

MIDLAND MAIL

THE JOURNAL OF THE MIDLAND (GB) POSTAL HISTORY SOCIETY

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Number 177, January 2013

It is with great sadness that we report the death of Sadie Cole and we offer our condolences to her family. My thanks are due to Frank Bennett for the following appreciation of Sadie.

Sadie Cole

Sadie Cole was a unique and lovely Lady and a devoted wife to Mike and a Mother of two sons Bob and Ian.

I first met Sadie in the early 1980s at the Hereford & Mid-Wales Philatelic Society meetings. We struck up an immediate friendship because of our mutual interest in Postal History and the social history that accompanied it. Some of the banter between us was not understood by the stamp collectors in the Society. Sadie was a superb postal historian who built up a unique and comprehensive collection of Radnorshire. When giving a display she would take great delight in producing an item that referred to Hereford Postal History knowing full well that I would mutter: "In the wrong collection". Despite living some 30 miles from Hereford, she and Mike travelled to most meetings braving inclement weather in the winter months, she was an extremely active member of the Hereford Society. She was a committee member and then Secretary between 1983 and 1993. She became Junior Vice President in 1995 and then President in 1998 and 1999. Sadie won the Society's annual postal history competition on several occasions. As well as being a member of the Midland Postal History Society Sadie was also a member of the Welsh Philatelic Society and won their egg cup competition more than once. Her Philatelic interests were supported by Mike who is a keen stamp collector himself.

Sadie joined the teaching profession in 1975. As part of her teacher training she produced a paper on the Aldridge Brick making industry and she also participated in various archaeological "digs" which is further proof of her interest in history.

Sadie and Mike were married in 1956 and moved to Discoed from Birmingham in 1976. She was an active member of the local church in Discoed which is very close to their home and she and Mike were instrumental in raising funds for its renovation, she was also a keen gardener and lover of the countryside.

Sadie touched many lives and she will be sadly missed by all of us who had the privilege of knowing her.

Frank Bennett

CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations are due to Clive Jones for his entry '*Early Mail by Midland Mails*' which was awarded 85 points and assessed as 'Gold Standard' in the sixteen sheet individual competition at the Midland Federation's Autumn Convention at Knowle.

AUCTION LOTS

Eric Lewis asks that auction lots should be handed to him preferably by the date of the February meeting, though he may be able to accept some at the March meeting at the very latest. Alternatively lots may be sent by post to Eric Lewis, 27 Rathbone Road, Smethwick, B67 3JG. Please remember to give a valuation and a reserve, and that there is a minimum valuation of £3.

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

On 16th February we visit the Black Country Museum, Dudley DY1 4SQ when, starting at 1.30 p.m., Gordon Hardy will display '*Derbyshire Postal History*'.

Then on 2nd March our meeting will be held in conjunction with the Streetly Society Fair at the Collingwood Centre, Great Barr. At 1.30 p.m. members will display one board on the theme '*Bookpost and Printed Paper Rate*'. Please note that there will be a Committee Meeting at 11 a.m.

Our Annual General Meeting will be held on 27th April at St Germain's Church Hall, Birmingham, starting at 1 p.m. It will promptly be followed by our annual auction at 1.30 p.m. Lots will be available for viewing from 11 a.m. Full details will be given in the auction catalogue which will be distributed with the next Midland Mail in early April.

LIBRARY CATALOGUE

Several members have pointed out that a page is missing from the catalogue which was distributed to all members with the last issue of Midland Mail. This was not noticed when the catalogues were being put in envelopes to send to members. Our printers have now printed the missing page which is enclosed for you to add to the catalogue. We do have a very extensive library, so please do make use of it. Our librarian, Eric Lewis, can be contacted on 0121 4291222 and will take books to a meeting or, if necessary, will post them.

A POSTAL MUSEUM AT LAST?

The news that a postal museum will be built at Calthorpe Place, close to the present site of Postal Heritage, is very welcome, and I am sure that the facilities will be first class. However, the news does raise some questions in my mind to which no clear answers seem ever to have been given. Why was the museum in Swindon abandoned? The withdrawal of a source of finance, the source of which has never been made clear, is the unsatisfactory answer given. Yet, finance seems to be available for the new project. Strange. Then, it would be interesting to know how much money was spent on the abortive project in Swindon. Did the site in Calthorpe Place suddenly become available or was it vacant during the time that the preparative work at Swindon was being done? I usually do not take conspiracy theories seriously, but there is something here that, to my cynical mind, seems rather unusual. Do I detect a hint of 'we cannot have a national museum outside London'? The railway museum at York seems to do well, apart from wasting a lot of money on a useless A3!

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THE NOVEMBER MEETING

The theme for our meeting at Carrs Lane Church on 10th November was '*Recent Acquisitions or Recently Written Up*'. Clive Jones began the afternoon with some superb railway material. We saw two missent marks of the North Western R.P.O., a Midland District Sorting Carriage mark struck in blue, a letter from London to Ulverston with seven 1d adhesives and showing missent marks of Birmingham and the Midland R.P.O., and a cover from the Derby & St Pancras Sorting Tender.

Mick Gill started with a 1759 letter from Blyth in Nottinghamshire with a straight-line Bawtry mark, Bawtry being the post town for several villages in the north of Nottinghamshire. Next came two items, one a 'Free', from the 1800s to the Kingston Arms, Newark which had earlier names of the Cardinal's Hat, the Talbot and later the Clinton arms. This coaching inn has associations with Nevison (the highwayman, Quick Nick), Lord Byron and William Gladstone who made his first political speech from one of its windows. Two free fonts both dated 25th November 1813 came next. Two Newark Penny Post items from Thorney to Newark were followed by an 1844 envelope from Mansfield to Bournemouth, readdressed to Wimborne with a second 1r red stuck over the first. A superb example of the proper use of an 'anonymous' registration label was followed by the only recorded example of a Nottinghamshire rubber skeleton used in 1812. Finally Mick showed a postcard of Granby post office acquired only the previous Saturday.

Two 'Ride Letter' envelopes dating from 1848 and 1860 were the first items shown by Alan Marshall. A very unusual item was a pre-addressed form of a Nottingham solicitor which had been folded inside out and posted without an address or stamp at Boston on 31st December 1845. The item was opened in London to reveal a Nottingham address; a manuscript '2' was applied and the item posted on 1st January 1846. A 1953 Coronation FDC was sent to the Seychelles where it was endorsed with a manuscript 'left colony – return to sender'. The item arrived back in London on 3rd September. We then saw five covers with UDC marks, one of which was from Barton-in-Fabis and the others from Kingston-on-Soar. Three of the latter also carried strikes of the Kegworth UDC. Alan ended with three postcards from c1910 of Bunny village, one of which showed the post office.

The next man in to bat was Peter Elms who showed two superb Mulreadies. One was sent from Birmingham to London, the other from Stourport to Birmingham. An illustrated letterhead showing bellows with a reversible pipe, presumably for the expulsion of air was particularly eye-catching.

Brian Atkins began by explaining how one of his covers was illustrated on the front of the November issue of *American Philatelist*; it had been used in an article related to genealogy. His first page had a scan of the front of the magazine together with the 1877 cover from Ellesmere to Philadelphia used in the article. The genealogical theme continued with an 1820 entire addressed to Samuel Sandbach, whose son had inherited, by marriage, Bryngwyn Hall in the village of Bwlch y Cibau, a sub-office of Oswestry. This was followed by three covers from the 1880s addressed to two of Sandbach's grandsons in India; one sent from Oswestry in 1880 was franked with a 6d grey but had been overpaid by one penny as the route via Brindisi had been reduced to 5d days earlier. Of particular note was a beautiful cover sent in 1879 from Shrewsbury to Sohagpore, India correctly franked with an 8d orange. [I do not remember seeing one of these on cover before.] The Sandbach name cropped up again with a 1910 cover from Roorke Cantonment and a 1918 cover from Jamaica with two GV 1½d stamps each overprinted 'WAR STAMP', both to Bryngwyn Hall. We next saw a number of covers sent to the USA. A 'Retaliatory Rate' cover of November 1848 to Wisconsin was fully paid both in the UK and the US. Rather unusual was an 1889 cover from Whitchurch which was franked at 2/1 – ten times the basic rate. Brian's final item was a 1d stationery cover sent in 1872 from Clun showing the scarce 080 cancel of that village together with the small straight-line datestamp on the reverse.

We remained in Shropshire with Guy Bridge's display. Guy began with a notice concerning coaches at the Talbot Inn in Shrewsbury. We then saw a letter written by Thomas Telford, followed by a cover showing the 078 cancel of Brampton Bryan and then one with the Ironbridge UDC used in the Shifnal Penny Post. A skeleton of Shrewsbury, used on 7th October 1840 was struck on a penny black cover. Guy ended with two more skeletons – one from Whitchurch used on 22nd January 1840, and the other 'SHIFFNAL' was struck in blue.

Derek Smeathers said that all his items had been acquired in the last twelve months. He began with three very attractive engraved letter-heads, the first of which was on a letter of 1845 from a maker of waterproof covers for carts and wagons. This was cancelled by the Peterborough double-arc cds with arcs at the bottom (unusual at Peterborough). The other two related to the shoe industry. One was from sent in 1891 by a dealer in shoe-making machinery to southern France and was hand written in French. The last one, from a shoe manufacturer had a booklet with it which contained an article about the first Royal Mail aerial parcel post in 1911 carrying footwear from this firm. Still on the footwear theme, a 1926 letter from a Northampton maker of football boots was addressed to Hawaii T.H. and sent for a halfpenny being stamped 'Printed Paper Rate'. Does anyone know what T.H. stood for? A 1932 air mail cover from South Africa had the air fee unpaid so postage due adhesives were applied at Northampton. These were cancelled with a black cross handstamp which may have been made locally. A registered cover from the Wellingborough sub-office of Doddington Road with the rubber datestamp showing DODDINGTON RP, the last letter being a 'd' upside down. Derek's final cover was cancelled by a Krag machine at Irlingborough on 30th December 1966. This was the first that Derek had seen. Does anyone have another.

Bryan Jones entertained us with some superb postcards of Warwickshire post offices, including, Bearley, Chadwick End, Lower Quinton, Lapworth (a lovely card) and Lapworth Street. At Shottery the post office was in a garden shed which was so small that there was room in it for only two people at a time. We then saw a number of Post Office forms followed by a cover with the straight-line mark of Studley. A most unusual item was a cover showing three different UDCs – Tanworth struck in blue, Ullenhall in red and Hockley Heath in red. Bryan ended with a 1944 registered cover from RAF Wellesbourne.

Some very interesting material relating to needlemakers formed much of Chris Jackson's display. The first item sent from Wm Bartlett & Sons from Redditch in 1841 was a penny black cover. This was followed by a cover from S. Thomas & Sons to New York in 1866 endorsed 'pr Arago via Southampton'. We then saw a variety of miscellaneous items including perfins, advertising circles and letter-heads. A cover sent from Malvern Wells to Bewdley was cancelled with the B72 duplex mark, and was followed by a letter of 1932 sent from Tristan da Cunha to Malvern. Chris' final item was the PUC £1 used on a letter from Sidbury to College Yard, Worcester.

After the usual shot of caffeine it was the turn of Richard Farman who showed us a variety of material connected with the carriage of early newspapers in the post. We saw a number of items which had been franked by appropriate Clerk of the Road. Richard Biggs of the West Road had franked a 1714 copy of the Evening Post. Another from London to Barrow had passed through the hands of John Jennings. There was an invoice from Daniel Stow the Clerk of the Chester Road. A copy of the Cambridge Chronicle had been sent in a 'Free' wrapper. There were a number of items to do with Parliamentary Proceedings. Richard ended with a copy of the Evening Post sent to Reading on 28th October 1715 which described the progress of the Scottish rebels.

Paul Bradshaw produced a range of Daventry material, largely from the eighteenth century. He began with a two-line mark from 1732 which is the earliest known Daventry mark in private hands. This was followed by covers showing different straight line marks from 1743, 1774, 1779 and 1783. An example of the first type mileage mark was followed by an example of the straight-line mark that has been recorded used between 1789 and 1798. There was a very nice strike of the typical marks, 4mm in height, used between 1799 and 1801. Paul's was on a cover dated 12th May 1801, the latest known date of use. We saw a strike of the very rare 'BRANNSTON' of Braunston from October 1837. Paul ended with two strikes in red of the boxed mileage mark of Daventry.

At this point your reporter had to leave so as to be home in time for an evening engagement, and he is very grateful to Bryan Jones for making notes for me on the rest of the meeting.

Roy Summers displayed a range of material from Wolverhampton, including the earliest known mileage mark in 1803, a variety of duplex marks and a 1908 Express Letter.

Mel Matthews showed early wall mounted post boxes. The first three types were all made by Smith & Hanks of Birmingham. The Type 1 was made in 1857, the Type 2 in 1860 and the large Type 3 in 1871. The Type 4 was made by W.T. Allen of London in 1881. These were followed by pictures of some 'ornamental edifices' with free standing buildings (often ornate) with built in posting boxes.

There was then time for a few second helpings. Mick Gill showed a selection of railway letters followed by mail from various P.O.W. camps – Boughton Camp, Colbaton Camp and Nether Headen. He finished with John Player printed economy labels circa WWII.

Bryan Jones produced a further selection from Stratford and South Warwickshire among which were the ornate 'No 1' from the Castle End receiving house in Kenilworth, a much redirected item from 1906, an example of the PostShop Stratford datestamp (probably the only recorded use), a 'rubber' and registered letter from Whitchurch (Stratford) and the temporary handstamp of Wilmcote used while awaiting closure in 2009.

Derek Smeathers showed six letters sent by a family of Towcester solicitors between 1792 and 1804. One of these was to a London coffee house, the others were sent to 'Salop'. These had carried one half of a £20 or £50 note plus, in one case, the follow up letter containing the second half. Then Derek produced six letters to or from the Brudenell Family at Deene Park in the northeast of Northamptonshire. Of these the earliest was sent in 1654 to Lord Brudenell and the latest was written in March 1841 by the 7th Earl of Cardigan (a Brudenell) who would lead the Charge of the Light Brigade in October 1854.

Richard Farman displayed more newspaper wrappers, some with up-rated charges. One was a rare example of a registered wrapper while another was addressed to the Dutch West Indies.

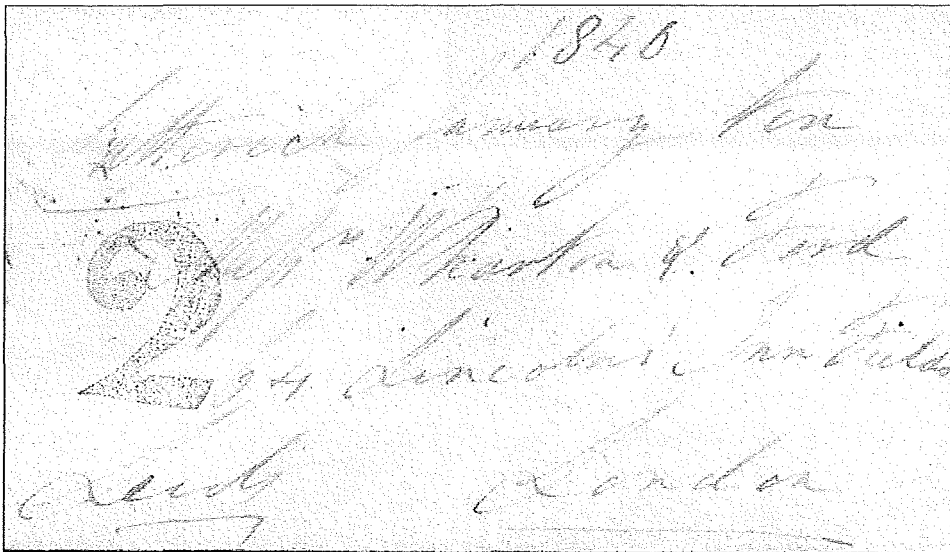
As is usual on the afternoons devoted to displays by members, it was a very interesting and enjoyable meeting with a wide range of material on display.

I would like to offer my heartfelt thanks to those members who provided descriptions of their displays.

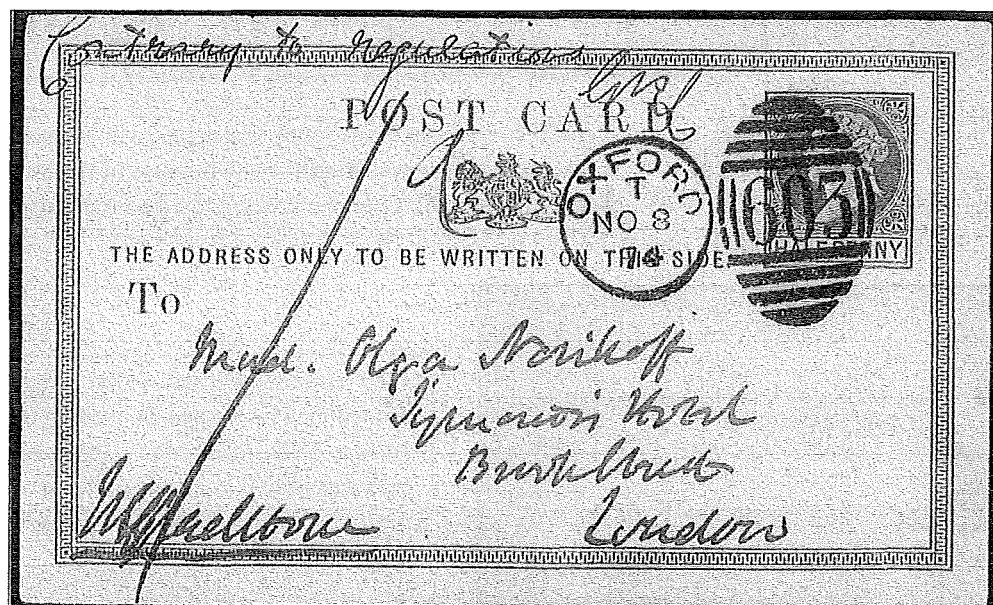
THE DECEMBER MEETING

Richard Farman invariably provides something special for our annual meeting at Burton-on-Trent and this year was not an exception. On 8th December, Patrick Frost treated us to a superb display of 'Great Britain Postage Due Mail, 1839 to the Present Day'. In the two sessions Patrick surely produced an example of every conceivable way in which an item could have been liable to a postal surcharge. The scope of the display can be seen from part of Patrick's introduction. 'This display shows how postage due charges were calculated and collected and the charge and explanatory mark used on such mail from the introduction of additional postage due charges in 1839; it includes all such mail sent to or within Great Britain as well as mail from where the British Post Office applied postage due handstamps or collected the charge.'

I soon realised on starting to write this report that it was impossible to do any semblance of justice to Patrick's display, of over fifty frames, in anything less than the thirty-two pages of the booklet that Patrick distributed at the meeting. So, I have chosen instead to show a few of the illustrations to give those that were not there an indication of the range of material. I thank Patrick for giving permission for this and Richard for yet another superb day.



Unpaid cover posted at Catterick on 10th January 1840, the first day of Uniform Penny Postage, showing the first day of use of the '2' charge mark.



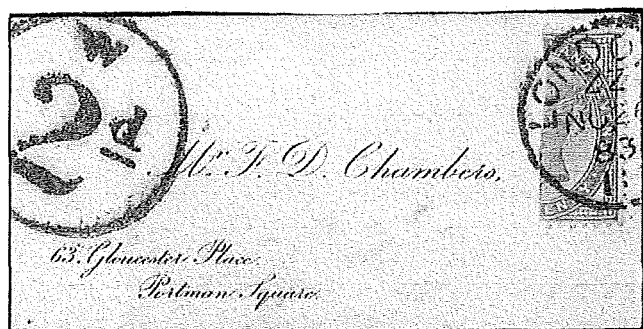
1874 1/2d postcard from the Prime Minister, William Gladstone, signed by him in the corner. As a result it is endorsed 'Contrary to Regulations' and charged 1d.



1894 1/2d postcard posted on the South Wales Sorting Carriage Night Up, handstamped 'Posted without Late Fee' with the unusual '1^D/Late Fee' charge mark.



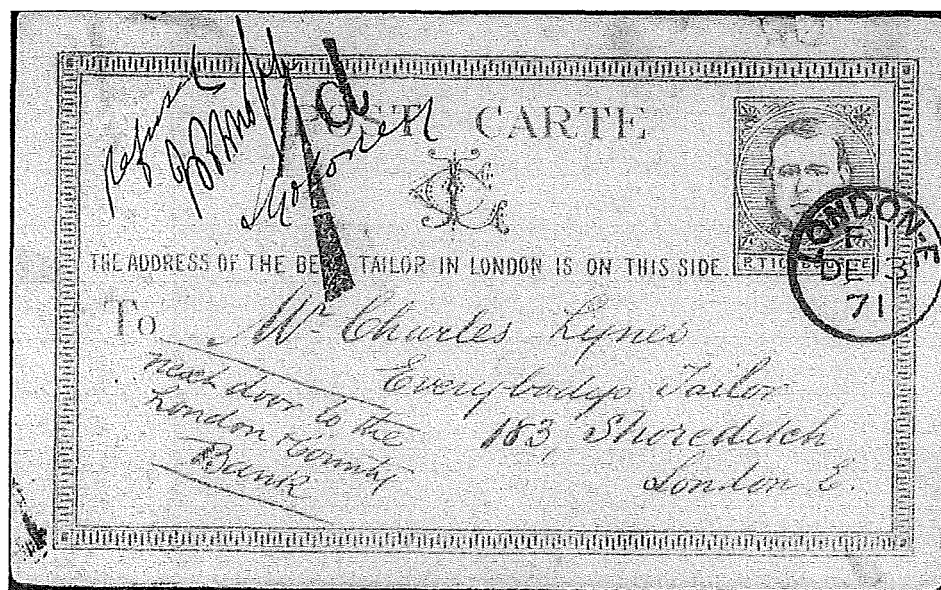
1870 cover from New South Wales paid via Marseille but diverted to the more expensive Brindisi route because of the Franco-Prussian War and charged 3d. Charge increased to 4d on redirection.



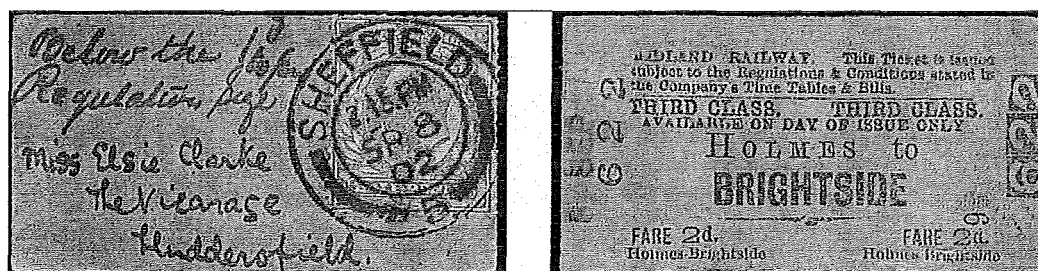
1883 visiting card sent within London at the printed matter rate and franked by a bisected 1d lilac. The stamp was disallowed and the card charged 2d as an unpaid letter.



1925 unpaid cover from Tristan da Cunha sent via Melbourne and charged the single 1½d rate which was collected by Irish 1d and British ½d postage due stamps.



1871 advertising card which imitates the ½d Post Office issue postcard but shows R. Tichbourne in the 'stamp'. It was posted in London and charged 1d.



1902 Holmes to Brightside 3rd class railway ticket, posted two days later from Sheffield to Huddersfield franked ½d. Endorsed 'Below the Regulation Size 1^d to pay'.

SOME SURCHARGED ITEMS FROM LEICESTERSHIRE

PRINTED PAPER RATE.

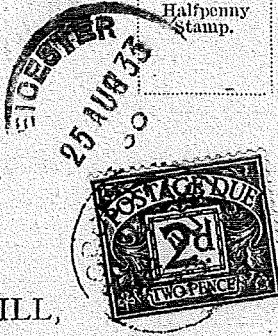
UNPAID 2^d TO PAY
POSTED TOO LATE FOR ½^d RATE
449

Mr. CHAS. A. W. SAXTON, J.P.,

67 RAINBOW HILL,

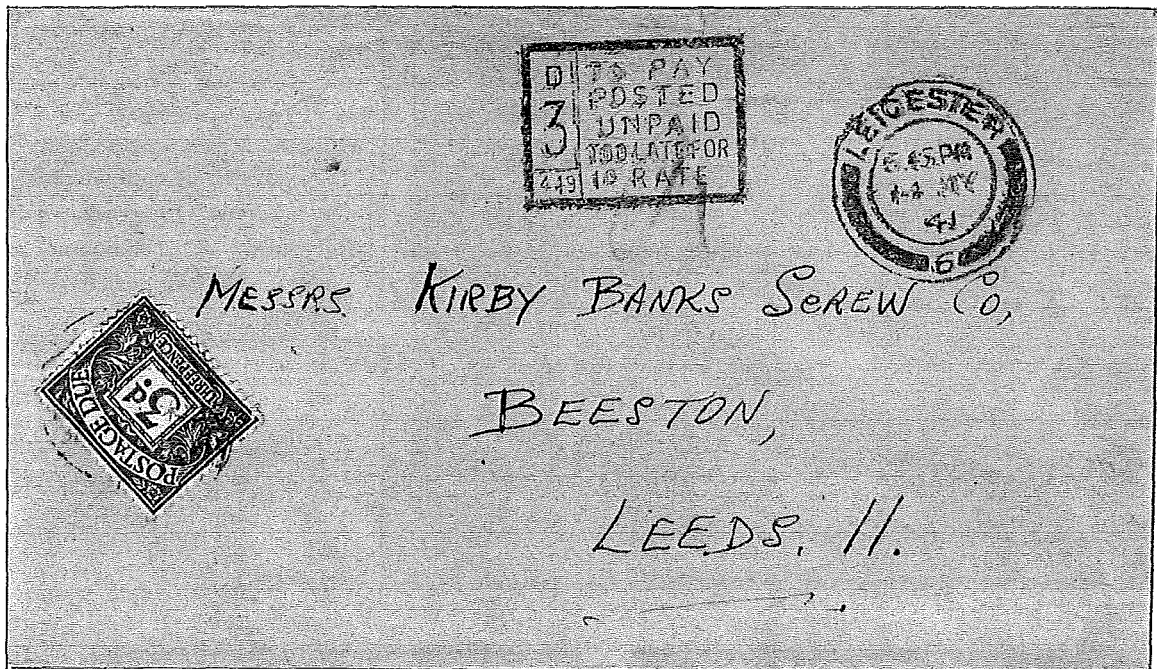
WORCESTER.

Halfpenny
Stamp.



When the minimum rate for printed papers was reduced to ½d on 29th May 1922 an additional charge of ½d was introduced for items which could not be posted before the 'cut-off' time, usually 4.15 p.m.

The card was posted too late for the ½d charge and so was charged 1d. As the item had been posted unpaid this fee was doubled to 2d.



On 1st May 1940 the rate for printed papers was increased to 1d for item weighing up to 2 oz. This item attracted a surcharge of ½d which was then doubled to 3d.

Below are two items which infringed the Printed Paper Rate regulations by being produced on a typewriter.



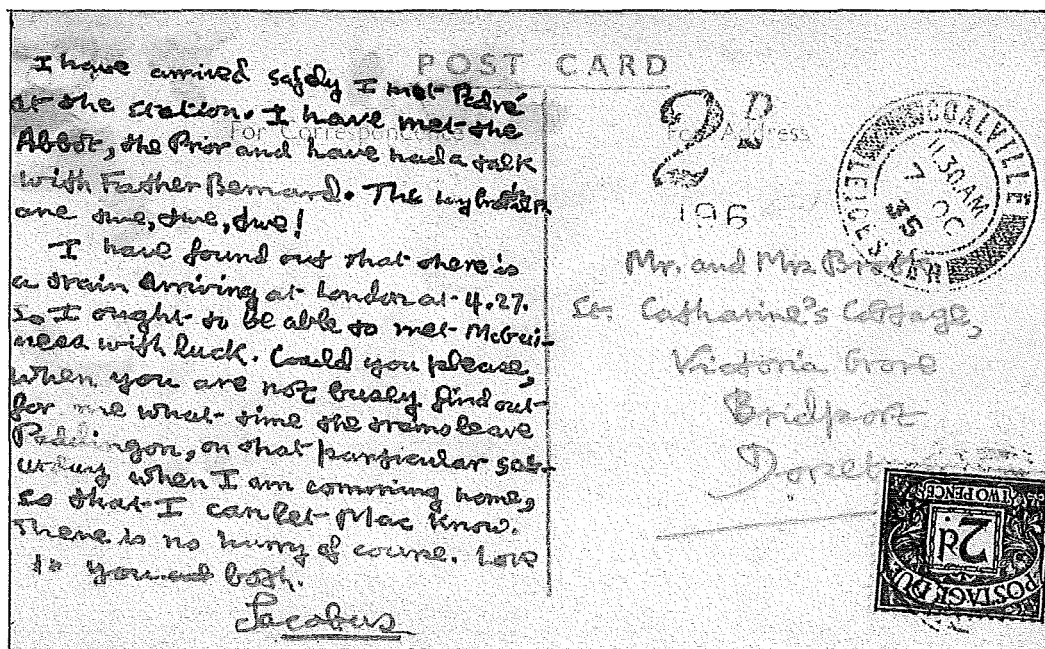
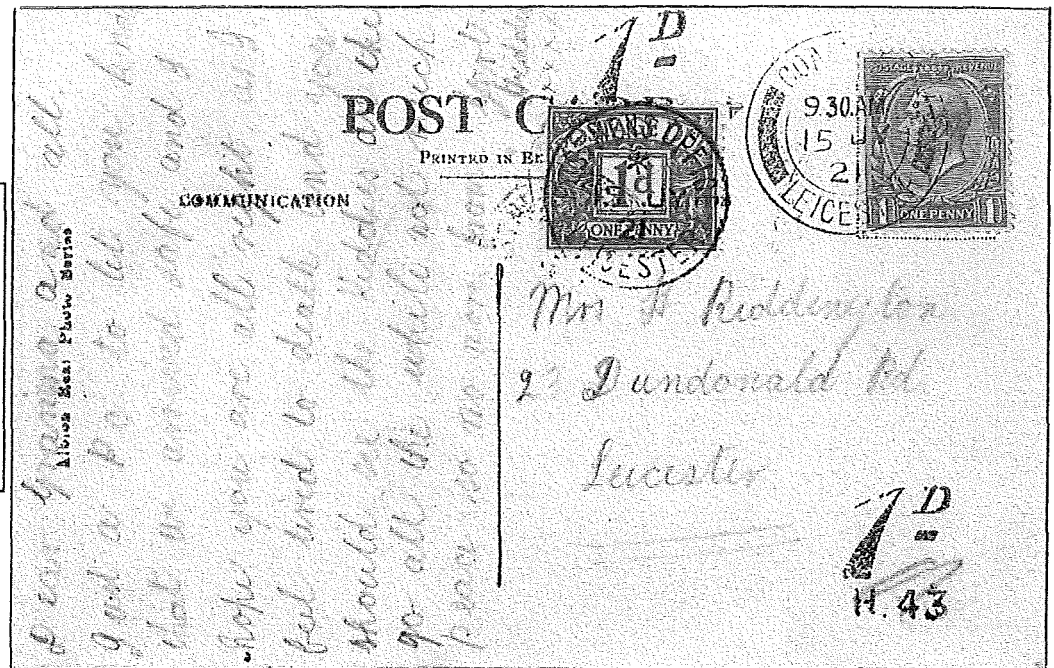
From 29th May 1922 to the 30th April 1940 the rate for postcards was 1d. The deficiency in this case was ½d so the card was surcharged 1d – twice the deficiency.



From 14th May 1923 to the 30th April 1940 the minimum rate for letters was 1½d. The item which was posted on 24th February 1940 was unsealed but contained a letter in typewriting characters. It was surcharged 2d – twice the difference between the Printed Paper Rate and the Letter Rate.

Up to about 1930 Coalville was allocated the number H 43. Thereafter, it was allocated 196, previously used at Chirk.

A card posted on 15th July 1921 and struck with the '1^d/H 43 handstamp of Coalville. From 3rd June 1921 to 28th May 1922 the rate for postcards was 1½d. The card was surcharged 1d – twice the deficiency of ½d.



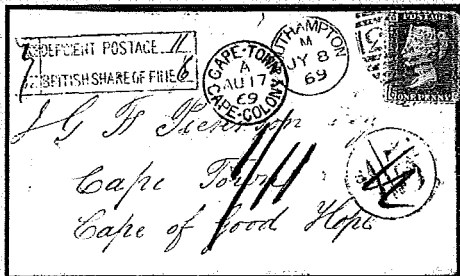
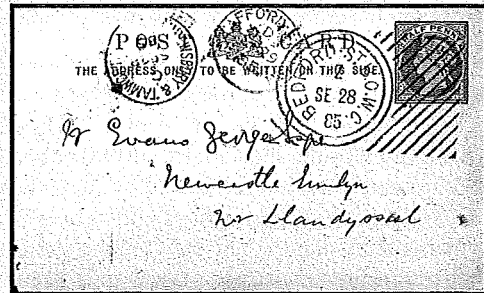
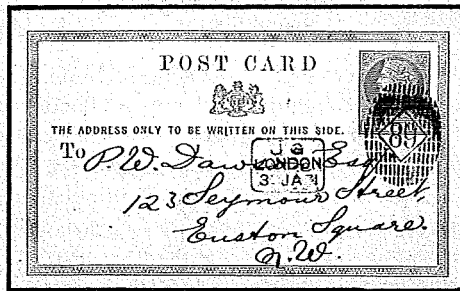
A postcard sent unpaid which shows the refectory at Mount St Bernards Abbey near Coalville. The message suggests that it was written at the Abbey. From 29th May 1922 to 30th April 1940 the rate for postcards was 1d. So the card was surcharged 2d – twice the deficiency. It would appear that the sender was a GWR supporter for he chose to travel from Paddington rather than Waterloo.



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BINGHAM – NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

by Alan Marshall

The final work prior to the release of the Nottinghamshire information for the Society's update of the Midland Counties in the British County Catalogue prompted a critical appraisal of the Bingham content. I welcome any comments, criticisms, additional information and recommendations on the contents of this article.

I have arrived at the conclusions that follow on the study of twenty-eight items that I own and twelve that are either in other collections or in dealers' stock. All of these have Bingham postmarks struck during the period 1795 to 1845. Since the post office in Bingham was a private concern operating with the authority of the Post Office, it is accepted that many unique types of postmark exist. For example, the marks NG 16, 18 and 20 used from 1835 to 1840 are only recognised and recorded by the size of the word Bingham, whether in upper or lower case letters with various additional asterisks, stops and the date all in one line.

Initially a focus on the 27 x 4 mm NG20 mark, supposedly recorded in the nine year period 1831 to 1840 in black and red, highlighted only three examples in a seventeen month period from June 1839 to October 1840 but all in black. It is not believed, based on the information to hand, that this stamp was in use four years earlier than NG 16. Secondly, NG 24 a U.P.P. handstruck '1', supposedly recorded 1840 to 1845 in red, had not been seen within the last fifteen years nor during the time of the previous County Editor.

Chris Beaver used to argue 'If you cannot find the proof then don't accept it nor repeat it.' With this in mind, having queried collectors, dealers and other sources, I reached the conclusion that:

- (a) Bingham never used red ink in the period 1831 to 1840;
- (b) the odd looking handstruck '1' was probably applied elsewhere en route, listed in error and so should be deleted.

At the very point of going to print, yes, what very often happens did occur and so a sizeable section of the article had to be rewritten. None other than our Secretary, Mick Gill, on looking through the books in a collection built up by a recently deceased friend, selected one with the title 'Postal reform & The Penny Black'. This book was written by Douglas N Muir at that time the Curator of Philately at the National Postal Museum and published in 1990. On page 91 there is a coloured illustration, flanked by two other items, of a cover from Bingham to Nottingham displaying on the front a BINGHAM in capital letters with a date of Ap 10 in red and, as if by magic, a handstruck '1' also in red alongside a manuscript 'Paid'. This was finally proof that both the Bingham mark and the handstruck '1' do exist in red. Whether or not the handstruck '1' was in existence until 1845 as the existing catalogue lists is a debatable point considering that NG 20 is only proven to date in black until October 1840.

Analysis of the facts available is as follows.

Observation, particularly of the letter 'A' and measurement of the BINGHAM illustration in the Willcocks & Jay catalogue clearly point to it being an example of NG 16. A length of 22mm equates to an approximate copying reduction of 36% in relation to an actual length of 35 mm. If the reduction of the odd looking handstruck '1' alongside (thick and squashed appearance with double serifs at the top and bottom similar to a letter I) is the same, then its actual height would be 5.5 mm and not 7 mm as listed. No NG 16 mark with an 1840 date has been found which suggests that the handstruck '1' has to be on a cover with an NG 20 mark as now located. So where did this 'I' come from?

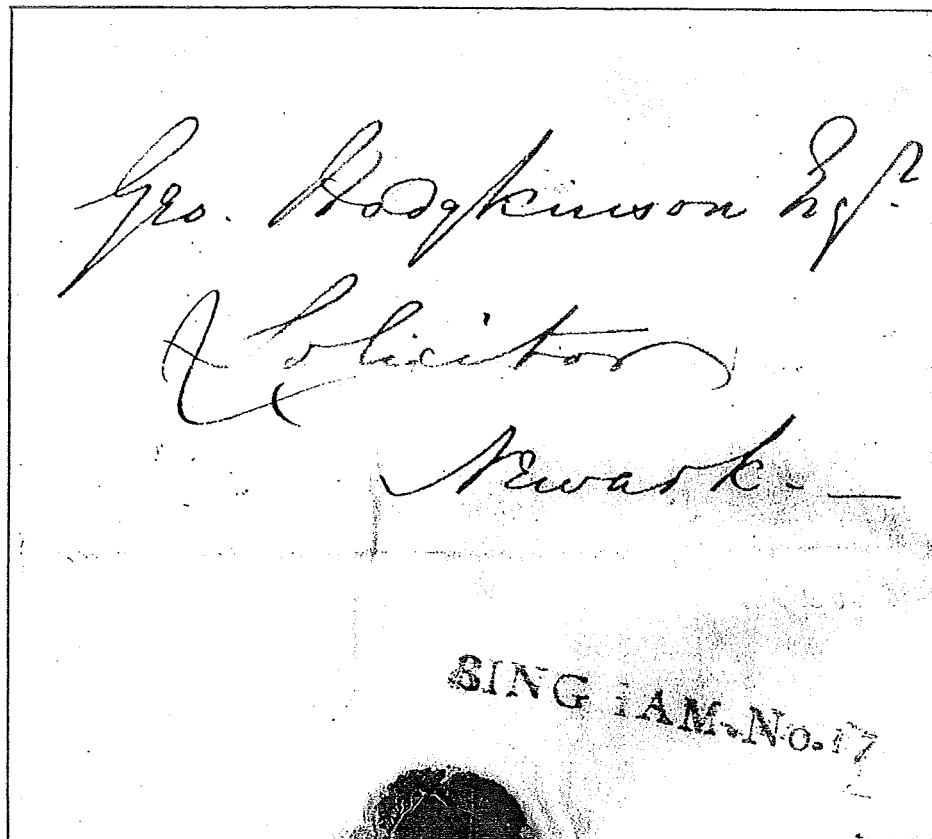
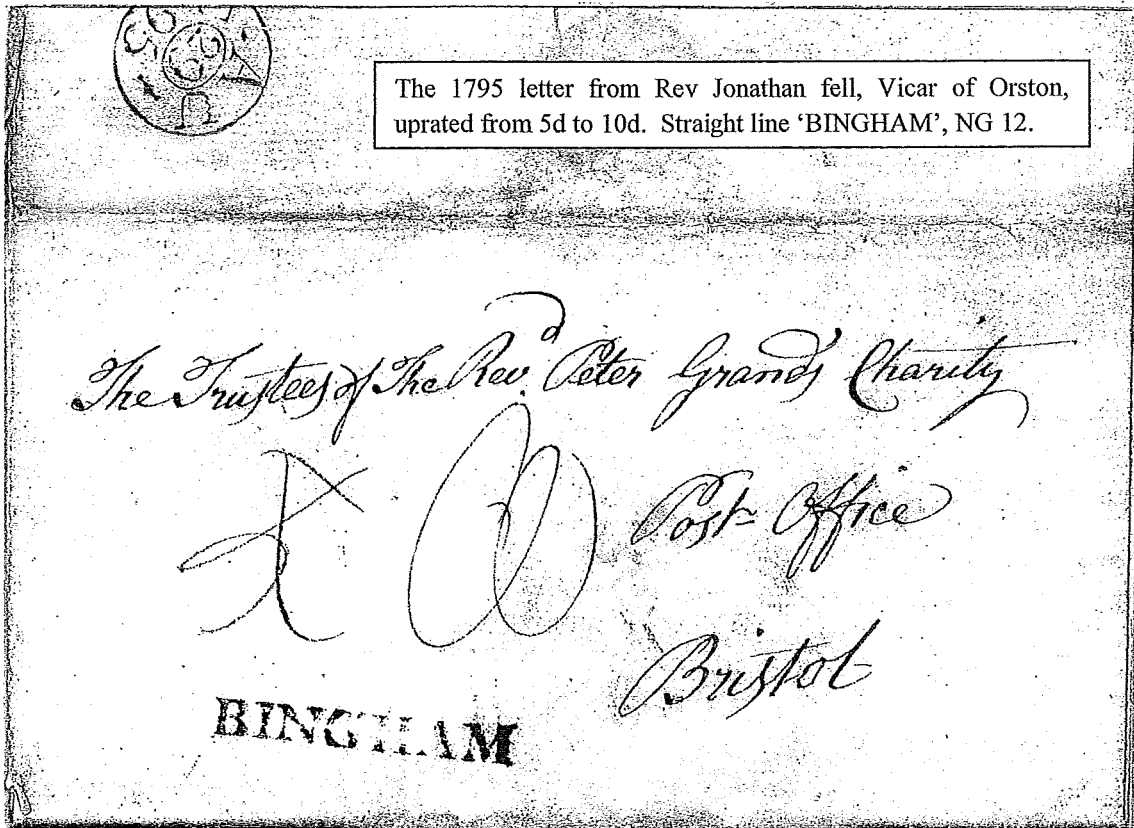
The illustration of the item in the Museum is also clearly reduced in size. This time it is considered to be approximately 84% of the actual size. A copied length of 22.5 mm equating to an actual length of 27 mm identifies the mark as NG20. The handstruck '1' reduced by the same amount gives an actual height of 6.4 mm compared with the 7 mm listed. This mark is of excellent quality being a clear slim-line strike with double serifs at the bottom and a single serif at the top left. There can be no argument that this handstruck '1' should replace the one in the existing catalogue, and at 6.5 mm could, in line with an agreed rounding up policy, stay at 7 mm with an archive reference.

With the only one to surface being in an archive indicates that someone realised its extreme rarity to have placed it there. We are fortunate to have located it now, with an acknowledgement to the advice of Chris Beaver to delete unless proven.

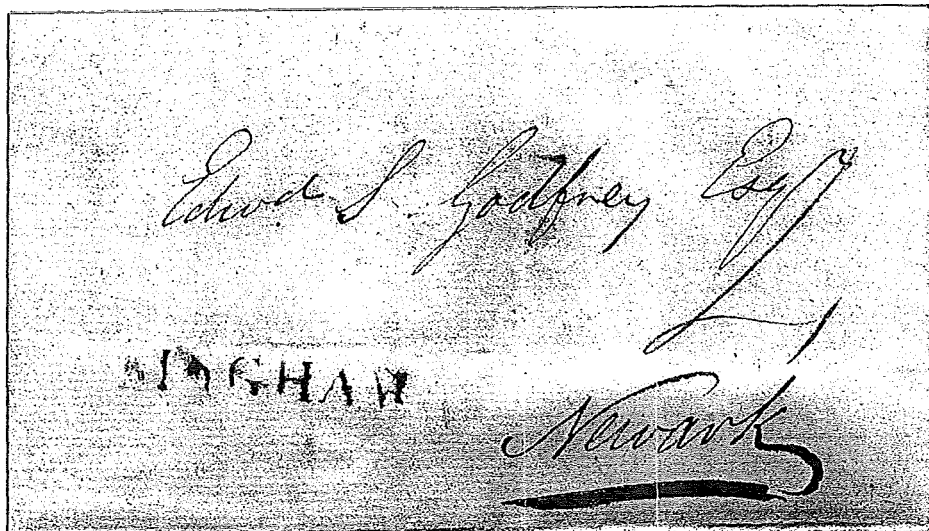
To continue, John Strong was not paid a salary by the Post Office. The postal rates authorised by the authorities¹ list the payment of one penny for:

- (i) every letter received not put into the letter box;
- (ii) every letter and newspaper delivered at the office;
- (iii) for all letters directed for adjacent villages with twopence extra if above one mile, three pence above two miles etc.

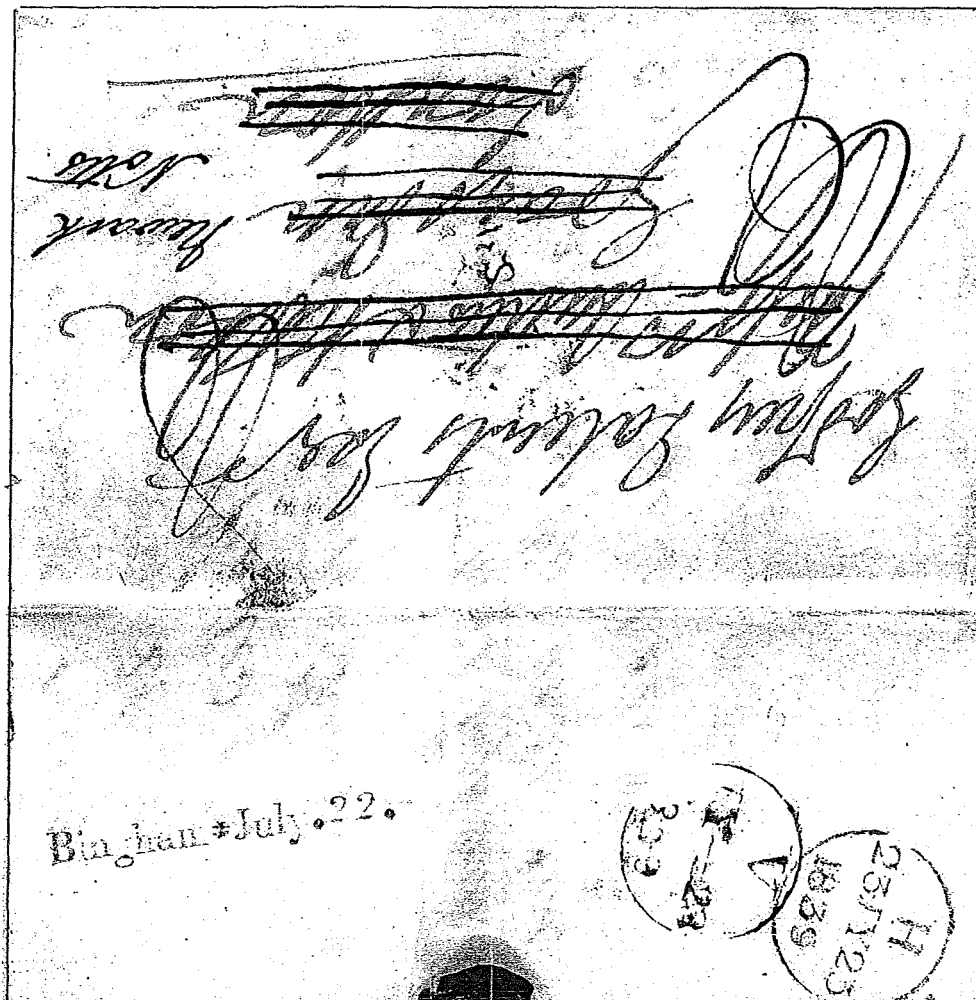
This equates to one penny a mile over and above the one penny listed in item (ii) which in total amounted to £70 p.a. in 1836 in lieu of salary. A running account kept for the postal authorities is the reason why no rates were applied to local mail at the Bingham office, other than the national rates when an item was put into the General Post.



A letter from Rev Girardot of Carcolston but written at Newton.
 17th November 1838. NG 16.



The letter of 20th March 1809 with a strike of NG 13 – 'BInGHAM' with a lower case 'n' and 'A' 4 mm in height.



A letter of 22nd July 1839 which shows a strike of NG 18 and which was redirected to Newark for which it was surcharged?.

A survey of the number of marks recorded in the period 1795 to 1825 shows that NG 12 (38x5 mm) is recorded from 1795 to 1805 but only seven items have emerged. In fact this mark actually measures 40x4.5 mm not 38x5 mm and will therefore be changed to read 40 x 5 mm to comply with the agreed rounding up of any 0.5 mm measurements.

NG 14 (37x5 mm), listed 1808 to 1835, actually measures 37.5x5 mm which will likewise become 38x5 mm. However, one item dated March 1809 of unique appearance is to hand with a lower case 'n' and a small capital 'A', the other letters are capitals with a constant height of 5mm. No further items appear until May 1825, a gap of sixteen years. The period 1825 to July 1835 contains twelve items all with 5 mm capitals. It is not believed that the postmark recorded in the BCC from 1808 to 1835 was in use seventeen years earlier and therefore the 1808 date should be deleted, and 1825 to 1835 inserted. If it was available in 1808, why would the unique handstamp mentioned above have been used in 1809?

The question is therefore what happened during the period 1801 to 1825. It can only be a matter for conjecture; were convenience and availability factors?

John Strong apart from having been a spirit and clover merchant as well as a plumber became the schoolmaster in 1822. Initially, classical scholar Robert White had founded and run a charity and private school. He was followed as the schoolmaster until 1738 by a Daniel Stafford. Thereafter, it seems Stafford's son, John, and John Strong were involved in running the school. By 1813 a good charity school for children of both sexes was running. He was also an actor and was involved along with John Stafford in staging a series of plays to raise money for the benefit of both the poor of the parish and for investment for the benefit of the school. As a father he managed to raise a family of thirteen children. He held all the offices of the Masons and was in 1836 honoured at the age of 72 to hold the office of 'Professional Grand Junior Warden' for Nottinghamshire. Furthermore, he was very involved in Church matters as shown later. It is thus understandable that the self-appointed duties of the postmaster might have suffered somewhat alongside his many other duties undertaken during the period 1801 to 1825 in particular.

There is also the fact that there would be a minimal amount of mail from a place like Bingham at the time as with probably only the local gentry, solicitors and clergymen being able to write and afford to use the postal system. During the life of NG14 from 1825 to 1835, other than two letters from John Strong himself, seven letters are from properties of note such as Orston Hall, Shelford Manor and Lambley House. Mail to and from the famous Thoroton family at nearby Screveton travelled directly through Nottingham in the unofficial local post system, thus avoiding Bingham.

In August 1795 Rev Jonathan Fell, vicar of Orston, who with five sons and three daughters between the ages of three and fifteen, and for the past four years a wife who had been in a precarious state of health, and himself with a weak constitution wrote to the Trustees of the Rev Peter Grands Charity at Bristol for assistance. The letter posted at Bingham is one of seven NG 12s recorded. In September he wrote again enclosing the appropriate completed petition form but this he prepaid the letter and posted it at Nottingham. The Fell correspondence contains three more letters from Bingham – October 1795, August 1796 and August 1805, but four others are from Nottingham all in August in 1798, 1799, 1800 and 1804. The 1804 letter which sadly notified the death of Rev Fell was written by a third party, with a very poor G. Fell (Gertrude) signature of an apparently illiterate widow. In this case the writer was none other than John Strong as shown by a comparison with other examples of his writing.

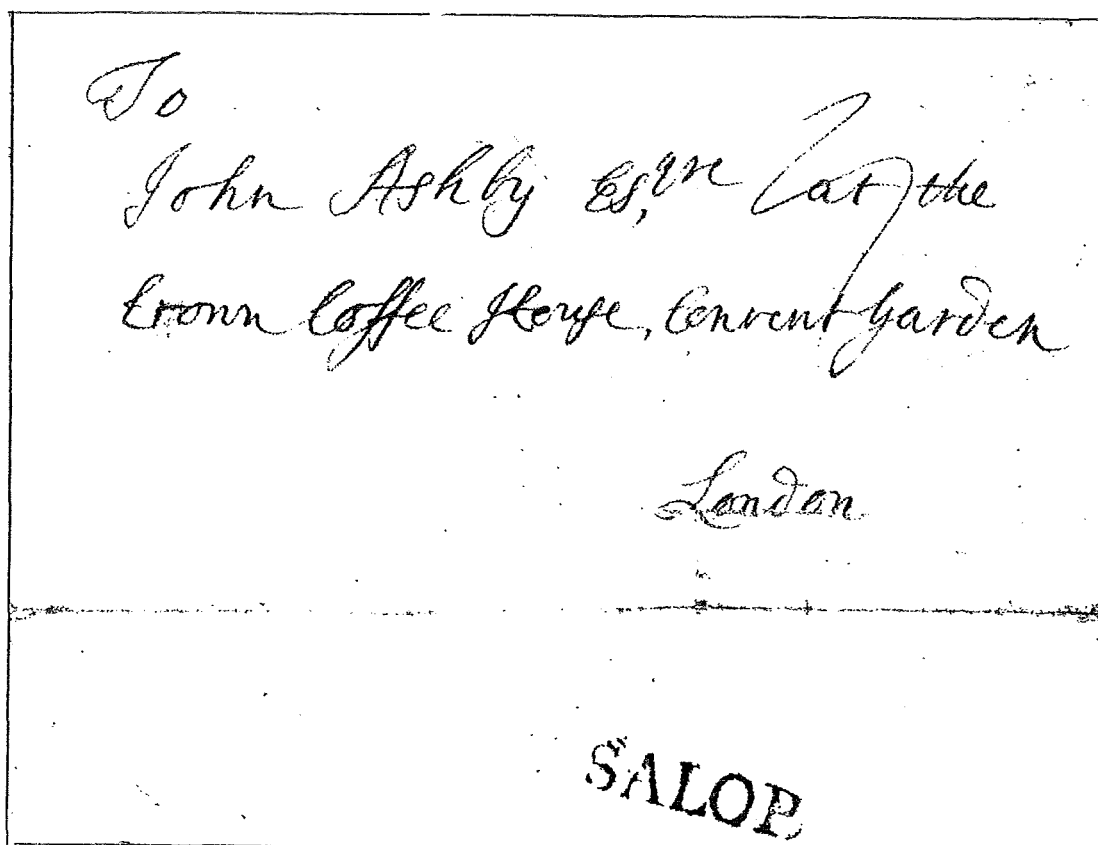
Why would he offer or be asked to carry out such a duty? As mentioned earlier he had a considerable involvement in the Church. Not only did he in 1810 have a child christened with the unmistakably loyal names of H.R.H. George, Augustus, Frederick (Duke of Sussex, sixth son of George III and Burgess of Nottingham in 1822), but he was the individual who in 1835, directed by Rev Wilkins D.D., Archdeacon of Nottingham, organised the petition presented to the Archbishop for the consecration of additional burial ground at Bingham, conveyed from the Earl of Chesterfield.

Of the Bingham local mail not posted there one item stands out above the rest. John Hassall of Shelford Manor was in charge of the local militia. He reports in a letter of 8th May 1827 that the local courts, one of which met at the Kings Arms in Bingham, could not meet until the return of the cavalry from permanent duty. The letter was written at the Chesterfield Arms in Bingham but posted at Nottingham to a coffee house in London with a request for the return letter to be addressed to the White Lion Inn at Nottingham.

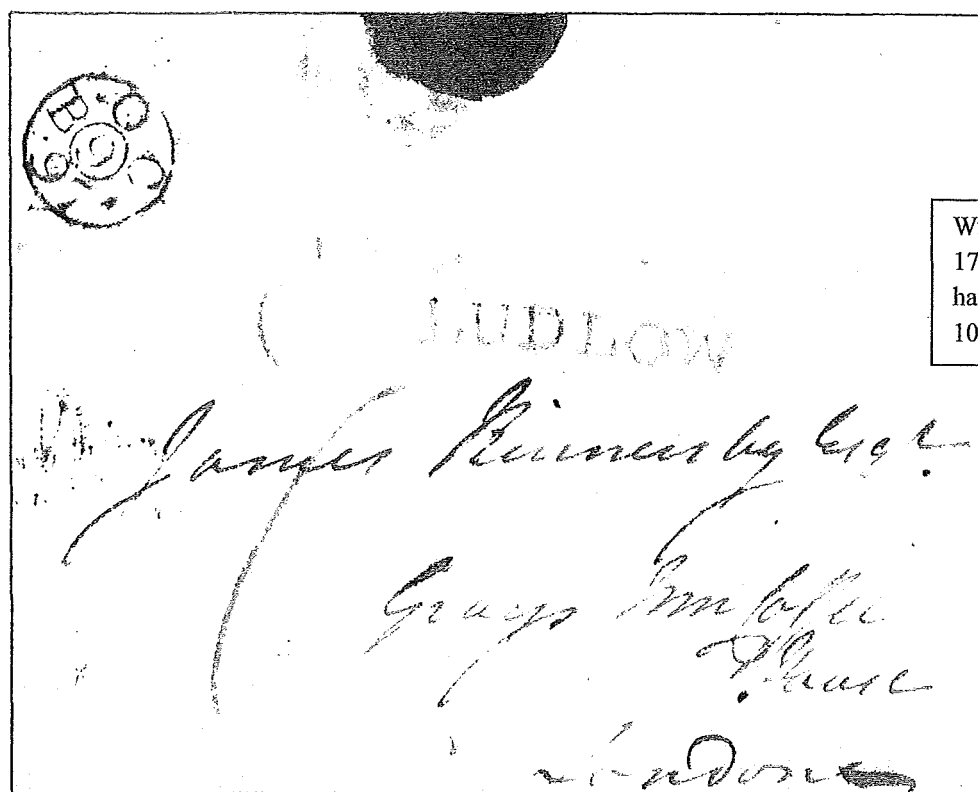
Finally, Mrs Fell survived for a number of years after her husband's death with letters of 1810, 1812 and 1813 associated with assistance from the Bristol charity. Two of the letters were written at Osgathorpe near Ashby-de-la-Zouch and one at Nottingham. All were written by a third party (not John Strong) and posted at Nottingham.

MORE COFFEE HOUSE COVERS SENT FROM SHROPSHIRE

by Guy Bridges



A letter which was written at Longnor (7½ miles south of Shrewsbury) on 25th April 1771, and addressed to 'the Crown Coffee House, Covent Garden, London'. It was struck on the reverse with the 'SALOP' handstamp of Shrewsbury.

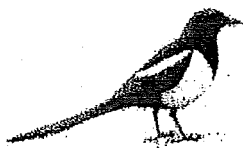


Written in Ludlow on 7th October 1797. Struck with 'LUDLOW' handstamp (SH238). 7d charge for 100 -150 miles.

A WOLVERHAMPTON PENNY POST ITEM

by Roy Summers

Illustrated below is a part entire which was written at Dunston on 14th (or 16th) December 1828 and presumably put into the Wolverhampton Penny Post at Penkridge. The Wolverhampton Penny Post mark (MLP 803) has not been recorded previously in red. The recorded dates in black are from 1st May 1835 to 29th November 1836, making this some seven years earlier. In the Society's *'Local Posts of the Midland Counties'* the illustration of this stamp is unclear after the 'p' in the town name. The red strike clearly shows that following the 'p' the handstamp ends with ⁿ.



Bill Pipe

THE MAGPIE



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THE EARLY POSTAL HISTORY OF PREES, NORTH SHROPSHIRE

by Brian Atkins

Prees is a village and civil parish in north Shropshire, 5 miles south of Whitchurch and 7 miles west of Market Drayton. Its original name was Prys, which is Celtic and means "brushwood", no doubt emanating from much of the area being heath land; indeed the specific locations Whitchurch Heath, Press Heath and Prees Lower Heath can be found on the original Ordinance Survey maps. Later OS maps show a hamlet called Prees Green about a mile and a half south of Prees itself. Prees Hall, a Grade 2 listed building¹, was the birthplace, in 1772, of Rowland Hill, first Viscount Hill, military commander under Wellington during the Peninsular War and at Waterloo. For a detailed review of Hill's military skills in Spain and Portugal and his relationship with Wellington see <http://www.waterloo200.org/articles/general-lord-hill-a-shropshire-soldier/>.

As far as its postal administration is concerned Prees appears to have had a chequered history, even the usually reliable Bagshaw² doesn't seem to know exactly who was postmaster in 1851! When the undated circular PREES postmark was issued in 1843 it was done through Shrewsbury, so it seems reasonable to assume that Shrewsbury was the Head Office for Prees at that time. A notice issued from the Inland Office on 5 APR 1847 supports this, when it transferred Prees from Shrewsbury to Market Drayton³.

Post 35⁴ reveals that by December 1849 Prees was being served with its London mails by a mail cart from Whitmore Station on the Grand Junction Railway, the cart passing through Market Drayton first, where other mail could be picked up for delivery. The cart went on to Whitchurch and Ellesmere but arrived late at those places and the P.M.G. proposed changes which entailed Prees being served by a foot messenger from Whitchurch at "wages of 12d per week"! Accordingly the Inland Office officially transferred Prees to Whitchurch on 5 APR 1850. But even this situation didn't last long, as along with the nearby village of Tilstock, Prees was transferred back to Shrewsbury on 7 APR 1851, confirmed by the 1856 cds (see PR5 below) being issued through Shrewsbury and a letter of 1858 from Prees to Tenby cancelled by a Shrewsbury spoon. So, who knows, whether the Post Office list of 1855, which shows Prees under Whitchurch is correct or not! The only thing which is certain is that at the beginning, the office at Prees was served from three different towns in North Shropshire at different times⁵!

But what of Bagshaw? His 1851 Directory of Shropshire states that the Post Office is at Mr. **William** Longfords and "letters arrive from Whitchurch at 9.10am and are despatched at 5pm". That would appear to correspond with the April 1850 transfer, stated above. However, in the list of inhabitants he gives "Longford **Richard**, postmaster", so William or Richard, take your pick?! The funny thing is that even Kelly's 1926 Directory gets into the act for it states "**William Wallace** Davies, sub-postmaster" but under its commercial listing it shows "Davies **E and Son**, grocers, Post Office", was William Wallace the son of Davies E the grocer? What is it with Prees?

The postmarks of Prees (1843 – 1933)



Cat No.	Handstamp	Size (mm)	Date of Issue	Colour	Recorded dates & No. of records
PR2	PREES	28	13 DEC 1843 (SIB 7 / 5)	Black	MAR 1845 – 21 APR 1857 9

PR5	PREES Code A	25	9 DEC 1856 (SIB 13 / 107)	Blue	AUG 1858 – 28 SEP 1860 4
PR8	PREES Codes A, B(2), C	20	31 DEC 1863 (SIB 23 / 17)	Black	7 JUN 1866 – 15 JAN 1879 4
PR11	PREES Codes A, B(7)	20	27 JUL 1880 (SIB 38 / 157)	Black	3 MAR 1900 – 6 MAR 1908 8
PR14	PREES / WHITCHURCH Codes 10AM (1), 4.30PM (1), 7.30PM (7) and 7.45PM (3)	26	Not known	Black	11 AUG 1908 – 5 APR 1933 12

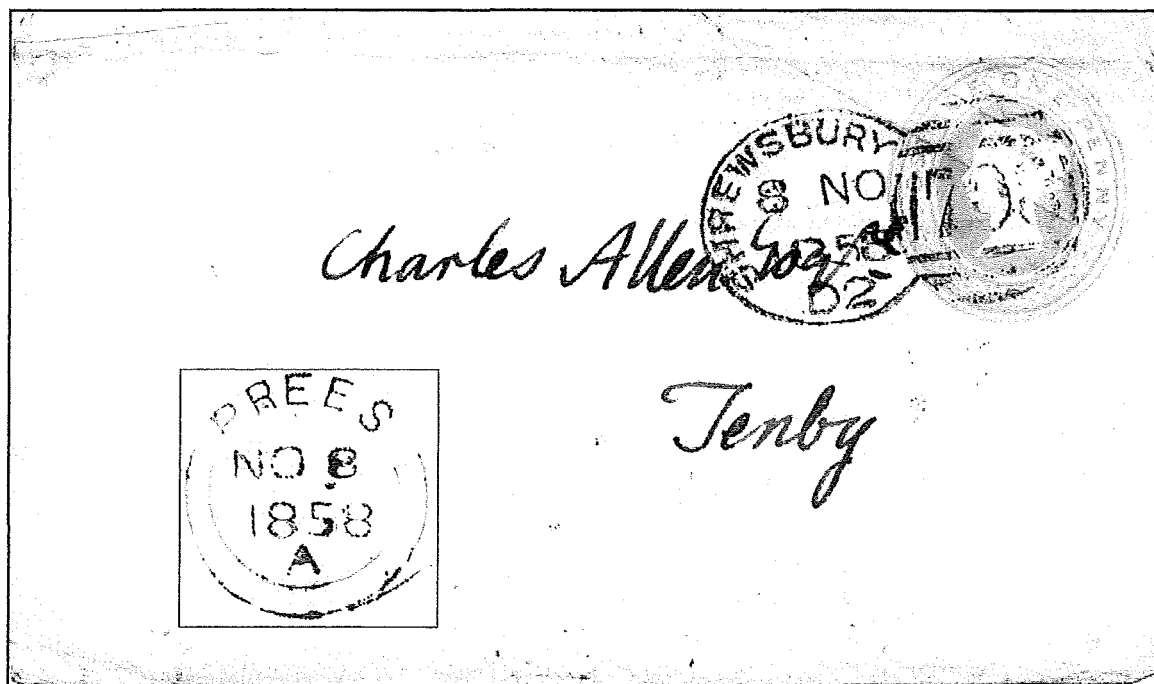
The earliest known use of a postmark at the nearby office at Prees Green is from a rubber date stamp issued on 2 FEB 1914. Kelly's Directory (1926) gives George Bennett as sub-postmaster with letters through Whitchurch and Prees the nearest money order and telegraph office.

PG2



Under Date of Issue for SIB
read Steel Impression Book,
for RIB read Rubber
Impression Book, followed by
the Volume and Page Number.

PG2	PREESGREEN / WHITCHURCH No code	28	2 FEB 1914 (RIB 19 / 280)	Black	13 JUL 1914 – 9 JUL 1918 5
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1858 stationery cover from Prees to Tenby cancelled with the Shrewsbury spoon and the PREES mark on the reverse superimposed on the front

- References:
1. <http://www.britishlistedbuildings.co.uk/en-260512-prees-hall-prees->
 - 2 Gazetteer and Directory of Shropshire 1851, Samuel Bagshaw
 3. The Undated Circular Marks of the Midland Counties, Midland (GB) Postal H. S., 4th edition 1996
 4. Post 35 Vol. 117 No. 5844 Page 30 (Dec 1849), Post Office Archives
- General. A North Shropshire Story, Shropshire Post Vol. 22 Page 7, Brian Atkins

MIDLANDS POST OFFICES OPENED / CLOSED 2012

by Ken Smith

DERBYSHIRE

Tansley, MATLOCK (closed 24-4-2007). Hosted Outreach c/o Darley Dale (Fri am) from 24-2-2012

GLOUCESTERSHIRE

Amberley, STROUD : changed to PO Local 10-8-2012

LYDBROOK (closed 6-9-2008). PO Local, Central Store, opened 12-3-2012

Redmarley, GLOUCESTER (closed 5-8-2008). Hosted Outreach c/o Highnam (Tues.11-2) from 21-2-2012

HEREFORDSHIRE

Hoarwithy, HEREFORD (closed Nov.2011). Hosted Outreach c/o Ewyas Harold (Mon.9-11) from 16-4-2012

Wellington, HEREFORD (closed 2010). PO Local, Community Shop, opened 13-1-2012.

LEICESTERSHIRE

Barlestone, NUNEATON (closed 24-9-2011). PO Local, Co-op, opened 23-1-2012

Croxton Kerrial, GRANTHAM : closed 20-1-2012 (following an audit)

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

Cropwell Bishop, NOTTINGHAM : closed 31-7-2012. PO Local opened 22-11-2012 (Co-op).

Farnsfield, NEWARK : relocated to Co-op as a PO Local 10-8-2012.

Gotham, NOTTINGHAM : closed 12-9-2012.

Hawtonville, NEWARK : changed to PO Local 7-9-2012.

North Leverton, RETFORD : changed to PO Local 15-11-2012.

Pleasley, MANSFIELD (in Dys) changed to PO Local 16-5-2012 (Landmark Centre)

Alfreton Rd.,Selston, NOTTINGHAM closed March 2012.

Lindley St.,Selston, NOTTINGHAM opened as PO Local 12-11-2012.

Sutton-on-Trent, NEWARK : PO Local closed (by) 26-6-2012. Hosted Outreach started 14-12-2012.

OXFORDSHIRE

Ashbury, SWINDON (closed 21-10-2011). Hosted Outreach, Rose & Crown, 17-7-2012 (Mon/Wed.am)

Cropredy, BANBURY closed 31-1-2012 (ill-health)

Marcham, ABINGDON closed 18-9-2012. PO Local, Village Shop, opened 16-11-2012.

Sutton Courtenay, ABINGDON (closed 23-7-2011). PO Local opened 26-3-2012.

RUTLAND

Edith Weston, OAKHAM (Farm Shop) closed 27-6-2012.

SHROPSHIRE

Bourton, MUCH WENLOCK closed 23-5-2012

Sheriffhales, SHIFNAL closed 31-10-2012

STAFFORDSHIRE

Dordon, TAMWORTH (closed 2-6-2011). PO Local opened 17-1-2012

Norton East, CANNOCK : changed to PO Local 21-9-2012

Weston, STAFFORD (closed 23-4-2010). Hosted Outreach, V.Hall, 1-3-2012 (Tu/Th.1-4 pm)

WARWICKSHIRE

Coton, RUGBY closed 27-1-2012

Cubbington, LEAMINGTON SPA : chnaged to PO Local 12-4-2012

Higham Lane, NUNEATON changed to PO Local 23-1-2012

Preston-on-Stour, STRATFORD-ON-AVON (Partner Outreach) closed Jan.2012. Re-open 22-10-2012

Abbots Farm, RUGBY : changed to PO Local 28-9-2012

WEST MIDLANDS

Fillongley, COVENTRY (PO Local c.11-4-2011) closed 20-4-2012.

Cranmore Boulevard, SOLIHULL changed to PO Local 21-9-2012

Fullbrook, WALSALL closed 15-11-2012 (to re-open/relocate when new Co-op store is ready)

WORCESTERSHIRE

Flyford Flavel, WORCESTER closed 12-1-2012.

MAIL ON THE BIRMINGHAM & GLOUCESTER RAILWAY, 1843-44

Those with good memories may remember that back in 2001-2004 I wrote four articles '*Mail by Rail in the Midlands*'. In the first of these (MM 121/2ff) I described the replacement of three mailcoaches: Birmingham & Worcester, Birmingham & Bristol and Birmingham & Bath by two mail trains in each direction between Birmingham and Gloucester. Beyond Gloucester a mailcoach ran to Bristol and Bath, while another ran to the southwest via Bristol. The mail trains from Birmingham left there at 12.34 a.m.; the departures from Gloucester were at 7.15 p.m. and 9 p.m. The importance of this line was that it provided a link between the Southwest and South Wales with towns in the Northwest and, via Derby, towns on the line from Derby to Leeds, Darlington and, by mailcoach, as far as Edinburgh. Since the times of departure in both directions are relatively close together it might be thought that one train in each direction would suffice.

The times of the northbound trains (Some intermediate stations have been omitted.) along with the onward connections are shown below:

Gloucester	7.15 p.m.	9 p.m.
Tewkesbury	7.51 p.m.	9.35 p.m.
Birmingham	9.45 p.m.	11.30 p.m.
To London	11.2 p.m.	
To Derby	12.30 a.m.	
To Lancaster		1.50 a.m.

A mailcoach arrived in Gloucester at 6.51 p.m. with mail Bristol, Exeter and the packet port of Falmouth. These mails went forward on the 7.15 p.m. train which also picked up the London bags from places such as Worcester, Droitwich and Bromsgrove. Mailcoaches from Carmarthen and Pembroke arrived in Gloucester at 7.30 p.m. and 8 p.m. respectively. The mails from these went forward on the second train along with those carried by a mailcoach from Aberystwyth which arrived in Tewkesbury at 7.48 p.m.

As there was an hour between the arrival of the second train in Birmingham and the departure of the train to Derby, it might be thought that the letters for the Derby line could have been carried on the second train. However, the surveyor pointed out that although the two stations were only a few hundred yards apart, the letters had to be taken to the post office for sorting before being taken back to the station, and there was not time to do this within an hour. So these letters were delayed in Birmingham.

Southbound, the times of the two trains and the times of arrival in Birmingham of trains from the north and from London were:

From Lancaster	11.42 p.m.	
Derby		1 a.m.
London		1.30 a.m.
Birmingham	12.44 a.m.	3.10 a.m.
Tewkesbury	2.38 p.m.	5.04 a.m.
Gloucester	3.14 a.m.	5.40 a.m.

The first of these trains was connected to three mailcoaches which carried mail which had originated in London. A coach for Aberystwyth left Tewkesbury at 3.53 a.m.; Coaches left Gloucester for Pembroke and Carmarthen at 4 a.m. and 4.15 p.m. Mail from the Derby line arrived in Birmingham after the departure of the first train to Gloucester so mail from Derby etc for South Wales was delayed in Birmingham for the greater part of twenty-four hours. The second train carried the bags from London for Worcester etc as well as mail for the Southwest from the Derby line. This was sent forward from Gloucester at 5.50 a.m. to Bristol (arrive 9.43 a.m.), Exeter (arrive 4.09 p.m.) and Falmouth (arrive 5.02 a.m.).

Towards the end of 1842 Rowland Hill in a long, rambling document in his search to reduce the money paid to the railway companies proposed among other measures the withdrawal of one of these trains in each direction. (Maberly, with good reason, was very critical of this memorandum, saying that it was very difficult to see what Hill was getting at and disputing the savings he projected would result.)

In a long minute of 1st March 1843, Maberly said that the first post from Bristol to Birmingham and the second from Birmingham to Bristol appeared to him to be the least important. He submitted reports from the various surveyors whose Districts would be affected. Mr Godby (Midland District) pointed out that these trains provided the only direct communication between the greater part of his District with Gloucestershire, Worcestershire and the West of England. If the train for Gloucester left before the arrival of the train from Derby then the correspondence of the northern and eastern parts of the Kingdom with the West of England and the Colonies would be delayed by twenty-four hours in Birmingham. Also, that it would be necessary to provide a special post to carry the London bags to Bromsgrove, Worcester and Droitwich.

Mr Rideout suggested that it would be possible to withdraw the two trains with minimal disruption if the time of departure of the first train from Birmingham was put back to 1.45 a.m. However, this could only be accomplished if the time between Birmingham and Gloucester were reduced by half an hour, less time was allowed for sorting at Gloucester and sorting was carried out at Bristol instead of Birmingham. Maberly doubted that it would be possible to reduce the time for sorting at Gloucester. Also it was not likely that the time on the railway could be reduced. An overall speed of not less than 26½ mph would be required. When account was taken of the stops, this rose to 30 mph when the train was moving. He added that the Post Office did not have the legal right to demand that a railway company run trains at so great a speed! Even then it was necessary to delay the departure of the coaches from Tewkesbury and Gloucester. This Maberly was reluctant to do, though the places in South Wales would have received mail from the Derby line a day earlier. He said that the people in Wales were expecting an acceleration of their London correspondence and that to delay it by up to an hour would lead to many complaints.

At the time an acceleration of the mail from London to Ireland via Birkenhead was being considered, and Maberly ended his report by commenting that an earlier arrival in Birmingham of the mail train from London would facilitate the use of only one mail train from Birmingham to Gloucester.

This acceleration came into effect on 12th April 1844, though the planning had started almost a year before that date. As a result the mail train from London then arrived in Birmingham at 12.57 a.m. and left for the North at 1.17 a.m. The up train arrived at 12.45 a.m. and departed for London at 1.5 a.m. The 7.15 p.m. train from Gloucester to Birmingham and that at 3 a.m. from Birmingham to Gloucester were withdrawn. The time of the 12.44 a.m. dispatch from Birmingham was moved to 1.10 a.m.

The train from Gloucester connected at Birmingham with the mail trains to Derby, London and Lancaster while the 1.10 a.m. departure took mail from all three of the trains from those places. The connection between the train to Gloucester and the train from Derby, which arrived at 1 a.m., was made possible by Derby exchanging direct bags with towns served by the line between Birmingham and Bristol, so removing the need for any sorting at Birmingham.

Although there was an interval of seventeen minutes between the arrival of the train from Derby and the departure of the train to Lancaster, Mr Stow said that it would be possible to transfer the bags from one line to the other in that time.

The departure of the mailcoaches from Gloucester at their usual times was facilitated by bringing forward their arrival to 3.15 a.m. so that the letters could be sorted before the arrival at 3.40 a.m. of the train from Birmingham. Also, the London mail from Cheltenham was taken to Gloucester by road instead of rail.

However, there was one drawback in all of this. Mr Godby pointed out that the train from Lancaster would arrive fifteen minutes after the departure, at 12.30 a.m., of the train for Derby, so letters from the north-west and Ireland for the Derby line would be left behind. It was not possible to alter the time of the train for Derby if a connection was to be made at Derby with the down night mail from Rugby to Darlington. A timebill of April 1845 shows the train leaving Birmingham for Derby at 12.30 a.m. This time was altered to 12.05 a.m. on 30th June 1845, so it appears no attempt was made to maintain the connection at Birmingham.

Mr Stow reported in January 1844 that apart from the junction between the up night mail from Lancaster and the down night mail from Derby being disturbed, there was no other inconvenience other than the dispatch of the mailcoach from Tewkesbury to Aberystwyth being put back twenty minutes.

JON BAKER TROPHY

It is time again to vote for what you consider to be the best article that appeared in Midland Mail. So please look through last years issues and let me know your choice, either by filling in the form enclosed with this issue or sending an email to Johnesoer@aol.com.

NEXT MIDLAND MAIL

First of all I apologise for the fact that this edition is much later than anticipated, caused in no small measure by the fact that Royal Mail took twelve days to carry a letter from Nottingham to Wokingham! The next edition should appear towards the end of March or early April. It will contain the usual reports but there is plenty of room for articles, long or short. My thanks to those who have sent me reports of their displays at the January meeting. I would be grateful if those who have not already done so could let me have a paragraph about their display. All contributions will be very gratefully received by

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