

MIDLAND MAIL

THE JOURNAL OF THE MIDLAND (GB) POSTAL HISTORY SOCIETY

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Number 134, March 2004

THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND AUCTION

The Annual General Meeting will be held on 17th April at St Germain's Church Hall, Portland Road, Birmingham beginning at 12.45 p.m. It will be preceded at 10.30 a.m. by a committee meeting. Since there are a large number of lots the auction will start promptly at the time shown in the catalogue. At the AGM a new and exciting postal history discovery will be announced, so do come along.

MEETINGS IN MAY AND SEPTEMBER

Please note that a meeting will be held on 8th May in conjunction with the annual fair organised by the Worcester Philatelic Society. The meeting will be devoted to members' one board displays on "*Parcel Post*".

Also, please make a note in your diaries that a joint meeting with the Somerset and Dorset Postal History Group will be held at Kington St Michael on 18th September. Full details of this will be issued with the next *Midland Mail*.

REOPENING OF ARCHIVES

Heritage Royal Mail's Searchroom will re-open on Tuesday 13th April. The opening hours will now be 10am to 5pm on weekdays with extended opening to 7pm on Thursdays. There is also to be some limited Saturday opening, again from 10 till 5, on six Saturdays - 8th May, 10th July, 18th September and 13th November, and then on 8th January and 26th February 2005. It is clear that someone has been listening to the comments made by researchers. The new opening hours will be particularly welcome. I imagine few people, especially if they were using off peak tickets, arrived in London much before 10.30 a.m., so a 4.15 p.m. closing time gave a rather curtailed day. As for the Saturday opening, I expect that it will be a case of "Use it or lose it."

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THE JANUARY MEETING

The return to Carrs Lane on 10th January gave members a chance to take a quick look at the very impressive shopping development in the Bull Ring area, though it did seem to cause problems for those arriving by car. The afternoon was devoted to undated circles, reflecting the move to update the Society's publication on those marks. However, one could have been forgiven for thinking that Roger Broomfield was showing penny blacks on cover, such was the number in his display. However the Chairman put the minds of other members at rest by pointing out that it was not obligatory to have penny blacks in the display. Roger began by showing the mark of Berrow in four different colours, Tarrington also in four colours, and The Trumpet in three colours. One cover showed Cradley's handstamp used as a receiving mark and then a dispatch mark as the cover had been turned. Roger then looked at Welsh offices with English connotations such as Garthmill (under Shrewsbury), Nantmel (under Kington), and Bow Street, a sub-office of Shrewsbury though seventy miles distant - see MM49/4.

Elizabeth and Eric Lewis devoted most of their display to instances of the earliest recorded use, the latest recorded use or the only recorded strike of a particular mark. There was a superb strike of MUCH WENLOCK within one week of the issue of the handstamp. We saw the WINSTANSTOW of Wistanstow, a manuscript "Missent to" followed by the Darlaston UDC, and the Letton dated circle used as an undated circle. John Soer used the marks of Leicestershire to trace the development of the different styles of UDC. He ended with examples of handstamps whose use had not been recorded. Chris Jackson said that forty-six sub-offices of Worcester used UDCs with a total of fifty-nine different marks. In Chris' display were UDCs from nineteen places with fourteen amendments to the UDC book. Among the marks that Chris showed us were EARLS CROOME in red; the only recorded example of GREAT-WITLEY in red; and CLASS.GATE (Later Cornmarket).

Shropshire material was shown by Guy Bridges. Of particular note was the mark of Wem struck in black in 1840 on a penny black cover, and then struck in blue in January 1843 on a cover where the penny red had been cancelled with a blue maltese cross. The UDC of Cressage came in shades of black, brown and blue. Guy finished with a photograph taken in about 1900 of Mrs Ann Millman, the first postmistress of Condover. If you are wondering what the connection with UDCs was, Mrs Millman had been appointed in September 1854. Alan Godfrey then took us to Warwickshire, beginning with the AULCESTER mark struck in red on 4th July 1829, about six weeks after the handstamp had been issued. We also saw the hitherto unrecorded WOOTTON-WALWEN of Wootton Wawen used in March 1855. A handstamp SNITTERSFIELD was issued to the office at Snitterfield in September 1847. However, the 'S' had clearly been removed by January 1853.

The HANLEY-STAFFS. used on a bill from a "Pottery Tissue Manufacturer" was the first item in Richard Farman's display. He then showed a number of UDCs on letters which had been sent abroad. There was one sent from Shelton to Canada, another from Cobridge to Paris as well as one from Sandiacre to Rangoon. Richard then showed the Abbotts Bromley mark on a Mulready. He modestly failed to point out that it was a two penny Mulready. There was a ride letter with the handstamp of Forsbrook cancelling the adhesive. Richard ended with the WE TLEY-ROCKS mark which had originally been issued as WHITLEY-ROCKS.

Paul Bradshaw concentrated on Northamptonshire material, starting with a letter of 1833 from Brackley. We then saw UDCs from Brixworth, Foster's Booth (struck in blue) and Great Creaton. The latter was used on a letter sent to New South Wales and which followed the addressee around Australia before it could be delivered. The handstamp of Mears Ashby was seen struck in orange ink. A letter showing the UDC of Riseley (under Higham Ferrers) was sent to Wokingham and carried the datestamps of Higham Ferrers, London and Wokingham. Roy Summers began by showing a map of the Wolverhampton sub-offices which had used UDCs. He then showed us marks from Albrighton (in Shropshire), Gornal (an unrecorded usage), Pennfields and Worfield (also in Shropshire). Roy ended with two letters, one of which carried a Wolverhampton Penny Post mark, each showing a different type of UDC from Tettenhall. John Bradnock started with the "reversed horseshoe" of Birmingham used in 1796 and then went on to the UDCs of Wem (used in 1843) and Bromsgrove, before ending with the mark of Steeple Ashton.

Our Chairman, Derek Smeathers showed us material from Northamptonshire, beginning with the marks of Broughton (under Kettering) and Boughton (under Northampton). We saw the FLOOR of Flore and EARLS BARTON used in 1856. Two covers each carried two UDCs - ADDERBURY with CHARLTON and MEARS ASHBY with WILBY. A mark of Farthingstone was different from that shown in the Steel Impression Books so must have been made locally. Derek ended with a cover showing the UDC of Rothwell used two months before it became a Money Order Office.

As is usually the case with the afternoons devoted to members' displays, it was a wide range of fascinating material on what would at first sight appear to be a rather narrow topic.

THE FEBRUARY MEETING

Our February meeting was held at the Collingwood Centre, Great Barr in conjunction with the annual fair organised by the Streetly Society. The first half of the afternoon was devoted to a display of *PPIs* by Mike Foulger who showed us a relatively recent facet of postal history. Using nine display boards, he illustrated the very wide variety of *PPIs* (Postage Paid Impressions, or sometimes Printed Postage Impressions) which have been used. He started with their introduction in the 1960s when Readers Digest, the football pools companies and mail order businesses were seeking an economical way of posting their bulk mailings, and he explained how rebates were available for companies which did the initial sorting into towns and counties. We were introduced to a comprehensive survey of the many types of *PPI* including the familiar standard impressions as well as the more unusual designs of certain individual organisations. Considerable variations in size, style, colour and printed detail were demonstrated and a number of unusual items were shown. Mike's personal knowledge from years of experience with the Post Office was clearly helpful in providing a context for the way in which *PPIs* have changed over the last four decades and he brought the subject right up to date by showing the most recent designs which are currently being phased in. The nature of these impressions is an important aspect of postal history but it is also something with which we are all familiar in our daily postal deliveries. *PPIs* signify the payment of postage when large mailings are involved. In many instances they have replaced the use of machines incorporating PAID dies and postage meters. It was clear from Mike's enthusiastic and detailed presentation that *PPIs* can be a very rewarding study, and as he pointed out there is still a great deal to discover.

The second half of the programme was taken up by Peter Barrell, of the Streetly Philatelic Society, displaying Swift Air. The display commenced with items portraying services, including Concorde, which had ceased in 2003. Peter showed the various items of stationery associated with this short lived service and gave a detailed account of how the service operated.

I am indebted to Dr Max Johnson and Mel Matthews for providing reports of the meeting.

THE MARCH MEETING

Members attending Portland Road, Birmingham, on 13th March were entertained by two of our distinguished number who gave displays of areas never previously covered at Society meetings, both in Wales. Gerald Marriner's subject was the postal history of Pembrokeshire while Guy Bridges tackled the county of Montgomeryshire. If we thought these might be somewhat limited subjects, we were soon enlightened.

Gerald began at the town of Haverfordwest where, we were told, the post office had occupied five different sites since 1837 and we were shown a photograph of the third of them. It had been a post town since the late 1600s. The earliest letter he had from this area was from a Flemish merchant, sent from Hubberstone to Bruges in 1711. The three-line handstamps of Haverfordwest are very scarce but there are no fewer than eight types of two-line stamp, used from about 1720 to 1790. We saw examples from 1743 and 1760. There was also a large horseshoe stamp (1794-97) used in 1795 before a smaller circular stamp was introduced. At the turn of the 19th century, Haverfordwest had the customary single line stamp, shown to us on an entire to Bridgnorth.

Due south from Haverfordwest, on the coast, lies Milford Haven, built at the turn of the 18th century but preceded postally by postboy and mailcoach termini at Hubberstone and Dale. Gerald showed an entire addressed to Milford Haven in 1802, from Crediton. He also had a single line Milford struck in red in 1818, a scarce mark. From the same period was a Pembrokeshire carrier's letter of 1815 addressed to a 'Doctor Grigory' in Hubberstone, the contents of which were well worth reading. Inland from Milford, Narberth became a post town in 1765. We saw a fine straight line 'Narberth' from that year and the later 'Narbarth' of 1787, sent to London for 6d. Back on the coast, Tenby had a post office established in 1711 and the handstamp of 1742 was its second.

From the early namestamps, Gerald took us on to the mileage marks. The '256' mileage of 'Narbeth' (1822) was on an insurance questionnaire enquiring whether the insured was "lusty or bloated" and whether his neck was "long, short or in proportion to his body". The Haverfordwest mileage erased mark was on a letter to Corfe Castle.

There were examples of the penny post handstamps of Fishguard (1843), Haverford west (four types), St Davids (1849) and Solva (1842). The late strike of St Davids was in blue, the only colour used that year, and the Solva strike was in its customary yellow-brown shade. A second Solva mark of 1848 was used with a Haverfordwest 'traveller'.

Double arc stamps were represented by a Haverfordwest stamp on an 1854 letter to Singapore and on an 1849 letter to Tenby from the Pembrokeshire Bank. One of the Hobbs Point double arcs shown was on a letter with a 1d black. Penny black letters from Pembrokeshire are elusive, to say the least

Gerald admitted to a love of undated circular stamps and his representatives included Dale, Hubberstone (uniquely in blue), Milton, Narberth, St Davids and Saundersfoot. We were now firmly into the era of adhesive stamps and it was inevitable that duplex stamps should be included next. Among them were Camrose (1892 to New York), Haverfordwest (1882 on a printed letter sheet at the ½d rate), Narberth Road (the G21 obliterator of a railway station) and Pembroke Dock (1898 to India). The last named letter was from the wife of a soldier and, such were the vicissitudes of his career, that it had to be re-directed from Delhi to Ireland and then to Jersey, via London!

There were sideways duplexes, double circles and squared circles, 'squared circles' being scarce in Pembrokeshire. Tenby had two types and the 1904 re-cut was shown on a letter to Sark. Pembrokeshire had some interesting ship letter stamps. Among those shown were the first type of Milford (1806) struck in red on a letter from West Africa to Kilmarnock, charged 1/7d. (One hates to spoil the fun of those who like to work out obscure charges but just a clue is in order: 4d+11d+4d = 1/7d.) Possibly unique, was an example of the Tenby Ship Letter of 1839.

An example of the 4d Uniform Post was followed by a Mulready letter sheet, three 1d black letters, a 2d blue (1842 but no lines) and two 1d reds from the black plates. Yes, they are all in the 'hens' teeth' category in Pembrokeshire. The reds (and another on blued paper) had the Llaugharne/Penny Post handstamp to embellish them.

Gerald concluded his display with examples of the parcel post, and of registered mail and instructional marks. The parcel post labels included Clarboston Road, Haverfordwest, Houghton Road and Solva. The registered letters showed the 8d, 6d and 5d rates, the last named including a registered letter of 1877 from the delightful Manorbier to Haverfordwest. More modern was a registered letter of 1965 from the Brawdy RNAS station. There was a returned letter and a missent letter from Haverfordwest and other instructional marks such as 'too late' and a penny charge for re-direction. Just to gild the lily and unrelated to the above, Gerald's final items were an 1890 Licence for Armorial Bearings (£2-2-0) and a Licence for a Carriage "of less than four wheels". He didn't say whether three-wheeled carts were a Pembrokeshire speciality.

Once the meeting had been given time to digest this display, Guy Bridges (our Shropshire County Editor) explained his interest in Montgomeryshire. Since the county received most of its mail from Shropshire post towns, it was a natural extension of his Shropshire interests - or so Denis Salt had convinced him! He had previously talked to us, in another context, about the offices associated with Oswestry and he had therefore decided to concentrate on Montgomery, the county town close to the border with Shropshire, and on Welshpool.

Among the early maps, we were shown a 1731 Ogilby and another of 1809. We were assured that Montgomery itself consisted of little more than a castle ruin, a church and a few houses. It was not on the Cambrian railway line. Early letters are, not surprisingly, non-existent. However, he had a 1747 example of a two-line mark of the town, addressed to the Duke of Powis in London, and other Mont/gomery two-line namestamps of 1759, 1767 and 1791. (Hands up those who knew Powis boasted a Duke.) Guy told us that Welsh postmasters took little care of these early handstamps and strikes were usually poor.

The first item we saw from the 19th century was a tavern bill from Mary Lloyd, of the Dragon Inn, Montgomery, dated 9th May 1800. The early (1801) mileage mark, '191', was shown, struck in a brownish ink. A circular '179' mileage stamp was issued in 1826 and we saw both this and the mileage erased mark. An 1821 letter referred, in its contents, to a 'too late' mark on a letter recently received, an intriguing reference at that date. No less interesting was a letter of 1833 from the Montgomery postmaster. He was, contrary to regulations, returning a letter to the sender at Tetbury to save it the delay of going to the Dead Letter Office. It had been addressed to a Thos Davies in Montgomery but not one of the five gentlemen in the town bearing that name had acknowledged it as being addressed to him. Guy said he had no 1d black item from Montgomery but, even better, we saw a distinctive '1' handstamp used in November 1842. Did we spot that the '854' numeral issued to Montgomery in 1844 was not the one we might logically expect, in view of its position in the alphabet? The answer was that Montgomery was, at the time, a sub-office under Welshpool.

The Montgomery display concluded with a re-addressed letter, sent to Montgomery instead of Montgomeryshire, and a 'book post' item for Bishops Castle, postmarked at Shrewsbury. There was no Montgomery duplex until 1878 and a registered letter from Montgomery to Titley had encountered difficulty as the addressee had gone away and left no address. Finally, we were shown some postcards of Montgomery, including one of the railway station which, alas, was some miles out of town.

Guy then moved on to the town of Welshpool, perhaps of more postal significance than the county town. Surprisingly, however, it had no namestamp until a 1772 'Welchpool', which we were shown struck in 1773. The 1788 mark had the same spelling, the standard at the time, and the first two-line stamp was from 1789. There was a horseshoe stamp from 1795 and the '183' boxed mileage stamp was struck firstly in black and then in brown. The later circular mileage mark (1824) bore the same figures and was shown used in 1829 in a purplish ink. Also struck in purple was an April 1829 example of the 'mileage erased' stamp but with the remains of the figures still visible. A second example of September 1829 was in blue ink. A circular datestamp was issued before the end of 1829 and we were shown its use in 1831.

Welshpool had an extensive penny post and four types of penny post handstamp. We were shown the boxed Penny Post stamp and then an 1832 penny post item from Powis Castle addressed to the famous 'Clive of India'. An example of the boxed 'No.1' receiving house stamp of Berriew may have been unique. More usual, was the later Penny Post stamp of Welshpool without the boxed frame.

Guy did have a 1d black item from Welshpool, if not from Montgomery. (In fact it was posted from a village just outside the town but your reporter couldn't spell the Welsh name!) He also showed us a Mulready letter sheet sent from Welshpool to Shrewsbury in June 1843. There was a cracking example of the distinctive Welshpool Maltese Cross cancel with solid centre used in 1842 and, also from 1842, a pair of 2d blues (with lines) cancelled, contrary to regulations, by a single Maltese Cross. An 1844 '852' numeral of Welshpool made sense of the '854' we had seen at Montgomery. A Welshpool 'skeleton' stamp of June 1842 had been thought unique but then, at an auction house well-known to Midlanders, a cover, advertised as having a Shrewsbury 'skeleton', proved to have a second skeleton - a Welshpool skeleton of 19th June. These are still the only two examples recorded. The stamp was in use while the seriffed CDS of the town was re-cut to have the serifs removed.

Welshpool was not among the first towns to use a duplex and didn't receive its stamp until 1866. Guy showed it used in 1867. Particularly interesting was the use of the town's small datestamp alongside the '852' numeral, which cancelled the adhesive, giving the impression it was a duplex stamp. (Welshpool apparently needed a second duplex stamp at busy periods but, at the time, lacked one.) For good measure, Guy added examples of later duplex stamps of 1874 and 1893, neither of which is recorded in the proof books. He ended his display with postcards of Welshpool, one of the best showing a train of the Cambrian Railway crossing the main road, on which road was a steam powered road vehicle. On the same railway theme, some modern railway items included two covers carried on the Welshpool and Llanfair light railway. Oh, and for good modern measure, there was a 1915 letter from Welshpool to La Paz, Bolivia. Welshpool to La Paz or Montgomery to Titley - Guy didn't say which was the more unlikely item.

Our chairman, Derek Smeathers, whose term of office is in its twilight days, thanked the speakers most sincerely for their excellent displays and presented them with certificates of appreciation. It seemed a pity that more than fourteen stalwarts hadn't been able to reach Birmingham to enjoy the afternoon but those who were there knew it had been well worth their effort.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

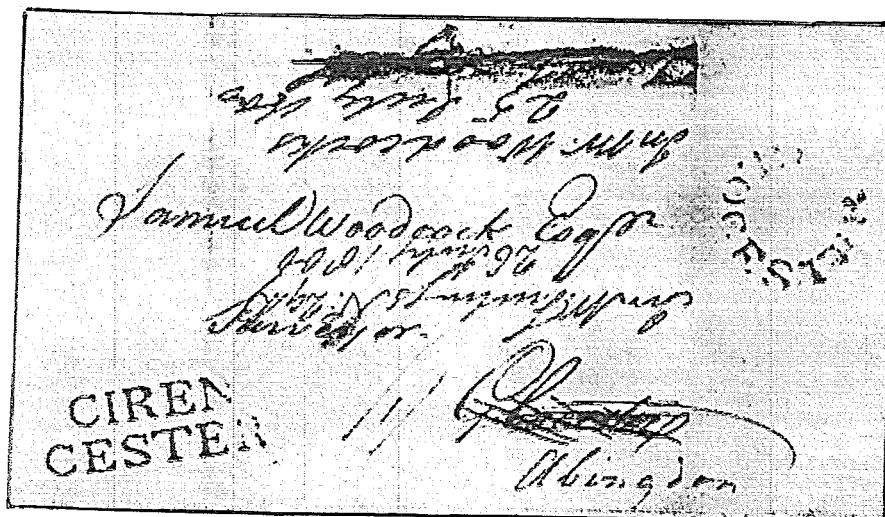
by John Calladine

The Napoleonic Wars began, from a British point of view, in 1793 when Britain joined Austria and Prussia in confronting the leaders of the French Revolution. The first phase continued without a significant break until 1802, when France and Britain concluded the Treaty of Amiens. In 1803, Britain and France were at war again and, as every schoolboy knows (or used to know), Napoleon was not finally vanquished until his defeat by Wellington at the Battle of Waterloo on 18th June 1815. That completes the history lesson and, unless one is a collector of military mail, it may seem irrelevant to the postal history of inland England and particularly of the Midlands. However, the charge for sending a letter a distance of, say, 90 miles was 5d in August 1784, 6d from January 1797, 7d from April 1801, 8d from March 1805 and 9d from July 1812. Was there a connection? One can be sure there was.

The financial surplus from the postal service, the difference between the cost of running the service and the postal revenue, can be thought of as a tax and, during a war, taxes increase to meet the extra cost of fighting that war. (Anyone old enough to remember the 'tax credits' due from World War II - and not repaid until almost worthless - will need no reminder.) The Napoleonic Wars were expensive and, with limited ways of taxing the public at that time, raising postal charges to produce a larger surplus must have seemed an obvious move. However, that was not the whole story because, during the same period, the cost of providing the public with a postal service came under enormous pressure. Whenever mail had to be carried more than a few miles, horses were needed, either for a rider or a mailcoach. The horses needed fodder and the more it cost to feed them, the more a contractor would want to be paid to cover the same distance. The Post Office had kept the payments to mail coach contractors unchanged at 2d a double mile (i.e. for a return journey of two miles) since 1787 but, as the cost of provender fluctuated from the late 1790s, so did the rates paid to horsing contractors. From about 1797, payments to contractors using the so-called 'patent' mailcoaches had to be increased to 3d a double mile.

The squeeze on postal revenue came from both directions. In 'Midland Mail' 81/17, a letter of July 1798 from Mr Saverland (one of the Post Office's riding surveyors) to Francis Freeling (Secretary to the Post Office) was reproduced. In it he drew the attention of Francis Freeling to the decrease in the number of letters being sent in his district since postal rates were increased in January 1797. He believed this was principally because the rates for short distances had been raised substantially (as well as the rates for longer distances) and it was over short distances that it was easiest for local people to avoid postage and illegally use a carrier to convey their letters. Since Freeling had not wanted rates increased on distances under 30 miles, he was not inclined to disbelieve what his surveyor was telling him. "... *I am well assured the tax will not produce near as much*" (as had been anticipated) he told the Postmaster General.

It is the pressure on costs that are clearly indicated by a letter from the postmaster of Cirencester to the surveyor of the South Wales District, Mr Samuel Woodcock. It is dated 23rd July 1800 and was addressed to Mr Woodcock at Gloucester (where he was also postmaster). It will be no surprise to us that the surveyor was away on his travels at the time and that the letter therefore had to be re-directed to catch up with him at Abingdon. Since the front bears decent examples of both the Cirencester and Gloucester handstamps of 1800, it has been reproduced below.



The postmaster of Cirencester, who signs himself "Bob Thompson", began by telling the surveyor he had long considered soliciting the Postmaster General for an adequate allowance for the heavy increase of expense he has had to bear for the past year while carrying the mail from Cirencester to Stroud. (There had been a London mailcoach through Cirencester to Stroud for a brief period in the 1780s but it would be 1809 before a branch mailcoach covered the same route.) He had then decided he could equally well put his case by presenting the facts to Mr Woodcock, in the expectation that whatever compensation he suggested to the Postmaster General (through Francis Freeling) would be readily agreed. He did not, he said, wish to burden Mr Woodcock with a long string of grievances but he wanted him to take into account the greatly increased cost of feeding his horses. To cover the (round distance) of 28 miles without a break at Stroud, he needed two well-fed horses to work the route alternately. (For this he would have been paid 2d a double mile, i.e. 2s-4d.) He assured the surveyor that, if he needed to hire a horse, he couldn't get one for anything like that sum. Furthermore, in addition to the horse hire, he had to pay the wages of the boy that undertook the ride on his behalf.

The postmaster of Cirencester went into some detail:

"Oats are now from 8 to 10 shillings a Bushel, Beans 12 (shillings a bushel), Bran 8 shillings per hundred (weight?) and Hay fit for travelling horses £5 a ton . . ."

Before considering how these prices can be related to the present day, it might be useful to say a word about feeding horses used for coaches or riding work in 1800. Such horses would probably have been fed a mixture of oats, bran or crushed beans with chopped hay. Typically, each horse would have needed between 14 and 20 pounds of hay a day and perhaps 10 pounds of 'corn', i.e. oats, bran or beans. Neither beans nor bran is regularly fed to horses nowadays. Beans are an excellent source of protein but are not generally available. Bran, which was much more nutritious in 1800 than it would be today (as so much is now extracted from it), is believed to affect the horse's calcium level and is confined to occasional use as a medicinal pick-me-up. Mr Thompson's two horses might therefore have been consuming 40 pounds of hay a day and a ton would have lasted no more than two months. If a ton of hay cost him £5-0-0 and the ride earned him 14/- a week (six round trips), the payment from the Post Office would have been about £5-12-0 while the horses ate the hay. This took no account of the cost of oats, bran or beans, perhaps another £3-£4. The payment to the rider would have been the final straw - please excuse the understandable pun because horses also need straw for bedding - and it is no wonder the postmaster concluded his letter by claiming *" . . . I can justly say that for a great while past I have been a loser by the Ride"*.

£1 in 1800 would have been worth almost £20 in today's money. In fact, the exact conversion (using the 2001 equivalent, the latest readily available) of £5 for a ton of hay is £194-42. A bushel of oats would be from £15-55 and beans £23-33. The current price of hay is about £120 a tonne, oats are £170 a tonne and bran £215 a tonne. (Bushels and pecks, so beloved at my primary school, are out of fashion - a bushel is a dry measure of 8 gallons.) The postmaster of Cirencester would have been paid about £200 a year, say £4000 at today's values. From that sum, he would undoubtedly have had to pay clerks and therefore the losses accumulated while undertaking the Stroud ride were something he could not ignore.

The pressure to increase payments to mailcoach contractors and those undertaking riding work became so intense that the Post Office undertook a wide survey of the price of hay, oats and beans. By the time the surveyors reported, late in 1801, prices had generally fallen a little but not uniformly. Extracts from the figures produced by Mr Saverland are reproduced below.

In about the middle of October 1800

Town names	Hay per ton	Oats per bushel	Beans per bushel
Birmingham	£5	4/6d to 5/6d	7/4 to 9/-
Daventry	£5 to £5-5-0	4/6d to 5/6d	8/- to 8/6d
Shrewsbury	£6	6/- to 6/3d	10/6d
Stourbridge	£6	6/- to 7/-	13/-
Lichfield	£7	5/- to 5/6d	9/6 to 10/-
Newcastle u L	£7-10-0 to £8	7/- to 8/-	12/- to 13/-

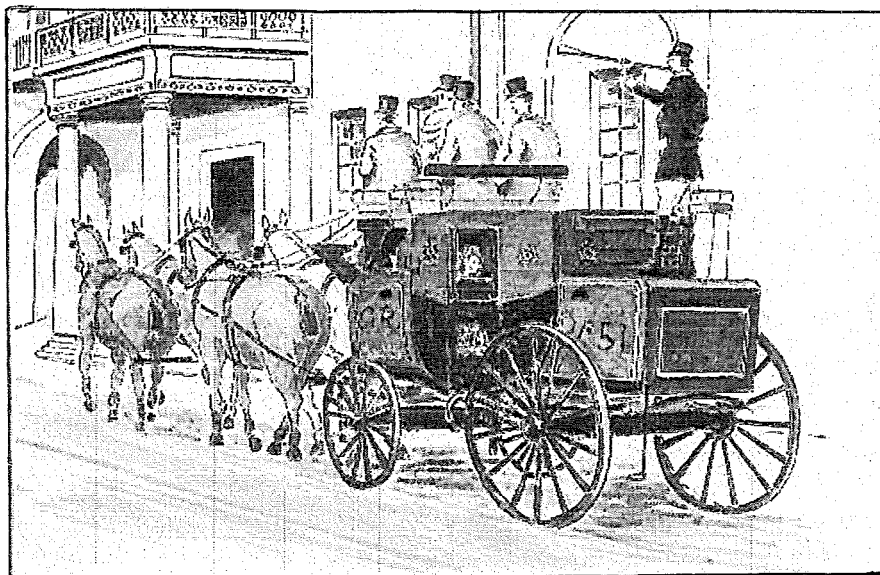
In about the middle of October 1801

Town names	Hay per ton	Oats per bushel	Beans per bushel
Birmingham	£3 to £3-15-0	5/-	8/3d
Daventry	£3-10-0	3/3d to 4/4d	8/-
Shrewsbury	£4-4-0	4/6d	6/6d
Stourbridge	£4 to £5	5/6d	7/-
Lichfield	£3-10-0	3/- to 3/6d	6/-
Newcastle u L	£5	4/- to 4/6d	7/6d

The purpose of this survey was clearly to provide the Post Office with a case for resisting increased payments to the horsing contractors and, if possible, to provide justification for reducing them. One can see that the price of fodder in, say, Lichfield had almost halved. However, this was probably temporary and misleading. There were 'scarcity riots' in Britain in both 1801 and 1802. The price of wheat and other foods reached an all-time high and the public reacted violently. There was no single reason for the high price of food and fodder. Trade with Europe had almost ceased since the war, giving British farmers a virtual monopoly of agricultural production. This led, in turn, to an artificial scarcity of foodstuffs. Labour had been taken away from the land to support the army abroad. At the same time, a large number of Enclosure Acts had possibly led to a reduction in the hay harvest by converting marginal land to food production. However, the principal reason for high prices was undoubtedly a series of notoriously bad harvests in the 1790s. They could hardly have come at a worse time.

Perversely, at the end of the Napoleonic Wars, corn prices halved and farmers panicked. The landowners, controlling Parliament, sought the exclusion of foreign grain imports and the resulting Corn Laws of 1815 prevented any imports of grain until the price of domestic grain reached £4 a quarter. This caused immense problems in urban areas but that's another story, of course. It is far removed from the grievances of the poor postmaster of Cirencester who might have mentioned two other matters affecting his finances. A tax on horses had been introduced in 1796 and, if that were not enough, it was followed, in 1798, by graduated income tax - 10% on incomes over £200. In retrospect, the postmaster's complaint to the surveyor seems mild enough. One just wonders he didn't quit his post!

A detail from an illustration in Bevan Rider's excellent book 'A More Expeditious Conveyance - The Story of the Royal Mail Coaches', shortly to be available from the Society library.



WE NEVER CLOSE OR, AS ONE DOOR SHUTS ANOTHER ONE OPENS

By Elizabeth and Eric Lewis

Members may have been surprised to see in Ken Smith's list of post office closures in the Midlands during 2003 the opening of a new post office. If we ignore re-openings following temporary closures this is a very rare event and took place in Smethwick which Ken lists under West Midlands.

May we be permitted to include a few words on this unusual occurrence. On the same list will be found the closing of Thimblemill post office. Now this is an event that we do not allow in Smethwick and a brief history of that office is as follows.

Thimblemill post office was established in January 1936 in Norman Road, Smethwick in Scott's newsagents shop, a few yards from Thimblemill Road which was possibly named after the Thimblemill public house which still stands on the corner of Norman Road and Thimblemill Road. In the 1970s, the sub-office was transferred to a shop in Thimblemill Road, still, of course, retaining its former name.

Last year, the sub-postmaster retired and the post office business was transferred round the corner into a newsagents shop in Abbey Road. As it was now actually nearer to Thimblemill Road than the original Norman Road office had been, it could easily have retained its name but the designation was changed to "Abbey Road Post Office".

It was planned to transfer Thimblemill post office to Abbey Road on Friday, 26th September 2003 and the till receipts changed to "Abbey Road" from that date. The actual closure was on Saturday, 8th November and Abbey Road Post Office took over from the morning of Monday, 10th November, part of the newsagents shop having been fitted out for post office business. A ramped entrance had been installed but no pillar box appeared until several weeks later.

If any member would like an impression of the datestamp showing the former rather unusual 'Thimblemill' name, we have a few on certificates of posting etc. Please ring Elizabeth on 0121 4291222 if you would like one, but never let it be said that post offices closed down in Smethwick. They are occasionally merely re-located!

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AN UPDATE OF THE RUTLAND SECTION OF THE COUNTY CATALOGUE

by John Hine

- The background story to the accompanying Rutland listing:

The series of British County Catalogues (BCC) published between 1978 and 1996 under the editorial leadership of Martin Willcocks and Barrie Jay with the assistance of very many 'County Editors' has become a standard reference work for all collectors of British postal history. Unfortunately, following the death of Martin, Barrie Jay is no longer in a position to coordinate the efforts of the various county editors and he has informed me that the BCC will no longer be maintained or updated.

With the improved (pc) technology now available to us, many collectors are in a position to greatly improve the rather limited and by now partially outdated information available in the BCC volumes. The possibilities for expanding a county listing are plentiful. Simply increasing the page format to A4 size (the BCC sheets are little more than half this size) will provide room for much more detailed information. Other improvements would be the introduction of 100% illustration of all markings and perhaps the extension of the BCC cut-off date of 1840/43 to, perhaps, 1860 to enable coverage of the UDC period. Other improvements relative to the BCC may include the listing of full dates (the BCC was limited to year dates) and the insertion of more explicit notes and distinguishing features of specific handstamps.

With these thoughts in mind I have produced a new-style, prototype, listing for Rutland in the hope that it will stimulate a discussion amongst our members that will eventually result in a 'Midland County Catalogue' (MCC) sometime in the future. Certainly the opinions and suggestions of the former BCC County Editors in our society will be of importance in deciding the way ahead.

- General notes on the Rutland listing

Progress on our forthcoming book on Midland mailcoaches and mileage marks has been delayed by a requirement to produce 'near-perfect' illustrations of the mileage marks. The retouching / cleaning of these illustrations has resulted in hundreds of hours of concentrated work (thank you Martin Scroggs and others). I propose a simpler solution to the problem of illustrations. Where proof impressions are available from the GPO Proof Books these are used. Where no proof impression is available then I have scanned the best available example of the handstamp and show the resulting illustration 'as-is' without any enhancement or retouching or cleaning-up.

As mentioned above the proposed cut-off date for the new listings is 1860 to enable inclusion of all the undated namestamps and also the various datestamps introduced to the more important offices. In this prototype list I have decided not to include the group of handstamps primarily issued as obliterations for the adhesive stamps introduced in 1840. These are mainly the series of Maltese Cross cancellers issued in 1840 and their successors the numeral obliterations issued from 1844 onwards. From 1853 onwards some major offices began to use 'combined obliterations' where a datestamp was combined in one handstamp with a numeral obliterator. Perhaps some members will view the omission of the numeral postmarks from the new listing as incorrect but I consider that John Parmenter's series of books on barred numerals already adequately covers this field of collecting.

The inclusion of 100% illustrations removes any necessity to refer to the type of handstamp so these are no longer included.

Due to the increased time span of the listing and consequent increase in the number of handstamps listed it has not been possible to maintain the BCC numbering system. I have chosen to use the letter R for Rutland (RU in the BCC) followed by a number with gaps in the numbering to allow for any possible future additional entries. Where the same handstamp is known used with more colours of ink this is shown by using the R number followed by a lower case letter per colour, R46a, R46b, R46c etc.

The second column of the listing is as in the BCC and shows the wording of the handstamp as spelt. Where a multiline handstamp occurs a solidus (/) is used to indicate the end of a line. All punctuation marks appear as on the handstamps, these are mostly in the form of a stop (.) or a dash (-).

The third column is available for notes or distinguishing features and now that we have an A4 size there is room to include more detail than was possible in the BCC format. Where the issue date of a handstamp is known this is always recorded here.

The following column shows the size of the handstamp in millimeters with, as in the BCC, the width being given first followed by the height. Circular stamps have just the diameter listed.

The fifth column is reserved for the colour of ink.

The last two columns consist of the earliest and latest full date of confirmed use. If dates outside this period have been reported without a reasonable degree of certainty (i.e. not confirmed by the county editor) then they are entered in column three with a remark that such dates have been reported but are unconfirmed. The use of complete dates where available is an improvement on the BCC listing which was limited to year dates only. This day-month-year requirement may provide some county editors with problems but others have been using full date records for some time. Where a stamp is known to have been issued but is as yet unknown in use I have entered 'GPO' in the last column to indicate that it is only recorded in the GPO Proof Impression Books.

In the BCC the last column was reserved for a rarity scale that was itself directly coupled to a monetary value. In this initial listing I have decided that the disadvantages of a rarity factor outweigh the advantages so there is no rarity scale. Perhaps other editors do not share this view but surely the commercial value of a letter depends on so many other factors than the postmark alone. For example a glance at the Rutland list reveals that the large majority of UDCs are as yet unrecorded - how does one relate this sort of rarity with that of an early 18th Century townstamp? There are so many other factors involved that have a bearing on the commercial value of an item to name a few:

- The quality and cleanliness of the postal marking and the letter;
- The age of a letter;
- The contents (historical and social) and the importance of the writer of the letter;
- The routing, the postal charges and the presence of other postal markings;
- The presence of adhesive stamps (post 1840);
- The popularity of the area with collectors.

- Specific notes on the Rutland listing

Since 1969 I have been the Rutland County Editor of the BCC. The original Rutland listing appeared in Volume 1 published in 1978 and the county was included in the 2nd edition of 1996. Although I had submitted a much-improved version of the Rutland listing in good time for publication, an administrative error resulted in its omission and the original text reappeared unchanged in the 2nd edition. The accompanying Rutland listing is thus the first revision to the original version to be published in 26 years.

One major difference relative to the BCC is the extended time scale to 1860 that has enabled inclusion of all undated circle namestamps. 28 Rutland UDCs were issued to village receiving houses during the period 1844 to 1859 and their scarcity can be gauged from the fact that only 4 of the 28 have so far been recorded in use. Two Greetham straight line stamps are now included with dates ranging from 1787 through until 1837. The background history of this early office was described in an article entitled 'Greetham Inn' by John Soer in 'Midland Mail' No.65, pages 12 to 14.

The quality of illustrations of those stamps without a proof book entry is limited by the quality of the available material and Uppingham certainly seems to have excelled in producing weak or smudged handstamp impressions in the period prior to 1830. Hopefully other members will assist in providing better originals to improve the quality of many illustrations.

- Conclusions and acknowledgements

I hope that I have managed to convince members that it is important to decide in which direction we intend to go now that the wise hands of Martin Willcocks and Barrie Jay are no longer on the steering wheel of the County Catalogues. Let John Soer know what you think is feasible and within our grasp. I think that with the combined knowledge and experience of the Midland (GB) Postal History Society members we are in an excellent position to establish and maintain a detailed listing of the early postal markings of the Midland counties. Hopefully this will appear in a uniform format and also be readily accessible for the collecting public (perhaps via internet). I intend to await the reactions of fellow members to this initiative and, if positive, I am willing to commence work on a similar listing for Gloucestershire.

At this point I pass my BCC Rutland county editorship into the capable hands of John Soer our Midland (GB) PHS Rutland county editor - possibly also to be called our 'MCC Rutland editor'. Finally, my thanks to John Soer for allowing use of information contained in his book 'The Royal Mail in Leicestershire and Rutland', and to John Calladine for his support and advice in this venture.



R01



R02



R03



R04



R05

R01 BELTON Issued to Uppingham 04.07.1848

R02 BRIDGE-CASTERTON Issued to Stamford 08.02.1845

R03 BRIDGE-CASTERTON Issued to Stamford 02.06.1859

R04 COTTESMORE Issued to Oakham 20.07.1844

R05 COTTESMORE Issued to Oakham 07.01.1858

25 GPO

25 GPO

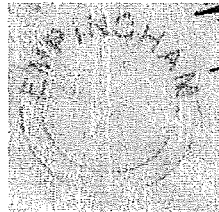
20 GPO

25 GPO

20 GPO



R06



R07



R08

R06 EMPRINGHAM Issued to Stamford 08.02.1845

R07 EMPINGHAM - probably not used Issued to Stamford 14.04.1845

R08 EXTON Issued to Oakham 29.09.1851

25 GPO

25 Red 01.06.1847 29.01.1850

25 GPO



R09



R10



R11



R12

R09 GREETHAM

R10 GREETHAM

R11 GREETHAM Issued to Oakham 20.07.1844

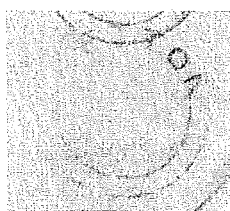
R12 HAMBLETON Issued to Oakham 14.04.1849

47 x 5 Black 07.09.1787 08.01.1806

38 x 4 Black 27.12.1809 03.12.1837

25 GPO

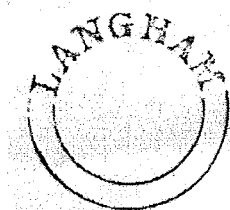
25 GPO



R13



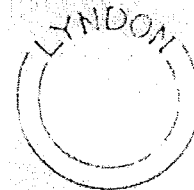
R14



R15



R16



R17

R13	KETTON	Issued to Stamford 22.08.1844	25	Black	26.12.1844	21.08.1854
R14	KETTON	Issued to Stamford 03.06.1859	20			GPO
R15	LANGHAM	Issued to Oakham 24.02.1844	30			GPO
R16	LYDDINGTON	Issued to Uppingham 22.11.1847	25			GPO
R17	LYNDON	Issued to Uppingham 03.03.1847	25			GPO



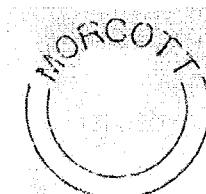
R18



R19



R20



R21



R22



R23

R18	MANTON	Issued to Uppingham 03.03.1847	25			GPO
R19	MANTON	Issued to Uppingham 01.06.1858	20			GPO
R20	MARKET-OVERTON	Issued to Oakham 22.01.1845	25			GPO
R21	MORCOTT	Issued to Uppingham 03.03.1847	25			GPO
R22	MORCOTT	Issued to Uppingham 01.06.1858	20			GPO
R23	NORTH LUFFENHAM	Issued to Uppingham 05.02.1859	20			GPO



R30



R34



R36

R30	OAKHAM	Sans serif	26 X4	Black	10.1774	
R34	97 OAKHAM		43 x 5	Black	30.11.1788	
R36	OAKHAM	Reported use in 1799 unconfirmed	44 x 6	Black	21.10.1791	03.08.1795



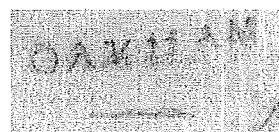
R38



R40



R42

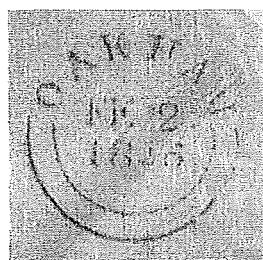


R43

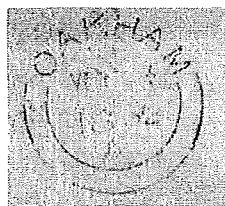
R38	OAKHAM / 98		28 x 11	Black	05.09.1801	25.01.1816
R40	OAKHAM / 96		32 x 10	Black	19.11.1818	02.12.1824
R40a	OAKHAM / 96	Later reuse	32 x 10	Red	21.12.1827	
R42	OAKHAM / 96	1826 date reported	25	Black	10.12.1824	12.12.1825
R42a	OAKHAM / 96	Unconfirmed report	25	Red	1828	
R43	OAKHAM	As R42 but mileage erased. Lower mileage bar sometimes visible	32 x 4	Red	11.03.1829	
R43a	OAKHAM	Reported use 26.05.1831 unconfirmed	32 x 4	Black	28.07.1830	14.12.1830



R44



R46a



R48

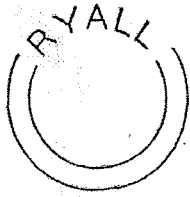


R50



R52

R44	OAKHAM	Issued 12.09.1830	24	Black	06.05.1834	02.05.1838
R46	OAKHAM	Seriffed datestamp issued 01.09.1838	29	Red	23.10.1841	
R46a	OAKHAM		29	Black	03.09.1844	01.01.1846
R46b	OAKHAM		29	Blue	22.01.1846	21.04.1846
R46c	OAKHAM		29	Olive green	01.07.1846	19.12.1851
R48	OAKHAM	Sans serif with code. Issued 29.04.1852	25	Olive green	09.05.1852	22.09.1856
R50	OAKHAM	Issued 12.03.1857 (O lower)	26	Black	10.09.1857	07.01.1859
R52	OAKHAM	Issued 12.01.1859	19	Black	26.02.1859	01.08.1895
R52a	OAKHAM	Similar stamp issued 05.04.1859	20	use combined with R52		



R60



R61



R62



R63



R64

R60	RYALL	Issued to Stamford 19.04.1847	25		GPO
R61	RYHALL	Issued to Stamford in .05.1859	19		GPO
R62	SOUTH-LUFFENHAM	Issued to Stamford 22.10.1844	25	Olive green	23.09.1846
R63	SOUTH. LUFFENHAM	Issued to Stamford 15.04.1859	19		GPO
R64	STRETTON	Issued to Stamford 02.09.1846	25	Red	28.11.1852



R70



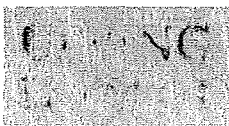
R73



R76



R79



R82



R85



R88

R70	upingham	In manuscript			18.12.1711
R73	UPING / HAM		18 x 8	Black	18.08.1739 02.12.1743
R76	UPING / HAM	Perhaps same stamp as R73	18 x 9	Black	27.08.1775 18.12.1776
R79	UPPINGHAM		55 x 6	Black	03.12.1783
R82	UPPINGHAM / 91		26 x 12	Black	04.06.1785 25.08.1785
R85	UPPINGHAM		47 x 5	Black	16.06.1789
R88	UPPINGHAM		52 x 5	Black	21.01.1799



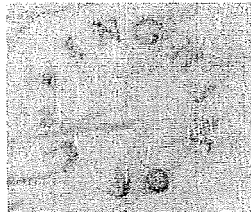
R91



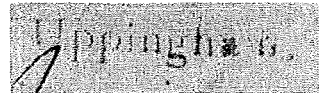
R94



R96



R98



R101

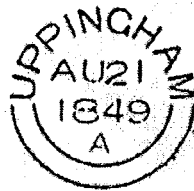
R91	UPPINGHAM / ??	Mileage figures uncertain	41 x 11	Black	29.07.1804	17.05.1809
R94	UPPINGHAM / 98		45 x 11	Black	05.07.1811	19.04.1816
R96	UPPINGHAM / 90		40 x 11	Black	17.01.1819	
R98	UPPINGHAM / 90	Unconfirmed use 20.10.1829 reported	25	Black	01.05.1823	02.05.1826
R101	Uppingham.	Lower case lettering. Also used together with R115 (missentto)	34 x 6	Black	15.06.1830	19.04.1831



R103



R104



R106



R108



R110

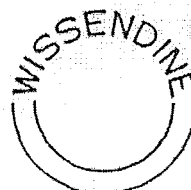
R103	UPPINGHAM	Issued 16.03.1833	25	Black	29.04.1834	15.03.1840
R104	UPPINGHAM	R103 reissued as datestamp 24.03.1840	25	Black	26.03.1840	05.11.1847
R106	UPPINGHAM	Sans serif with code issued 21.08.1849	25	Green	12.12.1851	27.11.1852
R108	UPPINGHAM	Issued 11.12.1854 (U higher)	25			GPO
R110	UPPINGHAM	Issued 01.01.1855 (U lower)	25	Green	15.12.1855	12.05.1858



R112



R115



R120



R121

R112	UPPINGHAM	Single arc issued 01.12.1857	21	Black	03.09.1859	09.09.1859
R115	Missentto	Lower case, no spacing, used with R101	28 x 4	Black	23.12.1830	19.04.1831
R120	WISSENDINE	Issued to Oakham 04.03.1846	25			GPO
R121	WHISSENDINE	Issued to Oakham 07.01.1858	19			GPO

End of Rutland listing

SHAW'S BUNTINGFORD AUCTION

G.B. & WORLD POSTAL HISTORY

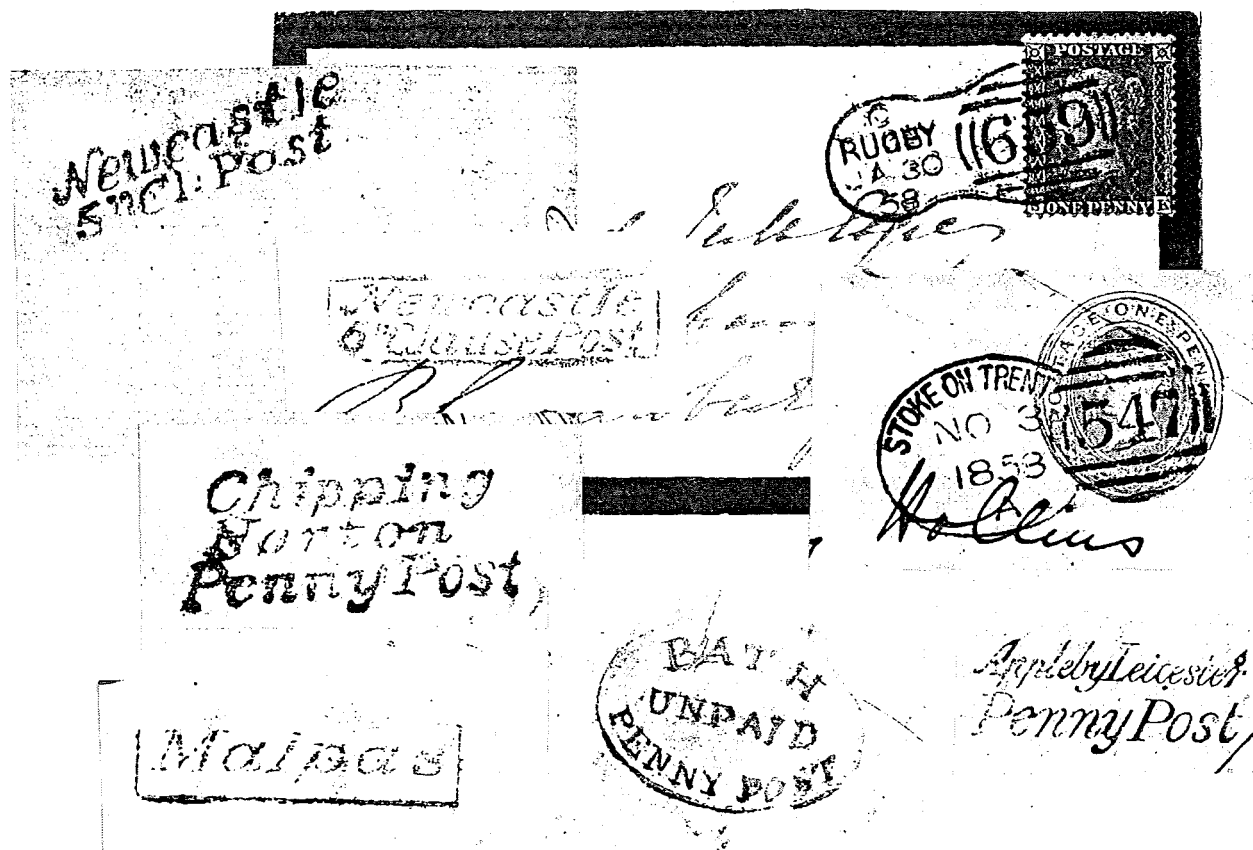
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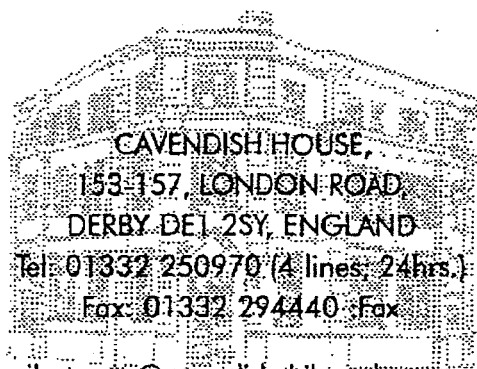
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