

Chairman:

Elizabeth Lewis
27 Rathbone Road
Smethwick. Warley
West Midlands B67 5JG
Phone 021-429-1222

Treasurer:

Peter Baxter
72 Midhurst Road
Kings Norton
Birmingham B30 3RA

Secretary:

Richard Farman
124 Henhurst Hill
Burton on Trent
Staffs DE13 9SY
Phone 0283-66515

Number 26, August 1982

The Erasmic Society ?

The Great Britain Postal History Group of the Postal History Society is no more. At the last count, it claimed more than 100 members with perhaps three or four times that number as joint members of the Postal History Society and the GB Group. Yet a mere handful of members attended its London meetings and its award-winning magazine was written and produced virtually single handed. With interest in British postal history greater than ever, it seems a perverse happening.

Inevitably, some will look for an explanation. Did the GB Group attempt to cover too broad an area of interest? Local postal history societies apparently thrive in Yorkshire, Kent, Derbyshire and, now, Shropshire to quote only the first few that come to mind. Is it not true that the mainstream of postal history collection and study embraces all aspects of the subject but as applied to a relatively small geographical area - perhaps a town or a county.

There are said to be dangers in narrow philatelic specialisation and in societies set up to promote it. Are there similar pitfalls awaiting the local postal history society? Without a wider perspective, local postal history cannot satisfactorily be set in its national context and yet regional similarities surely exceed regional differences in postal matters. Perhaps, with the benefit of hindsight, the GB Postal History Group would have fared better as a co-ordinator of the increasingly active local societies.

The Midland (GB) Postal History Society pursues a middle course. While

taking a particular interest in the postal history of the midland counties (and even these are loosely defined), the subjects of its displays and competition entries indicate a membership with a wide range of interests. Notwithstanding this and perhaps because of it, the membership - and especially the active membership - is too small for comfort and urgently needs to be increased. There must be real fears that the proliferation of county societies makes this task harder rather than easier. In the long run one can hope that the virtues of the 'Midland's' broader scope will be more widely recognized and the Society's interests likened to those notable Erasmic Shaving Soap adverts of yesteryear - not too little, not too much but just right !

THE NEW SEASON

The first meeting of the new season will be on Saturday 18th September at Dr Johnson House, Birmingham, starting at 2.00pm. It will be preceded by a committee meeting. Dr Johnson house is in Bull Street, next door to Lewis' bakery shop, and only a few minutes from New Street Station. Members are asked to consult the indicator on the ground floor to find the room number allocated to the meeting. There is car parking at the old Snow Hill station or at the Royal Angus Hotel, St Chad's Circus.

The subject of the first meeting is 'Undated Circular Marks'. Members are asked to bring examples from ANY Midland county or even records of known examples including strikes in the Post Office Archives. It will add to the interest if contributors are able to display selected examples and say a few words about them or the villages from which they originate. (Even undated straight line marks of the same period may be given a hearing !)

Interest in these marks is at a high level and new ones are coming to light every year. Please help to establish a unique record of Midland examples.

The second meeting will be on Saturday 30th October at 2.00pm, also in Birmingham, but this time at the Midland Institute, St Margaret Street, near the Birmingham City Library. This meeting has been arranged to coincide with the Birmingham Society's Fair at which a number of dealers will be present.

If that attraction were not enough, the Society is particularly fortunate to have as its guest speaker Michael Young who is well known in postal history circles and also editor of the Worcs section of the British County Catalogue of Postal History. His display will be in two parts: the first part 'Worcester' and the second 'Worcestershire'. Members can be

assured of a memorable afternoon and, as there will not be another Bulletin before the second meeting, you are asked to make a careful note of the date. This would seem to be an ideal meeting to bring along a potential new member.

The Rest of the Season's Programme

The remaining meetings of the season will be described in greater detail in the Bulletins preceding them but, to whet your appetite, the programme is as follows:

4th December 1982 at the Bass Museum, Burton-on-Trent, a special Guest Speaker (who may or may not be masked and cloaked).

22nd January 1983 at Dr Johnson House, Birmingham, a display by Martin Willcocks which promises to be a highlight of this or any other season.

19th February 1983 at Dr Johnson House, the Annual Competition.

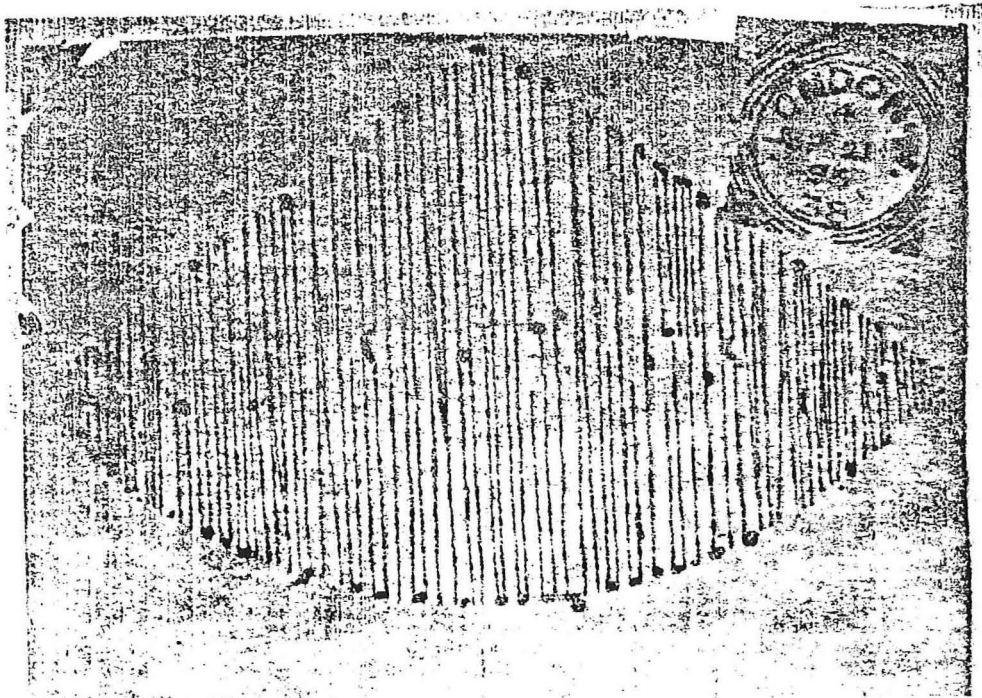
12th March 1983 at Dr Johnson House, our only Nine Sheet Display of the new season.

16th April 1983 at Dr Johnson House, the Annual General Meeting and Auction.

Committee Meetings are planned to precede the meetings on 22nd January and 16th April.

Trouble with your eyes ?

In 1895, this envelope was sent to Miss J.M.Holland, Albion House, Alcester, Warwickshire and successfully delivered ! (Courtesy of PO Archive).



SAVED FROM THE FLAMES

by Steve Stobbs

In the early 1930s, the authorities of the town of Shrewsbury waged a campaign to persuade all householders, shopkeepers and office staff to clear out the unwanted papers and rubbish from their property and particularly from their attics. Members of the fire brigade visited everyone, especially those in the old properties in the centre of the town, and arrangements were made by the salvage department for the collection of such material and for its burning on the town's official tips under proper supervision. As can well be imagined, the amount destroyed was colossal and it was rumoured that one or two individuals were making a small fortune collecting the Penny Blacks and Twopenny Blues from the fringes of the fires.

The original document described below was given to my father, having been rescued from the fires and then found to have no stamps thereon. It reads:

"To the Right Worshipful the Mayor of the Borough of Shrewsbury
We the undersigned request you will immediately convene
a meeting of the inhabitants of the said Borough to
consider the propriety of presenting petitions to the
Houses of Parliament praying that immediate effect be given
to the uniform system of Penny Post as proposed by
Mr Rowland Hill."

(Signatures of almost
all the leading professional
and business people of the
town)

On the reverse appears:-

"In pursuance of the above requisition I hereby convene a public
meeting of the inhabitants of the Town to be held in the Guildhall
on Thursday the 11th Day of July instant at twelve o'clock at noon.

(signed) Rich. Ford

9th July 1839

Mayor "

While my father never received any of the Penny Blacks, I feel that this original document is of far greater value "postal history-wise" than any stamped cover !!

THE SIDEWAYS DUPLEX CANCELLATION AND ITS USE IN THE 1860s

Nearly everyone will be familiar with Traill and Holland's excellent little book "The Sideways Duplex Cancellations of England and Wales" published by Messrs R.C.Alcock in 1975. In the introduction to that book, the authors make the point that, together with the 'spoons', the sideways duplex marks formed a major experiment in processing increased quantities of mail. Why it was thought desirable to place the lettering of the stamp so that it had to be read sideways is a matter of some speculation and no report appears to have survived which discusses the result of the trial or, indeed, when it was terminated. The evidence suggests that the conventional upright duplex evolved from the earlier designs and that it became the preferred double cancellation for several decades.

The issue of conventional upright duplex stamps began early in 1858 and proceeded at a rapid pace. It might be expected that a town receiving a conventional duplex stamp would immediately retire its sideways duplex. Indeed, a few years earlier, a note to postmasters said "If you have been previously supplied with a stamp, you will return the old one to me immediately". Some towns did withdraw their sideways duplex. Norwich, for example, received its first conventional duplex stamp in March 1858 and there is no record of a strike of a Norwich sideways duplex thereafter. But, at the other extreme, the Folkestone sideways duplex has been recorded for December 1879 and Honiton for February 1870. An analysis of the recorded dates of useage in Traill and Holland's book suggests that about 40% of the 160 or so towns outside London issued with a sideways duplex continued to use them into the 1860s.

Post Office Archives record, with one or two omissions, the issue of each sideways duplex stamp. Many towns had only one stamp but some of the larger cities had ten or more. Until August 1856, the records generally indicate whether an issued stamp was of new manufacture or a re-cut of an existing stamp. After that date, no distinction is made. The last town to be issued with its first or only sideways duplex was Wrexham on 25 January 1858 and the last record of an issue of any kind was to Bath in 1870.

Two questions come to mind that you might consider in relation to your area of interest. The first concerns the issue of new stamps. Were any NEW sideways duplex stamps issued after February 1858? By that time, upright duplex stamps were preferred and there would have been no reason to

manufacture stamps to an outmoded design. However, as sideways duplex stamps were expensive items of equipment and too valuable to discard willy-nilly, there may have been some justification for having at least a proportion of the stamps re-cut.

This leads directly to a second question. If re-cut sideways duplex stamps were being issued in the 1860s, what was the requirement for them? There seems little doubt that the spoon and sideways duplex experiment had been completed and evidence suggests that 40% of towns never struck a sideways duplex after 1858. Perhaps the list of the earliest and latest dates of known use in Traill and Holland's book misleads us into thinking of a more-or-less continuous period of use between those dates. Is it much more likely that there was consistent use of a sideways duplex only up to the date of issue of a conventional upright duplex in 1858 or 1859 and, thereafter, sporadic and possibly rare useage of the mark in connection with some unusual event or situation?

There is evidence to show that skeleton stamps were used in the 1840s when a CDS was away being re-cut. Perhaps sideways duplex stamps were retained principally as an emergency replacement stamp in case the conventio duplex was damaged. However, they may have also been used when extra mail had to be cancelled or a spare hand was available at the end of a delivery round to cancel further mail before he was permitted to go home. The precise circumstances may never be known but the theory of limited reserve use could be tested by listing all known dates of a particular sideways duplex mark.

The writer, with help from a member of Dudley P.S., has done just that for a midland town and the results support the theory. Whereas there was ample evidence of constant use of the stamp from mid-1856 until early 1858, not one strike was found between the date of issue of the conventional duplex in May 1858 and a sudden reappearance of the mark in August 1862. Then, over the following three months, several strikes were found, the last in November 1862. An analysis of about 20 examples can hardly be considered conclusive but a wider investigation might be revealing. If you can add to the story, please tell the Bulletin what you find.

The subscription for the 1982/83 season is unchanged at £2-50.

If you haven't paid, please do.....quickly !

It's so cheap, you might think of enrolling a new member and paying his first year's sub

MICHAEL JACKSON (PHILATELISTS) LTD.

STANDS 11-12 · LONDON INTERNATIONAL STAMP CENTRE
27 KING STREET · LONDON WC2E 8JD

BANKERS: NATIONAL WESTMINSTER BANK LTD. 38 STRAND LONDON

PTS

TELEPHONE: 01-836 2748

*Please give us your 'wants lists' for any aspects of
postal history collections*

We would like to purchase high quality county material (especially pre 1750); instructional markings pre 1940; unusual postal history e.g. documents relating to the P.O., or postal notices; railway material; post offices on post cards etc. This request covers both the MIDLANDS area and the rest of the British Isles. We also buy interesting overseas postal history, especially maritime items.

Please ring or write first.

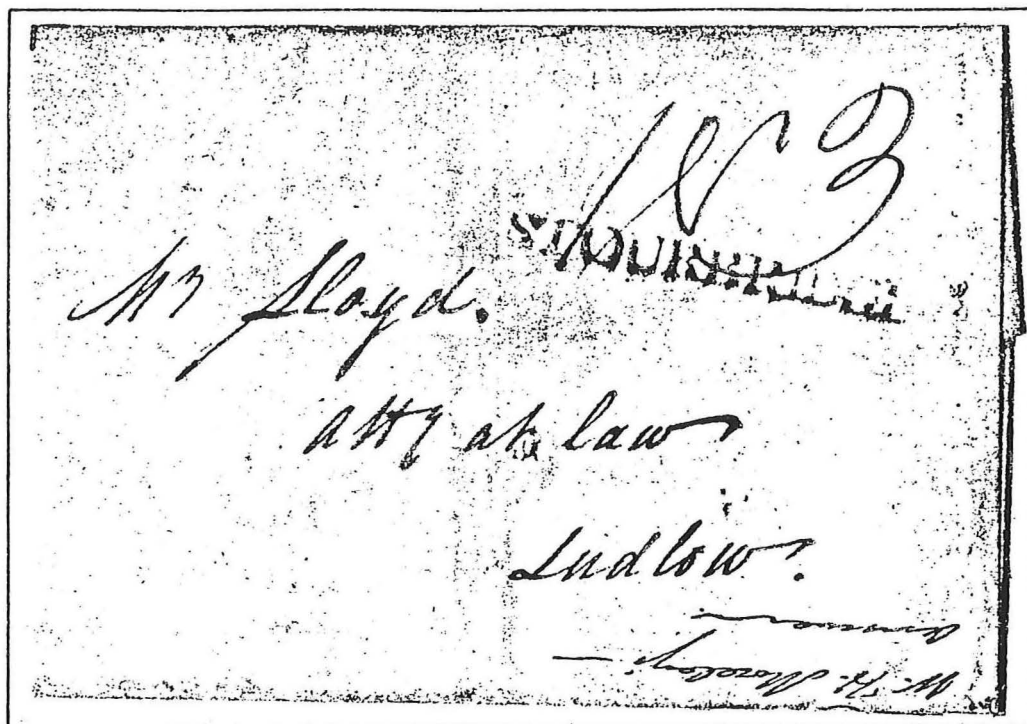
AN INN IN THE HIGH STREET - Section 9

The Final Chapter - William Savage, Stourbridge postmaster and keeper of the Talbot Inn, died in 1781 leaving his widow Mary with a substantial mortgage debt.

Mary Savage inherited the financial problems of the Talbot and the duties of postmaster. She begged Daniel Clarke to release her from the mortgaged inn but she had to continue the struggle until 1784 when, at last, the inn was advertised for sale. A claim in the advertisement that it stood upon the "Great North Road to Bath and Bristol and from North Wales to London" suggests that estate agents' extravagances have changed little over the years.

The new owner, John Wiley, came from a coffee house in Bristol but he does not figure in our story. In fact, Mary Savage continued as postmistress until 1810 and it is a coincidence that not only was she succeeded by another Mary, Mary Oliver, but both served in the post for almost 30 years.

We know where Mary Oliver had her office in the High Street because, when sold in 1840, it was already known as The Old Post Office. What has not yet been discovered is where Mary Savage lived and worked between 1785 and 1810. The post office never returned to the Talbot Inn again.



A Stourbridge letter of 1800 from Mr Brettell
- the man who administered the Talbot sale in 1784.

The year 1985 will be of some significance in Stourbridge and, happily, the Head Postmaster has agreed that the occasion will not pass unregarded.

In 1885 the 'new' main post office was opened.

In 1785 the link between the post office and the Talbot ended.

In 1685 the first references to a Stourbridge post office appear. The town celebrated the centenary of its fine railway station by demolishing it. The Head Postmaster understands that we want no repetition of that !

Books that may interest you - 2.

HOBBS John E.O. 'Postmarks of Worthing, 1806-1981'. £2-50 + 20p p & p from the above Sea Lodge, 183 Brighton Rd, Worthing. Published by the Worthing Society of Postal Historians in 1981. Illustrated.

IPM Catalogue of Picture Postcards. £2-50 from IPM Ltd, The Coach House, Henfold Lane, South Holmwood, Dorking, Surrey. 112 pages, fully illustrated

KANE William. 'Postal Markings of Dublin, 1840-1922' £1-50 from PO Box 109 Dublin, Irish Republic. Published June 1981, 28 pages, 221 illustrated marks.

KIRK R. 'British Maritime Postal History - Volume 1; P&O Bombay & Australia Lines 1852-1914'. Published by PHEAS for Postal History International (Proud Bailey) 1980. £16-00.

26/9

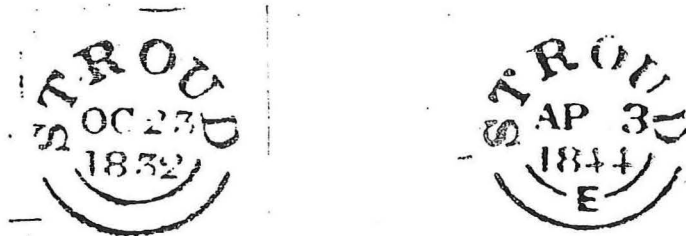
A STRANGE CDS

by

Jonathan Calladine

Hon Sec Marlborough College P.S.

Early in 1844, fashion-conscious post office authorities decided that all new office stamps should have sans-serif lettering. Only recut stamps, it seems, were allowed to leave London without the new look. Stroud, a Gloucestershire post town, had been issued with a seriffed CDS on 27th October 1832 but in 1844 it was returned for recutting. When it was re-issued on 3rd April 1844, a code letter had been added, possibly at Stroud's request. Since this was after the general switch to sans-serif lettering, the recut stamp appeared with 'STROUD' in seriffed letters and the code letter sans-serif.



In October 1848, the CDS was again returned for recutting. The result was the monster shown below. Someone had carved off the serifs from the original stamp leaving a most odd CDS.



The story has a happy ending. The postmaster of Stroud was clearly shocked by the 'new' stamp and demanded a replacement. A standard sans-serif CDS was sent to him on 6th December 1848.



Do any other Midland towns have a similarly strange mark ?

A VISIT TO POST OFFICE ARCHIVES -. PART 3

No aspect of postal history is more rewarding than research into local postmasters. In the early years of an office, there is a good chance that the postmaster was an innkeeper since the inn provided a change of horse for the postboy. By the 19th century, the incumbent may be surprisingly well-connected. The names of 19th century postmasters are included in the various commercial directories of the period and these can be found in many Midland libraries. But, to find the name of a 17th or 18th century postmaster a day in Post Office Archives is likely to be the only satisfactory solution.

In the Archives are a fascinating series of weighty volumes under the Archive reference Post 3. These are the annual accounts of the Post Office from 1678 to 1850 and include the Accountant General's record of receipts and payments made by the Receiver General including salaries to 'Deputy Postmasters' (ie local postmasters and postmistresses). Fortunately the records include not only the name of the post office but also the name of its postmaster at the time of the account.

The early volumes are not always easy to read and, at first sight, the offices appear to be listed in no obvious order. Closer examination will confirm that the contents of Volumes 1 to 15 are arranged according to the six great post roads. The snag is that the roads are not identified and the offices associated with one road are followed by those of a different road without a break in the text. Just when an occasional reference to the name of a road is made, the whole arrangement changes. The 'six road system' is replaced after Volume 17 by nine "Divisions" which, although consistent between volumes, do not appear to be based on geographical grouping. If this has not already deterred you, you will find that the earliest volumes contain the following accounts:

Volume 1	1678 (July) - 1679 (July)
Volume 2	Missing
Volume 3	1685 (Jan) - 1700 (March)
Volume 4	1700 (April) - 1710 (March)

and thereafter ten annual accounts appear in each volume.

Volume 1, unlike any other, begins with an alphabetical index of postmasters. It includes, for example:

Under 'C'	Crank, Edward of Birmingham	Page 134
Under 'L'	Lax, John of Coventry	Page 135

An extract from page 134, Edward Crank's monthly account, is given at the top of the next page.

P134

Edward Crank of Birmingham is

1658

Coltho Ballant of his Acc^o ending the 30 June - - -Aug^t 5 54 Coltho Inland office for letters in Aug^t July - - -Sept 4 58 Coltho Inland office for letters in Aug^t - - -

Oct 2 64 Coltho Inland office for letters in Sept - - -

Coltho Inland office for his great paym^t due the 29 Sept

Volume 3 follows a quite different format. The entries are now listed, year by year, according to the post roads in the manner illustrated below.

Colton of Stafford	- - - - -	1. 13.
Lathbone of Lichfield	- - - - -	1. 00
Field of Colshill	- - - - -	00. 13
Crank of Birmingham	- - - - -	36. 11
Shrewsbury of Shrewsbury	- - - - -	00. 9
Wolch of Wolch	- - - - -	81. 17
Bridgman of Bridgman	- - - - -	18. 16
Coventry of Coventry	- - - - -	3. 1
Derby of Derby	- - - - -	95. 13
Walsall of Walsall	- - - - -	100. 9

This is an extract from 1685 and includes, inter alia, the postmasters of Colshill, Birmingham, Shrewsbury and Coventry. Although no first names are shown here, they do appear under most years and we find, for example, Joyce Crank as postmistress of Birmingham; Edward's widow perhaps? Later in the volume, each line is given a serial number and, while this is initially inconsistent from year to year, it becomes of considerable help in later volumes.

When, after Volume 17, the offices are arranged into nine Divisions, it is a simple matter to find a particular office. There is much Midland interest in Division 4 (eg Birmingham, Bromsgrove, Shifnal and Walsall) but Coventry and Lichfield are in Division 5 and Derby and Ashbourne in Division 6. An extract from Division 5 of 1806 is illustrated.

Fifth Division

		Salaries	Bye letter Office Salaries	Riding work
Coleman	Atterstone	24	"	88 5
Stacken	Baldock	12	"	"
Blackbrook	Bangor	34 16 8	24	48 1

While it has been our aim to discover the identity of the postmasters, it will be apparent that the accounts provide other useful information. The postmasters' salaries are listed, of course, and, from the receipts, one might hazard a guess at the volume of mail handled. Payment for additional riding work is included and the date of its introduction may suggest an expansion of local deliveries. There is too much to photo-copy economically so a notebook and several sharpened pencils are recommended.

In the penultimate part of this short series, inland mail routes and local delivery services will be examined. It should appear in the Bulletin early next year.

(All the illustrations in this series are reproduced by courtesy of Post Office Archives.)

+ + + + + + + + + + + + + + +

Future Bulletins

The next edition of the Bulletin will appear on 22nd November and will contain reports of the first two meetings of the new season. Subsequent editions are planned for 11th January, 1st March and 9th May 1983.

Contributions from members and friends of the society, however brief, will be welcomed with open arms and should be sent to:

John Calladine,
Dunley House,
Cranham.
Gloucester GL4 8HQ