

Bordeaux, Rue du Pavé des Chartreux N. 22

May 20<sup>th</sup> 1814

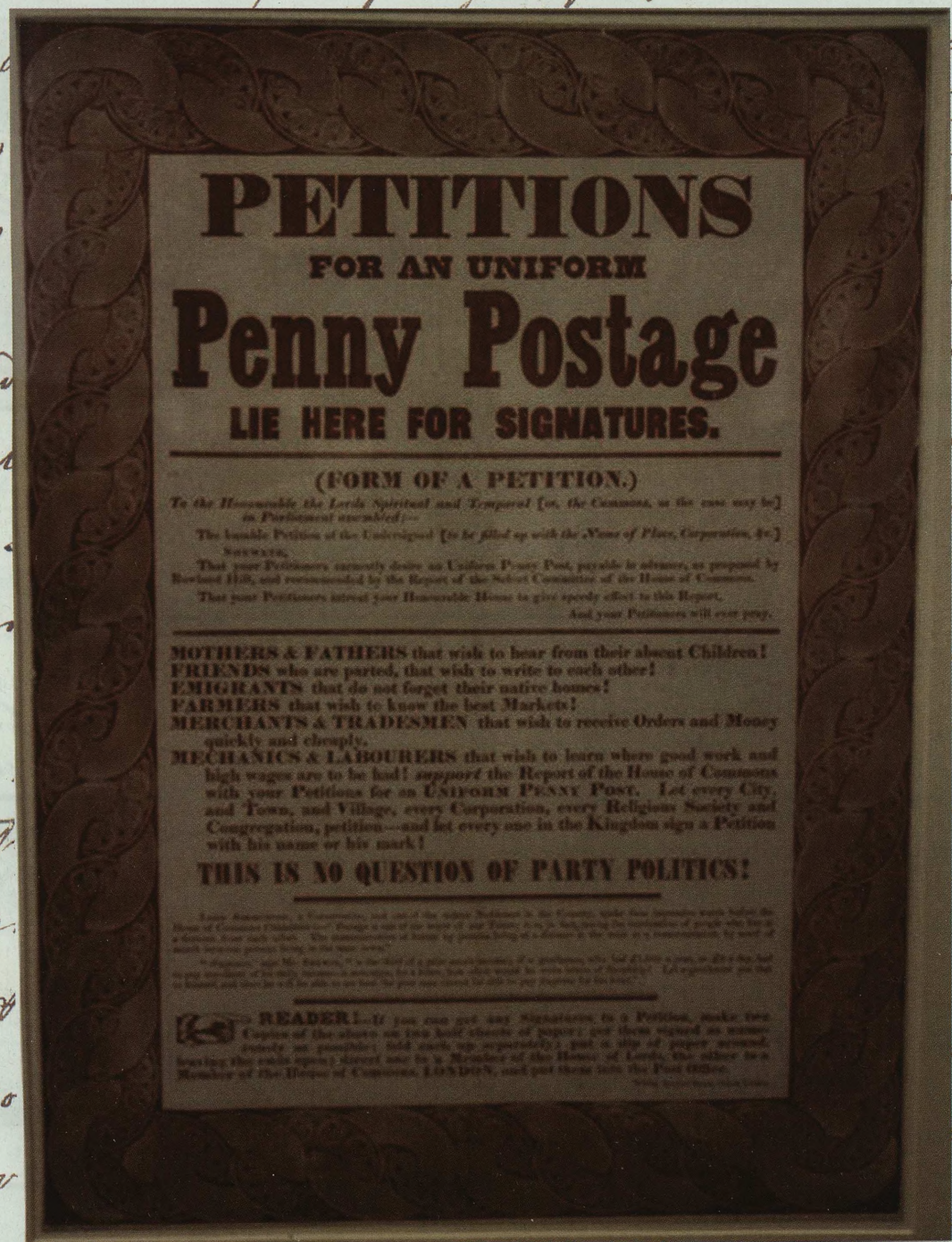
# Postal History

My dear *Frederick*

The Journal of the Postal History Society

all occasions, to my situation & interests. Your private letter of the 4<sup>th</sup> is in a high degree gratifying to me, as an additional

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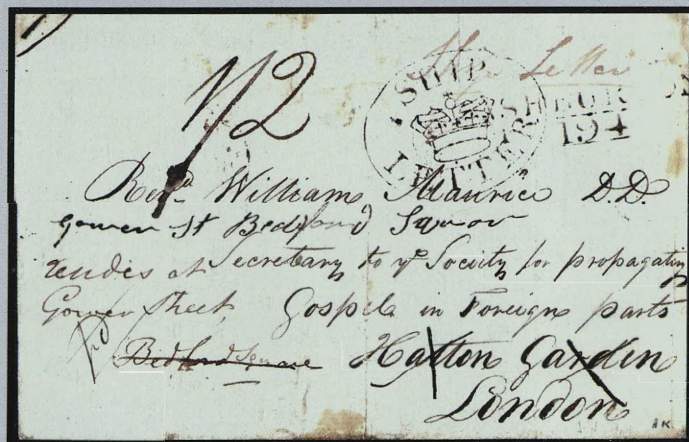
No 344

December 2012

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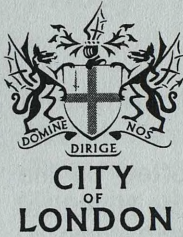
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A Two Day Conference  
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- Their Uses and Users

12th & 13th April 2013

at

London Metropolitan Archives &  
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# **The Beating Heart of London's Business**

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### **- Their Uses and Users**

**12-13 APRIL 2013**

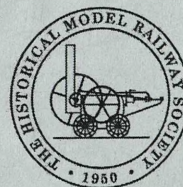
This two-day conference, organised by A<sup>2</sup>SN and supported by the Postal History Society, the Business Archives Council and the Historical Model Railway Society is the second in a series begun in 2012.

The conferences seek to explore and expand co-operation between volunteer-led societies involved in business history fields and the academics, archivists and museum professionals working in the same areas. The events aim to prompt an awareness of what these various groups are doing, and to start a dialogue between the enthusiast and academic which may lead to co-operation in preserving and using collections, and furthering our understanding of the past and its relevance to the future.

London, as a venue for the second conference, has been facilitated by John Scott, Chairman of the Culture, Heritage & Libraries Committee of the City of London Corporation, who is one of our speakers. The event is hosted by London Metropolitan Archives and Museum of London Docklands and themes of trade and commerce are drawn from holdings in their care. London is a world-renowned centre for business, a place where the means of communication, written, electronic and physical, come together. It is not surprising therefore to find a vast array of business archives held in archival repositories in and around the City. Whatever your passion, we aim to give you new opportunities, avenues of exploration and fresh insights.



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## **THEMES**

### ***Friday 12 April 2013 - London Metropolitan Archives***

**Postal Heritage - The Postal History Society together with the British Postal Museum and Archive**

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**The Age of Finance – city banking archives: panel discussion**

**Breakout sessions:**

**Unlocking lock and safe records through archives of Chubb and Son, users and volunteering perspectives**

**A discussion on community archives - their methods and uses.**

**History with no archives - how is it done?**

**Drop-in sessions:**

**Tour of LMA**

**Weird and wonderful items from LMA business collections**

**Ask the Archivist - Advice and Help**

**Business in film: view films in LMA's Mediatheque**

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### ***Saturday 13 April 2013 - Museum of London in Docklands and the Sainsbury Archive***

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**Archiving Ephemera at the National Railway Museum**

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# Postal History

The Journal of The Postal History Society

Number 344, December 2012

Hon Editor: CLAIRE SCOTT

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Copy dates for 2013 - March issue February 5th, June issue May 5th, September issue August 5th, December issue November 5th.

## EDITORIAL

As the year draws to a close and I put the finishing touches to the December Journal I would like to thank every member who has contributed over the past year whether your article has appeared as yet or not. Having material on hand really does help me to edit the Journal and to try and provide you with varied and interesting articles- please do not feel that because I have some material in hand that you need to sit back and stop writing. At conference I approached a number of members and asked them to write up their displays for the Journal so that those of you who missed out on a very interesting and enjoyable weekend would be able read about them. I am using up the short articles and one page items more quickly than I am receiving them so if you find that you are writing up an interesting cover do send a scan and your write up to me at the same time. It only remains for me to wish you all a happy, healthy and successful collecting year in 2013.

## PRESIDENT'S MUSINGS

My term as President of our Society has certainly commenced with a bang. I am writing this the morning after a memorable meeting arranged by our immediate past President, John Scott, at the Guildhall of the City of London to view a fellow member's collection of documents related to the postal reforms of 1839 and 1840. A full report appears elsewhere in this issue of Postal History but I am able here to thank Anthony Eskenzie CBE whose artefacts were displayed for providing the display. The event was further enhanced by the presence of the Lord Mayor of London, Alderman David Wootton, who took time out from preparing to depart the Mansion House when his term ended on the 10th November.

The weekend was further enhanced when on Friday I was delighted to see many fellow members of the Postal History Society attend the Stuart Rossiter Memorial Lecture held at the Royal Philatelic Society London where I regaled the audience with the thrills and frustrations of Postal History Authorship. So, where do we go from here. I hope on to even greater and worthier endeavours, this past weekend will spur myself and my fellow Council members to find ways of making membership of our Society enjoyable whilst adding further to our understanding of this great hobby.

One of the hopes that I have is that we can revive a tradition of the Society by holding either a weekend meeting or an annual conference on the Continent. There is a precedent for this, in 1985, before I became a member of the Society, the conference was held at Vlissingen in Holland. With the availability of low cost air fares it is possible to hold either the conference or at least a weekend meeting in a historic city such as Bruges or Reims. I have already had some thoughts on how this could be achieved without having to call upon the resources of a philatelic society in such a location. I would be interested in our membership's response to such an idea.

Your Council has put together a varied programme for the year ahead and much work goes into this, the production of this journal and the other activities of the Society. I urge all who are able to support your Society through attendance at meetings, contributions to this Journal and any other endeavours that the Society participates in over the coming years.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor

On behalf of the British Air Mail Society it gives me great pleasure to invite the members of the Postal History Society as guests to attend a day long meeting next year, Saturday 2nd November 2013, at the premises of the Royal P.S., when the subject of the day's proceedings will be "World War II Air Mails." The programme of events is yet to be decided, but there is already a sign of great interest from many members who have expressed their wish to display a great variety of material, so I think we can promise a varied and entertaining day for those attending.

There would, of course, be the opportunity for any of your members who collect WWII airmails to contribute to the day's proceedings by way of providing additional displays. I have been tasked with organising this meeting and as the time gets closer I hope to have a clearer idea of what we might expect to see. This meeting is entirely free to those wishing to attend, BUT we will need numbers and names in advance for obvious security reasons at the Royal. And as we expect to have refreshments (buffet lunch) we would need numbers. There would be a nominal charge for those wishing to lunch at the Royal.

Dr. Richard Saundry, Secretary BAMS, 3 Reawla Lane, Gwinear, HAYLE, Cornwall TR27 5HQ (01736 850739, e-mail; richardsaundry@btinternet.com)

Dear Editor

Letter from Flen 16 12 71. It has been forwarded by mail train PKXP Nr 4 to Hallsberg and probably to Malmö and via Denmark to Hamburg, Paris, Bayonne, Irun and Madrid??

From there it has been returned via Hamburg 23 12 71 to the mail train PKXP 2 from Malmö 25 12 71 to Flen.

As per the convention Sweden-North German Union February 1869 the rate for an unpaid letter up to 15 gram was 5 Silbergroschen, to be shared equally, as per the postmark on the reverse.

Convention Spain-Germany of 1864 states a portage of 64 Cuartos for a letter of ½-1 loth. (20 Cuartos to Spain and 24 to Germany and 20 for the Transit).

Can any reader add to these comments.

Gunnar Nilsson



# THE PORT TALBOT RAILWAY & DOCKS COMPANY

NEIL PRIOR

Railways and ports were, at first, separate parts of the transport system in South Wales. Many ports were built along the south Wales coast during the nineteenth century to serve the rapidly expanding industries and coalfields on the south Wales valleys. Cardiff was served by the Taff Vale Railway, whilst Swansea was served by a number of railway systems, and both grew to become, in time, major cities. Railway-led port facilities really started in Mid Glamorganshire with the Llynfi and Ogmore Railway (at first a Tramroad), which developed a 1,000-tonne port at Porthcawl to serve the mineral valleys in the Bridgend area, but further development there proved too difficult.

The Talbot family of Margam Castle, near what was to become the town of Port Talbot, built a dock at the mouth of the River Afan, giving their name to the area. There had been a small natural port and harbour present there for centuries before the industrial revolution. Several tramways had developed in the area to bring coal and other minerals from the valleys inland (*Figure 1*). The building of the South Wales Railway (The Great Western Railway) by the 1850s had ensured its inland communications.

PRE-RAILWAY TRANSPORT TO 1840.

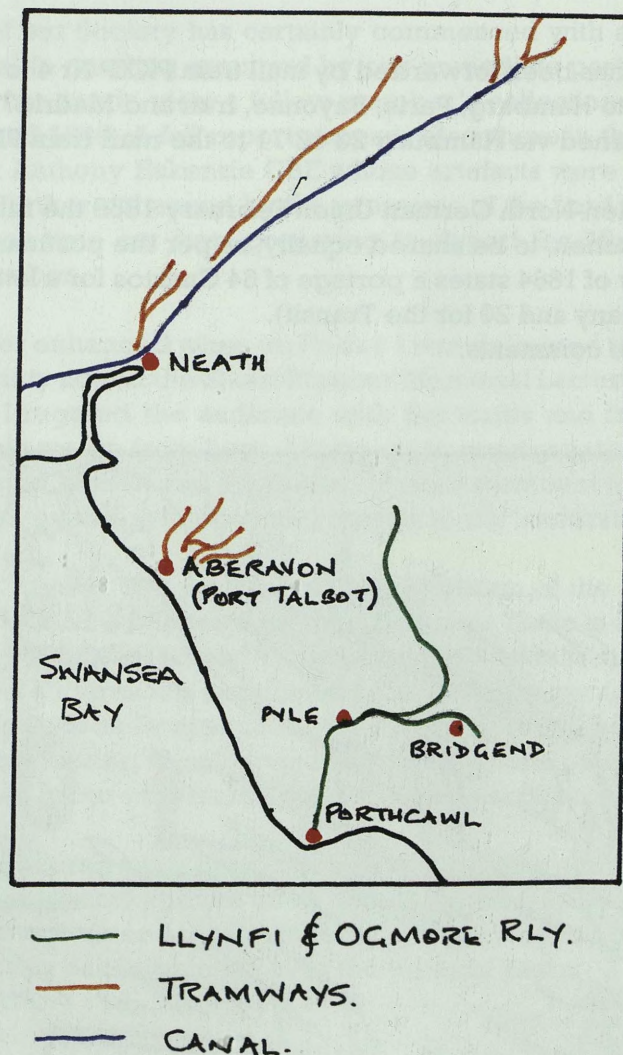


Figure 1. Pre-Railway Transport to 1840.

By an Act of 10th August 1882, The Rhondda and Swansea Bay Railway was incorporated to connect the Swansea Bay ports with the Rhondda Valley coalfields through the valley of the River Afan (Figure 2). The Port Talbot Railway and Docks Company was the idea of local industrialists, who wished cheaper coal and expanded port facilities. As a consequence, a prospectus was

### THE RAILWAY SYSTEM IN 1890.

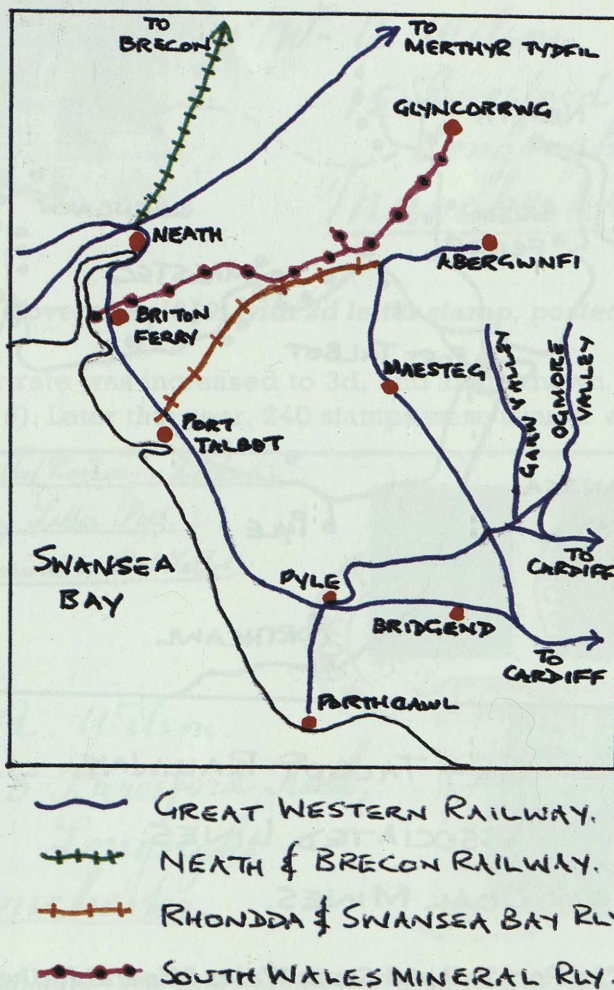


Figure 2. The railway system in 1890.

issued following the successful passage of an Act of 31st July 1894, whereby a new 9-acre dock was to be built at Port Talbot, with a railway line to Maesteg and with it a connection to the many coal mines in the area, and by 1897, fifteen miles of track had been completed. Two further Acts in 1896 enabled an 8-mile extension to a junction with the Great Western Railway in the Ogmore Valley to open on 19 December 1898, together with another line, The South Wales Mineral Railway. This was to run on the eastern side of the Afan Valley to serve the collieries in the upper Afan Valley, and this line opened on 14 November 1898, thus increasing the length of the line to around 33 miles (Figure 3). Following the opening of these two lines, Port Talbot had access to coal mines in three directions, and, over the Rhondda & Swansea Bay Railway, access to the rich coalfields of the Rhondda Valley.

It was not until February 1901 that the Railway was authorised to carry mail, Railway Letter Stamps having been printed by McCorquodale & Co. of London supplying 500 stamps in sheets of 24, with a face value of 2d, printed in a bluish green colour (Figure 4). Each stamp bore a control number printed in black. In 1919, Railway Letter Stamps of the Great Western Railway,

PORT TALBOT RAILWAY WITH S.W.M.R., 1914

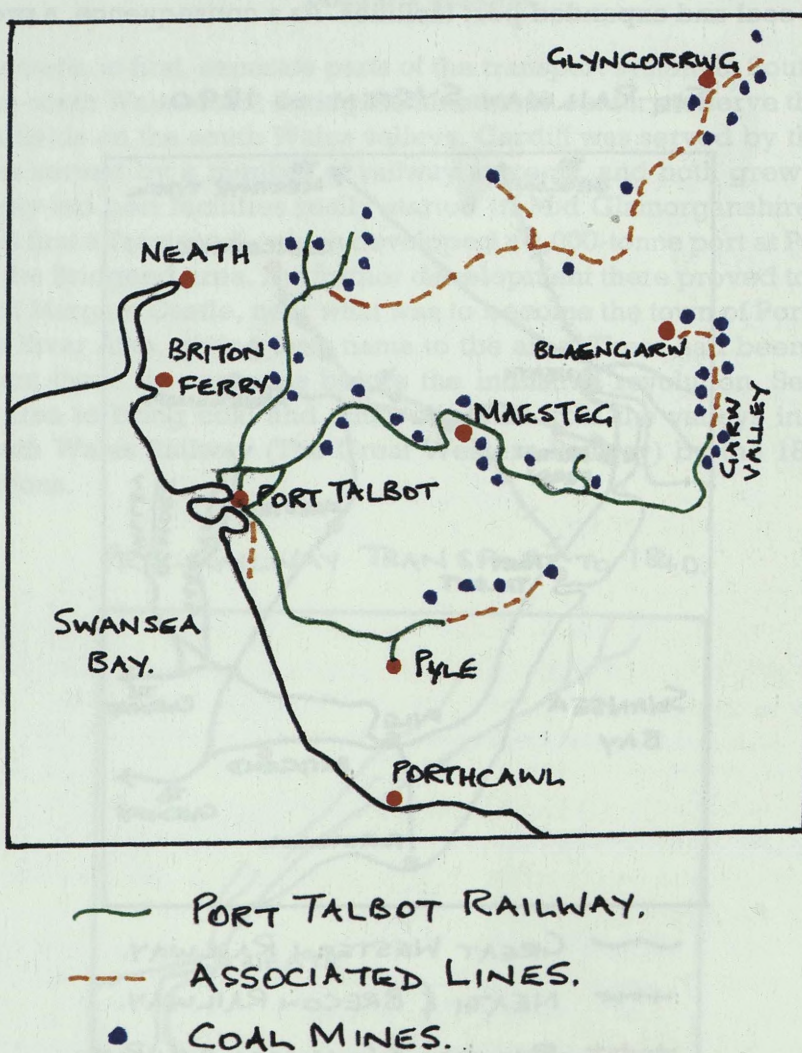


Figure 3. The Port Talbot & South Wales Mineral Railway in 1914.

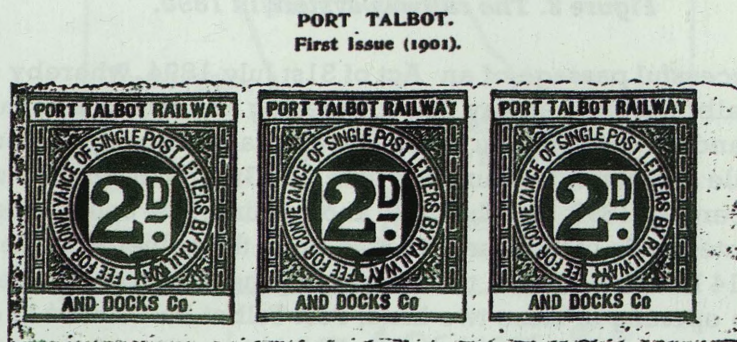


Figure 4. Port Talbot Railway & Docks Co., Railway Letter Stamps

lithographed by Waterlow Bros. & Layton, Perf. 11, were overprinted "PORT TALBOT RLY/ & DOCKS CO." in red, 240 are known, bearing the control numbers 167461 - 127700 (Figure 5).



Figure 5. Cover dated 7 November 1919, with 2d letter stamp, posted from Maesteg station.

In January 1920, the letter rate was increased to 3d, and an unknown number were surcharged "3" in manuscript (Figure 6). Later that year, 240 stamps were issued at the new 3d rate, on this



Figure 6. Cover dated 30 January 1920, with manuscript '3' surcharge, posted from Maesteg station.



Figure 7. Cover dated 30 August 1920, with 3d letter stamp, posted from Maesteg station.

occasion without control numbers (Figure 7). The rate was again increased in September 1920 to 4d, and an unknown number were surcharged '4' in manuscript (Figure 8), followed by a further



Figure 8. Cover dated 7 September 1920, with manuscript '4' surcharge, posted from Maesteg station.

printing of 240 stamps to correspond with the new 4d letter rate, again without control numbers (Figure 9). The normal General Post Office letter rate had to be paid in addition to the Railway Letter Service charge.



Figure 9. Cover dated 11 April 1921, with 4d letter stamp, posted from Maesteg station.

The closure of many coal mines and the high unemployment rate meant that there were fewer passengers using the railway, and by the mid 1930s many of the lines had closed to passengers, although some were able to continue with freight and carrying workmen to the mines that remained open.

Whilst it must be recognised that the vast majority of the covers available to collectors for the many railways that used this service are "philatelic" in nature, these would be virtually unobtainable were it not for the efforts of three individuals, H.L'Estrange Ewen, Rev. L. Graham of Newark, and Mr A. Wilson of Manchester, the latter spending his holidays before, during and after the First World War cycling around Britain posting letters to himself. Age lends respectability, and these

Railway Letter Stamp covers are now very collectable items of postal history.

## REFERENCES

"Port Talbot Railway", by S. Richards.

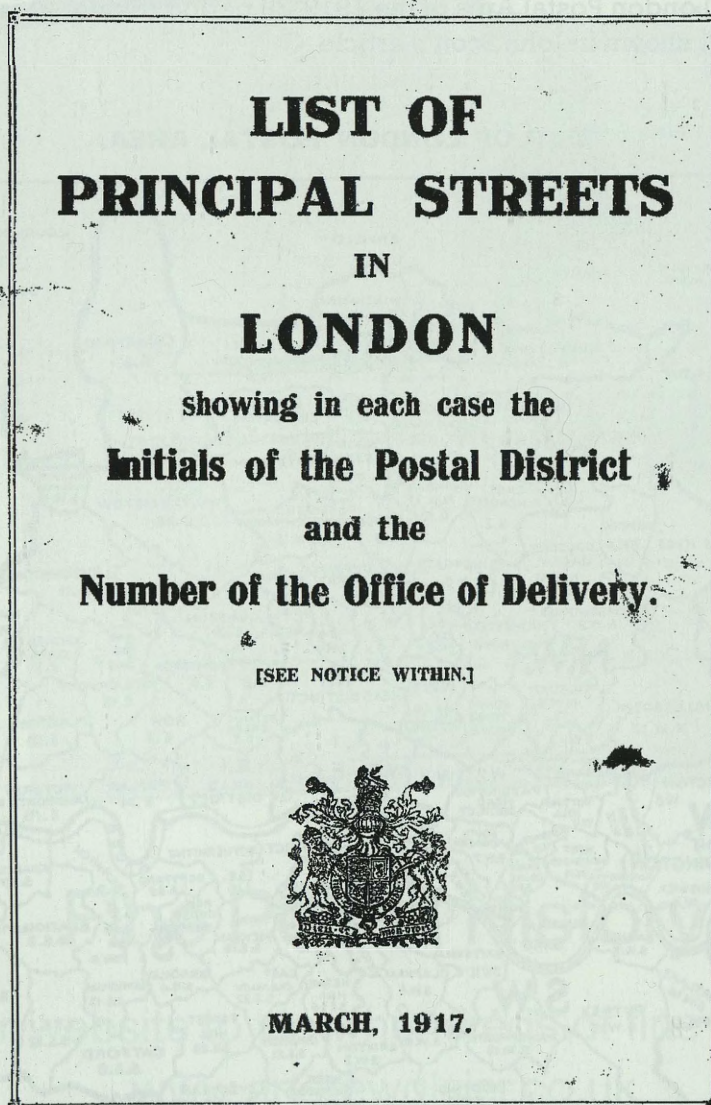
"The Railway Letter Stamps of Great Britain & Ireland, 1891 -1947", by Roger de Lacy-Spencer.

"The Railway and Airway Letter Stamps of the British Isles, 1891 -1971", by Capt. H. Jackson.

## POSTAL CODES - THE NEXT STAGE

### Graham Mark

Further to John Scott's article on the beginnings of Post Codes<sup>1</sup> there was a second major step taken in London in March 1917. An octavo booklet of 64 pages was published by the Post Office and it was distributed free (*Figure 1*). In the introduction by Postmaster General, Albert Illingworth MP, he appealed to the public in London and to their correspondents in the provinces to adopt



the practice of adding the number of the Delivery Office to the district initial(s) when addressing letters and packets. Also he asked businesses and private residents to add the number to their letterhead. The booklet listed the principal streets and stated the District initials and number. The reason stated for these requests was that before the war, the Post Office staff from long experience

were able to sort letters correctly, even when they were wrongly or insufficiently addressed. But the majority of those officers were then serving in the Army, and the same skill or memory could not be expected of the temporary substitutes. Hence, when a letter was sent to Hampstead it would, until then, have been addressed "Hampstead, London NW". Under the new scheme it would be addressed "Hampstead, London NW3".

The Delivery Offices may have had these numbers already for internal Post Office purposes only. The evidence for this is that Delivery Offices were numbered alphabetically after 1 for the Head Office of the District<sup>2</sup> and when the South District was abolished in 1868, the numbers allocated to offices originally in the South-East District were not altered to allow the new offices to be included in alphabetical order. SE1 was the District Head Office, SE2 Abbey Wood, etc up to SE18 Woolwich. The offices transferred from the South District were: SE19 Norwood, SE20 Anerley, SE21 Dulwich etc up to SE27 West Norwood. However, the same is not true for the South-West District where all the offices, including those transferred, are numbered alphabetically after SW1, the District Head Office in Westminster. Similarly the North-East District was absorbed by the East District in 1869 and the offices are numbered 2 to 18 alphabetically after Whitechapel, E1, the District Head Office. It is noticeable that the London Postal Area of the 1919-39 period (Figure 2) is much smaller than the area of the map of 1857, shown in John Scott's article.

MAP OF LONDON POSTAL AREA.

iii





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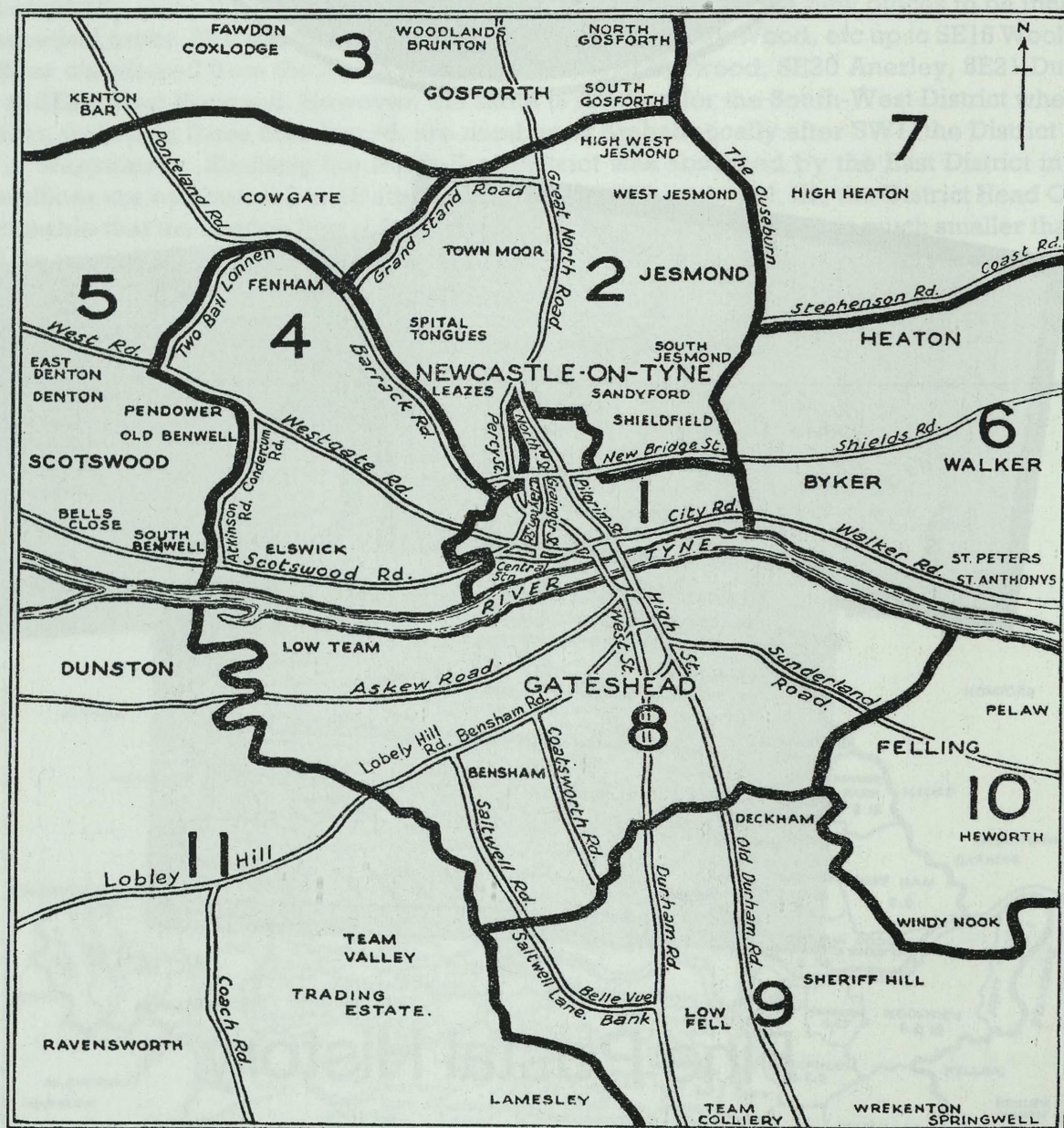
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Further steps along the same lines were taken in major provincial cities. Post Office Guides indicate approximate dates for publishing district numbers which may well have been in use internally for some time. The Districts of Glasgow were shown in the January 1924 PO Guide, but Mackay stated that numbering there was begun in 1921. In January 1933 the PO Guide also listed district numbers for Town Sub-Offices and Branch Offices in Birmingham, Bristol, Edinburgh, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle-upon-Tyne (Figure 3), Salford and Sheffield. Brighton had numbered districts, first given in the July 1935 PO Guide.



MAP OF NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE AND GATESHEAD SHOWING POSTAL DISTRICT NUMBERS.

REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup>Scott J: London's First Postal Code, in Postal History No 337 (March 2011) pp 26-30.

<sup>2</sup> With one exception: WI was a District of its own. Other offices in the West District came under Paddington Head District Office which was W2.

## A VERITABLE FEAST OF POSTAL HISTORY.

It is strange how sometimes the best laid plans come to naught whereas others simply come together fortuitously. Such was the case in London on the weekend of 2nd to 4th November which began on the Friday evening with our President, Hugh Feldman, delivering the Stuart Rossiter Memorial Lecture at 41 Devonshire Place. Hugh needs no introduction and his works on London and the United States are legendary and his talk about the Thrills and Frustrations involved was both entertaining and educational.

The following day started early with the arrival of the Lord Mayor and the Lady Mayoress of the City of London to view the wonderful material assembled by Anthony Eskenzi for the Society's meeting in Guildhall. Almost 100 visitors gathered during the morning to hear the talk, to view the historic material on the site of London's Roman amphitheatre and to chat over a buffet lunch. Anthony's paper and photographs of the day appear elsewhere in this Journal and it was a memorable show for which the Society is indebted to Anthony and to his many helpers, not least Nicky Hillman. Such was the quality, even apparent to non-collectors, that the Chief Commoner suggested that it should be on view for longer than the two days scheduled and perhaps it can be repeated during 2015. Among our guests was the Chairman of Royal Mail and the Director of the British Postal Museum & Archive and hopefully this will only be the start of the Society spreading its wings a little wider.

For the afternoon the Great Britain Philatelic Society had kindly invited us, on a reciprocal basis, to join them at 391 Strand for a talk on Mulreadies by our member Tom Slemons from the United States and we were privileged to see both great material and original research.

Gavin Fryer and  
Hugh Feldman



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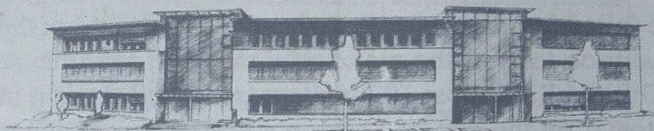
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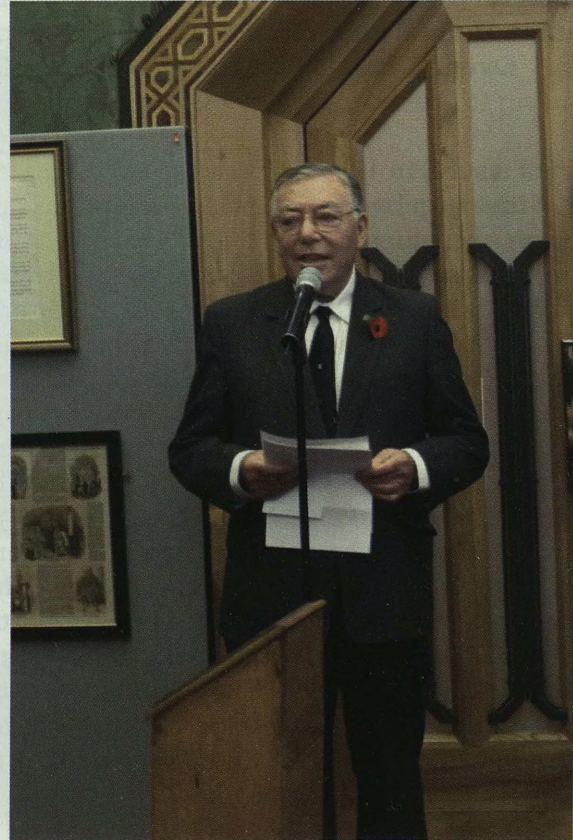
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**C.G.**



John Scott, Chairman of the City of London Culture, Heritage and Libraries Committee, Hugh Feldman, The Right Honourable The Lord Mayor, Alderman David Wootton and Deputy Anthony Eskenzi. John Scott opening the proceedings and Anthony Eskenzi welcoming the Lord Mayor.



# **THE CAMPAIGN FOR CHEAP POSTAGE AND THE REFORM OF THE POST OFFICE IN THE VICTORIAN ERA AND ITS IMPACT ON ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL ACTIVITY.**

**ANTHONY ESKENZI CBE, DSc, FRICS, FRPSL**

The story that follows is no less than a revolution in communication technology which was promoted substantially by the City of London. Interestingly it coincided with the Coronation of Queen Victoria in 1837 and her visit to the City which gave rise to the Wyon medal in celebration. It was the head on the City Medal engraved by William Wyon which was chosen finally for the portrait of the Queen that appeared on British postage stamps thereafter during her reign.

Rowland Hill, born in Kidderminster on 3rd December 1795, was inspired when giving evidence before the Duncannon Commission on Postage in February 1837 when he suggested a postage stamp to prepay postage on letters in a pamphlet of that year entitled "Post Office Reform; Its Importance and Practicability". The pamphlet revealed that for years post office revenue had been declining despite the high postal rates which meant that only the upper echelons of society had access to the service.

Hill, the son of a schoolmaster who brought his family to London, was primarily an educator and realised that making the service more affordable would assist commerce greatly and enable the working man to communicate across an increasingly far-flung world, thus necessitating the need to read and write.

Pressure for reform came from merchants, tradesmen and businessmen who saw the commercial advantage in lower postage rates. In London, influential individuals created a group called 'The Mercantile Committee on Postage' with the express purpose of generating publicity for radical reform. Over 2,000 petitions with more than 250,000 signatures were presented to Parliament clamouring for reform, despite the opposition of the Postmaster General.

A warrant issued in 1839 informed the public that the Lords of the Treasury had decided to take a tentative first step by introducing a uniform 4d rate on December 5th 1839 to enable the postal staff to become accustomed to charging by weight instead of distance and the number of sheets. The experiment lasted until 10th January 1840 on which day Uniform Penny Postage became the rule for all inland letters regardless of distance, provided that the weight did not exceed half an ounce. On that day neither stamps nor covers were available and so the public had to continue the practice of presenting their letters at the Post Office window with the requisite money for prepayment. From 6th May the Penny Blacks and Twopenny Blues printed by Perkins, Bacon & Petch were distributed gradually around the country along with the Mulready stationery.

Meanwhile Hill had taken a two year temporary posting as an adviser to Francis Baring, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, to supervise the implementation of his plan. Hill kept a Journal, which, while it might have begun simply as a record of his work at the Treasury, soon became an armoury of evidence against his perceived enemies, particularly Colonel William Maberley, the Secretary of the Post Office. The first section of the Journal, running from his appointment in September 1839 to March 1843, six months after he had left the Treasury, is philatelically the most interesting, covering, as it does, the introduction of the system, the subsequent ridicule of the Mulready and its replacement by 1d pink and 2d blue envelopes and letter sheets, along with the change in colour of the Penny Black to the Penny Red.

In September 1841 the reform-minded Whig government which had supported Hill's work was superseded by an antagonistic Tory administration and, while his appointment was extended by

one year, little progress was made under Henry Goulburn, the new Chancellor, and Hill was made redundant in September 1842. This precipitated a great public outcry and a national collection which benefited Hill to the tune of £13,360 19/5d. Yet another Parliamentary Committee was established as a result of a new petition and Hill's evidence was incorporated into a second pamphlet "The State and Prospects of Penny Postage", published in 1844. In the meantime Hill had become a Director and subsequently Chairman, of the London and Brighton Railway Company, a position he held until 1846 when a new Whig government appointed him to the specially created post of Secretary to the new Postmaster General, Lord Clanricarde.

His continuous struggle against obstruction and mischief took a serious toll on Hill's health and the last sections of his Journal have entries such as "Ill, worked at home" and short holidays for rest and recuperation. Eventually he was forced to retire and left the Post Office on 4th March 1864 with great praise from Parliament and from the press and a generous gratuity and pension. However he maintained an interest in postal affairs and the Journal gradually peters out in 1869.

## S.M.R., A MOST PECULIAR ITEM.

### RICHARD WHEATLEY & GEOFF AMOS

This item caught my eye for two reasons; one, it is franked by a Netherlands East Indies stamp, and two, on the reverse there is a Constanta - Alexandria datestamp of the Romanian Steamship line S.M.R.. Furthermore, the stamp has been tied to the envelope by a Braila - Bursa cds and a large purple oval cachet reading "s/s Angele Mabro of Alexandria". To add to all this, the lower part of the envelope has been trimmed off, so its destination is not immediately apparent.



The Wheatley cover



On reverse

### **Stamp.**

This is a Netherlands East Indies 20 cent blue "Queen with ship" definitive stamp issued in 1922. At that time postal rates were on the increase and from 1 January 1922 the letter rate to Holland had been increased and brought into line with the U.P.U. letter rate.

### **Cachet.**

A distinctive large double oval cachet cancels the stamp with the wording as above and in the centre there is a capital letter M on a flag attached to the top of a mast.

### **Life of the ship.**

This ship was launched on 21 June 1898 having been built by William Gray & Co Ltd at West Hartlepool, in England. It had been built for the London & Northern Steamship Co Ltd, London and was originally named "Easingwold". In 1917 it was sold to the Paris - Lyon - Mediterranean Railway Co and renamed "P.L.M. 10". Then in 1928 it was sold to G. & T. Mabro, Alexandria, Egypt, who named it "SS Angele Mabro".

Apart from the changes in ownership, the ship had a rather chequered life. The Straits Times of 14 June 1936 reported one incident thus:

#### *Ship ransacked by masked pirates.*

*Brandishing knives and pistols, masked pirates attacked the Egyptian cargo ship Mabro in Braila. They approached the ship in rowboats with muffled oars, climbed aboard by means of rope ladders, surprised the sleeping crew, bound and gagged them. The pirates ransacked the ship from stem to stern and not suited with removing money, valuable carpets and oriental goods, stole the crew's clothes. Coastguards saw the pirates quitting the Mabro. They opened fire but missed. Police boats attempted to follow the marauders but aided by the darkness they disappeared.*

Its downfall came in 1940. It was part of Convoy O.G. 028 made up of mainly coal carriers which formed at sea off Gibraltar on 5 May 1940. This convoy of 48 ships successfully ran the gauntlet to England. On the next voyage it was carrying iron ore from Bilbao to Cardiff and it decided to sail unescorted. This was a fatal mistake, for on 6 July it was torpedoed by U30 in the Bay of Biscay.

### **Braila-Bursa postmark.**

Braila is a Romanian port on the Danube - just where the river starts to split into a delta. The word Bursa means bourse, so in the business part of the town. The postmark is dated 11 August 930, which is 1930, it being the norm in Romania to miss out the first 1 in the year.

### **S.M.R. postmark.**

On the reverse there is a fine strike of the Type 4 Sea Post Office date stamp Constanta - Alexandria dated 12 VIII 930. This date is well within the date range recorded for this mark, 1927 to 1939.

### **Another cover.**

As the lower part of the envelope, with the destination on, has been trimmed off, where it was addressed to is a puzzle. One clue is the name of the road, 10 Rue Sesostris. Sesostris is the name of one of the Black Pharaohs in the 12th Egyptian dynasty.

Confirmation of the destination came at the Gloucester Conference when Geoff Amos showed a complete envelope with the same printed address! However, Geoff's cover bore an Australian 1d red stamp, but in other respects it was identical to my cover, even down to the date of despatch and the S.M.R. transit mark on the reverse. The full address on Geoff's cover confirms that the addressee was a stamp dealer in Alexandria.



The Amos cover

So all in all, another peculiar item.

## AUCTION REPORT

With almost 100 bidders in this year's Conference auction it may come as little surprise that the 360 lots for sale realized a grand total of nearly £12,000.

The most expensive single lot was the first of the two letters written the day after The Charge of the Light Brigade which fetched £1,400, still some way short of the maximum bid. This series of Crimea letters made £3,365 in all, which is not a bad return on an investment of 12/6d way back in 1943 and, needless to say, the descendants of Richard Burton are delighted by the realization.

The India Soldier's letter illustrated in the last Journal made £400 while the Seaman's Letter made £280. The officer's letter to St. Helena also attracted interest and sold for £220 while the unique postal order lacking the usual black printing saw heavy competition between room bidders before it was secured for £350.

Nearer home the two letters posted on the first day of Uniform Penny Postage were the subject of enthusiastic bidding at £150 and £120 respectively while the late use of the Mulready in 1856 rose to £180.

That is not to say that there were not some bargains to be had by those with the specialized knowledge and one lot bid up to £175 cost the lucky buyer only £22 – as auctioneer I discovered why from the buyer and he really does have a bargain!

The next challenge is to have an equally interesting auction next year so why not use the cold winter evenings to dig out all that surplus material you have gathered over the years and enjoy the proceeds lest Father Time catches you before you have the chance.

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# AN EARLY LETTER TO WESTERN CANADA

JULIAN RUTH

I bought this letter written and posted in Belfast on 4 June 1825 because of my interest in mail crossing the Irish Sea. At the time neither I nor the e-Bay seller realised the significance of the cryptic pen endorsement above and to the left of the address and which took the full story of the letter much further.

The letter was originally addressed care of the Hudson's Bay Company in London and postage of 2/- was paid by the sender in Belfast for that stage of its journey. The postal charge was split between the Irish and British Post Offices as indicated by a now rather faded manuscript endorsement in red ink to the left of the address; 9d for the 80 Irish miles to Dublin and 1/3d thereafter, the latter made up of 2d packet boat fee, 1d Menai Bridge charge and 1/- mileage to London from Holyhead. Before leaving Belfast the letter was also date-stamped 4 June 1825 in black and marked with a black boxed "P PAID".



The letter passed through Dublin on 5 June, receiving a red dated octagon date-stamp, and arrived in London on 7 June where two red dated tombstone "PAID" marks were added. It was immediately forwarded unpaid to John Rae, the local agent for the Hudson's Bay Company in Stromness, Orkney. On the reverse there is a black circular London dispatch datestamp for 7 June and a red Edinburgh circular arrival dated 9 June. The onward charges to Orkney were 1/6½d, including ½ d Scottish wheel tax indicated by a black boxed "1/2" applied in London. Those charges are consistent with a routing via Wick and the Huna ferry to Kirkwall. There are no further Post Office marks.

Probably also in London, it was marked by a Hudson's Bay clerk at the top left with the already mentioned pen endorsement. This distinctive mark reads "YF" and stands for York Factory, the main Company trading post on Hudson's Bay itself, south of the modern settlement of Churchill. Several of the Company's major trading posts in North America were identified by abbreviated marks at that time. It is thought that these rarely seen marks were only applied to the top letter in each bundle of letters for each trading post, accounting for their relative scarcity. From Stromness, the letter was carried privately to Canada by the Hudson's Bay Company in its own vessels. Once at York Factory, the letter would have been carried by Company employees to the addressee, John Stuart, who was at this date in charge of its interests in Saskatchewan.

The letter was written by John Stuart's brother and begins (his spelling and punctuation):

"My dear Brother

I have now before me your letter of 1 August 1823, the last I have had the pleasure to receive from you, and the contents of that letter has been really too distressing to me to brood over it without any other information from you since.

In the first place, your sudden return from the N.W. to Hd Bay and your discouraging prospects in trade were to me a consideration of distress, much heightened by your disappointment in receiving my letters, which was twice a year and for two years miscarried. This made me suspicious of some foul play (as children say) and, having received none from you last season, am exceedingly concerned on your account, but sincerely hope that this may reach you and that I may be fortunate in the ensuing Autumn so as to hear from you and better tidings."

He continues with much family news before finishing:

"I must now conclude in hopes that I am not too late for the H. B. ship and that in return I may receive your reply in the course of the coming autumn. Mrs S & children join me in fondest love and best wishes for your welfare and happiness and in fond hopes of better encouragement in all your concerns.

I remain, my Dear John, your most affectionate Brother,  
P. Stuart."

So who was the recipient of the letter and what was his news from 1823 that was too awful for his brother to think about?

Though John Stuart (1780-1847) was born and died in Morayshire he spent most of his life in what would eventually become western Canada and the far north-west of the USA. In 1796 he joined the Canadian North West Company and by 1805 he had risen to be an important member of Simon Fraser's epic expedition to explore the lands across the Rockies that became British Columbia. On that expedition he became the first commander of the garrison at Fort St James on what was later called Stuart Lake after him. Further exploration with Simon Fraser followed in 1808 along what was thought to be the Columbia River but which turned out otherwise and was eventually named the Fraser.

Stuart spent most of the next decade in an area beyond the mountains then called New Caledonia in charge of various posts on behalf of the North West Company. During that time there was an intense rivalry with the Pacific Fur Company, which had been set up in the USA by John Jacob Astor, and much of Stuart's time was taken up with fending off their encroachments and harassing them in turn. The North West Company eventually won out, largely as a result of the disruptive effects of the War of 1812 on American interests in the region, and it purchased Pacific Fur in 1813.

From 1817 to 1820, Stuart was based at Pierre au Calumet in Alberta warding off encroachment from the east by another major rival, the Hudson's Bay Company. This time the rival eventually came out on top and the two companies merged in 1821 as the reformed Hudson's Bay Company. Stuart became a chief factor for the new enterprise in the west.

It seems that he had always prided himself on his good relations with the native population and he therefore felt perhaps overly responsible when two Company employees were murdered by two of the local Carrier Indians at Fort (now Prince) George in 1823. The incident prompted a breakdown and led him to ask for a more settled and less demanding posting. His account of the incident in his 1823 letter home is likely to have been the news that so disturbed his brother. As a consequence of his request, Stuart was sent to take control of the Saskatchewan District in 1824 and he would have been there when his brother's June 1825 letter reached him.

Later postings included taking charge of the Winnipeg District from 1826 to 1832 and the Mackenzie River District (now in Oregon) from 1832 to 1835. The latter posting was a demotion after Stuart fell

out with the Governor, George Simpson, apparently because he disagreed over Simpson's abandonment of his "country wife".

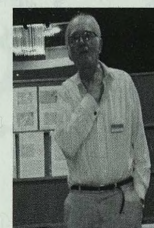
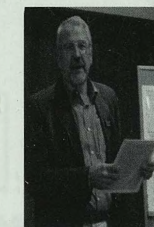
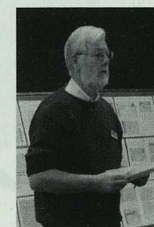
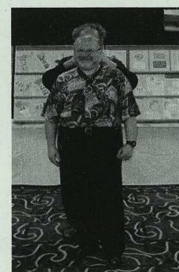
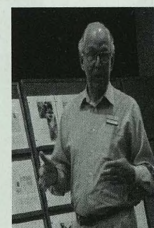
In 1835, he returned to Scotland on health grounds and was followed in 1836 by his own "country wife", Mary Taylor. Ironically in the light of his earlier disagreement with Simpson, she returned to Canada in 1838 because Stuart refused to honour his previous promise to marry her formally. After Stuart's death in 1847, his sisters succeeded after considerable litigation in having his legacy of £500 to Mary reduced to £350.

I am aware that other letters sent to John Stuart exist, a number of which were once owned by the late Allan Steinhart. I would be most interested to know if the contents of any of the others throw more light on the "incident" referred to in this letter or on other aspects of the life of this intriguing pioneer of the Canadian West.

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| John Rawlins        | - | Official Paid Mail                                |
| John Sussex         | - | Ireland – World War II                            |
| Edward Klempka      | - | GB – Early Machine Cancellations                  |
| Gerald Marriner     | - | Underpaid Channel Islands International Mail      |
| Cedric Prys Roberts | - | British Postal Agency – Danish West Indies        |
| Julian Tweed        | - | GB Registered Late Fees                           |
| Richard Farman      | - | Staffordshire Foreign Mail                        |
| Norman Higson       | - | Missent Mail                                      |
| Graham Booth        | - | Liverpool Forwarding Agents                       |
| Malcolm Ray-Smith   | - | English & Welsh west coast ship letters           |
| Yvonne Wheatley     | - | GB – Railway mail                                 |
| David Gurney        | - | Alderney sub Post Offices                         |
| David Trapnell      | - | Italians in France – World War I                  |
| Claire Scott        | - | Death   |
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| Joachim Frank       | - | Cancels of the Shipping Postmasters, South Africa |
| Richard Wheatley    | - | Egyptian Hotel Mail                               |
| David Tett          | - | Phillipines – World War II Mail                   |
| Patrick Frost       | - | Unusual GB Mail                                   |
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| Max Smith           | - | Bombay – Inland Post pre 1837                     |
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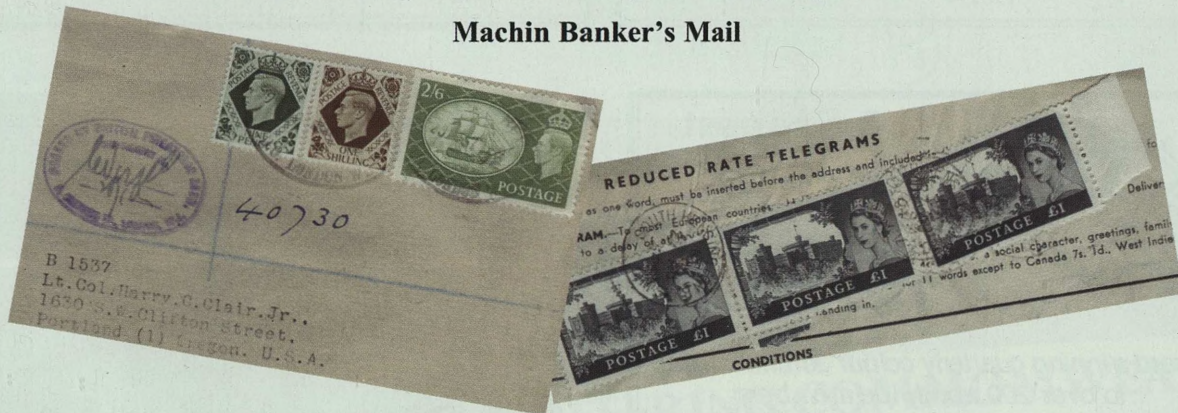
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