

MIDLAND MAIL



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



President: Mr W.J. Calladine

Chairman:
Mike Young

Treasurer
Trevor Clewley

Secretary:
Elizabeth Lewis

Number 79, March 1993

I hesitate to return to the subject of my last editorial, but since it has also been the subject of a number of newspaper articles, and we are possibly faced with the most important change to the postal system of this country in over three hundred years, I will add a few more comments.

An article in the Daily Telegraph was headed "It works, so why sell it off?" The answer is that the Treasury, that organisation with an unsurpassed record of getting things wrong, is impatient to get its hands on the £1 billion or so that could be raised by the sale of Royal Mail. I wonder what they would find to waste our money on. An attempt to bring the Olympic Games to Sutton Coldfield, whilst the railway line to that place falls to pieces, seems a possibility. A study of the sums of money paid by the Post Office to the Treasury shows that in about six years a sum greater than that obtained by privatisation would have been handed over.

My reaction to the statement that the Government has pledged to maintain a nationwide letter service to every address in the United Kingdom with uniform prices and a national network of post offices is that that could be the plan at the moment.

Then I read that Ministers insist that, in the event of privatisation, the name Royal Mail will be retained and that the Queen's head will remain on stamps. That should guarantee that it will be bought by some ghastly, antipodean republican. We are not told the views of Her Majesty on all of this. Might I suggest Ma'am that you send these Ministers to the Tower and treat them in the same way that your namesake dealt with those who displeased her.

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

A joint meeting will be held with the Shropshire Postal History Society at the Beauchamp Hotel, Shrewsbury on Saturday 3rd April. Those who wish to attend should contact Denis Salt on 0743 231418.

Our Annual General Meeting and Auction will be held on Saturday 24th April at Carrs Lane Church Centre, Birmingham. The programme for the day is:

- 11 a.m. Committee Meeting
- 12 noon Lunch and Auction Viewing
- 1 p.m. A.G.M. followed by Auction Viewing
- 2 p.m.(prompt) Auction

THE FEBRUARY MEETING

Our annual competitions were held on 6th February. The first was that for material from before 1840. There were seven entries: Guy Bridges - Ludlow, 1690-1826; Richard Farman - Lichfield Penny Post; Alf Fieldhouse - London Local Post; Eric Lewis - Birmingham City Centre Penny Posts; Rod Nicholas - Leominster, The Early Years; Denis Salt - Exeter to Chester Cross Post, North of Bristol; Mike Young - Bewdley to 1840. As your editor had to leave to catch a train, it is not possible to include any descriptions of the entries. I am indebted to Sharon for collecting details of the entries in the other two sections.

In the post-1840 competition the entries were: Chris Beaver - Uttoxeter, Staffordshire East; Guy Bridges - Maltese Cross Cancellations; Peter Sharp - 19th Century Sub-Offices of Leamington; Harold Wilson - The Early British T.P.Os and Missent Mail; Mike Young - Joseph Dalton Hooker, 1865-68.

Then the post-1840 material was provided by Elizabeth Lewis - The Birmingham Post Office in World War II; Harold Wilson - B.O.A.C. Crash Mail.

The results were:

Pre-1840 - 1st : Denis Salt

2nd : Mike Young

Post-1840 - 1st : Guy Bridges

2nd : Harold Wilson

Post-1940 - 1st : Elizabeth Lewis

2nd : Harold Wilson

THE MARCH MEETING

There was a very good attendance at the meeting on 13th March at Worcester when the subject was "Inspectors and Instructional Marks." Chris Beaver started the afternoon's entertainment with an inspector's crown authorising a change of rate. A variety of "missents" was followed by covers from the two Madeleys - one in Staffs, the other in Shropshire. Although Richard Farman like several other members could not reach Level 2 in National Curriculum Maths (unaware of the meaning of 9), his contribution was a fascinating miscellany which included a registered item which was compulsorily registered, a Money Order and letters sent from Rhodesia during the UDI period. An unusual reason for non-delivery was seen on one of Trevor Clewley's covers - "Demolished". Others showed a variety of "Return to Sender" marks including a "Please Return to Sender" from Leicester which shows that good manners still exist in the East Midlands. Amongst Ches' covers was an item which showed evidence of thirty-six attempts at delivery. Alf Fieldhouse showed a letter sent in 1988 from Arnhem to Stourbridge which had travelled via Indonesia. A letter addressed to Shanghai in 1941 was returned with the mark "No Service/Return to Sender".

After a break for a welcome cup of orange juice, John Soer started the second half with a number of instructional marks from Leicestershire. The two extremes of size of handstamp applied to incorrectly metered mail were shown. Eighteenth century manuscript endorsements, such as a 1712 "per Ashby bagg" (Castle Ashby), was the subject of Derek Smeather's display. It illustrated very well that there is more to postal history than town handstamps. "Crowns, Stars and Springs" could have been the title for Elizabeth's nine sheets. The Crowns began with the first type correcting the rate on a letter of 1703; amongst the Stars was one on a letter sent from London to Geneva in 1834 on which 3/6 had to be paid; the Springs were the erasure marks used in London. Eric began with the various types of letter used by the inspectors, the numeral from the 1870s, and ended with the triangular marks used on missent items in the T.P.Os. Mike Young rounded off the entertainment with a look at the surcharge marks of Worcester and Bromsgrove. A "BROMSGROVE 1 / REDDITCH 2" was not a football result but denoted attempted delivery at a location on the boundary between the two delivery areas.

Our thanks are due to the Worcester Philatelic Society, and in particular Mike Young, for making available the facilities to allow us to enjoy another day in Worcester.

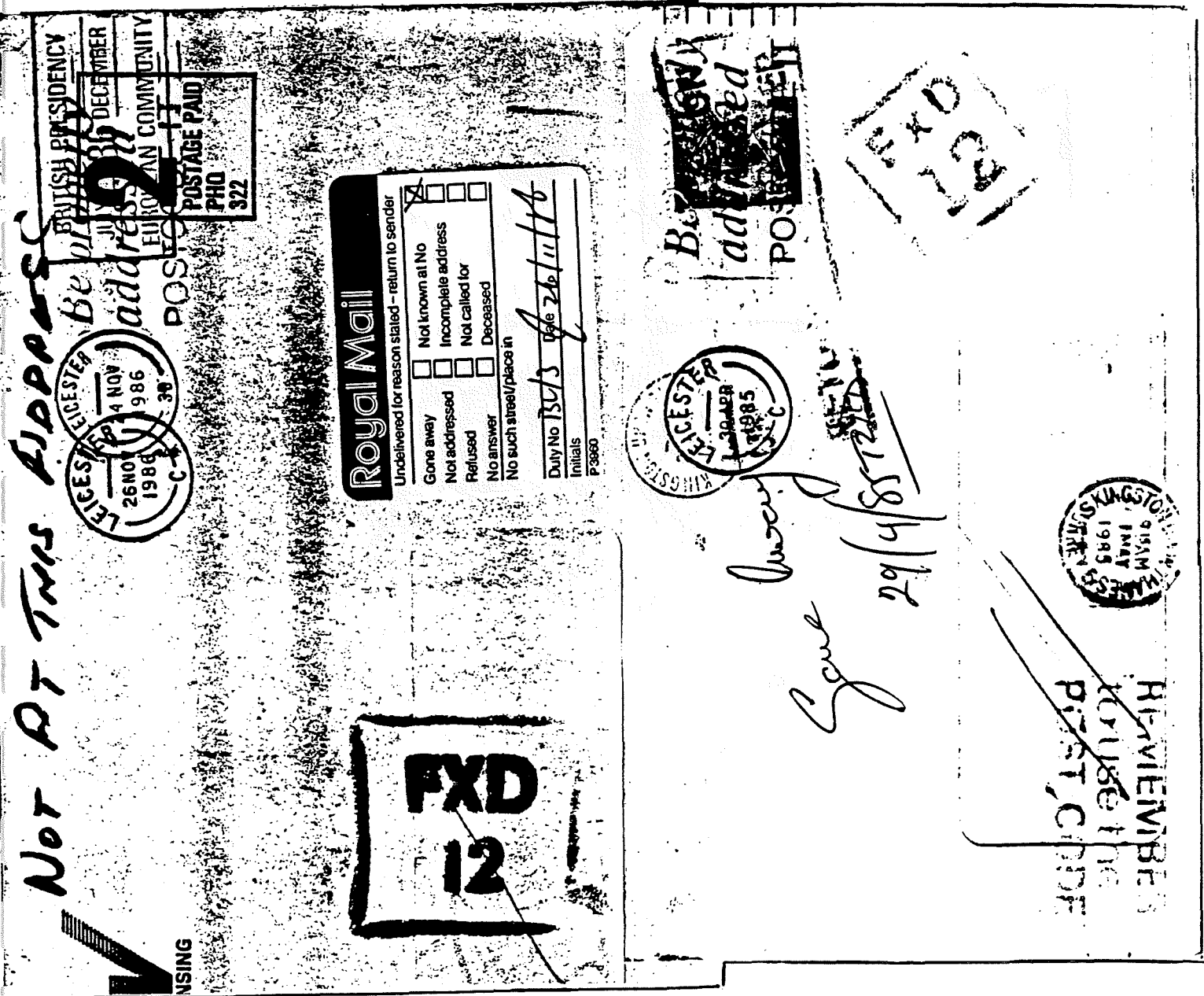
CORRESPONDENCE

Mr de Rousset-Hall has written about David Hardwick's comment that Rugby is no longer a Post Town:

"It still is - i.e. an IVO (Inward Vouching Office). It has had two changes of status - first it ceased to be a Head Office, probably in the sixties, and then its outward mail was concentrated on Coventry in the seventies. But that has nothing to do with being a Post Town. Again as far as I know all MLO's select for Rugby..."

FXD/12

The covers shown below appeared in my display at Worcester. Can anyone tell me the purpose of the FXD/12 marks?

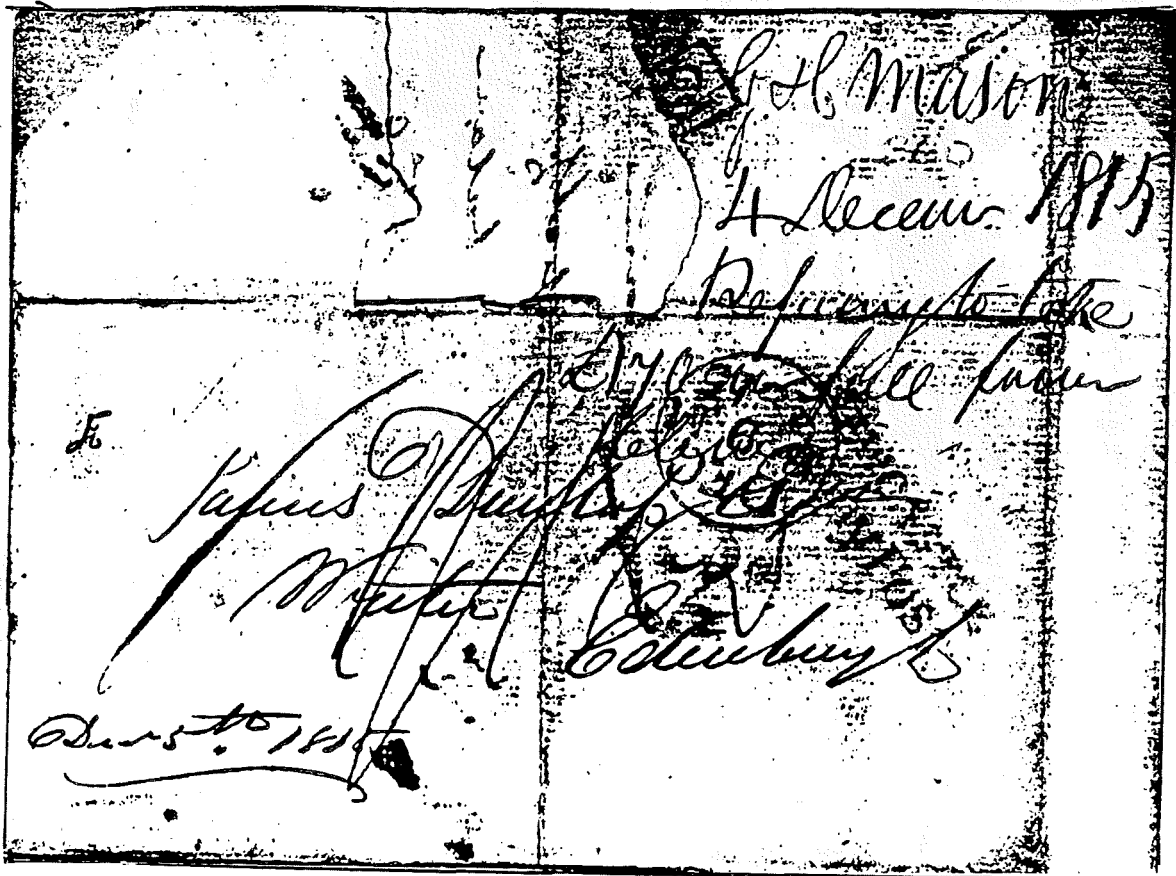


"NEWCASTLE PENNY POST" - 1815

by Rev. Christopher Beaver

Every one of us immersed in the Midlands Local Posts project has made discoveries in the course of the last three years, and come publication day in the autumn all will be revealed. Not that every question will be resolved. Lacunae there will always be.

Just in time to be incorporated comes a totally unexpected piece of evidence worth highlighting in advance. It looks so ordinary an entire, typically tatty rather than a display item, that most of us would hardly give it proper scrutiny. But wait a moment, NEWCASTLE/Penny Post is quite clear if in dingy dun, and 1/1½ to Edinburgh surely can point towards its use at only one Newcastle - the Staffordshire one. It's clearly Oxley type 1, and that I've never seen or heard of before. You'd expect a conclusive town stamp of course, but Walsall (for example) never did use both town stamp and Penny Post stamp together. A double charge from Northumberland perhaps? Hardly, the single General Post rate being 9d., nor is there any record of Newcastle-on-Tyne having a Penny Post before the type 3 period, 1830 to be precise. It can't be County Down since there was no provincial Penny Post in Ireland until 1832. (Yes, we are aware that the Ashbourne Oxley A3 illustration does not belong to English Postal History.)



That this letter made its trip to Scotland in 1815 is clear inside, outside, and on the Edinburgh stamp: written 4th December, place not specified, arrived in Edinburgh on the 9th. The content gives no clues. But haven't I seen the writer's name before, Mason? Yes, for I have a letter of April 1813 which belongs to the same correspondence, charged 1/- (before the additional $\frac{1}{2}$ d was imposed from 8th June that year) and with a circular mileage Newcastle-U-Lyme and no Penny Post stamp. Good. In that case the boxed N^o. 2 in red (the left half of it torn off with the seal) must be that of Lane Delph, and that becomes the earliest recorded use of a handstamp anywhere in the Potteries!

Now, none of the sources behind the story of the Potteries' posts detailed in MM38/5ff and no subsequently discovered ones have suggested the likelihood of finding a Penny Post stamp used at Newcastle-under-Lyme prior to 1823. An Oxley type 2 was issued for use on unpaid mail from villages west of the town. The Potteries' posts were definitely made official under the 5th Clause of the 1801 Act in the November of that year and their receiving houses were converted directly into General Post sub-offices in about June 1839. On unpaid mail from the Potteries passing into the General Post through Newcastle, their post town, some form of 5th Clause Post stamp was struck, according to the records so far received, from at least 15th January 1816 to 22nd June 1839. The need for such stamps did not occur until the introduction of a penny charge on each outward letter (payable either by the sender or the addressee, in practice usually the latter and this made possible by the continued concession of "open boxes" at the Potteries' receiving houses - not generally allowed under 5th Clause arrangements); this was from 28th October 1815, the day the Leicester - Liverpool mailcoach began, and during the seventeen-and-a-bit months that it ran most Potteries' mail was carried by it and did not go through Newcastle at all. Nearly all of what did went to Manchester and beyond on the Birmingham to Manchester mailcoach, this "Newcastle Penny Post" letter to Edinburgh evidently amongst it.

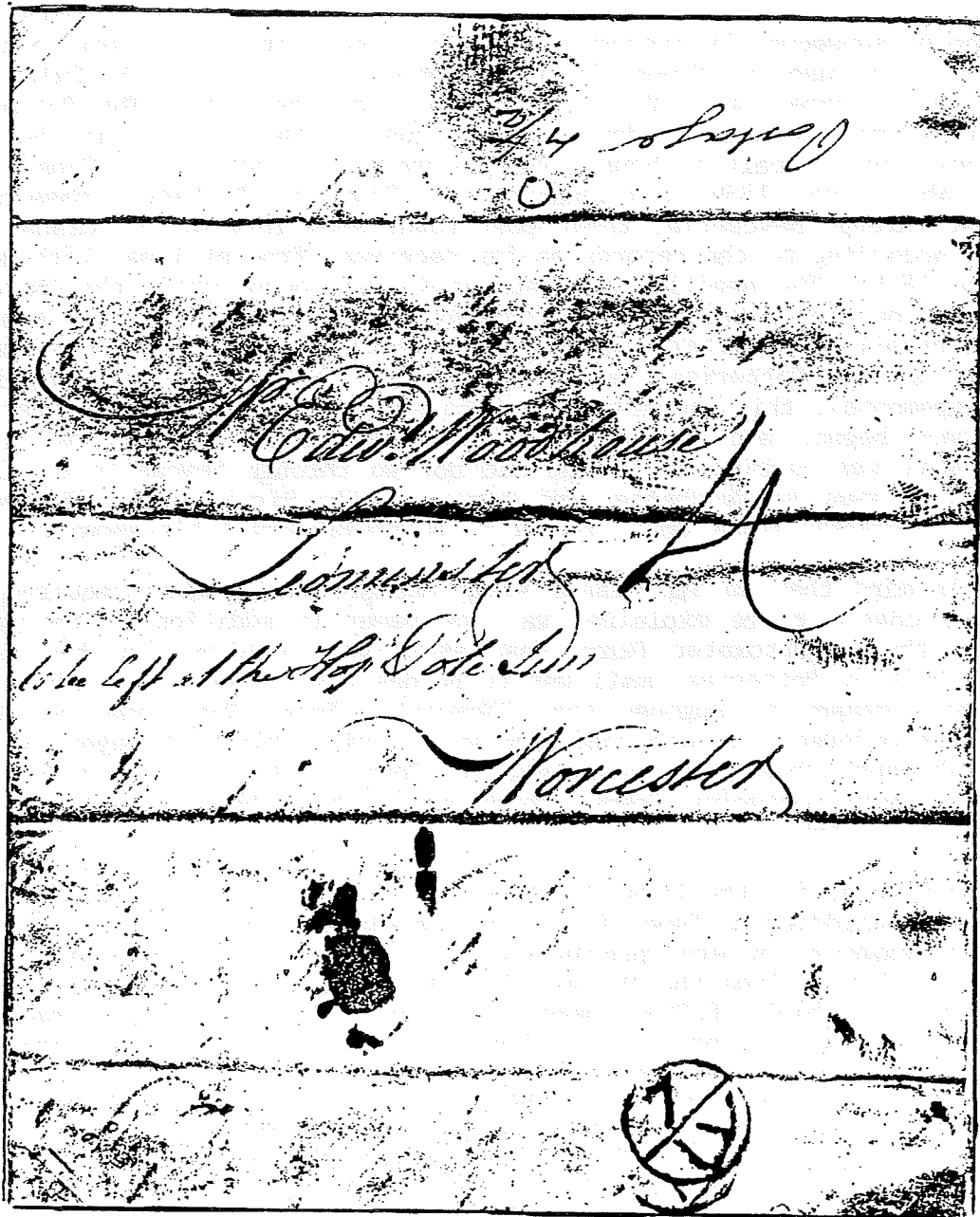
Bear in mind that no 5th Clause stamp had previously been required elsewhere, and that the charge to be explained was one penny in addition to the General Post rate. Also that a Uttoxeter Penny Post stamp was required for the same purpose because the bulk of Potteries' mail was to be dealt with there. So there would seem to be no good reason to suppose that "Newcastle Penny Post" was not the wording intended to be ordered. In use confusion would arise only with regard to franks and newspapers, because these were chargeable in Penny Posts but not in 5th Clause; in practice that meant outgoing franks which should have been free being taxed at a penny to pay by mistake.

I suppose that for the first few weeks of the running of the Leicester - Liverpool mailcoach a Middlewich Penny Post stamp was in use too, though the chances of my possessing an example, or even proving it, are remote. Only one example of Middlewich FCI (on a letter from the Potteries to Liverpool, present location unknown) is attested from a probable fifteen months of use. Either of those marks would be recognised as a rarity and priced accordingly. I am content with the present find!

Have you any evidence to pass on to "The Local Posts of the Midlands to 1840" to be a little more accurate? If so, please be quick.

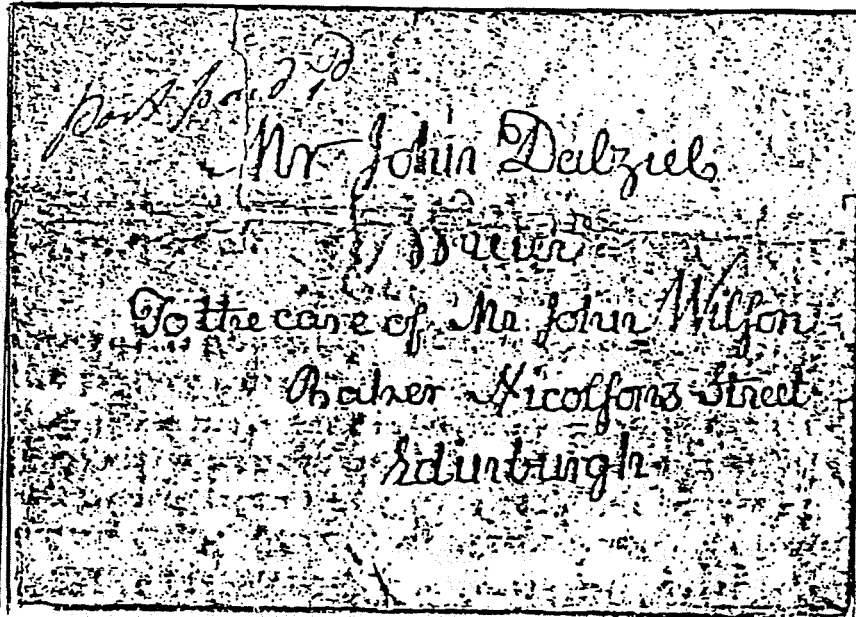
INTERESTING COVERS

The first of these has been sent by Mike Young. It was sent in July 1774 from London to a gentleman in Leominster, but with the instructions "to be left at the Hop Pole Inn, Worcester". The Hop Pole was situated on the corner of Shaw Street and Foregate Street, close to the Post Office. The charge which appears on the front was 4d (above 80 miles), but on the back is "Postage 4½" which probably indicates a local delivery charge of ½d.

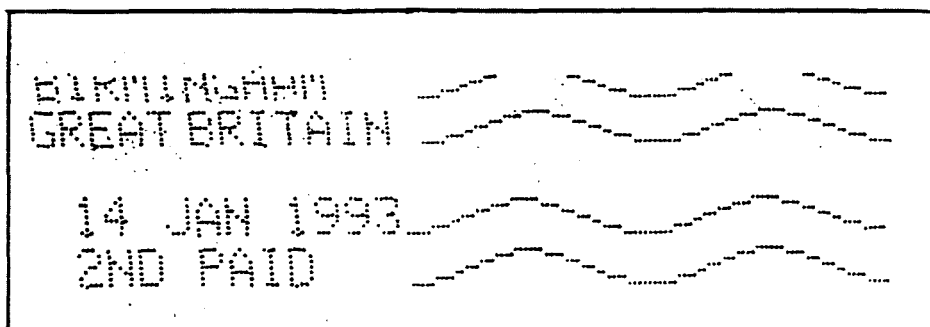


Alan Spencer has a query concerning the second which was sent on 31st December 1787 from Earlstown (presumably Earlston in the Borders) to Edinburgh. The only postal marking is a manuscript "post paid 1d" which does not appear to conform to the rates then applicable. The minimum charge for one stage was 2d and the correct rate from Earlstown/Earlston to Edinburgh, a distance of twenty-five miles, was the 3d rate for distances up to fifty miles. The only 1d. rate at that time was Peter Williamson's local penny post which operated within Edinburgh. However it was normal for such letters to only carry his stamp with no additional manuscript endorsements.

He wonders if any member can offer any explanation for the rate charged on this item.



The last is an item sent by Harold Wilson. It is part of a flat A4 packet which he received a short while ago. He has been told that the mark is made by an experimental machine designed at the P.O. Research Establishment at Swindon. This machine named "ino" has not proved satisfactory and has probably only been used at Birmingham.



THE SURVEYORS' JOURNALS (Part 5)

On 2nd January 1796, Mr Saverland set out for Birmingham to find someone to carry the mail between there and Stourbridge in the place of Mr Smith who had been dismissed for delivering, in Birmingham, letters which he had taken up on the road from Stourbridge. He had reached Coventry when he received an "Express" saying that Mr Coleman, the postmaster of Atherstone, had been "struck with an apoplexy, was then speechless, & not expected to live." When Mr Saverland arrived at Atherstone, early the next morning, he found that Mr Coleman was so far recovered that he did not think it necessary to stay any longer than to see the business of the following day done. He then returned home. Reference to MM78/18 will remind us that in the previous January, Mr Coleman had been "somewhat deranged in his head." It would appear that the P.M.Gs would not tolerate any more for, ten days later, Mr Saverland was again at Atherstone to install a new postmaster, Mr Coleman having been dismissed.

Daventry was the first office to be visited by Mr Saverland in February. There he found several letters brought the preceding night by the post from Northampton for Dunchurch and Rugby which had been detained for twenty-four hours. He reprimanded the postmistress and told her that such letters must always be forwarded by the mail-coach on the morning after they had been received. The excuse of the deputy was that as the mail did not return from Northampton until twelve or one o'clock, she had either to sit up till that time to extract a few letters out of the bag, or get up at five in the morning to make up the bags for Dunchurch and Rugby for the mailcoach which arrived before six o'clock. Mr Saverland commented that it was to be lamented that one of the three mailcoaches which went from Northampton to London on the same road could not be sent through Stoney Stratford, as it would have made the ride to Daventry unnecessary, and accelerated the mail to several towns a whole day. However all the coach proprietors objected to this, although it was a mile shorter.

Four days were spent inspecting offices in Buckinghamshire before he went on to London to consult with Freeling on a number of matters, which included the delays to the mailcoaches at Lichfield caused by the fact that the postmaster did not receive sufficient allowances to enable him to provide proper assistance.

From 24th to 27th March Mr Saverland was at Atherstone to consult with Mr Western on the rates of postage to and from all parts of Scotland. They made out, and sent to every deputy in their districts, lists of those rates from their offices to the different post towns in Scotland. After he had spent four days at home he met Mr Parkin, the solicitor to the Post Office, at Coventry to go on to Chester for the trial of two men charged with robbing the mail between Frodsham and Chester.

A survey of the offices at Hinckley, Atherstone, Tamworth, Lichfield, Coleshill and Coventry took up the last part of April and the first four days of May.

A week later he went to Birmingham to investigate the charges made against one of the letter carriers. It had been alleged that at different times he had delayed letters he had to deliver, and in particular he had left twenty-one letters in pawn for half a guinea, a whole week, at a public house. [Further details of this can be found in MM53/6.]

Mr Saverland was in Birmingham again at the beginning of June. This time it was to find someone to carry the mail to and from Stourbridge as the previous contractor had "deserted it without notice". [It is to be presumed that the vacancy had been filled in January.] As he was unable to find anyone willing to do it for £7 a mile, he decided to let the matter rest for a few days while he went to Shifnal to find a person to convey the mail to and from Newport at £4.13.4 a mile as the postmaster of Newport had requested an increased payment for that duty. The deputy at Shifnal agreed to undertake the ride for the old payment.

On his return to Birmingham, Mr Saverland found that although some applications had been made in his absence, no one was willing to perform the Stourbridge ride for £7 a mile. So the next day he went to Stourbridge where only two people could be found to take it at any price. One offered to carry the mail in a light coach at £10 a mile; the other proposed to convey it on horseback for £200 p.a. - more than £13 a mile. Eventually, on his return to Birmingham, Mr Saverland agreed terms with Mr Waddle, of the Castle Inn, who had originally asked 130 guineas but undertook to carry the mail in a light cart, with permission to carry one passenger, for £130 p.a. [This was not the end of the matter as will be seen from the article which follows this one.] From Birmingham he went to Lichfield to look into a third delivery of letters there.

A tour of inspection in Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire took up the latter part of the month and part of July. The next journal is missing.

On 10th September, Mr Saverland arrived in Holyhead where he spent two days in the course of which he visited the lighthouse. He reported:

"visited the lighthouse which is fully repaired & made comfortable for the Light Man, and the plate glass of the Lanthorn, the Lamps & Reflectors within, are kept excessively clean & bright; And I have the greatest satisfaction in adding that the Captains of His Majestys Packets not only speak equally well of Mr Vickers's management and attention in this respect, but that the Light is seen at such a distance coming from Dublin, that after making the Coal Light upon the Skerries, they run for the Bay & Harbour in the darkest night with the utmost confidence, to the great comfort of themselves & passengers, particularly in boisterous weather, & to the great acceleration of the Mails."

The rest of the month and much of the next were spent in North Wales.

The only entry of interest to us in the journal for November is that on the 1st of the month he was in Lichfield on the establishment of the Birmingham and Lichfield mailcoach. In his report on the timebills he wrote:

"The Mail from Stone to Wolverhampton, one of the most important horse rides in the Kingdom, continues to be performed with the greatest exactness at the rate of nearly eight miles an hour, very much to the credit of the Deputy of Stone; and the ride from Dudley to Wolverhampton with the letters to and from the Birmingham & Bewdley branch, also continues to be remarkably attended to."

For the whole of December, Mr Saverland was employed at home, first of all on routine paper-work and then filling in tables of postage for all the large offices in his district. [Rates of postage were increased on 5th January 1797.] In his report on the riding duties he commented that the very severe weather, during almost the whole of December, accompanied by frequent and rapid thaws, had so broken up the roads as to make very difficult for the horse posts, which operated in the night, to keep to time.

G.B. POSTAL HISTORY

ALSO: Some Foreign, Ephemera, Post Boxes - etc.

Wants Lists - for specific items or for general interests - will receive my personal attention

JIM HAMMOND

5 Staverton Rd, Daventry
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Tel. Daventry (0327) 71842

Mr Western's first official visit of 1796 was on 25th and 26th January to Nottingham in order to report on the lowest terms that the rides from that office could be done so as to avoid delays at Derby and Birmingham. [See MM70/11.] The same matter occupied Mr Western's attention a month later when, on his way to London, he called at Birmingham "for the purpose of observing the Inconveniences occasioned by the late arrival of the North Letters from Derby and Newark."

On 15th March he left London and went to Northampton to investigate a complaint about the late arrival of the post at Higham Ferrers. Three days later he met Mr Saverland to attend a meeting "by order of the Postmaster General" with Mr Curzon's agent on the subject of a proposed coach from Coventry, through Ashby, to the Potteries. However, Mr Curzon had neither named an agent nor fixed a meeting, so Mr Western went home before going on to Nottingham to check the new arrangement of rides. His journal gives more detail than does that of Mr Saverland about their meeting at Atherstone. It appears that many of the taxes on letters, from their districts, going through Carlisle were too high. [Owing to a rerouting?] Thus there was the need to issue to each deputy a corrected table of the rates of postage to Scotland.

Mr Western spent most of April in Lancashire. However towards the end of the month he went to Northampton to arrange for the London letters for Higham Ferrers to be sent in the Northampton bag instead of that for Wellingborough. In his report on the riding work he stated that on the first of the month, the Wirksworth rider was too late at Derby for the coach to London. He had thus been obliged to go on to Loughborough where he overtook it, and the London bags from Bakewell and Wirksworth were forwarded without delay.

As the whole of May was occupied by a survey in Yorkshire, I will only mention his report on the riding work for that month. The London bag which ought to have arrived at Worksop on the evening of the 29th did not arrive until the next day as the Ollerton rider had lost it "in the street". It was returned to the Newark office after the rider had left. The deputy at Newark was told that the bag should have been sent on immediately by "express".

A visit to Nottingham to investigate a report that no one could be found to act as a letter carrier for the pay offered, and a survey on the road from Melton Mowbray to Rockingham and Northampton, accounted for the first half of June. He found that the rider from Wellingborough to Thrapstone was under fourteen years of age, and so ordered that another be employed. On the 25th it was necessary for him to go on from Wansford to Kettering as £100 in bank bills had been stolen out of a letter at that office. He returned there on 2nd July to check that the office was taken care of while the postmaster attended the trial at Northampton Assizes of Thomas Wright. [Wright was found guilty of stealing £100 from a letter, and was sentenced to seven years transportation. He was the son of the letter carrier, and was employed by his father to deliver the letters on Sunday mornings. It was the opinion of the Attorney General that he could not be considered as an employee of the Post Office, in which case he would have been hanged.]

Mr Western spent the last three weeks of July in Yorkshire, and most of August in Lincolnshire.

The only entry of interest to us in the journal for September was to say that he raised the taxes between Derby, Newark and Nottingham. [I have not had time to see if further details of this exist.]

On 22nd November, Mr Western set off for Alfreton since he had received a request for that place to be served from Belper instead of Mansfield. A month later he was at Cuckney, near Ollerton, to open a receiving house. On his way back to Derby, he called at Chesterfield to look into an application from there for a post from Derby. [More on this in the next issue.]

Mr Woodcock's first survey of 1796 took him to Worcester. From there he went on to Hereford where he reprimanded the postmaster for not sending his accounts to London, and for errors in making up his Missent and Dead Letter account.

On 1st February he received a letter from Worcester saying that the post had been robbed between Stourbridge and Bewdley. He immediately set off for Bewdley, but when he arrived there, late at night, he found that the supposed robbery had happened between Birmingham and Stourbridge. When he got there, a thorough investigation revealed that it was a story invented by the postboy to cover his own negligence. Although the surrounding area was much alarmed by the report of the postboy, all the bags were safe and nothing lost. A survey in Gloucestershire and Wiltshire in the latter part of the month revealed nothing worthy of comment.

Mr Western went to Tetbury on 2nd March to introduce a London bag for that town, and to make out a list of places to be included in the Tetbury delivery. [This is to be found in Post 14, ref. 242.] Later in the month, an inspection of the offices in Shropshire did not turn up anything of note. He then went on to meet Mr Hasker and various coach proprietors to discuss the introduction of a mailcoach three days a week between Gloucester and Carmarthen.

None of the tours of inspection that Mr Western made in the next four months involved the Midland counties, other than Oxfordshire.

When he returned to Hereford at the beginning of September, he found that the paperwork in much better order than it had been earlier in the year. At Leominster he found that the postmaster had "retired into the Country" and left the management of the office to his son. However, Mr Western commented: "I do not know that the service will suffer from this as the Son appears to be a steady, intelligent young man, and with attention fully equal to the duty." At Presteigne, he took a count of the letters so that he could report on the application for a daily post. On his way he called at Shobdon which he felt was a proper place at which to open a receiving house, and to include in the bag the letters for Pembridge and neighbourhood. Next, he visited the sub-office at Kington. He said that the trade of the town was considerable, the number of letters large, and whatever additional post was given to Presteigne should be given also to Kington.

In the first half of December, Mr Western visited a number of offices in the West Midlands. The deputy at Tewkesbury was in arrears. At Worcester, he found that the postmaster of Ludlow was charging incorrectly. Also the deputies at Stourbridge, Kidderminster and Bewdley were not as careful in their taxing as they should have been. The postmaster of Bristol was told to tax letters for Tenbury and Alcester 5d. instead of 6d. At Stratford, he discovered that the deputy at Henley-in-Arden sent letters for Warwick to Birmingham instead of Stratford, causing them to be delayed, and that Chipping Norton did not charge letters for Kington on Stratford, as he should have done. Some minor errors were corrected at Evesham.

(to be continued)

G.B. COVERS

Do you see my lists of GB cover material? If you don't and are a member of The Midland (GB) Postal History Society, you should! They contain a wide selection of interesting and unusual items - county material, difficult values and rates- from 1840 to date. Send for a copy of my latest list today. All 'Wants Lists' for specific items or county material will receive my personal attention.

ROGER HUDSON



P.O. Box 172,
COVENTRY CV6 6NF

Phone: 0203 636613

A SHORT-LIVED MAILCOACH

It will have been seen in the previous article that, in June 1796, after some difficulty Mr Saverland agreed terms with Mr Waddle of the Castle Inn for the carriage of the post between Birmingham and Stourbridge. However, on 25th June, Mr Gottwaltz, the postmaster of Birmingham, wrote to Mr Saverland saying that Messrs Waddle and Styles had called upon him to say that Waddle was handing over the Stourbridge ride to Styles. Moreover, Styles, as could be seen from an enclosed card, intended to run a coach, except on Sunday when the mail would be carried on horseback.



Mr Saverland wrote to Freeling that he had instructed Mr Gottwaltz that such a mode of conveyance could not be permitted until he heard from him (Freeling).

On 30th June, Mr Gottwaltz wrote to Mr Saverland saying that he had taken the conveyance of the Stourbridge mail away from Waddle as he was unwilling to carry the mail unless he could do so in a coach. He had arranged for this mail to be carried, for £123.5.0., by Mr Spreadborough of "The Sign of the Bird in Hand" in Dale End, Birmingham, commencing on the following Monday as he believed Waddle would carry it in his cart until then. He added: "The mail went only one day up and down in the coach, and one day up."

The following day, Mr Gottwaltz wrote again to say that Spreadborough had started to carry the Stourbridge mail that day, as Waddle did not choose to do so any longer. He ended: "I hope it will be settled now, it has been quite the contrary for this long time back.

Surely, with only three trips this must be the most short-lived mailcoach.

Should you wonder why Mr Saverland was involved in the Stourbridge area, it may be worth my adding that in April 1796, Freeling wrote that Mr Saverland considered the places between Birmingham and Stourbridge to be in his district equally with Mr Woodcock's (Post 42/14K/1796).

WITH MY POST OFFICE I THEE ENDOW

There are, I suppose a number of reasons for people getting married, but that described below must be one of the more unusual. On 19th January 1835, the post-mistress of Worcester, a Mrs St John, wrote to Freeling:

"My Lord,

Although unknown I presume to address your Lordship on a subject domestic and private with persons generally, but in which, as an official servant, I may not act without your Lordships approval or permission.

I beg to acquaint your Lordship that I am the widow of the late Deputy-Postmaster here, who died in the year 1828, and that it pleased His Grace the then Postmaster General, to continue the appointment to me, and that the Clerk who [in] the latter parts of my deceased Husband's life conducted the business (the last mentioned being deprived of sight) has remained with me until now, but as I am not able to make him that compensation which he considers, and I believe justly, to be due to him for services which are unremitting, he has proposed that I should marry him, and fearing the loss of his assistance, having found him faithful and zealous in the business, and to the best of his ability a good officer, I have been convinced that it will be my best interest to do so; and I therefore, as is my duty, lay my intentions before your Lordship to permit our union, and to consent to the Office being transferred to him. His name is John Hill; he is upwards of forty years of age, of steady and industrious habits, and has been accustomed to public business more than half his life; he is also well acquainted with the neighbourhood and inhabitants, and can, I believe, retain the same sureties as appear on my bond.

I beg most earnestly that I may not be thought presumptuous and deserving your Lordship's anger by venturing to make the foregoing request, and promise that should your Lordship be pleased to yield consent thereto, that every exertion shall be made to prove my gratitude for such a distinguished favor, and to prevent your Lordship regret for having condescended to confer it.

With the utmost deference

I am, my Lord..."

In his report to the Postmaster General, Freeling said that, according to the surveyor, Mr Hill was in all respects qualified and had the goodwill of the respectable inhabitants of Worcester. He continued: -

"I need hardly remark that a married Woman is ineligible to the situation of Postmistress, and consequently if Mrs St John marries, she vacates the office.

For many years past, in cases where the Deputy has conducted herself well, the intended husband, being of reputable character, giving good security and engaging to perform the duty in his own person, the Postmaster General has transferred the appointment to the man; but I do not remember a case of a similar application, from any office of so great a value as that of Worcester, which is nearly £200 a year."

The Postmaster-General gave his permission for, on 11th February, Mrs St John wrote to Freeling saying that she and Mr Hill were to be married on the following Monday - the 16th. However there was a slight delay, for it was in a letter dated the 19th that she acquainted Freeling with the fact that she had become the wife of Mr Hill that morning, and that her sureties were willing to act in the same capacity for her husband.

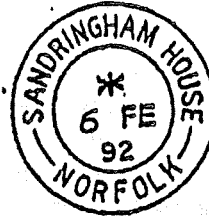
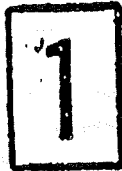
I do not know when the regulation about married woman holding a post office was withdrawn, but I assume the Acts relating to the property of married woman would have had some bearing on the matter. The above does show that whilst marriages might not be made in Heaven, they certainly were in Lombard Street.

79/14

HANDSTAMPS OF

BUCKINGHAM PALACE AND OTHER ROYAL RESIDENCES

Since even the most respected of publications must now feature stories about the Royal Family, the illustrations below should rectify a deficiency in Midland Mail.



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Shown below is part of an advertisement which appeared in the Leicester Journal during December 1790 and January 1791. It will be seen that the fare for inside passengers was twice that for those travelling outside. The supplement payable for travel by mailcoach varies from 20% (to Leeds) to 50% (to London). The mailcoach took about fourteen hours to reach London, three hours less than the Leicester Post Coach. The purpose of the advertisement was to announce the introduction of the latter coach which was said to be new and "on the most improved mode of construction for ease and celerity."

F A R E S.		
	Inside.	Out.
Leicester Post Coach to London	£1 10-0	£0 11 0
Royal Mail to ditto	1 11 6	0 16 0
York, Barn and Leeds Post coach to ditto	1 5 0	0 12 6
Royal Mail from Leicester to Nottingham	0 10 6	0 5 6
from Leicester to Chesterfield	1 2 0	0 10 6
from Leicester to Sheffield	1 5 0	0 12 6
from Ditto to Leeds	1 16 0	0 12 0
Nottingham Post Coach from Leicester	0 6 0	0 3 0
Nottingham and Leeds Post Coach from Leicester to Chesterfield	0 16 0	0 8 0
From Leicester to Sheffield	1 6 0	0 19 0
From Leicester to Leeds	1 10 0	0 15 0
From Leicester to Halifax	1 10 0	0 15 0

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December 9, 1790



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KEEPING IT IN THE FAMILY

Sometime ago whilst in the Public Record Office at Kew I came across a copy of a letter written by Anthony Todd to the Duke of Newcastle, "His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State", in the Chatham Papers, PRO 30/8/83 Part 1. It reads:

"

General Post Office
January 2. 1753.

My Lord

As the Inspection of Correspondence by Letters, to and from these Kingdoms, is reposed in me; I humbly apprehend it is my Duty to represent to Your Grace, that there seems to be an immediate Necessity for the Preservation of so material a Service, that some additional Assistance should be granted, especially at this Time, as there appears to be an Increase of the Business, which has hitherto, without any provision for Death or Sickness, been too burthensome for the present Hands, and a greater Impediment to Correspondence and Commerce than needs to be. The present Clerks are perhaps better qualified than can be expected in the General Course of Things, but they are not sufficient for the business, which as it depends upon Winds and Tides, a great deal must often be transacted with the utmost Dispatch; much less, therefore, is this Number sufficient to preserve a constant Succession of able Hands, and to provide in due Time against Accidents, for, in this Kind of Employment, it will always be difficult, unless some truly diligent Officers with good Capacities are properly trained, to find Persons of Fidelity and Loyalty, with such a Variety of Qualifications, as are necessary for so singular and laborious a Duty, and the Attendance in a manner constant Day and Night.

To produce a regular State of this Department, obliges me to begin with my own Duty, which is to look over & examine amongst all the letters, Inwards & Outwards, of the Foreign Office, that nothing may escape Observation. This requires a great deal of Time, as well as Attention to the Seals, Hands-Writing, and Course of Correspondence, which are constantly changing, as if it were on purpose to avoid Inspection. For this Reason it is necessary for me to be the first Person in the Office every Morning & Evening. The rest of my Time is employed in examining for, and marking out what is proper to be copied, and in assisting Mr Bode to open and seal up the Packets & Letters, which is by far the most material and difficult Part of all the Business, as well as that it takes up the greatest Share of Our Time, and if this is not performed with the necessary Care and Attention, which he in particular can execute with such Art and Neatness, that too much cannot be said in his Commendation, there might be great Confusion in various Shapes, such as the Complaints of Ministers that their Letters have been opened, the mistakes of Seals, or not truly and well engraved ones, or of folding Letters under wrong Covers. To preserve this Art of opening & sealing up of Letters dexterously, requires an Attention to be immediately paid to it most of all; without which the whole Business would be at a Stand and the Loss of a Person in this singular Way, would be of the worst of Consequences.

To provide therefore against any Accident that may attend Mr Bode or myself, it is most humbly submitted, as he has a son about Fourteen Years of Age, if it might not be prudent, in Case of the obtaining His Majesty's Approbation, to send him to Hanover, in order to learn the Art of Engraving in the proper Manner, and where all the Seals used here, are now, and have long been made, which is a present and very great Inconvenience, by being obliged to wait the Opportunity of Messengers, both in going and coming, whilst we are in Want of them, and it would still be a greater in Case of Mr Bode's Death, who has been for a Course of Years, in Correspondence & Acquaintance with the Officers in the Secret there.

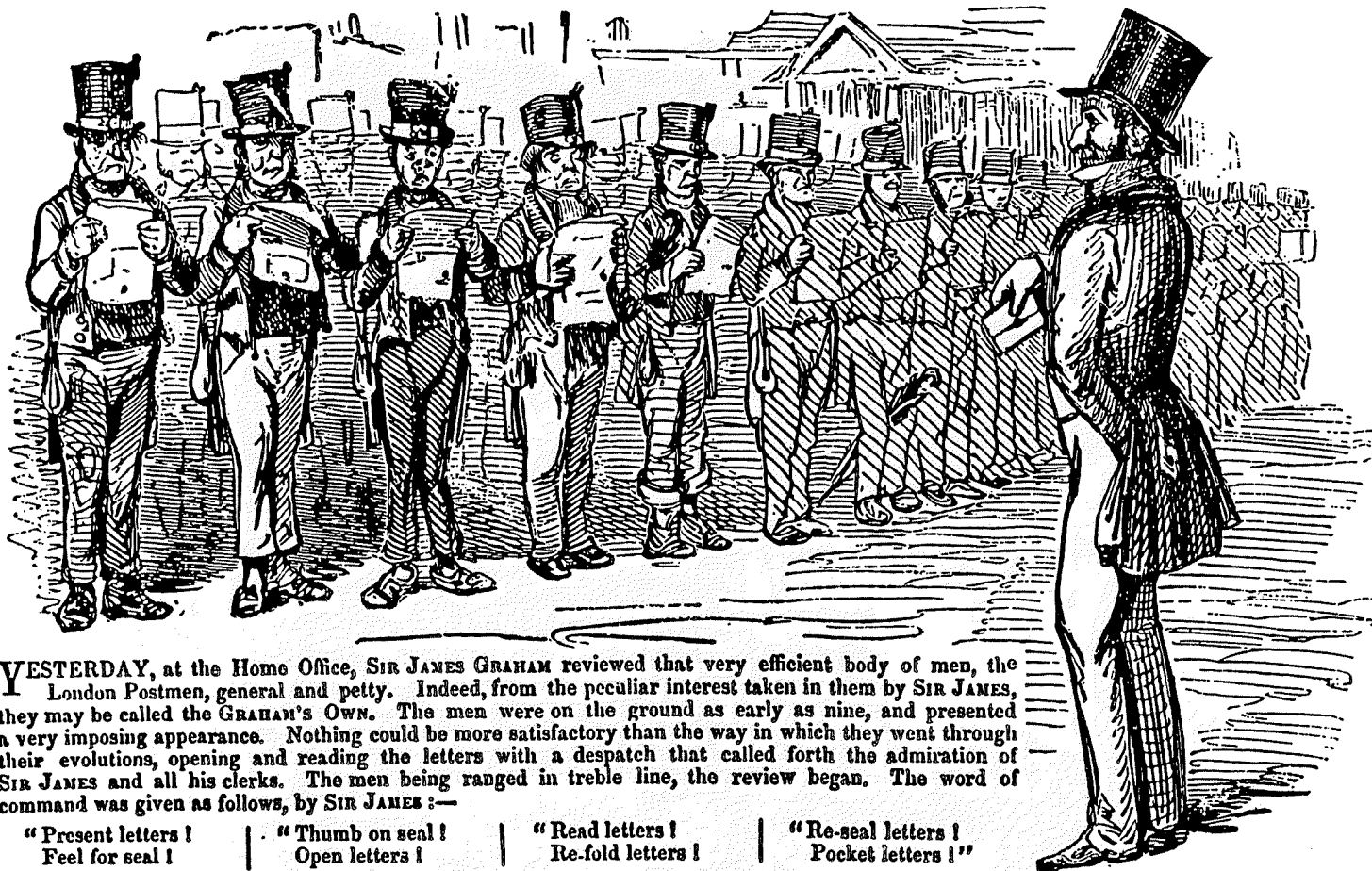
If this should be judged necessary, the Young Man, as soon as he returned hither, might be instructed in the Art of opening and sealing up the Letters, which, with the Knowledge of the German Language and Engraving, would make him a very useful Person.



PAUL PRY AT THE POST OFFICE.

A Punch cartoon of 1844.

GRAND REVIEW OF THE LONDON POSTMEN.



YESTERDAY, at the Home Office, SIR JAMES GRAHAM reviewed that very efficient body of men, the London Postmen, general and petty. Indeed, from the peculiar interest taken in them by SIR JAMES, they may be called the GRAHAM'S OWN. The men were on the ground as early as nine, and presented a very imposing appearance. Nothing could be more satisfactory than the way in which they went through their evolutions, opening and reading the letters with a despatch that called forth the admiration of SIR JAMES and all his clerks. The men being ranged in treble line, the review began. The word of command was given as follows, by SIR JAMES :—

"Present letters !
Feel for seal !

"Thumb on seal !
Open letters !

"Read letters !
Re-fold letters !

"Re-seal letters !
Pocket letters !"

SIR JAMES gave the word in a fine sonorous voice ; and was admirably responded to. Nothing could be more dexterous than the manner in which the postmen, by means of lucifer and wax, resealed the various missives. When wafers were to be used, the word of command was thus :—

"Wet wafer !

"Insert wafer !

"Stamp !"

The review over, SIR JAMES emphatically complimented the body on their efficiency ; and they were then dismissed for their several walks.

Punch lampoons letter-opening at the Post Office.

There are Three Hands more employed in the copying only. Your Grace can judge of their Business by the Copies that are transmitted, which would not indeed be too much, if there could be Time allowed for it, but the greatest Hurry must for the most part be made use of in the copying, particularly in long Letters of Cypher. Someone is obliged to dictate to another who writes the quickest, as many of the Packets take a long Time in sealing up, and the Mails arrive frequently at critical and unseasonable Hours for the delivering out of the Letters. It needs therefore hardly be remarked, that if but one Hand should be sick, there would be an absolute Want of Help, which may well be expected, where there is so much Night Duty, and two of them in years. So another Clerk to copy would make some Provision for Accidents, and be of great immediate Service, as well as a Benefit to Commerce, and even to this His Majesty's Own Revenue. For 'till such Time as the Foreign Minister's Dispatches are all sent out, the common Letters cannot be delivered to the Merchants, who have often thereby lost the Exchange Time, for their Commissions and other Business. Whenever this has been the Case, upon a Post Day in particular, the Decrease of Postage the same Evening is apparent, and amounts to much more than the Addition of a Clerk or two. Besides this, nothing could contribute so much to the Belief of the Ministers and others, that their Letters are not inspected, as the being able to deliver them out in a reasonable Space of Time after the Mails arrive. The sooner likewise the Mails outwards can be dispatched, the better Chance they have for favorable Winds and Tides, as also, the Officers will be in a condition to rise earlier the next Morning to the Business of the Mails inwards, which is an heavy Part of the Duty, considering that Four Nights a Week it [the outward mails?] is from Ten to Two o'Clock and often much later, and for the most Part the Clerks are obliged to be in the Office again at Eight the next Morning.

Upon all these Considerations, & many more might be offered, Your Grace must perceive how very necessary it is become, that an Engraver to reside here should be provided, who may likewise be instructed in the opening & sealing up of the Letters, as those Parts of the Duty have a particular Connection, and is what I must crave Leave to recommend most earnestly and seriously to Your Grace's immediate Attention, as also the Addition of another Clerk to copy.

I resign myself to Your Grace's Will entirely, and am with the most submissive Respect, &c. &c. &c Anthony Todd."

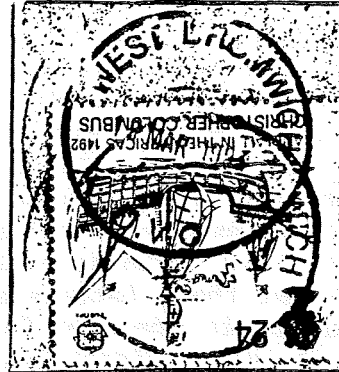
This letter conjures up a fascinating picture of the clerks in the Foreign Branch of the Post Office feverishly opening letters, copying them and then looking for an appropriate seal before closing them.

The Act of 1711 gave directions about the opening of letters. Apart from those which could not be delivered for reasons such as a lack of address, letters were not to be opened "except by the consent of the person or persons to whom the same shall be directed or by an express warrant in writing under the hand of one of the principal secretaries of state for that purpose." The above letter suggests that either this was not followed or that one warrant covered the letters of many people.

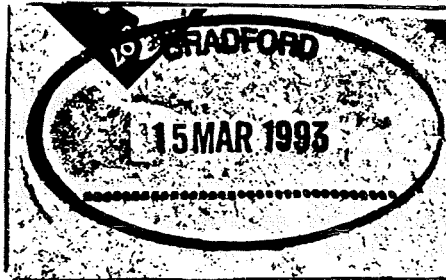
Although the opening of letters in the Post Office is well documented, in particular by Robinson in "The British Post Office" p. 119-125 & 337-352, I have not seen the above letter mentioned.

OVO HANDSTAMPS

My thanks to Paul Hill for sending the postmark from Sutton Coldfield shown below. OVO, I believe, stands for Outward Vouching Office. I wonder why it was used as a cancellation. (I now find that the letters OVO before the word "MANAGER" do not show up on a photocopy as the 28p and 30p stamps come up very black.) It was a short time after the preceding sentence had been typed that the example from West Bromwich dropped through my letter box.



Also, the past week has seen the arrival of an unusual postmark from Bradford. Has anyone else seen anything like this?

THE NEXT MIDLAND MAIL

This should appear at the beginning of June. The only certain feature is another extract from the Surveyors' journals. I hope to include an index as promised earlier in the season. But as I have not yet started, it is far from certain that it will be included. All articles, however short, please to:

John Soer, 51d Barkham Road, Wokingham, Berkshire RG11 2RG.

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