3d air mail fee shown through the use of vignettes. The Postmaster General declared this process to be illegal and all of the services were closed within days of starting.

Midland and Scottish Air Ferries in collaboration with the British Industries Fair, which was held in buildings adjacent to Castle Bromwich Aerodrome, Birmingham, flew air mail flights between Castle Bromwich and Liverpool, and Castle Bromwich and Heston Air Park, London on February 19th 1934, and in the reverse direction on February 20th 1934. In order to overcome the Postmaster General ruling no vignettes were issued but an air fee of 3d in addition to normal postage was charged^[7]. The service was duly declared illegal and stopped after the flights on February 20th 1934. A number of flight covers exist to and from Birmingham, a typical cover is illustrated in Figure 6.



Fig 5, Last flight cover to Plymouth but due to fog flown to Cardiff then rail to Plymouth.



Fig 6, First flight cover from Heston Air Park, London to Birmingham with British Industries Fair skeleton hand-stamp. Signed by pilot H.G. Malet.

The next air mail event in the Midlands was on May 23rd 1934 when London Scottish and Provincial Airways Ltd carried a special air mail for the Post Office from Tollerton Aerodrome, Nottingham to Radlett Aerodrome Hertfordshire and then by road to London. A Post Office exhibition was being held in Nottingham and mail was flown in recognition of this event. Letters were charged 4d for this service, a cover is illustrated in Figures 7a and 7b (see next page)^[7]. The envelope is addressed to Oliver Edwin Simmonds, (1897 – 1985) who was a British aviation pioneer, aircraft engineer and the Conservative Party Member of Parliament for Birmingham Duddeston from 1931 to 1945^[9]. Very few covers were flown. In a recent auction a description of one similar to that in Figure 7, but with the addition of the pilots signature, stated that 5 were flown^[10].

The Post Office placed a contract with Railway Air Services Ltd for the transport of internal first class mails by air at no additional fee for the transport by air. Highland Airways had been awarded a contract on an experimental basis commencing in May 29th 1934, but this had been for a relatively local service from Inverness to Kirkwall in the

Orkney Islands, also with no additional fee for transport by air. However, the service operated by Railway Air Services would be national. Railway Air Services had been formed by the four main railway companies, the Great Western Railway, the London Midland and Scottish Railway, the London North Eastern Railway and the Southern Railway together with Imperial Airways^[6].

The following major routes were to be operated:

London, Birmingham, Manchester, Belfast and Glasgow
 Cowes, Southampton, Bristol and Birmingham
 Plymouth, Teignmouth, Cardiff, Birmingham and Liverpool

In addition there were shorter routes namely:

Isle of Man shuttle service, Belfast, Isle of Man and Manchester
 Cardiff and Bristol.

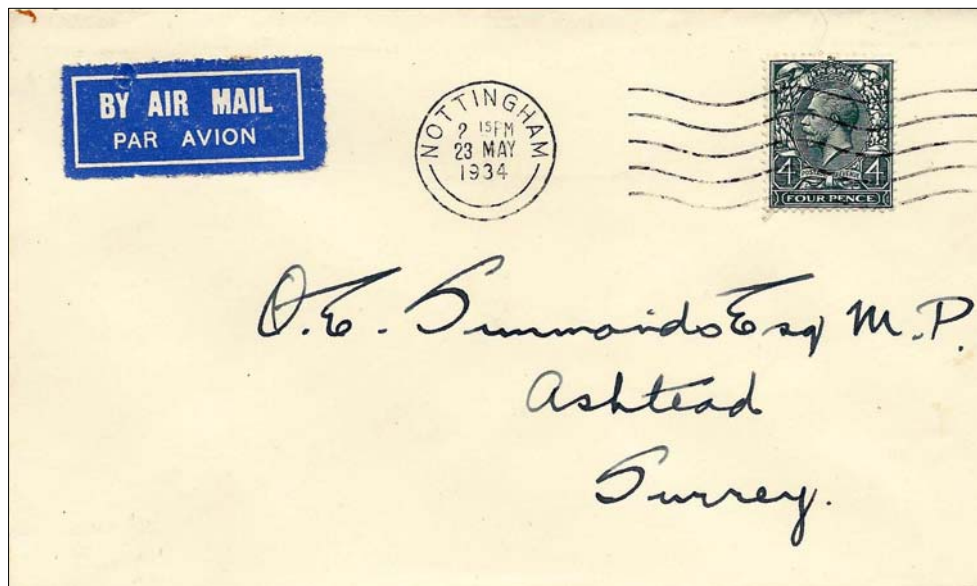


Fig 7a, Front of flight cover from Nottingham to London, May 23rd 1934.

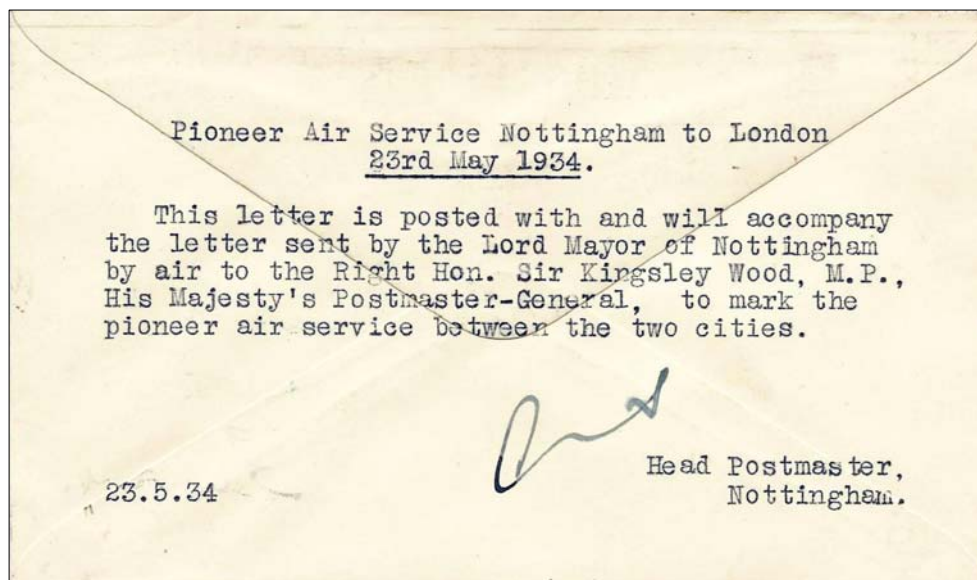


Fig 7b, Reverse of cover showing note about flight signed by the Head Postmaster of Nottingham.

It can be seen that Birmingham was effectively a hub allowing transfer of mail from one route to another. The contract commenced on August 20th 1934. The General Post Office produced leaflets about the service, the front of that for Birmingham, which comprised 4 pages, is illustrated in Figure 8a. This gives the location of the post boxes

at which letters posted would gain the maximum acceleration. Page 2, not illustrated, gives the accelerations to the 14 towns served. Figure 8b, illustrates the back page of the leaflet for Cardiff which shows the routes and also describes the Railex service. Mail posted for the air mail service would be cancelled by the Post Office at the office of departure.

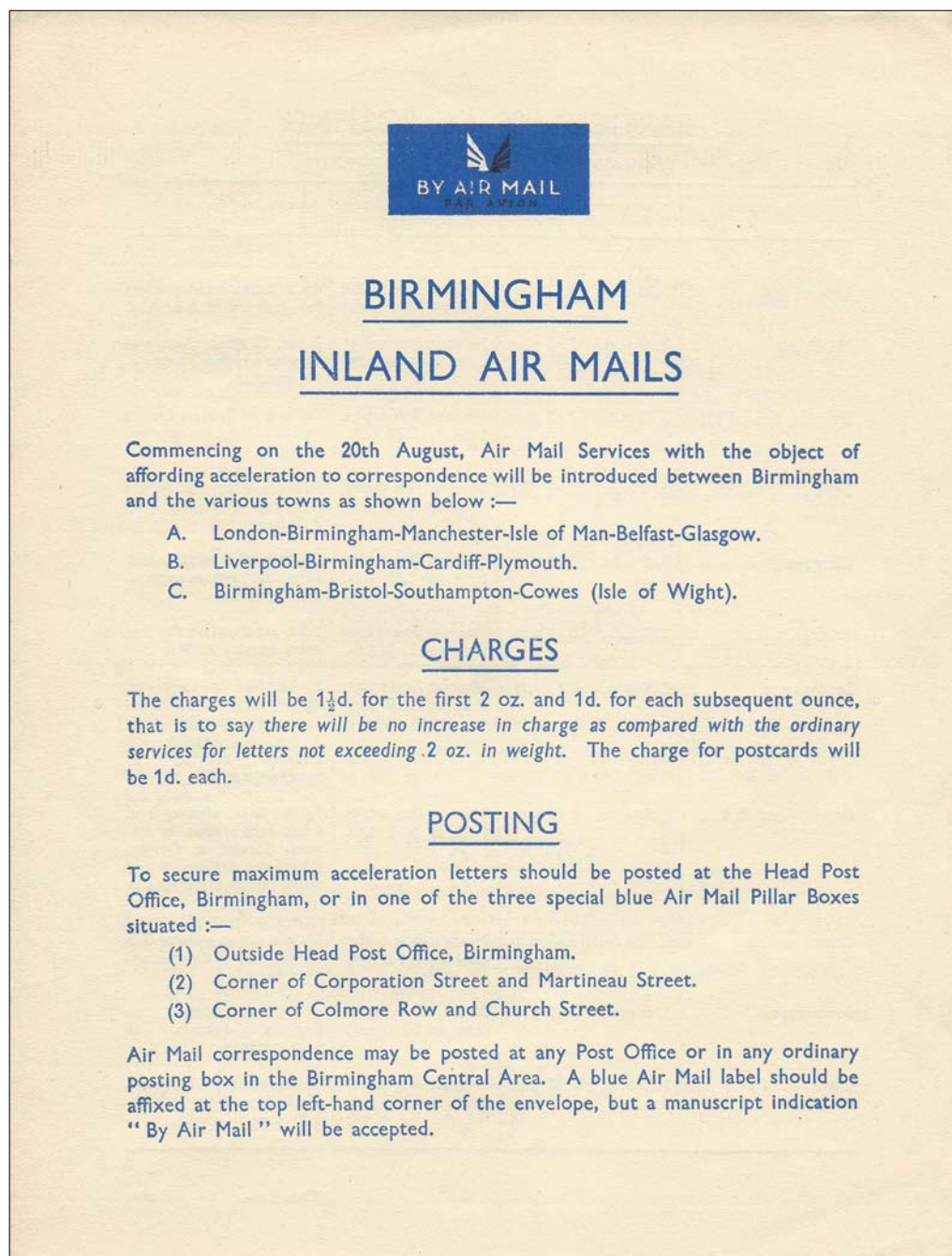


Fig 8a, Front page of General Post Office notice for Birmingham internal air mails.

The introduction of the service was of great interest to Aero Philatelists and a multitude of covers exist for 116^[8] different stages between the various towns and cities served! These include flights which used Birmingham as an interchange for example from Glasgow to Cowes. The company had produced special envelopes in addition to those produced privately and these were duly prepared for carrying on the first flights. Unfortunately on August 20th the weather intervened and some of the flights were cancelled or curtailed. A full description of the stages flown is given in references 4, 6 and 11.

Two planes left Glasgow for London on August 20th but only made it to Manchester before the flights were abandoned due to gales and rain, the mail was unloaded and sent south to London by rail (See Fig 9), the Post Office

being under an obligation to make deliveries of first class mail as soon as possible; mail from Glasgow and Belfast for Birmingham would only have been flown as far as Manchester and mail from Manchester went south by rail.

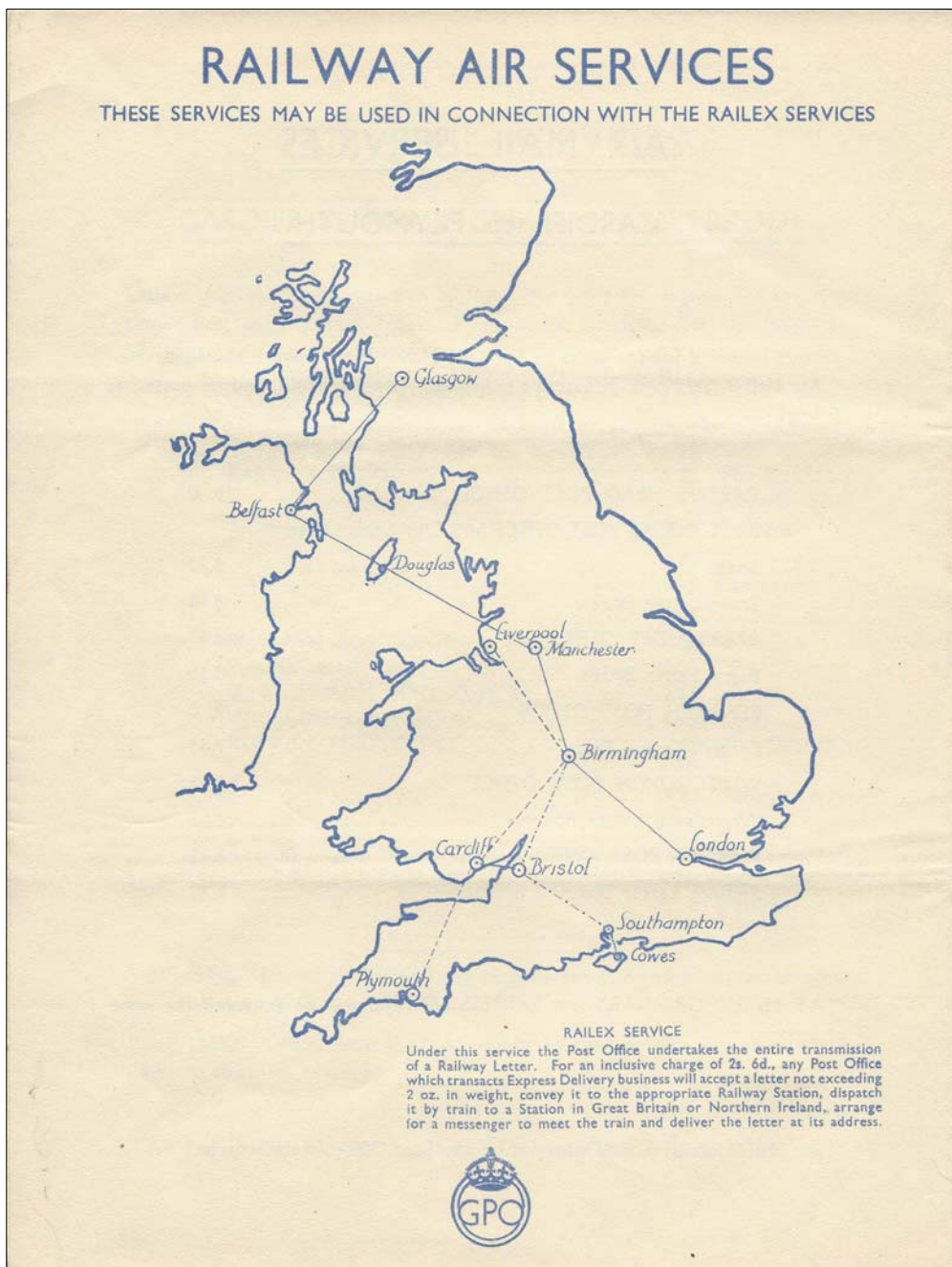


Fig 8b, Back page of Cardiff leaflet showing routes and details of Railex Service

A plane left Croydon Aerodrome, London on August 20th and flew as far as Birmingham before the flight was abandoned. Therefore no mail was flown from Birmingham on the London to Glasgow route. All mail for destinations north of Birmingham was sent by rail. A full service on this route took place on the following day August 21st. Because of the short time in which to prepare covers, and the likely confusion about which flights took place, there are relatively few first flight covers for August 21st. Figure 10 illustrates a first flight cover from Birmingham to Glasgow flown on August 21st. A Francis Field envelope was used as most of the special envelopes had been used for covers on the previous day.

The Liverpool to Plymouth service was successfully operated in both directions on August 20th and first flight covers to and from Birmingham exist.

A plane took off from Castle Bromwich for the round trip Birmingham to Cowes and return on August 20th. However, due to a gale warning did not proceed beyond Bristol. Mail for Southampton and Cowes was offloaded at

Bristol and continued the rest of its journey by rail. The plane returned to Birmingham with the mail from Bristol to Birmingham only. Mail from Southampton and Cowes was held over and flown on August 21st but shows a cancellation of August 20th. As for the other services first flight covers to and from Birmingham exist.



Fig 9, First flight cover flown from Glasgow to Manchester, rail to Birmingham.

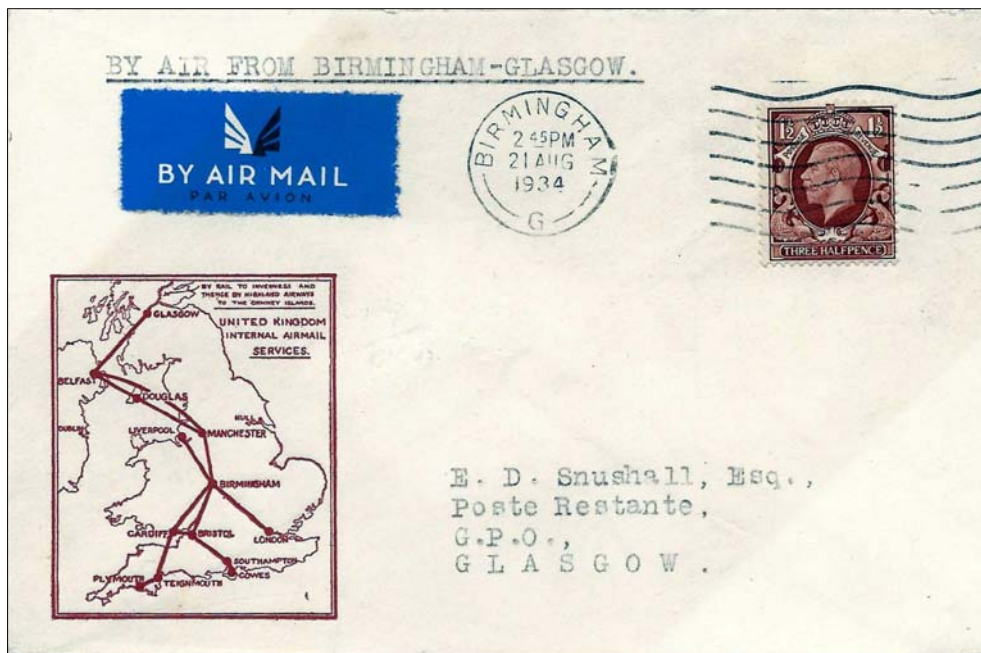


Fig 10, First flight cover, Birmingham to Glasgow, Francis Field envelope.

It can be seen from the above that the identification of first flight covers needs some care. Covers cancelled on August 20th 1934 intended for air mail could have been flown between destinations, flown part way and then taken by rail, taken by rail the entire journey or in the case of mail from Southampton and Cowes held over and flown on August 21st.

At the bottom of Figure 8b the use of Railex is mentioned and the service described. The Author has covers sent by the Railex service but neither has, nor has seen, examples to or from Birmingham. Although not mentioned it was also possible to send railway letters through the airmail system. A letter would be handed in at Snow Hill Station, Birmingham and it would then be transported by the Great Western Railway to Castle Bromwich then flown and on arrival at the destination airport posted in the normal way. This service allowed letters to be handed over after the

normal mail had been closed. A charge of 3d was made, in addition to normal postage, shown by a hand-stamp, see Figure 11. Of course these covers being railway letters would be cancelled after arriving at the destination aerodrome.



Fig 11, Railway letter, Birmingham to London, flown on last airmail flight from Castle Bromwich.

On September 29th 1934 the last flights took place on the Cowes, Southampton, Bristol and Birmingham and the Plymouth, Cardiff, Birmingham and Liverpool services and the Isle of Man shuttle and the Cardiff and Bristol service.

The final day of air mail to and from Birmingham was on October 31st 1934. Not all ran smoothly on the last day as the mail for Birmingham was flown beyond Castle Bromwich Aerodrome to Meir Aerodrome, Stoke on Trent, and transported to Birmingham by rail as Castle Bromwich Aerodrome was fog bound. The reference to Stokemeer Aerodrome, Stoke in reference 7 is incorrect.

On the following day, November 1st, a new timetable for the London to Glasgow route came into effect in which Liverpool replaced Manchester and Birmingham.

The Midlands would play no further part in internal air mails until after the second world war when the air letters, which were similar to railway letters, were permitted. These were used by the newly established British European Airways. However, they are outside the scope of this article.

The internal air mail links with the Midlands during the first half of the 20th century are only a small part of an interesting area of British postal history. The development of air mail links, particularly from the Scottish mainland to the islands is particularly interesting and inspiring. The people involved in setting up and running the routes were real pioneers. Richard Beith describes in detail the efforts of these pioneers^[12]. Postal and social historians are fortunate that there is a reasonable amount of material of interest that helps to explain and illustrate the story.

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METER MARKS AND NOTTINGHAM REVENUE PROTECTION

by Frank Walton RDP FRPSL

A 2016 Christmas card addressed to my wife had a beautifully clean strike of a meter mark and with an unusual hand stamp – equally well struck (Fig 1). Second Class letter mail is currently 55p, but the meter mark is for 53p – a bulk mailing discount perhaps? It would appear that an inspector spotted the discrepancy but either out of ‘goodwill to all men’ or because the discount was legitimate, marked the envelope with nothing further to be charged but what does NOTTINGHAM REVENUE PROTECTION refer to?

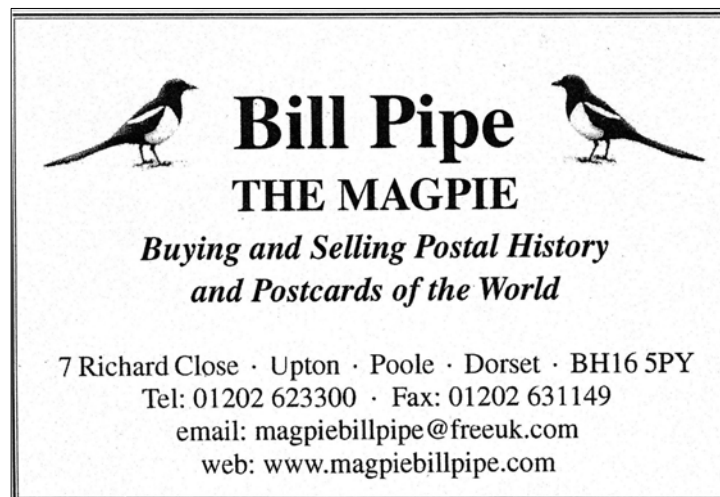
Another item, also addressed to Mrs Walton (but my mother this time rather than my wife!), has a similar 53p meter mark (Fig 2). But this one has a private hand stamp of FIRST CLASS. This represents an excellent discount of 11p off the normal 64p first class letter rate. Does anyone know how this system works?



Fig 1, part of 2016 cover with Nottingham Revenue Protection Treat as 2nd Class hand stamp



Fig 2, 2016 cover (lower part excised) sent FIRST CLASS with 53p Meter Mark





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COVENTRY to the MEDITERRANEAN

by Ian May

It's always a bonus when one finds an item that belongs in more than one of your collections. Two of my interests are the postal history of Coventry and certain aspects of Portuguese philately and postal history. When I obtained the envelope, shown in Figures 1 and 2, I thought, with its origin in Coventry and a hand-stamp Portugal that it might fit into both collections. However, a bit of research showed that the Portugal hand-stamp had nothing to do with the country but the envelope has proved to be much more interesting than I first thought.



Fig 1, Cover from Coventry to Tunbridge Wells, with *Please forward*.

There is probably much more to discover about this envelope's travels but let me describe what I know.

It was addressed to:

The Rev J R Miller's Party, Miss A ?????? Barry, Queens Road, Tunbridge Wells. With a request, top left hand, of "Please forward".

It was stamped with the UPU foreign postage rate, 2½d, and cancelled with a Coventry double circle hand-stamp dated April 19th 1911, 12:45 am.

It arrived in Tunbridge Wells where it received a very faint double circle hand-stamp on the back dated April 19th 1911, 7:15 am. I assume it was received by Miss Barry who re-addressed it:

c/o Messageries Co, Beyrouth, Syria, and re-posted it when it received a Tunbridge Wells machine cancellation, dated April 19th 1911, 2:??, on the front.

Messageries Maritimes was a French merchant shipping company with extensive routes including the Mediterranean, in particular, Marseilles – Constantinople – Beirut and Marseilles – Port Said then proceeding to Mahe – Reunion – Mauritius – Adelaide – Melbourne.^[1]

The letter reached Beyrouth on the 25th April as indicated by the Beyrouth, British Post Office dated hand-stamp on the back of the envelope. During the next few weeks it obtained further hand-stamps, all on the back of the envelope, at:

Beyrouth probably 2nd May.

Port Said 7th May.

Marseille probably 12th May, having been addressed to Marseille, France.



Fig 2, Reverse of cover originally from Coventry to Tunbridge Wells

My assumption is that during this period Messageries Maritime were attempting to locate the Rev. Miller's party because there is a manuscript, "passenger aboard the Saghalien" on the front. There are also five ship marks. On the front are the marks of the Portugal, Saghalien, Paquebot Equateus and Paquebot Congo, and on the back, Paquebot Orenoque. All ships of Messageries Maritime.

Also on the reverse is an address, C/O Rev. Miller, Rossendene, Woodlands Avenue, Leicester, England. I wonder if the letter found the Rev. Miller on a ship or was it finally returned to England?

So am I disappointed that it doesn't fit in my Portugal collection? Certainly not! But I would be grateful for any comments on my analysis or other interpretations of the letter's travels.

Reference <http://www.theshipslist.com/ships/lines/mm.shtml>

Ian May also writes: Attached is a copy of part of the back of an envelope sent from Warwick to Powick near Worcester. The postmarks are of Warwick, 16 AP 1858, and Worcester, 17 AP 1858. There is also a Stanbrook Undated Circle mark, type D1, which is not recorded in the Society's UDC book, 4th Edition, page 181, 14 / 57.



Reverse of part of the cover to Powick showing all the marks

BULLETIN No 1, THE PRECURSOR OF MIDLAND MAIL

BULLETIN No. 1

MIDLAND G.B. POSTAL HISTORY SOCIETY

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EDITORIAL

First and foremost I would like to wish all members a happy New Year and look forward to your cooperation and contributions during 1976. As it is the intention of the Society to record all information in relation to the postal history of the Midlands, I hope members will use this bulletin to record all new information. The members of this group have collectively a wide knowledge so if any member with a query lets me know I will publish it in the bulletin and it is hoped other members may have the answer.

Any member wishing to publish any postal history article, either in interim or finished form, is invited to use the bulletin for this purpose.

NEXT MEETING

This will take place at the Birmingham & Midland Institute, Margaret St. Birmingham on Saturday 14 February 1976. Room 3 from 2 to 5pm. Each member should bring 12 sheets for display. If there is any spare time at the end of the meeting those with extra sheets will be invited to show them.

Last MEETING

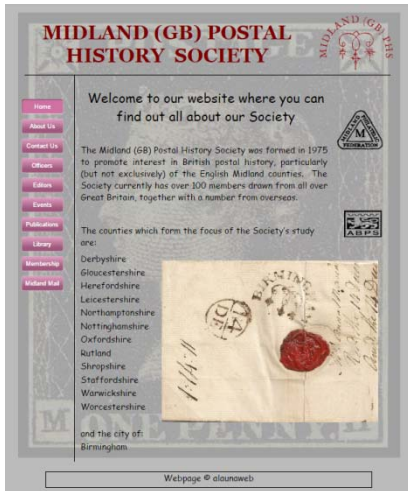
Those member who showed were as follows

Mr. Chester	Coventry Machine Cancellations
Mr. Paul	Railway Postal History and Railway Letters
Mrs. Ward	Hereford & Worcester Postal History
Mrs. Lewis	Birmingham Spoons
Mr. Robertson	Rugby Modern Postmarks
Mr. Gray	Squared Circles
Mr. Lloyd	Stone Postal History and Postally Used Newspapers
Mr. Coles	Birmingham Skeletons
Mr. Ward	Surrey Covers
Mr. Lewis	Lichfield Postal History
Mr. Parker	Nuneaton Postal History
Mr. Heath	Kidderminster Postal History

Reproduced above but slightly reduced in size to allow a few words to be added, is a copy of the very first 1976 one-page **BULLETIN No. 1** of the society, which evolved into the present Midland Mail – haven't we come a long way since then!! Recognise any names?

MIDLAND MAIL ONLINE.

by Malcolm Allinson



Members will be interested to know that scanned copies of every Midland Mail will soon be available to read or download from the Society's website <http://www.midlandphs.org.uk/pages/midlandmail.html>

This has been made possible entirely from the generosity of scanning facilities at the Royal Philatelic Society London, and in particular Frank Walton their current President. Frank is also a member of this Society and we owe him our gratitude for carrying out all of the scanning and collating.

I have now been able to acquire an advanced set of the back copies of Midland Mail so that I can print them and read them in the old fashioned way – on paper!^[1] From the very first copy, Bulletin No. 1, they provide a complete narrative of the Society and its activities over its first 40 years.

As I have not been a member for all of those 40 years, I did not have all of the back copies until now, so I am fascinated to read all of the articles from the early years of the Society. They contain such a wealth of information for

us all, and this project has made sure that this knowledge is both retained and is made easily available to a future audience - both members and other interested philatelists who have access to our website.

Whilst our own website has search facilities, the "Royal" website has a powerful generic search facility that can home in on individual words or phrases. If you go to <http://www.rpsl.org.uk/catalogue.asp> this feature is available to everyone - not just Royal members, and free of charge as it is part of the Royal's charitable aims.

You may have been thinking that for a long time nothing has been happening regarding this subject. On the surface this is true, but you can now see that below the surface there has been extensive activity all round to get us this far. Do watch this space in future; when I hope to be able to announce full Midland (GB)PHS website access to all of our back copies of Midland Mail.

The latest edition of the Index which has been so ably compiled by John Soer is already available on our website. It is not only a work of art in itself, it is a thorough up to date examination of the written history of the Society; and search engines aside, gives the reader an excellent overview of what the Society has published over the last 40 years.

As for the contents of all of these back copies of Midland Mail, I am finding them fascinating. They have opened up a whole new area of reading for me (and hopefully my understanding), together with enough facts and figures to add to my own enjoyment of collecting. I am finding things that are probably obvious to the more experienced member, but isn't this the whole idea of the hobby – senior members one way or another passing on information to the newer recruits. I for one will be spending a lot of time trying to absorb everything, even if the garden suffers this year.

When the Society first started, regular meetings and Midland Mail were the only means of spreading the word. The Internet was not widespread beyond the Laboratory and some military applications. Then, many members were only too keen to put in writing their own knowledge and subject expertise, which we are all still making good use of. Reading those many articles today, one realises the tremendous research effort that members over the years have put in and their generosity in publishing their researches. Today of course we do have the Internet, which gives us all an almost infinite research facility; but first of all you do need to know where to start in searching that particular Goliath. These greatly accessible Midland Mails will at least give us all a good idea of search terms to use to make further investigations if needed.

I do hope that now Midland Mails are to be more easily available, members will find the impetus to make greater use of them, and perhaps take this excellent opportunity to build upon the vast amount of research that has already been carried out in the study of postal history.

^[1] *The merits, or otherwise, of printing compared with the ecological option of retaining and using documents in electronic format can be discussed with me at any time, providing my interlocutor provides a very large glass of peaty amber something as 'discussion fuel'!*

THE ROYAL SHOW AT STONELEIGH

by Alan Godfrey

In 2016 I wrote an article about the Royal Show, which was held at Warwick in 1931 (MM189). In his follow-up article (MM190), Ian May made the comment that an article was needed about the Royal Show after it moved to its permanent home at Stoneleigh in Warwickshire, which I decided to do.

Since 1839 the Royal Agriculture Society of England (RASE) had held annual shows, known as the 'Royal Show', in a different part of the country each year until 1962, when it was decided that a permanent showground should be adopted. It was intended that the showground would play a wider role than just hosting an annual show and would become a centre of excellence in agriculture. Lord Leigh, the owner of Stoneleigh Abbey, offered 460 acres of his estate to RASE, initially on a six year lease, and in 1963 the National Agricultural Centre (NAC) opened at Stoneleigh Park, near Kenilworth (Fig. 1). The first Royal Shows at the site were well received and so, in 1965, RASE signed a further lease of 99 years. The Royal Show was held at Stoneleigh from 1963 to 2009, when declining numbers caused RASE to discontinue it.



Fig 1, Stoneleigh Main Entrance

RASE made its base at Stoneleigh and also provided accommodation for other agricultural organisations including the British Horse Society, the British Beekeepers Association, the Pony Club, the Rare Breeds Survival Trust and the Farming Wildlife Advisory Group. Local towns used slogan postmarks to advertise the Royal Show from 23rd June to 2nd July 1963: Birmingham, Coventry, Nuneaton, Rugby and Warwick & Leamington. In 1966 and 1967 Warwick & Leamington also used slogan postmarks indicating their 'host town' status.



Fig 2, The Mobile PO used at the Royal Show from 1969

Warwickshire (Fig 5). In 1980 the permanent Post Office was opened and new hand stamps were issued: counter stamp, packet cancel and parcel cancel; these were designated "RASE STONELEIGH / KENILWORTH WARWICKSHIRE" (Fig 6).

Post Office facilities were also available at Stoneleigh, initially in the form of a Mobile Post Office during the period of the Royal Show (Fig 2), just as previous Royal Shows had done. In 1980 a year-round permanent Post Office on the site was built, which provided mail services and sold stamps and philatelic products. Mail posted in the Mobile PO was cancelled with a single circle "COVENTRY / WARWICKSHIRE" hand stamp (Fig 3). Between 1971 and 1979 a special single circle hand stamp "ROYAL SHOW.STONELEIGH / COVENTRY" was used on mail for the period of the Royal Show in June/July each year (using three hand stamps numbered 1, 2 & 3 until 1974, and just 1 & 2 thereafter) (Fig 4). A special hand stamp was used in 1978 to celebrate the centenary of the Royal Show in



Fig 3



Fig 4



Fig 5

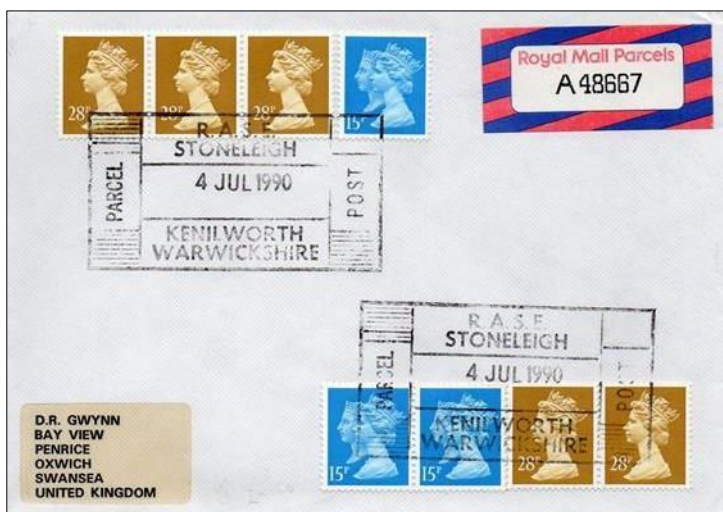


Fig 6

On 8th July 1981 the Queen's visit to the Royal Show was marked with a special hand stamp and cachet. During the Royal Show several special rubber hand stamps in various shapes and sizes were in use showing a stylised "ROYAL SHOW / KENILWORTH / WARWICKSHIRE" and showing a rosette (Fig. 7). An exhibition was held in 1982, jointly sponsored by the Royal Society of Birds (sic), the National Postal Museum and the Midland Postal Board, which issued a special postcard showing a blue tit, for sale at the Royal Show with the proceeds going to the RSPB (Fig 8).

In 1989 RASE celebrated its 150th anniversary, as well as 'Food & Farming Year', with two special hand stamps (Figs 9 & 10). The last special hand stamp used at the Royal Show

was in 2002, issued by BFPS 1000, when the Queen's Golden Jubilee Royal Stamp Collection was on show at the NAC Post Office.

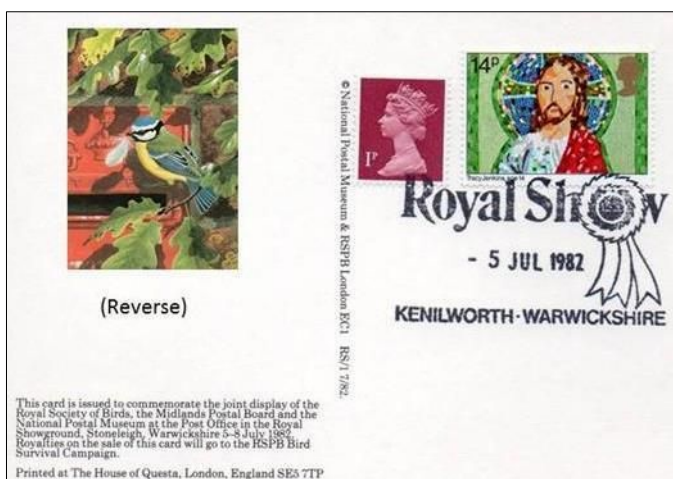


Fig 8

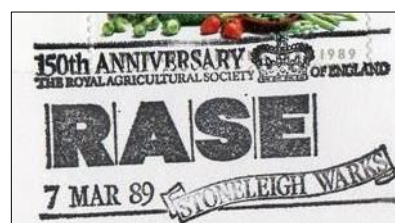


Fig 9



Fig 10



Fig 7

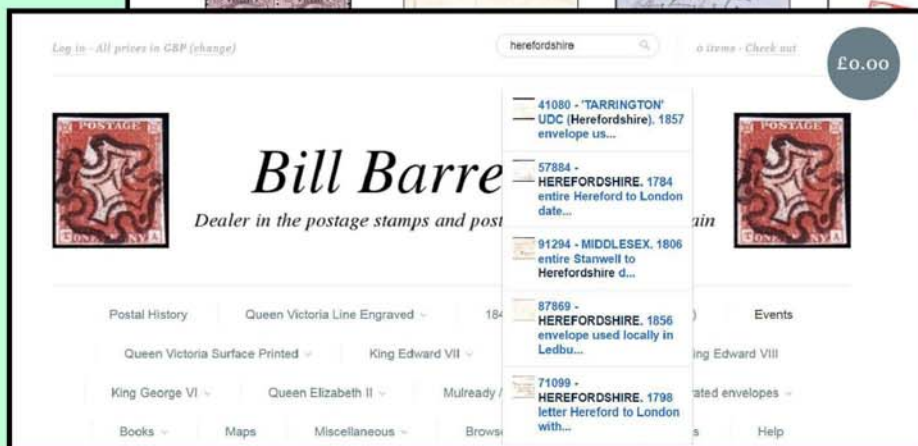
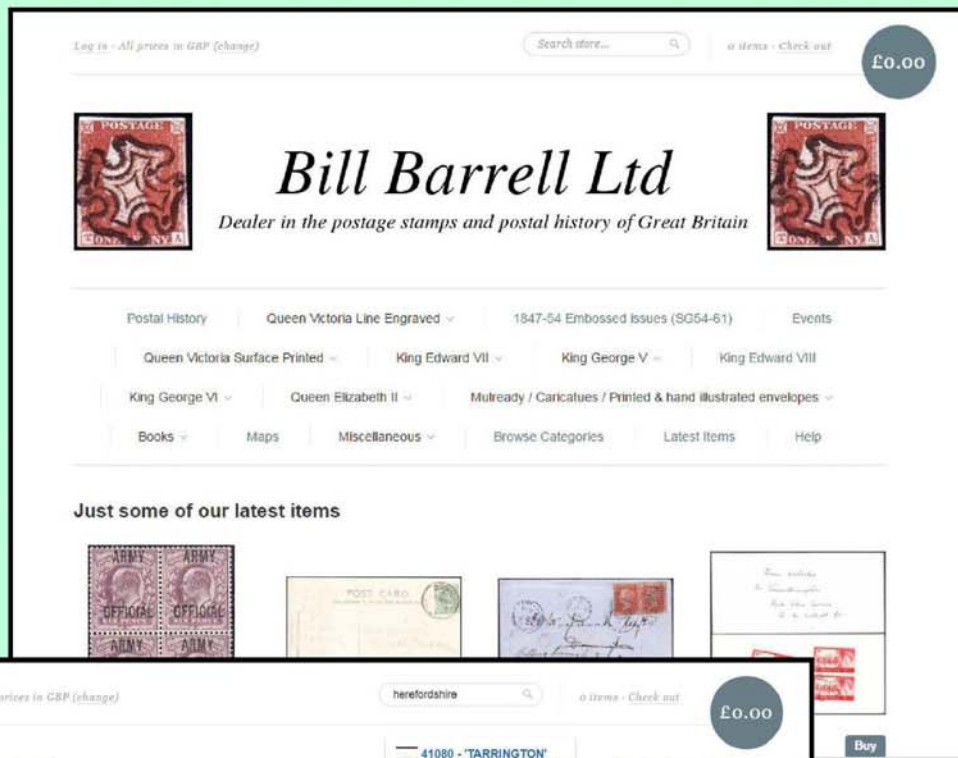
In 2014 RASE sold the commercial operations of the Stoneleigh site to the Grandstand Group, who rebranded the site as the National Agricultural Exhibition Centre (NAEC). Stoneleigh Park still hosts a number of agriculture-related shows and exhibitions.

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