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MIDLAND (G.B.) POSTAL HISTORY

SOCIETY 1975
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BULLETIN NO. 21 SEPT. 81.

NEW SEASON Programme 1981/82. Once again we commence our Season of meetings and activities. The Committee have organized an interesting session of events which we trust will encourage better support from members than last year. A PROGRAMME has been prepared and printed and your copy is enclosed - so slip it into your wallet and refer to it at regular intervals than you will not miss a meeting.

SUBSCRIPTIONS These are now due and should be sent to the Treasurer as above as soon as possible. Due to increasing printing and administrative costs the Annual Subscription has been updated from £2 to £2.50 per member. Copies of this 1st Bulletin have been sent to all members (whether they paid last year's sub or not) but regrettably from now on bulletins will only be sent to paid up members.

CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTION (from Elizabeth)

Dear Member,

It does not seem twelve months since I was asked to write the introduction to last season's opening Bulletin, but here again at the start of another new Postal History season is a suitable time to reflect on the progress of the Society during the past year and look forward to the months that lie ahead.

On looking back undoubtedly our biggest achievement was to again win the Midland Philatelic Federation's top award in the Postal History class. We congratulate Derek Smeathers who submitted on behalf of the Society his 'Thrapstone' entry which won him our Society's award in February. What a coincidence that his initials D.S. are the same as our last years winner, Dennis Salt.

I was pleased to see that on the whole some of our meetings were better attended than in previous years, the January meeting in Birmingham was exceptional when over half our members attended.

As to the coming season may I urge you all to attend as many meetings as possible, you will be guaranteed an interesting afternoon and to get a good attendance is a great encouragement to your Committee and other members. The first meeting of the season on Saturday 12th September is also the date for a Stamp and Postcard Fair at the Imperial Hotel in Temple Street, Birmingham from 10 a.m. onwards. Why not visit the Fair before coming to the Meeting ?

Finally may I urge you to participate in the meetings whenever possible by bringing up to nine sheets (20th March) and any UNDATED circular handstamps of Warwickshire and Birmingham on 12 September (Towns A to H) and 23 January (Towns I to Y). Not forgetting the Annual Competition entry on 20 February.

Interesting Extract from 'THE WORCESTERSHIRE GUARDIAN' June 22 1844
of a Mailcoach run between WORCESTER AND LUDLOW by courtesy of Ted Heath.

To the traveller by the mail road from Worcester to Tenbury, however, the scenery is scarcely less enchanting, the route frequently running parallel at a distance of perhaps a mile and a half to two miles.

There is something most exhilarating in the enjoyment of a morning's ride on the box of one of her Majesty's mail coaches (not steam carriages) through such a rich and romantic country as that between Worcester and Ludlow; and especially with a prospect of a few days' first rate sport in view. Escaping the smoke of the city we mount the eminence on the western bank of the Severn and drinking in the fresh morning air bearing upon its wings the odour of the thousand flowers and shrubs in the surrounding fields and suburban gardens, we rattle along the macadamised road, the four-in-hand indulging themselves in a frolicsome gallop of two or three miles by way of initiation.

"Tantara-ra-ra". Our red-coated guard sounds his well known horn, and at its summons appears the swarthy blacksmith with forked stick in hand, on which is hung "the Squire's" letter bag. No stappages: a nod of recognition on the part of the guard, and a hearty grin in return from Vulcan; the bage is snatched from the pole, and there stands Vulcan at his smithy door lost in admiration of the performances of the team, and regardless both of his iron which is colling on the anvil, and the neighing of the impatient palfrey waiting for his second shoe. Like time and tide, her Majesty's mail waits for no man - though sometimes for woman; hardly is the blacksmith's contribution to the mail deposited in its accustomed place, when another blast is sounded from the guardian angel in our rear, and behold, a blooming damsel trips forth with dainty feet, and with wanton tresses flowing in the breeze, from the village post-office, whose porch is all trellised over with clambering woodbine, and the starry jessamine. A halt is called: red-coat looks glad, and coachee looks glum. Before the wheels have ceased their revolutions Mr. Guard has found his way into the cottage, whither the maid has returned on seeing him. They appear to be an unnecessarily long time in making up the bags; but here they are both at last, the guard looking highly delighted, and the maid with countenance as crimson as his coat. Coachee thinks he ought to have come in for a share of his coadjutor's cause for hilarity; and the maid, to conciliate him, hands him a nosegay fit for a Brobdignagian - being composed of a large double giliflower, three cabbage roses, and a peony. The whole lot, however, is disposed of in the coachman's button-hole, and away we rattle again, the impassioned red-coat casting many a "longing lingering look behind". On, on we go: now by the side of a young oak wood, where the pheasants are seen feeding in the pathways opening through it; now skirting a field of beans, whose fragrance - as of a plantation of blossoming honeysuckles - perfumes the air around; now over a breezy common, fully exposed to the fragrant breath of heaven -

A million odours rich and sweet,
It bears upon its wings,
For infant flowers, a morning treat,
Before the Skylark sings.

Young flowers that, sleeping all the night,
Had sighed their scents away,
And waking up with wild affright,
Had trembled all the day;

With lips refreshed by luscious dews,
They catch the prime perfume,
Then paint afresh their faded hues,
And in new splendour bloom.

"Tantara-ra-ra" Behold and aged woman - her body bending as if to its mother earth - appears at the door of the wayside lodge - the humble and thankful keeper of the park gate. She bears her liberal master's post-bag, which, with her daily and energetic injunction addressed to him of the royal livery, she hands to the coach, and then retires slowly into the

comfortable habitation, provided for her rest in her latter years. The approach of the mail always creates a sensation in the country. As we progress onwards, the husbandman in the fields, hearing the familiar rattle of its wheels, suspends his labour, and leaning upon his spade lifts his hat from his sun burnt brow in salutation of the passengers; the lady in her breakfast parlour runs to the window to see whether any letter is dropped for her from a far distant brother, parent, or friend, and finding none, sighs and returns to her seat; the cattle look up, and surveying for an instant the approach of the rubbing vehicle, suddenly shoot out their heels and scamper up and down the field as if in imitation of their brethren yoked in harness; little children come running out of thatched and whitewashed cottages, and lift up their tiny hands in exultation of the fleeting sight, while their shrill treble voices give boisterous greeting to the merry-looking guard, who treats them to a few passing notes on his instrument, at which all dance in very extacy of youthful joyousness. Happy, happy days of childhood.

But now we have reached our station. This is the spot - the white-washed church standing near the river's bank, and in the centre of a churchyard, scanty of gravestones, with a gentleman's lodge on the right hand of the road. The keeper is in expectation of our arrival, having received orders from his master to afford us every facility in our sport; so throwing our rod and landing-net staff to the boy in attendance, we dismount and proceed to the river side.

With this passing notice of the introductory delights of an angling tour we must now break off, promising to "return to our mutton" on a fitting opportunity.

Note : further information from Book by John H Chandler
'Stagecoach operation through Wiltshire'
South Wilts. Indust. Archaeological Socy
31 Old Meadows Walk, Salisbury Dec 1980.

Reminders

The following members have been appointed as COUNTY EDITORS by the Society to receive information from members on the DUPLEX postmarks etc. as previously requested. They will also be interested in receiving information on ANY interesting County postal marks that you may have.

<u>BIRMINGHAM</u>	<u>SHROPSHIRE</u>	<u>WORCESTERSHIRE</u>	<u>STAFFS & DERBYSHIRE</u>
Peter Baxter 72 Midhurst Road Kings Norton Birmingham	S.Stobbs 28 Rosafield Ave. Halesowen W.Midlands	Mrs.E.Lewid 27 Rathbone Place Smet.hwick, Warley, W.Midlands	R.Farman 124 Henhurst Hill Burton on Trent Staffs.

WARWICKSHIRE : W.S.Chester at Y.Wern, Pen.Y Gellimill, Kerry, Nr.Newtown POWYS.

Will all Committee members (and County Editors) meet at 12-30 in Entrance Hall, Dr.Johnson House prior to the Society meetings in September, January and April.

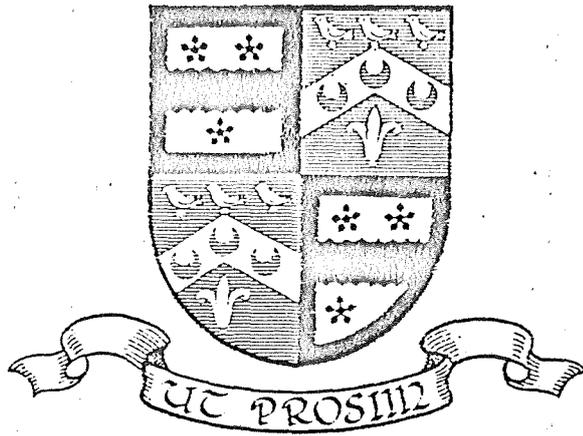
FUND RAISING and INFORMATION

If any member has an early publications on postal history, copies of Post Office information, Regulations etc. that can be readily reproduced and passed to members in exchange for a donation to Society funds please let Richard Farman, our Secretary know. His address is 124 Henhurst Hill, Burton on Trent, Staffs.

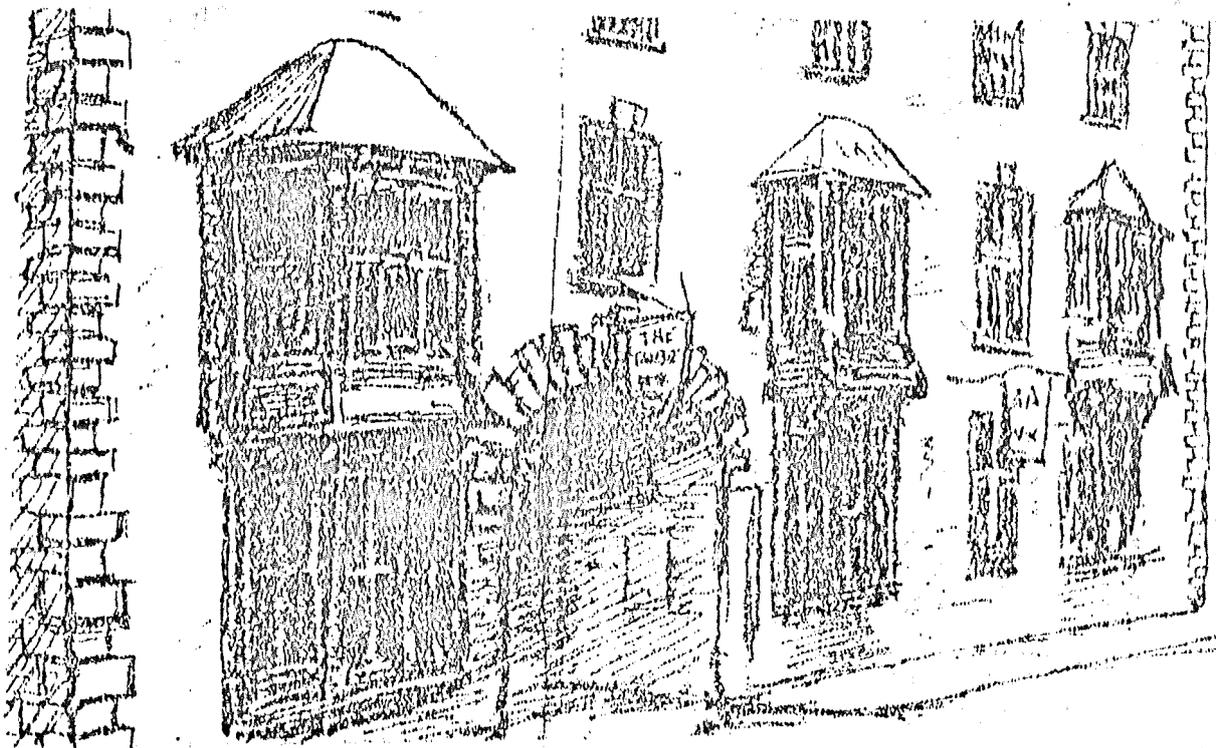
AUCTION Please start thinking about surplus material for our Annual Auction in April. More explicit information on items to be sold is desirable. Further information in a later Bulletin.

SECTION ONE

The Crest of the Foley Family
founded by Richard Foley

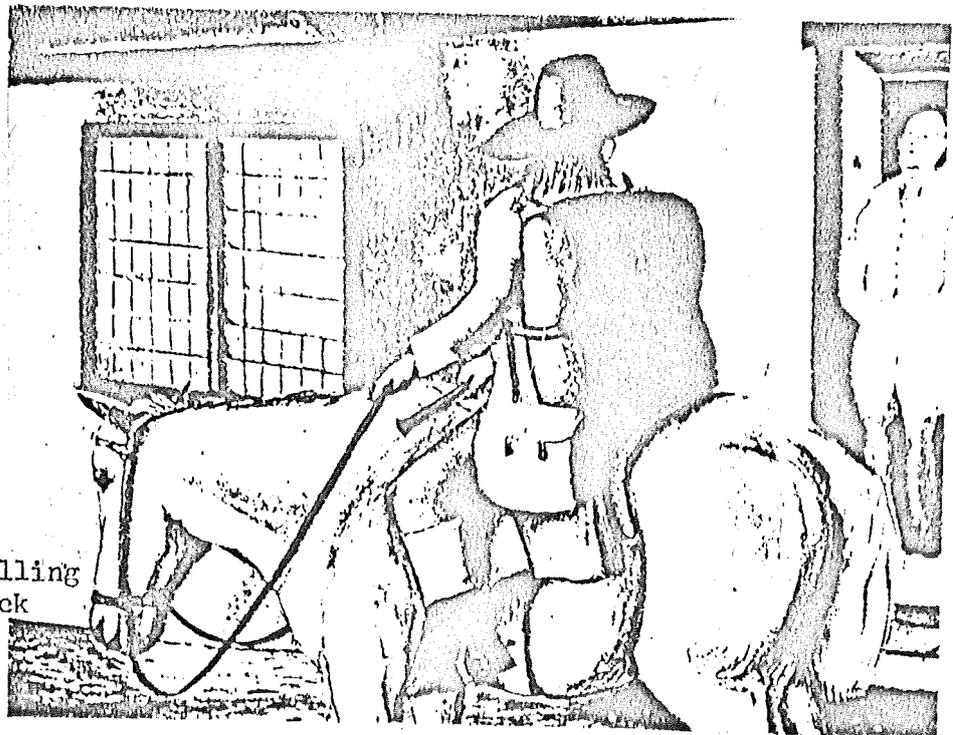


FOLEY CREST



SECTION TWO

The Talbot Inn
Stourbridge



SECTION THREE

A 17th C Post Boy calling
at an Inn. On his back
he carries the 'Great
Maile' and about his
middle the 'Bybag'

the town clock now stands. It is almost certain that the house built by Richard Foley on the right hand side of the High Street, just beyond the town hall, was the first house constructed of brick in Stourbridge. It is believed that it was called simply the "Brick House".

Richard Foley made his will in 1657 and, in it, he mentions his "mansion" in Stourbridge where he was then living. When he died, possibly in the same year, he left the house to his third son, John. Whether John Foley lived there is not known but he died without issue and the house passed to Richard Foley's fourth son, the Reverend Samuel Foley. It is during the period 1657 to 1685 that the Foley family ceased to live in the "Brick House" and decided to let it as an inn. By 1685, its new and popular local name, the Talbot Inn, had become established. A lease of that year describes it as the "house in the High Street, called or knowne by the name of the Talbot". It occupied a strategic position in the town and the new sign that was hung outside is said to have survived into the nineteenth century.

At long last my story moves to postal matters and it will not have taken a genius to decide that the history of the Talbot and the postal history of Stourbridge are to move forward hand in hand. And, to bring that into context, we had better begin at the Chester Road.

(Reference "Gentlemen at the Talbot" published by Mark and Moody Stourbridge. Price 20p)

Section Three

In the seventeenth century, there were six Great Post Roads of England. Of these the Chester Road ran from London, through Coventry and Lichfield, to (not surprisingly) Chester and from there to Holyhead and the Irish packet boats. Thomas Gardiner's survey of 1677 shows a by-post leaving the Chester Road at Coleshill and passing through Birmingham, Stourbridge and Tenbury to Ludlow. Of course this does not imply a daily service: most by-posts only operated once a week and some were less frequent. However it suggests that Stourbridge may have had a postmaster from a fairly early date.

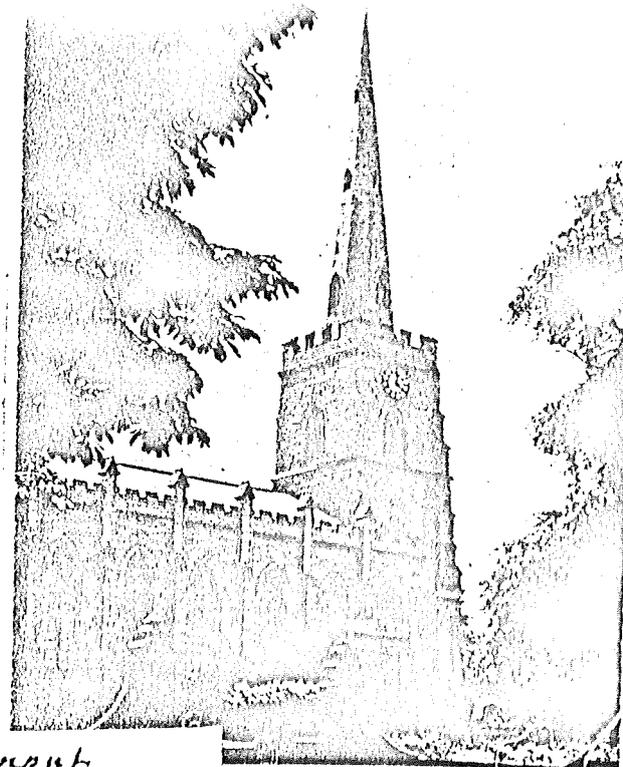
In the Post Office Records, London, are to be found the General Accounts of the GPO from about 1685 and that ties in rather well with our story. Some of the manuscript is difficult to read but the first mention of "Stowerbridge" is clear enough. In the year 1687, a Thomas Price of Stowerbridge paid in the sum of £42-11-8. Who was Thomas Price ?

There is a temptation to digress at this point to explain the relationship of Stourbridge with the manor and parish of Old Swinford. Almost every local history book makes startling errors of fact. There is now a masterly book on the subject by a past headmaster of the Stourbridge Grammar School to which one could scarcely do justice. Suffice to say that Stourbridge was never an independant manor or parish but, due to its geographical position, inevitably outgrew the original parish and manor of Old Swinford. It is to the records of the Church of St. Mary, Old Swinford that one must turn for help. Fortunately the Poor Law and Settlement documents have survived from 1651. Among these and covering the period 1670 to 1794 are the Apprenticeship Indentures whereby poor children of the parish were apprenticed to local traders and gentry. Innholders, like brewers, were never poor.

(Reference : 1. Oldswinford, Bedcote and Stourbridge Manors and Boundaries. by R.L. Chambers M.A. Dudley Teachers Centre. Price £1-25.)

SECTION FOUR

The Church of St. Mary
Old Swinford



yo^r Letter I received and accordingly I have comput
the bills and I found that I did not Charge y^e Bill
Came of the 24th of June Therefore I have copyed
the Bills and have send you an account of them and like
an account of what Letters I have rec^d the postage for
must be accounted for this quarter but the bad
Letters you must deduct out of the 36-10-2 as will

to & t my Rentorage 17 this is an
April 13-12-0 exact account of the bill
May 13-09-8. show for I would have
June 09-05-4 to this bill what money sh
7 post y^e Letters 00-03-2 whards and I will repay y^e
36-10-2 againe when you come
and I am sorry that you ha
some trouble about it
which all from yo^r

SECTION FIVE

A portion of Mary Clarke
letter to Thomas Milward
dated 7th July 1712

Mary Clarke

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Letter Office
London

1720 St. Church of Stourbridge D

SECTION SIX

Letter Office, London
Receipt for proceeds of
Stourbridge Post Office
in first quarter
of 1720

To the Post Office of his Majesty's Decem^{br} 25 --- 30: 4: 2
January --- 14: 18: 4
To the Post Office for Letters in } February --- 11: 16: 3
March --- 10: 2: 11

67: 1: 8

Section Four

The very first mention of an innholder in the Apprenticeship Indentures is, almost unbelievably, a Thomas Price in 1681. He is said to reside in Stourbridge, not Old Swinford, and to have taken as his apprentice a William Fynnard. Ten years earlier, Thomas Price Senior and Junior have put up an indemnity bond to support a Mary Beaver of London. An intelligent guess suggests that this is the same Thomas Price who has the post office and that he is, not surprisingly, an innkeeper. He is not short of money and perhaps the sort of man who could have taken the Talbot. But the clues lead no further and we must move forward to 1693 to find out who succeeds him as postmaster. The accounts show it to be Jonathan Pyrke. Now we are on firm ground.

In 1685 Jonathan Pyrke leased the Talbot for a period of 21 years from the Reverend Samuel Foley. We can also find him in the church records as a gentleman of Stourbridge putting up yet another indemnity bond. It is idle to speculate whether Thomas Price had the Talbot before Pyrke, gave up the lease and continued as postmaster or whether it was not until 1693 that Jonathan Pyrke could wrest the post office from another inn. In any case, notwithstanding his long lease, Pyrke gave up both the Talbot and the post office in 1695 and moved to Exeter. He assigned the rest of his lease to Daniel Clarke of Newport (Salop) but he did not present him with the postmaster's job. That was now paying a salary of £10-0-0 a year and was to stay in the family.

(Reference : The Poor Law & Settlement Documents of the Church of St. Mary, Old Swinford 1651 - 1794 published by The Birmingham & Midland Society of Genealogy & Heraldry.)

Section Five.

When Jonathan Pyrke moved to Exeter, Mrs. Elizabeth Lench became the first postmistress. A letter from Jonathan Pyrke to Daniel Clarke asks him to pay his sister, Mrs. Lench, the sum of £10. If Daniel Clarke wanted to be postmaster, and he probably did, his luck ran out and he died at just about the time in 1707 that Mrs. Lench gave up the appointment. It passed to Thomas Blick (or Blicke) for a brief period of about four years. His connection with Mrs. Lench or the Talbot is not immediately apparent but another document is of possible help. In 1700, Thomas Milward describes in his Day Book how he went to Robert Lench's "outcome" (Coming of Age) and gave 6d to the fiddler, John Blicke. Perhaps the Lenchs and Blickes were close friends or, possibly, related.

Meanwhile Mary Clarke, Daniel's widow, took over the lease of the Talbot and in 1710 she was able to buy it outright from the Foley family. In 1712 she went a stage further and took over the post office. When Thomas Blick had become postmaster, the annual salary had been reduced from £10 to £5. It took Mary less than a year to put that right and the salary remained at £10 for the next fifty years! On 7th July 1712, she wrote a most interesting letter to Thomas Milward (referred to above) who was then staying in Fleet Street, London. It reads "Your letter I received and accordingly I have computed the Bills and I found that I did not charge your Bills. Come of 24th June therefore I have copied the Bills and have sent you an account of them and, like, an account of what letters I have paid the postage for and must be counted for this

quarter but the dead (?) letters you must deduct out of the £36-10-2 as well as my quarterage". We will look at these accounts in more detail in Section 6 but ponder why the post office accounts are being perused by a gentleman in Fleet Street.

(Reference : 2. Thomas Milward's 17th Century Daybook by R.L. Chambers, M.A.)

Section Six

Thomas Milward is the sixth recorded generation of the Milward family of Wollescote. Rarely can so much evidence of one family's affairs have survived the centuries. He was born in 1670 and died in 1724 so he was 42 when Mary Clarke wrote to him. Unlike his forbears, Thomas Milward has a profession : he is a solicitor. Furthermore we know him to have been a frequent customer of the Talbot in Daniel and Mary Clarke's time with a weakness for drink and a far more serious weakness for excessive gambling. If Mary needed help to sort out the financial affairs of her post office at the time of taking it over, who better to turn to than a favoured customer who was also a solicitor ?

The accounts begin as follows:-

	March	£	s	d
25th	50 at 4d		19-	4
27th	39 at 4d		13-	0
29th	65 at 4d		1-01-	0

and continue in like vein for three months. It seems that letters were delivered three times a week and that she handled 654 letters in April, 809 in May and 556 in June. There were just 8 letters post paid in the quarter and 24 letters that would not be accepted bearing postage to be paid of between 4d and 1/4. Total receipts for the first quarter were £36-10-2 less those dead letters she mentions, 12/3d. I am sure Thomas Milward would be satisfied that she could handle the post office accounts. After all, she had kept track of what he owed the Talbot.

(Reference : The 'Palfrey Papers', Worcester Records Office.
