

MIDLAND MAIL

THE JOURNAL OF THE MIDLAND (GB) POSTAL HISTORY SOCIETY

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I would like to thank the Society for the unexpected and delightful presentation made to me at the AGM. For some time I had been looking at a bare part of a wall in my study and wondering what I could put there. The frame of the 'Historic Postmarks' matches very well that of a map already hanging there.

It is with relief tinged with a little sadness that I now vacate the editor's chair after twenty-five years and 125 editions, but I feel that now is the time for a fresh face with new ideas to take over. I am sure that members will extend to Sadie Cole the excellent support that I have enjoyed over the years.

The changes that have taken place in that time in the production of Midland Mail are almost unbelievable. I started with a dot-matrix printer the high-pitched noise of which used to drive me insane. Then there was a daisy wheel printer that made so much noise that I had to leave the room until it had finished. As a contrast, the present ink-jet machine is so fast and quiet that twenty pages or so are produced in seconds. As for the monitor, the present one is a tiny fraction of the volume of the one with which I started.

There are probably many possible answers to the question, 'What do Paris, Copenhagen, Helsinki, Athens and probably a number of other European cities have that cannot be found in London?' Well, twenty-five years ago, London possessed a National Postal Museum worthy of the name, but in 1998 the Post Office sold the King Edward Building and closed the Postal Museum. There have been promises made of another home being found for the Museum in London and more recently Swindon. A considerable amount of preparatory work had been done on the latter, involving not a small amount of time and expense. So what can one make of the announcement that the BPMA is not to continue with plans to develop a new base in Swindon. I find the explanation that a major supporter – Royal Mail? - had withdrawn rather vague and unsatisfactory. In fact it almost seems evasive that I wonder if there has been political interference. It is clear that the government intend to sell Royal Mail to raise cash to squander elsewhere. It would be quite natural to remove any superfluous commitments from 'the books' before attempting a sale. Pure conjecture maybe, but I have a great mistrust of those who purport to govern us, whatever their political party. However, until such time as we get a National Postal Museum, if ever, I can recommend a visit to the museum in any one of the first three cities named above. Also, a visit to Bath is always worthwhile.

NEW MEMBERS

We extend a cordial welcome to Michael Wilesmith of Harrogate who collects Worcestershire postal history and to Richard Edmonds of London who is interested in general GB.

THE NEXT MEETING

The first meeting of next season will be an all-day affair at the Abbey Centre, Northampton on **10th September**. Full details and booking form will be distributed with the August issue. In the morning Maurice Palmer will display postal history and ephemera of the Boer War and Derek Smeathers will show WWII postal history from Northants. The afternoon will be devoted to displays by members.

THE APRIL MEETING

The Society's April meeting on 16th was arranged to coincide with the Midland Federation Fair at Wombourne and was at the unusual time (for us) of 10.30. There had been some worries that the morning timing and new venue would deter members but there was, in fact, a very satisfactory attendance of sixteen, with one or two other members making casual interventions and at least three working as dealers in the adjacent rooms. The subject of the day, 'Recent Acquisitions', attracted ten very varied one-board displays, with five offering a second round. Miscellaneous displays of this kind are difficult to record, as one can hardly mention every item shown, and it is possible to give no more than a flavour of the content of each.

MICK GILL began with a selection of Nottinghamshire items. There was a letter of 1690/91 from Mansfield to the Tower of London concerning the valuation of trees standing in Sherwood Forest (few of which survive). Also from Mansfield was a letter with the significant date of 10th January 1840 bearing a handstruck 'P1' in red ink. At Southwell, a letter from Doncaster of the 1780s had a 2d local delivery charge. From 1796, when an official office had opened at Southwell, there were no more local charges evident. Rather unusually, the circular date stamp of Ollerton, represented by an 1841 example, clearly has a single arc, not a double arc. A somewhat surprising scarcity was an 1845 Tuxford letter with an '1844 type' numeral.

The Nottinghamshire theme was continued by ALAN MARSHALL, with letters to and from Nottingham. One of 1664 to London, written by a Richard Smith, was enquiring if a cake he had sent had been received safely. Leaping forward more than 200 years, a letter of 1892 had a 1/2d re-direction charge, the only one Alan has seen. Twentieth century items included a letter of 1946 from Nottingham to Germany where an attempt had been made to register it when, in fact, there was still no registered service. The postage charge had been refunded. A remarkable modern item, of 1989, was a receipt for £127-43 'postage due' (although clearly not all would be postage) wallpapered with 25 x £5 "To Pay" stamps.

MALCOLM ALLINSON brought us Northamptonshire material. The mis-spelling of Long Buckby as "Long Buckly" was shown on a letter of 1839. There was an excellent strike of the penny paid mark of Northampton, only used in January and February of 1840. We saw an 1846 Long Buckby undated circular mark and then twentieth century postcards from Dallington which, at one time, was a detached area of Northamptonshire.

DEREK SMEATHERS provided the second Northamptonshire contribution and told us his first three items had all been gifts. He also reminded us, as if we needed reminding, that it was the centenary of the world's first aerial parcel post, flown from Northampton racecourse in 1911 by a Bleriot type machine. It was said to carry either five or six boxes of shoes/boots but a photograph of the scene clearly shows at least eleven boxes! Other esoteric items included an envelope from Peterborough to China carried on the trans-continental railway, a KGV se-tenant item from a booklet used on cover, a letter of the Weedon and Leamington Railway Company (which never built the promised line) and a 1936 letter from Northampton to the Belgian Congo, re-directed through a selection of African countries that no longer exist.

STUART GEDDES, who lives at Monmouth, has become a welcome regular at our meetings in recent times and his recent acquisitions were relevant to his interest in the postal history of Newport and included letters to overseas destinations. One to Ontario was carried on the Canadian Packet from Liverpool. There were two letters of 1841, one sent by air and the other by surface mail, to America. There was a Bute Docks duplex on a letter to Sweden and a Tredegar duplex on a letter to San Francisco bearing a strip of four penny red stamps.

RICHARD FARMAN's letters all had canal links. What could have a closer connection with canals than a letter signed by the great Thomas Telford himself? In it he was signing-off work on the Middlewich Branch. There was a Brades Ironworks (Birmingham) letter with a sketch of a proposed canal wharf to be built on land owned by the Duke of Sutherland and a letter carried by canal boat from Stoke to Middlewich, charged just 1d. An 1890 pre-printed card from Stone to Brierley Hill gave information about the current location of the barge and the charges paid at the locks.

Some of ERIC LEWIS' exhibits were recent acquisitions but it would take a lifetime to acquire all the elusive 'Creswell' undated circular marks he included in his one-board display. Sidney Raine, the doyen of early collectors of Birmingham material, died in the late 1960s and his collection was sold at Robson Lowe's auction in 1970. Eric was unable to buy a group of the so-called 'D3' type Creswell marks but, having since passed through two or three hands, they have now "come home" to Eric. The main purpose of these tiny stamps was to conserve expensive ink. We saw the marks of Ashstead Row, Aston Park (a new discovery), Bristol Street, Castle Bromwich, Hampstead, Minworth, Monument Lane, Moseley, Penns, Small Heath, Stirchley and Summer Lane. Looking at the Society's UDC book, it

would have been quicker to list those we *didn't* see! By contrast, we saw one of the vast undated circular marks that occasionally turn up on our mail.

ALAN GODFREY showed covers from Warwickshire. The earliest was a 1676 cover from Alcester, followed by a 1718 Free Frank from Edmund Prideaux, to be left at the Greyhound's Head in Alcester by the 'Stratford Bag'. There was a photo of Alcester railway station and a railway letter from the final passenger service in 1962. A local letter of 1800 was to a needle maker offering to pay a debt at the rate of 10/- in the £, supplemented by some bodkins! A Crimean War letter of 1855 was from a 15 year old Midshipman in the Black Sea Fleet. (By the end of the century, he was an Admiral, nicknamed the "Ocean Swell".) Finally, we heard of the Shakespeare label, sold at the church where he is buried from 1897 to the 1920s. Unusually the example we saw was on a picture postcard but the Post office eventually insisted that the label could only be applied to the picture side of such cards, where it would not share the postmark.

GUY BRIDGES moved us west to Shropshire where, from Ludlow, he had discovered a straight line stamp of 1766 that he believed to be of a different length and height from the recorded mark used between 1769 and 1777. We saw the sole recorded use of a Shrewsbury single numeral stamp struck in 1861. A 1904 letter from Halfway House to Liverpool had an unrecorded Halfway House skeleton. At Berriew, a 'No.1' receiving house stamp was used until 1839 but, from 1840, the Welshpool Penny Post stamp was transferred to Berriew and used there. It was still in use in 1843.

Finally, in the first round of displays, JOHN CALLADINE moved from his favoured 'Stourbridge' to Burnham Market, in Norfolk, a small town far from the Midlands. He showed the rare early marks of Burnham but the display centered around the highly unusual Burnham Penny Post (1829-1835), that was set up at the request of the residents of several small villages previously served by the Rougham Penny Post, notwithstanding the new penny post costing an extra penny in the General Post and resulting in the later arrival of their mail. It finally ceased when a Lynn-Wells mailcoach took over the service.

After an interval to view the boards, Mick Gill continued his earlier Nottinghamshire display with the scarce Besthorpe undated circular mark and a letter from Redmile that had been sent as a railway package. Southwell was only served from Mansfield for a few months in 1840 but Mick had a Mulready, with a Southwell udc, that had arrived by that route. We were told of the oft-confused villages of Beckingham, in Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire, with examples of equally confused letters. Alan Marshall's Nottinghamshire miscellany included a Jubilee cover mailed in 1931 with 1/2d stamp that attracted twopence to pay because of the increase in postal rates over many years. There were three different re-issued marks, all different, and first day use of a Loudon skelton stamp in 1926. Derek Smeather's moved onto Malcolm Allinson's ground by returning to Long Buckby but this time to see an item sent by the station master that was stamped there. He also had a photograph of the railway station. Those of us, like me, who didn't know when 'Her Britannic Majesty's Service' was used on envelopes found that it was mainly for the consular service but the item we were shown concerned an outstanding phone bill. A 1963 Burghley Horse Trials cover was presumably stamped at a mobile post office and two further unusual items were a postal stationery cut-out used in lieu of an adhesive stamp and a rarely found 3d railway letter stamp. Eric Lewis' second session followed his Creswell stamps with the small (3/4 inch) 'D1', 'D2' and 'D4' UDCs from a host of Birmingham offices including, but not limited to, Hockley Hill RO, Lancaster St RO, The Parade, Summer Lane and Wootton Wawen. Finally, Richard Farman concluded the morning's proceedings with more canal material including a letter from Eccleshall to another Halfway House, a pub on a canal, that had attracted a 3d delivery charge from Bromsgrove. An 1806 letter from Liverpool accompanied goods being carried by canal to Lady Gordon in Scotland, the quantities suggesting she was stocking-up for the winter or, perhaps, for the duration of the Napoleonic Wars. A suitable conclusion was provided by carriers' letters of 1821 and 1824 and a drover's letter of 1832.

Editor's Note: My thanks to John Calladine for providing this report.

THE AGM AND AUCTION

The Annual General Meeting and Auction was held on Saturday, 7th May at St Germain's Church Hall, Birmingham. After apologies had been noted and the minutes of the previous AGM had been accepted as a true record, the Chairman gave his report. Mel said that once again we had enjoyed a very successful season, with the highlights being the displays – "Early Provincial Marks" by Malcolm Ray-Smith, "Unusual Aspects of Suffolk Postal History" by Tom Slemons and "Rutland Postal History" by Bob Viney. We were indebted to John Calladine for organising the first two displays. The meetings devoted to one board displays had been well supported and members had kept to the rules.

Mel thanked Richard Farman for organising such a varied and interesting programme, Eric Lewis for keeping the finances in good order, and Alan Godfrey for examining the accounts. Eric also has the arduous task of organising the Annual Auction which is always a great attraction and a valuable source of income for the Society. Chris Jackson, with his team of helpers had ensured that the actual auction had run smoothly.

With regard to publications, Bob Viney, with assistance from John Calladine, had produced an updated version of the book on undated straight-line marks. Martin Scroggs, working in conjunction with John Calladine, had produced an Oxfordshire supplement to the book on local posts. Unfortunately, Chris Jackson had resigned as Coordinating Editor but the position was being covered by John Soer in an acting capacity.

During the last year Mick Gill had not only carried out his normal secretarial duties but had also produced a revised set of rules for "Dissolution of the Society", a new membership application form and new Library Rules.

Finally, Mel thanked John Soer who had been editor of 'Midland Mail' for twenty-five years and then presented John with a framed set of "Historic Postmarks" to mark his retirement from the post.

Our Treasurer, Eric Lewis, then distributed copies of the balance sheet, a copy of which is enclosed if you were not at the meeting. Eric commented briefly on various items. The subscriptions included a payment for five years from a member who likes to pay for five years at a time. The increased cost for hire of rooms was caused by the charge for the meeting room and refreshments at Carrs Lane. The production costs of the 'Straight-line Book' had been recouped and we were now showing a profit with twenty copies still to be sold. The accounts for the year were approved.

Eric then reported that in view of the financial situation of the Society, the Committee had recommended that subscriptions should remain at £10. This met with unanimous approval.

The Editor of 'Midland Mail' reported that, as usual, five editions of about twenty pages had been published in the past year. He thanked members for the tremendous support that he had received over the previous twenty-five years. While it would have been invidious to mention names, he recalled the great encouragement he had received from the late Christopher Beaver.

As acting Co-ordinating Editor, John Soer said that work was progressing on book which would update, for the Midland counties, the British County Catalogue. Apart from two counties the collection of data was complete and he hoped that by the next AGM the book would be close to publication.

The Secretary distributed a sheet showing an amendment to the procedure to be followed should it be felt necessary to dissolve the Society. This was approved unanimously.

There were a number of changes in the Officers of the Society. Alan Marshall was elected as President, Derek Smeathers having completed his three year term; Sadie Cole was elected as Editor of 'Midland Mail'; John Soer took over the post of Co-ordinating Editor. Alan Godfrey was re-elected as Examiner of Accounts.

John Soer said that he had received over thirty nominations covering seven different articles for the Jon Baker trophy. The winning article was 'Use of Penny Post Handstamps after the Introduction of Uniform Penny Post' by John Calladine, John Hine and Martin Scroggs.

After a short break we then proceeded to the Annual Auction. While there were more unsold lots than usual, and there was a lack of the 'fireworks' often seen, there were still some very good realisations. Of particular note were lots 4 - £200 (est. £95), 37 - £90, 339 - £190 (£20), 340 - £160 (£20).

An unaudited list of realisations is given below.

A	5	B	18	D	4	E	5	F	19
G	1	H	1	J	2	K	3	L	2
M	8.50	N	42	P	6	Q	1	R	1
S	5	T	3	U	5	V	1	W	5
AA	4.50	BB	1	CC	1				
1	280	2	160	3	46	4	200	5	32
6	17	7	26	8	48	9	110	10	78
11	70	12	13	13	30	14	80	15	75

16	52	17	4	18	4	20	14	21	6
22	55	23	30	24	20	25	6.50	26	16
27	7.50	28	8.50	29	24	30	14	31	9
32	6	34	60	35	16	36	16	37	90
39	26	40	4	41	6.50	42	5.50	43	9
44	7	45	5	46	11	47	26	52	18
53	48	54	55	55	4	56	10	57	10
60	5	61	20	62	5	67	5.50	68	4.59
69	15	73	7	76	8.50	78	8.50	80	9
81	13	82	14	87	18	88	18	89	20
93	5	97	5	98	8.50	101	7	102	11
103	20	104	9	105	8	108	18	109	20
111	80	112	18	114	18	117	7	121	60
122	22	124	17	125	80	126	75	127	13
128	7	130	5	131	7.50	132	17	137	5
139	46	140	8	141	7	142	18	143	7.50
144	46	145	6	146	7	147	12	148	4
149	15	150	24	151	16	155	14	156	3
158	5	159	9	162	40	163	80	164	9.50
165	24	166	14	170	17	171	8	172	8
173	10	174	3	175	5	176	5	177	5
178	3	179	15	181	17	182	3	183	8
184	8.50	185	6.50	186	8.50	187	10	188	2
189	4	190	5	192	20	193	20	197	8
201	4	202	24	204	8	205	8	206	4
207	3	208	6.50	211	5	214	6.50	215	7
218	7	219	4	220	5	221	34	222	3
223	4	224	7	226	6	227	2.50	229	4
231	16	232	2.50	233	2	234	2	235	4
236	5	238	4	240	4	241	5	243	3
244	2.50	246	7	247	5.50	249	10	250	2
251	8.50	252	14	253	13	255	16	256	7
257	5	259	11	260	7	261	3	262	2
263	3	264	5	265	7	266	10	267	14
268	10	270	7.50	271	7.50	272	20	273	5
274	24	275	36	276	28	277	3	278	3
281	3	282	3	283	9	285	3.50	286	3
287	13	290	3.50	294	4	295	8	299	8
300	3	301	3	303	3	309	5.50	310	5.50
311	11	312	3.50	313	46	314	22	315	3
316	15	322	30	323	34	325	10	327	55
328	28	329	15	331	34	332	8	333	12
335	20	336	16	337	3	338	9	339	190
340	160	342	9.50	343	9.00	344	28	345	4
346	8	347	18	348	32	349	10	350	26
351	24	352	8	354	9.50	355	32	356	32
357	16	358	5	359	3	360	24	362	9
363	7	367	9	369	5	371	3	372	30
373	15	374	3	375	14	376	9	377	13
378	12	380	4	381	3	382	6		

THE MAY MEETING

Our meeting on 14th May was held in conjunction with Worpex – the annual fair organised by the Worcester Philatelic Society. Appropriately the topic chosen by our speaker, Chris Jackson, was '*City of Worcester*'. Chris began with a warrant of July 1567 for a Messenger of the Royal Chamber for delivering three letters in Staffordshire, Shropshire and Worcestershire at 2s.8d a day, giving a total of £3.01.04. Next came a van Langeren mileage chart.

We saw a cover from the Civil War - a letter sent on 11th January 1657 from Charlton, near to Pershore to Hanley Castle, Upton-on-Severn. This was accompanied by photographs of effigies of the writer and the recipient. From the Commonwealth era, Chris showed a letter sent in May 1657 to Southwark. An early prisoner's letter was sent from Worcester gaol in May 1670.

A letter sent from Worcester to Naples in 1715 had a charge of 1s.4d. crossed out and replaced by a fee of 1/-. Chris' earliest Worcester handstamp is the two-line 'WORCES/TER' from February 1720 on a letter sent to 'Cocoa Chocolate House in Pall Mall'. Chris then went on to show a number of two-line marks from the 1700s, including some not recorded in the County Catalogue. One of these turned up in 1811, twenty-seven years after its previous use.

Worcester had a first-type mileage mark – '114 WOR/CESTER' and Chris showed one example dated as early as 12th October 1784. Droitwich also had a mileage mark showing a distance of '114' as it was a receiving house under Worcester. In the twelve years, or so, after the withdrawal of the first-type mileage marks, the handstamps gradually got smaller until by 1799 they were only 4mm in height. Chris illustrated this trend with several covers.

Next, came a whole range of different types of mileage mark from the period 1801 to 1820 – boxed mileage marks, mileage between lines and various circular marks. All of these showed a distance of 117 miles. Of particular note here was the only known copy of the mileage mark of Malvern – 'MALVERN/121' used in August 1812.

In a little over four years, starting in February 1844, Worcester used no fewer than eight 'traveller' handstamps. Some of these were most unusual in that, at the bottom, they showed one number over another.

The next section of Chris' display consisted of material from the Worcester Penny Post. We saw the numeral handstamps of the receiving houses at Malvern (No. 1), Malvern Wells (No. 2) and Ombersley (No. 3). We also saw the straight-line mark 'ST JOHNS WORCESTER' struck in blue ink.

Worcester used three totally different 'Too Late' marks – one had a single frame, a second had a double frame while a third was in an oval frame. We saw examples of all of these covering the period 1822 to 1835. When one hears the word 'missent' in conjunction with Worcester, the name Sir Thomas Phillips immediately springs to mind. It was a surprise to find that Worcester used four different types of 'missent' handstamp. While Chris did show some covers from the Phillips correspondence, we saw examples of the handstamps in various colours on other letters.

We now came to the Uniform Fourpenny Post and Chris showed us the handstruck '4' of Worcester used on 7th December 1839. Less spectacular, but nevertheless a very desirable item, was a cover sent from Worcester to Matlock on 10th January 1840 – the first day of Uniform Penny Postage. Chris ended the first half of his display with photographs of the rebuilt Worcester Post Office in c.1850.

The first board of the second half consisted of covers carrying Maltese Cross Cancellations. We saw penny and twopenny Mulreadies; a penny black cover sent to Upton-on-Severn and then redirected to Herefordshire, so attracting an extra charge of a penny; a letter sent from London to Worcester on 21st December 1840, with a penny black cancelled with a red Maltese Cross, was turned on 13th May 1842 and sent to Fendall's Exchange Coffee House after being franked with two twopenny blues which were cancelled with a black Maltese Cross.

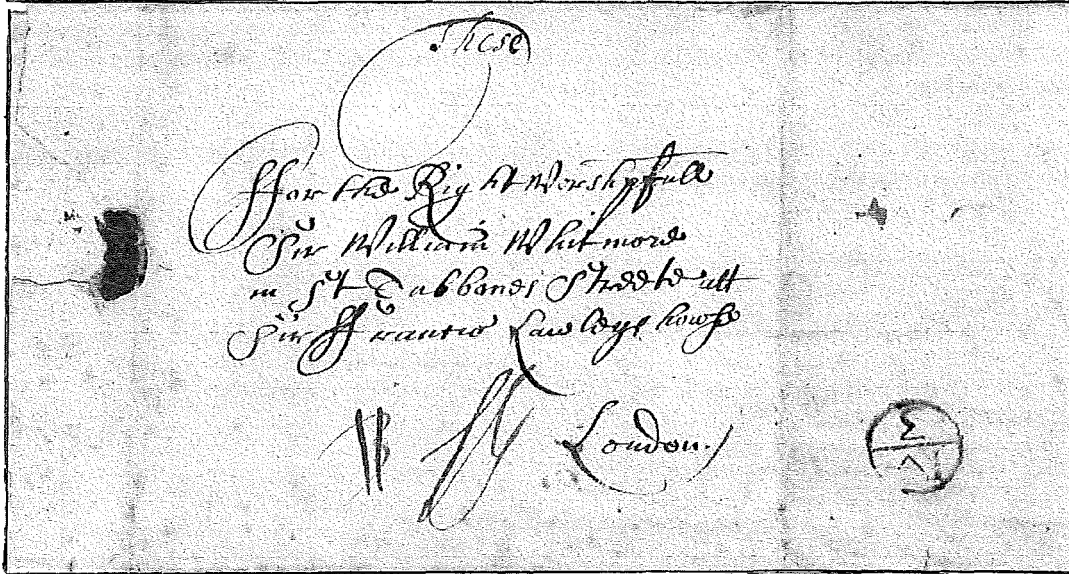
A wide range of numeral cancellations followed including the 1844 type, duplexes, the scarce 4VOS used in 1874, and, of course, examples of the Worcester 'Spoon Cancellations'. Chris then turned to the town sub-offices. We saw the UDCs of Bridge Street (struck in orange and blue), Class-Gate and Cornmarket as well as the sans-serif straight-line mark of Cornmarket. The rural sub-offices were represented by Sidbury with its two different types of UDC, along with an invoice from the postmaster and a photograph of the office, dating from c.1880.

The latter part of the display contained a range of items. A letter sent from Worcester to the Crimea in 1855 was charged threepence. A very scarce item was a registered letter sent to Birmingham in August 1846 at the 1/- rate. Another registered letter, sent in 1853, showed three twopenny and one penny adhesives. We saw internal Post Office envelopes for sending money from the sub-offices to the Head Office in Worcester during 1913 to 1915. An Express Letter of November 1895 carried a 4d adhesive. A handstruck '2' was to be found on an unpaid letter of January 1853 and an overweight letter of November 1860. Of particular note was a range of Parcel Post Labels from the town sub-offices as well as the main office. Two unusual manuscript endorsements were 'Dead' (June 1863) and 'Deceased' (January 1869). Chris ended with an illustrated billhead from 'Henry Webb & Co, Agricultural Chemists, Chemical Manure and Oil of Vitriol Works'. One can only hope the works were downwind of the city.

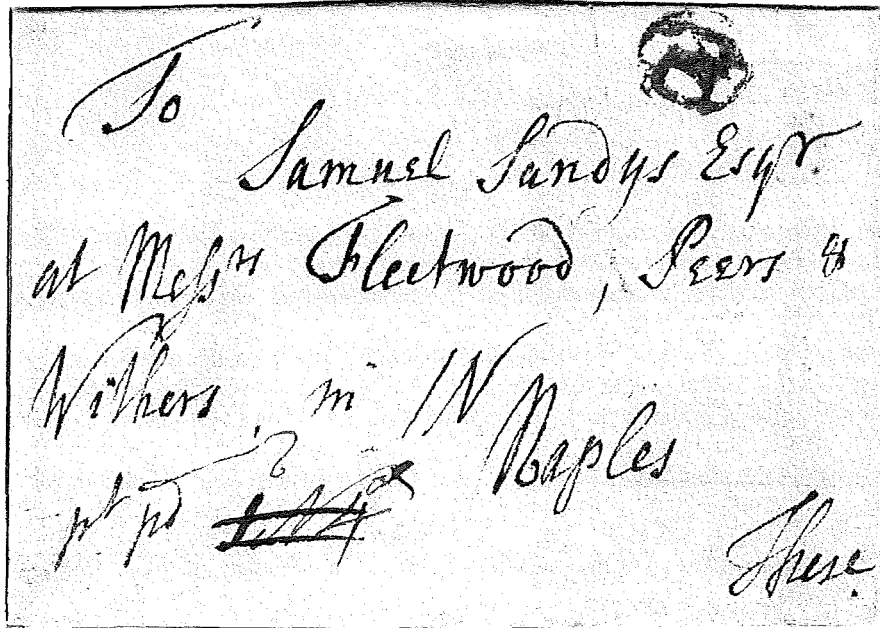
The applause at the end showed that we had been entertained by a superb display containing much scarce material which showed the wide range of postal history to be found from one medium sized city.

SOME ITEMS FROM CHRIS JACKSON'S DISPLAY

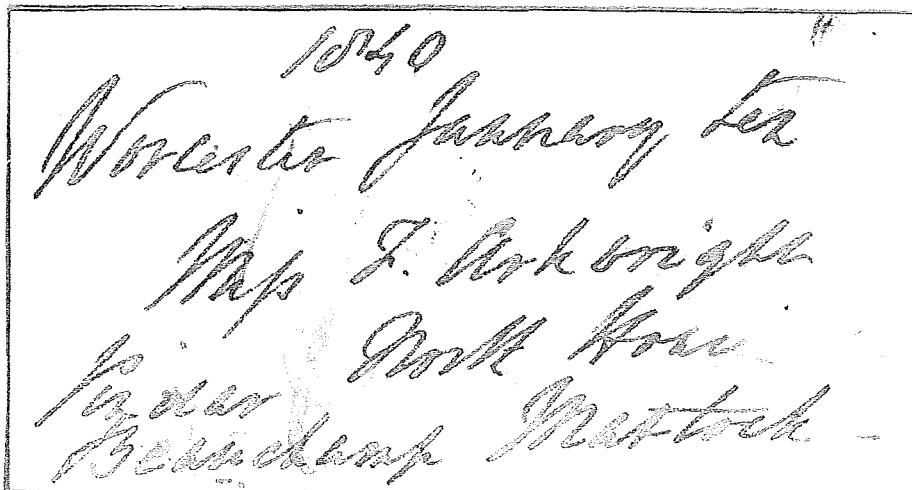
A letter sent in 1670 from Worcester Gaol. As it was to a MP the 3d charge was cancelled, presumably in London, and the cancellation initialled 'TG'. It was another ten years before Inspector's Crown marks were introduced.



Worcester to Naples – 1715. The letter was prepaid 1s.4d which was then crossed out and '1N' shown for the carried forward foreign charge. The 4d reduction was the internal British postal charge.



First Day of Uniform Penny Post



WORCESTER SKELETONS

by Chris Jackson

When I displayed the Worcester skeleton handstamps with two numbers below at Worpex, I had not realised that these handstamps did not occur throughout the counties of the Midlands. There have been several suggestions as to the meaning of these numerals but no-one can be certain. As a result of the discussions I have compared the marks in detail and tabulated the information.

The inner number, where one occurs, is tight up against the year date within the circle of the town name, whilst the outer number is both on the same radius and in line with the lettering of the town name.

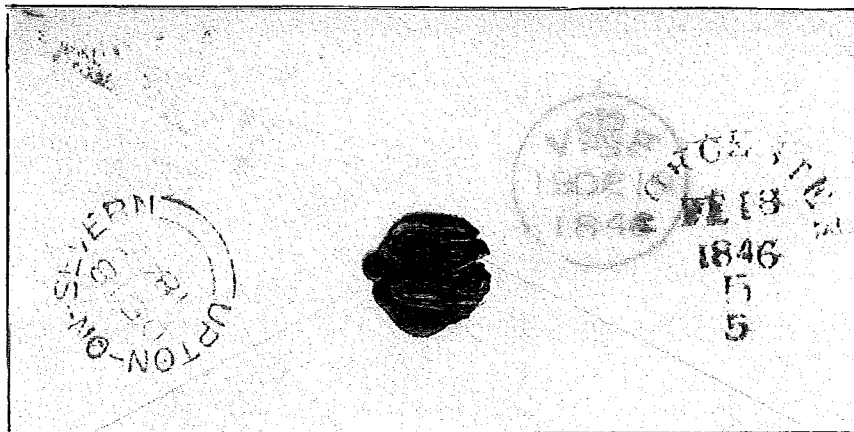
<u>Date</u>	<u>Inner number</u>	<u>Outer number</u>	<u>Colour</u>	<u>Size</u>	<u>Type</u>
15 th Dec 1846	5	6	Black	29mm	1
16 th Dec 1846	None	3	Black	29mm	1
18 th Dec 1846	5	5	Black	29mm	1
19 th Dec 1846	5	1	Black	29mm	1
30 th Dec 1846	5	1	Black	29mm	2
4 th Jan 1847	5	8	Black	29mm	2
30 th May 1848	None	5	Blue	31mm	2
30 th May 1848	2	5	Black	31mm	2
3 rd June 1848	2	6	Blue	31mm	2
3 rd June 1848	2	3	Blue	31mm	2

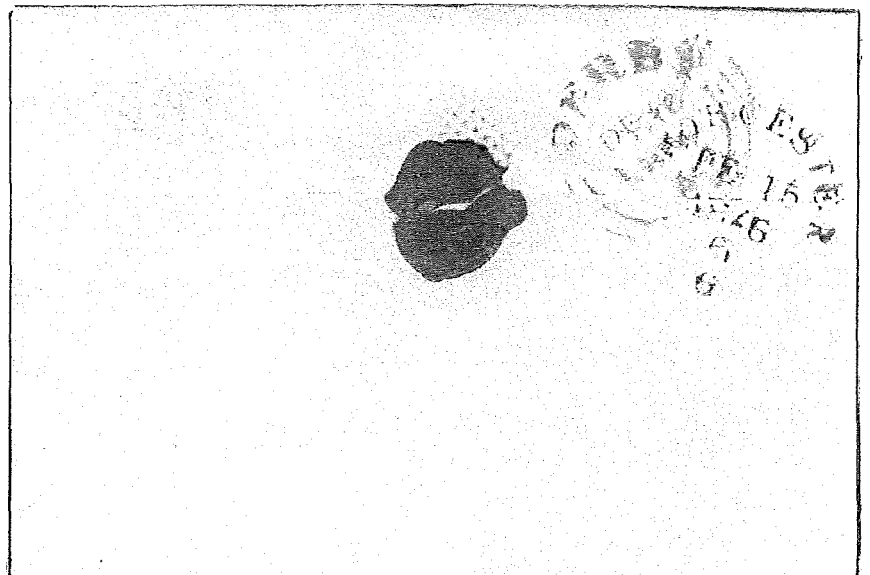
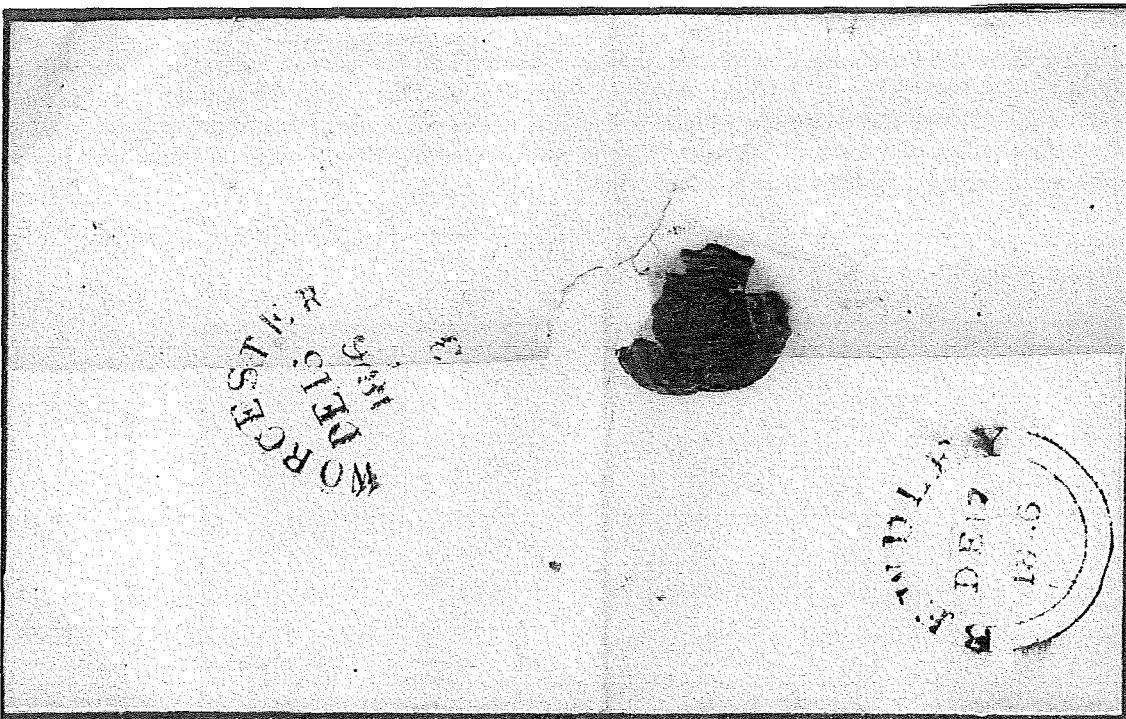
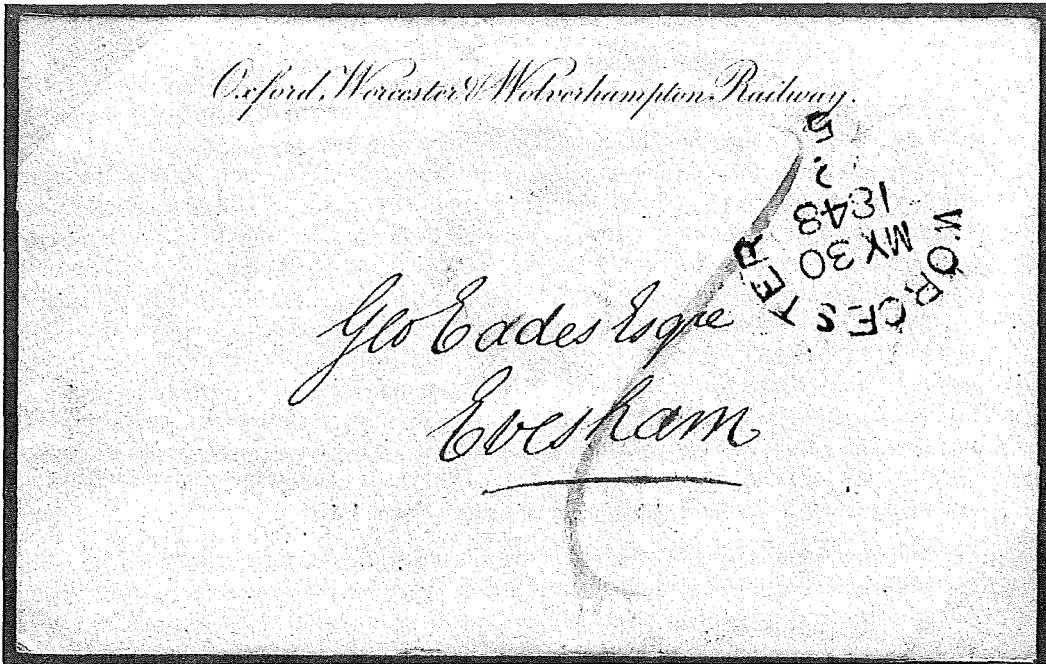
The handstamp in the 1846 usage is consistent in that the first E of Worcester is misplaced high in each recorded example. Similarly in 1848 the C and E of Worcester are very close and the 4 in the year date is on an angle in all recorded examples. From which it can be concluded that only one handstamp was in use on each occasion.

The most common suggestion is that one of the numbers probably relates to the number of the box containing the handstamp slugs. If so then this would appear to be the inner number as it is the consistent one. The outer number may relate to time of use or the position of the clerk using the handstamp who knows? Certainly it is the variable number.

In addition to Worcester the same double numbering occurs at Kidderminster in June 1848, but there all examples show 5 over 1.

If anyone can give a definitive answer as to the meaning of these numbers many members, myself included, would be delighted to hear it.





THE CZECH ARMY IN NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

by Derek Smeathers

The article in *Midland Mail* 169/9 reminded me that the first time I had heard of the Czech Army being in Northamptonshire was some years ago when I visited Solihull Philatelic Society with a display of Northants and was lightly admonished for not mentioning it. Since then, I have acquired more information and some items to illustrate their activities. The date of their arrival at Desborough was 1st September 1943 (when a British-style datestamp was issued) and the earliest cover I have dated 8th September is shown at fig. 1. I have not been able to establish exactly where in Desborough the Czechs settled. The town now has a thriving historical society but they do not know. I suggested the nearby airfield which had been commissioned by the RAF on 1st September 1943 – quite a coincidence I thought! The society assures me the Czechs were not stationed there. The main body of men were apparently called the 2nd Infantry Battalion, but just before Christmas 1943 they were joined by the Czech Armoured Division which had been serving with the British Forces in North Africa for the past two years. Covers to and from this group are shown at figs. 2 and 3. They are known to have used the extensive grounds of Billing Hall, near Northampton and Deene Park near Corby, but apparently not as residents. In early 1944, a Czech officer and his men gave valuable assistance when the village of Deenethorpe was badly damaged by an American B17 bomber which crashed there on takeoff from Deenethorpe USAAF base. Presumably, the Czechs had been working at nearby Deene Park.

Like many other foreign fighting units in the UK during World War 2, the Czechs had an undercover address for mail, and fig. 2 shows P.O. Box 226, London on a cover sent from the United States. They were instructed to use their Army Post Office for all outgoing mail in order to conceal their whereabouts from the enemy, but the occasional item was posted elsewhere. I have a cover posted in the village of Burton Latimer and cancelled with the handstamp of the village post office, addressed to USA on 23rd May 1944 with the reverse flap sealed by a gummed label which clearly broke these rules – see fig. 4. Quite a number of these patriotic seals were used by the Czechs – I have eight, all printed in red, white and blue.

The Czechs are stated to have left Desborough 'at the end of May 1944' but I do not have an exact date. I do have a cover cancelled at their Field Post Office on 1st June 1944 so possibly that may have been the last day it was open. Interestingly, it is censored although it is addressed within England and would not normally have been examined. But this was a few days before D-Day and much of Southern England was covered by Allied Forces on whose mail there were stringent conditions of secrecy. Perhaps there is a connection?

fig. 1

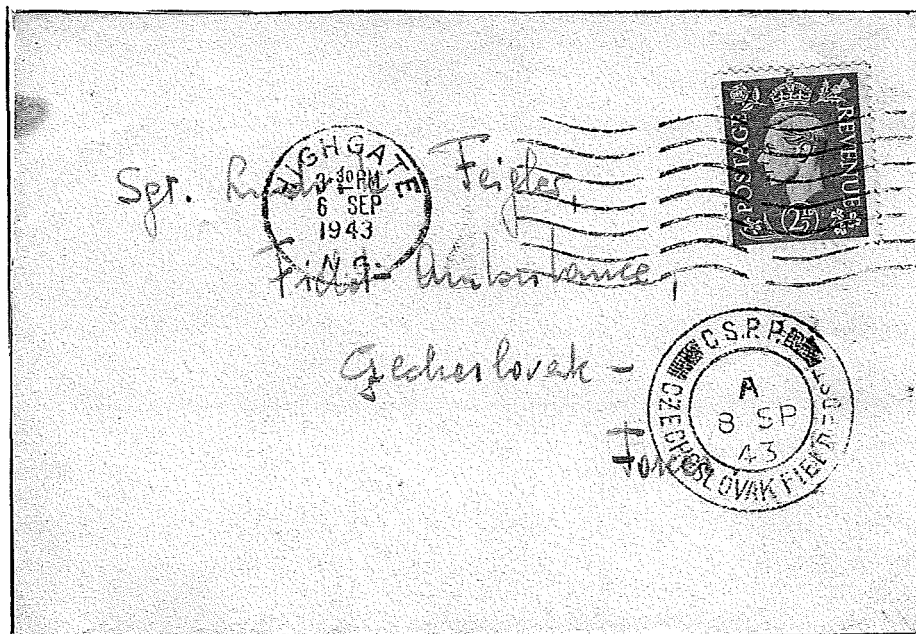


fig. 2

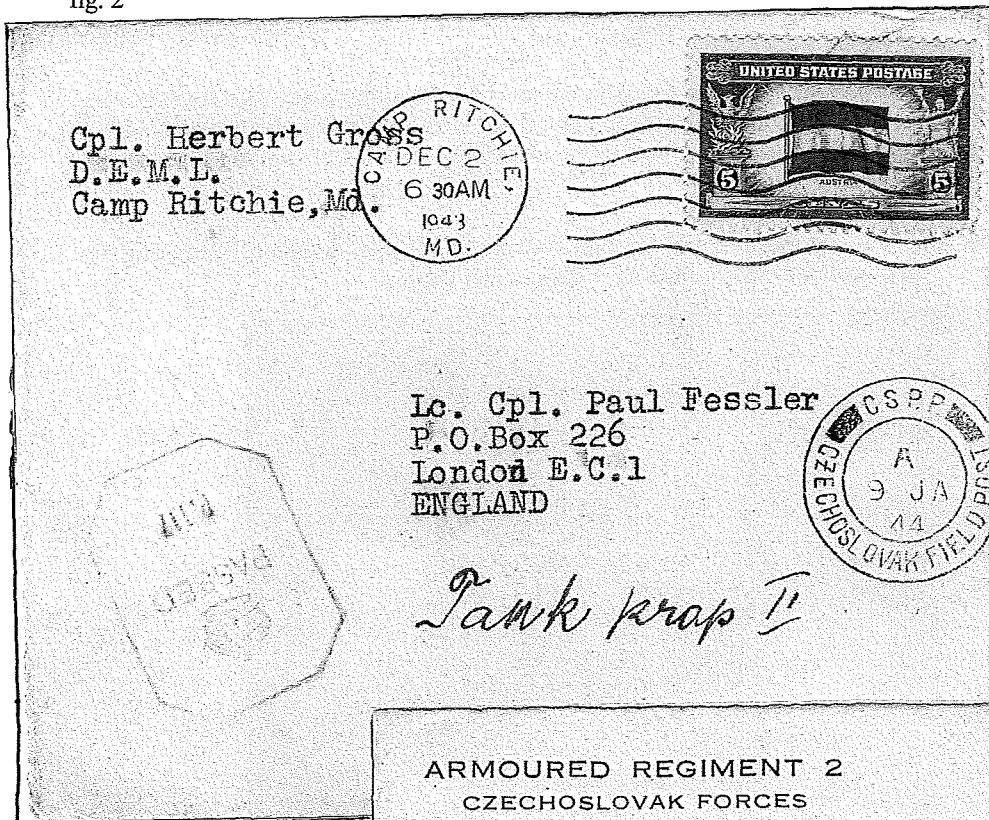


fig. 3

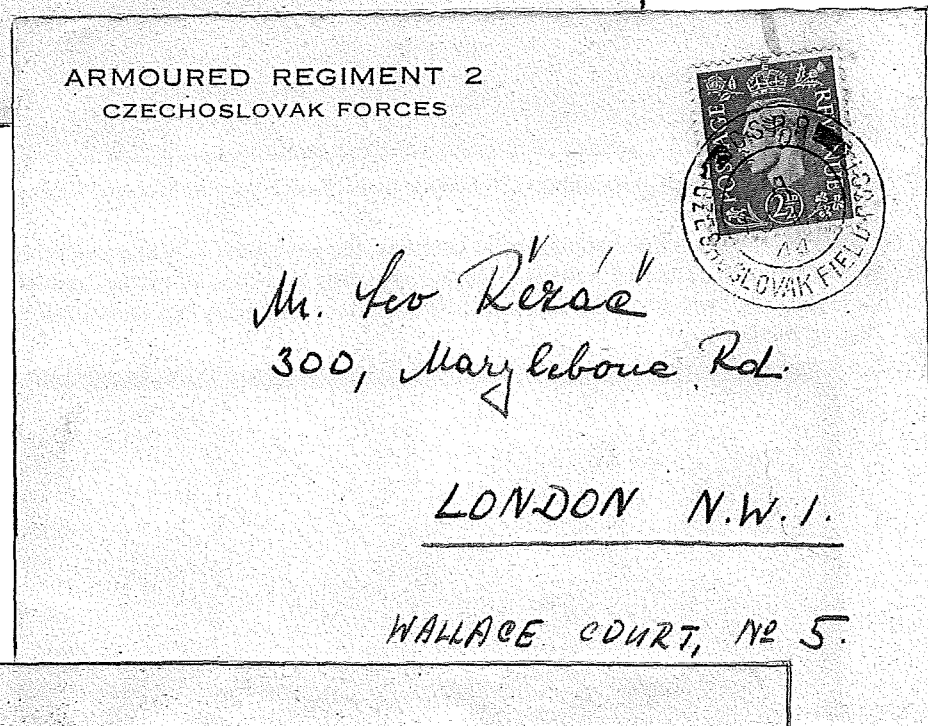
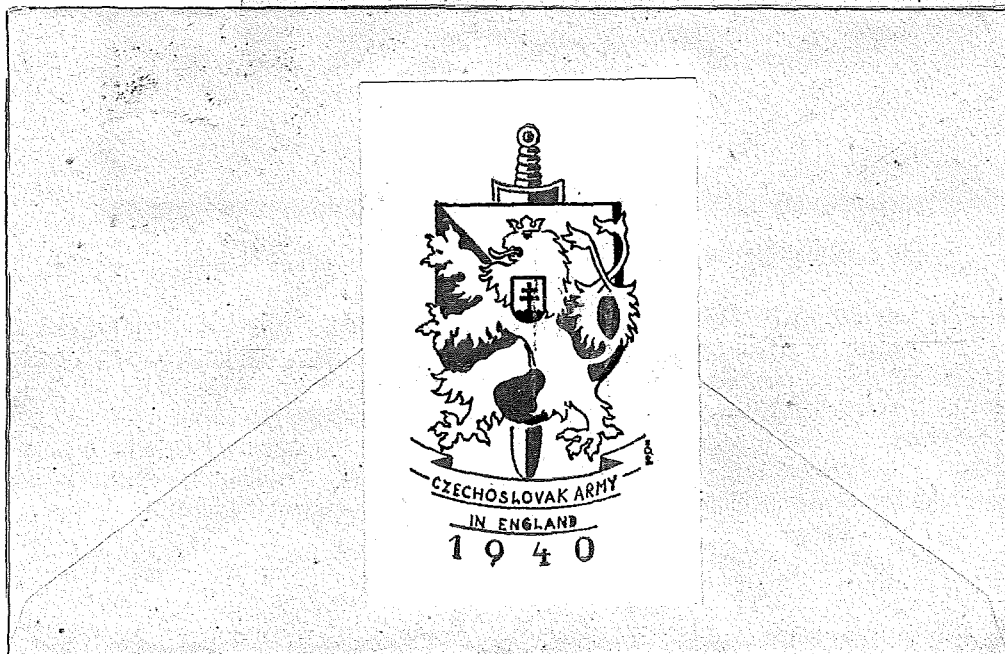


fig. 4



THE TRAVELS OF MISS ORDE (updated)

by Brian Atkins

In the Midland Mail of June 2004 (135/10) I penned an article about the travels of Miss Orde. Since then other covers have appeared and also more information about Miss Orde has come to light, thanks to a Midland member, and an 1873 cover addressed to Bath. I am grateful to our Hon. Editor for allowing me to write another article putting together the old and new information.

The first letter, dated 26th December 1863, is addressed to her through bankers in Malaga, southern Spain, (fig 1), franked with a 6d lilac (SG 83, plate 3) and cancelled by a Shrewsbury 3-bar circular duplex.



Fig 1, December 1863 cover from Shrewsbury to Malaga, Spain

However, by April 1864, Miss Orde had moved to Granada, the city of the Alhambra and the magnificent gardens of the Generalife, the former palace of the sultans. During my visit in 1982, an American voice, clad in tartan trousers, boomed to his loved-one, "My dear, the General Life Insurance Company has sponsored this place and had it named after them". Incredible but true!

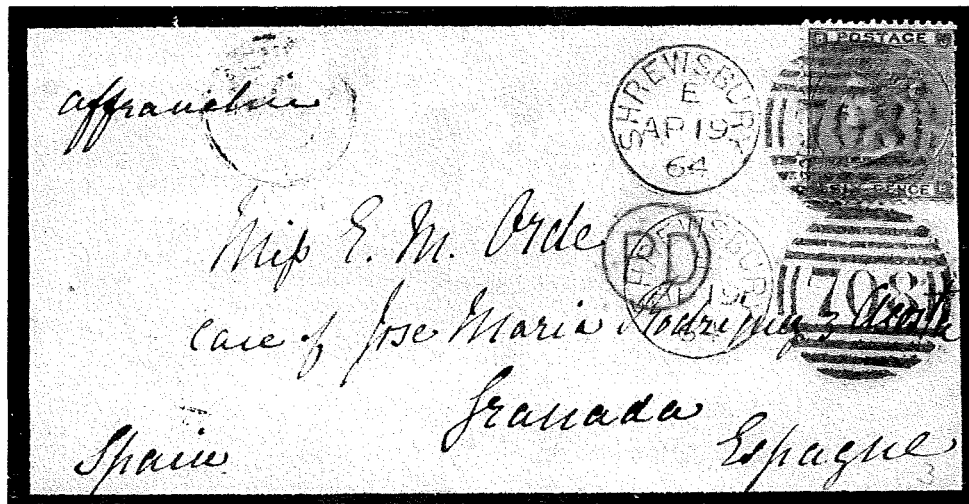


Fig 2, April 1864 cover from Shrewsbury to Granada, Spain

The mourning cover was also franked with a 6d lilac but cancelled by the much scarcer 4-bar circular duplex dated 19th April 1864. The Treasury Warrant of October 1858 stated that letters between the United Kingdom and Spain via France were to be charged 6d per ¼oz. Letters for Spain were put into a closed bag (there are no French marks) and forwarded to the Spanish Exchange Office at Irun on the border with France, from where the letter to Malaga arrived on 29th December and that to Granada on 21st April. With both letters taking 3 days to arrive at their respective destinations, they are wonderful examples of how the railways had speeded communications. The note "A scrap for Bee inside" inside the flap of the envelope suggests that Miss Orde was not travelling alone.

By 29th May 1864 Miss Orde was in Geneva, Switzerland. The mourning cover (Fig 3) is franked by four 1d reds and a 2d blue, plate 9, paying the 6d rate for letters of ¼oz to Switzerland via France as per the Post Office Guide of April 1860. The letter arrived in Geneva via Calais/Paris TPO and Paris on 1st June 1864.

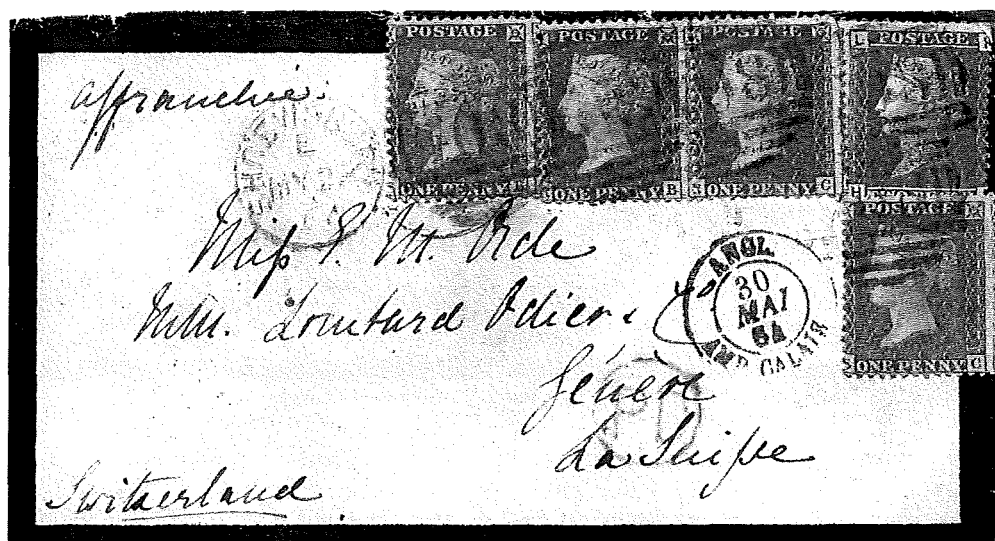


Fig3, May 1864 cover from Shrewsbury to Geneva, Switzerland.

While en route to Italy via the Col du Grand St Bernard, the oldest of the alpine passes, Miss Orde received another mourning cover dated 12th August 1864 addressed to Sallanches and forwarded to Chamonix.



Fig 4, August 1864 cover from Shrewsbury to France

The correct Anglo-French Convention rate from January 1855 was paid by the 4d vermilion (SG 79, plate 3), which is cancelled by a distinct Shrewsbury 3-bar circular duplex, recognisable by a particularly long serif to the top left of the figure 7. The letter reached Paris on the 14th and was on the Paris to Lyon T.P.O. the same day, arriving in St. Gervais-sur-Arve, near Sallanches, on the 16th. But the cover was put into a post box (*trouvée a la boîte*) and forwarded as Miss Orde had decamped to Chamonix, where it arrived on the 17th August having been charged 30 centimes for the privilege of forwarding. The convention also stated that foreign letters could be forwarded free of charge if handed in to a post office but were subject to postage due if put into a box, as in this case.

By the 26th October 1864 she had reached the undistinguished port city of Livorno (or Leghorn) on Italy's Mediterranean coast, no doubt having wallowed in the heady sights of Pisa, Lucca, Siena and Florence.

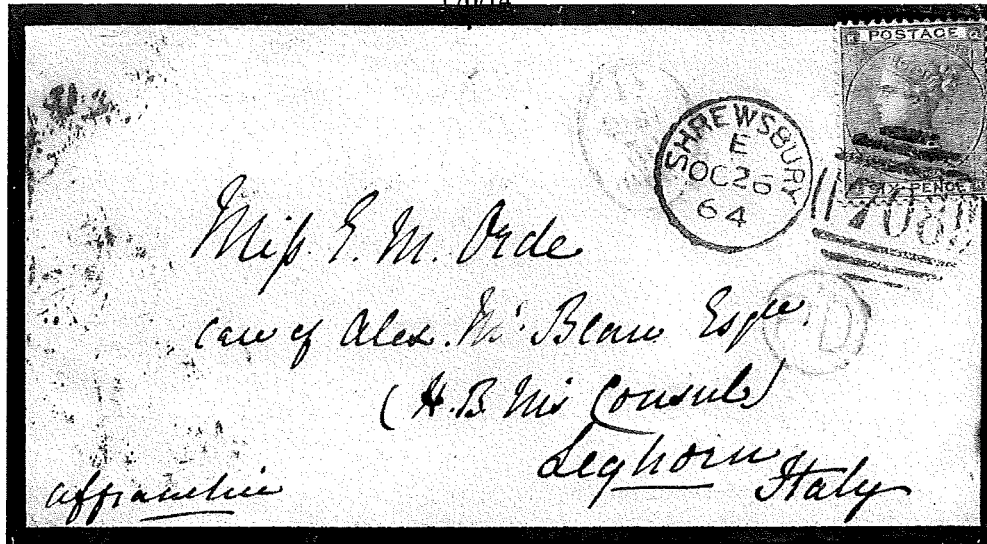


Fig 5, October 1864 cover from Shrewsbury to Italy

The letter went in a closed bag to the French border town of Modane from where it was taken to the Italian Exchange Office at Susa and forwarded by train to Turin (Italian railway mark "DA SUSA A TORINO / 29 OCT 1864, on the reverse). It arrived in Livorno via Genoa on 30th October 1864. At this time routes and rates to Italy are complex. The Post Office Guide (1860) shows charges of 6d per ¼oz. to Lombardy, 6d (via Sardinia) or 9d (via France) to Modena and Parma, 6d to Sardinia, 7d to Tuscany, 8d to Venetian Lombardy and 11d (via France) or 1/4 (via Belgium) to the Papal States! Livorno is in Tuscany yet the letter was charged 6d only and no postage due was raised.

By 1st November 1864 Miss Orde had made her way to Rome where she received another mourning letter from Shrewsbury as per Fig 5 (courtesy of Guy Bridges). The cover was sent at the 6d rate but the sender did not know that the postal rate to Rome was not the same as that to Livorno in southern Tuscany, 158 miles from Rome, which was, of course, the head of the Papal States.

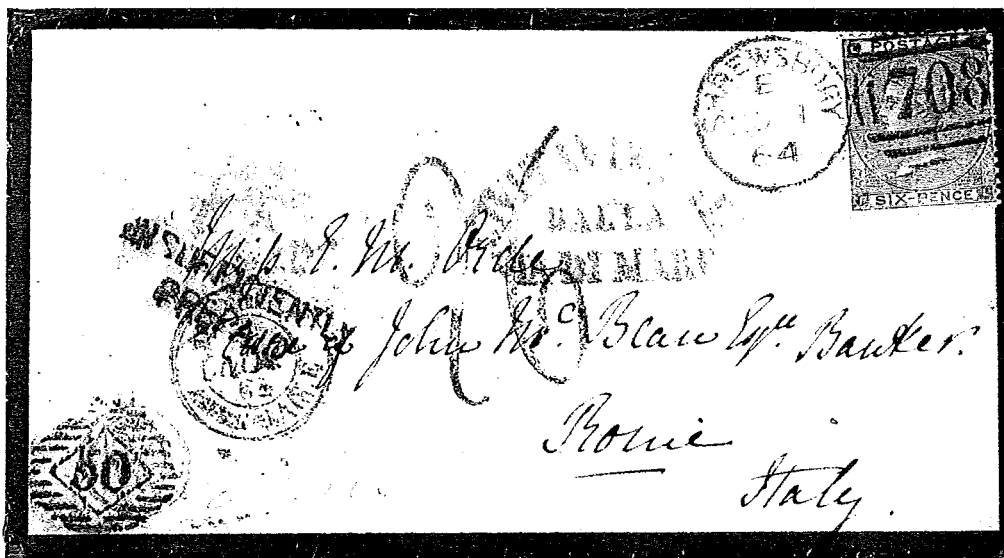


Fig 6, Cover from Shrewsbury to Rome, dated 1st November 1864

The letter went to Marseilles (date stamp Nov 5th) and then across the Mediterranean to Civitavecchia. The CIVITAVECCHIA DALLA VIA DI MARE mark literally translates as *Civitavecchia By Way of the Sea* and was struck on packet mail for Rome landed at that port, 40 miles north of Rome, where it arrived on 8th November 1864. The underpaid letter had been marked INSUFFICIENTLY / PREPAID with the London Inland Office 50 in diamond cancelling the encircled PD (Paid to Destination); on arrival in Rome it was assessed 26 *bajocchi* (about 1/-) postage due. Miss Orde must have been quick to reply explaining what had happened as the next mourning cover was franked with 1d red, 4d vermilion, plate 4 and 6d lilac, plate 4 paying the correct 11d rate to the Papal States via France. The cover is dated 16th Dec in Marseilles and it arrived in Rome on 20th December 1864, probably carried from Marseilles on the packet 'Quirinale'.

Fig 7, Shrewsbury to Rome dated 13th December 1864

Suffering from cultural overload, not to say fatigue, by November 1875 Miss Orde was inhaling the invigorating sea air at Kilmory on the remote west coast of Scotland, no doubt breakfasting on the produce of the abundant waters of nearby Loch Fyne (I'm thinking kippers here!).

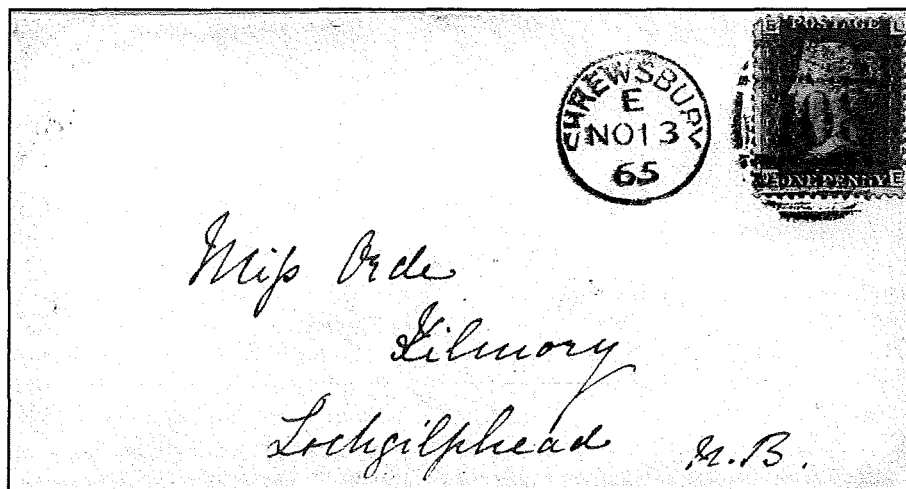


Fig 8, Shrewsbury to Kilmory, Lochgilphead, Scotland

But who was Miss Orde and what connection does she have with Shrewsbury? Thanks to our member Ray Woodward-Clark I am able to add that her full name is Eliza Margaret Orde and she was born in June 1829, the daughter of Sir John Powlett Orde; her mother died in the same month that she was born. In 1832 Sir John married Beatrice Edwards and they had a daughter Beatrice Catherine born in 1836 and it is surmised that the note "A scrap for Bee inside" refers to Beatrice, Eliza Margaret's half-sister. I see no reason to doubt this, as Bee is a known diminutive of Beatrice. Through his marriage Sir John Powlett Orde became the owner of a "castellated mansion house" at Kilmory on the west coast of Scotland, hence the last letter addressed to her there. Mr Woodward-Clarke traced Miss Orde to 20, University Street, London in 1881, where she was described as a "Lady Trainer at University College Hospital". In 1901 she and her half-sister were living in the village of Milford, near Godalming, Surrey, attended by four servants. A very recent purchase of a letter in the same hand as the earlier ones and addressed to Bath in 1873 has led me to speculate, with some accuracy, I believe, as to who was writing to her for all those years.

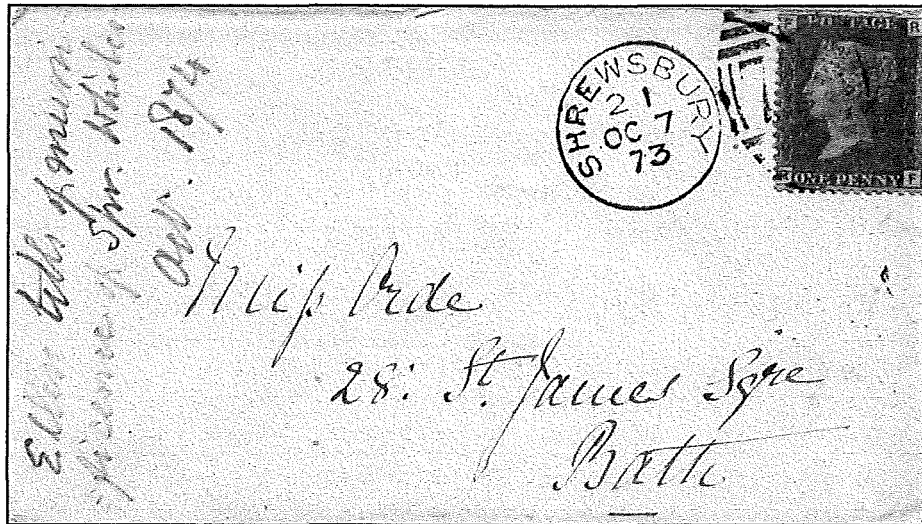
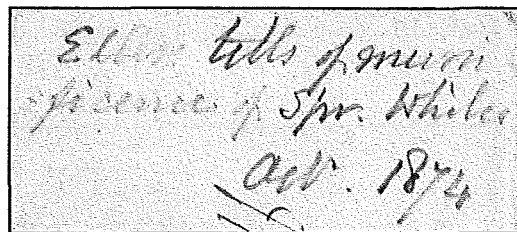


Fig 9, Shrewsbury to Bath, October 1873



Pencil notation on above cover

The pencil notation states:
(in the hand of Miss Orde?)

Ellen tells of munificence of Spr Whites (or Whiles)
Oct 1874

It took me a long time to decipher the word *munificence* (it is in two parts, muni-ficence) and I am still not sure what *Spr. Whites* (or *Whiles*) refers to or why 1874 was added, when the postmark clearly shows the letter is dated 1873 but it was the note on this letter that allowed me to piece things together. The note may have been a later addition (October may just be a coincidence) or a simple mistake was made when adding the year. However, the important part of the note is the name Ellen as Miss Orde had an elder sister named Jane Ellen Orde (birth date unknown, died 1st Mar 1893), who married Reverend Frederick Paget Wilkinson, Rector of Ruyton-XI-Towns, a village 10 miles north-west of Shrewsbury. They married at St. George's Hanover Square, London, on 8th December 1857. Therefore I believe that it is more than likely that Jane Ellen, the elder sister of Eliza Margaret Orde was writing all those letters mailed from Shrewsbury to foreign and British parts over a period of at least 10 years. It is not unusual for a person to be known by their second name rather than their first. As additional proof Kelly's Directory of May 1863 has Rev. F P Wilkinson, MA as Rector of Ruyton-XI-Towns and the first letter I have is dated December 1863 to Malaga, though there were probably others written earlier as Miss Orde journeyed to the south of Spain and probably more later as she travelled through Europe. The Rev. Wilkinson had the foresight to undertake an extensive archaeological investigation of Ruyton Castle ruins once the site came into Church ownership and before work to landscape the extended churchyard was started. He excavated the castle foundations down to floor level and his reports are an invaluable record of features that are now lost or buried. The plan of the castle ruins he published in the October 1878 issue of the 'Parish Paper' suggests that the castle buildings cover a much greater area than the present ruins indicate.

References: United Kingdom Letter Rates Inland and Overseas, Tabcart, 2nd edition, Bradford 2003.
British & Maritime Postal History Vol. 1, the P&O Bombay & Australian Lines, Kirk
The Postal Markings of Shropshire, Part 1, ed. Atkins Shropshire Postal History
Burke's Landed Gentry of GB by Peter Beauclerk Dewar (Washington, Delaware 2001)
thepeerage.com (for the Rev F. P. Wilkinson's marriage to Jane Ellen Orde)
<http://www.rxit.org.uk/castle/The%20History%20of%20Ruyton%20Castle.pdf>
(Ruyton Castle excavation)

From the Midlands in September...

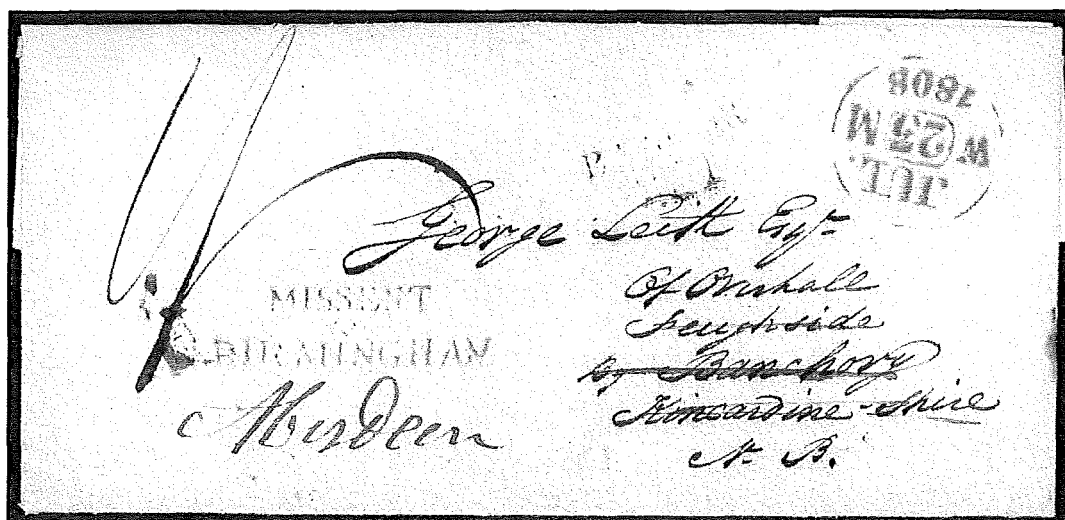
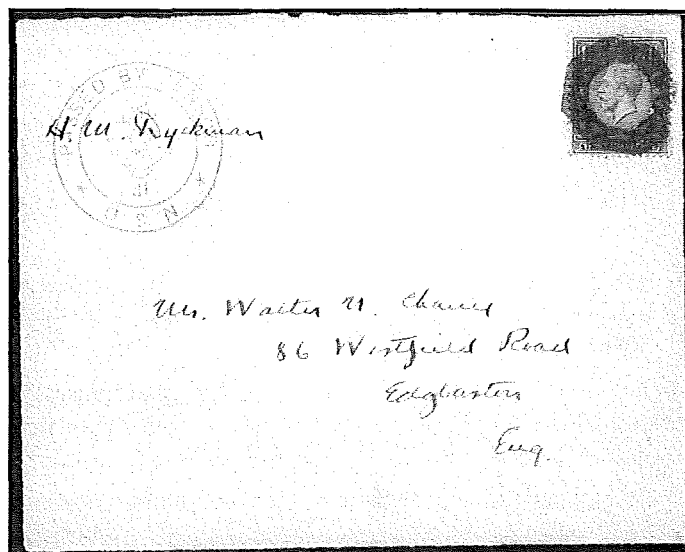
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THE 3VOD DUPLEX OF NOTTINGHAM

by Alan Marshall

The 3VOD mark is without doubt the most prolific of the vertical oval duplex handstamps, possibly even without its extension with the seventeen marks which included a number in the three basal bars. It is worth noting the overlap of the 3VOD mark with the other VODs as currently recorded by John Parmenter.

4VODA	4VODB	3VOD	3VOD (Basal No.)
05OCT1866	12DEC1871	20DEC1873	04OCT1895 (No 11)
07JUL1877	30DEC1896	05MAR1897	16NOV1908 (No 13)

It has also to be appreciated that overlapping before and afterwards occurred with the squared circle (1885 to 1907) and the double circle handstamp from 1894 onwards.

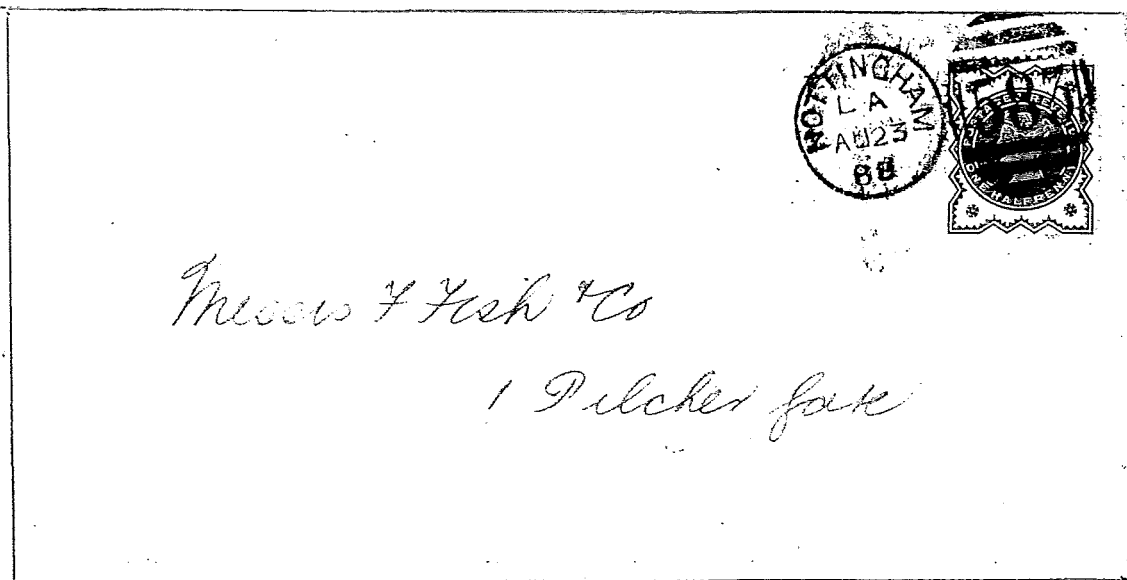
The basic 3VOD stamps displayed both 'all letter' codes and a combination of a letter with a number. The stamps with a basal number, however, all displayed 'clear time'. John Parmenter is currently working on an update of his '*Barred Numeral Cancellations*' catalogues.

As confirmation of my opening statement, I have been able to offer three new 'letter only' codes, six combined letter and number codes and seven new dates outside the recorded date periods. Within the basal numbered stamps six new dates and six new times were identified.

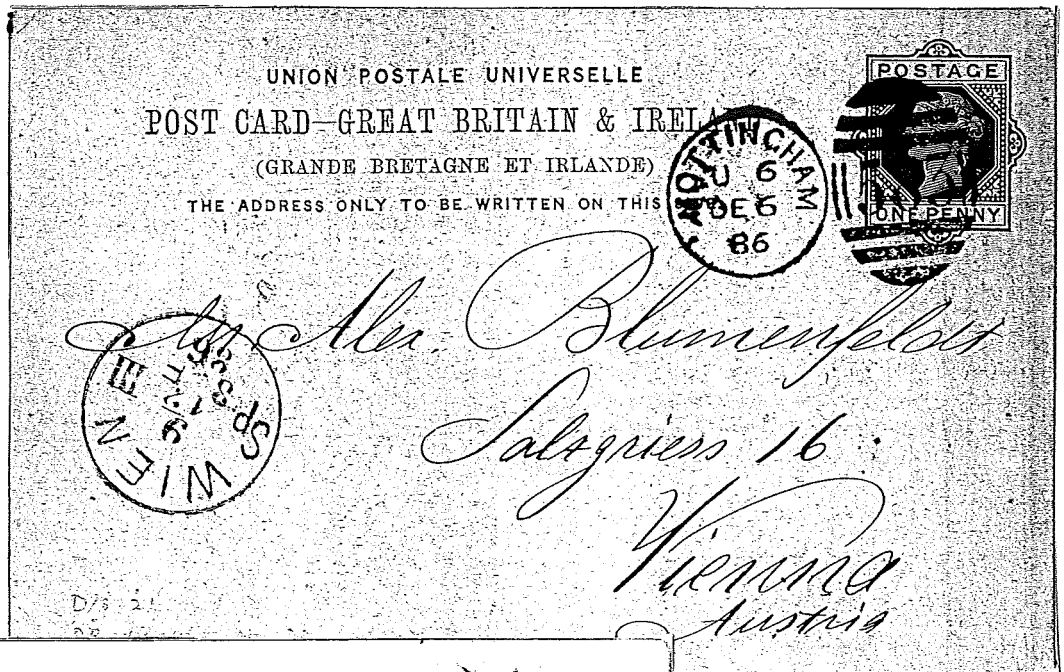
Of particular note in relation to the basal numbered stamps, the current latest date for the No 5 mark is 27th February 1890 which can be extended by two much later recordings of 19th February 1896 and 27th November 1899, an increase of six years and nine years respectively.

Finally, just to confuse the situation an oddity surfaced on a picture postcard of Nottingham Castle dated 22nd July 1903. In appearance it is a basic 3VOD mark (no basal number apparent) six years later than those currently recorded and displaying what appears to be a time of 11.15pm. The only postmark to show a time of 11.15pm is from the no. 13L handstamp; 11.15am is found only on a no. 11 mark; and 1.15pm occurs only on a no. 6 mark. Could it be a no. 17 mark (1898 to 1909). However, the figures of the '15' are smaller than the digits of the hour number and are not as they appear on any other of the very numerous marks seen.

'All letter code'



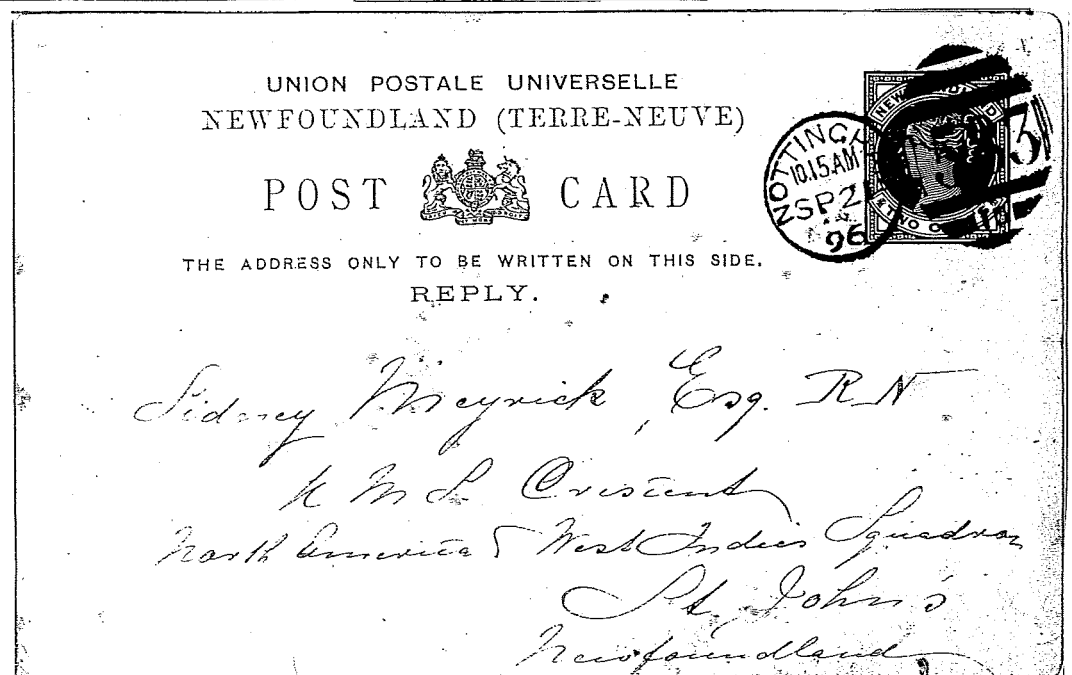
Code consisting of a number
and a letter



Time shown



Basic 3VOD used in 1903



McDONALDS' MADNESS

by Trevor Radway

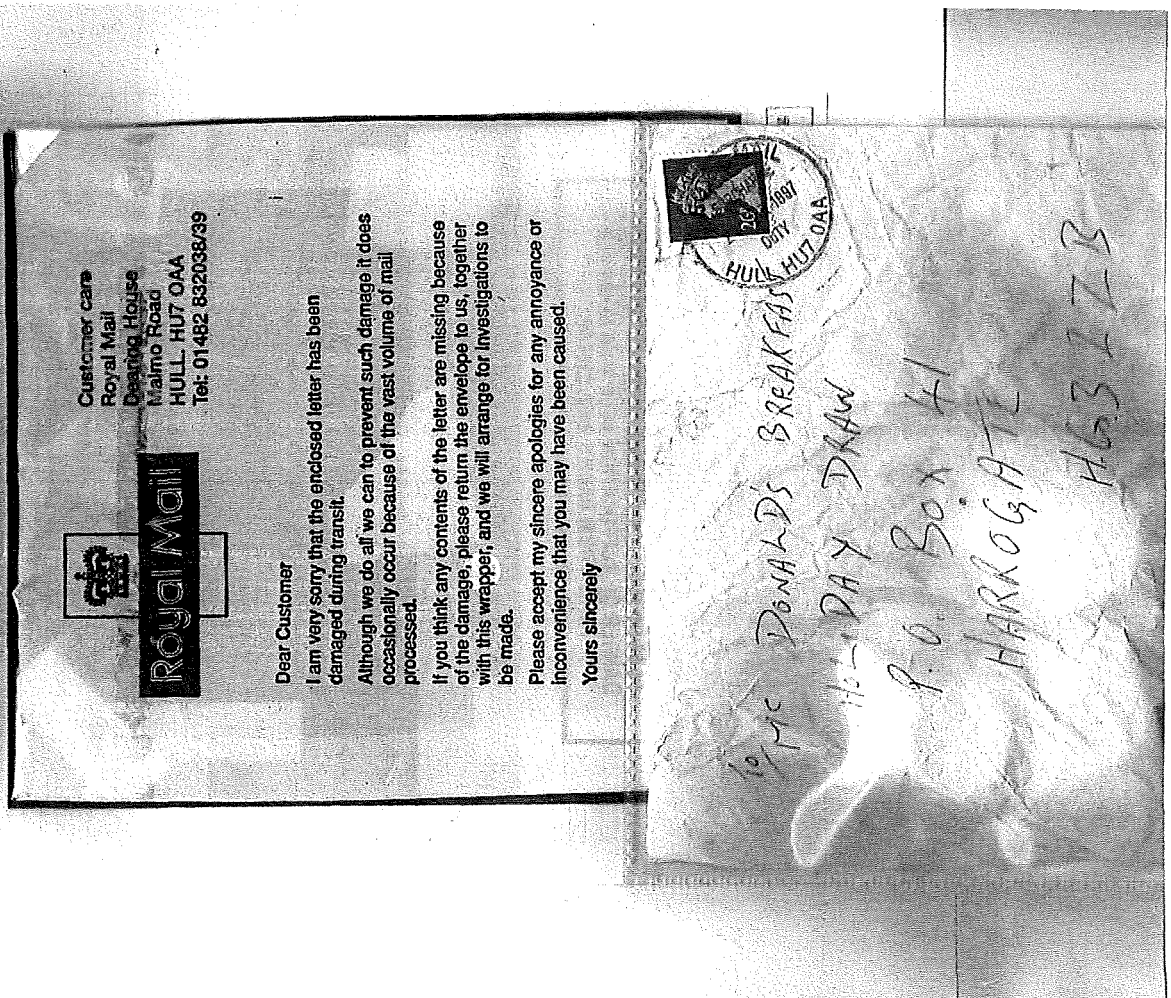
From time to time, one receives letters delivered by Royal Mail that have been damaged by machinery. They are generally enclosed in Polyon or polythene bags with an explanatory note. Indeed, some of us strange individuals collect these things as an item of interest. Usually the strength of feeling is against Royal Mail for allowing the machinery to become clogged etc.. Some years ago I acquired an item which was damaged but the blame was NOT with with Royal Mail. Recently, I acquired a similar item which confirms my views.

We have a situation in which the perpetrator of the crime was really not Royal Mail but McDonalds, the well-known and, sometimes disliked, fast food chain. The cover illustrated below, addressed to Harrogate, was posted at Hull and received a large cancel ROYAL MAIL/SURCHARGE DUTY/26 MR 1997/HULL HU7 0AA. You can see that it was for a Breakfast Holiday Draw which to enter you had to enclose bottle tops from one of their specified products. I have included one of these in the illustration. Unfortunately the thickness of that one and the one inside the envelope make it difficult to get a good scan, for which I apologise.

Clearly the exposure of the said bottle top caused a problem with the delicate functions of the machinery of Royal Mail. It meant that it was not possible to apply the normal machine cancellation so the adhesive was cancelled with a handstamp. (This was also the case with another item posted at Stoke-on-Trent.) Both were enclosed in Polythene bags and sent to the addressee. No doubt, they acquired quite a few of these bags at Harrogate.

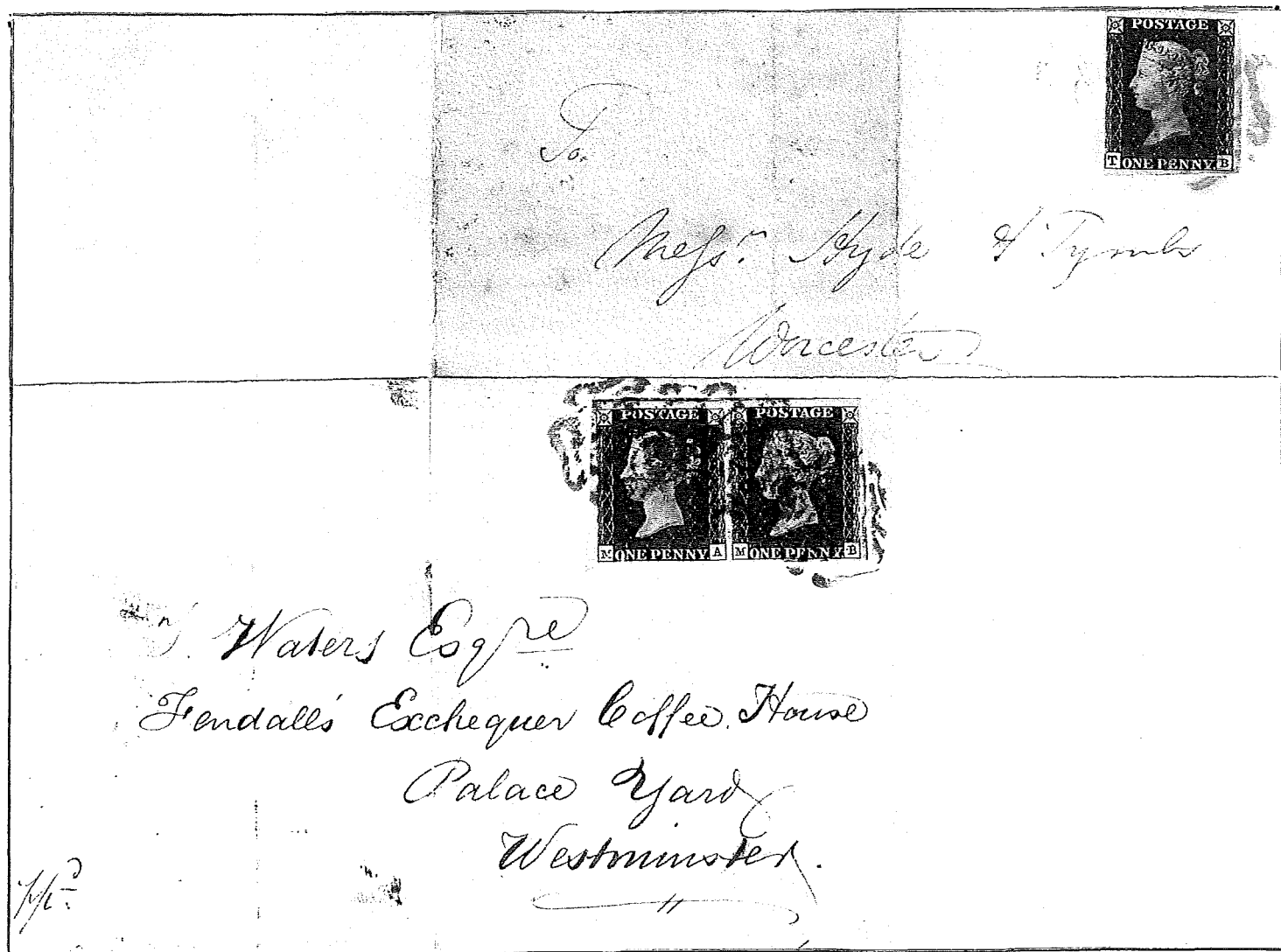
I suggest that the Post Office should have sued McDonalds for time wasted and damage to the machinery by a series of bottle tops in the works! What madness by the publicity staff of McDonalds to think of such an idea.

As a matter of interest, it would now cost 58p to send such an item as this letter is over 5mm thick. An increase of over 120% in fourteen years does make the eyes smart a little.



ANOTHER ITEM FROM CHRIS JACKSON'S DISPLAY AT WORPEX

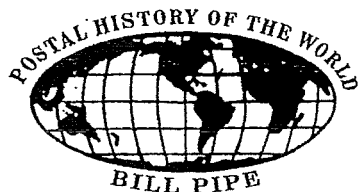
The cover shown below was sent from London to Worcester on 21st December 1840, franked with a penny black cancelled with a red Maltese Cross. On 13th May it was turned and sent from Worcester to London with an enclosure which made the weight over half an ounce. Consequently it was stamped with a pair of penny blacks, from plate 10, which was cancelled with a black Maltese Cross.



THE NEXT MIDLAND MAIL

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MISCELLANEOUS

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 Amendments to Office and Transfer Lists in the UDC Book
 Cambrian Newspaper and the Post Office
 Carriers and the Carriage of Mail
 Czech Forces in GB during WWII
 Error Was Soon Corrected, The
 Fletcher Collection
 Posts with a Real Purpose
 Prior Park, House of Ralph Allen
 Singapore Philatelic Museum
 Swindon, Proposed New Site for BPMA

Ian Baker	155/13
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John Calladine	165/8
Brian Atkins	167/14
Bryan Jones	169/9
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John Calladine	156/16
John Calladine	155/17
John Calladine	162/20

Since the index took a little more space than I had anticipated, I have had to fill an extra page and three quarters. This has given me the chance to sign off with two Leicestershire items. The first was sent from Long Whatton in November 1676 and is endorsed 'post paid 3^d' while the second was sent from London to 'Little Appleby' in October 1703 and carries the instruction 'pr Loughborough bagg'.

