

MIDLAND MAIL

THE JOURNAL OF THE MIDLAND (GB) POSTAL HISTORY SOCIETY

www.midlandphs.org.uk



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Number 192, October 2016



1893 UPU double rate cover from Jersey to British Guiana (reduced) – see September meeting, page 3

CONTENTS

Page

- 2 – Date of AGM changed, Burton, New Member, etc
- 7 – October Meeting at Knowle, Solihull
- 14 – Walter Scriven, Postman at Bridgnorth
- 17 – The Staff of the Birmingham & Crewe SC
- 19 – How it all began
- 22 – Parcel Post Labels Burton sub-offices

Page

- 3 – September Meeting at Kington St. Michael
- 9 – A Yard of Tin
- 16 – The Great Cross Post – The Role of Joseph Quash
- 18 – Cross-Hatch Letter Writing
- 20 – Rutland Skeletons – A Collection-based Account
- 23 – Cressage (Shropshire) to Nadu River, BC Canada

THE SOCIETY'S 2017 ANNUAL AUCTION – NOW 29th APRIL 2016 (see page 7)

DATE OF AGM CHANGED TO 29th APRIL. Please place any of your unwanted items into our annual auction, we badly need more vendors. Items can be handed in at the 12th November, 3rd December or 14th January meetings, or sent to Eric Lewis, NO LATER THAN THE 14TH JANUARY at 27 Rathbone Road, Smethwick, B67 5JG.

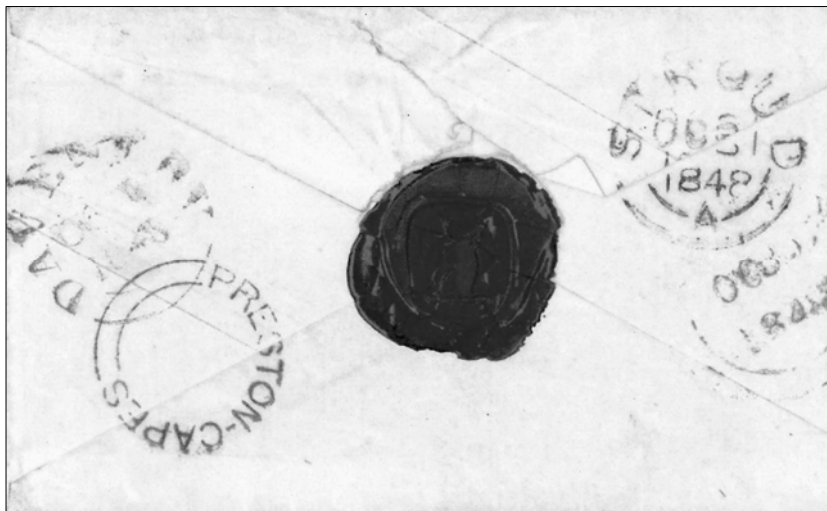
Please do not resubmit lots with an estimate of less than £3 or any unsold lots from the 2015 or 2016 auctions; however they can be entered in the 2018 auction, preferably at a lower reserve price.

CHRISTMAS MEETING AT BURTON – Enclosed with this edition of Midland Mail is a flyer for the Christmas meeting at Burton-on-Trent on 3rd December 2016. **Please complete the flyer and return to Richard Farman by 22nd November.**

New Member – We welcome **Richard Capon** of Oundle, Peterborough to the Society. He is researching correspondence between Thomas Belsey of Margate and his agent William Bradshaw between 1805 and Thomas' death in 1832. 30 letters were discovered each having a 6d local delivery charge added by the Oundle postmistress, Ann Everest. He has had access to six of the letters and hopes there may be other examples in members' collections that he can study. If anyone can supply scans or copies of fronts and contents or even allow access to originals, please contact him on richard_1_1@btinternet.com or 07743 401285. Richard has received his back numbers of Midland Mail and believes the post office in MM 190 / 2 may be in the village of Chelveston-cum-Caldecot. He has been in touch with **John Hine** who asks if anyone can corroborate that location, please let us know what you think.

John Paulson writes – In his short article in MM 190 / 20, Colin Fountain speculates that *POST & GO datestamps may be the rarities of the future as they presumably get very little use* and cites his experience at Gloucester on 7th December 2015. Having visited the city's main post office twice during the 289th Three Choirs Festival at the end of July, I think that Colin's assessment is absolutely correct. On Saturday 23rd July an otherwise helpful female member of staff denied any knowledge of such a handstamp, led me to a normal counter position and arranged for my old-style certificate of posting to receive a 'normal' S.I.D. impression. Four days later I tried a different female member of staff, who *did* know about the POST & GO handstamp and took the time to rummage through several cupboards and drawers but without success; she surmised it was probably only used at really busy times such as the run up to Christmas!

Gwyn Hughes reports the discovery of an undated circle of PRESTON CAPES under Daventry in black ink; cover dated 31st October 1848, by far the earliest example of this udc – code 9 / 32 in the Northants section of The Undated Circular Marks of the Midland Counties and issued to Daventry on 27th April 1847. (See illustration below left).



PRESTON CAPES udc, by far the earliest use



BURTON LATTIMER udc with two Ts, a new find (see below)

Derek Smeathers has found a 'new' Northants udc, that of Burton Latimer. He reports there is a normal C1 udc recorded in the proof impression books, issued in August 1851 (10 / 283), known used until March 1859, including in green ink. The new discovery is smaller, in green ink, and there is a double T in LATTIMER. The 1d red is cancelled with 363 (Higham Ferrers) and dated 26th February 1849, the year confirmed by London and Lynn marks. This smaller udc must be a non-standard production, possibly made locally? He asks if anyone has seen another example. (See a black & white copy of the udc above right)

THE 10th SEPTEMBER 2016 MEETING at KINGTON St MICHAEL, WILTSHIRE

Thanks to sterling organisation by **John Calladine**, 17 members and 8 guests, including four from the Somerset & Dorset Postal History Society, gathered at 11am on 10th September at the village hall in the picturesque Wiltshire village of Kington St. Michael to hear our chairman **Malcolm Allinson** introduce **Claire Scott** to give her talk entitled *Death by Post*.

Claire began by stating that an exhibit based on her collection had gained an Open Class International Gold, which has less than 10% non postal history. She also stated at the outset that research was not valued in our hobby and that she liked to collect without using a catalogue. Her display was a mixture of postal history, social history and social postal history. Historically funerals were created by the Catholic Church for bishops and priests and in the early days you could not attend a funeral without an invitation. Her early frames showed a 1759 invite to the funeral of John Corbet at Battlefield Church, Shrewsbury at 10am on 22nd Sept with macabre engravings of skeletons, coffins and catafalques. A large January 1844 cover which contained a request to attend the funeral of Robert Pilestone Brown in Bow had a vignette of the Thames; it was from Gepp, Funeral Director, Mile End Road. In Europe notices were put up outside churches (still are in Italy – Ed) and examples were shown dated 1811, 1816 and 1890 together with advertisements for funeral attire. Due to the lack of space in church cemeteries the burial Acts of 1852 and 1853 allowed Local Authorities to administer their own cemeteries. The Parish Vestries elected Burial Boards to administer them. They had to be places of calm and beauty and topographical writing paper was produced to illustrate their beauty. An 1865 letter, sent by book post to Whitchurch, Shropshire had a design for a gravestone. Certificates of death were also required and records of burials had to be kept and letters can be found discussing wills and executors; a noticeable inclusion in this section being a March 1867 letter from Paris to Edinburgh, in which was written *Your brother died in this city!*



Fig 1, 1865 book post cover to Whitchurch, Shropshire, with the enclosed plan for a large gravestone

Mourning envelopes would play a big part in such an exhibit and we saw ones with black wax, and envelopes of many different sizes with black borders of many different designs and others with black wafers decorated with flowers (1851). Highly decorated envelopes were expensive and the example from West Hartlepool in 1876 is a fine one (see Fig 2, left). Black wax was used as an indicator of death and a letter of 1818 from Nice to London starts with the words, 'You will see from the black wax that my dearly beloved has breathed her last'. He continues 'I am told it will be necessary to have an order sent to Dover from the Customs House to let the body pass'. This refers to



the practice of having a false bottom to a coffin which hid smuggled contraband and without the correct paper work coffins were routinely opened. Black wafers either plain or decorated were widely used; they were out of fashion by the end of the 19th century, so one on a 1929 letter from Battersea to Switzerland showed very late use. There was no evidence, she stated, that the thickness of the black border had any significance, a 1927 cover to Vienna had a border measuring 1½ inches! There was a cover with a black triangle in the top left hand corner. Mourning stationery was also in evidence seen in a wonderful 1893 cover from Jersey to British

Guiana with an advertisement for Court Mourning Stationery from John Dickinson & Co (see front page). The first section of her display ended with two noticeable items, an October 1891 funeral invoice with engraving of the undertakers, W. G. Raven, Fitzroy, Australia and an 1825 Indenture of an Apprentice Undertaker in Poland St., Westminster.

The second section, like the first, was of 10 frames. Claire began with Notices of the Death of Royalty, which included the 1812 announcement of the death of the grandson of Charles III of Spain and an 1888 programme for the memorial service for Frederick III, Emperor of Germany and King of Prussia. An eye-catching item was a Sept 1852 ticket to the funeral of the Duke of Wellington; other items of note were covers with stamp surrounds. Diseases, of course, played a part in such an exhibit and there was an 1820 'disinfected' cover from Trieste, an 1831 from Germany and an 1842 cover from Malta disinfection station. An 1832 cover from Liverpool stated 'London has a clean bill of health'. An 1897 cover from Louisiana, USA had the writer requesting financial assistance as he was cut off due to yellow fever in New Orleans!

She continued with 'types' of death. An 1811 letter to New York stated James Wilson had committed suicide – he had tried twice, first time by cutting his throat and then he shot himself!



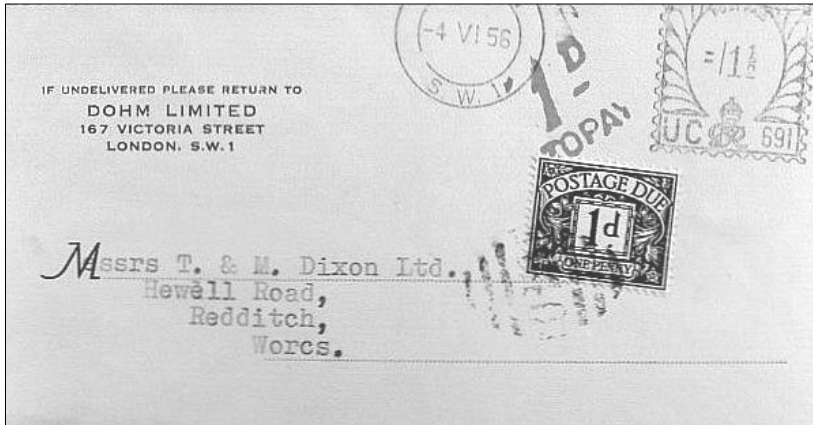
Fig 3, 1870 letter from Rangoon to Brighton, including an account of the murder of the captain of the *Fairwind*.

A blackmail letter of 1855 from Caithness threatened the recipient with 'dire consequences' if the Glengolly estate was purchased. Military associated deaths followed with an 1842 mourning letter from Berlin. Included here was an 1878 card commemorating the collision of the vessels *Princess Alice* and *Bywell Castle* off Woolwich. An unusual item was an 1869 document giving permission for an exhumation in Paris, the body to be taken from one cemetery to another. Towards the end an outstanding item was a 'Letter Bomb by Book Post' – a package containing cartridges and bullets from the battlefields of Waitara and Pukehinahina, New Zealand; cartridges made by the Maori from pieces of the Family Herald! After these aspects of death, Claire finished with a few humorous items, an 1887 black-edged card commemorating the death of the Denby Dale Pie a 1908 card, surcharged as it had a piece of string attached to a small gallows!

After a welcome lunch in The Jolly Huntsman, we reconvened to show our own items with the theme being *The Unusual*, rather fitting after what we had seen before lunch.

Andrew Wootton began the proceedings with a 1904 extra large parcel post item, two postage due letters posted to himself, an 1840 illustrated 1d black cover from Manchester depicting a comic incident in a lawyers office, Edward VIII meter marks, a framed Paul Pry at the Post Office and a large souvenir of the Penny Post Jubilee celebration at South Kensington Museum dated 2nd July 1890.

Mick Gill started with an item of about 1712 from Tuxford to Osbaston, Leicestershire endorsed 'By London'; charged 4d to London and another 4d for the return to Leicestershire. A 1911 letter card from Nottingham, clearly about horse racing had a label stating it was an exhibit at Marlborough Street Police Court – what had the writer been up to? A quotation sent from Newark on 21st July 1927 had been returned with a reply the next day and sent again with a further enquiry on 23rd July! A postcard of the Hop Pole, Ollerton had been sent in 1935 as an acknowledgement for a booking, written and signed by the proprietor. Then came four hand-painted envelopes with scenes of Newark used as FDCs between 1972 and 1980 and sent to the artist G. Drury at his home address; there were another seven unused envelopes by the same artist bought at the society's auction in 2007. Finally he produced three novelty Victorian / Edwardian travelling inkwells, two pillar boxes and a 1901 Post Office London Directory.



Chris Jackson's turn produced the following: 1646 civil war letter delivered in Worcestershire, 1812, the only copy found of a MALVERN 121 mileage, 1859 the only known copy of a small COULBOURN-BROOK udc, 1938 letter from an apiary, five covers from the same writer to the same recipient with the black edging getting thinner, Missent to Thailand instead of Australia, and, amazingly, a 1956 1d to Pay with Redditch 3VOS – the only known copy (see left)!

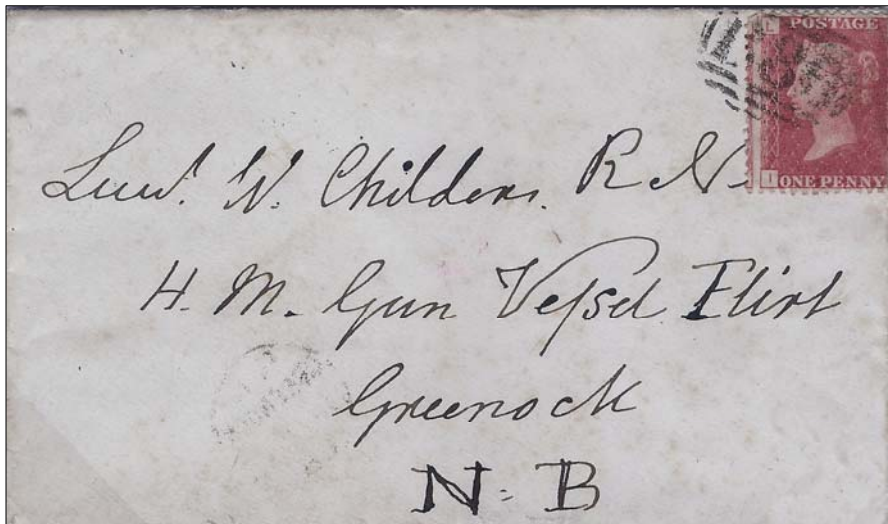
Gordon Hardy's display was made up with a mixture of subjects. It started with an OC 15 1821 item from Bath to Derby, for the Somerset and Dorset Postal History Society members present with the endorsement *If absent to be forwarded*, the recipient was at home so it did not need to be forwarded. The second subject showed how the 1881 Customs and Inland Revenue Act was interpreted by the Post Office. Prior to the Act postage stamps were used for postage and Inland Revenue stamps paid various revenue duties. The wording of the Act was "... *postage duties may be paid by the use of penny adhesive stamps not appropriated by any word or words on the face of them to postage duty, or any particular description or instrument.*" There was some confusion as to which revenue stamps could be used for postage, the Act used the phrase "not appropriated" which would exclude all stamps except with the worded "Inland Revenue" however even the Act's section heading reads "Stamp duties of one penny may be denoted by postage stamps and vice versa." The post office notice uses the more general wording of receipt stamps in its notices. The examples shown are the "Draft Payable on Demand or Receipt" stamps. The first example was posted from London on 25 Oct 1881 4 months after the Act became law. It is endorsed 2d which is correct to the letter of the Act but ambiguous if the post office term receipt stamp is used. The letter is addressed to Judge Fredrick Adolphus Philbrick QC, a prominent philatelist. Did Philbrick send the letter to himself and then challenged the postman as to whether the charge was valid, so he simply cancelled the charge. The second letter was similarly charged 2d, this time there is a letter from The Secretary, General Post Office, Dublin, apologising and returning the 2d in postage stamps. Two mobile post office covers, 1957 Thoroughbred Stallion Show, Derby with a press cutting saying that this will be the last of these shows as the Old Race Course was being sold. The other item was for the Bakewell Show in 1959.

The last item showed was a letter to Lieut. W Childers RN, H.M. Gun Vessel *Flirt*, Greenock. The *Flirt* was a Beacon class composite construction with an iron keel, stem and stern posts and iron framing, with wooden planking retained over the iron frame. The *Flirt* was powered by steam but also had sails, in fact the ship could travel faster under sail at 12 knots but only 10 knots under steam. However, Admiral G A Ballard said that they were "quite unmanageable under sail alone." Ballard also commented that the vessel was built "along the lines of an extremely elegant packing crate." Another pundit said they "sailed like tea trays". Lieutenant W Childers was born in 1837 and joined the Royal Navy as a cadet in 1850. He was in the Crimea at the battles of Alma and Sebastopol, In 1857 he went to China at the start of the second China War. In 1860 he became a Lieutenant and in 1861 and 1863 sailed round the world on *HMS Charybdis*. In 1868 he commanded the *Flirt* in the North Sea and tragically died from an internal injury when transferring from *Flirt* to *HMS Black Prince*, off Greenock in 1869, he was just 32 (see illustration on the next page).

Stuart Geddes showed just two items, an 1839 printed letter sheet from Cheltenham and a 2003 precursor of a precancelled letter

Trevor Radway began with a letter from a 'dubious' relative in Exeter jail to his wife, which had OL on it. What is OL? (*Did anyone come up with an answer? Let us know if you did – Ed*). Registered Letter on post requiring postage due from St. Kilda post office dated 27th August 1930, the day it was abandoned; a 1722 letter with a Cloak Bag, what is a Cloak Bag he wanted to know; a 1911 cover from Fulham to Wimbledon with a 655 in circle; a 1913 registered postcard from Osterburg to Magdeburg and a 1922 English stamp on a cover from Dublin, which was not accepted;

For a second offering **Chris Jackson** included an 1859 cover with the only known example of a NETHERTON udc; a lovely 1860 cover with a pair of 12cent Washingtons from the United States to Redditch; a 1949 10/- railway stamp genuinely used and an array of Dudley numbers – **263** from 1844 in black, 1850 in blue, **293** (1850) and **392** (1854).



1d red plate number cancelled **B86** of MATLOCK BRIDGE. Dated 30 NOV 1868, the cover arrived in Greenock 1 DEC 1868. From Gordon Hardy's display.

1868 cover to H. M. Vessel Flirt at Greenock

Jim Hammond showed the following: 1595 local letter to Willey near Bridgnorth; 1847 DOWN, Kent (residence of Charles Darwin) to Shrewsbury; 1889 registered letter from Mark Lane to Paris with a 6d inland revenue stamp; 1918 written registered label of Kingston Deverill, Bath; 1939 Valentines telegram; 1941 telegram and a 1957 illegal use of National Savings stamps.

Malcolm Allinson brought along his Cumberland items beginning with a 1623 / 25 map of Carlisle. He continued with a 1787 entire from London to Whitehaven at 3/6 rate for 1¼ozs; Carlisle 298 mileage mark to Lincolnshire via London; 1837 Maryport 318 boxed mileage; 1846 GRETNALD udc, Gretna being a sub-office of Carlisle; 1854 post office receipt for a registered letter at Whitehaven; 1865 post office receipt for a private letter bag; 1889 licence for a carriage of less than 4 wheels; 1899 Medical Examiner's report for an application of an assistant postman at Penrith; 1906 postcard from Millom to Lucerne with a ½d green stamp and 1d to Pay as it was returned to Millom; 1938 registered fragile mail to Tokyo from Portinscale; 1943 Workington to a Japanese POW camp and 1946 Moota POW camp to Bayern, Germany.

John Soer began with a Midland Railway Letter from the first year of that service, 1891. The 2d Railway Letter stamp and the 1d lilac were both cancelled with the circular telegraph handstamp, '1432', of Ullesthorpe station. Although the letter was addressed to Rugby, the letter was initially sent to Leicester where it was struck with a squared circle handstamp. Of a strip of seven stamps from the Post & Go machine at the BPMA, the first six were normal but printing on the left-hand side was missing on the seventh. It is doubtful that maps of the London Underground have ever featured before at any of our meetings, but John produced a number from the period 1908 to 1937. A glance at the name of the station between Bank and Chancery Lane on the Central Line should show these maps featured in a postal history display.



POST OFFICE

At about 3pm Malcolm brought the meeting to a close by thanking Claire Scott for her well presented display; the variety of material, social and postal was amazing with the sort of items non of us had seen before or are likely to see again, a highly original and entertaining display.

THE 29th OCTOBER MEETING AT ARDEN SCHOOL, KNOWLE

PLEASE NOTE – In his introduction our chairman, Malcolm Allinson, informed the 21 members and 3 guests that the AGM and Auction meeting at Birmingham clashed with a Society of Postal Historians meeting, **so it was decided to put back the AGM to 29th April at St. Germain's Church Hall in Birmingham** and all present agreed.

CHRISTMAS MEETING AT BURTON – Midland Mail will have a flyer for the Christmas meeting at Burton-on-Trent on 3rd December 2016. Malcolm asked everyone who wishes to attend to complete the relevant sections and return to Richard Farman by 22nd November.

The meeting began with a presentation by **Martin Scroggs**, the co-ordinator of the society's proposed book on parcel post labels. He began with two pages of Oxfordshire A5 labels and a lovely, early photograph of a parcel post coach outside Oxford post office. Next came a photocopy of a rare E1 label from Summertown and 3 labels from Henley-on-Thames as well as a parcel tag to Germany. A 1928 label from Shiplake Cross was the latest from Oxfordshire. There were also labels from Whitney Blankets, and a 1906 insured label from Reading Road, Henley to Paris.

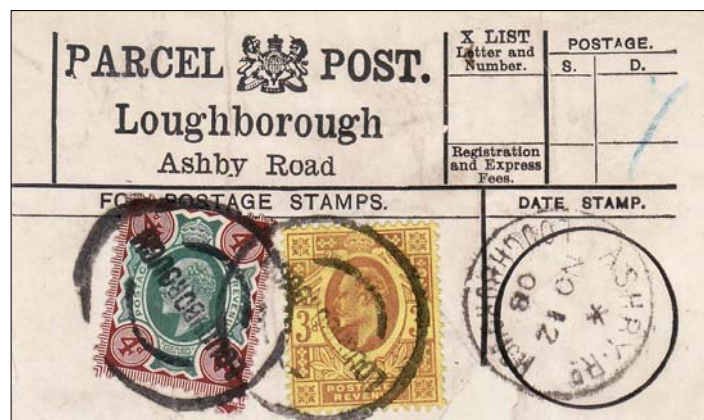
John Calladine's display was concerned solely with the office at Stourbridge and its sub-offices. It began with a tie-on label bearing a Stourbridge Parcels Post label on one side and five adhesive stamps, making up a total charge of 6d, on the other, there being insufficient space on the label for so many adhesives. He then showed examples from Stourbridge of virtually all types of parcel post label and concluded with a Great Western Railway Pre-paid Newspaper Parcel label on a packet of returned unsold newspapers, the Post Office's monopoly not extending to packets of newspapers. The sender is believed to have been the sub-postmaster of the office at Brettel Lane.

Chris Jackson provided labels from Worcester and its sub-offices both inside and outside the city. A label had WORCESTER with a line through it and KINNERSLY added in pencil. He ended with labels from Evesham.

Alan Godfrey brought facsimile rubber labels with many different designs from Leamington Spa (1915), Coventry (1936, 1938) etc; they were used to speed up the process of sending a parcel; wartime ones had no date due to shortage of rubber. There was a private post label from PRYCE JONES of Newtown, Mont. Finally there were two sheets of 'midget' labels to 1983 and two certificates of posting parcels.

Brian Atkins' first item was a **PARCELS POST** label from Shrewsbury dated 28th August 1884 which was attached to a label from E.W. & W. Phillips, Tailors and Waterproof Tweed Manufacturers sending a parcel to Towyn with a 6d dull green cancelled by a 5-bar 'dumb' cancel. Labels from Shrewsbury with SHREWSBURY PARCELS OFFICE cancels, as well as labels from a number of other towns and villages (eg, Whixall) were shown.

John Soer began with a label from Frisby (-on-the-Wreake), dated December 1896, which showed a plate number. This was followed by two labels which did not show the name of the office; identifiable only by their date stamps as being Wymeswold and Park Vale, Leicester. One can only speculate as to why the date was written in manuscript, instead of being shown by a date stamp on labels from Rotherby (1896) and East Norton (1901), both under Leicester. John then went on to illustrate the various charges levied on parcels in the period 1896 to 1915.



1908 label from Ashby Road, Loughborough sub-office at 7d rate for a parcel weighing 7lb (from 2nd July 1906)

Eric Lewis showed a wonderful group of private labels from firms including two from PRYCE JONES, Newtown, Mont., two from Cadbury Bros., and others including Selfridges (Oxford St.) and Marshall & Snellgrove (Scarborough).

Mick Gill started with three 1958 printed labels on parcels to New Zealand sent by Simon, May & Co, Nottingham, all cancelled by poor SORTING OFFICE / NOTTINGHAM / PARCEL / POST rectangular rubbers. Next a 1979 Nottingham / Parcels circular rubber date stamp on a red Free / No charge to be / made on Delivery label. 1982 and 1985 labels had examples of Bobbers Mill rectangular rubbers. Books valued at £10 went to New Zealand in a parcel with a Low Pavement BO / Nottingham / Parcel Post date stamp and stamps valued £19.20! Two leaflets issued on the introduction of new rates on 1st July 1935, plus a 1960 leaflet giving guidance with packing Christmas parcels.

Alan Marshall produced labels of Nottingham sub-offices including Bingham and villages. Noticeable was an A3 type of Nottingham Station Street with a parcels Depot and cds 20 OCT 1886 as well as examples of the Albert Street main office and a large London Stores Dept label covering the delivery of stamps to the Sherwood office. Also included was a New Zealand label from Auckland to Cambridge and a rectangular Looe, Cornwall parcel cancel on a **Looe Rabbitries** label.

Gordon Hardy's display started with a selection of private carrier labels, followed by a selection of parcel post labels with the rates explained and Derby sub-office labels. The August 1882 Act to amend the Post Office Act for the Conveyance of Parcels with 55% of the postage to go to the railway company. Finally a photograph of a fully loaded ROYAL PARCEL MAIL coach with four horses, staff and the inevitable crowd of children.

Guy Bridges had an 1846 edition of the Pictorial Times about the delivery of Parcels in and around London. This was followed by a large 1839 parcel sent by carrier from Whitchurch and labels of Shrewsbury town sub-offices of Abbey Foregate, Belle Vue, Cherry Orchard, Kingsland, Meole Brace, The Column and The Mount.

Richard Farman brought notices of how the system works beginning with a PP17 Parcel Post Irregularity Report. Then an 1886 parcel post notice of how to fasten Wicker Hampers from the Wisbech office and a Z docket cancelled Liverpool 1905 as well as a docket A from the Returned Letter Office, London. A 1927 parcel insured for 8/- from Bloxwich to Switzerland ended his first display.

Clive Jones showed the oldest item of the day, dated 20 September 1756, a family letter travelling **free** with a fresh stock of gloves and marked "**with a parsill**", saving the postage of 3d between Rawcliffe and Leeds. A shipping notice of 1845 detailed Midlands and Yorkshire places served by a twice weekly service of sailing vessels from Southwark to Thorne. A parcel label from **Everton** in Nottinghamshire (under Bawtry) was cancelled by a skeleton hand stamp of 15 June 1910, the only known example of this mark. A selection of Yorkshire labels were shown, including a rare oblong stamp with indented corners dated 27 May 1889 from Halifax.

Gordon Hardy for his second time around showed 1900 Foreign & Colonial Certificates of Posting, indicating what was in the packages. Also a Curry & Paxton Ophthalmic Opticians, London label sending a pair of spectacles to Holland!

For his second time, **Richard Farman** showed a packet service parcel of Dublin Packet Office to Liverpool at 8/10 in 1831. A railway letter with string thus classified as a parcel via Gobowen and a 1910 7lb salmon from Ballater to London by the G.N. of Scotland Railway! A Long Eaton private label insured a parcel sent by Josiah Brown from Leeds to Belgium in 1901 and a grand 1883 Parcels Post from Tamworth.

Mick Gill's second display comprised a Victorian scrap cut-out of a horse-drawn Parcel Post van and a selection of parcel post labels from Nottinghamshire, which included a 2/6 Middle Pavement BO / Nottingham 1964 label from a Parcle Label Issuing Machine. Mick then produced some personal items; the tie and model container lorry given to him when Royal Mail Parcel Force was established; a combination screwdriver from the Wizard Ideas staff suggestion scheme and a Workwear catalogue he had written. Finally we saw the handbook issued to staff on the opening of the North Eastern Parcel Centre, Washington (late 1970s); his hands featuring in illustrations 18 and 19!

Alan Godfrey produced A2 labels with no office and other A labels as well as Instructional Notices about carriage of fragile items including eggs! There were also Leamington labels and a Birmingham roller cancel.

Chris Jackson showed labels from Malvern sub-offices; Dudley and sub-offices, Fladbury, Far Forest, Church Hill and an Offenham / Evesham 'blind' label.

Martin Scroggs began with an 1887 Inland Insured label, followed by a Bournemouth experimental label of 1884. Eggs came to the fore again with a notice related to their safe packing and finally a card with early rates of parcels.

My thoughts were that a meeting about the parcel post might have been rather dull. Far from it, the variety of items and the ingenuity of members to come up with interesting items was once again on display. Another excellent day!

A YARD OF TIN

by John Calladine

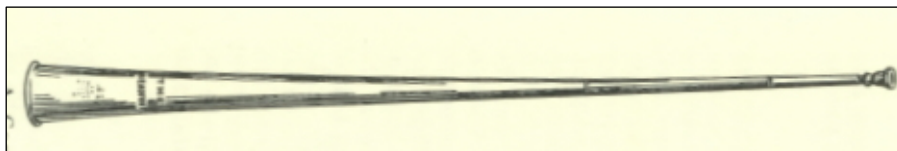
It is well known to postal historians that the only Post Office employee on a Royal Mail coach was the guard. It is less well known that, probably during the first two years of the mail coach service (1784-1786), the guards were provided by the coach contractor and were not Post Office employees. (Few “facts” in the history of the mail are as straightforward as they may initially appear.) Provided with a scarlet great coat, embroidered with gold braid, the guard was an immediately recognisable figure. It had been Palmer’s plan to employ soldiers as guards but this would have involved quite a large number of regular troops and the proposal was deemed impractical. It is a common misconception that retired soldiers were therefore the primary body of men employed by the Post Office as guards. However, in reality mail coach guards were not required to have any military experience. They were certainly armed. Exactly how they were armed is less clear but evidence suggests¹ they most likely carried a short weapon, popularly known as a blunderbuss, and a brace of pistols. The shot they fired was the size of a pea and a blunderbuss was loaded with about a dozen such lead balls. It is popular notion that a flintlock blunderbuss was loaded with rusty nails and any unpleasant rubbish at hand but this is yet another misconception, as is the belief that the flared mouth of the barrel was to assist the spread of the shot. The real purpose of the flared mouth was to make it easier to reload the weapon, particularly while on the move.

The guard also carried a locked timepiece and a horn, with which he warned other road users to clear a path for the mail coach, advised toll gate keepers to open their gates and with which he announced the arrival and departure of the mail coach at the staging points where the horses were changed. Much has been written about the arms carried on a mail coach and about the importance of the timepiece and of timekeeping. Rather less has been written about the horn. It is generally accepted that the horn was a standard item of equipment provided by the Post Office. However, the horns carried in the closing years of the mail coach era were quite different from those used in the early years. Basically there are two types of straight horn: the coach horn and the post horn. The bore of a coach horn increases over the length of the horn while a post horn is of narrow bore, terminating in a well-defined bell mouth. Because the narrow bore horns were favoured by Royal Mail in the final years of the mail coach era, they are remembered as “post” horns and yet that is not how the era began.

The original horns used on mail coaches were 3 feet long and supposedly made of tin. They were therefore always known as “a yard of tin”. Tin horns were the cheapest; better horns were made of brass or copper. A mail coach horn was certainly a classic coach horn, with the bore increased gradually over the length of the horn, but were they really made of tin? As far as the Postal Museum is aware, no tin horns have survived and there is little doubt that mail guards, who took considerable pride in their position and appearance would have bought themselves copper horns whenever they could, as they had a better sound. There were probably a very few, certainly not a significant number of guards, who copied the stagecoach guards and bought a keyed horn, somewhat like a trumpet, to be able to entertain their passengers with the popular tunes of the day. However, such frivolity was surely frowned upon by the Royal Mail. Perhaps the best available evidence of the “yard of tin” is to be found in the paintings² of James Pollard (1792-1867). Pollard was arguably the finest painter of coaching and sporting scenes of the age and was noted for the meticulous accuracy of his work. He would take great trouble to ensure that even the colour of the harness was correct. Mail coaches were one of his favourite subjects and, among his best paintings is one of the “Quicksilver” coach, the only named mail coach. In his painting, the guard is actually blowing his horn and there can be little doubt that this is a tin horn, not a copper horn. A detail is illustrated below.



Any open horns, whether coach horns or post horns, can only vibrate at their fundamental pitch and its harmonics³. The fundamental tone of a “yard of tin” differed significantly from the other horns. It is difficult to sound the fundamental tone and, in practical terms, each horn is limited to five notes (for the cognoscenti, the keynote, its fifth, its octave, its tenth and twelfth). It was because of its shape and length that the mail coach horn was distinctive. Although it was said a mail coach could be distinguished, however much other coach traffic was in town, there was a proposal in 1803 by a Mr Wolmer⁴ to limit the right to sound horns solely to mail coaches. Mr Hasker, Superintendent of the Mail Coach Office, had obvious sympathy with the proposal, accepting that “*horns are a cause of frequent alarm and confusion in most post towns*”, but he recognised there would be great objections to such a monopoly and the idea was rejected. What was not rejected, however, following a complaint by the Lord Mayor of London in the same year⁵, was a proposal that the sounding of horns by mail coaches (and other coaches, no doubt) should be forbidden during Sunday mornings or evenings, when church services would be taking place. As mail coaches generally ran on only six days a week, one doubts that such a restriction was onerous.



An illustration, said to be of a “yard of tin”, but of doubtful authenticity.

A booklet was produced at the end of the nineteenth century by an expert⁵ describing himself as “An Old Guard” that gave instruction to those wanting to learn to blow a horn. (It was published by Kohler & Son, well known makers of horns at the time: their reputation was such that every surviving brass instrument of their manufacture has been recorded.) In his booklet, the author suggested a coach horn ought not to exceed three feet in length because its sound would then become more like the sound produced by a bugle. He acknowledged, however, that coach horns of about four feet in length were in use and were said to be easier to blow.



A horn sold recently at Cavendish Auctions and said to be an authentic mail coach horn.

A recent sale by Cavendish Auctions⁶ included what was claimed to be a genuine mail coach horn. It was of copper, not brass as stated in the auction description, and just over 34 inches in length. Although it appears to have no written provenance and no markings to suggest it was an official issue, its length and shape give some credence to the claim. It may have been a horn acquired by a guard to replace his original tin horn. More detail of the mouth of the horn is shown below. However, similar horns with no mail coach connection are not uncommon and provenance in such cases is essential. There are two copper horns in a hostelry in Wiltshire, one a coach horn and one a post horn, both 34 inches in length.



It seems, at some point, the Royal Mail abandoned the use of coach horns in favour of those with a narrow bore and a distinct bell mouth, the horns now known as “post horns”. Presumably because they were easier to blow, they also used longer 4ft horns. At a meeting of our Society some years ago⁷, a two part copper horn of this type was shown, with the comment that the mouth appeared to be genuine but, because of its excessive length, it seemed possible it had been extended during the coaching revival of the late 19th century, more for ostentatious presentation than sound. It now seems the comment was mistaken and the horn entirely genuine. Illustrations of the full length of the horn and of the mouth are shown on the next page. The horn is approximately 4 feet long (1290mm) and embossed with the Royal Coat of Arms, possibly in a white metal alloy, with “ROYAL MAIL” inscribed below. It is stamped with a patent mark of a crown with an envelope beneath and with the serial number “92”. When this horn was offered to the Red House Stables Working Carriage Museum near Matlock, it was by a family who had retained it as a family heirloom since the mail coach era.



The full length of the Royal Mail post horn.



The mouth of the post horn, now believed to be a genuine mail coach horn, similar to two in the collection of the Postal Museum.

Julian Stray, Senior Curator at the new national Postal Museum, informs us there are two similar horns in their collection, both in copper and in two parts. One is 1200mm long (just under 4ft) and the other 1240mm (just over 4ft). The former is stamped “97” and the latter “83”. He describes the coats of arms as being in brass, a detail that

needs to be resolved. However with three similar horns known to survive, there can be little doubt they truly are authentic mail coach post horns. The Museum has other horns, including one marked "YORK.LONDON.-P.O." and another marked "LONDON / DERBY" but neither has provenance and, rather like the surviving "mail coaches", the Museum has no belief in their veracity. Other supposed "mail coach" horns in the Museum collection were manufactured by firms only established after the end of the mail coach era!

In 1882, Stanley Harris⁸, who described himself as "an old stager" wrote of the old coaching days. He tells us of a small shop in a very narrow street opposite Chandlers' Hall which, by 1882, had long been demolished and replaced by warehouses. The tenant of this shop took advantage of its proximity to the General Post Office, and also to the "Bull and Mouth" and "Swan with Two Necks" coaching inns, to manufacture horns solely for mail coach guards and other coaches. The variety of the horns manufactured there was considerable. The long tin horn was said to have been used by the guards on cheap, slow coaches, suggesting that mail coach guards would have been keen to rid themselves of that image. There were numerous horns with "twists", i.e. bugles, and long copper horns varying in length from three feet to four feet or more with a very narrow bore, terminating in a bell shape with a "German silver" (a copper, nickel and zinc alloy) mouthpiece. He could have been describing the Royal Mail horn above.



Perhaps the final piece of the puzzle is to consider how mail coach guards carried these long horns on the mail coaches. It has been suggested that either a leather loop attached to the coach or a wicker container of some kind were used and there are paintings of both. One of the clearest illustrations is, once again, from a painting by James Pollard showing the Hull Mail changing horses outside the Falcon Inn at Waltham Cross. The horn is held in a loop with the mouth of the horn uppermost. We know that some of the entries to inn yards were very narrow and the best "whips" (coach drivers) disdained any thought of slowing to walking pace when entering them. It was probably fortuitous that, at this moment, the guard was likely to have the horn to his lips and not swinging precariously from the coach.

A further painting by Pollard and one of his earliest is less clear but illustrates an unidentified mail coach changing horses, in a rather leisurely manner, in the spacious yard of an inn, suggesting it was probably a country inn. Again, the horn can be seen hanging in a loop, or quite probably two loops at the rear of the coach.

Perhaps one of the most unpopular uses of the mail coach horn was to summon passengers back to the coach at the end of their meal break. We know from the time bills that twenty minutes was considered a quite generous allowance. Considering the time taken to dismount from the coach and find the landlord, it probably did wonders for the sale of indigestion pills.



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1. Royal Mail Coaches, An Illustrated History Frederick Wilson (2007)
2. The Regency Road, The Coaching Prints of James Pollard N.C.Selway (1957)
3. The Musical Tunes, Coaching Calls A.B.Shone (June 1951)
4. Post 35/3/1801
5. Post 10/5 No.42
6. Cavendish Auction, 9th March 2016, Lot 760.
7. Midland Mail, 147/4 (2006)
8. Old Coaching Days Stanley Harris (1882)

* * * * *



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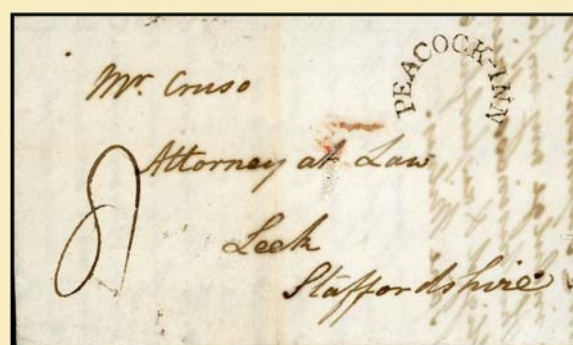
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DATE	TOWN OR PLACE.	NATURE OF EVENT	Hour at which the Office will be kept open for Telegraph business.	TRANSMITTING OFFICES FOR THE GRAND STAND.		
(1882)						
Nov. 17, &c	Lombourn -	South of England Club Coursing	-	-		
" 17	Marham -	Norfolk Coursing Meeting	-	-		
" 17	Derby -	Autumn Race Meeting	-	always	TS MR	X
" 17	Market Drayton -	Coursing Meeting	-	-		
" 17, &c	Newbury -	Sydmonten Coursing Meeting	-	-		
" 21 to 23	Warwick -	Race Meeting	-	10 p.m.	TS	
" 21 & 22	Upleham -	Darlington Club Coursing Meeting	-	-		
" 22, &c	Berkeley -	Open Coursing Meeting	-	-		
" 22, &c	Kempton Park (Sunbury) -	Coursing Meeting	-	6 p.m.	TS	
" 22 to 25	Manchester -	November Race Meeting	-	always	TS, BM, LV, LS	



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WALTER SCRIVEN, POSTMAN AT BRIDGNORTH

by Jim Hammond

Walter Scriven was born in 1884 to William and Amy Scriven of 19, Railway Street, Bridgnorth. According to the 1891 census he is the 4th of seven children; however it is clear from earlier censuses that there were previous births in this family – at least three other children had been born who had either moved on or died by the time of the census of 1891. Walter's father, William Scriven, was local to the area having been born in Alveley, 6 miles south east of Bridgnorth just west of what is now the A442. He was married at the age of 25 to an Alveley girl, Amy Chapman, in 1867, and they lived in the village initially, his occupation being described (in common with the vast majority of those living outside the towns) as "Agricultural Labourer". Clearly not a family of means.

By the time of the 1881 Census, William and Amy had moved to 19, Holly Bush Road in the High Town, Bridgnorth. His occupation was described as "Farm Labourer", and there were four children living in the home, together with a boarder who would supplement the family income. The family must have moved to the town before 1875, as a daughter, Emily, was born at Bridgnorth in that year.

A notice in the London Gazette of 21st January 1881¹, records that "In the County Court of Shropshire holden at Madeley. In the matter of proceedings for Liquidation by Arrangement or Composition with Creditors, Instituted by William Scriven of 19, Railway Street, Bridgnorth, in the County of Salop, Machinist". The notice requests that all persons having property belonging to the debtor, or owing him money, are to deliver them to the Trustee. Creditors who have not already delivered their proof of debt must do so. The notice is dated the 17th January 1881. The Scriven family had fallen on hard times, and William was having to go through the process of insolvency arrangements. This was all before Walter was born.

There is a discrepancy in the recorded address between this notice and the 1881 Census. Railway Street runs into Hollybush Road, and the house number in each case is "19". The 1891 census also gives the address as Railway Street. It is not clear to me which is correct, or whether the road was renamed. Perhaps someone with local knowledge can clear up this anomaly.

In the London Gazette of the eighth of July 1881², there is a further notice to the effect that: a special resolution for Liquidation by Arrangement of the affairs of William Scriven was passed in the County Court, and that a general Meeting of Creditors would be held on the 25th July 1881 to "Audit the Accounts of the Trustee, release the Trustee and close the liquidation". There is no indication in this kind of notice of the extent of the debts, but the likelihood is that there was money owed to local traders that did not amount to a great deal and he was able to come to an arrangement with the creditors as indicated in the notice.

This gives a background to the family circumstances into which Walter Scriven was born, three years later in 1884. Three more children were born by the time of the 1891 Census in which Walter is aged six and a "Scholar" (i.e. receiving basic instruction). By now, William Scriven the father is described as a "Portable Engine Driver" (This must mean a Stationary Engine, which is how it is described in the next Census of 1901).

The next record in which we find Walter is the Census of 1901. He is sixteen years old and a "Boot Shop Assistant", probably having been working since he was thirteen. He is still living in the family home at 19 Railway Street and contributing to the family income, along with an elder brother "Francis" and a younger brother "Harry".

Walter clearly did not intend to remain in a boot shop. In the London Gazette of the 6th October 1903³ is a notice from the Civil Service Commission, stating that the following candidates have been certified by the Civil Service Commissioners as qualified for the appointments set against their respective names. Dated the 1st October 1903, "Without Competition" (i.e. not a competitive appointment), for the Post Office Department is "Postman, Walter Scriven, (Bridgnorth)". In the appointment books of the General Post Office, it is recorded that he was appointed in August 1903 as a Rural Postman for Bridgnorth to Romsley⁴, 2 miles further south east of Alveley.

The position of a postman was not at all a well paid job at that time, but it was regular job with regular pay and as long as you behaved yourself it was a secure job without the fear of redundancy. More importantly, perhaps, the Post Office was an organisation with a hierarchy of positions giving the possibility of advancement. For Walter, though he may not have realised this, he joined the Post Office at a time when a series of Parliamentary enquiries was improving the working conditions of the postmen. There is one further record in the appointment books for Walter Scriven dated November 1907⁵; in this case it gives the appointment as a Rural Postman, Bridgnorth. There is not enough information to be clear if this is a promotion.

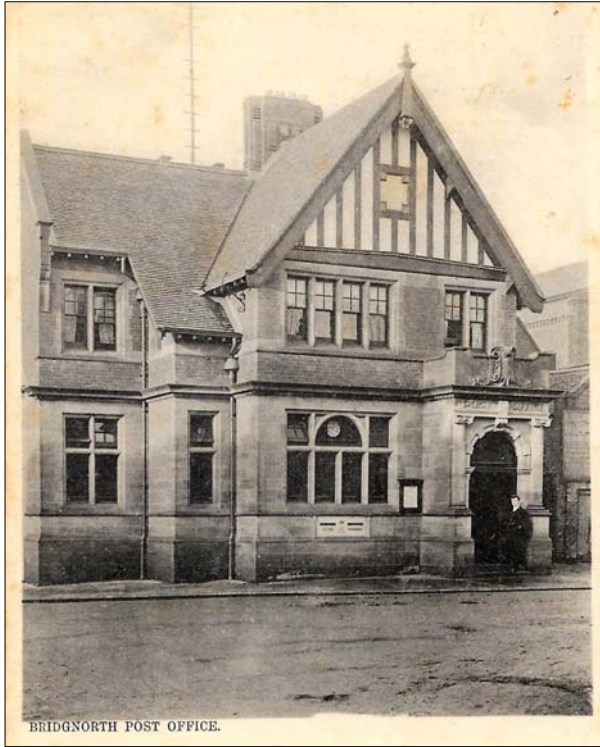


Fig 1, 1903 postcard of Bridgnorth Post Office

In 1908, Walter married Lizzie Leah Edge at Oswestry. The Census three years later gives them as living at No. 1 Severn Terrace, Bridgnorth, with a child – Leslie Walter – aged one. Walter’s occupation is “Postman”, and the house is recorded as having five rooms (excluding closets, bathrooms, offices etc). There are no lodgers; Walter’s occupation has allowed him to be “on the up”.

Apart from registrations of birth, marriage and death; few records survive detailing the lives of ordinary people in ordinary occupations, and normally one would expect little more than information from the censuses, perhaps a will or a business archive and an occasional mention in a local newspaper. On the whole, this is true for Walter Scriven. His father William died in 1917 aged 74 followed by his mother in 1920 aged 75. However, in the Post Office Magazine of 1936⁶, there is a record of Walter Scriven’s promotion at Bridgnorth Post Office to “Assistant Inspector”. I have not found any other records of promotion prior to this, and that would be all if it were not for another notice in a supplement to the London Gazette.

The notice in the Supplement to the London Gazette of the 13th June 1944⁷ reads as follows: “The KING has been graciously pleased to award the Imperial Service Medal to the following officers:- (includes) “Scriven, Walter, Assistant Inspector, Bridgnorth”. The recommendation for this award would have been made by the postmaster of Bridgnorth, and the presentation made on his retirement aged sixty. From his inauspicious beginnings, Walter had advanced to the position of Assistant Inspector, had his good character officially recognised, and now had the security of a Civil Service pension.

The Imperial Service Medal was awarded to selected Post Office employees on retirement. It was instituted in 1902 to be awarded to manual grade Civil Service employees with a good service record. From 1931 the obverse side showed the crowned head of the current sovereign, while the reverse had a view of a man gazing across the sea towards the setting sun – this was supposed to symbolise rest after labour. The words below say: **For Faithful Service**. To be eligible, civil servants had to be established members of staff with at least 25 years pensionable service. The Post Office made it clear that awards were not a matter of right. Employees also had to show interest and zeal in their work, and had to work in such a way that did not require constant supervision. They also needed an unblemished official conduct record.



Fig 2, KGVI Imperial Service Medal

Walter enjoyed sixteen years of retirement before he died at the age of 75 on the 14th January 1960; his address at the time of his death was “Sunnydale, Rose Lane, Bridgnorth”. He left no will, his widow took out letters of administration and his effects were valued at £1,362 – 10 – 0. His widow, Lizzie Leah, lived on until 1966 – dying at the good age of 86.

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- 1 London Gazette, 21st January 1881, p.329
- 2 London Gazette, 8th July 1881, p.3436
- 3 London Gazette, 6th October 1903, p.6092
- 4 Post 58 Appointment Books
- 5 Post 58 Appointment Books
- 6 Post Office Magazine, Vol3, No2, February 1936, p ‘x’ following p.72
- 7 London Gazette, 13th June 1944 (Supplement) p.2879

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THE GREAT CROSS POST – THE ROLE OF JOSEPH QUASH OF EXETER

by Alan Godfrey

Malcolm Allinson's recent article on the Great Cross Post (MM 191/9) has perhaps understated the importance of Joseph Quash, described in the article as "just one of the many West Country businessmen whose petitions to the Postmasters General, Sir Thomas Frankland and Sir Robert Cotton, brought a favourable response." Quash, as Postmaster of Exeter, also held responsibility for the operation of the Cornish Road as far as Truro (in operation from December 1704). In October 1696 he was instructed to set up and manage the first cross post from Exeter to Bristol. To achieve this he worked with Henry Pyne of Bristol, who was responsible for checking the accounting. In the same year he became renter of the by-letters (the small farmers) at £140 / year. In 1698 he set up an extension of the Cross Post to Wootton under Edge. When the Cross Post was extended from Bristol to Chester in 1700, it was Quash who was asked to mastermind the operation, with assistance from Henry Pyne and Thomas Reynell of Chester. In return Quash was paid £65 for settling the road and a Mr Jenner £26 for measuring it. In 1707 / 8 he was given approval to set up another cross post, this time from Bristol, through Bath, to Oxford (and arranged for his protégé, Ralph Allen to manage it from Bath, where two years later he also became Postmaster) and perhaps a further road in South Wales. It seems almost certain that Quash was responsible for introducing the first town marks (the Exeter "E", the Bristol "B" and, later the Chester "C").

Away from the cross posts, in 1706 Quash successfully applied to farm the Exon Road ('for letters between London and towns in Somerset, Gloucester, Worcester, Oxford, Hereford, Devon, Shropshire and South Wales') for £600 / year (increasing to £700 / year by 1711), and in 1710 he was appointed Receiver General for Taxes for parts of Devon. These events seem to mark the start of his financial problems. In 1711 postage rates increased by 1d and concurrently most of the contract farms ceased and the farmers became salaried managers, who were also paid an additional 10% of net revenue. Quash was the exception, he retained his farm, but failed to collect the 1d postage increase. On 14th February 1713 Post Office records show "due from Mr Joseph Quash of Exeter for the Adiconall duty of one penny per letter in the Cross Road from June 1, 1711 to February 14, 1713 £1640 / 4 / 9", in addition to this £165 was due on the by-letters. This seems to have been paid, but a further claim of £2,200 on 13th February 1712 / 3 caused Quash to flee and he was declared bankrupt. In April 1714 Francis Manaton lodged a claim, declaring that he had paid Quash £3,500, who drew three bills on Oswald Hoskins in London, who accepted them; however before they were paid both Quash and Hoskins were bankrupt.

After this Quash, disappears from view although it is quite likely that he used his extensive experience of the cross posts to assist and support his friend and former trainee, the twenty-six year old Ralph Allen, after he obtained the farm of the cross and by posts across the whole of England and Wales in 1720. Indeed, Quash acted as guarantor for Ralph Allen on a bond of administration relating to the will of Allen's parents' estates in 1731 / 2. This shows Quash was still a close and trusted friend to Allen eighteen years after his bankruptcy. Willcocks' view was: "(Quash's) lack of financial control betrayed his postal acumen, and this seems to have been accelerated by national conditions making difficult the transmission of money, and folly in selection of his financial associates." There is no doubt that Quash was an important (but largely unrecognised) postal pioneer, who proved to be an outstanding employee as Postmaster and manager of huge distances of post road, but a failure as a farmer in his own right. He should also be recognised for identifying the potential of the young Ralph Allen, training him in his methods of cross post administration and giving Allen the opportunity in Bath which launched his career in the Post Office.

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England's Postal History – R.M. Willcocks – published by the author 1975.

Masters of the Post: The Authorised History of the Royal Mail – D Campbell-Smith – Allen Lane 2011.

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A RARE VIEW OF THE POST OFFICE STAFF OF THE BIRMINGHAM & CREWE SORTING CARRIAGE

This article by **Keith Morris** first appeared in the June TPO Society journal and was offered to Midland Mail

Many years ago, before postcard collecting gained momentum, a postcard like the one on the left would have been in a box labelled "Social History" or even "Unidentified" or "of Post Office interest" with probably not even a thought of turning it over to look at the postmark.



The Card is addressed to-
Miss Chinery

St Paul's College
Whittall Street
B'ham (Birmingham)

The message reads *Many Happy Returns of the day*
From Auntie + Uncle
31st Jan. 07

With a side note "A glimpse of the interior of the Mail"

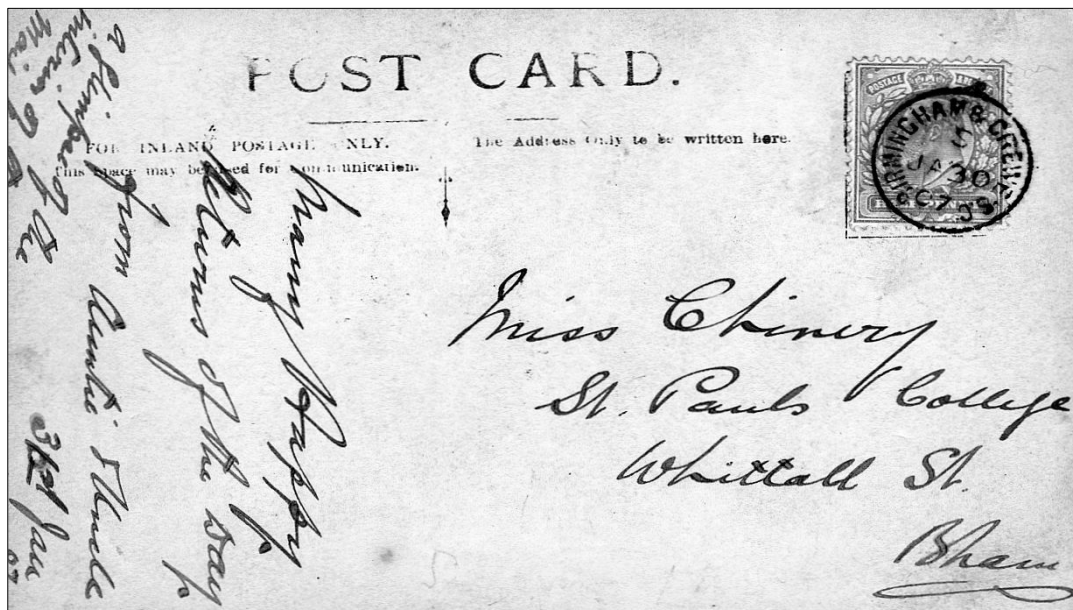
St Paul's College was founded on 7th October 1908, from an earlier establishment based on Whittall Street.

Miss Chinery would have had a good education for a girl in 1907 (or was she a tutor?). Today the College specialises in Mathematics and Computing Sciences for Girls.

The Real photograph shows what is probably the whole of the Staff of the Sorting Carriage, presumably the senior Sorting Clerks & Telegraphers (SC&T) are to the front, as befits their rank in the Carriage.

Note the writing on the mail bag on the left reading
BIRMINGHAM & CREWE / SORTING CARRIAGE /
GOING NORTH / NORTH WESTERN / T.P.O. /
GOING NORTH / SCOTCH / 2ND DIVISION

Birmingham & Crewe Sorting Carriage / S / JA 30 / 07



The anomaly between Uncle's message dated 31st January 07 and the cancellation date of the 30th January can be explained by the S, indicating that the Sorting Carriage was travelling South, having left Crewe at 01.00am (when the date stamp was set), and uncle writing the message at the end of his duty in Birmingham the next morning!

CROSS-HATCH LETTER WRITING

by Derek Smeathers

Early 19th century letters were expensive to send, firstly because paper was expensive and then because of postage charges. Paper could be purchased in small sheets (about the size of the modern A5) but people wanted more space for their messages. Until 1839 postage was charged on a 'per sheet' basis with two sheets doubling the postage. The early Victorian writers had a way of keeping costs down by writing one way on a sheet then turning it half way and continuing across the page, though the reading of it was difficult and required a definite skill. However the writer had used another, clever device to save postage – he had written the letter on an extra-large sheet, measuring 16 x 13 inches, claiming postage for only one sheet. He makes the point by adding **Single** in the lower left corner of the address panel and the Royal Mail has duly obliged by charging the single-sheet rate of 8d to Kettering via Oundle, Stilton and the North Road mailcoach to Newark, Notts – between 50 and 80 miles. He has kept it below one ounce, anything over would have multiplied the purchase and he has used every last inch of the paper except for the address panel. Mind you he has saved more money by making his brother pay the 8d to receive the letter! A canny lot these Northamptonshire folk!

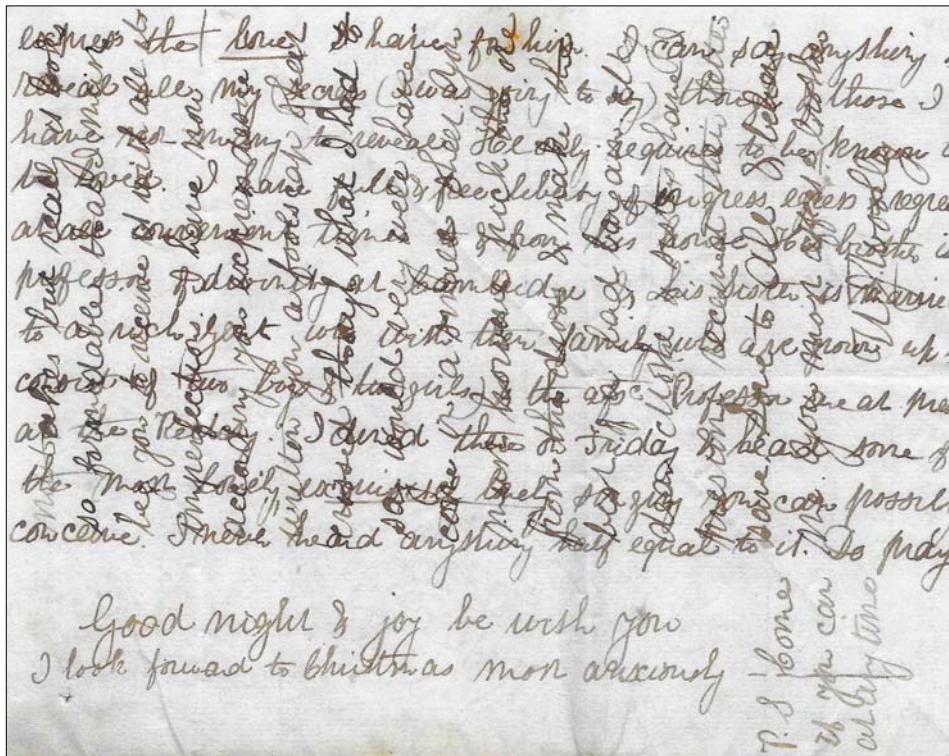
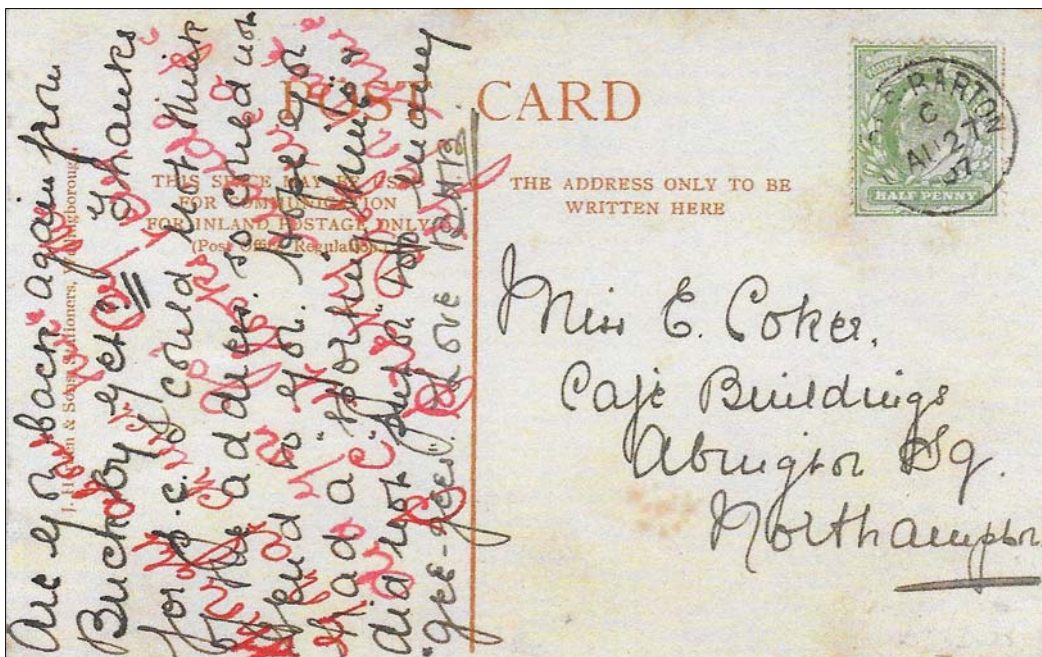


Fig 1 (left, reduced to fit) shows a typical cross-hatched letter dated 1st Oct 1838, in which the writer apologises for his writing 'I am getting into a sad scribbly (sic) hand and you will find the crossing difficult to read. If I had been at the office I would have written it in red ink'. I have no example of using two colours for writing cross-hatched letters, neither have I seen one – has any one else?

Years later I bought a local postcard of 1907 because it had a photograph of a

Northants post office. On the other side was a cross – hatched message using black and red inks – just as the writer of the letter in Fig 1 had described (see Fig 2, left). It certainly helps the clarity of the message, even with unclear hand-writing – the writer had clearly used this method before.



HOW IT ALL BEGAN

by John Calladine

The Editor has asked members to say something about the genesis of their interest in postal history. My fear has always been that such an account would be both predictable and boring and I am not sure he has convinced me otherwise. However, we like to cooperate and there is always the latent fear that, if we fail to respond, the editor will resign. Far worse than a boring text in 'Midland Mail' is no 'Midland Mail' at all!

As with most members, the original interest in stamp collecting began in school days (in the late 1930s) when such an interest, like train spotting, was normal. It began with Indian stamps, where I believe I pinched the early collection from my elder brother, but it soon changed at boarding school to an interest in German stamps. There were exciting days towards the end of the war when the first Nazi material came to the market, liberated from German post offices by advancing troops. I still have a 1949 catalogue of European issues that brought some order to the seemingly endless flow of colourful Nazi items never seen before. Why did Britain not have such thrilling stamps?

With schooldays over, stamp collecting became no more than a background interest and so it remained until the mid-1960s. While I just remember the commemorative issue for the Coronation in 1937 and the Centenary of the Penny Post in 1940, Britain produced very few stamps other than definitives. It all changed when Wedgwood Benn became Postmaster General. The first 'special stamps', as opposed to those that commemorated only important anniversaries, appeared late in 1964 but it was the Battle of Hastings stamps of 1966 that first attracted the attention of my son, then seven and studying the event at school. The day after we bought the new stamps, we travelled to Hastings to watch the somewhat chaotic re-enactment of the famous battle. Thereafter new special stamps were collected as they appeared.

In 1967 the RAF shipped us all off to the United States in the *SS France*. By then a second son had been born. In an attempt to keep up to date with British special stamps and importantly to fill the pre-1966 gaps in the collection, a dealer's list was sent from the UK. It proved to be fascinating and it was not long before I fell for an offer of three 1d blacks for £5. (No, they were not four-margin examples but were perfectly respectable and collectable.) During the next two years, I set out to collect what I believed to be a unique collecting category, British "line engraved" stamps. There was no specialised catalogue until 1973 – by which time inflation had pushed up the catalogue price of a penny black to £12 – and I set out to compile a table of the various types of corner letters and watermarks on line engraved stamps, with which to organise the growing collection. Needless to say, that had all been done elsewhere but I was not to know it.

In 1970 we returned to England and, more importantly to the Ministry of Defence in London. The stamp emporiums of the Strand were within strolling distance of my office, initially in Admiralty Arch and later in Whitehall. I contacted a dealer whose adverts I had seen when in America and I would subsequently attempt to find time in the supposed lunch hour to sit on a high stool in John Lobo's office in Maiden Lane (just off the Strand) and select penny reds, imperf and perf. Through him I was introduced to such eminent philatelists as Dr W.R.D. Wiggins, Robson Lowe and eventually Martin Willcocks. Then, one day, John showed me a small bundle of covers he had just acquired, all with early Stourbridge name-stamps. "My goodness", I exclaimed, "that was my hometown". They were too interesting to pass over and I bought them all. That was how it began.

I was still in London in 1975 when I saw a small item in the magazine "Stamp Collecting". It told of the formation of a postal history society in the Midlands. There was then no opportunity to attend its meetings but I joined immediately. Forty years later . . .




Bill Pipe

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RECORDED AND UNRECORDED RUTLAND SKELETONS: A COLLECTION-BASED ACCOUNT

by Bill Gillham

Rutland skeletons fall into two groups: UPPINGHAM and the rest. The first of these is relatively common but even here there are discoveries to be made. The collector's *vade mecum* is, of course, *Skeleton Postmarks of England and Wales* originated by the ubiquitous James Mackay (Third edition 2006 compiled by Patrick G. Awcock and John R. Frost). This is the reference text for the present article and so provides the framework for what follows: I cite it as A and F where appropriate. Down to detail:

UPPINGHAM

This is the most often encountered: I have eleven in total. Awcock and Frost give 30 August 1907 to 26 September 1907 as the period of use. But I have one dated 28 August 1907 (Fig 1) so an unrecorded item. They also list one for 31 January 1909 only, which may be a re-use; I haven't seen this. It is worth noting at this point that all the other skeletons they record for Rutland are given a single date. This is probably more an index of rarity than the only point of use: see the discussion of the South Luffenham mark below.

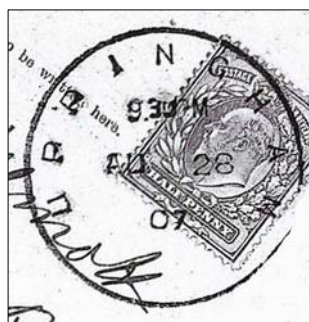


Fig 1, UPPINGHAM skeleton



Fig 2, KNOSSINGTON / OAKHAM Skeleton (see below)

OAKHAM

Only a single entry here, and a late one: 12 June 1975. I have an example of this timed at 2 p.m. A and F note that the 'new county' date-stamp was incorrect as there was no provision for 'time' - hence the skeleton. I suspect this quibble was a rearguard action by Rutlanders who fiercely resented the 'takeover' by Leicestershire; it still resonates even though a subsequent Conservative government reversed the decision!

What follows are 'village' skeletons in alphabetical order.

ASHWELL

A and F give: ASHWELL / OAKHAM 13 SP 1912, 32mm. I haven't got it and I haven't seen one. Does anyone have one?

EMPINGHAM

A and F give two entries: EMPINGHAM / STAMFORD, 9 MR 1907 - 25 MR 1907 30mm
EMPINGHAM / STAMFORD, 12 AUG 1910 - SP 1910 36mm

I don't have an example of the first of these but of the second I have one from the last day of use timed at 5.45 p.m.

KNOSSINGTON

Here is the kind of example that gladdens the heart of a collector being both unexpected and unrecorded. Unexpected because Knossington is one of the scarcest village postmarks in any form: I have just one despite much searching at local postcard fairs. The details of the skeleton on a KE7 PPC are as follows:

KNOSSINGTON / OAKHAM, 11.A.M.? JA 1 (year not visible c.1905), 33mm (Fig 2 above).

SOUTH LUFFENHAM

A and F give just one entry: SOUTH LUFFENHAM/STAMFORD 3 SP 1910, 36½mm. But I have recently acquired an earlier example as follows:

SOUTH LUFFENHAM /STAMFORD 6.15M (? for P.M.) AU 17 10, 36½ mm – which extends the probable period of use. And, incidentally, suggests that other single-date reports are not the whole story (Fig 3).

WHISSENDINE

A and F (they call it WHISSENDALE, an obvious error) give just one entry, which, corrected, is as follows: WHISSENDINE / OAKHAM 5 SP 1908, 31mm. The postcard is illustrated on the back cover of John Soer's 1997 book and is now in my collection; shown here for the record (Fig 4, with this actual postmark).

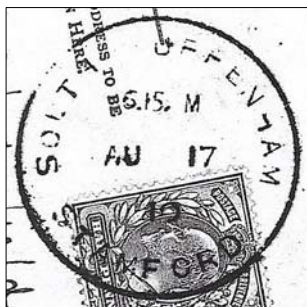


Fig 3, SOUTH LUFFENHAM



Fig 4, WHISSENDINE / OAKHAM

And finally A and F list a rubber skeleton as follows:

LITTLE CASTERTON / STAMFORD 23 06 1912 (note that they don't give the diameter) but I also have what is likely to be the same mark on piece (date: 20 Nov 12; size: 29mm). In addition I have a corresponding mark on a 1914 postcard as follows:

LITTLE CASTERTON / STAMFORD 27 JUL 14 29mm (Fig 5) which would give it a long period of use and raises the question of whether it is a temporary skeleton or our old friend a 'village rubber'. Note that in this example the year is visible (just), although it may not be entirely clear in the photocopy; however the probable date conforms to that written on the accompanying message.



Fig 5, LITTLE CASTERTON / STAMFORD

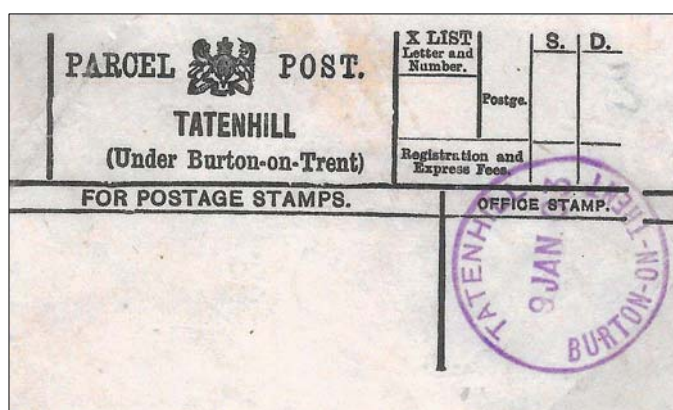
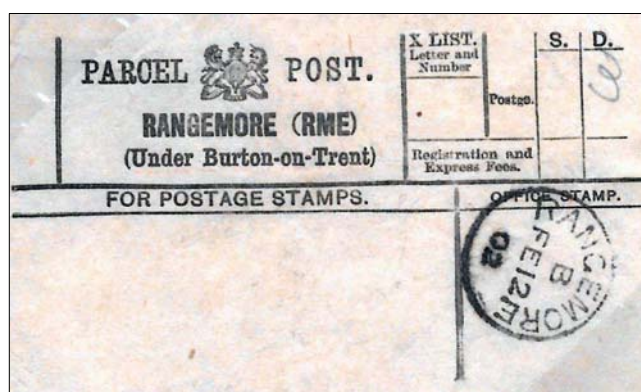
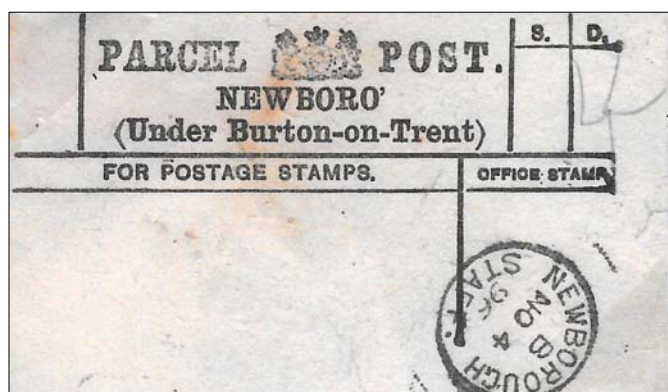
I have called this a 'collection-based' account because I wanted to stick close to the evidence I have available. Also this kind of straightforward report gives both the reader (and the writer) the opportunity to make tentative conclusions. The most obvious being that has been found so far, in my own collecting and the data brought together by Mackay and subsequently by Awcock and Frost is only part of the picture. In short there must be other examples out there; a bonus would be if members of the Society could add to what is reported here.

References:

- Awcock, P.G. and Frost, J.R. (2006) *Skeleton Postmarks of England and Wales* (Third Edition ; originated by James Mackay) Published by The British Postmark Society.
 Calladine, W.J. (ed.) (2013) *The British County Catalogue of Postal History (Midlands Edition)* Published by The Midland (G.B.) Postal History Society: No .6
 Soer, J. (1997) *The Royal Mail in Leicestershire and Rutland*. Published by The Midland (GB) Postal Society: No.4

PARCEL POST LABELS OF SOME BURTON-ON-TRENT SUB-OFFICES

Richard Farman has submitted some colour photocopies of parcel post labels of Burton-on-Trent sub-offices mostly to the west and south west of the town, together with a map for reference, the scans are self-explanatory.



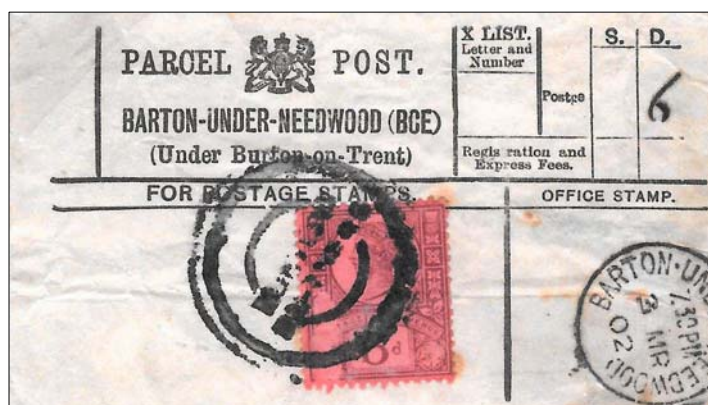
Villages to the north east of the Trent in the BURTON-on-TRENT postal area



1/3 paid for an 8lb parcel from 1st June 1920



3d Stamp added?

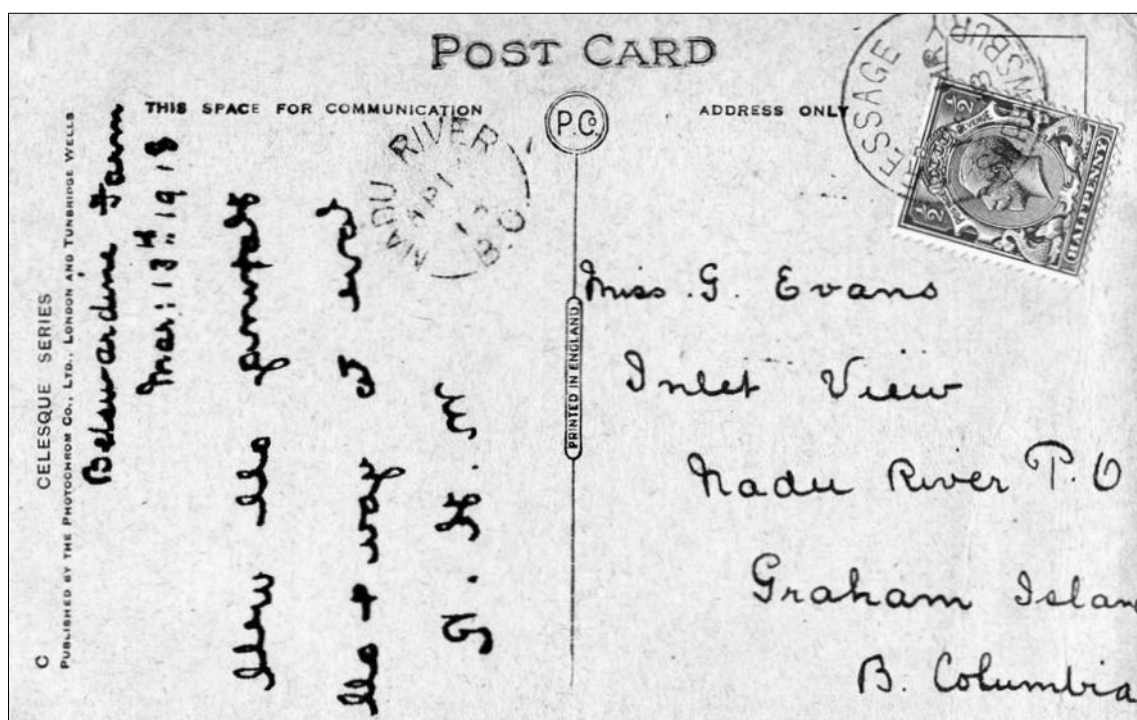


Part cancel of BARTON-UNDER-NEEDWOOD duplex with BURTON-ON-TRENT parcel rubber cancel. 6d paid for a 4lb parcel from 1st June 1897.

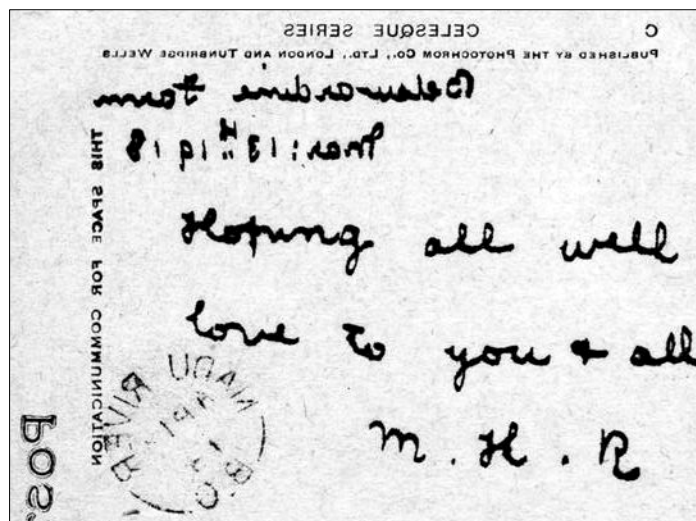
CRESSAGE, SHREWSBURY to NADU RIVER, BRITISH COLUMBIA in 1918

by Brian Atkins

When I lived on Vancouver Island, my daughter called it 'my remote location'! Well this Shropshire postcard is addressed to an even more remote Canadian location! The card turned up at a 2011 meeting of the 21 Club in Vancouver; it has the previously unreported cancel of **NADU RIVER / B.C.**; it was mailed at ½d rate on 14th March 1918 from Cressage, a village south of Shrewsbury but it was not taxed – the foreign (and 'empire') rate was 1d. It went by sea to New York; then Northern Pacific Railroad via Chicago to Tacoma, Washington State and finally ship to Victoria BC, or direct to Vancouver and up to the Queen Charlotte Islands, the location of Nadu River.



Nadu River was a short-lived agricultural settlement formed in the early 1900s during the first rush of homesteaders to take up land in the Queen Charlotte Islands, of which Graham Island is the largest. A dock, store and post office were established on the site of an old, seasonal, Haida First Nation camp; the post office opened on 1st Feb 1914 and closed on 30th Sept 1923; the small community that surrounded it no longer exists. Nadu is a modification of the Haida word for nose and refers to the promontory formed where a river enters the east side of Masset Sound, near where the sound enters Masset Inlet (**Nadu** still appears on the Google map of Graham Island). The card's recipient, Miss G Evans, was a relative (daughter?) of the Nadu River postmistress, Mrs Elizabeth Mary Evans, who served from 1917 till the closure of the office in 1923.



The greeting on the reverse confused all who viewed it until your correspondent realised the message was in mirror writing; it reads:

**Belwardine Farm,
March 13th 1918**

**Hoping all well }
Love to you & all }
M. H. R. }**

← This part in mirror writing

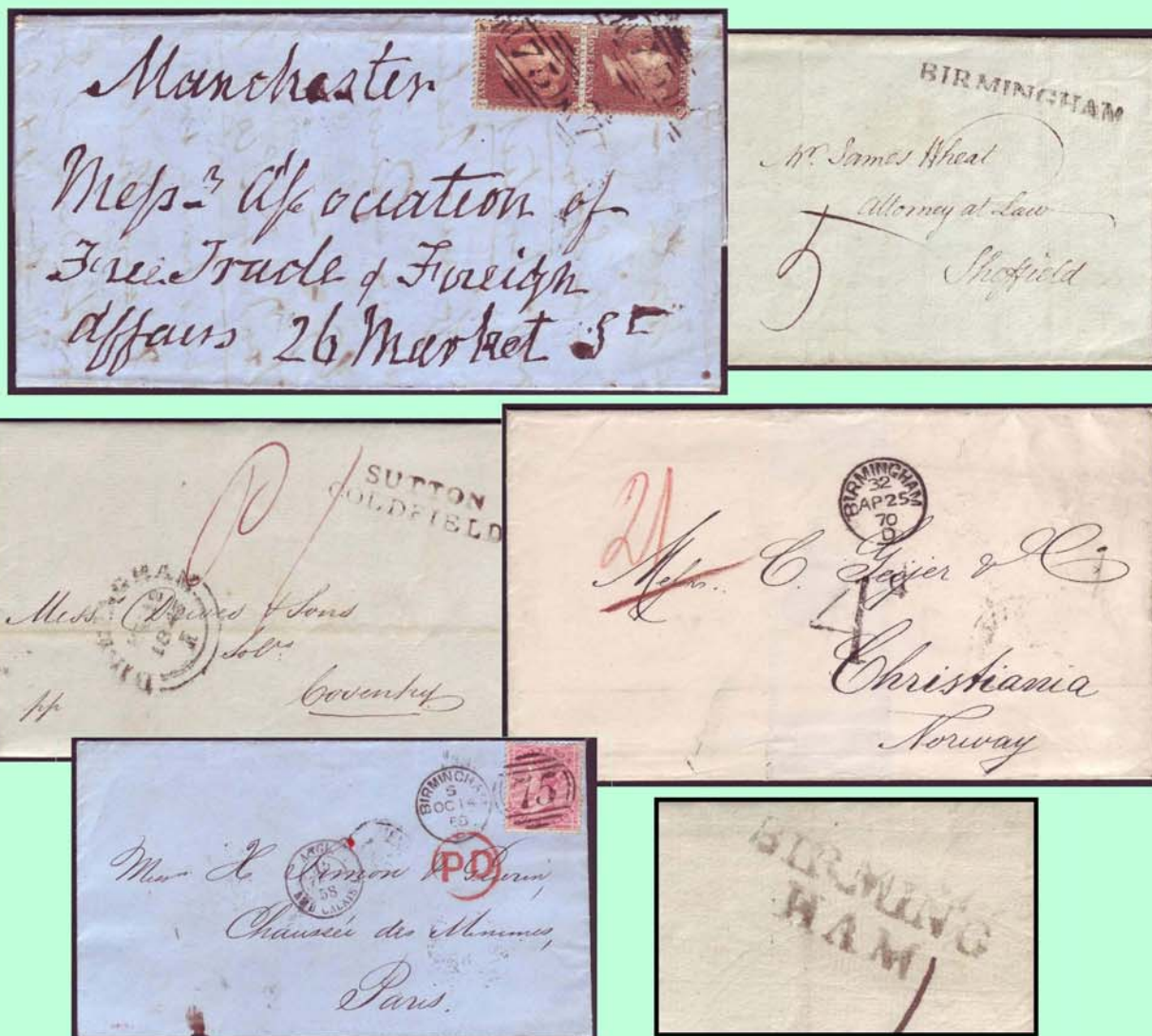
My thanks are due to Andrew Scott of Sechelt, British Columbia and 21 Club member for the scan and information on Nadu River.

NB: The 21 Club in Vancouver is an invitation-only club for philatelists and postal historians from all aspects of both of those interests.

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