

MIDLAND MAIL

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



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Better Never Than Late

It is a matter of regret that this, the final number of 'Midland Mail' for the 1985/86 season, should appear some two months later than expected. The delay has been due, in no small part, to the work needed to complete the 1986 Revised Edition of 'The Undated Circular Marks of the Midland Counties' but several unrelated factors have combined to cause the earth to spin at three times the accustomed speed. It all goes to show that it may be insufficient merely to leave the kitchen if you can't take the heat - you should depart quickly before the toast burns.

Sub Judice

As we go to print, hearings are awaited in two court cases involving personalities in the postal history world, one national and one local. That the two parties are presumed innocent is self-evident but it would not be unnatural for some of us to feel a little depressed that circumstances have arisen which make a court appearance necessary. If money is indeed the root of all evil, we may be thankful that so many facilities are available to postal historians without charge and we, in turn, should take every care to ensure that no actions of ours tempt anyone to close a facility to amateur researchers or to levy a charge. Inky fingers, careless photocopying of delicate papers and sandwich crumbs on the carpet may not number among the deadly sins but they are surely on the waiting list.

The 1986 Revised Edition

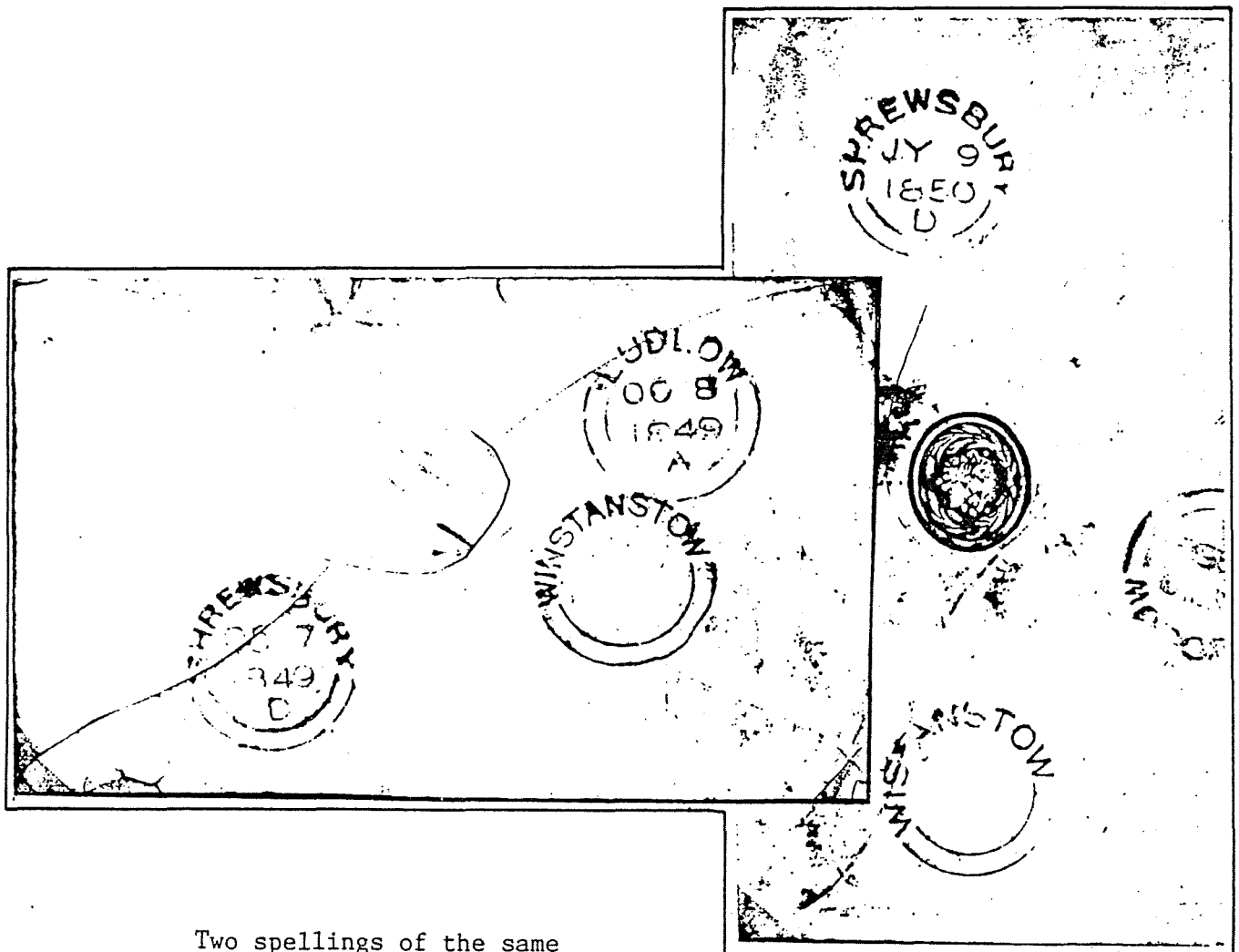
A limited number of copies of the 1986 Revised Edition of 'The Undated Circular Marks of the Midland Counties' are now available. As many members know, it was the original intention to offer substitute pages incorporating information received since the book was first published a little over a year ago. However, the volume of new information is so great that scarcely a page is unaffected and it became clear some months ago that the sensible course would be to re-issue the complete book in 1986. At the same time, the opportunity has been taken to make improvements to the content, notably by adding an index of all Midland offices that used undated circular stamps.

The 1986 Revised Edition is on sale to new customers at a price of £7-25 (plus

postage and packing). However, members and friends who bought a copy of the original book may purchase the 1986 Revised Edition at the special price of only £1-75 (plus £1-25 postage and packing, if required). It will not escape your notice that anyone who bought the original book, even at the full price of £5-50, is not at any financial disadvantage vis-a-vis a first time buyer when they order the 1986 Revised Edition.

Members may not know that we have lost the use of the photocopying facility that has served us so well for several years and has enabled the UDC book and 'Midland Mail' to be reproduced to a high standard at minimal cost. We have been very fortunate to obtain the use of another photocopier to produce the 1986 Revised Edition at the same low cost and we are greatly indebted to Roger Broomfield for his help. However, members are particularly asked to note that, subjected to an abnormal load in unusually hot conditions, the machine did produce a few blemishes in the finished product, none of which affect legibility even marginally but occasionally result in dark bars across a page, spoiling its pristine appearance. To produce the book at £1-75, these minor imperfections must be accepted and members are asked to be tolerant. It is expected that the problem will be solved before the full price copies are widely available but it may be necessary to print these at an increased cost which would make the special offer impossible to repeat.

Members who would like their copy of the 1986 Revised Edition sent by post are invited to send a cheque for £3 (payable to The Midland (GB) Postal History Society) to the Coordinating Editor. Other copies will be available for sale at the Society's September meeting.



Two spellings of the same
Shropshire village name in
its UDC - Winstanstown (1849)
and Wistanstown (1850).

The March Meeting

Geoff Oxley may still be best known to English postal historians for his work on the provincial local posts but his display of The Postal History of Scotland to the Society on 15th March soon proved that there are other equally important strings to his bow. It was not intended to be a mere catalogue of scarce Scottish markings, nor was it. Those scarce marks took their place in a most carefully prepared discourse on Scottish postal routes and rates where the principles led inevitably to the marks applied in consequence. Eighteen members were present at Dr Johnson House and they had a rare treat.

The display opened with a letter of 1681 from Scotland to Rotterdam, charged 5d to Edinburgh and a further 5d beyond. A second letter of 1694 had a strike of the Edinburgh Bishop mark, introduced only six months earlier, and there were other letters showing examples of the manuscript initials (e.g. "GI" for 'Glasgow') so widely favoured at the time in Scotland. A franked letter of 1723 had what may be the earliest Edinburgh namestamp and we were told that, whereas namestamps were used on letters addressed to the north of England, Bishop marks were used on letters to London while internal Scottish letters had no stamps at all.

Local carriers' letters are too rarely seen but here we had evidence that the Scottish ones shown had been correctly accompanying goods since one was "with a piece of linnen", another "with a parcell" and yet another "with a bagg (of) bonnetts". Of the Scottish local posts, the best known is probably that of Peter Williamson which operated between 1773 and 1793 and we saw an example dated 1779. However, we also learned something of the contemporary Galloway Post which was set up to carry mail between Edinburgh and Port Patrick (and from thence it travelled to Ireland) but which was also used by the Bank of Scotland to deliver letters to its branches en route. Ship letter marks are something one envisages on letters from distant lands and it came as a surprise to many of us to learn that ship letter marks could arise on letters travelling within Scotland. An example shown to us bore a strike of the Edinburgh/Ship Letter mark on a letter from Lerwick to Leven via Edinburgh.

For those who like postmarks for their own sake, there were some beauties including the circular ornamental stamp of Glasgow used from 1743 to 1749, the special circular mark of Montrose, 'Duns' in upper and lower case lettering, 'Lanerk' with a spelling error, Pennycook/Penny Post in phonetic style and the only known example of the Gallowgate (Glasgow) receiving office stamp. There were the first and second types of Scottish mileage marks and the first mark of Arran. Apparently, it was usual to give the initial office on an island that name rather than the name of the town, hence 'Arran'.

Another matter not previously well understood was made clear when Geoff explained that the popular 'Additional $\frac{1}{2}$ d' marks were only applied (and the charge levied) when a letter was carried within Scotland on a mail coach. This explains why some letters do not carry such a mark. Costing rather more than a mere $\frac{1}{2}$ d was a letter that had been returned from Ireland. By the time it reached Scotland again, it had attracted charges of $3/8\frac{1}{2}$ d. One wonders if the sender was allowed to refuse it? Even more expensive was a bank letter (weighing 5ozs) charged $11/8$ d but still with just the additional $\frac{1}{2}$ d for that charge was not multiplied.

The first session ended with yet more interesting postmarks. There were two different 'Missent to Glasgow' stamps, the unique 'Campbeltown/Steam Boat' and the dated 'Paid in the Country' of 1822 with the 'Postage/to/Edinburgh/Not Paid' of 1836.

Mr Oxley's second session took us from the early 1830s into the period of uniform penny postage although, as he explained, he had cut down the post-1840 material as felt that this audience would appreciate the earlier material. Much of what we saw involved letters travelling abroad from Scotland and the point was made that, before postal treaties or conventions were established, mail abroad had to be pre-paid within this country. A 'Paid at Glasgow' mark of 1832 is particularly elusive while a framed

stamp of similar wording was later passed on to a receiving office. Glasgow Exchange receiving office had its own distinctive paid mark, the only such office that did. We were told that penny postage was charged to those with a franking privilege but not to Ministers of State. A letter of 1834 to the Paymaster General was one used to illustrate the latter point. While on the subject of penny posts, we were shown the marks of the Island of Mull, of Tobermory and of Aros. We also learned how the 2d rate charged prior to 1836 was found to be illegal and subsequently lowered to 1d.

There were several unusual items from the late 1830s. A 'Not found' letter of 1838 from Nottingham had no fewer than 22 postmasters' initials on it. There was a Money Letter of the same year (from Aberdeen to Huntly) charged 3x7d + $\frac{1}{2}$ d and another letter with the unusual 3d rate - 2d for less than 8 miles plus a penny post charge. A scroll 'Too Late' mark had been used on a mail coach route introduced as late as 1837 and, even later, was a Glasgow dated penny post handstamp brought into use only six weeks before the advent of uniform postage. Perhaps it goes without saying that we would see letters from the last day of the general post, the first day of the 4d post and the last day of the 4d post. How else would you introduce the subject of Uniform Penny Postage?!

Having done that, how do you then start the post-1840 material - with a May date 1d black cover from Leith to Edinburgh and a Mulready charged 2d due! There were unusual rates and charges to be seen and a nice example of the American retaliatory charge (so-called because the British had started doing the same thing) where pre-payment of 1/- was not recognised when the letter reached the United States. In fact, letters abroad now predominated and we learned the finer points of 'pre-convention' and 'post convention' "PF" marks. More than that, we were shown a letter from Scotland to Spain where "PF" signified payment to the frontier between France and Spain because there was a convention with France at the time but not with Spain. So much for the surprising effects of piecemeal postal treaties. Long live the UPU!

The whole display had been a delight to postal historians and one only wonders how many more such topics Mr Oxley could present in similar informed and entertaining style. To go back to where we began, for those who wonder if a much-yearned-for second edition of 'The English Provincial Local Posts' will ever appear, they need not fear that Scottish postal history has taken Geoff over for such a book will surely appear when the earlier information (and all the amendments received) can be transferred to a modern storage and word-processing system. It just needs 25 hours in the day
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The April Meeting

If there is such a thing as the 'postal history season', that season drew to a close on 26th April with the Society's Annual General Meeting and Auction. In spite of numerous apologies for enforced absence, 18 members were present at the AGM so ensuring a fair measure of democracy. The Minutes of the 1985 AGM were read by the Secretary and approved by the members who also voted to retain the County Editors as members of the Committee following the past year's experiment. Elizabeth, our Chairman, was enduring the backlash of a throat infection and found it impossible to read her annual report but, since she prepares a typewritten text, the Secretary was able to deputise and present it on her behalf. In it she referred to the commercial and literary(?) success of the UDC book which, together with 'Midland Mail', had been suitably rewarded at Stampex. She praised the interesting and varied programme of meetings and expressed her pleasure at the good attendances they had attracted. The competitions had attracted a high standard of entry and the Jon Baker Trophy had been won by Chris Beaver (who is now on a hat trick). Elizabeth mentioned the members who had contributed displays for the 350th anniversary of the General Post and similar noteworthy occasions and she thanked the members of the Committee, including the

County Editors, for the help they had given the society in its tenth year of existence.

The Secretary, Treasurer and Editor then gave their own brief reports, the Treasurer gilding the lily by distributing copies of the audited balance sheet. Although there was a healthy cash balance, he pointed out that, if the profits from the UDC book were put aside, the position had been reached where expenditure was overtaking income and a subscription increase from £3-50 to £4-50 was proposed. There has been no increase for several years and the proposed new sub was approved by the meeting.

The Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer indicated their willingness to remain in office (or to retire if anyone wanted their jobs) and were duly re-elected. The Editor regretted that he would not be able to continue and he proposed John Soer as his replacement, a proposal that met with unanimous approval and probably some relief. The Society's awards were presented to Steph Stobbs, Mike Young, Ted Coles and Chris Beaver and it only remained to discuss the programme for the new season (read all about it in the September 'Midland Mail') before the AGM was over and a cup of Dr Johnson House tea heralded the imminence of the Annual Auction.

At this point it is appropriate to remind ourselves that the auction is a very valuable source of Society revenue (over £90 last year) and that Eric and Elizabeth Lewis put a great deal of their precious time into its preparation. On the day, the Secretary conducts the auction with an élan that might well make Cavendish Auctions green with envy if they knew of it (can their auctioneer run the show, enter book bids and compete himself? - all at once?) and the Treasurer makes sure that not a penny is made or lost without due account of it. It all adds up to a fine team effort and the results speak for themselves. There were umpteen book bids, a vigorous 'floor' and only a modest number of unsold lots. Realisations were:-

Lots donated to the Society

A	£8	G	£2
B	£12	H	£1
C	30p	J	£2
D	40p	K	£5
F	£1-60	L	£1-75

Other Lots

1	£5-50	56	£3-30
2	£4-75	57	£6-50
4	£7-50	59	£4-50
5	£5	60	£4-25
6	£26	61	£10-50
7	£5	62	£7
10	£4-50	63	£4-50
11	£5	64	£11
14	£2	65	£3-50
17	£6	66	£2-30
19	£7-50	67	£5-25
20	£4-50	68	£20
22	£5-50	69	£4-50
23	£2	70	£4-25
24	£1-25	73	£5
25	£1	74	£2-70
26	£7-50	75	95p
27	£3-25	76	£1-10
29	£3-25	77	£3
30	£2	78	£4

31	£3	79	£8
32	£1-30	80	£6
33	£3-25	81	£2-10
34	£8-50	83	£11-50
35	£7	84	£1-60
36	£11	85	£1-20
37	£3-50	89	£10-50
38	£4-50	90	£4-75
39	£1-50	91	£1-80
40	£7-50	93	£2
42	£4	94	60p
43	£4	95	£1
44	£31	96	40p
45	£5	97	80p
46	£10-50	98	70p
47	£14	99	£1-25
48	£5	100	£13
49	£1-80	101	£9-50
50	£2-50	102	£6-50
51	£2	103	£5-25
52	£6-25	104	£6-25
53	£5	105	£4-75
54	£3-60	107	£48
55	£11		

FOR

POSTAL HISTORY

ESPECIALLY

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

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Not in Our UDC Book

583 CORN-MARKET WORCESTER 1854. A neat 1d Pink Stationery
env from CORN-MARKET via WORCESTER 13 Mar 1854 to SHEF.
FIELD 14th. Condition av/g clean, uncreased, some damage
to reverse opening. Cancelled "918". On reverse on side
flap a single line unserifed black "CORN-MARKET"-----
dated h/s for Worcester & Sheffield also on reverse.
Midland U.D.C. Cat not listed Est £28

It was tempting to use this item from a well-known dealer's recent list as our 'Tailpiece' item but it seemed a little harsh. However, it will serve very well to draw the reader's attention to the progress report on page 14!

The Birmingham-Manchester Mailcoach

by The Reverend Christopher M. Beaver

Like a stone dropped in the middle of a pond, one change - the introduction of the Birmingham Auxiliary, for example - may disturb mail arrangements in every direction. John Soer's comments ('Midland Mail' 44/13) illustrate this very well. I had not guessed why the Birmingham to Manchester route was altered in 1812; indeed I had not traced the date. He has added one more piece of a difficult jigsaw and stimulated concentration on that part of the puzzle. The outline looks like this.

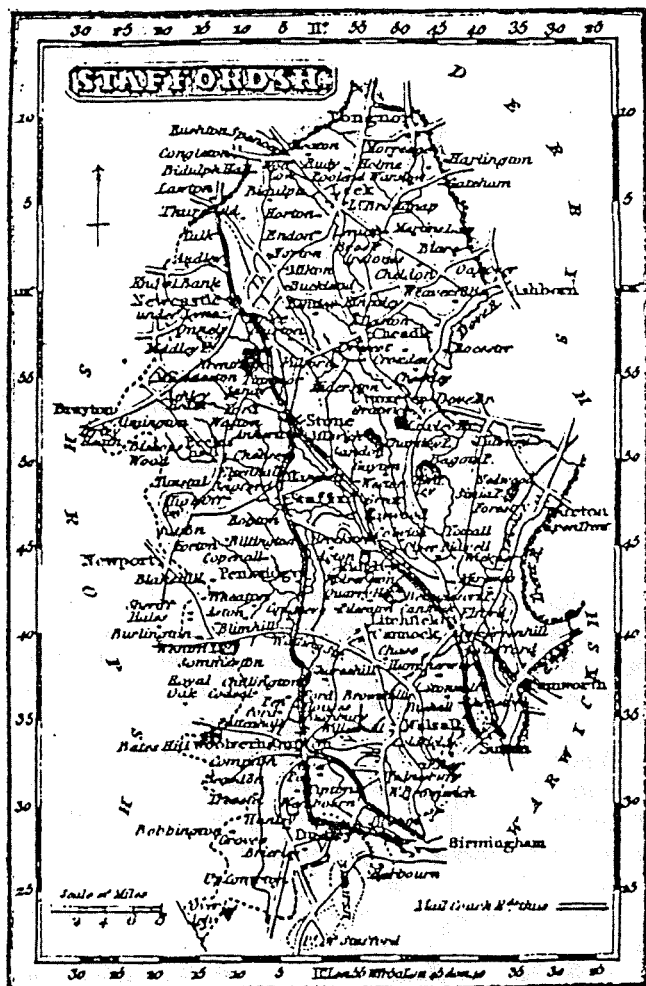
The Bristol-Birmingham mailcoach began, daily, on July 6th 1787 and the Birmingham-Manchester, which was converted to a daily mailcoach from October 10th 1800, seems always to have been regarded, at either end at least, as an extension of it. The latter never went 'straight', which might have been through Lichfield or through Walsall, Cannock and Stafford, but round through Wolverhampton and Stafford, and thus to Stone. There was no cross-post this way in 1791 but the 1793 Universal British Directory contains several references to it, including a Wednesbury entry: "the Manchester coach passes through every Monday Wednesday and Friday at 4pm to Birmingham and returns from Birmingham every Sunday Tuesday and Thursday at 11pm to Manchester". (Walsall was then served by a daily footpost from Wednesbury connecting there with the London-Shrewsbury mailcoach which, like the later Holyhead coach, always went that way between Birmingham and Wolverhampton.) The first Birmingham-Manchester route change was when it became daily in 1800, taking the longer route surely in order to provide Walsall with a direct connection with the north (the connection to Birmingham and the south having been quickened when the short Birmingham-Walsall mailcoach began in 1796, a service continued through all the changes until 1837).

John has shown why, in 1812, it was deemed necessary to revert to the Wednesbury route: it already, and always, went through Wolverhampton and Penkridge though what was rejected, at the contractors' insistence, was the possibility of it continuing through Walsall and going directly northwards over Cannock Chase in order to shorten the time.

Incidentally, in 1815 the Birmingham-Manchester and the Birmingham-Bristol appear in a list of the ten principal cross and bye-mails in the Kingdom.

A Wrightson Directory of 1815 and a Pigot of 1818 are quite specific in stating that the Manchester mailcoach "goes through Walsall", plainly pointing out an alteration. The map of Mr Godby's District (Post 10A/11) 'corrected to February 1814' shows it had again been changed by that date. It had presumably proved possible for the mailcoach from Manchester to take the longer route thus restoring Walsall's connection with the north and still arrive in good time for the afternoon departures from Birmingham to London and Bristol. (The reference to the changes of this route in 'Midland Mail' 41/6, 2nd para, needs expanding to include the 1812 and c1814 alterations as well.)

As was shown previously ('Midland Mail' 43/6), between 1817 and 1819 two London mailcoaches, to Holyhead via Coventry and to Shrewsbury via Oxford, were operating within an hour or two of each other (both on the Wednesbury route) between Birmingham and Shrewsbury. In c1820, Thomas Telford produced the detail of a scheme to by-pass the town of Wednesbury, thus avoiding hills and bends, and its line is depicted on the map reproduced in 'Midland Mail' 43/6 and 44/12. However, the road was never constructed.



Wallis' map of Staffordshire dated 1820 showing the places mentioned in this article. (Editor's note: This map purports to show in bold outline the 'Mail Coach Roads' and serves to show that county maps are not a complete, or indeed accurate, guide to the contemporary mailcoach routes.)

The last alteration, to the best of my current knowledge, occurred in 1828 when, once more, the shorter way was taken and a foot messenger introduced at Walsall 'to meet the Mail at Wednesbury'. This I have from the Walsall file at Post Office Archives with the reference Post 40/645 but have not looked at the original document. By 1828, in fact before this change, there was also a Birmingham to Liverpool mailcoach with a 'branch' from Knutsford to Manchester which operated at roughly a 12 hour interval from what consequently came to be distinguished as the Manchester Day Mail. At their southern end, both travelled the same roads. The daily statement printed in 1836 and filled-in on March 8th 1837 (see Willcocks' 'England's Postal History,' Plate 20) shows their timings at Birmingham - and an odd misprint in that a bag for Manchester appears to be sent on the Bristol mailcoach (should 'for' read 'from' - Ed). References to a 'Manchester Night Mail' all seem to mean the Liverpool one and its branch rather than a third service, though putting on another coach right through is not an impossibility when occasion required it. (A Birmingham to Nottingham stage-coach clearly became a mailcoach at Derby where it arrived a little before the Birmingham-Sheffield mailcoach.) In this last period, provision for Walsall's connections to the north was supplied by a Wolverhampton to Lichfield mail-gig and its introduction may account for, or be coincidental with, the 1828 change: there was also a Walsall to Penkridge horse-post from 1829 but that seems to have been used only for the Penny Post.

To summarize, the chief variations here traced are:-

Route through Wednesbury: c1793-1800 (3 day); 1812-1814 or earlier; 1828-37 (2 MCs).
Route through Walsall: 1800-12; in or before 1814-28.

* * * * *

The Peover Papers

and the Midland Counties

From the work of Dr J.W.M.STONE, M.B.

Part Two

25MAR73 Ireland, p11. To Mr Warburton at Dublin telling him that he has ordered Mr Eccles, his deputy at Manchester, to send all letters for Ireland to Mr Barber at Stone who is to send them and keep account with Mr Warburton. Mr Warburton is to give account in his lists of these letters as he does for Chester and he is to be careful to send all letters for Lancashire, Maxfield, Congleton and those parts of Cheshire to Mr Barber who has the most convenient way of conveying them.

C7 25MAR73 Vol One, p90. To Mr Eccles at Manchester. He cannot yet resolve as to removing the stage to Brereton but he is troubled that Mr Eccles' design failed him in settling the other road and hopes it may yet take effect. Mr Barber (Stone) and he must be content with lesser profits rather than lose so hopeful an improvement. Barber has written to him about the letters sent from Eccles' part to Ireland and would he therefore publish in Manchester that their letters are to be sent by way of Chester to Ireland and back without being sent to London. He is to keep separate account of all such letters and, either in his ordinary bills or by particular list, by every post.

C8 25MAR73 Vol One, p91. To Mr Barber at Stone saying he is sorry he cannot settle his new road and cannot take notice of any agreement with him by any of those towns but he wishes Mr Barber could go on with his design as he believes it may turn to his and Mr Eccles' interest. If Maxfield, Congleton or any of those have correspondence with Ireland, let their letters be conveyed this way. Mr Barber is to write to Mr Aldcroft at Warrington and to Mr Wearden at Preston to give these directions to his agents at Liverpool, Warrington and Preston. The letters are to be sent to Ireland twice weekly by Chester and Mr Barber will take care of the returns.

C9 27MAR73 Vol One, p92. Again to Mr Barber who he finds apprehends difficulty in keeping account with Dublin and Manchester for the Irish letters. It must be done by having bags (sealed) and lists sent from each hand and there is to be a check on both. They will keep a constant account with the office. Mr Barber is asked to improve the design all he can by writing to the postmasters of Lancashire and Cheshire to tell them to observe that way and, if possible, to establish his road by Maxfeild, advising Colonel Whitley as to Brereton and Knutsford so that he may make the best choice.

C10 1APR73 Vol One, p95. He writes to Mr Barber to let him know that he has not yet decided whether to move the stage from Knutsford but he will be glad if Barber will settle his new branch. As for the Irish letters, it is all one whether they pay here or in Ireland.

C11 19APR73 Vol One, p110. To Mr Cappur at Nantwich. He will not settle the whole road together until May at the soonest. Mr Cappur is to proceed in the settlement of the Wrexham branch and is to be kind to the manager of the office at Whitchurch.

C12 22APR73 Vol One, p113. Once again, he writes to Mr Barber at Stone and is sorry he finds difficulty in his new branch. He finds Mr Eccles (Manchester) so weary of Mr Aldcroft (Knutsford) that he believes he would consent to any reasonable terms rather than have any more to do with him and Mr Aldcroft will have enough on his hands to manage the other stage. He is to desire Aldcroft to write to Liverpool to send the Irish letters to Stone.

C13 3MAY73 Vol One, p127. He tells Mr Barber that, if his new branch fails him, he may put it aside. He will give the order for a new mail as he desires; the passage of the Irish letters by this stage must have a beginning.

Bg1 5JUN73 Vol One, p156. To Mr Webley at Gloucester. He has ordered Mr P'sons to draw the articles with the postmaster of Hereford as he desires.

C14 10JUN73 Vol One, p162. To Mr Barber at Stone. He finds he has begun the new branch.

Bg2 21JUN73 Vol One, p175. To Mr Philpott at Hereford thanking him for the particulars. He has sent an officer to Salop, Ludlow, Worcester &c and his stage also. He wishes Leiminster and Kingston were served by a horseman and thrice a week if it would turn to account. He has had complaints of the ill management of the branch of Lemster.

8MAY73 Vol One, p352. To Mr Chetwood at Whitchurch. He is troubled to find that the gentry of Wrexham cannot have the course of their letters changed without breaking a little into Mr Phillipps' concerns, which Colonel Whitley is inclined to indulge within reason in obedience to Lady Ellis who has a great kindness for Mr Chetwood's sister. The change proceeds from the general desire of the country. Mr Cappur is the person recommended by them.

C15 28JUN73 Vol One, p199. To Mr Barber again, who he thought would not have scrupled at a reduction of salary of £60 or made a proportionable gratuity but he leaves it to his discretion at present. He hopes Lord Gerrard (now on his way to Cheshire) and others round Maxfeild and Congleton will enlarge his branch. Mr Barber is to opine whether to continue the stage of Knutsford or settle it at Brereton Greene.

(To be continued)

Correction In the second line of the introduction to this series ('Midland Mail' 44/7), reference was made to the deputy PMG, Lord Arlingham. This should have read, of course, 'Lord Arlington'. ('Arlingham' is a Gloucestershire UDC !)

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OPENING (AND CLOSING) OF VILLAGE SUB-OFFICES

Further to John Soer's item on the Dates of Opening of some Village Sub-Offices, Harold Wilson has written to say that he has found just two references to the replacement of village sub-offices by wall-boxes:

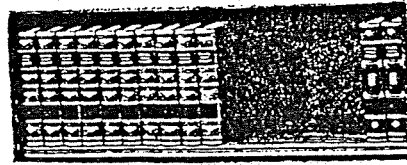
10th August 1860 - Sub P.O. at Tissington to close and a wall-box erected instead.

29th July 1869 - Sub P.M. (Breadsall) submitted false entries of stamps on letter bills - to be dismissed. At same time the office to be abolished and a wall-box erected instead.

Both these decisions were later reversed.

* * * * *

Exploring the Library



where Chris Beaver finds John Everson

"Where did you find that?" is a common question we ask concerning the facts that emerge from one another's research. The answer is not necessarily somewhere at Post Office Archives and those of us who rarely or never manage to spend time in London need not despair of discovering unknown evidence more locally and piecing together the findings. Larger libraries and county record offices often contain more than meets the eye and the catalogue rather than the shelf is often the place to delve. It is important not to overlook research already done, especially the products of modern writers who quote or refer directly to their sources. At Birmingham Reference Library, for example, most of the more substantial works of our predecessors are available in Social Sciences Section 383. (It would be good if runs of periodicals like 'Postal History', 'British Mailcoach' and 'Midland Mail' were deposited.)

Directories are a rich source of postal information. 'London' ones often cover the whole country and may mention times, rates and routes to and from the capital. Local ones, covering a town, county or area, are sometimes difficult to locate since only one original copy may have survived. Many of those for our part of England are listed in 'Guide to Directories of the West Midlands' compiled by D.F.&S.Radmore published by the Library Association in 1971 and some counties have a list indicating where to find (most of) those that exist for their own area. Such a list to locate Road Books would be helpful for only the Guildhall Library and the British Library have a large number. Of Cary's 'New Itinerary', Birmingham (Geography section 942) has the editions of 1806, 1810, 1817, 1821 and 1828, as well as Paterson's 'Roads' for 1803, 1824 and 1829. What others are in Midlands libraries or among our personal treasures?

'Local Studies', including the scholarly products of the County Record Society or its equivalent, can absorb many hours and sometimes unexpectedly rich rewards emerge. The writers of the Victoria County History may allude to a few facts about post offices and postmasters but it is apparent that the editors of the Staffordshire volumes have not used the evidence of a post-graduate student, discovered in P.O. Archives and the Public Record Office, who, while supposedly producing a thesis on 18th century communications affecting the development of the pottery industry, could not resist researching the whole county while she was at it. It was all reproduced in the 1934 volume of 'Collections for a History of Staffordshire'.

The latest find resulted from a discussion with a knowledgeable librarian at Birmingham 'Local Studies' who remembered the name 'Everson'. The catalogue of the material in the Archives made it sound worth looking at. Two unpublished manuscript volumes by Henry John Everson were apparently deposited about 1925, one entitled 'The Post Office in Birmingham 1550-1924' and the other 'Arrangements for the Collection and Delivery of Letters etc in Birmingham 1793-1845, with Lists of Birmingham Offices and Postmasters c1826-1923'. Take the latter first. The library's title is less than accurate since the Coleshill listing begins in 1643 and Hales Owen's in 1769.

From a variety of local sources, Everson discovered dates of appointment and resignation or death, of establishment and closure of each office under Birmingham. P.O. Archives are not a source of his material but we can compare many first dates with the issue of the first Undated Circular Marks (UDCs). A stamp was generally ordered before the opening of a projected new office e.g. Queeslet's first UDC was issued on 29 July 1856, the postmaster appointed on 1 November 1856 and the office closed on 23 Dec'r 1861. (The other volume discloses a new walk established to Barr Hall, nearby, in a report of many extensions of Birmingham District Post printed on 14 July 1856.) Where applicable, dates when an office became a Money Order Office and a Telegraph Office are also given, as are changes of address or name. Since Everson worked for the GPO, he may have had access to records at Birmingham Head Office. Are they still there, transferred to P.O. Archives or lost? Was the task completed?

The much larger volume is of more general interest. Birmingham enthusiasts could spend weeks on it - and save themselves years of searching. Subject index and chronological arrangement make a particular search through it straightforward. The book consists very largely of extracts, meticulously transcribed in full, from local newspapers and Aris's Gazette in particular; occasionally from books. One book not in the Library (is it, perhaps, in the library of the Birmingham Philatelic Society?) is 'History of the GPO with special reference to the Growth and Development of Birmingham GPO' by John Wilson "for 40 years in the P.O. Birmingham" published in 1899. A great many Post Office Notices, issued locally as well as from London, are quoted verbatim. Here is the gist of one dated April 2nd 1774: from the 8th, mail from London on the bye days, viz Sunday, Wednesday and Friday, will certainly arrive earlier and more regularly than for some time past. Also additional Posts will be despatched to Coleshill every Sunday and Friday nights with letters for places to the North and for Ireland, and letters shall be received at Birmingham from the North etc every Sunday and Tuesday morning (so providing communication) six instead of four times a week with places north of Coleshill and with Ireland, wind and weather permitting. Details of this kind are included for all the roads and, later of course, railways from Birmingham. Would that announcements were also made when services were withdrawn!

For the sake of those who do not have the opportunity of spending a day or two in the second city, the new Editor may be glad to publish further revelations next season. Meanwhile, please do enquire whether particular interests are touched on, for Everson has provided a mini-P.O. Archives.

Perhaps this will serve as a parting shot at the retiring Editor - on the assumption a certain insignificant crossing point is hidden in the 'etc':

'The boy who carries the bye mail from Worcester to Stourport etc was on Monday last (6 Dec 1790) stopped near Worcester by two footpads and robbed of the Stourport bag.'

Editors come and go. We are grateful they think fit to record such trifles, leaving it to posterity to judge their significance in the long story of 'Midland Mail'.

* * * * *

Great Britain Postal History

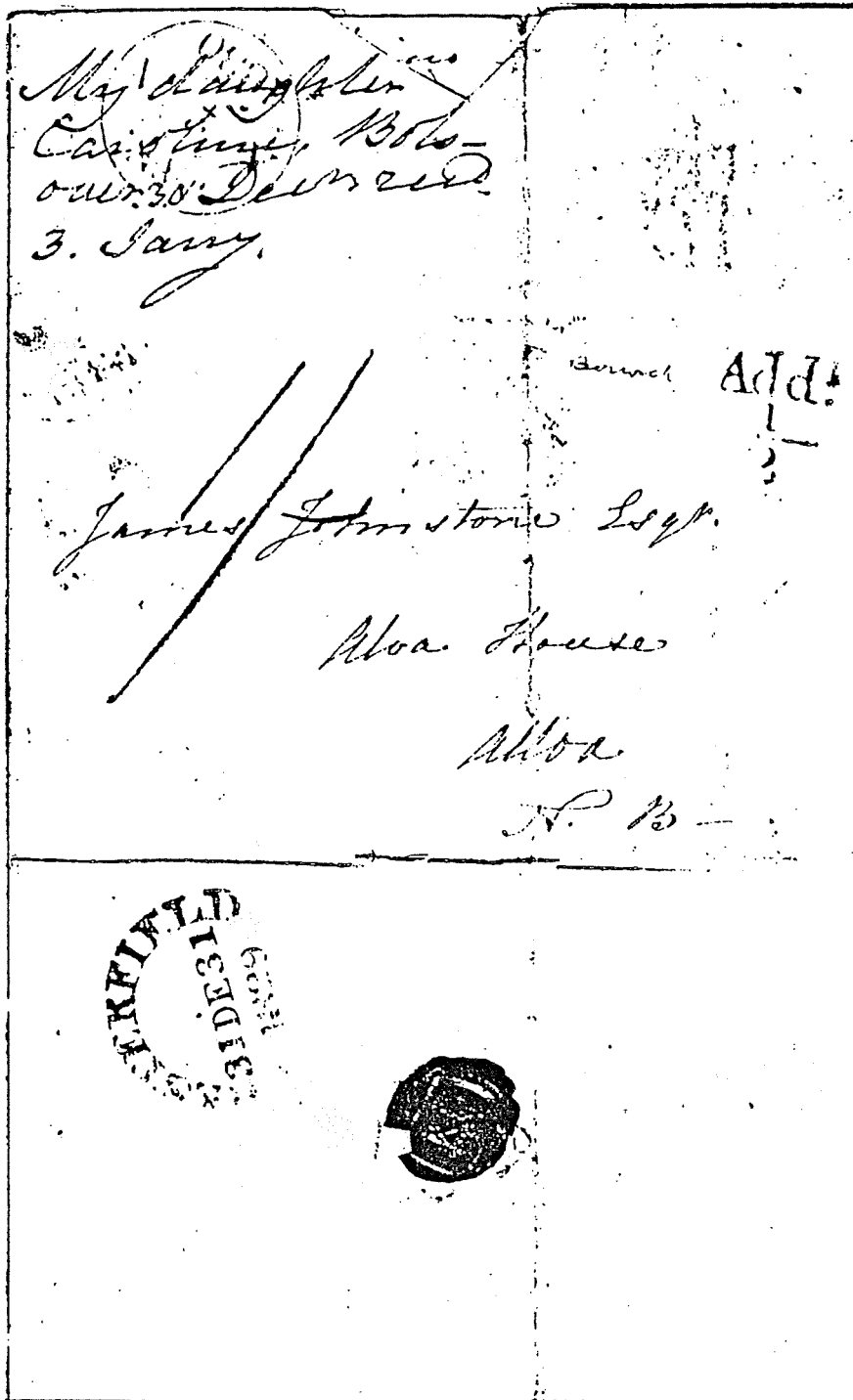
from 1840 to date. County material,

FDCs and the unusual. Send for my latest list.

ROGER HUDSON
36 WEST STREET
WARWICK
CV34 6AN

BOLSOVER CASTLE (Once more!)- a letter from the distaff side.

I was interested in James Grimwood-Taylor's and Frank Peach's items on 'Bolsover Castle', writes HAROLD WILSON, as I have a letter of 30th December 1829 from Mrs Caroline Gray (wife of the Vicar of Bolsover) to her father at Alloa. This has the 'Chesterfield' circular stamp for 31st December, a red Edinburgh transit stamp for 2nd January 1830 and the Berwick 'Addl $\frac{1}{2}$ ' in green.



Mrs Gray writes a chatty letter about the social gatherings they attended over Christmas and planned visits for the New Year. They seemed to be seasoned travellers. She says "On Christmas Day of course we had service in the church but not the sacrament, and you will hear with as much astonishment as we did, that until last year Bolsover Church had not for 16 years had service in it on that day. The congregation was excellent. On Monday, as we intended, we left this for Clifden which is 15 miles off, over a road of which this is the exact representation.



(Clifden Hall was the home of the Walker family.)

If any other letters from this family correspondence are in the hands of readers, we would be delighted to hear of them for we appear to have a pleasant fragment of social history in our midst.

THE STRAIGHT LINE TOWN SUB-OFFICE MARKS OF THE MIDLANDS

A PROGRESS REPORT

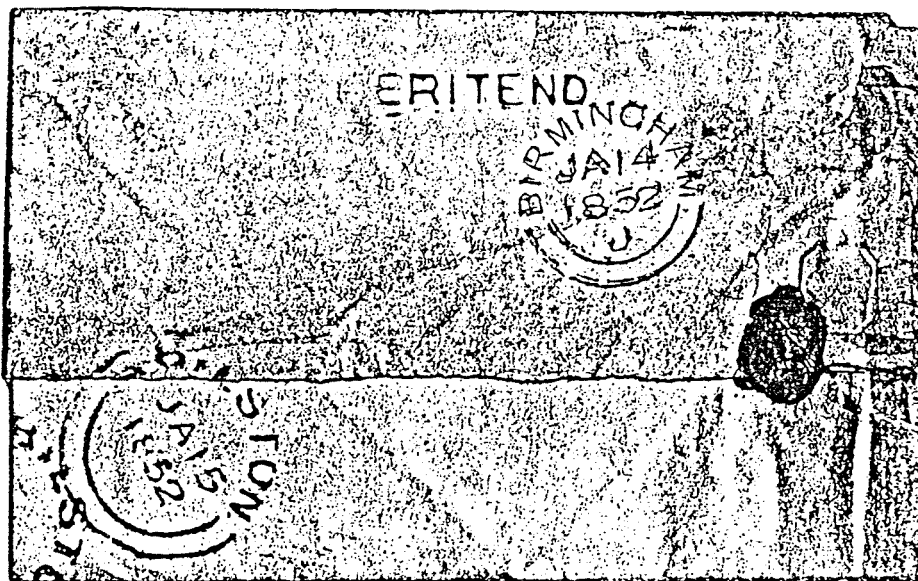
In 'Midland Mail' 43/13-19, there appeared the Society's provisional list of the straight line marks of the Midland town sub-offices (TSOs) and members were asked to advise the County Editors (through the Coordinating Editor) of any examples they had seen. Readers were promised an interim report on how the exercise is progressing but they should bear in mind that what follows relates only to the information received by the Coordinating Editor (soon to be passed on to County Editors) and does not include information known to County Editors and held close to their respective handsome chests.

Of the 76 marks illustrated on the P/MSL list, not a single report has been received of exactly half of them. However, it is known from displays seen at Society meetings, for example, that members have examples of most of the Coventry and Leamington marks and, if these had been submitted through the Coordinating Editor, it would have made a significant difference. As expected, the best reporting has been of the various Birmingham marks. However, it is interesting that, although the Great Hampton Street office was issued with at least four different stamps, none has yet been recorded by us. There has been no report yet of any of the three Wolverhampton marks.

The commonest marks, by a good margin, appear to be those of Handsworth, Sutton Coldfield and Brierley Hill. One suspects that the two Brierley Hill sub-offices may eventually turn out to be among the scarcest marks.

Several marks not on the P/MSL list have been reported. It is probable that none are true TSO marks but village marks, often pre-1840 remnants. It has yet to be decided which, if any, are relevant to this second exercise but all would be included in the third and final part of the work on undated marks.

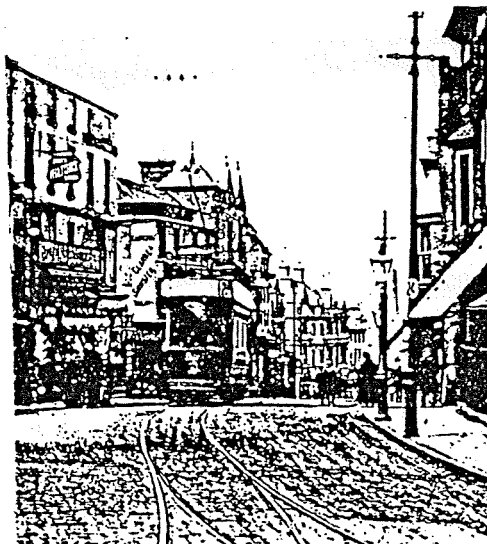
It is probably self-evident that examples of the Midland straight line marks are not particularly common and many may be scarce. It cannot be emphasised too strongly that members with only a single example in their postal history collection should report it because each and every report is important and significant. If you haven't given the exercise any thought yet, please make a midsummer resolution to do so.



Just the kind of scruffy example
that should not be passed over.

Kidderminster and Stourport TRAM MAILS 1898 - 1919

by JOHN SOER



Members of this society have written erudite articles - even books - about the carriage of mail by horse, coach and train but, apart from one instance, never by tram. This is one small attempt to remedy this sorry state of affairs.

Trams were first used to convey mails between Kidderminster and Stourport in 1898. By the end of 1907, the number of services used had risen to 7. A further service was added in January of the two following years. The tramway staff collected and delivered the bags at the Stourport post office since the trams passed that office; they also delivered the bags to the Kidderminster office although the office was 100 yds from the terminus.

In 1910, the Stourport night mails were transferred to the Wolverhampton to Stourport mail van. As a part of the general restriction of Post Office services during World War I, the day mail services between Kidderminster and Stourport were suspended on 6 May 1916. They were restored in May 1919 when the number of deliveries at Stourport was increased to three (7am, 12 noon and 4pm). The trams used were the 10.15am and 2.45pm from Kidderminster and the 9.45am and 2.15pm from Stourport.

(Ref: Post 121/136)

Editor's Note: As the Editor-in-Waiting has written this item, I hope he may allow us to return to it in a later issue. Kidderminster and Stourport are approximately 4 miles apart but the intervening land was rural and the existence of a tramway is therefore a little surprising. Furthermore, both towns were served by the Great Western Railway and one might think that this was the obvious way to send mail - until you examine the track layout. When the tramway was closed (probably before 1930), it is believed that its course became a cycle track alongside the Kidderminster/Stourport main road and it was on this same track that the writer sustained multiple injuries to body and pride when returning from Stourport just after World War 2, having been there to meet his elder brother's fiancée (who worked in the post office), crashing his new bike into a trench that workmen had dug across the cycle track and omitted to mark or light!

Overleaf: Schedule of Mails conveyed between Kidderminster and Stourport by Electric Tramway Company on weekdays only.

Time of despatch from Kidderminster to Stourport	Time of arrival at Kidderminster from Stourport	Number of Receipts	Mode of conveyance between Office and Tramcar.	Average daily weight and cost at Company's Parcel rates.	Annual if Company's Parcel rates were paid.	Actually paid to the Company for conveyance.
4-50am	-	2	By Postman	lbs. s d 90-1/4	£ s d 20-17-4	£10-10
-	8-45am	1	By Tramway Company's servant.	9 3	3-18-3	1/10 (includes)
-	9-45am	1	do	8 1/2 3	3-18-3	£5-10
-	12-45pm	1	do	7 2	2-12-2	
1-25pm	-	1	do	20 4	5-4-4	£5
-	2-45pm	1	do	7 2	2-12-2	£5
5-55pm	-	1	By Postman	50 6	7-18-6	£3-10 ✓
-	7-15pm	1	By Tramway Company's servant.	7 1/2 3	3-18-3	£5
-	* 8-15pm	1	do	6 2	2-12-2	£5-10 ✓
Totals					£53. 9. 5	£50. 0. 0

* These Services cease on the 28th February 1910.

NES

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Of Mice & Stamps

by JOHN SOER



We begin with an extract from the Leicester Journal of 28 November 1890

" The officials at the Leicester Post Office have been studying zoology in a way that is charming - to an outsider. The other day £3 worth of stamps were 'missing'. They were what is known as Civil Service stamps, and were worth from 5s to £1 each. The clerks

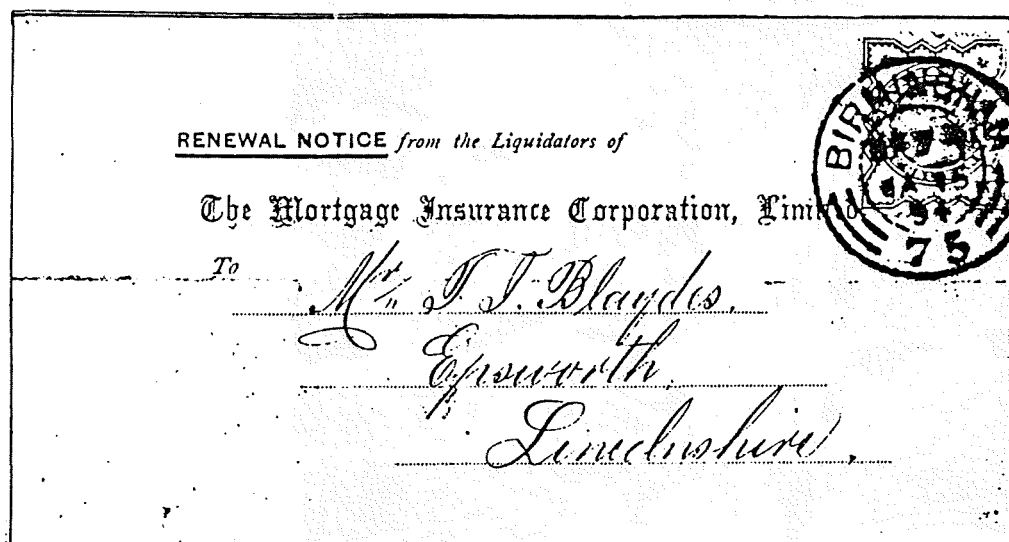
in charge were questioned, but nothing could be elicited from them. Then the drawer where the stamps had been kept was re-instated, and circumstantial evidence was found that seemed to connect some mice with the offence. The way of the sinners was traced through a groove in the anatomy of the office counter, and in another drawer, yards away, further evidence was found - this time in the form of nibbled fragments of the Sovereign's visage. A mouse was, in fact, discovered in the very act of 'getting outside' a five shilling stamp. History does not say precisely what became of these particular convicts. Perhaps they have been transported for life, for we are confidently informed that they will never offend again."

Two years later, the storekeeper at the Leicester Post Office wrote to the Head Postmaster: "I beg to state that a large number of forms and documents having been damaged, and in many cases destroyed by mice at this office, it is absolutely necessary to always have a cat on the premises. The cat, however, is not sufficiently fed, for the officers do not always remember to bring milk to the office, therefore, I shall be very glad if you will kindly apply for an allowance of 1d per day for the maintenance of the animal . . . "

Accordingly the Head Postmaster applied for an allowance of £2 a year but he was told that an allowance of 1/- a week was made to the postmaster at Nottingham for the maintenance of 2 cats, and that a similar arrangement should be made at Leicester. This the PMG authorised (Post 35/10591/1892).

Lest members think that this is a frivolous article, I should mention that in 1953 questions were asked in the House of Commons about the allowance paid for the maintenance of cats in the Post Office. Also P.O. Archives have published Historical Summary No.4, Post Office Cats 1868-1980. The only mention of a Midlands office in this is when the Head Postmaster of Warwick and Leamington Spa applied, in 1939, for an allowance of 1/- a week to keep a cat after "numerous complaints of damage to gift parcels of Cadbury's chocolate". Obviously Leamington mice have better taste than Leicester mice.

* * * * *

Tailpiece

A request from the liquidators of an insurance company
for a renewal premium - presumably in the knowledge
that at least one is born every minute.

Sting in the Tailpiece

Unlike the above insurance company, the Midland (GB) Postal History Society has not gone into liquidation and our lady Chairman, who supplied the above, feels sure we will not hesitate to renew our subscription which is now due. Please send £4-50 to the Treasurer, whose address is on the front page, while you remember.

Mileage and Mileage Marks

The promised 'novel words' about mileage and mileage marks have been held over but the attention of readers is drawn to Vivien Sussex's article 'How Long is a Mile?' in the latest issue of 'Postal History', the bulletin of The Postal History Society. If you, like me, thought a mile was always 1,760 yards, you may be in for a surprise!

The Features Index

An index to articles that have appeared in 'Midland Mail' since 1976 is attached to this number but may, of course, be separated from it if that proves to be more useful.

The Next 'Midland Mail'

The next 'Midland Mail', which will probably appear in September, will be the first in the tender care of our new Editor. In the circumstances, it may be unwise to give hostages to fortune but one can be sure that the September issue will include dates and details of the new season's meetings - and a lot more besides, particularly if we make midsummer resolutions to send a full blown article or an interesting minor item to:

John Soer, 51D Barkham Road, Wokingham, Berks RG11 2RG

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* * * * *

10th

Birthday.....

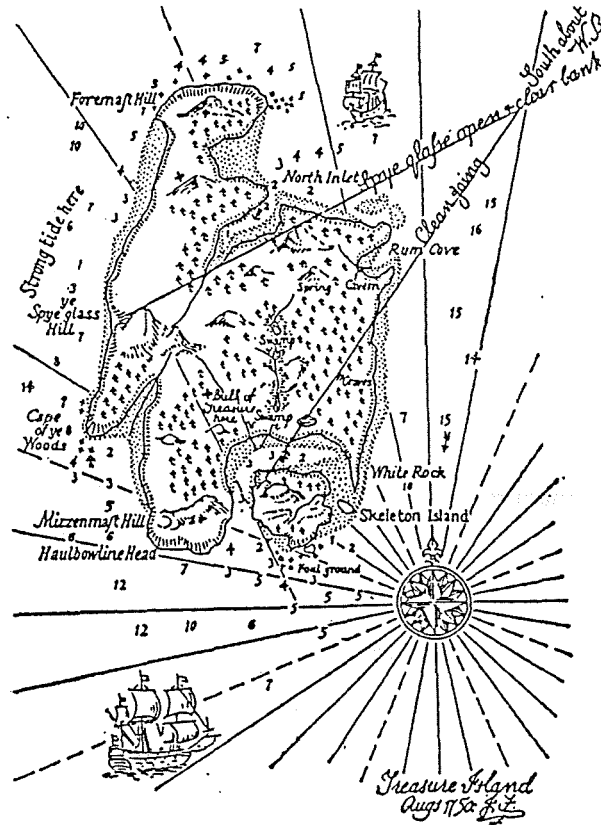
MIDLAND (G.B.) POSTAL HISTORY SOCIETY

10th

Birthday.....

Treasure

Hunt



THE FINAL QUESTION

If the page numbers of the first and second answers are added and the third answer (a facing page) is subtracted from that total and if that result is then subtracted from the fourth answer, a two digit number is obtained whose digits are the same. WHAT COUNTY ARE WE IN if we refer to that page number in 'The Undated Circular Marks of the Midland Counties'? (Those without the previous four answers have a 1 in 9 chance of guessing the correct solution!)

WHAT TO DO NEXT

Please submit the answers that you have to the retiring Editor, John Calladine, before 31st August 1986, which is the closing date for the competition. A valuable prize will be awarded to the competitor whose entry, in the opinion of the Editor, comes nearest to providing an all-correct solution. As in all such competitions (to avoid a lot of unpleasant hassle), the Editor's decision must be regarded as final.

APPEAL PROCEDURE

There isn't one