

MIDLAND MAIL

THE JOURNAL OF THE MIDLAND (GB) POSTAL HISTORY SOCIETY

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Number 157, November 2008

CONGRATULATIONS

Our congratulations to Derek Smeathers whose entry, *'The Early Postal History of Castle Ashby'*, in the MPF Inter-Society Competition at Stafford in June gained a silver-gilt award with 80 marks which was only two fewer than the winner - the best entry in the whole competition.

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

The November meeting will be held on **15th November** at **St Germain's Church Hall**, starting at **1.30 pm**. Members are invited to bring a one frame display on any topic of their choice.

On **13th December** we meet at **Sharpe's Pottery Museum, Swadlincote**. From **10.30 am** members are invited to provide standing displays on *'Letters to and from Europe'*. At **2.00 pm** John Soer will give a display *'The Crossroads of Europe'*. He promises that there will be something of interest for those whose interests lie solely in G.B. There will be a buffet lunch at 12.30 pm which will cost about £10. If you would to join us for lunch, please contact Richard Farman by 6th December on 01283 566515.

The first meeting of 2009 will be on **17th January** at **St Germain's Church Hall** when, starting at 1.30 pm, Eric Lewis will give a display *'Signs of the Times'*

CHANGE OF DATE

Please note that the meeting at Northampton in 2009 will now be held on **12th September** and not the 19th as originally planned.

THE SOCIETY'S ANNUAL AUCTION

This will take place on Saturday 26th April at our usual venue - St Germain's Church Hall. So that it is possible to distribute catalogues in good time, particularly to our overseas members, it is necessary to let Eric and Elizabeth have your auction lots by 14th February, but preferably at the meeting on 17th January especially for heavy or bulk lots that he will have to transport back to his house. Lots can, of course, be sent by post to Mrs E Lewis at 27 Rathbone Road, Smethwick B67 5JG by 14th February at the latest, but preferably much earlier as compiling the catalogue with good descriptions to attract buyers is a very time-consuming process.

Please note that the minimum reserve for lots remains at **£3** with increments of: 50p up to £10; £1 above £10 up to £20; then £2 up to £50; then 35 up to £100; and £10 above £100.

As usual, a gift of any surplus material that you may care to give in aid of Society funds would be much appreciated. This raises a valuable amount of money so enabling subscriptions to be kept down. It also provides us with an opportunity to dispose of unwanted material or to acquire items for our collections.

DON KEEN

The Birmingham Philatelic Society and the Midland (GB) Postal History Society are sorry to announce the death of Don Keen who passed away on 30th September 2008, aged 88. Don had not been at all well for some considerable time but had attended various daytime meetings of the Midland Postal History Society when these were held in Birmingham, the last occasion being our April Auction this year. As Don had been unable to attend evening meetings of the Birmingham Society over the last few years, he particularly enjoyed these daytime meetings where he was able to meet members of both societies.

Don took up philately in a serious way during 1964. It is not known if he collected during his school days, but this was probably the case as his interest quickly developed from a general collection to the stamps of Great Britain in the 1960s, joining the Birmingham Society in 1966 where his interest in Birmingham's postal history developed.

He joined the Midland (GB) Postal History Society on its formation in 1975. Don's main area of study was the postal history of Birmingham, in particular the development of local posts of Great Barr and Perry Barr, places adjacent to where he lived. Don frequently took the authors of this obituary to meetings of this Society as well as fairs having a likewise interest in Birmingham's postal history.

Later, Don's main interest changed to the stamps and postal history of Thailand, joining the Thailand Philatelic Society and building up an excellent collection of that country. As a result he resigned from the Midland Postal History Society for a few years but later rejoined having never lost his interest in the postal history of Birmingham.

In March 2000, one of Don's displays to the Birmingham Society resulted in his writing a six page pamphlet 'A Tale of Two Barrs' on the subject of local postal services to the north of Birmingham from 1650 until the area was absorbed into Birmingham in 1928, based on his researches into the subject. The pamphlet was printed and distributed to all members of the Birmingham Society, and was also reproduced in 'Midland Mail'.

Both societies have memories of his displays in his more active years, covering his various interests including, on more than one occasion, his wartime travels through various countries when he served in the Royal Engineers.

Don worked for many years up to his retirement at the Speedwell Gear Case Company in Witton where he was a draughtsman. In his latter years Don was made an honorary member of the Birmingham Society.

The two societies were represented at his funeral by David Shaw, David Venables, Bob Shaw and Eric Lewis.

Our sincere condolences are extended to his wife, Maisie, and daughter, Susan.

Elizabeth & Eric Lewis. October 2008

BIRMINGHAM PHILATELIC SOCIETY AWARDS

I notice from the newsletter of the above Society that some of our joint members received awards at the opening evening of the 2008-09 season when the awards for last season's competitions were presented by Colin Searle, the new General Secretary of the ABPS and the editor of the 'Midlander'.

Eric Lewis won the Grindall Cup for Open Philately with an entry '*Early Development of Postcoding in GB (1856 to 1938)*'. Eric also was awarded a bronze in the Sydney Raine Medals for postal history with an entry '*Parcel Post Labels of Private Companies in Great Britain*'. In the same competition Mel Matthews received a silver for his '*The Uniform Penny Post of Great Britain*'. Mel also received a bronze La Trobe medal for a full evening display '*British Self Adhesive Stamps*'. In that competition Alan Spencer gained a silver for '*Where shall we go next year?*'. The Stanley Gibbons Salver for Stamps and the Stephenson Stobbs Trophy for Thematics were both won by Dr. Max Johnson.

Of particular note was the award of the society's Arthur Manley Cup for philatelic research to Stanley Cohen for the second edition of his '*British Squared Circle Postmarks*'. This Cup is only occasionally awarded. It should also be noted that another of our members, John Hine, is one of the co-ordinating editors of that publication both volumes of which are now in our library, having been purchased with money raised by the sale of the late John Bradnock's surplus literature.

THE SEPTEMBER MEETING

There was a very good attendance on 20th September - a glorious Autumn day - at Kington St Michael where we met, with some members of the Somerset & Dorset Postal History Society, to start our new season. Some members took the opportunity to inspect the new facility of a 'Post Point' which had opened earlier that week, and which is described in an article by John Calladine which follows this report.

The topic chosen by Eric Goffe, the speaker in the morning, was *'The Worcester Road'*. Eric explained that he would interpret this title loosely and would show items that had travelled along all or part of the Worcester Road in the course of their journey. He began with an 1808 map of England and Wales followed by Time Bills, dating from the late 1700s, of the London and Worcester mail coach. A copy of the General Advertiser, dated 7th March 1806, announced that the mail coach from London to Worcester and Ludlow left from the George and Blue Boar in Holborn. We also saw a print by Miller of the London and Worcester mail coach.

Eric began his journey along the Worcester Road in London. Among the items we saw were an early handmade envelope sent in 1787 from London to Blenheim Palace; an item to Bengeworth which had been sent to Broadway where the boxed mileage mark was applied in conjunction with a manuscript 'Missent to'; a letter to Great Malvern went to Worcester and was treated in a similar fashion, but in this case was stamped with a circular mileage mark. Two letters illustrated contraventions of the rules of the 'Franking Privilege'. One sent to Oxford was marked 'Above Privilege' as the packet weighed more than one ounce, while another, sent to Windsor, was stamped 'ABOVE/NUMBER'.

Next came Cary's maps of Berkshire (1792), Oxfordshire (1824) and Worcestershire. A letter of 1773 from Watford to London was marked 'Missent to MAIDEN/HEAD'. One sent in 1807 from Henley-on-Thames to Radipole Barracks showed a charge mark of 1d applied in red ink, while a letter sent in 1806 from Maidenhead to Worcester was endorsed 'Down Post'.

Our next stop was at High Wycombe. A letter of 1783 to Aylesbury showed a two-line 'HIGH/WICKHAM' and a charge of '3' replaced by a '6' as it was sent via London. The letter which was written at Marlow on Saturday, 22nd February contained the comment, 'There being no post today from Gt. Marlow I shall send the letters to Wycomb in hope of your receiving them Monday (24).'

Then it was on to Oxford. Of particular note here were: a letter of 1637 carried privately from Oxford to London and endorsed 'ddd' - 'dat, dicat, deducit' or 'give, devote, dedicate'; a charge of '2' altered to 'in all 5' on a letter of 1704 from Oxford to Newcastle-on-Tyne; a straight-line 'OXFORD' on a 1706 letter to London; the first-type mileage mark used in 1786; the experimental octagonal 'Post Paid' mark of London on a letter of 1794 sent to Westminster; and marks from the Oxford Penny Post.

After a short break, it was time to move on to Woodstock from where we saw the serpentine mark of 1792 on a double letter which had originally been charged as a single, as well as a letter sent in April 1839 by the Duke of Marlborough to Church Hanbury. Enstone was represented by penny post items from 1815 and 1834 as well as the mileage mark used in 1825. From Chipping Norton came a two-line mark (1754), the first-type mileage mark used in 1787, a superb strike of the boxed mileage mark from October 1801, and the mark 'CHIP - NORTON/80' used in 1811.

Moreton-in-Marsh was represented by the first-type mileage mark (1790) showing a distance of 82 miles - a figure that is impossible to justify and a two-line concave mark (1794). A letter to Sir Thomas Phillips as so often carried the 'Missent to Worcester'. However, in this case, the letter was correctly addressed to Broadway but was still sent to Worcester.

The middle pages from the Proof Impression Book of Pershore started the section on Pershore. We also saw mileage marks from 1802, 1803 and 1824. The letter of 1803 was marked with a star showing that it had been delayed internally in the GPO. Also of note was a letter (1768) showing the framed mark of Keinton on a letter to Pershore endorsed 'by Worcester bag'.

Finally, we arrived in Worcester from where we saw a straight-line mark of c1712, a 1771 letter to Bristol marked 'X Post', the first-type mileage mark used in 1784, the UDC of the London Road office (1842), Way bills of the mail coach to Upton and examples of the Worcester 'Spoon'. Eric ended with a leaflet from Worcester petitioning for repeal of the Insolvent Debtors Act - truly the end of the road for postal historians.

We had been treated to a superb display of postal history of which the above account can only do partial justice.

After an excellent and substantial lunch in 'The Jolly Huntsman' it was time for members' displays on '*A Road in my County*'. It is tribute to the quality of the material on display that your reporter did not see anyone falling asleep on a pleasantly warm afternoon.

Trevor Radway who lives at Painswick on the present A46 began with a letter sent in 1805 from Painswick to Bath in 1805. The letter which went via Cirencester showed the boxed PAINSWICK/110 mileage mark. Trevor also described how the road was turnpiked in 1746 and produced a booklet on the turnpikes of Gloucestershire.

John Soer chose the road through Leicestershire from Market Harborough through Leicester and Loughborough to Cavendish Bridge and showed early marks of Market Harborough (1726, 1734 and 1741), Leicester (1707, 1717 and 1720), Loughborough (1711 and 1736) as well as the mileage marks of the unofficial receiving houses at Mountsorell, Kegworth and Cavendish Bridge.

The road from Cirencester to Bath through Tetbury and Cross Hands was John Calladine's choice. He illustrated this with marks of Tetbury (1721), (Chipping) Sodbury (1765) and the UDC of Cross Hands used in 1818. A mileage mark of Dunkirk showed a mileage of 103, a figure that cannot be explained. Whatever route is considered, the distance to London would have been considerably higher than 103 miles.

Paul Bradshaw began his display with a superb 18th Century print of the Town Hall and Corn Exchange at Towcester, which showed the route through the town taken by the mail coaches. He followed this with a whole range of Towcester marks including 'TOCE/STER' (1722), 'TOW/CESTER' (1748) 'TOWCESTER' (1777) and the mark of 1800 with small letters.

We remained in Northamptonshire as Derek Smeathers showed material from the road which ran up to Rockingham and Uppingham, in particular from the areas around Kettering and Higham Ferrers. A letter of 1776 from Boughton House showed a two-line mark of Kettering. Then came a variety of mileage marks from Kettering showing figures of 84, 75 and 76. A letter of 1827 from Thrapstone to Daventry was charged 7d as it was sent via Kettering.

Chris Jackson's material was a continuation of his superb standing display in the morning. We now saw mileage marks of Broadway, Evesham and Pershore. We saw the only recorded copy (August 1812) of the mileage mark of Malvern, and the earliest recorded copy of the circular mileage mark of Upton on Severn.

Stuart Geddes took us to Monmouthshire with a look at the road from Newport to Monmouth through Caerlon and Usk. A mail coach ran along this road from 1787. As Newport did not receive a handstamp until 1785, of two letters sent from Newport to Kings Weston near Somerton one was stamped at Usk, while the other was marked at Usk and Bristol. We saw the first-type mileage mark of Monmouth used in 1787, and a letter sent from Cork to Usk which was missent to Newport.

Mail carried along the Chester road into Staffordshire was shown by Richard Farman. A letter of 1660 was endorsed 'Leave this at the post house in Litchfield to be sent pt pd 3d'. Another item sent to Staffordshire in 1662 did not carry a Bishopmark, showing that at the time these marks were applied only to mail arriving in London. 'To be put in Lichfield Bagg And Left at Sand Cross' was the inscription on a letter sent to Sundon in 1673. Of particular was a cover sent in 1701 from Bolton to Chester which showed the straight-line 'BOLTON' and the endorsement 'By the way of Stone'.

Jan Young began with a print from about 1850 showing a view of Bromsgrove, and then continued by showing postcards of Worcester Street and Worcester Road - the route of the old A38 through Bromsgrove. The Merchant's House standing on the east side of Worcester Street, at the corner with Station Street, was built for a wool merchant in the late fifteenth century. It was demolished in 1962 and taken to Avoncroft Museum of Buildings. Further along the street was another half-timbered house with the words 'ANNO DOMINI' on it which was reputed to have been built in 1581. Just beyond this cottage, Worcester Street becomes Worcester Road. One of the major buildings here is St. Peter's Roman Catholic Church which was the first Roman Catholic Church to be built in Bromsgrove since the Reformation. It was built in 1862.

Our next destination was rural Herefordshire, in particular the road between Hereford and Ross-on-Wye. Roger Broomfield explained that the village of Harewood End had penny posts from both Hereford and Ross. He showed examples of the '*Harewood End/Penny Post*' mark. Later, a receiving house was opened at Birch - between Ross and Harewood End. The '*Birch/Penny Post*' mark was struck on a letter of 1841 sent from London to Ross and which had been franked with a penny red. The letter was then turned and sent to Ludlow with a penny black being used to pay the postage.

Norman Higson took us to deepest Wiltshire with a look at the postmarks of villages on the road between Salisbury and Shaftesbury. We saw the italic straight-line mark of Wilton used in 1844, the boxed 'No10' of Fovant in the Salisbury Penny Post, and the UDCs of Barford and London Elm, the latter on a cover along with a Salisbury traveller.

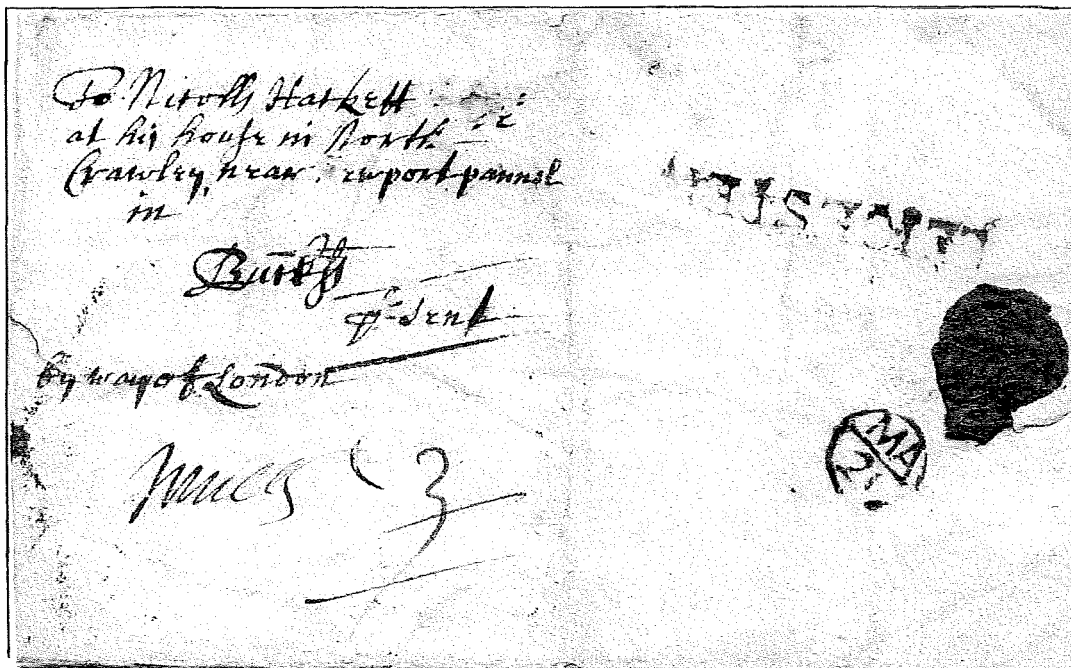
Then, in a flash we were about 140 miles to the north in Nottinghamshire with Alan Marshall. A letter sent in 1784 from Loughborough to London had a manuscript 'Missent' to in conjunction with a 'NOTTING/HAM' mark. A print of 1808 showed a mail coach approaching Nottingham. From the villages on the road between Nottingham and Loughborough we saw the UDCs of Rempstone and Ruddington, and rubbers from Bradmore and Bunny.

We remained in Nottinghamshire with Mick Gill who looked at places on the Great North Road. Mick began with three maps of 'An Actual Survey of Great Post Road between London and Edinburgh'. A letter of 1736 was endorsed 'p Newark bagg'. The contents of a letter sent in 1796 from London to Northwell made it clear that the writer, a young man, was sending his dirty washing home! We saw a straight-line mark of Tuxford used in 1777 and the boxed 141 mileage mark of Retford. Mick ended with a copy of the "Travellers' and Mail Guards' Corrector" which listed the difference in time between London and a number of places in the country.

Finally, we went south again to Bristol where Roger Martin showed a comprehensive range of marks from the Bristol Penny Post, concentrating firstly on the road northwards to Thornbury and, secondly, in the direction of Axbridge to the south. We were shown the numeral marks of each of the receiving houses. Of particular the only known copy of 'No 18' of Kingsdown. There were also straight-line marks of Thornbury. A letter from Bedminster (No. 11) carried a circular 'PAID/AT/BRISTOL'. Our journey ended by the sea at Weston-super-Mare (No. 28).

We had enjoyed a day of superb postal history and excellent company. Such days involve a lot of preparation to make sure that everything goes according to plan and a very big 'Thank You' is owed to John Calladine and his group of helpers.

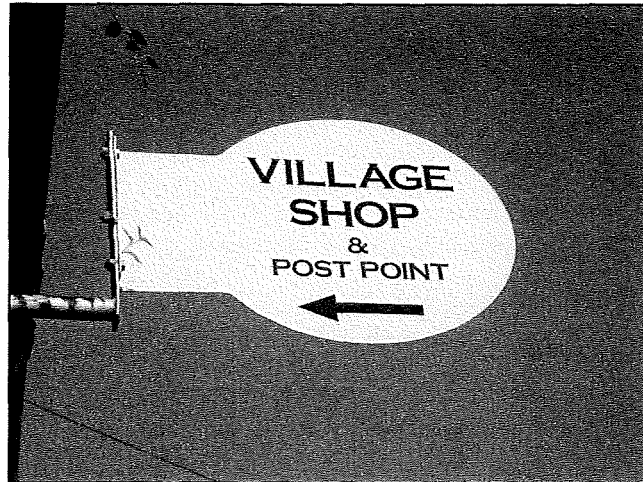
An item from your Editor's display at Kington St Michael. The letter was sent from Loseby to North Crawley, near Newport Pagnell, in May 1707. Although both Leicester and Newport Pagnell lay on branches from the Chester Road, the letter was sent through London, so attracting a total charge of five pence. It shows the straight-line 'LEICESTER' mark - the earliest recorded handstamp to be used in Leicestershire.



“POST POINT”

A DIY ‘POST OFFICE’

by John Calladine



At the recent Society meeting in the Wiltshire village of Kington St Michael, a number of members expressed interest in the ‘Post Point’ in the village shop next door to the meeting room. Notwithstanding protracted and well-argued protests, Kington St Michael lost its sub-office in the recent round of post office closures, as did most of the surrounding villages. Residents now have to travel to Chippenham and use a small surviving town sub-office that, at best, probably has room for six customers inside its doors.

Although an undated handstamp was issued to Kington St Michael in 1849, it has not been recorded in use and it is likely the office opened somewhat later in the 19th century. In recent years, it has been operated, together with its accompanying shop, by the owner of several other similar stores in the area. With the closure of the post office, the owner closed the shop. It has now been reopened as a successful village co-operative, run by volunteers.

Determined to provide the village with a better facility than a mere sales point for postage stamps, the co-operative looked into other possibilities. They discovered that any named business can operate a “business collection point”, whereby they pay Royal Mail £450 a year to collect letters and parcels five days a week. (There is an extra charge of £130 for a Saturday collection.) Since the village had already housed a post office in the same location, it was apparent that a secure cupboard could be converted in to an equally secure chute and storage box where letters and parcels could safely await the daily collection – made at 4.55pm in Kington St Michael, ten minutes after the village postboxes are cleared. It was also apparent that the shop would need an adequate supply of stamps of suitable denominations, some form of postal scales, both for letters and parcels, and that support was likely from North Wiltshire council. The village therefore applied for a grant of £5000 to maintain its postal service. In the event, they received £2500 but that proved sufficient to get the project off the ground. Postal scales that advise the customer of the correct postage necessary for their letters, and another scale for parcels, cost in the region of £130 each. The letter scale has a ‘chip’ that will need replacing when postal rates change. The parcel scale requires customers to weigh their parcels and find the appropriate postage from a wall chart.

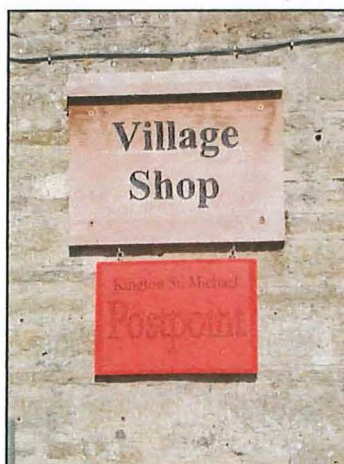
It was decided that a stock of stamps with denominations below £2 would suffice and a sum of about £700 was budgeted for this purpose. Interestingly, Royal Mail pay the cooperative a commission of 5% for the sale of 1st class stamps and 3% for 2nd class. Since stamp sales account for a significant proportion of total village shop sales, this is proving to be a useful source of income.

Such a facility cannot legally be called a “post office”. Since very few of these facilities yet exist, the first probably being that at Brockweir in Gloucestershire, the village hit on the name “Post Point”.

The whole point of such a facility is that it is essentially a DIY operation. You weigh your letter or package, buy the necessary stamps and place the item in the chute. You and not the staff of the shop are responsible for applying correct postage. However, the facility extends much further. Recorded Delivery, Certificates of Posting and Special Delivery are all provided for, see the illustration of the notice on village notice boards. The necessary postal stationery is provided free to the facility and the village has its own datestamp (typically costing about £40) – NOT to be used for cancelling adhesives! There is what is effectively a 'day book' in which all such letters or parcels are recorded and, again, it is the customer's responsibility to ensure the correct labels are used.



It is already apparent that use of the 'post point' facility is increasing each week. Villages in Devon and Buckinghamshire that have also lost their post offices have been making enquiries of Kington St Michael with a view to opening a similar facility. What seems clear is that an initial capital expenditure of at least £1500 is probably necessary and, with so much available from Royal Mail on the internet, those shops prepared to install a computer could probably extend the range of available services further. Whether 'post points' will become as familiar to us as sub-offices remains to be seen but they have the potential to become an interesting facet of the ever-evolving postal history of the nation. Some of our members were seen collecting Certificates of Posting, probably convinced that they are.



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LARGE LUMPS

Below are photographs of some of the displays at Warwick. I leave readers to work out to whom each belonged by reading the report opposite.



THE OCTOBER MEETING

There was a very good attendance on 18th October when we met at the premises of Warwick & Warwick. The topic for the afternoon was '*Large Lumps*' - a topic that was certain to bring out a wide range of material. Peter Elms began the proceedings, though at first we thought he was going on a cruise when he produced a well-worn suitcase covered with labels from the ship *Andes*. This vessel, one of the Red Star Line had been used to carry mails. Peter then gave some of the history of this ship along with as detailed plan and a number of postcards. More suitcases, in fact four carrying the Royal Arms, were opened by Joe Cottrill. These came from the 'Black Museum' of Warwick & Warwick, and had originally been part of the Jack Waterman collection. The contents had clearly come from the clear-out of a post office, or, judging by the amount of material, from several offices. Among a wide range of artefacts were inkpads, bags, the die from a Krag machine and a number of handstamps, steel as well as rubber. Clearly, the authorities north of the border have a more cavalier attitude to the disposal of such objects than their English counterparts.

Guy Bridges began with a cover from the Society of Friends which had been turned. One side showed a penny black, while there was a penny red on the other side. Next, came the programme of events with which the staff of the Wolverhampton Post Office celebrated the Jubilee of Queen Victoria. Guy ended with some very large postcards of the Shrewsbury Flower Show.

Mel Matthews treated us to a discourse on the history of the pillar box which he illustrated with models from his collection. Among others, we saw models of: the first type used on the mainland; one eight feet tall of which three were made; a small box showing the distance from the Post Office as well as the postal charges; an early Penfold; and an elliptical box of 1898.

A calendar produced by Milwards of Redditch to commemorate 200 years of needle making began Chris Jackson's display. This was followed by an original Ogilby strip map of the road from Hereford to Leicester. We also saw a copy of Rowland Hill's obituary. Chris rounded off his display with a board showing a wide range of needles intended for a variety of purposes. Chris told us how one needle, made by the company for which he had worked, and intended to withdraw sample of pleural fluid became bent during use.

Richard Farman began with a copy of the London Gazette of 2nd October 1784 which gave details of the rules and regulations of the Franking System. This was followed by several 'Free' letters which could be opened up to reveal a large diagram or illustration. One from 1833 contained a political cartoon relating to the Corn Laws. Another showed a large coloured cartoon, while another contained a plan of Cary to amend the Holyhead Road.

Roy Summers produced a number of packets to which a large number of stamps had been affixed. Of particular note was one from China with no fewer than 239 stamps. A pot bottle which had contained Fiddiman's London Ales was shown by Mick Gill who then produced a Mulready which contained an advertisement for a Mr Fiddaman of Newark. Mick also showed us a 1939 reproduction of the Ogilby Strip Maps. While not as expensive as the originals, this is still a very desirable item.

A copy of Mogg's Map of the Post Roads of England and Wales began Alan Marshall's exhibit. Among other items of note were a 1794 map of Nottinghamshire by John Rocque, a print of a mailcoach approaching Nottingham, and town maps of Nottingham from 1820, 1841 and 1851. Alan ended with a print of 1847 showing the new post office. The site is now occupied by Marks and Spencer.

Whenever Eric Lewis gives a display we know that we are going to see an eclectic mix. This time, Eric showed material relating to the history of stamp collecting. We saw watermark detectors (including one made of wood), perforation gauges, sweat boxes, various editions of the XLCR stamp finder, a Bridger & Kay cancellation gauge, tins of stamp hinges, colour charts, an early 1900s advert for Hawid mounts, early stamp magazines and catalogues, and a stamp snake. A device for mounting stamps without touching them had more in common with Chris Jackson's needles than any other philatelic item.

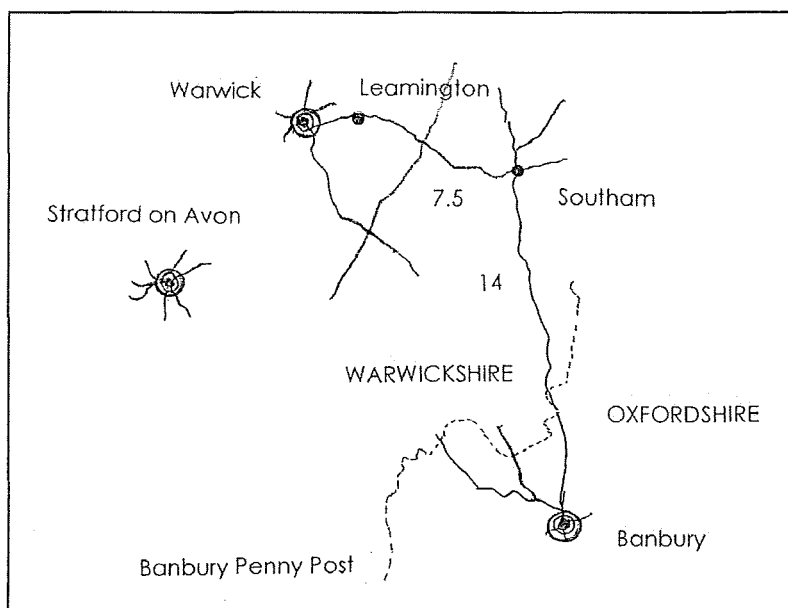
John Calladine showed us items that would have been found on the desk of a Victorian Gentleman. Among these were letter scales, a paper weight by Minton, an inkwell a blotter, a pen and a letter opener which was a souvenir of Queen Victoria's Jubilee.

It had been a truly fascinating afternoon, and had enabled us to see what a wide range of excellent material that members would not normally exhibit. We must thank yet again Messrs Warwick & Warwick for the use of their premises, and especially Joe Cottrill who made the day possible.

BANBURY PENNY POST

1822 – 1823

The Banbury Penny Post was a short-lived arrangement that arose from a change to the route of the London-Birmingham mailcoach. The mailcoach route via Banbury was established in 1819, through Aylesbury and Buckingham to the south of the town and Keinton and Warwick to the north. In 1821, the route was varied and it thereafter ran through Leamington rather than Keinton. However, to the annoyance and frustration of the inhabitants of Leamington, there was insufficient time at Banbury to unload and sort the Leamington letters and they therefore remained on the coach, to be carried through Leamington to Warwick. The letters were sorted at Warwick and returned to Leamington by a penny post messenger, a procedure that clearly caused considerable delay.



Probably in January 1822, a further change was made to the route of the London-Birmingham mailcoach, this time south of Banbury. It brought the coach into Banbury earlier than before and, for the first time, provided sufficient time to sort the Leamington letters at Banbury, rather than at Warwick. It was a simple task for the surveyor to persuade Freeling to sanction a penny post between Banbury and Leamington to replace the existing penny post from Warwick because it both delighted the inhabitants of Leamington and saved the Post Office the £27-6-0 cost of a messenger between Warwick and Leamington, the Leamington bag being dropped by the London-Birmingham mailcoach as it passed through the town. The Postmasters General approved the new penny post on 8th February 1822.

However, on 5th July 1823 the route of the mailcoach south of Banbury was changed again, to take it through Bicester rather than Buckingham. Yet again, there was insufficient time for the Leamington letters to be sorted at Banbury and they were again carried on to Warwick. The Banbury Penny Post to Leamington therefore ceased.

A first type Penny Post stamp was issued to Banbury and the receiving house at Leamington continued to use the 'No.1' stamp it had used in the Warwick Penny Post.

References

Post 42/85/1822

HANDSTAMPS OF THE BANBURY PENNY POST

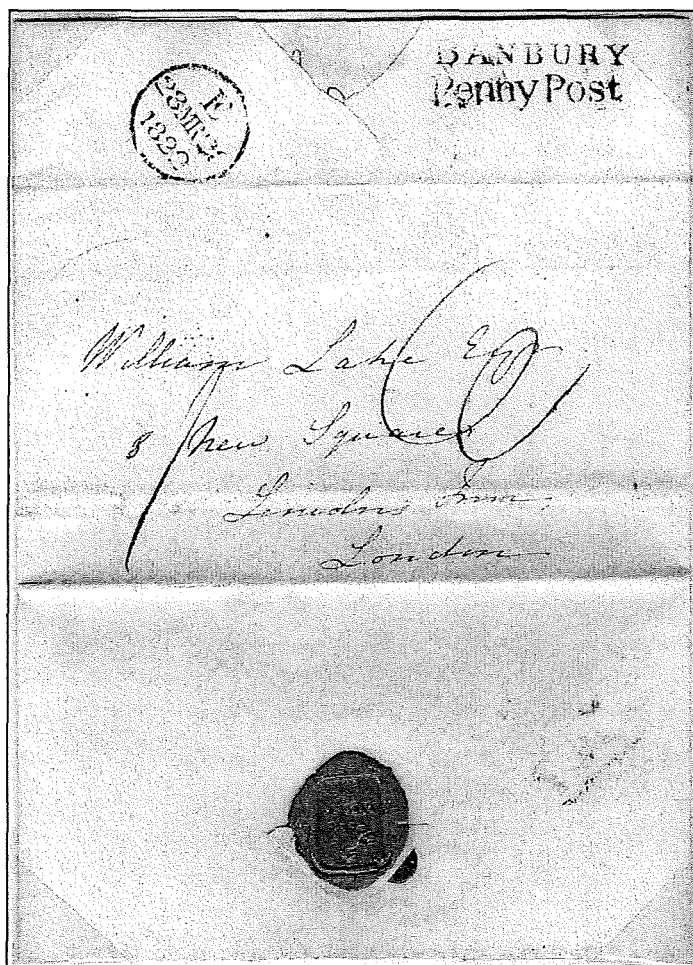
Post town: Banbury

Receiving house: Leamington

MLP1118 BANBURY Penny Post B 27MAR22-13SEP22 E

MLP1119 R 27MAR22-13SEP22 E

Note: The 'No.1' handstamp of Leamington was also used in the Warwick Penny Post. The rarity "E" refers to its use in the Banbury Penny Post.



The Banbury Penny Post handstamp on a letter to London dated 27th March 1822.

THE 1949 EXPRESS COVER

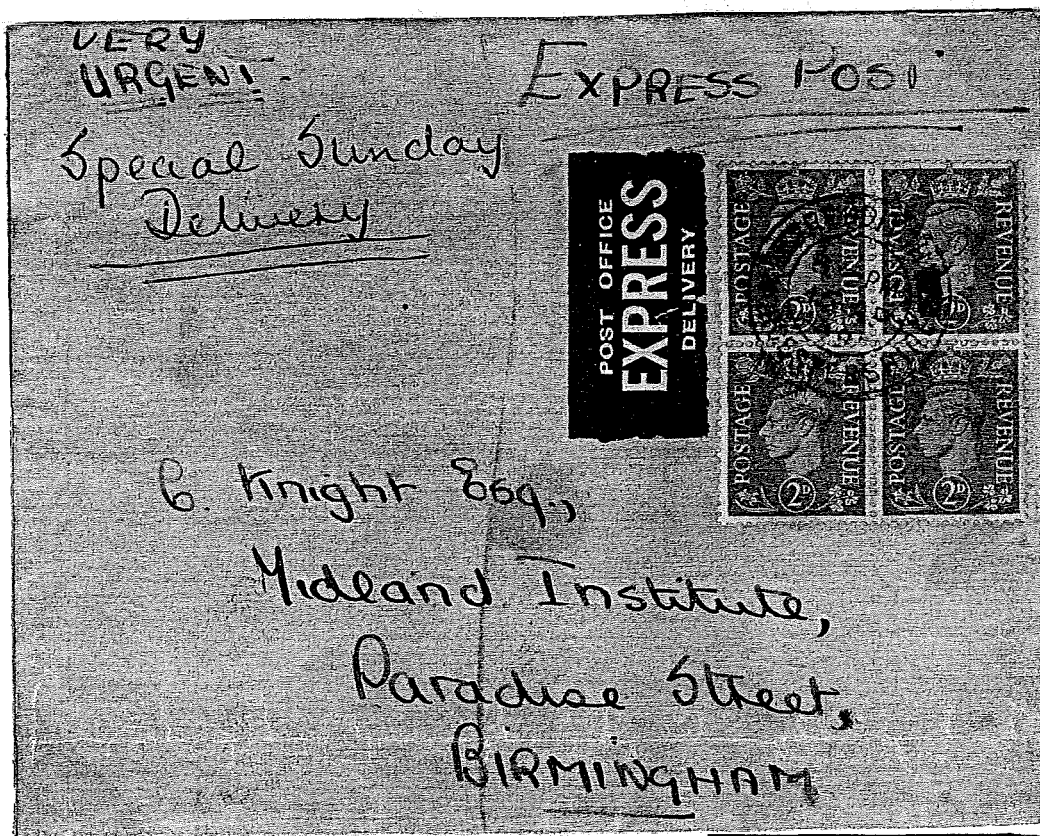
Eric Lewis writes concerning the cover sent from Redditch to Birmingham in 1949 described by Chris Jackson in MM156/3:

At our instigation, Chris has had another look at the cover and confirms that the postmark reads 16th April (a Saturday) rather than the 15th April. So, the letter was posted on 16th April 1949 at 8 pm, i.e. late on the Saturday evening, but in time to catch the last collection on that day from Worcester. The letter was processed at the main sorting office in Birmingham for delivery by the 'Limited Sunday Special Delivery Service' at a rate, introduced in 1934, which was the 'Full Ordinary Postage plus a Special Fee of 1/6d plus the cost of any Special Conveyance when used.' This ties in with the postage of 1/8½d paid with the stamps on the envelope. The item was not surcharged for 'Cost of a Special Conveyance' as it was addressed to the then Midland Institute in Paradise Street, just round the corner from the sorting office in Hill Street, and so was probably delivered by a foot messenger. (The Midland Institute Building in Paradise Street was demolished in 1966, and the old library in Margaret Street became the home of the Midland Institute.)

Prior to 1934 the rate would have been 'Full Ordinary Postage plus a Special Fee of 1/6d per mile.' This was a service introduced in 1921 because of the withdrawal of Sunday services.

The rate introduced in 1934 remained in force until 31st December 1955. On the following day the rate was increased to 'Cost of Full Postage plus a Special Fee of 3/- plus the cost of any Special Conveyance.' Then, on 17th May 1965, another increase took place with similar terms but a Special Fee of 9/-. What happened after decimalisation? Did this service cease at that time?

It should also be noted that the 'Railex Service' also operated from its introduction on 1st January 1934. This involved the carriage of a postal packet to a railway station by a post office messenger for dispatch by the first available train, and for its immediate delivery by post office messenger from the station of destination. The rates were completely different from the Special Sunday Delivery Service, and that, of course, is a different story.



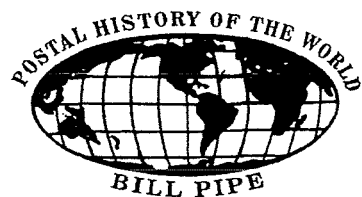
IS IT HEREFORDSHIRE OR SHROPSHIRE POSTAL HISTORY?

by Roger Broomfield

Illustrated below is a "G" size registered envelope which has been resting at the bottom of a drawer at home for some time, and was sent to me on 21st September 1989. As can be seen, it was dispatched from Craven Arms where it was struck with a Craven Arms, Shropshire datestamp, but bears a registration label from Hereford. Strange!

Was this to use up the Hereford labels or had the Hereford District been enlarged? I would greatly appreciate help in finding a logical explanation!





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THE RUSHDEN LETTER CARRIER IN 1882

by Derek Smeathers

The town of Rushden in 1882 was a comparatively small village of about fifteen hundred inhabitants near the southern boundary of Northamptonshire. It was a sub-office of Higham Ferrers and a building in the main street had been used as a sub-post office since about 1870, the sub-postmaster being Charles Hewitt. He also ran a stationers shop there, and his family lived above and at the rear of it. The post arrived daily by letter carrier from Higham Ferrers.

Rushden grew rapidly from 1880 onwards, caused mainly by the establishment of several boot and shoe factories, and by 1900 the population had risen to almost 15,000. A railway station had opened in 1895 and the Post Office decided to build a large new post office in the town centre; it opened in 1904, by which time Rushden had become a R.S.O. (railway sub office). Growth continued through much of the twentieth century, until the boot & shoe bubble burst.

Rushden is now undergoing a redevelopment of the town centre and one of the buildings affected is the original post office of Charles Hewitt at 35, High Street. During the work, five large wooden boxes were found there - apparently left in the roof space - full of rotten, smelly, dirty rags and bundles of paper. The bundles turned out to be the remains of Charles Hewitt's stationary business, but one contained numerous post office forms and literature from the 1870s and 1880s. Most were beyond salvage, but a local historian managed to rescue a few specimens, one of which is shown here. It is the form carried by the letter carrier from Higham Ferrers when he made his walk to Rushden on the morning of 4th December 1882, and which had to be completed showing all the registered items he carried - on that day he had none! But it shows the time he set out from the Rushden office as 8.20 am and that he had completed his delivery one hour later. Even then, Rushden was a long straggling village, almost $\frac{3}{4}$ mile long from the bottom of Higham Hill to what is still called "Top End". The form shows he had collected 2d postage due and paid this to Mr Hewitt. Nothing is known about the letter carrier who signs the form "C. West"; the Despatching Officer space is signed by initials "S H" - believed to be the daughter of Charles Hewitt, Susan.

Quite a lot of information has already been gleaned from the "boxes of rubbish", even though no valuable stamps have come to light. There is an interesting sheet at present undergoing restoration which appears to be an order form for various value stamps all in sheets of 240, except the halfpenny value which is in sheets of 480 - presumably the small "half-size" stamp of the 1870s. If possible, we may be able to have a copy of this form for a later issue.

(Reduced to 75%.)

RURAL LETTER CARRIER'S LETTER BILL.					
NOTE.—No Rural Letter Carrier must be despatched without one of these Bills.					
Stamp of Office. RUSHDEN DEC 4 1882	Stamp of Office at the Starting point of a Branch Rural Letter Carrier.	Rural Letter Carrier from <u>Rushden</u>	To <u>Top End</u>	Hours Mins. after	
Hours Mins. after		Hours Mins. after		Hours Mins. after	
Despatched from Starting point at		Left the end of the Walk on Return*		Hours Mins. after	
Arrived at the end of the Walk*		Arrived at Starting point		Hours Mins. after	
* (The Rural Letter Carrier must enter the time whether there is a Sub-Office at the end of his Walk or not.)					
Signature <u>C. West</u>			Signature <u>S. H.</u>		
De-patching Officer.			Receiving Officer on Return.		
Addresses of Registered Letters handed to Rural Letter Carrier for Delivery.			Addresses of Registered Letters handed to Rural Letter Carrier at Sub-Office on his return journey.		
1			1		
2			2		
3			3		
4			4		
5			5		
6			6		
7			7		
8			8		
9			9		
10			10		

[See over.]

RURAL LETTER CARRIER'S LETTER BILL. (See Over.)

Where no Stamp is used, the name of the Sub-Office must be written.		Sub-Postmaster's Entries			£	s.	d.
Sub-Office Stamp.	Postage in Money on Paid Foreign Letters handed to Rural Letter Carrier						
	Cash handed to Rural Letter Carrier for Stamps required by the Sub-Postmaster, as per separate Memorandum....						
Whenever Stamps are applied for the actual value of the Stamps on hand at the time of application must be stated) £ : :							
Actual hour of Rural Letter Carrier's Arrival on outward Walk	Hour Mins. after						
Actual hour of Rural Letter Carrier's Despatch on his return Walk							
		Sub-Postmaster's Signature.					
Sub-Office Stamp.	Postage in Money on Paid Foreign Letters handed to Rural Letter Carrier						
	Cash handed to Rural Letter Carrier for Stamps required by the Sub-Postmaster, as per separate Memorandum....						
Whenever Stamps are applied for the actual value of the Stamps on hand at the time of application must be stated) £ : :							
Actual hour of Rural Letter Carrier's Arrival on outward Walk	Hour Mins. after						
Actual hour of Rural Letter Carrier's Despatch on his return Walk							
		Sub-Postmaster's Signature.					
Sub-Office Stamp.	Postage in Money on Paid Foreign Letters handed to Rural Letter Carrier						
	Cash handed to Rural Letter Carrier for Stamps required by the Sub-Postmaster, as per separate Memorandum....						
Whenever Stamps are applied for the actual value of the Stamps on hand at the time of application must be stated) £ : :							
Actual hour of Rural Letter Carrier's Arrival on outward Walk	Hour Mins. after						
Actual hour of Rural Letter Carrier's Despatch on his return Walk							
		Sub-Postmaster's Signature.					
Unpaid Postage on Letters &c. taken out by the Rural Letter Carrier							
Postage in Money on Paid Foreign Letters brought in by Rural Letter Carrier, as per entries on the left hand side					A		
					B		
					C		
Cash handed to Rural Letter Carrier for Stamps, as per entries on the left hand side					A		
					B		
					C		
Total Charge.....							
Deduct postage on Unpaid Letters &c. returned to Postmaster herewith							
Cash handed to Postmaster by Rural Letter Carrier ...£							
Value of Stamps, including Poundage forwarded herewith by the Head Postmaster for the undermentioned Sub-Offices.							
Name of Sub-Office.					Value of Stamps and Poundage.		Signature of Sub-Postmaster acknowledging receipt of Stamps and Poundage.
					£	s.	d.
Signature of Rural Letter Carrier					When Starting Outwards } <i>L. C. West</i>		
					When he Returns } <i>L. C. West</i>		

FARMER TAKES DRASTIC ACTION AT HARESFIELD

by Trevor Radway

The postcard of Haresfield Station, Gloucestershire, reproduced below was posted on 10th June 1907. This small station, serving at the most a couple of hundred people, was situated on the Bristol to Gloucester line of the Midland Railway Company. The line and platform to the right is the Up-line running north from Bristol to Gloucester and Derby with its attendant buildings and proud staff of eight. The central line to Stonehouse and Bristol and to the south is served by a platform only. In the middle distance is a signal box controlling, amongst other things, a vehicular crossing to the village of Haresfield which is to the left of the picture. There are three more staff there. The tall signal is the Up Home signal on the Midland line.

It will be seen that there are two other lower quadrant signals over the wooden fence to the left of the picture. These were part of the Great western Railway line running south from Gloucester, then east to Stroud and London which ran parallel to the Midland line for about five miles but had no station at Haresfield. There were thus four lines of rail at this point owned by two different companies.



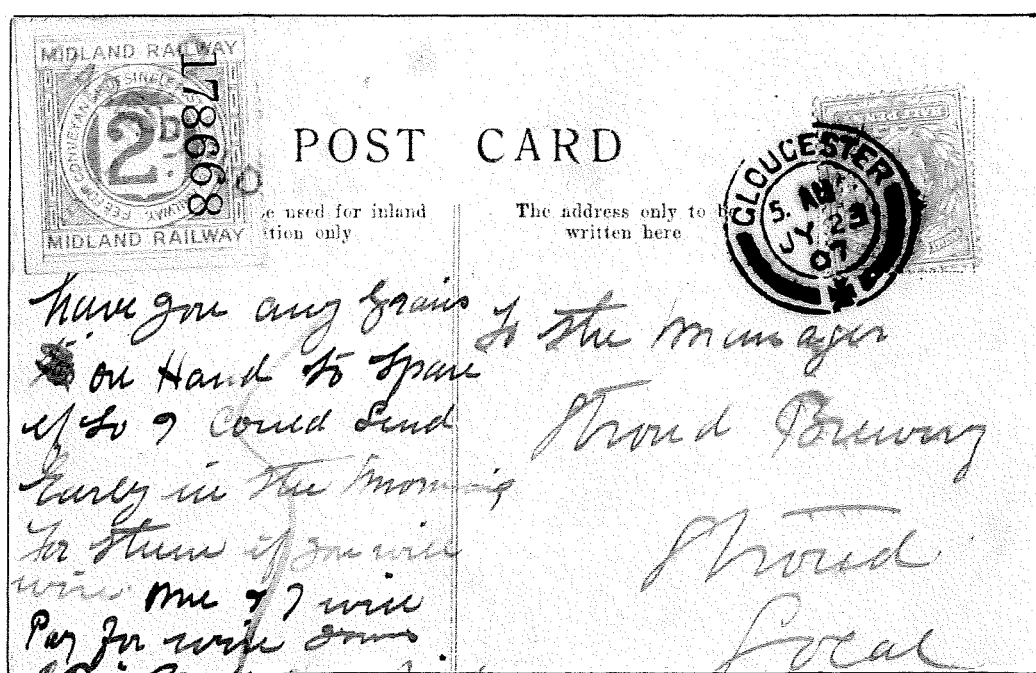
The illustration on the next page is the reverse side of a card of Haresfield village showing the local public house, 'The Haresfield Beacon' which was located next to the level crossing.

It is difficult to be concise about the events so I postulate my theory below.

C. Rickards of Haresfield was a local farmer and after a hot July day in the fields went to the pub for a pint or so of cider. The time would have been between 7.30 and 8 pm. While he was partaking of his refreshment he realised that he was running short of food for the pigs so he purchased a postcard and halfpenny stamp from the landlord and wrote the following message to the Manager, Stroud Brewery, Stroud:

"Have you any grains on hand to spare if so I could send early in the morning for them if you will wire me & I will pay for wire yours C. Rickards Haresfield."

It must have been a real problem because Gloucestershire farmers were, or for that matter still are, not known for throwing their money about on such 'high-tech' things as a wire (telegraph).



Next came the problem of getting the postcard to Stroud. The local postbox had probably been emptied at 5 or 6 pm at the latest so there was only one option remaining. Rickards crossed the four lines over the level crossing and went to the Station Office. He explained that his message was very urgent so the stationmaster accepted the postcard and for a payment of 2d promised to deal with it expeditiously. Back to the pub went Rickards!

The stationmaster then affixed a green Midland Railway 2d stamp which is inscribed 'FEE FOR THE CONVEYANCE OF SINGLE POST LETTER BY RAILWAY' which was in addition to the postage stamp already on the card. The railway letter stamp was then cancelled 'HARESFIELD' twice by diagonal strikes in purple ink, but the postage stamp was untouched. The number 178668 was for accountancy purposes.

The last down train of the day to Stroud via Stonehouse and Dudbridge was at 7.41 pm so that was not a possibility as it had gone. The first train in the morning was the 8.10 am which arrived in Stroud at 8.45 am. So the decision was made to give it to the guard of the 8.55 pm departure from Haresfield, the last of the day, northbound towards Gloucester. It duly arrived at the recently opened Midland station - eastgate where it was dispatched to the George Street Sorting Office, about half-a-mile away. The postcard was now in the GPO system as distinct from the railway.

The card was franked 'GLOUCESTER 5AM JY 23 07' and put in a bag for Stroud. It was then taken next door to Gloucester Central station which was run by the GWR. Some time, just after 6 am it was carried by train southwards, taking a slightly different route for about three miles, and then onto the four track section through Haresfield where it went rapidly down the line behind the fence on a GWR train before going east towards Stroud.

The sorting office in Stroud was next to the station and I would have expected the card to have arrived at the brewery by the first delivery at about 8 am. The line through the message indicates that the request was dealt with at the brewery.

It is amazing what you can postulate from one small item of postal history is it not?

It has since been pointed out to me that the Railway Letter Service required a 2d Railway Company stamp applied to an article as well as a postage stamp for the current LETTER RATE even if it was a postcard. In 1907 that should have been a 1d postage stamp to comply with this requirement. The article was thus underpaid by a halfpenny and should have been taxed 1d at Stroud.

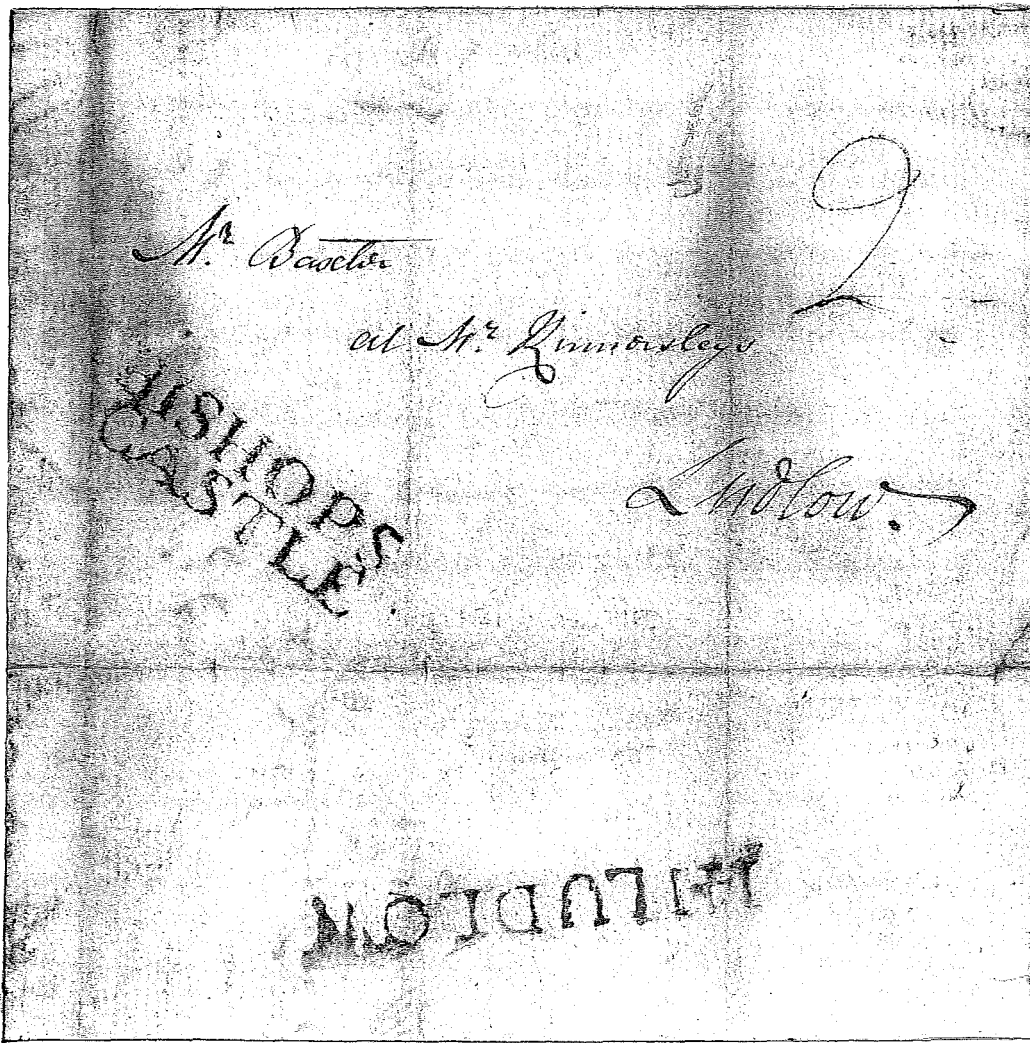
THE POSTAL MARKINGS OF SHROPSHIRE

Part 1

THE MAIN OFFICES, SUB-OFFICES AND PENNY POST VILLAGES 1706 to c.1910

Part 1 of the long awaited first book of the postal markings of Shropshire, edited by Brian Atkins, is in the final stages of production. All postal markings of the main towns and penny post villages from 1706 to c.1910 are illustrated, with the earliest and latest dates of use provided as day, month and year, not just the year. All known colour uses are recorded as well as the size of some marks, especially where size will act as an aid to identification. Would you be surprised to learn that having illustrations has revealed two previously unrecorded pre-1800 Oswestry marks and that 45 different 4-bar vertical oval duplexes have been identified for Shrewsbury? All this and much, much more. It is intended that publication will take place in mid-November; don't miss it for Christmas!

A letter sent from Bishops Castle to Ludlow on 21st May 1789



The Shropshire Postal History Society

The book will be spiral bound with a stiff cover and possibly a protective transparent sheet.

Members who wish to register an interest should contact one of the following:

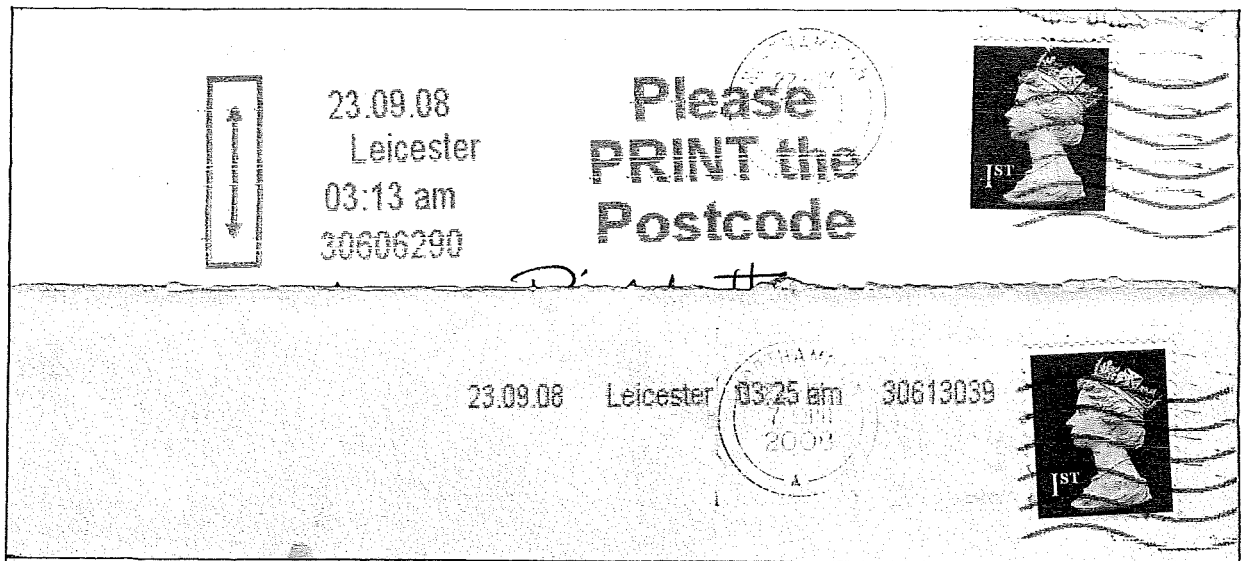
Brian Atkins at b.m.atkins@shaw.ca or at Box 959, Lake Cowichan, British Columbia, Canada VOR 2G0;
 Jim Ball at james.ball60@btopenworld.com or 92, Stanmore Drive, Trench, Telford, Shropshire TF2 7DG;
 Guy Bridges, 59, Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury, Shropshire SY2 6BQ

The cost of the book is £14.95 plus £2 post and packing in UK, overseas at cost.

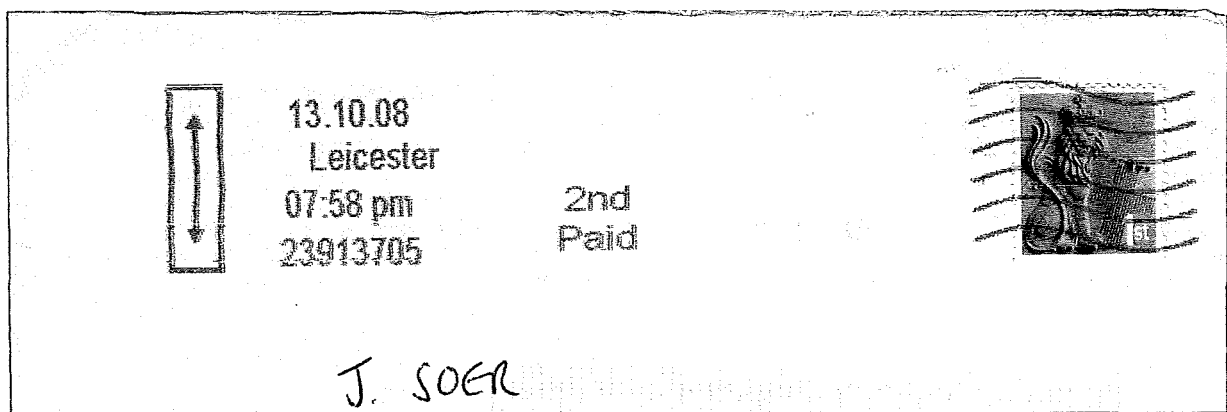
NOT MISSENT TO NORTHAMPTON

I am indebted to Tim de Rousset-Hall for the two machine marks shown below. Both are on letters that were sent from Market Harborough to Great Bowden, near Market Harborough. Normally, such mail would go to Leicester for cancellation etc. before being returned to Market Harborough for delivery. At a first glance it appears that the letters were sent to Northampton in error after being cancelled at Leicester. However, close inspection shows that the stamps were cancelled at Northampton in the evening, and then again at Leicester at shortly after 3 am.

The explanation for this apparently bizarre practice? At the time, the Integrated Mail Processors at Leicester were being upgraded. In order to relieve the pressure on the Leicester office, mail from Market Harborough was sent to Northampton for cancellation, sorting and onward dispatch. However, mail for the Leicester Postal District was sent to Leicester where it was sorted using one of the IMP machines. A rather nice piece of postal history for the future. As postal historians we concentrate on the past and often fail to see that the postal history of the future is being made now.



Addendum: Clearly something needs an upgrade at Leicester (No, not the soccer and rugby teams.). The discrepancy between the adhesive and the inscription produced by the machine is obvious. Although, to be fair, the letter did arrive the next day.



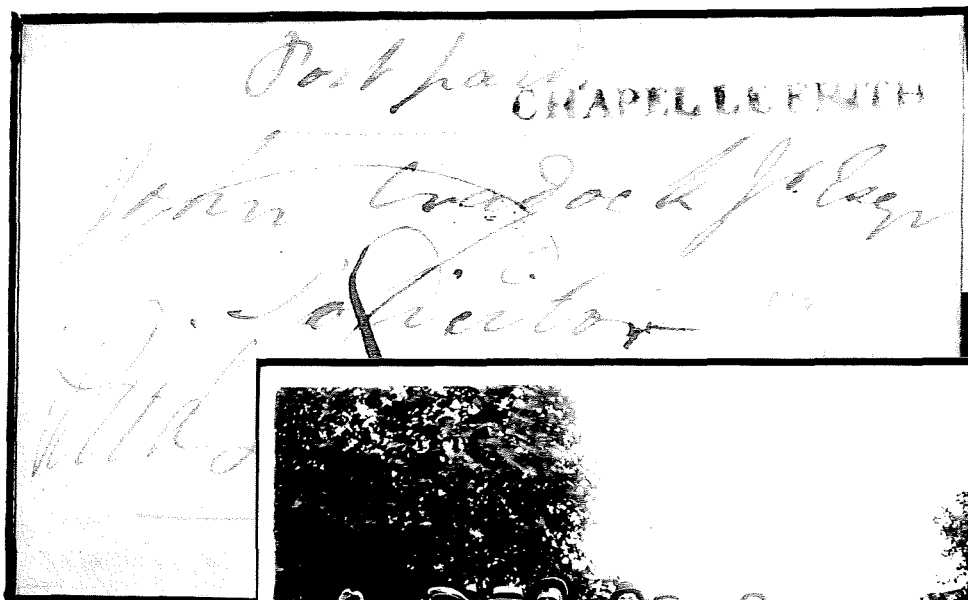
THE NEXT MIDLAND MAIL

It is intended that this will appear towards the end of January. It will contain more on Oxfordshire Local Posts as well as details of offices closed during the last year. However, there is room for much more so please send articles, short or long to:

John Soer, 51d Barkham Road, Wokingham RG41 2RG

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