

MIDLAND MAIL

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



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Number 129, March 2003

CHRISTOPHER BEAVER

It is with great sadness that we have to report that Chris Beaver died on 12th March. A full obituary appears on the next page but I would like to take this opportunity to pay my own tribute to Chris. While I have been the editor of Midland Mail, the contribution of Chris has been enormous as a perusal of the indexes will show. That is the obvious support that he gave to me. However, I have always valued the fact that after each Midland Mail had been distributed there was invariably a phone call or letter, full of detailed comments, thanking me for my efforts. I shall miss his quiet wisdom and support enormously.

My earliest memory of Chris is that of a letter he sent to me shortly after the publication of my booklet on the postal history of Ashby-de-la-Zouch, asking about the Leicester to Liverpool mailcoach. How much more we now know about the mailcoach system thanks to Chris's research.. I then got to know him better as we often ran into one another, while we both delved into our separate areas of research, in the Birmingham Reference Library on Saturday mornings before the meetings at Dr Johnson House and later Carrs Lane. One abiding memory is of the Burton meeting in about 1984 when, on what must surely have been by far the coldest night of the year, Chris cycled back to Dordon - a distance of about twenty miles, despite offers to give both him and his bike a lift, saying that the ride would give him chance to think about a sermon.

A memorial service for Chris will be held at the parish church in Penkridge at 2 p.m. on Saturday, 17th May.

MICHAEL JACKSON

We regret that we report the death of Michael Jackson in January. Michael had ceased to advertise in this journal last autumn as he had announced his retirement from dealing in postal history. Stampex did not seem quite the same this year without the opportunity to visit his stand for a chat with him and Vivien Sussex.

NEW MEMBERS

We extend a cordial welcome to the following: Trevor Radway of Painswick who collects the postal history of Stroud and Painswick as well as Late Fee and Too Late mail; Allan Edwards of Birmingham who is interested in G.B. material in general; David Greenhalgh of Coventry whose interests include Military Mail and Information added to Mail; and Frank Lane of Carmarthen who collects London Numeral Cancellations plus general postal history.

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

Our Annual General Meeting and Auction will be held on Saturday, 12th April at St Germain's Church Hall, Portland Road, Birmingham. Full details have already been circulated with the auction catalogue.

Please note that a whole day meeting will be held in Northampton on 13th September. Full details will be distributed with the next issue.

CHRISTOPHER BEAVER

It is difficult to conceive of a greater loss to the Society than Chris Beaver, who passed away on 12th March after a painful battle with cancer. He was undoubtedly one of the finest postal historians in the country, researching the subject deeply with unbridled enthusiasm and, critically, committing the results of his work to paper for the benefit of those who follow. One loses track of how many articles he provided for Midland Mail and how often he won the Society's Jon Baker Trophy. He will be best remembered for his ground-breaking work on the British mailcoach system but his understanding of the work of the Post Office in the 18th and 19th centuries led to outstanding contributions in other key areas of research. No one knew more of the work of the Post Office riding surveyors and their importance to the successful development of the postal system.

Chris, a devoted Anglican priest, was never known to appear at a meeting in clerical dress and, had it not been for the articles he wrote as "Reverend", would have left many unaware of his vocation. Most still remain unaware that, like others of his generation, he "served his time" as a National Serviceman in the RAF. Chris began his working life, not as a priest but as a teacher, at a private school in Hampstead Garden Suburb. After a year at Durham University reading History (one believes), he changed his subject and his life, to undertake a religious degree at Kings College, London, followed by a year at Warminster, Wiltshire. Seven years as a curate were spent at Leek and Uttoxeter before he was appointed vicar at Normacot, in the Potteries, where he spent ten years and undoubtedly formed his life-long love of the county of Staffordshire and particularly of the Potteries. He spent a further six years each at Pheasey, near Walsall, and Dordon, near Tamworth, and only left the county for the final six years of his paid ministry, at Langley, Birmingham. Even after he retired to Penkridge, he worked long and hard for the church and was taking services as recently as September last year.

Chris, as befitted a Kings College graduate, was a man of considerable intellect and remarkable memory. He read every relevant book he could find, remembered what he had read and could recall its substance years later. He had an extensive library of his own that included many out-of-print and rarely seen works relating to, or impinging on, English postal history. One was frequently embarrassed when, discussing an obscure subject with Chris, he would say "I am sure you have read such-and-such . . ." and would then unfailingly recall what the book had said and how it resolved the particular query we faced. If one had, indeed, read the quoted book, one could rarely remember all the topics it covered and certainly not how it had answered our problem. Fortunately for us all, Chris could!

Few of us will meet our maker able to claim, as Chris would never have done, that their life's work is essentially complete. However, whatever he may have thought, Chris was able to complete much of what he set out to achieve. His work on mailcoaches passing through the Midlands has formed the critical and essential framework of the Society's forthcoming publication on mileage marks and mail routes to London. (He also completed the extensive narrative texts relating to Birmingham and the county of Staffordshire.) Many years of almost unbelievably-detailed research into mailcoach routes has led to the publication, less than a week before his death in the journal of the Great Britain Philatelic Society, of his magnum opus on every mailcoach known to have run in or out of London. County postal history societies beyond the Midlands have had details of their mailcoaches provided by Chris and his work on Welsh mailcoaches, unpublished but essentially complete, will provide further evidence of his studies. Believing there was yet more to be done by others, particularly in Ireland, Chris left his research notes carefully organized and filed, ready for those who will appreciate their value. The Society will be their faithful custodian.

As someone who corresponded with Chris, quite often twice a week or more, and received regular phone calls from him, it is difficult to know how to move forward in the continuing study of English postal history without his help. I told Chris more than once that it was his letters, always hand-written in tiny script (often on the back of discarded hymn sheets) that drove me to use reading glasses! We made several 'research excursions' together, none more memorable than the one to Durham to study a stunning early 18th century correspondence in the Cathedral Library. The 'discovery' of the remarkable c1770 postal map in the British Library - after a tip-off by Robert Johnson - was no less exciting. Chris became a great personal friend and it is difficult to write objectively of him when the loss is felt so much. No apology is needed, however, for claiming that Chris was invaluable to the Society. We must be thankful we were the ones that gained most from his secular life and we will surely remember Chris, both as an outstanding postal historian and as a loyal friend, with immense pride and affection. We extend our deepest sympathy to Jeanette and the family.

WJC

THE FEBRUARY MEETING

On 15th February we broke new ground when we held our meeting at the Collingwood Centre, Great Barr in conjunction with the annual fair of the Streetly Philatelic Society who kindly provided us with a room for the afternoon. The subject for the afternoon was '*Redirected and Undeliverable Mail*'.

Sadie Cole, who was returning to the building where she had met her husband, began the proceedings with a letter from Hereford to Kington which had been redirected to Ludlow, and which showed the mileage marks of Hereford and Presteigne. The writer of a letter of 1819 had to pay for its return enclosed in a Post Office Returned Letter Notice. A letter of 1896 sent from Chester received fourteen postmarks on its travels. Sadie finished with a number of modern letters sent from London to Discoed which had been missent to a number of places including Leeds, Cardiff, Liverpool, Brecon, Darlington and Bedale.

John Soer began with a registered letter sent from Ashby-de-la-Zouch to Burton-on-Trent and for which the addressee could not be found. Another letter also sent from Ashby to Linton, Burton-on-Trent received no fewer than twelve postmarks, including the duplexes of Ashby, Burton and Leicester, during the course of its travels. John then showed a number of different 'Not to be Found/449', 'Gone Away/449' and 'No Such Street/In Leicester' marks.

A letter of 1832 addressed to Birmingham was the first item in Eric Lewis's display. The letter was taken round by each of the eleven letter carriers who signed it before it was sent back to London, the sender having to pay the return postage of 1/6. A further letter of 1832 also carried eleven signatures, eight of them the same as on the previous item. By 1845 there were twenty-three letter carriers and a letter sent to Birmingham then showed that number of attempts to deliver it. This was beaten by a letter which showed evidence of thirty attempts to deliver it in Hockley and Handsworth. Eric showed an example of the 'Firm Not Known/75' handstamp of Birmingham - a mark which is rarely seen. Eric's final item was a returned postcard stamped with the skeleton of the Birmingham Returned Letter Office.

Roger Broomfield began with letters addressed to public houses including one to the Wagon & Horses, Mayfield near Birmingham in 1895. Another letter was marked "Deceased". A letter from Craven Arms from Hereford was endorsed "Left and gone to Hereford", then "Not known where". Not surprisingly a letter sent from Hereford to Ploughfield was marked "Not Known". A letter of 1824 addressed to Much Wenlock was endorsed in Hereford "Not Known" then "Try Much Wenlock".

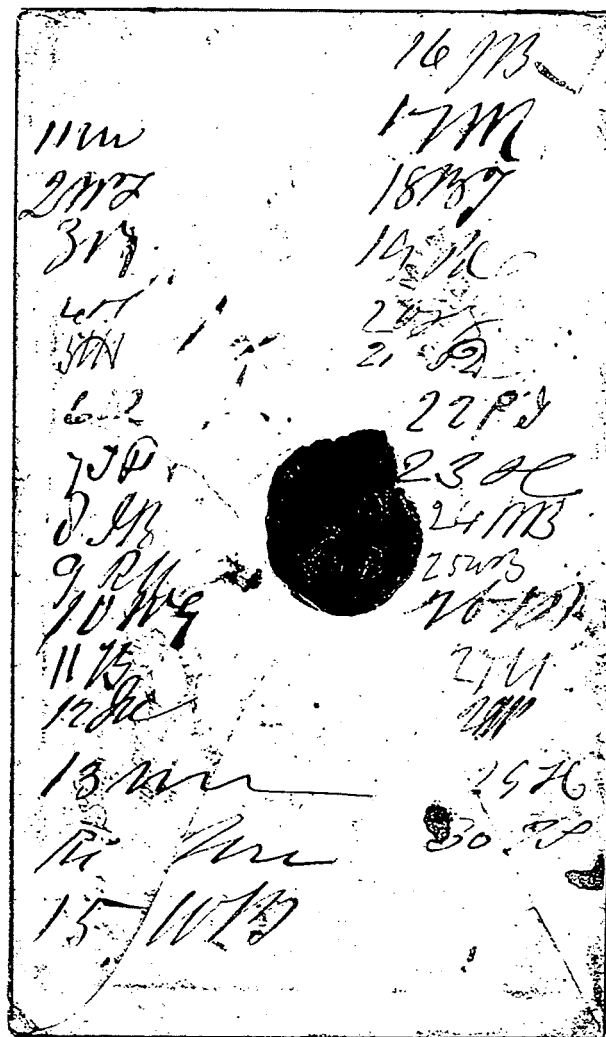
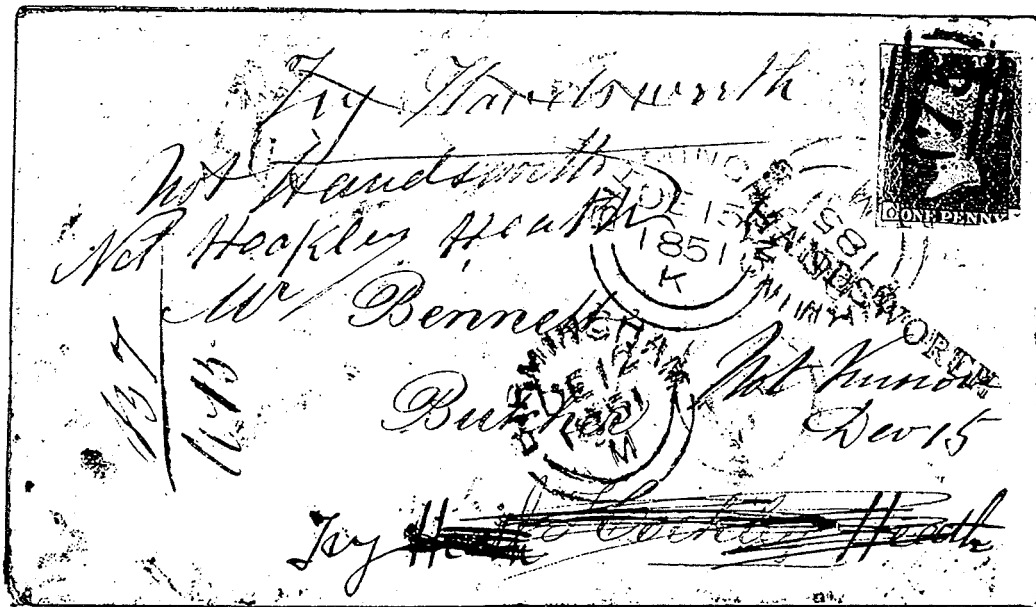
Among a number of Northamptonshire items shown by Paul Bradshaw were an 1825 letter from London to Passenham showing a manuscript '*Missent*' in conjunction with a straight-line mark of Towcester.; an undelivered letter sent from Northampton showing eighteen datestamps from seventeen different locations; the 'MISSENT-TO/NORTHAMPTON' mark on a letter of 1818 addressed to Croughton, Northamptonshire (the posttown was in fact Brackley); and a letter dated 11th February 1993 which was damaged by fire in a wagon at Preston and eventually delivered on 28th February.

Roy Summers produced a number of items relating to Wolverhampton, beginning with a letter sent in 1820 from Glasgow to Sheffield but redirected to Wolverhampton. Of particular note was a letter of the Uniform Fourpenny Postage period sent from Wolverhampton and redirected within London. A letter sent in 1876 from Bilston to Worcester was sent on to Leeds where it was endorsed "Try 1st address again".

Guy Bridges began with a letter of 1823 sent from Kilmarnock to London where it was redirected to Ashby-de-la-Zouch. Several covers showed strikes of charge marks for the redirection fee. A letter of 1847 had a manuscript "Not" alongside a Much Wenlock c.d.s. A letter from Kidderminster to Tanworth not surprisingly had the handstamp 'MISSENT TO.' used in conjunction with a Tamworth c.d.s. Guy ended with a Notice of Objection redirected from Ludlow to Shrewsbury gaol.

Our Chairman rounded off the afternoon with a variety of material from Northamptonshire. A cover redirected from Byfield to Jersey had strikes of three different UDCs. Among a number of undeliverable items was a letter sent in 1941 from Towcester to Sweden by airmail. It was five months before it was returned. In 1953, there were twelve places named Middleton with post offices. A letter sent from Northampton was taken to several before being returned to Northants. The letter contained twenty dinner-dance tickets - a case of '*After the Ball was over*'.

Thirty attempts to deliver a letter in Hockley and Handsworth - a cover from Eric Lewis's display. The letter was addressed to Hockley where it proved impossible to find Mr Bennett. After similar failures at Handsworth and Hockley Heath the letter was presumably returned to its sender.



THE MARCH MEETING

For our March meeting we were again at a new venue - Oldbury Park Primary School, Worcester. We are indebted to the Worcester & District Society for kindly providing us with a room at the venue of their annual fair.

The meeting began with those present standing in memory of Chris Beaver; no doubt, each person had their own particular memories of Chris.

The subject for the afternoon was 'Oxfordshire Postal History' with two speakers - Geoffrey Townsend and Albert Bayliss.

Geoffrey's display was devoted largely to the city of Oxford. Geoffrey began with a letter sent in 1723 to Liverpool and endorsed "By London". The rest of the first frame was devoted to a selection of the straight-line marks up to 1801 of which, we were told, twenty-three types have been recorded. This was followed by a frame of mileage marks. We saw examples of the boxed 'PAID AT/OXFORD' used in 1830 and 1831.

Among the post-1840 material were a white line twopenny blue used on a turned letter; the surcharge mark '2' used in 1859; and a Clarendon Hotel Cachet. These were in addition to a plethora of numeral cancellations and duplex marks.

Geoffrey then turned his attention to the sub-offices. Of particular note were the straight-line marks of Castle Street and Holy Well Street, the latter being struck in blue. There were UDCs from Iffley and Headington.

The last part of Geoffrey's display consisted of material from the county. We saw some superb strikes of UDCs, in particular Cropredy (in blue), Bodicott, Great Hazeley and the 'ENSHAM' of Eynsham. Finally, Geoffrey showed us some letters sent to Faringdon on which the postage due adhesives had been cancelled with the registered handstamp of Faringdon.

Albert Bayliss took as his theme the rest of the county but began with a letter of 1682 sent from London to Rycote near Thame and endorsed "To be left to the care of the postmaster of Oxford". He then took each of the roads to Oxford and showed material from each of the posttowns on those roads. What follows is merely mention of a few items that caught my eye among a range of most interesting material.

From Bicester came a straight-line mark used in 1763 and a variety of mileage marks. The Banbury section began with the two-line 'BAN/BURY' used in 1753. The mileage marks showed a distance of 86 miles in 1804 but 77 miles in 1821. However, for me, the highlight of the Banbury material was a tiny 'MISSENT to BANBURY' struck in blue ink in 1832.

Tetsworth was represented by a two-line mark of 1770, various mileage marks and a penny post handstamp used in 1816. Among the Thame covers was a straight-line mark used in 1763 and a first-type mileage mark. It seemed strange to be seeing a distance as low as 48 miles in a midland county. Even lower was the distance shown on the mileage marks of Nettlebed - 43 miles. One cover showed the boxed mileage mark 'BENSINGTON/49' as well as that of Nettlebed.

The Woodstock section began with straight-line marks of 1750 and 1757, followed by the first-type mileage mark and then the serpentine handstamp used in 1799. A letter sent in 1808 from Evesham to Henley in Arden was endorsed "X at Woodstock". Chipping Norton used a number of two-line handstamps but that used c1780 was massive.

An item from Eynsham that aroused interest was the first-type mileage mark "62 ENSHAM" used as late as 1802. One can only speculate as to the reasons for such a late usage. Witney was represented by handstamps used in 1762 and 1794 as well as mileage marks and penny post items.

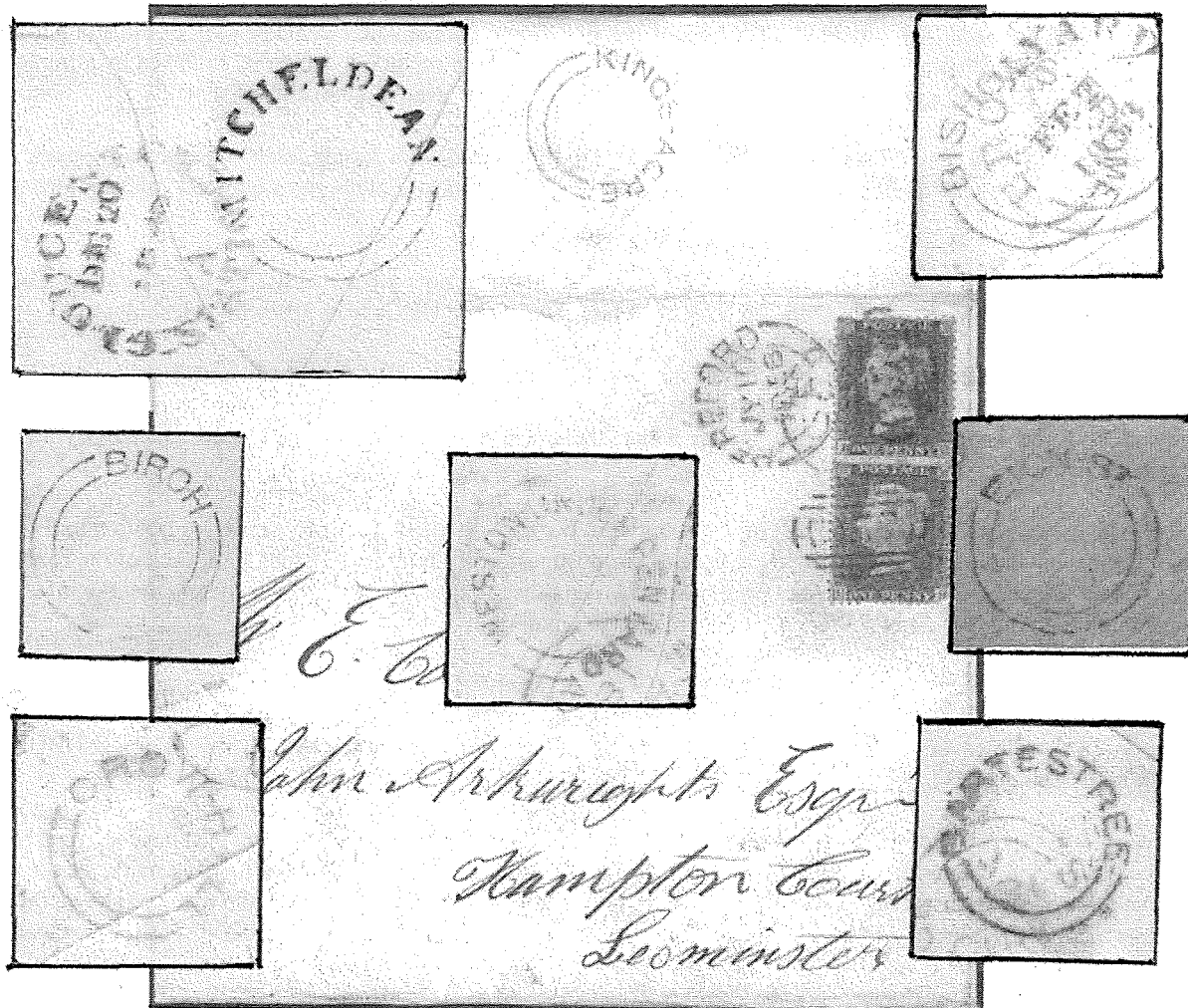
Albert then strayed into Berkshire (boundary changes after 1900 are to be totally ignored) and we saw two superb items from Abingdon - the "AB . N . DON used in 1706 and a superb strike of the lower case "Abingdon" used in 1728. Albert ended with a number of penny post items from Wallingford.

It was the first time that the Society had been treated to a display devoted (almost) entirely to Oxfordshire and it was obvious that all those present had thoroughly enjoyed the afternoon.

Fifty Years of Philatelic Expertise.

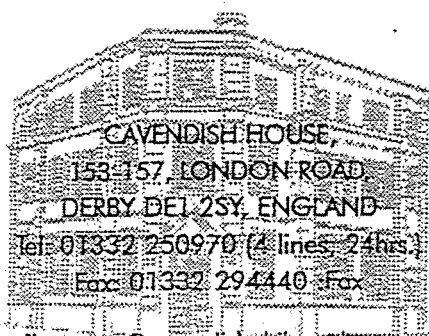
The Rev. J. Sutters Collection of Herefordshire Postal History

will feature in our 6th June Sale.



Can we help you build – or sell – your Collection?

Contact Ken Baker or Ian Kellock.



E-mail: stamps@cavendishphilauc.demon.co.uk
www.Cavendish-Auctions.com

POSTS WITH PURPOSE?

Martin Scroggs and John Calladine

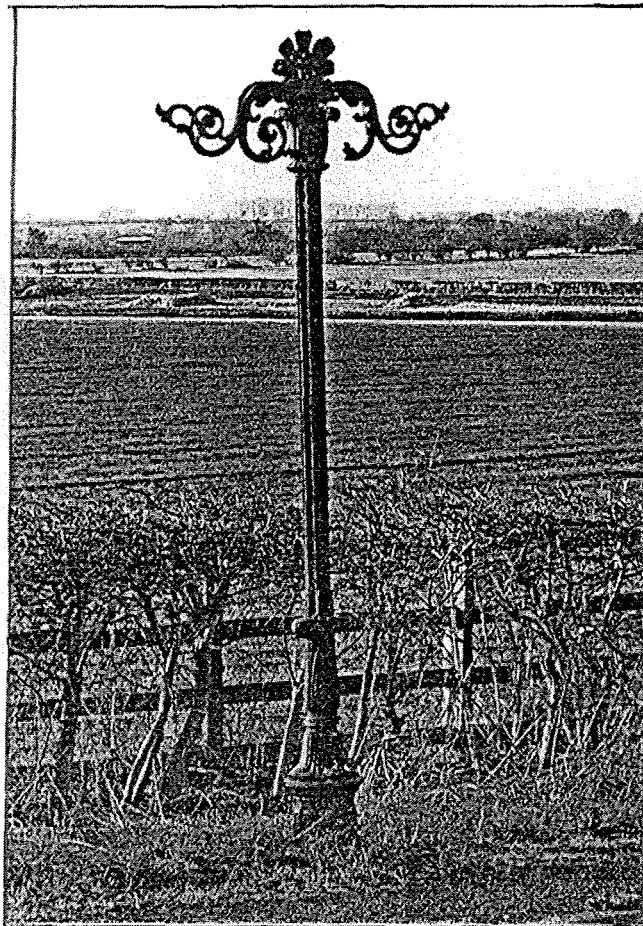
In October 1998, Midland Mail reported the astonishing claim of the 'Antique Collector' magazine that the reason our mail was called "the post" was because mailcoaches would hasten deliveries by hanging sacks of mail on posts outside villages. In particular, they referred to seven roadside posts between Long Compton and Stratford on Avon. There was no suggestion they were, in any way, unique.

In fact, several years earlier, one of our members had drawn the attention of the (then) Editor to the posts on that particular road. It seems that tour guides of 'Shakespeare's Country', on coaches from Stratford, made mention of these posts when passing them and claimed they were placed there for mailcoaches to suspend bags of letters. Until recently, there had been no opportunity to investigate this interesting story but it did appear that the Society's 'Local Posts' book might, perhaps, provide a glimmer of possible justification for the claim that there was a mailcoach association, even if a connection to the word 'post' (used three centuries earlier) could be discounted.

The village of Long Compton, said by some to be the birthplace of Dick Whittington, lies on what is now the A3400 between Chipping Norton and Stratford on Avon, passing through Shipston on Stour. The distance from Chipping Norton to Stratford is about twenty two miles. Long Compton is just five miles from Chipping Norton and therefore at the southern end of the road. Mailcoaches between London and Birmingham were more normally routed through Banbury but, on 5th April 1835, a Chipping Norton-Birmingham mailcoach was inaugurated. It only ran until 5th July 1836 but was re-established exactly three years later and then continued until 1842.

Before considering exactly what function the mysterious posts on the Chipping Norton to Stratford road might have been intended to serve, it would be useful to describe them. They are made of cast iron but are without any mark to indicate who manufactured them or where the foundry was located. As can be seen from the photo (below) of a post in the vicinity of the Halford cross roads, they could not be described as of utilitarian design. They are about ten feet high and have two elaborate arms serving no obvious purpose. If they were in the middle of a town, one would be quite sure they were intended for hanging baskets of flowers. One can surmise they were quite expensive to erect and the design is redolent of high Victoriana rather than of the more functional Georgian era. One would not immediately come to the conclusion that their creation coincided with the establishment of a mailcoach in the 1830s.

The post near Halford cross roads.



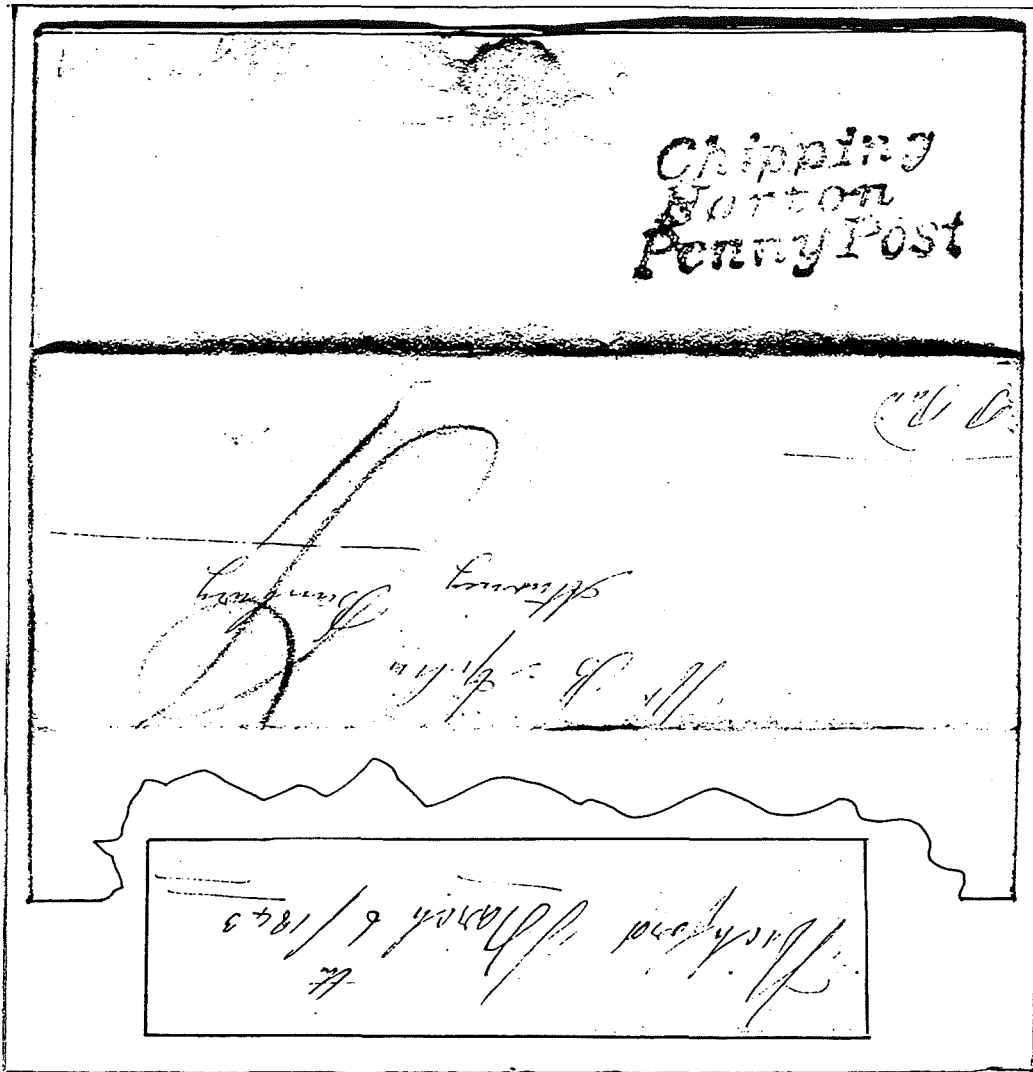
If not mailcoaches, what other modes of transport come to mind? There are two other rather more obvious candidates. Could they, for example, have a connection with stagecoaches, for Shipston on Stour has several coaching inns. Whereas one can imagine that a mailbag or pouch might be left hanging on such a post, what possible need would a stagecoach have for a structure of this kind? Could it be for the collection of parcels and packages? One must seriously doubt that anyone would leave a parcel hanging on a post in a deserted road and one would doubt even more that a coach would collect it without prior payment at a stagecoach office. Could they be relics of the early horse-drawn tramway, opened in September 1826, which ran from Stratford, long before the Great Western Railway or the West and Midland Railway arrived in the town? It seems a more convincing explanation but the tramway ran from Stratford to Moreton in Marsh, not to Long Compton and Chipping Norton. (The section between Moreton in Marsh and Longdon Road was later converted into a GWR branch line and continued to Shipston.). There can be no railway or tramway connection.

As the great Sherlock Holmes used to say, if you have eliminated all other explanations, then you must return to your original premise, however unlikely it may seem. So, for those who don't remember the content of every page of the Society's 'Local Posts' book, let us remind ourselves of the origin of a penny post from Chipping Norton to the villages in the vicinity of Long Compton. Until the mid-1830s, these villages had received their letters by unofficial posts from Shipston on Stour, Chipping Norton and even Moreton in Marsh. In February 1835, a resident of Long Compton complained that a London letter cost him 9d General Postage to Shipston and a further 6d for the six miles local delivery. (1d per mile for delivery by a postmaster was quite usual.) He asked for a penny post to be established. It so happened that, following complaints of lack of security of the General Post provided by a lad and a single-horse mail cart, the Post Office surveyor had just made arrangements for the establishment of the Chipping Norton-Birmingham mailcoach mentioned above. With his new mailcoach scheduled to pass through Long Compton, the surveyor could see a simple and inexpensive solution to the request for a penny post. With the mailcoach originating at Chipping Norton and not running on a through-route from London, time could be found for the postmaster at Chipping Norton to extricate letters for Long Compton and the surrounding villages from the London mail and to make up a penny post bag. There wouldn't be many letters but, if the mailcoach carried them, there would be no additional transport expense at all. Already we have visions of, not one bag, but small packets of letters being hung on posts at the road junction nearest to each village, posts being set up with their arms conveniently at the height of the mailcoach guard's seat. Why two arms? So that letters awaiting collection could be left hanging on the other arm? Sadly, it is all nonsense.

The surveyor drew a sketch map in which he made it clear that half a dozen villages were considerably closer to Long Compton than they were to Chipping Norton. He therefore proposed the establishment of a Receiver at Long Compton at a salary of £5 a year. The mailcoach would take the penny post bag to Long Compton and the receiver would distribute the letters. Since receipts for the first year were £5-19-1d, it equates to the delivery of just 1429 letters in total - 27 letters a week. There were no multiple bags and there was no need for elaborate cast iron posts. Even more damning is the fact that the posts are in the wrong place. The Chipping Norton Penny Post provides no answer.

Although we know that the penny post was duly established on 18th August 1835, it is inevitable that examples of letters carries by it are going to be very difficult to find. In fact, only two strikes of the Chipping Norton Penny Post handstamp are known to the Society and both are post-1840. However, one of the two known letters did come from the village of W(h)ichford said, by the surveyor, to be just over two miles from Long Compton. So, although not a genuine penny post item and dated 6th March 1843 - after the mailcoach had been withdrawn - it is probably indistinguishable in appearance and undoubtedly passed through the Long Compton receiving house. An illustration appears on the next page.

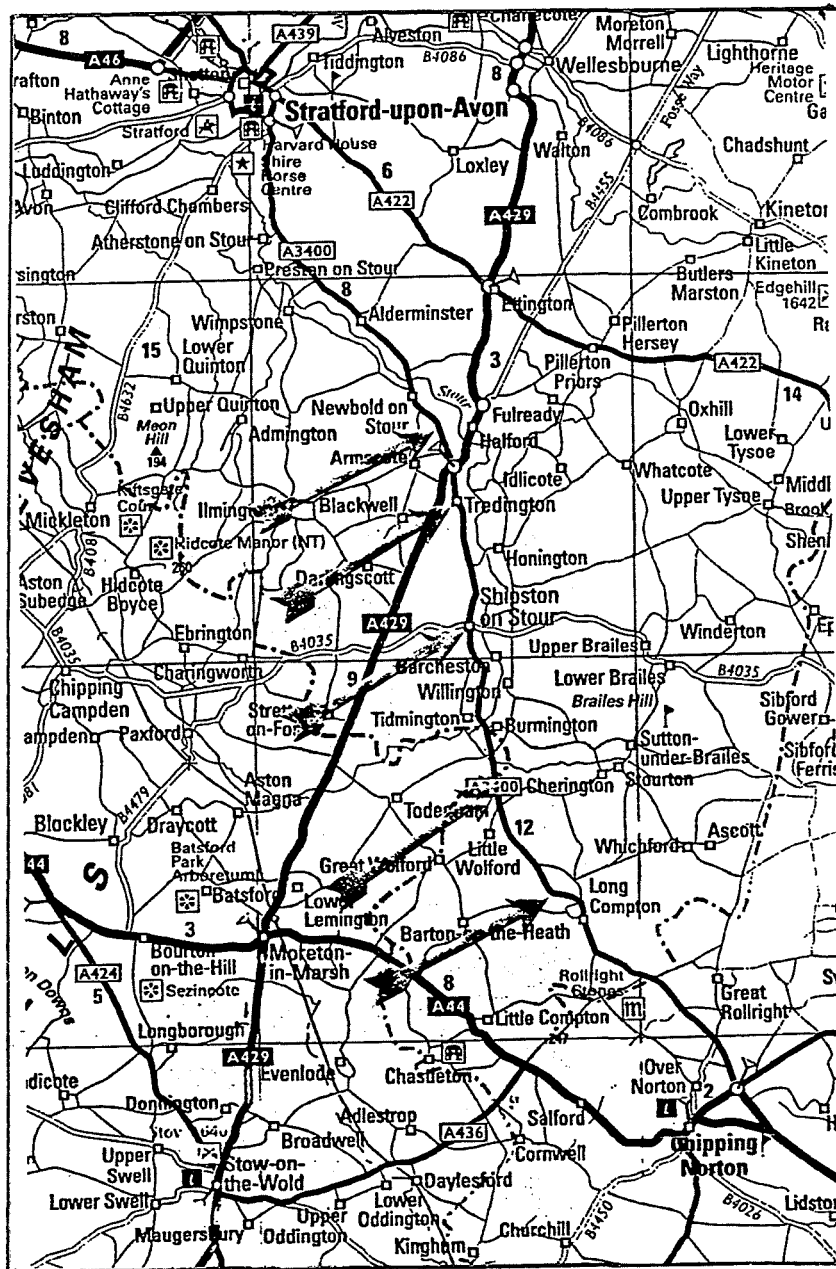
The scarce Chipping Norton Penny Post mark on a letter from Whichford.



Having contradicted Sherlock Holmes by looking at both the alternatives and the prime suspect without finding an obvious reason for these posts to have been erected, perhaps the exact location of each post will provide the clue we need. In her piece in 'Antique Collector', Verite Reily Collins said there were seven surviving posts between Long Compton and Stratford on Avon. An on-site investigation has found five of them. There is one near Long Compton (map reference SP278336), alas with one of its arms missing. There is a complete one near the turn to Cherington village (SP264362). It has retained both of its arms but is now almost submerged in bushes. There is a post in the centre of Shipston on Stour (SP258407) that was reported as having both arms lying on the pavement but which appears to have been reassembled. Further along the road at Tredington (SP256437) the post survives, in a private garden, but both arms have disappeared. Finally, near the Halford cross roads (SP253453) there is the post illustrated above, with both arms present, albeit one damaged. It is described as being "near" the cross roads but the truth is that it isn't particularly near to them, nor is it near anything else of consequence. If one looks critically at the location of the posts, it is evident that they were not placed at the obvious point for the convenience of a village. Why would one be needed in the middle of Shipston on Stour? No, they seem to serve some other purpose altogether.

Is there any chance that these posts, which carry no indication of mileages, were nevertheless intended as mileposts? The early Ordnance Survey maps marked the distance in miles along the more major roads but did not specifically mark milestones. Modern OS maps, both at the 1:50000 and 1:25000 scales, not only show them but distinguish between milestones (MS) and mileposts (MP). This information is not always reliable because milestones have suffered badly in the past sixty years. In particular, many were removed and hidden during World War 2 and some were lost and not replaced. (Since then, road improvements and verge strimmers have added to the toll.) The latest edition of the OS Landranger Map (1:50000) shows no mileposts on the road between

Stratford and Chipping Norton. However, the 1:25000 map clearly shows a milepost 'near' the Halford cross roads, exactly where the last of 'our' posts is located. It might have shown the post in Shipston, if it were not among houses. It does not show the post 'near' the Cherington cross roads but that post appears on a 1972 OS map, as does the post at Tredington. The modern OS Explorer map shows the post 'near' Long Compton but, oddly, it was omitted from the 1972 map. If we take account of posts that now exist or were marked on the 1972 OS map, we can account for no fewer than twelve of them. What is absolutely clear is that known posts, or the marked location of those that have disappeared, are positioned exactly a mile (or multiples of a mile) apart. They are, indeed, mileposts. Perhaps, many years ago, there were as many as twenty?



A modern road map of the Stratford-Chipping Norton road with the location of the posts marked.

The obvious question must be this; if they were mileposts, why is there no indication of the distance to Stratford or to Chipping Norton? The most likely answer must be that, at one time, an indicator hung from each of the cross arms, perhaps in the form of a wooden board. The shape of the arms hardly appears ideal for that purpose but, without knowing the form of the suspended board or plate, one can hardly speculate. Even without an apparent mailcoach connection, few would disagree that the posts need to be protected against further damage or removal. The attention of the Milestone Society has been drawn to their plight and one hopes that they may eventually be listed for preservation and, perhaps, restored to their original condition.

MINUS TWO, PLUS ONE AT NORTHAMPTON

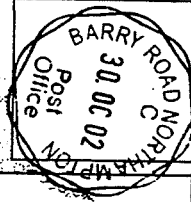
By Derek Smeathers

With the continuing spate of Town Sub-Office closures, it is nice to record that a new one has recently opened in Northampton, albeit replacing two others. The oldest of the town's sub-offices, Wellingborough Road opened in 1855. Another TSO was opened in Wellingborough Road in 1904, barely half a mile away from it, and this was called Abington Park - although it is several hundred yards from the park itself. These two offices were run by the same postmaster in recent years, and both were closed on 16th October 2002.

Also in Wellingborough Road, at about the half-way mark between the two former offices, is the local Co-op supermarket at the corner with Barry Road. Officially, on 17th October 2002 a new TSO was due to open within this shop and there was much publicity about the change. That morning, I called at the shop but was told the office was not yet open ... "try later on". Mid-afternoon came but still no post office, and the shop assistants did not know why. So I phoned the manager and was told that there were "computer problems preventing opening". In answer to the obvious question, he said "perhaps tomorrow, we hope".

I phoned the next day to check whether it was open; it was. I gained even more fitness by walking there, and sure enough two of the three counter positions were open. I had three pieces of business to transact, the last being to obtain a clear strike of the new datestamp. The one offered to me was almost unreadable; the clerk apologised and seemed to be struggling with the date stamp. I asked if there was a problem. She replied that she couldn't get a clear date, and showed me two attempts. I said "this is an old type circular stamp, have you got a self-inking one?" "The new ones haven't arrived yet, so we are using the old ones from Abington Park, and they are worn out" was the response. Between us, we managed to man-handle a couple of readable strikes and I then asked when the new ones were expected. A shrug of the shoulders said it all! I learned later that the new SID was received on 19th October and was used that day (a Saturday). For one day only then, Barry Road TSO had been Abington Park TSO. The 'superb' strikes are illustrated below.

POST OFFICE Order for stamps, Stationery etc Purchaser <u>D. SMEATHERS</u> Items required on <u>17 OCT. 2002</u> Note: The list must be handed in at a Post Office. If the purchaser wishes to keep a copy he is advised to prepare a duplicate. The copy will be date stamped and initialed by the counter officer. Purchases should be checked on receipt. THIS IS NOT A CERTIFICATE OF POSTING		 Post Office Date Stamp	P325 Revd May 1989  Initials of Counter Officer
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Certificate of Posting <i>This is a receipt for ordinary letters. Keep it safely to produce in the event of a claim. The ordinary post should not be used for sending money or valuable items.</i>		
Please write the name, address and postcode for each item you're sending in the column below (in ink)	number of items ONE	Officer's initials MP
name <u>BRITISH GAS</u>	address and postcode <u>ADMAIL AA 3120</u> <u>SOUTHAMPTON</u> <u>SO14 0NU</u>	date stamp 

please continue on the back (if necessary)

P326 PAD July 96

THE NOTTINGHAM TO HIGHAM FERRERS ROAD IN 1789

On 4th March 1789, George Western, one of the surveyors, wrote to John Palmer:

"Agreeable to your Directions I have proceeded along the Road from Nottingham through Melton - Mowbray, Oakham, Uppingham, Rockingham & Kettering to Higham Ferrers, being part of the Road from Nottingham thro' Bedford to London. And I beg leave to lay before you the following Observations which upon the closest Examination I was able to make appear to me to represent the actual State of the Road."

This is written at the top of a large sheet of paper down the right side of which is a sketch map of the route (reproduced in two sections on the next page) and to the right of that is a description of the road. This is reproduced below.

"The Road to Bridgeford is very bad & deep & subject to be overflowed; it is one of the Trent Lanes [?], and the Corporation of Nottingham are (as I am informed) obliged to repair it. It is also the Road from Loughbro' into Nottingham. It might easily be made good.

"The Road as far as Plumtree is tolerable. It is broad and there's good Gravel tho' it is much cut up with Wheel-Tracts. It wants but little to be made good. Near Edwalton there are a few mounds of Earth which confine the Road and make it narrow; they might be removed without difficulty. ¼ of a mile before Plumtree the Road is bad, and continues so thro' the Town.

"The Road continues very bad thro' Normanton & Stanton, till you come to the Foss[e] Road. it's a deep Clay and for the most part has never been ... [The remaining few words of this line are illegible.]

"Thro' Overbroughton the Road is very bad, thence to Nether Broughton pretty good, may[?] do all the way to Melton, there is a Hill not very steep at Kettleby, but it is long.

"From Nottingham to Melton the Road is a broad Turnpike. About 6 miles, in the middle of the Road appear to have had very little done, being a stiff Clay and very deep and bad. There has been a great Supineness in making it, and it is at present most shamefully neglected. There are no Impediments to its being a good Road - no Rivers, Hills or narrow ways. The materials are good being Gravel, Stone & Chalkstone. It wants nothing but Exertion to be a very good Road.

"For 3 miles from Melton is a good Sand Road. At Little Dalby Lordship it begins to be very bad, having been (apparently) totally neglected. It is a stiff deep lay, particularly about Leesthorpe, and is as bad as any in the whole Road.

"Close to Mr Brown's is a Brook which is subject to Swells [flooding?] - there should be a Bridge there, and I understand Money has been issued for that purpose. The Road mends as you get near Langham, but is hilly; in that town it is bad, and there's a Stream of Water where [there] ought to be a Bridge. At Barleythorpe the Road is better, but there's a Bridge which I do not think safe, being narrow and weak.

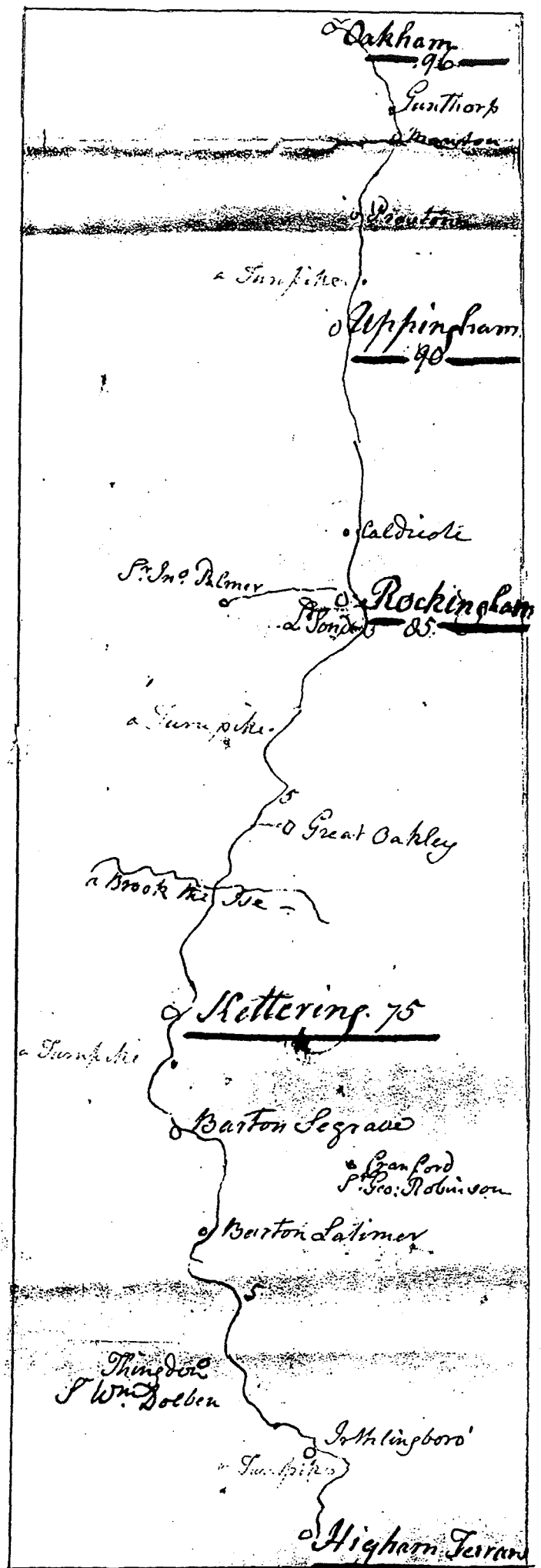
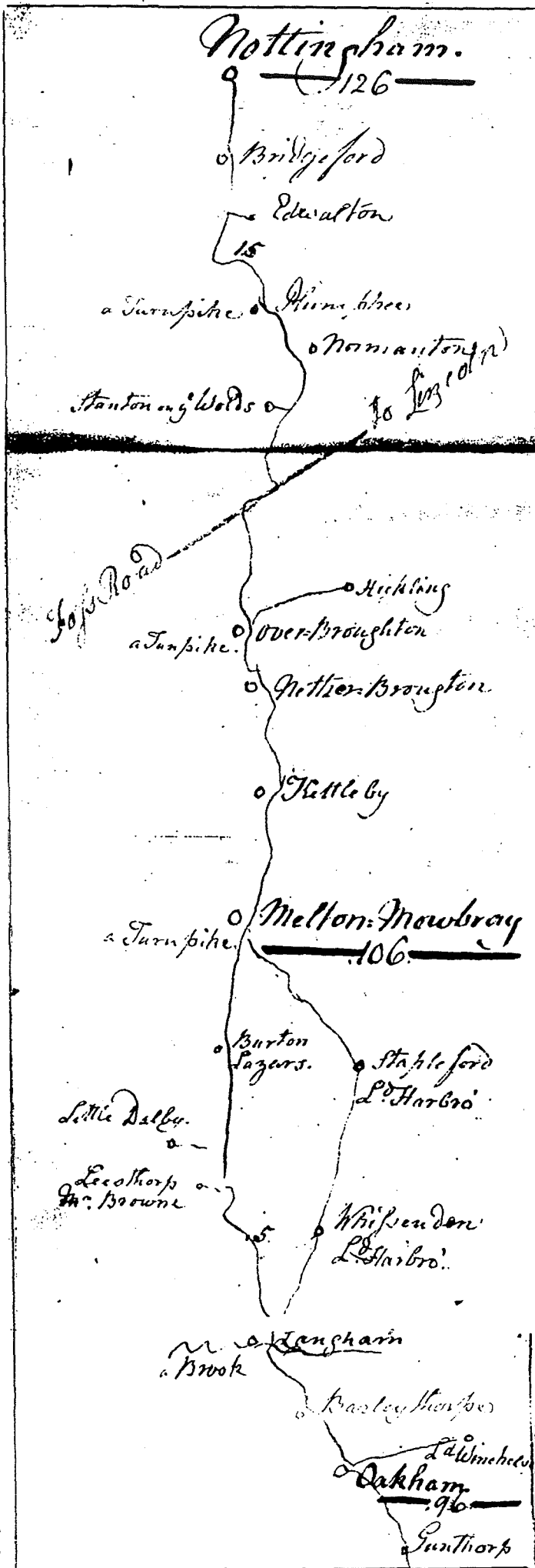
"Oakham to Manton the Road is god, thence to Preston down & up hill, but pretty good Road, and continues so to Uppingham.

"From Melton to Uppingham, the Road improves much after leaving Langham. There appears good materials all the Way, mostly Gravel & Stone, but they are wretchedly managed. There are nine private Gates to open between LeesThorpe & Uppingham, but as they are all nuisances they must be removed on Complaint.

"When you leave Uppingham there are 4 very steep Hills in the course of a mile, being entirely up & downhill. There are 2 Gates which have no Business there. The Road has been much improved, and with little pains might be made good all the way to Rockingham.

"2 miles beyond Rockingham might easily be made good, and from thence to Great Oakley across the Forest much in the same state. There are 2 Gates on the Forest.

"When the Road crosses the Ise it is very dangerous. There is a Bridge but without Battlements, and the approaches being sometimes under Water, a Carriage might easily be overturned by missing the Road and tumbling off the side of the Bridge, which I am told has happened. There wants nothing but Battlements, the Bridge being strong, tho' narrow.



"From Kettering to Higham there is but little wanted to be made a good Road. At Irthlingboro' is a Bridge and long Causeway, the narrowest part is about 15 Feet.

"The Materials here are good and the Road is well taken Care of.

"From Higham Ferrers to Bedford the Road is good.

"Upon the Whole there does not appear to me to be any real Obstacle to the making a good Road from Nottingham this way, it being all Turnpike and broad, with no Impediments either from Hills or Rivers. There are indeed a few short Hills near Uppingham but not sufficient to deter the scheme, and there seems to be a spirit kindling among the Gentlemen of the Country which I think is all that is wanting. It is much the nearest Road and I believe if measured would be found [to be] much shorter than is computed."

Does the latter comment imply that John Cary had not surveyed this particular road. For much of the eighteenth century it was a post road. However, it was not until 1807 that a mail coach ran along this route, despite the fact that some sources state incorrectly that the Leeds mail coach ran this way from 1785.

[Ref: Post 96, Ref 21, Folio 9]

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MISTAKEN IDENTITY

by Alan Marshall

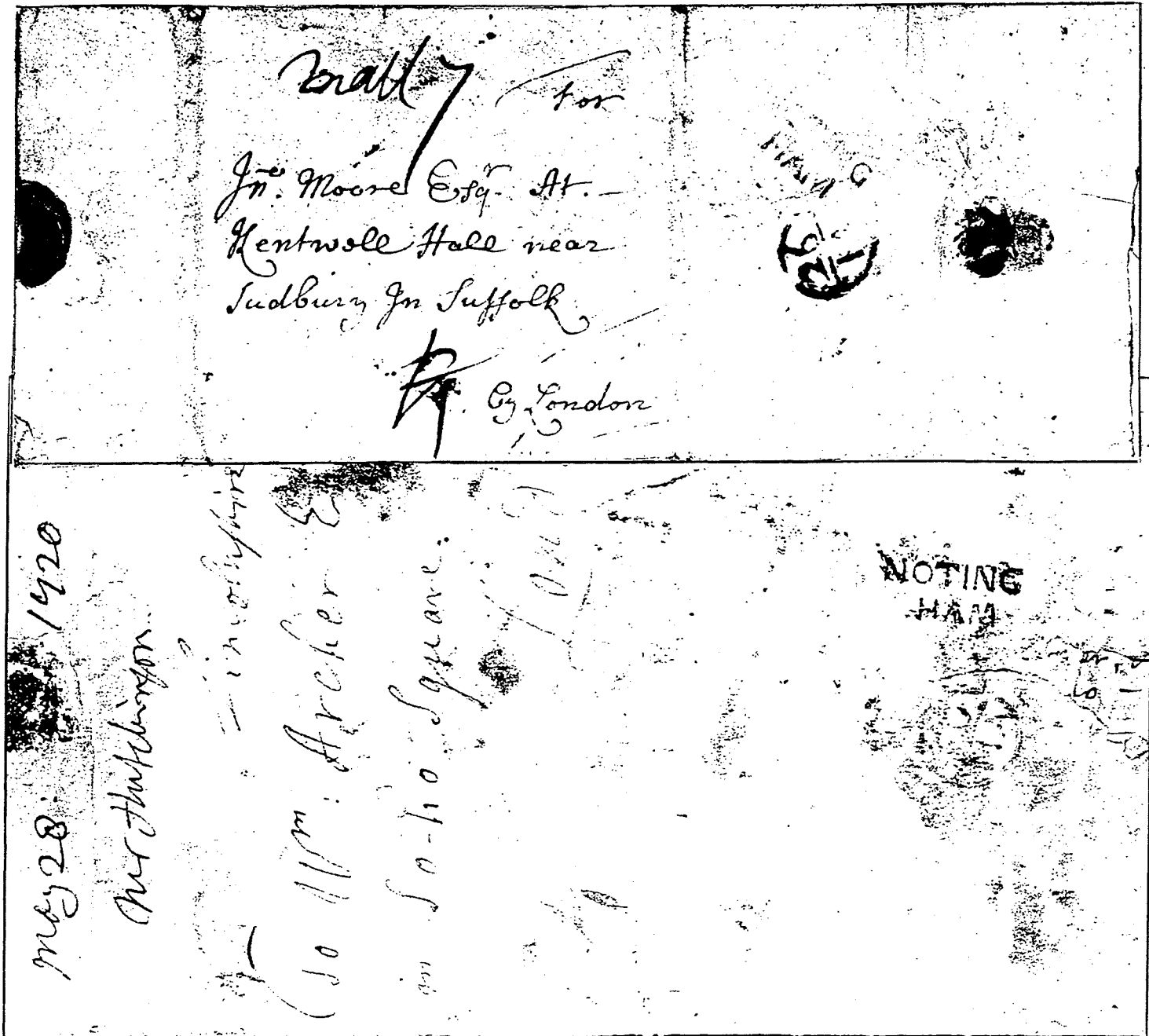
The Nottinghamshire section of the County Catalogue (Willcocks & Jay) lists NG119 as:
 NG119 NOTTINGHAM 24 x 10mm 1721

I have recently acquired an example of such a mark on a letter, dated 24th January 1721, from Strelley Hall, Nottingham to John Moore at Kentwell Hall, Sudbury, Suffolk (upper illustration below). It shows a '4' rate to London where it was uprated to 'In all 7' to Sudbury, and a Bishopmark for 26th January.

The Nottingham mark is a poor one with only the G on the top line being readily visible. The other letters can just be identified but measure 22/23 mm rather than the 24 mm as listed. The display sheet for this letter (produced by a previous owner?) states "this is the earliest known date of this mark with the latest being 1st November 1721". I presume that the legibility of the latest one is no better than the earliest. (Note: Hall in 1947 had found nothing earlier than 1740.)

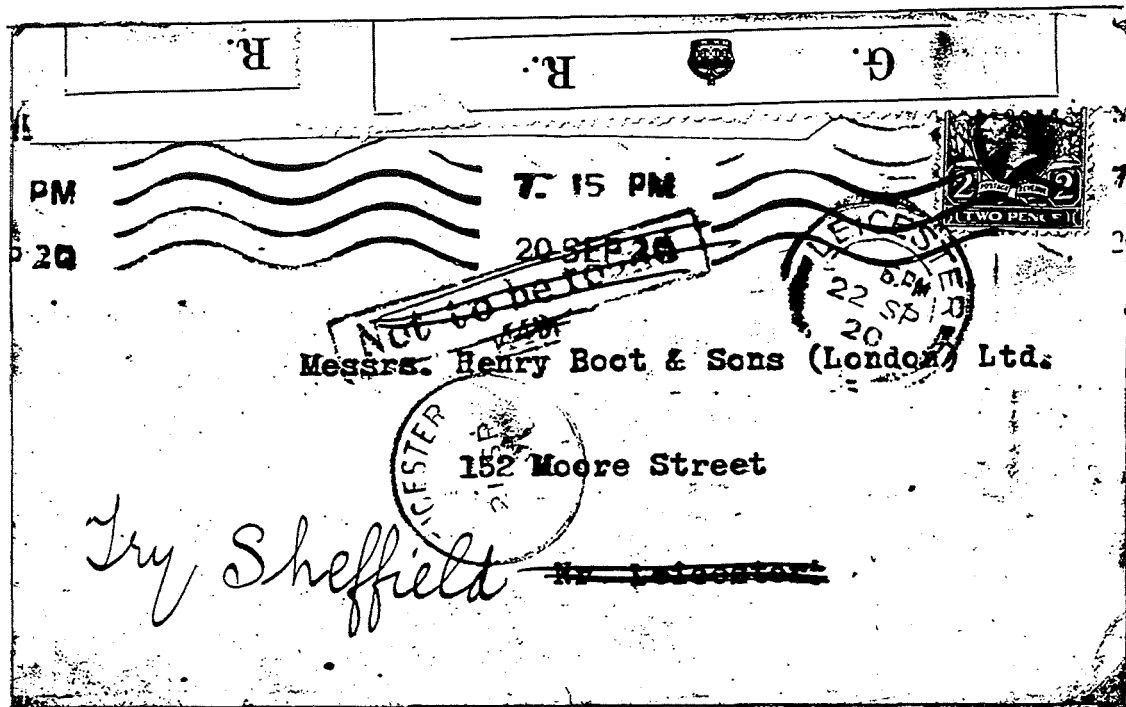
However, an overlay of an excellent mark on a poor quality letter (lower illustration), in my collection, sent from Nottingham to So Ho Square, London on 28th May 1720 matches perfectly. Of real significance is that there is only one T in Nottingham and the measurement is 22 x 10 mm. I submit, therefore, that a small alteration in the County Catalogue is required and should now read:

NG119 NOTINGHAM (note spelling) 22 x 10 1720-21

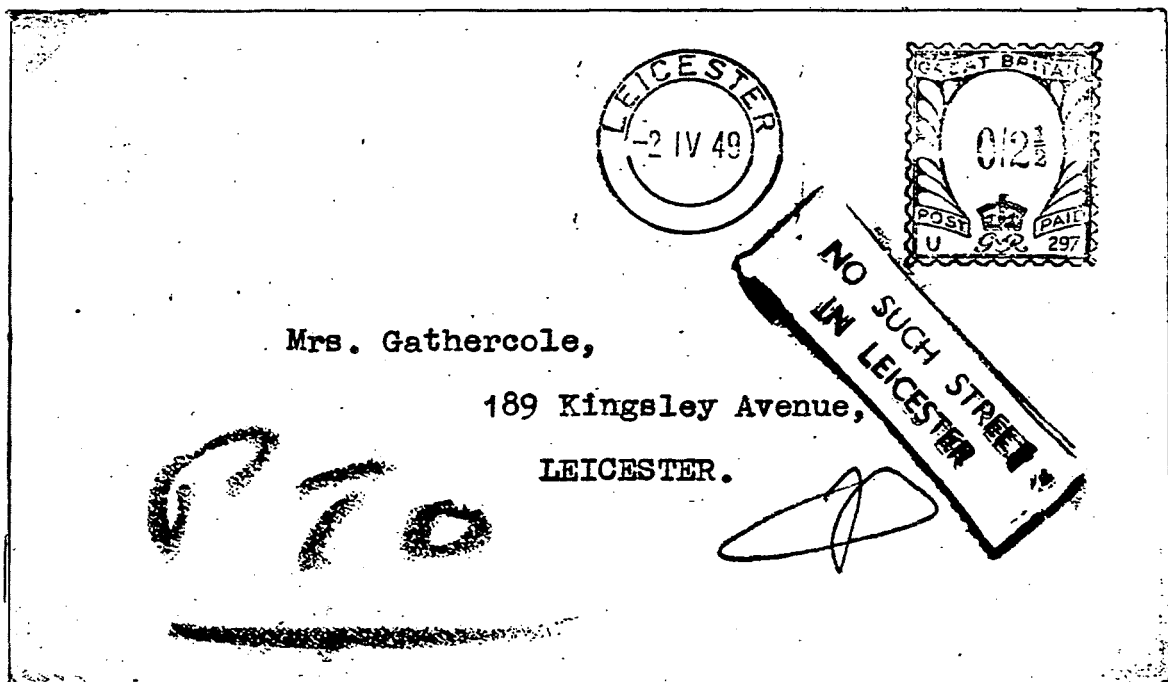


TWO ITEMS FROM THE EDITOR'S DISPLAY

The first cover shown below appears to be a fairly mundane item. A letter addressed to 'Moore Street, Nr Leicester.' Obviously the addressee could not be traced in Leicester so the envelope was struck with the 'Not to be found/449' handstamp. This was crossed out after the letter had been opened and resealed in the sorting office before redirection to Sheffield. Sadie Cole pointed out that Henry Boot & Sons actually erected the building in which the letter was being shown - The Coolingwood Centre, Great Barr.

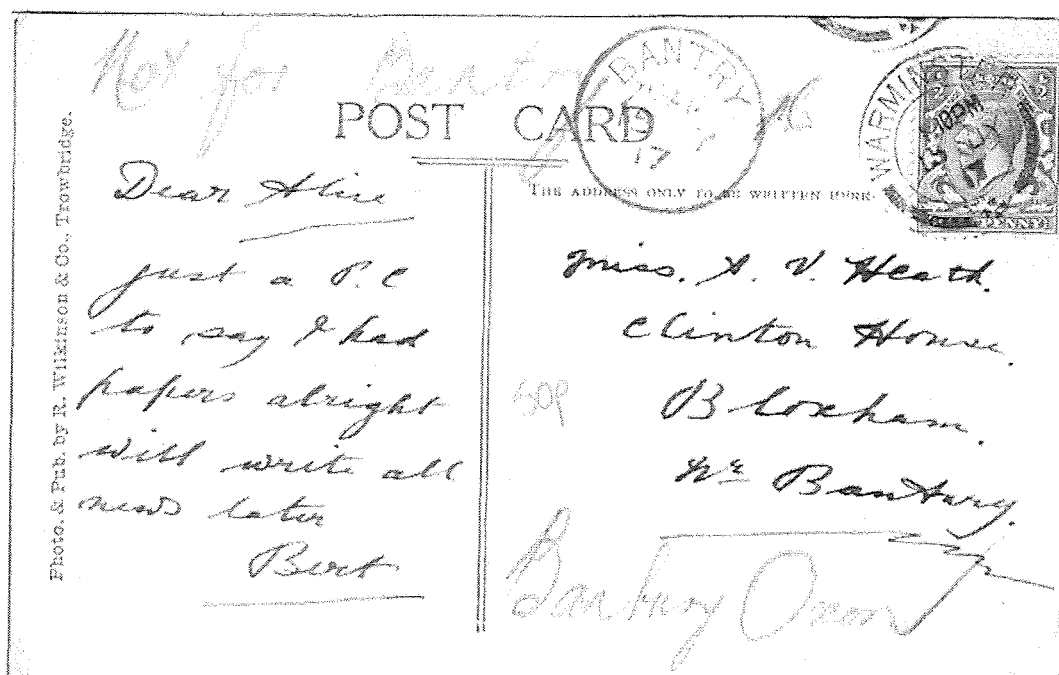


It appears that a not insignificant number of letters could not be delivered for I have recorded six 'Not to be found' handstamps used at Leicester between 1903 and 1958. What is surprising is that a number of writers failed to get the name of the street correct - I have recorded three different 'NO SUCH STREET/IN LEICESTER' used at Leicester between 1948 and 1979.



MISSSENT TO BANTRY

Rick Martin has kindly sent this copy of a postcard sent from Warminster and addressed to Banbury. Somehow, the card was sent to Bantry in Ireland.



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ADDITION TO THE LIBRARY

The Great Britain Philatelic Society has kindly donated a copy of the latest issue of 'THE GB JOURNAL' to the Society's library. This contains the article written by Chris Beaver - '*London Mailcoaches*' - which gives details of all the mail coaches running from London between 1785 and the 1840s. As such it is bound to be a much sought after source of reference in the future. The volume can be borrowed by members on application to Eric Lewis.

Derek Smeathers has pointed out one typographical error. Route 96 reads "MELTON MOWBRAY as 93 to Bedford ...", but if you follow this back to route 88, it becomes clear that 93 did not go to Bedford. The fact is that '93' is a misprint and route 96 should read "MELTON MOWBRAY as 95 to Bedford ..."

AMENDMENTS TO THE SOCIETY'S UDC BOOK

The request for amendments to the Society's UDC book has met with an excellent response. So many new usage dates have been provided in several counties that a straightforward amendment list, requiring manuscript amendment of the UDC book, may be tedious and unwieldy. A possible solution may be to provide amended usage pages, county by county, with the amendments underlined. The mechanics of doing this have still to be discussed by the Committee but an answer will surely be found. (For those wondering how books could be 'unbound' to change pages, be assured it isn't a great problem.)

Although amendments and new information were requested before the March meeting, in order to assess the size of the task, members are requested to continue providing similar information, either to the Coordinating Editor or to the appropriate County Editor. Information sent to the Coordinating Editor will invariably be acknowledged.

'MIDFAIR STAMP FAIRS'

Barry Faulkner who is organising these fairs offered our Society a free table to publicise our activities, and the Society wishes to thank Barry for his generous offer. Tom Poynton and Eric Lewis took advantage of this at the first event which was held on 2nd February. A supply of the Society's publications attracted interest from a number of visitors two of whom enrolled as members.

Why not visit one of the fairs which are held at The Holiday Inn, Coventry on the first Sunday of a month and are attended by about forty dealers. Better still, pair up with another member and look after our table at a future fair.

THE NEXT MIDLAND MAIL

It is anticipated that this will appear in early/mid June along with full details of Midpex. Also, if time permits there will be an index to numbers 121 to 130. While I have some articles in preparation, I have little in hand so articles, long or short will be welcomed by: John Soer, 51d Barkham Road, Wokingham RG41 2RG.

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