

MIDLAND MAIL

THE JOURNAL OF THE MIDLAND (GB) POSTAL HISTORY SOCIETY

President: Richard Farman

Chairman:
Chris Jackson

Treasurer:
Elizabeth Lewis

Secretary:
Mel Matthews

Number 135, June 2004

Until a few months ago it was a matter of whether or not our mail would be delivered before I left for work at about 7.30 a.m. Some mornings it was; on some it was not. Now the question is will our mail before I get home from work. Twice recently the postman has only beaten me by minutes. Yesterday, I was the clear winner by twenty minutes, the delivery being made at 5.20 p.m. We have not had a second delivery here for many years despite the letter we received some weeks ago saying that it would be withdrawn. Obviously, a third delivery in the late afternoon has replaced it.

Recent experiences suggest that the Post Office is falling apart. In the last few months I have had letters that have been tampered with; at least one has not arrived; one first class letter was a week in transit; and the words "Please Do Not Bend" on a stiffened envelope are an obvious invitation to fold the said item in two.

Then there is the decision to remove the high value stamps from general sale. Since these stamps are no longer readily available as individual items to all, I trust that Gibbons will remove them from future editions of their catalogues. The so called commemoratives should also suffer a similar fate. I occasionally forward a packet of postal history to another member of a society to which I belong. He has asked me to affix the latest commemoratives to these packets. The trouble is that the local sub-offices never seem to have any. Usually, it is one of the dreadful white labels that is used.

Are my recent experiences a "statistical glitch" or are they an indication of a very marked deterioration in our postal services? It should be said that for over thirty years at this address we have enjoyed a remarkably efficient service with many very reliable and helpful "posties".

HONORARY LIFE MEMBERSHIP

The Committee decided earlier this year to award honorary life membership to Mike Champness in recognition of the help that he has given to the Society over the years, particularly with our publications. It was a pleasure to see Mike at the meeting in Northampton last September.

SOCIETY LIBRARY

The Society is extremely grateful for the gift of Chris Beaver's postal history library. A substantial number of his books has been added to the Society's library and an updated catalogue which incorporates these books is enclosed with this issue. The surplus, i.e. books which were already in the Society's library were sold for Society funds in the April auction.

THE NEXT MEETING

This will be held on 18th September at Kington St Michael in conjunction with the Somerset and Dorset PHG. A leaflet which gives full details is enclosed with this issue.

Full details of the programme for next season will be sent out with the next issue of Midland Mail.

THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

There was a record attendance of twenty-three members and guests at our Annual General Meeting which was held at St Germain's Church Hall on 17th April. After the usual preliminaries our Chairman, Derek Smeathers, gave his report. Derek commented that the beginning of this season was marked by the completion of the five-year term as Secretary by Eric Lewis. His service to the Society has been exemplary. Mel Matthews took over not just the Secretary's job but also as Programme Secretary, and quickly showed what a capable officer he is. We are very fortunate to have two men of such calibre willing to handle the Society's affairs.

Elizabeth Lewis, our long-serving Treasurer, and Eric Lewis made history as the first husband-and-wife team to be awarded the prestigious ABPS Award of Merit - so richly deserved for their great work not only with our Society but in the wider field of philately and postal history.

Mel Matthews had carried out a review of the Society Rules and produced an up-dated version within a few days of becoming Secretary. He had also considered whether we should be represented on the internet. Bob Viney had produced a study of the possibilities, and we had been approached by the Falkirk and District Philatelic Society with an offer of a page on a web site. We had taken this up, but at the time of writing our application had been acknowledged but no result has appeared.

Derek then reviewed the very attractive programme we had enjoyed over the past season, and ended by saying that the attendance at these meetings had not been well attended. It was his one regret, as he came to the end of his term as Chairman that our meetings were not better attended. He asked what could we do to bring in the 75% of our membership that do not come to meetings. However, he thanked those who did come and all those who work so tirelessly to make the Midland Postal History Society such a successful one. Long mat it continue.

Elizabeth Lewis, our Treasurer, distributed copies of the accounts for the year ending 31st March 2004. Elizabeth reported that the income from subscriptions and adverts was lower as some of these had previously been paid in advance. The production costs for *Midland Mail* were up because 5000 copies of the red front page had been ordered as our printer would not in future have the facility to print these, and a number of copies had been ordered for distribution at Midpex. The cost of room hire appeared to be only slightly up but in fact was £95 higher as the room at Northampton had been paid for before March last year. The charges at Carrs Lane had risen substantially and we had paid £110 for the room we had used in January. It was agreed by the meeting that the annual subscription should remain at £8.

The Editor made his annual plea for articles for *Midland Mail* and thanked all those who had contributed during the past year. The Coordinating Editor reported that stocks of the Society's publications were very low. He then announced the discovery of a map of the post roads which the Society had been given permission by the Earl of Leicester to reproduce. The County Editors were working hard on the mileage project and completion was within sight. Tom Poynton, our representative on the MPF and the ABPS said the latter was reported to be financially sound. The Packet of the former had been wound up, leading to a major downturn in revenue. A sliding scale of fees had been proposed to make up the shortfall.

We then proceeded to the election of a new Chairman. Chris Jackson was proposed by Alan Godfrey, seconded by John Calladine, and was duly elected.

Mel Matthews then gave provisional details of next season's programme. This will be distributed with the August edition of *Midland Mail*.

The Jon Baker trophy, for the best article appearing in *Midland Mail* in 2002, was awarded to Ken Smith for his article on the closure and opening of post offices in the Midlands.

We then proceeded to our Annual Auction the realisations for which appear on the next page. It was yet another excellent auction with total realisations of approximately £4300 with total realisations in excess of £5,500 of which £184 was for lots given to be sold for Society funds.

Our thanks are due once more to Eric and Elizabeth for the enormous amount of work that preparing such a large catalogue must have involved and then dispatching the many postal lots. Thanks also to our auctioneer, Chris Jackson and to Sharon for distributing the room lots. They make a superb team.

AUCTION REALISATIONS

A	6.00	B	13.50	C	12.00	D	3.00	E	13.00	F	12.00
G	28.00	H	5.00	J	3.50	K	4.00	L	7.00	M	8.00
N	12.00	O	7.00	P	10.00	Q	12.00	S	9.00	T	20.00
1	360.00	2	380.00	3	26.00	4	10.00	5	28.00	6	22.00
7	4.00	8	18.00	9	13.00	10	24.00	11	7.50	12	13.00
13	20.00	14	20.00	15	ns	16	ns	17	1.25	18	4.00
19	1.50	20	2.00	21	3.75	22	4.25	23	1.75	24	1.75
25	2.25	26	0.75	27	2.00	28	8.50	29	17.00	30	24.00
31	5.00	32	17.00	33	5.50	34	8.00	35	4.00	36	ns
37	ns	38	ns	39	ns	40	17.00	41	7.00	42	16.00
43	ns	44	13.00	45	50.00	46	22.00	47	10.00	48	10.00
49	3.00	50	16.00	51	1.00	52	16.00	53	6.00	54	34.00
55	22.00	56	16.00	57	55.00	58	ns	59	58.00	60	26.00
61	40.00	62	1.75	63	1.25	64	ns	65	10.00	66	12.00
67	4.50	68	4.00	69	0.75	70	2.25	71	ns	72	ns
73	14.00	74	5.75	75	12.00	76	6.50	77	22.00	78	4.50
79	5.00	80	8.50	81	10.00	82	175.00	83	50.00	84	32.00
85	34.00	86	10.00	87	12.00	88	26.00	89	6.50	90	38.00
91	2.00	92	10.00	93	13.00	94	11.00	95	14.00	96	10.00
97	2.00	98	1.00	99	2.00	100	4.25	101	15.00	102	ns
103	14.00	104	2.75	105	ns	106	10.00	107	3.50	108	10.00
109	ns	110	12.00	111	5.00	112	28.00	113	12.00	114	15.00
115	ns	116	10.00	117	20.00	118	10.00	119	9.00	120	11.00
121	9.00	122	14.00	123	34.00	124	ns	125	22.00	126	ns
127	ns	128	ns	129	ns	130	ns	131	13.00	132	22.00
133	10.00	134	15.00	135	10.00	136	ns	137	2.75	138	5.00
139	ns	140	65.00	141	10.00	142	3.00	143	20.00	144	17.00
145	1.00	146	6.50	147	24.00	148	9.00	149	18.00	150	8.00
151	8.00	152	2.00	153	10.00	154	10.00	155	3.00	156	12.00
157	19.00	158	18.00	159	ns	160	14.00	161	15.00	162	15.00
163	19.00	164	9.00	165	8.00	166	8.00	167	ns	168	18.00
169	15.00	170	10.00	171	18.00	172	11.00	173	18.00	174	42.00
175	8.50	176	13.00	177	32.00	178	ns	179	13.00	180	4.75
181	ns	182	8.00	183	7.00	184	30.00	185	12.00	186	14.00
187	16.00	188	15.00	189	ns	190	36.00	191	14.00	192	12.00
193	4.00	194	5.50	195	10.00	196	2.75	197	30.00	198	7.00
199	15.00	200	12.00	201	7.50	202	7.50	203	7.50	204	11.00
205	16.00	206	4.00	207	9.00	208	6.00	209	5.00	210	4.00
211	12.00	212	2.50	213	4.00	214	5.00	215	4.00	216	7.50
217	5.00	218	7.50	219	3.50	220	3.00	221	28.00	222	7.50
223	17.00	224	7.50	225	7.50	226	4.00	227	ns	228	26.00
229	14.00	230	ns	231	ns	232	5.00	233	8.00	234	10.00
235	55.00	236	30.00	237	6.00	238	12.00	239	6.00	240	32.00
241	26.00	242	4.00	243	17.00	244	ns	245	24.00	246	6.50
247	17.00	248	7.50	249	5.00	250	6.50	251	5.00	252	15.00
253	17.00	254	32.00	255	12.00	256	22.00	257	10.00	258	20.00
259	5.00	260	ns	261	11.00	262	15.00	263	3.00	264	3.00
265	ns	266	3.00	267	8.50	268	5.50	269	6.00	270	3.00
271	6.50	272	24.00	273	13.00	274	10.00	275	ns	276	ns
277	ns	278	4.25	279	3.50	280	1.00	281	ns	282	5.50
283	3.00	284	3.00	285	9.00	286	2.25	287	1.00	288	ns
289	2.00	290	2.50	291	6.00	292	4.00	293	6.00	294	ns
295	55.00	296	36.00	297	ns	298	ns	299	ns	300	ns
301	6.50	302	ns	303	1.75	304	4.25	305	2.75	306	9.50
307	9.50	308	4.00	309	ns	310	11.00	311	12.00	312	ns
313	7.00	314	14.00	315	8.50	316	3.75	317	26.00	318	11.00
319	15.00	320	6.50	321	4.00	322	6.50	323	24.00	324	15.00

325	8.00	326	15.00	327	7.50	328	4.75	329	9.00	330	11.00
331	5.50	332	ns	333	18.00	334	5.50	335	46.00	336	46.00
337	8.00	338	11.00	339	3.25	340	14.00	341	11.00	342	7.00
343	28.00	344	14	345	15.00	346	11.00	347	7.50	348	ns
349	7.50	350	8.00	351	ns	352	30.00	353	19.00	354	2.75
355	4.25	356	ns	357	26.00	358	15.00	359	4.25	360	12.00
361	36.00	362	12.00	363	40.00	364	34.00	365	3.50	366	11.00
367	24.00	368	11.00	369	24.00	370	3.00	371	6.00	372	30.00
373	17.00	374	42.00	375	12.00	376	3.75	377	11.00	378	80.00
379	5.50	380	26.00	381	ns	382	15.00	383	13.00	384	18.00
385	14.00	386	11.00	387	6.50	388	7.00	389	8.50	390	10.00
391	12.00	394	45.00	395	24.00						

Lots 392 and 393 were withdrawn.

AMENDING THE SOCIETY'S UDC BOOK

The 4th Edition of 'The Undated Circular Marks of the Midland Counties' was published in 1996. Since that time, the Co-ordinating Editor has been notified of many more amendments to the usage data and it is known that several County Editors have also maintained their own records. It is impractical to expect a fifth edition of the book to appear in the next few years but it should prove possible to amend the usage pages - and those pages only - so that they can be incorporated into the existing book if members wish to do so.

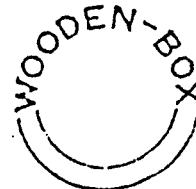
The UDC book was not produced on a computer but on a typewriter with non-standard memory disks, each holding only two or three pages of information. While it is not feasible to transfer these pages onto a computer, other than by scanning the printed pages, it is a relatively simple task to amend the existing disks. The proposal is therefore to amend usage dates (and colours, if appropriate) on the existing pages and to highlight the amendments by underlining them. These pages, bearing the existing page number but annotated to show they are an amended version, would then be sent to members as an annex to 'Midland Mail'. The task would be undertaken on a random county-by-county basis and it is anticipated that, perhaps, two counties would be included with a single issue of 'Midland Mail' if this can be done without increasing the Society's postage costs.

In all probability, the pages will be sent out with the binding perforations already punched. A manual binding machine would then be made available at selected Society meetings for those members who wish to open their existing 4th edition and replace the pages. (Other members may prefer to retain them as a separate supplement.) The first of the amended pages would probably appear with 'Midland Mail' early next year.

Although previous appeals to members to send amendments either to the appropriate County Editor or to the Co-ordinating Editor have met with a good response, there are surely more to come. The counties with the best record of amendments will obviously appear first! Those with e-mail can send them to:

john.calladine@ukgateway.net

Please consider what you have tucked away in your collection and notify amendments before the end of September, including the proof book reference (column 5) wherever possible.



THE MAY MEETING

It was unusual for our Society to have a meeting in May, but there was a very good attendance when we met on 8th May at Oldbury Park Primary School, Worcester. The afternoon was to be devoted to members' one board displays on "Parcel Post".

Eric Lewis began the proceedings with a printed bill of a carrier from "Brecknock". We have come to expect the unusual, if not the bizarre, from Eric on these occasions. Eric did not disappoint us. His next item was a parcel dated 1794 - the result of Eric and Elizabeth spending a rainy day in Bournemouth. We also saw a printed receipt for the conveyance of parcels of 1838 and a Ross first type Parcels Post label used in August 1883 on a piece showing the full address. John Soer produced parcel post labels of Leicestershire showing the various types and then different parcel post rates.

Bob Viney began with a copy of the London Gazette from 1686 which reported that J. Warren of Stamford had been fined £440 for "carrying and conveying Letters or Pacquets contrary to Law". Among other items shown by Bob were a letter of 1756 sent from Exton in Rutland to Westminster and endorsed "to be left at the Old Knaggs Head in Stamford", and a package of 1876 showing the Uppingham duplex cancelling a 6d and ½d adhesives. The explanation of this was that although the limit for the Inland Letter Post was twelve ounces, items up to five pounds in weight could be sent by Book Post.

A Parcels Post label of Worcester used on 31st December 1883 was Chris Jackson's first item. Chris then went on to show us labels carrying a wide range of Victorian stamps. Amongst these were labels from the Redditch TSOs as well as the rural offices. Chris ended his display with examples of items carried by parcels post system operated by the railways. We had thought that Bob Viney's item was early but Sadie Cole went back to 1655 with her first item which was a letter referring to a parcel which was to be sent by the next carrier. Sadie then told us about the history of Pryce Jones, of Newtown, who started the first mail order business in the world in 1879. Among the items of Pryce Jones ephemera was a Pryce Jones Parcel Post label.

Roy Summers produced parcel post labels from the majority of the Wolverhampton sub-offices. It is not an easy task to do this for one town. Among the labels from Warwickshire shown by Gerald Marriner was issued to an office "Solihull Lodge" but with the word "Lodge" crossed out. Gerald told us that he had not been able to find any evidence for a post office at Solihull Lodge.

It was now the turn of "Mr Parcel Post", himself, Bill Toye to entertain us. The material that Bill produced included receipts of 1808 and 1824 for a parcel issued by the Bull & Mouth Inn; a blue parcel post label intended for use within London on which the adhesives were cancelled with a rhomboid mark; and a food parcel sent to the BEF in India with stamps showing the F&M perfin of Fortnum and Mason.

A first type Parcels Post label of Liverpool was shown by Alan Godfrey. This was followed by a second type label but without a printed name of an office. We also saw various examples of the handstamps used in the parcel post including a number of Paid marks; mint labels for parcels sent by bus; railway parcel post stamps; and two covers from parcels sent by Midland Red. Alan ended with nine sheets of Warwickshire parcel post labels.

A railway timetable of 1837 was Richard Farman's first item. Richard told us that the Grand Junction Railway would have carried parcels. Then came part of a wrapper which had been carried by the Shropshire Union Railway in 1866 from Stafford to Shrewsbury. A number of covers showed the letter stamps produced by the Midland Railway. Richard ended with Staffordshire parcel post labels. Of note among these were one from Uttoxeter RSO and several from Stafford station with a variety of inscriptions such as "Stafford Station B.O." and "Railway Station B.O."

There was now time for second helpings and Eric Lewis showed us a Christmas greetings card in the form of a parcel followed by examples of the private labels produced by Cadburys, Marshall & Snelgrove, and Spurrell & Son. The latter is not recorded by Mackay. John Soer showed Belgian railway parcel post stamps - to be found in most schoolboy stamp collections years ago. Bill Toye produced part of a sheet with a label of Whit church (under Cardiff) joined to one of Bungay. This shows that the labels were printed in sheets with a labels for a number of offices in one sheet. Bill supported this with examples of constant flaws on labels used by different offices.

Like all the afternoons devoted to members' one board displays it had proved to be a most entertaining afternoon with a wide and fascinating range of material on display.

A CARRIER'S PRINTED BILL USED IN 1790

I am indebted to Eric Lewis for sending the copy of this bill which he showed at the May Meeting.

Mr. Edw. Jones,
Landoury

Brecknock,

Dr. To William & George North,
London, Gloucester, Manchester, Shrewsbury, &c. CARRIERS.

☞ The LONDON WAGGONS set out from the King's-Head Inn, Old-Change, London, every Saturday at Twelve o'Clock at Noon, and call, in coming out, at the Green-Man-and-Still, in Oxford-Street. ----- They set out from the Flower-de-Luce, in Oxford, every Tuesday Morning; and from Mr. MANNING's, Westgate-Street, Gloucester, every Wednesday Evening, and are the ONLY WAGGONS which go from SOUTH-WALES thro' Oxford to London. ----- GOODS from Coventry, Kidderminster, Birmingham, &c. and all Parts of the North, directed to Mr. KELLOW's Warehouse, Gloucester, are expeditiously conveyed to all Parts of Monmouthshire and South-Wales.

The MANCHESTER WAGGONS set out from Mr. HOLBROOK's Warehouse, in the Dolefield, MANCHESTER, every Friday Evening; from Mr. MURRALL's Warehouse, Shrewsbury, every Wednesday Morning, (where Goods are taken in from Chester, &c.); from the Feathers, Ludlow, every Thursday Morning; from the Black-Swan, Leominster, every Friday Morning; and from the Greyhound, Hereford, every Friday Forenoon. --- ** This is by far the Cheapest and most Expeditious Conveyance by Land, from Manchester, &c. into South-Wales.

		L.	s.	d.
	To Bill £	8	10	2
	Feb 15. C. Byfash	5	5	—
		3	5	2
1790	March 20. 1 Deal plank for fann ⁿ		1	6
	27. 1 Basket — do — 2. 15			11
	Printy the Billy, Noyadd to lit		5	6
	1790	£	3	11
	Apr 15. Byfash	3	3	—
		£	8	5

THE NEWLY-DISCOVERED 'HOLKHAM' MAP

A postal wall-map of England and Wales has recently been discovered at Holkham Hall in Norfolk. The Earl of Leicester has agreed that 100 prints may be reproduced by the Society. The map has yet to be authoritatively dated but initial research suggests it may be c1735, some thirty-five years earlier than the British Library map and thus the earliest complete map of the English postal system. Thomas Coke (later Earl of Leicester) became Postmaster General in 1733 and there is no reason for such a map to have been at Holkham before that date. It appears on an inventory of Holkham Hall made in 1766.

Brown lines probably represent the London posts while thinner dotted lines are bye-posts. The cross posts are in clear red. The cross posts shown suggest that the map dates from the early 1700s.

Apart from the antiquated spelling of many place names, other features that suggest its early date are the scale, in both computed and measured miles, and the description of the surveyor's district encompassing Warwick and Stratford-on-Avon as "Part of the Kent Road".

PRINTS (approx 24 x 33 ins) ARE AVAILABLE FROM JOHN CALLADINE AT A COST OF £21.50 plus £2 p&p.
(The sum of £21.50 includes £2 for Society funds.)

Please contact John at 5 Skillins, Kington St Michael, Chippenham SN14 6RL.
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BIRMINGHAM SQUARED CIRCLE POSTMARKS

Members are probably familiar with the book '*Collecting British Squared Circle Postmarks*' which was first published in 1987. That book has now been completely revised and greatly expanded in a second edition that has been compiled on a compact disk. However, a separate compact disc gives a comprehensive description of the use of 'Squared Circle' postmarks in the Birmingham office.

Apart from the list of the various handstamps, along with their dates of use, there are sections on types and sub-types, a rarity guide, the recutting sequence for each of the proofed hammers, about sixty covers showing superb strikes of the Birmingham 'squared circles', and twelve postcards showing Birmingham as it was at the start of the twentieth century. These in fact were a disappointment as they consisted largely of cards that would retail for about £2, though they are colourful. However, I doubt that those buying this disc will bother overmuch about a few postcards.

Although I write as someone who does not collect Birmingham postal history, the rest of the disc seemed to me to be very impressive. It cannot have been easy, even for such a large office as Birmingham, to find sixty superb strikes on cover. The recutting sequence for each hammer that appears in the proof books is easy to follow and is most informative. The notes on the types and sub-types are detailed and equally informative.

The listing pages can be read by MS word and are designed to be read in A4 portrait format. This does mean that the period of use does appear on two lines.

Is this the way that philatelic publishing will go in the future? One attraction must be that it will be easier to produce updated editions as further information comes to light.

Those interested in this disk should contact:

amikewill@aol.com or stanleycohen@mercuryin.es

AERO/AIRMAIL HISTORY

5th National Philatelic Exhibition

at **POSTINGS**

Twice Yearly Postal Auctions



at the **Towngate Theatre, Basildon**
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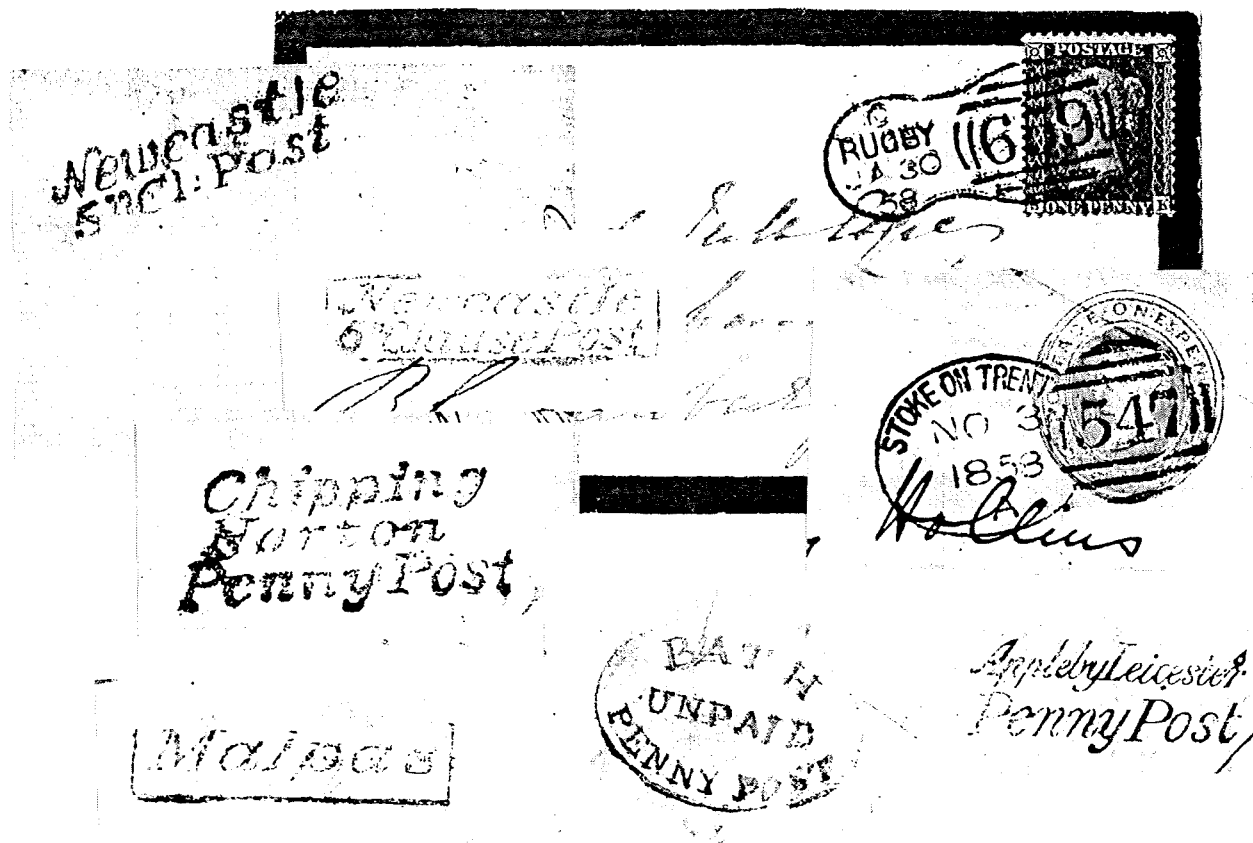
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THE TRAVELS OF MISS ORDE

by Brian Atkins

During the early part of the 19th century, most educated young men and women took the Grand Tour. A trip to southern Europe with a spinster aunt as chaperone was part of a lady's education. Though Italy was the primary destination, Spain, France and Greece were also visited. The British were lured by their admiration of antiquity and the desire to see monuments of ancient civilisation, superb architecture and all the wonders of nature that the Mediterranean countries had to offer. They could also escape the damp and cold of a British winter! Miss Orde did just that and I have been fortunate to obtain 5 covers which allow us to trace her steps.

In December 1863 we find her sunning herself, like many since, on the Costa del Sol. A letter addressed to her through bankers in Malaga has a 6d lilac (SG 83, plate 3) cancelled by the Shrewsbury duplex dated 26th December 1863 (fig 1), issued on 1 JUN 1863 (SIB 21 / 252) with 5 examples recorded from 21 SEP 1863 to 26 DEC 1863, using code E only.

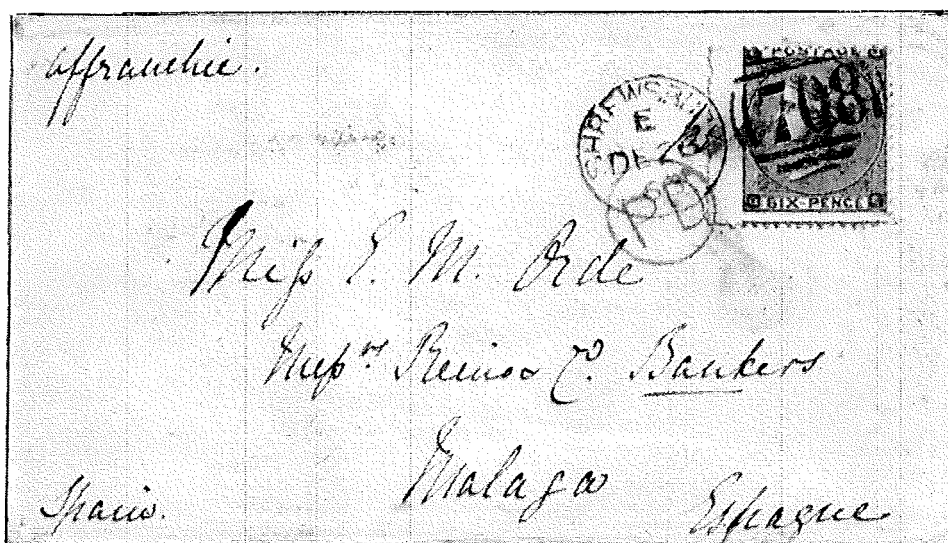


Fig 1. December 1863 cover from Shrewsbury to Malaga, Spain

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



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

Miss Orde was being informed of a sad loss as a mourning cover was sent from Shrewsbury (fig 2) with a similar 6d lilac cancelled by the 4-bar circular duplex dated 19th April 1864, issued on 8 FEB 1864 (SIB 23 / 33) with four recorded uses from 25 MAR 1864 to 17 SEP 1866 using codes E and I. The Treasury Warrant of October 1858 stated that letters between the United Kingdom and Spain via France were to be charged 6d per ¼oz. Letters for Spain were put into a closed bag (there are no French marks) and forwarded to the Spanish Exchange Office at Irun on the border with France, where the letter to Malaga arrived on 29th December and that to Granada on 21st April. Both letters took 3 further days to arrive at their respective destinations; wonderful examples of how the railways had speeded communications. That Miss Orde was not travelling alone is confirmed by the note "*A scrap for Bee inside*" inside the flap of the envelope.

By August Miss Orde had left the heat of southern Spain and we find her enjoying the clean, fresh summer air of the foothills of Mont Blanc in the Haute Savoie, eastern France.

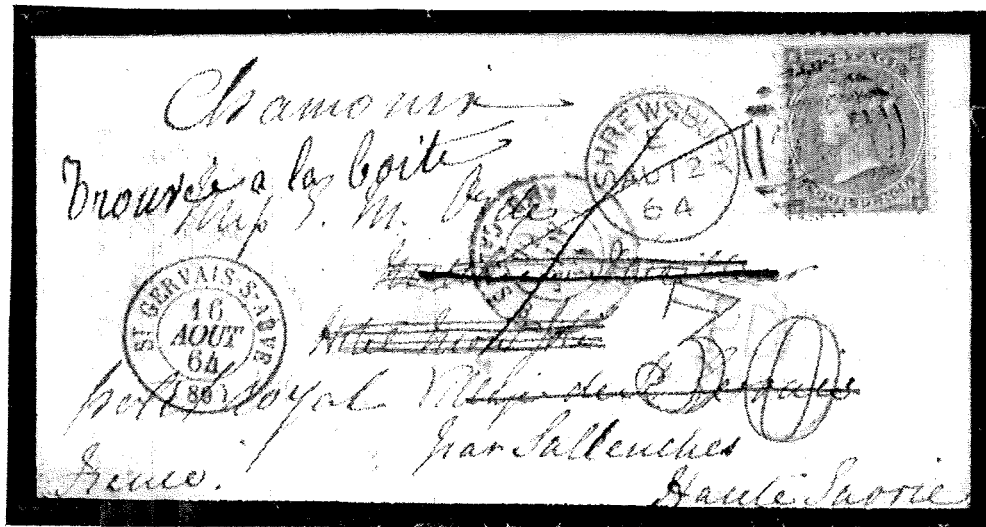


Fig 3. August 1864 cover from Shrewsbury to France

As the letter is missing we shall never know if it was part of the same correspondence or whether the indefatigable Miss Orde was being informed of another sad loss, but this mourning cover was sent on 12th August 1864 (fig 3) with the 4d vermilion (SG 79, plate 3) cancelled by a Shrewsbury 3-bar circular duplex, the twelfth such duplex issued to Shrewsbury on 26 FEB 1864 (SIB 23 / 39) with five records of use from 12 AUG 1864 to 29 APR 1865, all using code E. It is recognisable by a particularly long serif to the top left of the figure 7. The letter reached London on the 13th, Paris on the 14th and on the same day was on the Paris to Lyon T.P.O., arriving in St. Gervais-sur-Arve, near Sallenches, on the 16th. But Miss Orde had decamped to Chamonix and the cover was put into a post box (*trouvée a la boîte*) and forwarded, arriving on the 17th August having been charged 30 centimes for the privilege of forwarding. The Anglo-French Convention of January 1855 regulated a charge of 4d per ¼oz. for letters from the United Kingdom to France, post paid (PD - Paid to Destination - under the figure 30). The same convention also stated that foreign letters could be forwarded free of charge if handed in to a post office but were subject to postage due if put into a box, as in this case.

Like Hannibal before her, Miss Orde was about to cross the Alps by road (the first train crossed by the Brenner pass in 1867 and the Fréjus railway tunnel opened in 1871); though also like Hannibal we do not know which route she took to enter Italy. It is almost too much to bear but yet another mourning cover finds our dear Miss Orde in the important but undistinguished port city of Livorno (or Leghorn) on Italy's Mediterranean coast. The letter was posted at Shrewsbury on 26th October 1864 (fig 4) and the 6d lilac (SG 85, plate 4) is cancelled by the same 3-bar duplex as the letter to Haute Savoie. One cannot imagine what delights Miss Orde found in and around Livorno, perhaps she was taking a rest from the more impressive parts of Tuscany.

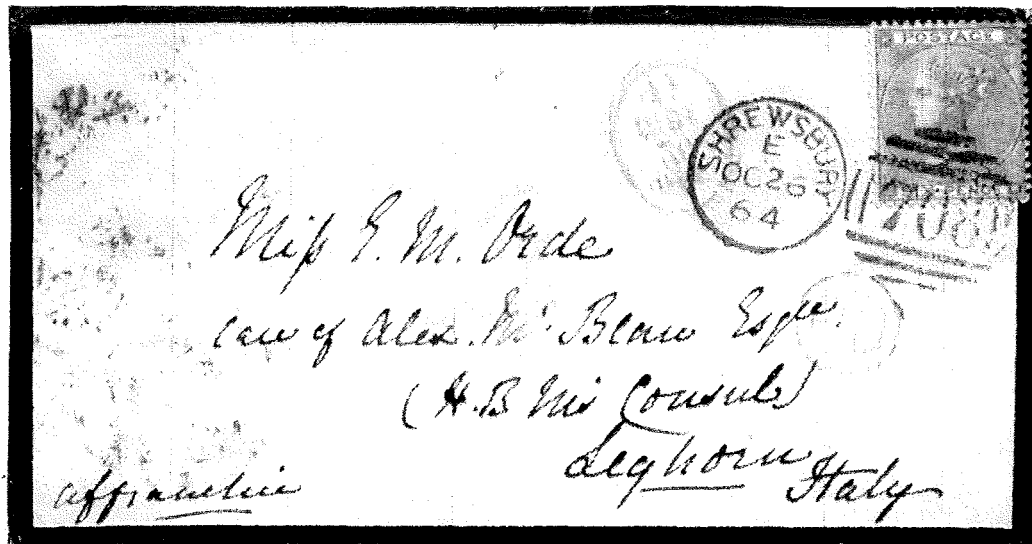


Fig 4. October 1864 cover from Shrewsbury to Italy

The letter went in a closed bag to the French border town of Modane from where it was taken to the Italian Exchange Office at Susa and forwarded by train to Turin (Italian railway mark "DA SUSA A TORINO / 29 OCT 1864, on the reverse); it arrived in Livorno via Genoa on 30th October 1864. At this time routes and, particularly, rates to Italy are complex. The Post Office Guide (1860) shows charges per ¼oz. of 6d to Lombardy, 6d (via Sardinia) or 9d (via France) to Modena and Parma, 6d to Sardinia, 7d to Tuscany, 8d to Venetian Lombardy and 11d to the Two Sicilies! Routes were via Belgium (expensive) and at least two through France, the one above and another via Marseilles and the packet to Sardinia and Genoa. However, contemporary covers to Italy appear to be charged 6d irrespective of destination (eg: 1865 London to Ancona, via Susa)!

Suffering from cultural overload, not to say fatigue, by November 1875 Miss Orde was inhaling the invigorating sea air at Kilmory on the remote west coast of Scotland, no doubt feasting on the produce of the abundant waters of nearby Loch Fyne. The 1d red is cancelled by the 4-bar oval duplex (fig 5) issued to Shrewsbury on 7 DEC 1864 (SIB 23 / 110) and recorded used from 13 JAN 1865 to 13 NOV 1865 (latest use below) using codes B (one only) and E.

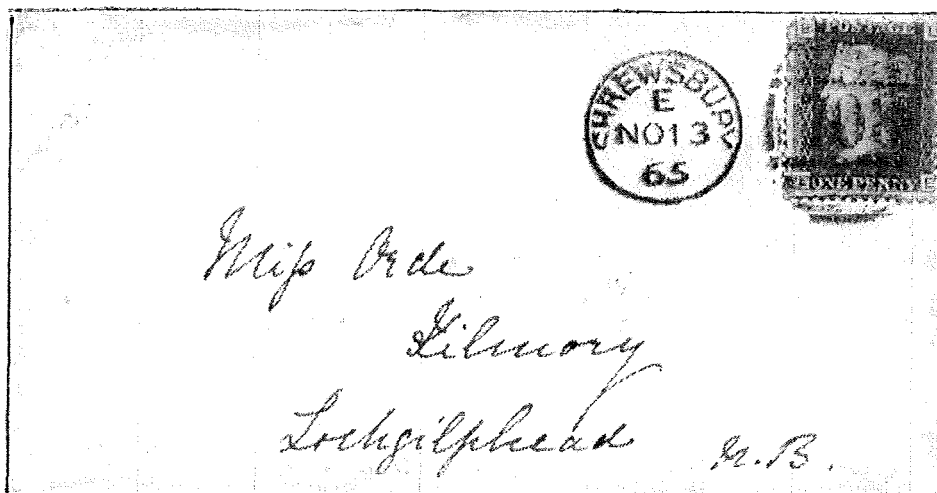


Fig 5. November 1865 cover from Shrewsbury to Kilmory, Lochgilphead, Scotland

Who was Miss Orde and what connection does she have with Shrewsbury? Was it a family member or friend who passed away? I can find no reference to her in the few early directories I have. If anyone has any covers addressed to her or information about her please contact me.

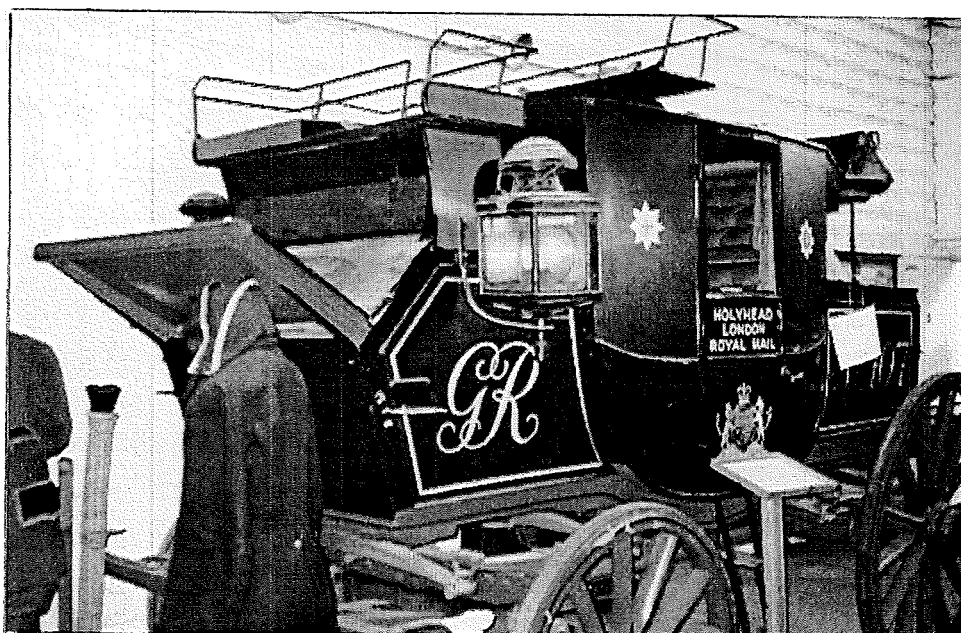
A HOLYHEAD MAILCOACH?

by John Calladine

It was while researching some of the information needed for an earlier piece in 'Midland Mail' (viz 'Food for Thought') that I was referred to Mrs Dale-Leech in Derbyshire. Mrs Dale-Leech is known throughout the coach driving fraternity. She also happens to be an expert in the esoteric world of post horn calls and the only woman ever to have won the Coach Horn competition at the Royal Show.

Caroline Dale-Leech is usually to be found at the Red House Stables, her working carriage museum at Darley Dale, near Matlock in Derbyshire. The emphasis here is on using the coaches she has on display. Road tours of the Derbyshire countryside by Carriage and Pair or by Coach and Four-in-Hand can be booked at the museum. Among the interesting vehicles on display, in the limited space she has available to her, is one of the few surviving Hansom Cabs, a Stage Coach and, yes, a Royal Mail Coach.

The mailcoach in question is numbered 107 and is described (and painted) as a coach used on the Holyhead Mail. It does not belong to the Red House Stables and Museum but is on loan from the Chandos-Pole family of Radbourne Hall, Derby. I am grateful to Mr Tom Ryder of York for providing the background story. The coach was bought in Cheltenham by Edward S. Chandos-Pole Esq in the 1860s. He was one of a group of coaching enthusiasts who ran a coach service between London and Brighton between 1862 and 1866. However, in 1867, this service was taken over by just three enthusiasts, of whom Edward Chandos-Pole was one, using two new coaches. In the winter of 1867-68, Chandos-Pole and a Mr Pole-Gell - possibly a cousin - ran a 'light coach' on the run. This is said to have been the old (Holyhead) mailcoach.

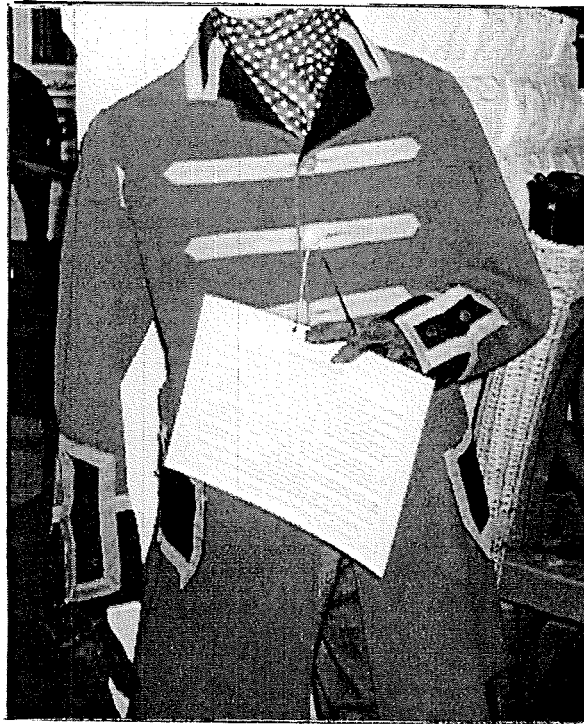


The Holyhead mailcoach at the Red House Stables Working Carriage Museum

The coach is described as having been built by Williams of Bristol in 1826. It is said to be the least modified mailcoach in existence and, quite possibly, the only authentic mailcoach. We know, from surviving timebills, that, on any given day, the mailcoach route between London and Holyhead was operated, not by a single coach but (depending on the period) by between three and six coaches - in each direction. We can also be sure, on such a prestigious route, that these were 'Patent' mailcoaches, that is they were coaches of an approved standard design hired by the Royal Mail from a contractor who not only supplied them but maintained them. The problem is that this contractor in 1826 was not Williams of Bristol but Vidlers of Millbank. It seems highly unlikely, more probably impossible, that the coach in the Museum was built in 1826. In 1826, Vidlers had no fewer than 200 patent mailcoaches in operation, with 80 in reserve, and the life expectancy of a coach was seven years. Their contracts were not to expire until 1835. (For this latter information, and more, one can do no better than recommend an article by Richard Blake in Volume 3, Number 1, of 'Cross Post', the journal of the Friends of Postal Heritage).

Mailcoaches were not built to an unchanging design. Over the years, Vidlers modified and improved their design but one thing remained constant, throughout the changes, and that was the straight undercarriage bar between the fore and the rigid rear axle. This caused mailcoaches to have a relatively high centre of gravity and reports of mailcoaches overturning on sharp bends are not uncommon. Elsewhere, the design of coaches continued to develop and, with Vidlers contract due for review in 1835 and renewal on 1st January 1836, the Post Office announced a competition for a modern mailcoach design with a prize of one hundred guineas. Again, the full story is in Richard Blake's article.

The days of Vidlers' monopoly were over but the problem was that no one firm was able to replace Vidlers. In order to maintain the mailcoach fleet, between 30 and 40 new coaches had to be constructed every year. The Post Office solved the problem by splitting the contract. The Northern region was allocated to Croall and Wallace and the Southern and Midland district to Wright, Horne and Williams. It now becomes feasible that mailcoach 107, the Holyhead mailcoach built by Williams, was constructed in 1836, not 1826 and used on one of the southern or midland legs of the Holyhead route. If so, it had a brief existence on that route because a true (i.e. full distance) Holyhead Mail only ran until 21st May 1838. However, that would account for the coach not being worn out, as it surely would have been if it had worked the route from 1826.



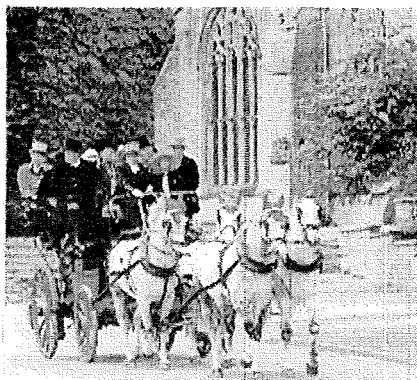
An original mailcoach guard's uniform - also on display at the Museum.

No sooner do we think that a dilemma has been resolved than another raises its head. If the coach was built in 1836 and not 1826, why does it have the insignia of George IV on the front boot and not William IV, who came to the throne in 1830? We should remember that Mr Chandos-Pole was running a private coach service between London and Brighton 30 years later. He was unlikely to have been allowed to run a coach bearing a royal monogram, particularly in Brighton. The probability must be that the coach was re-painted as a mailcoach many years later and, mistaking the year of manufacture, wrongly marked. Again, Mr Ryder may have provided a clue. In 1920, three 'mailcoaches' were used in a display at the International Horse Show at Olympia. One was from the Science Museum, another from a private owner in Kent and the third coach was this one. A surviving photograph shows slightly different insignia on the Chandos-Pole coach. There must be a probability that the coach would have been re-painted for the display and, almost certainly, re-painted yet again at least once since 1920. There will have been plenty of scope for imagination and error.

The number allocated to this mailcoach, number '107', appears to be authentic although there is no guarantee that it is. As mailcoaches were scrapped, it is likely that superseded numbers were re-used. In 'Midland Mail' 100/22, a London-Holyhead timebill of 1811 was reproduced. It shows a coach (with an unreadable) number leaving London for Oxford. At Oxford, coach number 210 - not necessarily the coach that left London - went forward to Birmingham. Coach number 180 ran from Birmingham to Shrewsbury and number 141 from Shrewsbury to Corwen. Coach number 93 covered the ground to the ferry at Bangor before number 79 completed the journey to Holyhead. A coach numbered 107 would fit into that pattern perfectly well although, of course, the timebill was used some 25 years before 'our' number 107 was likely to have been built. A set of timebills from 1827 has also survived. Unfortunately, these are specimens and, not having been completed on an actual run, do not include the serial numbers of each coach used. What they do indicate, however, is the number of different coaches employed. Since 1811, the route had changed and new bridges had been built. No longer were five or six coaches needed for the London-Holyhead run but three; one coach between London and Birmingham, a second coach between Birmingham and Corwen and a third coach between Corwen and Holyhead. It seems, therefore, that coach 107 would most probably have been used between London and Birmingham but possibly on the middle leg, between Birmingham and Corwen.

Part of a completed London to Holyhead timebill, used on 13th May 1815, can be found in 'Midland Mail' 44/11. Coach number 56 was used between London, Oxford and Birmingham, where coach number 244 was sent forward. Also in 'Midland Mail', but in 57/19, is a completed timebill for the Birmingham to London Mail used on 5th(?) September 1829. The coach used for this run was number 213 and, since a coach numbered 210 appeared on the London-Holyhead timebill of 1811 (see above), it is surely adequate proof that coach serial numbers were reallocated when a coach was scrapped. It is inconceivable that a coach built around 1811, as the original '213' is certain to have been if number 244 were in use in 1815, would still be in use in 1829.

It would be nice if one could end the story with some positive conclusions. At this stage, it simply isn't possible to do so. The evidence strongly suggests that the mailcoach at the Red House Stables was manufactured in 1836 or later. It may, indeed, have been used for a brief period on the Holyhead Mail, most probably between London and Birmingham. The coach has not been examined to see if the serial number '107' appears on any kind of identification plate but it is plausible. Perhaps one of our members will be able to take the story forward and, if so, no one will be happier to hear of the conclusions than Mrs Dale-Leech.



Note:

The Red House Stables & Carriage Museum (phone 01629-733583) are located at Old Road, Darley Dale, Matlock and open every day at 10.00am. The entrance fee (2003) is Adults £2-75, OAP £2-25. Tours by Carriage or Coach and Four-in-Hand must be booked in advance.

THE MOSSMAN COLLECTION

For those interested in horse-drawn vehicles, there is within a short distance of junction 10 of the M1, what is claimed to be the largest collection of such vehicles in the country. The collection contains what is described as a London-York mailcoach. The collection is open (Mondays excepted) from 10 am to 5 pm from April to October. In the summer months the gardens in Stockwood Park are well worth a visit. The Mossman Collection, Stockwood Park, Farley Hill, Luton. Tel: 01582 738714. At junction 10A take the first exit. After about half a mile turn left into Whitehill Avenue, then turn left into Farley Hill. The entrance to Stockwood Park is on the left after a few yards.

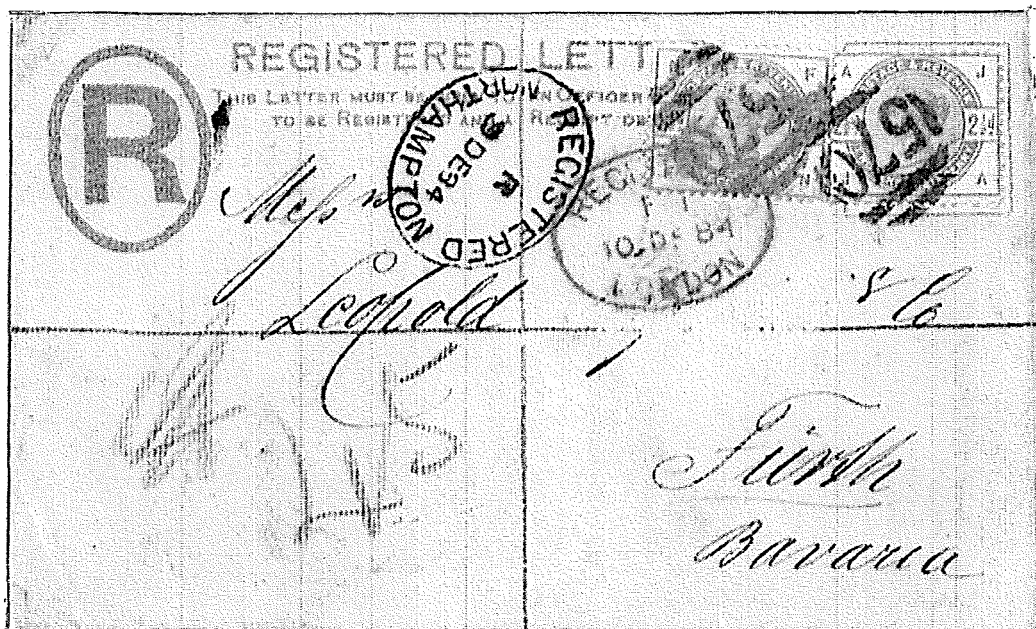
THE NORTHAMPTON VOS TWINS

by Derek Smeathers

Of the barred numerals, including the 1844 types and the duplex stamps, the vertical oval single is found less often than others. Introduced around 1860, this type is quite common from the smaller posttowns but is very much scarcer from the large busy offices. Northamptonshire perhaps demonstrates this as well as any other area. Smaller offices, such as Towcester, Higham Ferrers, Thrapston and Weedon made good use of VOS cancels through the 1870s, 1880s and 1890s, with their duplex handstamps in use at the same time. Northampton used its duplex stamps very freely, but the VOS remains distinctly uncommon.

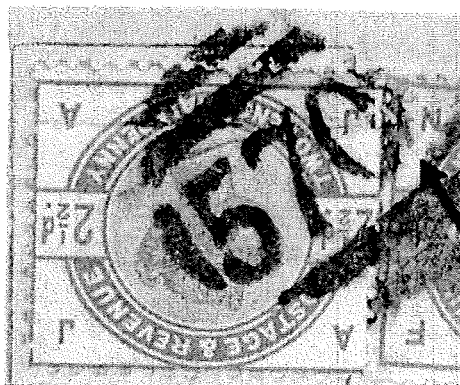
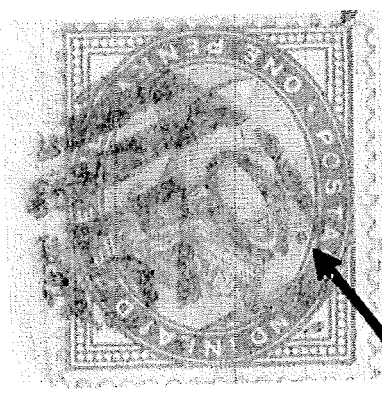
As a type, the Vertical Oval Single can be divided into two sub-types: one has three horizontal bars above the number and three below it - and so is called a 3VOS; the other has four bars above and four below, and is known as a 4VOS. Smaller offices usually had one or the other - Weedon is an example, all those seen so far being 4VOS.

In October 1870, a 4VOS was issued to Northampton (could it have been connected with the postcard?) but has not been recorded in use. On 13th April 1878, the town was sent its first 3VOS, to be exact it was sent two of them on the same date. These two appear very much alike, the main difference being that one of them has a full stop ("dot" in modern parlance) after the numeral. Parmenter, in his excellent book on these handstamps, records the "no dot" stamp used on 19th December 1891 only, and no use at all of the "dot". Soon after the publication of his book, I acquired a registered cover (illustrated below) with the 3VOS "no dot" cancelling the adhesives. It is not a good strike but clear enough to identify, and the date is 9th December 1884.

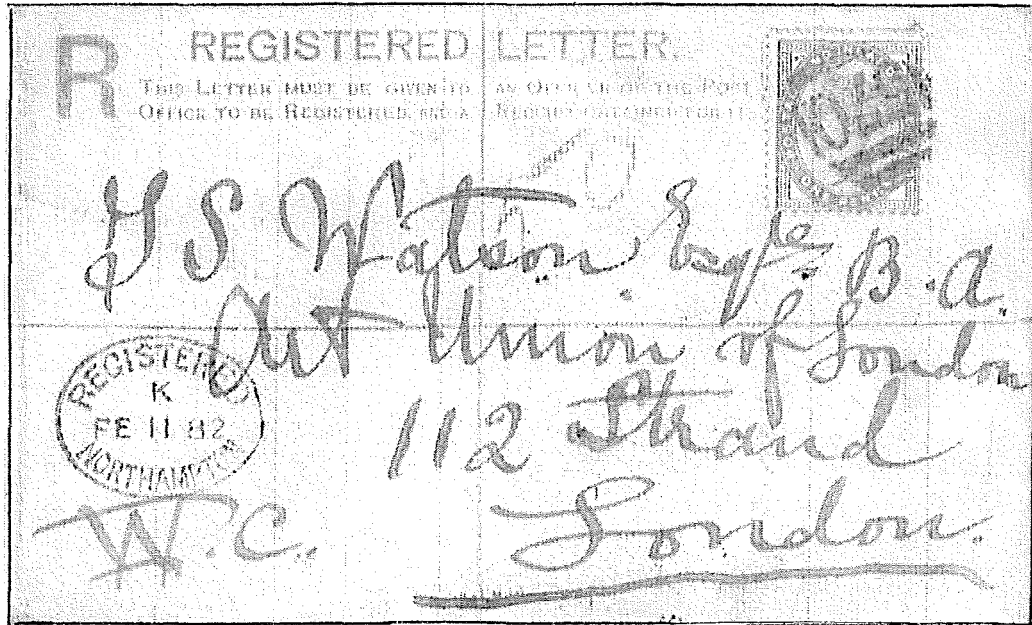


A few weeks ago, I found another registered cover of a slightly different type and here the adhesive is cancelled by the "dot" 3VOS - again not perfect but clear enough to show the dot. The date is confirmed as 11th February 1882. So now the twins have arrived! A comparison of them side by side seems to show a different shaped figure "7" in each one - unlike the illustrations in Parmenter. Is this an exciting new discovery?

Enlarged copies of the "dot" and "no dot" handstamps



A bonus is that the oval registered handstamp of Northampton on this 1882 cover has turned out to be the earliest example I have. As a type, this registered oval handstamp first appeared in London in the 1860s, and a few years later provincial offices used them. I have a Leicester example used on 30th June 1875. What is the earliest example from a Midland town that our readers can show?



A registered envelope of 1882 showing the "dot" handstamp.

SOME THOUGHTS ON THE LEICESTER VOS HANDSTAMPS

Derek Smeathers' article prompted me to have a look at the strikes that I have of the Leicester VOS handstamps. Leicester was issued with two 4VOS handstamps, one on 12th May 1866 (fig.1), the other on 18th October 1867 (fig. 2). Two 3VOS handstamps were issued on 8th February 1875 (fig. 3) and 21st May 1884 (fig. 4)



fig. 1



fig. 2



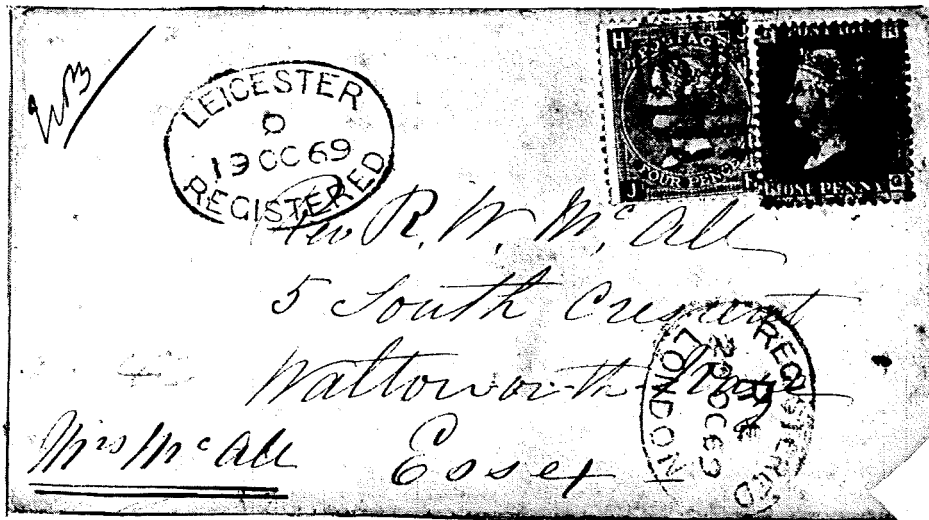
fig. 3



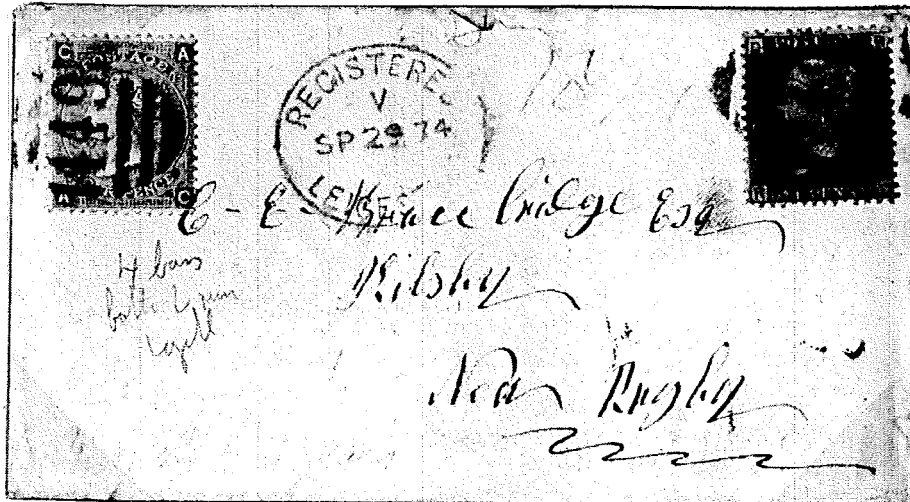
fig. 4

I do not have a strike of the first of these. All the impressions I have of the three remaining handstamps are on registered covers in the period October 1869 to March 1890. The strikes are usually so poor that it is only from the date that one can possibly identify the handstamp. At some point between March 1890 and December 1893 the office stopped using the VOS handstamps to cancel the adhesives on registered mail and used the oval registered handstamps instead.

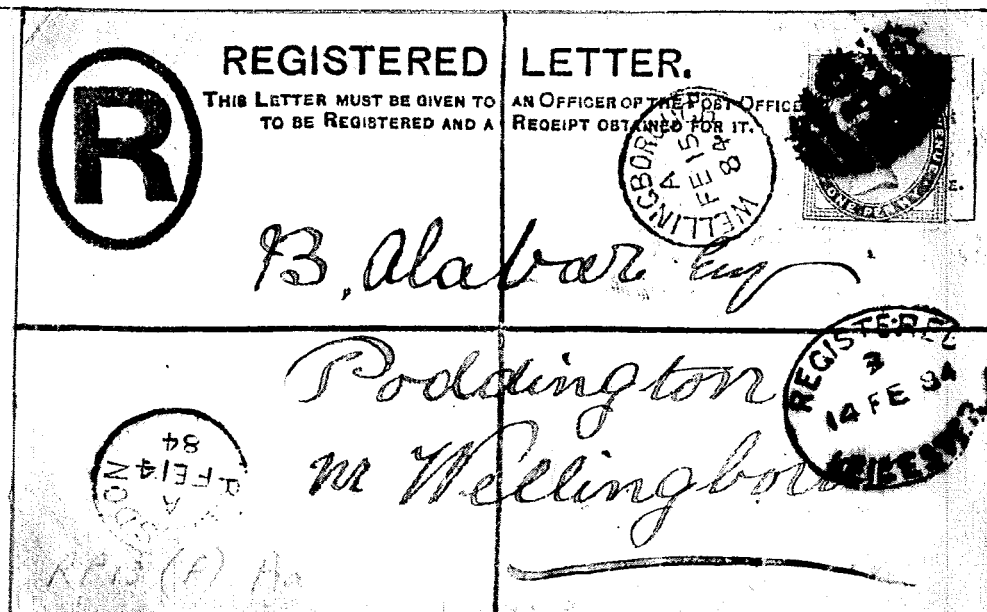
The "LEICESTER/REGISTERED" handstamp was issued on 9th October 1867.
The "449" 4VOS which cancels the adhesives was issued on 18th October 1867.



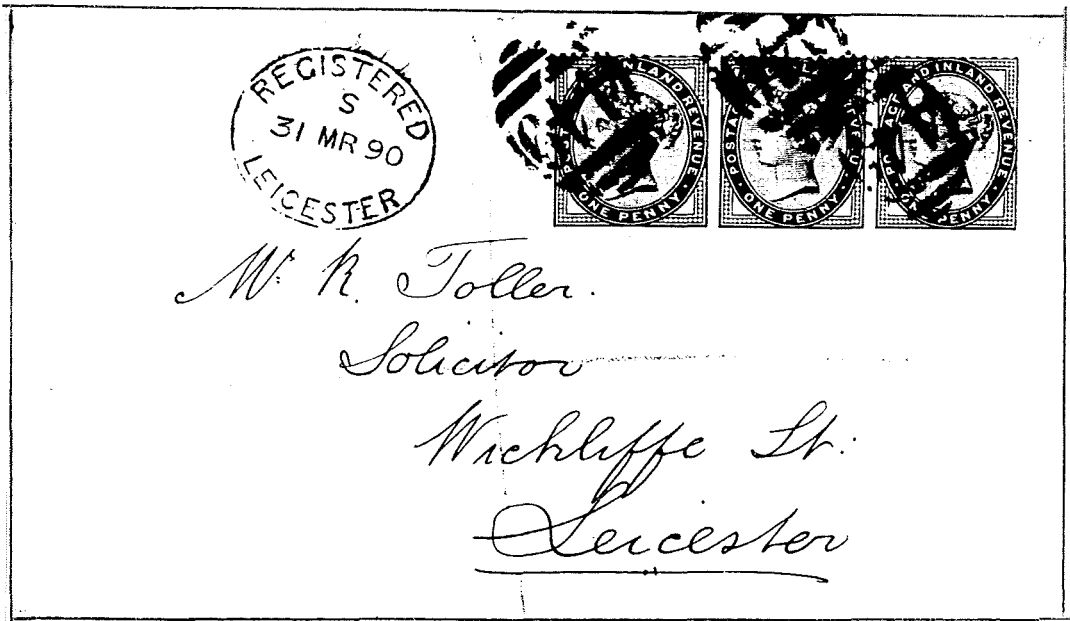
The "REGISTERED/LEICESTER" handstamp was issued on 3rd February 1874.
The ink from the bottom two bars of the 4VOS handstamp has spread giving the impression that there are three bars.



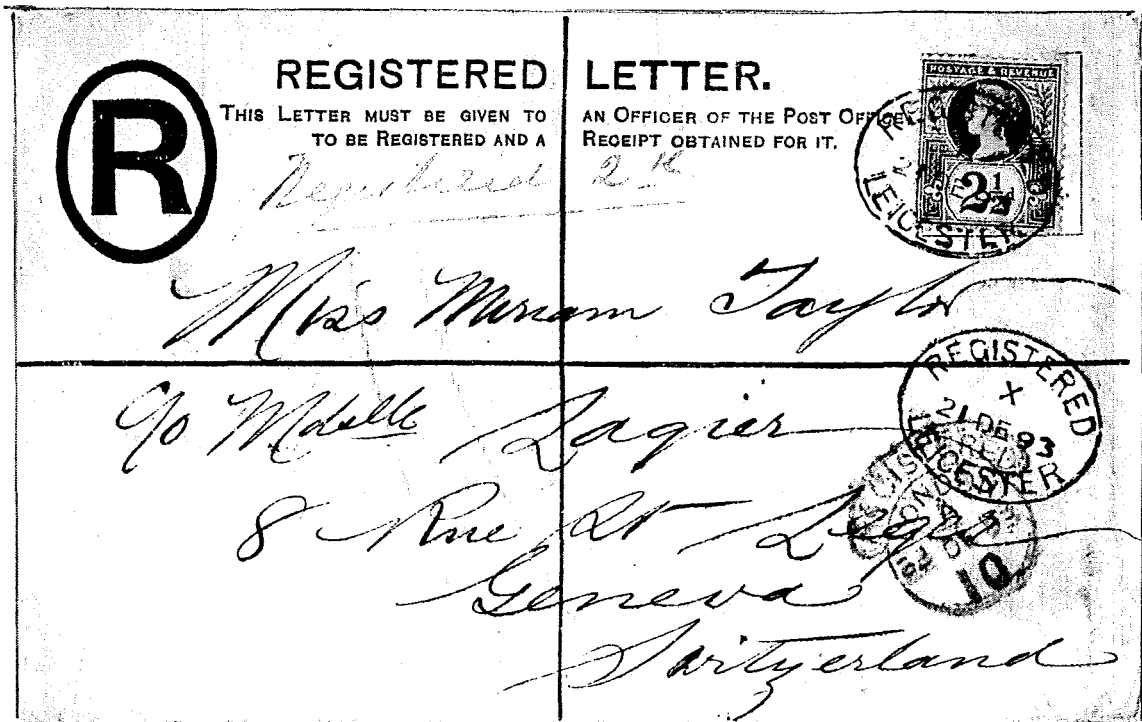
The 3VOS "449" handstamp, issued on 8th February 1875, used to cancel the adhesive on a registered letter



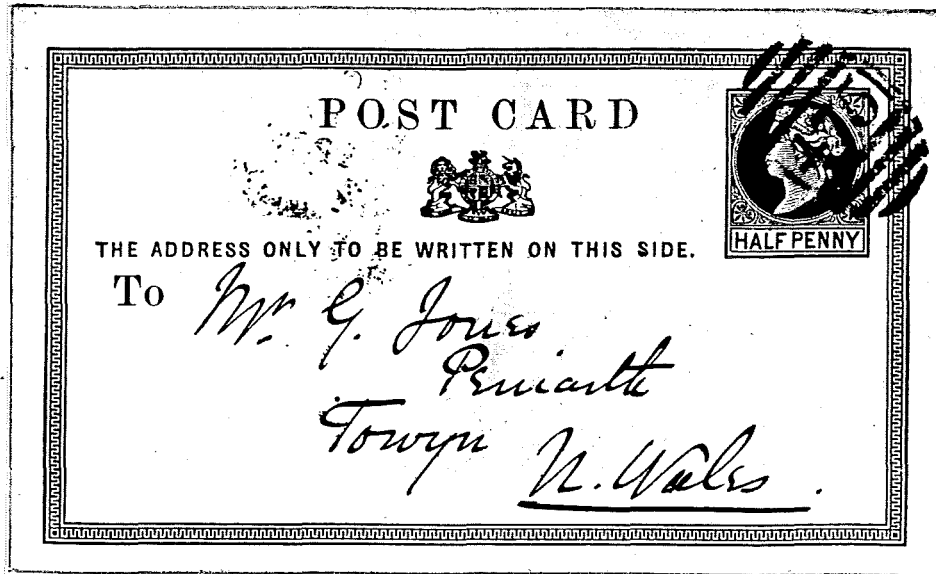
A 3VOS "449" of Leicester used in 1890 to cancel the adhesives.



A "REGISTERED/LEICESTER" handstamp used in 1893 to cancel the adhesive.



Can anyone tell me for what purpose the VOS handstamps were issued? At Leicester in the nineteenth century they only seem to appear on registered mail. Yet the only example of have from Loughborough is as a cancellation on a postcard as shown on the next page.



MORE TO FEED MY HORSE

In response to John Calladine's article in the last issue, Elizabeth and Eric Lewis have kindly sent the copies of two bills which illustrate the high cost of feeding a horse compared with the cost of sustenance for the rider. The Bromyard bill is dated 1820 on the reverse. The Leominster bill is undated.

Richard Lockley, FALCON INN, BROMYARD.			
	£	s.	d.
Breakfast		3	6
Lunch		2	6
Dinner		3	
Tea & Coffee			
Supper			
Wine			
Negus			
Spirits		4	
Punch			
Ale & Porter			
Tobacco			
Cider and Perry			
Fruit			
Writing Paper			
Servants' Eating & Drinking			
Hay & Corn		8	6
Beds			
Bed-Room Fire			
Lights			
Washing			
Saddler			
Letters			
	£	11	1 1/4

C. Harris
Burden, Printer, Bromyard.

E FORD. Oak & Unicorn Inn, LEOMINSTER.			
	£	s.	d.
Breakfast, - - - - -			
Dinner, - - - - -			
Tea, Coffee, and Chocolate, -			
Supper, - - - - -		1	
Wine, - - - - -			
Negus, - - - - -			
Sugar and Lemon, - - - - -			
Punch, - - - - -		2	
Spirits, - - - - -			
Ale and Porter, - - - - -			
Beer and Tobacco, - - - - -			4
Cider, - - - - -			
Fruit, - - - - -			
Writing-paper, - - - - -			1
Servants Eating and Drinking, -			
Horses, Hay, and Corn, - - -		2	7
Washing, - - - - -			
Hair-dresser, - - - - -			
Saddler and Smith, - - - - -			
Fire in Bed-room, - - - - -			
	£	5	6 0

HARRIS, PRINTER.