



# MIDLAND MAIL

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



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Elizabeth Lewis

Number 71, AUGUST 1991

My thanks to those of you who responded to the request for comments on the programme of meetings. It appears that those who responded are quite happy with the what the Society offers. Lack of opportunity rather than lack of interest is the main reason for non-attendance. Physical incapacity, illness, work commitments and sheer distance from Birmingham are all reasons quoted for inability to attend meetings. The programme for the coming season is varied and held at a variety of locations so I hope that as many of you as are able will try to get along to some of these.

Earlier this week a book which consisted largely of photographs taken in the last few years of operation of what had once been the Great Central Railway was loaned to me. Many of the photographs were taken less than twenty-five years ago and were to me familiar scenes. Yet barely a trace of them now remains. It reminded me of something I have said before in this space which is that we can so easily take the "here and now" for granted and then, before we realise, it has disappeared. So as postal historians we should not overlook the present. I hope this summer to be able to spend time putting together a photographic record of the village post offices in Leicestershire.

Finally I would like to make a personal plea. As some of you know I have for some time been working on a book on the postal history of Leicestershire. I hate to tempt fate but I hope to have finished the typescript by the end of the year. If any members have Leicestershire material in their collections, I would be grateful if they could let me have details of the markings. Even the humble material like single circles is of interest. Yours may be the one I have not seen before or it may extend the period of usage.

### SUBSCRIPTIONS \* SUBSCRIPTIONS \* SUBSCRIPTIONS \* SUBSCRIPTIONS \* SUBSCRIPTIONS\*

This is just to remind you that subscriptions are now due. Yet again the amount remains unchanged at £5, despite the fact that the cost of posting Midland Mail goes up yet again next month. . So Trevor Clewley, our Treasurer will be pleased to receive cheques for that amount at:

127 Queslett Road East, Streetly, Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands B74 2AJ.

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NEXT SEASON'S PROGRAMME

The first meeting of the new season will be on 14th September at Carrs Lane Church Centre, Birmingham beginning at 1.30 p.m. Members are asked to bring up to 9 sheets of recent acquisitions or totally different sheets.

Then on 12th October again at Carrs Lane at 1.30 p.m. it is hoped that the speaker will be a well known G.B. collector. Actual confirmation of this is still awaited.

The remainder of the programme is:

<sup>2ND</sup>  
Alteration. The November meeting will now take place at the village hall, Walton on the Hill near Stafford. Transport from Stafford station will be arranged for those who require it. Full details in the next issue.

14th December. Bass Museum, Burton-on-Trent. Letters from 12th century to 17th century from Robson Lowe's personal collection.

18th January. A visit to P.O. Archives' new premises in London.

8th February. Annual Competitions. Carrs Lane Birmingham.

21st March. At Worcester. Leicestershire Postal History - a mystery speaker.

11th April At Shrewsbury. A joint meeting with the Shropshire and Welsh Societies. The main speaker will be Michael Champness.

25th April. A.G.M. and Auction. Carrs Lane, Birmingham.

The September meeting will be preceded by a committee meeting at 12.30 p.m.

# GREAT BRITAIN 1580-1901

Elizabethan to Victorian

## POSTAL HISTORY

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COLLECTING COPY-PAPER

by Derek Smeathers

I recently bought three letters addressed to the Earl of Northampton - at least that was what they were at first sight. Certainly they were three nice pieces addressed to his Lordship either at Castle Ashby ("per Ashby Bag") or at "his house in Bloomsbury Square, London". All are between November and December 1712 with a London Bishop Mark. Each of the three addresses is written in a different hand and the wax seal on each is different. Inside, the letters are all written in the same hand (different from any of the three addresses) and with some carelessness - many alterations, crossings-out, etc., and none is signed although the usual ending, "Your humble Servant.." is written.

It suddenly became clear to me that the date of the letter was, in each case, much later than the Bishop Mark on the address, one some weeks later.

What these must be, I believe, are copies of letters FROM the Earl to other people. When a letter was received, the cover was taken off and set aside to be used as copy paper at a later date. With no such modern wonders as carbon paper, it would have been necessary to copy out each letter in order to retain a record of what was said, but this did not need to be neat, and would have been done fairly hurriedly - hence the rather untidy appearance of these "letters".

So I have paid good money for copy-paper! And that sentence makes me about as "economically careful" as the Fourth Earl of Northampton must have been. Presumably paper was expensive in 1712 and possibly not all that plentiful, so the idea of keeping these wrappers was attractive enough. For postmark collectors it is a good thing too, as many more wrappers will have survived because of this practice. Or was George the Fourth Earl just a one-off mean old B...ritish Aristocrat? Has anyone else come across this procedure?



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OPERATING MR PALMER'S PLAN

OR

MR WOODCOCK'S A TO C

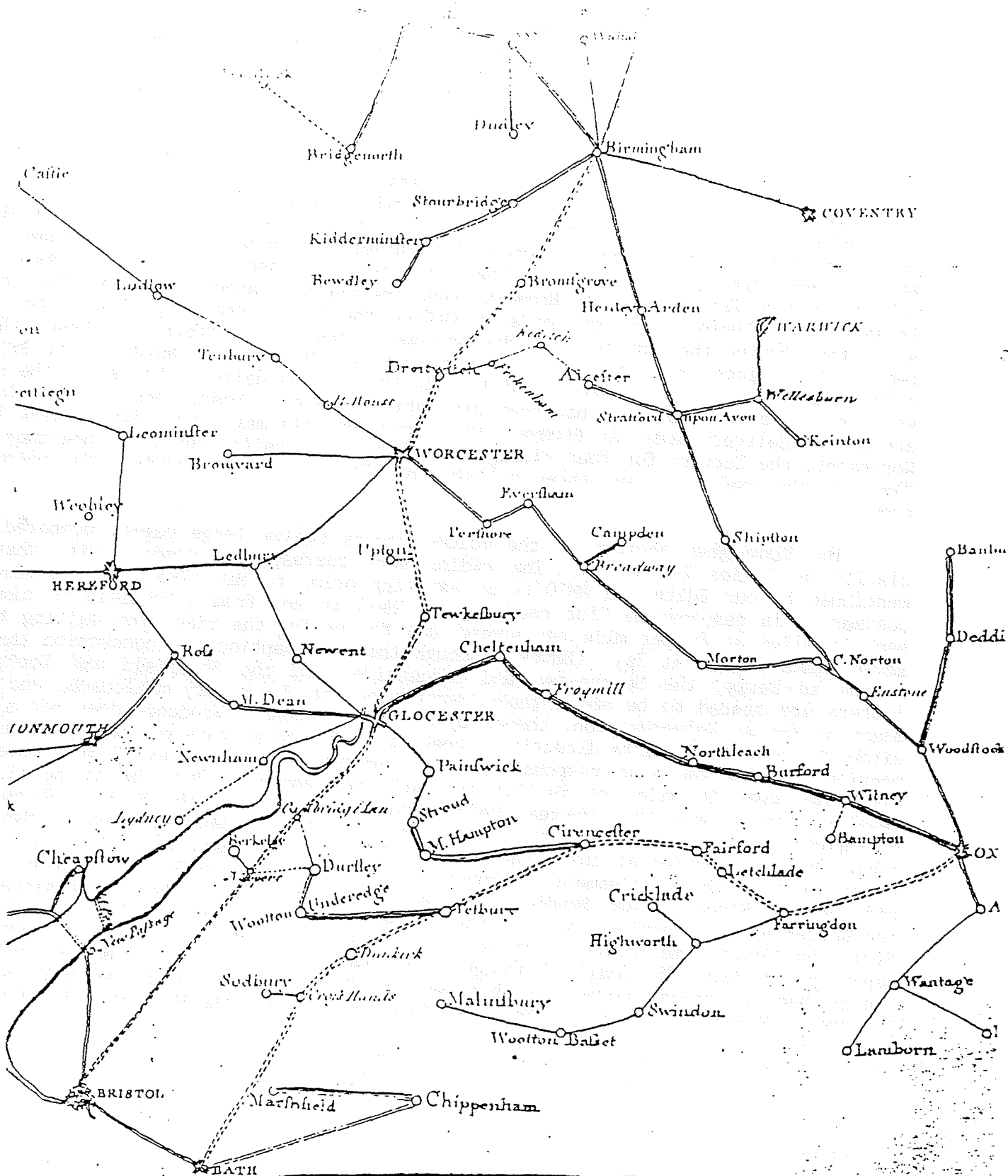
by Rev. Christopher Beaver

John Palmer did not just introduce mailcoaches. Many routes and schedules had to be altered to fit in with his overall intention of improving postal services. As for Ralph Allen so for him; the surveyors were the agents through whom the Plan would be executed.

A large volume recently re-discovered at Gloucester Reference Library was intended to be a complete record of the postal arrangements at each post town in the parts of England and Wales for which Samuel Woodcock assumed responsibility in 1787. There is little doubt he had much of the information among his working papers, having assiduously collected it on his travels over the following few years. He intended to have it all systematically recorded in one book. He headed the pages, leaving ample room for the busy offices to occupy several of them, and then began the long task of filling them with facts - name of the deputy postmaster, date appointed, his surities and the amount of his bond; riding work for which responsible, frequency, distance and price; the offices where he has sub-deputies and their salaries, or if unsalaried "paid by the pence"; next, "the days and hours of arrivals and departures of the Post before Mr Palmer's Post Plan" followed by the same "since Mr Palmer's Post Plan", noting where necessary in general or specific terms the towns or parts of the country whose letters are carried that way; then the name of each town with which vouchers are exchanged, specifying if appropriate the "places for which letters are sent as forward" through that town; lastly a list of the places in the delivery of the post town with a column for the "Mode of Conveyance" to and from each of them - though "called for" or "left in town" may sometimes be the entry there.

The first page of the volume explains the scope of the project as: "A survey of the Post Towns in the Bristol Windsor Gloucester or Third Division and the Oxford Worcester Shrewsbury or Fourth Division by Samuel Woodcock Surveyor of the General Post Office and Postmaster of Gloucester." As was shown in "A Succession of Surveyors" (MM54/16-19) Woodcock was one of four new appointees in 1787 who with two from the "Old Establishment" were each given responsibility for a portion of England and Wales, and the boundaries of the districts were altered in 1799 when one of the six was replaced and a seventh riding surveyor added to the establishment. More recent research reveals an intention, possibly on Palmer's part, to have a team of nine, and that three of the six for those twelve years each had two divisions. It is hoped that it will be possible from the account books to discover in which year the divisions were introduced and to determine their boundaries.

Originally a map dated 10th July 1789 was deposited with the volume at the library. Its present location is unknown, though photocopies of its central part do cover the area of most interest to this Society. Some details on the map do not accord with the arrangements in the undated volume and a few may be inaccurately depicted; however it would seem the writing began a little later than the map was printed. Now comes a more disappointing revelation. For whatever reason Woodcock did not by any means complete the time-consuming task of filling all those pages. From Aberiswith he progressed only to Cardigan before abandoning the book. Certainly that was by 1793. Neither additions nor alterations were subsequently made, though Woodcock continued as surveyor of substantially the same district until 1822. Maybe it was not lack of time. A realisation that the Plan could not be completed nor would the arrangements ever be permanently settled may have stayed his hand. So what after all has been found?



## EXPLANATION

- Double black lines above the rail is conveyed from London by Coach
- Double dotted yellow lines — Cross Country Coaches
- Single black lines — General Night
- Single Red lines — Bus Night
- Black and red lines both General and Bus Night

In the counties which are our special concern details are given of only seven post towns: Bewdley, Birmingham, Bridgnorth, Broadway, Bromyard and Camden. Each of these was at the time at the end of a bye-mail or on a single post road, with the one exception of Birmingham. An illustration from the Camden pages is fairly typical. The delivery arrangements may be a surprise for about 1790. "No letter carrier allowed" plainly means none paid for out of revenue and "no gratuity" means no additional charge for delivery in the town. It seems more likely the person who went to the villages was paid 1d for each mile of his walk than that he charged 1d a mile for each letter; it is not clear who paid him. At Bewdley letters for the surrounding parts are "mostly sent on Market Days by the Farmers etc except Cleobury Mortimer who employ a messenger to fetch them at their own expense", and it is much the same for villages around Bridgnorth. At Broadway (and the villages around, not just the town, is implied) - "before this was made an Office the Deputy received  $\frac{1}{2}$ d a letter but since that period that gratuity is discontinued"; now "the letters for these (thirteen listed) places are sent by a messenger who is paid by the Deputy." At Bromsgrove "there used to be a gratuity of 1d a letter for the delivery but since the same was disputed at Worcester it has been discontinued here." Nearly one hundred places are in its delivery area. At Bromyard which receives its mail three days a week from Worcester, the letters for four villages are "left till called for", for one they are "left on the road" (!), and three villages pay "an old letter carrier" for bringing them.

The Birmingham section of the volume covers twelve large pages, numbered for clarity as folios 24 to 29. The riding work corresponds, almost, with what is mentioned by our Editor in MM70/11 as existing prior to May 1793. The Birmingham postmaster is responsible "for carrying the Mail to and from Litchfield 14 times a week 16 miles at £4 per mile per annum" and for paying the rider for waiting there seven times a week at 7s. (However though there is mentioned a connection through Burton to Derby, the Manchester and Lancashire, and the Sheffield and Yorkshire letters are stated to be among those carried on the Shrewsbury mailcoach, and that means as far as Wolverhampton, thence by a ride to Stone. Woodcock does not allude either to coaches or carts directly; a coach is inferred at this period if a guard is mentioned.) He was also responsible "for carrying a Mail to and from Bewdley 14 times per week 26 miles at £4.13.4 per mile per annum." But, be it noted, the Bewdley details show that whereas before Palmer's Post Plan the Bristol-Shrewsbury crosspost, thrice weekly, connected that town directly with Worcester and Bridgnorth, since the introduction of that Plan Bewdley has no direct mail to either. It seems therefore that the arrangements Woodcock made in May 1793 (MM70/11) included a new ride between Worcester and Bewdley. Map and volume make clear that in or since 1785 the Worcester to Shrewsbury part of the Exeter to Chester crosspost has ceased. The Birmingham-Bristol mailcoach which replaced rides on the same or a similar route and began on 6th July 1787 (daily) through Gloucester, Worcester and Bromsgrove provided the primary crosspost connection between the Southwest and North as well as the Midlands. Woodcock's report of May 1793 does specify that the Worcester-Bewdley ride is for the purpose of conveying "the cross post bags", and this is likely to mean that it completed a direct connection from Worcester to Wolverhampton, eliminating the detour through Birmingham of letters between the Southwest and North. Such a connection is clearly missing on Woodcock's map and in the volume and has not then been made.

To return to an analysis of the Birmingham pages, the London and Shrewsbury mailcoach is through Oxford, Stratford and Birmingham, as expected. There is a connection to Coventry which takes mail for nowhere beyond, a mailcoach since the "Coventry guard" is referred to (cf. MM55/16). Before Palmer there were rides thrice weekly to "Oxford, Coventry etc" which surely Woodcock records incorrectly as on the same days as one another since "London and parts beyond" are correctly given as having been six-day which has previously been shown as resulting from a three-day service on the Chester Road through Coventry and three-day on the bye-night route through Oxford. The map shows a straight line from Birmingham to Coventry without showing Coleshill at all, no doubt because it was outside Woodcock's District. A

## Camden Delivery

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| Places Names.   | Gentlemen's seats &c. | Mode of Conveyance |
|-----------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| Acton-sub-edge  |                       | Letter Carrier     |
| Botchal Camden  |                       | D.                 |
| Chipping Camden |                       | D.                 |
| Charisworth     |                       | D.                 |
| Dorchester      |                       | D.                 |
| Elvington       | Thos. M. Mould        | Called for         |
| Foxcote         |                       | D.                 |
| Clapton Great   |                       | Letter Carrier     |
| Clapton Little  |                       | D.                 |
| Hilcot Great    |                       | D.                 |
| Hilcot Little   |                       | D.                 |
| Elmington       |                       | D.                 |
| Kingcombe?      |                       | D.                 |
| Lark Stoke      |                       | D.                 |
| Meen            |                       | D.                 |
| Marston Long    | Rev. M. Loggin        | D.                 |
| Marston Broad   |                       | D.                 |
| Nichilton       | Walter Groves Esq.    | D.                 |
| D. Hill Farm    |                       | D.                 |
| Norton Upper    |                       | D.                 |
| Norton Lower    |                       | D.                 |
| Norton House    | Lord Harroby          | Called for         |
| New Comb        | Joseph Roberts Esq.   | D.                 |
| Old Comb        |                       | Letter Carrier     |
| Paxford         |                       | D.                 |
| Rebworth        | Martin Esq.           | D.                 |
| Saintbury       |                       | D.                 |
| Westminster     |                       | D.                 |
| Sturval         |                       | D.                 |
| Weston-sub-edge |                       | D.                 |
| Weston Park     |                       | D.                 |

To most of these Places the Letters are sent by a Person who receives one Penny per Mile for his Trouble.

direct connection between Birmingham and Coleshill apparently no longer exists. "Before Mr Palmer's Post Plan " a ride between them brought the "north and west" mails to Birmingham daily and took "north and west" letters five times a week; somewhat confusingly in that same period a ride took "north" as well as other letters thrice weekly to and from Bromsgrove.

Under the deputy postmaster of Birmingham are listed just one letter carrier and rather more sub-deputies than might be expected. He is responsible for paying the "bye and cross road salary" at Bromsgrove and Droitwich. The salary of Henley-in-Arden is paid from Stratford-on-Avon. The salaries of nine more sub-deputies are "paid by the pence": Walsal, Willenhall, Wednesbury, West Bromwich, Bilston, Sutton Colfield, Dudley, Castle Bromwich and Meriden. (Of these Wednesbury is not included in Cary's 1787 list of Receiving Houses under Birmingham, repeated unaltered in the edition of 1793. Walsall had had a bag from London six-days a week since 1755, a stamp in use from at least 1775, and it was made a post town in 1793.)

The list of places in the Birmingham delivery appears to have been carefully compiled - 166 of them in strictly alphabetical order and each with its county specified. A few places close to the post town are served by the letter carrier, such as Sandpits and Bordesley. Each of the receiving houses has a bag in which go letters for places beyond in the case of eight of the ten, and the Bewdley and Halesowen postboys and the Bristol and Coventry mailcoach guards all leave letters for other places apart from the receiving houses on their way. No doubt because it is important not to delay the principal through Mail, nothing is left by the London mailcoach before Henley-in-Arden, and the other way towards Shrewsbury only the bags for Wednesbury and Bilston are dropped before the stop at Wolverhampton. The Litchfield postboy evidently takes the Sutton Coldfield bag, but no more; he has a great deal of long-distance mail to carry. Though the list does not specify how the bags for the receiving houses are carried, it does usually note that a bag is received from another post town as well and that is sufficient, with the details of how the letters reach other places, to be fairly sure of the routes taken. Thus the Coventry mailcoach goes via Castle Bromwich, Stonebridge and Meriden. The Bewdley postboy serves Handsworth and Sandwell Hall, so goes through West Bromwich and Dudley on his way to Stourbridge (which is confirmed by the 1793 report where the distance is the same and "through Dudley" is stated.) Toll End, or Tolend, is the one place which has a bag (it contains the Tipton and Great Bridge letters) but no sub-deputy, and that bag is probably left at West Bromwich, cf. MM53/9ff and 64/16ff.

Of all the receiving houses that leaves only Walsal and Willenhall yet to be accounted for. How were their bags carried; a bag for each from Wolverhampton as well as Birmingham? Other sources suggest they made their own arrangements and whether it was at this time a through ride or two walks, it was not provided out of the revenue. Many places without an office made their own provision similarly. Relatively few of those in the extensive Birmingham delivery even at this early date have in the "Mode of Conveyance" column "called for", "sent there" or "sent by servant" and in only fourteen instances are the letters "left in town". These are mostly Halls and isolated hamlets.

Outside the Midlands, Woodcock's survey gives equally fascinating accounts of such major posttowns as Bath and Bristol. Incomplete and tantalising as it is, it deserves to become much better known. #

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# A photocopy of the completed pages has been submitted to Post Office Archives and, when bound, will be available for reference. In the meantime, the Society is taking urgent action to obtain the most "original" and complete photocopy of the missing map of 1789.

[illegible]

# Birmingham.

The Days and Hours of the  
Arrival and Departure  
of the Post before Mr. Palmer's Post Plan;

From London  
(and Parts beyond)  
Every Day but Sunday,  
From 4 to 6 in Morning.

From Oxford, Coventry &c.  
Sunday, Wednesday, Friday,  
From 6 to 8 in Morning.

From Worcesterhampton  
Salop. . . . . Derby,  
Chester, . . . . Manchester,  
Lancashire & North Wales,  
Saturday, Sunday, Monday,  
at 8 in Evening.

From Shrewsbury, Salop &c.  
Sunday, Monday, Wednesday,  
Thursday, Friday, Saturday,  
at 9 at Night.

From Colshill with the  
North and West Mails  
Sunday, Monday, Tuesday,  
Thursday, Saturday,  
at 6 in Morning.

From Stratford on Avon  
Sunday, Wednesday, Friday,  
at 7 in Morning.

From Stourbridge, &c.  
Wednesday, Friday,  
at 6 Morning.

From Litchfield, Derby &c.  
Tuesday, Wednesday at 6.  
Thursday, Friday, at 8.  
at Night.

From Broomsgrove  
with the Western Mails  
Sunday, Wednesday, Friday,  
at 8 in Evening.

To London,  
(and Parts beyond)  
Every Day but Sunday,  
at 11 at Night.

To Oxford, Coventry &c.  
Sunday, Tuesday, Saturday,  
at 11 at Night.

To Worcesterhampton  
Salop. . . . . Derby,  
Chester, . . . . Manchester,  
Lancashire & North Wales,  
Saturday, Sunday, Monday,  
at 7 in Morning.

To Shrewsbury, Salop &c.  
Sunday, Monday, Wednesday,  
Thursday, Friday, Saturday,  
at 7 in Morning.

To Colshill, with the  
North and West Mails  
Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday,  
Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday,  
at 11 at Night.

To Stratford on Avon  
Sunday, Tuesday, Thursday,  
at 12 at Night.

To Stourbridge &c.  
Tuesday, Thursday,  
at 10 at Night.

To Litchfield Derby &c.  
Tuesday, Wednesday,  
Thursday, Friday,  
at 8 in Morning.

To Broomsgrove  
with the Western Mails  
Sunday, Wednesday, Friday,  
at 8 in Morning.

## Birmingham.

25.

The Days and Hours of the  
Arrival and Departure  
of the Post since Mr. Palmers Post Plan;  
From London,  
(and Parts beyond.)  
Every Day but Monday,  
at 12 at Noon.

|                 |                      |
|-----------------|----------------------|
| From Abingdon & | Berkshire.           |
| Highworth &     | Wiltshire.           |
| Oxford &        | Oxfordshire.         |
| Chert. norton.  | Stafford on Avon &c. |

Every Day but Monday,  
at 12 at Noon.

From Coventry,  
Every Day at 1 in Afternoon.

From Litchfield, Burton, & Derby,  
Every Day at 5 in Morning.

|                     |              |
|---------------------|--------------|
| From                | Stourbridge. |
| Addiscombe, Dudley. |              |

Every Morning at 1/2 past 8.

|                              |                      |
|------------------------------|----------------------|
| From Shrewsbury,             | Parts of Shropshire  |
| Chesler.                     | & Cheshire.          |
| Manchester &c.               | & Lancashire.        |
| Sheffield                    | & part of Yorkshire. |
| Hendal.                      | & Westmorland.       |
| North Wales                  | Holhead.             |
| (and by Packet) from Dublin. |                      |
| and the Northern parts of    | Ireland.             |

Every Day at 2 in Afternoon.

|                           |                   |
|---------------------------|-------------------|
| From Worcester,           | & Worcestershire. |
| Leicester,                | Gloucester.       |
| and great Part of         | Gloucestershire.  |
| Cardiganshire             | Cardiganshire.    |
| Powell'shire              | Radnorshire.      |
| Herefordshire             | Monmouthshire.    |
| Wiltshire                 | Bath.             |
| The West of               | England.          |
| (and over the             | And Wales.)       |
| From Glamorgan            | Cardigan &c.      |
| and the Southern parts of | Wales.            |
| Ireland.                  |                   |

Every Morning at 9 o'clock.

To London,  
(and Parts beyond.)  
Every Day but Saturday,  
at 3 in the Afternoon.

|                |                      |
|----------------|----------------------|
| To Abingdon &  | Berkshire.           |
| Highworth &    | Wiltshire.           |
| Oxford &       | Oxfordshire.         |
| Chert. norton. | Stafford on Avon &c. |

Every Day but Saturday,  
at 3 in the Afternoon.

To Coventry,  
Every Day at 3 in the Afternoon.

To Litchfield, Burton, & Derby,  
Every Morning at 10.

|                     |              |
|---------------------|--------------|
| To                  | Stourbridge. |
| Addiscombe, Dudley. |              |

Every Day at 1/2 past 1 at Noon.

|                              |                       |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|
| To Shrewsbury,               | & Parts of Shropshire |
| Chesler.                     | & Cheshire.           |
| Manchester &c.               | & Lancashire.         |
| Sheffield                    | & part of Yorkshire.  |
| Hendal.                      | & Westmorland.        |
| North Wales                  | Holhead.              |
| (and by Packet) from Dublin. |                       |
| and the Northern parts of    | Ireland.              |

Every Day at 1 in Afternoon.

|                           |                   |
|---------------------------|-------------------|
| To Worcester,             | & Worcestershire. |
| Leicester,                | Gloucester.       |
| and great Part of         | Gloucestershire.  |
| Cardiganshire             | Cardiganshire.    |
| Powell'shire              | Radnorshire.      |
| Herefordshire             | Monmouthshire.    |
| Wiltshire                 | Bath.             |
| The West of               | England.          |
| (and over the             | And Wales.)       |
| To Glamorgan              | Cardigan &c.      |
| and the Southern parts of | Wales.            |
| Ireland.                  |                   |

Every Evening at 5 o'clock.

PRIVATE ROAD-SIDE LETTER BOXES IN RURAL DISTRICTS

The following circular, dated September 1908, from the Surveyor has been kindly sent by Harold Wilson who came across it in a ledger from Alferton Post Office.

"With reference to Surveyor's Circular No 207/05 the following rules should be observed in regard to private road-side letter boxes, in use in rural districts for the delivery and collection of letters by rural postmen.

Any arrangement made for (1) the delivery or (2) the collection of letters from a private road-side Letter Box is of the nature of a concession and the privilege may be withdrawn at the discretion of the Postmaster General. Speaking generally it should be observed that the Department is not desirous of extending the use of such boxes.

The Boxes must be placed on or close to the postman's route and when used for collection purposes must not be in the vicinity of a S.O. or a public Letter Box. They must be made secure and kept locked. They should be suitably inscribed and so constructed and placed as to be clearly distinguishable from public Letter Boxes. A key or keys as may be necessary, must be supplied by the owner for the use of the collecting postman. As a rule the collection should be made by rural postmen only and save in exceptional circumstances Mail Cart Drivers should not be required to alight to clear private Letter Boxes.

A fee of 5/- a year, payable in advance on 1st January will be charged for each collection from a private Letter Box irrespective of the number of keys or collectors. No fee will be required if the box is used for a delivery only, unless there is no aperture in the box and a key is necessary. In the latter case a fee of 5/- will be made for each delivery. A combined collection and delivery counting as one service.

In the case of new Boxes the full fees should be charged for collections commenced during the first half of any year, but after 30th June half fees only should be charged for the remainder of the year.

The present rule as regards the collecting postmens' reserved rights in respect of the fees will not be disturbed, but the reserved rights do not extend beyond the fees at present being received by the postmen and any additional fees charged in future should be carried to the Revenue.

Please forward a list of such boxes in your district, the number of (a) deliveries and (b) collections made from each and state by whom the deliveries and collections are made and whether the postmen are required to keep a key."

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## G.B. COVERS

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

**ROGER HUDSON**



P.O. Box 172,  
COVENTRY CV6 6NF

Phone: 0203 686613

TWO EXTRACTS FROM POST 58

Whilst I was using Post 58 Ref. 1, I came across the following two entries which are different from the usual records of appointments contained in that Post series.

"December 24th 1743.

Application having been made to the Postmaster General by the Lord Viscount Gage that the Town of Mitcheldean, in the County of Gloucester, might be made a Branch of this Office, and the same upon a due Consideration, appearing to be improper to be complied with, any otherwise than by way of Tryal, as the profits arising therefrom might not defray the expenses of the same. It is hereby ordered and agreed to by the Board, that the town of Mitcheldean (by way of Tryal) for one year shall be considered as a Post Town, under the Direction & Management of Mr William Nicols our Deputy at Gloucester, upon the following conditions, - viz: That the Inhabitants of that Town & Neighbourhood shall pay to the said Deputy at Gloucester one penny for every letter, over and above the ordinary & usual rate of Postage, and also that the said Deputy shall be allowed by this Office an additional Salary of Five Pounds p annum to commence from the 25th instant."

It does not seem that the use of the term "Post Town" was warranted since it appears that Mitcheldean did not have a postmaster, and the inhabitants were being asked to pay above the General Post rates. It is not clear if the extra pence were to go to the Revenue or to form part of the postmaster's perquisites. Can the Gloucestershire members say if this trial resulted in a permanent official establishment at Mitcheldean?

The second extract, dated 10th March 1742, is on the taxing of letters.

"Whereas the Letters that pass through this Office are sometimes charged too high, in injury to the Subject, but more frequently too low in prejudice of his Majesty's Post Office Revenue, which Errors are conceived to arise from the tax being sett in the hurry of business, late at night, and by the judgement of a Single Officer only, without such Inspection, Cheque or Control, as might prevent and rectify the same. For remedy thereof in future, it is Order'd and Directed that all Letters outwards shall before taxing undergo a double inspection, in manner following.

As soon and as fast as Letters are brought in & stamp'd, a sufficient number of Officers well experienced in taxing Letters, shall before the same are sorted out, examine what tax ought to be sett on each Letter, and writing thereon the initial Letter of their name with a red pencil, add also such other mark as shall be understood by the Taxers at the Road Stations to denote what tax they are to charge, whether Single, Double, Treble or Quadruple, which marks they shall govern themselves by and make the Charge accordingly, unless they observe any Errors in the said directing Marks, which they are to account it a part of their Duty to examine, and when such are found, whether they be of under or over marks, They shall bring the same to the Comptroller or his Deputy to be rectified, that he may see and know through whose Default or Carelessness such Errors are from time to time committed. And the Comptroller and his Deputy are to see that this Order be constantly & punctually complied with; and in Case by the Letters thus passing in future, under a double observation and Cheque, before the final taxing, they apprehend such loss of time, as may retard the dispatch of the Mails to any inconvenient degree, they are to consider what further means or assistance may be wanting to accelerate the Dispatch, and prevent such Inconvenience that proper orders may be given for that purpose if necessary.

And it is further order'd that the several Deputies in the Country be informed of the use & intent of the red pencil marks aforesaid, and that when they at any time find any Letters taxed higher or lower than such mark imports, they are required forthwith to inform the Board thereof, and to whom such Letters so wrong taxed are directed."

Do any members have in their collections any covers showing such red pencil marks? I wonder for how long this system lasted, if indeed it ever came into being.

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# THE BUSINESS OF BRIBERY

by John Calladine

Mr Tillcock of Cheshunt was "accustomed to business" and he told Sir Francis Freeling as much. Apparently the postmistress of that place, a Mrs Moore, had died early in 1827 and Mr Tillcock fancied himself as a suitable candidate to fill the vacancy. "I flatter myself", he wrote, "that upon enquiry I should be found eminently qualified for the situation." Clearly he was prepared to devote himself to the self-proposed appointment for he added that he was "living now upon a small independency" and was "wishing for something to occupy my time and make a small addition to my income without the risk of a speculative concern."

Mr Tillcock might be accustomed to business but he was "at a loss to know to whom an application should be made or to whose influence or interest" he must be indebted. However he clearly knew how the cogs of such a matter were to be oiled. If Sir Francis or the Postmaster General were in positions of influence, they too would know something of business procedure. "If I could succeed", he continued blithely, "I should feel extremely grateful and, if they would accept the compliment of One Hundred Pounds for any trouble that they had taken, it should be very much at their service (and the most implicit confidence might be relied on)."

Alas, he had picked the wrong man. The very next day, Freeling informed the Postmaster General, Lord Frederick Montagu, that he had received an improper letter offering a "Compliment of £100." Ought not Mr Tillcock to be prosecuted, he asked? The PMG probably knew more about the ways of business than Sir Francis. "This is a very offensive proposal", he replied, and "Mr Tillcock (sic) should at least be informed that he is liable to a penalty for making such an offer." Mr Tillcock thus survived to try his hand on others better accustomed to the business methods of the day.

Post 42/80/1827

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SORTING AT THE INLAND OFFICE

I am indebted to Harold Wilson for sending a copy of a minute which describes in detail the method of sorting used in the Inland Office and proposes an alternative method (Post 35/1449/1856). The minute begins by pointing out the importance of making the operations of the Post Office as simple as possible, and then drawing attention to the complicated system of sorting. It goes on:

"Taking the Inland Night Mails from London for the purpose of illustration, the system under which letters are now sorted for dispatch is as follows:-

After passing through the hands of the stampers, the letters are first divided into what are technically called "divisions", - that is to say the letters are sorted according to the different railways by which they will be dispatched, - these railways being the North Western, Midland, Eastern Counties, South Eastern, South Western and Great Western. Scotch and Irish letters, however, are sorted to "Scotland" and "Ireland" respectively, and those for a few large towns, such as Birmingham, Manchester and Liverpool are sorted at once to those towns.

The second operation consists of sub-dividing each of these "divisions" into "roads". As regards the English divisions, the South Western, which has the smallest number, is divided into six "roads", and the North Western, which has the largest, into as many as fifteen; the total number of "roads" for England and Wales being fifty seven.

The third operation is to sort the letters of each "road" to the different post towns, and when this is completed the letters are put into the bags for dispatch.

To give an illustration of the present system, a letter for St Asaph would, by the first operation, be sorted to the North Western division; by the second, it would be sorted to the Chester road, and by the third to Rhyl to which town St Asaph is a sub-office.

From the foregoing description your Grace will perceive that considerable practice and great technical knowledge must be necessary before a person can sort for the first or second stage with rapidity and accuracy on the present system. A perfect knowledge of the positions of the respective post towns in England and Wales (though no doubt of great assistance) would not enable a person to accomplish this sorting with accuracy as it frequently happens that for the convenience of the Department the mail for a particular town is sent by a circuitous course. As an example, I may state that the mail for Tewkesbury is conveyed by the London and North Western Railway, and the letters are consequently sorted to the North western division. In like manner, letters for Grantham are put in the Midland Counties division, as there is no night mail from London over the Great Northern Railway; and many other similar cases could be provided if necessary. The second or Road sorting of course presents similar difficulties to those met with in the first process, though perhaps not to so great an extent.

Another evil that results from the present system is that this knowledge when acquired is of but temporary value, as on account of alterations in the routes of some mails, either the division or road sorting has, from time to time to be altered.

If further illustration of the complexity of the present system were necessary, I might mention that the sorting for the Day Mails, in many instances, varies from that for the Night Mails, on account of the different routes which the Day Mails take."

The minute then goes on to outline a possible method in which the initial sorting would be by the initial letter of the post town, and the second operation would be to sort the letters to their post towns. The bags which had to be

# MIDLAND RAILWAY.

## 1st DIVISION.

Ashbourne  
Alfreton  
Bakewell  
Barnsley  
Belper  
Chesterfield  
Dewsbury  
Loughborough  
Mansfield  
Matlock  
Melton Mowbray  
Normanton  
Oakham  
Rotherham  
Southwell  
Uppingham  
Wirksworth  
Worksop

## 2nd DIVISION.

Bawtry  
Doncaster  
Gainsborough  
Grantham  
Harrogate  
Keighley  
Knaresborough  
Newark  
Otley  
Pontefract  
Retford  
Ripley  
Ripon  
Skipton

## 3rd DIVISION.

Barton-on-Humber  
Bedale  
Beverley  
Brough  
Catterick  
Driffield  
Easingwold  
Ferry Hill  
Hartlepool  
Hartlepool, West  
Howden  
Malton  
Milford Junction  
Northallerton  
Richmond  
Selby  
Tadcaster  
Thirsk  
Whitby

## 4th DIVISION.

Acklington  
Alnwick  
Belford  
Chathill  
Durham  
Fence Houses  
Gateshead  
Hexham  
Middlesbrough  
Morpeth  
Redcar  
Shields, North  
Shields, South  
Stockton  
Yarm

## 2nd Road.

Bradford  
Halifax  
Huddersfield  
Leeds  
York

## 3rd Road.

Darlington  
Hull  
Newcastle-on-Tyne  
Scarborough  
Sunderland

## 4th Road.

Derby  
Leicester  
Nottingham  
Sheffield  
Wakefield

Reproduced on the next page is the North Western sorting list of July 1854. Note there are only fourteen roads. Below is a Midland list which apparently is from 1858. To add to the confusion the 1st Road has been divided into divisions. Permission was given for this to be tried experimentally at Edinburgh.

# NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY.

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>AYLESBURY.</b><br>Amptbill<br>Aylesbury<br>Bedford<br>Berkhempsstead<br>Bletchley<br>H. Hempstead<br>Rickmansworth<br>St. Albans<br>Ting<br>Watford<br>Woburn                                                          | <b>WARWICK.</b><br>Coventry<br>Daventry<br>Kenilworth<br>Leamington<br>Lutterworth<br>Rugby<br>Towcester<br>Warwick<br>Weedon                                                                                                     | <b>BIRMINGHAM.</b><br>Birmingham<br>Dudley<br>Shipstone-on-Stour<br>Stratford-on-Avon<br>Tipton<br>West Bromwich                                                                                                  | <b>BUCKINGHAM.</b><br>Banbury<br>Bicester<br>Brackley<br>Buckingham<br>Dunstable<br>Leighton Buzzard<br>Luton<br>Newport Pagnel<br>Stoncy Stratford<br>Winslow |
| <b>WORCESTER.</b><br>Bewdley<br>Brierly Hill<br>Bromsgrove<br>Droitwich<br>Great Malvern<br>Kidderminster<br>Pershore<br>Stourbridge<br>Stourport<br>Tewkesbury<br>Worcester                                              | <b>STAFFORD.</b><br>Atherstone<br>Eccleshall<br>Hinckley<br>Leek<br>Market Drayton<br>Newcastle-under-Lyne<br>Nuneaton<br>Rugeley<br>Stafford<br>Stone<br>Tarporley                                                               | <b>SHREWSBURY.</b><br>Aberystwith<br>Bridgenorth<br>Ellesmere<br>Leominster<br>Ludlow<br>Newtown<br>Newport, Salop<br>Oswestry<br>Shiffnall<br>Shrewsbury<br>Tenbury<br>Welchpool<br>Wellington, Salop            | <b>WOLVERHAMPTON.</b><br>Ashby-de-la-Zouch<br>Bilstone<br>Burton-on-Trent<br>Lichfield<br>Tamworth<br>Walsall<br>Wednesbury<br>Wolverhampton                   |
| <b>CHESTER.</b><br>Bangor<br>Carnarvon<br>Chester<br>Conway<br>Corwen<br>Flint<br>Holyhead<br>Holywell<br>Pwllheli<br>Rhyl<br>Ruabon<br>Wrexham                                                                           | <b>WARRINGTON.</b><br>Birkenhead<br>Congleton<br>Crew<br>Knutsford<br>Macclesfield<br>Middlewich<br>Nantwich<br>Northwich<br>Prescott<br>Preston Brook<br>St. Helens<br>Sandbach<br>Stockport<br>Warrington<br>Whitechurch, Salop | <b>LANCASTER.</b><br>Ashton-under-Lyne<br>Bury, Lancashire<br>Bolton<br>Chorley<br>Garstang<br>Isle of Man<br>Lancaster<br>Oldham<br>Ormskirk<br>Preston<br>Rochdale<br>Settle<br>Southport<br>Todmorden<br>Wigan |                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>CARLISLE.</b><br>Accrington<br>Blackburn<br>Burnley<br>Burton, W.<br>Carlisle<br>Cockermouth<br>Colne<br>Kendal<br>Maryport<br>Milnthorpe<br>Penrith<br>Ulverstone<br>Whitehaven<br>Wigton<br>Windermere<br>Workington | <b>NORTHAMPTON.</b><br>Caistor<br>Higham Ferrars<br>Kettering<br>Lincoln<br>Market Raisen<br>Market Harborough<br>Northampton<br>Oundle<br>Peterborough<br>Thrapstone<br>Wellingborough<br>Wragby                                 | <b>BOSTON.</b><br>Alford<br>Barton-on-Humber<br>Boston<br>Bourne<br>Folkingham<br>Grimsby<br>Horncastle<br>Louth<br>Market Deeping<br>Sleaford<br>Spilsby<br>Stamford<br>Ulceby<br>Wandsford                      |                                                                                                                                                                |

THE PEOVER PAPERS  
AND THE MIDLAND COUNTIES

From the work of Dr. J.W.M. Stone, M.B.

Part eight

C51 13MAY75 Vol Two, p550. Roger Whitley asks Mr Cranke at Birmingham to let him know how far Bewdley is from Ludlow and how long the letters have gone that way; also the stages, letter-offices & distances in his branch.

Bg25 13MAY75 Vol Two, p552. To Mr Phillpotts at Hereford saying that he desires to establish the stage to Hay, but not to pay so dear for it as he proposes. The usual rate (for thrice a week) is 20s (yearly per mile), and this they call the Derby rate (that road being settled at that rate or under). In part of his salary he reckoned the bye-letters at 9, and will pay him 5 more. RW is sorry to hear that he keeps the Saturday letters till the Tuesday before he sends them to Leinster (Leominster?); though he is obliged to ride there but twice a week, and Ludlow being but 7 miles further, he might well perform the whole thrice a week for [£?] 10 which is more than the Derby rate (which is the rule of this office).

Bg26 25MAY75 Vol Two, p561. Another letter to Mr Phillpotts asking what he will take to manage the stage to Hay twice a week (to bring the mails they send on Tuesday & Saturday) and fetch thence the Pembroke bags to send to this office. He will give him 6 salary besides all the bye-letters.

Bg27 10JUN75 Vol Two, p571. Further to Mr Phillpotts offering him 8 p.a. salary (besides the bye-letters) to carry twice a week to & from Hay, where he must take care to settle the office. As to the Ludlow proposal he must send and fetch thence thrice a week; he is to let RW know his lowest demand, and not forget he is already obliged to send twice a week to Lemster which is more than half the way. By the time RW has his answer it will be ripe for a resolution which RW is not yet by reason that place is now served another way; as for the Hay stage RW is resolved on the point and if he refuses it on these terms RW must employ another.

C52 29JUN75 Vol Two, p588. To Mr Rathbone at Lichfield complaining that he seems to excuse the vile cheat so often practised in his stage. It is evidently committed by those he entrusts so the blame must lie at his door. He must expect from him such satisfaction as the nature of the business requires.

Bg28 30JUN75 Vol Two, p593. Yet another letter to Mr Phillpotts saying that he has complaints from persons of credit that the letters are not safe in his hands; they do not directly accuse him but allege, his office being kept in the prison, it gives opportunities to prisoners by continuance with some of his servants to intercept "Letters of Businesses witts writeings" whereby the parties are much damnified and the office scandalised. Speedy remedy may be used by removing his office (not being for its reputation being kept in a prison) as by his agent. He must exact care hereafter. He is to let RW know how often he sends to Preston [Presteign?], how far Knighton is from it, and how those parts may be better & quicker served.

N6 1JUL75 Vol Two, p594. He informs Mr Hawdon at Tuxford that he shall have a bill for his salary upon Newark according to his desires.

C53 1JUL75 Vol Two, p595. To Mr Rathbone at Lichfield who has written that he has imprisoned his man for the grand abuse he committed; as to punishment he may consult his judgement, being supreme in the post office at Lichfield. RW has nothing to do with anyone but him, who is liable for the misdemeanours of his servants.

C54 3JUL75 Vol Two, p595. He writes to Mr Barber at Stafford saying that Mr John Kennerley of Middlewich complains of Peter Hodgkinson, Mr Barber's agent at Brereton Greene, who refuses delivery of his letters unless he pay him " a penny extraordinary notwithstanding he constantly sends for them, I cannot say, that he hath Authority from you to exact thus upon the Countrey", but requires Mr Barber to redress this intolerable grievance.

C55 3JUL75 Vol One, p456. He writes to Mr Kennerley saying that he is troubled that Hodgkinson is so injurious to him; he has no deputation or immediate dependence on RW, but is employed by Barber of Stone who manages that branch. He will write to Mr Barber about it.

Bg29 13JUL75 Vol Two, p606. Yet again to Mr Phillpotts saying that he finds by Mr Webley of Gloucester that Mr Phillpott has stopped Mr Webley's hands as to bye-letters, pretending that he has agreed for them, yet sends not up his contract. Pray let it be dispatched without delay.

C56 17JUL75 Vol Two, p613. He tells Mr Shelvoke at Shrewsbury that he cannot be guilty of so unhandsome a thought as to esteem him faulty in charging the letter RW's son sent (and franked) to Mr Charles Jones at Poole [Welshpool?], for Mr Crank [of Birmingham] remembers the letter and sent it frank from him. Pray enquire into it as RW cannot pass it by; those that will use RW so in his own letters will do much worse to others. Not only Ld. Powis makes complaints (and with too much cause), but many others in those parts. He thanks him for his proposal of improvement to the office by changing the road from Poole to Machentleth; pray inform which way he now goes, also what branches besides Poole belong to his office and what salary Crank gives him, what is performed by horse and what by foot posts, with all the duty of his stage.

C57 29JUL75 Vol Two, p624. He informs Mr Cranke that he is solicited to send Machentleth letters by Montgomery, Newtowne & Llanmidles, which RW is confident will be the more commodious way there being several considerable towns in this road, where as there is only Poole in the other. They must conclude the change will augment the charge, but consideration of the profit which the other towns will usher in will facilitate the increase of salary which is to be made. He desires his opinion and assistance to settle it.

C58 5AUG75 Vol Two, p628. He tells Mr Shelvoke that he has the business under consideration and intends ere long to settle it. He has had no satisfaction concerning the charging of his son's letter to Poole; pray do it first post and, if he has more to add about the settlement of the new road to Machentleth, communicate it.

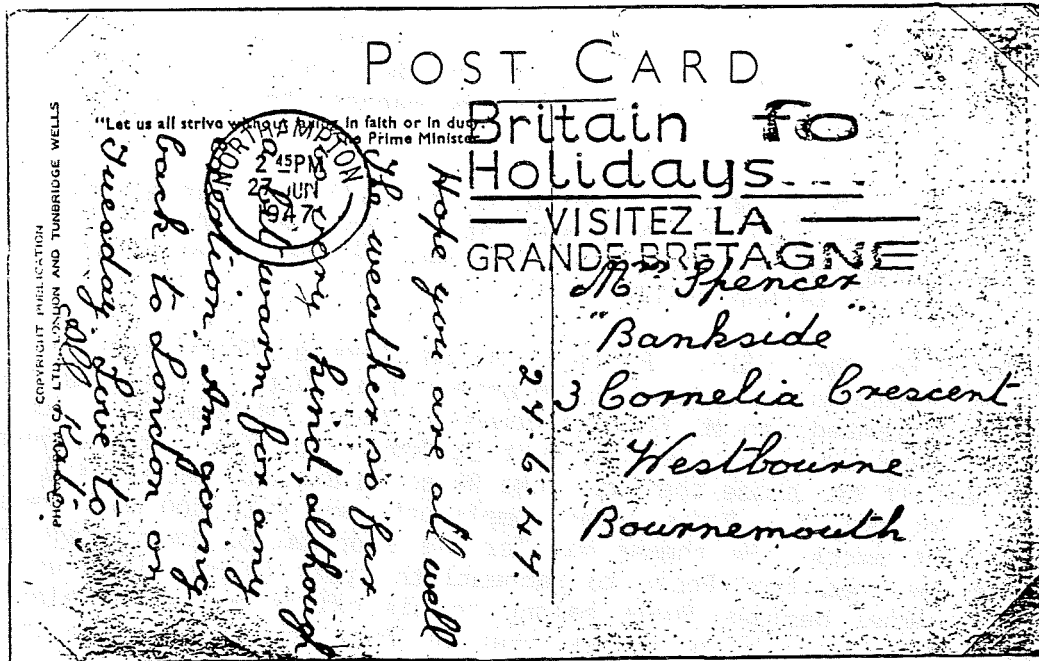
C59 5AUG75 Vol Two, p628. To Mr Cranke. Although there is weight in his arguments both as to the little correspondence of Wales, and the carriers bringing "their" letters to Shrewsbury, yet he is not convinced but the carrying the road by Montgomery &c. must turn to account; the reason "they" write so few letters is because their conveyance is so slow by the carriers and also chargeable, but if they heard a horse pass two or three times a week by the doors it would put them in mind of writing, especially when they find quick despatch and the charge of the carrier taken off. Consider to try it for six months.

Bg30 12AUG75 Vol Two, p631. He informs Mr Webley at Gloucester that Mr Phillpotts has executed his contract for the bye-letters.

(to be continued)

TAILPIECE

The holiday season is an appropriate time to show a card sent by Derek Smeathers. Slogans returned to general use soon after WWII - usually to advertise Britain's good points at a time of economic difficulties. Here, holidays are advertised at Northampton - in French!!

THE NEXT MIDLAND MAIL

It is hoped that this will appear shortly after the October meeting. The promised articles on mileage marks and the postal history of a Midland town should appear in it. The rest depends on the contributions sent to:  
John Soer, 51d Barkham Road, Wokingham, Berkshire RG11 2RG.

**G.B. POSTAL HISTORY**

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

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