

MIDLAND MAIL

THE JOURNAL OF THE MIDLAND (GB) POSTAL HISTORY SOCIETY

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NEW MEMBERS

We extend a cordial welcome to Brian Purcell of Worcester whose collecting interests include Cannock and Bristol postal history, and Geoff Oxley who collects Oxfordshire as well as mail to the German States, 1815-1875.

THE SOCIETY CONSTITUTION

Following agreement at the Annual General Meeting, the Society's revised rules – now the Constitution, dated April 2010 – have become operative. Members should note that "hall" in paragraph 8(e) should be amended to read "shall".

LIBRARY RULES

The Committee has recently completed a review of the rules of the Society's library. Some minor changes have been made as regards the loan of books published by the Society but out of print, and to the paragraph on copyright. A copy of the revised rules, in a similar format to the Society's Constitution, is enclosed with this issue.

THE NEW SEASON

The first meeting of the new season will be on **11th September** – not 13th as announced at Worcester – and will be an all-day joint meeting at Kington St Michael with the Somerset & Dorset Postal History and the Bristol Postal History Group. An information sheet will be included with *Midland Mail* in August but please note the date as there will be an 'not to be missed' display by Malcolm Ray-Smith.

A second date to be noted is **13th November** at Warwick when Tom Slemons, who has just won a Large Vermeil medal at London 2010, will be visiting us from Indiana, USA, no less, to show '*Unusual Aspects of Suffolk Postal History*'

SOCIETY SALES

There are only a handful of remaining copies of the Oxfordshire Supplement to the Society's 'local posts' book. If you have the original, you should certainly buy this to complete it, whatever your county of interest. The cost is £5 plus £1.50 p&p.

Page two of '*Midland Mail*' No. 164 gave details of a CD of mailcoach timebills. It is proving popular and will help many areas of local research. Again, it costs £5 on indefinite loan (plus £1.25 p&p) and numbers are very limited. Please contact John Calladine on 01249-758148.

THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND AUCTION

The Annual General Meeting was held on 17th April 2010 at St Germain's Church Hall, Birmingham. Twenty-three members were present, and nine members sent apologies.

The Chairman reflected on his three years in office and thanked everyone for their attendance at meetings and for the abundance of interesting material shown. He particularly wished to thank all the officers for their hard work which, he said, went unseen by the majority of members. He said that the Society was solidly financed and had been able to sustain its membership. It had become clear to him that the Society rules would benefit from updating and, with the help of the General Secretary, they had been revised. Members would be asked shortly to approve the revisions which had been thoroughly vetted by the Committee.

The Treasurer distributed copies of the balance sheet to 31st March. This showed that income from gifts sold at the auction and the commission were up £100 and £80 respectively, but the cost of room hire was up by £111. However, despite the very low rate of interest on the Building Society account, there was an excess of income over expenditure of £132.21. His proposal that the subscription remain at £10 was supported unanimously.

The General Secretary read out a report from the Editor of Midland Mail in which he thanked both John Calladine and Martin Scroggs for producing the series of articles on the Oxfordshire Local Posts. Copies of the cumulative index for issues 1-150 were still available and a further index for issues 151-170 was planned. He was very grateful to all members who had submitted articles and reminded everyone that all articles, both long and short, were always welcome. He was especially indebted to both Eric and Sharon for their work in getting Midland Mail printed, packaged and into the post as this was clearly no mean feat. Finally, the use of voting slips for the Jon Baker Trophy had been an enormous success.

Our Publications Manager, Chris Jackson, reported that although progress with the County Catalogue update had been slow, the printer had completed successfully a trial run with one county, comprising preface, specific illustrations and listing. He distributed letters to the County Editors detailing his requirements for county prefaces and specific illustrations. Chris said that those who had contributed to the update would be thanked in a general introduction, and that he intended that the updated catalogue would be ready for a launch at MIDPEX 2011.

Alan Godfrey, our ABPS Representative, said that overall the number of affiliated societies remained roughly static, although some had left and others had rejoined. However, societies generally were losing members and philatelic societies were no exception. He reminded members of the regional events associated with the 2010 Festival of Stamps and that Philatelic Congress was to be held in Kenilworth – an event at which there would be much good material on show as well as excellent speakers.

The next item on the agenda was the proposed revised rules – to be the Society Constitution which the Chairman stressed was needed to carry the Society through the next decade. The General Secretary gave a summary of the proposed changes and of one small amendment to the copies distributed with Midland Mail, an error being caused by 'computer gremlins'. [See page 1.] Members approved the Constitution which took immediate effect.

The election of Officers, Managers and County Editors followed. Mel Matthews was proposed and accepted as Chairman for the coming three years while all others were re-elected en bloc. The post of MPF Representative remained vacant once again. Alan Godfrey was re-appointed as Examiner of Accounts.

Richard Farman gave details of the proposed dates and venues of next season's meetings:

11 th September	Kington St Michael	8 th January	Carr's Lane
16 th October	Carr's Lane	12 th February	Black Country Museum
13 th November	Warwick	5 th March	Streetly
14 th December	Sharpe's Pottery Museum or Museum of Brewing	16 th April	MPF Wombourne
14 th May	AGM and Auction	7 th May	WORPEX

Finally, the Jon Baker Trophy for the best article in Midland Mail during 2009 was awarded to Brian Atkins for his '*Mail between Shropshire & USA, 1849-70*'.

The auction started briskly with the lots donated for Society funds selling for a total of £118.50. There was a superb start to the main part of the auction with lot 1 eventually realising £600. This set the tone for the rest of the day, for while there were bargains to be had, many lots were sold well above their estimate. Of particular note were lots: 8 - £660 (estimate £65), 9 - £240 (£42), 10 - £400 (£90), 226 - £60 (£18) and 362 - £85 (£7). Sales totalled approximately £8000, considerably more than in any other auction of our Society, with about 91% of the lots being sold.

The Society thanks all those involved in the auction, particularly, among those distributing lots to the buyers, Sharon's nine-year old son, Jonathan, who quickly mastered the job, remembering most of the buyers' numbers so that he could quickly take their lots to them.

A	26.00	B	10.00	C	15.00	D	4.00	E	6.00	F	1.00
G	22.00	H		J	4.00	K	4.00	L	5.00	M	6.00
N	11.00	O	7.50								
1	600.00	2	120.00	3	45.00	4	160.00	5		6	65.00
7	50.00	8	660.00	9	240.00	10	400.00	11	44.00	12	80.00
13	130.00	14	110.00	15		16		17	32.00	18	9.00
19	7.00	20	15.00	21	10.00	22	12.00	23	6.00	24	13.00
25	30.00	26	18.00	27	10.00	28	5.00	29	5.00	30	5.00
31	85.00	32		33	19.00	34	12.00	35	10.00	36	
37	20.00	38	5.00	39	5.50	40	13.00	41	17.00	42	4.00
43	18.00	44	13.00	45	13.00	46	4.00	47	8.50	48	12.00
49	3.00	50	6.50	51	9.50	52	5.00	53	8.00	54	9.50
55	8.00	56	5.00	57	11.00	58	11.00	59	13.00	60	9.00
61	6.00	62	9.50	63	65.00	64	12.00	65	16.00	66	13.00
67	16.00	68	12.00	69	9.00	70	17.00	71	30.00	72	7.50
73	16.00	74	6.50	75	4.00	76	13.00	77		78	1.50
79	6.00	80	13.00	81	3.00	82	3.00	83	8.50	84	15.00
85	13.00	86		87	12.00	88	15.00	89	80.00	90	20.00
91	11.00	92		93	3.00	94		95	11.00	96	4.00
97	6.00	98		99	13.00	100	16.00	101		102	8.50
103	9.00	104	50.00	105	9.00	106		107	9.00	108	5.00
109	17.00	110	4.00	111	36.00	112	9.00	113	24.00	114	15.00
115		116		117		118		119	13.00	120	3.00
121	13.00	122		123	9.00	124	18.00	125	20.00	126	20.00
127	9.00	128		129	22.00	130	18.00	131	22.00	132	9.50
133	18.00	134	22.00	135	28.00	136	38.00	137	18.00	138	18.00
139	8.00	140	18.00	141	14.00	142	18.00	143	22.00	144	20.00
145	15.00	146	10.00	147		148	3.00	149	8.50	150	7.00
151	5.00	152		153	5.00	154	38.00	155	46.00	156	18.00
157	19.00	158	9.00	159	22.00	160	36.00	161	55.00	162	
163		164	60.00	165	4.00	166	4.00	167		168	11.00
169	19.00	170	19.00	171		172	60.00	173	12.00	174	10.00
175	6.00	176	5.00	177		178	24.00	179	15.00	180	48.00
181	42.00	182	3.00	183	60.00	184	22.00	185	22.00	186	22.00
187	24.00	188	9.00	189	12.00	190	26.00	191	3.50	192	
193	3.50	194		195	8.00	196		197	4.00	198	4.00
199	5.00	200	4.00	201	4.00	202	5.00	203	8.50	204	7.00
205	3.50	206	4.50	207	10.00	208	5.50	209	16.00	210	10.00
211	15.00	212	4.50	213	44.00	214	12.00	215	24.00	216	6.00
217	24.00	218		219	15.00	220	5.00	221	26.00	222	16.00
223	14.00	224	12.00	225		226	60.00	227	30.00	228	20.00
229	16.00	230	13.00	231	9.00	232	13.00	233	11.00	234	18.00
235	5.00	236	36.00	237	3.00	238	16.00	239	6.00	240	
241		242		243		244	5.00	245	11.00	246	17.00
247	24.00	248	18.00	249	3.50	250	4.00	251	16.00	252	10.00
253	65.00	254	16.00	255	14.00	256	48.00	257	20.00	258	3.00
259	4.00	260	24.00	261	32.00	262	34.00	263	22.00	264	5.00
265	6.00	266	4.00	267	4.00	268	18.00	269	20.00	270	
271	19.00	272	24.00	273	16.00	274	5.50	275	5.00	276	24.00

277	8.00	278	26.00	279	8.50	280	15.00	281	17.00	282	8.50
283	10.00	284	13.00	285	14.00	286	6.00	287	28.00	288	26.00
289	44.00	290	16.00	291	28.00	292	26.00	293		294	2.00
295	30.00	296	17.00	297	18.00	298	14.00	299	3.50	300	8.00
301		302	4.00	303	4.00	304	5.00	305		306	16.00
307	16.00	308	17.00	309	9.00	310	55.00	311	16.00	312	4.00
313	24.00	314	16.00	315	11.00	316	28.00	317	14.00	318	17.00
319	5.50	320	14.00	321	19.00	322	16.00	323	40.00	324	8.50
325	28.00	326	9.00	327	19.00	328	13.00	329	16.00	330	5.00
331	4.00	332	15.00	333	6.00	334	13.00	335	28.00	336	17.00
337	11.00	338	5.00	339	4.00	340	13.00	341	6.00	342	11.00
343	2.00	344	22.00	345	26.00	346	3.00	347	4.00	348	4.00
349	3.00	350	4.00	351	20.00	352	130.00	353	30.00	354	24.00
355	70.00	356	22.00	357	5.50	358	32.00	359	42.00	360	9.00
361	16.00	362	85.00	363	2.50	364	34.00	365	3.00	366	20.00
367	17.00										

THE MEETING ON 24TH APRIL

There was an excellent attendance at the meeting held in conjunction with the Midland Federation Fair at the Arden School, Knowle when Mel Matthews gave a talk, illustrated by many superb slides, on 'Post Boxes'. Mel began in sixteenth century Florence where the cathedral contained a box into which people could put notes denouncing other members of the congregation. We went then to St Helena where in the seventeenth century letters for incoming captains were placed by outgoing captains under the "Cape Stones". An attempt to introduce letter boxes in Paris in 1635 was not a success. However, in 1758 six letter boxes were erected in Paris, and in 1829 the scheme was extended to other towns and villages.

Mel then turned our attention to this country. He told us that until 1908 sub-postmasters were responsible for providing their own letter boxes, and he showed slides of some made of stone or wood. Anthony Trollope, at the time a Surveyor's Clerk and who had seen boxes in Belgium and France, in 1852 recommended the erection of letter boxes in the Channel Islands. Mel showed a copy of a notice about the introduction of the "Road-Side Letter Boxes". In November 1852, the first pillar boxes were erected at St Helier in Jersey. They were shortly followed by the introduction of three on Guernsey. We saw a photograph of a box painted red outside what was then the main post office on Guernsey. Another photograph showed a Channel Islands box outside the Head Post Office in Bristol.

The first pillar box on the British mainland was erected at Botchergate, Carlisle at the end of 1853. A similar box, manufactured by John Butt of Gloucester, from the same year is still in use at Barnes Cross near Sherborne in Dorset. In the picture that we saw it was painted red, but originally it was painted green as were those in the Channel Islands. It was not until 1874 that the Post Office began to repaint the boxes red, the changeover taking ten years.

The firm Smith & Hawkes made a number of pillar boxes at their Eagle Foundry in Birmingham in the 1850s. Although three prototypes were meant to be 4ft 6in in height, they turned out to be over 8ft, and cost ten times more than any other boxes. One of these was located in New Street and another, of which we saw a superb photograph, was placed in the Bull Ring. A second type of box made by Smith & Hawkes had a 'fluted' body and a vertical aperture. Examples of this type of box can be found in Warwick and Banbury. Examples of a third version which had a horizontal aperture are to be found in Shirley and Malvern.

A number of octagonal boxes were made in about 1856 by the Derby firm of Andrew Handyside. Two of these are to be found in Framlingham, Suffolk.

As there were so many receiving offices in London there was little need for letter boxes in the capital. Nevertheless, in May 1855 six boxes were erected. These showed the distance from the main post office, but they proved to be very unpopular as they were so low in height. Consequently, the 'London Ornate Box' came into use between 1857 and 1859. Made by Smith and Hawkes these boxes had the aperture on the top. It was unfortunate that it does sometimes rain in this country.

A less ornate version with the aperture below the rim became the first national standard pillar box in 1859. Many of these were made by Cochrane & Co of Dudley. Mel showed a photograph of one with a lamp post on the top.

Some non-standard boxes made by Cochrane & Co, three of which are still in use, were supplied to Liverpool. These had a crown on the top and bore the words 'POST OFFICE' to denote that they were the property of the Post Office.

From 1866 to 1879, the hexagonal Penfold became the standard design. Mel showed slides which illustrated the various modifications made to that type of box, and an example of one in Studley, Warwickshire. The year 1879 saw a reversion to a cylindrical design of pillar box. These had a high aperture and are known as 'anonymous' boxes since they had no royal cipher. This was corrected in 1887. Of particular note was one in Cambridge with spikes on the top. (To deter pigeons?) An example of 1883 is to be found in Acock's Green. These standard boxes came in two sizes – Type A with a slightly larger diameter than the Type B. In 1899, Type C boxes came into use. These were double-width elliptical boxes with two apertures, one for 'town letters' and the other for 'country letters'.

Mel ended the first half of his talk with a look at wall boxes of the Victorian era, beginning in 1859. Of particular note with their characteristic enamel plates were the 'Ludlow boxes', made by James Ludlow of Birmingham for use at sub-offices from 1885.

After the tea-break, Mel turned his attention to the twentieth century. In 1901, the 'B' Type pillar box was made with the aperture in the body, while in 1904 a modified version with the aperture in the door came into use. While the Royal Cipher during the reign of Edward VII was of the type E VII R, for George V there was no V – the Cipher was G R.

In 1924, an experimental telephone kiosk was produced which incorporated a stamp vending machine and a letter box. One of these can be seen in the Avoncroft Museum, Bromsgrove. It was in the same year that oval signs showing the direction to the nearest post office were first placed on the top of pillar boxes. Next, we saw an example of a 'D' type box with a stamp machine built into the box. From 1930 to 1938 boxes, which were painted blue, were provided for air mail letters. A refurbished example can be found outside Windsor Castle, but it is not in use. From 1932 these boxes were produced with a double collection plate, one for collection times and one for air mail postage rates. Apparently such a box painted red is in use in Maidstone. Mel then showed us slides of the special vans that were used to collect the letters from these air mail boxes..

Examples of boxes from the short reign of Edward VIII are to be found in Digbeth (Type A) and Yardley (Type B). Many of the boxes from that reign had the Royal Cipher of Edward VIII replaced by that of George VI. During WWII many pillar boxes were painted in black and white hoops to make them more visible in the blackout.

Rectangular boxes made from sheet steel (Type F) came into use in 1968. These proved not to be very hard wearing and prone to rusting at the bottom, due, no doubt, to dogs. Consequently a cast iron rectangular box (Type G) was introduced. Then, in 1979, the Post Office reverted to cylindrical boxes (Type K).

Mel rounded off his talk with a display of '*Postboxes on Stamps*'. I had not realised just how many stamps fit this description.

The fact that we had been treated to a very informative, entertaining and professionally produced presentation was reflected in the warmth of the applause after Derek Smeathers' vote of thanks.



Some pillar boxes in Oxford

THE MAY MEETING

There was little chance of members straying from the theme for the day when we met at Worcester on 1st May for we had been asked to '*Choose your own Topic*'. We were pleased to welcome Jan Gaines from Australia who was on a visit to this country.

Roger Broomfield began the proceedings with a look at some penny posts in Herefordshire, in particular the receiving offices at Eardisland and England's Gate in the Leominster Penny Post. Among the items that Roger showed us were: a letter sent in 1837 from Eardisland to Ludlow; a letter from England's Gate to Henley in Arden rated '9' in blue ink and a cover franked by Lord Sudeley sent from Brighton on 5th December 1839 – the first day of Uniform Fourpenny Post. The theme of local posts was continued by John Soer, but unofficial posts in Leicestershire. We saw items from unofficial posts between Leicester and Hinckley, Coventry and Hinckley, Loughborough and Ashby-de-la-Zouch, and Atherstone and Measham.

Material from Tenbury Wells formed Chis Jackson's display, beginning with a plague year letter (1665) which was endorsed "with a box". Next came an albino impression of the straight-line mark on a letter of 1743 which was followed by other straight-line marks from the 1790s. We saw a number of mileage marks, in particular the first type, with a mileage of 134, used in December 1785. Chris then showed us penny black covers and a Mulready before ending with duplex marks in various formats. Later, Chris showed some fascinating material on the fishing industry in Redditch – fishing hooks were made there. Of particular note were a number of advertising envelopes which included one which showed a superb steel engraving of Samuel Alcock's factory on the back of the envelope.

Richard Farman showed some of his latest acquisitions. A letter of 1694 from Dublin to Kensington marked with time stamp with a solid heart of the London Penny Post. An officer's letter from HMS Leander sent via Panama was charged 1/- postage, while a letter from Corfu to London which had originally been rated at 2/6 was marked as a 'Free', though it did attract a charge in the Twopenny Post. Richard produced a number of 'Frees' including a Money Letter sent to the Paymaster General, and one sent during the Seven Years War from Gibraltar to the Gaines Coffee House in Edinburgh.

North Norfolk was John Calladine's chosen area, in particular Walsingham and Wells. After he had told us about the history of the shrine at Walsingham, John produced the two-line mark of 1774, the straight-line mark of 1810-11 and then the undated circular mileage mark issued in 1826. Wells was represented by a 'WELLS' mark used in 1749 and the first type mileage 'WELLS/N. 122 used on a letter from Holkham.

Jan Gaines produced a wide range of material from Coventry, beginning with the two-line mark 'COVEN/TRY' used in 1752. This was followed by the straight-line mark from 1797, a boxed mileage 'COVENTRY/91 of 1803 and the dated circular mileage mark used as early as 1806. We saw a number of penny post items covering the period 1815 to 1839. Jan ended with the Krag continuous impression, circular datestamps and meter marks.

Roy Summers began with a number of First Day Covers from Wolverhampton which included those featuring Wolverhampton Art Gallery, Penn Ecumenical Centre, North West Midlands Mail Centre and Wolves v Reading in 1988. Later, Roy showed a number of surcharge marks such as '2^D/908' and '2^D/TO PAY/908' of Wolverhampton, and '1½^D/TO PAY/75 of Birmingham on a letter sent from South Africa to Wolverhampton.

Overseas mail to and from Northamptonshire was displayed by Derek Smeathers. We saw a letter sent to Hong Kong in 1843, one which took four and a half months to reach Australia, and a letter from France with a strike of a very scarce Wellingborough skeleton. Notable in a further contribution from Derek was a letter sent in 1936 to Brazil via Paris on which the air mail fee of 3/6 had been paid by twenty 1½d stamps plus six 2d stamps. A letter from northern Persia was endorsed 'via Russia' but had in fact been sent via India. An item sent from Belgium in 1937 went by way of Northampton, Massachusetts.

Next, came two of our Nottinghamshire members. One of Alan Marshall's other interests is 'Birds on Stamps' and it was that which he chose for his topic. Alan concentrated in particular on the golden eagle which can be found on the airmail stamps of the USA and Germany. We saw a very wide range of covers featuring such stamps. Mick Gill began with a paper envelope used for the sale of postcards by the postmaster, F.H. Davage of the Kirkgate post office in Newark. This was supported by a postcard showing that office. Mick then went on to show postcards featuring post offices in the north of the county, including West Stockwith (illustrated on the next page), Clayworth, Misterton and Sturton-le-Steeple.

The variety of material displayed at the meetings devoted to members' one board displays never ceases to amaze. The meeting at Worcester was no exception.

WEST STOCKWITH POST OFFICE

The postcard illustrated below was one of those shown by Mick Gill at the meeting in Worcester. An office 'Stockwith' opened in 1844 under Gainsborough. In 1859 it became 'West Stockwith'. On the appointment in 1891 of Robert Smith, grocer and confectioner, whose premises are shown on the card, the office moved to Main Street where it remained until 1912. It moved back to Main Street in 1929 but opposite its former site. In 1918, West Stockwith became a sub-office of Doncaster.



Post Office, &c., Main Street, West Stockwith.] [Not to be copied. Darley, Typo.

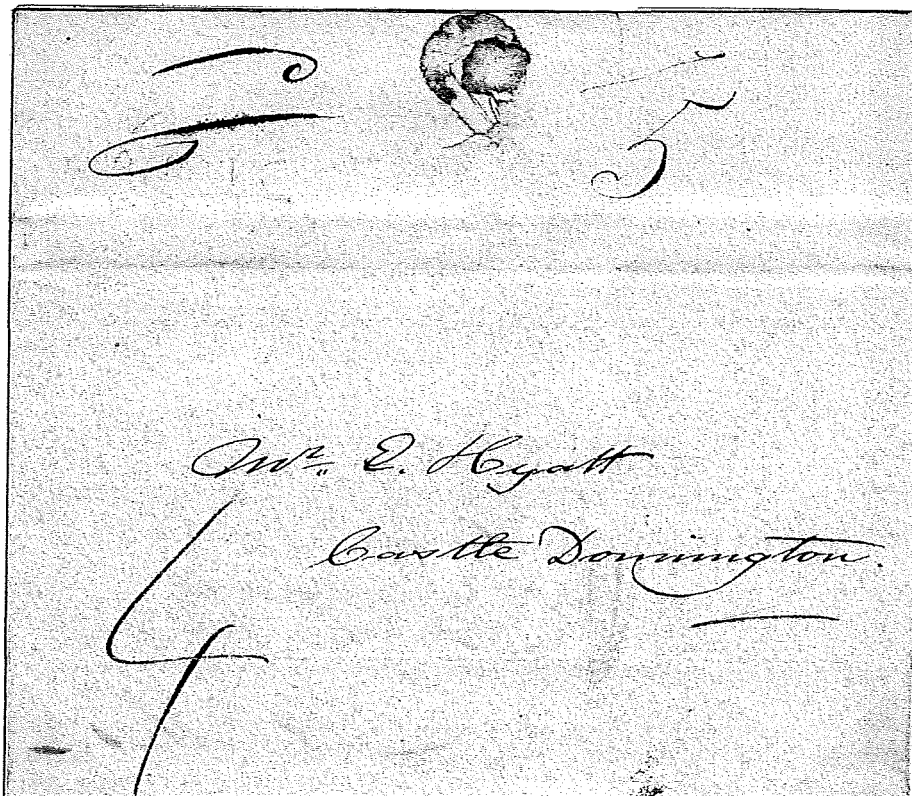
TWO LOCAL POST CHARGES ON ONE LETTER

The letter shown below which was sent from Leicester to Castle Donington in 1936 shows three charges:

4d for the general Post from Leicester to Loughborough;

1d for the unofficial post from there to Cavendish Bridge, raising the total to 5d;

1d for the unofficial post from Cavendish Bridge to Castle Donington, giving a total of 6d.



"I do not in the slightest degree confer any blame on Mr Davies, our postmaster, who is a very accommodating and admirable public officer".

It seems that Mr Davies undertook a “night delivery”, after the arrival of the London letters and the implication is that he also distributed The Cambrian. With a need to collect payment for unpaid letters, a midnight arrival of the mail probably made that impractical.

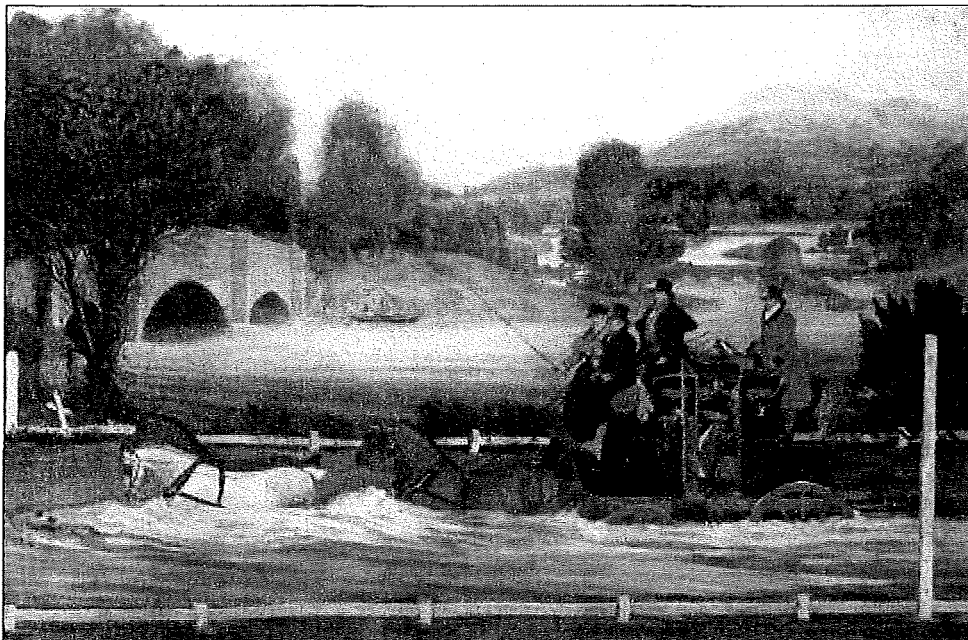
Those whose memory extends to 1994 may recall a series of articles in ‘Midland Mail’, with the title ‘Five over Severn’, that told of the problems encountered by the Post Office in getting mail across the River Severn, there being no bridge across the river below Gloucester. In this instance, The Cambrian had looked into the cause of the delay to the London Mail and had been told that it was four hours before the guard and boatman could venture to cross the New Passage. Mr Williams asked the Postmaster General to investigate the matter and to provide a more certain means of conveyance across the river. This request would hardly have fallen on deaf ears because, at that time, the dreadful reputation of the New Passage, which more or less followed the route now taken by the Second Severn Crossing bridge, was being considered.

In a minute to the Postmaster General, Francis Freeling, Secretary to the Post Office, tells him he has examined the timebills and he can confirm that the late arrival of the coach was solely due to the “*late tempestuous weather and the state of the tides at the New Passage*”. There is some indication that the weather across northern Europe was particularly bad at the time. A contemporary report by a coach passenger in northern France, on his way to England and written on the same day as Mr Williams’ letter, comments:

“ . . . and (can) only add that the weather was so windy and stormy that it took away all my inclination to put one’s head out of the coach”.

It is likely that the newspaper’s complaint was the final nail in the coffin of the New Passage ferryboat crossing because, within a few weeks, the (London)-Bristol-Milford Haven coach route had been switched to provide a Severn crossing at Old Passage, where the boat followed a route (close to the modern Severn Bridge) later used by the Aust ferry.

At the end of his minute to Lord Maryborough, Freeling expresses the hope that, having explained to the Editor of The Cambrian the circumstances of the delay which, he said, were beyond human control, the Editor would be moved to insert the Post Office’s answer in his publication. The Postmaster General indicated his approval. Perhaps their concerns were unnecessary. A search of the index to The Cambrian suggests that, whatever the Editor may have thought of the poor performance of the mailcoach, he did not share it with his readers.



A mailcoach in a flood (after James Pollard) but not at the River Severn!

STRATFORD-ON-AVON – ONCE THEY HAD A POST OFFICE!

by Bryan A Jones.

Until quite recently Stratford-on-Avon had their main post office located just up the road from Shakespeare's Birthplace, an ideal location for the steady stream of tourists visiting this site. One additional, and well used, facility was the inclusion of a separate Philatelic Counter away from the normal counter positions. With the earlier closure of the Philatelic Counter at Birmingham Head Post Office this was the only similar facility available to me, and I spent many hours reading through the latest Bulletins (which were always made available) and sorting through whatever stock they held to home in on the latest offering from Royal Mail.

All this is now a distant memory, the post office, although occupying the same premises, is now an appendage to a Co-Op mini-market, and the Philatelic Counter has long since been cleared away to be replaced by a range of fast-food shelves! Royal Mail may consider it to be progress, I take quite the opposite view.

However I have one memento of this now defunct service to philatelists. One afternoon in June 2004 I was happily browsing through the latest Bulletin when I noticed that the clerk, who had completed her Sales Returns, then delved into her desk drawer and produced a handstamp with which she dated the Return. Craning my neck I could see that this was something unique, a datestamp with the word "Postshop" across the top, so I immediately set off in search of the local Manager and eventually persuaded him to apply this datestamp to a couple of items I conveniently had available. He was at pains to point out that this datestamp was never intended to be used to cancel mail, but I suspect he realised that cancelling my two items was the quickest way of getting rid of me. Still I didn't care, I had what I wanted.

I would imagine that there cannot be many, if any, other examples of this particular datestamp in existence, so for me it is a reminder that, just once, I happened to be in the right place at the right time.



A TIXALL PARCEL POST LABEL

I am indebted to Richard Farman for providing the photocopy shown below. Note that the rubber handstamp used on the label is different from that used to cancel the adhesive.

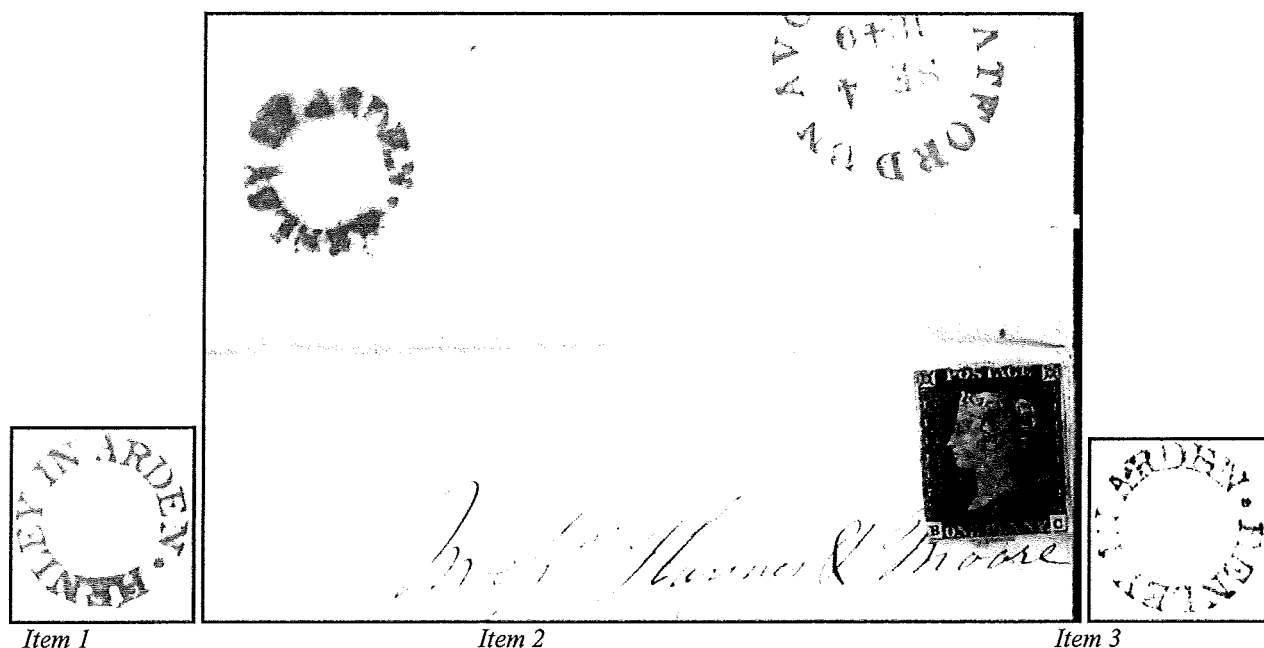


HENLEY-IN-ARDEN – THE 1832-1850 UNDATED CIRCLE HANDSTAMP

by Bryan A Jones

The Henley-in-Arden 23mm diameter undated circle handstamp (type C3) enjoyed a long life, being introduced in 1832 and surviving until 1850. Examples can be found quite easily, with three colours being used during the life of this handstamp, firstly applied in red from 1832 until September 1840, subsequently in black between 1841 and 1847 and finally in blue for the final three years of its life.

Late impressions of this handstamp still show a very clear strike although there is evidence that its use was quite heavy. However, I have a cover which causes me to question whether or not this handstamp was in fact replaced about halfway through its recorded life.



The handstamp illustrated (item 1) shows its application in red in 1834 and as can be seen it appears to be in good condition. The part-cover illustration (item 2) of an item from Blackford Mill (just outside Henley-in-Arden) to Warwick, via Stratford-on-Avon, is dated 4 September 1840, and is, I believe, the latest recorded example applied in red. As can be seen the handstamp is in very poor condition. This makes the appearance of a much later example (item 3) dated 1846, and applied in black, worthy of comment for it is in as good a condition as the earliest example I have recorded some 14 years earlier.

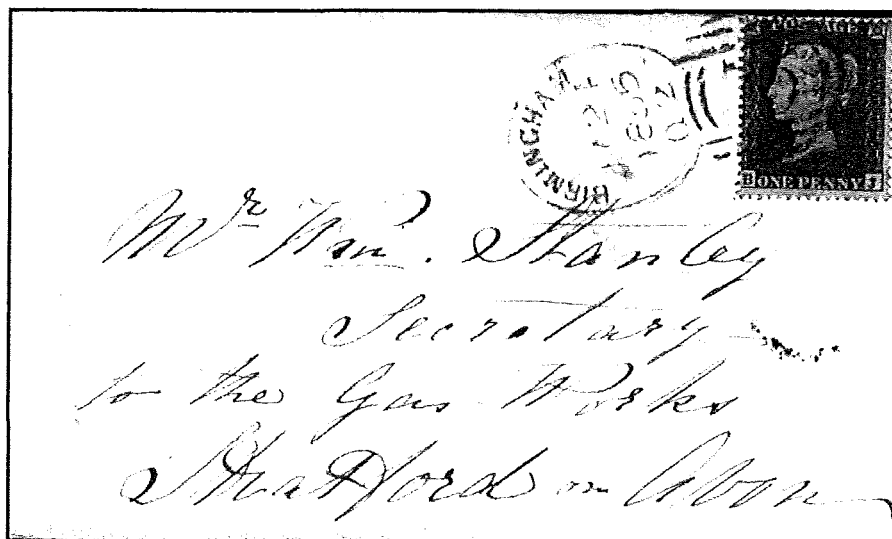
The only conclusion I can draw from this is that an identical undated circle handstamp was introduced around the end of 1840, at about the time that changeover to the use of black ink occurred. As far as I can tell there is no measurable difference in size, style or measurement between the earliest and latest examples illustrated, yet to have restored the example used in item 2 to something approaching the state of the later example would have been quite phenomenal.

SOUTH WARWICKSHIRE UNDATED CIRCULAR HANDSTAMPS

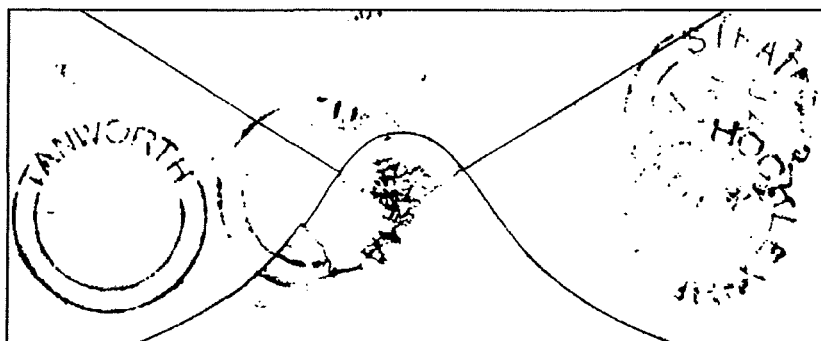
One is Good; Two is a Bonus; but Three is Really Special!

by Bryan Jones

As anyone knows finding undated circular handstamps from some of the village post offices is always difficult, so when you discover a good example you consider yourself lucky. When, however that example is accompanied by not one, but two other undated circular handstamps from adjacent villages, well then that is something to savour. The cover illustrated, carrying a Birmingham "Spoon" duplex dated 24 January 1855, and addressed to the Secretary to the Gas Works at Stratford-on-Avon, finally arrived the following day at its destination. The interest however is contained in the various undated circular handstamps applied to the reverse.



Three different undated circular handstamps have been applied, in order of application, these are: Ullenhall (the point of origin, and a village on the Henley-in-Arden to Redditch road); Tanworth (Tanworth-in-Arden – an adjacent village some 3 miles further north towards Birmingham); and finally Hockley Heath (another village some 3 miles north of Tanworth on the main Birmingham to Stratford-on-Avon road). As it happens, the point of origin – Ullenhall – is closer to the eventual destination, Stratford-on-Avon, than the other two villages, and so with each hand-over this letter moved further away from its destination. I surmise that a local carrier wended his way daily from village to village, possibly beginning at Henley-in-Arden progressing through the three villages, terminating at Hockley Heath where mail collected en-route could be transferred to the Stratford-on-Avon to Birmingham mail coach, before he returned to his starting point. Otherwise why travel cross country when the nearest point on the Stratford-on-Avon to Birmingham route was only about 3 miles away along a well established road?



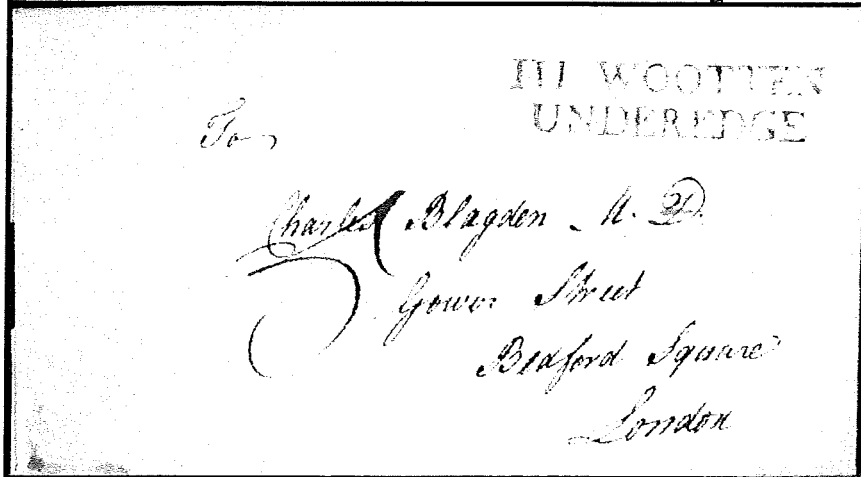
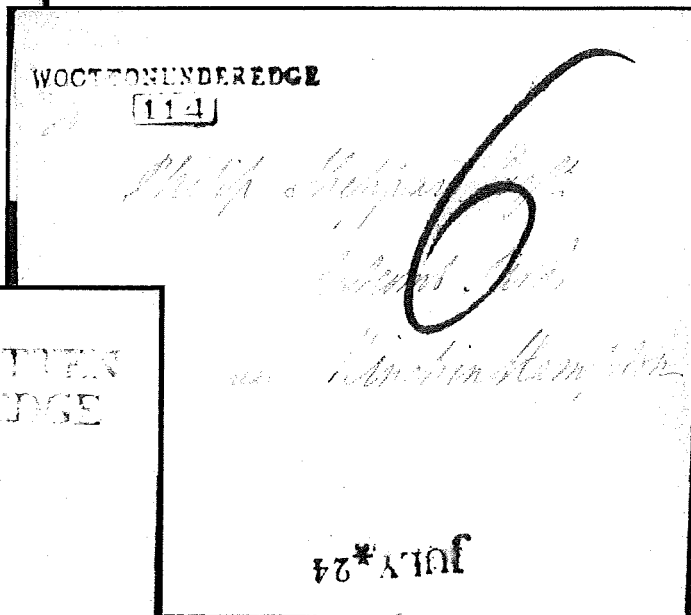
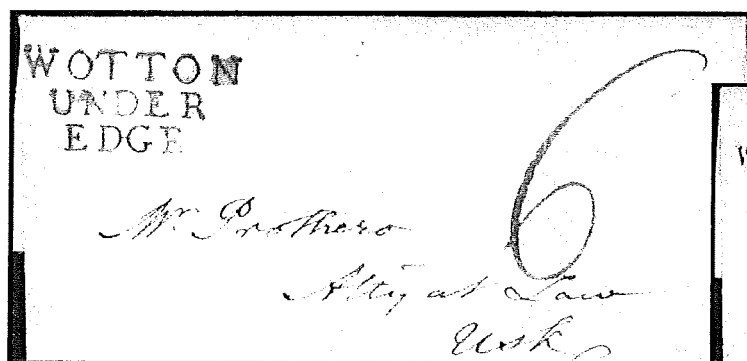
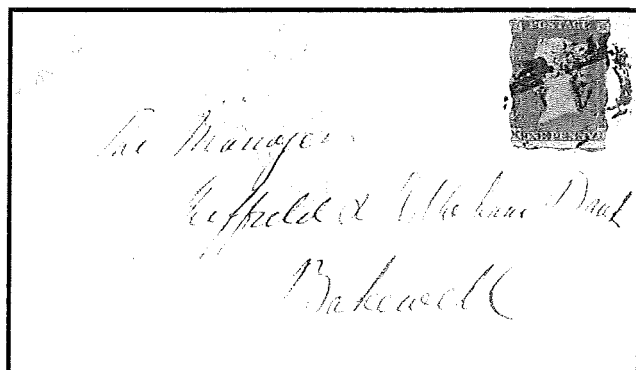
The undated circular handstamps, all applied on 23 or 24 January 1855, have added interest:-

Ullenhall (the poorest strike of the three udc's), nearest the centre of the cover, and applied in red, this according to the MPF handbook is the only recorded usage. **Tanworth**, a fine strike in blue. This udc was issued on 23 May 1848, but only infrequently recorded in blue between 24 March 1851 and 16 January 1856. **Hockley Heath**, a good strike also in red. Although recorded in use between April 1852 and August 1857, this is the only reported usage in red.

Record-Breaking Results in May; Gems from September Auction.

The only known Midlands usage of a Treasury
Roulette 1d Red on Cover -
**Featured in our May auction, and SOLD
for £11,750.**

**THE GILBERT WHEAT COLLECTIONS
OF WOTTON-UNDER-EDGE and
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A NEW KINETON STRAIGHT-LINE MARKING?

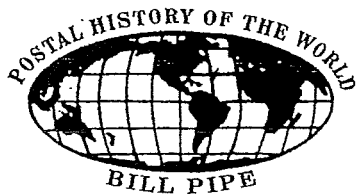
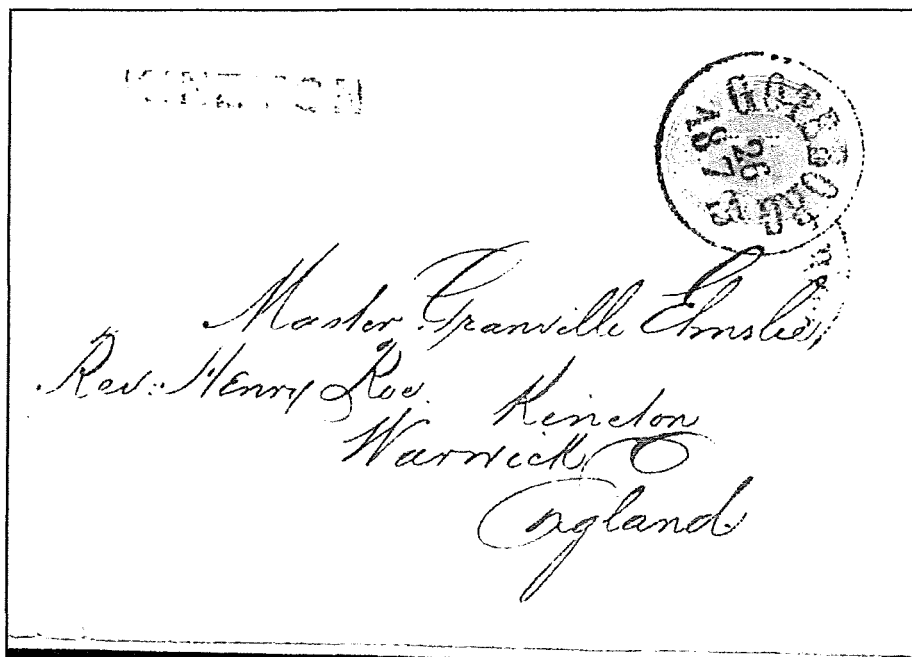
by Bryan Jones.

Ian Baker, one of our members in Scotland, originally contacted Eric Lewis with details of a previously unrecorded Kinton straight line marking. This request was forwarded to me to see what, if anything, I could add, the answer unfortunately was very little. Perhaps one of our other members might be able to help.

As can be seen from the illustration below this letter, addressed to Rev Henry Roe, Kinton, Warwick, originated in Gothenburg, Sweden, on 18 July 1875. A straight line handstamp, KINETON, measuring 31 x 5mm, has been applied in black upper left.

The question as to whether this was a previously unrecorded arrival marking applied by the Kinton post office, or whether it was a private mark added by the recipient, is open to question.

One thing, however, is clear. This is **not** a very late usage of the Keinton mileage marking (with mileage removed) for that marking, recorded in use up to 1839, has the name spelt in the original manner, namely "Keinton", furthermore these earlier markings all used seriffed lettering. Any further suggestions would be welcomed.



THE MAGPIE

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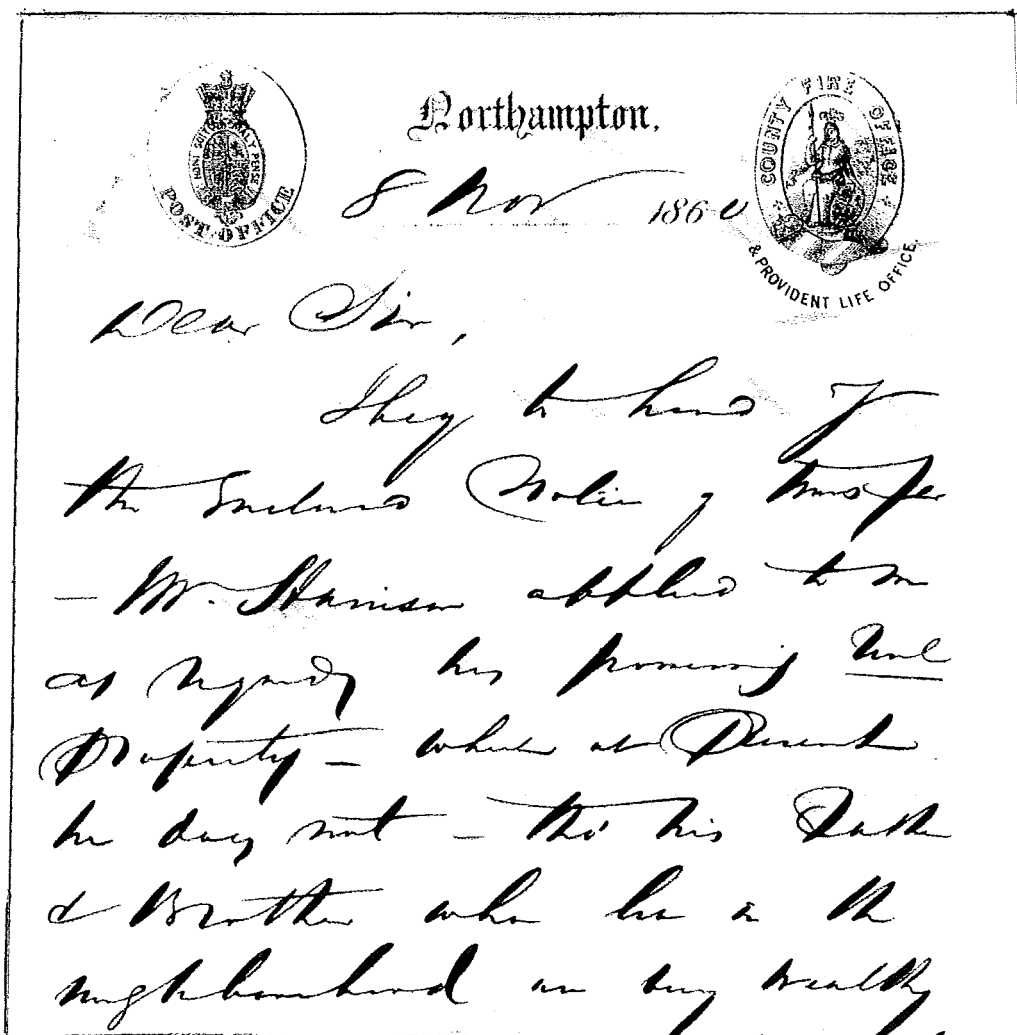
ANOTHER ASPECT OF NORTHAMPTON

by Derek Smeathers

This refers to an article in 'Midland Mail' in August 2003 when two aspects of Northampton Uniform Postage were described. One of them revolved around the Birdsall family who held the post office for many years—part of their business "empire". What was not mentioned was another part of that "empire"; as far back as 1830 (and possibly earlier) the Birdsalls had held the agency for leading insurance companies, County Fire Office and Provident Life. In the town directories, this is an important part of their advertising. But the Post Office took a very dim view of mixing commercial advertising with mails, and even into the postcard era of the 1870s examples of printed advertising where it would be visible in transit. In all their years managing the post office, the Birdsalls never referred to their post office tenure on any of their commercial stationery.

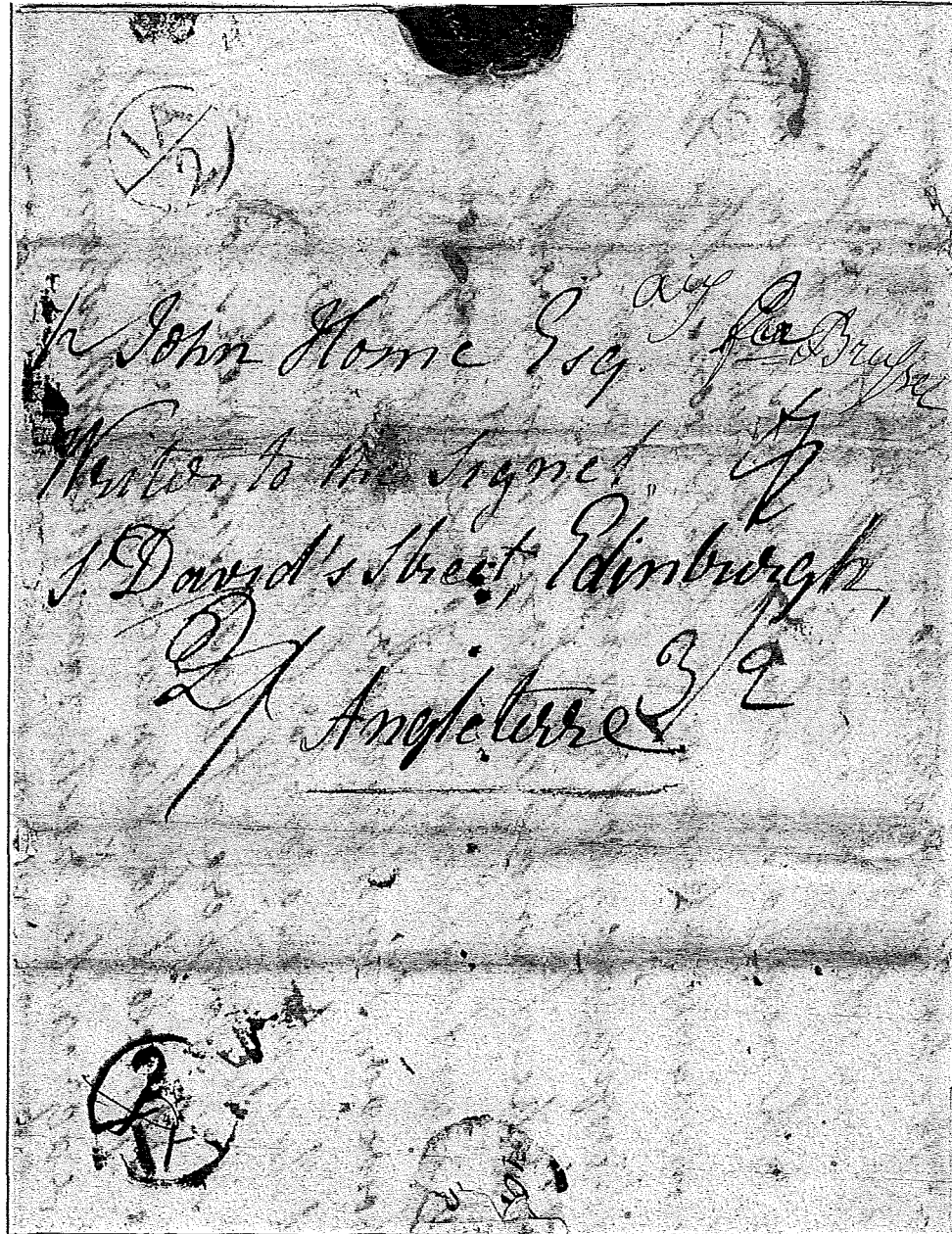
When they gave up the post office, a new man came to take over, in the same corner building in the town centre at the bottom of the Drapery. His name was George Norman Wetton and he was to remain postmaster for the next twenty-five years. He was not part of the Birdsall "empire" and the corner shop became purely the post office. The whole of the Birdsalls' library, stationers, printing and publishing businesses were now operated from their extensive property on the other side of the Drapery. Wetton improved the post office and to all intents and purposes concentrated entirely on his job as postmaster. One small chink in his armour seems to have been that he inherited from Birdsall the insurance agencies of County Fire and Provident Life. This is shown in the attached copy of a letter written and signed by Mr Wetton in November 1860—the notepaper is headed with a Post Office logo at one side and the insurance companies' at the other. Can we assume that he had obtained authority for the use of these logos? The insurers would not have objected—they would have been delighted to have their name associated with the Post Office—but that, a government department, the Queen's loyal servants? Surely approval would be forthcoming only under some extreme circumstances. There is neither cover nor envelope, but the letter refers to a potential shareholder and a "healthy young man" so probably it was addressed to one of the insurers. It does not appear to be on Post Office business!

Mr Wetton was a very successful postmaster and expanded the post office considerably. In his last couple of years, he was searching for new and larger premises which he eventually found at 14/16 Abington Street and the post office moved there when he retired in 1872. It was still there more than forty years later.



THREE FOR THE PRICE OF ONE

The letter illustrated below which was sent on 27th December 1786 from Aix la Chapelle to Edinburgh shows three Bishopmarks – those of the Foreign Department (top left), Inland Office (bottom left) and Edinburgh (top right). While there must have been numerous letters for Edinburgh or Dublin from Europe which came through London, I cannot recollect having seen before a letter with three Bishopmarks.



The letter is endorsed "fco Brussel" – paid as far as Brussels, and the '8' on the reverse represents payment for the journey from Aix-la-Chapelle to Brussels. The '7' represents the charge for a double letter from Brussels to Ostend. Although the letter contained three sheets, in this country it was also charged as a double letter at 3s. 2d made up of 2/- double the packet rate from Germany plus 1s/2d (twice 7d for London to Edinburgh). The prepayment at Aix seems to have been ignored by the British Post Office.

FROM THE BEAVER ARCHIVE

The copy below is taken from the Birmingham Official Directory for January 1854.

POST OFFICE.

Postmistress—Miss Gottwaltz.

The letter box is closed 35 minutes previous to the departure of the different mails; but letters are received at the window (one penny stamp extra on each) until within 20 minutes, & till 5 minutes of the dispatch of each mail (3 extra stamps each), after which no more letters can be forwarded by mail under dispatch.

When the regular letter box is closed a late letter box is opened for the reception of those to go by subsequent mails. Attendance is given at the paid letter window from 6 in the morning until midnight.

There are three general deliveries by letter carriers, daily, the first commencing at 7 a.m. the second at noon, & the third at 4 p.m. except on Sundays, when there is only a morning delivery.

The Money Order office is open from 9 a.m. until 5 p.m. Sundays excepted.

ARRIVALS.		MAILS.	DEPARTURES.		
H.	M.		H.	M.	
1	15	A.M. London night mail up.....	12	5	A.M.
1	15	— Derby railway.....	12	0	P.M.
1	22	— London night mail down...	12	10	—
9	50	— London day mail up.....	9	0	—
1	30	P.M. London day mail down....	1	30	—
3	25	— Bristol local mail.....	10	50	A.M.
3	30	— Liverpool train.....	11	0	—
3	25	— London express mail.....	11	45	—
3	30	— Edgbaston messenger.....	4	0	P.M.
3	30	— Handsworth messenger....	5	39	A.M.
7	0	— Great Barr messenger.....	6	0	—
7	0	— King's Norton messenger..	6	0	—
7	0	— Moreley messenger.....	6	0	—
7	0	— Castle Bromwich messenger	6	0	—
8	0	— Acton messenger.....	6	0	—
9	0	— Halesowen ride (coach & cart)	6	35	—
7	50	— Edmdon messenger.....	6	0	—
9	0	— Dudley & Kingswinford ride	5	30	—
10	0	— Leamington.....	3	30	—
10	30	— Tamworth ride.....	2	45	—
10	0	— Chipping Norton.....	2	45	—
10	25	— Stourport.....	2	30	—
10	46	— Holyhead.....	2	15	—
11	10	— Gloucester railway.....	1	15	—
		Gloucester & Rugeley } express mail..... }	7	45	P.M.

Receiving houses:—

167 & 163 ASHTED ROW.....	Letters are dispatched from all the Receiving Houses at $\frac{1}{2}$ past 2 & $\frac{1}{2}$ past 8 p.m.
221 BRISTOL STREET.....	
98 BROAD STREET, ISLINGTON....	
52 HIGH STREET, DERITEND.....	
18 DUDDESTON ROW.....	
35 LANCASTER STREET.....	
123 SAND PITS.....	
1 KENION STREET.....	
90 ASTON ROAD.....	
78 HIGHGATE.....	
1 WELLINGTON ROAD.....	
LOZELLS.....	

Branch Offices.	Receivers.	Letters delivered.	Dispatched.
CASTLE BROMWICH	Mrs. A. Lewis	9 a.m.	5 p.m.
ELMDON.....	J. Limbery.	8 a.m.	5 p.m.
ERDINGTON.....	Isaac James	$\frac{1}{2}$ p. 7	2 p.m.
HANDSWORTH, Soho street.....	Sam. Sanders	11 a.m.	0 p.m.
HARBORNE.....	S. Dugmore	8 a.m.	$\frac{1}{2}$ p. 11 a.m.
KING'S NORTON....	Thos. Hems	3 p.m.	10 p.m.
MOSELEY.....	Thos. Bird	7 a.m.	3 p.m.
NORTHFIELD.....	Joseph Joice	$\frac{1}{2}$ p. 7 a.m.	$\frac{1}{2}$ p. 5 p.m.
PERRY BARR.....	Robt. Craze	8 a.m.	5 p.m.
SMETHWICK.....	Josph. Vernon	6 a.m.	$\frac{1}{2}$ p. 7 p.m.
BIRCHFIELD.....	I. Moore	....	....
SMALLHEATH.....	Mrs. Mary J. Smart	....	....
EDGBASTON.....	John Taylor	....	....
PENNS.....	Ann Martin	....	....
ASTON.....	P. I. Roberts	....	....
SUTTON.....	E. Beech	....	....
SHIRLEY STREET....	A. C. Richards	....	....
HOCKLEY HOUSE...	M. Wood	....	....
OLDBURY.....	J. Lowe	....	....
CURDWORTH.....	Ed. Carter	....	....
YARDLEY.....	James Chell	....	....
SPARKBROOK.....	John Morris	....	....

LIST OF PLACES IN THE BIRMINGHAM DELIVERY.

Acoc's Green	Great Mill	Rowington
Ashted	Halesowen	Sandpits
Aston & Hall	Hall Green	Sandwell & Hall
Badesley	Hampstead	Salfley (Low. & Up.)
Balsall Heath	Handsworth	Sheldon
Barbeacon	Harborne	Shirley Street
Bam Brook End	Hay Hall	Shirley Heath
Barr	Hendley-in-Arden	Small Heath
Barrels Green	Hill	Smethwick
Bedlem's End	Hockley & Heath	Soho
Bentley Heath	King's Heath	Solihull
Berwood Hall	King's Norton	Sparkbrook
Bickenhill	Knowle	Springfield
Birchfield	Langley	Summer Hill
Bordesley & Hall	Lappall	Sutton Coldfield
Branderden	Lapworth	Tanby
Brades	Leasowes	Tanworth
Bromwich (Castle)	Lightwoods	Temple Balsall
Castle Bromwich	Maney	Thelwell
Church Bickenhall	Moseley & Hale	Ullenhall
Cinder Hill	Moore Green	Umbrellade
Claverdon	Moore Lane	Wake Green
Doe Bank	Neachells Green	Walker's Heath
Duddeston & Hall	Northfield	Ward End
Edgbaston	Ocott	Washwood Heath
Edmdon	Packwood	Weatheroak Hill
Erdington	Park Hall	Webb's Green
Fazley	Perry & Hall	Wells Green
Four Oaks Hall	Pipe Hall	Windmill End
Frankley	Quinton	Witton
Grange	Ridgacre	Yardley
Green Lanes	Rounds Green	

NEWSPAPERS.

Aris's Gazette; published Monday morning; John Caldicott, publisher; office, 71 High st	Letters are dispatched from all the Receiving Houses at $\frac{1}{2}$ past 2 & $\frac{1}{2}$ past 8 p.m.
Birmingham Journal; published Saturday morning; John Fredk. Feeney, publisher; office, 33 New st	
Birmingham Mercury; published Saturday morning; Wm. Benj. Smith, publisher; 110 New st	
Midland Counties' Herald; published Thursday morning; Wright, Dain & Poyton, proprietors; office, 16 Union st	
LOZELLS.....	

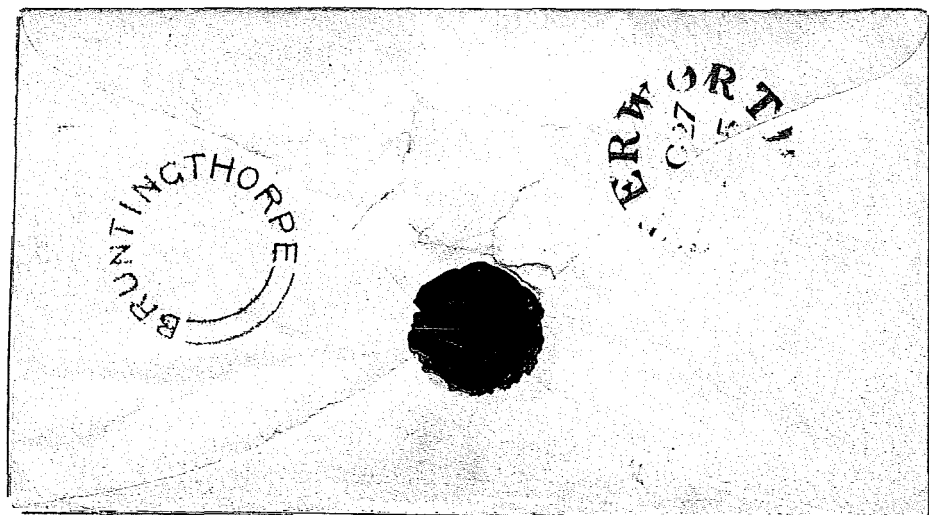
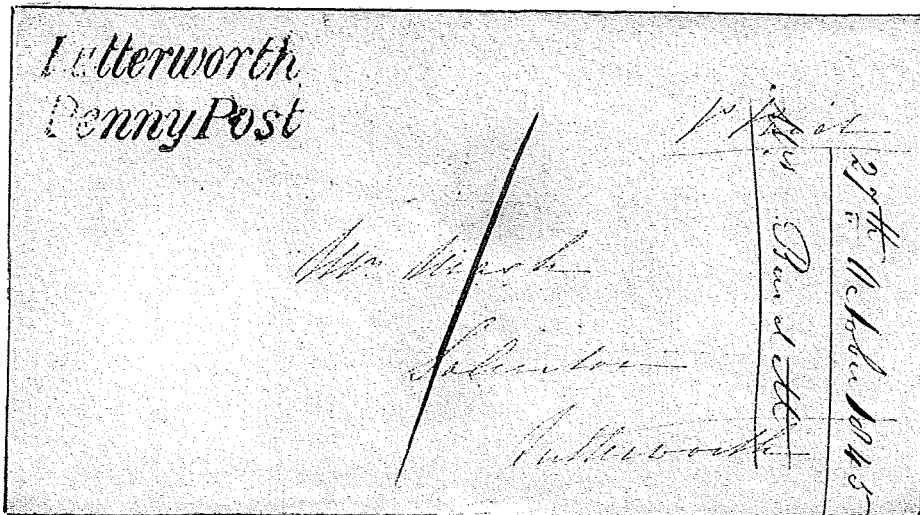
HOTELS.

Marked thus * are posting houses.

* Royal Hotel, Frederic Dee, 26 Temple row	Letters are dispatched from all the Receiving Houses at $\frac{1}{2}$ past 2 & $\frac{1}{2}$ past 8 p.m.
* Hen & Chickens, Francis Smith, 130 New street	
* Queen's Hotel, Robert Brown, New Canal street	
Nelson Commercial Hotel, Robert Gooden, Spicel street, Bull ring	
Stork Hotel, Misses Ellen & Mary George, 2 & 3 Square	
Union Commercial Inn, John Mashin, 21 Union street	
George Commercial Inn, Mrs. Hannah Taylor, 143 Digbeth	
White Hart Commercial Inn, Thos. B. Coates, 133 Digbeth	

A RECENT ACQUISITION

The envelope shown below, and sent in 1845, shows a strike of the 'Lutterworth/Penny Post' handstamp which was issued on 3rd April 1838 after the introduction of a penny post with receiving offices at Ashby Parva and Ullesthorpe. The reverse shows a partial strike of the Lutterworth dated circle for 27th October 1845 along with a very good impression of the Bruntingthorpe UDC issued on 28th June 1844. While the receiving offices in the Atherstone/Ashby-de-la Zouch penny posts used their 'village type' penny post handstamps after 1840, I have not before seen one issued to a post town used after 1840. All my other copies of the UDCs of the Lutterworth sub-offices were sent out of the district. Does anyone have a cover sent to Lutterworth from one of its sub-offices in the 1840s? Did this practice occur anywhere else in the Midlands?



THE NEXT MIDLAND MAIL

It is intended that this will appear by mid-August along with next season's programme. There is a need for articles which should be sent to:

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