

MIDLAND MAIL

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



Chairman:
Elizabeth Lewis
27 Rathbone Road
Smethwick
Warley
West Midlands B67 5JG
Phone 021-429-1222

Treasurer:
Trevor Clewley
127 Queslett Rd East
Streetly
Sutton Coldfield
West Midlands B74 2AJ
Phone 021-353-4491

Secretary:
Richard Farman
131 Henhurst Hill
Burton on Trent
Staffs
DE13 9SY
Phone 0283-66515

Number 42, November 1985

For Richer or Poorer

Readers of the daily financial pages will remember the late Patrick Hutber and particularly the oft-quoted and enjoyed 'Hutber's Law'. In its simplest form, this stated that "better" means "worse" or, to expand it a little to reveal its most frequent manifestation, "a product or service that is improved will invariably be inferior to the product or service it replaces".

If anyone feels that this is English cynicism at its worst, they should recall the saying about the exception proving the rule and make sure they are not confusing one with the other. A gentleman wrote recently in 'Stamp News' about the new improved all-vinyl photo corners that he clearly finds almost impossible to use. Anyone attempting to buy the familiar brown padded envelopes at their High Street stationers will find that they, too, have been improved. Gone is the stout bag, well-padded with old shredded newspapers. In its place is its smart replacement, "padded" with a little bubble plastic that probably took a pint of North Sea oil to produce. With little rigidity and minimal protection of its contents, the improved product costs between 15 and 20% more than the item it replaced.

The Philatelic Bureau will have to be understanding if we worry a little about the new improved computerised service we are about to receive. The last major improvement disposed of the bonus cancelled stamps we were sent as a receipt for our order and eliminated every useful piece of paper leaving us with just one statement a year. Another improvement of that magnitude may leave us without the order for which we have had no receipt. The improved new technology stamp catalogues have produced volumes with print too fine for those with less than perfect vision to read except under an arc lamp. Were we ever asked if these were improvements we wanted?

All this is an unfailing symptom of advancing years and members who admit to incipient senility may be relieved to hear that no major improvements to 'Midland Mail' are planned for the coming year. We will muddle along as we are and leave improvements to the big boys.

Are you reading me?

If you should wonder why you are not reading this because you have no copy of 'Midland Mail' this month, it is because your sub has not been paid and you have been deleted from the mailing list. Please send £3-50 without delay to the Treasurer whose address is at the top of the first page you are missing.

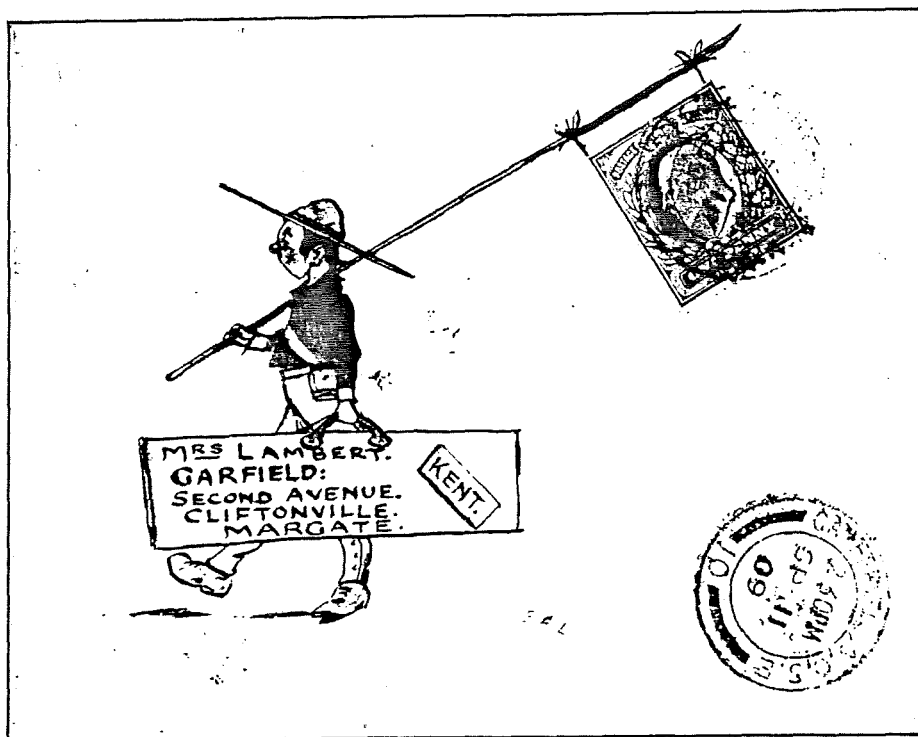
The September Meeting

The new season opened with a particularly interesting selection of nine sheet displays on the theme '1900-1920'. It was surprising how many subjects were found that were legitimately encompassed by that brief period. John Calladine opened the batting with a display of early machine cancels - Hey Dolphin, Bickerdike, Boston, Columbia and Krag - and the short-lived Wilkinson franking machine. Ian May and Peter Sharp, men of Warwickshire, showed respectively a miscellany from Coventry and Leamington Spa, the former replete with single rings, rubbers, slogans and parcel post labels (including one 'on cover'); the latter including variations of the double ring, Krag machine cancels and a card of c1920 that was trapped behind a letter box for 50 years! Ches' contribution was a cameo study of the 1914-18 war. There was a Field Service card, an official envelope, a patriotic embroidered card, a notice of admission to hospital, a discharge note - and more. In complete contrast was Richard Farman's display which he called "All for 1d", following the course of a large black '1d' due mark at Burton-on-Trent over part of its 45 year life. A card a mere 1½mm oversize had attracted the extra payment as had a card with a little glitter on it and another with Shamrock seeds attached. The pedantic pursuit of official regulations appears to have been unparalleled.

Derek Smeathers used a small branch railway line from Wellingborough to Higham Ferrers as his theme. The Rushden RSO provided a rich source of markings and these were backed up with parcel post labels and double ring strikes. Mike Young's selection was from the Worcester area. Noteworthy were a large skeleton mark of Bredonbury, a Post Office security form signed by an office cleaner (no less) in 1908, a couple of smashing photos of the proud postmaster of Inkberrow, a registered letter with a 'M.O.O. & S.B.' cancel and a rare skeleton mark from some unconsidered, minor Midland town. Chris Beaver's Staffordshire "oddments" revolved around the railway at Tamworth. Those of advanced years will remember the high and low level stations where two railways crossed at right angles: these produced both east-west and north-south TPOs for Chris to show us. However he also scored the 'hit of the day' with the Burton-on-Trent telegraphic code, 'BT', in a triangle used on a brewery letter, something the Secretary seemed to place in the 'coveted' class.

John Soer's unusual Leicestershire items included some variations of the 'skeletons', notably 'COALVI LE' with a missing 'L' which was a 'constant variety' because, one presumes, the kit contained insufficient 'L' letters. An inverted 'E' in a skeleton of 1920 was, however, corrected a few months later. Very unusual was the Wigston parcel cancel used on a postcard with a 'Downey head' stamp. Steph Stobbs had some scarce railway material including labels of the Bishops Castle Railway and the Shropshire & Montgomeryshire Railway, the latter used on covers primarily associated with the important Nescliffe depot. Eric Lewis' display was noteworthy for its entertainment value because it included a wonderful range of 'mechanical' postcards which were operated for all to see. He also showed a 1908 Post Office booklet with a cartoon predicting that, by 1958, post offices would be run by robots! (Perhaps if they had not burdened themselves with motor licences and pensions, they would have been.) Finally, Elizabeth suffered the Chairman's burden of batting last and conjured up a fine selection of privately produced postcards, hand-painted envelopes and unlikely items epitomised by a card on wood veneer to give us a worthy finale.

There was a bonus because Frank Peach had a large selection of the Birmingham double ring marks described in 'Midland Mail' No. 40 and could add a little, even to Eric's comprehensive knowledge of them. It had been a thoroughly worthwhile afternoon and an opening attendance of 17 members augured well for the rest of the season. It seems that we never get around to illustrating any of the items shown in the nine sheet displays but this time we can include one of the delightful illustrated envelopes included in Elizabeth's pages.



The November 2nd Meeting

Approximately 50 people gathered at Shrewsbury on 2nd November for a joint meeting of the Welsh Philatelic, Shropshire Postal History and Midland (GB) Postal History Societies hosted by the Shropshire Postal History Society. During the morning the meeting was entertained with three displays given by a member of each society. The displays were based on the member's particular chosen area and included a wealth of local posts and a number of fascinating stories relating to them.

Michael Scott-Archer, representing the Welsh PS, showed 'Oswestry' commencing with a free letter of 1710 endorsed 'Frank' which attracted the keen attention of a certain visitor of similar name. Later items included an 1881 GWR 'parcel letter' to Llangollen with the appropriate parcel label on the back, a reminder of the days before 1891 when the Post Office would only permit letters to be carried by the railways when tied with string as parcels. There was a huge envelope posted to the town clerk at Montgomery, endorsed 'To be forwarded by mail cart from station', bearing 2½d in postage (a 6oz letter) and a 2d Cambrian Railway stamp.

Our own society was represented by the Secretary, Richard Farman, who described and illustrated various Staffordshire local posts and amused us with a photograph of Stapenhill post office replete with decorations for the Coronation of Edward VII. The post office formed part of a plumbers' merchant's shop whose double front had a full-length canopy on which were placed no less than eleven water closets. (Who said this was to indicate that the King was now on the throne?) A later picture of the same post office, with a rebuilt facade, had the canopy removed!

For the Shropshire PHS, Brian Atkins took us on a local tour of Wem, a sub-office of Shrewsbury whose first recorded postmark of 1811 was shown. Amongst other items was an 1823 bill for the carriage of letters recorded by the postmaster of Wem to Sir Noel Hill and photographs of two 1857 and 1859 wall post boxes at Yerton Heath and Martan, both evidently still in position. The earlier of the two was of the type without a hood which, after complaints of water in the box, was redesigned in the form of the later one.

After lunch, an afternoon's entertainment was provided by the visiting speaker, Mrs Vivien Sussex. Her subject was "Norwich - postal history as seen through the eyes of a city", a subject she has obviously studied in great depth, not only from the point of view of its postal history but also its social and other history. This was reflected in her display which covered over four hundred years, commencing with a letter of 1561 from the Queen's Messenger to a King's soldier and continuing through to modern postal sorting, Norwich being one of the few towns chosen for the experimental sorting and coding machines over the past quarter of a century or so. The 1561 letter is believed to be the earliest postal item known for Norwich and Vivien was obviously pleased to be able to say that it had been given to her as a Christmas present.

It is difficult to pick out a few items from the vast range and variety shown, each item a gem in its own way. Perhaps it will suffice to say that we saw such things as 16th century Norwich Merchants Posts, mail coach notices, early local newspapers with appropriate tax stamps, a 1668 letter endorsed 'Paid the post 2d to London' to which the Post Office had added 'forwarded 2d', and two Norwich Christmas Cross postmarks which were so clear that they could be seen by your reporter the full length of the room distant. Of particular interest to the ladies present was an envelope inscribed 'Norwich Rose', itself delightfully illustrated, and containing a rose-shaped enclosure, folded into eight sections, which opened to reveal scenes of the city on both sides of each segment.

Many new friends were made during the day among members of the three societies and thanks were expressed to Mrs Sheila Hart for organising the meeting. The Editor is grateful to Eric and Elizabeth for providing a report in his enforced absence.

Forthcoming Meetings

We now have two meetings in quick succession to look forward to. The first is on Saturday 30th November at 2pm at The Birmingham and Midland Institute, Margaret Street, and this has been arranged to coincide with the Birmingham Philatelic Society's Annual Stamp Fair & Exhibition. There will be a dozen or more dealers present including our own Roger Hudson and others (also) with good stocks of postal history material. The display will be by Eric and Elizabeth Lewis and they have given it the title 'A Village by the River Rea'. Knowing what we have glimpsed before, we can confidently anticipate a full-scale treat.

The very popular annual visit to The Bass Museum, Burton-on-Trent, has been brought forward (by popular request) to Saturday 14th December. Richard Farman has, once again, been able to arrange a lunch at the Museum and we are offered soup, pie or pastie, gateau and coffee for an all-inclusive price of just £3. If you would like to join the lunch, please assemble at 12.00 for 12.30 (or earlier if you would like some time to see the excellent museum) but, most important, please give Richard your name not later than 7th December. The meeting proper will begin at 2pm and this year's speaker will be Mr Arthur Lloyd, whom many of our members will know or know of, and the topical subject for a Staffordshire location is 'Uttoxeter, Lichfield and Stone'. Last year, this meeting attracted the largest attendance ever at a Society gathering and, who knows, we might beat the record again. Please remember the change of date - it is now 14th December.

The Stourbridge Post Office Centenary

On Saturday 21st December, 100 years to the day after the 'new' main post office at Stourbridge (Worcs) was opened, Lady Cobham will formally re-open the modernised building. To celebrate the centenary, an exhibition is being mounted in the town's new public library from 4th December to 2nd January. The Society has sponsored a postcard illustrating early postmarks and a special handstamp will be in use on 21st December. Postman Pat is lending a hand and champagne will/may flow in the streets.

Bolsover Castle, Derbyshire 1830

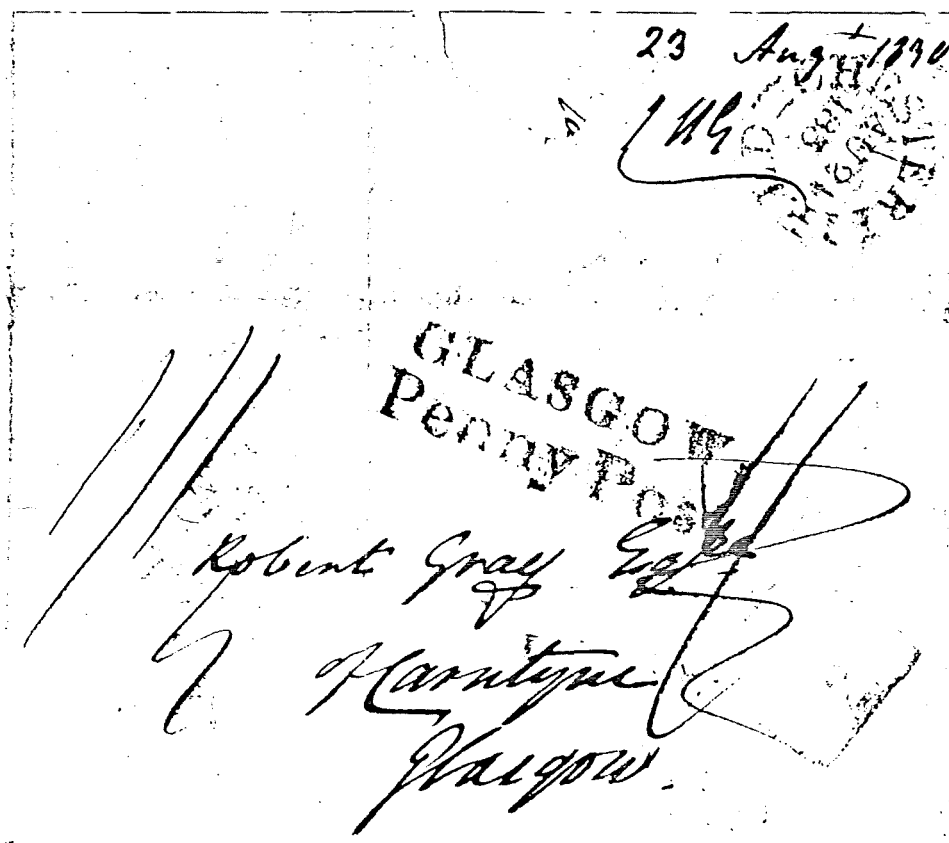
by James Grimwood-Taylor

Under the influence of 'Midland Mail's energetic (?) editor, I take up my pen by way of apologia for recent inactivity in all directions except for that of a somewhat less local publication (appearing fortnightly in all the best newsagents!). I feel sure that 'Midland Mail' is the one place that I can discuss items from my Derbyshire collection without being accused of being parochial, for I assume that most of my fellow-members of the Midland (GB) Postal History Society are county or local collectors such as myself. I am also sure that they will agree that local history often fuses with postal history, and that the inner sheet of a letter is often more interesting than the 'messy postal marks' on the outside. Thus I shall risk describing something a little less "postal" than "history".

The letter in question (illustrated) is dated 23rd August 1830 and is addressed to one "Robert Gray Esqr., of Carntyne, Glasgow". The Derbyshire element of its postal history is confined to a black 'CHESTERFIELD' double arc circular date stamp on the reverse and a manuscript "1/-" charge on the front. The latter was crossed through and replaced by the full "1/1½" manuscript charge in Glasgow (a faint boxed "½" handstamp was applied in transit in Carlisle for the Scottish Additional Mail Tax of ½d but is hard to see), where a fine 'GLASGOW/Penny Post' and a matching CDS were also applied. A nice example of a Midland letter bound for Scotland - NOT that easy to find for smaller towns I can assure you. The postal history more or less ends there but now I turn to the contents and read the heading:

"Bolsover Castle, Monday 23rd August 1830"

A glance at Pigot directories for Derbyshire for 1829 and 1835 shows me that in 1829; "Letters (from Bolsover) are forwarded to Chesterfield by various chance conveyances, but there is no receiving house" whereas in 1835; "Letters arrive from, and are despatched (by foot-post) to CHESTERFIELD, every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday." No Chesterfield Penny Post marks are recorded but it is likely that the "foot-post" mentioned in 1835 was in operation in 1830, and carried this letter, because it did arrive at Chesterfield on a Tuesday ("AU 24/1830" backstamp).



The contents introduce the local history element, and reveal that the writer had just moved in to the vast and largely ruined castle of this north-east Derbyshire village and was endeavouring to furnish it! A recent (1982) guide describes the castle thus: "An extravagant adaptation of the site of a large medieval fortress . . . it was started in 1613 . . . (and) comprises of a romantic keep (1613/16), a residence (1629) . . . (and) a riding school (1634). The residence, known as the 'Little Castle' is (and has been since 1715) the only habitable part" ! In 1830 the castle was owned by the Duke of Portland but he had just managed to let it for the first time; to the newly appointed vicar of Bolsover, the Reverend John Hamilton Gray, the writer of my letter. (The castle was let for over a century to various energetic occupants until 1945 when the Duke of Portland gave it to the Ministry of Works; it is now open to the public and undergoing restoration.)

It seems that the Reverend John Gray, a young Scot with good connections, had secured the living of Bolsover (perhaps on condition that he took on the lease of the old, draughty castle) and that he wrote this letter to his father upon his return to the castle after four months of work to make it fully habitable. It reminds me of my own lesser efforts to make my Derbyshire "castle" habitable and furnished in recent months!

"We arrive here on Saturday evening during a beautiful sunset, in the rays of which Bolsover ruins and tower and terrace looked most imposing, as we ascended the steep hill from Chesterfield . . . Such pleasing impressions . . . were not dispelled by the improvements which we noticed . . . The court is not yet quite finished (at this you will not be much astonished, when you remember the uncommon slowness of the workmen)." An unkind slur this, on the ability of Derbyshire folk. I would suggest the author was a rather impatient man with little understanding of castle-building in limestone! "But it looks remarkably well, and the new Dining Room quite surpassed expectations! Caroline was quite delighted with it, and . . . I think she is now almost as much in love with Bolsover as a place of abode as I am myself! Hitherto she was never able to forget the first impression of filth, discomfort and utter desolation which it exhibited upon our first taking possession of it, when unfurnished, unwashed and dismantled. But in the absence of our four months all these impressions were forgotten, and forgetting all its original disrepair, she is alive to its present appearance . . . My adult school (yesterday) was but poorly attended, though for that I was prepared; indeed during the continuance of Harvest I mean to have no meeting on the week nights . . . The only piece of furniture which our new Dining Room wants is a table . . ."

There is more about father's "rheumatic pains" and a startling new "gown" which Bolsover's "Clerk" is afraid to show to his congregation without some preparation! But the best part of the letter is that which I have quoted; what would any local postal not give for such an account of a crucial insight into the history of any great house in his area. I am now looking for an early letter from every 'great house' in Derbyshire. A difficult but stimulating project'.

* * * * *

Great Britain Postal History

from 1840 to date. County material,

FDCs and the unusual. Send for my latest list.

ROGER HUDSON
36 WEST STREET
WARWICK
CV34 6AN

YET MORE ABOUT MAIL COACHES

by John Soer

I read with interest the item from Vivien Sussex in 'Midland Mail' No.41 about the Yarmouth, Norwich and Birmingham mail coach and, whilst I hesitate to disagree with someone as knowledgeable and charming as Vivien (quite right too - Ed.), I suspect that she made a mistake about the route of the Yarmouth-Birmingham mail coach - see the copy of the 1836 Time Bill overleaf.

This was not the first mail coach from East Anglia to the Midlands as one was introduced on 3rd June 1822 between Yarmouth and Leicester. By the middle of 1823 this coach only operated over the Leicester-Stamford section due to "lack of patronage" in the Eastern Counties. In 1825, it was decided to extend the journey through to Birmingham and dispense with the Leicester-Hinckley-Coventry rides. The purpose of this was not to provide Bedworth with a penny post but to expedite the correspondence of Leicester Hinckley and Coventry with Manchester and Liverpool. Also, it was possible to save one day in correspondence from Leamington and Warwick to Manchester etc by bringing forward the departure of the mail to Coventry from 3pm to 1pm.

The Birmingham-Yarmouth mail coach ran for the first time on 6th July 1835: it used a different route east of Melton Mowbray, running through Grantham where it connected with the Glasgow and Edinburgh mails. (The importance of the Grantham office at the time is worth an article in itself.)

In 1842 the coach was replaced between Birmingham and Leicester by the use of the railway via Rugby. Finally, it was discontinued on 5th April 1846, although a mail coach ran between Melton Mowbray and Grantham until 1851.

My immediate reaction on seeing the illustration of Vivien's letter of 1837 was the letter had been routed through London since the 9d rate had been altered to 11d (see John Harrison's article in 'Postal History' 233). The charges are appropriate for the distances if the penny post charge is included but the letter should have shown a mark applied in London. Possibly the mis-sending was due to carelessness in the Newmarket office.



**LEICESTER, NORWICH, AND YARMOUTH
ROYAL MAIL.**

C. S. PETTIFER

BEGS most respectfully to announce to the public that he has contracted with his Majesty's Postmaster General, for a New **PATENT MAIL COACH**, direct from Leicester to Yarmouth, daily, and which will leave his Office, **STAG AND PHEASANT INN**, on Monday next, at half past 2 o'clock in the afternoon, through Melton, Oakham, Stamford, Peterboro, Wisbech, Lynn, Swaffham, and Norwich, and arrive at Hogarth's Hotel, Yarmouth, by 10 o'clock the following morning, returns from thence every afternoon at 3 o'clock.

COACHES daily from the above Office, to and from London, Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds, York, Hull, Sheffield, Nottingham, Lincoln, Cambridge, Birmingham, Coventry, Warwick, Leamington, Cheltenham, Bath, Bristol, Exeter, Shrewsbury, Plymouth, and every principal town in the kingdom.

Performed by
C. S. Pettifer, and Co.

Who is not only determined to make the above Coaches desirable modes of conveyance in point of expedition, but to insure patronage and support, by every possible attention to the personal comfort and convenience of Passengers.

N. B. The Proprietors of the above Coaches will not be accountable for any Parcel or Package whatever, above the value of Five Pounds, unless entered as such, and paid for accordingly.

General Coach Office, Stamford.
Pheasant Inn, Leicester, May 30.

LEICESTER JOURNAL
7 JUNE 1822

Turning to Chris Beaver's article on 'Mail Coaches from London', the timing of the Leeds, Nottingham, Oakham, London mail coach was altered in 1820 to "expedite all



Birmingham, Grantham, Norwich, and Yarmouth TIME BILL.

The Time of working each Stage is to be reckoned from the Coach's Arrival, and as any Time lost is to be recovered in the course of the Stage, it is the Coachman's Duty to be as expeditious as possible, and to report the Horse-keepers if they are not always ready when the Coach arrives, and active in getting it off'. The Guard is to give his best assistance in changing, whenever his Official Duties do not prevent it.

GEORGE LOUIS,

200.- -Feb. 1836.

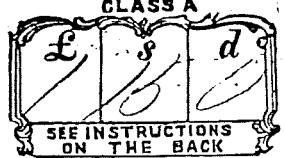
the Foreign Correspondence of the Mercantile Districts in Yorkshire". I do not know the time of arrival in London but the departure time from Uppingham was altered from 4.20pm to 10.45am. The latter time would give an evening arrival in London. 1820 is a little before the period Chris was writing about so I do not know if it was one of the three coaches referred to on pages 41/9 and 41/10.

Incidentally, this coach, in the reverse direction, passed through Shefford at about 2.00am. This might explain why no letters from Shefford through Bedford have been seen! (See "Around about Willenhall", 'Midland Mail' No.41 also.)

* * * * *

A BIRMINGHAM MONEY ORDER

Examples of Victorian Money Orders are not common because, unlike letters, the need or opportunity to retain them was minimal. This one from Birmingham is dated 25th January 1849 and was payable at the Oxford Street office, London. The separate Letter of Advice notifying the name of the payee made the system secure.

	BIRMINGHAM 12 904 <i>Issued</i>		CLASS A 
CREDIT the Person named in my Letter of Advice the Sum of <i>One</i> Pounds, <i>Four</i> Shillings, <i>—</i> Pence, and debit the same to this Office. To the Post Office, at <i>Oxford</i> <i>Postmaster:</i>			
The Party to whom this Order is made payable, must sign here his or her Christian and Surname at full length, except in the case of Firms, whose usual Signature will suffice. Received the above <i>James Hetley</i> <i>Signature.</i>			
N.B.—THIS ORDER MUST BE PRESENTED FOR PAYMENT BEFORE THE END OF THE SECOND CALENDAR MONTH AFTER THAT IN WHICH IT WAS ISSUED, (for instance, if issued in January it must be presented before the end of March,) OTHERWISE A NEW ORDER WILL BE NECESSARY FOR WHICH A SECOND COMMISSION MUST BE PAID. AND IF IT BE NOT PRESENTED FOR PAYMENT BEFORE THE END OF THE TWELFTH CALENDAR MONTH AFTER THAT IN WHICH IT WAS ISSUED, (for instance, if issued in January and not presented before the end of the next January,) THE MONEY WILL NOT BE PAID AT ALL.—AFTER ONCE PAYING A MONEY ORDER, BY WHOMSOEVER PRESENTED, THE OFFICE WILL NOT BE LIABLE TO ANY FURTHER CLAIM. If this form be clipped or mutilated there may be difficulty as to paying it. [SEE BACK.]			

NES

NEW

ENTERPRISE

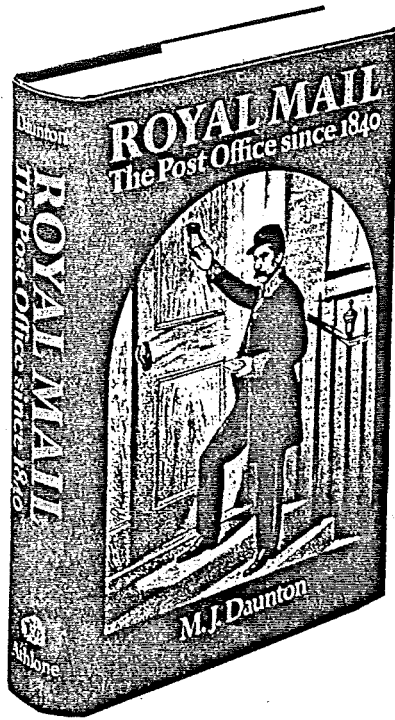
STAMPS

NES

G. B. Postal History (all aspects and all periods); Postal Stationery; Stamps both on and off cover and other postally related material.

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Book Review

ROYAL MAIL

The Post Office since 1840

by Martin Daunt

Carefully researched, well written and beautifully presented, 'Royal Mail' was commissioned by the Post Office. The commission, given to an outsider whose expertise is as a student of business history, dictated the virtual omission of that important part of the service now separated and known as telecommunications. Compared with the

works of Howard Robinson, as it must be though it concentrates on a single century from 1840, the merit of Martin Daunt's book lies in a clear presentation of why developments happened as and when they did. A straight chronological account is rejected in favour of recounting the story under broad headings, each covering the whole period. The four main sections are:

Improvement and Expansion
Carrying the Mail
Working for the Post Office
Officials and Politicians

and there is a valuable epilogue, The Postwar World, covering the period which cannot yet be properly researched on account of the 30-year rule.

Concentration upon these themes, and upon the reports and archives that reveal the changes sought and modified or rejected, means a concentration upon London where the decisions that mattered were taken. The book is excellent for understanding the tensions and in-built conservatism of a vast bureaucracy where the Treasury, politicians, the work force and the public have constantly influenced policies and their detailed application. Not that 'Royal Mail' is ever dry or lacking in drama. The main characters are set in their social context and details of personal background and career help to explain their actions and arguments.

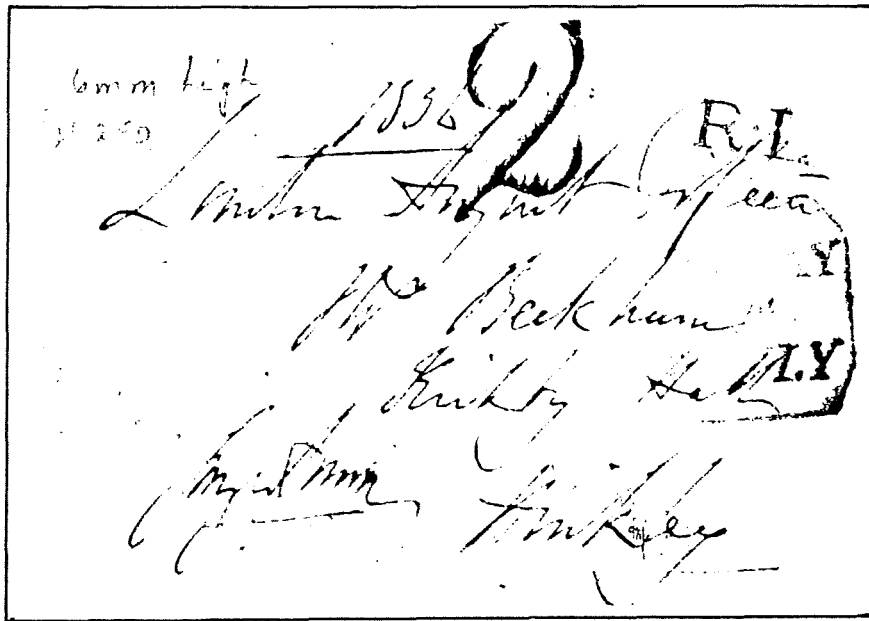
There is very little about postmarks, postal routes and local offices, or about the design and production of stamps, which are the perennial fascinations of those whose interest in things postal begins with a study of what they have chosen to collect. Illustrations are plentiful, graphs, statistics and notes clear, quotations well chosen, and the index indispensable. Misprints ought not to occur so frequently in what is an otherwise very professional work of scholarship.

'Royal Mail, The Post Office since 1840' is published by The Athlone Press, 44 Bedford Row, London WC1R 4LY and costs £18-50.

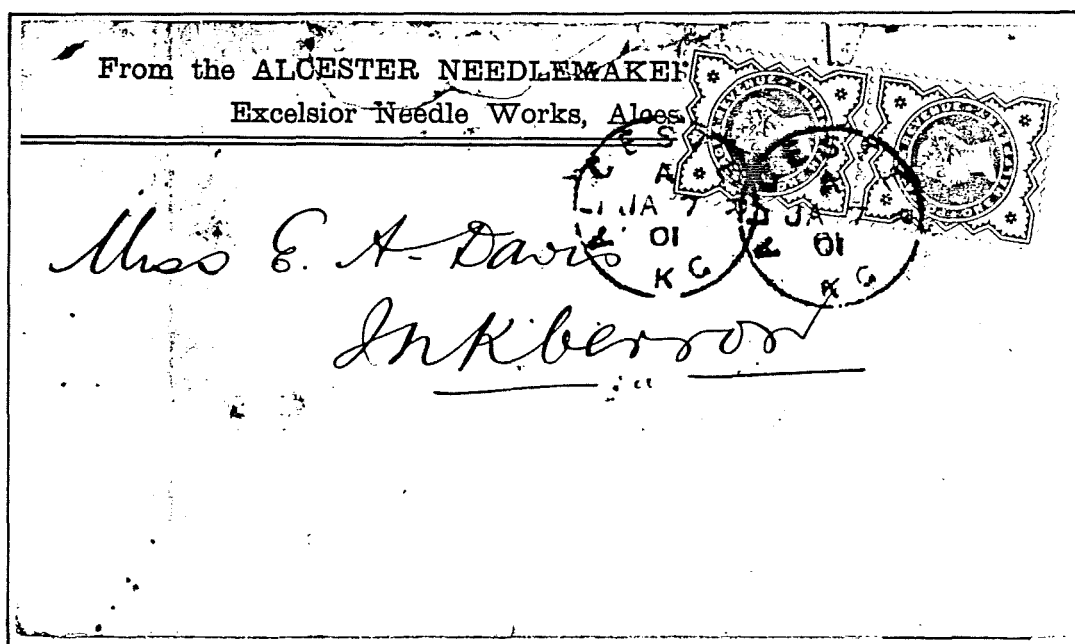
C.M.B.

Members ask for - **HELP!**

Gay Parker has sent a photocopy of a front that he has acquired recently and asks for someone to explain to him exactly what a 'Ride Letter' is. The letter was sent from London to Kirkby Hall, Hinckley. Incidentally, Gay has found that Kirkby Hall is no more but its stables still exist as part of the Mallory Park motor racing circuit. The 'tombstone' mark was obviously stamped in London but where were the 'RL' and the '2' applied?



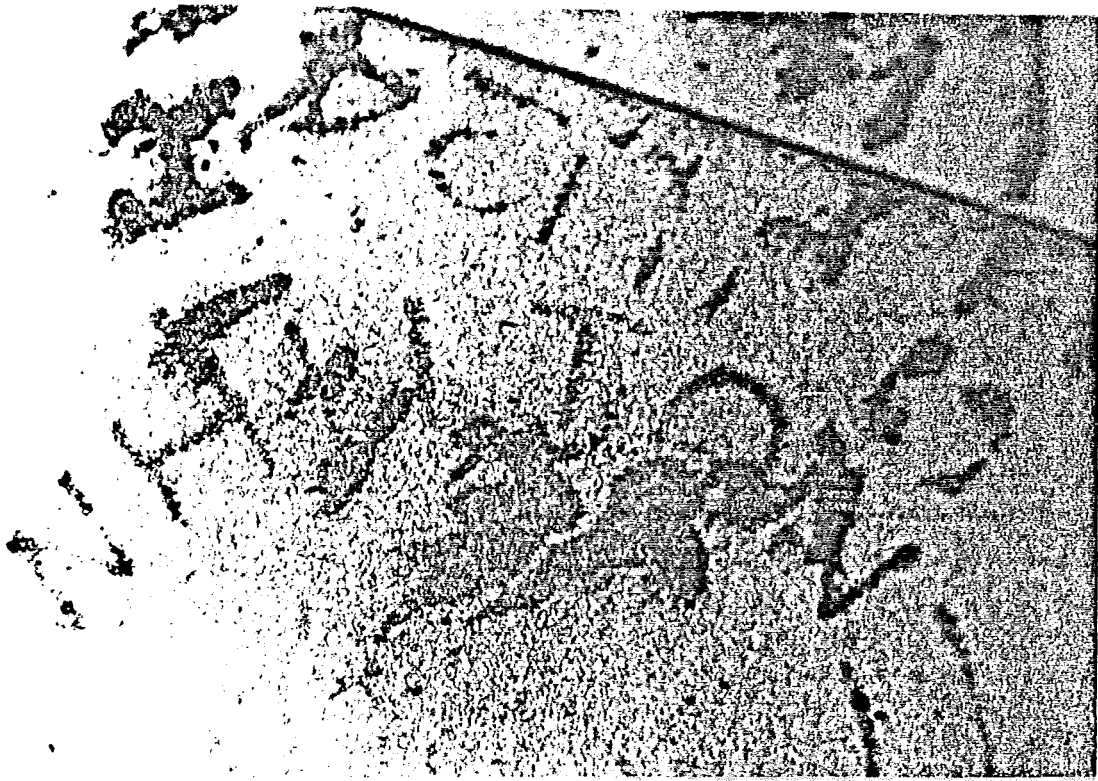
Peter Sharp showed the Alcester single ring at the first meeting and no one present seemed able to explain what 'KG' at the foot of the circle might signify. With the benefit of all your reference books, can anyone throw further light on this one please?



The Undated Circular Marks of the Midland Counties

At the first Committee Meeting of the new season, attended by several of the Society's County Editors, it was agreed that information for inclusion in the first amendment to 'The Undated Circular Marks of the Midland Counties' would be accepted until the end of February 1986. The amendment will take the form of a set of substitute pages, appropriately punched, each page clearly marked 'Amendment No.1' and these will be made available, at cost, to anyone who has purchased the original version of the book. They will be incorporated in unsold books which will be increased in price accordingly.

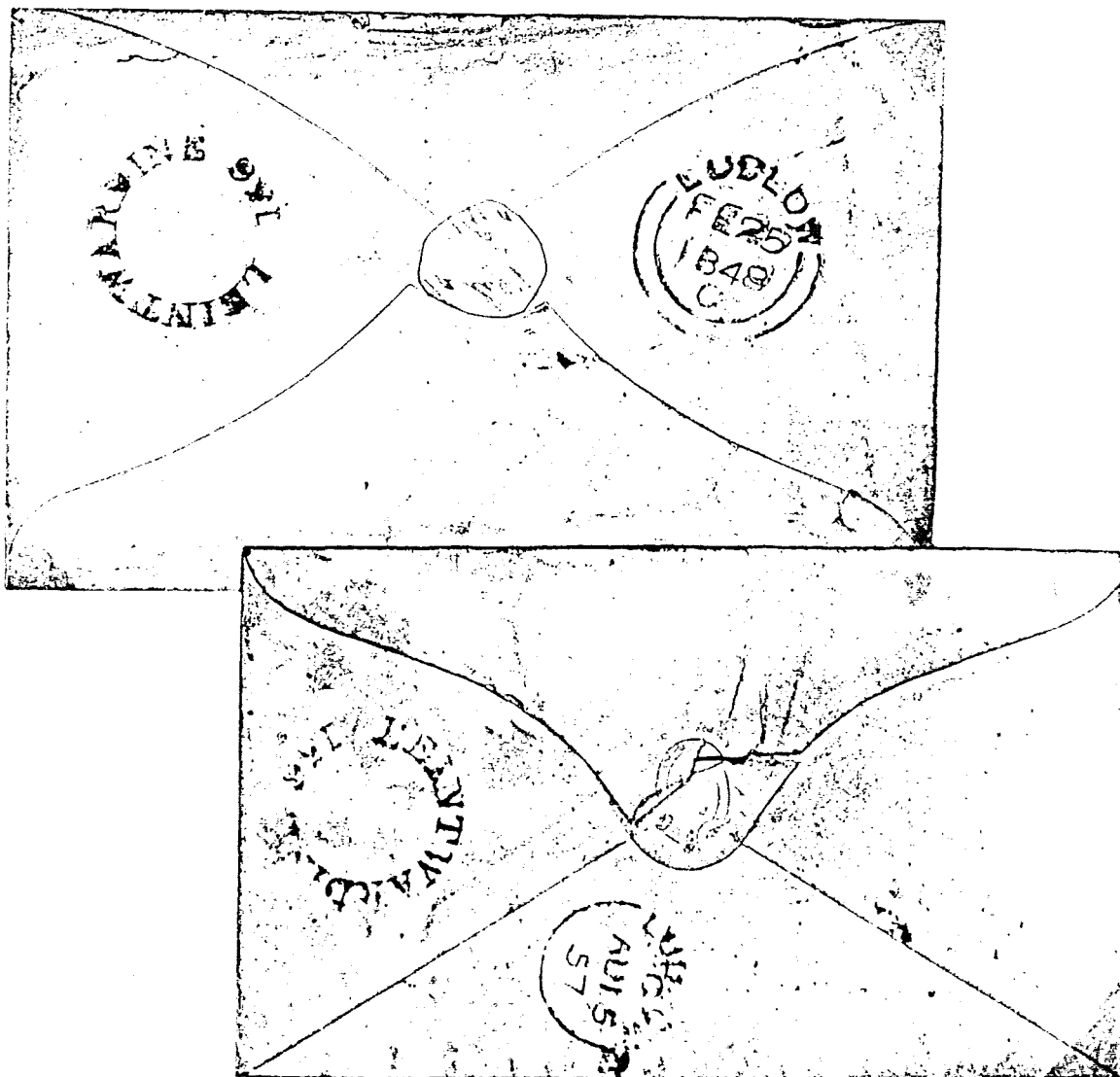
In fact, a lot of interesting information has already been received including reports of several marks that appeared in use in a different form from the impression in the proof books. Derek Smeathers has kindly sent an enlarged photo of the mark recorded in the Northamptonshire section of the book (page 44, 9/193) as 'WHITTON'. Both Derek and Michael Champness have confirmed that all examples of the strike they have seen read 'WHILTON', the correct name of the village. The handstamp may have been re-cut locally.



A similar story is emerging from Herefordshire. On page 24, 10/162, there is the mark recorded in the Steel Impression Books as 'CROW-HALL'. Roger Broomfield has seen two examples of this mark recently, both dated 1852, and both read 'CROW-HILL'. It is not merely a case of the 'A' having been filed to produce a poor 'I', it is a clear letter 'I' but the gaps between 'H' & 'I' and 'I' & 'L' are larger than one might expect, suggesting a re-cut stamp.

In Shropshire, the two stamps of the village of Preston Gubbals which appeared in the proof books as 'PRESTON-GOBBALDS' (12/20) and 'PRESTON-GOBALDS' - neither correctly transcribed in our book - both appeared in use as the correct PRESTON-GUBBALLS. The first would not be too difficult to re-cut locally but the second . . . ?

Finally, Herefordshire collectors might wonder why a UDC of Leintwardine is not recorded. The answer is that Leintwardine blithely continued to use a circular



mileage mark and we are indebted, once again, to Roger Broomfield for illustrations (above) of the mark in use in February 1848 and August 1857. The Ludlow dated mark had, of course, changed significantly in the intervening period.

Straight Line Town Sub-office Marks of the Midlands

Following the large exercise undertaken by the Society over the past two or three years to list the UDCs of the Midlands, it is now proposed to conduct a very much smaller exercise to list the contemporary straight line marks of the town sub-offices. Because there are probably fewer than 100 of these marks, used principally in Birmingham but overall in about a dozen Midland towns and cities, it is proposed to illustrate each and every handstamp. An office such as the one in Great Hampton Street, Birmingham, used as many as five different straight line stamps between the early 1840s and the late 1850s and it is not easy to describe the differences between them without resorting to tedious measurement. An illustration of each will therefore be invaluable.

The Society is once again asking its members and friends to provide all the information they can about the usage of these handstamps. However, the exercise will be conducted rather differently this time to make it simpler and more attractive. A search of the Steel Impression Books has already been made and all marks recorded and photocopied (by courtesy of Post Office Archives). These will be assembled into a draft illustrated list which will appear in the January number of 'Midland Mail'.

Each mark will be given a provisional serial number (e.g. 'MSL 32') and members will be asked to quote that number and provide details of the date and ink colour of any examples they have in their collections or have seen elsewhere. The full proof book details will not be included in the draft list but will, of course, form an important part of the final publication. Incidentally, the straight line marks of the Birmingham Penny Post have been included although they just pre-date the Steel Impression Books. There may be other town sub-office marks unrecorded in the Steel Impression Books and members will be invited to submit photocopies (or the originals for photocopying if they prefer) when such items turn up. They will be an unexpected bonus.

If you are not particularly familiar with the TSO straight line marks, a few are illustrated to whet your appetite.

ASTON-R ²	22MAR56
BRISTOL-STREET	15AUG43
BRISTOL.S?	2SEP46
BRISTOL-ST	25MAR57
CAMP-HILL	5OCT55
DERITEND	15AUG43
DERITEND	6AUG50
DUDESTON=ROW	15AUG43
DUDESTON	6AUG50

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The Birmingham Philatelic Society

ANNUAL STAMP FAIR AND EXHIBITION

SATURDAY 30th NOVEMBER 1985

10.00 a.m. — 5.00 p.m.

at the
BIRMINGHAM & MIDLAND INSTITUTE
Corner of Margaret Street and Cornwall Street
BIRMINGHAM 3

WITH LEADING MIDLAND AND NATIONAL DEALERS
Have a rest at the RUNNING BUFFET
Chat over a quiet drink at the BAR

A MEETING OF THE MIDLAND POSTAL
HISTORY SOCIETY WILL TAKE PLACE AT
2.00 p.m.

MANY LOCAL AND NATIONAL DEALERS
ATTENDING — See list on reverse.

Price of admission
25p Adults 10p Children
CAR PARKING FACILITIES AT
Shoppers car park, Paradise Circus (next door to new library)
Free meter parking in Cornwall Street after 1 p.m.

WHY NOT JOIN THE PHILATELIC SOCIETY
For more details write to: T.B. CLEWLEY,
c/o B.M.I., Margaret Street, Birmingham 3

SEE
YOU
THERE

THE 10th BIRTHDAY TREASURE HUNT

The Second Question

You will remember that you are invited to answer five questions from popular postal history literature. In each case, you should make a note of the answer and page number on which it was found. Please do not submit answers until the Treasure Hunt is complete. The second question is:-

It says 'Provincial Penny Posts' but to whom is the Bangor Ship Letter addressed?

* * * * *

An Exclusive Offer to Our Members - Early 19th Century Kiloware!

As a contrast to modern kiloware frequently advertised in the philatelic press, we offer you 19th century covers by weight, mainly of the early to mid 1800s. Unlike modern kiloware, often offered as "unsorted", we are honest enough to admit that all medium to good quality postmarks have been taken out (other than some common marks) but we can guarantee that it has not been on the market previously having been received direct from a collector who purchased the material from solicitors' offices in the 1940s. A couple of one pound weight sample batches produced an average of 70 covers in each but this will vary, the earlier items tending to be on thicker paper.

Quite a few scarcer marks were noticed including a few first type mileage marks together with straight line town handstamps and the odd 'penny post' but all scarcer marks are in very poor condition. Still, it is a very useful mixture for studying postal rates, periods of use of handstamps etc, and each batch contains a number of good strikes of commoner markings, both of the pre-stamp and post-1840 periods. There are a fair number of Midland items, together with London and other places, and the accumulation has been well mixed to produce a reasonable range although inevitably there is some duplication. Apart from the inclusion of marks from outside the Midland area, the material is somewhat similar to Lot 50 in last April's Society Auction when the covers sold for 32p each.

The price to clear is just £7-50 per old-fashioned pound weight - sorry, our scales will not cope with modern kilogrammes. This price includes normal postage at buyer's risk but, alternatively, the package will be brought to the next Society meeting or sent by Recorded or Registered Post if the appropriate amount is added. Covers will be weighed out as they come as it would be unfair to others to sort the material for individual members' requests. This material would normally be sold in our Annual Auction and therefore 10% of the proceeds will be given to Society funds.

Please place orders with Mrs Elizabeth Lewis whose address will be found, of course, on the front page. If demand exceeds supply, those ordering more than 1lb may have to be rationed but there is a reasonable amount of material available.

The 350th Anniversary of the General Post

Members of the Society seem to have provided displays the length and breadth of the Midlands as an important part of the Post Office's 350th anniversary celebrations. Roger Broomfield contributed 14 sheets of 'Ledbury' for a display made up by Hereford City Museum and Peter Imeson has been busy in Shropshire. We have already mentioned Mike Young's display at Worcester and Gay Parker's exhibit at Atherstone and Coventry. Who else has been doing the same sort of thing? We would like to hear about it.

Tailpiece

Another English-style pillar box in a distant land. This time it is the Portuguese administered enclave of Macau on the Chinese mainland. Note the Chinese characters at the top forbidding fly-posting of bills on letter boxes.

The Next 'Midland Mail'

The next 'Midland Mail' is due in January 1986. Don't forget, it will include a provisional listing of TSO straight line marks - and much else including the first of the new postal history book lists from Ted Heath. Merry Christmas !

FOR

POSTAL HISTORY

ESPECIALLY

G.B. (County)
MARITIME
TRANSATLANTIC
and some FOREIGN

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