

MIDLAND MAIL

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



President: Mr W.J. Calladine

Chairman:
Mike Young

Treasurer:
Trevor Clewley

Secretary:
Elizabeth Lewis

Number 74, April 1992

TED COLES

The Midland Postal History Society is only one of many that suffered a grievous loss when Ted Coles passed away suddenly on Sunday 1st March. Ted had visited his sister-in-law in Tenbury for lunch and had driven back to Birmingham. He was found the next day in his armchair.

Ted was one of the founder members of our Society. He was last seen by many at Stampex ferreting around in a way that was unique to Ted and which often enabled him to produce the unusual before anyone else realised that it existed.

Ted was a Fellow of the Society of Postal Historians, a Fellow of the Royal Philatelic Society, London as well as being a member of many other societies both local and national. His greatest love though was France and the French Colonies of which he had a major collection and on which he was a prolific writer. Also he was a member of their Philatelic Society. He wrote many articles for Philately and Postal History and his contribution in this field to our hobby will be a permanent reminder of his wide knowledge on a variety of subjects.

But I feel that Ted will be best remembered for his genuine friendship and cordiality which he extended to all around him, a kind word here, a bit of advice there, and help where needed. He was very active to the end and it is difficult to believe that he celebrated his 80th birthday last December at Solihull. He will be sadly missed by all those fortunate enough to have known him. We offer our condolences and sympathy to his family.

M.H.Y.

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

A joint meeting with the Shropshire and Welsh Postal History Societies is being held on Saturday 11th April at the Beauchamp Hotel, The Mount, Shrewsbury commencing at 10.30 a.m. I do apologise for the very late notice about this meeting, and suggest that anyone who has not received details but wishes to attend contacts Denis Salt, Tel. No. 0743 231418.

Our Annual General Meeting and Auction will be held at Carrs Lane Church Centre, Birmingham on Saturday 2nd May. There will be a committee meeting beginning at 11 a.m., followed by viewing of the auction lots from noon until the beginning of the A.G.M. at 1 p.m. The auction will begin at 2 p.m.

THE FEBRUARY MEETING

Saturday 8th February was the day of our Annual Competitions. This year our judges, Mr George Chesworth and Mr John Hodges, came from the Worcester Philatelic Society. After welcoming them on behalf of the Society, Mike Young, who had arranged their visit, and the judges departed for another room with entries for the first section, the pre-1840 period, for which there were five entries:

Guy Bridges	-	Shrewsbury Handstamps, 1692-1763
Richard Farman	-	Development of the Lichfield Penny Post
Alf Fieldhouse	-	Edinburgh Penny Post Receiving Houses
Denis Salt	-	Irish Packet Letters
Harold Wilson	-	London Bishop Marks, 1667-1778.

Whilst the judging of these was taking place, members viewed the post-1840 and post-1939 entries. There were six entries for the first of these two sections:

Chris Beaver	-	Uniform Penny Posts
Guy Bridges	-	Traveller Marks of Shropshire
Ted Coles	-	Mail carried by Scottish Steamer Companies
David Hardwick	-	Development of the Rugby Duplex
Elizabeth Lewis	-	½d. Postcards charged at the 1d. Letter Rate
Harold Wilson	-	Mail recovered from the crash of the Scipio.

There were three entries for the post-1939 section:

Guy Bridges	-	Locations of Shrewsbury Post Offices
Ches Chester	-	Postal Mechanisation
Eric Lewis	-	Midland Red Parcel Service

After a welcome cup of tea the results were announced by the judges as:

Pre-1840 - Denis Salt, who was also chosen to represent the Society in the Midland Philatelic Federation Competition;
 Post-1840 - Harold Wilson
 Post 1939 - Eric Lewis.

Mike Young again thanked Mr Chesworth and Mr Hodges for their work and presented them with certificates of appreciation.

Your editor would like to thank Elizabeth and Eric for acting as reporters in his absence.

THE MARCH MEETING

This was held on 14th March at the Guildhall Worcester to coincide with the Annual Fair of the Worcester Philatelic Society who kindly provided the room. The subject of your editor was, needless to say, Leicestershire Postal History.

The first few sheets consisted of maps of the county, from a Van Langeren of c. 1640 to early nineteenth century maps showing the mail-coach routes. The major part of the first section was devoted to Leicester itself, beginning with the straight line handstamp used in 1717 which was followed by a letter of 1720, showing the two-line "LEI/CESTER". Further letters covered the period up to 1780. The various types of mileage mark were displayed from the first type used in 1784 to the "mileage removed" mark which remained in use until the mid-1840s. Other items from the county town included the "Leicester/Penny Post" handstamp used in 1839; the "TOO LATE" handstamps used mainly on mail to Ashby-de-la-Zouch, probably because the mailcoach for that town left at 7 a.m.; and the missent handstamp of Leicester which included the mileage of 97. Somewhat out of sequence were sheets illustrating the "Posted in Advance for Christmas Day" scheme and mail sent by the firm of Arthur Wheeler which included the use of a Pitney Bowes machine, in which the value tablet was replaced by bars, to cancel a postal stationery envelope.

Although we went northwards from Leicester to the village of Mountsorrel, the distance shown on the mileage mark used there was that of Leicester. The unusual UDC of Mountsorrel as well as its 476 numeral cancellation were shown. Then on to Loughborough with marks ranging from the two-line handstamp used in 1752 to the Missent mark used in 1845. The first section ended with the mileage marks of Kegworth and Cavendish Bridge.

The reason for the different distances on the mileage marks of Melton Mowbray were explained before we moved to the northwest of the county. Items from Ashby-de-la-Zouch included local delivery charges, "ASHBY L" and "ASHBY/Z" handstamps. The penny posts in the area were represented by items from Appleby and Overseal. Then it was time to move south to Market Harborough. The handstamps shown ranged from a small "HARBO/ROUGH" used in 1726, and a larger version from 1742, to a variety of mileage marks. The fact that the periods of use of some of the handstamps used at Lutterworth overlapped was illustrated. This section ended with a visit to the Hinckley area, beginning with a letter of 1709 endorsed "p. Coventry bagg"; then a "HINCKLEY" of 1793 which was followed by a "HINKLEY" used in 1797 and the "reversed horseshoe" from 1799. The final items in this part were from the penny post to Market Bosworth.

The third section began with a few sheets of UDCs before the various rates of registration from 1848 to 1956 were illustrated by mail from the county. A "PARCELS POST" label from Lutterworth began a small section on the parcel post. A display of material from Lutterworth from 1844 to 1974 rounded off this part of the display.

The final part began with post-1840 material from Leicester. This was followed by a number of odds and ends including superb strikes of a Snarestone / Burton-on-Trent rubber used in 1930 and a boxed "NOT/ASHBY-DE-LA-ZOUCH/LEICS." on a card sent to Ashby Road, Burton. The display ended with a number of recent photographs of village sub-offices, ranging from those in garden sheds to the converted chapel at Braunston in Rutland.

CORRESPONDENCE

Gay Parker has written:

"I should like to thank all members for the very thoughtful card sent to me from the Bass Museum meeting. I was in very poor fettle at the time, and the photograph of the bar complete with Bass 'neck oil' cheered me up no end. It was as good as being there.....well nearly! I am pleased to say that I have made a recovery of sorts, but I shall never be 'as before' and unlikely to be able to attend many meetings. I shall however try to keep in touch through Midland Mail, which continues to be of an excellent standard. Once again very many thanks for your kind thoughts, and I wish the Society every success in the coming years. It must be one of the best in the country."

Gay also goes on to say that he has a Meriden UDC for sale and that he is still looking for a number of items including the date stamps of the Spon Street and Jordan Well T.S.Os of Coventry, date-stamps of Collycroft Bedworth prior to 1842, and the No. 3 of Bedworth used in the Hinckley Penny Post. If anyone can help Gay can be contacted on 0203314922.

BACK TO BANBURY CROSS
(MM73/11-16: Some Amendments)

by Rev. Christopher Beaver

There seems to be no likelihood that the route of the London to Birmingham, through Banbury, mailcoach was ever as shown on the partially reproduced on MM73/13. This and Paterson's similar map were accepted as reliable evidence that for a few months of 1821 the route was Banbury-Kinton-Warwick. A diligent search by our President has revealed several more snippets of information which together clarify the sequence of events and suggest that though it may have been intended to alter the route thus, it never actually happened.

Though several miles further, an alternative road between Banbury and Warwick was chosen, that is through Southam and Leamington. It was planned to begin this and dependent changes on 27th May 1821 - not at the beginning of a quarter. This is stated in a letter from Leamington asking how to apply for a separate bag made up in London to be "thrown out" for that town - otherwise (and as happened) their letters would be taken on to Warwick. The existing arrangement is also specified: "the Leamington and Warwick letters are in one bag and come down to Daventry by the Holyhead Mail where they are sorted and brought to this place and thence to Warwick by a Mail Cart or Gig." This confirms that the trial use of a stage coach for this service in 1818 had not continued.

A report of 6th June 1821 confirms that the change of route "from Banbury thro' Southam, Leamington & Warwick" instead of through Stratford had recently begun, but despite correct instructions being given the letters for Southam have been missent by a clerk at the GPO to Daventry instead of being enclosed in the Banbury bag. A further report on 9th July, a negative response to an application for a ride from Banbury to serve Kinton and Wellesbourne (in addition to or in place of the newly established ride from Stratford), suggests that it

was a difficulty with the contractors that precipitated the alterations in May which "became necessary in order to maintain the Mail Coach in the Aylesbury line." Chiefly it makes it abundantly clear that there was now no mailcoach nor any other direct postal communication between Banbury and Kington. That link was restored very temporarily on 2nd December (sic) by the extension of the Kidderminster-Stratford mail-coach to Banbury, and again a few weeks later, that is after the hiatus when the branch linked with the main line at Warwick.

Another interesting find concerns the alteration of the London-Birmingham route south of Banbury. Commenting in 1824 on a letter and a memorial received from Bicester against an application from the Duke of Buckingham to the Treasury that it should revert to the Buckingham road, Freeling refers to "some painful correspondence last year when in the discharge of a Public Duty and the urgent necessity of the case the M'Coach from London thro' Ailesbury to Birmingham was diverted from the Buckingham and Brackley line to the Bicester line." Since therefore this was in 1823 (by July according to the P.O. circulation map) it was not the cause of there being time at Banbury early in 1822 for Leamington's letters to be separated there instead of being taken on to Warwick. More importantly the wording makes clear the shortening of the route was not planned and may imply that whatever difficulty precipitated that change had to be resolved by recourse to the law. Plainly there is more to be unearthed about this that has not been found under the likely Index headings of Post 42. It should be added that a good deal of the the difficulty experienced in attempting to trace the complexities of this story results from Post 40 material being "wanting" or at least so far unlocated.

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BRIBERY

The election address on MM73/19 has prompted Michael Leigh to send a copy of another election notice which is show below.

TO THE
ELECTORS
 OF THE
 Borough & Out-Parish of Leominster.

LEGAL PROTECTION TO PERSONS BRIBED.

WILLIAM BOYCOTT, ESQ., Agent for Messrs. ARBUTHNOT and HARTLAND, late Tory candidates for the City of Hereford, has, in a letter dated 16th instant, and inserted in the "Hereford Times" of the 17th instant, written as follows:—

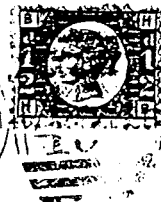
"By the provisions of the Acts of Parliament, 26 and 27 "Vic., cap. 29, sec. 7 and 31; and 32 Vic., cap. 125, sec. 33, any "witness who answers questions put to him on the trial of an "Election Petition is entitled, as a matter of right, to a Certificate "by the Judge, which will indemnify him against all proceedings "in relation to the Election.

"The only safe course therefore for a Bribe Voter is to "attend and give evidence on the trial of the Petition and he may "then defy any criminal charge."

I fully coincide with Mr. Boycott's view of the Law, and trust that all the Electors of Leominster who have been induced to accept Bribes or promises of Bribes in any shape, will, as soon as possible, shelter themselves under the protection of the Law.

EDWIN GREGG.

Leominster, April 17, 1880.



Mr Charles James
Long hall Lane
Leominster

THE PEOVER PAPERS
AND THE MIDLAND COUNTIES

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

Part ten

C64 11DEC75 Vol Two, p741. He informs Mr Shelvocke at Shrewsbury that it is confirmed by his letter that it will not be convenient to alter the Poole road. As to the other proposal RW is not able to judge it, being a stranger to that part; he only perceives it would bring charge of the office which he has reason to avoid. However he wishes an essay were made to see if any good would come of it; if the gentlemen make good their promises it might encourage the undertaking (with benefit of by-letters). He would be content to give a Gazette or two weekly.

N15 11DEC75 Vol Two, p743. He tells Mr Green at Nottingham that he is sorry his mother has been so disappointed by the wilfulness of Mr Baldock (Newark). He has acquainted Mr Sechauerell with the state of the matter and hopes to hear from him. The main thing that sticks with Baldock is that he would not willingly part with that branch till the end of his deputation at midsummer next.

N16 11DEC75 Vol Two, p744. Mr Fawden at Tuxford is asked to inform him how the Mansfield letters are conveyed, whether by his messenger or one of their own providing; also what they pay there above the office charge and who has the benefit of it.

Bg34 14DEC75 Vol Two, p745. He tells Mr Powell at Cirencester that he has endeavoured to get him the Duke's protection, but yet "canot preuaile, as a Souldier it canot be, if it may be as a Domestique, or any other Capacity. I shall speedily giue advice of it."

N17 22DEC75 Vol Two, p757. To Mr Baldock at Newark saying that he does not understand his proposal so fully as to send a present answer; he (Mr Baldock) says Mr Tours brother will pay 20 guineas and 25 a year for by-letters, but does not tell what encouragement he expects, whether a salary, to continue 1d a letter, or whether the by-letters will be sufficient over and above the rent he has to pay. He has received letters from Messrs Pierpoint and Sacheverell's brother "pestering, and setting of that stage, (as other stages are settled) and takeing of the penny a Letter," and cannot refuse it. He has private information they intend to indict him and his agent (for exacting the 1d). He wonders that Tayer's brother had not got P & S or the town to recommend him to RW, but as the case stands he cannot refuse Greene. Is it not advisable to quit it voluntarily and make peace with them betimes to stop prosecutions and accept T's brother on B's recommendation; if not RW cannot disoblige that town and shall order the Nottingham bags to be delivered sealed to Greene or to whom they send to receive it on 2 January and, if he does not deliver it accordingly, RW must be forced to make use of another hand at Newark. [PS] If they send before 2 January for the Nottingham bag, pray deliver it or go over himself to settle matters with them.

C65 28DEC75 Vol Two, p762 He approves of the proposal of Mr Shelvocke at Shrewsbury and will allow a trial of a Quarter; he also likes his Aberisttoyth project.

(to be continued)

METER MARKS OF BIRMINGHAM UP TO 1971

by R.L. Woodward-Clarke

The Post Office authorised the use of meter franking machines in the United Kingdom in 1922. There was no mad rush to use these machines and the earliest meter franking I have seen for Birmingham is an impression from a Pitney Bowes Model A machine used on 30th April 1926 (fig. 1). However, I feel sure that meters must have been in use in Birmingham before this and if anyone has an earlier meter frank I would be pleased to hear of it.

The Pitney Bowes Model A had to be used in conjunction with a large mailing machine and each meter could only print one value. Another drawback was that a 'slogan' could not be printed alongside the town mark. Later machines overcame these shortcomings, one of the most popular being the Universal Midget produced by Universal Postal Frankers. A machine of this type was used by Barlows of Edmund Street as early as October 1926 (fig. 2). The slogan identified them as the sole agents for Universal Postal Frankers but whether this was just for Birmingham or for the whole country I have been unable to ascertain.

Some of the Universal Midget Machines were still using the original frank design in the 1940s, although in 1927 a new standardised design had appeared, which with its imitation perforations had a superficial resemblance to a postage stamp. Despite the standardisation of the frank design there are differences which allow the various makes and models of machine to be identified. The prefix letters to the machine numbers are a simple means of identification:-

Neopost Ltd:-

N

Universal Postal Frankers:-

U - Universal Multi-value model
M - Universal Midget model
S - Simplex model

Pitney Bowes Ltd:-

P - Model CV
H - Model H
PB - Single-value model

Machines now had the facility of printing the impression on a roll of gummed tape so that packets and parcels could be meter-franked. At first the Post Office insisted that these tapes should be pre-printed with the user's name and address or the machine number and town of origin (fig. 3) but this was later abandoned as being unnecessary.

During the 1930s and 1940s the use of franking machines became widespread in Birmingham and both large and small firms took the opportunity of advertising themselves through slogans incorporated in their meter franks (figs 4 & 5). Most of these slogans clearly identified the user but occasionally one finds an enigmatic message (fig. 6). Fortunately, the previous owner of this mark had pencilled the name of the firm on the back - Commercial X-Rays Ltd. During the war years a number of the slogans were of a patriotic nature (fig. 7).

As each new monarch ascended the throne so the royal cypher in meter franks changed, but only on new or reconditioned machines. Thus one can often find meter franks incorporating the royal cypher of a

fig 6

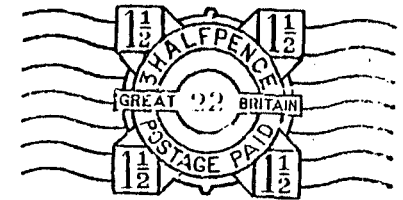
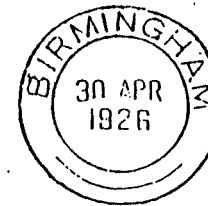
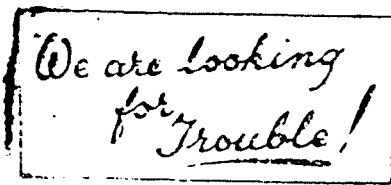


fig 1

fig 7

IT IS A
NATIONAL DUTY
TO BE
CHEERFUL



BARLOWS 117 EDWARD ST
BIRMINGHAM
SOLE AGENTS
FOR
UNIVERSAL
POSTAL FRANKERS



fig 2

fig 8

SAMUEL THORNLEY LTD.,
L. BIRMINGHAM. 4.
B.W. Davis Ltd.,
19 W. 4th Street,
Birmingham. 4.



fig 3

74/9

fig 9

LEVEROLL
ADJUSTABLE SEATS
AND MECHANISMS FOR
ALL FORMS OF TRANSPORT
AND INDUSTRIAL USE.



N. 378 BIRMINGHAM

N. 378 BIRMINGHAM

N. 378 BIR

Austin
Britains
Dependable Car



fig 4

fig 10

IF UNDELIVERED
PLEASE RETURN
TO
Kalamazoo
Ltd
NORTHFIELD
BIRMINGHAM 31



BOUSFIELD
BROTHERS
BIRMINGHAM.
FRUIT & POTATO MERCHANTS



fig 5

king who had left the throne many years before. Samuel Thornley Ltd of Snow Hill were still using an Edward VIII frank in 1940 (fig. 8). Edward cyphers, although not rare, are much more uncommon than either of the George cyphers.

With the accession of Queen Elizabeth II the royal cypher changed to EIIR and throughout the 1950s new models of franking machines were brought into use including:-

Frankopost Simplex Major	prefixes SW, SX, SY and SZ
Frankopost Simplex Minor	prefix SV
Roneo Neopost Model 305	prefixes NA, NB, NC etc
Frankopost Automax	prefixes A and AA

In 1959 a completely new design of meter frank was introduced, the so-called 'Emblems' design, no doubt inspired by the Wilding design of postage stamps issued earlier in the decade (fig. 9). During the 1960s a number of new machines using the Emblems design can be identified on Birmingham mail.

Roneo Neopost Model 205	prefix J
Roneo Neopost Model 105	prefix N with suffixes A, B, C etc
Pitney Bowes Model Series 5000	prefix PB with suffixes A, B etc
Roneo Neopost Model 605	prefix TN (This was a German machine sold under licence. It could be hand-held and rolled over bulky packets and parcels franking them without the need for gummed tape or labels.)

The Swiss firm Hasler AG entered the British market in 1967 with their model F88. This machine had a very distinctive frank design and used the prefix 'fml' (later FML). Kalamazoo Ltd of Northfield was one of the first companies to use this make of machine and continued to do so through the 1970s and into the 1980s (fig. 10).

The advent of decimalisation brought changes in frank design and new manufacturers entered the market place, but that is the next chapter of meter-franking in Birmingham which remains to be told another day.

Addendum: Mr Woodward-Clarke writes that he has been collecting meters for many years and is at present engaged in compiling a list of the identities of the users of meter franking machines in Birmingham and Sutton Coldfield. He wonders if other members might be willing to help either by supplying information from covers in their possession or by saving for him any metered covers which they would otherwise discard as being of no interest. He would need the following information:-

1. Meter serial number
2. Date of meter mark
3. Name and address of user.

If anyone is able to help, I will forward any information or covers that are sent to me.

BIRMINGHAM POSTAL DISTRICTS, 1939

The map shown below has been kindly sent by Eric and Elizabeth Lewis who would like to point out that the district numbers do not equate with any numerals which appear in postmarks and which are die numbers.



DAVENTRY POSTMARKS

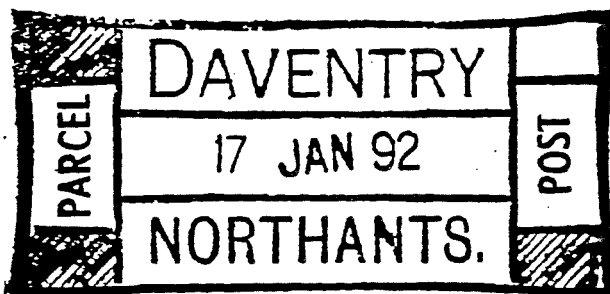
My thanks to David Hardwick for sending a copy of a sheet showing most of the postal markings in the possession of the Daventry office. Although in some instances the quality of the strike is not good, I feel it is worthwhile to show all of them.

DAVENTRY**ONE REGISTERED BAG**

Daventry
To
Northampton



TO PAY	LIABLE TO SECOND CLASS RATE
	POSTED UNPAID
	OVER G
	NON POP
	INSUFFICIENTLY PREPAID



POSTED AFTER THE LAST
COLLECTION ON THE DATE
SHOWN ON POSTMARK

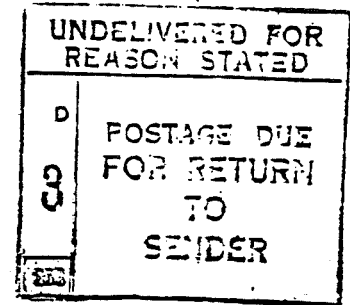
UNDELIVERED FOR REASON STATED

RETURN TO SENDER

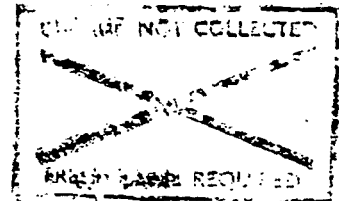
INCORRECTLY ADDRESSED

INCORRECTLY POSTCODED

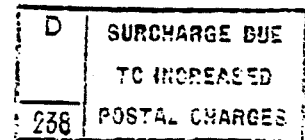
**YOUR CORRECT POSTAL ADDRESS
IS: RUGBY, WARWICKSHIRE**



**YOUR CORRECT POSTAL ADDRESS
IS: BANBURY, OXFORDSHIRE**



**YOUR CORRECT POSTAL ADDRESS
IS: NORTHAMPTON**



INCORRECTLY POSTED IN A BUNDLE OF LATE
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AND SO LIABLE TO DELAY.

GREAT BRITAIN 1580-1901

Elizabethan to Victorian

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THE POSTAL HISTORY OF ALCESTER AND GREAT ALNE

The following article is taken from a booklet "The Postal History of Alcester and Great Alne" written by John Donaldson and published by the Alcester and District Local History Society, both of whom have kindly given permission for it to be used here.

Elizabeth Whissell was named as the postmistress in 1790. The Whissells were a well-known Alcester family; a George Whissell was a victualler at the Swan from 1788-92, and maybe she was his wife or near relation. The Swan Inn was a likely place for the post office then.

In 1808 at Warwick Lenten Assizes, Job Edkins, aged 18, was charged with embezzling a letter containing bills and drafts while being employed as a postboy between Stratford-on-Avon and Alcester. He was convicted and sentenced to eighteen months in the House of Correction and fined 1/-. The judge told him that he could have suffered death if he had been capitally indicted but because of his youth he had been dealt with leniently. Mary Ann Barnhurst was the postmistress at the time.

In 1812 John Stephens is mentioned as postmaster in a document in the Warwickshire Records Office - "In the King's Bench between Joseph Blandy plaintiff and John Stephens defendant. John Stephens (of Alcester) postmaster asketh oath and saith this action is brought against deponent". Blandy apparently brought an action against Stephens for not paying duties on horses. Stephens was the owner and keeper of the Swan from 1792 to 1843, owner of the Dog and Partridge, farmed Cold Comfort Farm in Arrow and owned land at Haselor, Aston Cantlow, Stratford and Inkberrow. He was an Overseer of the Poor and a contractor for coaches on the London to Kidderminster route. He married a widow, Dinah Harrison in 1790 (see below).

In March 1813, approval was given for the allowance of £154.12.0 for two daily rides from Stratford to Alcester, Stratford to Warwick and Stratford to Kineton, done by one person, to be increased to £191.16.0 p.a.

Mrs Mary Terrill is shown as the postmistress in 1821. Letters arrived from Stratford by mail gig at 9 a.m. and were dispatched at 4 p.m. There is some doubt as to which Mary Terrill this is as a Mary Terrill is shown in the Alcester Marriage Registers as a witness to three weddings:-

- 1789 - Thomas Terrill and Mary Crow (John Stephens also a witness)
- 1790 - John Stephens and Dinah Harrison
- 1795 - John Terrill and Ann Stephens (John Stephens' sister)

She must either have been a close friend or relation of John Stephens and it is likely that Stephens would pass the post office duties over to her, probably soon after 1812, rather than to Mary Terrill, nee Crow.

In November 1828, Mrs Mary Terrill, who lived alone, was tragically burnt to death, her clothing having caught fire while she was undressing downstairs. She was 63 years old and was reported to have kept the post office for many years.

Freeling wrote in 1829 to the P.M.G.:-

The whole of the inhabitants of Alcester having refused to continue to pay the gratuity of a halfpenny on the delivery of letters, the sub deputy has for more than six months been obliged to pay out of her small salary of £32 a year the sum of 5/- a week or £13 per annum for delivering the letters twice a day.

It was recommended that she be relieved of this expense.

Charlotte Archer was the postmistress by 1835 when the letters arrived from London and the South every morning at nine and were dispatched every afternoon at four. Letters from Birmingham arrived at 4 p.m. and were dispatched at 9 a.m.

On 25th January 1835, Charlotte Archer, a widow, married Richard Overbury, a widower. Overbury became the postmaster with a post office at 4-5 Church Street, the Angel Inn, of which he was the proprietor. He remained the postmaster until his death in January 1847 when his widow, Charlotte, again took over the duties of postmistress until March 1849.

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adapted for that use. The caretakers lived on the floors above and attended to the telephone exchange overnight.

The need was felt, however, due to the still greater increase in business, especially at periods such as Christmas, for much greater extension. Premises were bought at 36 High Street and work put in hand to build a completely new, efficient and convenient office. The exterior design was much criticised by local people, who had not been consulted.

The new Post Office, which had cost £45,000, was opened in January 1963. The telephone exchange remained at the old office until new premises were completed in 1965 at the rear of the High Street office, at a cost of £55,000.

Prior to the official opening, Mr W.A. Mackenzie, deputy regional director of the G.P.O., said that the new office had been designed for the needs of Alcester for many years to come. In 1963 Alcester post office had about 1,600 customers, handled about 44,000 letters and 900 parcels each week. At the counter, 1000 postal orders were issued, 1,100 pensions were paid and 100 deposits for the Savings Bank were received. In addition, wireless, television, dog and gun licences were issued and telegrams sent.

In the reorganisation of the Post Office in October 1986, the position of postmaster was abolished. Mr Wylde was appointed Branch Manager in charge of the Counter, and Mr S. Bennett was made Delivery Officer. Now mail arrives from and is dispatched by mail van to Redditch or Coventry. Letters posted before 11 a.m. Mondays to Fridays, and 12.30 p.m. are cancelled ALCESTER WARWICKSHIRE; after these times REDDITCH WORCS.

ALCESTER R.S.O.

The earliest indication of an R.S.O. is an instruction in the 1896 Kelly's Directory: "Letters should have R.S.O. Warwickshire added." The sub-office was located in the station building.

G.B. POSTAL HISTORY

ALSO: Some Foreign, Ephemera, Post Boxes - etc.

Wants Lists - for specific items or for general interests - will receive my personal attention

JIM HAMMOND

5 Staverton Rd, Daventry
Northants. NN11 4HL.
Tel. Daventry (0327) 71842

LETTER BOXES

There are (1988) four notable letter boxes in the Alcester area:

1. Sperrall Ash: VR 1855-60, Penfold hexagonal type. This has been restored and re-painted largely due to a petition from the Redditch Philatelic Society.
2. Oversley Bridge: VR 1861-7 wall-box.
3. Priory Road, Alcester: VR 1882-5 wall-box. By the Lord Nelson Inn.
4. Wood Bevington: KE VII after 1904 wall-box.

POSTMARKS

1. AULCESTER undated circle with double arcs. Used 22nd May 1829 to 17th May 1846.
2. 755 numeral cancellation issued in 1844.
3. Dated circle ALCESTER with twin arcs issued 14th March 1846.
4. Double circle ALCESTER with cross pattee at the base. Used from c1900 to 1920s.
5. Double circle ALCESTER/WARWICKSHIRE. Used in 1950s.
6. Double circle with line arcs ALCESTER/WARWICKSHIRE - used in 1950s.
7. Single circle ALCESTER/WARWICKSHIRE - current datestamp.
8. Single circle ALCESTER at top, S.O. at base. Used 1907.
9. Single circle ALCESTER/WARWICKSHIRE. Used 1913.

(Editor's Note: No doubt members will be able to contribute illustrations as well as information to enable a more detailed listing to be drawn up.)

G.B. COVERS

Do you see my lists of GB cover material? If you don't and are a member of The Midland (GB) Postal History Society, you should! They contain a wide selection of interesting and unusual items - county material, difficult values and rates- from 1840 to date. Send for a copy of my latest list today. All 'Wants Lists' for specific items or county material will receive my personal attention.

ROGER HUDSON



P.O. Box 172,
COVENTRY CV6 6NF

Phone: 0203 686613

GREAT ALNE

In the seventeenth century the "Great Road" leading from London to Shrewsbury and thence to Holyhead and the crossing to Ireland passed the front door of the Mother Huff Cap Inn, Great Alne, whose front door really is on the main road, not the side door as may appear.

From 1850 to 1874 Thomas Edwards is shown as the postmaster and also as constable. In 1850 letters arrived from Henley at 9.30 a.m. and were dispatched at 3 p.m. In 1874 letters via Birmingham arrived at 10 a.m. and were dispatched at 4.10 p.m. (Editor: the issue of a UDC in 1847 suggests the office opened then. The transfer to Birmingham probably took place in 1856.)

Edwin Edwards, who was listed as postmaster from 1896 to 1900, was the son of Thomas Edwards. He also held the position of assistant overseer and collector of rates. In 1896 letters arrived from Redditch by footpost at 7.15 a.m. and were dispatched at 5.25 p.m. In 1900 the mail came from Alcester RSO; the times of arrival and dispatch were approximately the same as in 1896.

In 1904 William Rutter was postmaster and sexton. It is believed this was just a temporary appointment.

By 1908 Mrs Clara Edwards was running the post office which she continued to do until 1954. She was a Welsh girl from the Knighton area who, it is believed, was employed as a maid for Lady Chance before marrying, when still young, Edwin Edwards whose first wife had died.

The post office was at Greystone Cottage, not to be confused with Greystone House. A postcard of the early 1900s shows the post office with a man, woman and three children by the garden fence. Was the woman Mrs Edwards who did in fact have three children? The cottage is still there and, although modernised, is easily recognisable.

Later, the post office was moved to the other side of the road but further down, where Mrs Edwards ran a shop as well. Unfortunately, the building was demolished owing to road widening. No photographs of this office have been seen.

Mrs Edwards was a real matriarch in the village in which she took a very active interest. She was very popular and respected. She died on 7th August 1956, aged 79.

Clifford Johnson became the postmaster in 1954. He preserved the old railway station at Great Alne by turning it into a shop and post office. A few months before he died in August 1974, he handed his post office duties over to Mrs E. Nightingale. The combined post office and shop are (1988) next to the Mother Huff Cap. Mrs Nightingale eventually handed over control of the office to her daughter, Mrs J. Lewis.

POSTMARKS

1. UDC issued on 19th April 1847.
2. Rubber handstamp GREAT ALNE issued 16 June 1886
3. Rubber handstamp GREAT ALNE/ALCESTER R.S.O./WARWICKSHIRE issued on 4th July 1904.

MORE "POST TOWNS"

Harold Wilson has kindly sent a cutting from the Derby Evening Telegraph which reports that Alferton, Belper and Ripley have been up graded to 'postal towns'. The changes which will be brought in from May will involve changes of postal address and post codes.

Letters addressed to Alferton, Belper and Ripley will have Derbyshire instead of Derby written after the town.

Ilkeston will keep its DE7 post code while Heanor changes to DE75 and old DE7 post codes for east Derby change to DE21, DE72, DE73 or DE74.

Matlock will keep its DE4 code but Bakewell loses it and should be followed by DE45 instead.

Ashbourne addresses will still be followed by the DE6 post code but old DE6 areas in west Derby are now either DE22 or DE65.

I hope no one in any of these areas has recently bought a five year supply of headed notepaper! I am not sure that I would apply the term "Post Town" to these towns and others which have been raised in status in the last year or so as I believe they do not have a post-master as such. (With the various reorganisations I am not sure if there is still such an official.) However it is a more elegant term than "Independent Vouching Office".

One final comment in the hope that someone in authority in the Post Office may read this. Since it is feasible to change post codes, when can we have the Market Bosworth area moved postally back into Leicestershire?

THE NEXT MIDLAND MAIL

First of all I must apologise for the delay in producing this issue. The aggravation of an old back injury made it rather awkward to sit at a word processor for more than a few minutes. That said, I am reluctant to tempt providence by saying much about the next issue. However I hope to start a serialisation of the Surveyors' Journals. A major article has also been promised but there will be plenty of room for more articles. It should appear at the very end of May. All articles, short or long, should be sent to:

John Soer, 51d Barkham Road, Wokingham, Berkshire RG11 2RG.