THE BYE POSTS

and

CROSS POSTS OF LONDON

by

Peter Bathe

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No. 13 in the LPHG Handbook Series

Published by

London Postal History Group 64 Gordon Road Carshalton Beeches Surrey SM5 3RE

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INTRODUCTION AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The bye and cross posts of London were important developments in the operation of the Twopenny Post and this book is intended to outline the history of these developments.

The bye posts were introduced to convey local letters between neighbouring towns and villages in the Country area of the Twopenny Post (originally between three and 10 miles from the City), thus obviating the need for such letters to go into central London and then come back out again, as had been happening for the previous 130 years.

The London cross posts served a similar purpose by linking the General Post from the provinces with certain London suburbs, when formerly this correspondence too had had to pass through the chief office in central London.

Most of what has been published in the past about these services has relied on the details contained in the "Ninth Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Inquire into the Management of the Post Office Department" (1837). Although reasonably accurate with regard to contemporary operational details, the Ninth Report is, at best, sketchy when covering events prior to 1836/7. This is because the Commissioners were more concerned with current practices and had only summarised the historical details.

There have been some problems with terminology in the past, partly as a result of ambiguities in the Ninth Report. In the current work, every effort has been made to use each of the various terms in the same sense as did the Post Office officials of the day.

Thus "bye post" refers to the system whereby local letters were circulated to towns and villages on the same Twopenny Post Country ride.

"Cross post" in the context of this book is the special system which linked the General Post on certain Post Roads with the Twopenny Post rides on the same roads, and sometimes adjacent rides as well.

The terms "sorting office" or "sorting station" refer to those receiving houses where letter carriers met to sort the bags that came from London. Such sorting offices existed *before* the establishment of the bye posts and were probably set up as part of the 1794 reforms of the Penny Post, but could be older.

When the bye posts were set up (in 1809-11), virtually all the existing sorting offices also became "bye post offices", but several sorting offices were created after 1811 which were not bye post offices.

It was only the bye post offices which were issued with the large dated handstamps, commonly known by postal historians as "Country Sorting Office" handstamps.

The offices used as pivotal points in the operation of the cross posts were sometimes referred to as "forward sorting stations" and had Penny Post style handstamps for use on cross post letters. Most of these offices were already provincial post towns with provincial double arc dated stamps. Later, some were also to become bye post offices (from 1837) and thus were issued with the Country Sorting Office dated handstamps. After 1840, either the CSO or provincial stamps were used on cross post letters.

The information contained in the present work relies on the detailed reports made at the time of each change by Edward Johnson and, later, Robert Smith, who were the senior officers responsible for the running of the Twopenny Post, with the comments of Sir Francis Freeling, the Secretary to the Post Office and the guiding hand behind many of the alterations.

These reports are preserved in Post Office Records and my thanks go to the staff of the POR for their considerable help over the years.

My thanks also goes to the numerous postal historians, past and present, who have blazed the trail for this study and, in particular, to Barrie Jay and Martin Willcocks who read the original manuscript and whose comments and suggestions have been incorporated into the final version. My debt to other postal historians is reflected in the bibliography at the end of this book.

Parts of this work have appeared in articles published in Stamp Collecting, Stamp News and Stamps, and my thanks also go to the

publishers for permission to reprint.

Postal history research continues and doubtless more discoveries will be made which will reveal inaccuracies in portions of the present work. The first type of bye post date stamp was discovered only as recently as 1981; what other delights will turn up eventually? The archives are far from complete but, one day, someone might solve such puzzles as why Hampton had a CSO stamp long before it was made a bye post sorting office, or why Hampstead did not get a village style Penny Post stamp although the other dependent offices of the Barnet cross post were each issued with one.

I hope this book encourages other postal historians to delve into such mysteries, just as earlier authors spurred me to start this study.

Peter Bathe Peacehaven, 1989

CHAPTER 1

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE BYE POSTS

Until 1809, the London Twopenny Post (and the Penny Post before it) had always brought letters from the outer suburbs up to offices in central London for sorting and stamping, even if the letters were addressed to

somewhere near the place of posting.

However, between 1809 and 1811 a system of bye posts was set up on each of the Twopenny Post rides (the routes taken by the post boys from central London to the outer boundary of the Country area) and these bye posts allowed the speedier transmission of letters between neighbouring suburbs. They were an important development in improving the Twopenny Post service.

Yet the basic idea for the scheme did not come from within the Post Office but from a member of the public, who thought it an unnecessary waste of time for letters to go up to London and then back again each time he and his relations - who lived only three miles away -

corresponded.

Francis Molyneux Ommanney wrote on 31 May 1809 to the Earl of Sandwich, one of the two Post Masters General at that time, complaining about the slow service between his home in Mortlake, and Wandsworth, where his relations lived, and then went on to propose a simple system to overcome the problem. Ommanney's proposal was to form the basis of the bye post network which spread throughout the Country area of the Twopenny Post.

Ommanney, a younger son of Rear Admiral Cornthwaite Ommanney, lived at The Elms, Mortlake, and was a navy agent, having his offices in Norfolk Street, off the Strand. It is doubtful if he was considered particularly important at this time, although nine years later, he was elected MP for Barnstaple and was knighted in 1820. In 1809, his influence may not have been great and his idea was most likely

considered solely on its merits.

Most of the credit for the bye posts must, of course, go to the Comptroller of the Twopenny Post, Edward Johnson, who not only refined and extended Ommanney's idea, but also persisted with the original experimental bye post, even when it was showing an expected profit of no more than 10s 3d a year on expenses of nearly £33. He was also keen enough to extend the scheme to the other rides, before the first bye post - on the Richmond ride - had improved on its early minimal profits.

It must be remembered that, at this time, the revenue from the Post Office was considered far more important than any improvement in the

service.

It was essential that if any improvement was planned, not only had it to pay for itself and preferably make a profit, but also the scheme had to be devised in a way to prevent letter carriers and letter receivers from pocketing the postage, or otherwise defrauding the government or the public.

Ommanney's letter to the Earl of Sandwich said he frequently wrote to his relations at Wandsworth, three miles away, but that "it requires One day & three quarters of another to send a letter & receive a reply thereto, altho' the Identical letters pass twice through that Town".

He went on:

"The bag for East Sheen, including Ours, conveyed by the Post Boy going to & from Richmond, who passes thro' Wandsworth & East Sheen on his Road to Richmond, and at present any letter for Wandsworth from hence goes first to London; I therefore for myself, & am confident I may add for the vicinity at large, request the favor that a Bag maybe kept by the Post Offices of Sheen & Wandsworth to receive & forward the respective letters without going to London; by this means letters can be dispatched in the mornº & replied to from each place in three quarters of a day, without causing any Extra Delivery to either Post Man; and with all Submission conceive the only difference will be the two offices keeping an account against each other & one for the Chief London Office of such letters."

Ommanney also pointed out that "were such Commodious Arrangement made the adjoining Parish of Barnes would be included, as those letters come also in the Sheen Bag".

Within 10 days, Johnson had considered Ommanney's suggestion and developed it into a full-scale bye post for the whole of the Richmond ride and not just between Sheen and Wandsworth, as Ommanney had asked. Johnson had also worked out provisional costings and was in a position to put a proposal forward for consideration by the PMGs.

Johnson said he was of the opinion that "the measure is practicable and that it would produce some profit to the revenue".

As regards to costs, he added:

"The whole of the Ride...might have the benefit of a By-post for a total expense to the revenue of about £40 per annum. The letters, by increasing to only double the present number which is 20 per day, would repay that expense and leave a surplus or net profit of £38 per annum."

There were 16 places on the ride which would benefit from the scheme. It only needed just one additional letter a day from each place to make a profit of £22 8s a year, Johnson said.

This was a very poor estimate by Johnson which nearly put the whole bye post system in jeopardy. Although the total expenses only amounted to a little under £33 (not £40 as Johnson first thought) the "profit" at the end of the first year was only 18s 6d - the extra business Johnson had predicted took a long time to materialise.

In his original report on the proposal, Johnson admitted that:

"The length of time before [letters] are delivered and before Answers can be received must be a discouragement to the sending such letters by the Post and an inducement to the corresponding by other Means. At present it is Two days before an Answer can be received at Mortlake from Putney, for instance, a letter put in at Mortlake by 9 in the Morning is not delivered at Putney till about 6 in the evening. The Answer put in the same evening, or by 9 next morning, is not received at Mortlake till

6 or 7 o'clock in the evening of the second day, both letters being brought to town where they lay several hours, and the same is the case upon all the Rides. But by the means of By-Bags a letter put in as above by 9 in the morning would be delivered between 11 and 1 o'clock and an Answer put in by 4 o'clock would be received the same evening, being Four & twenty hours earlier than an Answer can now be received."

Because the new system would be relatively fast, Johnson felt "no Public conveyance could be equally speedy and certain, it is to be presumed this would always have the preference with the Public".

Nine months later, when the Richmond bye post had "produced little or no profit" and Johnson was nonetheless proposing a similar scheme for the Brentford ride, he continued to maintain that the new official bye

post would be popular.

"Where there is no Bye Post," he said, "there is a great inducement to the corresponding by Errand Carts, Stage Coaches and Waterman, but the Bye Post being more expeditious, cheap and certain than these it will be preferred to every such conveyance wherever it is established."

He later added:

"The means of corresponding by common carriers presents itself to the inhabitants constantly and as at present it is two days before an answer can be received to a letter sent by the Post even to the nearest village it is more than probable that the greater part of the Correspondence between those places is carried on by the above means."

Although the Post Office had a monopoly in carrying letters, this only applied to those routes where the Post Office itself supplied a service. If a small village was not served by an official post, then it was quite in order for a carrier or some other messenger to carry letters, for a fee, from the village to a place where he could put the letters into the post, although he often took them further.

Because the postage rates were so high, various attempts were made to get round the law using carriers who could convey letters more cheaply. Because the Post Office did not, prior to 1809, provide a direct service from Richmond to Mortlake, or from Mortlake to Putney, it was legal for other carriers to offer the service instead.

It would also appear that once such a right had been established, it was not easy for the Post Office to institute a new service, then claim

its monopolistic rights and suppress the older private service.

When Johnson's first proposals on the Richmond bye post reached Sir Francis Freeling, Secretary to the Post Office, he decided to take legal advice. He also "entertained some doubts whether the several clauses of the Penny Post Acts could justify the charge of 3d or any charge on a Letter conveyed direct say from Richmond to Mortlake."

The solicitor to the Post Office, Mr A. Parkin, expressed his opinion thus:

"The Postm*tr Gen's have a right to the Conveyance of a letter put in at Richmond for Mortlake, and to take 3d Postage; The Arrangement for conveying it is through London, to the manifest Delay of the letter & consequent Inconvenience to the public.

"For Expedition, The Postm" Gen¹s propose to change the Route of the Letter, & to send it direct from Richmond to Mortlake.

"This seems within the Spirit of the Acts of Parliament, and I think it may be done, and the Rate of 3d taken.

"I do not know that it would be right to insist that persons shall not send or carry letters between Richmond and Mortlake, after the Plan is adopted; they have the Right now, and they should not be denied it after the New Arrangements take place — If the Postmr Gen¹* think otherwise on that Head, Parliamentary Regulation must be had, & a Penalty enacted for so sending letters."

Freeling's reaction to being told "that nobody should be prevented from sending letters privately" was that he was "persuaded the Law as it now stands is not so strong as one could wish, & that a Parliamentary Regulation at the first convenient opportunity will be necessary to legalise the new practice."

All notices issued to the public to advertise the bye posts contained a footnote about the illegal conveyance of letters, which said:

"By the 9th of Queen Anne, cap. 10. Any Person illegally conveying Letters, incurs a penalty of £5. for every Offence, and £100, for every Week the practice is continued. And by 42d Geo. III. cap. 81. the Sender also incurs a penalty of £5. for every Offence with full Costs of Suit."



CHAPTER 2

THE RICHMOND AND BRENTFORD TRIALS

According to Johnson, the places to be served by the first bye post to be established (on the Richmond ride) were: Vauxhall, Battersea, Wandsworth, Putney, Wimbledon, Roehampton, Barnes, Mortlake, East Sheen,

Richmond, Petersham, Ham, Twickenham, Teddington, Hampton and Sunbury.

Johnson originally proposed that there would be six receivers on the ride who would perform "the duty of making up and taking charge of the By-bags and keeping the checks against the letter carriers," but as the scheme was eventually established, only five receivers were involved.

These were: Henry Franks (Newington Butts), Mr Neighbour (Wandsworth), Mrs Phebe Bradbury (Putney), Benjamin Page (East Sheen) and Mrs Mary Rowland (Richmond).

Each receiver was to be paid £5 a year extra for the bye post duty with the exception of Mrs Rowland, who was to get £6, as she had "collections from a greater number of offices than the other receivers to sort and distribute".

Johnson at first proposed to try the bye post experiment on both the Richmond and the Brentford rides at the same time but Freeling felt that the Brentford trial "had better be suspended till the Richmond one has been practised for some time".

The bye post started on the Richmond ride about 5 July 1809 (the exact date is not known) and apart from one or two minor problems, seems to have worked quite successfully, if not very profitably.

After the first six months of operation, Johnson produced an account

of what had gone wrong, and how many letters had used the system.

He found that the receiver at the Vauxhall office "had not understood or had forgot his instructions with regard to Letters put in at his office and intended for parts within the same delivery, as he had not selected them for the Bye Post but dispatched them with those for Town".

Another problem seems to have been an attempt at fraud. Johnson reported that:

"Mr Stanhope of the Foreign Office having mentioned that some friends of his at Twickenham or Teddington had expressed their suspicions that letters which they had received had been delivered clandestinely as they appeared to want the Post Marks."

The matter was investigated by Johnson but he could find no evidence of that being the case.

He did explain that "a clandestine delivery of letters to and from adjoining walks might be carried on by Letters Carriers who attend at the same Sorting Office whether there is a Bye Post or not" and he then went on to say:

"the more effectually to prevent that practice it would be advisable to insert in any future advertisement an explanation of the stamps which every letter should bear that has passed duly through the Office. The Letter Carriers would then be aware that the Public could discover and might communicate to

the Office any fraudulent delivery and they would be fearful to attempt it."

The stamps used in the bye posts by the receivers at the sorting offices had to include a date as the letters were no longer passing through the central London offices where before all datestamping had been done. No earlier suburban stamps had included a date, and the first sorting office datestamps were similar in design to the contemporary undated paid and unpaid marks, being unframed and bearing the legend "3py P. Unpd" (Fig 1).

This type is extremely rare. One example is known for Richmond, dated 28 July 1809, and two examples of a stamp reading Mortlake are known for 14 September and 2 October 1809. The Mortlake stamp was actually used at East Sheen. It is not known why the stamp bore the name of a different receiving house to the one at which is was used. Later bye posts did show similar instances at, for example, Blackheath (where the Greenwich stamp was used) and at Turnham Green, which used a stamp bearing the name Acton.

ORTLA OFV EV SP14 F SP14 F SP14 F

The rarity of the stamps might well be explained by the fact that, according to Johnson's first progress report, only 4,299 letters used the bye post in the first six months of operation, an average of 165 letters a week, with a high of 208 letters in the week ending 15 December, and a low of 121 in the week of 27 October.

However, it is clear that, from early on, these new country sorting office stamps were being used on non-bye post letters as a replacement for the sorting office's receiving house namestamp; one of the Mortlake examples (14 September) is not on a bye letter. From the salaries of the receivers, who were paid a tenth of a penny per letter taken in (plus a few odd allowances), it is possible to calculate the number of non-bye post letters that went through those receiving houses which were also sorting offices.

For example, Benjamin Page, at the East Sheen receiving house (which used the Mortlake sorting office stamp) was granted a salary of £6 a year on 1 January 1811, after it had been £5 "these many years". As Page's office had long been used by the letter carriers of Mortlake and Barnes to sort the bags as they came down from London, it is likely he was allowed £1 per head for the two letter carriers, in line with other offices, leaving an allowance of £4 for the letters handled. From this, it can be calculated that the total number of letters of all types handed in at the East Sheen office in the first six months of the bye post was probably between 4,000 and 5,000, and some of these would have also received the rare Mortlake stamp shown in Fig 1.

The three examples seen have all been unpaid stamps - but of course, it was quite possible to prepay the postage on bye post letters, just as it was possible to prepay any Twopenny Post letter. Although prepayment was not common, it nevertheless would have meant that, in all probability, a dated paid stamp had to be issued to each sorting office as well as a dated unpaid stamp.

Stamps with moveable dates were far more expensive than undated

stamps. Because the year in datestamps was fixed at this time and only the day and month moveable, new stamps had to be issued at the start of

each year.

It was probably to save the expense of having two dated stamps at each bye post office (a paid and an unpaid version) that a new style of stamp, without any "paid" or "unpaid" legend (Fig 2), was issued at the beginning of 1810. Each receiving house had, in any case, a 3d paid stamp, and from 1810 this stamp was used on any prepaid bye-letters. All bye-letters without such a paid stamp were assumed to be unpaid.



Fig 2

Johnson's half year report stated that the total amount of postage for the first six months was £53 14s 9d - equivalent to £107 9s 6d in a full year - which compared with £74 of postage collected on letters passing from one place to another on the ride prior to the setting up of the bye post. This gave an expected increase in gross revenue of £33 9s 6d for the full year.

Expenses were put at £32 19s 3d, composed of £26 in additional salaries for the receivers at the sorting offices; letter bills and vouchers £3 17s 9d; letter bags £1 10s; and sealing wax, pack thread

etc, £1 11s 6d. Expected profits were thus 10s 3d.

In the event, the full year's revenue was slightly higher - £107 17s 9d equivalent to 8,631 letters - and net profits were 18s 6d.

Strangely, the annual figures were exclusive of the estimated produce of the Valentine's Day bye-letters. Johnson had pointed out that the number of bye-letters in the week ending 16 February 1810 was 1,337 compared with an average of 165 a week during the previous six months. The extra letters in that week would have added over £14 to the profits, and made the whole operation appear more worthwhile.

In March 1810, Johnson reported to Freeling:

"Whether the Richmond Bye Post may hereafter be productive I am unable to say, but hitherto it has produced little or no profit. Whilst however it is attended with no loss I am of opinion it should be continued as it does certainly add greatly to the convenience of the TPP...On more populous roads I should imagine it would be more productive, and I therefore beg to recommend that a Bye Post be tried on the Brentford Road."

Freeling, in his covering report to the PMGs, added: "The result of this experiment for the Six Months has not answered my expectations but the Revenue has not sustained any loss by the measure" and so he was prepared to continue with the Richmond trial and extend the scheme to Brentford.

The Brentford service was to cover Knightsbridge, Chelsea, Brompton, Queens Elm, Little Chelsea, Walham Green, Fulham, Kensington and the Gravel Pits, Hammersmith, Turnham Green, Chiswick, Acton, Ealing, Hanwell, Brentford, Kew, Isleworth and Whitton, "and the Road from Oxford Street".

The sorting offices were established at the receiving houses of Mr Blackburn (Knightsbridge); Mrs Kingston (Kensington); Mrs Mary Morris

(Hammersmith); Mr Goring (Turnham Green) and Mr Norbury (Brentford). Salaries were again fixed at £5 a year for each sorting office, as on the Richmond ride, with £6 for the two offices which had the largest number of receiving houses under them: Knightsbridge and Brentford.

On the Richmond ride, it was noted that the sorting office at East Sheen used a dated sorting office stamp which read Mortlake, and on the Brentford ride, the sorting office at Turnham Green used a stamp inscribed "Acton". It is believed the Knightsbridge sorting office was moved to Brompton fairly soon after the bye post started — and certainly by 1813. Indeed, this may have been another case where, at least initially, the dated stamp was used at an office with different name.

Although the sorting office salaries were £1 more than on the Richmond ride, other expenses - for letter bills, bags, sealing wax, etc - were the same, and totalled £6 18s 3d.

Johnson reported that in the year before the bye post started, the amount of postage on letters passing between the towns on the ride was £249 12s 0d and after the first six months, the bye post was producing at a rate of £284 18s 8d a year. Therefore, after deduction of expenses, the Brentford bye post was going to make a profit of £1 7s 5d on the year.

Johnson felt the slow increase in bye-letters was "owing to the regulations not being extensively known, although a great many handbills had been distributed". He also reported on the first 15 months of operation of the Richmond bye post and did have some good news: "the increase has been more rapid in the last quarter than it had been in any former period". Revenue in the 13 weeks to 10 October 1810 was £34 12s 3d, equivalent to 2,769 letters, while in the same 13 weeks of 1809, revenue was £26 10s 0d, equivalent to 2,120 letters. There was thus an increase of over 36 per cent.

Freeling said the results were "less encouraging to an extension of the System than I hoped for", but agreed to the experiments being continued:

> "It is possible the public will make more use of them as they are better known and understood. The Printed Papers in the Comptroller's report will shew your Lordships how attentive he has been to the progress of this business and care of it."

Unfortunately the particular papers mentioned here do not appear to have survived, but a later example is shown in Fig 3.

One possible reason why there was little enthusiasm for the scheme at a local level was that the receivers at the sorting offices were not being paid. On 20 October 1810, Johnson reported:

"The Receivers on the Richmond Ride having performed the Bye Letter duties for fifteen months without any pay for their trouble, and those on the Brentford Ride Six months to the 10th Instant I therefore beg to recommend to their Lordships the Post Masters General that the former be allowed the Salaries mentioned in my report of 15th March."

It does appear that the salaries were then confirmed. By 20 March 1811 Freeling could send a short note to the PMGs:

"Your Lordships will be happy to see that the Bye Posts on the Richmond & Brentford Rides have been so favourable in their result and I presume your Lord

Two Penny Post Office,

July 27th, 1811.

HIS MAJESTY'S POSTMASTER-GENERAL

Being desirous of extending the Benefit and Accommodation afforded to the Public by Means of the Two-Penny Post Office, have been pleased to order that on and after the above date, Letters passing from one to another of the tollowing Places, viz.

Walworth Camberwell Dulwich Norwood

Sydenham
South End
and
Beckenham

or from one Part to another of either of the same Places, be delivered direct, by the Means of a Bye-Post, instead of being first sent to London.

By this Regulation, Letters put in at these Places in Time for the Morning Dispatch are delivered at any of them about Noon, and such as are put in for the Afternoon Dispatch, the same Evening; (Norwood and Beckenham excepted, which are served only at the Noon Delivery.) Thus the Letters are delivered shortly after they are put into the Post, and Answers can be received a Day earlier than they could previous to this arrangement.

In order that Persons receiving Letters may know whether they have passed duly through the Post-Office, and whether they are delivered in proper time, every Unpaid Letter has a stamped figure of 3, denoting the Postage to be paid on Delivery, and every Paid Letter a Stamp shewing that it is Post Paid and where it was put in. Each Letter, Paid or Unpaid, has also a Stamp which shews the Place it was dispatched from and the Day and time of Day (that is Mg. for Morning, and Ev. for Evening) of its departure. The following are the Forms of these Stamps.

On the front of each Unpaid Letter.

Z Z

On the front of each Post Paid Letter. according to where put in.

Camberwell 3 Py P Paid One of these on the back of each Letter, according to where dispatched from, &c.



This Byc Post to be considered an Experiment only, until further Notice.

E. JOHNSON, Comptroller.

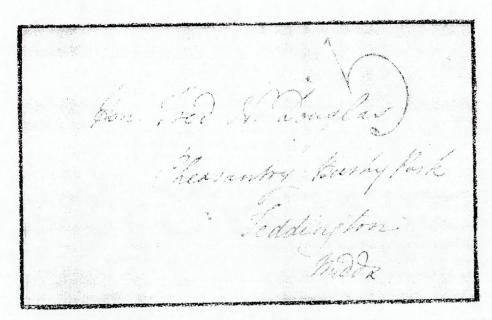
ILLEGAL CONVEYANCE OF LETTERS.

By the 9th of Queen Anne, cap. 10. Any Person illegally conveying Letters, incurs a penalty of £5. for every Offence, and £100, for every Week the practice is continued. And by 42d. Geo. 111. cap. 81. the Sender also incurs a penalty of £5. for every Offence with full Costs of Suit.

ships will order a similar regulation experimentally on the remaining rides."

At the end of the second year of the Richmond bye post, there had been a profit of £55 13s Od. Thus the number of letters passing between the towns on the Richmond ride had risen from 4,920 in the year before the bye post, through 8,590 in the first year of the bye post, to 13,005 in the second year.

The profit at the end of the first year of the the Brentford ride bye post was £16 2s 4d. The total number of letters using the bye post on this ride in that year was 23,974, compared with the 19,968 letters which went between the towns on the Brentford ride but via London in the year before the bye post was introduced. The expansion in the second half year was over 10 per cent, from 11,396 in the first half to 12,576 in the second.





A Richmond bye-post letter dated some 23 days after the scheme was introduced showing the rare date stamp.

[courtesy of Keith Romig]



CHAPTER 3

EXPANSION TO OTHER RIDES

Once the Richmond and Brentford bye posts started to improve, the PMGs gave their approval, in March 1811, to further expansion of the scheme — if still only experimentally. Johnson worked hard and before the end of the year, he could report that the whole of the Twopenny Post area was being served by bye posts, at a cost of only £270 a year.

Woolwich ride

The first of the new bye posts was on the Woolwich ride, set up on 6 April 1811 to serve "Kent Road from the Bricklayers' Arms, New Cross, Peckham, Forest Hill, Deptford, Greenwich, Blackheath, Lewisham, Lee, Eltham, Charlton, Woolwich, Plumstead and Shooters Hill". All but Forest Hill and Plumstead had two deliveries a day - noon and evening - the exceptions having no evening delivery.

Sorting offices were set up at Kent Road; Peckham (although it is believed the office was in fact at New Cross); Deptford Broadway; Blackheath (where the Greenwich sorting office stamp was used); and Woolwich Central Office. All but two of these sorting offices received £5 a year in additional salaries to cover the bye post duties. The busier offices at Woolwich and Blackheath were awarded £6 a year.

It is not certain who all the receivers were at the sorting offices when the bye post started. However, the Deptford receiver was George Greenway, of the Rose & Crown, Greenwich Road; at Blackheath, it was William Steward, of the Duke's Head; and at Woolwich, James Stone, a grocer in the High Street, was receiver at the Central Office.

Woodford ride

On 8 May 1811, Johnson reported the setting up of the Woodford bye post, which served a very large area, including most of "metropolitan" Essex: "Bow, Bromley in Middlesex, Old Ford, Stratford, West Ham, Plaistow, Upton, East Ham, Barking, Ilford, Holloway Down, Leytonstone, Wanstead, Leyton or Low Leyton, Walthamstow, Snaresbrook, Woodford, Chingford, Sewardstone, Loughton, Woodford Bridge, Chigwell and Chigwell Row".

On this ride, it was Sewardstone, Loughton and Chigwell Row which had only a noon delivery; all the other places were served with both noon and evening deliveries.

The sorting offices - all but one with salaries of £5 a year - were at Bow; Stratford (the only one with a salary of £6); Leytonstone (the office was probably at Leyton); Woodford; and Chigwell (this office was probably at Woodford Bridge).

Croydon or Waddon ride

At the end of May, Johnson was making preparations for a bye post on the Waddon ride. This ride, he said, had six sorting offices against only

five on all the other rides. "Both for the sake of simplifying the duty and keeping down the expenses it is desirable that the number of sorting offices on this Ride should also be no more than Five."

Johnson decided that a new sorting office could be established:

"midway between the nearest offices on the Ride, which are those of Stockwell and Clapham, the London and Bye Bags to be then received at and dispatched from this Office, and the Letter Carriers of the two deliveries to attend there together to sort and prepare their letters."

The new office was to be allowed £3 a year as a receiving house for taking in letters, £4 a year for house room for the four letter carriers and £5 a year as a bye post sorting office. However, the amount allowed for the letter carriers' room was offset by a reduction of £2 from the original Clapham sorting office "being the allowance to that office for the like accommodation which it now affords but which will then cease" and £1 from the Stockwell office for the same reason. The additional expense of the new office would thus be £9 a year or £1 per annum less "than if there were two sorting offices instead of one in this quarter, having each a Bye salary of £5".

Johnson maintained that:

"the material advantage will be the simplifying of the Bye Post Duty on this Ride and the saving a great deal of time and trouble at each office. An expense for Letter Bills, Vouchers Bags and Stamps &c will also be saved, and it will moreover be for consideration hereafter whether the present sorting office at Clapham may not be wholly discontinued as being unnecessary. A further advantage will also arise...as the Clapham and Stockwell deliveries are now so united by Buildings the missending the letters of one delivery to the other does sometimes happen: in such cases the Letter Carriers by being together will readily exchange missent letters and thereby prevent delay of them."

The new office was to be at the shop of Mrs Barfoot, printseller, of Clapham Rise.

About a month later, on 24 June, Johnson reported:

"on Thursday the 13th Instant I proceeded down the Waddon Ride to instruct the receivers in the intended Bye Post Duty for that Ride, On Friday to see a rehearsal of it by sending bags with Letter Bills but without Letters for the further instruction of the Receivers and the Post Boys and on Saturday the 15th to carry it into effect."

A week later, the first of the vouchers and letter bills for the week came up to London and "upon being inspected they exhibited in general but few errors". Johnson went down the ride again "to explain the most material of the mistakes" and to check that the times of collection were suitable.

The sorting offices on this ride were at Newington Butts, Clapham Rise, Tooting, Mitcham and Waddon. The Waddon office initially had a salary of £6, against £5 for the other offices, and was chosen so it could serve both Croydon to the east and Carshalton to the west. The

date stamp here was inscribed Croydon, however.

Johnson also pointed out:

"at the places included in the Newington district, the Inhabitants have the advantage of two Bye Posts, the one down the Richmond and the other down the Waddon or Croydon Ride, bags being made up at Newington office for both these Rides."

With regard to the profitability of this ride, Johnson said:

"From the population and respectability of the
places on this Ride there appears good ground to
expect that the Bye Post will be at least proportionately productive with that of the other rides."

By the end of 1811, he could report:

"On the Croydon Ride, where the Bye Post has been established between five and six months only, the net profit is already at the rate of £34 pr annum."

This was a higher rate than on the Brentford ride, which had been

going longer.

Among the printed notices Johnson had prepared for this ride was one which indicated to which sorting office letters for a particular delivery were to be sent (Fig 4).

Newington Butts, New Kent Road, West Square, St George's Road, Walcot Place, Kennington, Vauxhall, Nine Elms, Battersea New Town, and

South Lambeth were all sent to the Newington Butts office.

The Clapham Rise office covered Stockwell, Brixton, Larkhall Lane, Clapham, Battersea Rise (the part adjoining Clapham Common) and Balham.

The Tooting office looked after Tooting itself as well as Streatham, Merton and Morden, while Mitcham and Beddington Corner came under the Mitcham office. The last office on the ride - Waddon - covered Waddon, Croydon, Beddington, Wallington and Carshalton.

The bye post had two deliveries - at noon and in the evening -

except at Morden, which only had the noon delivery.

In March 1823, a bye post sorting office was also established at Vauxhall with an increase in salary of £9 - £5 for the bye post duties and £4 for sorting room for the letter carriers. This office was to take some of the load off Newington and "the Letter Carriers who serve Vauxhall, South Lambeth, the Wandsworth road and Battersea fields should attend" at the new Vauxhall sorting office. Vauxhall, like Newington, was linked to both the Croydon and Richmond bye posts.

Sydenham ride

Bye posts on the other rides were established in fairly quick succession but it can be assumed that Johnson devoted as much effort to each ride to make sure the schemes worked successfully.

On 27 July 1811, the Sydenham ride bye post came into operation, with the receiving houses at Walworth, Camberwell Green, Dulwich and Sydenham used as sorting offices for the bye post. This was a much smaller ride than most of the others, with only four sorting offices, all with £5 salaries. The service extended to Norwood, South End and Beckenham as well as those villages with sorting offices, although Norwood and Beckenham only had a noon delivery, while the other places on the ride also had an evening delivery.

Places in the Waddon Rides

Letters for Places on the Left of this Page to be sent to those on the Right.

Newington Butts
New Kent Road
West Square · · · · · · · · ·
St. George's Road
Walcot Place
Kennington Newington Butts
Vauxhall
Nine Elms · · · · · ·
Battersea, New Town
South Lambeth
Stockwell
Brixton
Larkhall Lane ······
Clapham
Battersea Rise (the part of it adjoining to Clapham Common
Balham
Tooting
Streether
Merton Tooting
Morden
Mitcham
Beddington Corner
Waddon.
Croydon
Beddington Croydon
Wallington
Carshalton et transmare

For the convenience of such as may find it a more easy reference, the following is a List of the several Places Alphabetically arranged.

The Left Hand Column contains all the Places, and the Right Hand those to which the Bye Letters are to be sent.

ı		· ·	
-	Balham to be sen	t to Clapham	
	Battersea. New Town	- ··· Newington Butts	
-	Battersea Rise, (adjoining to Clap-)	···· Clapham	
-	Beddington	···· Croydon .	
	Beddington Corner · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	···· Mitcham	
	Brixton Carshalton	Clapham	
	Carshalton	Croydon	
	Clapham	Clapham	
-	Croydon · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	···· Croydon	
	Kennington	Newington Butts	
-	Larkhall Lane	···· Clapham	
	Merton	- ···· Tooting	
	Mitcham	··· Mitcham	
	Morden ·····	- ····Tooting	
i	Newington Butts · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	Newington Butts	
	New Kent Road		
۱	Niue Elms	- · · · · Ditto	
l	St. George's Road	- ···· Ditto	
۱	South Lambeth	- · · · · Ditto	
	Stockwell	- · · · · Clapham	
	Streatham · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	···· l'ooting	
1	Tooting	Ditto	
	Vauxhall		
	Waddon		
	Walcot Place	Newington Dutts	
1	Wallington	···· Croydon	
-	West Square	Newington Butts	
1			

Edmonton ride

Thursday 10 August 1811 saw the opening of the bye post on the Edmonton ride. Again only four sorting offices were used, based at Hackney (£6); Stoke Newington (£5); Tottenham (£5); and Edmonton (£6). This bye post covered most of north east London: "Kingsland, Ball's Pond, Dalston, Shacklewell, Hackney, Homerton, Clapton, Stoke Newington, Stamford Hill, Tottenham, Edmonton, Southgate, Winchmore Hill, Enfield, Bull's Cross, Ponder's End, and Enfield Highway". All these districts, it was stated, had two deliveries a day.

Finchley ride

The Finchley bye post began on 21 September 1811 and had sorting offices at Islington (£6); Sommers Town (£5); Camden Town (£5); Highgate (£5); and Finchley (£6). The area served by the Finchley bye post was quite extensive: "Islington, Pentonville, Highbury, Holloway, Battle Bridge, Pancrass, Sommers Town, Camden Town, Kentish Town, Hampstead, West End, North End, Highgate, Hornsey, Finchley, Colney Hatch, Fryern Barnet, East Barnet, Whetstone, Totteridge, Highwood Hill, Mill Hill and Hendon". Again, the whole district had two deliveries a day. So extensive was this bye post that in 1831 it was divided into two, as will be discussed later.

Paddington ride

The last of these early bye posts was opened on 11 October 1811 and had just one sorting office, at Paddington, where the receiver had an increase in salary of just £5. The places served from the Paddington office were Edgware-Road, Lisson-Green, Kilborn, The Hyde, Kingsbury and Willsdon (the spellings are as they appeared in the official announcement).

"By this Regulation," the handbill proclaimed, "Letters put in at Paddington by 10 o'Clock in the Morning will be delivered at any of these Places by or about Noon the same Day, and such as are put in by 5 in the Evening will be delivered at Paddington, Edgware-Road and Lisson-Green the same Evening. Letters put in at Kilborn by ½ past 4, and at the Hyde and Willsdon by ½ past 3, for Paddington, Edgware-Road, or Lisson-Green, will be delivered the same evening.

"Persons at other Places may also avail themselves of this Arrangement; for instance, Letters from Hendon for Paddington, Edgware-Road or Lisson-Green, if taken to the Office at the Hyde and put in by ½ past 3; or Letters from Hampstead for these Parts, if taken to the Office at Kilborn by ¼ past 4 will be delivered the same Evening."



CHAPTER 4

OPERATION AND REGULATION

In order to keep a close check on the revenue, and to make sure the bye posts worked smoothly, Johnson issued special printed notices to both letter carriers and receivers. The letter carriers were told they must:

"carefully sort out from their Collections every Letter intended for Delivery within the Ride to which they belong, and deliver all such Letters to the Sorting Office where they attend. It is repeated they must be particularly careful that all such Letters be transferred to the Office-Keeper, for delivery by the Bye Post, and that they be not sent up to London.

"When all the Bye Bags have arrived by the Post Boys, the Principal or Bye Letter Charge taker will, upon receiving from the Office Keeper all the Bye Letters, sign his name under that of the latter, at the bottom of the Letter Bill containing the Total of such Letters. This Bill will be made out and presented to him by the Office Keeper for that purpose.

"The duty pointed out in the above paragraphs 1 and 2, and that of delivering the Letters to the Public, are all the Bye Post Duties to be performed by the Letter Carriers. The remainder, and the stamping of the Letters, is the department of the Receivers, and the Letter Carriers are most strictly forbidden assisting therein."

The division of labour - which was for security reasons - was reiterated in the letter receivers' instructions:

"Excepting sorting out the Bye Letters from their Collections, delivering them up to the Office Keepers, and signing the Bill containing the Total for delivery, the Letter Carriers are to take no Part whatever in the... Bye Post Duties. They must not have the Use of any of the Stamps, nor make Entries in the Voucher, nor must they ever have access to either. The Stamps and Vouchers are intended as Checks for the Correctness of the Duty and the Security of the Revenues. A Confidence is necessarily reposed in the Office Keepers, that these Checks shall not be entrusted to the Letter Carriers, which might at once render them useless, but be kept and used by themselves, and it is presumed that no one having a Desire to continue the Office would adopt, or suffer, a contrary Practice."

These injuctions were doubtless not followed in every case, as there was more than one place where the wife was the receiver and the husband or son, the letter carrier.

The receivers' instructions show how the bye posts operated and the uses of the various stamps. For letters being sent from the offices:

"The Letter Receivers at the Sorting Offices (after seeing that the Date Stamp is properly shifted) are to Stamp all Letters put in at their own Offices, both London and Bye-Letters, Paid and Unpaid, on the Back, with the Date Stamp. Likewise all Bye Letters collected by the Letter Carriers from other Offices in the same District, but not the London Letters from the latter."

The receivers then had to sort their own collections and all the bye-letters brought in by the letter carriers, according to the sorting list of that bye post. All the paid letters were stamped with the appropriate paid stamp (Fig 5) when they were put in, at either the sorting office itself, or one of its dependent receiving houses.

The receiver at the sorting office had to stamp all the unpaid bye post letters from his district with what was described officially as "the Threepenny Unpaid Stamp". Known today as "the flattopped 3" (Fig 6a) it was so designed to distinguish it from the 3 applied to country letters at the chief office in London (Fig 6b).

Both the paid and unpaid stamps were to be marked on the front of letters.

The receivers' other duties were:

"To sort the Letters into the Slips of the Sorting Box, according to the Directions in the Sorting List.

"To enter in the Voucher, on the Sent Side, in their respective Columns, the Number of Paid and the Number of Unpaid Letters which are to be sent off in the Bye Bags.

"To copy into the Letter Bills, the Entries made in the Voucher of Letters going in the Bye Bags.

"To put the Letters and Bills into the Proper Bags, - to Tie the Bags and Seal them, making a fair impression of the Office Seal on the Knot of the String; and to deliver them to the Post Boys.

"Where there are no Letters for a Place, the Bag, containing a Bill stamped with the Date Stamp, signed with the Office Keeper's Name, and having the word None written across the Space intended for Figures, must be sent as duly as if there were Letters. The Bag to be tied, but it need not be sealed.

"The Bags for Places down the Road to be delivered to the Post Boy going down from London; Those to come up the Road to be delivered to the Boy coming to London."

This last instruction would appear to be simple commonsense but

Penton-Ville

Fig 5

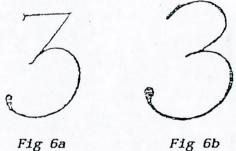


Fig 6b

obviously Johnson felt there was a need to spell it out.

The regulations covering the receipt of letters from other sorting offices for delivery within the district were just as explicit. To start with, Johnson pointed out that, at some offices, the post boy going down and the one coming up the road met, or at least there was little or no time between the dispatch and arrival of the bye bags, but at other offices there was a "considerable interval." The regulations said that:

"Where the latter is the case, any Letter put into the Sorting Office during the interval which may be for delivery within the same District, must be added to such as may before have been sorted into the Slip of the Sorting Box for the District. These Letters, together, must then be entered in the Voucher, both in the Sent and Received Column for the District. The Number of such Letters will of course be the same in both these Columns.

"The Bags arriving must be received and opened by the Office Keepers, who, after seeing that the Number of Letters agree with the Letter Bills, must enter the Number in the Received Side of the Voucher in the Columns answering to these Bills.

"The Letters above described, that is, such as have been put into the District of the Sorting Office for delivery in the same District, and such as have arrived in the Bye Bags, must then be added together in one Total of Paid and one Total of Unpaid, and entered accordingly in the Total Bill. This Bill must be signed by the Office Keeper. The Letters must then be delivered to the Principal Letter Carrier, who, after counting them must also sign the Total Bill acknowledging the receipt of the Number entered in it.

"Immediately after the Business of each Bye Post is over, the Date Stamp must be properly shifted in readiness for the next Post. A set of Letter Bills must then be stamped with it on the Top, and signed by the Office Keeper, and then laid in their respective Slips of the Sorting Box, in readiness for the next Dispatch.

"All the Bye Bills must be kept by the Receivers till the Voucher is completed and then, on Saturday Morning, they will enclose them in the Voucher which they will securely seal with Wax and their Office Seal, and deliver it to the Principal Letter Carrier to be sent in the London Bag."

Dead Letters

In October 1810, Johnson reported that, in an effort to widen the know-ledge of the bye posts among the public, he had "of late adopted... Bye Letter Regulations for dead letters, in the room of that which describes the general regulations of the Twopenny Post Office".

These new regulations were spelt out as Instruction 5 to the letter

carriers:

"Missent Letters from London, whether General or Two-Penny Post, if intended for the same Ride, must be transmitted to their proper district in the Bye Bags also, as the most speedy means of correcting the error."

It appears strange Johnson should think that speeding up delivery of a few of the missent letters should materially encourage the public to use the bye post. As it was, redirected letters, even if for the same ride, had to be sent to London as there was a redirection charge. Certainly, the accounting procedures necessary for all the missent letters were remarkably complicated:

"When any Bye Letters come missent in the Bye Bags, they must be brought to account in the Voucher and the Total Bill, the same as if not missent. The Letter Carrier will endorse them 'Missent to' &c. &c. and will then enter them and the Postage distinctly in his Return Bill, for instance, thus, '1 Missent Letter forwarded to Clapham, 3d' '1 Ditto to Tooting, 3d'. He will then return them to the Office Keeper, who will forward them to their proper districts by the next Bye Post. They must not be entered in the Voucher upon being sent off again, as they have already been fully accounted for, nor must they be entered in the Letter Bill which goes with them, except as a Memorandum at the foot of the Bill, thus, 'Two Missent 6d'.

"When Letters which have been previously missent in the Bye Bags arrive at the Office to which they properly belong, they must not be entered either in the Voucher or the Total Bill, as they have already been entered and accounted for at the Office they had been missent to, but they must be delivered to the Principal Letter Carrier without any account, as he will be charged with them from the Return Bill before-mentioned. In short, from the entry in the Return Bill, they are allowed to the one Letter Carrier, and charged to the other in their Accounts for the next payment."

The letters from London which were missent but could be forwarded to their correct destination on the same ride were also accounted for in the letter carriers' return bills:

"The Letter Carrier to whom they are missent will take credit from them in his Return bill, and the Office Keeper will enter a Memorandum of them in the Bye Bill going with them, but they must not be charged in that Bill nor the Voucher."

Special stamp

Most of the stamps used in conjunction with the bye post have been described, but there was one stamp which was issued only to certain sorting offices near to London (Fig 7).

These offices served districts which were partly in the Town and partly in the Country areas, and so had additional dispatches to London (as Town offices) after the last collection at Country offices. Letters posted after the last bye post collection (4.30pm) could be sent to Town and there would be dealt with as "Town to Country" letters.

Put in after 2 pt 4

Fig 7

The last collection in Town for the first delivery in the Country the next morning was 5.00pm. Letters for this delivery were put into bags which were dropped by the mail coaches (which left London at 8.00pm) at various strategic points along the main roads through the Country area.

The stamp shown in Fig 7 would have been needed to show why a letter written on one day did not arrive until the next. As yet, no example of this stamp has been recorded in use. By sending the letter on this more circuitous route it could, in fact, be delivered earlier. If it were kept at the sorting office until the next bye post dispatch, it would not be delivered until noon the next day, instead of in the morning.



CHAPTER 5

EXTENDING THE BYE POSTS

Until the 1830s, there were very few alterations to the original bye post system which Johnson had set up. Initially, the scheme was more than satisfactory, but during the 1820s, at a time when minor modifications would have enabled the system to keep pace with the expansion of the London suburban population, little or nothing was done, partly because Johnson was not 100 per cent fit, but mainly because the government of the day saw the Post Office purely as a source of revenue; its function as a service to the public was little considered.

Some minor alterations were made by Johnson but when he died, at the beginning of 1829, his position as Comptroller was taken over by Thomas Musgrave, a man who seems to have done little at all for the service and appears to have antagonised Freeling from the start.

Musgrave left a lot to his subordinates and it was fortunate that at this time one of the principal clerks under him was Robert Smith. Smith had the organisational abilities and energies that Johnson had possessed 30 years before, and Freeling soon recognised Smith's potential.

A change of government in 1830 lifted a dead hand from the Post Office and, as Earl Grey steered his great Reform Bill through parliament, Lord Althorp at the Treasury and the Duke of Richmond as Post Master General set about improving the service offered by the Post Office.

Eventually, in 1834, Freeling was able to get rid of Musgrave - who was moved sideways to become postmaster of Bath - and Smith took over the running of the Twopenny Post under the new title, Superintending President. In effect, however, Smith had been doing all the organisation work from about 1830. It was he who put into effect the policies laid down by Richmond and Freeling, the most important of which was the extension of the Country boundary of the Twopenny Post from 10 to 12 miles from the chief office.

The effect of this extension on the bye posts will be described in Chapters 6 and 7, but before then, there were a number of minor changes.

Hampton extension

In October 1830, Smith started to produce a series of proposals for improving the Twopenny Post system. His suggestions had to be approved by Musgrave but, as Freeling was invariably enthusiastic about Smith's plans, Musgrave seems to have done little more than rubberstamp the proposals when they crossed his desk.

Smith's first plan covered the Hampton extension to the Richmond ride. He adopted a fairly standard method of presenting his proposals starting with a statement of how the system operated at the time, and then how he felt he could improve things.

The bags for Twickenham, Hampton and Hampton Court, said Smith, "are at present conveyed from London by the Richmond Rider to the Sorting Office at Richmond where the Twickenham and Hampton Charge Takers attend to receive them... These Charge Takers then proceed to the Sorting Office at Twickenham...where the other Twickenham Letter Carrier is in attendance... The Hampton Letter Carrier proceeds on to the second office at Twickenham to meet the Teddington Letter Carrier & give him his Letters... At this place the Hampton Man takes his Horse, for which he is allowed £1 1° - per Week & proceeds on to Hampton with the Letters for that place & Sunbury & the Hampton Court Bag where the Charge Taker for the latter place is in waiting & also the Hampton assistant... The Hampton Charge Taker proceeds with his Horse to Sunbury to deliver the Letters there... He cannot finish the whole of the delivery, he having for some years paid a Man to deliver the Letters at Upp: Sunbury."

Smith pointed out he thought this practice "irregular". He also gave the times for the completion of the noon delivery as:

"At Twickenham & Teddington it is about 45 Minutes after 1 o'clock & some times 2 o'clock, at Hampton from 15 to 30 Minutes after 2 o'clock and at Hampton Court & Sunbury about 30 to 45 Minutes after 2 o'clock."

Smith's proposal was:

"a Branch Rider should be dispatched from Richmond to convey Bags to Twickenham & Hampton (it could not be done by the Rider who conveys the Bags from London to Richmond, the distance being too great)... the time occupied in changing the Saddle Bags from one Horse to the other...need not occupy more than 3 Minutes... The Branch Rider would arrive at the second office at Twickenham (which must then be made the Sorting Office) by 40 Minutes past 11 o'clock and at Hampton by 12 o'clock or 4 Minutes after, the distance from the Richmond Office to the Hampton Office being... 4½ Miles. The deliveries will be completed in the Teddington & Twickenham Districts more than 30 Minutes earlier and the Hampton and Hampton Court Districts nearly 1 Hour... The afternoon dispatch...may be extended 15 Minutes and the Morning dispatch still further time may be given."

Smith then went into the costings for the extended service:

"The distance to be contracted for...is 9 Miles per day, this at 8½d per Mile will amount to £99 9° per Ann...It will also be necessary to establish Bye Posts at Twickenham & Hampton, the allowance for which to each office will be £5 per ann and as it is proposed to abolish the Horse at present allowed to the Hampton Letter Carrier it will be necessary to allow 6°/- per week for an extra Man to bring the afternoon Collection from Sunbury to Hampton as the Sunbury Letter Carrier will not be able to finish the delivery at Upper Sunbury in time to collect at Lower Sunbury."

In order to show the need to improve the service, Smith stated the

number of letters going to and coming from the various places. In one week 944 letters were sent to Twickenham and 768 came from that town; 599 went to Hampton and 527 were dispatched from there; and at Hampton Court, 605 letters were received and 554 sent, making a total of nearly 4,000 letters in a week.

Smith's plan to establish bye post sorting offices at Twickenham and Hampton in 1830 is the first reference found so far to bye posts for those towns. A dated stamp of the Fig 2 type, exclusively used in country bye post sorting offices, is known for Hampton over the period 1812-1819 (Fig 8).

Further research is required to discover if Hampton were included in the bye post system for a short time in the second decade of the 19th century, or if the issuing of a country sorting office stamp to the town were an error.



Fig 8

Hendon branch

The next country ride Smith looked at was that to Finchley, on which he reported in May 1831.

Once again, Smith explained the system as it then existed:

"The fixed time for the departure of the Rider in the morning from the Gen¹ Post Office is 50 minutes after 9 o'clock, & he should arrive at Islington by 2 minutes after 10 o'clock & leave the Islington & Holloway Bags; he then proceeds to the Office in Clarendon Sq & delivers the Somers Town Bag. From there he goes to Camden Town & leaves the Bag for that place & also the Hampstead Bag...He proceeds from thence to Highgate & leaves a Bag...He goes direct from there to Finchley, where he should arrive at 6 minutes after 11 o'clock, & delivers the Hendon & Finchley Bags; the whole distance is 10½ miles."

The bag for Holloway, having been left at Islington, was prepared for delivery at the Islington office by the Holloway charge taker and one of the assistants and then taken 1½ miles to the Holloway office, where the other letter carrier was waiting, before delivery started.

"The Hampstead Bag," said Smith, "is left at Camden Town where one of the Hampstead Letter Carriers is in attendance to convey it to the Sorting Office at Hampstead. The distance is about 1 miles & 3 quarters and...it is generally...% past 11 o'clock before the Letters (sic) have prepared them for delivery...The present sorting office is nearly at the commencement of Hampstead, & the Men that have the distant ground to deliver must be very late before they finish.

"The Finchley Sorting Office is about 1 Mile and a half from the High Road...[at] 'Church End'. At

this office, the Letter Carriers for Finchley, Hendon, Highwood & Mill Hills, Totteridge, Whetstone, East Barnet & Friern Barnet all meet."

Smith pointed out that as some of these letter carriers had to walk "great distances", the deliveries were not completed until 1.30 or 2.00pm.

Smith proposed the ride should be divided in two. "The new Rider," he said would:

"proceed direct to Somers Town, Camden Town, Hampstead & Hendon & the present Rider to Islington, Holloway, Highgate, Finchley Common & Whetstone.

"I calculate by the Rider going the nearest route to Somers Town through West Smithfield &c that nearly ½ a mile will be saved.

"The present Sorting Office for Hampstead is quite at the commencement of the village. I should propose to remove it to the North Office which is in the center, by this alteration & conveying the Bag by a Rider, I shd calculate that the deliveries may be completed 3 quarters of an hour earlier.

"At Hendon the advantage would also be very considerable, the deliveries may be made full 30 minutes earlier, and the time for putting in Letters may be extended 45 minutes both in the morning and the afternoon. 15 minutes may also be given at Mill Hill."

He then explained that if the original rider went through Holloway instead of Camden Town, the Holloway bag could be dropped there rather than at Islington, saving nearly 30 minutes on delivery times.

At the end of the ride, Smith looked at the position of the Finchley sorting office:

"I have already stated that the Sorting Office at Finchley is out of the High Road. I propose that this should be a Receiving House only, and that the Sorting Office should be in the High Road. We have already got a Receiving House on the Common, but should this arrangement take place the situation is not sufficiently centrical, besides, it is at an Inn, which is very objectionable for Letter Carriers to meet at. I have noticed a very respectable Shop on the Road which would make a very good office."

Later, it was agreed that Charles Jaques, oil and colourman of Finchley, should be the receiver in place of a Mr Grayson, and Mr Jaques' salary should be £12 a year.

Smith continued with his proposals:

"The Rider would proceed to Whetstone, for which place a Bag must be made up & a Sorting Office established. All Letters for Whetstone, Totteridge, East Barnet, Friern Barnet & Colney Hatch would be sent in this Bag."

This, said Smith, would be a great saving in time:

"I calculate that the distance from the Gen¹ Post
Office to Whetstone is not greater than the present
office at Finchley, consequently the Rider would

arrive there about 11 o'clock, or a few minutes after, which is the time he now gets to Finchley...the Letter Carriers instead of having to Walk 2 or 3 miles before they begin their deliveries will be almost in the center of them, and...the deliveries would be completed 3 quarters of an Hour earlier...3 deliveries may be given to Whetstone and the principal part of Totteridge and that part of East Barnet where Sir S. Clark resides can have one delivery."

Once again, Smith was troubled by a receiving office in an inn. Since 1828, there had been a policy of trying to avoid the use of public houses as receiving houses in the Twopenny Post. Smith felt that if a sorting office were to be established at Whetstone, then the office

would have to be moved.

"It is at an Inn, and I have before observed that it is very objectionable to have the Letter Carriers meet at these places."

A few days later, Mr Matthews, a baker, was appointed at £14 a year

to take over as receiver at Whetstone from a Mr Fordham.

Smith calculated that the cost of the rider to Hendon would be £176 16s per annum on the basis that the distance was 8 miles (16 miles a day) at 8½d a mile, the standard rate at that time.

Smith also proposed to abolish the bye post on the Finchley and Hendon rides, mainly because of changes nearer London which had occurred in 1829 but, while no bye post was established on the new Hendon branch until 1837, a bye post was, apparently, retained on the Finchley ride.

In 1829, the chief offices of both the London Twopenny Post and the General Post moved from Lombard Street to St Martin's-le-Grand. This move of about ½ mile north west brought the chief office so much closer to places such as Islington it was difficult to class them as "Country"

and thus charge the higher rate of postage.

Somers Town, Islington and Camden Town were, therefore, taken into the Town area and besides benefitting from a reduction in postal charges, they also had more deliveries - four instead of three. Other villages were also included in the Town area very soon afterwards - Kingsland, Dalston, Hackney, Kennington, Newington Butts, Walworth, Vauxhall and Kent Road as far as Albany Road - the changes being formalised in 1831 by defining the Town area as within a circle of three miles radius centred on the chief office.

With the increase in the number of deliveries and changes in postal rates, it was decided that the bye posts could not be maintained between these places and other villages on the same rides. The variation in rates would cause confusion for the receivers. For example, a letter from Islington to Camden Town by bye post would have been charged 3d, but, as two places within the Town area, the charge should have been

only 2d.

Over the next couple of years, the facility of four deliveries a day was extended to a number of other places, such as Chelsea, Knights-bridge, Brompton, Kensington and Paddington, but these remained part of the Country area and also part of the bye post system. However, two places which were transferred to the Town area in 1831 - thereby losing the bye post - were Camberwell and South Lambeth.

Sydenham ride

Smith continued his series of surveys of the Country rides during 1831 and ensured suitable improvements were suggested to the PMG along the bureaucratic chain of command, which went through Musgrave and Freeling.

In August 1831, Smith reported on a survey he had made of the Sydenham area, which seems to have been poorly served, and said:

"There is not any part of this place that has more than 2 deliveries per Day & Forest Hill and some parts of the Common only one, and the more distant parts of the district not any.

"The reason that Sydenham does not get an early morning delivery is that it is out of the line of route of the Mail, the nearest point whence it passes is South End, which is 2 Miles from Sydenham."

Smith was here referring to the fact that, since 1794, the evening mail coaches had been used by the local London post to take bags of mail from the last collection made in Town to the outer suburbs for delivery first thing the next morning. South End, Lewisham, was on the Hastings road and, while not used as a bag drop for Sydenham on a daily basis, it was used for a drop on Saturday night, so that Sydenham, like all the rest of the Country area, could have an early morning delivery on Sunday – the only delivery on that day.

Smith reported that the lack of a morning delivery was not complained of by the inhabitants, who were "satisfied with the two deliveries," he said, adding:

"It is only those persons that reside where there is only one delivery and those where they do not have any that complain and I must add with some degree of justice."

Smith accomplished the necessary additional deliveries with the appointment of an auxiliary assistant letter carrier at 12s a week.

Beyond Sydenham was Beckenham. Here Smith could see no other way of providing a second delivery except by extending the ride.

"At present, the Letters are left at the Sydenham Post Office where the Beckenham Letter Carrier attends for them. The distance from Sydenham to Beckenham is full 2 Miles and a quarter. The Rider generally arrives at Sydenham about 10 minutes before 11 o'clock & the delivery begins at Beckenham a little before 12 o'clock.

"The delivery...includes Penge Common and Clay Hill, the latter is but a short distance from Bromley.

"Should a second delivery be made at Beckenham it of course must be the night delivery. The Riders gets to Sydenham about 15 Minutes after 5 o'clock. By employing an extra Man there is no doubt but he might proceed to Beckenham to make the delivery, and at this season of the year [Smith was writing in August] it may be done without any difficulty but I should not think it would be proper, or safe, in Winter, the distance...is more than 2 Miles and part over a very lonesome road, he could not arrive at

Beckenham to commence the delivery till ½ past 6 o'clock and it would be 8 o'clock or later before he could finish."

Smith then pointed out that by extending the ride to Beckenham, the rider:

"wd arrive there considerably earlier than the Letter Carrier does, secondly the Letter Carrier would be on the spot to commence the delivery and the walking to and from Beckenham to Sydenham would be saved, the latter would be considerable relief and enable the Letter Carrier to make the second delivery."

The additional riding work would, according to Smith, involve 4% miles a day and would cost £49 14s 6d based on the rate of 8%d per mile per day for 312 days a year (not Sundays).

It would also be necessary to pay the Beckenham receiver £5 a year for bye post duties, and 3s a week to the letter carrier as charge taker.

Freeling recommended the plan to the PMG but had reservations about the cost. He said:

"It is our duty to grant our facilities and accommodation without incurring any unreasonable or disproportionate expence to the Revenue. I conceive that the addition of 2 or 3 miles to a ride of 9 or 10 miles might not necessarily require the same expence to the Contractor which would be incurred by a new establishment and that the duty might be performed with little, if any addition to his present materials."

With this in mind, Freeling proposed:

"That the Contractor (who could afford with that sum to keep another horse) should be first asked whether he would not undertake the increased distance for a less sum, probably £30 per Ann."

Smith put this proposal to the contractor, who agreed with the lower figure, much to Freeling's pleasure:

"I am glad to see...that I was not mistaken in my hope that the Contractor...might be induced to perform the proposed extension to Beckenham for about £30 instead of £49 per annum."

And he reiterated his homily against extravagance:

"It is our duty in all cases to get the Public Service done as economically as possible consistently with a punctual performance of it."

The operation of the Beckenham extension at the new rate of 5d a mile (against 8½d a mile for new rides) also established an important principle which was applied to all subsequent extensions — including the major expansion of the rides with the 1833 Country area boundary changes.

The new rate was paid for the next extension - to the Edmonton ride - in January 1832.

Edmonton ride

The next area which needed improved services, according to Smith, was Edmonton and Enfield. Before preparing his report and proposals, Smith accompanied the letters carriers over the various walks:

"not only to satisfy myself of their extent, and the time necessary for the completion of the delivery, but to see if the division of the Walks was well defined, and if I could by any alteration improve them without making it necessary to apply to his Grace the Postmaster General for further relief. The result has satisfied me that nothing but an entire new arrangement will be able to effect the object in view."

Following his usual approach, Smith first outlined the system as it was before making his proposal:

"These Districts are very extensive. They commence near the 6 Miles [mark] on the Hertford Road and extend to the 11 Miles Stone near Waltham Cross. They include Upper & Lower Edmonton, Ponders End, Enfield, Bulls Cross, Winchmore Hill, Southgate &c &c, in the whole making a circumference of about 18 miles. There are 6 Letter Carriers and an auxiliary assistant for the whole ground. Edmonton & Enfield, generally, have 3 deliveries a day, Winchmore Hill & Southgate two, other parts one, and the more distant parts not any, which is the case with Bulls Cross."

The noon, or General Post, delivery finished at Edmonton and Enfield about 2.00pm, according to Smith, while at Southgate, it was 2.15pm and at Winchmore Hill, between 2.30 and 2.45pm. Smith added:

"It requires very great exertions on the part of the Letter Carriers to finish by the time I have named. These Men have then to Collect at 4 o'clock and take their Collections to the Sorting Office at Edmonton, a distance to the Winchmore Hill & Southgate men of upwards of 3 Miles; they have then to wait at Edmonton for the Letters for the night delivery, which cannot be finished till 8 o'clock & some times later."

The position of the sorting office, which covered the whole area, was part of the problem. Smith described it as being "nearly at the extremity of Lower Edmonton".

He pointed out:

"Here the delivery for Edmonton begins so that Upper Edmonton which is nearest London and the most populos (sic) is delivered last.

"The distance from the Office at Lower Edmonton to Enfield is about 2 Miles & 3 quarters; it is true that the Enfield Letter Carrier is allowed a Horse to convey the Letters to and from these places, but the allowance is so small (only *13/- per Week) that he cannot keep one strong enough to do all the work; the consequence is that he only uses him to bring the Letters from Enfield in the afternoon and to

take them back & he proceeds on foot at the noon delivery."

Smith's solution to the problem was to move the sorting office at Edmonton, extend the Twopenny Post Ride to Enfield, set up a new sorting office there, and to abolish the allowance for the horse for the Enfield letter carrier.

"By the removal of the Edmonton Sorting Office to the centre of the Village and establishing another Letter Carrier, a new division of the Walks could be made by which means one Letter Carrier would be enabled to clear the ground to the right and the other to the left of the Office, and the Village would be served 1 Hour earlier than at present, a second delivery may also be extended to Nightingale Hall & Edmonton Marsh, where there are several Houses and some Wharfs, these places altho' within a quarter of a Mile of Edmonton have but one delivery a day of which the Inhabitants complain sadly."

In addition, Smith pointed out, Southgate would be served half an hour earlier, and Winchmore Hill, about an hour earlier. The extension of the ride to Enfield would speed things up there as well so that the noon delivery would be completed 30 or 40 minutes sooner.

"By the Letter Carrier being relieved from walking from Edmonton, he may extend the delivery to Bulls Cross and serve it once a day," said Smith.

As far as the cost of the new scheme was concerned, Smith said:

"The additional distance if contracted for by
Mileage would be 5 miles & 3 quarters per day. This
would amount to about £63 per annum but the
contractor will consent (on the principal laid down
in the case of Beckenham when it is only an
extension of the Ride) to perform it for £45 per
annum. From this may be deducted the present
allowance of 13/- a week or £33 16 per ann to the
Enfield Letter Carrier for the Horse, so that the
additional charge for this part of the service will
only be £11..4.. per ann to which must be added £52
for an additional Letter Carrier to Edmonton, and £5
for the Bye Post at Enfield, making the total
increase £68..4 per ann.

"An account has been kept of the number of Letters & Newspapers going to these places in 1 Week and they amount to 1,034 to Edmonton & 1,009 to Enfield, of course the number of Letters from these places will be on the same proportion."

Freeling's covering letter, which went with Smith's report to the PMG, again emphasised the point that the extension to the ride was being paid for at a lower rate than for new rides. He ended his letter:

"When I recollect that the number of Letters to the places to be benefitted may be calculated in & out at 4,300 per week, I cannot but consider it to be our duty to extend the exisiting accommodation whether there was or was not a prospect of increasing the Revenue of which I have no doubt."



CHAPTER 6

THE 12 MILE CIRCLE

At the end of 1833 came the biggest single expansion of the whole Two-penny Post system with the decision to include all towns and villages within 12 miles of the chief office as part of the Country area of the Twopenny Post.

The extension brought 23 General Post receiving houses within London. Two new receiving houses were opened at the same time. Four of the Twopenny Post rides were extended, and another four branch rides were created.

Seven of the receiving houses taken into the Twopenny Post area were made sorting offices. Another two sorting offices were created at receiving houses in Eltham and Carshalton, which had been part of the London local post for many years. However, only Eltham was made a bye post office at this time. It was not until 1837 that the other offices were served by the bye posts.

It is thus necessary to look at the extension to the 12 mile circle as being in two phases: the extension of the rides to the outer suburbs and the extension of the bye posts to these towns.

First, the rides. As had been decided with the Sydenham to Beckenham extension in 1831, two rates of payment were agreed with the contractor for the new and extended rides: 5d per mile for a simple extension and 8d per mile for the new branch rides, a slightly lower rate than the 8½d paid for earlier rides.

There was an exception to this rule: the extension from Brentford to Hounslow was contracted for at a rate of 8d a mile "because it was a Mail Cart & attended with greater expense."

The total mileage contracted for at 5d was 20 miles, with a further 50 miles at 8d, which meant in riding work alone, the expansion of the Twopenny Post cost £671 12s 11d a year. (This figure, quoted by Smith, appears to have been calculated on 315 working days a year - excluding Sundays - and not 312 as previously.)

Other increased costs included 11 regular letter carriers, who were all paid £1 a week, but of whom seven were charge takers and therefore were paid an extra 3s a week, making an annual cost of £626 12s. The 17 auxiliary assistants were employed at various rates of pay between 6s and 12s a week and cost £395 4s a year in total.

Additional payments for the receiving houses totalled £193 a year, making the total cost of the extension £1,886 8s 11d a year.

The proposals for payments to the receivers were made by Smith in March 1834, after the new system had been working for some time:

"In calculating the allowance to be paid to each Office, I have in the first place been guided by the number of Letters posted, secondly by the number of dispatches, thirdly the accommodation afforded to the Letter Carriers at the Sorting Offices, & lastly for any extra trouble in Assistance the Deputies have been called upon to perform by delivering letters at some of the distant Houses, or by taking charge of Letters for persons living beyond the line

of the Circle & from other causes by which the duties of the $\mathsf{Dep^v}$, or Office Keeper, have been much increased."

However, Smith observed:

"all the Offices (with the exception of Eltham & Carshalton) are held by Deputy Postmasters, or are Receivers under them, consequently the Salaries I have to propose will be in addition to what they now receive from the General Post Office."

Bexley branch

A branch ride was set up on the Woolwich ride which left the main route at Blackheath and went through Eltham to Bexley. The Eltham receiving house, at this time run by Lawrence Pike, had always been part of the local London post but, as part of the new branch ride, it became a sorting office and a bye post office. Smith proposed an increase in salary of £5 a year.

At Bexley, another sorting office was establised. Smith said:

"Room is provided for the Letter Carriers to prepare
the Letters for delivery. Bags are dispatched twice
a day, but the Letters posted are not numerous."

Smith recommended a salary of £12 a year. Three receiving houses were served from the Bexley sorting office: the two new offices of Welling and Erith, and the previously established receiving house at Bexleyheath. The ride from Blackheath to Bexley was one of the longest of the new branches - 16 miles a day additional riding work at 8d a mile.

Bromley extension

The extension from Beckenham to Bromley was only 4 miles and was paid for at the 5d rate. The new sorting office was at Bromley and Smith proposed a salary of £20 a year as:

"The number of Letters posted at this Office are very considerable, the Deputy is also required to provide a room for the Letter Carriers to perform their duty, the Bags are dispatched twice a day & the applications [for letters] at the Office very considerable."

Foots Cray, Chislehurst and Hayes were all receiving houses served by Bromley.

Hounslow extension

As the Brentford ride was served by a mail cart, the extension to Hounslow, which involved an extra 5 miles a day, was paid for at the rate of 8d a mile.

The Hounslow office, a new sorting office, was described by Smith: "Bags are dispatched twice a day, the $\mathsf{Dep}^{\mathsf{v}}$ provides a Room for the Letter Carriers & the duty is much increased from the applications at the Office. The

Letters posted are not so numerous as at some of the other Offices."

As a result, Smith proposed an addition to the deputy's salary of only £18 a year. This office also served Heston, Norwood Green and Southall.

Kingston branch

A branch ride to Kingston was set up from Wandsworth on the Hampton ride and this meant an additional 12 miles a day riding work at 8d a mile. The salary at Kingston was raised by £20, as the duty was similar to that at Bromley and "has considerably increased from applications".

Edgware extension

The Hendon ride was extended to Edgware, adding 7 miles a day at 5d a mile. The deputy at Edgware, where a new sorting office was established, was paid £15 a year more. Smith said:

"There are 2 dispatches from this Office every day. A Room is provided for the Letter Carriers & the Dep' sends the Letters to Redhill & Orange Hill daily, which enables the Stanmore Letter Carrier to deliver his Letters 1 Hour earlier. The Letters at this Office are not numerous."

Two other receiving houses were served from Edgware: Stanmore and Elstree.

Barnet extension

The extension of the Whetstone ride to Barnet was quite short and only added 4 miles riding work each day (at 5d a mile). As with the other new sorting offices, there were two dispatches a day from Barnet and the deputy had to provide a room for the letter carriers to sort the delivery.

"The Letters are numerous," said Smith, "& the additional trouble from enquiries &c is considerable."

On that basis, Smith recommended an increase in salary of £20 a year. Potters Bar was also added to the ride under Barnet.

Enfield ride

The Enfield ride, which had only recently been extended from Edmonton, was not lengthened any further, but receiving houses in Waltham Cross and Waltham Abbey were included in London for the first time.

Romford branch

In east London, a 16 mile branch ride was created on the Woodford ride, leaving the road at Stratford and serving receiving houses at Rainham and Dagenham, and a new sorting office at the end of the branch at Romford. Smith said the letters posted here were not as numerous as at Kingston or Bromley, so a salary of £15 was proposed.

Carshalton branch

Finally, a short branch ride — of 6 miles (at 8d a mile) — was established on the Croydon ride, leaving at Mitcham and running down to Carshalton where there had been a Twopenny Post receiving house for some time. Sorting office duties were established there to serve two receiving houses brought into the district by the extension — Sutton and Cheam — as well as to handle letters for Malden, which went via Sutton. The receiver at Carshalton was paid £2 a year for the extra duties.

The establishment of a sorting office at Carshalton affected the main Croydon ride, which at this time still finished at Waddon. A small alteration was, therefore, made to the Croydon ride a few years later as

Smith described in his report to Freeling of June 1835:

"The present Sorting Office for the Croydon district is at Waddon, about ½ a Mile from the Town. When Carshalton was attached to Croydon it was considered a central situation for the Letter Carriers to meet at, but by the improvements that followed from the 12 Mile Circle, Carshalton was separated from Croydon and a Ride now goes direct to it, consequently the necessity of keeping the Sorting Office at Waddon is done away with.

"By Waddon being the Sorting Station all letters posted at Croydon or to be delivered there must be carried to and fetched from Waddon, much time is therefore lost in going and coming as well as the labors of the Letter Carriers being unnecessarily

increased.

"By removing the Office to Croydon, the distance for the Ride will not be increased and as the Letter Carriers of the district can attend to assist in preparing the letters for delivery, I calculate that the deliveries will be accelerated about 15 or 20 minutes in addition to which the letters may be posted at Croydon 15 Minutes later both in the morning and afternoon and at the Receiving Houses at Croydon Common and Thornton Heath, the time may be extended 30 Minutes.

"Although I propose to remove the Sorting Office from Waddon, it will be right to let the Receiving Box remain, the letters posted here are very limited but the public have long had the benefit of the Office and it might cause dissatisfaction to deprive them of it."

The inhabitants of Waddon were going to have a reduced service in any case, because it was necessary to close the office 15 minutes earlier, Smith said, to allow time for the collection to be taken to Croydon.

However, Smith quoted the number of letters posted at the various offices in the district in one week as Croydon 814, Croydon Common 27,

Thornton Heath 40, and Waddon 30.

"It will be seen that nearly 900 letters are posted at the Offices to which I propose to extend the time & only 30 at the Office at which the time is to be

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curtailed.

"With reference to the small saving in Revenue, f8 is at present allowed to the Thornton Heath Receiver for conveying the Collection to Waddon in the morning and afternoon, I shall not be able to dispense with this Service in the morning, but the alteration will enable the Letter Carrier to do the duty in the afternoon, the allowance to the Receiver may be reduced by half."

NOTICE

SINCE the Consolidation several Receivers having taken the General Post Rates on Letters addressed to the following Post Towns and Places:—

Earnet
Bexley
Bromley, Kent
Carshalton
Cheam
Chiselhurst
Crayford
Croydon
Dagenham
Edgeware
Elstree

Erith
Foots Cray
Greenford
Hadley
Hayes, Kent
Hounslew
Kingston
Locks Bottom
Malden, Surry
North Cray
Norwood

Potters Bar Rainham Romford Sidcup Southall Stanmore St. Mary Cray St. Paul's Cray Sutton Waltham Abbey Waltham Cross

They are informed that these Places, being within the limits of the Twopenny Post, Letters addressed to them must be sent to this Office, and be charged with the Threepenny Post Rate only.

Letters are sometimes addressed to Places near these Post Towns which are beyond the limits of this Office, in such cases, the Receivers have only to refer to the List of Places in the Country Delivery of the Twopenny Post, and if they do not find them there, they may conclude they are in the General Post Delivery, and take the Rates accordingly.

R. SMITH,

Superintending President.

Twopenny Post-Office, December, 1838.

[Courtesy of Post Office Archives]



but several also general

BYE POSTS OF 1837

The extension of the Twopenny Post boundary to the 12 mile circle was allowed to settle down before the system was complicated by the addition

of local posts.

Towards the end of 1834, Freeling and Smith started planning a series of cross posts to allow provincial letters brought by the mail coaches to be delivered earlier on the Twopenny Post rides which coincided with the coach routes. By May 1836, five such cross posts had been set up (see Chapter 10).

Then, in the summer of 1836, Freeling, who had not been a well man

for some while, died and was succeeded by Col William Maberly.

It was not until December 1836 that plans were formulated to extend

the bye posts to the outer areas of the Country district.

Once again, the changes were made as a result of a suggestion from a member of the public, just as Ommanney had put forward the idea of the original bye post in 1809.

This time it was a resident of Beckenham, William Whitmore, who

wrote:

"The Twopenny Post passes and repasses through this place twice a day to & from Bromley, shortly after its extension to which I made an application to the late Sir Francis Freeling, that it might be allowed to carry letters between the two places.

"To this application I received an answer dated 17 March 1834, stating that the expediency of establishing cross posts in the Twopenny Post districts could not be taken into consideration until the then recent arrangements connected with the extension of the Twopenny Post to a circle of twelve Miles round London had been a sufficient time in operation to familiarise the details of the measure.

"It would be a great convenience that this privilege should exist to which end, should it be necessary, I shall have no difficulty in obtaining the signatures of the neighbourhood generally."

Maberly reported to the Earl of Lichfield, the PMG:

"When the Boundary was enlarged it was not thought advisable to establish [bye posts] at the Places which had hitherto been excluded until it could be seen how the Plan would work. It has now been in operation for some time & has fully answered all the expectations which were made of it, & there seems no reason that Posts should not now be universally adopted within the limits of the Twopenny Posts."

Smith had told Maberly:

"In returning Mr Whitmore's application I beg to say that a Bye Post communication may be established between Bromley and Beckenham & the other Villages on this line of road; at the same time I am satisfied

the Board will not consent to give the accommodation on this route (where the correspondence is comparatively small) without extending it to other points, and including all the Post Towns and districts that have been brought within the limits of this Office by the 12 Mile Circle. I therefore consider it my duty to take a comprehensive view of the question and bring the whole subject under the notice of the Board.

"Previous to the extension... Bye Posts were established in all the Country districts, except Hampstead & Hendon, and when an additional Ride was put on it was not thought necessary to open a Bye Post communication between these two places, because the correspondence was so limited at Hendon, but now this Ride is extended to Edgware & includes Stanmore it is of much more importance and should be included in the arrangement.

"The first point to be shewn is the advantage of a Bye Post and I will take the Bromley Ride as a case as the same remarks will apply to all the others. Between Bromley and the Three Mile Circle there are three Villages, viz: Beckenham, Sydenham & Dulwich; by the present regulation a letter posted at Bromley for either of these places must be brought to the London office & carried back again, so that a letter posted at Bromley for Beckenham before 9 o'clock AM, the distance being only 2 Miles, is not delivered till the Evening; by the Establishment of a Bye Post it may be delivered within 2 or 3 Hours after being posted. I have already remarked that the correspondence of this Road is limited, but looking at Kingston, the advantages will be considerable for here a Bye Bag will open a communication between Hampton Court, Hampton, Sunbury, Twickenham, Richmond, Mortlake, Putney, Wimbledon, Wandsworth & & & , so that a letter passing between any of these places and Kingston may be accelerated from 7 to 10 Hours in its delivery."

He went on to list the post towns and districts to be made bye post offices:

"Bexley (which includes all the Crays, Welling & c), Bromley, Carshalton (which includes Sutton & Cheam), Kingston, Hounslow, Barnet, Romford, Edgware (which includes Stanmore), Hendon, Hampstead.

"By establishing Bye Offices at these places, direct communication will be opened with all the places on the lines of route between them and London," Smith said.

In an appendix to his report, Smith listed all these places (Table 1).

"By the above statement, the Board will see that 10
additional Bye Offices must be opened and as the
fixed allowance to a Letter Receiver for the Bye

Post duties is £5 $p^{\rm r}$ annum, it will, should the increase be approved of, cause an additional charge

on the Revenue of £50 pr annum.

"There are two other Post Towns that I have not included in this statement, viz Southall and Waltham Cross, I can however in these cases arrange for Bye Post communication by attaching the first to the present Brentford Bye Post Office and the latter to the Enfield."

Smith's final point was:

"This arrangement...cannot be carried into effect till early in the ensuing year for Bye Forms and Stamps must be prepared and each Bye Post Office will require to be instructed in their duties."

The PMG noted: "This will be an excellent arrangement & afford much

accommodation."

It would appear that the extended bye posts came into operation in February 1837.

Table 1

Bye post office	Places on ride with direct communication
Bexley	Eltham, Woolwich, Blackheath, Lee, Lewisham, Deptford, New Cross & Peckham
Bromley	Beckenham, Sydenham & Dulwich
Carshalton	Croydon, Mitcham, Morden, Merton, Tooting, Streatham, Brixton, Clapham & Stockwell
Kingston	Hampton Court, Hampton, Sunbury, Twickenham, Teddington, Richmond, Petersham, Mortlake, Barnes, Roehampton, Wimbledon, Putney & Wandsworth
Hounslow	Brentford, Isleworth, Hanwell, Ealing, Acton, Chiswick, Hammersmith, Kensington, Chelsea & Brompton
Barnet	Whetstone, Totteridge, Finchley & Highgate
Romford	Ilford, Barking, Chigwell, Woodford, Walthamstow, Leytonstone, Stratford & Bow
Edgware	Hendon & Hampstead



RIDES WITHOUT BYE POSTS

Despite the extension of the bye posts in 1837, there were still two rides within the Twopenny Post which did not have extensive bye posts: Harrow and Fulham.

Harrow ride

When the bye posts began in 1809/11, the Paddington ride had only one bye post office - at Paddington itself. The area covered by this office

included Kilburn, The Hyde and Willesden.

For many years, some inhabitants of Harrow had pressed for inclusion in the Twopenny Post while others had fought against the move. The opposition arose because there was no franking privilege within the London post. Those people who could send their letters free in the General Post to London would not be able to do so once Harrow became part of the Twopenny Post. Conversely, those supporting the move knew that the 3d rate within the Country area of the London post would be 1d cheaper than the General Post rate to London from Harrow.

By 1824, however, the bulk of the population of Harrow appeared to

prefer a move into London.

Johnson proposed two methods to serve the town. The first was the simple establishment of two rides each day to Harrow. The second was to have one ride in the morning, and then carry the evening dispatch by mail coach as far as The Hyde on the Edgware Road. The Harrow letter carrier would then collect the bag from The Hyde the next morning.

Freeling felt that two rides a day - which would also allow for two dispatches from Harrow - was the preferable method. Once this was decided, Johnson went on to propose that the rider should not go direct to Harrow but make a small detour in order to serve Kilburn, Willesden,

Neasden and other places in that area.

Johnson said:

"Between Paddington and these parts the Letters are carried on foot, but if they were made up in a separate bag and thus conveyed by the Ride to the Kilburn office, their delivery would be very considerably expedited and a longer interval be given for the return of answers."

He also pointed out there would be:

"the quicker departure of the Paddington Letter Carriers from their Sorting Office, the Letters of these places forming at present a part of the Paddington Charge which has now become so heavy that it occupies the Letter Carriers a long time in sorting, counting and preparing for delivery.

"The expense attending this would be the usual allowance of Three shillings per week to the Kilburn Letter Carrier for performing the Charge taking duties and Two Pounds per annum to the Receiver for finding House room for the Letter Carriers whilst sorting their letters."

The bye post was not extended, however, and Paddington remained the only bye post office on this ride, even though Kilburn had become a sorting office for letters coming from London.

Over the next six or seven years, the population of the area between Paddington and Harrow increased, although, as Smith pointed out in 1831, the increase had "certainly not kept pace with the rapid improvements in other parts of the environs of London". Even so, said Smith:

"in some parts the Inhabitants have considerably increased and they are not satisfied with the tardy accommodation afforded years back, as...no improvements have been made in these Districts since the extension of the Ride to Harrow; & then the accommodation was principally confined to that place."

Smith pointed out there were only two sorting offices on the ride: Paddington and Kilburn. The Paddington sorting office covered:

"Westbourn, Kensel & Holdsden Greens, with Wembley, they are all on the direct Road to Harrow but have only one delivery a day with the exception of Westbourn Green which is served twice a day... The Letter Carrier attends at the Paddington office for his letters, & generally leaves there for the noon delivery about 11 o'clock. The delivery commences a short distance from Paddington Church... and finishes ... at Wembley, which seldom can be done before ½ past 2 or 3 o'clock. Letters for Willsdon, Neasden, & are sorted to Kilburn, these places are served by an auxiliary assistant and have 2 deliveries pr day."

Smith at this time decided to open a new sorting office at Willesden:

"not only on account of having a Receiving House there, but because I consider it to be the centre of the District. I propose that the Willsdon Bag should include Neasden, Wembley, Holdsden Green and all other places as far as Kensel Green, but that the latter with Westbourn Green should still be attached to Paddington because they are more contiguous to it."

At the same time, Smith added the village of Apperton to the Twopenny Post, under Willesden.

Once again there was no alteration to the bye post as originally set up by Johnson in 1811 — with only Paddington acting as a bye post sorting office. The situation continued until the 1850s.

Fulham branch

Another ride which did not have its own bye post was the Fulham branch, (established in 1835), although it was linked to the Hounslow ride.

In May 1835, the Vicar of Fulham, the Rev R. G. Baker, wrote to the PMG complaining of the late delivery of his letters. He said:

"The General Post letters which reach London in the

morning are brought here by a man who walks over to Hammersmith for them, from here at a quarter before nine, and leaves them in his way back, still walking, at the different houses to which they are directed, as he passes them.

"The consequence of this arrangement is, that not only is the hour most uncertain at which each individual receives his letters, as the subjoined statement which has been accurately kept by my servant for some days past will show you; but that we are unable to procure a letter earlier or more regularly by sending to the office, as the man only

goes there after he has completed his round.

"You will probably be disposed to admit that the case which I thus venture to submit to your consideration is made even stronger by a comparison with the hours at which the letters are delivered in Putney, a greater distance from London, when a friend made the observation for me on the same days; and where, if it is wished to obtain a letter before the delivery commences, it may be had on every morning in the week except Monday, when it is somewhat later, at half past ten o'clock."

Reverend Baker also pointed out that the Fulham office closed at 8.30am and 3.30pm when the collections were made, whereas the Putney

office remained open until 9.30am and 4.30pm.

The lists of delivery times which Reverend Baker submitted showed that, over seven days in May, his deliveries were made at various times between 12.35 and 1.40pm, while his friend's deliveries in Putney were usually at 11.30am and never later than noon.

Smith reported on the problems at Fulham, having first made clear he was fully aware of the situation and having hinted that he had been prevented from proposing any changes before, presumably by Musgrave, who

had recently ceased to be Comptroller of the Twopenny Post.

Smith said:

"The cause of the present late delivery in parts of Fulham & the early dispatch of letters from it is to be accounted for by the Bag being left at a considerable distance from the most populas (sic) parts of the Parish, as none of the Rides take the route of Fulham - the Putney Bag is conveyed by the Richmond Ride & left at the Upper end of the Village, this accounts for an earlier delivery of letters at this place, but the Fulham Bag is conveyed by the Hounslow Ride & left at Hammersmith, which is more than 2 Miles from that part of Fulham that Mr Baker resides in & as the Letter Carriers do not leave the Sorting Office at Hammersmith till % before 11 o'clock, & the deliveries occupy about 2 Hours, they cannot be completed much before 1 o'clock. The letters posted at Fulham have to be conveyed to Hammersmith & as they must be there by ½ past 4 o'clock to be in time for the Ride, the Letter Boxes cannot be kept open later than 45 Minutes after 3 o'clock, which is 15 Minutes earlier than letters are dispatched from Richmond, Brentford, Enfield & Woolwich, this certainly does appear inconsistant."

In making his proposals, Smith commented:

"In every alteration I have the honor to submit for the consideration of the Post Master General, I am most careful not to propose any plan that will benefit one part of the public to the injury of another. If I was not guided by this principle, I should in this case suggest that the Fulham Bag be left at Putney instead of Hammersmith. By such an alteration Mr Baker & the Inhabitants of that part of Fulham would have their letters about 1 Hour earlier than they do at present, but the consequence would be the Letter Carriers must commence their deliveries where now they finish, and would finish where they now begin, so that the Inhabitants residing in the parts of Fulham near Hammersmith would have the same complaint to make as Mr Baker now does, beside such an arrangement would deprive them of the Bye Post on the Hounslow Ride."

To get over the problem, Smith proposed:

"to have the Fulham Bag left at Brompton instead of Hammersmith & to have it conveyed from thence to Fulham by a Horse Messenger. In this case I propose to make the Receiving House at Walham Green the Sorting Office, because I consider this to be the most central point for the Letter Carriers to start from, & I calculate...they would be able to deliver to the parts of the ground they now commence at about the time they do at present & in the other parts of Fulham the delivery would be accelerated nearly 1 Hour in addition...the time for putting in Letters both in the morning and afternoon may be extended ½ an Hour, and the present Bye Post regulation be continued."

The cost of the measure would be about £50 a year, Smith said. He highlighted the importance of Fulham by quoting the amount of revenue collected on letters delivered in the parish in the previous 12 months: £787 16s. With the charge for management of the service being £173 16s,

there was a net revenue of over £600.

Walham Green, although a sorting office for London letters, was not a bye post office and bye-letters for Fulham were dealt with at the bye post office at Brompton on the main ride.



TIMETABLES AND HANDSTAMPS

During the mid-1830s, Commissioners were appointed to inquire into the management of the Post Office Department and they published a series of reports which looked in detail at all aspects of the operation of the service. Their Ninth Report covered the Twopenny Post and, in the various appendices to that report, details of the bye posts as they were operated in 1836 can be found.

Appendix 46, for example, is a "Return of the Country Rides of the Twopenny Post-office, with the Districts and the Number of Regular Letter Carriers and Auxiliary Assistants attached to each." This lists all 15 rides and branch rides, and 50 sorting offices covering 129 districts. A total of 166 letter carriers and 60 auxiliaries were employed in the Country area.

Appendix 53 is "An Account of all Places within the Twopenny Post Delivery at which Bye-bags are made up, the Places to which these Bags are sent; the mode of Conveyance; and the Time of Arrival and Departure of the Bags in each case." A series of timetables is given to show the connections between the various sorting offices on each ride, except the Harrow ride, where the bye post only went as far as Paddington.

The morning dispatch to Hounslow, for example, was by mail cart and reached Brompton at 9.48am, Kensington at 9.58, Hammersmith at 10.07, Turnham Green 10.15, Brentford 10.31 and Hounslow 10.53 - a total journey time of 1 hour 15 minutes.

The afternoon dispatch on this ride was by horse and was, apparently, slower, taking 1 hour 24 minutes and reaching Hounslow at 5.45pm.

Collection began at Hounslow at 8.45am and 3.45pm and took 1 hour 14 minutes to get to Brompton. According to the timetable, the riders must have passed each other between Brompton and Kensington.

Besides the Hounslow ride, mail carts were by then also being used for the morning dispatches on the Edgware, Woolwich, Bromley and Hampton rides. Timetables for the other rides are given on page 95.

The bye posts appear to have remained with little further modifications until the Twopenny Post became the London District Post in 1844. Indeed, many continued unchanged until the division of London into 10 separate districts in 1856 made the bye post unnecessary. By then, however, most of the remaining horse rides had been converted to mail carts, or had been augmented or replaced by railway services.

Handstamps

The large circular sorting office date stamps initially introduced in 1810/11 continued in use for some time, although in the mid-1830s, the style changed from the type with a curved year (Fig 9) to one with a straight year (Fig 10). In the 1840s, a third style with sans serif lettering (Fig 11) was introduced. For certain offices, examples have been reported as late as 1848/9, although not necessarily used on bye post letters. A full listing is given in Table 2.

Table 2. Recorded uses of Country sorting office date stamps (after Barrie Jay, London Catalogue)

NAME USED IN STAMPS	SITE OF OFFICE (if different)	BYE POST OFFICE OPENED	TRANSFER TO TOWN AREA	Type 1 Fig 1 Jay L520	Type 2 Fig 9 L521	Type 3 Fig 10 L522	Type 4 Fig 11 L523
NEWINGTON SOUTH LAMBETH	Newington Butts Vauxhall	1809 1823	1831 1831		1815-18 1827-29 1832‡		
WANDSWORTH		1809			1816-37		
PUTNEY		1809			1811-36	1838	1046
MORTLAKE	East Sheen	1809		1809	1813-37	1836-44	1846
RICHMOND		1809		1809	1810-36	1837-45	1846-48
HAMPTON		1830		Fare de	(1812-19)\$	1839-40	
TWICKENHAM		1830		no stamps	recorded	1047	1040 40
KINGSTON		1837				1847	1848-49
Newington and Va	auxhall also linked wi	th Croydon ri	de				
						1005 45	1040
BROMPTON	Knightsbridge	1810			1813-27	1836-45	1848
KENSINGTON		1810			1811-37	1846	
HAMMERSMITH		1810			1812-30	1838-45	
ACTON	Turnham Green	1810			1817-36	1839-43	
BRENTFORD		1810			1811-36	1837-39	1045 40
HOUNSLOW		1837				1840-45	1846-48
Walham Green, Fi	ulham, sorting office	opened 1835 i	but not as a	bye post	office		
					1011 01		
KENT ROAD		1811	1831		1811-31	1000 40	
PECKHAM	New Cross	1811			1817-36	1839-43	
DEPTFORD		1811			1811-36	1837-39	
GREENWICH	Blackheath	1811			1812-36	1837-46	
WOOLWICH		1811			1812-36	1837-44	
ELTHAM		1833			1836		
BEXLEY		1837				1845	
BOW		1811			1813-32	1839-45	
STRATFORD		1811			1814-37	1838-42	
LEYTONSTONE		1811			1817		1842
WOODFORD		1811			1816-33		
CHIGWELL	Woodford Bridge	1811			1817-36	1840-45	
ROMFORD		1837				1837-47	1849
Ilford was crea	ted a bye post office	by 1844, No	stamp record	ded			
CLADUAM	Clapham Rise	1811			1820-30	1838-39	1848
CLAPHAM	orahuam wrze	1811			1818	1842	
TOOTING		1811			1830-36	1839-47	1846-48
MITCHAM	Unddon*	1811			1816-37	1842	
CROYDON	Waddon*	1837				1841-44	
CARSHALTON		103/				1041 44	

^{*} Office transferred from Waddon to Croydon itself in 1835

[§] Reported usage before recorded date of establishment of bye post office

[‡] Later stamps inscribed SOU LAMBETH. Reported usage after recorded date of transfer to Town area

Table 2 continued

NAME USED IN STAMPS	SITE OF OFFICE (if different)	BYE POST OFFICE OPENED	TRANSFER TO TOWN AREA	Type 1 Fig 1 Jay L520	Type 2 Fig 9 L521	Type 3 Fig 10 L522	Type 4 Fig 11 L523
WALWORTH CAMBERWELL		1811 1811	1831 1831		1811-31 1812-27 1822-24	(1838)*	1848
DULWICH SYDENHAM		1811 1811			1814-26	1838-45	1846
BECKENHAM		1831		no stamps	recorded		
BROMLEY		1837				1839-46	1846
HACKNEY		1811	1831		1820-29		
STOKE NEWINGTON		1811			1814-36	1838-43	
TOTTENHAM		1811			1822-33	1839-47	1849
EDMONTON		1811			1812-33	1842-48	
ENFIELD		1832		no stamps	recorded		
ISLINGTON		1811	1831		1812-33*		
SOMMERSTOWN		1811	1831		1815-19		
CAMDEN TOWN		1811	1831		1815-26		
CHIBER TOWN					1826-3191		
HIGHGATE		1811			1815-37	1838	
FINCHLEY		1811			1815-28		
WHETSTONE		1831			1832-36	1840-44	
HAMPSTEAD		1837		no stamps	recorded		
HENDON		1837			(1829)§		
BARNET		1837				1838-46	1848
EDGEWARE		1837				1838-47	1849
PADDINGTON		1811			1813-37	1839-45	1846

Kilburn sorting office opened 1824 but not as a bye post office Willesden sorting office opened 1831 but not as a bye post office Harrow included in Twopenny Post 1824 but not as a bye post office

- AT Later stamps inscribed CAMDEN TN
- § Reported usage before recorded date of establishment of bye post office
- * Reported usage after recorded date of transfer to Town area



Fig 9



Fig 10



Fig 11

Examples of circular dates stamps have not so far been discovered

for Beckenham, Enfield, Hampstead or Twickenham.

In 1844, barred oval obliterators were issued to the bye post sorting offices of the new London District Post. These stamps were needed to cancel the adhesives on bye post letters and one or two other classes of mail, such as cross post letters, which did not pass through the chief office in central London. All other adhesives would be cancelled at the chief office.

The fact that barred ovals were issued in 1844 suggests that the earlier style of obliterator - the Maltese Cross - had also been supplied to the bye post offices. There is some evidence from the comparison of inks that this indeed was the case.

Each sorting office was given a number in 1844, which appeared in the barred oval stamps (Fig 12a). The numbers ran in sequence along the rides and branch rides, starting at Highgate on the Barnet ride. However, where the ride ended at a post town, the office there was not issued with a London District Post number but one in the English provincial series (Fig 12b), as shown in Table 3.



Fig 12a

Fig 12b

Table 3. Allocation of numbers to London sorting offices

No	Office	No	Office	No	Office
1 2 3 937*	Highgate Finchley Whetstone Barnet	18 20 21 22 23	Deptford Greenwich Woolwich Eltham Bexley	31 32 33 34 35	Wandsworth Putney Mortlake Richmond Twickenham
4	Hampstead			36	Hampton
5	Hendon	24	Dulwich	422*	Kingston
6	Edgware	25 26	Sydenham Beckenham	37	Brompton
7	Stoke Newington	144*	Bromley	38	Kensington
8	Tottenham			39	Hammersmith
10	Edmonton	27	Clapham	40	Acton
11	Enfield	28	Tooting	41	Brentford
		29	Mitcham	394*	Hounslow
12	Bow	30	Carshalton		
13	Stratford	938*	Croydon	42	Paddington
14 15 16 17 668*	Leyton Woodford Chigwell Ilford Romford		vincial series and 19 omitted to prevent co	onfusion	with 6 and 61

From this table it can be seen none of the 1811 sorting offices near London which had been taken into the Town area in 1829/31, eg Kent Road, Islington, Walworth, etc, were allocated numbers at this time, although several did get office numbers and barred oval stamps in 1861.

On the Woolwich ride, there was no issue of a number to Peckham in 1844. There had been some discussion, in 1831, of including Peckham in the Town area at the same time as Camberwell, because, according to Smith, the two places "are so connected that you cannot give to one without including the other".

Notwithstanding this observation, it would appear that Peckham - or at least part of it including the sorting office at New Cross - remained in the Country area. Examples of the Country sorting office handstamp are known as late as 1843. It would appear that the bye post office here

was closed with the introduction of the London District Post.

The branch ride from Stratford to Romford was very long, the journey time was an hour. The establishment of a sorting office part way along it at Ilford probably occurred before 1844 in an effort to shorten letter carriers' walks when serving the villages along this branch.

It should be noted that, once again, the only bye post sorting office on the Harrow ride in 1844 was at Paddington. However, in August 1850, numbers 60, 61 and 62 were allocated to the offices of Kilburn, Willesden and Harrow, although of a unique pattern (Fig 12c).



Fig 12c

This late addition to the bye post scheme lasted just six years until, in 1856, the division of London into separate districts and the establishment of head offices round the centre of London made the original bye post scheme redundant.



THE HOUNSLOW CROSS POST

The 1830s were a period of great reform in all spheres of life. Although considerable developments in postal services took place, there was continual and vociferous pressure for yet more improvements, in particular from the supporters of universal penny postage.

Numerous parliamentary commissions and committees were established to look at the workings of the Post Office Department and Freeling spent much time and effort defending his department against outside criticism.

Many of the reforms of the services during the early 1830s can be attributed to his efforts to answer the critics - sometimes even before the criticism had been made.

He was in a difficult position. Much as he may have agreed with some of the demands of the postal reform lobby, he had to stand by all the Post Office had, or had not, done since he had become Secretary in 1798.

His actions then were justified by the fact that, for many years, his political masters had simply required the Post Office to raise as much revenue as possible. All developments in the service had to be measured against how much additional revenue could be raised. Virtually the major non-profit making improvements came during those administrations which were more liberal in thought, and were not required to raise vast sums to pay for expensive wars.

Even so, it was sometimes necessary for Freeling to push the PMG of the day a little further than he might otherwise have gone. It is clear that Freeling was not averse to improving the service as far as he could, within political constraints, but he did feel that he and his staff knew better how to improve things than any outsiders.

Reading Freeling's reports to various PMGs is an education as to how a 19th century permanent civil servant cajoled, manoeuvred or sometimes just tricked his political overlords into doing exactly what he wanted.

Should the PMG ever go against Freeling's wishes, and the resultant action fail, Freeling was quick to remind the PMG of his original recommendations.

Freeling was thus an expert at playing the political game and he used his vast experience to forestall and frustrate critics of the Post

It is even possible that had Freeling not died in office in 1836, Rowland Hill's Penny Post may not have got going as early as 1840.

Out of Freeling's efforts to forestall the critics came one of the most complex of mail circulation systems in the country, based in the Country area of the London Twopenny Post: the London cross posts.

The criticism Freeling tried to anticipate was "the charge that we bring letters thro great places on the Main Road up to London then send

them back again & with a rate of add' postage upon them".

What was happening - and, of course, had happened since the beginning of the local London post 150 years before - was that all letters from the provinces for places in the suburbs were being brought to the chief office in the City and then delivered under the Twopenny Post system. This made them liable to an additional charge, having already been charged the mileage rate from the provincial town to the

centre of London.

However, with the extension of the Twopenny Post Country area from the 10 mile to the 12 mile circle at the end of 1833, several post towns — which corresponded directly with other provincial towns — were brought

into, or very near, the Twopenny Post area.

This created the anomaly that at, say, Hounslow (one of the post towns brought into the London Country area) a letter from Bristol would only be charged the mileage rate from Bristol to Hounslow (113 miles = 9d), while a little further along the road at Brentford, such a letter would be charged the mileage rate from Bristol to London (122 miles = 10d) plus the 2d local delivery charge in the Twopenny Post Country area. As both Hounslow and Brentford were now part of the Twopenny Post, it seemed logical their letters should be treated, and charged, in the same way.

Freeling's answer was to stop, at the post town on the outskirts, the mail which was for places between there and London, and deliver

these letters under a separate penny post from the post town.

Although these post towns were the termini of the London Twopenny Post rides, they were not then linked to the long-established bye posts which operated along these rides inside the 10 mile circle (see Chapter 7).

Thus the scheme devised by Freeling had to be independent of existing rides and foot posts and this resulted in a very intricate

system.

Whether the plan was made excessively complex in an effort to show how difficult, and expensive, it was to improve on the existing service, or whether Freeling genuinely thought it was the best way to proceed, is hard to tell.

Certainly Sir Rowland Hill made great efforts to untangle the web of cross posts and abolished them altogether at the end of the 1850s. By then, however, the advent of the railways had completely altered the provincial mail circulation systems; uniform penny postage had cut out any double charging element; and the creation of the 10 London postal districts had altered the circulation of mail within the capital. The cross posts could, therefore, be considered redundant.

The complexities of Freeling's original system arose from his early concept of the scheme. This was that the only places to benefit should be those through which the mail coaches actually passed, and not any of the neighbouring suburbs, even if these other suburbs were on the same

Twopenny Post ride.

The problem was that the Twopenny Post rides did not always follow the same routes as the mail coaches. To serve only those places on the coach road meant organising a new set of riders which also only used the coach roads.

However, as each individual cross post was established, this initial idea was gradually modified. Eventually all the towns and villages on a Twopenny Post ride were served. Indeed, in some cases, two Twopenny Post rides were served from the same post town as one cross post.

Nevertheless, the concept that the cross post rides would be completely separate from the rest of the Twopenny Post system persisted,

adding to the complexities of the operation.

Freeling first brought up the idea in a report dated 4 October 1834 to the Marquess of Conyngham, who had been appointed PMG the previous July.

"Your Lordship is aware that I have long had a favourite scheme in Contemplation and that at various times I consulted your Predecessor upon it who greatly encouraged it but we were all desirous that as this Scheme was so closely connected with the Country Twopenny Post the circle of which was lately extended to 12 miles round London it would be right to see how that measure succeeded in all its operations before we clogged it by any premature addition to the almost numberless details of which it is composed."

There is, of course, no evidence to show whether Freeling did, or did not, discuss the plan with the previous PMG, the Duke of Richmond. As Richmond was one of the more zealous of reforming PMGs, it is quite possible the idea had been looked at - even that it was Richmond's idea

in the first place.

In any event, Freeling went on to describe the new scheme to Conyngham and asked permission to try it as an experiment on the western

road.

"I have selected the Hounslow and Brentford Road as the principal, and the most difficult, in as much as 7 Mail Coaches center at Hounslow. If it should be practicable on this Road, the same principle must obtain on all Roads to London, with respect to the villages within 12 miles (not touching upon our General Post 3 Mile Circle) thru' which the Mail Coach passes."

From its original inception it was intended to extend the scheme to

other routes:

"If the plan be first arranged on the greatest Road of Brentford the same could be made available to other great Roads Blackheath - Greenwich (now a Borough), Deptford, Enfield, Edmonton, Tottenham, Finchley, Highgate &c &c Ilford &c &c."

Freeling's main point was that letters would be received much

earlier, and at less expense to the public.

There had, he believed, been some objection to the earlier delivery in the suburbs on the basis:

"that a speculator having a residence on such a main Road might from an earlier delivery than in London come up & forestall the Markets - the Delivery in London is now so much accelerated...I think the objection has less weight than it formerly had."

There was initially some doubt as to whether Brentford should be made a post town, and the mail coaches drop the letters there In the end it was decided that Hounslow would be the dropping off point "to avoid the multiplication of Bags and accounts".

Most of the ground work for both this and later cross posts was done

by Robert Smith, the Twopenny Post Superintending President.

Smith felt that the easiest way of dealing with the General Post correspondence left at Hounslow was by "treating the places on the line of road between Hounslow and the 3 Mile Circle as forming part of the Hounslow penny Post". Hounslow, like many other provincial post towns, had its own local penny post service for neighbouring villages. However,

the Hounslow penny post did not overlap the London area until the cross post was established.

With the towns and villages on the London side of Hounslow to be treated as part of its penny post, letters for these places would only be charged the mileage rate to Hounslow, plus 1d for the local service and thus receive the Hounslow penny post mark (Fig 13).



Fig 13

The new system meant that for all letters, there would be at least the 1d saving on the local delivery charge — the Twopenny Post Country area delivery charge for General Post letters being 2d. In addition, however, some letters would make further savings as they travelled a shorter distance to Hounslow than to London, and so could fall into a lower mileage charge band.

Smith prepared a list of places within London which were to be served by the new arrangement so that the postmasters on the western roads could be instructed to sort to Hounslow instead of the London bag (Fig 14). "This will require strict attention on their parts," Smith said.

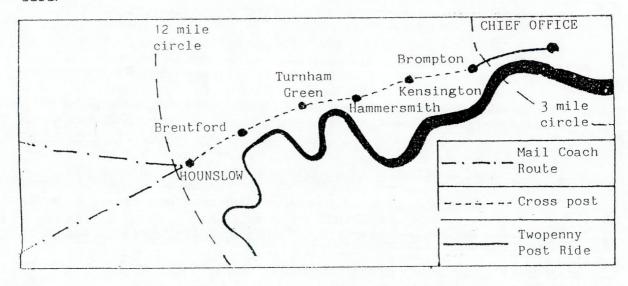


Fig 14. Hounslow cross post ride

Smith went on:

"After the arrival of the Mails at Hounslow it will require great exertion on the part of the Post Mistress to dispatch the Bags in sufficient time to arrive at the various Sorting Offices previous to the departure of the Letter Carriers. There are 5 Sorting Stations between Hounslow & London, Viz: Brentford, Turnham Green, Hammersmith, Kensington & Brompton. Bags must be made up for each place, and it will require much accuracy & attention in Sorting the Letters for these districts. The Rider must be attendance at Hounslow by 6 o'clock in the Morn's & he must be dispatched soon after, to enable him to arrive at Brompton about % past 7 o'clock, the

distance is quite 9 miles."

The seven mail coaches which passed through Hounslow were from Poole, Exeter, Bath, Bristol, Gloucester, Stroud and Devonport. Smith

reported that the mail coaches:

"begin to deliver their Bags at Hounslow soon after 5 o'clock & the last Mail arrives at 39 minutes after, consequently there will be but little time allowed for making up the Bags, & I think it will be necessary to give the Dep' at Hounslow an Assistant. Our Charge Taker is a very intelligent respectable Man, he is well acquainted with the districts & would be a great assistance in Sorting the Letters and I have no doubt for a small remuneration he would be glad to do it."

It was intended the cross post letters should be at the various sorting offices "in time to blend the delivery with the present early Morn⁹ delivery" which generally started at 7.30am and was completed by

9.00am.

Smith agreed with George Stow, the Post Office Surveyor for the Western Districts, that the postmistress of Hounslow, Ann Butler, need only charge the receivers at the Twopenny Post sorting offices with the amount of letters sent for delivery and, said Smith, for the receivers:

"to collect the postage from the Letter Carriers & Transmit it in Sealed Bags to the Dep': of course care will be taken to provide the necessary Checks for the Security of the Revenue. By this arrangement this Office will not have to open any new accounts."

Ann Butler's office in Hounslow is shown in Fig 15.

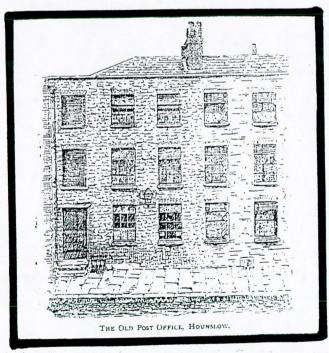


Fig 15. Post Office, Hounslow, mid 19th century

The arrangements for letters being sent from the London suburbs to the provinces were for the rider to return to Hounslow in the evening in sufficient time for the postmistress to make up the bags before the mail

coaches started to arrive.

"With this view," said Smith, "I think the Brompton Box should close at 30 Minutes past 6 o'clock, the Kensington & Hammersmith at 45 Minutes & the Brentford at 7 o'clock, if found practicable the time can be afterwards extended."

Smith made it clear only the principal offices in each district would be kept open for the extended time.

The Hounslow cross post started on the night of 5 December 1834. Stow, the surveyor, was at Hounslow to see how things would go, while Smith looked in at various sorting offices, to check everything went smoothly.

On 6 December, Smith reported that the letters had arrived in ample time at the sorting offices for the early morning delivery.

"There were 72 Letters forwarded from Hounslow to our Sorting Offices for the delivery this Morn, but I have no doubt the number will be considerably more than this, for I apprehend that several of the deputies have not clearly understood the day the new arrangement was to commence."

A random survey taken at the beginning of the year when the initial plans for the cross post were being formulated had shown that on one day, 166 letters had been brought into central London by mail coaches passing through Hounslow, only to be delivered by the Twopenny Post along the line of the road back towards Hounslow.

Certainly the receivers in the London area were well aware of the new scheme, and 130 letters were dispatched to the provinces via Hounslow that evening.

The system picked up rapidly and on 15 January 1835, Smith could report:

"By a return that I have got from the Deputy at Hounslow, I find that upwards of 6,000 letters have been forwarded by this arrangement in one Month."

In March 1835, Smith proposed salary increases for the receivers at the sorting offices involved in the cross post scheme:

Thomas Channon	Brompton	£5
John Kingston	Kensington	£5
Mrs Mary Woodhouse	Hammersmith	£4
Mr Baynes	Turnham Green	£3
Philip Norbury	Brentford	£5

At Hounslow, Ann Butler was to be paid an extra £20 a year, with an additional £15 for her assistant, on the recommendation of Stow.

Although her increase was not authorised until April, Freeling did push the pay rise through in advance of Treasury sanction, pointing out:

"The present salary is £62 with an allowance of £20 for an Assistant & £10 8s for Sunday Newspaper Duty altogether inadequate to the Duty & Expences of the Office even previous to the Additional labor arising from the new Arrangements.

"Had the necessity for this Additional Allowance been less urgent it might have been included among the Salary Cases about to be brought forward but as the Success of the Measure may in some degree be said to depend upon the great exertion & further Assistance which I understand from Mr Smith the postmistress has already provided at her own Cost, I presume your Lordship will not hesitate to approve of Mr Stow's proposition."

Stow had also pointed out the duties had:

"to be performed at a very early hour in the morning and in the Evening rendering firing and Candles necessary throughout a great part of the year, and consequently entailing considerable expense," and he emphasised that "every credit is due to the Postmistress for the zeal and diligence with which she has acted up to her instructions."



Posted at the No. 3 Receiving House of Chippenham and addressed to Chelsea.

The endorsement shows it to have been posted on the last day of the Uniform Fourpenny Post period but the London penny would still have to be paid.

The village type Penny Post marks of Chippenham and Hounslow appear on the obverse, the latter reflecting the dropping of the letter at Hounslow.

[Courtesy of Michael Jackson]



THE SHOOTERS HILL CROSS POST

With the success of the Hounslow cross post, plans were laid for the next venture, the Dover Road. Although this did not carry as many coaches as the other great roads out of London, it did take the continental foreign mails.

The first post town out of London on the road into Kent was Dartford, 15 miles from the City and outside the Twopenny Post circle. On 28 January 1835, Smith went to Dartford to look at the possibility of

operating the cross post from there. He reported:

"On the face of it this certainly appears the most simple plan, but the expense would be considerable. The Bags would have to be conveyed from Dartford to Deptford which is just 11 miles, and I am doubtful whether we should not sometimes be liable to break down: it is 11 miles of heavy ground, & the Bags should be dispatched from Dartford by about 20 minutes after 5 o'clock, to enable them to be at the last station (Deptford) before 7 o'clock. At this early Hour in the Morning I fear there is the possibility of the Rider not being punctual in his attendance, even at Hounslow where the departure is an Hour later there has been some difficulty on this point."

Smith ruled out the Dartford scheme on grounds of cost and instead proposed to make Shooters Hill - a place on the Dover Road only eight miles from London - a General Post Town. Shooters Hill already had a Twopenny Post receiving house and was used to drop Twopenny Post bags from the down Dover Mail each night for the early morning deliveries in

Woolwich and Eltham.

As the up Dover Mail reached Shooters Hill at about 5.30am, according to Smith:

"I should not then require a Rider as I could send foot messengers with the Bags to Blackheath, Deptford &c."

This would be much cheaper and Smith estimated the two schemes to cost:

	V	ia Dan	rtfo	ord	via S	hoote	rs	Hil	. 1
Postmaster's salary	+	£20	0	0	+	£33	0	0	
Riding work	+	£121	13	4*					
Extra messengers	+	£40	0	0	+	£49	8	0	
TOTAL		£181	13	4		£82	8	0	

*original estimate for riding work £124 8s 0d

Smith commented:

"There will be a saving of nearly £100 pr annum by adopting the present plan, with the greater certainty of its working well."

Three messengers were to be employed: the one going to Blackheath, Greenwich, Deptford and New Cross (a distance of about 4 miles) was to be paid 10s a week; another for Woolwich, 2 miles away, 6s; and the third, who went from Blackheath to Lewisham, 3s.

In addition, there were to be small allowances to the receivers at Woolwich, Blackheath, etc:

"for the increase of duty they will be required to attend to, but in these cases I think it will be desirable to proceed in the same manner as I have done on the Hounslow Road viz: to let the plan be in work for a Short time that I may be more competent to judge of the extent of the additional duty."

The cross post had been operating for a little over three months when Smith proposed increases in salary for the various receivers:

"They receive Bags from & make up Bags for Shooters Hill daily, and are accountable to the deputy at that place for the postage charged on the letters sent for delivery in their respective districts, their duties also begin much earlier in the morning & are continued later in the Evening, besides having to receive & dispatch letters on Sunday."

The increased allowances were:

Mrs Ann Hammond	New Cross	£3
John Warcup	Deptford	£4
Mrs Steward	Blackheath	£4
John Watts	Greenwich	£5
William Robinson	Woolwich	£4

In the end, Shooters Hill was not made a full post town, but a "voucher town". The exact meaning of this term is not known but Freeling said that if Shooters Hill were made a post town with London, "the Letters would be liable to heavy increased Postage". As a "voucher town as far as Dover" Shooters Hill simply made up bye letter bags with all the towns on the Dover Road and its branch roads, and used a penny post stamp (Fig 16).

Shooters Hill Penny Post

Fig 16

Until the establishment of the cross post, the Twopenny Post receiving house on Shooters Hill had been in the Red Lion, where the landlady, Hannah Henderson, was receiver. However, Smith felt that the cross post duties should be entrusted to a grocer, Thomas Shelley, who lived nearby. This would also enable Smith to move the receiving house from the Red Lion, which was something he had been "for some time anxious to do".

It is not clear whether Smith's concern was the result of the policy laid down by the Post Office in 1828 to avoid the use of public houses as receiving houses, whenever possible, or because the Red Lion was not secure. Two years earlier, Widow Henderson had been robbed of "two caps and a frill (or collar)" by one, George Smith, who was sent for trial at Maidstone assizes, and was sentenced to seven years transportation.

After the receiving house was removed from the Red Lion, Henderson herself was in trouble, appearing twice before Woolwich magistrates for

non-payment of the poor rate (1839 and 1840) and finally, in 1841, losing her licence through "misconduct".

Shelley was to receive a salary of £40 a year - £7 as Twopenny Post receiver for Shooters Hill (the same rate as had been paid to the licensees of the Red Lion since 1814), and £33 for the cross post duties.

This salary was felt to be "quite moderate" by Freeling. Smith outlined the reasons for the proposed salary:

"the early Hour he must be up in the morning, with the number of Bags he will have to receive & make up & the various accounts he will be required to open with the Twopenny Post Receivers."

Freeling added that the office would:

"make up Bye Letter Bags with all the Towns on the Dover Road, and such others branching from it, as now send their letters from Dartford by the Cross Post.

"The postmaster would have to collect the Revenue on such Bye Leters, and must therefore have an appointment & give Bond." $\[\]$

That bond was set at £200, and a magistrate who lived on Shooters Hill, Thomas Hayter Longden, acted as one of Shelley's sureties.

Shelley had an increase in salary of £25 a year in February 1839 - considered "only just and reasonable" to bring Shooters Hill into line with "others of the first Stage Towns out of London where the forward sorting and Sunday newspaper duty is similar". He continued to receive £65 a year until the cross post ended in 1844. His salary was then cut to £30 a year, with the proviso that it would be reduced by another £10 a year on a vacancy. In fact, Thomas Shelley remained receiver until he died 16 years later. His widow, Mary, acted as receiver for a further four years.

The cross post service was intended for virtually all the places on the Woolwich ride and its branches which had previously received Kent mail through central London: Woolwich, Plumstead, Charlton (Old and New), Eltham, Lee, Lewisham, Blackheath, Deptford, Greenwich, New Cross and Peckham (Fig 17).

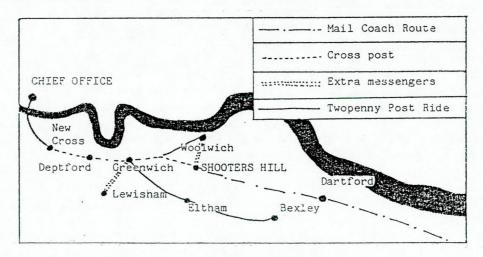


Fig 17. Shooters Hill cross post ride

There was no need to make any arrangement for those villages between Shooters Hill and the Twopenny Post boundary, which had been incorporated in the Twopenny Post only since 1833, namely, Bexley, Welling and Erith.

In 1802, a Fifth Clause Post* was established from Dartford through Crayford to Bexley and Erith, and, in 1827, an additional messenger was employed from Bexleyheath to Welling. This arrangement was retained after the villages had become part of the Twopenny Post and

correspondence with Kent continued to be routed through Dartford.

The up Dover Mail reached Shooters Hill at about 5.30am, according to Smith, although other evidence suggests the time of arrival was nearer 4.30am. The letters had to be sorted and accounted for by 6.00am when the foot messengers took them to Woolwich, Deptford, etc. The letters reached the sorting offices for delivery by between 7.00 and 8.00am.

Smith reported the arrangements for the evening:

"At Woolwich...I propose to keep the Principal
Office open till 7 o'clock in the Evening for
letters for the down Mail, it now closes at 4
o'clock in the afternoon."

The evening messenger left Deptford at 6.00pm and reached Greenwich half an hour later. This messenger, and the one leaving Woolwich at 7.00pm, would be back at Shooters Hill by 8.00pm allowing time for Shelley to sort and stamp the letters before putting them on the down Dover Mail at about 9.20pm.

The Shooters Hill cross post started on the night of 6/7 March 1835. The new arrangements, reported by Smith on 7 March, were described by Freeling as "a fortunate commencement of the Kentish Regulations", and the PMG, Lord Maryborough, added: "I have no doubt of this proving a very beneficial arrangement".

The same day as Smith reported the start of the service, an

announcement appeared in the Greenwich Gazette:

Greenwich Post Office - Letters for the Dover Mail are now received at this Post Office up to half-past 6 o'clock in the Evening and forwarded from thence to Shooters Hill, to be dispatched by the mail the same evening.

Maryborough commented:

"The sooner we can extend this admirable plan to other Roads the better."

Nine days later Smith was making further proposals for expanding the cross post service in London.

^{*}Fifth Clause Posts were set up to serve places away from post towns at charges agreed between the Postmaster General and the inhabitants. They got their name from the fifth clause of the 1801 Act of Parliament, 41 George 3 Cap 7, which authorised their establishment. The Dartford Fifth Clause Post was converted into a Penny Post in 1839.



EXTENSION OF THE HOUNSLOW CROSS POST

On 16 March 1835, Smith proposed to Freeling that the Hounslow cross post should also serve the villages at the western end of the Hampton ride: from Richmond to Sunbury. This scheme Freeling put aside for a little while. His own concept of the cross post system was to serve only those villages in the London suburbs through which the mail coaches actually passed.

While this had applied on the Hounslow road, if only because none of the sorting offices were off the line of the coach route, it had not been applied strictly in the case of the Dover Road. Special arrangements had had to be made to serve Woolwich and Lewisham by the Shooters Hill cross post, even though neither was on the route of the mail coach.

Smith's scheme for extending the Hounslow cross post to the Hampton ride most certainly did not comply with Freeling's original concept of the scheme. However, it was not until Smith reported on the planned cross post at Barnet, where there was a similar problem, that Freeling put the extended plan before the PMG.

To the north of London, there were a number of places - including Hampstead - which were up to 1½ miles off the coach route. It was felt that Hampstead, while "not exactly within the route of the Mails...would have more letters than any of the other Villages", and that it would be right to extend the cross post to this, and other, outlying towns and villages.

Freeling said:

"This proposition to include Places not in the Route of the Mail Coaches is certainly a deviation from the principle of my original Plan, which was intended solely to meet the anomaly of conveying letters through a place, to be subsequently returned thither by another mode of conveyance.

"If a departure from this principle be admitted in one Case, it will apply to several others. In confirmation of which, I send a report from Mr Smith, which I had hesitated to put forward, in which he states that the respectable and populous Parishes of Twickenham, Richmond, Teddington, Ham, Petersham, Hampton, Hampton Court and Sunbury, might easily be included in a Penny Post delivery from Hounslow. It appears there are not less than 70 letters that would be accelerated daily."

Smith proposed:

"To make Twickenham the Sorting District for all the places; that the Postmistress of Hounslow [Ann Butler] should charge all the Letters on the Twickenham Letter receiver, this will be convenient as the Richmond Charge Taker goes to Twickenham every morning for the Bag conveyed by the mail the previous night, and the Twickenham, Teddington, Ham & Petersham Letter Carriers meet at Twickenham in

the morn⁹. The Letters for Hampton, Hampton Court & Sunbury must be forwarded on to Hampton, this I propose shall be done by the Twickenham Letter receiver."

Giving further details, Smith went on:

"The distance from Hounslow to Twickenham is about 2½ Miles. I calculate that the Bag may be dispatched from Hounslow by about 15 minutes after 6 o'clock in the morn⁹ & that it will arrive at Twickenham about o'clock, this will be in time for the first delivery & a foot messenger will be sufficient for the Service, this messenger will also have to return to Hounslow with the Letters intended for the down Mails, but as I proposed to keep the Richmond and Twickenham Boxes open till ½ past 6 o'clock for Letters intended for the Western parts of England, Messenger will have first to collect Richmond, then proceed to Twickenham & from thence to Hounslow where he must arrive by about 15 minutes before 8 o'C to give time to the Deputy to make up the cross post Bags."

According to Smith, these arrangements would allow the inhabitants of Richmond and Twickenham to post their letters 2½ hours later than they did before.

The cost of the extension would total £41 a year, Smith said. The messenger who carried the bags between Hounslow and Twickenham would get 10s a week, and £15 a year was to be allowed to the Twickenham receiver whose:

"responsibility & duty...[would] be considerable as he will not only be accountable to the deputy at Hounslow for the postage, but he will also have to convey the Letters to Hampton every Morning, a distance of 2 Miles, besides having the Sunday duty to attend to."

In putting Smith's plan before the PMG, Freeling constantly referred to it as a "deviation" from the original principle but still spoke of it in such glowing terms that no PMG committed to improving the service could really refuse to accept the scheme. It was, however, a major change of policy concerning the whole method of circulating letters in the London suburbs. In a way, it was also a very dangerous precedent, further eroding the idea of centralised control of the postal services, with its attendant checks on the revenue.

Once this idea was accepted, it would have been possible - if not always desirable - to have linked the Hounslow road, for example, with all the London suburbs, and eventually to have no provincial letters for the suburbs going through the chief office. Indeed, such a system was proposed for a Sunday service two years later (Chapter 19).

It is doubtful if Freeling ever wanted to go that far but the acceptance of the Twickenham extension would certainly free his hands considerably when drafting further schemes.

Maryborough, by then PMG, "highly approved" of Smith's plan, and told Freeling:

"I rather consider this as an improvement upon your Plan & a proof of its excellence for the ${\tt accommoda-}$

tion of the Public than a deviation from it."

That, presumably, was exactly what Freeling wanted, and the extension to Twickenham (Fig 18) started operation on 10 April 1835.

Smith prefaced his plan for extending the Hounslow cross post to Twickenham by saying:

"It is now a little more than 3 Months since the Hounslow plan commenced & with the exception of the missorting of some of the letters by the Deputies (which I have reason to think will be ultimately overcome) nothing could have worked better than the plan has done, & this at a time that we have had the worst weather & the dark mornings to contend against."

However, two winters later, in December 1836, this minute appears: "The occasional late arrival of the Bristol Mail at Hounslow in the Winter Season throws out the arrangement for the delivery.

"To remedy the delay of these Letters, which on such occasions are sent to London & returned in the Evening, the President of the T.P.P. recommends in the encd Report that the Postmrss of Hounslow may be directed to forward the Letters by a second Messenger who would be able to reach Twickenham in time for the noon or second T.P.P. Delivery & as this appears to be a very proper arrangement while it will only involve a trifling expense of 3s a journey occasionally in the Winter Season, I beg to submit it for your Lordship's authority."

Unfortunately Smith's report referred to in the minute has not survived, but the then PMG, the Earl of Lichfield, said: "This is a very desirable arrangement."

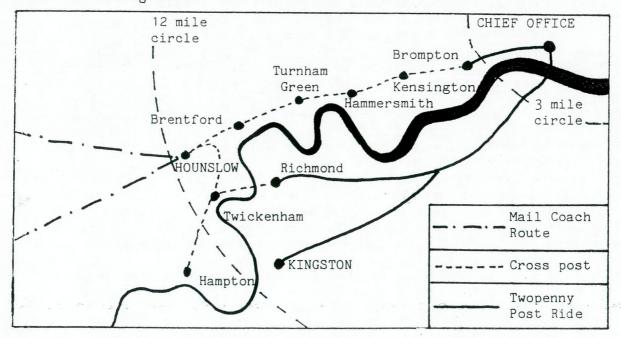


Fig 18. Twickenham extension to Hounslow cross post



NORTHERN CROSS POSTS

The next cross post Smith looked at was to be for the Chester & Holyhead Road - which also carried the Irish mails. This cross post was to be based at Barnet.

On 25 March 1835, Smith reported he had:

Hornsey & Crouch End.

"been to Barnet & [found] there are four Mails pass thro' there in the morning which leave 26 bags, the first Mail arrives at 18 minutes after 4 o'clock & the last at 48 Mts after 5 o'clock. It will be requisite that these Bags should be examined & dispatched to the Twopenny Post Stations by 20 Minutes after 6 o'clock. This the Postmaster thinks he shall be able to accomplish.

"There are three Twopenny Post Sorting Stations for which Bags must be made up viz: - Whetstone, Finchley & Highgate; the distance from Barnet to the last place is 6½ Miles, consequently a Ride must be established to convey the Bags from Barnet to these stations in the same principle as from Hounslow to Brompton. The places that can be served by this arrangement without employing Extra Messengers are: Whetstone, Finchley, Highgate, Totteridge, East Barnet, Fryern Barnet, Colney Hatch, Muswell Hill,

"But should it be thought right to include Hampstead, Hendon, Mill Hill & Highwood Hill, foot messengers must then be employed to convey the letters from Finchley to Hendon & from Highgate to Hampstead to meet the Letter Carriers."

The cost of the scheme would be £79 1s 8d a year for riding work for the 6½ miles from Barnet to Highgate plus "a small allowance to the Barnet Deputy & the receivers at the sorting stations". The inclusion of Hendon and Hampstead would involve two additional messengers at 7s a week each, adding another £36 8s a year to the cost.

Once the decision to include Hampstead in the cross post was made, it was necessary for bags to be made up for four sorting offices.

A little over six months later, Smith proposed pay rises for four receivers whose duties were increased by the scheme. The increases, which were in line with those made to receivers in both the Hounslow and Shooters Hill cross posts, were:

Nathaniel Sibley Highgate £5
Mrs Eleanor Lovell Hampstead £4
Mr Ambridge Finchley £3
Mr Matthews Whetstone £3

Once he had outlined his original plan, Smith told Freeling:
"Before the plan can commence it will be requisite
for the Surveyors whose districts are connected with
the Mails on this line of route to furnish a list of
towns to which Letters can be forwarded from Barnet,

& if the rates of postage to be charged on such letters could also be marked by the Surveyors in these lists it would be desirable. The Surveyors must be furnished with a list of the places that are to be charged on Barnet instead of London. I will make out this list as soon as the Post Master General shall be pleased to decide whether Hampstead & is to be included in the arrangement."

Freeling commented to the PMG:

"It is my duty to add that there is great complexity and minuteness in all these arrangements which must not only be perfectly understood by the Surveyors and Postmasters in many parts of the Kingdom, but by the numerous Receivers, Letter Carriers, &c actually engaged in carrying them into effect."

In a curious postscript, Freeling also said:

"If as I apprehend the Post Office at Barnet & the Postmst there are not sufficient to give due effort to these numerous tho' small & minute details I shall consider myself justified in submitting a more effective arrangement at that Office."

There is, however, no further reference to changes at the Barnet post office, where the postmaster was George Hudson, a butcher by trade, who had been appointed in 1795. He continued to run the office until his death in June 1837, when he was succeeded by his daughter Eliza who was postmistress until she died a year later.

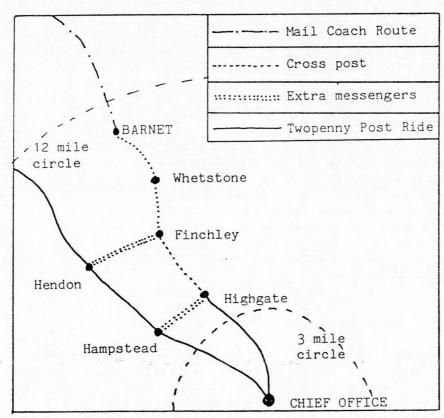


Fig 19. Barnet cross post ride

(Fig 19) The Barnet cross post started operation on 11 July 1835, using its existing penny post stamp (Fig 20).

Barnet Penny Post

Fig 20

Waltham Cross cross post

It was not until January 1836 that Smith put forward his plans for the next cross post - on the Great North Road through Waltham Cross. That delay would, in part, have been due to the change of government during 1835.

Four mail coaches passed through Waltham Cross: Edinburgh, Lynn,

Boston and Lincoln, according to Smith, who added:

"They generally arrive in sufficient time to admit of the Ride being dispatched soon after 6 o'clock, this will be necessary as the distance will be 9 Miles to travel, as Bags must be made up for the Sorting Districts at Enfield, Edmonton, Tottenham and Stoke Newington, & the Bag must be at the latter place not later than 20 Minutes after 7 o'clock."

Smith listed some of the places which would benefit from the cross post: Enfield, Ponders End, Edmonton, Winchmore Hill, Southgate, Totten-

ham, Stoke Newington, Clapton and Homerton, adding:

"There are a few other minor places but it not

necessary to name them in this Report."

The chief cost of the new cross post was, once again, the riding work. Smith stated that this, "according to the terms of the new contract", would be £95 16s 3d a year. When the Barnet cross post was established, the riding contract was based on 8d per double mile, and the service was for a full 365 days a year. The "new contract" applied at Waltham Cross was, however, based on a reduced rate of 7d per double mile.

Further expenditure on the Waltham Cross scheme was also described

by Smith:

"The letters for Clapton & Homerton must forwarded to the sorting office at Hackney by foot messenger, the distance is not great, and I apprehend it may be done for 3/- per week. There must also be a small allowance to the four Receivers for their additional duty, £15 per annum will cover

"In this Report I have inserted Winchmore Hill and Southgate as places that may be benefitted by the arrangement. These places are attached to the Edmonton District, & have never had a morning delivery but as the letters are generally addressed 'Edmonton' it will be impossible to exclude them in to the Deputies, instruction sent consequence will be that unless the delivery is provided for by extra means the letters must remain at Edmonton for the noon delivery.

"I have for some time had it in contemplation to submit to My Lord the Post Master General the propriety of extending a Morning Delivery to these places, they are respectable & extensive neighbourhoods and chiefly Inhabited by Merchants & persons connected with the City. They have now 2 deliveries Viz noon & Evening and those letters dispatched from here [the chief office] by the Mails at night remain at Edmonton for the noon delivery the following day, which is not completed in the distant parts of the Walk till nearly 1 o'clock. I find that the number of letters so detained will average about 150 in the week. The duty cannot be done by the regular Letter Carriers as they have to make collections at Winchmore Hill & Southgate between 8 & 9 o'clock in the Morning. The accelerated delivery of 150 letters in the week is of itself important but when the Cross Post letters are added. to it, the accommodation will be so great that I do feel that I am warranted in recommending to My Lord the Post Master General that two auxiliary assistants be put on, one for Winchmore Hill district & the other for the Southgate: this will afford considerable accommodation as the letters will be delivered by 9 o'clock in the Morning. I have no doubt I can get it done for 7/- pr week to each assistant."

The principle of serving places off the mail coach routes having been established for Twickenham and Hampstead, Smith had no qualms in adding Southgate and Winchmore Hill to the cross post. He was then able to use this as a lever to get better deliveries generally for these two places.

The Waltham Cross cross post started on 5 March 1836 following the PMG's approval of the whole plan on Freeling's recommendation. Initially, the town's existing three-line penny post stamp (Fig 21) was used.

Freeling added:

Waltham Crofs Penny Post

Fig 21

"The propriety of pursuing the same course as the other Roads from the Metropolis to which it has not yet been applied, can be considered hereafter."

Three days later, Freeling wrote again to the PMG, enclosing a report by Smith on the start-up of the Waltham Cross scheme. Freeling said the report showed:

"that we are following up as fast as the pressure on the Department & the constant interruption to its regular duties by orders from Parliament & the Commissioners will admit, the plan suggested by myself & approved by your Lordship of forwarding to the Post Town on the first stage from London & delivering from thence the Letters for Places in the vicinity of the Metropolis which it had been the former practice to send to London & return from thence to their destination by the Twopenny Post. The arrangement has I am happy to say been hailed by the parties interested in this correspondence as an immense benefit, the amount of letters on this line, the Waltham Cross Road, is not at present of large amount but we have reason to know that it is of importance."

This minute reflects some of the anger and frustration Freeling must have felt over the postal reform lobby's continued criticism of his

department, despite all his efforts to improve postal services.

He was also putting a fairly brave face on the fact that, despite being on the Great North Road, with the correspondence from the Edinburgh and Lincoln mails, the Waltham Cross scheme had not made a very good start, in terms of the number of letters handled.

Smith reported:

"It is satisfactory to me to be enabled to assure My Lord the Post Master General that there will be no difficulty in the working of this plan. The Ride has been despatched each morning at 6 o'clock, & the Bags have been delivered at the various Stations in ample time for the first delivery; the return to Waltham Cross in the Evening with the down letters may always be sufficiently early to allow the Post Master ample time to have his Bags ready for the Mails.

"The number of letters stopped have not yet been numerous, there were 13 on Saturday by the Up Mails and 33 for the down; this morning there were only 10 by the Up Mails and there has been no letters from Scotland yet, I apprehend the Deputies are not yet sufficiently conversant with the new regulation to be correct, when they are I calculate the number of letters in and out will be about 60 a day."

A broadsheet of 1838 states the letters from Edinburgh for "Clapton, Edmonton, Enfield, Homerton, Palmer's Green, Ponder's-end, Southgate, Stamford Hill, Stoke Newington, Tottenham and Winchmore Hill" were sent via the Berwick Mail.

Smith concluded his report by saying:

"It is only an act of justice to the Post Master of Waltham Cross to say that he has been most attentive & afforded every possible assistance and I am fully justified in saying that I think the new duty will be well attended to by him."

The Waltham Cross postmaster was Joseph Hunt, described as a Collector of Tax and Coach Bookkeeper, who had been appointed in March 1827.

Statistics published for the first four months of the cross post's operation show that 5,180 letters used the scheme, in roughly equal proportions for the four Twopenny Post sorting offices, Stoke Newington, Tottenham, Edmonton and Enfield.

This works out at 15,372 a year, or 42 a day; slightly under Smith's

estimate of 60 but in line with the first day's usage.

It does not appear there was a dramatic increase the following year

either, although the statistics are presented in a way which makes comparison difficult.

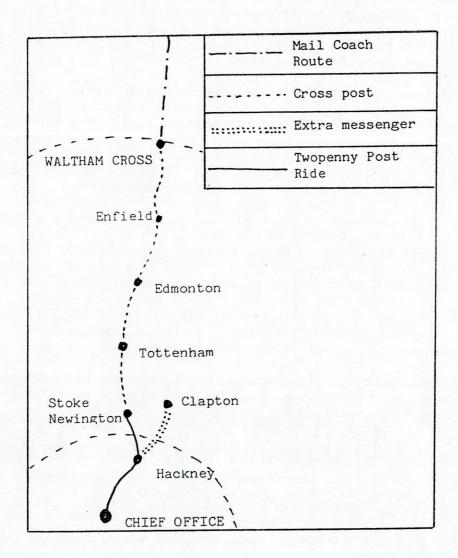


Fig 22. Waltham Cross cross post ride



CROYDON CROSS POST

Despite the poor start to the Waltham Cross operation, plans were soon being prepared for another cross post - on the Brighton Road at Croydon.

Here things had been complicated by the "delinquency" of the Croydon postmaster, Robert Bennett, and his wife Jane, who had between them held the office for some 40 years but were found to be mismanaging the post office. It took some while to ascertain exactly what had gone wrong at Croydon and to sort out the mess.

Thomas Walton was postmaster at Croydon for seven or eight years until his death, aged 46, in 1783, when his widow, Jane, took over the office and his 15-year-old daughter, also called Jane, was, as she later described, "sent home from School at Streatham, to assist my mother in

the duties of this office".

Widow Walton died in November 1800, aged 67, but two years earlier she had resigned the appointment of postmistress in favour of her daughter. In June 1801, Jane Walton, then 31, was planning to marry Robert Bennett, a carpenter. Because only spinsters and widows could be postmistresses (married women could not then be held responsible for debts) Jane had to apply for the appointment to be transferred to her husband-to-be. Nonetheless, it was Jane who ran the office - at least most of the time.

In 1815, it was discovered that a niece, Ann Bennett, had been performing many of the duties of the office and, it appeared, had been trying to defraud the Revenue of part of the postage due on unpaid letters. The Bennetts nearly lost their appointment then and probably would have done, but for the intervention of Jane's brother, Thomas Todd Walton, then a senior clerk in the Foreign Office at the Post Office.

Robert Bennett promised, after the unfortunate affair with his niece, to do all the duties of the office himself and not to let Ann Bennett have access to the office again. But that promise was broken, in part, 20 years later.

In October 1835, following a complaint by Rev Thomas Bisset of Addiscombe, an investigation was carried out at the Croydon post office,

which led to Bennett being severely reprimanded.

By that time, Jane Bennett was approaching 70 and appears to have become a cantankerous old woman, who often was less than civil to members of the public and frequently made mistakes. Her husband had been "dangerously ill" and, despite his promise, allowed not only his wife to work in the post office, but also one of his daughters and a maid servant as well.

Six months later, Freeling had to report again on the Croydon office

to the PMG, the Earl of Lichfield:

"I lament that a New case of suspicion against the Croydon office has occurred to render it necessary that the Comptroller of the Twopenny Post Office (as his Dept might have been implicated) and one of my principal officers should proceed to Croydon to examine all the parties employed in the P.O. there."

Croydon, 10½ miles from London, had been in the extraordinary

position of being both a provincial post town and a Twopenny Post office since 1802. In fact, until the 1833 extension of the Twopenny Post area to the 12 mile circle brought in places such as Hounslow, Bromley, etc, Croydon was the only town to be served by both the Twopenny Post and the General Post.

This dual position meant neither Post had assumed total responsibility for policing Bennett's activities and the running of the

Croydon office had become very lax.

The immediate cause of the latest investigation into the Croydon office was the loss of a packet containing a silk handkerchief, but the investigating officers turned up many other misdemeanours including undelivered letters in the office (some several years old, and one containing a money order) and the misappropriation of a letter carrier's allowance.

Naturally, the Bennetts were dismissed and a new postmaster, Thomas Toovey, was appointed.

Freeling had already told the PMG:

"we should avail ourselves of the vacancy at the Croydon office...to revise the whole of the arrangements in that neighbourhood."

This included a new salary structure for the Croydon office, a relocation of the office on the main road, the establishment of a provincial penny post to serve outlying villages such as Sanderstead, Warlingham, Farley, etc, and the London cross post. A stamp was issued (Fig 23) for use in both the provincial penny post and the cross post.

Croydon PennyPost

Fig 23

The local Post Office Surveyor, J.W. Sebright, had to stay in Croydon for a while after Toovey's appointment in order to instruct him in his duties and it was felt desirable to start the cross post while Sebright was still there. The start was therefore scheduled for 21 May 1836.

Smith reported:

"The places that will be benefitted by this arrangement are Streatham, Norwood, Mitcham, Tooting, Clapham, Stockwell, part of Brixton and Dulwich. A Ride must therefore be dispatched from Croydon every morning at 6 o'clock with Bags for Streatham & Brixton which will include the letters for all the other places. The distance will be 6½ Miles per day for the Riding Work and as it will include Sundays the expense will be according to present contract of 7d per mile, £69..3..11½ per annum. According to the principle laid down in former cases an additional allowance of £5 per Annum will be required for each of the Receivers at Streatham & Brixton which will make the additional expence for this £79..3..11% per annum. Presuming that this will be approved of by My Lord the Post Master General Mr Sebright will proceed to prepare instructions for his deputies and I shall do the same for the Twopenny Post Receivers that will be affected by it."

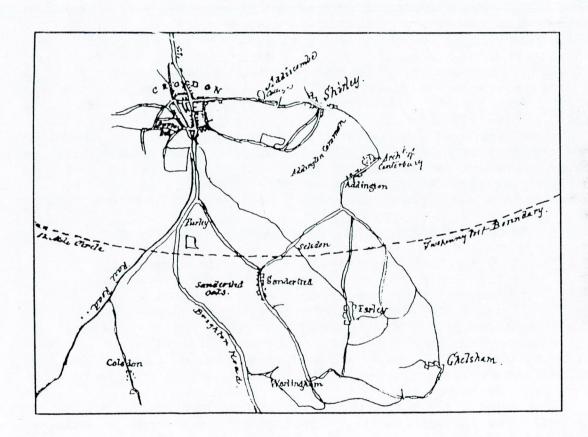
In the first few weeks of operation, 21 May to 5 July 1836 (46

days), the cross post carried 554 letters to and from Streatham and twice as many to and from Brixton - a rate of over 13,250 a year.

Whether or not Freeling intended to extend the cross post scheme further - to towns like Bromley on the Hastings Road, or Romford on the Chelmsford and Ipswich Roads, or Edgware, which was already receiving its mail from Manchester via Birmingham - will never be known.

At the time the Croydon cross post was set up, Freeling was already quite ill and within two months, he was dead.

His successor, Col William Maberly, had even more problems with the postal reform lobby but did not try to solve them with yet more complex cross post schemes.



[Courtesy of Post Office Archives]



CHAPTER 15

EFFECT OF THE RAILWAYS

By 1838, the railways were beginning to operate out of London and, from early on, the Post Office used them in preference to coaches to carry the mails to the provinces.

In many cases, the railways did not follow the original coach routes very closely and so considerable re-organisation of the posts throughout the country was necessary as the railways spread.

The first long-distance mails from London were carried by the London & Birmingham Railway and, in May 1838, Charles Johnson, the Post Office regional surveyor for the Home District, sent Maberly a report "stating the arrangements he conceives it will be necessary to make in the Home District connected with the acceleration of the Mails from London by the Railway to Denbigh Hall."

Denbigh Hall was the temporary railhead just north of Bletchley, where the railway met Watling Street. The mail coaches were taken on railway wagons as far as Denbigh Hall, where they were off-loaded to continue their journeys as horse-drawn stage coaches.

Johnson's report does not appear to have survived, but Maberly noted:

"As the Twopenny Post arrangements connected with Barnet will be altogether disturbed by the alteration that will be effected, I intend to communicate with Mr Smith upon the subject and shall direct him to report fully how far it will be expedient to transfer the Twopenny Post rides from Barnet to Watford or any other point."

The arrangement at Barnet was the cross post between the Twopenny Post towns (Highgate, Finchley and Whetstone) and the coaches that until then had passed through Barnet, such as the Chester & Liverpool, Leeds, Glasgow and Manchester Mails.

Unfortunately, Smith's report has not survived either but, on 19 June 1838, the PMG approved the establishment of a horse post between Barnet and Watford.

The system did not always work smoothly, as was reported on 7 January 1839:

"Railway Train delayed at Watford waiting the arrival of the Barnet Bags which were delayed by the horse dropping on the Road."

The Post Office had to explain the cause of the delay to the railway directors and then expressed the hope "that the precautions that have been taken will prevent a recurrence of the accident."

However, no details of those precautions were given.

The cross post continued to operate through Barnet but soon after the railway started operating, the first purpose-built Travelling Post Office in the country was introduced on the line from Euston to Denbigh Hall.

This obviated the need for the Barnet postmistress, Eliza Hudson, to sort all the cross post letters before the rider took them to Watford.

However, it was still necessary for her to add in manuscript on the front of the letter the postage rate to the destination. Because there was a charge of 1d for the use of the cross post service (against 2d if the letter passed through central London), it was also necessary for her to stamp the letters with a penny post mark to validate the charge.

At that time, all cross post letters, whether coming from, or going to, the provinces, were stamped with the penny post mark of the post

town at which the cross post started - in this case, Barnet.

For letters coming from the London suburbs, this penny post mark was applied to the back of the letters as a transit market. The total charge - the mileage rate plus the penny for the cross post - was written on the front of the cover at the cross post town. These letters also bore the dated sorting office stamp of the Twopenny Post town on the cross post, and sometimes a receiving house name-stamp of the office where each letter was posted.

With letters coming from the provinces, only the mileage rate to the cross post town would be written on the front at the place of origin, so the cross post town's penny post stamp was applied to the front as a charge mark. the recipient would be On delivery, the mileage rate plus charged additional penny.

Miss Hudson died on 12 September 1838, but it was not until 1 October that John Prior Ward, a druggist, was

appointed postmaster of Barnet.

By this time the railway had been through all way the Birmingham, where it linked with the Grand Junction and North Union Railways, and the Travelling Post Office was extended through to Preston.

During October, Ward was issued with a number of new stamps: the first was a new penny post stamp for Barnet itself (Fig 24), then came "Missent" and "Too Late" stamps (Fig 25) and, finally, a group of penny post stamps for seven villages in the Barnet provincial penny post and for the three Twopenny Post sorting offices in the Barnet cross post (Fig 26).

1837, very few provincial Until penny posts had stamps for the receiving houses in the villages, only the post town on which the penny post was based. As a result, there was often doubt as to whether the manuscript charge on the front included any local post charges.

To overcome this, penny post stamps villages the to issued provincial penny post schemes.

Barnet Penny Post

Fig 24

Missentto Barnet Too Late

> Fig 25 Highwate PennyPost

Finchley PennyPost

Whatstone PennyPost

Fig 26

The seven villages in the Barnet penny post to receive their own stamps were Shenley, Northaw, South Mimms, Gannock, Ridge, London Colney and Potters Bar. These were in the same form as Fig 26.

While stamps were issued to Finchley, Whetstone and Highgate in the cross post, no such mark was issued to Hampstead, although the receiver there was paid an additional fee for the extra duty the cross post brought, just as receivers in the other three towns were. It seems that Hampstead's mail was charged to the Highgate receiver and no charge stamp (the penny post mark) was needed for Hampstead.

With the issue of the penny post marks to the Twopenny Post towns, there was a change in practice in the way the cross post letters were

charged and stamped.

The original system was operated for letters from the provinces (the penny charge was indicated by the cross post town's penny post stamp) but for letters from the London suburbs, a different method was

employed.

The receivers at the sorting offices on the ride applied their new penny post marks to the front of the covers and the Barnet postmaster marked the covers with a dated handstamp. The manuscript charge applied was simply the mileage rate and the summation of the charges was left to the receiving office.



CHAPTER 16

KINGSTON AND HOUNSLOW CROSS POSTS

Towards the end of 1838, as the Southampton Railway was being opened by stages from London to the coast, it was decided that this line should be used for three of the West Country mails which had formerly passed through Hounslow: Poole, Exeter and Devonport.

The closest the railway came to Hounslow was at Kingston and, in this case, some of the Hounslow duty was transferred to this town. Extra

assistance was given to the Kingston office.

Kingston was made a sorting district "and a ride established to Hounslow through Brentford End and Twickenham" to maintain the cross post between the West Country and the Twopenny Post towns on the Hounslow ride.

Kingston was on the route of the Portsmouth mail coach and this

mail, too, was to be transferred from road to rail.

So, at the same time as Kingston became the centre for some of the West Country cross posts, it was agreed that there should be "opening of Cross Post communications with the towns on the Portsmouth line of road."

The letters were to pass through the station at Kingston (now Surbiton station) to the Kingston post office in Market Place, run by a grocer, Thomas Baker.

This cross post, which started on 15 December 1838, served all the

towns in the Hounslow cross post (Fig 27).

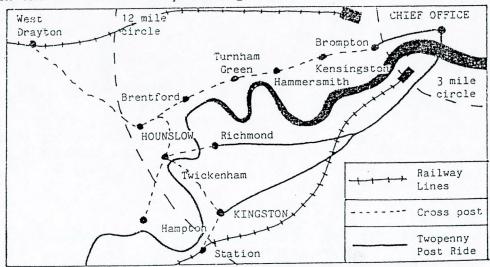


Fig 27. Kingston and Hounslow cross posts

Originally, the Kingston to Hounslow ride was undertaken by horse, but within a week, Maberly was having to ask the PMG for permission to substitute a mail cart for the horse at a rate of 9d per double mile or £119 15s 3%d per annum.

This, Maberly said, was £23 11s 4%d more than had already been sanctioned for the horse post, "but it is unavoidable as it appears that the bags are too numerous and weighty to be carried on horse back".

It was planned to transfer the other mails which passed through Hounslow (Bristol, Bath, Gloucester and Stroud) to the Great Western Railway during the summer of 1839. The GWR was also opening in stages and had, by then reached Twyford, just short of Reading.

However, both the railway company and the mail coach contractors were asking too much, so it was decided "to abandon the idea for the present". It would appear that the contractor for the Gloucester coach was prepared to accept the change at a reasonable price, but it was felt it would not be worth disturbing the system for just one of the four coaches on the Western road. It was proposed to "defer the measure till next year when by giving notice in January we can put an end to the contracts".

Eventually the four mails were transferred to the GWR on 4 February 1840 but again the railway did not pass through Hounslow. The bags were dropped at the station at West Drayton and taken to Hounslow by mail cart.

Bruilford

Hammersmith Twicken ham PennyPost
PennyPost
PennyPost
Rensington
PennyPost
PennyPost
PennyPost
PennyPost
PennyPost

Fig 28

Six days after the start of the Kingston cross post at the end of 1838, penny post marks were issued to Kingston for all the sorting offices in the Hounslow and Kingston cross posts (Fig 28) and on the same day, 19 December, Hounslow itself was issued with a new penny post stamp and a "Too Late" stamp (Fig 29), as well as stamps for four of the villages in its provincial penny post - Hanworth, West Drayton, Cranford Bridge and Feltham.

Hounslow Too Late

Fig 29

It is probable that letters from these villages for the mails by then using the Southampton Railway were also taken to Kingston by the cross post, just as letters posted at Hounslow itself.

Kingston had a long-established penny post of it own and so already had a penny post stamp when the cross post started (Fig 30). However, during February 1839, the town was issued with a new mark (Fig 31) as part of a general issue of stamps to the Kingston provincial penny post offices of Chessington, Long Ditton, Thames Ditton, East and West Molesey, Tolworth and Weston Green.

KINGSTON Penny Post

Fig 30

Kingston and Hounslow were also issued with "Missent" stamps about the same time (Fig 32).

The offices at these two towns adopted the same method of handling and stamping cross post letters as on the Barnet ride: down letters being given penny post stamps at the Twopenny Post sorting offices, up letters getting the penny post stamps of the cross post towns

Kingston PennyPost TooLate

Fig 31

Missent to Hounslow

Missent to Kingston

Fig 32

Because Hounslow, Kingston and Barnet applied dated handstamps to letters going to the provinces, it was no longer necessary for the Twopenny Post sorting offices to use their dated stamps on the covers, although sometimes they still did.

The old system of the cross post town applying a penny post stamp to both inward and outward letters continued in the three other cross posts operating round London at this time (Shooters Hill, Croydon and Waltham Cross). There was no issue of penny post stamps to the Twopenny Post towns served by these schemes, although Waltham Cross itself got a new penny post mark (Fig 33) in November 1838 to replace its earlier three-line stamp (Fig 21).

Walthum Cross Penny Post

Fig 33

The use of penny post stamps in the cross posts continued until December 1839 when, with the introduction of the General Fourpenny Post, the extra penny charge for the cross post was dropped. There was an exception to this. Franks (the free letters allowed to Members of Parliament, government officials, etc) were only carried free in the General Post, and the penny charge for the cross posts (which were operated by the London Twopenny Post) was retained for franks until the franking privilege was removed in January 1840 with the introduction of the Uniform Penny Post

All the cross post towns, except Shooters Hill, were also provincial

post towns and thus had the standard double arc dated handstamps. All but Shooters Hill and Waltham Cross were also, from February 1837, sorting offices in the London bye posts and so had the dated stamps of that service. One or other of these two stamps was used by Hounslow, Kingston and Barnet from late 1838. After the penny charge was dropped and the penny post marks became redundant, the other cross post towns started using their provincial date stamps or Country sorting office stamps as transit marks.

Some of the village penny post stamps, particularly those on the Hounslow and Kingston cross posts, continued to be used in the early

1840s as transit marks.

Shooters Hill was issued with a provincial date stamp in July 1840 (Fig 34) but for a short period before that, it used an unusal two-line stamp (Fig 35). A similar style of stamp was, apparently, also used on cross post letters which passed through Waltham Cross at this time.



SHOOTERS HILL

Fig 35

In February 1842, the Kingston date stamp was re-cut and codes A and B added, while in April 1843, the Hounslow stamp was also fitted with A and B codes. The significance of these codes is not known. As the proof books indicate in each case that there was only one stamp in which the two codes could be inserted, they were obviously not intended to differentiate a pair of stamps. It could be that the codes were to indicate morning and evening duties, or inward and outward mails.



CHAPTER 17

DEPTFORD CROSS POST

During the 1840s, changes had to be made to the other three London cross posts - Croydon, Shooters Hill and Waltham Cross - as the Brighton, Dover and East Coast mails switched from road to rail.

At two of these offices, the changes were not great, but at Shooters Hill, the whole cross post system had to be transferred to Deptford.

The London & Brighton Railway began carrying the mails in October 1841. As the line went straight through Croydon, it was only necessary to make minor adjustments to the cross post arrangements.

Similarly, at Waltham Cross, the Great Eastern's line ran parallel to the Great North Road and the station at Waltham Cross was not far from the post office. When the changeover came at the end of 1845, the only alteration necessary was the appointment of a messenger to take the mail from the post office to the station. He was to be paid 10s a week for this task.

However, when the South Eastern Railway's line to Dover was completed in 1844, the Shooters Hill cross post had to be abandoned as the line did not pass anywhere near the office.

At this time, the railway ran through New Cross to Croydon and Reigate before heading east through Kent. The cross post was, therefore, transferred to the Deptford sorting office, which was near the railway at New Cross [Gate] station (Fig 36).

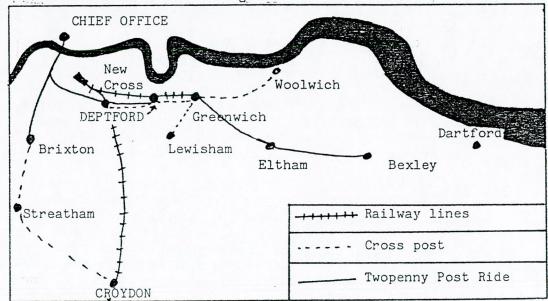


Fig 36. Deptford cross post

Although plans had been laid to "preserve the accommodation to Woolwich $\&^c$ " with the cross post based on Deptford, this did not start immediately, "as the Surveyor will have ample work getting ready his other arrangements for using the Dover line".

Deptford was to be made a post town, and the postmaster paid considerably more money, but this was delayed "until after the Railway

service has come into operation" although the reduction in the Shooters Hill postmaster's salary was to take place "at once", according to a

Post Office minute of 26 April 1844.

While the SER started carrying the Dover mail on 10 May 1844, a letter from Greenwich to Rochester is known, dated 21 May, which went via Shooters Hill, indicating that the cross post - at least to the Medway towns - did not change "at once".

Because the SER's line to Dover shared the route of the London & Brighton Railway through the London suburbs, it was decided to link the cross posts on the two lines so that the new service was to be "extended to the Towns on the Hastings and Brighton lines in addition to the line

of the Dover Railway."

In fact, the Deptford cross post was to cover virtually the whole of Kent, much of Sussex and parts of Surrey (at least as far west as Guildford) which had been served by the Croydon cross post. At the same time, the Croydon cross post was extended into Kent and included Dover and Continental Mails.

There was, however, no railway line to Hastings until 1851, although such a line had been authorised by Parliament before 1844. The Hastings mails were taken by the Dover railway as far as Staplehurst, where the train stopped to fill with water, and were then transferred to mail coach for the rest of the journey to Hastings.

At the London end of the line, a mail cart was established "to receive the bags at the New Cross Station to carry them to the Post Office at Deptford, and thence proceed through Blackheath to Woolwich,

returning in the evening in time for the down Train."

The cart cost 8½d per double mile, and the total expense was

£71 1s 11%d a year.

A second cart was needed between the General Post Office and Streatham "to supply the several places on the Croydon line which will be deserted by the discontinuance of the Brighton Mail Cart between London and Reigate."

John Barnard Warcup, the postmaster as Deptford, had to employ an assistant because of the additional duties involved and his salary was increased from £38 to £90 a year, "which looking at the duties he will have to perform appears to me only a moderate remuneration," commented Maberly.

He explained to the PMG:

"The wages of the Messenger from Blackheath to Lewisham must in future be paid at Deptford instead of at Shooters Hill and the allowances now made at the latter office...for the Messenger at Blackheath and Deptford and...for the Messenger to Woolwich may be altogether discontinued as these services will no longer be required."

However, an extra messenger was needed:

"to collect the Letters in the Evening from Greenwich and the Receiving House at New Cross, to whom I submit the wages of 10s a week may be allowed."

The Blackheath to Lewisham messenger was retained until March 1857 at the 3s a week originally set in 1835 - and was only discontinued when the duty could "be performed by the Letter Carriers as part of their regular work."

Just over a year after the Dover line opened and the Deptford cross

post was set up, the SER wanted to speed up the night mail and Captain O'Brien, the secretary to the railway company, asked the Post Office to make a number of changes to the working of the system.

The surveyor for the district, William Johnson, made some objections

to these changes, but Maberly said:

"I am of opinion that the difficulties to which he refers ought not to be allowed to stand in the way of the contemplated acceleration inasmuch as whenever the line of Railway from Calais to Paris is completed every minute that can be gained on the Railway to Dover will become an object of importance with reference to the Communication between London & Paris and the consideration of a rapid conveyance of the Correspondence between the Capitals of the two Kingdoms must far outweigh the trifling inconvenience that may be experienced by the Inhabitants of a few Towns served by Branch Posts from the Railway."

This quite remarkable statement from Maberly took no account of the fact that the railway in northern France was not likely to be built for several years, nor that the prime consideration for the British Post Office was the inland service!

Maberly continued, however:

"I submit therefore, should your Lordship approve, that the Surveyor may be directed to lose no time in preparing for the requisite alteration in the hours of the Branch Posts to meet the change, and that Mr Stow may be directed to inform Captain O'Brien that y' L^{dsp} is quite willing to fall in with the views of the Directors as far as it is practicable consistent with the arrangements of the Post Office Service, but that the present stop of the train at New Cross Station for the present is absolutely indispensible for Post Office purposes, and that you regret therefore you cannot allow it to be discontinued."

A month later, however, on 14 October 1845, Maberly reported on a new proposal from the SER which would enable it to discontinue the New

Cross arrangement for the down train.

"The Directors of the Railway have agreed to forward without charge the Letter Bags for the Down Train from Deptford to London Bridge Station in time for dispatch at 8.30 PM by which means there will be no abridgement of the time now allowed at Greenwich & Blackheath and a loss of only 15 minutes at Woolwich. With regard to the up journey as it would be necessary for the Company to dispatch the Bags for Woolwich &c by a special Train from London to Deptford in the morning in order to secure their arrival in time for the first delivery, the Directors prefer to continue the present arrangement of stopping the Train at New Cross where the Up Bags will be transferred to the Messenger as at present, and especially as the acceleration of the up Train is not regarded as of much importance."

Further acceleration was made possible a few years later when, in 1848, one of the earliest automatic mail bag transfer systems in the country was installed at New Cross.

This system allowed the main line trains to pass through New Cross without having to stop to drop or pick up bags and worked on the same principle as the apparatus which remained in use with Travelling Post Offices until the 1970s.

It is assumed that the carriage of mail to London Bridge ceased at this time, and the cross post system reverted to the original scheme.

The first system to be installed at New Cross was known as Dicker's improved apparatus but, in October 1855, Hill's version, which enabled two bags to be exchanged instead of one, was installed.

Similar mail transfer apparatus were also installed at other cross post stations, such as at West Drayton, the link between the Hounslow cross post and the GWR, where the apparatus was installed in 1858.

On 1 July 1844, a double arc dated handstamp (Fig 37) was issued to Deptford for use on its cross post letters, as a backstamped transit mark. A similar style stamp, but with larger lettering, is known used in 1853 and 1854 (Fig 38) and then during the late 1850s, a different type of handstamp was used — the single circle dated stamp shown in Fig 39.



Fig 37



Fig 38



Fig 39

John Warcup's position as postmaster of Deptford passed to a relation, William Willis Warcup, in about 1851 and when William died in 1856, the appointment of his successor was felt to be an important question. After some months, during which time a Mr Crabb (who seems to have had a roving commission from the Post Office) looked after the Deptford office, it was decided to make some considerable changes within the various Deptford offices.

In January 1857, it was proposed that:

"the Head office in Deptford, at which the General Post and Sorting duties will be performed, should be placed in the High Street: - the present receiving office in that Street being closed: - and that a receiving office issuing and paying Money Orders be opened in the Broadway, where hitherto the Head office had been held...

"as Mr Goldfinch (now receiver in the High Street) is not qualified for all the duties of the higher situation, that Mr John Atkins be appointed as Postmaster...subject of course to his being found competent after due probation."

Finally, it was recommended that Mrs Emily Warcup, widow of the late postmaster, be appointed receiver in the Broadway at a salary of £11 a year plus an allowance for the Money Order duty.

The new postmaster of Deptford, chemist and druggist John Atkins, was entitled to £34 a year for the separate London District duties, £30 for the General Post (or cross post) duties and £6 for the Money Order business, which was expected to be light. This was £20 less than Warcup had been getting.

However, the following year, the salary was raised to £100 a year

and an additional £30 allowed for an assistant.

But by then, the days of the Deptford cross post, and others round London, were numbered. Two key events at the end of the 1850s made this inevitable. One was the more general introduction of Travelling Post Offices on the rail network which reduced the need for detailed sorting at minor offices. The second was the division in 1856 of London into 10 districts — many with district offices near the main railway termini.

In December 1847, the SER was asked what the charge would be for a Railway Post Office on the Dover Night Mail and it was reported that the amount asked was "extravagantly high", so the plan was not pursued. Three years later, however, a Sunday Sorting Tender was established and eventually sorting was performed on a regular basis on both the Brighton and Dover mails. A sorting duty was set up on the Brighton train on 1 July 1859, while a District Sorting Carriage was put into service on the Dover line on 1 August that year.

With these improvements, and the fact that the South Eastern District Office was near London Bridge station, the terminus used at this time by both railways, it was decided that the Deptford cross post

was no longer necessary.

A minute dated 3 September 1859 simply states:

"Under the circumstances described by Mr Boucher [vice-controller of the Circulation Department, as the London District Post had become], I submit that the Cross Post service between New Cross station, Deptford and Woolwich may be discontinued as he proposed on & from 12th inst."

Deptford was to be reduced in status from post town to receiving house at the same time. Unfortunately, the full circumstances related by Mr Boucher are not recorded. The apparatus at New Cross station was, however, removed on 21 October but the Deptford salary was not reduced until July 1862.

The great postal reforms of 1840 had already removed the original raison d'etre for the cross posts: the extra charges levied on letters which passed through the suburbs on their way to central London before

being brought back to those suburbs for delivery.

The improvement in the circulation of letters in the capital brought about by the division into districts removed the second advantage of the cross posts: earlier delivery of the country letters in certain suburbs.

By dispensing with the cross posts and concentrating country letters at the district head offices all the suburbs could be given early deliveries.

During the late 1850s and early 1860s, the new secretary to the Post Office, Sir Rowland Hill, dismantled the cross post systems - but not always with the support of the public.

At Woolwich, for example, the Local Board of Health (the nearest Woolwich had at that time to a Town Council) petitioned the PMG for the re-establishment of the cross post in 1861.

Hill would not go as far as restoring the cross posts, but did

propose an :

"acceleration...[of] all the Country Correspondence including the letters formerly brought by 'Cross Posts' from Towns in Kent, Sussex & Surrey.

"The improvement might, I should hope, induce the inhabitants to forego any desire for a restoration of these Cross Posts & for a return to the former arrangement which gave them a delivery only a little earlier in the morning of the Cross Post letters at the same time with the letters brought by the last despatch from London overnight the latter being now delivered on the evening of their arrival.

"The Cross Posts were extensive and in my opinion a return to the old arrangement whereby the London correspondence would be delayed till next morning, for the sake of an earlier distribution of the Cross Post letters would be highly objectionable."

The improvement Hill proposed was the use of the North Kent Railway (built at the end of the 1840s) to carry the country letters from central London early in the morning and a late fee scheme for letters posted at Woolwich in the evening.

"I would recommend that Mr E. Page [Inspector-General of Mails] be authorised to negotiate with the Railway Company for the conveyance of the bags in question by the means specified as 'parcels etc'."

On 16 May 1861, Boucher and Page reported back on their feasibility study. Page said the SER was prepared to carry the bags between Woolwich and London at the sceond class fare of 9d for each train used. Boucher suggested using both the 7.00am and 7.50am trains, which would allow the letter carriers to start their rounds about 30 minutes earlier.

"A valuable improvement may therefore be obtained at a cost of \$1/6 a day," said Sir Rowland.

Besides the earlier deliveries, consideration was given to later dispatches:

"As regards the question of affording later times for posting at Woolwich for the night mails out of London &c, Mr Boucher proposes in the first place, to keep the Receiving Office at Green's End open for 15 minutes longer (ie until 4.15pm) without fee, and secondly to receive letters bearing an extra stamp as late fee for another 15 minutes at that office, and for 30 minutes later than at present (up to 4.45pm) at the Church Street office, to be forwarded by the 4.50pm train to London. The greater distance of the Green's End office from the Railway Station renders it impracticable to give so late a time there for this dispatch as from the Church Street office.

"The public will, I think, derive considerable advantage from the arrangement and the produce from the late fee will probably cover the expense which will be 9d per day or 4%/6 a week for the use of the Train and %5/- a week for a messenger to convey the letters to the Station."

It is clear from this memo that the station in Woolwich to be used was Woolwich Dockyard, which is very near the site of the old Church Street office, and not Woolwich Arsenal station, which, in turn, is very near Green's End.

This proposal was accepted by the local residents as "a great improvement". Hardly had the ink dried on this agreement than the Post Office decided to extend the improved service — or at least the earlier

morning delivery - to other south east London towns.

The 7.00am train on the North Kent Railway was used for "one supplementary dispatch of letters from the South Eastern District Office". It was expected that this would result in "the letter carriers commencing the General Post delivery at the places specified 15 minutes earlier than at present". The "places specified" were Deptford, Greenwich, Blackheath, Lewisham and Charlton.

Sir Rowland recorded:

"Under the arrangement recently made with the Rail-way Company [covering Woolwich] the proposed additional bags would be conveyed without extra charge, but an expense of 5*/- a week would be necessary for a Messenger to take the bag containing the Deptford, Greenwich & Blackheath letters from New Cross Station, and another 5*/- a week for a second messenger to take the Charlton bag from the Charlton Station. In the case of Lewisham, no such expense would be needed.

"The letters for Deptford, Greenwich and Blackheath which would be affected amount to as many as 18,000 a week, but at Charlton the General Post delivery includes but 1,600 letters, and in this case there might perhaps be some question of the expediency of the proposed outlay (although the expense per letter will be very small) were the place differently situated, but being in the midst of a neighbourhood receiving the advantage, I think

Charlton should participate in it."

Six years later, problems were being experienced further down the North Kent Line at Plumstead. The population there had been expanding rapidly as there was a continual and increasing demand for workers at the Royal Arsenal, on the borders of Plumstead and Woolwich. The population of the parish had soared from 8,373 in 1851 to 24,502 by 1861 and was to reach 52,436 by 1891.

In February 1867, three auxiliary letter carriers were appointed at Plumstead "with a view to accelerate the General Post and the last deliveries there". However, a month later, further measures were taken to speed up the General Post delivery at Plumstead, "by sending a supplementary Bag by the Train leaving London at 7.12am". The additional

cost was to be only 2d a day.

Soon after this agreement had been approved, a much wider use of the North Kent Line was envisaged, which would also cover the Greenwich Line; both these lines were part of the SER's network. The first proposals were put forward at the end of April 1867 for "the substitution (except in regard to one journey out and home) of a railway service for the present cart service" for all the towns covered by the previous agreements: Deptford, Greenwich, Lewisham, Blackheath,

Charlton, Woolwich and Plumstead.

The charge was to be £100 a year for the general use of the North Kent Line and another £100 a year to use the Greenwich Line, against which there was a saving of £144 a year for the mail cart and another £45 or so paid for the use of the railway under earlier agreements.

However, besides the payments for the carriage of letters by the trains, various messengers had to be employed at rates varying between 3s and 10s a week to collect the mail from the stations, and the net result was an increase in expenditure of £91 3s 2d a year. A further cost of £3 7s a year was incurred two years later when it was decided to replace the foot messenger between Woolwich sorting office and the station with a mail cart.

With the start of a more general use of the North Kent Line for transporting the mails between London and the south eastern suburbs, the special afternoon dispatch from Woolwich ceased, together with its associated late fee service.



WHEREAS on the Night of the 26th Instant, Three Mail Bags of Letters labelled respectively "GRAVESEND," "GRAVESEND and DARTFORD," and "GRAVESEND and DEPTFORD," were feloniously Stolen from the Gravesend Post Office.

Whoever will give such Information as shall lead to the Apprehension and Conviction of the Offender or Offenders, shall receive a Reward of

FIFTY POUNDS,

payable on Conviction.

Apply to Mr. North, Superintendent of Police, Gravesend; or to M. B. Peacock, Esq., Solicitor to the Post Office.

GENERAL POST OFFICE, JUNE 30, 1845.

CHAPTER 18

CROSS POST STATISTICS

During the mid-1830s, there was considerable pressure for wide-ranging reforms of the Post Office. Freeling had himself introduced a number of improvements over the years, including the five London cross posts.

Such developments, however, did not dissuade the pressure groups from their main demand: the provision of cheap postage across the country. Although Freeling's efforts did much to improve the overall service, after his death in July 1836, the reformers' movement towards what was to be the Uniform Penny Postage gained momentum.

In the build-up to the Uniform Penny Post, a Parliamentary Select Committee gathered vast quantities of statistics, which were published - together with the written and oral evidence it collected - in a series of weighty reports. Among the mass of data, there is evidence to show just how effective, or otherwise, the London cross posts were.

The reports show that of the five original cross posts, the one

through Hounslow was by far the most widely used.

In the year to 5 July 1836, a total of 126,425 letters used the Hounslow cross post, compared with 43,009 letters through Shooters Hill, only 15,818 through Barnet (in six days under the year) and even lower annual rates in the first weeks of operation of the Waltham Cross and Croydon schemes.

These figures are given in the Select Committee's reports in terms

of revenue, split by sorting district, and are given in Table 4.

The Hounslow service was well used from the start. On the first day, Smith had reported 72 letters coming up the road, and 130 sent down, and at the end of the first month, "upwards of 6,000 letters" had been accelerated using the Hounslow cross post.

Thus at the beginning of the service, the rate was about 72,000 to 74,000 letters a year and, in the year 1835-6, the original portion of the cross post (ie excluding Twickenham, etc) handled 89,100 letters.

A second set of figures (for the year to 5 November 1837) was also published. However these included data on other, provincial, penny posts operated from the post towns, so cannot be compared, except for Shooters Hill, where there were no other penny posts. Here the number of cross post letters amounted to 47,963, a rise of 11.5 per cent.

It seems likely, then, that if the two larger, longest established cross posts - at Hounslow and Shooters Hill- continued to grow, the

three smaller cross posts also grew from the low initial rates.

Because Shooters Hill was the only cross post station which was not a post town in its own right, the data given for this office in the Select Committee's reports are solely related to the cross post traffic. Data from the other offices often combined cross post letters with letters for the towns themselves and dependent penny posts outside London.

An analysis of the statistics for Shooters Hill reveals much about the sort of letters using the cross post.

The 12 month figures show an average of 827 letters a week in 1835-6 and 922 letters per week in 1836-7. Assuming that the volume of correspondence in each direction was approximately the same, the figures for

the number of letters coming up the road from Kent work out at 413 and 461 per week for the two years.

Table 4. Revenue of London Cross Post in year ending 5 July 1836

				Equivalent No	
	£	S	d	of Letters	
HOUNSLOW					
Brentford etc	62	18	7	15, 103	
Turnham Green etc	20	10	8	4, 928	
Hammersmith etc	53	6	4	12, 796	
Kensington etc	117	7	7	28, 171	
Brompton etc	117	1	10	28, 102	
				89, 100	
Twickenham etc	155	10	5	37, 325	
	526	15	5	126, 425	
SHOOTERS HILL					
Woolwich etc	55	11	9	13, 341	
Blackheath etc	88	12	1	21, 265	
Deptford	26	4	7	6, 295	
New Cross & Peckham	8	15	8	2, 108	
	179	4	1	43, 009	
DADNET (C. 14 T.) 1005					
BARNET (from 11 July 1835)		^	_	0.045	Annual rate
Highgate	41	0	5	9, 845	
Whetstone	12	6	2	2, 954	
Finchley	12	11	7	3, 019	
	65	18	2	15, 818	(16, 038)
WALTHAM CROSS (from 5 Marc	h 1836	5)			
Stoke Newington	5	13	8	1, 364	
Tottenham	4	19	0	1, 188	
Edmonton	5	17	0	1,404	
Enfield	5	2	0	1, 224	
	21	11	8	5, 180	(15, 372)
CROYDON (from 21 May 1836)					
Brixton	4	13	0	1, 116	
Streatham	2	6	2	554	
or earnam	6	19	2		(12 0F1)
	0	19	4	1, 670	(13, 251)

Another set of statistics states that in two weeks in January 1838, the amount of correspondence delivered from Shooters Hill (ie the number of letters coming up the road) was:

	Week beginning			
	15 January 1838 29 Januar	y 1838		
Paid	96 97			
Unpaid	258 318			
Privileged	2 3			
Total	356 418			
Newspapers	136 141			

Further statistics show the number of letters broken down by "weight" in the week beginning 5 March 1838:

Single	387
Double	17
Treble	6
Ounce	1
Above 1oz	
Franks	
Total	411

This shows that 94 per cent of letters were single letters and the Select Committee also published figures showing the number of single unpaid letters delivered from Shooters Hill by rate charged:

	Week beg	inning
	14 May 1838	21 May 1838
1d	-	_
2d	36	35
3d		
4d	29	31
5d		
6d	108	106
7d	46	49
8d	57	74
9d and over		

There were no post towns in Kent 15 to 20 miles from Shooters Hill (ie in the 5d rate band) and there was little or no correspondence from towns over 80 miles, such as New Romney, which would be in the 9d or higher bands.

Well over a third of all correspondence paid the 6d rate and only three major towns - Rochester, Chatham and Maidstone - fell in that mileage rate, whereas eight towns, including Dover and Ramsgate, were in the 8d rate.

The 2d rate was paid on letters from Dartford, and the 4d rate covered Gravesend. Canterbury, Ashford and places like Sittingbourne and Faversham were in the 7d rate band.

The examples of Shooters Hill cross post letters which survive in various postal history collections reflect the proportions of correspondence in the different rate bands shown in the Select Committee's statistics. That is, the largest number are from 20 to 40 miles from Shooters Hill (Maidstone, etc), the next largest from 60-80 miles (Dover, etc) and so on.

However, the Committee's statistics were only for inland letters and a number of letters to and from France, Germany and Switzerland are known, with at least one India Ship Letter from Calcutta which was landed at Deal. In all, as many foreign letters are known as examples of letters from the 40 to 60 miles band. So, by analogy, it could be assumed that as many as 50 foreign letters a week used the Shooters Hill cross post in each direction.

An analysis of the number of letters using the other cross posts is not possible but from surviving examples it is possible to get some insight into the extent of the services.

Examples are known of letters passing through the Waltham Cross service from as far away as Edinburgh, a distance of 385 miles, and from Royston, Cambridgeshire, just 26 miles away.

On the Barnet road, examples are known going to Derby, 115 miles

away, and to Market Harborough, 73 miles from Barnet.

But by far the busiest cross post was that through Hounslow and later through Kingston. Before some of the western mails were transferred to the South Western Railway line through Kingston, letters are known which passed through Hounslow on their way to Poole and also to Jersey via Weymouth. After the division of the western mails between the two cross posts, Hounslow served places like Oxford, Marlborough, Chippenham, Bristol, Glastonbury and Tiverton in Devon, while Kingston served Bagshot, Odiham, Basingstoke, Andover, Farnham, Salisbury and Exeter. Examples are known going to or from all these places.

The split between Hounslow and Kingston is illustrated by two covers both sent from Hampton in late 1839 - one going to Bagshot, the other to

Chippenham.

Both covers have a TP/Hampton receiving house namestamp, the Hampton country sorting office date stamp, and the Twickenham/Penny Post stamp as Twickenham was the link from Hampton with the cross posts. The letter to Bagshot then went via Kingston, where it received the Kingston date stamp. The Chippenham letter went to Hounslow and received the Hounslow/Penny Post mark (probably in error, it should have been date stamped).

The importance of the cross posts, and of the Hounslow and Kingston system, was emphasised by Smith in 1843 when reporting on a proposal to

cut out the morning delivery in London suburbs:

"If we take... Hammersmith, Chelsea or Brompton, letters brought by the railroad are sorted upon Hounslow or upon Kingston... Those letters are forwarded in time to come in our morning delivery. At Chelsea & Brompton, I think the number of Letters sent up in that way are 200 in a morning; at Kensington 250. Now those letters must in that case be detained until the next delivery...The same applies to Waltham Cross line, and to Barnet and other places upon whatever line they may be: the letters do not come to London but stop short and go out by the next morning delivery: for example, a letter posted on the Dover line, at Blackheath would be delivered between eight and nine in the morning, but if you do away with the morning delivery they must be detained for some time and chime in with the next delivery."

Smith's figures of 1843 show that the cross posts were handling a very much larger volume of mail than in 1836, when the total number of letters going through the Brompton and Kensington sorting offices was only just over 150 each a day.

This, of course, reflects the vast increase in postal traffic that occurred generally following the introduction of Uniform Penny Postage.

Table 5. Recorded uses of Penny Post handstamps in the London cross posts (after Barrie Jay, London Catalogue)

OFFICE	CROSS POST OPENED	Type 1 Fig 13 Jay L730	Type 2 Fig 16 L737	Type 3 Fig 20 L720	Type 4 Fig 21 L741	Type 5 Fig 30 L733	Type 6 Fig 23 L721
Hounslow	6 Dec 1834	1835-38					18384-40
Kingston	15 Dec 1838					1839	18395
Sub-offices of the Brentford Brompton Hammersmith Kensington Turnham Green Twickenham	e Hounslow and Kingsto (10 April 1835) 6 March 1835	n cross pos	ts (Fig 2	(8);			1839 ⁴ 1839 ⁴ 1839 ⁴ 1839 ⁴ -45 1839 ⁴ -40 1839 ⁴ -40
Barnet	11 July 1835			1835-36			18381
Sub-offices of the Finchley Highgate Whetstone	e Barnet cross post (F.	ig 26);					1839 ² 1839 ² ¶ ²
Waltham Cross	5 March 1836				1836-38		1839 ³
Croydon	21 May 1836						1836-39

Notes;

' Issued 10 October 1838 ² Issued 27 October 1838 3 Issued 10 November 1838

5 Issued 25 February 1839

4 Issued 19 December 1838

¶ No examples known



CHAPTER 19

MR LOUIS' SUNDAY CIRCLE

The possibility of linking the cross post towns round London was considered seriously in 1837 as a way of overcoming the long break over Sunday in services for provincial mails that passed through central London.

It was George Louis, a senior clerk in the London Twopenny Post, who devised the plan during 1836. In January 1837, Maberly put the proposal forward to Lichfield, the PMG.

The idea was to avoid:

"the inconvenience that ensues at present from Letters intended to pass through London being delayed in their transit once a week for the period of 38 Hours and I now enclose that Plan which so clearly explains itself that the perusal of it will put your Lordship fully in possession of all the objects it is intended to effect and the means by which they are to be accomplished."

The full details of Louis' plan, however, do not appear to have survived and it has been necessary to piece together the proposal from references in Maberly's covering report and in Lichfield's later correspondence with the Treasury.

The core problem was that the provincial mail coaches arrived in London on Sunday mornings but there were no staff on duty to sort the mails and make up bags for onward transmission on Sunday evening. The mails that were to go on to other provincial towns were not dispatched until Monday evening.

Mail coaches did leave London on Sunday evenings but did not pick up any bags until they reached the first stage towns out of London. Most of these towns were used for the London cross posts - Hounslow, Croydon, Barnet, Waltham Cross and Shooters Hill - but several were not, such as Bromley, Edgware and Romford. Also at this time, Kingston had not been made into a cross post town.

Some of the deputies at these towns got special allowances for the Sunday duties: Ann Butler at Hounslow, for example, got £12 8s, while George Hudson at Barnet got £13. In other cases, payments for the Sunday duty were included in the office salary.

The obvious solution to the problem of the mail lying in London over Sunday was to bring in staff to sort the mail and dispatch it "in the same manner as on other days". This solution was proposed by virtually everyone who read Louis' plan, and Maberly admitted:

"As this method is the natural and obvious manner of avoiding delay, of course, it engaged my attention more particularly before I was disposed to entertain the Plan."

However, he went on to explain:

"If once the Officers of the Inland Office were known to be in attendence on Sundays, and it was ascertained that the Mails were to be dispatched as usual at night, the Public would never be satisfied until they had a Sunday delivery of Letters in London as they at present have in the country, and however particular Merchants might insist, still if business was done and Letters written by some Houses, such is the competition in business and such the low rate of profit that those Firms which pursued the practice would obtain so decided an advantage over others by the earlier intelligence they would obtain, that all would be driven to adopt it even against their own inclinations.

"Your Lordship is aware how contrary to the wishes of the great majority of the Mercantile community of London such an alteration in their habits would be, in fact, that is easily appreciated when it is known that 3 Sundays since when 4 or 5 Mails of Importance were wanting, and a delivery on the Sunday had been advertized to take place between 10 & 2 o'Clock at the GPO the postage on Letters demanded at the Window amounted only to the sum of 2°/11°!

"To give a direct circulation of Letters therefore, thro' London on Sunday would be to force the merchants of the Metropolis to make it a day of business against their will; and I consider it far preferable to obviate the delay indirectly, than to subject them to such an inconvenience - I put out of view altogether the annoyance to our own officers in not having the usual respite on Sunday, which...is of no little importance to them but which, as Public Servants, we have no right to insist upon if it should interfere with Public Interests - Still I would submit that if they are called upon to sacrifice the only portion of leisure they enjoy, they ought in fairness to be compensated for the loss of it, and if such remuneration were given, as I am prepared to maintain it ought to be, the direct mode of avoiding this delay of the correspondence of the Empire would be infinitely more expensive than the indirect; and it follows that, in every point of view, the proposition before your Lord p is the one most eligible for the Public."

Lichfield described Louis' plan as "accomplishing the object at much less expense, with equal certainty, and without involving the difficulties which attach to bringing the correspondence up to London".

He then went on to outline the mechanics of the proposal:

"The letters in question shall be sent from all parts of the country, so as to reach the nearest post-town to London on the different lines of road early on Sunday morning; that a cart shall be dispatched from Shooter's Hill, the head of the Dover road; pass through Bromley, the head of the Hastings; Croydon, the head of the Brighton; and Kingston, the head of the Portsmouth, and thence to Hounslow, the head of the Great Western roads; that

another cart shall start from Romford, the head of the Chelmsford road; Epping, the head of the Cambridge road; Waltham Cross, the head of the Hull, &c road; Barnet, the head of the Great Northern lines; Southall, the head of the Worcester road; and Edgware, the head of the Banbury road, and thence to Hounslow, to meet the other cart, exchange bags of letters, and both return by the same routes. As bags are now made up at all these towns for the country on Sundays, as on other days, which are picked up by the mail-coaches the same evening, the circulation of the letters, now delayed...would be rendered complete.

"The number of those letters is about 3,500 on the average; but there is every reason to believe that the important acceleration would largely augment them. I trust it would also be found practicable to included in the arrangement the letters brought by foreign mails to Dover, in which case 1,000 more must be added to the above number in the actual amount that would benefit by the regulation."

Maberly had outlined the proposal for handling the foreign mails: "If the plan of the Circle be adopted there is no reason why Foreign Letters should not pass round it as well as others; in which case it would be necessary that the Packets to Calais should sail every Monday from Dover, instead of remaining as they now do, in Port unless they have sufficient Freight in the shape of Passengers; and if possible the French and Belgian Authorities should be induced to make up distinct Bags for London and other parts of the Country in their Mails which should arrive in England on the Saturday night, should they, however, not be willing to do this, I think means can be found to accomplish the object without consent."

Maberly added that the expense had been estimated by Louis at $\pounds 408$ 4s "to which it may probably be necessary to add the salary of an additional clerk at Dover to assist in the duties connected with the Foreign Mails". Lichfield told the Treasury that the cost "at the outset" was about £500 a year. "This may, however, probably be reduced hereafter," he said.

The plan seemed to provide an ideal solution - but there was one problem: postage rates were based on the distance letters travelled. For the mails to go round London on the route proposed would obviously involve them travelling a much longer distance than on the direct route through London. Theoretically, then, letters sent round the circle on a Sunday would have to be charged a higher rate of postage. Maberly said it would not be practicable to charge a different rate of postage on one day in the week to the other six, so he told the PMG it would be necessary to get the Treasury to agree to waive the extra charges.

"If the Treasury are not prepared to give your Lordship authority for such reduction I cannot recommend you to adopt the System.

"To have one charge six days in the week and another and larger one, in most cases, on the seventh, must lead to such general dissatisfaction and such extensive correspondence in consequence of it, that it would inevitably disgust the Public, and terminate...in the Post Office being obliged to withdraw the plan in question altogether owing to the opposition made to it."

The alternative forced upon the Post Office, Maberly said, would be to use the direct route through London, which, of course, he had already discounted.

"Unless therefore your Lord" is empowered by the Treasury to depart from the strict Letter of the Law in this respect, I consider the objection fatal and should recommend the abandoment of the Plan, however ingenious and useful it may be."

Lichfield agreed it would be necessary to get the Treasury's permission to vary the rates of postage and that without such permission, the plan would not succeed. He also told Maberly:

"This is an extemely simple plan and does great credit to the ingenuity of Mr Louis - it is calculated to do away with a grievance long & loudly complained of by the Public without putting the whole of the Machinery of the Gen¹ Post Office in London into work on Sunday and which I have strong reasons for believing is not wished for by the inhabitants of the Metropolis."

In February 1837, Lichfield wrote to the Treasury explaining the plan and asking for:

"authority for deviating from the letter of the law, and empowering me to charge the letters in question with the same rates of postage on Sundays, when they would describe a circle round the metropolis, as on other days of the week, when they pass directly through it; unless such an authority be given I cannot recommend your Lordships to sanction the adoption of the plan in question, as, however beneficial, it would be productive only of dissatisfaction, and occasion more general inconvenience than is incurred under the existing system."

The Treasuary recommended that the direct route through central London be adopted for the Sunday mails and Lichfield had to write again at the end of March to explain in more detail why this proposal would not be appreciated by the London merchants.

It is not clear, however, if the Treasury was swayed by the arguments, at least not immediately, and no further reference was made to the plan until the summer of 1839, when Maberly wrote to Lichfield:

"Having understood that the Chancellor of the Exchequer had some idea of the plan submitted by Mr Louis in 1837 for preventing the delay of Letters intended to pass through London on Sundays being now carried into effect I desired Mr Johnson who has succeeded to the London District since that period to look attentively at the papers & to report

whether the adoption of railway conveyance for the Mails or any other circ* * would now render the plan impracticable or inexpedient. I send his report with the former papers & perhaps your Lordship will take an opportunity of consulting Mr Baring upon the Subject."

Again, unfortunately, Johnson's report has gone missing together with the "former papers" which were with it - presumably Louis' original plans.

However, Lichfield's decision two months later was "Mr Louis' plan for preventing the delay of letters intended to pass through London on Sundays to stand over for the present" so it is presumed that Johnson thought the use of the railways to carry the mails would prevent the original plan working properly — or else he had found some other flaw.

There is no evidence that the plan, even in a modified form to account for changes brought about by the railways, was ever adopted. Had it been, the possibility of using it to take letters from one ride in the Country area of the Twopenny Post to link with any of the other post roads round London would have been a major development in the London cross post system. In the end, the only part of the circle that was linked up was between Kingston and Hounslow (Chapter 16).



APPENDIX I

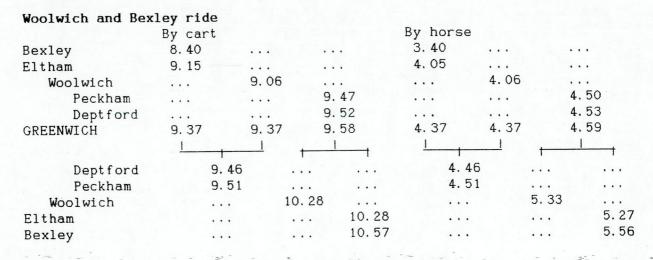
BYE POST TIMETABLES

Based on Appendix 53 to the Ninth Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Inquire into the Management of the Post Office Department (1837).

	Morning	Afternoon
Hounslow ride	0	
	By cart	By horse
Hounslow	8. 45	3. 45
Brentford	9.06	4.06
Turnham Green	9. 24	4. 24
Hammersmith	9. 36	4.36
Kensington	9. 47	4. 47
Brompton	9. 59	4.59
Brompton	9. 48	4.40
Kensington	9. 58	4.52
Hammersmith	10. 07	5.03
Turnham Green	10. 15	5. 15
Brentford	10. 31	5.33
Hounslow	10. 53	5.54
Edgware ride		
	By cart	By horse
Edgware	8. 52	3. 52
Hendon	9. 20	4.20
Hampstead	9.44	4.44
Hampstead	9. 58	4. 28
Hendon	10. 20	4. 43
Edgware	10. 52	5. 22
Barnet ride		
Dainet Tide	Ry horse	Py horse
Barnet	By horse 8.58	By horse 3.38
Whetstone	9. 15	4. 15
Finchley	9. 35	4. 35
Highgate	9. 47	4. 47
uigugate	5. 47	4. 4/
Highgate	9. 55	4.40
Finchley	10.06	4.53
Whetstone	10. 30	5. 15
Barnet	10. 46	5.31

	Morning			Afternoon		
Enfield ride						
	By horse			By horse		
Enfield	9. 10			4. 20		
Edmonton	9. 42			4. 42		
Tottenham	9. 50			4.50		
Stoke Newington	10.02			5.02		
Stoke Newington	10.00			4. 48		
Tottenham	10. 14			5. 02		
Edmonton	10. 33			5. 21		
Enfield	10.55			5. 43		
Chimroll and Dow	aford rido					
Chigwell and Rom				By horse		
D C d	By horse 8.56			3. 36		
Romford		9.06			4.06	
Chigwell		9. 25			4. 25	
Woodford		9. 40			4. 40	• • •
Leyton			9.50	•••		4.36
Bow	0.56	9. 56	9. 59	4. 56	4.56	4. 45
STRATFORD	9. 56	9. 30	5.55	4. 50	1.30	1
	1 1	_ +	1		'	
Bow	10.05			5.05		
Leyton			10.15			5.01
Woodford			10.30			5. 16
Chigwell			10.49			5.35
Romford		10.5	9		5.45	

Morning schedule allowed letters from Romford to be sent to Chigwell and vice versa, but the evening timetable apparently precluded such an exchange



Croydon ride Croydon Carshalton Clapham Tooting MITCHAM Tooting Clapham Carshalton Croydon	Morning By horse 9.06 9.33 9.46 10.11	11	10. 10. 10. 10.	00 25	Afternoon By horse 4.06 4.44 4.46 5.11	4. 06 4. 33	 6. 01	4. 56 5. 21 5. 34
								0.01
Bromley ride								
	By cart				By horse			
Bromley	8. 45				3. 45		-	
Beckenham	9.00				4.00			
Sydenham	9. 25				4. 25			
Dulwich	9. 48				4. 48			
Dulwich	9.54				4. 33			
Sydenham	10. 17				4. 56			
Beckenham	10.40				5. 21			
Bromley	10. 55				5.36			
Hampton and King	cton rido							
nampton and king	By cart				Dr. honos			
Kingston	8. 55				By horse 3.55			
Hampton		8. 30				2 20		
Twickenham		8. 55			• • •	3.30		
Richmond		9. 06				3. 55 4. 06		
Mortlake		9. 20				4. 20		
Putney		9. 37				4. 37		
WANDSWORTH	10. 10	9. 46	10.	10	4.59	4. 46		4. 59
WILL DWOK III	10.10	3. 40	. 1		4.05	4.40		1 .
Putney		10	10				F 10	
Mortlake			. 19	• • •			5. 10	• • •
Richmond			. 36 . 50	• • • •			5. 16	• • •
Twickenham			. 00	••••			5.30	• • •
Hampton			. 25	• • • •			5. 40	
Kingston		11	. 25	10.58			6.05	F 46
				10.50				5.46

APPENDIX II

CROSS POST TIMETABLES

Based on Appendix 44 to the Ninth Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Inquire into the Management of the Post Office Department (1837).

Morning			Afternoon		
	Departed	Arrived		Departed	Arrived
Hounslow to Brompton	6. 20	7. 30	Brompton to Hounslow		7.40
Barnet to Highgate	6.20	7. 12	Highgate to Barnet	6.40	7.32
Waltham Cross to			Stoke Newington to		
Stoke Newington	6. 15	7. 25	Waltham Cross	6.30	7.40
Croydon to Brixton	6.20	7. 12	Brixton to Croydon	6.30	7.22

No timings were given in Appendix 44 for the Shooters Hill cross post as the data concerned rides and Shooters Hill was served by foot messengers. Similarly, there are no timings for the foot messenger from Hounslow to Twickenham

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                                             (1811) Croydon ride
                                             (1811) All rides
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                                             (1823) Vauxhall sorting office
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                                             (1830) Hampton extension
                                             (1830) 3 Mile Circle
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                                              (1831) Finchley and Hendon rides
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                                             (1831) 3 Mile Circle
                                              (1831) Finchley ride
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                                              (1831) 3 Mile Circle
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