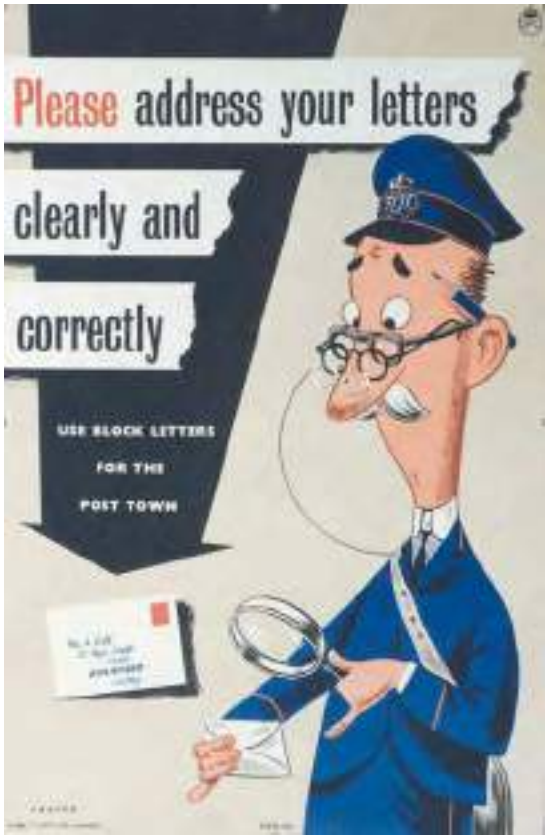
The Postal Museum

An Overview of the Royal Mail Archive



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An Overview of The Royal Mail Archive

Introduction

This overview will help you to find your way around and into the records of the archive.

There are several different ways that material can be found and this overview aims to help you with this.

Information Sheets

The information sheets are free of charge to both visitors and people contacting The Postal Museum (TPM). The Highlights section of our website also gives information on a variety of subjects: https://www.postalmuseum.org/collections/highlights/

Step by Step Guide to Finding Information

The records of the Royal Mail Archive are organised into classes, which are identified by the prefix POST and a class number. For example, POST 1 is formed of correspondence with the Treasury. Please feel free to either browse the POST classes or go straight to the Subject Index at the end of the overview. However, our suggested route is as follows:

1. First go to the Subject Index (page 232 onwards) and look up the subject of your research. This will then give you several options in the various POST classes. Make a note of the number (e.g. POST 1) of each POST class that you would like to look at.

2. Next, turn to the POST class section (pages 13-231) and look up the POST classes (which are arranged in numerical order), which you

noted from the Subject Index, to see if they contain the kind of material that you are looking for. Each class usually gives the following types of information:

- the number of the class;
- the title of the class;
- the dates it covers;
- the size of the collection;
- a description of the records within it (known as 'scope and content');
- the history of the organisation, department or person that created the records (known as the 'administrative or biographical history');
- access conditions;
- details of the various series within it.

3. In the POST class section the most important area to note is the **access conditions** as it tells you where to go next and whether the records are actually here at Freeling House. Please note that:

   - Some of our records are not yet open and may not be available.
   - When it says 'The catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room', these are the RED catalogues on the carousels, in numerical order by POST class.
   - Where it says 'Old catalogue available' please ask staff for help. Older catalogues may need some explanation from our staff.
   - Our catalogue is now available online: https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/ You are also welcome to consult our online catalogue in the Archive room, where it is available to view on two computer terminals.

4. Once you know which POST class(es) contains the kind of material that you are interested in, consult the relevant red catalogue in the carousel (there is a catalogue for almost every POST class in the carousel) to find out the Finding Number(s) of the material in question

(e.g. POST 1/1). To request material, first fill in a requisition form, blanks are available in the Archive room. Tear off the top two sheets (top copy and carbon) and fill in, then give to a member of staff. A separate form must be completed for each item required. A maximum of six items can be ordered at a time. The material will be delivered within 15 minutes, if it is available. Please note that:

- If the items that you require are microfilmed, you must view them on a microfilm. Please use the lists on top of the microfilm cabinets to locate the correct film. Please help yourself to the films and use one of the machines available. You may make copies of the material, by the frame, on the same machine. There is a charge of 25p a sheet for this service, please pay at the Archive room desk.
- Most records relating to telecommunications have been transferred to BT Group Archives, and can only be consulted there:

  BT Group Archives
  Third Floor
  Holborn Telephone Exchange
  268-270 High Holborn
  LONDON WC1V 7EE
  Tel: 020 7440 4220
  Email: archives@bt.com
  Website: https://www.bt.com/about/bt/our-history/bt-archives

  Where material has been transferred to BT Group Archives, this is indicated in the catalogue.
- **If you need any further guidance please ask a member of staff**
- **Most of the information in this overview is also available in our online catalogue: https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/**

POST CLASS NUMERICAL LIST

POST 1:	Post Office: Treasury Correspondence	1686-1977
POST 2:	Post Office: Receiver General's Cash Books	1677-1809
POST 3:	Post Office: Accountant General's Annual Accounts	1678-1938
POST 4:	Post Office: Accounts of Packet Ship Services and British Overseas Posts	1773-1857
POST 5:	Post Office: Incident Warrants: Accounts	1817-1852
POST 6:	Post Office: Incident Bills Accounts	1766-1854
POST 7:	Post Office: Property and Income Tax Assessments and Certificates	1813-1891
POST 8:	Post Office: Auditing of Accounts and Systems of Financial Accounting and Compiling Statistics	1802-1991
POST 9:	Post Office: Accounts	1715-1948
POST 10:	Post Office: Records on Conveyance of Mails by Road, Inland Services	1786-1990
POST 11:	Post Office: Records on Conveyance of Mail by Railways	1827-1975
POST 12:	Post Office: Contracts and Voyage Records on the Conveyance of Inland Mails by Sea	1748-1965
POST 13:	Post Office: Reports, Press Releases and Terms of Agreement on Inland Air Mail Services	1935-1971
POST 14:	Post Office: Inland Mails Organisation and Circulation: Records	1757-1982
POST 15:	Post Office: Inland Mails Organisation, Letter Books	1784-1937
POST 16:	Post Office: Postal Drafts	1912-1969
POST 17:	Post Office: Inland Mails: Organisation, Circulation and Sorting	1797-1998
POST 18:	Post Office: Travelling Post Offices	1838-1992
POST 19:	Post Office: Postal Business Statistics	1839-1990

POST 20:	Post Office: Records on Inland Mails Organisation: Post Office (London) Railway	1854-1977
POST 21:	Post Office: Maps	1757-1991
POST 22:	Post Office: Counters Operations and Services	[c1910]-2001
POST 23:	Post Office: Inland Mail Services: Letter Post	1636-1989
POST 24:	Post Office: Newspaper Post	1791-1966
POST 25:	Post Office: Inland Mail Services: Parcel Post	1824-1985
POST 26:	Post Office: Inland Mail Services: Registration	1807-1976
POST 27:	Post Office: Inland Mail Services: Money Orders and Postal Orders	1838-1957
POST 28:	Post Office: Ancillary Services	1888-1989
POST 29:	Post Office: Packet Minutes: Documents	1811-1920
POST 30:	Post Office: Registered Files, Minuted Papers (England and Wales)	1792-1952
POST 31:	Post Office: Registered Files, Minuted Papers (Ireland)	1841-1960
POST 32:	Post Office: Registered Files, Minuted Papers (Scotland)	1869-1966
POST 33:	Post Office: Registered Files, Minuted Papers (General)	1921-1960
POST 34:	Post Office: Secretary's Minutes to the Postmaster General: Packet Minutes	1811-1920
POST 35:	Post Office: Minutes between the Secretary and the Postmaster General: Volumes	1792-1969
POST 36:	Post Office: Irish Minutes: Volumes	1831-1920
POST 37:	Post Office: Scottish Minutes: Volumes	1842-1937
POST 38:	Post Office: Secretary's General Minutes to the Postmaster General: Volumes	1921-1973
POST 39:	Post Office: Packet Reports: Documents	1807-1837

POST 40:	Post Office: Postmaster General's Reports: Documents	1791-1841
POST 41:	Post Office: Packet Reports: Volumes	1807-1837
POST 42:	Post Office: Postmaster General's Reports	1790-1841
POST 43:	Post Office: Overseas Mails: Organisation and Services: Packet Boats and Shipping	1683-1949
POST 44:	Post Office: Overseas Mail Organisation: Records on Colonial Post Offices	1796-1951
POST 45:	Post Office: Records on British Postal Agencies	1865-c1910
POST 46:	Post Office: Overseas Mails Organisation: Conventions and Articles of Agreement	1698-1913
POST 47:	Post Office: Army Postal History	1888-1975
POST 48:	Post Office: Overseas Mails Letter Books	1703-1938
POST 49:	Post Office: Records on the International Parcel Post Service	1856-[c1985]
POST 50:	Post Office: Overseas Mail Services: Records on Air Mail	1919-1987
POST 51:	Post Office: Overseas Mails Contracts	1722-1936
POST 52:	Post Office: Stamp Depot	1865-1992
POST 53:	Post Office: Inland and Overseas Postage Rates	1735-1982
POST 54:	Post Office: Postage Stamps: Records	1840-1990
POST 55:	Post Office: Handstruck Date Stamps: Proof Books	1823-1995
POST 56:	Post Office: War and Civil Emergencies	1859-1969
POST 57:	Post Office: Staff Recruitment	1861-1988
POST 58:	Post Office: Staff Nomination and Appointment	1737-1972
POST 59:	Post Office: Staff: Establishment Books	1691-1983
POST 60:	Post Office: Staff: Pay, Allowances and Conditions of Service	1792-1989
POST 61:	Post Office: Uniforms and Discipline	1765-c1995

POST 62:	Post Office: Staff Welfare	1855-1999
POST 63:	Post Office: Staff: Training	1869-1990
POST 64:	Post Office: Staff: Medical Provision and Sick Leave	1892-1985
POST 65:	Post Office: Staff Associations	1866-1995
POST 66:	Post Office: Staff pensions and Superannuation	1713-1992
POST 67:	Post Office: Letters Patent	1715-1964
POST 68:	Post Office: Rules and Instructions	1729-2003
POST 69:	Post Office: Royal Mail Holdings plc Board and its Predecessors	1934-1994
POST 70:	Post Office: Advisory Councils	1921-1994
POST 71:	Post Office: Parliamentary Papers	1806-1971
POST 72:	Post Office: Headquarters Administration and Policy	1786-1972
POST 73:	Post Office: Regional Administration and Operations	1860-1959
POST 74:	Post Office: Solicitor’s Department	1685-1938
POST 75:	Post Office: Savings Bank, Insurance and Investment Services	1828-1975
POST 76:	Post Office: Engineering	1882-1984
POST 77:	Post Office: Factories Department: Volumes	1900-1967
POST 78:	Post Office: Supplies Department	1874-1985
POST 79:	Post Office: Contracts Department and Contracting Functions	1932-1999
POST 80:	Post Office: Agency Services	1874-1937
POST 81:	Post Office: Telegraphs, Private Companies	1845-1905
POST 82:	Post Office: Telegraphs, Post Office (Inland)	1837-1939
POST 83:	Post Office: Telegraphs, Post Office (Overseas)	1849-1934
POST 84:	Post Office: Telephones, Private Companies	1879-1915

POST 85:	Post Office: Telephones, Municipal	1894-1938
POST 86:	Post Office: Telephones, (Inland)	1874-1938
POST 87:	Post Office: Telephones, Overseas	1877-1938
POST 88:	Post Office: Wireless Telegraphy and Telephony	1886-1945
POST 89:	Post Office: Broadcasting	c1920s-c1960s
POST 90:	Post Office: Engineering General	Not known
POST 91:	Post Office: Buildings, Furniture and Fittings	[c1790-1910]
POST 92:	Post Office: Post Office Publications	1855-present
POST 93:	Post Office: Forms	Not known
POST 94:	Post Office: Private Office Papers: Colonel Roger Whitley, Deputy Postmaster General	1672-1677
POST 95:	Post Office: Private Office Papers: Sir Thomas Frankland	1694-1697
POST 96:	Post Office: Private Office Papers: John Palmer	1782-1813
POST 97:	Post Office: Private Office Papers: Lord Walsingham, Joint Postmaster General	1787-1792
POST 98:	Post Office: Private Office Papers: Sir Francis Freeling, Secretary	1793-1829
POST 99:	Post Office: Private Office Papers: Marquess of Salisbury	1820-1823
POST 100:	Post Office: Private Office Papers: Rowland Hill	1836-1879
POST 101:	Post Office: Private Office Papers: Sir John Tilley	1853-1880
POST 102:	Post Office: Registered Files: DF Series	1936-1967
POST 103:	Post Office: Receiver General's Entry Books	1694-1854
POST 104:	Post Office: Telegrams: Forms and Delivery	1867-1992
POST 105:	Post Office: Private Office Papers: Derek Carter	[1954]-1993
POST 106:	Post Office: Private Collections: Sir W H Preece	1854-1965

POST 107:	Post Office: Notices to the Public and Instructions	1768-1937
POST 108:	Post Office: Public Relations Department, Predecessors and Successors	1906-2000
POST 109:	Post Office: Original Artwork for Posters, Leaflets and Telegrams	1936-1996
POST 110:	Post Office: Printed Publicity material	[1934]-present
POST 111:	Post Office: Newspaper Cuttings	1685-present
POST 112:	Post Office: Girobank, Girobank Sale and Privatisation	1960-1995
POST 113:	Data processing	c1970s-c1990s
POST 114:	Post Office: Acts and Warrants	1657-1986
POST 115:	Post Office: Staff Association and Union Publications	1890-1997
POST 116:	Post Office: International Telecommunications Union	[1870]-[1950]
POST 117:	Post Office: Universal Postal Union	1868-1994
POST 118:	Post Office: Photograph Library	20th Century
POST 119:	Post Office: Engineering Research Reports	Not known
POST 120:	Post Office: Investigation Department	1836-1995
POST 121:	Post Office: Registered Files, Minuted and Decentralised Registry Papers (Miscellaneous Papers)	1851-1981
POST 122:	Post Office: Registered Files, Minuted and Decentralised Registry Papers	c1896-c1980
POST 141:	Post Office: The R M Phillips Collection	1837-1990s
POST 142:	Post Office: The ‘Berne’ Universal Postal Union Collection	1850-
POST 143:	Post Office: British Fiscal & Revenue Stamps (creation to issue)	Not known

POST 145:	Post Office: British Postal Stationery (without imprinted stamps - creation to issue)	1907-
POST 146:	Post Office: Overseas Territories (under the aegis of the British Post Office)	-1970
POST 150:	Post Office: British postage stamps (including imprinted stationery) - creation to issue	1840-present

POST CLASSES 1-122: INTRODUCTION

This section will provide a general description of the material held in The Royal Mail Archive, which is known by the reference POST.

It will show the size of the particular collection, then three topic areas, namely scope and content, administrative or biographical history, if there is any, and the type of access available.

POST is the overall name of the material in this archive. The records relate to the operation, policy, development and social impact of the British Post Office from 1636 to the present day. In addition to the provision of postal services, the Post Office's responsibilities have included telecommunications between 1868 and 1981, broadcasting until 1961 and selected banking and financial services.

Scope and content

The aim of this area is to show briefly what is contained within each section in such a way that the reader will immediately be aware of the general nature of the records within that particular class and its possible relevance to their research.

Administrative or biographical history

The history of the department, organisation or person that created, received or accumulated the records. The history of a department or organisation will often show its structure and functional responsibilities.

Access conditions

This area will show you the various ways in which the material can be accessed. It will list the Finding Aids that can help you start your search. There may be legal reasons why access is prohibited (the records may be subject to a 30 year closure). Some records have been microfilmed. Many catalogues are now available on our website, but you will also find that there are a few POST classes that have not yet been catalogued.

THE ADMINISTRATIVE HISTORY OF THE BRITISH POST OFFICE/ROYAL MAIL

The Post Office was established in 1635, by King Charles I. The head of this new service was variously known as Master of Posts, Comptroller General of the Posts and Postmaster of England.

The Civil War saw the Post Office contested by both sides. Acts of Parliament were passed during the Interregnum (1656) and later upon the Restoration (1660). These established the "General Post Office" as a branch of government which was to be headed by the Postmaster General.

The service at this time consisted of a number of main routes from London to the provinces. Postmasters on the routes collected and distributed mail and collected revenue.

During this period the scope of the Post Office's activities was limited and its administrative functions were largely concerned with its finances. The General Post Office was based in the City of London and was organised into three departments; the Inland Office which handled all internal letters, the Foreign Office which handled all overseas mails and the Penny Post Office which dealt with all locally posted mail for London. This building was destroyed by the Great Fire of London, which might explain why only a small number of Post Office records from that period survive. Those that have survived are largely volumes of accounts detailing levels of income and expenditure through the years. From 1667 the role of Postmaster General became a political appointment. Between 1691 and 1823, two Postmasters General were appointed, one being a member of the Whig party and the other a member of the Tory party. At the same time the post of Secretary to the Post Office was created. Over time this post developed into one which held real influence within The General Post Office; the Secretary's Office becoming the centre of decision making within Headquarters.

The eighteenth century saw much development of routes and post towns, the Post Office continued to be run from London. It was not until 1715 that the Post Office appointed its first regional administrators, known as Surveyors. Surveyors were charged with ensuring that those at lower levels in the organisation were doing their duty and that the revenues were being correctly managed.

The nineteenth century was a period of vast expansion for the Post Office. Postal rates were subject to a reform which resulted in the introduction of penny postage and the adhesive postage stamp. Increased adult literacy led to a dramatic increase in the volume of mail. The latter half of the century saw an explosion of new services as the Post Office moved into banking, telecommunications and set up a parcels operation. It also saw the development of a nationwide network of post offices through which these services could be accessed.

By the end of the century, Headquarters buildings had accumulated large volumes of historical material. To meet the challenge of managing this material, in 1896 the Post Office established its own "record room".

The responsibilities of the surveyors had also grown during this period. They became the heads of districts of management; responsible for managing the range of Post Office activities in their areas.

The Post Office's move into telecommunications began in 1870, with the establishment of the United Kingdom telegraph service as a Post Office monopoly. From 1880, the control of the telephone service passed progressively to the Post Office, with the entire service being taken over in 1912. The Post Office also became involved in international telecommunications culminating in 1947 when, following the nationalisation of Cable and Wireless Ltd, it acquired the company's telecommunications assets in Britain. In 1904, the Wireless Telegraphy Act conferred licensing powers on the Postmaster General, and the Post Office continued to regulate radio services until the responsibility was passed to the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications in 1969. Within the field of broadcasting, the Post Office was responsible for the granting of transmission licences and the collection of radio licence fees, and for advising Parliament on questions of sound and television broadcasting services. In 1933 the Post Office's new Public Relations Division took over the Film Unit from the Empire Marketing Board, and in 1940 this unit was transferred to the Ministry of Information, later becoming the Crown Film Unit.

By the 1930s the size and complexity of the Post Office had grown so much as to lead to public criticism. The result of this was a committee of enquiry, the Bridgeman Committee, which led to a large-scale devolution of powers to provincial management and the creation of eight regions.

The Post Office Act of 1961 created a Post Office fund under the management of the Postmaster General. All income was paid into the fund and all expenditure met out of it. This enabled the Post Office to operate as a business with the financial status of a public authority. However, the Post Office remained a government department, answerable to Parliament on day-to-day business.

The Post Office Act of 1969 saw the General Post Office ceasing to be a branch of government and become instead a nationalised industry, established as a public corporation. Under the terms of the Act, the Corporation was split into two divisions - Posts and Telecommunications - which thus became distinct businesses. The office of Postmaster General was discontinued and the Post Office, as it was now known, was headed by a Chairman and Chief Executive/Deputy Chairman. This role was directly appointed by the Post Office Board. The Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications was created in 1969 and, in addition to sponsoring the Post Office, took over the functions previously exercised by the Postmaster General in relation to Broadcasting.

The Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications was dissolved in March 1974. Broadcasting and radio regulation became part of the Home Office, whilst Post and Telecommunications functions became the responsibility of the Department of Industry. The latter merged with the Department of Trade in 1983 to become the Department of Trade and Industry.

In 1981 the telecommunications business of the Post Office became a separate public corporation, trading as British Telecom. In 1984, British Telecom was privatised and since 1991 has traded as BT. Following the 1981 split, the Post Office was then reorganised into two distinct businesses, Post and Parcels.

In 1985, National Girobank became a wholly owned subsidiary of the Post Office, Girobank plc. Prior to that it had operated as a separate business within the Post Office. It continued to trade under the name 'National Girobank' until 1987 when it became known as 'Girobank'. In June 1988, the government announced that it wanted to privatise Girobank. In 1989, the Alliance & Leicester Building Society entered into closed negotiations as the preferred bidder to buy Girobank. Girobank became part of the Alliance & Leicester in July 1990.

In 1986, postal operations were restructured into three separate businesses: Royal Mail Letters, Royal Mail Parcels and Post Office Counters. In October 1987, Post Office Counters began trading as a limited company and wholly owned subsidiary of the Post Office and was known as Post Office Counters Ltd. Although Royal Mail Letters, Royal Mail Parcels and Post Office Counters had their own Managing Directors and headquarters functions, what was now the Post Office group of businesses retained a headquarters function for group policy. Additionally this "Group" function continued to provide the rest of the businesses with services and support.

In 1990, Royal Mail Parcels was renamed Parcelforce with new livery, uniforms and typography. In 1993, the positions of Deputy Chairman and Chief Executive became two separate roles. The position of Chairman as the 'head' of the Post Office remained. In 1997, Parcelforce was rebranded as Parcelforce Worldwide. In October 2001, Post Office Ltd was created. In addition to the brands, network and functions of Post Office Counters Ltd, Post Office Ltd also absorbed Post Office Network, Network Banking, Cash Handling and Distribution and Customer Management (Government Unit) business units in Royal Mail, and all of their functions.

In June 1999, the government issued a White Paper on Post Office reform, with the objective of giving greater commercial freedom to the Post Office to enable it to compete and respond to changes in the market place. The paper reduced the government's financial demands on the business and allowed it to borrow from the government at commercial rates to pay for acquisitions and joint ventures with private companies. In January 2000, a Postal Services bill was published. In July 2000, the Postal Services Act was passed creating a company with more commercial freedoms and a more strategic relationship

with the government while, at the same time, giving a commitment to a universal postal service.

The Act also created a new regulatory framework with a reformed independent consumer body, the Consumer Council for Postal Services (known as Postwatch), and independent regulator, the Postal Services Commission (known as Postcomm). Under the provisions of the Postal Services Act, Royal Mail Group plc now operates its mail services under a licence granted by Postcomm.

Under the Act, in March 2001, the Post Office Corporation became a public limited company wholly owned by the government. At the same time it changed its name to Consignia. Post Office branches, Royal Mail and Parcelforce Worldwide remained unaffected by this change of name. In November 2002, Consignia Holdings plc changed its name to Royal Mail Holdings plc and Consignia plc became Royal Mail Group plc.

At the present time, Royal Mail Group plc (the operating company) is a public limited company and a wholly owned subsidiary of Royal Mail Holdings plc (the parent company). Royal Mail Holdings plc is a public limited company owned solely by the government (specifically by the Treasury and the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry). Royal Mail Holdings plc consists of a number of subsidiaries, associates and joint ventures. Its principal area of operation is the United Kingdom (UK), although it also operates in Europe, primarily through one of its subsidiaries, General Logistics Systems (GLS).

Royal Mail Holdings plc currently comprises four main operating units:

- Royal Mail Letters collects and delivers letters and packages in the UK and designs and produces the UK's stamps and philatelic products
- Post Office Limited runs a network of Post Office branches across the UK
- Parcelforce Worldwide provides a collection and delivery service for urgent parcels and packages within the UK and throughout the world
- GLS is a European parcel and express business

Royal Mail Letters and Parcelforce Worldwide are business units within Royal Mail Group plc, while Post Office Limited and GLS are wholly owned subsidiary companies of the Group.

The Royal Mail Holdings Board acts as the highest authority in the company and is the main plc board. It monitors performance and establishes strategy and objectives. A Group Executive Team (previously known as the Management Board) reports to the Board. Its responsibilities include developing and monitoring the execution of 'strategy, annual operating plans and budgets for Board approval'. Several Boards, Committees and Teams report to the Royal Mail Holdings Board and the Group Executive Team. Further details about these Boards, Committees and Teams can be found in POST 69 and on the Royal Mail Group website (www.royalmailgroup.com – last accessed November 2006).

POST 1

POST OFFICE: TREASURY CORRESPONDENCE 1686-1977

1185 volumes, 2 files

Scope and content

POST 1 consists of records relating to the supervision of the General Post Office's financial business, including correspondence relating to authorisation of expenditure, development of services and applications for pensions.

POST 1 is commonly used by researchers investigating their family history. This is because a large proportion of this class consists of documentation relating to pensions and gratuities awarded to individual Post Office employees for the years 1686-1959. Amongst the numerous bound volumes of Treasury letters are the pension details of thousands of employees. Additional information is often included such as the officer's name, rank and office, date of birth, career history, last salary, cause of retirement or date of death and a statement of reference. Case statements, reports and correspondence are sometimes included where retirement was on grounds of ill-health or the cause of death under investigation. The names of these individuals can be traced through the pension and gratuity indexes, which can in turn be found in separate POST classes, usually made available on microfilm.

Researchers pursuing their own family history are advised to consult the 'Guide to Family History', which can be found in the Archive room and is available to download online. This guide provides step by step advice on how to trace pension records, as well as appointment records.

The majority of these pension records can be found in Sub-Series 1 'Treasury letters, general correspondence' and Sub-Series 6 'Pensions and gratuities applications and awards' (pp. 1-259 and 271-349 of the POST 1 printed catalogue respectively).

Sub-Series 1 'Treasury letters, general correspondence' accounts for the majority of the material held in POST 1. In addition to pension records, this series comprises a record of communications between the Treasury and Postmaster General concerning the financial management of the inland, foreign and colonial services. This includes Treasury authorisation for expenditure on salaries and allowances; new establishments, buildings, facilities and equipment; extension of postal routes, services and postage rates. Developments in transport and technology, rapid expansion of the GPO and increasing complexity of the Civil Service are reflected in the letter books from the early nineteenth century. Volumes contain correspondence

concerning road surveys; conveyance of mails by steam packets and railways; contracts for building work and ship conveyance; extension of telegraphic and telephonic communications; Post Office Savings Bank; Civil Service grades and pay scales.

Many of the letters in Sub-Series 2-5 are helpfully grouped and indexed by subject, such as Sub-Series 4 containing copies of letters authorising expenditure on postal telegraphic and telephone services. However, many of these letters are in fact duplicates of the records found in Sub-Series 1.

Administrative history

The General Post Office was, until 1969, a government department, and its expenditure was controlled by the Treasury. Prior to 1969 the Treasury supervised all GPO financial management, policy, planning and development.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/
- Some items in this class are available on microfilm in the Archive room. Please consult the microfilm catalogue, which can also be found in the Archive room, for further details

POST 2

POST OFFICE: RECEIVER GENERAL'S CASH BOOKS 1677-1809

104 volumes

Scope and content

POST 2 comprises the Receiver General's monthly record of all money received and expended on a monthly or quarterly basis by the Post Office. However, POST 2/107-112, covering the Bye and Cross Road Letter Office, contain quarterly accounts only. Subject, place and name indexes are included in POST 2/1-44, covering 1677-1748, although they are not contemporary compilations. Dates on volumes prior to 1752 have been revised in the catalogue to conform to the modern Gregorian calendar.

Administrative history

The Receiver General was an independent appointment, designed to remove all responsibilities for cash from the hands of the Postmaster General. There was, however, another major financial position in the Post Office, the Accountant General, who was appointed by the Postmaster General to keep an account of all revenue. This produced duplication of records. The Receiver General took receipt of all money paid into the Department, and paid costs directly from these funds.

The sources of income are mainly payments received from inland letters; window money (postage due on letters handed in by the public to the clerk behind the window of a post office); postmasters; letter receivers; returned letters; charges levied on incoming foreign letters. Expenditure includes payments for salaries of postmasters, letter carriers, sorters, window men, clerks of the roads and of the inland and foreign offices, inspectors, watchmen and other employees; ship letters; returned letters; accommodation, furnishings and equipment; travelling expenses; allowances and pensions; local taxes; contractors and tradesmen; building, hire, wear and tear of packet ships; captains fees. The balance of cash was transferred to the Exchequer.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/

POST 3

POST OFFICE: ACCOUNTANT GENERAL'S ANNUAL ACCOUNTS 1678-1938

33 volumes

Scope and content

This POST Class contains the annual accounts of the Accountant General (mainly the income and expenditure of the Post Office) and the general accounts of individual postmasters and agents.

General accounts

POST 3/3-5, 7, 9, 11, 13-17, 20-23 and 26 comprise the Accountant General's annual accounts of the income and expenditure of the General Post Office, based on receipts and payments made by the Receiver General. All of the volumes, except POST 3/23 and 26, contain accounts audited by the Commissioners for Public Accounts. The latter two items contain rough accounts only.

The accounts cover foreign, colonial and inland post offices and services, including salaries paid to deputy postmasters in England and Wales, officers and letter carriers at the Inland and Foreign departments in London, mail guards and overseas agents; money due to deputy postmasters; balances due from deputy postmasters and agents in England and Wales, Edinburgh, Dublin and overseas; old debts of inland postmasters, including those declared irrecoverable; packet boat hire costs, general expenses and passenger revenue; returned letters costs; income and expenditure on express mails; window money receipts; letter carriers' money; money received for postage and conveyance of inland, foreign, cross and bye road, penny/twopenny post and inland packet letters; stamp revenue; riding work allowances; incident payments; ship letter gratuities; franked letter costs; taxes; and expenditure on management of the GPO in Scotland and Ireland.

The lists of individual postmasters' salaries, balances due and old debts provide a valuable source of information for local and family historians, as they give the name and post town of each postmaster. Researchers should, however, note that: a) POST 3/23 and 26 are rough accounts and do not contain these lists; b) volumes are not indexed; c) lists containing similar information on postmasters in Scotland and Ireland are not contained in these volumes.

The general annual accounts in POST 3/27-34, covering 1854-1938, reflect the expansion and increasing complexity of GPO business and services. To an extent, the type of information included, and its arrangement, differs from that in the preceding annual accounts. They do not contain lists of individual

postmasters salaries, balances due and old debts. Volumes include GPO accounts with other government departments and foreign post offices; UK, colonial and overseas postage stamp revenue; accounts for returned, refused, missent, redirected and overcharged letters; summaries of salaries, allowances and wages to London Headquarters staff, Surveyors and their clerks, postmasters, agents, sub-postmasters and receivers in the UK, Ireland and abroad, letter carriers and mail guards; compensation payments for loss of fees to postmasters and agents in the UK and abroad; income and expenditure on mail conveyance by railway, mail coach, omnibus, cart, contract packet boats and private ships; cost of sites, buildings, rents, rates, taxes and fuel; pensions and superannuation payments; Money Order, Post Office Savings Bank, Government Annuities and Life Insurance accounts. POST 3/27 also contains the annual accounts of individual colonial, foreign and UK packet station agents and postmasters, arranged alphabetically by location.

POST 3/33-34 comprise general statements of annual income and expenditure, signed by the Comptroller and Accountant General. They contain information similar to that in POST 3/27-32, though in a more summary form.

Postmasters' general annual accounts

POST 3/1, 6, 8, 10, 12, 18, 19, 24 and 25 contain annual general accounts of individual postmasters and agents. The first five volumes cover England and Wales, Edinburgh, Dublin and some packet stations in Europe, such as Amsterdam, Lisbon, Corunna and Rotterdam. The last four volumes cover only England and Wales. They include payments to the Inland or General Office and Bye and Cross Road Office for letters, and expenditure on salaries and allowances for riding work, office duty, sub postmasters and letter carriers, mail conveyance, returned letters, incidents, mail guards wages, ship letters and express mails.

In volumes POST 3/6, 8, 10 and 12, the general annual account of the GPO precedes the postmasters' accounts. These general annual accounts correspond to the respective account in POST 3/7, 9, 11 and 13, although they are presented in a different format.

This group of records also forms a useful source for family historians, as it gives the names of postmasters and agents at each office. Unfortunately, only POST 3/1 includes a name index. Volumes POST 3/6, 8, 10 and 12 are indexed by place. Volumes POST 3/18-19 and POST 3/24-25 do not contain any indexes, although the accounts are arranged alphabetically by place (within each division for POST 3/18-19).

Postal Divisions

The information in the lists of postmasters' salaries, some lists of balances due, and in the postmasters' accounts, (see POST 3/1-15), is arranged by the six postal roads. However, the roads are not stated at the beginning of each section, one running into another without apparent break. Some reference to

the postal roads does however occasionally appear. The six roads, West, North, Bristol, Chester, Yarmouth and Kent, are first named in the account for 1787 (see POST 3/16), the last four not being geographically restricted to the town or county named. In 1788 the six roads system is replaced by nine divisions, apparently of no geographical arrangement, e.g. division 8 includes both Durham and Croydon. Accounts for the West Indies division, including Barbados, Tobago, St Vincent, Grenada, Dominica, Antigua, Trinidad and Bermuda, are entered in POST 3/16-17 and POST 3/20-22. Accounts for the East Indies division, including St Helena, Cape of Good Hope, Mauritius, Ceylon, Madras, Calcutta and Bombay, are entered in POST 3/21 and POST 3/22.

Administrative history

The Accountant General was appointed by the Postmaster General to keep an account of all revenue in the Post Office. There was another major financial position, that of the Receiver General, who was appointed independently to remove all responsibilities for cash from the hands of the Postmaster General, taking receipt of all money paid into the department, and paid cash directly from these funds. These two positions overlapped, and there is much duplication of work, and records, and they were finally amalgamated in 1854.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/
- Some items in this class are available on microfilm in the Archive room. Please consult the microfilm catalogue, which can also be found in the Archive room, for further details

POST 4

POST OFFICE: ACCOUNTS OF PACKET SHIP SERVICES AND BRITISH OVERSEAS POSTS
1773-1857

32 volumes

Scope and content

This series comprises accounts of British packet services and overseas posts, including records of agents and postmasters, packet stations, and packet boats. The accounts cover income, expenditure, salaries, allowances and disbursements.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/
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POST 5

POST OFFICE: INCIDENT WARRANTS: ACCOUNTS 1817-1852

6 volumes

Scope and content

POST 5 comprises a series of quarterly accounts of warrants issued by the Treasury authorising payment, by the Receiver General, of incident bills incurred by the General, Twopenny and London District Post Offices (the Twopenny Post was replaced by the London District Post in 1844).

Accounts cover a wide variety of items and are arranged under general subject headings, such as ‘pensions’, ‘packets’, ‘tradesmen’ and ‘rents’. Entries include the date of issue of warrant, what or whom it is for, date payment is due and the amount. Volumes are indexed by person, subject and place. Warrants are mainly for payments of:

- Pensions, salaries and allowances to chief and senior officers, clerks, sorters, messengers and servants working in the London headquarters departments, including offices of the Secretary and Accountant General, and the Foreign, Inland, Express, Mail Coach, Dead Letter and Ship Letter offices; packet agents; surveyors; postmasters; inspectors of mails, letter receivers and carriers and packet ships; commanders and mates of packet ships, or their widows; letter receivers and carriers in London; and mail guards

- Expenses for mail conveyance by sea, including costs incurred by packet ships operating from Falmouth, Harwich, Dover, Whitehaven, Donaghadee, Weymouth, Milford Haven and Holyhead, and in the West and East Indies, notably hire charges, lighting dues, wages and victualling for captains, officers and crew whilst at sea, out of employ or while the ship is undergoing repairs; and ship letter mails

- Expenses for inland mail conveyance, notably for payments to mail coach contractors; road, bridge and ferry tolls; supply and upkeep of fire arms, time pieces, mail bags and mail guards uniforms; mail coach maintenance; and railway and steam packet company charges

- Compensation for abolished offices or duties

- Tradesmen’s bills for items supplied or work done

- Legal expenses, notably relating to investigation, detection, capture and trial of felons

- Rents, taxes and rates for offices in London
- Stationary printing costs
- Transit postage and tonnage dues to foreign post offices
- Travelling expenses, particularly surveyors'
- Advances or loans (covered by imprest warrants) to employees, particularly seamen.

There are no indications whether or not POST 5/1-3 include warrants relating to the Twopenny Post Office.

Administrative history

Until 1969 the General Post Office was a government department and its expenditure was controlled by the Treasury. The Receiver General was an independent appointment, designed to remove all responsibilities for cash from the hands of the Postmaster General.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/

POST 6

POST OFFICE: INCIDENT BILLS ACCOUNTS
1766-1854

34 volumes

Scope and content

This POST class comprises a series of quarterly accounts of salaries and allowances due and payable by incidents to the officers, clerks and tradesmen employed by the General, Twopenny and London District Post Offices (the Twopenny Post was replaced by the London District Post in 1844). Items 6/4-6, covering 1794-1799, also include separate quarterly accounts of tradesmen's bills and incidental warrants paid out of the revenue of the Bye and Cross Road Letter Office. Accounts cover a wide variety of items and are arranged under general subject headings, such as 'pensions', 'packets', 'tradesmen' and 'rents'. Entries include what the bill is for, name of person owed and the amount. The date of the Treasury warrant authorising payment is often included at the end of each quarterly account. Volumes are not indexed. The accounts include bills for:

- Pensions, salaries and allowances to chief and senior officers, clerks, sorters, messengers and servants working in the London headquarters departments, including offices of the Secretary and Accountant General, and the Foreign, Inland, Express, Mail Coach, Dead Letter, Ship Letter and Bye Letter offices; packet agents; surveyors; postmasters; inspectors of mails, letter receivers and carriers and packet ships; commanders and mates of packet ships, or their widows; letter receivers and carriers in London; and mail guards

- Expenses for mail conveyance by sea, including costs incurred by packet ships operating from Falmouth, Harwich, Dover, Whitehaven, Donaghadee, Weymouth, Milford Haven and Holyhead, and in the West and East Indies, notably hire charges, lighting dues, arms and ammunition stores, wages and victualling for captains, officers and crew whilst at sea, out of employ or while the ship is undergoing repairs; and ship letter mails

- Expenses for inland mail conveyance, notably for payments to mail coach contractors; road, bridge and ferry tolls; supply and upkeep of fire arms, time pieces, mail bags and mail guards uniforms; mail coach maintenance; and railway and steam packet company charges

- Compensation for abolished positions or duties

- Items supplied or work done by tradesmen

- Legal expenses notably relating to investigation, detection, capture and trial of felons
- Rents, taxes and rates for offices in London
- Stationary printing costs
- Transit postage and tonnage dues to foreign post offices
- Travelling expenses, particularly surveyors'

Item 6/11, covering 1805-1809, is different to the rest of the series. It contains certified accounts of the quarterly salaries and allowances paid by incidents upon which the Civil List deduction, or tax, of six pence in the pound is chargeable. Each account lists the 'salaries' and 'incidents' of individual officers and clerks at the General Post Office headquarters in London, including the Postmaster General, Secretary and other senior officers, and the total duty payable each quarter.

These accounts probably originate from the office of the Receiver General, who was in charge of all monies received and paid out of the revenue of the Post Office.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/
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POST 7

POST OFFICE: PROPERTY AND INCOME TAX ASSESSMENTS AND CERTIFICATES
1813-1891

37 volumes

Scope and content

This POST class consists of schedules of annual property and income tax assessments made upon the salaries, annuities, and pensions of employees in the General Post Office in England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland, with signed certificates of affirmation and verification by the GPO Assessors and Commissioners (senior officers in the GPO, notably from the offices of the Secretary and Receiver General).

Accounts are arranged mainly by department or section and cover: establishments in GPO headquarters in London, Edinburgh and, from 1854, Dublin, including the Postmaster General, Secretary, Accountant General, Receiver General, Solicitor, Surveyors, heads of departments such as the Inland, Money Order, Returned Letter and Circulation offices, and their inspectors, clerks, sorters, stampers and messengers; letter carriers and receivers in London, under the General Post (up to 1856), Twopenny Post (up to 1844) and London District Post (from 1844); superannuated officers; provincial establishments in England, Wales, Scotland and, from 1854, Ireland, including postmasters, sub-postmasters, clerks, letter receivers and messengers; Colonial agents and postmasters; mail guards; officers of the railway or travelling post; telegraph and engineering establishments (from 1871); and Savings Bank staff (from 1862).

Entries state the name of employee, office or position held, amount of income assessable, exempt amount of income, duty payable and rate, rebates allowed and total deducted.

From POST 7/2 onwards, volumes consist of standard, printed schedule and certificate forms. POST 7/1 contains various pasted-in summary lists and certificates, covering 1813-1818. It is divided into Domestic and West Indies taxes assessed by the Receiver General.

This POST Class is a useful source for family historians, containing lists of staff employed in the GPO between 1843 and 1884 and in 1891, including their position and annual salary.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/

POST 8

POST OFFICE: AUDITING OF ACCOUNTS AND SYSTEMS OF FINANCIAL ACCOUNTING AND COMPILING STATISTICS
1802-1991

142 files and volumes

Scope and content

This POST class consists of records of the Public Accounts Audit Commissioners' checks on GPO annual accounts and the Accountant General's checks on accounts received from agents and postmasters in the first half of the 19th century. Also included are various reports and other papers relating to financial systems, methods of accounting and collecting, collating and presenting business statistics in the Post Office.

Administrative history

The Post Office annual accounts, like those of other government departments, were liable to examination by the Public Accounts Audit Commissioners. One of the main duties of the Accountant General was to superintend the making out and examining of the general accounts of Post Office revenue and to certify their validity before the Exchequer.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/

POST 9

POST OFFICE: ACCOUNTS
1715-1948

175 volumes, 14 files

Scope and content

POST 9 comprises a wide variety of 18th, 19th and some 20th century account books and schedules relating to Post Office business.

A number of items in this POST class will be useful to researchers of 19th century family history. POST 9/112-130 contain names of mail conveyance contractors, 1854-1874; POST 9/139 lists names of postmasters, 1847-1848; POST 9/66-76 include names of postmasters and their date of appointment, 1855-1873; and POST 9/146-163 contain names of officers working in the Post Office in London, 1798-1854. However, these volumes do not contain name indexes.

POST 9 consists of the following series: Statements and accounts of gross and net produce of the General Post Office revenue; Receiver or Accountant General's cash account journals; Accounts of daily, monthly, quarterly or annual receipts and payments, inland, foreign and colonial services; District Surveyors' incident expense accounts, England and Wales; District Surveyors' monthly accounts of provincial riding work payments to contractors, England and Wales; Accounts of provincial postmasters' allowances and payments, England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland; Detailed returns of provincial post offices in England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland; Ledgers and lists of old debts of postmasters and other officers; Salary schedules and authorities, GPO London, Twopenny Post Office and London District Post Office; Miscellaneous salary accounts; Twopenny Post Office accounts; Accounts of individual post offices, inland and overseas; Miscellaneous accounts.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/

POST 10

POST OFFICE: RECORDS ON CONVEYANCE OF MAILS BY ROAD, INLAND SERVICES
1786-1990

317 files, 88 volumes

Scope and content

This POST class contains records relating to the transportation of mails by road - mail coaches in particular - but also includes material on the early use of railways. Some reference to steam packets is also contained in this class.

Administrative history

Prior to the introduction of the GPO's mail coach service in 1784, the mail was conveyed by horse riders or mail cart on the longer routes out of London and on foot on some country services. The service was slow and vulnerable to attacks by armed robbers. In 1782 John Palmer of Bath put forward his scheme for conveying the mail by stage coach. Rejected in 1783 by the Postmasters General, a trial was finally approved in Jun 1784, with the support of William Pitt, Chancellor of the Exchequer. The experiment on the Bristol-Bath-London road in August 1784 was a success and Palmer began to organise further mail coach services in 1785. He was appointed Surveyor and Comptroller General of the Post Office in 1786 and presided over the expansion of the service throughout England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland. By 1790 all the most important routes had been covered and many towns had a daily delivery and collection of mail by coach. The full scheme involved 42 mail coach routes.

The mail coach service was almost immediately affected by the arrival of the railways in the 1830s. The GPO quickly took advantage of this new and faster method of transport to replace the mail coaches. The last of the London based coaches ceased in 1846, although this method of conveyance continued for cross post services between some provincial towns until the 1850s. The last coach in the Midlands ran out of Manchester in 1858. Mail coaches lasted longest in those area which railways were slow to reach, such as Cornwall, Mid Wales, the Peak District and far North of Scotland. One of the last mail routes to be used, to Thurso in northern Scotland, ceased after the opening of the Highland Railway in 1874. In some remote parts of Scotland railways were never built and horse drawn carriage continued into the twentieth century, until replaced by motor vehicles.

Post Office experiments with motor transport began in the 1890s. Until the end of the First World War services were provided mainly by private contractors. In 1919 the Post Office introduced its own fleet of motor vehicles.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/
- Some items in this class are available on microfilm in the Archive room. Please consult the microfilm catalogue, which can also be found in the Archive room, for further details

POST 11

POST OFFICE: RECORDS ON CONVEYANCE OF MAIL BY RAILWAYS 1827-1975

106 volumes, 50 files

Scope and content

This POST class relates mainly to the railways but includes some material concerning conveyance of mail, by mail coaches and steam ships and cases of arbitration between the Post Office and these companies.

Administrative history

The first ever main line railway opened in 1825 and ran between Stockton and Darlington. In 1827 the use of that railway, and future lines, for carriage of mails was suggested to Secretary Francis Freeling by Thomas Richardson (see POST 11/51). The first conveyance of mail by this method actually occurred on 11 November 1830 on the Liverpool and Manchester Railway, less than two months after this second main line had opened (see POST 11/52). The Post Office was quick to take advantage of the new form of transport and in July 1837 mails were conveyed by train from Birmingham to Liverpool on the inaugural service of the Grand Junction Railway (see POST 11/57 and 58). In January 1838 the idea of having special mail carriages was experimented with; a horse box suitably fitted up started running between Birmingham and Liverpool on the Grand Junction in 1838. Proving a success, the first official ‘travelling post office’ set off from London to Preston on 1 October 1838.

In August 1838 an Act to provide for the conveyance of the mails by railways was passed by Parliament. This enabled the Postmaster General to compel railway companies to carry mails by ordinary or special trains, at such hours as the Postmaster General might direct, together with mail guards and other officers of the Post Office. Companies could also be required to provide carriages fitted up for sorting letters en route. In return, railway companies would receive a payment to be fixed, by arbitration if necessary, for any services and accommodation supplied. This Act provided the foundation for all future arrangements for carrying mails by rail.

Between 1838 and 1848 railways expanded rapidly in Britain and mails were quickly diverted to them from the roads. The London and Birmingham Railway, opened in September 1838, was the first important line to be completed in England and marked the end of the ‘Golden Age’ of coaching. From 1844, the year of ‘railway mania’, to 1848, 637 separate lines received their charters from Parliament. Mail coach contractors unable to get passengers essential to their operations where the railway ran a parallel route began giving notice to quit (see POST 11/60 and 61). The south western

coaches ceased their runs when the Great Western Railway was completed to Bristol in June 1841. The last horse drawn mail from London, to Norwich via Newmarket, was withdrawn in January 1846. By this time the railway network was becoming moderately complete. However, up to the 1870s railway services in the provinces often operated in connection with mail coaches.

By the 1850s the railway posts were generally known as Travelling Post Offices or Sorting Carriages and a number of trains almost wholly devoted to carrying mail were in operation. (See also POST 18). Over the next seventy years railways contributed significantly to the vast improvement in quality, increase of volume and speed of postal communications within Britain. Serious competition was absent until the widespread use of motor vehicles from the second quarter of the twentieth century.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
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POST 12

POST OFFICE: CONTRACTS AND VOYAGE RECORDS ON THE CONVEYANCE OF INLAND MAILS BY SEA 1748-1965

81 files and volumes

Scope and content

This class relates to conveyance of mails within the United Kingdom and Ireland by sea. The majority of records are on the Irish and Scottish packet services, with a few contracts for mail services to the Scilly Isles, Lundy Island and the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands placed at the end of the class.

Administrative history

The first Post Office packet station was established in the 16th century at Holyhead for the transport of mails to Dublin. Packet boats from Holyhead were soon supplemented by services from Milford Haven to Waterford and Portpatrick in Scotland to Donaghadee. Regular Irish services were established in the 17th and 18th centuries. By the end of the 19th century regular packet services between the mainland and many of the islands around Britain were in operation.

Although the Post Office owned some of the vessels, until the early 19th century the normal practice was to contract for the supply, maintenance and operation of packet boats, paying an allowance to the owner, often the captain, for their hire. The Post Office determined the schedules and rules for handling the mails. Owners made profits from carrying passengers, bullion and freight. The Post Office did not pay for loss or injury to vessels caused by storms but did compensate owners for damage inflicted by enemies of state during times of war and often had to pay ransom money for the return of boats seized by privateers or foreign foes.

In the early 19th century developments in industrialisation led to successful application of steam power to ships. In 1818 a private company, Holmes and Co, established steamboats between Holyhead and Dublin. As a result, the number of passengers on government packets decreased drastically. The Post Office decided to take action in response to protests by packet owners and to stop the illegal transmission of mails by the steam boats. Rather than use the Holyhead company’s boats, the Post Office decided to build its own steam packets and the first two, *Lightning* and *Meteor,* were placed on the Holyhead station in 1821. Further Post Office steam boats were introduced at Dover in 1822, Milford Haven in 1824, Portpatrick in 1825, Liverpool in 1826 (packet station established there in that year for conveyance of mails to Dublin) and Weymouth in 1827. In 1836 the Post Office had 26 steam packets in operation.

The steam packets were very expensive to build and operate and nearly always made a financial loss, particularly the services from Holyhead and Milford Haven in the 1830s. In 1790 the entire packet fleet had been placed under the supervision of an Inspector of Packets, following severe criticism of their high cost by a government inquiry of 1788. However, by the early 19th century the office was not equipped to manage the expanding fleet. Inefficiency and poor management of both sail and steam packets, was largely due to the Post Office's lack of expertise in maritime affairs. Post Office awareness of this failing was demonstrated in 1823 when 30 packets at Falmouth were taken over by the Admiralty. The carrying out of repairs to *all* packet boats at one central workshop in Holyhead was particularly uneconomical. Competition for passengers from private steam boat companies on the Irish routes, particularly from the City of Dublin Steam Packet Company on the Liverpool to Dublin route, turned initial profits into sustained losses. The Post Office soon realised that a system of private contracts may have been preferable to building and owning its own steam boats. Following three critical government inquiries, 1830-1836, an Act of Parliament turned over all packet operations to the Admiralty from 1 Jan 1837, although the Post Office still controlled the schedules.

The Admiralty, which at first intended to carry on the mail service in its own vessels preferred by the end of the 1830s to grant mail contracts to companies that could build large vessels and maintain adequate fleets. The Liverpool to Dublin route was the first to be put out to tender and was run by the City of Dublin Steam Packet Company from 1839. Although the Admiralty increasingly entered into contracts with private steam companies for mail services to Ireland, and the Scotch and English islands, government steam packets continued to sail during the 1840s. The Holyhead to Dublin service was not put out to tender until 1849. In 1850 a ten year contract was signed with the City of Dublin Steam Packet Company. In 1848 and 1849 services between Liverpool and Dublin, Milford Haven and Waterford and Portpatrick and Donaghadee were discontinued. Government packets had disappeared by the end of the 1850s and the policy of relying entirely upon the mercantile marine had been established.

In 1860 control of the packet services was returned to the Post Office and every endeavour was made to lower the high cost of the services run by various steamship companies. The struggle continued until the end of the century when the Post Office began using the services of commercial steamship companies for the conveyance of mails.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/

POST 13

POST OFFICE: REPORTS, PRESS RELEASES AND TERMS OF AGREEMENT ON INLAND AIR MAIL SERVICES 1935-1971

2 volumes, 2 files

Scope and content

This POST class contains records related solely to inland air mail services. It comprises reports on the night air mail service, and agreements with airlines. This class currently only contains four items. Further records on air mail services can be found in POST class 50, *Overseas Airmail*, and POST Class 34 *Packet Series Volumes,* (during the early days of the Air Mail Service this series was used to record cases dealt with at GPO Headquarters).

Administrative history

The first air mail service within the United Kingdom was from Hendon to Windsor in 1911, to mark the coronation of King George V. The few letters that were carried bore the post-mark ‘First United Kingdom Aerial Post’.

A major advance in inland services came in 1934 with the introduction of the town-to-town service with routes nation-wide.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/

POST 14

POST OFFICE: INLAND MAILS ORGANISATION AND CIRCULATION: RECORDS
1757-1982

215 volumes, 193 files

Scope and content

This POST class relates to the arrangements for circulation of mails in England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland between the 18th and 20th centuries. It comprises three major sections: letter copy books of the Inland Office, 1794-1836, order and notice books of the Inland Office and Circulation Department, 1794-1868, and volumes and files relating to the revision of rural posts in the mid-19th century. The rest of the class is made up of a variety of items on the management of inland mails, including a number of London Postal Service order books, records of the Dead Letter Office, Bye and Cross Road Letter Office and Twopenny Post Office. Due to the incorporation of the Foreign Office with the Inland Office in 1840, a number of records in this class also refer to the circulation of overseas mails, particularly the orders and notices books of the Inland Office and Circulation Office, (14/289-334).

Administrative history

Inland mails organisation: the Inland Office and the Circulation Department

A separate domestic postal service originated early in the 17th century when a split developed from the foreign service. By the 1670s the General Letter Office in London comprised an Inland Office, with 43 staff, and a Foreign Office, with only 4 staff. By the end of the decade they were both housed in Lombard Street, as two distinct services with separate staff, although there was a considerable overlapping of work. By the end of the century the staff of the Inland Office greatly increased and the department brought in two-thirds of the GPO's profits. (The staff of the Foreign Office increased to a lesser extent). The Inland Office was managed by a Comptroller and Accomptant and staffed by cashiers, clerks of the roads, an alphabet man, window men, sorters and letter carriers and receivers. By the middle of the 18th century the Inland Office also had a Deputy Comptroller and the outdoor service accounted for most of the staff.

In the early 19th century three overlapping services existed; the Inland Office, Foreign Office and Twopenny Post Office, each with separate staffs. The Inland Office had general charge of the whole postal system for the British Isles, including the mail coaches to and from London. Its staff consisted of a Superintending President, presidents, vice presidents, clerks of the roads, sorters and letter carriers for London. The Foreign Office dealt with mails going to and coming from foreign countries. There was a separate Ship Letter

Office and Dead Letter Office. The Bye and Cross Road Letter Office had been absorbed into the Inland Office by this time, (see below).

In 1829 a new central office opened in St Martin's le Grand, to house the General or Inland Office, Foreign Office and Twopenny Post Office. All had distinct letter carriers and their own receiving houses. Foreign Office letter carriers were abolished in the early 1830s. In 1844 the Twopenny Post Office was renamed the London District Post Office.

In the mid-19th century there occurred a gradual amalgamation of all divisions connected with circulation of mail. On 6 April 1840 the Foreign Office was consolidated with the Inland Office and in July 1849 the Ship Letter staff were placed on the Inland Office establishment. By 1850 the Inland Office and London District Post Office were the two departments directly engaged in mail circulation - collecting, sorting, delivering and charging the letters and newspapers in London and its immediate neighbourhood, and in despatching mail to all quarters. The Inland Office was charged with the despatch of mails from London to the provinces or to foreign parts and with the delivery in London of letters received from the country or from abroad. The London District Office was charged with similar duties in respect of the correspondence carried on within London itself and a district around it of 24 miles in diameter, and, sometimes, with the delivery of letters from the Inland Office. This arrangement and duplication of duties meant there was a wastage of manpower. In 1854 proposals were put forward to unite them under one superintendent and consolidate the Dead Letter Office within them. The establishment of the Circulation Department was authorised by the Postmaster General in October 1854. The Circulation Department was managed by a Controller, assisted by a vice controller, and a number of deputies. Below them was a body of clerks and then the sorters and letter carriers. Arrangements for the operation of the new Circulation Department gradually came into force over the next few years.

By 1870 the Circulation Department comprised various branches including the Surveyor and Controllers Office, the Inland, Newspaper, TPO, Foreign and Registered Letter branches, East Central Office and Lombard Street branch.

Bye and Cross Roads Office

In 1660 there were 6 main post roads - North Road to Edinburgh; West Road to Plymouth; Chester or Holyhead Road, Roads to Bristol, Dover and Norwich. Other places were served by branch posts working out of the main roads. Letters between intermediate towns on the main roads were carried by bye-posts**.** There were no cross posts connecting places on different main roads; the post had to pass through London which caused much delay. By the end of the 17th century a number of cross posts, which did not pass through London, had been established, beginning with a direct post between Bristol and Exeter. The Act of 1711 legalised the cross posts.

In 1720 Ralph Allen was given the contract to farm the Bye and Cross Road posts. He continued in that role for 44 years, until his death, making many

important reforms and improvements in the conveyance of letters. Under Ralph Allen the Bye and Cross Road Letter Office was a completely separate part of the postal service. When he died in 1764 it came under the management of the GPO and the Postmasters General. It was governed by a Comptroller, Philip Allan (Ralph Allan's nephew), appointed in 1764. The Office was transferred from Bath to London and housed separately from the Inland Office as a fourth distinctive branch of the GPO - beside the Inland, Foreign and Penny Post offices. Philip Allan managed the Office until his death in the early 1780s when John Staunton took over. The Bye and Cross Road Letter Office became known as the Bye Letter Office by 1788 and remained a separate department for some time until it became essentially a branch of the Inland Office towards the end of the 18th century. By then its distinctiveness had largely ceased, as the network of routes made the difference between a country letter and a by letter and a cross road letter largely meaningless. The office of Comptroller was also abolished toward the end of the century.

London Penny Post, Twopenny Post and London District Post

In 1680 William Dockwra, a London merchant, set up a London Penny Post. It was stopped by the Duke of York in the Courts for infringement of State monopoly and taken over by the Postmaster General in 1682, administered separately from the 'General Post'. This official penny post was also known as the London District Post. The Act of 1711 legalised the London Penny Post. An Act of 1801 abolished the London Penny Post, after an existence of 120 years, and replaced it by what became known as the Twopenny Post (still relating to London and its environs only). In 1805 the limits of the Twopenny Post were restricted to the General Post delivery and letters crossing these bounds became a Threepenny Post. (In 1839 it became a penny post again). In 1844 the Twopenny Post Office became officially known as the London District Post Office. This was amalgamated with the Inland Office and Dead Letter Office in 1854, to form the Circulation Department.

Dead and Returned Letters

The Dead Letter Office was established in London in 1784 to deal with dead and missent letters, when the addressee could not be found. Similar offices in Edinburgh and Dublin opened shortly after. Each was headed by an Inspector. In 1813 a Returned Letter Office was organised to return undelivered letters to writers and collect the postage due. Prior to 1813 the only letters returned were those supposed to contain money or items important enough to escape destruction. During the 19th century the department for dealing with undelivered and returned letters was variously named the Dead Letter Office, Dead and Returned Letter Office and Returned Letter Office. The latter title became gradually more favoured as it prevented any confusion by the public with dead *persons* and sounded less gruesome. In 1854 it became a branch of the newly formed Circulation Department. By the early 20th century the work of headquarters offices was devolved to separate Returned Letter Offices set up in major towns in Britain.

Mid-19th century revision of rural posts in England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland

Although the French had set up the ‘poste rurale’ in the 1830s, until the mid-19th century the British Post Office was cautious in setting up deliveries in rural districts, only doing so when more than 100 letters a week were received in the village. A major expansion of rural posts throughout the United Kingdom and Ireland took place during the 1850s, under the auspices of Rowland Hill. Appointed secretary to the Postmaster General in 1846 and sole Secretary in 1854, Hill favoured the extension of deliveries to rural districts partly as a means of boosting the gross revenue. Surveyors were already setting up new postal deliveries where conditions justified. Under the revision plan some 700 new posts were set up by 1850, for delivering over 7,500,000 letters a year. A general revision that was begun in 1851 was pretty well complete by 1858. Many revisions of the 1850s included the introduction or enlargement of the free delivery boundary in rural post districts. By 1859 about 93% of mails were delivered free of charge by letter carriers to the houses of the addressees.

One of the most active and enthusiastic workers for these extensions was Surveyor Anthony Trollope, who wanted deliveries where most people were found in a rural district, not where the most influential people lived, and worked to do away with the rural letter carrier’s practice of charging for letters delivered. Trollope surveyed much of Ireland and all of south western England including the Channel Islands. Reports by Trollope can be found in case files POST 14/35, 40, 209, 213, 217, 218, 220 and 221.

The three series on rural revisions in POST 14 provide a detailed record of those changes, covering the establishment, expansion, alteration, preclusion and cessation of postal services and facilities. They also form a comprehensive guide to the rural posts existing in the mid-19th century, including collections, deliveries, routes, sub-offices, receiving houses, posting boxes, sorting offices, letter carriers, letter receivers, sub postmasters, modes of conveyance, facilities, equipment, salaries and allowances.

Rural posts were organised in rural districts under town post offices classified as ‘post towns’. All rural routes were served by the post town and its branch or sub-offices. Each town post office, managed by a deputy postmaster, belonged to a national District. Each District was administered by a District Surveyor who reported to the Secretary. The Secretary reported to the Postmaster General. This administrative structure is reflected in the three series on rural post revision.

There were two types of revision: a ‘general’ revision of the rural posts under one town; or minor alterations to a rural post, often initiated by a petition from the local inhabitants. Decisions were, in practice, mainly made by the Secretary, who submitted them to the Postmaster General for formal sanction. Proposals were normally only rejected if the volume of letters was insufficient to warrant the resources, the Post Office favoured an alternative reform, a minority of local inhabitants desired the alteration, or a guarantee bond was not provided.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/
- Some items in this class are available on microfilm in the Archive room. Please consult the microfilm catalogue, which can also be found in the Archive room, for further details

POST 15

POST OFFICE: INLAND MAILS ORGANISATION, LETTER BOOKS 1784-1937

78 volumes

Scope and content

This POST class comprises copy letter books relating to administration of the Post Office in Britain, Scotland and Ireland and, to an extent, overseas.

Administrative history

In 1784 the Irish Post Office was given a separate existence with its own Postmaster General. The offices amalgamated again in 1831 and remained together until the Post Office in Southern Ireland was transferred to the Irish Free State in 1922.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/
- Some items in this class are available on microfilm in the Archive room. Please consult the microfilm catalogue, which can also be found in the Archive room, for further details

POST 16

POST OFFICE: POSTAL DRAFTS
1912-1969

46 files and volumes

Scope and content

This POST class relates to the postal draft system from its inception in 1912 until it ceased in 1969 with the introduction of Girobank services. It comprises correspondence between the Post Office and government departments, committee minutes, reports, and specimens of postal drafts.

Administrative history

History of Postal Drafts

With the passing of the National Insurance Act 1911, Approved Societies acting as agents of the Ministry of Health for the paying of National Insurance benefits approached the Post Office for a means of sending small remittances through the post, postal and money orders being unsuitable. An Interdepartmental Committee, including representatives of the Post Office and the National Health Insurance Joint Committee, was appointed by the Treasury in June 1913 to consider the matter and the postal draft was the outcome of the Committee's recommendations. The service was introduced at the end of 1914 with the approval of the Treasury and without specific statutory authority. Very few Approved Societies in fact made use of the system, preferring to pay benefits in person.

During the First World War the use of postal drafts was extended, by Treasury authority, to various Government departments and some quasi-Government departments, including departments established in the United Kingdom by Colonial Governments. The War Office and Admiralty were amongst the first departments granted permission to use the system for the payment of pensions and reserve pay. Postal drafts were a more economical method of sending remittances through the post and Government departments were encouraged to use them in place of money orders.

In 1934 a Postal Draft Committee report recommended extension of the system, by statute, to Friendly Societies, Trades Unions, Local Authorities, Public Utility Corporations, charitable organisations of a permanent character and other similar bodies. Nothing emerged from those recommendations and the majority of non-Governmental applicants were denied access to the system by the Post Office, which cited practical difficulties and lack of statutory authority. No definite policy for granting or refusing permission to utilise the system was ever established.

The system of postal drafts ceased in 1969 with the introduction of Girobank services.

The postal draft system

The postal draft was a form of cheque for small sums drawn on the Postmaster General. It provided for the payment of money which had to be remitted by post. Printed forms of drafts were supplied by the Post Office to issuing authorities - Approved Societies or Government departments - which entered amounts and transmitted them to payees. Most forms were printed on watermarked paper and further protected by a colour band. The maximum amount payable was printed on the draft. Drafts could be cashed at any Post Office in Great Britain, Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic or at a specified post office. For the payment of sums over £10 evidence of identity was normally required from the payee. Paid drafts were returned to the issuing authority by the GPO and the account rendered. Advances to cover estimated payments were sent by issuing authorities to GPO Headquarters.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/

POST 17

POST OFFICE: INLAND MAILS: ORGANISATION, CIRCULATION AND SORTING
1797-1998

292 volumes, 100 files

Scope and content

POST class 17 contains papers on the mail handling cycle, from collection to delivery. The bulk of material relates to sorting and processing operations. The class is divided into 19 series. Series 1 and 2 comprise sorting and circulation directories. Series 3-9 generally relate to mechanisation of processing and sorting operations, including development of mechanical aids and the postcode system, letter, packet and parcel sorting machinery, the Post Office Letter and Parcel Post Plans introduced in the late 1960s, new mechanised offices and environmental controls. Series 10-12 concerns the introduction and marketing of postcodes. Series 13 and 14 comprise papers and audit reports on operational organisation and efficiency. The next four series cover local authorities and postal addressing, various sorting methods, processing and sorting equipment, and delivery and collection methods. Series 19 comprises papers relating to general circulation issues.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue class is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/

POST 18

POST OFFICE: TRAVELLING POST OFFICES
1838-1992

115 volumes, 96 files

Scope and content

This POST class relates to the conveyance of mail on the railways. In the latter half of the 19th century railway mail services were known as Travelling Post Offices and sorting tenders. During the early 19th century sorting tenders became known as sorting carriages. In general terminology sorting carriages were also often referred to as TPOs. The railway mail service also included bag duties or tenders. TPOs and sorting carriages comprised either special trains run exclusively for conveyance and sorting of mails or carriages on passenger trains hired to convey and sort mails. Bag duties were run solely for transportation of mails.

This POST class includes papers on the mail bag exchange apparatus, TPO mail circulation and sorting lists, railway rolling stock lists and diagrams, schedules of TPO services, minutes of the TPO Whitley Sub-Committee, working arrangements during war-time, route maps, and files on TPO staffing, during railway strikes and after service alterations.

Administrative history

The first ever main line railway came into operation between Stockton and Darlington in 1825. The first conveyance of mail by railway took place on 11 November 1830, on the Liverpool and Manchester Railway, less than two months after the opening of this second main line (see POST 11/52). The Post Office soon realised the potential for major improvements in mail distribution offered by this new form of transport. The first experimental Travelling Post Office, then known as ‘the railway post office’, ran between Birmingham and Warrington in January 1838 on the Grand Junction Railway. It consisted of a horsebox converted into a primitive sorting carriage, coupled to a train. The experiment proved that mail sorting could be carried out efficiently on board trains, saving both time and money. In April 1838 a regular service started on the newly opened London and Birmingham Railway, with purpose built sorting carriages. By the end of the year through services had been established between London and Preston. Thereafter the TPO network grew rapidly, accelerated by introduction of the Penny Post in 1840, proliferation of new rail routes and railway companies in the 1840s, the increased volume of mail in circulation and general economic expansion. Railway mail services quickly swallowed up the role of the mail coaches. Previously, some sorting of mail was done by mail coach staff and postmasters at coaching inns. However, TPOs enabled large quantities of mail to be sorted and processed on the move.

Despite the rapid expansion of TPOs, the department in charge was known as the Mail Coach Office until 1854. The 1850s and 1860s saw further expansion and by 1867 the TPOs had their own Department at GPO Headquarters in London, headed by a Surveyor of Travelling Post Offices. Overall management of railway services resided in the Inspector General of Mails. Control of TPOs remained based in London, which was the focal point of much postal traffic. In 1882 the London Postal Service was created. The post of Chief Superintendent, TPO Section, was established one year later. During the 19th century the Post Office developed an intricate and comprehensive network of Day and Night services covering England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland. The *Act to Provide for the Conveyance of Mails by Railways*, 1838, allowed the Postmaster General to compel railway companies, for reasonable remuneration, to carry mails by ordinary or special trains, at such hours as the Postmaster General might direct, together with mail guards and other officers of the Post Office. Companies could also be required to provide carriages fitted up for sorting letters en route. This Act provided the foundation for all future arrangements with private railway companies and British Rail for carrying mails by rail. The first railway mail services were normally carriages attached to passenger services, which provided accommodation for sorting and / or conveying mails. By the mid-1860s a number of special trains run purely for postal requirements with very little or no passenger accommodation, were in operation as part of mail carrying contracts agreed between railway companies and the Post Office. In 1885 special mails, exclusively for Post Office use, were introduced between London Euston and Aberdeen. Known as the Up Special TPO and Down Special, they constituted a major reorganisation of the West Coast route, greatly accelerated TPO services to Scotland and formed the biggest and busiest of the TPOs.

In the years leading up to World War One there were over 130 TPOs in operation throughout the United Kingdom, ranging from the large and prestigious London based services, such as the North Western TPO and Great Western TPO, to small local links, such as the Grimsby and Lincoln Sorting Tender and Brighton and Hastings Sorting Carriage (see POST 18/11-12). After the First World War, 1914-1918, many TPOs and Sorting Carriages which had ceased operating during conflict were not restored (see POST 18/38 for comparison of 1914 and 1922 service lists). Day TPOs and parcel sorting on TPOs were particularly reduced. The slow economic recovery during the 1920s delayed substantial re-investment in TPO rolling stock until the 1930s. During the Second World War all letter sorting on trains ceased and only a few key bag tenders ran. Parcel sorting and daytime TPOs were radically reduced after the War, mainly because the number and frequency of collections and deliveries had been reduced by concentration of processing services. A phased reinstatement began in 1945, but only about 46 services were restored. In 1948 the railways were nationalised and the British Transport Commission, (replaced by the British Railways Board in 1962), took over the TPO contract with Post Office. There was little change to the system from 1950 until 1968, when the Two-Tier letter service was introduced and TPOs began to carry and sort only First Class mails for next day delivery. The resultant drop in overnight business led to the disappearance of some

services during the 1970s, including the Plymouth-Bristol and Crewe-Bangor TPOs. The overall size and shape of the network remained largely unchanged until the mid-1980s. Concentration and mechanisation of letter mail handling in addition to faster British Rail services and greater use of road and air facilities, led to a review of East Coast services in 1985, and in 1988 the first major revision since the Second World War occurred. A new timetable was issued for a system of 37 TPOs, some services were combined, others extended and new ones added including services such as the Manchester-Dover TPO, which by-passed London (see POST 18/68). Further large-scale revisions and alterations took place in the 1990s to fit in with Royal Mail policies (see POST 18/66-67). By 1994 there was a limited provision of 24 TPOs. However, these were larger and faster trains, operating only at night and using specialised railway rolling stock.

The last TPO ran on 9 January 2004.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/

POST 19

POST OFFICE: POSTAL BUSINESS STATISTICS
1839-1990

440 volumes, 41 files

Scope and content

This POST class contains statistics relating to Post Office business, including returns of delivered, posted and registered mails, 1839-1913; comparative summaries of annual returns of work and staff hours from Head Post Offices in the United Kingdom, covering 1923-1966; returns of work and staff on Travelling Post Offices and Sorting Carriages, 1951-1974; and postal business key performance statistics, 1973-1985.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/

POST 20

POST OFFICE: RECORDS ON INLAND MAILS ORGANISATION: POST OFFICE (LONDON) RAILWAY
1854 - 1977

25 volumes, 23 files, 1 box

Scope and content

This POST class relates to the conveyance of mails by Underground pneumatic tube in London**.** It comprises proposals, committee reports, plans, tenders, contracts, specifications and Manager's annual reports regarding the introduction and operation of the Post Office (London) Railway.

Administrative history

The Post Office (London) Railway was opened for traffic in December 1927. The Post Office first showed an interest in using underground railways to transport mail beneath London in 1854 and in 1893 serious consideration was given to running an electric railway in the pneumatic tunnels. By the turn of the twentieth century, traffic congestion in London had reached the point that cross-London journeys by road took so long that an unnecessary number of vehicles had to be used to carry the ever growing volume of mails between sorting offices and main line termini. In 1905, the Metropolitan Pneumatic Despatch Co. presented a bill to Parliament for the construction of a pneumatic line connecting the major railway termini and Post Offices. The Bill was rejected as being too ambitious. In September 1909 the Postmaster General appointed a Committee to examine the practicality of the transmission of mails in London by pneumatic tube or electric railway. The Committee reported in February 1911 in favour of an electric railway between Paddington Station (Great Western Railway) and the Eastern District Post Office in Whitechapel Road, a distance of six and a half miles.

The scheme was submitted by the Postmaster General to the Cabinet in 1912 and power to construct the railway was given to the Postmaster General by the Post Office (London) Railway Act, 1913. The Act made provision for compensation for damage and allowed the Post Office a budget of £1, 100, 000 to construct the line with stations at Paddington, Western District Office, Western Parcel Office, West Central District Office, Mount Pleasant Sorting Office, King Edward Building, Liverpool Street and East District Office. Tenders for the construction of the tunnel were invited on the 26 August 1914. John Mowland and Co. won the tender to construct the tunnels and build eight stations. The work, although interrupted by the war, was completed in 1917. In parallel with the building work, Post Office engineers built a test track on Plumstead Marshes to experiment with the control systems and rolling stock. However, the war caused the testing to be brought to a premature halt. During the war the stations became a home for exhibits from museums. The

cessation of the war enabled the Post Office to proceed with their plans, and in 1919 tenders were issued for the supply and installation of the electrical equipment. Prices proved too expensive for the post war budget and the scheme was held in abeyance until 1923 when tenders were reissued.

In May 1927, work was sufficiently advanced for half the system to be handed over for staff training and in December of that year the scheme received Parliamentary approval and the line became fully operational with parcels traffic running between Mount Pleasant and Paddington. Mount Pleasant to Liverpool Street opened for Christmas parcels from 19-24 December and then for a full parcels service from 28 December. Liverpool Street to Eastern District Office opened for parcels on 2 January 1928. Letter traffic began on 13 February with the opening of West Central District Office station, followed by Western District Office on 12 March. The line proved an immense benefit to the Post Office in the first year of operation, however the high mileage gave the Post Office problems as the cars needed a lot of maintenance. In the early 1930s the rolling stock underwent a gradual change as the cars were replaced by three car trains. These trains were replaced by 34 new trains in 1981 in a £1 million development programme.

In a Press Release, issued by the Post Office PR team on 7 November 2002, Royal Mail announced that unless it could find a new backer, that the Post Office underground railway would close in the near future. The working operation finally ceased on 30 May 2003, but the system has in fact been 'mothballed' in the hope that an alternative use can be found for it.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/

POST 21

POST OFFICE: MAPS
1757-1991

763 maps

Scope and content

This POST class consists of maps showing mail circulation for England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland and postal routes, districts and boundaries.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- A catalogue is not yet available for this POST class
- Copies of some of these maps are available in black boxes on the Archive room shelves. The majority comprise circulation maps of England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales. There are also a few town maps and some surveyor's district maps of the different areas in England. Most of the maps date from the 19th century
- The original maps are produced on special instruction only

POST 22

POST OFFICE: COUNTERS OPERATIONS AND SERVICES [c1910]-2001

106 volumes, 44 files

Scope and content

This POST class relates to the operation of Counters business and services. The majority of the records relate to the policy on the establishment, closure and up-grading of sub-offices and the review of the scale payment sub-office system.

Administrative history

Post Office Limited (named Post Office Counters Ltd 1987-2001) was established as a wholly owned subsidiary of Royal Mail Group plc on 1st September 1987. It inherited functions and services from Royal Mail relating to the management of post office branches in England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales and the provision of financial, information and other relevant services through this network.

Thomas Witherings opened the first post office, where members of the public could take mail for posting and collect mail sent to them, in October 1635 in Bishopsgate Street, London. He was acting under a proclamation from King Charles I 'for the settling of the letter office of England and Scotland', authorising him to open the royal domestic mail service to the public to generate revenue for the King. Withering lost control of the service in 1637, leading to a spirited struggle by several claimants for the right to manage the monopoly (see Robinson, Britain's Post Office, Ch.3). This ended in 1653 when the Government farmed out services to the highest bidder, and the Post Office Acts 1657 and 1660 fixed rates for sending letters and established the legal foundation of the service for the first time. The duties and remuneration of postmasters were confirmed in the Post Office Act 1660, which designated responsibility for postmasters staged throughout England and Scotland to accept and hand-over letters, and provide fresh horses for post-boys on payment of a set fee.

The network of post office branches expanded considerably during the 18th century. Post offices were known as Letter Receiving Houses and were usually housed at inns and run by the innkeeper acting as the postmaster. Postmasters were self-employed and received payments according to the quantity of mail handled. The system was centrally administered through an Inland Office based in Lombard Street, London.

In 1715 six 'Surveyors' were appointed by the Postmaster General to manage postal operations outside of London, and in 1720 Ralph Allen established a

business under contract to the Postmaster General to manage and develop the postal network for letters not passing through the London office. Allen managed this until his death in 1764, at which point his business became part of the Inland Office department and was transferred from Bath to London.

In 1854, as services expanded and the need for greater facilities at post office branches increased, the first post offices owned and run by Royal Mail (then named the General Post Office) were opened. These were called crown offices, as opposed to sub-offices run by agents (sub-postmasters). Crown offices were managed by paid employees of the General Post Office and administered with sub-offices through the Inland Office Department (renamed the Circulation Department from 1854-1934). A system of salaried and scale-payment sub-offices, head post offices and regional branch offices was established to provide a range of facilities managed through a network of head postmasters, postmasters and sub-postmasters.

In 1934 the system of district Surveyors and central administration of post office branches through the Circulation Department was replaced by eight regional divisions with devolved powers and a central headquarters function. Crown and sub-post offices were now managed through a series of general postal regions, though paid postmaster and head postmaster in each region still managed all functions (collecting, processing and delivery of mail as well as counter operations).

A 'Counters Services' department was first established in Postal Headquarters in 1981. In 1986 postal operations were organised into three separate businesses - Royal Mail Letters, Royal Mail Parcels and Post Office Counters (in addition to National Girobank which remained a separate business unit until it was sold to the Alliance and Leicester Building Society in 1990). In the Post Office Counters division, 32 district offices reported to four headquarters units: the "territories". Counters managers, each responsible for five to ten main post office branches and a number of sub-offices, supported each district manager. Sub-post offices and sub-postmasters, who were contractors to Royal Mail, were unaffected by this reorganisation.

In 1987 Post Office Counters became a limited company - Post Office Counters Ltd, a wholly owned subsidiary of Royal Mail but with separate audited accounts. This was reorganised in 1993 with seven regions replacing 30 districts and three territories, and three business centres focusing on particular markets: financial, branded and agency development. In 1998 the strategic, policy and administrative functions of Royal Mail were reorganised further with the establishment of 17 different business units operating across all three businesses (counters, mail and parcels). Counter operations and services were focused in four main functions: Post Office Network, Network Banking, Cash Handling and Distribution and Customer Management (Government Unit).

Post Office Ltd was established on 1st October 2001, under new powers granted to Royal Mail by the Post Office Act 2001. Post Office Ltd absorbed Post Office Network, Network Banking, Cash Handling and Distribution,

Customer Management (Government Unit) business units in Royal Mail and all of their functions, in addition to the brands, network and functions of Post Office Counters Ltd. Post Office Ltd remains an integral part of Royal Mail Group plc, but stands alone financially and is profit-accountable in its own right. It now contains seven administrative divisions, including Service Delivery, Customer Services and Strategic Alliances responsible respectively for Post Office branches, sales and marketing and key commercial services.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/

POST 23

POST OFFICE: INLAND MAIL SERVICES: LETTER POST 1636-1989

165 files, 87 volumes

Scope and content

This POST class comprises reports, papers and correspondence relating to the establishment, development and operation of Britain's Inland Letter Post service, spanning the period from 1635 to 1989. At present, POST 23 is divided into 14 Sub-Series, containing some pieces originally in POST 22. There is a small amount of material that relates to seventeenth and eighteenth century developments (see Sub-Series 1 'Establishment and Introduction of the Inland Letter Post' and Sub-Series 5 'Introduction of the Penny Postage'). However, the majority of the records held in this class relate to developments that occurred in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, which was the period in which a great expansion and modernisation of the inland letter service occurred within Britain. For the nineteenth century, there is interesting general information in Sub-Series 2 'Inland Letter Post, General' and, in Sub-Series 3 'Missing Letter Branch Case Papers', there are over 50 files of records created by the Missing Letter Branch, who investigated mail thefts between 1839-1859. The largest group of records within this class for the twentieth century is Sub-Series 8 'Two-Tier Inland Letter Service, Correspondence and Reports', which relates to the substantial changes that occurred from the 1960s that accompanied the introduction of a first class and second class postal service, amongst other changes that further modernised the system. Other than Sub-Series 14 'Seditious, obscene and libellous publications sent through the post', which comprises records for the years 1876-1927, the latter half of this class (Sub-Series 9-13) is filled with reports, business plans and material related to other significant developments that have occurred within Britain's letter post service from the late 1960s to the late 1980s.

Administrative history

The history of the Inland Letter Post is an important part of the history of modern communications. Since 1635, the General Post Office and its successors has been the progenitor of a number of techniques, organisational innovations and methods of communications distribution that have, in the course of time, been adopted the world over. The development of a modern Inland Letter Post system capable of delivering approximately 30 billion items per annum in Britain has clearly experienced an enormous amount of change over this extremely long period of time. It has been strengthened by centuries of growth, a sustained increase in organisational sophistication and a number of sweeping transformations, such as the introduction of the national Penny Post in the nineteenth century or of postcodes in the twentieth century. In the following passage of writing some of the key developments of the Letter Post

service, that form the historical context for the records found within POST 23, will be sketched.

In July 1635, by a Royal Proclamation of Charles I, a new revenue-producing plan to offset the cost of maintaining the Royal Posts was implemented (the Royal Posts date back to the reign of King Henry VIII and were made up of the King's personal messengers, conveying letters on behalf of the court and nobility). For the first time, this allowed the public to use the Royal Posts in return for fixed rates of postage. These rates were based upon the number of sheets of paper making up any given letter, and on the distance it was carried. Posts were carried along the five principal roads of the kingdom, those to Dover, Edinburgh, Holyhead, Plymouth and Bristol, travelling as far as Edinburgh and Dublin, with a number of Post Houses en route to allow collection of letters from intervening towns (see POST 23/1). This service survived the Civil War and was reconfirmed with the 'Charter of The Post Office' in 1660, which established the first London Letter Office. The 'Charter' reinforced the edicts of a 1657 Act of Parliament, which effectively fixed rates for the conveyance of postage across the British Isles. By the end of the seventeenth century, the Crown had secured a state monopoly on the carriage of inland mails and had taken control of the London Penny Post, a public postal service operating within the capital only, for which both those sending and receiving a letter would pay a penny. The establishment of a modest national service was by this time secure and settled and continued to expand at a steady pace.

By the mid eighteenth century, there was a controller of the Inland Office and two clerks for each of the six principal roads that spread from London to the rest of the British Isles. At the Head Office in Lombard Street, there were two Postmaster Generals, a number of other senior figures and approximately 16 sorters, amongst other staff responsible for the daily running of affairs. The outdoor service of the Inland Office was undertaken by nearly 70 letter carriers. In total, the department served over 180 offices nationwide, in addition to the work of the Bye and Cross Road Letter Office, which cared for the local carriage of posts between cross-road towns (See Howard Robinson, 'Britain's Post Office' (OUP, 1953), pp. 68-71). Towards the end of the century, there occurred a wholesale reform of the way letters were carried across Britain, when John Palmer oversaw the introduction of armed mail coaches to replace the boy messengers, from 1785 on. This development meant that the mails could now be carried across Britain faster, more regularly, with more safety and to a far stricter timetable, which in turn led to an expansion of services, revenue and national importance of a burgeoning modern Post Office.

Naturally, the industrial revolution and its attendant technological developments meant that mail coaches would not carry inland mails indefinitely. Travelling Post Offices (TPO), trains that journeyed the length and breadth of Britain carrying staff to sort the mail whilst on the move, began operation in the 1840s and there were over 100 in operation by the end of the nineteenth century. However, the great changes, developments and reforms that unravelled in many spheres of life during the nineteenth century, an ever-

growing and increasingly literate populace and the growth of industry and commerce, all contributed to a demand for an inland letter service of ongoing expansion and sophistication. A crucial step in this regard were the reforms to this service that occurred in the 1840s, which are commonly associated with the leading light of British postal history, Sir Rowland Hill (1795-1879).

Hill made a number of proposals for reforming the Post Office, but his major contribution was to change the way people paid for the national letter service, which in turn led to a more affordable service, a substantial growth in postal traffic and therefore to a series of organisational changes. In 1837, he published a pamphlet, 'Post Office Reform: Its Importance and Practicability' (see POST 23/214). Instead of the recipient paying a rate dictated by the mileage involved and the number of sheets of paper in the letter, a system that had become highly criticised, Hill argued for the following. A national rate of one penny, to be pre-paid by the sender by means of an adhesive label (the postage stamp), with charges being made according to weight. This pamphlet was well received. In 1837, a government-appointed select committee looked into the matter and published its final report in March 1839 (see POST 23/202) and it was agreed by Parliament on 12 July of that year. The concept of pre-payment was agreed and new uniform rates were introduced on 10 January 1840, only five weeks after an interim 4d rate had demonstrated its practicality and also due to public pressure. However, it was not until 1897, as part of concessions made for Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, that delivery by postmen was extended to every house in the Kingdom. There were changes to the maximum weight that could be posted for one penny in 1871 and 1879 and the national Penny Post kept its eponymous rate right up until 1918 when this charge was finally raised by a half pence (See POST 23/201 for a review of the achievements of the penny post by 1890, written by Rowland Hill's son, Mr. Pearson Hill).

When the national penny post was introduced, the Post Office handled just over 75 million letters per annum. By 1870, this figure had risen to in excess of 860 million and letters remained the dominant means of inland long-distance communication until the telecommunications revolution of the twentieth century (for postal traffic figures see Martin Daunton, 'Royal Mail: The Post Office Since 1840' (London: Athlone Press, 1985), p. 80). The mid-nineteenth century reforms to the way the Post Office went about its business laid the foundations for the way the organisation would administrate the nation's inland letter service well into the twentieth century. However, before concluding with a consideration of the equivalent reforms of this later period, there is one department of the nineteenth century Inland Letter Office that is particularly well represented in POST 23 and therefore worthy of brief comment.

This is the Missing Letter Branch (Sub-Series 3 'Missing Letter Branch Case Papers'). This department conducted investigations into many suspicious cases where inland letters went missing, and was often successful in finding a culprit, usually a sorting clerk or postman. Missing duties were the responsibility of the Solicitor from the first recorded instance in 1793 (see the minute entry Eng321P/1827 in POST 30/21) and in 1816 they were assumed

by the Secretary's office (See POST 72). However, in 1839 (when this series begins) the duty became known as the Missing Letter Branch. A number of organisational changes occurred such as the introduction of a Post Office Inspector General in 1848, the replacement of this post ten years later with the detachment to it of four Travelling Officers (investigation officers) and two police constables (assistants) and a number of other travelling officers becoming permanent staff in 1861. In 1883 the Missing Letter Branch was renamed the Confidential Enquiry Branch (CEB), and its head was given the title of Director. These files relate to the period 1839-1859 and contain a wealth of information such as the 500 indexed cases for 1854-1856 that can be found in POST 23/62.

Efforts to revitalise Britain's letter post were redoubled after the Second World War and there were a series of organisational changes to the way the London Postal Region (LPR) was run, with collection and delivery times, circulation objectives and staff working hours coming under the spotlight (See Sub-Series 6 'Post War revision to letter services, London Postal Region'). The major changes that occurred in the post-war period until the 1980s and beyond owed much to technological advancements that, like many sectors of British business and industry, the Post Office Board sought to take full advantage of. The mechanisation of postal sorting gathered pace from 1945 onwards and the automation of many parts of the by now elaborate and very large inland letter system heralded other changes of national importance, such as the introduction of post codes in the early 1960s (See POST 17 in general for issues related to mechanisation and see POST 17 Sub-Series 10 for the introduction of post codes in particular).

One of the landmark developments facilitated by these improvements to the system was the arrival of a two-tier letter service, which was officially introduced on 16 September 1968. The new first class service was charged at 5d and second class letters were charged at 4d. These were liable to deferment in the post and, in general, were delivered about 24 hours later than the equivalent first class service. Long before this service was introduced, letter traffic had been divided into two broad streams with fully paid letters in one stream and printed papers at a lower rate of postage in the other stream in order to ensure prompt delivery of fully paid letters. Late postings had gradually increased over the years, for example, in the Western District Office in London, it increased from 75% in 1956 to 82% in 1967, and so although the new system was sometimes criticised, it was considered to be a necessary adjustment to the way the letter service was run. Reports, memoranda, the proceedings of parliamentary speeches and debates and much else related to the introduction of the two-tier letter service can be found in Sub Series 8 'Two-Tier Inland Letter Service, Correspondence and Reports'.

In 1969, an Act of Parliament made the Post Office a nationalised corporation and the organisation ceased to be a government department for the first time in the modern era. Under the terms of the Act, the organisation was split into two distinct sections: posts and telecommunications. One of the consequences of this legislation was that that the organisation came under

increased pressure to remain profitable. With this in mind, marketing plans and long term planning papers were drawn up during the 1970s and 1980s in which the state of the letter system and plans for its future development were discussed, some of which can be found in Sub-Series' 9 and 10. By the early 1980s, the telecommunications side of the business had been separated and was later privatised in 1984, whereas the inland letter service remained under the control of the Post Office. This part of the organisation became separated from counters and parcels under the name 'Royal Mail Letters' in 1986 and reports relating to the establishment of the letters business in this year can be seen in Sub-Series 13, including graphs that show the volumes of inland mail and the relative success/failure at meeting service targets from the 1960s on (POST 23/155 and 199). From 2002, a similar set up remained in place, but with one important difference: Royal Mail (which continued to be a PLC) lost its monopoly for the conveyance of inland letters.

The history of the Post Office monopoly of letter services is very complex and its validity has been a source of political debate throughout the twentieth century. The 1635 proclamation made it unlawful to establish a private post where an official one existed and in 1637 a further proclamation declared a monopoly on carriage of letters between persons within the kingdom. In 1657 an Act established a 'General Post Office' and appointed a 'Postmaster General,' giving him a monopoly on the carriage of letters. Throughout the latter part of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, measures were taken to clarify the application of, and exclusions to, the monopoly, and extend it to other Post Office services. There have been other interesting episodes related to this Post Office monopoly, including an occasion in 1885 when the Postmaster General made an ill-tempered visit to the colleges of Oxford and Cambridge to investigate an independent postal system that had been developed at the universities, producing its own postage stamps, between 1870-1886 (see POST 23/77) and the contentious monopoly continued to be the subject of political debate well into the late twentieth century (see POST 23/142 'The Letter Monopoly: Review, 1979' and Sub-Series 4 'The Post Office Monopoly of Letter Post' for related material). From 1 January 2006, the market was opened up to competition by the postal regulator Postcomm in anticipation of EU rulings concerning postal monopolies. This ended a 350-year period in which the Post Office had maintained this sole right to offer an inland letter service.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/

POST 24

POST OFFICE: NEWSPAPER POST
1791-1966

58 volumes, 21 files

Scope and content

This POST class relates to the transmission of newspapers by post and comprises records relating to the franking privilege of the Clerks of the Road, the transmission of newspapers overseas, and the postage rates of Newspaper Post. The majority of the class consists of published lists of newspapers registered at the Post Office for transmission under the Newspaper Post (POST 24/21 - 24/72).

Administrative history

Officials of the Post Office acted as the first newsagents in this country after the establishment of the public postal service. Six postal officials entitled ‘Clerks of the Road’ were privileged to frank gazettes at 2d, a reduced charge from letter post. Under the terms of the Franking Act 1764, newspapers bearing the signature of a Member of Parliament or sent to a member at any place which he advised were to go free. The Newspaper Office was established at the General Post Office in 1782 by John Palmer, following criticisms relating to the treatment of newspapers. With the coming of the French Revolution, the Clerks in the Foreign Office established a large foreign news agency. The Ship Letter Act of 1815 contained an important provision in favour of newspapers, providing the first enactment that allowed newspapers to go out of the United Kingdom at a cheaper rate than letters.

The act of 1764 also authorised Members of Parliament to frank newspapers. Many extended the provisions of the act by allowing free postage to booksellers and newsagents who rapidly took over a considerable part of the distribution of newspapers from the Clerks of the Road. An Act of 1825 legalised the free transmission of newspapers by post. In 1830 news vendors presented a petition to Parliament protesting against Post Office servants being allowed to compete with private dealers, and on 5 April 1834, the Post Office ceased to have a privileged interest in the franking of newspapers.

An act of 1855 abolished the compulsory payment of stamp duty on newspapers. Newspaper proprietors were allowed the option of printing on paper stamped to denote payment of stamp duty and thereby qualifying for free transmission by post or using unstamped paper and paying normal rates of postage, until 1870.

The Post Office Act of 1870 provided that newspapers fulfilling the conditions specified in the act were, after registration by the Post Office, entitled to

transmission within the United Kingdom at a rate of ½d irrespective of weight. In 1897 weight restrictions were introduced. A grant of preferential tariff to the press was declared by a Treasury Committee in 1875, enabling the Post Office to transmit press releases and news messages to newspapers and other news institutions at the press tariff rate. By the Post Office (Newspapers Published in British Possessions) Act of 1913, copies of newspapers printed and published in any British possession or protectorate were admitted to the benefit of the inland newspaper rate. The Canadian Magazine Post introduced in 1907 allowed for the transmission of all newspapers registered at the Inland Newspaper rate and in addition publications issued at intervals of not more than 31 days, subject to certain conditions.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/

POST 25

POST OFFICE: INLAND MAIL SERVICES: PARCEL POST 1824-1985

74 volumes, 20 files

Scope and content

This POST class comprises reports, correspondence and memoranda relating to the introduction, implementation, policy and operation of the inland parcel post service. Some pieces relate to the introduction of both the inland and overseas parcel post.

Administrative history

Until the late nineteenth century the carriage of parcels was in the hands of ‘carters’ or carriers, operating on a local basis. With the improvement of the roads in the eighteenth century and the inception of the railway services in the late 1820s, the volume of parcels conveyed by coach and railway increased. By the 1850s railway companies had cornered the bulk of this business. In 1842 Rowland Hill suggested that a parcel service should be operated by the Post Office. However, the government was content to let this business remain in the private sector, for the time being. By the 1860s the population explosion and dramatic expansion of British commerce and industry gradually forced the Post Office to give some thought to parcel post. A plan for the introduction of a parcels post was suggested in the 1860s by Rowland Hill and Frederick Hill, (Rowland’s brother and Assistant in the Postmaster General’s Office).

The establishment of the General Postal Union in 1874, (now known as the Universal Postal Union) led to further discussions. In 1880 the union promulgated a convention for the exchange of postal parcels between Germany, Austria-Hungary, Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, Egypt, Spain, France, Great Britain and Ireland, British India, Italy and Luxembourg, This envisaged the transmission of parcels up to 3 kilograms in weight. A convention was signed at Paris on 3 November 1880, due to come into operation on 1 October 1881. A protocol attached to this convention took note that Great Britain, Ireland and British India were not in a position to sign the convention as they did not have an inland parcels service at that time, and they were accordingly given until 1 April 1882 to bring the convention into effect.

On 11 February 1882, Henry Fawcett, Postmaster General, assisted by Frederick E Baines, Inspector General of mails, and Sir Arthur Blackwood, Secretary to the Post Office, submitted a memorandum analysing the various problems preventing the introduction of an inland Parcel Post service and suggesting ways of overcoming them.

An Act to amend the Post Office Acts with respect to the Conveyance of Parcels (45 & 46 Vict. Ch. 74), was passed by Parliament on 18 August 1882. Twelve of its seventeen sections dealt with matters arising from the negotiations between the Post Office and the railway companies; their remuneration and the services to be rendered by them.

The Inland Parcel Post came into operation on 1 August 1883 and 'letter-carriers' were entitled 'postmen' as a result. From 12 August 1884 the service was known as the Parcels Post. Parcels sent by the Post were limited to 7lbs in weight and the rates of postage ranged from 3d for 1lb to 1s for 7lbs.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/

POST 26

POST OFFICE: INLAND MAIL SERVICES: REGISTRATION 1807-1976

21 volumes and files

Scope and content

This POST class relates to the introduction and implementation of the registration service, the compulsory registration scheme and compensation for the loss and damage to registered mail.

Administrative history

In the tenth report of the Commissioners of Post Office Inquiry, January 1838 it was recommended that a uniform fee of 2d should be charged for the registration of letters and that the Post Office should admit liability for their loss up to a maximum of £5. This scheme was to come into force in June 1839. However it was stopped by news of impending reductions in postage rates. A general scheme for the registration of inland letters came into force on 6 January 1841. Registration was applicable to any valuable letter for a prepaid fee of one shilling. There was no compulsion or compensation. By 1854 the fee was payable by stamps and in 1856 letters marked ‘registered’ and posted in a letter box were charged one shilling.

The principle of ‘compulsory registration’ was introduced on 1 August 1862 for all letters containing coin and passing through London, at a double registration fee of 18 pence. Compulsory registration was extended throughout the country during 1863. On 1 September 1873 compulsory registration also became applicable to those letters containing jewellery and watches.

The principle of compensation for damage and loss to registered letters was introduced on 1 January 1878 at a sum of two pounds.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/

POST 27

POST OFFICE: INLAND MAIL SERVICES: MONEY ORDERS AND POSTAL ORDERS
1838-1957

121 files, 57 volumes

Scope and content

This POST class contains historical accounts, annual, financial and other reports, letter copy books, minutes and correspondence on the establishment, operation and development of the money order and postal order services. The series also contains records on the prevention and detection of fraud, the use of postal orders as currency in wartime, and information on agreements with other Empire or Commonwealth countries for the sale of British postal or money orders in their territories.

Administrative history

Money orders were the first financial service to be supplied by the Post Office, and had their origins in a private business carried on within the department from 1792. A system of 'money letters' was established by six 'Clerks of the Road' with the sanction of the Postmaster General, to give the public the means of safely and economically transmitting small sums of money from any one part of the United Kingdom to any other. The Committee of Revenue Inquiry, which reported on the Post Office in 1829, expressed its disapproval. This profitable system was subsequently taken over by the Postmaster General in 1838, and reductions in poundage, followed by the introduction of the penny post in 1840, led to a rapid increase in traffic from 55,000 orders in 1836 to 1½ million orders in 1841.

The money order system was set up to be confined to areas of the market not covered by commercial banks and geared towards the 'poorer classes' for the transfer of small sums of money. However, most remittances continued to be made by enclosing cash in letters and by the late 1830s attention turned towards a cheap system of registration in order to provide a secure means of delivering cash.

A limited overseas money order service was introduced in 1856 during the Crimean War. This service spread rapidly to many parts of the Empire and, in 1868, the first money order agreement with a foreign country (Switzerland) was signed.

In 1871 a reduction in the poundage rates on inland money orders (under 10s to 1d and under 20s to 2d) led to further considerable increase in the use of such orders. But as the cost of the issue and payment of each order was approximately 3d the money order service was unprofitable as far as the low

value orders were concerned, and by 1875 the inland service as a whole was run at a loss. This was despite Rowland Hill's efforts to develop the more profitable traffic in larger sums - the maximum value was increased to £10 in 1862 despite the misgivings of the Treasury which was concerned about creating competition for the banks.

In 1874 George Chetwynd, the Receiver and Accountant General, proposed a cheaper system of postal notes or orders which could be cashed by the bearer on sight, and after meeting concerns voiced by Parliament and an appointed Treasury Committee, the system of postal orders was introduced in 1881. Their usefulness was greatly increased by the permission to make them out for odd amounts by affixing the necessary postage stamps to the face of the order. They proved very popular and by 1885 the Post Office was selling annually over 25 million postal orders. In the twentieth century their use with entries for football pools increased their popularity still further. In 1938 sales reached 350 million per year.

After the outbreak of war in 1914 postal orders were declared legal tender by the government, in an effort to withdraw gold coinage from circulation. The same measure was again taken in 1939, to prevent disruption to coinage circulation by bombing.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/

POST 28

POST OFFICE: ANCILLARY SERVICES
1888-1989

24 volumes, 51 files

Scope and content

This POST class comprises material relating to Post Office services supplementary to the core activity of the business. It consists of reports, minutes, correspondence and memoranda relating to the introduction, operation and development of individual Post Office ancillary services, their profit and expenditure, recommended improvements and alterations, and information sheets and guides to the services. It also includes files on Direct Mail, Electronic Post and Intelpost, Postfax, Royal Household postal services, Government Department and Ministers Postal Services and the Marketing/Message Liaison Group.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/

POST 29

POST OFFICE: PACKET MINUTES: DOCUMENTS 1811-1920

2760 files

Scope and content

The Packet Minute classes (POST 29 and 34) comprise minutes to the Postmaster General from the Secretary to the Post Office, on the Packet Boat and overseas mails services. It began in 1811, at which date those subjects were transferred from the Postmaster General's Minute series (POST 30 and 35).

POST 29 consists of volumes containing a copy of, or reference to, every minute submitted to the Postmaster General, including those which have since been destroyed. POST 34/1 - 105 are indexed. The Postmaster General's decision on each case is also recorded. POST 29 consists of those actual papers which are still in existence (comprising both the original minute to the Postmaster General and the papers leading up to, and following from, the Secretary's submission). It has been produced in two versions, one numerical and the other alphabetical, i.e., set out under subject headings. When requisitioning papers, both the catalogue reference Nos. and the Minute No. should be quoted, e.g. POST 29/4, Pkt 203B/1314.

Further information about this class can be found in the ‘Guide to Reports and Minutes’, which is available in the Archive room.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/
- Some items in this class are available on microfilm in the Archive room. Please consult the microfilm catalogue, which can also be found in the Archive room, for further details

POST 30

POST OFFICE: REGISTERED FILES, MINUTED PAPERS (ENGLAND AND WALES)
1792-1952

8086 files

Scope and content

This POST class comprises 'minuted' papers relating to Post Office services in England and Wales for the period 1792 to 1952 (although the vast majority of these records cover the period 1840-1921). It also includes references to Irish and Scottish services until 1840. 'Minuted' papers were those papers which had been submitted to the Postmaster General for a decision, and then been retained in the Post Office registry. At first, the papers 'minuted' tended only to be the particular case submitted to the Postmaster General but, as time went on, registry staff followed a practice of continuing to add physically to an existing minuted case all other cases on that subject which came to hand. As a result, the minuted papers frequently consist of quite large bundles of files on a common subject spanning many years. The date range of the files is consequently often much earlier or much later than the date suggested by the 'Former Reference' used by the registry staff and, in many cases, the precise dates covered by the files have not yet been listed. The subject of individual files among the minuted papers can be wide-ranging, from the mundane administrative minutiae to policy decisions on developments of critical importance.

Administrative history

The system of 'minuting' papers submitted to the Postmaster General by the Secretary to the Post Office for a decision (i.e. numbering the papers, and separately copying a note of the paper as a 'minute' into volumes indexed by subject) was introduced in 1793. It remained in use by the Post Office Headquarters registry until 1973.

Until 1921, several different major minute series were in use: that concerned with the Packet Service (POST 29), and those concerned with England and Wales (POST 30), Ireland (POST 31) and Scotland (POST 32). From 1790 until 1841, parallel 'Report' series were in use by the Secretary (POST 39 & POST 40).

In 1921, the several different minute series were replaced by a single all-embracing series (POST 33). This was suspended in 1941 as a wartime measure when a Decimal Filing system came into use (POST 102), but was resurrected in 1949. In 1955 the registration of Headquarters files began to be decentralised under several local registries serving particular departments, although the 'minuting' of cases considered worthy of preservation, and the

assimilation of later cases with earlier existing minuted bundles, continued until 1973.

Further information about this class can be found in the ‘Guide to Reports and Minutes’, which is available in the Archive room.

Access Conditions

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- Some items in this class are available on microfilm in the Archive room. Please consult the microfilm catalogue, which can also be found in the Archive room, for further details

POST 31

POST OFFICE: REGISTERED FILES, MINUTED PAPERS (IRELAND)
1841-1960

169 files

Scope and content

This POST class comprises ‘minuted’ papers relating to Ireland for the period 1841 to 1960. ‘Minuted’ papers were those papers which had been submitted to the Postmaster General for a decision, and then been retained in the Post Office registry. At first, the papers ‘minuted’ tended only to be the particular case submitted to the Postmaster General but, as time went on, registry staff followed a practice of continuing to add physically to an existing minuted case all other cases on that subject which came to hand. As a result, the minuted papers frequently consist of quite large bundles of files on a common subject spanning many years. The date range of the files is consequently often much earlier or much later than the date suggested by the “Former Reference” used by the registry staff and, in many cases, the precise dates covered by the files have not yet been listed. The subject of individual files among the minuted papers can be wide-ranging, from the mundane administrative minutiae to policy decisions on developments of critical importance.

Administrative history

Up until 1830, the Irish mail service did not come under the control of the British Post Office and was overseen by its own Postmaster General. In 1831 it was re-united with Great Britain's Postal service and ceased to have its own Postmaster General. Under this new arrangement an Irish secretary was appointed to supervise Ireland's postal services and reported directly to the Postmaster General in London.

The system of 'minuting' papers submitted to the Postmaster General by the Secretary to the Post Office for a decision (i.e., numbering the papers, and separately copying a note of the paper as a 'minute' into volumes indexed by subject) was introduced in 1793. It remained in use by the Post Office Headquarters registry until 1973.

Until 1921, several different major minute series were in use: that concerned with the Packet Service (POST 29), and those concerned with England and Wales (POST 30), Ireland (POST 31) and Scotland (POST 32). From 1790 until 1841, parallel 'Report' series were in use by the Secretary (POST 39 & POST 40).

In 1921, the several different minute series were replaced by a single all-embracing series (POST 33). This was suspended in 1941 as a wartime

measure when a Decimal Filing system came into use (POST 102), but was resurrected in 1949. In 1955 the registration of Headquarters files began to be decentralised under several local registries serving particular departments, although the 'minuting' of cases considered worthy of preservation, and the assimilation of later cases with earlier existing minuted bundles, continued until 1973.

Further information about this class can be found in the ‘Guide to Reports and Minutes’, which is available in the Archive room.

Access Conditions

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POST 32

POST OFFICE: REGISTERED FILES, MINUTED PAPERS (SCOTLAND) 1869-1966

584 files

Scope and content

This POST class comprises ‘minuted’ papers relating to Post Office services in Scotland, although a proportion developed into cases of general interest. “Minuted” papers were those which had been submitted to the Postmaster General for a decision, and then been retained in the Post Office registry. At first, the papers ‘minuted’ tended only to be the particular case submitted to the Postmaster General but, as time went on, registry staff followed a practice of continuing to add physically to an existing minuted case all other cases on that subject which came to hand. As a result, the minuted papers frequently consist of quite large bundles of files on a common subject spanning many years. The date range of the files is consequently often much earlier or much later than the date suggested by the ‘Former Reference’ used by the registry staff and, in many cases, the precise dates covered by the files have not yet been listed. The subject of individual files among the minuted papers can be wide-ranging, from the mundane administrative minutiae to policy decisions on developments of critical importance.

Administrative history

The system of ‘minuting’ papers submitted to the Postmaster General by the Secretary to the Post Office for a decision (i.e. numbering the papers, and separately copying a note of the paper as a ‘minute’ into volumes indexed by subject) was introduced in 1793. It remained in use by the Post Office Headquarters registry until 1973. Until 1921, several different major minute series were in use: that concerned with the Packet Service (POST 29), and those concerned with England and Wales (POST 30), Ireland (POST 31) and Scotland (POST 32). The Scottish minute series was started in 1842: previously Scottish subjects had been included in the general minute series (POST 30). From 1790 until 1841, parallel “Report” series were in use by the Secretary (POST 39 & POST 40).

In 1921, the several different minute series were replaced by a single all-embracing series (POST 33). This was suspended in 1941 as a wartime measure when a Decimal Filing system came into use (POST 102), but was resurrected in 1949. In 1955 the registration of Headquarters files began to be decentralised under several local registries serving particular departments, although the “minuting” of cases considered worthy of preservation, and the assimilation of later cases with earlier existing minuted bundles, continued until 1973.

Further information about this class can be found in the ‘Guide to Reports and Minutes’, which is available in the Archive room’.

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POST 33

POST OFFICE: REGISTERED FILES, MINUTED PAPERS (GENERAL) 1921-1960

9015 files

Scope and content

This POST class comprises ‘minuted’ papers relating to all manner of Post Office matters. ‘Minuted’ papers were those papers which had been submitted to the Postmaster General for a decision, and then been retained in the Post Office registry. At first, the papers ‘minuted’ tended only to be the particular case submitted to the Postmaster General but, as time went on, registry staff followed a practice of continuing to add physically to an existing minuted case all other cases which came to hand. As a result, the minuted papers frequently consist of quite large bundles of files on a common subject spanning many years. The date range of files is consequently often much earlier or much later than the date suggested by the ‘Former Reference’ used by the registry staff and, in many cases, the precise dates covered by the files have not yet been listed. The subject of individual files among the minuted papers can be wide-ranging, from the mundane administrative minutiae to policy decisions on developments of critical importance.

Administrative history

A number of major changes took place during the period covered by this series. From 1 April 1922, Post Office services in Southern Ireland were transferred to the control of the provisional Irish Government. The growth in administration meant that aspects of work relating only to matters of local interest were devolved from central headquarters to district surveyors. In 1934, as part of a general reorganisation of the Post Office, a Director General was appointed to replace the office of Secretary to the Post Office. At the same time a Post Office Board was created under the chairmanship of the Postmaster General. Further changes in 1934 led to the replacement of district surveyors by regional directors, who were given full powers of day-to-day control of local postal and telecommunications affairs in their regions. This reorganisation was complete by the mid-1940s, with an increasing amount of work concerning local affairs being devolved from Headquarters, leaving it to deal only with matters of general policy and those outside the scope of regional authority.

The system of ‘minuting’ papers submitted to the Postmaster General by the Secretary to the Post Office for a decision (i.e. numbering the papers, and separately copying a note of the paper as a ‘minute’ into volumes indexed by subject) was introduced in 1793. It remained in use by the Post Office Headquarters registry until 1973.

Until 1921, several different major minute series were in use: that concerned with the Packet Service (POST 29), and those concerned with England and Wales (POST 30), Ireland (POST 31) and Scotland (POST 32). From 1790 until 1841, parallel 'Report' series were in use by the Secretary (POST 39 & POST 40).

In 1921, the several different minute series were replaced by a single all-embracing series (POST 33). This was suspended in 1941 as a wartime measure when a Decimal Filing system came into use (POST 102), but was resurrected in 1949. In 1955 the registration of Headquarters files began to be decentralised under several local registries serving particular departments, although the 'minuting' of cases considered worthy of preservation, and the assimilation of later cases with earlier existing minuted bundles, continued until 1973.

Further information about this class can be found in the 'Guide to Reports and Minutes', which is available in the Archive room.

Access Conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/
- Some items in this class are available on microfilm in the Archive room. Please consult the microfilm catalogue, which can also be found in the Archive room, for further details

POST 34

POST OFFICE: SECRETARY'S MINUTES TO THE POSTMASTER GENERAL: PACKET MINUTES: VOLUMES
1811-1920

228 volumes

Scope and content

The Packet Minute classes (POST 29 and 34) comprise minutes to the Postmaster General from the Secretary to the Post Office, on the Packet Boat and overseas mails services. It began in 1811, at which date those subjects were transferred from the Postmaster General's Minute series (POST 30 and 35).

POST 34 consists of volumes containing a copy of, or reference to, every minute submitted to the Postmaster General, including those which have since been destroyed. POST 34/1 - 105 are indexed. The Postmaster General's decision on each case is also recorded. POST 29 consists of those actual papers which are still in existence (comprising both the original minute to the Postmaster General and the papers leading up to, and following from, the Secretary's submission). It has been produced in two versions, one numerical and the other alphabetical, i.e., set out under subject headings. When requisitioning papers, both the catalogue reference Nos. and the Minute No. should be quoted, e.g., POST 29/4, Pkt 203B/1314.

Microfilm copies - The indices to these volumes have been microfilmed (excepting the years 1914 - 1920), and these must be viewed on microfilm.

A series of microfilms has also been created which includes extracts only from piece numbers POST 34/17 - 200. These extracts relate specifically to Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific services. A catalogue of the extracts included may be found on microfim reel no. 43.

A separate microfilm includes various extracts from this series, covering piece numbers from POST 34/40 - 226 (Although extracts are not included from every volume). These extracts seem to relate mostly to Singapore, but it is not clear how comprehensive this selection of extracts is.

Further information about this class can be found in the ‘Guide to Reports and Minutes’, which is available in the Archive room’.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/
- Some items in this class are available on microfilm in the Archive room. Please consult the microfilm catalogue, which can also be found in the Archive room, for further details

POST 35

POST OFFICE: MINUTES BETWEEN THE SECRETARY AND THE POSTMASTER GENERAL: VOLUMES 1792-1969

1721 volumes

Scope and content

This POST class consists of volumes containing a précis of, or reference to, every minute submitted to the Postmaster General from the Secretary relating to all aspects of Post Office administration. There are also separate bound indices to the minutes arranged by different subjects. POST 35/1-6 consists of volumes of minutes from the Postmaster General to the Secretary relating to all aspects of Post Office administration.

Much of the actual paperwork referred to in these volumes can be found in the accompanying class POST 30 (England and Wales Minute Papers). For further details of how this class relates to the other report and minute classes, see the following section 'Related Material'.

The class is divided into four Sub-Series. The date range for almost all of the records in the class is 1792-1921. However, there are three volumes in Sub-Series 3 'Indices to minutes between the Secretary and the Postmaster General' that contain records that cover the period up to 1969 (see POST 35/1699-1701).

The material is arranged in date order within series. All pieces consist of one volume unless otherwise stated.

Further information about this class can be found in the ‘Guide to Reports and Minutes’, which is available in the Archive room.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/
- Some items in this class are available on microfilm in the Archive room. Please consult the microfilm catalogue, which can also be found in the Archive room, for further details

POST 36

POST OFFICE: IRISH MINUTES: VOLUMES 1831-1920

216 volumes

Scope and content

POST 36 consists of volumes containing a précis of, or reference to, every minute submitted by the Post Office Secretaries, of England and Ireland, to the Postmaster General in London, in relation to all aspects of postal operations and administration within the Irish postal service. Much of the actual paperwork referred to in these volumes can be found in the accompanying class POST 31 (Irish Minute Papers).

Administrative history

Up until 1830, the Irish mail service did not come under the control of the British Post Office and was overseen by its own Postmaster General. In 1831 it was re-united with Great Britain's Postal service and ceased to have its own Postmaster General. Under this new arrangement an Irish secretary was appointed to supervise Ireland's postal services and reported directly to the Postmaster General in London. Further information about this class can be found in the 'Guide to Reports and Minutes', which is available in the Archive room.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/
- Some items in this class are available on microfilm in the Archive room. Please consult the microfilm catalogue, which can also be found in the Archive room, for further details

POST 37

POST OFFICE: SCOTTISH MINUTES: VOLUMES 1842-1937

187 volumes

Scope and content

This POST class consists of volumes containing a précis of, or reference to, every minute submitted to the Postmaster General from the Secretary to the Post Office in Scotland, relating to all aspects of Post Office administration. Separate bound indices to the minutes begin in 1846.

Much of the actual paperwork referred to in these volumes can be found in the accompanying class POST 32 (Scottish Minute Papers).

The dates and minute numbers on the binding of a number of the volumes are incorrect.

Please note that all of the records in this class cover the years 1842-1921, with the exception of one record, POST 37/187, which is an index to minutes for the years 1920-1937.

Further information about this class can be found in the 'Guide to Reports and Minutes', which is available in the Archive room.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/
- Some items in this class are available on microfilm in the Archive room. Please consult the microfilm catalogue, which can also be found in the Archive room, for further details

POST 38

POST OFFICE: SECRETARY'S GENERAL MINUTES TO THE POSTMASTER GENERAL: VOLUMES 1921-1973

384 volumes

Scope and content

This POST class consists of volumes containing the title of every minute submitted to the Postmaster General relating to all aspects of Post Office administration. There are also separate bound indices to the minutes. This general minute series was introduced in 1921, replacing the formerly separate England and Wales, Ireland, Scotland, and Packet series of minutes.

Much of the actual paperwork referred to in these volumes can be found in the accompanying class POST 33 (Postmaster General's Minute Papers). Minutes referred to in this class can also be found in POST 102 (Decimal Filing Series) and POST 122 (Minuted and Decentralised Registry Papers).

Administrative history

A number of major changes took place during the period covered by this class. From 1 April 1922, Post Office services in Southern Ireland were transferred to the control of the provisional Irish Government and, thereafter, the only material remaining relating to Ireland is for Northern Ireland. The growth in administration meant that aspects of work relating only to matters of local interest were devolved from central headquarters to district surveyors. In 1934, as part of a general reorganisation of the Post Office, a Director General was appointed to replace the office of Secretary to the Post Office. At the same time a Post Office Board was created under the chairmanship of the Postmaster General. Further changes in 1934 led to the replacement of district surveyors by regional directors, who were given full powers of day-to-day control of local postal and telecommunications affairs in their regions. This reorganisation was complete by the mid 1940s, with an increasing amount of work concerning local affairs being devolved from Headquarters, leaving it to deal only with matters of general policy and those outside the scope of regional authority. Further information about this class can be found in the 'Guide to Reports and Minutes', which is available in the Archive room.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
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POST 39

POST OFFICE: PACKET REPORTS: DOCUMENTS 1807-1837

33 files

Scope and content

The packet report series (POST 39 and 41) comprises reports to the Postmaster General from the Secretary to the Post Office, on the packet Boat service and overseas mail arrangements. These are the surviving reports from those listed in POST 41.

POST 39 therefore consists of the actual Reports which are still in existence, with any enclosures. POST 41 consists of indexed volumes containing a copy of every Report submitted to the Postmaster General (including those which have since been destroyed) and is the only guide to the contents of POST 39. The Postmaster General's decision on each case is recorded. Examples of incidents recorded in the reports include the capture of packet ships, possibly due to pirates, smuggling of dry goods, loss of crew, terms and conditions of ship hire, victualling of crew and route changes and times.

In 1811 a parallel series entitled Packet Minutes (POST 29 and POST 34) was created. Cases for the attention of the Postmaster General were sometimes recorded in both series, but at other times in only one of the two series. Upon the cessation of the Report series, POST 29 and POST 34 continued alone.

Administrative history

During the period covered by these records the Secretary to the Post Office was Sir Francis Freeling. Freeling began his career in the Bristol Post Office and had been appointed appointed principal and resident surveyor in London by 1785. In 1797 he rose to the office of joint secretary to the Post Office and in 1798 he became sole secretary, serving in this capacity as the head of the post office until his death. His administration saw many reforms, including the growth of local penny posts and the introduction of steam power to transport the mail by rail and sea. Freeling was made a Baronet in March 1828. Further information about this class can be found in the ‘Guide to Reports and Minutes’, which is available in the Archive room.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/
- Some items in this class are available on microfilm in the Archive room. Please consult the microfilm catalogue, which can also be found in the Archive room, for further details

POST 40

POST OFFICE: POSTMASTER GENERAL'S REPORTS: DOCUMENTS 1791-1841

655 files

Scope and content

The Postmaster General's Report series (POST 40 and POST 42) began in about 1790 and comprise reports on all aspects of Post Office organisation in England, Wales and Scotland; as well as those on the Packet Boat service and overseas postal arrangements up to 1807, when a separate Packet Report series (POST 39 and POST 41) was introduced.

POST 40 consists of those actual Reports which are still in existence, with their enclosures (many of which are sketch maps of local postal routes, petitions from the principal inhabitants of towns and villages throughout the country and detailed reports from heads of departments and the District Surveyors, etc). Although, in this list, some of these Reports are shown as 'wanting', many are, in fact, filed within later Reports on the same subject - a common practice of the day. POST 42 consists of volumes containing copies of reports to, and minutes from, the Postmaster General (including those which have since been destroyed), and is the only guide to the contents of POST 40. POST 42/1-25, 35-42, 59-139 and 141 are indexed. The Postmaster General's decision on each case is also recorded.

Post 40/1-3 consist of indexed reports from Francis Freeling, the Resident Surveyor, addressed to the Joint Postmasters General, mostly to Lord Walsingham. They are supplementary to the main series of reports.

Post 40/4-41 consist of reports from the Resident Surveyor addressed to the Postmaster General.

POST 40/42-652 are a continuation of POST 40/4-41, but these reports were made by Freeling in his capacity as Secretary. Freeling was promoted to the vacancy created by the death of Anthony Todd in June 1798, having been created Joint Secretary since March 1797, owing to Todd's incapacity.

Freeling continued the Reports until his death in 1836, after which they were continued for a time by Lieutenant Colonel William Leader Maberley, his successor. From August 1837 Maberley used only the parallel Minute series for his submissions to the Postmaster General. Reports for the period August 1837-February 1841 are quarterly statements of the gross revenue of the Manchester, Bristol, Birmingham, Liverpool and Leeds Penny Posts.

In 1794 a parallel service entitled Postmaster General's Minutes (POST 30 and POST 35) was created, followed in 1811 by a Packet Minute series

(POST 29 and 34), corresponding with the packet reports. When the Report series came to an end around 1837 the Minutes were continued alone. The Reports seem to have been the more important of the two series, while the early Minutes were concerned mainly with comparatively minor matters relating to personnel, etc.

Further information about this class can be found in the ‘Guide to Reports and Minutes’, which is available in the Archive room.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/
- Some items in this class are available on microfilm in the Archive room. Please consult the microfilm catalogue, which can also be found in the Archive room, for further details

POST 41

POST OFFICE: PACKET REPORTS: VOLUMES 1807-1837

6 volumes

Scope and content

The Packet Report series (POST 39 and POST 41) comprise reports to the Postmaster General, from the Secretary to the Post Office, on the Packet Boat service and overseas mail arrangements.

POST 41 consists of indexed volumes containing a copy of every report submitted to the Postmaster General (including those which have since been destroyed) and is the only guide to the contents of POST 39 (Packet Service Report Papers). The Postmaster General's decision on each case is also recorded. POST 39 consists of those actual reports which are still in existence, with any enclosures.

In 1811 a parallel series entitled Packet Minutes (POST 29 and POST 34) was created. Cases for the attention of the Postmaster General were sometimes recorded in both series, but at other times in only one of the two series. Upon the cessation of the Report series POST 29 and POST 34 continued alone.

Further information about this class can be found in the ‘Guide to Reports and Minutes’, which is available in the Archive room.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/
- Some items in this class are available on microfilm in the Archive room. Please consult the microfilm catalogue, which can also be found in the Archive room, for further details

POST 42

POST OFFICE: POSTMASTER GENERAL'S REPORTS 1790-1841

152 volumes

Scope and content

The Postmaster General's Report series (POST 40 and POST 42) began in about 1790 and comprise reports on all aspects of Post Office organisation in England, Wales and Scotland; as well as those on the Packet Boat service and overseas postal arrangements up to 1807, when a separate Packet Report series (POST 39 and POST 41) was introduced.

POST 42 comprises reports on all aspects of Post Office business and until 1837, when this report series faded out, the reports referred to important cases, such as the running of major departments and key decisions. It consists of volumes containing copies of reports to, and minutes from, the Postmaster General (including those which have since been destroyed), and is the only guide to the contents of POST 40. POST 42/1-25, 35-42, 59-139 and 141 are indexed. The Postmaster General's decision on each case is also recorded.

The class includes a degree of duplication. [Series A], which are indices of subjects, persons and places, are duplicated with additional notes in [Series B]. [Series A] are duplicated as abstracts in [Series D], and [Series D] are duplicated with additional notes in [Series E].

In 1794 a parallel series entitled Postmaster General's Minutes (POST 30 and POST 35) was created, followed in 1811 by a Packet Minute series (POST 29 and 34), corresponding with the packet reports. When the Report series came to an end around 1837 the Minutes were continued alone. The Reports seem to have been the more important of the two series, while the early Minutes were concerned mainly with comparatively minor matters relating to personnel, etc.

Further information about this class can be found in the 'Guide to Reports and Minutes', which is available in the Archive room.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/
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POST 43

POST OFFICE: OVERSEAS MAILS: ORGANISATION AND SERVICES: PACKET BOATS AND SHIPPING
1683-1949

211 files

Scope and content

This class covers the organisation and services of Packet Boats and shipping. The earliest established packet stations were Dover to Calais 1633, Harwich to Holland 1660, Falmouth to Spain and Portugal and Falmouth to the West Indies in 1702.

Please also see POST 4 Financial, for Accounts, Packet stations and Agents, and POST 14/238-334 for information on revised rates of postage for overseas mails, steam packet boat sailings etc.

Administrative history

Mail was carried in sailing packets up to 1815, but after this date these gave way to steam-driven vessels. By 1840 the carrying of mail had been put into the hands of the commercial shipping lines, Cunard, Peninsular and Oriental Shipping Company, the West Indian Royal Mail, Union Castle etc., who found the postal subsidies valuable as they extended their routes further to keep pace with the expansion of the British Colonies.

After 1840 the General Post Office introduced domestic and Imperial 'penny postage', and before the Second World War, 1939-1945, pioneered a comprehensive airmail service, carrying letters at a standard rate without air surcharges. During the war it also introduced the airgraph and, later the airletter which was prefranked with the standard postage.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- An old Post Office Archives catalogue is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue for this POST class is also available to view on The National Archives' website at: http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/catalogue/search.asp. Search under the reference 'POST'
- Some items in this class are available on microfilm in the Archive room. Please consult the microfilm catalogue, which can also be found in the Archive room, for further details

POST 44

POST OFFICE: OVERSEAS MAIL ORGANISATION: RECORDS ON COLONIAL POST OFFICES
1796-1951

28 volumes, 40 files

Scope and content

This POST class relates to the establishment and operation of colonial post offices in British North America [Canada], Australia and New Zealand. The records include instructions from the Postmaster General via the Secretary (POST 44/1-12), returns to surveys relating to the volume of mail processed and the costs of running the offices, details of the staff employed at these offices and their duties (POST 44/24-33). Included in these records are Foreign and Colonial memorandum books and China Agencies draft letterbooks.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/
- Some items in this class are available on microfilm in the Archive room. Please consult the microfilm catalogue, which can also be found in the Archive room, for further details

POST 45

POST OFFICE: RECORDS ON BRITISH POSTAL AGENCIES 1865-c1910

2 volumes, 3 files

Scope and content

This POST class contains records relating to the operation of British Postal Agencies.

Administrative history

British postal agencies, (also known as British Post Offices) were established in countries throughout the world to manage, and monitor the arrangements and regulations for the conveyance of mail to and from Britain and to carry out these arrangements. Agents were appointed to conduct local affairs on behalf of the Postmaster General. Their duties included the receipt and despatch of mails, the collection of postage, maintenance of accounts and reporting to the Secretary in London any matters of concern.

In 1873, British Consuls were appointed as agents with the titles of British Post Office Agent.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/

POST 46

POST OFFICE: OVERSEAS MAILS ORGANISATION: CONVENTIONS AND ARTICLES OF AGREEMENT
1698-1913

65 volumes

Scope and content

This POST class comprises copies (mainly published and submitted to the House of Commons) of conventions and articles of agreement made between the Government and/or the Post Office of the United Kingdom and overseas governments and/or postal administrations, for the exchange of mails and the regulation of these services. The conventions lay down the offices of exchange, despatch and delivery times, weight and dimension limits and postage rates. POST 46/57 relates to the formation of the Universal Postal Union in 1875, POST 46/62 relates to the establishment of an Imperial Penny Postage, introduced in 1898 and POST 46/63 - 65 concerns the payments of the Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company for the conveyance of mail.

Administrative history

An overseas mail service has been in operation since 1580, before the establishment of the public postal service. A staff of ten Royal Couriers carried letters on affairs of State, or on the business of ‘particular merchants’ to Dover. At Dover, the postmaster provided horses for returning couriers and vessels for those passing through to Calais.

In 1619 the office of Postmaster General for Foreign Parts was created. The mail service with foreign countries was not large in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The foreign Post Office, as it was called, had a staff of only four men in 1660. At the time of the Napoleonic wars, the Foreign Office business was barely accounting for 10% of the total net income of the Post Office. Postal connections with other countries were irregular and difficulties were experienced in the capturing of letters arriving in ships and in the collection of profits. From the 1690s the government attempted to resolve these problems and extend the service by means of convention with the postal administrations of other countries for the establishment of an overseas service. The Overseas Air Mail service came into operation in 1917, thus after this date the conventions are between the Post Office and overseas postal administration for the transportation of mail by air. These can be found in POST 50/1.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on The National Archives' website at: http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/catalogue/search.asp Search under the reference 'POST'

POST 47

POST OFFICE: ARMY POSTAL HISTORY
1888 – 1975

736 files

Scope and content

This POST class consists of records from the army post office both overseas and at home.

Administrative history

The First Army Post Office was founded in 1808 during the Peninsular War. By 1882 Queen Victoria had authorised the creation of the Post Office Corps, a Reserve Force who were swiftly followed by a second Army Postal Corps known as The Royal Engineers Telegraph Reserve. Both companies were later reorganised into two supplementary companies providing proficient postal and telegraph services throughout the South African War in 1889.

By 1908 the two reserve companies had been incorporated into the Royal Engineers Postal Section (REPS). When war broke out in 1914 the postal services personnel for the Expeditionary Force, composed entirely of General Post Office staff and employees, were recruited from the Royal Engineers Postal Section. The REPS served in France, Belgium, the Dardanelles, Egypt, Palestine, East Africa, Greece, Italy and Northern Russia in the First World War. However, by the time of the Second World War the REPS served all over the world.

As the size of the Army increased and fresh wars broke out, the need for a Home Postal Depot became more pressing. Eventually in 1914 the Home Postal Depot was formed in London to act both as a central sorting and distribution point for all the Forces mails and as a training centre for REPS personnel.

Towards the end of 1924 the War Office decided to form a new branch of the Army Reserve, known as the 'Supplementary Reserve' to provide all the necessary technical units required for the Army on mobilisation. Several units of the Royal Corps or signals were included in this new reserve and the Post Office raised the whole of the technical personnel for the units, including some 40 officers and 850 men, as well as some 35 officers for the pool of officers (not allocated to units) in this reserve.

This POST class deals with the administration of the Royal Engineers Postal Section both in Great Britain and abroad, including recruitment and staffing, emergency postal arrangements, financial matters, mobilisation and manoeuvres training and postal war diaries.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/

POST 48

POST OFFICE: OVERSEAS MAILS LETTER BOOKS 1703-1938

338 volumes

Scope and content

This POST class consists overseas letter books mainly concerned with Newspaper Post transported by packet ships. The majority of the records relate to arrangements for the management of this mail service. This includes duties such as locating missing and misdirected letters and arranging for postal collection and delivery; staff issues such as appointments, transfers, promotions and dismissals; financial issues including staff salaries and currency exchanges between national post offices and the dissemination of changes to post office policy and office administration which relate to changes in postage charges and weights, requests for office stationery and collection of reports. Some records have been re-classified from POST 45.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- An old and incomplete catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on The National Archives' website at: http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/catalogue/search.asp Search under the reference 'POST'
- Some items in this class are available on microfilm in the Archive room. Please consult the microfilm catalogue, which can also be found in the Archive room, for further details

POST 49

POST OFFICE: RECORDS ON THE INTERNATIONAL PARCEL POST 1856-[c1985]

55 files and volumes

Scope and content

This POST class comprises memoranda, letters and reports on the establishment and operation of the Foreign and Colonial Parcel Post, and agreements between the Post Office of the United Kingdom, and foreign postal authorities and shipping companies.

Administrative history

In 1880 a Postal Conference was held at Paris with the view to creating an International Parcel Post and at that conference the British Post Office was represented. Having no Inland Parcel Post, it was unable to enter into any international agreement.

The Inland Parcel Post came into operation on 1 August 1883 and from the outset it was intended to link this service with the International Parcel Post as soon as possible.

Early in 1883 the proposals to be submitted to the forthcoming Postal Congress were being circulated and it was apparent that there would be an attempt to introduce into the Parcel Post Convention modifications which the Post Office would find very difficult to accept while its parcel post was yet in its infancy. A circular letter was sent to all the signatories of the convention asking whether they were willing to concede to Great Britain the special terms agreed to at the Paris Conference of 1880. The replies to the circular were generally favourable but the Treasury at this time declined to allow the Post Office to proceed with negotiations until the Inland Parcel Post was more firmly established. It was not until November 1884 that authority for the establishment of a Foreign and Colonial Parcel Post was at length obtained, and the service established.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/

POST 50

POST OFFICE: OVERSEAS MAIL SERVICES: RECORDS ON AIR MAIL 1919-1987

14 volumes, 16 files, 1 box

Scope and content

This POST Class relates to the transmission of mail by air, and comprises of records relating to arrangements with other countries' postal organisations and air companies, services available, the development of the Empire Air Mail Scheme and the airgraph, air mail provision during the First and Second World Wars, and notes on the development of the services.

Administrative history

The first official conveyance of mail by air was in 1911, to celebrate the coronation of George V, between Hendon and Windsor. It was the brainchild of Captain (and later Sir) Walter Wyndham. Termed 'The Coronation Air Post', the service was only a temporary measure, 16 flights were made, involving 37 bags and approximately 113,000 pieces of mail. It was only after great developments in aviation, accelerated by the First World War, that air mail began to look a practical proposition. In 1917 an agreement was drawn up with the French Post Office for a joint air postal service. On 10 November 1919 a regular London - Paris service began, operated by Aircraft Transport and Travel Ltd, and air mail expanded to include Amsterdam and Brussels.

The UK air line companies were finding it hard to survive commercially, so in 1924 three separate UK air carriers merged to create Imperial Airways Ltd., which was given the monopoly for air mail transportation, and also given a subsidy, which would gradually decrease, until the company was commercially viable. In 1927 the air mail service extended to India, and the first experimental night flight service took place in 1928, between Stockholm and London.

1934 saw the announcement of a new policy by the Postmaster General. The Empire Air Mail Scheme was devised to provide an improved, accelerated and more frequent service on the Empire routes, between the UK, South Africa, India, Malaya, Australia and New Zealand. Agreements drawn up with Imperial Airways were due to expire in 1937 and 1939, and the Post Office and Imperial airways recognised that to keep the operations viable, a more organised scheme needed to be drawn up. The result was that all first class mail to the involved countries was to be forwarded by air as the ordinary means. Before this, all mail was transmitted by land and sea unless an air mail surcharge was paid. After the Empire Air Mail scheme was introduced, a flat rate for first class mail meant that the mail automatically went by air. The plan was implemented in three stages. The first stage was the introduction of

the scheme between the UK and South Africa. The second stage was between the UK and India, Burma and Malaya, and the third and final stage was between the UK and Australia and New Zealand.

Aircraft played an important role in the Second World War, and this included the transportation of mail. Inevitably civilian mail was disrupted, but military mail increased tremendously, and it was quicker to send mail by air. In 1941 air postcards were introduced, special forms printed on very thin paper, which took up very little space and weight, and in 1942 these were replaced by air letters. The airgraph was also introduced, as a solution to circuitous route for air communication between Britain and the Middle East. The airgraph service, first suggested in 1932, reduced letters on special forms onto microfilm, and enlarge them at the end of the journey. A contract was signed with Kodak Ltd, and the first equipment was in place in April 1941, allowing letters to be filmed in Cairo and enlarged in the UK. The service was extended to include East and South Africa, India, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada, and was made available between citizens. The forms were made available free of charge, the completed forms were accepted over the counter, and a fee of 3d for members of British and Allied Forces, and 8d otherwise, was charged, (although after the introduction of the air letter, the fee was standardised to 3d). The huge reduction in bulk of the letters meant that it was possible to send the airgraphs on flights that would otherwise have been unavailable for carrying mail. However, the introduction of the light-weight air letter, and the increasing capacity of aeroplanes meant that the airgraph declined in use between 1943 and 1945. The service finally ceased on 31 July 1945. In the four years it was operational, the airgraph service transmitted over 330,000,000 messages weighing approximately fifty tons, which would have been 4,500 tons of letters in ordinary format.

After the war, it was obvious that the Empire Air Mail Service could not function as it had before. The other participating countries were introducing competing services running alongside the Imperial Airways services, and government subsidies were being withdrawn. The Post Office was keen to introduce an ‘all up’ service world wide (i.e. no surcharge for mail going by air), not just to the countries involved in EAMS. Aviation has developed enormously since then, reducing delivery times, increasing load capacities, and delivering mail all over the world, and the Post Office now uses many different airlines to transport its mail.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/

POST 51

POST OFFICE: OVERSEAS MAILS CONTRACTS 1722-1936

118 files, 7 volumes

Scope and content

This POST class comprises contracts of agreement between, the Postmaster General and individual persons and shipping companies, for the conveyance of mail overseas by packet boat. The contracts lay down the standards required by the Postmaster General, for example, the equipment and maintenance of the vessels, routes, ports of call and penalties incurred by non-compliance with the terms of agreement. The class also includes correspondence concerning applications for tender, papers relating to profits made by particular companies, returns showing particulars of existing contracts, and contracts for the establishment of a packet service between the UK and other counties.

Administrative history

An overseas mail service has been in operation since 1580, before the establishment of the public postal service. A staff of ten Royal Couriers carried letters on affairs of State, or on the business of ‘particular merchants’ to Dover. In 1619 the office of Postmaster General for foreign parts was created. His couriers, who wore distinctive badges, not only carried letters between London and the Continent. A public office was maintained near the Exchange, where writing desks for public use were provided and where details of the Posts were displayed. Mails were despatched twice a week. By 1700 (the Dover packet boats providing services to France and Flanders) additional Packet Stations had been established. That at Harwich (established in 1660) provided a service to the Netherlands and that at Falmouth (established in 1689) provided services to Spain and Portugal. During the next century the Falmouth Station grew in importance, providing new services to the West Indies and serving British fleets in the Mediterranean. ‘Packet ships/boats’ is a generic term for vessels carrying mails. The contracts use the term ‘packet ships’ and/or vessels.

The incentive to change from sail to steam power on packets carrying the Irish mail was the need to recapture passenger income. This vital supplement to the packet captains’ income from their mail carrying contracts with the Post Office was rapidly being lost to other competing Government-operated vessels, and to the new fast privately-operated steamship services coming into use across the Irish Sea during 1818-1819. The Post Office’s first experiments with steam power took place early in 1819, with trials of the privately owned steamers *Talbot* and *Ivanhoe*. By June 1821 - the journey time halved - the Post Office had built its own steam driven packet boats for

the Holyhead station: the *Meteor* and the *Lightening.* By the end of the year steam packets were also serving the Dover Station and a revolutionary change in postal communication by sea, had begun. Thus after this time the contracts often refer to ‘steam vessels’ rather than packet boats.

In 1823, following arguments that there would be less smuggling should the packets be under naval control, a measure that would also ensure an effective armed force in and around Channel waters, the Admiralty took control of the Falmouth Station. Management of the packet stations had become so much criticised that the remainder of the packet station were turned over to the Admiralty in 1837, where they remained until 1860 when they were transferred back to the Post Office. Thus, between 1837 and 1860, the contracts were between the Admiralty and shipping companies.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/
- Some items in this class are available on microfilm in the Archive room. Please consult the microfilm catalogue, which can also be found in the Archive room, for further details

POST 52

POST OFFICE: STAMP DEPOT
1865-1992

1379 volumes and files

Scope and content

On 1 April 1914, under authority of an Order in Council, responsibility for both the manufacture and distribution of postage stamps and related items passed from the Board of Inland Revenue to the Post Office. The work transferred included control of the contracts for the manufacture of watermarked paper, adhesive postage stamps, stamped stationery and postal orders. The records in this class are those created by the Post Office's Stores Depot, more recently known as the Royal Mail Stamp Depot. It was the latter which, in 1989, discovered this collection lying forgotten in its store, and transferred it in its entirety to the Post Office Archives. In 1995 material was sent to the Archive from Hemel Hempstead, and as other items have come to hand, they too have been transferred and added to this list.

Administrative history

Prior to 1879 the Post Office was responsible for the work of storing and distributing Postage Stamps etc. This work was apparently carried out from St Martin's le Grand and, because of insufficient accommodation at that address, the Post Office in 1879 sought Treasury authority for the work to be transferred to the Inland Revenue Department. Treasury approval was given and after a trial period, the work was finally transferred about the middle of 1880. This situation continued until 1911, when a Departmental Committee was set up to consider questions relating to the supply of stamps and stamped stationery. The committee, after reviewing all relevant factors, recommended that the control of production and distribution of stamps, stamped stationery, insurance stamps, postal orders and licences should be re-transferred to the Post Office together with the staff currently employed. This course was agreed by the Treasury and in March 1914 the Inland Revenue staff employed on this work at Somerset House came under the control of the Post Office Stores Department. The Inland Revenue staff employed on Control duties at Contractors works and the staff employed in the India Stamp Branch were, however, not transferred until 1922.

From 1 April 1914 the work of demanding, storing and issuing adhesive stamps and stamped postal stationery was transferred from the Inland Revenue to the Post Office and the following contracts, made by the Board of Inland Revenue, were taken over by the Postmaster General:

Messrs Harrisons and Sons - for the supply of unified (Postage and Revenue) stamps other than the 6d commencing on 1 January 1911 for a period of 10

years and thereafter from year to year terminable after 12 months calendar notice.

Messrs McCorquodale and Sons Ltd - for the supply of stamped postal stationery commencing on 1 January 1911 for a period of five or ten years and thereafter from year to year terminable after twelve calendar months' notice.

Messrs Waterlow Bros and Layton Ltd - for the supply of Insurance stamps other than a small quantity of Bi-colour stamps - commencing 1 May 1912 for a period of five years and thereafter from year to year terminable by twelve calendar months notice.

There was also an informal arrangement with Messrs Waterlow Bros and Layton for the supply of High Value Postage stamps, namely the 2s/6d, 5s/-, 10s/- and 20s/- values.

The informal arrangement with Messrs Waterlow Bros and Layton was terminated in 1915, tenders being invited from four firms. Four tenders were received and a contract was placed with Messrs De La Rue whose quotation was by far the lowest.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/

POST 53

POST OFFICE: INLAND AND OVERSEAS POSTAGE RATES 1735-1982

39 volumes, 15 files, 1 sheet

Scope and content

This POST class comprises material concerned with postage rates in the form of reports, correspondence relating to alterations of postage rates and franking privileges, postage rate tables based on individual post towns both inland and overseas, and House of Commons journal extracts covering franking privileges.

Administrative history

'Post-stage rates' for letters carried on the post-roads out of London were introduced in 1635 with the establishment of a state run postal service for the public's letters. The rate was based, primarily, on mileage and on the number of sheets the letter comprised of, heavier letters were charged by weight. Later, Penny Posts were set up for the collection and delivery of local letters, based on cities and other major centres beginning in London in 1680 and later extended to other provincial centres. Postage on general mails was normally paid by the recipient upon delivery.

Acts of Parliament, and later Treasury Warrants, gave authority for changes in rates and laid down charges for new services as they were introduced. The most significant was the Act of 1839, which led to the introduction of Rowland Hill's scheme for a Uniform Penny Postage in 1840. Postage rates were now based on weight and prepayable by means of the newly introduced stamped stationary and the more popular adhesive postage labels (postage stamps). The Postal Reform of 1840 also removed from Peers and ordinary Members of Parliament their privilege of franking letters for free transmission through the post.

The formation of the Universal Postal Union in 1874 led to uniformity of postage rates for overseas mail. Penny Postage within the Empire began on Christmas Day 1898. Two-tier postage, based on speed and offering the choice of a higher first-class rate to give fast delivery or a second-class rate for slower service, was introduced on 16 September 1968.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/

POST 54

POST OFFICE: POSTAGE STAMPS: RECORDS
1840-1990

20 volumes, 39 files

Scope and content

This POST class comprises minutes, reports, correspondence and statistics relating to postage stamps. It relates to the design, selection of designs and production of postage stamps, matters concerning responsibility for production costs, the use of stamps as remittance, the introduction of King George V postage stamps, and questions regarding postage stamps put to the Postmaster General through Parliament.

Administrative history

From the introduction of penny postage in 1840 all stamps and stamped stationery was produced, distributed and paid for by the Inland Revenue's Commissioners of Stamps and Taxes. In December 1876 the Inland Revenue suggested that it would be more appropriate for these costs to be met by the Post Office. At the beginning of the financial year in 1883 the Treasury instructed the Post Office to budget for the cost of stamp production. (POST 54/3).

Although the Post Office was now footing the bill, the Inland Revenue retained responsibility for manufacturing and distribution arrangements until 1 April 1914. On this date the Post Office took over all operations at the Inland Revenue's Somerset House stamp distribution centre for England and Wales. This involved the manufacture and distribution of all postage stamps, adhesive revenue and fee stamps, insurance stamps, postal orders, licenses, savings bank coupons, stamped postal stationery and telegraph forms for use in England and Wales. The transfer was authorised by the Treasury and *"*The Inland Revenue and Post Office (Powers & Duties) Order*"* was published by His Majesty's Stationery Office in March 1914. (POST 54/36).

The complicated relationship between the Inland Revenue, the Post Office, stamp designers, printers and printing hardware manufacturers is well represented in correspondence and memoranda relating to the introduction of King George V postage stamps following his accession to the throne in 1910. (POST 54/48 - 49).

In 1962 yet another authority was to officially enter the sphere of postage stamp production. The existing relationship between the Post Office and the Council of Industrial Design was reviewed and the Postmaster General's new Stamp Advisory Committee was created consisting of Post Office and COID members. The role of the committee was clearly defined in a memorandum

agreed by both parties. (POST 54/16). Today the SAC continues to influence the issue of postage stamps primarily through making recommendations to Royal Mail for commemorative stamp subjects and the selection of final designs. Other matters relating to the production and marketing of stamps and philatelic products are the responsibility of the Post Office Stamps and Philately Board (Stamps Advisory Committee).

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/

POST 55

POST OFFICE: HANDSTRUCK DATE STAMPS: PROOF BOOKS 1823-1995

426 files and volumes

Scope and content

This POST class consists primarily of 'proof books', that is bound volumes and files containing specimen impressions of new date, machine cancellation or other handstruck stamps (both steel and rubber) for postal use, authorisations and instructions for use, handstamp destruction records and historical summaries of machine cancellations.

These two main collections of proof books have substantial gaps, notably, for steel stamps, for the period after 1821, and, for rubber stamps, after 1831. It is believed that the proof books for these periods were lost in the major fire which occurred in 1957 at the Supplies Department, Mount Pleasant, where these records were once housed. Regrettably, when the surviving volumes in these two collections were rebound in c1960, the original volume numbers were lost, and new artificial numbering sequences were given to the newly-bound volumes. This destroyed the evidence once offered by the original bindings, making it impossible now to determine exactly what has been lost from the original series.

Administrative history

The first stamp to be introduced for postmarking purposes was the hand-struck stamp introduced in 1660 by Colonel Henry Bishop, Postmaster General, to “put upon every letter showing the day of the month that every letter comes to the office, so that no Letter Carrier may dare to detain a letter from post to post, which before was usual”.

These so-called Bishop marks were the first British postmarks and consisted of a simple circle divided horizontally with the indication of the month in one half and the day of the month in the other.

In 1840 hand-struck cancellation stamps were introduced, to deface the newly introduced adhesive postage labels (stamps) and prevent their fraudulent re-use.

The earliest stamps were made of wood, and later brass: and were probably manufactured locally. By 1825, however, they were being made of steel, and issued centrally. This change is reflected in the fact that the earliest proof book in the collection commences in 1825 (see POST 55/10). With the introduction of the Parcels Post in 1883, where steel stamps would not have been effective, pliable stamps made of cork were introduced. By 1885,

however, stamps made of rubber had come into use for the Parcel Post and other uses (see POST 55/115).

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/
- Some items in this class are available on microfilm in the Archive room. Please consult the microfilm catalogue, which can also be found in the Archive room, for further details

POST 56

POST OFFICE: WAR AND CIVIL EMERGENCIES 1859-1969

131 volumes, 103 files

Scope and content

This POST class comprises material on how the Post Office operated during wartime and civil emergencies. The greater part of the collection relates to the vital task of maintaining communications, including handling prisoners-of-war mail, censorship and civil defence arrangements during the First World War (1914 - 1918) and the Second World War (1939 - 1945). Among the early papers are documents relating to the South African War of 1899 - 1902 and some nineteenth century notices and field manuals of the Post Office Rifles Association.

Some records have been transferred from POST 14.

Administrative history

In 1799, Henry Darlot, a clerk in the Foreign Section, was chosen for the position of Army Postmaster. He was the first to accompany the Army overseas when he joined them in Holland to facilitate delivery, collect letters, and protect the revenue. In 1854, Edward Smith of the Inland Letter Office was sent to Constantinople as postmaster to HM Forces. He, along with three assistants and seven sorters, handled 450,000 letters a month to and from troops between Britain and the Crimea (via France).

The origins of the Post Office Rifles stem from the Fenian troubles in 1867. Sixteen hundred Post Office staff were sworn in as special constables to protect key installations, including post offices. With the passing of the danger the following year, a number of the special constables asked if a Post Office Volunteer Corps could be formed. The War Office officially sanctioned the proposal, and the 49th Middlesex Rifle Volunteers were formed in 1868. The title of the regiment was changed to the 24th Middlesex (Post Office) Rifle Volunteers in 1880. In 1882, the Army Postal Corps was formed from the members of the Middlesex Volunteers to run the Army's postal service. A sister unit, the Field Telegraph Corps, was formed from postal workers in 1883 becoming 'I' Company of the 24th Middlesex. Both units were embodied in the reserve of the Royal Engineers in 1884, although still attached to the 24th Middlesex for drill and discipline.

The Boer War saw eleven officers and 624 other ranks serve with the Army Postal Corps between 1899 and 1902. Their base in Cape Town connected with many temporary Field Post Offices and five travelling post offices. 68.9 million letters and newspapers and 1.4 million parcels were delivered to the

troops. In an average December week, 789 bags of mail were received in Cape Town, and in the busiest week of the war 643,000 letters and newspapers and 33,967 parcels were delivered.

In 1908 the 24th Middlesex Volunteers became the 8th Battalion of the City of London Regiment (Post Office Rifles) on formation of the Territorial Force. This battalion and its two sister battalions (2/8th and 3/8th raised during the First World War) were largely made up of Post Office personnel but no longer had any direct links with the Army Post Office Corps. In 1913 the Army Post Office Corps became the Royal Engineers Postal Section and the Telegraph Reserve became the Royal Engineers Signal Section. At the outbreak of the First World War a Base Post Office was set up at Le Harve, whence army mail went to an Advanced Base Post Office and then to Field Offices and Branches. Primary sorting in the UK was done from the Home Depot. All mail below 4 oz. from servicemen was carried free, with letters to them addressed “c/o GPO, London” then sorted by code to preserve secrets of military layout. Censorship was operated by military authorities. The shortage of men led to a reduction in the number of deliveries and 35,000 women were temporarily employed. Subdivision of the London Postal Districts was introduced in 1917 to aid the women sorters.

The Second World War presented an even greater challenge, with mobile fronts all over the world and enemy air attacks at home. At the outbreak of the war the Post Office was the largest employer in the country, and by mid-war nearly a third had volunteered for active service. Fifty thousand staff were members of the Post Office Home Guard, who were detailed to defend telephone and telegraph facilities in case of invasion. Postwomen were again taken on to fill the gaps, often working long shifts. Mobilisation then evacuation caused millions of people to change address, greatly increasing the volume of mail and the percentage of insufficiently addressed letters. Payment of pensions and allowances greatly increased, as well as new tasks like the distribution of millions of ration books, public information leaflets and permits. The blackout made sorting, delivery and station work very difficult, and the need to blacken the glass roofs of sorting offices etc. meant that many sorters and telephonists worked all the time by artificial light.

Air raids brought large scale destruction of Post Office buildings, mostly in major urban centres, telephone cables had to be repaired or re-routed as quickly as possible, destruction at major railway termini often meant improvised re-routing of mails, and bomb damage sometimes made letter delivery hazardous and difficult, when the numbers on houses, or the occupants, or even the houses themselves might disappear overnight. In September 1940, 23 post offices were destroyed in one night. During the Blitz post office buildings had their own fire-fighting teams composed of staff, often very efficient in preserving its buildings.

The Army Post Office was based at Nottingham in a former textile factory. Army and RAF mail was handled there by hundreds of WRAC women, plus men unfit for active service and GPO officials who had volunteered. Insufficiently addressed letters were also handled at Nottingham by the Post

Office. Naval mail for ships in foreign waters was handled by Wrens at King Edward Building, London, then by the Admiralty at Reading. Hostilities in the Mediterranean posed particular difficulties for getting mail to British forces in the Middle and Far East. The sea route around the Cape added 12,000 miles to the journey, a 3 month delay, and aircraft space was at a premium. Microphotography offered a solution and the airgraph service was introduced in 1941. Some 330 million airgraphs were sent until the service ended in July 1945. At first airgraphs and air letters were for military use only, but were then made available to civilians. By 1945 600,000 civilian air letters per week were being despatched to 33 different countries.

Prisoner-of-war mail was despatched abroad by the Post Office. Between 1941 and 1945 26,250,000 parcels (both Red Cross Parcels and parcels from next-of-kin) were sent from Mount Pleasant via Portugal to Geneva (despite difficulties in getting around or across enemy territory) where they were transmitted forward by the International Red Cross. About 200,000 letters per week were sent to POWs from Britain by air to Lisbon, where an exchange system operated with mail from Germany for German prisoners in Britain and Canada. The Post Office was in effect a fourth service, vital to the survival of the state and performed its duty well despite labour shortage, the need to recruit and train inexperienced staff, and enemy attack.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/

POST 57

POST OFFICE: STAFF RECRUITMENT
1861-1988

52 files and volumes

Scope and content

This POST class contains material on the recruitment of Post Office staff. It covers methods of recruitment, the examinations involved, the various types of posts, the different methods of admission, and the problems encountered regarding recruitment, such as shortage of labour and the employment of disabled persons.

Administrative history

Until 1969 the Post Office was a department of the Civil Service. The Civil Service consequently had a role to play in recruitment matters. Established staff had job security and enjoyed many benefits, such as pensions. Non-Established workers had no such benefits, they tended to be full-time boy messengers and part-time auxiliary postmen and women. In 1849 it was decided that promotion to Establishment should not be expected to result from higher social status. Auxiliaries signed a form which excluded any right to fill a permanent post, however, promotion continued to be an incentive to recruitment and a reward for competent work.

In the first half of the nineteenth century appointments were generally made by patronage, possible recruits were put forward by high ranking employees, although in theory a test still had to be passed. This method of recruitment was severely criticised in the second half of the nineteenth century, and in the 'Report upon The Post Office' in 1854, it was suggested that 'The Postmaster General should lay down strict rules for the examination of all candidates for admission, either in the class of Clerks, or into that of Sorters and Letter Carriers, in order to test their capacity, and should take care also to satisfy himself as to their characters, before making any appointment'.

The year 1870 saw the implementation of the open competitive examinations in the Civil Service, and the Post Office was obliged to appoint the clerks in the Secretary's Office from the successful candidates. The open examinations were for the Civil Service as a whole, but there were closed competitive examinations through which existing employees could try for promotion. The examinations were not just used for ensuring that recruits were competent to perform the job. When women joined the Post Office, particularly as clerks, the examination included a foreign language paper. There was no requirement at all for knowledge of a foreign language, however, the examination acted as a guarantee that the women that passed were of the 'proper' social standing.

In 1870 the telegraph services transferred to the Post Office. Initially the staff retained their separate duties but in 1876 the smaller provincial offices amalgamated, and this arrangement extended to larger towns in 1882. It was decided that there should not be a distinction between telegraphists and post office clerks in order to permit a more flexible adjustment of the 'indoor staff' to variations in traffic, and to reduce the threat of disruption from any telegraphist's strike. However, in practice, dual training only worked in the small provincial offices. In larger offices the training was often wasted, as the staff always specialised.

As the Post Office was a Civil Service Department, it was obliged to follow orders. One of these was the order in 1897 to employ ex-servicemen. Prior to that, boy messengers, although being Non-Establishment, usually moved into an Established post within the Post Office at the age of sixteen. The order to employ ex-servicemen meant that these vacancies for boy messengers dried up, and many who would otherwise have stayed in the Post Office were left jobless, and without skills. The Post Office was therefore heavily criticised by the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws and the Relief of Distress. The dilemma of how to keep all parties satisfied continued until the inter-war period, when the Post Office was forced to abandon its traditional practice of utilising part-time labour.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/

POST 58

POST OFFICE: STAFF NOMINATION AND APPOINTMENT 1737-1972

257 volumes, 18 files

Scope and content

This series contains records relating to the nomination and appointment of staff, both Established and non-Established. It consists mainly of volumes, in which vacancies, nominations, and appointments were recorded. It also contains records relating to bonds paid, and papers relating to the appointment of specific individuals.

Prior to 1831 appointment records were not kept uniformly over the country and separate series were created. In 1831 centralised employment records were created by copying the relevant minute numbers and brief details relating to appointment, transfer, dismissal, resignation, retirement, or death.

Some records were transferred from POST 14.

Administrative history

The appointments procedure in the Post Office during this period was very complicated. Employees could either be Established, which meant they had privileges and rights, such as superannuation, or they were non-Established, which meant that they were probably part-time, and had no benefits or job security. Established employees were also civil servants and therefore were affected by any changes in the system, such as the gradual efforts to replace patronage with examinations and grading. Sub-postmasters and packet captains were not officially employed by the Post Office but were sub-contracted. Sub-postmasters tended to work in another line of business such as greengrocing and run a sub-post office as a side-line. Up until the end of the nineteenth century appointments were made by a system of patronage. Staff were appointed by being nominated to posts. Although they were supposed to then take a test of competency, this was often just a formality. The broad sweeping changes in the Civil Service with the introduction of competitive examinations meant that this practice was abandoned at the end of the nineteenth century.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/
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POST 59

POST OFFICE: STAFF: ESTABLISHMENT BOOKS 1691-1983

525 volumes, 7 files

Scope and content

Within this class are volumes and files that contain basic information about established Post Office staff and about the principal Post Office branches in England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland. This class also contains details of Post Office establishments abroad, packet boat services, deceased officers, vacancies and committee reports regarding the Post Office Establishment, amongst much else. There are 24 volumes (POST 59/1-24) covering the period 1691-1798, but the majority of the material consists of lists of salaried officers at various British Establishments for the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The class is divided into eight Sub-series, a few of which should be mentioned at the outset. Sub-series 1 is the largest of these and contains the main Establishment books and lists of officers from 1691-1983, published annually from the late eighteenth century (bound copies for this series for the period 1869-1980 can be found in the Archive room). Sub-series 3 contains the Establishment books for provincial postal regions across Britain and so is naturally considerable in size, although the period covered for these books tends to be late nineteenth and early twentieth century only. By contrast, Sub-series 4 and 5 contain major and minor Establishment books for the London Postal Region, spanning nearly a 200-year period from 1800. The only series that does not contain lists of basic information (which is the essence of most of the Establishment books) is Sub-series 6, which contains 20 papers and committee reports for the period 1793-1923 that describe changes that have occurred and have been proposed to the Establishment system; a useful starting point for understanding the organisational development of the Establishment structure.

The sort of information included has changed over this 300-year period, but a large proportion of the information found in any particular Establishment book is likely to include an employee's name, their department or location, date of appointment, and yearly salary (or weekly wage). Similarly, the type of employee that has been included in the yearly establishment books has changed over time (and some consideration of the difference between 'established' and 'unestablished' staff will follow), but as a rule of thumb, in the main Establishment books that were published annually (which can be found in Sub-Series 1), it is staff who have been occupied in more senior positions within the Post Office hierarchy who are likely to be found. As a consequence, most of the yearly establishment books within this class will only ever list by name a modest proportion of the entire Post Office workforce for any given

year. (It may be helpful for prospective researchers to note that the best starting point in searching for records relating to 'rank and file' employees are the appointments indexes and pensions indexes. A guide to these sources can be downloaded from the TPM website and a printed version can be found in the Archive room, entitled 'Guide to Family History Research'.) POST 59/ 26, 28, 32, 33, 34, 37, 39, 40, 42 and 91 include brief summaries of duties performed by officers. POST 59/ 7, 11, 18 and 20 give complements of Packet Boats.

Administrative history

The word 'Establishment' has a number of meanings in the present context. In historical writing about the Post Office, the word is variously used to describe: the Post Office structure as a whole; all Post Office salaried staff; all staff employed in senior positions; and the various buildings and branches themselves, or 'establishments'. However, for the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the word is predominantly used to distinguish between staff that were employed directly by the Post Office, enjoying a yearly salary, benefits and a pension, and those who, though working for the Post Office in some capacity, did not. Discussing this period, one postal historian argues that… 'a firm line was drawn between those who were part of the privileged and protected core 'on the establishment' and the part-time or temporary staff who were denied the benefits and security. Moreover, the established staff were located in a hierarchy which offered advancement and promotion; the Post Office offered not only a job but also the prospect of a career' (Martin Daunton 'Royal Mail: The Post Office since 1840' (London: Athlone Press, 1985), p. 248). Indeed the benefits of being 'on the establishment' would usually include a retirement age of 60, a pension (after the 1859 Superannuation Act), some paid holiday, and even limited healthcare. As Daunton has noted, in terms of the benefits enjoyed by established staff, the Post Office remained preferable to private employment until the establishment of the welfare state after 1945.

Unestablished staff, particularly in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, remained numerous for a number of reasons. Working for the Post Office has had a longstanding reputation for being 'unsocial work'; that is, the peaks of postal traffic have tended to be in the early morning and early evening. For this reason, there has always been a high demand for part-time workers and in the modern era the Post Office has consequently employed a large proportion of staff who did not find their way onto the Establishment books. Likewise, Sub-Postmasters have often run other businesses from the same premises as a local Post Office branch and were therefore not part of the established staff. It will already be clear that owing to the many changes that have occurred over the centuries and because of the different types of Establishment records that have been generated over this time, neatly defining 'Establishment staff' is problematic. The remaining discussion will illuminate the structure of this class of records by briefly considering the chronology of the emergence of the different sorts of Establishment books within the context of the broader developments of British postal history.

The first Establishment book was produced in 1691. King Charles I had inaugurated an embryonic state postal service in 1635, and having survived the upheavals of the English Civil War, it had gained more of an organisational capacity by the end of that century with the establishment of state control of the London Penny Post, although there are still just 20 established officers named in this record of the early Post Office staff. There were a similarly small number listed in Queen Anne's Establishment book of 1702, in which the Post Office Establishment was one of a number of state Offices and Departments detailed. By 1747, Establishment books began to look a little more like later publications, with staff details of office, title, name, and salary per annum, for the London, Dublin and Edinburgh Establishments, the London Penny Post and details of the Packet Boat service. As the composition of the Post Office structure gradually evolved, new information was recorded in the books. For instance, Branch Commissioners and Postmasters' salaries were included from 1760; the Secretary's Office, Receiver General's Office, Accountant General's Office, Inland Office, tradesmen, pensions, rents and taxes from 1769; and more significant reforms, such as those of 1783, warranted specific descriptive attention in the Establishment books (see POST 59/19, which records revision proposals for the Establishment, its staff and new pay proposals and comparisons).

From 1785, mail coaches were used to convey letters and parcels across Britain and over the next two decades Post Office net revenue increased from £150,000 to £700,000 per annum. The Establishment book for 1792 (POST 59/22) lists establishment developments since the introduction of mail coaches and thereafter an increased number of Deputy Postmasters of provincial towns are listed. Indeed, from 1800 on, a number of reforms and the steady growth of services precipitated the publishing of further types of Establishment books, such as those found in Sub-Series 3 of this class: 'Establishment books and lists of the London Postal Service'. Within these records, an evolution of the organisational structure of a city's postal operations can be traced, from the London Penny Post, which soon became the Twopenny Post, to the introduction of postal regions, to the twentieth century infrastructural advancements such as the Post Office (London) Railway, or 'Mail Rail'. Throughout, this Sub-series of Establishment books detail the various departments, salaries, positions and lists many of the established staff by name.

By the 1800s, the yearly Establishment books recorded a greater volume and variety of information of this sort, in keeping with the concomitant enlargement of Britain's postal processes that occurred in the years and decades that followed the introduction of the mail coach system at the end of the eighteenth century. For instance, the Establishment book for 1832 (POST 59/37) provides details of when an individual was appointed, their name, how much they were paid on the Establishment, the total amount paid, and a narrative account of duties undertaken. Details cover the Board, Secretary's Office, Mail Coach Office, Surveyors' Office, Solicitor's Office, Receiver General's Office, Accountant General's Office, Dead Letter Office, Foreign Office, Inland Office, mail guards, packet agents, post towns in England, and the ships, captains, tons, engines, staff and rate of passage of packet stations. Also included is a

report on the way in which mail coaches were supplied and repaired, rules and regulations of horse post contracts, copies of circulars to surveyors, marine mail guard instructions, statements of regulations in operation respecting the whole process of the collection of Post Office revenue, and an abstract of comparative statements of gross revenue at post towns in England 1833-4.

In many ways, the organisational unfurling of a modern Post Office came after the major reforms initiated by Rowland Hill in the 1840s. The changes brought in by Hill included the introduction of a national Penny Post in which the recipient of a letter or parcel no longer paid for the service. Rather, the sender affixed a pre-paid adhesive stamp, the Penny Black. The subsequent growth in postal services was tremendous and this caused many changes to the quantity and character of Establishment books and Establishment records. POST 59/177 'Report Upon The Post Office' describes the structure of the organisation as it stood in 1854, commenting that 'The Establishment of the Post Office necessarily extends over the kingdom, and indeed all over the British possessions [abroad]…Its Head-quarters are in London; there are Metropolitan Offices in Edinburgh and Dublin; and there are District Offices in every town and almost every village, throughout the country' (p.3). Between 1860 and 1880, the number of full-time (Established) staff rose from 25,192 to 46,956 and whilst in 1890 the total number of full-time and part-time staff stood at 113,541, this had risen to 234,008 in 1920 (Daunton, pp. 195-196).

Naturally, accompanying this growth in staff was a growth in the numbers of physical Post Office Establishments. There were 4,028 in 1840 and 24,354 in 1913 (Daunton, p. 276). The Establishment books in Sub-series 3 'Provincial Establishment books' furnish details for many of the provincial districts within which such branches were located. For instance, POST 59/412-424 offers the particulars for offices in Worcester for the years 1874-1964, providing a wide assortment of details regarding postmen, assistant postmen, messengers and telegraphists, as well as basic information on sub-offices and the pay, pensions and other details of their personnel. The information that can be gathered from these records varies from establishment to establishment and over time, but these are useful resources for garnering facts and figures for many provincial postal areas, particularly for the first half of the twentieth century.

A number of further developments occurred from the late nineteenth century into the mid-twentieth century that affected the way these records were kept and consequently what one can expect to find. These include the acquisition of telegraph and telephone systems, the expansion of the work of the Post Office Engineering Department, the introduction of insurance and banking services and much more. Indeed, in the main Establishment book for 1931 (POST 59/163), the details contained are divided across 17 categories:

Postmaster General and Secretaries; Accountant General's Department; Central Telegraph Office; Engineering Department; London Postal Service; London Telephone Service; Medical Department (London); Money Order Department; Solicitor's Office (London); Stores Department; Surveyor's

Department; Postmaster Surveys; Provincial Telephone Staff; Head Postmasters; Assistant Postmasters and Chief Superintendents; and Sub-office Postmasters.

To give some idea of the kind of information held in Establishment books by this time, consider the front page to the section entitled 'Savings Bank Department' in the above-mentioned 1931 Establishment book (p.156). Here, a summary of all male staff in the department can be found (at this time, the information for each department was split into male and female categories) and it can be learnt what wages were being paid to doorkeepers, liftmen, boy messengers, cleaners, foremen and even department firemen (between 30-45 shillings per week), as well as how many of each were employed. It is also stated that the department contained 600 clerks who were paid between £60-£250 per annum. At the top of the page, the numbers and wages of senior staff - from higher-grade clerks right up to the department controller - are listed and on the pages that follow this summary, all of these 306 senior staff members are listed individually. For each of these entries, the details given are date of birth, dates of appointments (listing previous positions held), name and salary. This format of presenting information is roughly followed for the other departments represented in the 1931 Establishment book, with some exceptions. For instance, the passage detailing provincial Establishments lists postal districts in alphabetical order, and provides the numbers of staff for each. This information is presented in table format and is divided into indoor / outdoor staff; male / female staff; and finally into job types such as sorting clerks, telegraphists, postmen and superintendents. For example, on p. 277 it states that there were 529 sorting clerks and 1430 postmen in the Liverpool postal district, amongst a range of other staff figures.

Finally, although this became the dominant format for the main Establishment books that continued to be published annually throughout much of the remaining century, a number of changes occurred after 1969, when the Post Office ceased to be a department of state and became a nationalised industry. From this time, including the subsequent part-privatisation of the business in later decades, the books became known as 'Lists of the Principal Officers in the Post Office'. These publications ceased to provide details of pay, but continued to list senior staff, their dates of birth and their various appointments within the Post Office, by department and also in an alphabetical index at the back of each book.

Access Conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/
- Some items in this class are available on microfilm in the Archive room. Please consult the microfilm catalogue, which can also be found in the Archive room, for further details

POST 60

POST OFFICE: STAFF: PAY, ALLOWANCES AND CONDITIONS OF SERVICE
1792-1989

188 volumes, 156 files

Scope and content

The records in this POST class cover a variety of aspects regarding working for the Post Office. The material relating to pay includes volumes detailing salaries and allowances paid to staff, official reports into pay and conditions, comparisons of pay with other companies and papers relating to numerous pay claims. Under allowances can be found copies of correspondence between the Post Office and the Treasury, Committee reports, claims before arbitration for changes to various allowances, schedules showing extra duty rates and special allowances payable and a history of good conduct stripes. Conditions of service includes papers on Sunday labour, promotion, exemption from jury service, hours of working, annual leave, and grade restructuring. There is also a section on Committee/Group reports looking into the way both individual departments and working methods could be changed to allow improvements, and papers from the Tweedmouth, Hobhouse, and Holt Committees to consider improvements in Post Office wages and conditions.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/

POST 61

POST OFFICE: UNIFORMS AND DISCIPLINE
1765-c1995

73 volumes, 117 files

Scope and content

This POST Class comprises material mainly relating to the design, manufacture and distribution of uniform, but also includes some material relating to discipline within the Post Office.

It includes reports on the manufacture and distribution of uniform, papers relating to the Committee of the Joint Working Party on Uniform and Protective Clothing, registers detailing patterns produced, contract statistics and schedules of entitlement, volumes containing decisions made by the Postmaster General which set precedents for the issue of uniform, correspondence relating to all aspects of uniform including the running of the Stores Department and photographic records of uniform garments with pattern numbers, guides to disciplinary procedures, papers relating to disciplinary cases and correspondence and memoranda relating to other aspects of discipline within the Post Office.

Administrative history

The first Post Office employees to be issued with uniform were the Mail Coach Guards who, from 1784, wore a scarlet coat with blue lapels and a black top hat with a gold band. As of 1793 the London General Post Letter Carriers were furnished with a scarlet coat with blue lapels, blue waistcoat and beaver hat with a gold band. By 1834 this uniform was worn by letter carriers in Edinburgh and Dublin as well as London. (See POST 61/1).

1837 saw the introduction of uniform for the London district ‘Twopenny Postmen’. These men wore the same blue waistcoat and beaver hat but were given a blue coat with a red collar. This arrangement lasted eighteen years until the amalgamation of the General and Twopenny Postmen when a new uniform was issued to all London Letter Carriers. The new dress included a scarlet frock coat, glazed hat and grey trousers. It was the first time that trousers had been issued as part of the uniform. (See POST 61/63).

The Post Office took over responsibility for the country’s Telegraph Service in 1870 and with it inherited a responsibility to provide Boy Messengers with a uniform as a supplement to their wages. (This had been carried out for some time by the private telegraph companies). By providing suitable work clothes for the Boy Messengers the Post Office may have been spurred to extend the entitlements to uniform because by 1872 the whole delivery force was receiving official Post Office dress. Decisions made relating to uniform had

always been rather disorganised with reports being produced here and there addressing very limited subject areas. (See POST 61/7). In an attempt to rectify this haphazard approach 1908 saw the creation of the Committee on Uniform Clothing, and by 1910 the committee had produced a comprehensive report standardising postal uniforms nation-wide by creating six ‘Classes’ of attire which corresponded directly with the grading of each duty. (See POST 61/11).

During the First World War the number of Postwomen employed by the Post Office rocketed as more and more male workers were drafted into the armed forces. Previously female letter carriers had only been afforded a limited clothing entitlement, but as of 1916 were provided with a blue serge coat and skirt, a waterproof skirt and cape, and a blue straw hat. (See POST 61/65).

Most of the main aspects of uniform manufacture and distribution remained unchanged from this point until 1948 when a review of Post Office Engineering grades was ordered by the Postmaster General. (See POST 61/4). Following the successful creation of scales of entitlement for the new engineering grades the Postmaster General decided to order a comprehensive review of all grades not covered by the 1948 agreement. For this task a new committee entitled ‘The Joint Working Party on Uniform and Protective Clothing’ was created and after four years of research and deliberation produced the 1954 report examining the arrangements for supply and issue of uniform and protective clothing. (See POST 61/13). (For committee papers and minutes of meetings held by the Joint Working Party on Uniform see POST 61/67 - 72).

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/

POST 62

POST OFFICE: STAFF WELFARE
1855-1999

124 files, 32 volumes

Scope and content

This POST class contains records on all aspects of the Post Office's welfare policy and its implementation. It mainly consists of reports, correspondence and newsletters relating to Health and Safety, refreshment facilities, Post Office Benevolent Societies, staff awards and recreational clubs. It includes information on the Post Office's policy on Life Assurance, The Rowland Hill Memorial and Benevolent Fund deeds of trust, the relief fund, local benevolent societies, awards of honours and various medals and the Post Office art club.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/

POST 63

POST OFFICE: STAFF: TRAINING
1869-1990

80 volumes, 12 files

Scope and content

This POST class consists of reports, memoranda and correspondence outlining training activities in the Post Office and considering the training needs of Post Office staff.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/

POST 64

POST OFFICE: STAFF: MEDICAL PROVISION AND SICK LEAVE 1892-1985

79 volumes, 28 files

Scope and content

This POST Class relates to the provision of medical care for staff through the appointment of medical officers, monitoring of sick leave and the establishment of the Post Office Ambulance Corps.

Administrative history

Medical officers were first appointed to the Post Office in 1854 after a committee of enquiry decided that all candidates should be examined prior to appointment in order to assess fitness for public service. The Medical Officer was responsible for overseeing health care in the Post Office and from 1893 he compiled an annual report with sick leave statistics to show the level of staff absence for the different districts and departments (See POST 64/16-76). Many of the medical officers to have served over the years also wrote medical articles and, following the work of Dr John Sinclair, were involved with the Post Office Ambulance Corps.

The Post Office Ambulance Corps was established in 1902 following a suggestion by a group of employees. Many of the members of this group held first aid certificates but were concerned about the length of time taken for medical assistance to arrive at the scene of an accident and wished to provide a first aid service during this period. However, they were not allowed to provide this service until they had achieved further qualifications from the St John Ambulance Association and there was no provision for such courses to be run at the Post Office. The group therefore sought and received the support of the Chief Medical Officer, Dr John Sinclair, and a course of lectures was set up with the aim of working for the necessary qualifications.

From its creation the Corps expanded throughout the organisation and maintained close links with the St John Ambulance Association. Annual competitions evolved as an opportunity for teams to demonstrate their skills in an emergency which became increasingly popular. In 1911 courses were arranged for women and two women's branches were formed. In 1928 the name was changed to the Post Office Ambulance Centre, (hence the name change in the catalogue), and re-organised to enable non-members of the St John Ambulance Brigade to join. The Centre was valuable in both World Wars and provided first aid posts and wards staffed by volunteers from the Corps in some of the most bombed areas of London.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/

POST 65

POST OFFICE: STAFF ASSOCIATIONS
1866-1995

105 volumes, 202 files

Scope and content

This POST class comprises material relating to the formation, functions and administration of Post Office Staff Associations.

Administrative history

There have been many staff associations, unions and representative bodies acting on behalf of the large numbers of staff employed by the Post Office in the modern era. Staff associations became increasingly prominent in the twentieth century. The Union of Post Office Workers (UPW) has had the largest membership and has been involved in all of the major wage negotiations since its inception in 1919. In 1980 it became the Union of Communication Workers (UCW) and in 1995 it merged with the National Communications Union to form the Communication Workers' Union (CWU). In 2005 it had a membership exceeding 250,000, comprising men and women working for the Post Office, British Telecom and other telephone and communication companies.

Post Office Staff Associations have their origins in the nineteenth century. The first efforts to improve staff conditions occurred in a number of meetings held in secret in and around St Martin's le Grand in the 1840s. A 'confederacy' was formed protesting against low pay and extra duties, with the support of some societies, clergymen and journalists. In the 1850s, similar small groups of Post Office employees joined with Lord's Day Societies and gained temporary successes in abandoning Sunday work. A small 'London Committee' concerned with the interests of letter carriers remained active through the 1860s and even met with Postmaster Generals a number of times, although the leaders of those agitating for increased pay were often sacked. The following decade saw the entry of telegraphists into Post Office employ and these were amongst the first to strike in 1871, and despite increased organisational endeavours, including William Booth's best efforts on behalf of the letter carriers, all efforts at creating a formal union failed. This was finally achieved with the creation of the Postal Telegraph Clerks Association in 1881, following a significant reorganisation of grades and negotiations with Postmaster General Henry Fawcett. In the final 20 years of the nineteenth century, there was a ferment of proto-union organisation across the Post Office workforce. This included the founding of the United Kingdom Postal Clerks Association in 1887 by provincial Post Office clerks; the Postmen's Union in 1889; and the Fawcett Association comprised of London sorters in 1890. Although the major pay claims were unsuccessful, the right to meet in

public was secured over this period, the Fawcett Association gained their first full time representative officials in 1892 (albeit against its will) and the first large scale strike occurred in 1890. By the turn of the century, every Post Office grade had gained a representative association.

From this time until the outbreak of the First World War there were a number of large-scale public enquiries into the grievances of Post Office employees. Arguing the case of the lower grade workforce was the National Joint Committee (also known as the Amalgamated Postal Federation), which was the precursor in loosely uniting the disparate associations to the post-war amalgamation into the UPW. There were five main hearings that were respectively overseen by Tweedmouth (1895-7); Bradford (1904); Hobhouse (1907-8); Holt (1912-13); and Gibb (1914). In the first of these inquiries, the improvements gained were widely deemed to be inadequate and precipitated militancy, especially from many telegraphists. By the time of the Hobhouse inquiry, the union associates were recognised for the purposes of negotiation and a more thoroughgoing representation of Post Office employees was secured by the time of the Gibb inquiry. By this time the British labour movement had become heavily unionised and the period 1912-14 was one of acute industrial unrest on a broad scale and many concessions were gained during the Holt inquiry, including a more equitable system of 'differential' wages, where the level of pay varied according to region.

In 1919, the 44 representative associations of various workers employed by the Post Office were amalgamated into the UPW. These associations had represented the workers of four main grades: manipulative (those who handled mail and the like), supervisory, clerical and other. The following is a list of these associations:

There were 17 associations for manipulative grades: Postmen's Federation; Postal Telegraph Clerk's Association; Amalgamated Society of Telephone Employees; UK Postal Clerk's Association; Fawcett Association; Engineering and Stores Association; Irish Post Office Clerks; London Postal Porter's Association; Central London Postmen's Association; Women Sorters Association; Sorter-Tracers Association; Registry Assistants, Second Class Assistants; Tube Staff Association; Postal Bagmen's Association; PO Telegraph Mechanicians Society; Tracers Association; Messengers Association.

There were 14 associations for supervisory grades: Postal Telegraph and Telephone Controlling Association; London Postal Superintending Officers Association; Society of Post Office Engineers; Association of National Telephone Engineers; Central London Male Supervisors Association; London Association of Head Postmen; Society of PO Engineering Inspectors; Assistant Head Postmen's Association; Head Porters Association; Association of PO Superintendents; Second Class Assistant Inspectors and Telegraph Messengers; Telephone Exchange Managers Association; Association of Inspectors of Messengers; Association of Inspectors of Tracing.

There were 9 associations for clerical grades: Women Clerk's Association; General Association of Third Class Clerks; PO Engineering Clerks Association; London Postal Clerks Association; Association of Third Class Clerks (Surveyors); Representative Committee of Metropolitan Third Class Clerks; London Telephone Service Association; Engineer-in-Chief's Office Supplementary Clerk's Association; First and Second Class Clerks (Provinces) Association.

There were 4 associations for other grades: National Federation of Sub-Postmasters; PO Medical Officers Association; Head Postmasters Association; Established Sub-Postmasters Association.

In addition to these associations, which were poorly funded and mostly run by Post Office employees in their spare time, there were numerous clubs and guilds, such as the Post Office Socialist League and sports and debating societies, which produced a wide range of literature and would have their successor Post Office social clubs through the twentieth century.

The amalgamated UPW was set up at the time when the government introduced the Whitley Councils, in 1919. The Whitley system dominated inter-war wage bargaining for the civil service as a whole and arguments presented for increased pay tended to be based on demands for a wage sufficient to cover the cost of living, and that was comparable with wages in the private sector and was thus guided by the market value of pay. Here, successive governments were cornered into having to 'set an example' in the formulation of reasonable wage schemes, especially following the economic downturns of the early 1920s and 1930s. During this period, and despite having little involvement in the general strike of 1926, the UPW became subject to the 1927 Trade Disputes and Trade Unions Act, which prohibited civil servants from joining unions affiliated to the Trade Union Congress. This state-enforced ban on trade union collusion in pursuing joint industrial interests circumscribed the effectiveness of the UPW until the end of the Second World War when this legislation was overturned.

From the amalgamation into the UPW in 1919 and for much of the remaining century, the organisational history of Post Office Associations and of staff representation in general concerns secessionist groups and the difficulties of keeping the UPW unified in its industrial negotiations. Because the amalgamated UPW acted on behalf of a qualitative and quantitative variety of job types, special interest groups composed along similar lines to the pre-amalgamated associations continued to exist, breaking away from the UPW and competing for their respective and often conflicting interests. This is a theme that Alan Clinton has emphasised in his comprehensive study 'The Post Office Workforce: A Trade Union and Social History' (London: Allen & Unwin, 1984). The secessionist groups with the largest membership in the inter-war period were the Guild of Postal Sorters; The Association of Counter Clerks; The Guild of Sorting Clerks and Telegraphists (SC&Ts); and the National Association of Postmen. Smaller groups included the Government and Overseas Cable and Wireless Operators Association and the Northern Ireland Postal Clerks Association.

Likewise, the secessionist organisations and representative bodies distinct from the UPW that dominated the post-war era were the National Guild of Telephonists; National Association of Postal and Telegraph Officers; Engineering Officers (Telecommunications) Association; Clerical and Administrative Workers Union; Civil Service Clerical Association; and after 1972, the Association of Professional Executive Clerical and Computer Staff.

The political and economic environment of the immediate post-war period was changed in that a Labour Government committed to full employment and an enlarged civil service gave the UPW more bargaining leverage and although gradual, significant improvements in pay and conditions were secured through the 1950s, as the UPW General Secretary Ron Smith argued in 1961. The Conservative dominated 1960s saw a more concerted effort to keep wage levels down and this precipitated a spate of negotiation and arbitration between the UPW and the government. The initial wage increases were too modest for many, leading to strikes in 1964, but a national all-out official strike was avoided when a more substantial pay increase was achieved later that year. In 1965, Tom Jackson became the UPW General Secretary and the following years were turbulent times for the UPW with protracted negotiations over capital and labour, instances of industrial action, particularly in 1968, culminating in the largest strike in the history of the Post Office: a six-and-a-half week national strike of all UPW members in January and February 1971. The UPW failed to gain the wage demands it had made in October the previous year when its members voted 14-1 to end the strike. The whole affair is estimated to have cost the Post Office £25 million in lost revenue. Clinton has argued that the strike had long term consequences for the UPW and Post Office wage bargaining, coming as it did at the beginning of a period in which the Post Office ceased to be a government department and in which it was stripped of its telecommunications functions (this was privatised under BT in 1984), along with the more recent restructuring that has included the more general amalgamation of Post Office Associations with the wider communications workforce in Britain.

Many facets of the above associations, strikes, negotiations and arbitration are covered in this class, including pre-amalgamation records, as well as material relating to the organisational structure and history of the UPW and the major controversies of the twentieth century including the UPW strike of 1971. For a full history see Alan Clinton 'The Post Office Workforce: A Trade Union and Social History' (London: Allen & Unwin, 1984). For Staff Associations and Union Publications see POST 115.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/

POST 66

POST OFFICE: STAFF PENSIONS AND SUPERANNUATION 1713-1992

44 volumes, 16 files

Scope and content

This POST class relates to arrangements for the payment of pensions, the establishment of the Superannuation Fund in 1821 and the development of the types of pensions payable to include both contributory and non-contributory pensions. POST 66/18-19 relates to the establishment of the allowance form system and POST 66/22 concerns discussions on the format of order books. POST 66/20 and 22 relate specifically to pensions paid in Guernsey and Jersey . POST 66/24 comprises brief histories of paid allowance and pension orders and postmasters accounts for the twentieth century. The class also includes information on changes to women's employment and salaries, pension fraud and copies of documents conveying a grace and favour pension paid to the Duke of Schonburg and Leinster (POST 66/1).

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/

POST 67

POST OFFICE: LETTERS PATENT
1715-1964

50 files

Scope and content

This POST class consists of Royal Letters Patent to Postmasters General and Receiver Generals giving the sovereign's written authority to perform their duties. The class also contains a letters patent for the office of Court Post. The patents give: name of appointee; dates of appointment; salary and duties. All have their seals missing but the original seal attached.

Administrative history

The position of 'head of The Post Office' was first entitled 'Postmaster General' under the Commonwealth Act of 1657. Previously he had been known by various titles, Master of the Posts, Comptroller General of the Posts and Postmaster of England.

The Post Office Act of 1660 provided that 'one Master of the General Letter Office shall be from time to time appointed by the King's Majesty, his heirs and successors, to be made or constituted by Letters Patent under the Great Seal of England, by the name and style of His Majesty's Postmaster General'. The appointment was generally not made for a fixed length of term and Postmaster Generals were succeeded upon retirement or resignation.

From 1691 two Postmasters General were appointed, to hold office conjointly. At that time one was a member of the Whig party and the other a member of the Tory party. This joint appointment continued as a government policy until 1823, although the political ramifications lost much of their initial importance. Between the years of 1784 and 1831, the Post Offices of Great Britain and Ireland were separate and had separate Postmasters General.

The post of Receiver General was established in 1677, with the responsibility to receive and account for all payments received and expended by the Post Office. In 1855 these duties were combined with those of the Accountant General.

The Office of Court Post, which was abolished [c 1798] was that of messenger responsible for conveying the sovereign's letters and those of his Principal Secretaries of State to the nearest stage of post town.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/
- For preservation purposes, access may be restricted at the discretion of TPM staff. Items may only be handled by TPM staff, and readers will be required to wear gloves

POST 68

POST OFFICE: RULES AND INSTRUCTIONS
1729-2003

Extent unknown

Scope and content

The records forming this class include rule books, instructions and circulars issued to Post Office staff to guide them in the performance of their duties.

Of particular value to the researcher is the series of weekly circulars introduced in 1859 (POST 68/458-544), the purpose of which was to promptly inform all staff (and, through them, the general public) of new services or operational changes. Similar information can also be found in the collection of 'Instructions to Postmasters and Notices to the Public' forming POST 107.

In 1991 those records in this class of a purely telecommunications nature were extracted and transferred to British Telecom Archives.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- An old and incomplete catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on The National Archives' website at: http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/catalogue/search.asp. Search under the reference 'POST'

POST 69

POST OFFICE: ROYAL MAIL HOLDINGS PLC BOARD AND ITS PREDECESSORS
1934-1994

95 volumes and 1634 files

Scope and content

This POST class comprises papers and copy minutes of the Post Office Board (1934 – c 1992), the Post Office Management Board (1970 – 1979), and the Posts and Girobank Board (1980 – 1981). The signed minutes of the main Post Office Board are included, 1969 – 1972.

This POST class also includes papers of subsidiary boards and committees established by the board, or whose papers and minutes were received by the board. These include the Girobank Board, Parcels Business Board, Post Office Finance Limited Board, the Post Office Board Emergency Committee, the National Joint Policy Council, the Managing Director's Committee: Posts, the Chairman's Executive Committee, the Post Office Executive Committee, the Girobank and Counters Committee, the Audit Committee, the Counters Executive Committee, the Major Projects Expenditure Committee, the Royal Mail Executive Committee, the Letters Management Committee, and ad hoc committees established by the board.

Administrative history

In 1934 as part of a general re-organisation of the Post Office, a Director General was appointed to replace the office of Secretary to the Post Office. At the same time a Post Office Board was created under the Chairmanship of the Postmaster General. Further re-organisation also took place in 1934 with the replacement of district surveyors by regional directors, who were given full powers of day-to-day control of local postal and telecommunications affairs in their regions.

The establishment of a functional board for the Post Office was first recommended in the Bridgeman report of 1932, and the Post Office Board was subsequently established with eleven members, including all the General Directorate and Directors. Recommendations made by the Board were put before the Postmaster General through the Secretary's Minutes to the Postmaster General. However the board had no executive power, and decisions rested ultimately with the Postmaster General. Although the Bridgeman Committee had envisaged the Board as a controlling body, in time it came to be more of a reviewing body and, due to its increasing size and the consequent difficulty of assembling members, its meetings became less frequent.

In November 1964 the board was reconstituted with the following members: Postmaster General, Assistant Postmaster General, Director General and the General Directorate, with Directors invited to attend as appropriate. The board considered and gave decisions on all major issues of policy and administration. In general, ministerial approval on important issues of policy was sought by submitting papers to the board and not by submitting minutes to the Postmaster General, except where a decision was urgently required before the board could be convened.

Before 1967 at Post Office Headquarters, 'common' engineering, finance, and personnel departments operated in parallel with Postal and Telecommunications service departments, all reporting through the general directorate to the Postmaster General. From 1967, Posts (which incorporated the existing remittance services and New Giro service) and Telecommunications were put under separate Managing Directors, each with nearly complete finance, personnel, and technological support provided by dividing up common departments.

A substantial 'central' personnel function remained and legal and some other services were left centralised. Telecommunications took on procurement and research for both businesses. The National Data Processing Service was established by Act of Parliament and began to function as an independent (central) service. Managerial links between Posts and Telecommunications began to disappear.

The Post Office Act of 1969 saw the Post Office become a nationalised industry, established as a public Corporation. The Corporation was split into two businesses, Posts and Telecommunications. The office of Postmaster General was discontinued, and the Post Office was headed by a Chairman and Chief Executive/Deputy Chairman. This role was directly appointed by the Post Office Board. Members of the board also included the Managing Directors Posts and Giro, and Telecommunications, the head of the National Data Processing Service, members for industrial relations, technology and, from January 1970, a finance member.

Following the establishment of the Post Office Corporation, a second board was created, the Post Office Management Board. Both were responsible for overseeing operations, but the Post Office Board took responsibility for strategic issues, while the Post Office Management Board took over the day to day running of the Corporation. The Post Office Management Board was a non-statutory board which consisted mostly of full time board members and two officials. It was to meet monthly and receive reports from the businesses on their operations and review them in accordance with board policies, consider capital projects for which board approval was required, to examine the annual investment programme and other tasks as required.

In 1971, the Post Office Board established an Emergency Committee to handle the strike of that year.

During 1978 - 1979 the board operated under an experiment in industrial democracy with about half of its membership nominated by unions. This experiment was, however, considered to be unsuccessful.

In 1980, in preparation for the departure of British Telecom from the Post Office, two separate boards were established for the Telecommunications and Posts and Girobank businesses. These two new boards replaced the Post Office Management Board, and were additional to the main Post Office Board.

The main Post Office Board continued to oversee the transition period, although it met less frequently. The Chairman of the Post Office was the Chairman of both new boards (as was the Secretary) and the boards were intended to deal with matters wholly or mainly the concern of each business. They had the power to defer matters to the Post Office Board, and power to authorise action to proceed on decisions made by the board. It was stated that these boards were not intended to replace the Managing Director's Committees.

At this time, discussion was also begun regarding what procedures would be put in place to replace the 1978 - 1979 experiment in industrial democracy. It was suggested that a new joint body should be created for each of the businesses (Posts, and Telecommunications) titled the National Joint Policy Council, consisting of executive board members and the General Secretaries / Presidents of unions to meet and discuss a wider range of issues than the National Joint Council General Purposes Committee had done so previously. The idea was to air important policy, planning and performance issues on the National Joint Policy Councils before board decisions were taken to increase awareness of union views. In 1981 the National Joint Council General Purposes Committee was renamed the National Joint Council Posts and Giro Committee.

In 1980 the Chairman's Executive Committee was established by the Post Office Board. This Committee considered matters affecting the running of the Posts and Giro businesses relating to performance and progress against targets and personnel. This committee was renamed the Post Office Executive Committee (POEC) in September 1992.

In 1981 a Girobank and Counters Committee was established which comprised the Chairman, Deputy Chairman, board member for Finance, Personnel and Industrial relations member, Miss E Cole, Sir Clifford Cornford, Mr P E Moody, Senior Director National Girobank, the Director of Marketing and Customer Services National Girobank. In 1985 a Giro Board was created in anticipation of the establishment of Girobank as a public limited company (plc).

Also in 1981, the telecommunications business of the Post Office became a separate public corporation, trading as British Telecom. When the responsibility for telecommunications was transferred from the Post Office Corporation to British Telecom, copies of board papers relevant to the new

corporation were passed to British Telecom. Following the 1981 split the Post Office was then re-organised into two distinct businesses: Posts and Parcels.

In 1981, the Post Office established an Audit Committee consisting of three part time members, the board member for finance and external auditors and internal auditors invited to attend as appropriate. It was to meet four times a year, with two meetings to consider the accounts, one to consider the external auditors letters to management, and one to meet internal auditors. The terms of reference for the committee stated that it was 'to review, as necessary, the financial policies and procedures of the Corporation and their implementation, including particularly the adequacy of the Corporation's internal control systems, and to report thereon to the Board through the Chairman of the Corporation.'

The Post Office was restructured during 1986 to create three businesses: Subscription Services Limited, Royal Mail, and Parcelforce, and the make up of the board members reflected this. In 1987 the network of Post Offices was established as Post Office Counters Limited, a wholly owned subsidiary of the Post Office, and the Counters Management Committee was established in 1986 to replace previous monthly AD meetings. The principle of this committee was that it would deal with matters of a collective concern and of a longer term nature, for example, monthly monitoring reports and progress against the business plan. It was an effort to make more effective use of management time, and provide for more effective management of the counters business. It was renamed the Counters Executive Committee in July 1993, and reported to the Post Office Counters Board, and the main Post Office Board.

In 1988, business boards were established for the Letters, Parcels and Counters Businesses. A Major Projects Expenditure Committee (MaPEC) was also established during this year to deal with the financing of major one-off projects.

In 1990, Post Office Parcels changed its name to Parcelforce Worldwide and was launched as an independent division. National Girobank was also privatised in this year and sold to Alliance and Leicester Building Society.

The Postal Services Act 2000 created a company with more commercial freedoms and a more strategic relationship with government, and on 26 March 2001, it became a plc wholly owned by the UK government (its sole shareholder). A new regulatory framework was set up with an independent regulator (Postcomm) and a reformed consumer body (Postwatch). On 4 November 2002, a name change from Consignia to Royal Mail Group plc occurred.

The Royal Mail Group website states that the 'Royal Mail Holdings plc Board sets the strategic vision of the company. It is responsible for driving the four goals of the renewal plan: being a great place to work; improving customer service; returning to profitability; and delivering positive cash flow.' The Management Board 'comprises all the Executive Directors of Royal Mail

Holdings plc and certain other Senior Executives of the Group. The Management Board develops and monitors deployment of the Group's strategy, annual operating plans and budgets for Board approval. It reviews operational activities, and sets policies where these are not reserved to the Board.'

There are three formal committees of the board including the following; Nomination Committee, Remuneration Committee, Audit and Risk Committee. Terms of reference for these committees can be found on the Royal Mail Group website at http://www.royalmailgroup.com/portal/rmg/jump1?catId=23200529&mediaId=23200554 (last accessed November 2006).

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is not yet available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/

POST 70

POST OFFICE: ADVISORY COUNCILS
1921-1994

110 volumes, 2 files

Scope and content

This POST class comprises reports, minutes, papers, leaflets and newsletters produced by Post Office Advisory Councils. These were external bodies set up to liaise with users of the Post Office, to monitor and review the performance and activities of the business and advise the Post Office on matters of mutual concern to the customer and the business. It includes the Standing Motor Transport Advisory Committee Minutes.

Administrative history

A system of outside consultation of Post Office administration was initiated by Herbert Samuel, the Postmaster General, as early as 1913 in the form of local telegraph and telephone committees. These were set up by chambers of commerce, trade or, in their absence, by local authorities. In 1921 Frederick G Kellaway, the Postmaster General, under pressure from the Federation of British Industries, set up a national body known as the Post Office Advisory Committee. This was the direct ancestor of bodies still operating today. These committees had only a limited effect, mainly on particular details of the running of the service, and they did not have much impact. By the early 1930s, the national council was meeting very infrequently. In the years immediately following World War Two the local committees were revamped to cover all aspects of Post Office work.

In August 1969 it was decided to establish a Users Council. This was titled the Post Office Users National Council (POUNC). Its aim was to represent at national level the interests of the users of Post Office services, to ensure the existence of adequate consultative arrangements at local level, to receive proposals from the Postmaster General, and to make recommendations to him about the services.

These powers were established under the 1969 Post Office Act. POUNC was an independent statutory body, funded by the Department of Trade and Industry. It was modelled on the consultative or consumers councils of the major nationalised industries. It covered the whole of the British Isles, and three country councils covering Scotland, Wales and Monmouthshire and Northern Ireland. These councils were independent from the Post Office. An independent chairman, (although appointed by the Postmaster General), sat with 32 members who were unpaid, except for reasonable out of pocket expenses. All members were appointed on 1 January 1970 and would serve, initially for three years. These members formed a cross section of Post Office

users, and, as they served in a personal not a delegate capacity, were free to express their own views, and to represent the views of the ordinary Post Office user. Some of its work was delegated to individual committees, one for postal matters, one for telecommunications, other committees were formed as the need arose. From its establishment the Post Office provided a secretary and premises. The work of the council would arise from matters put to it by the Post Office, the public, and local advisory committees. This gave the local advisory committees a direct link to Post Office headquarters, something not previously available to them. POUNC maintained close liaison with Advisory Committees, receiving regular reports of their meetings, and circulating a periodic POUNC newsletter.

Between 180 and 200 Post Office Advisory Committees existed in 2000 throughout the United Kingdom. New committees were often formed and existing committees merged, when for example, a Head Postmaster's area of responsibility was enlarged. Membership was drawn from local authorities, commercial organisations, local voluntary bodies, and individuals. The committees were non-statutory. Post Office managers attended meetings to explain Post Office policy and answer questions about local issues. The aim was to increase the confidence of the business community in the Post Office. Advisory Councils acted as liaison points between the Post Office and the local community on matters of mutual concern. Prior to the enactment of the Post Office Act of 1969 Advisory Committees were sponsored and, in some cases, financially supported by bodies such as the Post Office itself, Chambers of Commerce, Chambers of Trade and Local Authorities.

On 1 January 2001, the Secretary of State, transferred all the property, rights and liabilities of the Post Office Users' National Council to Postwatch. The following is taken from the Royal Mail Group website - www.royalmailgroup.com (last accessed November 2006):

'Postwatch (initially called the Consumer Council for Postal Services) was established to promote the interests of users of postal services within the framework of the Postal Services Act 2000. It replaces the Post Office Users' National Council (POUNC) and has a more extensive regional structure. Postwatch is responsible for monitoring postal service standards and acts as a focus for consumer issues and complaints. It is consulted on key decisions including variations in the services for which postal licences are required, the granting and modification of licences, and the enforcement of licence conditions. Together with the Postal Services Commission (Postcomm), Postwatch also monitors and advises on the network of Post Office branches.'

Postwatch states that 'The role of Postwatch is to protect, promote and develop the interests of all customers of postal services in the UK. We campaign for a better overall postal service for customers, advising Government, the Regulator and Royal Mail Group on consumer views, demands and needs.'

Postwatch has a network of nine regional committees around England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The chairman of each committee sits

on the National Council. The regional committees include; Scotland, Northern Ireland, Northern England, Wales, Midlands, East of England, Greater London, South East England, and the South and West. Postwatch has also established the Counters Advisory Group 'to identify, consider and act on consumer concerns about issues affecting the post office network and to inform Postwatch's national policy development and campaigning work.' Postwatch also conducts research into consumer views.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/

POST 71

POST OFFICE: PARLIAMENTARY PAPERS 1806-1971

265 volumes

Scope and content

Parliamentary Papers and reports of Government Commissions of enquiry relating to the Post Office.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is not yet available
- Some items in this class are available on microfilm in the Archive room. Please consult the microfilm catalogue, which can also be found in the Archive room, for further details

POST 72

POST OFFICE: HEADQUARTERS ADMINISTRATION AND POLICY 1786-1972

Extent unknown

Scope and content

This POST class contains records relating to the operation and administration of Post Office Headquarters including Secretary's Office order books and reports on the headquarters function, and records on corporate policy and administration.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- An old and incomplete provisional list is available for this POST class in the Archive room

POST 73

POST OFFICE: REGIONAL ADMINISTRATION AND OPERATIONS 1860-1959

158 volumes

Scope and content

This POST class consists of reports relating to development of the regions within the Post Office including the Bridgeman, Gardiner and Lumley reports. It also contains annual reports and other papers relevant to individual regions, and minutes and papers from cross-regional conferences such as Regional Directors meetings.

Administrative history

The origins of the operation of services on a local, territorial basis date from the Post Office Act 1711, under which a team of Riding Surveyors was appointed to inspect the operation of services within individual Surveyor's Districts. Initially, the Surveyors' responsibilities were supervisory only, guidance and directives on specific cases having to be obtained from Post Office HQ in London.

From the late 1880s, however, a greater freedom to make decisions on routine cases was devolved to the Surveyors; and, by the early 1900s, a further measure of 'decentralisation' and 'devolution' was increasingly under consideration.

Meanwhile, London had already emerged as a separate administrative department of the GPO in London, one operating under several titles over the years ranging from the London Penny Post (from 1681) to the London Postal Service (from 1882). Additionally, with the growth in the telephone service from its nationalisation in 1912, its organisation in the field developed on a territorial basis.

The move towards a full system of regionalisation, to replace the age-old system of Surveyors' Districts etc, came in 1932 and 1934, with the recommendations of the Bridgeman and Gardiner Committees.

Regionalisation was eventually introduced in 1934, on 1 August, beginning with the setting-up of the Scottish and North Eastern Regions.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is not yet available

POST 74

POST OFFICE: SOLICITOR'S DEPARTMENT
1685-1938

601 volumes and files

Scope and content

This POST class of records comprises a wide variety of legal documents. The bulk of the material is made up of the Property Leases and Agreements, which were entered into to establish and maintain Post Office Services, many with Plans, and the Prosecution Briefs have been selected from a large accumulation on the basis of historical and/or general interest, and are listed topographically.

The Briefs describe in detail the alleged offence of the accused and where endorsed; the verdict and sentence is also quoted. For prosecutions, where the Briefs have not been endorsed, results can usually be found in contemporary newspaper cuttings. Some of the initial reports of offences are to be found in POST 42 (Postmaster General's Reports: Volumes) and further reference to the cases to which the Prosecutions and Briefs refer can be found in POST 30 (Postmaster General's Minutes: Documents) and POST 35 (Postmaster General's Minutes: Volumes). The Briefs give many examples of crimes against the Post Office and, in some instances, explain how certain sections of the Post Office operated in those days.

The Ledgers and Letter Books are listed chronologically.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- An old and incomplete catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on The National Archives' website at http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/catalogue/search.asp. Search under the reference 'POST'
- Some items in this class are available on microfilm in the Archive room. Please consult the microfilm catalogue, which can also be found in the Archive room, for further details

POST 75

POST OFFICE: SAVINGS BANK, INSURANCE AND INVESTMENT SERVICES
1828-1975

124 volumes, 11 files

Scope and content

This POST class comprises reports and papers on the establishment and operation of, and facilities and services provided by the Post Office Savings Bank. It comprises those records that did not form part of the National Savings Department holdings in 1969.

Included in this class are War and Defence bonds and information on the Post Office's annuities and Life insurance.

Administrative history

The Savings Bank was established by the Post Office Savings Bank Act 1861. This act empowered the Postmaster General to receive money on deposit, to make repayments, and to pay interest at the rate of 2 ½% per annum on the balance outstanding to the credit of depositors. The Bank opened for business on 16 September 1861 using the already existing system of 301 Post Office Money Order offices and with 1,700 Post Offices acting as its local agents for deposit and withdrawal transactions. This quickly grew to 2,300 Post Offices. As the first institution of its kind in the world its success was immediate. The minimum deposit needed to open an account was fixed at one shilling.

In 1861 the Savings Bank had twenty four thousand account holders and a staff of 200. By 1871 there were 1,300,000 accounts and the total sum on deposit was £15 million. The original system of manual book keeping lasted until 1926. Services were extended to include Government Stocks and Bonds in 1880; Insurance and Annuities in 1888; War Savings Certificates in 1916; (Renamed National Savings Certificates in 1920); Premium Savings Bonds in 1956; Investment Accounts in 1966 and a Save as You Earn contractual scheme in 1969.

In the mid 1960s, as part of a general government policy to disperse staff from London, the Savings Certificate Division relocated to Durham, firstly into temporary accommodation then into a new purpose built office block. The move was completed by 1969. Other parts of the Savings Bank dealing with Ordinary and Investment accounts moved out of London to Glasgow.
The Department was renamed 'Department for National Savings' in 1967.

In 1969 the Department had a staff of over 14,000. By 1988, thanks largely to mechanisation and computerisation, this had been reduced to nearly half this size.

When the Post Office ceased to be part of the Civil Service in 1969 and became a Public Corporation, the Savings Bank remained with the Civil Service and started a new life as a Public Corporation. The Post Office continued handling savings transactions over the counter on an agency basis.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/

POST 76

POST OFFICE: POST OFFICE: ENGINEERING
1882-1984

178 files and volumes

Scope and content

This POST class mainly comprises reports, correspondence, statistics, staff manuals and historical summaries of the organisation, policy, development and operation of the Post Office Engineering Department and its successors.

There are papers on the establishment and operation of the Hill Research Station, cables and cableships, and the electrical power scheme.

Administrative history

The nationalisation of the private telegraph services in 1870 created a need for a specialist department of the General Post Office devoted to engineering. The first Engineer-in-Chief, R S Culley, was appointed on 29 January 1870 and many of the technical staff formerly employed by the old private telegraph companies formed the nucleus of his new department. The existing telegraph lines terminated at railway stations, usually some distance from the towns, so the first job of the Post Office engineers was to extend the lines to post offices within the towns. New routes were also added, with 740 miles of wire laid under London's streets during the first few months of 1870.

The British Isles were split into divisions for the purpose of local engineering control. These divisions, each under control of a superintendent engineer, who was directly responsible to the Engineer-in-Chief, later became known as engineering districts. The first Engineer-in-Chief's Office was in Telegraph Street, London, at the Central Telegraph Office which had previously been owned by the Electric Telegraph Company. A move to new headquarters, GPO West in St. Martin's-le-Grand, took place in 1874.

In 1881 the Government authorised the Post Office to offer the public telephone as a service, in addition to telegraph services, and the first Post Office Telephone Exchange was opened at Swansea in March. In 1912 the Postmaster General took over the National Telephone Company and for the first time a unified telephone system was available throughout most of Britain. Approximately 19,000 staff were transferred over, of which about 7,000 were employed on engineering work, adding to the 9,000 already employed in the Engineering Department.

Three Engineering districts were formed in 1901 to deal with London's telephones. These were the Metropolitan North, Central and South. The North district was abolished at the transfer, but within a few months the whole of the

metropolitan area was put under the control of one superintending engineer for the London Engineering District. It remained the smallest engineering district in area, but was the largest in value of plant and number of staff.

The rapid expansion of the GPO's telephone services and the development of other forms of telecommunication led to an increase in the work of the Engineer-in-Chief's department. It remained primarily engaged in developing, providing and maintaining telecommunications services, but it also had responsibility for matters concerning electrical power and, as time went on, the mechanisation of postal operations.

The department and the office of Engineer-in-Chief changed radically after 1969 when the engineering work of the new Post Office Corporation began to be split between the new, increasingly separate, postal and telecommunications businesses.

RoMEC (Royal Mail Engineering and Construction) was formed in April 1988 as a self-contained profit centre. Its customer base extends to every part of the Post Office. The RoMEC Group comprises six core product groups in the specialist areas of security, manufacturing, maintenance, datacommns, installation and consultancy.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/

POST 77

POST OFFICE: FACTORIES DEPARTMENT: VOLUMES 1900-1967

16 volumes

Scope and content

This POST class consists of reports, memoranda and accounts relating to the organisation, structure, functions and operations of Post Office factories and the Factories Department.

Administrative history

The origins of the Post Office factories go back to 1870 when the Post Office telegraph system was established. One of the properties acquired was a factory previously run by the Electrical and International Telegraph Company. In 1892 a factory at Bolton was taken over, part of which was transferred to London. Later, the National Telephone Company's factory at Nottingham was acquired, the work and staff being subsequently transferred to Birmingham.

The Factories department was a separate division of the Stores Department. The work of the factories was reviewed by a committee in 1910-11. The committee's report (See POST 77/4) recommended that the factories should be placed under the control of the Stores Department, and factories were absorbed into the department in 1912. The factories were again removed from the control of the Stores Department in 1941 and a separate department was established under H A Thomas who acted as Controller of the department.

The main functions of the Factories Department altered during the period covered by the material listed below. Broadly speaking its work covered the repair, reconditioning, assembly and manufacture of all Post Office equipment and machinery.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/

POST 78

POST OFFICE: SUPPLIES DEPARTMENT
1874-1985

62 volumes, 286 files

Scope and content

This POST class mainly comprises reports, correspondence, committee, and other reports, statistics, staff manuals, and training information for new staff, relating to the organisation, development and operation of the Post Office Supplies Department.

It also includes a collection of material on posting boxes, including information relating to the design, development, positioning, installation, painting and repainting, locks and keys, and indicator and notice plates for pillar boxes.

Administrative history

Prior to the setting up of the office of Controller of Telegraph Stores in 1877 the purchase of postal and postal telegraph stores was the responsibility of the Chief Clerk of the Post Office and the Engineering-in-Chief. In 1901 a committee of enquiry into the organisation and working of the Department of Telegraph Stores suggested that consideration should be given to the amalgamation of the postal and telegraph stores departments and this took place in 1902. At this same time an independent Factories Department was formed. A further change took place in 1941 with the setting up of a separate Contracts Department. The Stores Department later became known as the Post Office Supplies Department. This department provided both postal and telecommunication stores until the separation of the businesses into the Post Office, dealing purely with postal matters, and British Telecom, dealing with the telecommunication business in the 1980s.

This class contains specimens of the engineering rate book and vocabulary of engineering stores; a number of descriptive booklets on the work of the department together with various committee, annual and other reports.

The Supplies Department was based at Mount Pleasant, London, with other premises situated in Studd Street London N1, Wembley, Bridgwater in Somerset, Birmingham and Edinburgh, and with a number of satellite units supplying the most frequently requisitioned items to their local areas. A separate clothing store existed at Hook in Hampshire. The London operations and work from the Bridgwater depot was relocated to new purpose built premises at Swindon in 1975. This new office and warehouse complex was designed to use modern storage and handling methods including high level storage racking, conveyors and fork lift and pallet trucks. It handled all the requirements for stores from offices in England, and it also handled requests

for general publicity items, the distribution of telephone directories, (carried out under a contract on behalf of British Telecom), and requests for uniforms from offices in Scotland and Northern Ireland. Other items for offices in Scotland and Northern Ireland were supplied from the Edinburgh site.

Access Conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/

POST 79

POST OFFICE: CONTRACTS DEPARTMENT AND CONTRACTING FUNCTIONS
1932-1999

16 volumes

Scope and content

This POST class consists of Annual Reports of the Contracts Department, reports, correspondence and papers relating to the organisation, staffing, functions, policy and review of procedure of the Contracts Department and contracting functions.

Administrative history

The Contracts Department was established on 1 April 1941 to take over all the contracting functions previously performed by the Personnel, Engineering and Stores Department.

The Department became responsible for making specialised studies of contractual arrangements for the execution of works, the purchase and sale of supplies and for placing the relative contracts. It did not, however, deal with contracts for the transportation of mails, small buildings and local installation works. The department also liaised in respect of all matters pertaining to contracts with other departments of the Post Office and government purchasing departments.

These department existed until the early 1970s, when contracting work was no longer centralised and was instead managed partly by Purchasing and Logistics and partly by individual departments.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/

POST 80

POST OFFICE: AGENCY SERVICES
1874-1937

2 files, 4 volumes

Scope and content

This POST class comprises material relating to the introduction and operation of agency services provided by the Post Office. It covers: the payment of Old Age Pensions at post offices, the sale of Health Insurance and Unemployment Insurance stamps, the floatation of the 'War Loan', in 1915, to help finance the war and the payment of money due to public corporations, through the Post Office.

Administrative history

The first Agency Service to be provided by the Post Office on behalf of the government was the Post Office Insurance and Annuity Scheme introduced at selected post offices in 1865. The payment of Old Age Pensions at post offices was introduced in 1909 and in 1912 Health Insurance and Unemployment Insurance Stamps began to be sold. In 1915, through the medium of the Post Office Savings Bank, the Post Office helped to float the 'War Loan' and in the same year, it began to issue War Savings Certificates through its Money Order Department.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/

POST 81

POST OFFICE: TELEGRAPHS, PRIVATE COMPANIES 1845-1905

119 files

Scope and content

This POST class encompasses the surviving records of a number of early domestic and international telegraph companies which pioneered the development and growth of the public telegraph network.

Administrative history

The first of the early telegraph companies was the Electric Telegraph Company, founded in 1846 by Sir William Fothergill Cooke (one of the inventors of the telegraph) and a number of City financiers. Prior to the Post Office takeover in 1870, some of the companies had already amalgamated or been taken over by competitors. For example: the Electric Telegraph Company and the International Telegraph Company merged in 1855, and the London Telegraph Company formally changed its title to London and Provincial Telegraph Company in December 1857.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The records in this POST class are held at BT Group Archives
- The catalogue for these records is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/

POST 82

POST OFFICE: TELEGRAPHS, POST OFFICE (INLAND)
1837-1939

304 files

Scope and content

This POST class consists of a collection of arbitration cases between the Postmaster General and private telegraph companies; memoranda by heads of Post Office departments and their correspondence, records of the Central Telegraph Office, lighthouses and lightvessels, circuits and codes, mobile facilities for telegraphs at race meetings and special events; Letters Patent taken out by inventors and specifications of inventions.

Administrative history

The Postmaster General took over the private telegraph companies under the Telegraph Acts of 1868 & 1869, which authorised the Postmaster General to purchase, work and maintain telegraphs in the United Kingdom.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The records in this POST class are held at BT Group Archives
- The catalogue for these records is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/
- Some records in this POST class are available to look at on microfiche in the Archive room. Please consult the microfilm catalogue, which can also be found in the Archive room, for further details

POST 83

POST OFFICE: TELEGRAPHS, POST OFFICE (OVERSEAS) 1849-1934

104 files

Scope and content

This POST class consists of a collection of licences, concessions, agreements, treaties, conventions and conferences, correspondence and memoranda between foreign governments negotiating landing rights, maintenance and operation of submarine cable telegraphs; ocean survey reports as well as other reports by officers in the General Post Office and committee reports.

Administrative history

The first transmission of telegraphic communication to overseas routes was by submarine cable from Dover to Calais in 1850. Private telegraph companies pioneered this work, with the Post Office becoming increasingly involved in the management of overseas cables following its takeover of the UK domestic telegraph network in 1870. Private companies remained active in the international arena, particularly in providing telegraph services to places outside Europe. Many of these companies merged in 1929 to form Cable & Wireless Ltd.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The records in this POST class are held at BT Group Archives
- The catalogue for these records is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/

POST 84

POST OFFICE: TELEPHONES, PRIVATE COMPANIES 1879-1915

106 files

Scope and content

This POST class comprises the records of private telephone companies which were taken over by the Post Office in 1912. It consists of items relating to individual companies, National Telephone Company rules and instructions, staff related records, agreements, judicial proceedings, valuation of assets and a collection of early telephone directories.

Administrative history

Following the introduction of the first telephone of practical value in 1876-1877, a number of private telephone companies were formed, including The Telephone Company (in 1878) and the Edison Telephone Company (in 1879). Other similar companies also sprang up throughout the country. The Telephone Company and the Edison Telephone Company amalgamated in 1880 to form the United Telephone Company and, in 1889, with other companies, combined with the National Telephone Company. The National Telephone Company swiftly became the most prominent of the telephone companies, although following a ruling in 1880 on the legal powers of the Postmaster General under the Telegraph Act 1869, it operated under licence from the Postmaster General, which also began to operate its own telephone service in competition with the National Telephone Company. In 1896, the Post Office acquired the National Telephone Company's trunk (long distance) network, restricting the company to the provision of a network of local telephone services. In 1905, an agreement was reached between the Postmaster General and the National Telephone Company that the Post Office would purchase the National Telephone Company's system on expiry of its licence in 1911. The entire UK telephone service (with the exception of the service operated by Kingston-upon-Hull Borough Council) passed to Post Office control on 1 January 1912.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The records in this POST class are held at BT Group Archives
- The catalogue for these records is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/

POST 85

POST OFFICE: TELEPHONES, MUNICIPAL
1894-1938

18 files

Scope and content

This POST class comprises a collection of reports on municipal telephone systems, public enquiries into applications by local authorities to borrow money for establishing services, and copies of the Postmaster General's licences and agreements.

Administrative history

From 1880, the Post Office enjoyed a monopoly in respect of the provision of telegraph and telephone services, following a legal ruling on the powers conferred on the Postmaster General by the Telegraph Act 1869. Private telephone companies in competition with the Post Office, principally the National Telephone Company, thereafter operated under licence from the Post Office. This remained the situation until 1912, when the Post Office took over the National Telephone Company which, by that time, was the last remaining telephone concern outside public control.

Prior to 1912 there had been increasing public concern about the perceived inefficiency and excessive cost of the National Telephone Company's services. This concern was given voice in part by certain local authorities.

The Municipal Corporations Association, representing most of the English Boroughs, was in favour of state control of the company's system. On the other hand, Scottish municipalities, led by the Glasgow Corporation (who had unsuccessfully applied for a telephone licence as early as 1893), supported local authority controlled services.

Following the investigations of a House of Commons Select Committee and other official enquiries, the Government in 1899 decided to operate a large Post Office run telephone system in London, and to leave competition with the National Telephone Company in provincial towns to local authorities to whom licences would be issued.

This policy was embodied in the Telegraph Act of that year. Later in the year, the Post Office began laying an extensive system of telephone lines in London, and a network of small exchanges in rural areas not previously served by the National Telephone Company.

The policy of municipal telephony in provincial towns would have seemed a natural development in adding to the already wide powers of local authorities in providing gas, water, electricity, transport and other public amenities.

In the event, it was to prove a failure: of 1,334 urban local authorities that might have sought licences under the Telegraph Act, 1899, only 55 applied for information. Of these, only 13 asked for licences, all of which were granted: Glasgow, Belfast, Grantham, Huddersfield, Tunbridge Wells, Brighton, Chard, Portsmouth, Hull, Oldham, Swansea, Scarborough and West Hartlepool.

Only six actually opened telephone systems: Glasgow (1901), Tunbridge Wells (1901), Swansea (1902), Portsmouth (1902), Brighton (1903) and Hull (1904). Only the service provided by Hull continues to the present day, although it is no longer entirely owned by the council (in 1987, The Hull City Telephone Department became Kingston Communications (Hull) plc, a company in its own right, although it continued to be entirely owned by the council. In 1999, it was partially floated on the Stock Exchange with the council retaining a 44.9% stake). The remaining five services were all sold to the National Telephone Company or to the Post Office by the end of 1913.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The records in this POST class are held at BT Group Archives
- The catalogue for these records is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/

POST 86

POST OFFICE: TELEPHONES, (INLAND)
1874-1938

76 files

Scope and content

This POST class comprises items on telephone rates and charges, forms of licence issued by the Postmaster General, reports, memoranda and papers relating to matters of telephone policy, items of general interest and a collection of select committee and departmental reports.

Administrative history

From 1880, the Post Office enjoyed a monopoly in respect of the provision of telegraph and telephone services in the UK, following a legal ruling on the powers conferred on the Postmaster General by the Telegraph Act, 1869. Private telephone companies in competition with the Post Office, principally the National Telephone Company, thereafter operated under licence from the Post Office. This remained the situation until 1912, when the Post Office took over the National Telephone Company which, by that time, was the last remaining telephone concern outside public control.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The records in this POST class are held at BT Group Archives
- The catalogue for these records is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/

POST 87

POST OFFICE: TELEPHONES, OVERSEAS
1877-1938

12 files

Scope and content

This POST class consists of a few specimen agreements between Britain and other countries for the establishment of an overseas telephone service, and a collection of reports on various overseas telephone systems.

Administrative history

Overseas telephonic communication in its early days was mainly confined to services between London and Paris, the North of France, Brussels and Antwerp. The first telephone cable across the Channel was laid in 1891. During the early 1920s services were gradually extended to other European and Scandinavian countries. In 1927 a radio-telephone service was opened between Britain and the United States. The overseas services were developed rapidly during the late 1920s and early 1930s, and communications soon extended to Australia, Canada, South America, Spain, Italy, etc.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The records in this POST class are held at BT Group Archives
- The catalogue for these records is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/

POST 88

POST OFFICE: WIRELESS TELEGRAPHY AND TELEPHONY 1886-1945

52 files

Scope and content

This POST class consists of a collection of reports on trials and demonstrations of various systems, applications and agreements for the establishment of stations, permits to conduct experiments, departmental and Parliamentary reports and miscellaneous correspondence on the subject, including references to the establishment of an Imperial Wireless Chain. Significant items in this series include a collection of original letters to Sir William Preece, the Post Office Engineer-in-Chief and electrician, from Guglielmo Marconi dating from the latter's arrival in the United Kingdom, and which describe a number of experiments in wireless telegraphy.

Administrative history

The possibility of transmitting signals from one point to another by electrical impulses without a connecting wire had attracted attention since the early days of telegraphy, and the Post Office, among others, conducted experiments in this field. In 1896, the Post Office (through its Engineer-in-Chief, Sir William Preece) provided facilities for Guglielmo Marconi to conduct experiments in the field of wireless telegraphy by means of hertzian waves.

Marconi gave the first demonstration of his new system of wireless telegraphy before members of the Post Office administration on 27 July 1896. With the transmitter on the roof of the Central Telegraph Office in Newgate Street, London, and the receiver on the roof of GPO South in Carter Lane, 300 yards away, signals from the transmitter were satisfactorily recorded. In August, the Post Office permitted Marconi to experiment with wireless equipment on Salisbury plain and elsewhere. The ensuing trials demonstrated the practicality of his system.

The following year Marconi was granted a British patent for his system by which "electrical actions or manifestations are transmitted through the air, earth or water by means of electric oscillations of high frequency". In July of the same year, Marconi parted company with the Post Office and, with other backers, set up the Marconi Wireless Telegraph and Signal Company.

In order to secure the control of wireless telegraphy, the Wireless Telegraph Act was passed in 1904 rendering it illegal for persons to install or work apparatus without a licence from the Postmaster General. In 1918, the Wireless Telegraphy Board was set up to coordinate interference problems in

radio communication in the English Channel. The interests of users of radio other than Government departments were represented by the Post Office.

In 1924, the Marconi Wireless Telegraph Company entered into an agreement with the British Government for the provision of radio stations to set up an Imperial Wireless Chain in England, Australia, Canada, India and South Africa. From 1929 electrical communications across the Empire were overseen by the Imperial Communications Advisory Committee, on which the Post Office was represented.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The records in this POST class are held at BT Group Archives
- The catalogue for these records is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/

POST 89

POST OFFICE: BROADCASTING
c1920s-c1960s

18 volumes, 7 boxes, 3 files

Scope and content

This POST class contains Post Office records relating to television and radio broadcasting, including Sykes, Crawford, Ullswater committee reports and correspondence between the Post Office and the BBC.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is not yet available

POST 90

POST OFFICE: ENGINEERING GENERAL (NOT KNOWN)

Scope and content

Papers relating to the Post Office Engineering department.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The records in this POST class are held at BT Group Archives
- A catalogue for these records is not yet available in the Archive room

POST 91

POST OFFICE: BUILDINGS, FURNITURE AND FITTINGS [c1790-1910]

18 volumes, files and plans

Scope and content

This POST class contains records relating to Post Office buildings and especially the move of the GPO from Lombard Street to a new site bordering St Martin's-le-Grand and Foster Lane in 1829. The building, which later became more familiarly known as GPO East, was designed by Sir Robert Smirke.

This class also contains miscellaneous items relating to GPO buildings, including sample returns of property owned or rented by the Post Office Department.

Further information may be found in the minuted paper series POST 30 to 42.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- An old and incomplete catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on The National Archives' website at: http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/catalogue/search.asp. Search under the reference 'POST'

POST 92

POST OFFICE: POST OFFICE PUBLICATIONS
1855-Present

Extent unknown

Scope and content

This POST class consists of publications produced by the Post Office with the purpose of disseminating news throughout the organisation, and beyond it to the general public. Publications cover the provision of information regarding postal services throughout the country, and staff newsletters from across the organisation. Staff newsletters give useful information about the way in which the Post Office communicated with its employees. They can also provide information about members of staff and social activities carried out within the Post Office, often giving details of senior appointments, and retirements. Organisation-wide publications, such as Courier, were originally published as regional editions, and therefore can provide a certain level of information regarding local activities. As well as information regarding postal services and staff newsletters, this class also contains copies of the annual reports and accounts of the Post Office. These give a useful summary of developments and changes within the Post Office.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is not yet available
- Some items in this class are available on microfilm in the Archive room. Please consult the microfilm catalogue, which can also be found in the Archive room, for further details

POST 93

POST OFFICE: FORMS
(NOT KNOWN)

Scope and content

Assorted forms relating to letter transfer at all stages, from collection to delivery.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is not yet available

POST 94

POST OFFICE: PRIVATE OFFICE PAPERS: COLONEL ROGER WHITLEY, DEPUTY POSTMASTER GENERAL
1672-1677

24 volumes and 2 files

Scope and content

Peover papers written by Colonel Roger Whitley, Deputy Postmaster General 1672 - 1677, under Lord Arlington. The private papers were written only for the Postmasters and contain no related documents or incoming correspondence. They include account books relating to final years of farming postal revenue, which show, among other things, Whitley's annual payments for rent in farm of the Post Office. Letter books relating to England, Ireland and further abroad, show examples of abuses of the posts at home and abroad as well as other occurrences such as the provisioning of post horses and the quartering of soldiers on postmasters. Also included is correspondence relating to the history of the collection.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/
- Some items in this class are available on microfilm in the Archive room. Please consult the microfilm catalogue, which can also be found in the Archive room, for further details

POST 95

POST OFFICE: PRIVATE OFFICE PAPERS: SIR THOMAS FRANKLAND 1694-1697

1 volume

Scope and content

The papers of Thomas Frankland, Postmaster General with Sir Robert Cotton 1691 - 1708 and with Sir John Evelyn 1708 -1715. Frankland greatly increased the revenues of the Post Office and was retained as Postmaster General by Queen Anne after the death of King William. Volume containing various letters and petitions regarding packet services, including foreign packets and freight of goods. The opening of the volume shows the collection to have been sold in 1893, giving a catalogue description from the sale, then another sale and catalogue description from 1895.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/

POST 96

POST OFFICE: PRIVATE OFFICE PAPERS: JOHN PALMER 1782-1813

505 folios, 17 volumes, 30 files

Scope and content

Private papers of John Palmer, Surveyor and Comptroller General of Mails, 1786 - 1792. Palmer was responsible for the introduction of the mail coach service. He submitted his plans for the service and changes in franking and postage to William Pitt, the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Disputes over the service and over his dismissal of his deputy resulted in his suspension from duty and dismissal in 1792. He received a pension, but fought for a claim for a percentage of the revenue of the Post Office, and no settlement was agreed until 1813. The papers include a collection of pamphlets and reports concerning a dispute with his deputy and claims for percentage of revenue, surveyor's and deputy surveyor's minutes for matters of the day; letters, reports and memoranda on foreign posts and packet boat services, postal reforms, mail coach services, staff, establishments, revenue, accounts and the city freedoms of Aberdeen and Liverpool awarded to John Palmer. Some of the sources are indexed.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/
- Some items in this class are available on microfilm in the Archive room. Please consult the microfilm catalogue, which can also be found in the Archive room, for further details

POST 97

POST OFFICE: PRIVATE OFFICE PAPERS: LORD WALSINGHAM, JOINT POSTMASTER GENERAL
1787-1792

16 volumes

Scope and content

Papers of Lord Walsingham, Joint Postmaster General, 1787 - 1794. Volumes containing copies and some original documents of Lord Walsingham. Much information is carried on the working of the Post Office, especially with regards postal and packet services in British North America and the West Indies, mail coach affairs, accounts of costs and revenue, salaries and wages, establishments and returns.

This class comprises a number of original volumes and film or photostat copies of others, the originals of which are held elsewhere; the location of these original volumes is indicated on the list of contents of the class.

The volumes contain mostly copies of official papers some of which are from dates earlier than Lord Walsingham's commencement of office, these were no doubt supplied to him for his information. There are also a number of original letters written to the Postmaster General on postal matters. Some volumes contain lists of queries from Lord Walsingham to various officials in the Post Office regarding practices in all departments.

The documents contain a considerable amount of information on the working of the Post Office at the commencement of a most interesting period. They include many references to the postal and packet services particularly in and to British North America and the West Indies, mail coach affairs, accounts of cost and revenue, salaries and wages, establishments and returns of various sorts.

POST 97/5 contains papers concerning the differences that arose between the Postmaster General (Lords Carteret and Walsingham) and John Palmer, the Comptroller of Mail Coaches.

POST 97/15 consists of a collection of letters (1) from senior officials of the Post Office (Bonner, Palmer, Todd and others) and (2) miscellaneous individual letters from numerous writers. POST 97/16 is a table of contents relating to the material contained in POST 97/4-6, 9, 12-13, and 15.

Biographical history

Lord Walsingham (1748-1818) was a leading figure in the late eighteenth century Post Office, holding the office of Joint Postmaster General from 1787-

1794. His tenure was jointly held with Lord Carteret (Henry Frederick Thynne) from 6 July 1787 to 19 September 1789; with the Earl of Westmorland (John Fane) until 13 March 1790; and finally with the Earl of Chesterfield (Philip Stanhope) until 28 July 1794. His time in this position was not without controversy and this period was one in which the early Mail Coach Service was in development and a number of other administrative issues, for example concerning packet services to British North America and the West Indies, were keenly debated.

Walsingham was born Thomas De Grey on 14 July 1748. The De Greys were a family of nobility and Thomas was a descendent of a distinguished lineage dating back to the thirteenth century (the well known Gray's Inn Road owes the provenance of its nomenclature to the De Greys of this period). He was married on 30 April 1772 and had five children over the following decade. In 1774, he was elected to parliament to represent the borough of Tamworth, Stafford, and in 1780 he was elected to represent the borough of Lostwithiel, Cornwall. Before his accession to the peerage following the death of his Father on 9 May 1781, he became one of the grooms of his majesty's bedchamber and in 1777 was also one of the Lords Commissioners of Trade and Plantations. His career continued along a successful trajectory as he successively held the positions of Vice Treasurer of Ireland and a Lords Commissioner for the East India Trading Company as well as maintaining his work as a commissioner of Trade and Plantations. Finding favour with Anthony Todd (Secretary of the Post Office, 1762-98), he resigned these posts to become a joint Postmaster General in July 1787.

His business acumen was well known to contemporaries and he was described by Kenneth Ellis, writing in 1951 as being 'the first efficient Postmaster since 1765… eager, gouty and irascible, he took the lead in business from the first'. In fact, one of Walsingham's stated wishes was that his department be viewed as an 'office of business' and his energies were spent on a number of efforts aimed at increasing the efficiency and profitability of the services and functions that the Post Office was then responsible for. These included reforms in the reduction of West Indian balances (which was mostly achieved by 1788); a daily foreign service (which was shelved following the breakdown of negotiations in Paris); and further economies in the packet service, amongst a number of other administrative revisions that he instigated. His achievements were numerous and included securing better pay and working conditions for clerks on the roads, a reduction of smuggling by improving the design of the West Indian packet ships and the introduction of more fastidious care of Post Office accounts.

Postal historians writing about this period have emphasised Walsingham's dispute with John Palmer (Comptroller General of the inland mails, 1784-92), part of a power struggle that took place in the high offices of the Post Office over this period. The controversy was precipitated by a Commissioners' report into Post Office expenditure, published in 1788, which inferred that the office of Postmaster General was a sinecure. Walsingham, keen to refute the charge, intervened in a number of mail coach matters that Palmer felt fell under his authority and there were a number of confrontations between the

two as a result. This was exacerbated when Walsingham demanded that Palmer produce the mail coach journals (the reports made for each coach journey) for accounts auditing. Palmer refused and their working relationship now appeared to be beyond restoration. Despite facing accusations of financial misconduct, Walsingham acted with more tact than Palmer, who fell out of favour with William Pitt (the Prime Minister) and whose intrigues were exposed when Walsingham came into possession of some letters written by Palmer to an erstwhile friend depicting the Postmasters General and the King in disrespectful terms. With this, Palmer was dismissed (although he retained a sizable pension) and Walsingham had survived the affair with his reputation intact.

Walsingham was promoted following this debacle, becoming chairman of Committees in the House of Lords in 1794, and with this his direct involvement in the running of the Post Office came to an end.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/
- Some items in this class are available on microfilm in the Archive room. Please consult the microfilm catalogue, which can also be found in the Archive room, for further details

POST 98

POST OFFICE: PRIVATE OFFICE PAPERS: SIR FRANCIS FREELING, SECRETARY
1793-1829

9 files and 3 volumes

Scope and content

Records relating to Francis Freeling.

POST 98/4 is a collection of letters from various people many of whom beg for aid either monetary or influential.

POST 98/7 is a collection of letters, 1827-1828, on various subjects from the Duke of Manchester, Postmaster General from September 1827 until December 1830.

Biographical history

Sir Francis Freeling was one of the longest serving administrators of the Post Office in the 19th century and, as sole Secretary from 1798, was involved in establishing a number of postal reforms that, by the time of his death on 10th July 1836, had earned him a baronetcy for his public service (bestowed on 11th March 1828). He was the first head of the Post Office to introduce a system for recording written minutes and reports concerning the running of the department. With this in mind, and in view of his enduring status as a prominent figure of 19th century postal reform, the Post Office Archives building has been named in his honour since 1984.

Born the son of a journeyman sugar-baker on 25th August 1764 in Redcliffe Hill, Bristol, few details are known of Freeling's childhood, although it is highly likely that he attended Colston's School before he joined the Bristol Post Office as a part-time apprentice. In 1783, he had shown enough promise to be recognised by John Palmer, the inventor then responsible for, and now widely recognised for his involvement in, developing the first armed mail coaches to replace the boy messengers for carriage of the mails. Freeling was transferred to Bath as his protégé and was quickly made Palmer's Chief Assistant, supporting him, against opposition, in successfully establishing the first 'cross-post' mail coach service between Bristol and Portsmouth in the Spring of 1785. Over this period, he was responsible for the regulation of the new coach service which gave him the duties of a roving surveyor who enjoyed much responsibility despite not technically being employed by the Post Office: Palmer had drafted him in without the technical authority to do so.

Nonetheless, in 1787 he gained a newly created surveyors appointment with the staff of the General Post Office in Lombard Street, London. He is

commonly said to have worked with energy, determination and in accordance with his Christian values. He gained successive promotions, eventually earning the appointment of Resident Surveyor in 1792. By 1797, under the patronage of Lord Walsingham, he was made joint secretary with the then elderly Anthony Todd. Upon Todd's death in 1798, Francis Freeling became the sole Secretary, effectively placing him in charge of the Post Office; a position he successfully held until his death, 38 years later.

Several events and issues have marked this long career. Freeling had a stated commitment to running the Post Office as efficiently and as profitably as possible and was largely successful in doing so, overseeing the expansion of postal operations that preceded Rowland Hill's celebrated reforms of 1840. He adhered to the view that the Post Office should remain a useful source of income for the Exchequer, and submitted a number of plans to increase postage rates as a consequence (See POST 98/1). He had been involved in introducing the local 'Penny Post' in London and other towns and cities in the 1790s but, in later years, opposed embryonic suggestions for a national 'Penny Post', arguing that profits would be unlikely to grow by encouraging large increases in postal volume at a reduced price. It was also in the 1790s that Freeling introduced the Report and Minute series of records that remain a valuable source of information for the period (See POST 30).

Under Freeling's leadership, the Post Office first used steamships in 1819 and in 1821 oversaw the building of the first steam packet ships. Similarly, it was under his auspices that the Post Office became one of the first users in 1830 of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway.

Freeling's professional longevity might in part be attributable to his habit of overcoming controversies. During the Napoleonic War, it was hoped that Britain might avoid a financial crisis by sending large quantities of gold and silver to the merchants in Hamburg. However, with no packet ships available for its transportation, Freeling personally ordered that the shipment be made by HMS Lutine, which was promptly sunk by the French in 1799 with £130,000 of bullion on board. Surviving this and a number of enquiries into his pay and the alleged abuse of his newspaper franking privileges, his reputation was again challenged when the Editor of 'The Times' newspaper accused Freeling, and Arthur Stanhope (Comptroller of the Foreign Post Office), of delay and negligence to the benefit of themselves (see POST 98/2). This was disputed, and a court action ensued which exonerated Freeling and Stanhope from all blame. Finally, in the last year of his life, a dispute between the Government and Vidler's Coaches (who provided the mail coaches that travelled approximately 3,000 miles daily) sparked a crisis in which the contractor was to withdraw its coaches with insufficient time for a new contractor to furnish replacement vehicles. Freeling is said to have made a prodigious undertaking of effort and organisation to ensure that when the deadline came, coaches were waiting at every depot. It fell to Freeling, at the end of his career, to save from crisis the coach service that he had helped establish at its beginning.

Sir Francis Freeling wrote profusely on all manner of postal subjects and built up a large personal library, renowned for the rare books it comprised. He was thrice married and his children too went on to have successful careers in senior Post Office positions. In a debate in the House of Lords in 1836, the Duke of Wellington said that Freeling possessed "a clear and vigorous understanding… and the power of expressing his thoughts and opinions both verbally and in writing, with force and precision". He stated that, under the management of Freeling, the English Post Office had been better administered than any Post Office in Europe, or in any other part of the world.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/

POST 99

POST OFFICE: PRIVATE OFFICE PAPERS: MARQUESS OF SALISBURY 1820-1823

4 volumes

Scope and content

This POST class consists of correspondence between the Marquess of Salisbury, Postmaster General and Francis Freeling, Secretary and mainly unnamed individuals. Subjects include staff appointments, the establishment and implementation of new Post Office services, letter traffic, operation of services and instructions to staff.

Administrative history

The Marquess of Salisbury, together with the Earl of Chichester, held the appointment of Joint Postmaster General from 6 April 1816. In May 1822 it was ordered in the House of Commons that the office of one of the Postmaster Generals be abolished to save revenue. Salisbury (the junior of the two) gave orders that his salary should be discontinued whilst he retained the appointment of Postmaster General. It was not until Salisbury's death on 13 June 1823 that Lord Chichester was appointed sole Postmaster General.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/

POST 100

POST OFFICE: PRIVATE OFFICE PAPERS: ROWLAND HILL 1836-1879

40 volumes, 239 files

Scope and content

This series of records comprises the private office papers of Rowland Hill including, Rowland Hill's Post Office Journals, extracts from the volumes of Secretary's minutes to the Postmaster General and some original documentation relating to those minutes, volumes of Rowland Hill's minutes to the Postmaster General, correspondence and general material relating particularly to postal reform and including a copy of all volumes of 'History of Penny Postage' by Sir Rowland Hill, KCB (published by William Clowes & Sons).

Biographical history

Rowland Hill is remembered today as a key reformer of the British Postal Service. In 1840, he introduced the Universal Penny Postage which decreed that letters of a given weight should all cost the same to send, regardless of the distance. For example, letters up to ½ ounce cost 1d (14gms/0.5p) to send and postage was prepaid, using the world’s first adhesive stamp.

He first advocated his plan in a pamphlet published in 1837 and the system was recommended for adoption by a Committee of the House of Commons the following year and put into effect in 1840. Hill was appointed as adviser to the Treasury to introduce the postal reforms. He strove to create a more efficient postal service that everyone could afford. His reforms ranged from encouraging people to insert letter boxes in their front doors to creating London's first postal districts. The appointment was terminated following a change of government in 1842. He was recalled to the Post Office in 1846 and appointed Secretary to the Postmaster General, and succeeded Colonel Maberly as Secretary to the Post Office in 1854. He retired from Office in 1864 and died in August 1879.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/
- Some items in this class are available on microfilm in the Archive room. Please consult the microfilm catalogue, which can also be found in the Archive room, for further details

POST 101

POST OFFICE: PRIVATE OFFICE PAPERS: JOHN TILLEY
1853 - 1880

25 files

Scope and content

Sir John Tilley began his career with the Post Office, more specifically the Secretary's Office, in 1829, when he entered that department as a Clerk on 19th February. At that time the Secretary's Office had a very small workforce headed by the then Secretary Sir Francis Freeling. Seven months after Tilley joined that department it transferred to St Martin's-le-Grand, London.

Tilley had a very successful career with the Post Office and rose quickly through the ranks. By 1838, aged only 26, he had been made a Surveyor, and on 11 October 1848 he was appointed to the post of Assistant Secretary. On 15 March 1864, he succeeded the then Secretary Sir Rowland Hill, the postal reformer, of whom he had always been a staunch supporter. Tilley was made a CB in 1871, and upon his retirement in 1880 the honour of KCB was bestowed upon him.

This series consists of bound volumes of Tilley's private letters and correspondence to the Postmaster General, the Treasury and various Post Office officials and members of the public during the time in which he was first Assistant Secretary and then later Secretary. In 1854 the Post Office underwent a general revision and the Treasury appointed a Commission of Enquiry upon which Sir Charles Trevelyan, Sir Stafford Northcote and Mr Hoffey sat. Tilley was greatly interested in the work of the Commission and, as a result, much of his private correspondence is from, and to, members of the Commission. A further area in which Tilley had influence of interest was the revision and improvement of the Rural Post System and, as a consequence, the extension of the rural delivery. Again this is reflected in the nature of the correspondence within the volumes.

Furthermore, the correspondence covers a variety of subjects including inland and overseas mail arrangements, Sunday labour disputes, wage disputes, opening of the Post Office Savings Bank and telegraph business. There is also correspondence relating to his knighthood.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/

POST 102

POST OFFICE: REGISTERED FILES: DF SERIES 1936-1967

50 files

Scope and content

This POST class comprises Post Office headquarters files which, as a time saving wartime measure, were recorded under a Decimal Filing system, instead of the previously used 'Minuted' system. Like the minuted series, the files cover a diverse range of subjects and registry staff continued to add files to the series after it had nominally been closed in 1949: consequently, records date up to 1967. Subjects covered in the papers include inland and overseas telecommunications during and after wartime, the issue of stamps, and Post Office administrative records, such as those covering the introduction of the Decimal Filing system.

The Decimal Filing system was a simple system based on numbers being allocated to particular subjects or headings, with decimal extensions of these numbers being allocated to subheadings: eg 10 = Postal Packets, 100 = Letters (Ordinary). No record volumes were created for the Decimal Filing series; papers were filed in batches according to the common serial number allocated for a particular subject.

Administrative history

The system of ‘minuting’ papers submitted to the Postmaster General by the Secretary to the Post Office for a decision (i.e. numbering the papers, and separately copying a note of the paper as a ‘minute’ into volumes indexed by subject) was introduced in 1793. It remained in use by the Post Office Headquarters registry until 1973.

Until 1921, several different major minute series were in use: that concerned with the Packet Service (POST 29), and those concerned with England and Wales (POST 30), Ireland (POST 31), and Scotland (POST 32). From 1790 until 1841, parallel “Report” series were in use by the Secretary (POST 39 & 40).

In 1921, the several different minute series were replaced by a single all-embracing series (POST 33). This was suspended in 1941 as a wartime measure when a Decimal Filing system came into use (POST 102), but was resurrected in 1949. In 1955 the registration of Headquarters files began to be decentralised under several local registries serving particular departments, although the “minuting” of cases worthy of preservation, and the assimilation of later cases with earlier minuted bundles, continued until 1973.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/

POST 103

POST OFFICE: RECEIVER GENERAL'S ENTRY BOOKS
1694 - 1854

16 volumes

Scope and content

The POST class is comprised, for the most part, of Entry Books of Correspondence which contain authorities for acceptance and payment of monies by probate of wills, letters of administration, powers of attorney, bankruptcy, appointment of assignees, incidental payments, packet boat expenses and warrants for payments of annuities etc.

Administrative history

The duty of the Receiver General's office was the balancing of cash derived from the income and expenditure of the Post Office. The Receiver General was appointed independently and took responsibility for cash from the hands of the Postmaster General. He took receipt of all money paid into the Department, and paid costs directly from these funds.

Sources of income included payments received from the Postmasters, Inland Office, Foreign Office, Letter Receivers, Letter Carriers and charges levied on incoming foreign letters.

Outgoing payments were mainly for wages, allowances, pensions and normal postal service costs. The balance of cash was transferred to the Exchequer.

The position of Receiver General tended to overlap with another prominent financial position, that of Accountant General. The Accountant General was appointed by the Postmaster General to keep an account of all revenue in the Post Office. Due to this overlap the posts were finally merged in 1854, and 1854 is the date of the last entry book in this series.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/
- Some items in this class are available on microfilm in the Archive room. Please consult the microfilm catalogue, which can also be found in the Archive room, for further details

POST 104

POST OFFICE: TELEGRAMS: FORMS AND DELIVERY 1867-1992

8 volumes and 21 files

Scope and content

This POST class has nine sub-series. These cover Telegrams (general), Greetings Telegrams, Forces Telegrams, the Telemessage Service, Overseas Radio and Telecommunications Branch, the Rules and Procedures, material used for exhibitions, Press cuttings and History.

Administrative history

Over the centuries there have been hundreds of different ways that messages have been carried and sent. By the early 1830s typeprinting of Telegraphs was happening in Europe, and in 1889 an English model of one of these machines was introduced to the Post Office by (Mr) Hughes.

By 1913 the Post Office was looking at ways of improving the speed of its operation and it was not long before the 'Teleprinter' was introduced by Creed. This machine possessed a typewriter keyboard and could be operated to approximately 65 words a minute. This machine printed the Telegram ready for delivery. This was a great boost to the efficiency of the system. It was adopted by the Post Office and used by its telegraph services.

The Post Office wanted to encourage the use of the Telegraph and in the early days reduced rates and employed more operators in order to reduce delay. They improved the working areas, and introduced motorcycles to speed up delivery. By the 1930s they were introducing beautifully decorated Greeting cards for sending on special occasions. These continued until the late 1960s when the numbers being sent reduced.

In the early 1980s and through to the 1990s there was liaison with British Telecom in order to introduce a 'Telemessage Service'. This was similar to the Greetings Telegram and a variety of designs were produced for various events like 'Weddings', '21st Birthday' and 'New Arrival'.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/

POST 105

POST OFFICE: PRIVATE OFFICE PAPERS: DEREK CARTER [1954]-1993

143 volumes and files

Scope and content

Whilst some of the items forming this collection (e.g. the records of the Union of Communications Workers comprising POST 105/108-116) do not fall into the category of public records, the majority of them do since they were created in the course of Post Office business. However, their survival is clearly due to the interest in the subject on the part of Alan Harvey and, later, Derek Carter. To some extent, documents in this collection duplicate what is held in other classes (e.g. POST 18 the TPO service); but, to a far greater extent, they fill important gaps (albeit in some cases only in facsimile form, or as transcriptions of original documents). The collection also contains items that, by subject, belong to other classes (e.g. duty instructions that, normally, would have been included with POST 68 Rule books etc); but these have been kept with the Carter Collection, to preserve its integrity.

Administrative history

The privately assembled collection of documents and photographs forming the Carter Collection came into the possession of the Post Office Archives and Records Centre in May 1994, when it was transferred to it by the manager of the TPO (Travelling Post Office) Section of Royal Mail. Mr Carter had died the previous year (1993, while still in service) and the collection had been donated by his widow. It is believed that Mr Carter's collection had been based on an earlier collection started by Mr Alan M Harvey, a former manager of the TPO section.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- An old and incomplete catalogue for part of this POST class is available in the Archive room

POST 106 (TCK 89)

POST OFFICE: PRIVATE COLLECTIONS: SIR W H PREECE 1854-1965

27 volumes and files

Scope and content

This POST class comprises papers relating to the career of Sir William Henry Preece, Post Office Engineer-in-Chief (1892-1899). It includes papers collected by Preece himself, and items relating to him which have been added to the collection. The papers cover his personal achievements in his career, such as his presidency of the Institution of Electrical Engineers, but also his official role, including, for example, letter books from his time as Engineer-in-Chief to the Post Office. The papers are predominantly concerned with developments in early telegraph and telephone systems but also cover his encouragement of Guglielmo Marconi in his experiments into wireless telegraphy and Preece's involvement in railway signalling developments.

Biographical history

Sir William Henry Preece (1834-1913) was born at Caernarvon, on 15 February 1834. He was educated at King's College, London, and received training in electrical engineering at the Royal Institution under Michael Faraday. In 1853, he joined the Electric and International Telegraph Company, becoming superintendent of its southern district in 1856. From 1858 to 1862, he was engineer to the Channel Islands Telegraph Company and, in 1870, when the Post Office took over the private telegraph companies, he transferred to the Post Office with the rank of Divisional Engineer for the southern district of the Post Office telegraphic system. In 1877 he was appointed Chief Electrician and, in 1892, Engineer-in-Chief. He retired from the Post Office in 1899 but continued to act as Consulting Engineer to the Post Office and the Colonies until 1904.

Preece was made CB in 1894 and created KCB in 1899. He was elected a fellow of the Royal Society in 1881 and president of the Institution of Civil Engineers (1898-1899). He was one of the founding members of the Society of Telegraph Engineers in 1871 (which later became the Institution of Electrical Engineers); he served as President of the Institution in 1880.

The scientific field explored by Preece in the course of his career was extremely wide and covered telegraphy, telephony and radio-telegraphic communication. He was responsible for many improvements and inventions in telegraphic work, and he also worked on railway signalling, doing much to secure the safe working of the railways. During his service in the Post Office, Preece was closely concerned with the development of the telephone in the United Kingdom, and he was one of the pioneers of wireless telegraphy. He

encouraged Guglielmo Marconi in his experiments into wireless telegraphy, securing for him in 1896 the assistance of the Post Office.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The records in this POST class were re-catalogued as TCK 89 and are held at BT Group Archives
- The catalogue for these records is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/

POST 107

POST OFFICE: NOTICES TO THE PUBLIC AND INSTRUCTIONS 1768-1937

4877 notices

Scope and content

Notices for public display and instructions to Postmasters, detailing rewards for information on mail robberies, postage rate changes, introduction and changes to services, cautions for illegal conveyance of letters, alterations to mail routes, packet boat sailings and general irregularities.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is not yet available
- Some items in this class are available on microfilm in the Archive room. Please consult the microfilm catalogue, which can also be found in the Archive room, for further details
- Some items in this class are available as printouts from the microfilms. These can be found in red folders on the carousels in the Archive room
- Transcriptions of notices from this POST class can be found in M M Raguin, *British Post Office Notices, 1666-1899*, which is available on the Archive room shelves

POST 108

POST OFFICE: PUBLIC RELATIONS DEPARTMENT, PREDECESSORS AND SUCCESSORS
1906-2000

196 files and volumes

Scope and content

This POST class comprises publications, reports, minutes and correspondence on the establishment, operation and development of the Public Relations Department and its predecessors and successors. It also contains records on the communication and marketing activity of the Post Office. Also included is information on surveys of the Post Office's reputation, student award schemes, film and video production and press broadcast notices.

Administrative history

The first Public Relations officer was appointed on 1 October 1933, although an active 'public relations' function existed at least ten years earlier. This was followed by the formation of the Public Relations Department, which was formerly established on 25 April 1934, when other changes in headquarters organisation were made.

The Post Office was the first government ministry to form a separate public relations department. In 1934 the first charter of the Public Relations Department stated that the responsibilities of the department were defined as 'being to promote good relations with the public, and to conduct sales and publicity for the services provided by the Post Office' (POST 108/18). The department was so successful that the Home Office borrowed its controller and some other officers in 1938 to plan publicity for air raid precautions. In 1939 some of its staff were seconded to help in establishing the war time Ministry of Information.

In September 1939 many of the department's remaining staff were dispersed to assist in other government work, but it was soon realised that public relations work was just as necessary in war time as in peace time, and the department's operations were revived.

By the 1950s the Department was organised into three main divisions, press and broadcast, publicity, and publications. Press and broadcast is the oldest division of the three, having been established in 1934. Since November 1940 it has been headed by a specialist with previous experience as a journalist. The division issues news bulletins, and other bulletins on individual matters are distributed to newspapers, broadcasters and other interested parties. In addition the divisions officers answer a continual flow of enquiries, mainly by

telephone, from journalists. The division also organises occasional press conferences for ministers.

The publicity division's main area of responsibility is to ensure that the Post Office is presented in print, display, and film with the highest possible standard of modern art and technique.

The Publications division was responsible for compiling and editing the various Post Office publications. These have included the Post Office Guide, Post Offices in the United Kingdom, London Post Offices and Streets, and Postal Addresses.

During the 1990s the department was renamed as Communication Services and positioned as part of Royal Mail Group centre. Four directors, reporting to a director of Communication Services, were responsible for: Regional Communications, Communications Consultancy, Creative Services, and Commercial matters.

Communication Services activities and functions were reviewed and redesigned, and changes made to resourcing levels. Under the new structure Communication Services was organised and run more like an external agency with much closer attention paid to costs and to profits. The intention was to expand the range of services offered, to support the Post Office aim of being recognised as the complete distribution company, and to get much closer to the users of its services.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/
- Some items in this class are available on microfilm in the Archive room. Please consult the microfilm catalogue, which can also be found in the Archive room, for further details

POST 109

POST OFFICE: ORIGINAL ARTWORK FOR POSTERS, LEAFLETS AND TELEGRAMS
1936-1996

925 items

Scope and content

This POST class contains artwork commissioned by the Post Office for use in posters, leaflets, and greetings telegrams. It includes unadopted as well as adopted designs.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is not yet available
- Some copies of the material in this POST class are available to look at in black folders on the Archive room shelves
- The original material is only produced on special instruction

POST 110

POST OFFICE: PRINTED PUBLICITY MATERIAL
[1934]-present

c6000 posters

Scope and content

The bulk of this POST class consists of over 6000 posters produced by the Post Office since the creation of its Public Relations Department in 1934 up to the present day. Subject matter ranges from public information, staff instruction and sales of philatelic items, and many well-known artists and designers have been commissioned by the Post Office (particularly in the 1930s-1950s). POST 110 also includes POPOS (Post Office Point of Sale) display instructions produced for post office branches giving information on the display material they should obtain and display for particular periods.

Access conditions

- The material in this POST class is in the process of being catalogued
- Copies of some of the material in this POST class are available to look at in black folders on the Archive room shelves. A small number of the items have been scanned into JPG format and are available for copying
- The original material is only produced on special instruction

POST 111

POST OFFICE: NEWSPAPER CUTTINGS
1684-present

52 volumes, 24 files, 3 items

Scope and content

The newspaper cuttings follow the development of the postal and telecommunications services from the postal declaration of 1685, and early accounts of the collection of mail from coffee houses in the eighteenth century, through to contemporary reports.

The most complete run of catalogued material covers the period 1843-1903, during which time the cuttings were bound into large volumes, each volume spanning one to two years. These cuttings are largely concerned with the early development of the telegraph and telephone and include details of private telegraph companies (particularly the Electric Telegraph Company, founded in 1846) and their takeover by the state; the relationship between the postal and telegraph services and the railways; international expansion of the system; and, later, the growth of the telephone service, and negotiations which eventually led to the transfer of ownership from the private telephone companies to the state in 1912. Some items are included because the report was received by telegraph and do not have any obvious postal connection. The majority of cuttings were collated centrally, with some early selections marked 'For the information of the Postmaster General', but the collection also includes albums collected by individuals or at a local level.

The twentieth century is not represented as comprehensively, with very little material from the First or Second World Wars, or the interwar period. Wartime reporting restrictions and the rising cost of newsprint, combined with the role of the Post Office on the home front probably contributed to the absence of material during this period. In the second half of the twentieth century, cuttings are more likely to be found arranged by local area or by subject, e.g. the 1971 postal strike. Since 1999, photocopies of selected cuttings, entitled 'What the media are saying', have been received from the Royal Mail Press Office on a weekly basis, and these are arranged chronologically, but have not been catalogued.

During stocktaking in 2005 a quantity of material was transferred from the Archive room portfolio collection to the archive. These cuttings cover both the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries, and have been catalogued by decade or, in a very few cases, by subject. The nineteenth century material includes many engravings and illustrations.

Cuttings have been taken from a variety of sources - national and local newspapers; satirical magazines; government and Post Office publications;

and scientific and trade journals; but the volumes also include original items such as share application forms, annual reports, tariffs, technological specifications, photographs, cartoons and illustrations. The cuttings cover many aspects of postal history and legislation which are officially documented in other post classes, but offer alternative perspectives and provide a good indication of both public opinion of the postal administration, and public response to postal innovations, including new issues of stamps, new buildings and the introduction of new uniforms. They also provide an opportunity to gain an overview of developments in the service during a particular period.

In addition to specific postal information, the class provides a record of the influence of the Post Office on British culture, demonstrating its role in the growth of mass communication and technological advances; education; the development of employment opportunities for women; and the trade union movement. Some volumes contain personal stories of the lives of postal workers, which may be of interest to family historians, and many volumes include interviews with employees and accounts of the daily running of the postal service which provide information about the duties attached to particular posts. Obituaries are a particularly good source of personal information relating to senior postal officials.

The catalogue entries include an overview of the material with a list of examples of particular interest, some volumes contain indexes of every item.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at: https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/
- Some items in this class are available on microfilm in the Archive room. Please consult the microfilm catalogue, which can also be found in the Archive room, for further details

POST 112

POST OFFICE: GIROBANK, GIROBANK SALE AND PRIVATISATION 1960-1995

126 files

Scope and content

This POST class contains Post Office documentation relating to Girobank.

Administrative history

On 18th October 1968 Prime Minister Harold Wilson officially opened Girobank - 'the people's bank', or National Giro as it was first known. Part of a Labour Government initiative to provide banking facilities for those people who did not have bank accounts, it was the first bank in the world to be planned and built from its very beginning as a fully computerised unit. The process was overseen by the then Postmaster General, Tony Benn.

Much optimism surrounded the new company and the promotional booklet enthusiastically claimed that, 'Within one or two years the National Giro Centre will be handling the accounts of some 1,200,000 customers, including many large firms and organisations.' At that time there were 23,000 Post Offices in the UK and Girobank provided free banking and credit transfer facilities at each one for six days a week, thereby creating competition for the high street banks. Due to the fact that only 25% of adults had bank accounts the market was considered very penetrable. However, despite its extensive promotion Girobank secured only 110,000 accounts in its first six months and suffered further losses for the next seven years.

Many reasons were put forward as to why the National Giro had not been as successful as predicted. Competition by joint-stock banks and the development of competitive current accounts by other banks had been cited as plausible causes. However, the real issue appeared to be the miscalculation of the difference between the real and actual demands of the customers. Furthermore, the economic growth of the UK had been sluggish since the Second World War and consequently its rate of absorption of new services was painfully slow.

Girobank did, however, benefit greatly from a partnership with the Mercantile Loan Company Ltd. The partnership meant that Giro customers were eligible to apply for Mercantile credit loans and new applications for a Giro account soared as a result.

When the Conservative Government were voted into power in 1970, the future of Girobank looked distinctly shaky as a review of the activities of Girobank

was commissioned. By this point Girobank's cumulative losses had reached over £19.7 million and although Giro was granted a reprieve, there was little doubt that it had been a very close call. On 17th November 1971, Christopher Chataway, the Minister for Posts and Telecommunications, declared that Giro should continue but that it must employ a new approach to its practices.

As part of the new approach many structural reforms were implemented during 1972. These included a review of the Tariff structure which doubled the majority of the existing charges and added a charge for debt transactions and later an overhaul of the Rents Scheme, the introduction of the Giro Gold Card, the streamlining of the business, a reduction of the labour force from 3500 to 3000 and a change in the standard 'same day' service to one of a 'next-day' service. The Giro also took on the Postal Order business and began using its International Services to replace the Post Office's own International Money Order Service.

In 1973 a report prepared by Coopers and Lybrand recommended that Giro should implement a formal business planning procedure and annual business plan. The advice was welcomed and the first business plan issued in 1973.

During 1986 postal operations were organised into three separate businesses - Royal Mail Letters, Royal Mail Parcels and Post Office Counters (in addition to National Girobank which remained a separate business unit). National Girobank became independent as a plc in 1988.

Despite the fact that Girobank had managed to overcome its shaky start and that it had grown rapidly to become Britain's sixth biggest bank, it never really shook off its down-market image and, in 1990 it was sold to the Alliance and Leicester Building Society.

This class contains Post Office documentation relating to the lifespan of Girobank, from its setting up until after its sale. Documentation takes the form of annual reports, organisational reviews, correspondence with other branches of the Post Office and with external bidders, press releases and clippings, press briefings, minutes of committees representing the Girobank sale or other businesses within Royal Mail, correspondence with Government officials and departments, promotional material, specimen samples of stationary, staff training leaflets and analytical studies. This series also takes into account the impact of the sale of Girobank on Post Office Counters Ltd and charts subsequent Post Office events during the 1990s.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/

POST 113

POST OFFICE: DATA PROCESSING

11 boxes, 2 volumes, 1 file, 1 memorandum

c1970s-c1990s

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is not yet available

POST 114

POST OFFICE: ACTS AND WARRANTS
1657-1986

220 files

Scope and content

POST 114 comprises Acts of Parliament relating to Post Office business covering the years 1657-1986. Parliamentary warrants, treasury warrants, details of parliamentary debates, memoranda and related reports can also be found within this class. The class is thematically separated into 24 Sub-Series' (which in turn are organised chronologically) covering a wide range of legislature, from major Post Office Acts that established such historic privileges as the state monopoly of postal communications, to numerous acts of a less celebrated nature, such as Road Repair Acts or Electric Lighting Acts. A number of important Acts can be found in Sub-Series 1 'The Establishment of the Post Office and Postage Rates', including the Post Office Acts of 1657 and 1969. Reports, policy reviews, various bills and other papers of a similar nature are gathered in Sub-Series 2 'Growth and Expansion of the Modern Post Office'. These records cover the years 1951-1986. All of the major branches of business that have been under the control of the Post Office during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries are represented in this class, including: telegraphs and telephones (Sub-Series 7); savings banks (Sub-Series 12); pensions (Sub-Series 15); and National Insurance (Sub-Series 16), amongst much else.

Administrative history

In the following passage of writing, a selection of the major acts of parliament that have affected the Post Office over the centuries, and that can be found within this class of records, are described in a little more detail.

An Act for the Settling of the Postage of England, Scotland and Ireland 1657 (POST 114/1):

In 1635, Charles I made the Royal Posts officially available for public use for the first time. Unlike Charles, this service survived the Civil War and in 1657, Oliver Cromwell's parliament passed an Act that established a number of important principals that would guide the early Post Office during its subsequent expansion. On the second page of the Act is the following passage: 'Be it enacted by his highness the Lord Protector and the parliament… that from henceforth there be one general office to be called and known by the name of the Post Office of England'. And so the General Post Office (GPO) came into being. The Act established the position of Postmaster General (which remained the head Post Office position until the role was eventually abolished with the Post Office Act of 1969) and rates of postage

were also set forth. To send one letter anywhere within 80 miles of London cost two pence; to Scotland, four pence; and to send a letter as far as towns in France, or even to Constantinople, cost one shilling. Finally, the Act claimed for the Crown the sole right to offer a postal service within the British Isles, establishing a state monopoly that would survive until the new millennium. Any person or organisation found to be offering postal services without the proper authority could be fined £1000 for each month the service was active (p.10). There have been numerous subsequent Acts of parliament that have modified the terms of this monopoly, such as the 1837 Post Office Management Act and Post Office Offences Act (POST 114/5).

Conveyance of Mail Acts: Mail Coaches (1790) and Railways (1838) (POST 114/52 and 53):

In the last quarter of the eighteenth century, the Post Office introduced a new method of conveying letters and parcels across Britain that greatly contributed to a growth and improvement of postal services and an expansion of the organisation. A system of mail coaches was developed that became the principal method of conveyance of mails until trains came to dominate from the 1840s onwards. The Stage Coach Act of 1790 laid down rules for the new system. Turnpike charges, the number of horses per carriage, the number of passengers per carriage, fines for mail guards who unnecessarily fired their issued guns and other details were set forth. The champion of the new mail coaches was John Palmer who was the first to see that armed mail coaches travelling on improved roads according to a precise timetable could make postal communications more efficient. This it did, and it was the first of a number of significant transportation changes that would facilitate great leaps in the growth of mail volumes that could be effectively handled by the Post Office. The mail coach system eventually passed away as the trains of the industrial revolution became the prime method of transporting the mails over distance. The Conveyance of Mails by Railways Act of 1838 gave the Postmaster General the authority to require railway companies to carry mails at the direction of the Post Office in return for suitable payment, with fines imposed upon companies who refused. The Royal Arms were to be painted on these carriages and from the early 1840s, Travelling Post Offices (TPO) - trains that would carry the mails and staff to sort them whilst in transit - began to run, with over 100 in operation by the end of the century. Further Railway Acts with various amendments were passed in 1844 and 1868.

Superannuation Act 1859 (Post 114/105)

State pensions could be claimed at the age of 70 from 1908 and this marked the beginning of improved welfare provisions in Britain aimed at tackling the poverty and hardships that had been perennially associated with old age. For much of the nineteenth century, those who became too old to work had to rely on the meagre provisions of family, charity and the Poor Law to survive and in this respect, the Superannuation Act of 19 April 1859 meant that working for the Post Office as an established employee became a vocation coveted for the financial securities it offered later in life. From this date, pensions were paid to employees after at least ten years service at one-sixtieth of retirement

pay, rising to a maximum of four-sixths. Those who retired earlier than age 60 for health reasons could expect to receive one month's pay for each year of service. Further pensions acts were passed by parliament through the nineteenth century (also reproduced in this volume; see also POST 114/106), which expanded upon the provisions of the landmark 1859 act and added various adjustments to pension and gratuity entitlement. From 1909, standard pension entitlement was slightly reduced, but a lump sum to the value of one-thirtieth of retirement pay was added, in addition to other entitlements such as a gratuity worth one year's wages paid to the family of an employee who died in service.

Savings Bank Act 1861 (POST 114/89)

By the mid-nineteenth century the debate about the role the state should play in the country's personal banking had grown in importance. The old Trustee Savings Banks handed their takings to the government for investment and received a fixed yearly dividend in return. This system did not facilitate small savings and depositors often had to travel a great distance to use such services. Although Rowland Hill, who was still secretary of the Post Office at the end of the 1850s, opposed further state (Post Office) intervention into financial services, others such as Frank Scudamore and John Tilley favoured the introduction of a set of reforms that would see the department take primary responsibility in administrating a personal savings facility. In 1861, having been introduced by Chancellor of the Exchequer William Gladstone, the Savings Bank Act was passed by the Palmerston Government and business began on 16 September. What was new about the service was that it was state-run and therefore enjoyed high security; deposits and withdrawals could be made at different post offices for one account by using a 'depositor's book'; small sums under one pound could be deposited; and account holders received a dividend equivalent to the value of interest accrued by state investment of their money, rather than a fixed rate. This meant that poorer people could now more easily use such services and the Post Office Savings Bank grew rapidly. In 1862, 178,000 accounts held £1.7m and by the turn of the century these figures had risen to 8.5m accounts and £136m in deposits (note that many people, as well as clubs and societies, held numerous accounts). Banking services remained an important part of the Post Office. In 1969, the service became known as National Savings.

Post Office Act 1969 (POST 114/14)

The Post Office Act of 1969 is one of the landmark events in the history of the organisation during the twentieth century. By this time, the Post Office, still a department of government, had acquired full responsibility for running an array of national services including postal communications, the ever-growing telephone system, a national savings bank (including National GIRO, introduced in 1968), pensions and much else besides. When the 1969 legislation came into effect on 1 October, it made a number of significant changes. Firstly, the Post Office ceased to be a government department and became a public corporation with all of its shares owned by the government. Organisational changes to this effect had been underway since the beginning

of the decade and by 1969 it had been generally accepted that the new corporate status was necessary for the organisation to become a profitable entity in the post-war economy. This meant that the historic position of Postmaster General was abolished and a new Post Office Board reported to the Minister of Posts and Telecommunications, a newly established ministerial position. Secondly, this legislation effectively divided the organisation into two distinct businesses: posts and telecommunications. It was felt that this would ensure a more efficient service for both and facilitate the ongoing modernisation that it was hoped would improve the profit margins of the Post Office as a whole. In reality, the Post Office Act of 1969 paved the way for the telecommunications side of the business to be separated from Post Office management entirely and it was eventually privatised in the early 1980s. The Act itself is 264 pages long and addresses other issues such as finance, banking, pensions, stamps and the status of the Post Office's postal and telecommunications monopoly.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/
- Some items in this class are available on microfilm in the Archive room. Please consult the microfilm catalogue, which can also be found in the Archive room, for further details

POST 115

POST OFFICE: STAFF ASSOCIATION AND UNION PUBLICATIONS 1890 - 1997

1177 volumes, 16 files

Scope and content

This POST class is comprised of serialised publications produced by, for, or relating to, Post Office staff associations, unions and societies. The publications contain information on all aspects of union and association internal activity and their negotiations with management on wages, recruitment, grading and conditions. They also report on Annual Conferences and convey general staff news, such as appointments and the development and re-structuring of the Post Office and its subsequent effect on workers.

Many of the publication titles have changed, they are listed as a continuous series and details of the change in title is given at the beginning of the series. Details of those that have undergone significant changes are given.

Please note that in some series many of the publications have been numbered incorrectly or inconsistently at publication stage. The volume and issue numbers given in the description are those that appear on the original.

Administrative history

Since the mid-nineteenth century, staff associations and unions have come into existence, acting on behalf of their members primarily on issues of pay and working conditions. In addition, clubs and societies have been formed, providing social and leisure opportunities. By 1890, the British workforce had been organised into workers unions and associations to a far greater degree than it had previously and the Post Office, which had grown in numbers as well as in the variety of its services (and therefore in the variety of occupations falling under its employment), was very much a part of this development. There were over 40 distinct grades of employment in the organisation and each had its own staff association. In 1919 these were amalgamated into the Union of Post Office Workers (UPW), although secessionist groups continued to break away from the UPW, which consequently struggled to remain united (which is perhaps explained by the diverse range of working conditions and pay that its members experienced). From the large-scale public enquiries at the beginning of the century, to the wholesale workers' strike of 1971, to the 1995 amalgamation into the Communications Workers' Union (CWU), staff associations, unions, clubs and societies have been an integral component, as collective organisations, to the history and development of the Post Office and its workforce. See POST 65 (Post Office Staff Associations) for relevant records and a more detailed account of this subject.

The majority of these associations and unions produced some form of literature, many publishing an association or union magazine or periodical. It is a wide range of this kind of material that is present in POST 115, which consists of in excess of 1,000 volumes. The class has been divided into eight Sub-Series, which cover the main types of publications that can be found. These are: Civil Service Associations Journals; Post Office Clerks Associations Journals; Postmen's Associations Journals; Postmasters' Associations Journals; Supervisory Grades Associations Journals; Post Office Engineering Union and Association Journals; Post Office Electrical Engineers' Journal; and The Rowland Hill Benevolent Fund. It is important to note that the official Post Office Magazine (entitled 'St Martin's le Grand' until its name changed to 'The Post Office Magazine' in 1934) is not an association, society or club publication and can consequently be found in POST 92.

The largest association in the history of Post Office staff associations is the UPW, which was formed in 1919 from the numerous, disparate and less formal associations that preceded this. In 1920, the UPW launched its official journal called 'The Post, the Organ of the Union of Post Office Workers' (Commonly referred to simply as 'The Post'). The first issue sold almost 90,000 copies and in another early issue, the editorial noted that 'Standing on the threshold of the New Year [1920] we are, as postal workers, confronted with one outstanding fact - amalgamation has occurred' (POST 115/437, p.27; p.32). This periodical is likewise a useful source of information (albeit from a UPW perspective) for subsequent events of importance to the Post Office through the twentieth century. Indeed, Martin Daunton and Alan Clinton (the two most prominent historians of the modern Post Office) have both made heavy use of 'The Post' in their work. Its name changed to 'The Post, the Journal of the Communication Union Workers' in 1980 and continued to be published until 1993. It should also be noted that 'The Post' is distinct from 'The Post of UPW House' which was a UPW newspaper that was filled with similar, but more informal content.

Beyond the 3,700+ issues of 'The Post', there remains over 45 distinct association and union publications that are available to view in POST 115. From 1890, the publications that predate the 1919 amalgamation include: 'The Postman's Gazette', 'The Post (the Organ of the Fawcett Association)', 'The Central London Review and The Postal and Telegraph Record', amongst others. There are journals representing women only such as 'Opportunity, The Organ of the Federation of Women Civil Servants' and many publications that relate to a particular issue of concern such as 'The Whitley Bulletin, The Official Publication of the National Whitley Council for the Civil Service'. Other major publications representing particular grades and types of employment include: 'The Controlling Officers' Journal'; 'The Sub-Postmaster, The Official Organ of the National Federation of Sub-Postmasters'; 'The Journal, The Official Journal of the Post Office Engineering Union'; and 'The Post Office Electrical Engineers' Journal'.

Other publications range from the specific, such as 'The Rowland Hill Fund Handbook', to the broader ranging, such as the numerous Civil Service newspapers and journals. These ran from 1890 to 1977 (although most stop

at 1969, the year the Post Office ceased to be a Government Department) and include titles such as 'Red Tape' and 'The Quill'. Considering the following Civil Service journal should help the prospective reader avoid possible confusion: POST 115/1-38 is 'The Civilian', a Civil Service newspaper that ran from 1894-1928, which changed its name to 'The New Civilian' in 1926. There are a number of publications in this class where a slight name change has occurred. In each instance, the individual catalogue description alerts the reader to this. Additionally, the series description for 'The Civilian/The New Civilian' (immediately preceding POST 115/1 in the catalogue) states that volumes 51-113 are held in the archive. Beneath this, [in square brackets] it states that there are 38 volumes. The volume number in square brackets always refers to the number of bound volumes of material in the archive, the description 'Vols 51-113' above this refers to the original, contemporary volume numbers that this publication was serialised under.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/

POST 116

POST OFFICE: INTERNATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS UNION [1870]-[1950]

Extent unknown

Scope and content

Documents created by the International Telecommunications Union.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The records in this POST class are held at BT Group Archives
- The catalogue for these records is not yet available in the Archive room

POST 117

POST OFFICE: UNIVERSAL POSTAL UNION
1868-1994

330 volumes and 6 files

Administrative history

The UPU was formed in 1874 and is one of the oldest intergovernmental organisations in existence. In 1862, Montgomery Blair, USA Postmaster-General, convened a forum to discuss simplification of the existing system of treaties between pairs or small groups of countries, and the first conference of the International Postal Commission was held in Paris on 11 May 1863. An international postal treaty was proposed to develop social, cultural and commercial communication but, while general principles were adopted for application to pacts between the administrations of fifteen individual countries, no formally binding agreement was established. The limited scope of the many bilateral treaties, with postal rates calculated using varying currencies and units of weight, combined with rapid technological and economic development, necessitated the formation of a collective international treaty.

In 1868, following his successful reform of the postal system operating between German States, a plan for a postal union between ‘civilised countries’ was drawn up by Heinrich von Stephan, Superior Privy Councillor of Posts in the North German Confederation. The plan was submitted to the first International Postal Congress, which took place in Berne on 15 September 1874. Plenipotentiary delegates from 22 countries: Austria and Hungary, Belgium, Denmark, Egypt, France, Germany, Great Britain, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey and the United States of America attended the conference, which resulted in the signing of the 1874 Treaty of Berne on 9 October, the date now known as ‘World Post Day’. A collective convention governing the international postal service was established, and the General Postal Union came into effect on 1 July 1875. Member countries were united into a single postal territory for the exchange of mail, with a standardised postal rate; each country guaranteeing freedom of transit and retaining all payments collected for international postage. Countries seeking subsequent accession were admitted subject to agreement from member administrations with whom postal conventions or direct relations already existed.

Further expansion was inevitable due to rapid international development and in 1878, following the accession of the colonies of some member countries, in addition to other new members, the name was changed to the Universal Postal Union. The 1878 Paris Congress decided that membership should be open to any country, by means of a unilateral declaration, without consultation

with existing members. This system lasted until 1 July 1948, when the union became a specialised agency of the United Nations.

The Convention was revised again by the 1947 Paris Congress and, as one of the conditions under which the UPU was recognised as an agency of the UN, accession requests required the approval of two thirds of the union's membership. Membership is now open to all UN countries, but approval must still be sought by sovereign countries outside the UN. By 2004 the Union had 190 members.

In 1966, the UPU Executive Council decided to erect a building large enough to accommodate this predicted expansion. Construction commenced in 1968 and was completed two years later. The International Bureau (the UPU headquarters) was opened in the Berne suburb of Muri on 20 May 1970, providing an information and consultation service and promoting technical cooperation among member countries. The Bureau represents the union in its relations with international organisations and acts as a clearing house for accounts related to the exchange of postal items and international reply coupons.

On 4 October 1909, the UPU monument was inaugurated in the Kleine Schanze park in Berne. Sculpted by Rene de Saint Marceau, winner of a competition organised by the Swiss Government on the theme 'Around the world', the granite and bronze statue depicts five messengers, representing the five continents, passing letters around the globe. Its symbolic representation appeared for the first time as a logo in 1951, on the cover of *Union Postale*, the UPU's journal, and was adopted as the union's official emblem by its Executive Council in 1967. The first issue of *Union Postale* appeared on 1 October 1875.

The UPU exists as an international forum for postal co-operation and fulfils a legislative, advisory, organisational and mediatory role. Establishing rules for international mail exchange, it makes recommendations to promote growth in mail volumes and ensures quality of service. As a non-political organisation, the UPU remains separate from the national postal services of its members. It is financed jointly by member countries on a contribution class system, with a choice of ten levels of contribution ranging from 0.5 to 50 units.

The supreme authority of the UPU is the Universal Postal Congress, which is made up of plenipotentiaries of all member countries and meets every five years. Congress performs a primarily legislative role, makes strategy and policy decisions and sets the five yearly budget. It elects the Director General, Deputy Director General and members of the Council of Administration and of the Postal Operations Council. The rules of the union are set out in its Constitution, a diplomatic Act ratified by the authorities of each member country. The Constitution is amended at Congress and changes are recorded as Additional Protocols, also requiring ratification. The provisions for the application of the Constitution and the operation of the Union are set out in the General Regulations, which are also subject to review at Congress. Rules

connected with the practical application of the postal service are contained in the Convention and its Regulations.

The Council of Administration meets annually to ensure continuity between Congresses and to respond quickly to changes in the postal environment. Responsible for supervising regulatory, legislative and administrative issues, the CA promotes and coordinates technical assistance among member countries, and has the power to approve the biennial budget, the Union's accounts and recommendations from the Postal Operations Council. The POC also meets annually and is responsible for the operational, economic and commercial aspects of the service. It ensures uniformity of technological and operational practice and revises both the Convention and its Regulations and the Postal Payment Services Agreement and its Regulations.

The Beijing Postal Strategy, approved by the 1999 Congress, outlines six objectives for the UPU:

- To ensure the provision of a universal postal service that allows customers to send and receive goods and messages to and from any point in the world
- To strengthen the quality of the international postal network by providing customers with reliable, secure and efficient postal services
- To increase the cost-effectiveness of the international postal network, providing customers with affordable postal services
- To respond effectively, through improved market knowledge and product development, to the needs and expectations of postal customers
- To enable, through the process of postal reform and development, postal customers to draw maximum benefit from technological, economic and regulatory changes in the postal environment
- To strengthen and broaden cooperation and interaction among the stakeholders of the postal industry.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/

POST 118

POST OFFICE: PHOTOGRAPH LIBRARY
20th century

1069 images

Scope and content

This POST Class contains approximately 100,000 photographs collected by the Post Office's Photographic Library from a number of sources within the Post Office.

Presently, only 1000 or so images have been catalogued. These are from the 'P' series of photographs, taken by the GPO Photographic Unit from 1934 through to the 1970s (although the coverage of the catalogued photographs is only to 1938). This 'P' stands for 'publicity', as many of these images have been produced to publicise the work of the GPO in magazines, posters and newspapers.

Most of the 'P' series photographs were produced to illustrate articles written by staff from the Public Relations Department for the Post Office Magazine, first published in 1934. A number of photographers were seconded to the Public Relations Department from the Engineer-in-Chief's Drawing Office. These photographers would accompany the Magazine's journalist on the events they were covering. The Public Relations Department also had photographers attached to the GPO Film Unit and these would also supply photographs for inclusion in the Post Office Magazine.

The 'P' series is only one of a number of clearly identifiable series of photographs in the Photographic Library. Other series include technical photographs taken by GPO engineering departments. Presently, these other series are not catalogued, although many photographs from these collections can be viewed in the Archive room.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- A catalogue for some of the photographs in this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/
- Copies of some of these photographs can be found in the black folders on the Archive room shelves. They can be accessed by subject
- Copies of these photographs (either by scanning or photographic reproduction) can be obtained by consulting the Archive room staff, who will inform you of the current prices for this work

POST 119 (TCB 22; TCC 23)

POST OFFICE: ENGINEERING RESEARCH REPORTS 1898-1981

Extent unknown

Scope and content

Records of the Post Office Engineering and Research Department, including reports on scientific experiments and development of technological solutions.

Administrative history

The Research section of the Post Office was initially part of the Engineering Department. From 1870, at the time of the Post Office acquisition of the telegraph network, Post Office engineers were involved in experimenting to make improvements to the services they provided. 1904 was the first time that some staff were allowed to devote all their time to research, and a room was set aside for experimental purposes in the GPO (West) building (later the Central Telegraph Office). In 1912, when the Post Office took over the National Telephone Company, a Research branch was established as part of the Engineering Department, reporting (through the Director of Research) to the Engineer-in-Chief. The National Telephone Company had set up a laboratory at its premises in Telephone House and this was incorporated in a Post Office laboratory set up in the King Edward building in London. In 1914, land was purchased at Dollis Hill in north London to provide a site for a new Post Office laboratory. Owing to funding problems and the disruption of the First World War, research workers were not established at Dollis Hill until 1921, and were housed in wooden huts until the opening of a permanent block of buildings in 1933.

In 1968, as part of the re-organisation of the Post Office, the Research ceased to be part of the Engineering Department and was established as the Research Department within the newly created Telecommunications Headquarters function. At the same time, a handful of staff transferred from the old research section at Dollis Hill to new laboratories at Martlesham; Dollis Hill was finally closed in 1975, when the new Research Centre at Martlesham was officially opened. The Research Department remained within the Telecommunications side of the Post Office, reporting to the Senior Director of Development, and transferred to British Telecom when the Post Office Corporation was divided into two separate corporations in 1981.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The records in this POST class are held at BT Group Archives and have been catalogued as TCB 22 and TCC 23. The catalogues for these records are available in the Archive room
- Some engineering research reports of postal relevance have been kept here in The Royal Mail Archive but have not yet been catalogued
- Some items in this class are available on microfilm in the Archive room. Please consult the microfilm catalogue, which can also be found in the Archive room, for further details

POST 120

POST OFFICE AND SUCCESSORS: INVESTIGATION DEPARTMENT 1836 - 1995

537 items

Scope and content

This POST Class contains the papers of the Post Office Investigation Department (POID), consisting of reports, instructions, memoranda, annual reports and research notes.

Administrative history

The Post Office Investigation Department (POID) was founded in 1793, when the Postmaster General accepted some responsibility for the detection of domestic crime. The first records mention that an Anthony Parkin, private solicitor, acted regularly on behalf of the Postmaster General detecting offences committed by clerks, sorters and letter carriers, who had committed crimes such as taking bank notes and bills of exchange out of letters or other fraudulent practices.

The Post Office investigation work remained the responsibility of the Solicitor until 1816, when it was transferred to the Secretary's Office. It was later to be called 'The Missing Letter Branch'. As early as 1823, the Post Office investigators were seconded by chimney-hatted Bow Street Runners. Shortly after 1829, when the Police force was founded by Sir Robert Peel, metropolitan police officers were seconded to Post Office detective work and remained so until 1976. In 1848, an office was especially created for investigations duties. Investigations became the role of the Post Office Inspector General who could call on the assistance of a clerk in the Inland Office. The Missing Letter Branch continued to operate but, as before, its duties were restricted to missing letters only. Ten years later, in 1858, the post of Inspector General was abolished and the Missing Letter Branch was reorganised as well as strengthened by four Travelling Officers in charge of investigations seconded by two Police Constables acting as Assistants. By 1861, there were five officers who were given permanent status. In 1869, the Missing Letter Branch underwent another reorganisation and the department was put under the principal Travelling Officer - who became Clerk for Missing Letter Business - and made a distinct unit of the Secretary's Office.

In 1883, the Missing Letter Branch was renamed 'the Confidential Enquiry Branch' and the officer in charge given the title of 'Director'. By 1901, the duties of the Confidential Enquiry Branch were restricted to 'enquiries' only and any other duties were transferred to other branches of the Secretary's office; the staff comprised then solely of the Travelling Officers, managed by their Director. In 1908 the unit once again changed its name to 'the

Investigation Branch'. The Secretary's office ceased to exist and the post of Secretary was replaced by that of 'Director General'. In 1934, the Post Office underwent a radical reorganisation which eventually affected the Investigation Branch in 1935. The Secretary thus became one of the administrative departments of the new Headquarters structure. In 1946, the name of the head of the Investigation Bureau changed from Director to 'Controller'. In 1967 the Investigation Bureau became known as 'Investigation Division' or 'Post Office Investigation Department' dealing with the investigation of Post Office crime and in particular theft from mail, by the deployment of civilian detectives with the full knowledge and approval of Parliament, the Home Office and the Courts.

Access Conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/

POST 121

POST OFFICE: REGISTERED FILES, MINUTED AND DECENTRALISED REGISTRY PAPERS (MISCELLANEOUS PAPERS) 1895-1981

555 files

Scope and content

This POST class comprises of Headquarters case files that came to light after the appropriate class catalogues (POST 30, POST 31, POST 32, POST 33, and POST 122) had been completed. It includes files found in the registry repository in the former Headquarters at St Martin's le Grand, which were filed upon completion and then forgotten. It also includes papers which remained with the originating Headquarters departments until the Headquarters moved in 1984. The majority of these are accumulations of files on a common subject spanning several years.

The manner in which this class accumulated means that it covers a wide range of subjects, ranging from allowances for keeping horses (POST 121/159) and cats (POST 121/22) to the Post Office's official attitude to divorce (POST 121/341). There are also a few appointment papers (POST 121/340, POST 121/344, POST 121/352, POST 121/430, and POST 121/431).

Administrative history

POST 121/1-POST 121/338 were discovered rolled in the registry repository of the former Headquarters at St Martin’s le Grand. These files are usually relatively small. POST 121/339-POST 121/429 came from departments in the former Headquarters and tend to be more bulky than those found in the registry repository. POST 121/430-555 arrived at the archives later than 1985. Earlier lists were divided into these three categories, however this was not felt to be useful and therefore they are now listed as a single run of records.

Further information about this class can be found in the ‘Guide to Reports and Minutes’.

Access conditions

- Subject to thirty year closure
- The catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/

POST 122

POST OFFICE: REGISTERED FILES, MINUTED AND DECENTRALISED REGISTRY PAPERS c1896-c1980

12500 files

Scope and content

This series comprises 'minuted' papers relating to all manner of Post Office matters. 'Minuted' papers were those papers which had been submitted to the Postmaster General for a decision, and then been retained in the Post Office registry. At first, the papers 'minuted' tended only to be the particular case submitted to the Postmaster General but, as time went on, registry staff followed a practice of continuing to add physically to an existing minuted case all other cases on that subject which came to hand. As a result, the minuted papers frequently consist of quite large bundles of files on a common subject spanning many years. The date range of files is consequently often much earlier or much later than the date suggested by the 'Former Reference' used by the registry staff and, in many cases, the precise dates covered by the files have not yet been listed. The subject of individual files among the minuted papers can be wide-ranging, from the mundane administrative minutiae to policy decisions on developments of critical importance.

Administrative history

The system of ‘minuting’ papers submitted to the Postmaster General by the Secretary to the Post Office for a decision (i.e. numbering the papers, and separately copying a note of the paper as a ‘minute’ into volumes indexed by subject) was introduced in 1793. It remained in use by the Post Office Headquarters registry until 1973.

Until 1921, several different major minute series were in use: that concerned with the Packet Service (POST 29), and those concerned with England and Wales (POST 30), Ireland (POST 31), and Scotland (POST 32). From 1790 until 1841, parallel ‘Report’ series were in use by the Secretary (POST 39 & POST 40).

In 1921, the several different minute series were replaced by a single all-embracing series (POST 33). This was suspended in 1941 as a wartime measure when a Decimal Filing system came into use (POST 102). In 1955 the registration of Headquarters files began to be decentralised under several local registries serving particular departments, although the ‘minuting’ of cases considered worthy of preservation, and the assimilation of later cases with earlier existing minuted bundles, continued until 1973.

Further information about this class can be found in the ‘Guide to Reports and Minutes’.

Access Conditions

- Subject to 30 year closure
- The catalogue for part of this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/
- Some items in this class are available on microfilm in the Archive room. Please consult the microfilm catalogue, which can also be found in the Archive room, for further details

POST 141

POST OFFICE: THE R M PHILLIPS COLLECTION
1837-1990s

45 volumes and 31 volumes of postmarks

Scope and content

Specialised philatelic collection of Victorian stamps of GB including 1839 Treasury competition entries; artwork, essays and die proofs for issued stamps from the Penny Black to the 'Jubilee' issue; cancellation and ink trials; plating studies of issued stamps; large multiples; stamps used on cover including first day covers of the Penny Black; studies of Mulready postal stationery and caricatures; fiscal and revenue stamps; the Dendy Marshall collection of postmarks (cut-out).

Summary of contents of volumes I-XLV

Volume	Contents
I	Pre-1840 documents and essays for adhesive postage stamps and postal stationery including 1839 Treasury Competition essays
II	1837-40 essays and proofs of adhesive stamps and Mulready stationery; Mulready stationery as issued (see also Vol. IX)
III	1840-41 1d unused
IV	1840-41 1d Plate 1 used
V	1840-41 1d Plates 2, 3, 4 and 5 used
VI	1840-41 1d Plates 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11 used
VII	1840 2d Plates 1 and 2, unused and used
VIII	1840-41 colour, paper and cancellation experiments including 'rainbow' trials
IX	1839-90 Mulready stationery and other printed envelopes
X	1840 1d black used on covers
XI	1840-44 cancellations on imperforate line-engraved
XII	1840-71 cancellations on line-engraved
XIII	1841-62 1d imprimaturs
XIV	1841-53 imperforate 1d unused
XV	1841-53 imperforate 1d used
XVI	1841-53 imperforate 1d used (continued)
XVII	1841-55 1d used on covers
XVIII	1841-54 imperforate 2d Plates 3 and 4 unused and used
XIX	1850-55 2d Plate 4 unused and used
XX	1841-53 imperforate 2d Plates 3 and 4 used on covers or pieces
XXI	1854-78 line-engraved essays and proofs

XXII	1848-54 trial separations and Prince Consort essays; 1854-62 perforated line-engraved 1d and 2d unused; 1855-62 imperforate varieties used
XXIII	1854-57 line-engraved 1d perforation 16 and perforation 14 used
XXIV	1854-57 2d plates 4, 5 and 6 used
XXV	1856-62 1d rose-red, Alphabet III, unused and used
XXVI	1862 1d rose-red, Alphabet II, Reserve Plates 15 and 16 and Alphabet III, Reserve Plate 17, mostly used
XXVII	1861 1d rose-red, Alphabet IV, Plates 50 and 51, mostly used
XXVIII	1864-79 1d inscribed with plate numbers, mostly imprimaturs and unused multiples
XXIX	1858-79 2d, ½d and 1½d imprimaturs, unissued stamps and the issued stamps unused and used
XXX	1847-54 embossed adhesive stamps, essays, proofs and the issued 1/-, 10d and 6d unused and used; embossed postal stationery proofs and as issued
XXXI	1855-72 surface printed essays, proofs, imprimaturs and 'specimens'
XXXII	1855-72 3d to 1/- values, essays, proofs, imprimaturs, 'specimens' and the issued stamps unused
XXXIII	1865-72 1/- and 2/-, 1880 2/- brown, 1872-73 6d and 1873-83 2½d, 3d and 6d, essays, proofs, imprimaturs, 'specimens' and the issued stamps
XXXIV	1873-79 1/-, 4d and 8d values, essays for 9d, 10d and 2/- values and 1880-83 3d to 1/- values, essays, proofs, imprimaturs, 'specimens' and the issued stamps unused
XXXV	1855-83 surface printed values to 2/- used including rare 'abnormals' and 1/- Stock Exchange forgeries
XXXVI	1867-82 5/- to £5 values, proofs, imprimaturs, 'specimens' and the issued stamps unused and used
XXXVII	1880 Consolidated Contract, 1879 essays for the low values, 1880 proofs and imprimaturs and the issued ½d to 5d stamps unused
XXXVIII	1881-84 schemes for improved stamp designs
XXXIX	1881-84 Unified 1d and 2/6 to £1 (also 1891 £1 green), proofs, imprimaturs, 'specimens' and the issued stamps unused and used including broken frame varieties of the £1
XL	1883-84 Unified 1½d to 1/-, proofs, imprimaturs, 'specimens', unissued stamps and the issued stamps, mostly unused
XLI	1887-1901 ½d to 1/-, essays, proofs, imprimaturs, 'specimens' and the issued stamps unused; 1894 reply stamp essays; 1901 King Edward VII essays
XLII	1887-1900 ½d to 1/-, unused multiples showing marginal markings
XLIII	'Postal Fiscals', Railway Letter and Parcel Post stamps, essays, proofs and as issued [newly written up]
XLIV	Private Companies' and Post Office Telegraph stamps, Military and Army Telegraph stamps, proofs, 'specimens' and as issued; De La Rue 'dummy' stamps

XLV Postage and Revenue stamps overprinted 'SPECIMEN'

Administrative history

Introduction to inventory (written by Reginald Phillips)

'Early in 1962 the attention of Mr Macmillan, then Prime Minister, was drawn to the existence of a unique private collection of British postage stamps of the 19th century and to the suggestion made by the owner of the collection, Mr R M Phillips, that consideration should be given to the preservation of the collection as a National Treasure by the establishment of a National Postal Museum for this purpose. The Prime Minister, on the advice of the Postmaster General, welcomed the suggestion.

By the end of 1962 negotiations between Mr Phillips and the Post Office had started and the project for the foundation of a National Postal Museum was well in hand. Mr Phillips presented to the Post Office in July 1963 a detailed memorandum of proposal which formed the basis for subsequent action.

In December 1963 Mr Phillips informed the Post Office that, in addition to the collection itself he was prepared to donate £50,000 ‘as a contribution towards the cost of providing means for the use and preservation of the collection’.

By April 1964 formal agreement had been given to these proposals and after a further series of discussions to settle details this great and imaginative scheme was published to the world at large at a formal ceremony at Mr Phillips' house in April 1965 at which, in the presence of Press, BBC and Television representatives the Postmaster General, Mr Anthony Wedgwood Benn, formally accepted the gift of the collection and of a cheque for £50,000.

This inventory gives in detail the contents of the 45 volumes, which with the 'Dendy Marshall' collection of cancellations in 31 albums and various large items, comprises the unique collection of 19th century British postage stamps and historic documents, artists' drawings, essays and proofs illustrating their development which were handed over on that occasion.

The collection, which took nearly forty years to build up, was awarded the Grand Prix at the 1960 London International [Stamp] Exhibition, and its estimated value at the time it was presented to the nation amounted to £263,148.'

The collection was remounted on acid-free pages during the 1990s keeping the typeface as near as possible to the original. The writing-up remained the same, any errors not being corrected. The collection of fiscal and revenue stamps, which had been mounted but not described, was remounted and described by Lionel Jones. Housing was changed from specially-made albums to archival solander boxes at the same time.

Access conditions

- All 45 volumes in this POST class have been digitised and can viewed on our website at http://www.postalheritage.org.uk/ phillips
- The catalogue for this POST class is available in the Archive room and is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/
- The originals are available to view by prior appointment with the Curator (Philately), under one to one supervision

POST 142

POST OFFICE: THE ‘BERNE’ UNIVERSAL POSTAL UNION COLLECTION 1850-

628 albums

Scope and content

Stamps as issued by all member countries of the Universal Postal Union from 1874 to date with some earlier reprints as supplied, mounted in albums with more modern material unmounted. Earlier stamps are overprinted or perforated SPECIMEN. This includes items of imprinted postal stationery up to 1940 or in places the 1960s.

Access conditions

- Available to view by prior appointment with the Curator (Philately), under one to one supervision

POST 143

POST OFFICE: BRITISH FISCAL & REVENUE STAMPS (CREATION TO ISSUE)
(NOT KNOWN)

29 albums, 3 large volumes of registration stamps

Administrative history

Up until 1914 the Treasury was responsible for the production and distribution of security printing material including postage stamps and stamped stationery. Then the latter two were transferred to the Post Office but all other security printing remained under Treasury control at Somerset House. In 1927 the Post Office, acting on behalf of the Ministry of Health, entered into contracts, for a period of six years, for the supply of Widows', Orphans' and Old Age Contributory Pension forms and for their watermarked paper.

Access conditions

- Available to view by prior appointment with the Curator (Philately), under one to one supervision

POST 145

POST OFFICE: BRITISH POSTAL STATIONERY (WITHOUT IMPRINTED STAMPS - CREATION TO ISSUE)
1907-

14 albums, 1 volume, 2 dies

Scope and content

Imperial (later Commonwealth) and international reply paid coupons

Administrative history

The creation of an international reply paid coupon was agreed at the UPU Congress in Rome in 1906. A common design was adopted, printed in Switzerland and overprinted with the name of the country. From 1926 there was also an Imperial reply paid coupon for the British Empire, later in 1952-3 transformed into a Commonwealth reply paid coupon. These were printed in Britain.

Access conditions

- Available to view by prior appointment with the Curator (Philately), under one to one supervision

POST 146

POST OFFICE: OVERSEAS TERRITORIES UNDER THE AEGIS OF THE BRITISH POST OFFICE
-1970

46 metal dies, plates

Scope and content

Artwork, metal dies, die proofs, essays, trials and registration sheets of issued stamps (including overprints on GB stamps) for various territories under the authority of the British Post Office. Also similar material prepared for territories under the authority of the Royal Mint or the Inland Revenue (Somerset House). The territories concerned are: Abu Dhabi, Bahrain, Bechuanaland, British Occupation of Italian Colonies, China Treaty Ports, Ireland, Kuwait, Levant, Morocco Agencies & Tangier, Muscat & Oman, Nauru, Oil Rivers, Palestine, Qatar, Trucial States and Zululand.

Administrative history

During the 19th century three colonial territories in Africa had stamps produced in London by De La Rue by means of overprinting current GB stamps with the territory name. These were Bechuanaland, Oil Rivers (Nigeria) and Zululand. Later in the 20th century this also applied to Nauru and Ireland. In none of these cases was the British Post Office responsible for the postal service.

At the same time there were also British Post Offices abroad, directly under the control of the home postal authority. These either used normal GB stamps and cancellations supplied from London (especially the offices in the West Indies, and Central and South America) or stamps were overprinted especially in London for the particular area (such as offices in the Turkish Empire [Levant] and Morocco). Similarly stamp of Hong Kong were overprinted from 1917 for use in British post offices in China and this took place at Somerset House whence the sheets were transferred.

After World War I work at the Royal Mint created stamps for Palestine and Ireland and this material was transferred directly to the then National Postal Museum for safekeeping.

During and after World War II the Italian Empire in North Africa was taken over by British forces and the postal service was provided with British stamps overprinted.

With the end of the Indian Empire in 1947 the British Post Office took over responsibility for the postal administration of states in the Gulf previously supervised from India. These were Abu Dhabi, Bahrain, Kuwait, Muscat &

Oman, Qatar and the overall Trucial States. Initially stamps and stationery provided were standard British issues overprinted for different territories or currencies. From 1958 in Kuwait and the 1960s in the other territories the first pictorial issues of the postal administrations about to be independent were created, designed and produced in Britain under the auspices of the British Post Office and sold to philatelists through the British Philatelic Bureau. Artwork, dies and registration sheets from those issues thus form part of the collection.

Access conditions

- Available to view by prior appointment with the Curator (Philately), under one to one supervision

POST 150

POST OFFICE: BRITISH POSTAGE STAMPS (INCLUDING IMPRINTED STATIONERY), CREATION TO ISSUE
1840-present

Scope and content

Artwork (adopted and unadopted), dies, essays, trials and die proofs, molettes and plates, plate proofs and registration sheets and issued stamps for all adhesive postage stamp issues and postal stationery, both proposed and issued. This includes all design and production stages from the first ideas to the final product and also trials for paper, ink, phosphor, perforation etc.

This POST class is organised by reign, beginning with Queen Victoria. This material consists largely of registration sheets of stamps, including official overprints; Mulready postal stationery; and items produced in connection with the 1879 Tender for the production of the 1d value. Within the reign, stamps are arranged by issue and date of registration.

On completion of each printing plate, six proof sheets were produced in the issued colour on watermarked paper, one of which was submitted to Somerset House for approval. This registration sheet is known as the imprimatur sheet (meaning ‘let it be printed’), and its endorsement authorised the use of the plate. Most of the sheets had samples removed by officials at Somerset House, and these stamps are identified by the term ‘missing check letters’ in the descriptions, referring to the corner letters which guarded against forgery and which identify the position of the stamp on the sheet.

Material produced for the 1879 Tender includes essays, specimens of colour and gum and unused paper supplied to the companies invited to submit designs.

As a visual reference, images of individual imprimatur stamps have been linked to online catalogue entries to show plate characteristics, shade etc., as the scale and value of the sheets make them unsuitable for digitisation at the present time. Most of these are stamps cut from the sheet described, but in a number of cases, it is likely that the item was cut from one of the other registration sheets.

Administrative history

In 1840 when the first adhesive postage stamps and printed postal stationery were issued responsibility for their production lay with the Stamps & Taxes Office, but the supply of paper was down to the Excise Office. This continued (with these two offices merging to become the Inland Revenue in 1849) until 1 April 1914 when responsibility for design, production and distribution of stamps was transferred to the Post Office, where it remains.

Access conditions

- A catalogue for the Victorian section of this POST class is available in the Archive room
- The catalogue is also available to view on our website at https://catalogue.postalmuseum.org/
- Available to view by prior appointment with the Curator (Philately), under one to one supervision

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