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AN

HISTORICAL SUMMARY
OF THE
STANFORD
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P47-15
POST OFFICE IN SCOTLAND

COMPILED

FROM AUTHENTIC RECORDS AND DOCUMENTS.

BY

T. B. LANG, Esq.

CONTROLLER, SORTING DEPARTMENT, GENERAL POST OFFICE, EDINBURGH.

— ♦ —
FOR PRIVATE CIRCULATION.
— ♦ —

EDINBURGH:

PRINTED BY W. H. LIZARS, ST. JAMES' SQUARE.

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NOTE.

This Historical Summary, compiled by Mr. LANG, was originally contained in a Letter addressed to the Secretary to the General Post Office in Scotland, with a view to its being included in the Annual Report of the Postmaster-General, presented to both Houses of Parliament at the commencement of the present Session, but it not being considered necessary to include the whole Summary in the Report, Extracts only were published in the Appendix. The whole Summary is therefore now printed, with his Grace's sanction, for private distribution.

A N

HISTORICAL SUMMARY

OF THE

POST OFFICE IN SCOTLAND.

THE earliest records that can be found relating to the conveyance of Despatches or Letters in Scotland, do not date earlier than the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. In these early records, special messengers for the conveyance of the King's Despatches and Correspondence are called "*Nuncii*" or "*Cursores*;" but the information as to their mode of travelling, and regulations for their guidance, is imperfect and limited. Messengers of this description were also employed to convey despatches from foreign countries, for which they received gratuities on their arrival at the Scottish Court. About the year 1500, the name of Post is found to apply to messengers travelling with the utmost rapidity then attainable in charge of despatches.* On the 1st of April 1515, the English envoy in Scotland wrote from Stirling to Henry VIII. of England — "This Friday, when I came home to dyner, I received your most honorable letters by Post, dated at your mansion, Greenwich, 26th March."† These letters, which appear to have occupied five or six days in transit from Greenwich to Stirling, must have been conveyed by one of these special Court Messengers.

It was not long after this period that the municipal corporations and private persons of consequence also introduced messengers of this description. For example, in 1590, a Post was established by the Magistrates of Aberdeen for carrying their despatches to and from Edinburgh and other places of royal residence. They appointed a person for conducting these despatches, under the name of the

* This appears from the Rolls of Exchequer in Her Majesty's General Register House at Edinburgh.

† Oliver & Boyd's New Edinburgh Almanac for 1839, pp. 88-94.

Council Post, who was dressed in a garment of blue cloth, with the town's armorial bearings in silver upon the right sleeve.*

In 1635 a public Post was first established in Britain, under Government authority by Charles I.† Its main object was to establish regular and certain communication between London and Edinburgh. The journey was limited to three days, and the rate of Postage for a single letter was fixed at 6d. sterling. Mails were despatched between these two cities usually twice a week, sometimes only once.

About two years after this period, the Post as the medium of communication, became so insecure, that in 1638 a person in England wrote to his friend in Scotland — "I hear the Posts are waylaid, and all letters taken from them, and brought to Secretary Cooke; therefore will I not, nor do you, send by that way hereafter." The Post at this time was called the Merchant Post, but it did not prosper.‡

In 1649, the Commonwealth took the Scottish Posts under its jurisdiction, and in connection with that measure they appear to have removed many, if not all the officers. The Posts were then placed upon a better footing, and the system was still further improved by Cromwell. In 1654 the Postage from England to Scotland was lowered to 4d. sterling. In 1656 the revenues of the Post Office in Great Britain and Ireland were farmed to John Manley, Esq., who was appointed Postmaster-General, and the rate of Postage in Scotland was fixed at 2d. for a single letter under 80 miles, for all distances above 80 miles 3d., to England 4d., and to Ireland 6d.§

On the 16th December 1661, Charles II. re-appointed Robert Mein "Sole Keeper of the Letter Office in Edinburgh," an office from which he had been removed during the Commonwealth.||

By grant under the Privy Seal, dated at Whitehall on the 14th September 1662, King Charles II. bestowed upon Patrick Grahame of Inchbrakie the office of Postmaster-General of Scotland¶—

* Kennedy's "Annals of Aberdeen," vol. i. page 262.

† Rymer's "Fœdera," vol. xix. page 649.

‡ Oliver & Boyd's New Edinburgh Almanac for 1839, pp. 88-94.

§ Register of Privy Seal, 1660-1666, vol. i. page 93. Arnott's "History of Edinburgh," page 357.

|| Privy Seal Register, 1660-1666, vol i. page 93.

¶ It appears that the office of Postmaster-General had been held by Sir W. Scatou, sometime before the appointment of Grahame.

“officium precipui magistri cursoris lie Postmaster-Generall et Censoris omnium cursorum dicti regni Scotie”—for all the days of his life, with power to appoint Postmasters at the stages necessary for forwarding the King's letters from place to place. The grant conveyed to Grahame all the rights and privileges which any Postmaster-General had previously enjoyed in Scotland, and specially bestowed on him a salary of £500 Scots yearly.*

On the 16th September 1662, the Privy Council of Scotland commissioned Robert Mein, merchant,† and Keeper of the Letter Office, Edinburgh, to establish posts between Scotland and Ireland, and ordained that Linlithgow, Kilsyth, Glasgow, Kilmarnock, Dumboag, Ballintrae, and Port Patrick, should be stages on the route, and granted him the sum of £200 sterling, to build a packet boat to carry the Mail from Port Patrick to Donaghadee, and further gave him the sole privilege of carrying letters on this line of road, for which he was allowed to charge for each letter to Glasgow, 2s. Scots, and from thence to any part within Scotland, 3s. Scots, and for letters to Ireland, 6s. Scots.‡

In 1665, by grant under the Privy Seal dated at Edinburgh on the 1st March, King Charles II. bestowed the office of Postmaster of Haddington upon William Seton, who was at the time Provost and Postmaster. The office which had been previously held by Cornelius Ramsay, is described to be “allswell for the carrieng and conveyeing of all such packetts from Haddington by Post to Colbrandspath as shall be directed to them,§ and for the despatching and carrieng by Post frae Haddingtoun to Canon-gait, and carieng and conveyeing of all such packetts as shall be directed to England to anie of our Privie Counsell of this our kingdome of Scotland, or to anie of our officers for our affairs and service.” The salary is stated to be £600 Scots yearly.||

* *Registrum Secreti Sigilli Regum Scotorum*, 1664, page 406; H. M. General Register House, Edinburgh.

† Robert Mein, in addition to the office of Sole Keeper of the Letter Office, Edinburgh, appears to have held the office of King's Confectioner and Comfit Maker—*Register of Privy Seal of Scotland*, vol. i. page 93.

‡ *Registrum Secreti Concilii Regum Scotorum*, Acta 1661–1667, page 186; H. M. General Register House, Edinburgh.

§ The grant is made to William Seton and Agnes Black, or the longest liver of the two, during all the days of their lives.

|| *Register of the Privy Seal of Scotland*, vol. i. 1660–1666, pp. 330, 331; H. M. General Register House, Edinburgh.

In 1669 the Privy Council passed an Act for erecting a Foot Post between Edinburgh and Inverness once a week, and between Edinburgh and Aberdeen twice a week, "wind and weather serving," and fixed the rate of Postage for a letter not exceeding one sheet of paper, carried 40 miles Scots (about 60 English), at 2s. Scots; for a single letter carried 60 miles, 3s. Scots; and for an ounce weight, 7s. 6d. Scots; and for every single letter carried above 80 miles Scots, within Scotland, 4s. Scots; for an ounce weight 10s., and so proportionably.* The same Act, "for the more effectual prosecution and performance of the premises," discharges "all other Posts established, or pretending to be established upon the Aberdeen and Inverness roads." †

To show the difficulties in the way of rapid communication at this period, from the condition of the roads in Scotland, it may be stated, that in 1678 an agreement was made to run a coach between Edinburgh and Glasgow (a distance of forty-four miles), which was to be drawn by six horses, and to perform the journey to Glasgow and back in six days. The undertaking was considered so arduous, that the contractor was to receive 200 merks a-year for five years, to assist him; but the speculation turned out so unprofitable that it was soon abandoned." ‡

In 1685, the intelligence of the death of Charles II., who died on 6th February, was received in Edinburgh at one o'clock in

* One Scots shilling was about that time equal to one penny sterling.

† Ordinance of the Privy Council, passed 28th January 1669. The Ordinance says — "The Lords of his Majesty's Privy Council having considered a petition presented to them by Robert Mein, Keeper of the Letter Office at Edinburgh, with concurrence and consent of Patrick Grahame of Inchbrakie, Postmaster-General, and diverse noblemen, gentlemen, merchants, traders, and others inhabiting in and about the northern shires of this kingdom, desyring for the advancement of trade correspondence and convenience of the King's subjects, that Foot Posts might be erected for carrying and re-carrying of letters upon the northern road betwixt Edinburgh and Inverness, at such reasonable rates and pryces as the council should think fit. . . . The said Lords find the desyr of the said petition reasonable, and much importing the benefite and conveniency of His Majesty's leidges in these northern parts, and therefore doe hereby grant full power and commission to the said Robert Mein to erect and settle constant Foot Posts upon the said road." *Registrum Secreti Concilii Regum Scotorum, Acta 1667-1673*, pp. 182, 183. H. M. General Register House, Edinburgh.

‡ *McCulloch's Commercial Dictionary*, Article "Roads." A Scotch merk was about that time equal to 1s. 1½d. sterling.

the morning of the 10th, by an express from London.* In 1688 it occupied three months to convey the tidings of the abdication of James II. of England and VII. of Scotland to the Orkneys.

The Post Office in Scotland again received the sanction of parliamentary authority in 1695, although "several public Posts" had already been established for carrying letters "to and from most parts and places in this kingdom," for the maintaining of mutual correspondence, and preventing the many inconveniences that happen by private Posts. And the "well ordering of these public Posts being a matter of general concern, and of great advantage, and that the best means for that end will be the settling and establishing a General Post Office," the Scottish Parliament "ordains and appoints a General Post Office to be kept within the city of Edinburgh, from whence all letters and pacquets whatsoever may be with speed and expedition sent into any part of the kingdom, or any other of his Majesty's dominions, or into any kingdom or country beyond seas, by the packet that goes sealed to London." It is also enacted, that a Postmaster-General shall be appointed by letters patent under the Privy Seal, or that the office of Postmaster-General may be set in tack by the Lords of Treasury and Exchequer. The rates of Postage were fixed at 2d. for a single letter to Berwick, or within fifty miles of Edinburgh; above fifty miles and not exceeding 100 miles, 3d.; and all single letters to any place in Scotland, above 100 miles, to pay 4d.: common carriers were prohibited from carrying letters, except where no Post Offices were established, and if convicted, they became liable "to be imprisoned for six days for ilk fault, and fined in the sum of six pounds Scots 'toties quoties.'" This Act also authorizes a weekly Post between Scotland and Ireland, and orders boats to be maintained for carrying the Mails between Portpatrick and Donaghadee; and a special provision is made, that Ireland is not to be put to any expense, but that the Postmaster-General should be allowed the sum expended on the packet boats in his intronmissions with the Treasury. And lastly, the Postmaster-General is ordered to take care that Posts are established over all the kingdom at places most convenient.†

* Privy Council Record.

† Scottish Acts of William III. vol. i. sess. 5, cap. 20.

In 1698, Sir Robert Sinclair of Stevenson, had a grant from King William of the whole revenue of the Post Office in Scotland, with a pension of £300 per annum to keep up the Post. The Post Office at this time appears to have been any thing but a profitable concern, as Sir Robert, after due deliberation, gave up the grant, thinking it disadvantageous.*

From the 11th November 1704 till Whitsunday 1707, George Main, jeweller in Edinburgh, accounts in Exchequer for the duties of the Post Office within Scotland, leased to him by the Lords of the Treasury and Exchequer in Scotland, during the three years ending at the latter date, for the yearly rent of 21,500 merks Scots, or £1194, 8s. 10d. sterling, subject to a deduction for the conveyance of public expresses, &c., and also a sum not exceeding £60 per annum for keeping a packet boat for carrying the Mails between Portpatrick and Ireland. It appears that he paid the following yearly salaries, viz. —

Postmaster at Haddington	£50 sterling.
Postmaster in Canongate	35 "
Postmaster at Cockburnspath	50 "
James Weems, Clerk to the Post Office,	25 "
Postmaster of Portpatrick for the Charge }	60 "
of a Packet Boat	

The expense of the Secretary's Packet and Expresses from the Post Office to London, from 11th November 1704 to 1st May 1707, amounted to £1994, 9s. sterling. The expense for Expresses for public affairs of the Government, sent and received betwixt London and Berwick, from 18th January 1707 to 1st May 1707, paid to the London Post Office, amounted to £476, 2s. 6d. Between 14th March and 6th October 1705, there were 25 "flying packets" (or special despatches) outgoing, and from 21st January to 3rd October 1705, the like number of flying packets sent by them. The cost of these paid to the Postmaster of Haddington and Cockburnspath was £23, 15s. sterling. The same Postmasters received £40, 14s. 6d. sterling for flying packets sent by them for the stages between Edinburgh and Berwick, from 14th April 1706 to 1st May 1707. A sum of £13, 5s. sterling was also paid for inquiries as to a robbery of the packet at or near Dunglass Miln.†

* Old Statistical Account of Scotland, vol. vii. p. 586.

† Exchequer Roll in H. M. Register House, Edinburgh.

From this period downwards, the data are of a more minute description, giving the condition of the Post Office more in detail, and affording the means of estimating its progress by the extent of its establishment.

In 1703, the business of the General Post Office at Edinburgh was discharged by seven persons, viz. — George Main, manager for Scotland, who held his commission from the Postmaster-General of Great Britain, salary £200 per annum; his accountant, £50 per annum; a clerk, £50; the clerk's assistant, £25; three letter-carriers or runners, each 5s. per week.*

In 1710, the Act of William, 1695, was repealed by an Act of Anne, and the Post Office of Scotland was united with that of England, Ireland, and America under one Postmaster-General. It was ordained "that a Chief Letter Office be kept at Edinburgh, and the Packet Boats between Donaghadee and Portpatrick are still to be maintained." This Act also regulates the rates of Postage.†

During the five years which immediately followed the Union, and which ended on the 1st May 1712, the average annual sum paid into the Exchequer by the Scottish Post Office, was £6000.‡

From the time of the Act of Anne, the establishment in Scotland was governed by a Deputy Postmaster-General, under the authority of the Postmaster-General of Great Britain, to whom all matters of importance had to be referred, and whose sanction required to be given to any matter involving pecuniary outlay. The first Deputy Postmaster-General, under the new arrangement, was George Main, who remained in office till 1715, when he was succeeded by Mr. James Anderson,§ a writer to the Signet in Edinburgh. There is a collection of this gentleman's papers in the Advocate's Library in Edinburgh, and amongst them some official correspondence, which gives not only interesting information relating to the Post Office, but also as to the state of the country at that period, and it is from this source that precise information is derived as to the condition of the postal arrangements.

When Mr. Anderson took office on the 12th July 1715, there was not a single Horse Post in Scotland, Foot Runners being the

* Chamberlain's "State of Great Britain, 1708," page 745.

† Act of Anne, Parl. IX. cap. 10.

‡ "Caledonia," by George Chalmers, vol. iii. p. 20.

§ Author of "Diplomata et Numismata Scotiæ," "Collections relating to the History of Queen Mary of Scotland," &c.

usual means of conveyance for the Mails. In this manner direct Bags were conveyed from Edinburgh as far north as Thurso, and westward to Inverary. There were three Mails a-week from Edinburgh to Glasgow, and three in return; the runners set out from Edinburgh each Tuesday and Thursday, at twelve o'clock at night, and on Sundays in the morning, and the Mails arrived at Glasgow on the evening of Wednesday and Friday, and on the forenoon of Monday. For this service the Post Office paid £40 sterling per annum, but from the fraudulent dealing of the Postmaster of Falkirk, who made the payments, the runners seldom received more than from £20 to £25.

After his appointment, Mr. Anderson directed his attention to the establishment of Horse Posts on the Western Road from Edinburgh. The first regular Horse Post in Scotland appears to have been from Edinburgh to Stirling; it started for the first time on the 29th November 1715. It left Stirling at two o'clock afternoon, each Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday, and reached Edinburgh in time for the Night Mail to England. In March 1717, the first Horse Post between Edinburgh and Glasgow was established, and we have the details of the arrangement in a memorial addressed to Lord Cornwallis and James Craggs, who jointly filled the office of Postmaster-General of Great Britain. The memorial states, that the "Horse Post will set out for Edinburgh each Tuesday and Thursday, at eight o'clock at night, and on Sunday about eight or nine in the morning, and be in Glasgow (a distance of thirty-six miles by the post road of that time) by six in the morning on Wednesday and Friday in summer, and eight in winter, and both winter and summer will be on Sunday night." There appears to have been a good deal of negotiation connected with the settlement of this Post, in which the Provost and Bailies of Glasgow took part. After some delay, the matter appears to have been arranged to the satisfaction of all parties.

A proposition was made at this time to establish a Horse Post between Edinburgh and Aberdeen, at a cost of £132, 12s. per annum, to supersede the Foot Posts, which were maintained at a cost of £81, 12s. The scheme, however, appears not to have been entertained at that time by the Post Office authorities.

At this period (1715), it took double the time for the Mail to perform the journey between London and Edinburgh that it did in the middle of the seventeenth century. When the Mail was

first established by Charles I. in 1636, three days was the time allowed for the special couriers to perform the journey between Edinburgh and London; in 1715, it required six days for the Post to perform the same journey. This can easily be seen by examining the post marks on letters of that time.

In the year 1715, Edinburgh had direct communication with sixty post towns in Scotland, and in the month of August, the total sum received for letters passing to and from these offices and Edinburgh, was £44, 3s. 1d. The Postage on letters to and from London in the same month amounted to £157, 3s. 2d., and the Postage for letters per the London road, amounted to £9, 19s., making the total sum for letters to and from Edinburgh, during that month, amount to £211, 5s. 3d. — equal to £2535, 3s. per annum.*

At this period we have interesting records of the seizure and pillage of the Mail by the Rebels. On the 16th September 1715, the Postmaster of Inverness wrote to the Postmaster-General — “I had yours of y^e 8th current, Tuesday last, about 10 o’clock forenoon. The night before I had account that y^e Post was prisoner; our bagg was broke up, so was y^e Dingwall and Dornoch baggs. You have, enclosed, a list of what came in my open bagg; if there were any frank letters, I received none of them, save 6 or 7.”† It would also appear that the Mail was occasionally violated by common robbers.

In 1716, the Duke of Argyll, who had then supreme control in Scotland, gave orders to Mr. Anderson to place relays of horses from Edinburgh to Inverness, for the purpose of forwarding despatches to, and receiving intelligence from the army in the

* From the Account, “for the month of August 1715, of James Wemyss, Principal Clerk, G.P.O., Edinburgh.” Anderson’s MS. Papers.

† In this letter, the Postmaster of Inverness informs the Postmaster-General, that on “Tuesday morning” the “Laird of Mackintosh, with a body of four or five hundred men,” entered the town of Inverness, and having placed sentries at the doors of several of the magistrates and inhabitants, Mackintosh of Borlum proclaimed the Pretender at the Cross; and then the rebels, after seizing a sum of public money and some lead, retired “without doing further wrong.” The carrying away of this money appears to have put some of the public authorities of Inverness in a “straite” for “want of money.” The Postmaster on that account advanced six pounds, and apologized to the Postmaster-General for making this use of the Post Office money without orders.

Highlands under General Cadogan. These Posts worked upon two lines of roads—the one went through Fife and round by the east coast, passing through Aberdeen; the other took the central road *via* Perth, Dunkeld, and Blair Athole. These Horse Posts were, however, discontinued immediately after the army retired.

At this time the Government evinced great concern about the Irish correspondence, and ordered Mr. Anderson to visit Portpatrick, and examine the harbours, with the view of selecting the one most convenient for the Mail Packets.

After the Rebellion had been suppressed, the public appear to have had great confidence in the Post, and evinced a desire to have more extended Postal accommodation, and in some instances memorialized the Postmaster-General to open offices in the rural districts.

By an order, dated 26th November 1717, Mr. Anderson received notice, that he had been superseded, and that Sir John Inglis had been appointed Deputy Postmaster-General for Scotland, and would take office on the 1st December.

It would appear from the correspondence of Mr. Anderson, that all appointments in the Post Office in Scotland, were held directly from the Deputy Postmaster-General for the time being; and on the entrance of a new Postmaster-General into office, all commissions and bonds of security had to be renewed, and it was common for the Postmasters to employ all the influence in their power to obtain the favour of the new Postmaster-General, in order to be retained in their situations.*

In 1730, the yearly revenue of the Post Office establishment in Scotland was £1194.†

In 1738, Archibald Douglas, Esq., was Deputy Postmaster-General, and the establishment in Edinburgh consisted of eleven persons, including the Postmaster-General, a person called an apprehender of private letter-carriers, and three letter-carriers or runners.‡

In 1741, Alexander Hamilton, Esq. of Innerwick, was Deputy Postmaster-General, and the establishment, exclusive of letter-carriers, consisted of eight persons, including a Solicitor. In this

* "Anderson, MS. Papers," Advocates' Library, Edinburgh.

† Arnott's "History of Edinburgh," page 541.

‡ "State of Scotland, 1738," page 185.

year there were 106 Post Towns in Scotland, and direct Bags were sent from Edinburgh to Kirkwall and Stornoway.*

About the year 1750, the Mails began to be conveyed from stage to stage by relays of fresh horses, and different Post-boys, to the principal places in Scotland, but the greater portion of the Mails were still carried by Foot Runners. Before the system of relays was introduced on the north road, the mode of conveying the Mails was very tedious. "For instance, a person set out with the Mail from Edinburgh for Aberdeen; he did not travel a stage, and then deliver the Mail to another Post-boy, but went on to Dundee, where he rested the first night; to Montrose, where he stayed the second, and on the third he arrived at Aberdeen, and as he passed by Kinghorn, it behoved the tide, and sometimes also the weather, to render the time of his arrival more late and uncertain. In this manner the Mail was conveyed 'thrice a-week.' The communication by Post between London and Edinburgh was not much better." † The condition of the roads however in Scotland, would not admit of any thing like rapid travelling. The best roads, even in the populous districts, were occasionally to be found in the channels of streams. The common carrier from Edinburgh to Selkirk, 38 miles, required a fortnight for his journey, going and returning. The channel of the river Gala, which for a considerable distance ran parallel with the road, being, when not flooded, the track chosen as the most level and easiest to travel in. Between the principal cities, the means of travelling were little better. It took a day and a-half for the stage coach to travel from Edinburgh to Glasgow.‡

At this period, and for long before, there was a set of single horse "traffickers" (cadgers), that regularly plied between different places. These traffickers, and the carriers, in spite of the laws

* "Scots Almanac, 1741."

† Arnott's "History of Edinburgh," page 538.

‡ McCulloch's Com. Dic. article—"Roads." In the ten years that followed 1750, there were successive turnpike Acts passed for Edinburghshire, for Lanarkshire, and various ways that are connected with Edinburgh and Glasgow. In 1762, Parliament gave £4000 towards building the bridges across the Tweed at Coldstream, making the subservient roads, and afterwards £800 for making a road from Ballantrae to Stranraer, in order to facilitate the passage to Ireland. In 1770, the Parliament began to make annual grants of £6998, for repairing the new roads and building bridges in the Highlands—"Caledonia," by Chalmers, vol. i. p. 36.

against them, carried more letters than the Post Office, at least in the country districts.*

In 1754, the revenue of the General Post Office in Scotland was £8927, and in the year 1757 it amounted to £10,623. In the latter year the Mail was upon the road from London to Edinburgh 87 hours, but from Edinburgh to London 131 hours. At this time, upon a representation from the committee of Royal Burghs, such regulations were adopted, that the time was reduced to 82 hours from London to Edinburgh, and 85 hours from Edinburgh to London.

In the year 1760, the revenue of the Post Office in Scotland, amounted to £11,942.

On the 10th of October 1763, a further improvement was made in the London Mail, by having it despatched five times a-week, instead of three as formerly. Previously it had travelled in so dilatory a manner, that in winter the letters which were sent from London on Tuesday night, for the most part, were not distributed in Edinburgh till Sunday, between sermons.

In 1765, the Postage upon a single letter, carried only one stage, was reduced from 2d. to 1d.†

In 1771, William Oliphant, Esq. of Rossie, was Deputy Postmaster-General. The Edinburgh establishment then consisted of ten persons, exclusive of letter-carriers, and there were 130 Post Towns in Scotland. A packet was despatched to Lerwick on the first Wednesday of each month, and returned about the 8th or 10th of the intervening month; the Postage upon a single letter to Lerwick was 6d.‡

In 1776, the modern Stage Coach was introduced into Scotland; the first coach arriving in Edinburgh on the 10th April. It performed the journey to London in 60 hours. And in the same year the first Penny Post in Scotland was established in Edinburgh by Peter Williamson, an eccentric native of Aberdeen, who, in consequence of keeping a coffee-shop in the hall of the Parliament House, was frequently employed by gentlemen attending

* The Postmaster of Falkirk, writing to the Postmaster-General at the time Mr. Anderson held that office, says—"The carriers carry more letters than the Post," and gives a list of carrier's names, and recommends that their horses be seized. Anderson, MS. Papers.

† Arnott's "History of Edinburgh," page 538.

‡ "Scots Almanac, 1771."

the courts, to forward letters to different parts of the city. This kind of business increased so much, that he opened an office, and established a regular Penny Post delivery of letters throughout the city. He had hourly deliveries, and agents at various parts of the town to collect letters. The men who delivered, of whom there were four in uniform, also collected letters, and for this purpose they rang a bell as they proceeded on their rounds to give information of their approach. Williamson's success soon induced others to attempt a similar undertaking ; but the authorities of the General Post Office, seeing the importance of this branch of business as a source of revenue, gave Williamson a pension for the good will of the business, and the Penny Post was then attached to the general establishment.* The Scottish Penny Posts were afterwards confirmed to the General Post, by an Act of Parliament, in the reign of George III.†

In 1781, twenty-three persons, including six letter-carriers, were employed in the Edinburgh establishment, and the number of Post towns had increased to 140.‡

A direct Mail between London and Glasgow was not established before 1788, when, on the 7th July, the first Mail Coach from London arrived in Glasgow. Previously the correspondence between those cities passed through Edinburgh, where it was detained twelve hours to be sent with the Mail to Glasgow at night.§

In 1791, the number of persons required to conduct the business of the Edinburgh Office was thirty-one, and the number of Post towns in Scotland 164.|| In 1794, the Inland Office, including the letter-carrier's branch, consisted of twenty-one persons.

Having followed the Scottish Post Office down to the close of the eighteenth century, it may be observed, that for a long time after its introduction and establishment, it was conducted solely with a view to the convenience and security of the correspondence of the public, and that it frequently received assistance from the Scottish Government by pecuniary grants ; and if we except the periods of rebellion, when a certain amount of *surveillance* was exercised by the agents of Government as a measure of State security, the Post Office in Scotland appears to have been conducted with great integrity and freedom from abuse.

* Chambers's Gazetteer.

† Scots Almanac, 1781.

‡ Scots Almanac, 1791.

§ 34 George III. cap. 17, 1794.

§ M'Culloch's Com. Dict. article " Roads."

In 1810, the Inland Office, including the letter-carriers' branch, consisted of thirty-five persons; in 1820, of thirty-nine; and in 1830, of fifty-two persons.

In April 1713, the Post Office in Edinburgh was removed to the first story of a house opposite the Tolbooth, on the north side of the High Street.* At a later time it occupied the first floor of a house near the Cross, above an alley which still bears the name of the Post Office Close. It was removed from this to a floor in the South side of the Parliament Square, which was fitted up like a shop, and the Letters were dealt across an ordinary counter like other goods. At this time all the out-door business of delivery in town was managed by one letter-carrier. From the Parliament Square, the Post Office was removed to Lord Covington's house, thence after some years, to a house on the North Bridge,† and to the present Office in 1821, at which period the despatch of the Mails was conducted in an apartment about 30 feet square. This apartment was purposely kept as dark as possible, in order to derive the full advantage of artificial light, employed in the process of examining letters, to see whether they contained enclosures or not.

At the present time, the Establishment in Edinburgh consists of 225 officers, of which 114 are Letter-Carriers, Porters, and Messengers. The average number of letters passing through and delivered in Edinburgh daily, may be estimated at 75,000. The number of Mail Bags received daily is 518, and the number despatched is 350. The amount of Money Orders issued and paid, shows a sum of £1,758,079 circulating annually through the Department in Scotland.

* Notice of removal of Post Office, Edinburgh, in "Scots Courant, April 1713."

† Chambers's "Traditions of Edinburgh."

THE Post Office Act of ANNE, 1710, united the POST OFFICES of ENGLAND and SCOTLAND under one POSTMASTER-GENERAL, entitled the POSTMASTER-GENERAL OF GREAT BRITAIN, and the Office in SCOTLAND was managed by DEPUTY. The following is a LIST of the DEPUTY POSTMASTERS-GENERAL in SCOTLAND from that time down to 1830, when the Office of DEPUTY POSTMASTER-GENERAL for SCOTLAND was abolished —

- 1710 GEORGE MAIN
- 1715 JAMES ANDERSON
- 1717 SIR JOHN INGLIS
- 1736 ARCHIBALD DOUGLAS
- 1741 ALEXANDER HAMILTON of Innerwick
- 1766 ROBERT OLIPHANT of Rossie
- 1796 THOMAS ELDER of Forneth
- 1799 WILLIAM ROBERTSON
- 1802 ROBERT TROTTER of Castlelaw
- 1807 HON. FRANCIS GRAY, afterwards LORD GRAY
of Kinfauns
- 1811 JAMES, 12th Earl of CAITHNESS
- 1823 SIR DAVID WEDDERBURN, Bart.

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