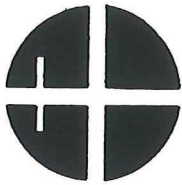


MIDLAND MAIL



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



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Chairman:
Chris Jackson

Treasurer:
Elizabeth Lewis

Secretary:
Eric Lewis

Number 111, August 1999

I suppose it has always been, and always will be, the lot of those who edit the journals of postal history societies to wonder what they are going to put in the next issue. While I am happy to go on for a while yet finding enough material to make sure that each issue of Midland Mail will be of a worthwhile length, it does concern me that there are times when this journal does not fulfil one of its functions - to facilitate communication between members. I am sure that every member must have in their collection at least one cover about which they could write a few lines. So, I would like to encourage everyone to do so in the coming season, and Midland Mail will be the better for a greater variety. Of course, if you are able to write a longer article, your Editor will be delighted.

NEW MEMBERS

We extend a warm welcome to John Reynolds of Stoke-on-Trent who is interested in the postal history of that town, and Godfrey Townsend of Oxford who is interested in Oxford, Swindon and the White Horse District as well as Swansea and West Glamorgan.

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

Our first meeting of the season will be at Cranham on 11th September. Full details of this joint meeting should accompany this edition. The meeting on 16th October at Warwick will be held in the premises of Warwick & Warwick in Scar Bank, Millers Road, beginning at 1.30 p.m. The meeting will be preceded by a Committee Meeting at 11 a.m. On 13th November we will be at Carrs Lane, Birmingham when Alan Marshall will give a display on Nottingham.

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THE MIDLAND COUNTIES IN THE INLAND OFFICE ORDER BOOKS, 1843-46

As in the previous issue, the entries are arranged in chronological order. The changes in posttown of the sub-offices are not shown as these appear in 'The Undated Circular Marks of the Midland Counties'.

- 17MAR1843 Lechlade, Fairford and Highworth are no longer posttowns. Letters for these places are to be sent to Faringdon.
- 29JUN1843 Pershore and Tenbury will be removed from the Worcester Division to the Birmingham Division - Northern Rail Road.
- 5JUL1843 The "Oxford and Birmingham" sack at the Worcester Division withdrawn and replaced by two other sacks: "Oxford and Broadway" containing bags for Woodstock (Banbury), Enstone, Morton-in-Marsh (Chipping Campden), Chipping Norton and Broadway; and "Shipstone and Birmingham" containing bags for Stratford-on-Avon (Kineton) and Shipstone. The latter to be sent to the Birmingham Division - Northern Rail Road.
- 5JUL1843 Hockley and Henley in Arden are to be sent to Birmingham by the night dispatch and Stratford-on-Avon by the day mail. [See TL 15 on p. 146 of the undated circle book.]
- 5JUL1843 Long Compton, Weston House - Sir Geo Phillips, Weston Park - G.R. Phillips M.P. are to be sent to Shipstone instead of Chipping Norton. [This probably coincides with the opening of a sub-office in Long Compton.]
- 23JAN1844 Letters for Etwall are to be sent to Uttoxeter not Derby. [This probably coincides with the opening of a sub-office in Etwall.]
- 28FEB1844 An auxiliary mailcoach called the 'Stilton & Leeds' will carry the following bags in a sack labelled 'London and Grantham': Hatfield, Welwyn, Wansford, Stamford, Coltersworth and Grantham (Tuxford).
- 5MAY 1844 The Postmasters have been supplied with new cancelling stamps each Post Town having its own number which will supersede the stamps hitherto in use.
- 17AUG1844 Letters for Uley and its delivery and Kingscote and its delivery are to be sent to Dursley instead of Stroud. [See 'Local Posts of Midland Counties' p. 111.]
- 12DEC1844 The 'Worcester & Birmingham' sack is to be discontinued and replaced by one labelled 'Wotton-under-Edge and Birmingham' which will contain the following bags: Wotton-under-Edge, Dursley, Bromsgrove, Droitwich, Pershore and Worcester (Leominster, Presteigne, Great Malvern and Bromyard).
- 3JAN1845 The bags for Dursley and Wotton-under-Edge are to be sent in the 'Cirencester & Stroud' sack. The sack at the Birmingham Division will again be named 'Worcester & Birmingham'.
- 6JAN1845 Day bags to be made up for West Bromwich, Wednesbury, Bilston, Shifnal, Wellington and Shrewsbury and enclosed in a sack labelled 'Birmingham & Shrewsbury'. The bags will be returned empty.
- 20JAN1845 The Evesham bag is to go in the 'Oxford & Broadway' sack instead of the Cheltenham bag.
- 13FEB1845 Letters for Kingscote now charged on Dursley to be charged on Wotton-under-Edge by Night Mail and to Tetbury by the Morning Mail.
- 14FEB1845 Day bags to be made up for Tetbury, Dursley and Wotton-under-Edge which with Cirencester will make up a sack 'Cirencester & Wotton-under-Edge'.
- 14FEB1845 The Pershore bag is to be enclosed in the 'Oxford & Broadway' sack (which on that evening becomes the 'Oxford & Pershore' sack) by the Great Western Rail instead of the 'Wotton-under-Edge & Birmingham'.
- 19MAR1845 Details of the Thrapstone delivery.
- 5APR1845 The bag for Bishop's Castle to go in the Shrewsbury bag instead of that for Welshpool.
- 9JUL1845 The bags for Warwick, Leamington and Stratford-on-Avon are to be sent single instead of in the Coventry bag.

- 12JUL1845 From next Monday morning the bags for Kenilworth, Leamington, Warwick and Stratford-on-Avon are to go in a sack labelled 'Coventry Station & Warwick Road'.
- 29JUL1845 The Market Harborough bag is to be enclosed in the Northampton bag instead of that for Rugby.
- 11AUG1845 Day mail to be sent to Newcastle (Staffs).
- 16AUG1845 The Pershore and Evesham bags will no longer go in the 'Oxford & Pershore' sack which now will be labelled 'Oxford & Broadway'. The Pershore bag will go in the 'Worcester and Birmingham' sack; the Evesham bag is to be enclosed in the Cheltenham bag.
- 26AUG1845 The Grantham bag (Tuxford enclosed) is to go in the 'Northampton & Peterborough' sack instead of the 'London & Grantham' which will become the 'London & Colsterworth' sack.
- 9OCT1845 Andoversford and its delivery are to be charged on Cheltenham instead of Northleach. [If this is correct, then either Andoversford became a sub-office of Northleach in 1842, (see TL2 on p. 32 of the undated circle book, or there was another transfer between 1842 and October 1845.]
- 19DEC1845 The Louth mailcoach is discontinued. Among the changes is the enclosure of the Colstersworth bag in the Stamford bag. The 'Northampton and Peterborough' sack then contains the following bags: Northampton (Kettering and Market Harborough), Wellingborough, Higham Ferrers, Thrapstone, Oundle, Stamford (Colstersworth), Peterborough and Grantham (Tuxford). The Boston bag with its enclosures and the 'Peterborough & Louth' sack are to be forwarded by the "Rugby Branch of the Northern Railway".
- 29DEC1845 Day mails are to be sent to Ross and Hereford.
- 29DEC1845 The 'Cheltenham & Hereford' sack is replaced by one labelled 'Gloucester & Aberystwyth' which contains the bags for Ledbury, Hereford (Hay), Kington (Presteigne), Rhydyder (Builth) and Aberystwyth. This sack is to be sent by the Great Western Railway. The bag for Tewkesbury is to be sent single by the Northern Railway instead of the Great Western as before.
- 7FEB1846 Day mail bags are to be made up for Wellingborough, Higham Ferrers, Thrapstone, Oundle and Wansford.
- 24FEB1846 Among a list of places for which the letters are to be sorted to the Northern Railway are: Higham Ferrers, Kettering, Market Deeping, Thrapstone, Colsterworth, Grantham, Oundle, Peterborough, Stamford, Tuxford, Leicester, Burton-on-Trent, Oxford, Kington, Shipstone, Stratford-on-Avon, Nottingham, Cheltenham and Tewkesbury. [I am not sure what this entry means as the bags for most of those places already went by train from Euston. Possibly it reflects a change in the systems within the Inland Office.]
- 10AUG1846 The bag for Tuxford is to go in the Newark bag instead of that for Grantham.
- 12SEP1846 A day mail bag is to be made up for Bicester - to go in the Oxford bag.
- 10NOV1846 A day mail bag is to be made up for Ledbury - to go in the Gloucester bag.

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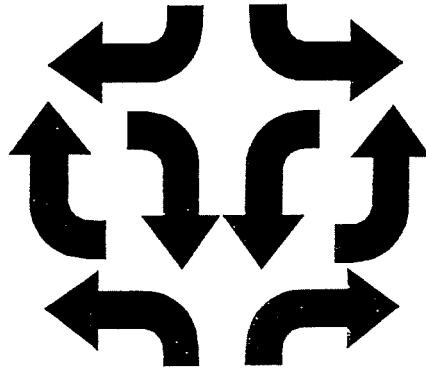
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MR MABERLY'S UPDATE

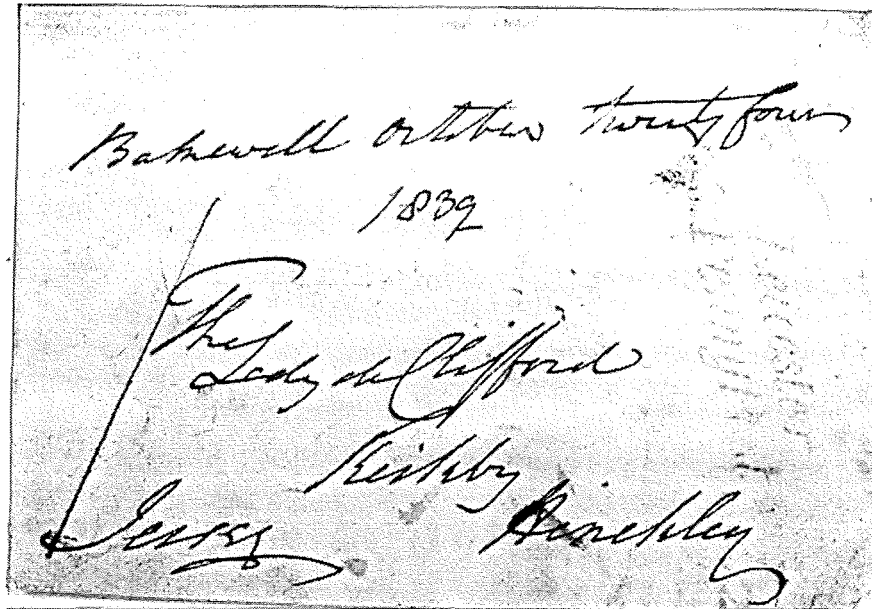
Eric Lewis has kindly sent a copy of the page from the Steel Impression Books opposite that on which are recorded handstamps issued on 29th November 1843. It is a draft that Maberly had prepared for an updated sheet to accompany each new handstamp that was sent out.

To what Place	Date when sent	Stamps
<i>YOU will herewith receive a new stamp, with which you will in future distinctly and legibly stamp every letter put into your Office, ~~discontinuing the use of your present stamp, which you will return to me immediately, should you have cause previously for the same~~</i> <i>You will be especially careful to stamp every letter ^{distinctly} correctly that is deposited in your Office, so that in case of any question you may be able to certify the same. Any neglect of this material duty will inevitably be attended with serious consequences.</i> <i>You will take good care of the stamp, as you will be held responsible for its safe custody and preservation. Common Ink must not be used with this stamp, but Printer's Ink or some material mixed with Oil; any Ink or Composition mixed with water will have the effect of corroding the stamp, which should be cleaned from time to time with a hard brush and a little spirit of Turpentine.</i> <i>The following is the recipe for the Composition at present in use in the Inland Department here, which is found to answer better than any other.</i> "One pound of Printer's Red Ink well mixed with one pint of Linseed Oil, and half a pint of Sweet Oil." <i>I am,</i> <i>Your obedient Servant,</i> <i>If you have been ^{previously} supplied with a stamp, you will return the old one ^{to me immediately}</i> <i>The Postmr</i>		
		W. L. MABERLY, Secretary.

A LEICESTER PENNY POST FREE FRONT

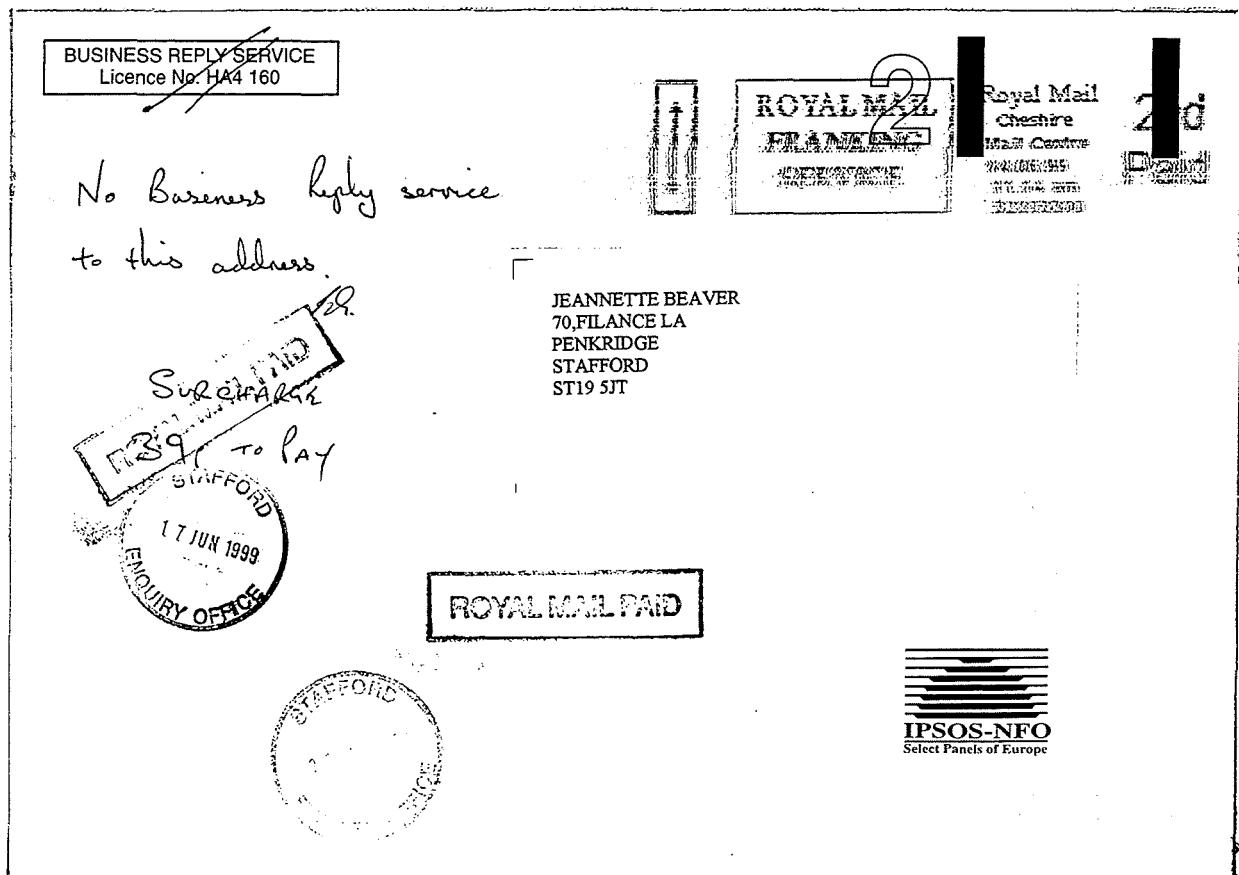
At a recent Stampex I purchased the free front shown below. Although it is only a front, I did not consider that I had been 'rooked' since I paid less for it than I had for a coffee and sandwich a little earlier.

I am rather puzzled by this item which is addressed to The Lady de Clifford, Kirkby (Mallory), Hinckley. Although the letter was a 'Free', it was correctly charged one penny for carriage in a penny post. But why was the 'Leicester/Penny Post' mark struck on the letter? There is no indication that it was redirected from Hinckley and I cannot imagine that Kirkby Mallory ever came in the Leicester Penny Post. Does anyone have an explanation?



NO BUSINESS REPLY SERVICE

My thanks to Chris Beaver for sending the envelope which is shown below reduced in size. On 17th June a card was delivered saying that the letter was available to the caller on payment of 39p or by post if 39p in stamps was affixed to the card. The card was sent and the letter was delivered on 28th June. The date of the awful Cheshire Mail Centre IMP mark is 14th June.



THE SURVEYORS' JOURNALS (Part 37)

The 1st January 1828 found Mr Karstadt in London at the G.P.O. from where he left on 4th of the month for Nottingham as the contractor for the ride from there to Loughborough had been dismissed. He spent nearly a week in finding a replacement. Mr Karstadt then went to Mansfield to investigate the strange delay to a letter containing a £5 note. Apart from a few forays to places such as Nottingham, Lincoln and Sheffield, Mr Karstadt remained in Mansfield until May either investigating this matter or in charge of the office there.

In mid-May, Mr Karstadt arrived in Ilkeston to consider a proposal for a post from there to Derby. He recommended that the P.M.G. refuse this request.

He spent the first eleven days of July at Bawtry, Gainsborough and Sheffield arranging rides between those places as it was proposed to withdraw the Louth and Sheffield mailcoach, but his efforts were unnecessary as it was decided to continue the mailcoach. In fact, that was the last piece of business that Mr Karstadt transacted in the Midlands in 1828. He was to spend September and October in Manchester and November and December in Lincolnshire.

It was towards the end of January 1828 that Mr Rideout arrived in Newnham to investigate an allegation that the contractor for the post from there to Gloucester had carried passengers. After he had inspected the Gloucester office, Mr Rideout went on to Ludlow and Bishop's Castle to arrange a horsepost on the withdrawal of the mailcoach between those two places. Then, at Malvern, he made arrangements for a post to meet the Cheltenham and Hereford mailcoach. The impending extension of this coach to Brecon took Mr Karstadt on to Hereford, Hay and Brecon.

Towards the end of February, the death of the postmaster at Witney meant that Mr Rideout had to take charge of that office for a week, making up the accounts and instructing the new deputy. After that, he fixed the boundary of the free delivery at Oxford before setting off down the road to Bath to make arrangements for the withdrawal of the Oxford and Bristol mailcoach. He then had to go back to Ludlow and Bishop's Castle to finalise arrangements for the ride and to investigate complaints made about the letter carrier at Bishop's Castle.

Next, came the installation of two new deputies - at Andoversford and Minchinhampton, followed by an inspection of the office at Tetbury.

In May, Mr Rideout investigated irregularities in the ride from Leominster to Radnor, looked into the loss of a letter containing money sent from Bath to Hereford, instructed a new deputy at Kington, reported on the charge on letters from Leominster to Mortimer's Cross and finally took charge of the office at Llandovery where he remained for most of June.

Mr Rideout visited Worcester towards the end of June to see if Mrs St. John was capable of taking over the office after the death of her husband. He then went onto Cheltenham to give instructions about the starting of a mailcoach from there to Bath. As a consequence of the introduction of this mailcoach, he was obliged to visit the Cirencester area to withdraw the rides he had established in March. At the end of July, Mr Rideout went to Wotton-under-Edge and Chepstow to find out the costs of a ride between those places and of crossing the Old Passage.

Mr Rideout spent the whole of August and September in Wales. In fact, apart from a few days at the end of October when he was in Redditch where the sub-deputy was in arrears, Mr Rideout's business in the rest of the year took him to either Wales or Wiltshire.

Mr Churchill's first business of January 1828 was to take charge of the office at Oswestry for a week as the deputy there was in arrears. A similar state of affairs took him to Stone where he spent nearly a month since the deputy was dismissed so great was his debt. He returned to Stone for a few days at the start of March to instruct the new deputy before going on to Shifnal, Broseley and Wenlock to alter the posts so as to give more time to answer the London letters. After he had installed a new sub-deputy at Overton, Mr Churchill visited several places in Wales.

On 28th April, Mr Churchill arrived in Birmingham, "on the sudden death of the Chief Clerk in that office, examining all his Letters & Papers with a view of ascertaining whether they might not afford some clue to the numerous lost property Letters implicating the Birmingham Office, but which after a very minute inspection entirely removed any imputation that might possibly have been cast on his memory." His investigations lasted until the middle of May and resulted in the arrest of a John Hunts of the Twopenny Post Office in London who had friends in Birmingham and in whose possession was found a muslin gown purchased with some of the stolen money. With the assistance of a police officer, Mr Churchill searched the persons and lodgings of all and letter carriers employed in the Birmingham post office to see if there had been any correspondence of them and Hunts.

Four days were then spent in converting the footpost between Coventry and Nuneaton into a horsepost.

Mr Churchill then had to meet at Wolverhampton a police officer from Bow Street to investigate the loss of a letter, containing £840, sent from Liverpool to Birmingham. The enquiry took the two men to Birmingham, Newcastle and Liverpool. They came to the conclusion that the clerk who had been instructed to take the letter to the post office had lost it on his way there.

There were two pieces of business in the Midlands in June: from 16th to 19th, establishing a penny post office at Oldbury with a foot messenger to and from Birmingham, and inspecting the offices at Wolverhampton and Shifnal. There is nothing of great note in the journal for July: inspections of the offices at Ellesmere, Overton and Wem; a change in the terms of the Wellington and Hay Gate ride; an investigation of a complaint, which proved to be unfounded, about the rider of the Welshpool and Bishop's Castle post.

Mr Churchill spent the first five days of August making the necessary arrangements for the Birmingham and Manchester mailcoach to miss out Walsall. He then took charge of the Birmingham office as the postmistress and five of her clerks had to attend the trial at Warwick of John Hunts. It was necessary for him to go to Coventry and Nuneaton to investigate charges of drunkenness made against the contractor for the ride between those two places. He found that the allegations were groundless. While in that part of the country he took the opportunity to attend the trial at Warwick. Back in Birmingham he attended to "various matters connected with that important office, examining all the official accounts & revising the whole of the duties, also enquiring into a petition from Handsworth for some official accommodation at that place with a view of proposing a Penny Post there.", before going on to Shrewsbury to inspect the office and regulate the ride between there and Whitchurch.

For the whole of September and October, Mr Churchill was in North Wales, Cheshire and Lancashire. However on 8th November, he was back in Birmingham to investigate the loss of a "remittance letter" sent from Burslem to Birmingham. His enquiries which lasted a week took him to Newcastle and Burslem but proved to be fruitless.

Then, from 16th to 19th November, Mr Churchill was in Birmingham, "attending to the daily duties of the Office in consequence of two of the Clerks having resigned their situations and a determined spirit of insubordination amongst the whole." [There is sufficient material in Post 40 for the years 1828/9 concerning the misdemeanours in the Birmingham post office to write a fair-sized book.]

Mr Churchill's stay in Birmingham which lasted until 11th December, was interrupted by the need to instal a new sub-deputy, a Mr Pipe, at Fazeley where the previous postmaster had been declared insolvent.

Back in Birmingham, he "engaged in the duties of the Office and investigating a serious charge preferred against the Senior Clerk of having been detected in opening and reading a letter in its course thro' the Office and enquiring into various irregularities of conduct on his part.. Also arranging for a Penny Post Office at Handsworth and instructing the Receiver in the duties thereof, and discontinuing the Foot Messenger between Birmingham & Wednesbury."

In his December journal, Mr Churchill goes on, "Continued at Birmingham in the daily duties of the Office on the dismissal of the Senior Clerk, revising and regulating the whole with a view of facilitating & defining the duty of the different clerks as much as possible, arranging the duty of the Letter Carriers in order to expedite the delivery of the Letters and attending to various matters connected with the business of this important office."

Further visits to the offices at Newcastle and Burslem did not produce any more information about the missing letter mentioned above.

Mr Churchill ended the year at Welshpool, arranging the duties of the office so as not to detain the mailcoach to and from Newtown, and altering the ride to Bishop's Castle so that it arrived in time for the mailcoach.

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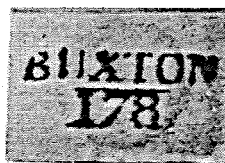
SOME MILEAGE PROBLEMS

In December 1828, Freeling wrote to the P.M.G., "The Alterations which are constantly taking place in the arrangements of the Posts not infrequently increase, and in other Cases diminish, the distance to Places according to the actual route of the Correspondence, so as to affect the Rates of Postage." He then went on to discuss some instances which had been raised in correspondence with the surveyors.

The **Lechlade** bag was now carried by the Stroud mailcoach, giving a distance of 78 miles for which the postage should have been 8d. instead of the 9d. being charged.

The letters to **Buxton** were charged 11d. throughout the year which was correct for the distance via Sheffield but during three months in the summer the bag was sent by an Express Ride from Leek. The distance then was under 170 miles so the correct charge should only be 10d. The surveyor had pointed out that there was no need for the bag to be sent via Sheffield as if sent by the ride from Derby to Bakewell it would still fall in with the mail from Sheffield and arrive at the same time. The distance by that route was 166 miles and it seemed to Freeling that having a shorter route, and the arrival being precisely the same, they were duty bound to use it. He proposed that the postage to Buxton in future be 10d. all the year so avoiding the embarrassment of charging a different rate for three months in the year. Despite this, it appears that the route via Bakewell was not used until June 1829 [MM107/5]. A possible reason is given in a note written by a Mr Perry [from the Mailcoach Department ?] which says that the Manchester mail was overloaded so when the ride from Leek was not used the Buxton mail should go via Sheffield and have a mailcoach guard for all of the 193 miles.

Mr Karstadt reported that the Buxton stamp gave the distance as 178 miles but he could not make out how this was reckoned. [Obviously he had not read MM88/16-17, 91/16 and 107/5 or he would have known that from 1805 to 1808 Buxton received its London mail through Macclesfield. The 1816 Cary Atlas gives Macclesfield as 167 miles from London and the distance from Macclesfield to Buxton as nearly 11 miles. Yet, I see that the County Catalogue records the earliest use of the 178 stamp as 1818.] There will be more on Buxton in MM112 & MM113.



Freeling said that he had had considerable difficulty in regard to **Abbott's Bromley, Great Heywood and Wolseley**. Mr Churchill had reported that daily bags for each of these places were made up at Lichfield. The bag for Abbott's Bromley was carried by the Chester Mail as far as Rugeley from where it was taken by the Uttoxeter ride to within a mile of its destination where it was met by a person employed by the receiver. The bags for the other two places were dropped by the Liverpool mailcoach as it passed through. Although the bags were carried by established posts, the postage was charged only as far as the posttown since none of the receivers had an official salary but were paid by a charge of one penny on each letter delivered. It occurred to Freeling that by giving a moderate salary to each of the receivers, the Post Office would make the three places "recognised Receiving Houses" and be entitled to charge an additional penny from London for the whole distance to the places themselves. Mr Churchill recommended that the receivers at Great Heywood and Wolseley should have an annual allowance of £10 for salary and providing a free delivery. As the receiver at Abbott's Bromley had to meet the horsepost between Rugeley and Uttoxeter, both morning and evening, making a daily walk of 6 miles, Mr Churchill recommended an allowance of £20 p.a. which included a sum for providing a free delivery. These proposals were accepted and the postage from London increased from ninepence to tenpence. The distances from London of these places were Abbott's Bromley 139 miles, Great Heywood 131 miles and Wolseley 129 miles.

In his report to the P.M.G., Freeling did not mention one query that Mr Karstadt had raised in a letter written on 29th February. [The initial reports from the surveyors were written in the early part of that year, yet Freeling did not report until December 1828.] Although two of the places are well outside our area of reference, the matter is of sufficient interest for us to look at it here. Mr Karstadt had mentioned that letters from London to **Peterborough, Boston and Barton** were charged one penny less than the actual distance they were carried would warrant. Originally, the Edinburgh mailcoach had carried the bags for these places to Stilton from where branch mails took them. But on the establishment of separate mailcoaches to serve these places, that to Barton and Hull had been sent through Hertford and that to Louth through Cambridge, resulting in an increase in the distance to the places:

Peterborough from 78.2 (rate 8d.) to 84.0 miles (rate 9d.);
 Boston from 113.3 (rate 9d.) to 121.4 miles (rate 10d.);
 Barton from 164.4 (rate 10d.) to 170.2 miles (rate 11d.).

When this happened it had been thought right not to charge the extra postage and, at first, the three bags had been sent by the Edinburgh mailcoach to Stilton to be taken up their by their own mails. However this had proved to be inconvenient as the the Barton and Louth mailcoaches had sometimes been delayed at Stilton waiting for bags they could have carried from London and the Edinburgh mailcoach was fully loaded. A note from Mr Stow in the Inland Office confirmed that the letters for the three places did not now go on the Edinburgh mail and that the lower rate of postage was charged. However there is no further mention of this anomaly in these papers.

Mr Karstadt began his letter of 29th February:

"I beg to return the List of places with the distances from London to my District filled in according to the present routes of the Post. I have taken the distances upon the Mail Coach Way Bills as the basis of these calculations, not only because they are reckoned from the General Post Office, but are the only authorised measurement we are supplied with."

This suggests that plans to draw up the well-known list of February 1829 existed at least a year before the information was published. [Ref: Post 40/897/1828]

THE CASE OF THE CHANGED FIVE POUND NOTE

The details of this case are relatively straightforward yet Mr Karstadt had to spend five weeks in Mansfield dealing with it.

On the afternoon of 14th November 1827, a Mr Fletcher paid one shilling at the post office in Newark for a letter directed to Mr John Booth, Overseer of the Poor, Mansfield Woodhouse and containing a £5 note for the relief of a Sarah Shardlow - twenty-five weeks at four shillings a week. The letter should have gone direct to Mansfield by the ride on the morning of the 15th. However, the letter was not received by Mr Booth and when its non-arrival was discovered Mr Fletcher informed the postmaster of Newark who immediately wrote to the postmaster at Mansfield, Mr Dawson, pointing out the entry of 1/- paid on the bill from Newark on 15th November. This enquiry from the postmaster of Newark was on 14th December and on the 19th, the letter arrived at Mansfield in the Nottingham bag, bearing the Nottingham stamp and the Newark stamp erased. The word "Missent" was written on the letter. The date of the letter had been altered from 13th to 23rd November and a £5 note of the Mansfield & Chesterfield Bank enclosed, instead of one of the Newark & Sleaford which had been sent by Mr Fletcher.

Mr Karstadt said that the role of the Nottingham office in this affair was easily explained. The letter had been dropped into the letter box at Nottingham, either late on 18th December or on 19th December. As the letters were stamped on the back the 'Pd 1s' on the front would not have been noticed, and once mixed with the other letters that mark would not have excited attention. The 'Missent' was not in the handwriting of anyone in that office. Also, if the letter had gone to Nottingham and been tampered with there, the culprit would not have wanted to draw attention to the fact that it had been to Nottingham, which erasing the Newark mark and putting the letter into the Nottingham box was certain to do.

He thought that it was probable that the letter had been sent to Mansfield on 15th November. The letter bill from Newark to Mansfield of that date had the entry of '1s' paid and as in the previous three months there had been only three days when the paid letters amounted to that sum and never more, the presumption was that the entry referred to Mr Fletcher's letter.

Mr Karstadt said that Mansfield Woodhouse was a village about a mile from Mansfield. The letters were called for daily by a woman, Ann Sissons, employed by the village and who had acted as their letter carrier for over thirty years. An extraordinary fact was that this woman could not read. She took the letters she had for Woodhouse to the Mansfield letter carrier who read the directions to her and on this information she placed them in order for delivery. She had stated quite positively that she had not had this letter for Mr Booth until it came from Nottingham. She was able to recollect this as Mr Booth had expected the letter and had enquired about it. Although Ann Sissons could not read, Mr Karstadt felt that she seemed to be a very respectable woman. She collected the letters as soon as the London mail was sorted which was about 2.30 p.m. As the letter in question would have arrived by the Newark ride at about 2 p.m., it would have remained in the Mansfield office until the following day.

A review of all the evidence led Mr Karstadt to conclude that the offence had been committed in the Mansfield office with several points indicating the postmaster as the most likely suspect, including the fact that he took five days to reply to an enquiry from the postmaster of Newark and did so on the day the letter reappeared.

At the end of February 1828, Mr Dawson was called upon to resign. In a letter, asserting his innocence, he said that the post office had been in his family since 1st November 1728. However, the P.M.G. said that he was no longer a fit person to be the postmaster.

If Mr Karstadt thought that he could soon leave Mansfield, he was wrong. At the end of March, he reported that he had been arranging the transfer of the office to the house of a Mr Collinson who had been nominated, but Mr Collinson had now declined the appointment because of the illness of his son who he had expected to help him. A few days later the Treasury nominated another person but he turned out to be blind. This person had hoped that his wife would be permitted to do the work. However, Freeling said this could not be allowed as it would subvert the ruling that a married woman was not eligible to be appointed as a deputy.

[Refs: Post 40/160/1828, 40/194/1828, 40/272/1828, 40/312/1828]

THE EXTRA CHARGE AT MARKET DRAYTON

In May 1828, a Charles Duckers wrote to the P.M.G. asking if the postmaster of Market Drayton was entitled to charge one penny above the "regular postage" on each single letter delivered to people living in the centre of the town.

In reply to a letter from Freeling, the postmaster of Market Drayton, Richard Grant, wrote that the name Charles Duckers was perfectly strange to him, there being no householder of that name in the town. Furthermore, he enclosed a letter dated 30th October 1810 sent from the G.P.O. and signed by Freeling.

This letter stated that the Postmasters General, having taken into consideration a memorial from the inhabitants of Market Drayton, did not think it right, bearing in mind the amount collected by the postmaster, that the people of Market Drayton should continue to pay a gratuity both ways on their letters. Therefore, their Lordships directed that from the 1st November an open letter box should be provided into which people could put their letters as at "ordinary Post Towns". However, the usual gratuity on the delivery of letters was to continue, it being understood that persons who called at the office should receive their letters for the postage only, and their newspapers free. The postmaster was to show at the end of a year by how much his income had been reduced by this measure and their Lordships would then consider what extra salary should be paid. They also intended to pay an allowance for the carriage of the bags to and from the mailcoach at Loggerheads.

Mr Grant said that he had complied with the demands set out in that letter. He had continued to ask for and receive the extra charge of a penny on the delivery of letters and the townspeople had not complained about this.

Mr Karstadt remarked that as the inhabitants were well satisfied with the arrangement, it would perhaps be better not to incur any expense in effecting a free delivery on the representation of an entire stranger.

Consequently Freeling was able to report to the Postmaster General:

"... it would be better to let the matter rest as it is, and that if the inhabitants themselves apply to be exempted from the extra charge, it will then be time enough to incur expence in order to afford a free delivery of the letters. If your Grace should be of the same opinion, such can be the understanding in this case."

In other words, the authorities were prepared to ignore a legal ruling until they were obliged to comply with it.

[Ref: Post 40/440/1828]

THE WITHDRAWAL OF THE OXFORD AND BATH MAILCOACH

We have already seen [MM110/14] that the mailcoach from Oxford to Bath and Bristol prevented some towns from deriving the full benefit of the new London and Stroud mailcoach, but that moves were afoot to withdraw the mailcoach from Oxford. This happened on 5th January 1828.

A report from Mr Rideout on the changes that he had put in place on the road between Oxford and Cirencester is missing. However, Freeling stated in a report to the P.M.G. that in order to carry the letters from Oxford a ride had been introduced between Oxford and Abingdon tied to the times of the Stroud mailcoach at the latter place.

On 1st April 1828, Mr Rideout detailed the changes made between Cirencester and Bath. The road was to be served by a horsepost made up of two separate contracts: Cirencester to Dunkirk and Dunkirk to Bath. The down Stroud mailcoach reached Cirencester between 6 and 7 a.m. while the up coach left there at 8.30 p.m. The horsepost was to leave Cirencester at 7 a.m. and, travelling at 7 m.p.h., reach Tetbury at 8.27 a.m., Dunkirk at 9.30, Cross Hands at 10.06 and Bath at 11.42 a.m. The return was to leave Bath at 2.30 p.m., Dunkirk at 5.06, Tetbury at 6.06 and reach Cirencester at 7.33 p.m. He went on to show that the places between Cirencester gained several hours in which to answer their letters.

The London letters for Tetbury had circulated through Chippenham [MM103/12], reaching Tetbury at noon and leaving there at 5 p.m. They were now to circulate through Cirencester [See MM107/7], so the town would gain over an hour to answer those letters.

[Refs: Post 42/270/1828, 40/284/1828]

THE BICESTER AND OXFORD RIDE

A voluminous set of papers in Post 40 deal with applications from Lady Jersey for improvements in her crosspost correspondence from Bicester to places such as Oundle and Woburn.

Mr Rideout identified the times of the ride from Bicester to Oxford as being the major part of the problem. A ride left Oxford for Towcester and Northampton at 8 p.m. [MM110/17] which could forward the Bicester letters to Northampton in time for the down Chester and Manchester mailcoaches which would take those for places on their roads together with those for Kettering, Wellingborough, Higham Ferrers, Oundle, Thrapstone and Stilton [MM109/9]. However, the ride to Northampton left Oxford at 8 p.m. while that from Bicester did not reach Oxford until 9 p.m. The ride from Northampton reached Oxford at 6.30 a.m., but that to Bicester left at 6 a.m. To provide a connection in both directions would curtail the time to answer the letters at Bicester by over two hours.

Mr Rideout suggested that to connect the rides in one direction would shorten the time by an hour and a half which would probably be acceptable to the people of Bicester. He was encouraged to suggest this as letters from Bicester to towns on or north of the Holyhead road and to the west of Birmingham circulated as quickly through London as they did by crosspost. This was because the Bicester ride reaching Oxford after the departure of that to Northampton, the mail was forwarded on the mailcoach to Birmingham but the arrival there was too late for all the mails apart from those to Liverpool and Tamworth.

Consequently it was proposed to dispatch the Oxford ride from Bicester at 5.30 p.m. so that it would reach Oxford before the departure of the Northampton ride.

The surveyor pointed out that this would not accelerate the letters to Woburn as the ride arrived in Northampton after the departure of the up Chester and Manchester mailcoaches. Those letters would continue to be forwarded by the up Warwick mail to Aylesbury where they remained until the next evening to go by the rider to St Albans and from there by the down Manchester mailcoach.

Freeling noted that a plan had presented itself for accelerating the mail from the West of England for Bicester which was brought into Oxford by the ride from Newbury shortly after the departure of the post to Bicester. However, this would have had the effect of further shortening the time at Bicester and that might be inconvenient to the area surrounding that town so he proposed to keep that matter in reserve.

[Ref: Post 40/872/1828]

TWO WORCESTER ITEMS

On 6th February 1828, Mr Rideout wrote from Worcester that on his first visit to that town some years back a report of 1820 had been forwarded to him which alluded to a practice of the letter carriers, on leaving the office to commence the delivery, proceeding to the house of the chief clerk and delivering the letters to people who were in the habit of calling for them and paying an annual fee for that privilege [MM103/13].

Mr Rideout had suspected that the practice still continued but had never been able to discover evidence of it on his visits to Worcester. However, on his recent return from Ludlow, instead of going straight to the post office as was his usual custom, he had waited until the delivery was to take place and had found that the senior letter carrier had gone to his house from where many people had obtained their letters. This had delayed the general delivery by over a quarter of an hour. Mr Rideout had attributed comments that when he was in Worcester the delivery took place earlier than usual to greater speed on the part of the clerks. Now, he knew otherwise.

He immediately suspended the chief letter carrier and reported the matter to Freeling. At the end of his report he mentioned the man's long service and although he said that he awaited the decision of the P.M.G., the tone of the final part of the report implied that he was reluctant to see the man dismissed.

The letter carrier, John Spooner, sent a long letter to the P.M.G., admitting his guilt and stating that he had been a letter carrier for nearly forty years during which time he had not been absent for one day. Freeling suggested and the P.M.G. agreed that enough had been done by the suspension and strongly reprimanding Mr Spooner.

After the death of Mr St. John who had been the postmaster at Worcester for thirty years, a number of applications were sent to the G.P.O. Lord Beauchamp called on Freeling to say that the widow would not be competent to carry out the work and he considered that his connexion with the county entitled him to some say as to the successor while Lord Deerhurst and others wrote in favour of Mrs St. John.

The Treasury decided that the appointment should go to Mrs St. John provided that she had the ability to fulfil it. Mr Rideout visited Worcester and reported that Mrs St John was as capable of holding the Worcester office as any woman could be. She was better acquainted with the work of the office than he had realised and she had the advantage of having her son to assist her for the first year.

[Refs: Post 40/105/1828, 40/532/1828, 40/597/1828]

WALSALL OMITTED

Mr Churchill reported on 7th August 1828 that as a consequence of the alteration in the route of the Birmingham and Manchester mailcoach by which it did not pass through Walsall, he had found it necessary to arrange for Walsall to send and receive its northern correspondence by putting on a footpost to meet the mailcoach at Wednesbury the nearest point on the new line of road. The messenger had to make two journeys a day i.e. to meet the mailcoach in the morning and the evening, making the distance of his walk fourteen miles a day for which he was to receive 16/- per week.

On 20th August, Freeling sent to the P.M.G. a petition from the people of Walsall remonstrating against the omission of that place from the route of the Birmingham and Liverpool mailcoach. In a report on this Mr Johnson stated that Walsall provided neither passengers nor parcels for the coach. The road through Walsall was not good and was about two miles longer than the new route. Consequently, the contractors had refused to continue on that road even at an allowance of 5d. per mile.

In a letter which accompanied the petition it was suggested that the mailcoach should miss out Wolverhampton instead of Walsall. Freeling quashed that idea by stating that not only was the former town one of the main supports of the mailcoach but also its mail came to £5,000 p.a. while that of Walsall came to only £1,800.

[Refs: Post 40/645/1828, 42/661/1828]

TURN AT DUNSTABLE

In December 1827, Mr Scott proposed that Coventry, Dunchurch, Daventry, Towcester, Stony Stratford and Fenny Stratford should make up a double set of bags for Dunstable to be carried by the mailcoach from Liverpool which arrived in London in the evening. That coach arrived in Dunstable in time for the letters to be sorted and forwarded by the down Manchester and Chester mailcoaches to places such as Woburn, Newport Pagnell, Bedford, St Neots and Huntingdon, saving a day in transit. The letters in question were at the time sent by the Holyhead mailcoach, to give more time to write answers, but that coach arrived in Dunstable after the departure of those to Chester and Manchester, so the letters remained there for nearly twenty-four hours. Freeling consented to this.

No doubt encouraged by this, Mr Scott then suggested that a day could be saved in the correspondence from Stony Stratford and Fenny Stratford for a large number of towns by sending them up to Dunstable by the Liverpool mailcoach to be forwarded as above. The towns were those from Dunstable on the route of the Chester mailcoach as far north as Atherstone; those as far north as Loughborough on the route of the Manchester coach; as far east as Huntingdon on the crosspost from Bedford and Stilton by the post from Northampton. Most of those letters at the time lay for nearly a day in the office at Towcester. Mr Scott went on to suggest that the letters sent in this way should not be charged according to the distance they were carried but as though they had been sent through Towcester. He quoted as an example letters sent from Stony Stratford to Northampton for which the distance via Towcester was eighteen miles for which the charge was fivepence while by way of Dunstable the distance was fifty-two miles - charge eightpence.

While Freeling approved of sending the letters by Dunstable since it was an established principle that they should send letters by the quickest route even if that was more circuitous, he said that it would be illegal not to tax the letters according to the distance they were carried. He believed that there was one instance where, many years before, a ride having been discontinued by the order of the then Postmaster General and the letters sent circuitously, the rates of postage had not been increased. As much as he had regretted that instance he had not felt bold enough to disturb it and he believed there was not another instance of the kind. [This statement was incorrect if Freeling was not, as seems likely, alluding to the instances of Peterborough etc mentioned above. I believe that the example to which he was referring was in the area of Market Deeping but I cannot find a specific reference to this.]

[Refs: Post 40/744/1827, 40/23/1828]



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CHELTENHAM-HEREFORD-BRECON

In February 1828, Mr Rideout reported on the changes he had made on the extension of the Cheltenham & Hereford mailcoach to Brecon and the benefits that would arise from this extension. These included more time to answer letters at Hay and places below there and opening a direct communication between the upper part of his district, namely Ludlow, Leominster, Hereford and Hay, with South Wales as the mailcoach was due to arrive in Brecon at 5.24 p.m., well before the arrival of the down mail from Gloucester, and to leave there at 9.45 a.m., after the arrival of the up mail from Carmarthen.

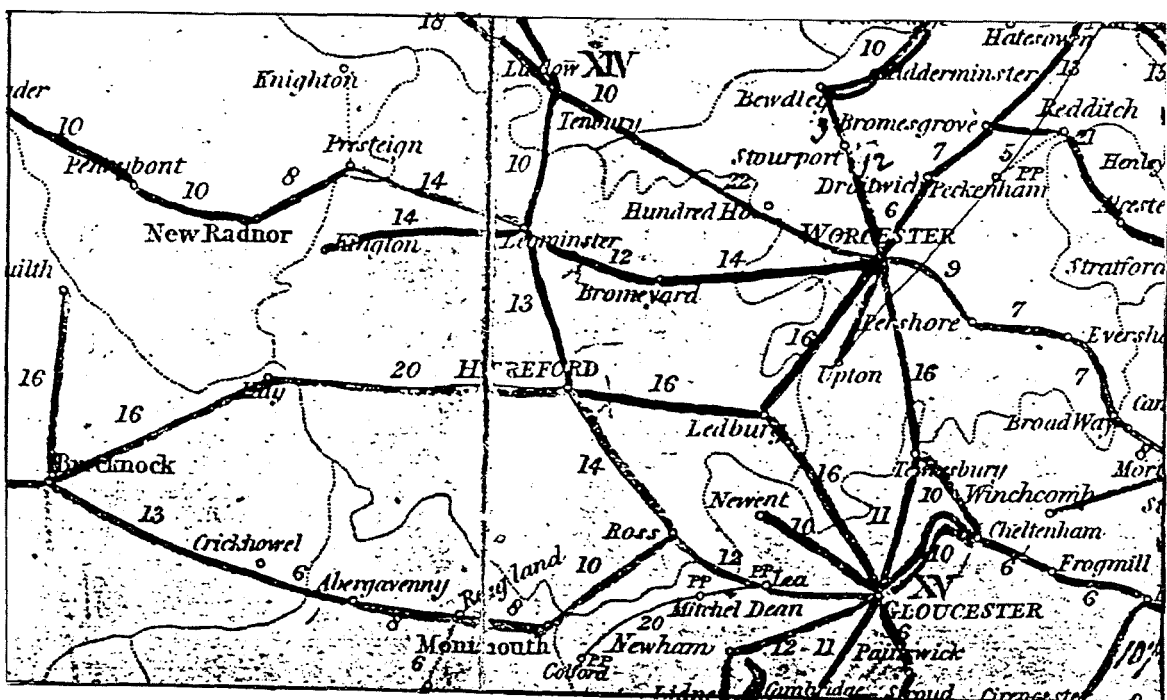
A reading of this report would lead one to suppose that the authorities in London would fully support these changes. Yet, does Freeling's covering letter to the P.M.G. seem rather terse and less fulsome in pointing out the advantages than is usually the case? An inspection of further reports shows that Freeling was far from happy with matters in Herefordshire; at one point he referred to "the restless and grasping spirit of the Gentlemen of Herefordshire." What follows is a distillation from a number of reports three of which have been placed together, resulting in a mass of papers. However, I hope that I have been able to pick out the essential points.

On 1st May 1827 a mailcoach running between Cheltenham and Hereford replaced the Worcester, Hereford and Hay mailcoach.

In the autumn of 1827, Freeling received a number of letters from various gentlemen in Herefordshire. Two were from the Earl of Somers who wrote, among other things, on 21st October that as a new turnpike had been opened from Leominster to Ledbury a mailcoach travelling on that road would save three miles and pass over flatter ground on its way to London than the coach from Ludlow via Worcester. Then, four days later, he wrote, "Supplementary to my letter ... of 21st inst, I beg to request a reply before the first of next month so far as to assure me we may depend on directions being given for the four horse mail to start between Cheltenham and Hereford thro' Tewkesbury on the said first of next month (November) ..."

Mr Clive, an M.P. for Hereford, adopted a more conciliatory tone in a letter of 7th November in which he said that there must have been some misunderstanding for in reply to Lord Somers Freeling had stated the allowance of 5d. per double mile would apply to a two horse mailcoach whereas the coach from Tewkesbury to Hereford was a four-horse mail. Also, the Committee for the Mail from Cheltenham to Hereford had resolved to extend it to Brecon from 1st March. Freeling replied that there had been no misunderstanding as the allowance had been made to give the coach a fair trial and if the subscribers chose to provide four horses, then no further allowance could be paid. As to the extension to Brecon, that was for the P.M.G. to decide.

In the meantime, Freeling had asked Mr Rideout and Mr Johnson, the Superintendent of Mailcoaches, for their observations. Mr Rideout said that he understood the proposition to be to discontinue the mailcoaches from Worcester to Ludlow and Kington, to send the Milford mail through Tewkesbury, Hereford and Brecon, and to extend the Stroud mailcoach to Gloucester. In a report of seven pages he showed that this would involve an increase in expenditure of over £900 p.a. and not one town, not even Hereford would derive any benefit.



The memo from Mr Johnson is worth publishing in full for the information it contains.

"Perhaps all the official reasons, except that the route from Cheltenham was the most direct for the London Letters, were against the new Branch Mail being substituted for the old one from Worcester.

"It does not seem sufficiently understood that ... the cheapness and the efficiency of a Mail Coach depends on its being properly united with the general Coaching Trade. At Worcester there are facilities for contracting for a Branch Mail to Hereford which do not exist at Cheltenham. It suits the other views and interests of the Coachmasters who work the Worcester Mail to have branches to Hereford, Kington and Ludlow, while the Gloster Mail Company have no present means of making a Hereford Branch Mail profitable to them, and therefore consider it a burden on their Trade. They would not have allowed it a connexion with their London Mail Coach if it had not been strongly pressed by the Post Office; and as the experiment has been attended with so little success they are less inclined to the measure than before.

"To aid the Gentlemen in the County in their desire to keep up a Hereford Mail by the new route, the Postmaster General has increased the ordinary allowance of 3d per mile to 5d which last is equivalent to the Stamp Duty and the Coach being thus duty free and toll free seems to have a sufficient protection, if there be any thing like a proper quantity of natural business for it. A greater allowance would be a very inconvenient precedent. ...

"It should not be forgotten that the Worcester Mail was discontinued to allow of the new one from Cheltenham. Of course the Coachmasters on the old line placed another Coach there to provide for their own Trade. This continues to draw Passengers from Hereford via Worcester, and is much against the Mail. After all, Worcester is the natural course for a great portion of the passengers from Hereford and below. It is not improbable that a Mail to Hereford might be resumed from Worcester at the ordinary allowance, but then certainly Hereford could not have the advantage of answering London Letters the same day. There is a very short time for it now."

In a letter to one of the Secretaries to the Treasury, Freeling wrote that he regretted that circumstances were daily occurring to justify the apprehensions he had expressed to the P.M.G. at the time [of the introduction of the Cheltenham & Hereford mailcoach] as to their assisting any association formed for keeping up a mailcoach that could not legitimately maintain itself. He also mentioned that he had received protests from Lord Beaufort and the City of Gloucester who had heard of the changes proposed by the people in Hereford.

Despite all of this, the P.M.G. authorised the extension of the coach to Brecon. No doubt, a deciding factor was that the Hereford Committee had raised £3000 by subscription for the support of the coach.

The next item of relevance is a letter written by Mr Johnson from Llandovery in June 1828.

"From what I have learnt on my way from London, in addition to what I knew before, I can tell you that every sort of effort is quietly making to establish the London and Carmarthen Mail Line through Hereford. I am confirmed in my opinion that two Mail Coaches between Cheltenham and Brecon are impossible, and as we are I think pledged to the old road, we must not do anything more to injure it. I would have protested against the extension of the Mail from Hay to Brecon, if I had thought it could have lived without the Subscription, but when it was granted it was for local purposes only. I trust therefore you will see that it ought to be confined during its period of experiment to its present uses, and that the London Bags to and from Brecon ought to be carried by the London mail to that town, and not by the Branch Coach from Cheltenham. The forcing the Mail through from Cheltenham without stopping to breakfast was an insidious thing of the Committee, and there are easy means to get the other mail to Brecon as soon, if it were proper to adopt them. All I pray is to let the Experiment of the new mail go on as it has begun. It is true I have been passive, but now I see that unless there is some resistance to the schemes of these Subscribers much mischief will ensue. They have had it all their own way from the beginning, and will pay for it in the end."

In July 1828, the Post Office reported to the Treasury that they were having difficulty maintaining the mailcoach between Bristol and Milford and that an extra allowance was needed if it was to continue to run. Furthermore it was evident that South Wales could not support two mailcoaches at the usual allowance let alone three. As the P.M.G. thought that the continuance of the subscription mailcoach would endanger those through Bristol and Gloucester, the Post Office decided that they would not renew the contract for the Cheltenham and Brecon mailcoach.

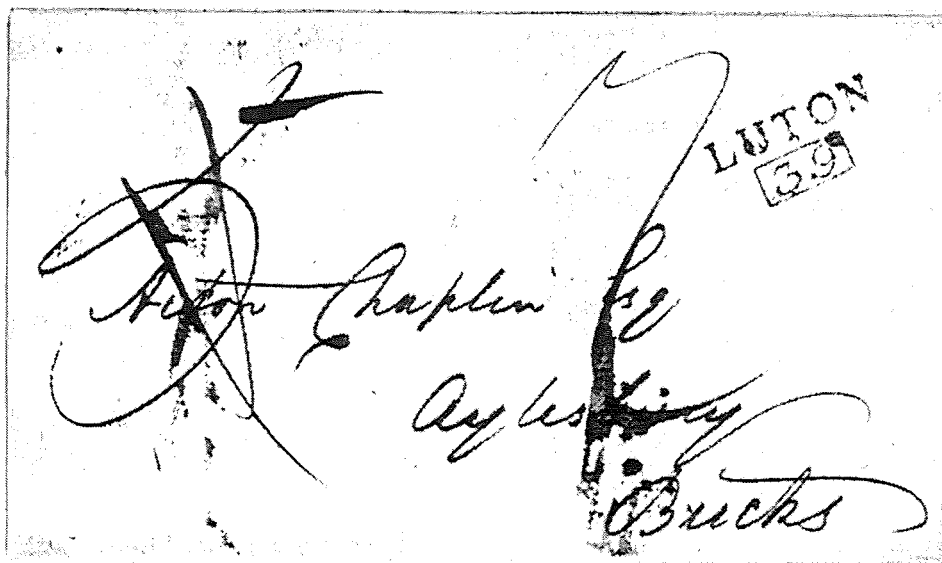
As can be expected, the gentlemen of Hereford were not happy when Freeling wrote that a mailcoach could not be allowed to run via Hereford after 1st March 1829 and that it was doubtful if it could be allowed to proceed beyond Hereford to Hay after that date. At a meeting of the subscribers which was fully reported in the Hereford paper Earl Somers said that although £700 had been paid from the subscription, the experiment had been so successful that the contractors were ready to renew their contract for three years without any further aid from the subscription.

Freeling was not to be moved and the coach ran as far as Brecon for the last time on 28th February 1829.

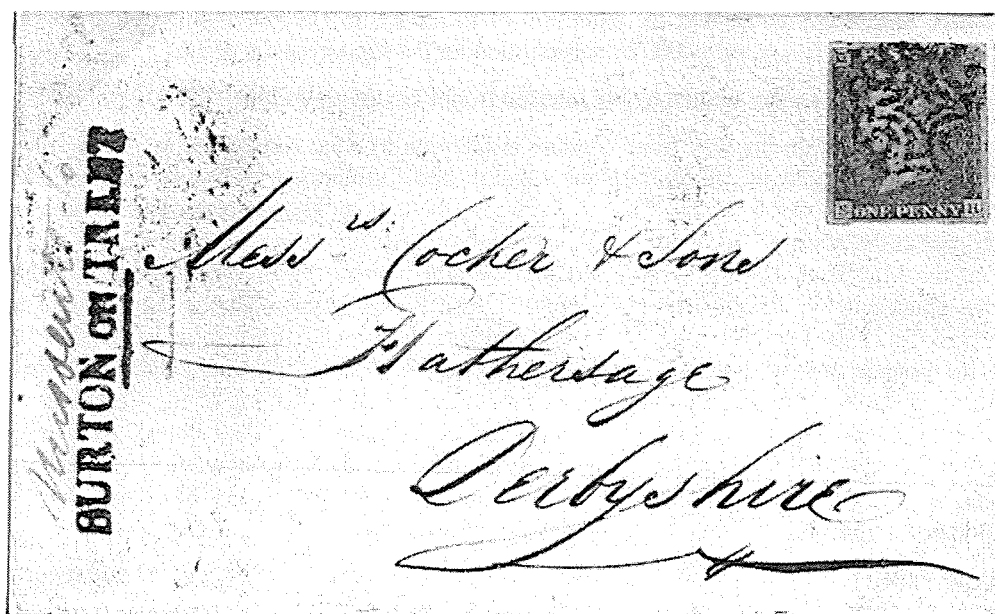
[Refs: Post 40/175/1828, 40/775/1828 containing 40/690/1827 and 40/631/1828]

MORE ON MILEAGE MARKS

The letter below was sent on 5th October 1801. Does anyone have a boxed mileage mark used before that date?



Richard Farman has kindly sent the copy of the mileage removed mark of Burton-on-Trent used on a missent letter in November 1841.



If you think that these two covers are meant as a reminder to look out the details of the mileage marks in your collection, your are correct. If you do not have the address of the appropriate county editor or the co-ordinating editor, I will forward them for you.

THE NEXT MIDLAND MAIL

This should appear in late October or early November. There will I hope be something of interest for most members but there is plenty of room for further articles. Why not find an interesting cover from your collection, write a few lines and send it to:

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