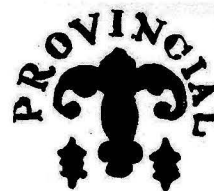


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BULLETIN NO. 9 FEBRUARY 1978

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Editorial

IS THERE ANYBODY OUT THERE ?

Once again a plea for articles or items for the Bulletin from members fell on pretty stoney ground - even the 'provcking' article in last issue on the measurement etc. of small postal history handstamps by our Secretary bought little response from members - however he has followed his previous piece up with another article which is published in this issue together with submissions from our usual subscribers. (plus one new contributor)

If you cannot produce anything for the Bulletin may I ask you to sort out your unwanted material and put something in our Postal History Auction (see below)

Editor

ANNUAL POSTAL HISTORY AUCTION

Will take place, with your help, after the Annual General Meeting on 8th April 1978. This time postal bids will be acceptable and in order to prepare the Catalogue to enable all members to bid items to be auctioned must be listed by 1st March.

So please prepare a list giving a brief description and reserve price of any items you may have for the Society Auction and send the list (not the items) to me by 1st March at the address given below.

More details regarding AGM and Auction will be published in next Bulletin.

Jon Baker 13 Station Rd Hinckley Leics.

Report of December Meeting

This was held at the Bass Museum at Burton as was introduced under the heading 'Judging Postal History and Preparation of Exhibits'. It was well attended by members, many of whom arrived early and visited the Museum and had lunch with our Chairman prior to the meeting. Outside attendance was a bit disappointing as the meeting had been well publicized in the philatelic press, but a few non members attended. These included two colonial members from 'Stamp Collecting'. All there were treated to an interesting and informative discussion led by Jack Andrews (an established MPF Judge of National Exhibitions). He was well supported by Ted Coles and Steve Stobb both of whom are Judges at National level. The whole meeting was accorded a success and arrangements are in hand for a repeat next year with a similar theme.

FEBRUARY MEETING (to be 'judged' by members present)

This will be held on Saturday 4th February at our normal meeting place in Birmingham, i.e. Midland Institute, off Margaret Street and will commence at 2 p.m.
The subject will be 'CHOICE OF THE AFTERNOON' and members are requested to bring along some material which would be suitable (or mounted) for Exhibition purposes. The idea is to find material to exhibit at the M.P.F. Competition in May to represent the Society.
Eric Lewis is preparing a small Society Trophy which can be awarded to the member displaying the most suitable Exhibition material.
P.S. List of any material you may have for the Society Auction can be handed over at the same time.

DECEMBER QUIZ

There were only two replies regarding the December Quiz, both members sent in correct answers - the first to arrive was from Alan Spencer.
Answer to the postal 'emblems' as drawn in outline :

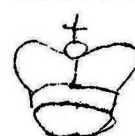
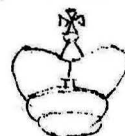
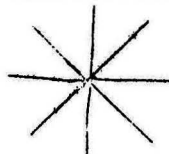
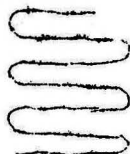
EXETER

BRISTOL

CHESTER

(The late correct answer received from Eric Lewis.)

FEBRUARY QUIZ



What do these marks on a cover signify ?
(not necessarily all on same cover)

Answer to Editor, 13 Station Road, Hinckley, Leics. First correct answer receives a 'small prize'.

BIRMINGHAM ITEMS TO LOOK OUT FOR No. 3

by Eric Lewis

Birmingham Bag Control

Large towns like Birmingham have Bag Control centres where mail bags are cleaned and repaired. Each bag is turned inside out by compressed air which also blows out the dust and anything else left in the bag, including the occasional letter which may have been in the bag a couple of weeks. Any letter found this way is now forwarded in a post office outer cover with a bag control handstamp (as illustrated) in order that the post office can explain the delay if any complaint is received. This is the only example that I have seen of this handstamp and was found amongst a bundle of covers purchased for less than £1 in a local society auction. Probably no one else had bothered to look through them.

DEAR SIR

by Alan Spencer

Part of the fascination of postal history is the contents of many of the letters and cards, giving a glimpse of the past through the eyes of the people living at the time.

Some years ago I came across a letter which was indicative of the harshness of the times when a farm labourers' wages averaged 10/- per week. The letter, dated 2nd January 1840, has a black Newton cds and red London District and Morning Duty postmark. There is also a manuscript 4, the letter being posted during the Uniform 4d Postage Period (5th Dec 1839 to 9th Jan 1840). The letter reads :

'I trust that you will not be displeased at my writing to you in (sic) behalf of the poor in the parish of Llanbadarnfynydd, Radnorshire. I beg to state state the firing in this country is entirely peat, coal being so expensive 32/- per ton; and the weather last summer being so very changeable and wet, that little or no turf was secured, especially by the poor people, who are consequently in a very distr-essed condition, some of whom have been under the necessity in buring the little straw in their beds to prepare victuals for their children, and with scarcely bread to support themselves are obliged to deprive themselves of a portion of that pittance to procure a little coal at this severe season. I am induced therefore to make a humble request that (the Landowners in the parish) will be pleased to contribute their aid towards buying some coal for the most needy, the farmers hving promised to haul it gratis from Newtown.

Letter was from a Reverend Lewis

Postscript : The Reverend Lewis was successful as the recipient of this letter, Sir William Dundas, sent £5.

Me thinks that Sir William was a 'soft touch' for I cannot envisage 'the burning of straw from their beds' would create enough heat to 'prepare victuals'. Anyway he sent enough to buy over THREE TONS of coal. Editor

POSTSCRIPT TO THE PENNY POST

By John Calladine

With the publication of Oxley's standard work "The English Povicinial Local Posts 1765=1840 and Martin Willcocks' masterpiece, 'England's Postal History', there might seem to be nothing left to discover about the provincial penny posts. Birmingham had one of the first in 1793 and by 1837 there were probably more than a thousand throughout the country. Certainly they are a major facet of Midland postal history, Ozley listing 12 penny posts in Staffordshire, 9 in Warwickshire, 8 in Worcestershire, 7 each in Leicestershire and Shropshire and 4 in Herefordshire.

In the writers opinion there remain at least a couple of points concerning the penny posts that have received little emphasis. Perhaps because of the tidy listings under county and post town, there is a tendency to look at a particular penny post in isolation. A moment's thought suggests that, once the penny posts began to spread widely in the nineteenth century, they would overlap each other and that the interaction between penny posts might produce some inter-

Brierley Hill (Staffordshire) became a receiving office of the Birmingham penny post in 1817 and was allocated a characteristic Birmingham penny post numeral handstamp (illustrated at figure 1.) In the same year Brierley Hill also became a receiving office of the Wolverhampton penny post and, apparently as an economy measure, employed its "Birmingham type" handstamp on letters entering the Wolverhampton post even though Wolverhampton receiving offices were not numbered. It became a receiving office of the Dudley penny post in 1834 and, a year later, became involved in its fourth penny post, Stourbridge. In these later penny posts there is no evidence that it used a handstamp, although by then it possessed a straight line namestamp (figure 2) which it certainly used in association with its Birmingham mark. By 1838 all the other receiving offices in the Stourbridge penny post had been issued with the distinctive "village type" penny post namestamps (figure 3). Why was this Brierley Hill omitted?

How did a sorter at Brierley Hill decide which penny post a letter should enter? Mr. Oxley advises that there were broad rules based on the destination of the letter. London letters entered the Birmingham penny post, letters to the north went via Wolverhampton whilst those to the west and North Wales were sent to Stourbridge. Doubtless many errors were made and there could be some unusual markings awaiting discovery.

Thirty miles away a similar but not identical situation developed at Malvern (Worcs). Malvern and Malvern Wells were receiving offices in the Worcester penny post from 1812 to 1831, from 1822 until 1831 they were also receiving offices of the Ledbury penny post. Then, in 1831, Great Malvern achieved post town status and began its own penny post. During their involvement with the Worcester penny post, Malvern and Malvern Wells were issued with namestamps (figure 4). These are of an early type issued to post towns and their use by receiving offices is most unusual. On the other hand the Ledbury penny post appears to have had no namestamps at all. Malvern and Malvern Wells probably used their "Worcester - associated" namestamps in the Ledbury penny post but what about Ledbury itself? Is there, in fact, a "Ledbury Penny Post" namestamp, as yet unrecorded?

Putting aside the problem of post towns without a namestamp, there are many village receiving offices without distinctive penny post markings. The relationship between undated village marks and the penny post is often overlooked. An example from Nailsworth (Glos.) is illustrated (figure 5) together with a much later example from Kingswinford (figure 6), one of the Dudley penny post receiving offices. Undated village marks give no indication of their association with the penny post and yet letters of the 1830s bearing these marks are every bit as interesting as those with distinctive penny post namestamps. Fortunately Michael Champness, Editor of "The British Mailcoach" has studied these marks for many years and enlightenment is at hand. Until his book is published it pays to keep one's eyes open. Some of the Birmingham area marks are rare.

References :

1. G.F. Oxley. The English Provincial Local Posts 1765-1840. Published by the Postal History Society and the Author. (see also "A Rarity Guide to the English Provincial Local Posts" by the same Author and Supplement No.1 to the book in "Postal History" of March/May 1975.)
2. R.M. Willcocks. England's Postal History to 1840 published by the Author.