

MIDLAND (G.B.) POSTAL HISTORY SOCIETY



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BULLETIN NO. 16 JANUARY 80

Editorial

Change of Meeting Place in Birmingham

If you fully digest information in the Bulletin - you will be aware that our next meeting to be held on Saturday 19th January commencing at 2 pm will take place at a different place.

Details are : Dr. JOHNSON HOUSE in BULL ST BIRMINGHAM
this House is next to Lewis's Store between Colmore Circus and Corporation Street. Bull Street is a pedestrian precinct and there is a large Public Car Park adjoining Colmore Circus.

New Street Railway Station is not far away in Corporation Street.

Details of Next Meeting (see above)

It is proposed that apart from nine sheets from members (restricted) a Study Group will be formed to list the various DUPLEX postmarks used in the Midlands. Our Secretary has prepared blank schedules which will be made available to members who have not yet received their copies. Will members co-operate by submitting those lists they already have and other members bringing along nine sheets for display. Thank you. Your support is requested in this endeavour.

SOCIETY AUCTION *****

This will take place on 29th March at the same time as our Annual General Meeting. It is hoped that a list of items for sale will be issued with the next Bulletin. To achieve this members are asked to bring along LIST only of items they wish to submit in the Auction to the January meeting. Otherwise please post your LIST to Jon Baker, 13 Station Road, Hinckley, Leics. by February 1st at the latest. Please make the effort to submit something in the Auction - already have some interesting items for sale - but more are required to make it worth while.

PROGRAMME FOR REMAINDER OF SEASON

- 19th January = Society Meeting (see above)
- 23rd February = As Above at Dr. Johnson House, Bull Street, Birmingham. Details to be issued.
- 29th March = AGM and Auction. Dr. Johnson House, Bull St Birmingham. Details to be issued
- 19th April = Special Meeting. Details to be issued

Please note that the February meeting will be ANNUAL COMPETITION for the best nine sheets of GB Postal History material - winner will receive the Shield and submission to Annual Exhibition of the Midland Philatelic Federation.

*consist of
duplex
only*

Report of November Society Meeting.

Our second meeting of the 1979-80 season was held at Coventry on the 17th November in conjunction with their Annual Fair and was very well attended. Eleven members brought material to display commencing with Mr. C.W.E. Coles who showed some of his Island Postmarks, including St. Kilda, Holy Island, Sark, Tresco and Kirkwall, all which can be very difficult to find. Each item was matched with a picture postcard of the appropriate island.

Mr. P. Sharp followed with an assortment of Penny and Twopenny posts from various places commencing with early Government type Dockwra marks.

We were then entertained by Mr. J. Baker, who showed early Hinckley and district Postal history including a 1768 Cross Post letter from Hinckley to Kidderminster, with a large two line Coventry. Mr. Chester informed us that this would have been carried from Hinckley to Coventry by foot, a distance of approximately 13 miles.

Mr. Chester followed with a display of the Postal history of Warwick beginning with a 1791 straight line handstamp and finishing with a Missent to Warwick and a handstruck 1 of the Warwick Penny Post.

Mr. H. Norvell concluded the first five displays with nine sheets of the Penny Posts of Coventry, comprising the three types used in conjunction with various local receiving office numbers, namely :-

No.2 - Kenilworth; No.3 - Bedworth; No.4 - Allesley;
No.5 - Brinklow; No.6 - Stonebridge; No.7 - Foleshill and
No.8 - Brinklow.

The penultimate mark (No.7) is unrecorded by Oxley and the item shown to us may be the only one known. Mr. Norvell concluded his display with an interesting summary of the History of the Coventry Penny Post.

After members had viewed the above displays Mr. P. Farman showed the transition of some of the village postmarks of Derbyshire, Staffordshire and Leicestershire from duplex to small single rings some of which he had found very difficult to find.

Mr. J. Calladine followed with a selection of nine unusual cancellations including an envelope with the adhesive cancelled by a very large 'W' of the West London district, a Woodford Green duplex with the numeral 53, which was already in use at Bath (the number was subsequently changed to F.23), a Reading 'Biscuit', a Rugby Shoe, Pearson Hill and Hoster experimental machine cancellations, and an 1898 London Flag cancellation which was only in use for four days, full details of this last item can be found in Mr. Calladine's article in the November 1977 Bulletin.

Mr. G. Parker began his display by saying that he had brought items out of his junk box. The display turned out to be a nice selection of Birmingham items including a Birmingham Paid 1d circular handstamp in red on a Q.V. mourning cover and a letter sheet bearing a Birmingham horseshoe of 1798 together with a Bishop mark having an 'A' outside the circle that was only in use for a month. A pity we have not all got 'junk boxes' containing such material !

After a further break for viewing Mr. D. Keen showed part of his collection of postcards of some of the more unusual views of Birmingham, each matched with a postmark of the appropriate road or district. He also brought some early Birmingham covers to show differing rates for the same mileage before and after postal rates were revised at various times.

The afternoon concluded with a display of 18th Century single and two line handstamps of various Black Country, Worcestershire and Herefordshire towns given by Mr. & Mrs. E. Lewis.

Several members present commented on the quality of the material that had been shown throughout the afternoon and how fortunate they were to have seen such a wide variety of interesting material.

Report of December Society Meeting.

The venue for our December meeting was the Bass Museum at Burton on Trent. Several members met during the morning and were taken on a most interesting tour of the museum by our Secretary, Richard Farman, who explained to us the establishment of the brewery trade at Burton and showed us the various processes employed in the past in the making of beer. After an enjoyable lunch together, at the museum, we were joined by other members, who had been unable to get along earlier, and gathered in one of the museum's private rooms where our afternoon meeting was held.

In place of our normal procedure of most members bringing along nine sheets we were entertained on this occasion with two displays, thus enabling us to have a deeper insight into two particular aspects of Postal History.

The first display was given by Mr. Richard Farman, with a specialised study of the Postal History of his own town, Burton on Trent. He commenced with an Ogilby road map showing the Burton post roads of the late 17th and early 18th centuries and outlined the establishment of a postal system in and around Burton at that time with examples of the straight line handstamps used throughout the 18th century. We were then shown various mileage marks commencing with the first type used from 1784 showing a mileage from London of 131 miles. This was discontinued in the 1790's and corrected to 132 miles when mileage marks were re-introduced in 1805. The mileage was further reduced to 124 miles in 1816 when new roads were opened up. Mr. Farman concluded the first half of his display with a description and examples of the Burton on Trent Penny Post and the introduction of Undated Circle handstamps. After we had viewed these he continued his display with further examples of undated circles of the various villages and sub-offices in the Burton on Trent postal system including two with the wrong spelling, namely TATTENHILL for TATTENHILL and SWADLINGCOOTE for SWADLINGCOTE. These were followed by various later postal markings such as Spoons and Duplex cancellations, the whole of the display being interspersed with various Missent marks, Inspectors marks, Registered letters etc. including a cover which had passed through Burton having the town name in full, i.e. Burton upon Trent, rather than the normal form of Burton on Trent. This cover had originated in Birmingham and also bore a straight line LADYWOOD sub-office handstamp which attracted the attention of our Birmingham members. Mr. Farman concluded with a unique collection of postal and kindred items appertaining to the Burton on Trent breweries. These included a Bass perfined ld red on cover plus a pair of Samuel Allsopp revenue stamps, the only company to have a combined official receipt and revenue stamp. We also saw a wealth of covers, letter headings, acknowledgements and share certificates from the smaller breweries that eventually joined together to become the Allied Brewery Group, of which Bass is a large part.

After viewing this interesting and unusual material we were treated to an equally magnificent display given to us by our fellow members, Mr. Harold Wilson on the earlier T.P.O. postal markings of England and Wales. Mr. Wilson is a recognised expert on these markings and has written three books upon the subject. He commenced his display by explaining that the T.P.C. service was first introduced on the 24th January 1838 and that the earliest markings known are Missent marks. We were shown a number of these on various covers. By 1844 London Mail handled on the T.P.O. services was being handstamped with circular M.N.R. or E.N.R. markings to distinguish between morning and evening mail. In 1857 district sorting carriages came into use, Day mail being stamped in red and night mail in black. A small star mark was brought into use in 1862 to indicate that the mail had been sorted on the train. This was replaced in 1867 by a larger star which only remained in use for two years.

In 1885 a speed up in Mail services between London and Aberdeen necessitated the introduction of distinguishing marks used in the Sorting Carriages with an index S for those sorted south of Carlisle and N for those sorted north of Carlisle. Mr. Wilson continued to amaze us with such items as circular L.C.R. (Lancaster and Carlisle Railway), Shrewsbury to Tamworth T.P.O. and R.P.O. markings, "Missent to Rugby and Newcastle" and an 1852 "Missent Rugby to Leeds". The first half was concluded with documents connected with the railway including a proposal put to Parliament that the Railway should take over the post office, but this was defeated. It was interesting to note that the proposer on this document was a Mr. Wilson.

After a time for viewing the second half commenced with a cover despatched on a service which began in December 1839 from Paddington to Twyford, on this service the stage coach was loaded on to a low flat wagon, then at Twyford the mail was loaded into G.W.R. Sorting Carriages for distribution throughout the country.

In 1859 the Cornwall Sorting Tender came into service. We were shown markings for this service including the earliest squared circle followed by Plymouth and Exeter night mail tenders and Plymouth to Bristol, which collected mail from the ships arriving from the West Indies and was known as an Ocean Tender.

In 1868 the London to Bristol service introduced a very small mark in an oblong box, this was "LBSC" for the London Bristol Sorting Carriage.

The first Continental mail service was introduced in 1860 with the London to Dover Ostend service and this also included a registered handstamp and had an LDSCD circular postmark.

By 1865 a Portsmouth to Southampton route has been opened mainly for the mail from Osborne House on the Isle of Wight.

The East of England were the last to introduce a Sorting Carriage, this was the London district to Ely and Peterborough.

The above is only a summary of the wealth of material shown to us in this display. In some cases only a very small number, or even a single example is known of the items that we were privileged to see.

Both of our exhibitors intersperced their talks with interesting stories about their display and of how they had acquired various items. It was very fitting that the meeting concluded with a vote of thanks given by no less a person than the 'Father' of our Society, Mr. Steve Stobbs, who expressed our sincere thanks to Mr. Farman and Mr. Wilson for a most interesting and entertaining afternoon. May I take this opportunity to wish every member a very Happy New Year and happy hunting in 1980.

Elizabeth Lewis (Chairman)

THE STRAIGHT LINE NAMESTAMPS OF
STOURBRIDGE

by John Calladine

When the first of the British County Catalogues (Willcocks and Jay) was published in 1978, many of us not involved in its compilation must have been surprised at the rich variety of namestamps originating from a single post town. To take but two examples, the Northampton handstamp in two lines was reported in more than a dozen different forms and sizes and Derby, in a single line, occurred in no fewer than sixteen guises. Perhaps we should take the hint that nothing in postal history is as simple as might appear at first sight !

Those who seek pre-stamp material from the smaller towns rarely have enough examples to be sure what does and does not exist in their own field. Without privileged access to the forthcoming listing of Worcestershire, my own record of the straight line namestamps of Stourbridge might best be described as "puny". However recently, while chasing a quite different thread of postal history in the county archives, I came across a number of early letters that have added at least 100% to my limited knowledge. As one or two members take a tolerant interest in Stourbridge and as the material is likely to be rare, I thought it might be useful to record what has come to light.

From G.P.O. records in London, it is evident that the spelling of STOURBRIDGE or STOWERBRIDGE was interchangeable during the 18th century. Only one two-line namestamp has been found in the latter form but, nevertheless, it has been a considerable surprise to identify no fewer than six different handstamps covering a period of only 26 years from 1758 to 1784. Since Stourbridge had a postmaster in 1686, if not earlier, there must be a good chance that further types prior to that period have yet to be discovered. The dimensions and approximate form of these two-line stamps are as follows:

1758 - 59

STOUR
BRIDGE

25 x 11 mm

1770 1774

STOUR
BRIDGE

38 x 14 mm

1775 - 76

STOUR
BRIDGE

26 x 12 mm

1781 - 82

STOWER
BRIDGE

40 x 17 mm

1783

STOUR
BRIDGE

28 x 15 mm

1784

STOUR
BRIDGE

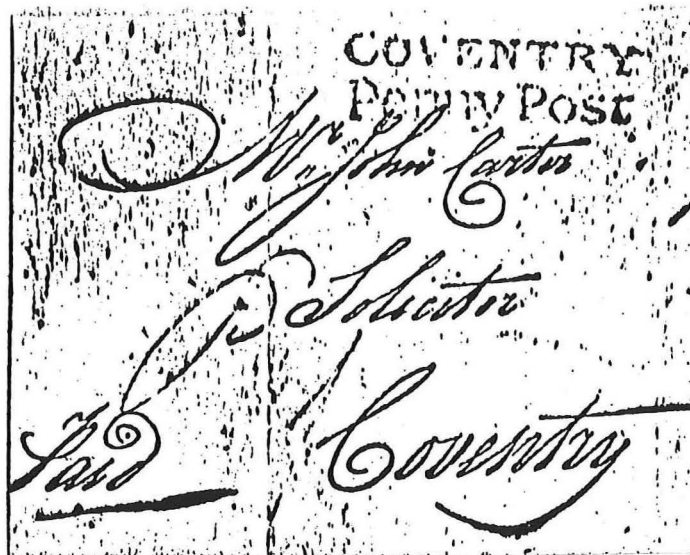
35 x 16 mm

To date I only know of one single-line Stourbridge handstamp. It was used between 1794 and 1799, is 55 x 5 mm in size and, like the other name-stamps, invariably struck in black.

The straight line stamps with mileage pose problems. Willcock's in 'England's Postal History', discusses handstamps with boxed mileage beneath and suggests that, in about 1803, the box surrounding the figures was replaced by a line above and a line below. He further points out that very occasionally there were no lines at all surrounding the mileage figures but that nearly all examples of English frameless straight line mileages can be ascribed to bad cutting or wear. As so few examples are perfectly struck, it is difficult to be sure whether the frame lines are or are not absent. However Stourbridge certainly had three quite different straight line mileage marks and my own example of 1813 with a single line below the mileage is as fine a strike as one could expect to come across. With some diffidence, therefore, I would list the straight line mileage marks as :

1803 - 07	STOURBRIDGE / <u>135</u>	55 x 11 mm
1809	STOURBRIDGE / 135	50 x 11 mm
1813	STOURBRIDGE / <u>135</u>	54 x 12 mm

It only remains to emphasise that this is not the end of the story. County archives contain immense pool of potential material, much of it unexplored for its postal history content. In the meantime I, for one, look forward to further British County Catalogues with inexcusable impatience.



TYPE A

See article on 'The Coventry Penny Post'
by Humphrey Norvill on next page.

THE COVENTRY PENNY POST by Hunphrey Norvill

Under the Penny Post Act of 1765, the Postmasters General were given authority to establish local Penny Posts in any town or district where that policy appeared expedient. In practice, cost effectiveness was the governing factor and by 1801, only Manchester, Bristol, Birmingham and Liverpool had been authorised to establish Penny Posts as they were the only towns where the revenue was likely to cover the expenses of the service.

In 1801, Coventry had a population of 16,034 and its main industry, the silk trade, was in decline because of the Napoleonic War. Nevertheless it was an important post town on the Holyhead Road and the journey from London to Coventry, via St. Albans, Dunstable, Fenny Stratford, Stoney Stratford, Towcester, Daventry and Dunchurch took less than a day. Joseph Soden became Postmaster in 1798 on the resignation of his father. His salary in 1800 was £83. 12s 0d with an additional £96 per annum for Riding Work. He also received an extra £35 p.a. as a Bye and Letter Office Salary. Despite these outgoings, the Coventry Post Office produced a surplus in 1800 of £306, which compared very favourably with the balance of £175 in 1798.

Certainly very little was spent on lavish premises for, in 1800, the Coventry Post Office was one small room in a private house, nearly opposite the King's Head Inn in Smithford Street. In 1810, it was transferred to a similar room about 14 ft square, in a house near the Great Meeting, Smithford Street. Lewen, who wrote a history of Coventry in 1850, stated, 'In both these places, the only convenience afforded to the public for posting letters, or communicating personally with the local Postmaster was through a small pitch-hole, about 12" square, opening into the street, where persons were exposed to the weather at all seasons and considerable annoyance was caused'.

Such, then, was the background of postal affairs in Coventry when, on 25th August 1810, Francis Freeling, Secretary of the Post Office from 1798 to 1836 wrote to the Postmaster General, 'I shall instruct Mr Hodgson into the delivery of letters at Kenilworth, which I know to be a large manufacturing place and which might be made productive to the Revenue under the Penny Post Acts. The new Mail Coach could conveniently carry bags both from Coventry and Warwick and a receiver might be appointed with salary equal to the monthly delivery - on all matters Mr Hodgson will report'. Freeling was a superb administrator, one of the greatest public servants of the Nineteenth Century. Hodgson's report must have been satisfactory, for Freeling, ever mindful of the public purse, authorised the establishment of the Coventry Penny Post in the autumn of 1810, with Receiving Houses at Nuneaton (No. 1) and at Kenilworth (No. 2).

The first general issue of Penny Post handstamps was made in the middle of 1811. The earliest recorded use of a Coventry Penny Post handstamp is of Type A in 1813 (see page No. 6). It is known in black from 1813-1817 and in red from 1818-1823. The black handstamp measures 36 mm x 11 mm, whilst in red it measures 35 mm x 12 mm.

To be Continued

Forthcoming Event : it is hoped to print an interesting article in the next Bulletin on the 'LC' marks of Birmingham.
Other material required - how about it ?

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