

MIDLAND MAIL

THE JOURNAL OF THE MIDLAND (GB) POSTAL HISTORY SOCIETY



www.midlandphs.org.uk



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An 1857 cover from Newport, Salop to Frankfurt, see page 9 for other Best Buys or some Not So Good Buys

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ANNOUNCEMENTS, Guy Bridges, – It is with great sadness that we have to report that Guy passed away on 2nd February 2021. These words are the recollections of Jim Hammond, Mike Mapleton and Brian Atkins, all of whom knew Guy from the early days of the Shropshire society. That he was not present at the first meeting is almost unthinkable considering how he became immersed in the activities and administration of the society. The abiding memory of all of us is that he was a reserved, gentle but knowledgeable man, underpinned by a determination which would appear now and then if one disagreed with his assertion about a postmark, for example the use of the figure 2 at Ironbridge (and not Wellington) comes to mind! He once admitted that he was a postmark collector rather than a student of routes and rates. He was single minded in his search for Shropshire items finding sources that others didn't, possibly helped by working for several incarnations of stamp shops in Shrewsbury. Discussions on the train home from a society meeting would always begin with postal history but end with a report of his other passion, his allotment. He was very proud of the fact that he could supply home-grown vegetables year-round for himself and his brother, as well as Gladioli bulbs for those he chose to give them to. He will be greatly missed by us all.

GLOUCESTERSHIRE POSTMARKS WEBSITE COMPLETED - Colin Fountain reports that John Hine and he have now completed their mammoth task of listing all the known postmarks of Gloucestershire on the website. The site now contains 524 pdf files which can be viewed, or downloaded at <https://sites.google.com/view/gloucestershire-postmarks>. Each file contains illustrations where available of every postmark type with its earliest and latest recorded dates, size, colour and date of issue where known. A Contents file has been added which lists all the files with details of the changes in the two most recent updates to each file. Although they are not planning to add more files, Colin and John intend to update the website regularly when new information for the listed offices becomes available, so scans of any unlisted marks or date extensions etc. are welcome and should be sent to cfountain@talktalk.net

THE PARCEL POST OF THE UNITED KINGDOM

Including Crown Dependencies - Volume 1
(Dr W.M. Melrose and N.J.P. Wraith)

THE PARCEL POST LABELS OF THE MIDLAND COUNTIES

(The Midland (GB) Postal History Society)

It has been a cause of some disappointment that no more than half the Society membership has bought a copy of the Society's handsome book on Parcel Post labels. While there will be many who simply do not collect them, the labels do impinge on almost any county collection and are surely of general interest to everyone. The subject has again been highlighted by the appearance of a long-awaited book on the same subject by Nick Wraith (with Dr Melrose), published by The Scottish Postal History Society. These two books complement each other very well, our Society's book listing all the known parcel post labels from Midland offices, while the new book, still principally about parcel post labels, casts the net wide, looking at not only the different labels used in England and Wales, but also in Scotland, Ireland and the Channel Islands, together with privately produced facsimile parcel post labels. Nick's book has clearly made some use of the mass of material assembled by Bill Toye, at one time a member of our Society, but sadly never a published work. (We made great efforts to involve him in our own book, for we believed he may have had examples of unrecorded Midland labels but were unsuccessful, as his health diminished.)

One unfailing problem when writing of parcel post labels is to devise the best possible method of classification. In the 1970s, we based our collections on Arkell's work, identifying just eleven different types of label. Then Mackay produced his magnum opus on The Parcel Post in 1982 and there seemed to be almost as many types of label as there were labels. The difficulty arises because there are small changes to spaces, dots and commas that some regard as a different type while others consider them to be inconsequential printing differences, limited to one or two offices. All modern classifications are, however, based on five identifiably different Coats of Arms on English & Welsh labels – four in Scotland, two the same as on English & Welsh labels and two different – but it is the sub-division that becomes more complex. We believe our Society's classification is optimum for Midland requirements and happily Nick's classification is not wildly different, whereas Mackay decided the Midland type C1, for example, embraced no fewer than eleven different types! (An excellent cross-reference of the Arkell, Toye and Mackay classifications can be found on page 251 of our Society's book.)

The new book is lavishly illustrated and can be ordered from the Scottish Postal History Society at a cost of £32, post paid, available from Mrs Lyn Robinson, 25 Myreton Avenue, KILMACOLM, Renfrewshire PA13 4LL or lyn@myreton.com if that's easier. Our Society's book is available (*Ed – from John Calladine*) at a reduced cost of only £24-00 to members plus £4-50 if you require it to be mailed. Both are well recommended and purchase of the Midland book would be an altruistic gesture that helps ensure new publications continue to appear at acceptable cost.

CHANGE of ADDRESS – Brian Purcell, Now contact him at 17, Springbank, Worcester, WR3 8SD, 01905 452415
Late breaking news – AGM by ZOOM Saturday 22 May 2021 at 10.30am

The 20th January Zoom Meeting was a Member's Evening of 'Rubber Cancellations or Skeleton Rubbers', at which 20 members were signed in.

Alan Godfrey produced a 1905 purple rubber of BROOM / REDDITCH, whereas Broom was under Alcester, but DUNNINGTON was under Alcester. There were 8 cut-outs in violet of Leamington villages including BISHOP ITCHINGTON, BISHOPS TACHBROOK, (1895, an early example), HUNNINGHAM & OXHILL. For Rugby, ASHBY ST. LEDGERS was noted (1897), under Stratford were DORRINGTON (1911) & WOLLERTON (1912) and under Shipston we saw GREAT WALFORD (1911) among others. For skeleton rubbers Alan showed SHREWLEY & FILLOUGHLEY. The above items were noted from a comprehensive display.

Julian Tweed surprised us with the unusual use of 'Clock Marks' indicating time of posting; they included an 1872 cover with a duplex of SPRING ST. PADDINGTON posted to Tower St, E.C. with a 'clock' on reverse showing posted at 11.30am. An 1873 London cover to Carlow, Ireland was posted at 10am (see below), an 1885 London cover used a 'pointer' device but a 1923 German inflation cover showed two clock faces, one for the hour and the other for minutes.



Gerald Griffin delighted us with coloured date stamps of Pewsey / Wiltshire (1856, orange) and Hereford in maroon (1855 & 1857). This was followed by a Dereham (1849) and Brough / Yorkshire both in blue.

Brian Atkins began with purple rubbers of ATCHAM (1903) and BERWICK (1910); both villages under Shrewsbury near Attingham Hall were issued with their first rubbers on the same day. Berwick was really only a hamlet, the office closing in 1972, having opened in 1883. A lovely purple LEEBOTWOOD rubber was

followed by a similar BICTON HEATH, which used at least 9 different rubbers as well as a skeleton rubber, all shown in cut-out form on the same power point slide, which also included a distorted impression of one of the 9 examples (see right). At this point Richard Farman mentioned that the distortion of rubber date stamps was due to poor vulcanisation of the rubber used in the stamps (originally called Climax Daters apparently, why such an odd name?).



Chris Jackson began with three skeletons: DODFORD / BROMSGROVE (NOV 1914); PEDMORE / STOURBRIDGE (APR 1912) and SINTON GREEN / WORCESTER (1912). A purple rubber skeleton dated 30 JAN 1900 from CHARLTON / PERSHORE may have been produced by favour (see left – Ed: *I simply didn't have enough space to show the whole unaddressed card but the quality of the strike was stunning for a mark of its type*) and he finished with a 19 DEC 1911 STOCKTON / WORCESTER rubber skeleton, one of two known.



Richard Capon's 1915 OUNDLE / NORTHANTS item appeared to have a figure 6 under the letter O of NORTHANTS, Richard stating this was consistent in all examples he has seen. He also showed two modern OUNDLE / PETERBOROUGH items dated 1975 & 1976

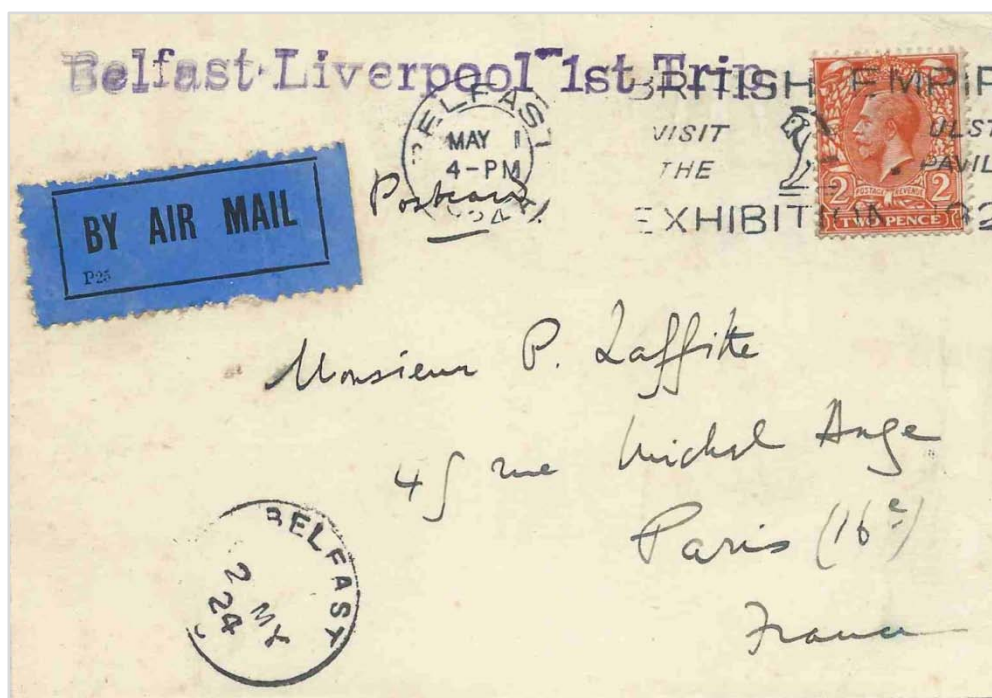
Richard Farman brought proceedings to a close with a large number of examples including rubbers of BUTTERTON / LEEK (1897) and ONECOT / LEEK (also 1897), both in purple. There was a CHURCH EATON rubber skeleton in violet (1910), a similar NEEDWOOD / BURTON-ON-TRENT (1912) as well as a WALL / LITCHFIELD (12 OCT 1912 but in black) and a WALL / LITCHFIELD rubber of 25 AUG 1912 in black. From Derbyshire there came a CODNOR skeleton, Codnor being 5 miles north east of Belper. If you thought Piccadilly was only in London, you would be wrong as Richard showed a 1916 PICCADILLY / TAMWORTH rubber and a similar but distorted example from 1920.

The 27th January Zoom Meeting was a presentation by **Ian May** entitled *Great Britain Internal Air Mails and the Midlands*, for which 22 members signed in. This is Ian's account of his display:

The earliest official air mail in Great Britain was "The First UK Aerial Post", which was part of the celebrations for the coronation of King George V, and ran from September 9th to the 15th 1911. The flights were from Hendon, London to Windsor in both directions. Because it was not legally possible to charge more than the standard rate of postage, 1d for inland letters, ½d for inland postcards, only the special souvenir cards and envelopes produced by the organisers were to be flown. These were produced in a number of colours and the reverse of many of the postcards contained advertisements. All of the letters and postcards flown were cancelled with a special dated hand stamp. A postcard carried on September 12th from London to Windsor, and then conveyed by the Post Office to Aberdeen was illustrated. There is a significant amount of material available in terms of the various colours of postcards and envelopes, the advertisements, and associated ephemera.

The next use of internal air mail was from October 1st to the 6th during the railway strike of 1919. Air mail was used between London and the following towns in both directions Bristol, Birmingham, Manchester, Newcastle and Glasgow. Mail was charged at the inland rate plus 2/- for air mail and covers were marked 'By Aeroplane'.

In 1924 an experimental air mail was flown from Belfast to Liverpool. It was intended to start on May 1st, but due to bad weather started on the 2nd. It continued until June 1st. The standard surface rate plus ½d air mail fee was charged. Fig 1 shows a first flight cover to Paris, which at the time of the presentation was stated to be a second day flight



cover! In 1928 a second experimental air mail was flown between Belfast and Liverpool, but this time in both directions. It was intended to run from September 24th to 29th during Liverpool Civic Week, but due to poor weather was extended to October 4th. The flying boat 'Calcutta' was used. The standard surface rate plus 1d air mail fee was charged and items had to be endorsed 'By flying boat'. A flown cover and a postcard of a similar flying boat were illustrated.

Fig 1, Belfast to Liverpool experimental first flight cover, then to Paris by sea and surface

In 1933 the Great Western Railway (GWR) started an air mail service using the railway letter scheme from April until September. Under the railway letter scheme a letter could be handed in at a station and then taken by train to a distant station at which it would be put into the post in order to be delivered. The railway company imposed a charge for this service in addition to the normal postage. The GWR initially flew air mails on April 12th in both directions between Roborough Aerodrome, Plymouth and Cardiff City Airport, calling at Haldon for Teignmouth and Torquay. Fig. 2 shows a cover flown from Cardiff to Teignmouth with a 3d GWR Parcel stamp to pay the 'Railway Letter Fee'. On arrival at Teignmouth it was posted for delivery in Plymouth. On May 22nd mails were flown between Birmingham and Plymouth in both directions. The GWR produced the first UK air mail stamp to pay the "railway letter fee" of 3d. The service continued until September 30th.

Following the success of GWR using the railway letter system for air mails a number of other companies attempted to copy the company. However, because they were not railway companies they were not allowed to carry air mails, and the Post Office terminated the operations within a few days. An example was Provincial Airways who flew air mails, with a Provincial Airways air mail 3d stamp, between Croydon and Plymouth in November 1933.



Fig 2, Great Western Railway, first flight cover flown Cardiff to Teignmouth, then to Plymouth by surface.

Midland and Scottish Air Ferries flew from Castle Bromwich, Birmingham to Liverpool and Castle Bromwich to Heston Air Park, London February 19th 1934 and did the reverse flights the following day. In order to overcome the ban on using the railway letter system the airline did not use an air mail stamp but still made a charge of 3d for each item. The Post Office still terminated the operation. The main reason for the flights was the British Industries Fair which was held at Castle Bromwich.

An air mail, which appears to be official, took place on May 23rd 1934 from Nottingham, where a Post Office exhibition was being held, to London. Mail was charged 4d.

In 1934 Highland Airways were awarded a contract to carry first class mail between Inverness and Kirkwall, in both directions. The first air mail flights in each direction were on May 29th 1934, and illustrated Highland Airways' covers were available for the flight.

On the 20th August 1934 Railway Air Services (RAS) commenced a national air mail service for first class mail. There were 3 main routes: London-Birmingham-Manchester-Belfast-Glasgow, Liverpool-Birmingham-Cardiff-Plymouth and Birmingham-Bristol-Southampton-Cowes, and 2 shuttle services: Manchester-Isle of Man-Belfast, and Bristol-Cardiff. Due to gales problems occurred, with the Glasgow south flight terminating at Manchester, and the London north flight terminating at Birmingham, the Birmingham to Cowes route terminated at Southampton. First flight covers which included legs of their intended journey which were not flown were transported by surface, usually rail to their destination. So for example Birmingham to London first flight covers were not flown. The exception was that air mail to be flown from Cowes was held over and flown on the following day. Fig. 3 shows a first flight cover from Birmingham to Southampton for onward transmission via sea and land to Chicago, USA. RAS produced a significant number of the envelope shown in Fig 3, particularly for the first flights of August 20th, they are relatively common but many were not flown! On the 21st August a full service was operated and a number of first flight covers, which are less common than those intended to be flown from Birmingham the day before were flown. On the 29th September 1934 all services other than the London-Glasgow via Birmingham were cancelled, and on 31st October 1934 Birmingham was taken out of the service.

From 1st September 1941 an air mail service operated between Liverpool and Belfast. Air mail was given priority at the censorship office in Liverpool, it was this that speeded up the mail rather than the flight! Due to the war time shortage of paper hand stamps inscribed "AIR MAIL" were introduced at Birmingham, Wolverhampton and Derby.

The display finished with an air mail flown in the railway strike, which lasted from the 29th May until the 16th June 1955. During this period the Royal Air Force operated a number of emergency air mail flights including to Honiley, near Warwick on June 15th".

There are a number of articles in Midland Mail about Internal Air Mails, which give further details and references:

The Midlands and Internal Air Mails until 1940, *Midland Mail*, 194, pp 7-15, April, 2017.
 Gill, M., The Nottingham Air Mail Service, *Midland Mail*, 195, pp 20-21, July, 2017.
 Baker, I., Birmingham 1919 'By Aeroplane' Strike Mail Cover, *Midland Mail*, 206, p 17, April, 2020.
 May, I. M., Response to Ian Baker's Article MM206/ 17, *Midland Mail*, 207, p 21, Extra Edition, 2020.
 Information is also available at: <http://www.gbintairmail.com/index.htm>



Fig 3, Railway Air Services, first flight cover Birmingham to Southampton, then to Chicago by sea and surface.

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**The 17<sup>th</sup> February Zoom Meeting** was a member's presentation *Post Office Correspondence – any period*, for which 22 members signed in. **Alan Godfrey** began proceedings with an 1808 letter from Major-General William Craven to the PMG recommending a man to join the Coventry to Birmingham mail as a guard. An 1809 letter from Lord Hertford concerned 'filling the office' at Aulcester (sic)! An 1882 letter from Henry Fawcett, the blind PMG, to William Tickell stated Fawcett couldn't comply with his request. An 1883 letter had Fawcett's signature.

**Ian May** produced an amazing early 18<sup>th</sup> century document related to the appointment of Margaret Kilsby at Coventry; she needed three sureties of £600, huge money in those days. Her contract stipulated no private deliveries!

**Richard Capon** showed a 1901 letter with an OUNDLE square circle showing Frederick Seal was to train as a boy copyist, with the aim of becoming a clerk in the GPO Accounts general Department.

**Chris Jackson** displayed Official Remittances to Worcester Head Office registered from Cropthorne (1914) and Suckley, Callow End (1914), Whittington (1916) and a money letter addressed Ombersley Road, W.

**Richard Farman** produced an array of items including, an 1825 letter from Freeling to the Foundling Hospital, a cover with a rectangular FREE mark used in the Ship Letter Office to the Cape of Good Hope (1826), an 1839 Rowland Hill Treasury letter, an 1835 2d post letter to the Receiver at Kew about his Jury Service, no way was it to be allowed, an 1840 letter from Churchill, the Surveyor, to the postmaster at Uttoxeter during the Uniform 4d Post period warning him Uniform 1d Post was nigh and two letters from the Earl of Lichfield, one of 1835 about the appointment of a postmaster at Uttoxeter and a 1 January 1840 FREE to Colonel Maberley during the Uniform 4d Post period.

**Marc Oxley** showed an 1819 letter to Freeling from the Earl of Dartmouth about the late arrival of a letter at Oxford

**Gordon Hardy** showed an 1813 receipt for £3.3.0 for Daily & Weekly Statement of the Packet Boats, re newspapers

The 24<sup>th</sup> February Zoom Meeting was a presentation by **Brian Atkins** entitled *The Postal History of Much Wenlock*, for which 22 members signed in.

Brian began by showing a map with places relevant to his talk; this was followed by a 30 January 1653 'Forerunner', an entire to the village of Badger, requesting Richard Taylor to be in Wenlock at 10am next day to elect a new bailiff. He explained that during the latter part of the 18<sup>th</sup> century there had been an extensive and well organised



Fig 1, No 3 (superimposed) of Wenlock but no SHIFFNAL / Penny Post mark, 29 Mar 1812

unofficial delivery system from Shifnal to local companies and individuals, before the penny post started on 6 October 1806. At this point Wenlock was given a mileage stamp with the same figures as Shifnal with 6 examples recorded, of which his was the latest dated 25 Sept 1811. With the installation of open boxes in Nov 1811, Wenlock was given a boxed

No3 in the new Shifnal penny post but three early coves (14 Nov 1811, 29 Mar 1812 and 18 Oct 1812) had no penny post stamp even though one had been used on a letter from the Madeley Wood receiving house on 2 Nov 1811. The two 1812 items showed a SHIFFNAL / 146 mileage with figures between two lines. His earliest entire showing a SHIFFNAL / Penny Post stamp was dated 3 May 1814, though he did state earlier ones should exist. But, he wondered why the Shifnal penny post stamp was not used on entires from Wenlock when it was used on mail from the other receiving houses. Another oddity about the use of the Shifnal penny post stamp was that it was not used on incoming mail (25 Feb 1830). He then showed items from Wenlock with the boxed, and common, *Shifnal / Py Post* (c150 examples known) and with the uncommon boxed *Shifnal / Penny Post* (8 examples recorded), which appeared to have been used sporadically, perhaps when the *Py Post* stamp was being cleaned or undergoing minor repairs.

A 6 May 1836 wrapper from Wenlock to Broseley was charged 2d. The presumption is that it was carried through Broseley in the penny post to Shifnal (SHIFFNAL date stamp on reverse but no Shifnal penny post stamp and no No3 of Wenlock), and then from Shifnal back down the same road to Broseley, also in the penny post (making 2d) It cannot be a double rate as there were no such rates in a penny post. The letter was carried over twenty miles when it need only have gone four!

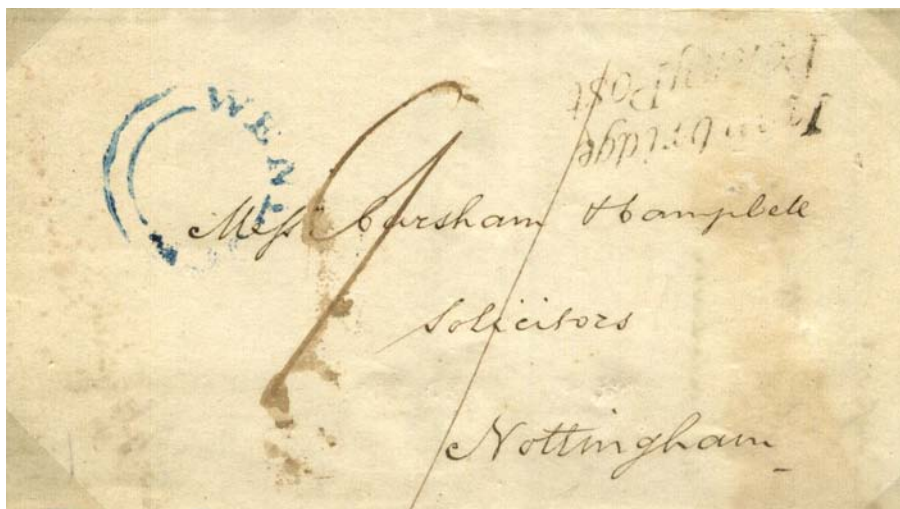


Fig 2, Wenlock to Nottingham through Ironbridge, 23 Jun 1839

A 15 Dec 1834 entire from Shrewsbury to Broseley had a manuscript *Misfent to Wenlock* but had been delivered via the Ironbridge penny post system; the first such item recorded through Ironbridge rather than Shifnal. He went on to explain that on the inauguration of a mail coach service from Birmingham to Shrewsbury on 10 Nov 1834, a penny post began at Ironbridge using the Shifnal receiving houses, for mail going west to Shrewsbury and beyond. Mail going east

(and to London) still went through Shifnal as indicated by an entire of 3 Jun 1838 to London. A cover of 8 Mar 1838 had the earliest recorded undated WENLOCK (red) and a grotesque boxed IronBridge / Penny Post, soon to be

replaced by an italic *Ironbridge / Penny Post* seen on a cover to Nottingham dated 23 Jun 1839 (see Fig 2, previous page), evidence that mail from Wenlock going east now went through Ironbridge and the Shifnal penny post had ceased, though the exact date of that permanent transfer was not known.

Taking us into the changes of 1839 / 40, Brian presented a uniform fourpenny post cover (31 Dec 1839) and a first day cover of uniform penny post (and 2d postage due as the 1d wasn't paid!) as well as examples of a Mulready (1840) and 1d black and 2d blue covers (both 1841). On 23 Sep 1843 the Post Office deemed it necessary to send an undated MUCH-WENLOCK, where we saw the earliest recorded and an example of 16 Jun 1844, with the 1d red cancelled by a late use of a maltese cross.

Of two ride letters from Broseley to Wenlock, that of 18 Jul 1845 had the 1d red cancelled by the undated sans-serif BROSELEY. Similar covers are known *from* Wenlock but were not presented, because he doesn't have one!

On 14 Oct 1844 the undated Much-Wenlock was replaced by a similarly spelled but smaller dated sans-serif mark, the earliest shown on an extraordinary cover dated 11 Jul 1846 downloaded many years ago from the website of Richard Frajola. It was mailed from NIAGARA / UC (Upper Canada) and charged 21/-, being 18 times the 1/2 packet rate via the US – Cunard *Cambria* from Boston on 1 August 1846, arriving in Much Wenlock on 13 August as per the date stamp, why it took so long from being mailed at Niagara to arriving in Boston was not apparent. It was addressed to Henry Mason, a Hatter in Barrow Street. A 16 Apr 1847 cover had a manuscript *Too Late* and an 11 Nov 1852 cover to Newark was mailed at the 6d rate for 3ozs. At this point Brian pointed out that Wenlock had begun the uniform penny post era as a sub-office of Ironbridge, but transferred to Shifnal (5 May 1849), then Newport (9 Jun 1851) and finally Wellington on 28 Jun 1852 as seen on the cover to Newark.

The larger sans-serif date stamp was replaced by a small single-ring stamp on the 29 Mar 1860, first seen in Brian's display used on a cover to New Zealand dated 18 Mar 1862, sent via Southampton at the correct 6d rate (GPO Notice January 1857) and 61 days in transit.



Fig 3, Wenlock to Dunedin, New Zealand via Wellington / Salop, 18 Mar 1862

The duplex mark was seen on a cover written by Dr William Penny Brookes, of Wenlock Olympiad fame, to his sister Anne Wilkinson, dated 1 Dec 1889. In the letter Brookes writes 'My labours for the public, one of which viz. the Olympian Society and its recreation ground, were commenced 40 years ago. The recreation ground, which is now a lovely place of resort(?) for the inhabitants is about to be leased to the Society for 99 years by Mr Gaskell'. He ends the letter 'Best love to you and I remain your fondly attached brother', WP Brookes

Finally the re-cut duplex was found on a 29 Dec 1898 cover from Wenlock addressed to Cyril Crosse, Scottish High School, Byculla, Bombay, India mailed 4 days after the introduction of the penny rate to the colonies on 25 Dec 1898 (Ocean or Empire or Imperial Penny Post). A number of items from Wenlock addressed to Crosse, including at least two which are registered, use cut-outs from various postal stationery covers.

**The 17<sup>th</sup> March Zoom Meeting** was a member's presentation *Best or Worst Ever Purchase*, for which a total of 25 members eventually signed in. Good to see some members who normally don't display sharing their items with us.

**Marc Oxley** started the proceedings with his first and best postal history purchase, an 1814 6-page entire from Bremen to London, which 'opened his eyes to the possibilities of postal history'!

For his best purchase, **Alan Spencer** produced correspondence related to the 1908 Philatelic Congress, signed by John Albrecht, secretary of the host Manchester Philatelic Society. His worst was an August 1953 Registered Airmail cover from Taiping, Malaya to Andover!

**Gerald Griffin's** worst purchase was a cover with a Ledbury 445 error cancel but when he arrived home he found he already had one! His best purchase was an early Settle (696) cancel dated 29 May 1844, together with a rare South Cave (515), a village with few inhabitants, an F01 cancel of Haywards Heath was, apparently, also seen on a Zululand stamp and finally a H46 Carlton Iron Works duplex cancelled a 14 Dec 1910 postcard.

**Toby Mottram** revealed that his best purchases were of Stockport, especially the unique Stockport / 176 mileage, with the bonus of a rare date stamp (without year) of 1784, identified as 1/5 in Whitney 2011, as well as a 1d black (plate 10 Letters HJ) from Cubbington (his home village) via Leamington Spa to Warwick dated 27 Feb 1841.

**Andy Thompson** produced three best acquisitions, the Kelantan 1937 set of stamps from 1¢ to \$5, a 1d black plate 7 cover from Lichfield dated 15 December 1840 and an unrecorded Burton parcel post label of 5 November 1912.

**Joe Cottrill** produced a wonderful 1728 entire from Stratford-on-Avon addressed to Nathaniel Mason, a solicitor at New Inn, London (see right). It contained a Certificate of Age of William Loach as legal birth certificates were not introduced until the Act of 1837. Was Loach establishing his age in order to be able to marry? Joe stated the Stratford mark was apparently unrecorded.

**Richard Farman** revealed as a best find a 14 February 1653 Commonwealth period entire from St Johns, London to Burton, post paid 4d. He also produced a 5 April 1662 entire from London to Stone, correctly charged 3d – it had no Bishop mark as these marks were not being used on outgoing mail from 19 April 1661 to 1663. An 1807 entire to Ireland had an amazing drawing inside but one of his worst items was an 1837 London Ship Letter entire to Gibraltar which was in rather poor condition!



1728 Stratford to London - reduced

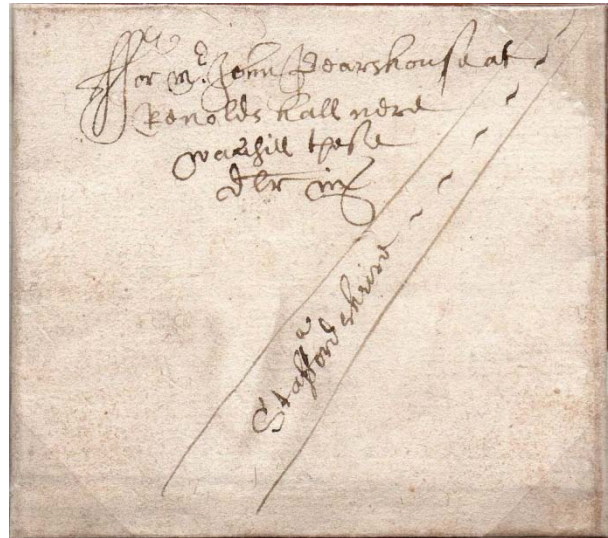
**Ian May** also had a Commonwealth period entire as a Best Buy! It was dated 18 March 1653 from Coventry to London, charged 4d as a double rate for less than 80 computed miles. He then showed an early undated entire with a manuscript COUENTRY (note the letter U), which led to a 1 November 1701 with a black COUENTRY cancel – note the letter U again. A 29 Feb 1840 (Leap year, did I note that correctly?) entire had a manuscript No 9 of Fillongley and to cap it all a 21 March 1841 1d black from Atherstone to Ashby-de-la-Zouch turned out to be from plate 11 no less! A modern KGV I airmail cover illustrated the Ball Bearing Run to Sweden during 1942.

**Brian Atkins** began his Best Buys with the 25 Dec 1898 First Day cover of Ocean Penny Post from Ellesmere to India purchased on eBay at an 'economical price'. A 7 March 1876 Church Stretton duplex was for many years the only one known, now there are two. His first major pre-stamp purchase at Stampex 1980 was of the earliest known entire (1719) from BISHOPS CASTLE. Worst buys were a pane of 6 Shropshire & Montgomeryshire Railway 2d red stamps obtained at a daft price, a 1945 Camp 8 POW card thought to be from Oswestry but it turned out it could also have been from Bury, Lancs and a 27 Jan 1855 entire from Quebec to Ludlow for which he was informed he had paid 'top dollar' but, as he stated, he still liked the cover!!

As usual **Julian Tweed** provided a variety of interesting items including a 6 August 1929 express cover from the 3<sup>rd</sup> World Scout Jamboree held at Arrowe Park, Birkenhead with skeleton of same. His other Best Buys were a remarkable 31 Dec 1799 GPO Notice offering a reward of £200 for information about a highwayman and a 4 October 1889 postal stationery envelope mailed at Aberdeen to Glasgow, which when opened displayed an array of advertisements. His Not So Good Buys began with a 12 February 1875 stationery Late Fee cover with a 1d red that he later realised didn't belong. At that time postcards were not accepted for use to foreign parts, so it had to pay the full rate, which meant the missing stamp was a 1½d! A final item was a 30 September 1862 cover from London to Cuba sent at 1/3, an impossible rate which should have been 1/2½ - the 3d stamp was torn and its use led to a lively discussion of its authenticity and who might have 'misused' it, if it was, in fact, misused.

**The 24<sup>th</sup> March Zoom Meeting** was a presentation by **Alan Godfrey** entitled *Postman's Knock, A History of the Post in Warwickshire*, for which 23 members eventually signed in.

Alan began with the formalisation of the postal system and the Proclamation of 1635 when Thomas Witherings was granted exclusive rights to carry private letters (except for carriers on regular routes). He set up six post roads and for the first time a raft of charges for carrying the mail were published. Cromwell continued the existing postal service from 1653, gave free postage to MPs and peers, set up a 'farming' system (a type of franchise) and diverted funds to the Head of State. On the Restoration of the Monarchy Sir Henry Bishop was appointed as the first PMG, the General Letter Office was founded in 1660 and the first Bishop mark appeared in 1661. Thomas Gardener was appointed Controller of the Inland Office and in 1677 published a detailed survey showing the lay-out of the six post roads and bye-posts with Warwickshire mail carried on the Chester Road. By 1691 John Cornish was established as postmaster in the small town of Southam. Ralph Allen was a Cornishman who became deputy postmaster of Bath aged 19 and in 1719 he 'applied' to farm the Cross Posts and Bye Posts for £6,000 per annum. Although he lost money after his first 7-year contract he renewed every 7 years and by 1763 revenue was £33,243 with a profit of £11,692!



14 April 1651 Coventry to Walsall – reduced 10%

At this point Alan moved on to early stage-coaches with a flyer advertising the first stage-coach from Birmingham to London on 24<sup>th</sup> May 1731 taking 2½ days to London. Alan revealed that Benjamin Satchwell, the self-appointed postmaster of Leamington (1783 – 1810) received 3 deliveries a week with, surprisingly, only 10 to 12 letters, which arrived at noon and left for Warwick at 2.15pm. He then progressed to road builders and the 'Toll Roads of Warwickshire', which led to John Palmer, a theatre owner of Bath, who realised that a French form of coach, the smaller and lighter diligence, could be used to speed up the mail. A 1784 trial from Bristol to London took 16 hours when previously the same journey had taken about 38 hours. The trial was successful and a route from London to Birmingham was added in 1785 with Palmer appointed as Comptroller of the Post Office in 1786. The mail coach theme continued with a sample time-bill for the London-Leeds coach and an 1818 advert in the Warwick Advertiser for a 'New Royal Mail Coach to Warwick'. A 1792 PO Notice urged 'Caution to Post-Boys' as they were known to deliver 'off route' and were often the target of highwaymen; that they rode mules or aged horses didn't help!

Sir Francis Freeling now took centre stage as Alan described how he was recruited by Palmer and in 1798 became Secretary to the Post Office. He was an outstanding administrator, who was obsessive about increasing revenue. To accomplish this, among other things, he began the transition from sailing packets to faster steam packets and



27<sup>th</sup> November 1840 Wolston / Penny Post to Ashby-de-la-Zouch

instituted the penny posts, which allowed Alan to show us examples of the boxed Stratford-on-Avon / Penny Post (1831), 22 August 1839 italic Kenilworth / Penny Post, the only known pre-1840 example of same and the post-1840 italic Wolston / Penny Post struck in a bright red. A 1794 Carey map showed the three roads which carried Warwickshire's mail to London and an 1824 reproduction of a Notice showing a reward of 2 Guineas to anyone giving information about lighted

firecrackers being put into the letter box! Alan ended the 'mail coach era' by showing a c.1890 painting of James Moses Nobbs, the 'Last of the Mail Coach Guards' who worked for 55 years in total; even after the coaches ceased he worked as a guard on the railway travelling post offices. He now turned to a description and picture of a Bellman, specifically of Joe Mallard, Leamington's last letter carrier and bellman from 1840 to 1879 – his bell is to be seen in the Pump Rooms Museum, Leamington.

Alan then turned to one of his favourite topics, that of Rowland Hill (1795-1879). Born in Kidderminster, the third child of eight, at the age of eleven he was teaching other children in his father's Birmingham school. Together with Robert Wallace, MP he founded the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge and pursued post office reform. In 1839 Hill was appointed to the Treasury on a 2-year contract, which became 3 years, to bring postal reforms. Under the Act of 1812 postage had become expensive, the cost calculated by the number of sheets and distance travelled by the letter as well as weight if an ounce or over. Alan showed an 1839 cross written letter sent from Alcester (red udc) to London, the cross writing avoided using a second sheet and being charged 1/6 instead of 9d. Newspapers, franks and revenue stamps were carried free but all was to change.



Cartoon referred to upper right

On 5<sup>th</sup> December 1839 Uniform Fourpenny Post was introduced and five weeks later it was replaced by Uniform Penny Post. Alan produced a 'cartoon' showing a stage coach with bags on top (illustration left), each bag weighed and priced: 2296 NEWSPAPERS weigh 273lbs GO FREE, 484 FRANKS weigh 47lbs GO FREE, PARCEL OF STAMPS GO FREE, LETTERS weigh 34lbs pay £93!

To illustrate the changes, Alan showed a 5<sup>th</sup> December 1839 cover from Edinburgh to York, which would have been charged 11d under the previous 1812 Act but was charged 4d. He also displayed 1d and 2d Mulready's as well as two 'Mulready' caricatures. On 12<sup>th</sup> May 1840 Hill wrote in his diary 'I fear we shall have to substitute some other stamp for that design by Mulready.....the public have shown their disregard and even distaste for beauty!' He followed this by describing the reasons for the change in colour of the

maltese cross and the penny black becoming the penny red. He explained that the public's reaction was positive with a Punch cartoon showing Hill crowned with a laurel wreath by Whig MP Lord Melbourne. Punch reported 'The coming of the Penny Post is an event much greater in its ultimate results on the happiness of England than the battle of Waterloo'! Hill was sacked under the Peel's new Tory government but following another change of government he became Secretary to the PMG in 1846 and promoted to Secretary to the Post Office in 1854.

The mail coaches were superseded by the railways with mail being carried from at least 1838, when the major towns began to receive their mail directly from the railway. The next major development of the post was the introduction of Registration on 6<sup>th</sup> January 1841, when the 1/- for registration was initially paid in cash but a 1d still had to be paid for postage. The cost of registration gradually declined until it became 2d on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1878.

The Bath St post office opened in Leamington on 25<sup>th</sup> May 1846, with Alan stating the office handled 40,000 letters a week. He represented village post offices using postcards and undated marks from Coughton (1858), which came under Bromsgrove, Napton (1845) to Warwick via Southam and the brilliantly named Long Itchington (1859) to Newcastle under Lyme via Stockton and Rugby. He introduced town sub-offices of Leamington by illustrating an 1848 cover from South Parade, Leamington to London and an Upper Parade, Leamington to Ludlow dated 4<sup>th</sup> February 1841. South parade sub-office opened in 1848 and was later renamed Clarendon Avenue and Upper Parade was established at Bettison's Library & reading Rooms in 1832. In May 1844 numbered cancels replaced the maltese cross, a cover from Southam had the penny red cancelled by the number 722, apparently quite scarce. On 31<sup>st</sup> July 1849 Southam lost its post town status and came under Leamington and on 5<sup>th</sup> July 1851 it transferred to Rugby.

The evening finished with post boxes – first suggested by Anthony Trollope, who had seen metal boxes in Paris; the postcard – introduced on 1<sup>st</sup> October 1870; a slide on Henry Fawcett, the blind postmaster; information on the parcel post introduced in 1883; picture postcards – approved for use from 1<sup>st</sup> July 1894; rubber cancels; photographs of Stratford-on-Avon post office (Sheep Street, opened 1892) and of Priory Terrace, Leamington (1910) and a Postman's Hut, located on the A46 where the Alcester postman's walk met that of the Stratford postman's walk. An altogether fascinating evening!

## HIGHAM FERRERS POSTAL HISTORY PART 2 - 1840 TO 1921

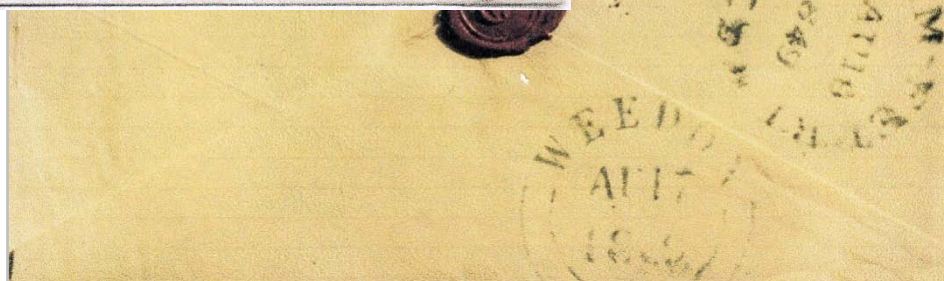
by Richard Capon

Part one of this article followed the development of the small Head Post Office in Higham Ferrers in the pre-stamps era. In this part I hope to explain clearly the complexity associated with this small town. In Midland Mail 204/21 material from Derek Smeather's collection outlined the problem associated with the existence, or otherwise, of a Rail sub-office at Higham Ferrers.

In 1840 the situation was simple, Higham Ferrers as head office supplied the postal needs of the town together with the adjoining village of Rushden and a range of other small villages such as Irthlingborough, Stanwick and Wymington. All these, and others, had sub-offices under Higham Ferrers at one time or another.



Above left postmark is from just before the introduction of the penny post in 1837 and next to it is an 1841 date stamp. I have not seen any examples of penny black or Mulready covers from Higham Ferrers.



By 1841 the standard ink was black and the 363 Higham Ferrers postmark had been in use from 1844. The two images above are from the same cover. The difference in colour is real.

The 363 remained in use in 1861 but the back stamp was now a single circle with both seen left on a cover to Market Harborough

The 3VOS 363 was in use by 1871 but this example posted in 1879 is better than the other one I own.



Ed - For a little more detail about this cover see MM 197/21

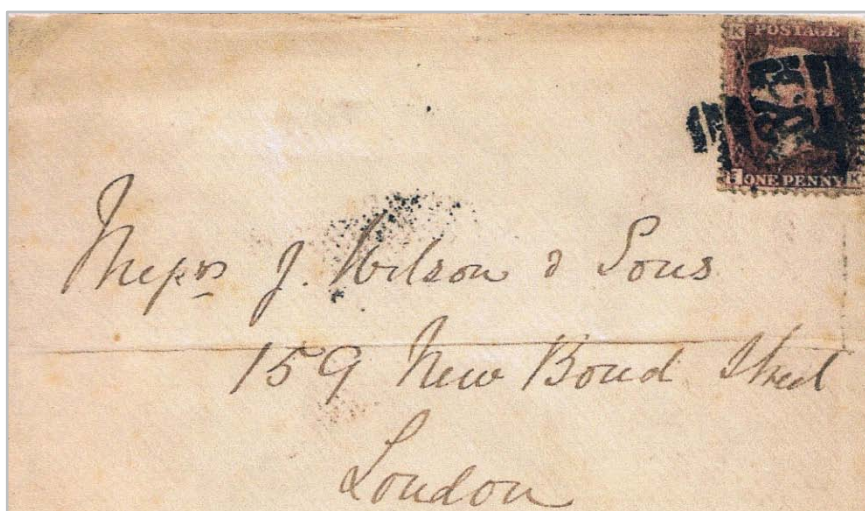
In 1845 Higham Ferrers got its first railway station on the L&NWR through Wellingborough London Road station. It



was variously called Higham Ferrers, Irthlingborough for Higham Ferrers or Irthlingborough. The Green Dragon Inn, the most significant in the Town, was the parcels receiving office for the L&NWR.

The picture on the left shows Higham Ferrers post office in Wood Street as it appeared in the latter part of the nineteenth century. It is the shop on the left of the photograph.

The Higham Ferrers office was not noted for cleaning its 363 hand stamp, the example below is typical. The back stamp shows that the cover originated at the Rushden sub-office, the London receiving mark reveals the 1878 date!

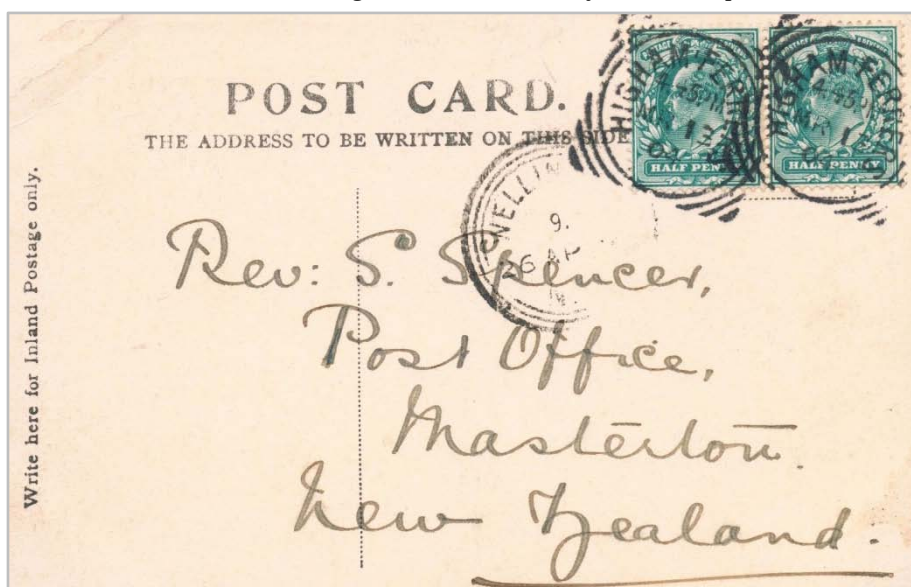


In 1895 a new railway station was opened at the end of a short 5 mile long branch line run by the Midland Railway from Wellingborough Midland Road station. Trains stopped at Rushden and at Higham Ferrers, the terminus. The Queens Head pub was the parcels receiving office for the Midland Railway. Perhaps it is worth emphasising that the Midland station was barely 200 metres from the two parcel receiving offices and the Post Office in Wood Street.

In the next 80 years Higham Ferrers was downgraded to a sub-office; first under Rushden and later under Wellingborough. Rushden had lost its sub-office in 1863 which was re-opened in 1871. Rushden was able to grow rapidly in the second half of the nineteenth century and it made sense to transfer the local Post Office administration from Higham Ferrers to Rushden.



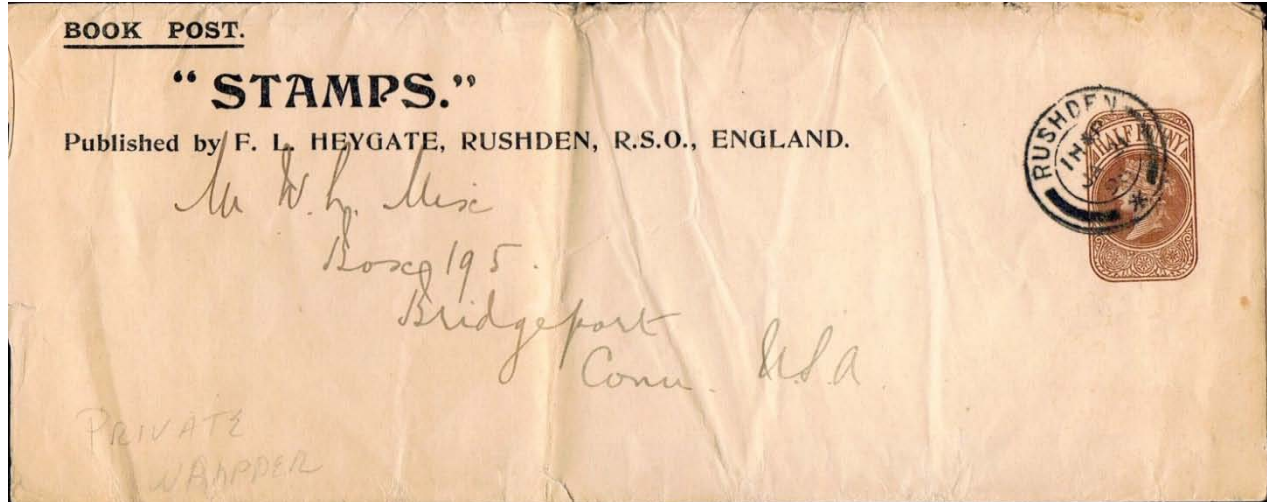
Unfortunately there was no building of substance in the town and it is believed that the Rushden RSO stepped up to the plate to support the postal service until the new Head Office in Rushden had been completed. Postcards and letters cancelled with Rushden RSO are very common for this period and there seem to be far fewer items with a simple RUSHDEN cancellation. The existing sub-office remained in use until the new High Street office was well established, but was renamed High Street South. It only remained open until 1916.



After 1905 Higham Ferrers, now a sub-office of Rushden, continued to use its squared circle canceller until at least 1908, although Derek Smeathers' Parcel Post label for a little later in 1908 does show a single ring canceller in use.

In his notes Derek outlines the difficulties of tracing evidence of the Higham Ferrers RSO. He only has the one Parcel Post receipt and that was illustrated previously in Midland Mail. Fortunately postal history is

not the only source of information. Kelly's Trade directory is an invaluable source of information under these circumstances. In the 1890 edition there is no mention of an RSO at Higham Ferrers. The 1898 edition specifically mentions the RSO and asks that letters that are to be sent by rail are labelled 'Northants R.S.O.'. The opening dates of the two RSOs are the same, 1st September 1892. Creating a Railway Sub-office did not mean that the Post office was closely related to a railway. In this case the two RSOs were supplied with mail directly from a TPO, rather than their head Office at Wellingborough.



An analysis of the address lists at the back of Kelly's Directory for 1892 shows that individuals in the Court List of professional and landed people, and also the Trade directory had embraced the Railway Sub-office address. 29 people with Higham Ferrers RSO in their address and 74 with Rushden RSO, compared with just two and one that kept Rushden, Northants; or Higham Ferrers, Northants. Of businesses, 21 now had Higham Ferrers RSO in their address and 49 for Rushden. Only one was seen for Rushden retaining the county as the address. The 1903 version of Kelly's directory once again mentions the Higham Ferrers RSO, but there is no mention of an RSO at either Rushden or Higham Ferrers in the 1910 edition. The new Rushden Head Post office had opened on August 1st 1905, and all RSOs countrywide were renamed as ordinary Sub-offices before Kelly's Directory was published in 1906.

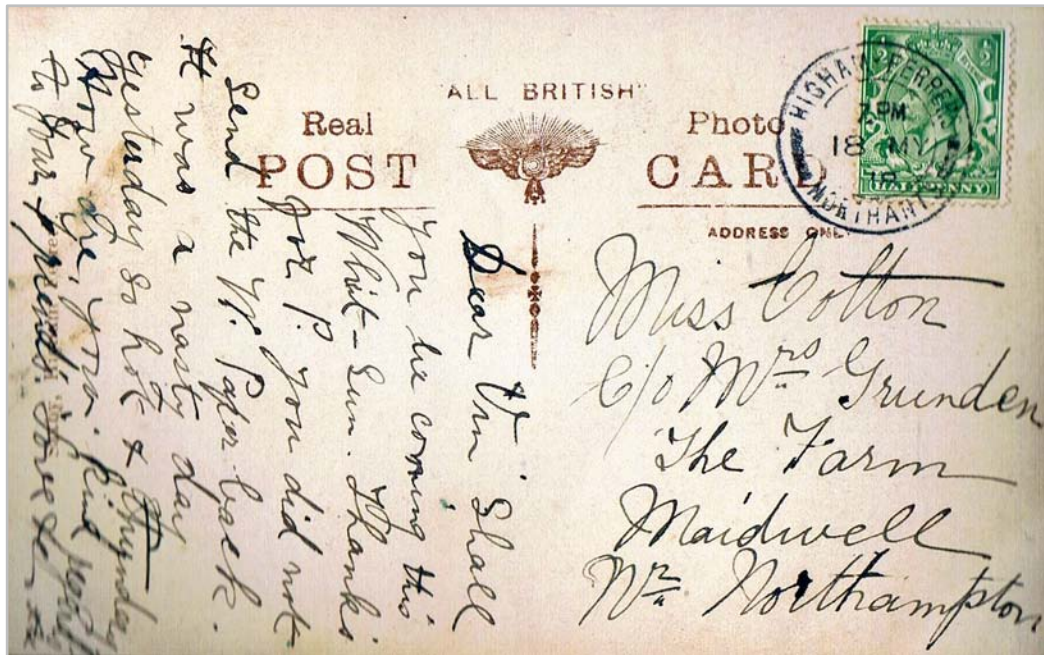
It is clear that some RSOs had very tenuous links with Railway stations. In his very useful list of changes to Post Offices over the years, Ken Smith makes the observation that on 1st September 1892, Higham Ferrers Head Office became an RSO. That is, until 1st August 1905 when it became a town sub-office under Rushden. The date, 1st August 1905 is clearly significant! If this information is correct, then one would not necessarily expect to see Higham Ferrers RSO cancellers in use as the office would continue to use the old ones, and it is known that many RSOs had hand cancellers that did not carry the letters RSO on them.

It is recommended that you read this web page which contains an interview with postman Jonathan Seckington on his retirement in 1907. (<https://www.rushdenheritage.co.uk/commerce/Postman-retirement1907.html>). I shall only highlight the one paragraph italicised below.

*"We used to receive a portion by rail and a portion by road. The letters by rail were due in at 5 a.m. at Higham Ferrers and the road mail at 6 a.m. The letters by rail would come by goods train from Northampton, and if there was much traffic at Northampton the mails would be very late. There used to be a good deal of grumbling both at Higham and Rushden, over the late arrival of the letters".*

Mentioning delivery by goods train from Northampton and the date in the 1870s makes the use of the LNWR station for mail deliveries certain, and a mail cart would move Rushden's mail to their then, sub-office.

The reader might well say, with justification, that the postal history evidence is so scant that it is impossible to make a solid case to support the contention that Higham Ferrers RSO existed in the Wood Street premises previously occupied by Higham Ferrers as a Head Office. I would assert that this outline is supported by such evidence as is available today, but if this brief outline acts as a stimulus to provide a counter argument than so much the better.



1918 double arc postmark for the period just before transfer to Wellingborough Head Office.

#### REGISTRATION - 6d PAID in CASH



**Jim Ball** writes: Illustrated is a September 1848 cover from Broseley to Shrewsbury. The unplated penny red paying the postage is cancelled by the 406 of Ironbridge, the head office of Broseley. The cover is registered with the 6d fee paid in cash, there is no Registration Number. The initial registration of 1/- from 6 January 1841 allowed the fee and postage to be paid in cash though it is usual for the postage to be paid with a 1d stamp (*Ed – Does anyone have an example of the registration fee and postage both paid in cash?*). With the reduction to 6d on 28 March 1848, the fee had to be paid in cash but the postage had to be paid in stamps. On 1 June 1850 it became mandatory for the 6d registration fee to be paid in stamps. (*Ed – Two other covers are known from Shropshire with the 6d fee paid in cash; 7 August 1849 Shrewsbury to Aberystwyth, two 1d reds paying 1oz postage rate and 20 December 1849 from Oswestry to Bewdley with 1d red paying ½oz rate. An incoming letter is also known with two 2d blues, plate 3, paying postage for 2ozs; all three with the registration paid in cash. 6d Registration paid in cash covers are not common*).



# Bill Pipe

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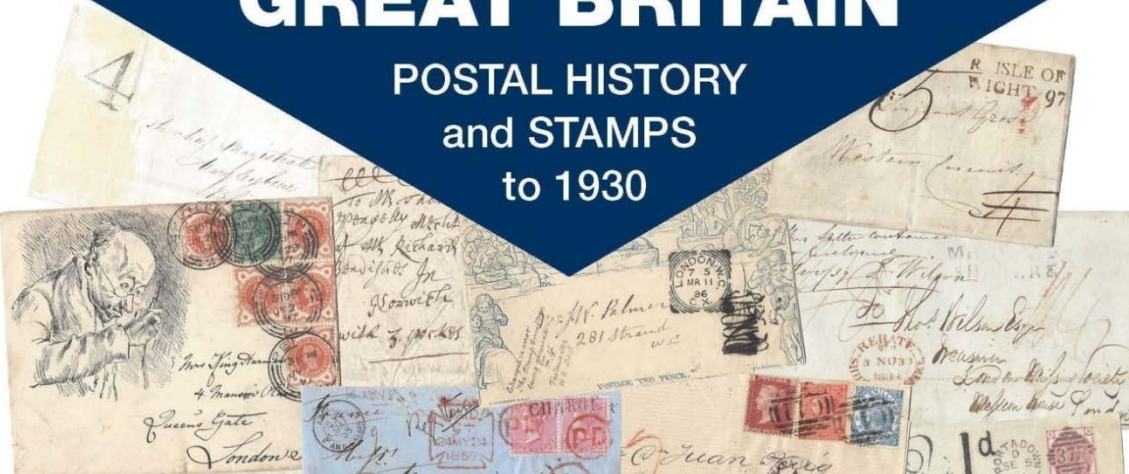
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## SOME BACKGROUND TO RUBBER DATESTAMPS

Ian M May

The zoom meeting held on the 20<sup>th</sup> January 2021 on the topic of ‘*Rubber Datestamps*’ lead to some interesting discussion about the period of their use, the proportion of offices for which rubber datestamps have been recorded that are included in the proof books, and the number of offices using rubber datestamps.



Fig 1,

BICTON HEATH rubber  
 Issued through Shrewsbury  
 24 OCT 1894 (RIB 6 / 274)  
 Not recorded used  
 Copy ex-PO Archives

In Mackay's book, *Sub-office Datestamps of England and Wales*,<sup>[1]</sup> copies of the strikes of the rubber datestamps in the Post Office proof books are shown, a typical example is illustrated in Fig. 1. A detailed discussion of the issue and subsequent use of the datestamp is given, much of the information based on official Post Official papers. George<sup>[2]</sup> reviewed the use of rubber datestamps in Shropshire,

adopting a similar approach to Mackay in that copies of the datestamps from the proof books were illustrated, but in addition he supplied the earliest and latest dates of *all* rubber datestamps used at Shropshire offices without distinguishing between the stamps. This short article attempts to cover the main aspects of the issue and usage of the date-stamps and is based on Mackay's and George's books. Mackay produced a companion volume, *Sub-office datestamps of Scotland*<sup>[3]</sup>, which gives similar information on the use of rubber datestamps in Scotland. Readers requiring further details should consult, in particular, Mackay's book.

In 1837 the Post Office determined that only offices transacting more than a £1000 business a year would be issued with a dated handstamp. The remaining offices would be issued with an undated hand stamp, details for the Midland counties can be found in reference 4. These would normally be used to show the office of acceptance, a dated stamp being applied at the main office, where any adhesives would also be cancelled. Early in 1860 the undated handstamps were withdrawn. Money Order offices would be issued with a dated hand stamp but many of the smaller offices, because they were not Money Order Offices, had no hand stamp. If the name of the office and a date were required it would be entered in manuscript.

On the 25<sup>th</sup> August 1885 a list of 174 sub offices in England and Wales (not being Money Order Offices), which were to commence the sale of Postal Orders was issued. Postal Orders were cheaper and more effective than Money Orders. It was decided not to issue these offices with steel datestamps but, instead, to issue the Climax Rubber Datestamps, which were about a fifth of the cost of a steel datestamp. Rubber hand stamps had been previously adopted in London for parcels prepaid in cash. They were considered suitable as they would only have light usage cancelling Postal Orders. The offices were issued with the necessary ink and pad, of which more below. A further substantial issue of 400 rubber datestamps was made in August 1886 following the decision of an additional major expansion of the Postal Order system. Further issues of rubber datestamps continued after 1885 but there were still some offices that, even as late as 1904, managed without any datestamp. However, in 1904 the Postal Order system was extended to all offices and a further 1000 rubber datestamps were issued.

Despite the rubber datestamps being issued initially to cancel Postal Orders, during the first decade of their use it was extended to parcel duties. From 1895 they were occasionally used on mis-directed or mis-sent mail. Their use on parcel post labels, together with Postal Order counter foils, provides many of the early records of usage of the rubber datestamps. By 1903 they were used, unofficially, to cancel adhesives on purely local sub-office mail, and by later in 1904 on non-local mail, clear of the adhesive, which was cancelled using the steel datestamp of the post town. By the end of 1904 the position was reversed with rubber datestamp being used to cancel any adhesives and steel datestamp being placed clear of any adhesives. A short time later the rubber datestamp was used on its own to cancel any adhesives. In 1911 there was official acceptance of the use of the rubber datestamps to cancel mail!

The proof books appear to contain only the issue of new rubber datestamps. After 1910 the proof books do not appear to have been so rigorously maintained. Repairs, of which there would be many, as the increased usage led to a reduced life of the datestamp, are not recorded in the available proof books, although there is some evidence that there were proof books for repairs but Mackay did not find these.

Initially offices were issued with an aqueous violet ink for use with the rubber datestamp, postmasters were told not to use the oil based black ink as this would cause the rubber to perish and distort. In December 1910 a special black indelible ink was supplied so that adhesives could be cancelled, even though this was already occurring. However, the use led to deterioration of the stamps and, hence, the need for regular repairs. A 1912 order stated violet ink was not to be used. (*Ed – stated at the zoom meeting rubber stamps deteriorated due to poor vulcanisation of the rubber*)

During the early 1930s there was some pressure to replace the rubber datestamps with steel datestamps but while the steel datestamp was 5 times more expensive, its life was greater than 20 years compared with the life of a rubber datestamp of 2 to 3 years. In 1934 the decision to replace the rubber datestamps was taken but it is not possible to determine how soon the rubber datestamps was replaced as there are no proof books. There were rubber datestamps still being used to stamp correspondence but these were Blackwell type for cancelling fragile letters and facsimile label rectangular datestamps for cancelling parcels.

In addition to the standard rubber datestamp, rubber skeleton datestamps have been recorded, but there are no records of them in the proof books. A typical example is shown in Fig. 2. Steel skeleton datestamps were normally issued when a steel datestamp was being repaired or replaced. In view of the short life of a rubber datestamp before it required repair it is somewhat surprising that more examples of rubber skeletons have not been recorded.



Fig 2,

BICTON HEATH Rubber skeleton  
Dated 19 NOV 1913  
Only recorded use

See paragraph about rubber skeletons at bottom of page

Mackay describes looking at 2000 usages of rubber datestamps of which only 500 appear in the proof books. He also reports that other collectors confirm that about 20% of their holdings of rubber datestamps appear in the proof book. George also agrees with this figure for Shropshire. This leads one to speculate why the figure is so low. Some of the datestamps had been issued 10 to 15 years before being used on mail so would have deteriorated, even though the aqueous ink had been used, so would have been repaired. Datestamps issued later, when oil based inks were used, would have had a shorter life before repair or replacement. What is particularly unfortunate is that the repair proof books do not exist anymore, as they would have shown how often a repair took place. As the Post Office estimated that the life of a rubber was only 2 to 3 years (it is assumed that this is when used for mail) it is possible that some offices could have had 10 repairs or replacement datestamps during the lifetime of the use of rubber datestamps. A further reason for the lack of usage on mail of proof copies is that if an office was upgraded to a Money Order or Telegraphic Office it would be issued with a steel datestamp. So some offices may have never used a rubber datestamp which appears in the proof books, or have used one for a short period of time prior to being up-graded. It also needs to be remembered that rubber datestamps were used at offices with a relatively small amount of mail. George gives the earliest and latest dates of usage at the Shropshire Offices, of about 220 Shropshire Offices about 50 - 60% recorded the use of a rubber, but a substantial number only recorded one date of usage.

In the meeting of the 20<sup>th</sup> January 2021 Brian Atkins showed a number of rubber datestamps from Bicton Heath, Shropshire and has provided further details. There were two copies in the proof book neither of which has been recorded. From December 1906 until March 1920 there were 22 records, which is an exceptional number of records for one office. Of the rubber datestamps 1 was a skeleton rubber datestamp and 7 were normal rubber datestamps. Because there are gaps between the records it is difficult to ascertain the life of a datestamp but a crude estimate based on the Bicton Heath records would be on average 2 years!

One of the reasons that rubber skeletons are so unusual is that they were not used after 1916 when they were replaced with steel skeletons. In the same year it was decided that any office that stamped more than 200 items a day should have a steel stamp. And finally in 1929 it was decided that only offices with one delivery should use a climax dater, other offices should have a steel stamp issued <sup>[1][3]</sup>.

In conclusion this article has attempted to describe the reasons for the issue of the rubber datestamps from 1885 and development of their usage until their replacement from 1934. It would appear that any records of their usage are always likely to be incomplete for the reasons described above. It is suggested that any attempt to report usage for, say, a county needs to be carefully thought through.

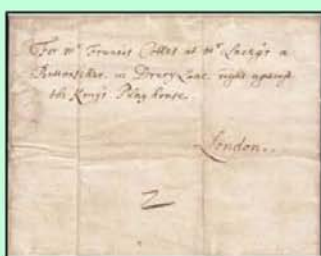
#### References:

- 1 Mackay, J. A., Sub-office Datestamps of England and Wales, Publ. by Author, Dumfries, 1986
- 2 George, D, Shropshire Rubbers, Shropshire Postal History Society, 1989
- 3 Mackay, J. A., Sub-office Datestamps of Scotland, Publ. by Author, Dumfries, 1985
- 4 The Undated Circular marks of the Midland Counties, Midland (GB) PHS, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition, 1996.

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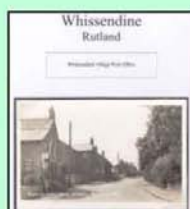
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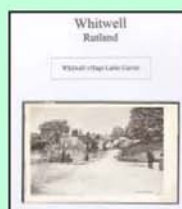
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## POSTED OUT OF COURSE – A NEW BIRMINGHAM INSTRUCTIONAL MARKING?

From Bryan Jones

The Solihull 'In Touch' daily bulletin, run by Paul Woodness the Solihull P.S. Secretary, which has operated every day since the first lockdown, and which is sent out as e-mails with attachments to all members who request it, allows members to send in scans of interesting covers, or stamps, with queries relating to their use or markings. This has generated considerable feedback, often from members who do not regularly attend meetings. One such query featured a fairly recent cover with a 'POSTED OUT OF COURSE' marking, the contributor asking what this meant and did anyone have other examples. I was able to respond, for in a batch of over 100 Jamaica covers from the KEVI (and very early QEII) period, all from villages with oval, mostly undated, cancels I had around 30 examples with 'POSTED (or MAILED) OUT OF COURSE' hand stamps. My response was that these markings were applied to registered covers posted at village post offices which did not have registration facilities, and which were in most cases then registered at Kingston, the capital. In such cases a 'MAILED OUT OF COURSE' hand stamp would be applied. Two different hand stamps were used. However in a small number of cases, the covers were registered, with registration labels applied, on arrival in the UK. All bar one were registered in London, with a 'Posted Out of Course, I.S. hand stamp applied, and a London I.S. registration label added.



One example was not registered until it reached Birmingham with a boxed rectangular 'POSTED OUT OF COURSE' hand stamp applied, overlapped by an oval Registered Birmingham hand stamp, and with a Birmingham 694 registration label. Presumably the boxed POSTED OUT OF COURSE marking was added at Birmingham, a nice addition to the list of local postal markings.

The MONTREAL / JAMAICA 3-ring canceller dated 4 May 1954 is 'rare' (between 5 and 10 examples recorded). There is a Birmingham arrival date of 24 May 1954.

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Brian Purcell has sent a photocopy of an 1851 postal stationery 1d pink envelope used to Hull, cancelled with the 175 numeral of Cheadle. The reverse has a **blue** undated ALTON (ST21), just under two years later than the recorded date (blue, 1 December 1849). The CHEADLE and HULL double arcs are also in blue

Editor's note: My scanner has decided not to pick up shades of blue or green from photocopies.

TWO CLIPPER COVERS FROM AUSTRALIA TO SHROPSHIRE VILLAGES in 1856

by Brian Atkins

Whilst the two covers were sent from different States in Australia, they show accounting used at the time depending on which country or state contracted the packet ship, both of which are sailing clippers. The first cover is from Sydney, NSW to Condoover, Shrewsbury. The postage rate to the UK was 6d (GPO Notice 56, 1 Oct 1854) paid by a NSW 6d green. The cover was endorsed 'by Mail Ship *Sultana*', which left Sydney on 6 Feb, Melbourne on 15 Feb and arrived at Liverpool on 21 May 1856 (95 days in transit) with the cover arriving at Shrewsbury via Stafford the next day. Although the mail was sent via Melbourne no extra postage was required from Sydney as it was a UK contracted packet ship, so 5d was credited to the British – 1d for UK delivery and 4d for the packet, Victoria State kept 1d. Of added interest is the good, undated CONDOVER recorded from 21 MAR 1855 to 1 OCT 1859.



A different situation arises if the packet ship was contracted by an Australian State as below. The entire is dated in Melbourne, Victoria on 22nd May 1856 addressed to the village of Acton Scott, Shrewsbury. The packet postage rate between Victoria State and the UK was reduced to 6d by GPO Notice 70 of February 1856, the 6d paid by two Half-length Victoria lithographed 3d blues (3rd state, SG11).



The letter missed the *Royal Charter*, which sailed on 25 May, arriving Liverpool on 12 August. It was carried by the Victoria Contract packet *Joseph Tarratt* (Black Ball Line), departed Melbourne 11 June, arrived Liverpool 19 Sep 1856 (Packet mark just visible) in 100 days, a slow passage. The 1^d accountancy is a credit to UK as the *Joseph Tarratt* was contracted by the State of Victoria, which kept the 5d balance. Different accountancy figures were struck depending on who contracted the packet, not dissimilar to the accountancy adopted by the 1849 UK/US Treaty.

Birmingham Parcel Post updates from Ian Baker

**Birmingham QMC / (Booth Street, Handsworth)**

Unrecorded, Type C4 Dated, MR 10 / 10

Single circle: BOOTH-ST / HANDSWORTH

3d for up to 1lb. nb List No. 100

**Birmingham QMH / (Deritend)**

Unrecorded, Type C4 Dated, NO 23 / 09

Single circle: DERITEND / BIRMINGHAM

5d for up to 3lbs.

**BIRMINGHAM / Five Ways, B.O. (QMK), Type C2a – office renamed Edgbaston on 1 January 1902**

Earliest known date: MY 6 / 01

Single circle: FIVE-WAYS / BIRMINGHAM

7d for up to 5lbs.



Latest known date: JA 2 / 02

Double circle: EDGBASTON-B.O. BIRMINGHAM / 5

3d for up to 1lb. nb List No. 63

**BIRMINGHAM / Monument Road (QMT)**

Unrecorded, Type C2a. Dated, MY 2 / 02

Single circle: MONUMENT-R^D / BIRMINGHAM

4d for up to 2lbs.

**BIRMINGHAM / Vauxhall Road QNI**

Unrecorded. Type B2. Dated, NO 26 / 92

Single circle: VAUXHALL-R^D / BIRMINGHAM

3d for up to 1lb. Renamed Vauxhall on 1 Jan. 1908

These labels remain amazingly popular; Andy Thompson has also sent 3 pages of extended dates and new types, which will appear over the next few issues.

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