

MIDLAND G.B. POSTAL HISTORY SOCIETY



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BULLETIN NO. 7 NOVEMBER 1977

Editorial

WHAT ABOUT THAT ARTICLE ?

You no doubt made a mental note after reading previous Bulletins to get down and write a short article for your Society - give the Editor a pleasant Christmas Present and put pen to paper please.

John Calladine's article 'The New Jerusalem' published in our last issue will shortly be printed in 'Stamp Collecting Weekly' and he has kindly donated 50 % of his fee to the Society - this will assist with our postage bill and is the reason why this Bulletin is posted to you.

SOCIETY MEETINGS at the AGM it was decided to 'hand out' Bulletins at the various Society meetings to 'reduce our overheads' - but if you are like me (and need reminding of 2 monthly meetings) it could mean that attendance at our meetings could slowly diminish instead of increasing. So we are doubly thankful to John Calladine - for his articles and contribution towards postages. Anyway, our November meeting details : (and this reminder)

SATURDAY 19th November at Sibree Hall, COVENTRY

Commencing at 2 p.m. with up to nine sheets from members. How about your most recent acquisition ? Don't forget to get there early and visit the Coventry Philatelic Societies ANNUAL EXHIBITION and DEALERS FAIR. Snacks and teas available. As usual guests will be made welcome.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

December

"Judging Postal History & Preparation of Exhibits"

To be held at 'The Bass Museum' at Burton on Trent on Saturday, 3rd December at 2 p.m. It is hoped that we get a wide attendance at this meeting which is the first of its kind (as far as we know) to be held. Members will be welcome at the earlier time of 11 am by our Chairman, Richard Farman, who will act as a guide for those wishing to 'tour the Museum' before the meeting.

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April

'Postal History Auction' and A.G.M.
Has been booked for 8th April at Midland Institute Birmingham. Further details to be issued.

Answer to August Quiz

The illustration was of a stamp used by the Head Post Office (Returned Letter Office) between January 1868 and April 1869 to mark a letter which had been through the R.L.O. ie the Returned Letter Office.

Congratulations to Society member Mrs. Elizabeth Lewis who sent the first correct answer. (and received a 'small prize')

NOVEMBER QUIZ

The earliest 'letter' known is hieroglyphic or pictographic being a series of signs of little pictures to convey a message carved in stone (and clay) and dating well before 3,000 B.C.

Subsequent 'letters' on papyrus, paper and parchment followed.

When was the first true public post introduced in England ?

What part of England did it cover ?

Not to be confused with 'the Royal Mail' or letters sent by Private Carrier, or The Merchant Posts.

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BIRMINGHAM ITEMS TO LOOK OUT FOR

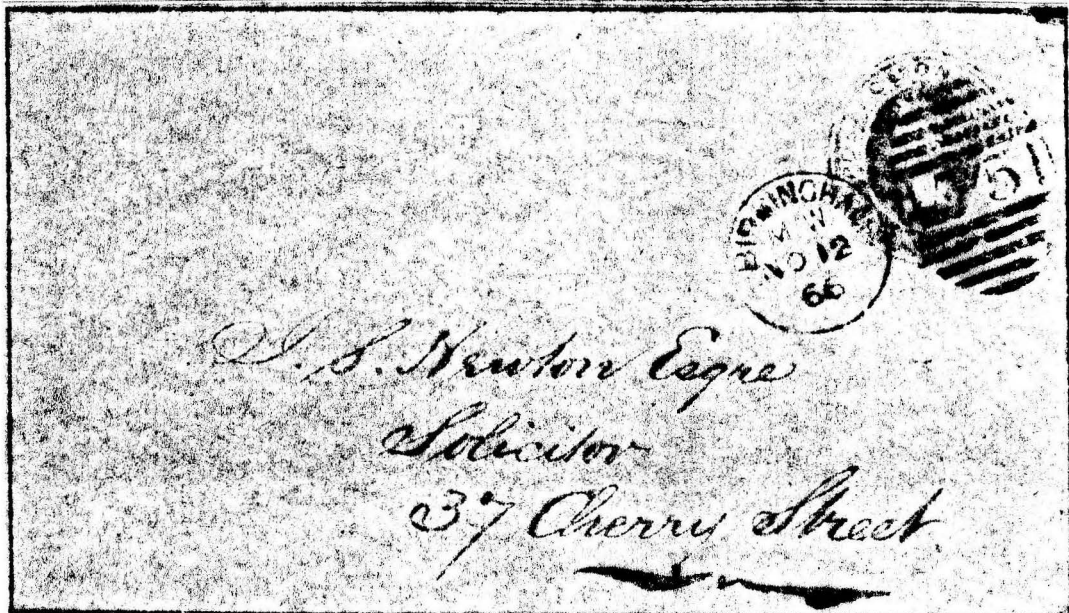
No. One by Eric Lewis

Birmingham was one of the few towns to have a five bar duplex handstamp - this was used for a short time in 1866.

Of the three covers that I have seen, the earliest date was 14th August, 1866 and the latest date being 12th November 1866.

It is always worth while looking out for this postmark (which is illustrated below) as it is not generally known that a five bar duplex is very much scarcer than the usual three or four bar item, and there is always a chance of finding one at a modest price.

The only other towns that I know that also used a five bar duplex are Liverpool and Southampton. Perhaps our members may know of some others ?



This short article by Eric Lewis marks the first of Birmingham Items to look out for - we look out for subsequent interesting articles by Eric.

Editor.

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NO Wants, for sale or exchange requests received from members this month. Surely you cannot be satisfied with all that you have got and what you want. No charge for publication. Jon Baker 13 Station Rd. Hinckley Leics.

ENGLAND'S FLAG CANCEL

by John Calladine.

In the summer of 1974, a correspondence in 'Stamp Collecting' magazine discussed the subject of "Britain's Scarcest Cancellation". Among the nominations was a first day strike of the earliest Birmingham spoon but the candidate provoking most discussion was England's only true 'flag cancel' - the impression of the Imperial Mail Marking Machine.

It is illustrated in Alcock and Holland's book "British Postmarks, A Short History and Guide" on page 104 (A & H No.2411) but the text gives no indication of its rarity. Nor does it seem that the background to this cancellation is widely known. Probably the best account can be found in a booklet by W.G. Stitt Dibden "Early Stamp Machines" published by the Postal History Society in 1964 in an edition of only 150 copies. Unfortunately the booklet is now almost as scarce as the cancellation !

American and Canadian collectors are more familiar with flag cancels than we are and a specialist society exists in the United States. It has probably crossed the minds of many British collectors that the wavy line cancels that disfigure our stamps might be put to better use. A waving flag emblem is an attractive alternative and it could have provided a happier celebration of the Queen's Jubilee than the universally condemned Jubilee stamps.

A Canadian flag cancel of the 1897 jubilee is illustrated at Figure 1 and it is this very cancel that lies at the heart of the story of the Imperial Mail Marking Machine.

In July 1896, the Imperial Mail Marking Machine Company of Canada offered the Post Office a trial of a flag cancel machine. The offer was accepted a year later and it seems certain that the Post Office borrowed an actual die of the Canadian Jubilee flag cancel in use in Montreal and which is identical, except in minor engraving detail, to figure 1. A trial was run in mid-1897 without the Canadian dated circle (see Figure 2) and later with a London dated circle of 25 November 1897. Only a single example of the latter trial is known. In neither trial is it likely that the cancellation was postally used.

However a third and final trial was conducted in the spring of 1898. The cancellation die had, by then, been changed to a flag bearing a Union Jack and the word "England". Stitt Dibden states that the machine was used on March 15th, 17th, 18th and 21st, 1600 perfect impressions being produced in each of the two half hour runs on 17th and 21st March. It has since been suggested that the final run was of only 20 minutes duration and that the figure of 1600 may be excessive.

The correspondence in 'Stamp Collecting' produced the following reports of known impressions of the 'England' flag :

- 15th March : a postally used cover in the collection of Mr. Frederick Langford of Pasadena, USA. (This is the only known complete envelope but Stitt Dibden gives its date, more plausibly as 17 Mar)
- 17th March : An envelope front addressed to a Mr. Chorley. This is illustrated at figure 3.
- 18th March : None
- 21st March : An on-piece impression on a penny lilac cut from the envelope, not by the present owner, but by his predecessor.
- Of Unknown Date : A commercially used example on a $\frac{1}{2}$ d brown postal stationery card (seen at a small Philatelic Society).

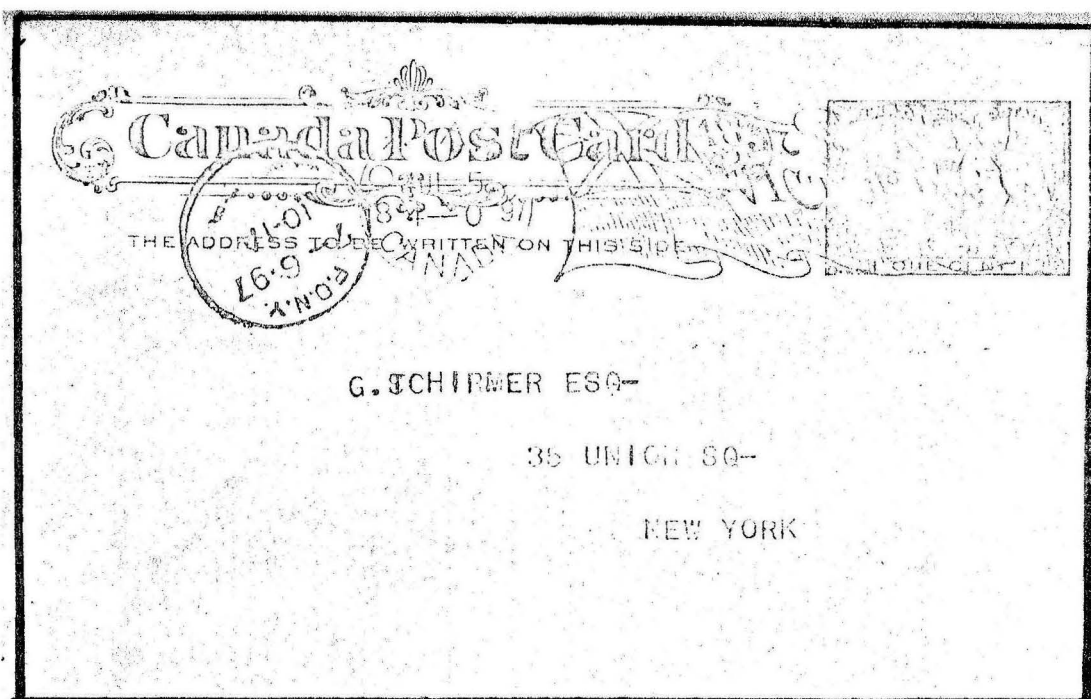


Figure 1.

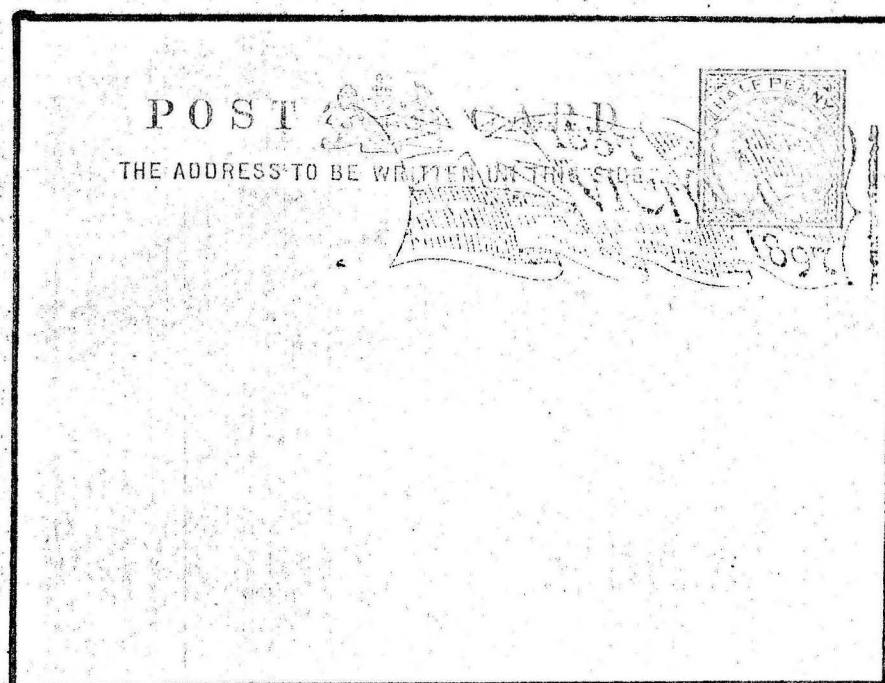


Figure 2.

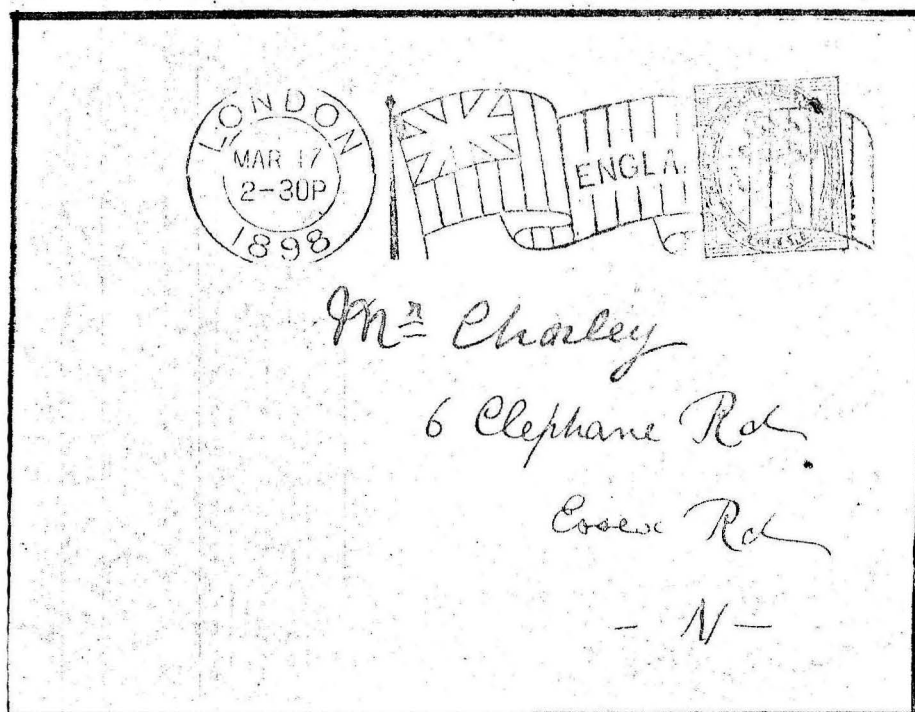


Figure 3.

Continued

There seems no reason why envelopes or postcards with this scarce cancellation should not have been sent to Midland addresses and there attractive appearance makes it probable that some were preserved. As only one complete envelope has so far been recorded, a second would provide a useful finale to anyone's postal history display !

Note It would indeed be interesting to know why the postal authorities did not proceed with more general use of this attractive cancellation. Perhaps they could not agree financial terms 'and royalties' with the Imperial Mail Marking Machine Company of Canada?

Editor.

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'RULES for RECEIVERS at PROVINCIAL TOWNS in ENGLAND'

Published for Her Majesty's Stationery Office in 1869 (27 pages)

Photostat copies of this booklet are available on application to our Chairman, Richard Farman, 124 Henhurst Hill, Burton on Trent Staffordshire on receipt of £1 towards Society Funds.

It is a very interesting publication for collectors of Midland postal history and covers such subjects as :

Rates of Postage	Exemptions from Postage
Book post & Newspapers	Registration
Letters errors & Fines	Stamping
Postage stamps	Despatches
Stamped labels	Stamped envelopes
	etc. etc.

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Glossary of Postal History Terms (First section) A - B & C

Above Privilege Number	:	A stamp applied to a letter disallowed under the Franking System
Above Weight	:	A letter disallowed under the Franking System
Ambulant	:	Railway
Après le Départ	:	Too Late
A.P.O.	:	Army Post Office
Ausstellung	:	Exhibition
Avion	:	Air Mail
Backstamp	:	A stamp applied to the reverse of a letter, usually indicating transit or receipt.
Bahnhof	:	Railway Station
Bishopmark	:	The first stamp, invented by Henry Bishop (1661). A circle divided horizontally, top segment indicating month and lower half the day of posting.
Cancellation	:	A stamp used as an obliterator.
Combination Cover	:	A cover bearing stamps of two different countries.
Cover	:	An envelope.
Currency Stamp	:	Stamps used by British and French Post Offices, embodying a stated amount of currency.

To be continued (Does anyone know of other A - B and C 's ?)