



MIDLAND MAIL

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



President: Elizabeth Lewis

Chairman:
Chris Jackson

Treasurer:
Elizabeth Lewis

Secretary:
Eric Lewis

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FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

By now, members should have received their auction catalogues and the programme of events on the day of the Annual General Meeting on **21st April**. There will be a committee meeting at 10.45 a.m., the AGM at 12.45 p.m. and the auction at 1.45 p.m.

It is hoped to distribute details of Midpex 2001 with the next issue but please note that this event will be held on **30th June** at The Midlands Sports Centre for the Disabled in Tile Hill, Coventry. Some sixty societies will be represented at this event which will also be attended by about forty dealers.

Please make sure that you have noted that on **15th September** there will be a joint meeting with the Lancashire and Cheshire Postal History Society at Burton-on-Trent.

MUMFORD BOOKS

One of our members, Michael Mumford, runs an antiquarian and second-hand book business covering a range of topics, including postal history and railways. His website - www.mumfordbooks.c.uk contains details of updates to his stock. Alternatively, for the latest catalogue send a SAE to Tan-yr-Wylfa, Llanddeiniolen, Caernarfon, Gwynedd LL55 3AB.

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THE JANUARY MEETING

Our first meeting of the year was a double-billed event devoted to two different aspects of Leicestershire postal history. Richard Farman took as the title of his display '*Ashby-de-la-Zouch and Associated Penny Posts*' and began by setting the geographical location of Ashby. His first cover was sent in 1761 from Stafford to Blackfordby and charged sixpence - fourpence for the General Post and twopence for local delivery. A series of letters sent to Netherseal in 1788 showed an extra charge of one penny. Richard then produced examples of the halfpenny charged for delivery at Ashby, amongst which was one from Florence to Normanton-le-Heath charged 2/7½d.

Next, Richard turned his attention to the receiving offices of the Ashby Penny Post. This did not come into being until Ashby had been made a posttown in 1830, so a letter sent within Ashby in November 1830 must have shown a very early strike of the boxed '*Ashby-de-la-Zouch/Penny Post*' handstamp. We then saw letters from all of the receiving offices - those at Appleby, Measham, Twycross, Sheepy and Overseal. These included examples of the numeral handstamps and the 'village' penny post handstamps which were, in these cases, not issued until after the introduction of Uniform Penny Postage. The receiving office at Overseal was unusual in that not only did it, like the others, receive letters through Ashby and Atherstone but also through Burton-on-Trent. We saw examples of letters sent through all three towns, one of which carried the handstamp of the Burton-on-Trent Penny Post.

All of the receiving offices in the Ashby Penny Post had also been in that of Atherstone since 1815 and we then saw letters from each of the offices sent through that posttown, illustrating the three different types of penny post handstamp used at Atherstone. A letter from Hinckley to Congerstone was notable for the fact that it was charged fourpence for the eight miles from Hinckley to Atherstone but only a further penny for the seven miles on to Congerstone. But as Richard pointed out it was possible to send a letter twelve miles for only one penny in this penny post.

Finally, Richard strayed over the border into Warwickshire with a look at the Bedworth receiving office which came into the penny posts of Hinckley and Atherstone. Of note here was the use in 1842 of the boxed 'No 1' used in conjunction with a penny post handstamp of Atherstone.

John Soer said that although the programme gave the title of his display as 'Leicester City', he was going to talk about postal history not football. It was several minutes into this second display that the speaker realised that no one was taking notes, so this report relies upon the fallible memory of your editor. John started by saying that the postal history of Leicester could be summed up in two sentences, and having done that, he invited the audience to go home. Since no one moved, he then produced a number of maps before turning to the early handstamps. These included examples from 1717, 1720 and 1731 which were followed by a number of other items from the eighteenth century. We then saw the two types of first type mileage mark used at Leicester; the first of these was an early strike - October 1784. There then followed more straight line marks from the 1790s along with a convex handstamp. Next came the boxed mileage marks with a previously unrecorded example from 1802, followed by two types with the mileage between lines and a number of dated circular mileage marks.

We had now reached 1840 so there was a brief pause to look at some sheets of Victorian illustrated notepaper before going on to the obligatory penny black on cover, two different skeletons and two examples of the 449 numeral cancellation. After the sideways duplex cancellations came a variety of the double handstamps. Notable amongst the squared circle cancellations were those with an unusual time code, unique to Leicester. Such is the scarcity of Leicester material that it is necessary to search for it in skips. One such item was a Christmas card sent in 1887 by the staff at Leicester post office, showing a poor photograph of the new office. This led to examples of the handstamps used in 1904 and 1908 on mail 'Posted in Advance for Delivery on Christmas Day'. Next came surcharge and instructional marks. At this point desperation set in for after parcel post labels from the town sub-offices came mailbag labels for bags to be sent to T.P.Os. That is what your reporter thinks he showed. If he has got it wrong, then he will, heaven forbid, like a recalcitrant pupil have to come back and do it again.

THE FEBRUARY MEETING

There was a very good attendance at the meeting in Worcester on 17th February to see Eric Lewis's display on Social Philately. From previous displays it is obvious that the depth and breadth of the collections of Eric and Elizabeth must be very considerable. However, Eric exceeded everybody's expectations with a quite fantastic display of no less than ten separate topics.

Eric began with the sending of money by post, starting with a copy of the official notice on how to cut notes so as to retain one serial number on each half note. Incredibly, two letters referred to the sending of each half of the same banknotes. To find a letter with a reference to the serial number of one half-note is nice, but to find the letter mentioning the other half is quite amazing. Eric covered the introduction of Money Order Offices in 1792 and the system for the transmission of funds by the credit and debit of the postmasters at each end of the transaction. A postal order which had additional stamps but no datestamp of the issuing office and which was subsequently refused payment by the Post Office was a particularly unusual item.

The second section told the story of the 'Post Office Tea Association'. It included original posters and an explanation, with material, of the establishment and growth of the business of selling tea through the post offices! Letters on forest products followed with examples on birch bark, leaves, plywood and even peat. The more solid items were passed around the audience; the amazing thing was that any of the fragile items had survived at all.

A section on postcoding which started in London in 1857 contained an original notice from 1856 together with examples of correspondence requesting the recipient to use the new code in their reply. Two maps of London showing the first postcode areas were particularly fine.

Junk mail followed with a section on the originator, a Joseph Ady, who offered a service of giving information on unclaimed bequests. Eric gave full coverage of the resulting court case in newspaper cuttings of the period.

Letters to sweethearts with coded letters and mirror-writing provided a section which some members examined in detail once a mirror had been obtained from a lady's handbag.

Decorative letter sheets brought the first half to a close and Eric left the audience with the challenge of folding a piece of paper in exactly the same way as in one of his exhibits. This was eventually won by Sadie Cole after a not inconsiderable input from Malcolm Allinson. The prize of a plastic postal balance was presented by Eric.

The second half started with censorship of philatelic mail in wartime. Dealers had to have permits and the sending of mail without the permit numbers showing resulted in material being returned to the sender. Eric explained how the B.P.A. took over the vetting of philatelic mail but that the censor had the final say on what was allowed to be exported.

Dog licences formed the next part of the display in which Eric explained that the licence was 7/6d (5/- in Scotland) right from its introduction in 1796 until withdrawal in 1988. The display included a licence for fifty-five dogs and examples of 'Dog Loose' endorsements on mail and the post office dog log for houses to which mail was not delivered because of a dog on the premises. Adverts for dog food on postal material completed this section.

Eric ended his talk with a look at abuses of the Free Franking System. These included a letter on which the franker had copied the address but with the original still showing, illegal use by the London Police, and a forged Free Frank the writer of which ended up being transported for seven years after the recipient had reported him to the authorities. Several letters were shown which were above the weight allowed, one of which cost the recipient 6/3d. Another referred to a brother who had a franking privilege up to 2 oz which was very unusual; the example shown was a 2 oz letter sent to Ireland in 1816 which would have cost 9/4d. Some members of the Treasury had unlimited weight privilege but these were few in number. However Eric produced such a letter which went free of charge but, if charged postage, would have cost 8/8d in 1832.

The Chairman thanked Eric for a truly excellent afternoon's entertainment, and questioned how anyone could have collected such an eclectic array of material. However there was no doubt that Eric's display had highlighted many different areas of social philately and provided members with ideas to take away for the development of their own collections.

The Editor would like to thank Chris Jackson for providing this report.

THE MARCH MEETING

Holidays, auctions and illness all took their toll on 10th March so it was a small but select gathering that met to show material on the theme of 'Registered Mail' etc.

Derek Smeathers started the proceedings with a display of items from Northamptonshire. This included two compulsory registered items, one of which carried the '4D R.L.D.' handstamp of the Registered Letter Division. Another covered had a blank registration label with a straight line handstamp of West Haddon. Eric Lewis's first item was a registered letter receipt, number 3, from Ellesmere dated 1841. A letter sent from Birmingham to Ludlow showed the shilling rate. Prior to 1851, the registration fee was paid in cash; Eric showed us a Post Office instruction stating that in future it was to be paid in stamps. Eric then went on to display a number of items illustrating the registration of parcels, including a certificate of posting from Five-Ways, Birmingham, dated 1897.

Registered mail sent through the T.P.O. system formed Harold Wilson's display. A letter sent from Ploesti in Romania to Leeds carried the marks of three different T.P.Os. Next came examples of the rubber handstamp used in the Tamworth and Lincoln Sorting Carriage on registered mail for overseas. Harold ended with covers showing the a.m. handstamps used to cancel stamps on the first day of issue which had been obtained from the 24 hour offices in Trafalgar Square and the King Edward Buildings, so preventing a first day cover dated the day before the stamps were issued. Chris Jackson began with covers from Worcestershire illustrating the shilling, sixpenny and fourpenny rates for registration. A letter to Paris had an unusual registration label, and a letter sent in 1896 from Worcester to Evesham carried the Paid 3d handstamp of the former town.

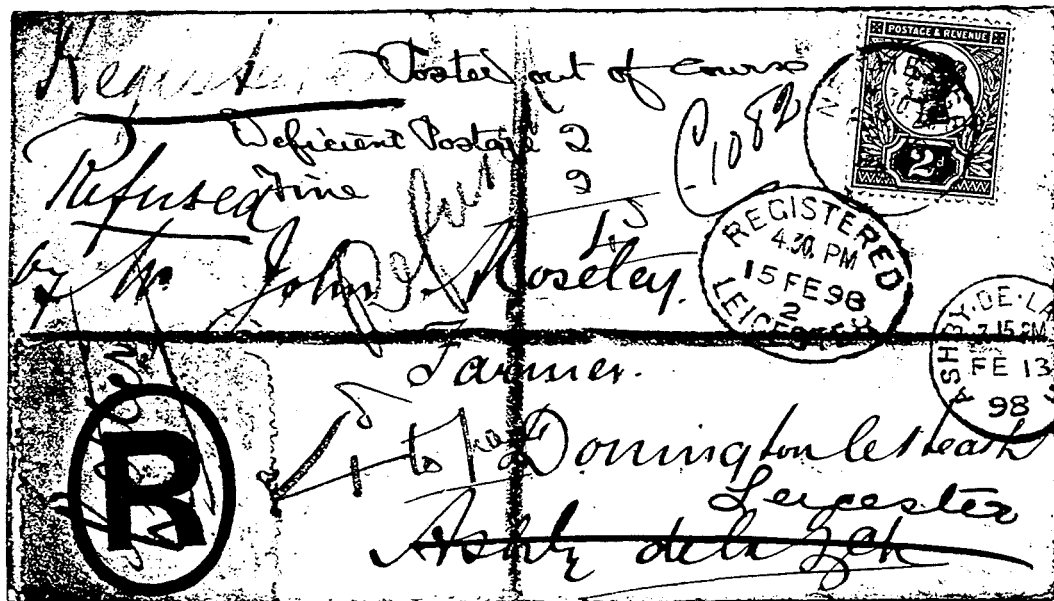
After the break, Guy Bridges produced some registered receipts from 1855 as well as a compulsory registered item of 1869 which was charged eightpence (twice the rate of fourpence). Guy ended with a 'Jury Precept' franked at the concessionary rate of threepence. Christopher Beaver's first item was a cover sent at the shilling rate but found to be overweight. Initially it was surcharged sevenpence but this was altered to sixpence. Very unusual was a cover sent in 1852 from West Bromwich to Macclesfield on which had been written the number of the letter - '24 Registered'. A cover of 1897 showed the duplex and registered handstamps of West Bromwich. Chris' last item was a lengthy written document which had been sent by Registered Book Post, no doubt with the aim of saving postage. John Soer began with postal stationary items from the period 1918-22, some of which showed mixed frankings. Other items included a Printed Paper item which had been registered and a letter 'posted out of course' which had then been refused.

Some members had obviously realised that our numbers were going to be depleted for they had come prepared with a second display. Derek Smeathers showed a Notice of Objection from 1846 with the 'NORTHAMPTON/3' skeleton, various types of receipt for registered letters, and a two ounce letter sent at the sixpenny rate franked with ten penny stamps. Letters which were not to be sent by means of the T.P.O. mailbag apparatus formed the basis of Eric Lewis's second offering. We saw examples of the 'REGISTERED 2d/FRAGILE - WITH CARE' handstamps as well as letters marked with the additional blue diagonal lines. Finally, Chris Jackson produced a number of letters sent from Worcestershire to places abroad such as Jamaica (1868), Malta (1876), China (1872) and India (1861). The latter took fifty-two days to reach its destination.

Although there was a degree of similarity between some of the material shown, there was more than enough that was different to make it a most interesting afternoon and well worthwhile the journey to Birmingham.

ONE OF MY FAVOURITE COVERS

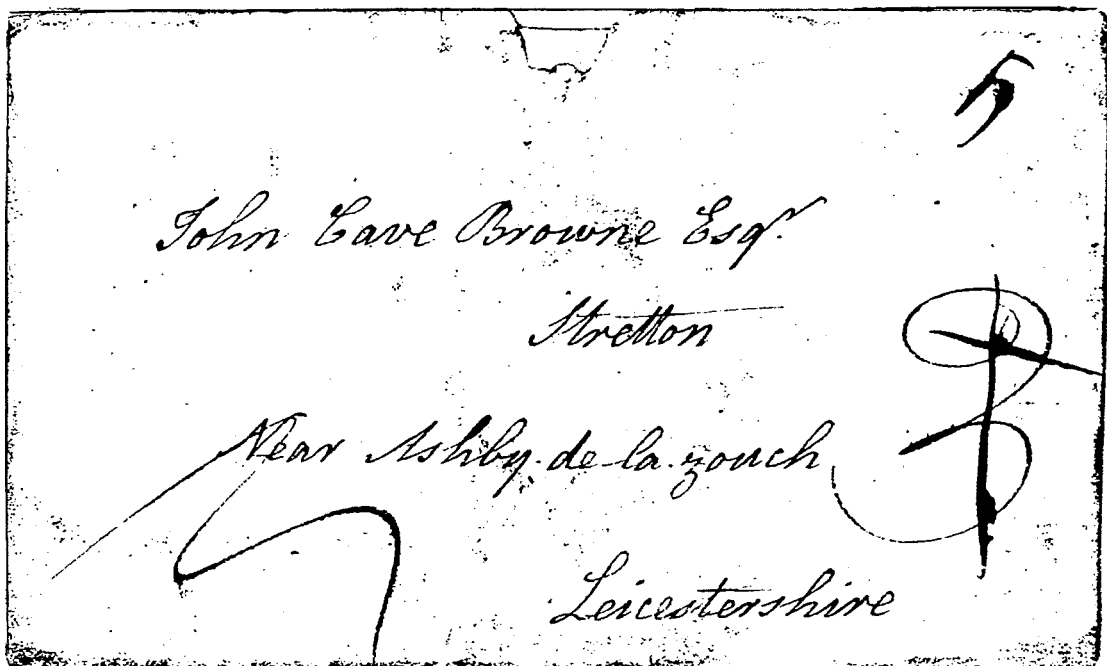
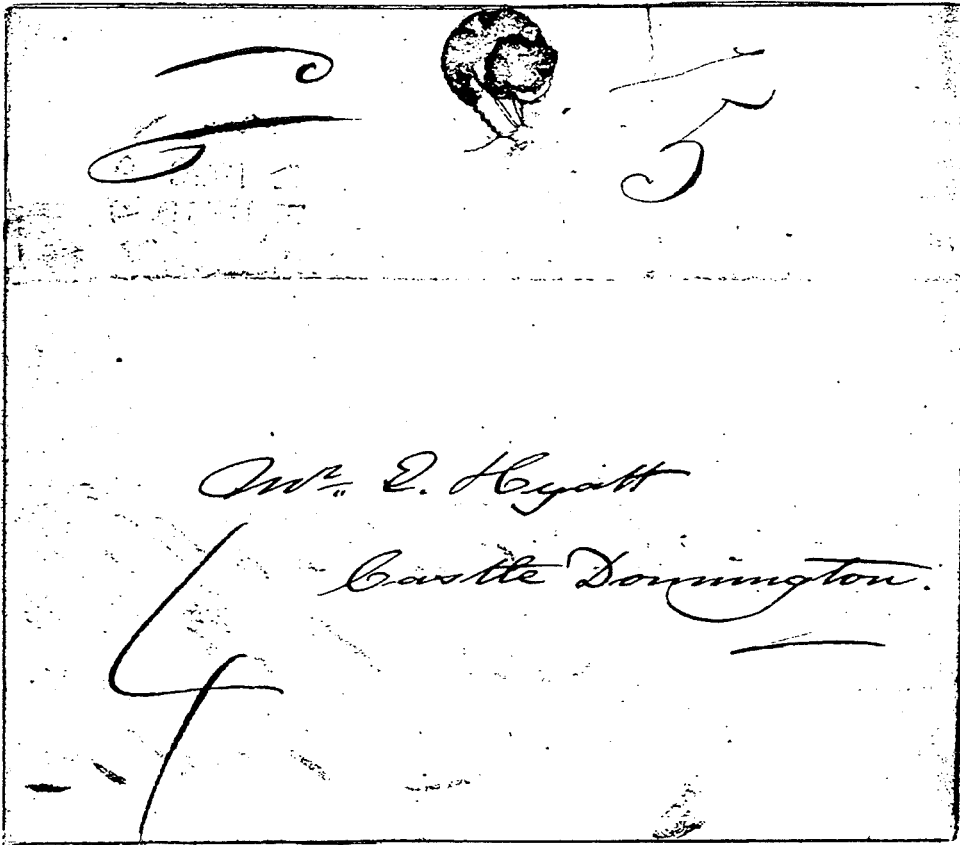
The cover shown below was sent from Netherseal to Donington-le-Heath. Not only was the letter "Posted out of Course" - the term applied to a registered letter which had been put into a letter-box instead of being handed in at the counter, but on arrival it was refused by the addressee. Apart from the "Registered" and "Refused" which are in blue pencil, all the manuscript markings are in red ink including the word "Letter" which is written over the experimental label in the bottom lefthand corner. The reverse shows strikes of the Ashby and Hugglescote single circles as well as the registered handstamp of Leicester timed and dated 2 a.m. 14FE98. It is one of those covers that need colour to do it justice. Perhaps we should persuade the Treasurer that Midland Mail be printed in colour!



TWO PROBLEM COVERS

Richard Farman's display reminded me that I had two covers with puzzling charges in my collection. The first which was sent in 1836 from Leicester to Castle Donington shows charges of 4d, 5d and 6d. Was this fourpence from Leicester to Loughborough, a further penny to Cavendish Bridge and another penny for carriage from there to Castle Donington. If so, it shows the charges for two unofficial posts. The letter was then turned and shows a charge of 4d and the Cavendish Bridge mileage mark.

The second was sent in 1777 from Newcastle-under-Line to Stretton-en-le Fields. A charge of 3d, surely correct for carriage to Loughborough, appears to have been crossed out and replaced by one of 5d. Does this represent the extra penny for the private post between Loughborough and Ashby-de-la-Zouch plus a further penny for delivery at Stretton? Or is the mark at the bottom left a '4' and if so, why was the charge for the General Post uprated to fourpence?



BIRMINGHAM'S LONDON MAILS: THE TRANSITION FROM ROAD TO RAIL, 1837-9

by Christopher Beaver

This is a fresh investigation of some of the wealth of primary evidence concerning the carriage of mail on the direct routes by coach and by train between Birmingham and London in a period of rapid change.

A daily statement concerning the times of mails at Birmingham Post Office, printed in August 1836 and used on 8th March 1837, is reproduced as plate 20 in Martin Willcock's *England's Postal History*. The down London mail due at 7.08 a.m. was exactly on time (eleven hours on its overnight journey) and departed for Holyhead thirty-five minutes later. The up mail due at 7.31 p.m. arrived ten minutes early and was sent on its way towards Coventry after a stop of twenty-two minutes. The 'Warwick' mail was a Birmingham - London mailcoach, also overnight, on a slightly longer route, but it did not in fact carry mail from one terminus to the other.

Alterations which were necessary in the Inland Office of the G.P.O. as the Grand Junction Railway came into use for the carriage of mail in July 1837, and the London and Birmingham Railway similarly in May and October 1838, are conveniently outlined in MM108/10. The routing of many letters between London and the Midlands and beyond was affected.

An innovation soon after the G.J.R. opened was the 'Dublin Express Mail' (so called from a London perspective) which was the first day mail out of as well as into London. The only mention of Midlands bags to be carried by this coach in the Inland Office orders was on 20th June 1838, when such towns as Liverpool and Manchester, Bradford, Halifax and Leeds were also included. Whether mail from the Midlands and such towns also went on it, then or earlier, needs to be considered.

Some details concerning this 'Day' mail are given in the list of Midland mailcoaches in MM101/8 (routes 100 and 114). From 4th September 1837, two months after other mails first went on the G.J.R., an already existing stagecoach put on by the London contractor Edward Sherman was used to convey Irish mail, departing at 8 a.m. from the G.P.O. for the temporary terminus of that railway at Birmingham. The announcement in *Aris's Gazette* calls it the 'Birmingham, Chester and Holyhead Day Mail' and adds that it was from the Bull and Mouth (close to St. Martin-le-Grand) and due to reach the G.J.R. at 6.45 p.m. The up coach arrived at the G.P.O. at 6.30 p.m. On the same date, a Liverpool to Holyhead via Chester and Conway mailcoach (route 113) was replaced by 114, Hartford being a station in the Cheshire countryside some twelve miles north of Crewe - which of course had not yet been developed into a railway town. Whereas the night mail for Holyhead via Shrewsbury (route 102) was timed to take 27 hours, covering 261 miles, the 'Express' schedule was 25½ hours, 66 of its 276 miles being by rail (see extracts from *British Almanac* [BA1838] below).

DUBLIN Express Day Mail Coach leaves London at 8 morning.			
24 Redburn	10 33m	3 54a	
37 Hockliffe	11 48m	3 36a	
42 Brickhill	12 40a	3 36a	
51 Stony Stratford	1 11a	1 11a	
67 Weedon	2 39a	11 41a	
79 Dunchurch	3 45a	10 33m	
90 Coventry	5 3a	9 29m	
108 Birmingham Railway Station	6 45a	7 45m	
174 Hartford, per Rail	9 59a	7 52m	
191 Chester, per Coach	11 56a	3 17m	
208 Holywell	1 59m	1 5m	
226 Abergele	4 3m	11 15m	
246 Aber	6 19m	8 58a	
276 Holyhead	9 32m	5 49m	
The Packet waits the arrival of this mail.			

HOLYHEAD, SHREWSBURY, and BRISTOL MINOR, from the Swan with Two Necks, Lad Lane.			
15 South Mins.	9 40a	5 20m	
26 Redburn	10 44a	4 41m	
44 Brickhill	12 32m	9 26m	
53 Stony Stratford	1 26m	1 34m	
61 Towcester	2 12m	12 49m	
73 Daventry	3 25m	11 32a	
81 Dunchurch	4 11m	10 51a	
92 Coventry	5 18m	9 46a	
101 Stonebridge	6 8m	8 57m	
110 BIRMINGHAM	7 8m	7 31m	
124 Wolverhampton	9 1m	6 14m	
136 Shiffnall	10 14m	5 1m	
144 Haygate	10 59m	4 16m	
154 SHREWSBURY	12 0	3 1a	
162 Nesciliff	12 53a	2 12a	
172 Oswestry	1 46a	1 17a	
184 Llangollen	2 58a	12 4a	
195 Corwen	3 45a	11 4m	
201 Tynant	5 1a	10 25m	
208 Cernioge	5 39a	9 49m	
215 New Stables	6 21a	9 8m	
222 Capel Carig	7 2a	8 26m	
229 Tynames	7 46a	7 42m	
237 Penryn Arms	8 36a	6 26m	
248 Mona Inn	9 43a	5 23m	
251 HOLYHEAD	10 55a	4 13m	

Two very different routes between London and Dublin from *British Almanac* for 1838. Departure of the up mail from Hartford is meant to read 4.52m (m = morning; a = afternoon). A list of mailcoaches from London of November 1837 (see MM40/7) calls these routes the 'Holyhead' and the 'Birmingham Day Express'.

The same almanac for 1838 shows three separate coaches left the G.P.O. at 8 p.m. to connect At Birmingham with the 7 a.m. train northbound on the G.J.R. The up coaches however arrived at the G.P.O. at very different times: the Carlisle, Glasgow and Edinburgh at about 6.30 a.m., the Manchester at 10.45 a.m. and the Liverpool at 11.55 p.m.

London, and Birmingham, Railway, to Glasgow, Glasgow, and Edin- burgh, from the Golden Cross and Cross Keys, Wood-street.			
14 Redburn	10 40a	8 53m	
37 Hockliffe	11 55a	2 36m	
42 Brickhill	12 25m	9 6m	
51 Sloney Stratford ..	1 16m	1 12m	
67 Weedon	2 44m	11 40a	
79 Dunchurch	3 8m	10 31a	
90 Coventry	4 54m	9 26a	
108 Birmingham Railway			
Station	6 38m	7 42a	
Leave the Station at 7 0m			
129 Wolverhampton ..	7 47m	6 40a	
137 Stafford	8 22m	5 55a	
151 Whitmore	9 2m	5 20a	
162 Crewe	9 31m	4 42a	
174 Hartford	10 6m	4 10a	
186 Warrington Railway			
Station	10 41m	2 35a	
218 Wigan	12 19a	1 22a	
235 Preston	9 5a	11 56m	
257 Lancaster	4 15a	8 56m	
272 Kendal	6 50a	6 51m	
306 Penrith	9 46a	3 56m	
324 Carlisle	11 35a	2 7m	
To Glasgow.			
331 Gretna	1 0m	12 37m	
364 Beattock Bridge Inn	3 47m	9 50a	
399 Knowlton			
420 Glasgow			
To Edinburgh.			
345 Langholm	2 4m	11 37a	
363 Hawick	4 24m	9 16a	
394 Torrance Inn	7 4m	6 26a	
419 Edinburgh	9 25m	3 57a	
The London and Manchester, and Lon- don and Liverpool mails, are conveyed by separate coaches from London to Bir- mingham, so that three new coaches start from the Post-Office yard every night, viz., one from Golden Cross, and two from the Swan with Two Necks, Lad Lane. From Birmingham the bags go by railway to Warrington, as above, and thence			
305 Manchester	11 37m	1 30a	
305 Liverpool	11 37m	1 30a	
On the return, the Liverpool coach does not leave Birmingham until after the arrival of the train from Liverpool at 11 12m, arriving in London at 11 55m.			
The Manchester leaves Birmingham at 11 30a, after the arrival of the last train from Manchester, and reaches London at 10 45m, and the letters sent out at 11 30m.			

It was the reduction of the delays in London for communication between Ireland and the Continent rather than the speed on the journey which made this an 'Express'. The Sixth Report of the Commission on Post Office Management of 1836, concerning the packet services, had included a firm recommendation for a through connection between London and Dublin twice a day.

Payments to Sherman for his part in conveying the Day mail continued only until 22nd June 1838, coinciding not with its ending but with change to a 9 a.m. departure from the G.P.O. and its transfer to the L&B.R. for 48 miles between Euston Grove and Denbigh Hall. A total of five mailcoaches (routes 101, 103 and 123) through the Midlands, all fitted to an 8 p.m. departure from the G.P.O., had been introduced in the month before using the temporary railhead at Denbigh Hall as their southern terminus. There is no new payment to any horsing contractor on or about 22nd June. The only credible explanation available is that one of the three night down coaches that ran in parallel to Birmingham G.J.R. station was no longer necessary and its timing was simply altered to link day trains on the L&B.R. with trains on the G.J.R., both down and up.

The section of the L&B.R. between Rugby and Birmingham had, like the extension from Tring to Denbigh Hall, been opened in April 1838, and no doubt consideration was given to its use by the Post Office. An inscription on the bridge at Denbigh Hall, reproduced in MM86/4, has naturally led to an assumption that passengers who were 'conveyed by coach to Rugby where they rejoined the Railway for Birmingham' included those on mailcoaches. However, a contract between the L&B.R. and the P.O., finally signed in May following arbitration, is set out in full as Appendix 3 of Harold Wilson's Travelling Post Offices of Great Britain and Ireland (Railway Philatelic Group 1996), and it makes no mention of using this northern section. Clause 10 provides for additional mails to be conveyed on trains other than the 8.30 p.m. from Euston Grove and the 4 a.m. from Denbigh Hall stipulated in Clause 2, but only on the same section. Clause 15 expects the contract to 'determine', which means come to an end, on 1st October. The payments in Post 6/29 to the horsing contractors which had been for 108½ miles at 3d. a double mile between the G.P.O. and the Birmingham G.J.R. station (route 99) were evidently for 63 miles, at the same rate to the same contractors, for the 132 days between 21st May and 30th September, two of the coaches horsed by William Chaplin of the Swan with Two Necks, Lad Lane, the third by Benjamin Worthy Horne of the Cross Keys, Wood Street and the Golden Cross, Charing Cross (route 101). Usually in Post 6 only one destination of a mailcoach is named but a clear expression of where these coaches actually ran is entry number 250 for the quarter concerned: "W. Chaplin being a compensation for relinquishing his contract for the conveyance of the Birmingham Mail to and from Denbigh Hall the 30th September to 10th October 1838 £15-15-0." This is easily calculated as 63 miles at 3d., one journey down and one up, for ten days, for each of two coaches.

The Inland Office Order of 20th June coinciding with the transfer of what had been specifically the 'Dublin Express Mail' to the southern section of the L&B.R. lists the towns in England which, for the first time, would be sent day bags. As was usually the case no mention was made of bags from them to London unless the up arrangement was different from the down. Positive evidence about this is in Appendix 67 of the Second Report of the Committee on Postage reproduced in MM75/16. Though undated, this very detailed statement concerning the mails at Birmingham Post Office was apparently compiled soon after the Order of 20th June 1838. Altogether there are shown four times of dispatch to London. Of these the 8.50 p.m. is by the mailcoach which is due to arrive from Holyhead at 8.31 p.m. and reach Denbigh Hall in time for the 4 a.m. train. (Comparison with the times shown in the British Almanac for 1838 suggests use of the railway brought a reduction of around an hour and a half only in the schedules.) The 'midnight' mail taking 'a second bag for London' no doubt goes by a coach from the G.J.R. station timed to set out a suitable interval after the arrival there of what is called the '4th GJR' mail. (First class trains on the G.J.R. carried mail to Birmingham from various parts of the north.) Similarly the twice weekly 'Foreign Bag' was added to mail brought southwards by the '1st G.J.R.' The day express, given the same full title used in Birmingham when it began the year before, 'London via Birmingham and Chester to Holyhead', still arrives at 6.45 p.m. (that is 9¾ hours not 10¾ hours from the G.P.O. though) and still departs at 7.38 a.m. (and so is likely to be due to reach the G.P.O. by 6 p.m.). Comparison with the British Almanac for 1838 times at Birmingham (at the G.J.R. station then) suggests that an earlier arrival in London occurred in June as well as the later departure. What is much more important is to notice that it is specified what letters were carried by this mail, from as well as to Birmingham. In the up direction mail for south-east England could be sorted in time to leave the G.P.O. on the mailcoaches at 8 p.m. the same evening - '*letters passing through London*' and the down mail bringing '*foreign letters*' is what shows this statement must have been produced after 20th June. It is furthermore worth emphasising that the statement clarifies that the four up mails on routes 101 and 103 were all running at different hours, as was the case in late 1837 when the British Almanac for 1838 was prepared. It would seem very likely that some Birmingham and other Midland mail was taken to London on some or all of the southbound mailcoaches from Birmingham G.J.R. station with the exception of the Dublin Express, from their start in July 1837, though it was the Holyhead mailcoach (102, 103) which carried the bags for London itself. A last comment on Appendix 67 must be added, that the 'Banbury' is also a London mailcoach (route 67), though it carried no bags the whole way from or to Birmingham.

There is a somewhat perplexing announcement in Aris's Gazette of 17th September 1838, the very day that passengers were at last able to travel on the whole of the L&B.R. The G.P.O. was not yet ready to take advantage of the opportunity. Mailcoach proprietors no doubt hoped to allure those who feared further collapse of Kilsby Tunnel: "*Royal Mail Coaches will continue to run as heretofore until 10th October by order of the Postmaster General, namely at 12.30 pm, 7.30 pm, 8.30 pm, 8.45 pm, 11.30 pm.*" These times must be from Birmingham inns, not the post office. The third and fourth are perhaps the same coach at different inns. Maybe the 'Banbury' is not included and the 7.30 should be a.m. and not p.m. Otherwise there is no time that could be the up day mail. The intention of continuing with the coaches to Denbigh Hall until 10th October was not fulfilled since they finished at the end of September.

Aris's Gazette on 1st October published a statement of arrivals and departures at Birmingham Post Office "*after tomorrow*", which, apart from omitting the messengers, is in similar form to the schedule in Appendix 67 of three or four months earlier. Now the London mails (at the G.P.O. departure of the day mail changed to 10 a.m. on 1st October) take just under seven hours, and most of the other mails are altered to connect with them. The new schedule is:-

Arrival		Departure
2.08 a.m.	Bristol	1.40 p.m.
2.50 a.m.	London	11.00 p.m.
8.10 a.m.	First Liverpool Railway	2.45 p.m.
10.32 a.m.	Chipping Norton	3.00 p.m.
4.30 p.m.	Second Liverpool Railway	11.15 a.m.
4.50 p.m.	London Day Mail	8.00 a.m.
5.02 p.m.	Yarmouth	7.45 a.m.
10.00 p.m.	Leamington	5.00 a.m.
10.20 p.m.	Tamworth	5.00 a.m.
10.30 p.m.	Stourport	5.00 a.m.
10.30 p.m.	Worcester	5.00 a.m.
10.30 p.m.	Holyhead	3.30 a.m.
10.30 p.m.	Sheffield	3.30 a.m.
11.15 p.m.	Third Liverpool Railway	4.30 p.m.

There were further alterations to the day mail soon afterwards, for an Inland Office Order on 9th November announced the departure time from the G.P.O. as 10.30 a.m., added all of Scotland to the mails carried, and listed many more towns in England (such as Northampton, Walsall and Newcastle-upon-Tyne) among a total of fifty-three to receive a day bag from London. The British Almanac for 1839 (MM58/10ff), prepared as usual before the end of the previous year, gives this time "*from the G.P.O. yard*" and arrival of the up daymail there as 2.34 p.m. The night mail "*London to Liverpool per Railway*", taking almost twelve hours for the whole distance, reaches Birmingham station at 113 miles at 2.38 a.m., and the up mail reaches the end of the G.J.R. at 10.58 p.m., and no doubt the G.P.O. by 6 a.m. In the same Almanac a listing of "*Railway Dispatches by which the Mails are conveyed*" includes two from Birmingham to London, at 8.30 a.m. and 11.30 p.m., and in the other direction (that is from Euston Grove) also two, at 11 a.m. and 8.30 p.m. Meanwhile the two routes to Holyhead were continuing.

Fitting the London night mails was a mailcoach from Birmingham at 8.30 a.m. through Shrewsbury to reach the packet port at about 12.30 the next night, the return starting out at 3.35 a.m. Passengers wanting to see some North Wales scenery would choose that route since the other mailcoach, through Conway, though shorter in time and distance, set out from Hartford at 8.30 p.m. and from Holyhead at 4.15 p.m.

Very soon however there was further change, since an Inland Office Order on 15th January 1839 gave advance warning that on the following Monday, 21st, the "*Morning Mails to the North and to Ireland will be dispatched at 9*" instead of 10.30. This was to fit in with arrangements made for a completely new packet service between Liverpool and Kingstown which was to begin on 24th. (Simultaneously the number of packets employed on the Holyhead station was reduced from six to four and for a while London mail ceased to go on that crossing.) The morning mail from London was to reach Liverpool in time for an 8 p.m. ship, and the evening mail for a 9 a.m. one. The return mails from Kingstown by this route at 5.30 p.m. and 11 p.m. both went on from Liverpool at 7.12 p.m., though government despatches and passengers could normally go on a morning train. The timings altered again on 20th June 1839 to give quicker communication between London and much of England with the whole of Ireland. This is confirmed by an Inland Office Order of 13th June and the detail of a lengthy Post Office Notice. (See Edward Watson's *The Royal Mail to Ireland*, (Arnold 1917, chapter 8.)

Payments in Post 6/69 to the horsing contractors and the railway companies show something of the costliness of faster mails. (No accurate estimate can be given for the cost to the G.P.O. of the mailcoaches used and maintained for any particular route, since contracts for this were for a large part of the whole country.) From 21st May to 30th September 1838 the horsing contractors of the four times daily each way mailcoaches between Birmingham and Denbigh Hall (the Holyhead included) were paid for 63 miles a total of £415.16.0. The London and Birmingham Railway Company were paid for the period 22nd May to 1st October, also 132 days, for "*conveying the Mails and the use and conveyance of the Sorting Office between London and Birmingham*", by which was meant the forty-eight miles between Euston Grove and Denbigh Hall, £1597.11.10. As there was only one payment to a Birmingham contractor for conveying mails between the Post Office and the railway station there covering the whole of the period 4th July 1837 to 1st October 1838, £325 to J. Waddell, it is not possible to assess how the frequency of journeys varied during this time. Similar payments in London to Vernon Abbott for conveying the mails to and from the Birmingham Railway run from 22nd May 1838; they are no more helpful in this respect.

Without doubt the great majority of letters in 1837-9 between Birmingham and London (the posttowns on the direct road and track between them also) were carried on the overnight Holyhead via Shrewsbury coaches and the overnight trains which took over parts of that direct route. The alternative possibilities specified in the Appendix 67 statement are likely to be similar at other towns; but as far as the day mail is concerned (the only alternative down as well as up) only for the towns named on the order of 20th June 1838 and after that date, that is until 9th November when many more bags were carried by the day mail. Whether the restrictions (only foreign letters down, only letters through London up) remained after this period is at present uncertain. Evidence on these matters may be gathered by a careful study of mail actually carried.

It is unlikely that what went in the 'second bag for London' can be distinguished because a morning duty stamp was used on incoming mail at the Inland Office even if it arrived at another time of day. What went in the foreign bag on a Tuesday or Friday would normally be stamped on the same day in both Birmingham and London. Some of the letters carried on the day mail in both directions also will show the same date on both a Midland town stamp and a London stamp. It would be helpful to be able to collate a record of such letters, noting where each is from and to as well as the date. Not all primary evidence is in archives!

NORTHAMPTON - PETERBOROUGH

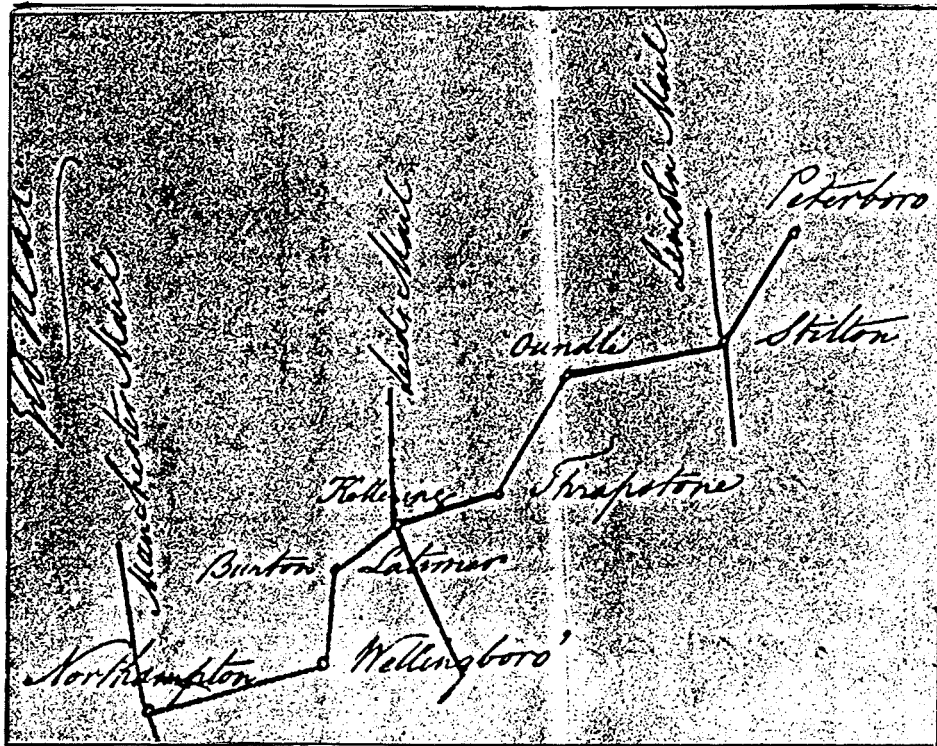
A Mr Mansell M.P. complained in February 1836 about the length of time that it took for letters to pass between Northampton and Peterborough. A letter which left Peterborough at 9.30 p.m. did not arrive in Northampton until the next day at 10 p.m., too late for any delivery. On the other hand, a letter to Kettering arrived there at 6.30 p.m. in time to be delivered.

Mr Neal reported that, in the other direction, the ride to Kettering left Northampton, carrying letters for Peterborough, at 3.30 a.m. and arrived in Kettering at 6.30 a.m. The ride from there to Thrapstone left as soon as the sorting was complete - at 7 a.m. - and reached its destination at 8.15 a.m. The letters remained there until the return of the ride to Stilton at 5 p.m. (This does not agree with MM109/8.), arriving there at 8 p.m. Finally, the mailcoach to Hull took them on to Peterborough the next morning.

The only solution that Mr Neal could suggest was to forward the letters from Northampton and Kettering immediately upon their arrival in Thrapstone by a direct ride from there to Peterborough which would arrive at the latter place at about 11 a.m. The return to Thrapstone would have to be at about 1.30 p.m., leaving a little over two hours for replies to be written.

However, the distance from Thrapstone to Peterborough was twenty-two miles, and consequently a ride between the two towns would cost atleast £176 p.a. As the number of letters involved amounted to only 1768 p.a., yielding a little over £55, it was not possible to remedy the inconvenience about which complaints had been made.

[Ref: post 40/108/1836] [See also MM109/8]



COLESHILL'S POST

Mr Churchill wrote in March 1836 that, in terms of its post, Coleshill was more inconveniently situated than any other place on the road between London and Liverpool in that its London letters could not be answered sooner than those of Liverpool. The answer to a letter sent from London on Monday night was not received until Thursday morning. The cause of this was the mailcoach from London reaching Coleshill at 6.32 a.m. and the one to London returning at 8 a.m. so the letters arriving by the down mail could not be delivered and attended to in time to be answered by the up mail.

Although the correspondence of Coleshill was quite small, Mr Churchill said that a town only 102 miles from London should be able to answer London letters the same day. He proposed that instead of the London bag being sent by the mailcoach from Liverpool at 8 a.m. it should be taken at 4 p.m. by a footpost to the penny post office at Stonebridge, a distance of five miles. From there it would be taken by the messenger to Coventry and then sent on by the mailcoach from Holyhead. Freeing approved this alteration.

[Ref: Post 40/113/1838]

THE MANSFIELD - NEWARK RIDE

Freeling wrote to the Postmaster General in April 1836:

"The Posts in the Centre of the Kingdom comprizing Newark, Nottingham, Derby, Lichfield with the 30 or 40 miles South and North, and also to the eastward, are of the most refined Complexity."

This was a response to a report from Mr Karstadt on the post at Southwell.

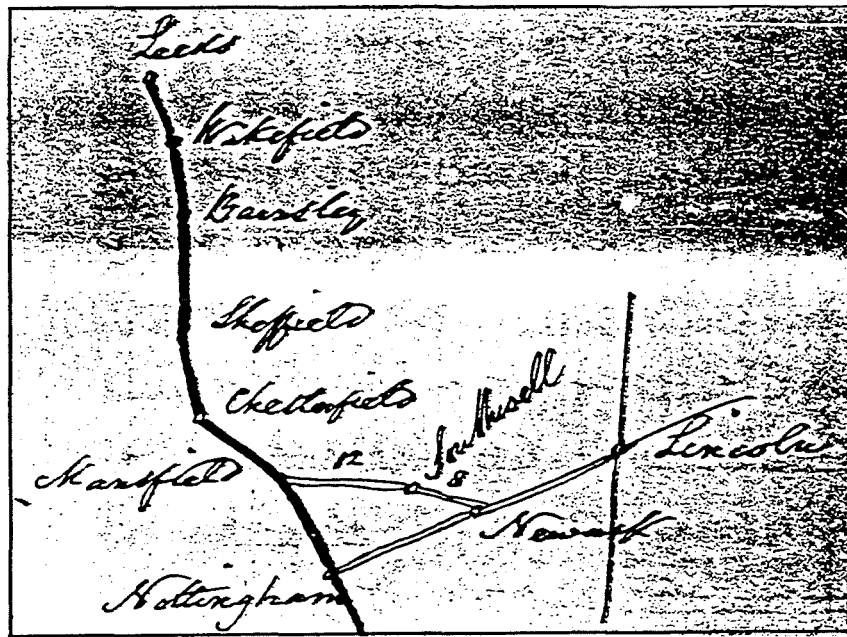
Mr Karstadt had written that a change in the times of the mailcoaches a few years before had made it necessary to establish a ride from Mansfield to Newark to connect with the ride from there to Lincoln in order to bring the letters from the Leeds line in time for distribution throughout the county. [See MM84/20 and 110/11.]. Previously this mail had circulated through Nottingham.

On the establishment of the Mansfield and Newark ride, the ride between Newark and Southwell was combined with it by sending it through Southwell as the times of the ride suited both places. Further changes caused inconvenience at Southwell where the mail from London arrived at 11 a.m. but the up mail left early in the morning.

Mr Karstadt went on to say that an acceleration of the Leeds mailcoach the previous autumn had made it possible to send again the Lincolnshire letters through Nottingham and so dispense with the ride from Mansfield as far as Southwell. A ride could then leave Southwell for Newark at 1 p.m. with the London letters. A drawback to this was that the cross-road correspondence would be delayed overnight at Newark.

A public meeting in the town decided unanimously that the preferred option was the afternoon departure in connection with the London mail.

[Ref: Post 40/180/1836]



THE MANSFIELD - NOTTINGHAM RIDE

In May 1836, Mr Karstadt reported that the introduction of a mailcoach from London to Halifax via Leicester and Sheffield would enable him to dispense with the ride between Nottingham and Loughborough. He had thought that he would be able to do the same with the Mansfield and Nottingham ride which had been established a few years before to carry the London bag from Mansfield, giving the town for the first time the opportunity to reply to London letters the same day [See MM116/7]. This could now be effected better by the new mailcoach, and with a much longer time to reply to letters.

But, since its introduction the ride had become useful for other purposes. It took to Mansfield the letters from Norfolk which arrived at Nottingham at 11 a.m., from Newark and Lincolnshire which arrived at about the same time, and from Birmingham and the West at noon. This correspondence amounted to about £300 p.a. and arriving at Nottingham two to three hours after the departure of the mailcoach to Mansfield would be delayed for a day unless taken forward by the ride. Also, the withdrawal of the Mansfield and Newark ride had turned a considerable amount of correspondence into the Nottingham route. Therefore it was decided to retain the ride.

[Ref: Post 40/233/1836]

THE LONDON-HALIFAX MAILCOACH AND THE OXFORD-NORTHAMPTON RIDE

The ride between Oxford and Northampton has featured in these pages more than once [MM100/26, 103/8, 110/17, 111/12 and 117/12]. The main functions of the eastbound ride were to take bags from Oxford to Towcester for the down Holyhead and Liverpool mailcoaches and to Northampton for the down Manchester and Chester coaches, as well as waiting at Towcester for the bags for Northampton from Birmingham, Coventry, Rugby, Dunchurch and Daventry brought by the up Holyhead mailcoach. In the opposite direction, in addition to taking the Oxford bags from the up Chester and Manchester coaches, the ride took to Towcester the bags from Northampton for the down Holyhead and Liverpool mailcoaches.

In May 1836, Freeling asked the surveyors to look into the possibility of connecting Oxford, Bicester, Towcester, Coventry and Birmingham with the new mailcoach to Halifax by means of the Oxford-Northampton ride. Correspondence between Nottingham and these towns had circulated through Northampton (via the Loughborough ride and the mailcoach from Manchester). That route had been broken by the withdrawal of the Loughborough mailcart with the result that such correspondence was now delayed by nearly a day.

Mr Churchill said that it was possible to link the new mailcoach and the ride by accelerating the latter but Mr Rideout felt that this would not work as the connections of the ride were already tightly timed and to increase the speed would make them likely to fail, particularly in winter.

Mr Rideout pointed out that the snag was that the mailcoach to Halifax arrived at Northampton half-an-hour before the other two and nearly an hour later in the up direction. [In another letter he gave the times as 2.35 a.m. down and 12.30 a.m. up.] Mr Karstadt showed that Mr Rideout could, without much difficulty, connect the ride with the mailcoaches at Northampton were it not for the need to wait at Towcester for the up Holyhead coach as well as the necessity of being back at Towcester in time for the Holyhead and Liverpool coaches. Mr Rideout agreed that were it not for those constraints he could get the ride into Northampton at 1.45 a.m. [in time for the down mail] and put its departure back to 12.45 a.m. [after the arrival of the up mail].

Mr Rideout then suggested that Northampton could be linked with the Birmingham road by a separate ride, possibly at another point such as Weedon. Lord Lichfield approved this ride for which the driver was to be armed; also the receiver at Weedon was paid £5 p.a. for taking charge of the bags and exchanging them with the mailcoach guard. It is possible that this ride was replaced by one to Towcester for it is not listed in Christopher Beaver's article "*Midland Rides in July 1838*" in MM113/8 but there is one to Towcester in addition to that between Oxford and Northampton. I can find no mention of the change in Post 42.

[Refs: Post 40/325/1836, 40/416/1836]

THE BANBURY-BRACKLEY RIDE

In May 1836, a number of the inhabitants of Banbury asked for a post to Brackley so as to improve their communication with the North. Mr Rideout reported that all the towns on that road between London and Birmingham were better served with their northern letters than Banbury. Aylesbury, Tring, Berkhamstead, Hemel Hempstead and Watford all had a daily communication with the Liverpool, Holyhead, Manchester and Chester mailcoaches by a ride to St Albans. Buckingham had a ride to Towcester; Bicester and Brackley had the ride from Oxford to Towcester and Northampton; a ride from Coventry supplied Warwick and Leamington. On the other hand, letters from Banbury remained a day at either Birmingham or Warwick. A count of the letters from Banbury to places on, and north of, the Holyhead road showed that they were not inconsiderable in number.

Mr Rideout first suggested that the delays could be overcome by the provision of a footpost to Brackley. The ride from Northampton to Oxford reached that place at 2.45 a.m. and in the opposite direction at 11 p.m. So a footpost could leave Brackley sufficiently early to reach Banbury at 7.30 a.m. and return at any time to be in Brackley by 10 p.m. Mr Cobb [whose name often comes up whenever Banbury's posts are mentioned] and some of the other bankers objected to this on the grounds of a lack of security.

Although a horsepost would have solved the problem, Mr Rideout was reluctant to recommend one because of its likely cost. However, Lord Lichfield felt that Banbury was entitled to a better communication with the Holyhead road etc and authorised the introduction of the horsepost. I cannot find a minute describing the payment to the contractor.

[Ref: Post 40/240/1836]

LEAMINGTON'S POST

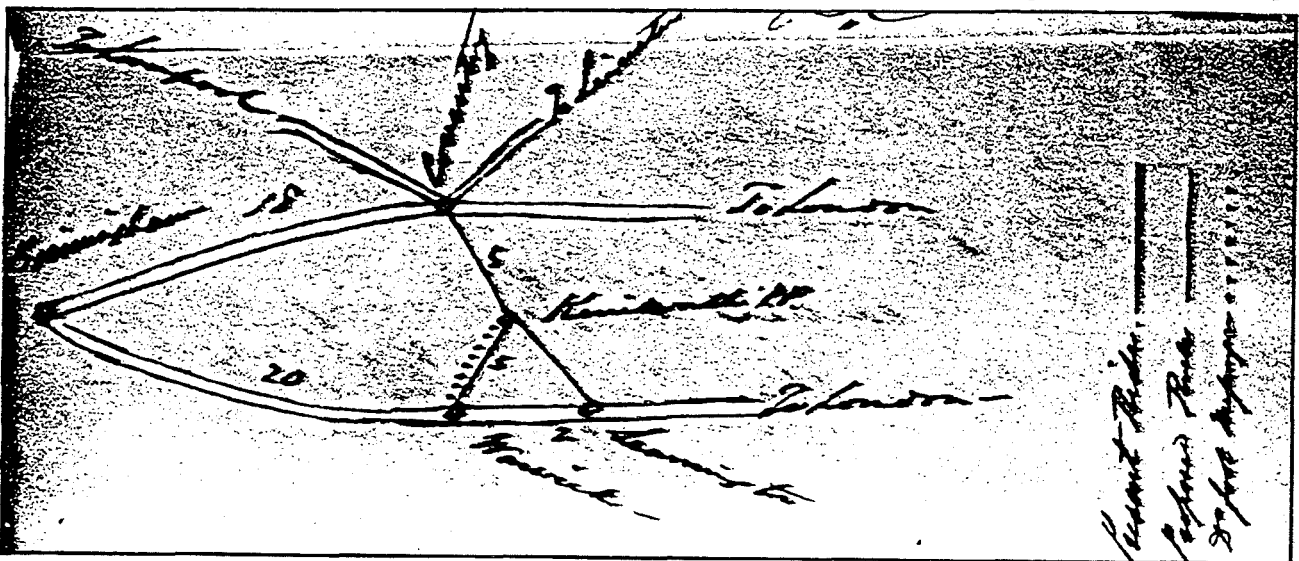
Mr Churchill gave details of an improvement to the post at Leamington in a report of May 1836. Before the changes suggested by Mr Churchill there was a daily horsepost between Coventry, Kenilworth and Warwick, connecting at the latter place with the Birmingham & Leamington mailcoach [See MM116/4]. Consequently the letters from the North, the London and Liverpool road as well as the Stamford and Leicester road did not reach Leamington until 10 a.m. The replies were taken back as far as Warwick by the Birmingham mailcoach at 3 p.m.

The arrival at 10 a.m. was two hours after the London delivery so the letters formed a second delivery at 10.30 a.m., but Leamington was such an extensive town that it was usually 1 p.m. by the time this delivery was completed, hardly giving time for a reply to be sent the same day.

Mr Churchill's proposal was that the ride from Coventry should go from Kenilworth to Leamington instead of Warwick, and put on a foot messenger between Kenilworth and Warwick at a cost of 12/- a week. Thus all the letters mentioned above would be in Leamington in time for the London delivery at 8 a.m. Also, instead of being dispatched at 3 p.m. by the Birmingham coach, they need not leave Leamington until 6 p.m. by the Coventry ride.

It was also suggested that Kenilworth should be a penny post to Leamington as well as Warwick and Coventry.

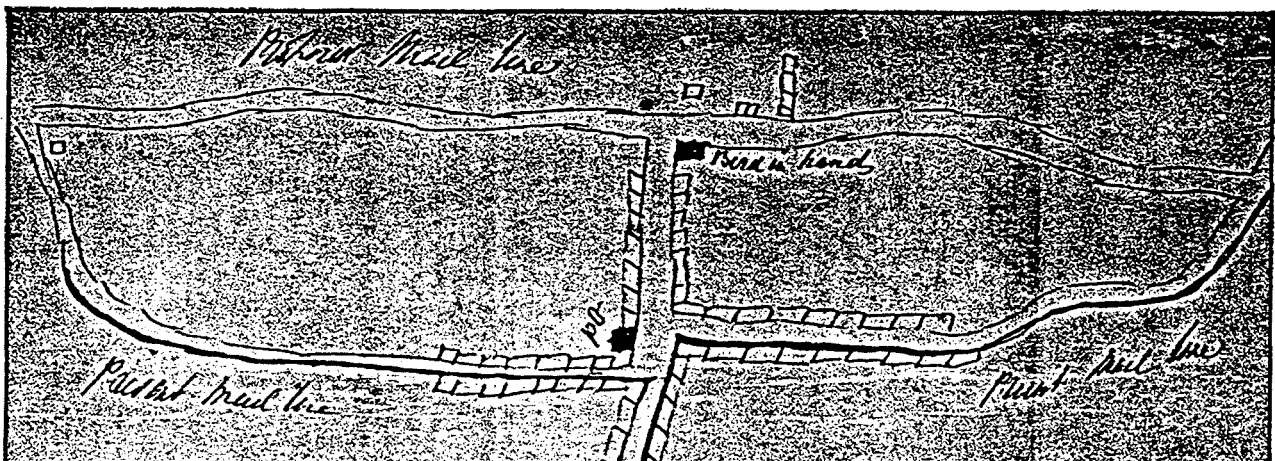
[Ref: Post 40/225/1836]



BURFORD

In May 1836, Mr Louis reported that he had been told that five minutes could be saved by the Gloucester mail-coach if it were to run over a new road avoiding the centre of Burford. This route had the advantage of avoiding two hills and two dangerous corners. When Mr Rideout visited Burford he found that there was an inn, The Bird in Hand, on the new road which was about a quarter of a mile from the post office. As the coach from London would reach The Bird in Hand at 4.46 a.m. and that from Gloucester at 10.10 p.m. he proposed that a receiving office be opened at the inn. The person taking charge of the bags was to receive £6 p.a. The bags were to be carried to and from the post office in the evening and morning rather than in the night which was felt to be insecure.

[Ref: Post 40/267/1836]



THE LONDON-WARWICK-BIRMINGHAM MAILCOACH

Joseph Hearn, a mailcoach contractor of the King's Arms Inn, Snow Hill, (London), wrote in January 1836 to the Postmaster General, suggesting that the mailcoach to Warwick and Birmingham could be accelerated. He believed that it was probably the slowest mailcoach in the country when compared with others covering a similar distance. Mr Hearn proposed that the acceleration could be achieved by doing away with three stops said to be necessary for Post Office business - at Warwick (15 minutes), Leamington (5 minutes) and Banbury (10 minutes). Also, as the quality of the roads had improved it should be possible to increase the speed at which the coach travelled.

Freeling gave some details about the coach: distance from London to Birmingham by Warwick 119 miles 4 furlongs; time allowed 13 hours 39 minutes; time of arrival (in Birmingham) 9.39 a.m. First of all, Freeling referred the matter to Mr Louis who met Mr Hearn to discuss the various points raised. The only comments that he made were that the stops at Banbury and Warwick were objectionable to passengers, and twenty miles, the distance from Warwick to Birmingham, was a long way to be without any posttown. He finished by saying that Mr Churchill should be consulted.

Mr Churchill said that for any advantage to be gained the coach would have to arrive in Birmingham by 7.30 a.m. so as to be in time for the branch mails and the first delivery. Nevertheless, he said that the stop at Banbury was for the sorting of the Southam letters and the ten minutes could be saved by making Southam a posttown. The five minutes at Leamington was for coach business and not needed at the post office. The stop at Warwick, which was for the purpose of sorting the letters for the penny posts at Knowle and Solihull, could be reduced to five minutes by making Birmingham open vouchers with all the towns up the road. (The question of making either Knowle or Solihull a posttown arose but the cost was considered to be too great.) Thus a total of twenty-five minutes could be saved which along with an acceleration of the coach would allow an arrival in Birmingham at 8.30 a.m. which would be "*more satisfactory and convenient to Passengers and improve the Character of the Mail.*"

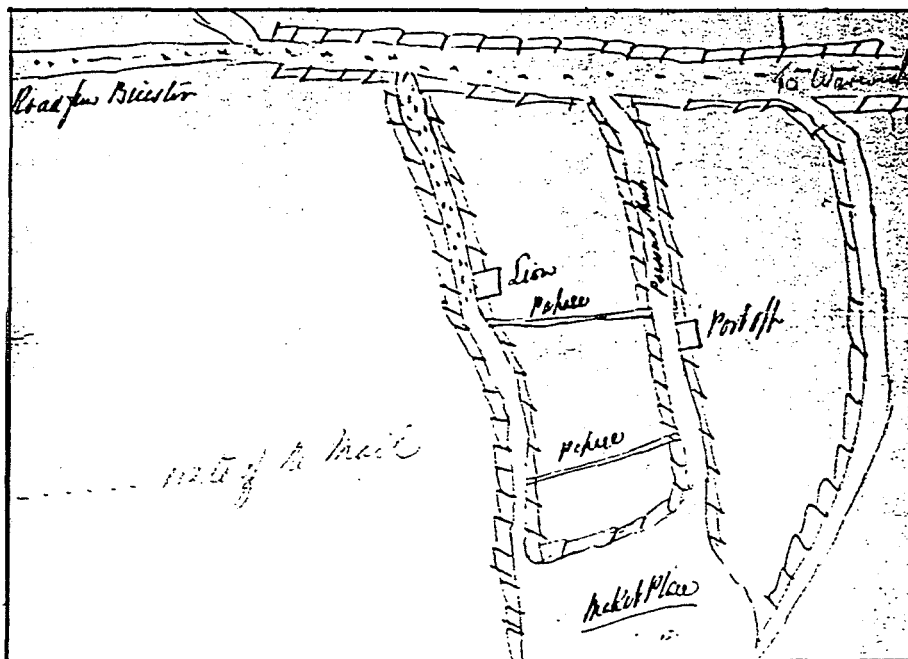
[Ref: Post 40/87/1836]

BANBURY

In October 1836, a Mr Cobb, a banker in Banbury, wrote expressing concern at the fact that since the withdrawal of the stop of the mailcoach in that town the bag was not always in the care of the guard. He asked that the up mail should go down Parsons Street to the post office, take up and leave the bags, then go on through the Market Place to the White Lion where the horses were changed. The down coach should take the opposite route.

Mr Rideout reported that as the mailcoach contractor lived at the White Lion the coach did deviate from the direct route through the town, going from the Horse Fair down the High Street to the White Lion and returned by the same route. The arrivals in Banbury were at 11.26 p.m. and 3.30 a.m. At 11.26 p.m., the postmaster had to take the bags to and from the White Lion. At 3.30 a.m., a watchman who had long been an occasional letter carrier had made the exchange with the guard. It was this to which Mr Cobb and other bankers objected. Although Mr Cobb's suggestion would have added only two or three minutes to the journey, Mr Rideout would not sanction it. Instead, he proposed a receiving house, nearly opposite the post office, and in the hands of a Mr Cottam who received £10 p.a. The bags were to be taken from the post office to Mr Cottam's at 10.30 p.m. and brought back at 7 a.m.

[Ref: Post 40/624/1836]



SPEEDING THE MAILS

The matter came up in the latter part of 1836 of avoiding the delays to the mailcoaches caused by their having to go out of their way to call at the post office in a number towns, or by the guard having to go between the inn where the horses were changed and the post office. Mr Louis wrote in a letter to Colonel Maberly that the London - Birmingham mailcoach should not go round by the post office at Solihull as that made the distance nearly a quarter of a mile longer. At Dudley [on a different mailcoach route] the office was so far out of the road that instead of the guard being available for helping to get the coach off, his time was wholly occupied in going to the office. While at Southam, the office was situated so far out of the way that it took the guard four to five minutes to go to and from the office. This was contradicted by the postmaster of Southam who said that the inn was no more than 140 yards from his door. Mr Louis went on:

"Some time since a Circular was sent to the Surveyors to request their assistance in directing Post Masters to use every exertion to aid the Guards in getting the Mail Coaches through the Towns; - during the night this cannot be expected, but at all reasonable hours I think it might be done at little or no additional expense, for if the houses of the respective deputies are not in the direct line of road it is only fair to compel them to do all they can to remedy the inconvenience arising from the situation..."

"In Mr Rideout's [District] the Inspector suggests that at Stourbridge the Postmaster should be requested to hand up and receive the Bags as the Mail passes which it does at 10 in the morning and 5 in the afternoon - at Kidderminster he suggests that the Letter Carrier should meet the Mail Coach, the office not being on the direct line, at the most convenient point which it passes to hand up and receive the Bags. It goes through this Town at a quarter before 11 in the morning and at a quarter past 4 in the afternoon.

"I cannot too forcibly impress upon you the difficulty Mail Coaches have in getting through the Country compared with well appointed Stage Coaches, to say nothing of the difference in the hours. The Guards on the latter go throughout the whole journey, have charge of the way bill, pack the parcels they have to deliver, free the coachman from all trouble or responsibility except the attention to their horses. On Mail Coaches the Guards have nothing to do with the Way Bills or parcels, these are in the charge of the Mail Coachmen who, except the first on the journey, do not know how the parcels are arranged, and the Guards instead of being able to assist in changing the Horses are in many cases obliged to go a considerable distance to the Post Offices, thereby retarding instead of facilitating the dispatch..."

Mr Churchill stated at Dudley and Solihull time would be saved by the letter carriers meeting the coaches at the inns and as they would have to do this morning and evening he recommended they each receive £5 p.a. for the extra duty. However, it was a different matter at Southam, for, as he wrote:

"The Mail Coach passes very near the door of the Post Office, and it should appear from the enclosed letter from the Deputy there that the Guard can and does leave the coach, exchange Bags at the Post Office, and join it again before the Horses are put to. It would therefore be desirable to continue that practice if possible, from the difficulties that seem to present themselves to any arrangement for sending the Bags by the Letter Carrier. The up Mail Coach does not pass thro' Southam until after 10 at night, and the one down before 5 in the morning. The Letter Carrier has left the office and gone to Bed long before the arrival of the up Mail. The Postmaster therefore is the only Person who could meet the Mail Coach at the Inn either Night or Morning and as he is one of the most wealthy and respectable men in Southam it cannot be expected that he would leave his House at such unseasonable hours to meet the Mail Coach and particularly as its arrival is uncertain and that he would be obliged to wait in the Street at the Inn door at 5 in the morning until the mail arrived. Under these circumstances therefore you will probably think that it is not necessary to impose so unpleasant a duty upon the Postmaster himself, and as no time has been lost at Southam the present arrangement may perhaps be allowed to continue."

FIRST DAY OF USE

I am indebted to Mr de Rousset-Hall for sending a copy of the handstamp used on the day of opening of the new sub-office in Western Avenue, Market Harborough. I wonder if it still in use.



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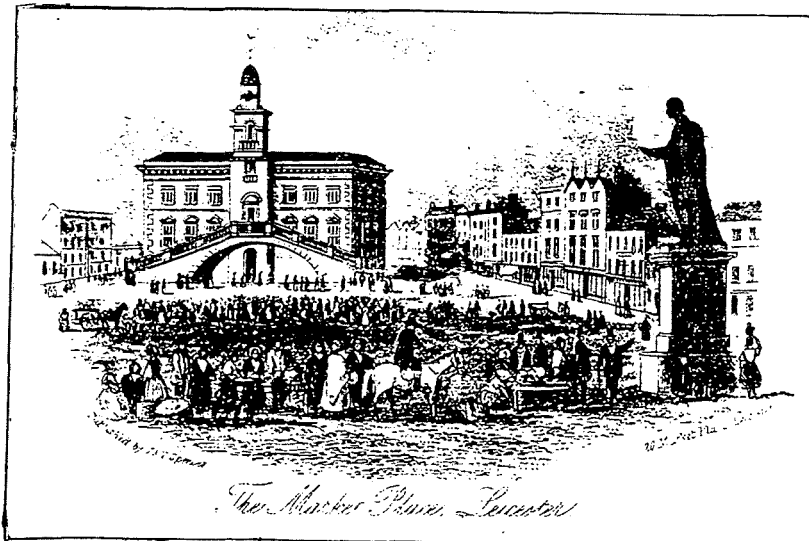
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VICTORIAN ILLUSTRATED NOTEPAPER

Shown below are the illustrations from some pieces of notepaper that I showed at the January meeting. Each had a different publisher.



THE NEXT MIDLAND MAIL

It is hoped that this will appear by mid-June provided that some articles are sent to:

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

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