



MIDLAND MAIL

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



President: Richard Farman

Chairman:
Derek Smeathers

Treasurer:
Elizabeth Lewis

Secretary:
Eric Lewis

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CONGRATULATIONS

Our congratulations to Dave Tarry whose entry on Mauritius - The Sterling Period won a gold medal and a special prize at the recent international in Amsterdam.

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

On 16th November we meet in Warwick at the premises of Warwick & Warwick when the afternoon, starting at 1.30 p.m. will be devoted to members' one board displays on "The Contents of Letters or Messages on Postcards". The meeting will be preceded by a Committee meeting starting at 11 a.m.

Our annual visit to the Bass Museum, Burton-on-Trent takes place on 7th December. The day starts at 10.30 a.m. with members' standing displays. Lunch will be at 12.30 p.m. The cost will be approximately the same as in previous years and if you would like to join us, please ring Richard Farman on 01283-566515 by 30th November. At 2.00 p.m. Gavin Littaur will display "Great Britain Postal History" from his Gold Medal award-winning collections. Gavin has written giving more details about the programme for the afternoon. It will consist of:

A short (fifteen minutes) introductory piano recital of 'Encores';

A ninety minute display of British Postal History, from the twelfth to the nineteenth centuries, including the first ever showing of a major new discovery, expanding the literature on the early postal history of London.;

A "fun-time" display (fourteen minutes) of miscellaneous postal items, including a mailcoach blunderbuss; a silver post horn; a wooden Victorian postbox; an intricate model of a mailcoach, some naughty early letters and a rather special "wreck cover" - the only letter written on the Titanic, which was on board the night the ship sank, and which survived;

A final 'Encore' (one minute) - "celebration".

On 11th January 2003, we meet at St Germain's Scout Hut, Portland Road, Birmingham when, starting at 1.30 p.m., Eric Lewis will give a display on "Birmingham Local Posts, 1650-1900". Please note the change of speaker. Godfrey Townsend and Albert Bayliss will now display "Oxfordshire" at the meeting in Worcester on 15th March.

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THE SEPTEMBER MEETING

A joint meeting of the Midland (GB) Postal History Society, the Somerset & Dorset Postal History Group and the Bristol Postal History Group was held in the village hall at Kington St Michael, Wiltshire, on 14th September. Some twenty members of our Society attended the all-day event. Throughout the meeting, a well-appreciated standing display of Chippenham Postal History was provided by Mr Don Little. Starting with a list of Chippenham postmasters and an example of the first CHIP.NHAM handstamp, Don's display included all the straight line handstamps, mileage marks, penny post offices, "missent" marks, duplexes and squared circles - and even found room for a few parcel post labels.

The principal display of the day was given by one of our own members, Mark Samwell of Bath. Although described on the programme as "Coloured Postal Markings", Mark suggested it might have reflected the display better if more emphasis had been given to "Coloured Obliterations". As it turned out, no one could have complained at either description.

Mark told us that his principal interest covered the 1850s and 1860s. In 1851, the postmaster of Durham suggested that different coloured stamping inks be allocated to each surveyor's district. In the event of a datestamp being unreadable, it would then be possible to allocate blame! Mark showed us a map of the seven surveyor's districts, as they were in 1850. The original colour allocations were made late in 1852 and included, not only England, but Ireland and Scotland - see Michael Champness' article on "Coloured Postmarks 1840-60" in The British Mailcoach, issue no. 25. Red, for the Northern District, and pink, for the South Wales District, looked very similar in practice. The orange (often yellow) stamping ink of the Western District disappeared from use in a year or so; Bath stopped using it at Christmas 1853. South Wales' ink became more red than pink and, by 1856, the Western District was using what can only be described as a sludgy greeny-olive ink.

Perhaps the key point that came across in the display was that obliterating ink (to cancel adhesive stamps) and stamping ink (for the datestamp) should have been quite different inks but, in practice, many adhesives were cancelled with stamping ink. Furthermore, it was not until 1855 that it was made clear that sub-postmasters were to obtain their stamping ink from their head postmaster. The implication must be that, until 1855, sub-postmasters could use whatever ink they fancied. The sub-offices of Bath were given yellow ink when the posttown of Bath stopped using it. It was the most expensive of the colours to mix.

We saw pages of adhesive stamps, on and off cover, imperforate and perforate, with a wide range of obliterations from offices across the country and with the ink colours carefully described. A large swathe of the Midlands was green with, perhaps, the finest green colour from Newcastle under Lyme. There were examples of the supposed Western District green that looked as if too much oil had been added to the stamping mixture (recipes for which had been supplied in 1852). There was a range of examples of blue ink, including the numbered obliterator of Lynmouth. The rarities are the true red cancels. One of the "rogue towns" that used the wrong colour was Mere in Wiltshire and its '984' is the best of the English reds. Ink colour described as "brown" is often nothing of the kind and we saw the true brown that was intended in the Home District on a cover from Southampton. We learned that very few coloured cancels are to be found from offices in the north of England.

The second part of the display concerned the correctly termed 'double stamps' - stamps that combined the obliterator and the datestamp. Although these were used to obliterate adhesives, offices often began by using stamping ink and, surprisingly, there does not seem to have been a specific instruction to use obliterating ink. We saw a frame of English 'spoons', including a cover from Leamington with a "Too Late" instructional mark struck in the same colour as the Leamington spoon. Nottingham used coloured ink for its sideways duplex but this was seldom a true colour and what appear to be mixed inks were used. (Strikes described as "violet" are no more than a blue ink variant - true violet was the aqueous ink used for rubber stamps.)

One of Mark's frames showed examples of sub-offices cancelling adhesive stamps. Some offices, without numbered obliterations, used their datestamps for this purpose. Examples of English undated circular stamps (UDCs) cancelling adhesive stamps on letters for local delivery are very scarce but, inevitably, one was included.

There are very few instances of coloured strikes in the late 1860s and '70s. They are sometimes found on penny plate adhesives, blue and red ink being used occasionally. Examples displayed were from Emsworth (Hants) and from Ireland. However, printed registered envelopes turn up with the vertical obliterations in colour, usually blue. There were examples from Birmingham, Manchester and Northampton. Red is seldom seen.

This had been an eagerly awaited display and Richard Farman thanked Mark Samwell warmly for our undoubted enlightenment. Although Mark had to leave to attend a wedding (in Northampton!) his display was then supported by four eighteen sheet displays on the same theme of "Coloured Postal Markings". The first of these was by Chris Jackson and was founded on Worcestershire examples. The marks of the penny posts of Malvern, Worcester and Stratford are to be found in red/orange and Chris included the "No 3" of the Worcester Penny Post in the same colour as the main office. There was a unique example of the Dudley Penny Post in blue. Even mileage marks can be found in coloured inks; we saw Pershore in blue, Worcester in red, Upton in a watery blue and Redditch in red-brown.

Chris was followed by Tony Osbourne of the Somerset & Dorset PHG. He began with coloured 'Post Paid' marks of the period 1776 to 1791 and continued through to modern examples, such as the red ink of 1990. There were blue stamps from the Axbridge area and those of Langport in red, yellow, blue and sea-green. Another S&D PHG member, an inveterate supporter of the joint meetings, is Betty Savage who told us that Sherborne (rarely), Shaftsbury (more frequently) and Weymouth cancelled adhesive stamps in colour.

Our own Roger Broomfield completed the supporting displays and we saw UDCs of Herefordshire in as many colours as one could think of. In particular, he focussed on the Ledbury area and we were able to follow the progression of colours used for its datestamp and then at the sub-offices that followed with those same colours. Two colours of UDC on a single cover are not unusual in the county and Roger made the point that Herefordshire had ink changes before the 1850s. For example, we saw Birch Penny Post in several different colours.

The programme after lunch was devoted to twelve nine sheet displays with no restriction other than they were the favoured items of those displaying them. They all deserved a more comprehensive description than can be given in a report of practical length and one trusts that those mentioned will appreciate the need for brevity.

Betty Savage followed-on from the morning's display by showing coloured marks, including mileage marks, and not just obliterations, of Dorset offices such as Wareham, Blandford, Cranbourne and Sherborne.

Chris Beaver highlighted the spoons and sideways duplexes of Staffordshire. Interesting facts included: (i) five of the twenty-nine offices that had spoons were in Staffordshire; (ii) only two offices in the county used sideways duplexes; (iii) the largest of all spoons was at Wolverhampton; (iv) there was a "732" spoon error at Stafford.

We don't often have the chance to see Robert Johnson's material and he picked a few choice items from his George VI collection. One with apparently unnecessary 'postage due' stamps was shown to have a significant annotation in manuscript - "previously used stamp". Among some twopenny blue covers were letters to Italy, Japan and Russia, and one with a 10d embossed stamp used in the 1860s. Hands up those who knew the 10d embossed was reprinted in the 1860s.

An even rarer 'avis' in our neck of the woods was Roger Vaughan of the Surrey PHG. He showed us postcards and handstamps from some pre-1964 Wiltshire offices. Few could be more obscure than one in the grounds of Longleat House and another, at Great Bedwyn, in a monumental mason's yard. (Ed: It is still there.) We were delighted to see Roger and hope that it will not be the last time he'll visit us.

Harold Wilson would not have dared to omit some handsome railway material. The intriguing numbered stamps of the Liverpool & Manchester Railway surely refer to the trains that carried the items but why were they used? Did you know that Derby Station was the first railway station to have a post office? Would you have thought it possible that an unofficial penny post existed at Derby in 1654?

Our good friend, John Millener showed his favourite city - Wells. He had a 'skeleton' used the day before a datestamp was issued, some very elusive 'missent' marks and the "Paid at Wells" mark. His parcel post labels (included to keep Bill Toye happy) included an unassigned example and he concluded with some picture postcards of Wells - cards that were often sent contrary to the appropriate postal regulations for such cards.

Roger Martin (again of the S&D PHG) said his display was mainly of items whose contents made them his favourites. There was a letter of 1772 from a son, at school in Bristol, to his father in Hebden Bridge describing his walk there. We learned that there was (effectively) no summer in Europe in 1816 because of a volcanic eruption in the Philippines. We were asked (and didn't know) when peacock blue ink, rather than black, was first used in this country and when manila envelopes made an appearance.

Mike Welch's display was of items rather more familiar to us. He explained that the twin arc datestamps were really a Scottish introduction but Birmingham and Liverpool were allowed to use them, from 1883, instead of squared circle handstamps. We saw a range of these stamps from Birmingham and they have been the subject of articles in 'Midland Mail' by Elizabeth and Eric Lewis.

Alan wall, our Bristol PHG representative, picked items from Bristol, particularly from Clifton. There were letters of 1710/11 and 1716 "to be left at the post house in Bristol". There was a Hotwells "7PPP" - penny post paid - and an "8PPU" of Clifton with a London 'Free' and no indication that the penny post charge had ever been paid. Alan also had an infrequently seen example (in Bristol) of two receiving house numbers on one cover.

(Dr) Geoff Tapper featured the Shaftesbury Penny Post. He told us that the post functioned over three periods and showed examples of letters from each period. Geoff said that he couldn't end his display without an example of a Wessex cancel on cover, nor did he.

It was left to two of our members to complete the day. Dave Tarry took us to Newport, Salop, and had three of the four recorded first straight-line marks from the town. He also had three examples of the "Missent to Newport S" mark and the earliest known Shropshire Mulready (of 9th May 1840). Two Mulreadies from Newport further gilded the Shropshire lily.

Richard Farman, as befits the President, kept his offering until the very end. It concerned the Napoleonic prisoners of war on parole at Ashby-de-la-Zouch. On parole or not, one absconded, was recaptured and spent his remaining time in a prison hulk (illustration supplied, of course). Two prisoners converted to the Baptist church and retained links with Ashby. Also, as befits a president, Richard ended the meeting on time and went beyond the call of duty by manhandling many of the tables and chairs to the storage room. It had been a good day in rural Wiltshire and the sun shone. WJC

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THE OCTOBER MEETING

On 12th October we met at a new venue - St Germain's Scout Hut in Smethwick. (Why is a church in Birmingham dedicated to a bishop of Paris?) The new venue has the advantage that it is possible to listen to the speaker from the comfort of an armchair. However, the quality of Harold Wilson's display on "Railways and the Mail" was such that there was no temptation to have a quiet snooze.

Harold began his display with examples of letters carried on the Manchester & Liverpool Railway. A number of letters addressed to the Manchester area were marked with numbers from 2 to 7. Did these represent the number of the train that had carried a particular letter. On the routes to London, some of the mail coach guards transferred to the railways. Often, they were given letters by the public to be taken to the G.P.O. in London. Such letters were marked with the name of the railway from which they had originated. We saw an example from the Blackwall Railway.

Next came examples of the early missent handstamps used in the London & Birmingham RPO and in the Grand Northern RPO. When used on the day mails such handstamps were struck in red ink. Another missent handstamp was that used in the Midland RPO. Also of note was the E/MR handstamp used in 1901 on a missent letter from Woodbridge to Hinckley. This is the only recorded use of this handstamp after 1876. From the GWR came another missent - that of the London & Exeter RPO used in 1856. The District Sorting Carriages were introduced in May 1857. They used a large star to denote missent letters and we saw examples from the District Carriages on the Midland and the G.W.R. The former was on a letter sent in July 1860 from London to Hathersage. It is likely that the letter had gone beyond Sheffield on the train.

The fourth service to be introduced was that on the Caledonian Railway. The CR handstamps appeared in a range of different sizes. Among other items were the only recorded example of the missent handstamp used on the day mail, strikes of the CR/F handstamp for use on letters addressed to destinations north of Perth, and a variety of datestamps including a skeleton. We saw a number of items from the London and Exeter T.P.O. including the diamond shaped handstamps, the duplex and the G01 obliterator. Though Harold explained that it is probable that the latter was used in the post office on Paddington.

Harold then turned to the various feeder services, starting with the "*Missent to Rugby/and Newcastle RWPO*". From the Ipswich District Sorting came the only recorded example (1869) of the boxed I.S.T. which was used on mail missent to the Sunday Sorting Tender.

The use of the framed "SHREWSY & TAMWORTH/R.P.O. as a cancellation was one of only two recorded examples. We saw examples of the handstamps to denote the late fee for letters posted at either Cannon Street or Charing Cross to go on the London & Dover S.C. From the Cambridge District Sorting Carriage came the only recorded example on cover of the circular framed C.D/S.C handstamp. Equally rare is the B34 numeral handstamp - one of two recorded examples - used on the London & Holyhead T.P.O. Harold finished the first half of his display with a cover where the bag seal of the Plymouth and Bristol Sorting Tender had been impressed upon the wax used to repair a damaged envelope.

The second half of Harold's display began with the postmarks of railway stations. The first station to have a post office was Derby which was at the junction of three railway companies, meaning that there was a need to transfer considerable amounts of mail. Harold showed us the missent handstamp struck in red on a cover of October 1840. Other stations with missent handstamps were Bristol, Southampton and Crewe. We also saw the G01 handstamp used at Paddington Station and the O47 cancel used at Crewe.

The next section was devoted to the Railway Letter Service which started in 1891. Harold traced the change in rates and the different designs of stamp. A letter sent on the last day of the service, 9th June 1984, cost £1.15.0 plus 27p V.A.T.

In 1933, the GWR introduced a Railway Air Letter Service and in 1934 all four railway companies formed a combined service. Although the amount of mail carried was small, we saw a number of covers.

Harold rounded off his display with a look at the Railnet System and the Post Office Railway.

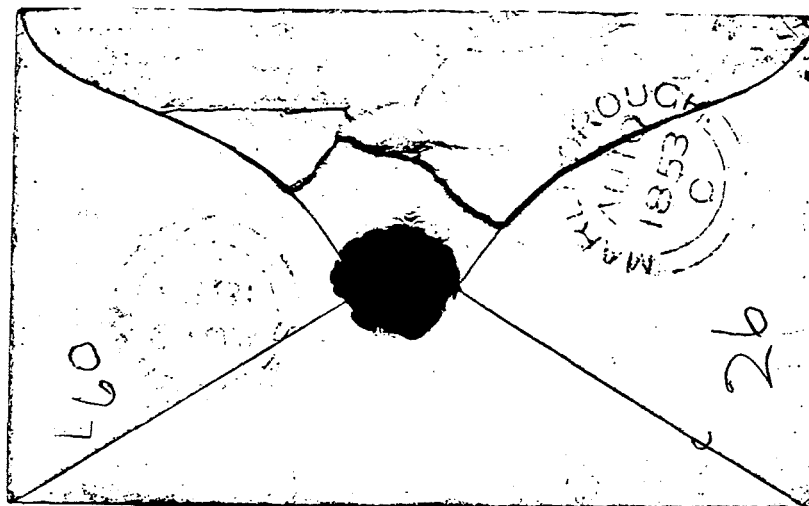
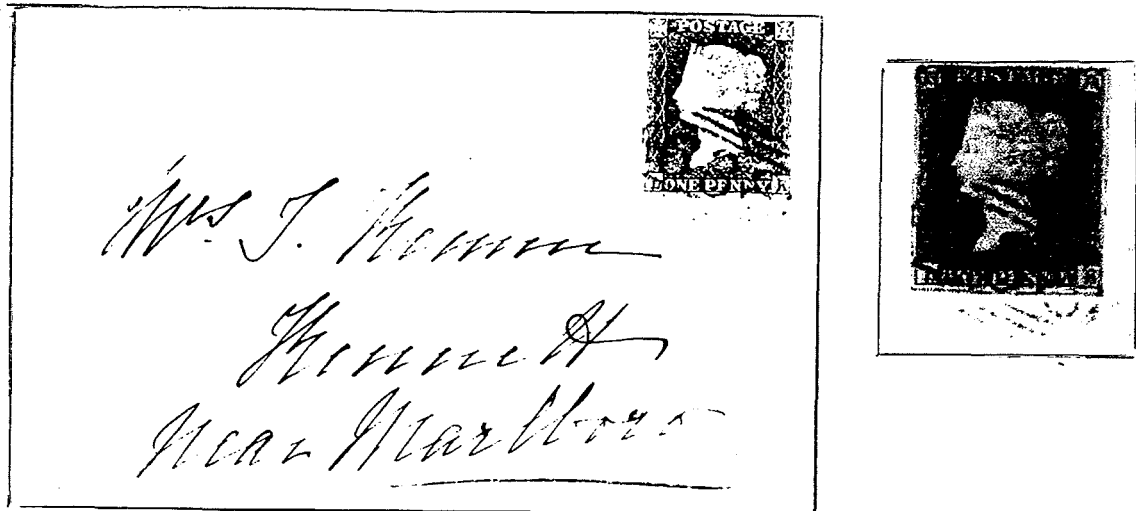
In thanking Harold, Derek Smeathers commented that not only had we seen much very rare material but how well Harold presented his material.

A SALISBURY ERROR

by Norman Higson

Recently, while sorting my Salisbury collection, I came across the item shown below. The stamp has been cancelled by an 1844 type numeral cancellation with number "638" but backstamped clearly with datestamps of Salisbury and Marlborough (10th August 1853), and there are no other marks.

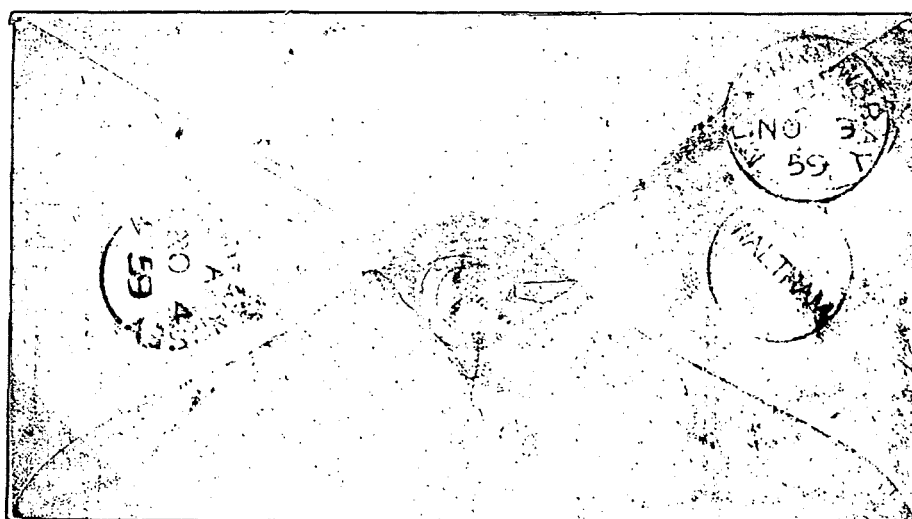
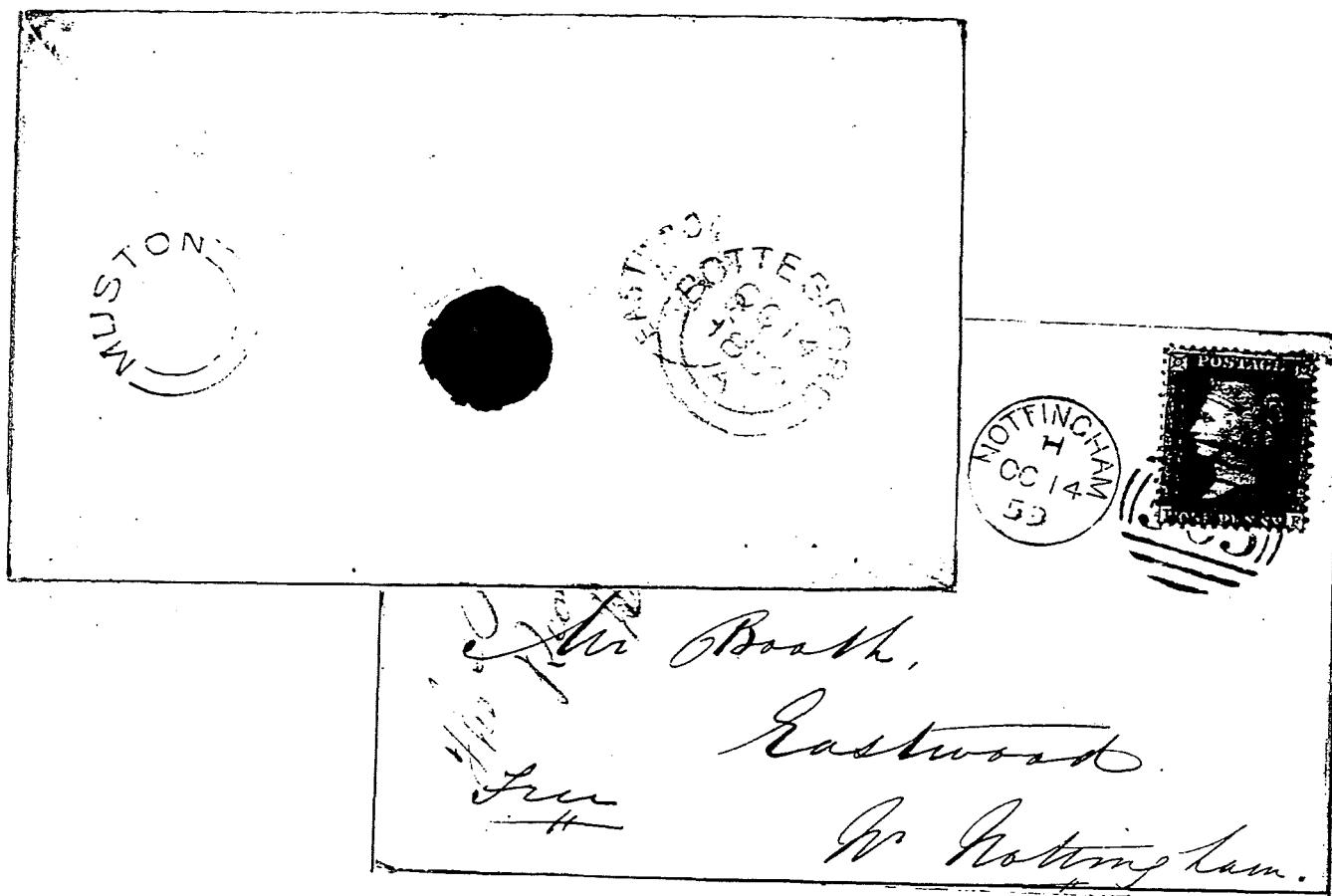
Salisbury's number was "683" and neither Dr Siggers nor John Parmenter list any error of issues at this time. Since "638" was allocated to Retford, Nottinghamshire, I am appealing to Nottinghamshire collectors to check if they have any Retford covers from that period showing a Salisbury mark struck in error. Contact: Norman Higson 01242 672825.



TWO UNRECORDED DOUBLE CIRCLES

When a book is in its fourth edition, one could be forgiven for thinking that most items still extant would have been recorded, especially when the County Editor concerned has been collecting for over twenty years. When two items that I had been seeking for some years both turned up at a Strand Stamp Fair this summer, I was more than a little surprised - even delighted. In 1857, a number of UDCs with two arcs were issued but with a diameter of 22mm instead of the usual 25mm. Only five were issued to offices in Leicestershire - three of the TSOs of Leicester as well as Muston and Redmile both of which were sub-offices of Nottingham. That of Muston is shown below. A branch post from Bottesford served Muston, hence the dated circle of Bottesford.

For some reason, about which I am still not clear, the sub-office at Waltham-on-the-Wolds received a numeral handstamp, 073, in April 1857. This mark is very elusive but there it was, albeit a poor strike, on the front of an envelope carrying a strike of the D4 type UDC of Waltham. A glance at the UDC book will show how scarce these later handstamps are, and I was delighted to add it to my collection.



A RECENT ACQUISITION

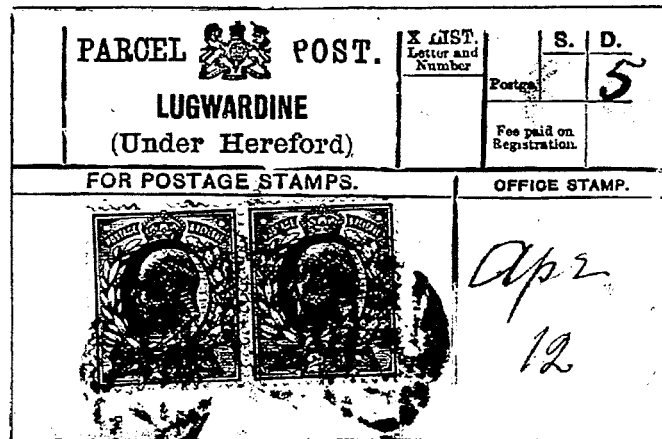
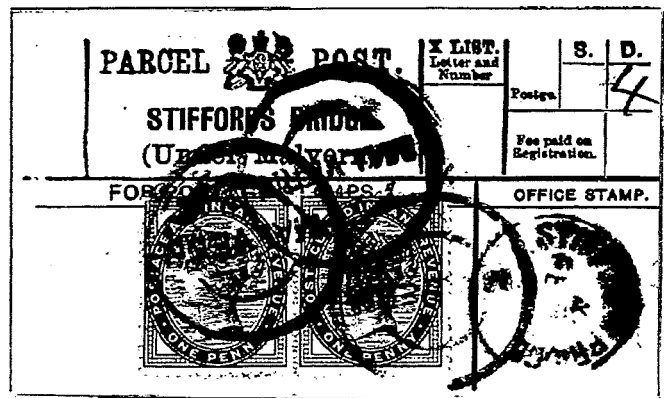
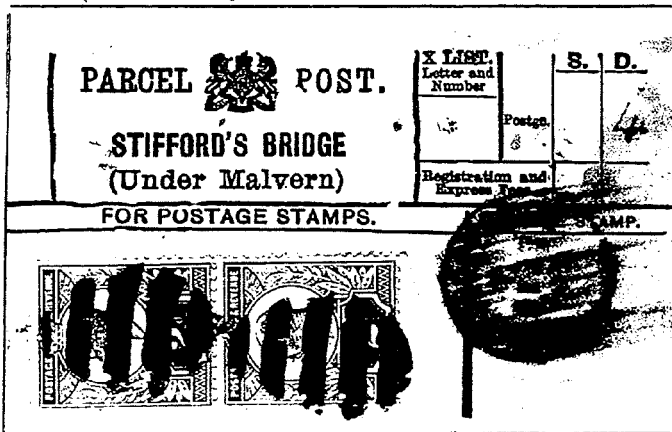
by Roger Broomfield

I recently purchased a Parcel Post label of Stifford's Bridge - just within Herefordshire, but under Great Malvern. It forms a nice pair with one I already had!

On the one already in the collection, the name of the office is spelt without an apostrophe - STIFFORDS BRIDGE - while on the one newly acquired, an apostrophe is present giving the name as STIFFORD'S BRIDGE.

The adhesives on the first one were cancelled by the normal circular undated parcel post cancellation of Malvern, but on the second, a dumb five-bar vertical oval obliterator was used. I have never seen such an obliterator used on adhesives on parcel post labels and wonder whether other members of the Society have come across this.

The closest I have come to this is a label from Lugwardine where the adhesives have been cancelled by strikes (albeit not very clear) of the 357 three-bar oval horizontal obliterator of Hereford.

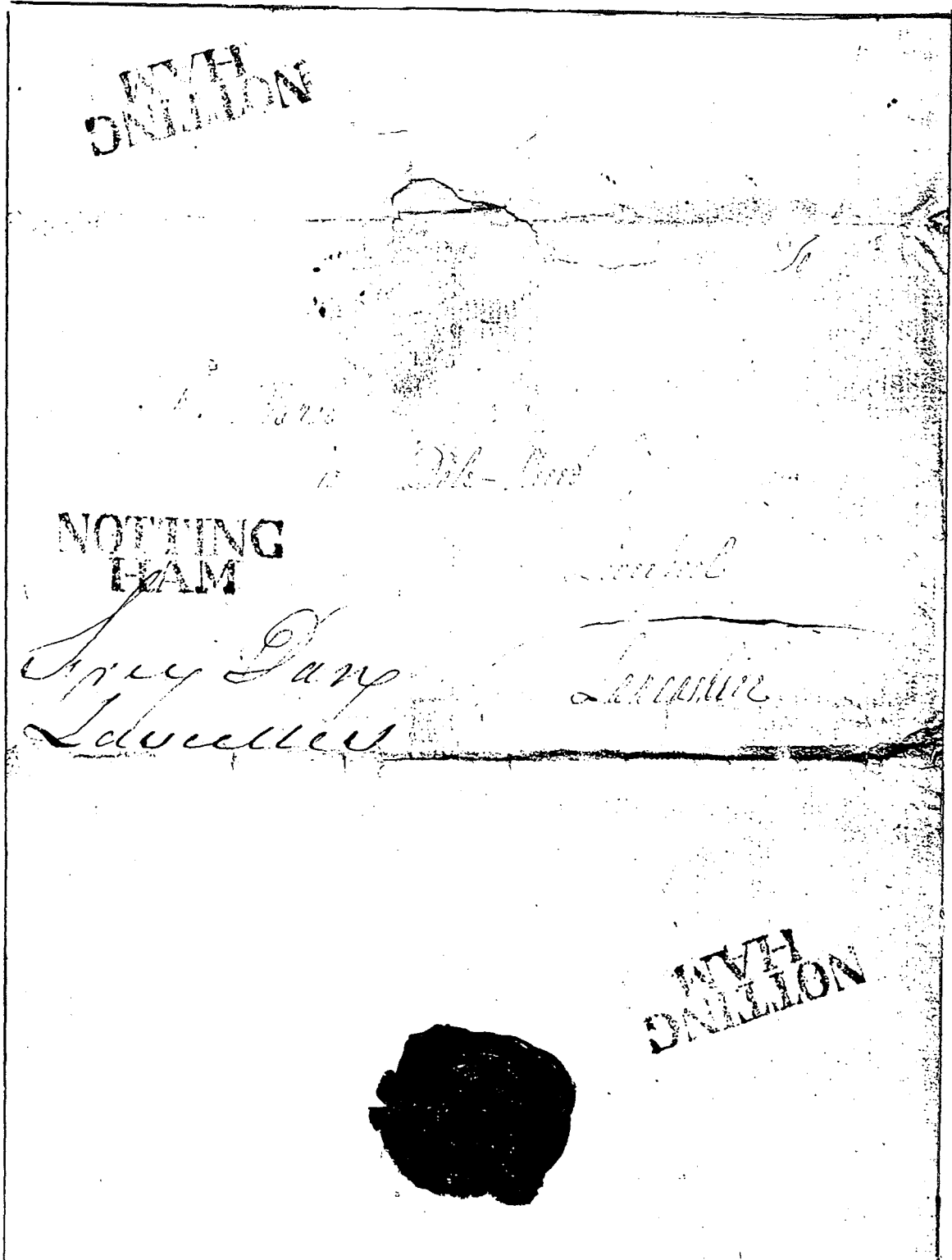


Editor's Note: I have a Lutterworth label cancelled by a dumb obliterator. Are there any other offers?



A TRIPLE STAMPED LETTER

In MM126/8, Alan Marshall mentioned a cover which carried three strikes of a Nottingham handstamp. At the time it was not possible to show a copy of that letter. However, the letter is now shown below. Can anyone else match this? Why are there three strikes of the same handstamp?



MAILCOACHES IN THE LONDON-BRISTOL-WORCESTER TRIANGLE FROM 1840

By Christopher Beaver

The information that follows is intended to supplement the article which appeared in MM126/11 - Mail by Rail in the Midlands (Part 2). Also, it should be read in conjunction with that which appeared in MM101/4 - Midland Mailcoaches, 1784-1840. If any member does not have a copy of the latter article then either Eric Lewis or I will provide a copy on receipt of a stamped addressed envelope.

The figures before the solidus (/) give the mileage in the stated year. Those after the solidus give the number of horses with in brackets the number of outside passengers allowed. Also the distance according to the Postal Directory (PD) for a particular year may be given. The final set of columns gives the dates between which a mail coach operated.

BRISTOL-BIRMINGHAM via Gloucester, Tewkesbury, Worcester and Bromsgrove.		
	1788 - 86; 1794 - 86; 1836 - 88/ 88 88 1 st , 88.2, 4(4)	2.7.1787 - 5.2.1841
BATH-BIRMINGHAM	1839 - 93.3;/(P.D. 1840,1841) - 93.3, 4(8)	20.8.1839 - 5.2.1841
(Paddington) - TWYFORD-BATH via Newbury, Marlborough and Devizes.	1840 - 74.1; /4(3), (P.D. uncorrected) - 74	4.2.1840 - 29.4.1840
(Paddington) - READING - BATH via Newbury, Marlborough and Devizes.	1840 - 69.0/4(3)	1.5.1840 - 29.7.1841
(Paddington) - TWYFORD - BRISTOL via Newbury, Marlborough, Chippenham and Bath.	1840 - 84.5;/4(3), (P.D.41 uncorrected) - 84	4.2.1840 - 29.4.1840
(Paddington) - READING - BRISTOL via Newbury, Marlborough, Chippenham and Bath.	1840 - 79.4;/ 4(4)	1.5.1840 - 16.2 1841
(Paddington) - HAY LANE-BRISTOL via Chippenham and Bath.	1841 - 35.4;/ 4(4)	17.2.1841 - 12.7.1841
(Paddington) - TWYFORD-STROUD	1840 -71.7; /4(4)	4.2.1840 - 21.6.1840
(Paddington) - STEVENTON-STROUD	1840 - 50.4;/	23.6.1840 - 13.12.1840
(Paddington) - FARRINGDON ROAD STATION-STROUD via Lechlade.	1840 - 38.1;/ 2(4)	13.12.1840 - 26.6.1841
BRISTOL-STROUD	1840 - 32.1;/	11.10.1840 - 17.8.1844
(Paddington) - CIRENCESTER-STROUD	1841 - 12.2, (17.1.1842) - twice a day	26.6.1841 - 11.5.1845
(Paddington)- OXFORD-STEVENTON	/ (PD 1842) - 10.4 x 2	15.7.1841 - ?
(Paddington) - TWYFORD-GLOUCESTER via Oxford and Cheltenham.	1840 - 78.3	4.2.1840 - 21.6.1840

(Paddington) - **STEVENTON- GLOUCESTER** via Oxford and Cheltenham

1840 - 61.0

23.6.1840 - 15.7.1841

(See MM126/12 which states that the notice to the contractors expired on 24th July 1841.)

(Paddington) - **CIRENCESTER-CHELTENHAM**

1841 - 15.5 twice a day

15.7.1841 - 11.5.1845

(Paddington) - **CIRENCESTER-GLOUCESTER** via Cheltenham.

1841 - 24.3 twice a day

15.7.1841 - 11.5.1845?

(Paddington) - **TWYFORD - CHELTENHAM** day mail

1839 - no payment;/ 4(8)

17.12.1839 - 22.6.1840

(Paddington) - **STEVENTON-CHELTENHAM** day mail via Oxford and Northleach

1840 - no payment/ (PD 1841) - 51, 4(8)

23.6.1840 - 15.7.1841

OXFORD-CHELTENHAM via Northleach

1841 - twice a day

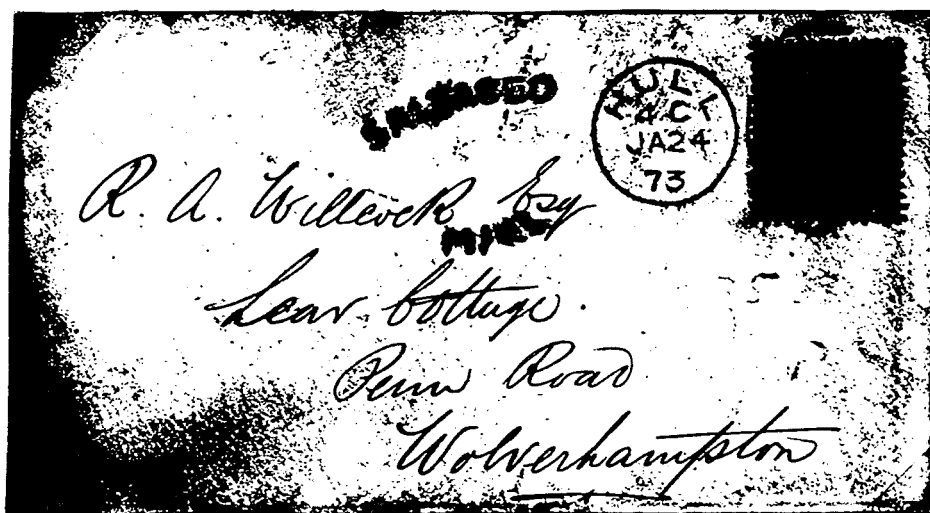
15.7.1841 - 10.10.45

A SALVAGED COVER

by Roy Summers

Shown below is a copy of a cover that was obtained from the Harmer's auction in December 2001 of Mr Howard Longden's collection of Wreck, Crash, Balloon Post and Disaster Mail. Apart from the fact that the letter was sent from Hull on 24th January 1873 to Wolverhampton where it was backstamped on arrival the next day, all I know is that it was in a railway accident. Also it carries a poor strike of a "SALVAGED / MAIL" cachet. The dark marks on the left-hand side of the cover are where it has been burnt.

I hope that members will be able to help me with some queries I have about this cover. Where did the accident happen? Would the mail have been routed via London? Has any other member got a cover with a similar cachet and was the cachet specially made? If so, it was done very quickly.



AN UPDATE ON SOME ELUSIVE NOTTINGHAM MARKS (Part 2)

By Alan Marshall

HANDSTRUCK "2"s

Although these handstamps are often the cause of confusion and argument, they clearly have a collecting appeal.

Normally handstruck "2"s were applied at either the dispatching posttown or the main receiving office on mail that was considered to be underpaid or was being redirected. Comparison with other examples of a particular handstamp are sometimes invaluable in determining where a strike was applied.

Bearing the above in mind, I have attempted to update the Nottingham handstruck "2"s from the starting points of Hall's "The Post Office at Nottingham" and The County Catalogue of Willcocks and Jay.

Hall lists three:	(i) 11mm high	4 th March 1840 - 14 th January 1847
	(ii) 23mm high (thin)	25 th July 1849
	(iii) 23 mm high (thick)	25 th December 1850 - 10 th September 1866

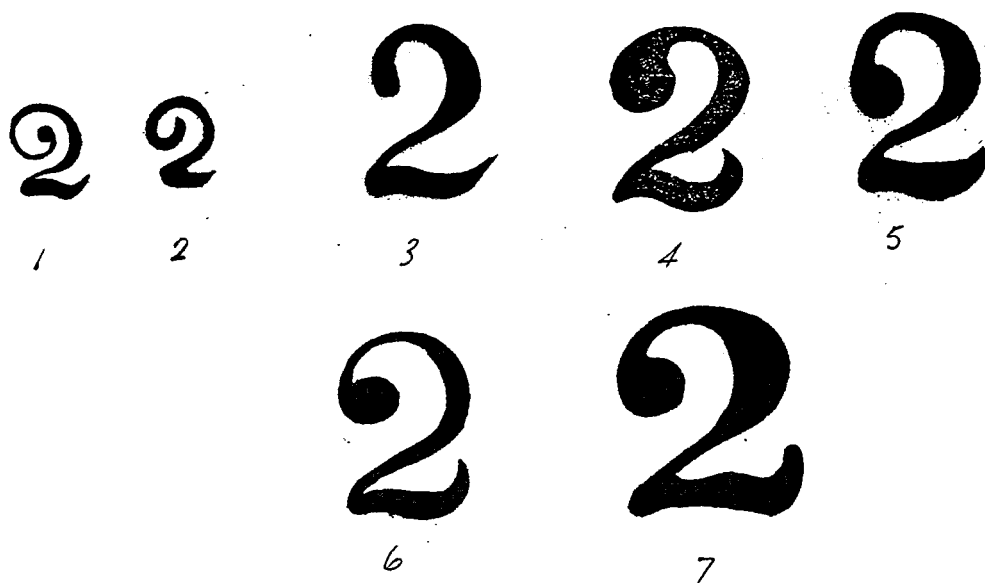
The County Catalogue lists three (four?):	
(i) 9 x 12 mm	1840-47 (two stamps)
(ii) 16 x 24 mm	1849
(iii) 20 x 23 mm	1850-66

The illustrations in the County Catalogue, although reduced in size, do appear to have been taken from Hall. However, the dimensions quoted differ, tending to indicate that they are different when in fact they are not.

My research has revealed so far seven different stamps from ten items from the period 1840 to 1860. All are shown reconstructed and as they appear. Some of the items are interesting for their content and two on account of their redirection..

- | | |
|---------------|--|
| 1) 11 x 12 mm | 25 th March 1840 as (i) in Hall and second of no (i) in the County Catalogue. |
| 2) 9 x 12 mm | 3 rd November 1846 (as (i) in County Catalogue), 14 th January 1847. |
| 3) 16 x 22 mm | 14 th August 1857, 8 th February 1858, 8 th September 1860. |
| 4) 18 x 24 mm | 9 th April 1848. |
| 5) 18 x 24 mm | 26 August 1851 as (iii) in Hall and in the County Catalogue. |
| 6) 18 x 25 mm | 17 th August 1848 as (ii) in Hall and in the County Catalogue. |
| 7) 23 x 27 mm | 6 th May 1847. |

All the strikes are in black with the exception of No. 4 which is in blue-green.



No 4 - A pension request by Thomas Smith for his wife Mary.

The Military Secretary
Honourable East
India Company
2 London
By Messrs

11 June 1848
Post Office
AP
1848
10410
1848

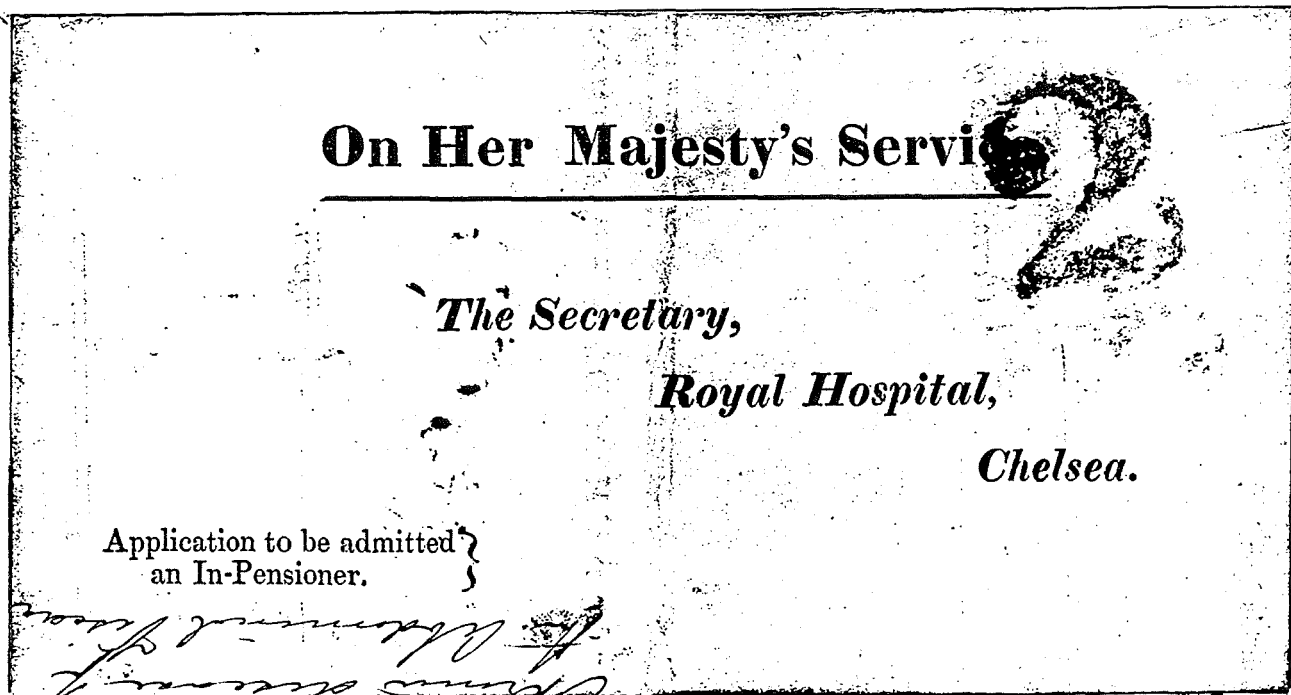
No 5 - A pension request from a driver in the Royal Horse Artillery
with service at Vittoria, Pamplona, Pyrennes, Bayonne and Waterloo.

On Her Majesty's Service
To The Secretary Registrar
Chelsea Hospital
From A Discharged Soldier

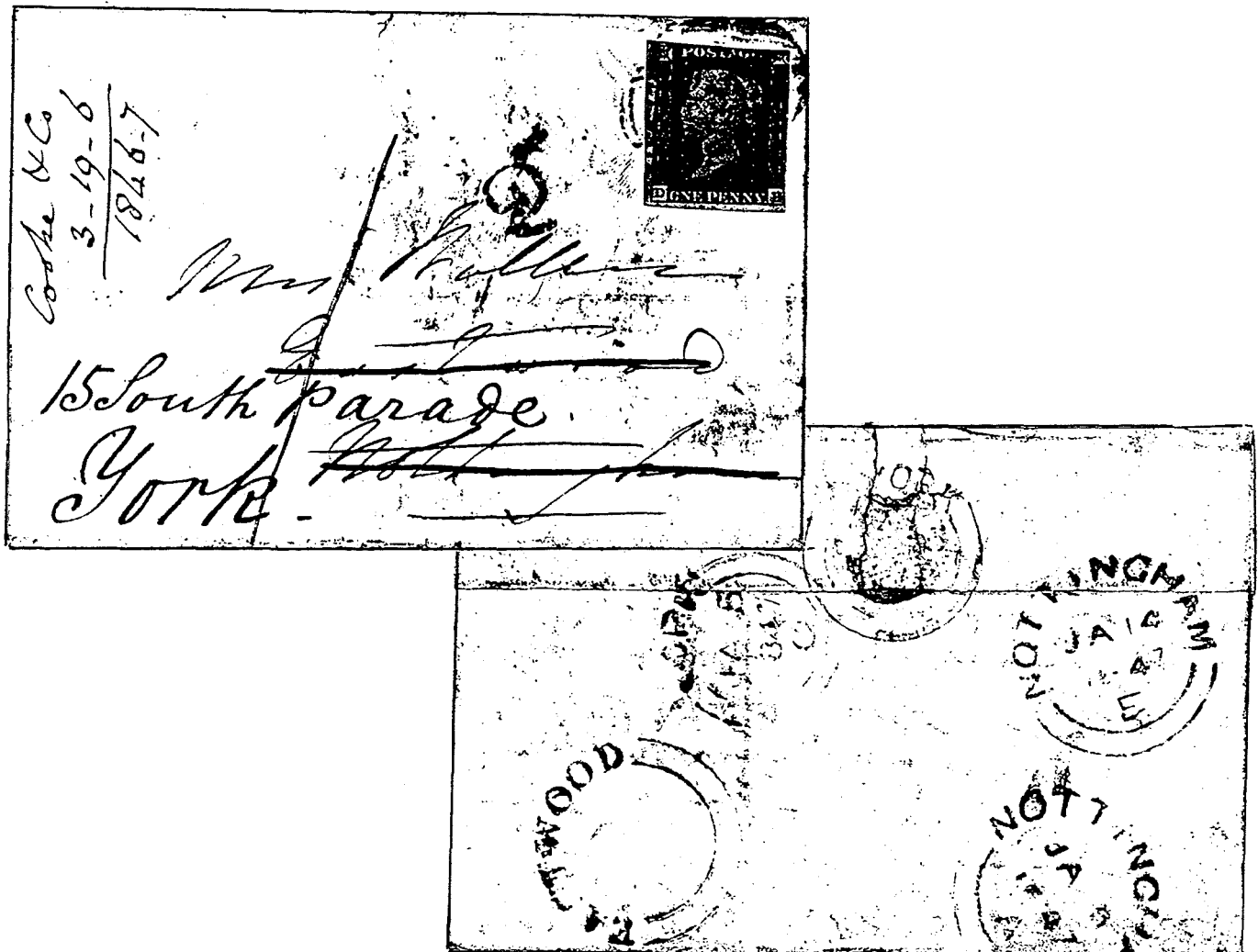
No 6 - a pension request by wife Mary for husband Sgt. Thomas Smith of the St Helena Regt.

The Military Secretary East
India House
2 London

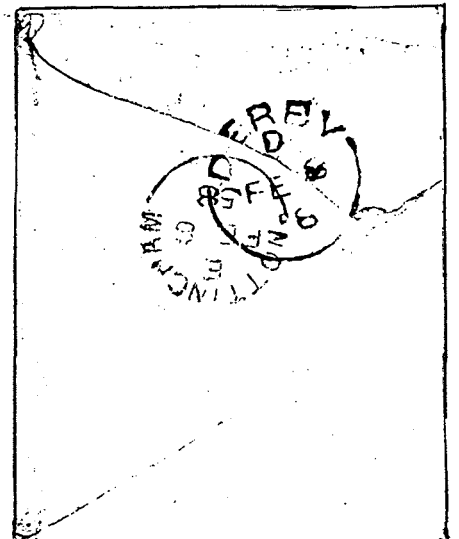
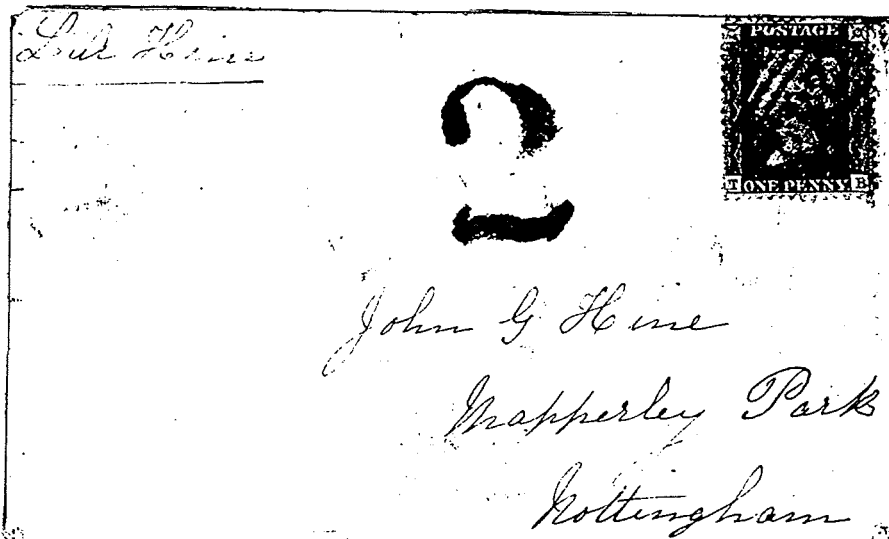
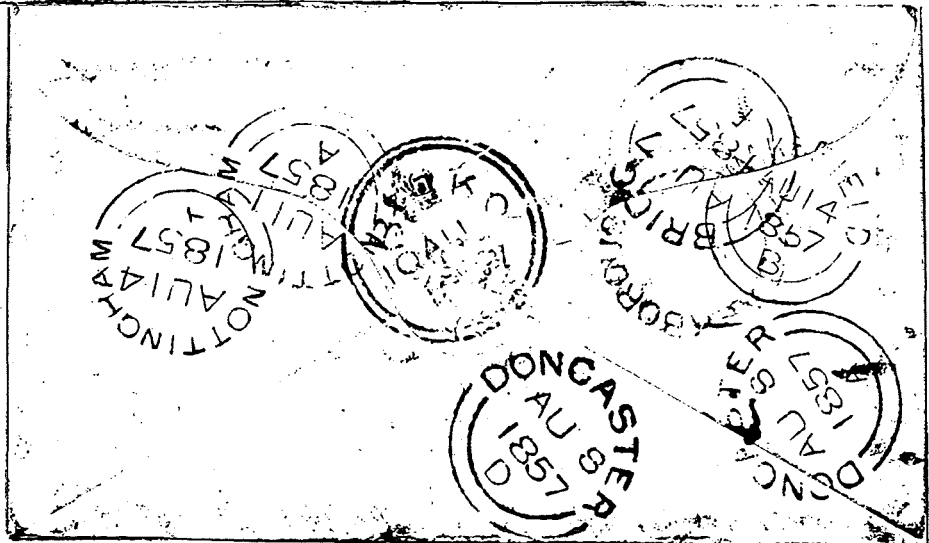
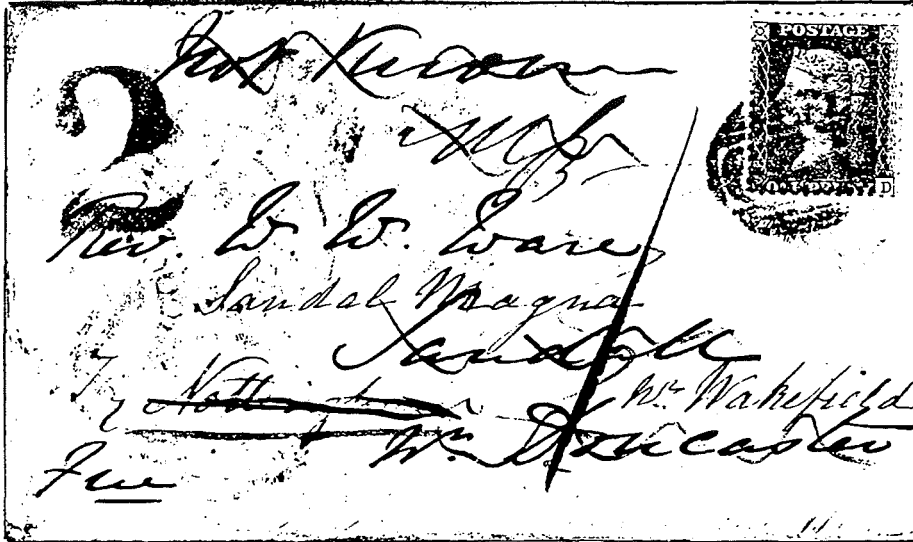
No 7 - From another Thomas Smith, Royal Horse Guards, applying to become an "in" Chelsea Pensioner.
In 1818, he was already a pensioner, aged 36, with seventeen years' service.



No 2 - an invoice of January 1847 from a company in York addressed to Eastwood with a manuscript "1" and from where it was redirected, with an Eastwood UDC, back to a different address in York, collecting in transit at Nottingham a 1d red stamp and a handstruck "2".



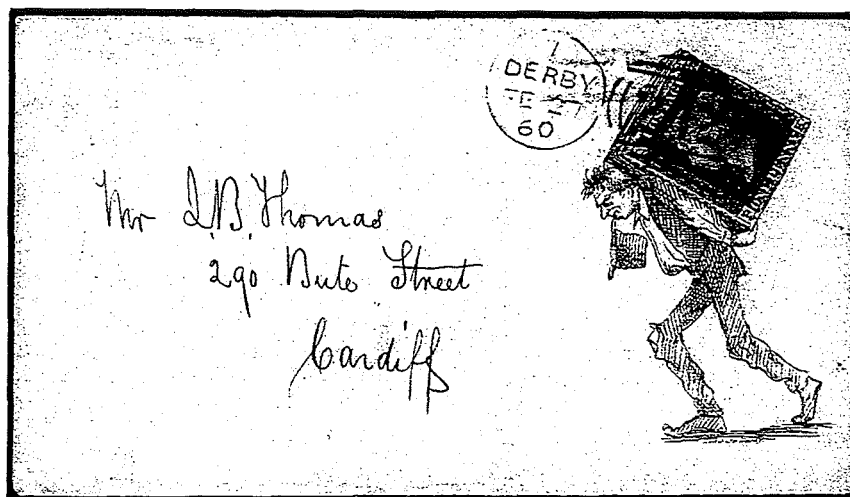
No 3 - a letter of August 1857. Two other letters support the idea that the "2" was applied in Nottingham. My interpretation of the journey of this envelope is as follows. The sender paid one penny for a stamp which was affixed and the manuscript "1" which had been written in error was cancelled (the crossing out is in the same colour blue ink as the Alkborough UDC). The adhesive was cancelled at Brigg with the 129 barred numeral on 7th August. On 8th August the letter passed through the Doncaster office twice on its way to and from Sandall where "Not Known" was written in red ink. "Try Nottingham" also appears in red ink. Before it arrived in Nottingham on 11th August, the letter appears to have been stamped in London? On 10th August with a handstamp containing a crown. At Nottingham the letter was redirected with a handstruck "2" and a cds of 14th August back to Wakefield where it arrived on the same day.



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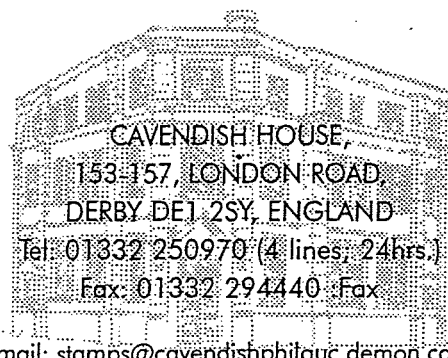


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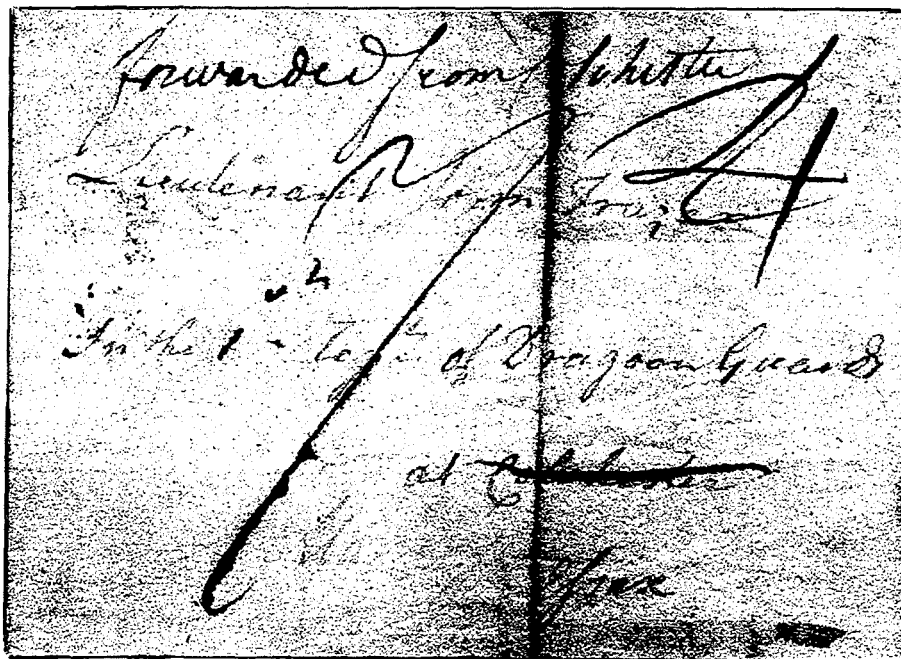
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A JOLLEY GOOD LETTER

By Brian Atkins

This is an interesting letter for two reasons. When I read it, I was strongly reminded of Thomas Hardy's novel 'Far from the Madding Crowd' in which the dastardly Sergeant Troy marries the beautiful and rich Bathsheba, thus abandoning poor Fanny Robin to the workhouse. It also has a mark I would not have expected in light of other records.

The letter was written from Bridgnorth on 2nd August 1784 to "Lieutenant John Frazer, In the 1st Regt. Of Dragoon Guards at Colchester, Essex" and charged four pence, the rate for over eighty miles. (The 1784 Act did not come into force until 31st August 1784.) The letter went via London (Bishopmark 5/AV on the reverse), so the "4" has been erased and supplanted by a "7" to account for an extra three pence for the fifty-one miles to Colchester from London. But Frazer had moved to Manningtree and the letter was forwarded, though no charge appears to have been added for this.



The reverse of the letter contains a very light strike of a mark similar to that shown alongside the letter. I recorded a very early first type mileage mark of Bridgnorth on a letter dated 30 MAR 1784 in the collection of the late Dr E.C. Druce during a visit to him in Canberra, Australia in 1997. So why was this two-line mark used?

The letter concerns Jane Andrews whom Lieutenant Frazer has offered to "help" with a one-time payment of thirty guineas for the parish to look after her (so Frazer told her father). However, the writer makes it clear that the girl believes that he was going to make regular payments of four shillings a week directly to her and the purpose of the letter is to clarify exactly what Frazer's intentions are. Although the letter contains no accusation (and maybe it is my overactive mind and too much television watching!), there is an implication that the relationship between Frazer and Jane Andrews had been "very friendly". At least Lieutenant Frazer is no Sergeant Troy (does honour come with rank?) as he appears willing to support Jane Andrews.

So, why a "Jolley" good letter? Because it was written by John Jolley, the Vestry Clerk and Master of the Workhouse! Furthermore, according to Pigot's Directory of 1828, a John Jolley was a carrier between Bridgnorth and London who "every Monday; goes thro' Stourbridge, Worcester and Oxford". Do you think they were related?!

CHRISTMAS TIME AT THE POST OFFICE

I am indebted to Elizabeth and Eric Lewis for sending a cutting from the "Smethwick Telephone" - a local newspaper. Thus the cutting describes Christmas of 1901 in the Smethwick post office.

"The work in the Post Office during the past week has been exceptionally heavy, and it is admitted by all competent Authorities to be the heaviest period yet, experienced in the service. At our own post office there is a marked increase in letters, letter-packets and parcels and the pressure has extended over a longer period. The first indications of the pressure of work set in on Friday evening the 20th Inst. And continued without intermission until the Friday following. The total number of parcels dealt with during six days ended 26th December, exceeded 2,000. These were delivered as in past years by the means of FURNITURE VANS four of these vehicles being requisitioned for the purpose. The number of parcels is about the same as dealt with during the same period last year. The extra work in the letter deliveries has been met as on former occasions by the engagement of nine assistant postmen, who commenced work on 11th inst to give them a suitable period of training and in order to adapt them to the work. In addition to these men the regular force has worked with unremitting vigour during the long period extending from 2.30 in the morning until towards eleven at night. Besides the extension of the work great delay has been caused to the usual routine by the late arrival of the mails caused by late trains, due chiefly to the bad state of the weather, which also contributed to the discomfort of the postmen and all outdoor workers. All men, however took things as they found them; there might have been an occasional grumble but on the whole the difficulties were faced cheerfully and willingly, and at the end there appeared to be general satisfaction that the work was finished without any sort of failure or disagreeable incident. One sad event, however, occurred to the oldest postman in the service. He was informed whilst on his first delivery that his wife had died, which necessitated his retiring from his duties. This was the only "fall out" and the melancholy event was recognised by a unanimous vote of sympathy from the man's comrades during their interval for breakfast. One new departure in this year's arrangements is worthy of notice. A special mail was made up for Tipton the nights of 23rd and 24th and despatched to that town at 9.28 pm. By this mail letters and parcels for Bilston, Brierley Hill, Dudley, Walsall, Wednesbury and West Bromwich were sent direct to Tipton, and distributed from that office as a centre, thus obviating the inevitable delay which might have occurred by sending the work through Birmingham. Breakfast and refreshments were supplied to all the workers on 24th, 25th and 26th. [These included] a liberal supply of tea, coffee, ham, beef, cake, scones, bread-and-butter, and a new feature in this year's refreshments was the introduction of hot beef-tea - an innovation which was much esteemed specially on the 24th when the weather was bad, both overhead and underfoot."

THE NEXT MIDLAND MAIL

As this will appear until towards the end of January, I would like to take this opportunity of wishing all our members a very happy Christmas. I have a some small pieces in hand for the next issue so there is room for articles both long and short which should be sent to:

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

