

MIDLAND MAIL

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



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The Good Books

Only those on safari in darkest Darley Dale or climbing the north col of the Wrekin are unlikely to have heard that the Society's first publication, 'The Undated Circular Marks of the Midland Counties', is now on sale. It is available to the outside world at £5-50 (plus £1 post and packing) and at a suicidal discount price of £4 to our hard-up, paid-up members. Since we aim to update the information in the book continuously, members are asked to report any examples of undated circular marks that come their way during the silly season.

At the same time, Volume 2 of John Parmenter's splendid work on 'Barred Numeral Cancellations' has come to hand. It includes, alphabetically, Bedfordshire to Co. Durham and, although it costs £13-50, it looks worth every penny. Derbyshire members will enjoy this volume.

Bye, Bye, Bengeworth

This issue of 'Midland Mail' is packed with new information but, if you are looking for a major article on 'Bengeworth (Worcs)', you will be disappointed and may reasonably expect the editorial head to roll. The author of the piece says it is "for reasons outside his control" and it may be a matter for debate whether the arrival of a baby son fits that description. Congratulations to Andrew and Nicola Watton and we look forward to the tale of Bengeworth early next season.

FOR

POSTAL HISTORY

ESPECIALLY

G.B. (County)
MARITIME
TRANSATLANTIC
and some FOREIGN

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The March Meeting

The Society has been fortunate to enjoy some very fine displays during the past two or three years and that provided by Michael Champness for his visit on 23rd March was one of the best. Among his 240 sheets, there was so much of interest and rarity that it was all too easy to miss the significance of a dozen major items.

He opened with a very attractive range of Valentines, many with original envelopes and all items that had passed through the post. The unique 'Barkis is Willing' Valentine postcard of February 1871 would be a highlight of any display. The Canadian Undated Handstamps were, by contrast, probably unknown to many members although recorded in the Steel Impression Books. Most had manuscript dates written in the strikes but there was at least one without a date cancelling a stamp - the equivalent of use on an English 'ride letter'. Perhaps better known but probably never seen in such profusion or colour were wafer seals for early ungummed envelopes. A pochette for flower seals (with listed contents), attractive scenic seals and the 'Mrs Caudle' range from Punch magazine were fascinating enough and, of course, there was a fine example of the notable 'anti-Graham' wafers used to protest at the actions of the then Home Secretary and the Secret Office. There was an equally fine selection of illustrated notepaper, some comical and some typographical, the latter including a particularly exquisite scene of Leamington. The first session was completed with trials of the Glasgow pin cancels, unusual coloured postmarks and a puzzling straight line 'Kineton' used as an arrival mark in Warwickshire on a German letter of 1875.

Ship letters launched the second session. A letter from a seaman who claimed that a musket ball had passed through him, a fine example of the 'Lre' abbreviation in a Yarmouth mark, correspondence from HMS Euryalus with Sir Garnet Wolsey's expedition to Egypt and an American letter carried all the way up the Mississippi (stamped 'Steam') were matched by rarely seen letters from the Dutch East Indies. Readers of the late, lamented 'British Mailcoach' enjoyed seeing material relating to the Ulverston light coach that crossed the Leven Sands thereby saving 1d of the postage charge and avoiding a bad road. Two items never previously seen by your reporter followed; a strike of 'B.B.' in an oval used for the 'Blind Bag' and a first day example of the original postcard (sent in Birmingham). There was some attractive material relating to the Parcel Post, particularly a paper knife with the postage rates, there were items from the little known Milford Haven to Waterford 'additional ½d' route and, amongst a number of 'free franks', one charged no less than 10d after having been found to be above the permitted number. The Sunday marks were worth close attention, for who would have spotted the unique 'S' above a ship letter mark or even 'S' above a spectacular 'Ireland' handstamp? The Fifth Clause Post examples were directed at our Jon Baker Trophy winner: Newcastle was excluded but examples of the Shepton Mallet, Wincanton and Shaftesbury Fifth Clause Posts had all originated from the Castle Cary area. The 'Guaranteed Post' is hardly a well known subject and we saw the sole Scottish mark that specifies its connection. We had seen ship letters earlier and now it was the turn of the Home Packet services. There were distinctive marks of the 'Prince of Wales' and the Clyde steamers 'Columba', 'Iona' and the earlier 'Lord of the Isles'. The second session ended with Missent Mail and a plethora of Midland examples - Shrewsbury, Warwick, Leamington, Birmingham, Leicester and Gloucester to name a few.

The third part of the display was as diverse as those preceding it. Some 'Boite Mobile's were followed by an early Australian letter of some historical significance and a letter from the Ionian Islands disinfected against the plague by stabbing it with a knife to let out the pestilential air. A flurry of unusual and often spectacular handstamps and instructional marks really deserve detailed comment but it will have to suffice to mention just one, an unusual London registered mark rather like two overlaid coins. There was an example of a letter carried to Spain by the overland route in the late 1850s struck with an 'S' in a circle and then a string of evocative wreck

covers including a letter that appeared to describe the shipwreck of Alexander Selkirk, the real Robinson Crusoe. The story of the small office at Lisburne Mines in Wales provided a cameo study that could win any 9 sheet competition. In 1853 it came under Aberystwyth but the Post Office decided to put it under Llandiloes, using labels, a handstamp and manuscript to amend the address. Within nine months, they gave up the struggle and the office was returned to Aberystwyth. We had waited until now for Mr Champness' well known forte, the English undated marks and it had been worth every minute. There was the first proof of a UDC without serifs dating from February 1844. Then there were UDCs on receipts and stationery and the rarely seen undated railway station marks of Castle Eaton, York, Whitmore and Swindon. The very scarce examples of UDCs cancelling adhesive stamps on ride letters (see 'Midland Mail' No.39) were there for all to see. Almost as elusive were the spectacular 'Crown tablets' informing the senders of letters of the recipient's fate e.g. 'Cannot be Found' or 'Dead'. The session ended with two types of the unusual Seaton marks and some undated Manx items.

The final session included some fine Irish undated marks and 'Scots locals'. Two obvious rarities amongst the Scottish marks were a first day 'local' and the 'Duke Street' of Glasgow, a little known stamp compared with the stamp of the same street in Edinburgh. A group of illustrated envelopes included some of the popular caricatures of the Mulready and a 2d Mulready overprinted for Essex Board of Education but the principal content of this part of the display was a vast selection of undated circular marks from each Midland county. With at least two fine marks from each of a dozen counties, it is scarcely feasible to mention them all: a number are illustrated in the Society's new book, 'The Undated Circular Marks of the Midland Counties'. Mention must be made here, however, of the tiny undated 'Creswell' stamps such as 'Summer Lane' and 'Castle Bromwich' of Birmingham but the complete surprise was a similar 'Allesley' of Coventry. It was omitted from the Society's book only because the Coordinating Editor did not believe it could exist. He now knows better.

Denis Salt gave a fluent and handsome vote of thanks and the meeting endorsed it in no uncertain manner. Among the 21 members present were many very knowledgeable postal historians but, as one commented, each and every one of them must have learnt something new from this remarkable display.

The April Meeting

This year's Annual General Meeting and Auction clashed with a provincial meeting of The Postal History Society at Northampton which spirited away a number of our members. Nevertheless, the presence of 16 members and guests and a large number of postal bids ensured that the auction was probably the most successful ever held by the Society.

The AGM opened promptly at 2pm after an hour's viewing of auction lots and the minutes of the 1984 AGM were quickly approved. In her Chairman's Report, Elizabeth Lewis said that the Society had gone from strength to strength during its ten year history but particularly during the past twelve months. She reminded members of the three excellent displays we had enjoyed during the season and of the very successful competitions, fully reported in 'Stamp News'. She thanked the Committee members for their support and commented on the increased membership of the Society. In her opinion, however, the outstanding event of the year had been the publishing of 'The Undated Circular Marks of the Midland Counties' and she summarised all the work that members had devoted to its successful conclusion. On behalf of the Society, she presented the Coordinating Editor with a gift token and a most attractive basket of house plants to dissuade his wife from divorce proceedings.

In his report, the Secretary apologised for his enforced absences due to his house reconstruction efforts but said he was happy to have seen a record attendance at the

Bass Museum meeting in December. He hoped to be able to arrange a similar event this year and he looked forward to another bumper gathering of members at the lunch. The Treasurer handed out an audited balance sheet (to gasps of wonder!) and gave the comforting news that the Society's finances were at least as sound as they were a year ago in spite of some distortions caused by 'one-off' expenditures. The Editor disclosed that 'Midland Mail' had again averaged 18 pages in each issue and that copies sent to the BPF, PHS and Post Office Archives were providing useful publicity. The production of the Undated Circle book had obviously been an important feature of the year and reviews had been promised by four leading philatelic and postal history magazines. He advised members that we would need to sell 80-90 copies to cover the basic production costs.

Following the officers' reports, the Chairman suggested that the Committee should, perhaps, be increased in size. The Secretary made the point that the County Editors were, in fact, already Committee members and the Editor (who should have made this clear in 'Midland Mail') was not the only member who was unaware of this. After discussion, the ten County Editors were confirmed and it was agreed that, for a trial period of one season, they would all be invited to committee meetings.

Among a number of points raised under 'AOB', was a suggestion that the Society was giving too much emphasis to outside displays by eminent postal historians and too little to more modest efforts by its own members. The Secretary believed the balance was right and quoted both increased membership and attendance to back his case. It was agreed that there would be two afternoons of 9 sheet displays next season and further thought given to shared displays by two or three members. Another member called for formal competition rules and the appointment of outside judges. The Chairman reminded members that it was difficult to get judges on a Saturday afternoon but steps would be taken to satisfy both points raised. Other members spoke of the need to publicise postal history as a hobby and the Society's involvement in particular.

The Annual Auction, conducted by the Secretary and impeccably organized by Eric and Elizabeth Lewis, was completed in less than an hour and was an outstanding success. Items donated to the Society raised over £40 and the total realisation nudged £500. The following is an unaudited guide to prices obtained but a number of unsold lots changed hands after the official completion of the auction and the Society undoubtedly claimed its pound of flesh.

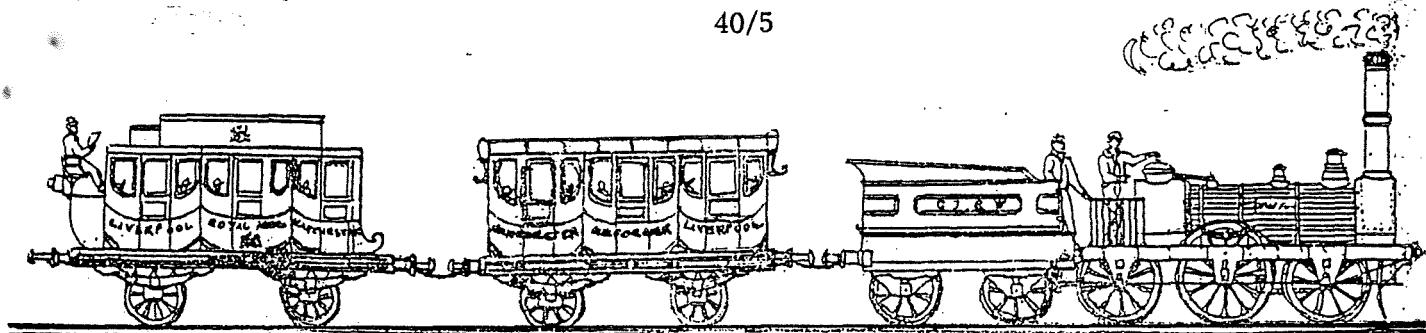
Donated Lots

A £13	F £2-50	N £1	S £1-70
B 60p	G £2	O £2-40	T 60p
C 60p	H £1-10	P £1	U 90p
D £9	L £2-20	Q 40p	V 20p
E 30p	M £2	R £3	

Other Lots

3 60p	19 50p	37 £6-50	58 £4
4 £8	22 £4	39 £5-50	59 £6-25
5 £1	23 £2-20	40 £2	60 80p
6 £4	25 £3-50	44 £2-80	61 £7
7 £4	26 £7	45 £2	62 £27
8 £9	28 £1-85	46 £6-50	65 £2-40
12 £26	30 £2-80	47 £2	66 50p
13 £8-25	31 60p	49 £46	68 60p
14 £3-50	32 £2	50 £64	72 £8-50
15 60p	33 £4-50	51 £3-20	73 £3-75
16 £1-80	34 90p	53 80p	74 £18
17 £1-50	35 £7	55 £2-60	75 £4
18 £1-10	36 £4-50	57 £1	77 20p
			83 80p
			86 £99

* * * * *



BY COACH AND RAIL 1837-38.

by The Reverend Christopher M. Beaver

It will have been evident from a study of the table of London Mail Coach destinations, as given in Post Office lists between 1823 and 1838 ('Midland Mail' 39/5 & 6), that the principal object in its compilation was to show that W.T.Wedderburn's list (ref 2A/30A) was made in November 1837, not 10 years before as was marked in another hand perhaps at a much later date. What position Mr Wedderburn held in the Post Office hierarchy is not at present known.

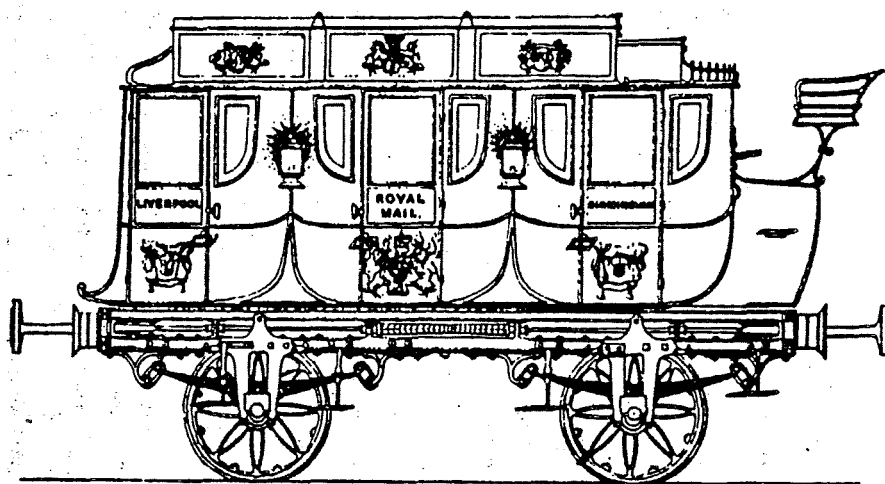
The interest of his list lies in its precise dating in the period between the opening of the first main line, the Grand Junction Railway, (which occurred in the very first days of Victoria's reign before the King was buried) and the use of any part of the London and Birmingham Railway by the Post Office. All postal arrangements in the Midlands were much altered in 1837-38 and some of the railway details will be familiar from Harold Wilson's 'T.P.O.', pages 6, 10 and 11.

The absence from this list of the London and Liverpool MC (viz. by Coventry, Lichfield and Warrington; not by Northampton, Lichfield, Chester and Woodside Ferry) and the inclusion of six MCs between London and Birmingham are of particular significance. On its own, the list gives no indication of the reason, though the reason and purposes were well known at the time. Four of the six MCs were introduced as a direct result of the opening of the GJR and it may be safely assumed all four followed the same route, by Coventry and Stonebridge, as the long-established Holyhead MC, but went direct to the temporary station at Vauxhall (until Curzon Street was finished, that is) and not to Birmingham Post Office.

Webster's 'The First Main Line' reveals some further details of interest. All carriages, as well as locomotives, were named and the first public journey leaving Vauxhall at 7am on July 4th 1837 included 'Liverpool and Birmingham Mail' and 'Birmingham and Manchester Mail' among the eight carriages (which all had seats outside as well as in) drawn by 'Wildfire'. Trains divided at Warrington, where a second engine waited, half proceeding to Liverpool, half to Manchester. In the winter of 1837/8 the first train of the day was often late leaving Birmingham due to waiting for the arrival of the mail coaches from London, "upwards of 30 minutes on average". The list reveals there were three such coaches. At least once, the train was sent on and a special train followed in due course. There was controversy about trains running on Sundays because a bye-law had forbidden them in the mornings on the Manchester and Liverpool Railway (over whose lines the GJR was granted operating rights) but this was not mentioned in the approved agreement between the two companies. The GJR contract with the Post Office simply assumed trains would run on Sundays. Despite the inevitable protests, this agreement was allowed to stand.

So it seems, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, that the three MCs from London listed as 'Birmingham, Carlisle', 'Birmingham, Liverpool' and 'Birmingham,

Manchester' all left St Martin's-le-Grand at 8.00 every evening and were due to reach the station at Birmingham by 7am. A time-sheet (Willcocks, plate 20) shows that the London to Holyhead MC on March 19th 1837, a few months before, arrived at Birmingham P.O. at 7.08am. The new mail coaches should have been a little quicker since they would leave no mail bags at the offices en route, though they would no doubt each pick up bags, and only leave them on the up journey. There was no sorting on the GJR until experiments began in January 1838, hence the three mails would need to be kept distinct all the way from London. In fact, they evidently remained distinct for the 'Railway Times' in May 1838 reported that on Tuesday 22nd "mail coaches for Holyhead, Manchester, Liverpool and Carlisle were transported on trucks on the London and Birmingham Railway". The likelihood is that all four went on the 8.30pm from Euston or, rather, its temporary predecessor; a Birmingham and Holyhead 4-horse MC replaced the London and Holyhead in that year, no doubt as soon as the LBR was completed in September.



A mail coach used on the Grand Junction Railway in 1837. The guard sat at the rear over the boot where the mail was housed.

There remains to be explained on Wedderburn's list the 'Birmingham Day Express'. It is clearly the London and Birmingham Day MC which appears only for the relevant year 1837-8 on the Return of Mail Coaches that covered the period 1836-41. Its actual purpose could hardly be guessed. Howard Robinson's 'History of the British Post Office' refers to the introduction of a Dublin Express Day Mail leaving the GPO at 8am, conveyed 70 miles by train from Birmingham (which the same Return reveals as meaning Hartford), due at Holyhead at 9.30am. That was 25½ hours, only about 1½ hours quicker than the concurrent mail coach through Shrewsbury due at 10.55pm. Despite the title, it probably did not convey mail addressed to Birmingham nor even mail originating in London! The Second Report of the Committee on Postage, Appendix E No.67, which details all the mails at Birmingham in the summer of 1838 when the LBR was mostly in use, shows this day mail's arrival and departure there going north at 6.45pm, noting that it carries foreign letters, and the up mail at 7.38am "with letters passing through London only". So it really was introduced to speed up mail passing through London to and from Ireland - by 12 hours and more.

One last point about the list signed by Mr Wedderburn on November 22nd 1837 demands some explanation. Against 'Yarmouth' another distinct hand wrote "This is not a Mail Coach out of London". The Return for 1836-41 agrees (as does the 1835 list) but does have, throughout, a Yarmouth and Ipswich 4-horse MC. Nevertheless, contractors did advertise it from London. The evidence is that there was no mail

carried because the route coincided with one of the Norwich MC routes as far as Ipswich but mail was transferred from one to the other there: no mail, no guard, no contract with the Post Office. Therefore the note is perfectly phrased but everybody would refer to it as a mail coach and confusion, even within the Post Office, is understandable. Did it not have 'Royal Mail' as well as 'London' and 'Yarmouth' on its sides?

Others surely will be able to supplement, modify or correct some of these observations. Maybe the list can somehow be shown to have been compiled in 1827 as someone much nearer that time supposed, to the confusion of students ever since?

List of Mail Coaches leaving London

London	&	Bath
do	&	Birmingham by Banbury
do	&	Carlisle
do	&	Liverpool
do	&	Manchester
do	&	Day Express
do	&	Brighton
do	&	Bristol
do	&	Carlisle (Glasgow)
do	&	Devonport
do	&	Dover

do	&	St Leonards
do	&	Stroud
do	&	Wells
do	&	Woodside
do	&	Worcester
do	&	Charmouth

*this is not a
mail coach out of
London*

*W. Wedderburn
28th / 11th 1827*

Mr Wedderburn's List

Addendum

For the annual procession of Mail Coaches on the Sovereign's birthday, it was customary for the Bristol MC to take preference. The printed programme for May 17th 1838, however, shows the Liverpool and the Manchester headed the procession, the Bristol taking third place on that occasion. Nostalgia for the heyday of the Mail Coach was already beginning. The titles correspond closely with Mr Wedderburn's list though naturally none of the four temporary Birmingham MCs was included. There was no Woodside, simply the one 'Liverpool', Wells is called 'Lynn & Wells' and Louth 'Louth by Boston'. It was clearly recognised that their days were numbered by placing 'Liverpool' and 'Manchester' in the forefront of the celebrations that day.

THE MINUTED AND REPORT SERIES OF POST OFFICE ARCHIVESAn Introductory Index

POST	MINUTED SERIES	
29	Packet Minutes: Documents, Vol.1	1811-1900
"	" " " " 2	1901-1920
	Notes: i Contents relate to overseas mails	
	ii Catalogues also issued indexed by subject	
	iii See also Post 34 (the corresponding volumes)	
30	PMG's Minutes: Documents, Vol.1	1794-1900
"	" " " " 2	1901-1920
	Notes: i Contents relate to England and Wales	
	ii Catalogues also issued indexed by subject	
	iii See also Post 35 (the corresponding volumes)	
31	Irish Minutes: Documents	1831-1920
	Notes: i Catalogue also issued indexed by subject	
	ii See also Post 36 (the corresponding volumes)	
32	Scottish Minutes: Documents	1842-1920
	Notes: i Catalogues also issued indexed by subject	
	ii See also Post 37 (the corresponding volumes)	
33	General Minutes: Documents, Vol.1	1921-1925
"	" " " " 2	1926-1930
"	" " " " 3	1931-1933
"	" " " " 4	1934-1940
"	" " " " 5	1949-1952
	Notes: i Catalogues also issued indexed by subject	
	ii See also Post 35 (the corresponding volumes)	
34	Packet Minutes: Volumes	1811-1920
35	PMG's Minutes: Volumes	1794-1920
36	Irish Minutes: Volumes	1831-1920
37	Scottish Minutes: Volumes	1842-1920
38	General Minutes: Volumes	1921-1940
102	DF (Decimal Filing) Minutes: Documents	1941-1948
	Note: Series introduced 1941-48 as a wartime replacement of the General Minute series but the date range of the files themselves extends beyond the war period. No volumes exist for this special wartime registry system.	

POST	REPORT SERIES	
39	Packet Reports: Documents	1807-1837
40	PMG's Reports: Documents	1791-1841
41	Packet Reports: Volumes	1807-1837
42	PMG's Reports: Volumes	1790-1841

Note: When the 'Report' series ceased in 1841, the several parallel 'Minute' series continued alone.

Reproduced by courtesy of Post Office Archives

New members may wish to refer to a series of articles 'A Visit to Post Office Archives' in 'Midland Mail', Numbers 25, 26, 28, 33 and 34. Directions for finding the new location of Post Office Archives are to be found on 39/4.

The Cleobury Mortimer Post

by Denis Salt and Michael Young

The delightful article in the January issue of 'Midland Mail' entitled 'The Cleobury Mortimer Postman' by C.W.E.Coles prompts us to add a little information about the postal service to Cleobury Mortimer prior to 1840.

Cleobury Mortimer is a small town in the south-east corner of Shropshire, about 12 miles east of Ludlow and 8 miles west of Bewdley (Worcs), best known for its fine church with a "crooked steeple". It received its mail from Bewdley and, in common with most Post Towns, the Postmaster at Bewdley organised an unofficial Local Post to deliver mail to neighbouring villages, for which the normal charge was 1d. There is no evidence of the date when this Local Post started taking mail to Cleobury Mortimer but Figure 1 illustrates a local letter dated 29 November 1810 from Bewdley to Hopton Court, stamped with the Bewdley town stamp of the day and charged 1d. Hopton Court is at Hopton Wafers, a village about 2½ miles from Cleobury Mortimer on the Ludlow road.

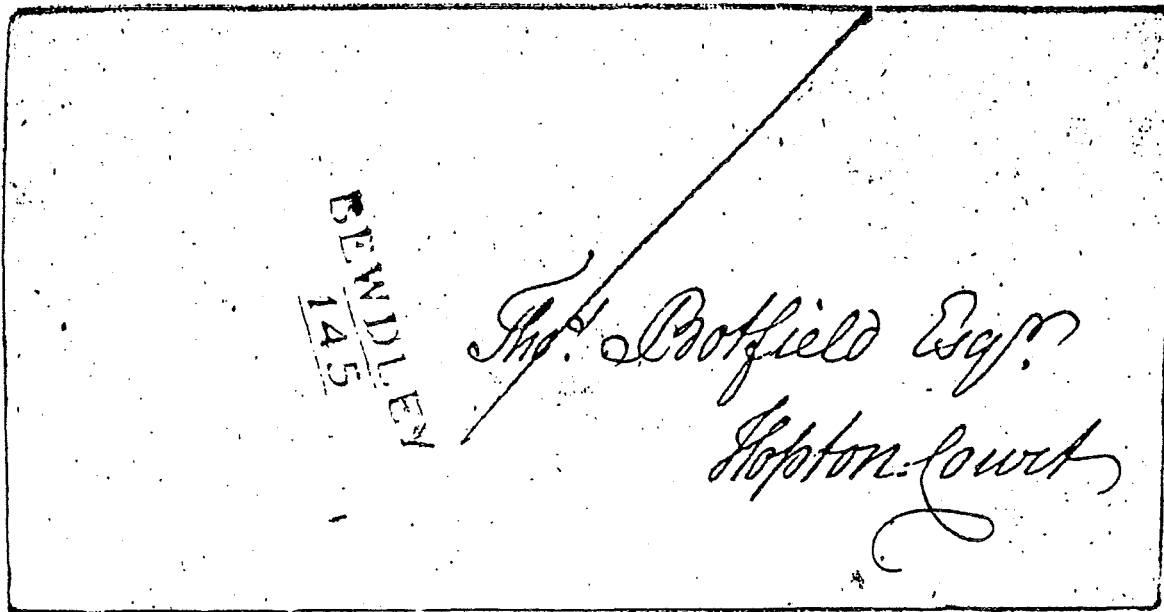


Figure 1.

An extract from Post Office records show that in December 1818 Samuel Woodcock, the Post Office Surveyor for this area, reported to Freeling:- "... the number of letters etc, sent to and received from Cleobury at the Bewdley Office, and the return for one week is as follows:

Letters sent from Bewdley to Cleobury and the vicinity	115
Letters received from Cleobury	50
Newspapers	37

from which return (was a penny post to be tried) the pence might be estimated at about 16s a week - the distance between Bewdley and Cleobury is 8 miles, a bad road,

it is probable a Messenger may be found to undertake the conveyance of the letters to and from for 3s each Journey of 4 days in the week, but not for less, and allowing £5 per annum to a Receiver at Cleobury and £5 to the Postmaster of Bewdley for keeping the account, it would amount to about the produce of the pence". The Postmaster General authorised a 12 months trial of a Penny Post between Bewdley and Cleobury (PMG's Report No.412 of 1818). This will not, of course, have affected the operation of the unofficial local post to other neighbouring villages.

Letters using this official Penny Post were stamped with the 'Bewdley/Penny Post' stamp, Oxley Type 1, in use from 1818 to 1823. Figure 2 shows the use of this stamp on a letter to Shakenhurst, near Bewdley, on 28 December 1819. In May 1820 the Bewdley-Cleobury Penny Post was made permanent (PMG's Report No.142 of 1820).

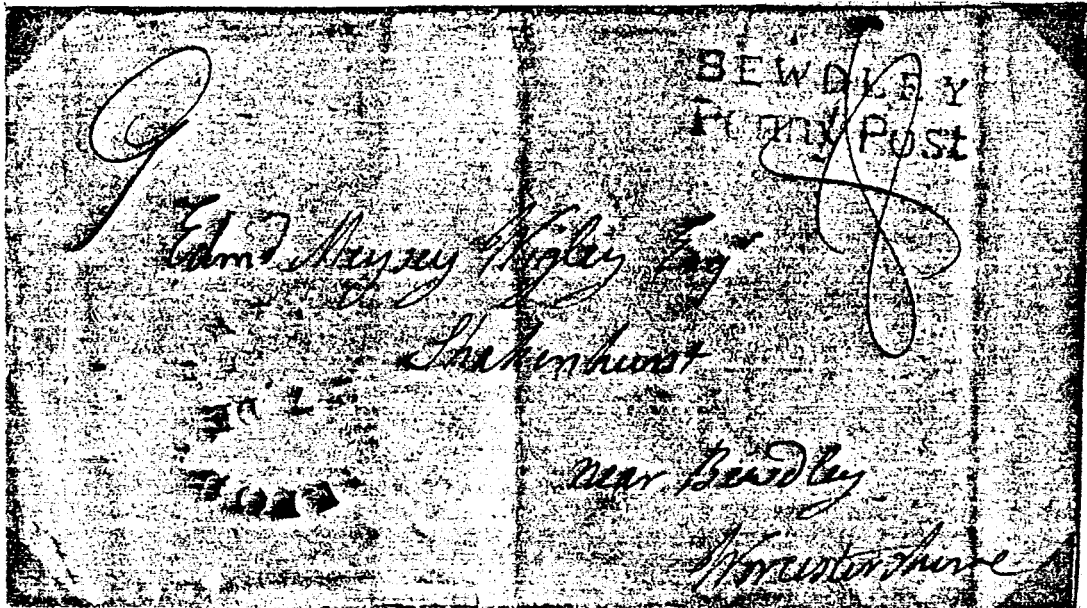


Figure 2.

From 1824 to 1837, Oxley Type 2 'Bewdley/Py. Post' was in use as shown in Figure 3 on a letter from Cleobury Mortimer through Bewdley to Ludlow and dated 14 January 1827.

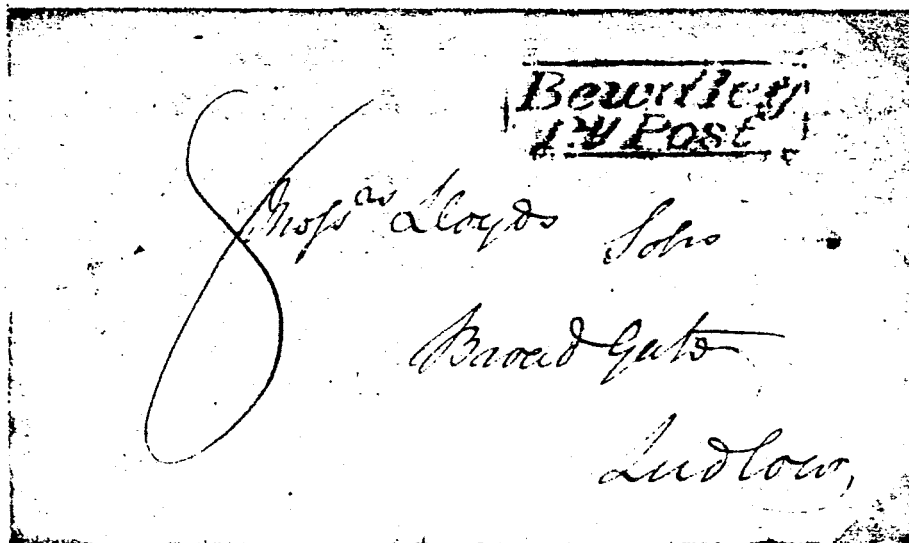


Figure 3.

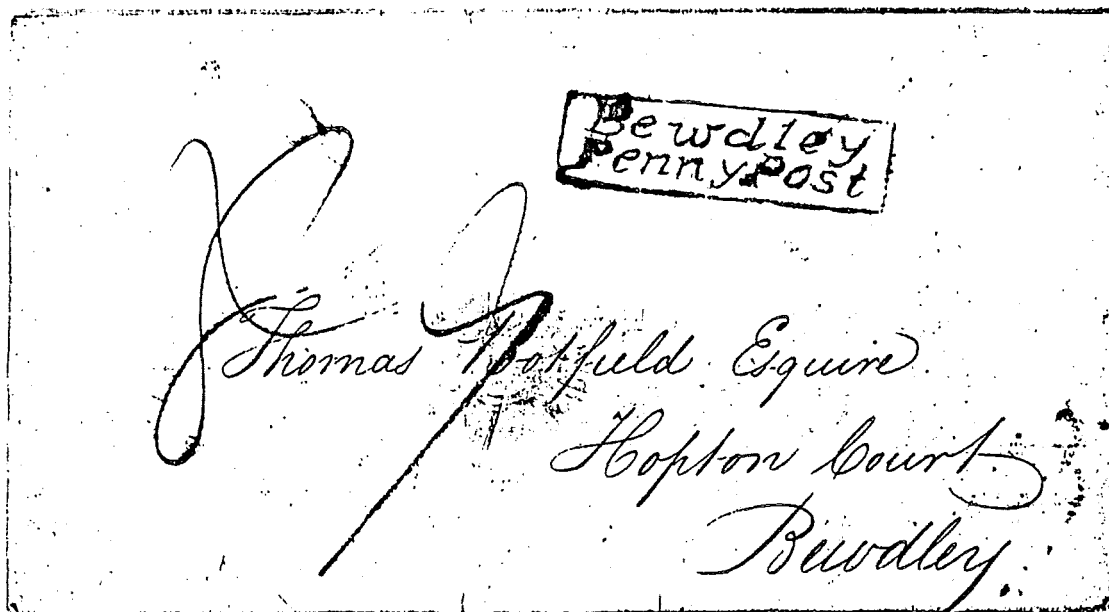


Figure 4.

Figure 4 shows a letter from Shrewsbury through Bewdley and Cleobury Mortimer to Hopton Court, dated 2 September 1837, with Oxley Type 3 'Bewdley/Penny Post' which was in use from 1837 to 1838.

Cleobury Mortimer had no Receiving House number as it was the only Receiving House in the Bewdley Penny Post but, on 27 October 1838, it was issued with an Oxley Type 5 'Cleobury/Penny Post' and a new 'Bewdley/Penny Post' stamp of the same type was issued on the same day. Figure 5 shows the 'Cleobury/Penny Post' stamp on a letter dated 1 April 1839 to Bewdley.

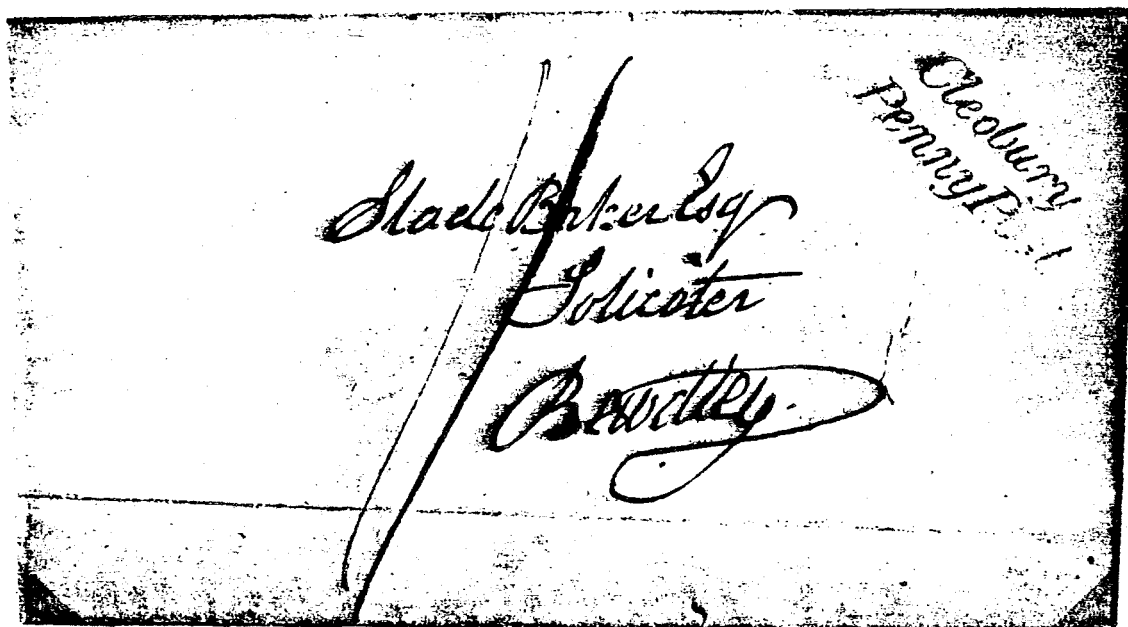


Figure 5.

Figure 6, on the next page, shows the Oxley Type 5 'Bewdley/Penny Post' stamp referred to above on a pre-paid letter to Cleobury Mortimer dated 31 July 1839.

From 1838, the 'Bewdley/Penny Post' stamp was no longer struck on outgoing letters which had the 'Cleobury/Penny Post' stamp on them. Its use was therefore

confined to letters going into the Cleobury Penny Post area.

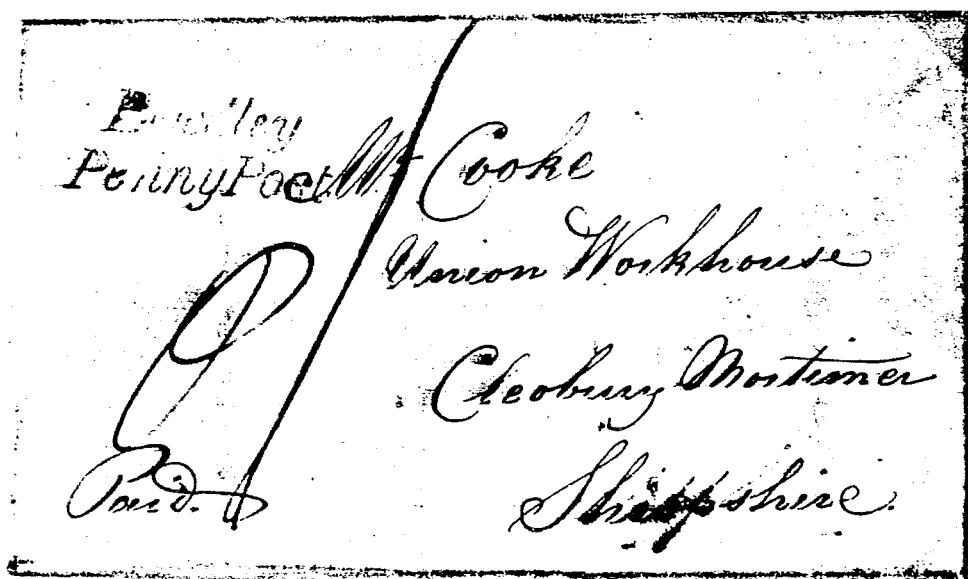


Figure 6.

The 'Cleobury/Penny Post' stamp was still being used in 1848 as a village handstamp only.

* * * * *

DAVID SHAW

Specialist in Scottish Postal History.

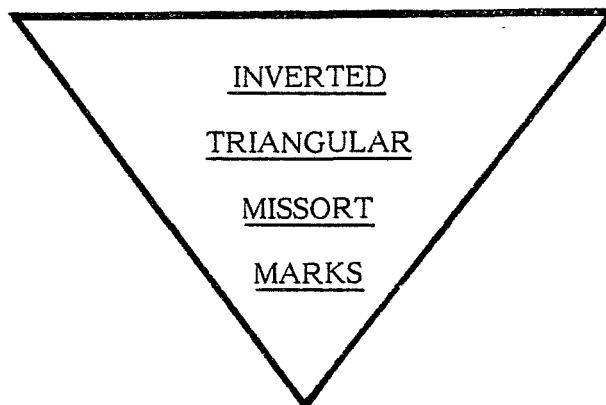
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1797	E/L with fair COVENTRY on obverse.	£7-50
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1921	PPC with 1½d tied good ISHAM, KETTERING Rubber. Nice for this.	£5-00
1881	Mourning envelope with 14 dot 1d lilac cancelled with nice HEREFORD duplex.	£5-00
1856	P.S. envelope, CHELTENHAM Sideways duplex and undated circle LONDON Rd, both good to fine.	£10-00
c1810	E/L, fine LECHLADE 81 mileage between lines on obverse.	£8-00
1830	E/L, good to fine ALFRETON on reverse.	£7-50
1830	E/L, fine CHESTERFIELD cds MILEAGE ERASED on reverse, year reads 18--.	£6-50
1916	PPC with good ROSS, HEREFORDSHIRE skeleton.	£5-00

Please add 20p under £20 and 40p over this for post and insurance in transit. Refund for any item not to your satisfaction if returned within ten days.



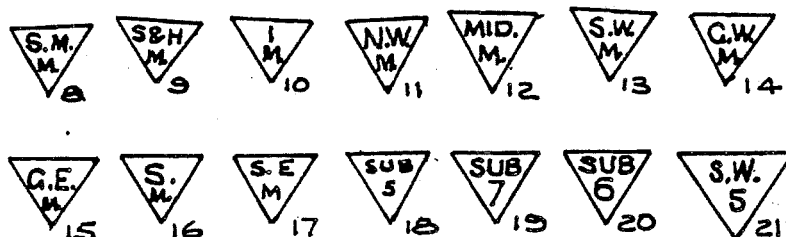
by Harold S. Wilson

These handstamps are often the subject of the query "Are these T.P.O. missort marks?" and can be found on dealers lists described as 'Railway Missorts'. In fact, they were used at the Inland Sorting Office in London. The sorting desks were labelled with the various Railway Divisions viz. 'North Western Division'. When a letter was found at a wrong desk, it was stamped with a triangular stamp to indicate that it had been mis-sorted and passed to the correct desk.

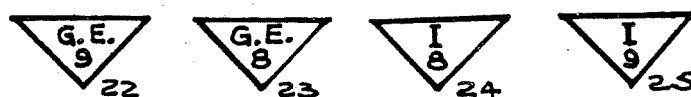
The first series was issued on 24th February 1869 to the Inland Branch. These were as Figures 1-7 and three of each were issued with times "5", "6" and "7". They were used on the morning duty at the times shown.



Figures 8-16 were issued on 22nd January 1872 ("M" stands for "midnight"). I have Figure 14 used in red on a letter of 6th September 1872 from London to Hay, Breconshire. I do not know what the initials "S.M." and "S&H" indicate. Figure 17 was issued on 2nd February 1872, Figure 18 on 2nd April 1875 and Figures 19 & 20 on 22nd October 1875. Figure 21, together with "N.W./5", "6" and "7"; "MID./7"; "I./5", "6" and "7"; "S./7" and "G.W./6", were issued on 28th June 1888. These and all subsequent issues were rubber handstamps.



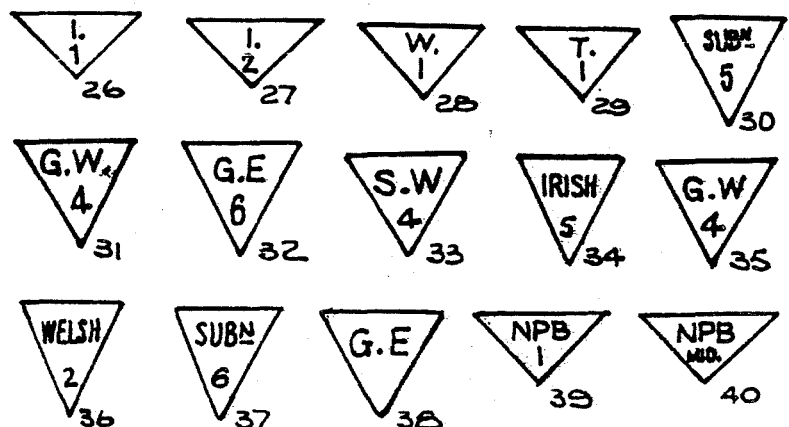
Figures 22-25, together with "MID./8" and "9"; "S/8" and "9"; "S.E./8" and "9"; "SUB./8" and "9"; "N.W./8" and "9"; "G.W./8" and "9" and "S.W./8" and "9", were issued to the 'Sub Controller, Circulation Office' on 25th April 1895.



Figures 26-29 (see next page), together with "G.E./1" and "2"; "S.E./1" and "2"; "G.W./1" and "2"; "N.W./1" and "2"; "S.W./1" and "2"; "SUB./1" and "2"; "S./1" and "2" and "W./1"

and "2", were issued on 23rd November 1897. Also issued at the same time, was a set of twelve reading "E.C./A" to "M", three reading "FNS/1", "2" & "3" and three reading "FLS/1", "2" & "3".

A series as Figures 28 and 29 reading "G.E./4", "5" and "6", "G.W./4", "5" and "6", "S.W./4", "5" and "6", "S.E./4", "5" and "6", "N.W./4", "5" and "6", "MID./4", "5" and "6", "S./4", "5" and "6", "W./1" to "6" and "T./1" to "6" were issued on 10th April 1901. I do not know what "T" stands for. Figures 30-32, together with "MID./4", "WELSH/3", "IRISH/4", "S.E./4", "N.W./2", "SCOTCH/1" and "S.W./3" were issued on 8 November 1912.



Figures 39 and 40, together with stamps reading "S.W.", "G.E.", "W.", "S.", "N.W.", "T.", "SUB", "S.E.", and "G.W.", were issued in 1897 to the 'Sub Controller' for use in the Newspaper Branch.

The stamps normally seen on postcards of the 1903-1914 period are as Figures 33-37 together with similar stamps "MID", "S.E.", "N.W" and "G.E" with numbers "1" to "6". The numbers in the stamps issued from 1901 indicated the time of use, viz.

1	Midnight - 4am
2	4am - 8am
3	8am - Noon
4	Noon - 4pm
5	4pm - 8pm
6	8pm - Midnight

I also have Figure 38 used on a postcard in 1946 and a similar stamp reading "G.W" used on a letter bearing a Geo VI 2½d light blue cancelled by an indecipherable date stamp. Apart from these, the only stamps I know recorded used are Figure 14, the series issued in 1897, and the series found used in the 1903-14 period.

* * * * *

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NOTES ON THE DOUBLE RING CIRCULAR DATE STAMPS OF BIRMINGHAM

INCORPORATING THE TOWN'S NUMERAL OR AN INDEX NUMBER.

by Eric Lewis

Having acquired over the years a box full of covers, wrappers and cards bearing this type of cancellation, the thought occurred to me that an attempt should be made to sort them into numeral order based on the one hundred and forty different index numerals thought to exist. A selection could then be formed into a representative collection for retention, leaving the remainder for disposal. This has presented no difficulty as one of our members is always glad to receive any surplus Birmingham material that I come across. Apart from odd items that have accumulated over the years, the box contained three separate batches of correspondence, each having a reasonable continuity. This undoubtedly helped a lot.

First, a brief history of the introduction of these marks. This type of cancelling stamp was brought into use in Scotland in 1883 but was not used in England until 1884 and 1885 when similar stamps were issued to Birmingham and Liverpool. It does not appear to have been used at any other English town until ten years later.

The numerals that appear in the base of the stamps can be separated into two main groups:

1. The town's postal number (75) in use up to 1893.
2. Numerals 1 to 140 in use from that year.

The numeral '75' does not appear to have been repeated in the later series.

GROUP ONE - STAMPS INCORPORATING THE TOWN'S NUMERAL '75'

Sizes. These stamps first appeared with a diameter of 25mm and, over the eight years in use generally, increased in size up to a maximum of 30mm.

Index Lettering. A system of index lettering, A to Z, was employed followed, when the alphabet was exhausted, by a double identical letter series, AA to ZZ. Again, when this series was completed, four further stamps were produced, lettered BA, BD, BC and BE. The latter was the last stamp of this type and, of course, BB was not used, having been part of the double identical letter group. The index letters, which appear in the upper portion of the stamps, are followed by a numeral, the true meaning of which is not apparent. Similar index lettering followed by numerals appear on Birmingham squared circle cancellers of this period and no one, as far as I know, has managed to break the code adopted or determine a correct reason for their use. It is, however, apparent from a study of a quantity of these marks that the single or double letters were a fixture in the stamp as they are invariably constantly positioned. The numerals were, however, changeable as they are not always regularly positioned or spaced and I have come across examples which are inverted. The obvious explanation for the numeral is a time coding but the numbers used do not fit into any recognisable system. Alternatively, and probably their more feasible use, was to identify the postal clerk who used the stamp, should any query arise.

Illustrations. Examples of the variations described above can be seen in the accompanying illustrations, all of which are photostats of actual strikes.

Dates of Use. The use of this group of stamps seems to have terminated in 1893 when the next series was brought into use.

GROUP ONE STAMPS



25mm Diameter.

Index letter A. Possibly the first Birmingham stamp of this type. Note the short widely spaced arcs.

All other stamps have longer arcs.



26 mm and 27 mm. diameter.

Single letter index.



28 and 29 mm. diameter. Single letter index.

The 'A' and 'B' indexes are both very late use of early letters.



26 mm. diameter with double index letters, containing two identical letters.



27 mm. diameter ditto.

Note the very thin lettering in the second example.



28mm. diameter ditto.



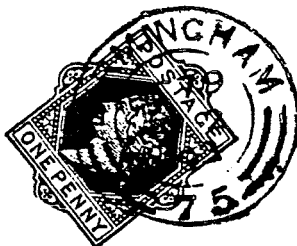
29 mm and 30 mm. diameter ditto.

GROUP ONE STAMPS

(continued)



BA and BC double letter indices.



BD and BE ditto



Two examples with inverted numerals following an upright index letter

GROUP TWO - STAMPS INCORPORATING NUMERALS 1 to 140

Types. This group immediately divides itself into two types, namely those with double arcs and those with single arcs between the double rings. The former type is further divisible into those showing time in code and those showing time in clear.

Time Coding. Unlike Group One, the well known normal time code system was employed on stamps in this group (when time was shown in code).

Sizes. The double arc stamps with time in code or in clear are both found in varying sizes from 25mm to 30mm diameter. As a contrast, the single arc stamps are very uniform in size, 25 to 26mm being the maximum variation.

Index Numerals in the Base of the Stamps. Unlike the first group, which had small moveable numerals, the varying numerals, which now only occur at the base of the stamps, appear to be a fixture to identify the stamp rather than the operator (if, indeed, that was their use in the first series).

Dates of Use. Examples that I have seen of the double arc numerals extend from 1893 to 1908 and, of the single arc stamps, from 1898 well into the 1920s, with the occasional later use right up to recent times.

Numerals Seen in the Double Arc Series. Numerals seen include 1 to 31, 51 to 55 and 61. Others may exist, of course.

Numerals Seen in the Single Arc Series. Most numerals from 1 to 140 have been seen with the notable exception of '75' which was, of course, used on all stamps in the first group and, for that reason, was probably not repeated. Other than this exception, it is probable that all numbers exist up to 140.

Illustrations. As for Group One, as series of typical strikes of Group Two stamps are illustrated below.

GROUP TWO STAMPS



DOUBLE ARC STAMPS WITH TIME IN CODE



25 mm. diameter. Note the different size and spacing of arcs.



29 and 30 mm. diameter.

DOUBLE ARC STAMPS WITH TIME IN THE CLEAR.



25 and 27 mm. diameter.



28 mm. diameter with varying length and spacing of bars.



29 and 30 mm. diameter.

GROUP TWO STAMPS

(continued)

SINGLE ARC STAMPS.



An example with very thick arcs and the highest numeral '140'.

All stamps in this group are 25 to 26 mm. diameter.

TURN OF THE CENTURY ?



Which is the correct date ?

CONCLUSION

These notes are by no means an attempt to record in detail the variations that occur in these stamps but summarise the groups and divisions that they broadly fall into. Those sufficiently interested in minor variations, such as sizes and shapes of the arcs and lettering together with the extent of the indexing used (particularly of the earlier coding), have a vast field before them with readily obtainable, cheaply priced material.

A POSTSCRIPT WITH AN UNANSWERED POSER

While sorting the covers and cards, a look-out was kept for unusual dates. The period covered was, of course, too late to produce first day useage of postal stationery cards and similar items but two items emerged dated December 31st 1899 and January 1st 1901. One of these will be the last day of the old century or the first day of the new century but, as discussed at length (without a definite conclusion) by various correspondents of 'Stamp Collecting' magazine a few years ago, it is not certain whether the 20th century started in 1900 or 1901. Without intending to start a similar discussion again, it would be interesting to see if any member can produce a cover or card dated later than 9.30pm on the last day of the old century, if indeed it finished on December 31st 1899.

* * * * *

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Tailpiece

You knew that sub-offices were being closed but did you know there was a responsible Post Office department?

The Next Issue

The September issue of 'Midland Mail' will celebrate the Society's 10th birthday and take a nostalgic look at how it all began? Who's idea was it, who was the first Chairman, where was the first meeting? Naturally, there will be details of the new season's programme and the first clue in a unique postal history treasure hunt with a valuable '10th birthday' prize. Read all about it in the 41st 'Midland Mail'.

A Giant Leap for Mankind

It is a happy coincidence that a fragment of postal history was immortalised in the Editor's Gloucestershire village of Cranham this year. For those who missed the news or read the wrong papers for the right reason, the cutting on the left is from the 'Daily Telegraph' of Wednesday 10th April 1985.

Gladys leaps into history

RETIRED country postwoman Mrs Gladys Hillier has achieved immortality on an Ordnance Survey map.

A crossing point over a Cotswold stream has been officially designated "Gladys's Leap" — because she had to jump over the 3ft wide brook every day during 35 years of deliveries in the village of Cranham, Gloucestershire.

Mrs Hillier, aged 85, who still lives in the village, says the stream never stopped her from getting the mail through — and she never once got her feet wet.

Hon. Editor

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