

MIDLAND MAIL

THE JOURNAL OF THE MIDLAND (GB) POSTAL HISTORY SOCIETY

President: Alan Marshall

Chairman:
Chris Jackson
(01527 544722)

Treasurer:
Bob Viney
(01572 770077)

Secretary:
Mick Gill
(01636 672868)

Programme Secretary: Mel Matthews (0121 6898147)

Number 179, August 2013

NEW MEMBER

We extend a cordial welcome to Dr Bill Gillham of Cottesmore, Oakham who collects Rutland postal history.

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

The new season begins with an all-day meeting in the village hall (SN14 6HX) at Kington St Michael, near Chippenham, on 7th September to which members of the Somerset and Dorset Postal History Group and the Bristol Postal History Group have been invited. Coffee and tea will be available from 10.30 a.m. and the meeting will begin at 11.00 a.m. During the morning, the Society will be welcoming the distinguished postal historian Alan Holyoake FRSPH who will display 'GB Secured Delivery Leading to Registration, 1450-1862'. This remarkable display was chosen for the 75th Anniversary Conference of the Postal History Society and was also shown recently in Australia. During the afternoon, members are invited to bring nine sheet displays with the theme 'Valuables by Post'.

Lunch will again be at the popular 'Jolly Huntsman' and pre-payment is not necessary. (Orders can be placed during morning coffee.) As there will not be a booking form on this occasion, anyone unfamiliar with the venue may phone John Calladine on 01249-758148 or e-mail john.calladine@mac.com for directions.

On 12th October we pay our annual visit to the premises of Warwick & Warwick. At 1.00 p.m. members are invited to provide a one board display on 'Items from the New County Catalogue'. There will be a committee meeting in the morning starting at 11 a.m. Will those members who will not be attending the committee meeting please note the starting time for the afternoon which is a little earlier than usual.

Our November meeting will be held on 9th starting at 1.30 p.m. at Carrs Lane Church, Birmingham. There should be plenty of scope in the title of the members' one board displays - 'Items carried by Road, River, Canal or Railway'.

MIDPEX

Bryan Jones and his team are to be congratulated on providing such a superb event at an ideal venue. Excellent catering, plenty of room to move around and a wide range of dealers all combined to make a very enjoyable day. We should not forget that an enormous amount of work goes into arranging such an event, and we should not overlook that such shows need substantial sponsorship. So thanks are also due to Cavendish Auctions.

The Society stand was busy throughout the day and about forty copies of our latest publication were sold. So, if you have not already done so, get a copy very quickly while they are still available!

Several of our members had displays on show and Malcolm Allinson is to be congratulated on his 'The Fourpenny Post' which was awarded 90 marks and 'Best in the Show'. Not far behind came Brian Atkins' 'The Postal History of Much Wenlock' which also was awarded a gold. There is no truth in the rumour that Alan Godfrey's 'Wreck Mail' was marked down because of the poor condition of the covers. Alan Marshall was awarded a silver gilt, while Clive Jones and Derek Smeathers received silver awards. Congratulations to all of them.

APOLOGIES

I apologise sincerely to members, particularly Brian Atkins, for the errors in the last issue. In the absence of a printer, I copied the issue onto a disc so that the edition could be printed elsewhere. At some point in the process the file clearly became corrupted. Brian's article appears later in this issue with the appropriate captions.

THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting was held on 27th April 2013 at St Germain's Church Hall, Birmingham with twenty-four members and five visitors present. Apologies were received from Paul Bradshaw, Tony Plowright, Martin Scroggs and John Soer. The minutes of the 2012 AGM were accepted as a correct record with no matters arising.

The Chairman said 2012/13 had been another successful year with Richard's programme being well received and the Annual Christmas lunch well attended. Highlights of the year were the joint September meeting with the Birmingham Society with displays of Birmingham postal history by Eric Lewis and Ian Baker. The sit-down lunch provided by Sharon and other ladies was much appreciated. The October meeting saw a display of Leicestershire post offices from John Soer, while the December meeting saw an excellent display of GB Postage Due Mail given by Patrick Frost. In February the display at the Black Country Museum from Gordon Hardy gave members the opportunity to see some Derbyshire postal history. Once again, the one-board displays at other meetings proved to be popular with the Bookpost/Printed Paper display causing members to scratch their heads and dig deep into storage boxes.

The new County Catalogue was almost ready and he looked forward to a book launch and successful sales. The Society was indebted to John Calladine and Martin Scroggs for all their efforts and to the County Editors for providing the material. Mick Gill continued to provide splendid service as Secretary, producing up to date minutes and easily followed agendas.

The membership had been greatly saddened by the untimely death of Sadie Cole. The editorship of Midland Mail had been a great challenge to her but, after a few hiccups, everything was going well. Sadie will be greatly missed. He was grateful to John Soer for stepping back into the breach as Editor.

He also wishes to thank Eric Lewis for looking after financial matters, well assisted by Alan Godfrey as Examiner of Accounts. The Auction presided over by Chris Jackson and his team was a useful money-raiser for the Society and thanks were due to Eric Lewis for all his work in preparing the auction. Special thanks were due to Alan Marshall as President who was always on hand to give helpful advice and assistance. Finally, Mel thanked all members who regularly attended meetings, gave displays and provided the backbone of the Society.

Alan Godfrey explained that he had not had sufficient opportunity to examine all aspects of the accounts and therefore could not sign them off as yet. The examination would be completed and the accounts distributed with a future issue of Midland Mail. The Chairman said that the accounts would be presented formally to the committee meeting in October. The treasurer said that membership stood at 106, speakers' expenses had increased and that the inclusion of colour pages in Midland Mail had also increased costs. In the circumstances the Chairman said that the subscription would remain at £10 a year. This met with the approval of the meeting.

The Secretary read a report from the Editor in which he thanked the family of Sadie Cole for ensuring such a smooth hand-over of material when they had far more important matters to deal with at such a sad time. Since then there had been three issues of Midland Mail, with an average length of twenty-four pages in line with the decision to reduce the number of copies to four a year. John wished to record his sincere thanks to all who had contributed articles, and especially Eric and Sharon who did so much to get each issue printed and distributed. He apologised for the faults in the latest issue, explaining that he did not know at which point they had arisen and added that they would be corrected in the next issue. As always, he asked that members try to contribute at least one article a year.

As Co-ordinating Editor, John Calladine was pleased to report that the new 'Midlands Edition' of the County Catalogue was currently with the printer. It would be available to members at the end of June and to the public at Midpex. It would be A4 size, hardback and have full dates of usage wherever possible, full size illustrations, coloured maps of each county and considerably amplified county introductions. The cost to members would be £15 and to non-members £20. John said that he had already indicated that he would now retire from the post of Co-ordinating Editor but, if members agreed, he would stay on for a year to handle book sales and the associated administrative tasks. He paid tribute to Martin Scroggs whose computer skills had resulted in a very professional conclusion to the project. Martin had indicated that he would be prepared to take over as Co-ordinating Editor in a year's time if members agreed.

Two very successful book launches had been held at the Birmingham Botanical Gardens in the past and it had been proposed the new County Catalogue be similarly launched. Unfortunately it was not possible to book the Loudon Suite on either a Saturday or Sunday in June because of the 'wedding season', but a provisional booking had been made for Friday 28th June. Subject to agreement, the cost would be £35 a head, with spouses and partners most welcome to attend. As the event would not have Royal Mail patronage it could be opened to all members. He proposed that, if members agreed, a sub-committee of two or three arrange the details and propose any official guests. Members were in agreement with a show of hands of those who wished to attend.

In concluding, John said that he was confident that the new book, to which so many had contributed and to whom he was very grateful for their support, would be well received both within and without the Society.

There was no Publicity Officer's report. Alan Godfrey explained that the ABPS was still running strongly. Numbers were only fractionally down because of the lack of young people joining societies. To keep costs down it had been agreed to discontinue membership cards and subscription renewals were being dealt with by e-mail where possible. The ABPS continued to support Stampex, twice a year, and Midpex. The next Philatelic Congress would be held in Gloucester.

There was a number of changes in the Officers of the Society: Chris Jackson was elected Chairman to succeed Mel Matthews; Mick Gill was elected as Secretary for a further five years; Mel Matthews took over from Richard Farman as Programme Secretary; Bob Viney replaced Eric Lewis as Treasurer; and, John Calladine was elected as Co-ordinating Editor for the coming year. There were no changes to the County Editors appointments. Alan Godfrey was re-elected as Examiner of Accounts.

Richard Farman explained that because of other commitments the programme for 2013/14 had still to be completed but that details would be given at the next meeting. The September meeting at Kington St Michael would contain a display by the renowned postal historian Alan Holyoake. The Secretary announced that the winner of the Jon Baker trophy was Derek Smeathers.

In closing the meeting, Mel Matthews paid a glowing tribute to Eric Lewis for his valuable contribution to the Society in many different roles over many years. On behalf of members he presented Eric with a suitably inscribed three-volume set of 'The Maltese Cross Cancellations of Great Britain and Ireland.

This presentation closed the meeting and, after a short break the Annual Auction commenced.

M.G.

THE ANNUAL AUCTION

The auction got off to an excellent start with lots 1 and 2 selling at £180 and £95 respectively as against reserves of £24 and £16. Boxes of mixed covers usually do well; a tin box of mixed Leicestershire covers fetched £110. Among other realisations of note were lots: 42 – a superb UDC of Wootton- Walwen which raised £60 (estimate £20); 61 – a Kidderminster Parcel Post label at £40 (£17); 95 – an unrecorded UDC of Ashow which fetched £50 (£20); 97 – another UDC reached £48 (£20); 117 which reached £44 over seven times its estimate of £6; and 299 – a penny black cover – sold at a little over three times estimate. Overall, some £5000 worth of material changed hands. A full list of realisations is shown on the next page. Lot 231 was mislaid by the vendor but if found it will sell at £36. Lot 229, Philatelic Bulletins from 1989 to 1997 was given away as it did not attract a bid!



Bill Pipe

THE MAGPIE



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1	180	2	95	3	40	5	17	6	11	7	15
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15	2	16	8	17	32	18	20	19	17	21	24
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30	3	31	4	33	3	35	9	36	10	37	11
38	30	39	12	40	9	41	24	42	60	43	17
45	5	46	8	47	2	48	4	49	13	50	8
51	24	52	22	53	32	54	26	55	30	56	15
57	4	58	11	59	4	60	28	61	40	62	28
63	18	64	18	65	15	66	16	67	30	68	40
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84	8	85	20	86	15	87	9	89	13	92	7
93	5	94	10	95	50	96	40	97	48	99	4
102	3	104	6	105	5	106	9	107	28	108	10
109	17	110	5	111	22	113	28	114	5	115	13
116	5	117	44	118	24	119	22	120	9	121	8
122	4	123	12	124	8	127	4	128	4	129	24
130	7	131	26	132	4	133	8	134	9	136	12
137	18	138	18	139	24	141	7	142	9	143	13
144	4	145	2	146	2	148	70	149	70	150	24
145	2	146	2	148	70	149	70	150	24	151	12
152	12	153	22	154	2	155	4	156	4	157	34
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167	5	168	10	169	4	170	10	172	18	173	18
174	28	180	9	182	10	186	6	189	17	190	2
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273	5	274	18	279	4	280	4	288	3	291	8
293	16	294	12	295	3	296	5	298	7	299	220
300	11	302	75	303	36	306	13	307	40	308	34
309	16	310	22	311	14	312	14	314	10	317	10
318	4	319	65	320	8	321	8	322	26	324	8
325	4	326	7	327	2	328	16	329	8	330	9
331	55	333	3	339	3	343	10	345	130	348	12
350	3	351	24	353	10	354	9	355	10	356	9
357	6	358	9	359	12	364	7	365	7		

THE MAY MEETING

There is invariably a good attendance for our meeting held in conjunction with Worpex, and our meeting on 11th May was no exception with over twenty members present. The fact that our Chairman had obtained chairs of a reasonable height was welcomed, particularly by those of us who are not as supple as we used to be. The meetings devoted to members' one board displays always bring out a wide range of fascinating material. The fact that there was no set theme for the meeting suggested that there would be an eclectic mix of postal history; we were not disappointed as items ranging from early seventeenth century letters through to Victorian valentines to birds on stamps were to be seen.

Richard Farman opened the batting with a mail bond given by two coach makers of Derby. This was followed by two 'frees' franked by Thomas Hasker, the Superintendent of Mailcoaches of which the second was clearly an abuse of the franking privilege, the letter having been written by a lady. Another abuse of this privilege was seen on a letter sent from London to Birmingham in 1828. Richard then showed us a number of parcel post items including a letter which had been enclosed in a parcel, and a fragment from a parcel sent to Frankfurt in October 1905 franked with 2 x 1/- and a 3d stamps. He ended with various items of Sample Post, a theme which he continued on a further board and including mail sent abroad.

John Calladine showed us early letters sent to and from Gloucestershire, starting with a letter of 1630 sent to North Nibley. A letter sent from Gloucester to London was two days in transit while a 1698 letter from Chipping Campden was charged 2d when, in fact, the charge should have been 3d. Surprisingly, a letter sent from Gloucester showed no sign of a town handstamp. Two letters of 1709 and 1710 sent to Frampton-on-Severn were endorsed by 'By Stroud Bag'. Although it was not a posttown at the time, a letter sent from Tetbury did carry a strike of a handstamp. John's final item was a letter sent from Gloucester to London in 1765 which rather strangely had not been struck with the town handstamp.

The town of Willenhall was Mike Cox's chosen topic. The first item, a penny post cover of 1838 sent to Stourbridge, was followed by a cover showing the UDC of 1844. Mike then showed us examples of the duplex marks and the single circles. There was a First Day Cover of the 1935 Silver Jubilee, followed by postcards showing the local industries of Willenhall. Mike ended with two airmail covers one of which was from the Yale Company.

Another Staffordshire town – Wombourne – was featured by Roy Summers who began with a map of the town showing the various sites occupied by the post office which first opened in 1844. Only four copies of the UDC are known but Roy showed us an example struck in green. There was then a gap until the use of the single circle in 1906 which was followed by a skeleton used in 1910. A picture showed the post office decorated for the 1935 Jubilee. A letter sent to Ron by his brother from New Zealand had been franked with South African stamps, resulting in a surcharge! Ron ended with a last day cover of the post office on one site and a first day cover from the next site.

Postcards of post offices in the Newark area comprised Mick Gill's contribution. He explained that his interest had been prompted by Dennis Humphreys' comprehensive survey of Nottinghamshire post offices and his own hobby of collecting old postcards of Newark. Mick began with 1950s postcards of premises in Cauntton which had been the post office on three separate occasions and Coddington 1895 to 1974. An early 1900s postcard of the Bridge Inn, Dunham-on-Trent followed. The inn became the post office in 1842 after which it moved to premises opposite where it stayed until 1942. An early 1900s postcard showed East Markham's post office from 1876 to 1971. Mick explained that when the sub-postmaster did suddenly in early 1969 he had been sent to run the office. A 1960s postcard of Halam showed premises which had twice been the post office adjacent to the Wagon and Horses. The post office at Laxton, the village which still operates the medieval method of strip farming, occupied the same premises from 1937 until compulsory closure in 2008. Mick explained that the official last day was Wednesday, 12th March but, as the post office did not open on Wednesdays, the effective last day was Tuesday, 11th March.

In a later contribution Mick showed a postcard of Normanton-on-Trent post office published by the postmaster and posted there in 1920. Five postcards of Tuxford recorded the location of all seven post offices from 1835 to date. Finally we saw the post offices at Walesby (1910 – 1950) and Winthorpe (1948 – 1953), by the Sheepwash Dyke and the Lord Nelson pub where, as a youngster, Mick had enjoyed many a glass of lemonade with his father.

I am not going to attempt to describe Eric Lewis' two displays, the first of 'Dean's Postal Tie Books' and the second of Victorian Valentines with their original envelopes. They had to be seen to be appreciated such was their visual impact. Both were well worth travelling some distance to see, as Eric's offerings usually are.

Alan Marshall showed us errors in the printing of the 1966 issue of stamps, in blocks of four, depicting garden birds. Alan pointed out that the presentation pack emphatically states that after being printed and the perforated each sheet was meticulously examined and any sheets with the slightest imperfection was destroyed. The next eight sheets showed examples of four colours completely missing: bistre brown, reddish brown, bright blue and emerald green, along with examples of vertical or horizontal shifts of bistre and reddish brown, blue, green, red and grey. These were accompanied by examples of the seven 'fly speck' varieties listed by Gibbons and a FDC with the stamp showing the blackbird with missing legs and a red dot between were the feet should have been.

For a second display Alan brought along the sheets he had prepared for a previous meeting on Printed Paper and Bookpost items, but had inadvertently left them at home. [The Editor is pleased to know that he is not the only person to do such things.] Among the items shown by Alan were an embossed, pre-printed Book Post envelope of 1872, six printed paper items from 1871-78 all displaying the small ½d stamp, a previously unrecorded 'Contains a communication/of the nature of a Letter/583' of Nottingham and a notice of 1876 about the 94th Anniversary of the Nottingham General Hospital.

Colin Fountain then took us to Gloucestershire, starting at Frogmill Inn from where we saw the first-type mileage mark used in September 1793. A letter sent to Chipping Campden in 1829 was struck with the circular mileage mark, CAMPDEN/100 as well as being charged 1d. [Do any other towns in addition to Campden and Hinckley show the figure '100' in their mileage marks?] We then saw some superb strikes of a number of UDCs including those of Avening, Little Dean and Stanton. Colin finished with the rubber skeleton of Brockworth used in August 1913.

Registered Covers from Shropshire was Brian Atkins' chosen topic. His first item was a cover from October 1844 showing the registered rate of 1/-. [I have been looking for one of those from Leicestershire for nearly thirty years.] Brian then illustrated the various rates in the nineteenth century. The registration fee was reduced to 6d in March 1848, and Brian illustrated this with a letter sent in June 1853 from Shrewsbury to Birmingham, franked with 3 x 2d and 1d stamps, as well as a cover of July 1862 from Oswestry to Shrewsbury (1d + 6d mauve). The fourpenny rate which was in force from 1862 to 1877 was represented by a letter of April 1865 sent from Wem to Oswestry, and a letter charged 7d (3d rose and 4d vermillion), as it weighed over one ounce, sent from Shrewsbury to Llangollen in December 1870. Three unusual items showed the twopenny registration rate (January 1878 – June 1918): an 'Objection to Voters' notice of June 1873; a Bookpost item charged 2½d; a printed bankruptcy notice sent at the printed paper rate so also being charged 2½d.

Clive Jones produced another fascinating selection of TPO material, beginning with a card showing a strike of the Derby & St Pancras Sorting Carriage. This item sent from France to Sutton on sea reached its destination the day after being posted. Next came the York & Scarborough Sorting Tender single circle on a registered letter to Messrs Messengers of Loughborough, a firm of horticultural builders and engineers, whose business, judging by the amount of their mail that exists, took their workmen all over the country. On the night of 9th September 1906 the 8.45pm train from King's Cross was derailed at Grantham with the result that many of the coaches caught fire. Clive showed us a postcard showing the scattered mail as well as a singed cover with a mark 'Grantham Railway Accident'. Among other items shown by Clive were: a skeleton from the Norwich S.C.; a charge of 1/6½ on a registered letter posted into a TPO, and labels indicating that a packet was too fragile to be transferred by means of the lineside apparatus.

Chris Jackson displayed a wide range of material from Shipston-on-Stour, beginning with the earliest recorded mark followed by two later marks. We saw mileage marks, penny post items and the UDC. A penny black cover and a Mulready came next. Of particular note was a cover showing strikes of two skeletons – Shipston and the scarce circular mark of Chipping Norton. Chris also showed us various examples of the 1844 type marks, two types of duplex and circular date stamps.

In summing up the afternoon, our Chairman commented on the enormous range of material displayed as a result of there being no set theme and suggested that a similar meeting be held next year. It had been another very interesting day in Worcester with an excellent fair and superb postal history.

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THE SOCIETY'S NEW PUBLICATION

The Society's new publication, a "Midlands Edition" of The British County Catalogue of Postal History, was launched on Friday 28th June with a lunch at the Birmingham Botanical Gardens attended by the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress of Birmingham. On arrival, the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress were greeted by Chris Jackson, our Chairman, and Mrs Jackson, before being introduced to our President, Alan Marshall. The guests were then shown a display of postal history items included in the new book from eight of our counties and from Birmingham, where Eric had prepared a display of Birmingham material not previously listed.

A most successful lunch was held in the Botanical Gardens' Loudon Suite, where our 'mileage mark' book was launched in 2005. At the conclusion of the meal, the Chairman asked the Coordinating Editor to say a few words about the content and background to the new publication before David Beech MBE FRPSL, until recently Head of Philatelic Collections at the British Library, proposed a toast to the Society. Chris replied to the toast, on behalf of the members, before presenting the Lord Mayor with a copy of the new book. Only after the lunch did members have an opportunity to see the finished result of our collaborative project and to purchase copies of the publication. Two members apparently cadged a lift back to New Street Station in the mayoral limousine. Does the Lord Mayor collect Shropshire postal history and wanted a few tips as well as making sure all future auction bids are successful? Whatever, your editor can report that the no. 24 bus gives a smoother ride than Boris' buses in the Metropolis.

Appreciating that we still have members young enough to be working on a Friday, attendance at the lunch was a little disappointing but the event was well supported by our 'regulars'. For those who were not at Birmingham, all is not lost. Copies of the book can also be ordered by post from John Calladine, 5 Skillins, Kington St Michael, Chippenham SN14 6RL. Although the book will be on general sale at a price of £20, the discounted price for members is £15. To that must be added £6-50 postage and packing, if the book is to be mailed. Cheques for all orders should be made payable to the 'Midland (GB) Postal History Society'.

For those who have been holidaying on a distant planet, the new book updates the long-established British County Catalogue of Postal History for twelve Midland counties and Birmingham. However, it goes beyond the earlier volumes as it is now hardbound in A4 size, allowing room for the full dates of usage of each mark (rather than year-only dates) and for greatly enlarged introductions to each county. Inevitably many previously unseen marks appear for the first time. All marks of standard types and marks exclusive to a particular county are illustrated full-size. Finally, to adorn the publication, there are beautifully restored coloured maps by Cary of each Midland county.



Left: Our Chairman, Chris Jackson presents a copy of the book to the Lord Mayor of Birmingham.

Above: Chris explains the finer points of Birmingham Postal History to the Lord Mayor.



David Beech proposes a toast to the Society.



Midpex – Mick Gill and John Calladine in a quiet moment on the Society's stand.



Derek Smeathers and Mick Gill inspect the exhibits at the book launch.

Midpex – An Anniversary and Several “Firsts”.

from Bryan Jones

With a RPSL stand in the foyer, 60+ dealers and over 40 Specialist Societies in attendance at Midpex 2013 there was plenty to celebrate. However, on occasions such as this it is always an added bonus if there is a souvenir, preferably philatelic, which in times to come will serve to remind us of what was a most successful event.

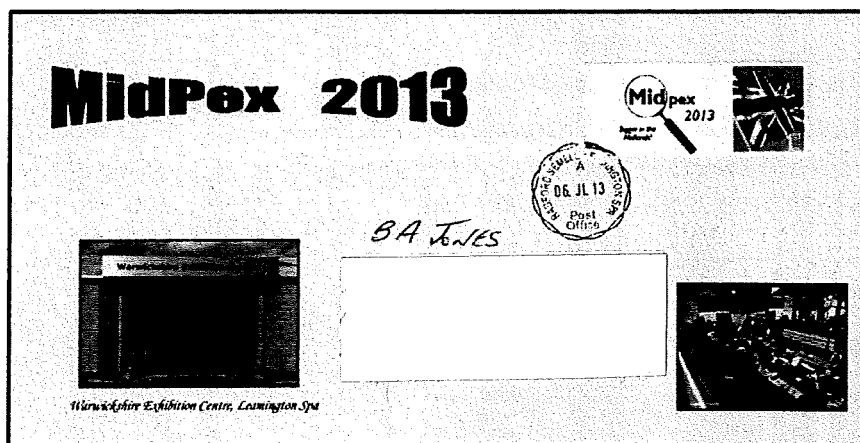
2013 was also the 50th Anniversary of the founding of the Midland Philatelic Federation, something that we, the Midpex Committee, felt was well worth commemorating, and we thought while we were at it why not commemorate the event itself. In consequence we commissioned two pictorial envelopes which could be purchased at the Exhibition, in the hope that anyone interested would create a souvenir to commemorate the event.

Events however progressed and once we discovered that “Post & Go” would be in attendance for the first time, and not only that but they were planning to give Midpex a first day issue of 5 Freshwater Life Series 2 we relished the thought of some quite spectacular souvenirs. We also arranged that as an alternative to the Freshwater Fish issue it would be possible to purchase a “Smilers” sheet featuring the Union flag 1st class stamp with a Midpex 2013 label.

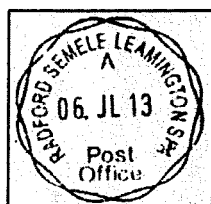
Finally we discovered that the Royal Philatelic Society of London, who were attending Midpex for the first time, were also bringing a souvenir to commemorate yet another anniversary, namely the centenary of the issue of the 2/6d Waterlow Seahorses stamp, a postcard featuring a black & white image of the stamp. 100 of these postcards would be available to visitors to the

With the possibility of creating something well worth keeping our thoughts turned to the possibility of getting postal cancellations. No one seemed to be able to provide any contacts in the Leamington Post Office, and my attempts over a 10 day period to rouse anyone at the Midland Cancellation Centre in Birmingham were totally wasted. When one telephones a so-called “service” no less than a dozen times and every call remains unanswered, one has to ask why Royal Mail bother to even list the so-called “service”. If they are not going to bother to answer the telephone then there is no point in employing people in that department, perhaps I need to write to the Management of Royal Mail and suggest that they could easily dispense with those staff without jeopardising the so-called service.

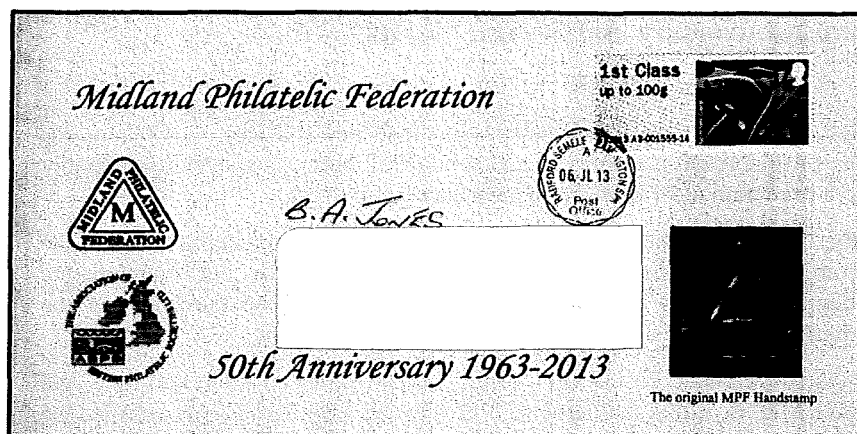
However thanks to the assistance of Andrea Filipiuk, a member of Leamington P.S., who lives in the adjacent village of Radford Semele we managed to rescue the situation. The local postmaster, presented with a copy of the Midpex brochure and the commemorative envelopes, was more than willing to offer a first day cancellation service, and those who requested this service finished up, thanks to Andrea and Colin Searle, with a souvenir not only of the event but with one of those difficult to obtain village cancellations so prized by us postmark collectors.



Midpex 2013 Commemorative envelope (reduced to 50% size).

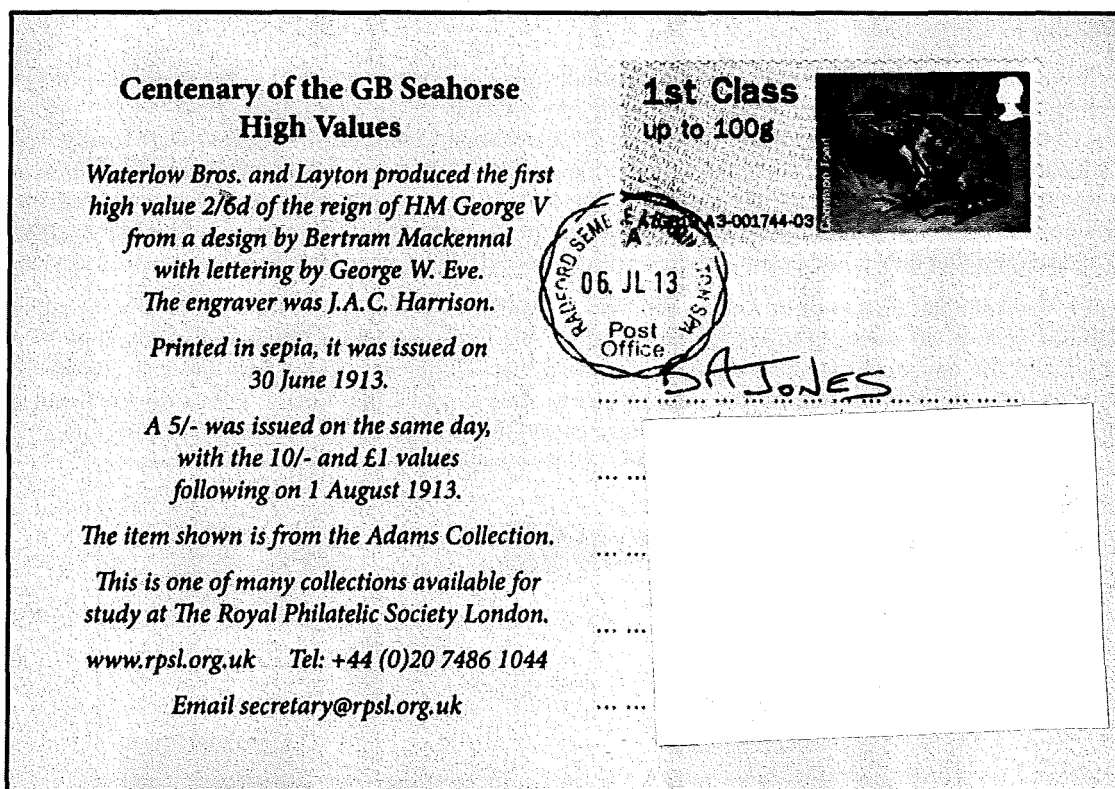


The Radford Semele “village” cancellation



Midland Philatelic Federation 50th Anniversary Commemorative envelope (reduced to 50% size).

Seahorses Anniversary Postcard produced by RPSL and an illustration from the card.



BOOK POST AND PRINTED PAPER RATES

At the meeting earlier this year on 'Book Post and Printed Paper Mail' I showed a document, produced in 1977 by what was then called 'Post Office Records', which listed various inland postage rates through the ages. As this publication interested some of those present and so may be of interest to others, I am in the next few issues reproducing some parts of it beginning with Book Post and Printed Paper mail.

A Book Post was set up in 1848 on the recommendation of Rowland Hill. The charge was 6d per lb and was restricted to one book per package. This rule was soon relaxed to allow for second hand books and the sending of more than one book in a package. This service was a great boon to the country subscribing Lending Libraries.

Date	Rate of Charge	Maximum Dimensions	Maximum Weight	Notes
21.2.1848	6d per lb	2ft x 2ft x 2ft	14 lb	
1855	4oz 1d 8oz 2d 16oz 4d Each additional 8oz 2d	"	"	Regulations modified to permit practically any printed matter to be sent by the Book Post
1856	"	"	"	Circulars admitted to the Book Post
1866	4oz 1d 8oz 2d Each additional 4oz 1d	"	"	
1.10.1870	2oz ½d Each additional 2oz ½d	2ft x 1ft x 1ft	5lb	
1892	"	"	"	A great extension of the articles transmittable and mode of packing.
22.6.1897	2oz ½d	"	2oz	As the Letter Rate became 1d for 4oz and ½d for each additional 2oz the Book Post applied only to packets up to 2oz in weight.
1.1.1904	"	"	"	Name changed to 'Halfpenny Packet Post' and further latitude granted regarding manuscript additions.
1906	"	"	"	Regulations introduced to include practically all formal partly printed documents.
1.11.1915	2oz ½d Each additional 2oz ½d	2ft x 1ft x 1ft or in roll form 2ft 6in x 4in diam	5lb	Book Post
3.6.1918	1oz ½d 2oz 1d	"	2oz	Above 2oz the letter rate applied.
1.6.1920	1oz ½d 2oz 1d Each additional 2oz ½d	"	2lb	Printed Paper Post
13.6.1921	2oz 1d Each additional 2oz ½d	"	"	
29.5.1922	1oz ½d 2oz 1d Each additional 2oz ½d	"	"	See the note at the end of the table.

14.5.1923	2oz ½d Each additional 2oz ½d	”	”	
1.7.1936	”	2ft x 18in x 18in. In roll form 3ft 3in for the length and twice the diameter combined	”	
1.5.1940	2oz 1d Each additional 2oz ½d	”	”	
1.6.1951	4oz 1½d Each additional 2oz ½d	”	”	
1.1.1956	2oz 1½d Each additional 2oz 1d	”	”	
1.6.1956	4oz 2d Each additional 2oz 1d	”	”	
1.10.1957	2oz 2d 4oz 4d Each additional 2oz 1d	”	”	
1.10.1961	2oz 2½d 4oz 4d Each additional 2oz 1d	”	”	A rebate system introduced for items posted in bulk.
17.5.1965	2oz 3d 4oz 5d Each additional 2oz 1d			
16.9.1968	1½ - 2lbs 2s			On the introduction of the two-tier service the Printed Paper rate was abolished except for a concessionary rate for items weighing 1½ - 2 lbs.
15.2.1971				Abolished entirely.

DEFEREMENT OF LATE POSTED PRINTED PAPER MATTER

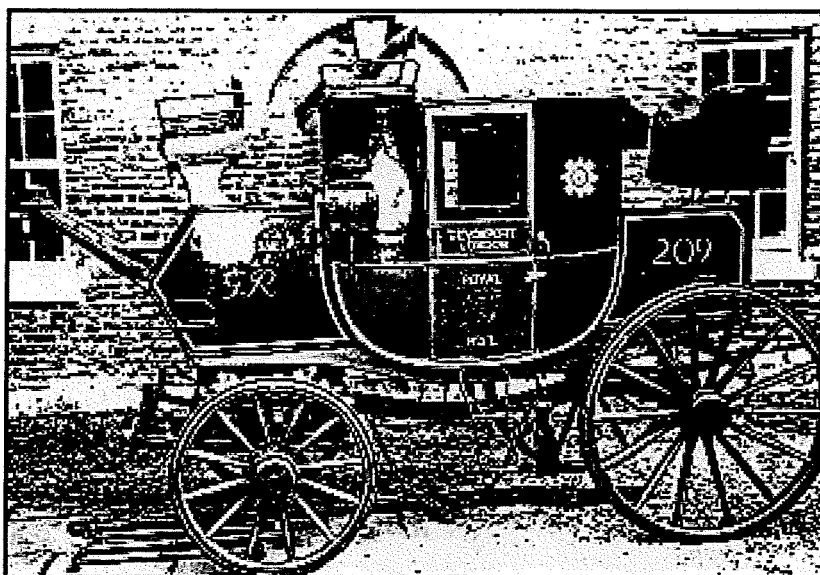
When the minimum rate was reduced to ½d on 29th May 1922 an additional ½d charge was introduced for items such as Stock Exchange quotations etc which could not be posted before the ‘cut-off’ time, usually 4.15 pm in London, and which needed to be delivered on the following day. This charge was increased to 1d on 17th May 1965. The ‘cut-off’ time was introduced to encourage early posting and was continued until the introduction of the two-tier service in September 1968.

"THE WHIP OF THE WEST"

by John Calladine

It was in August 2006 that an article appeared in 'Midland Mail' No.146 under the title "Are there *any* surviving mailcoaches?" The aim had been to trace all coaches in UK museums and collections that had a claim to be patent mailcoaches. Of the seven coaches considered, the most elusive proved to be a coach once owned by the Stracey-Edwards family of Hotham Hall in East Yorkshire. It had subsequently been sold at auction in 1982 and its present whereabouts were unknown. The auctioneers could provide no useful information.

The coach in question purported to be a "Quicksilver" coach, the only named mailcoach, which ran on the route between London and Devonport. At the time of the auction, its authenticity was in doubt and a photograph (below) suggests it was of much later design than any so-called 'Patent' mailcoach used on the principal London routes. Mr Stracey-Edwards' great granddaughter told me her great grandfather referred to it simply as "his old coach". There is every reason to believe it was painted as a 'Quicksilver' coach for an International Horse Show in 1920, when three supposed mailcoaches were paraded.



The so-called "Quicksilver" coach.

With no further information available, the matter rested until, six years later, a letter arrived from a retired schoolteacher. She had also been attempting to trace the present whereabouts of the so-called "Quicksilver" coach but for a very different reason. Her middle name was "Ward" and her three times great grandfather, Harry (or Henry) Ward, was known to have connections of some kind with it. Most specifically, she had learned that the name of Harry's elder brother, Chas S. Ward, was painted on the door of the coach. That the family was closely linked to coaches in the mailcoach era became even more likely when she revealed that their brother George was a coach proprietor, as had been their father.

Our correspondent thought it likely that the coach had been shipped to the USA and was in a coach collection somewhere in America. A contact was e-mailed, two more sources in the USA were consulted and the answer came back that the coach had not gone to America but remained in England and was "somewhere near Maidstone, Kent". The American contacts went further and were able to pass the enquiry onto the current owner of the coach. Sadly hopes were dashed when it became crystal clear that the present owner of "Quicksilver" wished to remain anonymous and it was not possible for either of us to see the coach.

Fortunately, what has followed has proved to be every bit as interesting as any inspection of the coach would have been. Our correspondent's family history research has led her to a pamphlet, "Hints on Driving", believed to have been written in the 1880s, by none other than Chas.S.Ward, "the well-known Whip of the West", whose name appears on the coach door. For anyone contemplating taking up four-in-hand coach driving, it is probably a valuable source of information as it discusses selection of a suitable team of horses, how to mount the 'box' on the coach, how to turn the horses, how to descend a hill, how to use a whip and more. However, the gems are not to be found in the driving tuition but in the author's discussion of his own background. Here we have evidence from a man who drove patent mailcoaches towards the end of the mailcoach era, just as the railway system began to spread out from London.

If we thought mailcoach drivers likely to be rough diamonds whose practical skills were unlikely to be matched by their intellect, this pamphlet paints a very different picture. Mr Ward, pictured below, was an educated man. He tells us that his father was a coach proprietor and one of the best whips of his day. Young Charles' experience of coach driving began at the age of 17 when, he says, his father sent him nightly to drive the Norwich and Ipswich Mail as far as Colchester. This could have been an ideal introduction because we know that some of these East Anglian Mails, although advertised from London, only carried mail beyond Ipswich. It was not an easy introduction, however, as Charles said he had never previously driven on that road beyond Whitechapel Church and, particularly in winter, much or all of the drive would have been in the dark. Nevertheless, he accomplished the task for nearly five years without accident and was subsequently promoted to the "Quicksilver" Devonport Mail. At the time it was the fastest coach of all out of London and he had to drive it 60 miles at night at speed. Although several of his predecessors had apparently found the work beyond them, Mr Ward proudly claims to have driven the "Quicksilver" for seven years without a single mishap. His employer was now the well-known Mr Chaplin, one of the great coaching proprietors who, according to Mr Ward's account, had no fewer than 1,700 coach horses in his stables. Finding night driving demanding and monotonous Charles asked Mr Chaplin if he could find him some work on a Day Mail. "I cannot find you all day coaches" was the reply and "besides, who am I to get to drive your Mail?"



"The Whip of the West"
Mr Charles S. Ward

At this point we have no idea of the date when Chas Ward was driving the Norwich & Ipswich Mail or the "Quicksilver" but he tells us that, as a result of his conversation with Mr Chaplin, he was offered the Brighton Day Mail, which was about to be established. Thanks to Chris Beaver's remarkable research into the London mailcoaches, we know that the Brighton Day Mail commenced running on 23rd July 1838. Interestingly, Mr Ward was offered the option of "horsing" the coach for one stage or simply driving it the whole distance. He chose the former but this was not a good choice because the railways were now being built. Construction of the London-Brighton line began in 1838 and was completed in 1841. (There is a Midland connection, even here, as the engineer for the line was John Urpeth Rastrick, from Stourbridge.) With the opening of the London & Brighton Railway, the mailcoach was withdrawn and Mr Ward sold his horses.

At this time, Mr Ward switched from driving mailcoaches, on which he would have had a total of 16 years experience, to driving some of the finest stage coaches. He was offered the "Exeter Telegraph", said to be "far famed" and one of the fastest and best-appointed coaches in the country. For three years he drove this coach from Exeter to Ilminster and back, a distance of 66 miles, early in the morning and late at night. Once again, the railway network frustrated him because the railway arrived at Bridgwater and the coach was abandoned. However, with other coachmen and two guards, he decided to make use of the railway and established a new "Telegraph" coach from Devonport to Bridgwater, continuing to London by train, thereby enabling passengers to make the entire journey of 250 miles in one day.

The railway was extended to Exeter (and finally to Plymouth). The "Telegraph" ran a shortened route and had another coach, the "Tally Ho" in direct competition. They started the return journey from Exeter to Plymouth at the same time, from different inns in the same street and became the subject of considerable betting. The "Telegraph" soon established its mastery, covering the ground, on a good run, at an average speed of a mile in four minutes and nine seconds, including stoppages. (That would equate to a speed in excess of 14mph, faster than any mailcoach.) However, when the railway finally reached Plymouth, Mr Ward had to look in the other direction towards Cornwall and ran a day coach between Truro and Plymouth, said to be a difficult road for a fast coach, the passengers continuing to London by train. This briefly became, at the Post Office's request, a second class mailcoach until, inevitable, the railway reached Truro and this proved to be the end of the stage coaches. Truro station opened in May 1859 by which time, from the account of his experiences, Mr Ward would have been about fifty.

The use of stage coaches in the 1840s to carry mail over the remaining miles of what had previously been London mailcoach routes, now largely displaced by railways, must have occurred in several parts of the country. One suspects this use has probably given rise to the claim that some surviving coaches were "mail coaches".

Returning to his early days on the mailcoaches, Charles Ward included in his narrative some revealing information about driving in foggy weather. He says the mailcoaches were guided out of London by men with torches, seven or eight Mails following in a procession that proceeded at a funereal pace. It could take three hours to reach Hounslow. (Few of us remember London fogs before the days of smokeless zones but in Victorian times they were horrendous.) Eight different mails passed through Hounslow, the Bristol, Bath, Gloucester and Stroud coaches taking the right hand road from Hounslow and the Exeter, Yeovil, Poole and "Quicksilver" Devonport Mails continuing straight on towards Staines. On one occasion Mr Ward passed another mailcoach, his being the fastest, when the driver called out "Charlie, what are you doing on my road?" It was a coachman driving the Stroud Mail. Needless to say, it was the Stroud coach that had missed its turn and turning it round was no small matter. However, if he had not exchanged greetings, the Stroud Mail would probably have reached Staines before the mistake would have been apparent. The timebill would have made interesting reading!

A few final words of wisdom from Mr Ward, attributed to a Bob Pointer, a coachman on the Oxford Road, may be worth quoting. "Never let your horses know you are driving them or, like women, they may get restive. Don't pull and haul . . . keep your hands as if you were playing a piano . . . don't get flurried . . . handle their mouths lightly: do all this and you might even drive four young ladies without ever ruffling their feathers or their tempers". Is this politically correct?

* * * * *

THE LONG MARCH - DUNBAR TO PORTSMOUTH 1795.

By Mike Wilesmith

84th (Yorkshire & Lancaster) Regiment of Foot.

Captain Alexander John Bower Correspondence to his father Alexander Bower of Kincaldrum, Kinrattle Nr Dundee, an insight into the life of a young officer at the start of the Napoleonic War period (En route to Portsmouth for the Cape of Good Hope), served in the 84th Regiment of Foot (3rd division Royal Highland Emigrant Corps) Yorkshire Lancaster 1793 to 1800.

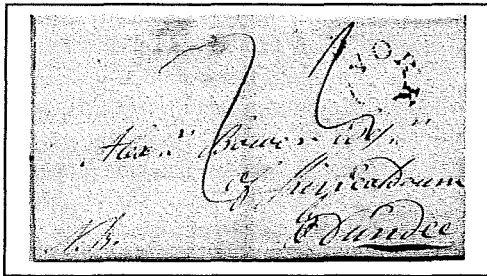
The Regiment was raised at York in 1793 just after Britain declared war on revolutionary France in 1794 the regiment raised a second Battalion in Hull for service in Ireland and in the same year the 1st Battalion was sent to Flushing in the Netherlands. In 1795 both Battalions were posted to the Cape of Good Hope where they merged before moving to Madras three years later. They stayed in India from 1798 to 1819. During this time in India it also sent detachment to the **Island of Perim** in the Red Sea & to Aden & took part in the Capture of Mauritius in 1810.

Sailed from Portsmouth on the East Indiaman Company ship **The Earl Howe** in 1795. An Armada of 200 ships gathered at St Helens bay off the Isle of Wight, before sailing to the Cape, **The Earl Howe** 1794 to 1813 sank in Bengal River.

On the 10th May 1797 **Captain Bower** saved the life of the future Sir James Carmichael Smyth when the boat they were fishing for Sharks upturn off the Cape.

Captain Bower died in 1800 on the **Isle of Perim** off Yemen (No reason given for death).

All Postal rates in accordance with the 1784 act, 24 George III cap 37. The next act became effective 5th January 1797.

Letter dated York March 9th 1795.

Entire Postmark Horseshoe YORK in Black.

London Two Ring Date Stamp AP/24/C/95 in Black.

Edinburgh Bishop Mark MR/11 in Red on Reverse.

Manuscript Postal Charge 2d & 4d in Black Ink.

2d York to Border.

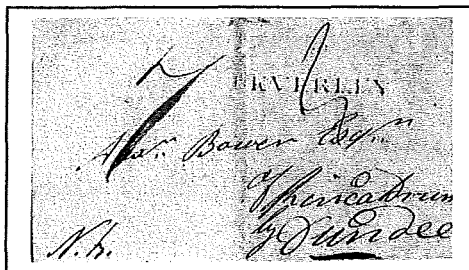
4d 50-80 miles in Scotland to Dundee.

Dear father

I arrived here last night after coming through a d---d bad road. We walked all the way from Dunbar to the press inn through water that took us up to the haunches. I very luckily met Major Ferguson & Captain King here the go down to Beverly to join the Regiment tomorrow. Major Ferguson seems to be a fine fellow. Our regiment embark at Hull next week for Portsmouth & God knows where but Captain King told me that we are going to the Cape of Good Hope or Mauritius. I hope we may. Captain King says that he will write you in a few days; it is only reported that we are going there but I will not be the least surprised if we should not leave England this winters, tell Charles Stirling if his brother has any intention of coming into this regiment to be quick as possible Colonel Bernard's terms are that he will make him a Lieut. for £400. Write me & tell me his terms. I do believe he will get a better opportunity. I will write you when I get to Beverly & tell you all my news. Captain King offers his compliments to you.

Compliments to my Mother, & Mrs Brown Ann Hellen.

I am your affect son Alexander Bower.

Letter dated Beverley March 12th 1795.

Entire Postmark BEVERLEY in Black.

Edinburgh Bishop Mark MR/14 in Red on Reverse.

Manuscript Postal Charge 4d & 7d in Black Ink.

7d London to Edinburgh.

4d 50-80 miles in Scotland .to Dundee.

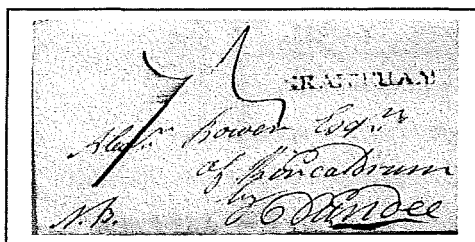
Photocopy of cover & contents supplied by Clive Jones.

Dear Father.

I arrived here the day before yesterday along with Major Ferguson he seems to be a very fine young fellow. Our destination is not known yet, but expects to leave this in the course of a week or ten days. Major Ferguson introduced me to General Scot today he is a fine old fellow. I was very happy to see in your letter that you had got a letter from John & Graham. I am happy that they are both well poor fellows. Our officers seem to be a set of very agreeable fellows, this Battalion I think are fully as good as the first & much cleaner. I will be obliged to you if you will write Donald and ask him to date back my commission is dated in the end of December & I do not think that fair for my money was lodged in October it would make a great difference to me for to get it dated back for a month, both as to rank & Pay. I left King at York he is a very fine fellow he told me that he was to write you soon. Tell Charles Stirling if his Brother intends to come into the Battalion for do it immediately or perhaps he will not get into it at all for the Duke of York is not to allow promotion to go so quickly as it has done, so the sooner he gets into the Regiment the better. You know Colonel Bernards terms. I have on more news to tell you at present but I will write you soon again.

Compliments to my Mother, Mrs Brown, Ann Nell. -.

I am your affect son Alexander Bower, write me soon.

Letter dated Grantham March 22nd 1795.

Entire Postmark GRANTHAM in Black.

Edinburgh Bishop Mark MR/26 in Red on reverse.

Manuscript Postal Charge 4d & 7d in Black Ink.

7d London to Edinburgh.

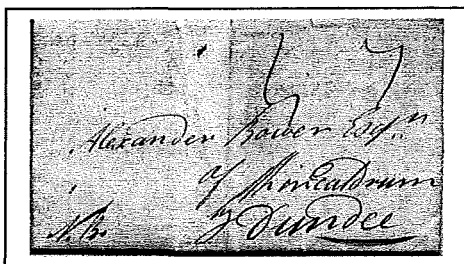
4d 50-80 miles in Scotland .to Dundee.

Dear Father

I arrived here from Newark on our way to Portsmouth. I left Hull on Tuesday last. We have had dreadful bad marching betwixt this & Hull the men are confoundedly tired God knows how many of them will be knocked up before we get to Portsmouth we are not allowed a single halting day so they must be in a very great hurry to get us to Portsmouth. We are not certain of our destination yet but we have some reason to suppose we are to be sent to the East or West Indies. I hope in God we will go to the East if we go to any of them. We have near 300 miles to march yet I am afraid that we will leave a good many men behind by desertion. I think it was a very bad plan to march us to Portsmouth if they are to send us abroad. I hope to meet John at Portsmouth before we sail if we go anyway I will write you the particulars when I get there. I have been very lucky in getting a very agreeable fellow in the division. I am in Captain Pearce there are none but him & I in the 3rd division the rest of our officers are to join us at Portsmouth. I am little sleepy & tired after my days march so you must excuse a long letter at present we are the only officers that walk with the men the rest ride but Captain Pearce & I understand campaigning better than ride on a march.

Compliments to my Mother, Mrs Brown, Ann, Hellen.

I am your affect son Alexander Bower.

Letter dated Wellingborough March 26th 1795.

Entire Postmark convex WELLINGBOROUGH in Black on Reverse.

Edinburgh Bishop Mark AP/1 in Red on reverse.

Manuscript Postal Charge 4d & 7d in Black Ink.

7d London to Edinburgh.

4d 50-80 miles in Scotland .to Dundee.

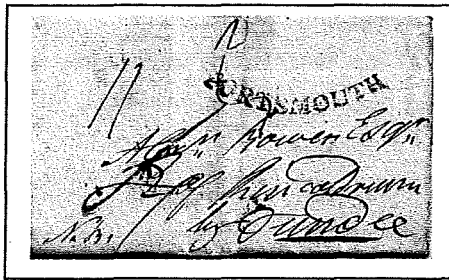
Dear father

I received your letter of the 15th. Inst...At Stamford the other day. I wrote you at Grantham a few days ago. Colonel Bernard dined with Captain Pearce & me there he told us that we are certainly going to the Cape of Good Hope Mrs Bernard is along with him they set off for Portsmouth two days ago post haste he is appointed Brigadier General. Tell Charles Stirling if his brother intends coming to the regiment to write me what his father will give for a Lieutenancy & I will try & settle it with Bernard for if he puts off much longer he will very likely lose the opportunity. It would be a great advantage for him to come into our regiment. If we go out to India for we get double pay there I am told that the Captain's pay there is £700 a year which will be a very great thing for me. We expect to meet the 1st Battalion in Portsmouth what a lucky thing it would be if John, Graham & I were to meet in Portsmouth I hope in God we shall. I suppose scueer Paty Carnegy is returned home to his oat seed before this time nothing less would serve him coming through Fife than a chaise & four horses he wanted to persuade me that it was cheaper coming with a chaise & four than riding on horseback ask him if that is not the case a prity figure he was coming up the streets of Edinburgh with a red nightcap, a pair of corduroy breaches all over blood the same that Margaret Brown stride into at Skinnettles a haind at least a month old. I dare say the people of Edinburgh took him for Glasgow Butcher. You need not mention anything about that of him, I will write the particulars of our destination when I get to Portsmouth we have about 200 miles to march yet. I hope my mother is getting better. I cannot say but the two Battalions of the 84th have got their share of duty since they have been regimented. Sir William Clarke writes Col. Bernard that there are only 186 men fit for duty in the first Battalion. Poor fellow they have had a terrible march of it since I left them. Lord Cathcarts Brigade were but in a very dangerous situation. I have time to write you no more at present.

PS: I was very sorry to see just now Sir William Erskins death in the paper.

Compliments to my Mother, & Mrs Brown Ann Hellen.

I am your affect son Alexander Bower.

Letter dated Portsmouth April 23rd 1795.

Entire Postmark Convex PORTSMOUTH in Black.

London Two Ring Date Stamp AP/24/C/95 in Black.

Edinburgh Bishop Mark AP/27 in Red on reverse.

Manuscript Postal Charge (4d Deleted) 4d & 11d in Black Ink.

4d Pompey to London.

7d London to Edinburgh.

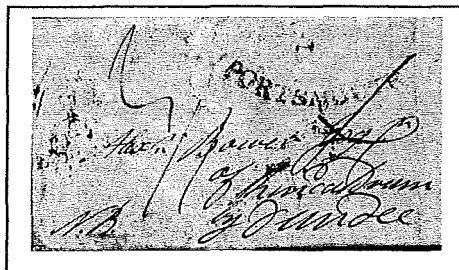
4d 50-80 miles in Scotland .to Dundee.

Dear father

I came on shore yesterday to get my necessaries. My stock is to be 3 doz Cotton shirts 2 doz Cotton stockings 2 doz pantaloons. I saw John Sterling here yesterday I sent him on board of ship immediately for he is much better there for he would get nothing here but bad & live d-d expensively & perhaps get something worse which is death if we go to a hot climate. Stirling I think will need a good deal of rubbing up but dare say he will make a very good officer. I am to go onto the "Earl Howe" of the East Indiaman Company she is a new ship this is her first voyage. I expect Graham will arrive here soon. We do not expect to sail for this fortnight yet. I cannot get any more wrote at present for Bob Fletcher is come into the room & he is making such a noise that I cannot write a word more at present.

Compliments to my Mother, & all.

I am your affect son Alexander Bower.

Letter dated Portsmouth May 7th 1795.

Entire Postmark Convex PORTSMOUTH in Black.

London Two Ring Date Stamp MA/8/C/95 in Black.

Edinburgh Bishop Mark MY/11 in Red on reverse.

Manuscript Postal Charge (4d Deleted) 4d & 11d in Black Ink.

4d Pompey to London.

7d London to Edinburgh.

4d 50-80 miles in Scotland .to Dundee.

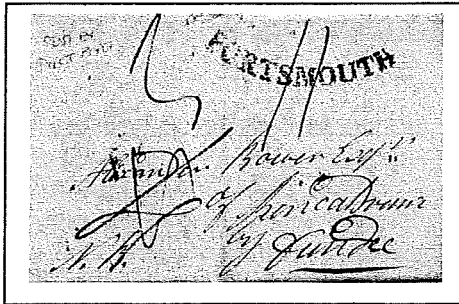
Dear Father

I received your letter this day I am very happy to hear that my Mother has completely got better of her complaint. I was very much astonished to see Mrs Demster & Miss Baren here, Miss Baren goes out to India with the flee. I hear that the 1st Battalion of our Regiment are arrived at Hull I am afraid that I will not get a sight of John before we sail at the end of the week or the beginning of the next. We will probably have some work in India for we are at war with the Marattas I am very happy at it for we will not idle. Col. Murray is just arrived from London he brings that news of our being at war with the Marattas. I wrote you that Stirling wanted a great deal of brushing up but he is improving greatly he tries to speak English now & has almost all his sulkiness he was completely laughed out of it. Major King is expected here from London. It is said that part of our army goes to the Spice Islands. No word of the home bound Indiamen. I will answer her letter before I sail but I have not time at present for I am ordered to go on board of ship immediately & I do not think that I shall come on shore again. I have no news worth telling you at present you need not write me again for we will sailed before your letter could reach this, so I will not probably hear from home for some months. Tell Mrs Douglass that Willie is in perfect health & spirits he is the most careless little fellow I ever saw he lost his purse & 6 guineas in it the other day through carelessness I shall do everything in my power to make him more attentive. I have given him two or three broad hints already but he does not seem to listen to them. If we do not sail in the beginning of the week I will write you again.

Compliments to my Mother, Mrs Brown, Ann & Helen.

God Bless you all

I am your affect son Alexander Bower.

Letter dated (On Board the Earl Howe) May 18th 1795.

Entire Postmark Convex PORTSMOUTH in Black.

London Two Ring Date Stamp MA/19/C/95 in Black.

Edinburgh Bishop Mark (Unclear Date) in Red on reverse.

Manuscript Postal Charge (4d Deleted) 4d & 11d in Black Ink.

4d Pompey to London.

7d London to Edinburgh.

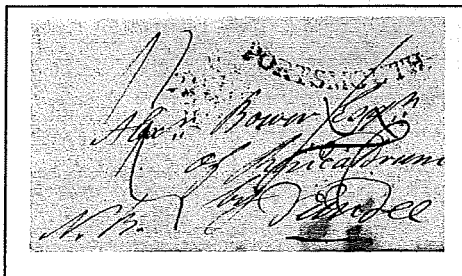
4d 50-80 miles in Scotland .to Dundee.

Dear Father

We sailed this morning from St Helens with a fair wind. I write you these few lines by the pilot who goes on shore immediately. There are above 200 sail of us altogether it is the most beautiful sight I ever saw. Col. Murray came on board yesterday. He came from the Bombay Castle he had seen Willie Douglass he told that he has come on deck & that he is completely the better of the measles. I wrote you a day or two ago & told you that Douglass was ill with the measles & not to tell his Mother anything about it, but you may tell her now that he is perfectly recovered. The officers that are in the ship with me are Mayors King, Orderly Lieuts, Hancel & Forsyth, Ensign Salter they are all a very agreeable set of fellows. The ship has a confounded deal of motion & I am very like to turn sick so you must excuse a long letter. I will write you every opportunity on the voyage.

Compliments to my Mother, Mrs Brown, Ann & Helen.

I am your most affect son Alexander Bower.

Letter dated (On Board the Earl Howe) May 24th 1795.

Entire Postmark Convex PORTSMOUTH in Black.

London Two Ring Date Stamp MA/26/C/95 in Black.

Edinburgh Bishop Mark MY/29 in Red on reverse.

Manuscript Postal Charge (4d Deleted) 4d & 11d in Black Ink

4d Pompey to London.

7d London to Edinburgh.

4d 50-80 miles in Scotland .to Dundee.

Dear Father

We arrived a day or two ago at St Helens, we sailed about 20 miles from this but were obliged to return for the wind changed. God knows how long we may lie here we wait for nothing but a fair wind. I went on board the Bombay Castle yesterday to see Willie Douglass you may tell his Mother that he has perfectly recovered of the measles, he is as well as ever I am surprised that the Dutton is not arrived yet but I hope to get a sight of Graham yet before we sail. Lord Hows fleet goes out with us & I think it's very likely he will keep us here for some time. I am told that the French Fleet are out so I dare say we will get some fun with our fleet & theirs. I hope John is at home poor fellow. I hear that the first Battalion are to be encamped. We have got a very good set of fellows on board our ship. The Captain is one of the best fellows I ever saw he pays us every attention. We hear still that our destination is certainly against the Cape of Good Hope. I have no time to write you any more at present but I shall write you again before I sail.

I am your most affect son Alexander Bower.

HOW TO AVOID A SCANDAL AND GET RICH BUT COME TO A SAD END OR AN AMERICAN MELODRAMA UNCOVERED BY SHROPSHIRE POSTAL HISTORY

by Brian Atkins

For a time, there existed high in the Rockies, 50 miles or so west of Denver, Colorado, a small town called Brownsville or Brownville, nobody seems sure of its exact name. It no longer exists due to a series of mud and rock-slides, which took place between the late 1880s and June 1912, the last of which finally engulfed the little town, which once boasted 600 people. There were a large number of British miners working in the gold and silver mines, which included the Seven-Thirty Mine at an elevation of 10,451ft. The nearest town to Brownsville, now, is Silver Plume, with about 250 inhabitants and some cared-for homes interspersed with a few ramshackle buildings. The post office is still there, though whether it is in the original location I don't know, it doesn't look like the original building (fig 1, photo taken in 2012).

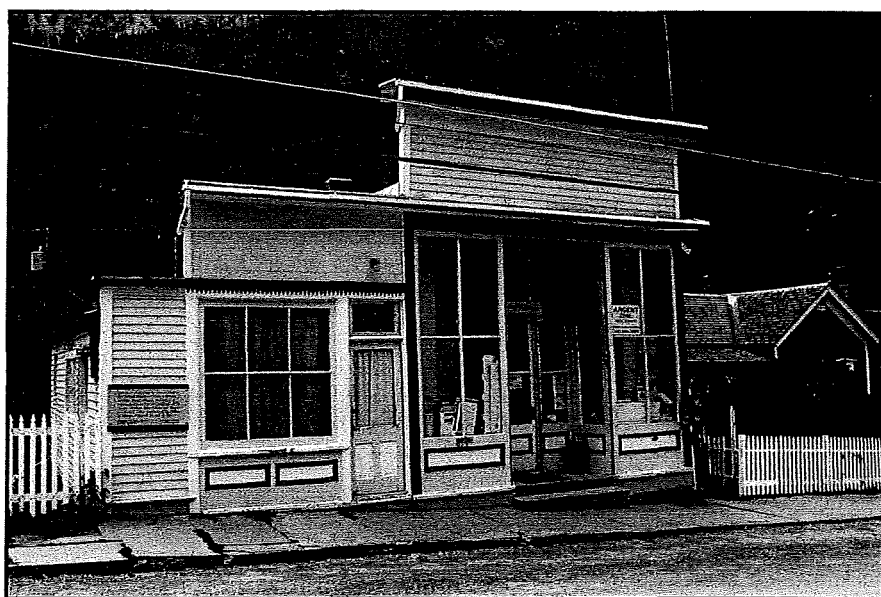


Fig 1. The post office in Silver Plume, Colorado. 850, Main St and still in business.

Alfred Griffin of the Middle Temple, London, (called to the bar Nov 1833), purchased Brand Hall near Market Drayton, from Purney Sillitoe. Sillitoe later retained the services of the notable architect, Sir John Soane to build nearby Pell Wall Hall, between 1822 and 1828, at a total cost of £20,976 (£1.6m using the 2009 retail price index). One of Soane's few country houses; it has been partially restored but is currently not in very good shape with only the original shell remaining. Griffin had three sons, Heneage Mackenzie, Marten Harcourt, (called to the bar January 1861) and Clifford; Marten Harcourt inherited Pell Well Hall on the death of Sillitoe (see fig. 7). The reason for it being willed to him is not known. Marten married Isabella Elisabeth Spencer (January 1865) who could trace her ancestry on her mother's side to Charles II¹.

Having been educated at Oxford, Heneage Mackenzie Griffin, arrived in Colorado in 1874. By the late 1870s he was living in Silver Plume (see fig.2,) and later settled in Georgetown, 3 miles east, now on Route I70 in western Colorado (see fig.3). As far as I can discover, Heneage never married. There is no doubt that he became very wealthy and after a visit from his niece, Annie Sophie Cory, in 1899, he returned to England in 1902, eventually touring around Europe with Cory and her mother, his sister Elizabeth. His niece took to writing under various pseudonyms, two of which were Victoria Cross and Victoria Crosse (honestly). She had nearly two dozen novels published, described as popular, racy and erotic, three collections of short stories, several plays, and saw some of her works adapted for film. Perhaps her best known novel is *Anna Lombard*, published in April 1901, which sold six million copies, ran through more than thirty editions and remained in print until the 1930s. Uncle and niece travelled widely, especially after her mother's death in 1916. They were in England during the First World War, but thereafter spent their time in the grand hotels of the Italian lakes and the south of France, mostly at the Riviera Palace Hotel, Menton. Heneage Griffin died in Lanzo d'Intelvi, Province of Como, Italy in September 1939; his niece spent the war in Geneva. She died in a nursing home, the Clinica Capitanio, in Milan on 2 August 1952, aged 84, her novels out of print and forgotten but leaving several litigants squabbling over an estate valued at over £100,000^{3,7}.

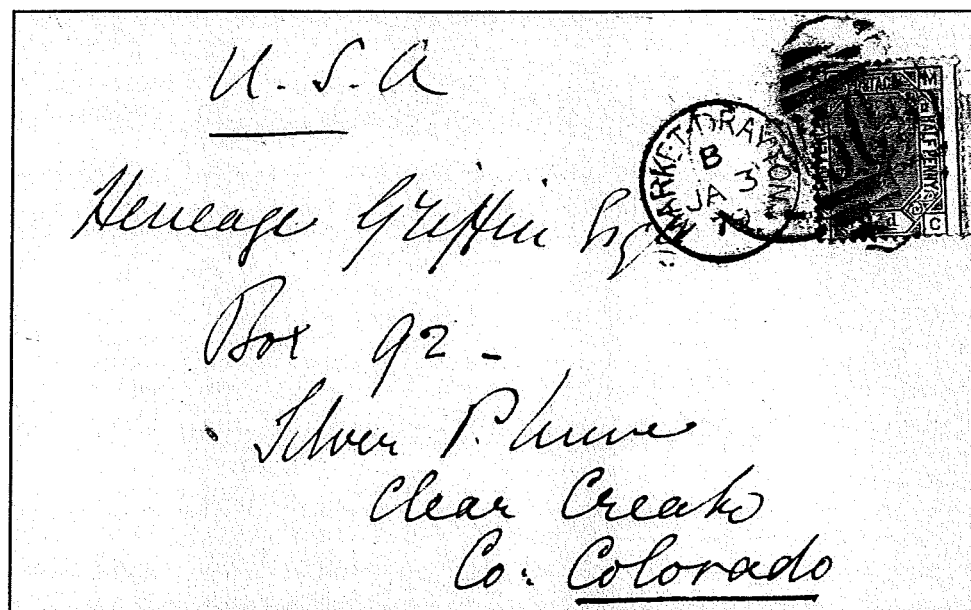


Fig 2. Market Drayton to Silver Plume, CO with the 2½d rosy-mauve, plate 12 paying the UPU rate. (courtesy of Guy Bridges). The Seven-Thirty Mine was registered in the name of The Clear Creek Company.

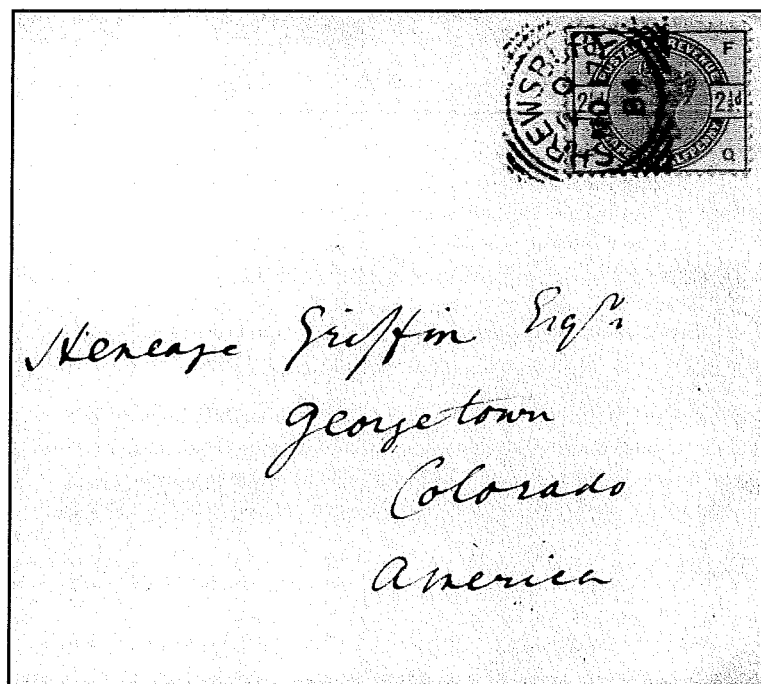


Fig 3, Cover from Shrewsbury, to Heneage Griffin, Georgetown, Colorado, America, with the QV 2½d lilac (SG 190, plate 2) paying the UPU rate and cancelled by the SHREWSBURY square circle dated 17th NOV 1884, code 20 (SB550).

Carried on the Inman Line, *City of Richmond*, Queenstown 1.15pm 19th November, arrived New York 29th Nov 1884 (*The Times*)

In 1880 Heneage's brother Clifford joined him in Colorado after a little family difficulty. Clifford's fiancée had been found dead in his room on the eve of their marriage and true to British upper class tradition his family ushered him abroad with unseemly haste to avoid a scandal and, most likely, the law as well. Avoiding legal consequences was never too great a problem for the so-called 'upper classes', but a scandal was another matter! The brothers became owners of the Seven-Thirty Mine above Silver Plume, (so called as its starting whistle blew at the more gentlemanly hour of 7.30am, whereas the whistles of the other mines blew at 6.30). The mine produced mostly silver and a little gold and eventually Heneage Griffin's new-found wealth brought him membership of the Denver Club (see fig 4). Clifford built himself a modest cabin on the mountain and led a singularly reclusive life, though he was not averse to 'thumping the bar' with the miners in Silver Plume on the odd occasion (sadly I couldn't find anything resembling a bar in Silver Plume in August 2012!).⁴

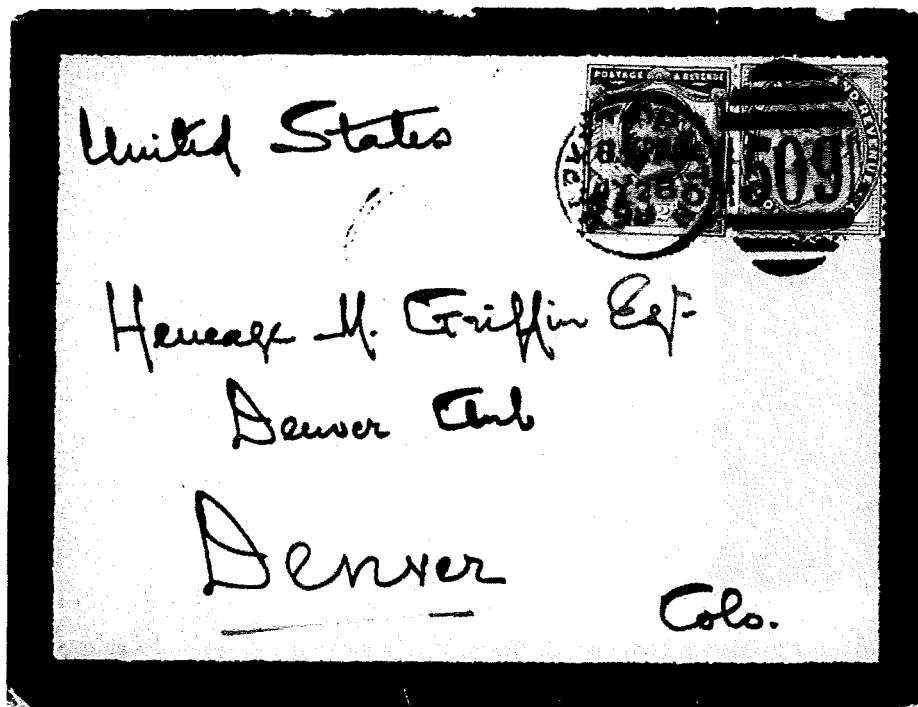
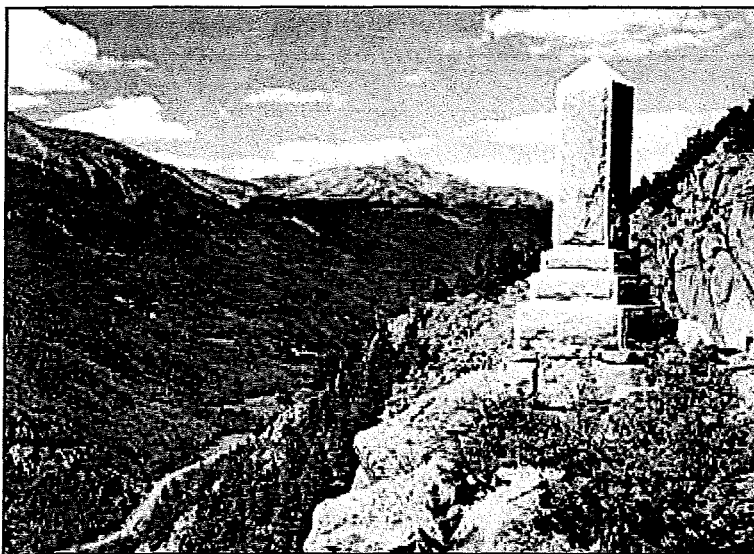


Fig 4. MARKET DRAYTON
28 July 1898. UPU rate paid
by 1d lilac and 1½d Jubilee
purple and green (SG 198)

Probably carried on the
Hamburg America Line
Augustus Victoria from
Southampton 29th July (*The
Times*) – arrival date stamp
unclear.

In an effort to keep his melancholy brother occupied, Heneage Griffin made Clifford superintendent of the mine but it appears that Clifford was unable to erase the memory of the tragedy he left behind in England. He became more and more introverted and distraught and began to hew a great hole out of the particularly tough granite-like bedrock. Whether he was tormented by guilt and wanted to punish himself or, merely, to occupy himself to forget we shall never know. When not hewing his hole in the granite he would sit on the porch of his isolated cabin and play a 'melancholy violin'. That is until the night of 19th June 1887, when the music suddenly stopped and a shot echoed throughout the mountains. Clifford Griffin was found face down in the hole he had dug with a bullet in his heart. A note requested he be buried where he fell. His brother used his influence to keep the cause of death out of the newspapers (avoiding another scandal, of course). He supervised the erection of a large hand-quarried monument of Silver Plume granite over the grave; the monument still stands high above I70⁵. There is quite a strenuous mile and a half walk from Silver Plume traversing mountain slopes, clambering over muddy creeks and scrambling across scree to reach the monument but the view down to the valley and the I70 is breathtaking. Equally impressive is the opposite view from the road, as the pointed edifice can clearly be seen jutting out defiantly on its rocky promontory.



An inscription on the monument
reads:

Clifford Griffin

Son of Alfred Griffin, Esq. of

Brand Hall, Shropshire, England

Born July 2, 1847

Died June 19, 1887

*In Consideration of His Own
Request Buried Near this Spot*

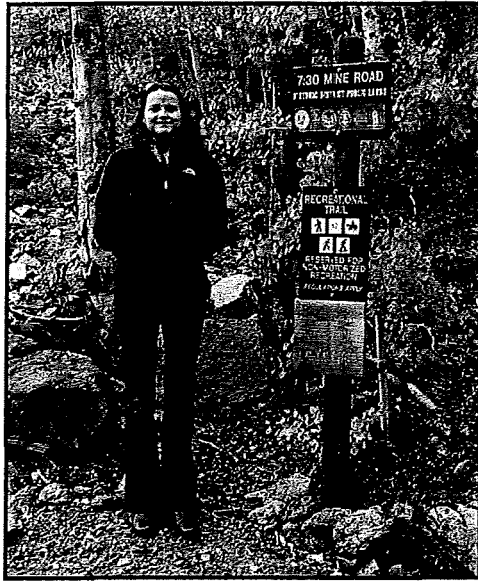


Fig 6. My daughter, Kate, at the head of the trail to the 730 Mine above Silver Plume in 2012.

We had just descended in a truck from 11,800ft in the Rockies and dropped in to Silver Plume on our way back to my daughter's home north of Denver, CO.

Two covers exist from America addressed to Marten Harcourt Griffin at Pell Well Hall, one from Concord, New Hampshire in September 1873 and the other from Newport, Rhode Island in August 1874. There are also three addressed to him in the 1870s from India to Market Drayton, one of which is illustrated below, and three in the 1880s from Market Drayton to Dinan, France. The cover below is franked 6 annas but overpaid one anna as the rate from India via Brindisi reduced to 5 annas in July 1878⁶. It was carried on the P&O *Pekin* from Bombay on 24th Feb, arriving Suez 7th March and from Alexandria on the P&O ferry *Isis* to Brindisi. Elizabeth Fanny Griffin married Colonel Arthur Cory in January 1860 and Annie Cory was born in Rawalpindi in 1868, her family not returning to England until 1881⁷. Was Marten's sister writing to him as she toured India with her husband and daughter? Unless a letter turns up, we shall never know!

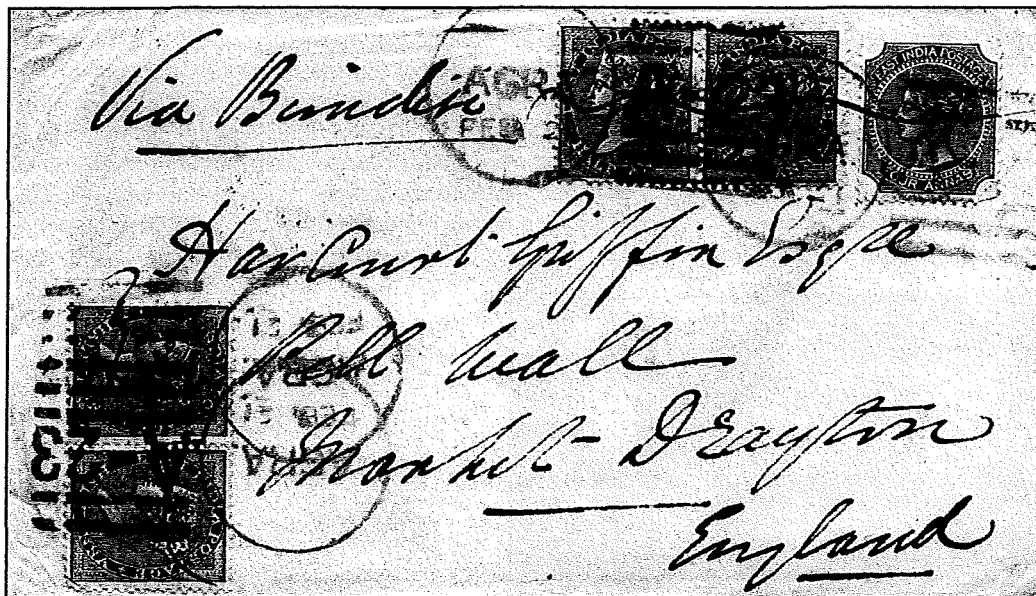
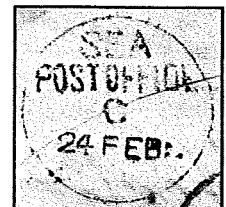


Fig 7. 2nd Feb 1879 cover from Agra, India to Market Drayton



SEA POST OFFICE date stamp on the reverse of the cover.

References 1. The Times, 4th February 2006, obituary of Anthony Reginald FitzRoy Griffin.

2. http://www.dicamillocompanion.com/houses_detail.asp?ID=1575

3. Oxford Dictionary of National Biography; Cory, Annie Sophie, 2004

4. Ghost Towns of the Colorado Rockies, Brown (Caxton Press, 2003)

5. From the Grave: A Guide to Colorado's Pioneer Cemeteries, Wommack (Caxton Press, 2003)

6. Overseas Letter Postage from India, 1854-1876, Martin & Blair, Robson Lowe, 1975

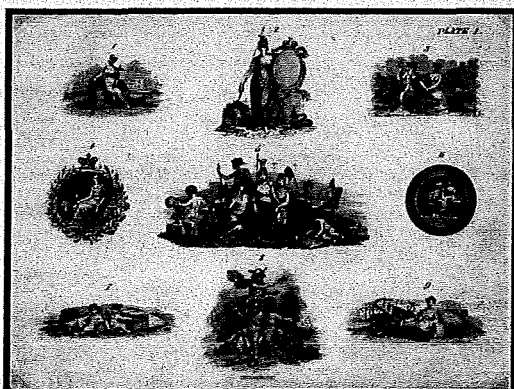
7. Victoria Cross, a Biography, Charlotte Mitchell, University of Queensland 2002

Others: UK Letter Rates Inland and Overseas 1635 to 1900, Tabcart, HH Sales 2nd Edition (2003)

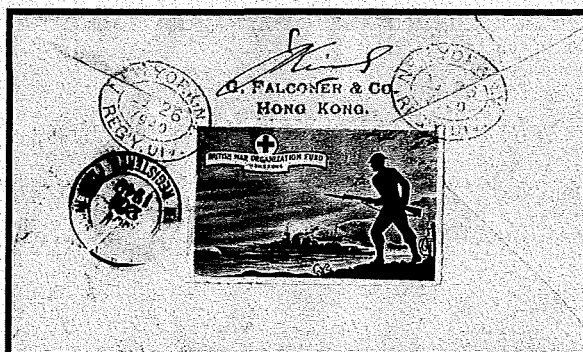
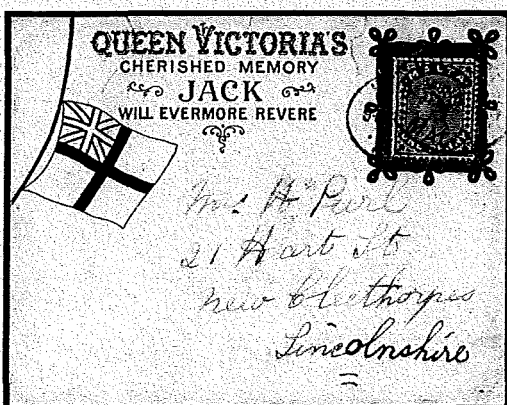
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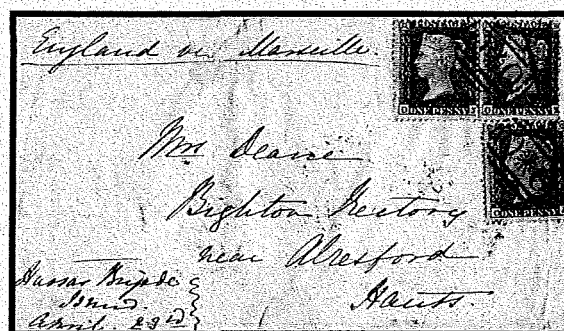
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