

Royal Proclamation of Philip and Mary

London, 20th August 1558 (4 & 5 Philip and Mary)

[Order to Sir John Mason, Master of the Posts, 'to reform abuses of usual slackness of the posts laid northward in the conveyance of letters hither, and the opening of them by the way, and therefore requiring him to give order forthwith for their reformation in that behalf, or else the Queen's majesty must be enforced to discharge them every one, and to seek some new means to be served from time to time with a through post.']

1. First it is ordained that there shall be ordinary posts laid at Dover, Canterbury, Sittingbourne, Rochester, Dartford, and London.
2. And forasmuch as the tide so falleth many times as many couriers taking the commodity thereof use to pass by the river to Gravesend, it is ordained that there shall be a post there appointed to serve that town from there to Rochester, and to Dartford from Gravesend upon need shall be.
3. Every of the posts shall be bound to have always the number of six horses at the least; two for the packet and four for goers and comers by post.
4. The ordinary post abovesaid shall take for every horse delivered to run post, 2s. 6d.
5. No man shall ride post without a guide; which guide shall ever in his journey have his horn which he shall blow at the towns and where the post is laid, and shall be bound to carry the courier's mail being of a reasonable weight.
6. No horses shall be delivered to run post but to the places, and from place to place, where the posts do lie, unless it be by special appointment appearing by two of the council's letters or by the mayor of the said posts.
7. In case couriers shall come so thick or in such numbers as the post's furniture will not serve, then the hackneyman at the appointment of the ordinary posts shall supply the lack, and generally at all times of lack the hackneyman shall be ready to furnish in such sort as shall be appointed unto them by the said ordinary post, whose request therein they shall in no case refuse; receiving for such horses as any of them in this case shall deliver the selfsame sum of money that the said ordinary posts use to do when themselves do furnish, that is to say, 2s. 6d. for every horse.
8. No man shall deliver any horse to any courier, or any other riding in post, but the ordinary post, or by his appointment; under pain of imprisonment and arbitrary fine. And in case any, hiring horses to go by journey, shall nevertheless run the gallop with them by the way, the same coming to the post's knowledge next adjoining to the place where the said horses were hired, he shall cause the same to be stayed and arrested, and the party shall not be suffered to have from thence any horse, either to run the post or to go by journey; and the party owning the horse shall have his action against the hirer of him.
9. The guides shall bring all couriers to the door of the ordinary post, where they shall both light from their horses and take new in the same place and not elsewhere; unless at the request of such as being men of sorts, the said horses may be brought to the door of the inn where they shall be at, where they may also light from their horses.
10. No hackneyman, unless he shall be appointed by the ordinary post, shall deliver any horse to any courier or others riding post, but only to ride in journey; and for the hire of such horses he shall neither demand or take above 2d. for every mile; under pain of imprisonment.
11. The ordinary posts shall have a horn always hanging at their doors, or some other painted sign declaring that to be the post-house.

The post of Gravesend shall take for every horse 16d., and shall not be bound to the conveyance of the packet, to whom in case of lack all other hackneymen there shall be ready to furnish horses; receiving for every horse appointed so to run post, 16d. Neither shall any of them deliver any horse to run post but by his appointment, neither take, for any horse they shall hire out to go in journey, pay above 2d. at the most for the mile, as is abovesaid.