

MIDLAND MAIL

THE JOURNAL OF THE MIDLAND (GB) POSTAL HISTORY SOCIETY

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STOP PRESS – WEBSITE. Many members have thought for a while that a prestigious society like ours should have a website. We have one now! The address is www.midlandphs.org.uk. The e-mails info@midlandphs.org.uk will lead surfers to Alan Godfrey and publications@midlandphs.org.uk will take them to our Society Librarian!

THE SOCIETY'S NEW COLLABORATIVE PROJECT

The Society's Committee has unanimously agreed the subject of the Society's next collaborative project, leading to publication of a new book. We shall be recording all known PARCEL POST LABELS from the Midland offices. The Coordinating Editor will be Martin Scroggs, who played a major role in the publication of our most recent book. Details of how to submit information will be provided later in the year but now is the time to consider what labels from Midlands offices may be lurking in hidden corners of your collections. Most of us will have a few, even if they are not a major interest. Unless you have a large collection, in which case you will be asked to contact your County Editor first, please be prepared to submit scans or photocopies to the appropriate County Editor(s) when asked to do so, even if you gave similar information to Bill Toye when he was seeking it. This project should have widespread appeal and will inevitably lead to a most attractive publication.



November 1901 parcel post label used on a parcel tag to Chester from Singleton & Cole the wholesale tobacco & snuff merchants at 22, Mardol, Shrewsbury. At that time the Queen Victoria 4d green and brown 'jubilee' stamp paid for a parcel weighing 2lb.

THE SOCIETY'S 40th ANNIVERSARY

This is early notice that we shall be celebrating the Society's 40th anniversary on Saturday 5th September at Loughborough. At 11.00am, John Scott, Immediate Past president of the Postal History Society will be displaying "The History of Writing paper" at Lovatt House, Loughborough, a short distance from the station of the Great Central Railway. This will be followed at 1pm by a buffet lunch in a luxurious Pullman Bar Car attached to one of the GCR's steam trains. The event is expected to end at about 2.30pm. It is anticipated that the 30/35 available tickets, will cost approximately £20, a cost subsidised by the Society. They will be offered to members and their partners by means of a booking form distributed later in the year that will include more detailed information.

FEBRUARY MEETING at The Black Country Museum, Dudley on the 14th of the month, saw our Chairman, Chris Jackson, introduce the topic of **Censored Mail** to 17 members present at this excellent venue which has ample parking and is a 15 minute walk from Tipton station, as Guy Bridges and I can testify.

Stuart Geddes showed a collection of letters from a US Army Officer back to his aunt in New York State written shortly after he landed in Normandy at the beginning of the US involvement in the Great War in 1917. The letters document his experiences as a dental surgeon, who also acted as a medical officer on a munitions train. Being an officer he was able to censor his own letters so some of the accounts are probably a little more explicit than letters from an ordinary soldier would have been although none of them give any indication of his whereabouts in France until the final one, written on November 11th and 12th 1918 from the far east of France near the German border.

Jan Young was granted permission by the Chairman to show three sheets of Valentines, it being that day! A lovely large one from Birmingham dated 13th Feb 1849 to Barn(t) Green, near Bromsgrove followed by a sheet showing two American Valentines dated 1908. We were informed that they were acquired as gifts for typing Frank Holland's personal and domestic affairs, Frank being of Alcock & Holland, Cheltenham Philatelic dealers.

Richard Farman had two goes with his first item from a Conscientious Objector in Dartmoor who was learning Esperanto. A 1914 paid political card from a Grenadier Guard who was standing as an MP, followed by a card from a POW Grenadier Guard in Germany. A 1915 card from Burton, FPO Egypt mail and two postcards returned by the censor as being 'unacceptable mail'. Finally in this section a sniper POW being transported by train found maps on the underside of the railway wagon labels and pocketed them, the Germans being puzzled as to where they had gone! His second effort began with information about 5,000 parcels of food and tobacco sent to POWs independently before being taken over by the Red Cross. The Burton postmaster arranged for the parcels to be collected on a hand cart with a maximum load of 300lbs. Anonymous parcel post labels followed along with a parcel card from a POW to Derby. There was a 'Service Suspended' item of 1918 from Liverpool to Moscow and letters to E. Linde, one in 1909 and one after being interned in POW Camp 5, Lancaster. Finally cards of the Soldiers and Sailors Family Association and the Navy and Army Citizen Board ended his display.

Guy Bridges began with two 1914 cards from a soldier in Rouen not sent free, therefore taxed. A 1918 POW card from Shrewsbury camp had a censor label as did one from Bromfield Agricultural Camp, a satellite camp of Shrewsbury. There were two envelopes censored to Eire with notes on the reverse explaining pseudonyms used, maybe to confuse the censor? Then two covers to the Middle East, 1942 from Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury with a Palestine censor, franked with two KGVI 9d green to pay the 1/3 postage and 3d registration. And one from Iraq to Claverley with an RAF censor and the rate paid by a KGVI 10d blue, commercially used.

Gordon Hardy states that he made a boob with 3 sheets POW mail he showed, saying that Camp 64 was Belper, it was in fact Castle Rankine in Scotland, Belper was Camp 58! The rest was WWI material, part of a display for a village pensioner's lunch for the commemoration of 100 years since the declaration of war. There were 3 censored items, Indian Forces 1915 PO with a square boxed PASSED BY / No 40 / Censor, a letter from Seymour Hains to his wife with an FPO cancel and triangular PASSED BY CENSOR / No 794 and a 1915 APO cancel and triangular PASSED BY CENSOR No 2347. A post card of the auxiliary voluntary Red Cross Hospital, Duffield showing soldiers and nurses; the Red Cross had about 40 of hospitals in Derbyshire. Card sent from Derby to the Royal Navy establishment training depot, HMS Victory, where 125,000 officers and men were trained for all branches of the Royal Navy. Savings items included War Saving Certificates with a savings card with 4/6d worth of 6d postage stamps and a War Saving Certificate book cancelled at Pinxton 1918.

Alan Marshall's censored covers were to and from Nottingham. WW1 covers to Denmark (1914) with 'Union Flag Business as Usual' sticker, to Switzerland (1915), Holland (1917) and Belgium (1918). WW2 covers to Switzerland (1940, 41), France (1940) with boxed No Service Return to Sender, to USA (1942) and 1943 with 'Held by British censor released 1946' strike in purple. Continuing, to Argentina (1944), Chile (1944) at the correct 3/6 rate via North Atlantic Air Service. WW2 incoming covers from Egypt with two different censor strikes and finally a 1942 item from the Isle of Wight to Hucknall, presumably due to a Rolls Royce Aero Engine testing plant being at Hucknall.

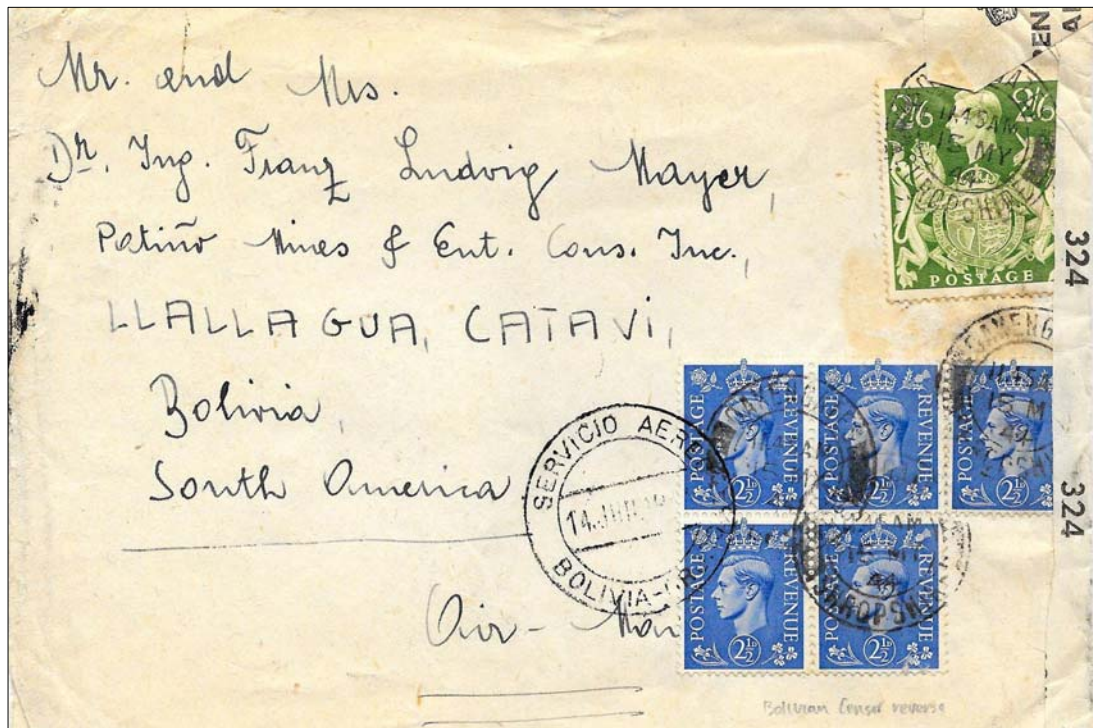
Mick Gill's first item was to Nottingham from France (1916) with a hexagonal censor mark and internal crown. Next came two 1941 examined items, from Newark to Belfast and to Newark from Washington, DC, redirected to Oxford. A 1942 censored item from Gibraltar to Newark was followed by an examined item from Mansfield to Cork. A 1943 piece bore a 'Returned to Sender / by the Censor / for reason explained in / memorandum enclosed / in the cover' but no indication for the reason for the return, whilst a 1944 item from Newark to France had been examined and re-sealed by both the French and British authorities. A 1945 examined item from Mansfield to Dublin was followed by a 1945 Forces 'privilege' air letter to Sutton in Ashfield from Lebanon, the writer revealing the Beirut night life to be 'very similar to Paris'! Finally Mick produced Churchill's Greatest Secret – Oil! The item was from

Southwell to Oklahoma, USA in 1943 and the sender was an American oilman brought over in that year to exploit the very high quality oil reserves first discovered in 1939

Chris Jackson started with a WW1 POW card from Camp 277 South Littleton, near Evesham, followed by a card from Camp 54 Hampton Lovett to Pavia, Italy. A card from Camp 287 Perdiswell, Worcester and a 1945 Evesham to Brisbane item came before a 1942 letter from Kidderminster to 'Africa', but no details as to where in 'Africa'! Finally two lovely KGVI items sent at the 1/6 rate of 1/3 airmail and 3d registration but with 1/1½d refunded. Since the Society is considering a book on Parcel Post labels, the second time around Chris showed these very items

Alan Godfrey showed a selection of censored mail from Italian POWs held in camps in Warwickshire during World War II. There were covers from Camp 39 (Maxstoke Castle, Coleshill), Camp 87 (Byfield, Rugby), Camp 97 (Birdingbury, Rugby), Camp 580 (Long Marston) and Camp 140 (Warwick Racecourse). His final sheet showed a letter sent from Kineton, near Warwick, in 1944 to Casablanca (French Morocco) c/o Foreign Office, Whitehall SW1, to be carried by the diplomatic bag and with a purple "Passed Censor" mark. The address, Office of BNLO, is the British Naval Liaison Officer, who was an intelligence officer, one of whose roles was to collect data on the movements of foreign navies. The addressee Commander D F Segrave MC RN does not appear in any of the Royal Navy lists of the period nor on the list of Military Cross holders.

Brian Atkins produced two displays. He began with an 1899 Boer War cover to Peatswood, Market Drayton franked with a Cape of Good Hope 1d red partly cancelled by a triangular PASSED PRESS CENSOR. 1918 incoming and outgoing items related to German POWs at Park Hall Camp, Oswestry with the P.C. (Passed Censor) in circle. 1943 and 1944 POW cards from Camp 8 (Oswestry) to Italy and Germany both with red, octagonal CROWN / PASSED stamp. A 1941 airmail cover from Delhi to Shrewsbury, censored in Calcutta and routed via Chungking, Hong Kong, across the Pacific, America and the Atlantic to Lisbon and the UK, franked at 3rupees 7anna 6pies. His second effort began with a 1942 registered airmail from Shrewsbury to Haifa, Palestine with three KGVI 6d purple paying the 1/3 airmail, the 1½d 'all-up' rate having been suspended, and 3d registration (see Guy Bridges similar cover recounted above) with British censor tape and hexagonal Palestine CENSOR stamp in purple. 1942. A 1944 cover from Oakengates, near Wellington, to Catavi, Bolivia, franked 3/6½, was ½d overpaid, with both British examiner tape and Bolivian censor (see scan below and see also Alan Marshall's 1944 cover to Chile, described above).

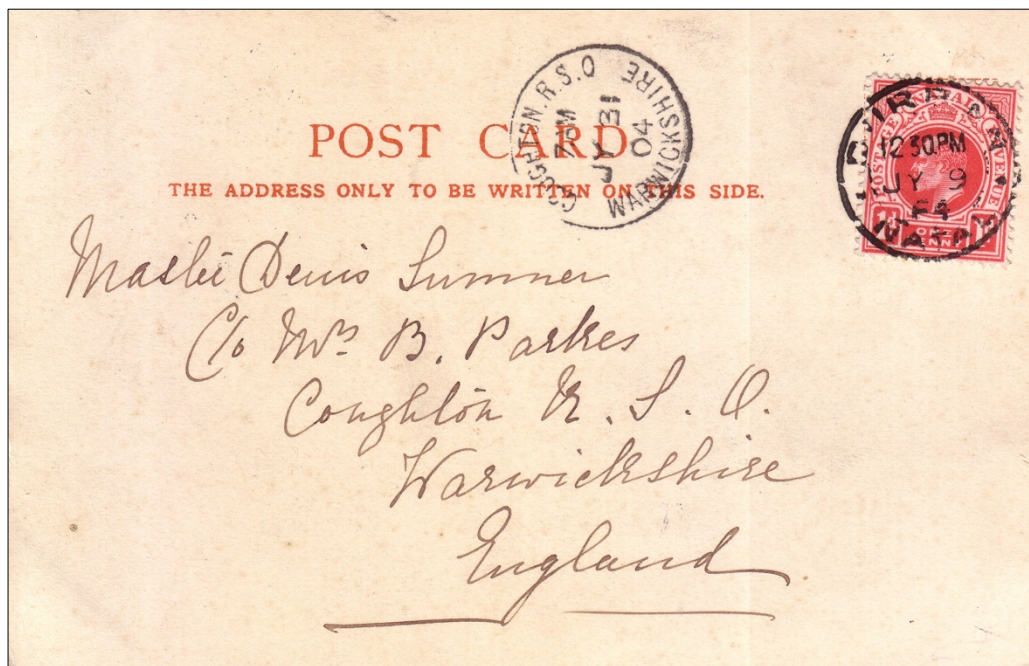


BOLIVIA censor mark on reverse used in Oruro, 135 miles south west of La Paz with Llallagua a further 60 miles south west of Oruro. Catavi was an infamous tin-mining area.

THE MARCH MEETING at Swadlincote on a beautifully sunny 7th of that month was opened by our Chairman, Chris Jackson, to a gallery of 18 members eager to show their contributions towards **The Railways Commeth**.

Brian Atkins began proceedings with items related to the railways of north west Shropshire. An 1853 'letter in a parcel', sent when letters could not legally be transported separately by train was put on the 2.20 from Oswestry and made the 5pm deadline in Shrewsbury for a conveyance to take place! Four lovely 'Wilson philatelic' items showing the use of Shropshire & Montgomeryshire Railway Letter stamps for conveyance of mail on that line were followed by an 1867 London to Oswestry letter showing the small N.W.R.P.O. / E stamp. He ended by displaying the three different Cambrian Railway perfins on covers dated 1871 and 1893 and a postcard of 1914.

Alan Godfrey has provided the following account of his display: Following the appearance of railways in the 1830s the mail followed the same routes as the mail coaches. It was soon realised that the mail could be sorted as the trains travelled along and so the travelling post offices were established. In the late 1850s it was decided to further speed up the mail by delivering directly to the towns and villages which the TPOs passed on their route. The post offices of these towns were designated Railway Sub Offices (RSOs) and as such could receive mail direct to or from a TPO without it needing to go the relevant head office. The first office was designated RSO on 1st March 1856. Postmarks incorporating the letters RSO could have been issued to all the offices designated as RSOs, but it appears that this did not happen. Many different types of postmark handstamps incorporated the letters "R.S.O": duplexes, double circles, single circles, skeletons and dumb parcel cancels. In some cases this included postmarks used by the offices recorded as sub offices of RSOs. The first postmarks including "R.S.O" appeared in the 1870's, but few offices had such handstamps until 1901, when a large number were issued. When the Post Office announced that an office was to become a RSO its postal address was changed to incorporate "R.S.O" into it and the head office was dropped e.g. when Alcester became a RSO on 2nd July 1894, its address changed from Alcester (under Redditch) to "Alcester R.S.O. Warwickshire". This was in effect an instruction to sorting office staff that a separate bag was to be made up for this office and items were not to be included with mail for its previous head office. Therefore, "R.S.O" became part of the address of each office and this appears on all sorts of documents, such as postcards, letterheads, invoices, parcel tags and similar. RSOs officially ceased to exist on 1st August 1905, by which time motor vehicles were in use by the Post Office and some of the previous methods to speed up the mail were no longer necessary. However, the basic system remained in use and some postmarks containing RSO were still in use up until 1944. Many of the postmarks in use were modified to remove "R.S.O" or at least the letter "R". In Warwickshire only five different RSO handstamps have been recorded by the Railway Philatelic Group. These are: Alcester (2 dumb parcel cancellations – ALCESTER R.S.O. and ALCESTER R.S.O. / WARWICKSHIRE), Ardens Grafton (a dated rubber handstamp inscribed "ARDENS GRAFTON / ALCESTER R.S.O."), Great Alne (a dated rubber handstamp inscribed "GREAT ALNE / ALCESTER R.S.O.") and Coughton (Circular date stamp "COUGHTON R.S.O."). Only single copies of the first four marks have been recorded. All five marks were displayed along with a collection of postcards with "RSO" used in the address.



1904 PPC sent from Natal to Coughton with 'RSO' receiving mark and correct use of "Coughton R.S.O" in the address. Mrs B Parkes was the wife of the postmaster and this card was sent to the post office.

Alan finished his display with four examples of Rugby Station postmarks two examples of the 3VOD duplex, one with time code N and one with coded time 1C*P (1.15pm), a squared circle cancellation from 1912 and an unusual date on a postcard cancelled with a 'Dulwich' style postmark at 1pm on 1st January 1911 with hand stamp ident 1.

Chris Jackson started with a page of Redditch railway station items, particularly tickets, one for a dog, another for a volunteer (1st class) and one for a motor cycle. The railway came to Redditch in 1859 but just before that the cancels on use were the small D1 undated circles, so very difficult to find, yet Chris showed the only examples of Finstal and Netherton as well as Lower Clent, Powick, Robertsend Street, Harvington, Knightsford-Bridge, Eardeston, Bredon (two known), Belbroughton and Bengeworth. Quite the display!

Gordon Hardy's contribution was an 1809 letter written by Benjamin Outram, superintendent of the High Peak Railway and Cromford Canal. Butterley Iron Works, responsible for the arch at St Pancras, had its own post office, straight-line and undated marks. See an 1897 Midland Railway letter below, a 26th Nov 1898 railway letter (missing the railway stamp) had the 1d pink stationery envelope cancelled with the oval CHESTERFIELD STATION and an 1841 registered item from the Ambergate, Nottingham and Boston and Eastern Joint Railway!



Gordon reports: This letter has the monogram of Calke Abbey, Derby on the reverse. The most likely route from Calke would be to the Midland Railway station at Melbourne four miles from the house. The letter then went into the postal system and was delivered the next day to East Cowes, Isle of Wight.

Stamp cancelled with a duplex of **DERBY / 3.30PM / NO 5 / 97** and on the reverse a single ring arrival mark of **EAST COWES A NO 6 / 97**.

As ever, **Eric Lewis** brought something completely different! His eclectic display began with a May 1840 letter requesting a good deal of meat be sent from Windsor! There were then GWR 1st-type UNPAID and PAID parcel labels and similar 2nd-type UNPAID and PAID labels, most of which appeared to come to Eric as wrapping paper on items purchased from a well-known philatelic dealer! Incredible! He finished with 1854 (from Shrewsbury) and 1855 (from Pickford's High Holborn) invoices to Craven Arms, Shropshire.

Perhaps the highlight of **Stuart Geddes'** display was a 1907 card, cancelled at RHIWDERIN, of the great railway disaster at Newport, Mon. He also showed an item with a GWR label cancelled BATH, mailed at Chepstow and addressed to Chepstow. Two items of 1862 and 1863 with the MISSENT TO CORWEN hand stamp had GWR notepaper and he ended with GWR air mail first-flight covers carrying letters between the south west, Cardiff and the Midlands, ending with a last-flight cover of 2nd October 1933. This really was a short lived service lasting barely 6 months.

Frank Bennett showed postcards of Hereford railways beginning with two of Barrs Court station and two of Barton Sidings, Hereford engine shed. There was a postcard with a single-ring FAWLEY station cancel and one from Hereford to Hay by rail to Dr Cecil Hinks. Two lovely postcards of the Tamworth & Hereford Sorting Carriage had one showing a notice stating 'Letters posted here must bear an extra halfpenny stamp' and a 1907 advertising card for a journey from Hereford of J. Salmon (Sevenoaks).

Quite how **Derek Smeathers** got away with two frames, I don't know but he did, must be his charm! Frame 1 began with an 1834 London & Birmingham Railway agreement to buy land at Roade (with an 'e') for a station! The same company opened the complete line in 1838. Blisworth station then featured with a postcard of the station bridge, an

early mail train south of the station and a time-bill from Euston, first stop Blisworth. Two L&NWR official covers sent to Northampton were followed by a timetable for the Peterborough branch in a Northampton newspaper. There was a goods invoice from Brackley station and finally for this frame a Guards hand stamp on a June 1853 cover. On frame 2 there was a LNWR newspaper stamp on the original newspaper and a 1911 rail express letter with LNWR stamp. An LMS memo from the district officer at Northampton, the top of a parcel with LMS stamps from Kettering and a similar item from Wellingborough came next to be followed by part of a packet to Peterborough with an early (temporary) stamp of British Railways used in 1948, the first year. He ended with an early (1871) Northampton & Banbury Railway hire purchase agreement, a cover from Byfield with a green East & West Junction Railway stamp and a similar from Moreton Pinkney but with the red and yellow stamp.

John Calladine's contribution was to tell of Stourbridge's brief moment of glory at the centre of the nascent railway industry. In 1819 John Urpeth Rastrick, who had worked with Richard Trevithick, joined with James Foster, the ironmaster of Stourbridge and owner of John Bradley & Co, to establish Foster, Rastrick and Co. Although they produced wheels and rails and the finest wrought iron in Europe, they also constructed four steam locomotives. The Agenoria was destined for a railway that the Earl of Dudley had contracted Foster to construct from his collieries at Shut End to Ashwood basin on the Worcestershire and Staffordshire Canal. The other locomotives, the Hudson, the Delaware and the Stourbridge Lion were ordered by the Delaware and Hudson Canal Company, who had built a wooden track in Pennsylvania to carry coal to their canal system and on to New York. We saw 18th century letters to Shut(t) End, to be left at the post house in Stourbridge. We were advised that letters to John Bradley & Co could be found from almost any county in the country and from abroad (1844 letter from Amsterdam below). The Agenoria opened the Shut End Railway in June 1829 and carried over 1200 passengers on one of its inaugural runs, a total load of 131 tons. The Stourbridge Lion opened the line at Honesdale, Pennsylvania in August 1829 and ran successfully across a trestle bridge and for a further mile and a half. Whereas the Agenoria continued to run for 40 years, the Stourbridge Lion, the first steam locomotive ever to run on (inadequate) rails in America, never ran again, nor did the Delaware and Hudson. Rastrick was a judge at the Rainhill Trials in October 1829 and the advanced technology incorporated into the winning Rocket locomotive design ensured that Agenoria and its contemporaries were obsolete. The Agenoria is in the National Railway Museum at York: the Stourbridge Lion boiler, but little else, is owned by the Smithsonian Institute and displayed at the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad Museum.



Our secretary, **Mick Gill**, showed the Great Northern Railway's 1847 plan for a deviation in its agreed route to pass north of Newark to one passing south and closer to the town centre. This was not pursued mainly due to problems crossing the River Trent. Postcards of the GNR's Newark station – now Newark Northgate – were followed by one of a 1915 accident in which one person died and seven were injured and another of the second 'Tubular Bridge' over the Trent. An 1860 envelope from the Nottingham and Grantham Railway and Canal Company, leased to the GNR, came next, followed by an 1870 letter from Halifax to the USA, which included details of an accident at Newark in which 20 people lost their lives. Next came an 1875 GNR Advice of Goods from Ranskill station and a 1902 postcard to Newton on Trent with a London & Leeds Sorting Tender hand stamp. Finally, a letter c1904 from Redmile with a GNR Parcel Paid label had been carried to London contrary to regulations!

Gwyn Hughes presented two time bills, a map of the railways of Buckinghamshire and a Metropolitan Railways map of London railways. A cover from Verney Junction to Essex had a 2d Metropolitan Railway label, an 1865 cover from Euston Square was sent at the 1d rate and had 4d paid in a late fee, an 1896 postcard from Jamaica to Hallatrow, eight miles from Bath had the Jamaica stamps cancelled by the B16 of Plymouth & Bristol Sorting Carriage but the highlight was a 1902 cover to Miami, Florida in the USA which had the KEd 2½d blue paying the postage and QV 2d red/green paying the late fee both cancelled by the K48 of the London & Holyhead TPO.

Richard Farman was terribly rushed because he had to take your Hon. Editor back to Burton station; well it was a railway theme day!! He showed a Burton & Ashby Light Railway map, tickets and photographs. Swadlincote, the town of choice for the meeting, figured in the rest of his display with postcards and photographs of the library (affected by mining subsidence), a wonderful picture of vast numbers of children on a tram, with Richard telling us that the tram drivers used to have a competition to see how many they could get on a tram!! Health & Safety eat your heart out!!! There were other pictures of trains coming up to Swadlincote (or Swad, as I believe it is known, at least I saw a t-shirt with that and a large red heart)!

Paul Bradshaw had a wonderful display of the following items: an October 1845 prospectus for the proposed Northampton, Lincoln & Hull direct railway, offering a capital of 100,000 shares of £20 each; the line was never built! A March 1847 letter from the Rugby & Stamford Railway regarding the construction of drains! An 1880s letter carried on the Northampton Tramways as a parcel, when Paul reported that he had never seen a stamp listed for the tramway. A marvellous 1899 pane of 12 x 2d unmounted mint stamps of the East & West Junction Railway which operated from Stratford upon Avon to Northampton (see also Derek Smeathers' account above) came before a 26th June 1913 railway express cover from The Strand post office, London to Woodbridge (Suffolk) prepaid 4d with a Great Eastern Railway 2d bright emerald attached. He finished with five covers, 1905 with six LMS parcel stamps, 1936 bag receipt used at Northampton, 1906 cover posted on the Northampton & Banbury Railway at Wappenham station and entered the mails at Towcester, a 1909 cover to London with 1d KEdVII and 2d L&NW stamp cancelled Northampton Castle and a 1960s piece to a Northampton insurance company bearing a L&NW 9d parcel stamp not cancelled.

Alan Marshall began with a February 1846 entire with a seal of the Ambergate, Nottingham & Boston & Eastern Junction Railway followed by an entire with Kegworth / 109 Uniform Penny Post prepaid in April 1840 to Nottingham with a manuscript '*Railway*' and Derby cds. Two GNR items included an invoice of February 1876 to Belvoir Castle for 17 cwts of cement at station to station rates and an application of May 1876 for a ledger account to carry coal from Bottlesford to Kings Cross. A September 1902 postcard to Great Central Victoria station requested a reservation for 3 luncheons to Bournemouth on the following day! The Great Central Victoria station theme continued with an envelope addressed there in February 1903 and an outgoing cover of 11th July 1963 with a Nottingham Victoria Stn cds (station demolished 1968). An October 1939 cover had an LMS 3d parcel label overprinted STONE to Nottingham. A pre-printed postcard from Ironville to Jacksdale was sent on a 20-mile round trip via Nottingham to cover a 2-mile across the Derby – Nottingham border distance and collected a 2d to pay strike for its pains! There were three Nottingham mail bag labels, Manchester, Liverpool and Jacksdale and finally the TPO cancels of Halifax (18th May 1872), Edinburgh – Newcastle (25th January 1888), Dublin – Belfast (23rd February 1888) Berwick & Newcastle (7th June 1888) and a Boxed London & Derby mark on a postcard from Denmark (11th September 1999).

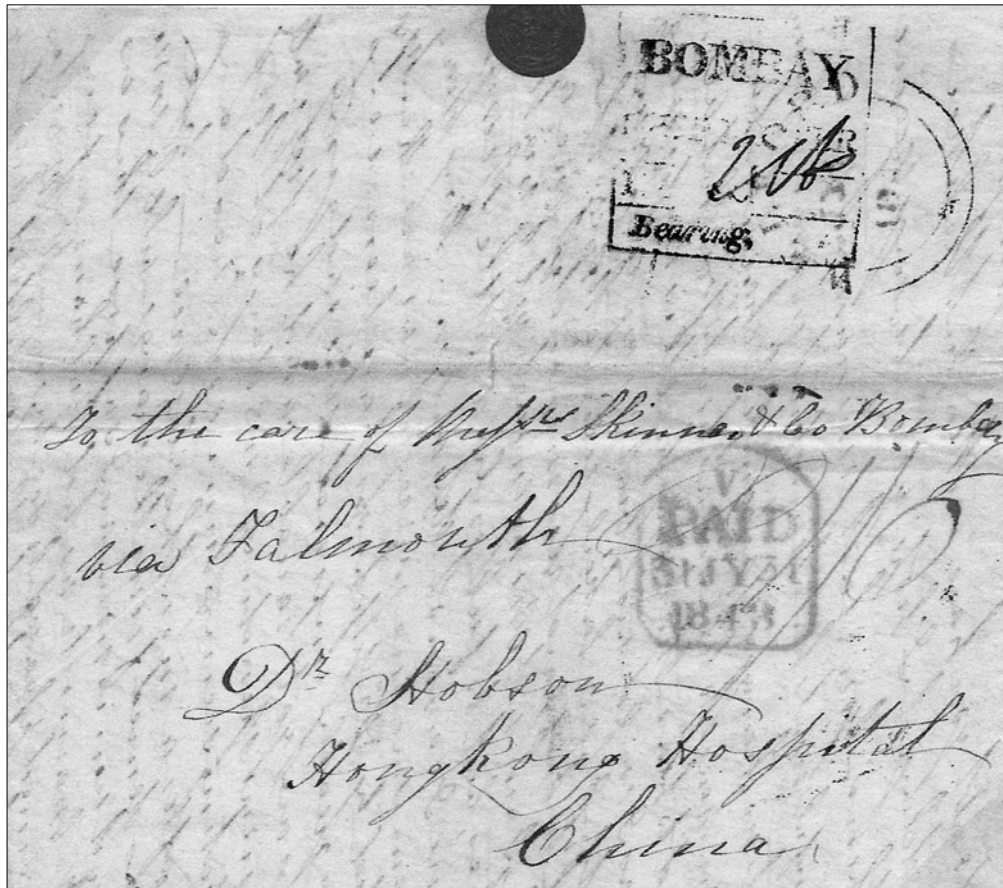
Jan Young provided postcards of the early 1900s showing Bromsgrove station and headstones of graves at St. John's churchyard, restored in 2014, in memory of two engineers of the Birmingham & Gloucester Railway Company who lost their lives at Bromsgrove station due to the explosion of an engine boiler on 11th November 1840. She then illustrated the Snowdon Mountain Railway with postcards. A rack and pinion system was proposed in 1869 and constructed between December 1894 and February 1896 at a cost of £63,800 (£6,442,000 in 2015). Opening day was 6th April 1896, when two trains ascended but disaster struck on the return journey when locomotive No.1, *Ladas*, lost the rack and ran out of control. The locomotive derailed, fell down the mountain and a passenger died. After a miscommunication the second downward train hit the carriages of the first, with no fatalities. Afterwards, no trains ran until April 1897. The summit café was demolished in 2006 and a new building, *Hafod Eryri* (loosely translated from Welsh into English as "*high residence of Snowdonia*"), was officially opened on 12 June 2009. Jan visited the summit in 2010, posted a card to herself in a Royal Mail box, and is still awaiting delivery!

As the afternoon wore on, yet again it became abundantly clear that the members present had produced a wonderfully varied display, this time of railway related items. We were told about engines being kidnapped; letters sent as sealed parcels to circumvent the regulations of the time; the introduction of RSOs, TPOs, perkins; wrapping paper of sale items from a philatelic auction house being worth more than the enclosed items and even the ratcheted Snowdon Mountain Railway! All members who attend are sure of a warm welcome, some lively conversation and a great variety of displayed postal history, whatever the topic of the day or whoever the speaker is, for, as well as the individual board displays, we have also been treated to some fine one-person exhibits in recent times.

WELFORD, NORTHANTS TO HONG KONG, 1843

by Derek Smeathers

The letter is dated at WELFORD on 29th July 1843 and is from two sisters to their brother, a doctor in Hong Kong Hospital, China. It is endorsed *via Falmouth* and the 1/- rate from that port, which was prepaid in this instance, came into being with the Treasury Warrant of 10th January 1840. It is further endorsed *To the care of Messrs Skinner & Co Bombay* as there was no packet service to Hong Kong at this date. Skinner & Co were shipping / forwarding agents in Bombay, known to be active between 1839 to 1844¹, who would send the letter to Hong Kong by private vessel, the charge for forwarding being 2 annas, to be paid by the recipient. They sealed the letter with a wafer featuring a rose design and a motto 'SUCH IS LOVE'.



The letter was carried by horse-rider to Northampton and Blisworth, thence by rail to London, where it arrived on 31st July 1843. From London it went to Falmouth by rail and mail coach. The date of arrival in Falmouth is probably 2nd August 1843 (see below)². From Falmouth it went by steamship to Alexandria in Egypt, then by the Mahmoudieh Canal and River Nile steamers to Cairo; by camel / donkey trains to the Red Sea port of Suez and from there by sailing ships of the East India Company to Bombay – the recognised overland route for the India mails.

A few weeks after this date, the P&O Company began a new steamship service from Suez to Bombay and in August 1845 this was extended all the way to Hong Kong, where a post office was opened by October 1843 but this letter has no reception mark, so it may have arrived before then! According to the website www.poheritage.com the *Lady Mary Wood* (see below) left Galle (Sri Lanka) arriving in Hong Kong on 13th Aug 1845, with the first P&O mail.

From the editor: After receiving the article from Derek, he and I had a conversation and he has allowed me to continue as follows. I believe that the date in London of 31st July 1843 is significant because a mail was made up in London to leave for Falmouth the next day, arriving there on 2nd August 1843 and was put aboard the P&O *Lady Mary Wood*, a paddle steamer, which sailed the same day. She called at Malta on 13th August and arrived at Alexandria on 13th August. From Alexandria the letter was carried overland to Suez, where the East India Company steamer *Atalanta* took it to Bombay, arriving on 9th September 1843², though the date is unclear on the arrival stamp.

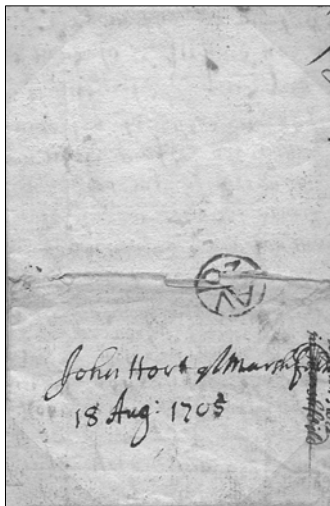
- References:
- 1) The Postal History of the Forwarding Agents, Rowe, Hartmann, 1984
 - 2) The Hon. E.I.Cs Steamers of 1830 – 1854, Hammond Giles, India Study Circle, 1995

MARSHFIELD, Gloucestershire
(A neglected office)

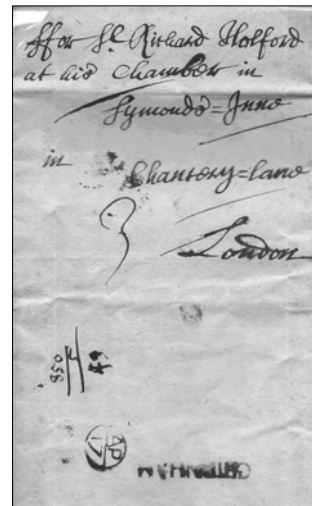
by John Calladine

Marshfield, a village at the junction of Wiltshire, Somerset and Gloucestershire, is just on the Gloucestershire side of the county boundary. Only nine miles from Chippenham and less than eleven miles from Kington St Michael (the venue for several of the Society's joint meetings), it is often erroneously thought of as a Wiltshire village. For the past 25 years, it has perhaps been noteworthy solely for its Marshfield Farm ice cream, a product with an enviable reputation in the south-west. The village is closely by-passed to the north by the A420 but a diversion through the village centre, a single thoroughfare less than a quarter of a mile long with the Catherine Wheel inn at its heart, suggests its more significant past, when it was accurately described as a small market town. Almost every house in the high street is of architectural interest and more than a hundred years old. The Catherine Wheel is one of a number of fine 18th century buildings, with parts of the inn said to be much older. The almshouses are from 1612 and many fine houses date from Tudor and Stuart times. It hardly looks like a typical country village.

Marshfield is described in the title as a "neglected office" because it was clearly an office of importance in the earliest days of postal communication in England and yet mention of it is rarely if ever made. This is almost certainly because there are no early postal markings. In fact, no mark of any kind is recorded at Marshfield until the 19th century. Early letters from Marshfield are not unknown and two are illustrated here, one with the first recorded handstamp of Chippenham. Why there are no marks will hopefully become apparent as we uncover the history of the office from the earliest years of the 17th century.



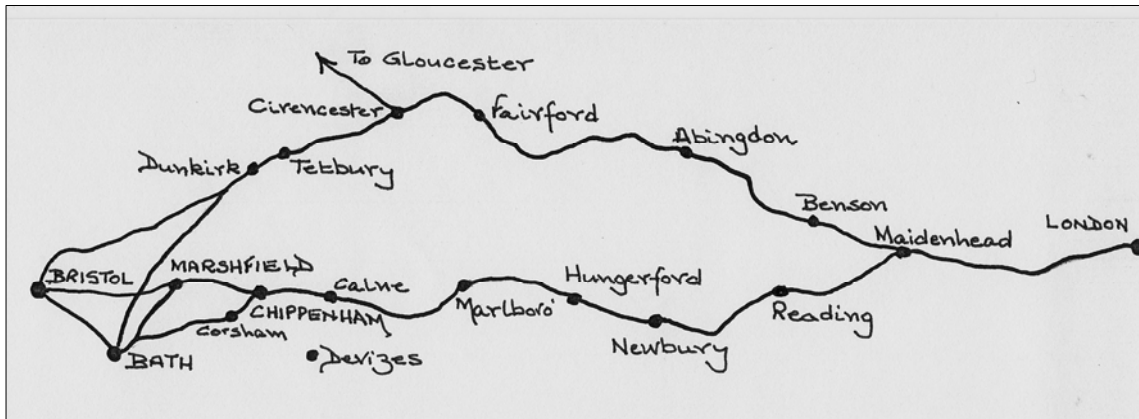
1705 from Marshfield.



1706 from Marshfield with the first Chippenham stamp.

To the south-west of Marshfield, the city of Bath is just eight miles distant and, continuing west along the A420 past Marshfield, Bristol is reached in 15 miles. This road, which originally passed through the centre of Marshfield, was once one of the most important post roads in the country, carrying the mail between London and Bristol from long before the Royal Mail was opened to the public until the middle of the 18th century. Before any standing post, the Audit Office Accounts⁽¹⁾ of Payments to Postmasters (1561-1637) show intermittent Bristol Road payments to Marshfield from October 1579 to December 1605, of 20d on each occasion, the same level of payment made to Chippenham and Bristol. More specifically, on 16th July 1574, the Office of the Master of the Posts noted payments made for the "extraordinarie post", in Her Majesty's progress, to Philip and John Alsope of Marshfield for serving ten days from 12th to 21st August (both days included) at a rate of 1d a day⁽²⁾. No payments were made to Bath.

On 6th August 1612, when stages to Bath were ordered in preparation for the Queen's visit, there is specific mention⁽³⁾ of the absence of any standing post between London and Bath. However, during the following year, intermittent payments made by the Audit office⁽⁴⁾ were to Bath (2//6d) rather than Marshfield. By that date, James I's queen consort, Anne of Denmark, was leading an independent life but her health was beginning to fail. It is unsurprising that she was visiting Bath, a city whose great boost came a century later when Queen Anne popularised the spa. From the time the Royal Mail was opened to public use in 1635, correspondence between Bath and London would have been significant.



Sketch map of the mail routes between Bristol, Bath and London

The fate of the General Post during the Civil Wars, so soon after it was opened to the public, has been a subject of learned discussion by postal historians for many years. Nowhere is its fate likely to have been of more significance than in the south-west, largely a Royalist stronghold but with the city of Bath in the hands of the Parliamentarians. In 1643, a Royalist force moved on Bath from its temporary base in Marshfield where, on 5th July, it was unwisely and prematurely lured into battle with the Parliamentarians for control of the city. The Battle of Lansdown, a major hill above Bath held by Parliament, is described as a pyrrhic victory for the Royalists. The Parliamentarians were dislodged from their hilltop position, largely by Cornish infantry, but the Royalists suffered huge losses, probably 300 dead and 800 wounded, ten times the casualties of their opponents. Every house in Marshfield was said to have tended wounded Royalists and its army soon retreated, leaving the Parliamentary forces to enter Marshfield and desecrate the church. Clearly suspicious of the residents' loyalties, it is no surprise to find that a letter from Marshfield⁽⁵⁾ was intercepted by Cromwell's government in September 1644, interested in knowing its content.

Thomas Gardiner's 1677 survey of the post roads lists the stages of the Bristol Road from London as Hounslow, Maidenhead, Reading, Newbury, Marlborough, Chippenham and Bristol. There is no suggestion here that Marshfield, although on the route, was a post town. This is confirmed by the absence of any payments to a postmaster at Marshfield in the Accountant General's Annual Accounts, certainly between 1685 and 1770⁽⁶⁾, and no receipts of payment from Marshfield are recorded in the Receiver General's Cash Books⁽⁷⁾ of 1677, 78 and 79. That there was an important sub-office at Marshfield is not in doubt. It is reported⁽⁸⁾ that, in the 1670s, a letter from Bath to London took sixteen and three-quarter hours *via a post office in Marshfield on the Bristol Road*. The postal route from Bristol to London remained through Marshfield, rather than through Bath, possibly until 1741. The 'Holkham' map of 1735/36 confirms that the Bath Mail to and from London was still passing through Marshfield. (It should be noted, by the way, that the General Post route on the map is shown by a double line with intermediate black hatching. The single red lines on the map, probably more obvious, are cross posts and include a cross post from Bristol, through Bath, Devizes and Marlborough to Oxford. This is not the London Mail.)

A major change came about in 1741. On 10th June a Post Office Notice⁽⁹⁾ announced that the post between London and Bath & Bristol was to become a six-day post. It was to follow the route of the original Bristol Road on the three so-called General Days. On the three Bye Days, the existing branch post to Gloucester via Cirencester, which left the Bristol Road at Maidenhead, would continue from Cirencester, not only to Gloucester but to both Bath and Bristol. Thus the London bags to and from Bath and Bristol would be carried by separate horse posts to and from Dunkirk and would join the Gloucester bag in the "Cirencester Mail" three times a week, thereby providing Bath and Bristol with a six day post. By the time of the 'British Library' map, c1770, the connection from the Bristol Road to Bath is from Chippenham via Corsham and no longer from Marshfield. This may have prevailed since 1741. As a significant office in the postal system, Marshfield was no more.

Audrey Swindells, co-founder of the Bath Postal Museum with her late husband, has suggested that the London mail was no longer sent through Marshfield from "about 1720". 1720 was the date of Ralph Allen's first cross post contract but, judging from the only surviving contract (the second), Allen would not have been allowed to re-direct such mail without Post Office agreement and, during the period of the first two contracts, this would have been unlikely. Only later, when he had the full confidence of the Post Office and they realised that his cross posts were increasing the revenue, not diminishing it, that a change may have been acceptable.



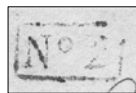
The Catherine Wheel at Marshfield.

The first mailcoach ran from Bristol to London, via Bath, in 1784. This is significant for it provides positive proof that the postal route between Bristol and London now avoided Marshfield, passing through Bath and Pickwick (on the edge of Corsham) and re-joining the original Bristol Road at Chippenham. It increased the distance between Bristol and London by about six miles but, as elsewhere in the country, coaches would have sought to avoid hills that previously had no significant effect on the timing of horse posts. ‘The “Contour” book of England’⁽¹⁰⁾, published in 1897 but relevant a hundred years earlier, states that *“the more direct road from Bristol to Chippenham is much inferior to that by Bath. It is very bumpy for five miles, then very steep and hilly for the next five . . .”*. Nine miles from Bristol the gradient is given as 1 in 12, and rated *“dangerous”*. No coach would be likely to use that road. The London-Bath route had thus become what is familiar to us as the ‘A4’, variously known as the “Great West Road”, the “Bath Road” and, in the west, as the “London Road”. The first turnpike appeared on the road in 1714 and progressively turnpike trusts became responsible for its maintenance and for a more settled line. (In 1750 it was temporarily re-aligned to pass through Melksham⁽¹¹⁾, several miles from the direct route.) There is a fine surviving tollhouse on the Bath side of Pickwick.

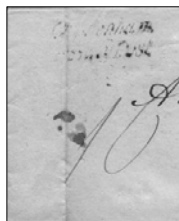
No longer on a major mail route, Marshfield was now served three days a week by a horse post from Chippenham. A minute⁽¹²⁾ of 15th January 1807 from Francis Freeling, Secretary to the Post Office, to the Postmaster General expresses surprise that the contractor for the ten mile ride is prepared to undertake it for £23-18-0 a year when his absolute expense of providing a horse and boy is £23-8-0. Nevertheless this situation continued until 1814 when, on 13th August, Freeling, wrote a further minute⁽¹³⁾ to the Postmaster General, following receipt of a report from Mr Aust, proposing that the three-day post to Marshfield be replaced by a daily Penny Post from Chippenham. It was to be experimental, as was usual at the time, while its profitability was assessed. In 1816 the surveyor reported a small loss⁽¹⁴⁾ and suggested the post be reduced to six days a week. Freeling disagreed and the post was allowed to continue seven days a week. Some two years later, in October 1818, Mr Aust reported a continued small loss⁽¹⁵⁾ and this time the Postmaster General agreed it should become a six-day penny post rather than daily. Nothing more of significance is heard until April 1835⁽¹⁶⁾ when it became apparent there had been complaints about the irregular performance of the ride. The new surveyor, Mr George Stow, who Freeling describes as *“young in office”*, visited Marshfield and resolved the problem, providing the inhabitants of Marshfield with an earlier arrival of their letters and a later collection. Furthermore, he recommended restoring the daily penny post and, as a point of principal rather than financial logic, the surveyor having provided no analysis of the letters, Freeling and the Postmaster General agreed to his request. The penny post ride to Marshfield continued until the introduction of a Uniform Penny Post.

Both Dr Siggers⁽¹⁷⁾ and Geoff Oxley⁽¹⁸⁾ agree that Marshfield was receiving house ‘No. 2’ in the Chippenham Penny Post. However, detail of the Chippenham Penny Post appears confused and incomplete. There is no complete account of the receiving house numbers allocated to the different offices, nor whether these numbers changed over the years. (An attempt will be made to provide a fuller account of the Chippenham Penny Post into Gloucestershire at a later date.) Dr Siggers records the No.2 receiving house stamps used between 1816 and 1834. There seems little doubt a framed stamp was used, followed by an unframed stamp, but examples appear to be more elusive than anticipated and no usage data for each mark can yet be provided. Illustrated is a boxed No.2 struck in 1821 and a

poorly struck example of what appears to be an unframed mark, with the front legs of the 'N' missing, on a letter from Colerne, a village four and a half miles from Marshfield but not on the main road. It is dated 5th September 1839 and has been struck, on the reverse, with the Chippenham CDS of the same date.



The boxed No.2 of Marshfield, 1821.



What appears to be an unboxed No.2 of Marshfield on a letter from Colerne dated 5th September 1839 with a type 5 Chippenham Penny Post stamp, charged 10d to London.

With the exception of the numbered receiving house stamp, Marshfield's first handstamp was an undated circular stamp issued on 9th August 1844. It is unrecorded in use. The first dated stamp was issued on 28th January 1856 and John Hine records its use on 31st December 1857. A dated single ring was issued on 7th April 1876 and John records its use on 13th April 1883. Not until 20th century do we have adequate records of the use of Marshfield hand stamps.

The assistance of John Hine in providing the record of usage of Marshfield postmarks is gratefully acknowledged but he was also the inspiration for this piece. There is much more to be discovered about this office and, if any members have Marshfield postmarks of any era or, better still, an unrecorded early mark, the Gloucestershire County Editor, would be delighted to hear of them.



The tollhouse at Marshfield



The unusual 'milestone' on what was once the principal route between London to Bristol

REFERENCES

1. The Inland Posts (1392-1672) Appendix 4. Dr J.W.M.Stone
2. State Papers 12.125. (60).
3. British Library Addl. MS 5755. (f. 240ii)
4. The Inland Posts (1392-1672) Appendix 4. Dr J.W.M.Stone
5. State Papers 21.7. (p.207)
6. Post 3 Accountant General's Annual Accounts 1678-1938.
7. Post 2 Receiver General's Cash Books 1677-1809.
8. Bath Postal Museum.
9. Post 40 The Surveyors' Journals.
10. The "Contour" Road Book of England and Wales, Western Division. H.R.G.Inglis
11. A History of Melksham.
12. Post 42/12D/1807
13. Post 42/170/1814
14. Post 42/172/1816
15. Post 42/356/1818.
16. Post 42/253/1835
17. Wiltshire and its Postmarks. Dr John Siggers
18. The English Provincial Local Posts 1765-1840. G.F.Oxley

UNOFFICIAL MAIL DELIVERY TO NETHERCOTE, WARWICKSHIRE

by Ian May

One of the aspects of postal history before the introduction of uniform penny postage in 1840 that I find of particular interest is the carriage of mail by means other than the Royal Mail. The Local Posts of the Midland Counties to 1840^[1], page 7, suggests that the intent of an Act of 1660 to re-establish the Royal Mail after the restoration of the monarchy was that it allowed for the carriage of mail by a friend, servant or carrier, but forbade the setting up of an organised service to compete with the Royal Mail.

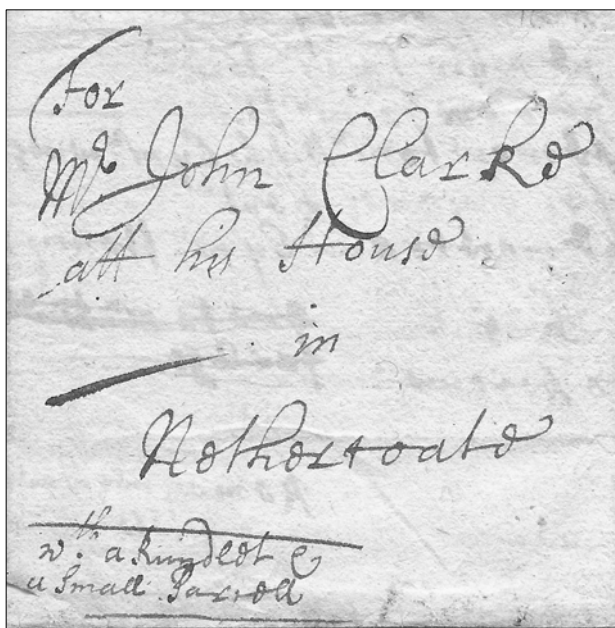


Fig 1

Figure 1, shows the address panel of a letter, which is mainly a bill, sent to John Clarke in Nethercote in about 1689. Unfortunately there is no indication from where it was sent. It is endorsed below the address "with a ?? and a small ??". This would therefore appear to have been delivered by a carrier.

Figure 2 shows the address panel of letter, dated November 20th 1728, from Southam to Mr Green, Attorney at Nethercote. The writer of the letter, Mr Paget writes as a post script "Pray a line ? bearer if you receive this". It would appear that Mr Paget was not certain of the delivery of this letter. This would possibly have been delivered by someone not well-known to Mr Paget.

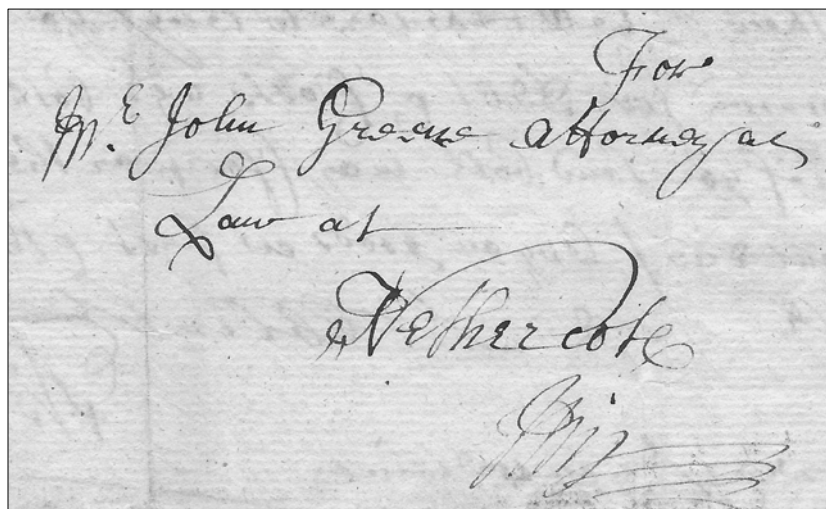


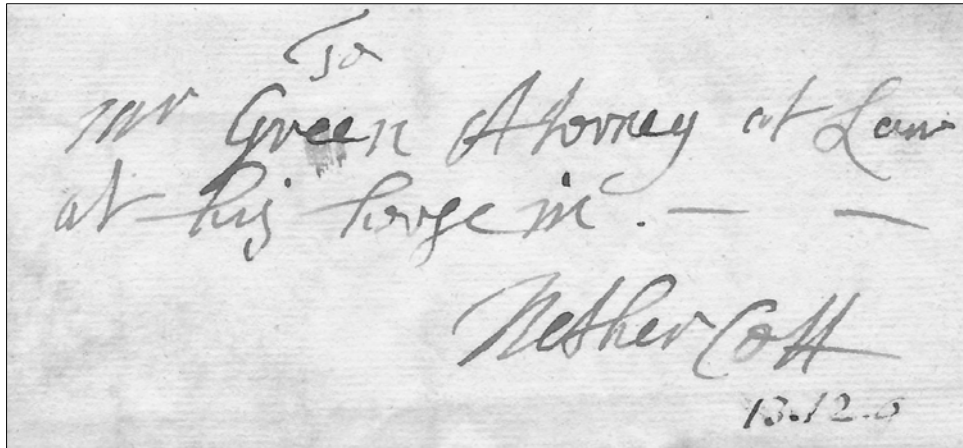
Fig 2

Until the introduction of the Penny Posts in the early 19th century the Royal Mail only carried mail between post towns. This meant that in order to receive mail it had to be collected from the Office in the post town. Many Post Masters saw an opportunity to both increase their income and to provide a much need service by operating an unofficial delivery service. It also meant that some smaller towns and villages would have no official way of communicating by mail because they were not on a Royal Mail Post Road. It was therefore necessary for the writer of any letter to organise its delivery by some means other than the Royal Mail.

The items to be described will illustrate various means of delivery by other than the Royal Mail.

Nethercote is a small village in Warwickshire that lies between Southam and Daventry, being about 6 miles from Southam and 4 miles from Daventry. The four items, all to Nethercote, shown in Figures 1 to 4 illustrate various means of the carriage of mail. In the descriptions below the "?" are for parts of the text I am unable to decipher.

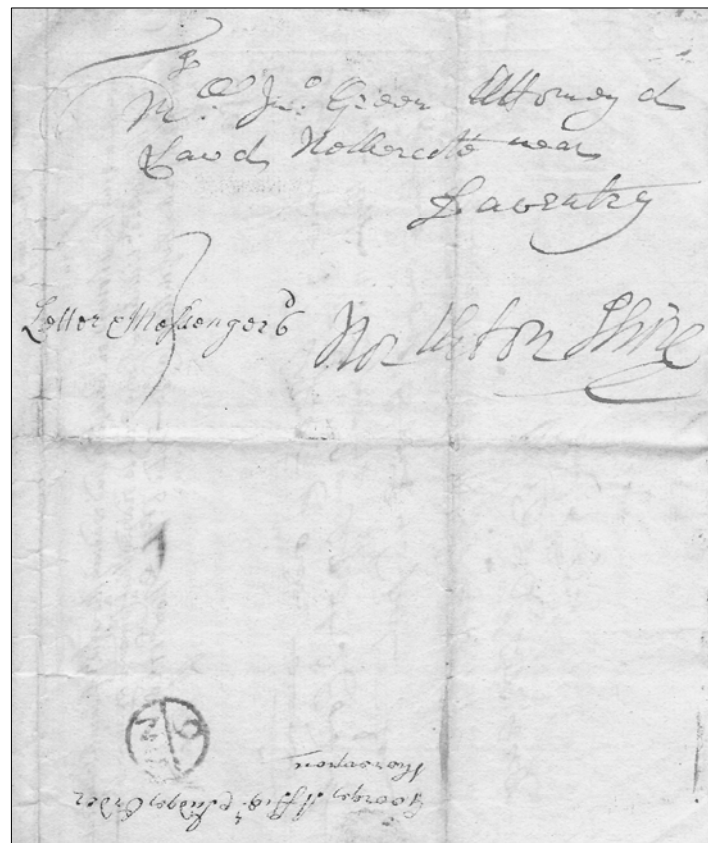
Figure 3 (next page) shows the address panel of a letter, dated January 7th 1736, also from Southam to Mr Green, at Nethercote. The writer of the letter, Mr Whelydale, is requesting a copy of his bill and requests that it is brought back to him "by ye barer". This would therefore likely to have been delivered by a servant or friend of Mr Whelydale. The inscription 13.12.6 at the bottom right hand corner is, I believe the total of Mr Whelydales bill as a similar inscription appears on the inside of the letter illustrated in Figure 2 with the addition of the word "costs".



To
 Mr Green Attorney at Law
 at his house in. — —
 Nethercote
 13.12.0

Fig 3

Figure 4, the final item I have from this correspondence is also dated November 5th 1728 and is from London to Mr Green, Nethercote near Daventry. It has been carried by the Royal Mail to Daventry and charged 3d. It was then taken from Daventry to Nethercote by a letter carrier and is endorsed “letter messenger 6d”. I assume that the 6d charge will have been made up as 3d Royal Mail charge and 3d local delivery. I also suspect that the delivery was organised by the Postmaster at Daventry. The Local Posts of the Midland Counties to 1840^[1], pages 174 - 175 describes a “thriving local service” which charged a 1d for delivery from Daventry. The letter above may have been carried in a forerunner of this local post.



To
 Mr J. Green Attorney at Law
 Nethercote near
 Daventry
 Letter Messenger 6d
 Mr John Thre
 13.12.0

Fig 4 (reduced in size, ed)

Some of the above is speculation. It would be useful to know if any other items to Nethercote exist and if so can they confirm, or otherwise, the above.

Reference.

1 The Local Posts of the Midland Counties to 1840. Midland (GB) Postal History Society No 3, 1993.

MIDLANDS POST OFFICES OPENED OR CLOSED DURING 2014

by Ken Smith.

Many offices were relocated during the year as PO Locals or as MAINS; but this list includes only those which either changed their name, replaced a Branch Office, closed without an immediate replacement, or opened after a period without an office.

BIRMINGHAM

Arran Way, 36	closed 15-12-2014 (replaced by Burtons Way)
Burtons Way, 36	opened 16-12-2014
Birmingham Airport, 26	8-8-2014, PO Local, Spar Store.
Kings Heath, 14	Branch Office > Main, WHSmith 20-2-2014.
Yorkminster Drive, 37	7-3-2014, PO Local (replaced Dunster Road, which closed Feb.2013)

DERBYSHIRE

CHESTERFIELD	Branch Office > Main, WHSmith 27-3-2014.
Dove Holes, Buxton	(closed 25-9-2008). Hosted Outreach, Methodist Church, 19-8-2014 (Tu/Th.9-1)
Eckington, Sheffield	closed 7-3-2014.
Furness Vale, High Peak	closed 1-8-2014. Hosted Outreach c/o Chapel-en-le-Frith, from 9-12-2014.
Wirksworth, Matlock	closed 5-7-2014

GLOUCESTERSHIRE

Charlton Church, Cheltenham	closed 12-2-2014 (see below)
Charlton Kings, Cheltenham	opened 13-2-2014 : MAIN, 41, Lyefield Road West.
Linden Road, Gloucester	closed 13-9-2014 (see below)
Seymour Road, Gloucester	opened 15-9-2014, PO Local.
Hardwicke, Gloucester	closed 6-1-2014 (shop closed), re-open 13-6-2014 (new shop), closed by 4/9/2014.
Joys Green, Lydbrook	closed 3-3-2014.
Mitcheldean	(closed 27-11-2013). Re-open / relocated 9-1-2014, PO Local.
Shipton Moyne, Tetbury	closed 12-2-2014, retirement.

HEREFORDSHIRE

Bromsberrow Heath, Ledbury	(did not close 31-10-2013 as previously reported), closed 31-10-2014
Cradley, Malvern	(closed 29-6-2013). Hosted Outreach, Village Hall c/o Malvern, 8-5-2014.
Wormelow, Hereford	closed 29-5-2014

LEICESTERSHIRE

Bitteswell, Lutterworth	closed by 27/3/2014
Greenhill (ISO), Coalville	closed by 22/7/2014

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

St. Stephens Road, Kettering	temporarily closed 27-10-2014.
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NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

Sawley, Long Eaton, Nottingham	closed 31-7-2014.
Leamington Drive, Sutton-in-Ashfield	(closed 27-11-2010). PO Local opened 28-11-2014.
Woodborough, Nottingham	closed 16-7-2014.

OXFORDSHIRE

Aston, Bampton	closed 31-7-2014. Hosted Outreach c/o Minster Lovell from 8-8-2014.
Horspath, Oxford	(closed 20-9-2011). Hosted Outreach c/o Great Milton from 7-11-2014 (Fri.10-1)
Stoke Row, Henley-on-Thames	closed 1-11-2014. Hosted Outreach c/o Woodcote from 21-11-2014.
Watchfield, Swindon	closed 21-2-2014.
WITNEY	Branch Office > Main, WHSmith 13-3-2014.

RUTLAND

Edith Weston, Oakham	(closed 27-6-2012). PO Local opened 14-1-2014, Farm Shop.
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SHROPSHIRE

Ashford Carbonell, Ludlow
Cleobury North, Bridgnorth
Llangedwyn, Oswestry (in Denb)
Llangynog, Oswestry (in Mont)
Telford Central, Telford
Trefonen, Oswestry

closed by 12-7-2014.
changed from Hosted Outreach to PO Local 21-8-2014.
(closed c.30-4-2013). Hosted Outreach, Mill Cafe, from 14-1-2014.
closed 28-4-2014.
Branch Office >Main, WHSmith 13-3-2014.
closed 31-12-2013, **robbery**.

STAFFORDSHIRE

CANNOCK
Caverswall, Stoke-on-Trent
Denstone, Uttoxeter
Oakamoor, Stoke-on-Trent
Waterhouses, Stoke-on-Trent

30-1-2014 Branch Office >Main, WHSmith
closed by 18-8-2014
closed by 12-8/-014
closed c.30-6-2014 (retirement)
closed c.9-5-2014. Hosted Outreach c/o Ashbourne Road, Cheadle, 2-10-2014.

WARWICKSHIRE

Claverdon, Warwick
Dunchurch, Rugby
Napton, Southam

closed by 12/8/2014
closed 6-5-2014. Re-open/relocated 3-12-2014, PO Local.
(closed -5-2013). Re-open 28-2-2014, PO Local.

WEST MIDLANDS

Moxley, Wednesbury
Moxley, Bilston
Corporation Street, Coventry
Station Square, Coventry
Warwick Road, Coventry
Halesowen
Sutton Coldfield

(7, Roberts Close) closed 18-3-2014 (see below)
(4, Kendrick Road) opened 19-3-2014, PO Local.
(Co-op Store) closed 12-6-2014
closed 4-2-2014 (see below)
opened 5-2-2014, PO Local.
from No.8 to No.6, Peckingham Street 21-7-2014, MAIN. Closed 23-12-2014
Branch Office >Main, WHSmith 27-2-2014.

WORCESTERSHIRE

Witton, DROITWICH
Kidderminster
Lower Moor, Pershore

(closed 11-4-2013). Re-open 20-10-2014, PO Local.
Branch Office >Main, WHSmith 6-2-2014.
PO Local, Old Chestnut Tree PH closed 28-2-2014. Hosted, Parish Hall, 21-10-2014



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LIGHT GOLD

by John Calladine

When Sir Francis Freeling, Secretary to the Post office, referred to “light gold”, he was not concerned with its colour but with its weight. Coin debasement had been a problem since Roman times and only lost its significance in the 20th century when British coins ceased to be made of gold or silver. Until the middle of the 17th century, coins were hand-hammered, resulting in coins of less than perfect shape. Mechanised minting in England began after the Restoration of Charles II but only to a limited extent.

The coin that troubled Freeling was the gold sovereign. These first appeared in 1817 as part of the second “Great Recoinage”, when the introduction of silver coins and a change to the gold coinage were part of efforts to stabilise the currency after the Napoleonic Wars. Until then, the principal gold coin had been the guinea (21 shillings) but the key value was now to be the sovereign (20 shillings / one pound). At the time, one troy pound of 22 carat gold was valued at £46-14-6d. For a sovereign to be “worth its weight in gold”, it needed to weigh a little under 8 grams, a coin weight that persists to the present day. (With gold now valued at approximately £740 an ounce, the intrinsic value of a pure gold sovereign in 2014 / 15 is in excess of £200. A modern sovereign contains 73% gold and costs somewhat less.



Typical Gold Sovereign of 1858

The most obvious way to debase gold coins was to shave a little metal from the coin’s circumference. The shavings from a number of coins could then be melted and sold as precious metal while the original, although debased, retained its face value. When coins were hand hammered and of irregular shape, this was relatively straightforward. It became a less attractive option when milled or serrated edges were introduced on many valuable coins, a technique that mechanised minting made straightforward. It was still possible to reinstate a milled edge crudely but it required skill. More attractive was “sweating”. This took advantage of the softness of gold coins. If the coins were shaken in a bag, the surface would wear and gold dust collected in the bag. A particular advantage of this method of debasement was that it more accurately simulated normal wear.

All this chicanery was very fine unless the debased coin passed through a bank. From 1821, brass coin weights were produced by the Royal Mint, enabling banks to check for any “light gold” offered to them. If the coin weight was incorrect, the bank refused it.

Although postage rates in the 1830s would seem unlikely to require the use of gold coins, it was in the London Twopenny Post that a particular problem arose, although it was probably not unknown in the provinces. A postal charge of 2d or 3d might not seem a valid reason for a customer to tender a gold coin and ask for change but, when paying for several letters, it might seem more reasonable, particularly in a city where such coins were usual. Even that did not seem reasonable to Francis Freeling. He suggested that the revenue was losing between £150 and £200 a year from sovereigns refused by the bank, which then had to be disposed of as bullion. It came at a sensitive time because collection of the revenue of the Twopenny Post was about to be transferred to the Receiver General. Sir Francis suggested to the Postmaster General that gold coins should not be taken by letter carriers unless there was a distinct understanding that those who tendered such coins would take them back if the Receiver General refused them.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the Postmaster General, the Duke of Richmond, went further and directed that letter carriers in the London Twopenny Post were not to give change for sovereigns under any circumstances. As far as we know, that solved the problem.

Reference

Post 42/16V/1834

TYPE D3 UNDATED CIRCULAR FROM TETTENHALL

by Roy Summers

Some time ago a part entire was obtained – ex-the Stourbridge find – which has a TETTENHALL type D3 undated circle on a cover from Wolverhampton dated 28th November 1859 (see Fig 1). Recently a fellow member of the Wombourne Society showed me another one – this cover also has the only recorded THE WERGS undated circle, also on a cover from Wolverhampton and dated 11th May 1859 (see Fig 2).



Fig 1, November 1859 cover with undated D3 TETTENHALL to Stourbridge.

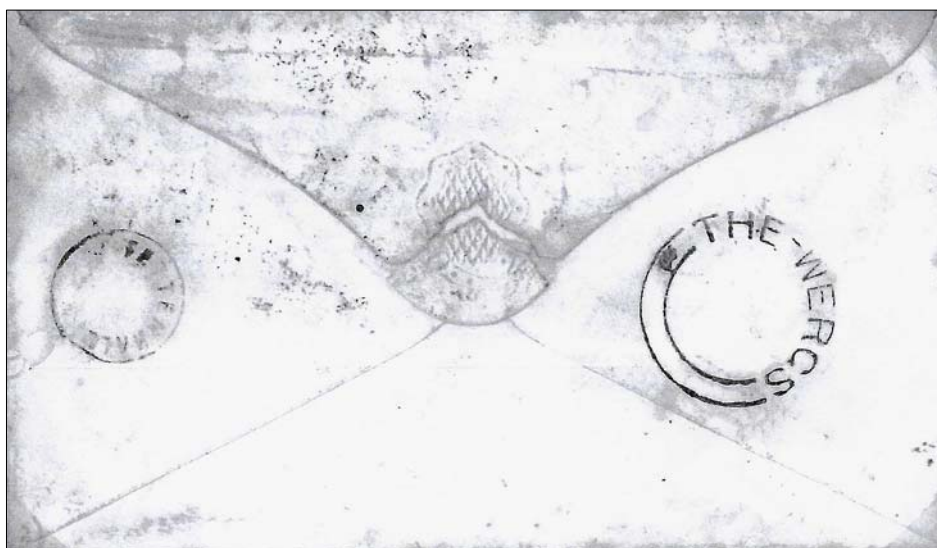


Fig 2, Showing an undated TETTENHALL at left and the only recorded undated THE WERGS on a cover dated 11th MAY 1859.

It would be interesting to know if any of our members have other copies of this mark, or, indeed, if they can throw any light on why this is not recorded in the Undated Circular Marks of the Midland Counties, published by the society, fourth edition May 1996.

A LITTLE OF NOTTINGHAM RAILWAY HISTORY

by Alan Marshall

We have been treated of late to a period of much detailed information regarding the railways and its postal activities. I can only apologise in advance that I have nothing really to contribute to it other than to draw attention to a somewhat nondescript wrapper from London to a solicitor in Nottingham, 3rd February 1846. For the stamp collector a QV penny red-brown, blued imperforate stamp might be of interest. Perhaps of more interest would be why does the item display an extra strike of a Stratford No13 barred oval cancel? Secondly, a clerk's note on the reverse reads '*Mr Hubbersly, London re Midland Directory*'. A reference, one concludes, to the Midland Railway.

Apart from a London cds and the complimentary Nottingham receiving cds of 4th February on the reverse one is left with a very small wax seal. Without a powerful magnifying glass the seal is likewise initially also nondescript until one notices the minute but very clear lettering displays 'Ambergate, Nottingham and Boston and Eastern Junction Railway'. The wrapper clearly emanated from the office of the aforesaid Company which in fact was not officially formed until 5 months later, on the 16th July 1846; it being a union of a Nottingham and Boston scheme, the Nottingham Erewash Valley and Ambergate Railway and the Nottingham Vale of Belvoir and Grantham Railway. The line opened from Colwick Junction to Grantham on 15th July 1850 and for local goods on 22nd July. The GWR wanted the line for access to Nottingham, but the Midland Railway was very keen to hold on to its monopoly. So keen indeed that the station master of the low level London Road station, Mr Pettifer, carried out a military style defence operation as the commandant.



Fig 1, The cover from London to Nottingham, 3rd Feb 1846

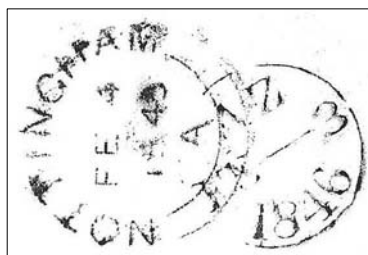


Fig 2, showing the London and Nottingham date stamps for 3rd & 4th Feb 1846 respectively

What follows verbatim is a detached account of the Midland Railway fight with the Great Northern Railway within the 'Lost Railways of Nottinghamshire':

The 'enemy' was the Grantham to Nottingham train run by a small railway company, which went by the cumbersome name of the Ambergate, Nottingham, Boston & Eastern Junction Railway (ANB & EJR). The train steamed into Nottingham station over the Midland lines, as it believed it was legally entitled to do. After the ANB & EJR train had pulled up in the station and discharged its passengers, its crew detached the locomotive (which had

been hired from the Great Northern Railway) prior to turning it round and steaming to the other end of the train in order to re-connect it and make the return journey to Grantham. But then Mr Pettifer ordered the first of his forces into action. As the ANB&EJR engine started its manoeuvring, it suddenly found that there was a Midland locomotive in front blocking its way forward. Then another Midland locomotive came up behind so that it was effectively captured. There were no doubt vehement arguments and loud protests, and the driver of the ANB & EJR locomotive was said to have made a desperate effort to charge the engine in front, but to no avail. The Midland Railway captors had their orders. The ANB & EJR engine was taken off by them into an old engine house.

Then Mr Pettifer ordered his second line of troops into action. No sooner was the 'enemy' engine safely in the shed than a gang of platelayers started work outside. Normally their work involved laying railway lines, but on this occasion they took them up, just to make sure that the ANB & EJR engine was well and truly marooned. This high-handed action demonstrates just how fiercely the Midland Railway was prepared to defend its then virtual monopoly in Nottinghamshire. At one time it had harboured its own ambitions to take over the ANB & EJR, but had been frustrated by a Great Northern shareholder, Graham Hutchinson, who had bought many of the ANB & EJR shares. The Midland's monopoly was disliked by the Nottingham Corporation and by Parliament. Undeterred, however, the Midland Railway continued to fight fiercely in Parliament and the courts to keep its most dangerous rival, the GNR, out of Nottinghamshire. To the east the Great Northern was completing a direct line from York via Grantham to London, running into King's Cross station, which would be one of the most attractive routes in the country.

Nottingham Corporation had given its support to the ANB & EJR when it constructed its independent line from a junction with the Great Northern line at Grantham to a junction with the Midland's Nottingham to Lincoln line at Colwick, on the east side of Nottingham. And authority had then imposed on the Midland Railway the right of the ANB & EJR to run its trains over the last stretch of Midland tracks and into Nottingham station. But the Midland had driven a hard bargain in exchange for this, insisting on crippling contributions from the ANB & EJR, while the Midland's manoeuvres in Parliament forced the ANB & EJR to buy out, at great expense, the Nottingham and Grantham canals before they were allowed to proceed. But the Midland Railway's harsh treatment of the smaller company was about to boomerang. Although the ANB & EJR had started running trains on its Grantham and Nottingham service in 1850, because of its over-extended financial position it was soon in difficulty. In 1852 it had to surrender its independence and enter into a 'working agreement' with the Great Northern.

The Great Northern then took over the running of the ANB & EJR and advertised that the Great Northern would now be running 'through coaches' from London to Nottingham. For the Midland Railway the words 'Great Northern' were a red rag to a bull. So the Midland wielded its formidable legal resources to get an injunction preventing the through train concept, but the GNR went ahead anyway. And it was the first train to include such a through coach that Mr Pettifer and his army so effectively ambushed.

After the battle of Nottingham station the conflict moved back to the courts, and eventually, seven months later, the captive engine was released. The Great Northern's acquisition of the ANB & EJR had to be recognised, but the rivalry between the two companies continued. The Midland Railway started refusing to convey all ANB & EJR 'through' traffic from Nottingham station, so that the ANB & EJR had to carry goods by horse-drawn road transport to Colwick, which was the terminus of its own independent line. This ANB & EJR line ran between Colwick, then a tiny village in the country three miles east of Nottingham, to Grantham, where it linked up with the Great Northern system. Parliamentary Acts of 1853 and 1854 enabled the Great Northern to take over the assets of the ANB & EJR. Now more than ever determined to run trains into Nottingham, the Great Northern decided the only solution was to build its own Nottingham terminus. It therefore got permission to run its own tracks, so no longer was there that risky business of having running rights over Midland lines. These tracks ran from Netherfield, near Colwick, to a new Nottingham terminus on London Road, Nottingham, at was called East Croft. The original junction with the Midland line at Colwick was removed, and it was not until nearly a century later, under British Railways, that it was restored so that Grantham trains could run once again into Nottingham Midland station.

The handsome new Great Northern station, then as now recognised as an architectural gem, was designed by a leading Nottingham architect, Thomas Chambers Hine, and built at a cost of £20,000. Hine worked on many buildings in Nottingham, including the remodelling of Nottingham Castle. Nottingham London Road station opened, together with the new three miles of line (including a bridge over the Nottingham Canal), on 3rd October 1857. It was used for all Great Northern traffic into Nottingham until the opening of the Victoria station in 1900, when all Great Northern passenger trains were transferred there, and then until 1944, for trains between Nottingham and Northampton (a service operated by the London & North Western Railway). After 12th May 1944, they too transferred to Nottingham Victoria.

With a lease agreement of 30th March 1855 the Company changed its name to the Nottingham and Grantham Railway and Canal Company on the 15th May 1860 and as such it passed to the LNER in 1923.

BRISTOL, SHREWSBURY & NORMANTON TPO – A RECENT ACQUISITION

by Brian Purcell

This service became operational in 1895. Hitherto it was designated Shrewsbury & Normanton TPO. Four different date stamps were issued, with PARCELS from East and West and without parcels from East and West. Wilson rated them as 'R' (only one or two known of each).

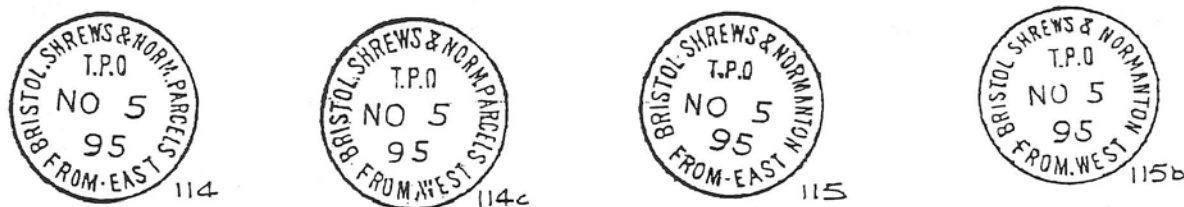


Fig 1, Four Bristol, Shrewsbury & Normanton date stamps with Wilson reference numbers

The service continued until 1902 when the TPO was routed to York via Leeds and the designation became Bristol, Shrewsbury & York TPO.

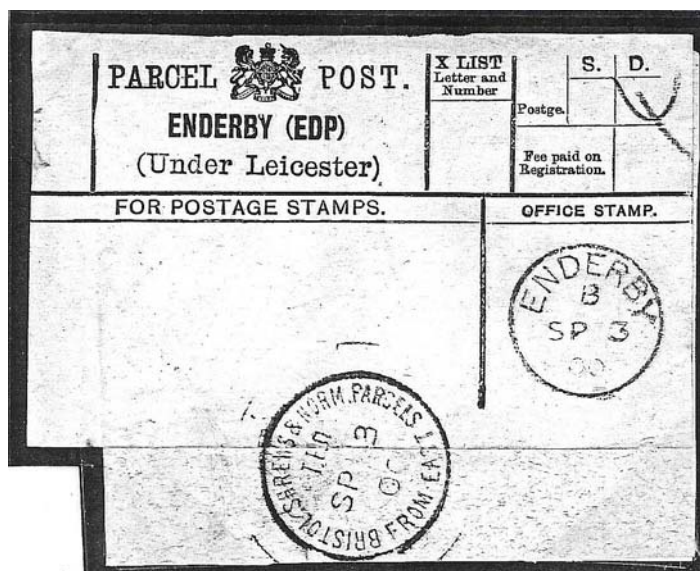


Fig 2, Wilson 114 used on a Parcel Post Label

Fig 2, shows a Parcel Post label of **ENDERBY (EDP)** / (Under Leicester) on a small piece cancelled ENDERBY single ring cds for 3rd Set 1900 with Wilson 114 alongside, one of only two examples that have been recorded.

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Cavendish advert

MISSENT TO MARKET DRAYTON

by Guy Bridges

It is surprising the number of letters that were missent to Market Drayton in the early 1800s. Illustrated is the Post Office form (reduced in size, ed) which gives 'A List of London Missent Letters and Newspapers received this Day, and forwarded by Cross Post', all with the London postmark 13th December 1813. Twelve letters addressed to Atherstone, Nantwich, Woburn, Chester, Hinckley, Tamworth and Holyhead were missent on that one day, with the form completed on 15th December 1813 and the MARKET DRAYTON / 156 mileage mark (SH 308) added. With so many letters missent to Market Drayton, it is strange that the only known MISSENT TO MARKET DRAYTON stamp is recorded in April 1850, on piece at that and not seen by anyone in the Shropshire society!

London Post Mark		To whom and where directed.		To what Office they should have been sent; or if this cannot be ascertained, "not known" to be inserted, with the post town to which they were forwarded.
Month.	Date	(The full direction to be inserted in this column.)		
Decr	13	Mr. F. Aug. (Drayton Atherstone		Atherstone
		John Stephens Esq. Chetmondley		Nantwich
		near Nantwich Cheshire		
		Mr. G. Baker Jos. Ann. Woburn. Deak		Woburn
		Mr. John Sanders Atherstone Harw th		Atherstone
		Miss Mrs. East Grosvenor Chester		Chester
2. Let		Mr. J. H. Esq. Lancashire Esq. Lancashire Grange		Buckley
		Hwy - Buckle		
		Miss Lord. Wootton the Hinkley Hinkley		Hinkley
		Mr. Robt. Peck Port. No. 2. Tamworth		Tamworth
		Mr. Geo. Owen Main Coach Off. Holyhead		Holyhead
		Miss Davies Broughton Chester		Chester
		Earl of Christchurch Bredby Hall Atherstone		Atherstone
Twelve Letters.				
Newspapers				

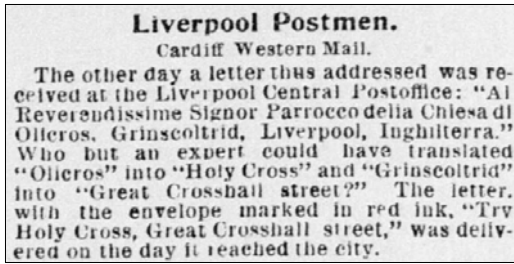
P. G. G. Postm. C. U.

The use of this Paper must never be omitted, because it is very requisite to have a cheque on the errors of the Sorting Offices in London, and when the Postmaster is out of Forms he will write to the Secretary for a fresh supply.

Missent to MARKET DRAYTON
 Wolverhampton Sept. 12th 1837
 Mrs. Lloyd
 The Castle
 S. Lichfield Eccleshall

A missent, not from the date on the above form but a manuscript Missent to MARKET DRAYTON with the mileage removed, on a free front from the Bishop of Lichfield at Wolverhampton, dated 12th September 1837, which should have gone to Eccleshall, Staffordshire. Guy supplied two similar missents of 1822 and 1826 with the full mileage stamp, which space didn't allow being illustrated (Ed).

THAT OLD VAGUES DUTY



Cutting from *The Morning Call* of San Francisco, 12th May 1894, page 10, originally from the Cardiff Western Mail.

A letter received from Italy at the Liverpool Central Post Office was addressed 'Al Reverendissime Signor Parrocco della Chiesa di Olicros, Grinscoltrid, Liverpool, Inghilterra'. It was correctly delivered on the day it was received to The Church of the Holy Cross, Great Crosshall Street. Nothing *vague* about that *duty*!

FEEDBACK – PARCEL POST – A UNIQUE CANCELLATION? (MM 185, page 24).

Following communication between John Hine and Derek Smeathers, it can now be reported that the new and current recorded period of use is from 21 FE.1893 to 26 OC.1912.