

MIDLAND MAIL

THE JOURNAL OF THE MIDLAND (GB) POSTAL HISTORY SOCIETY

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Number 162, November 2009

First of all, I must apologise to members and, in particular, Bryan Jones for the fact that the illustrations were missing from the article '*South Warwickshire Undated Circular Handstamps*' which I hope to print again in the next issue. I am still not sure how that happened, particularly as the illustrations in Bryan's other article appeared correctly.

I am not sure when this edition will reach members for, at the time of writing, the appears to be no end to the strikes by Royal Mail staff. The only beneficiaries from this dispute are clearly the competitors of Royal Mail. Will we see Royal Mail owned by Deutsche Post! Since there is not room on the last page (page 22) for the usual announcement, the next Midland Mail should appear by the end of January.

Finally, I would like to wish all members a very happy Christmas.

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

On **14th November** our meeting will be held at **Carrs Lane Church, Birmingham** when, starting at **1.30 pm**, members are asked to bring one board displays on '*Something from the County Catalogue*'.

Our Christmas meeting will take place on **5th December**, and will again be held at **Sharp's Pottery Museum, Swadlincote DE11 9DG**. There will be members' standing displays from **10.30 am**. At **2 pm** Mike Roberts will give a display on '*Scilly Islands*'. The buffet lunch which proved to be very successful last year will be at **12.30 pm**. If you would like to join us for lunch please contact Richard Farman by **28th November**.

The first meeting of 2010 will be held on **9th January** at **Carrs Lane Church, Birmingham**. At **1.30 pm**, our Secretary will give a display on '*Newark and District*'.

Please note that the date of the March meeting is **Saturday 6th March** and not **7th March** as stated on the programme card.

ANNUAL AUCTION

It may early to be thinking about our annual auction but it will be held a week earlier than usual. Therefore it is essential that Eric Lewis receives as many lots as possible at/by the meeting on **9th January** so that he can start to prepare the catalogue in mid-January. The final date (on which there is absolutely no leeway) for the receipt of lots is the date of the February meeting - **13th February**. Lots may be sent to Eric Lewis at **27 Rathbone Road, Smethwick B67 5JG**. Please give full descriptions together with estimated market values and your reserve price.

A gift of surplus material to be auctioned for Society funds will be much appreciated as money raised in this way does help to keep down the cost of subscriptions.

THE SEPTEMBER MEETING

Although the Society has met in the Northampton area previously, the first meeting of the 2009/10 season was at a new venue, the Community Centre at Greens Norton. A number of visitors, including three or four ladies - an unusual privilege, as the Chairman commented - provided a satisfactory if not munificent attendance. Derek Smeathers made a commendable effort to provide us with a most pleasant venue and an interesting meeting, which was worthy of more Society support than it received.

The two principal displays were to be very different. Philip Lindley, a member of the Society but normally unable to get to our meetings, began the day with a lucid and well-presented display of '*Royal Windsor and its part in Postal Development*'. He explained that, although Windsor was not on any of the early postal routes, its important castle (a royal residence since Norman times) had a major influence on what would otherwise have been a minor rural postal service. Not only was the royal presence of importance but, from the Restoration of 1660, Windsor was also a military garrison town. Add to that an ecclesiastical influence from visiting bishops (and archbishops) and significant commercial activity for a town of its size and its disproportionate influence on postal matters becomes less remarkable.

Philip divided his display into four principal sections. The first dealt with the period to 1840, the second considered the growth of business in the 1840s, the third looked at new services introduced in the second half of the 19th century and the final section took us into the 20th century. We saw early maps of Berkshire, including one with the county 'turned on its side' by Baddeslade and Toms. An announcement of 1674 in the London Gazette informed the public of post being sent to Windsor "Every night from the General Post Office". In view of this it is not surprising that Windsor had a name stamp from 1707 and we were shown a letter of 1708 to Norfolk. It had been charged 2d to London, then 'in all 5d' to Norfolk plus a final 1d local delivery charge to account for the six manuscript strokes of a pen. The content was equally fine, referring to Marlborough's victory at the Battle of Oudenarde - a key battle in the War of the Spanish Succession. Throughout the 18th century, there are no fewer than ten variants of the Windsor straight line mark and also a curved namestamp (perhaps two). Windsor had far more mileage marks than would seem reasonable for a town of its size.

Many of the 'Free' letters were from visiting bishops and we saw 'cross post' examples to and from Salisbury. Quite remarkably, there was an illicit 'Free' letter signed by (Lord) Walsingham, after his retirement as Postmaster General, but used by another correspondent. There were some nice examples of soldiers' letters, one giving an account of the writer's attempt (eventually successful) to be recruited into the Household Cavalry. There were a number of letters from a Major, later Colonel, Lee, an impecunious rogue pursued by debtors. A letter of 1790 was from a local tradesman wanting his dues, another letter to Lee's solicitor spoke of him "hoping he is safe from his creditors". This "safety" finally took the form of a posting to India but he fell sick on the journey and died within three months of reaching the sub-continent.

A letter written on 6th May 1840, with a handstruck '1' rather than a 1d black, was from another army officer and described a ball at the barracks. In the 1840s, there were several handstruck marks for 'paid' letters at Windsor and probably more than the three generally listed and recognised by collectors. We were shown a number of letters illustrating the progression of adhesive cancellations used at Windsor. Again Windsor had more than its fair share including no fewer than four basic 'squared circles', mostly re-cut several times.

It goes without saying that many of the letters shown to us were to or from members of the royal family. We saw examples of the use of early postal stationery and examples of telegrams, one of which, an OHMS telegram, simply said "Arrange lunch for me". There were letter mis-sent and misdirected and we were reminded that, until the late 19th century, redirected letters were not charged extra. There were letters from both Prince Christian and Princess Helena where the royal household had forgotten to apply adhesive stamps. This no longer mattered once Edward VII came to the throne as he re-introduced free postage for royal correspondence. We were shown examples of letters from the household during that and later eras and examples of their private stationery.

Finally, we reached 1911 and the special Coronation Aerial Post service to and from Windsor. There was both a letter and a card sent on the first public flight back to Hendon. In view of Windsor's postal history, what could have been more inevitable than this historic development? One is only surprised the Space Shuttle wasn't launched there.

The second display was described by its presenter, Gerald Lovell, as "not postal history". It was certainly unlike anything we have seen before. Mr Lovell, the current president of the Northampton Philatelic Society, produces special covers, often First Day covers, on behalf of charities, including those that benefit injured and disabled racing drivers. If this seems like an esoteric sideline, do not be misled for a sum well in excess of £100,000 has been donated to date. The general plan is to find a significant event at nearby Silverstone, such as the British Grand Prix, find a relevant postage stamp, have a special handstamp produced by Royal Mail and persuade famous members of the racing fraternity, at home and abroad, to sign a limited number of covers. At every aspect of this work, he is singularly successful. Such covers can sell to enthusiasts for as much as £100 each.

Gerald began his display, '*Silverstone, Centre of British Motor Sport*' by telling us something of the history of the racing circuit. It had been an RAF station between 1943 and 1946, the home of a training unit for Wellington bombers. The WW2 era pattern of three runways (placed in a triangle to enable aircraft to take off into the wind) formed the basis of the race track. The first race was held in 1948 with just six months notice when Maserati, with just two entries came 1st and 2nd. In the late 1950s, for several years, a mobile post office was brought to the track for the British Grand Prix. In 1969, the first handstamp benefiting disabled drivers appeared and a series of covers was produced by several sponsors. Mr Lovell sponsored his first cover in 1982 using Royal Mail's 'motor car' special stamps and thereafter he maintained a series of covers signed by the leading drivers of the day. One cover he mentioned was co-signed by the legendary Fangio (in Argentina) and by Stirling Moss (in the UK). In 1985, there were special celebrations at Silverstone for Motor 100 (well remembered by your scribe who took a classic car there and drove over part of the course). The 1993 cover raised £11,000. Covers have been signed by such as Murray Walker, the Duke of Kent and even Mick Jagger, all having motor racing links. In 2000, the 50th anniversary of Grand Prix racing, only three drivers were alive who had competed in the first race. Again Gerald had their signatures. One particularly interesting aspect of the charity covers was the letters we saw from the famous signatories as they often had a photo and each verified that the signatures on the covers were genuine. Appropriate postage stamps are used wherever possible, for both car and motorcycle events, and these are cancelled with Royal Mail special handstamps, costing in excess of £200. On occasions, handstamps have been produced other than Royal Mail for about £30 and adhesives not used but Gerald prefers the postal connection, even though the covers are never used for any true postal purpose. A letter from Stoke Mandeville expressing their appreciation for a cheque for £5000 illustrated how important this exercise has become and Gerald has no intention of finishing just yet, provided Silverstone retains its somewhat threatened status as the leading British track.

Derek Smeathers, our President, thanked Mr Lovell for his fascinating and unusual display and our Chairman, Paul Bradshaw, thanked Philip Lindley for his splendid display of the postal history of Windsor. After lunch at a local pub we returned for the members' displays of which is only practical to give the briefest account of their content.

Richard Farman's first display was of recently acquired parcel post labels, most notably those used at Field Post Offices in WWI. He hoped we would be able to tell him more about the postal rates but members expressed total ignorance. Alan Marshall combined two quite different topics, the vignettes, and envelopes of John Player and philatelic material linked to rabbits (and hares!), since Alan lives at Bunny, Nottinghamshire. We saw one of only two recorded 'Bunny' UDCs. Mick Gill had 'Upton' (Notts) UDCs on covers with a Windsor connection and justified the balance of his display of Victorian material as having relevancy since Victoria was, indeed, 'The Widow of Windsor'. Of note was a 'Missent to Worksop' handstamp struck in green ink. Derek Smeathers display had many royal connections including a letterhead from an "agricultural implement manufacturer" claiming royal endorsement, and a number of items linked to the coronations of Edward VII, George V and George VI. An illuminated letter from Queen Elizabeth thanking those who had helped with the evacuation of children from London (on and after 1st September 1939) was very unusual. Richard's second display was of the railways of Staffordshire. The 'Whitmore Station' UDC was beloved of our late reverend member and we learned that the average speed of a train between Whitmore and Stafford in 1840 was a very respectable 33 mph. We also learned that Stafford and Stafford Station shared the same duplex identification number. Neville Watterson is not a member of the Society but very well known in other postal history fields and he showed his "Scraps of GB". Most had a Northampton connection but there were 'squared circles' of Kettering and Huntingdon, the former on a letter to Zanzibar and the latter on a picture postcard showing the view from a house in which he once lived.

Mention must be made of two very fine standing displays, one throughout the morning by Derek Smeathers and the other in the afternoon by our Chairman. Both covered the local area of Towcester, with Brackley and Welford, and were as comprehensive as one could ever wish to see. We had enjoyed a thoroughly good day, in superb weather, and the Chairman thanked Derek and his lady helpers for looking after us so splendidly.

I would like to thank John Calladine for this report. I was prevented at the last minute from attending.

THE OCTOBER MEETING

On 14th October there was a very good attendance of about twenty members at the premises of the auctioneers Warwick & Warwick. Our programme secretary, Richard Farman, was the speaker with a display entitled '*The Chester Road through Staffordshire*'. Anyone who thought that this was going to be just a display of postmarks from towns on that road would have been disappointed for what we saw was material that had travelled along that road from 'all points of the compass'.

Richard began, as is customary, with a number of maps including a sketch map from the Earl of Dartmouth's postage book, a Hondius of 1616, a small Speed of 1627 and no fewer than three maps produced by Van Langeren - those of Leicestershire, Derbyshire and Staffordshire. A list of the postmasters on the Chester Road in 1653 followed.

We saw a number of sixteenth century letters including one sent in 1584 from Penkridge, from Leek to Stafford in 1594 and one carried privately to Blithfield Hall in about 1584. The seventeenth century was very well represented. Among items of particular note were a Civil War letter sent in 1645 from the Earl of Nottingham to the Earl of Manchester, a 'free' of 1652 sent to the Commissioners of the Navy and endorsed '*ffor the special Service of the State*', a letter from London to Yoxall of 1660 which carried the instruction '*Leave this at the post house in Lichfield to be sent post pd 3^d*'. A charge of 3d on a letter, marked '*Frank*' and sent from Sandon to London in 1673, had been deleted with the change endorsed by the initials TG. Most unusual was a cover of 1672 from Aleppo to Lichfield showing the correct rate for a double letter of 2s. 6d. A letter sent from Dublin to London in 1664 showed a 6d rate but took fifteen days to complete its journey.

Letters which showed interesting endorsements cropped up at frequent intervals throughout Richard's display. Two of particular note were one sent in 1679 from London to Sand Hall marked '*To be putt in Lichfeild bagg and left at Sand Cross*', and one of c1690 marked '*to be left at Sand Coffee hous in Sand Lane Lichfield*'. Unfortunately, Richard has not been able to find the location of either Sand Cross or Sand Lane. Can any member help?

Next, came material from Leicestershire and Derbyshire. Should anyone have wondered what this had to do with the Chester Road, Richard pointed out that the post road from the two county towns joined the Chester Road initially at Towcester but later at Brickhill. The comment '*pray direct yr letter to mee at Melbourne to be put into Derby Bagg for they come late and very deare from Loughborough to Ashby*' was to be seen in a letter sent in 1674 from Melbourne to London. A cover of 1697 from Appleby to London showed an Inspector's Crown indicating that the 5d charge had been correctly deleted. A straight-line mark of Leicester had been struck on a letter sent to London in 1711. A taste of what was to come later was given by a letter sent in 1701 from Bolton to Chester and endorsed '*by way of Stone*'. This item carried the earliest known example of an English provincial town handstamp - that of Bolton.

Richard began the second half of the display of material from the period 1700 to 1720. We saw a number of early handstamps of Stone - from 1706, 1709, 1710 and 1712. The albino mark of the same town was to be seen on two undated letters. The first also carried in manuscript '*Turn downward by Coleshill*', while the second, sent to Alfreton by way of London, was marked '*Turn downward from Stone*'. We also saw a 'N-CASTLE U L' of 1709, a 'STAFFORD' mark from 1710, a 'TAMWORTH' from 1713, a 'LICH/FIELD' of 1715 and 'N-CASTLE/U-LINE' from 1715. This was truly a very impressive line-up of early town handstamps. While the earliest recorded mark of Burton dates from 1707, Richard showed us a letter of 1717 which was sent from Burton to London at a cost of 6d but did not shown any Burton mark.

When Richard moved on to the 1730s we saw, among a number of items, a LITCH-/FIELD from 1732, UTOX-/ETER of 1736, and a WOLVER/HAMPTON on letters of 1734 and c1737. The latter letter which was sent to Holywell, Flintshire carried the endorsement '*Cross post turn at Coleshill*'. A letter sent from Kidderminster in 1742 to the same destination was marked '*By Way of Chester and thence to Holyhead*'. From the 1750s came a three line 'NEW/CASTLE/UNDER', a 1755 TAM-/WORTH and a 'STAF/FORD' of 1758 on a letter which was endorsed '*to be left at the Post Office in Stourbridge*' and '*Turn at Coleshill*'. A letter sent in 1761 from Stafford Prison to Coventry contained '*so kind to allow me half a crown a week wich is two little my bed costs that or else I must lie in the dungeon where I shall be eten up*'. Richard ended his display with more maps - in this case of changes made to the route of the Chester Road in north Staffordshire..

Our President, Derek Smeathers, in thanking Richard commented that we had seen a wide range of very scarce material. The warmth of the applause showed that all those present had thoroughly enjoyed the afternoon.

Our thanks are due again to Messrs Warwick & Warwick for providing us with such an excellent venue.

TWO ITEMS FROM RICHARD FARMAN'S DISPLAY

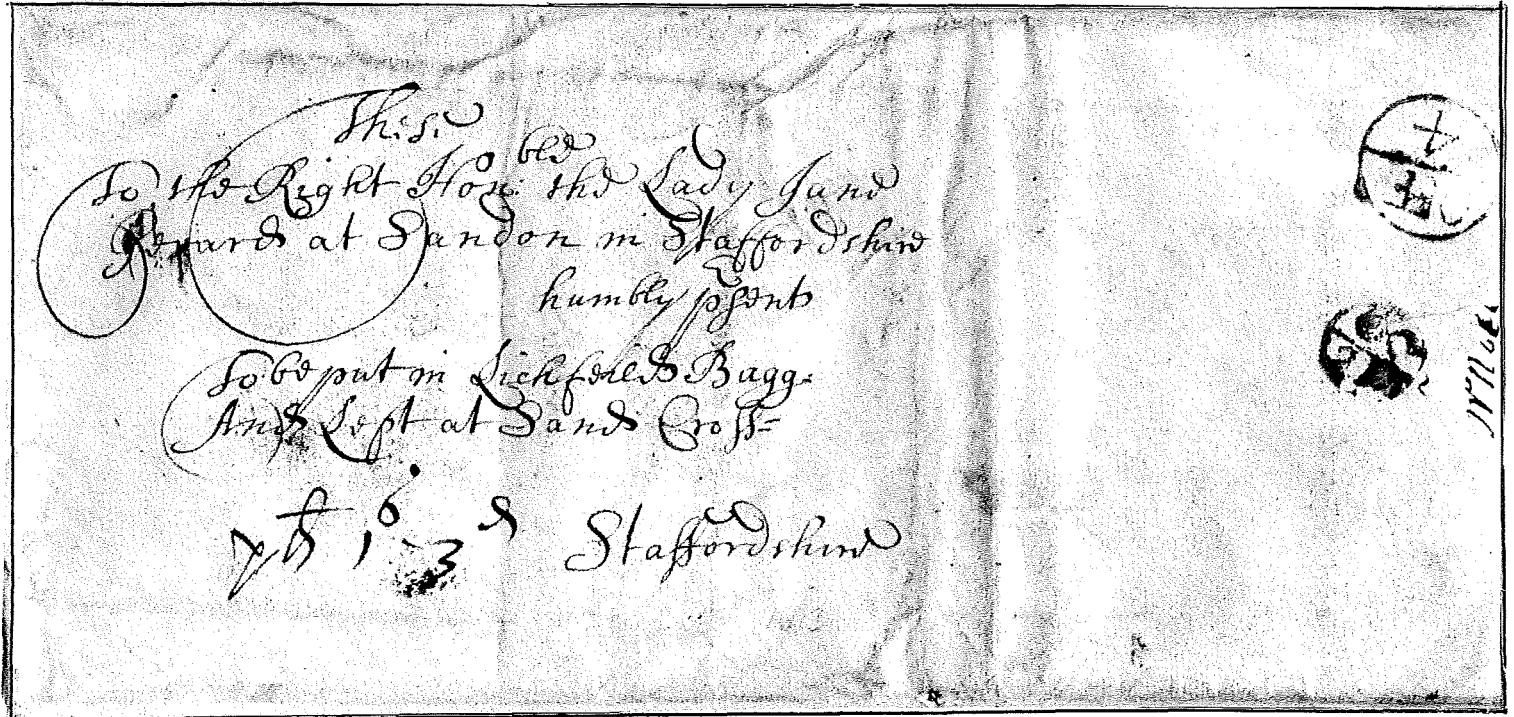
London to Sandon sent on 28th October 1673.

Postage paid 1s 3d. i.e. five times 3d rate.

Endorsed by the sender:

"To be put in Lichfield

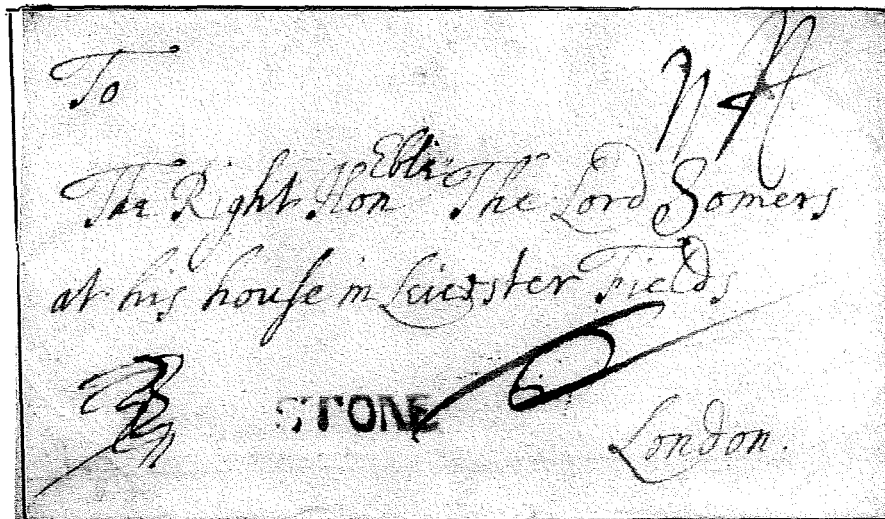
And left at Sand Cross"



Written by the Bishop of Lichfield & Coventry at Eccleshall Castle on 24th March 1707.

3d charge deleted and recharged at 6d for a double letter.

This charge was also deleted as the bishop was entitled to 'Free' postage.



POWER STATION POSTMARKS - A LITTLE MORE!

by Derek Smeathers

Further to Mick Gill's article in MM161/3 perhaps I might add a little further information concerning Sellafield which has become the overall name for the huge site on which the original nuclear energy research establishment (Windscale) and the atomic power station (Calder Hall) stand alongside the nuclear fuel processing plant (Sellafield). About twenty years ago, I took the tour operated from the excellent visitor centre at the site and postal history crossed swords with the official guide. She stated that the power station had been named after the River Calder which flows into the Irish Sea nearby and whose waters were used by the station. I said that I understood that it was called Calder Hall because it stood on the site of an old farming property with that name belonging to Calder Abbey Estate, but she said no farm had existed there before the power station came.

On returning home, I checked my Cumbrian collection and there was a postcard of 1917 sent by a farmer from Calder Hall about difficulties with harvesting! I also have a 1930s map showing it, not far from Calder Bridge village. So I sent a copy of it to the Sellafield Visitor Centre with a suggestion that perhaps they should correct their information to visitors. I had a very nice reply from the Information Officer of British Nuclear Fuels, Dr Adrian Tognarelli, agreeing that the station was named after the old farm. He also mentioned that in the construction of the station, the workers all used accommodation in the South Camp. A post office was established there and a philatelic cover posted there is illustrated. There never was any North Camp. Official mails from the Sellafield complex were always handled at the nearby post town of Seascale - which also controlled two sub-offices nearer to Sellafield, Calder Bridge and Gosforth.

In re. your notice of meeting
for Thurs. I am afraid
I shall not be able to
attend. Harvesting has been
so far, exceedingly difficult, &
I have over 40 acres now ready
for carting. I hope this may
be a sufficient reason for my
non-attendance.
Yours truly,
Calder Hall.
12th 9. 17.
J. E. Docker.



Postal stationery card written from Calder Hall - the farm which gave its name to the nuclear power station.

THE FLETCHER COLLECTION AT THE BRITISH LIBRARY

By John Calladine

The Fletcher Collection of British stamps and postal history was formed by Mr Hugh Greenwell Fletcher over the lifetime of a collector born in 1882. When he died in 1968, he bequeathed his massive collection to the Bruce Castle Museum, from where it was transferred to the Philatelic Collections of the British Library in 1989. Originally held in more than three-hundred volumes, it was re-housed in archival boxes at the British Library and stored in temperature and humidity controlled conditions. Approximately half of the collection is of pre-stamp material, mounted on anything from expensive hinged leaves to pages from school exercise books or, in some cases, it is uncounted. There are no elaborate write ups, just a simple pencil note of the date of the item (which may be in error) and its town of origin. However each page or item bears a six-figure reference number, the first three figures indicating the volume number and the remaining figures the individual identification of the item within its volume. Since these numbers were allocated at Bruce Castle, some of the smaller volumes may now be combined, with others, in a single archival box while other larger volumes may be divided among several boxes.

The material is not organised by county, as it probably would be nowadays. It is arranged by Post Office Service or type of postal marking and then, within each box, in alphabetical order, by town. Inevitably, some items are of great significance. There are, for example, no fewer than seventy-three strikes of handstruck '4's from across the country, many of superb quality. The Fletcher Collection is of particular importance now that the Society is preparing a 'Midlands edition' of the British County Catalogue of Postal History. It is unlikely that the collection has previously been checked for dates (and particularly full dates) of usage. The Society's draft lists for both Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire were considered comprehensive and yet no fewer than thirty-five date extensions came to light, not to mention two entirely new and unrecorded marks!

The procedure for viewing the Fletcher collection may seem somewhat long-winded but, in truth, it is relatively straightforward if followed to the letter. The first step is to arrange an appointment. Anyone viewing a collection such as this at the Philatelic Collections of the British Library, however eminent or well known, will be closely supervised. Since David Beech, the curator, has only one qualified assistant, an appointment to view the Fletcher Collection should be made sometime in advance. (Requests for viewings of material held in the Philatelic Collections are not infrequent and supervision time is limited). The viewing can begin at 10.00am and continued until 4.00pm, with an hour-long break usually taken at midday. Experience suggests that, to view the whole range of pre-1840 items, for example, more than a single day is needed and it is probably best accomplished by, say, two County Editors working together. Once an appointment has been made, a British Library Readers Pass must be obtained. Passes are not issued without a valid need for them and that will be provided by the appointment already made with the Philatelic Collections. A Readers Pass could be issued at 9.30am on the day of the appointment, if necessary, but it would be better to obtain it in advance, as delays could lead to precious viewing time being lost. The department issuing the passes is efficient and, although a photograph appears on the card, it is taken during the application procedure and it is unnecessary to provide one. What you do need to provide is a passport or other proof of identity and something like a recent utility bill to verify your place of residence. A Pass is normally valid for a year.

During examination of the collection, normal archive rules apply and are summarised in a handout provided when you arrive for the viewing. As usual, pencils (not pens) must be used and, although marks can be measured when necessary, the permission of your supervisor must be obtained each time it is done. If an entire needs to be opened to obtain a full date, your supervisor will decide whether it is feasible without damaging the item and undertake the task for you. You can be sure everything that can be done to help you will be done. If an unrecorded mark is found and a scan is required, this can be ordered (using the six-figure reference number mentioned above) but it cannot be provided immediately. The frightening news is that each scan costs no less than £28-69. Happily, the position is not quite as bad as it seems because four or five items can usually be included on one A4 scan.

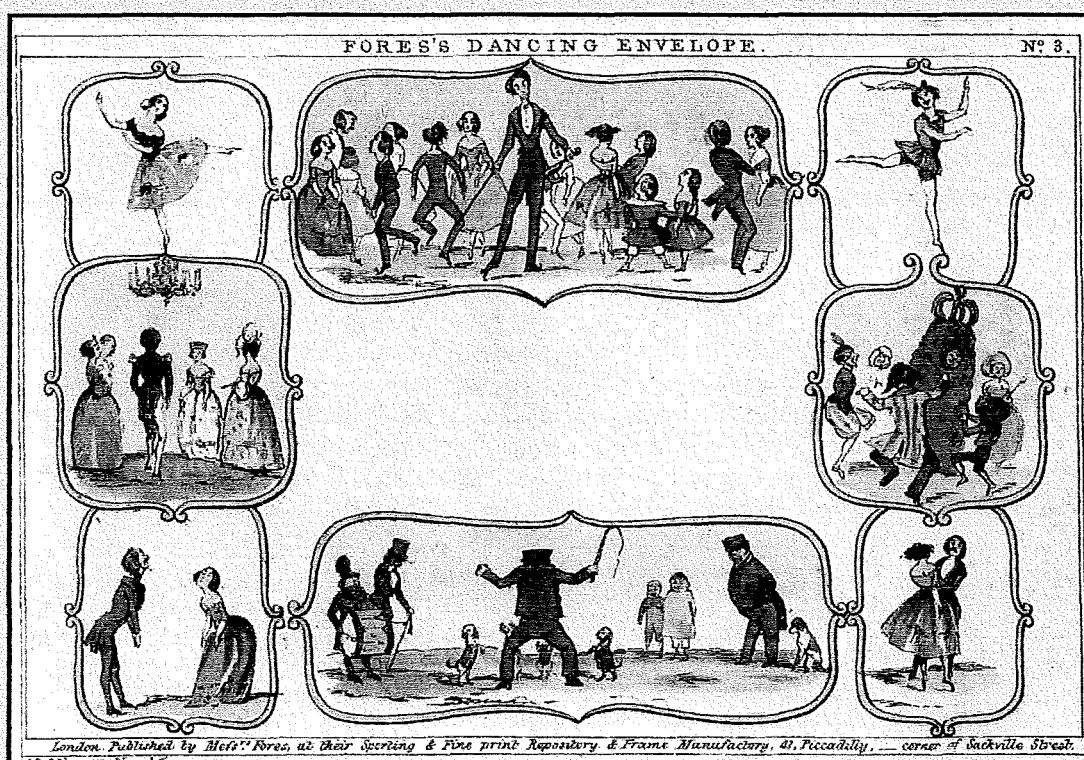
Finally, it is worth knowing there is an index to the contents of Volumes 113-341 covering the postal history material. It can be useful in deciding which volumes are to be brought up from the secure store. If anyone decides to check the pre-1840 postal markings, the staff will already have a good idea what to have at hand and there will be no need to wait for the relevant volumes to be brought from the store. It would be surprising if anyone found a viewing of the Fletcher Collection an unrewarding experience.

'London 2010' is coming....

We're having a party (for volunteers- are you one?)

We're having a special 2-day Auction (with viewing at the Exhibition)

And we'll have a special handbook catalogue.



If you are considering selling your collection, or a significant item, you should be talking to us.

Ken Baker, our Australian specialist, and James Grimwood-Taylor will be happy to discuss your requirements.

Simply phone us on 01332 250970, fax on 01332 294440 or

Email: stamps@cavendishphilauc.demon.co.uk

And visit our NEW website - www.cavendish-auctions.com

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Fax: 01332 294440

THE DOUBLE ARC DATESTAMPS OF CHELTENHAM

by John Hine

Introduction

Between 1830 and 1858 Cheltenham used a series of double arc datestamps and there are twenty five of them entered in the Proof Impression Books (P.I.B.'s) between 1845 and 1857. These proof entries are mostly accompanied by a note indicating whether the stamp is new or a recut from a previous issue sent in for repair. By combining this information with a study of the individual stamp characteristics it can be determined that there were just seven different double arc datestamps in use over the 29 years of use with many of them subject to recutting up to four times. The twenty-five stamps as proofed are illustrated in Figure 1 with identification numbers #1 to #25 together with their relevant P.I.B. reference.

During recutting of the stamps in London skeleton stamps made up from loose type were used temporarily until the normal datestamp was returned. I have records of five different skeleton stamps used in Cheltenham between 1839 and 1848 and there is a possibility of a sixth one having been used. These stamps have been allocated identifications #A to #6. #C I have not seen but it is listed in the 3rd Edition of the 'Skeleton Postmarks of England & Wales' (British Postmark Society 2006). Because the single date recorded in the book is not during a recutting period its existence remains unconfirmed. The skeletons are illustrated in Figure 2 but as may be expected from their scarcity the originals are not perfect specimens. In 1848 and 1849 two new datestamps were supplied and the necessity to use skeleton stamps during recutting was removed. When a stamp was sent for recutting the other stamp was put into service. This list of recorded use of Cheltenham datestamps reveals just how datestamps were replaced during recutting by either skeletons or reserve stamps.

Figure 4 shows the series of recuts associated with each of the six new stamps issued from 1839 to 1858
From May 1858 the Cheltenham double arc stamps were replaced by much smaller single circle datestamps (#27).

The first Cheltenham Double Arc datestamps (#1 to #3)

The first Cheltenham Serifed Dated Double Arc stamp (SDDA) (#1) was issued in January 1830 to replace the old mileage stamp with mileage removed. The new datestamp was 24mm in diameter and had the month and day in one line with the year below. It is surprising that this datestamp survived in use for nine years until early 1839. By that date larger offices had several box-closing times per day and the GPO required evidence of traceability to show by which post each letter was sent. This was achieved by adding a code letter or number to the datestamp. When the small Cheltenham datestamp was withdrawn from service it was replaced temporarily by a large skeleton stamp until a large 30mm regular datestamp suitable for coding was issued in April 1839. This Serifed Dated Double Arc stamp with Code (SDDAC) was used with letter codes A to D from first to last collection. From 1841 onwards codes F and G were added (#2 and #3).

Sometime in April 1841 the datestamp was damaged and was sent to London for repair. Normally this repair process included a re-engraving of the letters called 'recutting' by the GPO. In this case the damage was considered to be too insignificant and the Proof Impression Book (P.I.B.) 4/113 notes 'returned without any repair'. The proof impression does show that the C is rather weak and that the left vertical stroke of the H is bent inwards. The Cheltenham postmaster remained unsatisfied with the stamp and sent it for repair again in September 1841. This time it was recut and returned to service showing an enlarged gap between the C and H of the place name. In July 1843 the stamp was recut again and after this it shows a large space between the C and H.

The C gap H datestamps (#4 and #5)

These peculiar datestamps have always intrigued collectors and the pioneer British postal historian J.H.Daniels made a study of them. Part of an early letter written by him to R.C.Alcock survives, unfortunately without date, but probably from the 1930's. Daniels notes his findings on the "*Cheltenham date stamp with space between the C and H.*" His conclusion, supported by Alcock, was "*I suppose that an incorrect letter crept in & was punched out*" This conclusion is in error as the P.I.B.'s show that the stamp was recut from the original 1839 datestamp that was correctly engraved (#2). The probable reason for the existence of the gap is that the recutter chose to repair the damage in the most practical manner without caring too much about the aesthetic result of his work. Examples of the '**C gap H**' datestamps as Alcock called them are plentiful and I have recorded details of more than one hundred. Eventually in July 1845 the stamp was sent for repair again and was returned completely recut in sans serif form and with normal spacing between the C and H(#6)

The Sans Serif datestamps (#6 to #25)

From early 1844 onwards all new stamps, dated and undated were issued with sans serif lettering. This did not apply to sans serif stamps that were sent for repair and these continued to be recut for several years afterwards complete with serifs although some, as #6 of Cheltenham, had their serifs removed during recutting. The advantage of smaller size handstamps without serifs from the GPO standpoint was that the stamps cost less to make and would save money by using less ink.

The first Cheltenham Sans Serif Dated Double Arc stamp with Code (SSDDAC) was as mentioned earlier converted from the seriffed 'C gap H' datestamp. This stamp continued in service until the end of 1847 when it was eventually replaced by the first of a new series of smaller datestamps measuring 25mm in diameter as against the 30mm of the converted stamp (#7).

In the years between 1848 and 1858 there are entries for no less than 19 similar stamps in this pattern. Fortunately at that time most stamps were annotated as 'new' or 'recut' in the P.I.B.'s and this, together with minor differences in engraving, enables us to determine the origin of each stamp. Thus we can determine that there were five different stamps issued the town and that they were regularly recut sometimes up to four times before being withdrawn from service. Comparing the details of examples known to me it is clear that the Cheltenham postmaster kept strict control over his datestamps and used them as issued in chronological order without any major overlapping of dates.

From 1855 onwards Cheltenham was issued with sideways duplex stamps and a (rarely used) spoon to cancel adhesives. This meant that from 1855 onwards the double arc datestamps were restricted to use as arrival stamps on incoming letters. From 1858 they were replaced by the new standard single circle datestamps of about 20mm diameter. I can record only one example of a double arc in 1858 and that had the month-day line transposed with the year line. Even so it is clearly an impression from stamp #25 the last to be issued.

The #26 datestamp

I have recorded one example of this unusual datestamp for 22 December 1857 with the code letter A above the date and with the year in two digits. It is struck as an arrival mark on the reverse of a letter from London. This stamp does not appear in the proofbooks and I am inclined to couple it with the similarly unproofed Cheltenham spoon in use during the same period (end November 1857 – begin January 1858).

Collection code letters

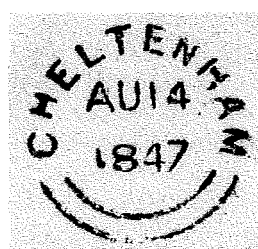
By 1839 busy offices had several box-closing times per day and this is seen by the use of letter codes in the datestamps. The first double arc datestamp with collection code letters issued to Cheltenham in 1839 (#2) is recorded in use with codes A to D but from 1841 onwards (#3 to #25) codes A to G were used. P.I.B. entries for new stamps issued in 1851 and 1852 (#16 and #17) note that code letters A to G and D to H respectively were supplied but the letter H has not been recorded in use. Another P.I.B. entry for a new stamp issued in 1855 (#21) notes that it was supplied '*with figures 1 to 5 instead of letters*'. These have not been recorded in use with the double arc datestamps.



F 1843 to 1844

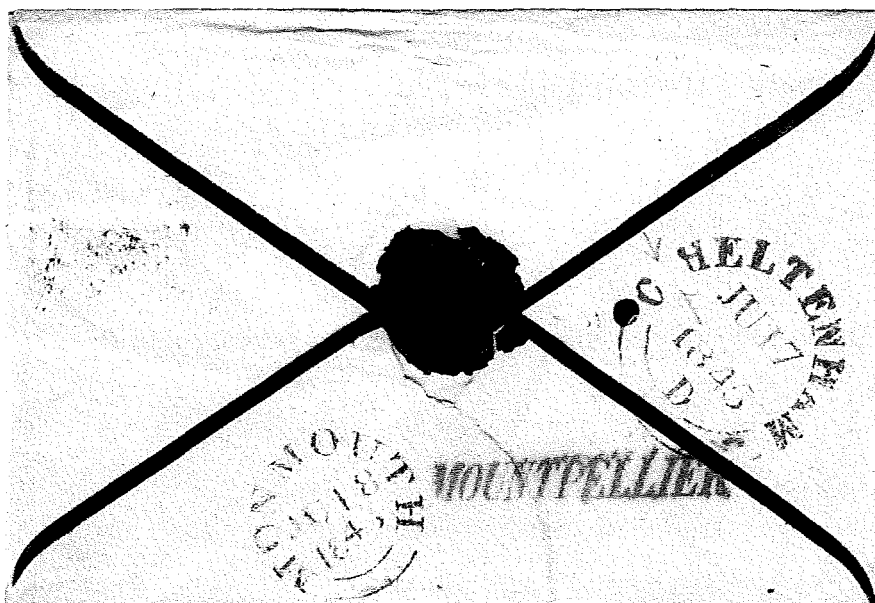


F sideways 1845



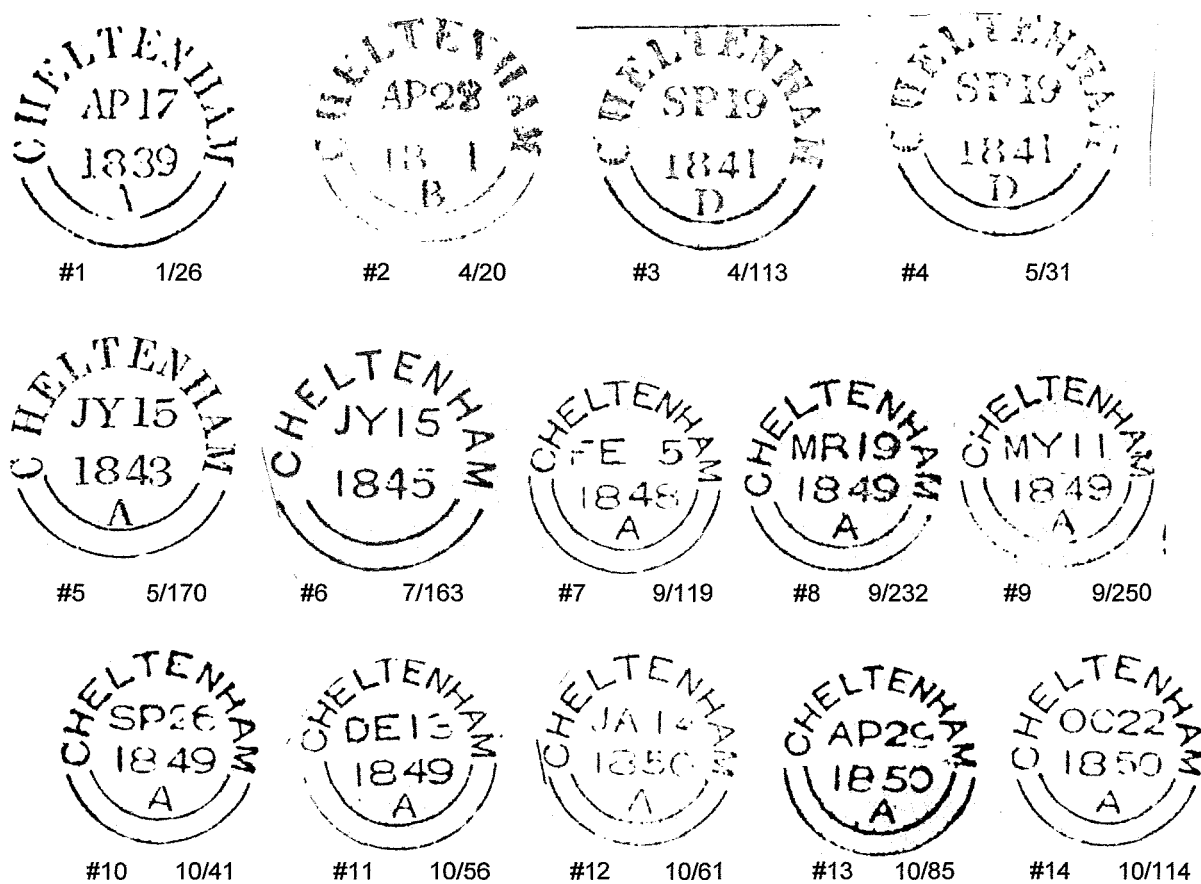
No code letter 1847

During several months in 1845 code letter F was used sideways in the 'C gap H' stamp (#5). In the letter from J.H.Daniels to R.C.Alcock mentioned earlier Daniels records an example of this F sideways code in April 1845. I can record use with code F upright from July 1843 until December 1844 (9 examples). However from February 1845 until the stamp was withdrawn in June 1845 code F was always used sideways (pointing down) (13 examples). Occasional use without a code letter also occurs during the period in various stamps from 1841 to 1849. Placing the F code sideways was certainly deliberate but whether the omission of the collection code letter was intentional (to denote a special handling) is not known.



The Cheltenham 'C gap H' datestamp on a letter from Mo(u)ntpellier to Monmouth in June 1845

Figure 1. Proof Impressions in chronological order





#15 10/195



#16 10/249



#17 11/56



#18 12/37



#19 12/101



#20 12/195



#21 12/227



#22 12/267



#23 13/117



#24 13/286



#25 14/49

#25 in use 1858 *
(year above date)

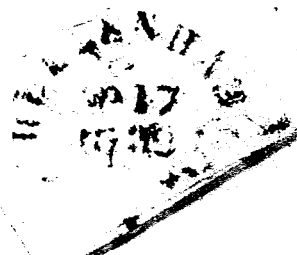
#26 22 12 1857 *



#27 19 05 1858

* These two illustrations are taken from actual strikes and are not proof impressions

Figure 2 Skeleton stamps used during recutting periods



#A 17 04 1839



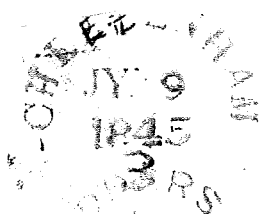
#B 23 04 1841



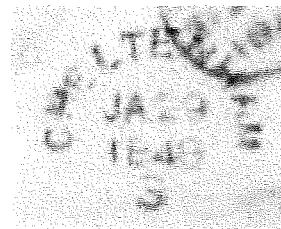
#C no illustration



#D 08 07 1843



#E 09 07 1845



#F 29 01 1848

Table of Issue Dates and Recorded Use 1830 - 1858

Ref.	Description / PIB notes	P.I.B.	Issue Date	Recorded	Recorded
#1	24mm SDDA	1/26	25.01.1830	15.05.1830	17.02.1839
#A	Skeleton / A			07.04.1839	17.04.1839
#2	30mm SDDAC	4/20	17.04.1839	13.07.1839	20.04.1841
#B	Skeleton no code			21.04.1841	23.04.1841
#3	#2 sent for recutting but	4/113	22.04.1841	23.04.1841	09.09.1841
#C	Skeleton / A (unconfirmed)			02.09.1841	
#4	#3 recut small	5/31	19.09.1841	06.10.1841	05.07.1843
#D	Skeleton / B			08.07.1843	16.07.1843
#5	#4 'recut' larger	5/170	15.07.1843	29.07.1843	26.06.1845
#E	Skeleton / 3			09.07.1845	
#6	#5recut' without	7/163	16.07.1845	02.08.1845	27.12.1847
#F	Skeleton / 3			15.01.1848	08.02.1848
#7	'new' stamp	9/119	05.02.1848	13.03.1848	10.12.1848
#8	'new' stamp	9/232	19.03.1849	03.04.1849	05.09.1849
#9	#7 'recut'	9/250	11.05.1849	23.10.1849	23.11.1849
#10	#8 'recut'	10/41	26.09.1849	08.12.1849	
#11	#9 'recut'	10/56	13.12.1849	07.01.1850	
#12	#10 'recut'	10/61	14.01.1850	11.03.1850	15.08.1850
#13	#11 'recut'	10/85	29.04.1850	18.09.1850	30.12.1850
#14	#12 'recut'	10/11	22.10.1850	21.01.1851	03.07.1851
#15	#13 'recut'	10/19	02.05.1851	13.08.1851	10.05.1852
#16	'new' stamp 'A to G' codes	10/24	29.09.1851	05.06.1852	17.04.1853
#17	'new' stamp 'D to H' codes	11/55	26.05.1852	28.05.1853	12.01.1854

#18	#16 'recut'	12/37	21.03.1854	06.04.1854	30.08.1854
#19	#17 'recut'	12/10	23.08.1854	08.11.1854	13.04.1855
#20	#18 'recut'	12/19	07.05.1855	19.05.1855	26.08.1855
#21	New stamp 'with figures 1	12/22	28.07.1855	27.11.1855	18.06.1856
#22	#20 'recut'	12/26	13.11.1855	24.05.1857	
#23	#19 'recut'	13/11	01.01.1857	14.04.1857	24.05.1857
#24	#22 'recut'	13/28	21.07.1857	04.10.1857	
#25	#21 recut	14/49	09.10.1857	06.03.1858	
#26	Unproofed stamp with code above			22.12.1857	
#27	New single circle stamp	14/23	19.05.1858	27.05.1859	

Ink colour at Cheltenham 1830-58

I am not an expert on the difficult subject of ink colour. Everyone seems to have a different interpretation as to what to call various shades of ink. The influence of paper, light, storage conditions and other factors all have an influence on the end result of what was a variable product made-up locally by the post office staff. Most collectors can agree with black and red colours although some people use grey or orange to describe deviating shades. When it comes to the range of greens and blues then we encounter a great divergence in meanings. What one person sees as green is to another blue, or blue-green or green-blue and so on. Cheltenham was similar to many offices and during this period from 1830 to 1858 several different shades of ink were in use over the years.

For cancellation purposes Cheltenham kept strictly to the rules and apart from the use of red ink to cancel 1d blacks in 1840 and early 1841 no other colour of ink has been recorded for cancellation purposes except black. The datestamps however were struck in various shades of ink throughout the period, mostly on the reverse of letters.

The first double arc datestamp (#1) is found struck in black ink only. From April 1839 red ink was used exclusively until early 1841. From then on until 1858 the shade of the ink used in the Cheltenham datestamps was changed irregularly. A simplified listing follows below together with Figure 3 that illustrates a typical range of ink colours/shades.

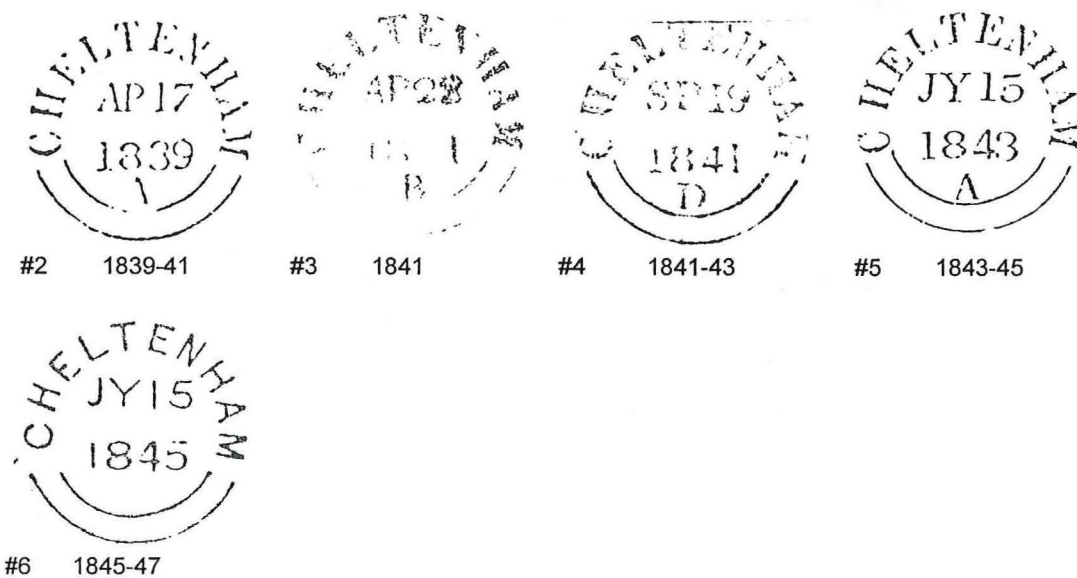
1. 1830 to February 1839 black ink
2. April 1839 to January 1841 red ink
3. February 1841 to July 1843 black ink
4. July 1843 to December 1852 various shades ranging from blue through blue-green to greenish-blue to a dark blackish-green.
5. December 1852 to August 1855 red
6. November 1855 to April 1857 reddish-black
7. April 1857 to May 1857 bluish-black

Figure 3 Typical shades of ink used at Cheltenham from 1839 to 1858.



Figure 4 Proof Impressions in series order showing recutting sequences:

Series 1



Series 2

#7 1848



#9 1849



#11 1850



#13 1850



#15 1851-52

Series 3

#8 1849



#10 1849



#12 1850



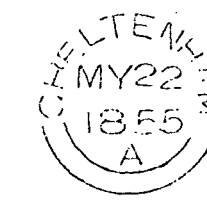
#14 1851

Series 4

#16 1852-53



#18 1854



#20 1855



#22 1857



#24 1857

Series 5

#17 1853-54



#19 1854-55



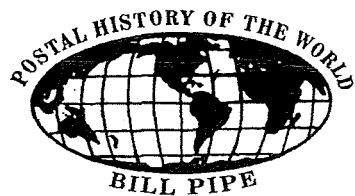
#23 1857

Series 6

#21 1855-56



#25 1857

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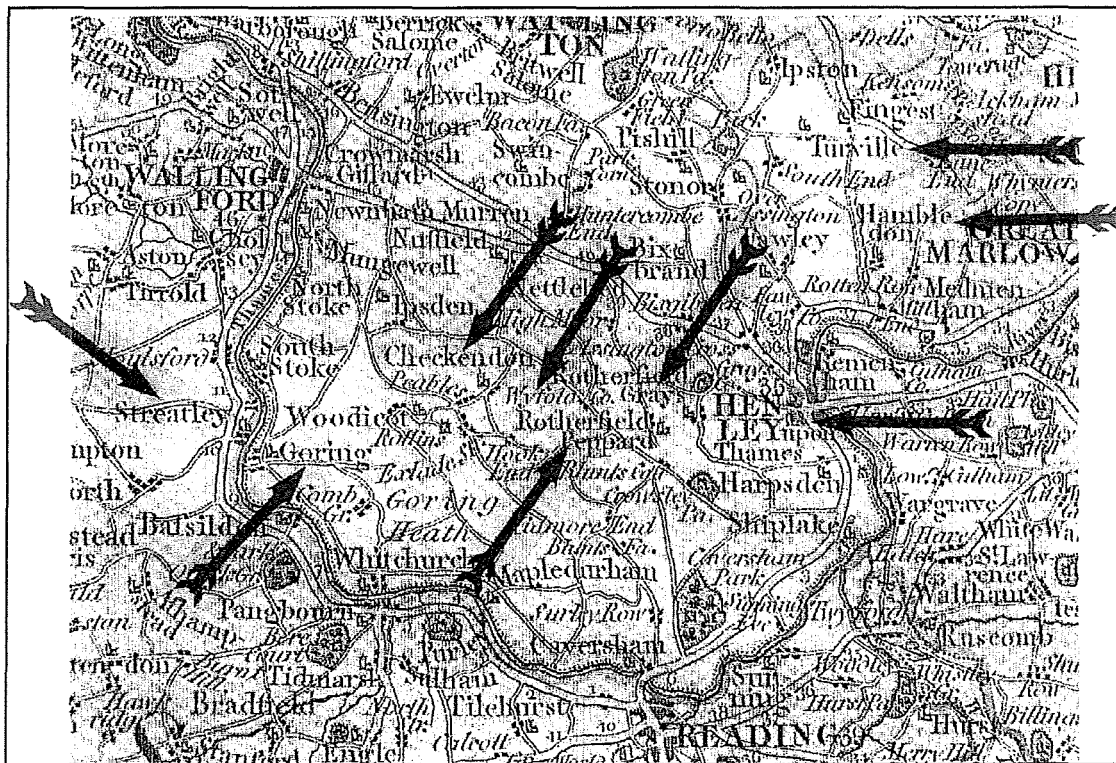
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HENLEY ON THAMES PENNY POST

1838-1840

There can be little doubt that a penny post from Henley on Thames to Grays, Rotherfield Peppard, Wyfold and Checkendon was not authorized until 13th February 1838, when it was authorized on an experimental basis for one year. However, an Appendix to the Second Report of the Select Committee on Postage (1838) records earlier receipts of 11/6d in a Henley Penny Post prior to 5th November 1837. One must assume these were the receipts for letters delivered in the town after charges for local letters, previously paid to the postmaster, were "brought to account" in 1837. When Lord Lichfield, the Postmaster General, approved the penny post to Checkendon in 1838, he noted that a nomination for a receivership should be referred to the Treasury, without making any reference to the location of a receiving house. It was presumed to be at the end of the ride at Checkendon (and Oxley records it as such) but no handstamp has been recorded and the Allowances to Deputy Postmasters (1838-1843) do not include a receiver's salary at Checkendon. A daily foot messenger was paid £31-4-0 per annum (2/- a day).

Following the discontinuation of what we now know as the Royal Mail Archive Post 40 minute series after the death of Sir Francis Freeling in 1838, we are able to glean less information than before from the somewhat sketchy minute series known to us as Post 35. A minute of June 1838 authorizes an extension of the Checkendon messenger's walk to Goring "for the accommodation of Streatley". Goring is on the Oxfordshire bank of the River Thames, directly opposite Streatley (in Berkshire), which had been served by a penny post from Reading since 1811. However, the first bridge across the river between Streatley and Goring was not built until 1837. Since the minute gives no explanation of the need for the extended walk, one might guess it was to deliver mail for Streatley that had been carried on the London-Gloucester mailcoach. Unlike the Worcester Mail, this coach still passed through Henley. The wages of the messenger were increased by £6-10-0 a year (5d a day).



From Cary's 1794 map of Oxfordshire.

On 18th June 1838, at the same time as the extension of the Checkendon ride to Goring was approved, a second arm of the Henley Penny Post to Turville was authorized, serving the villages of Greenlands, Millend, Hambledon, Skirmett and Fingest. Eight days later, the surveyor was given permission to appoint receivers at Hambledon and Turville. Both were paid £3-3-0 a year.

Type 5 penny post handstamps were issued to Henley, Hambledon (Bucks) and Turville.

References

Post 35/1110Z/1838
 Post 35/903AA/1838
 Post 35/799AA/1838
 Post 35/903AA/1838
 Post 9/132, page 141
 Appendix 23 of the 2nd Report of the Select Committee on Postage (1838)

HANDSTAMPS OF THE HENLEY ON THAMES PENNY POST

Post town: Henley on Thames

Receiving houses: Hambledon and Turville (and possibly Checkendon).

MLP1135	<i>Henley PennyPost</i> (issued 11MAY38)	B	27NOV38- 6AUG39	E
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MLP1136	<i>Henley PennyPost</i> (issued 9JUL38)	Not recorded in use		
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MLP1138	<i>Hambledon PennyPost</i> (issued 9JUL38)	Not recorded in use		
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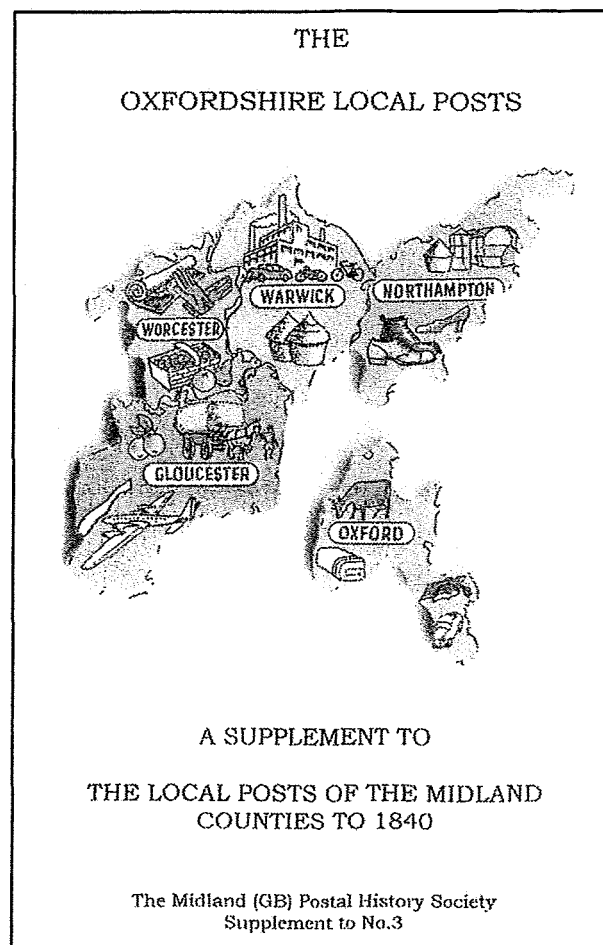
MLP1139	<i>Turville PennyPost</i> (issued 9JUL38)	Not recorded in use		
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N.B. Note that the Henley mark known used has the 'y' of 'Henley' over the 'o' of 'Post' and the other issued stamp has the 'y' of Henley over the 'P' of 'Post'.

THE OXFORDSHIRE LOCAL POSTS - A SUPPLEMENT TO 'THE LOCAL POSTS OF THE MIDLAND COUNTIES TO 1840'

For the past two years, Midland Mail has included articles describing one or other of the local posts in Oxfordshire. These were not included in the Society's 'Local Posts' book because, at the time, we had no Oxfordshire County Editor. In this issue of 'Midland Mail', for example, there is a description of the Henley on Thames Penny Post. The series will be completed in the Spring of 2010.

For those who wish to have the complete information readily at hand, a Supplement to the 'Local Posts' book has been produced and will be on sale in 2010. Some of the illustrations and scans in the original articles have been improved and usage dates have been expanded, following recent new information. With a colour cover and containing 44 pages, the book is fully indexed, both by place name and Midland Local Post (MLP) number, and is plastic ring bound in the manner of the original 'Local Posts' book.



It would be helpful to know how many of these supplements to print. It is anticipated it will be sold for a modest price of £5 or £6, certainly not more, and members expecting to buy a copy are asked to speak to John Calladine (01249 758148) or to e-mail him (john.calladine@mac.com) or simply to mention their interest at the December meeting.

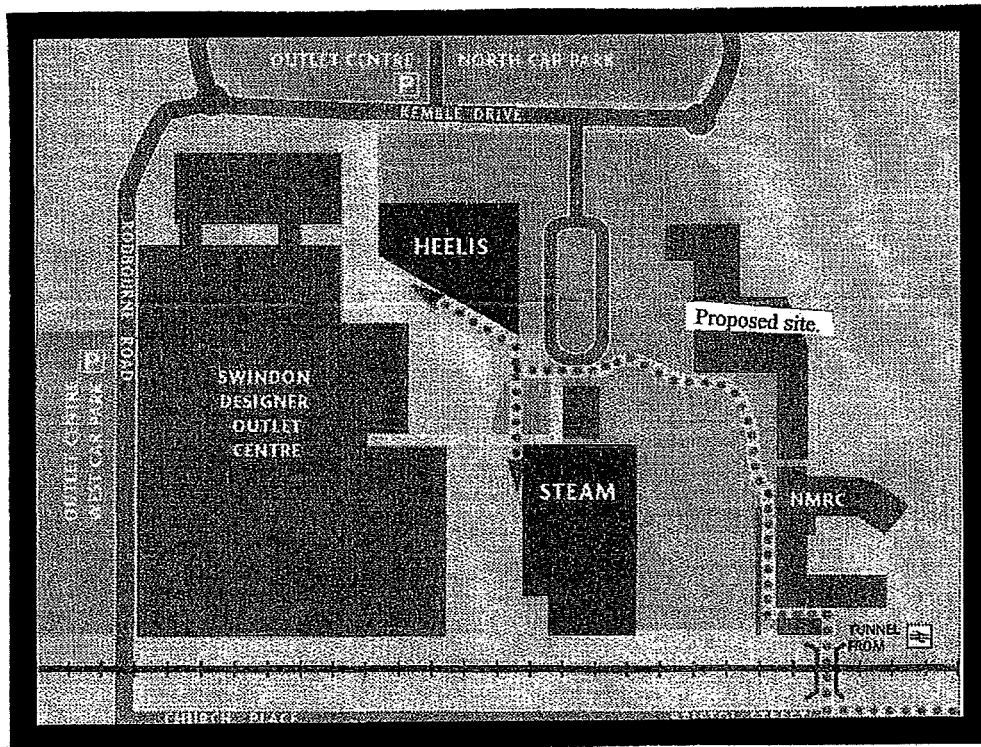
THE PROPOSED NEW SITE AT SWINDON FOR THE BRITISH PHILATELIC MUSEUM AND ARCHIVE

by John Calladine

Many members will be aware that the British Postal Museum closed down several years ago, when the Post Office sold the King Edward building, and that it has never re-opened. Certain material is available at Phoenix Place, co-located with what is now known as the Royal Mail Archive, and several visit's a year are arranged to a storage site at Debden in Essex to see the larger museum exhibits. In the meantime, successive working parties have sought to find a new home for the Museum and new locations, such as Woolwich Arsenal, have occasionally been mooted. However, after much deliberation, it appears to have been accepted there is no suitable permanent site within the London area.

The Great Western Railway's famous railway works at Swindon, where the last steam locomotives were built for British Railways in 1962, finally closed in 1986. The advantages of a large site with excellent road and rail connections and a range of large and substantial buildings were quickly recognised and what is termed a "retail designer outlet" opened in the late 1990s. It is said to be the largest such mall in Europe and no fewer than 105 stores are located there. There had been, for many years, a small railway museum in Swindon but to commemorate the legacy of the GWR, 'God's Wonderful Railway', a new 'Steam' museum was built adjacent to the designer mall. (If you have not visited this museum, you are missing a treat and few could fail to be impressed.) However, the mall and the museum use only a section of the old railway works. The National Monuments Record Centre, part of English Heritage, moved into nearby buildings and, to house in temperature and humidity controlled conditions some of the ten-million photographs it holds, it also constructed a new building, in modern but sympathetic style, behind its railway premises.

In 2006, the National Trust opened its headquarters on the Swindon site. This is an entirely new building, constructed in a similar style to the existing Churchward buildings, but including every possible 'eco' feature required of an ideal modern structure. With largely natural lighting and natural heating and with electricity generation from a multitude of photovoltaic panels, it is said the building is responsible for less than a tenth of the carbon dioxide output of a similar conventional air-conditioned building. Furthermore, by combining four National Trust offices in a single location, the organisation claims to have saved millions of pounds.



The Swindon site - 'Heelis' is the National Trust HQ.

Needless to say, there remain other buildings at the Swindon site, still unoccupied and in a derelict but generally watertight state. In particular there is a group of buildings adjacent to the National Monuments Record Centre. Those looking at new sites for a postal museum realised that, if no suitable site were available in London, here was the opportunity to have almost limitless space in a building on a site near to Swindon railway station, an hour's journey from London, and close to Junction 16 of the M4. Perhaps the decisive factor was that, for once, the freehold of the premises would be available and there would be no risk of the museum facing yet another move when a lease expired or facing a large uncontrollable increase in costs at some future date. There was all the room in the world to continue the existing co-location of the Museum and Archive and, to house the Archive in suitable conditions, the construction of a new temperature and humidity controlled storage building, as at the NMRC, would face no planning obstacles.

Recently, an opportunity arose for a small group of the 'Friends of the BPMA' to visit the proposed museum site, along with several of the Museum staff. A plan (illustrated above) shows its location on the Swindon site, 'Heelis' being the name of the new headquarters of the National Trust. It is apparent that a large car park, the Outlet Centre North Car Park, is almost adjacent to it but, on a site of this size, there is every likelihood the Museum and Archive will have some parking space of its own. As I had seen earlier photographs of the interior of the buildings proposed for the BPMA, a scene of some dereliction was not unexpected and the illustrated photographs probably convey that without difficulty! However, the overall impression is very favourable. The style of construction of these essentially industrial buildings ensures they are flooded with daylight. (In the Victorian era, they could hardly depend on the fluorescent lighting added many years later.) Furthermore, enough maintenance has been carried out to ensure they have remained largely watertight and, although some windows have been broken, the larger windows have been well protected by wooden boarding. However, it is the available space that makes the most impression. When one considers that the section earmarked for the Royal Mail Archive will have a mezzanine floor added to it, not to mention a new storage building, and seeing the space available for museum objects, it is possible to understand why a 'partner' is actively being sought to occupy some of the remaining available space. At the proposed new entrance to the Museum and Archive, there is some remarkable old machinery for testing ropes and chains and, as elsewhere on the site, this will be preserved to add further character to the building.



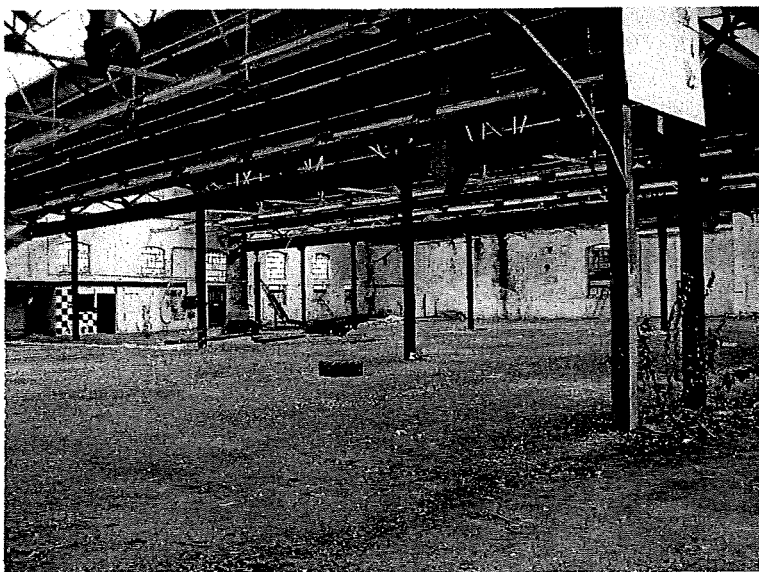
Some of the available museum space.

Probably the most obvious question is when will this all happen and how much will it cost? The current estimate for an opening date is 2013 but that is probably optimistic. Perhaps 2014/15 would be nearer the mark, knowing the usual fate of building projects, A meeting is to be held shortly (and should already have been held when this appears in 'Midland Mail') at which an option to buy the building will be agreed. That will allow the BPMA a further two years to put the necessary funding in place. No one has said what the existing building and site will cost but it is confidently believed to be in the order of £1 million. The total cost of the project has been estimated as £3 million but, if you later read that it cost twice as much, you read it here first. Royal Mail, who sold the King Edward building where the museum was previously housed, is committed to making a substantial contribution. The town of Swindon is very keen to attract the BPMA and has suggested it will also make a financial contribution but, in present straitened circumstances, I doubt that it is being depended on.

The photographs show various parts of the existing buildings and their proposed use. At this stage, plans for the interior have been drawn up but are not generally available. However, space designations have been indicated by more knowledgeable museum staff and are probably correct. It is inevitable that the disadvantages of a site away from London will be widely aired but, if a site in London is unrealistic, few other sites could provide the undoubted advantages of availability, cost and accessibility provided by Swindon. Roll on 2014!



More museum space - a little work still needed!



The likely site of the Royal Mail Archive.