

• 2004 •

BRITISH *PHILATELIC* BULLETIN

The Travelling

Post Office

1838-2004

PUBLICATION N°10

GREAT WESTERN

MIDLAND

HIGHLAND

SOUTH EASTERN



SOUTH WESTERN

NORTH EASTERN

NORTH WESTERN

CALEDONIAN

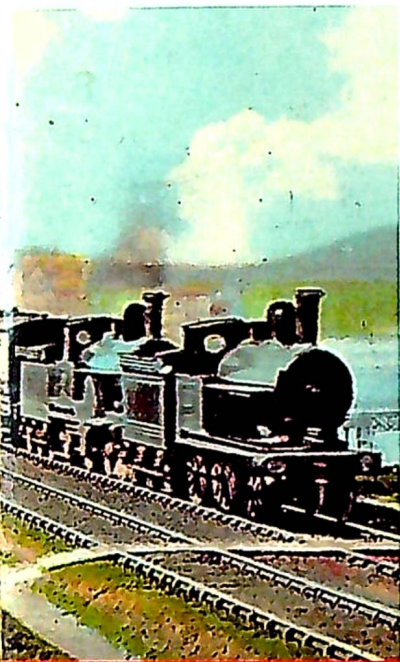
• 1838 •

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35 miles between Aberdeen and Peterhead

took just over four hours



Below: Royal Mail electric trains in the Princess Royal Distribution Centre, Willesden



The withdrawal of the last Travelling Post Offices in January 2004 after 166 years of glorious service is as sad an event in Royal Mail's history as it is in Britain's railway history.

The development of the British railway network from the first half of the 19th century played a major role in the industrial revolution and in Britain becoming the powerhouse of the world. The railways improved access to markets and the population's mobility, leading to greater employment prospects and increased wealth.

The General Post Office was quick to take advantage of the railways, using the Liverpool & Manchester Railway – the first inter-city route – for the carriage of bagged mails within a year of it opening in 1830. Previously mails had travelled by road, and many still did as the rail network expanded. The journey times were long – for example, in 1860 the 35 miles between Aberdeen and Peterhead took just over 4 hours, including a total of 20 minutes at Ellon and Burness Toll; in 1864 the Great North of Scotland Railway took 2 hours 55 minutes, reducing to 2¼ hours in 1865, between the same termini.

• GENESIS OF THE TPOs •

Special trains for the carriage of mails came with the invention of the Travelling Post Office in 1838. An idea of a postal surveyor called Karstadt was taken up by George Louis in a report dated 6 January 1838. He said that Karstadt's 'thorough acquaintance' with the Bye letter duty enabled him to foresee the difficulties the General Post Office would have to address as soon as a long line of railway should be opened; the Grand Junction Railway had opened between Birmingham and Warrington in 1837 and the London & Birmingham Railway was to open, in two parts until the Kilsby Tunnel was completed in 1838.

Under the mail coach system, said Louis, there was necessarily a stop for the accommodation of passengers within every 100 miles. These stops were used for sorting the Bye correspondence, thereby preventing a continuous line of bags and all the complication of accounts arising therefrom.

Louis forecast that when a long line of railway came into operation, more than double the distance would be travelled in the same time taken by the mail coaches, rendering the present stops unnecessary. He went on to say that the Bye post administration would become more complex and could be avoided by putting 'active and well disciplined' mail clerks on the trains. He recommended an experimental duty between Birmingham and Liverpool with a view to adopting it permanently when the railway from London to Birmingham came into operation.

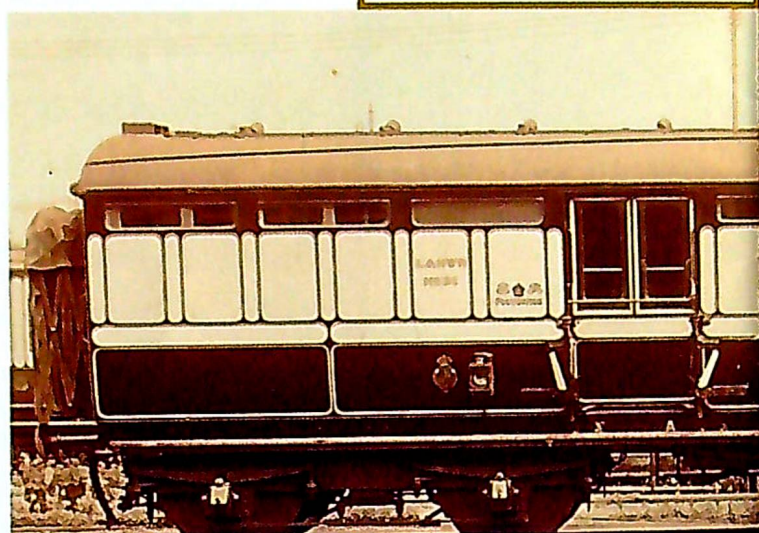
Louis recommended that Mr Ellis act as a temporary mail clerk, working with Frederick Karstadt, the surveyor's son. He thought that in the longer term there would only be a need for one clerk but that at first 'it would not be either judicious or safe to employ less than two at the same time.'

Should his proposition be approved, George Louis recommended that Ellis and Karstadt go to Birmingham to learn the circulation so that they would be ready when the carriage was ready, which



Above: An unadopted postage stamp design by Rosalind Dease, featuring an 1838 TPO carriage

Below: LNWR sorting carriage No.31

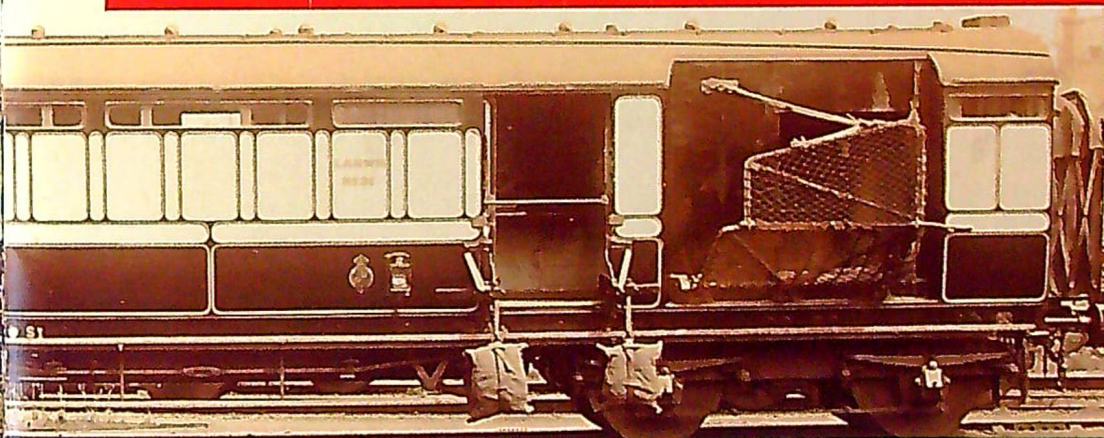


would be in about 10 days if approval was given. The men would receive a 15/- (75p) daily allowance.

Although Louis' emphasis was on the administrative benefits, in these pre-universal penny post days it was necessary to record the transmission of both pre-paid and unpaid mail. He could see how the associated bureaucracy could be simplified; by putting its own personnel on the trains to guard the mails, the GPO could also make use of the time the mail was in transit by sorting it.

The trial started on 20 January, with the London & Birmingham Railway providing a modified horsebox for the purpose. It was considered a success and on 19 May a formal contract was made between the GPO and the London & Birmingham Railway for the

*the Grand Junction Railway had opened
between Birmingham and Warrington in 1837*



Above: Interior of LNWR sorting carriage No.211

operation of a daily postal carriage between Euston Grove and Denbigh Hall, near Bletchley, and back. The railway company was to provide a carriage fitted up as a post office, with the necessary sorting boxes, at its own expense. The fee to be paid by the GPO for the service was to be settled by arbitration. The service was contracted to be provided from 21 May, although it might not have started on that date as there was provision for a separate payment for the special carriage which 'may not be immediately required'.

Only duly authorised officers of the GPO and the train guard were to be permitted to travel in the carriage. In addition the GPO was authorised to make use of any other train operated by the railway company for the carriage of mails, newspapers and the transportation of mail guards and other officers.

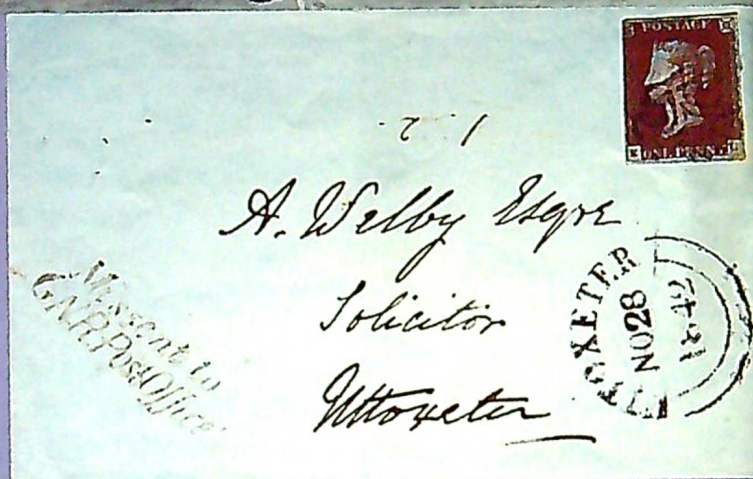
The railway company sealed the contract on 30 May 1838, when the adjudication on fees was made. The company was to be allowed a $7\frac{1}{2}\%$ return on capital, 5% for profit, the remainder for repairs, therefore the GPO would pay $3\frac{3}{4}d$ (2p) per mile per axle of the vehicle employed, to a maximum of $2\frac{3}{4}$ tons per axle. Other mail and personnel could be carried for $2\frac{1}{2}d$ (1p) per mile per third of a carriage occupied.

An act of Parliament regularising the arrangement gained royal assent on 14 August 1838. With regard to railways made, being made or to be made, where

passengers or goods were conveyed in carriages 'drawn or impelled by the power of steam, or by any locomotive or stationary engines, or animal or other power whatever' the Postmaster General could require, on 28 days notice, the carriage of mail or 'post letter bags' and have, if he wished, exclusive use of any vehicles used for the purpose; separate sorting carriages should be provided if required. In spite of these requirements a railway could still be required to carry (road) mail coaches or carts 'by the usual or proper trucks or frames'. The act called for any carriage provided for Post Office use to have the royal

the railway company sealed the

contract on the 30 May 1838



Below: A London Midland & Scottish Railway-designed sorting carriage built at Wolverton works by British Railways



Above: Staff on the Midland TPO

coat of arms painted on its exterior in lieu of the owner's name and the vehicle number; the lack of the coat of arms would not inhibit the vehicle's use. Application of the coat of arms to postal vehicles continued until the end, but some of the railway companies circumvented the branding inhibition by having the company's initials painted alongside the vehicle's number.

By the end of 1838 the railway northwards from London had reached Preston and in 1840, Lancaster. The TPO, known as the Grand Northern Railway Post Office, was extended in line with the railway. Perth was reached in 1847, when the Grand Northern RPO was renamed the North Western TPO (Day Mail). As the rail network developed so did the TPOs. Night Mails were often accompanied by Day Mails and special TPOs were operated in conjunction with shipping services carrying overseas mails. Some of the early TPOs included:

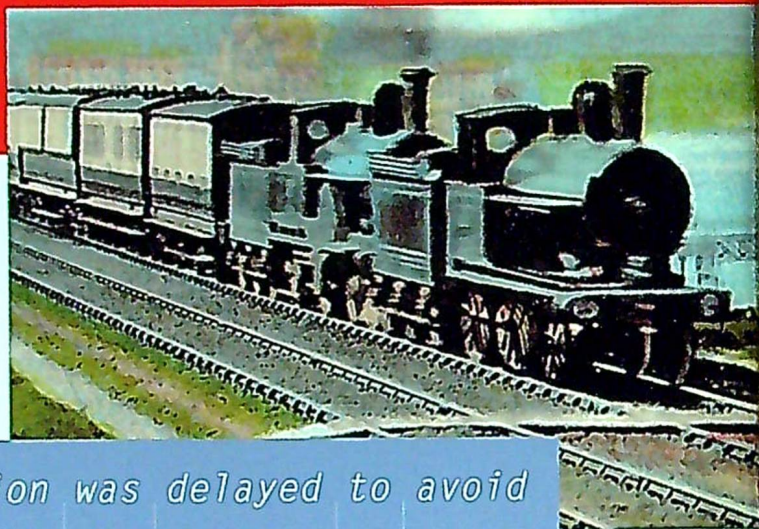
- 1845 Rugby & Newcastle RPO
- 1848 Caledonian RPO
- 1850 Bangor RPO
- 1850 Gloucester & Tamworth RPO
- 1850 Great Western Sunday ST
- 1850s Grimsby & Lincoln SC
- 1850 Ipswich Sunday ST
- 1850 South Western Sunday ST
- 1852 Rugby & Leeds RPO
- 1853 York-Newcastle RPO
- 1854 Chester & Holyhead RPO
- 1855 London & Exeter RPO
- 1855 Midland TPO
- 1856 Birmingham & Stafford ST
- 1857 Shrewsbury & Tamworth RPO
- 1858 Carlisle-Edinburgh ST
- 1858 Glasgow SC
- 1858 Shrewsbury & Tamworth RPO
- 1859 Brighton SC
- 1859 Bristol & Exeter RPO
- 1859 London & Brighton SC

• NOMENCLATURE •

The first TPOs were known as railway post offices (RPOs). From the 1860s some services were known as sorting tenders (STs), sorting carriages (SCs) from 1904. The RPOs became railway sorting carriages (RSCs) from 1914 and then travelling post offices (TPOs) from the 1920s. Sometimes there were operational reasons for changes in designation, rather than fashion for a new title – the Cardiff-Crewe SC and Crewe-Cardiff SC became TPOs after on-train Cardiff town sorting was ended in 1934. Their various titles were recorded both in official paperwork and operational datestamps provided as part of the postal bureaucracy and, occasionally, to cancel mail. Original TPO names were allied to the names of the operating railway companies – hence the Great Western, Midland, Highland, South Eastern, South Western, North Eastern, North Western and Caledonian TPOs, which all, except for the Great Western, survived for more than 50 years after the companies that gave them their names had been abolished. Most other services had geographical names. Their memorials are the cancellations and related matter that have been collected for many years.

TPOs were a function of GPO headquarters until 1883, when they were taken over by the London Postal Service and the London Postal Region from 1937. Local services could be operated by a postmaster; some services that started under postmaster control were later taken over by the LPS/LPR. The last of the postmaster type, the Chester Relief SC, was established as recently as 1986, when the head postmaster at Chester decided that mail from TPOs arriving at Crewe and bound for North Wales could gain an advantage if it did not have to be taken into Chester for sorting. Therefore a carriage was worked from Chester to Crewe manned by Chester-based postmen; sorting was carried out whilst stationary at Crewe and then the carriage and postmen were returned to Chester. The service was withdrawn in 1994. The residents of North Wales had experienced a much better service prior to the withdrawal of the Crewe-Bangor TPO in 1979.

Below: A postman with the TPO ground apparatus



*its introduction was delayed to avoid
a claim of patent abuse!*

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• DEVELOPMENT OF THE SERVICE •

The efficiency of the TPO service was enhanced by the exchange apparatus which allowed mails to be picked up and set down without stopping the train. Apparatus working commenced in 1852, although there had been trials of different systems as early as May 1838. The system used had been devised in 1848 but its introduction was delayed to avoid a claim of patent abuse!

The GPO entered into a contract with every railway company required to carry the mails. These specified the level of service to be provided in considerable detail. When required, each company had to provide its own sorting carriages, manufactured to the Postmaster General's specification; use of another company's vehicles was forbidden.

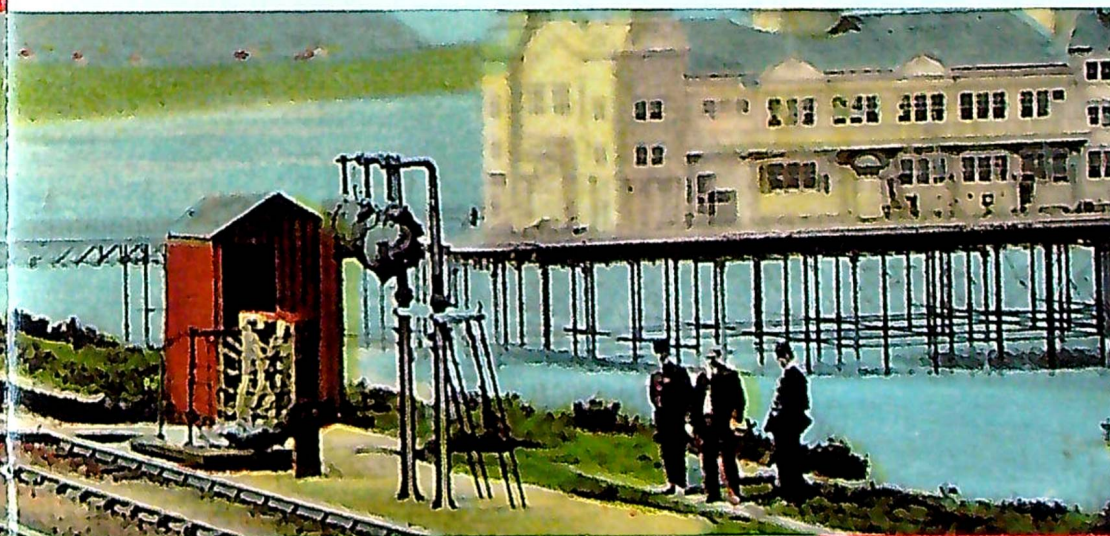
An 1883 contract with the Great Northern Railway specified three levels of service: the Peterborough &

Grimsby Night Mail, and vice versa, could be conveyed in 'ordinary trains of carriages' or by special trains and the GPO could require its timing to be altered on 28 days' notice; a mid-day mail between King's Cross and York, Leeds, Bradford and Halifax and the Grantham-Nottingham Day Mail could only have their timings altered with GPO approval; and the company could re-time three London-York and two York-London services on giving notice to the GPO, providing it used its 'utmost endeavours consistently with a due regard to their passenger service and the convenience of the travelling public to arrange the times of arrival and departure of such trains in such manner as will be most convenient to the Postmaster General'!

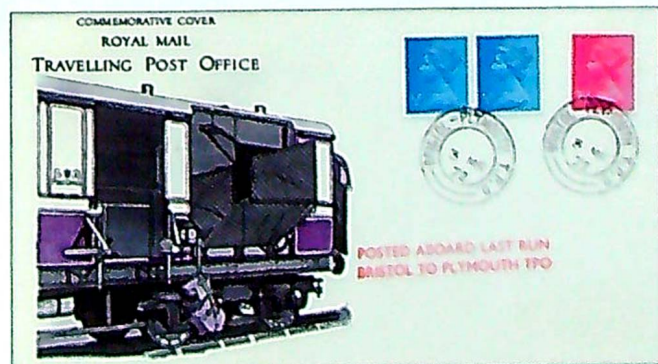
The contract also included non-specific use of apparatus and required the company's servants to take charge of the mails when required. It was worth £27,000 annually and could be determined on six months' notice by either party or at any time after 29 May 1888.

A late posting service, whereby letters posted into special post boxes located at stations were sorted directly to the relevant TPO to secure an earlier delivery was established in the 1860s. Such letters were subject to payment of a 'late fee', which could be as much as 6d (2½p), payable in advance in postage stamps affixed to the items in question.

In 1879 the fee was reduced to ½d. The fee was increased to 1d in 1969 and became ½p on the arrival of decimalisation in 1971, increasing to 1p in 1974. The late fee service was abolished in 1976.



Above: Mail from Holyhead near Colwyn Bay

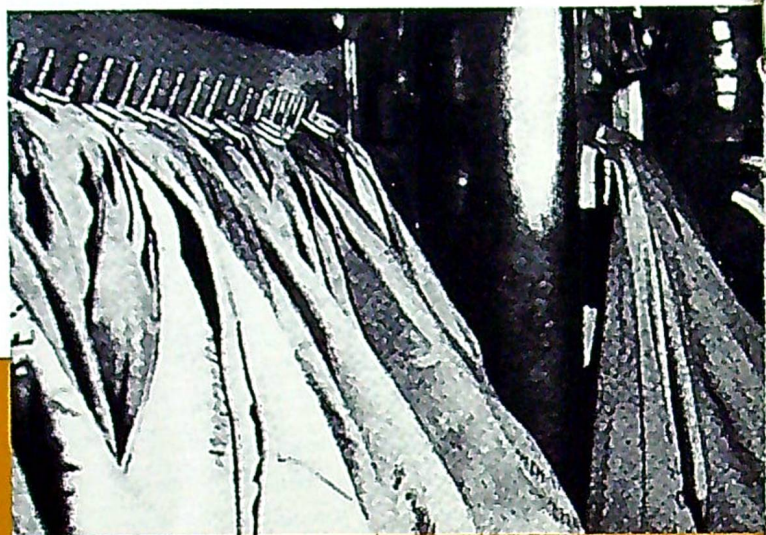


• THE SPECIALS •

A major change to TPO operations occurred in 1885, with the acceleration of the Scottish mails on the West Coast route. There was a desire to secure an earlier delivery of mail from London within Scotland 'in some cases with the object of securing the delivery of letters in suburban districts before merchants and others residing there leave home for their places of business, and in other cases with that of extending the interval for the preparation of replies by return of post or of affording an interval where none already exists.'

Existing services set off from Euston at 8.25pm (for Holyhead with the Irish mails) and at 8.50pm (for the

provinces and Scotland). Advancement was made difficult by the late arrival of mails to London for transmission northwards. Also to be considered was the impact an earlier departure would have on collection times as far as Rugby and Birmingham where posting boxes would need to close earlier.



Service	Depart Euston	Arrive	Remarks
Highland Mail	8.00pm	Perth 7.25am	Passenger and early-posted mail for Glasgow and the Highlands
Irish Mail	8.20pm	Crewe 11.54pm Holyhead 2.35am	Passenger to Crewe, then passenger and mail
Post Office 'Special'	8.30pm	Crewe 11.59 Perth 7.35am Aberdeen 9.55am	Mail to Perth, then passenger and mail. (All Scotch and Irish mail, to Crewe, and mail for Carlisle and the Lake District.)
Limited Mail	8.50pm	Perth 9.05am	Passenger and mail that had missed the special
North Wales Lancashire night mail Scotch supplementary	10.00pm	Holyhead 4.55am Liverpool 3.00am Manchester 2.50am Preston 3.20am Carlisle 5.55am Edinburgh 9.10am Glasgow 9.15am	Passenger and mail for places within 200 miles of London, including Preston, North Wales, major Scottish towns
Midnight Mail	12.00am	Edinburgh 12.52pm Glasgow 1.15pm	Passenger and mail for 'north-country and Scotch letters'; an improved connection would be made with the Midland Railway at Wigan for mail from Newcastle upon Tyne, Hull, Leeds and Derbyshire.

Contrasts in TPO letter sorting between the early and late 20th century



a solution was found of which the key element was a special mail



The number of connections made with cross-country routes at Tamworth, Nuneaton, Birmingham, Stafford and Crewe by the 8.25pm and at Wigan by the 8.50pm could be impacted by an earlier departure; if connections were lost, mail could be delayed by 12 or 24 hours.

A solution was found, of which the key element was a special mail, from which the public was barred, that left Euston for Perth at 8.30pm carrying both Irish and Scottish mails. Details are shown in the table, left.

Two trains would convey the mail southwards, a Limited Mail leaving Aberdeen at 12.30pm to arrive at Euston at 3.55am and the London Night Mail, or 'Up Special', leaving Aberdeen at 2.45pm and due in London at 4.10am. The first would deal with existing day mail between Aberdeen, Edinburgh and Glasgow whilst the second would collect mail for London first delivery and Continental day mails.

The pattern established by the 1885 acceleration was also to continue in use until 1993. In 1885

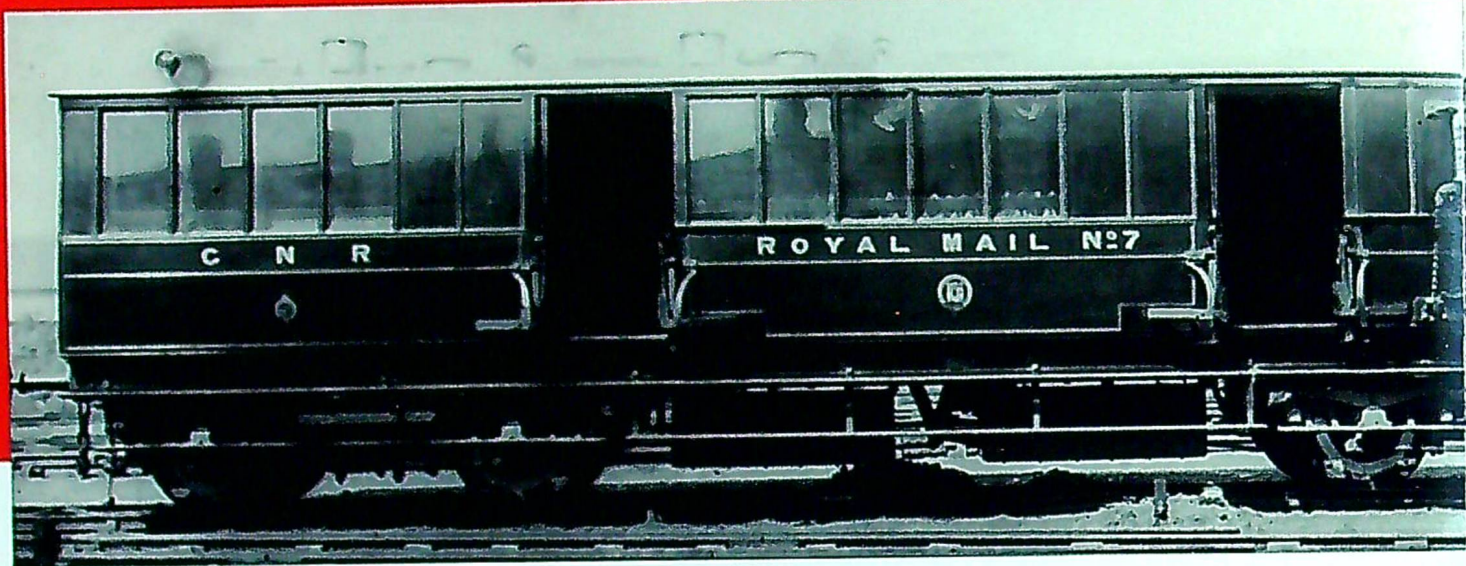
the Down Mail was formally the North Western TPO Down Postal (Night) and the Up Mail was the North Western TPO Up Postal (Night); the North Western appellation referring to the railway company that operated the service between Euston and Carlisle. The Caledonian Railway operated the remainder of the route. The two railway companies provided a jointly-owned fleet of postal vehicles – the 'West Coast Joint Stock'. The Midland and North Eastern railways also operated their own joint stock.

The acceleration contributed much to the renowned speed of mail delivery of the time. By the time of the 1914–1918 war, the GPO had an extensive network of day and night TPOs reaching into some of the remotest corners of the British Isles.

In 1923, following the grouping of railway companies, the special mails became formally known as the Up Special TPO and the Down Special TPO, the pair becoming the best-known long distance TPOs.

• NATIONAL FORCE •

By 1926 the GPO operated 71 sorting duties in England, Scotland and Wales, 31 of which involved apparatus working. There were five sorting duties in Northern Ireland, two with apparatus working, and 12 in the Irish Free State, of which eight had apparatus working. Twenty of the mainland services operated every day except Christmas Day. There were also 11 bag tender duties that ran in conjunction with the TPOs; the last of these was known as the UP Special TPO (Edinburgh Section) that ran between Edinburgh and Carstairs, where it was added to the main portion of the Up Special TPO. Exceptionally, mail could be



handed in although a sorting carriage was not used for it latterly; it ended in 1988, when it was replaced by the Edinburgh-Carlisle TPO.

TPOs came to widespread attention in 1936 after the launch of John Grierson's documentary film *Night Mail*. Commissioned by the GPO, with music by Benjamin Britten, and W.H. Auden's memorable poetry 'This is the night mail crossing the border, bringing the cheque and the postal order...' ringing in its ears, the public remains fascinated by this tale of the night mails.

A replica of a Grand Junction Railway TPO carriage, built by the London, Midland & Scottish Railway

Company, was included in an exhibition of rolling stock held at Euston to mark the TPO centenary in 1938. It is preserved, along with a West Coast Joint Stock TPO, in the National Railway Museum at York. The TPO & Seapost Society, which is still active, was founded in response to the anniversary too.

The outbreak of the Second World War in 1939 quickly had a dramatic effect on TPOs; the London-Newhaven/Newhaven-London SCs succumbing on 4/5 September, followed by nine more by the end of the month. Yet another six services were withdrawn during the next year. Those that remained ran as bag tenders and apparatus working was suspended.

• POST-WAR CHANGE •

In 1946 the return to normality was not without difficulty for the TPOs, for so much experience, particularly of apparatus working, had been lost. However, new rolling stock was ordered, to existing designs, in 1947 and then to new standard designs in 1959. Not only was the existing stock poorly insulated and ventilated but personnel had become more vocal in its criticism of it. The new stock was the first in postal service to have connecting gangways placed centrally; previously off-set gangways had prevented through passage to or from other vehicles that might be in a train.

Apart from the 'Great Train Robbery' in 1963, when £2.5 million was stolen from the Up Special TPO, the TPO service carried on more or less as it always had done, with very little

Left: Great Northern Railway (Ireland) sorting carriage No 7

Below: North Eastern TPO stock near Leicester in 1986

notice from the outside world, an archaic survivor from the past. In 1966 the Peterborough-Crewe and Crewe-Peterborough TPOs became the first to be added to the network since the post-war restoration of services.

Railway modernisation, including the change from steam to modern traction, brought improvements in train speed, although at the expense of the exchange apparatus, last used in 1972. It was modernisation within the Post Office, though, particularly the concept of deferred delivery of non-priority mail, the two-tier system introduced in 1968, that had a bigger impact on TPOs, reducing the amount of mail that needed overnight processing and therefore being responsible for the withdrawal of the short-distance TPOs during the 1970s.

By the time the rail contract, valued at £200 million over five years, was renegotiated in 1983 there were only 39 TPOs in service. The 1988 contract, with a five-year value of £230 million, set significant performance targets, with penalties due for failure and bonuses paid for improvements. The new contract brought with it major changes to the TPO network, with several services withdrawn

and new long-distance services introduced. The target was to improve the quality of service, particularly in London, East Anglia and the south-east, and the reliability of the network. It was probably the first time TPO workings had been considered as an entity for 150 years! (The 1885 acceleration had only dealt with the west coast route and its connections.)

the change from steam to modern traction

brought improvements in train speed

• RAILNET •

Further radical changes were made to the TPO network with the introduction of Railnet from 1996, coinciding with a new 10-year contract. Partially a child of rail privatisation, where use of facilities at stations had to be paid for, this brought with it the development of road/rail interchanges owned by Royal Mail. The principal of these, at Willesden, concentrated all London-bound and originated TPOs on a single site; others were built at Doncaster, Tonbridge, Wishaw, Filton and Warrington. The revised network consisted of 18 TPOs. Introduced the previous year but part of the Railnet concept was a fleet of 16 four-car electric trains, owned by Royal Mail and built to its specification to carry bulk mail; working over the trunk routes, these carried early-posted first class mail in the afternoons and second class mail during the evenings.

Despite this investment Royal Mail announced in 2002 that it would end its existing rail operations during 2003/4, citing rail unreliability and possible savings of £1.2 billion as the reason. The sorting carriage fleet was also due for replacement, with vehicles are between 30 and 40 years old, and it was unclear how the Royal Mail's operational requirements could be made to comply with modern health and safety requirements, or how Royal Mail could finance a replacement programme.

The wind-down of services started on 9 May 2003, with the withdrawal of the Glasgow-Cardiff and Cardiff-Glasgow services. Six services covering South Wales, East Anglia and the south-east were finished on 25 July, and the remainder after 9 January 2004. Late in 2003 it was suggested that Royal Mail might reach agreement with another operator for the carriage of mail by rail, but reprieve for the TPOs is unlikely.

Since 1830 the mails have been inseparable from the railways, making the withdrawal of the last TPOs in 2004 a poignant affair. We will always remember the Night Mail, now it is time for the Last Post to remind us of times past.



*remember the Night Mail,
now it is time for*

Right: British Railways postal stock at Derby



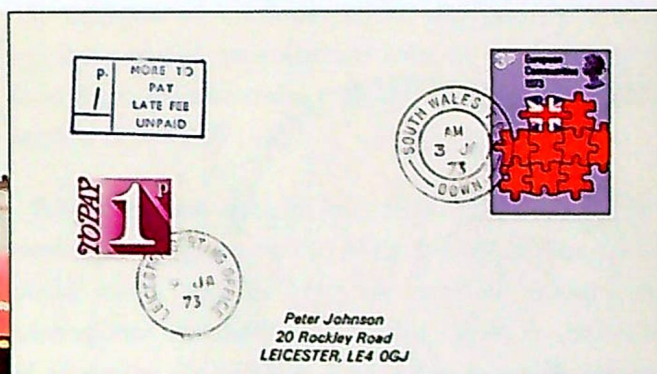
• TPO POSTMARKS •

The first TPOs were not issued with their own datestamps because it was not then intended that they should receive loose mail from the public. However it was necessary to show if a letter was delayed through mis-sorting (sent to a TPO in error) and the first markings associated with TPOs were for such purposes. The experimental TPO of 1838 used a stamp 'MISSENT TO RAILWAY POST OFFICE' and similar ones were used on other routes as the TPO system expanded.

The first circular datestamps were issued in the late 1860s/early 1870s. Some indicated if the datestamp was being used on a day or a night mail, an up or a

down duty, or even which crew was using it. A new type of datestamp was introduced from the 1890s – the diameter was slightly larger than previously. Known to collectors as 'double ring datestamps with thick arcs', they remained in use until replaced by datestamps with thin arcs from the 1950s.

From the 1970s many services were issued with single-ring datestamps, for use on documents relating to the Datapost service and not intended to cancel stamps although this did happen. Datestamps issued to bag tenders, non-sorting mail trains often with TPO-type designations, from the 1970s are sought by some collectors.



Left: An EWS Class 67 locomotive with postal stock

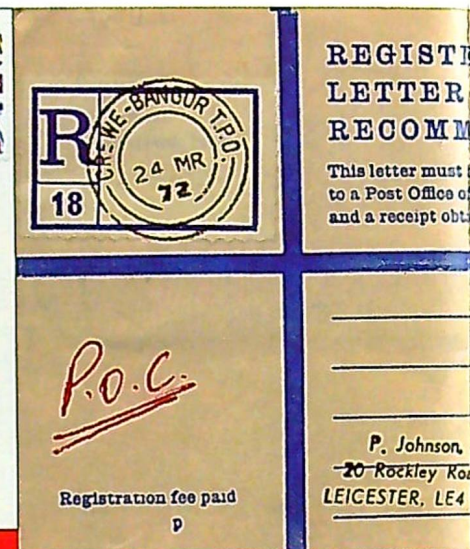
the last post



With the introduction of the new services from the late 1980s a policy of standardisation of the layout and style of datestamps was brought in, producing modified TPOs titles, too. Anachronistic references to 'night' TPOs were removed. The North Eastern TPO Night Up, for example, became simply the North East TPO Up. The effect of these changes was to leave only the Great Western and Midland TPO retaining a pre-grouping railway company name.

For collectors, a particularly popular type of TPO cancel was the 'AM' datestamp. The datestamps on the TPOs were dated the day the train set out and

this continued in use after midnight until the train reached its destination. As a result it was possible for collectors to buy new stamps when they went on sale at London's all-night post offices and race to get them posted onto the TPO to be given the previous day's datestamp! This practice came to an end in 1953 when the Post Office brought in datestamps inscribed 'AM' for use after midnight so the stamps were cancelled with the correct date and thus did not appear to have been issued a day early. The AM postmarks remained hugely popular up until 1981 when the Trafalgar Square Post Office ceased to open all night.



a particularly popular type of TPO

cancel was the 'AM' datestamp



30th Anniversary



BRISTOL - DERBY T.P.O.

DERBY - BRISTOL T.P.O.

27th March 1949-1979



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As well as posting covers onto TPOs, collectors could at one time submit covers to the TPO Section Office in London for cancellation. However as the volume of requests grew the service had to be curtailed and a general 'Travelling Post Office Section London' datestamp was used instead. This was announced in the *British Postmark Bulletin*, giving all collectors an opportunity to obtain examples. The considerable interest generated by the announcement that the TPOs were to end resulted in special arrangements being made for collectors to send in covers, to the London Special Handstamp Centre, for last day cancellations of the routes which ceased on 25 July 2003 and 9 January 2004.

In addition to the operational datestamps, special commemorative cancellations relating to TPOs were used from time to time, although none were actually applied on a TPO.

Brief mention should be made of the Late Fee markings. As stated earlier, from the 1860s the public could route mail by TPO, for quicker delivery, by posting into dedicated late-posting boxes on payment of a late fee. By 1882 all 'mail trains in which sorting duty is performed' also had late-posting boxes. Items posted without additional stamps to cover this fee were held back and forwarded by the normal service. However after 1891 they were accepted and double the late fee was collected from the recipient of the letter. Markings worded 'Posted without late fee' and showing the amount to be collected (used in conjunction with postage due stamps) are popular with some collectors. The fee ended in 1976. Covers could also be despatched on TPOs by registered post on payment of an additional fee.

Numerous commemorative TPO covers have been produced over the years, often relating to the last running or anniversaries of services. Sometimes produced in limited numbers, such covers are very collectable.

• TPO STAMPS •

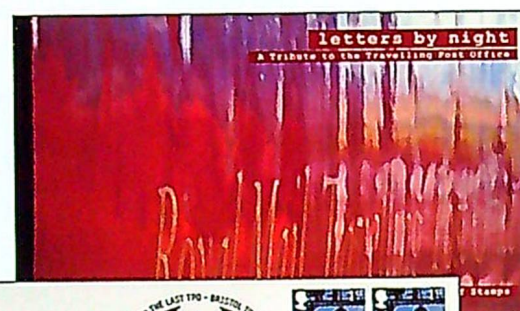
Somewhat surprisingly, Royal Mail has issued only one stamp with direct reference to the TPO service. The 18p stamp in the 1988 Transport and Communications set shows the mailbag pick-up apparatus. Some of the locomotives featured in Cuneo paintings shown on the 1985 Famous Trains stamps may have hauled TPO trains. An early mail coach, although not a TPO, was shown on the final stamp of the Liverpool & Manchester Railway set of 1980. The early TPO carriages however have featured on stamps from Dominica, Guyana, and Mongolia.

The paucity of British stamps featuring the TPO is partly made up by railway letter stamps from a preserved railway. TPO carriages and apparatus have featured on issues from the Nene Valley Railway. One of the carriages from the TPO involved in the Great Train Robbery in 1963 is now preserved on the Nene Valley Railway and former TPO coaches can also be seen on the Bluebell, Severn Valley, and Mid-Hants railways.



• TPO TRIBUTE •

Royal Mail has marked the end of the TPO with this Bulletin publication, a prestige stamp book and a commemorative cover. The book, entitled 'Letters by Night' was issued on 16 March 2004 and contains a pane of three of the six 'Classic Locomotives' stamps of January 2004, a pane of 'The Station' Pub Sign stamp (August 2003), as well as definitive and country stamps. The book also includes a special poem on the TPO written by Simon Armitage, with an introduction by Peter Johnson. The commemorative cover, featuring a film still from *Night Mail*, bears a block of four of 'The Station' stamp, cancelled by a TPO handstamp and a cachet denoting that it was carried on the last run of the Bristol to Penzance TPO service.



• FURTHER READING •

There is quite a literature on the subject.
Recent books and articles include:

A M Goodbody:

**An introduction and guide to the Travelling Post
Offices of Great Britain**
(Railway Philatelic Group, 2nd edition 1983)

Peter Johnson:

**Mail by Rail: The History of the TPO and Post
Office Railway**
(Ian Allan, 1995)

Peter Johnson:

'The Great Train Robbery'
British Philatelic Bulletin, August 2003

Martin Robinson:

**'Travelling Post Offices' and
'Commemorative TPO Postmarks'**
British Postmark Bulletin 1 & 29 August 2003

R M Stubbs & G P Roberts:

TPO Postmarks of Great Britain 1962-1990
(TPO & Seapost Society 1991)

Frank J Wilson:

**Great Britain & Ireland Travelling Post Office
Postmarks, a guide and catalogue**
(Railway Philatelic Group 1991)

H S Wilson:

**The Travelling Post Offices
of Great Britain & Ireland**
(Railway Philatelic Group 1996)

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The author: Peter Johnson

Peter Johnson is the author of *The British Travelling Post Office* (Ian Allan, 1985) and *Mail by Rail - The History of the TPO and the Post Office Railway* (Ian Allan, 1995). In compiling this Bulletin publication he made use of the researches of the late Allan Harvey, an officer of the Post Office and an enthusiast of TPOs, now in his possession.



Since Johnson's first book, on the railway between Shrewsbury, Aberystwyth and Pwllheli, was published in 1984, he has written several books about Welsh narrow gauge railways and two about trams; most of his books include photographs he has taken himself. The subject of his most recent book, the Welsh Highland Railway, featured on the 26p value of the 'Fire & Light' Millennium stamp issue in 2000. He is working on a history of the Festiniog Railway from 1939 to 1983 to be published during 2004.

Peter Johnson also contributes a narrow gauge railway news column to *Steam Railway* magazine.

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