



MIDLAND (G.B.)
POSTAL HISTORY
SOCIETY



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BULLETIN NO. 17 MARCH 1980

Editorial

This is the last Bulletin to be issued before the end of our 1979/1980 Season and it is a suitable time to take stock and look back over the Season and look forward to the next. The Society has held six meetings with the last meeting to be held on Saturday, 29th March (see below). Attendances have varied with average number of members being from 15 to 20 each time. This could be improved as we have just over 40 members.

Membership has remained static during the year with losses and gains - and theragain an improvement in membership could be expected. This lies in your hands mainly - so during the coming 'off peak' break between Seasons - spread the word, let fellow collectors know of our existence and sign them up !

More support for Society activities and 'something for the Bulletin' also lies in your hands. We are as strong as your interest.

NEXT
SOCIETY
MEETING

Annual General Meeting and Auction

To be held on Saturday, 29th March
At Dr. Johnson House, Bull Street, Birmingham
AGM will start at 2 pm
Auction viewing at approx 3-15 to be followed by Auction.
This will be a chance to bring along a guest or invite a visitor. The more the merrier.

Will Committee members note they are expected to meet in the Foyer of Dr. Johnson House at 12-30 prior to the meeting.

MIDLAND PHILATELIC FEDERATION

HOPE TO SEE YOU
THERE

This is NOT a
Society meeting

are holding their Annual Convention and Stamp Fair at Burton on Trent Technical College, Lichfield Street on Saturday 19th April from 11 am until 5 pm. Among the items of interest will be an Exhibit of Postal History by one of our members. Eight Dealers in attendance.

DUPLEX
POSTMARKS

Members have been requested to compile lists of the various Duplex marks they might have of Midland Towns and special Sheets for recording these are available from Richard Farman. During the 'off season' could you assist the Society in this 'recording' - some members already have - but we obviously would like our record to be as exhaustive as possible even if you only have a few items to record. Completed forms to be sent to our County Editors who are :

Richard Farman : for Staffordshire and Derbyshire *
(in collaboration with Derbyshire PHS)
W: S. Chester : for Warwickshire
Peter Baxter : for Birmingham
Eric Lewis : for Worcestershire

OR
Bulletin Ed,
13 Station Rd

REPORT OF OUR 23rd FEBRUARY 1980 MEETING.

Our February meeting was devoted to the third annual competition that our Society has held, with no less than nine members submitting entries. These were as follows, taken in the order in which we viewed them:-

SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE PENNY POSTS, submitted by Mr. C. Beaver, covering penny post markings from a wide variety of towns in South Staffordshire.

DUPLEX CANCELLATIONS OF WAPWICK, entered by Mr. P. Sharp, who showed a range of these marks, including an Edward VII stamp overprinted 'Army Official' cancelled with a Warwick duplex on an official cover.

HALESOWEN POSTMARKS, shown to us by Mr. S. Stobbs, the marks shown ranged from an early straight line with the town name in two words, straight line mileages in use as late as 1845 and 1846 and the numeral '77' canceller allocated to this town.

SHREWSBURY GENERAL PRE-STAMP POST, displayed by Mr. D. Salt, who commenced with straight line handstamps, including an example of the first handstamp and continuing with various horseshoes and mileage marks, his display ended with a 'Too Late' and a 'Missent' mark of this town. It was interesting to see how the town had used the words 'Salop' or 'Shrewsbury' at various times throughout the eighteenth century in its postmarks.

ASHBY-de-la-ZOUCH POSTAL HISTORY, brought along by Mr. R. Farman who, like Mr. Salt showed the first type known for the town, namely an Ashby/Z straight line. He followed this item with various mileage marks, an interesting letter to Francis Freeling and three examples of local penny posts.

COVENTRY PENNY POSTS, Mr. W. Chesters' entry for the competition comprised a history of the Coventry Penny Posts. The numeral handstamps included number 6 used at Stonebridge. These were followed by various penny posts incorporating the village name in their handstamp all within the Coventry penny postal system.

ATHERSTONE POSTAL HISTORY, shown to us by Mr. G. Parker, including a boxed number of 3 of the Atherstone Penny post on a letter. The contents of which included a request for the writers' parcels to be sent direct to Burton in future as the cakes so kindly sent previously through Atherstone had cost shillings and sixpence!

MAIL FROM ENGLAND TO FRANCE WITH 'ANGLETERRE' POSTAL MARKINGS APPLIED IN FRANCE TO INDICATE THEIR COUNTRY OF ORIGIN, displayed by Mr. C.W.E. Coles who included two early examples with the 'N' reversed.

POST OFFICE INSPECTORS' HANDSTAMP MARKINGS, submitted by Mrs. E. Lewis, showing the use of these marks from the early eighteenth century to a variety of markings applied in the nineteenth century. Among the items which aroused interest was an Edinburgh inspectors' crown and erasure marks applied in the London post, unlike other markings applied by the post office, these types of handstamps give no clue in themselves as to their use and in some cases meanings have not been made known to the general public.

Many comments were passed by members whilst we were viewing the various entries on the very high quality of the material shown throughout.

The competition was judged by our member Mr. J. Andrews who is a national and international Postal History judge. He announced the winner as Mr. Salt with his Shrewsbury display and presented the Societies polished oak trophy to him to retain for one year. Mr. Andrews expressed his delight at the high standard of the entries that he had been asked to judge and which made his decision a most difficult one.

Whilst Mr. Andrews was judging the competition we were entertained by three members.

Mr. S. Stobbs brought along a collection of letters written by an ensign, Francis Burgers who went to the Peninsular War in 1813. The letters which were written to his home in Lutterworth were supplemented by various items such as the tailors bill amounting to £72 for fitting him out. He was only 18 years old at the time and took part in the Battle of the river Nivelle as soon as he arrived there. The actual battle was described in great detail in one of his letters, whereas published literature only makes very brief mention of the event. He was wounded at the battle, but his wounds evidently healed quickly and he writes 'I have got a pair of crutches made and hop up and down like an old ballad singer'. He was recommended to go back to England to recover and states that he was likely to be granted a pension of £50 for his wounds. A further letter states he had arrived in Maldon, Essex in May 1814. All of these letters which Mr. Stobbs had had bequeathed to him by his old friend Sydney Raine aroused much interest not only for their historical content but for the wealth of postmarks on them, such as Falmouth and Plymouth Dock Ship Letters, and various other English and Foreign post office markings. Mr. Stobbs also showed two further letters which he had found since acquiring the above items again addressed to Francis Burgers' house at Lutterworth, but this time from Ireland where he had rejoined his regiment in November 1814. Francis Burgers had Lutterworth Hall, which is still standing today, built before he died at the early age of 30 years.

Mr. D. Keen then showed a selection of his fine Madras Postal History collection which comprises covers which have obviously been very carefully chosen for quality and interest. Among the items shown were ship and packet letters, bearing letters, paid letters and steam letters all incorporating the towns' name of Madras and other markings such as an out station ship letter applied to mail received from up country for transmission abroad and a Madras receiving house number 2 handstamp used in conjunction with a G.P.O. postmark.

Mr. Coles concluded our afternoons entertainment with a scarce postal stationery item only produced in December 1971 to February 1972 for the Stamford Mercury. The $\frac{1}{2}$ p impressed stamp being in blue instead of turquoise. The example he showed was nicely used with a Stamford Mercury 742 numeral handstamp.

These displays, together with the competition entries provided much food for discussion amongst our members who, after two hours of excellent entertainment which passed all too quickly, made their way back to their various homes.

Elizabeth Lewis.

(Chairman)

P.S. Mr. Salt's exhibit will be entered at the Midland Federation Annual Exhibition at Burton-on-Trent on Saturday April 19th to represent our Society in their competition.

Postal History items are required for the Birmingham Philatelic Society Exchange Packets. This is an opportunity to dispose of your surplus material. Items should be numbered and placed in envelopes with a list of the contents, price required, and a space for purchasers signature shown on the front. Please hand any envelopes that you can prepare to Mr. or Mrs. E. Lewis at any of the Societies meetings. Stamps are also required. We can ensure good sales for reasonably priced material.

Private address: Mr. & Mrs. E. Lewis, 27, Rathbone Road.
Smethwick.
WARLEY. W. Midlands.

YOUR LOVING FRIENDS

Not surprisingly, the greeting was from a gentleman - from two in fact - to a lady.

"Your Loving Friends
Cornwallis
J.A.Craggs"

The lady in question was Mary Clarke, widow of the late Daniel Clarke and innkeeper of the best hostelry in town, the Talbot Inn. The reason for the letter bearing that intimate greeting is worth a guess. The gentlemen in question might have been valued customers at the Talbot - but they were not. Surely they must have known the lady very well? In fact they probably never met her. In many ways it is a pity that they didn't because Mary was a shrewd woman who handled her business affairs with a flair that James Craggs, for one, could usefully emulate. He, poor soul, was accused of illegal involvement in the infamous South Sea Bubble Venture and poisoned himself. But that's another story.

Those with a sharp eye will have noted that Cornwallis lacks a first name or initials and will have guessed (correctly) that he had a title. What interest did he share with J.A. Craggs? Perhaps you have the information at your fingertips and can even name the year with confidence. It was 1717 and these two eminent gentlemen were Joint Postmasters General of England, no less.

The rest of the story has to be an anti-climax. There was no intrigue and no romance. On 14th December 1717, the Postmasters General wrote from the General Post Office to their servant, the Postmaster of Stourbridge (Worcs.), Mrs. Clarke. They acknowledged receipt of a bill for thirty six pounds, eleven shillings and eightpence and told her that, when paid, it would be placed to the credit of her account. But they rescued a mundane letter from literary oblivion with that delightful conclusion, "Your Loving Friends". Sometime and somewhere, between 1717 and 1980, the age of chivalry withered away and was replaced by an O.H.M.S. envelope.

Since the contents of the letter are unexceptional and it bears no worthwhile postal markings, it is fortunate to have survived for more than two and a half centuries. With it survived Mary Clarke's detailed post office accounts for three months of 1712 and the official Letter office balance sheet for Stourbridge for the quarter ending 25th March 1721. The three provide fascinating glimpses of the workings of a small town post office in the early years of the eighteenth century.

THE STRAIGHT LINE NAMESTAMPS OF STOURBRIDGE
- A POSTSCRIPT

Since preparing the short article that appeared in Bulletin No.16 (January 1980), further examinations of material in the county archives at Worcester has produced no new examples of two-line Stourbridge name-stamps but it has enabled dates of useage to be confirmed and extended. Those who are interested may wish to amend the dates of the first three types I listed to read:

1755 - 1767
1770 - 1774
1775 - 1778

The most exciting find has been a solitary example of a single-line STOURBRIDGE namestamp from the year 1712. Willcocks has made the point that, whereas a number of towns stamped their names in the period 1705 - 1709, few are known between 1710 and 1719. The stamp is struck in black and measures 43 x 6 mm.

Both the above items submitted by John Calladine.

BIRMINGHAM ITEMS TO LOOK OUT FOR. Number 6 by Eric Lewis.

BIRMINGHAM 'L.C.' MARKS

A circular handstamp containing the letters 'LC' can be found used on a few letters passing into the Birmingham Postal system in the 1850's. It is still not known what the two letters stood for or for what purpose the handstamp was used, but it has only been found on covers to Birmingham or villages in the Birmingham postal district.

This mark appears to have been first recorded in the July 1926 issue of Stanley Gibbon's Monthly Journal by C.F. Dendy Marshall but he had no proof of why it was used.

A small batch of covers with the LC mark was discovered on letters through Birmingham to Henley-in-Arden by the late Sydney Raine, the well known postal historian of Birmingham. Sydney Raine's original notes on this mark are typed below, but he too had no proof of its correct use.

" I was lucky in finding a "nest" of 25 - 30 these (LC marks) in an old country office. Dendy Marshall has stated his opinion that the one in his collection indicated that it had been delayed in Birmingham owing to being mis-sorted - but I think he is wrong.

Not one of my complete letters had suffered delay in Birmingham - they had all passed through Birmingham but had not originated there - they were all to Henley - which had no Railway Station and was on the Coach Road to London, and still being used by Coaches, but I think not after in 1855.

I think the mark might well stand for 'LOCAL CARRIER', the letters being carried by a carriers cart - having missed the G.W.R. train to Halton (some five miles from Henley)!"

Sidney Raine

Post script to note

I don't imagine there are more than six to a dozen known copies - outside the one's I have found BUT this mark was in use from 1848-1859 - 11 years! I think now my estimate is much too low - but certainly no collectors seem to have any.

Sidney Raine



The two LC postmarks recorded by Eric Lewis

Article continued on next page

I have one of these covers to Henley-in-Arden which was posted in Warwick on 4th January 1855, it bears a Birmingham c.d.s. of the same date and a Henley-in-Arden c.d.s. of 6th January 1855. There was therefore a delay of two days between Birmingham and Henley-in-Arden.

The second example that I have is on a cover from Brierley Hill, back stamped Brierley Hill and also Dudley on the 20th September 1851 and with a Birmingham circular date stamp of 22nd September 1851. This letter, addressed to Messrs. Deakins was redirected from St. George's Crescent to nearby Chain Walk in Lozells. Messrs Deakins having moved there from number 7 St. George's Crescent as indicated in the Birmingham Post Office Directory of 1854. Was this redirection the reason for the 'LC' handstamp, but the other covers that I have were not redirected. The letter arrived on or before the 25th September as indicated by the recipients writing on the envelope.

I have a third example on a letter posted in Swansea on the 25th May 1858. The envelope is back stamped the same date with a Birmingham c.d.s. I have seen a cover date April 3rd 1858, addressed to the same firm and sent from the same person in Swansea and having a similar LC handstamp.

The LC marks on the above covers were undoubtedly applied in Birmingham as in each case the ink used matches up with the Birmingham receiving c.d.s. The first cover in a bright yellow green, the second in a dull bluish green and the third in black.

The use of an LC mark on mail to or through Birmingham was revived for a short time in the early 1900's when a new rectangular handstamp containing the letters LC was brought into use. I have an example on a postcard from America where the adhesive was cancelled with a 22nd March 1904 c.d.s. and have seen another of the same period.

The mark generally believed to stand for 'Letter Carrier' or 'Local Carrier', but why should it be used on so few letters if it was necessary to handstamp them in this way? The vast majority of letters to Birmingham in the 1850's were taken out to the districts and villages in the Birmingham postal system by letter carriers.

Could this mark be an early form of the diamond letter census mark that has been used by the post office at certain times from 1922 and which are still used each October to count selected batches of mail? The use of the Birmingham LC mark appears to fall into date groupings and this could possibly be the reason for its use. (The letters could well represent letter count or letter census). Perhaps other members may like to comment on this or any other possible reason for its use.

WHAT'S NEW

by Robert A. Hunt.

I wonder how many of us use the information available through the various specialist societies and study groups to further our knowledge of the postal history of our own particular field of interest, especially those of us interested in a particular town or county.

While I am aware that to some people postal history ended with the introduction of penny postage, or at the latest at the end of the reign of Queen Victoria, many of us are well aware that postal history continues to be made all the time.

For example: by the time you read this many of us in the Warwickshire area will, for most purposes, have lost our local postmarks, with our mail being franked "Coventry, West Midlands". This is the first step towards fully automated letter sorting using those jaw-breaking postal codes.

Members of the Postal Mechanisation Study Circle have been kept fully informed of the introduction of this and other mechanised letter offices. The circle is quite new but produces a useful monthly newsletter and IDENT a more technical journal concerned with postal mechanisation. The circle is also producing souvenir covers to mark the introduction of each new MLO and holds postal auctions.

Also quite new is the Postal Label Study Group. Although members of this group are interested in all sorts of esoteric items such as air mail vignettes and express delivery labels many take a great interest in registration labels.

Until recently different labels were issued to each individual office or sub-office and through the Groups exchange packets it should be possible for postal historians to obtain labels issued to offices in their own area. The Group also publishes a well-produced and informative illustrated quarterly bulletin.

The Cinderella Stamp Club has, of course, been in existence for many years and membership of it and its offshoot the British Private Post Study Group would be useful for any member interested in such things as the strike post stamps of 1971 and the carriage of mail by bus companies such as Midland Red or Stratford Blue.

An organisation which would perhaps warrant an article to itself is the Letter Box Study Group, a body in which I take particular interest.

To be a member of this you have to be even more of a "nut" than are even most postal history collectors. After all who in their right minds would go round measuring, drawing or photographing pillar boxes?

In fact although I make light of it the Group is doing sterling work tracking down pillar boxes of all types, making local authorities aware of any unusual boxes in their area and trying to ensure that no more rare boxes vanish - as has happened to so many over the years.

This is something with which every reader can help. After all these are boxes of various types near to us all and some could be types which the group is trying to trace. And who can deny that the introduction of the pillar box well over 100 years ago had an important effect on the growth of the postal service, thus playing an important role in the study of postal history?

Finally one of the most important societies for anyone interested in twentieth century postmarks is the British Postmark Society. The society produces an informative quarterly bulletin, runs postal auctions and has a number of circulating packets.

To save space I have not given details of the secretaries of the various societies and groups but I would be happy to supply names and addresses on receipt of a s.a.e. My address is 11, Newtown Road, Nuneaton.

Post Script by Editor

This is the last Bulletin to be issued for our present Season - it is hoped that the next issue will be published in August to give you notice of the first meeting of the 1980/81 Season and brief programme of further meetings.

We will be publishing an interesting article by Steve Stobbs and hope to complete the story of Coventry Penny Post. (by Humphrey Norville). Subject to your response next year the Society hope to publish information on the DUPLEX MARKS OF MIDLANDS - so please list those that you have and send to address previously given.

Remember that I as Editor am constantly looking for material to publish in the Bulletin. Short articles with a single illustration are always acceptable - so turn something out and send to :

Jon Baker
Bulletin Editor
13 Station Road
Hinckley LEICS.