MIDLAND MAIL

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

President: John Soer

Chairman: Roger Broomfield

Treasurer: Elizabeth Lewis

Secretary: Eric Lewis

Number 99, April 1997

NEW MEMBER

We offer a warm welcome to Roger Vaughan of Godalming, Surrey whose postal history interests include Surrey, South Wales, Gloucestershire and parts of Warwickshire.

UPDATED SOCIETY RULES

The opportunity has been taken to produce an updated set of both the Society's rules and competition rules which include the amendments agreed at various A.G.Ms. since they were first published. A set of each of the above with a set of the library rules is enclosed with this issue.

The rules for each of the three competitions have been clarified as there has been some doubt in members minds in the past as to what can be included in each section.

MIDPEX 1997

The Society will again be having a stand at this major event which will take place on Saturday, 28th June from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Midland Sports Centre for the Disabled, Tile Hill, Coventry. The venue is adjacent to Tile Hill station to which there are frequent local trains from Birmingham New Street, Birmingham International and Coventry. There will be 60 specialist societies and over 40 dealers present, catering for all philatelic tastes. No doubt those members who visited the 1995 Midpex will be going again this year, and those who did not are advised not to miss this major philatelic event of the Midlands.

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THE SOCIETY WINS A MAJOR AWARD

As mentioned very briefly in 'Midland Mail' 98/1, the Society has won a major philatelic award. The Rowland Hill Awards were instituted by Royal Mail in 1996 to honour achievements that promote philately and launch the hobby into the 21st century. Co-sponsored by the British Philatelic Trust and the Philatelic Traders Society, they are intended to become a prestige event in the philatelic calendar. Certainly the awards ceremony, at a black-tie dinner in the heart of the Victoria and Albert Museum, was a most auspicious inauguration of the scheme and your Coordinating Editor, who was lucky enough to represent the Society, reports that it would have been reward enough merely to be present at such an event.

There are fourteen Rowland Hill Awards in three broad categories, Innovation, Initiative and Commercial Enterprise. The Initiative awards (of which there are seven) include a Research Award for original work in the form of published material by a philatelic society or a national periodical. The latest edition of our UDC book made us eligible for the 1996 award but it was apparent that the awarding body also took a wider view of the Nominee's research achievements. We are most grateful to the Somerset & Dorset PHG for their nomination and particularly to our good friend John Millener, their chairman. It has been a cruel blow of fate that, more recently, John has suffered a heart attack and we all wish him a complete and speedy recovery. It was fitting that he was the first to know of the Society's success.

The nominations were whittled down to a short list of three for each award during preliminary examination. However, like the Hollywood 'Oscars', no one (other than the awarding body) was aware of the winner of each award until an envelope was duly opened at the awards dinner. When the three nominations for the Research Award were announced, the Society was said to be "at the forefront of researching and publishing literature on the postmarks of the Midlands area and of the penny posts". Specific mention was made of the depth of the Society's research. The other nominees in this category were formidable. Gerald Bater had carried out research into aspects of GB philately not previously undertaken, notably of the high value stamps, and Dr James Mackay's work needs no introduction. He is the most prolific writer in the history of philately and a Doctor of Literature whose 160 published books include not only every aspect of philately and postal history but the definitive work on Robert Burns. To be mentioned in the same breath as "Jim" is no small achievement.

The Award winners were announced by Mr John Orford, Marketing and Sales Director of Harrison & Sons, and the presentations were by the Director and General Manager Royal Mail, Mr Adam Novak. It was a heart-stopping moment when the Society was announced as the winner of the Research Award. The Award consists of a most attractive trophy, which the Society retains, and a certificate. Both are very splendid items designed by a noted graphic design consultancy, Delaney Design Consultants. The trophy is best described as a vertical rectangular plinth of polished slate, about five inches high. The inclined top surface bears a metal facsimile of Slania's magnificent engraved die of Rowland Hill which was used for the 25p value of last year's Communications stamps. The front face of the plinth is engraved as follows:

BRITISH PHILATELIC TRUST
INITIATIVE AWARD FOR
RESEARCH 1996

MIDLAND GB
POSTAL HISTORY SOSIETY

The
Rowland Hill
Awards

The certificate is printed in lithography, letterpress and intaglio on a French mould paper specifically made for prints. Slania's engraving of Rowland Hill is central to the design, together with a facsimile signature and a symbol based on the Maltese Cross. Even the Souvenir Menu for the dinner is a masterpiece of the designer's art and bears one of the 25p Communications stamps cancelled with a 'Rowland Hill Awards' datestamp. All items will be on display at the AGM in April.

The Society will surely treasure this award which is the culmination of some twelve years collaborative work. So many members have contributed to our research in one way or another that we can all feel that we have played our part in winning the trophy. Let's hope it will prove an inspiration to us and that we will be encouraged to redouble our efforts to make sure that the latest project - mileage marks and mail routes - surpasses even the best of our previous efforts.

THE FEBRUARY MEETING

Our speaker at Worcester on 15th February was Harold Wilson who displayed 'Early Derbyshire Postal History'. Harold began by saying that most of the material he was going to show was pre-1840, and that the first half of his display was to be devoted to Derby itself.

A letter sent privately in 1612 from Chaddesden to Walsall was followed by photocopies of letters from 1654 in archives which support the idea that Derby received its mail through Lichfield before 1661. There was also a letter sent in 1697 by carrier to London.

Harold then went on to look at the various handstamps of Derby, beginning with a small straight-line which though undated has been recorded before 1711. Of the various straight-line marks, one was spelt with an 'A', and from the period 1784 to 1796 we saw a range of ornate marks. We were then shown a number of different types of mileage marks followed by the 'Paid at Derby' known as the "Ram's Head" mark. Amongst the Mulreadies was a twopenny used as late as 1848.

A letter sent in 1812 from Bakewell to Ashbourne was marked with a manuscript "Missent to Derby". This was followed by examples of the missent handstamp used at Derby.

To finish the first half of his display, Harold turned his attention to the local posts of Derby beginning with the unofficial penny post. We saw a letter sent in 1794 within Derby and charged a penny. The same charge was levied on letters to Stapleford, from Cavendish Bridge to Chaddesden, and from Draycott to Derby. These covers were from the same date range as those sent in the unofficial twopenny post amongst which was one sent from Gotham on which the twopence had been prepaid. A number of the covers showed strikes of the No 2 handstamp which was used in this post. An official penny post at Derby was introduced in 1811 and it was intended that there should be receiving houses at Duffield (No 1) and Belper (No 2), but it was 1825 before a receiver could be found at Duffield. We saw the different types of 'Derby/Penny Post' handstamps.

In the second half of his display, Harold took us on an alphabetical tour of Derbyshire starting at Alfreton from where we saw examples of the mileage mark as well as covers carried in the unofficial post. A letter sent in 1767 to Ashbourne from the Westminster office of the London Penny Post was charged 1s 2d which included a local charge of twopence. There was a number of different spellings to be seen in the straight line marks from 1754 onwards. At Bakewell we saw a range of marks from straight line, through mileage handstamps including the mileage removed up to the UDC struck in red and black. A 'Free' letter of the fourpenny post period was among the Belper material while the Buxton items included a 'P' for privilege letter sent to Kirkwall in 1788, and a skeleton of 1845. A tiny 'CASTLETON' was struck on a Mulready in 1840. A 'CHAPEL/IN FRITH' of 1804 was notable amongst the items from that town. A letter sent from Hemsworth in 1669 had a second message added at Chesterfield before being sent on to London. An early two-line mark from Chesterfield had the third 'E' before the 'I'. We saw various types of penny post handstamps from Glossop, Hathersage and Matlock, and 'horseshoe' marks from Peacock Inn and Stoney Middleton. The 'SUDBURY-D' handstamp was struck in black, blue and green. The 'TIDDES/WELL' handstamp was struck on aletter sent to Scotland in 1743 and endorsed 'By Yorke'. Finally, at Wirksworth we were shown a letter sent to London in 1679, various straight line and mileage marks as well as two different types of penny post handstamp.

It was a most entertaining afternoon and Harold is to be congratulated on finding such a wide range of material and showing how fascinating provincial postal history can be.



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THE MARCH MEETING

We were honoured that Michael Champness agreed to judge our competitions on 15th March, and as the first competition was being staged, we were splendidly entertained by Michael with a display showing the development of the envelope through the use of wafer seals from 1837, the date of the earliest known usage of these seals. Wafer seals were, essentially, a replacement for sealing-wax and the precusor of the gum used to seal the envelope which we know today! Cameo seals were shown although these have not yet been found on British letters possibly because of their expense. The themes shown on the seals were very varied and took us through cartoons, cryptic messages, advertising, Welsh national costumes, religion and politics.

The Society is indebted to Michael for this display and for the work he subsequently put in judging our competitions. Although the entries were few in number, they were of excellent quality.

The pre-1840 competition

There were three entries in this section -

1. Worcestershire Postal History - the Uniform Fourpenny and Penny Posts which showed examples of the Fourpenny period from Worcester, Dudley, Upton and Studley, and examples of the Penny Post handstamps of Kidderminster, Tenbury Wells and Bromsgrove.
2. The Stratford-on-Avon Penny Post in which we saw examples of six types of boxed and one unboxed Penny Post handstamps.
3. The Original "County Offices" of the Birmingham Penny Post showing examples of handstamped covers for 1793 (the year of the founding of the penny post) from Sutton Coldfield - possibly the earliest penny post cover known - as well as covers from 1797 (West Bromwich) up to 1828 (Castle Bromwich and Knowle).

The third entry, that of Elizabeth Lewis, was declared the winner.

The post-1840 competition

The four entries were:

1. Early Machine Cancellations which included examples produced by the Pearson Hill, Rideout, Azemar, Etheridge machines as well as the punch machines used in Manchester which produced either a nick in the side of a postcard or a small hole in the card (from 1858).
2. Birmingham Surcharge Handstamps including a handstruck '2' from 1845 as well as such handstamps as 'Closed Against Inspection', 'Of the nature of a Letter' plus various 'To Pay' marks up to 1988.
3. The Oxford 613 Error. In 1871, Oxford received a duplex mark with the number 613 (that of Petersfield) and the error was perpetuated with two handstamps, one with a flat-topped '3', the other with a round-topped '3'. Examplesof the erroneous number were shown together with, for comparison, an example of the correctly used 613 from Petersfield.
4. The Uniform Penny Post 'Paid' Handstamps of Staffordshire which showed examples of the 'Paid One Penny' or 'Paid 1d' handstamps of West Bromwich, Wednesbury, Wolverhampton and Newcastle under Lyne.

The judge commented on the evenness of the entries and declared the winner to be the 'Oxford 613 Error' for despite the rarity of the marks of the other entries, he felt that this study was extremely comprehensive.

The post-1940 competition

There were two entries -

1. The Increasing Quality of Service Awareness which showed handstamps relevant to the improvement of the Post Office services including a several styles drawing attention to the fact that the sender had incorrectly dated meter mail.
2. Meter Marks showing the evolution of the design of British meter marks. The earliest shown dated from 1923, just one year after Britain had ratified the UPU agreement on metered mail and began using meters.

The judge stated that these two entries were equal in knowledge, material and research, and while the 'Quality of Service' entry gained on condition and rarity, the 'Meter Mark' entry was ahead on writing-up. Michael declared the result to be a dead heat (David Hardwick and Alan Godfrey).

The entry chosen to go through to the Midland Federation Competition was 'The Oxford 613 Error'.

RWB

MAIL BY RAIL - THE FUTURE AND THE PAST

At 9 a.m. on 21st March your reporter, together with representatives of half a dozen postal history societies, joined some 75 invited guests of the Post Office on the 'Railnet Pullman from Euston station. The purpose of the outing was to preview the new London Distribution Centre at Willesden, a key element in the Post Office's Railnet project. Royal Mail has invested £150 million in this project thereby committing itself to rail conveyance of letters for the forseeable future. The London Distribution Centre is to handle all mail trains that would previously have run into London mainline stations thus making the handling of mail bags at these stations a thing of the past.

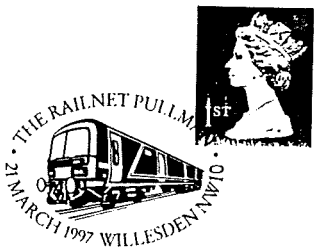
On arrival at Willesden, the guests were grouped into manageable parties for a tour of the facility which, by any standard, is of impressive scale. A new rail concourse has been built, in itself approximately the size of St Pancras station. There are seven wide platforms, each capable of accommodating a twelve carriage train. Mail bags, and increasingly plastic mail trays, are carried in York containers - similar to those used by supermarkets - and all mail trains, whether existing TPO storage vans or the new Class 325 EMUs, will use these containers. The use of containers, which replace the the system of loose-loaded mail bags that has prevailed for 150 years, will speed the transfer of mail to and from trains and road vehicles.

The mail processing facility at the London Distribution Centre is also on the grand scale. Forty-one loading and unloading docks are provided for road vehicles, control of the vehicles being directed by a fully computerised display system. The York containers are brought to a vast sorting machine powered by twenty linear motors which will sort 37,000 mail bags daily. The sorted bags pass down outfeed chutes into more York containers and are then taken to the appropriate road vehicle or train by powered 'Movers' handling six containers at a time. The rail platforms have been built higher than usual so rail transfer is virtually level. The whole operation is monitored from a control room giving a commanding overview of 10,000 square metres of operational area.

While members of the press, peers and MPs with other commitments left the tour at Willesden, those of us who knew a good thing when they saw it returned to the 'Railnet Pullman'. We were served a very acceptable lunch on the train while it made its way from North London to Kidderminster via Northampton and Coventry but not, interestingly enough to a rail buff, via Birmingham New Street. At Kidderminster we disembarked again and were taken by a steam train of the Severn Valley Railway on a brief and enjoyable excursion to and from Bewdley. Most of us were happy enough to be carried conventionally but VVIPs such as Mr Ed Burkhart, President of the Wisconsin Central Railroad and now Chairman of English, Welsh and Scottish Railways (who will operate the mail trains) rode on the footplate of 'The Great Marquess'. All this was a preliminary to the formal presentation, on long-term loan, of a restored 1959 TPO sorting carriage to the Severn Valley Railway by Mr Burkhardt and Mr Richard Dykes, Managing Director Royal Mail. The carriage looked magnificent with its "Egyptian" shaded lettering complemented by original transfers of the Royal Crown, Cyphers and Garter devices, a point not lost on Mr Alun Rees, General Manager of the SVR, who expressed his delight in taking possession of a vehicle that had, possibly uniquely, been restored before coming to the SVR!

It remained to hop on board the 'Railnet Pullman' and accept further liquid hospitality during the journey to Euston where we arrived punctually at 6.40 p.m. (Offers by other members to report on similar onerous events in future will be respectfully declined.) WJC.





A special cover to commemorate the visit of The Railnet Pullman to the new Royal Mail London Distribution Centre at Willesden to preview the Railnet project and afterwards to present a Travelling Post Office to the Severn Valley Railway at Kidderminster.

THE POST OFFICE

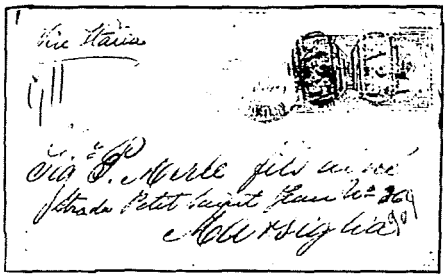
MORE ON EARLY NUMERAL CANCELS

Since the last issue, Michael Champness has reported the 46 of Banbury used on 1st May 1844.

I am also indebted to Michael Jackson for sending the photocopy of the 680 of St. Ives, Huntingdon used on 14th May 1844.



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'CHARGED ON' MAIL

by Ian May

Sometime ago, I came across a cover of 1839, illustrated below, from Halesowen to Warwick which was endorsed in manuscript "charged on Coventry". Not knowing what this meant I made some enquiries. The only feasible suggestion at the time was that it was probably a non-postal endorsement added by the recipient, a solicitor. Then, at a recent meeting of the Scottish Postal History Society, Ron Stables showed a similar Scottish item and pointed me to a series of articles in 'The Scottish Post' which describe the method of accounting used by the Post Office in Scotland prior to the introduction of Uniform Postage. As the method was used for mail going from Scotland to destinations throughout Britain I assume that the same procedures were used in England and Wales. I have summarised the procedure below.

1. Items received at an office were sorted into batches for the outward mails, dependent on the office to which they were to be forwarded.

2. Items were then rated and the total number of items and the total charges entered onto a bill and charged against the receiving office to which they were ultimately sent.

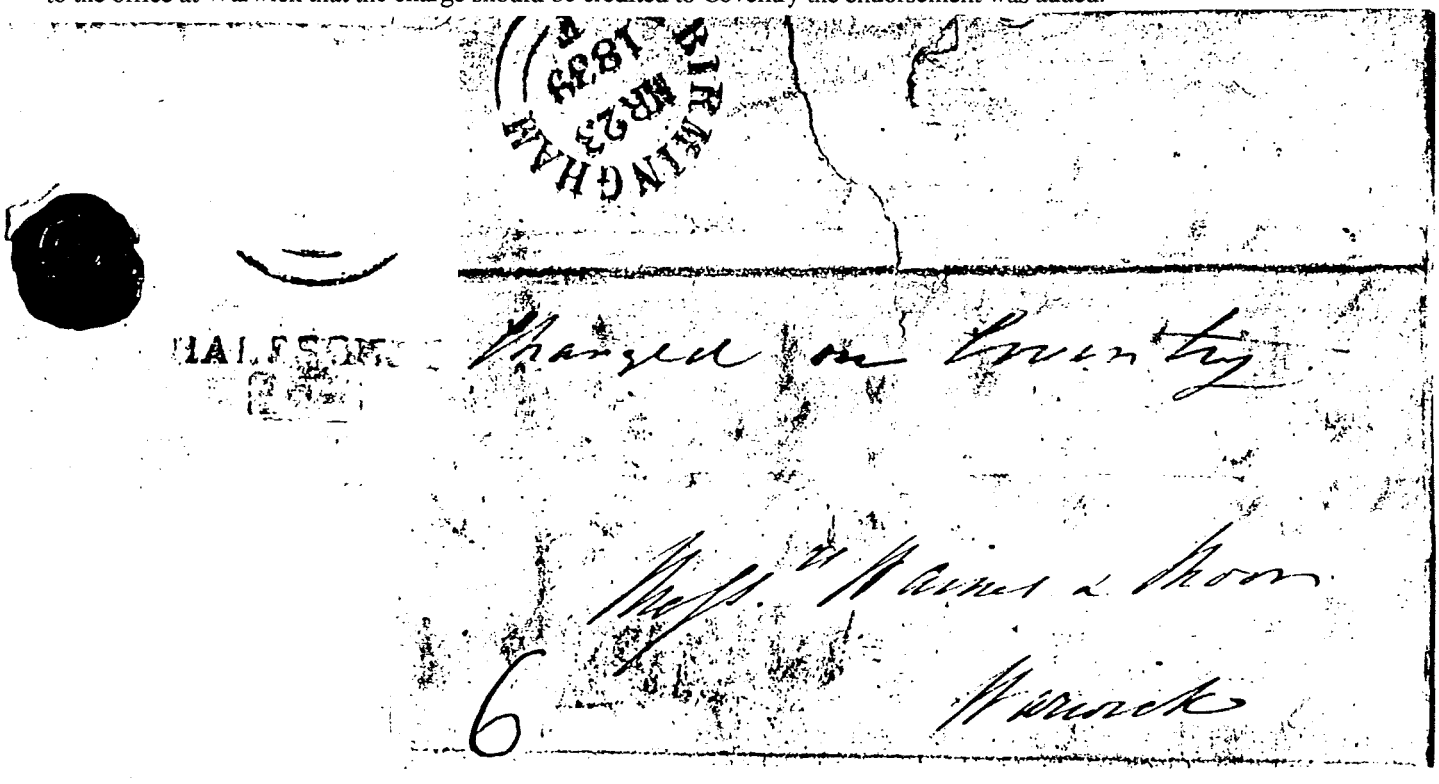
3. The letters were sent with the bill by the appropriate mail to either the receiving office or an intermediate office from where it was forwarded to a further office and so on until they reached their destination. When the letter reached its destination, the receiving office, the bill would be checked. Mail was only charged to the final receiving office and not against the intermediate offices.

4. Because the items were charged to the receiving office it now had the responsibility to collect the relevant charges from the addressees. Any undelivered or uncollected mail was accounted for together with the charges collected. In Scotland the money collected and the accounts were sent to Edinburgh, while in England they were forwarded to London. As an aside it appears that the money from an office was only sent fornightly or monthly and that while it was in the bank prior to forwarding any interest accruing was the postmaster's perquisite.

With the above in mind consider the cover which was posted in Halesowen. Two possible routes would be:
Halesowen - Birmingham - Stonebridge - Coventry - Warwick, Halesowen - Birmingham - Knowle - Warwick.

Since the distance for the second, and I suspect the correct route, is about 25 miles and the distance to Coventry is about the same, the charge for either route would be 6d, that for a single sheet sent 20-30 miles.

However, what is likely to have occurred is that the item was put into the Birmingham mail and charged to the Coventry account at the Halesowen office, where it may have been thought that Warwick was a penny post office of Coventry. The error was noticed at the Birmingham office where the letter was forwarded to Warwick. In order to indicate to the office at Warwick that the charge should be credited to Coventry the endorsement was added.



NOTES ON THE POSTAL HISTORY AND POSTMARKS OF BISHOP'S CASTLE TO c1920

by Brian Atkins

1677 Thos. Gardiner's Survey shows both Shrewsbury and Ludlow on by-roads from the Chester Road through Coleshill and Birmingham. Clearly mail between London and Bishop's Castle could have gone through either town, but later evidence suggests the route via Ludlow was favoured. But the Peover Papers for 1677 show a postal connection between Shrewsbury and Montgomery which is only eight miles from Bishop's Castle.

1711 The P.O. annual account books show that Samuel Says was paid a salary from at least 25 June 1711 when Bishop's Castle became a post town.

1722 Charles Waters became the postmaster. He was followed by Sarah Waters (1727-36), Richard Brown (1737), Foulk Bright (1737-43) and John Moore (1744-65).

1756 A map in Robertson's 'Post Roads, Post Towns & Postal Rates 1635-1839' shows an extension not served six days a week from Ludlow to Montgomery which would probably have passed through Bishop's Castle.

1766 John Home became the postmaster. In 1782 he was paid £10 p.a. He was followed by Charles Waters (1787-97) and J Waters (1997-99). It is interesting to speculate whether these were descendants of the earlier Waters.

1789 The Universal Directory of Barfoot & Wilkes, said to have been compiled in 1789, states that Thomas Walters was the postmaster. The accuracy of this text has been called into question and a letter "l" may have been added to the name Waters, but the name Thomas does not correlate with Charles from the P.O. account books. The directory further states the London mail through Oxford, Worcester and Ludlow arrives at 9 o'clock every Monday, Thursday and Saturday morning and mail arrives from Shrewsbury through Welshpool and Montgomery on the same mornings at 8 o'clock.

1793 A list of post towns shows that Clun was a "sub-post town" of Bishop's Castle. Letters from London arrived at Bishop's Castle at 9 a.m. on the second day after dispatch.

1799 John Griffiths appointed as postmaster.

1810 Mr Woodcock, the Surveyor, was at Bishop's Castle for the first two weeks of July, "putting in a new Postmaster". (MM93/10). Was this Samuel Norton?

1815 A post on four days a week from Ludlow introduced. (Post 40/90/1815)

1828 Pigot's Directory shows Samuel Norton, a saddler, as postmaster. The mail to London was dispatched every day at 8 a.m. and arrived at 6.30 p.m. There was a horse post to Welshpool which left at 8 a.m., arriving back at 8 p.m.

1836 Pigot's Directory for this year has the same entries as above except for some minor time changes. However there is an entry under Ludlow which states that a mailcart leaves for Bishop's Castle every afternoon at two.

1839 The Bishop's Castle bag from London is to be sent via Birmingham, Shrewsbury and Welshpool so arriving two hours earlier. (Post 35/468FF/1839)

1843 A direct ride from Shrewsbury replaced that from Welshpool, giving an earlier arrival and four hours in which to reply by return of post. (Post 35/414/1843, 35/5090/1844)

1851 Bagshaw's Directory shows Mr (probably Edward) Griffiths as postmaster, stationer and printer.

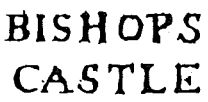
1856 The Shrewsbury to Hereford Railway opened in 1854 and by 1856 a mailcart carried the mail from Craven Arms Station to Bishop's Castle, probably serving Lydbury North on the way. In December 1857, Bishop's Castle became an R.S.O. receiving its mail from the Shrewsbury and Tamworth T.P.O.

1902 Alfred Bore was the postmaster. There is anecdotal evidence that mail arrived by train at 4 p.m. The line from Craven Arms had opened in 1866. Most mail, though still went by mailcart to and from Craven Arms.

1904 The Post Office Guide Shows Bishop's Castle as an R.S.O. with a branch office at Wentnor.

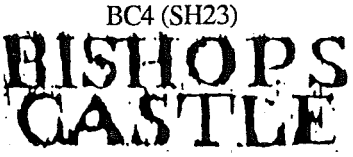
1926 Alexander Bore was the postmaster with hours of business 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. except Wednesday (close 1 p.m.) and Sunday (close 10.30 a.m.

BC2 (SH14)



Size: 24mm x 10mm
Recorded dates: 12FEB1719 - 1765
Colour: Black

BC4 (SH23)



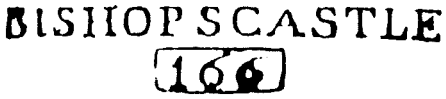
Size: 44mm x 14mm
Recorded dates: 1780 - 28FEB1796
Colour: Black

BC6 (SH26)



Diameter: 34mm
Recorded dates: 1797 - 28OCT1800
Colour: Black

BC8 (SH28)



Size: 54mm x 11mm
Recorded dates: 12JUN1801 - 1823
Colour: Black (Ink can be brownish)

BC10 (SH33)



Diameter: 25mm
Recorded dates: 29JUN1824 - 11MAY1838
Colour: Black

BC12 (SH34)



Diameter: 29mm
Date of Issue: 24MAY1838 (SIB 2/17)
Recorded dates: 16JAN1839 - 11JAN1845
Colour: Black

BC14 (SH36)



Diameter: 34mm
Recorded dates: 15JAN1845 - 30JAN1845
Colour: Black

BC16 (SH34)



Diameter: 29mm
Date of Issue: 3FEB1845 (Arecut of BC12?)
Recorded dates: 6JUL1845 - 28SEP1855
Colours: Black, blue and green.

BC18



Size: 24mm x 19mm
Recorded dates: 21AUG1844 - 5MAR1872
Colour: Black

BC20



Diameter: 25mm
Date of Issue: 20FEB1856 (SIB 12/313)
Recorded dates: 1NOV1858 - 30JUL1862
Colours: Black and blue
Codes: A (commonest) and B

BC22



Diameter: 26mm
Date of Issue: 27FEB1856 (SIB 12/319)
Unrecorded used.
Why this handstamp was issued only 7 days after BC20 is a mystery which may never be resolved.

BC24



Diameter: 22mm
Date of Issue: 19MAR1860
Recorded dates: 22MAR1860 - 8NOV1864
Colours: Blue and black
Codes: A (commonest) and B

BC26



Diameter: 22mm
Date of Issue: 19APR1870
Recorded Dates: 6JUN1873 - 26FEB1875
Colour: Black
Code: A

BC28



Diameter: 21½mm
Date of Issue: 25APR1875 (SIB 34/143)
Recorded dates: 15JUL1876 - 30DEC1892
Colour: Black
Code: A (commonest) and B

BC30

MISDIRECTED TO

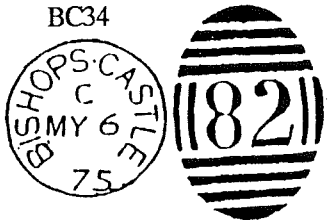
Size: 40mm x 3mm
Recorded date: 16MAY1879
Colour: Black

BC32



Size: 28mm x 19mm
Date of Issue: 3JUN1872 (SIB 31/133)
Recorded dates: 26FEB1875 - 13SEP1875
Colour: Black

BC34



Size: 20½mm diam. and 29mm x 18½mm
Date of Issue: 7MAY1875 (SIB34/146)
Recorded dates: 13SEP1875 - 24JAN1895
Colour: Black
Codes A and B

BC36



Diameter: 21mm
Recorded Dates: 26OCT1901 - 12NOV1914
Colour; Black
Times: 6am and 6.45pm.

BC38



Size: 20mm diam. and 28mm x 18mm
Recorded dates: 23JAN1896 - 20FEB1906
Colour: Black
Times: 9.15am, 4pm, 5.45pm, 6pm, 6.45pm and 8.45pm

BC40



Diameter: 29mm
Recorded Dates: 17APR1906 - 29MAY1906
Colour: Black
Code: B

BC42



Diameter: 25mm
Recorded Dates: 23JUN1906 - 5SEP1914
Colour: Black
Time: 6.45pm.

BC44



Diameter: 31mm
Recorded Dates: 20AUG1915 - 27OCT1915
Colour: Black
Times: 6.45pm and 7pm

BC46



Diameter: 24½mm
Recorded Dates: 16MAY1916 - 26NOV1917
Colour: Black
Times: 5pm and 6pm.

BC48



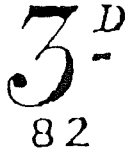
Diameter: 28mm
Recorded Dates: 10JAN1921 - 12JAN1921
Colour: Black
Times: 8.30 am. and 6.45 pm.

BC50



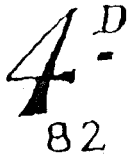
Diameter: 26mm
Recorded Dates: 23DEC1921 - 4APR1924
Colour: Black
Time: 5.15 pm.

BC52



Date of Issue: 10JAN1916
Unrecorded used

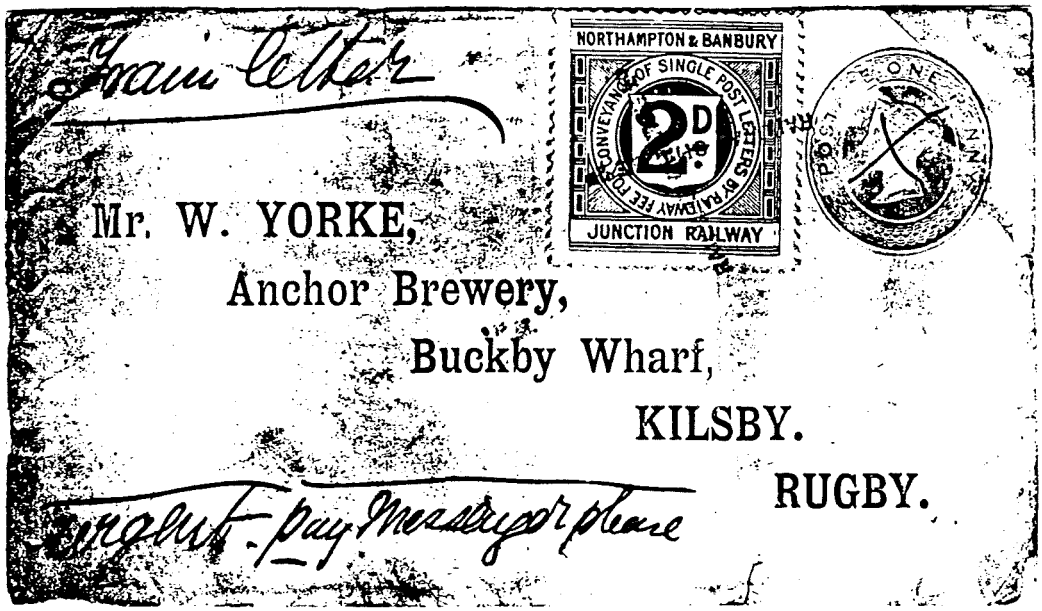
BC54



Date of Issue: 10JAN1916
Unrecorded used.

TRAIN LETTER

Derek Smeathers has kindly sent this photocopy of an envelope with the railway letter fee cancelled at Blisworth by the violet handstamp 'RAILWAY CHARGE 2d'



William Yorke, of Primrose Cottage, Buckby Wharf, bought the Anchor Brewery from Frederick Montgomery in 1894 and sold it two or three years later. Other envelopes of this type are known and were stamped to order for the Brewery to obtain orders from hotels and public houses. It appears that the letter went by rail from Blisworth to Kilsby Station and from there was taken the four miles or so by special messenger. Presumably, the Royal Mail messenger was paid his fee on delivering - according to the written instructions at the base.

THE SURVEYORS' JOURNALS (Part 25)

Mr Hart was at home, "occupied in the General Business of the District in corresponding with the Deputies etc ..." up to 28th January 1816 when he left Leicester for Nottingham to renegotiate the terms for the rides to Loughborough and Newark. [We find at this period the surveyors were trying to arrange lower payments for many of the rides as the cost of horse fodder was lower than it had been for some years.] From Nottingham he went on to Newark where he spent most of February opening a penny post to Cliff Row.

In mid-March, Mr Hart dismissed the contractor for the express ride between Worksop and Sheffield, and examined the office in Sheffield. After that, he did not reappear in the Midlands until mid-May when he went to Derby to investigate a complaint about the "constant absence of the Deputy" and to report on the general management of the office. He was still at Derby on 2nd June waiting for authority to dismiss the clerk for repeated misconduct. But the next day he had to go to Wirksworth to investigate anonymous complaints, which he decided were unfounded, that letters had been opened in the office. He then went on to Bakewell to sound out the persons who had previously petitioned for a mailcoach whether they would provide one in the event of the Sheffield and Manchester contractors giving up. From later events it appears that the answer was in the negative.

There was a short excursion into Lincolnshire before Mr Hart examined and "approved of the arrangements" in the new office at Newark.

Then for three weeks from 18th June, Mr Hart was on the road between Sheffield and Manchester, arranging the riding work, to start on 5th July, on the withdrawal of the Sheffield and Manchester mailcoach.

In mid-August, Mr Hart went to Cavendish Bridge and Castle Donington to meet the inhabitants of the latter place to discuss the request for a post office. Much of his time was taken up in September by finding new contractors for the rides from Nottingham to Loughborough and Newark, a task made more difficult by the fact that the offers made in response to advertisements in the Nottingham papers were dated from "ale houses". He then went on to Sheffield to "reinstate Order in the Riding Work from thence to Buxton ...". He also arranged for Ashbourne and Leek to send their letters for the West through Manchester. However, when he inspected the Derby office towards the end of November he found that this instruction was not being followed.

It appears that order had not been restored in the ride to Buxton from Sheffield for Mr Hart was forced to return to the latter place in December to find new contractors.

Mr Godby was in Oswestry at the start of 1816 looking into the possibility of making the four-day penny post to Llanfyllin a daily one. Later in the monthhe arrived in Newcastle on the appointment of Mr Brothers as the postmaster in place of Mr Massey who had died. Then an enquiry about delayed letters took him to Burslem and Uttoxeter. At Lawton he looked into how the inhabitants could be accommodated by the "New Pottery Mail Coach" - that from Leicester to Liverpool.

In mid-March, Mr Godby attended a trial at Stafford before going on to Longport and Etruria to arrange footposts from Newcastle. This was followed by an inspection of the offices at Stone and Wolverhampton. In the latter part of the month, he met a number of contractors including those for the rides between Shrewsbury and Welshpool, Ellesmere and Oswestry and Chirk to Chester to discuss a reduction in their allowances, "in consequence of the great fall in the price of horse provender."

On 17th June, Mr Godby went to Coventry to draw up a contract for the ride to Hinckley and for the coach to Warwick which was to start on 20th June. For most of July and the first half of August he was running the office at Wolverhampton as the postmaster had absconded while in arrears with his payments to London. Eventually, a Miss Hill was appointed as the deputy.

The purpose of Mr Godby's visit to Uttoxeter at the end of August was to "extend the convenience of the Pottery Mail Coach to the inhabitants on the Road to Lane End, and to establish a Penny Post at Tean." He then went on to Hinckley on the appointment of Mrs Needle following the death of her husband.

For a month from 7th November, Mr Godby was at Shrewsbury, first of all covering the vacancy caused by the death of Mrs Lawrence, the postmistress, and then instructing Mr Goodwin, the new deputy. His last journey of the year was to Dudley and Stourbridge to look into an application for a postal service made by the inhabitants of Brierley Hill.

For the first ten weeks of 1816, Mr Woodcock was running the office in Monmouth. Then he went to Stroud to install a new postmaster but this only took a few days as the person appointed had been an assistant to the former deputy. An investigation, lasting three days, into missing letters posted at Oxford revealed nothing. It was then necessary for him to take charge of the Banbury office as the deputy was in arrears.

In the following weeks Mr Woodcock visited a number of offices, including Worcester, Stourport, Bewdley, Stourbridge, Birmingham, Cheltenham, Ross, Hereford and Hay, to negotiate lower terms for the rides.

Mr Woodcock was at home in July "under medical advice". But, several weeks were then occupied in arranging a 5th Clause Post to Malmesbury from Chippenham, the Tetbury to Malmesbury post being withdrawn. However, he did find time to draw up a new contract for the ride from Cirencester to Stroud.

As the postmaster at Enstone had absconded while in arrears, Mr Woodcock had to run the office there for over a month. He returned home at the end of October in a poor state of health which confined him to his house for the rest of the year apart from one day in Cheltenham investigating a complaint about an extra charge of a halfpenny on the second delivery He found that the letter carriers had been doing this for sometime and so left a written order for it to be stopped.

ADDENDA

WOLSELEY BRIDGE

In a petition sent in March 1816 the inhabitants of Wolseley Bridge said that the postmistress who had held that position for many years had died about three months ago and that it had not been possible to find a permanent successor on account of the small salary (40/- p.a.) which had been the same "time beyond Memory." After stating that Wolseley Bridge was on the direct road between London and Liverpool, ten miles from Lichfield and twelve miles from Stone, they went on to ask that they should be relieved of the charge above that of the General Post they had to pay.

The same report contains a letter written by Sir William Wolseley:

"The late Mrs Alcock who kept the Roebuck in my village of Wolseley was also the Receiver of the Baggs from the Post Office In Lichfield for upwards of Forty years - [. The Roebuck] is now occupied by Mr Dunn whom I have accepted as my Tenant. It is my Request that he may be continued to transact the Business of the Post Office here - as many Hamlets are & will be benefited by it and therefore ought not unadvisedly be transferred elsewhere. My old Mansion has been built before the Conquest [!!!] - and lies very contiguous to my Village - and it Wd be most inconvenient to have the Post Office moved to another Quarter after so long an Enjoyment of it..."

In his report Mr Godby wrote:

"The inhabitants of Wolseley Bridge ... have a Bag from each of the Offices at Lichfield, Stafford & Stone and the letters are forwarded from each without any delay.

I find that on the recommendation of Mr Saverland an allowance of 20/- p.a. was made as an acknowledgement of the trouble of receiving and delivering the letters there, & the receiver was to charge one penny on all letters in & out but not anything on newspapers.

The Memorial does not state any inconvenience the Inhabitants are under, but merely prays that they may be relieved from any expence beyond the legal Postage. This of course it is impossible to do without establishing a regular Sub Office which I do not think it advisable at so small a place as Wolseley which in fact consists of the Inn and four or five other Houses only, besides it is within 2 miles of Rugeley where there is a considerable and regular Sub Office. The amount of General Postage on letters sent to Wolseley may average from 10/- to 15/- per week which I presume you will not think sufficient to warrant the expence of a Sub Office as under such an establishment we must discontinue the extra charge on letters both in & out, and the salary which the amount of Revenue might justify would not ... make the Office an object to any respectable person. A Penny Post which might perhaps admit of a larger salary would in fact give the Inhabitants little or no relief from expence as at the same time that it took off the extra charge on letters inwards would continue it on those outwards & put [it] on the Newspapers which is now not the case..."

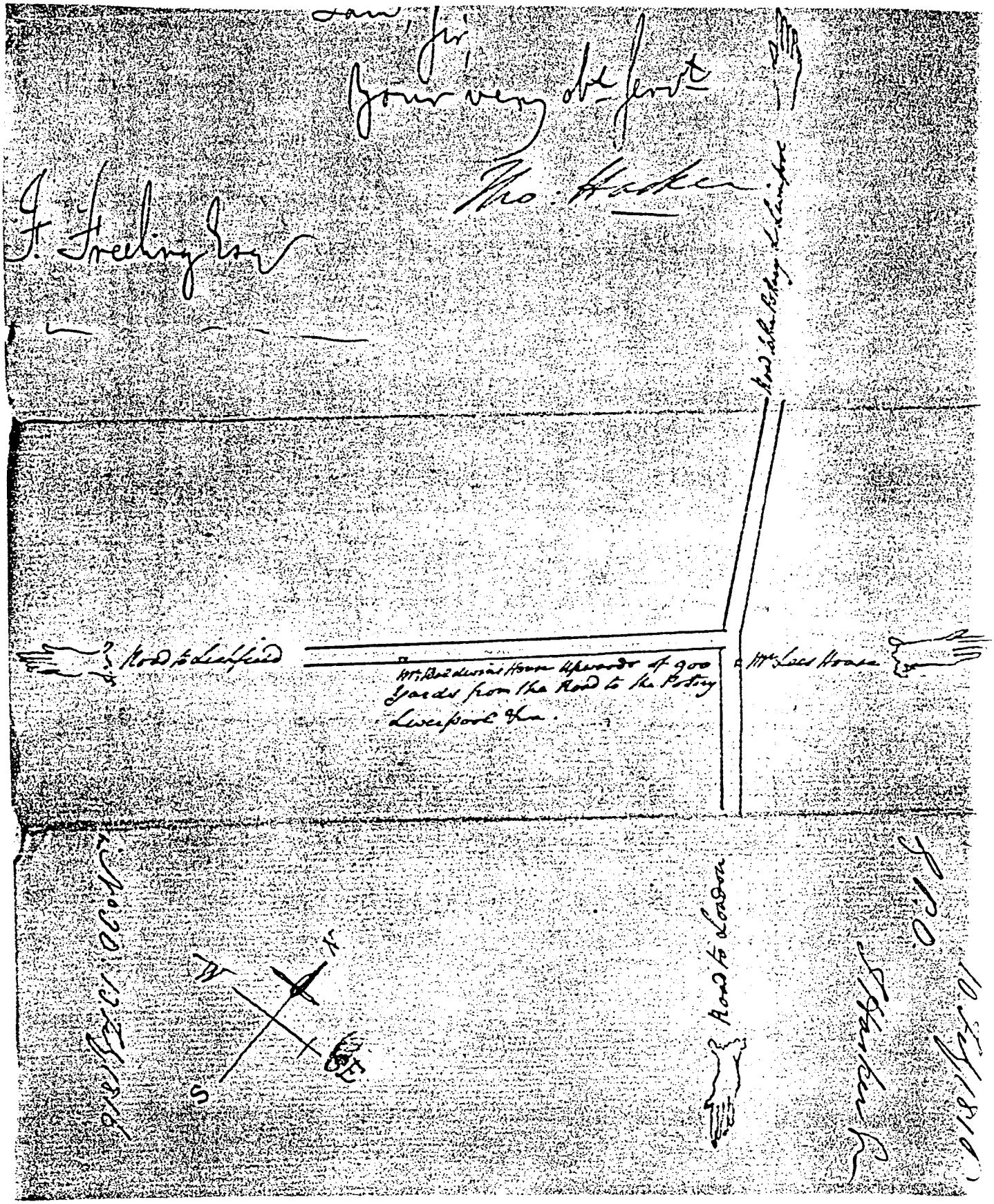
He went on to say that the inhabitants paid only a reasonable extra sum and were in the same position as many other villages. As regards the letter from Sir William there could be no objection to the bags being left at his public house. Since the death of Mrs Alcock they had been left at the principal inn but the landlord did not wish to continue with them.

[Ref. Post 40/97/1816]

CARRYING THE BAG AT BURTON-ON-TRENT

In February 1816, Thomas Hasker reported to Freeling that Mr Lees, the mailcoach contractor at Burton, objected to carrying the bags twice a day between his house and that of Mr Baldwin, the postmaster, a distance of about 900 yards. This was necessary as the mailcoach did not actually pass through the town. Hasker recommended a payment of 1/- a day to be paid to Mr Lees or, if he was not willing to do it, some other person. The return journey was to take eight minutes - eight miles an hour - which could be done easily as the road was well paved with small pebbles.

[Ref. Post40/30/1816]



THE BANBURY - WOODSTOCK MAILCOACH

In December 1816, Freeling reminded the P.M.G. that it had been necessary to turn down requests made by the people of Banbury and Deddington to send the mail by a stage coach to and from Woodstock unless the proprietors would consent to all the limitations of "a coach of the second class. He said that a contract had been signed to start on 23rd February 1817 when the notice to the riding work contractor expired. The annual expense would be £51.14.2 as aagainst the £136 paid for the riding work.

This brief minute gives little indication as to the content of the accompanying papers.

On 31st October Thomas Hasker had written:

"When the Banbury Coach was formerly established it was under the direction of Mr Woodcock, and the Proprietor & Driver was of the name Drinkwater. I do not therefore remember much of it, and submit that his opinion should be obtained; but I think the Driver had the care of the Bags, and was a tippler. If this is the same Drinkwater is he become more sober?

Should the establishment of the Coach appear desirable, and if the Proprietor thinks he can live by it, as he evidently does by the manner of his application, I think the request cannot be refused;- to go by his own Coach (if proper) being so short a distance, at one penny per mile each way, to carry four inside & four outside passengers, and subject to our time & direction both in & out which I presume should be to leave Woodstock at 6 a.m. or as soon as the Mail is ready, to reach Banbury at 8.30 - being about 6½ miles an hour, and to return at the same pace, leaving Banbury at 6.30 p.m. and to arrive at Woodstock at nine. If Drinkwater is a sober man, there need not be a Guard perhaps, but I submit that to the consideration of my Lords the Postmaster General, and I beg leave to forward this latter part supposing Mr Woodcock's report favourable."

Twelve days later, Mr Woodcock said:

"If Drinkwater, the Proprietor of the Coach between Woodstock and Banbury will contract to convey the Mail to and from those towns on the terms laid down by Mr Hasker, the objections will be done away, and a trial I think should be made, tho' from the character & means of the parties I am affraid it will not be lasting.

I inclose a letter from the Deputy of Woodstock on the subject - John Drinkwater the original proprietor of the Coach is a very drunken man, not fit to be trusted, his brother George, who has applied to Mr Hasker has a character of more steadiness and sobriety and in his hands I think the business may be safely conducted. Mr Hasker I presume will make the contract with him if it takes place & that the milage will be paid from his office. If there is a steady Coachman I shd not think a Guard necessary - there is a brace of pistols with the present contractor ..."

However, a fortnight later, Mr Woodcock wrote again to Freeling. His letter contained an extract from a letter he had received the previous day:

"George Drinkwater never was a sober [man], but a kind of middling character; he denies any knowledge whatever of the mail concern & says it is Mr Cobb and the Gentlemen of Banbury that are settling the business for him. I find he is very frequently intoxicated."

Whatever the truth of these statements, Hasker reported on 5th December that George Drinkwater had signed a contract to carry the mail between Woodstock and Banbury on the terms stated above, except that the journey was to take three hours. The driver was to be armed, and to have the bags in a locked box under his seat.

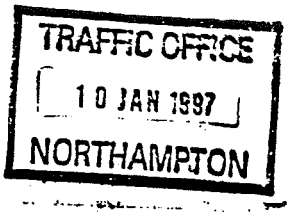
[Ref. Post 40/275/1816]

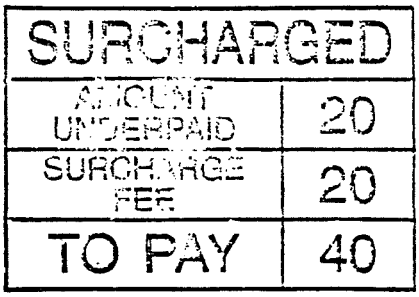
Members may care to refer to MM96/12 in connection with this piece.

HANDSTAMPS OF NORTHAMPTON M.L.O.

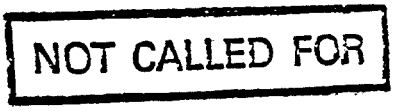
I am indebted to David Hardwick for sending copies of all the handstamps to be found in the Northampton M.L.O. earlier this year.





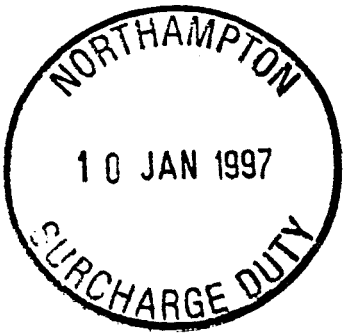




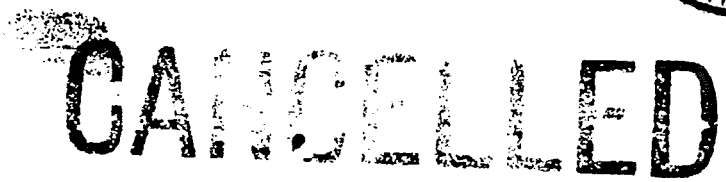


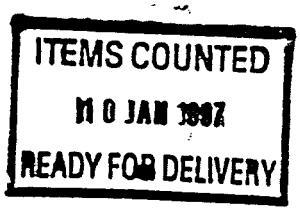




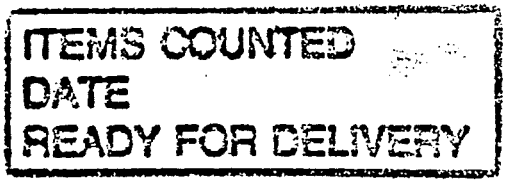


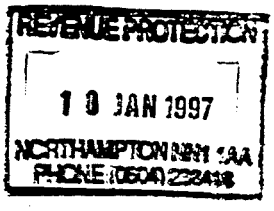
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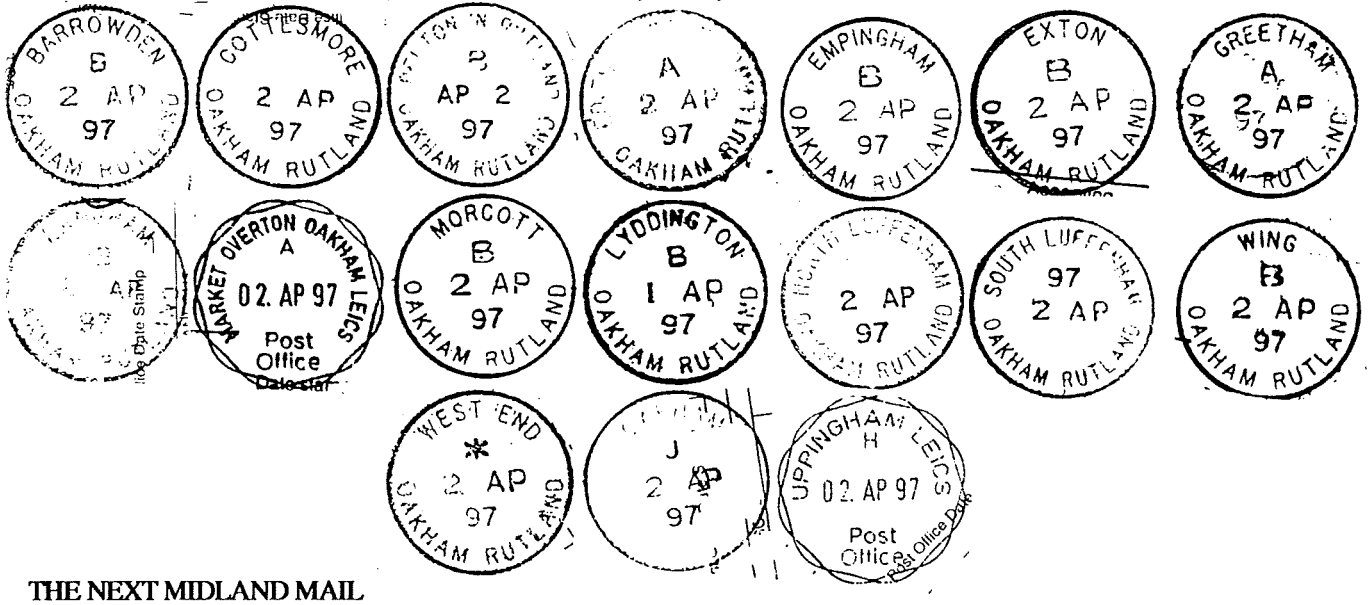
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The Letters Business of The Post Office

RUTLAND RESURRECTED

On 1st April, Rutland became a unitary authority, so officially it is now a county again, though I was not aware that it had ever been anything else. To coincide with this, most of the offices which have Oakham as their posttown were issued with new datestamps some of which are illustrated below. (Four offices - Essendine, Ketton, Great Casterton and Ryhall - come under Stamford while one - Caldecott - is under Market Harborough.) Market Overton and Uppingham obviously consider that they are still in Leicestershire, or perhaps having not too long ago having paid for a S.I.D. they are not going to pay for another. The county town Oakham appears not to be proud of its county for on two strikes of two different handstamps the word 'Rutland' was illegible. Teigh and Thistleton are missing since their opening hours are very restricted. They will have to wait until I can visit on the appropriate morning. Whissendine was closed temporarily.

Is there another county where it is possible to visit nearly all the post offices in one morning? Though the problems facing rural sub-offices can be gauged from the fact that whereas there were once thirty-eight post offices in Rutland, other than those in Oakham and Uppingham, there are now only twenty-one.



THE NEXT MIDLAND MAIL

It is likely to be mid-June before this will be published. To make this a special issue plenty of articles are needed by: John Soer, 51d Barkham Road, Wokingham RG41 2RG.

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