

MIDLAND MAIL

THE JOURNAL OF THE MIDLAND (GB) POSTAL HISTORY SOCIETY



www.midlandphs.org.uk



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A letter written on 28 February 1813 by Capt Gregorie, a POW at Bishops Castle, to General de Preux, a POW at Bridgnorth, Shropshire. It was sent free to the Transport Office, London who censored it (Crown / GR), put it into the General Post on 9 March 1813 and charged 10d collect. See page 4 for more on Richard Farman's talk 'Napoleonic War', further accounts of Zoom meetings from page 3 and page 9 for an entire from the same correspondence.

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ANNOUNCEMENTS,

2019 JON BAKER TROPHY – Thanks to all members who voted. Since an AGM will not take place this year, it has been decided to reveal the winner for 2019, who is **John Soer**, for his article ‘Mail on the Midland railway and its Constituents 1840 – 1875, Part 7’. Hearty congratulations to John, who was a clear winner. Runner up was **Marion Turner** for her article on the Jack Barlow Collection. The January edition of Midland Mail will see a request for your vote for the 2020 winner – it never ends!

Midland Postal History Society and Covid 19 – Chairman’s Report

I didn’t envisage when I took on the role of chairman that I would be carrying out my duties in a pandemic and that we would be having meetings online. Zoom meetings give us the chance to see interesting displays and meet with members. Thanks to their support and their willingness to adapt, we have now had eight enjoyable meetings online with 10 to 26 members attending (some from as far away as Holland and Scotland). Each meeting starts with a few minutes informal chat whilst everyone gets logged on. Then there is some business before the speaker’s presentation, which takes about 20 to 30min with 20 to 30 pages / slides being shown. An advantage of Zoom is that you can clearly see the items being presented. We end with member’s questions, including items to share, either to gain insight from the speaker or from the collected knowledge in the room. All this from the comfort of your own home.

As well as meeting more often, we have also been treated to an additional edition of the Midland Mail. My thanks to Brian for his hard work as Editor.

I am aware that not everyone can attend zoom meetings. We have recorded most of them, making them available for people with access to email. For people without access to the internet we are looking at the option of sending out the presentation images by normal mail to those who ask for them.

Proposed Zoom Meetings to December 2020

21 st October	Julian Tweed – Late Fee Mail
28 th October	Members evening – Mail from or to Unusual Destinations
18 th November	Chris Jackson – Upton-upon-Severn
25 th November	Members evening – Recent Acquisitions
16 th December	John Soar – GB Mail to and from Belgium
23 rd December	Members evening – Mail with a Christmas theme

More on Member’s evening displays by Zoom

The members display is like our pre-Covid meetings and will give those who wish to show something a chance to say a few words about their items. I suggest we limit it up to 6 items and a 3 minute talk with questions at the end of each presentation. I would appreciate it if you could let me have items by the Sunday before the meeting, send to gordon.hardy@btinternet.com. You can take scans of a whole page or of the item and text separately. Photographs taken on a phone can be sent to my email address.

More on the Zoom Meetings – Brief accounts of the Zoom meetings which have taken place so far will be found from page 3 in this issue. They are similar to the accounts of our regular face-to-face meetings. It would be appreciated by the editor if members who have given a whole meeting or have participated in a Member’s evening would send him a brief summary of their display, plus at least one scan, to help with writing an account for those unable to Zoom (sniktab@gmail.com)! Your editor tried to take notes during Alan Godfrey’s excellent display but found himself looking at the screen, listening to Alan and forgetting all about note taking! Clearly, he can no longer multi-task! Alan kindly sent a copy of his power point, so all ended well and a report was produced.

SEARCHING MIDLAND MAIL – If members use the RPS website to search Midland Mail (see MM 196 / 16-17) or other journals, the process has changed because the website has changed. You will now need to do as follows:

- 1) To search go to www.rpsl.org.uk and click on Catalogue (Large C bottom right), the Catalogue Search page opens and where it says ENTER SEARCH TERM in grey do so (I entered **Miss Orde** related to those articles I wrote) and click on SEARCH to the right.
- 2) The titles of 4 articles appeared in a new window entitled RESULT. In the left hand column there are some blue rectangles, click on central ITEM next to the edition you want.
- 3) Another screen pops up called DETAIL. Scroll down and click on VIEW under Associated Documents and up pops the pdf of the edition you want. It’s all a bit cumbersome but it does work!

THE ZOOM MEETINGS:

The first Zoom meeting was held on 29 July with 26 members logged on including one from overseas. **Gordon Hardy** gave a short display on the Gifford correspondence and questions and answers followed.

On 19 August 2020 **Brian Atkins** gave a power point entitled 'A Lady's Grand Tour of Europe 1863-65'. He began with a map of Europe indicating the cities and route that his lady (Miss Orde) had visited. Her journey began (for us) in Nov 1863 with covers to Valencia, Malaga and Granada in Spain, all at 6d via France. She then moved on to Geneva and the Alps, before descending into Italy at Livorno and Rome before returning home (certainly by November 1865) via Geneva. All letters were from Shrewsbury. The final slides showed a postcard of her Scottish abode at Kilmory, Lochgilphead as well as evidence of her correspondent, her half-sister living near Shrewsbury.



Letters to the Papal States at 11d per ¼oz (PO Guide 1 Jan 1857) paid by three 1d reds, plate 73, and two 4d pale red, plate 4. ROMA VIA DI MARE (*Roma By Way of the Sea*) on the reverse, struck on packet mail landed, probably, at Ostia west of Rome, where it arrived from Marseilles (10 March) on 15 March.

On 26 August **Ian May** gave a talk / display entitled 'A Brief Encounter with Express Mail'. On overcoming initial gremlins (well, we are dealing with *Technology!*) Ian stated that after a number of efforts an Express Letter Service eventually began in 1891 (London) and generally by 1892. He gave several examples of Services 1 and 2 with Services 3, 4 and 5 added in 1906. Further changes took place in 1938 with the Express service ending in 1980 and Special Delivery in 1993. He went on to discuss the Railex service and International Express Mail



Service 1, Messenger all the way

Leamington Spa 18th July 1898, charged 3d for a mile.

Usually the charge was put onto a 'Form E' but here stamps have been applied to cover.

Rubber oval POST OFFICE / EXPRESS hand-stamp

At the 16 September Zoom meeting **Richard Farman** gave a fascinating presentation entitled 'Napoleonic War'. Entires to or from Staffordshire and Shropshire featured in the presentation. The first was dated 3 Sept 1806 from



Paris to Lichfield (see left), charged 16 decimes in France. Received 19 Sept in London, censored (Crown / GR) and forwarded to Lichfield unpaid at 2/1. An 18 October 1806 entire went from Leek to Paris and a 23 Nov 1806 one from L'Orient to Ashby de la Zouch. An all-Shropshire entire dated 28 February 1813 from a POW at Bishops Castle was sent to a POW at Bridgnorth (also see page 9). A 28 April 1813 entire from a mother in Touillon (a small village 30km NW of Dijon) was sent to a Surgeon POW at Bridgnorth, censored in London, put into the General Post on 1 June 1813 and charged 1/2, 10d in the General Post and 4d incoming Ship Letter. An entire from Leek to Quimper, dated 28 Sept 1812 went via the Harwich packet to Rotterdam and was charged 11 decimes to be collected on

arrival. Finally a 20 April 1813 entire from Brest was censored (Crown / GR) and charged 10d collect to Chesterfield. Some non-postal items, including one from the Commissioners of the Transport Office, London, dated 4 February 1811, concerning a prisoner exchange of equal rank, one prisoner residing in Lichfield, rounded off an absorbing evening.

On 23 September, **Alan Godfrey** gave a power point talk entitled 'The Last Explorer: The Amazing Life of Sir **Hubert Wilkins**': amazing is not overstating it. Wilkins was born George Wilkins (1888 – 1958) at Mount Bryan East, South Australia, the youngest of 13 children. Alan showed slides illustrating that he was a man of many parts. He studied Mechanical Engineering at Adelaide; took to flying lessons with Claude Graham-White as his instructor; reported on the Balkan War from the Turkish side (1912) and took part in the Canadian Arctic Expedition of 1913 – 1916. He crashed into an asylum in Crete taking part in the England to Australia Air Race (1919). The 1921 Shackleton – Rowett Expedition took him as an ornithologist and on Tristan da Cunha in 1922 he discovered a new species of finch, followed by a visit to Russia in the same year to report on the famine as well as reporting to the secret service about life in general in that country. In 1928 he flew across the Arctic to Spitsbergen and later that year was on the Wilkins-Hearst Antarctic Expedition (1928 / 30). In 1931 he was part of the Trans-Arctic Submarine Expedition but with money running short he undertook a lecture tour of Canada and the US (1932). He returned to the Antarctic with the Ellesworth Expedition (1933) and in 1936 was part of the first Atlantic crossing of the Hindenburg. With many adventures in between, in 1958 he visited the US nuclear submarine USS Skate. He took the name Hubert not to upstage George V who knighted him. He died in Massachusetts in November 1958. An exceptional man.



Philatelic cover cancelled Vancouver, BC to commemorate Wilkins' lecture / visit in January 1932.

The Kinsmen are secular, Canadian non profit organizations in various towns / cities that promote service, fellowship, positive values, and national pride. (from Wikipedia)

EARLY WARWICKSHIRE SKELETON HAND-STAMPS

by Ian M May

Introduction

The report of the February 2020 meeting, 'Skeletons', in the Midland Mail^[1] prompted me to look again at the 19th century skeletons or travelling hand-stamps in my collection of Warwickshire, excluding Birmingham, with the intention of attempting to ascertain why they were used. In the analysis below I have included skeletons mentioned in the report in reference 1, the Midlands Edition of the British County Catalogue^[2] and Skeleton Postmarks of England and Wales^[3].

Mackay^[5] describes the background to the use of the early skeletons in England and Wales which is summarised here. Because of dissatisfaction with date stamping Thomas Bockenham, an employee of the Post Office, who later became Controller of the Circulation Department, was asked, in 1837, to review hand-stamps currently in use. This led to the ordering in September 1838 of skeleton hand-stamps that could be used for a relatively short time, while damaged date stamps were being re-cut or replaced. The skeleton hand-stamps were circular date stamps made up from loose type. After the normal hand-stamp was returned the skeleton would be dissembled and returned to Post Office Stores. By 1860 the use of skeletons was expressly forbidden, Post Masters being required to order new date-stamps to replace those damaged in plenty of time and when the replacement arrived to return the damaged hand-stamp to the Controller of the Sorting Office to be re-cut and returned to the Post Master if it was worth doing so. Covers showing the use of skeletons from this period, 1838 to 1860, are not common because of the short period of their use at a particular office.

A proof strike of the re-cut hand-stamp can be obtained from the Post Office steel impression books^[4].

The discussions of wear are made with the proviso that strikes of the hand-stamps are rarely perfect! The figures below which indicate wear are examples taken from two or more strikes. The Tables show the dates recorded of the use of a skeleton and the date of the issue of the re-cut hand-stamp. Also given below the tables are additional references to skeletons for which, generally, only the year of use is given.

Leamington Spa

Leamington was issued with a circular dated hand-stamp which was recorded in the steel impression books on 4th January 1833^[2].

Dates of use of skeleton	Date of issue of re-cut	
27 March 1839	27 March 1839	Fig 1
9 April 1841 (3 examples) – 15 April 1841	16 April 1841	Fig 2
2 January – 3 January 1844	5 January 1844	Fig 3

An additional record for 1841 is given in reference 1. Leamington skeletons, Figs 1, 2 and 3 below



Fig 1, 27 March 1839



Fig 2, 9 April 1841



Fig 3, 3 January 1844

An impression of the circular dated hand-stamp 19 January 1833; i.e., when relatively new, on a cover and the impressions of re-issued 3 re-cuts from the steel impression book are all very similar so only the re-cut of 1839 is illustrated (Fig 4).

Before the 1839 re-cut strikes of the hand-stamp did appear to show a significant amount of wear on the inside of NGTON of LEAMINGTON, Fig. 5. After the re-cut strikes appeared to be much clearer for a time but there is wear on the inside of EA of LEAMINGTON prior to the 1841 re-cut (Fig 6).

Before the 1844 re-cut the hand-stamp appears generally worn, particularly to the outside of EAM of LEAMINGTON (Fig 7). By 1846 the hand-stamp had been replaced by a smaller diameter hand-stamp with code letters.



Fig 4, Proof of re-cut of Leamington. circular dated hand-stamp, 27 May 1839



Fig 5, Leamington circular dated hand-stamp, 17 April 1837



Fig 6, Leamington circular dated hand-stamp, 24 October 1840

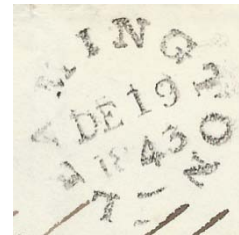


Fig 7, Leamington circular dated hand-stamp 19 December 1843

Coleshill

Dates of use of skeleton	Date of issue of re-cut	
20 June 1848, with code number 2	21 June 1848	Fig 8

Prior to the issue of the skeleton the hand-stamp had no code letters. The proof in the steel impression book states that this was a new hand-stamp with code letters (Fig, 9), but I suspect it was a re-cut of the hand-stamp with code letters included.

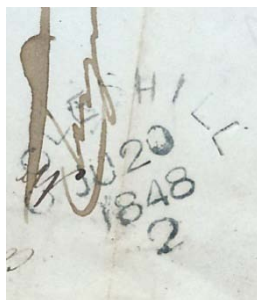


Fig 8, Coleshill skeleton 20 June 1848

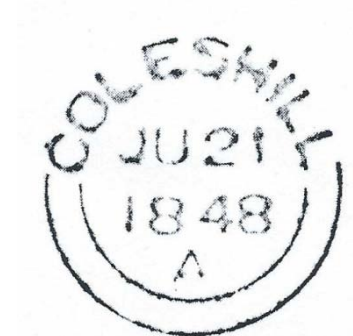


Fig 9, Proof of re-cut of Coleshill circular dated hand-stamp, June 21 1848.

Coventry

Coventry was issued with a dated circular stamp, recorded in the steel impression books on 5 February 1831^[4].

Dates of use of skeleton	Date of issue of re-cut	
11 March 1844	12 March 1844	Fig 10

Prior to the re-cut (Fig 11), the hand-stamp was showing considerable wear with the “OVE” of “COVENTRY” not being completely struck, (Fig 12). This hand-stamp was replaced with a circular dated hand-stamp with code letters, which is recorded in the steel impression book on the 19 April 1847.



Fig 10, Coventry skeleton
11 March 1844



Fig 11, Proof of re-cut Coventry
circular date stamp, 8 May 1844

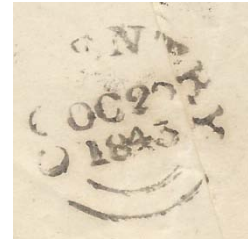


Fig 12, Coventry circular
date stamp, 20 October 1843

Rugby

Rugby was issued with a circular dated hand-stamp which was recorded in the steel impression books on 9 January 1840^[4], an example is shown in Fig 13.

Dates of use of skeleton	Date of issue of re-cut	
16 June – 2 July 1847	2 July 1847	Fig 14.

An additional record for 1845 is given in reference 1.

At the time of the re-cut code letters A to E were added (Fig 15) likely the reason it was removed from service and why the skeleton was in use. Fig 15 is a steel impression book strike and shows how even those may not be complete as strikes on covers show the lower inner arc beneath the code letter to be complete (Fig 16).



Fig 13, Rugby circular date stamp, 4 June 1840



Fig 14, Rugby skeleton 2 July 1847



Fig 15, Proof of re-cut of Rugby circular
dated hand-stamp, 2 July 1847

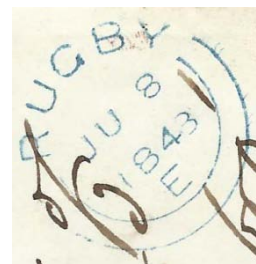


Fig 16, Rugby circular dated
hand-stamp, 8 June 1848

Stratford on Avon

Stratford on Avon was issued with a circular dated hand-stamp with two arcs at the base, which was recorded in the steel impression books on 24 November 1836, (Fig 17). There is a proof strike in the steel impression books for 23 December 1840 (Fig 18), of a circular dated hand-stamp with one arc at the base and code letters. However, there are strikes on cover of a similar hand-stamp from 26 December 1839 (Fig 19).

Dates of use of skeleton	Date of issue of re-cut	
9 July – 10 July 1843	11 July 1843	Fig 20
27 June 1846 ^[2]	30 June 1846	
23 April – 3 May 1849 ^[2]	7 May 1849 – new hand-stamp.	

An additional record for 14 August 1838 is given in reference 2 but no proof of any re-cut appears to be given in the steel impression books.

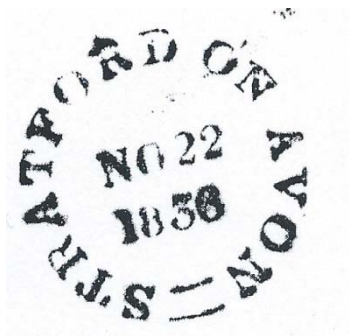


Fig 17, Proof of Stratford on Avon circular dated hand-stamp, 22 November 1836



Fig 18, Proof of Stratford on Avon circular dated hand-stamp, 23 December 1840



Fig 19, Stratford on Avon circular dated hand-stamp, 26 December 1839

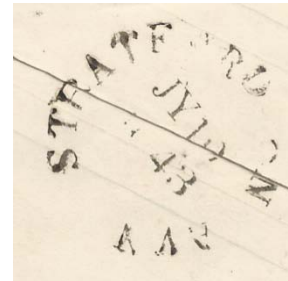


Fig 20, Stratford on Avon skeleton 10 July 1843

The hand-stamp was re-cut in 1843. With the re-cut in 1846 (Fig 21), the serif letters were replaced with sans-serif letters. The strike of the hand-stamp on covers is often poor which is the likely reason for the re-cuts. In 1849 a new hand-stamp was issued (Fig 22), with sans-serif letters and hyphens in front of and after 'ON' and two arcs at the base.

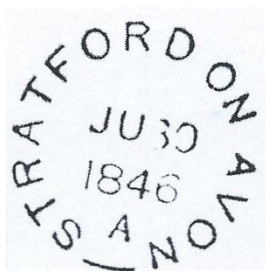


Fig 21, Proof of Stratford on Avon circular dated hand-stamp, 30 June 1846

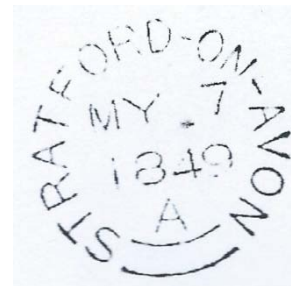


Fig 22, Proof of Stratford on Avon circular dated hand-stamp, 7 May 1849

There appear to be some questions about the dates of the Stratford on Avon skeletons and hand-stamps. The date of the additional record of 14 August 1838, given in reference 2, would make it the earliest date for a skeleton, the next one recorded being on the 11 October 1838 at Blackburn^{[3],[5]}. It is also before the date of the order made for skeletons discussed in the introduction above. Either a very similar hand-stamp or the hand-stamp used for the proof strike in the steel impression books for 23 December 1840 (Fig 18), existed by 26 December 1839, as shown by Fig 19. Is the date incorrect in the steel impression books or was this a re-cut and the hand-stamp originally issued earlier?

Conclusions

In conclusion the use of skeletons or travellers appears to be because the hand-stamps in daily use suffered from excessive wear, particularly those of Leamington Spa and Coventry. However, the use of skeletons in Coleshill and Rugby was in order to allow the addition of code letters to the hand-stamp. Mackay^[5] states that codes A, B and C were introduced from 1844 to signify morning, afternoon and evening duties respectively. There are some unanswered questions regarding the use of skeletons and the issue of hand-stamps at Stratford on Avon. It would also appear that Stratford on Avon was a relatively early user of code letters. As the period of use of a skeleton was very short it is possible that additional records may come to light in the future.

References

- 1 Report of Meeting 8th February, Skeletons, Midland Mail, 206, April 2020. Pp 3-5.
- 2 British County Catalogue of Postal History, Midlands Edition, Midland (GB) P H S, 2013
- 3 Mackay J. A., Skeleton Postmarks of England and Wales, Ed. Peachey C. G., 2nd edition, British Postmark Society, 1996.
- 4 Steel Impression Books, Vols 1-18, Post Office Archives, London.
- 5 Mackay, J. A., Postmarks of England and Wales, Published by Author, Dumfries, 1988.

Acknowledgements:

I would like to acknowledge the help of John Calladine and Martin Scroggs who both made useful comments on an earlier draft of this article.

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At the 16 Sept zoom meeting, **Jim Hammond** offered the Shropshire related Napoleonic item below in support of **Richard Farman's** presentation of 'Napoleonic War'. The two entires shown by Richard and Jim were very similar (see Richard's on the front page).



The entire, left, dated 30 June 1813, is from Bishop's Castle, Shropshire, to a French Officer 'on parole' at Bridgnorth, also Shropshire.

Jim states he has not translated the letter but the writer is French, addressing the recipient at the start of his letter as 'Monsieur le Commandant'.

The Transport Office stamp was applied in London as required for all Prisoner of War mail and censored (Crown / GR). The postal charge of 1/8 is probably a double rate; the entire on the front page shows a single rate of 10d. This entire has a London date-stamp for 5 July 1813 on the reverse.

## WHY WERE MANY EARLY GLOUCESTERSHIRE LETTERS MISSENT?

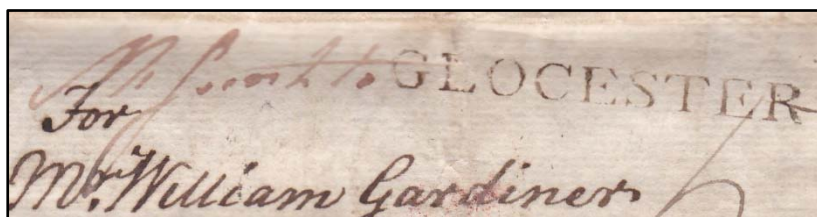
by John Hine

Due to human error some early letters were occasionally sent to incorrect destinations necessitating redirection and resulting in endorsements reading 'Missent to' usually followed by the name of the post town. Initially 'Missent to' was written in red ink and the town stamp was added to confirm matters and explain the delay in delivery. From 1801 onwards hand stamps were issued to major offices (eg Birmingham BM164) or to those regularly encountering incorrect delivery problems. One reason why a letter was missent was that the Post Office incorrectly sorted it into the wrong postbag. I can register a number of so-called 'mailbag errors' for Gloucestershire destined letters that fall into this category.

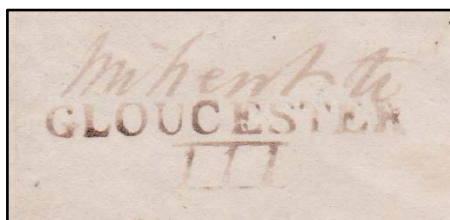
Another reason was due to incorrect or insufficient addressing by the sender. In Gloucestershire this occurred regularly because letters were often addressed to towns or villages followed by Gloucester instead of Gloucestershire. In many of these cases the letters were put in the Gloucester Mail to that city instead of to the country areas via the Worcester Mail or the Cirencester / Stroud Mail.

I have records of six Missent to Gloucester letters that were intended for the Morton / Stow area that should have been carried by the Worcester Mail and similarly five letters intended for the Cirencester / Stroud areas that were also missent. All of these were addressed to 'Gloucester' and received Missent endorsements and / or Missent to Gloucester stamps.

Endorsed in manuscript:

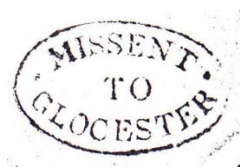


Missent to GLOUCESTER  
(1796)

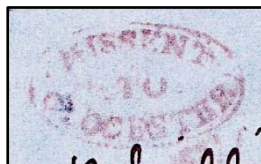


Missent to  
GLOUCESTER  
III  
(1809)

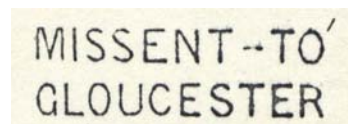
The dedicated Missent stamps:



GL401



GL401 red



GL403 proof

|       |                      |              |                          |
|-------|----------------------|--------------|--------------------------|
| GL401 | Issue date not known | Black        | 18.02.1813 to 22.08.1846 |
|       |                      | Red          | 01.08.1853               |
| GL403 | Issued 08.11.1850    | Black        | 15.11.1854 to 18.11.1861 |
|       |                      | Red          | 12.05.1855               |
|       |                      | Blue / black | 27.05.1859               |

## RAILWAY TELEGRAPHS

by Jim Hammond

Following the article by John Soer in Midland Mail No 208, detailing the oval Station hand stamps issued to Railway Telegraph offices, I was spurred on to piece together some of my own research in order to provide some more information about the general situation regarding telegraphs and railway companies.

As John says, a monopoly on the operation of telegraphs was conferred upon the Postmaster General as a result of the Telegraph Acts of 1868<sup>1</sup> (which was modified by a separate Telegraph Act of 1869<sup>2</sup>) and 1870<sup>3</sup>. The management and development of all domestic telegraphs was taken over by the Post Office, the assets of the Private Telegraph Companies having been purchased. The date of transfer of the telegraphs to the Post Office was the 5 February 1870<sup>4</sup>. The 1870 Act, which followed the transfer to the Post Office, was passed in August 1870 and extended the provisions of the modified 1868 Act to the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man, and made a few other provisions.

The Act of 1868 specifically excluded the Atlantic Telegraph Company and the Anglo-American Telegraph Company from the monopoly of the Postmaster General. The Submarine Telegraph Company, which operated several submarine cables to continental Europe, was also not acquired by the Post Office. The Act of 1869 states that the Postmaster General 'shall not by virtue of this Act be authorised to purchase the whole or any part of the undertaking of any company or persons engaged in the transmission of telegrams to or from any place out of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland'. The Act of 1870 contains a clause stating that the Act does not authorise the Postmaster General to purchase the undertakings of the Submarine Telegraph Company. The Submarine Telegraph Company was eventually acquired by the Postmaster General in 1889 and 1890.

The Railway Companies, and details of their telegraph arrangements leading up to this transition in 1870, are all listed in a document drawn up by the Board of Trade in July 1868<sup>5</sup>, the same month as the 1868 Telegraph Act. This document lists 54 Railway Companies in England and Wales, 8 in Scotland and 20 in Ireland. Of the Railway Companies in England a variety of arrangements for the use of telegraphs existed prior to the Post Office monopoly. Some Companies had installed and worked their own telegraph system, some owned the system on the railway but it was worked by one of the private Telegraph Companies, some had an agreement with a private Telegraph Company who had installed telegraph apparatus on the railway and allowed the Railway Company to use it for operating the railway. There are other arrangements in some cases that vary from those given here.

The Midland Railway, to which John refers, has the following information submitted for 1868 in the Board of Trade Report: 113 Telegraph Stations used for the Public or for the purposes of the Public and the Railway jointly; zero Telegraph Stations used for the purposes of the Railway only; 748 miles of posts and underground lines used by Public or Public and Railway jointly. When it comes to miles of wire, there are 2984 miles used for Public or Public and Railway jointly and there are 646 miles used for the purposes of the Railway only. In the notes it states that apart from the 646 miles of wires for the sole use of the Railway Company, all the rest of the wires are operated by the Electric and International Telegraph Company (by far the largest of the Private Telegraph Companies). I have to assume that Signal Boxes were not regarded as Telegraph Stations – Signalmen used the telegraph as a means of communication to facilitate the 'block signalling system', and perhaps these account for much of the wire mileage used for the Railway Company only. I may be wrong about this.

John states that "although the railway telegraphs were primarily for their own use, they were now open to the public" (following the Post Office Monopoly). The situation regarding Railway Companies and Telegraphs was rather complicated. Originally the Railway Companies either installed their own telegraph systems or came to an agreement with a Private Telegraph Company to have a telegraph installed as detailed above. This latter arrangement benefitted both companies as the Railway Company acquired the means to rapidly communicate urgent messages down the line, and the Telegraph Company acquired the right to install telegraph wires alongside the track which linked many towns and cities into its telegraph network. The Board of Trade document makes it clear that many Railway Companies were offering the public the facility to send telegraphic messages from their stations prior to nationalisation, either through the offices of a Private Telegraph Company or through their own private facilities. In the latter case, the message could only be sent to a person in another town on the Railway Company's lines.

The South Eastern Railway is an interesting case. It had 113 Telegraph Stations for Public and Railway, with 252 Telegraph Stations for use of the Railway Company only. This was the only Railway Company that definitely issued and used adhesive stamps for the public to prepay the fee for a telegraph message. The stamps were designed and printed by Charles Whiting, and the first issue appeared in 1860, they continued in use until the Post Office Monopoly in 1870. The London, Chatham and Dover Railway also produced stamps for prepayment of telegraphs, but there is no evidence that they were ever used.

The main reasons that the Government decided to take over the whole of the domestic Telegraph business are summarised by the Post Office in an historical review<sup>6</sup>. These were the unsatisfactory coverage of the service across the country, the relatively high cost of sending a message and the difficulty for all classes of society to access the service. The bulk of the Telegraph network was restricted to the lines of the Railway Companies. This meant that some towns were not connected into the services, rural districts and many urban suburbs also had no service, and both business and public had to go to a railway station, often inconveniently situated, in order to access the service. On cost, the Post Office initially charged a basic price of 1/- for twenty words over any distance. Just prior to the monopoly, the private companies had reduced their charges to 1/- for twenty words up to 100 miles with successive increases over greater distances. In 1885 the Post office reduced this basic cost to 6<sup>d</sup>.

By the 1890s the Post Office was becoming concerned about the number of 'free' telegrams that were being sent by the Railway Companies on their own business<sup>7</sup>. The five years from 1876 to 1880 saw a total of 1,565,985 free telegrams sent, while in the five years from 1886 to 1890 the number had increased to 4,972,449. Negotiations were instigated between the Post Office and the Railway Companies over the next few years in order to strike agreements that put a limit on the number of free telegrams that a Railway Company could send.

The Post Office drew up various agreements with the Railway Companies to cover all aspects of telegraph work and maintenance. While the Post Office was primarily concerned with public and business telegraph communication, it was sensitive to the needs of the Railway Companies to continue to use the telegraph for efficient and safe operation. To this end agreements were reached that contained an annual 'allowance' of 'free' telegrams that the Railway Company could use. They were encouraged to restrict telegraph communication to the most urgent messages. The Midland Railway Company concluded an agreement on the 31 December 1892, by which they were entitled to send each year 320,000 free telegrams containing, in total, not more than 5,120,000 words<sup>8</sup>!

Similarly, the London and North Western Railway Company (Euston – Rugby – Birmingham etc) came to an agreement on the 30 June 1894. This Railway Company was entitled to send each year, free of charge, 325,000 telegrams containing not more than 4,550,000 words<sup>9</sup>! The suggestion that Railways Companies were encouraged to restrict telegraph use to the most urgent messages only is backed up by this extract from the London and North Western Company's rule book<sup>10</sup>

26. Communications of an urgent nature, but not of sufficient importance to warrant the use of the wires, should be forwarded by the Sender by means of the "Urgent Train Message" system. Full instructions on the subject appear on the Urgent Train Message Form.

The Railway Companies were using the telegraphs on their own Company business, while at the same time acting as agents of the Post Office to transmit telegraphs for business and the public. The railway telegraph clerks had, therefore, to follow the rules and practises of the Post Office, as is shown by this extract from the aforementioned rule book.<sup>11</sup>

(e) The following Post Office Rule with regard to the senders affixing the stamps to the messages must be carried out when-ever practicable :—

Senders affixing stamps to messages.

" All charges for transmission and for portorage, &c., must  
 " be prepaid by means of postage stamps, and the senders  
 " must be requested to themselves affix the stamps.  
 " When a message written on a form A. 1 is handed in,  
 " the clerk must ascertain whether the whole charge is  
 " covered by the embossed stamp, and if not, the sender  
 " of the message must add the stamps necessary to make  
 " up the charge."

The next illustration shows the top half of a 'telegram to be forwarded' form of the London & North Western Railway, dated 12 December 1893. This is the form handed to the Telegraph Clerk containing the message that is to be transmitted through the wires to the relevant station. It clearly states, in the yellow overprint, the need to avoid using this mode of communication when not absolutely necessary. The Post Office was concerned to avoid large numbers of railway telegrams causing delays to the messages of both business and the public, and the agreements mentioned were entered into in order to address this. The Railway Companies, by taking care over the number of telegrams that they sent, would take longer to 'use up' their allocation of free telegrams. This would result in fewer telegrams that they would have to pay for (albeit at a negotiated reduced rate).

(1712—Forwarded Telegram.) No. of Message \_\_\_\_\_

**London & North Western Railway.—TELEGRAM.**

Prefix \_\_\_\_\_ Code Time \_\_\_\_\_ No. of Words \_\_\_\_\_

Time \_\_\_\_\_ Date *Dec 12 1893*

Forwarded \_\_\_\_\_ m. Date \_\_\_\_\_

Station \_\_\_\_\_ By me \_\_\_\_\_ Clerk \_\_\_\_\_

to \_\_\_\_\_ From \_\_\_\_\_ (Name and Address.) To \_\_\_\_\_

*J. R. 26 1/2* *Whitechurch*

*V.O. V.Y. 1219 Dec 11 to*  
*Hereford 5 Boxes*  
*9.45 a.m. RN 35071.*

*SCA. O.K.A. urge*  
*forward Yea S.M.*

The origin station has not been entered on this form, but the destination station is Whitechurch (Shropshire). The message inevitably contains a number of standard code letters, for example the 'SM' at the end means 'end of message'!

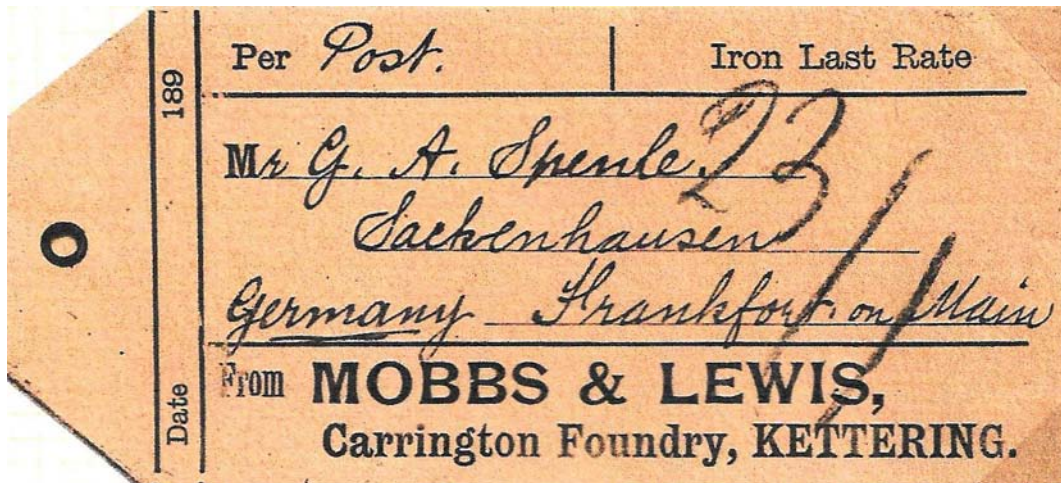
#### References

- 1 31 & 32 Victoria Cap110
- 2 32 & 33 Victoria Cap73
- 3 33 & 34 Victoria Cap 88
- 4 18<sup>th</sup> Report of the Postmaster General on the Post Office, 1872, p.42
- 5 Return to an Order of the Honourable the House of Commons, Board of Trade, July 1868
- 6 41<sup>st</sup> Report of the Postmaster General on the Post Office, 1895, pp. 33-38
- 7 36<sup>th</sup> Report of the Postmaster General on the Post Office, 1890, p.10-11
- 8 General Post Office 'Wayleaves' 1912. Part 2, no.330
- 9 Ibid, No.319
- 10 London & North Western Railway, Telegraph Rules & Regulations, 1906. p.52
- 11 Ibid p. 35

## THE IRON LAST RATE

by Derek Smeathers

For those too young to know, an iron last is for mending shoes; it is used by shoemakers and cordwainers (a shoemaker who makes new shoes from new leather) in the manufacture and repair of shoes. Whichever way you turned it, a last had two legs at 90° on a flat surface with a vertical leg rising from the intersection of the flat two (see illustration below). Being manufactured from iron, these lasts were very heavy and it appears that a special Post Office rate, the Iron Last Rate, was agreed for the carriage of them by the parcel post service. The label below is from a firm specialising in the making of lasts used in the boot and shoe industry. This particular label was addressed to Germany, probably in 1897.



The postage paid was 1/6 by affixing the three QV 6d purple on rose (SG 208, issued 1 January 1887) to the reverse of the label. The postage stamps are cancelled by an undated KETTERING rubber stamp. Does 1/6 seem to be an inexpensive, even cheap rate to Germany, considering the weight?

*From the editor* - Lasts were cast iron and very heavy as Derek states. I used one as a schoolboy footballer. I recall that studs on football boots had three short, sharp nails, so that when the boot needed new studs, it was slipped over the appropriate flat size, the old stud removed (if still there) and the new one hammered into the sole. Football boots were meant to last in those days!

So who can enlighten us about the Iron Last Rate and how long did it last (Oh dear, again, sorry!)? I hope the heavy delivery was the *sole* one that day (that's put my foot in it).



# Bill Pipe



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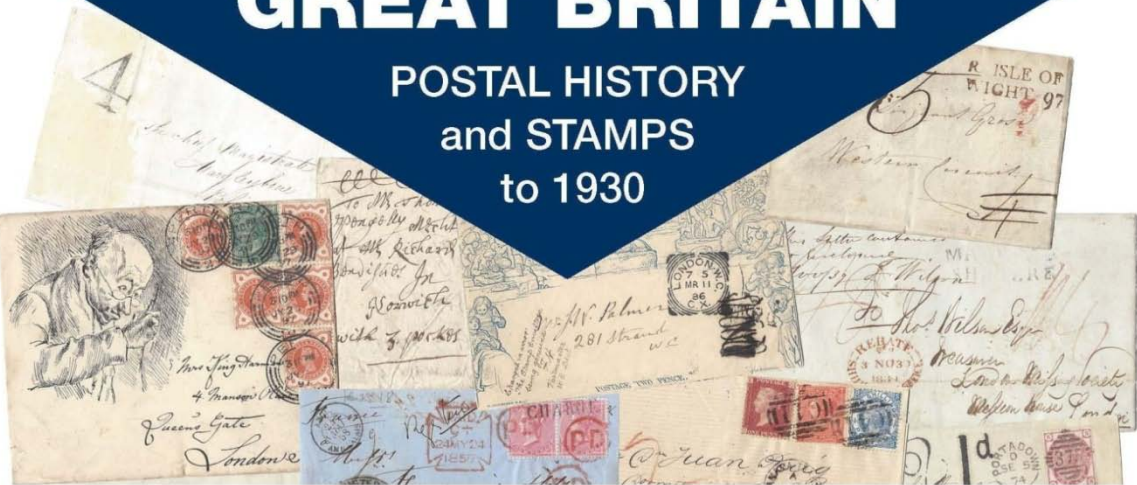
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# WILDINGS of SHREWSBURY - POSTAL RELATED ITEMS

by Brian Atkins



Fig 1, L.W perfin

I have a small group of perfins in my Shropshire collection including one I acquired many years ago; it was an L.W on a KEdVII ½d green cancelled with an OC 11 1910 SHREWSBURY double circle (Fig 1). It was obtained at such an early stage of my collecting interest that I knew nothing about what I later discovered were called perfins. I realised there must be a reason for them but promptly forgot about it as pre-stamp items and undated circulars of the villages began to be discovered! But then along came the small dated circular village hand stamps on postcards, some of which had an elaborate 'shield-like' emblem announcing they were produced by L. Wilding / THE SALOP ART PRESS / SHREWSBURY (Fig 2). The GV 1d scarlet on a November 1913 postcard below also has an inverted L.W perfin, seen to better effect in the inverted black and white reproduction alongside. Here was the proof that the L.W perfin was that of L. Wilding, later confirmed by a receipt attached to an invoice in 1931 (Fig 3). The perfin is known used from 1908 to 1945 (thanks to the Perfin Society for this) and is characterized by a pinhole between the base of the L and W.

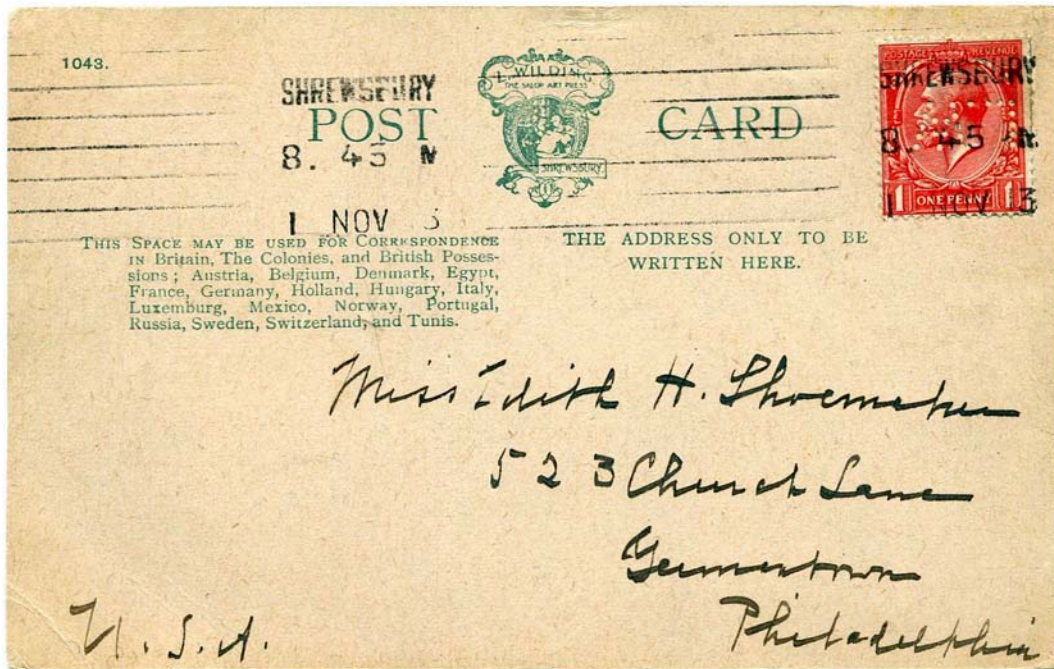


Fig 2, Nov 1913 Wilding card to USA showing inverted L.W perfin with upright image alongside.



Fig 3, 1931 receipt from WILDING & SON to Acton Reynald Girls School (9 miles north of Shrewsbury), attached to an invoice for books including *The Three Musketeers*, *Bleak House* and the immortal *1066 and All That*, one of the funniest books ever written, for those with a Goonish sense of humour, anyway!

But who were Wilding & Son? Their shop at 33, Castle Street was on the left up the hill from the railway station after the Library on the right and Council House on the left and just before the turn to Windsor Place. The business was begun by Longworth Wilding, who I thought may have been a Quaker with a first name like that, but it appears not so. He was born in Salford in 1850, his father also Longworth and his mother Jane (née Owen) of Shrewsbury. They lived for a time with his mother's sister at Dogpole, Shrewsbury. After employment as a Telephone Clerk in Cardiff and marriage in 1874, by 1881 he was described as a Bookseller at Castle Street.

The website [www.shropshirehistory.org.uk](http://www.shropshirehistory.org.uk) states 'Wildings carried on business at No 33 from its foundation by Longworth Wilding in 1875 until its demise in 1968. By that time it had been taken over by the Midland Educational Supply Co who offered a much-reduced range of services. In its heyday Wildings sold stationery, books, gifts, pictures and records and undertook picture framing. They also operated a substantial printing and bookbinding works at the rear of the premises in Windsor Place'.

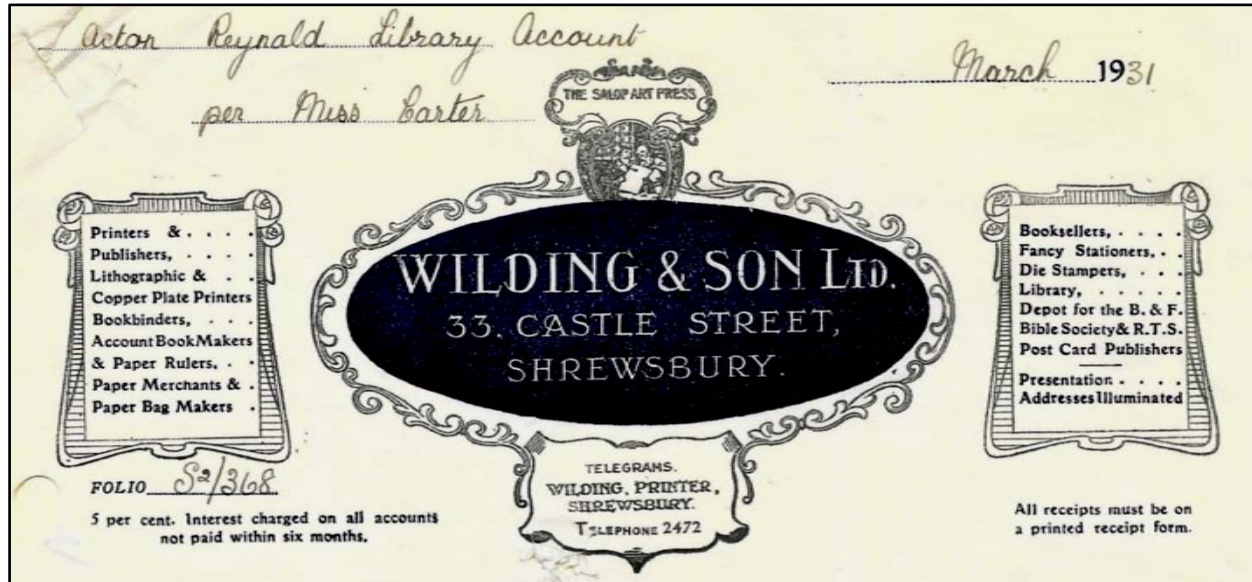


Fig 4, 1931 heading of the invoice to which the receipt in Fig 3 was attached

As you see from the invoice head, by 1931 the company was providing a variety of goods and services to the local townspeople and beyond. The right-hand side of the invoice shows **Post Card Publishers**, which is, perhaps, what the company is most noted for nowadays, with later cards numbered to well over 1,000 (note 1043 on the top left of Fig 2). At least 24 of their cards were of Shrewsbury scenes painted by Edwin Cole (Fig 5); the one below is the front of the card to Pennsylvania, USA, shown at Fig 2.

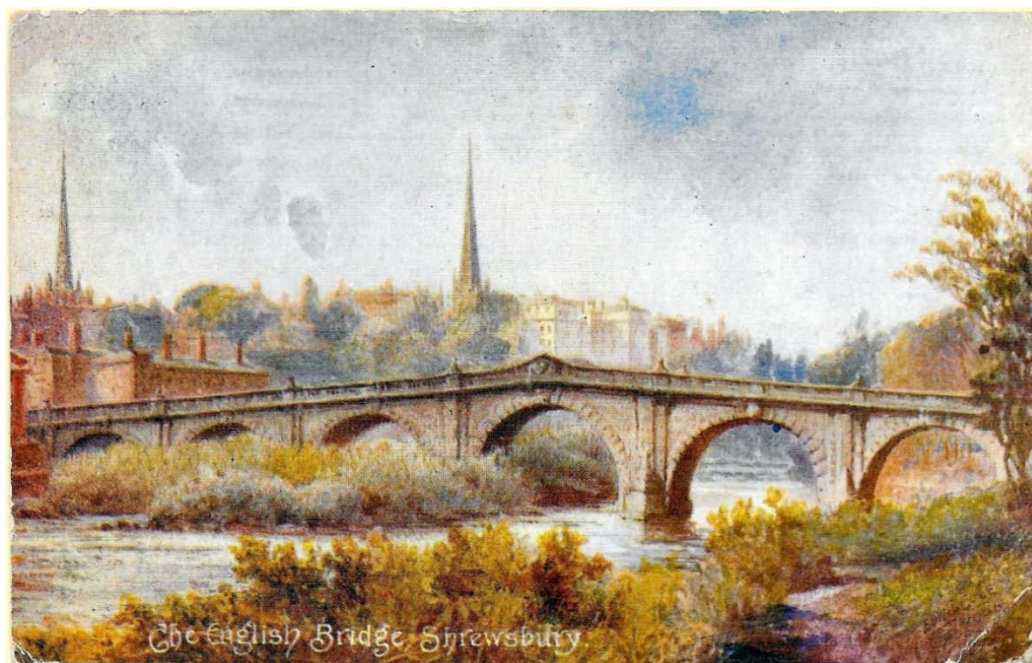


Fig 5, The English Bridge, Shrewsbury from a painting by Edwin Cole

Forty of Cole's paintings can be found at <https://www.garenewing.co.uk/home/collections/cole.html>; many were used for postcards but his separate stand-alone paintings, mostly of Shropshire views are there as well.

In 1916 the company produced a postcard for German POWs held in Shrewsbury (Figs 6 and 7). The card is flimsy and looks hastily produced (what is that green foliage meant to be, an olive branch?). I'm led to believe the German states *Best Wishes for Christmas and New Year*. It would be interesting, but probably impossible, to find out if the company produced the cards as a goodwill gesture or whether a government agency requested them and paid for them.



Fig 6, Front of the postcard printed by Wildings for the use of German POWs at Shrewsbury, Christmas 1916

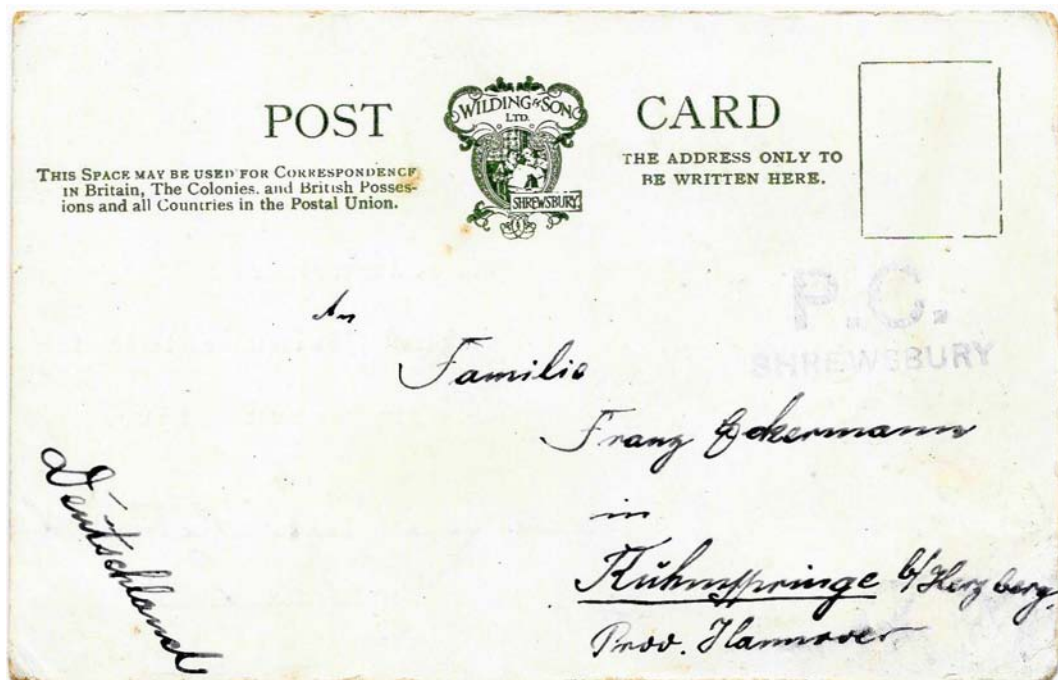


Fig 7, Reverse of the card sent to the Province of Hanover & showing a faint P.C. / SHREWSBURY mark

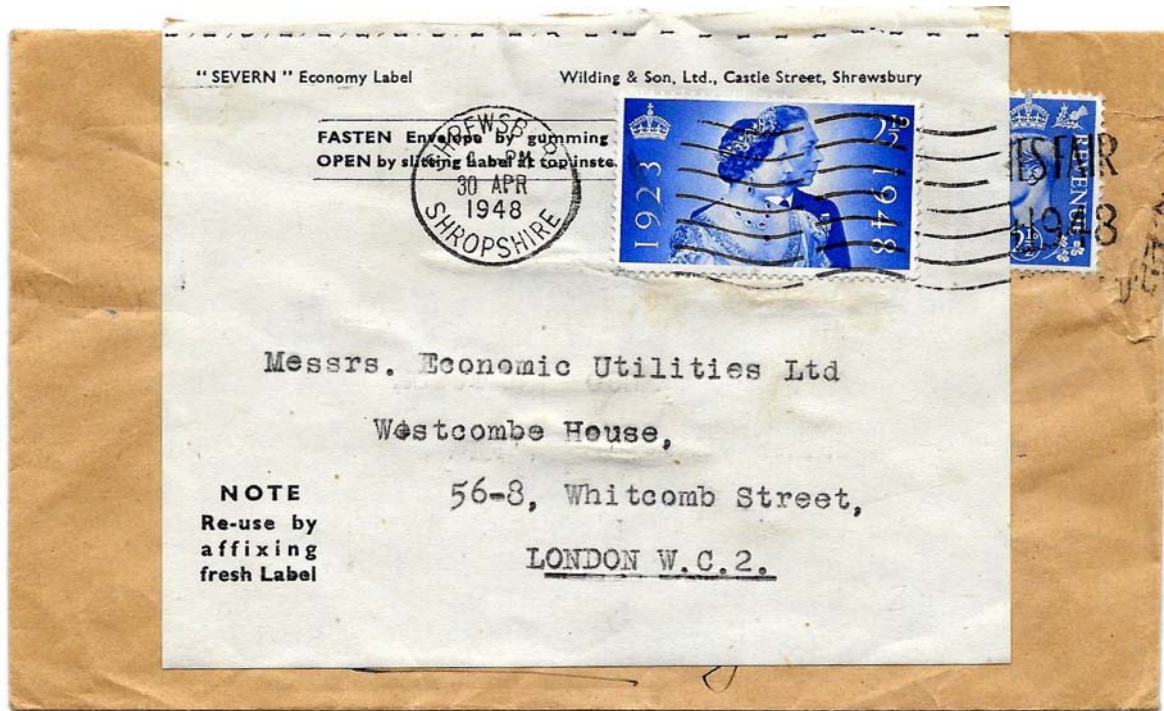


Fig 8, 1948 "SEVERN" Economy Label, named after the river?

Their WW2 effort included an economy label for reuse covering a letter originally from Hull to Shrewsbury.

They weren't above a bit of advertising either! A February 1897 GPO postcard from Wyle Cop, Shrewsbury to St Neots had a short piece of advertising down one side with an encouragement to bulk purchase cards.

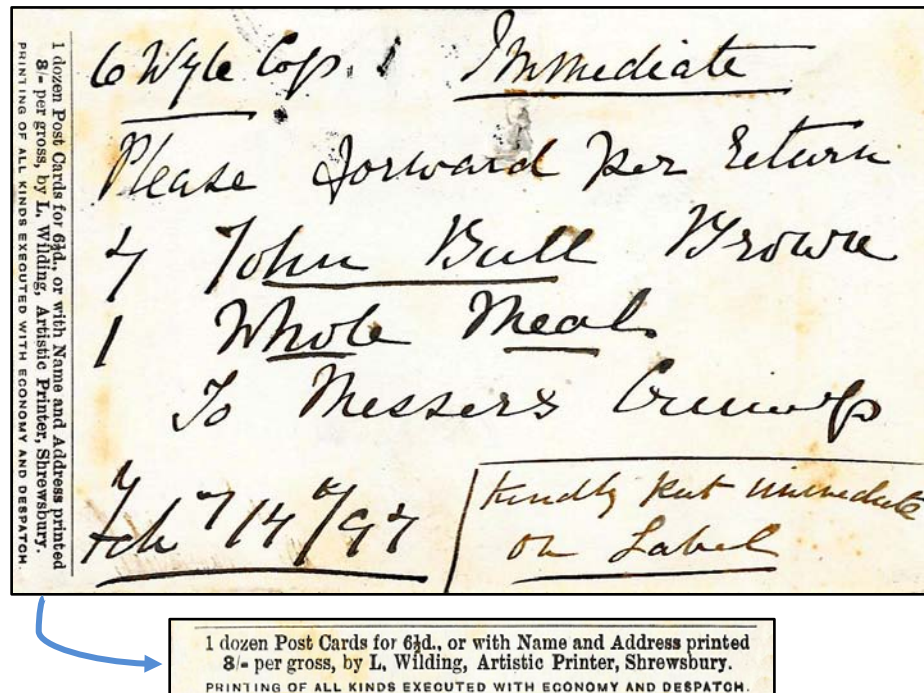


Fig 9, Reverse of postcard to St Neots with Wilding advert printed at the side (Collection of Richard Farman)

Longworth Wilding died at Atcham, the village opposite the National Trust's Attingham Hall, sometime in the second quarter of 1918 but the successful business he began survived for 50 years after his death. How we could do with a good bookbinder and quality card and paper merchant in the Shrewsbury area today.

Does anyone have an example of a Wilding postal related product or service not shown here?

## PRIDE AND PREJUDICE: A POSTAL HISTORIAN'S TALE

by Alan Godfrey

In April 2019 I received an unexpected and unusual email from an American lady, Barbara Heller. Her request was as follows: "I'm working on a special edition of the novel *Pride and Prejudice* and I'm hoping that you, or a member, can assist me in resolving some postal questions. Here's an example: in 1812 would a letter from Hatfield in Hertfordshire travel through London on its way to Bakewell in Derbyshire? If an aunt was sending a multi-page letter to a niece, would she send it pre-paid to save the niece money or is there a danger it wouldn't be delivered if all the postage was already paid? Would a letter sent "Express" be pre-paid? Any assistance would be much appreciated!"

Always keen to tackle a challenge, I emailed her back to find out more about this book. She told me that there are 19 different letters sent between the characters in *Pride and Prejudice*. She wanted to create the letters to look as though they were written in 1811 and 1812, when the novel is set. The letters would be individual (i.e. not bound into the book) so that the reader could hold each one. Even though some of the places in the novel are fictional, the postal marks were intended to be as authentic as possible. However, she did go on to say: "I've done a lot of research - I have several books by R. M. Willcocks - but I feel like I've gone down a rabbit hole of Regency postal marks, routes and costs and the more I discover, the more questions I have." I think we've all been in that situation!

So, we then began to get into the detail. I explained about the General Post vs London Twopenny Post, London morning duty and evening duty, Sunday marks, unpaid (black) and prepaid (red) rates, letters taken via London showing the 'In all' rate; and I provided scans from my own collection showing examples of various marks.

Many of the fictional towns in *Pride and Prejudice* allowed the invention of some fanciful marks. One was 'Meryton' (said to be near Hatfield in Hertfordshire), for which Barbara decided she would like a serpentine town mark. Another was 'Hunsford' (said to be near Westerham in Kent), which was given a two-line boxed 25 mileage mark. An easier mark to create was Newcastle-upon-Tyne to 'Pemberley, near Lambton, Derbyshire' (said to be north of Bakewell), a circular dated mileage mark. Barbara also created a fictional manuscript 'Missent to Prenton' to explain the late arrival of a letter. Obviously, it was also necessary at times to consult my colleagues in the Society for assistance for their opinion and my thanks especially go to Gordon Hardy and Richard Farman for helping out.



Fig 1, 1811 Hunsford / 25 boxed mileage to Longbourn House, near Meryton, Herts (Reproduction)

The nineteen letters were written out by the New York Society of Scribes, who created them using the actual writing of famous Georgians as a guide. Mr Darcy's handwriting was based on the Duke of Kent (Queen Victoria's father); the handwriting of Robert Southey (Poet Laureate for 20 years) became the source of Mr Gardiner's letters (he was uncle to the Bennet sisters in the book). As for the book's heroine, Elizabeth Bennet, her letters had to be in the handwriting of Jane Austen herself. The content of the letters was largely based on the text of the book, but this was augmented by original text created by Barbara and her helpers, sometimes using Jane Austen's actual letters, and 'taking what was paraphrased [in the novel] and turning it into letter prose.'

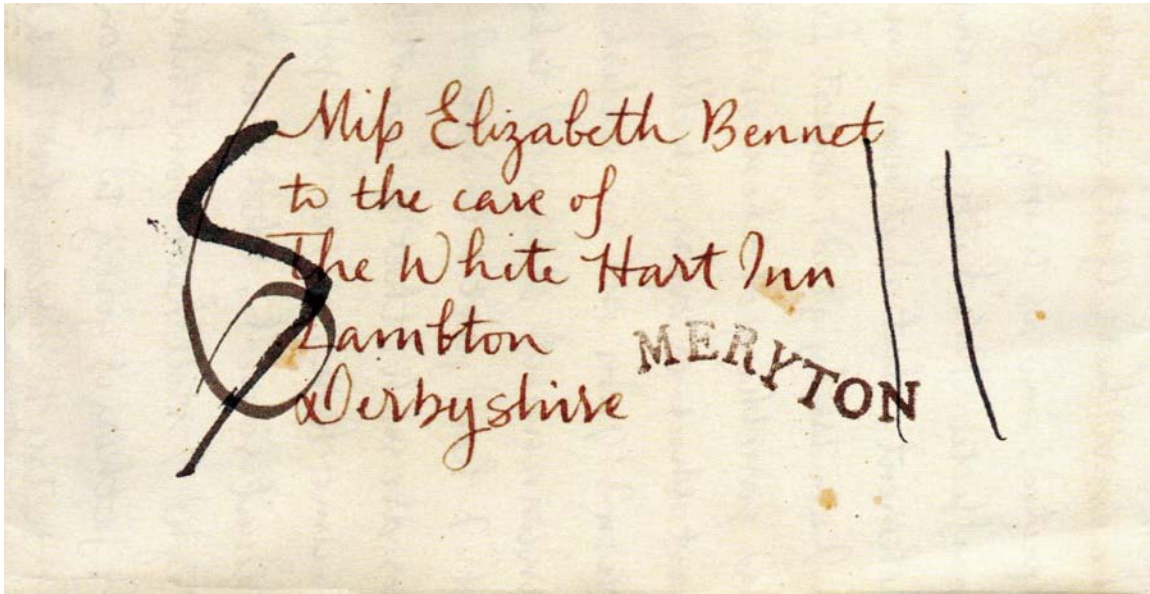


Fig 2, 1812 MERYTON Serpentine to Lambton, Derbyshire (Reproduction)

The new version of 'Pride and Prejudice' was published in September and has received glowing reviews from: The Washington Post, Smithsonian Magazine and The Times (UK). Barbara Heller is a set decorator for film and television by profession and based in New York.

[*"Pride & Prejudice"* by Jane Austen, curated by Barbara Heller, is published by Chronicle Books at \$30. It is available in UK from Amazon for around £20]

#### PITSFORD, NORTHAMPTON to CONSTANTINOPLE, TURKEY 1896

Submitted by Derek Smeathers

The cover from Pitsford 5 miles north of Northampton has the QV 1½d purple and green (SG198) and 1d lilac, die 2 (paying the 2½d UPU rate), both cancelled by a single Northampton 4-bar vertical oval duplex, dated 23 April 1896. It is addressed to Constantinople, Turkey, arriving on 28 April 1896, (date stamp of the BRITISH POST OFFICE.)



The addressee was a passenger on the Orient Line SS *Lusitania*, which was not the one torpedoed and sunk off southern Ireland in 1915; this one was built by Laird Bros, Birkenhead and launched in 1871 for the Pacific Steam Navigation Company. Her 13 October 1871 maiden voyage was from Liverpool to Valparaiso, Chile, via Cape Horn.

# A LETTER to a FUTURE ARCHBISHOP of CANTERBURY'S GRANDFATHER

by Gerald Griffin

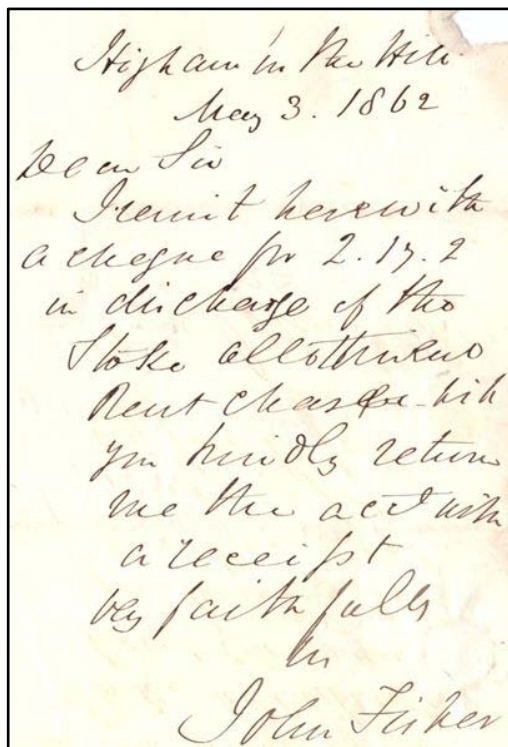
Several years ago, when I fully retired, I decided to look for a way to satisfy my collecting instincts. Having a few expensive hobbies already, the new hobby had to be cheap! When staying with a friend, who was a keen philatelist, I asked him about the numbers that were used to cancel the stamps in his GB Victorian collection. While he had obviously noticed them he could not say much more than "That is where they were posted".

Having collected stamps as a boy I decided to investigate these numbers as a collecting possibility. A few years on and I have a reasonable collection of England and Wales Post Office Numbers used as cancellations, most of which have been purchased for a few pounds! Initially I bought job lots of individual stamps, which got the collection going. Now I mostly buy the cancellations on covers or postcards.

As readers will know the covers sometimes comes with their contents, most of which are mundane. They include requests for rent reduction, an order for beer or an account of a holiday in Pwllheli. Occasionally they are more interesting and here is one of them.



Fig 1, Local cover with 1d red 'star' cancelled by the HINCKLEY duplex dated 2 MY 1829 (should be 1862)



The copperplate transcript:

Higham in The Hill  
May 3. 1862

Dear Sir

I remit herewith a cheque for 2.17.3 in discharge of the Stoke allotment Rent charge. Will you kindly return me the acct. with a receipt

Very faithfully,  
John Fisher

At first sight this cover looks like a perfectly normal communication. It seems that it originally contained a cheque as payments for rents from allotments. The cheque would have been quite a sum of money in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and therefore seems likely to cover the rent for a longish period of time, possible a year. The letter is addressed to Rev John Fisher, the Rector and Lord of the Manor at Higham on the Hill, near Hinckley in Leicestershire. The writer of the letter is also named John Fisher. Closer examination however raises some interesting anomalies, which might imply not all is as it appears.

The letter was received at the Post Office in Hinkley on May 2 1862 but was written apparently later on 3<sup>rd</sup> May. (The date part of the duplex has an error giving the year as 1829 - the 62 has been inverted).

Fig 2, Letter inside the envelope (reduced)

The Copperplate writing on the two parts is quite different, which means two people had a hand in the letter. While the address on the front is correct there seems to be an error in the sender's address. He is writing from Higham IN the Hill, not Higham ON the Hill. There is no reference to a Higham IN the Hill in any local records. The letter has the hallmarks of being composed by an educated person; it is articulate and has a formal, legal feel. It seems unlikely to have been written by a gardener or servant, people who often collected such rents at that time. However there is a problem with the writing; while the words are clearly written at the start of the piece, they become less clear at the end, for example, in the words 'allotments' and 'charge'. The word 'very' at the end is poorly written and the marks under 'faithfully' do not seem to serve a purpose.

The letter is to and from the same name. Records show that Rev John had a son, also called John who would have been 28 years old when the letter was written. The 1841 census list John as a child in the Higham rectory. In 1851 he is no longer there, possibly away at school. He is not there in 1861 either. Indeed he is nowhere to be found in the area. The 1861 census has no other John Fishers in Higham on the Hill.

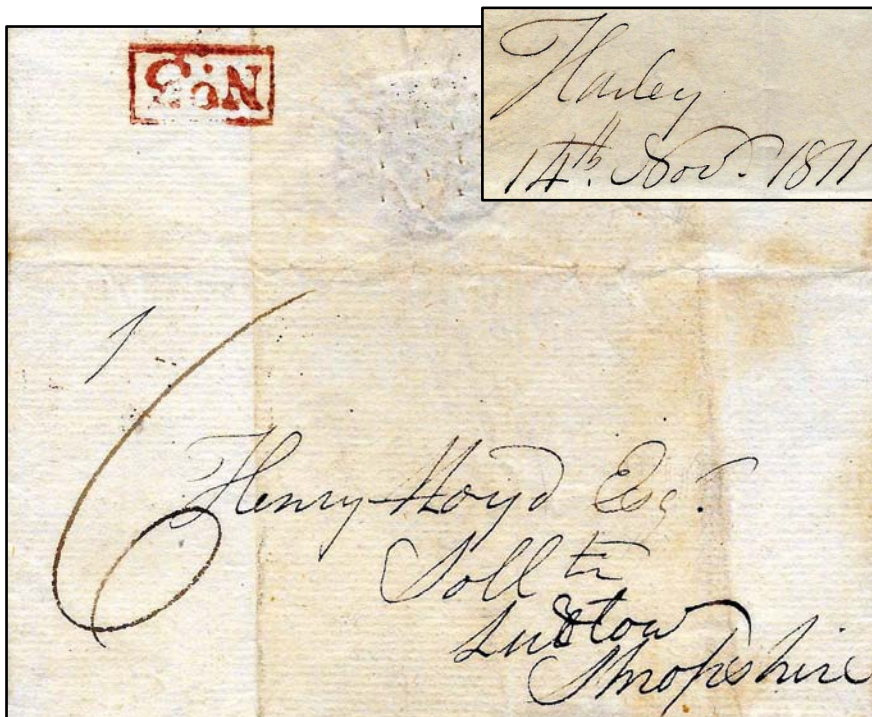
All this leaves us wondering why the dates do not match and indeed, why the letter was posted at all when it could easily have been delivered by hand in this small village. Why are there two hands in the writing? Was the letter pre-addressed, say, by Rev. John for the rent collector to write the contents? Given the errors in the letter was it possible that the writer was copying a note he had been given? Would an educated man have made the mistake with the address? Who is the mystery second John Fisher? Were the two John Fishers one and the same person? If so why was the letter written?

Or could first impressions be correct and that it was indeed written by the son, John who returned to Higham after the census and became a rent collector for dad. Perhaps John was dyslexic and had the cover pre-addressed by someone else to help him out. We will probably never know!

Local records show that the church did own allotments in Higham but not at this time. There are references in modern planning documents to allotments in the neighbouring village of Stoke Golding but they do not appear on any map. I have been unable to establish if these are the allotments referred to.

Rev John Fisher had several sons and one, Henry, succeeded him in the Rectory. Henry was the father of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Geoffrey Fisher, who crowned Queen Elizabeth II.

~~~~~  
HARLEY, near WENLOCK to LUDLOW, 14 NOVEMBER 1811



The earliest boxed N^o3 of Wenlock is seen on the adjacent entire from the village of Harley, dated 14 Nov 1811, but there is no SHIFFNAL / Penny Post stamp (SN400), the earliest record of which is 2 Nov 1811; so it was in use. Entires from Wenlock dated 29 Mar 1812 and 18 Oct 1812 do not have the penny post mark either but the SHIFFNAL / 146 mileage mark (SN534). The earliest entire that I know of from Wenlock that also has a SHIFFNAL / Penny Post stamp is dated 3 May 1814, there may, of course, be earlier ones. Nov 1811 and Sept 1812 entires from Madeley Wood (No1) and Broseley (No2) receiving houses respectively, *do* have the penny post mark of Shifnal.

Any explanations for this apparent anomaly?

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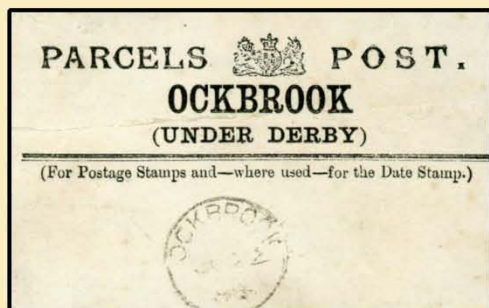
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