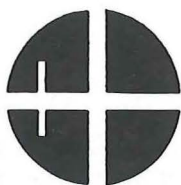


MIDLAND MAIL



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



President: John Soer

Chairman:
Roger Broomfield

Treasurer:
Elizabeth Lewis

Secretary:
Eric Lewis

Number 97, November 1996

Autumn Stampex came and went this year rather earlier than has been usual. I was unable to get to Spring Stampex in January so this was my first visit to the new venue which proved to be more accessible than I had anticipated. My first impressions were favourable - all the dealers in one light, comfortable hall with space to sit down. However, I did feel that there is room for improvement, particularly in the catering. The lighting of the exhibits was poor; the competitors deserved much better, especially when one considers the cost of an entry. One major dealer had very little stock as the stand allocated was not very secure. Despite the irritations, I am sure that Islington will eventually prove to be a very acceptable venue for Stampex.

In a newsletter sent out with the catalogue of one of our advertisers, a correspondent bemoaned the predominance of postal history at the meetings of philatelic societies. Now surely this is as things should be for philately is no more than a small branch of postal history. While some may find fascination in the methods of producing postage stamps, I am sure there are many, like me, who came to postal history because they were more interested in the intended uses of the stamps. That then engendered an interest in postmarks.

NEW MEMBERS

We welcome Alan Marshall from Nottinghamshire whose interests include Nottingham and the villages south of the Trent. Also, we welcome back Andrew Watton who has rejoined after a lapse of two or three years.

THE COORDINATING EDITOR

After more than twenty years in Cranham, John Calladine, the Society's Co-ordinating Editor for its publications, is returning to his old home in London, at least for the time being. Letters and phone calls should be addressed to: 21 Abbotsbury Road, London W14 8EJ (phone 0171-603-6085).

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

On 14th December we pay our annual visit to Burton-on-Trent. The format will be as in the past - standing displays from 10.30 a.m. to lunch. Then, starting at 2 p.m., Brian Stimpson will give a display 'Introduction to Postal Scales'. I am reliably informed that Mr Stimpson has an outstanding collection of postal scales. If you intend to join us for lunch which is expected to cost about £10 to £12, please contact Richard Farman (01283-56615) by 7th December.

At the meeting on 11th January 1997, starting at 1.30 p.m., at Carrs Lane Church Centre, Birmingham, the subject for members' displays is 'How many miles to ...'. The aim of this meeting is to focus our attention on the Society's new project.

ADDITION TO THE LIBRARY

The second edition (published spring 1996) of 'The Skeleton Postmarks of England and Wales' by James Mackay and updated by Colin Peachey has been purchased for the Society's library and may be borrowed by members.

THE SOCIETY'S NEW PROJECT

With the 1996/97 season underway, members are reminded of the Society's fascinating new project on mileage marks and mail routes, outlined in 'Midland Mail' 96/2. In particular, we have all been asked to send details of the mileage marks in our collections to the appropriate County Editors. Please provide photocopies of the straight line stamps, if at all possible, and use BCC references for the later circular types. The members' displays at the January Meeting will feature mileage marks and the County Editors will hope to have received much information by then. Please don't delay - your help is needed.

A MAP OF THE POST ROADS OF ENGLAND AND WALES

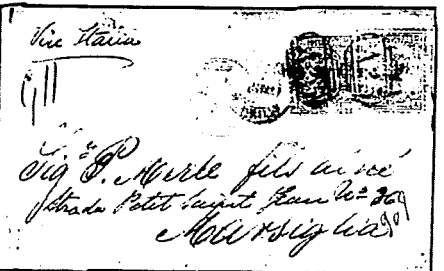
The Society has been given permission by the British Library to reproduce a map dating from about 1770 which shows the mail routes in England and Wales at a scale of 7 miles to the inch. As well as showing the posttowns and official receiving houses, it denotes places where the inhabitants paid for the carriage of their letters to the nearest posttown. The map also distinguishes between the routes on the ordinary post days and the bye-post days where these differ. The photographic copies, which have been made with the help of a loan from the Stuart Rossiter Trust, cost £25 plus postage etc. If you are interested please contact John Calladine.

While on the subject of maps it should be mentioned that Post Office Archives have now prepared a listing of the maps in their possession. Amongst these are a number of direct relevance to the Midlands. The circulation maps (1807) of Birmingham and Derby were shown in MM48/18-19; a similar map for Oxford exists. Town plans, many of which show the extent of the free delivery include: Banbury (1836), Bromsgrove (1837), Cheltenham (1834), Derby (1838?), Droitwich, Evesham, Hereford (1837), Kidderminster (1838), Leamington (1838), Ledbury (1831), Loughborough (1837), Ludlow (1835), Nottingham (1831), Stourbridge (1837), Stratford-on-Avon, Tewkesbury, Walsall (or Digbeth?) and Worcester (1835).

REDDITCH POSTMARKS

Redditch Philatelic Society celebrates its 25th anniversary this year, and one thing which has been done to mark the event is to produce a souvenir postcard showing early Redditch postmarks. If anyone wishes to purchase this card

they will be available on 16th November at the Fair and Exhibition at Abbey High School, Redditch, or they can be ordered by post from Mr C. Jackson, 49 Mason Road, Headless Cross, Redditch B97 5DT. The cost of the card is 40p or 70p with a Redditch cancellation (plus 20p for postage).

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THE SEPTEMBER MEETING

The joint meeting with the Somerset and Dorset Postal History Group held on 14th September in Cranham celebrated the tercentary of the Great Cross Post which started on 2nd December 1696 and which ran from Exeter to Bristol, later extended to Chester.

The meeting started with a joint presentation given by John Millener and John Calladine on the establishment and operation of this post. The presentation included readings of official correspondence which had been recorded by a well known actor. A possible timetable for the Exeter to Bristol section was shown which assumed a speed of 6 m.p.h. and an overnight stop at Wellington. Each postmaster rode twice a week to the next posttown and returned without any letters. Descriptions were then given of the work of Manley and Quash, the post from Bath to Oxford, the extension of the Great Cross Post to Chester, and ended with the introduction of the Birmingham to Bristol mailcoach which ended the through crosspost as an entity. Your editor feels that this presentation, the work of John Calladine, is worthy of a more permanent record, so when he has completed his move of home, I hope that he can be persuaded to produce a precis for a future edition of Midland Mail.

Ron Hake then gave the first of the displays of material relating to the Great Cross Post. This included maps and photographs of the road. Also shown were examples of: the 'X-marks' of most of the offices between Exeter and Bristol; the 'Exeter E'; and the 'Bristol B'. Early town-marks included those of Minehead (1709) and South Moulton (1707). There were more 'X-marks' in the material put together by the members of the Somerset and Dorset Group, and which was shown by John Millener. Also of note were: a cover of 1705 with the 'BRI.WATER' mark; a 1704 'TAVNTON'; and a letter of 1703 sent from Minehead to Cornwall.

Malcolm Ray-Smith, the first speaker after lunch, began by giving more of the historical background. He dealt with the difficulties encountered by Whitley in trying to farm out the posts, and an abortive attempt to introduce a new post road between Devizes and Taunton. He then went on to discuss the creation of handstamps to be used in the Cross Post, probably to aid the accounting procedures. The first 'X-marks', those for towns between Exeter and Bristol, appeared in the autumn of 1709, while those on the feeder routes further north appeared in 1713-14. Amongst the covers that he showed were the 'X-marks' of Bridgewater, Bath and Wootton-under-Edge, examples of the 'Chester C' and the 'WOTTON/UNDER/EDGE' used in 1767 on a letter to Ross. A letter sent in 1732 from Birmingham to Gloucester showed the handstamps of Birmingham and Kidderminster.

Material belonging to Martin Willcocks who was not able to be with us was shown by Chris Beaver. Of particular note was the 'PEMBROKE X' used in 1713 on a letter to London which took eight days to reach its destination. Chris Jackson displayed letters from places such as Stourbridge and Birmingham which had entered the Cross Post at Kidderminster. The material belonging to Denis Salt showed how the Cross Post aided communication between the North and South of Wales (See MM77/6ff.). Eric Lewis also showed material originating from the West Midlands. John Calladine's twenty sheet display completed the day. The earliest item, a letter of 1710 with an Exeter Bishopmark, was addressed to Stilden near Bewdley. The latest, dated 6th May 1787, was from Worcester to Liskeard, and was sent just two months before the introduction of a Bristol-Birmingham mailcoach.

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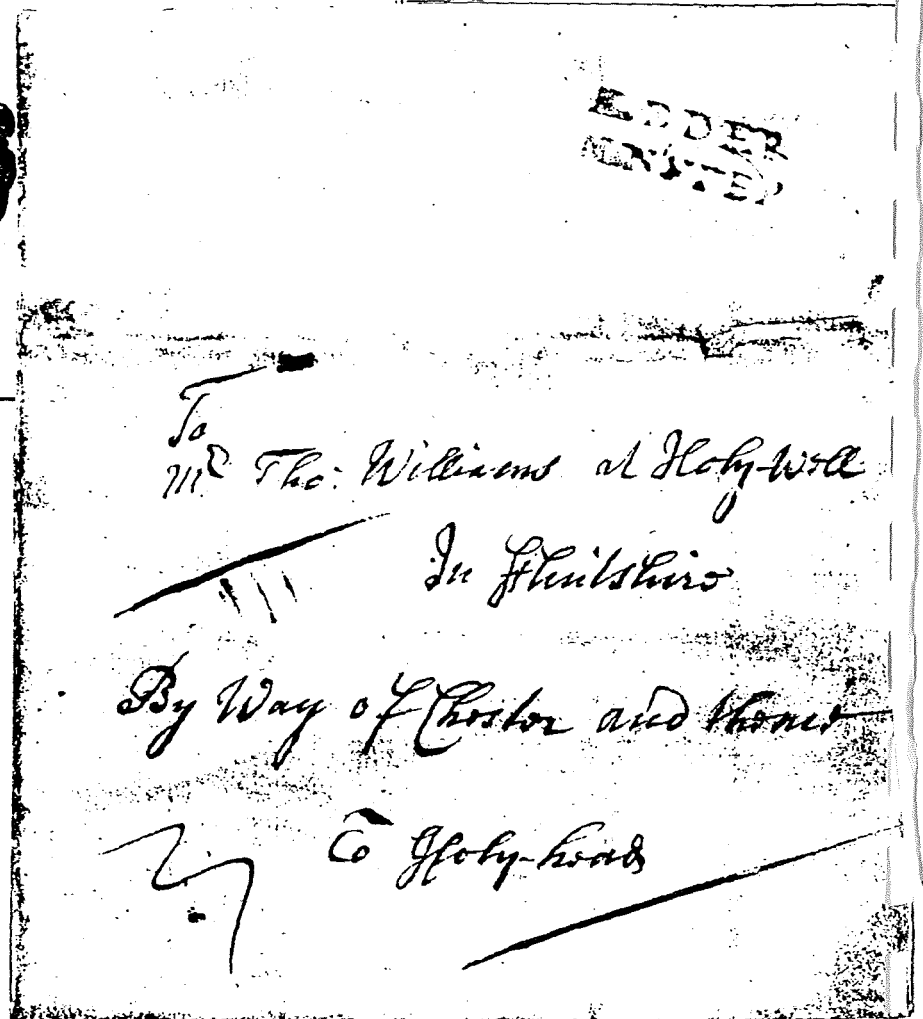
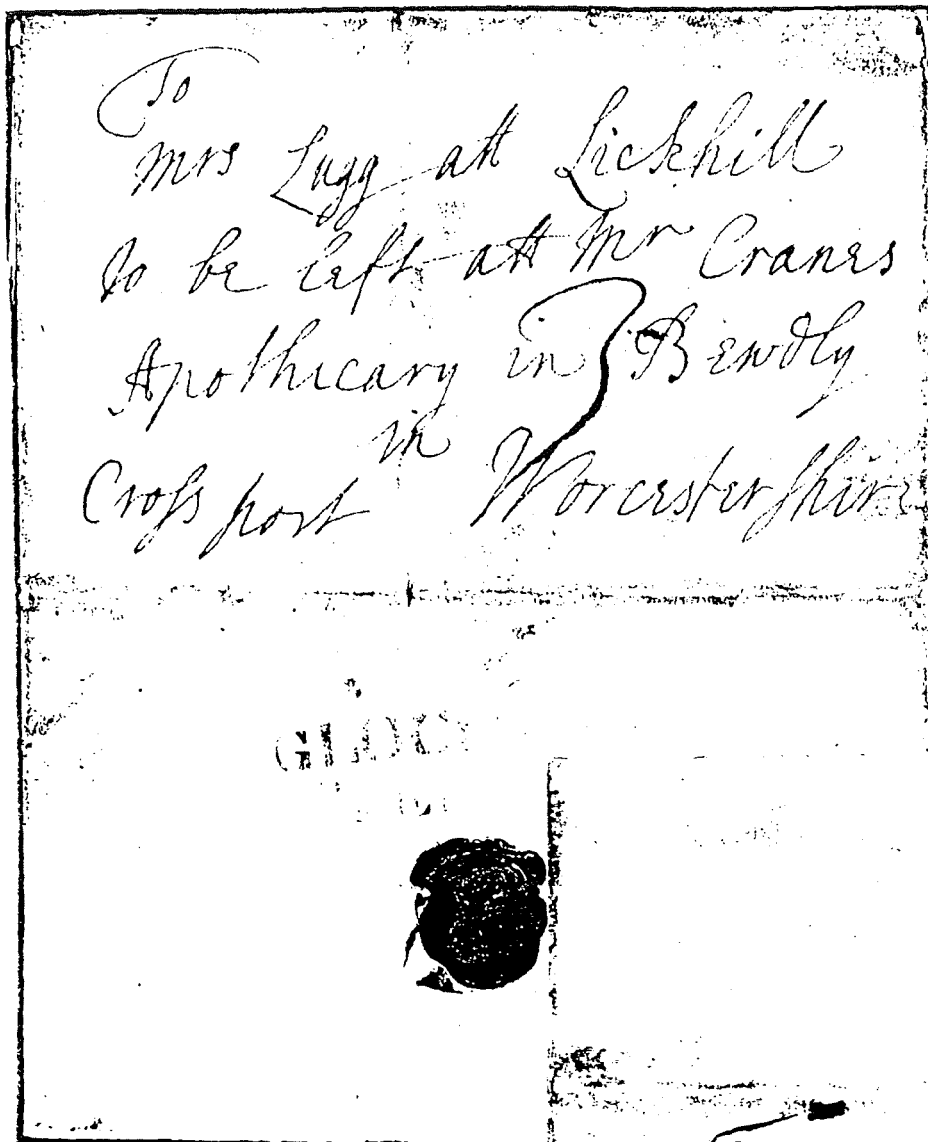
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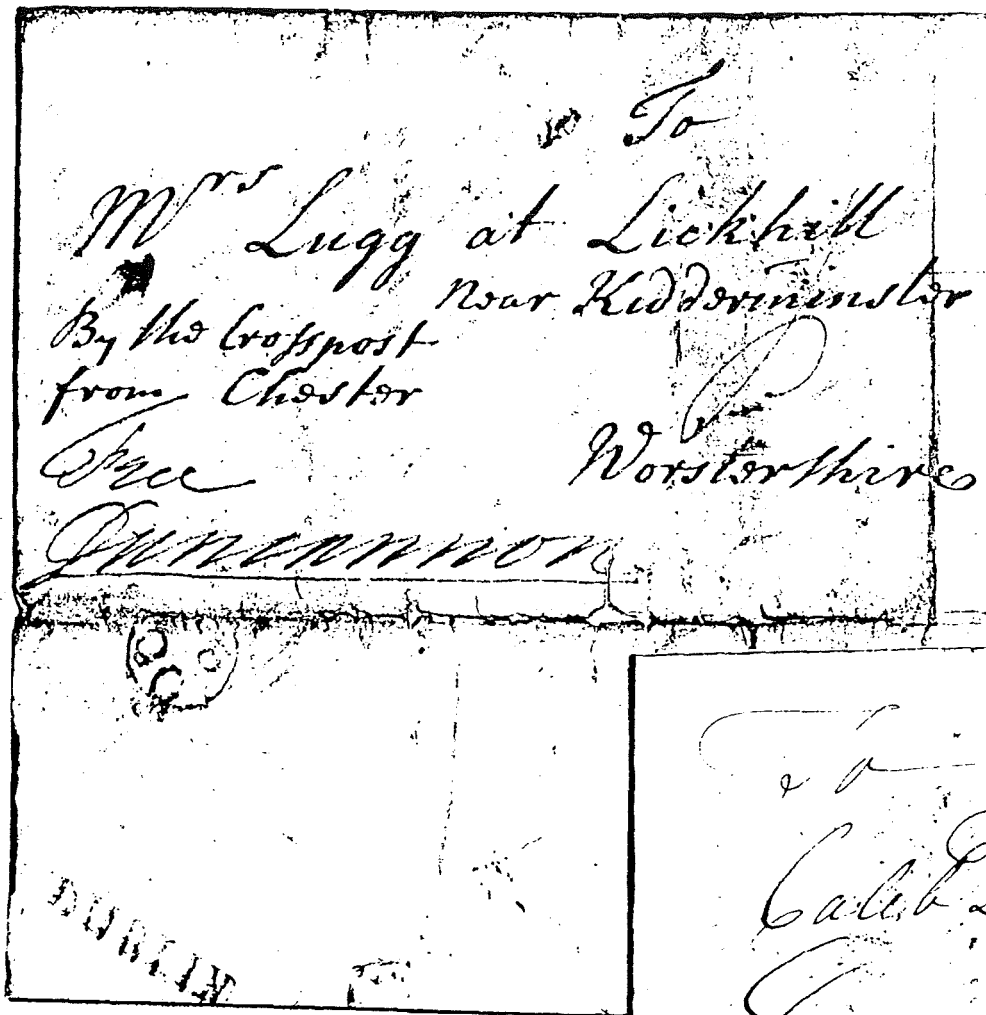
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An item from Eric Lewis's display - a letter sent in 1733 from Gloucester to Bewdley.

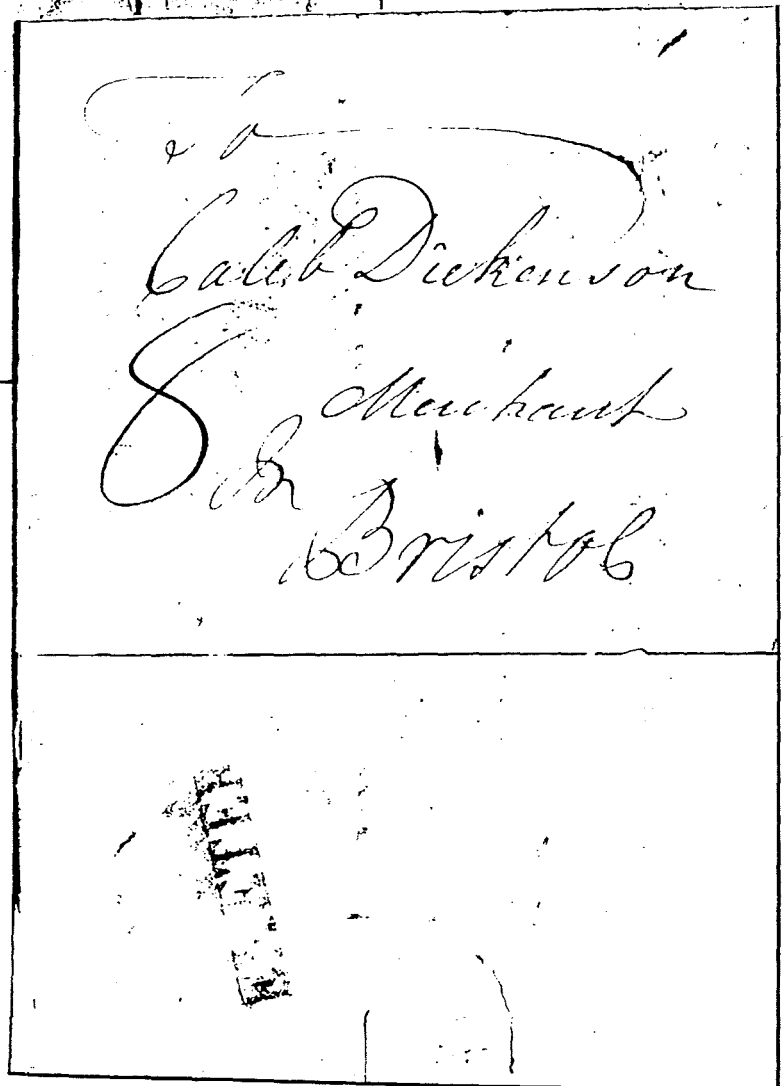


A letter of 1742 sent in the Cross Post from Kidderminster as far as Chester. Contributed by Richard Farman.

Shown below are two items from John Calladine's display at Cranham.



A free letter of 1743 from Ireland to Kidderminster intended to be sent "By the Crosspost from Chester". A London Bishopmark of 4th November suggests that its arrival in Chester did not coincide with a Great Cross Post departure.



A letter sent from Exeter to Bristol in 1745 (20th November). The charge of 8d. is explained by reference to an enclosed letter "Left at the Post Office". There are gloomy references to the Jacobite Rising which pre-dated the retreat from Derby on 6 December.

THE OCTOBER MEETING

During the fifteen years in which I have been a member of this Society we have been treated to a number of superb displays by some eminent postal historians. However, what we saw on 19th October - Malcolm Ray-Smith's "Early Great Britain Postal History" - must surely rank as one of the most outstanding displays given to the Society. The quality of the covers was enhanced, if that is possible, by excellent writing up and presentation. What a pity that more members did not take the opportunity to see the very best in the postal history of this country.

Malcolm started by mentioning that every item in his display was over 250 years old i.e. pre-1746. He went on to say that there were four strands which led to the Post Office: the Merchant Posts leading to the Foreign Branch; the Royal Mail; local delivery; and provincial enterprise. He then proceeded to illustrate each of these. The first cover shown was sent in 1459 from London to Venice and carried a lovely guild mark. There were also items from the Corsini correspondence. Then we were shown a letter of 1513 written by a cousin of Anne Boleyn. That was followed by one sent in 1567 from London to Walsall. A letter of c1596 was addressed to John Stanhope, the Master of the Posts, in his capacity as Treasurer of His Majesties Chamber. The payment of soldiers at Ripon was the subject of a letter sent from the Court in 1605. Provincial enterprise was represented by items carried to London by the city footposts of Bristol and Chester, the latter in 1641.

We saw a number of letters from the Civil War period including one sent in 1642 from a prisoner in Warwick Castle to his cousin, the Earl of Manchester. Amongst the campaign letters were one written in 1644 by a captain in the Parliamentary forces besieging Donnington Castle, and one written on the day before the Battle of Preston in 1648. From the same period, a letter endorsed "Haste, Post Haste" is the only recorded example of a provincial, official express-letter with timed annotations.

It is possible that a letter sent from London to Norwich was carried by Jason Grover for it was charged twopence, one penny less than the official rate.

Malcolm then turned his attention to the early General Post Receiving Houses in London. We were shown superb strikes of the '7/Off', '5/Off' and '4/Off' marks. The second of these was on a letter to "ye Red Lyon in Leicester", and the last on a "ffrank" to Lichfield.

Amongst a number of manuscript town marks of Scotland was a "from Aberdeen" of 1676. From England came a manuscript "Doncaster" on a letter sent to Hamburg in 1690 and endorsed "Post paid at Doncaster in England. In all to Antwerp Elevenpence". There was no provision at the time for prepayment of the postage for the Antwerp to Hamburg section.

To conclude the first half of the display we were shown a Bishopmark of 1st April 1692 struck in red.

Malcolm began the next part of his display with manuscript town marks including York on a letter of 1698 to Hamburg, Horncastle on a letter sent in 1704 and endorsed "p Caxton Bagg post paid 2d at Horncastle", Royston in 1708 and Thorne in 1737.

Next came the early town marks such as those of Cambridge (1707), Ipswich (1708), Dartmouth (1705), Caxton (1730) and a superb Exeter bishopmark of 1696. The crosspost system was represented by the 'X-marks' of Bridgewater, Bath and Wotton-under-Edge, a 'Chester C' of 1709 and a "FROM YORKSHIR" of 1715.

To round off the afternoon came the only recorded example of the Franches Style Mark, used to obliterate a treble rate on a letter weighing $\frac{3}{4}$ oz and which was to pass at the double rate, on a letter sent to Venice in 1737. This mark was described by Gardiner in 1677 and 1682.

The above can only be an account of a few of the items that caught your editor's eye, and in no way can it do justice to the quality of the material on show and the way in which it was presented. John Calladine summed up the feelings of all those present in a fulsome tribute to Malcolm's display.

IT ALL BEGAN SOME TWENTY ONE YEARS AGO

by Eric Lewis

This year is the twenty-first anniversary of the formation of our Society and it seems a suitable opportunity to review some of the events of the first year or two of the Society's life. In order to do this I have looked through the early issues of the bulletin and the minutes of the first few meetings.

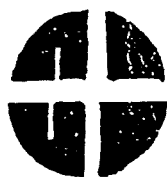
An inaugural meeting was held on 19th April 1975 when ten people met and agreed to form our Society. Steph. Stobbs was elected as Chairman and a subscription of one pound per annum was agreed. Other officers appointed were Ches. Chester as Secretary, Peter Baxter as Treasurer and Peter Bidmead as Bulletin Editor. Two County Editors were appointed under the title of 'County Recorders' namely Steph. Stobbs for Shropshire and Ches. Chester for Warwickshire.

A committee meeting held on 4th October 1975 evidently lasted some thirteen hours as the minutes record that it commenced at 11 p.m. and lasted until 12 noon.

The first general meeting took place on 8th November 1975 attracting an attendance of eighteen members and visitors, twelve of whom gave short displays. Of these twelve, only four now remain as members and you will see from your programme that they will each display again at the meeting on 9th November which is the nearest Saturday to our twenty-first anniversary.

An initial set back was the resignation of the Bulletin Editor because of his moving to another part of the country but Mr J.A. Ward took up this position and issued bulletin number one in January 1976. Attached to the bulletin was a list of some thirty-two members but many discontinued their membership for various reasons after the first year or two. After he had published the second bulletin, Mr Ward had to relinquish the job for the same reason as Mr Bidmead and we had to wait until December 1976 for the next proper issue (number four) under the editorship of Jon Baker, number three being a single sheet newsletter issued by the Secretary. Bulletin number five, which completed the first two years of our Society's publications, contained our first article which was contributed by John Calladine. Membership lists after January 1976 unfortunately do not exist but it is interesting to note that the six members who had not renewed their subscription were named in the February 1977 issue of the Bulletin. As a comparison, although we now have many more members the Treasurer informs me that less than six members still owe their current Year's subscription, this of course being at a time much earlier in the philatelic season, no reminders having yet been sent out.

The heading to the Bulletin and as now used in an adapted form on Midland Mail and Society letter headings was introduced by Jon Baker when he took over as editor. A reduced size reproduction as it first appeared is as follows.



**MIDLAND G.B.
POSTAL HISTORY
SOCIETY**



Fortunately Jon recorded that this was based on variations of early postmarks, his words being:-

"'Hot Cross Bun' 1681 to 1686 probably the first Provincial Town Stamp use. Chister area. The pattern is exactly the same as an early map of the city of Chichester.

'Midland G.B. Postal History Society' - based on the same style of lettering of Birmingham town stamps 1720-1805.

'Birmingham Chandelier' of 1772."

The title 'Midland Mail' was not introduced until several years later.

The Bulletins record that for the first two seasons, other than for each A.G.M., all meetings comprised short displays by members. The first meeting with a speaker being at Burton-on-Trent in December 1977 when ten members and nine visitors attended.

At the second A.G.M. it appears that I suggested that each February meeting be devoted to a competition, basically to find a member to represent the Society at the M.P.F. inter-society competitions in May. This was agreed to but it was emphasised that 'although members would be encouraged to show suitable entries it must not stop others from bringing non-competitive material'. It was to be called 'choice of the afyternoon' and evidently I offered to make a suitable trophy. The title remained for a year or two and of course the competition was eventually divided into three sections, it being the judge's choice as to which entry is entered in the M.P.F. competitions.

The title 'County Recorders' was changed to 'County Organisers' in 1976 and extended from two to six counties:-
 Shropshire - Steph. Stobbs Warwickshire - Ches. Chester
 Staffordshire - Arthur Lloyd Birmingham - Peter Baxter
 Worcester and Herefordshire - Elizabeth Lewis

Lastly, in this short history of the first two years, an auction was introduced at the second A.G.M. 104 lots were offered at reserves ranging from 25 pence for such items as a 'Returned to Sender' card with several handstamps to £5 for eight airmails. Most items were under a pound and it is recorded that sales totalled £44.55

Unfortunately individual realisations are not given. No postal bidding was permitted and the first hint of an auction was that 'something special will be held after the A.G.M.'.

Much more could be written on how the Society developed after the initial period covered by these notes, perhaps for publication on our 25th anniversary.

BOOK REVIEW

THE UNDATED POSTMARKS OF WALES 1840 to 1860

by Roger Broomfield

What struck me on first glancing through this book was the superb presentation. Use is made of colour, a clearly drawn map heads the section for each county, the reproduction of covers and other documents is of a very high standard, and the usage data is clearly tabulated. Roger's printers have certainly 'done him proud'.

After the introduction, which contains photographs of covers showing the different types of undated postmarks, there is a listing, arranged by county, of all the offices which used undated marks and the kind used. The main part of the book is the usage data arranged by county, of firstly the straight line marks and then the circular datestamps. I have not carried out a detailed analysis but I gain the impression that the U.D.Cs of Wales are much more difficult to find than their English counterparts.

Our Chairman is to be congratulated on the result of what must surely have been a lot of hard work, though no doubt enjoyable. Certainly it is a book that should be in the library of all postal historians, not just those interested in material from Wales. If nothing else it sets a standard at which we can all aim.

The book, 124 pages, ISBN 0 9527177 1 9, published by the Welsh Philatelic Society with assistance from the Stuart Rossiter Trust, is available from Roger at 78 Court Road, Malvern WR14 3EG at a cost of £10 plus £2 postage and packing.



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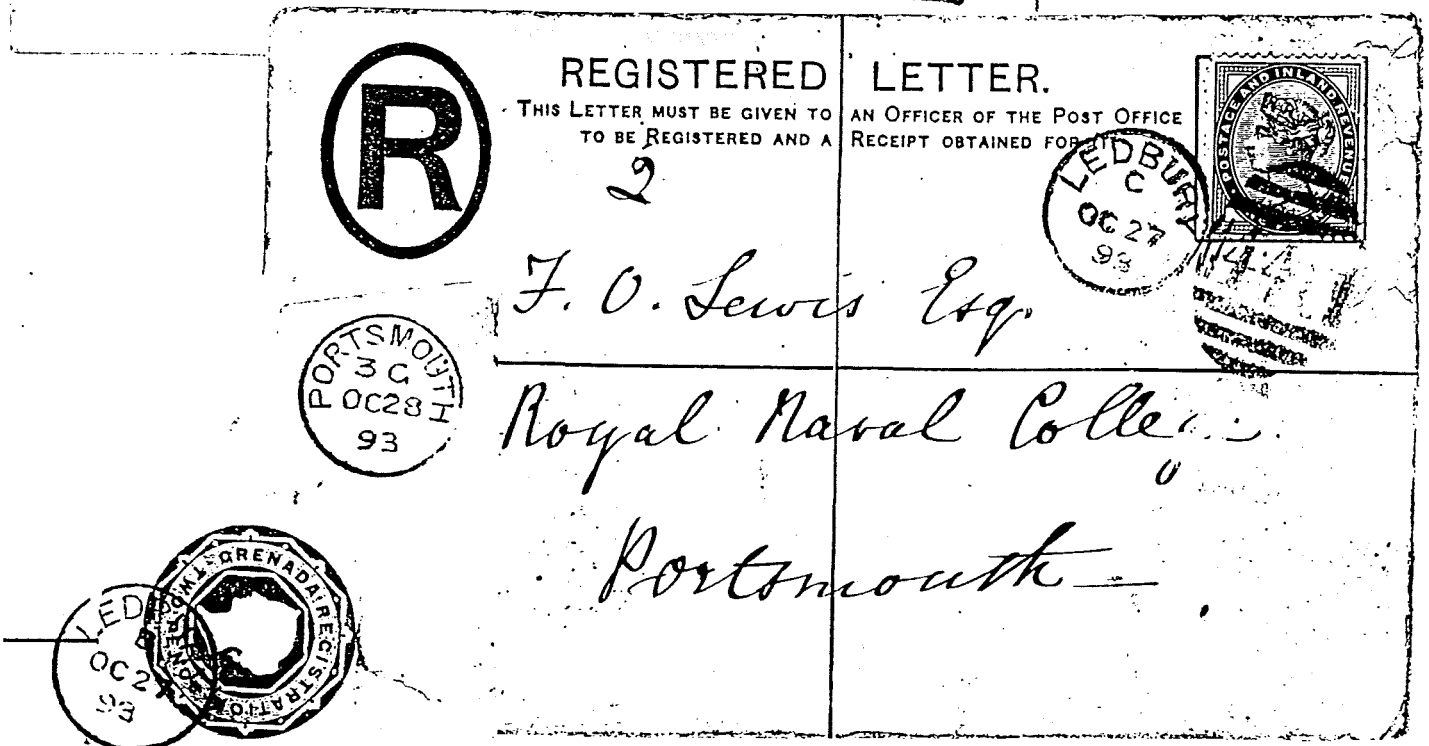
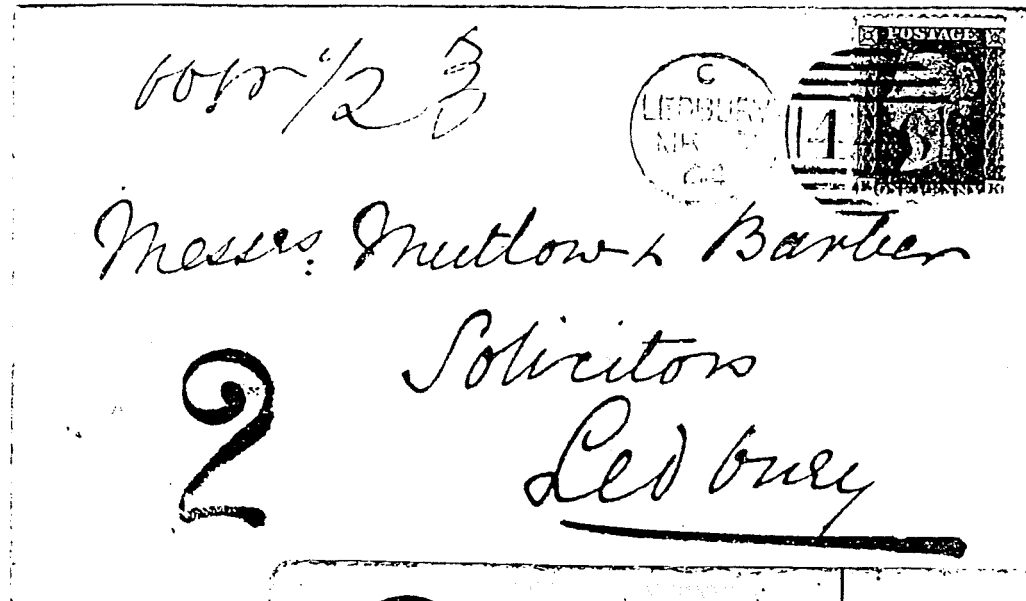
Catalogue on request from Graham Moss at 65 George Street Oldham OL1 1LX

TWO COVERS FROM THE CHAIRMAN

I am indebted to Roger for sending the two illustrations shown below.

The first, a find at Stampex, shows a handstruck 2 from Ledbury which Roger had not seen before. To add insult to injury, two were available - from the same dealer, that shown and one of two years earlier. The 2 is used, obviously, to indicate the postage due.

The second is a red printed registered envelope obviously used as such for the cliche on the back is cancelled by a Ledbury thimble. A close look at the cliche shows the envelope to have originated from Grenada! Surely this is an unusual usage.



REGISTERED LETTER RECEIPTS

This is a page from my Lutterworth collection which shows some of styles of registered letter receipts used in the last century.

No. 12

REGISTERED LETTER.

Received this 13th day of Sept 1849

a Letter addressed Gotch & Sons
Bankers
Luttering

Office Stamp. {  {

Postmaster, or Letter Receiver's Signature. { Wm. Vears

No. 74

REGISTERED LETTER.

Received this 1st day of June 1857

a Letter addressed Mr. John Wood
Harborough

Office Stamp. {  {

Postmaster, or Letter Receiver's Signature. { Wm. Vears

No. 504 P.O. Lutter the 28 day of June 1869

Received a REGISTERED LETTER addressed to

DATE STAMP. {  {

G. H. J. Newman
Leicester

Postmaster's Signature Wm. Vears

THE SURVEYORS' JOURNALS (Part 23)

This edition is shorter than usual for our three surveyors spent a high proportion of their time on the road outside the Midlands.

Mr Woodcock was kept at home for the whole of January 1814 by "the uncommon severe bad weather ... such a deep fall of Snow, and so severe a frost has not occurred for many years." This dreadful weather continued until about the 20th February. While at home he claimed to have directed the forwarding of the mails in all possible ways. From 25th February to 12th March, Mr Woodcock was in the area of Chipping Sodbury arranging, "by way of a trial", a penny post between Chipping Sodbury, Iron Acton and Frampton Cotterrell. On his way home he called at Cirencester to instruct the deputy who was to be accountable for the penny post mentioned above. [Was Chipping Sodbury a sub-office of Cirencester?]

In early April, Mr Woodcock called at Hereford to inspect the office and expedite the rides. From there he went on to Wales where he spent the whole of May and June.

We next find Mr Woodcock in the Midlands from 16th to 23rd July when he was in the area of Kidderminster, Stourbridge, Dudley and Birmingham to investigate a request from Tipton for a reorganisation of their posts. He described Tipton as being a parish which was "very populous & full of Iron & Coal works." He directed that an account of the Tipton letters was to be taken at Birmingham, Wolverhampton and Dudley. It was November before he could again give his attention to this matter for August and September were taken up in dealing with penny posts in South Wales.

On his return to Birmingham and Tipton in November he proposed to establish a penny post at Tipton to be served by the Birmingham and Stourbridge rider. [See Local Posts of Midland Counties page 42.] He returned home by way of Worcester and Malvern as the inhabitants at the latter place had expressed dissatisfaction with the three-day penny post in winter. He directed the Hereford post to carry their bags on the other days, making it a daily post. The last two weeks of the year were spent in charge of the office at Kington as the postmaster had been dismissed for not sending his accounts to London.

After he had attended to the Stroud and Cirencester ride, Mr Woodcock went to Birmingham to finish making the arrangements for the Tipton Penny Post. At the close of the year he was confined to his room by illness.

The dreadful weather at the start of 1814 did not prevent Mr Godby establishing a penny post in the Prescott area. He did comment that the mail between Chester and Liverpool had not been able to cross the Mersey on account of the quantity of floating ice and snow.

In March, he made a brief visit to Stafford, Stone and Newcastle to enquire about the circulation of letters to Tarporly. Then, in April, he went to Ellesmere for one day to instruct the deputy about the Missent Letter Accounts.

However, Mr Godby was more active in the Midlands during June. He spent a week at Rugby and Dunchurch as there had been complaints made about the conduct of the foot messenger. After he had found that these complaints were justified, Mr Godby dismissed the messenger and appointed someone else whom he then supervised "in the performance of his duties" before going on to Coventry to inspect the office there. On 22nd June, Mr Godby arrived in Penkridge to prepare for the opening of a penny post. On the 24th he went to Stafford and on 25th to Wolverhampton to instruct the deputies. He returned to Penkridge on the 27th to start the penny post. [See LPoMC page 245.]

In the middle of July, Mr Godby went to Shrewsbury to explain how the allowances for the rides to Aberystwyth should be paid as these rides had been transferred to the office at Shrewsbury.

How to speed up the delivery of letters at Leamington took Mr Godby to that place and Warwick for a week in mid-August. Then he went on to Daventry as the Braunston bag had been found in the middle of the road. It was decided to reward the finder.

The only other business in the Midlands that took Mr Godby away from home during the rest of the year was in December when he visited Atherstone to see the contractor for the ride to Ashby, and then installed a new sub-deputy in Ashby.

Mr Hart began 1814 by going to Worksop to establish a ride from there to Sheffield for the carriage of the mail from London. From Worksop he went to Ollerton in order to alter the circulation list to take account of the new ride. His travels took him down to Grantham from where he "proceeded across the different line of Roads to ascertain, the delay and the causes of the Mails to Leeds and Manchester." It is not clear if this is a reference to delays caused by bad weather. Towards the end of January he went to Nottingham where he helped in the office for nearly two weeks as both the post-mistress and her assistant were ill.

It was the illness of the deputy that caused Mr Hart to help out at Derby but that was four months later, in mid-June. In the meantime his travels had taken him to Lincolnshire and the northern part of his district. His only other business in the Midlands during the rest of the year was to be in charge of the office at Ollerton, as the deputy was found to be incompetent, from the beginning of October to mid-December.

ADDENDA

ALCESTER TO REDDITCH

In October 1814, a Mr Reading of Studley in Warwickshire wrote to Freeling asking for a "regular post-office" to be established in the village. He claimed that, on average, forty letters were received there each week, and the inhabitants had to pay 8½d. for a letter from Birmingham and 11½d for one from London whereas the people of Redditch had to pay only 6d. and 9d. respectively. Then he added that he had learned that the mail which for many years had been left at a house in Studley was in future to be left at "a petty public house" kept by an old woman a mile from Studley. This was despite the fact that the route from Alcester through Studley to Redditch was one mile shorter than the intended road. People in the village were so apprehensive about the use of this public house that, if they had to send a letter of any importance, they would "be under the disagreeable necessity of sending to Alcester".

Mr Woodcock enclosed in his report a letter and a map (shown on the next page) from the postmaster of Stratford-on-Avon, Mr Lane, who was also the contractor for the Alcester to Redditch ride. Mr Lane said that the extra charges were nothing to do with him; they were levied by the sub-deputy at Alcester. With regard to the road through Studley, he would have preferred to have gone that way but beyond Studley the road was so bad as to be barely passable in winter, and certainly not fit for a person to ride along at the speed required for the mail.

In his report Mr Woodcock said that as the road through Studley was a post road notice should be given to the appropriate authority to have it repaired or face a possible indictment. In the meantime, he proposed that 6d. a day should be paid to the man who had been in the habit of receiving the Studley letters to meet the rider at the point 7 on the map. He also wrote to the postmistress at Alcester telling her that she was not to charge more than an extra penny on any letters sent to Studley.

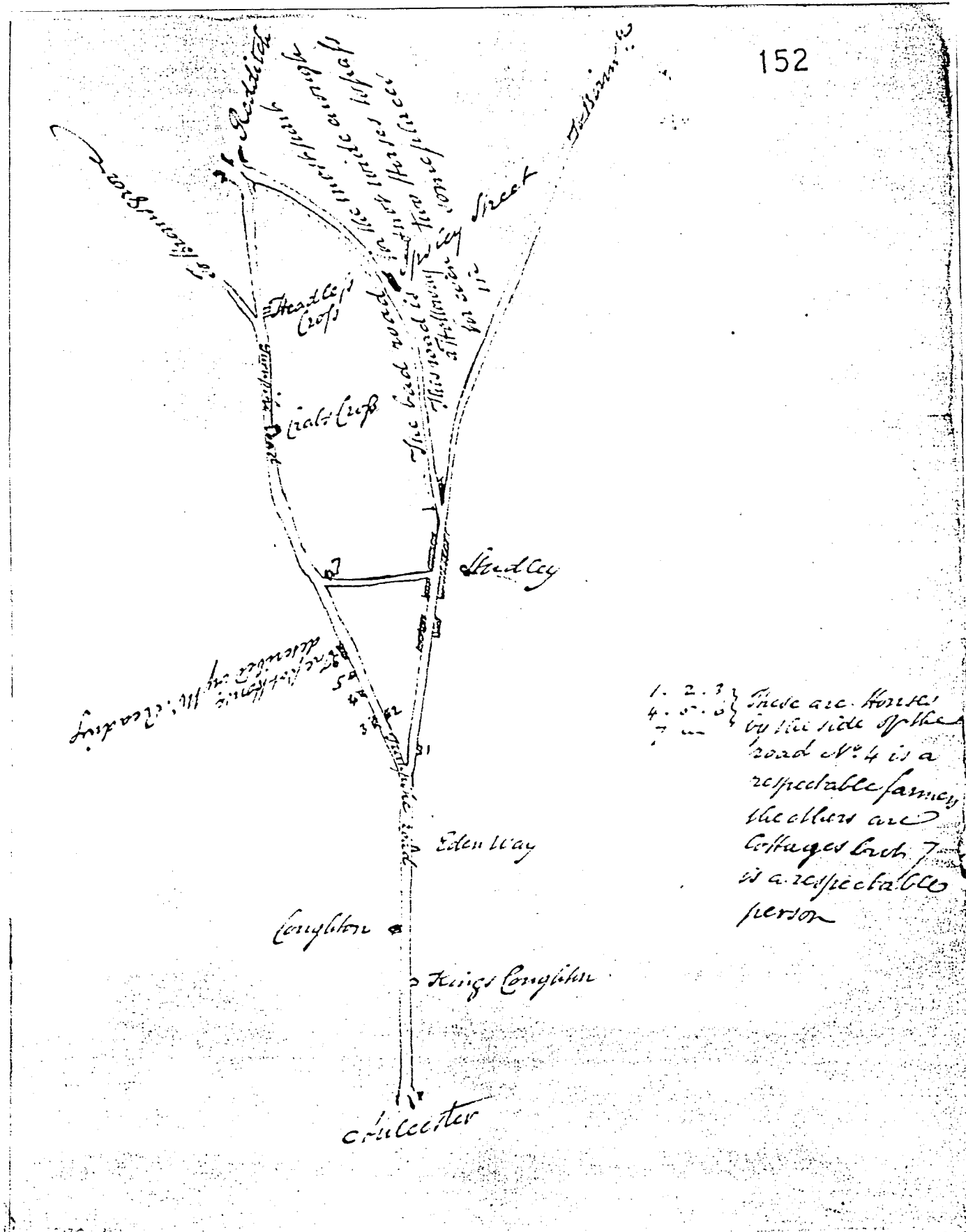
Mr Lane had said that he doubted that forty letters a week were received at Studley. A count made for one week from 16th November showed twenty-eight letters with a total postage of 19s-5d.

The matter of this road came up again in September 1815, and though strictly it should be dealt with in the next issue, I feel that for the sake of completeness it is more appropriate to record the change here.

On 20th September 1815, Mr Woodcock wrote that while at Alcester he went to Redditch through Studley and Ipsley to inspect the road about which complaints had been made. He was satisfied that it must be very bad in winter, and though there had been repeated promises to mend it, very little appeared to have been done. In fact, it was little more than a wagon track from one village to the other, and to make it good would cost the parish of Ipsley £300. The road to Studley was very good as was that from there to Redditch. So, by taking the best road, which although one mile further, the mail could be carried to and from Redditch quicker than taking the road through Ipsley which he described as "an obscure village of little or no correspondence".

For these reasons he proposed that the contractor should be allowed for one mile more ground - an extra £6 p.a. There would be a saving of the payment of £3 made in the winter months to the messenger from Studley, giving an overall increase of £3 p.a. He added that probably the Postmaster General would prefer to do this rather than the indictment of a poor parish which after all might prove ineffective.

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AN ABUSE OF THE FRANKING PRIVILEGE

In December 1814, Freeling wrote to the Postmasters General:

"My Lords

It was intimated to me that Mr. Cotes M.P., whose own Post Town is Shiffnal was in the habit of giving Franks dated from Wellington 8 miles off. On writing to the Surveyor, I found it was the fact, and that Mr Cotes gave Franks dated also from Newport in another direction. I then ordered an Account to be kept of the Franks put into the three offices for a fortnight, which is enclosed, and from which it appears that by using three Post Towns Mr. Cotes has franked in 14 days 45 letters more than he is entitled to.

Your Lordships will be pleased to say what notice should be taken of this. Perhaps a Letter by your command to acquaint Mr Cotes of the circumstances & referring him to the Act which limits his Franks to 10 daily would be sufficient. Or in such a case as this, it might be proper to charge all the letters put into the offices of Newport and Wellington, since the words by which a Member is restricted to be within 20 miles of the Post Town to entitle his Letter to pass free, could not I think have in view another Post Town, but meant that unless a Member really was in the Country, that is to say in the District of the Town from which he dated, his Frank should not be respected. And the object was to limit the giving away of Franks. Now if a Member who is within 20 miles of two or more Post Towns uses them all, it becomes impossible to know what number of letters he has franked 'till it is too late to charge them, and when he is found in the practice of exceeding his number it appears to me that by the true meaning of the restriction such letters as are not put into the office of his ordinary Post Town must be liable to charge."

A postscript was added:

"It is understood that the Franks given away are put into the offices at Wellington and Newport by Country Banks."

The number of letters franked by Mr Cotes put into the three offices is shown below.

Date	Put in at Newport	Put in at Wellington	Put in at Shiffnal	Total	Number above privilege
Nov 28	5	-	5	10	-
29	2	2	7	11	1
30	4	-	11	15	5
Dec 1	4	2	5	11	1
2	1	2	5	8	-
3	7	-	4	11	1
4	16	3	6	25	15
5	3	-	4	7	-
6	5	1	7	13	3
7	6	1	8	15	5
8	3	-	8	11	1
9	3	2	11	16	6
10	5	-	4	9	-
11	8	1	8	17	7

Mr Cotes' reply to Freeling reads:

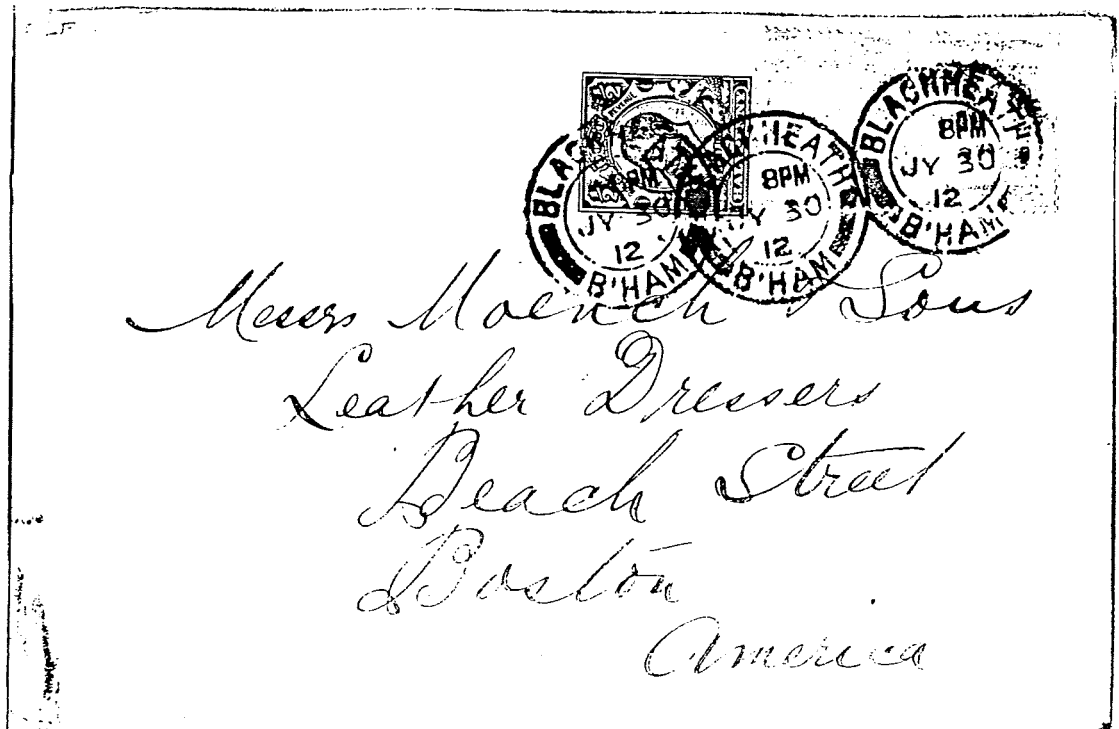
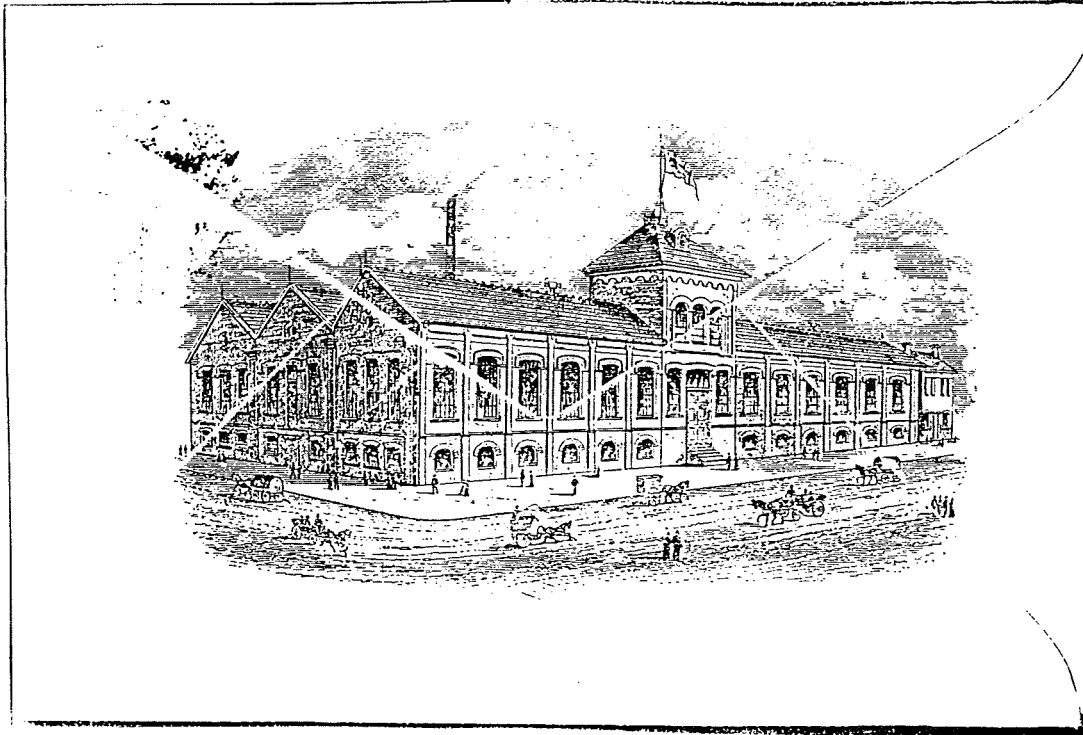
"Sir

I am sorry to find by the letter with which you honored me that I have exceeded my privilege in franking. I shall endeavour to be more cautious, not having had an idea that my attention to a few neighbours could have so far exceeded my powers.""

I will leave readers to put their own interpretation on the phrase "endeavour to be more cautious".

ANOTHER ILLUSTRATED ENVELOPE

Bill Barrell asks if any member can identify the building shown on the reverse of an envelope sent from Blackheath, Birmingham in July 1912.



THE MYSTERY POSTMARK

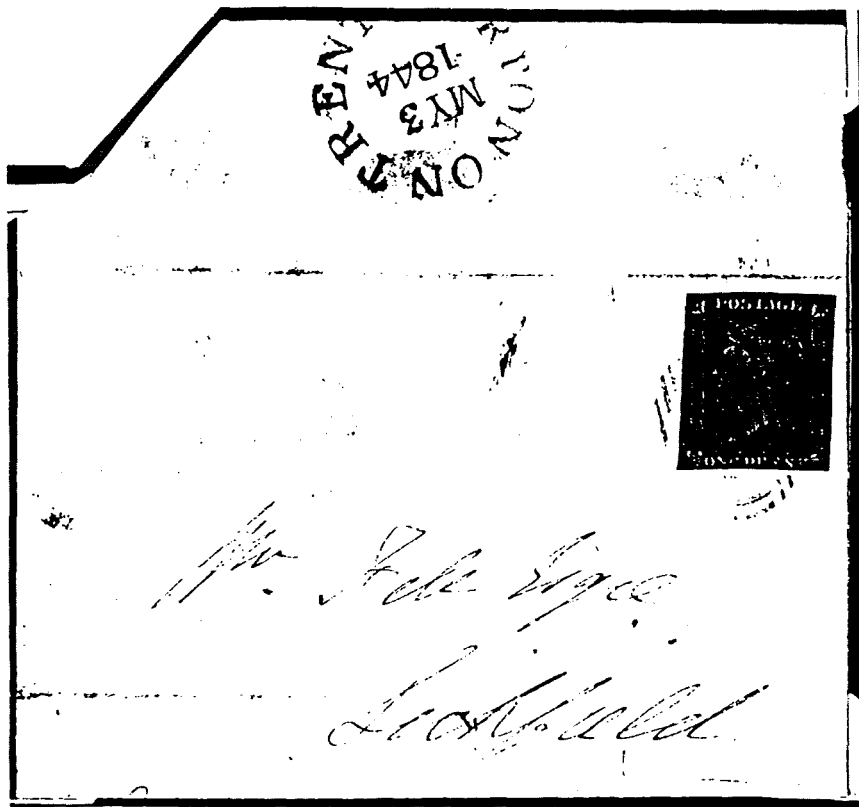
My thanks to those members who identified the postmark shown in the last issue as originating from the Northeast - Newcastle/Sunderland. It is apparently fairly common on items that missed the machine cancellations.

A SPECIAL COVER

A commemorative cover has been issued relating to the meeting held at Cranham to commemorate the 300th anniversary of the establishment of the Great Cross Post. The adhesive on this cover has been cancelled with a special handstamp. There are still a few copies remaining at a cost of £1.75 including postage. If you are interested please contact John Calladine.

AN EARLY NUMERAL CANCELLATION

Richard Farman has kindly sent a copy of a cover showing the '152' of Burton-on-Trent used on 3rd May 1844. He wonders if anyone has an example of this type of cancellation used on an earlier date.



THE NEXT MIDLAND MAIL

This will appear as soon as possible after the January meeting. It will contain something of the happenings in 1815, but the rest will depend on those articles, short or long, that are sent to:

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

A HAPPY CHRISTMAS

I would like to take this opportunity to wish all members a very happy Christmas and good collecting in 1997. I will close with a contribution from John Calladine who found it in a cracker last Christmas.

'I was posted to Africa during the war.'

'Really! Did you like it?'

'Dunno - I couldn't get out of the envelope!!!'

Well, it is much better than anything I found in a cracker last year which isn't saying very much.