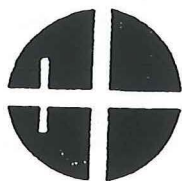


MIDLAND MAIL



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



President: Richard Farman

Chairman
Derek Smeathers

Treasurer:
Elizabeth Lewis

Secretary
Mel Matthews

Number 131, August 2003

NEW MEMBER

We extend a cordial welcome to Jan Gane of Hamersley, Western Australia whose postal history interests include Coventry and Israel. Jan is the Co-ordinator for Swan Valley Stamp Show 2004.

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

The first meeting of the season will be held on **13th September** at **The Abbey Centre, Northampton**. Details of this all-day meeting have already been circulated, and this is a reminder that you should contact Derek Smeathers by 6th September

On **18th October** the meeting will be held at **St Germain's Scout Hut, Portland Road, Birmingham** when John Calladine and John Hine will show material on '*Gloucestershire*', starting at 1.30 p.m. There will be a committee meeting beginning at 11 a.m.

Our meeting on **15th November** will be held at the premises of **Warwick & Warwick in Warwick**. The afternoon will be devoted to members' displays on '*Oversize and Three Dimensional Objects*'.

HERITAGE ROYAL MAIL AUTUMN LECTURE SERIES

I have received details of the above lectures each of which will be held on a Tuesday at 7 p.m. The Search Room will remain open until 6.45 p.m. with last requisitions at 6.15 p.m. Entry and refreshments are free. The lectures are:

2nd September *Love and Hate in the Dublin GPO, and other Archive Treasures* - Dr Keith Jeffery, Professor of Modern History at the University of Ulster.

23rd September *From Under the City to Love on the Wing ... Music used to evoke images in the GPO Film Unit*.
Charles Wiffen, Junior Research Fellow at the Royal College of Music.

21st October *Love your Letterbox* - Christine Jones, Collections Manager Heritage Royal Mail.

18th November *Poster poster on the wall ...* - Roger Crawford.

If you require more details, please ring 0207 2392570 or contact Libby Buckley at Freeling House, Phoenix Place, London WC1X 0DL

SUBSCRIPTIONS

If a cross appears in the margin, then your subscription for this season is due. It would be appreciated if you could let Elizabeth Lewis (27 Rathbone Road, Smethwick B67 5JG) have a cheque for £8 at your earliest convenience.

WALTER (CHES) CHESTER - Cofounder of our Society

Members will be saddened to learn of the death on 7th July of 'Ches' Chester. He was born in Sydney, Australia in 1920 and joined the Royal Air Force at the start of World War II, becoming an instrument/air frame inspector and spending four years in Rhodesia prior to demobilisation in 1945. Ches then joined Rolls Royce at Coventry and was an instrument inspector until his retirement.

Ches became a member of the Coventry Philatelic Society in 1958 and later, on moving to Hinckley, joined their Society. Over the years he held various offices at both societies who benefited from the considerable time and effort he devoted to each.

It is however as co-founder of both the Midland Philatelic Federation and the Midland (GB) Postal History Society that he will be mainly remembered by philatelists throughout the Midlands and further afield. In 1962 Ches, then a member of the Coventry Society, took the initiative and wrote to fourteen societies asking their views on forming a Midland Federation. Jack Gibbs of the Birmingham Society pledged his society's support and booked a room at the Birmingham and Midland Institute for an inaugural meeting. Ten societies responded by sending representatives and the Midland Philatelic Federation was founded on 8th June 1963. It is interesting to note that the first two of the eleven aims of the Federation, adopted at that meeting, were to promote the study of philately and the study of local postal history.

However, it was not until 1975 that Ches thought it ripe to form a separate local postal history society and again he led the way in conjunction with Steph Stobbs in founding the Midland (GB) Midland Postal History Society. He was the first secretary of the Society, and in 1988, when the Society had grown large enough to warrant a position of President, he was again the obvious choice by the committee to receive such an honour. His main postal history interest was Coventry and, apart from being our Society's Warwickshire County Editor for a number of years, was also chosen by Martin Willcocks to edit the Warwickshire chapter of the first volume of the County Catalogue.

At the Society's 25th anniversary celebration lunch Ches was made a life member of our Society and in his impromptu thanks he expressed his obvious delight at being thought of so highly by his friends in the Society. Unfortunately, it was about that time that Ches developed Alzheimer's disease and his wife, although not in the best of health herself, cared for him during his remaining years.

Much more could be written on the tireless way he devoted his life to the good of philately in general and an obituary emphasising his interest in the M.P.F. will appear in the September issue of the 'Midlander'.

Our condolences are extended to Ruby and his family at this sad time.

Elizabeth and Eric Lewis

ALF FIELDHOUSE

Alfred Charles Fieldhouse was born in West Bromwich on 15th January 1915 and died on 17th June 2003, aged 88 years. Alf served in the Royal Air Force during World War II and then worked at the London Steel Works in Oldbury, later renamed Barlows, until his retirement, having been Company Secretary for many years. He was also Chairman of the Midland Wages Board which represented twelve local steel companies in their negotiations with various Unions.

His great hobby was philately, specialising in Penny Blacks, Penny Reds, G.B. Postal History and Disinfected Mail. His knowledge was so valued and his collection so vast that he was able to give displays to many midland societies on numerous occasions.

Alf's contribution to the Dudley Philatelic Society was extensive, being a founder member at the rebirth of the Society and at various times, Secretary, Treasurer and Chairman. He was also a member of the Midland (GB) Postal History Society and various other specialist societies.

Alf's name appeared in the 'Midlander' from the 1960s onwards as giving displays to societies, and he was the Midland Federation Treasurer from 1984 to 1994.

The foregoing illustrates his active involvement in philately but he will be mainly remembered for the way he carried out his duties and activities. He was a quiet, kind man, always approachable and a pleasure to talk to and a real gentleman.

Eric had kept in touch with Alf with occasional 'phone call over the last year or two since he was no longer able to take an active part in the philatelic world. He will be sorely missed and long remembered by many as a philatelist and friend. Our sympathy is extended to his son, daughter, grandchildren and great grandchild.

Arthur Kimberley
with additional notes by Elizabeth and Eric Lewis.

A SHOT IN THE ARM: A FURTHER CONTEMPORARY VIEW OF VACCINATION

By Elizabeth and Eric Lewis

Further to John Soer's notes on this subject in MM130, we submit illustrations of two items related to this subject. Namely: - a postcard postally used from Derby to Chesterfield on 19th July 1908, and a 19th century print, both items being self-explanatory.

A colour copy of the latter has been given to John to incorporate into his collection. If any other member collects this subject we should be happy to supply them with a colour print. Telephone us on 0121 4291222.

TELEPHONE 676Y.

From THE PRINCIPAL,
TRAINING COLLEGE, DERBY.

Date as Postmark.

The Principal desires to state that you are accepted as a student. Your acceptance of seat, by wire or otherwise, must reach the Principal by Friday evening, July 10th or your place will be filled. Dental & Re-Vaccination Certificates, unless already sent, must reach College by Monday, July 13th. Communications as to date of Entrance, Requisites, etc. will be sent later.



MAIL BY RAIL IN THE MIDLANDS (Part 3) or STOKE-ON-TRENT MADE A POSTTOWN

This article appears here, out of chronological order for a number of reasons. The first is that it is dedicated to the memory of Chris Beaver; secondly it will stand alone as an article; and finally I have not completed to my satisfaction the research on earlier material. Before reading what follows, members might care to read the article written by Chris on the postmark of Whitmore Station in MM30/7.

The main line of the LNWR passed to the west of the Potteries. However the growth of industry in the Potteries meant that there was a need for railways in order to move the heavy materials, raw and finished. The lines that were to form the backbone of the North Staffordshire Railway were authorised by Parliament in June 1846. These were the routes from Crewe to Derby and from Macclesfield to Colwich. Various branches were added to these over the years and by the end of the nineteenth century the North Staffordshire Railway consisted of an extensive network of lines. It can be seen from the map that Newcastle did not lie on the main line but on a short branch from Stoke.

On the opening of the Grand Junction Railway in 1837, the Potteries were served by a mail cart from Whitmore Station to Newcastle-under-Lyme which acted as the main distribution centre for the Potteries.

In 1853, the "*Chief Bailiffs and other Inhabitants of the Borough of Stoke-upon-Trent*" sent a petition to the House of Commons. Apparently they had petitioned the Postmaster General in 1852 but had not received any reply. The main points of the petition were as follows:

- the Borough of Stoke-upon-Trent consisted of the towns of Longton, Fenton, Stoke, Hanley, Shelton, Cobridge, Burslem, Longport, Tunstall and Wolstan, with a population of nearly 150,000;
- the letters for the district were conveyed from and to Whitmore Station, on the London and North-Western Railway, to and from Newcastle-under-Lyme, a distance of six miles, by mail gig, and from there by horse posts to the pottery towns;
- in consequence of this mode of transport the time for the dispatch of letters was curtailed by nearly three hours and the area was deprived of a day mail to and from London
- the North Staffordshire Railway gave the most direct and secure communication to and from the LNWR at Stafford or Colwich and Crewe;

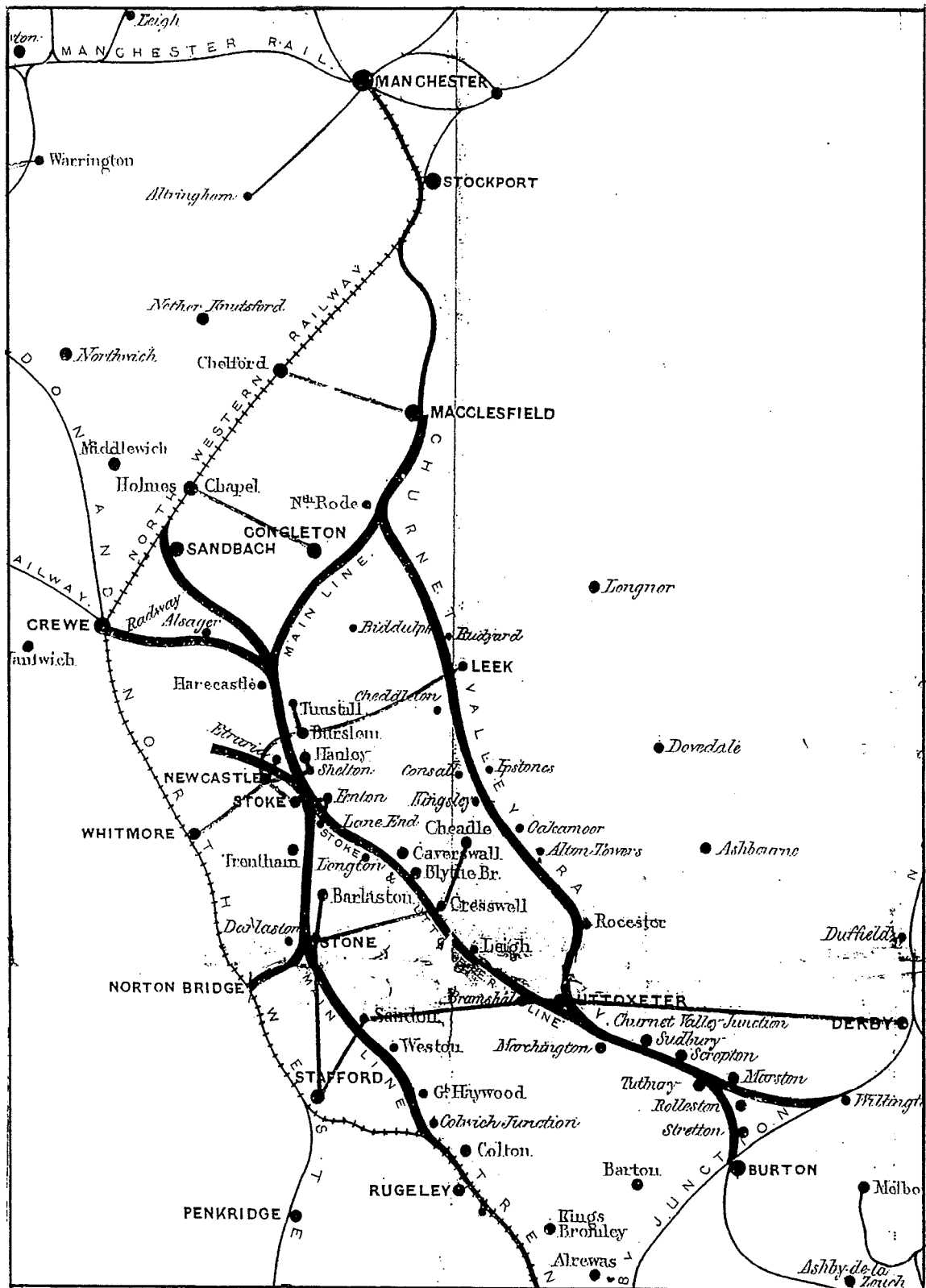
The petition ended: "*...the present insecure and dilatory mode of conveying the Mail Bags to and from the Pottery Towns, by way of Whitmore Station, may be discontinued, and that, for the future, they may be conveyed by the North Staffordshire Railway ... whereby several hours longer will be allowed for the dispatch of letters, and the accomodation of a Day Mail to and from London be obtained without occasioning any additional delivery.*"

In May 1853, Mr Churchill proposed that day mails to the Potteries from London, Birmingham, Liverpool and Manchester should be carried by means of the North Staffordshire Railway. The initial plan was for the bags to be carried from Stafford on a train at 2.05 p.m. that arrived in Stoke at 2.45 p.m. The mail from London arrived in Stafford at 1.10 p.m., that from Birmingham at 11 a.m., and from Liverpool and Manchester at 2 p.m. In the event, the latter mail was left at Norton Bridge for the train from Stafford as the connection time at Stafford was too short.

The return of the post was on a train leaving Stoke at 10.10 a.m., arriving in Stafford at 10.50 a.m. The London bag left there at 11.46 a.m. and arrived in the capital at 4.30 p.m., while that for Birmingham left at 2 p.m., arriving at 3.15 p.m. in time for the afternoon delivery. However, the bags for Liverpool and Manchester were sent from Stoke at 11.45 a.m. on a train to Crewe where they joined the down day mail.

The North Staffordshire Railway charged £117 p.a. for this service - 2d per mile per day on six days a week over forty-five miles. Mr Churchill stated that the railway could not be used to carry the night mails from either Stafford or Crewe as no trains ran at times suitable for the Post Office. To put on a special train would have been far too expensive.

Mr Churchill pointed out that the sorting of the day mail for the Potteries would have to take place at Stoke as it would cause a considerable delay to take the bags to Newcastle for sorting, and then return them by the various rides. Also, the mail cart which carried the night mail from Whitmore Station could be extended to Stoke which would become a post town. This would enable the night mails to be dispatched later in the evening. As the postmistress of Stoke was "not fit or competent" to undertake the duties on its becoming a post town, the postmaster of Newcastle and his clerk were transferred to Stoke. He was allowed £15 to cover his removal expenses. Mr Churchill said that the Stoke postmistress could be offered the position at Newcastle, but it appears that another person was appointed, possibly because Newcastle remained a post town.



Mr Churchill also changed rides in the Potteries. In summary, the three double rides (details were not given) from Newcastle and the double ride from Tunstall to Lawton were withdrawn, and replaced by two double rides from Stoke to Longton and Lawton as well as a messenger from Stoke to Etruria and Woolstone. The projected times for these rides are shown below. The times in brackets are the times of arrival/dispatch before the change.

Stoke	5.00 a.m.		arrive 8.30 p.m.	Stoke	5.00 a.m.		arrive 9.00 p.m.
Hanley	5.14 a.m.	(5.39)	8.16 p.m. (7.36)	Fenton	5.10	(5.35)	8.50 (7.50)
Cobridge	5.20	(5.45)	8.11 (7.30)	Longton	5.30 a.m.	(5.45)	8.30pm (7.30)
Burslem	5.29	(5.40)	8.01 (7.50)				
Longport	5.35	(5.20)	7.55 (8.00)				
Tunstall	5.44	(6.00)	7.46 (7.40)				
Golden Hill	5.53	(6.20)	7.37 (7.20)				
Kidsgrove	6.11	(6.31)	7.19 (7.09)				
Lawton	6.20 a.m.	(6.40)	7.10 p.m. (7.00)				

Stoke was able to dispatch its night mail at 10.15 p.m. instead of 7.50 p.m., and Newcastle's dispatch was at 10.15 p.m. instead of 10 p.m. These changes were introduced on 24th January 1854.

The North Staffordshire company offered the use of two rooms at Stoke station to the G.P.O. for £20 p.a. Mr Page, the Inspector of Mails said that, as it would save time to do the sorting at the station which was half a mile from the town, the rooms should be used as a "*sorting office on the same plan as that at Derby Station*", but it was not to be used as a post office for the town, "*for which its situation renders it very unfitted*". He also said that a letter box could be placed at the station, as was done at Derby, "*the box to be closed at an earlier hour than that at the Town Office to which it will be subordinate*". In April 1854, the sorting office was said to be dark and badly ventilated, and there was no room for the letter carriers or messengers. Consequently the sorting office was moved to a room used by the mileage clerks of the railway company.

When Stoke became a post town on 24th January 1854 a temporary messenger at 7/- a week was appointed to carry from Newcastle to Stoke the letters for the Stoke delivery that had been misdirected to Newcastle. These numbered about 150 a day. In October the surveyor reported that the number had actually increased as "*there exists a foolish feeling of jealousy in Hanley, Tunstall and Burslem of the principal office being at Stoke and on this account they will not take steps to remedy the inconvenience arising from the misdirection of their letters*". He added "*So long as letters are not delayed by the error they will continue to be misdirected.*" The postmaster of Stoke commented "*...the Gentlemen (not living in Stoke) will not call Stoke their post town*". The messenger was withdrawn. Earlier, Mr Page had commented that Newcastle was a larger town than Stoke and between the two there appeared to exist some jealousy as to which should be the post town.

References: Post 30/93A; The Regional History of the Railways of Great Britain - Volume VII - The West Midlands.

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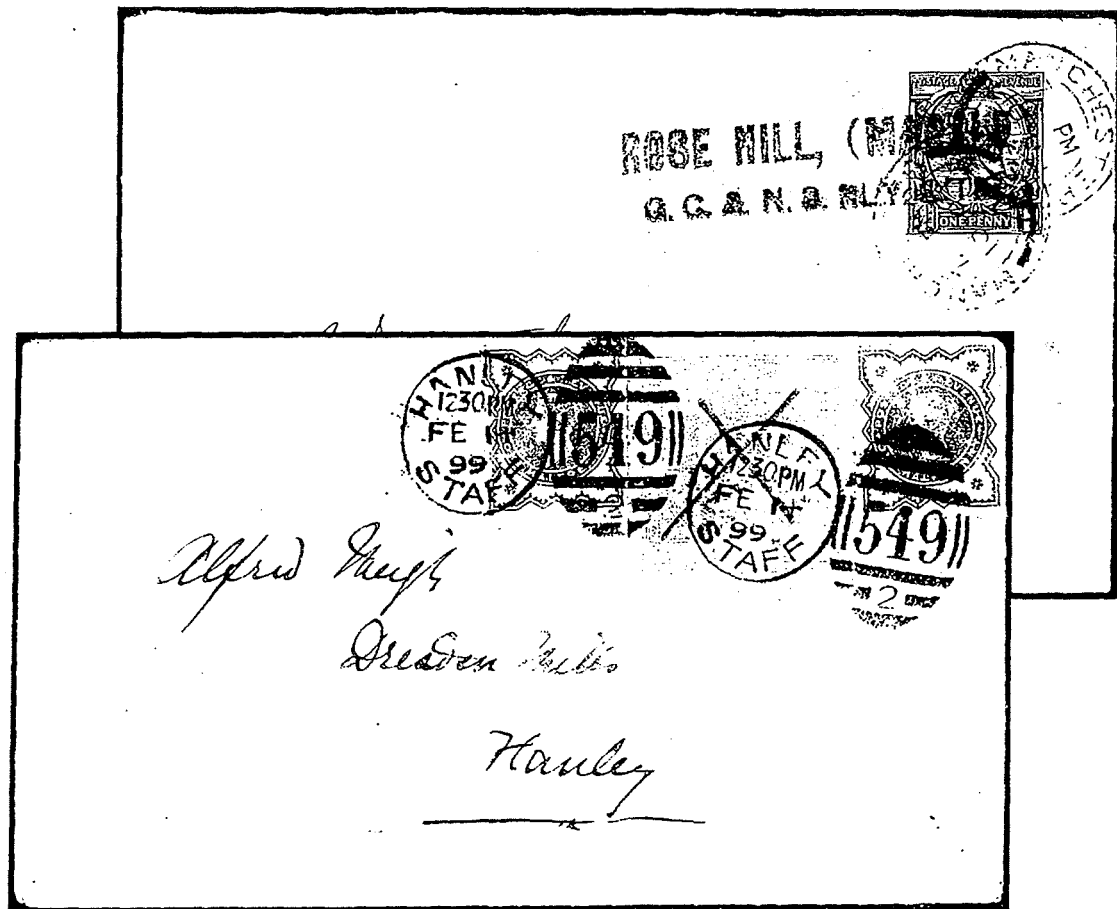
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Our 26th September sale features a substantial collection of Staffordshire formed by the late Rev. C. Beaver, including this scarce pair of railway letters



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A POINT OF LAW

(as interpreted by John Calladine)

At the time the Society's 'Local Posts' book was being prepared (in the early 1990s), there was significant disagreement between two eminent postal historians, both sadly no longer with us. On one side was Martin Willcocks, author of 'England's Postal History', the standard work on the subject, and for many years the doyen of English postal historians. On the other side was Denis Salt, a founder member of our Society who had spent much of his life in the family law firm. Inevitably, the argument was legal and, since neither conceded the case, the relevant paragraphs in the Introduction to our book had to be drafted with some care.

The disagreement concerned a passage in Martin's book. On page 89 he wrote:

"An interesting point which does not appear to have been noticed by writers is that the preamble of the 1801 Act repealed the 1765 Act and every mention in later clauses of penny posts applied to London only. It would appear therefore that from 1801 all provincial posts were illegal; the date when they were legalized again has not yet been discovered, but the Post Office must have had a nasty shock when this was noticed".

It would be helpful to remind ourselves what this was all about. An Act of Parliament of 1765 (5 Geo III Cap.25) had, almost as an afterthought, given the Postmasters General authority to set up a 'Penny Post' in any city or town where it was thought expedient to do so. Thereafter no other person would be permitted to collect or deliver letters in that town in competition with the official penny post. The Act of 1801, to which Martin made reference, (41 Geo III Cap.7), is best known to us for its fifth clause that introduced the concept of 5th Clause Posts. However the same Act also increased postal charges, among them the charges in the London Penny Post. Prior to that Act, letters passing between places within the 'town area' of the London Penny Post had been charged 1d, although an extra 1d was charged for delivery into what was defined as the country area. (Before 1794, the extra 1d for country delivery had been retained by the letter carrier but, from 1794, this penny also went to the Revenue.) From April 1801, all letters in the London Penny Post had to be charged 2d, wherever they were delivered.

Dennis' consistent argument was that the 1801 Act did NOT repeal the 1765 Act but repealed the charges in the London Penny Post introduced by the 1765 Act. Martin responded by pointing out that the 1765 Act had empowered the Postmasters General to demand the same postage rates in provincial 'penny posts' as *"are or may be taken"* in the London Penny Post. It followed that posts, such as the penny post in Birmingham, were illegal because they were still charging a penny.

Denis countered that line of logic by declaring there was nothing in the 1765 Act that required the postal rates to be aligned indefinitely. In 1765, the Post Office was empowered to charge the same as in London and that really was as far as it went. Denis made the undeniable point that, in 1836, when the Postmaster General sought legal opinion on the admissibility of 2d charges in some provincial penny posts, they were declared to be illegal. In what it was hoped was a Judgement of Solomon, we wrote in our book *"Whatever the correct interpretation, the Post Office never recognised a problem and no further parliamentary action was thought necessary"*.

It was years later, when searching for something completely unrelated, that a minute was spotted in (what was then) Post Office Archives. The archive reference is Post 40/31D/1801. Francis Freeling, the Secretary to the Post Office, had written to the Postmasters General on 26th January 1801, before the 1801 Act of Parliament, concerning a letter he had received from a Mr Tucker, an attorney in Bristol. Mr Tucker had asked Freeling whether the "penny postman" serving the Winterbourne area of Bristol was justified in refusing to deliver letters to his brother who had recently built his new home in a field, a considerable distance from the main road but still within the parish of Winterbourne. Freeling had referred the query to the Solicitor (the Post Office's legal officer) for a legal opinion.

The opinion given was that the letter carrier was obliged to deliver the letter. However, to Freeling's surprise, the Solicitor further concluded that, instead of charging 1d for all letters delivered or collected at places outside the post towns of Bristol, Birmingham and Manchester – the only provincial penny posts established at that time – the Post Office should have charged 2d. The Solicitor had probably reached his opinion after consulting another Act of Parliament (34 Geo III Cap.17), not yet referred to here, dated 28th March 1794. The 6th Clause of that Act authorised the London Penny Post to be extended beyond its then current limit of 10 miles. The 7th Clause authorised the Postmasters General similarly to extend the range of other penny posts *"... from such Cities and Towns in which Penny Post Offices are already or may hereafter be established"* and continued *"... the same Rates of Postage hereby made payable (i.e. as in the London Penny Post) shall and may be received in such Cities, Towns and Places"*

respectively". Francis Freeling conceded that the need for charges consistent with the London Penny Post had not occurred to him and neither had it occurred to any of the Surveyors. He went on to say "*if censure attaches for this omission, I ought to bear my full share of it*". Most interestingly, in the context of our story, Freeling went on to seek legal opinion as to whether it was up to the Postmasters General to decide whether to demand 1d or 2d. The opinion was that there was no option and 2d must be demanded on all such letters. (One can only conclude that the legal term "shall and may" had been interpreted as "must".) Directions were therefore sent to the Surveyors to this effect. Freeling commented "*Your Lordships will be pleased to recollect that this additional penny can only attach to such letters as are written in the town and sent from thence into the country delivery and vice versa*". The Postmasters General responded "*The proposed demand of 2d seems to be consistent both with reason and with law*".

Martin Willcocks had a remarkable memory and one always felt he had seen something at some time that had led him to believe that the charges then prevailing in the London Penny Post were obligatory in provincial penny posts. Was this the minute he had seen? However, it doesn't finally settle the question of whether it was Martin or Dennis who had correctly interpreted the law. Having received this legal opinion, Freeling did not, a few months later, suggest to the Postmasters General that the 1801 Act made it necessary to introduce a 2d rate throughout the provincial penny posts. Although there were a number of 2d charges in penny posts, the basic charge for delivering a letter carried by the General Post from the post town to an address within the area covered by that town's penny post (or for collecting it) remained one penny.

If one believes the law is an ass, what happened in 1836 will surely strengthen that belief. In or about December of that year, the Postmaster General, who had received a host of new applications for penny posts, sought the opinion of the Post Office solicitors as to the legality of charges made in the "country penny posts" (i.e. provincial penny posts). He asked for a ruling on four specific cases:

1. That of a General Post letter delivered beyond the General Post by a country (i.e. provincial) penny post.
2. Conversely, a letter collected by a country penny post forwarded by the General Post.
3. A letter put into a country penny post that did not arrive or leave in the General Post.
4. A letter put into a country penny post and delivered within the same town or its suburbs. (Letters travelling within Bristol and Manchester were specifically mentioned.)

Although he didn't say so, in cases 3 and 4, a 2d charge was often made in a provincial penny post.

The opinion of the Post Office Solicitors, Messrs J.Campbell and R.M.Rolfe, was that the postage payable in respect of letters passing by country penny posts was that they were still regulated by the Act of 1794 referred to above. They based their opinion on the 7th Clause of that Act, which (they said) extended to the Country Penny Posts the enactments previously made as to London. (So far, we don't have a problem but the conclusion the Solicitors then reached is surely incomprehensible to a layman.) It followed (they said) that the rates payable in all the cases referred to would be 1d only and they were unable to discover any authority for levying 2d in places such as Bristol and Manchester! (We should remind ourselves there had been a 2d charge in London – and no 1d charge – for the past 35 years.)

A further case was then submitted for legal opinion. In towns, such as Bristol, where there was a penny post on each side of the town, should letters posted in one of these posts and delivered in the other be liable to two charges? Again, the legal view was that no more than 1d could be charged. Does one detect a note of frustration in the minute the Secretary of the Post Office, then Colonel Maberly, sent to the Postmaster General? "*I submit that there is no alternative but to direct the Surveyors at once to cause the charge of 2d to be reduced to one penny . . . I am not enabled at present to form an estimate of the loss to the Revenue*".

Were provincial posts charging 1d, rather than 2d, illegal after 1801? Were provincial posts charging 2d legal after 1836? One can only be pleased that Uniform Postage put an end to the nonsense in 1839/40. If any lawyer would like to weigh-in, the Editor will surely be happy to hear from you.

TWO ASPECTS OF UNIFORM PENNY POSTAGE AT NORTHAMPTON

By Derek Smeathers

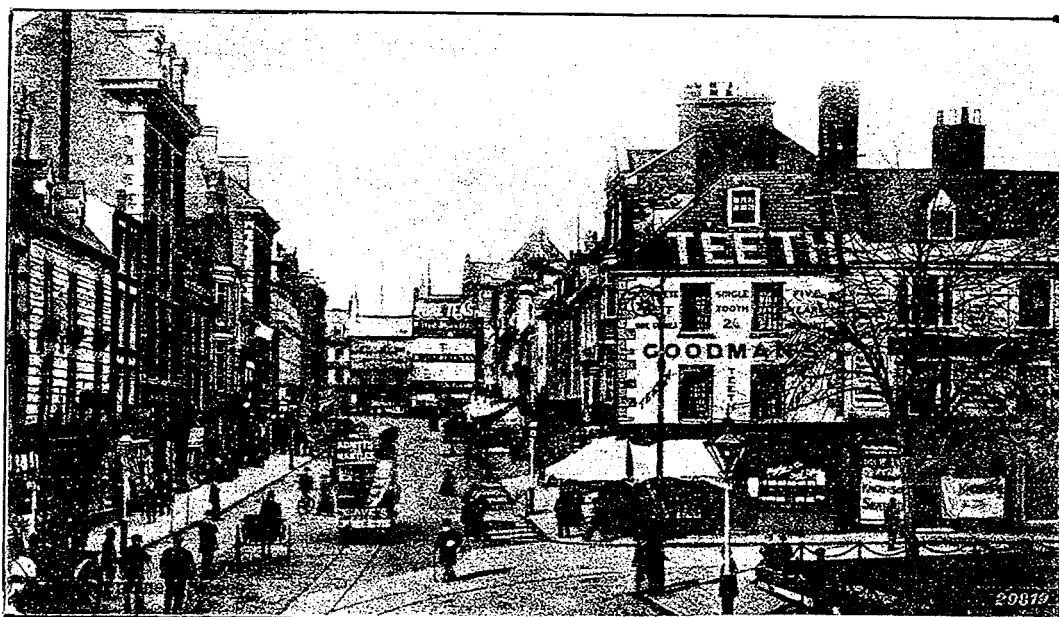
With the coming, on 10th January 1840, of a uniform minimum charge of one penny for a prepaid letter within Great Britain and Ireland, also came the need to indicate on the letter that postage had been prepaid. The adhesive labels were still at the planning stage and were expected to take many weeks in design and production. As a temporary measure it was decided to fall back on the old, tried and trusted method of marking the mail - the handstamp. With time so short, postmasters were permitted to have their handstamps manufactured locally, with little restriction on design. Some opted for the full wording "One Penny Paid" while others used a serif "1" or even a simple vertical stroke, and there were several hundred different types in between. Further than that, since for the first time an unpaid letter would be charged double on delivery, another handstamp would be required showing "Two Pence To Pay" or simply "2". The inks to be used with all of them had to be in line with the well-established practice of red on paid letters, black on unpaid. Many post towns used these handstamps from January 1840, and although the new Penny Black adhesive labels were officially issued in May supplies were not plentiful. Provincial towns were often "rationed" and even larger offices received fewer sheets than they had ordered, so postmasters continued to use the "temporary" handstamps when postage was paid in cash, even into the early 1850s.

Northampton is known to have used at least six different 1d handstamps in red ink, and at least two 2d ones in black, starting with a 1d in red on 31st January 1840 and ending with a strike of a 1d in red on 3rd October 1850, as illustrated. How did a town of barely 20,000 people come to have at least six different stamps in this period while towns of a comparable size had one or two, if any?

The Town's post office had been taken over in 1802 by William Birdsall, a bookbinder by trade, who had come to Northampton ten years earlier and bought a small printing business with a shop at the corner of Mercers Row and the Drapery, in the centre of Town. He was a keen businessman and had the idea of a lending library, the first in Northampton. The venture was immediately successful, and soon he was able to buy a much larger three-storey property opposite the shop in the Drapery to where he transferred the lending library and also opened a retail bookshop. In 1802, the Warwick family relinquished the post office they had held for thirty-five years, and Birdsall became the postmaster in his original corner shop, removing his printing business to the rear of his larger Drapery building.

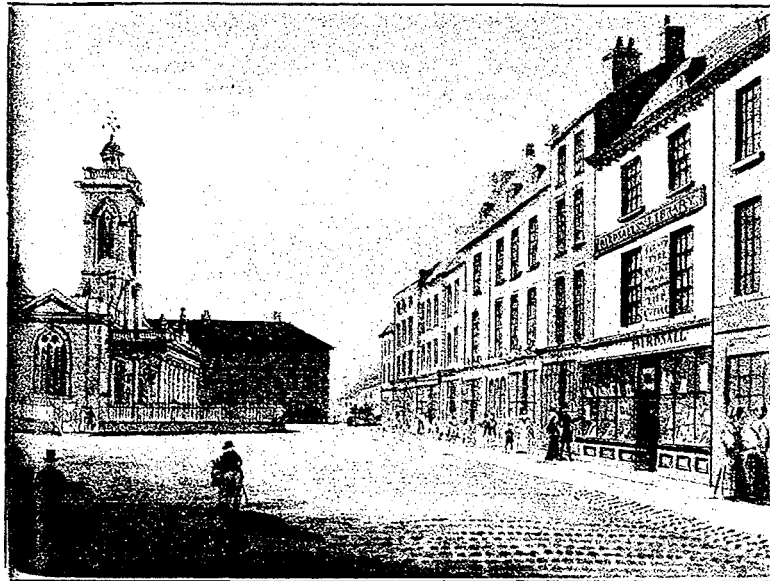
The unofficial local post had by this time become well-established, and Birdsall actively set out to extend its area of operation. He was a highly-regarded figure in Northampton circles and the service was operated largely with cooperation and assistance from the county gentry and aristocrats such as Lord Northampton, Earl Spencer and the Ishams of Lamport whose great houses provided messengers and facilities for it. Before William Birdsall died in 1822, the local post covered eighty-nine villages and hamlets, going even as far as Arthingworth, northwest of Kettering. (See "Local Posts of the Midland Counties", pages 182-185.) He had also extended his Drapery premises, opened a new stationery shop with book-binding workshops, a savings bank and an insurance agency office there.

The 'TEETH' building was the post office from 1802 to c1860.



His son Richard took over the business and so became postmaster in 1822, continuing William's varied business interests. The bookbinding business in particular flourished and became the central pillar of what was now a small business empire. Richard died in early 1840 and his widow, Violet Anne Birdsall became postmistress at a particularly momentous time for the Post Office. She had to oversee the enormous changes and expansion of postal business, and here we return to the UPP handstamps for it was almost certainly in the Birdsall workshops that the eight different ones were designed and made for use at Northampton post office - still in that little corner shop. When Violet Birdsall died in 1845, the Birdsalls gave up the post office to concentrate on their bookbinding. The firm Birdsall & Son became one of the leading binders in the country. Their work found its way into the Royal Household and some of the world's great libraries. They were chosen by the British & Foreign Bible Society to make a presentation bible for Edward VII on his coronation in 1902. By then, they had built huge factories in Wood Street and Union Street where their staff numbered hundreds.

The west side of the Drapery, showing Birdsall's shops, library, bank and printing works c1840.



The UPP handstamps were probably made as required, not all at the same time. They were made of wood so with regular use would have worn quickly. The first 1d was short lived, being recorded in use from 31st January to 22nd February 1840. The next four each lasted longer than the one before, but still less than a year each, so perhaps Birdsalls learned as they went along! The final type however continued for 8½ years though there may have been more than one of the same design. The two 2d types are known used only intermittently. Together they all form an interesting set of postmarks, one aspect of Northampton's part in Uniform Penny Postage.

The Northampton UPP handstamps with known periods of use.

P I

31/1-22/2 1840

P I^d

27/2-23/6

P I

30/7-12/1/41

P. I^d

30/1-19/3 1841

P^d I

27/2/41-1/4/42

P^d I

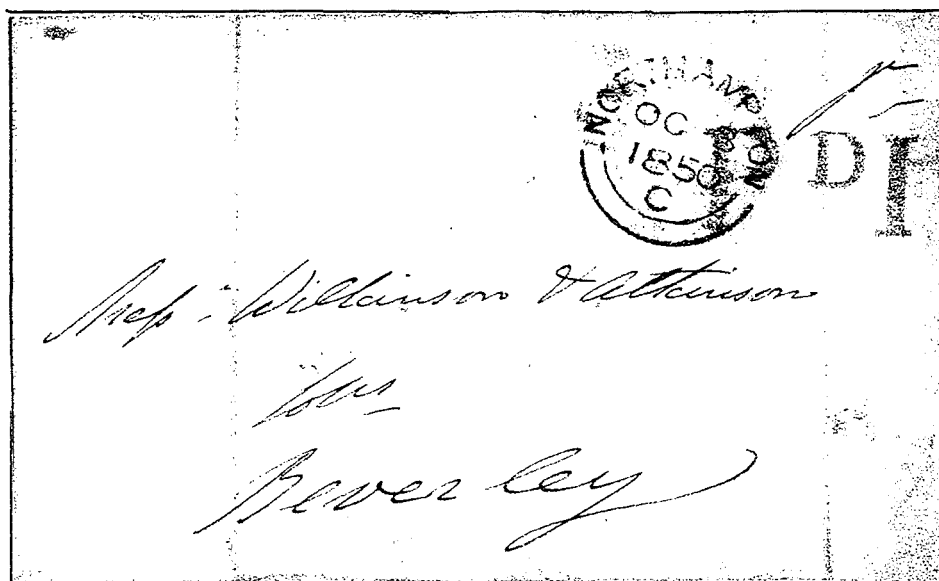
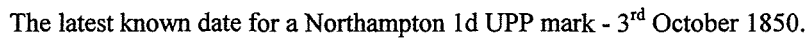
13/4/42-3/10/50

2

1840-41

2

1844-55



The other aspect concerns those adhesive labels - postage stamps in today's parlance. One of the town's several water-driven mills in the 18th century was manufacturing quality hand-made paper. Rowland Hill had spent some little time in the autumn of 1839 looking at paper of varying types suitable for adhesive labels, and on a visit to France on the subject he was impressed by the use of watermarks as a security device. The Controller of H.M. Stationery Office could not discuss the stamp paper until mid-December 1839 but several large and experienced paper-makers were talking to Rowland Hill that autumn. William Magnay came from a London family of stationers and was working on watermarks. John Dickinson, perhaps the best-known of the paper factors had perfected a silk-thread process that he believed was an excellent security device; he had already used it for government bonds and thought it the best available.

At Northampton, Stacey Wise ran the Rush Mills factory by the River Nene and he had been producing security-water marked paper for bank notes and certificates for several years, notably for the Royal Bank of Scotland. He also had a very good working relationship with Perkins Bacon & Petch of London. But Wise did not move in the same powerful circles as Dickinson and Magnay, and he is hardly mentioned in the detailed discussions that Rowland Hill had up to January 1840. On 5th February, the official request for tenders for the paper appeared in the press - two weeks only were allowed for receipt of tenders. Dickinson and Magnay were arguing publicly about the quality of their papers, but in the end Magnay did not tender. John Dickinson was therefore expected to get the contract, and Stacey Wise did not even tender for the adhesives; he tendered his special watermarked security paper for the postal stationery only.

Rowland Hill and his adviser Henry Cole now had to satisfy both the Stationery Office and the Treasury that the postage stamps would meet the requirements of security, since they would be equivalent to actual cash. On 25th February, they awarded the contract for the postal stationery and envelopes to John Dickinson, making him the favourite for the stamps. But on 4th March, Stacey Wise visited Hill and the contract for the stamp paper was signed. Hill commented "*Dickinson's paper will not do for labels When cut up some of the threads draw out. The chancellor has, under my advice, to employ the watermark paper for labels.*" It appears that the watermark expertise of Stacey Wise had won the day. The Excise Office had drawn up their own security watermark, but Wise told Perkins Bacon that he had submitted two examples of watermark which were much more secure from forgery. He said "*I am engaged in making specimens of paper with a complex and beautiful watermark ... if my tender is accepted the paper will be hand-made.*" He was clearly very dedicated and proud of his work. Under the contract, he was paid 14d a pound for the paper, and it was to be carried from Rush Mills by boats of Wooster & Co to the station at Blisworth on the newly-opened London & Birmingham Railway, thence by train to London. Rush Mills had its own dock on the canal and rumour suggested that Perkins Bacon had a financial interest in Wooster & Co - another arrow in the quiet quiver of Stacey Wise.

So he had just over a month to produce the first two hundred reams and 'ship' them to Perkins Bacon. It wasn't all milk and honey. Wise had trouble with his workers who refused to work the required hours. Two Excise men were placed in the factory to oversee security and they caused many delays in checking the quality of the work. The planned watermark mould had 720 small crowns (see reduced illustration), so positioned that each label would have one crown watermark in the centre when printed. On 19th March, a correction of a fraction of an inch had to be made to achieve this, and even later, in April, another slight alteration was needed to facilitate printing - requested by Perkins Bacon. But the first paper was dispatched on 15th April and by 22nd April the printers were producing 11,520 sheets of stamps a week - that's 2¾ million stamps - by working day and night! All the penny blacks and first-type two penny blues are on Stacey Wise paper - the triumph of a quiet master-craftsman.

Stacey Wise died in 1842. The business was carried on in his name by his widow and his son until 1858 - supplying secure watermarked paper, mainly for British Empire stamps and banknotes. But it is for the Penny Black contract that he is best remembered. His factory is long gone, but the name Rush Mills remains as a small, select and quiet group of commercial offices by the canal. On occasions, letters from Stacey Wise can be found at auction or in a dealer's stock, and so far, all I have seen are stamped with one of Birdsall's temporary postmarks. I keep looking for one of his letters with one of his stamps on it. Perhaps one day ...

Sources: ATPAS Printing Education and Training Journal, Northampton Public Libraries, Mrs Jean Markie.

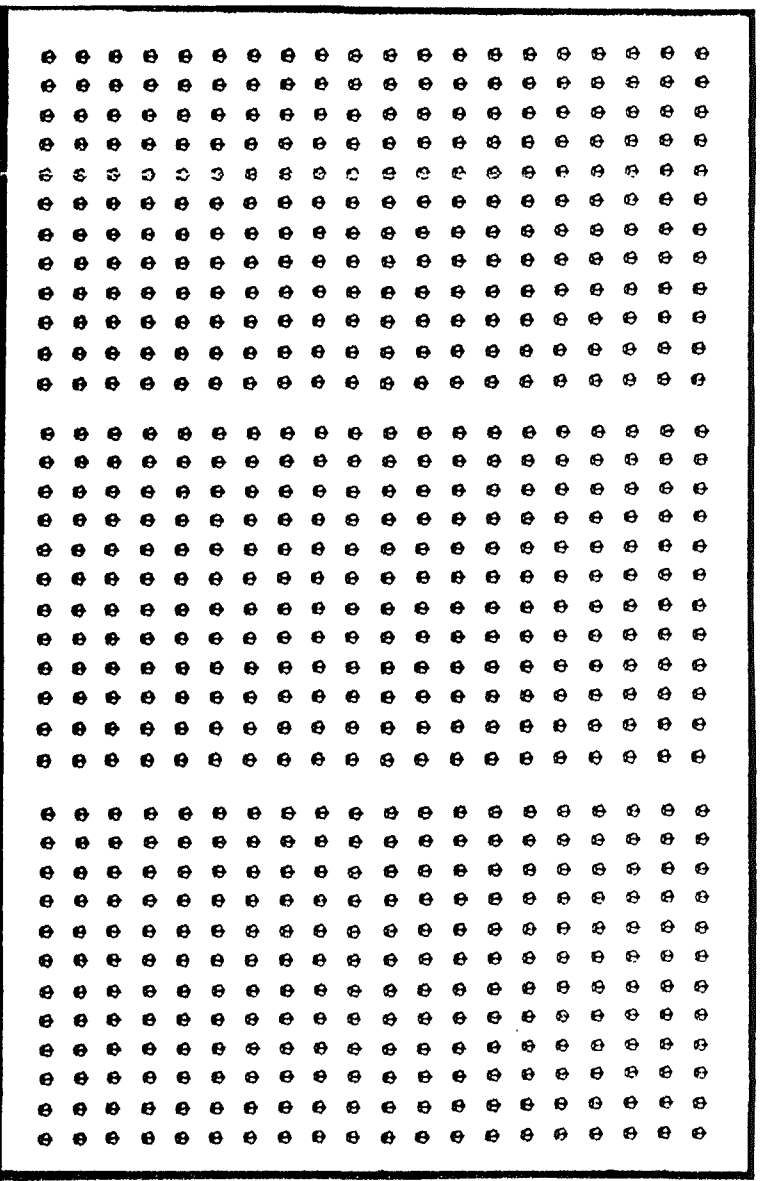
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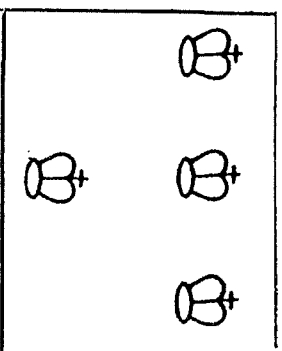
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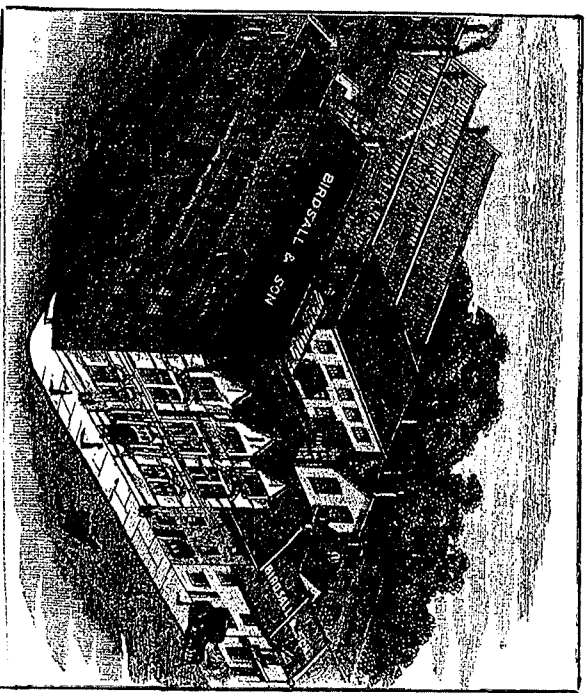
This much reduced reconstruction shows Stacey Wises's watermark frame with its 720 crowns - one to each label.



The illustration below shows the full size watermark design and spacing.



An engraving of about 1880 showing the factory complex where the world-wide bookbinding business was based until 1961.



DOUBLE STAMPED MAIL WITH VARYING DATE POSTMARKS

By Elizabeth and Eric Lewis

While letters bearing dated postmarks struck twice occasionally occur as in figure 1, those with differing dates usually prove of more interest.

We have accumulated a few with consecutive dates such as figures 2, 3 and 4. The reason for these no doubt being that in each case the letters were posted too late to be forwarded to their destinations on that day. Figure 5 presents a different story, - a wrong date struck by the stampers who were using a stamp cut in error with the previous day's date.

Post could not always be dispatched to a particular locality even if received by the post office earlier in the day than the normal cut off time for dispatch to main post towns; figures 6 to 9 illustrate this. Those originating in Birmingham would have attracted a 'Too Late' handstamp if posted late in the day, but being addressed to local towns were restamped and dispatched the following day. The earliest of the Birmingham items is in the collection of our member Ian Baker.

Redirected mail will normally be handstamped where posted, where addressed to and where redirected to, and we are able to illustrate in figure 10 such an item, with two of the three postmarks being applied in London on a Wednesday and Saturday. The letter was conveyed free under the franking privilege on both stages of its journey. A post office clerk's note in manuscript on the letter shown in figure 11 explains, without doubt, the reason for the varying dates in the London postmarks.

Undeliverable letters are the most likely form of mail to attract differing date handstamps for any one town on an individual cover, but because of the infrequency of dates appearing in the postmarks of provincial pre-stamp mail we have not come across such a use. Post-1840 undeliverable or redirected mail is, of course, far more likely to have dated handstamps and we have not attempted to include this in this article.

Can other members submit examples from the pre-stamp period of mail with handstamps showing different dates for the same town, perhaps with far more interesting reasons than those we have come across?

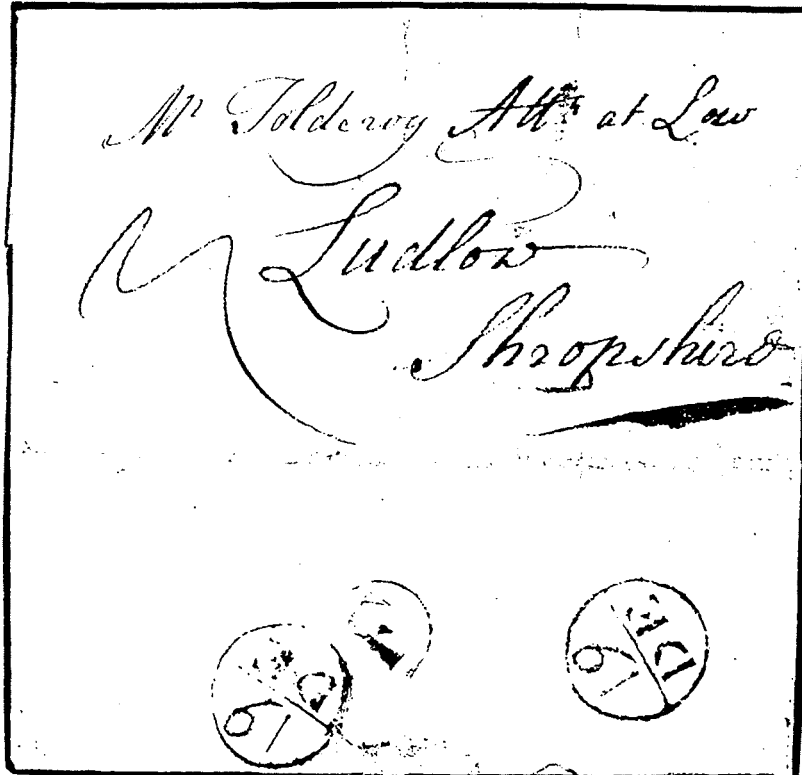


Fig. 1 Letter written 19th December 1772 with two identical Bishopmarks and an encircled 'F' London receiving stamp.

Fig. 2 Written 25th July 1732 and held over until 26th for dispatch to Essex.

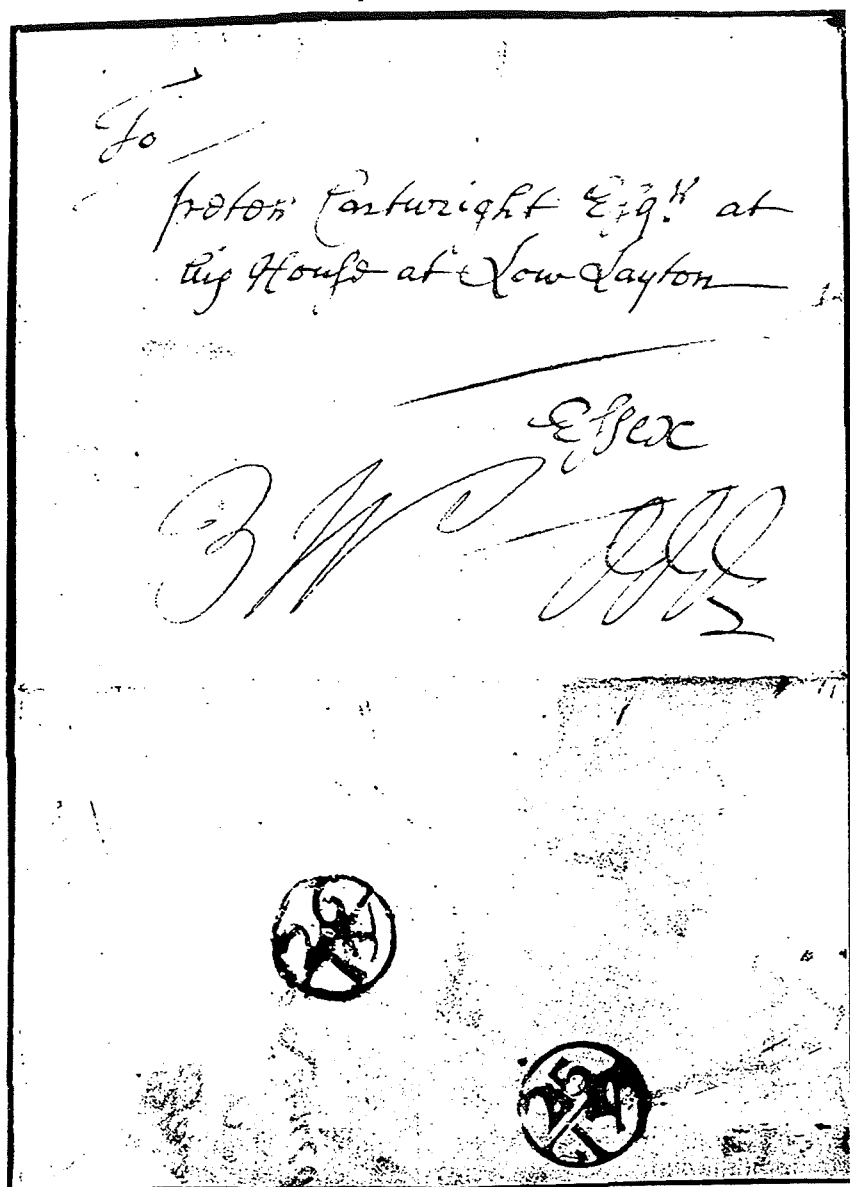


Fig. 3 Consecutive day Bishopmarks differing appreciably in size on a 1777 letter.

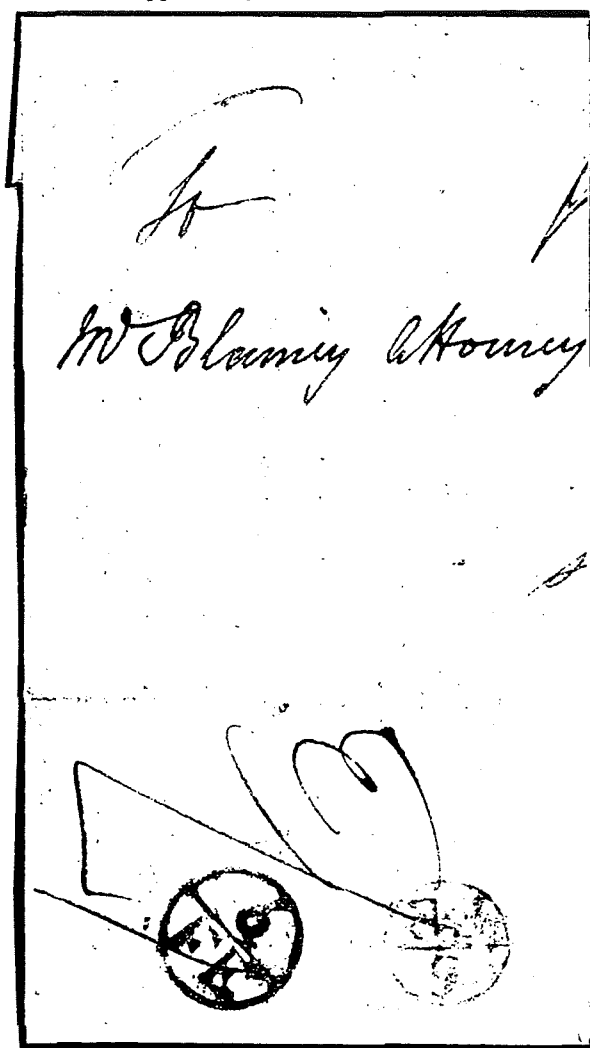


Fig. 4 A later example written on 26th October 1781, the two postmarks varying slightly in size.

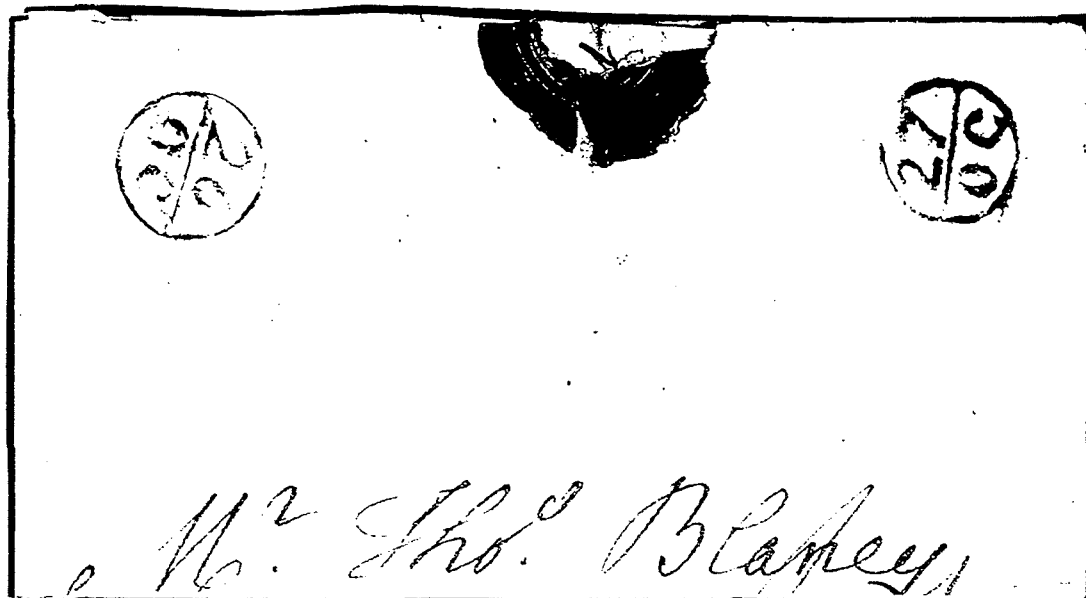


Fig. 5 Letter clearly dated 30th November 1784 but which received an incorrectly cut 29th November Bishopmark prior to application of a correctly dated handstamp.

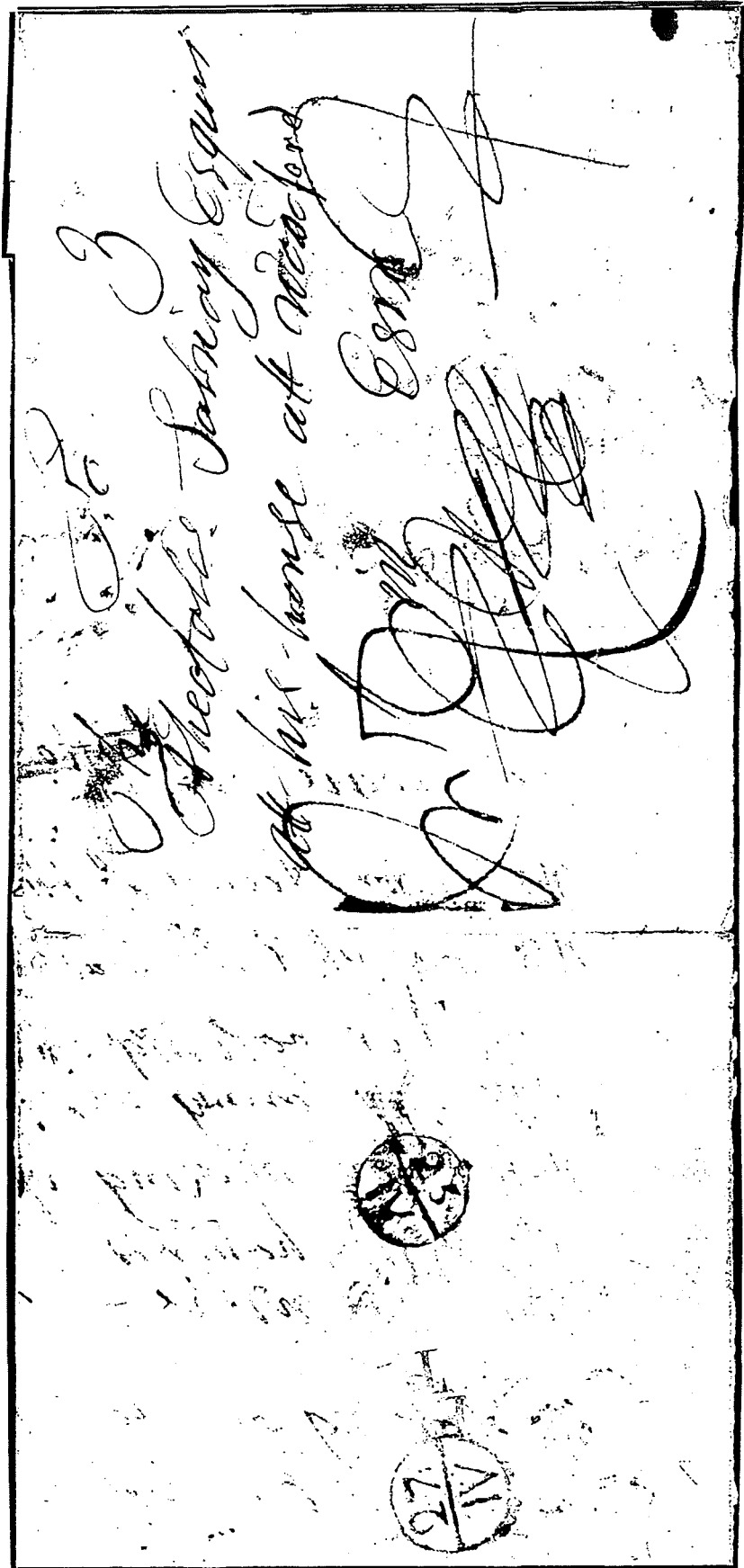
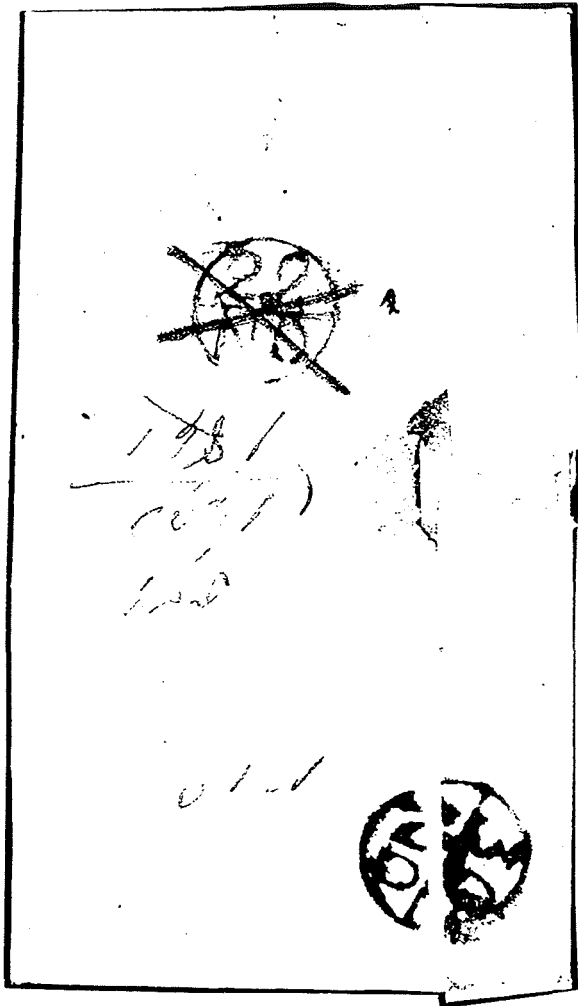


Fig. 6 Letter written Saturday, 23rd June 1759, arriving in London on the Monday where it received a 25th June Bishopmark. The second stamp indicates the first dispatch to Essex was two days later on the Wednesday.

Figs 7, 8 and 9 Letters posted in 1812, 1814 and 1818 to Derby, Lichfield and Broseley respectively.
Each re-handstamped the day after handing in at Birmingham.

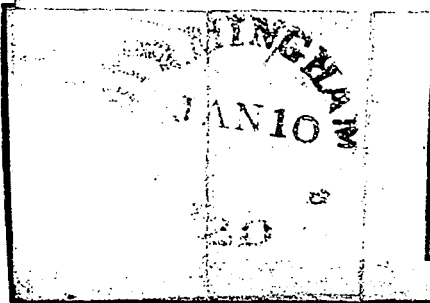
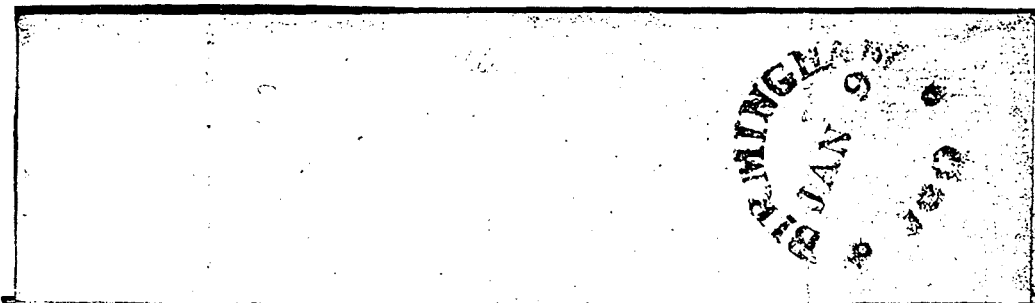
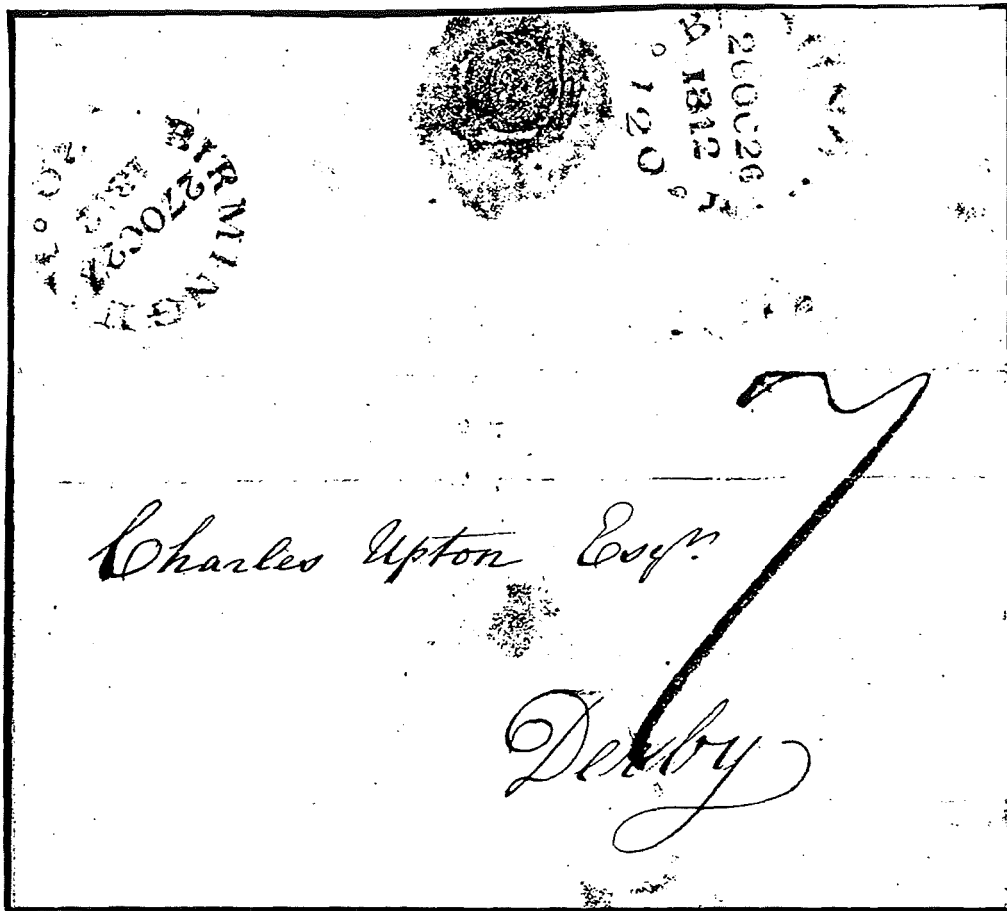


Fig. 10 1830 London to Ludlow where it was redirected to London where it attracted 'Free' handstamps on 28th April and 1st May.

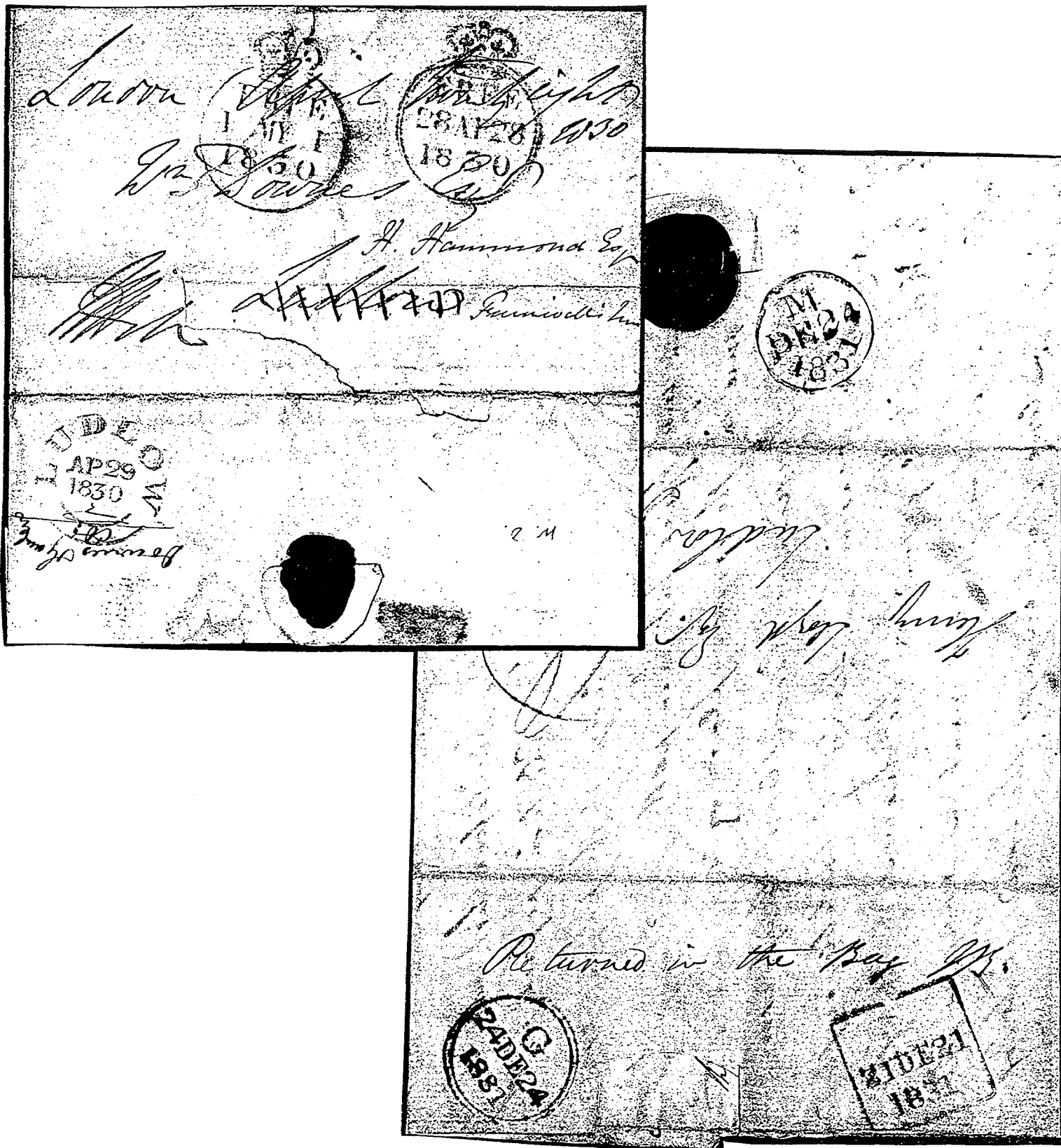


Fig. 11 A letter sent from London on 21st December 1831 but inadvertently taken back to London as can be seen from the endorsement. This is verified by London dispatch marks of 21st and 24th December and a receipt mark of the 24th.

HOW IT ALL BEGAN

In January 1971, Garnet Langton (Can you remember him?) wrote from Bournemouth to Chris Beaver:

"... I have pleasure in enclosing the Staffordshire collection which I trust you find satisfactory.

"I remember you telling me at Philymphia that you were pretty well complete on stamps, so I expect you are now turning to postal history. It is becoming increasingly difficult to obtain as its popularity grows and some counties are now almost impossible to obtain, although Staffordshire is not one of these. You have a reasonable chance of adding to this collection over the years if you so wish ..."

On the back of the letter Chris wrote: *"The beginning of my Staffordshire P.H. collection."*

If postal history from some counties was almost impossible to obtain in 1971, what are the chances now? I wonder to which counties Garnet Langton was referring.

THE NEXT MIDLAND MAIL

I intend that this will be distributed in early November. Apart from the usual reports, the contents will depend upon what articles, long or short, are sent to:

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