

MIDLAND MAIL

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



President: Rev. C.M. Beaver

Chairman:
Mike Young

Treasurer:
Trevor Clewley

Secretary:
Eric Lewis

Number 82, November 1993

NEW MEMBER

We extend a warm welcome to Mr A. Constable from Rugby whose interests include Letter Boxes and general postal history.

THE SOCIETY'S NEW BOOK

The Society's long-awaited new book - "The Local Posts of the Midland Counties to 1840" - is now available to members at a special price. The book describes the establishment, extent and expansion of every official Penny Post and 5th Clause Post in the Midlands, illustrates every known handstamp and records the known usage and estimated rarity (both pre and post 1840) of each. It also describes what is known of the many "unofficial" local posts that operated both before and during the currency of the official posts. The book includes mention of more than 800 places in the Midlands, illustrates more than 350 handstamps and uses no fewer than 87 maps and 140 other illustrations to tell the story.

This is a large book of 368 A4 pages and it is available at a price to members of £13 ringbound or £30 hardbound in handmade washable marbled covers. If members require the ringbound book to be mailed to them, an extra charge of £4 will cover special packing and first class postage. The hardbound copies will not normally be sent by post but the likely cost will be quoted on request. Cheques should be made payable to the Society (or to John for hardbound copies) and orders forwarded to:

John Calladine, Dunley House, Cranham, Gloucester GL4 8HQ (phone 0452-862218)

THE POST OFFICE SURVEYORS' MAPS OF c1813

In 1813/14, each of the seven Post Office Riding Surveyors prepared a handdrawn map of his district. On this map, he marked the status of each office and, by means of coloured lines, distinguished between mailcoach routes, horse posts, armed rides, footposts etc. Any existing Penny Posts or 5th Clause Posts were also indicated.

These maps are now held by Post Office Archives. They are large and flimsy and are difficult to photocopy, even in sections. The task of using crayon to colour all the lines is difficult and time-consuming. It is doubtful that anyone has attempted to copy more than one or two of them. It was suggested to Archives that copies of these maps, which are among the most interesting artifacts held there, would provide an invaluable source of reference to postal historians if they could obtain them.

As a result of this representation, the maps were restored and professionally photographed. It was found that the smallest size that enabled the detail to be clearly visible was A3 (approx 16x12 inches). Since A3 enlargements are expensive, it was agreed that laser colourprints should be made from A3 photographs.

Post Office Archives has kindly granted the Society the exclusive right to sell these prints outside the Archive premises (where only a very small number will be available). The price of an individual laserprint will be £3 and a set of seven maps will be offered at £20. Maps can be sent (flat) by first class post in a protective cardboard envelope at an additional cost not expected to exceed £1.50 (regardless of the number ordered).

The seven maps are:

Home District (Mr Scott)
Midland District (Mr Hart)
North Wales District (Mr Godby)
South Wales District (Mr Woodcock)
Western District (Mr Aust)
Eastern District (Mr Western !)
Northern District (Mr Hodgson)

Orders should be given or sent to John Calladine and cheques made payable to the Society.

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

Our next meeting will be on 20th November at Carrs Lane Church Centre, starting at 1.30 p.m. Members are asked to bring nine sheets on "After the Penny Post".

On 11th December we shall hold our annual get-together at the Bass Museum at Burton-on-Trent. Members are invited to gather from 10.30 a.m. and bring along static displays. Lunch will be at 12.45 p.m. and is expected to cost about £7. If you wish to join us for lunch please let Richard Farman (tel. 0283-66515) know by 4th December. The meeting proper will begin at 2 p.m. when Richard Nichols, of the Staffordshire Record Office, will talk on "The Restoration and Preservation of Covers and Documents".

Nine sheet displays on "You cannot be serious" will form the basis of the meeting on 8th January at Carrs Lane Church Centre. The meeting will be preceded by a committee meeting at 12.30 p.m.

G.B. COVERS

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

ROGER HUDSON

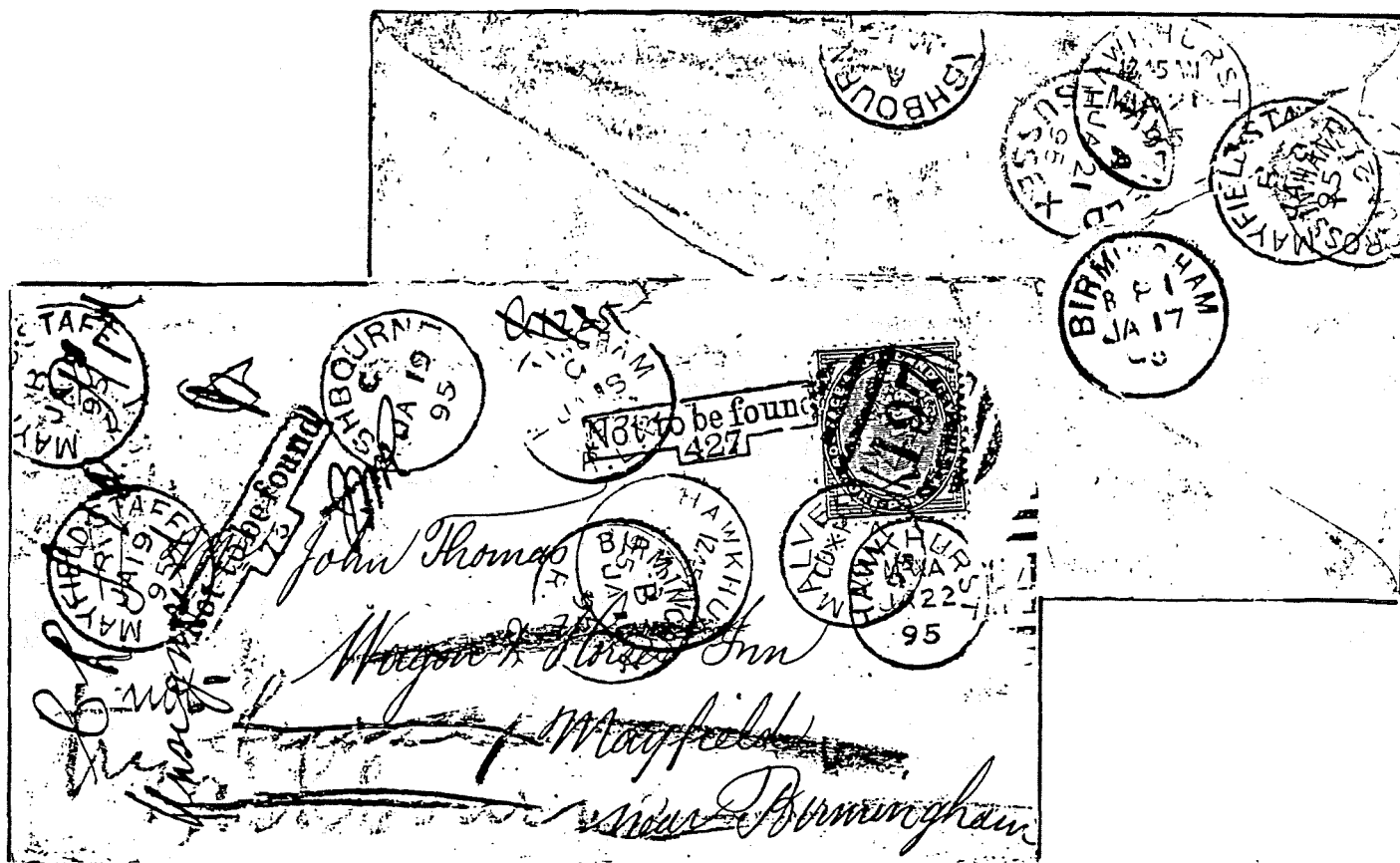


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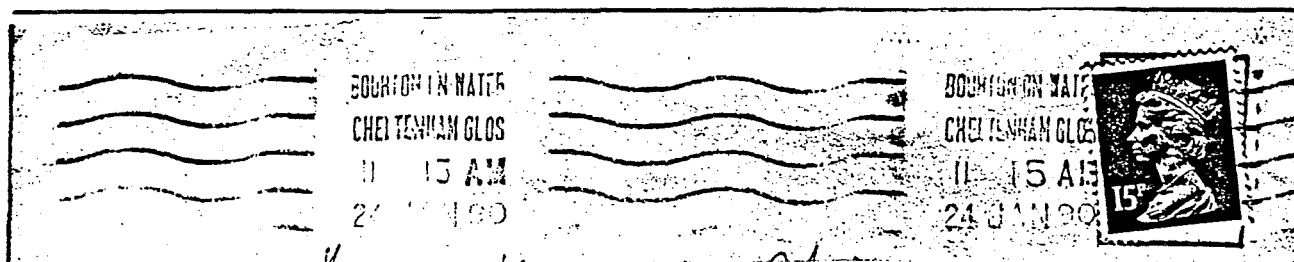
Phone: 0203 686613

THE SEPTEMBER MEETING

"Liquid Postal History" was the topic of our first meeting of the season. Letters concerned with the carriage of goods by canal formed the basis of Derek Smeathers' display. These ranged from a letter sent in 1829 from Crick Wharf to Loughborough to a Mulready sent by a fruit importer in London to a grocer in Northampton. Denis Salt interpreted "liquid" as meaning "any subject" so brought along a range of material on penny posts in the Shifnal area. Amongst the covers produced by Guy Bridges were a 1725 letter from Shrewsbury to Searles Coffee House, and illustrated envelopes from 1907. Harold Wilson showed a range of covers carried by sea. These included the marks of the Holyhead and Kingston Packet, the Greenock and Ardishaig Packet as well as those of the transatlantic post offices operated by the White Star Line and the America Line. Roger Broomfield started with a letter about the Gloucester and Hereford Canal through Ledbury, and then went on to letters sent to public houses including that shown below.



Trevor Clewley began the second half with a display of registered covers sent overseas; these showed a variety of destinations and rates. Amongst David Hardwick's items were a cover damaged by contact with an oily substance and a special mailbag label for the carriage of A Level results. Chris Beaver claimed not to know what a liquid is so he brought along a display of barred numerals which included a number of scarce Staffordshire marks, some struck in blue. Covers from villages and towns on the Severn between Beachley and Tewkesbury were shown by John Calladine. Peter Sharp wanted to know if the two different dies in the Krag from Bourton reflected a period of heavy rainfall.



Both Elizabeth and Eric Lewis showed material relating to coffee houses - letters, prints and even a model. The afternoon was rounded off by Mike Young with a 1793 letter about gin and postcards of pubs in the Bromsgrove area.

THE OCTOBER MEETING

The October meeting was one of those occasions when, a few minutes into the display, your editor's heart sinks as it becomes obvious that no report, of a page or so, can possibly do justice to the material being shown. What follows is a brief distillation of the notes I made during the superb display on "The T.P.Os of England, Scotland and Wales" given by Harold Wilson.

Although mail was first carried by rail in 1830 shortly after the line between Liverpool and Manchester had been opened, it was not until 1838 with the opening of the Grand Junction Railway that sorting of mail on a train took place. (Harold made the point that "Travelling Sorting Office" would be a more accurate description.) The vehicle used was a converted horse-box. Then later that year, after the line from London to Birmingham had opened throughout, mail from London was carried by train. The first postmarks used aboard the T.P.Os were Missent marks. Amongst those we were shown were: "MISSENT TO/RAILWAY/POST OFFICE" on a letter from Bridgnorth to Cirencester; "Missent to/G.N.R. Post Office" with a manuscript "up" added on a letter sent from Derby to Uttoxeter; "Missent to/G.N. Railway Post Office/Day". The last of these was also shown with a manuscript "up" on a letter sent from Birmingham in 1846.

The first handstamps, without "Missent", associated with the T.P.Os were the circular E/NR and M/NR. These were not actually applied on the trains but were used in the Inland Office to denote mail which had been received too late to include in the regular bags of sorted mail. Various covers illustrated the various types of these marks. (The T.P.Os usually sorted only mail picked up en route and not that from the Inland Office.)

In May 1857, the first of the District Sorting Carriages - the North Western D.S.C. was introduced. This was represented by the boxed "NORTH-WESTERN/DIST-SORCARE".

Harold then turned his attention to the Liverpool and London T.P.O. First we were shown examples of the "N.W.R.P. OFFICE/LIVERPOOL/446" duplex which Harold thinks was used whilst the carriage was used as a stationary sorting office during a long wait in the station. These were followed by the "LIVERPOOL & LONDON T.P.O." single circles which were used as cancels whilst the train was on its journey.

In the next section, the various "Special" T.P.Os which operated on the West Coast route to Scotland, beginning in 1885, were illustrated by a wide range of marks.

Of particular note from the London-Holyhead route were the postmarks used on the mails for Canada and the U.S.A. - "LONDON & HOLYHEAD/T P O/UNITED STATES MAIL" and "LONDON SUPPLEMENTARY/CANADIAN MAIL" single circles.

From the L.N.W.R. we then moved to the Midland Railway whose first route to London was by way of the L.N.W.R. at Rugby. We were shown an example of the missent handstamp issued to the T.P.O. from Rugby to Newcastle which was introduced in 1845. From this T.P.O. was developed the Midland T.P.O. operating between Bristol and Newcastle which was represented in the display by a number of postmarks, including the one which was used the day after the accident to the train in January 1929. Other postmarks from T.P.Os operated by the Midland Railway included the "MIDLAND/DIST. S.C." used in 1868 and single circles from the London & Derby S.C.

Next, it was the turn of the G.W.R. A letter sent in 1852 from Falmouth to Newbury was endorsed in manuscript "Returned from G.W.R.P.O. Harold finished the

first half of his display with examples of postmarks from the various sorting tenders which operated in Cornwall.

A most unusual item at the start of the second half was a letter sent in 1891 from Kimberley to Whitehaven, and damaged en route. It carried an impression in wax of the bag seal "PLYMOUTH TO BRISTOL/SORTING TENDER" as well as a mark from the Whitehaven S.T. Another cover from the G.W.R. which caught your editor's eye was one showing the boxed "L. & B./S.C."

A letter sent from Ploesti to Leeds was remarkable for the short time that its journey took; on arrival in this country it was stamped with the hooded "REGISTERED/LONDON-&-QUEENBOROUGH/S.T." There were examples of the 4d. late fee paid for posting letters in the boxes at Cannon Street and Charing Cross. I doubt that Harold had acquired a postcard, sent to Paris, for the Shepshed single circle or the Loughborough duplex; the presence of the oval "L.D./S.C./-/D" of the London and Dover S.C. is a more likely reason. The handstamp "South W RY" used on a letter of 1856 was not strictly a T.P.O. handstamp but was used by the mailguard on mail trains which did not have a sorting carriage. It was impressed on letters which had been handed to him to post on arrival in London. However we were shown an example of the first handstamp used in the South Western T.P.O. - the boxed "SOUTH-WESTERN/R.P.O."

The final part of Harold's display was devoted to the T.P.Os of Scotland. From the Caledonian T.P.O. there were various missent marks, from both day and night trains as well as a skeleton. The Perth and Aberdeen S.C. was represented by its duplex mark. Then we saw the crown registered mark used on the Glasgow and Carlisle S.C.

The very last item was a registered letter showing the use of the diagonal blue lines and label to denote an item which was not to be transferred by the lineside apparatus.

In his vote of thanks, Chris Beaver said that we had been privileged to see what must be the definitive collection of T.P.O. material.

THE LAUNCH OF THE "LOCAL POSTS" BOOK

There can be no doubt that the launch of the "Local Posts" book on 20th October was a unique occasion in the Society's eighteen year existence. The publication of a book by the Society is no longer highly unusual ("The Local Posts of the Midland Counties to 1840" is our third) but the circumstances of this launch were remarkable in that we had the backing of Royal Mail's public relations office and the event was one that those fortunate enough to attend will not quickly forget. To give our book a launch that would gain media attention, Royal Mail hosted a lunch in the Loudon Suite of Birmingham Botanical Gardens, truly a delightful venue. It became a dual celebration for many members will know that the completion of the "local posts" project was always intended to coincide with the bicentenary of the Birmingham Penny Post. The Royal Mail lunch therefore celebrated both the bicentenary and the book launch.

For those making their way to the Botanical Gardens to prepare the displays, the day started well with Chris Beaver's most professional interview on Radio WM. With Elizabeth ready to kick him if he made a mistake, Chris gave an excellent explanation of the occasion and fielded unrehearsed and unexpected questions with equal aplomb. It left one feeling that the day would go well.

The Loudon Suite consists of two rooms interconnected by a small lobby. We used the smaller room to mount a splendid display of local post material in twelve frames and Royal Mail provided replica pillar boxes to add to the ambience. Six frames of the display featured part of Eric and Elizabeth's newly mounted display of the Birmingham Penny Post. In the remaining frames were six nine-sheet displays

representing the other sections of the book, viz

Harold Wilson	Derbyshire
Derek Smeathers	Northamptonshire
John Soer	Leicestershire
Mike Young	Worcestershire
Denis Salt	Shropshire
Chris Beaver	Staffordshire

These displays were chosen to be complementary and to include coverage of unofficial posts, a 5th Clause post, an early provincial penny post and a selection of the later penny posts. In the handsome frames of the Birmingham PS they were doubly impressive.

The main room was set out in theatre style with the lectern backed by red display boards provided by Royal Mail. On a nearby table were copies of "Midland Mail" and examples of each of our three books. That we had suitable display material to mount on the boards was in no small measure due to the foresight of Richard Farman. Before abandoning one of the doomed outposts of the Coal Board for congenial surroundings in Sitwell Street, he produced suitable heading notices for the Society and the bicentenary, a list of our publications, another list of forthcoming meetings and large-scale coloured reproductions of a number of the most interesting maps in the new book. Royal Mail had kindly mounted these and the result was a relevant and professional display. Yes, one could now be sure that the day would go well.

Long before the guests arrived at noon, cameras were clicking. The official photocall was outside the entrance to the gardens where press photographers from the "Wolverhampton Express and Star" and the "Birmingham Post" were at hand. Royal Mail had provided a member of their staff in Victorian letter carrier's uniform who, sitting astride the "hen and chickens" parcel delivery cycle and flanked by a Victorian pillar box, held aloft a copy of the new book. Notwithstanding a forecast of rain, the sun shone and the press were happy. Inside the Botanical Gardens, the nineteen members of the Society who were lucky enough to have been invited had realised that, for the first time, we had an almost complete gathering of County Editors. John Soer's school halfterm would be the following week and that meant, most unfortunately, that our Leicestershire editor could not desert his hopeful chemists. On the other hand, the presence of John Hine, our Gloucestershire expert, was remarkable. John had driven from his home at Reutum, close to the Dutch border with Germany, just for this occasion. Thus the group of County Editors that posed before the display was photographed many times over. Sharon suggested that the Coordinating Editor's substitution in the group for our Leicestershire County Editor was highly appropriate and this was said to have something to do with matching hair styles.

By the time the official guests began to arrive at noon, most of the Society members were present with the important exception of the Shropshire contingent who were at the mercy of British Rail and seemed destined to spend their bicentenary outside Smethwick Rolfe Street station. Among the guests were seven distinguished friends of the Society whom we had kindly been invited to nominate by Royal Mail. From Post Office Archives came Jean Farrugia and Kevin Squelch and from the National Postal Museum (having flown in from Dublin) Douglas Muir. The two major national societies, the Society of Postal Historians and the Postal History Society were, represented, respectively, by the President, Jeremy Martin, and the President designate, Fred Goatcher. Finally, we were delighted to welcome the man who, one can say, "made it all possible" - Geoff Oxley. Geoff's book on The English Provincial Local Posts remains the standard work and provided the starting point for our project.

After the pre-lunch drinks, Graham Rocke, Royal Mail's Publicity Manager in Birmingham, called the assembly to order and welcomed them to the occasion. He then introduced the Society's speakers who were to give a twenty minute presentation on the subject of the local posts. John Calladine spoke first and dealt with the period from 1635, when the Royal Mail was opened to the public, to the establishment of the first three provincial penny posts in 1793. His brief description of Dockwra's local post in London appeared to leave the Royal Mail representatives wondering where they

went wrong. John was followed by Chris Beaver, the President, who took us from 1800 through to the advent of Uniform Penny Postage in 1840. Chris covered the 5th Clause posts, using Newcastle as his example, and then the later provincial penny posts with Warwick as his example. No penny post can truly be described as "typical" but Warwick provided a good basis for an explanation of the many facets of an official local post.

At the completion of the presentation, Chris invited our Chairman, Mike Young, to take over. There will be some reading this report who may fail to understand the significance of that step. On 5th October, Mike had undergone a major operation that was planned to keep him in intensive care for up to a week, in hospital for a month and in reclusive convalescence for a further four weeks. Such was his determination to be at the book launch that here we were, just two weeks after the operation, able to see Mike present a copy of our book to Councillor Brenda Newton who received it on behalf of the City of Birmingham and thanked us most graciously.

This completed the formal proceedings and the excellent buffet lunch provided an opportunity for animated discussion and renewal of old acquaintances. Those who had a chance inspected the special Birmingham Penny Post cake that had been made and iced for the Society by John C's sister-in-law. It featured an almost-too-perfect reproduction of the Smethwick Penny Post cover illustrated on the front of the book together with an inkwell and quill pen (all in icing sugar) and the sides of the cake were further decorated with various Birmingham Penny Post markings - in their correct colours, one might add. What was left of the cake was taken to the meeting at Birmingham on 23rd October and that, too, is now history.

Before we knew it, it was time to leave and one hoped that the members' photos (and a video) would do justice to this very special event. The President has written to Graham Rocke to thank Royal Mail, on the Society's behalf, for its hospitality and for helping to ensure that "The Local Posts of the Midland Counties" was launched with a suitable splash. Now all we need to do is sell a hundred and fifty copies!

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MORE ON EARLY MAIL VANS

by Gay Parker

The article on the Stony Stratford to Leicester mailvan prompted me to look through my file on mailvans. Below are extracts from two letters, both written by ex-Post Office employees.

"Thomas Tilling Ltd added motorbuses to their large fleet of horsebuses in 1904 with an order for 20 Milnes Daimler chassis. Three of these were set aside as Royal Mail vans, commencing on 2nd June with the service from London to Brighton. It is recorded that by 1912, Thomas Tilling were operating motorised Royal Mail contracts from London to: Ipswich, Hastings, Deal, Ramsgate, Margate, Dover, Reading, Oxford, Birmingham, Aylesbury, Southampton and Bournemouth."

"The Milnes-Daimler motor van carried a crew of two, a driver and a postman/driver in the back sorting mails. Parcels were carried in baskets on top of the van, covered by a tarpaulin in wet weather. The postman sorted the mails by the light of two acetylene lamps as the van travelled on its journey to and from London."

The ventilators for the acetylene lamps can be clearly seen running along the top of the van.

The above article, along with a postcard, produced by Richard Blake and depicting the Stony Stratford and Leicester mailvan, was received shortly before Gay's death at the beginning of October. I have no record of when Gay joined the Society, but if he was not a founder member, he certainly joined during the early days for in MM4 there is a report of the November 1976 meeting at which he gave a display on Atherstone history. His first contribution to Midland Mail, in August 1978, was on "The Holyhead Mail through Warwickshire". Indeed, Gay's first and last contributions to this journal sum up the wide range of his interests - from mailcoaches to mailvans. In particular Gay had a deep interest in, and realised the importance of, artifacts as a means of bringing postal history to life. This was evident in the fascinating display "Coaching Days and Posting Ways" which Gay arranged at the Nuneaton museum in 1988. Along with the exhibition he organised a run of the Norwich Union mailcoach from Nuneaton to Bedworth. In this and other ways Gay tried to introduce postal history to a wider audience, in particular young people. Not a bad aim for all of us.

MEMBERS' WANTS

David Chambers wants postal history and picture postcards (old or recent) of Worcestershire. If anyone has surplus material please contact David at:
15 Briar Close, Larkfield, Aylesford, Kent ME20 6NA

David Hardwick is collecting anything connected with postal matters including photographs and articles covering any town/village/suburb called CLIFTON anywhere in the world. He would be grateful for anything, including photocopies at this stage. Please contact David at 47 Rugby Road, Clifton, Rugby CV23 0DE.

THE SURVEYORS' JOURNALS (Part 8)

On 28th January 1799, Mr Saverland left his home at Claybrook for London to consult with Freeling on a number of matters, including the establishment of a Penny Post at Liverpool and the acceleration of the mailcoach from Manchester to Carlisle. It was mid-February before he returned to Claybrook. In his report on the riding work during February he commented that the heavy fall of snow in the Midland counties was not experienced in the more northern counties. Although the road from Stone to Wolverhampton had been blocked from 1st to 3rd February, roads further north had been kept open. He added, "The Midland Counties never before, in the memory of man, experienced so heavy a fall of snow."

Mr Saverland's next official journey was to Birmingham in mid-March. The postmaster there had stated that there was a need to employ a further letter carrier at certain times. Mr Saverland reported that the revenue would suffer if an additional letter carrier was not provided.

In April, only three days were spent away from home on official business. The postmaster at Lichfield had informed him that letters from the towns between Lichfield and Northampton, for the Liverpool line of road, which by his directions were sent to Northampton so that they could "fall in" with the Liverpool mailcoach at Daventry, had been returned by the postmaster of Northampton by the Chester coach. So he went to Northampton to acquaint the postmaster with the reasons for this circuitous route and to correct the circulation of letters from that office.

Most of May was spent on business in Lancashire. In the latter half of June and the first two days of July, Mr Saverland was in charge of the office at Towcester where the postmaster was considerably in arrears with his payments to London. The post office was moved to the inn where Mr Saverland lodged, but on 2nd July the postmaster was reappointed.

After he had spent six days, from 10th July, instructing the new postmaster at Stone, he went on to Nantwich to perform the same job there. However he found that not only had the old clerk been retained by the new postmaster but also the deputy had been in possession of the office for several months. [I find it incredible that someone could act as postmaster for a period of months without the authorities being aware of the fact.] As all was in order he stayed there for only two days before going on to Birmingham to inquire about a letter, put into the office at Alcester and directed to Messrs Rylands, Birmingham, containing several Bankers Bills payable to order and which had not been received.

Various matters in Lancashire took up most of Mr Saverland's time in August. On 1st September he set out on an tour of inspection which lasted until the middle of October and took in offices in Staffordshire, Cheshire, Shropshire and North Wales.

The introduction of an official post between Rugeley and Uttoxeter occupied Mr Saverland for the first three days of November. A week later, he set out for Holyhead to look into various matters concerning the packets stationed there. This included a request from the captains to be allowed "to wear a Pendant, as Men of War".

Mr Saverland was at home during the whole of December.

From 17th January to 5th February 1799, Mr Western was at Bakewell. For the first ten days, he was in charge of the office as the deputy had died. Then he instructed the new postmaster, Robert Smith, in his duties.

After his return home, he spent the rest of the month in dealing with the difficulties caused by the weather. His report contradicts Mr Saverland's statement about the northern counties for he wrote: "...there was the heaviest fall of Snow that has been known for many Years lasting throughout my district for near 48 hours to 2nd

February and causing an allmost total Stop to Communication by post." As often appears to have been the case, the thaw caused flooding, particularly between Derby and Lichfield, and between Newark and Nottingham. He also mentioned the breaking of banks of a canal reservoir affecting the road between Derby and Loughborough.

On 12th March, Mr Western set out for Northampton from where he proceeded to Oundle, Weldon and Wansford. The Earls of Westmoreland and Cardigan had asked that a post from Rockingham to Wansford through Weldon, Deane, Cliffe and Apethorpe should replace that from Rockingham to Oundle. He advised against this. From Northamptonshire he went on to London, where he remained until mid-April to discuss with Free-ling various matters in his district. After he had taken a few days leave he met Mr Woodcock at Oxford to discuss the possible extension of the cross-road boundaries.

Mr Western spent May outside the Midlands, first in Manchester and then in Yorkshire. He was still in Yorkshire on 1st June supervising the alteration of the mailcoach there. He commented: "When the new coach from Leicester to Leeds is on so settled a footing as to promise a permanent system of regularity I think something may be done for the accommodation of the road letters to accelerate their delivery.." [Does this mean that mailcoaches dropped off letters at places between stages?] On his way home from Leeds, he called at Wirksworth to inquire, without success, about a missing bag sent to Matlock from Derby. Then he had to go to Nottingham since the coach proprietor, Mr Gray, was hurrying the postmaster so much as to prevent proper attention being paid to the sorting and taxing, "by which the revenue and publick might be injured." At the end of June he inspected the office at Newark and then went on to Lincolnshire. Then apart from a spell at the office in Huntingdon, all his official business during the rest of the year took him outside the Midlands.

In his report on the riding work in April he stated that the Nottingham rider had neglected his duty by galloping up and down Newark fair for nearly an hour with his bags. He was committed to the house of correction for one week. In the same month bad weather again caused problems. This time heavy rain caused flooding - "more sudden & deeper than had been known in the memory of the oldest man living." [Did they have poor memories? Every instance of bad weather seems to have been the worst in living memory.] The post between Derby and Lichfield was badly affected; on 18th the mail arrived at Burton at 5 a.m. instead of 9 the previous evening.

In October he complained about the poor performance of many of the rides. The roads were worse than he had ever known them and the horses were fed on bad provender which was "extravangtly dear". [At the time extra allowances were often paid to contractors who complained that they were unable to carry out the duties at the agreed terms because of the high price of food for their horses.]

In contrast to his earlier journals those of Mr Woodcock of this period are very brief. Apart from visits to the offices at Chepstow and Bristol, he spent January and the first two weeks of February at home. He too commented on the severe weather in early February and stated that the guards and post boys had "run great risks of their lives." In the last two weeks of February he was occupied on the road between Birmingham and Worcester, trying to speed up the rides. He felt that it could not be done unless a horse and rider was employed at each end of the Birmingham and Stourbridge stage, to pass each other and not exchange bags. The contractor could not afford to do so unless he was paid more.

The only time in the next three months that Mr Woodcock was in the Midlands was in May when he was in charge of the office at Oxford. His journals for June to September are missing.

At the end of October and beginning of November, he was at Hungerford to instruct a new deputy. On his way home he called at Oxford to inquire about an application made to the P.M.G. to alter the route of the post to and from Banbury. In December, a complaint that the post from Moreton was late arriving at Winchcombe proved to be without foundation.

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HUNTINGDON, August 16th, 1799.

SIR,

JOHN CHARMON, a Rider, employed by the Contractor for conveying the Mail between Huntingdon and Kimbolton, having this Day been convicted before one of His Majesty's Justices of the Peace, of loitering and wilfully mispending his Time, so as to detain the Mail, and of quitting it for a considerable Space of Time, before he had arrived at the end of his Stage; and in Consequence thereof committed to the House of Correction, to be confined to hard Labour for one Month.

I think it proper to acquaint you therewith, and to request you will make the same known to any Riders employed in your Service, or in that of any Contractor for Riding Work paid from your Office, and caution them against committing a similar Offence.

I also enclose some printed Cautions which you will give to each of the Riders so employed, that they may not have it in their Power to plead Ignorance of the Nature of the Offence, or of that, of illegally collecting and delivering Letters.

*I am,**Your humble Servant,**Surveyor: General Post-Office.**Postmr of*

LONGEVITY

by Derek Woodhall

When our Editor wrote to me recently, he enclosed with his letter a firm's advisory postcard franked with an ordinary King George V halfpenny stamp of the 1926 issue, which was cancelled by the Hey -Dolphin machine (HDF-76A). The postmark is BIRMINGHAM/1929A/MAR22/4-PM. Nothing very special about that, you will say, but what was interesting to me was the name of the firm printed on the back of the card. It was The Birmingham Battery & Metal Co Ltd of Selly Oak, Birmingham, and as soon as I saw it I was reminded of an entire I have had in my collection for some time, which is addressed to the Birmingham Battery and Metal Co. from Liverpool, and is dated 10th August 1841.

I discovered that the Birmingham Battery & Metal Co. was founded in 1836 (hence the title of this article), and was originally located at 80, Digbeth. In 1977, which is the latest reference I have, its address was Bristol Road, Selly Oak.

Some time ago, I noticed an advertisement in FLIGHT magazine dated 7 September 1939, where the company advertises its part in the construction of at least two of the Empire Flying Boats, "Cambria" and "Caledonia". It specifically refers to the Firm's B.B. copper tubes which were used for the engine installations on these aircraft and also on the Short-Mayo Composite which, if you remember, was a "pick-a-back" experiment designed to extend the range of one aircraft by launching it from the back of a larger and lightly loaded aeroplane.

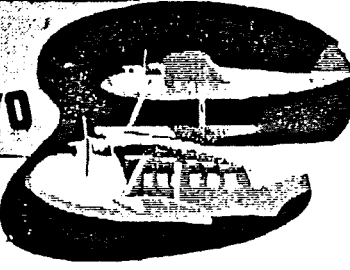
The Empire class of flying boats and the upper component of the Short-Mayo Composite were used for the carriage of air mail just before the Second World War, and indeed the former were designed and built in order to carry all mails within the Empire by air without surcharge. Probably the most notable flight made by "Mercury", the upper component of the Composite, took place on 29 November 1938 when, loaded with Christmas mail, including some mail bags stowed in the floats, it was launched over Southampton from the lower component "Maia" and flew non-stop to Alexandria. A similar non-stop flight was carried out on 12 December 1938.

Below is a copy of the Birmingham Battery & Metal Co. Ltd 1939 advertisement, and on the opposite page a photograph of the Mayo Composite aircraft on the Medway near Short Bros factory at Rochester, in October 1937.

FLIGHT

SEPTEMBER 7, 1939.

**CALEDONIA
CAMBRIA
SHORT-MAYO**

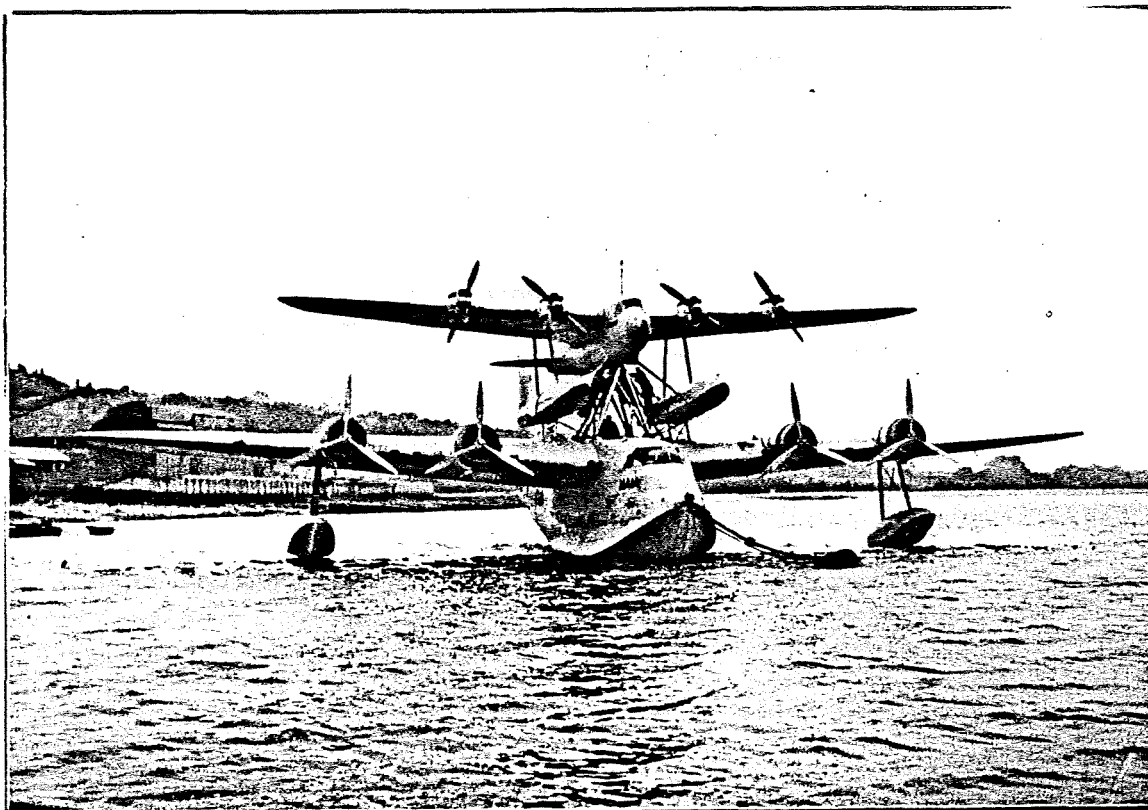


B.B. COPPER TUBES
(to A.I.D. Specification and Tests) were used
for the engine installation of Cambria, Caledonia
and the Short-Mayo. Send us YOUR enquiries.

BIRMINGHAM BATTERY & METAL CO. LTD.,
Selly Oak, Birmingham.
Manufacturers of Copper and Brass Tubes, Plates,
Sheets and Strip.

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SUNDRY ADDENDA AND CORRIGENDA

by Rev. Christopher Beaver.

Publication of a third index of the main articles that have appeared in *Midland Mail* (80/19-20, cf. 63/20-22 and 45/19-21) facilitates the use of our Journal as an ongoing record of research done. Those whose membership has begun since 1975 are enabled to obtain copies of pages relevant to their interests as well as perceive the gaps and uncertainties where related knowledge or fresh research needs to be written up. For my own part I constantly refer back to past numbers and make note of cross references and additional evidence. "Between The Lines" (MM50/4-8) consisted almost entirely of comments and questions prompted by MM49. This time I look back and endeavour to interpret some of the notes. By chance almost all concern routes and mailcoaches, directly or indirectly.

THE EXTRA PENNY (MM81/6-7, c.f. "Local Posts of the Midland Counties" p. 267). Our editor has discovered, I believe, the source of Herbert Joyce's reference to the additional penny payable at Hinckley, Atherstone and Tamworth imposed as a condition of the alteration of the route, from 5th April 1788, of the London-Chester-Holyhead mailcoach (cf. MM47/8 and 55/15). We now know: 1) Its original route from 10th October 1785 was the same as the London-Liverpool as far as Stone, the 140 miles mentioned in Christopher Saverland's 1801 report; 2) The alteration in 1788, allowed because of commercial opposition as well as petitions from Atherstone and Hinckley, included the change north of Wolseley Bridge to pass through Stafford instead of Stone - so delete nine words at the end of the last sentence of MM43/6, and notice 1780 two lines earlier was a misprint; 3) The additional ld. continued at all three towns after 1801.; 4) It was payable only on letters received; 5) Why the charge ceased at Tamworth, and when (Post 40/111/1815). We are also led to expect that the salaries records should indicate when the ld. ceased to be payable by the inhabitants of Atherstone and Hinckley.

The last paragraph quoted from Saverland's 1801 report also aroused my keen interest. One gathers it was in 1788 that "for a very inconsiderable time" the longer road through Grendon and Polesworth was used. In support of its being then, the 1789 mileage warrant (Post 97/4/91) shows 279 as the distance London to Holyhead, and this is consistent with the earliest time-bill extant of probably 1790 which shows 279½. Saverland is not likely to have been familiar with the 1669 broadsheet (SP29.263.124), accurately transcribed in Dr. Stone's "The Inland Posts 1392-1672). This indicates a bye-route from the Chester Road at Colshall (= Coleshill) to the market towns of "Tamworth Atherston Polihull", so I suppose the messenger then took what the petitioners of 1801 were "pleased to call the original road." Pooley Hall was and is the principal residence near to the small market town of Polesworth and unlike the town happens to be on the same side of the river Anker as the road. I am not persuaded a separate bye-road to Solihull was meant, for that was not a market town. Certainly Polesworth will always have used what is called the "original" road as its means of communication with neighbouring towns, whereas Fazeley was a new textile village developed from 1790 by Sir Robert Peel senior. We may therefore suppose the petitioners in 1801 knew better than the surveyor, while being grateful for his detailed comments.

AUXILIARY MAILCOACHES (MM57/11-12). At the end of the third paragraph please correct to read "the upper ground between Waltham Cross and the G.P.O." Conclude the fourth paragraph with "- and the time-bill of course." The very last sentence is untrue and should read: "The remainder were purpose-built for the Post Office but remained the property of the Millbank firm which held contracts to make and maintain them from 1788 to 1836." Richard Blake, whose postcards are well-known, has researched the Besant and Vidler records, a summary of which was published in an article "Mail Coach Developments 1786-1836" in Cross Post 3/1 of Autumn 1989 - that is the journal of the Friends of the National Postal Museum. The next number of Spring 1990 includes John Parker's "Running a Mail Coach" and my own "Mail Coach Routes". With this last is a London-Yarmouth time-bill of 1827. The collection of 1827 bills we first mentioned in the MM57 article and later listed along with a map compiled by our editor (63/9-11) are now fully restored to pristine condition and on permanent loan to P.O. Archives. Copies are not yet available on the reference shelves, but our editor has slides of most sheets, for John Calladine photographed them before rebinding. (Editor's Note: It is my intention in the near future, depending on the space available to print transcriptions of all those bills relating to the Midlands.)

A handbill of J. Wright & Co., White Horse and Fetter Lane, dated in 1831 gives incidental confirmation that the London-Yarmouth mailcoach was not a patent coach but remained an Auxiliary since it gives its name. Among coaches advertised is:

"Yarmouth (Royal Mail & Telegraph) through Colchester, Ipswich, Woodbridge & Yoxford (½past 6, Sundays 6)."

BIRMINGHAM-MANCHESTER MAILCOACH (MM45/7). Delete the final sentence, for Telford's plan to by-pass Wednesbury was indeed fulfilled. The receiver there constantly had to to the junction and wait for the passing mailcoaches, for which he was eventually paid.

BIRMINGHAM-WALSALL MAILCOACH (MM80/17, cf. 45/17. See also Vale's "Mail Coach Men of the Late 18th Century", pages 191-7). Charles Perks owned the main Walsall inn and ran coaches to the Saracen's Head in Birmingham. Mr Waddell, contractor for the northern part of the mailcoach to Bristol, owned the Castle Inn, Birmingham. Walsall, the principal centre for the manufacture of harnesses and saddles, had petitioned in 1795 for the London-Liverpool mailcoach to be altered between Coventry and Stone from its constant route through Coleshill and Lichfield to go through Birmingham and Walsall and then over Cannock Chase to Stafford. This was not allowed because north of Walsall was "a bad road". Some better accommodation was still desired, and the next year conceded. The Birmingham-Walsall mailcoach began on 10th October 1796 with Waddell as the sole contractor because he refused to cooperate with Perks. The latter also had signed the contract, each of them was to have used his own coach with the coachman as guard and the coaches passing one another en route. Thomas Hasker, Superintendent of Mailcoaches, clearly found Waddell a difficult character. However by the end of October it was Perks he was threatening to have prosecuted, for not fulfilling his part of the contract. What ensued has not certainly emerged though two things suggest the use of coaches was suspended. The collection of timebills of the spring of 1797 (the ones that were at Bruce Castle, substantially reproduced by Vale) does not include a Birmingham-Walsall. Nor for that matter is there a Birmingham-Lichfield; such a mailcoach was under negotiation in October 1796 with Waddell the instigator in this case as the sole contractor. Secondly it appears the contract reproduced in MM80/17 is a new one for a service to commence on 1st June 1797, and Waddell is not involved at all. Now we find Charles Perks together with Richard Corfield under the threat of prosecution for refusing to work to the Castle Inn - the one owned by Waddell. We can hope that as the surveyor's journals are investigated and summarised the facts will become clearer. (Editor's Note MM84 may clarify some matters, but it may make others even muddier!)

THE GREAT CROSS POST (MM77/6-9). Though Ralph Allen in his Narrative does refer to his becoming postmaster of Bath in 1710, the P.O. accounts do not endorse this. Martin Willcocks in his "Englands Postal History" pp. 40-42 fairly summarises the evidence, and the likely explanation for Allen's date is that he came there then

to help develop the Cross Post between Bristol and Oxford for Joseph Quash. Most of the papers of Aubrey Emonet who researched such matters at great depth but has published little herself are now in my keeping, available for reference by anyone interested.

The Exeter-Chester Cross Post was effectively ended by the introduction of the Birmingham to Bristol mailcoach, as outlined except that I can find no evidence for this being in 1785. Aris's Gazette has a notice announcing the start of such a mailcoach at the Birmingham end from 6th July 1787 (cf. MM47/15 and 53/5). I have tried and still hope for confirmation in a Bristol source. The earliest cross-country mailcoach began on 9th May 1785 between Bristol and Portsmouth, established by Freeling himself, then working for John Palmer. Bevan Rider's booklet "Bristol First" contains much evidence concerning that city's important place in the postal history of 1784-5, and nothing found about a mailcoach to Birmingham in that admittedly secondary source supports my expectation that it was not a revival in 1787.

DISTANCE BY THE NEAREST CARRIAGE ROAD (MM65/8, para 4). The announcement of 19th September 1838 was evidently not immediately applicable, at least not everywhere. Post 68/5 includes a letter dated 12th November that year from Benjamin Churchill to the postmaster of Uttoxeter which requests that he supply distances from Uttoxeter of thirty-four particular places "by the nearest carriage road at your earliest convenience." Furthest away are Derby, Birmingham, Shifnal, Atherstone and Coleshill, and many of the places nearer had minor offices. This was surely part of a nationwide exercise by the surveyors to re-assess the General Postage to be charged between any two offices, hitherto assessed according to the actual distance a letter was carried. One may guess questions had been asked concerning the legality of the existing method, and wonder whether the task was fully completed before the matter became irrelevant a year later. It is worth looking for examples of letters charged less than the rate for the distance actually carried in this period. I expect my earliest is one from West Bromwich to Lichfield of 12th December 1838, charged 5d. This is much more likely to have been routed through Birmingham, and so carried more than twenty miles in the General Post, than through Walsall.

BIRMINGHAM-COVENTRY. In an article which advanced reasons for some variations in the figures found on mileage stamps of towns in an arc north and west of Coventry (MM43/5-8) it was pointed out that the direct road from Coventry through Stonebridge to Birmingham was in use before any mailcoach came to the Midlands. Relevant allusions have since been published at 47/16 and 57/14, but there has been no answer to the question posed - "When were these towns first postally linked by this route?" A lengthy notice in the London Gazette starting on 27th June 1761 is reproduced in Harold Wilson's "History of the Post in Derby" as fig. 14. It outlines what Ralph Allen refers to in his Own Narrative as effecting the completion of his plan, and these measures coincide with the start of his last contract for they are to come into effect on Monday, 6th July 1761. The paragraph which answers the question reads:

"Also a new Cross Post Stage between Birmingham & Coventry by which the correspondence of Coventry and Daventry with Birmingham Wolverhampton Sheffnal Shrewsbury Stone Nantwich Chester Warrington Liverpool Manchester and all parts of Lancashire Westmoreland and Cumberland may be carried on Six Times a Week; and their correspondence with Northampton Harborough Leicester Loughborough Derby and Nottingham considerably quickened and improved."

It will of course be "bye-night" mails (so called from a London perspective) which were to use the Coventry-Stonebridge-Birmingham road. Mail between London and Birmingham continued, there can be little doubt, to go on those "nights" via Oxford as since 1748, and via Coleshill on the "post-nights" as from the previous century (cf. MM51/7). direct routing of mail between London and Birmingham surely was normal for the brief period that the 1785 mailcoach between those cities lasted. It was conceded again in the down direction only from 12th December 1791 9cf. MM47/8-9, the source being Post 96/9).

SKELETONS

by Rev. Christopher Beaver

Here is a subject to which we have paid only occasional attention. This Society does not need to produce a book now that the British Postmark Society has published "Skeleton Postmarks of England and Wales", conceived by James MacKay and brought to birth by Colin Peachey. The listing is likely to be even less complete than MacKay's book on sub-office rubber datestamps, since in the nature of the case skeletons have rarely been entered in proof-books. I suppose the ingredients for constructing skeletons were issued from time to time to surveyors, and later head-postmasters, and they in turn issued them as the need arose. Altered and fixed together again each day at the temporary office of use, such a stamp is often needed only until a permanent replacement arrives - in the early days while a vital or the solitary stamp was being recut, for example. Some offices at some periods are shown to have made frequent if not constant use of skeletons. Thus seventeen varieties used at Oldbury are listed between 1908 and 1924, and seventeen at Peterborough between 1893 and 1921 (cf. MM12/4-6, 46/18, 47/3, 61/8, 62/6). The variety of pairs of letters at the foot of those used at the latter town remains an unexplained peculiarity.

The fact that approaching half of the skeletons are recorded in this book on a single date must mean that hundreds of those used are unlisted or literally unknown. If all collectors and societies cooperate by providing additional evidence, a second edition could prove much bigger, yet the likelihood of making new finds will always remain.

Apart from the rubber skeletons, of which good examples are rare treasures, from minor offices, the most attractive and elusive are the skeletons of the early period, 1838 into the 1850s. The nine varieties used at Northampton between 1839 and 1850 is more than known anywhere else. This compares with twelve altogether in Staffordshire; of these six were in the County Catalogue and only two are recorded on more than one date. Few of the skeletons of this period appear to have been in use longer than about two weeks. Since the revival of their use in the 1880s a period of months has not been unusual. Always intended to be circular, diameters range from 9 to 36 mm.

As an illustration, a previously unrecorded Rugeley skeleton of the unframed seriffed kind which begins the story, is shown on the next page. It happens to have an earlier date than any listed from the Midlands. Evidently the small undated double arc stamp issued on 15th August 1831 had been sent back for a re-cut and to be converted into a datestamp. Strange that this occurred when the office was demoted; after only nine years as a posttown Rugeley became a sub-office of Stafford. The cds was issued on 5th September 1838, "altered" says the proof book.

Skeleton Postmarks of England & Wales is obtainable from Colin Peachey, 19 Moorland Road, Hemel Hempstead, Herts HP1 1NH at £8.50 + p&p (was £1.50).

G.B. POSTAL HISTORY

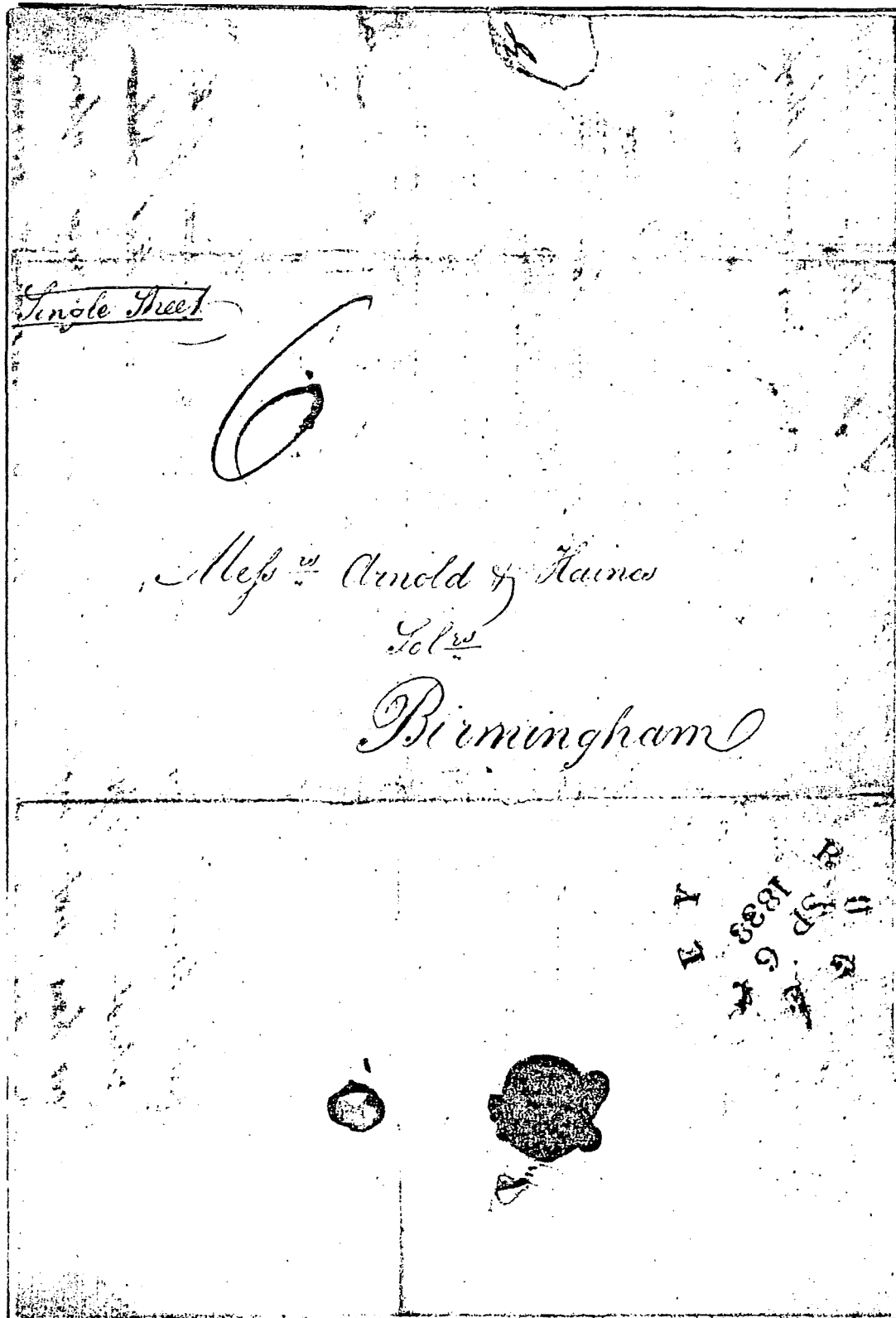
ALSO: Some Foreign, Ephemera, Post Boxes - etc.

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

JIM HAMMOND

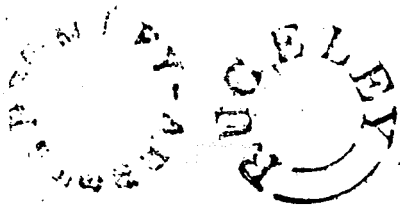
5 Staverton Rd, Daventry
Northants. NN11 4HL.
Tel. Daventry (0327) 71842

An entire sent on 6th September 1838 from Rugeley
showing the unframed skeleton handstamp.



A letter sent on 15th August 1838
from Abbots Bromley through Rugeley.

Thomas Hudson Esq
The Close
Lichfield



Messrs Arnold & Haines
Sols
Birmingham

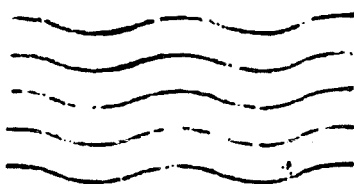
Sent from Rugeley on 16th September 1838.

THE LATEST GENERIC POSTMARKS

Since nearly all ordinary mail posted in the LE postcode area is now taken to Leicester for cancellation, Royal Mail has seen fit to replace the Leicester dies on the cancelling machines with ones showing the names of the county. Examples of all of those that have come to hand plus one rubber handstamp are shown below.



LEICS
GREAT BRITAIN
PAID 2ND
27 AUG 93



LEICS
GREAT BRITAIN
PAID 2ND
27 AUG 93



Now for what must be the ultimate in generic cancellations. Sunday mail from Derby, Leicester and Nottingham is now all cancelled in Derby where the postmark shown below is used. Unfortunately it appears that Derby is unable to process the mail in time for delivery in the South of England on the Mon-day. Of five first-class letters posted at 9.30 a.m. on 31st October, and cancelled on that day, not one arrived in places as far apart as Bath and Luton before the Tuesday. A week later, in order to try to obtain a copy good enough to reproduce here I sent another letter to myself; again it arrived on Tuesday.

THE NEXT MIDLAND MAIL

This, it is hoped, will appear towards the end of January. It will contain the usual reports, more from the Surveyors' Journals and articles which will have been sent in the meantime to:

John Soer, 51d Barkham Road, Wokingham, Berks RG11 2RG.

Though it is only November, I would like to wish all members a very happy Christmas and New Year. If Santa Claus should read this, I would like to remind him that I am still looking for Melton Mowbray Penny Post item.