



MIDLAND MAIL

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



Chairman:
Elizabeth Lewis

Treasurer:
Trevor Clewley

Secretary:
Richard Farman

NUMBER 54, MARCH 1988

Again there is no room in this edition for the editor to spread his wings, so it is a case on straight on with the real business.

THE ANNUAL AUCTION

A final reminder that details of lots for the next auction can be accepted by Eric and Elizabeth Lewis within the next week. This early deadline is to give sufficient time for the auction catalogue to be produced and received by our overseas members.

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

The next meeting will be on 19th. March at Dr. Johnson House, Birmingham beginning at 2 p.m. when our annual competitions will be held. These are for nine sheet entries of:

- (a) predominantly pre-1840 material,
- (b) predominantly post-1840 material,
- (c) post-1938 material. This is being held on a trial basis.

The final meeting of our season will be the A.G.M. and Auction on 23rd. April beginning at 2 p.m., again at Dr. Johnson House. It will be preceded by a committee meeting beginning at 1 p.m.

On 7th. May there will be a joint meeting with the Shropshire Postal History Society when the speaker will be Rev. de Lacy-Spencer who will give a display entitled 'Mails on the Rails - Midlands to Wales'. There will be a meeting fee of £1, and lunch must be booked in advance. For details please contact Mrs. S. Hart, Westhope, Lyth Bank, Shrewsbury SY3 0BE

NEW MEMBERS

The Society extends a cordial welcome to Mr. V.S.B. Patel of Leicester, Mr. O. de Rousset-Hall of Market Harborough and David Cornelius.

SHORT LETTERS

With regard to the piece in MM52/13, further examination of the document shows that it definitely does not date from 1811. It could be an update of the 1811 circular produced in 1818 or 1823. I favour the latter which would fit in with other evidence.

THE JANUARY MEETING

The Society broke new ground at the January meeting which was held at P.O. Archives. On our arrival (Your Editor had not been there all night as some members claimed; it was the one occasion when I had the shortest journey.) we were treated to refreshments. Then, when we had all gathered we were shown behind the scenes by Jean Farrugia and her colleagues. This gave us an idea of the vast range of material available, and even those well acquainted with the Archives learned a great deal. Then it was time for individual research. Nottingham Rural Posts, the dates of appointment of the first postmaster of Hinckley and Nuneaton being made a post-town along with studies of the Steel and Rubber Impression Books were just a small part of the activity. It was difficult to know whether it was the staff or the photocopier which was working the harder. Trivialities such as food appeared to be forgotten in the quest for knowledge. All too soon it was time for Elizabeth to thank Jean and her staff for their hospitality and the tremendous privilege that they had extended to us. The Editor now awaits a flood of articles from the day's research.

THE FEBRUARY MEETING

Some twenty members and guests assembled at Worcester on 20th. February. Peter Sharpe started the afternoon's entertainment with a display of Parcel Post Labels from the Leamington area. He was followed by Roger Broomfield who concentrated on the period prior to 1883; of particular note was a letter of 1804 weighing 3 ounces and charged at 8/-. He concluded with a Parcel Post Label from The Trumpet. Steph Stobbs showed us labels from Shrewsbury, including an example of the first type "Parcels Post", but he finished with one from Bow Street (under Machynlleth). (Anyone who knows of a label for Bow Street under Shrewsbury please send it to Steph forthwith.) Railway related material provided the bulk of Derek Smeathers's nine sheets. We saw L.N.W.R. parcel stamps, labels from Rushden and its sub-offices which were R.S.O.s, and a voucher from the Midland Railway for carrying a dog as a parcel. Chris Beaver, after a false start with some Staffordshire labels, also produced some railway material. This included a waybill for miscellaneous traffic carried by passenger train and a piece of parcel wrapping, with an O.H.M.S. label sent by B.R. passenger train and stamped PASSENGER TRAIN. A display, in which each label still carried the adhesives, of all the parcel post rates from 1886 to 1918 was John Calladine's contribution. This was followed by a display by Mike Young of a variety of material including a 1841 mailcoach waybill for carriage of a parcel, a form requesting special delivery of letters and parcels and various labels from Worcestershire, one of which carried the COACH/ROAD BORNE mark. Then John Soer produced parcel postmarks from a number of towns. This was followed by Parcel Post Labels from the Lichfield area shown by Ted Coles. Eric Lewis treated us to a show of items, largely pre-1883. We saw a carrier's bill, parcel receipts from 1823 and 1826, an advert for the Brighton Royal Blue Vans and a ruler showing the 1883 parcel rates. Notable in Elizabeth's nine sheets were a first type "Parcels Post" label used at Ross in August 1883, and two examples of Parcel Post Labels produced by private companies - those of Cadburys and Spurrell & Son of Carmarthen. The latter is not listed by Mackay. Since there was some display space unfilled, Elizabeth and Eric then entertained with a wide range of material related to parcels. A fine end to an enjoyable afternoon. Some of the items from the displays by Elizabeth and Eric are shown after this report.

Our thanks are due to Mike Young and the Worcester Society for providing the facilities for a very pleasant day.

Mr. Edw. Jones
Landoury

Brecknock,

Dr. To William & George North,

London, Gloucester, Manchester, Shrewsbury, &c. CARRIERS.

The LONDON WAGGONS set out from the King's-Head Inn, Old-Change, London, every Saturday at Twelve o'Clock at Noon, and call, in coming out, at the Green-Man-and-Smill, in Oxford-Street. — They set out from the Flower-de-Luce, in Oxford, every Tuesday Morning; and from Mr. MANNING's, Westgate-Street, Gloucester, every Wednesday Evening, and are the ONLY WAGGONS which go from SOUTH-WALES thro' Oxford to London. — GOODS from Coventry, Kidderminster, Birmingham, &c. and all Parts of the North, directed to Mr. KELLOW's Warehouse, Gloucester, are expeditiously conveyed to all Parts of Monmouthshire and South-Wales.

The MANCHESTER WAGGONS set out from Mr. HOLBROOK's Warehouse, in the Dolphinfield, MANCHESTER, every Friday Evening; from Mr. MURRAY's Warehouse, Shrewsbury, every Wednesday Morning, (where Goods are taken in from Chester, &c.); from the Feathers, Ludlow, every Thursday Morning; from the Black-Swan, Leominster, every Friday Morning; and from the Greyhound, Hereford, every Friday Forenoon. — This is by far the Cheapest and most Expeditious Conveyance by Land, from Manchester, &c. into South-Wales.

		L.	s.	d.
To Bill		8	10	2
Feb 15. C. By Cash		5	5	
March 20. 1 Deal plank for sawn		3	5	2
27. 1 Basket — do — 2. 15				11
Printy the Billy Noyard to let			5	6
1790		3	11	5
Apr 15. By Cash		3	3	
			8	5

PARCEL POST.
CARMARTHEN (CT)

X LIST.
Letter Number S. D.

FOR POSTAGE STAMPS

OFFICE STAMP.

From W. SPURRELL & SON, Printers, Carmarthen.

Rev. J. Jenkins
The Rectory
Roch
Bewdley

PARCELS POST.
ROSS (HEREF.)

(For Postage Stamps and Date Stamp)



THE PEOVER PAPERS
AND THE MIDLAND COUNTIES

From the work of Dr. J.W.M. Stone, M.B.

Part Six

C44 30JUL74 Vol Two, p306. To Mr. Barber at Stone saying that he cannot think Col. Whitley so weak as to order the Grand Mail to stop (in any place) for a branch bag, yet there may, and ought to be, a little attendance in expectation (when no accident of weather &c will hinder its coming) and it may be got up again by a little more than ordinary riding. But by no means let the Grand Mail be so delayed as to break its course of coming duly to the office.

Bg11 1AUG74 Vol Two, p307. To Mr. Wetman at Lechlade saying that he could not but give Mrs. Bradley (Faringdon) accounts of the complaints (of his exaction in making people pay double rates) but is so well satisfied with his letter that he shall say no more.

Bg12 22AUG74 Vol Two, p322. To Mr. Webley at Gloucester. His by-letters for the last six months ordinarily come to 18 or 19s. per month, sometimes 23 or 24s.

Cd7 27AUG74 Vol Two, p332. He offers Mr. Ives at Northampton the by-letters at £8 yearly.

Bg13 27AUG74 Vol Two, p332. Again to Mr. Webley commenting that he receives about £12 a year already for Mr. Webley's by-letters and may justly expect more. Thinks £14 a reasonable rate (to farm them).

Bg14 27AUG74 Vol Two, p334. To Mr. Phillpotts at Hereford. It is true the road terminates (one way) at his stage, but he has a good branch to Rosse, Lemster, Kinton, Presteyne &c besides Gloucester.

Bg15 1SEP74 Vol Two, p337. He informs Mr. Webley that he cannot approve his offer to pay £10 (keeping the account and paying the "over-plus"), but thanks him for it being intended as a good example to others. However, he will abate 20s and accept £3. 5s. a quarter (for the by-letters).

Cd8 3SEP74 Vol Two, p338. To Mr. Ives. Has spoken with his servant; will accept £6 for the by-letters and, if Col. Whitley can settle the Wellingborough branch (as he has given Mr. Holland once more to endeavour), then to pay £8.

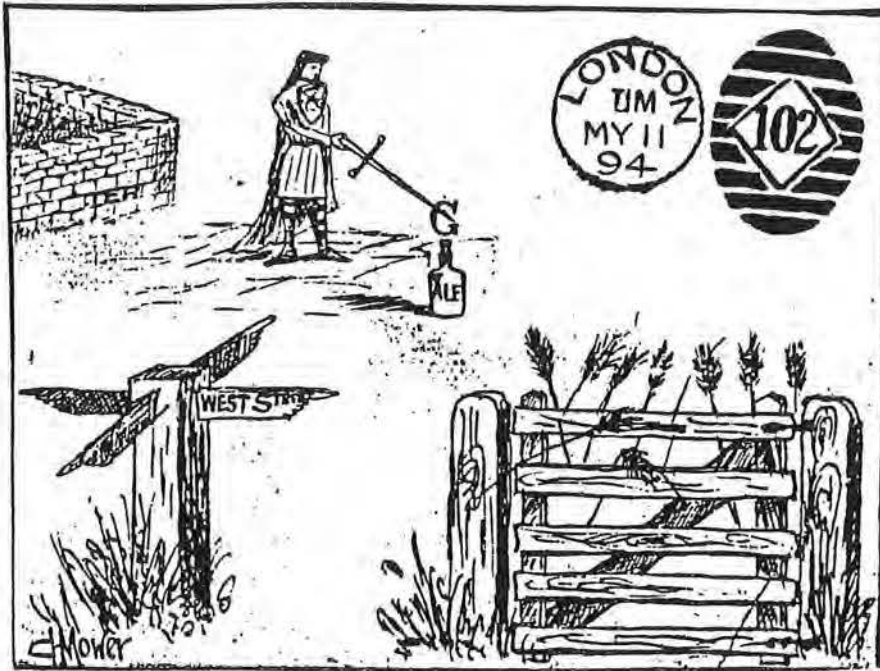
Bg16 5SEP74 Vol Two, p340. He comments to Mr. Phillpotts that he suffers his servants (as he says) to take the benefit of the by-letters, yet it is to his (Col. Whitley) damage, being his. Mr. Phillpotts has no power otherwise to dispose of them.

Cd9 10SEP74 Vol Two, p351. To Mr. Ives. Had Mr. Ives but managed the Wellingborough branch according to Col. Whitley's desires, he doubts not it would have come to a good issue. To let Holland undertake it & assist him. Shall have the by-letters for £5.

(to be continued)

COMPETITION

While on the visit to P.O. Archives, Elizabeth and Eric could not resist looking at two albums of reproductions of illustrated envelopes. They particularly liked those with pictorial addresses designed to confuse the Post Office and two are reproduced here. The first is fairly obviously addressed to :- Walter Nightingale, West Street, Reigate. The second is not so obvious and they leave you to work it out for yourselves. They will give or send a small prize for a correct answer received by the date of the A.G.M. In the event of two or more correct answers being received the winner's name will be drawn out of a hat on the day of the A.G.M. Please send your answers to them at 27, Rathbone Road, Smethwick, Warley, West Midlands B67 5JG.

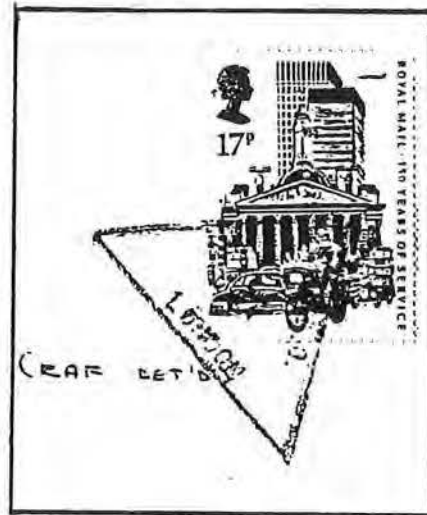


LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

John Calladine writes:

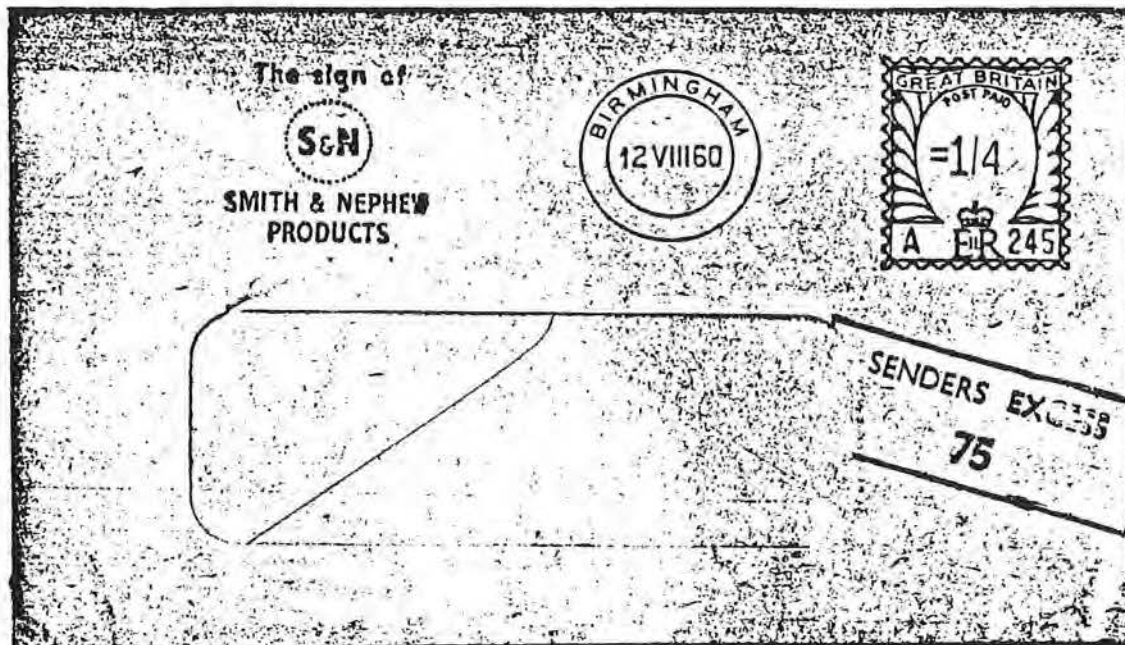
"Is the UDC making a comeback?" asks Roger Broomfield in the latest Midland Mail.

No, I think it has a serious rival - the UDT (also struck in December 1985, believe it or not).



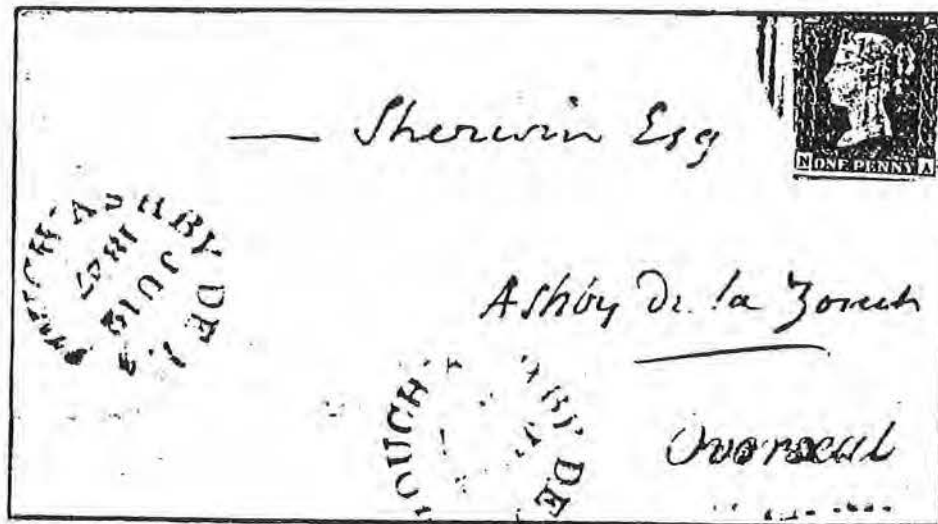
Elizabeth and Eric Lewis write:

We recently acquired in a mixed lot a meter marked envelope with a boxed Senders Excess/75 handstamp, the numeral "75" being of course that assigned to Birmingham. The 1/4d rate in the meter mark would certainly be an excess of postage in 1860 but can any member explain exactly why the handstamp was applied. Was it because the sender explained to the Post Office that they had accidentally set a wrong figure in their meter machine and was a refund made in these circumstances.

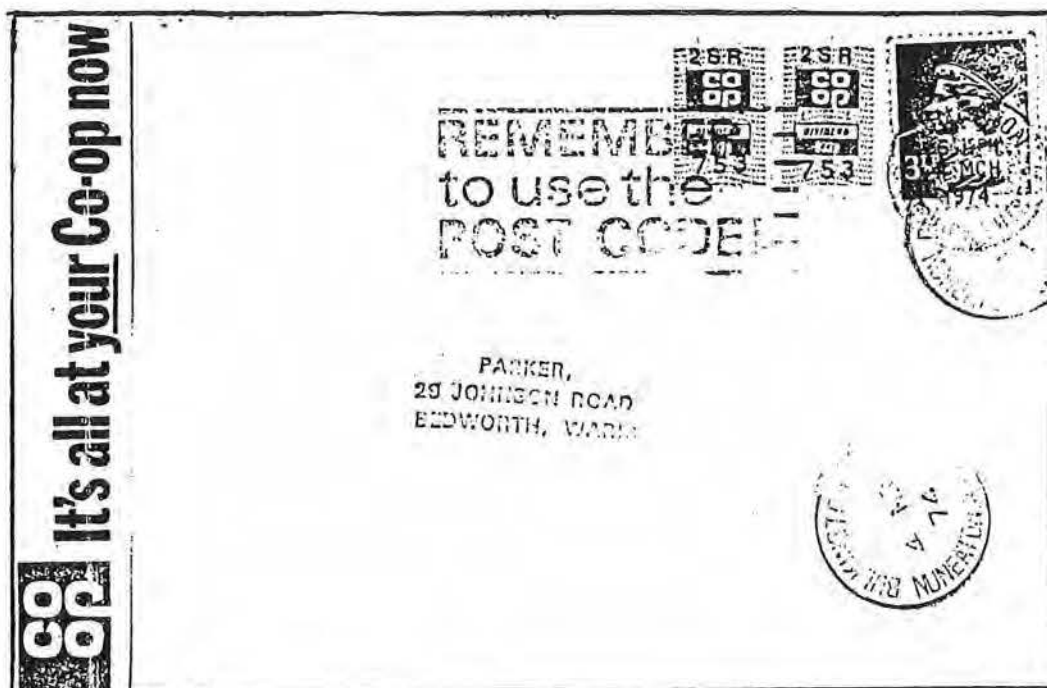


Gay Parker writes:

Regarding the Overseal straight line stamp, I think you are probably right about the words "Penny Post" being filed down. I have an example, dated 12 June 1847, which I assumed had been mis-struck, as only a small part of the bottom line is legible. Now I imagine it had been filed down but not very well. Obviously by the date of your cover it had been done properly. (Editor's Note: I will leave the Coordinating Editor to decide how this example is to be classified in the book to be published later in the year.)



In a recent Midland Mail mention was made of the placing of post offices in supermarkets. An office in my area, Bulkington had its premises in the local Co-op before 1974. My opinion of this is reflected in the cover below.



SIX-DAY POSTS AGAIN

by Rev Christopher Beaver

It seems to have been only for London that lists were published in newspapers and road books of towns with a "Daily Post, Sundays excepted, to and from this Office." The number of places with which other towns could correspond six times a week (or indeed seven, and away from London six did not mean except Sunday) was also gradually increased in the latter half of the eighteenth century. For example on 13th. March 1758 Aris's Gazette reported that "the late alteration in the post to and from" Birmingham had made necessary the preparation of a new list which "may be had of Ralph Taylor the letter deliverer" of "the different places the post goes to and comes from with an account of the days and hours of its setting out." That will have been an update of the fascinating sheet reproduced in MM51/7, comparison with which would be instructive if a copy has survived. The 1751 sheet shows only London and Wolverhampton as having a six-day post with Birmingham. They were the first of many.

The introduction of the bye-post mail between London and Birmingham was announced in Aris's Gazette in a notice of 9th. December 1748, in the same kind of confused way that Ralph Allen recorded it later in Appendix 2 of His Own Narrative: "...letters shall be conveyed by the Post six days in the week (instead of three as at present) betwixt London and Chipping Norton, Evesham, Worcester, Bromsgrove and Birmingham with the intermediate places and these letters on the three additional post days shall be conveyed through Oxford." A warning in most precise terms followed a vague indication of the date the new service would begin:

"Public notice is hereby given that these additional conveyances will commence at Christmas next, and whereas great numbers of letters have hitherto been privately collected and delivered contrary to law and to the great prejudice of the revenue of the Post Office all carriers, coachmen, watermen, wherry-men, dispensers of country newspapers and all other persons whatsoever in any way concerned in the illegal collecting and delivering of letters or packets of letters will be prosecuted with the utmost severity. N.B. the penalty is £5 for every letter collected or delivered contrary to law and £100 for every week this practice is continued. By command of the Postmaster General, John Wilson, Surveyor. At the Post Office, Birmingham."

Unlike the 1751 sheet, neither this notice nor Allen's Appendix makes clear that the Birmingham to London connection was made via Coleshill and the Chester Road three times a week and via Bromsgrove and Oxford three times. The Appendix indicates the route and year of Allen's additional provisions which were not necessarily on the same routes as the already existing posts. Nor does he mention for example that the Birmingham to Oxford connection was altered to the much more direct route through Stratford-on-Avon from 5th. January 1758.

By chance the time of arrival of this re-routed bye-post at Birmingham is mentioned in a report in Aris's Gazette of Monday, 12th. January 1767:

"due to a great fall of snow...the London mail which usually comes in here about seven in the morning did not arrive till six o'clock last Friday evening; 'tis said the horse was found with the mails on the hills near Chipping Norton but without the Rider."

In 1751 the London mail had been due on Fridays at three in the afternoon suggesting that the shortening of the route reduced the time by eight hours, from thirty-seven to twenty-nine, the same as by the Chester Road (due at 7 a.m. in 1751).

Examination of London lists referred to in MM48/8 with reference to towns on the Chester Road shows that Chester, Nantwich and Stone had a six-day post with London from 1755, and Coventry, Daventry, Dunstable, St. Albans and Barnet from 1761. The actual years and the bye-night routes by which these connections were achieved being given by Allen, a new list being published shortly afterwards on each occasion. The Appendix gives a clear impression of those parts of the country with which Birmingham, and some other Midlands towns had a six-day communication, from each of those years, some of them specified in the lengthy summary of the 1761 achievements which brought Allen's career to its climax.

"Irish Mail" was the heading of a notice published at Birmingham in Aris's Gazette in 1768. From 6th. July there would be a post six times a week instead of three with Ireland through both Holyhead and Portpatrick to and from many commercial parts of the country, and this would be achieved by means of bye and cross posts. Holyhead first appeared on the London six-day list which is dated 6th. September 1768, but the notice surely pinpoints the date of establishment. Unfortunately the notice is otherwise vague, clearly not prepared specifically for Birmingham. Edward Watson's "Royal Mail to Ireland" (published in 1917) reveals that in that year the number of packets on the Holyhead to Dublin passage was increased from three to six and the mails from London, similarly increased, were due to reach Dublin on the sixth day, every day of the week except Friday. The inference from the notice's wording that different routes would be used on different days (since many bye and cross posts were not six-day) may not apply for Birmingham, but as far as Chester most likely alternated between the Lichfield and Stafford routes. It seems certain a six-day post must have been established along the North Wales coast using the Conway and Menai Strait ferries, yet beyond Chester (and Shrewsbury) only Holyhead was added to the London six-day list.

Much remains uncertain, yet little by little the developments in the eighteenth century are becoming a good deal clearer. That does not mean uncomplicated.

Editor's Note: It is hoped to publish copies of the notices, which listed the "six-day" post-towns, starting with that of 1755, in the next issue. I hope members will find these of use.

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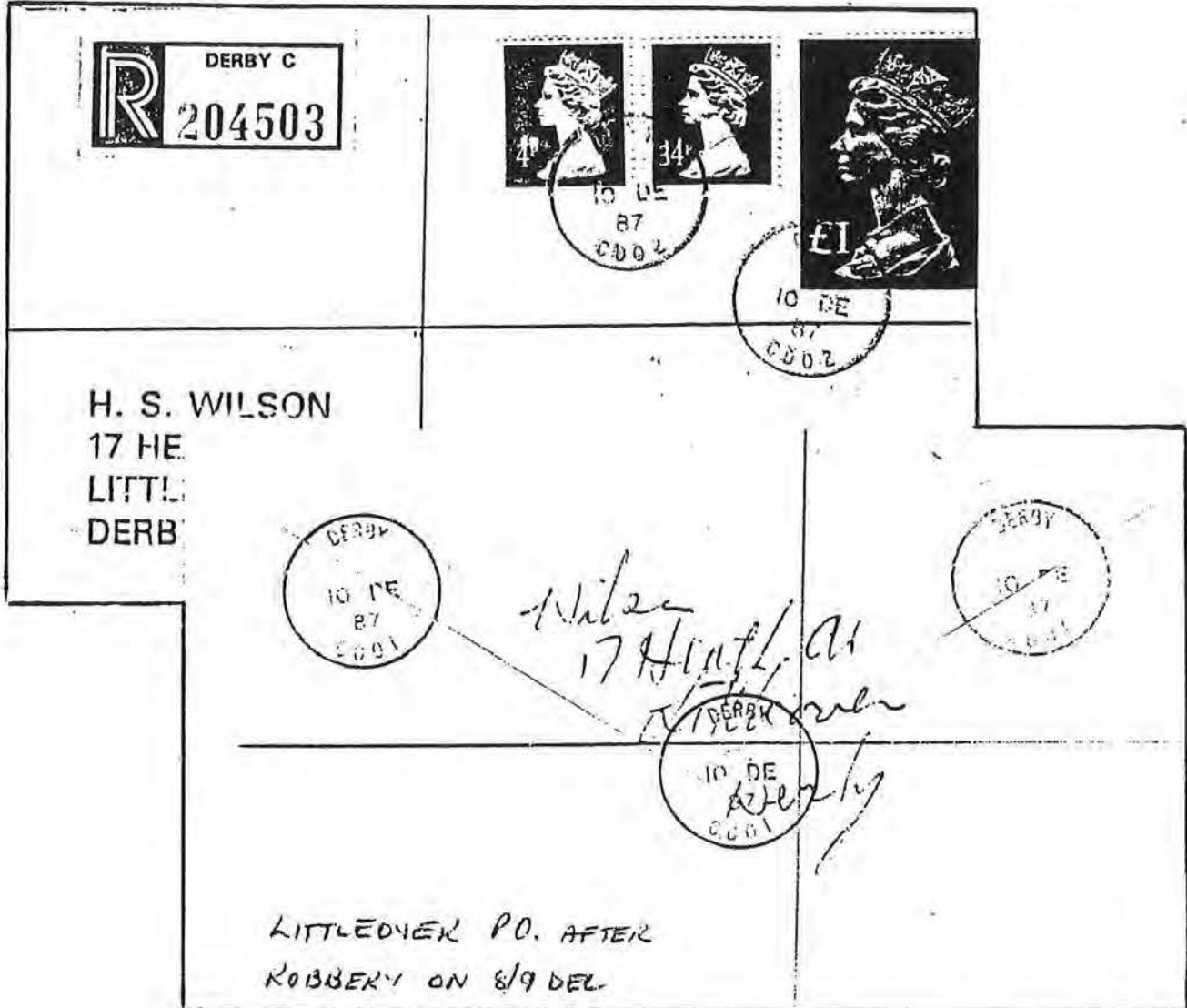
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ROBBERY AT LITTLEOVER

by Harold Wilson

Illustrated below is a cover posted at Littleover post office showing the use of temporary handstamps. C.D.O. stands for "Counters District Office". The office was raided on the night of 8/9th. December 1987 when the handstamps, postal orders and the complete safe were stolen. The office reopened on the 10th.

A PENNY POST CIRCULAR ?

Harold has also sent a copy of the circular reproduced on the next page. He would be grateful if any member could shed some light on the purpose of this document. Does it bring the pence charged on local letters into the Post Office Revenue rather than their forming part of the postmaster's perquisites?

Oswestry, Sept. 21st, 1837.

Sir,

You will shortly receive if you have not already, a supply of Bills and Vouchers for the purpose of carrying to the account of the Revenue, the pence on local letters posted at your Office. I cannot better convey to you the nature of this regulation, than by quoting a paragraph from the Secretary's Letter to me on the subject.

"The Postmaster General has decided to establish a Penny Post for all local letters, both at Post Towns and Sub-Offices, and that the charge of one penny must be made on all letters posted at the Town and delivered by the Letter Carrier, or obtained from the Office, whether they are addressed to the residence of the Individual or to be left at the Post Office, also on those posted in the Town, addressed to persons residing in the neighbourhood where there is no official delivery, whether they are sent out by the Postmaster, or enclosed in private Pouches, or called for by the Servants of the parties to whom they are addressed: in fact, all letters whatsoever put into the Office for delivery by any means in the Town or Neighbourhood, are to be charged with Penny Postage, which is to be carried to the account of the Revenue."

With this paragraph before you, I anticipate you will find no difficulty in understanding the daily Bills and monthly Vouchers you will receive for the purpose of bringing the Penny Letters to account. You will observe, that all Penny Letters whatsoever, (except those for the delivery of any existing Penny Post) are to be entered on the daily Bill; they are to be brought to account directly from the Taxing Table, and paid Letter Box. Every time the Letter Box is cleared, and the Letters taxed off, or as often as the Penny Letters are taken from Taxing Table to be sorted, whatever Penny Letters there may be are to be told up by the Taxing Clerk and entered in the Bill, the letters to be checked by the sorting Clerk and both parties to affix their signatures in the respective Columns. The same process is to be observed when the paid Letter Box is cleared; the party clearing the Box is to tell the Penny Letters as before, and enter them and sign his name, handing them over to be checked by the sorting Clerk, who will also sign his name in the proper place.

In very small Offices where no Assistant is kept, you will see by the Bill the Letter Carriers' signature is to be substituted; in these cases it will be convenient, to save unnecessary entries, to have a Box upon the Taxing Table to receive the Penny Letters as they are taxed, clearing it only when a delivery is about to be made, and when the Letter Carrier would be present to check the entry. But after all, no precise rule of proceeding can be laid down. Every Postmaster will be regulated as to the frequency of his Entries, and the times of making them according to the number of Letters and other circumstances. I have only to request, that the mode of check pointed out by the daily Bill, may be strictly complied with, as well as the direction on the Voucher with regard to their transmission to London.

This regulation is to commence on and with the 6th of October next; and should any Postmaster feel a difficulty upon any point connected with it, there will be time enough in the interval for him to apply to me for farther Information, which I request he will not fail to do.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

B. CHURCHILL.

SOME PROBLEMS IN LEICESTERSHIRE

I doubt if our present country postmen, driving around in their red vans, ever consider the difficulties of their predecessors of over one hundred years ago. Those of you who know the terrain of East Leicestershire may feel a little sympathy for Richard Morgan who wrote to the Postmaster General in February 1856 asking to be relieved of the last part of his walk from Uppingham to Horninghold, Hallaton, Blaston and Holt -

"... a distance of 20 miles per day, a journey rendered very harassing by the hilly nature of the country over which he has to pass and by the fact of part of the road from Blaston to Holt being over ploughed fields of a very tenacious soil, without any made way or footpath, and which in winter are almost impassable."

The accuracy of his statement was attested to by a number of the inhabitants of the villages on his walk. Consequently the delivery at Holt was transferred to the Market Harborough to Medbourne messenger.

We often lose sight of the fact that, despite the reforms of 1840, it was to be many years before every part of the country had a free delivery. The fortunate ones were those who lived on the messenger's walk or in a village where the postmaster was paid an allowance for making a delivery. The person who wrote, from Ellistown, to the editor of the Leicester Advertiser in January 1878 was not so lucky.

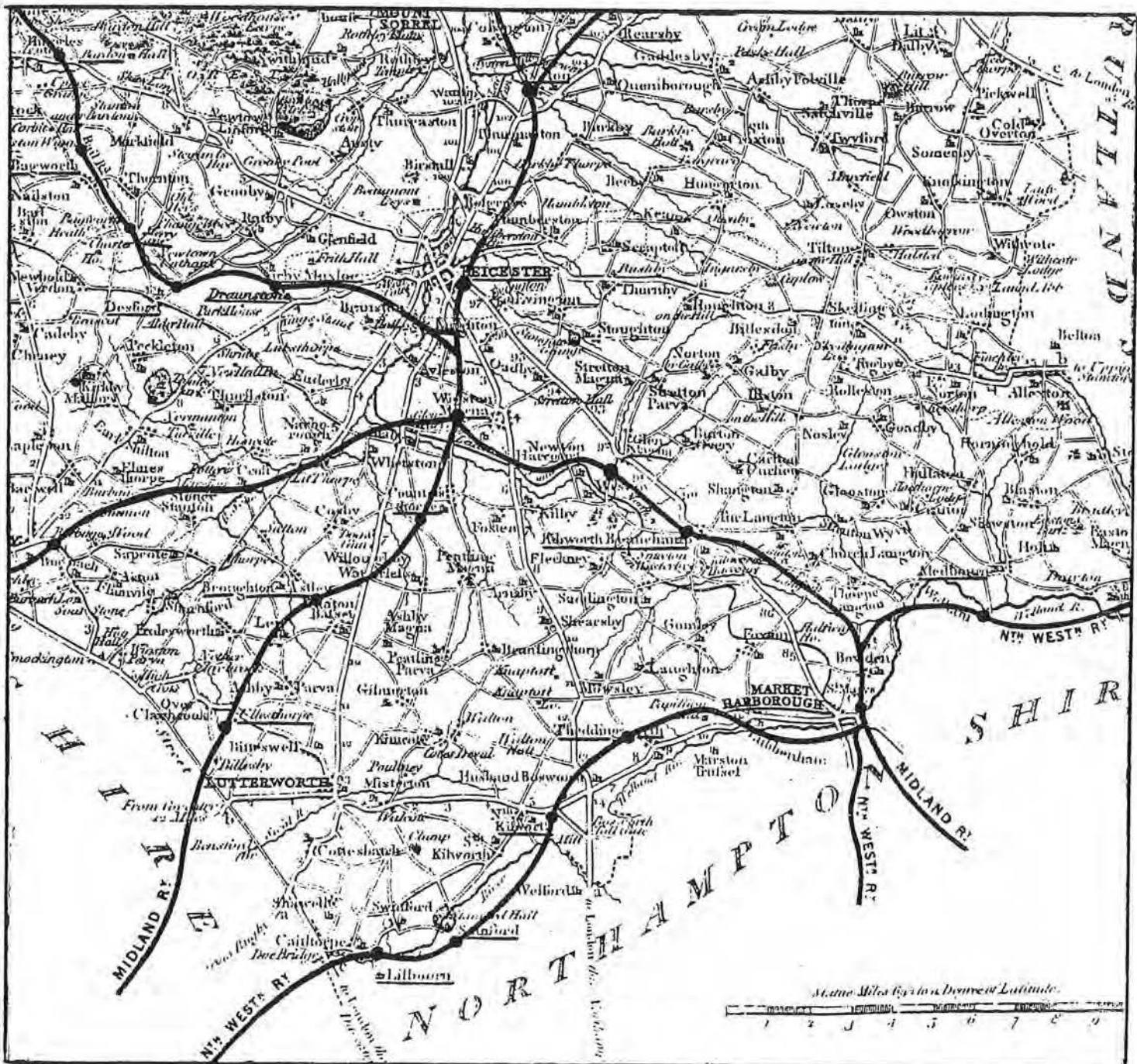
"Sir, - In looking over your columns of 3rd inst., I find an article concerning the postal arrangements of Leicestershire. ..I am glad to see that I am not the only one that has been put to inconvenience through our "efficient" postal arrangement. I have known us here to have letters lie at Bagworth eight days before being delivered, and if you asked the reason why they were delayed so, you were met by the polite reply, "You're off the district;" that's all you could get; and now we have got a post-office at or for Ellistown, it cannot be depended upon. Those who live by the turnpike side get looked after, but you have not very far to live from it to be out of the "district," and if it does happen that you are "out of limits," as the postman calls it, its God help you. ...nor would they (Post Office Officials) like to be served as some of us are served, having a letter knocking about among your neighbours a day or two before you get it, because you are "out of the district" - Yours, &c., "

The article referred to was an editorial parts of which show nothing really changes in this world. Although Leicestershire had the honour of having the Postmaster General, Lord John Manners, as one of its representatives, the editor was of the opinion that Leicestershire suffered from the worst postal service in the whole of the country which, if inflicted upon any "little peddling village in any unimportant district out of Leicestershire", would have led to such an outcry that would have caused Earl Beaconsfield to "tremble for the stability of his government." He mentioned the instances of a letter taking ten days to go from near Market Harborough to London, and the inhabitants of Desford, six miles from Leicester, not being able to rely on anything sent from Leicester being delivered in less than two days. Then -

"...there are the benighted and forsaken people of Lutterworth who complain most bitterly... So atrocious are the arrangements for postal communication between Leicester and Lutterworth, that we have long ceased to trust to them. If we were to post in Leicester the papers for our subscribers in the Lutterworth district early on Friday evening, the chances are a thousand to one they would not be delivered till Monday morning, there being no delivery on Sundays, and a delivery on the day following the postage being quite out of the question. To meet this difficulty, we are actually compelled to stamp the papers here, send them by train to Ulllesthorne, and then forward them to Lutterworth to be

posted. Last week, owing to the immensely increased Christmas traffic the papers were delayed at the railway station, and our agricultural friends, anxious to read the reports of Friday's markets on Saturday morning, found themselves without their papers. It is well for Lord John Manners that he did not hear half that was said of him by some of the farmers in consequence of this annoyance, for...we grieve to say not a few of our angry friends, like Mark Twain's "Innocents", found their only relief in profanity. We advise Lord John if he values the good opinion of the farmers, and has any regard to their spiritual welfare to look to this; for the habit of very profane swearing may grow upon them!"

At the time, apart from a day-mail via Ullesthorpe station, mail between Leicester and Lutterworth went through Rugby. A mail cart linking the two places had been withdrawn in 1858. A direct route was used again from 1905 when the bags were carried on the Great Central Railway.



A QUICK LOOK AT POST BOXES

by Robert Hunt

Shortly after the editor took over, I promised him an article for "Midland Mail" (It must have been the draught Bass) on rare post boxes in our area. The study of letter boxes may not be everyones idea of postal history, but to me it is an important part of the story of the handling of mail.

We are fortunate in the Midlands in having quite a number of rare or unusual boxes. Also the Letter Box Study Group publishes accurate lists making the job of seeking out interesting ones easier; the references below are largely based on LBSG records.

Members who were at the December meeting were probably unaware that there was a box worth looking at only half-a-mile away at Horninglow sub-office - a G VI R Ludlow type wall box of which about forty exist, mainly in small villages.

Somewhat rarer, and more attractive, are the 1856 "Doric Column type" (fig. 1). Of the eight actually in use in the U.K., two are at Warwick and one at Banbury. There are only four examples in use of a modified version, with a horizontal aperture (fig. 2), produced the following year of which three are at Malvern and the fourth at Solihull.

Inevitably a number of boxes find their way into museums etc. The Stoke City Museum and Art Gallery boasts a restored "First National Standard" of 1856, while the Tramway Museum at Crich has a hexagonal Penfold (fig. 3). Two of my favourite type of box - the rare 1930s combined telephone kiosk, stamp machine and letter box - are to be found at Bewdley on the Severn Valley Railway and at the Dinting Railway Centre in Derbyshire.

But boxes do not have to be old to be interesting. Indeed it can be embarrassing at times to disillusion people who tell me about some "rare" Victorian wall box. Alas some of these are far more common than many twentieth century examples. Of the rarer modern boxes, two types are instantaneously recognisable. In the late 1960s and early 70s an experiment was carried out with the introduction of boxes made from sheet steel. The experiment was a failure and only about two dozen still exist, of which three-quarters can be found in central Birmingham. Several examples of the next abortive experiment to change the style and shape of pillar boxes, a rectangular cast iron version dating from the early 1970s, can be found in Leicester.

This is only a very superficial look at a complex subject. If the editor is willing, I will return to the theme at a future date. In the meantime members may want to track down a copy of "The Letter Box" by Jean Farrugia, (Editor's Note: It was still available at Vera Trinder in January), or "Old Letter Boxes" by Martin Robinson, Shire Publications No. 188, price £1.25. Information on the LBSG is available from the secretary:

Mrs. S. Jones, 43 Miall Road, Hall Green, Birmingham B28 9BS.

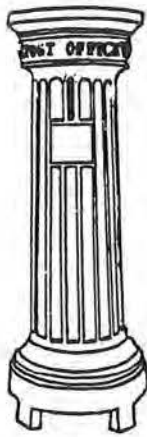


Fig. 1

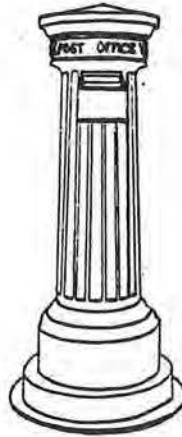
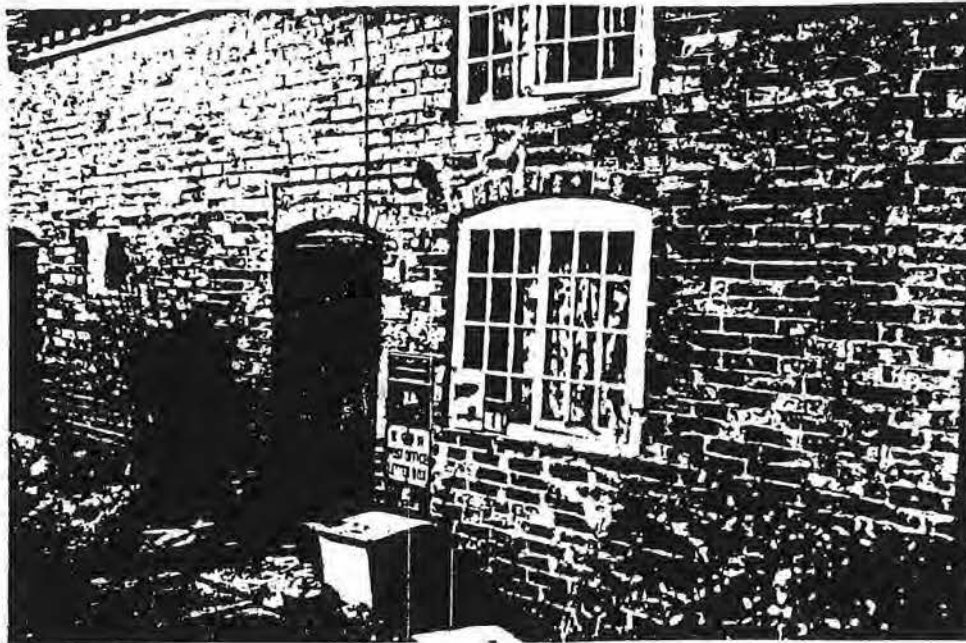


Fig. 2



Fig. 3



The former post office at Shenton (Leicestershire showing a Ludlow type letter-box).

Great Britain Postal History

from 1840 to date. County material,

FDCs and the unusual. Send for my latest list.

ROGER HUDSON
36 WEST STREET
WARWICK
CV34 6AN

A SUCCESSION OF SURVEYORS

by Rev. Christopher Beaver.

"The Story of the Post Office Surveyors" is the sub-title of a well-researched booklet written by two who had known the job from the inside ("Monarchs of All They Surveyed" by J.T. Foxell and A.O. Spafford, H.M.S.O. 1952). All the developments in England and Wales from 1715 to 1940, from the first establishment of "riding surveyors" to ultimate supercession by Regional Directors and Boards, are precisely outlined, detailed extracts from archives being quoted frequently. It remains the definitive summary.

The present brief study, confined to the central period between 1787 and 1856, results from research designed to match the names of "riding surveyors" with the districts where they served, which despite the wealth of material not as simple a task as it may sound. For much of the time a district was referred to as "Mr. Western's" rather than by a geographical title; this was somewhat confusing since whenever a vacancy occurred the remaining surveyors had the right in order of seniority to transfer. Until 1821 appointment of a new surveyor to whichever district was eventually left vacant depended on one man's patronage, each P.M.G. alternately. After that there was an attempt to provide experience for likely candidates or a few months probation while self-training on the job. Only two new surveyors were jointly appointed before there ceased to be a two-headed P.M.G. From 1837 each surveyor had a clerk to assist, a young man whose potential had been judged in one or other office of the G.P.O. in London, and it was from their ranks that a vacancy among the surveyors was generally filled. By 1856 the establishment had grown to a stationary clerk and two travelling clerks in each district, and the surveyors had become more like provincial administrators than "riding" surveyors.

Here then under the names which were eventually customary for the districts are listed the people entrusted with great responsibilities for the smooth running of the post. The commentary which follows indicates a little about the characters and careers of many of them. The letter d means the appointment ended with death in office, r with retirement or resignation; otherwise a move to another district is apparent on the lists or another appointment within the Post Office is mentioned in the commentary. In 1856 those remaining in office were joined by two additional surveyors, Christopher Hodgson and Ernest Milliken, and nine districts created, their boundaries determined by the railway system on which the mails then circulated to most of the country.

RIDING SURVEYORS, 1787-1856HOME DISTRICT

Johnson Wilkinson 1787-99r
(Barnabas Bartlett 1793-99)
Leonard Aust 1799-1810
Anthony Scott 1810-33r
George Stow 1833-35
J. Walter Sebright 1835-38
William Johnson 1838-54r
James Newman 1854-56

MIDLAND DISTRICT

George Western 1787-1809
Gratian Hart 1810-21
George Karstadt 1821-40d
William Godby 1840-56

NORTH WALES DISTRICT

Christopher Saverland 1787-1810
Augustus Godby 1810-22
Benjamin Churchill 1822-54r
John Beaufort 1854-56

SOUTH WALES DISTRICT

Samuel Woodcock 1787-1822
Charles Rideout 1823-56

WESTERN DISTRICT

Samuel Lott 1787-1809r
(Anthony Scott 1808-9)
George Western 1809
Barnabas Bartlett 1809r
Leonard Aust 1810-19d
George Karstadt 1819-21
George Louis 1821-35
George Stow 1835-38
George Cresswell 1839-56

EASTERN DISTRICT

(Part of Home District 1787-99)
Barnabas Bartlett 1799-1809
George Western 1809-21d
Gratian Hart 1821-32
George Neal 1832-56

NORTHERN DISTRICT

George Hodgson 1787-1809r
William Hodgson 1810-24r
John Fletcher 1824-38
John Tilly 1838-48
John Good 1848-56

In the early 1780s Palmer's Plan provoked the scorn of all the existing surveyors, it seems, and they actively resisted its implementation; only one of them changed his tune at least to the extent of positively cooperating when the plan was imposed and their battle was clearly lost. The title surveyor was used by the G.P.O. in the sense of one who has oversight. Foxell and Spafford did not clearly distinguish between those who were meant to exercise oversight from an office of the G.P.O., that is Philip Allen resident surveyor of the Bye Letter Office and Nathan Draper resident surveyor of the Inland Office in particular, and those who, though based in London, were expected to travel the country on behalf of both of those offices and others. Of the latter there were three, not three surveyors altogether. In the reorganisation which was part of Palmer's Plan, Richard Arbuthnot who had been a surveyor since 1762, and was too old and frail to be of further use was superannuated along with Mr. Draper in 1787. (Philip Allen and his office survived though with little distinct work to supervise). Johnson Wilkinson (commissioned in 1771), still based in London and given responsibility for supervising the South-east of England, acted as an embittered thorn in the side of the new establishment. George Hodgson (1764) took on the North of England and despite increasing frailty was long valued for his skill and determination.

It was Lord Carteret as P.M.G. who persuaded the Treasury in January 1787 of the need for five additional "riding surveyors" for England and Wales as an essential element of the new establishment to further Palmer's Plan. Six surveyors, including the two survivors of the old establishment as it was inevitably termed, were then appointed to live near the centre of a specified portion of the country, while Francis Freeling "completely fitted by near two years constantly on the Roads" working for John Palmer would be employed "generally over the whole Kingdom in case of illness or surcharge of business to any of the other surveyors." In practice Freeling was too fully employed in London to travel but he remained a surveyor until 1797 (and retained the salary until his death in 1836).

John Palmer was himself titled Surveyor and Comptroller General, while Charles Bonner his deputy had the title Resident Surveyor, and others later were similarly styled. As long as Palmer was on the scene and while the Mail Coach Office had to be separate from the G.P.O. the riding surveyors were treated as under their direction; thereafter they were part of the Inland Office establishment. Hodgson in particular was directed to assist Mr. Western who was the least experienced and most "overpressed with work". The other three new men were able, youngish postmasters. Samuel Lott retained Honiton until his son could have it, and Samuel Woodcock Gloucester until handing it on to his daughter. Christopher Saverland retained Portsmouth, which was not in his district, until compensated in 1802; he was also entrusted with other occasional tasks like establishing the Weymouth to Channel Islands Packet; he had earlier in his career been a clerk in the office of Anthony Todd and managed the Packets to Europe in Holland. Mr. Western and Mr. Woodcock both did duties for him when he was away.

Meanwhile one other man, Barnabas Bartlett, Palmer's clerk from 1789, was frequently sent out in all directions and in 1793 it was decided to give him the authority of a surveyor, chiefly for the south-east though this was not stated. By then Wilkinson rarely travelled; he had very much the largest district, refused to accept responsibility for parts of it, and resented the fact that Hodgson was provided with a post-chaise. In the end he was superannuated, though regarding himself as having a freehold he went on demanding full pay, unsuccessfully. A seventh district was then created and all the boundaries made precise, not that cooperation across them was no longer required, or help expected and given in time of crisis. Some adjustments were also made in 1810 to reduce the distances involved in the area centred on Exeter, and again in 1838 when the railways were replacing the mail-coaches. These later boundaries are clearly shown on the 1823 and 1845 circulation maps. Otherwise districts were unchanged until 1856 when their number was next increased.

In 1795 a Mr. Lichfield was approved as an extra surveyor to learn the job under Mr. Lott or preferably Mr. Hodgson "as he has been in the habit of instructing surveyors and from his great experience as well as the business in the Northern Districts being on a very extended scale of circulation more real insight into it will be obtained there." Indeed he had already served as a surveyor for thirty years and continued for another fourteen before being succeeded, on his retirement, by his son William. No more is heard of Mr. Lichfield but Leonard Aust was already making reports the same year prior to his appointment to charge of a district in 1799.

Every district except Mr. Woodcock's changed hands in 1809-10, and in the south-west of England the situation became farcical. Samuel Lott's illness a year or two earlier precipitated the training of Anthony Scott who was first appointed a supernumerary surveyor then acting surveyor of that district. When Mr. Lott retired Mr. Western exercised his right to succeed, then almost immediately Mr. Bartlett asked to exchange with Mr. Western which was approved. Mr. Bartlett then resigned and it was Mr. Aust's turn to choose to fill the vacancy. Mr. Scott as the junior surveyor took Mr. Aust's place. Because of his experience with packet stations Christopher Saverland was asked to become the Post Office agent at Falmouth, at the equivalent of a surveyor's salary. Thus apart from Anthony Scott and the younger Hodgson there were two other new surveyors, Gratian Hart and Augustus Godby. The latter proved to be one of the high fliers, going on to be Secretary of the Post Office first at Edinburgh and later, when the mismanaged Irish Post Office had to be brought back under direct control by the G.P.O., in Dublin. Hart on the other hand was clearly one of the less efficient surveyors, often reprimanded, and his eventual appointment as agent at Dover was no promotion. (John Fletcher was another who would attract unfavourable comments on his reports or the lack of them, as occasionally did George Louis though his exceptionable ability was also recognised by Freeling.)

George Karstadt as senior clerk in the Secretary's office at the G.P.O. was often sent around the country from 1812 onwards to deal with particular problems, a grooming for the next vacancy which did not occur until Leonard Aust died in 1819, when "Western District, each surveyor having declined, falls to him." On George Western's death two years later however, exercising their right in accordance with "the invariable rule of the office", Hart, then Karstadt chose to move, leaving another vacancy in the Western District for the next junior surveyor, George Louis. (Junior surveyor was the term sometimes used for the latest of the seven to become a riding surveyor.)

Lord Chichester believed that the best man for the job should be appointed and then not until he had proved his ability at it, and the right to claim a vacancy by virtue of seniority should cease. Part of his minute of 31st. May 1821 is reproduced below

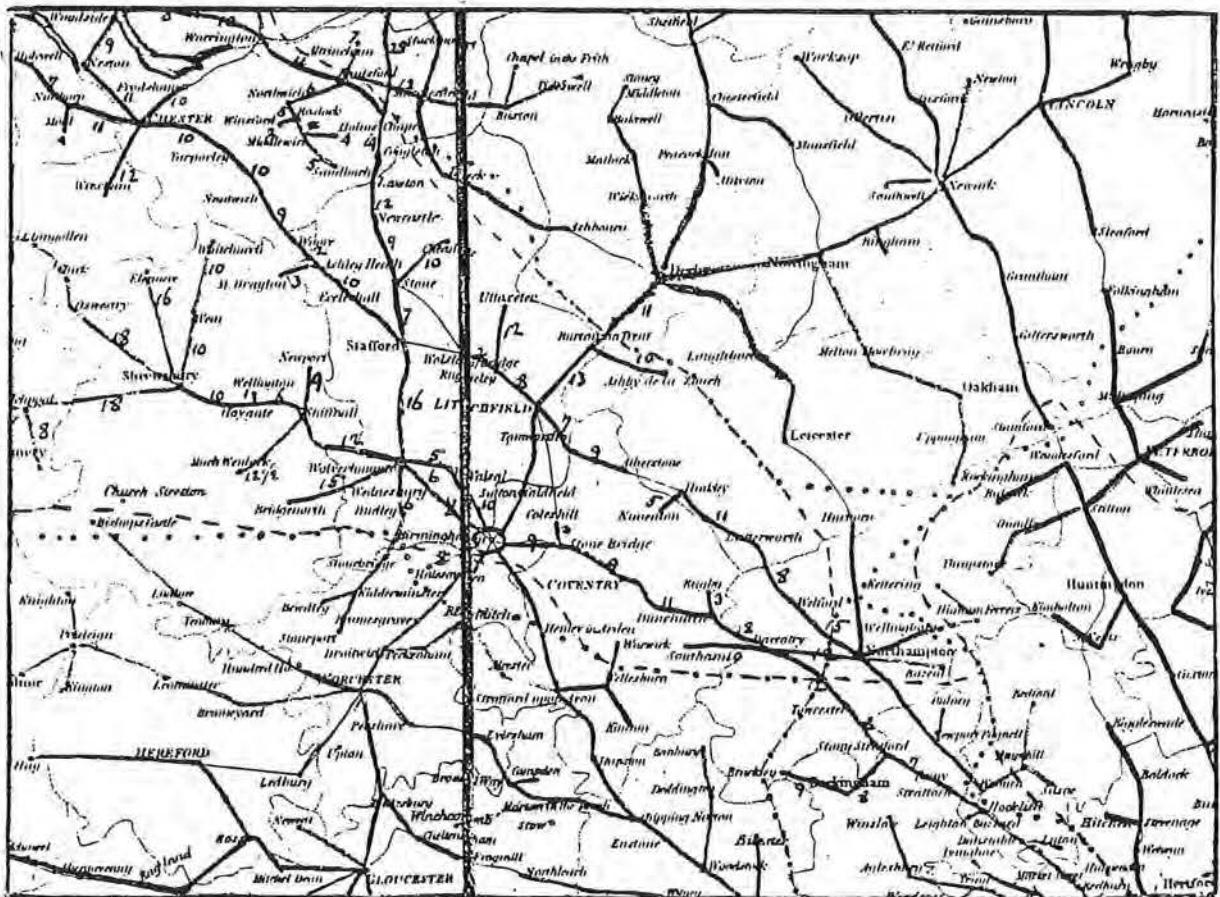
It is essential to the well being of the Office that the Riding Surveyors should be selected from the most intelligent and experienced Officers in the several Departments, that I wish to recommend that, in future the appointments to that situation shall be considered a Joint Act of the Postmaster General, and not an object of private Patronage; and if Lord Salisbury shd. view the subject in the same light, I waive my Claim to the next appointment and in order to excite a spirit of Emulation & a supply of qualified Persons, I recommend that 2 or more Officers be employed occasionally as assistants to the Riding Surveyors, whereby the Postmr. General may be able to form some judgement of their pretensions when a vacancy shall arise. At the same time it must be clearly understood that the appointment of any Officer to act as Assistant occasionally does not give him a decided claim to succeed. It is an advantage to him to be able to show his Talents & learn his duty; but there may be others, when the vacancy occurs, who may be better qualified, as experience & length of Service alone, cannot be decisive in an appointment that requires so many peculiar Qualifications; & allowing to an Officer the greatest merits in the situation he may fill, his fitness for a Riding Surveyor may not correspond with his other good qualities.

His views prevailed as has been outlined above and the list shows only one further example of a surveyor changing district - George Stow. On Augustus Godby's promotion and Samuel Woodcock's retirement there was careful selection by the joint P.M.G.; it was still the days when practical experience and character mattered much more than any paper qualifications. The North Wales and South Wales Districts (where Shrewsbury or Oswestry, and Gloucester were adjudged suitably central for the residences of the surveyors, as elsewhere were Derby or Sheffield, Darlington or Doncaster, Cambridge and Exeter) seem always to have had at the helm utterly conscientious men who never flagged in their efforts, in Woodcock's case for thirty-five years.

Among the later names a few were on their way to higher appointments. George Louis became Superintendent of Mail Coaches for three years to be succeeded both times by George Stow; despite the title they were largely responsible for the negotiations with the railway companies and the wholesale transfer of the mail from road to rail transport. Walter Sebright became postmaster of Glasgow. John Tilly, 25 when sent to the Northern District, proved that the most remote surveyorship was closely observed in London by becoming Assistant Secretary under both William Maberly and Rowland Hill before succeeding them in 1864; his sixteen years as Secretary of the Post Office culminated in a well-deserved knighthood. The era when practical men like himself could even begin on such a ladder in a G.P.O. office without education and civil service exams was by that time over. The days when surveyors rode on horses to inspect and regulate everything had gone too; messages could now be instantly conveyed by telegraph direct to or from many post offices throughout the land. Tilly's career actually began in Sir Francis Freeling's office and ended in his seat, and they were the only surveyors to reach such eminence.

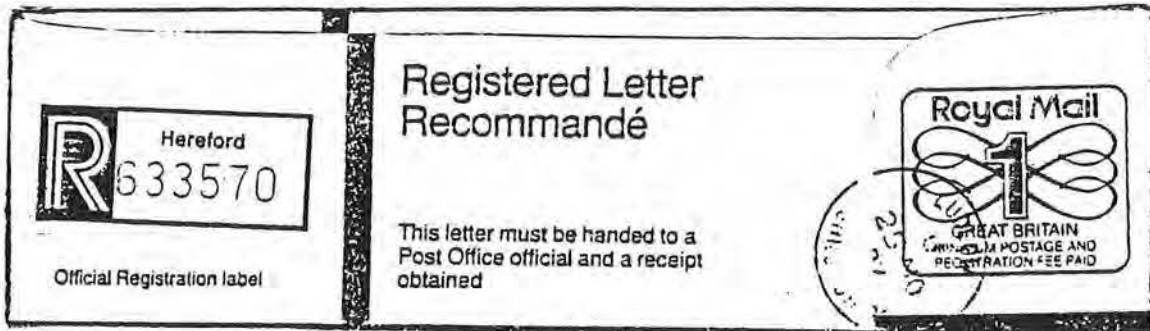
(The chief sources used are Posts 59; 58/33-58, 60-61; 96/12; 97/4; 42; 35; 68/432; several maps now in Post 21.)

The map below shows the boundaries, in the Midlands, of 1823 (dashes) and 1845 (dots).

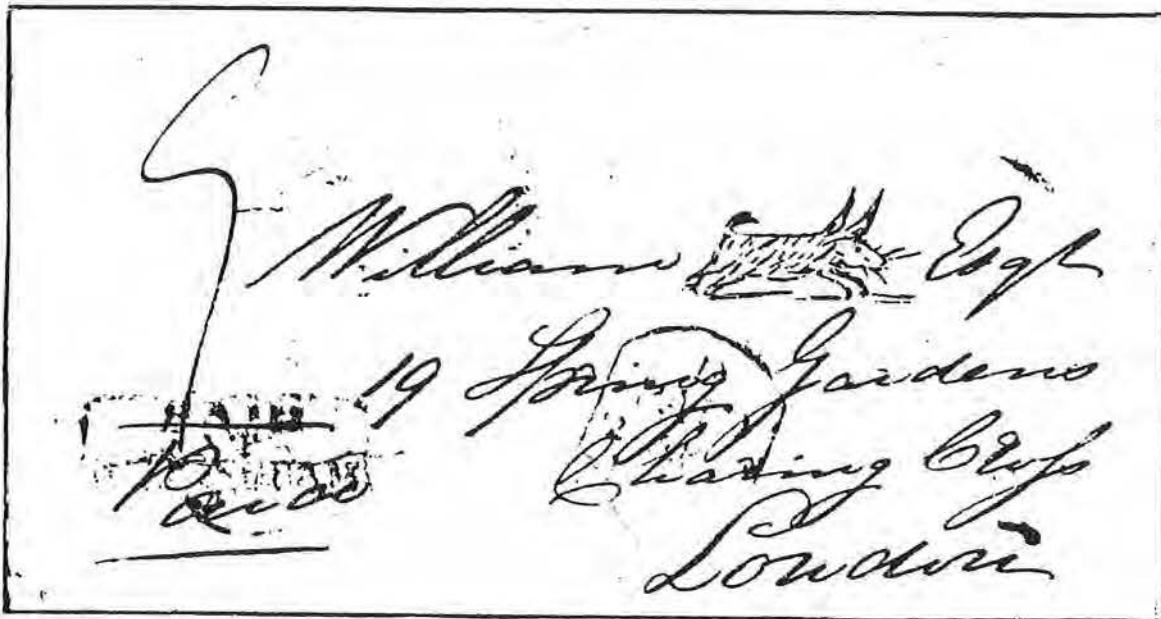


A TAKEOVER BID

Roger Broomfield has sent this registered envelope with a LUDLOW SHROPSHIRE date stamp for 25N087, but with a Hereford registration label. Do the members from Salop know they have been taken over.

TAILPIECE

It seems to be appropriate to end this issue with a cover sent from Birmingham on 30th. March 1839 to a Mr. William Hare. Elizabeth and Eric who contributed this item would like to know if anyone has seen an earlier item of this nature.

THE NEXT MIDLAND MAIL

This should appear in late May. In addition to the reports of the March meeting and the A.G.M. and the auction realisations it will contain a listing of eighteenth century mailcoaches. Items held over from this edition such as the look at Inns and Post Offices, and an article on Shrewsbury to Aberystwyth routes will appear in the next two editions.
