

NOTEBOOK

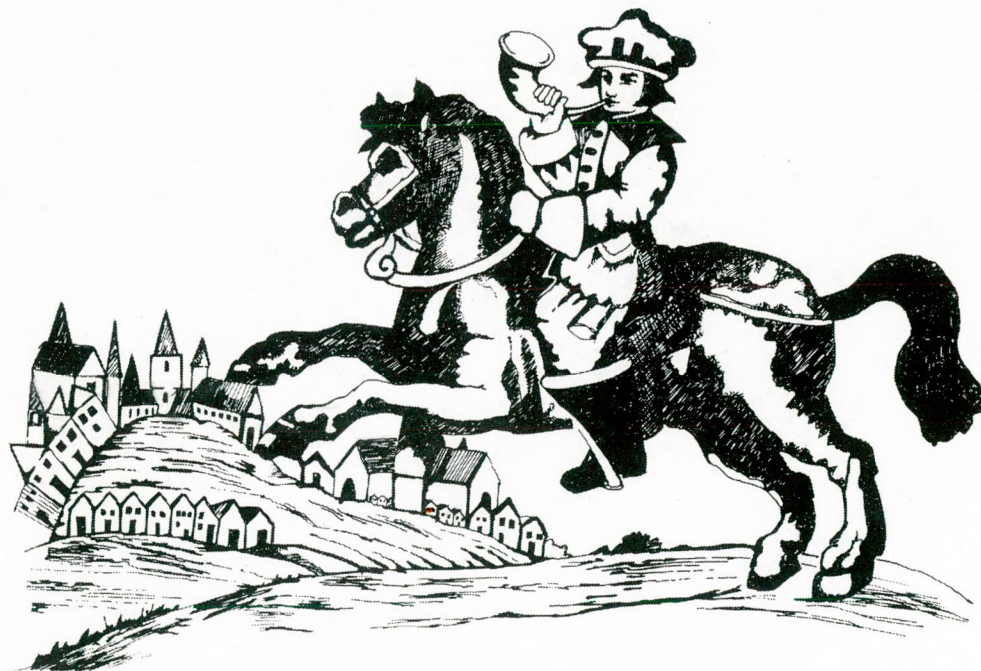
POSTAL HISTORY IS THE STUDY OF THE OPERATION OF POSTAL SERVICES
BOTH PUBLIC AND PRIVATE AND THE PUBLICATION OF THE FRUITS OF
SUCH STUDY

IN THIS ISSUE.....

COURT MAIL

Sir Peter Horsley and Jean Farrugia

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Haste Post Haste

CAROLYN-MARIE TURNER

COURT MAIL, by Sir Peter Horsley and Jean Farrugia

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It was intended to abstract those parts which relate directly to London but, on reflection, this clearly detracted so much from the value of the whole, it is a complete republication.

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In November 1974 a special exhibition featuring the Court Post was opened in the National Postal Museum, London, and remained on view until February 1975 whence it travelled north across the border " Haste Post Haste " to Glasgow as part of the 800th. Anniversary of the Burgh, where it rested until 17th. May 1975. The exhibition recounted the story of the Court Post from early to modern times and was illustrated by many examples from the collections of Martin Willcocks, Albert Thomson and myself, together with material both from the Post Office records and the Court Post Office at Buckingham Palace. The success and popularity of this exhibition was in no mean measure due to Jean Farrugia's enthusiasm, research and work in bringing it altogether and I am most grateful for her collaboration and help with the following series of articles.

Many have written about the various aspects and ingredients of the Court Post including my own efforts in the " Journal of a Stamp Collector " but I am not sure whether anyone has attempted, as I shall, to pull all the strands together, nevertheless, I am only too conscious of the work done by others in this field and of the gaps remaining in my own knowledge.

To me stamps have always been about communications and, while today, it is largely taken for granted that, by just lifting a telephone, a satellite orbiting in space will relay our voices to the farthest corners of the globe, just a hundred and fifty years ago the great majority of folk in this country could not even write, nevermind afford to send messages of any kind; it was their illiteracy and inability to communicate which kept the poor ignorant and immobile in their villages and hamlets. For example, it was stated during the Parliamentary Enquiry of 1838 into Postal Reform that "...the difficulty of communicating leads to the remarkable tenacity of the poor to continue in their own parishes, rather than remove to another where their conditions might be improved..." and "...the consequence of the high rates of postage, in preventing the working class from having intercourse by letter, is that those who learned at school to write copy have lost their ability to do so...". This isolation permitted atrocities and injustices to go unheeded and unchecked by public opinion and even governments. Once relatively cheap and organised postage was introduced and then expanded overseas, ordinary people rapidly became far more articulate and so began to influence events - it was, after all, the rising clamour of public opinion which in the end led to the abolition of slavery. Today great national disasters are followed swiftly by relief from all points of the compass and accidents in remote places may no longer prove fatal as telegraph wires hum and special equipment and doctors follow. While in some parts of the world military adventures may still wreak their special kind of havoc, the rest of us will, at least, read about it the following morning over our breakfast tables and the United Nations may even debate it.

You may now be asking yourselves what has this to do with the Court Post. Well it all began with the urgent need, not just the luxury, for communications and this first article will try to trace its historic path. In the earliest days it was obviously vital for kings and nobles, governors and military leaders to pass messages and orders; to merchant princes the passage of business instructions was also of great importance and we know of the existence of the well-established Merchants Posts of the 15th. and 16th. centuries which plied between the great trading centres of Europe - indeed some originated in London, following the route to Dover and thence across Europe from City Post to City Post to various destinations. It is also fact there was a network of carriers for private mail used by the nobility and rich to take messages beyond the reach of their own servants. For centuries letters on affairs of State or to and from the Court and despatches in time of War, were carried by Messengers of the Court: prior to Henry VIII's reign, these couriers were styled Nuncii and Cursores and were an impor -

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tant adjunct to the Court. However, the genesis of our present-day postal services was in the lines of regular post-stages set up in Henry VIII's reign by the first known " Master of the Post ", Sir Brian Tuke. At the Court of Elizabeth I in 1558, the first year of her reign, there were six messengers of the Court and it is recorded in that year " a letter to Sir John Mason, Knight, Threasourer of the Chamber, to pay of suche threasoure as doth remayne in his handes to Robert Cascoigne, John Forster, John Wynter, Thomas Clerke, John Man and Robert Kytchewan, messengers, being presently sent forth with letters, souche a somme as he shall thynke necessary for their journeys ". In 1565 Robert Cascoigne became " Post of the Court " responsible to the Master of the Posts and receiving a payment of four shillings a day during the times of the Queen's journeys through her Kingdom. Cascoigne survived charges of fraud and ill-conduct whilst in office and in 1583 surveyed the Queen's posts on the road from London to Berwick and it is recorded " Robert Cascoigne to Sec. Walsingham. I have gone through the posts to Berwick, and in my journey have examined the books in general, and find default in every one of them. Since my coming Sir Hen. Wodrington, marshal there, sent letters to the Lord Treasurer, Lord Hunsdon, and you, and delivered them to the posts there at 5 p.m. of Aug. 25, which were not received at Belford until 12 at night, and at Alnwick until 10 a.m. of the 26th., so that there were 17 hours between Berwick and Alnwick. The post of Belford alleges his boy fell into the water. The defects of all will appear by their books, of which I have made a copy for August and September. In my return, I shall give every post certain articles, of which I enclose a copy, and if you shall be pleased to reform anything, inform me of it ". (Enclosure).

" Orders by Queen and Council to be observed by all posts between London and
Berwick :

Every postmaster receiving any packet of letters from Sir Fras. Walsingham, or any of the Council for Her Majesty's affairs, is to affix a label, subscribed with his name, of the day and hour that it came to his hands.

To keep a proper book, wherein he shall enter the date and hour of the receipt of packets, agreeing with the label.

To keep two or three good horses in his stable, for speedy conveyance of such packets, the person carrying such to ride six miles an hour.

If any of them break these orders, it will be to their uttermost peril ".

In Elizabeth's day, not a single post was mentioned without some qualification associating it with her person - " a post daily serving Her, a post for Her Majesty's service and affairs, a post for the conveyance of Her Majesty's letters and those of her Council and so on ". Those carrying Royal Mail were to " blow their horn as oft as they met company, or four times in every mile ". A few of the most important statesmen were permitted to send urgent messages and by writing on them "Haste Post Haste " or similar words they were accorded special treatment; this treatment involved their carriage by a messenger without stopping to rest and messages were signed by each postmaster or innkeeper with the time of arrival while horses were changed. For example, reprieves for condemned prisoners bore inscriptions such as " Hast, Hast Hast, Post, Hast, Hast for Life ", and the sign of the gallows. Such inscriptions are rare and command large prices. Because of the high cost of hiring horses and as the volume of Court mail grew, to augment their income Postmasters were given sole rights to supply horses to travellers at 2½d. a mile, provided fresh animals were available for Royal messengers at the special rate of 1d. per mile. Also Postboys carried private letters with the Packet to supplement their low pay although this was not officially allowed; however, delays became so bad that orders were given that messengers must not diverge from their routes to deliver private mail nor make special journeys without carrying a State Packet.

The question of pay was a sore subject with Postmasters. It was an expensive busi-

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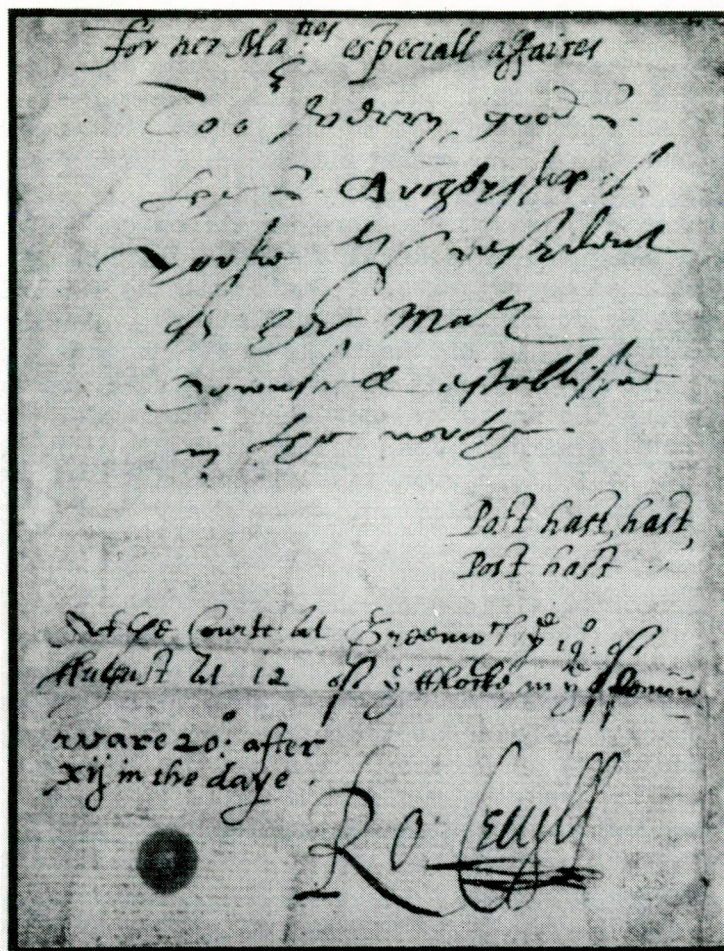
For her Maties
especiall affaires

1596

Post hast, hast,
Post hast

At ye Courte at
Greenwich ye
19th August at
12 of ye clocke in
ye fornoon
Ware 20: after
xij in the daye
Ro-Cecyll

[Barry Jay
collection



ness maintaining a large number of horses, with their salaries often years in arrears and a note from Sec. Conway to the Lord Treasurer in 1628 stated " Mr.Wotton, Postmaster for the Court, is not able longer to perform the service without pay. Recommends him for payment as soon as there shall be a possibility, and that in themeant the Lord Treasurer will give him some comfort in signing his orders " and in 1837 it is recorded " Petition of John Wytton, Deputy Postmaster of the Court, daily attending Your Majesty, to the King, for his wage of 10s per diem there is due to him 1400 l, neither has he allowance of diet or horsemeat ". Many fell deeply into debt, even suffering imprisonment.

In the reign of James I (1603 - 1625), all four posts of the Kingdom still centred on the Courte: The Courte to Barwicke (The post to Scotland): The Courte to Beaumoris (the post to Ireland): The Courte to Dover (the post to the Continent) and the Courte to Plymouth (the post to the royal Dockyard). The office of Court Post continued long after 1635, when Charles I, short of funds, opened his posts to public use, and by the reign of Queen Anne the close connection which had once existed between the posts and the Crown had not been completely severed. In the Autumn of 1707 the Queen, attended by her Court, set out for Newmarket, and in attendance was Henry Andrews, the Court Post. Like that of his predecessor in the reign of William III, James de Cardonnell, his duty was to carry letters between the Court and the nearest stage or post-town, a duly considered so arduous that his allowance had recently been doubled to twenty shillings a day - payable quarterly out of the profits of the Post Office. When the Court was at Newmarket or Windsor, Andrews had no long distance to ride, these places being post-towns; but when the Court was in London or at Hampton his journey was longer. In London he had to carry the letters between Kensington or Whitehall and the General Post Office in Lombard Street: and when at Hampton, not a post-town, he had to carry them to and from Kingston. At this time, another " in attendance on Her Majesty in the care of her letters " was the Comptroller of the London sorting office, William Frankland, son of one of the Joint Postmasters-General. At the Harwich Packet

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Station, as soon as the mail arrived from Holland, the seals of the bags were broken and the letters for the Court taken out and sent to Newmarket by express. On arrival at Newmarket the express took them, not to the Palace, but to the post office, where they were addressed under cover to Frankland.

By then Court, or State letters as they were sometimes called, were defined to be letters directed to " The Queen, His Royal Highness the Prince, the Lord High Treasurer, and the two principal Secretaries of State and their Clerks ". Until the 1780's the Mails did not leave London until the Court letters had been received at the General Post Office. This detaining of the Mails until the arrival of the Court post had been a cause of constant complaint since the beginning of the century and part of the plan for accelerating the Mails by the use of armed mail coaches on the principal roads of the kingdom put forward by John Palmer in 1782, was they should not be kept waiting for the Government letters when these happened to be late. In 1807 Court letters coming into London were still, unlike ordinary letters, delivered the moment the Mail arrived.

By 1787 most of the principal Offices of the Post Office had become sinecures, some holders only occasionally attending, and others - including the Court Post - attending not at all. The Court Post, Henry Penton, employed a Deputy to whom, out of his salary of £750, he made an annual allowance of £58. From the many perquisites enjoyed by offices of the Post Office at that time, one at least possessed a certain interest as marking the close connection which had once existed between the Post Office and the Crown. This was the fee of one shilling received by the Chief Sorter at the G.P.O. on the occasion of a birthday in the Royal Family. In 1787 the Royal Family consisted of twenty one members, and so his income from this source in that year amounted to one guinea. Until 1869, when Post Office employees ceased to be servants of the Crown, they enjoyed a special day's leave a year known as " The Queen's Birthday ". Today, under Corporation status, it is known as the Post Office Spring Holiday !

In June 1793 it was " ordered by His Majesty in Council that the Office of Court Post should be discontinued on the decision of Mr. Penton ". And so, in January 1812, on Penton's death, the Office of Court Post -- long considered unnecessary and more properly performed by any of the Messengers in Waiting -- ceased. A Memorial from Thomas Collier, Deputy Court Post, in April 1812, asking for the continuation of his allowance from the revenues of the Post Office, was sympathetically received by the Treasury, who granted him £36 a year.

The Sovereign's letters continued to be carried post-free until 10th. January, 1840, when the young Queen Victoria voluntarily surrendered her right to Royal franking as an example to those, such as Members of Parliament, who had lost their franking privilege upon the introduction of Uniform Penny Postage. A notice in the Sunday Times of December 29th., 1839, read as follows : - " We are happy to be able to insert today the important minute directing the commencement of the Penny Post on January 10th. It will be seen Her Majesty has given up her franking privilege, and will use stamps like her subjects ". But although, henceforth, her letters bore postage stamps, just like those of her subjects, she adopted the practise of autographing the envelope to denote the sender " The Queen ", in the same way the letters authorised to go through the post free of charge had once been franked. Royal Messengers, however, continued to carry certain letters by hand.

Two years later, in 1842, a Letter Receiving House was opened in the village of Crathie, near Balmoral. The first Receiver was Charles Thomson, Head Forester of the Balmoral Estate who, realising soon after the introduction of uniform penny postage the village needed a post office, had set about building one. His new home and post office were very much like any other cottage in the area and it also possessed the usual bare wood dresser found in most highland cottages but Thomson's dresser had a special drawer set aside for all the paraphernalia of the office. It was from this cottage he carried on the business of the post office for forty-five years until his death in 1887. Queen Victoria had become a frequent visitor -- first visiting Balmoral in 1848 -- and upon Thompson's death expressed the wish that his son, Albert, then following a successful

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career in London, should take over the office. When she realised he would suffer a substantial drop in income if he agreed, she undertook personally to make up the deficiency. And so Albert Thomson became Postmaster of Crathie by Royal request. Today, his son is Postmaster, carrying on the business -- in the same building -- which has been part of the Thomson family life for over one hundred years. Just a few yards away is Crathie Kirk, where Her Majesty The Queen worships when she returns to Balmoral, her highland home. On the afternoon of the 20th. August, 1955, for four hours only, a temporary post office was opened at Abergeldie Castle, where cards and letters, bearing its special date stamp, Abergeldie Castle Aberdeen 20 AU 55, were sold by Prince Charles and Princess Anne, raising over £2,000 in aid of Crathie Church funds.

During Queen Victoria's visits to Balmoral, the Court's letters were dealt with wholly at the Castle by the Sergeant Footman, the sealed bags etc., being made up by him. He also affixed postage stamps to the Court's letters. These did not pass through any of the sub-post offices operating in the area, Crathie and Braemar, but were carried to and from the train at Ballater by a messenger in a special conveyance.

From 1870, when the private telegraph companies were taken over by the Post Office, a Court Telegraphist was provided by the Post Office to serve the Queen and the Court. The first to be so provided was George Warren, formerly an employee of The Electric & International Telegraph Company, whose salary was recoverable from the Privy Purse. Various hand date were provided for his use but were issued for Telegraphic purposes only. In 1877, at the express wish of the Prince of Wales, later Edward VII, a sub-post office was established at Sandringham House, his private country residence. The postmaster's salary was £25 a year, and during the visits of the Prince and Princess, or the young princes when their parents were abroad, the Post Office bore the additional cost of nine shillings a day for a special cart service to and from Lynn, the nearest post-town. This public office, mostly used by staff of the Estate, was closed on the 9th. February, 1968. However, no special postal facilities were provided for the Court's mail until January, 1897, when a Court post office was opened at Osborne House for the Convenience of the Queen's household and to relieve the Sergeant Footman of what amounted to the duties of a sub-postmaster. The Court Telegraphist acted as Clerk-in-Charge and a special hand date stamp was issued for his use, the first to be issued for postal use at the Court.

This first part has given a brief summary of the history of the Court Post up to the end of the 19th. century. In the second, I will attempt to start relating history to the great variety of Court cancellations, franking stamps and cachets. Before that, however, a few extracts from records and accounts of the Court Post, reprinted with thanks and acknowledgement to the Court Postmaster.

1565, August 5th: Office of Court Post created by Warrant of the Council.

1624: Richard Pock appointed Court Post.

1627: Anthony Buckling appointed Court Post (soon after, office delegated to a Deputy -- John Wytton).

1637: John Wytton turned out of office.

1700-01: Office held by Mr. Vanhill.

1701-02: Mr. Cardinell appointed.

1747: " Paid Dennis Bond, Esq. 90 days fee as Court Post at 40 (shillings) p. Diem at Lady Day Last 180 (pounds).
Paid Henry Penton Esq. 366 Days Fees as Court Post....£732."

1801, June 13th: Letter to the Treasurer :- "...the only Patent Place for Life in the Department of the Post Office, which in the tenth Report of the Commissioners of Enquiry is stated to be altogether unnecessary; that the Duty may be very

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properly performed by any of the Messengers in Waiting at the Secretary of States Office, and therefore they (the Joint Postmasters General) were of the opinion that on the Demise or Resignation of the present Patentee this Office ought to be abolished...."

1812: "Cash Paid to H. Penton 365 Days Fee Court Post £730."

1812, January: Postmaster-General informed that the death of Mr. Henry Penton, the Court Post, had been announced in the newspapers:- " Mr Penton's salary is £2 p. Diem or £730 p. ann which will be paid to the day of his Death. It was ordered by His Majesty in Council on the 21st. June 1793 that the Office of Court Post should be discontinued on the Decease of Mr. Penton, and the sum of £730 p.ann. will consequently fall into the Revenue....."

1812, April: Memorial of Thomas Collier, Deputy Court Post, for continuance of allowance from Post Office revenues after the abolition of the Patent Office of Court Post (Collier's memorial reveals that he had served both Mr Henry Penton, Senior, and his son). Allowance of £36 per annum granted by Treasury.

1840, January 10th : Parliamentary and official franking of letters ceased (henceforth free of use of the mails to be for official use only). But Queen Victoria indicated her desire that this regulation should also apply to her letters -- setting a splendid example by this voluntary act.

1870: The Court Telegraphist (Mr. G. Warren) an employee of the Electric and International Telegraph Company, placed on the Establishment of the Post Office (Southampton office) upon its take-over of the private telegraph companies (his salary being recoverable from the Privy Purse). Arrangements made for improved telegraph service between Buckingham Palace and Balmoral, Osborne, and Windsor Castle.

1896: Mr. J.M. Hiley (Deputy Court Telegraphist at Windsor Castle) appointed Court Telegraphist on death of Mr. Warren.

1897, January 1st: Sub-post office opened at Osborne (" hitherto open only for telegraph work ") for the convenience of the Queen's Household and to relieve the Sergeant Footman who had previously performed, it was said, what amounted to the duties of a Sub-Postmaster. (There were four mails each way at Osborne, which were dispatched and received by the Sergeant Footman who also weighed letters and parcels and sold stamps). Sub-office subordinate to Cowes; Court Telegraphist acted as Clerk-in-Charge. Consideration given to opening of sub-office at Balmoral also, but not considered necessary. Office not required at Windsor Castle.

1898, February 17th : Official arrangements made with Court Telegraphist for sale of stamps and postal orders at Windsor Castle (he had already been selling stamps occasionally) when Court at Windsor Castle. Establishment of sub-office not considered necessary (Castle adjoined HPO, unlike Osborne which was some miles distant from Cowes Post Office).

1901, September : Royal franking revived by Edward VII.

1902, April 14th: Post Office for the sale of stamps etc. opened at Buckingham Palace.

1903: Court Telegraphist occupied with both telegraph and postal duties when Court at Balmoral Castle or Sandringham (A public Telegraph Office had been opened at Sandringham House in 1886): assistance sent out by Postmasters of Aberdeen and King's Lynn.

1904, February : By this time, post offices were being maintained at Buckingham Palace, Windsor and Balmoral.

1906, September : Mr. Hiley promoted to the rank of Court Postmaster, at the wish of the King. Current arrangements : - Buckingham Palace : office open all the year round. Windsor, Balmoral and Sandringham: office when Court in residence.

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1909, July : Balmoral Castle listed for the first time in a list of post offices in the " Post Office Guide ". Court Postmasters appointed in more recent years were : 1922 F.G. Wilson. 1929 F.A. Mason. 1935 G.P. Wyles. 1940 R.E. Rideout. 1945 E.J. Burt. 1952 R. Norton. 1962 W.A. King. 1975 L. Pengelly.

Hand Date Stamps

Many philatelists develop side-shows alongside their main stream interests -- such side shows might include collections of Ship Letter Marks, Paquebot cancellations or such modern innovations as Pictorial First Day and Commemorative covers. For a number of years I served as an Equerry in the Royal Household, first to Princess Elizabeth and Prince Philip, then to the Queen from the time Her Majesty came to the throne and finally to H.R.H. Prince Philip when he started his flying training; the photograph of



the Post Office van leaving the Palace was, I hasten to add, taken a little time before my time! As part of my duties concerned dealing with correspondence, it was not perhaps unnatural in such an environment I should begin to enquire how the mail was handled after it left my office and from these enquiries sprang a much wider and more detailed study of Court Mail over the centuries. Sir John Wilson, who was then keeper of the Royal Philatelic Collection, took a benevolent interest in my researches although I felt sometimes it was like discussing a local dialect with a classical scholar. The Court Postmaster at the time, Mr. Norton, gave me considerable advice and subsequently the late Mr. Butters, Court Postmaster from 1967, was of consider-

able assistance in helping me to assemble an exhibition of Court Mail for Philypia. Mr. Pengelly, the present Court Postmaster, has gone to immense trouble in helping Jean Farrugia and myself with this article.

We now propose to deal with the hand date stamps, although, for the time being, we are excluding those used on overseas visits and the scroll handstamps which still remain something of a mystery.

The office of Court Post continued long after 1635 when Charles I, short of funds, opened his post~~as~~ to public use. By the time of Henry Andrews, Court Post to Queen Anne from 1705, Letters Patent, given for life, defined the duties of the Office as being to carry " All Royal Letters and Dispatches between the Court or Palace of Residence and the first Post Stage or Post Office..." in return for an allowance of 20/- a day out of the profits of the Post Office. When the Court was at Newmarket or Windsor the Court Post had no distance to ride, since they were post towns. However, when the Court was in London or Hampton his journey was longer since letters had to be carried between Kensington or Whitehall and the General Post Offices in Lombard Street, or in the case of Hampton, not a post town, to and from Kingston. Until the 1780's the mails did not leave London until the Court letters had been received at the General Post Office. As late as 1807 Court letters coming into London were, unlike ordinary letters, delivered the moment the mail arrived.

The office of Court Post was discontinued in 1812 upon the death of Henry Penton the younger, the last to hold office. However, the Sovereign's letters continued to be carried post-free until in 1840 Queen Victoria voluntarily surrendered this right, although Royal messengers continued to carry certain letters by hand. Meanwhile, no special post facilities were provided for the Court Mail until 1897 (although a number

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of hand date stamps were used by the telegraph office), except in one instance. An extract from a Post Office minute reads " To P.M.G. -- I submit that a Post Office may be established at Sandringham House as desired by the Prince of Wales. To commence:-- S0 salary £25. In addition an expense of 9/- a day during the stay of the Prince or Princess for a special cart between Lynn and Sandringham in the evening. To cease : - Dersingham S0 allowance for the delivery and collection at Sandringham (9/- a week)". This minute was approved by the P.M.G. who added that special postal arrangements were required for the Prince of Wales' children during their stay at Sandringham as the Prince and Princess were going abroad and they had to have all the facilities they really desired for writing to and hearing from their children.

No further special arrangements were made until January, 1897, when a Court Post Office was opened at Osborne House for the convenience of the Queen's Household and to relieve the Sergeant Footman of what had amounted to the duties of a sub-postmaster. The Court Telegraphist acted as clerk-in-charge of the Post Office and a special handstamp was issued for his use, the first to be issued for postal use at the Court (fig 30). The first Court Post Office opened between 1st.January and 15th.February, 1897. The number of letters handled was about 1000 each way and the number of postage stamps sold averaged about £6 per week. During the Queen's stay at Osborne, about fourteen weeks in the year, the mail cart from Cowes to Ryde called every evening to collect the Queen's private pouch. Osborne House was one of the favorite Residences of Queen Victoria and was extensively used as a shore base for Royal Yachts. It was presented to the Nation by Edward VII in 1902 and is now a convalescent home.

At this time Windsor Castle and not Buckingham Palace was the State Residence and in 1898 the Master of the Household provided an office there where the Court Telegraphist could carry out certain postal duties such as receiving parcels and selling postal orders and stamps. By 1904 a Court Post Office, open when the Court was in residence, had been established.

Upon his accession in January, 1901, Royal franking was restored by Edward VII and by 2nd.May he had approved a design for a Royal franking stamp incorporating his cypher. The first stamp, made of steel, was completed by 16th.May and sent to the King in a special box. By the end of the year a total of six such stamps had been issued: two for the King, one to be kept at Sandringham, and three to the Court Telegraphist. A seventh Royal franking handstamp was added in 1903, for use on the Queen's correspondence when the Court was divided (which became quite a frequent occurrence during the happy Monarch's reign). This additional handstamp followed an embarrassing incident when a registered letter was sent by the Queen from Balmoral when the King and his franking stamp were elsewhere and the Queen's letter was surcharged on delivery, no doubt much to the surprise and chagrin of the recipient. In August of 1901, the Treasury declared the Royal franking privilege was not to be extended beyond His Majesty's personal correspondence, letters sent by his personal staff at Windsor Castle, Buckingham Palace, Sandringham House, Balmoral Castle and Cowes (Royal Yacht), the business correspondence of the Privy Purse Office and the three Household departments -- the Lord Steward, the Master of the Horse and the Lord Chamberlain. By October, separate franking stamps were issued: these Royal franking stamps will be dealt with later. They were a substitute for adhesives but required the addition of a hand date stamp or Official Paid stamp on the envelope and cover.

By November, 1902, postage stamps ($\frac{1}{2}$ d and 1d) overprinted " R H Official " were supplied by the Post Office for use on correspondence from certain outlying offices connected with the Royal Household, namely : the Examiner of Plays, the Inspector of the Palace of Holyrood House, the Housekeepers at Windsor Castle and Frogmore, Gentleman of the Royal Cellars, the Paymaster of Households and the Royal Laundry, Richmond.

Under the arrangements for the restoration of Royal franking and to indicate no postage was due to be paid on correspondence from the King and the Royal Household which bore the autographed signatures or impressions of franking or certifying stamps, Post Offices regularly despatching such mail were provided with Official Paid handstamps.

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The first were issued to the Head Post Office at Windsor and to the RSO (Railway, not Royal !) at Sandringham on the 28th. August, 1901, and bore the legend " Official Paid ", with the name of the office and spaces for the date and time of posting. These handstamps were to be applied to all properly certified correspondence from the Court when in residence. Instructions issued to Postmasters in August, 1901, stated they were to use their " Official Paid " stamp on any letters sent by the King which bore his signature in the corner or an impression of his Royal franking stamp or were certified by the autograph signature of Sir Francis Knollys (the King's Private Secretary) or Sir S. Probyn (Keeper of the Privy Purse) and that " they should keep a record of every letter so dispatched free of postage ". If they had no Official Paid stamp they were to repay, by postage stamps, any letter certified as above, unless such letters were addressed to Government Offices, when they were to be sent forward " untaxed with the Official Letters ". Postmasters were to enter details of the value of any postage stamps so used on (naturally enough) a special form, forwarding it to the General Post Office in London as soon as the King had left, for reimbursement.

In the Autumn of 1901 the Court was due to move to Balmoral Castle and arrangements originally proposed by the Post Office for dealing with its outward letters included the supply to the Sergeant Footman of a credit stock of postage stamps from Aberdeen. The Surveyor of Posts in Scotland, however, suggested a simpler procedure would be to issue to Controller of the Household with a special handstamp with which to effect cancellations; however, London did not favor his proposal at first but, soon after, the King's Private Secretary also sought some alternative to the affixing of postage stamps on the Court's letters whilst at the Castle. So it was decided to issue a special " Official Paid " handstamp with a crown in its design (fig.39) to the Court Telegraphist for use at Balmoral and other Royal Residences. In August, 1901, pending the issue of the new handstamp, a spare London Official Paid handstamp was sent to the Court Telegraphist at Balmoral. The special " crown " handstamp was sent to him on the 26th. September and thereafter replaced the borrowed London one.

During Queen Victoria's long reign Buckingham Palace was seldom used as an official residence. However, on the 14th. April, 1902, a Court Post Office was established there and, unlike the other Court Post Offices, remained open thereafter all the year round under the supervision of the Court Telegraphist, J.M. Hiley. It thus, naturally, became the centre of Court Mail activities and business. In 1906, at the express wish of Edward VII, Mr. Hiley was promoted to the rank of Court Postmaster, so the wheel turned the full circle and this office remains to this day.

By 1911 a Court Post Office, again only operational when the Court was in residence, had been opened at the Palace of Holyrood House (fig.22) -- surprisingly called in the handstamp Holyrood Palace rather than by its correct name. Another office was similarly opened at the Royal Pavilion, Aldershot (fig. 35), used for military tattoos etc., when the Court Post Office was moved to the Pavilion. This Pavilion was a wooden building long since demolished. During annual visits to the Cowes Regatta, a Court Post Office was set up on the Royal Yacht which had their own special handstamps (figs. 37 and 38).

A number of special hand date stamps were used for specific purposes. One such stamp was issued on 20th. June, 1911, for the Coronation of King George V, when a Court Post Office was temporarily established at Westminster Abbey (fig. 33). Another followed quickly on the occasion of the new King's Coronation Visit to Ireland and a Dublin castle hand date stamp was issued and probably used between 8th. and 12th. July, 1911 (fig. 32); the later date in fig. 22 may be explained in that before returning the stamp a few late impressions were possibly unofficially made from it.

At the beginning of the last War, during the threat of large-scale bombing, there was a mass evacuation of children from large towns and centres of population into areas of greater safety. A letter of appreciation to those who had taken in evacuees was sent separately to each householder concerned by H.M. Queen Elizabeth. A special stamp was used (fig. 19) for this purpose, only between 26th. March and 18th. April, 1940. The

Court Mail.....

text of the letter read as follows :

" I wish to Mark, By This Personal Message, My Appreciation of the Service you have Rendered to your Country in 1939.

In the early days of the War you opened your doors to strangers who were in need of shelter, and offered to share your home with them.

I know that to this unselfish task you have sacrificed much of your own comfort, and that it could not have been achieved without the loyal co-operation of all in your household.

By your sympathy you have earned the gratitude of those to whom you have shown hospitality, and by your kindness to serve you have helped the State in a work of great value. Elizabeth R. "

The Windsor Great Park Post Office was opened on 17th. January, 1949, for use by families of the employees of the Royal Estate (fig. 16). When Princess Elizabeth and the Duke of Edinburgh were married in 1947, Empire foods were sent to them as wedding presents and these were made up into food parcels and redistributed to pensioners from Buckingham Palace under a special label. On the 20th. August, 1955, for four hours only, between 2 p.m. and 6 p.m., a temporary " skeleton " hand date stamp cancellation was used (fig 34) in aid of Crathie Church funds. For the occasion, a temporary Post Office was opened in Abergeldie Castle and souvenir postcards at 2/- a time were sold by Princess Anne and Prince Charles. It was reported over 7,000 of these postcards were sold (few letters were posted) and by the end of the day the vestry fund was richer by £2,260. Abergeldie Castle was built by the Gordon family in about 1560 and leased to the Royal Family in Queen Victoria's reign. In more recent times it has been used as a residence by the Queen Mother.

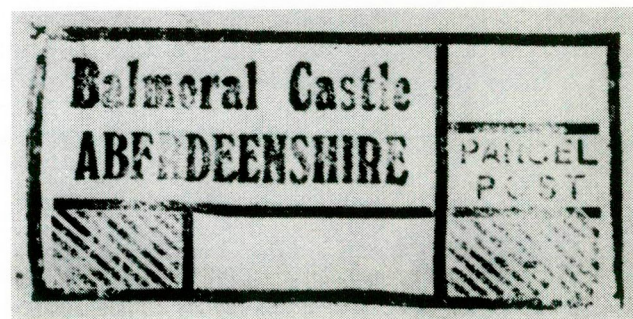


In summary, prior to 1897, Windsor Castle, Osborne, Balmoral, Cumberland Lodge were issued with special hand date stamps for telegraph office only (figs 1, 13, 29 and 31). A hand date stamp is still used on Court telegrams.

Names of Palaces and Residences used within the stamps are Buckingham Palace, Windsor Castle, Sandringham, Osborne, Balmoral, Holyrood Palace, Hampton Court, Frogmore and the two Royal Yachts, Victoria and Albert and Osborne. A number of

special stamps were used for specific purposes: Westminster Abbey (very rare), Dublin Castle, Royal Pavilion, Buckingham Palace and Abergeldie Castle. There was the special parcel post stamp used from Buckingham Palace for distribution of food parcels.

A variety of Official Paid hand date stamps were issued (figs 39 and 40) as were Buckingham Palace registration stamps (figs 42 to 45). Balmoral has the only parcel post handstamp.



The Only Royal Parcel Post Handstamp

The position today is that official mail from the Royal Household requires the Royal

Court Mail.....

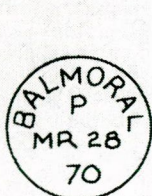
franking stamp or Royal Household departmental certifying stamp before entitlement for official payment. The Court Post Offices at Buckingham Palace and Windsor are open all the year round whilst those at Balmoral, Palace of Holyrood House and Sandringham are established by the Court Postmaster only when the Court is in residence.

For treatment of mail, residences can be divided into two categories, Sandringham and Balmoral and the official residences of Buckingham Palace, Windsor and the Palace of Holyrood House. Taking the former first, when the Court Post Office is in operation, two hand date stamps are used : one for ordinary mail " Balmoral Castle " (fig.4) and one for official mail " Official Paid -- Balmoral Castle " (fig. 5). When the Court Post Office is not in situ, official mail goes to Ballater Post Office where it received an " Official Paid -- Ballater " stamp (fig. 6). The same procedure applies to Sandringham : for normal mail a " Sandringham House -- Norfolk " stamp (fig.11) and for official mail an "Official Paid -- Sandringham House NFK" stamp (fig.8). Other hand date stamps have been used (figs 7, 9, 10). At one time there was a Railway S.O. at Sandringham but, as this was not used full-time, it was closed down for economy reasons. When the Court Post Office is not at Sandringham official mail goes to King's Lynn where it receives the " Official Paid -- King's Lynn " stamp (fig.12). Mail from the official residences goes to the local post office and is hand date stamped " Official Paid " with the particular office -- in the case of Buckingham Palace, S.W.1 -- and the time and date. Registered and mail requiring special delivery is cancelled with the hand date stamp in the Court Post Office at the residence concerned -- thus Buckingham Palace, Windsor Castle, Holyrood Palace will appear in the stamp. A Court Post Office can be set up anywhere but, outside the main residences, it is more normal for the local Post Office to be instructed to accept Royal franking and use an Official Paid stamp.

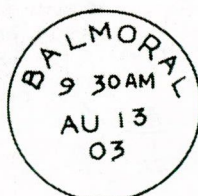
The headquarters of the Court Post Office are in Buckingham Palace under the supervision of the Court Postmaster and provides postal services for the Court and Royal Household. He has responsibilities towards other Royal residences which do not have Royal franking privilege, although this mail sometimes carries, in addition to postage stamps a cachet giving the office of origin. The Court Postmaster provides other services, such as telephone, telegram and general information. Court Post Offices are not public offices and, therefore, staff are not established to deal with or answer enquiries in letters from the public.

HAND DATE STAMPS

BALMORAL



1



2



3



4



5



6

Court Mail.....

SANDRINGHAM HOUSE



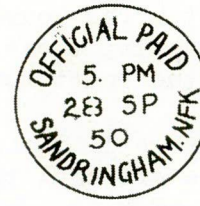
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8



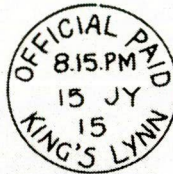
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10

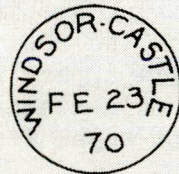


11



12

WINDSOR CASTLE



13



14



15



16

BUCKINGHAM PALACE



17



18



19



20

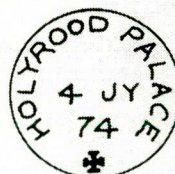
PALACE OF HOLYROOD HOUSE



21



22



23



24

HAMPTON COURT



25



26

FROGMORE



27



28

Court Mail.....

OSBORNE



29



30

CUMBERLAND LODGE



31

DUBLIN CASTLE



32

WESTMINSTER ABBEY



33

ABERGELDIE CASTLE



34

ROYAL PAVILION



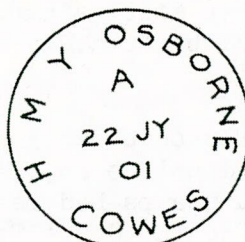
35

SPECIAL WIRE



36

ROYAL YACHTS



37

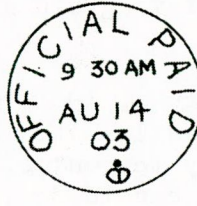


38

OFFICIAL PAID WITH CROWN



39



40

REGISTRATION HANDSTAMPS



41



42



43



44



45

Notes

Figs.

- 1 Issued for Telegraph use.
- 3 Found with index letters A, B and C.
- 4, 5, 6. In current use
- 11, 12 In current use
- 16 Office opened 17th. January, 1949
- 17 Issued for Telegraph use.
- 18 Issued 19th. July, 1930
- 19 Special hand date stamp used between 26th. March, 1940 and 18th. April, 1940

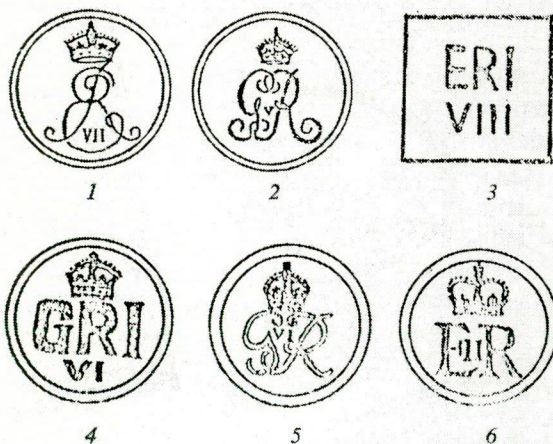
Court Mails.....

- Figs. 20, 21 In current use.
 23, 24 In current use.
 25 Issued 15th.January,1872 for Telegraph Office use -- long since obsolete.
 26 Issued 19th.May, 1880 -- long since obsolete
 27 Issued 19th.December, 1901
 29 Issued for Telegraph use.
 30 First postal hand stamp used from 1897.
 31 Issued for Telegraph use.
 32 Probably used between 8th. and 12th.July, 1911
 33 Issued 20th.June, 1911
 34 Issued only on 20th.August, 1955
 36 Used on Victoria and Albert
 38 Temporary hand date stamp, Cowes Regatta, 1901
 39 Issued to Court Telegraphist, 1901

Royal Franking and Certifying Stamps

As we have already mentioned, upon his accession in January, 1901, Royal Franking was restored by Edward VII. On the 2nd.May, 1901, a letter from Marlborough House stated " I send herewith a design which the King has approved for a personal franking stamp for his own use. Please have it made up as a steel stamp...." The hand stamp incorporating his cypher (fig. 1) was completed by 16th.May and sent to the King.

On the 2nd.August, 1901, another letter went forth " Please order 3 more franking stamps in boxes like the last one except that they need not be so elaborate and expensive ". By the end of the year a total of six such stamps had been issued : two for the King, one to be kept at Sandringham and three to the Court Telegraphist. A seventh stamp was issued in 1903 for use on the Queen's correspondence, the cause of this having been described previously.



The four franking stamps provided for George V (fig.2) in September, 1910, were very similar in design to the circular stamps provided for Edward VII. However, Edward VIII changed the design to a square and included the initial I (fig. 3) to denote he was Edward Rex Imperator -- Emperor of India. The design, based on a sketch he produced early in his reign, did not include a crown (prophetic ?). Eight stamps were provided for his use at Sandringham, Windsor, Balmoral and, at his wish, Fort Belvedere. Two were provided for the Court Post Office at Buckingham

Palace, one for travelling and one in reserve. The franking stamps provided for George VI in 1937 were circular in shape and included a crown in their design; however, he still included the initial I in the Royal Cypher (fig. 4). Obviously a year later the King had second thoughts and expressed concern that the Royal cypher in his franking stamp was incorrect. On 28th.June, 1938 he was supplied with a stamp of new design, with the cypher in the flowing style accepted by Edward VII and George V and excluding the initial I (fig.5). In 1952 a new design was approved for use by the Queen (fig. 6). These are all categorised as Royal Franking Stamps.

In August, 1901, as already mentioned, the Treasury declared the Royal franking privilege might cover His Majesty's personal correspondence, letters sent by his personal staff at Windsor Castle, Buckingham Palace, Sandringham House, Balmoral Castle and Cowes (the Royal Yacht); and the business correspondence of the Privy Purse Office and the three Household departments - the Lord Steward, the Master of

Court Mails.....

the Horse and the Lord Chamberlain.

Soon afterwards the Post Office produced three rubber hand stamps, numbered 1, 2 and 3 for use by the three Household departments concerned. Before they could be issued, however, and because the three departments objected strongly to using impersonal, numbered stamps, the Secretary to the Board of Green Cloth of the Lord Steward's Office suggested a new design with the initials LS for the Lord Steward's Office, MH for that of the Master of the Horse and LC for that of the Lord Chamberlain. These were issued on 28th. August.

Similar stamps were later issued for the Privy Purse at Buckingham Palace and Windsor; The Master of the Horse at the Royal Mews London and Windsor and the Lord Chamberlain at St. James's Palace. Others were issued for departments of the Lord Steward at Buckingham Palace, bearing the initials BGC, MH, PH, RL and RC.

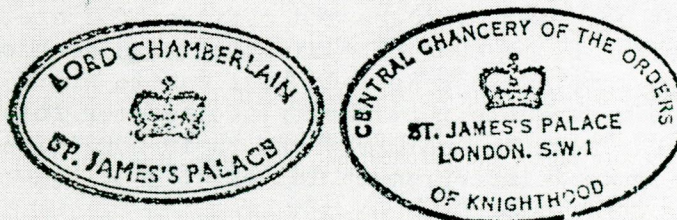
The Privy Purse stamps were used on correspondence from the Keeper of the Privy Purse, the Assistant Keeper, the Secretary and the Assistant Secretary to the Privy Purse, the Personal Secretary and Assistant Private Secretaries to the King. The Master of the Horse stamps were used by the Master of the Horse, the Crown Equerry and Secretary, the Accountant, Clerk and Assessor of Taxes and the Superintendents of the Royal Mews in London and at Windsor. The Lord Chamberlain stamp was used by the Lord Chamberlain, Comptroller and Chief Clerk. Of the initialled stamps issued to offices of the Lord Steward, that with the initials BGC was used by the Lord Steward, Treasurer and Comptroller of the Household, the Acting Secretary and Clerk to the Board of Green Cloth. The MH stamp was used by the Master of the Household, his Deputy and the Clerk Comptroller. The Paymaster of the Household used the PH stamp, the RL by the Royal Laundry. The RC stamp was used by the Gentlemen of the Royal Cellars. All stamps were oval in shape and featured a crown in their design.

CERTIFYING STAMPS AND CACHETS IN CURRENT USE

BUCKINGHAM PALACE



ST. JAMES'S PALACE

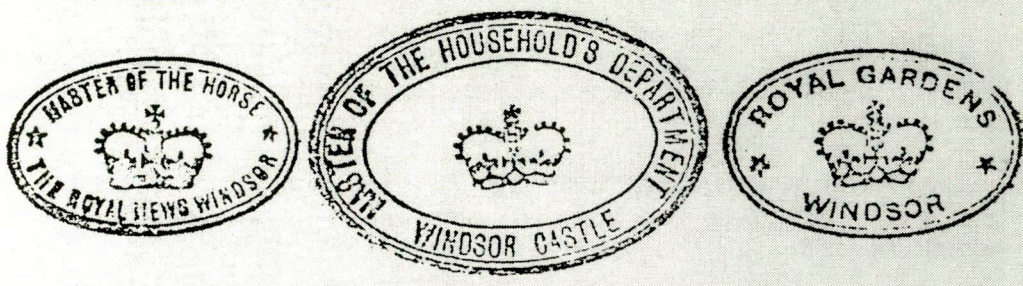


KENSINGTON PALACE



Court Mails.....

WINDSOR CASTLE



Gavin Littaur sent me this unusual hand stamp on a cover addressed to Queen Victoria. The letter was posted in London on 14th April, 1860: the hand stamp is dated 17th April, 1860. Is it a receiving or some other official mark or just the work of an imaginative philatelist? We would be grateful if any reader can identify it for us.

Royal Yachts, Flights and Tours

One of the most incredible occurrences in my own philatelic journey was the transfer by the jury at B.P.E. of a Court Mail entry from the Postal History to the Thematic class. The Wellburn collection demonstrated to me beyond doubt that Court Mail was the genesis of the postal services and postal history. Sir Brian Tuke, "Master of the Posts" in the reign of Henry VIII established the first permanent posts, based on a system of stations where horses were maintained for the use of the King's carriers. Prior to that, communications were set up spasmodically as the situation, political or military, demanded. The King's "Post" gradually expanded to the carriage of private messages between individuals and improved progressively through the reigns of Elizabeth I and James I until the reign of Charles I who, with pressing cash flow problems, opened up the Royal posts to general use in 1635. The early letters from the Wellburn collection systematically traced this historic transfer from an exclusive Court and State to public Service. Two of the letters, the first signed "Henry" and the second "Elizabeth" must take pride of place in any Court Mail or Postal History study.

The first chapter in the story of the postal service etched out in sharp relief what the study of postal history is all about -- communications. Apart from the wealthy merchants, it was only the Court and State with its political and military servants who travelled extensively and when travelling had the urgent requirement to communicate continuously with the other great officers and offices of State. Ordinary citizens, denied the means of moving or of even communicating with each other, remained generally static -- indeed as late as 1839 Rowland Hill was to write "...the high cost of postage contributed to the remarkable pertinacity of the poor to continue to live in their own parish rather than move to another where their conditions might be bettered through a lack of ability to intercourse by letter".

Through this necessity for speedy communications, a great variety of methods for carrying and transmitting them were used, from on foot at one extreme to the aeroplane at the other, from the written word to telecommunications. These methods can often be followed through cancellations and instructions, franking and certifying stamps. A good example of this is a study of Royal Yachts, Royal Trains and the Royal Flight.

The story of Royal Yachts reaches back into the depths of our island history and the Monarchy's preoccupation with maritime supremacy. The earliest account of Royal Yachts goes back to the loss of "La Blanche Nef" in 1120, a 50-oar boat. This Royal Boat was lost with all hands (except one) transporting Prince William, King Henry II's only legitimate son, together with the flower of the young nobility of

Court Mails.....

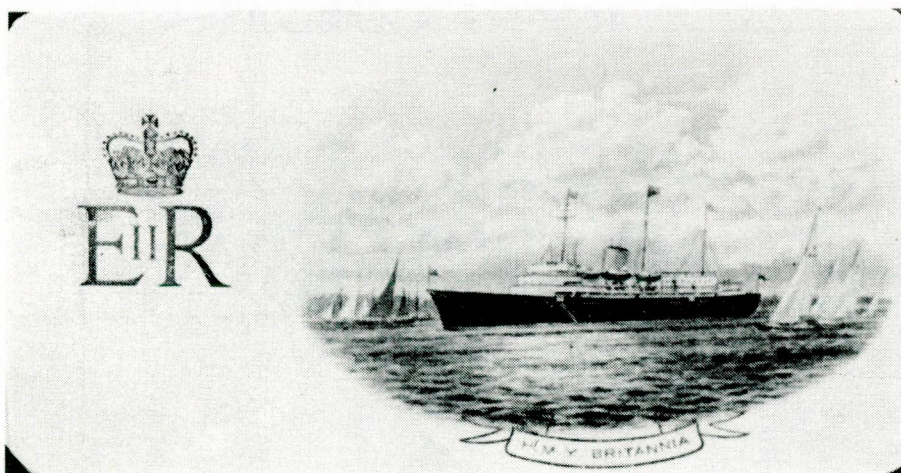
England and Normandy, from Normandy to England. Records state the crew had been "Well treated to wine" and struck a rock. Henry II was "never to smile again".

For our purpose, the postal significance of Royal Yachts began in the reign of Queen Victoria, with the introduction of steam. Thereafter, the yachts played an increasingly important part in Court and State affairs. Since Osborne House was a favorite residence of Queen Victoria and the popularity of "Cowes Week" was considerable, the Royal Yachts were in constant use conveying members of her family and important visitors to and from the island, as well as conveying her many Continental relations from foreign parts. It only needed time to produce a whole chapter of mail connected with Royal Yachts, Osborne House and Cowes, with a wide variety of date-stamps and cachets.

Among the largest yachts were the "Victoria and Albert I" (the first steam-yacht) (1,034 tons), "Osborne II" (1,850 tons), "Victoria and Albert II" (2,470 tons), all paddle wheel yachts, followed by "Victoria and Albert III", a twin screw boat of some 5,500 tons. The last named was paid off at Portsmouth in 1922 and sold to a Norwegian shipping company, renamed the "Prince Olaf" in 1925 and was used throughout the twenties and into the thirties. This classic reminder of the Victorian and Edwardian era was eventually broken up in 1954. Many must be the regrets it could not have been preserved for posterity in all its original glory. There are date stamps for both the "Victoria and Albert" and the "Osborne".

During Royal visits to Cowes Week, a Court Post Office was established on the Royal Yacht and King George V required the Court Postmaster to wear the blue reefer suit and peaked cap of the Royal Yacht Squadron!

Finally, the last of the Royal Yachts, the "Britannia" (3,900 tons) was completed in 1954 and has since straddled the oceans of the world as a splendid example of British ship design and craftsmanship. Court Mail to and from the "Britannia" is collected and despatched by special bag under seal via the normal mail routes by land, sea or air; the seals often carry special registration marks and instructions. The crew's mail may carry a Maritime Mail date-stamp and the Flag Officer uses a cachet, "FLAG OFFICER / ROYAL YACHT" (fig. 1). Other cachets and handstamps connected with the Royal Yacht include "FLAG OFFICER ROYAL YACHTS / H.M. YACHT BRITANNIA", "MAIL OFFICE / H.M. YACHT BRITANNIA", and those connected with particular visits "ROYAL VISIT / H.M. Y. BRITANNIA / DOUGLAS - ISLE OF MAN" and "ROYAL VISIT - WESTERN FLEET / AT TORBAY".



The history of Royal Flights and aircraft covers only 50 years or so. The Queen's Flight at Royal Air Force, Benson, Oxon, has its own cachet (fig. 2) and from time to time its aircraft and helicopters are employed to carry Court Mail when the Royal Family are away from London. While the Queen's Flight and its acceptance as a means of Royal travel is now firmly established, its early history was somewhat slow and chequered. Indeed, it was only the impetus provided by the then Prince of Wales which finally led to the formation of the King's Flight in 1936 under the auspices of the Department of the Master of Horse.

Court Mails.....

The Prince of Wales (later King Edward VIII) probably made his first flight on the Italian Front in 1917 in a British fighter and just after World War I he flew over the Rhineland with the famous American aviator Brigadier-General Billy Marshall. However, about this time, King George V advised the Prince, as heir to the throne, to use more prudent methods of transportation. This advice was heeded and the Prince of Wales did not take to the air again until 1928, when he became progressively more absorbed with flying, first using the aircraft of the Royal Air Force Communications Flight at Northolt and then purchasing his own personal aircraft.

When the Prince came to the throne as Edward VIII, one of his first acts was the official establishment of the King's Flight at Hendon, yet another landmark in the story of Royal communication stretching back to the Royal messengers on horseback. There are a number of cancellations and cachets connected with the many long journeys made by the Royal Family as they have criss-crossed the globe in both King's and Queen's Flight and civil aircraft. I have an unusual one of salvaged Royal Mail to remind me of a personal escape. In 1954 I was in Australia for the Royal Tour and was booked to return to the United Kingdom in a Qantas-BOAC Constellation on Saturday, March 13th. By some extraordinary chance, more work turned up at the last minute and delayed my departure by a day. The Constellation crashed at Kallang and a day later I had the eerie experience of landing over the burnt out wreckage where I might well have perished with the rest of those unfortunate passengers. An extract from The Times, dated March 15th, reported " Mr. M.L. Durrant, Director of Posts, Singapore, said today that some of the Queen's personal mail may have been destroyed. A portion of two bags of mail from the Royal Household was salvaged together with films and photographs of the Royal Tour. A quantity of civil mail was salvaged " (fig.3).



1



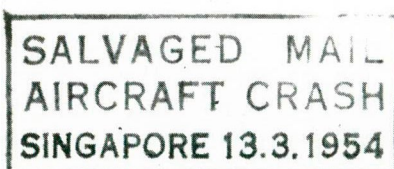
5



2



4



3



7

Court Mails.....

When a Royal Train was used during State visits, a post office was often established on the train with its own special handstamp. The one illustrated (fig. 4) was used during the Royal tour of Canada in 1939. Others I have seen included " Royal Train " Australia (1934), " Royal Train " New Zealand (1934) and " Royal Train R.P.O. " U.S.A. (1939).

Our Royal Family have always travelled extensively but from Queen Victoria's reign, with improvements in communications, the pace quickening until in present times there must be few countries the Royal Family have not visited. Over the years these visits have generated a great variety of special handstamps and cachets. Since these may form a very specialised study in themselves, I am excluding them from this article. However, there are a number which I think are particularly interesting such as the Durbar, Coronation and Camp handstamps of India, including the Coronation Durbar (1911), The King Emperor's Camp P.O. (1911), H.R.H. The Prince of Wales' Camp P.O. (1922) and so forth.

An unusual cancellation was the " Royal Visit H.Q. Australia " (fig. 5) used exclusively on the " S.S. Gothic " during the Australian Tour (1954) and one on the U.S.S. " Warrington " reading " Royal Party Abroad " during a tour of the U.S.A. in 1939.

During Royal visits, telegrams are a rapid method of communication but normal mail is usually collected and dispatched in special bags under a seal via the normal mail routes by land, sea and air. The labels on such special bags often carried special registration marks.

Before concluding I must mention one omission. Recently I have been sent a hand-date stamp which I had not previously seen, Compton Place, Eastborne (fig.7). In 1935 the Post Office made special arrangements for the King and Queen Mary's stay at Compton Place, Eastbourne. The property belonged to the Duke of Devonshire and apparently George V stayed there at times because of his illness -- presumably the air at Eastbourne was especially invigorating.

The End

FURTHER RESEARCH.....

This material, as readers will appreciate, was originally published several years ago. Since then more information has come to light, in particular, on the scroll stamps, which were not included as intended.

David Trapnell is preparing material for the Handbook on Court Mail and Simon Kelly is dealing with Scrolls.

Both will be very pleased to hear from anyone with information to contribute.