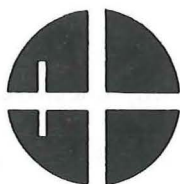


MIDLAND MAIL



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



President: Rev. C.M. Beaver

Number 91, August 1995

MIKE YOUNG

When I was elected to the post of your Chairman, I said that Mike's would be a hard act to follow. Since his passing, this seems doubly so, particularly as his experience, his humour and his kindly prompting are no longer there.

I have lost count of the number of years since I first met Mike through the Worcester Society and then the Three Counties Federation (where he will be remembered not least for his wit and fairminded approach to the Mortimer Quiz), the Society of Postal Historians (where his practical joking was legendary) and last but not least through this Society where his knowledge, his concern for others, his courage and his very presence will long be remembered and admired.

That he has ascended Jacob's ladder surely cannot be doubted. That he enjoyed his postal history cannot be denied, and that he has already started a study of the sub-offices of that distant place surely cannot be ruled out.

God bless you Mike. We shall miss you. We send our condolences to Jan and the rest of the family.

RB

TREVOR CLEWLEY

We first met Trevor in the 1970's when his interest was mainly in stamps rather than postmarks which he later took up, joining our Society in the early 1980's. On the resignation of a former Treasurer in 1984, he volunteered on the spot to fill the vacancy, and members will, we feel sure, agree he carried out this duty extremely well to the benefit of the Society even when in recent years his health was not what it should have been. An apparent recovery earlier this year unfortunately did not last and he was taken into intensive care early in the summer.

On leaving industry, Trevor entered the teaching profession where he ran a stamp club for the benefit of his pupils. Both he and his wife were also officers in the Boys' Brigade.

Over the years his annual visit to our house for the purpose of having the books audited led to occasional visits to spend an afternoon and evening discussing postmarks and covers. His main interest in cancellations rather than pre-stamp material had over the last few years turned to a study of the Free Franking system, and Trevor was in the process of building up an excellent display on this subject which alas, we were not to see.

Trevor's cheerful voice and humorous comments will be sadly missed at meetings of the Society, and the committee will be the poorer for not being able to seek his advice on financial and other matters.

To his wife, Betty, his son, daughter and son-in-law we extend our sincere condolences.

E & EL

Eric and Elizabeth have been asked by Trevor's widow and family to thank all members who sent letters and cards of sympathy. They very much appreciated the kind thoughts.

NEW MEMBERS

We extend a warm welcome to the following who have joined the Society since the publication of the last issue of Midland Mail and look forward to seeing them at our meetings whenever possible:

Mrs Shirley Smith whose main interest is the social and postal history of Coventry. She also collects Birmingham postal history.

Mr Andrew Lajer whose postal history interest is Wellingborough.

Mr Peter Elms of Redditch who collects Northfield, Birmingham.

MIDPEX

I did not count the number of societies represented on Saturday, 10th June at Tile Hill, Coventry but the variety of material on display covered an enormous range, even though some organisations that I would have expected to be present were not represented. One can only say, "Shame on them", and hope that they will attend any future events. Eric and Elizabeth tell me that they spoke to at least a quarter of our membership and each one thought it an excellent event. My general impression was of a relaxed atmosphere with plenty of room to view both the displays and the dealers' stocks.

The displays on our stand reflected the range of interests in the Society with material from five counties, covering most periods. Our Coordinating Editor was happy for a number of our publications were sold.

The organisers are to be congratulated on arranging a most enjoyable event. I hope it will not be the last.

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

We start the new season on 16th September at Carrs Lane Church Centre, Birmingham when members are asked to bring up to nine sheets on UDCs. The meeting which will begin at 1.30 p.m. will be preceded by a committee meeting at 12.30 p.m.

On 7th October, we visit Penkridge in Staffordshire. The meeting will be held in the Church Hall in Market Street and in the morning, from about 10.30 a.m., members are asked to bring standing displays. Then, starting at 1.30 p.m. our President will give an illustrated talk on "Mailcoach Routes".

There are several parking areas in a short distance of Market street, the main shopping street in Penkridge and a one-way street. The hall near the top end bears its original inscription "Reading Room". It is difficult to give accurate times of trains as that Saturday will be the first of the Winter timetable, but, at the moment there are trains from Birmingham at 9.49, 11.55 and 12.51, from Wolverhampton at 10.07, 11.01 and 12.07, and from Stafford at 10.56, 11.55 and 12.55.



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Catalogue on request from Graham Moss at 65 George Street Oldham OL1 1LX

REGISTRATION LABELS

by Harold Wilson

With reference to the 'D' labels in the article by Ray Woodward-Clarke it should be noted that they were also the standard labels used on registered letters handed into a Travelling Post Office. Presumably these were regarded as 'emergency' uses since they were not used in large quantities. When they were first proposed c1906, it was suggested that they had the name of the T.P.O. on them, as in Fig. 1, but this was not done. These blank labels were printed in sheets of 50 but there must have been sequential sheets above 50 as Fig. 2 shows a scottish type label with number 182, used on the 'Down Special' on 6th May 1932. Also, I have number 125 used on 10th October 1935, on the 'Great Western T.P.O.'. These are very late usages for this type of label. The normal type is as Fig. 3 and was used until the change in the registration scheme to the present one.

Fig. 1



Fig. 2

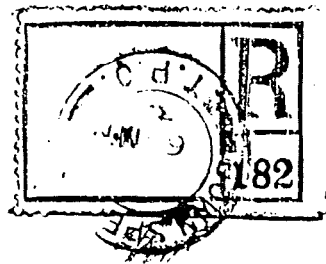


Fig. 3

IX	REGISTERED LETTER RECOMMANDÉ This letter must be handed to a Post Office official and a receipt obtained	
Registration fee paid p	U.S. WILSON, 17, HEATH AVENUE, LITTLEOVER, DERBY DE3 6DJ	

NOTES ON THE POSTAL HISTORY AND POSTMARKS
CHURCH STRETTON TO c. 1929

by Brian Atkins

This article should be prefaced with a brief explanation of its origins. The Shropshire Postal History Society have taken up the idea of producing a County listing of all the postmarks up to c1920 and individual members have agreed to research a particular town or towns. Information on Church Stretton was collected from Members of the Society and one of the things that has surprised us is how few examples there are of some postmarks. Since the Editor has kindly allowed publication of this article, may I request members of the Midland(G.B.) P.H.S. to send information on postmarks in this and subsequent articles to me at: Box 959, Lake Cowichan, British Columbia, Canada, VOR 2G0. Any and all information will be gratefully received regardless of whether the postmark is within the recorded timespan or not. Please include a note on colour and any codes. A photocopy would be particularly appreciated.

From its early days Church Stretton did not have a direct mail connection to London. It appears to have been served from Ludlow which received its mail from the Chester Road through Birmingham (Gardiner's Survey, 1677) and a little later was served directly through Oxford and Worcester (1683). In 1785, a mailcoach ran to Ludlow from London also through Oxford and Worcester albeit on a slightly different route. The Universal British Directory (c1797) confirms that "...the postroad from London is within eight miles of the town," by which it presumably meant Ludlow as it goes on to say, "A news-man from Salop passes through every Friday to Ludlow, and returns to Salop on Saturday night, who generally brings the letters." The arrangement appears to have been very informal.

In 1803, the Postmasters General received six memorials asking for a direct connection between Shrewsbury and Bristol through Ludlow (and thus Church Stretton). There were petitions from Ludlow, Church Stretton, Shrewsbury and "certain inhabitants of Salop". Although the letters to Church Stretton did not exceed £40 a year, their Lordships felt it was right that Shrewsbury and Ludlow should be directly connected, especially during the Assizes! Thus, on 26th July 1803, Saverland opened a sub-office at Church Stretton, under Shrewsbury, and started a coach service between the two towns on three days a week, with the coach continuing on to Hereford from Ludlow. This greatly improved the communication between Shrewsbury and Ludlow on those days the direct post ran. Previous communication had been via Birmingham and Worcester with a letter leaving Shrewsbury at 6 a.m. being delivered in Ludlow the next evening. The service appears to have been limited not only by the number of days it travelled but by the proprietors agreeing "...to convey the Bags for the Turnpikes only. And this ... is all the accommodation that can be afforded ...with regard to the Revenue." I am not sure exactly what this means and I would welcome any suggestions.

Pigot's Directory of 1822 shows William Haverkam of the Talbot Inn as the postmaster. Also, "The Hereford Mail is despatched every afternoon at half-past two, and arrives every morning at seven. The Shrewsbury Mail is despatched every forenoon at eleven, and arrives at half-past two in the afternoon." By 1825, the mailcoach had been extended to Chester, and by 1831 to Liverpool in the North and Bristol in the South.

An article "Church Stretton of Yore (1911)" suggests Haverkam received one penny for the delivery of each letter. The article goes on to say that by 1840 the office had moved to a house opposite the Market Hall but was still managed by "...one of the Misses Haverkam of the Talbot." The house was a residence of her uncle Mr Thomas Broome to whom the business was later transferred (no date given) and at his death it was continued by his widow (again no date). Bagshaw's Directory of Shropshire (1851) shows Mrs Margaret Broome in charge of the office but no location was

given. Apparently Mrs Broome left the town and the office was relocated to a house opposite the Crown, and Miss Sarah Heighway was appointed in 1870. She later married George Windsor to whom the office was transferred. His "Church Stretton Guide" published in 1884 shows the office open for fourteen hours a day, except Sundays, when it was open for three hours. On the promotion of Mr Windsor to Lymington (Hants) in 1892, he was succeeded by a Mr Darlington. On his death, he was succeeded by his daughter who later married a Mr Gunn, "the present Postmaster", (as at 1911).

The Church Stretton Guide (1924) and Kelly's Directory (1926) show Harold E. Gunn as the postmaster. Furthermore, the Guide states that Church Stretton was an R.S.O., the letters being received through the Shrewsbury and York T.P.O. This arrangement probably began in January 1858 on the establishment of that T.P.O.

In about 1908, the post office moved to Sandford Avenue where it remained until recently.

Each postmark is numbered with what we hope will be a future catalogue number, e.g. CS3. SH107 and SH109 refer to Willocks and Jay County Catalogue numbers.

CS3 (SH107)

CHURCH STRETTON

2 examples recorded: 1808 - 26 NOV1837
Size: 56x3mm.

The existence of such a handstamp may be questionable as there are suggestions it is a boxed mileage mark when neither the outline of the box nor the figures have struck.

CS5 (SH109)

CHURCH-STRETTON

153

Size: 56x11mm. 27 examples noted, all in black.
Recorded: 15 APR 1807 - 2 SEP1847
In view of the 1807 example, the existence of CS3 (SH107) becomes even more unlikely.



CS7

Diameter: 25mm. Date of Issue: 9 NOV 1847 (SIB 9/96).
Colour: Black, Recorded Dates: 31 JAN 1848 - 12 AUG 1849.
Colour: Black/Green, Recorded Dates: 9 APR 1849 - 22 JAN 1854.
Colour: Blue/Black, Recorded Date: 7 JUN 1849.



CS9

Size: 23x16mm. declining to 22x16mm. Date of Issue: APR 1844.
Colour: Black, Recorded Dates: 8 MAY 1844 - 19 MAR 1874.
Colour: Green/Brown (Ochre?), Recorded Date: 8 JUL 1851.

The use of this obliterator appears to fall into two distinct periods. The first is 8 MAY 1844 to 8 JUL 1851 (9 examples), and the second 31 MAY 1858 to 19 MAR 1874 (8 examples). The second group appears to have a smaller obliterator, though whether it is a different stamp (the later issue of a 3HOS has not been traced in the Proof Books) or a worn version is difficult to determine. I would be very grateful for a photocopy of any use of this handstamp, particularly between July 1851 and May 1858.



CS13

Diameter: 25mm. Date of Issue: 14 SEP 1849 (SIB 10/39).
Colour: Grey, Recorded Date: 6 NOV 1849.
Colour: Black, Recorded Date: 30 JAN 1850.
Colour: Ochre, Recorded Dates: 9 MAY 1850 - 21 OCT 1854.
Codes Recorded: A only.



Diameter: 25 mm.
 Colour: Green,
 Colour: Black,
 Codes Recorded:

Date of Issue: 20 MAR 1857 (SIB 13/181).
 Recorded Dates: 5 MAY 1857 - 1 JUL 1858.
 Recorded Dates: 30 JAN 1860 - 24 JAN 1862.
 A and blank.

CS17



Diameter: 22mm. Date of Issue: 22 MAY 1860 (SIB 20/39).
 No use has so far been recorded.
 There are 3 similar CDS's which follow, and care is needed not
 to confuse them. CS 19 has a hyphen, not a dot between H and S

CS19



Diameter: 22½mm.
 Colour: Black,
 Codes Recorded:

Date of Issue: 25 JAN 1864 (SIB 23/27).
 Recorded Dates: 20 JUN 1866 - 17 SEP 1868.
 Blank only.

CS21



Diameter: 23mm.
 Colour: Black,
 Codes Recorded:

Date of Issue: 11 AUG 1869 (SIB 28/73).
 Recorded Dates: 18 AUG 1870 - 13 AUG 1872.
 A only.

CS23



Diameter: 22mm.
 Colour: Black,
 Codes Recorded:

Date of Issue: 19 NOV 1874 (SIB 34/82).
 Recorded Dates: 14 SEP 1875 - 9 MAY 1878.
 A and B.

CS25



Diameter: 20mm.
 Colour: Black,
 Code Recorded:

Date of Issue: 15 JUN 1880 (SIB 38/140).
 Recorded Date: 19 DEC 1883
 B.

CS27



Diameter: 20mm. Date of Issue 19 MAR 1884 (SIB 44/6).
 So far, this handstamp has not been recorded in use.

CS29



Diameter: 20mm.
 Colour: Black,
 Code Recorded:

Date of Issue: 6 APR 1887 (SIB 45/275).
 Recorded Date: 27 DEC 1890.
 B.

CS31



Diameter: 20mm.
 Colour: Black,
 Code Recorded:

Date of Issue: Not recorded in SIB.
 Recorded Dates: 1 JUN 1901 - 12 MAY 1904.
 Blank.

CS33



Diameter: 20mm.
 Colour: Black,
 Code Recorded:

Date of Issue: Not recorded in SIB.
 Recorded Dates: 22 AUG 1911 - 4 MAR 1919.
 * (eight-pointed star).

CS7 and CS13 to CS29 have been recorded as backstamps only (with the exceptions of CS17 and CS27). CS31 and CS33 have been recorded on Parcel Post labels only. All the following handstamps have been recorded cancelling adhesives.

CS35



Size: 29x20mm.
 Colour: Black,

Date of Issue: 25 NOV 1874 (SIB 34/83).
 Recorded Dates: 21 APR 1876 - 27 DEC 1890.

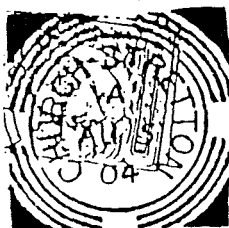
CS37



Size: 20mm. + 30x20mm. Date of Issue: 16 NOV 1875 (SIB35/11).
 Colour: Black, Recorded Dates: 30 DEC 1875 - 7 MAR 1876.
 Codes Recorded: A, B and C.

The Church Stretton duplex seems to be quite rare. Parmenter records only one and only one other (in my collection) was recorded by the Shropshire P.H.S.

CS39



Size: 28x23½mm.
 Colour: Black,
 Codes Recorded:

Date of Issue: Not recorded in SIB.
 Recorded Dates: 13 JUL 1889 - 5 AUG 1904.
 A, B and C.

CS41



Diameter: 20mm.
 Colour: Black,

Date of Issue: Not recorded in SIB.
 Recorded Dates: 25 AUG 1904 - 29 SEP 1908.

CS43



Size: 28½x24mm.
 Colour: Black,
 Times Recorded:

Date of Issue: Not recorded in SIB.
 Recorded Dates: 12 SEP 1904 - 15 NOV 1913.
 4.30 p.m., 8.30 p.m.

CS45



Diameter: 28mm
 Colour: Black,
 Times Recorded:

Date of Issue: Not recorded in SIB.
 Recorded Dates: 24 NOV 1913 - 24 DEC 1913.
 10.30 a.m., 4.30 p.m. and 7 p.m.

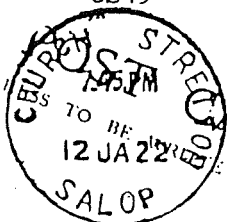
CS47



Diameter: 26mm.
 Colour: Black,
 Times Recorded:

Date of Issue: Not recorded in SIB.
 Recorded Dates: 10 AUG 1914 - 8 JUL 1921.
 10.30 a.m., 5.10 p.m. and 7 p.m.

CS49



Diameter: 28mm.
 Colour: Black,
 Times Recorded:

Date of Issue: Not recorded in SIB.
 Recorded Dates: 11 JAN 1922 - 12 JAN 1922.
 6.45 p.m. and 7.45 p.m.

CS51



Diameter: 26mm.
 Colour: Black,
 Times Recorded:

Date of Issue: Not recorded in SIB.
 Recorded Dates: 11 JUL 1923 - 16 AUG 1923.
 2.30 p.m. and 8 p.m.

CS53



Diameter: 28mm.
 Colour: Black,
 Times Recorded:

Date of Issue: Not recorded in SIB.
 Recorded Dates: 6 JUL 1927 - 3 AUG 1927.
 10.30 a.m., 1 p.m., 6.30 p.m. and 9 p.m.

CS55



Diameter: 25mm.
 Colour: Black,
 Times Recorded:

Date of Issue: Not recorded in SIB.
 Recorded Dates: 6 AUG 1929 - 30 AUG 1929.
 1 p.m. and 8 p.m.

References not mentioned in the text:

Shropshire Post Nos 11, 31, 32 and 39.

Midland Mail No. 86.

Midland (GB) PHS Booklets No. 1 (3rd Edition) and No. 2.

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THE ROYAL MAIL DISTRIBUTION NETWORK AND THE ROLE OF THE TPOS

by A. OBRADOVIC

This article is part of a paper written in March 1994 by Mr A. Obradovic who was then manager of the Travelling Post Office Section, and appears by kind permission of the present manager, Mr Brian Quinn.

The daily task faced by the Royal Mail is daunting in statistical terms. Every working day (Monday to Friday) about 60 million letters are posted in the UK. Of these, in the region of 22 million are inland letters posted at the First Class rate. Royal Mail currently aims to deliver 92% of all First Class mail by the next working day. (Geographical and transport constraints prevent a full 100% target).

A good deal of commercial mail is now pre-sorted by large customers and enters the Royal Mail system ready for transportation. However, there is still a massive flow of stamped and meter mail which floods into approximately 100,000 posting boxes and across about 20,000 post office counters. The journey of a letter can start at any one of these collection points and finish at any one of 24 million postal addresses in the UK. It is the essential task of Royal Mail to ensure that the journey is completed quickly, efficiently and accurately.

The system deployed to undertake this task is large and complex. It involves all modes of transport. Sixty mail trains (including 24 TPOs), 30 chartered aircraft and 28,000 Royal Mail road vehicles are the key elements. There is also a massive human resource involved - over 150,000 staff are employed to sort, move and deliver the mail. Physical infrastructure includes 80 major sorting centres with a high degree of automation.

To place TPOs within the context of this complex organisation, it is necessary first to examine the sorting and routeing principles used by Royal Mail.

The letter mail circulation system has evolved over four centuries since the formal establishment of the Royal Mail. It is now the Postcode which is the basis of sortation. The country is divided into some 120 separate Postcode areas, with the first letter or pair of letters in individual postcodes signifying the area:- e.g. B = Birmingham; EX = Exeter. Post Towns within each Postcode area are allocated their own number or numbers which, together with the first letter or pair of letters, form the outward half of an individual code:- e.g. B60 and B61 are the outward codes for Bromsgrove, Worcestershire; EX1 to EX6 for the City of Exeter; EX16 for Tiverton.

The inward half of the postcode comprises an alpha-numeric, three character element (e.g. 1AA) which identifies single addresses or groups of addresses. For business addresses there is normally one complete postcode per address - for residential areas an average of 15 addresses are covered by one postcode.

There are over 1500 post towns in the UK. All of these normally have one or more delivery offices from which postmen take out the mail to individual addresses. It would be impractical and uneconomic for all post towns to send mail directly to each other. The collection of mail is therefore concentrated at over 100 key locations where outward sortation takes place. Within this total are 80 large automated sorting centres and it is through these that the vast majority of mail is processed. All sorting is done on the basis of the postcode and at the automated centres each item is tagged with phosphor dots or a type of electronic bar code. At the outward sorting stage, it is the first part of the postcode which defines the sorting and routeing arrangements.

Outward sorting centres will send mail direct to distant post towns when the volume of mail justifies this. Where there are insufficient letters to justify a direct despatch to an individual post town, the mail will be aggregated with other mail for the same postcode area and sent as a residue to the designated sorting centre for that postcode area. To illustrate this principle we can look at mail passing from Bath (BA postcode area) to the Darlington postcode area (DL). Bath produces sufficient mail for Darlington itself (DL1 - DL3) to justify a direct despatch. However, when mail comes to hand for the other post towns in the DL area (e.g. Bishop Auckland DL13/14, Northallerton DL6/7), Bath will amalgamate this and send it as a residue despatch to the sorting centre at Darlington for further sorting to the individual post towns concerned.

Most First Class mail is posted late in the day. This means that for long distance mail there may be insufficient time to get mail for the smaller post towns to the designated sorting centres for further processing in time for delivery the following morning. It is the role of the TPOs to overcome this constraint of time and distance.

To return to our example at Bath, mail for the DL postcode area which is on hand by mid-afternoon will be sent to Darlington at 1600 for further processing and will arrive there at 0030, leaving plenty of time for the extra sorting required. However, DL mail not posted in Bath until late afternoon/early evening will be split. Mail for Darlington itself will be sent as a direct despatch to Darlington, but that for other DL post towns will be amalgamated and despatched at 2115 to the Midland TPO (North) which runs from Bristol to Newcastle and provides a full sortation for all post towns in the DL area. Both flows of mail will arrive at Darlington at about 0330. Local road services will take the mail from the TPO for the other DL area post towns to its final destinations in time for delivery. (These road vehicles will also convey the mail to the same post towns received at Darlington as a residue despatch from Bath earlier in the night and since re-sorted.)

It can thus be seen that one of the main aims of the circulation system is to forward mail as quickly as possible in order to lessen the effects of peak flows on transport links and transfer points. TPOs exist to provide service to that part of the First Class mail which could not achieve next day delivery by other means.

Under postcode-defined circulation each TPO has a designated range of postcode areas for which it sorts mail. Postcode areas are grouped to form numbered Divisions within each TPO. The mail sent to each TPO Division is sorted en route and is despatched from the train at the appropriate places. TPOs therefore provide intermediate processing - all mail received will have already been given a preliminary sortation into postcode areas before it is received on the train (the only exception being a small amount of mail posted directly into the TPO by customers at stations).

Virtually all postcode areas are provided with service by at least one TPO Division. Some areas are served by several TPOs - the DL area for instance, currently receives mail from four TPOs, including the Midland (North).

The twenty-four TPOs are a strictly limited resource and are expensive to operate, running only at night and using specialised railway rolling stock. Of necessity, they often have to be the option of last resort when mail routes are being planned by Royal Mail. About 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ million letters are currently sorted nightly on the TPO network, although further large amounts of mail are also carried as stowage by the trains to which the TPOs are attached. In Quality of Service terms, the TPOs are invaluable and it would be very difficult for Royal Mail to achieve 90% next day delivery for First Class mail without the on-board sorting of letters provided by the TPO network.

CURRENT TPO OPERATIONS

The present network of 24 TPOs stretches across the mainland of Britain. Glasgow, Newcastle, Norwich, Dover, Penzance and Swansea might be considered as the extremities of the TPO map. Significant interchanges take place at Birmingham, Crewe and Derby. London is the hub for a number of key services serving the trunk main lines.

All TPO operations now take place on dedicated mail trains provided under the terms of the letter mail contract between Royal Mail and British Rail. It is now several years since the running of the last TPO attached to a passenger train. TPO rolling stock is owned by BR, or rather by its subsidiary Rail Express Systems (Res). Royal Mail specifies its requirements for the routes, stopping places and timetables of the TPOs and Res plans and operates the service. A close working relationship exists between the two organisations and frequent liaison, both at the working level and at formal meetings, ensures the smooth running of the service.

The TPO fleet ranges in age from 17 to 35 years and comprises 133 vehicles. Specially built, these vehicles are of two basic types - sorting carriages (84) and stowage carriages (49). For the technically minded, the former are branded NSX, the latter NTX, NUX and NPX. All TPOs now run as air braked trains and are electrically heated. Since the mid-1980s the TPO fleet has been painted in standard Royal Mail red livery and each vehicle sports the Royal cipher. More recently the legend "Royal Mail Travelling Post Office" has been applied in large white italic lettering to the bodysides of sorting carriages. Most carriages have posting boxes (for First Class Mail only) on each bodyside; the late posting fee which used to be required for this service was abolished many years ago.

The trains conveying TPOs are almost always equipped with a number of non-TPO mail stowage vehicles - usually of the "BG" generic type - and in recent years Res has painted these in Royal Mail red. The Res dedicated locomotive fleet is now also painted red so that TPO trains often present a uniform and striking appearance, particularly if seen in daylight or when at well lit stations during the night. TPOs are timetabled to run at speeds up to 90 mph. Experience has shown that - certainly with the existing rolling stock - higher speeds can make the sorting of letters difficult to accomplish effectively. Since the introduction of "Driver Only" operation by BR, the Royal Mail Officer-in-Charge on board each TPO has been provided with a two-way radio link to the driver. Mobile phones are also provided on board for Royal Mail operational use.

In the sorting carriages one side of the vehicle is equipped with long banks of pigeon-holes, known as sorting frames. Smaller pigeon-holes are provided for the sorting of letters, whilst packets and large letters are sorted on the larger frames. Each row of pigeon-holes is labelled by means of long flexible strips called "fillets". On the opposite side of the coach, dozens of hooks are provided for the hanging of open mail bags into which bundles of sorted letters and individual packets are dropped. When mail bags are full, they are sealed and labelled and taken to separate stowage vans where they are stacked to await despatch at stations en route.

The Officer-in-Charge of the TPO squeezes himself in wherever there is space. He has to carry out his supervisory duties without the benefit of an office - there is no room on TPOs for such luxuries. Each coach has a lavatory and limited facilities - a tea urn and a small food warmer. Some stools are provided for the sorters, but most prefer to work standing up. All projecting fixtures and fittings are padded, so as to avoid injury to staff from the motion of the train.

Each TPO has its own distinctive datestamp - for use on official documentation and also for the cancellation of any letters posted onto the TPO at stations. On the pairs of TPOs operated by crews who lodge away at each end of the journey (and therefore work the same train only every other night), both "Number One Side" and "Number Two Side" datestamps are provided, identified by a figure 1 or 2 in the outer ring.

Of the 550 or so Royal Mail staff who are employed on TPO duties, most have to lodge away from home for at least two periods a week. Working in teams ranging in size between a dozen and thirty, the normal pattern of duties is: Monday - passenger train to distant point, returning on the TPO Monday night; TPO to distant point on Tuesday and Thursday nights; TPO from distant point on Wednesday and Friday nights; lodge at distant point during Wednesday and Friday. Most lodging is done at places over 200 miles from home (e.g. London staff in Carlisle, Manchester staff in Dover). Some TPO staff are on "out and back" workings (e.g. Norwich - London - Norwich).

The working conditions and lifestyles make a career on the TPOs a special calling, one to which only relatively few find that they are able to respond. Once settled, however, the average TPO crew member tends to stay - often for long periods. Recent retirements have, in some cases, brought to an end careers of more than 40 years of riding the rails. All TPO crews are recruited from existing staff at Royal Mail sorting centres. TPO staff rightly consider themselves as the cream of Royal Mail sorting grades and take great pride in their ability, in most cases, to sort faster and more accurately than their colleagues in stationary manual sorting offices. The nightly challenge of completing the sortation of all traffic on board by the due station engenders a particular pride of craft and a strong sense of loyalty and comradeship pervades most TPOs.

ON BOARD THE TPO

A closer look at one of the current services may help to explain further some of the aspects of the TPO operation. The Midland TPO Going North - more commonly known as the Mid North TPO - plies between Bristol Temple Meads and Newcastle every night, Monday to Friday. As the train pulls out of Bristol at 2204 it consists of eight vehicles. Three of these, at the rear, are stowage vans which will be detached at Sheffield. Of the remaining, two are TPO sorting carriages (NSX) and these are marshalled each side of a TPO stowage carriage (NTX). A class 47 locomotive will normally provide the motive power.

On board the TPO carriages is a crew of 18 Royal Mail staff plus the Officer-in-Charge. On Monday, Wednesday and Friday nights the crew will be Newcastle-based, returning homewards. On Tuesday and Thursday nights the crew will be Bristol-based, starting a round trip which will not return them home for another 29 hours and which includes a period of more than 12 hours off duty in Newcastle.

The sorting on board the Mid North TPO is carried out in six Divisions:-

- Division 1 - Cambridge (CB), Doncaster (DN), Lincoln (LN) and Peterborough (PE) postcode areas;
- Division 2 - Sheffield (S) postcode area;
- Division 3 - Bradford (BD), Leeds (LS), and Wakefield (WF) postcode areas
- Division 4 - Harrogate (HG), Hull (HU) and York (YO) postcode areas;
- Division 5 - Darlington (DL), Durham (DH), Sunderland (SR) and Tees-side (TS) postcode areas;
- Division 6 - Newcastle (NE) postcode area.

During the course of the journey northwards, about 600 bags of mail will be received for sorting, totalling about 90,000 individual letters and packets. Each bag will be addressed to a particular Division on the TPO, the sorting centre of origin having already given the mail a preliminary sortation.

Apart from an initial feed of traffic at Bristol, the first major influx is at Cheltenham (2252/2302), with receipts from Gloucester, South Wales, Bath and Swindon. Further traffic is loaded at Birmingham New St (2355/0008) - mainly from the West Midlands area. Derby (0048/0058) is a major interchange and is the first significant unloading point for the Mid North. Division 1 mails are despatched here. More importantly, it is also the place where the largest receipt of the journey is loaded. Much of the receipt at Derby will have arrived via the Royal Mail overnight inland

air mail network, known as "Skynet". East Midlands Airport, within easy driving distance of Derby station, sees no less than eight Royal Mail chartered aircraft arriving between 2300 and midnight. These flights provide connections from all parts of the country and there is a large nightly interchange between air, road and rail at Derby.

The traffic being sorted on the Mid North as it leaves Derby will now include letters despatched as late as 2030 from Aberdeen; 2110 from Southampton and 2200 from Exeter. This connection between "Skynet" and the TPO network allows many areas to enjoy next day delivery from distant places - and, moreover, for mail posted at the end of the business day.

The section from Derby to Sheffield is the most critical of the journey for the crew of the Mid North, since most of the traffic received in Divisions 2 and 3 at the former station must be sorted and despatched at the latter, the travelling time being only a little more than three-quarters of an hour.

Each Division provides sortation for up to 48 individual post towns in its designated postcode areas. Sequencing of sortation is geared to the schedule of unloading at stations en route. This normally allows the Divisions for destinations near the end of the line, such as Division 6, to be left until later.

For the Mid North TPO, the despatches at Sheffield (0145/0155), York (0245/0253) and Darlington (0335/0343) will clear the lion's share of the work load. After a short halt at Durham (0400/0404), the TPO eventually pulls into Newcastle at 0435 and the final despatches, for Newcastle only, are off-loaded. The crew can now leave the train for a well earned rest. They will have the satisfaction of knowing that, partly as a result of their efforts, thousands of Royal Mail customers in Yorkshire and Northeast England will soon be receiving letters from distant parts of the country posted less than twelve hours previously - a level of service difficult to achieve without the TPO.

The mailbag labels below show some of the constituents of the divisions of some other TPOs. Alas, there are none for the Mid North TPO.

T	LEICESTER	SSUX 2215
	YORKSHIRE TPO	
	DIV 5 (CO DURHAM)	
E	IN AT LEICESTER	
	P3793CX CON 1119	

T	LEICESTER	SSUX 2145
	MR DOVER TPO	
	DIV 2 (SURREY)	
	IN AT COVENTRY	
E	P3793CX CON 1392174	COX

ACCIDENT TO THE KETTERING MAIL BAGS

The use of mailbag apparatus on the TPOs, which ceased in October 1971, was not without its hazards as can be seen from a report which appeared on 4th February 1890 in The Market Harborough Advertiser.

"On Thursday morning last a number of letters were either lost or destroyed by an accident which occurred to the Kettering mail bags. In consequence of the mail train from Derby to London not stopping between Market Harborough and Wellingborough, the bags, which are seven or eight in number, are put out of the sorting van by an ingenious apparatus, in two leathern pouches, near the Hall Lane bridge. The train passes through Kettering station at about half-past two, and the pouches, being put out on a switch, are by means of a spring thrown on to a bar extended from the oblong screen near the bridge mentioned, and from thence are taken by a man to the Post-office. On Wednesday evening, it appears, the usual sorters were not in the van, and those who were on duty do not seem to have been such adepts in this portion of the work. The pouches on Thursday were put on the switch when near the Rothwell Road bridge, but they either caught against the parapet or slipped off. As the train had passed and the pouches were not in the usual place, the man at the screen, with assistance, instituted a search. The next stopping place of the train being Wellingborough, a telegram was sent to the station with regard to the matter, but the sorters replied that they put the bags out in the ordinary way. One of the pouches, containing four bags, was found uninjured between the two bridges mentioned, but the other had been thrown across the metals to the other side of the track, and subsequently was picked up by an engine on the up goods line. The pouch was, of course, cut to pieces, some of the bags with their contents falling into the six-foot way, while one bag was carried as far as Isham station, by which time the whole of the missives had dropped out. Several porters at the railway station were set to work to collect the correspondence, and it was not until nine o'clock that the whole of it was recovered, but some of the letters were completely destroyed.

I wonder if any of the delayed covers still survive. If so they would surely form an interesting addition to a TPO collection, especially if marked with a hand-stamp to explain the delay.

G.B. POSTAL HISTORY

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

Wants Lists - for specific items or for general
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5 Staverton Rd, Daventry
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THE SURVEYORS' JOURNALS (Part 17)

On 2nd January 1808, Mr Saverland left his home at Claybrook for Walsall to take charge of the office as the postmistress, Miss Penn, had resigned. It was not possible to appoint a replacement until the 18th so Mr Saverland was forced to remain there until 2nd February instructing the new deputy. On his way home he spent three days in the Birmingham office.

Messrs Hasker, Western and Saverland met in Leicester for four days in mid-March to discuss the possible establishment of mailcoaches from Leicester to Liverpool, from Shrewsbury to Derby, and from Sheffield to Manchester.

Then, at the end of March, Mr Saverland attended the trial in Coventry of N. Alexander, a letter carrier there, who had been arrested six months previously on suspicion of having stolen money and bills out of letters. After the trial was over, he went to London for twelve days regarding the introduction of a mailcoach to Holyhead by way of Shrewsbury.

Mr Saverland spent most of May in Cheshire but he did call at a number of offices in Staffordshire on his way there. Then, on 1st June, he met Mr Western to discuss delays to correspondence between the Coventry and Northampton Roads.

Between 28th June and 8th July, he visited Coventry, Warwick, Southam and Daventry to make alternative arrangements for the carriage of the mails on the withdrawal of the mailcoach between Daventry and Warwick.

There then followed two journies connected with the new mailcoach to Holyhead. He spent two days in Shrewsbury from 26th July, with Hasker, Western and the coach proprietors, before going on to Oswestry, Whitchurch, Chirk and Llangollen to arrange a connection of the mail from Chester with the new coach. [I find it difficult to understand this and subsequent references to Whitchurch as surely it was never near the route of the coach. Is there a Whitchurch, or as it can be read in Mr Western's journal, a Whitehurst near Chirk?] He then went to Wrexham and Chester to "provide for the conveyance of the Mail to Whitchurch."

On 18th August, Mr Saverland met Mr Western in Birmingham before they went on together to Shrewsbury to "prepare new Lists of Postage, & to instruct the various Postmasters in the new circulation, & alteration in the postage, in consequence of opening a direct communication between Shrewsbury and Holyhead." From Shrewsbury he went on to Oswestry before visiting the new receiving house at Whitchurch. Then to Wrexham to check that everything was ready for the express ride to and from Chester and Whitchurch.

The 1st September found Mr Saverland in Liverpool making arrangements for the mail from there to connect with the new coach; on the 2nd he was in Chester making sure that everything was ready for the ride to Whitchurch; on the 3rd he again visited the office at Whitchurch; and on the 4th he was in Ellesmere to arrange the post to Oswestry. The next day he met Mr Western in Oswestry to find out how he had arranged the rides in North Wales. On the 6th, Mr Saverland arrived in Shrewsbury to be present at the departure of the coach for Holyhead that evening. After he had informed Freeling that, apart from some mistakes in the Dublin office, the new arrangement was working well, he left Shrewsbury on 9th September.

The next business of any note in the Midlands was a visit to Oswestry, starting on 4th December, to meet a Mr Dyer who was to succeed Mrs Evans as the deputy. After he had explained the business to Mr Dyer, he walked round the town looking for a house or lodging with a room below for an office. Neither Mr Saverland nor Mr Dyer who had set out with the same purpose met with any success. On account of this and the fact that most of the duty was in the night Mr Dyer resigned. So Mr Saverland had to take charge of the office. Eventually, a Mrs De L'Hoste of Chester was appointed but she wrote enclosing a medical certificate stating that she was unable

to leave her room. Woweever, she arrived on 30th but after considering the nature of the duty and the impossibility of getting a house, except at a very high rent, before 1st May 1809 (the usual time of letting houses there), she declined the appointment. Mr Saverland was to remain in Oswestry for another month.

The only journey on official business made by Mr Western in January 1808 was to Nottingham as he had received information about the illegal carriage of letters to and from that town.

A complaint that the deputy at Retford had detained letters took Mr Western there in early March. On the 10th, he went to Chesterfield to investigate the theft of the bags from Leeds, Wakefield, Barnsley and Sheffield for Mansfield. As we have already seen, the middle of the month found him in Leicester. A week later, he was in Buxton arranging for the ride from Buxton to Macclesfield to be put into other hands from 6th April. In a later report on the riding work he wrote that the ride from Buxton to Knutsford through Macclesfield had been divided and put in new hands which had had a good effect and procured an earlier arrival at Bakewell.

Mr Western made two official visits in the Midlands during April. In the middle of the month he went to Melton Mowbray, Fosse Inn and Nottingham respecting a request for an official receiving house at Fosse Inn. A week later he was in Winsters as he had received a request for a receiving house or sub-office under Wirksworth to be opened there. He then set off for Bath on leave of absence.

After spending eight days at the G.P.O., Mr Western left London on 28th May and visited Woburn, Hockliffe, Fenny Stratford and Northampton to devise means of accelerating the correspondence from "Bedford and the Woburn branch with Warwick, Buckingham, Coventry and Birmingham, and also from Buckinghamshire to Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire and Northamptonshire." [I have not been able yet to find this report. Sometimes reports in Post 40 are not indexed under an obvious heading.] Before he reached home he met Mr Saverland in Burton.

Three days were spent in Nottingham at the start of June transferring the office to the widow of the postmaster, before he met Mr Hasker in Sheffield on the business of a mailcoach from there to Manchester. He travelled over the ground to Buxton, Macclesfield, Stockport and Manchester, and then set out for Birmingham, going via Nottingham where he made further enquiries about the illegal conveyance of letters to and from London. Whilst in Nottingham, he was informed that the proposed meeting [with Freeling and Hasker?] in Birmingham had been postponed. So, he returned to the business of the Sheffield to Manchester mailcoach, visiting Sheffield, Buxton, Leek, Manchester, Liverpool, Chester, Knutsford and Macclesfield in the course of preparing for the start on 6th July.

The installation of a new deputy at Buxton and supervising the introduction of the new coach took up the first three weeks in July. Although the reports about the new coach are missing, Mr Western's journal does give some detail. The rides from Bakewell to Buxton, from Buxton to Macclesfield, from Macclesfield to Knutsford, and from Manchester to Stockport were withdrawn. The following rides were introduced: Macclesfield to Monksheath, Bakewell to Stoney Middleton, and an Express with the London bag during the Buxton season from Leek to Buxton.

As we have seen, on the 27th July Mr Western was in Shrewsbury from where he went on to Llangollen, Wrexham, Chester, Liverpool and Manchester to see what changes would be needed on the introduction of the new coach to Holyhead. He then spent several days in Monksheath, Macclesfield and Buxton completing the "regulations necessary on the establishment of the Mailcoach from Sheffield to Manchester." Also, he investigated the possibility of opening a receiving house at Disley.

After meeting Mr Saverland in Birmingham and going on to Shrewsbury and Oswestry, he visited Corwen, Bala, Bangor and Holyhead before returning to Oswestry on 5th September. The next day, Mr Western was in Whitchurch to attend the commence-

ment of the new coach and also the branch mail by horse and mailguard between Chester and Whitchurch. Three days later, he set off for Corwen, Bala, Bangor, Carnarvon and Beaumaris to inspect the new rides at those places.

Some unspecified business took Mr Western to Holyhead towards the end of September. After he had been there for over two weeks a inspected the road through Bangor, Capel Curig, Llangollen and Whitchurch.

Three days at the beginning of November were spent in Buxton, taking off the ride from Leek and sending the the letters "thru' a new Channell." He was then called to London to discuss and find means of preventing possible frauds in the claims made by the deputies in their quarterly accounts for missent and redirected letters.

After a short leave of absence in Bath, Mr Western was attending to matters in Lincolnshire for much of December.

In the period From 22nd to 31st January 1808, Mr Woodcock visited the office at Chipping Norton to put in a new deputy; those at Moreton in Marsh and Stow were the deputies had asked for increased allowances for the riding work because of the high price of horse fodder; those at Woodstock and Banbury to try to speed up the arrival of the mail there.; and finally at Oxford to enforce the regulations for "duly forwarding the Bye Letters recd at that Office in the morning." This matter caused him so much concern that he was back in Oxford a few days later and spent over two weeks in February there. [This subject will come up again and be described in an addendum later in the season.]

There was one journey in March - two days making enquiries at Cambridge Inn, Newport and Bristol about a letter said to have been put into the post office at Dursley and to contain £73 in notes of the Gloucester Bank. Mr Woodcock was not able to find any trace of the letter.

For most of April, Mr Woodcock was at Stratford, installing a new postmaster, Mr John Lane. However, he did find time to visit the offices at Warwick, Alcester and Evesham.

There is one journal missing which appears to cover the months of May and June. We find Mr Woodcock at the start of July at Tetbury, "finishing the instructions of the new Deputy & opening the new Voucher." From Tetbury he went on to visit the offices at Cheltenham and Tewkesbury and to examine the state of the roads in the Cheltenham district which were "under Indictment."

Apart from a brief visit to the offices at Stroud and Hampton, Mr Woodcock was outside the Midlands for most of August. In his report on the riding work he complained, neither for the first nor the last time, about the performance of the ride between Bewdley and Birmingham. In particular, more time than necessary was taken at Stourbridge in the dispatch of the mail, and the ride from there to Dudley had been dilatory. The rider blamed the number of coal carts and other impediments he met on the road.

For one week in September, Mr Woodcock was at Banbury investigating a supposed false return of London letters. On his way home he called at the offices in Woodstock and Oxford.

For virtually the whole of October, he was employed at home on official duties. He then set out on a very extensive survey through Worcester, Stourport, Bewdley, Kidderminster, Stourbridge and Birmingham, inspecting the riding work, in particular that between the last two places. He found it necessary to change some of the contractors.

ADDENDUM - COVENTRY AND WARWICK RIDES

As we saw in the last issue, a mailcoach was introduced in November 1807 between Daventry and Warwick. One consequence of this was that the ride from Coventry to Warwick was withdrawn, though the period of notice did not expire until 5th January 1808.

On 22nd December 1807, Mr Saverland wrote to Freeling:

"The Market Town of Kenilworth, situate halfway between Coventry & Warwick has for about eighteen years received its Letters three days a week by the Post going to Warwick, & on the other three days, the Contractor for the Ride has conveyed them on horseback to Kenilworth, for which he received the Pence on all the letters every day. On the establishment of the Daventry & Warwick Mail Coach, I signified to the Contractor for the Warwick Ride at Coventry that the Ride would be given up on 5th January next. The allowance for the Warwick Ride is £30 pr annum, which is now become very unnecessary, as the conveyance of the Letters between Coventry & Warwick, by way of Daventry is every day & very expeditious. But as it would be a great hardship upon the Inhabitants of Kenilworth, who are numerous & very respectable, to do away their present accommodation, I beg to recommend that we should allow £20 a year towards the expence of serving them, they continuing to pay the pence, as at present, which will enable the Contractor at Coventry to send them their Letters six days a Week, by a Man & Horse. The Letters to Kenilworth amount to about £200 a year & the pence to about £20, which together with the proposed allowance from the Office will be about £40 a year for the ride of five miles. If a Foot Messenger were employed, the expence would be nearly the same, 14/- a Week, with however the disadvantage that the Inhabitants would hardly have time to answer their Letters, by return of the Post, in the Summer time, & in the Winter they could not be answered till the following day."

Their Lordships agreed to this proposal. However, six months later, on 21st June 1808, Mr Saverland wrote:

"I am favoured with your Letter of yesterday acquainting me that the Daventry & Warwick Mail Coach is to be discontinued after 5th of next Month and that it is necessary to make some new arrangement for the correspondence of the Road between Daventry & Warwick.

I beg to be informed whether Warwick should be served from Daventry as at present, or three days a week only from Coventry, as it used to be prior to the establishment of the Daventry Mail Coach. And whether Southam should be served only three days a week at the expence of the Revenue, in case the Gentlemen of the Neighbourhood do not think proper to subscribe towards a six days Post as heretofore.

What a Ride may be contracted for, every day, from Daventry to Warwick, 20 miles, at the present prices of Hay & Corn, I cannot readily say, but it must be considerable. The cheapest mode will be to open the late communication between Coventry & Warwick, & I recommend that it should be daily instead of three days a Week, otherwise the Inhabitants of Warwick will have much to complain of, as the convenience of the Coach to Daventry, & the direct communication thereby with Northamptonshire, Leicestershire, Ireland, North Wales, Lancashire etc has been very considerable. The expence of the latter arrangement will be as under.

Ride - Daventry to Southam 3 days a week 10½ miles, to go six days if the inhabitants continue their former subscription - £33 pr annum.

Ride - Coventry to Warwick, daily 10 miles at £6 pr mile - £60 pr annum.

To be discontinued, the allowance of 2d a mile to the Daventry & Warwick Mail Coach - 20 miles - £60.13.4

Mail Guard's Uniform found to the Coach Man, say £6

The allowance in aid of the expence of conveying the Letters six days a week from Coventry to Kenilworth - £20

Additional expence pr annum £6.6.8

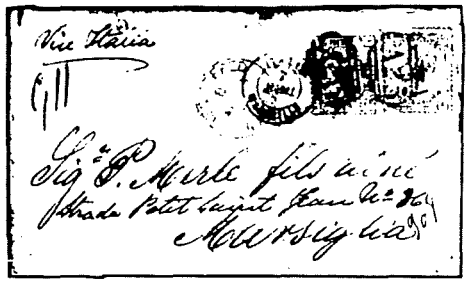
If the mail is to be conveyed between Daventry & Southam, six days a week, at the expence of the Revenue, the arrangement will be more expensive, but as Southam is a Place of little consideration in point of Correspondence, I submit that any additional days Post should be left to the Inhabitants.

The Mail Coach between Daventry & Warwick having been tryed & failed, as I foretold, the inhabitants of Warwick cannot suffer any inconvenience to their correspondence if a daily Post should be established between Warwick & Coventry as the letters will go equally as quick by way of Coventry as pr Daventry, excepting that they will receive them later & have less time to answer them. The Warwick London Bag must be conveyed to and from Stratford on Avon as formerly."

Authorisation was given for the six-day post to Warwick from Coventry, and for one on three days a week from Daventry to Southam.

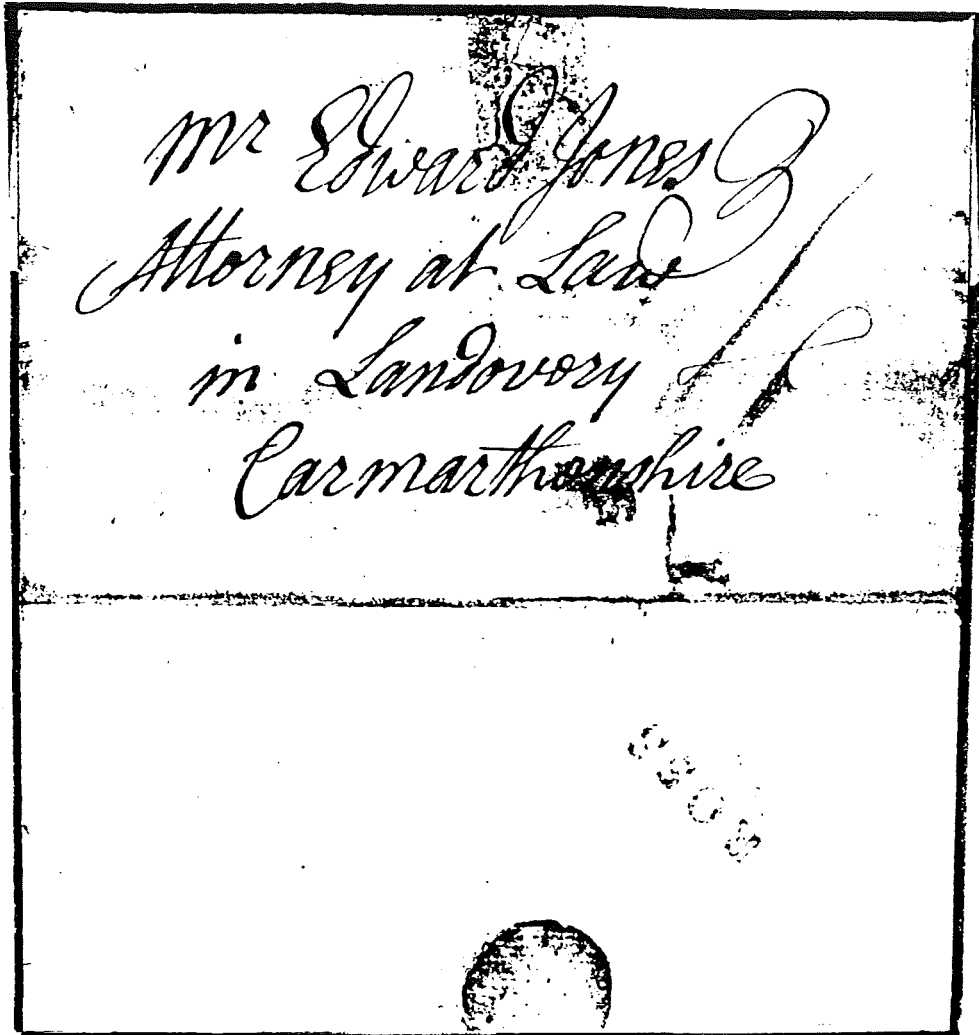
There will be more on Coventry to Warwick when we get to 1810.

References: Post 40/63G/1807
40/78I/1808

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AN UNRECORDED ROSS MARK

Roger Broomfield has kindly sent the copy of a letter dated 9th July 1774. The ROSS mark measures 21x5 mm whereas HF 362 in the County Catalogue is quoted at 21x6 and is said to have a "tall R".

THE NEXT MIDLAND MAIL

This will appear in late October or early November. It is too early to say what it will contain other than more from the Surveyors' Journals. So articles, long or short, please to:

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

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