

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



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No Clean Sweep

It was a select (ie rather small) gathering of members at the AGM that heard Elizabeth, our Chairman, pay a charming tribute to Jon Baker's long stint as editor of the Bulletin. Only three Bulletins had appeared when, in 1976, there was an urgent appeal to the membership for someone to make himself responsible for editing and producing the society's lifeline. Jon stepped into the breach, more a press-gang victim than a volunteer, and has produced since those early days no fewer than 21 editions - often with a shortage of suitable material, usually under pressure of other work but always with good humour. He deserves a rest and we owe him a great debt.

I step into his shoes full of misgivings. I have no editorial or artistic expertise and can type with two fingers only on a good day. If I had felt moved to write an Editorial in this my first Bulletin, I would have said just what Jon said in his. The success of the Society hinges on communication between its members. If we can all make one contribution a year to the Bulletin, however small, we will continue to have an active and growing Midland Postal History Society.

Please expect no clean sweep by your new editor. The new broom has made a few changes but the object will be steady progress rather than change for change's sake.

Material for the Bulletin and Letters to the Editor should be sent to:

John Calladine
Dunley House
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Gloucester GL4 8HQ

Joint Meeting with the Postal History Society

On Saturday 20th March, eight of our members gathered with members of the Postal History Society at Shrewsbury in our first joint meeting. We were greeted with coffee and biscuits in a comfortable room at the Beauchamp Hotel overlooking the Shropshire countryside. Throughout the day members of both societies gave displays of up to 25 sheets on various themes but broadly concerned with the subject of The Collection, Despatch, Carriage and Delivery of Mail. The morning's displays included :-

Staffordshire correspondence connected with Wedgwood and Erasmus Darby including an explanation of how Newcastle under Lyme became the most profitable of the fifth class posts with many receiving houses.

The Dover Road Post where we learned that, if a letter went through Chatham, it cost ld more than if it went through Rochester.

A fine selection of Inspectors' Marks including an assortment of stars, crowns and similar markings together with inspectors' letters and numeral handstamps.

Shropshire material including undated circles and post to and from Shrewsbury.

We adjourned to the hotel dining room to be served with a most excellent lunch followed by coffee and returned, suitably fortified, for the afternoon session which included displays of :-

Material concerned with the Canadian contingents in the second Anglo-Boer War.

Letters illustrating aspects of the day's chosen subject - collection, despatch, carriage and delivery of mail.

A practical re-creation of a postman's rural delivery of 1858 in the Belbroughton area of Stourbridge illustrated with photographs.

A display of Instructional, Explanatory and Tax markings, mainly on postcards.

The meeting closed with a vote of thanks to Denis Salt and members of the Postal History Society for inviting our members to join them. We enjoyed a cup of tea together before departing to homes as far separated as Kent and Newcastle and agreeing that we should hold another joint meeting in the not-too-distant future.

Elizabeth Lewis

Obituary

It is with sadness that we report the death of one of our members, Jack Steward of Kidderminster. He was well known in the Birmingham PS and he passed away while attending the SPH conference at Leamington. We offer our condolences to his family.

The Annual General Meeting and Auction - 24th April

AGMs are rarely the most popular meetings in any society and this one was unlucky enough to clash with two other meetings in the area. Apologies for absence were received from Messrs Peach, Wilson, Stobbs and Sharp and from the Rev Beaver. The Minutes of the 1981 AGM were adopted without dissent. The Chairman reported on a variety of meetings held in the past year including two full length displays. She said that a start had been made on a listing of the UDCs of Warwickshire and she thanked the officers of the Society for the help they have given her. The Secretary told the meeting that the new season's programme will be published in the August number of the Bulletin (see below). The Treasurer said there had been an increase in income during the year because subs had been raised. There was a surplus of £75 but the Society may have to pay £40 for room hire next year so this "surplus" was just enough to keep us in balance. He recommended that the subscription be unchanged for the 1982/83 season.

The Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer announced their willingness to continue in office but the Bulletin Editor asked to retire. He was thanked by the Chairman for his sterling efforts during the past six or seven years and, much to his surprise, presented with a framed coloured Victorian print of the General Letter Office which was later signed on the reverse by all members present. It was fitting that it was Jon who had had the foresight to arrive armed with a bouquet to present to Elizabeth, our Chairman, as a tribute from the Society.

Because of the small attendance, it was not surprising that many of the auction lots were unsold. Realisations were:-
 Lot 11 £5, 16 £9-50, 17 £1-50, 21 40p, 22 £1, 24 £1-50, 25 £3, 29 £3, 32 £1-90
 33 £3-10, 34 40p, 36 40p, 37 £1-50, 39 50p, 40 £1-50, 47 £2-20, 48 £4,
 49 £1-50, 53 £2-50, 54 £9-50, 55 £6-50, 57 £3, 60 £3, 61 £3, 62 £1-90, 63 £10,
 68 70p, 69 - 74 withdrawn, 81 £2-20.

The New Season's Programme

Full details of the new season's programme will be given in a Bulletin to be published in August but the provisional dates and locations are:

| | |
|----------------|-------------------------------|
| 18th September | Birmingham |
| 30th October | Midland Institute, Birmingham |
| 4th December | Bass Museum, Burton on Trent |

22nd January, 19th February, 12th March & 16th April Birmingham

If these dates clash with other meetings, please let the Secretary know.

SELLING POSTMARKS an occasional series on dealers in GB postal history.

No. 2 Derek Green

The extensive postal lists of D.L.Green make his name one of the best known in the business. They are his own work and it would take only a little imagination to realise how much time is absorbed in their preparation. If you had wondered why you didn't see his name at a well-known show or fair, wonder no longer - there simply isn't time to attend !

Derek Green's interest in stamps started at the age of six. Those fascinating "Orange Tree" stamps of the Orange Free State were the trigger and he began to build a detailed collection of them. He 'progressed' to early letters and postmarks and then, about sixteen years ago, he acquired a "find" of 500 covers with penny reds. Those launched him into the postal history business and he hasn't looked back. Mr Green is yet another dealer who has never wanted his own shop. He feels that the unavoidable overheads would only result in dearer PH material.

When asked for his comments on Midlands PH affairs, he reminisced that a Birmingham 'Chandelier' mark could be bought for £50 when he began trading and to-day it would fetch over £1000 - if you could find one. He believes that some of the Midland penny posts and early straight line marks are still underrated and there is no shortage of potential here in the long term. His own stocks of the area are extensive and cover the whole field of straight lines, mileages, penny posts, undated village marks and even the more humble CDS.

Derek Green remains a keen collector of postal history himself. Of his three collections, the best known is his Welsh collection which includes all the known - and several 'unknown' - marks of the Uniform Penny Post (in exhibition condition !). In case you believe that a dealer will sell anything at a price, you can forget it this time. When it comes to marks of the UPP in Wales, his collecting instincts come first every time !

More About Selling Postmarks

There are one or two postal history dealers among our members and the Bulletin reaches others. If you are a dealer and would like to reach our membership with details of your stock, why not advertise in the Bulletin ? Rates are very low and the readership is wholly of keen PH collectors, many of whom rarely travel to the London dealers. The Secretary will be delighted to hear from you.

A Visit to Post Office Archives - Part 2



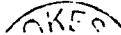
In the first part of this short series (Bulletin No.23, January 1982), we considered how to find Post Office Archives in London and what we might discover there. This second part will look specifically at the postmarks issued to your local village, town or city.

If you are hoping to find specimen strikes of early straight line stamps of the eighteenth century, you will inevitably be disappointed. It is not until the 1820s that useful information turns up. Most of it is in a series of volumes known as the "Post Office Date Stamp Impressions (Steel)". No fewer than 48 volumes cover the period from 1825 to the end of the century but, among these, a few are concerned only with London marks (Vols 6, 17, 19, 24, 33, 39 and 43) or overseas post offices (Vols 8 and 22). The rest will provide plenty of scope for study !

It would be surprising if records of this age followed a standard format. However, these records are reasonably consistent, each page comprising three columns headed 'To what place', 'Date when sent' and 'Stamps', the latter bearing an impression of the stamp supplied. Figure 1 shows a typical entry.

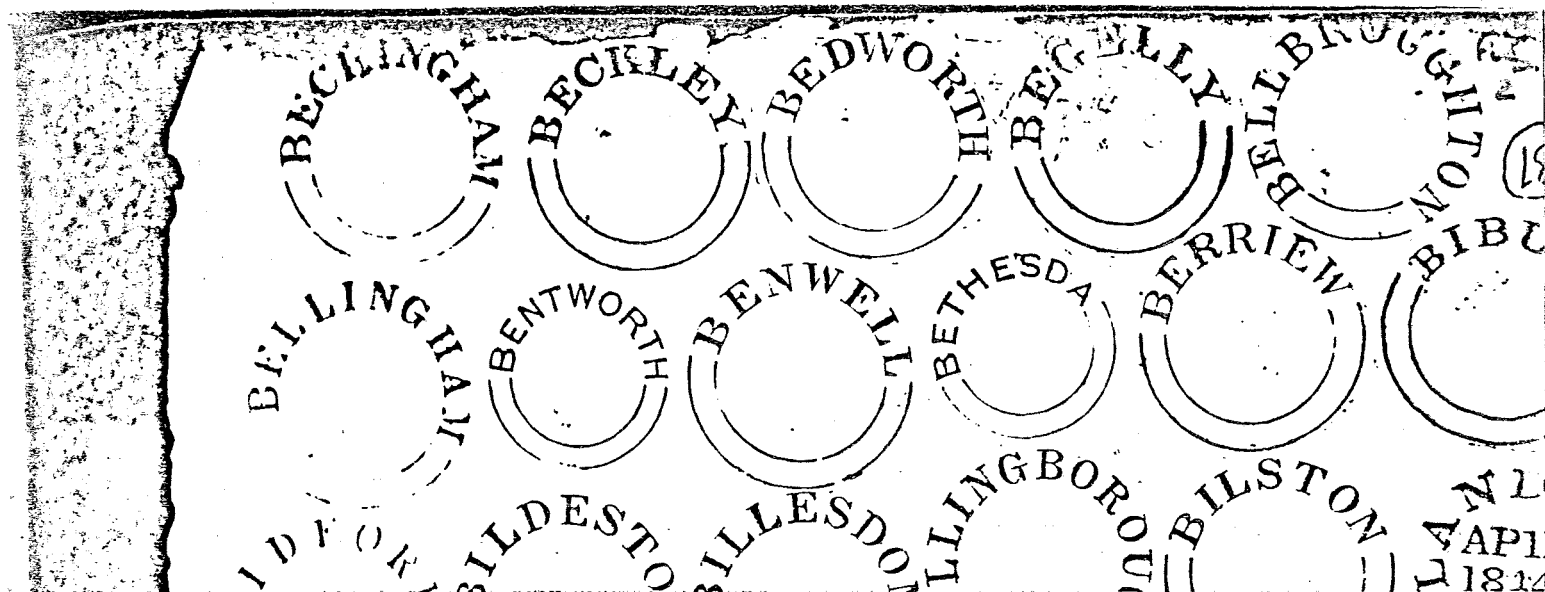
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Fig. 1

| To what place | Date when sent | Stamps |
|-------------------|------------------------|--|
| <i>Seven Oaks</i> | <i>1858 Mar 31</i> |  |
| <i>Sheerness</i> | |  |
| <i>A. D. S.</i> | |  |

The two notable exceptions to this format are Volumes 3 & 15 and these two volumes usually, but not with 100% certainty, record impressions that are also included in other volumes. The 'normal' volumes list the marks in the order in which they were issued, regardless of the town to which they were sent. There is an index at the front of each volume listing the post towns by their initial letter. Whereas this is of some help, it is often preferable to search each page because you may well unearth marks of sub-offices that are unknown to you and therefore unconsidered in an index search. Volumes 3 and 15, on the other hand, contain no written information but strike each

stamp on a page appropriate to the initial letter of the office. Both volumes cover an extended period: Volume 3 from 1838 to 1850 and Volume 15 from 1857 to 1870. Figure 2 shows part of a page in Volume 3.



In many cases, the date struck on the specimen impression (if dated) will coincide with the date of issue or at least be within a day or two. However, for no apparent good reason, there can be large discrepancies. There may also turn out to be a discrepancy between a dated strike in, say, Volume 15 and what is clearly the same stamp in a different volume. Probably the best course, if you can afford it, is to photocopy pages of interest so that anomalies can be resolved in slow time. The staff will photocopy at your request and produce excellent results but the cost is a hefty 18p a sheet. Incidentally, it should be mentioned that the steel impression books are, themselves, hard-bound photocopies. They receive a lot of attention and this sensible arrangement has avoided damage to the originals.

The steel date stamp impression books cover the period up to about 1886 reliably but the period from 1887 to 1908 appears to have significant gaps. From about 1886, a further series of volumes in the archives contain information on the Rubber Stamps, including parcel postmarks, and these are worth looking through. Even after 1908, the steel impression books can scarcely be considered to provide the interest or completeness of the early volumes.

A start has been made by Hilary Wellsted and Proud Bailey Ltd on a series of books titled "Postmarks of the Date Impression Books, Post Office Records" which illustrate the marks in the steel impression books. Section One, which covers Volumes 1 and 2, appeared in 1979 and a further section is expected this year. These books have the advantage of a reliable index.

So much for postmarks: in the next article we will look at a different aspect - local postmasters - and turn back the pages 300 years.

BIRMINGHAM POST OFFICE IN THE 1820s

(From the Central Literary Magazine of July 1877)

"In 1822 there were five clerks and nine postmen at the Birmingham Post Office, but the duties of the postmen seem to have been of a much less strict and regular character than those of letter-carriers of the present day (1877). There were three deliveries - at 8am, 10.30am and 5pm. Edgbaston letters were not, for the greater part, delivered, but had to be "left with friends" and to any houses beyond the limits of the town delivery proper, the carriers would take the letters and pocket the pence received.

Thus in Bell Barn Road, there was at this period one factory, the letters for which were taken by the postmen on payment of a penny a piece, the route to the factory being a garden walk.

Kings Heath, and such suburbs, were very badly off; the letters were supposed to be taken once a week, but it frequently happened that there were not sufficient to pay the postman for his trouble, and they stayed till the next week.

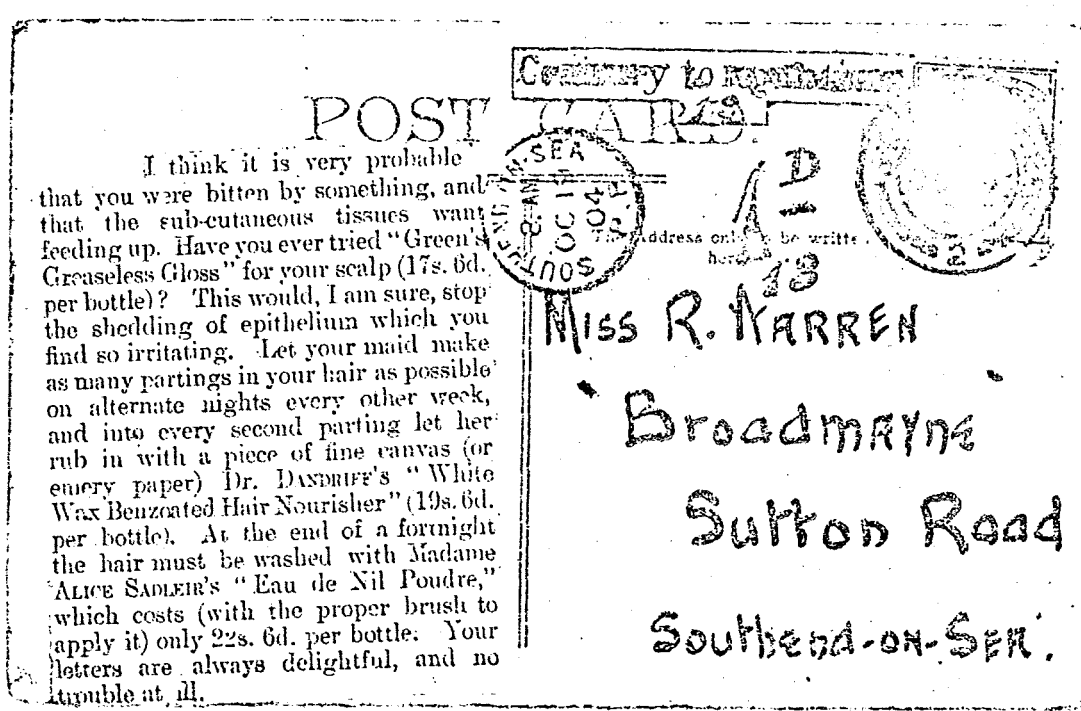
As late as 1830, letters for Moseley and district, on one occasion, remained at the Birmingham office for six weeks; a letter carrier was then sent the whole round with them, but he was unable to finish in one day. On reaching Kings Heath in working his way back, he tried to get a bed, but in such ill-repute were strangers from Birmingham then held that no one would take him in and he had to walk home and return next day to finish the delivery. However he was substantially rewarded - the fees he obtained in the two days amounted to nearly 26s.

The charge in 1824 for delivering a letter from the Birmingham Post Office to Balsall Heath was 2d, Moseley 3d, Kings Heath 4d, Kings Norton and district 6d. Extra delivery charges were enforced on letters delivered only a short distance from the centre of the town until about 1841, about a year after the establishment of the Penny Post throughout the Kingdom."

Submitted by Peter Baxter

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Subscriptions for the 1982/83 season are now due. The sub is unchanged at £2.50. The Treasurer is looking forward to hearing from you

An unusual message'AN INN IN THE HIGH STREET' - Section 8

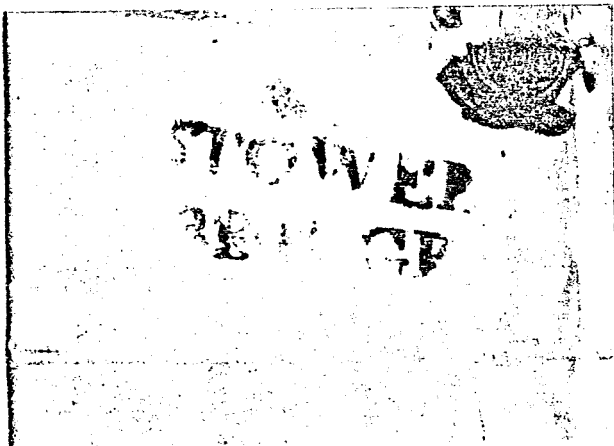
The story so far - The Talbot Inn in Stourbridge High Street has been the town's post office since the final decade of the 17th century. The year is now 1755 and a new lease is being prepared.

George Clarke (postmaster from 1736 to 1741) or possibly his brother Daniel, an attorney in Bewdley, arranged a lease of the Talbot in 1755 and an inventory was drawn up which has fortunately survived. One might think that the room used as a post office could be identified. It would obviously be on the ground floor of the inn and it might be easier to recognize from the items it did NOT contain (linen, silver and valuable furniture) than from the expected contents. However, in the event, it has proved impossible to put a finger on a listed room and say with conviction that it was used as the post office. We do know, fortunately, its location in the inn from another source.

Many years ago, the late Alderman Palfrey met a a reporter on the local paper and showed him an old plan of the Talbot. "Look", he said, "the room they are converting into the new cocktail bar used to be the post office". He pointed to a room just inside the front door on the right hand side. So far, a quite intensive search for that old plan has proved frustrating. The present owners of the Talbot Inn, Wolverhampton and Dudley Breweries, could not have been more helpful. They asked their solicitors to make a thorough search of the extensive title deeds but the plan is not among them. If it is

with the Palfrey papers in the Worcester Record Office, it is not with the other Talbot records and many fruitless hours of scrutiny have failed to provide a clue to its whereabouts.

The new lessee of the inn was Thomas Savage of Bridgnorth. A letter written to a friend in Wolverhampton in 1755 suggests that he carried out a careful reconnaissance of the business before signing the lease. Three years later, in 1758, he took over the duties of postmaster from Ellen Southwood and in 1774/75 passed the job onto his son William. It was William who, in 1776, agreed to buy the inn rather than lease it. He undertook to pay Daniel Clarke a total of £2,100 including a £1,600 mortgage at 4%. It was that deal that probably signalled the end of the link between the Talbot and the Stourbridge post office.



A 'Stourbridge' mark on a letter of 1781 - the year William Savage died.

William Savage remained as postmaster until his death in 1781. When he died, he left his widow, Mary Savage, in a financial mess. Notwithstanding her problems, she immediately assumed the duties of postmistress. She wrote a pathetic letter to Daniel Clarke begging to be released from the inn ..

(The final part will appear in the August Bulletin)

Books that may interest you - 1.

ASQUITH Brian L. The Concorde collector's handbook. Published by the author at Alandale, Radcliffe Gardens, Carshalton Beeches, Surrey in July 1981. £4.95 + 30p p&p. Includes flown covers, postmarks and postal stationery.

BECKWITH George & LAURANCE Lenny. Lands End Cachets; 1900 onwards. Published in 1981 at £1-65 by Mr Beckwith at 43, Chaplin Crescent, Sunbury, Middx. 32pp 68 cachets illustrated, described and dated. Vol 2 due this year.

BEITH Richard Scottish Air Mails, 1919 - 1979. Published by the author c/o Riverbank Press, Stirling Road, Dundee in 1981. £5.40 in a limited edition of 750 illustrated copies.

DON'T FORGET - the next Bulletin in August will contain details of next season's programme.