

# MIDLAND MAIL



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



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Chris Jackson

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Secretary:  
Eric Lewis

Number 112, November 1999

### NEW MEMBERS

We extend a cordial welcome to Richard Martin of Cirencester whose interests include Cirencester and T.P.Os., and to Adrian Gurney of Coventry who collects Warwickshire with an emphasis on Coventry.

### FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

On **11th December** we hold our annual get-together with lunch at the Bass Museum, Burton-on-Trent. Members are invited to gather from 10 a.m. and provide standing displays, which may be as small as one sheet, on 'Postage Dues', particularly any problem covers. Lunch will be a 'Christmas Lunch', costing £12 (this also includes the cost of morning coffee and afternoon tea). In the afternoon, starting at about 2.15 p.m., Patrick Frost will give a display on 'The Postage Due System of Great Britain'. If you would like to join us for lunch, please contact Richard Farman on 01283-566515 by 4th December.

Our first meeting of the new millenium will be held on **15th January** at Carrs Lane Church Centre, Birmingham, starting at 1.30 p.m. when Gerald Mariner will show 'Solihull & Knowle' and Brian Jones will display 'Stratford-on-Avon'.

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

As this is the last issue of the year I would like to wish all members a very happy Christmas and enjoyable collecting of postal history in the next century.

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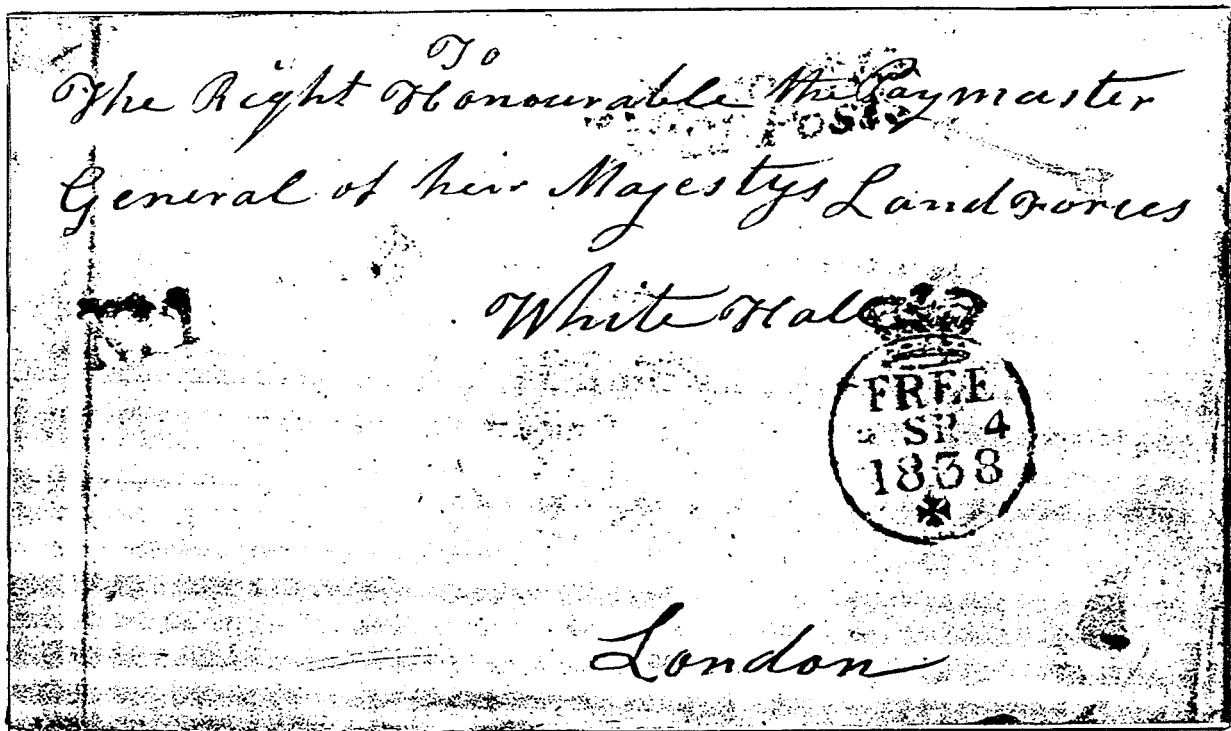
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## THE SEPTEMBER MEETING

There was an excellent turnout at Cranham on 11th September for our first meeting of the season - the whole day joint meeting with the Somerset & Dorset PHG and the Bristol PHG the morning session of which was devoted to Fifth Clause Posts.

John Calladine began the proceedings with a fascinating and erudite introduction which is worthy of a much wider audience and so an edited version appears after the report of the October meeting. Chris Beaver then dealt comprehensively with the Fifth Clause Post at Newcastle under Lyme from its introduction in 1801 up to 1839 when all ten receiving offices were made General Post sub-offices of Newcastle. The introduction in 1815 of a charge of one penny on outward letters led to the use of handstamps, though at first a 'Newcastle/ Penny Post' stamp was supplied. Chris showed us the different types of Newcastle Fifth Clause Post handstamps and the various numerals. A recent find of was a letter, illustrated below, sent from Lane End in September 1838, showing a mark 'Newcastle/5" Cl. Posts'. All other known Fifth Clause handstamps of Newcastle and elsewhere have the singular 'Post'.



Geoffrey Tapper then showed material from the Fifth Clause posts of Shaftesbury and Wincanton. As early as 1805 Shaftesbury had such a post to Hindon, but it was 1823 before Fifth Clause posts served Bruton, Castle Cary and Wincanton. The last place received its own Fifth Clause posts in 1829 - to Castle Cary and Bruton. One cover shown by Geoffrey had two Fifth Clause postmarks, those of Shepton Mallett and Shaftesbury.

Next, Alan Wall talked about the Fifth Clause posts of Bristol. An early one was that to Axbridge (1805), but the emphasis was on that to Thornbury established in 1825. An unusual item was a 'Free Frank' incorrectly charged 1d.

Ron Hake said that there was evidence for a number of towns in Devon having operated Fifth Clause posts but not using postmarks. However handstamps were known for Okehampton and Holsworthy.

Tony Osmond ended the morning with a look at the receiving offices on the road between Taunton and Minehead which were converted to penny posts in 1823.

Such was the readiness of members to show nine sheets of twentieth century material in the afternoon, that invitations to do so were harder to come by than an Oscars nomination. David Hardwick kicked off with an interesting use of the Freepost system, something to do with a dating agency, I believe. This was followed by some items of redirected mail. Inkjet postmarks was Alan Godfrey's chosen field, beginning with the use of the Domino machine at Birmingham in 1991 which was followed by inkjet cancellations of Gloucester in 1993. Alan finished with the use of an IMP at Watford in 1996.

John Milliner showed us a number of registered mail items, in particular the large (D type) registered labels. Material from the village post offices around Evesham formed Andrew Watton's display. There was a postcard of the office at Bengeworth along with a parcel post label from that office. Frank Bennett produced a registered cover from each decade of the century, showing the increase in charges. There were also registered items in Gerald Marriner's material from Wales. A cover of 1931 showed the Narberth M.O. & S.B. handstamp used as a cancellation.

Tony Osmond showed us some unusual 'postage due' material. A spot check of a bulk posting sometimes reveals an irregularity. The matter is dealt with by phone so the mail concerned is then stamped 'Do not surcharge'.

Amongst the covers shown by Mike Welch was material from the first year of the 'Post in Advance for Christmas Day' scheme at Rochdale. He finished with 'What happens when the machine misses the stamp?' Betty Savage showed that a wide variety of postmarks were used in the villages of Dorset between 1922 and 1957.

Norman Higson traced the changes in the design of the PPI marks starting with the experimental impression of 1966. John Harding sent nine sheets of telegraph triangles used as cancels. To round off the afternoon Alan Godfrey showed nine sheets of meter marks starting with a 1923 Universal.

Our thanks are due to John Calladine and his helpers for arranging such an enjoyable day out. Events like this do not happen without someone putting in a lot of effort.

## THE OCTOBER MEETING

Our meeting on 16th October took place at a new venue - Warwick, the auctioneers, Warwick & Warwick, having kindly given permission for the use of their viewing room. The topic for the day was 'Missent and Redirected Mail'.

Richard Farman began with a number of manuscript missent marks, all pre-1800, to places such as Stone, Stafford and Lichfield. Also to be seen in Richard's display were the framed and unframed missent marks of Stafford. Chris Beaver also showed a wide range of missent marks from Staffordshire including those of Lichfield (in black and red), Stoke, Newcastle-under-Lyme and Madeley. An unusual item was a letter addressed to William Kendall in Bourton-on-the-Water which was missent to Burton-on-Trent where it was opened by someone with that name.

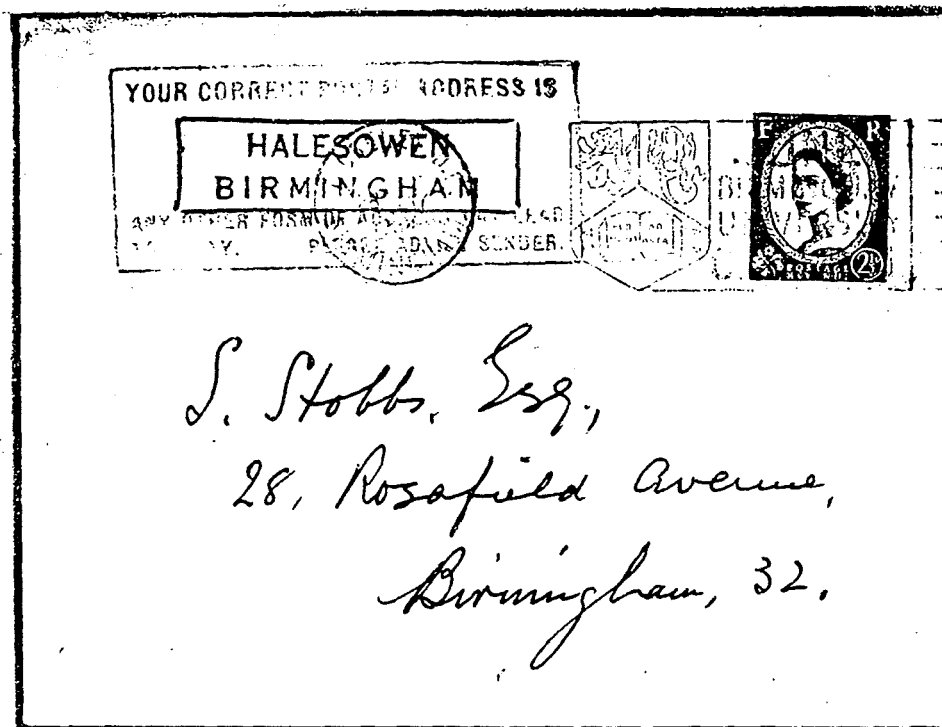
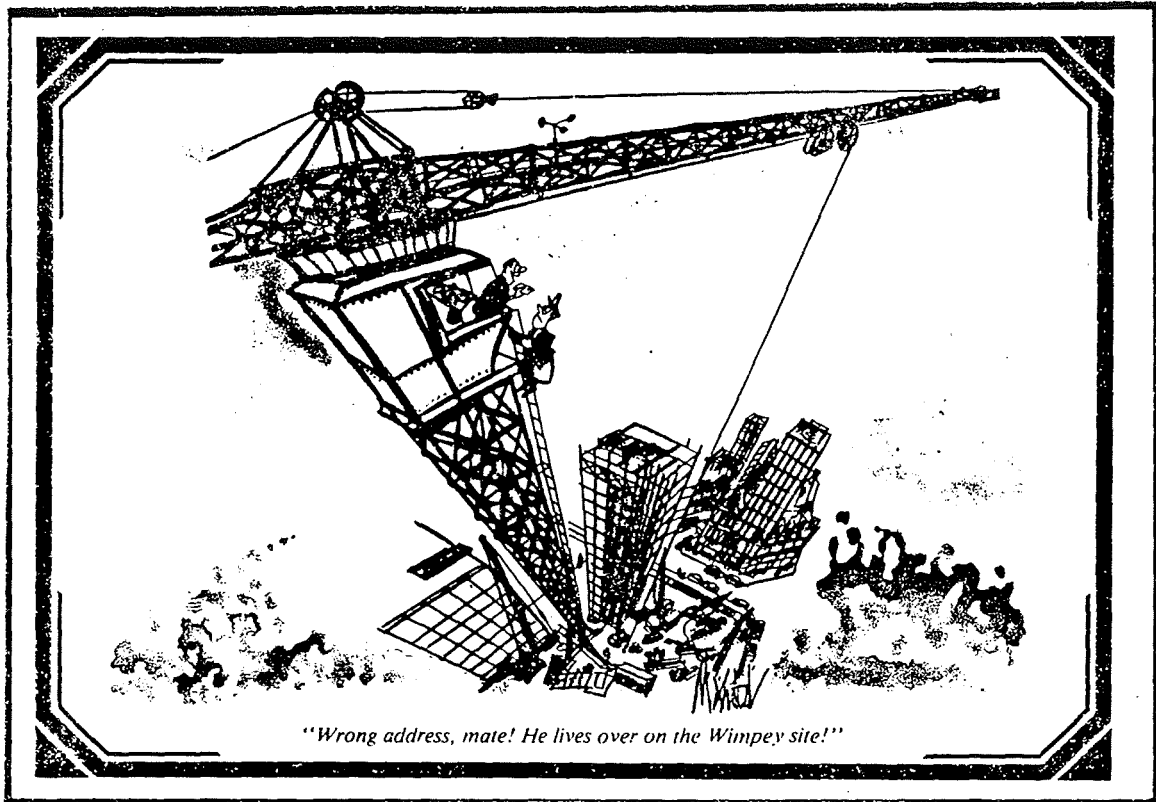
The first item shown by John Calladine was a letter sent in 1786 from London to Edinburgh but which was missent to Wootton-under-Edge where it received a manuscript 'Missent to' in conjunction with a strike of the first type mileage mark. The letter which was originally posted in London on 23rd November returned there on the 27th and did not reach Edinburgh until 1st December. We were also shown a number of items addressed to the infamous Sir Thomas Phillips with the missent marks of places such as Worcester, Evesham and Shipston-on-Stour. An 1848 missent mark of Stourbridge is the only known copy. Amongst the Worcestershire material shown by Chris Jackson were a letter sent in 1840 to Upton-on-Severn and charged 1d for redirection to Herefordshire, and an oval missent mark of Stourport.

A letter sent to Market Bosworth instead of Market Harborough, a postcard sent from Coalville to Bardon Hill which went via Bordon, Hampshire and Bardon Mill, Northumberland were among John Soer's items. Notable in Alan Godfrey's nine sheets were an oval 'MISSENT/TO/STRATFORD AVON', the modern, circular 'NOT AT' marks of Oxhill, Shilton and Meriden, and a wedding invitation sent from Lodge Park, Redditch to Greenland, Redditch which ended up in Copenhagen, where its journey towards the Arctic Circle probably ended.

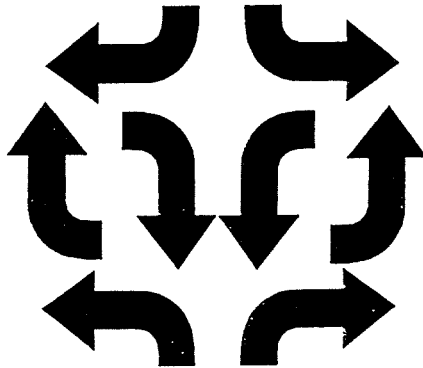
Derek Smeathers showed a letter of 1773 sent from Towcester to Daventry which went to Coleshill, a 'MISSENT-TO/NORTHAMPTON' of 1807, and a letter from Belgium to Northampton which went via Northampton, Massachusetts. Among Roy Summers' material were various missent marks of Wolverhampton and an item of the Uniform Fourpenny Post period redirected from Wolverhampton to London. Eric Lewis rounded off the afternoon with, amongst others, a manuscript 'Missent to' completed by a Darlaston UDC and another Sir Thomas Phillips item, this time missent to Bromyard. More of Eric's material is shown on the next page.

Whatever the topic, these afternoons devoted to nine (the numeracy hour has not yet reached the Midlands PHS) sheet displays never fail to bring out a wealth of fascinating items, and our afternoon in Warwick was no exception.

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## FIFTH CLAUSE POSTS

by John Calladine

What has probably led to Fifth Clause Posts being largely overlooked is the dearth of postal markings for, save in a handful of towns, there is little to tell us that a letter was carried in a 5th Clause Post. We, in the Midlands, the South-West and Bristol are lucky, because in our areas of interest, we have all the English 5th Clause Post handstamps that ever existed

Although there had been an official local post in London since 1682 for the collection and delivery of letters in and around the City of London, and, although an Act of Parliament of 1765 had authorised the establishment of penny posts at other posttowns, the only places in England where the Post Office considered penny posts viable (and had therefore established them) was at Manchester, Bristol and Birmingham in the 1790s and at Liverpool in 1801. Elsewhere and particularly in country areas, letters were fetched from posttowns by servants or village messengers. Such was the demand for a local service that, around many towns, postmasters had set up their own local posts employing their own messengers to deliver and collect letters and, for this service, they made a charge which was not remitted to the Post Office in London but which, after deduction of a small allowance to the messengers, made some profit which the postmaster retained to supplement his official salary. Recognising that circumstances varied widely from place to place and the difficulty of making an immediate profit from such an operation but wishing to regularise it, in 1801 the Post Office introduced an Act of Parliament (41 George III CAP 7), the 5th clause of which empowered the Post Office to set up official local posts to collect and deliver letters at places that were not posttowns at charges that were to be agreed with the inhabitants of those places. That Act was amended by a further Act in 1806 to make it clear that a Fifth Clause Post could be between any two places and not just between a village and a posttown. It is obvious why these posts were known as 'Fifth Clause Posts' but they were also officially known as 'Convention Posts' or 'Village Posts' and these alternative names are useful to us. A 'convention' was not originally an assembly of delegates but the agreement that such an assembly reached. A Convention Post is one that must be established by agreement. 'Village Post' reminds that these posts were set up principally to bring the post to villages - an objective which was ultimately to change. A second important clause in the 1801 Act was the 6th clause. This recognised the continuing right of inhabitants to make their own local arrangements. Unlike the General Post or a Penny Post where competing services were banned, a Fifth Clause Post was not a monopoly. If you wanted to have your letters taken to the nearest posttown independently, you could do so. Much has been written about the enlightenment of a Post Office that allowed this but there may have been some self-interest too. They could walk away from experiments that failed, still leaving the public with an unofficial alternative. Nevertheless, the key elements of a Fifth Clause Post were that its establishment and the charges levied had to be agreed between the post Office and the inhabitants who would use it and these inhabitants remained free to use an alternative service if they wished to.

It is worth keeping in the forefront of one's mind that where the Post Office set out to organise a 5th Clause Post there was more often than not some kind of unofficial post already in existence. The starting point for the establishment of an unofficial post was sometimes a petition from the inhabitants seeking an official service, quite often in the fond and vain hope that their community would be made a posttown served directly by the General Post from London. In other cases, The Post Office surveyor would come to the conclusion that an official local post was desirable. He would sound out the views of the local aristocracy and then convene a public meeting at which he would seek the inhabitants' agreement to his Fifth Clause Post.

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What did each side hope to get from such a post? From the inhabitants' point of view: firstly, they hoped to get messengers of greater efficiency and reliability than those that the postmaster used who, nationwide, were noted for their age, infirmity and bad character; secondly, they were often offered an earlier delivery and a later collection of letters; thirdly, receiving houses were usually opened at villages that had none; and fourthly, they expected to pay no more and hopefully less for this service than they had paid before. From the Post Office's point of view, the establishment of a Fifth Clause Post brought the post in the area under their control and direction. The Post Office also hoped, by encouraging people to write more letters, to increase General Post revenue. Although the Post Office was often faced with the need to recompense a postmaster for the loss of revenue from the displaced unofficial service, they limited that compensation payment to the current incumbent and did not pay it to his successor. Therefore, although the Fifth Clause Post might make no profit in the short term, the longer term prospects for a profit were very real.

The first Fifth Clause posts began in the year of the Act, 1801, and, contrary to what has been written, some made a profit in that year. In October 1801, the Southall district Fifth Clause Post was said to be "greatly to the accommodation of the inhabitants and to the advantage of the Revenue". Not all was smooth sailing in the early days. An attempt was made to set up a Fifth Clause Post at Coggeshall in 1801 where the residents had a long-standing dislike of the postmaster of Kelvedon, the posttown, and preferred to keep their own messenger. When the surveyor gave up and abandoned his scheme, he admitted that, if he were to call a public meeting, it might "cause much animosity and discontent and answer no beneficial purpose to the Revenue". Also in 1801, a proposed Fifth Clause Post at Bath was abandoned because the three private messengers in an unofficial post were said to be "scarcely paid for their trouble" and carried only about fifteen letters a day. They survived by carrying a few parcels. Francis Freeling, the Secretary to the Post Office, had favoured such a post at Bath for he had previous experience of the area but was finally convinced that it couldn't function, certainly not for the time being until more houses were built and occupied.

By analysing the data in Oxley's book on Provincial Local Posts, it seems likely that there were at least forty-five Fifth Clause Posts by 1806 and around sixty by 1808. Perhaps only another thirty were established after 1808. In all and at sometime there were Fifth Clause posts from more than seventy posttowns and the grand total of such posts (some towns having posts in more than one direction) certainly exceeded one hundred. In the early 1820s, there remained about twenty-five functioning posts in England and, by 1836, there were said to be just twenty-three posts serving fewer than fifty receiving houses in England and Wales. These latter statistics, though not disagreeing with Oxley's book which did not attempt to cover Wales were in fact taken from returns submitted to two Select Committees in 1838. Like other information produced hurriedly for committees examining Uniform Penny Postage, their complete accuracy is suspect.

Since there were more than a thousand penny posts, it is not hard to see why eighty or so Fifth Clause posts, many of them no longer operating in the 1820s and 30s, are overlooked but, at one time or another, two hundred or more places not served by the General Post relied on them. As I mentioned before, it is the absence of postal markings that has contributed to the near oblivion of these posts in postal history displays. Only twelve places in England and four places in Wales had distinctive handstamps and then not until 1816 or after.

Much is made of the Post Office's discovery in 1806 that, whereas they had previously been reluctant to carry newspapers and 'free' franked letters in a Fifth Clause Post without charge, they were in fact obliged to follow General Post practice and do so. However, although this is important because it had a profound effect on the future of Fifth Clause posts after about 1808, there were a number of early Fifth Clause posts that carried newspapers and franks free - the posts at Chertsey and Dartford are examples - and this was usually because there had been a precedent in an unofficial post. Free carriage might make viability marginal but not in every instance. Perversely, although the Fifth Clause posts had been set up principally to serve villages, it was in the country that the obligation to carry franks and newspapers without charge had the greatest impact on profitability for relatively large numbers were sent to the country seats of the gentry. In one minute of 1808, Freeling said "The 5th Clause ... was introduced for the purpose of trying experiments by agreement with the inhabitants and all the posts under it would have answered well if franks and newspapers had not been declared to be excepted from the charge". In another he said "the only 5th Clause posts that will be agreed in the future are dependent towns ..., villages or scattered houses will be made penny posts". Much is made of the fact that a penny post could charge for newspapers and franks and, where one was set up, no competing service was permitted. Less is said about the extreme reluctance of the Post Office to impose a penny post where it wasn't wanted. After 1808, there was a move to convert unprofitable Fifth Clause posts into penny posts. At Chippenham, there had been a Fifth Clause post to Corsham since 1806. When, in 1821, a Mr Long asked for a post office at Corsham, the surveyor, knowing that this would further threaten financial viability, decided that the answer was to abolish the Fifth Clause post, establish a penny post and sweeten the pill by rearranging the General Post so that letters for delivery at Corsham did not languish at Chippenham overnight. Nevertheless, the inhabitants would have none of it and went as far as threatening to invoke the sixth clause of the 1801 Act and set up their own delivery and collection service. Poor

Freeling had to write to the Postmasters General "Against this memorial, I presume your Lordships will think we cannot well contend and that the surveyor must be directed to retrace his steps and to place Corsham precisely in the same state in which it was". The surveyor had to do just that and a Fifth Clause Post remained until 1839.

One has a feeling that over the years, with penny posts in the ascendancy and Fifth Clause posts largely ignored, some surveyors, and particularly new ones, had developed wrong notions of Fifth Clause posts. In 1816, the then surveyor, Mr Woodcock - as fine a surveyor as the Post Office ever had - established a Fifth Clause Post at Malmesbury. Francis Freeling had suggested a ½d charge on letters, both in and out, but the inhabitants said it would be less complex if they paid 1d on delivery and no charge on outgoing letters. Since the surveyor was sure that more letters came into Malmesbury than went out, this scheme was agreed. In 1829, a new surveyor discovered that the post at Malmesbury was of "an extraordinary description". Freeling subsequently described it as "peculiar and unofficial" and blamed "a surveyor who is no longer a member of the department". In fact, the postmistress appeared to have remained true to precisely what had been agreed thirteen years earlier and allowed an open box at her office where letters could be left without payment for carriage to the posttown.

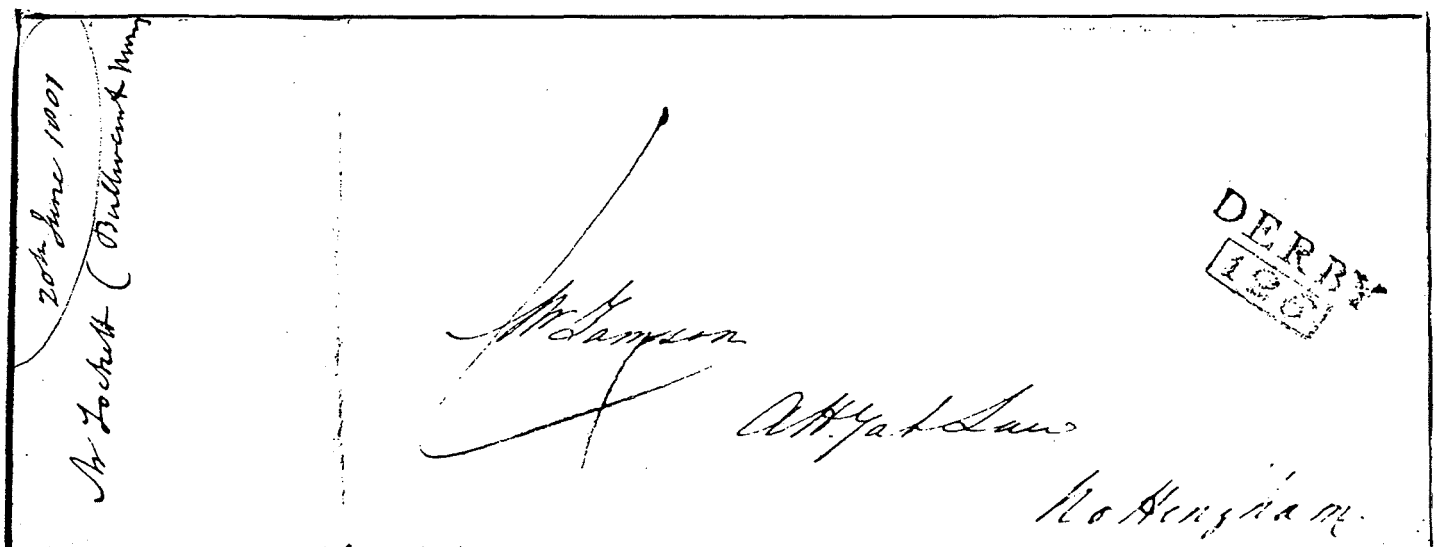
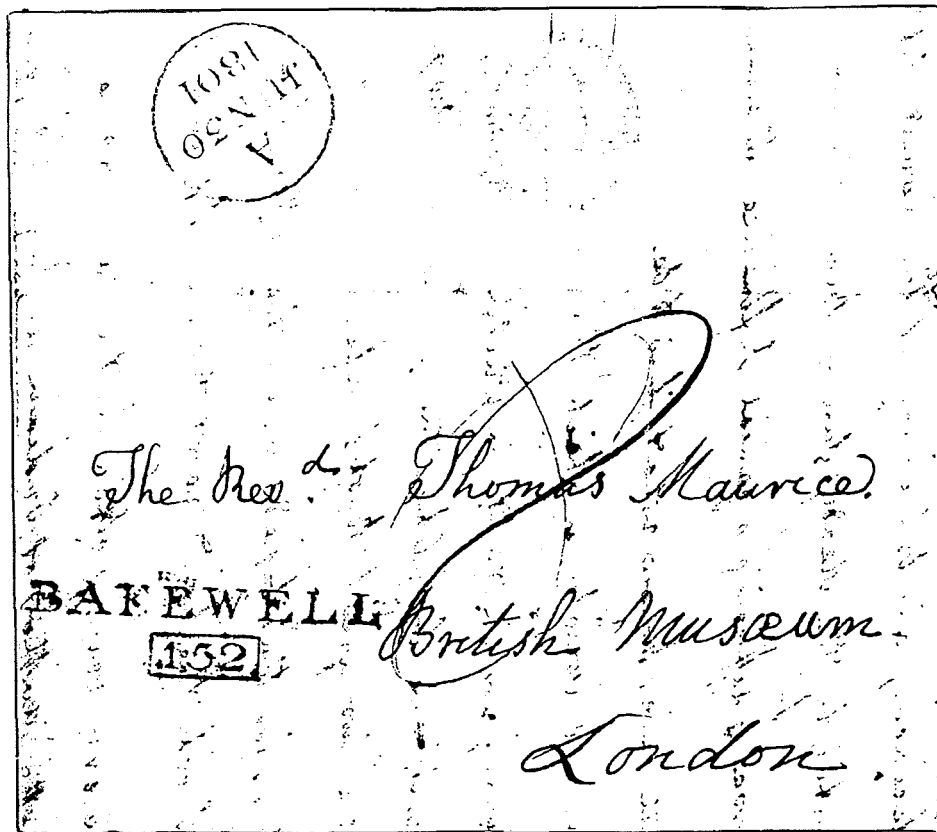
The provision of open boxes in Fifth Clause posts became something of an issue in the 1820s, in no small part provoked by an application to have open boxes, which had been a feature of penny posts since 1811, on the line of road between Bristol and Weston super Mare. While the surveyor had no qualms about open boxes and even made a virtue of them when convincing inhabitants that they would (overall) pay less, Freeling was greatly concerned. In 1823 he wrote "It is true that we have one or two precedents ... but I beg your Lordships distinctly to understand that this is a 5th Clause post and my doubt arises on this single point. The Post Office enters into a convention with the persons locally interested who agree to pay a certain price for the delivery and collection of their letters. If they are relieved from payment on putting in, that expense must fall on the person to whom the letter is addressed and who is not a party to the convention or agreement". Legal opinion subsequently backed Freeling's view and further open boxes in Fifth Clause posts were resisted. Nevertheless, some existing posts retained their open boxes and it was at one in Wales that the challenge Freeling feared came to a head.

The St Clears and Llaugharne Fifth Clause Post is full of interest. (It also happened to use Fifth Clause post handstamps at both towns.) In 1825, when a Fifth Clause post was mooted, it was stated that Llaugharne was a sub-office of Carmarthen and it held that status and yet neither it nor St Clears had a receiving house! St Clears, far from being a township out in the sticks, lay on the route of the London-Milford mailcoach, a few miles beyond Carmarthen. The unofficial arrangement was that the inhabitants paid for a messenger to deliver the letters at both places, these having been dropped at the tollgate at St Clears. The surveyor suggested a Fifth Clause post, charging 1d on each paid and unpaid letter, and he established receiving houses at both places with open boxes. (There were so many irregularities in this arrangement that one hardly knows where to start.) Freeling was very concerned about these open boxes but wrote "Until that point" (concerning the validity of open boxes in 5th Clause posts) "is distinctly settled and as it may be advantageous to the neighbourhood, I am not prepared to object to it in this instance - if it hereafter be questioned, we can retrace our steps". And questioned it certainly was. A letter from a Carmarthen lawyer, written in 1830, spoke of "extortion" and sought the indictment of the postmaster of Carmarthen and of the receivers at St Clears and Llaugharne. His complaint was that he was being asked to pay a charge of 5d on letters received from St Clears and Llaugharne when the former was just nine miles from Carmarthen and latter twelve miles. What the surveyor was charging was 1d Fifth Clause rate on top of 4d Short Letter rate to Carmarthen! These letters were being put into open boxes and the recipient left to foot the bill. The Post Office solicitor was consulted and the point he picked up was that you couldn't charge both rates because Fifth Clause posts were for "the conveyance of letters between places not having any other post communication". At St Clears, the letters were arriving on a mailcoach! Freeling displayed his administrative skill in full by advising the Postmaster General to write to the gentleman who had complained and to tell him that the 5d rate was not an "imposition", as he had claimed, but an arrangement entered into with the inhabitants at the time the post was established. In the meantime, to sort out the illegality he clearly recognised, he decided to make St Clears a posttown and to retain the 1d Fifth Clause post charge between Llaugharne and St Clears. I don't know whether he subsequently closed the remaining open box at Llaugharne.

What comes out of any exploration of the charming Fifth Clause posts is their individuality. Was there ever such a thing as a 'typical' Fifth Clause post? One could discuss them for hours.

## EARLY BOXED MILEAGE MARKS

James Grimwood-Taylor has responded to the challenge in MM111/16 by sending copies of three boxed mileage marks used in 1801. These are Chesterfield on a letter dated 14th May 1801, Derby on a letter dated 20th June 1801 and Bakewell posted on 28th June 1801. Can anyone beat 14th May?



## NOTES ON THE POSTAL HISTORY AND POSTMARKS OF WHITCHURCH, SHROPSHIRE (1707-1850)

by Brian Atkins

- 1673 The Peover Papers show that Mr Chetwood was the deputy (1.8/352) and (Vol1.8/428) discuss the removal of the deputy postmaster, Mr Phillips.
- 1674 Again the Peover Papers show that Mr Capper of Nantwich was addressed concerning the refusal to dismiss the deputy, Mrs Phillips (1.9/501).
- 1677 Gardiner's Survey shows Whitchurch served by a by-post from Nantwich on the Chester road.
- 1684-90 No return from Whitchurch in the annual returns to the Post Office.
- 1690 A Post Office Notice of 14th July states that letters for Whitchurch, which had previously been sent in the Birmingham bag, were from 2nd August to be sent in a bag to 'Widow Rycroft' at Whitchurch.
- 1691 Joan Rycroft, postmistress, made an annual return but received no salary.
- 1700 A Post Office Notice states that from 29th September the Cross Post already running between Exeter and Bristol will be extended to run via Gloucester, Worcester, Shrewsbury and Whitchurch to Shrewsbury, twice a week.
- 1702-06 J. Roycroft paid a Cross Post salary of £30 and a varying Cross Post salary between 1712 and 1721.
- 1723 Charles Watson, postmaster at Whitchurch (until 1735), then, Robert Williamson (1736-62), Richard Bulkely (1763-67), James Spencer (1768-73) and Elizabeth Spencer (1774-93), with a salary from 1786.
- 1794 Beckett - no first name given - a name which continues for many years. Pigot's Directory (1828) gives Mrs Beckett as the postmistress. Letters are despatched from Shrewsbury by a horse post at 8 a.m. and arrive every evening at 5 o'clock (presumably through Wem).
- 1795 In August, Mr Saverland was at Whitchurch where he found the rider "so much in liquor" he couldn't take the mail to Shrewsbury. Saverland sent a "steady person" in his place and instructed the deputy at Shrewsbury to find a "sober" replacement! (MM78/19). Soon after, the crosspost between Whitchurch and Chester was brought to an end as shown by a minute (Post 40/149/1795) which reads "...Mr Saverland has also proposed the ride to and from Chester and Whitchurch 3 times a week should be discontinued as an unnecessary expense. It costs the Revenue £35 p. ann. and as Mr Saverland is of the opinion that the accommodation will be as great and the Letters go as quick by way of Wolverhampton. Indeed it appears the greater part of the Correspondence of Whitchurch with Chester is already forwarded by that route, instead of the direct one and under these circumstances ..., Your Lordships may think it right to adopt Mr Saverland's proposition from 10th. Oct. next ..."
- 1803 A petition to extend the post from Whitchurch to Nantwich in order to give "a communication with Chester" was rejected because the expenses would increase to £84 p.a. "to benefit only a part of the correspondence of one posttown, namely Whitchurch and the neighbouring town of Wem." The petitioners had stated that letters to Chester through Wolverhampton took 3 days longer, but this was refuted by Freeling who wrote "...this is not the fact, though the letters certainly are 24 hours longer in their journey than if there were a direct post..." (Post 42/55/1803).
- 1808 The ride between Whitchurch and Chester was re-established when the mailcoach between London and Holyhead via Shrewsbury was set up in 1808 (Post 42/190/1808). It appears that the contractor refused to renew it after the first year at the contract price and the connection was switched to a ride between Chester and Chirk through Wrexham (Post 42/390/1804).
- 1828 Whitchurch Penny Post established, probably in December 1828, with a receiving house at Malpas, in Cheshire, from where an account of letters at that time showed a penny post would bring in £24 p.a. to the Revenue (Post 42/971/1828).
- 1835 The only mailcoach to serve Whitchurch started on 15th January 1835 and ran between Shrewsbury and Chester, but was replaced by a horse post on 5th April 1836.

- 1835 In November 1835, the surveyor reported that the villages of Handley and Tattenhill (both in Cheshire) were pressing for an official delivery of letters. As the letters would be carried on the mailcoach from Whitchurch to Chester the only expense would be a salary of £6 pa for a receiver at Handley and £4 p.a. for the "distinct service" of delivering letters twice daily to both Handley and Tattenhill. The surveyor also recommended John Gregson as "a fit and proper person" to take charge of the letters at Handley. The addition to the Whitchurch Penny Post was approved by P.M.G. on 30th November 1835 and established on 6th January 1836 (Post 42/688/1835).
- 1837 Whitmore Station on the Grand Junction Railway opened in July 1837, and the following year parts of North Shropshire began to receive their principal mails by mailcart from this station.
- 1839 On 31st December 1839, part of a notice in Eddowes' Salopian Journal, on behalf of Shrewbury Post Office read, "The (Letter) Box will be shut at a quarter past seven in the morning for the Welshpool Mail and likewise for the Whitchurch Post."
- 1849 Post 35/5844/1849 (11th December) states "The London correspondence for Whitchurch is conveyed by a Mail Cart from Whitmore Station of the L. & N.W. Rly. Co., passing through Market Drayton and the village of Prees." The mail arrived at Whitchurch at 7 a.m., and was despatched "as early as" 5.45 p.m. The minute also confirmed there was a mail cart from Shrewsbury to Whitchurch, through Wem, which carried only local mail to Whitchurch. Col. Maberly proposed stopping the cart from Whitmore station at Market Drayton and the cart from Shrewsbury at Wem and establishing a cart from Crewe to serve Whitchurch and to supply Nantwich with its night mail. Maberly suggested that the arrival of the mail at Whitchurch would now be at 5.30 a.m. and the despatch "need not be before 7.45 p.m.". A footpost was established from Whitchurch to serve Prees with a wage of 12 pence a week. The direct connection between Whitchurch and Chester via Malpas was to cease, with Malpas to be served directly from Whitchurch. It is doubtful if the cart between Whitchurch and Wem ceased as, in 1851, L. Griffiths "the present foot messenger" applied to set up a ride from Wem to Weston, Prees, Tilstock and Whitchurch, with Tilstock becoming a receiving office at £3 p.a. for the receiver, plus £1 p.a. for the delivery of letters (Post 35/585/1851).

## WC 2 (SH 748)

WHITCHURCH

|                 |                  |
|-----------------|------------------|
| Size:           | 38x4 mm          |
| Date of Issue:  | Not Known        |
| Recorded Dates: | 1707 - 15MAY1719 |
| Colour:         | Black            |

## WC 4 (SH 750)

WHIT  
CHURCH X

|                 |                       |
|-----------------|-----------------------|
| Size:           | 34x11 mm              |
| Date of Issue:  | Not Known             |
| Recorded Dates: | 13OCT1713 - 24NOV1714 |
| Colour:         | Black                 |

## WC 6 (SH 751)

WHIT-  
CHURCH

|                 |             |
|-----------------|-------------|
| Size:           | 24x10 mm    |
| Date of Issue:  | Not Known   |
| Recorded Dates: | 1721 - 1730 |
| Colour:         | Black       |

## WC 8 (SH 758)

WHIT  
CHURCH

|                 |             |
|-----------------|-------------|
| Size:           | 30x11 mm    |
| Date of Issue:  | Not Known   |
| Recorded Dates: | 1746 - 1768 |
| Colour:         | Black       |

## WC 10 (SH 768)



Size: 39 mm  
 Date of Issue: Not Known  
 Recorded Dates: 1761 - 8SEP1780  
 Colour: Black

The record of 1761 is from "The Postal History Of Great Britain and Ireland" (page 18) by the late Martin Willcocks. Martin was unable to confirm the date of use which I questioned as it overlaps the period of use of WC 8 by several years. Martin's opinion was that the overlap was not surprising for he maintained the Post Office was experimenting with different types of handstamp at that time.

## WC 12 (SH 771)



Size: 50x16 mm  
 Date of Issue: Not Known  
 Recorded Dates: 1785 - 30JUL1792  
 Colour: Black

## WC 14 (SH 773)



Size: 41x16 mm  
 Date of Issue: Not Known  
 Recorded Dates: 20OCT1789 - 1790  
 Colour: Black

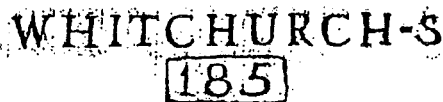
The letters of WC 12 and WC 14 have a similar distribution. Why would a relatively small office like Whitchurch use two such similar handstamps at the same time, particularly with one of them having the letter 'S' (denoting Shropshire) removed? An experiment of some description?

## WC 16 (SH 776)



Size: 37 mm diameter  
 Date of Issue: Not Known  
 Recorded Dates: 1794 - 15OCT1800  
 Colour: Black

## WC 18 (SH 780)



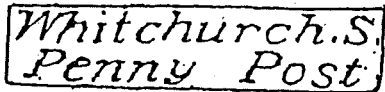
Size: 55x11 mm  
 Date of Issue: Not known, but probably 1801.  
 Recorded Dates: 2SEP1803 - 1827  
 Colour: Black

## WC 20 (SH 783)



Size: 24 mm diameter  
 Date of Issue: 29OCT1827 (SIB 1/202)  
 Recorded Dates: 1827 - 19DEC1839  
 Colour: Black

WC 22 (SH 790)



Size:  
Date of Issue:  
Recorded Dates:  
Colour:

50x11 mm  
Not known, but probably March 1829.  
9APR1829 - 27MAY1836  
Black

WC 24 (SH 792)



Size:  
Date of Issue:  
Recorded Dates:  
Colour:

9x8 mm  
Not known, but probably December 1839.  
9DEC1839 - 19DEC1839  
Black

WC 26 (SH 785)

Skeleton, illustration  
not available.

Size:  
Date of Issue:  
Recorded Dates:  
Colour:

31 mm diameter  
Not known, but probably January 1840.  
22JAN1840  
Black

WC 28 (SH 786)



Size:  
Date of Issue:  
Recorded Dates:  
Colour:  
Recorded Dates:  
Colour:

29 mm diameter  
23JAN1840 (SIB 4/108)  
3FEB1840 - 21JAN1849  
Black  
26FEB1849 - 26OCT1850  
Blue

WC 30



Size:  
Date of Issue:  
Recorded Dates:  
Colour:

24x19 mm  
Not known, but probably APR/MAY1840  
15JUN1844 - 1JUL1856  
Black and Blue



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## THE SURVEYORS' JOURNALS' (Part 38)

The journals for January 1829 appear to be missing. Mr Churchill spent most of the last two weeks of February 1829 in charge of the Birmingham post office in consequence of the absence of several of the clerks through illness. While in Birmingham he investigated the loss of a letter containing money sent from Dublin to Messrs Simcox and Pemberton in Birmingham. Finding a new contractor for the horse post between Coventry and Nuneaton took up the last two days of the month.

Mr Churchill was back in Birmingham on 13th March, by order of Freeling, to take charge of the office again as a result of numerous complaints about "irregularities and neglect in the performance of the different duties ..." He was to remain in Birmingham until 20th April. The time was spent in "... attending personally to all the duties and enforcing the strictest attention on the part of all the Clerks ...". Mr Churchill also found the time to arrange a horse post between Warwick and Leamington as well as continuing his enquiries into the lost letter during which he visited Stourbridge.

In mid-May, Mr Churchill visited Ellesmere and Whitchurch to inspect those offices, regulate the horse posts and to enquire about the amount of "Northern Correspondence" as he had received a petition from Whitchurch asking for a direct communication with Chester. He spent the last week of the month at Bilston as he had received a petition asking for a "regular" post office there. After he had looked into the amount of correspondence and surveyed the neighbourhood, Mr Churchill proposed that Bilston be made a posttown. For most of June, he was in Wales but the first three days he was engaged at Shifnal, "regulating the Penny Posts", and at Wellington inspecting the office.

At the start of July, we find Mr Churchill again in Birmingham. This time to find a new contractor for the ride to Henley and Stratford, to regulate the foot messengers in the various penny posts, and to discuss with a Mr Ingle his taking over the Bilston office. He then went on to inspect the office at Walsall, arrange an earlier delivery, revise the circulation of letters to the North, and alter the time of the messenger to meet the North Mail at Wednesbury. After he had installed a new sub-deputy at Fazeley, Mr Churchill went to Chester and Whitchurch to find out the cost of putting on a ride between those two places.

Towards the end of the month, Mr Churchill went to Wolverhampton and Birmingham to prepare for the opening of a post office at Bilston. This took up over two weeks and involved "... instructing the new Postmaster in his various duties, making out circulation lists, and arranging for a free delivery of the Letters throughout the Town, and also for a daily Country delivery to the various Manufactories & Iron Works in the neighbourhood, and discontinuing the Foot Messenger between Bilston & Wolverhampton ...". He then went on to Stafford to discuss with Mr Littleton M.P. a proposed plan for serving Penkridge from Walsall by a daily ride. From 20th to 25th August he was in the area of Chester, Whitchurch and Malpas arranging a direct communication to and from Chester by means of a horse post, so saving a day in the "Northern Correspondence". The footpost to and from Malpas was withdrawn and a second delivery was introduced at both Whitchurch and Malpas.

Mr Churchill was in North Wales for the whole of September. In mid-October he went to Wolverhampton and Walsall to put on a daily ride (from Walsall) through Cannock to Penkridge, so giving an earlier delivery of the London letters. The footpost between Walsall and Cannock was withdrawn. He then went on to Coventry to prepare penny posts to Allesley, Meriden and Stonebridge.

The journals for the remaining two months of 1829 cannot be found.

At the start of February 1829, Mr Rideout was in Kidderminster finding a new contractor for the ride to Wolverhampton. Next, he went to Droitwich to discontinue the charge made for delivery of letters. He then went on to Malvern to prepare a communication between the Malverns and Ledbury. Mr Rideout's next task, in a busy month, was to establish a penny post at Ombersley. The rest of February was spent in the area of Hereford, Hay and Brecon, making arrangements for the withdrawal of the mailcoach.

Complaints about the "general irregularities" of the office at Stroud took Mr Rideout to that town in mid-March. It was a long ride from there to Ludlow to find a new contractor for the ride to Bishop's Castle. At the end of the month he was in Cheltenham to extend the penny post to Alstone and up the Tewkesbury road. Then three days were spent in Tewkesbury and Upton-on-Severn establishing a penny post between the two towns.

In mid-May we find Mr Rideout at Ledbury and Great Malvern, instructing the new postmaster at Ledbury and opening a penny post between Great Malvern and Ledbury through Malvern Wells. [See MM110/16 - It appears that a penny post did not operate between Ledbury and the Malverns from May 1827 to May 1829. Can anyone produce a cover to show that this statement is wrong?]

An application for a penny post from Oxford to Kidlington, Gosford and Islip took Mr Rideout to those places in June. It was only a short ride to Abingdon to investigate the possibility of opening a penny post to Marcham, Fyfield and Kingston Inn. There were two other matters to be investigated in June: complaints about the penny post to Upton-on-Severn and an allegation that the postmaster of Stroud had opened a letter.

Mr Rideout spent much of August trying to alter the rides based on Stratford-on-Avon which took him to Kineton, Warwick, Redditch, Bromsgrove, Alcester and Chipping Norton. While at Alcester, his first visit since the appointment of a new deputy, he arranged for an allowance for a letter carrier as the inhabitants had refused to pay the extra charge for delivery.

The only other items of business worthy of note are the opening in October of the penny posts mentioned above from Oxford and Abingdon.

Mr Karstadt transacted only one piece of business in the Midlands in the first half of 1829. In April, he investigated a charge that the postmaster of Worksop had opened a letter in its transit through his office.

The first half of July was spent in arranging the rides made necessary by the withdrawal of the Sheffield and Manchester mailcoach. On the 6th and 7th August, Mr Karstadt was in Stockport to supervise the start of the penny post to Marple, New Mills and Hayfield. He then went to Sheffield to finalise arrangements for the withdrawal of the Manchester mailcoach.

On 7th September, Mr Karstadt arrived in Derby to inspect that office and to consider an request for more clerks. From Derby he went on to Melton Mowbray to consider an application for an increase in the wages of the letter carrier. His next call was at Mansfield where the postmaster had been accused of opening a letter. He then inspected the ride between Mansfield and Newark and all of those based on Nottingham.

## ADDENDA

### TWO OXFORDSHIRE PENNY POSTS

In a letter dated August 1828 and written at Kidlington the Rev. Dr. J. Jones, the Vice-Chancellor of Oxford University, asked for improved postal facilities at Kidlington and its neighbourhood. He gave details of the various villages and pointed out that the mailcart from Oxford to Bicester passed through one of these villages, Gosford. So not only would little expense would be incurred if a bag could be dropped off there in the morning and one taken up in the evening containing the letters of Kidlington, Gosford, Watereaton, Islip and Hampton Poyle, but there was a person at Gosford willing and qualified to manage this.

For some reason which is not stated it was June 1829 before Mr Rideout reported on this application. He confirmed the details given by Rev. Jones and added that Kidlington and Hampton Poyle were served from Woodstock where an extra charge of 4d a letter was made, and Islip and Watereaton were supplied from Oxford with an extra charge of 2d each letter. Mr Rideout said that the correspondence for these villages was small, amounting to no more than £12 p.a. However, this would be enough to cover the cost of a receiving house at Gosford from where each individual could claim his letters. The penny post bag would be made up at Oxford and dropped off at Gosford at 7 a.m. by the Bicester mailcart which on its return would pick up the bag at 7 p.m.

Freeling said that where they set up penny posts it was expected that they should deliver the letters but as Mr Rideout believed that the inhabitants would be satisfied with their letters being left at a place near them he was prepared to approve the proposition on an experimental basis for one year.

Also in June 1829, Mr Rideout reported that when the Oxford and Bath mailcoach had been withdrawn a place called Kingston Inn (Kingston Bagpuize) had been deprived of its usual post so an allowance of 5/- a week had been paid for a footpost from Abingdon. He had now visited Abingdon and Kingston Inn and found that the messenger delivered, on his way, the letters at Tubney and Fyfield. The number of these letters was not large enough to pay for a penny post but if the village of Marcham, the letters for which were delivered by a private messenger charging one penny on each letter, was included then the letters were likely to yield about £38 p.a. which would leave a profit of almost £2 p.a. after paying 12/- a week for the messenger and salaries of £22.0 and £33.0 to the receivers at Marcham and Kingston Inn respectively. [Note: Until 1974 these places were in Berkshire.]

A minute of November 1830 reported that as the penny post to Kingston Inn had made a profit of nearly £14 in the year since its introduction while that to Gosford had yielded nearly £21 they were to be made permanent.

[References: Post 40/504/1829, 40/510/1829, 40/882/1830]

## THE POSTS OF STRATFORD-ON-AVON

Mr Rideout began a report written in September 1829 by stating the times of the various rides based on Stratford. The ride from Chipping Norton left there at 5.10 a.m. reached Shipstone (11 miles) at 6.40 a.m. and arrived in Stratford (10 miles) at 8 a.m. At Stratford the sorting for the various branch rides took place.

That to Bromsgrove left at 8.20 a.m. reaching Alcester (8 miles) at 9.18, Redditch (8 miles) at 10.18 and Bromsgrove (6 miles) at 11.06 a.m.. The return left Bromsgrove at 2 p.m. and reached Stratford at 4.50 p.m.

The Warwick ride left at 8.25 a.m. arriving in Warwick at 9.45. It returned at 3.45 p.m. reaching Stratford at 5.05.

The Kineton ride left at 8.28 a.m., reached Wellesbourne (6 miles) at 9.23 and Kineton (4 miles) at 9.58. The return left at 3.15 p.m., arriving in Stratford at 4.45 p.m.

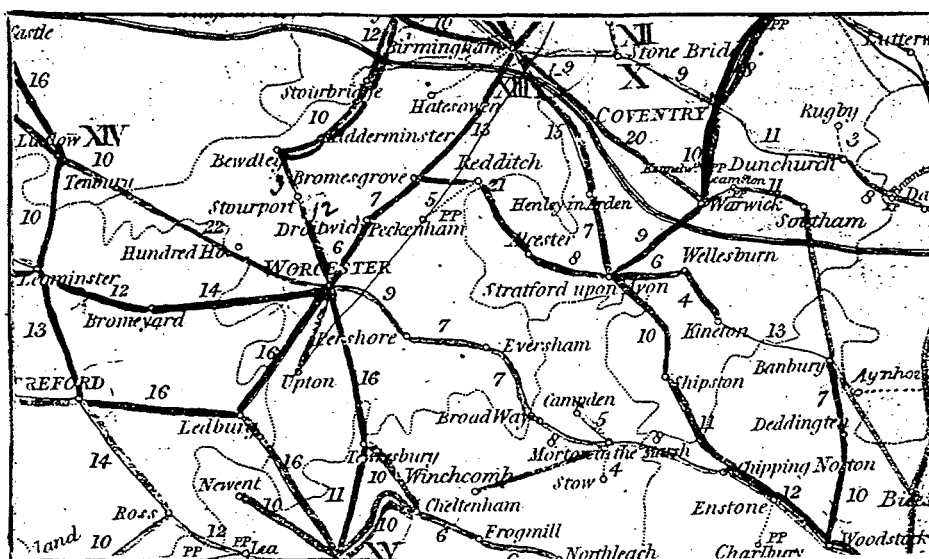
The ride to Birmingham departed at 8.10 a.m., reached Henley-in-Arden (8 miles) at 9.10 and arrived in Birmingham (15 miles) at 11. The return was at 2.15 p.m. and the arrival in Stratford was at 5.05.

The ride to Chipping Norton left Stratford at 5.30 p.m. and arrived in Chipping Norton at 8.20 p.m. in time for the mailcoach from Worcester to London at 9 p.m.

Mr Rideout proposed some "material alterations" in the times of the return mails. The dispatch from Bromsgrove was to be forty minutes later at 2.40 p.m. while that from Warwick was to be at 4 p.m. The former was to arrive in Stratford at 5.30 and the latter at 5.20 p.m. The departure from Kineton was to be at 3.45 giving an arrival at Stratford at 5.15 p.m. The return from Birmingham was to be at 2.15, reaching Stratford at 5.30 p.m. and so allowing twenty minutes for office duty. The departure from Stratford at 5.50 p.m. gave an arrival in Chipping Norton at 8.40 p.m.

Mr Rideout was able to negotiate new terms for these rides resulting in a saving of over £100.

[Ref: Post 40/758/1829]



## STEEL VERSUS BRASS HANDSTAMPS

In November 1829, Freeling reported to the P.M.G. that it had always been impressed upon postmasters that they should mark all letters clearly with their official stamp and for this purpose the Post Office had been anxious to supply them with stamps which combined clearness with durability. For many years the stamps had been made of brass but as a result of a trial started in 1824 Lord Chichester had ordered that all the stamps be made of steel. The Post Office employed a manufacturer in Birmingham who charged £2 for a stamp with dates and duplicate figures, and 7s/6d for those without dates. Previously, they had paid £1.16.0 for datestamps and 7/- for undated ones of brass. The person who had supplied these brass stamps had now offered datestamps made of brass with the dates made of type metal for £1.8.0. So that the P.M.G. could come to a correct judgement of the relative merits of steel and brass handstamps, he (Freeling) had written to several of the principal postmasters asking their opinion and, in particular, the length of time for which each type of stamp remained serviceable.

The postmasters concerned, those of Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham, Oxford, Bristol, Bath, York, Brighton and Newcastle-on-Tyne, were all of the opinion that the steel stamps were superior to those made of brass.

The postmaster of Newcastle said that he only had one steel stamp which had been in constant use for three years, though it was worn and would have to be replaced soon. On the other hand, brass stamps gave fair impressions for about twelve to sixteen months and were more liable to clog with dirt. Mr Butler, the postmaster of Oxford, wrote that the steel stamp used in that office had worn much better than the brass ones and a steel one would last as long as two or three made of brass. The deputy of Birmingham had not kept records of the time the handstamps remained in use but commented that the letters and figures made of brass became rounded at the edges after being in use for a short time. At Sheffield the postmaster was not able to give an opinion as that office had never had a steel stamp. The only one in that office was made of brass and had been in use over five years. The postmaster at Liverpool had kept careful records. A brass stamp received in January 1823 lasted for twelve months; one received in January 1824 lasted nine months; a third brass stamp received in October 1824 was used for six months before being superseded by a steel stamp. This had remained in use for two years but had often been laid aside since corrosion had been caused by its being used with the same ink as had been used with the brass stamps. However, his present stamp had been in use since 16th May 1827 in conjunction with an oil-based ink. He concluded that if a steel stamp was used with an oil-based ink the stamps were always bright, made a sharper impression than brass and lasted three times longer.

If the handstamps mentioned above appear to have had short lives compared with others, it should be remembered that these were busier offices than most. [Ref: Post 40/896/1829]

### WITHDRAWAL OF THE SHEFFIELD-MANCHESTER MAILCOACH

As a consequence of a number of representations made about the inconvenience of the mailcoach between Manchester and Sheffield via Buxton [See MM101/14] a new coach running by the more direct route of Glossop was introduced as early as 1822. The main complaints made about the mailcoach running via Buxton were that the route was circuitous, it did not suit the communication between Sheffield and Liverpool, and its late arrival at Sheffield. The direct mail by Glossop was arranged expressly to remedy this, leaving Manchester on the arrival of the Liverpool mail by Knutsford, remaining at Sheffield two hours in the middle of the day and returning to Manchester in time for the Liverpool mail to be sent to Knutsford. The only drawback to this was the limited time, from noon to 2 p.m., for answering letters. However, by 1829, another route via Leeds had been opened which allowed letters for Manchester and Liverpool to be sent out at 3.30 p.m. reaching Manchester and Liverpool at 6 and 11 a.m. respectively the next day. This together with the fact that the letters arriving at Manchester in the interval between the departure of the coaches via Glossop and Buxton (7 and 10.30 a.m. respectively) could be sent through Leeds with little delay made the Buxton coach redundant.

Mr Karstadt in a report of July 1829 then outlined how the various places on the Buxton route could be served without covering the whole line of road with rides. Buxton received all its letters via the mailcoach apart from three months in the year when, to avoid the delay of the London bag caused by the times of the mailcoach, an express ride from Leek was provided. But, it was possible to serve Buxton from Leek all the year, particularly as the up and down Manchester mailcoaches nearly met at Leek. By this means the bag from Manchester would arrive only an hour later and the London bag would arrive a day earlier - 3 p.m. instead of 9 a.m. The letters from Sheffield would have to be sent through Manchester, arriving at 3 p.m. instead of 9 a.m., but these only amounted to £2.10.0 a month.

Bakewell received its London bag and most of bye-letters by a ride from Derby. On the abolition the letters to and from Sheffield would have to go via Derby but would still be delivered the same day. However the Manchester letters, which amounted to only £6 a month, would also be sent through Derby and be subject to delay.

Tideswell which had a messenger to meet the mailcoach at Taddington would have to send to Buxton but would gain the improved communication with London given to Buxton.

[Note: MM101/9 has the coach (139) as being withdrawn on 5th April 1829, yet Mr Karstadt's report, written on 30th June 1829, implies that the coach was still running and the withdrawal was imminent.]

[Ref: Post 40/551/1829]

### CONTROL OF THE SURVEYORS

In July 1829 Freeling wrote to the Postmaster General:

"I have on different occasions expressed to your Grace's Predecessors my opinion that when our Riding Surveyors are actively employed in inspecting the duties at the Post Offices, checking the accounts, revising the Circulations, pursuing plans for the accommodation of the Public, etc. etc., the usual allowance of twenty six shillings per day, which is in fact given as an inducement to these particular services, is well expended.

"It has long been an object with me to obtain as detailed an account as possible of the movements of these Officers. Your Grace is aware that they transmit Monthly Statements shewing in what manner they have been employed, and these are looked at critically, and if anything occurs to me requiring explanation I apply for it.

"It is frequently the case however that the Surveyors proceed to different parts of their Districts without the object of their journeys being previously known here, and indeed there are many instances, in which this is absolutely unavoidable, such as sudden accidents, information of the decease or absconding of a Postmaster, loss of Bags, irregularity in the Horse Posts etc. Whenever the objects are not of this passing nature, however, it is desirable that the Surveyor should state (if possible before he proceeds) the nature of the business on which he is about to be engaged. In many cases this is done, (I have always inculcated it), but it is not a general practice.

"I do not mean to insinuate that their Travelling, which is the chief source of their Emoluments, is not regulated by right and honourable feelings; my firm conviction is that such is the fact, but if no other good resulted, it would in my opinion be maintaining only a proper discipline with such large sums are annually allowed in per diems, and travelling expences.

"From what has been stated your Grace will see that it is difficult, and might be injurious, to lay down a positive rule on the subject, but I think the end might be attained if your Grace authorised me to explain to the Surveyors without reserve what we desire to accomplish, and to state that your Grace relies upon their entering into your feeling to give effect to the object in view."

[Ref: Post 40/614/1829]

#### THE NEXT MIDLAND MAIL

It is hoped that this will appear towards the end of January and will contain the usual features. While I have some material in hand, there is room for articles, long or short, which should be sent to:

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

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