

# MIDLAND MAIL

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



Chairman:  
Elizabeth Lewis

Treasurer:  
Trevor Clewley

Secretary:  
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### NUMBER 53, JANUARY 1988

With space at a premium in this issue, my comments must be brief. I would like to wish you all a somewhat belated Happy New Year and hope that you find plenty of material in the coming months, be your interests "Birmingham Chandeliers" or double circles from deepest Shropshire. My thanks to those of you who have sent articles to me. If your contribution is not included in this issue, don't worry since it will certainly appear in the next edition.

#### FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

The meeting on 20th. February will be held in the Guildhall, Worcester starting at 2 p.m., when we are asked to bring nine sheets on "Parcel Posts". This meeting will coincide with the stamp fair organised by the Worcester Philatelic Society at which twenty dealers will be present.

Our annual competitions will be held on 19th. March at Dr. Johnson House, Birmingham. A reminder that, this year there will be a competition for post-1938 material in addition to the two for which the dividing year is 1840.

#### THE ANNUAL AUCTION

The date of our Annual Auction, the 23rd. April, seems a long time ahead, but details of any lots that members wish to enter will be required by early March so that a catalogue can be distributed in good time.

Please send descriptions with an assessment of the condition based on "Poor", "Good", "Fine" or "Superb" to:

Mrs. E. Lewis, 27 Rathbone Road, Smethwick, Warley, West Midlands B67 5JG.

Also indicate clearly the number of items in each lot together with a fair market valuation and your reserve price, if any.

Also, donations of items to be sold for the Society funds will be greatly appreciated by your committee.

#### NEW MEMBERS

The Society extends a warm welcome to Paul Hill of Ravenstone, Leicestershire, Malcolm Batty of Leicester, Mr. A.C. Fieldhouse of Stourbridge and Sadie Cole of Discoed, Presteigne.

## THE OCTOBER MEETING

It was the Society's privilege to be entertained at the Birmingham and Midland Institute on 31st October by members of The Forces Postal History Society. Each of the five displays highlighted a different aspect of the postal history of the armed services and the speakers went to considerable lengths to include material with a Midland connection.

The familiar figure of Steph Stobbs opened the batting and one knew that there would be a cornucopia of unusual items emanating from Shropshire selected from an apparent infinity of similar material left at home. One could be forgiven for believing that Shropshire was one giant POW camp during the wars and that most of the inhabitants spent their waking hours censoring mail but he proved that to be untrue by also throwing in items from a military hospital, Polish displaced persons, American bases and a handful of RAF stations. It is rumoured that there were a few empty fields between the military establishments but it seems improbable.

Jack Andrews is well known to our members but perhaps not the material he showed - Belgian military items with a British connection. There was Belgian forces' mail coming into the UK and the cachets of their troops in Britain, of their field hospitals and a hospital ship. Noticeably, there were letters from two Belgian ships written in 1940 which had added poignancy, both ships being sent to the bottom in that same year.

Ted Coles, captaining the team, divided his display between naval and army mail. He showed us a franked letter from the then Viscount Nelson, rarely seen UDCs of the Navy Post Office and what must be a remarkably rare example of a letter from a "pressed man" on a naval ship pleading to his employer for his release. There were cards from ships abroad and the scarce AMO cancel of the WW1 Admiralty Mail Office. From the army were cachets used while on manoeuvres in 1918 and mail embellished with Jubilee and Coronation stamps from manoeuvres in 1937. Finally, we learnt that, after Dunkirk, troops of the BEF retained their free mail facility even when removed from the beaches of France to the safety of Evesham.

Alastair Kennedy, author of the standard work on WW1 military mails, displayed a remarkable selection of forces' items, each and every one with a Midland connection. There was a letter of 1813 from Weedon Barracks and, exactly a hundred years later, one from manoeuvres at Lutterworth. Hospital cards from Birmingham and Shrewsbury preceded WW1 items from Midland camps and WW2 mail from RAF post offices. WW2 mail destined for forces overseas was routed through the Home Postal Centre at Nottingham, providing yet another Midland link. There were FPOs at Lichfield and in Northamptonshire, there were Free Czechs at Stafford and American Army Post Offices at Cheltenham and Burton on Trent. If that were not unusual enough, how about the cachet of the Royal Dutch Brigade at Wolverhampton?

Nick Colley completed the afternoon's entertainment with mail from WW2 RAF stations in Britain. We saw examples from such diverse postings as Aston Down (Glos), Sealand (Ches), Cranwell and the ubiquitous RAF Records Office. There were the marks of the RAF base censors on letters from abroad, RAF censors in Scotland and, probably very scarce, the RAF censor at Pembroke Dock. However, the cachet "Missing Presumed Dead" hardly seemed sensitive even in the darkest days of the war.

The fourteen members of our Society who witnessed these displays could not fail to be impressed with the scope and scale of forces' postal history and Ted Coles is to be congratulated on assembling such a formidable array of postal history talent and material for our enjoyment.

The editor would like to thank John Calladine for writing this account of the meeting.

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### THE DECEMBER MEETING

The atmosphere in the new hospitality suite at the Bass Museum on 12th December was truly festive when over thirty members and guests assembled for a joint meeting with the Shropshire Postal History Society. When Elizabeth thanked the museum staff on our behalf, the warmth of the applause reflected the appreciation of those present. We then settled down to watch a display of "Penny Posts since 1680" given by Mr. Frank Thompson. It is really impossible to do justice to his display in such a small space since virtually every sheet merits a paragraph to itself. So the following can be no more than a brief account of those items, from amongst a wealth of material, which caught your editor's eye.

Mr. Thompson began, not with penny posts, but another interest of his - the posts of Thurn and Taxis. We saw a letter of 1458 from Monte Cassino, another of 1458 from London to Venice showing the Venetian merchant's symbol and a letter sent from Verona to London in 1596. These were followed by a number of covers from the various Thurn and Taxis postal districts.

The section on early penny posts outside London began with a look at Edinburgh. As in London, the official penny post was preceded, but for a much longer period, by an unofficial venture which was started at the end of 1773 by Peter Williamson. We were shown superb examples of two datestamps - the straight line EDIN Dec 12 1773 1d, of which only three are known, and the circular E. PENNY POST NOT PAID \*. Equally eye-catching was a serpentine NOT PAID. For some years a semi-official post, serving the towns of Dalkeith, Prestonpans and Musselburgh, operated alongside Williamson's post. We saw examples of the straight line handstamps of these towns. In 1793 Williamson's post was superseded by an official service. From this we were shown a number of the Head Office time stamps and city receiving house stamps.

From Edinburgh we were taken to Manchester. Of particular note here were the marks of the receiving house at Oldham, particularly the framed 2PP, the large oval PP/3 of Staleybridge and a framed PENNY NOT PAID. I was astounded to learn that Dobcross, a village of the Manchester Penny Post, was in Yorkshire. I had thought such things were likely to lead to rioting if not civil war. However a letter sent to Ayr through Manchester carried a superb strike of Dobcross/P.P.

Then it was time for the Birmingham material, starting with a letter of 17th September 1793 showing the PAID mark of Solihull. Apart from the so far unrecorded 13, all the numbers of the receiving office P.P./PAID handstamps were represented. Other items of note were the Smethwick/PY. POST and the Oxley type 2 Birmingham/PY Post, both of which are rated "very scarce". A letter addressed to "Coventry or Oxford" carrying the PP1/PAID of Brierley Hill also attracted attention.

The second part was devoted to the reforms of the mid-1800s, starting with a number of sheets of "Treasury Essays". These included the entries of Bogardus, Dickinson, Schonburg and Whiting. Penny Blacks were represented by die proofs and a number on cover including one on cover cancelled in claret at Higham Ferrers. The various states of plate 5 were also shown. This part was rounded off with examples of the experimental roulette perforations of 1848 and 1853, the "Rainbow Trials" and the 1851 Prince Consort Essays.

In the final part, Mr. Thompson treated us to a display of Dockwra marks. Although he had shown these at a previous meeting, the Secretary persuaded him to bring them along again. John Calladine wrote an excellent account of this display in MM34, so I shall do no more than mention one or two items. One letter we had not seen before carried a strike, from 27th May 1682, of the handstamp of the Temple Office in the original Dockwra post. To quote Willcocks, these marks are the "Post Office Mauritius" of Postal History. Also from the Temple Office were a letter of 1685 showing the Temple Dockwra of the period along with a

This was a memorable afternoon's entertainment. Amongst the wide range of material there was not one indifferent strike to be seen. Dr. Frank Bottomley eloquently expressed the thanks of all those present.

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REMINDER

The deadline for details of undated marks, other than UDCs, to be sent to John Calladine was 31st. December 1987. However John is still keen to hear of usage of such marks in the post-1840 period. If the mark is not on the P/MSL list he would like a photocopy and the date of use. All queries and details to:  
John Calladine, Dunley House, Cranham, Gloucester GL4 8HQ.

Illustrated below are the marks used at Overseal in the period from 1840 prior to the issue of a UDC. The upper one was issued in May 1840, and I suspect the words "Penny Post" were filed out circa 1847.



FOUR CLASSES OF MAIL COACH

by Rev Christopher Beaver

In Post Office Archives (until recently Reference Library 10A/12, but "All the original maps in this collection have been transferred to Post 21.") is a transcript of a list of mail coaches headed "c. 1814", giving as accurately as could then be ascertained the date when each one then existing had been established. On the accompanying map is written "Extracted from England 474K/1814".

In England, Wales and Scotland, there were twenty-three mail coaches listed as first class, eighteen of these having a London terminus; twenty-seven second class; twenty-three third class including three from London; nine fourth class. The latest date given is actually a third class Birmingham - London established on 25 May 1812. A Birmingham - Warwick mail coach established in 1813, according to the Post 42 index, is not included. This might suggest the documents were produced in connection with the attempts in 1813 to assess how much the Post Office had not paid in road tolls, and the effect of abolition of the mail coach exemption. With the list is a clear explanation of the distinction between the classes. My notes slightly abbreviate the original wording:-

FIRST CLASS

Regular patent Mail Coaches and carry four inside and two outside passengers, and although not half in number run more than three-quarters of the number of miles Mail Coaches travel.

SECOND CLASS

Also patent Mail Coaches and carry four inside and four outside passengers, ...carry four outside to answer local purposes or give convenient accommodation to inhabitants and to add to the emoluments of the Contractors who without such aid could not undertake a Mail Coach.

THIRD CLASS

These are coaches found by the Contractors and have occasionally been established from the commencement of Mail Coaches in 1785 to the present time. Some of them carry as many outside passengers as the Act permits and others are limited to four inside and four outside.

FOURTH CLASS

These are Penny Post Coaches or such as are put on by the surveyors.

Referring again to the list, I find some of the dates of establishment to be incorrect or misleading. My copy is too much annotated to reproduce clearly and in full. However an indication of the class and dates of some of the "Midlands" coaches will be of interest.

FIRST CLASS

London to Gloucester, Worcester, Holyhead (by Chester), Liverpool, Carlisle (by Manchester), Leeds, are six of those with 1785 dates, but not all of them started on the day or even month stated; some originally went further, and some routes had altered a good deal in the interim. None were patent coaches in 1785 either. London to Holyhead (by Salop), 5.9.1808 is correct, but there is no allusion to Shrewsbury as the previous destination from 1785. The fact that in 1813 Northampton to Chester was changed to an "Auxiliary" (i.e. Third Class), connecting with the London to Manchester means that London to Holyhead (by Chester) could no longer be accurately described as First Class. This supports the expectation that the list was compiled in late 1812 or early 1813. Bristol to Birmingham, date of establishment entered as "not known", was 6.7.1787.

SECOND CLASS

Manchester to Birmingham 10.10.1800. Sheffield to Birmingham 5.4.1801.

THIRD CLASS

Ludlow to Worcester, no date given; London to Ludlow had been established in 1785 but does not feature on the list as such.

Hereford to Worcester 17.3.1794. Nottingham to Derby 5.4.1801.

Hereford to Gloucester 5.7.1802. Warwick to Coventry 29.10.1810.

Coventry to Leicester 29.10.1810. Birmingham to London 25.3.1812.

The other two London ones were Exeter (foreign) and Harwich (foreign) both without date and I believe less than six times a week; frequency is not mentioned on this list.

FOURTH CLASS

No dates of establishment given. Shrewsbury to Aberystwith, Chester to Woodside Ferry, Birmingham to Walsall; the original establishment of this in 1796 did not last; it recommenced in 1797 however.

Though the mail coaches were not commonly referred to in accordance with this classification in reports or by the public, it is evident that distinctions on similar lines continued. For example there is a comprehensive eight page "Return Showing the Names of the Mail and other Coaches carrying Letters in England and Wales for the Five Years ending 1 March 1841 showing the Number of Horses by which drawn, the Number of Outside Passengers and the Price per Double Mile to the Horsing Contractors in each year respectively." On this only fourteen were stage coaches, a little over two hundred mail coaches (not all the latter existing in any one year). In both categories more are two-horse than four-horse, though the latter include all the longer distance ones. Most of the main London mail coaches allow only three outside passengers, but the number ranges from three to eight with four as the most commonly allowed. I confess to not knowing whether the same Act governed the number as in 1813 when some third class coaches carried "as many outsides as the Act permits", in which case that presumably meant eight.

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THE CASE OF THE MISSING LETTERS

In April 1796, Charles Groves, a letter carrier at Birmingham was dismissed for drunkenness and not delivering his letters on time. Groves's successor had not long been on the walk before he informed the postmaster, Mr. Gottwaltz, that Groves had pawned a number of letters at the Swan public house. On the same morning that he received this information, Mr. Gottwaltz was told by a Mr. Silvester, who lived on Groves's walk, that he had not received a letter, containing a Bill of Exchange for over £112, which had been sent to him from Shrewsbury.

Mr. Gottwaltz, supposing that the letters, and amongst them Mr. Silvester's, were still at the public house arranged, along with Mr. Silvester, to meet Groves there. However Groves had been there some days before and redeemed the letters. The publican said that there had been twenty-one letters on which he had lent half a guinea. They had been in his possession for a week before Groves had redeemed them.

At this point the surveyor, Mr. Saverland, was called in to make further investigations. His first move was to have Groves "apprehended on suspicion of a felony and committed for examination." He then arranged for a number of handbills to be distributed throughout the town and advertisements put in the newspapers, asking people whose letters had been delayed to contact him. A number of people responded to this. Some had failed to receive letters which they were told had been sent; most of these were for parts of Groves's delivery. Others had received letters which had been detained for four or five days. However no letters could be found on Groves or in his lodgings. So although Saverland felt there was no doubt that Groves had secreted or destroyed several letters containing Bills and other enclosures, there was no evidence to warrant his being put on trial. Accordingly he was discharged, having been served with a writ for detaining letters.

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# Post Office, Birmingham,

MAY 14, 1796.

WHEREAS

**GEORGE GROVES,**

LATE A LETTER CARRIER BELONGING TO  
THIS OFFICE,

*Did on Sunday the 17th of April last,*

LEAVE TWENTY-ONE LETTERS, which he had to deliver, at the SWAN Public House in LIVERY STREET, where they were detained till the following SUNDAY, the 24th of APRIL, when he took them away from the House aforesaid.

AND it being apprehended that the said GEORGE GROVES hath feloniously converted Part of the said Letters, with their Contents, to his own Use; IT IS EARNESTLY REQUESTED, for the Sake of public Justice, that all Persons who may have received Letters on or about the 24th of April last, which from the Dates may appear to have been detained, or at any other Time within the last Six Months, but particularly on or about the Time before-mentioned, will come forward, and produce the Letters so detained to me at this Office.

THE said GEORGE GROVES was the Letter Carrier for the FOURTH DIVISION of this Town, in which are the following Streets :

TEMPLE-STREET

The South West Part of St. PHILIP'S CHURCH YARD

COLMORE ROW

CHURCH STREET

CHARLES STREET, between Newhall Street and Snow Hill

LIONEL STREET, between Newhall Street and Water Street

CHARLOTTE STREET, from Mount Street to St. Paul's Square

BROOK STREET

NORTHWOOD STREET

CAROLINE STREET

The East End of WARSTONE LANE

HALL STREET

GREAT HAMPTON STREET

STREETS communicating with Great Hampton Street

CONSTITUTION HILL

BOND STREET

HAMPTON STREET

LIVERY STREET

And all the Streets within this Circle.

C. SAVERLAND,

Surveyor General. Post Office.

A COMMENT ON THE PENNY POST

by John Calladine

We all think we know that the telephone killed off the art of letter writing - or was it television? If Victorian values included anything worthwhile, it was surely recognition of the value of soundly composed and handsomely penned letters. By comparison, we are semi-literate and lazy, rarely writing to a friend for the sheer pleasure of the task and the reward of his reply. Things aren't what they used to be.



The letter illustrated was written on 3rd June 1840 when uniform penny post was still a novelty and the penny black a seven day wonder. The writer was Edward Brown and the addressee his father Thomas Brown, a cotton manufacture of Burley in Wharfedale, not far from Otley in Yorkshire. Thomas Brown used to travel about the country by carriage on his business affairs, and it seems that he arranged for letters to be sent to him at post towns along his proposed route for more than one such letter has survived. This letter caught up with him at Shrewsbury. It was posted at Keighley, where it was written, the penny postage paid in cash and the post town of Bradford added its circular date stamp where one might have hoped a penny black would be. Both the postal markings are in orange ink.

The business content of the letter is brief. "My dear Father" it begins, "I received your letter of 30 ulto yesterday morning and I forwarded £50 to Allens in accordance to your wish." It would seem at first sight, that father's letter took three days to travel from some unknown point, quite probably in the Midlands, to Yorkshire but 30th May 1840 was a Saturday and Thomas may not have posted his letter until after the weekend.

If this had been a modern letter, it might well have reached a rapid conclusion once the business of the day had been stated. Happily for us Edward, who was 30 in 1840, continued:

"Before the penny postage came into operation, I imagined that I should be almost inundated with letters from my relations and friends and I almost resolved that on the opening I would myself write to many friends informing them or rather reminding them of the privilege conferred upon us, but I have failed to do so and I find they have taken but little notice of the change, so that I am led to think that as the present generation has not been much accustomed to friendly correspondence, the advantage in the reduction of postage will for some time to come be principally reaped by the commercial world.

Most likely the children now under education, and especially those at a distance from home, will be taught the habit of frequent correspondence, and I hope that many who have long ago been returned "finished" may now take it up as a duty and contract the habit of friendly intercourse through the medium of the penny post."

Those with a sharp eye and a passing interest in clause analysis may have realised that Edward's paragraph contained just two sentences, the first no less than 107 words long, and it still manages to read quite well. The content may have surprised us but perhaps it should not. Postage rates had become intolerable before Rowland Hill's reforms and, as it appears to have been considered socially unacceptable for a private letter to be pre-paid by the sender, long or frequent letters to friends must have been a doubtful blessing. When the penny post arrived, perhaps children did need to be taught the habit of frequent correspondence. Apparently nothing changes in the world.

The nicest feature of this letter is not revealed by either its cover or contents. It remains in the Brown family and was shown to me by the recently retired great great grandson of Thomas. His forbears would be pleased to know that he writes a good letter.

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#### WEST BROMWICH RECORDS

by Rev. Christopher Beaver

You'd be forgiven for supposing that Mrs. Hannah Sutton's dismissal from the West Bromwich receivership in 1809 (MM52/14-15) was the end of a proud family record after eighty-four years. Not so. As the Victoria County History noted, the job continued in the family long after this sorry incident. The name occurs in many directories and the census returns from which I have extracted details:

Thomas Sutton was the receiver at least 1828-39 and Samuel Sutton postmaster at least 1841-70. I've not discovered dates of appointment for any of the Sutton family and there are gaps in this summary, but it does sound like five generations covering 145 years from 1725. Whether the location of the office was identical throughout is doubtful, and the radical change in its surroundings is expressed in the change of its proper address, about 1840, from Bromwich Heath to High Street, West Bromwich. (The form Brummagem, by the way, betrays the connection with another place.) There can be no doubt it was always on the important road which led more or less directly from Birmingham to Wolverhampton and so to Shrewsbury, never at the original hamlet of West Bromwich, around All Saints' Church, a mile to the north.

The surprise in the story of the 1809 incident is surely the specific reference to a receiving house so early in the eighteenth century, when Hannah's grandparents began. There is an even more surprising attestation to its existence. In the 1st Report of the Committee on Postage (a basic source of Oxley's book) are many pages which, with other details, give the date of establishment of each provincial penny post office then open, compiled from the records and signed by Colonel Maberley on 27 March 1838. Well, some dates evidently could not be found, but the compiler did an impressive job. No one seems to have pointed out that there are five offices in the Birmingham Penny Post with dates, according to this list, prior to 1793; not a precise day as was generally recorded but a precise year, so there is little likelihood of mis-prints.

That provincial local posts organised by the postmasters existed is certain; in this area alone the compiler of the 1838 report had the evidence to record dates for the establishment of penny post offices earlier than the centrally promoted ones for which, as Resident Surveyor, Francis Freeling seems to have been largely responsible - and in the one case even before the 1765 Act under which the 1793 and other penny posts were established. The dates given are West Bromwich 1751, Knowle and Solihull 1776, Sutton Coldfield 1785, Wednesbury 1786. Edinburgh and Dublin starting in 1773, were on a larger scale. Where can we now look for corroborative evidence that West Bromwich was the very first penny post office outside London? All that can at present be said is that it is the earliest date given and it is as yet unexplained. I doubt that such a post was forbidden before the Act authorising them; the point of the clause was surely to guard against competition, and it was expressly the local deputy postmaster who was made responsible for authorising his agents since it stated that when such a penny post office was established no person could collect or deliver letters without a licence from the postmaster. What was envisaged was subordinate offices in any town or city rather than in villages several miles away, yet London was naturally cited as the example and there agents were appointed up to ten miles from the Chief Office. It is fortuitous that these intriguing dates appeared in the 1838 Report particularly as West Bromwich and Wednesbury had been made post-towns in 1837, and Oxley indicates that Solihull and Knowle ceased to be penny post offices in 1836.

The 1809 complaint concerning delayed mail was made by the vicar of Tipton. There was then only the one parish, its church, St. Martin's, at Horseley Heath. What aroused John Howell was evidently more the prevalence of the words 'Missent to Litchfield' (without a handstamp, did he notice?) than the fact that the particular letter took four days to reach him. When arrangements were being made in 1814 for the establishment of a penny post office at Horseley Heath (but called Tipton), it was stated that there had previously been no regular delivery letters there, but this is contradicted in the papers relating to the 1809 incident. The date of establishment of this Penny Post is given by the 1838 Report as 6th January 1815; according to the Post 42 index it was made permanent in 1816.

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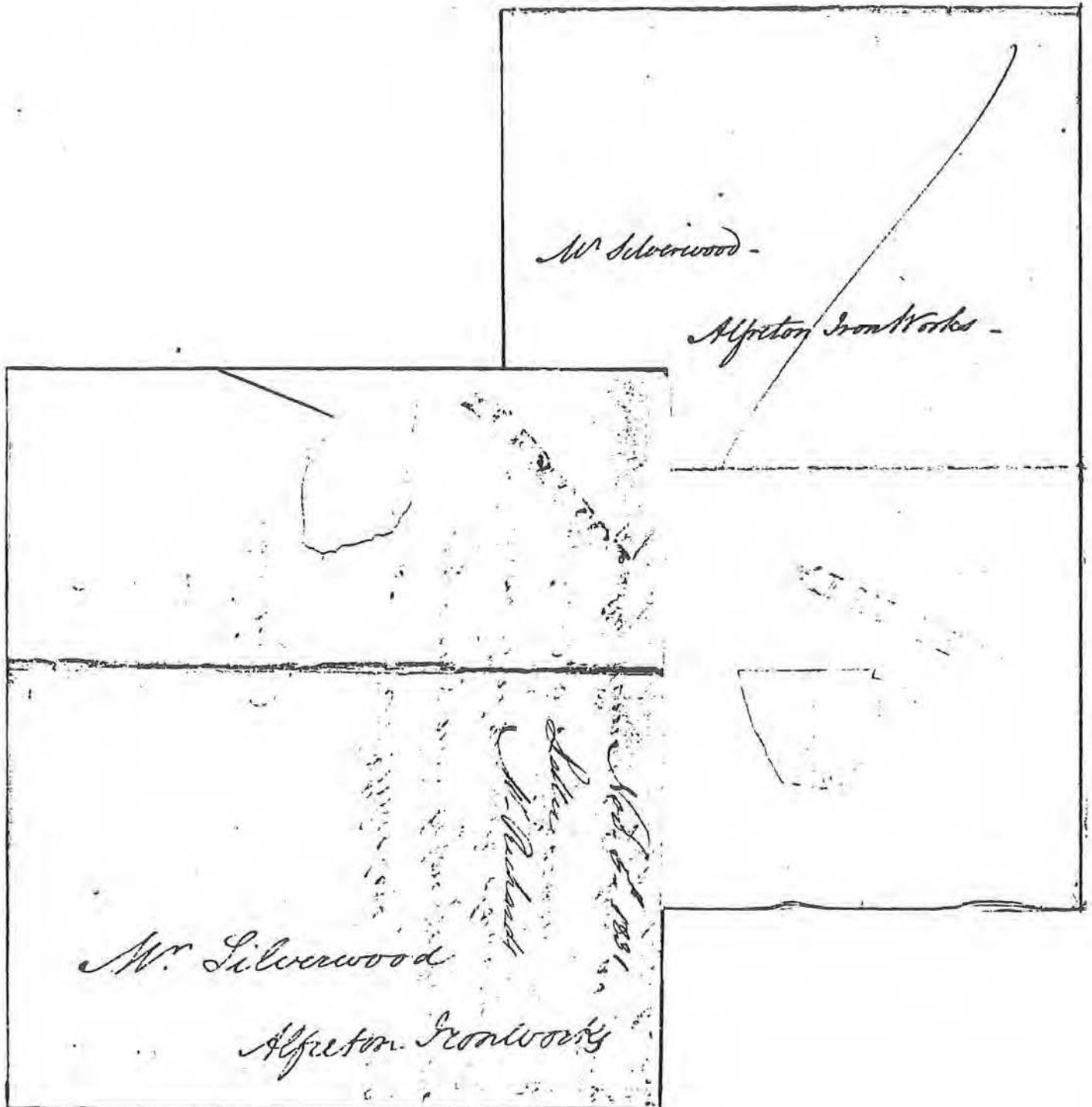
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A DERBYSHIRE LOCAL POST

by Harold Wilson

A recent purchase shows that the practice of local postmasters running unofficial local posts was more widespread in Derbyshire than previously suspected. Illustrated are two covers used locally in Alfington one (25 April 1831) rated 1d. and the other with no charge. Both have been through the post as shown by the straight line ALFRETON.



"SHORT LETTER OFFICES"  
IN THE BLACK COUNTRY

by Rev. Christopher Beaver

We owe a debt of gratitude to the Editor for finding an early definition of the term "short letter" and clarifying the process by which such letters were intended to be regulated from 1809. A good example of inconsistency that had to remain untidy. Often anomalies were better not enquired into. They were left alone by Freeling and the surveyors alike until some complaint had to be answered. Because so many details continued to be ad hoc the public went on complaining until the reforms of 1840. Shall we ever stop doing likewise?

One anomaly came to light in 1829 as a result of Bilston becoming a post-town, and its resolution occasioned the creation of two "Short Letter Offices", a title put in inverted commas presumably because though easy to understand in the context, it was meant to be an unofficial name for them. Previously a letter between Wolverhampton and Bilston, three miles apart, had been charged only one penny, though it was not an official penny post. Now the minimum single rate between post-towns, fourpence, had to be charged. The anomaly was that Wolverhampton to Wednesbury, and Wolverhampton to West Bromwich, further distances on the same road, remained one penny. The answer to the complaint by inhabitants of Wolverhampton was the opposite of their intention for Benjamin Churchill, the surveyor, decreed that there was no choice but to equate all these rates at 4d. The P.M.G. admired "this new mode of accommodating" them when Freeling recommended acceptance of Mr. Churchill's report:

*"...his proposition to make both (Wednesbury and West Bromwich) "Short Letter Offices" converting the present private Bag into an official one is very proper. We shall then be entitled to demand the full rates as at Bilstone and the whole arrangement will be more regular than the existing private one." (Post 42/846/1829).*

To have made them penny post offices of Bilston would have meant a 5d. charge on a letter from Wolverhampton. Both at around 15,000, had larger populations than Bilston, and at the same time were receiving offices in the Birmingham Penny Post. Assuming Wolverhampton via Dudley (a post-town since 1822) to Brierley Hill was correctly stated by Colonel Maberley in 1838 to have been 1d. all along the protests are readily understood.

Legally fourpence remained the minimum General Post rate until 4 January 1838. Officially authorised exceptions are referred to in a report by Freeling in 1834 arguing against the proposition that West Bromwich and Wednesbury be made post-towns. The muddle was recognised and spelt out to the P.M.G. at some length:

*"It is true that the Penny Postage now charged on letters and newspapers arriving at Birmingham (for West Bromwich) would be taken off and by adopting the plan pursued in some recent instances of establishing a Twopenny Post between Post Towns very near each other we might confine the charge to what it is at present upon the local letters put in at Birmingham namely Twopence but we should not be able to afford any additional accommodation to West Bromwich by making it a principal office and there would be a sacrifice of nearly £200 a year Penny Postage.*

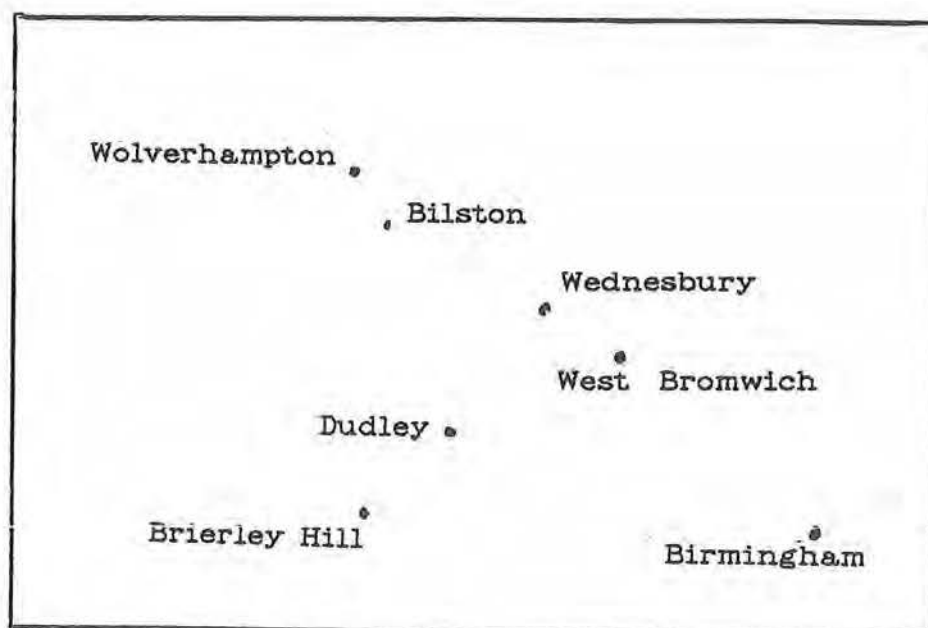
*If the indulgence were granted to this place I do not think it could be denied to the neighbouring Parish of Wednesbury only 2 miles further from Birmingham (altogether 8 from the Town) and I apprehend we could not apply the Principle of the Twopenny Post in this case so that Letters from Birmingham instead of being charged 2d. as they now are would be 4d. single, 8d. double etc which I doubt not would create much dissatisfaction, looking at the immense intercourse between both these places and Birmingham....The best course will be not to encourage the suggestion of making the two places Post Towns but to consider whether our present system cannot be made available to afford increased accommodation...." (Post 42/862/1834. cf. Willcock's, England's Postal History p.100ff.)*

The allusions here to a 2d. charge in the Birmingham Penny Post agree with the regulations that began on 27 August 1793 when West Bromwich and Wednesbury were among the places referred to:

*"1d. will be charged in the town (Birmingham) and 2d. for the suburbs and places within the limits of the Penny Post to be paid on putting in or on delivery at the option of the writers except Letters intended to be forwarded by the London and Cross Road mails with which 1d. must be paid on putting into the Receiving Offices." (Aris's Gazette, P.O. Notice of that date).*

It would be interesting to prove that, whether officially or unofficially, the postage between Wolverhampton and Bilston, Wolverhampton and Wednesbury etc., was reduced from 4d. to 2d. in the mid 1830s. Evidence given to the Wallace Committee in 1838 (after West Bromwich and Wednesbury had become post-towns in 1837 and the rate between post-towns within eight miles of each other had legally become 2d.) was that a great deal of correspondence within the Black Country was illegally conveyed by carriers at rates cheaper than those of the Post Office.

"The Brierley Hill Anomaly", "Whatever Became Of Bilston" and "Around About Willenhall" in MM34/13ff, 35/7ff, 41/5ff are all relevant to the matters discussed.



THE PEOVER PAPERS  
AND THE MIDLAND COUNTIES

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

Part Five

C38 6JAN74 Vol Two, p106. To Mr. Barber at Stone saying that he is sorry to hear of the miscarriage at Brereton Green. He will discourse with Lord Brereton about it.

C39 31JAN74 Vol Two, p130. To Mr. Holbech at Coleshill saying that he shall have the by-letters for 30s. p.a.

Bg6 31JAN74 Vol Two, p131. To Mr. Webley at Gloucester commenting that he hears Mr. Webley is a good churchman, which is a great argument with Col. Whitley of his integrity in other matters, but cannot allow his boys quitting the road on any pretence.

Bg7 3MAR74 Vol Two, p156. To Mr. Phillpott at Hereford stating that the gentry about Hay are earnest to have the Brecon & Carmarthen bags go that way. He is to give his opinion and state on what terms he will perform the service twice a week (to & fro).

Bg8 28MAR74 Vol Two, p184. Another letter to Mr. Phillpott wanting to know the lowest he will take to carry to Hay &c.

C40 21APR74 Vol Two, p210. To Mr. Rathbone at Lichfield saying that as to what concerns Vtoxiter, Burton &c, he has directed Hickes to write to him, and on his answer will resolve what to do.

Bg9 28APR74 Vol Two, p220. He writes to Mr. Phillpott saying that he has great complaints from Mr. Phillpott's branches that they are ill served; Mr. Phillpott is obliged to ride to Lemster, Kneighton, Prestayne twice a week but neglects it. He desires to hear whether any of them lie near the way to Hay, then he will be better able to resolve about sending the Pembroke mail that way.

C41 28APR74 Vol Two, p223. Another letter to Mr. Rathbone saying that he is informed from Derby that there is not only considerable trade, but several gentry dwell betwixt there and Vtoxiter who will be much dissatisfied at this alteration.

C42 14MAY74 Vol Two, p239. He informs Mr. Barber that Mr. Challoner (Editor's note: A previous deputy at Stone? See MM46/17) says that he found most of the postmasters willing to comply in his business till after he returned from Chester, when Mr. Barber told him that Col. Whitley had advised them not to meddle with him, so he was advised to proceed without them. Pray send up Col. Whitley's letter as he can find none such in his books. Is so far as opposing Mr. Challoner that if the postmasters are willing to comply with him they shall have Col. Whitley's concurrence provided they act nothing to the damage of the office.

Bg10 26MAY74 Vol Two, p248. Again to Mr. Webley. Is informed that several JPs have set their hands to a certificate against him. To use all means to prevent it being sent hither, for Col. Whitley will not be able to defend him when so many eminent persons are resolved (Whitley fears) to put him out.

C43 23JUL74 Vol Two, p299. To Mr. Felton at Stafford. He is to hasten his boy (to & fro) into the road to meet Stone and also the Lichfield boy with his bag so it may not be left behind hereafter.

(to be continued)

THE DEMISE OF A LOCAL POST OFFICE  
ALDERWASLEY - DERBYSHIRE

by Harold Wilson

Another sub-office closed on 27th. November 1987, when Mrs. J. Baines decided she had served long enough after having been the sub-postmistress at Alderwasley since 29th. May 1963. Previous to this she had been in Post Office service as a telephonist for about twenty years.

Alderwasley is a scattered village, with a population of roughly two hundred, about two miles south-east of Wirksworth. The earliest reference to a mail service I have found is a minute in Post 14 dated 27th. April 1853:- "An allowance of £4 a year to be paid to the sub postmaster at Ambergate for a free delivery at Alderwasley."

A directory for 1881 shows the mail coming from Derby. In 1881 a wall box was erected with a daily clearance at 5 p.m. It would appear that an office was opened in 1894 since the handstamp in Figure 1 was issued on 8th. June 1894. A directory for 1895 shows Miss Sarah Ann Murfin as sub-postmistress with the mail arriving from Wirksworth, Matlock Bath or Derby according to the location of the addressee. It arrived daily at 7.40 a.m. and was dispatched at 5.45 p.m.

In 1900 Job Slack was appointed sub-postmaster with the mail now arriving at 8.20 a.m. and departing at 6.15 p.m. In 1911 Mr. Slack got into financial trouble for, according to a newspaper report of 5th. January 1912, he was charged with fraud, having converted Postal Orders to the value of £87 for his own use. He was succeeded by Mrs. Barbara Marlow. A directory for 1922 shows the mail coming through Wirksworth and Whatstandwell and one for 1925 shows it through Wirksworth and Matlock. From 1928 the mail is shown passing via Wirksworth only.

The penultimate postmistress was Miss M. Pickering, but I have been unable to establish when she was appointed.

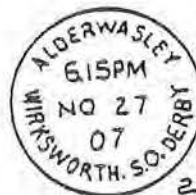
Handstamps recorded are:-

Fig. 1. A rubber stamp issued on 8th. June 1894.

Fig. 2. Shows the office coming under Wirksworth. It is known as a receiving mark in 1906 with the adhesive cancelled at Wirksworth, and as a cancellation in 1907.

Fig. 3. Initially used for cancellation purposes and later as a counter stamp.

Fig. 4. The final counter stamp.



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WANTED

Robert Hunt is seeking one of the envelopes, produced by a previous editor Jon Baker, to mark the introduction of the two tier postal system. If anyone has a copy to sell, please contact Robert at 8 Murray Road, Mickleover, Derby DE3 5LE.

THE R.A.F. IN SHROPSHIRE  
DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR

by Steph Stobbs

At the joint meeting held last October, the Forces Postal History Society provided the displays. A very good friend of mine travelled from London to see the displays and, afterwards, said that he was delighted with the material shown. A short time ago he wrote to me on all that he knew about the R.A.F. in Shropshire. I thought that I knew Shropshire fairly well, but his letter certainly opened my eyes. There was so much information in it that I wrote and asked if he would have any objection to its being used in Midland Mail. I do not think that I can do better than quote from his two letters to me.

Dear Steph,

I have been giving some thought to the RAF presence in Salop during the last war and as a result append the following comments. Since you are much closer to the subject than I a useful exchange of ideas should result. In particular you may have some ideas concerning the GPO post offices which must have served the smaller stations. I would draw your attention to "Action Stations - Volume 3: Military Airfields of Wales and the Northwest" historical detail.

Atcham:

RAF occupancy 9/39 - 5/42 and 3/45 - 4/46.

US forces 5/42 - 3/45.

What civilian sub post offices would the RAF have used ?

Which USAPO did the US forces use ?

Bridgnorth:

Previously Stanmore Camp, Bridgnorth. Is a datestamp known ?

Bridgnorth.Shropshire / R.A.F.P.O. S/R 20.11.43 - 25.4.46.

Bridgnorth. R.A.F. Bridgnorth/ Shropshire D/R 13.11.58 - 25.2.59.

Bridgnorth R.A.F./ Shropshire Seal Issue proof only seen

R.A.F. Post Office/Date/Bridgnorth 6.1.56.

R.A.F. Post Office/Date/Bridgnorth.Shropshire 10.3.59.

Bridle Way Gate:

RAF occupancy 1/41 - 10/45. Nothing postal known.

Brockton:

RAF occupancy 1/44 - 6/44. Nothing postal known.

Chetwynd:

RAF occupancy 1941 - 4/46. Nothing postal known.

Condover:

RAF occupancy 8/42 - 6/45.

Counter d/s ordered by Shrewsbury Head Post Office in 1944.

Halfpenny Green (Bobbington):

I do not know whether you include this one or not since the county border goes right through the airfield ?

Halfpenny Green R.A.F.P.O. / Stourbridge S/R 15.9.44.

High Ercall:

RAF occupancy 10/40 - 2/64.

Counter d/s ordered by Wellington Head Post Office in 1945.

RAF registered label seen.

Hinstock (Ollerton):

RAF occupancy 4/42 - 7/42.  
HMS Godwit 14.8.43 - ?

Admiralty 7/42 - 2/47.  
Nothing postal known.

Hodnet:

RAF occupancy 6/41 - 2/45

Nothing postal known.

Montford Bridge:

RAF occupancy 4/42 - 12/45

Nothing postal known.

Peplow:

Peplow R.A.F.P.O./Market Drayton S/R 3.8.44 - 22.8.44.

Shawbury:

Details of the nearest civilian sub-office would be appreciated.  
Station Post Office/Date/\* Royal Air Force. Shawbury \* 13.4.48.

Sleap:

Sleap R.A.F.P.O./Shrewsbury. Shropshire S/R

Stoke Heath:

This is the only station not mentioned in "Action Stations", probably because it was not an airfield but more likely a headquarters.

Stoke R.A.F.P.O./Market Drayton.Salop S/R 22.9.44 - 8.8.53.

R.A.F.P.O./Stoke Heath Large circular packet type.

\* R.A.F. \*/Stoke Heath/Date/Market Drayton/  
Station Post Office 24.2.49.

Ternhill:

Ternhill R.A.F.P.O. Market Drayton.Salop S/R 22.9.44 - 13.11.56.

Ternhill.R.A.F./Market Drayton.Shropshire S/R 26.1.56 - 10.1.71.

Parcel Post/1/Ternhill/-/-/Market  
Drayton/Shropshire Par 1947

Tilstock:

This station is reported to have been served by a civilian sub-office called "Higher Heath". Confirmation of this and the datestamp details would be appreciated.

Weston Park:

RAF occupancy 6/41 - 1944.  
Nothing postal known.

HMS Godwit II 1944 - 1945.

Dear Steph,

....You have my full permission to publish my notes or any part of them as you may think fit. If in doing so it is possible to achieve any of the following points it will have been very well worthwhile:-

- a. Extend my dates,
- b. Identify the datestamps used by the civilian post offices,
- c. Decide upon the actual location of Stoke Heath R.A.F.P.O. I now think it may have been a M.U. within RAF Ternhill.

There were four distinct types of parcel datestamp, so if any of these types crop up a sketch would be appreciated.

I do hope that any of our members who can assist my friend by even extending a date will kindly let me know so that I can pass it on to him. I may add that he has spent many years compiling this list. I am able to make a few additions, and if there are enough from others I will be only too happy to prepare another short article for Midland Mail.

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NORTHAMPTON RURAL POSTS

Listed below are the proposed posts listed in document dated 15th. December 1855 (Post 14. Ref. 228, p. 703ff.).

Northampton - Oxendon

Kingsthorpe, Boughton, Pitsford, Brixworth, Lamport, Maidwell (Draughton), Kelmarsh, Oxendon.  
By mail cart daily.

Boughton - East Haddon

Boughton Mill, Chapel Brampton, Church Brampton, Holdenby, East Haddon.  
By footpost daily.

Boughton - Moulton

Moulton. Conveyance and delivery by sub-pmr Moulton.  
(This appears to have replaced a Boughton - Walgrave messenger.)

Brixworth - Holcot

Scaldwell, Old, Walgrave, Hannington, Holcot.  
Footpost daily. Delivery at Old and Walgrave by sub-pmrs.

Brixworth - Guilsborough

Spratton, Great Creaton, Cottesbrooke, Hollowell, Guilsborough.  
Messenger daily. Delivery at Spratton by sub-pmr.

Spratton - Coton

Teeton, Ravensthorpe, Coton.  
Footpost daily.

Maidwell - Haselbech

Maidwell Vale, Haselbech.  
Delivery and collection by sub-pmr. Haselbech daily.

Kelmarsh - Harrington

Kelmarsh, Arthingworth, Harrington.  
Delivery and collection by sub-pmr. Kelmarsh daily.

Oxendon - Clipstone

East Farndon, Clipstone.  
Delivery and collection by sub-pmr. Oxendon.

Northampton - Little Brington

St. James' End, Dallington, Duston, Harlestone, Great Brington, Little Brington.  
Footpost six days a week.

Northampton - Upton Hall

Cotton End, Railway Station, Far Cotton, Hunsbury Hill, Duston Mill, Upton.  
Footpost daily.

Northampton - Gayton

Milton (Rothersthorpe), Blisworth, Gayton.  
Footpost six days a week. Delivery at Milton and Rothersthorpe by sub-pmr.  
Milton

Northampton - Roade

Hardingstone, Wootton (Quinton), Collingtree, Courtenhall, Roade.  
By messenger six days a week. Delivery at Wootton and Quinton by sub-pmr.  
Wootton.



STILL BEING GIVEN AWAY

Elizabeth and Eric have noticed that, following on from the extract on the last page of MM48, modern stamps still appear to be difficult to sell as the following examples from a recent auction catalogue shows.

|                                                                                                                                                         | Estimated<br>Value | No. of<br>Items |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| 732 1967/68 Castle 5/-, No Wmk, 4 mint sheets of forty, Plate J..<br>(56 in multiples).                                                                 |                    |                 |
| 733 QE.II range in sheets and part sheets inc Castles No Wmk. 2/6 (220), 5/-<br>(40), 10/- (40) and E1 (40). FACE VALUE ABT £120.                       |                    | £0 Sev 100s     |
| 734 Mint Collection of 1967 to 1970 high vals., mainly in plate blocks of 4<br>with 1967/68 Castles to E1 (8), 1969 Machines to E1 (4) & 1970 to E1 (4) |                    |                 |
| 735 FIRST DAY COVERS 1969 2/6 to E1 (3 covers); 1970 10/-                                                                                               |                    |                 |

They have searched in vain for such valuations in the Postal History section of the catalogue and can assure you that any items which you submit for our auction will not be offered in the same way.

IS THE UDC MAKING A COMEBACK ?

So asks Roger Broomfield who submits the following item from December 1985.

THE NEXT MIDLAND MAIL

This will appear during early March. In addition to the usual reports, there will be more from the Peover Papers, further on the six day posts as well as a look at post offices and public houses. There is room for several more articles which should be sent to:

John Soer, 51d Barkham Road, Wokingham, Berkshire RG11 2RG.

## Great Britain Postal History

from 1840 to date. County material,

FDCs and the unusual. Send for my latest list.

ROGER HUDSON  
36 WEST STREET  
WARWICK  
CV34 6AN