

MIDLAND MAIL



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



President: Elizabeth Lewis

Chairman:
Derek Smeathers

Treasurer:
Elizabeth Lewis

Secretary:
Eric Lewis

Number 121, August 2001

NEW MEMBERS

We extend a cordial welcome to the following:

Mr A.S. Thompson whose postal history interest is Staffordshire;

Mr R. Viney who collects Rutland and Stamford;

Mr Steve Ellis whose interest is Leek (Staffordshire) and transatlantic maritime mail.

We now have 100 members if all existing members renew their subscriptions. There are a few who still have to pay. If yours has not been received, a cross appears in the margin. A cheque for £8 sent to our Treasurer would be much appreciated.

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

We start the new season on **Saturday 15th September** with a joint meeting with the Lancashire and Cheshire Postal History Society at **Burton-on-Trent**. Full details are enclosed with this issue.

On **20th October** we return to Birmingham (see the note below) for a meeting starting at **1.30 p.m.** devoted to Derbyshire postal history (not Derby itself). The speakers will be Gordon Hardy and Harold Wilson.

We visit the premises of Warwick & Warwick in Warwick for our meeting on **17th November** starting at **1.30 p.m.** for an afternoon of members' one board displays on "How it all began". This will be preceded by a committee meeting beginning at 11 a.m.

LOCATION OF THE OCTOBER MEETING

Unfortunately we were unable to obtain a room at Carrs Lane for the October meeting which will now be held at the Birmingham and Midland Institute, Margaret Street which is at the rear of the Council House and Art Gallery. If you intend to go to the meeting and are not familiar with the location please telephone Eric (0121.4291222) for a map which will show the route in by road and from both New Street and Snow Hill stations. (It is ten minutes walk from either station.)

CATALOGUE OF PUBLICATIONS IN THE SOCIETY'S LIBRARY

As our stock of these eight page catalogues was recently exhausted, the originals have been updated with additions as noted from time to time in 'Midland Mail'. A fresh supply has been printed and if you require a copy of the catalogue, perhaps having mislaid your original, it can be obtained from the Secretary at a cost of 20p or 40p if posted. Remittance in stamps please (not a cheque) to Eric Lewis, 27 Rathbone Road, Smethwick B67 5JG. A supply will be brought to the next few meetings.

OBITUARY

Your committee are sorry to have to report that Denis Salt of Shropshire, a member of our Society for many years, died on Monday 20th August, the day after his 90th birthday. A tribute will appear in our next issue.

MAIL BY RAIL IN THE MIDLANDS (Part 1)

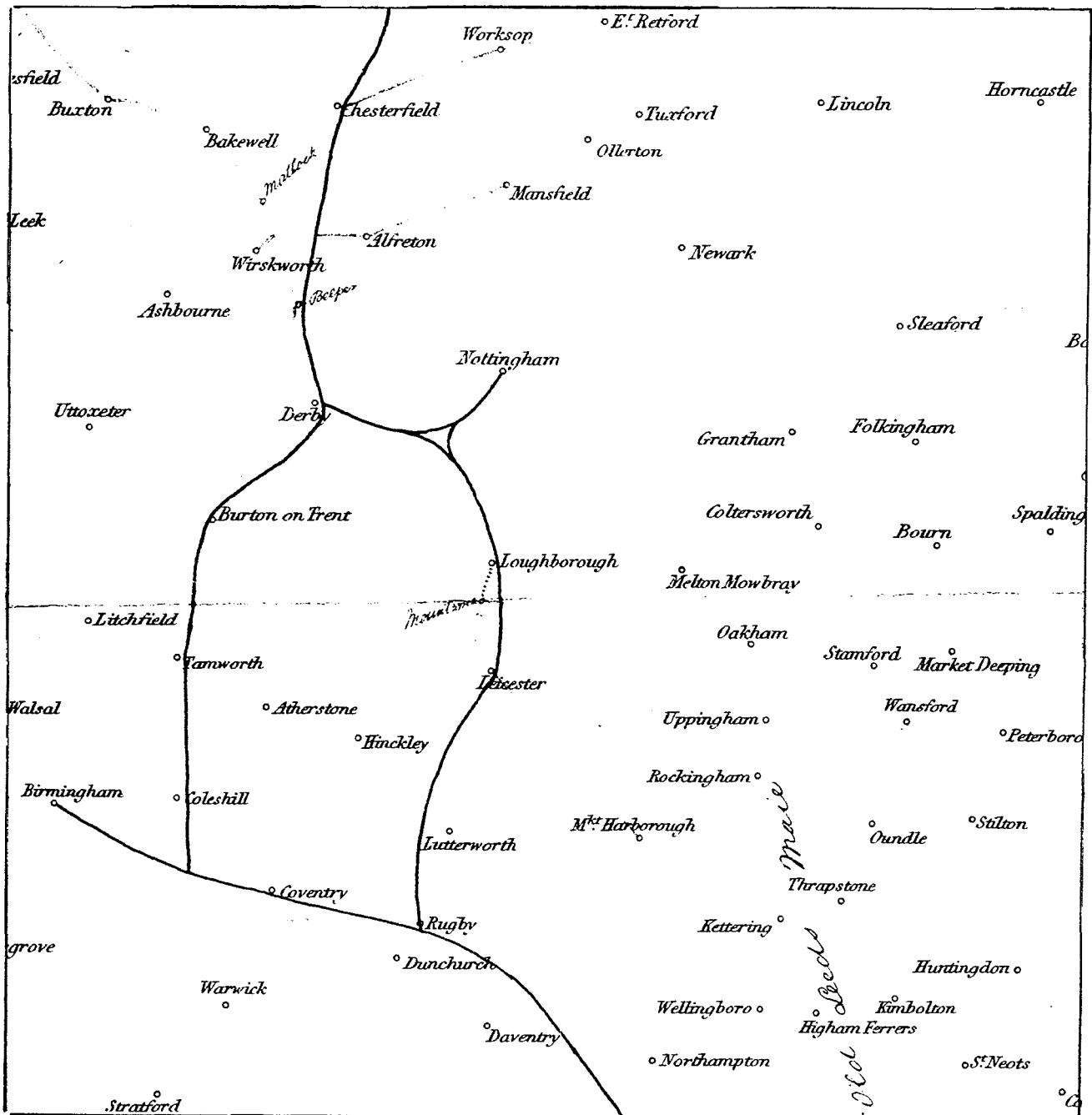
This is, I hope, the first in a series of occasional articles that will trace the changes in the circulation of the mails that took place from 1838 up to about 1850 as the railway system developed and trains gradually superseded mailcoaches. I am not sure how this will turn out, if at all, or how often the articles will appear as the research is barely started. That research is not helped by the fact that the background reports to the usually minutes in Post 35 were destroyed some years ago. Also the Post 35 volumes are no longer on the open shelves in P.O. Archives. I would normally complete the research before attempting to publish anything, but that would mean I would have nothing to put in Midland Mail for the next two or three years!

I will concentrate first of all on those three lines, centered on Derby, which eventually amalgamated in 1844 to form the Midland Railway. [Yes, I am aware that this will mean coming back to 1838 in a later issue.]

The **Midland Counties Railway** between Derby and Nottingham opened to traffic on 4th June 1839. The remainder opened in 1840 - to Leicester on 5th May and Rugby on 30th June. At first, a temporary station was used at Rugby Wharf as the junction with the London and Birmingham Railway was not completed for a further three weeks.

The **Birmingham and Derby Railway** opened to the public on 12th August 1839 between Derby and Hampton-in-Arden on the London & Birmingham Railway from where the trains went on to Birmingham until the direct line from Whitacre was opened in 1842.

The **North Midland Railway** opened formally on 11th May 1840 between Derby and Masborough (Rotherham) from where a line ran to Sheffield. The section to Leeds came into use on 1st July.



Although I suspect I really do not need to do this, I will point out that whereas on a Travelling Post Office the sorting of letters took place as well the carriage of bags this was not the case for many of the trains used to carry mail. No sorting of mail took place on these other trains.

An entry in Post 14 for 1st October 1838 [See MM108/10.] lists the changes to take place on the withdrawal of the Birmingham mailcoach and its replacement throughout by the London & Birmingham Railway. [In fact there were three coaches running between Denbigh Hall and Birmingham via Coventry. Also the Denbigh Hall (near Bletchley) to Lichfield mailcoach via Lutterworth, Hinckley and Atherstone should have been included in the notice.] Among these alterations were the introduction of a "Coventry Sack" containing the bags, among others, for Coleshill and Coventry, and a "Sheffield and Birmingham Sack" containing bags for Lichfield, Burton-on-Trent, Derby (Ashbourne), Alfreton, Chesterfield and Sheffield.

The letters for Lichfield, Burton-on-Trent etc went forward from Birmingham at about 3 a.m., along with those from the West etc, on the mailcoach to Sheffield. Although the mailcoaches which had served Burton-on-Trent, Derby, Chesterfield and Sheffield with their London letters were still running it was obviously quicker to send the mail by way of Birmingham using the railway as far as that town.

The contractors of the Birmingham and Sheffield mailcoach were given notice to quit on 5th April 1840. The letters then went on the Birmingham & Derby line leaving Birmingham at 3 a.m. and arriving in Derby at 5.40 a.m. [Up to July 1842 the mail trains on the Birmingham & Derby line used the L&B station in Curzon Street.] At Coleshill, Tamworth and Burton messengers were appointed to carry the bags between the station and the post office. The ride between Coventry and Coleshill was discontinued as was the mailcart from Tamworth to Birmingham and were respectively replaced by a footpost from Coventry to Stonebridge and a mailcart from Birmingham to Sutton Coldfield. A ride from Tamworth via Fazeley served Lichfield. [MM108/11]

In November 1839, the people of Nottingham had complained about the lateness of the arrival of their mail and had asked for it to be carried on the Midland Counties line. At first, it was not possible for the Post Office to grant this request but from 6th April 1840 the letters were sent by Birmingham and Derby, arriving, along with the Western letters in the Nottingham office at about 7 a.m. [MM108/12]

I am not sure if a mailcoach ran from Derby to Sheffield for a few weeks after 6th April 1840 for it was in June that a minute said that the North Midland Railway was prepared to carry mail between Derby and Sheffield on 17th June 1840. A further minute authorised allowances for station messengers at Belper and Chesterfield as well as a horsepost between Wingfield Station and Alfreton.

The bag for Ashby-de-la-Zouch was sent via Birmingham and Burton-on-Trent from 6th July 1840 on the withdrawal of the Leicester to Burton mailcoach.

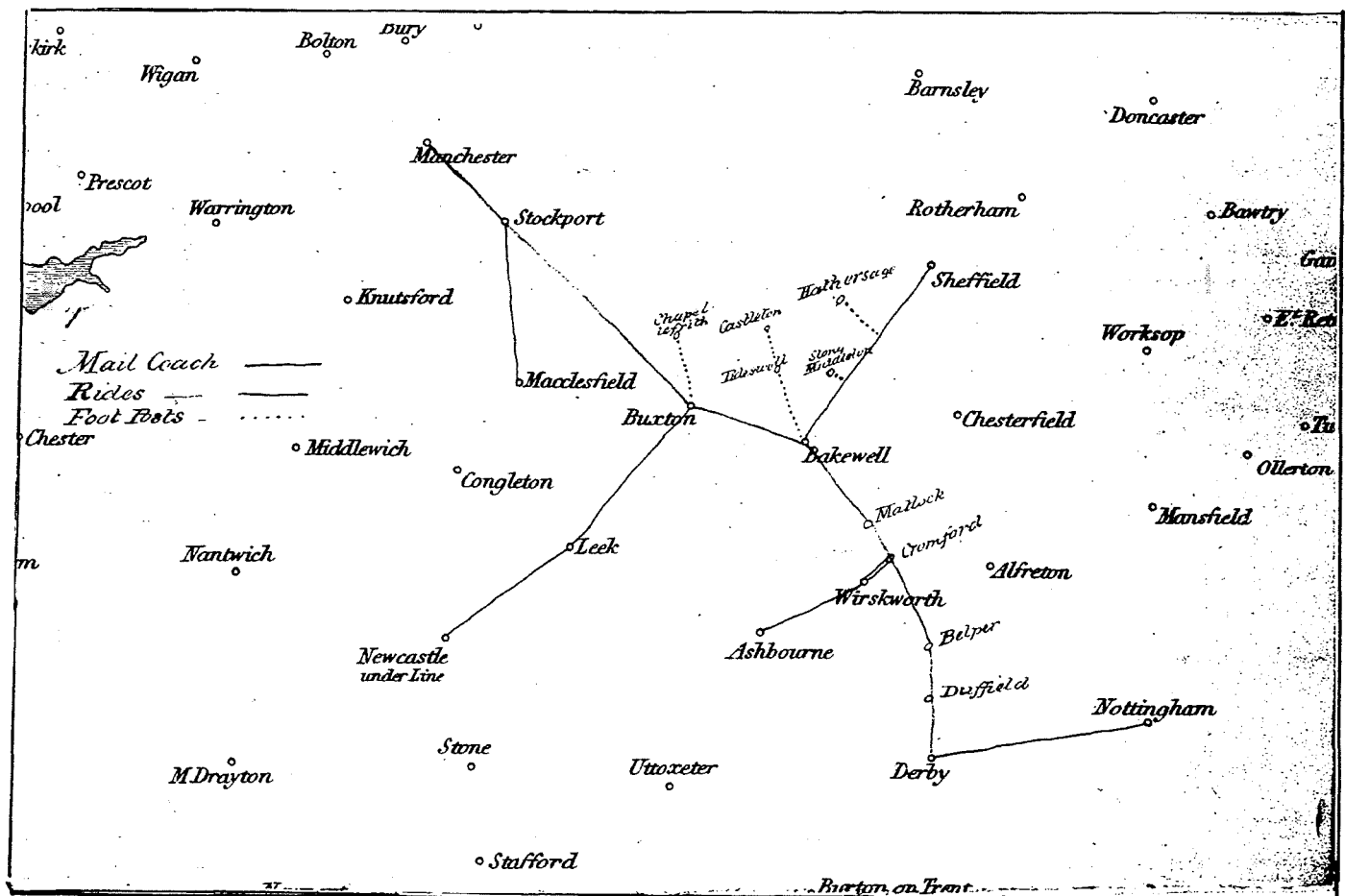
No doubt notice was given to the contractors of this mailcoach to quit as the line from Rugby through Leicester was now open so the withdrawal of the London-Leicester-Derby mailcoach was not far away. On 24th August 1840 mail was sent for the first time from London to a train running between Rugby and Leeds which according to an advertisement in the Leeds Mercury of 4th July left Rugby at 12.30 a.m. Leicester, Loughborough and Derby received their bags by this train. The bag for Market Harborough came through Welford which was served from Rugby by a mailcart. The Derby mailcoach actually ran for another five days before its withdrawal. A ride from Weedon then served Northampton and Wellingborough.



It will be seen from the order of 24AUG1840 [MM108/11] that the mail for Belper, Alfreton, Mansfield, Chesterfield and Worksop continued to circulate through Birmingham. The bags for Alfreton and Mansfield were dropped off at Wingfield from where they were taken by a mailcart. A mailcart also carried from Chesterfield the letters for Worksop which until then had received its mail from Retford at 2.30 p.m. It is likely that it was decided to send the bags on the Birmingham-Leeds train for that passed through the above places at a more convenient time. The Birmingham train arrived at Belper at 6.15 a.m. whereas the Rugby train passed through at 3.58 a.m.

When the surveyor tried, later in the year, to alter the hours of the Derby-Manchester mailcoach, even going as far as putting provisional times into a timebill, he found that to do so would totally disrupt some of the rides in the area, including the evening mail to Nottingham. So, the times remained as they had been. In order to give an earlier arrival of the letters the surveyor proposed the introduction of a mailcart from Belper through Wirksworth to Matlock, leaving Belper at 6.45 a.m., and arriving in Matlock at 8 a.m. The return from Matlock was to be at 5.30 p.m. with an arrival in Belper at 6.45 p.m. It appears that this mailcart did not come into operation until March 1841 [MM110/8]. Bakewell received its letters through Sheffield from where the ride was dispatched at 7 a.m., instead of 9 a.m., arriving in Bakewell at 9.15 a.m. [See order of 14DEC1840 in MM108/11]. The surveyor felt that to withdraw the mailcart from Derby to Ashbourne would cause too many protests but the footpost from Wirksworth was discontinued.

The route of the Derby-Manchester Mailcoach



A look at MM110/8 will show that on the evening of 5th February 1841 a number of changes were made in the circulation from London affecting places as far apart as Coleshill, Ashby-de-la-Zouch and Southwell. Surely, it is unlikely that they are linked in some way?

For the answer we must go to the south of Birmingham, to the line of the Birmingham and Gloucester Railway Company. According to Williams, the section between Bromsgrove and Cheltenham opened to passengers on 24th June 1840. On 16th October, the railway company informed the Board of Trade that the line from Cheltenham to Gloucester would open on 1st November. The officials of the Post Office then began their plans for the use of the line which eventually started on 6th February 1841. [Initially the northern terminus of the line was at Camp Hill; it was not until August 1841 that the line reached the Curzon Street station of the L&B.R.] Before we look in detail at those plans, it is worth noting a comment made by Mr Stow in response to a question from the railway company. He said that the mailcoaches would not be forwarded by the railway and that the accommodation required was the same as that on the Midland Counties and North Midland - two compartments of a second class carriage properly fitted up for the guard and bags.

Mr Rideout reported that three mailcoaches were to be taken off:

Birmingham & Worcester which carried the London bags to and from Bromsgrove, Droitwich and Worcester;

Birmingham & Bristol which took mail from the West to Birmingham and from the North to Bristol;

Birmingham & Bath which was confined mainly to communication between towns on the road.

In the place of these coaches two trains ran each night between Birmingham and Gloucester. It was proposed that one should leave Birmingham at 12.34 a.m., the other at 3 a.m. The trains from Gloucester were due to arrive in Birmingham at 10.25 p.m. and 12.10 a.m. Another document suggests that these last two times were in fact 9.50 and 11.35 p.m. South of Gloucester, mailcoaches continued for a while to carry the bags.

The second dispatch (3 a.m.) and the first arrival at Birmingham connected with the night trains between London and Birmingham and so took the London bags for Worcester, Droitwich and Bromsgrove.

Although the best route for the railway would have been through Stourbridge, Bromsgrove, Droitwich, Worcester and Tewkesbury, these places were avoided so as to reduce the cost of building the line. Consequently the line was constructed to the east of these places, though not so far east as to avoid the Lickey Hills. The result was that the post offices at Bromsgrove and Droitwich were over a mile from their stations and Worcester was four miles from its nearest station Spetchley.

It is possible to compile from the various reports a possible timetable for these trains.

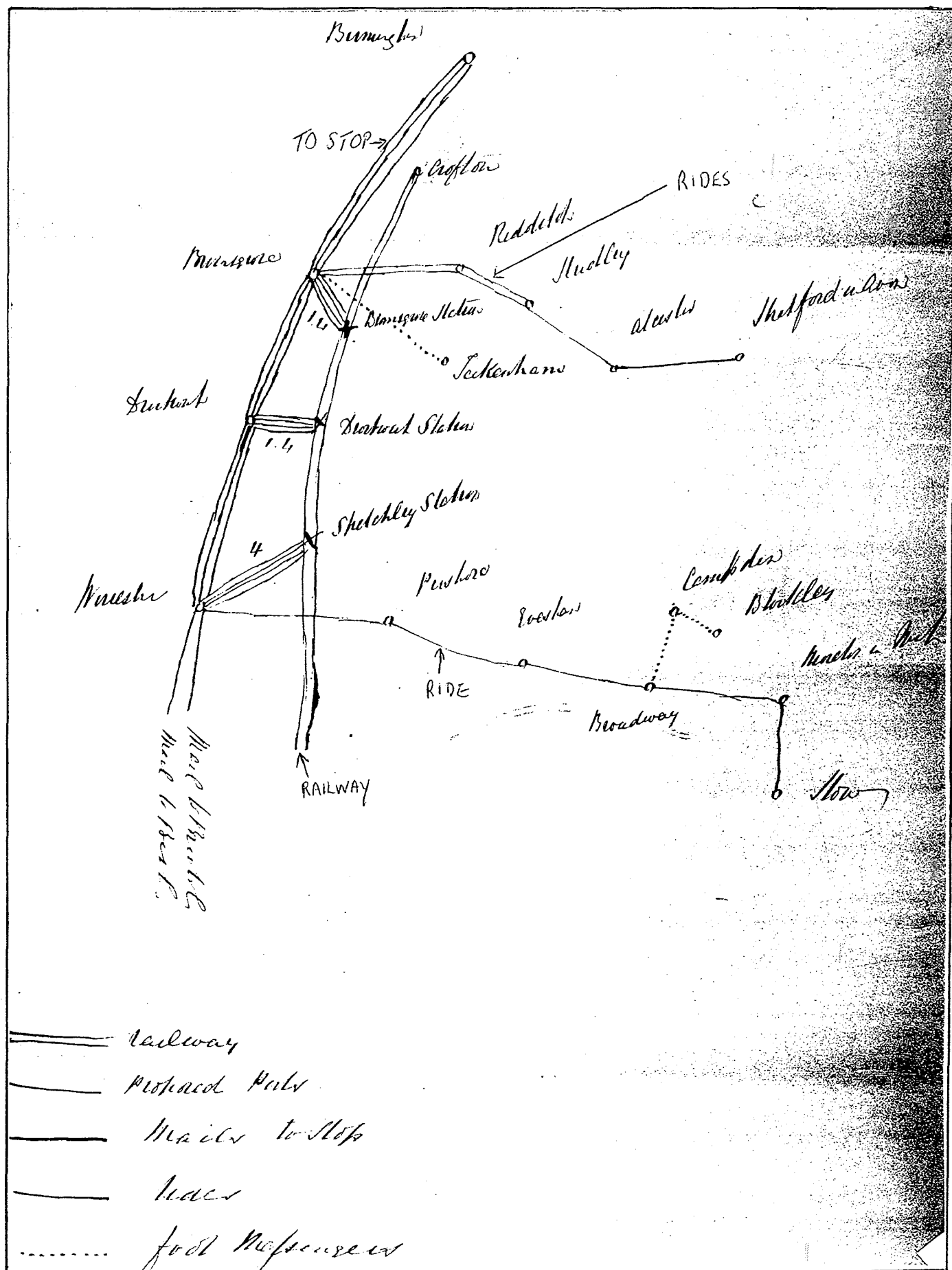
Birmingham	12.34 a.m.	3.00 a.m.	↑ 9.50 p.m.	↑ 11.35 p.m.
Bromsgrove Station	1.19*	3.45*	9.04	10.49 p.m.
Droitwich Station	1.37	3.59	8.48	10.33
Spetchley (for Worcester)	1.51	4.17	8.11	10.16
Ashchurch	2.28	4.54	7.51	9.36
Cheltenham	2.46	5.12	7.35	9.20
Gloucester	↓ 3.04 a.m.	↓ 5.30 a.m.	7.15 p.m.	9.00 p.m.

In two reports, Mr Rideout suggested that at each of these places there should be four rides each night between the post office and the station i.e. to take letters to and from each of the trains. It appears that the authorities expressed concern at the cost of this for, on 6th January 1841, Mr Rideout submitted a document showing the times of arrival and dispatch at towns in the area as it was then and would have been with four or two rides to the railway. This is shown on page 7. Consequently four rides were sanctioned to connect Bromsgrove and Worcester with their stations, but only two were allowed at Droitwich.

Further south, only two rides were necessary between Ashchurch station and Tewkesbury since the Cheltenham to Aberystwyth mailcoach passed through Tewkesbury at 6.08 a.m. and in the opposite direction at 7.48 p.m. These times meant that the road west of Tewkesbury was "cut off" from the first train from Gloucester and the second from Birmingham. Thus it was only necessary to connect Tewkesbury to the other two trains.

The times of the rides from the towns on this route were altered but not significantly. In fact the places on the various branches received a marginally poorer service, in that the dispatches in the evening were slightly earlier. The real gain was in the shorter time taken to carry letters between the Southwest and Birmingham.

Mr Rideout did take the opportunity to withdraw the footpost between Ledbury and Malvern and circulate the letters through Tewkesbury and Worcester. At Gloucester the ride to Minchinhampton, which was dispatched after the arrival of the first train from Birmingham and returned in time for the second train to Birmingham, was rerouted through Painswick and the footpost from Horsepools withdrawn. At Birmingham, the withdrawal of the Worcester mailcoach made it necessary to put on a footpost from Birmingham to King's Norton and Northfield.



Return showing the arrival & departure of the Northern & Western Lines at the following Towns, at present, as before in report 8 Nov & 22 Dec & also with two communications only between Birmingham City Station & Worcester City Station

Towns		Present time	Time with 4 dispatches to railway	Time with 2 dispatches to railway
Bromsgrove	arrival	2 5 AM	1 49 AM	4 15 AM
	departure	10 51 PM	10 PM	8 20 PM
Redditch	arrival	3 40 AM	3 25 AM	6 10 AM
	departure	8 50 PM	8 10 PM	6 PM
Sturley	arrival	4 AM	3 45 AM	6 30 AM
	departure	8 25 PM	7 45 PM	5 55 PM
Alcester	arrival	4 45 AM	4 30 AM	7 15 AM
	departure	7 40 PM	7 PM	4 50 PM
Sheffordham	arrival	5 45 AM	5 30 AM	8 15 AM
	departure	6 30 PM	5 50 PM	3 40 PM
Droitwich ✓	arrival	2 41 AM	2 3 AM	11 20 AM
	departure	10 16 PM	9 45 PM	8 PM
Worcester	arrival	3 15 AM	2 55 AM	5 5 AM
	departure	9 52 PM	9 PM	7 20 PM
Pershore	arrival	5 10 AM	4 40 AM	7 25 AM
	departure	7 20 PM	6 50 PM	4 54 PM
Evesham	arrival	6 AM	5 50 AM	8 15 AM
	departure	6 50 PM	6 PM	3 45 PM
Broadway	arrival	6 50 AM	6 20 AM	9 5 AM
	departure	5 40 PM	5 20 PM	2 55 PM
Moreton in Marsh	arrival	8 AM	7 50 AM	11 15 AM
	departure	4 30 PM	4 PM	1 45 PM
Stow	arrival	9 15 AM	8 45 AM	11 50 AM
	departure	3 20 PM	2 50 PM	12 55 PM
Campton	arrival	9 AM	8 50 AM	not sufficient time for the journey
	departure	3 20 PM	3 PM	
Bloxley	arrival	10 20 AM	9 50 AM	
	departure	2 PM	1 40 PM	

In order to take advantage of the acceleration south of Birmingham the times of the Birmingham and Leeds trains were altered. In December 1840, the surveyors drew up a table showing the intended times of arrival and dispatch of the night mails at Birmingham after the alterations of 5/6th February 1841. [It is not clear if these are times at the station or at the post office. The fact that the Liverpool mail arrived after the dispatch of that to London suggests they are the times at the post office. However since the interval between the up TPO from Liverpool and the dispatch to Leeds was so short, a bag for Derby was made up on the TPO and was exchanged at the station. The same procedure applied in the other direction.]

	Arrive	Depart
Bristol	9.50 p.m.	12.34 a.m.
Leamington	10.00 p.m.	4.00 a.m.
Stourport	10.30 p.m.	3.15 a.m.
Holyhead	11.00 p.m.	3.00 a.m.
Bath	11.35 p.m.	3.00 a.m.
Liverpool & North (TPO)	11.55 p.m.	1.50 a.m.
Derby & Leeds	1.40 a.m.	m12.00 midn
London (TPO)	2.10 a.m.	11.30 p.m.

A comparison with the table in MM119/8 shows that the Bristol mail now arrived over four hours earlier than it had in 1838.

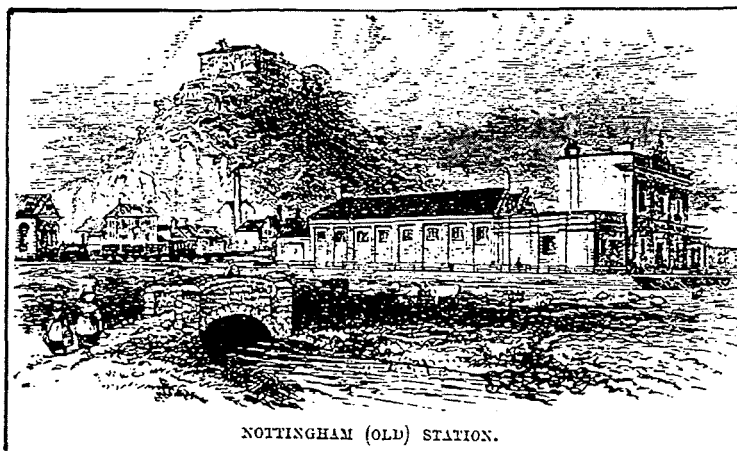
Mr Godby pointed out that the Derby & Leeds mail arrived at 11 p.m. with the London bags from Burton-on-Trent, Ashby-de-la-Zouch, Tamworth, Lichfield and Coleshill in time for the up mail at 11.30 p.m. In future the train from Leeds would not arrive until 1.40 a.m. - over two hours after the dispatch of the London mail. Furthermore, the dispatch to Derby and Leeds was at 3 a.m. and took the London bags for the above places, but from the night of 5th February, it would leave two hours before the arrival of the mail from London.

The solution to this was to: put on a ride from Birmingham to Lichfield; extend the Birmingham-Sutton Coldfield ride to Tamworth; serve Coleshill by a ride from Coventry which would also carry the letters for Allesley, Meriden and Stonebridge. At first, Mr Godby proposed to re-introduce the Leicester-Burton mailcoach to carry the London letters for Ashby and Burton, but, when the tenders were far too high, he decided to serve both places by an extension of the ride which already ran from Coventry through Atherstone to Ashby.

Mr Godby proposed a number of other alterations which were sanctioned by the P.M.G. As the trains from Birmingham and Rugby now connected at Derby, that from Birmingham was withdrawn north of Derby, the bags being taken forward by the Rugby train. The London bags for Belper, Alfreton and Chesterfield with their enclosures were transferred at Rugby instead of Birmingham.

The train from Derby to Nottingham was dispatched three hours earlier at 3.40 a.m. This allowed the ride from Nottingham to Newark to leave at about 4.45 a.m. which in turn meant that the ride from Newark could be in Lincoln by 9.50 a.m., so saving a day in the western correspondence of Newark and Lincoln. [Although Mr Godby said that Newark would gain four hours in which to reply to its London letters by this route, no change was made.]

Other towns in Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire benefitted from an earlier arrival and later dispatch of their mail. As the bags left at Wingfield station were in the Alfreton post office by 4.30 a.m., the ride to Mansfield arrived there by 6.10 a.m., so allowing a further ride to reach Southwell by 8.20 a.m. So the London letters reached there two hours earlier than when sent through Newark.



NOTTINGHAM (OLD) STATION.

On 30th March 1841, the Great North of England Railway opened between York and Darlington with the result that on 5th April the London-Edinburgh mailcoach was withdrawn. From 6th April a mailcoach running between Stilton (where it took up the bags from London, the Eastern Counties and the bye-bags from the Louth mail-coach) and Doncaster carried the mail for Tuxford but not, as might be expected, Newark.

A report from Mr Godby refers to an acceleration of night mail on the London & Birmingham line to start on 6th April so that the train will take 5 instead of 5½ hours. At the same time, the trains carrying mail between Derby and Birmingham were accelerated. The train left Derby at the same time but arrived in Birmingham twenty-five minutes earlier. In the opposite direction, the train left Birmingham twenty-five later but arrived in Derby at the same time as before. A fascinating picture of the way in which the railways operated at the time is given in a letter from the Secretary of the railway company in which he said that their manager had proposed the later start from Birmingham as "*it will in the event of the Lancashire Mails being late, prevent risk of collision from our Mail Train following the London Train too closely ...*" In fact, one reason for the acceleration on the Derby line was that the manager of the coaching department on the L&B was unhappy about the fact that the train from Derby was initially scheduled to arrive in Birmingham at 1.25 a.m., only five minutes before the train from London. He wanted an interval of at least ten minutes.

The proposed times of the trains on the Birmingham and Derby line are shown below.

Derby Station dep	11.00 p.m.	Birmingham Station dep	12.40 a.m.
Burton arr	11.25	Hampton arr	1.15
Tamworth	11.55	Coleshill arr	1.25
Coleshill arr	12.15 a.m.	Tamworth arr	1.45
Hampton arr	12.25	Burton arr	2.05
Birmingham arr	1.00 a.m.	Derby arr	2.40 a.m.

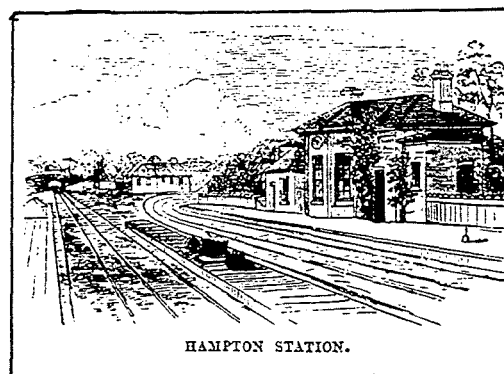
Also running for the first time on 6th April 1841 was the Nottingham and Lincoln mailcoach which carried the London bags for Newark, Ollerton and Lincoln. Shortly before its introduction, Mr Godby commented that the alterations on the Birmingham line should enable the train to Nottingham to be sent out earlier. This would permit an early dispatch of the mailcoach to Lincoln. Then in a later report he remarked that as the mailcoach arrived at Newark at 7.27 a.m. and returned from Lincoln at 5.25 p.m., it was possible to serve Southwell through Newark with a ride from there at 8 a.m. and returning from Southwell at 4 p.m. The ride from Mansfield was discontinued. This appears to have come into operation with the bags leaving London on 5th July 1841 [MM110/8].

In the same batch of papers there is a note to the effect that the ride from Derby to Burton would be able to leave at 4 a.m. There has not been enough time to find out more about this ride, but its introduction is probably linked to the instruction of 6APR1841 that the Burton bag was to go by way of Derby instead of Coventry. This would have given a much earlier arrival than a ride through Atherstone and Ashby-de-la-Zouch.

Refs: E41800/1841 in Post 30/49, E30500/1841 in Post 30/51.

Other sources: The Midland Railway by F.S. Williams (1968 reprint of 5th Edition of 1876);

A Regional History of the Railways of Great Britain, Vol 9 The East Midlands by Robin Leleux.



A POSTMASTER'S LOGBOOK - 1777-1807

I am indebted to Derek Smeathers and John Calladine for providing me with a copy of an article which appeared in Stamp Collecting on 23rd September 1933. It concerned a volume which had come into the possession of the writer, G.R. Crouch, and on the cover of which was inscribed:

*"Presteigne, May, 1805.
Instructions and Directions, &c
How to Do the Post Office Business."*

The author of the book was John Piggott who wrote on the title page the record of his Post Office service:

"10th October, 1777. I Begun and Entered upon the Post Office Business at £8, and £2 per annum from the Bye Office, making in whole Ten pounds per annum.

"5th October, 1807. Left off, and Resigned the Post Office; Served 30 years."

Mr Crouch describes the book as containing details of the procedure to be followed in dealing with the mails, Specimen waybills, a list of the mails to and from Presteign, orders from the Postmaster General, specimen account forms and much more. Before reproducing the first of these, it will be helpful to give the information from the third section.

The London mail arrived via Leominster on Sundays, Wednesdays and Fridays, consisting of five bags: the London bags for Presteigne, Radnor and Aberystwyth, the Leominster-Aberystwyth bye bag, and the Leominster-Radnor bye bag. The last four were sent on the same night to their destinations while the Presteigne bag was dealt with the next morning. On Tuesday nights a London mail also arrived containing only two bags: the Presteigne bag from London and the Leominster and Presteigne bye bag.

On the other three nights of the week, Mondays, Thursdays and Saturdays, the mail was sent off to London via Leominster. The mail sent from Presteigne at 10 p.m. on Monday arrived in London at 8 a.m. on the Wednesday.

The procedure for dealing with the incoming mail from Leominster reads as follows:

"May 1805. How to do the Post Office Business at Presteigne after the Post comes in from Leominster. First search the Letter Box, and what Letters for Presteigne, Kinsham, Knill, Titley, Eywood, Kington, Knighton, Radnor, Penybont, Rhayder, Aberistwith and Places adjacent thereto.

"Stamp them with the Presteigne Office Stamp."

P R E S T E I G N
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"Then Tax them (those for Presteigne only 1d as that is my perquisite being dropt into my office, and in my own Delivery). (N.B. - The additional alteration of one penny took place the 12th and 13th of March, 1805.)

"The Kinsham, Knill, Titley, Eywood, Kington, Knighton and Radnor at 4d. each single Letter. Those for Penybont and Rhayader 5d. Those for Aberistwith 7d.

"Sort them all into their proper holes or places.

"Then open the Cross Bag from Leominster.

"Take out first, the Short Letters from thence. Tax them, including the Presteigne Short Letters along at the same rate.

"And sort them also.

"Then enter the whole number of each sort upon the back of the Leominster X Bill, so as to refresh the memory in order to enter them in the three Columns made in my book for that purpose. (If there's any that have the money sent along from Leominster or elsewhere to pay the postage of any Short Letter, must enter them down along as I must account for them all upon Oath when Make out my Quarter's Account of Short Letters, called the Bye and Way Letters, vizt, the 5th January, 5th April, 5th July and 5th October.

[Editor's Note: For an account of Short Letters see MM51/10ff.]

"Then examine and count the Cross Road Letters from Leominster. If right, and answer to the Bill sent with them, sort them likewise. (If not right, must make your remarks accordingly to have it allowed.)

"Then examine if the Cross Bill is drawn in and added up right. And put it by till have sorted the London Letters.

"Then open the Presteigne London Bag, sort the Newspapers, Postpaid, and Free Letters therefrom, from the Paid Letters.

"Then take the Number in Tale and the Amount upon a loose paper to see if Answer (sic) to the Bill sent with them, beginning with the lowest first, and the larger next in progression, and if the whole Amounts to the Bill sent with 'em, may be sure and certain they are right.

"Then sort them into their proper holes or places.

"But if don't amount to the Bill sent must look them over again, to see if can find it out where the Mistake is, or lies, as we often do by chance put Pay Letters amongst the Frees, etc. If then not right remark it, so as to have it allowed at the Quarter's end.

"Then enter them down into my book in each hole separate, doing the Radnor first, and counting them twice over, and dispatch him directly. Then do the other Letters. When we have entered them all down, and added them up, figure the sum total of each hole, vizt, Radnor, Presteigne, King, Kington and Knighton together upon the loose paper, wherein have took an Account of the London Letters before.

"Then add the London Bill, The Cross Bill, and the Short Letters together, and if the three sums total agrees and proves the same as the other five, may be sure and certain they are right.

"Then make out the other four Bills, vizt, Presteigne, King, Kington and Knighton, putting each Bill under the upper Pay [Paid] Letter and tye them up, and put them in their proper Bags, the Frees, pd. and Newspapers may be put Loose along and Seal them up.

"Then Enter in my book, on the Credit side of Genl Office Account the number of London Letters, and the sum Total therein, that I had made a memorandum of on the loose paper and the day I received them and file it; as I must send the Original Bill back the next night Stamped and Signed ... J. Piggott."

It would be interesting to know if this volume is extant.

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VERITAS

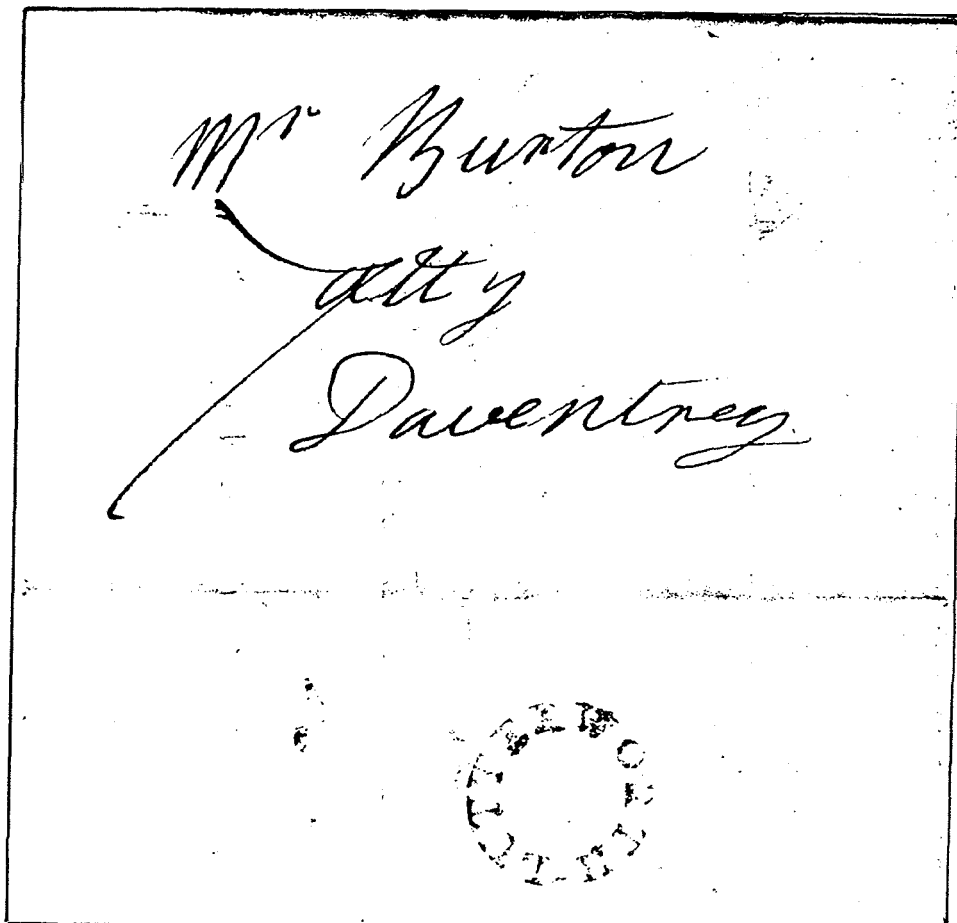
So often the contents of the covers that we find are rather boring letters, about property, sent from one firm of solicitors to another but from time to time one crops up where the contents are far more interesting than the postal markings. One such was sent from Lutterworth to Daventry in March 1834 and shows a poor strike of the Lutterworth UDC issued in July 1832. As the letter does not contain a single full stop, I have inserted some at what I think are appropriate points in the following:

"Sir

Having understud you are the Lawyer fore Muster Ledrag in Leighs shute perhaps you wont minde peying the Postidge fore thee following infirmation. Leigh has tuke the benefit of the Insolvent Dettors Act and niver paid a Sixpence. He as been committed to Lester Jeel and tried for fellonee but was acquitted. Has had all sorts of bad characturs at his hous. Lawyer Fox of Lutterworth can tell you a deal about Leigh. Doctor Jones of the same place is going as a Witness for Leigh to say He considered him a respectable man and had dealt with him for hosses but had not dealt with him lately because of his being committed for hos staling. This Doctor niver dealt with Leigh in his life till Leigh run up a Doctors Bill and as Jones could get no money He got an old poney worth about £3. And the writur of this believes he has often herd Jones say what a rogue Leigh was. It is beleeeved a friende of Leighs one James Griffith will come to give Leigh a caractur. This Griffiths is in Lunden a omnibus driver, in the Country a fine fashionable Gentleman but sartainly is a goode lucking man and no fool having been in Town from a boy first as a [Cad?] and then a Coachman. He was a few months ago committed and tried for receiving stolen Hosses from one Davies whose brother was transported. This Griffiths when in the Country at Harborough [illegible] stops at Leighs, dresses in the first style of fashion and goes by another name as a large horse dealer.

Yours
veritas"

While the writer may have been telling the truth, I suspect that he was trying to hide his identity by pretending to be less well educated than he actually was. He was aware of the Insolvent Debtors Act and I wonder how many people today could spell "committed" and "acquitted" correctly. There are two instances of "hos" for horse but at the end he uses the correct spelling and not the Leicestershire dialect.



NOTTINGHAM - A SURVEY OF SCALES

by Dennis Humphreys

In about 1887, the postal authorities in Nottingham carried out a survey of both the town and rural sub-offices to ascertain who was using private or official scales to weigh letters and parcels. The handwritten lists are not dated but by working through the list and knowing the dates of opening of many of the offices, I am sure that c1887 is a fairly accurate date.

Was this survey carried out at only Nottingham or was it part of a wider initiative? Have any other members seen anything like this?

Shown below are the returns from the town receiving offices. Not shown is a column in which it was indicated whether or not the office was located in a shop. All of the TSOs were in a shop.

OFFICE	LETTER SCALE	PARCEL SCALE
Albert Street	Private	Official
Alfred St. Central	Private	Private
Alfreton Road	Private	Official
Arkwright Street	Private	Official
Blue Bell Hill	Private	Private
Carringby	Private	Official
Chapel Bar	Private*	Official
Carlby P'lace	Private*	Official
Derby Road	Official	Private
Fishergate	Official	Official
Hyson Green	Private*	Official
Mansfield Road	Private	Official
Melbourne Street	Private	Private
New Basford	Official	Official
New Lenton	Official	Official
Old Basford	Official	Official
Old Lenton	Private	Private
Old Radford	Official	Official
St Anns Well Road	Official	Official
Sherwood Rise	Private	Official
Sneinton	Private*	Official
Sneinton Elements	Private	Private
Station Street	Private*	Private
Trent Bridge	Private*	Official
Union Road	Private	Private
Walter Street	Private	Private
Waverley Street	Official	Official
Woodborough	Official	Official
		(Spring balance)

Note: A * denotes that the private scales were used only for official purposes.

When the rural offices are added, giving a total of 98 offices the recorded results are;

	LETTER SCALES	PARCEL SCALES
71 in trade premises	57 private*	37 private
	14 official	34 official
27 not in trade premises	19 private	3 private
	5 official	24 official

Three of the offices not in trade premises (Bestwood Colliery, Burton Joyce and Wollaton) had no letter scales but used private weights on the parcel scales.

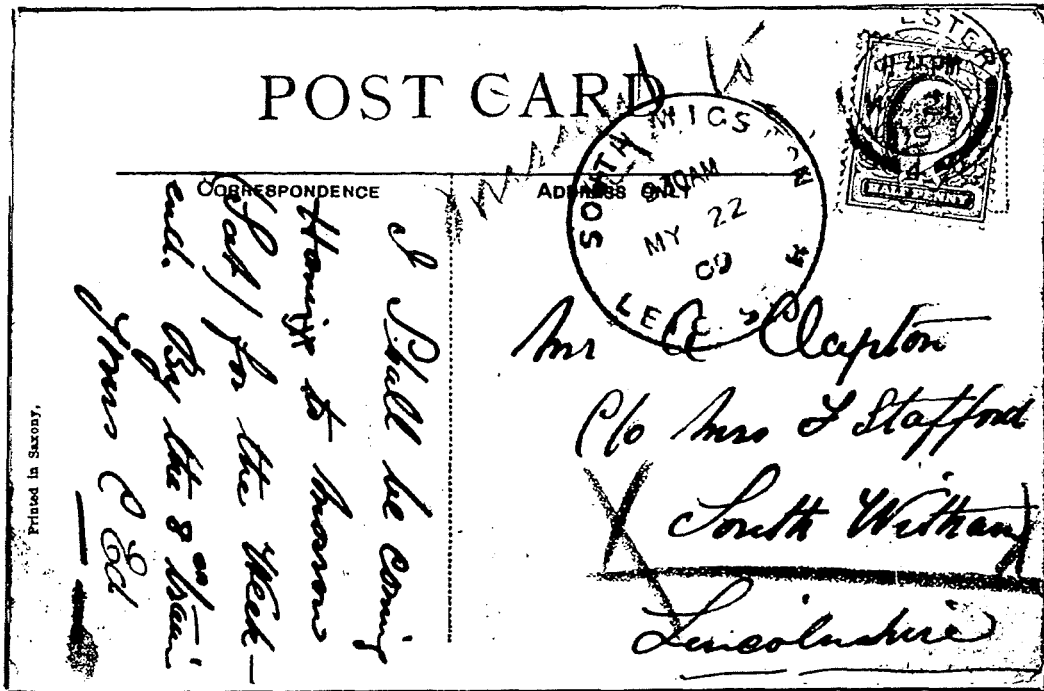
Of the 57 offices in trade premises using private scales 7 confined their use to official business.

The offices at Clifton, Ilkeston Junction and Muston used official spring balances to weigh the parcels.

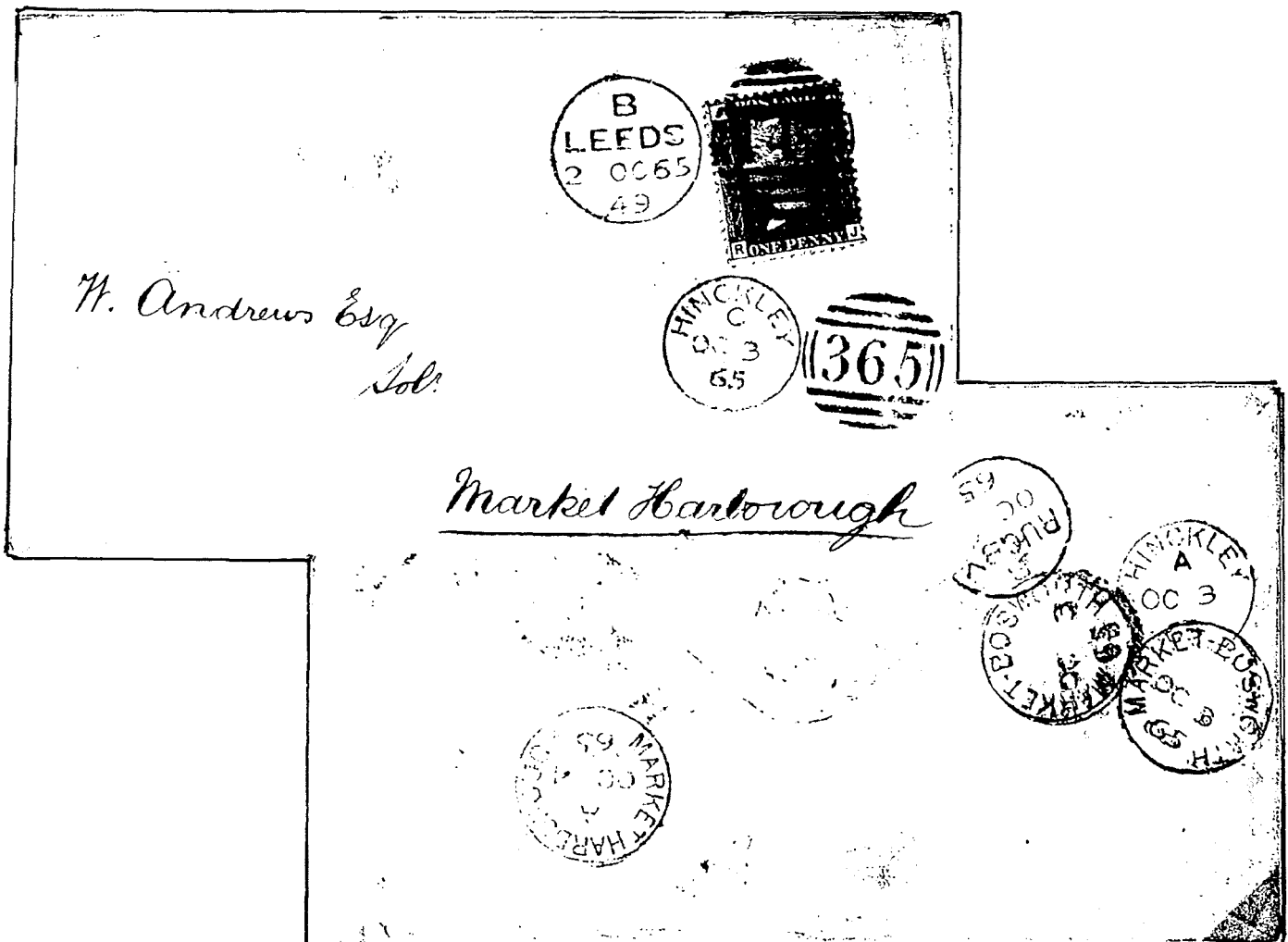
[Editor's Note: As late as 1990, at least two offices in deepest Leicestershire were using brass weights, kept in lovely polished wooden boxes, to weigh letters.]

SOME MISSENT ITEMS

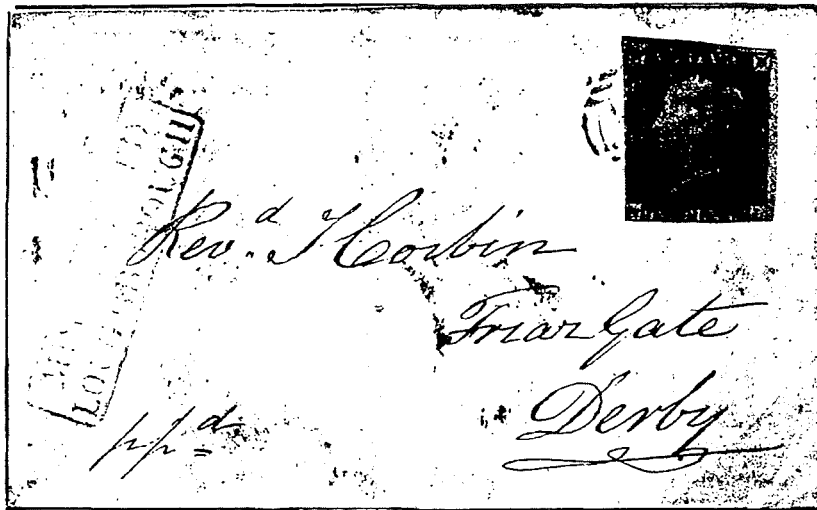
Sent from Leicester to South Witham but was missent to South Wigston.



Sent from Leeds to Market Harborough but was missent to Market Bosworth

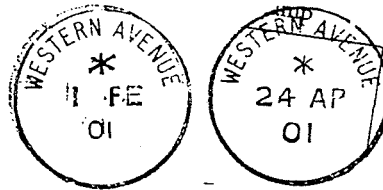


This letter was sent from Ringwood to Derby in February 1851. It shows a strike of the boxed Missent handstamp of Loughborough. This is much scarcer than the well-known handstamp of Leicester. I have seen only four in twenty years.



MORE ON WESTERN AVENUE

In MM119/16 I showed a copy of the handstamp used in the new sub-office at Market Harborough and asked if it was still in use. It now appears that the office has two such handstamps and they were still in use in April. There are minor differences between the two handstamps as a close examination will reveal.



THE NEXT MIDLAND MAIL

I hope that this will be published in early November. There is a need for articles to be sent to:
John Soer, 51d Barkham Road, Wokingham RG41 2RG

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