

MIDLAND MAIL

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



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Marginally Better

The membership is generally quite kindly disposed towards the inadequacies of 'Midland Mail'. The problems of producing such a broadsheet on a small scale and a shoestring are apparent to most. If any comment can truly be classed as a complaint, it is one concerning the size of the margins. It came as a complete surprise to hear that someone might want to retain their copies of 'Midland Mail' in other than a box file and the news that copies were even being hard bound came as a jolt to the editorial conscience. More than one member had said that the page margins were becoming smaller and this obviously made binding unsatisfactory.

There are good reasons why the margins have been small. The particular type-writer used for 'Midland Mail' had an unusual typeface which looked cramped when lines were single-spaced. To overcome that snag, 1½ line spacing was favoured but it reduced the number of words that could be typed on a page. Widening the margins would have reduced the number of words still further and, please don't forget, the right hand margin is as important as the left and much harder to control. With this issue, all that has changed. With a new 'proportionally spaced' typeface has come a little bit of magic - right hand margin justification. For those who, like the Editor, know nothing of printing technicalities, the difference between 'Midland Mail' and, say, a newspaper column is that the latter has both left and right hand margins perfectly aligned. From today, we can do that too. It only remains for the readers to decide just how much of each side of the page is to be left blank.

Our Next Meeting

Once again, there is no November meeting this year and the next meeting will be the traditional gathering at The Bass Museum, Burton-on-Trent where Richard Farman, the Society Secretary, holds court. The lunch was very popular last year and Richard has kindly agreed to arrange another (12.00 for 12.30) so, if you wish to join in, please contact him a week in advance so that he can advise the Museum of the likely numbers. The date to remember is Saturday 15th December. There are plenty of new things to see at The Bass Museum so arrive early if you wish.

The meeting proper begins at 2.00pm in the 'downstairs bar' and the speaker will be the well-known postal historian Mr. W.A.SEDGEWICK, co-author of 'The Spoon Experiment' with Martin Willcocks. It promises to be a very special day out.

The October 6th Meeting

There had been some concern that the first meeting of the new season would be sparsely attended because it clashed with other attractive events - in spite of the Committee's best efforts to avoid them. However, 14 members turned up to show and view nine sheets of Penny Posts and the result was a highly satisfactory afternoon's entertainment.

Don Keen cleverly worked his display around the Holt family connection and took in the penny posts at Erdington, Shirley Street, Elmdon and Sutton Coldfield. 'Ches' went the rounds of the Warwickshire penny posts (Atherstone, Leamington, Stratford, Hockley ...) and asked for help dating a Warwick Penny Post with a characteristically thin '2' charge mark. Chris Beaver's recent researches had more-or-less overturned all previous knowledge of the Newcastle 5th Clause Post (read all about it in 'Midland Mail') and we saw several types of 5th Clause mark and a previously unrecorded 'No.13' of Audley. Harold Wilson looked at the Derbyshire penny posts - Duffield, Derby, Ripley, Glossop, Hathersage, Wirksworth etc - and included handstamps with 'penny post' removed and a 'free' letter with the penny charged. Ian May confined himself to the Coventry Penny Post and treated us to a variety of marks from the different Receiving Houses and in different inks. Peter Imeson (welcome, Peter) took us further afield to Guildford, Chichester (not recorded in green), Gloucester, Spilsby and Cranford Bridge to name but a few.

Those who did not know that there were four, not three, types of Bewdley Penny Post now believe it because Mike Young enlightened us with examples of them all and he added further Worcestershire marks including Shipston on Stour and a 'Kinvar Penny Post' of 1838 unrecorded in black ink. Denis Salt's Shropshire marks included Ruyton, Westbury, Oswestry, Ironbridge (types 3 & 5), Shifnal (types 1 & 2) and Whitchurch. We returned to Warwickshire with Peter Sharp who had examples of the penny posts of Leamington, Stratford and Warwick. The Editor's Stourbridge Penny Post was notable for its confusion but included a previously unknown early mark and it was left to Eric and Elizabeth Lewis to round off the afternoon in good order with, from Eric, the original numbered offices of the Birmingham Penny Post (notably a 1797 West Bromwich mark) and, from our Chairman, Elizabeth, the town Receiving Houses, such as Hagley Row, Lancaster Street and Prospect Row, of which six were within a mile of the main post office. If anyone doubted the popularity of penny posts and the wide variety of marks associated with them, they would have been impressed by these most interesting displays.

The October 27th Meeting

The true flavour of Denis Salt's fine display of 'The Royal Mail at Shrewsbury, 1660-1840' would be lost by attempting merely to catalogue the items in it for it was Denis' informed commentary that was all-important. He had wisely limited his exhibit to about 60 sheets but everything on those sheets - the sender, the addressee, the postal route, the charge marks - was comprehensively explained and one almost forgot that we were seeing virtually every significant Shrewsbury postmark from the earliest origins of its office to the advent of uniform penny postage. No speaker could have made a better attempt to understand the operation of the post in his area of interest and to convey that understanding to his audience.

Denis opened with a letter of 1671 from Shrewsbury to London and followed with half a dozen more of the 17th century addressed to Shrewsbury or its environs; specifically to a lady "living in the High St., Shrewsbury", less specifically to a gentleman at "Acton Burnell or elsewhere". At this time there were, of course, no handstamps but, when they were later used at Shrewsbury, the selection was impressive for the BCC lists no fewer than 28 'Shrewsbury' and 10 'Salop' marks between 1705 and 1800. We saw examples of most of the principal types: 1718 SALOP, 1720 SHREWS/BURY, 1736 SALOP, 1771 SALOP, 1787 SHREWS/BURY, 1793 'horseshoe' and 1801 SHREWSBURY

to quote a handful. There was a letter of 1740 from Cambridge to the headmaster of Shrewsbury School, another of 1768 to Llanfyllin "paid to Montgomery" and perhaps reaching its destination by the cross post that began in 1763 and yet another of 1780 from Shrewsbury to Ludlow which travelled using the route of Quash's extended Exeter cross post. There was a letter from Shrewsbury to Knockin with a $\frac{1}{2}$ d charge for local delivery and a letter of 1785 carried by the first Shrewsbury mailcoach. The background to each and every one was carefully explained before we reached our break 'at 1800'.

The second half of the display took us from 1800 to 1840. No 'first type' mileage mark is known at Shrewsbury but we saw the first SHREWSBURY/165 mark and then no fewer than eight of the nine different types of dated mileage mark. Later marks include a reduced mileage of '153' because, it was explained, the London mail travelled via Daventry from about 1824 rather than via Oxford. An excellent illustration of the value of the contents of a letter was provided by one from Acton Burnell to London which could well have been posted in Shrewsbury since it bore no marks to indicate that it had been carried in a local post but, in fact, the writer had mentioned that it was, indeed, being posted in Acton Burnell because he would be too late himself to catch the post in Shrewsbury. We saw a number of letters with 1d local delivery charges, 1d being levied between any of the villages and in Shrewsbury itself outside the free delivery area. From unofficial local deliveries, we moved on to the penny posts and learned that Shrewsbury Penny Post never had a 'No.1' receiving house because of potential confusion with Welshpool's 'No.1' at Westbury. Finally, to complete the picture of the post at Shrewsbury, Denis produced an example of the Uniform 4d Post and a 'first day cover' of the Uniform Penny Post - what else?

In his eloquent vote of thanks, Steph Stobbs, the doyen of Shropshire postal history, paid particular tribute to the research that lay behind the pages we had enjoyed and declared himself "entranced" by the whole display. Seventeen members and guests heartily endorsed that remark.

DAVID SHAW

Specialist in Scottish Postal History.

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A selection of MIDLANDS postal history can be found on our monthly lists - send SAE for sample listing. Here are a few items from stock -

- 1750 E/L with good BIRMING/HAM on reverse (31x12mm and known for 1756 as rarity F in County Cat.) endorsed 'Turn at Colshill'. £22.50
- c1785/7 E/L with part strike 127/NOTTING/HAM on obv., fades to right hand side but recognisable and rated rarity G in County Cat. £15.00
- 1795 E/L, good NEWCASTLE/UNDER LYNE 2/line mark on obverse. £12.50
- 1833 E/L with good HINKLEY/PENNY POST in orange on rev., just on fold, rare. £22.00
- 1838 E/L to Lichfield with v.fine WEST BROMWICH cds on reverse and fair LICHFIELD/PENNY POST in red italics on obv. Altered rate marks. £12.50
- 1839 E (no side flaps) fair MISSENT TO/LEICESTER 97 struck vert'ly on obv. £12.50
- 1839 E/L with good-fine italic LEAMINGTON/PENNY POST well placed on obv., over-struck by 'No.1'. £15.00
- 1841 E/L, good red oval PAID AT STRATFORD on obv., fair red udc AULCESTER on reverse. £18.00
- 1844 E 3mgn 1d tied nice MX with fine NEWCASTLE UNDER LYNE cds on rev., good udc BURSLEM alongside adhesive on obv. £10.00

Please add 20p under £20 and 40p over this for post and insurance in transit. Refund instantly for any item not to your satisfaction if returned within 10 days.

Cavendish Bridge

James Grimwood-Taylor's plea for help in 'Midland Mail' No.36 did not fall on deaf ears. You may remember that he had a letter of 1825 from a village called Cavendish Bridge with a 'Paid at Leicester' handstamp and he asked:

Where was it prepaid?

Was Cavendish Bridge a sub-office of Loughborough or Leicester or both?

Has anyone else a prepaid letter pre-1840 from Cavendish Bridge?

John Soer came to the rescue and it was his opinion that the letter was, indeed, prepaid at Cavendish Bridge. It would then be carried on the mailcoach from Manchester as far as Leicester where the Cavendish Bridge letters would be sorted and forwarded as appropriate. In this case, the appropriate action was apparently to forward the letter by the same mailcoach.

John quotes from a Post Office directive of 1825 which helps to explain Cavendish Bridge's relationship with both Loughborough and Leicester. It reads, in part, as follows: "It is very necessary to renew the order that letters for the following places Kegworth, Shardlow and Cavendish Bridge, which are now sent partly to Leicester and partly to Loughborough, should be forwarded (however addressed) in the Leicester and not in the Loughborough bag..."

Finally, John admits to having two pre-1840 Cavendish Bridge letters. The first is to Hastings in 1827 and is charged 11d which, from the total mileage calculation, indicates that it was charged on Loughborough and not on Leicester. The second letter of 1833 is to Leicester itself but is charged only 4d, the rate for a distance under 15 miles. Since the distance from Cavendish Bridge to Leicester is 21 miles, even this letter may have been charged on Loughborough.

* * * * *

and Ashby

And it was John Soer himself who asked, in 'Midland Mail' No.35, "I wonder why the postmistress preferred the ASHBY/Z (mark) to the 'authorised version' (ASHBY/L)?" This time, Chris Beaver has a possible answer:

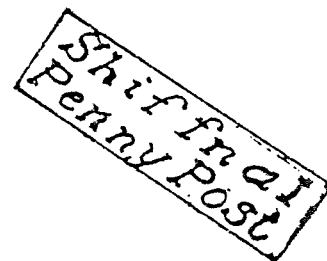
"There is a very likely reason for the use of ASHBY/Z rather than ASHBY/L at Ashby de la Zouch, Leicestershire: to avoid confusion, in particular with Ashby Magna or, indeed, Ashby Parva and Ashby Folville, all in the same county; or with Ashby, Ashby-by-Partney, Ashby-de-la-Launde, Ashby Puerorum and West Ashby, all in Lincolnshire. There could, of course, be no confusion with Ashby (Suffolk), Ashby (Norfolk) or Ashby St.Ledgers (Northamptonshire).

One of my favourite covers has a straight-line STROKE - from a dealer's Staffordshire stock! There are actually more than 60 places in England from which Stoke-on-Trent needs to be distinguished, most of them locally referred to simply as 'Stoke'. In 1785, Stoke Ferry in Norfolk was, as far as I know, the only one with any kind of post office."

(with acknowledgments to Crockford's Clerical Directory)

* * * * *

The Shifnal & Ironbridge Penny Posts



by Denis Salt

Part One

The Shifnal Penny Post served the area of Shropshire where the Industrial Revolution had its beginnings, Coalbrookdale and Madeley on the north side of the River Severn, Broseley on the south. It was during the 18th century that the coal mines and iron foundries in the area assumed great importance and the first iron bridge in the country, built at the Abraham Darby foundry at Coalbrookdale, was erected in 1779 over the River Severn at the place now called Ironbridge. At the beginning of the 18th century, Shifnal enjoyed a fast horse mail from London three days a week and in 1755 this mail service became daily except Sundays (1). In 1785 the horse mail from London to Shifnal and Shrewsbury was replaced by a mail coach, the first mail coach leaving London on 5 September 1785 (2) and reaching Shifnal after 21 hours on the road. By about 1790, and very possibly considerably earlier, the Postmaster at Shifnal had set up a regular horse post to serve the area with Receiving Houses at Madeley Wood, Broseley and Wenlock (3). The horse post to Wenlock left Shifnal after the arrival of the mail from London, just before 5.00pm, and reached Wenlock at 8.00pm every day except Monday. The return post left Wenlock at 6.30am every day except Tuesday, to catch the London mail leaving Shifnal at 9.00am. A charge was made of 1d per letter each way, though an annual sum was agreed for the delivery of the mail to, and its collection from, some of the works. The gross receipts from this Local Post in the year 1801 amounted to £224.15.0 Outgoing letters were stamped with the Shifnal town stamp and carried no other marks except the General Post charge in manuscript. Incoming letters, which would already have been marked with the General Post charge, now had a smaller figure including the 1d for local delivery added, generally in the top right hand corner of the letter (see Figure 1).

The establishment of Penny Posts on the pattern of the London Penny Post was provided for by Statute in 1765 (4), with the authority of the PMG. But outside the cities of Manchester, Bristol, Birmingham and Liverpool, no Penny Post was set up in England and Wales for over 40 years. The first such Penny Post to be set up was at Shifnal, where it was officially established on 6 October 1806 by taking over the existing unofficial horse post to Wenlock, with its Receiving Houses at Madeley Wood, Broseley and Wenlock (5) (see plan). The only change was that the unofficial post included a separate ride from Shifnal to Coalport which was now discontinued and Coalport was henceforth served by a foot messenger from Madeley Wood. However, there were other local posts at Shifnal, particularly one to Priors Lee, Malinslee and Ketley, which did not become part of the Penny Post but continued as before.

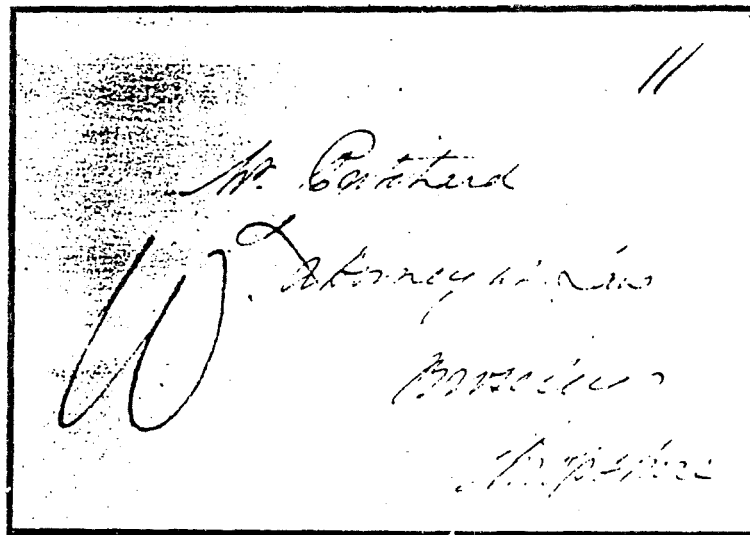
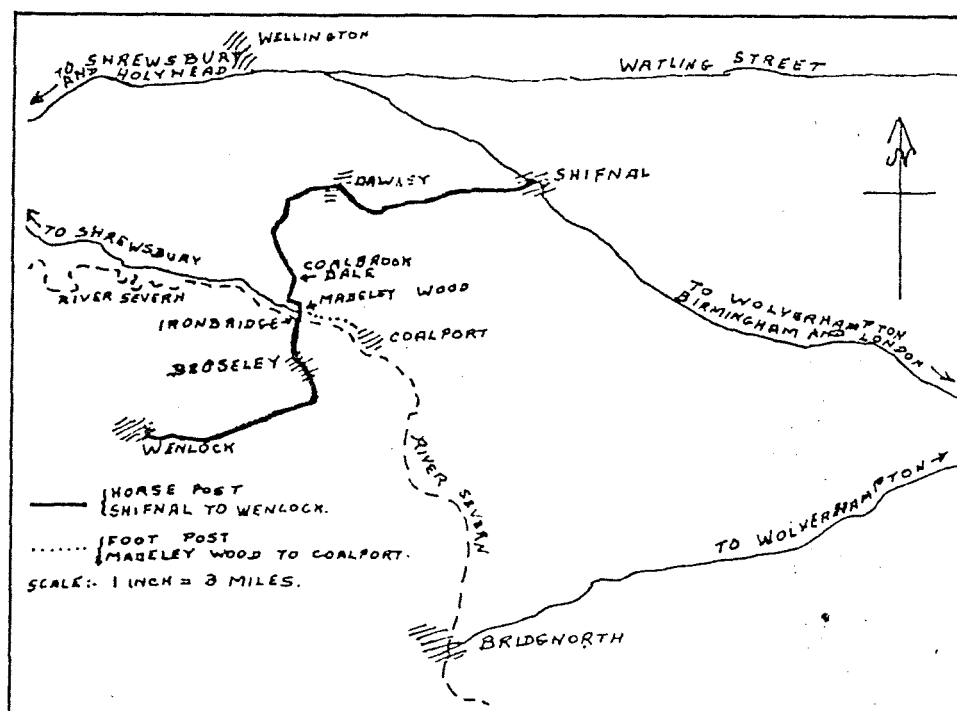


Figure 1. Letter dated 16 July 1801 from Bewdley to Broseley.



Plan of the Shifnal Penny Post

At the time of the establishment of the Penny Post, Shifnal (which for nearly a century had been using a variety of straight line stamps and, for a short period around 1785, a first-type mileage stamp) was using a straight line mileage stamp showing the figure 146 as the distance in miles from London (Fig.2). Between 1807 and 1811, Wenlock used a 'Wenlock/146' mileage stamp (Fig.3) showing the Shifnal mileage as, of course, the General Post charge would be based on the Shifnal mileage. Madeley Wood used a straight line stamp (Fig.4) and so did Broseley (Fig.5). In August 1811, all Penny Post receivers were instructed to install open letter boxes and the 1d for the Penny Post could then be added to the General Post charge and collected on delivery of the letter at its destination. Madeley Wood, Broseley and Wenlock were then issued with boxed 'No.1', 'No.2', and 'No.3' stamps respectively which were struck on all letters despatched from these offices, instead of the named stamps they had previously been using. At the same time, Shifnal itself was issued with

SHIFFNAL

146

Fig. 2.

WENLOCK

146

Fig. 3.

MADELEY WOOD

Fig. 4.

BROSELEY

Fig. 5.

its first 'SHIFFNALL/Penny Post' stamp (Oxley Type 1; Fig.6) which was struck on all letters going into the General Post at Shifnal. It was at this time struck on outgoing mail only, not on letters coming from the General Post in to the Penny Post at Shifnal. The main object of the Penny Post stamp was to call the attention of the Post Office authorities at the delivery end that there was an extra 1d to be collected for the Penny Post. The Shifnal town stamp only and not the Penny Post stamp was struck on local letters of which the place of origin and the destination were within the Penny Post area.

The Penny Post continued with little change (apart from some of the timings) until 1834, except that the office at Madeley Wood was now known by the name of Ironbridge, and the horse post from Shifnal to Wenlock had been replaced by a mail cart. The original 'SHIFFNALL/Penny Post' stamp had been replaced by a boxed 'Shiffnal/Py Post' stamp (Oxley Type 2; Fig.7) in 1826 which continued in use until the Shifnal Penny Post ceased to operate in 1840. For a short period in 1831/32, Shifnal used a boxed 'Shiffnal/Penny Post' stamp (Oxley Type 3; Fig.8) but it appears to have had a very short life.

SHIFFNALL
Penny Post

Fig. 6.

Shiffnal
P.Y. Post

Fig. 7.

Shiffnal
Penny Post

Fig. 8.

It was on 10 November 1834 that the first major change in the organisation was made when a new mail coach service was set up from Birmingham via Ironbridge to Shrewsbury (6). From the report of the Select Committee on Postage (published in 1838), it is clear that Ironbridge had to account to Shrewsbury for the net revenue from the Penny Post so far as it related to letters going to or coming from Shrewsbury or beyond. It seems probable, therefore, that Ironbridge was now a sub-Post Town but of Shrewsbury, not of Shifnal.

It seems probable that the first object of this new service was to relieve pressure on the Penny Post at Shifnal and improve communications between the ironworks in the Ironbridge area and the industrial Midlands. At the same time, by extending the new service from Ironbridge to Shrewsbury, it also provided a direct link between Ironbridge and the County Town. This part of the new service may well have been provided at the request of Shrewsbury, which would be the reason for Ironbridge having to account to Shrewsbury for the revenue from its Penny Post. It is thought that the mail cart from Shifnal passed through Dawley on its way to Ironbridge and will have picked up letters from here and other places "on the road". The population of the three Parishes of Dawley, Madeley and Broseley totalled 16,998 according to the 1831 census which was nearly equal to that of Shrewsbury (18,285 - 1841 census) and was larger than that of any other Post Town in the County.

However, in spite of the fact that Ironbridge was accountable to Shrewsbury for the revenue from its Penny Posts, it was not a Receiving House for Shrewsbury Penny Post. The normal General Post charge was payable on all letters going to Shrewsbury, in addition to the Penny Post penny if the letter came from one of the Receiving Houses outside Ironbridge itself. Westbury, mentioned in the Report, was of course an entirely separate Penny Post of Shrewsbury.

As has been said above, Ironbridge still continued as a Penny Post Receiving House for Shifnal and Figure 9 shows a letter dated 22 December 1837 from Ironbridge to Buckingham, carrying the 'No.1' Receiving House stamp of Ironbridge and the 'Shifnal/Py Post' stamp. About this time (1834), Ironbridge (which had previously used only a boxed 'No.1' stamp) received its first named hand-stamp; in fact it received two, possibly at the same time. The one was a boxed 'Iron Bridge/Penny Post' (Oxley Type 3; Fig.10) and was used on Penny Post letters which travelled on the new service mentioned above, not on the Penny Post via Shifnal. It was used on Penny Post letters which originated from one of the villages within the Penny Post area addressed to a place outside the area, and on letters which arrived at Ironbridge from outside the penny post area for delivery at one of the villages within the area but not for delivery at Ironbridge itself. The earliest known 'Iron Bridge/Penny Post' stamp is 1 December 1834.

The second hand-stamp issued to Ironbridge at this time was a boxed 'Ironbridge' stamp (Fig.11). Only a few letters with this stamp have been seen but it appears to have been used as a town stamp on letters originating in Ironbridge for the General Post and on all letters for delivery in Ironbridge itself, whatever their place of origin. Letters originating from Ironbridge, or from one of the Receiving Houses serving the Ironbridge Penny Post, and for delivery within the Penny Post area, were struck with this stamp instead of the Ironbridge Penny Post stamp. This follows the practice already in use at Shifnal for letters of which both the place of origin and the destination were within the Penny Post area (see above). The earliest known use of this stamp was in 1835 and the latest known use was on a letter dated 15 February 1838. On this letter, it was struck over a boxed 'No.1' which had been incorrectly used because it was a letter from Ironbridge to Shrewsbury, charged 4d for a distance not exceeding 15 miles, and carried wholly by the General Post.

(End of Part One)

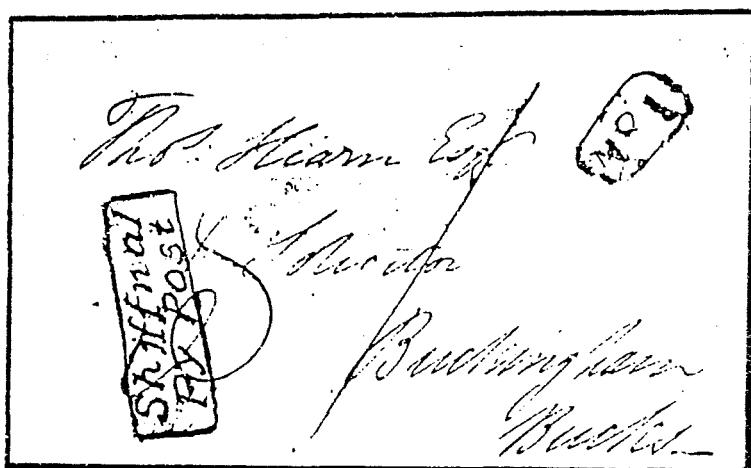


Figure 9. Letter dated 22 Dec 1837,
Ironbridge to Buckingham.

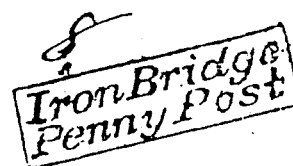


Fig. 10.

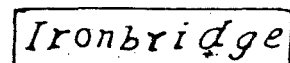
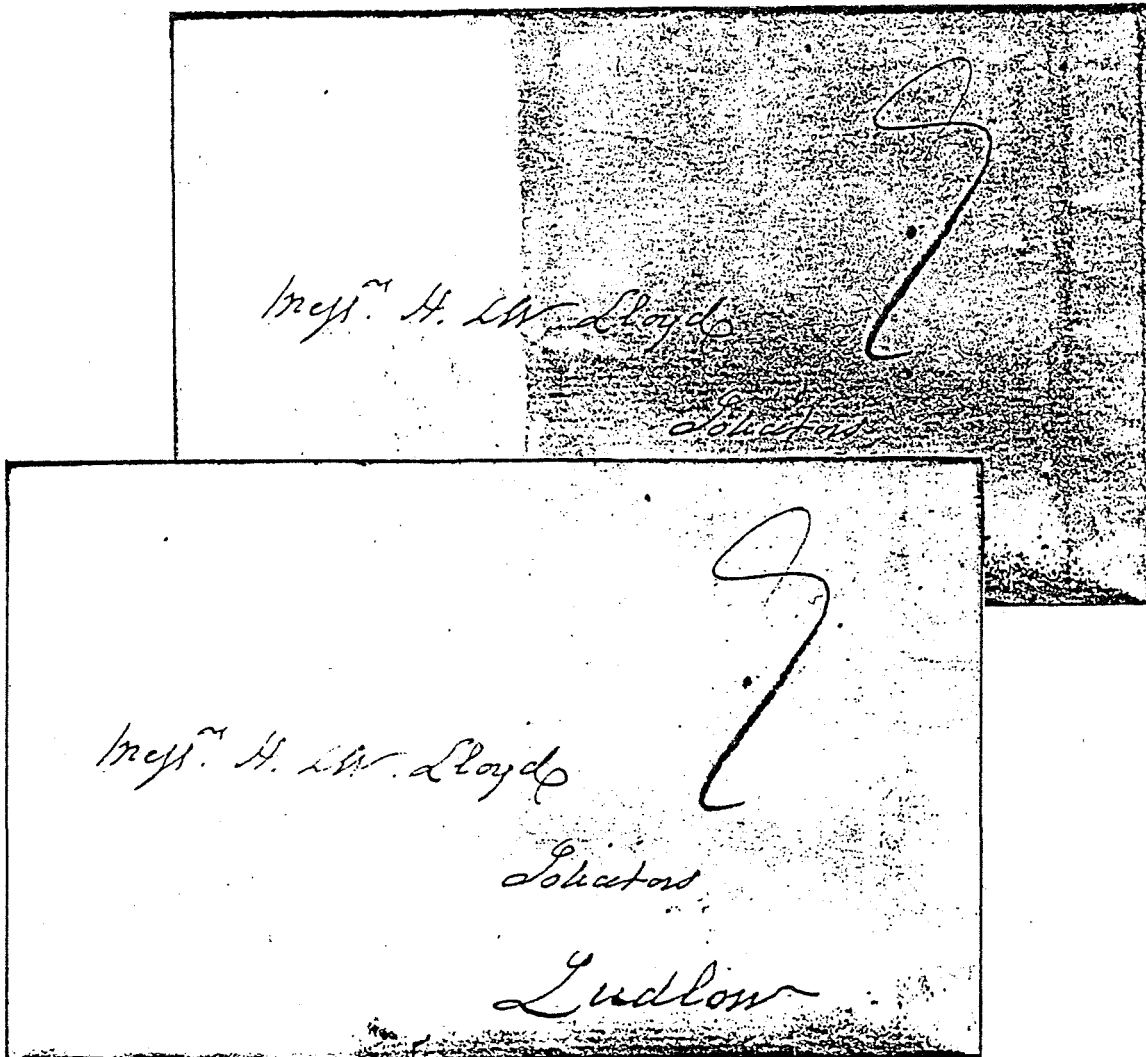


Fig. 11.

Note: This article has been adapted by the author from one published in the final number of 'The British Mailcoach' in June 1981. The concluding part, with additional illustrations, will appear in the next issue of 'Midland Mail'.

CLEAN UP THOSE DIRTY POSTCARDS ! ...or covers.

It is said you can't turn a sow's purse into a silk ear - or something like that. The illustrations above are intended to give hope that whatever fate has handed down to you in the form of a soiled cover or postcard, it might be improved. This was a particularly nasty entire because a section had remained protected and clean while the rest was about as grubby as a piece of paper could be. The two photocopies were made some 15 minutes apart with the setting of the copier unchanged, of course.

What had happened in those few minutes was that an attempt had been made to clean the item. Most of us have tried two popular methods of cleaning; judicious use of a soft india rubber or a rub over with bread crumbs. A common result of the former is a sudden crease near a corner but the second method, although often appearing successful, has a more pernicious danger. Bread crumbs contain fatty substances which are deposited on the paper and lead to far worse problems than dirt and dust in years to come.

The best possible answer is to use a product made specifically for cleaning valuable archive material. It is known as a Draft Cleaning Pad and is manufactured by Archival Aids, a division of Ademco Drimount Ltd. The pad is a stockinette bag about 5 inches long and 2 inches diameter containing fine particles of what may or may not be a rubber compound. Twist the bag slightly and let a quantity of particles fall on the item to be cleaned. Then rub gently in a circular motion with the pad itself or a cotton wool ball. The Draft Cleaning Pad DCP 1 costs £1.64 including VAT but without postage (it weighs 100gms) and is available from:

Messrs J. Hewit & Sons Ltd, 97 St John St., London EC1

* * * * *

Yet more
of
Woore

by Denis Salt
with additional research by The Reverend C.M.Beaver

Editor's Note: Readers may recall that, as a side-issue of Chris Beaver's article on Bilston, we are endeavouring to establish whether the village of Woore in Shropshire was under Stafford or Market Drayton at the time it used its celebrated 'fleuron' hand-stamp. Here, we hope, is the definitive answer.

Woore is a village in the north-east corner of Shropshire, best known to postal historians for its Fleuron stamp, and is situated about seven miles north-east of Market Drayton and nine miles west of Newcastle-under-Lyme. According to John Cary's List of Post Towns, Sub-Post Towns and their Receiving Houses dated 1st January 1793, it was at that time a sub-Post Town, presumably of Stafford as it was served from there. A letter dated 7th December 1799 from Sir Edward Pryce Lloyd (later 1st Baron Mostyn) to Mr Thomas (a solicitor) at Llanfyllin, stamped with a straight-line "WOORE" is illustrated at Figure 1. This is the earliest stamp of Woore seen by the writer, though earlier ones may well have been used.

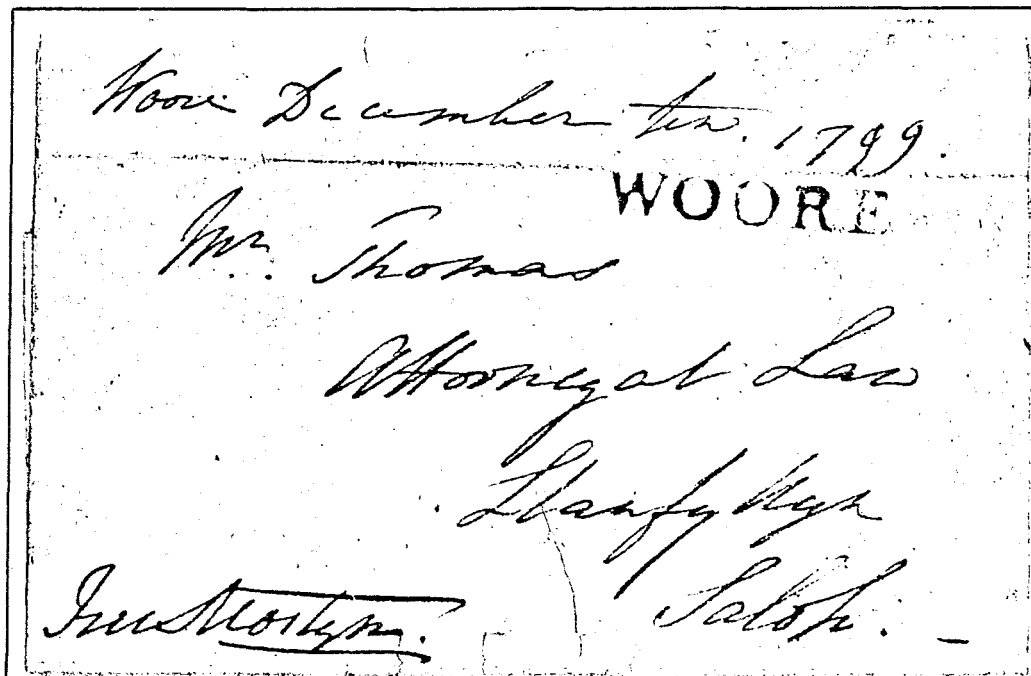


Figure 1.

The Chester Road ran through Woore and, in March 1833, the office at Woore was under Stafford. Horses were changed at Woore and it seems likely that the Mail Coach carried the mail for that place. The Receiver at Woore received an allowance of only 20/- a year and a charge was made by him and the Letter Carrier for delivery.

of the letters. Following a complaint about this charge, the Surveyor recommended that the Receiver's allowance should be increased to £6 per annum and a grant of £4 a year made for the free delivery of letters at Woore. This was approved on 23rd March 1833 (Post 42, Vol 57, page 571 and Report 189/1833).

The Grand Junction Railway between Birmingham and Liverpool was opened on 4th July 1837 and proposals for the use of the railway, when opened, had already been made by Mr Churchill (the Surveyor) and W.L.Maberley and approved on 8th June 1837 (Post 35, Minute No.1092X). Details of "Old Rides discontinued and New Ride Contracts, Foot Messengers &c authorised in Connection with the Railway" are contained in a subsequent report to the effect that the proposals had been implemented on the opening of the railway (Post 35, Vol 41, pages 165-6; Minute No.304Y). One of the new Foot Messengers was Market Drayton-Woore and new Horse Posts and Mail Carts included Market Drayton-Whitchurch, Whitmore-Market Drayton and Newcastle-Whitmore. The same list includes, among the services abolished, Market Drayton-Loggerheads (Ashley Heath). Clearly Woore, Market Drayton and Whitchurch were all now being served by rail from Whitmore Station and, presumably, Woore now came under Market Drayton instead of under Stafford.

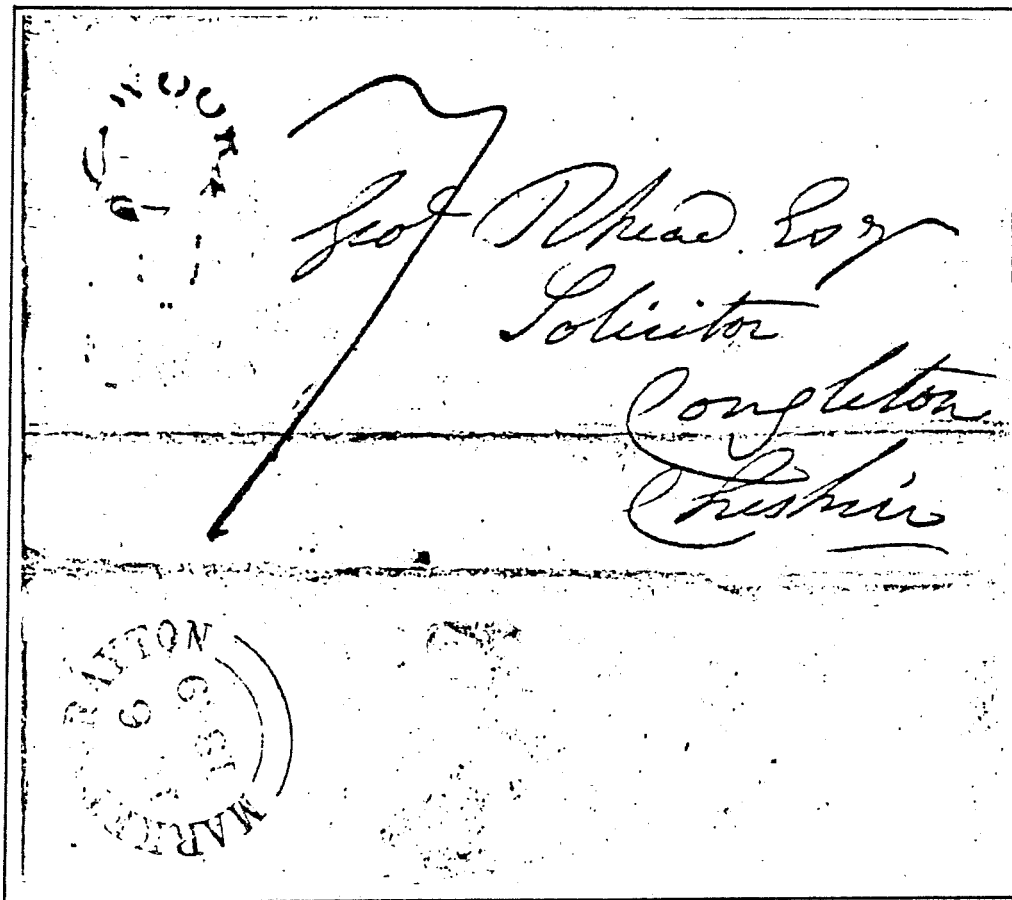


Figure 2

Figures 2 and 3 show letters dated 6th June 1839 and 21st February 1843 respectively with Market Drayton stamps as well as the Woore fleuron. The Steel Impression Books at Post Office Archives start only in January 1825 and the Woore fleuron does not appear in them. Many of the fleuron stamps issued to English sub-offices appear to have been in use between 1823 and 1825 and it is very probable that the Woore fleuron was issued at this time prior to records in the Steel Impression Books. As no Woore stamps earlier than 1839 have so far been recorded - except the straight-line Woore shown on the previous page - it seems likely that the Woore fleuron had, in fact, been in use before 1825 although none have turned up.

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Yet More of Woore

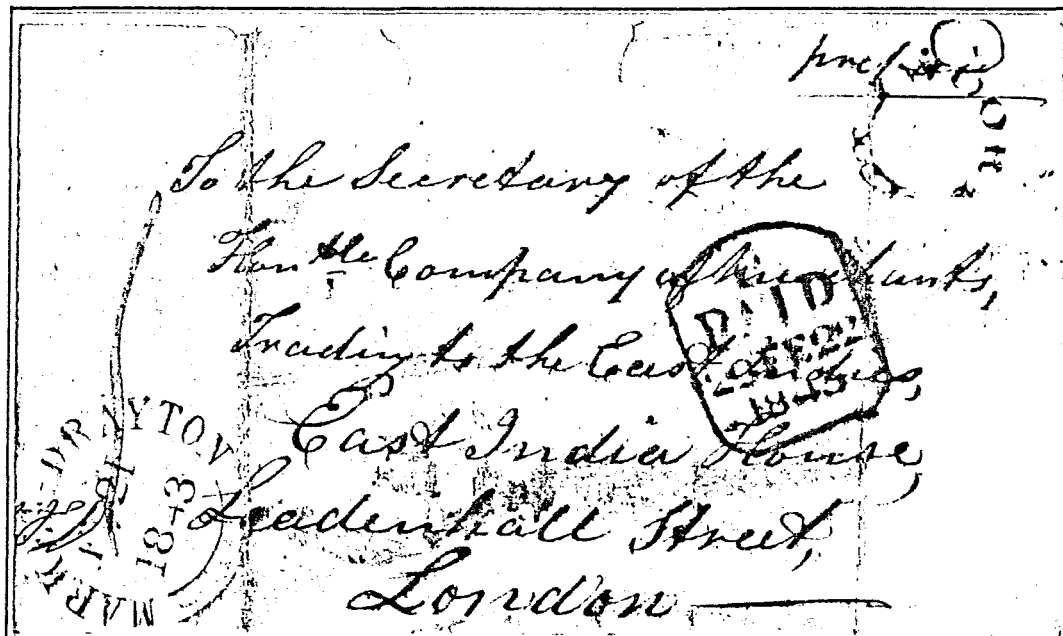


Figure 3.

for

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especially

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TRANSATLANTIC

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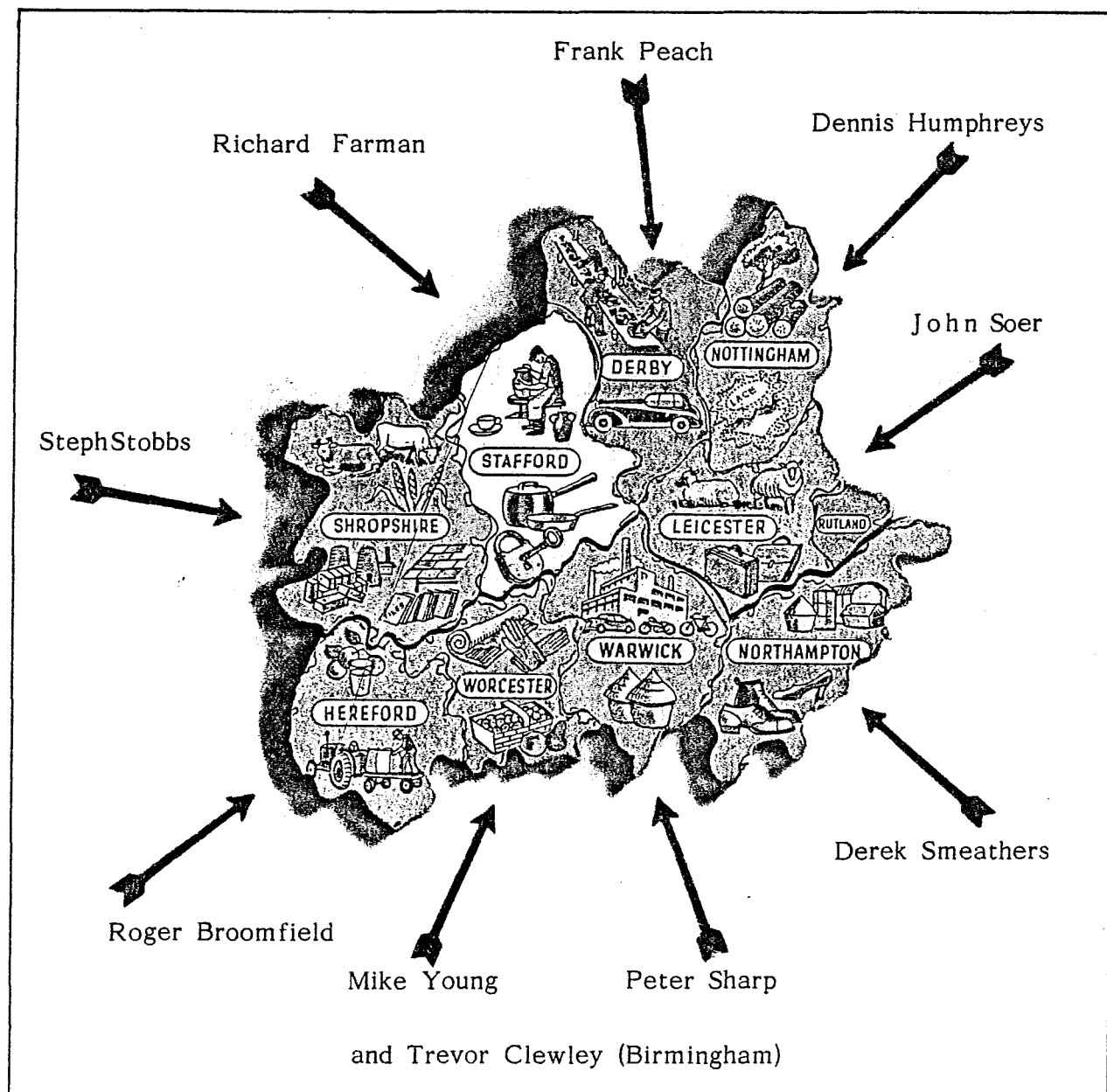
and some FOREIGN

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More County Editors

Perhaps because the Society has embraced all aspects of British postal history - with a particular interest in the postal history of the Midlands stated but often underplayed - we have never attempted to define exactly what is meant by 'The Midlands'. This had the advantage that we were able to increase or decrease our area of particular interest to suit the active membership of the day and there was something to be said for that approach. However, our current major effort to list the Undated Circular Marks of the Midlands has obliged us to concentrate our minds and decide just what to include and exclude. The result is tidy and logical and reflects both geographical integrity and the composition of the membership. For the purpose of our exercise, at least, 'The Midlands' includes Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Staffordshire, Shropshire, Leicestershire (with Rutland), Northamptonshire, Warwickshire (plus Birmingham, of course), Worcestershire and Herefordshire. The immediate need has been to appoint four new County Editors and we welcome Roger Broomfield, Dennis Humphreys, Frank Peach and Derek Smeathers to the fold. They will be responsible for collating information from our members about the postmarks of their chosen county and, in the short term, for tackling the job of preparing the county lists of Undated Circular Marks from the mass of paper being thrown at them. If you wish to contact one of the new 'Team of Ten' and have no address, a Committee Member will be happy to forward your letter. The complete picture looks like this:



Those Long Distance Footposts Again

... being a further extract from the Records of the Borough of Leicester:

"it is agreed that the Post master at Lytchfield shall have XX pence a weeke allowed him out of the Chamber of the Towne untill Michallmas next if he doe continue all that time ... his post for carrieing of letters from this Towne to London ... provided he weekly bring to Mr Maior the weekly intelligence from London"

The extract is undated but it accompanies papers of 1648, including details of the Borough defences, and this date is confirmed by a further entry in the Chamberlain's Accounts of 1648-49:

"Item paid to the footpost of Litchfield for 53 weeks pay at 1s 8d per weeke given by the Towne by order of a Common Hall the summe of iiijl viijs iiijd"

John Soer, who found these entries, points out that their interest lies not only in the existence of a footpost from Lichfield to London but its operation during the period of the Civil War, albeit at the time of the brief Second Civil War.

There was, in fact, a seminar on 26th October at the National Postal Museum to consider the whole question of the operation of the Post during the Civil War. John Soer's information, allied to that from other sources, supported the view that a postal service, as we might understand it, began to be re-established from about 1647. However, of specific interest was a remark by Dr J.W.M.Stone that he did not think a 'footpost' necessarily travelled on foot but that it was a term used at that time to describe a messenger organized by, for example, a city or borough. He subsequently provided extracts from a number of sources between 1580 and 1649 to indicate that 'footpost' was a term similar to 'carrier' e.g. "12s paid for cloth to make Packer, the footpost, a coat" and "Carriers and Foot Posts to be made a Committee".

It must be admitted that Lichfield or Leicester to London weekly and York to London every other week (from the 'Carriers Cosmographie' of 1637) is a lot to expect of a man on foot but it is not impossible. Can any member throw further light on this subject?

Book Review

'A More Expeditious Conveyance' by Bevan Rider (J.A.Allen, London 1984. 159 pages, £12-50. ISBN 0-85131-394-9)

This 'Story of the Royal Mail Coaches' is a delightfully produced book which should grace the '388 shelf' of the public library. The reader is taken at a steady trot on eleven journeys out of London to be shown a vignette of each stage and town. Only the last takes us through the Midlands as we convey news of young Victoria's accession as far as Holyhead. Our guide has marshalled his facts with meticulous care, including a fresh sifting of Post Office archives and many a local history library. He inserts a selection of his findings at relevant points without delaying the journey. Scholarship is hidden by artistry. No index and no bibliography may deter collectors from buying this rather expensive book for themselves but none will be disappointed if it emerges from the gift-wrapping.

C.M.B.

The Jon Baker Trophy

It has been decided that the annual award of the Jon Baker Trophy for the best article in 'Midland Mail' will be judged at the January Committee Meeting and the Trophy presented, along with the Annual Competition awards, at the February meeting.

A CASE OF THE WERGS

No one knows when the Lewis family expect to draw back the curtains on a Sunday morning. On Sunday 7th October it had to be early. Through silent Smethwick streets, cars were converging on Rathbone Road for an assignment of unusual importance. Pencils pointed, the chosen few were to search for The Wergs, The Trumpet and Wooden-Box.

There was Ches, veteran of unnumbered encounters with the dark and dateless connurbations of Warwickshire. He partnered Trevor, co-opted for his misplaced sense of fun and capacity to blunt pencils. Steph arrived with MHY; both acknowledged experts in their chosen fields - one could write, the other could read. Eric was needed to brew uncharted fathoms of tea (and because he lived there) while his better half provided a much-needed mental dossier of obscure villages and a lunch fit for kings. There was an office boy hired in the south midlands, capable of sharpening a good pencil but never allowed to sit down in case he sullied the furniture.

With scarcely a glance at the clock, they applied themselves to their work with an enthusiasm tempered in the white heat of Eric's coffee or, in one case, something encapsulated in glass by a Mr Bell. "C1, D4, C4" - the codes echoed around the otherwise silent room. "Llanrhaiadr yn Mochnant ?" "No, Llansaintffraid yn Mechan !" Few could do other than admire the sangfroid: you could cut it with a knife.

The afternoon wore on. Hands became heavy, eyes moist with the effort. The A Team threw in their hand. The B Team were having an argument about Sudbury; was it a suburb of Birmingham ? The C Team were brewing yet more tea. Shadows lengthened and Nooky came in for supper. It was time to go - enough was enough.

It had been a job well done, perhaps a mite overdone. In a mere seven hours they had searched six volumes of the Steel Impression Books for those Midland UDCs....

* * * * *



GREAT BRITAIN

AND

COMMONWEALTH



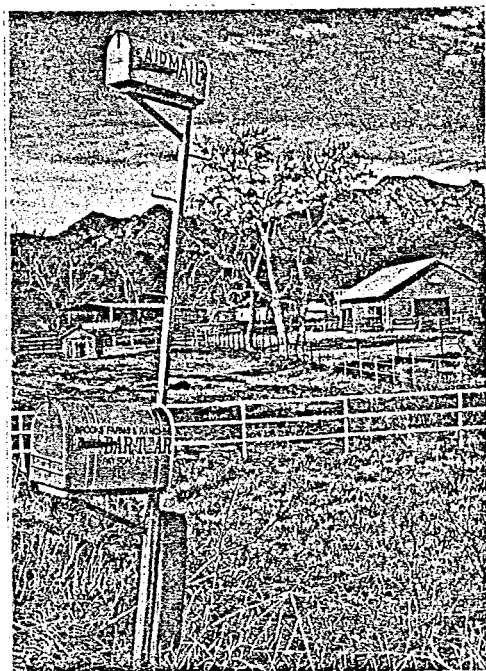
COVERS

1. WARWICKS 1823 Entire letter from Bristol to Ludlow showing a fine example of the variety "MISSENT/ / ? / BIRMINGHAM" (Missing 'TO'). This was probably due to a worn handstamp. Mileage mark "BRISTOL/122" on reverse. £40.
2. WARWICKS 1767 E.L. to London showing fine example of the two line "BIRMINGHAM" (43x18) & London Bishop mark. £40.
3. WARWICKS 1836 Entire to Peterborough with a fine clear strike of the "LEAMINGTON/- PENNY POST" in black with the Boxed "No1" receiving house in red. Listed in OXLEY as RARE. (5-10 examples) £32.
4. GLOS 1824. E.L. from London to Chippenham showing a lovely strike of the circular "CHELTENHAM/101" prefixed by Manuscript "MISSENT TO.." making a very fine "MISSENT TO/ CHELTENHAM". Entire clean & uncreased. £45.
5. MALTA 1943 Cover used from EGYPT to Malta. The cover was sent from Alexandria where a GVI 3d stamp was put on. This was not valid for postage which was signified by the mark . Postage due was charged in Malta. 2x2d + 1d. The cover also shows the Egyptian censor mark "M/Censorship Dept..". An attractive and scarce commercial useage. £75.
6. MAURITIUS 1911 Postcard showing The Market, port Louis used to Paris bearing 6cents tied by c.d.s. "PILLAR BOX/PORT LOUIS". £12.

WE ARE NOW BUILDING UP STOCKS OF COMMONWEALTH POSTAL HISTORY AND FAR EAST, ESP. CHINA, THAILAND ETC. WE ARE KEEN TO BUY SINGLE ITEMS, COLLECTIONS ETC. IF YOU HAVE ANY SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS, DO LET US KNOW AND WE WILL SEND PHOTOSTATS OF ANYTHING THAT COMES INTO STOCK.



Michael A. Harris, P.T.S., B.P.F. Telephone: 01-836 9291
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Tailpiece

Rural mailboxes pictured in Arizona, USA.

Herefordshire Postal History

Roger Broomfield, our Herefordshire County Editor, is President of the Herefordshire and Mid Wales Philatelic Society. On the evening of 5th December, he will be giving a display with a strong postal history bias at St Martin's Parish Centre, Hereford. Any of our members who wish to attend will be made most welcome.

The Next 'Midland Mail'

The next issue of 'Midland Mail' is due to appear, far too soon, on 11th January. Readers may have noted that at least one 'trailed' item has had to be held over from this number and there can be no promise that order will be fully restored so soon after Christmas. However, a major article on the Private, 5th Clause and Penny Post provisions at Newcastle-under-Lyme, hinted at on an earlier page, will surely appear. We have items concerning the well-known Midland beauty spots of Cleobury Mortimer and Halesowen and, of course, the concluding part of Denis Salt's illustrated article on the Shifnal and Ironbridge Penny Posts. Much more is in the pipeline and, before the end of the season, we hope for literary masterpieces on towns (and even counties) we have never featured before. Don't forget - place a regular order with your newsagent.

A MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR TO YOU ALL.

Send for a copy of my latest list of GB cover material from 1840 onwards. It contains a wide selection of interesting and unusual items - county material, difficult values and rates, from 1840 to date.

All 'Wants Lists' receive my personal attention.



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