

MIDLAND MAIL

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



Chairman:
Elizabeth Lewis

Treasurer:
Trevor Clewley

Secretary:
Richard Farman

Number 49, March 1987

By the time that this edition reaches you, Stampex for this year will have been and gone. The replacement this year of the competitive exhibits by invited displays prompts me to ask the question "Do we really need competitive philately / postal history?". A glance around the dealers' stands and the display frames at a national exhibition will soon show what those present are interested in - adding to their collections. They are missing the chance to learn more about their hobby, but the amount of material on show does tend to be rather daunting. Possibly this new approach, of showing a few invited displays, is the way forward.

Also I am not sure what purpose it is meant to serve. Most of us take great pleasure in arranging our material and displaying it at society meetings, as well as seeing what our friends have to show. Do we really need the incentive of a piece of metal to produce interesting displays? Then the rules, with the insistence on the exclusion of collateral material, do seem to impose artificial constraints on the way in which a display is arranged. I often find that the use of related "ephemera" makes a subject more interesting.

It is not my intention to join in the criticisms that one often hears of the judging. In fact I often feel that they have an impossible task in that the criteria they have to consider are subjective, and the range of material is too diverse. How can anyone compare a display of pre-adhesive material with one on postal mechanisation? Just one small complaint which is that they do seem to confuse regurgitation of facts from books with research. But I must not pursue that otherwise I shall take up the whole of this edition. Medals or no medals, I hope that we all will carry on collecting in the way which gives us pleasure.

THE ANNUAL AUCTION

A final reminder that details of lots for the next auction can be accepted by Eric or Elizabeth Lewis up to 21st March, i.e. the date of the next meeting. A catalogue will then be produced in good time to distribute well before the date of the auction, bearing in mind the time required for posting to our overseas members.

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

The next meeting will be on Saturday 21st March when Mr. L.D. McConnell will show "G.B. Military Mail". This should be well worth seeing, so do come along.

The final meeting of the season will be the A.G.M. and Auction on Saturday 2nd May. Both meetings will be held at Dr. Johnson House, beginning at 2 p.m.

THE JANUARY MEETING

The Derby Mail stuck in a snow drift (James Pollard, 1792-1867).



THE FEBRUARY MEETING

Fourteen members attended the meeting on 21st February to see seven entries in both the "pre-1840" and "post-1840" competitions. There was some really superb material on display which made for an interesting afternoon.

As usual the afternoon began with the competition for the earlier items. Richard Farman display, "88 years in and out of line", was devoted to the handstamps of Newcastle - under - Lyme, beginning with N:CASTLE:/UN LINE of 1714 and ending in 1802 with a circular NEWCASTLE which enclosed UNDER/LYNE. From Staffordshire we moved to Warwickshire from where Peter Sharp showed the markings of Stratford Penny Post including the numeral handstamps of the Wellesbourne and Bidford receiving offices. The postmasters of Shrewsbury ran an extensive system of local posts. This and the official penny posts of the area were covered in Denis Salt's nine sheets. Then Steve Stobbs took us "across the sea to Ireland" for an entry which contained an 1828 framed Lisburn mileage mark and a "Money Letter" of the same year. Harold Wilson's entry, which was titled "Unpaid marks of the General Post", looked at the variety of Bishopmarks from 1667 to 1787. "Rates" was the topic chosen by Derek Smeathers. One item which immediately caught the editor's eye was one, of 1823, which had twice been charged 8d; one for Wolverhampton to Daventry, the other for redirection to London. But during its travels it was missent to Hinckley where it was stamped with a boxed mileage mark after the manuscript "Missent to". This section ended with Elizabeth's nine sheets on the handstamps, with initials inside a circle, used by the letter receivers in London. Of particular note were an example (1736) of the italic JJ of John Jeffries, and the R.M of Richard Morley (1777).

Since the usual Dr. Johnson cup of tea was not ready, it was straight on to the later material. Full marks for entertainment value were awarded by the judges to Eric Lewis' "Amusing Machine Cancels". Typical of these was the slogan "Help Your Postman / Keep Your Path Clear" with the added comment "How good of him to offer". The Post Office take no notice of county boundaries; this was illustrated in Chris Beaver's display of Staffordshire villages under post towns in other counties, and places in other counties under Staffordshire post towns. His straight line BRIERLEY / HILL was envied by some of those present. Peter Sharp showed Leamington Parcel Post labels including those of the town sub offices. Steve Stobbs' nine sheets were devoted to the Atcham area including the Attingham Park Military Hospital. Amongst the items in Harold Wilson's "Early English T.P.O.s and their Missent Handstamps" were a "Missent to Rugby / and Newcastle RWPO" and a "MISSENT-TO / R & L.R.P.O. Derek Smeathers entry was "The Second World War in Northamptonshire"; this included items from the American Army Postal Service. Mike Young, who was unable to attend, showed great courage (or foolhardiness ?), since the previous editor was there, in sending nine sheets of "Stourbridge" which included an 1850 traveller.

Harold Wilson then provided the entertainment while the judges, two members of the Society, retired to deliberate on the entries. Eventually they returned to announce the winners - Denis Salt in the pre-1840 section, and Harold Wilson in the post-1840 competition.

A MYSTERY SOLVED

With reference to the letter illustrated on page 5 of the last issue, Denis Salt writes:

"I do not think there is any alternative to Stourport as the place of origin. The charge of 2/1d. indicates a single letter charge of 5d., which would cover 15 to 20 miles after 9th July 1812, and Henry Lloyd did not qualify as a solicitor until 1818. I do not think there is any Post Town other than Stourport within 20 miles of Ludlow, and on the face of it even that is over 20 miles. The route would have to be via Bewdley and Cleobury Mortimer, which indicates that the date of the letter was probably in the 1830's, but Mike Young would know more about this."

MEA CULPA

To the confusion of members I omitted "Lichfield 1775" on the list of Chester Road towns with six-day communication with London (MM 48/8). Please insert this before Coleshill to make the rest of the article comprehensible - I hope!. This fits in with the expectation that Lichfield actually became six-day in 1770 on the introduction of the Birmingham to Derby cross-post, cf. MM 46/3 and 47/15. C.M.B.

Great Britain Postal History

from 1840 to date. County material,
FDCs and the unusual. Send for my latest list.

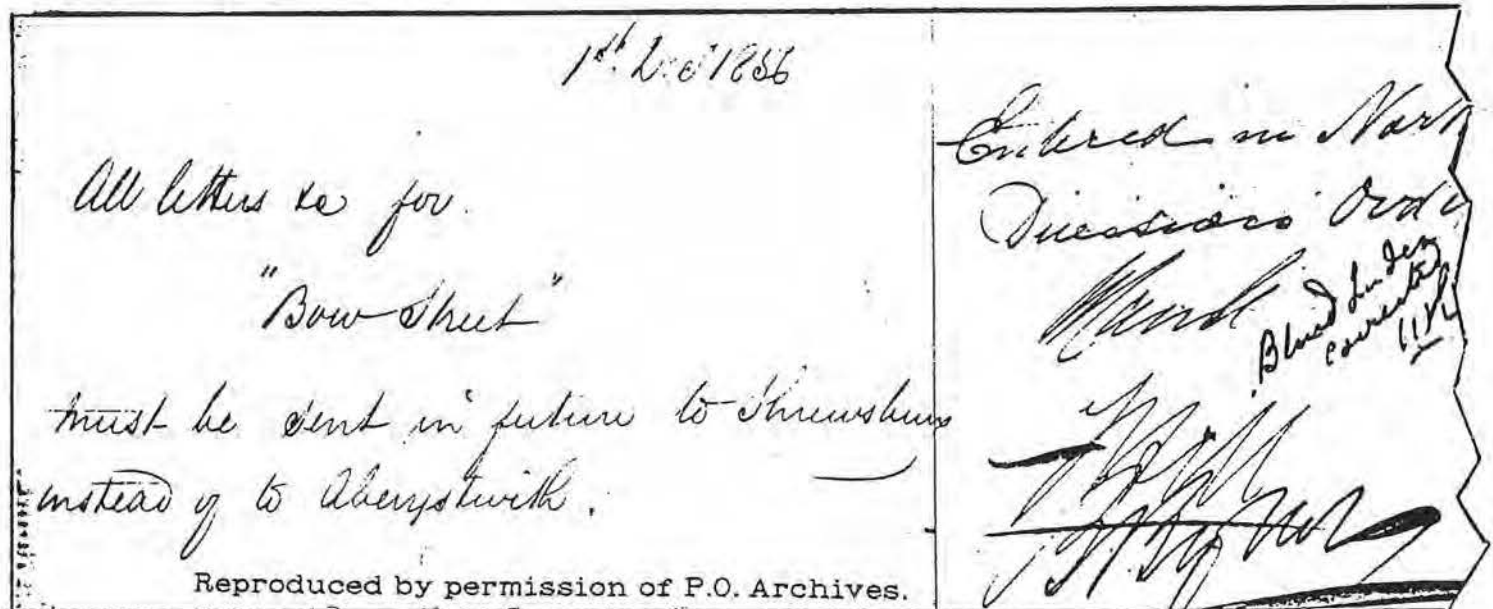
ROGER HUDSON
36 WEST STREET
WARWICK
CV34 6AN

BOW STREET

I understand that there are some people (most of whom no doubt live to the west of Offa's Dyke) who have the audacity to question the decision of our Shropshire editor to list Bow Street as a sub office of Shrewsbury, despite the cover shown on p.69 of the U.D.C. book. Despite the fact that all I know of Shropshire Postal History could be written on the back of an 1870 halfpenny stamp, I would like to offer some evidence to support Steve.

For those who know less than I do, the Bow Street in question is not that in London but is three miles to the north east of Aberystwyth on the A487, and some seventy miles from Shrewsbury.

An official post from Aberystwyth passing through this village was authorised in 1850. Early in 1855 two posts to Bow Street were proposed. One was by mail coach from Shrewsbury; a second bag was brought from Aberystwyth by mail coach. Since there were two separate allowances for the delivery of the letters, the bags must have arrived at different times of the day. I have not found when this arrangement came into being, but in 1856 instructions were issued to the Inland Office in London that letters for Bow Street must be sent to Shrewsbury.



There were a number of other offices in West Wales which came under Shrewsbury. Although I have not delved very deeply into this, it seems likely that they were on branch posts from the route of a Shrewsbury to Aberystwyth mail coach. For example in 1852 the post to Corris was extended to Tallylyn and Dolgelly, the messenger then going one day and returning the next. At one time the bag for Cemmaes was carried by the mail coach and was left in the care of the toll collector at Tyn y Rhos.

I imagine that the reason for these offices being made subordinate to Shrewsbury was that since the bulk of the mail was probably eastbound, it saved time for it to be dealt with at Shrewsbury. Although this of course would depend upon the departure times of the mail coach.

If our Shropshire members can prove my conjectures to be incorrect, I will be only too pleased to publish their evidence. Finally I should add that there is no truth in the rumour that Mr. Stobbs has evidence to show that Stourbridge and Worcester were sub offices of Shrewsbury.

THE OFFICES OF WALSALL PENNY POST

by Rev. Christopher Beaver

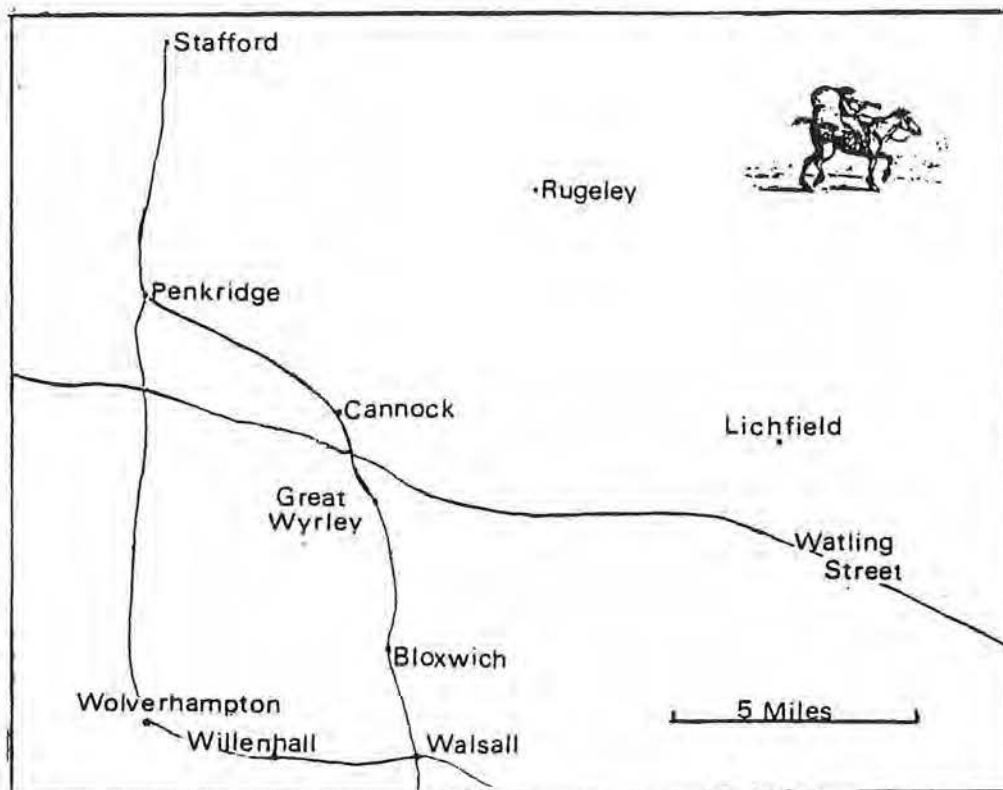
Strikes of the only stamp, of the above penny post, recorded by Oxley - WALSALL/Penny Post, type 1, drab, 1830 to 1832 - are poor as well as "very scarce". There were only three receiving houses, Penkridge, Willenhall and Cannock. It does not seem a promising subject for study.

However two facts arouse interest. Type one stamps were all issued by 1823, yet the Oxley record gives the first office established as Penkridge in 1829. The map of postal routes in 1823 (Post 10A/16) shows a foot messenger from 'Walsal' to Cannock which is the only place in Staffordshire marked 'P.P.'. (The Black Country offices in the Birmingham P.P. are omitted except Wednesbury which has no P.P. indication; that is also true of Penkridge then under both Wolverhampton and Stafford, but not yet under Walsall. The Potteries' offices were all 5th. Class and they are depicted on one of the larger scale diagrams off the coasts.)

Recently a much later example of WALSALL/Penny Post type 1 turned up, a better example than others seen and apparently in red though the upper line is oxidised. This letter, illustrated below, is dated 23rd. February 1839, effectively proving that no replacement for the type 1 was issued to Walsall.



A glance through Oxley's "English Provincial Local Posts" shows a similar use of type 1 only at Ashford (Kent), Boston, Deal, Exmouth, Harwich, Holmfirth, Lostwithiel, Ripley (Surrey), Ross, Rye and Staines (no town in the Midlands among them), but only three of these recorded as late as 1839. In Staffordshire four other towns had type 1 stamps. Uttoxeter and Burton-on-Trent Penny Posts lasted only eighteen months in 1815 to 1817 being dependent on the ill-fated Leicester to Liverpool mail coach. Wolverhampton's type 1 was succeeded by types 2 and 5. Stafford's is "very rare", known only for 1829, and may or may not have been replaced since the dates of issue of Penny Post stamps are not generally recorded before 1837.



The earliest allusion to an office at Penkridge yet found is in the Cary list dated 1st January 1793 where it appears, surprisingly, as a receiving house under Lichfield. The 1793 Universal British Directory shows Penkridge served by a Stafford to Wolverhampton "cross post" ride daily, at 10 a.m. on the southward journey and 3 p.m. on its return. Also we are told "The Post Office is at the sign of the Fox. James Scholey, postmaster." For a small market town it was well served by Penny Posts - under Stafford from 1814, Walsall from 1829, and Wolverhampton from 1830. All these ceased on the opening of the Grand Junction Railway in July 1837 (there were twice daily postal connections to all three places by the railway). Then very briefly, if at all, it became a Penny Post office under Rugeley which was linked to the railway at Penkridge by a mail cart; this was replaced by a Rugeley to Stafford cart. Penkridge ceased to be in any Penny Post for it became a post town in 1837. From the 1820s into the 1840s the office was run by Mrs. Mary Perrin at the Crown in Bridge Street. The U.D.C. (impression book 1/144) issued on 12th December 1829 replaced a straight line stamp, of which the last recorded use was in 1824 on a letter going north to Trentham.

Walsall Penny Post began as a foot post to "Cannock, Bloxwich and Wyrley" (Wyrley) in 1822 (Post 40/460). By the 1821 census Cannock had become a sizeable mining town of 2780 people, a little more populous than Penkridge. There is no sign of an official post before the receiving house was established in 1822, but there had been private arrangements earlier as Parson and Bradshaw's Directory of 1818 shows John Cook conveying letters to Lichfield on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays at 7 a.m., and Harvey Eggington to Walsall daily at 8 a.m. except Mondays and Saturdays. No confirmation of the receiver at Cannock has been found until after the extension to Penkridge in 1829, when a ride replaced the walk from Walsall, but White's Directory of 1834 has the office at John Cook's (the same as above ?) who was a tailor, and he continued into the 1850s. No stamp is known before the issue of a U.D.C. on 30th August 1843 (5/178).

On the same ride, between 1829 and 1837, Bloxwich is first mentioned as having an office in an 1835 Pigot directory, when James Bird is named as receiver; times are given for all the offices on the morning journey from Walsall to Penkridge in about 1 hours and for its afternoon return. There is again no record of a stamp before the issue of a U.D.C. on 16th November 1843 (5/197), but the office is confirmed in an 1841 Pigot when John Jennings was the receiver, as well as by the list of Penny Post offices in Appendix E, no. 23 of the 2nd Report of the Committee on Postage (1838). When Penkridge ceased to be a Walsall Penny Post Office in 1837, the twelve mile horse post was replaced by a seven and a half mile footpost as far as Cannock. Since this distance was apparently covered in an hour in 1844, a reversion to horse-power is possible but it is specified as a footpost in 1851.

Wyrley, though mentioned as on the route of this Penny Post at the time of its establishment in 1822, did not have an office until long after 1840. However it is recorded in White's Directory of 1851 "at William Jones at Great Wyrley", four years before a stamp is known - Wyrley Bank U.D.C. (12/241).

The place of Willenhall in the Walsall Penny Post from 1833 to 1840 has been previously noted (MM 41/5ff). Whether either the Willenhall or Walsall Penny Post stamp or neither of them was used on this distinct route is so far unknown. The evidence of the five examples of WALSALL / Penny Post type 1 in my collection is that it was struck without an accompanying town stamp on mail sent out to, as well as received from places on the ride/walk serving places north of Walsall. Those illustrated are:

1. From Edward Littleton M.P. (later Baron Hatherton) who lived at Teddesley Hall and was the dominant figure in the Penkridge area. The letter was sent from Penkridge via Walsall in 1832.

2. Written in 1839 at "Wyrley Grove near Walsall", so probably it was handed directly to the messenger as a "walk letter".

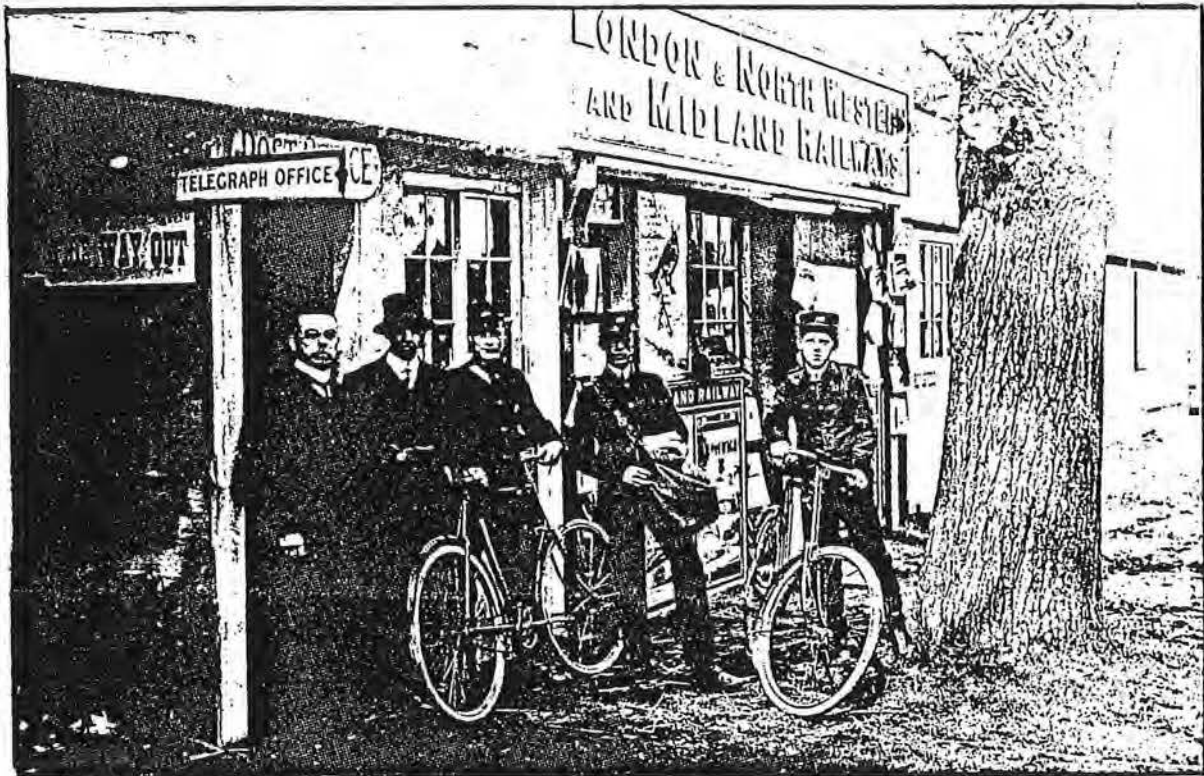
Finally an "Oxley update" will serve as a summary as well as a correction of some of the details in "English Provincial Local Posts".

WALSALL (Staffs)

	Estd	Ceased		Type	Issued	Used from to		colour
Cannock	1822	1840	Walsall	1	by 1823	1830	1832	drab
Penkridge	1829	1837	Walsall	1	by 1823	1839	1832	red
Willenhall	1833	1840	Penkridge	2	1829	1832	1832	crimson
Bloxwich	by 1835	1840	Willenhall	3	Not recorded in Walsall P.P.			

A MYSTERY POST OFFICE

Can anyone identify the location of the post office shown on the postcard below? On the back of the card is printed "BAXTER'S Photo Series, HINCKLEY", so the scene is probably in Leicestershire or Warwickshire. From the nature of the buildings it is likely that it was a temporary office - at an agricultural show or a cattle market? The railway companies' building appears to be an enquiry office. The Midland Railway board is advertising tourist and weekend tickets to Droitwich Spa. The tray above that is marked "London & North Western Railway / Please take one." An interesting card but where is it?



THINGS AIN'T WHAT THEY USED TO BE

submitted by John Calladine

One cannot imagine any of the gentlemen in the above picture tolerating such slovenly work as that below which graphically illustrates the demise of the manuscript marking since Victorian times. Presumably it is intended to convey that the adhesive became detached in the sorting office at Twickenham.



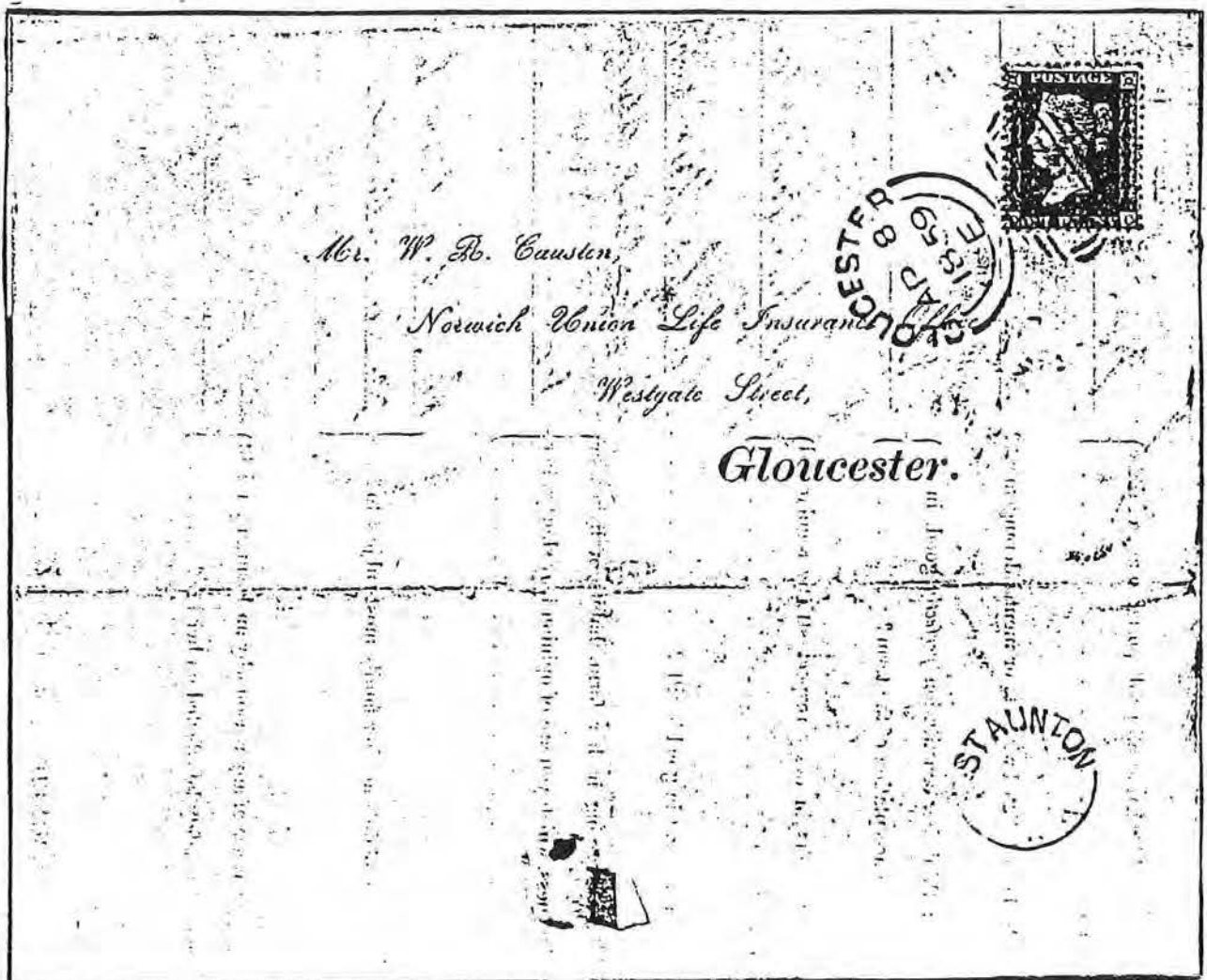
ONE THAT NEARLY GOT AWAY

by Roger Broomfield

An inspection of the first series (approximately 1860) Ordnance Survey maps revealed a few places that were in the County of Worcester which now are not. One of these was Redmarley which we had covered under Herefordshire in the U.D.C. book (although its first U.D.C. was sent to Gloucester).

A search through the Proof Books revealed a dated mark STAUNTON-WORC and the old map confirmed it - Staunton was indeed, at that time, in Worcestershire. The County Archivist confirmed this and informed me that it was only transferred to Gloucestershire on 1st April 1931. Redmarley was also involved in this transfer.

The cover below shows the second undated mark for Staunton which was sent to Gloucester on 27th November 1857, some six years after the dated mark mentioned above which was issued on 28th March 1851.



MORE ON REDIRECTED PACKETS

Mr. Ray Woodward-Clarke writes :

I agree with Elizabeth and Eric Lewis (MM 48/14) that Post Office form No. P688G is rather elusive although I can confirm that it is still in use; indeed the latest printing of this form is dated June 1986. I have seen them in use in Birmingham in 1986 and 1987. It is impossible to judge how many of these forms are used but it is interesting to note that the March 1954 printing as illustrated in the last Midland Mail was still being used in 1965.

Over a number of years, I have managed to acquire three different versions of this form in eleven different printings.

As evidenced by Elizabeth's and Eric's specimen the form has been in use since at least 1942. In 1955 the form was revised to include the words "or for enclosing surcharged items." after "Northern Ireland". This wording was again revised in January 1973 to read "or for enclosing Surcharged, Business Reply, or Recorded Delivery items". The wording has remained unchanged to date but the form was again revised in May 1977 when it was made smaller.

The forms have been printed on white, cream, yellow and buff coloured paper.

Wt 75032/33-7820 750m 8/64 B & W Ltd. (1742

P 688 G
(30082/55)

REDIRECTED PACKETS

THIS BUNDLE MUST BE DELIVERED

UNOPENED TO:—

Name
and
Address

*Richard Lloyd
New Eas. Works
Bristol
Bristol*

Made up by
Disc Stamp or
Name of Office

NOT TO BE USED FOR ADDRESSES OUTSIDE
GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND
OR FOR ENCLOSING SURCHARGED ITEMS

REDIRECTED PACKETS

THIS BUNDLE MUST NOT BE CUT OPEN

56-ST 4/77 V.P.Co.Ltd.

P 688 G
(Rev'd. Jan. 73)

REDIRECTED PACKETS

THIS BUNDLE MUST BE DELIVERED

UNOPENED TO:—

Name
and
Address

*MAGUIRE & WOODS
LLOYD'S BANK HOUSE
35 HIGH ST
BIGGLESWADE BEDS*

Made up by
Disc Stamp or
Name of Office

*SPD
17 MCH 18
2.14 PM*

NOT TO BE USED FOR ADDRESSES OUTSIDE
GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND
OR FOR ENCLOSING SURCHARGED, BUSINESS
REPLY, OR RECORDED DELIVERY ITEMS.

REDIRECTED PACKETS

THIS BUNDLE MUST NOT BE CUT OPEN

Eric Lewis now adds:

Having queried in the last issue if printed wrappers for bundling up redirected mail were still in use, I have been showered by them. Who by ? - none other than the Post Office themselves as the firm where I work has moved its offices to their factory.

After advising all customers and suppliers of the move and the new office address, we collected mail for two months up to Christmas. Since then we have paid for a redirection service.

It is interesting to note that the labels in use now are similar to the wrappers used in years gone by, but with the omission of the lower portion. The reason being that the redirected mail is now held in a bundle by an elastic band with the label placed loose on the top of the bundle, rather than sealed in a wrapper.

A surprising fact to emerge is the number of firms who have ignored the change of address when writing or sending literature, even those sending invoices for payment, despite a letter last October advising them of the change and of course a reminder each time we have written to them since. Now in mid February we still get redirected mail almost every day, so much in fact, that at the time of writing I have accumulated no less than 42 labels. Enclosed is an example for each paid up member as a Free Gift !

P 688 (Rev'd. MAY '77)					
REDIRECTED PACKETS THIS BUNDLE MUST BE DELIVERED UNOPENED TO:—					
Name and Address	SPRING LAKE SOUTH MALVERN LINK WORCESTER W12 14 1AQ				
<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; padding: 5px;"> Made up by </td> <td style="width: 50%; padding: 5px;"> Date Stamp or Name of Office </td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2" style="text-align: center; padding: 20px;">  </td> </tr> </table>		Made up by	Date Stamp or Name of Office		
Made up by	Date Stamp or Name of Office				
					
NOT TO BE USED FOR ADDRESSES OUTSIDE GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND OR FOR ENCLOSING SURCHARGED, BUSINESS REPLY, OR RECORDED DELIVERY ITEMS.					
REDIRECTED PACKETS THIS BUNDLE MUST NOT BE CUT OPEN					
OP/00049 6/86					

NEW ESTABLISHED BIRMINGHAM ROYAL MAIL.

THE Committee appointed at a public Meeting of the Merchants, Manufacturers, and other Inhabitants of this Town, to conduct the Application for a direct Mail from Birmingham to London, have the Satisfaction to inform the Public, that they have prevailed upon the Lords Postmasters General to establish a direct Mail Coach, through Coventry, to leave Birmingham at Four o'Clock every Day, and to arrive at the General Post Office, in Lombard-street, next Morning at Seven o'Clock.

The Advantages arising to the Town from the new Arrangement are numerous and important. The Letters will now be sent the nearest Way to London, and will not leave this Place till Four instead of Three o'Clock. The great Inconvenience which existed from not being able to answer Letters by Return of Post, is thus obviated. Another Arrangement connected with the above, is, that Regulations are made, at the Instance of this Committee, for the early Delivery of the Liverpool and Manchester Letters, so that Merchants and others will, after the Receipt of these Letters, have sufficient Time to write to London by the Post of the same Day.

Among these Advantages, that of being able to secure a Place in a Mail Coach, to arrive in London by Seven o'Clock in the Morning, will be found of considerable Consequence.

The Committee cannot but congratulate the Mercantile and Manufacturing Interest of Birmingham and the Neighbouring Towns, on the final Issue of their Exertions, in effecting an Object which had been for many Years so earnestly desired; but they feel it their Duty to state to the Public, that it is at present considered by the Postmasters General, as an Experiment only, and that the Continuance of this important Accommodation will entirely depend on the Patronage of the Public. The Committee do therefore strongly recommend to the Public to support and encourage this Establishment by every Means in their Power.

The Working of the Mail has been undertaken by Messrs. Dunn, Waterhouse, and Company, who will, in the Opinion of this Committee, do ample Justice to every Encouragement which they may experience from the Public.

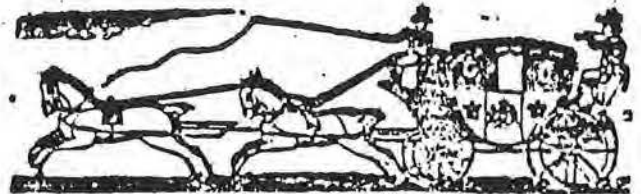
Committee. **THOMAS ATTWOOD, High Bailiff,
THOMAS PHIPSON, Low Bailiff,
MATTHIAS ATTWOOD,
RICHARD SPOONER,
THOMAS SMALL,
THOMAS COOPER,
WILLIAM SMITH,
P. M. JAMES,
J. W. CROMPTON,
THOMAS LEE,
S. WALKER,
R. PRATCHET,
W. and R. SMITH,
JOSEPH GREEN.**

WILLIAM DUNN, in Behalf of himself and other Contractors, most respectfully begs Leave to return Thanks to the High and Low Bailiffs, the Deputation, Committee, and other Gentlemen, who have, by their great Exertions, succeeded in effecting that desirable Accommodation.

THE NEW LONDON MAIL.

And they trust, by their strictly doing their Duty, they shall merit that Support their Friends have already so liberally bestowed on them.

Swan Coach Office, May 29, 1812.



New established Birmingham Royal Mail.

THE Public are respectfully informed started on Tuesday, May 26, at Four o'Clock, and will continue at the same Hour every Afternoon, and arrives in London in 15 Hours; returns from the Swan with Two Necks, Lad-lane, every Evening at Six o'Clock, and will arrive in Birmingham with the London Bags as usual.

The Proprietors beg to observe, that they have New Coaches made with Patent Axletrees, and in other Respects on the Principle of the Mails, and the Guards paid by and under Post Office Regulations; they have also provided, at a great Expence, Horses of considerable Value, new Harness, &c. &c. therefore look up to their Friends for a liberal Support.

Performed by

DUNN, BARTON, WATERHOUSE, & Co.

N. B. The Proprietors will not be accountable for any Parcel or Package whatever, nor Passengers' Luggage, unless properly directed, regularly entered, and paid for.



London and Birmingham Royal Balloon.

THE Proprietors of the above Coach respectfully inform their Friends and the Public in general, this Coach will in future leave the Swan Hotel, Birmingham, at Two o'Clock, instead of Three o'Clock, and every Attention will be paid to the conducting of the Business as usual.

Performed by

DUNN, BARTON, WATERHOUSE, & Co.

N. B. The Proprietors will not be accountable for any Parcel or Package whatever, nor Passengers' Luggage, unless properly directed, regularly entered, and paid for.

WHAT THE PAPERS SAID

The cuttings on the opposite page are from the Midland Chronicle of 30th. May 1812. Apparently the Chronicle gave more space to this event than did Aris's Gazette (see Chris Beaver's article MM 47/8) for on the same page the following report appeared:

On Tuesday last, the Birmingham and London Royal Mail Coach, established for the particular accommodation of this town and neighbourhood, started from the Swan Hotel at four o'clock. The bells of St. Martin's church ringing, and thousands of spectators assembled on the occasion greeting it as it passed with cheering shouts.

About two o'clock the coach, attended by eight mail guards in full uniform, adorned with blue ribbons, parading the town, under the direction of Mr. Hart, stopped at the bank of Messrs Spooners and Attwoods, the residences of the High and Low Bailiff, the bankers, and the principal inhabitants; the procession closed after it had remained some time at the house of Mr. Pratchet, where as at the other resting places, the attendants were liberally supplied with wine, biscuits, sandwiches etc.

The carriage, horses and harness are in a style of splendour and excellence we have not before witnessed, and reflect great credit upon our spirited townsman, Mr. Dunn; public patronage, we doubt not, will amply repay him and the other contractors for the expence and risk they have incurred in this attempt to afford greater facilities in the commercial intercourse between this town and the metropolis, both by gaining the additional hour to answer letters by the return of post, and by enabling the public to insure places in the mail to London, instead of waiting as formerly for a vacancy, the chance of which was always very precarious.

Aris's Gazette was not alone in its sparse treatment of the introduction of mail coaches; Jopson's Coventry Mercury gave only the following brief report on the first arrival there of mail coaches in July 1785.

C O V E N T R Y. *August 1.*
On Monday evening last the Mail-Coach from Liverpool arrived about a quarter past seven o'clock at the Post-Office (the King's-head Inn) in this city for the first time, and at half past seven o'clock proceeded on its way for London.
On Friday evening last died, Mr. Joseph Vernon, son of Mr. Vernon, of this city, apothecary.
Died lately at Shuslock, in the county of Warwick, Mrs. Cronall, wife of Edward Cronall, Sen. Esq.

No mention at all of the down mail which I imagine would have preceded that mentioned. The printer of this paper was not enamoured of the mail coaches for on 29th. August 1785 he wrote:

It is much to be wished that the managers of the mail coaches would give orders to their coachmen to drive at a more moderate rate through all towns, as many accidents must inevitably happen from the present method of rather increasing than slackening their speed over the stones etc;

In the following edition, it was reported that the London - Liverpool mail coach had not reached Coventry on the previous day until 12 noon instead of 7 a.m. since it had broken down on Finchley Common. The report went on:

It cannot be called an unexpected accident, as no one who has been witness to the furious manner in which these vehicles are driven, but must suppose that either the tackling must give way, or the coaches themselves be overset. And what real good end can be answered by all this inauspicious haste, to say nothing of the inhumanity to the poor beasts which draw them, or the risque the passengers are exposed to, of having their limbs either broken or dislocated.

This was followed by the prediction concerning the Irish Mail that Chris Beaver has mentioned (MM 47/8).

Then in the copy of 7th. November the editor had much to report:

A few nights since the Birmingham mail coach was twice overturned; the first time on Whitley-Common, near this city; the second time on Branston-bridge. What the effect of the former was, we cannot say; but as to the latter, the guard was dashed against the battlements of the bridge, and bruised most shockingly, as were the two passengers, who, we are informed, took post-horses from Daventry to London.

On Saturday 29th ult. the Hollyhead mail coach was overturned near Stone, in Staffordshire; it had only one passenger, one of his Majesty's messengers, who was so much hurt, that he was obliged to stay at Stone.

A few days since the Liverpool Coach was overturned by the breaking of the axel-tree, in the town of Wolverhampton. The inside passengers received only some slight bruises; but the coachman and two outside passengers were much hurt.

Was it coincidence that two weeks later the paper contained the following advertisement?

WHITE-BEAR INN, Coventry.
THE Proprietors of the Birmingham Mail and Balloon Coaches, return their sincere Thanks to the Inhabitants of Coventry and its Neighbourhood, for the generous Support they have already received, and in future every Evening will reserve two Places certain in the said Coaches, from Coventry to London.
 * * * Places and Parcels taken in by John Hill, Grocer, in Cross-Cheaping.
 NOVEMBER 21, 1785.

FOR SALE - A Mr Lowe wishes to dispose of the stamps shown below. He has no idea as to their value, if indeed they have any so a "best offer" would suffice. If interested contact Mr Lowe at 17 Cedarwood Drive, Balsall Common. CV7 7DS.



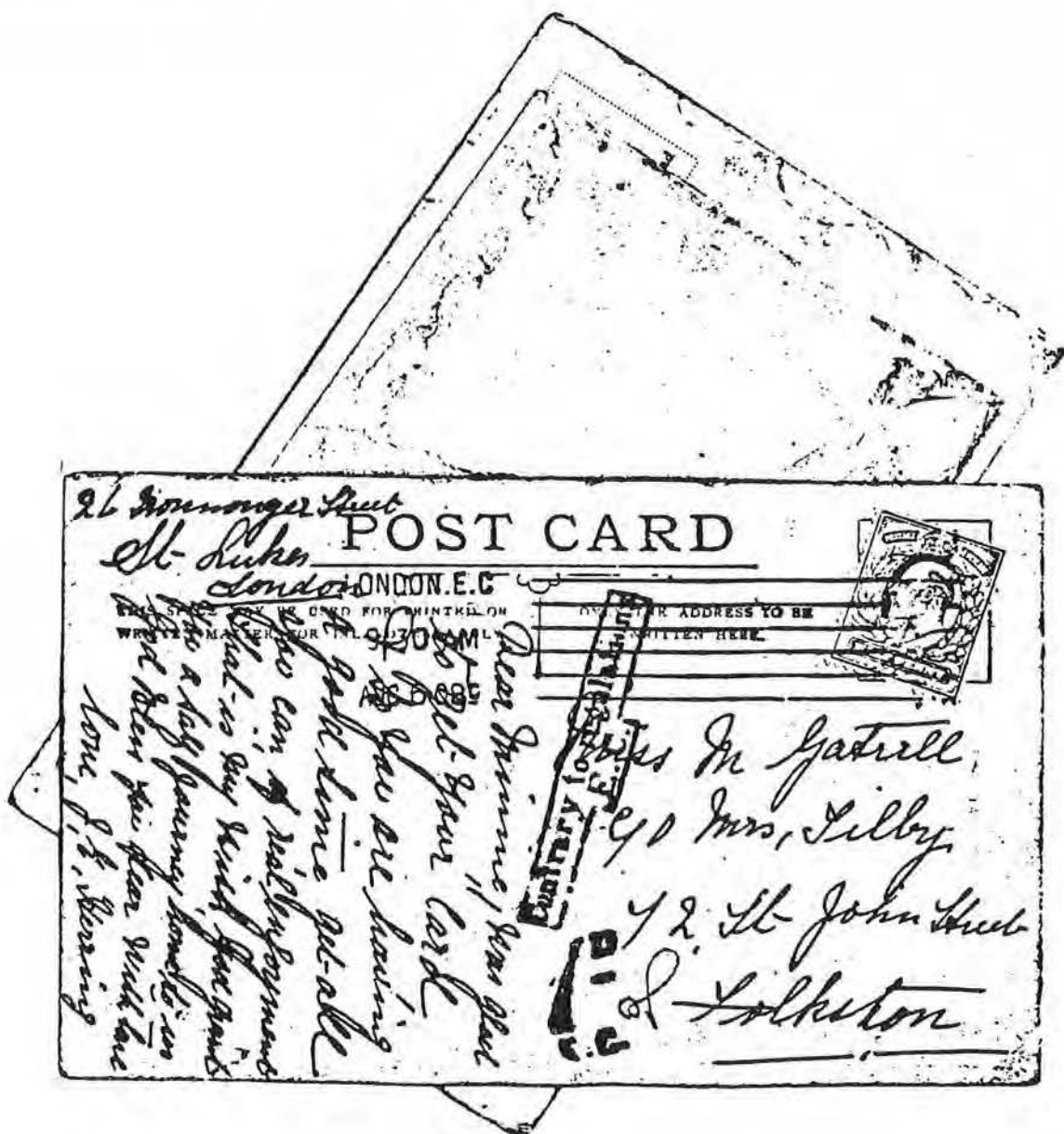
A SECRET MESSAGE TO MISS MINNIE GARTRILL

by Elizabeth and Eric Lewis

The illustration below is of a thin envelope which was concealed between two picture postcards gummed together around their edges to create the impression of a single postcard.

The contents of the envelope are no longer with the item but fortunately the envelope and cards have survived still attached to each other, probably mounted as a postcard in an album.

It is apparent from the illustration that an observant post office worker noticing the unusual thickness stamped it "Contrary to Regulations" and surcharged it at the letter rate. Undoubtedly this item was prepared in this manner to transmit a secret message to Minnie who was possibly on holiday at Folkestone. How did Minnie explain to Mrs. Tilby why she had to pay a surcharge on the postcard?



MR. WOODCOCK'S JOURNAL

The following is the report of one of the surveyors on his activities during the period 15th - 31st August 1792. All the surveyors submitted reports on their work at regular intervals to London. But they are rarely as detailed as this one.

I have not been able to confirm the fact but I think that Mr. Woodcock had only recently been appointed when he submitted this report. If that was the case some postmasters must have wondered what had hit them. After some consideration, I have decided that it is better to publish the report as it was written, apart from a few comments in parenthesis, rather than edit it which would destroy much of the interest.

Possibly it is worth mentioning that the rates in 1792 for a single sheet were:
 not exceeding one post stage 2d.
 over one but not exceeding two stages 3d.
 80 miles and under 4d.
 over 80 miles but not more than 150 miles 5d.
 over 150 miles 6d.

August 15th. Set out for Worcester on a survey of that office and the several branches connected with it.

Ordered the Deputy of Worcester to tax the short letters to and from Pershore and Droitwich 2d single instead of 1d. To tax letters from Glamorganshire 5d not 6d except Swansea and the vicinity which tax 6d single. (This suggests the letters were sent through Bristol.)

Opened and examined the Crossroad Bags both ways - found one Bath for Devizes missent to Worcester - directed Bath to send letters for Ross and Brecon forward to Gloucester not Worcester which they often do. Directed Bristol to send letters for Hereford on Sunday nights to Worcester not to Gloucester. Directed Worcester to tax single letters for Hinckley 4d not 5d. (This suggests a shorter route from Birmingham to Hinckley than that shown on the 1807 circulation map of Birmingham - via Lichfield ?) (Ordered) Birmingham to tax Pershore and Tenbury 4d single not 3d - and to tax Upton-on-Severn 3d not 4d their letters being fetched from Worcester by their own messenger whereas Pershore and Tenbury are conveyed by Post. Cautioned the Deputy of Birmingham to be careful not to missend letters for Bewdley and Alcester to Worcester. No regular Printed Time Bill from Birmingham to Bristol this post. Directed the Birmingham Deputy to keep a proper supply. The Guard did not bring the bags to the Office himself but sent them by a man from the Inn. Left an order for them always to bring them themselves & on no account to put them into the hands of another person.

Inspected Bags & Letters from the Stourbridge branch - directed Bewdley to tax Cowbridge 5d single not 6d. Gave direction and also to Stourbridge to stamp legible and in front. To tax Exeter 6d not 5d. Kidderminster to tax Aberistwith 6d single not 5d (But I calculate the distance to be less than 150 miles unless they were sent through Lampeter and Hereford). (Found in the bag) one Kidderminster for Bristol undercharged 5d.

Opened Bags & Inspected letters from the Oxford branch. Directed the Deputy of Chipping Norton to tax plainly and to charge letters for Bewdley 4d single not 3d.

Hereford branch late in, the rider says he is detained at Malvern. Ordered him to bring what letters were ready when he came thro' but to wait for nobody. Submit it to the consideration of the Postmaster General whether a regular receiving house should not be fixed there. During the Summer Months there is a great resort of Company who I believe wd. willingly pay the pence for such an accommodation.

Directed Shrewsbury to tax letters for Evesham 5d single not 4d. (I calculate the distance via Bridgnorth and Kidderminster to be 57 miles but over 80 via Birmingham whether sent via Worcester or Chipping Norton.)

20th. Visited the Ledbury Office on my way to Hereford. Found the letters right. The post from Gloucester late in its arrival. The ride is done by the Deputy of Ledbury who employs a good horse on the business. Reprimanded the rider for his delay. He promises to be more regular and expeditious in future.

21st. Came to Hereford. Immediately attended at the Office. Looked over dead letters and found them regular. Examined into the taxed letters for London. Found two undercharged 10d, one overcharged 5d. Cautioned the Deputy to be very careful in stamping & taxing.

22nd. Inspected Bye Letters going up the Gloucester branch. Ordered Newnham to be charged on Gloucester and taxed 3d Newent to be charged on Ledbury tax 3d.

23rd. Attended the Office and examined letters for the Worcester branch. Ordered Hereford to charge Upton-on-Severn on Worcester and tax it 3d single, also Stourport and Alcester tax 4d. Directed Worcester and Gloucester to tax letters from Weobley 3d instead of 4d, they being fetched from Hereford by their own messenger.

24th. Attended the Office by 5 o'clock in the morning to examine letters previous to the dispatch of the London Mail. Found all right except one overcharged. In the evening attended the coming in of the Post. Examined London and Bye bags - found two letters from Bristol undercharged 8d and one from Ross undercharged 2d - several letters from Bristol for Hereford appeared to have been missent to Birmingham. Wrote to Bristol about it. Examined the letter box for London letters. Found one letter franked by Mr. Fitzpatrick dated the 25th put in on the 24th and one franked by Mr. Walwyn dated the 26th put in on the 24th. I taxed each 10d and gave the Deputy a very strict charge to examine all Franks very clearly in future.

25th. This evening looked over the Letters from London. Found three directed to Members (of Parliament) taxed improperly, and 3 letters for Presteign missent to Hereford.

26th. At Six this morning examnd Bye bags from the Carmarthan branch. One, Hay for Hereford undercharged 2d. Examined the letters going up to London - found one undercharged 5d, one overcharged 5d.

The ride between Hereford and Worcester having been but indifferently performed of late, I examined into the cause, and found it was let out to a man at less than the Office allowance who kept a light Cart and hindered his time in picking up parcels on the road. I ordered him to be discharged and the Deputy promises to take it into his own hands and do it well. The ride to Ross which he has is very well done. A light Coach is run between Worcester and Hereford 3 days a week the Proprietors of which intimated a design of applying to the Office for the carriage of the bags. If such an application is made to their Lordships, I can say it would suit the correspondence thro' Ledbury very well.

Left written Instructions on various points with the Hereford Deputy.

26 to 28th at Leominster. Attended the Office. Inspected dead letters & vouchers - right. Examined the Bye bags and found two letters from Bristol undercharged 10d. This officer knows his business. Ordered a new Mail (?) for this branch, also a new stamp and seal for this office.

28th. Came to Ludlow. Inspected that Office. Found they did not stamp and tax plainly. Directed the Deputy to be very careful to do so in future. Keeps no short letter account but accounts for the short letters between Ludlow, Bishops Castle and Tenbury in his Bye Vouchers.

30th. At Worcester. Opened and inspected the following London bags at the Worcester Office thinking that wd be the most likely way to find them unprepared and to detect negligence and error.

Bishops Castle neglected to charge himself with a Post Paid letter 1s/4d in the bill of the day. Charged it and wrote a severe reprimand to him for negligence. Directed him also to tax plainer.

Ludlow. Does not tye well.(?) Often omits to return London bills filled up. Opened the Bye bag for Worcester. Found a single letter for Dublin taxed 10d (shoulf it have been 8d ?) and a single letter for Litchfield taxed 6d should only be 4d. Wrote to the Deputy on the above.

Leominster - right.

Tenbury No bill sent up. Two paid letters 10d in the bag not entered. Stamps and taxes badly. Thought it right to go to Tenbury for a day or two to inspect the Office. Found a new person Geo. Webb in possession of the Office who I found ignorant of his duty. A London bag is made up for Tenbury, yet the Deputy seems to have no account with the Inland Office but pays the amount of London letters to Ludlow. Never sends up any London bill, or charges himself with the Paid letters he sends up, but he says he gives the money to the guard. Instructed him how to make up his London bag etc. and sent up a particular report on this Office to Mr. Freeling.

September 3rd. Returned home by way of Worcester.

How often do we puzzle over anomalous charges when in fact they are due to "negligence and error"? Possibly as a result of this Journal, Freeling was shortly to report that as soon as possible a printed sheet would be produced listing all the post towns and other towns in the country along with two other columns. One of these was to state the office to which letters should be sent; the other was for the correct tax. Then he added that the surveyors would not be able to fill them all in at once so some delay must be expected! He also mentioned that there were a few books in use for the same purpose, but he felt that a sheet was better. The idea was not entirely new since another surveyor, Mr. Western, mentioned in his report for July 1792 that he went to Newark and made out a table of the rates of postage to and from that office. I wonder if any of these documents still exist; one would certainly make a fascinating addition to any collection of postal history.

DID THEY CATCH HIM ?

The original of this notice is not in good condition, but I think that it is still worth reproducing. The nature of the "felony" is not specified, but £50 would have been a considerable sum of money at that time.

ABSCONDED.
50 POUNDS
REWARD.

WHEREAS
Wm. Gilbert
 (OTHERWISE GILBART)
OF NOTTINGHAM,

Notably well known as the Driver of the Mail Gig, from NOTTINGHAM to DERRY.

STANDS CHARGED WITH

FELONY,

AND HAS ABSCONDED:

Notice is hereby given,

That any Person or Persons, who will apprehend the said WILLIAM GILBERT, & lodge him in any of his Majesty's Gaols, or give such information as may lead to his apprehension, shall, upon conviction, receive a reward of

FIFTY POUNDS.

The said William Gilbert was in Nottingham about Nine o'Clock in the Evening of Friday the 2d instant, & ran away on finding the Constables enquiring for him. He is about 25 Years old, five feet four inches high, stout made, broad over the Shoulders, thick set, round Face, rather aqueline Nose, florid Complexion, and usually wears a low crowned broad brimmed Hat, and single breasted Frock Coat, with side Pockets. He is a great player on the Keyed Bugle, by trade a Fishmonger, and formerly drove Gilbert's Fly Waggon from Lincoln to Nottingham, and occasionally travelled with Gilbert's Waggon from Nottingham to Thirstone and Birmingham; frequently attending the Fish Markets at the two latter Places.

All Persons who can give information leading to the apprehension of the said William Gilbert, are requested to communicate the same to FRANCIS FREELING, Esq. General Post Office, London; or to the Postmaster of the nearest Town.

General Post Office, London, 3d June, 1826.

Printed by J. H. & Co. at the Press of the General Post Office.

THE JON BAKER TROPHY

It was very much to the editor's surprise and delight, when Elizabeth proposed at the last committee meeting that he should be awarded the trophy for this year. He would like to thank the committee for this great compliment. However, judging by the quality of Chris Beaver's contributions, it will not be many years before the trophy again graces St. Leonard's Vicarage.

TAILPIECE or WHEN IS A U.D.C. NOT A U.D.C.?

- a tale from deepest Herefordshire contributed by Roger Broomfield.

Below are shown two U.D.Cs. That on the left is the one sent out to Hereford on 1st October 1847, while that on the right is quite different - a quick glance at the last three letters will confirm this.



The one on the left was used on 25th January 1848 while the other, which is shown by courtesy of Elizabeth and Eric Lewis, was used on 30th September 1858. This was nearly eight years after the issue of a C.D.S. on 26th December 1850.



The similarities between Elizabeth and Eric's U.D.C. and my C.D.S. are self-evident, and so, the answer to my question is -

When it is a C.D.S. without the date slugs. (but don't Let(t)on)

THE NEXT MIDLAND MAIL

This will appear towards the end of May. Apart from the usual reports, I have little idea as to what it will contain. Hopefully there will be something on the rural posts of Nottingham. As for the rest that depends on what I can find during the Easter holiday and what drops through my letter box in the meantime.

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

FOR

POSTAL HISTORY

ESPECIALLY

G.B. (County)
MARITIME
TRANSATLANTIC

and some FOREIGN

CONTACT

Michael Jackson (Philatelists) Ltd.
LONDON INTERNATIONAL STAMP CENTRE
27 KING STREET
LONDON WC2E 8JD

01 836 2748 - 24 hr service