

MIDLAND MAIL

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



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Number 41, September 1985

Ten Years Old

It would not be surprising if, amongst the celebrations for 350 years of the General Post, the outside world overlooked the tenth birthday of the Midland (GB) Postal History Society. There are older and larger societies, even better known societies, but survival for a decade is a worthwhile achievement and we need seek no other justification for our own celebration. There are probably no more than five of our current members who were present when the Society was born and the rest of us may care to reflect on how it all began.

The inaugural meeting of any society can hardly be considered its true beginning because someone has to appreciate the need for a new society, make the plans and call the first meeting. Our inspiration came from Mr W. S. Chester ('Ches' to one and all in the philatelic world) who, at that time, was Secretary of the Coventry Philatelic Society. It was Ches who saw the need for a federation of Midland philatelic societies and, using Coventry P.S. funds, created the Midland Philatelic Federation. Being Secretary, he found himself with the task of drafting the aims and rules of the Federation and, in these, he incorporated the important words - "To promote the study of local postal history". That was all very well but he knew that the new Federation could not achieve that aim in itself; a postal history society was needed. Ches wrote out the aims and rules of such a society, were it to exist, and, using Federation funds, hired a room for an inaugural meeting. The scene was set for that all-important meeting on Saturday 19th April 1975 at the Birmingham and Midland Institute.

Ten prospective members turned up at the meeting plus a gentleman who collected Switzerland and who must have been surprised to hear what was being discussed. Mr Steph Stobbs, a young man with a bit of experience tucked under his belt, was elected Chairman and he invited Ches to outline the way he expected the proposed society to function. Interestingly enough, it was nearly called a 'study group' but those present appreciated that the aims were wider and the name of Midland (GB) Postal History Society was agreed. It will do no harm to reiterate the aims of the Society expressed at that time:

1. To promote the study of British postal history with an emphasis on local postal history within the area covered by the Midland Philatelic Federation.
2. To hold regular meetings where postal history can be displayed and discussed.
3. To record all knowledge gained and to publish it for the benefit of members.
4. To study postal history, in its widest aspect, up to the present day.

At that inaugural meeting, Ches was elected Secretary and Peter Baxter Treasurer. By October of 1975, when the Committee met, membership of the Society had increased to 16 and it reached 20 before the end of the year. The first Bulletin, a single sheet, appeared in January 1976 followed by a second - two sheets this time - in March. Richard Farman took over the Chair in 1977 and subsequently relieved Ches of the Secretary's responsibilities in 1979 when Mrs Elizabeth Lewis became Chairman (we have avoided the awful word 'chairperson'), a post she has held without dissent ever since.

It is hoped that those who were in at the beginning can look back over ten years with some satisfaction. The membership has grown steadily if unspectacularly, average attendances at meetings have crept up to near the 20 mark, and original research is being published. Perhaps most significantly, one feels that members enjoy their society. In 1978, the name of Mr W.S.Chester was inscribed in the British Philatelic Federation's 'Book of Merit'. Undoubtedly the honour was largely for his work in forming the Midland Philatelic Federation. In view of what he did for postal history, perhaps it should have been inscribed twice?

Forthcoming Meetings

The first meeting of the new season will be on Saturday 28th September at 2pm at Dr Johnson House, Bull Street, Birmingham. For those members who have not yet found their way to a meeting of the Society, Dr Johnson House is centrally located in the city, about five minutes walk from New Street Station and close to both Rackhams and Lewis' department stores. This meeting will be one of the ever-popular 'Nine Sheet Displays' and this time we are asked to bring a maximum of nine sheets of postal history material from the period 1900-1920 (perhaps it should be 1901 rather than 1900 - see a later item!) This will give our many collectors of 'modern rubbish' a chance to steal the limelight.

The first meeting will be preceded by a Committee Meeting at 1pm. In accordance with the decision at the AGM, all County Editors are invited to attend committee meetings this season. Discussions will include the issue of amended pages to the book of undated circular marks and the preparation of a companion volume of sub-office straight line handstamps. The Committee Meeting will also be at Dr Johnson House.

You are asked to make a note of the second meeting of the season as there will not be another issue of 'Midland Mail' before it. This will be a joint meeting with the Shropshire and Welsh Postal History Societies on Saturday 2nd November and the venue will be The Britannia Hotel, Shrewsbury. The display will be by the noted postal historian, award winner and 'Michael Jackson-accomplice' Mrs Vivien Sussex. Full details are given on a separate sheet which our Secretary hopes to send out with this issue of 'Midland Mail'. We look forward to a bumper turn-out for a most attractive day's entertainment.

Future Meetings

The programme for the rest of the 1985/86 season is expected to be as follows:

30th November (at the Birmingham and Midland Institute) - Eric and Elizabeth Lewis.
 21st December - the annual gathering at The Bass Museum, Burton-on-Trent.
 18th January 1986 (at Dr Johnson House) - 9-sheet display (theme to be announced).
 22nd February (at Dr Johnson House) - the Annual Competition.
 15th March (at Dr Johnson House) - Mr G.F.Oxley.
 26th April (at Dr Johnson House) - AGM and Society Auction.

Full details of each meeting will be given in the preceding issues of 'Midland Mail'.

Subscriptions

SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR THE 1985/86 SEASON ARE NOW DUE.

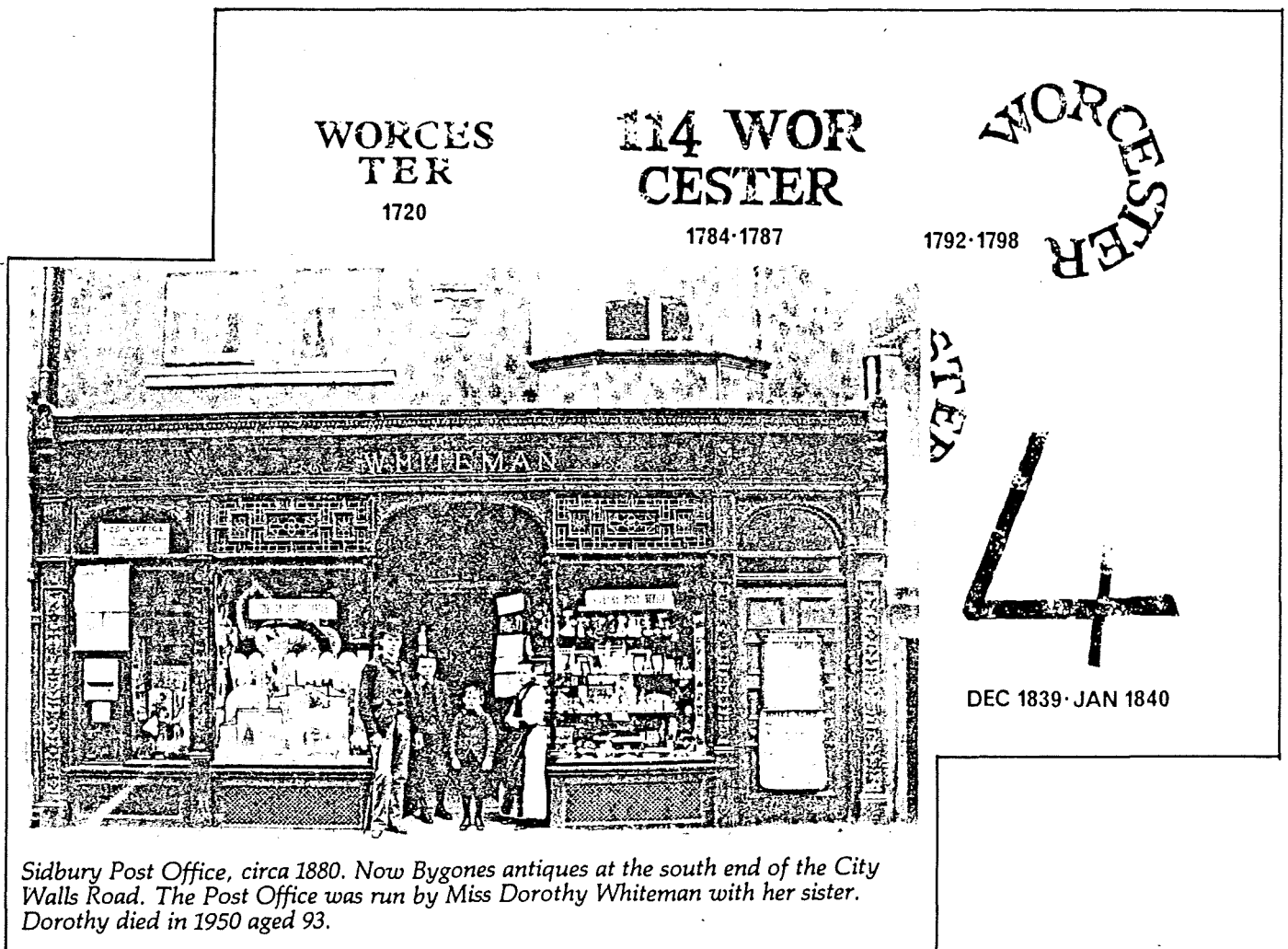
Twenty members have already paid up but that represents little more than a third of our potential strength. It would be greatly appreciated if cheques were sent, as soon as possible, to the Honorary Treasurer whose address appears on the front page. The sub is unchanged at £3-50. This number of 'Midland Mail' has been sent to everyone who subscribed last year but a revised mailing list based on paid-up members will be compiled early in November. The Society extends a warm welcome to its new members.

PLEASE PAY - WITHOUT DELAY

Three Hundred Years of the Worcester Post Office

Collectors of postcards produced by the regional postal boards may be aware that two interesting cards are being issued by the Midlands Postal Board as a part of the celebrations of 300 years of the Worcester Post Office. The first card, illustrating Worcester postmarks of 1720-1844, was put on sale on 31st July and a second card will appear later in the year.

It goes without saying that the illustrations of the Worcester postmarks are from items in Mike Young's collection. It may be less widely known that Mike has also written a very competent 'History of the Post Office of Worcester, 1685-1985' which has been published as a most attractive 10 page booklet by the Midlands Postal Board Public Relations Office, 86 Lionel Street, Birmingham B3 1HQ. In it, he describes the establishment of the General Post, the beginnings of the post at Worcester, the various locations of the main office and includes quite a lot of information about the sub-offices and receiving houses. An illustration from the booklet and of a part of Picture Card MPB 17 are reproduced below.



Sidbury Post Office, circa 1880. Now Bygones antiques at the south end of the City Walls Road. The Post Office was run by Miss Dorothy Whiteman with her sister. Dorothy died in 1950 aged 93.

WHAT THE PAPERS SAID

or, to be precise, what the philatelic press said about

'The Undated Circular Marks of the Midland Counties'

The Undated Circular Marks of the Midland Counties

This is the first publication to be produced by the Midland (GB) Postal History Society which was formed in 1975. It attempts to list every handstamp in undated circular form issued to sub offices in Derbyshire, Herefordshire, Leicestershire (and Rutland), Northamptonshire, Nottinghamshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire (with Birmingham) and Worcestershire, during the period 1830-1859, a total of over 2,000 marks. The undated marks have been listed in chronological rather than alphabetical order to help postal historians and postmark collectors in piecing together postal delivery routes.

Among its features, the publication records the location of every mark in the Steel Impression Books of the Post Office Archives and its period of use in each known ink colour. The publication consists of 108 pages and has been produced in the vertical A4 format. It is available in two versions, either spirally bound or punched to fit any standard two-hole ring binder. The cost of the publication is £5.50 plus £1.00 for postage and packing. Orders with the appropriate remittance made payable to 'The Midland (GB) Postal History Society' should be sent to John Calladine, Dunley House, Cranham, Gloucester GL4 8HQ. Unless otherwise specified, the spirally bound version will be supplied.

British Philatelic Bulletin

The Undated Circular marks of the Midland Counties. (Obtainable from: John Calladine, Dunley House, Cranham, Gloucester, GL4 8HQ. Price £5.50, postage £1.)

This — the first publication of the Midland (GB) Postal History Society — attempts to list every handstamp in undated circular form issued to sub-offices in the counties of Derbyshire, Herefordshire, Leicestershire (and Rutland), Northamptonshire, Nottinghamshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire (with Birmingham) and Worcestershire during the period 1830-59, a total of over 200 marks. By using what is principally a chronological listing, the issue of a group of new undated circles at the same time often gives useful clues to the opening of new sub-offices with the establishment of a new official post. It also shows clearly how scarce are the underrated later undated circles whose period of use was often no more than a few months. The book records the location of every mark in the Steel Impression Books of PO Archives and its period of use in each known ink colour. The cross referencing to the Impression Books is useful as it enables collectors to obtain photocopies of any mark that particularly interests them but which has not been illustrated here. 108 pages, 150 marks illustrated, available in two versions — spiral bound or punched to fit standard two-hole ring binders.

THE UNDATED CIRCULAR MARKS OF THE MIDLAND COUNTIES

Midland (GB) Postal History Society
£5.50 plus £1 postage from W. J. Calladine, Dunley House, Cranham, Gloucester GL4 8HQ.

This is the first publication from the Midland Postal History Society, and a very professional debut it is indeed. Fundamentally this book provides a detailed listing of the undated circular postmarks used at the minor sub offices and receiving houses in the eleven Midland counties of Derbyshire, Herefordshire, Leicestershire, Rutland, Northamptonshire, Nottinghamshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire, Birmingham and Worcestershire. The backbone of the book is the material preserved in the proof books at Post Office Archives, which provides, more or less, the date of issue in the majority of cases. The listing is fleshed out with the periods of usage, colours of ink, and other relevant details. The classification of types follows that devised in 1973 by Michael Champness; I can appreciate the dilemma in striving for uniformity at the expense of the chronological sequence. Type C1, for example, the double-arc style with sans-serif lettering, actually came after Type C2, the style with seriffed lettering — but that is a minor point compared with the chaotic classification of the comparable marks north of the Border, as any student of Scots Locals will appreciate.

The arc stamps were superseded in the late 1850s by the much smaller and neater thimble stamps with name round the top or across the centre. These were adopted in 1858 and had a very short life, as undated stamps were peremptorily withdrawn early in 1860. Consequently many of the marks of these later type have yet to be recorded in actual use. The data presented in this book has been stored on magnetic disk, and a questionnaire is enclosed for readers to send details of hitherto unrecorded material to John Calladine, the co-ordinating editor.

The text is arranged in alphabetical order by counties, with cross-reference to offices whose controlling post town changed from time to time, across county boundaries. The illustrations are derived partly from the proof books and partly from covers illustrating the use of these marks as backstamps. A particularly useful feature is the listing of offices under each post town at the beginning of each chapter, divided into those established by 1855 and those which were opened during the last few years in which the undated stamps were current.

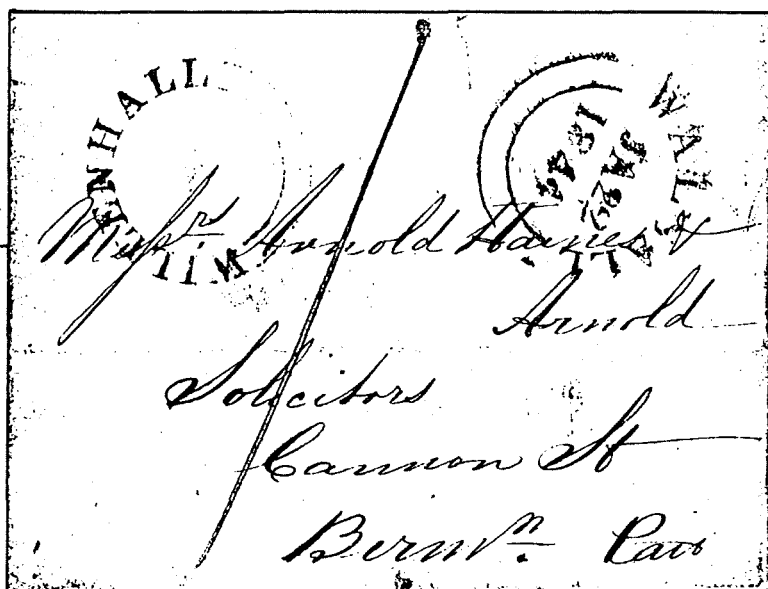
The Midland Society hope to follow this up with a companion volume dealing with the straight-line undated marks. They have certainly set themselves a very high standard with this first work.

James Mackay

'Stamps'

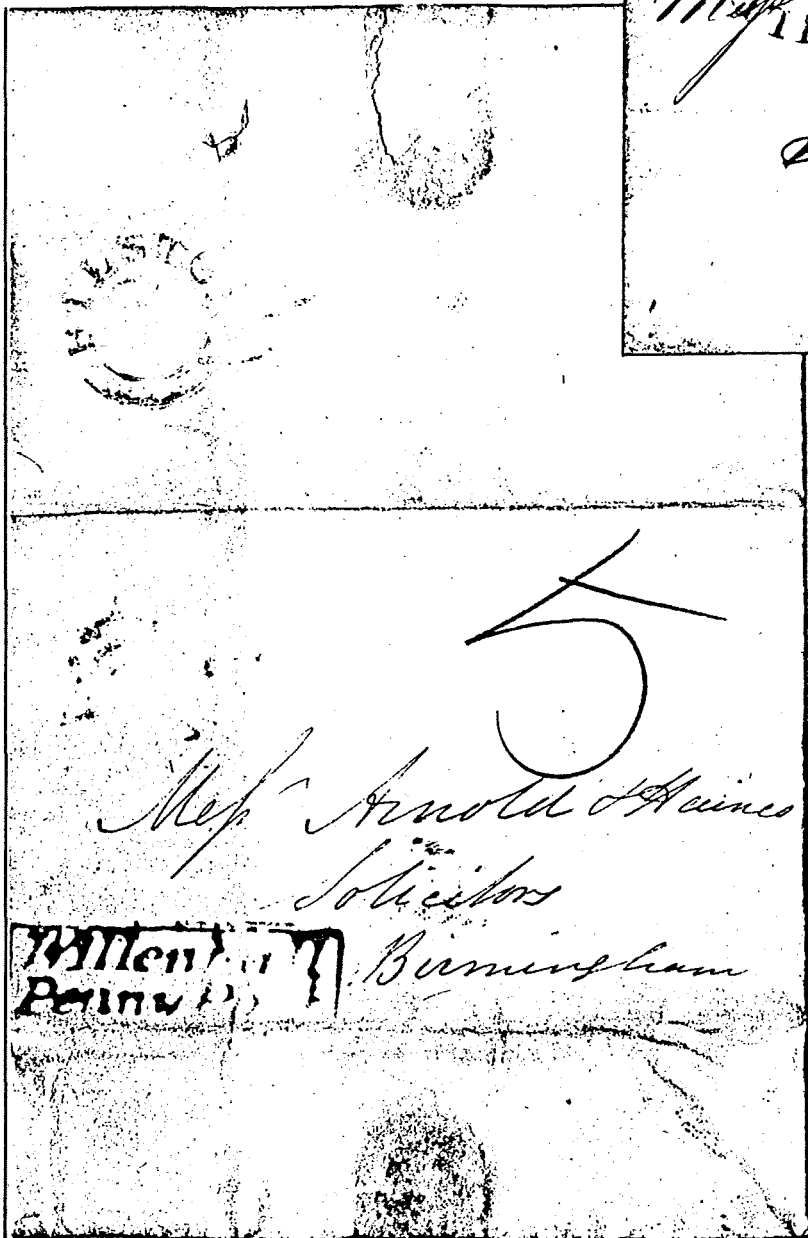
Gibbons Stamp Monthly - can you spot the 'deliberate' mistake?

Around About Willenhall



A glance will show that the entire illustrated were sent to the same Birmingham partnership. Both were written at Willenhall, one of the smaller towns of Black Country Staffordshire, midway between Wolverhampton and Walsall and noted chiefly for the manufacture of locks. It is obvious the letters went by different indirect routes. They might have gone directly, on the train. But Willenhall had only a receiving office.

Standard Penny Post stamps were normally not issued to receiving offices before 1837 in the 'Oxley type 5' period; hence the misnomer 'village type'. The earlier exceptions are, in eight instances at least, easily explicable - they were used at offices whose letters went out in more than one direction, in other words they belonged in more than one local post. Adderbury's FC7 is the best

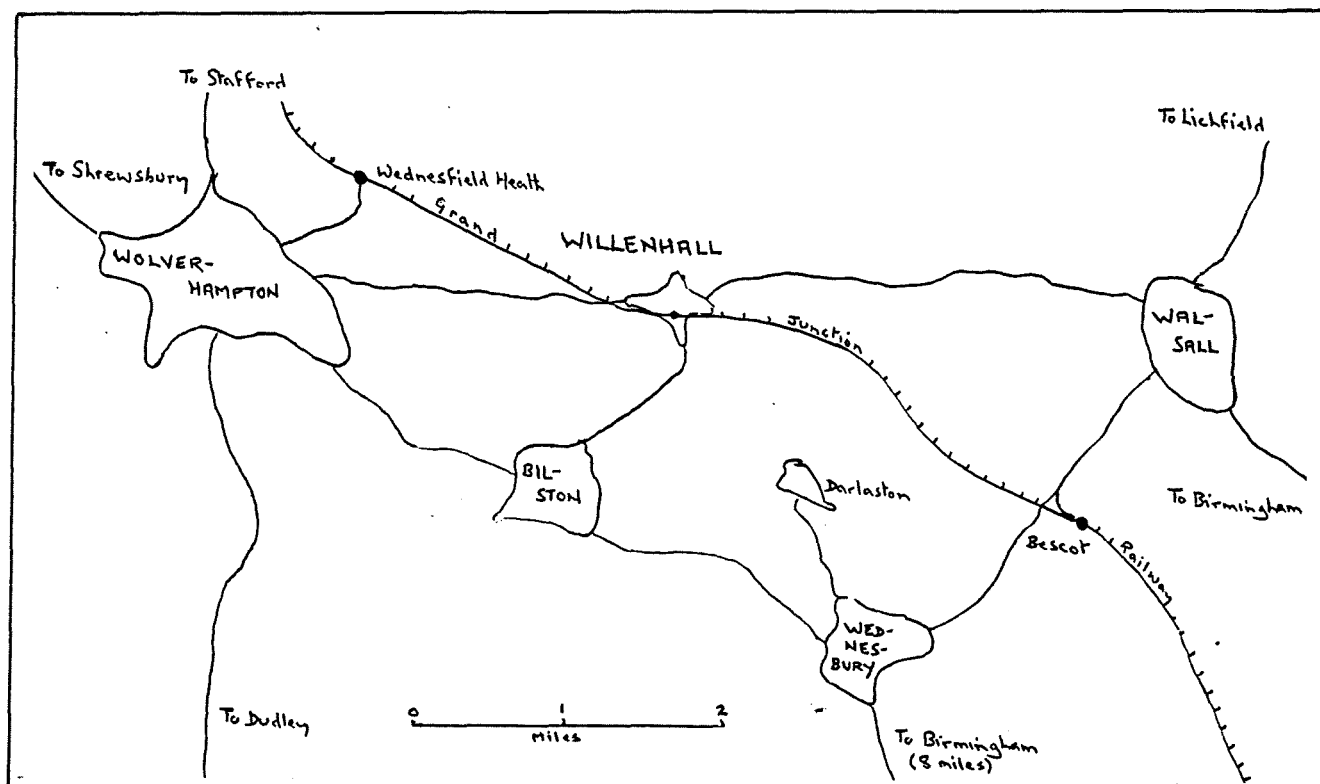


known. Strangely, before 1837 none of these stamps is recorded used in more than one direction; there is too little evidence to be sure whether that is coincidence. The most glaring example is Shefford/Penny Post where type 1 is known 1813-18 and type 3 1832-39 but used only through Biggleswade, never through Bedford. The only examples apart from Willenhall in our Midland counties are Malvern and Malvern Wells, both type 1, listed by Oxley under Ledbury without use as well as under Worcester used from 1823-31 and 1823-4 respectively - that is before the former was renamed Great Malvern and its office status raised. In the Manchester and Leeds areas, type 3 was the normal stamp issued in the early 30s to distinguish their many offices. Elsewhere in England as a whole, some two dozen receiving offices used Penny Post stamps normally issued to post and sub-post towns for no apparent or consistent reason. None of these were in the Midlands.

Willenhall/Penny Post is of type 3 which were produced between 1827 and 1834. The 1st Report of the Committee on Postage gives the date of establishment of this P.P. office under Bilston as June 11th 1833. (It was Bilston's only such office and Bilston itself did not have any Penny Post stamp. The 'Bilstone' UDC had been issued on August 31st 1829.) No date is given in either the 1st or 2nd Report for Willenhall's establishment as a P.P. office under both Walsall and Wolverhampton but it may have been the same. The 1st Report list of Penny Posts consists of those which then existed and is dated March 27th 1838. Willenhall is included under each of the three towns mentioned. Oxley records use of Willenhall/Penny Post type 3 under Bilston in 1838 only, while listing the stamp under Birmingham (as does The British County Catalogue of Postal History, Volume 2) as well as under Walsall and Wolverhampton, in each case without recorded use. There is no known route by which a letter might travel from Willenhall to Birmingham without passing through one of the other three towns except, from 1837, by the railway and that was not used as will be demonstrated. The three - Walsall, Wolverhampton and Bilston - are all listed as post towns in the 2nd Report (of 1838) and both Wednesbury and West Bromwich on the road between Bilston and Birmingham were made post towns in 1837 so it seems strange if Bilston was actually still 'under' Birmingham. A Pigot Directory of 1835, though, has Bilston and Willenhall listed in the 'Delivery of Birmingham'. If Bilston did become a post town in 1829, as adduced in 'Midland Mail' 35/9, does the explanation lie in a continuing authority of the Birmingham postmistress over the whole area, for predecessors had been reckoned their own P.O. Surveyors? Clearly, on the first letter of August 4th 1837, the charge of 5d is 1d from Willenhall to Bilston plus 4d G.P. minimum rate from Bilston to Birmingham. M.Scott Archer ('Penny Posts of Wales', p3) points out that the Reports do not distinguish between post towns and sub-post towns, list some receiving offices under both, and do not make it clear that in such cases the penny rate applied only between the sub-post town and the inferior offices beyond. It is improbable that the rate from Willenhall to Birmingham was ever 1d before 1840, despite the example of the Brierley Hill anomaly ('Midland Mail', 34/13).

Even if Willenhall has no proper place in the Birmingham Penny Post, and nor had Bilston after an initial abortive attempt at establishment in 1793, both were listed as (General Post) receiving houses under Birmingham on Cary's list dated January 1st 1793. A Pye Directory of Birmingham of 1797 states that the London and Shrewsbury mailcoach, which ran through Wednesbury, Bilston and Wolverhampton, takes a bag for Willenhall; there may have been a footpost from any one of the three but the last is most likely. In 1800 the Birmingham to Manchester mailcoach began and, until 1828, this travelled by way of Walsall and Wolverhampton, so passing through Willenhall; an 1808 Directory of Birmingham clarifies that its mail went on it. In 1821 a Lichfield and Walsall ride was extended to Wolverhampton, so also passing through the town. It is the 1828 'Pigot' for Staffordshire which first mentions the location of Willenhall's post office in Wolverhampton Street, names the postmaster and gives times for both the Bristol-Birmingham-Manchester mailcoach and the Lichfield-Wolverhampton mail-gig at the Neptune in Church Street. Later that year, the Manchester mailcoach route was changed to pass through Wednesbury and Bilston instead of Walsall and Willenhall. The times of London mails at Willenhall in the 1830 Pigot suggest that the walk from Bilston to Willenhall had been begun either at the same time, in 1828, or in 1829 when Bilston's status was raised; it could have been an unofficial penny post for it is not mentioned in P.O. records until the official establishment in 1833. The 2nd Report gives its cost as £6-10-0 per double mile per annum.

1837 was a year of considerable alterations due to the opening in July of the Grand Junction Railway. This actually passed through Willenhall and there was a second class station but the nearest stations at which mail was handled were Bescot (for Walsall) and Wednesfield Heath (for Wolverhampton), mail carts being used to those towns. The Wolverhampton to Lichfield ride ceased which left Willenhall with only the foot messenger connection to Bilston, through which place the London to Holyhead mailcoach continued as it had since 1808 when the extension from Shrewsbury had been completed. Naturally, the Birmingham to Manchester mailcoach ceased. The 2nd Report records the establishment in 1837 of two very strange Penny Posts, that is of Bilston under



Wolverhampton and of Wolverhampton under Bilston! (Probably the different dates given include a misprint and both were July 15th.) It would be intriguing to discover if this was because Willenhall continued a Penny Post connection to Wolverhampton. It was agreed officially later in the year that, where rates had gone up because of the changes consequent upon using the railway, they should revert to the old rates; London to Walsall was mentioned as a case in point. Bilston to Wolverhampton would not easily be accepted as 4d if Willenhall via Bilston to Wolverhampton was 1d. There was also a new messenger from Birmingham through West Bromwich and Wednesbury as far as Bilston but the following year this and the old-established Wolverhampton-Bilston (1809) walk became Birmingham-Wednesbury and Wolverhampton-Wednesbury walks instead.

Willenhall returned to having direct postal communication along its main road in 1841 when footposts to both Walsall and Wolverhampton were established and the Bilston-Willenhall walk abolished. By the time its UDC was issued on November 16th 1843, Willenhall had evidently been transferred from Birmingham to Wolverhampton as its post town but, as the second letter shows, Walsall could apply its datestamp instead on mail going that way. By 1845 there were twice daily walks to both Walsall and Wolverhampton. It must often have seemed frustrating that there was actually that railway station in the middle of Willenhall. Second class indeed! Postally so, too, for Willenhall's office remained a subordinate one until about the end of 1855.

FOR

POSTAL HISTORY

ESPECIALLY

G.B. (County)
MARITIME
TRANSATLANTIC
and some FOREIGN

CONTACT

Michael Jackson (Philatelists) Ltd.
LONDON INTERNATIONAL STAMP CENTRE
27 KING STREET
LONDON WC2E 8JD

01 836 2748 - 24 hr service

THE BEGINNING OF THE ENDof Undated Marks

Following the publication of our book of undated circular marks, two members drew the Editor's attention to Post Office Minutes concerning the withdrawal of undated marks. It is perhaps not universally known that, before the decision was made in 1860 to discontinue handstamping at sub-offices with undated marks, an experiment was conducted at Shrewsbury to assess its likely effect. By courtesy of Post Office Archives, the text of the minute concerning that experiment is reproduced below:

34,328

The Postmaster General.

At a recent meeting of certain of the Surveyors, the question of abolishing the use of Receiving House Stamps was, at my request, taken into consideration, and the enclosed papers shew the result of their discussion.

In accordance with their recommendation I submit that the practice of stamping letters at Town Receiving Houses not Money Order Offices may be at once discontinued but as there exists a difference of opinion as to the propriety of discontinuing the practice of stamping letters at Sub Offices, where date stamps are not used, I submit that an experiment be made, and that the practice be discontinued at all Sub Offices in the Shrewsbury District for a period of six months commencing with the 1st proximo.

It will thus be seen whether the objections raised to the universal discontinuance of the practice are or are not well grounded.

Your Lordship is perhaps not aware that a proposal for supplying gratis to all offices a stamping pad invented by Mr Creswell, the Surveyor, is under consideration.

Should the above named experiment prove successful the expense of such an arrangement as that contemplated will necessarily be materially reduced, the number of offices to be supplied being so greatly lessened.

6 September 1859

The Postmaster General approved the proposal on 7th September. Our book records a few instances of Shrewsbury sub-office marks being used in the second half of September 1859 but no instance of a strike after 1st October.

* * * * *

NES

NEW ENTERPRISE STAMPS

NES

G. B. Postal History (all aspects and all periods); Postal Stationery; Stamps both on and off cover and other postally related material.

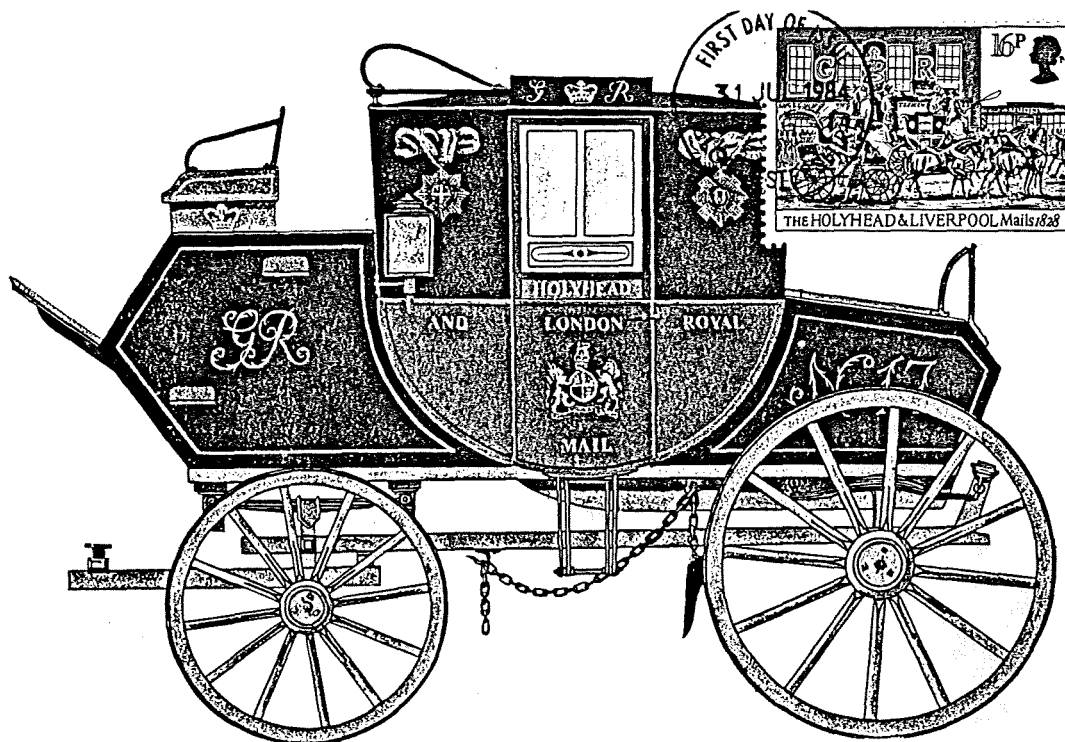
We offer a comprehensive list comprising the above subjects, carefully described with above average attention to detail and with appropriate background information and comment.

Send for our fixed price sale list with the now well established unique buying procedure. With not more than five sales per year may we suggest you send promptly to avoid missing our next list. Post free from N.E.S.

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Chris Beaver writes more about...

MAIL COACHES FROM LONDON, 1823-38.



Some confirmatory evidence for the correct date of Mr Wedderburn's list being November 22nd 1837 (see 'Midland Mail' 39/5-6 and 40/5-7) has come to light in the 7th Report of the Commissioners on Post Office Management. This report contains three further relevant lists of mailcoaches. Appendix 23 was evidently compiled shortly before June 23rd 1836, App.26 is dated July 25th 1836 and App.51, showing alterations since App.26, is dated February 4th 1837. Comparison of these enables one correction and two additions to be made to the notes in 'Midland Mail' 39/5-6.

1. The Halifax mailcoach began in summer 1836 (not in 1837); i.e. it is in App.26 but not App.23.
2. The Hastings mailcoach was extended to St Leonards between August 1836 and February 1837; i.e. it is specified in App.51.
3. The Exeter by Yeovil mailcoach was established in the same period; also in Appendix 51.

This last was a short-lived mailcoach. It was referred to as the 'Exeter Day Mail' which should mean that, like the Birmingham Day Express, it left London at 8am or thereabouts - and probably arrived in the evening. In January 1838 arrangements were made for some new rides to places on its route when it was discontinued. It probably ceased early in April according to the then customary contractual practice (Post 35/42/336, 542).

It is frequently assumed that all London mailcoaches were invariably due to depart at 8pm and to arrive around dawn. This was not always so for all of them. In earlier periods, foreign mails, Auxiliary mailcoaches and Sunday arrangements, in particular, were exceptional. The compiled list now contains evidence of three which did not depart at 8pm throughout the 1830s. Moreover, in 1831 or shortly before, the 'up' Liverpool timing was altered to arrive in London at 10pm and a report by Freeling states that this was one of three which had been 'made to arrive at night so that

the correspondence of some of the largest towns in the Kingdom be forwarded by the Foreign Mails the same evening they reach the Metropolis - an object of very great importance' (Post 42/54/259). Directories show that this arrangement applied to the Liverpool Up mailcoach until 1835 but, in 1836, it was arriving at the conventional time. Which were the other two Up mailcoaches similarly altered? And if, as it sounds, the Dover (Foreign) was not the only one to leave London at midnight, which other(s)? Devonport for Falmouth? Gloucester for Carmarthen for Milford? No other which passed through the Midlands appears to have been affected, Up or Down.

and Vivien Sussex adds...

The YARMOUTH, NORWICH and BIRMINGHAM MAILCOACH

Norfolk Hotel, Norwich.

THE
**YARMOUTH, NORWICH,
AND
BIRMINGHAM**



New Royal Mail Coach.

THE PROPRIETORS of this large undertaking beg leave to offer to the Public, their numerous Friends and Supporters, their very best thanks for the liberal and flattering Support they have already received; they pledge themselves that every exertion shall be used on their part to make the New Mail one of the best conducted and regulated Coaches in the Kingdom. The many advantages arising through this much-wanted and very extensive Communication with the North and West of England (never before known), they flatter themselves will alone recommend it, as one of the greatest Accommodations ever introduced to the Public for despatch of business. They therefore feel a confidence in giving it their best exertions to merit Patronage, and trust by a strict adherence to the comfort of Passengers and care of Parcels to meet with a continuation of those favors already so liberally shewn them.

The Mail continues to leave the Coach Office, Quay, Yarmouth, at Half-past Four, and the Norfolk Hotel, Norwich, at a Quarter before Seven every Evening. Passengers and Parcels are requested to be booked as early as convenient.

The **NORWICH and NEWARK UNION DAY COACH** as usual, every morning (except Sunday) at Six o'clock.

The **PHENOMENA DAY COACH** to LONDON every Morning at a Quarter past Six, and arrives at the Bull Inn, Aldgate, at Seven in the Evening. Passengers and Parcels immediately forwarded to any part of the West End.

The **NORWICH and LYNN DAY COACH** every Afternoon (except Sunday) at Four o'clock as usual.

ARRANGEMENTS will be made by all the above Coaches for the accommodation of Christmas Presents, and every possible care and attention regarded to the safety and punctual delivery of all Parcels entrusted to their care.

Wm. DURRANT & Co. Proprietors.

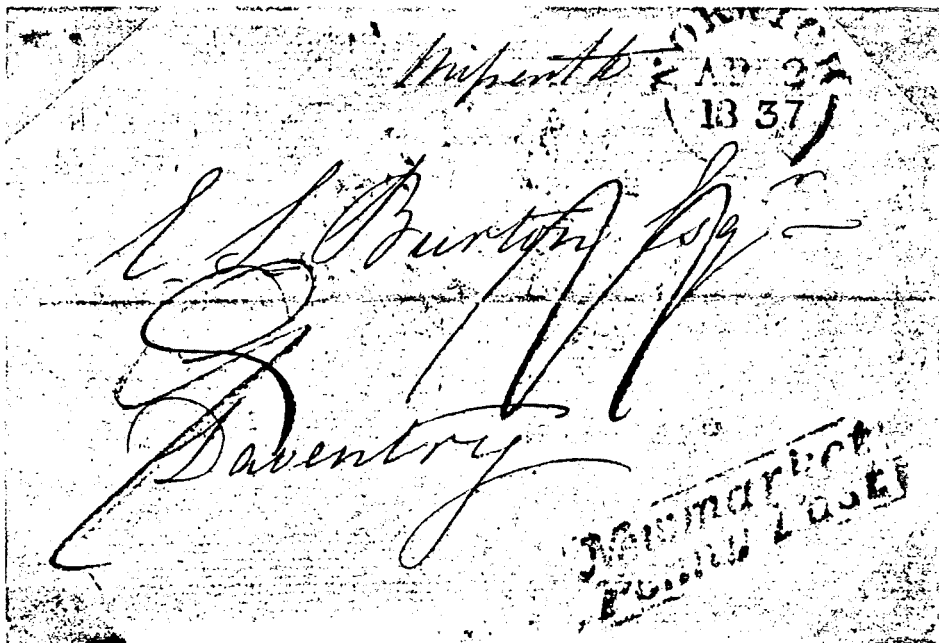
N. B.—The SELF DEFENCE COACH to Wisbech, Peterborough, and Stamford, leaves Lynn at Seven every Morning (except Sunday).

Coaches to Yarmouth three times a day, and to Beccles, Lowestoft, Fakenham, Wells, Watton, &c. &c. as usual.

General Coach Office, St. Giles',
5th December, 1835.

Passengers and Parcels Booked for any part of the Kingdom.

Mrs Sussex has sent a copy of an announcement of 5th December 1835 giving details of a 'New Royal Mail Coach' from Yarmouth to Birmingham via Norwich together with a letter of 1837 which originated in Newmarket and was intended for Daventry. However, it was despatched in the wrong direction and was marked 'Missent' at Norwich before being returned along the same road through Newmarket to Cambridge, Northampton and Daventry where the letter would have left the coach before it continued to Birmingham.



MEMORIES OF THE HORSE MAIL

About a quarter of a century ago, Harry Perry, the last of the old horse mail drivers at Stourbridge (Worcs) retired from the Post Office. One of his colleagues had the foresight to buy him a pint at the local and make a note of some of his memories. The present postmaster has kindly passed it on to 'Midland Mail'.

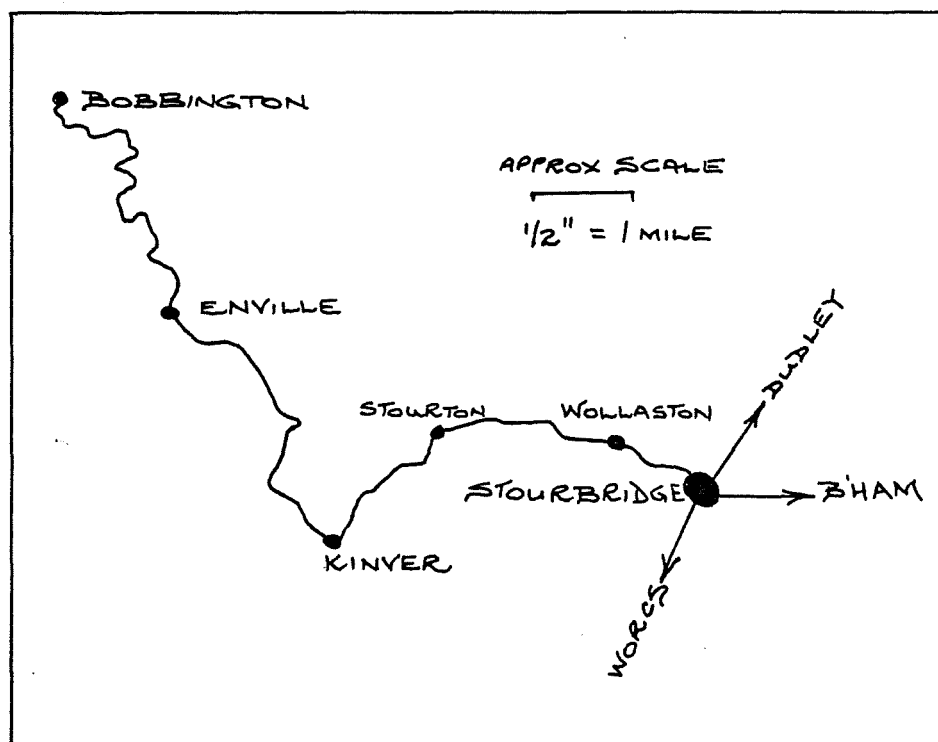
"I started in 1921 and did the Stourbridge to Bobbington run. Every weekday morning I used to leave Stourbridge Office at precisely 5.45am, taking all the mails and daily newspapers for Kinver, Envile and Bobbington. Upon arrival at Bobbington, I had to do a delivery and returned to Stourbridge at 6.45pm. Fine horses we had in those days: there were three named Cooper, Stringer and Darky who took it in turns. Most of them had done gallant army service and Darky had twice been wounded but rendered many years of faithful service to the Post Office.

The roads were not very good in some of the country lanes and the Bobbington run was very lonely. Sometimes the winters were rather severe and the horses would fall occasionally. Only once, though, did I have a broken shaft - had to knock up a blacksmith in Kinver; he wasn't very pleased at being got out of bed at such an early hour but I explained to him that the mail must get through and he quickly made a temporary repair which enabled me to carry on.

I had one or two hold-ups but can't remember the dates. After the first hold-up, a policeman used to travel inside the van until the bandit was caught. During the 1926 general strike, I also had a policeman travel in the van from Wollaston to Stourbridge.

Times were often hard then and it was not easy to bring up a fairly large family on £1-19-6 a week and, for that, I had to attend to the horses at weekends. We had some good times as well"

Harry Perry was transferred from Stourbridge to Hagley Post Office in 1926 and worked as a postman there until 1937. He returned to Stourbridge as postman driver of a motor van and, with a break for army service from 1941 to 1946, remained there until his retirement. His insistence that the mail must get through at all costs echoes the exploits of the early mail coach drivers and, fortunately, the tradition survives at least in some rural areas.



The Atherstone Festival Exhibition

This is the year of the Atherstone Festival and, for four days in June, the town laid on a Festival Exhibition which was opened by the Prince and Princess of Wales, no less. One of our members, Chris Beaver, had suggested to the Secretary of the Festival Committee that a postal history exhibit ought to be included and that the display of Atherstone Postal History could safely be left to another of our members, Gay Parker. The Midlands Postal Board weighed in with a 'hen and chickens' centre cycle and a replica Penfold letter box and they provided Gay with display cases and enlarged photographic art work. Gay showed some 24 sheets covering the period 1794 to 1946, together with a pewter scale model of a mailcoach, a Palmer mailcoach half-penny and other appropriate items.

Thus it was that Gay was standing expectantly by his exhibit when the Festival Exhibition was opened on 27th June and he was not to be disappointed because the display that immediately caught the eye of the Princess of Wales was his. He would be the first to admit to being captivated and his description of her as "completely charming" would seem fair comment - she even took a copy of his book. When the excitement was over and Gay returned home to recount the exploits of the day to his youngest sons, he was quickly brought to earth by four year old Christopher who, on finding that the Princess did not transform herself into Wonder Woman, lost interest in the whole affair.

Gay Parker's exhibit is to be shown again at Coventry as a part of the 350th anniversary celebrations of the General Post and both he and Chris Beaver, who provided informed advice, are to be congratulated on what was clearly a very successful and popular display.

Send for a copy of my latest list of GB cover material from 1840 onwards.
It contains a wide selection of interesting and unusual items -
county material, difficult values and rates, from 1840 to date.

All 'Wants Lists' receive my personal attention.



ROGER HUDSON

36 WEST STREET

WARWICK CV34 6AN

Telephone: Warwick (0926) 492326

The Letter Box Study Group

Members interested in letter boxes are invited to apply for membership of the Letter Box Study Group (£2-50 per year). Enquiries should be addressed to the Honorary Secretary/Treasurer:

Mr W.L.Morton,
11, Morven Road,
Bearsden,
Glasgow
G61 3BU

Incidentally, it is hoped to include a photograph of another 'way out' letter box in the next 'Midland Mail'.

10th

Birthday.....

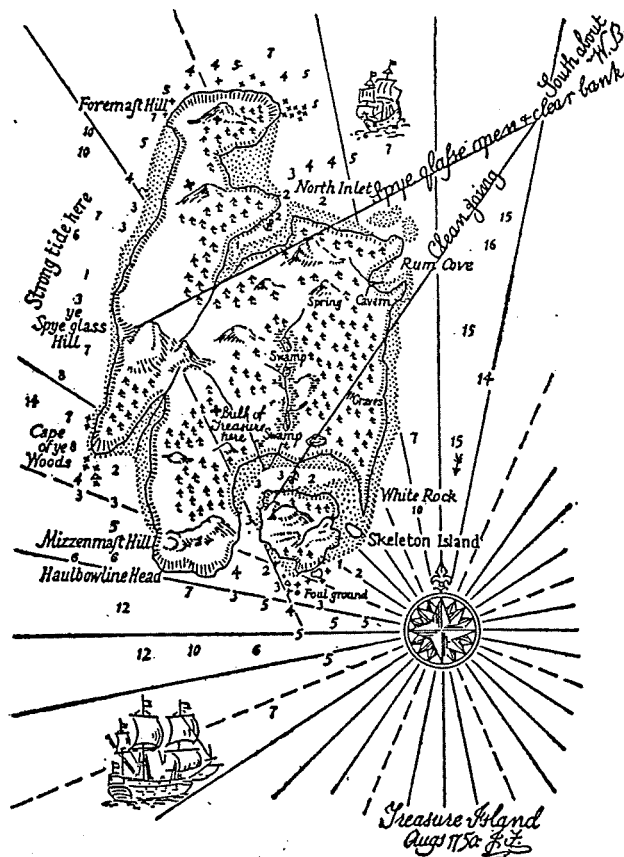
MIDLAND (G.B.) POSTAL HISTORY SOCIETY

10th

Birthday.....

Treasure

Hunt



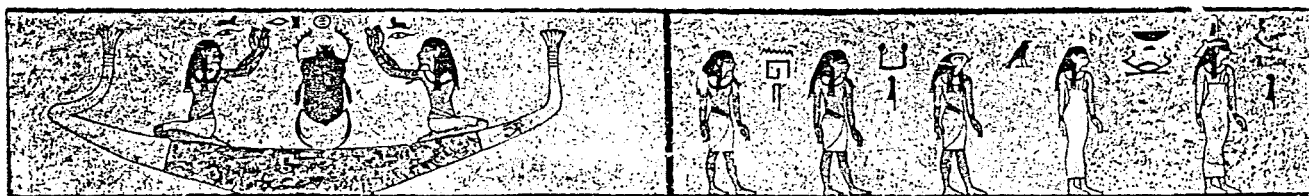
The 10th BIRTHDAY TREASURE HUNT is a search of postal history literature, none of it obscure. The treasure is a valuable and appropriate prize. One question will appear in each number of 'Midland Mail' this season, a total of five questions, and correct answers to the first four will be needed if the fifth is to be answered correctly.

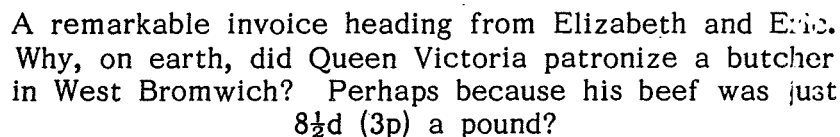
The clue in the first part of each question is intended to lead the reader to the book that will provide the answer to the second part. The answer to the question should be noted together with the page number on which it was found. No answers should be submitted, however, until the Treasure Hunt is complete. The prize will be awarded to the competitor whose entry, in the opinion of the Editor, comes nearest to providing an all-correct solution.

Here we go with the first stage of the Treasure Hunt:

If Oldbury lies between Oakengates and Onibury, where is Madeley Wood?

Just note the answer and the page number and hope that the second question is as easy!





Eric Lewis' article in the last 'Midland Mail' has, as yet, produced no offer of a cover or card dated later than 9.30pm on the last day of the old century but it has prompted Denis Salt to point out that the 1st century AD must have included the years 1 to 100. It therefore follows that the 19th century included the year 1900. Denis dares to suggest that the authority of the Concise Oxford Dictionary, which states that the present century commenced on 1st January 1901 and will end on 31st December 2000, is more reliable than the contributors to 'Stamp Collecting'. It all seems so straightforward, one wonders why it generated the controversy it did?

'Midland Mail' No. 42 is due to appear in mid-November and further issues are planned for January, March and May 1986. We would welcome articles from members, or more minor items to illustrate, particularly relating to those Midland counties that have received minimal coverage so far. If you think you have something suitable, please contact:

John Calladine, Dunley House, Cranham, Gloucester GL4 8HQ (Phone 0452-862218)