



MIDLAND MAIL

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



President: Mr. W.S. Chester

Chairman:
Richard Farman

Treasurer:
Trevor Clewley

Secretary:
Elizabeth Lewis

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The September meeting was cancelled since so many members had other commitments on that day. Possibly we need to look at our pattern of meetings. Would members prefer the first weekend in September? Or would the traditional pattern of a break in the summer be better superseded by one of six meetings beginning at the start of September, and held every other month? I am sure that your committee would welcome comments.

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

The annual visit to the Bass Museum at Burton-on-Trent will take place on 16th. December. The room will be available from 11 a.m. for those members who wish to display material. After lunch the guest speaker will be Victor Short whose theme is "Victor Short entertains". This will begin at 2 p.m. If you wish to join us for lunch (approximate cost £5.50) please contact Richard Farman (0283-66515) before 9th. December.

On 13th. January we meet at 1.30 p.m. at Carrs Lane, Birmingham when we are asked to bring 9 sheets of "Christmas Gifts or Recent Acquisitions".

A reminder that our three annual competitions will be held on 3rd. February at the Guildhall, Worcester.

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THE OCTOBER MEETING

The September meeting having been cancelled, the meeting at Shrewsbury on 28th. October became our first meeting of the new season. This was a combined meeting of the Shropshire, Midland (GB) and Welsh Postal History Societies and attracted a good crowd to the Beauchamp Hotel, our society contributing an attendance only a little below that of a normal meeting in Birmingham. The principal attraction of the day was to be James Grimwood-Taylor's renowned display featuring the 1839-40 Postal Reforms. It goes without saying that much was expected because Mr. Grimwood-Taylor's displays are invariably as lucid as the many articles he writes and it is said it has much to do with the skills he acquired making archaeology comprehensible to university examiners. This was always going to be a display to be remembered.

James began by making the point that the first postal reformer belonged to the eighteenth century - John Palmer, the originator of the mailcoach. Nevertheless, the nineteenth century arrived with postal rates at sky high levels to finance the Napoleonic Wars. We were shown some fascinating examples of letters that had attracted enormous charges; £1-6-0 on an 1826 letter from Limerick (probably equivalent to £200 or £300 nowadays), £7-7-0½ from India to Edinburgh via London and an 1837 letter from Malta, sent by packet, that commanded a magnificent £11-10-0 which was refused by the recipient until a more tolerable charge of 23/- had been negotiated. It was the infinitely lower charge of 1d. for pre-paid letters at the Soldiers' Rate that helped point the way to the possibility of a uniform pre-paid rate on all letters.

It would be impractical to list all the notices, pamphlets and other ephemera that James had collected to illustrate the campaign for postal reform in the 1830s. One would be hard pressed to assemble anything comparable. Cobbett's leaflet of 1830 highlighted the unreasonable cost of letters and Robert Wallace's maiden speech in Parliament in 1833 defied convention by attacking the Post Office. Rowland Hill, inspired by Wallace then produced his famous pamphlets, originally intended for a limited influential audience but made public in later editions, proposing a uniform 1d. rate for inland letters. This was at a time when a typical charge was about 8d. However it was the Mercantile Committee on Postage, with Henry Cole as its Secretary, that spearheaded the subsequent propaganda campaign. We saw an example of their newspaper and of Cole's giant and tiny letters, the former charged single postage and the latter a double rate thus highlighting the nonsense of the prevailing system. There were posters from Banbury and Leyburn asking the public to sign petitions for penny postage and, an item familiar to our members, the petition for a public meeting in Shrewsbury that the late Steph Stobbs described in "Midland Mail" 26/4.

One aspect of postal reform unfamiliar to many of us was the dread that stationers had of any form of official postal stationary which they feared likely to put them out of business. Although the Mercantile Committee had produced an essay for a sticky stamp to appease them, when Southgate, a stationer, produced a leaflet explaining the 1839 Act of Parliament (which empowered the Treasury to introduce penny postage), he used the opportunity to make adverse comment on the proposal for postal stationary. It should be no surprise that, when the Mulready letter sheet appeared, unreasonable abuse was heaped upon it and, surprise surprise, Southgate caricatures are among those best known to philatelists and postal historians.

A Post Office Circular introducing the short-lived 4d. rate was neatly complemented by letters sent on the day preceding its introduction and costing 8½d. and 9d. and by an example of first day usage of a handstruck "4". James then showed letters that passed through penny posts at the 4d. rate and local letters whose reduced rates were not increased to 4d. There was a handstruck "4" used on a free letter and subsequently crossed out when it was appreciated that the 4d. rate, unlike the succeeding uniform penny rate, did not invalidate free franks. Most unusual (and rarely considered by collectors) was overseas mail from the 4d. period. This was not charged within the country at the 4d. rate but at the old mileage rate and the foreign rate added to that. Finally, to take us from the 4d. rate to UPP in the most elegant manner, we saw a free letter from Wakefield posted on 9th. January and redirected at Liverpool on 10th. January where, inevitably, it collected the new 1d. charge.

James told us that he had originally intended to close his collection to items from the UPP period but he had been seduced into extending it into the first few years of penny postage. Almost inevitably he had a first day penny black and a Mulready for good measure but there were several more esoteric offerings. How about a pre-paid 2d. letter on the first day of UPP before the twopenny blue stamps were ready? Or two different 1d. handstamps (Beaumaris and Bangor) on one letter? Or a piece of selvage stuck on the back of a letter to caricature Rowland Hill's original description of an adhesive stamp? There were very rarely seen examples of fraudulent use of joined halves of penny blacks and penny red-browns on letters, one with a vertical division and the other horizontal. Rowland Hill had become a very popular figure and the Scots produced a song sheet lauding him - even if they did think his first name was "Roland"! The massive sum of £10,000 was subscribed by way of a testimonial in 1844 and, although Hill lost his job in 1845, he was never likely to starve.

It had been a marvellous display of definitive postal history and a perfect complement to a series of articles that Mr. Grimwood-Taylor is now publishing in "Stamps Magazine".

After lunch, we had a most unexpected treat: we were entertained by three lady postal historians, surely a "first" in any society in the land. The "home" contribution was from Sadie Cole who gave a most unusual and attractive talk which she called "By-ways to Aberystwyth". Sadie had obviously spent some time in Post Office Archives researching the personal angle of letters to the P.M.G. concerning matters on the post roads leading to Aberystwyth. Among them was a feud of the 1790s between a Mr. Thomas Johns and Mr. Woodcock, the surveyor, concerning Mr. Johns' proposal that the post should be extended from Rhyader to Aberystwyth, the surveyor being less than enthusiastic. Surprisingly, Mr. Johns got his way but he was a wealthy man and able to stand surety for the new post. A Mr. Franklin Lewis, who lived on the Kington road, was unhappy with the conduct of the local mail contractor. He wrote in less than flattering terms explaining to the P.M.G. that drunkenness was the visiting evil of the lower classes in that area! We were left in no doubt that the contractor was numbered amongst them. Sadie's talk was instructive and fun - and postal history too! Her transcripts of the records, printed in a large typeface (presumably computer aided) were a model of clarity and gave your reporter food for thought. If lady members can handle postal history and computers, mere men had better look to their laurels.

The Editor would like to thank John Calladine for the above report.

DATE-STAMPS

If you have ever wondered why certain sub-offices used a rubber date-stamp, whilst another used a single circle steel or a double circle, the following extract from the Post Office Circular of 6 February 1929 may clarify matters.

The following conditions governing the supply of date-stamps and type to Sub-Offices are furnished for the guidance of Head Postmasters in completing requisitions:—

A Climax Dater is supplied to a Cash Account Postal Order Office with not more than one despatch.
A Single Steel Stamp is supplied to a Telegraph, or Money Order or Savings Bank Office which has no despatches.

A Combined Steel Stamp without index letters is supplied to a Telegraph, or Money Order or Savings Bank Office which has one despatch only.

A Combined Steel Stamp, with index letters according to the number of despatches, is supplied to any office with more than one despatch if there is not enough work to warrant the supply of two stamps. If two stamps are supplied, one should be a Combined Steel Stamp with clock time for date stamping correspondence, and the second a Single Steel Stamp for the counter.

A Head Postmaster may order a second stamp for any Sub-Office if he is satisfied that the use of one stamp for all purposes causes inconvenience, whether on account of the amount of correspondence to be stamped, or the number of despatches made, or the number of counter transactions for which a date-stamp is required.

In the issue of 2 September 1931 it was stated that the use of steel stamps had been extended to all Cash Account Postal Order Offices which transacted licence business. I do not know when these regulations fell into disuse. Certainly it appears that they were being followed in 1974-5, but there are now many offices still using a double circle which no longer cancel ordinary mail.

SHROPSHIRE RUBBERS

One of our members, Denis George, who is also a member of the Shropshire P.H.S., has written a book with the above title. It contains a good introduction on the history of Rubbers generally, and lists all known Rubbers used by Shropshire villages. It contains 60 pages and costs £5 plus 75p. postage. It is available from Denis Salt, 7 Wood Bank Drive, Shrewsbury. SY3 8RW.

THE BLIND POSTMAN

I am indebted to Harold Wilson for sending the following extract from the Derby Mercury of 4th. June 1851.

In the village of Baslow, near Chatsworth, a man named John Heathcote, who for a number of years has been quite blind, is regularly employed not only in meeting the gig mail, but also in delivering the letters. The plan usually adopted is as follows:—

Having received the bag from the mail driver, it is duly handed to the post-mistress, by whom the letters are sorted and deposited in different pockets about his person, and aided by a blind man's memory, they are duly delivered to the proper persons.

CORRESPONDENCE

Gay Parker writes:

"I found the article on Dunchurch and Rugby really interesting. I must say that I have not heard of a mailcoach operating directly out of Rugby. This appears to be borne out by the article. However, a friend of mine has a genuine mailcoach posthorn complete with Geo. III cypher. It also has the legend London-Rugby inscribed upon it. Visitors to my exhibition at Nuneaton last year may have seen it on display. (To my utter chagrin, my friend refuses to sell it to me!)

The only conclusion I can come to about the inscription, is that although the coach ran from Dunchurch, the contractor was actually based in Rugby. I thought for some time that the mailcoaches called at the Dun Cow (which is still there), but they called at the Bell Inn. This may have been opposite. Perhaps members can help with this.

Dunchurch is a lovely village. One of the attractions is the Old Lion Inn, near the church. Now a private dwelling, it was the place where the Guy Fawkes plotters waited to see if he had been successful. I thought the story of the milestone was hilarious. I wonder if the stone is still there. The present post office is in a quaint cottage on the main road. There are also some beautiful half-timbered cottages at the back of the Dun Cow.

It would be nice if the post office premises of the 1800 period could be traced, as many of the old buildings are still there."

Gay has also sent a copy of the Rugby and Dunchurch entry from the 1828 Pigot Directory, part of which is reproduced below. I notice that the up Liverpool mail only carried bye-letters from Dunchurch.

POST OFFICE, Rugby, Mrs. Elizabeth Ashley, Post Mistress.—Letters to LONDON, DUNCHURCH, NORTHAMPTON, &c. are despatched every evening at seven, and arrive every morning (Sundays excepted) at eight.—Letters for COVENTRY, BIRMINGHAM and LICHFIELD are despatched every morning at three, and arrive at a quarter past ten at night.—DUNCHURCH, William Sedgley, *Post Master*.—Letters for LONDON and all places on the line of road are despatched at ten minutes past nine every night, and arrive every morning (Mondays excepted) at ten minutes past four.—Letters for COVENTRY, BIRMINGHAM, &c. are despatched at ten minutes past four in the morning, and arrive at ten minutes past nine at night.—Letters to Rugby are despatched by a cross post at seven in the morning in summer and eight in the winter, and arrive every night at eight.—Letters are despatched by a cross post to DUNSTABLE every day at one, independent of the other departures and arrivals at Rugby.

COACHES,

FROM RUGBY.

To LEICESTER, the *Regulator* (from Oxford, &c.) calls at the Spread Eagle Inn, every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday afternoons at four.

To OXFORD & BANBURY, the *Regulator* (from Leicester) calls at the Spread Eagle Inn, every Tuesday, Thursday & Saturday mornings at half-past ten.

FROM DUNCHURCH.

To LONDON, the *Royal Mail* (from Liverpool) calls at the Bell Inn, every

COACHES—Continued.

day at one; goes through Daventry, Towcester, Stoney Stratford, Dunstable, St. Albans, &c.—the *Royal Mail* (from Holyhead) calls at the Bell Inn, every night at about ten minutes past nine—the *Alliance* (from Liverpool) calls at the Bell Inn, every night at about half-past eleven—the *Balloon* (from Birmingham) every night at ten—the *Eclipse* every morning at half-past five—the *Emerald*, every night at eleven—the *Independent*, every morning at twenty minutes past ten—the *Tally-ho*, calls at the Green Man, every morning at ten—and the *Union*, every night at ten—and the *Herald* (from Manchester) every morning (Mondays excepted) at half-past nine.

To BIRMINGHAM, the *Balloon* (from London) calls at the Bell & Green Man alternately, every morning at five; goes through Coventry, &c.—the *Eclipse*, calls at the Bell Inn, every evening at half-past five—the *Emerald*, every morning at six—the *Independent*, every afternoon at four—the *Tally-ho*, calls at the Green Man, every afternoon at four—the *Union* every morning at about five and—the *Rising Sun* (from Cambridge) every Monday, Wednesday and Friday afternoon at half-past four.

To CAMBRIDGE, the *Rising Sun* (from Birmingham) calls at the Green Man, every Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings at ten.

To HOLYHEAD, the *Royal Mail* (from London) calls at the Bell Inn, every morning at about ten minutes past four.

To LEICESTER, the *Regulator* (from Oxford) calls at the Green Man, every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday afternoons at half-past three; goes through Rugby and Lutterworth.

To LIVERPOOL, the *Royal Mail* (from London) calls at the Bell Inn, every morning at half-past four.

To MANCHESTER, the *Herald* (from London) calls at the Green Man, every morning at half-past three.

To OXFORD, the *Regulator* (from Leicester) calls at the Green Man, every Tuesday, Thursday & Saturday mornings at eleven; goes through Southam and Banbury.

PETERBOROUGH "SKELETONS"

by Derek Smeathers

I was most interested in Ted Coles' article - and very grateful for the pictures. Two more to add to my list !!

These coded skeletons have puzzled me (and probably other people) for quite some time. I first acquired one about five years ago and on asking various collectors was told, usually peremptorily, "They are times" or "Must be different offices" or "Counter staff" or "Days of the week".

Over the years, I have seen one or two others, but they are not all that common. A couple of years ago I mentioned them to a Peterborough "Specialist" who said that he had not heard of them, and dismissed them as of little interest. They are still turning up - I bought my most recent one in March 1989 and I give the following table of my collected items to see whether anyone can throw any light:

28 Dec 1899	diameter	32mm	letters	AD (close together)
10 Apr 1902		33		A M
22 Apr 1902		32		A J
13 Feb 1903		31		A K
16 Feb 1903		31		AH
12 Mar 1903		33		C F
4 Apr 1903		33		B C
20 Apr 1903		32		B J

There is no readily recognisable pattern. If we add Ted's to the list, we can say the vast majority are used in March and April, but then what about the two December ones? (Mine and Mackay's). There are enough of them to rule out most suggestions - they are not days of the week, or counter staff or different offices. What about time? They could be, except that two of my specimens, 12 Mar 1903 and 4 Apr 1903, have a further letter midway between the upper rim and the date - just where you would expect the time to be. In each case, it was a "Z". I reckon this rules out the lower code as being time. I think it also gets rid of Mr. Mackay's "erroneously" theory.

So what is the answer - why were they used and what do they mean? At one time I thought they might have some connection with a T.P.O. but my strikes are on mail to places as diverse as Paris and Accrington, Hammersmith and Rotherham. They are on postcards and envelopes - printed matter as well as ordinary hand-written missives. Any suggestions?

One final point I might mention. I have a 31mm skeleton dated 24 DEC 1907 very similar to the coded ones but without any letters at the base.

B.H.R.

POST CARD

Miss Editha Cumu



POST CARD.



Acetone
in a glass jar
1/2 x 1 1/2

Messrs. C. Whittaker & Co., Ltd.,
Engineers,
Accrington.

A.M. DEC 29 1899

This side may have a message written
upon it for inland postage, but the right
hand side must be reserved for address
and stamp only.

POST CARD

The Address to
be written on
this side



Mademoiselle Marguerite Girard
8 rue de Montmartre
Magasin de Couleurs
Paris



S. G. Cook Esq.
18. Arington Grove.
Penge.
London. S. E.

THE START OF THE "DERBY" ROAD?

by Harold Wilson

When I began research for a book on the history of the posts of Derby one of the first sets of papers I read was the Peover Papers. In these is a list of the Postmasters on the Chester Road and on the bye-road to Derby dated 1667. On this list there are three columns headed respectively :- Old Salaries; Salaries according to the Derby Road, and Salaries according to Judgement (Fig. 1). At the time the heading "according to the Derby Road" puzzled me. It seemed to suggest that the Derby Road was the first important bye-road, if not the very first if all other bye-road rates were charged accordingly, as it would appear from other references in P.O. Archives.

I was then given a copy of an extract from "State Papers Domestic. Charles II." Public Record Office Reference SP29/88/100. This is headed:

"By Daniel O'Neill Esq His Majesties Post-Master General.

These are to certifie Persons of all quallities and degrees what soever. That Daniel O'Neill Esq. His Majesties Post-master General, Hath erected and settled the conveyance of Letters too and from London and Sheafiel, by way of Torcester to Northampton, Harborough, Leicester, Loughborow, Derby, Chesterfield and Sheafiel in manner and forme as followeth."

A list of the stages and times of arrival and departure followed, showing that the post ran three days a week to Derby and twice a week from Derby to Sheffield. These papers are endorsed "1663" in a different hand. Daniel O'Neill was appointed Postmaster General on 29th. April 1663 and died on 24th. October 1664. This seemed definite enough, but no!

Howard Robinson in his book "Britain's Post Office" quotes Henry Bishop (appointed Postmaster General in 1660) as advertising that he had "at his great expense settled many new posts in several roads and by roads where heretofore no posts had ever been", citing Derby as one of these. This once again seemed to be the answer until I was able to see early correspondence of the Coke family at Melbourne Hall, nr Derby. Sir John Coke, senior was Secretary of State in 1635, and it was he who appointed Thomas Witherings as Postmaster General in 1635.

In the correspondence were several letters of 1653 and 1654 with "Post Paid 3d" and "Post Paid 6d" (double letter) as in Figs. 2 & 3, which would indicate a service at that time, since 3d. was the rate for a single letter for a distance over 80 miles.

To go back a stage, in the Catton collection, now in the Derbyshire Records Office, is a letter of 1647 (Fig. 4). I had always been told that there was no public post during the Civil War, and had assumed that the letter had been carried privately. In 1637 was published "The Carriers Cosmography" which listed places in London from which "Carriers, Wagons, Foot-posts and Higglers do come from many parts, towns, shires and countries...". This shows carriers from Derby on Thursdays and Fridays. These carriers and "footposts" carried letters, often at the same rate as the public post.

I then discovered the "Historical Manuscript Commission" books. One of these has extracts of correspondence between Sir John Coke, senior, and his son at Melbourne Hall. Those between 1637 and 1642 are of particular interest and are as follows :-

1637, Aug 5. Tottenham to Melbourne - "Your letters come sometimes late. I hope that will by Mr Witherings posts be amended. For we, the Postmasters General, have made him our deputy, that he may the better accommodate his letter office."

1640, Nov 15 to Melbourne - "I wrote to you last month by the post, and this week two letters by Tom Bell. One I received from you by Mr Witherings man..."

1640, Dec 23 to Melbourne - "I wrote yesterday to you by the post of Lichfield and on Monday by a servant of the Earl of Stamford."

CHESTER ROAD.

Miles	Stages	Postman's Name	Old Salary	Salary according to the Act of 1864	Salary according to the Act of 1864	Sum
18 single	London	John Bonnett	30.00.00	10.00.00	21.00.00	21.00.00
10 and 10	Baynham	Walter Vasey	40.00.00	20.00.00	30.00.00	30.00.00
10 and 10	St Albans	Sarah Simpson	40.00.00	20.00.00	30.00.00	30.00.00
7 and 10	Dunstable	Robert Jackson	40.00.00	17.00.00	25.10.00	25.10.00
12 and 7	Princes Hill	John Younger	40.00.00	20.00.00	30.00.00	30.00.00
12 and 12	Northampton	John King	20.00.00	20.00.00	20.00.00	20.00.00
12 and 12	Harborough	Charles Palmer	20.00.00	20.00.00	20.00.00	20.00.00
8 and 12	Leicester	Robert Brown	20.00.00	20.00.00	20.00.00	20.00.00
12 and 8	Southborough	Robert Brown	20.13.4	20.13.4	20.13.4	20.13.4
12 and 24	Derby	Henry Norton	40.00.00	10.00.00	40.00.00	40.00.00
10 and 10	Beckbury	Richard Woolford	20.00.00	20.00.00	20.00.00	20.00.00
10 and 13	Cottingham	Andrew Snape	40.00.00	23.00.00	34.10.00	34.10.00
14 and 10	Doncaster	Valentine Hutton	40.00.00	24.00.00	36.00.00	36.00.00
5 and 14	Leicester	John Day	66.00.00	53.00.00	59.00.00	59.00.00
6 and 6	Birmingham	John Watson	28.6.10	24.6.00	28.6.10	28.6.10
12 and 8	Collyer	Charles Holborn	40.00.00	20.00.00	30.00.00	30.00.00
16 and 12	Leicester	John Watson	40.00.00	28.00.00	40.00.00	40.00.00
12 and 12	Stafford	John Fulton	2.12.00	2.4.00	2.12.00	2.12.00
14 and 12	Manchester	Joseph Thomas	40.00.00	36.00.00	40.00.00	40.00.00
12 and 12	Warminster	John Green	40.00.00	24.00.00	36.00.00	36.00.00
20 and 20	Worcester	William Warden	60.00.00	27.00.00	40.00.00	40.00.00
16 and 16	Stoke	Charles Halliwell	100.00.00	64.00.00	100.00.00	100.00.00
14 and 16	Northwich	Richard Dunn	40.00.00	30.00.00	40.00.00	40.00.00
14 and 8	Cheshire	Charles Baker	90.00.00	22.00.00	60.00.00	60.00.00
12 and 8	Northwich	Richard Snodder	30.00.00	20.00.00	20.00.00	20.00.00
14 and 12	Derby	William Foster	30.00.00	26.00.00	26.00.00	26.00.00
10 and 14	Leicester	William Holland	30.00.00	24.00.00	24.00.00	24.00.00
24 and 10	Boatman	George Beane	60.00.00	34.00.00	34.00.00	34.00.00
24 single	Hull	George Swift	40.00.00	24.00.00	24.00.00	24.00.00
			1305 13 2	926 13 4	1209 13 2	804 00 00

1641/2, Mar 18 to Melbourne - "You will receive letters this week, both by the ordinary carrier and by a footpost from Swithland...." (This reference to Swithland is possibly explained by the next entry I quote.)

1643, Apr 24 to Melbourne - "The Ashby carrier came not to town this last return. This he sends enclosed by his cousin Danvers by the Leicester carrier." (The Danvers family owned the Swithland estate for many years.)

I had thought, until Robson Lowe's Postal History sale in March this year, that letters sent to Lichfield, as mentioned in the letter of 23 Dec 1640, had been sent on to Derby by carrier. However the letter in Fig. 5 was sold at that auction and I was able to contact the purchaser. The rate puzzled me but the purchaser provided the answer. He gave me a reference in the Bodleian Library in Oxford. This was from an "account of the General Postage made up for a quarter of a year beginning ye 25th March & ending 23 June 1659" which stated that Francis Lyndon, the postmaster of Lichfield, was to receive a salary of £59-15-0, made up of "4s-4d p day for the (Chester) Road & £160 p ann for ye branch to Derby &c", and receipts of £49-13-0 for letters on the Chester Road. (Rawlinson MS A. 64(f2371). The "&c" is not explained so I cannot say how much was actually paid for the "Branch Road". This now made sense of the reference in Sir John Coke's letter of 23 Dec 1640 to letters for Derby coming via Lichfield. The rate of 6d. is also correct for a single letter for a distance of over 140 miles (London to Derby via Lichfield). If we couple this with the reference in the letter of 5 Aug 1637, I believe that the post to Derby started when the Chester Road opened (or very soon after) in 1635. Also that the change from Lichfield to Towcester as the junction took place in 1660 as part of Henry Bishop's reorganisation.

The reason for Derby having such an early post is, I believe, the fact that the Coke family resided at Melbourne. As I said earlier Sir John, senior, was Secretary of State, one of the most important people in the country at that time. Other important people in the area included the Curzons at Kedleston, the Devonshires at Chatsworth, the Wilmots at Derby, the Harpurs at Calke and others.

Whether or not it will be possible to fix the exact dates only time will tell.



Fig. 2

Fig. 3

To the Hon.
 Thomas Selby
 Esq. — add
 Melborne
 Derby
 post paid 6d.

Fig. 4

To his honored friend Thomas
 Whitniet Esq. at Abington
 near Derby post
 paid 6d.
 post is paid
 Whithers at Derby Downe
 CATTON
 14th 1791

Fig. 5

presents these & my service to the most
 virtuous Lady the Lady Aston at
 S Henry Willoughby his house
 at Kitzby in Darbysire
 Leave these at M Theekstones house
 at the three tenies to be sent as
 above directed
 post payed 6d.
 Derby

RUBBER DATESTAMPS

by Derek Smeathers

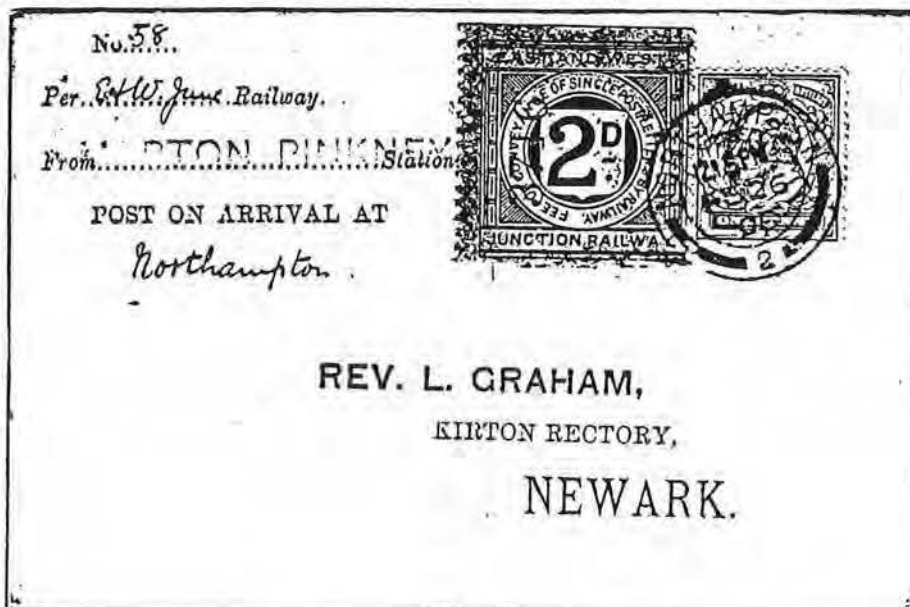
Recent items in Midland Mail on this subject have prompted me to write with just a different aspect. Before that though, I have one which shows the village name in two halves, at top and bottom. Is this unusual?



At a recent meeting of the local Postal History Group, I showed a few sheets on the subject of "SPELLING" and several rubber stamps were concerned. The obvious thing is to look for erroneous datestamps, and they are always turning up. In most cases they did not last long and were replaced - probably at local request. As a case in point, the stamp of GREAT OAKLEY KETTERING in 1920 is spelt KETERING.



But things may not always be what they seem and, in Northamptonshire at least, spellings of village names have varied considerably when applied to nearby places or landmarks. For example, had you arrived at MORTON PINKNEY by train about 1900, you could be forgiven for thinking that the Post Office handstamp was an error in reading MORETON PINKNEY. But that is the correct name of the village - only the railway station is officially MORTON PINKNEY.

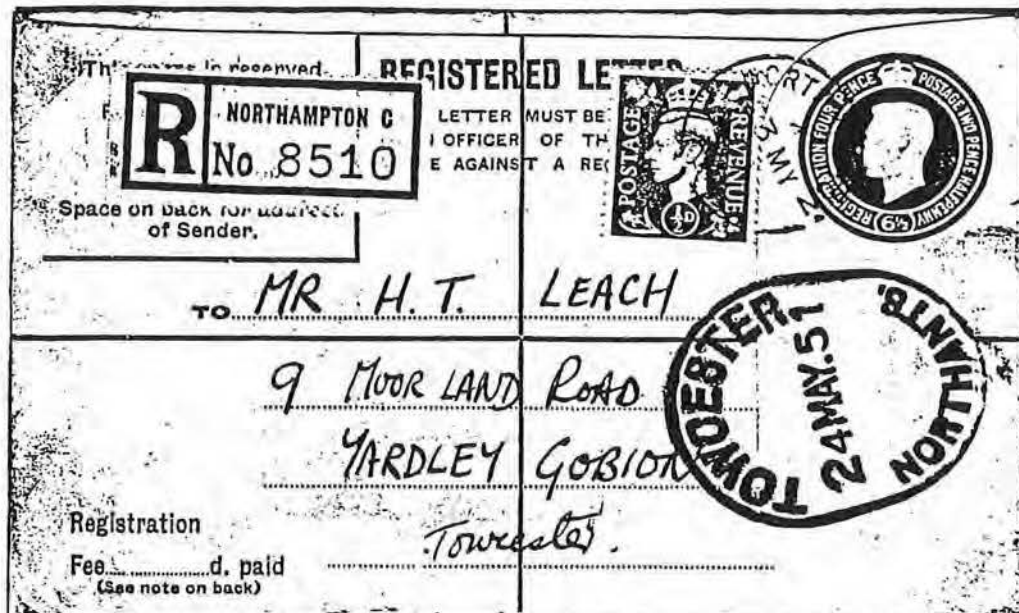


REV. L. GRAHAM,
KIRTON RECTORY,
NEWARK.

About the same time, the post office of HAZELBEECH was in the village correctly named HASELBECH - which has been the village name for as long as local folk have drunk beer! The Post Office spelt their office name as the locals pronounce their village name - a case of phonetic post !! However even the Post Office spelling went astray sometimes, so that their office name (already different) was changed again in their rubber handstamp. They gave it a BEACH - and that in a village almost as far from the sea as one could get !!



One word of warning, it has been pointed out by several correspondents that these rubbers get very distorted. But look at the illustration of a registered letter stamped with a Towcester rubber datestamp 24MAY51. I thought this was a distortion but James Mackay in his lovely book on Postmarks after 1840 shows examples of rubber datestamps made in the oval shape of this Towcester mark (page 53). So don't always expect the rubber stamps to be circular.



G.B. POSTAL HISTORY

ALSO: Some Foreign, Ephemera, Post Boxes - etc.

Wants Lists - for specific items or for general interests - will receive my personal attention

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A SURVEY OF SURVEYORS

by Rev. Christopher Beaver

"A Succession of Surveyors" in MM54/16ff outlined the careers of thirty men who served as Riding Surveyors between 1787 and 1856 in England and Wales. There were six districts between 1787 and 1799 and seven thereafter. In 1856 they were increased to nine, each by then, besides its surveyor, having a clerk and two assistants, these last doing most of the travelling.

The present study, after considering evidence that the desirability of direct on-the-spot investigation and oversight was realised in the seventeenth century, and the formal acknowledgement of it in 1715, attempts to trace the careers of the people who were appointed as surveyors between 1720 and 1787.

For some source material, readers are referred to more substantial publications. Foxell and Spafford's "Monarchs of All They Surveyed" (HMSO, 1952) which records much concerning "The Story of the Post Office Surveyors" contains the full text of two 1715 documents, which are a carefully worded request from the Postmasters General seeking authority to appoint surveyors, and the reply to this by the Lords Commissioners of the Treasury. There too is a typical instruction to a surveyor sent by Ralph Allen in 1730. Several other such instructions are quoted or referred to by Howard Robinson (Britain's Post Office, 1953, has one plate) or by Sally Davis (Ralph Allen, Benefactor and Postal Reformer, pub Bath Postal Museum 1985). All these authors, particularly Robinson also quote from the surveyor's bland statements of satisfaction with things as they were when asked to express their thoughts about John Palmer's plan in the early 1780s. There is neither need nor space to repeat such texts and details here.

The case for appointing cost-effective surveyors was successfully urged upon the Treasury in 1715 by James Craggs and Lord Cornwallis, both newly in office as Postmaster General. The former had already made investigation "into the several managements of" the Post Office and found it "has not proper Surveys and Cheques upon their Inferior Officers and Deputies". Surveyors were needed "to make continual journies into the Kingdom to examine the accounts and superintend the management", or in other words "Inspect all the Main Roads, Cross Road, & Branches." The Treasury accepted that the proposed action would "conduce much to the Improvement of his Majesty's Revenue." (Post 1/6 pp.7-9).

Craggs was not the first person to make such a recommendation in high places. Thomas Gardiner as Controller of the Inland Office had added a note to his "General Survey of the Post Office" made for the Duke of York in 1677, concerning the difficulty of bringing the postage for letters not passing through London into the Revenue. He suggested "it would be a good work done to send a fit person through all the Roads, to ride with the Maile from end to end, examining the furniture of the severall Postmasters and Conveniences for his Office, to observe the generall riding through the stages, and what expedition they are capable of performing; and chiefly what number of letters are received in every stage, both going and returning." The difficulty arose, as he recognised, chiefly from the several clauses in the 1660 Act which allowed letters to be conveyed by means other than by the agents of the King's Master of the Posts, and from the very vague clause: "Nothing shall prohibit carrying Letters or Packetts from any Town or Place to the next Respective Post Road or Stage appointed for that purpose" which seemed to encourage all kinds of clandestine private enterprises. There is no sign of any resultant action. On the contrary, for Gardiner came to realise one man would be insufficient. His 1682 revision, prepared for Lord Dartmouth, asked for "Ryding Surveighors" in place of "a fit person". It also mentioned a further sphere where inspectors were needed - it would be "worthwhile to imploy an honest cheque" on all the packet boats.

Gardiner's recommendations were based on long experience. Officials in London were well aware of much of what was going on, but were powerless to do anything more than remonstrate in letters to some of the offenders and complain to higher authority. Soon after Gardiner became Controller of the General Letter Office a notice appeared in the London Gazette of 8th. July 1667 (distributed of course the length and breadth of the land):-

"All Deputy-Postmasters ... are to take notice that for the better securing of the correspondence by Letter in England and Ireland, several persons are appointed from the Generall Letter Office, to go through each respective Road, to examine the failers, and settle the Stages and Pacquet-Boats for the ease of the Nations, this day beginning with the Chester Road..."

Whatever that inspection and other measures achieved it was becoming clear to some that a permanent establishment of experienced on-the-spot supervision and unannounced inspection would achieve much more. Like James Hickes the long-serving Senior Clerk (who admired Gardiner because he "attends closely to the business by which means others do the same."), Gardiner was concerned about corruption and inefficiency, and knew the revenue from the Post Office ought to be much larger, but wanted there to be fair treatment and just rewards as inducements to postmasters and everyone else in the service to be both honest and efficient.

Another measure Gardiner urged was the establishment of six-day posts on the grounds that regular and frequent posts would discourage the prevalent use of carriers and private posts. That would involve increasing the establishment and higher salaries - much greater expense. The Revenue would not suffer, quite the contrary, and such thinking was premature but not unreasonable.

The way was cleared for the developments of the eighteenth century by the Post Office Act of 1711. Despite the rejection by the House of Commons of a clause which would have given powers of search to counter the illicit carriage of mail, the carriers were now specifically forbidden to carry any letters other than concerning the goods on the wagon or cart. The appointment of surveyors was provided for - that however meant people who would settle distances "by the same measure and standard" on all the post roads throughout the country. Another clause, alleging conspiracy among postmasters, stipulated penalties against anyone found guilty of embezzling the postage of any "By or Way Letters to the prejudice of the Revenue." It was this provision which could be used to justify the new P.M.G's of 1715, intent on rooting out abuses, in their application to their masters at the Treasury for travelling surveyors with power to inspect accounts and supervise the management. In the meanwhile the introduction of the 1711 rates of postage and the conversion of many "farmers" into managers of their bye-roads or areas had combined to worsen matters - far fewer letters were being put into the post offices and the Revenue had dropped not risen. On 13th June 1715, three weeks after the application, precisely what was asked for was agreed by the Lords Commissioners of the Treasury:-

"Six Persons may be appointed to Survey through the Six Main Roads in England and all the Cross Roads and Branches with such Instructions and Authorities as you shall think proper to give them at an Allowance of Twenty Shillings a Day each." There were however two unsurprising conditions - the "Charge is to be kept up no longer than you shall find absolutely necessary", and "you are from time to time to lay before Us to Accot of their several Transactions and what Benefit the Revenue received from this Survey. "It was also stipulated that the Receiver General of the Post Office was to be responsible for the payment of the six. (Post 1/6 pages 7-9; Post 3/5 which is General Accounts 1711-20 contains no allusion to surveyors.)

Unfortunately no record of the names of most of those appointed in 1715 seems to have survived, nor of payments to them. It appears probable that within a year or two the operation was scaled down. Some at least were still functioning when Allen met the same P.M.G's in 1719 to offer to develop and manage bye and cross-posts throughout England and Wales. He was able to point to a report by one of the surveyors that he had been able to account fully for the bye and cross-road letters passing through the Bath Post Office. Moreover in his "Own Narrative" of 1761, where he outlines the checks by which "every Postmaster on the same Road & in all the Branches of the same Road" and "reciprocally between the Postmasters on different and on the Branches of different Roads", "kept in vigour by the constant tho' occasional inspection of Surveyors", he states that the problem with the bye and way letters had been "judged to be without remedy after these six Surveyors with all their Volumes of Reports had made the matter appear still more desperate than they found it." Allen had clearly read these volumes before preparing his plan, but they do not appear to have survived or been seen by any writers on the subject since. "Some of the less able Surveyors" actively opposed the plan, whether as maliciously as the many postmasters who were guilty of defrauding the Revenue he chooses not to assert, though the ringleader was a corrupt surveyor - "one Mr. Joseph Bell, afterwards Controller of the Inland Office, and at length dismissed from that service and publicly prosecuted in His Majesty's Court of Exchequer for damages, in reparation of notorious frauds by him committed, which frauds his very Office was erected to prevent." The imputation is clear and it will be no surprise to discover Allen was careful, as far as in him lay, to ensure future surveyors would be people he knew and could trust. In Post 2 there is a gap from 1715-20 where conclusive proof might have been found, but it does seem evident that there was no continuity of surveyors from 1715 to midsummer 1720 when Allen's first contract began. (All writers hitherto have assumed otherwise or give that impression.) The 1721 Accounts (Post 2/18 p.100) contain just one reference to a single surveyor, John Jesse, who was paid by the Receiver General £28 for twenty-eight days during 1720-21, not unlikely during the first quarter. As he was later Accomptant General and the facts fit the 1715 arrangements made with the Treasury, this may have been the last such temporary assignment under its terms, that is he was sent into the country specifically to sort out financial problems at particular offices. After this there is no further reference to surveyors in the Accounts until the appointment of a Resident Surveyor in 1743.

GREAT BRITAIN 1580-1901

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In Ralph Allen's "Own Narrative" there is an explanation of just why he considered reliable surveyors essential to his scheme. Between putting his proposition to the P.M.G's and the beginning of his first contract "Mr Allen went himself thro-out the Kingdom to make an actual Survey" in the course of which he discovered the extent to which, and the means by which, postmasters were defrauding the Revenue, and so found it necessary "to appoint Surveyors whose office it is ... to repair to and for a considerable time together, to reside at, those places which one may fitly call the Key Posts; and there make inspection from day to day into the due operation of the established Cheques. In this Service the Surveyors are to keep exact Journals of everything that passes and to transmit to Mr Allen Copys of the most material parts of them..."

From the point of view of James Craggs and Lord Cornwallis the object of the contract with Allen was precisely akin to the purpose for which surveyors had been deemed necessary five years before. The terms were such that the Revenue met no costs and could not lose. Allen and his unknown backers faced the risks and he convinced P.M.G's and Treasury that he could succeed where those earlier surveyors had largely failed, to the benefit of the public, the Revenue and himself. In December 1720 the P.M.G's sent to the Treasury Allen's accounts for his first quarter, some figures precise, others estimated, "which we hope will justify our Suggestions that the said (Cross Road and Bye Letters) Branch was capable of Improvement and in probability will be more so if not obstructed by the several Postmasters in the several Countreys, who did put the greatest part of the Profits of the said Cross Road and Bye Letters into their own Pockets, which we thought there was no other way to prevent for the future but by this Method." (Post 1/6/166-7; c.f. Post 9/9/25.)

Evidence suggests that the contracts of three riding surveyors were regularly renewed at the same date as Allen's, i.e. every seven years after 1720 until 1755 and for the last time in 1760, early because of the King's death. Appointed by the P.M.G's they were nevertheless nominated by Allen and each paid £300 by him. It is of course because of this that there is no allusion to them in the G.P.O. account books. Though earlier names are known from copies of some letters of instructions which Allen sent to them (Post 68/1), the earliest surveyor in the surviving appointment and establishment books (Post 58/1 and Post 59/3-21) is Francis Kemp in 1740. This could be because he was the first to be recommended to rather than chosen by Allen. The very next appointment is the most intriguing of all: "John Lumley appointed a surveyor in the room of Francis Kemp discharged, to be paid by Ralph Allen, to commence Lady Day 1742." It seems to mean that he was called back after a couple of years at home or in Bath more likely, for he was an experienced and highly valued surveyor. A few months later he moved to London (still paid by Allen) to become the first "Principal and Resident Surveyor". When the Treasury agreed to expenditure on such a post he was transferred to the establishment of the G.P.O. In 1750, a year or two after his death, a gratuity was allowed to Lumley's daughter provided that she handed over the records she had in her possession. He had paid for "transcribing and putting his Books of Surveys in such order as to be an Instruction or Guidance to the young Surveyors & others, which said Books he had, by indefatigable Pains & Industry, been twenty eight years in compiling during all which Time he not only put the Deputy Postmasters upon such a Footing as to advance the Revenue, but got in many arrears of Debts due to the Crown from Executors & Securities of Postmasters, who had been dead several years...and..there is a considerable Sum of Money that has been allowed and admitted by our Predecessors to be due & owing to him." It would be hard to envisage a more glowing tribute. Lumley had been appointed in 1720, so for the P.M.G's in 1750 to refer to him as "our first surveyor" suggests discontinuity with those temporarily assigned to surveying duties before him. He retained the postmastership of Abingdon, one of the offices of the Bristol to Oxford cross-post, from 1712 (the same year that Allen was appointed at Bath) until 1731. Similarly Allen remained postmaster until 1748 when his brother Philip took on Bath instead of Hungerford, though Philip had already been working in Bath for Ralph since the 1720's, neither of them confining himself to Post Office business. They habitually paid others to do many of their duties in typical eighteenth century fashion.

(to be continued)

COMPETITION

This is the second part of the competition in which you have to calculate the charge(s) which have been erased from each of the covers shown. My apologies for the missing A in the last issue; it was stuck on, and at some stage became detached.

F

1516

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TAILPIECE

With the approach of Christmas our tailpiece poses two questions about a seasonal item. What is unusual about the slogan shown on the envelope below? Which other city in the Midlands used a similar die? The answers are at the bottom of the page.

THE NEXT MIDLAND MAIL

This will appear as soon as possible after the January meeting. If it contains nothing else, I will ensure that the long promised map of mailcoach routes is there. I have one or two other pieces in reserve, but would welcome articles of any length at:

John Soer, 51d, Barkham Road, Wokingham, Berkshire RG11 2RG.

G.B. COVERS

Do you see my lists of GB cover material? If you don't and are a member of The Midland (GB) Postal History Society, you should! They contain a wide selection of interesting and unusual items - county material, difficult values and rates- from 1840 to date. Send for a copy of my latest list today. All 'Wants Lists' for specific items or county material will receive my personal attention.

ROGER HUDSON



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ANSWERS: The slogan was produced by an experimental die made of a plastic material. To my knowledge, but I could be wrong, the only other place in the Midlands using this type of die was Coventry. Impressions may be recognised by the frame around the slogan which was not usual with this slogan.