



# MIDLAND MAIL

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



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NUMBER 66, AUGUST 1990

Welcome to another season of postal history, though there is no true close season for this hobby. Anyway now that the World Cup and Wimbledon have departed from our television screens, there may be time to mount a few covers and write a piece for Midland Mail. I am sure that we all have some "problem" covers in our collections that would entertain members, and it is possible that someone may be able to provide an answer.

Over the last year or two I have followed with interest the attempts of various bodies to woo the youngsters of today away from their computers and involve them in stamp collecting. It was while I was watching some of our fourth-year students working on their local history studies for their G.C.S.E. that it occurred to me that the approach of all these bodies is wrong. It is postal history not stamps in which we should try to interest young people. For it is postal history with its scope for individual research into areas of relevance and interest that has more in common with the inclinations and experience of today's schoolchildren. Beyond a certain age they are more likely to acquire an abiding interest in something in which they can see a purpose rather than in the acquisition of coloured labels designed to part them from their money. . It is possible that they could follow the opposite route to that taken by most of us. Their experience of postal history could lead to an interest in its minor offshoot - philately. Even then I expect that the thematic approach would appeal rather more than traditional philately. So instead of trying to interest the juniors of your local society in yet more multicoloured wallpaper, why not try some covers instead and show them the scope of postal history.

SUBSCRIPTIONS\*SUBSCRIPTIONS\*SUBSCRIPTIONS\*SUBSCRIPTIONS\*SUBSCRIPTIONS\*SUBS

A reminder that subs are now due. If you have not already paid our Treasurer, Trevor Clewley will be pleased to receive cheques for £5 at:-  
127, Queslett Road East, Streetly, Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands B74 2AJ  
So for 1.37p. a day you can attend eight interesting meetings and receive five copies of a bulletin which reaches the areas of postal history that other journals cannot reach.

THIS SEASON'S PROGRAMME

8th. SEPTEMBER. At DOCTOR JOHNSON HOUSE, Birmingham (note the venue) starting at 2 p.m. The subject will be Local Posts Part 1. This is the first of two meetings devoted to looking-at material which will be the subject of the Society's next publication. You are asked to bring material, which can include Penny Posts, Fifth Clause Posts and unofficial local posts, from the following areas:- Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire, Northamptonshire, Warwickshire and Birmingham. There is no limit on the number of sheets, but if you have a large number will you put them in order of importance in case time is limited. The meeting will be preceded by a COMMITTEE MEETING starting at 1 p.m.

6th. OCTOBER. At Carrs Lane Church Centre, Birmingham beginning at 1.30 p.m. We are asked to bring nine sheets on the subject of "REGISTRATION".

3rd. NOVEMBER. At Carrs Lane Church Centre beginning at 1.30 p.m. This will be the second meeting devoted to local posts. We are asked to bring material from:- Gloucestershire, Herefordshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire and Worcestershire.

15th. DECEMBER. At Bass Museum, Burton-on-Trent. Vivien Sussex will give a display on "Valuables by Post".

12th. JANUARY. Details to be arranged. This will either be a joint meeting with another society or a nine sheet members' display.

2nd. FEBRUARY. At Carrs Lane Church Centre. Our Annual Competitions. Full details should appear in the next Midland Mail.

9th. MARCH. At Carrs Lane Church Centre starting at 1.30 p.m. Final details have yet to be arranged.

27th. APRIL. At Carrs Lane Church Centre. A.G.M. and Auction.

COMPETITION

The answers to the competition in the last five issues are:-

- A 7d. for 30+ to 50 miles. Sent via Worcester.
- B 5d. See MM56/8.
- C 7d. 6d. (for 20+ to 30 miles) plus 1d. penny post charge.
- D 8d. Sent via Fenny Stratford, St. Albans and Aylesbury.
- E 8/9½d. (7d. x 15) plus ½d. turnpike charge.
- F 9d. for 120 to 170 miles. Sent via Selby and Beverley?
- G 7d. Sent via Woburn and Bedford.
- H 10d.
- I 10d. 9d. rate to London replaced by that for 120+ to 170 miles.
- J 5d. for 30+ to 60 miles.
- K 3d. for two post stages- Northampton the only intermediate post town.
- L 1/3½d. 1/1d. General Post + 2d. Twopenny Post + ½d. turnpike charge.
- M 2d.
- N 8½d. 8d. for route via Northampton and Atherstone plus ½d. delivery. (See MM46/19)
- O 8d. for 50+ to 80 miles via St. Albans. (1d. for delivery not shown).
- P 1d. for re-direction.
- Q 6d. for 20+ to 30 miles via Staines.
- R 3d. 1d. plus 2d. registration.
- S 6d. Twice the 3d. printed paper rate.

The winner was Chris Beaver who got thirteen correct. Where a date was not shown the appropriate County Catalogue should have helped apart from Q which was the deliberate "joker" in place of a penalty shoot-out.

## THE LOCAL POSTS OF THE MIDLAND COUNTIES

While members have been mowing lawns and tending their roses during the summer days, research on the Society's new "local post" project has continued in the cooler surroundings of Post Office Archives. With the help of several County Editors, the copying of minutes and reports relating to the majority of the official local posts (penny and 5th clause) has been completed and it is planned that first draft narratives for each post (except the Birmingham Penny Post) will be ready by the end of the year.

It is now intended to involve all our members in this exciting new project. It has been agreed that two meetings this season will be devoted to members' displays of material relating to unofficial or official local posts. The sub-committee responsible for the project has also produced a questionnaire, that will be available to members from the first meeting. and which, unlike those in previous projects, members are asked to complete for each letter they have which they believe to have passed through a local post, official or unofficial. The aim has been to ask only those questions vital to the project. It is hoped that members will record everything they have (and encourage their friends to do so) as such letters are not likely to be in collections in great numbers and every example is important to us.

The project has already turned up new and unexpected information. The publication of a book in 1993 covering the Birmingham Penny Post and all other Midland local posts (more than 70) should provide a fitting celebration of the bi-centenary of the Birmingham post and make an important contribution to the study of English postal history.

J.W.C.

## HIGH AWARDS FOR THE SOCIETY'S PUBLICATIONS

The Society's two books, "The Undated Circular Marks" and "The Undated Straight Line & Numbered Receiving House Marks", were sent for inclusion in the Fourteenth Annual Philatelic Literature Fair held at the Cardinal Spellman Philatelic Museum, Massachusetts U.S.A., on March 24th. & 25th. All entries to the fair were judged by "well-known philatelic experts".

Members will be pleased to hear that both books received "Vermeil Awards" and the certificates will be on display at the first meeting of the new season.

J.W.C.

## **G.B. POSTAL HISTORY**

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

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

**JIM HAMMOND**

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

CORRESPONDENCE

As Secretary of The Postal History Society, Michael Jackson writes:

Dear John,

Thank you for another good Midland Mail. However I was very surprised to read the reported comments of some county collectors at your Stamp World '90 meeting, that some felt that this society was apparently anti local collecting.

As Secretary I dispute this strongly, and although our task is to provide a forum for international collecting from Aden to Zanzibar, we do give a fair proportion of our time to county collections and G.B. as befits the proportion of our members interests. There is no point in our duplicating the excellent work of societies which have local meetings within their study boundary, and who also publish varying types of magazine. I refer to groups such as yours, the East Anglian, the Yorkshire and the Somerset & Dorset etc.

Within the immediate past we have had major displays by Harold Wilson, John Forbes Nixon, Michael Champness, James Grimwood Taylor, Vivien Sussex and myself, plus many other smaller contributions, a very generous time allocation. Our Editor can only choose from what he is sent, but we are currently running an in-depth article on Sevenoaks. Stalwarts such as Martin Willcocks, Denis Salt and Peter Chadwick often have articles included.

Since the formula was adopted of a main speaker on a wider variety of subjects plus 20 sheets from those present we have increased our attendances from an average of 10 (15 if lucky) to over 30 with several meetings sold out at a maximum of 45. That proves what our attending members enjoy, and require.

We have deliberately aimed at variety because nothing is more calculated to decrease attendances than boring repetitive displays, whether they are of Portugese pre-stamp strikes for town after town; French TPO marks, 500 in total, all the same design and varying in name only; Penny Posts of a small area repeated foreach place in a county and the same as those elsewhere in G.B.

I sincerely hope that you have space for this comment from the PHS and that erroneously held opinions may alter. We welcome suggestions from our members as to anything we could do as an umbrella for all who are keen postal historians, but in my opinion philately in general tends to be too fragmented and over-organised already. And any further proliferation of groups and/or publications is not likely to benefit anyone. Do write to us care of myself at Huntingdon or via John. I look forward to your replies.

Yours....

Derek Woodhall has written enclosing a cutting from the magazine Flight, published in 1921, which itself made reference to an paragraph from the Observer of October 1821:

THE MAILS

A century ago, 1 October 1821, expediting His Majesty's Mail was a prominent feature of the times as witness the following paragraph from the "Observer" of that date:-

"Mr Burgess, whose suggestions regarding a more expeditious conveyance of

the mails were embodied in the Extra Post Bill, rejected last Session, is now trying the effect of his plan; and to that effect has advertised the London and Manchester Light Express, a new public carriage, drawn by two horses abreast and carrying two inside passengers only, to commence running from the Castle & Falcon, Aldersgate Street, at four o'clock in the afternoon on Monday, October 1, and arrive in Manchester early the succeeding morning, leaving the whole of that day for business. The object of the undertaking, he says, is to present to the public a mode of conveyance combining greater expedition, greatly increased comfort and safety to passengers, less risk to persons travelling the road, and less oppression to the horses than is now experienced in the most expeditious public coaches."

If precedent were required to justify our present P.M.G. going all out for Air Mail time-saving, surely it is to be found in the above 1821 "hustling"

Derek would like to know if anyone has any information on the "Extra Post Bill".

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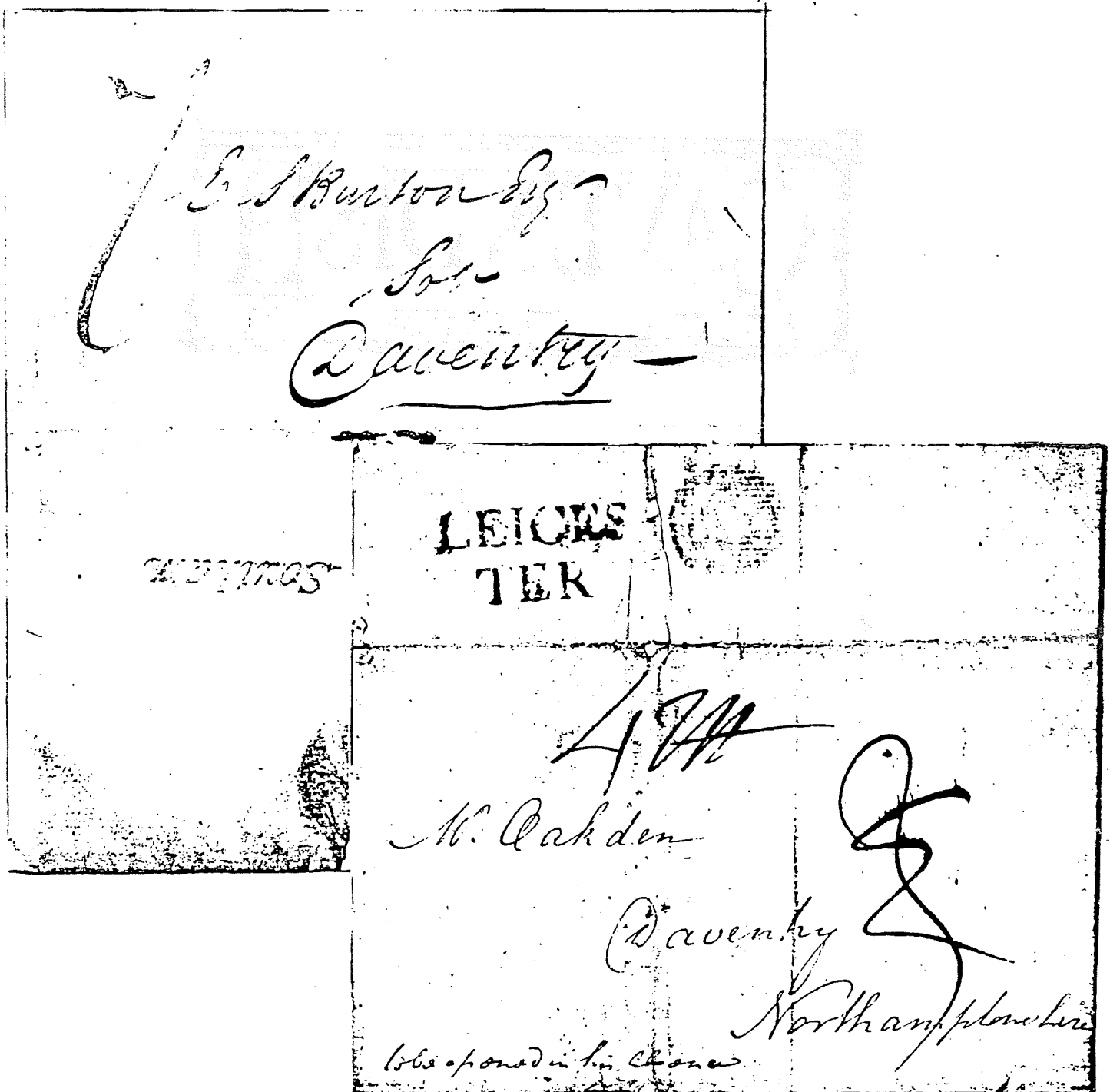
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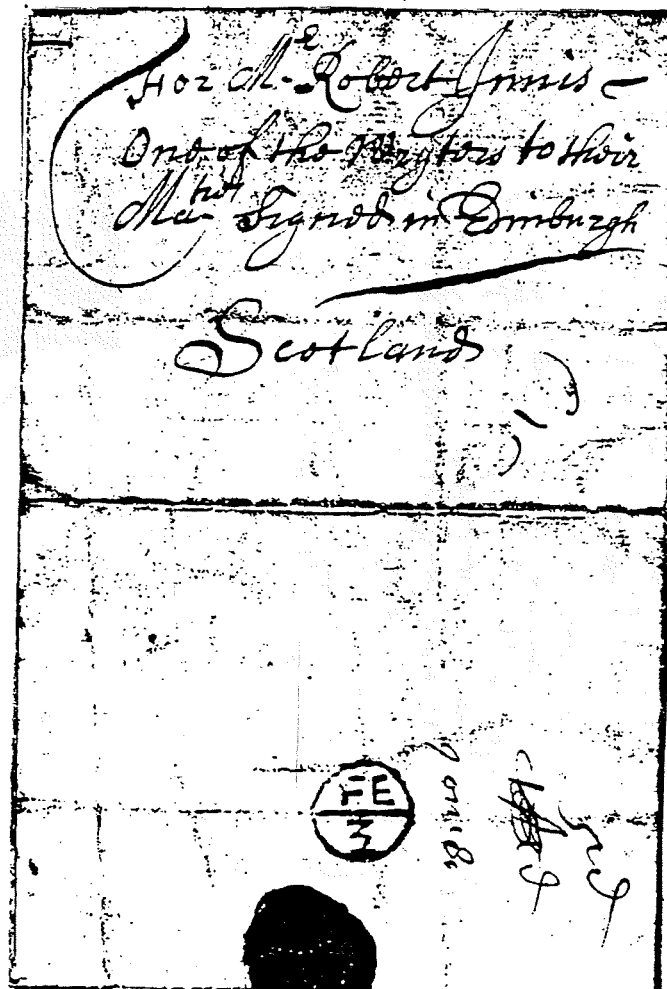
SOME PROBLEM COVERS

The first is an item contributed by "Ches". The cover was sent from Southam to Daventry in September 1837 and was charged at 7d., the rate for 30+ to 50 miles. Southam is situated 10 miles from Daventry and 9 miles from Warwick on a direct road between these two towns. It has been suggested that the cover was sent via Warwick and Coventry from where it was carried to Daventry by the London coach. If so, should it have been stamped at either Warwick or Coventry.

The second item was also sent to Daventry, but from Leicester in October 1780. It appears to have been rated at 3d., the rate for under 80 miles. This was crossed out and replaced by a "4". Does this indicate a local delivery charge or was some route other than that via the Northampton to Daventry post used? The matter is complicated by what appears to be an "illiteracy mark" for 3d. which has been crossed out. Can any of our Northants members shed some light on this?



Finally a letter which is dated 31st. January 1690 and was sent from Blaston in Leicestershire. It appears to have been put into the post in London for the only charge shown on the front is one of 5d, presumably comprised of 3d. for London to Berwick and 2d. for Berwick to Edinburgh. The latter was the rate for 40 miles and under yet the route from Berwick to Edinburgh was 55 miles. Can anyone explain this? Also I wonder if the writing to the right of the Bishopmark is of any significance.



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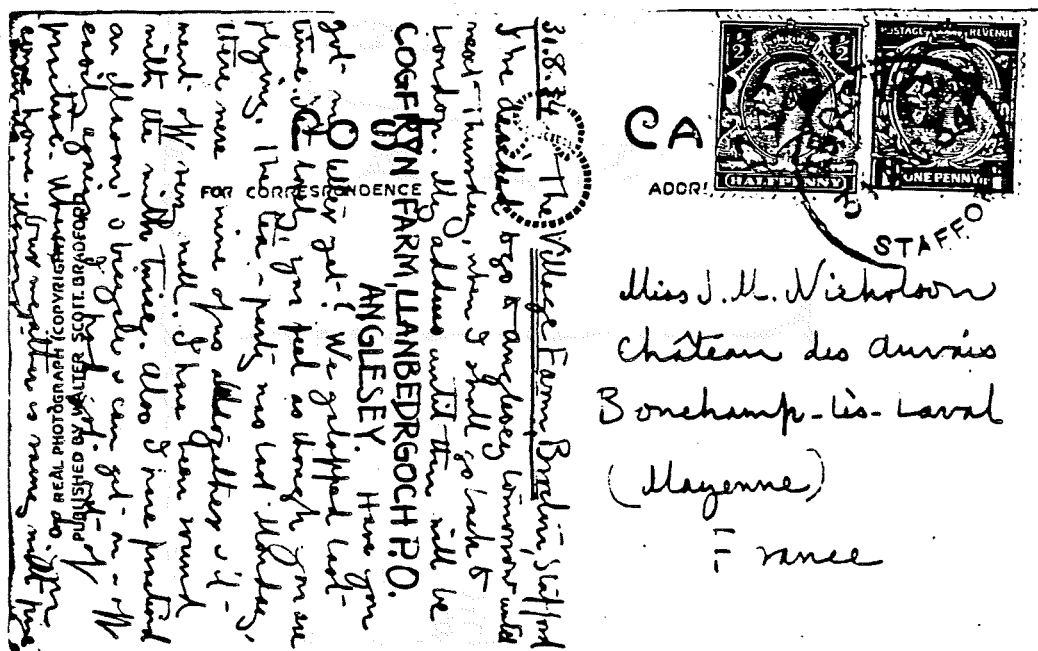
VISITORS VERY WELCOME BY APPOINTMENT AT BRIDGEFOOT HOUSE  
 BY THE OLD RIVER BRIDGE AT HUNTINGDON

# THE END OF MINOR OFFICE RUBBERS

by Rev. Christopher Beaver

Whether or not the article in MM64 concerning Climax Daters has yet prompted a study of all your examples, would you please see whether you have any used after 1933 at sub-offices, and pass on the results to the Editor. No response will be taken to mean you have none! Illustrated is my own sole example, on a card written at The Village Farm, Brocton, on the N.W. corner of Cannock Chase, close to the site of Brocton Camp which was a temporary home for thousands during the First World War:-

31AUG.34 BROCTON, STAFFORD



There are no proof book records surviving for England & Wales which would show when a single ring steel stamp was supplied to any particular office requiring a replacement for its Climax Dater. The decisions to discontinue entirely the use of rubber obliterations at "small" offices were taken in the last weeks of 1933 and the new steel stamps were being supplied by January 1934. James Mackay in his "Sub-Office Rubber Date-Stamps of England & Wales" records very few offices still using those stamps after April. His latest date is more likely to be the result of an incorrect year slug than an actual survival of the stamp:-

4JAN.35 BAYFORD, WINCANTON, SOMERSET

Otherwise his latest usages are:-

1MAY.34 EASTLEIGH, WEMWORTHY, DEVON  
4MAY.34 PYE GREEN, HEDNESFORD, STAFFS  
22MAY.34 UPPER BAR, NEWPORT, SHROPSHIRE  
11JUN.34 CALTON, STOKE-ON-YRENT, STAFFS  
11JUN.34 COTTON, STOKE-ON-TRENT, STAFFS

The recent book published by the Shropshire Postal History Society also records:-

11JUL.34 SHRAWARDINE, SHREWSBURY  
29AUG.34 UPPER BAR, NEWPORT, SHROPSHIRE

Maybe these records are based on too few and too limited collections for there to be any significance in the apparent concentration of late dates in one locality of the country. However, perhaps there was a failure by one surveyor's office to compile or send in a list of all the places requiring replacements when such a list was first requested.

The previous article mentioned that many sub-offices which had once had only a Climax Dater graduated to a steel stamp. Several policy decisions caused such a change in some instances. From 1916 it was stipulated that wherever the average number of items stamped in a day exceeded 200 a steel stamp should be issued. From February 1929 any office with more than one dispatch a day was henceforth to have a steel. On 2nd. September 1931 it was announced "the use of steel stamps has been extended to all Cash Account Postal Order Offices which transact licence business", which meant those that issued wireless and dog licences.

How many offices in England & Wales remained dependent on a single rubber stamp until 1933/4 may never be accurately known. For Scotland it is a different story because proof books do survive containing an impression made, generally during 1935, of the replacement steel stamp for each such office there.

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### MILEAGE ERASED

by Rev. Christopher Beaver

To clarify what was stated in MM65 concerning both the decision to discontinue the use (in addition to the issue) of mileage stamps and the purpose they served attention may be drawn to a minute in Post 42 and the background papers - Post 40/117/1829. See also MM56/7 and 58/15.

On 6th. February 1829 approval was given for a circular to be sent to all postmasters instructing them to "file out" the figures from such stamps in use. It was not a matter of checking them and erasing them if found to be incorrect. The decision was a direct consequence of compiling a list of towns which "vary in their distances from the stamps now in use", that list being based on reports just received from the surveyors, and that decision having no direct or stated relationship with the move to the new G.P.O. Nevertheless it was of course obvious to everyone concerned that when the new building was ready for occupation many mileages would need revising and more stamps would have become incorrect. It is therefore very likely that the decision to erase all mileages, correct or not at the time, was influenced by this prospect. After the opening of the new G.P.O. in September a new list of postages to and from London was published as we have seen, and those who needed to know the mileages inserted them in the blank column provided.

The only specific reason given by Francis Freeling for his advice that the circular be sent refers not to complaints from the public about incorrect figures nor to the move to St. Martin-le-Grand, but to the likes of Robert Partridge, the clerks who did need access to correct mileage figures. After informing the P.M.G. that the figures on the stamps are often inaccurate, he reports: "The Officers here are misled by them in taxing letters through London."

That it would take much longer to look up two figures was not even mentioned - it was what was supposed to happen anyway. Still it would be surprising if there were not loud groans in the office and requests for more staff - and from September 1829 representations that mileage stamps be re-introduced. They never were.

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## SIX-DAY POSTS, 1786

I am indebted to Chris Beaver for sending the copy of the London Gazette shown below. It should be noted that the places listed were served with a "Bye and Cross Post EVERY DAY" as well as a six-day post from London.

General Post Office, London,  
November 27, 1786.

**M**R. PALMER's PLAN for the more regular, safe, and expeditious Conveyance of His Majesty's Mails, is this Day extended to YORK, and likewise to NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE, and EDINBURGH.

A SIX Days Post per Week is now established betwixt this City and the undermentioned Post-Towns, which are accommodated also with a Bye and Cross Post EVERY DAY.

|                     |                      |
|---------------------|----------------------|
| Alnwick             | Loughborough         |
| Athbourne           | Leicester            |
| Asaph St.           | Litchfield           |
| Bury St. Edmund's   | Liverpool            |
| Bury, Lancashire    | Leek                 |
| Boston              | Leeds                |
| Burton on Trent     | Lancaster            |
| Birmingham          | Marl                 |
| Bewdley             | Manchester           |
| Bangor              | Macclesfield         |
| Bradford, Yorkshire | Middlewich           |
| Barnesley           | Mansfield            |
| Bawtry              | Morpeth              |
| Beverley            | Norwich              |
| Belford             | Newmarket            |
| Bervick             | Newark               |
| Bolton              | Nottingham           |
| Blackburne          | Northampton          |
| Boroughbridge       | Nantwich             |
| Bakewell            | Northop              |
| Buxton              | Newcastle under Line |
| Chapel le Frith     | Newcastle upon Tyne  |
| Cambridge           | Northwich            |
| Charteris           | Northallerton        |
| Coventry            | Ormskirk             |
| Colehill            | Peterborough         |
| Chester             | Preston              |
| Conway              | Roylton              |
| Caxton              | Rochdale             |
| Congleton           | Retford              |
| Chesterfield        | Rawcliffe            |
| Chorley             | Rippon               |
| Cave, North         | Stilton              |
| Cave, South         | Spalding             |
| Darlington          | Stamford             |
| Derby               | Stafford             |
| Dudley              | Shiffnall            |
| Doncaster           | Shrewsbury           |
| Durham              | Stone                |
| Dunbar              | Stockport            |
| Edinburgh           | Sheffield            |
| Ferrybridge         | Shields, North       |
| Grantham            | Shields, South       |
| Gainsborough        | Sunderland           |
| Gatehead            | Stourbridge          |
| Garstang            | Scarborough          |
| Huntingdon          | Thetford             |
| Harborough          | Towcester            |
| Holyhead            | Tuxford              |
| Holywell            | Thorne               |
| Halifax             | Tadcaster            |
| Huddersfield        | Tidderwell           |
| Howden              | Wibbech              |
| Hull                | Wolverhampton        |
| Harrowgate          | Walsall              |
| Haddington          | Warrington           |
| Ives St. Huntingdon | Wakefield            |
| Kidderminster       | Weighton Market      |
|                     | Wetherby             |

Kendal  
Knutsford  
Lynn  
Lincoln

Wigan  
Whitby  
Yarmouth

Early next Spring the Plan will be farther extended to GLASGOW, ABERDEEN, to FALMOUTH, PLYMOUTH, &c. and the Improvements in the Bye and Cross Posts given to the Remainder of the principal Post-Towns.

N. B. The YORK, the NEWCASTLE, and the EDINBURGH Mail Coaches go from the Bull and Mouth Inn in Bull and Mouth Street; to which House the WORCESTER Mail Coach has been lately removed.

Charles Bonnor.

A Quarterly General Court of the Governors of the Bounty of Queen Anne, for the Augmentation of the Maintenance of the Poor Clergy, will be held at their House in Dean's Yard, Westminster, on Thursday the 21<sup>st</sup> of December instant, at Eleven o'Clock in the Forenoon.

Victhalling-Office, December 13, 1786.

THE Commissioners for Victhalling His Majesty's Navy do hereby give Notice, That on Tuesday the 16<sup>th</sup> of January next, they will be ready to receive Tenders in Writings, (sealed up) and treat with such Persons as will undertake to supply Sea Provisions to His Majesty's Ships and Vessels at the Isle of Man, which will be paid for by Bill in Course.

The Conditions of the Contract may be seen at the Secretary's Office, at this Office, or by applying to the Collector or Chief Officer of His Majesty's Customs at Douglas, in the Isle of Man; and all Persons who may think proper to make Tenders on the said Occasion are desired to take Notice, That none that contain extravagant Prices upon some Articles, and Prices much inferior to the real Value upon others, will be considered as proper to be admitted; and that no regard will be had to any Tender that shall not be delivered to the Board before One o'Clock on the said 16<sup>th</sup> Day of January next, nor unless the Person who makes the Tender, or some Person on his Behalf, attends to answer for him when called for.

Mercers Hall, London, December 14, 1786.

THE Wardens and Commonalty of the Mystery of Mercers of the City of London do hereby give Notice, That the Committee of the said Wardens and Commonalty have this Day, in the Presence of several of their Bond Creditors, caused to be drawn out of their Lottery Wheel the Lots of the Bonds to be paid off, amounting to the Principal Sum of 3060<sup>l</sup>. viz. No. 7, 11, 16, 31, 43, 155, 178, 252, 265, 280, 343, 413, 449, 472, 512, 551, 578, 636, 778, 793, 810, 871, 952, 989, 993, 1000, 1134, 1315, 1338, and 1381, for 100<sup>l</sup>. each; and No. 1451 for 60<sup>l</sup>.

And the said Wardens and Commonalty do hereby give this further Notice, that the said several Bonds of the Numbers and Principal Sums abovementioned will be paid off at the Clerk's Office at Mercers Hall, on the 5<sup>th</sup> Day of July next, together with the Interest that will then be due thereon, at which Time the Interest on such Bonds will cease and determine.

Robert Cawne, Clerk.

## SUNDAY LABOUR IN THE POST OFFICE

The recent introduction, in many areas of the country including the Midlands, of Sunday collections prompted a look at the history of Sunday postal services. This particular article deals mainly with events in the second half of the last century. Time did not allow me to examine all possible sources so I may return to this subject, in particular matters since 1900, if I find that the material available warrants a further article.

Unlike the rest of the country London never had a delivery of letters on a Sunday. Indeed for many years, not only was there no delivery of letters but also mail was not transmitted through London. Instead a number of special cross-posts were used. In 1849 mail between Winchester and Birmingham was sent on a Sunday through Exeter; and correspondence between towns served by the North Eastern Railway and those served by the North Western Railway was carried on a Sunday by a mail cart running between Cambridge and Wolverton. At the same time most of the mail trains ran as on other days, and except as regards London, carried letters as usual. In fact the transmission of letters through London on a Sunday was recommended on at least three occasions:- by the Commissioners of Post Office Inquiry in 1836; by a Committee of the House of Commons in 1838, and by a Committee of the House of Lords in 1847.

Amongst the earliest attempts to curtail Sunday services in the Post Office was a memorial from Bath presented by Lord Ashley (an M.P. for that City and later to become Lord Shaftesbury) asking for the closure of the Bath office on a Sunday, or, at least, the closing of the doors after 10 a.m. This the authorities were not prepared to do but Mr. Creswell, the surveyor, suggested that the Money Order business should be continued until 8 p.m. on a Saturday but suspended altogether on a Sunday. This came into effect on 6th. February 1848. The other M.P. for the city immediately organised a petition signed by nearly five thousand people, including the mayor, expressing anxiety about any total closing of the office on a Sunday. However similar arrangements were introduced at Leeds and Birmingham on 13th. August and 1st. October 1848 respectively. As there was no complaint about these, the measure was extended on 7th. January 1849 to all 450 Money Order offices in England and Wales.

This was the first of a series of measures effected with the aim of "affording to all connected with the Post Office the utmost amount of rest on the Sunday" which was "consistent with a due regard to public convenience." On 28th. October 1849 the provincial offices in England and Wales were closed on a Sunday, as a general rule, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. The Sunday deliveries were restricted in all cases to one. (This involved the withdrawal of two deliveries at Lichfield, Nuneaton and Stafford. A single delivery was discontinued at a further thirty-five towns in the Midland and North Wales Districts.) On the other hand provision was made for the transmission of "forward" letters through London. Eventually this was found to require no extra staff as the number of "forward" letters was less than expected. Also since the Sunday dispatch of "forward" letters lightened the Monday morning's work, it was possible to transfer to the Monday, without delaying Monday's delivery, a large portion of the work formerly done on the Sunday.

Then on 13th. January 1850 further relief was provided, at the provincial offices, by the withdrawal of a large number of Sunday mails rendered useless by the abolition of the additional; and by ceasing on a Sunday the money pre-payment on all inland letters. These made the evening attendance unnecessary so the offices, with a few exceptions, were able to close at 10 a.m.

For those interested in the statistics, by the measure of 28th. October 1849, 508 offices were closed on average  $3\frac{1}{2}$  hours and about 4000 "dependent" offices were closed on average about 3 hours. In addition 233 deliveries in 194 post towns were discontinued, and 368 carriers relieved on average about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  hours each. By the measure of 13th. January 1850, 576 offices were closed on average a further 4 hours as were the 4000 "dependent offices".

A further reduction in the amount of work done in the Inland Office was achieved by the introduction in April 1850 of Sunday Sorting Tenders. The bags for London from towns close to London were taken up, on the Saturday night, by the down mail trains. The sorting was then started on the down train and, if necessary, completed on the up train.

In May 1850 Lord Ashley carried a resolution in the House of Commons by 93 votes to 68 for the entire discontinuance of the delivery and collection of letters throughout the country on a Sunday, and for an enquiry by the Government "as to how far transmission of mails on Sunday might be suspended without injury to the public service". The deliveries and collections were withdrawn on 23rd. June. This caused such an outcry that within a month another resolution was carried by 195 to 112 votes virtually rescinding the previous one. This resolution asked for an enquiry into whether Sunday duty could not be reduced without entirely discontinuing delivery and collections.

The committee responsible for this enquiry reported on 10th. August 1850. Whilst the committee received many letters supporting the change of 23rd. June, the majority of the mercantile classes were in favour of the restoration of some form of Sunday postal service. Specific "evils" mentioned in the report were "delay and inconvenience in the correspondence, arising out of the country markets when they fall on a Saturday; increased risk of theft or loss arising from the detention during Sunday of money letters; obstacles to the insurance of vessels, with delay in the announcement of their arrivals and departures; hinderance to the detection of crime and to the general administration of the law; delay in the transmission of information and directions respecting legal and other sorts of business; inconvenience to travellers, and delay in procuring medical aid, and in summoning friends and relatives in case of sudden illness or approaching death." The committee recommended that a delivery of letters on a Sunday, in the provinces, should be resumed subject to the following conditions:-

1. There was to be only one delivery and one collection.
2. The delivery was to be made at such a time as would not interfere with the hours of Divine service, especially of morning service.
3. The delivery was to be made by letter carriers or at the window of the post office, according to local custom.
4. As far as possible every post office be closed on Sunday at 10 a.m.
5. No money payments for inland letters was to be received at a post office; only stamped letters or unpaid ones were to be taken.
6. Where the letters which were delivered on the Sunday morning reached their destination by 8 p.m. on the Saturday, the delivery was to be made on the same night.
7. Where the duties were such as to prevent a rural letter carrier from attending Divine service, an arrangement was to be made for providing a substitute at least on the alternate Sundays.
8. In retaining a Sunday delivery in a rural district the P.M.G. was to be guided by the prevalent feeling of the locality.
9. An option be afforded to every householder to suspend the Sunday delivery of letters at his house, on written application to the local post office.
10. The withdrawal on Sunday of useless mails was to be continued.

Instructions No. 21, 1850.



By Command of the Postmaster General.

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**NOTICE to the PUBLIC,**  
AND  
**Instructions to all Postmasters,  
Sub-Postmasters, and Letter Receivers.**

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GENERAL POST OFFICE,  
June, 1850.

ON and after the 23rd instant, there will be no delivery of Letters throughout the United Kingdom on Sunday, nor will there be any collection of Letters, whether by Messengers, Letter Carriers, Receivers, &c., on that day.

A collection, however, by means of Boxes will still be permitted on Sunday, as at present, at the Receiving Offices, whether in Towns or in the Country, and at the Chief Offices, in Towns, &c., it being clearly understood, that Letters deposited in the Receiving Boxes shall remain unsorted and untouched until the Monday, and that there shall be no attendance of Postmasters or their Clerks at the Window of the Post Office on Sunday.

The present practice of detaining Letters addressed to the Metropolis itself, when posted on Saturday, until the dispatch on Sunday, will not be disturbed, with the exception that the Bags containing such Letters must be closed on Saturday Night, and as the Mails will be transmitted on Sunday in the usual manner, it will be necessary that some person shall attend to dispatch the Bags alluded to as well as to receive or forward those Bags that have arrived from other Offices.

Postmasters taking upon themselves to deliver Letters to any parties whatsoever in contravention of these orders, will be most severely punished.

Instructions No. 31, 1850.



By Command of the Postmaster-General.

# **NOTICE to the PUBLIC,**

AND

## **Instructions to all Postmasters, Sub-Postmasters, and Letter Receivers.**

GENERAL POST OFFICE,

*August, 1850.*

THE Instructions No. 21, 1850, which have been in force since the 23rd June last, relative to the Sunday Postal Arrangements, are now cancelled; and the Regulations laid down in the previous Instructions, No. 1, 1850, a Copy of which is annexed, are to be reverted to on and from the 1st day of September next, and must be carefully observed in every particular until further orders, all modifications on points of detail being reserved for subsequent consideration.

### *Copy of Instructions No. 1, January, 1850.*

ON and after Sunday, the 13th Instant, all Post Offices in England and Wales will be closed to the Public on Sunday from 10 A.M. for the remainder of the day, except in those cases where the delivery commences between 9 and 10 A.M., when the Office must continue open for one hour after the Letter Carriers are despatched; and except also in those cases where the delivery commences later than 10 A.M., when the Office, having been closed at 10 A.M., must be re-opened for one hour after the despatch of the Letter Carriers.

On and after the same date, no Inland Letters will be received on the Sunday except such as are prepaid by Stamps or are Unpaid, for the deposit of which the Letter Box will be open as usual throughout the day.

Until the closing of the Office at 10 A.M., or during the subsequent hour after the despatch of the Letter Carriers, Foreign Letters may be prepaid, Postage Stamps may be obtained, and Letters may be registered on payment of the usual Registration Fee; Strangers, Renters of Private Boxes, and those who reside beyond the limits of the Letter Carriers' deliveries, may also, while the Office is open, obtain their Letters at the Office Window.

Except at the times above mentioned, no Letters or Newspapers can be delivered from the Office on the Sunday.

So on 1st. September the situation prior to 23rd. June was restored.

With regard to 8 it was pointed out that this principle had been acted on as in 1848 and 1849 no less than 320 rural posts had been wholly withdrawn on a Sunday, and 84 partially so. The regulation was that a rural post was withdrawn on a Sunday if a count carried out on two Sundays found that 6/7 of the letters delivered were for those people asking for the change. I have not been able to find the date on which this rule was introduced. However I suspect that it was 1850, for it appears that until that time no application for the suspension of a post on a Sunday was considered if there were any objectors, however few. When a rural post was withdrawn the wages of the letter carrier were reduced by half of a day's pay as the Sunday delivery was usually lighter than that of other days of the week.

So as to prevent the inconvenience that would arise from frequent changes of mind by people taking up the option mentioned in 9, a regulation was drawn up which stated that such a request had to remain in force for not less than three months, and could not be cancelled without a week's notice. While it remained in force no letter, under any circumstances, would be delivered on a Sunday to the person concerned.

During the following thirty years or so the question of Sunday labour in the Post Office surfaced periodically. It is difficult to say whether the Sabbatarians were genuinely interested in the grievances of the rural postmen or were using them to further their own principles. Certainly the postmen had a genuine complaint, trudging upwards of twenty miles a day, without a single day of rest from year's end to year's end. They were supported by the editor of the Saturday Review who wrote: "The grievance is a frightful one and ought to be remedied; only we do not look on the proposed Sabbatarian remedy as the right one. The postman ought to have his holiday, and the public ought to have their letters.... Letters must be delivered on Sundays throughout the country. But this is no reason why the rural postman should be the one person who works for 365 days in the year without a single holiday. The plain remedy is, let the Post Office be more liberal with its servants. At present they are scandalously overworked and underpaid..."

That editorial was written in 1866 at a time of increased activity by the Working Men's Lord's Day Rest Association. The attention of the P.M.G. was drawn to the fact that some postmen were actively seeking the stoppage of the Sunday delivery by distributing pamphlets produced by that society. (A copy of such a pamphlet is shown at the end of this article.) They were warned that they were liable to punishment for disobedience if they continued to do this. Lord Shaftesbury presented to the P.M.G. a memorial against work on Sunday on behalf of the society. A similar petition was presented to the House of Commons. As a result the Post Office was ordered to provide for Parliament a detailed return on the extent of Sunday working. The result was eight pages of closely printed information. At about a dozen places in England and Wales, the most important of which was Newcastle, and none of which were in the Midlands, the postmen made no house to house delivery on a Sunday but the letters were given to callers at the office. The only post town outside London on the mainland of England and Wales at which there was no Sunday delivery was Tetworth. In the whole of the United Kingdom, 2301 rural postmen delivered letters over the same ground as on weekdays, 3074 did no work on Sundays, and 610 worked on Sundays but delivered over a smaller area than on weekdays. The final part was a list of the post towns where there was a delivery on a Sunday, and where as a result of individual requests, letters were kept over until the Monday, together with the number of such requests. The entries for the Midland towns are

listed below. Whether the number was a reflection of the size of the population, or a measure of the religious zeal of the inhabitants, I leave you to judge.

|               |     |                |      |                |      |
|---------------|-----|----------------|------|----------------|------|
| Ashby         | 1   | Atherstone     | 1    | Bawtry         | 4    |
| Belper        | 32  | Bilston        | 1    | Birmingham     | 7089 |
| Brierly Hill  | 72  | Burton         | 1176 | Cheltenham     | 883  |
| Chesterfield  | 12  | Coleford       | 137  | Coventry       | 7513 |
| Cricklade     | 3   | Derby          | 5422 | Dudley         | 12   |
| Dursley       | 6   | Evesham        | 1    | Gloucester     | 153  |
| Hereford      | 5   | Higham Ferrers | 7    | Hinckley       | 3    |
| Kenilworth    | 10  | Kettering      | 5    | Kidderminster  | 9    |
| Leamington    | 599 | Leicester      | 55   | Lichfield      | 3    |
| Loughborough  | 4   | Ludlow         | 1    | Malvern        | 227  |
| Mansfield     | 75  | Mkt Harborough | 4    | Matlock        | 11   |
| M. Mowbray    | 13  | Newark         | 21   | Newcastle/Lyne | 4206 |
| Northampton   | 353 | Nottingham     | 158  | Oakham         | 4    |
| Oswestry      | 198 | Oundle         | 3    | Pershore       | 2    |
| Retford       | 89  | Rugby          | 16   | Rugeley        | 2    |
| Shipston      | 7   | Shrewsbury     | 25   | Stafford       | 2    |
| Stoke         | 27  | Stone          | 2    | Stonehouse     | 1    |
| Stourbridge   | 10  | Stourport      | 25   | Stratford      | 2    |
| Stroud        | 49  | Tamworth       | 4    | Tewkesbury     | 7    |
| Tipton        | 41  | Towcester      | 1    | Walsall        | 40   |
| Warwick       | 31  | Wednesbury     | 23   | Wellington     | 12   |
| West Bromwich | 36  | Whitchurch     | 3    | Wirksworth     | 1    |
| Wolverhampton | 282 | Worcester      | 602  | Worksop        | 5    |

To what use the collected data was put is not clear for there seems to have been no change in the system by 1871, when in response to further requests from the Working Men's Lord's Day Rest Association, William Gladstone was responsible for the House of Commons passing a resolution instituting another enquiry into "how far it may be practicable to effect a further reduction of the labour now performed on Sunday by the letter carriers and rural messengers in the service of the Postmaster General."

The main recommendations of the Report were:

1. That a Sunday rural post should be taken off if the receivers of 2/3 of the letters desired its discontinuance. (Previously it had been 6/7.)
2. If the walk of a rural messenger exceeded 14 miles, he was to have a substitute on every alternate Sunday.
3. All town receiving offices were to be closed on a Sunday; letters were to be collected from pillar or wall boxes only.
4. All rural post offices which had no post arrival or dispatch on a Sunday were to be closed for the whole of that day.

The committee also investigated the situation in Newcastle where they found that the system of providing a delivery to callers only did not lead to any great reduction in the amount of labour needed. Nineteen of the thirty-two letter carriers were required to attend from 7 to 10 a.m. to give out the letters. Also there was a risk of people getting letters which did not belong to them. A further recommendation was the greater use of street door letter boxes: "If every house were supplied with a box, the letter-carrier would doubtless be able to complete his delivery more speedily, being relieved from those stoppages at doors which probably are more numerous and longer on Sunday mornings than on other days."

An order of the House of Commons of 26th. July 1875 required the Post Office to state how many town receiving offices had been closed in accordance with the 1877 report, and how many rural messengers had been

entirely released from Sunday duty. The numbers were 321 and 100 respectively. In addition it was reported that 300 new rural posts had been established since April 1872 without a Sunday service. Also the total number of rural posts without a Sunday service was about 4200.

After the Local Government Act of 1894 had come into operation it was decided that in order to save people the trouble of canvassing a whole district to obtain signatures for a petition seeking withdrawal of a Sunday post, it would suffice if a resolution was passed by 2/3 of those present at a meeting of the appropriate local authority coupled with an assurance that the resolution represented the wishes of the inhabitants generally.

As I said at the beginning time did not permit me to investigate all the material available, particularly those from this century. From the few I did see it appears that the emphasis had swung to the provision of collections. In 1927 it was reported that of the 21,000 post offices in Great Britain few had no Sunday collection, but no detailed information was available. Also there was no delivery on a Sunday in any part of the country. Then in June 1928 the PMG decided that future extensions of Sunday collections should depend on the expenditure involved in relation to the volume of correspondence affected. The practice of consulting local authorities was to be abandoned.

I am grateful to Post Office Archives for permission to reproduce the documents used to illustrate this article. The next two pages show the two sides of one leaflet.

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There are upwards of 20,000 Post Office officials in the United Kingdom who are deprived of the day of rest.

## SUNDAY POSTAL DELIVERY MADE INDIVIDUALLY OPTIONAL.

Letter Receivers, henceforth, personally responsible for this  
SABBATH DESECRATION.

Sir, or Madam,

There are upwards of 20,000 Post Office Officials employed in the United Kingdom on the Lord's Day, and many Clerks are kept at work in large commercial houses to prepare replies to the orders brought by the Sunday morning's post.

If you are an EPISCOPALIAN, do us the favour to consider:—If it be consistent to repeat the Response to the 4th Commandment, while compelling men—under penalty of losing their situations—to perform unnecessary work on the Sabbath? For unnecessary Letter-delivering must be allowed to be, seeing that it is dispensed with by the Three Million Inhabitants of London—to say nothing of Scotland.

If you are either a WESLEYAN, or an orthodox DISSENTER, do us the favour to consider:—If it be consistent with your acknowledged principles, to uphold a system which places in direct antagonism the temporal and eternal interest of THOUSANDS of LETTER CARRIERS, and disqualifies to some extent at least, for Public Worship and Private Meditation, not less than ONE MILLION of LETTER RECEIVERS—their relations, connexions, and associates being included.

If you do not belong to any of the above classes, we ask you—If it be consistent with the principles of justice—if reconcilable with a spirit of philanthropy—to gratify a taste for news on the first day in the week, at the expense of that day's rest to a fellow creature.

If you have no doubt on the subject, you will, we are sure, sign the subjoined notice: if you have any doubt, we ask you to give the benefit of that doubt to the poor LETTER CARRIERS of this district.

I am yours respectfully,

CHARLES HILL,

Secretary, Working Men's Lord's Day Rest Association.

Please to drop the following notice—when signed—into the first Post Office or Pillar-post, unstamped.

Persons willing to circulate these Papers are requested to apply to Mr. C. HILL, 11, Bedford Row, London, W.C.; by whom also subscriptions to the fund for this special object will be thankfully received.

TO THE POSTMASTER OF

I will not trouble you, in future, to send my Letters on Sundays.

Name

Address

“Any person can have his letters, &c., retained in the Post Office on Sundays, by addressing to the Postmaster a written request duly signed to that effect.”  
Extract from the British Postal Guide, April, 1863.

After Swanthorpe Grindall - Hunts  
12 March 1866

This paper was left at my house by the letter carrier belonging to the Post Office at Grindall this morning. It appears that he came solely for the purpose of delivering it, as there were no letters or newspapers to leave on this occasion. I cannot imagine it to be the intention of the Post Office authorities that their Official should be made the means of disseminating such misstatements & falsehoods, as are contained in this absurd document; & more particularly I would call official attention to the fact of the letter carriers being employed to deliver such papers without any postage being charged upon them.

For W. J.

405th Thousand.  
**SUNDAY POSTAL DELIVERY**

MADE INDIVIDUALLY OPTIONAL.

PLEASE TO  
SIGN THE  
ANNEXED  
REQUEST TO  
YOUR  
POSTMASTER  
NOT TO SEND  
YOUR LETTERS  
ON SUNDAYS.

THERE ARE  
20,000 POST OFFICE  
OFFICIALS  
UNNECESSARILY  
DEPRIVED  
OF THE  
DAY OF REST.



ANY PERSON  
CAN HAVE HIS  
LETTERS, &c.  
RETAINED  
IN THE  
POST OFFICE  
ON SUNDAYS  
BY  
ADDRESSING  
TO THE  
POSTMASTER  
A WRITTEN  
REQUEST  
DULY SIGNED  
TO THAT  
EFFECT.

**HARASSED TO DEATH.**

In the *Times*, some time ago, "A Rector" wrote as follows:—"I am glad to see in your remarks upon improvements in the Post Office that the interests of a very humble class—the letter carriers, has not escaped your notice. How they may fare in more favoured regions I know not; but in our country of long distances and sparse villages, the lot of those unlucky pariahs of the Post Office is a good deal worse than that of the hacks who drag the mails. Twenty miles is the common trudge, with no remission on Sundays. The postman in my own village walks more than twenty-two miles daily. His Sunday duty is now remitted on an almost universal petition of the householders in all the villages in his favour. It seemed to be considered in the neighbourhood the rule that the postmen should die quickly. The last postman soon died of consumption, and the present (even now that he gets his Sunday holiday) seems on the road to do so. Surely 163 miles per week form rather a stringent rule for any office in a Christian country."

**NON-NECESSITY FOR THE SUNDAY WORK PROVED.**

There is no Delivery of Letters on Sundays in London, Newcastle-on-Tyne, Wortley, Ripley, Ulceby, Gilberdyke, Goole, Bodmin, Haworth, Idle, Bacup, Horton Gateshead, Holmfirth, Sowerby, Heighington, High Easter, Wath, Wainfleet, Apperley Bridge, Bramley, Terrington, nearly the whole of Scotland, and numerous other places. Surely if these places can give the Postman his Sunday rest, ought not every town and village in the empire to do the same? "Do unto others as you would they should do unto you."

**EXPRESSION OF PUBLIC OPINION NEEDED.**

An influential member of Parliament has kindly undertaken to move for a Parliamentary return of the number of persons throughout the country who have requested that their letters, should not be delivered on Sundays, and the Post Office authorities have kindly promised to furnish such a return when it is called for. You are therefore earnestly requested to sign the annexed notice, as any action which may be taken to obtain the day of rest for all Post Office employes in the country would depend on such an expression of public opinion as the return mentioned will furnish. *Every adult in every family, house, and parish*, should sign the annexed request, and drop it into the first Post Office or Pillar Box unstamped. Any number of names and addresses may be added.

**NO SUNDAY POST WORK IN LONDON.**

London with its vast commerce and 3,000,000 inhabitants can freely and cheerfully give its Post Office servants the entire day of rest ought not every town and village in the empire to do the same?

## The Service Fags Out Strong Men.

"Many years ago it was my duty 3 or 4 days in the week to walk about the same distance which our postmen do now, and I know, although myself a strong man, and able to make great exertion when required, if I had had to have done my work during the 6 days I should have sunk under it. I have it from a medical gentleman, that the Post Office employees do suffer from their unintermitting duties. It wears and fags out strong men."—Letter in the Birmingham Daily Post, March, 1865.

## Pity the Postman.

"I have been carrying people their letters instead of going to church." These words were uttered with deep feeling by a rural postman, just as the congregation were leaving the village church. For 4 hours the man had been on his "round." Over 12 miles of ground had he tramped with his letter-bag that Sabbath morning. On entering into conversation with him I found that from the 1st of January to the last of December he had no Sabbath rest.

**From 6 in the Morning till half-past 10 at Night.**

Referring to a letter-carrier, a correspondent says, "He has 34 miles per day to traverse. On duty from a quarter to six till half-past ten in the morning: again from one till half-past four in the afternoon; and again from half-past seven till half-past ten at night." Is not this slavery in a free country?

"I can perform my duty cheerfully for 6 days, but I feel the Sunday work to be the curse of my labour."—*Postman's Letter to C. Hill.*

## Public Sympathy for the Postman.

An overwhelming majority of letter receivers are willing to give to the postman his Sunday's rest. A carrier who applied for 500 of these papers, stated in his letter—"I am one of those unfortunate fellows that has as much work to do on Sunday as any other day." We supplied the papers, and a few weeks after he wrote as follows:—"I am getting on first-rate; nearly done Sunday work. I have got nearly all the people in my district to sign those papers, and I think in about another week or two my Sunday work will be stopped altogether. I have got somewhere about between 300 to 400 people that have signed, and I do not think that there will be more than seven or eight people stand out."

### Reduction of Sunday Work.

In some parts, where these papers have been freely circulated, the Sunday labour of the carriers has been much diminished. A correspondent writes, "Many of the Birmingham post men find their Sunday morning's work much lightened. I heard of one man who had done his Sunday by a little after 7 in the morning, another who only had 9 letters, I believe, to take out and another told me that he had left something like 200 letters in the office."

Reader, will you co-operate in our efforts to remove this wrong inflicted on our provincial Post Office officials? The Post Office authorities leave the question in the hands of the public. Every person is at liberty to employ or to release the letter carriers from Sunday work.

Will you not release him from serving you? so that as far as you are concerned he may rest his weary frame, and enjoy sweet intercourse with his family and his God. The Post Office employé is a deserving useful class of public servants, who are wrongfully and most unnecessarily deprived of the inestimable blessing of one day's rest in seven. They groan under the oppression and long to be delivered from the curse of Sunday labour.

If the persons who receive six-eighths of the Sunday Correspondence of any Rural District sign a Memorial to the Postmaster-General in favour of the Discontinuance of the Sunday Post, the Sunday deliveries will be stopped. Forms of Memorial to be had of Mr. C. Hill.

The Postmaster-General "is always ready to withdraw a Post on Sundays whenever it is clearly shown that there is a very general wish on the part of the inhabitants that it should be discontinued."

"To prevent the inconvenience and confusion which would arise from frequent changes in the instructions, no request can be entertained unless it extend to a period of at least three months, nor be withdrawn even after the lapse of that time without a week's notice."—POSTAL GUIDE, Oct. 1861.

Clergymen, Tract Distributors, Working Men, and others, willing to circulate these papers from house to house, at Churches and Chapels, or in other ways, are supplied gratis on the receipt of the Secretary of 3 stamps for every hundred required, to pay the postage.

Working Men's Lord's Day Rest Association.

13, BEDFORD ROW, LONDON, W.C.

**Treasurer—W. GARLICK, Esq., 33, Gt. James St., Bedford Row, London, W.C.**

**Secretary**—Mr. CHARLES HILL, 13, Bedford Row, London, W.C.

Price 6d. per 100; 4s per 1,000.

TO THE POSTMASTER

of

I request that my Letters and Newspapers may not be delivered on Sunday until further notice.

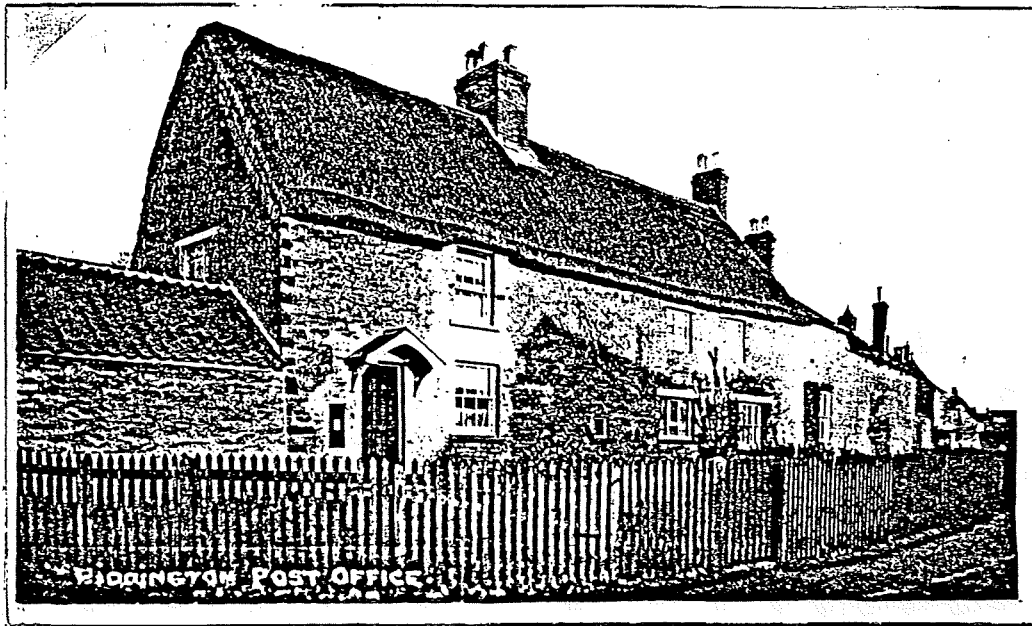
I make this request with the full knowledge that this instruction cannot be cancelled until three months have expired, nor even then without a week's notice, and that so long as it remains in force no letter or newspaper will under any circumstances be delivered to me on Sunday.

[illegible]

Dated the \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ 186

TAILPIECE

Derek Smeathers has kindly sent this photograph of the post office at Piddington in Northamptonshire which closed in 1971 when one was opened in the developing village of Hackleton nearby.

THE NEXT MIDLAND MAIL

This should appear towards the end of October. There will be the usual reports plus a little on the rules for a rural letter carrier. The rest depends on sufficient articles, however short, being sent to: John Soer, 51d Barkham Road, Wokingham, Berkshire RG11 2RG.

## G.B. COVERS

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

**ROGER HUDSON**



P.O. Box 172,  
COVENTRY CV6 6NF

Phone: 0203 686613