

## NIGHT MAIL

*This is the night mail crossing the Border,  
Bringing the cheque and the postal order,*

*Letters for the rich, letters for the poor,  
The shop at the corner, the girl next door.*

*Pulling up Beattock, a steady climb:  
The gradient's against her, but she's on time.*

*Past cotton-grass and moorland boulder  
Shovelling white steam over her shoulder,*

*Snorting noisily as she passes  
Silent miles of wind-bent grasses.*

*Birds turn their heads as she approaches,  
Stare from bushes at her blank-faced coaches.*

*Sheep-dogs cannot turn her course;  
They slumber on with paws across.*

*In the farm she passes no one wakes,  
But a jug in a bedroom gently shakes.*

*Dawn freshens, Her climb is done.  
Down towards Glasgow she descends,  
Towards the steam tugs yelping down a glade of cranes  
Towards the fields of apparatus, the furnaces  
Set on the dark plain like gigantic chessmen.  
All Scotland waits for her:  
In dark glens, beside pale-green lochs  
Men long for news.*

*Letters of thanks, letters from banks,  
Letters of joy from girl and boy,  
Receipted bills and invitations  
To inspect new stock or to visit relations,  
And applications for situations,  
And timid lovers' declarations,  
And gossip, gossip from all the nations,  
News circumstantial, news financial,  
Letters with holiday snaps to enlarge in,  
Letters with faces scrawled on the margin,  
Letters from uncles, cousins, and aunts,  
Letters to Scotland from the South of France,  
Letters of condolence to Highlands and Lowlands  
Written on paper of every hue,  
The pink, the violet, the white and the blue,  
The chatty, the catty, the boring, the adoring,  
The cold and official and the heart's outpouring,  
Clever, stupid, short and long,  
The typed and the printed and the spelt all wrong.*

*Thousands are still asleep,  
Dreaming of terrifying monsters  
Or of friendly tea beside the band in Cranston's or Crawford's:*

*Asleep in working Glasgow, asleep in well-set Edinburgh,  
Asleep in granite Aberdeen,  
They continue their dreams,  
But shall wake soon and hope for letters,  
And none will hear the postman's knock  
Without a quickening of the heart,  
For who can bear to feel himself forgotten?  
W. H. Auden*

## DELIVERING THE MAIL

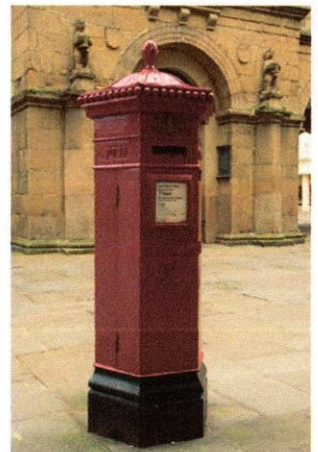


## DELIVERING THE MAIL IS THE END

It all starts with posting a letter and how it travels from being posted to the point of delivery.

By Hand  
By Van  
By Train  
By Plane

Or any combination of the above



**1.6 – Cont**

The **London to Birmingham Railway** was the first Main Line to be opened for traffic and following amalgamation in 1846 it became part of the **London & North Western Railway**.



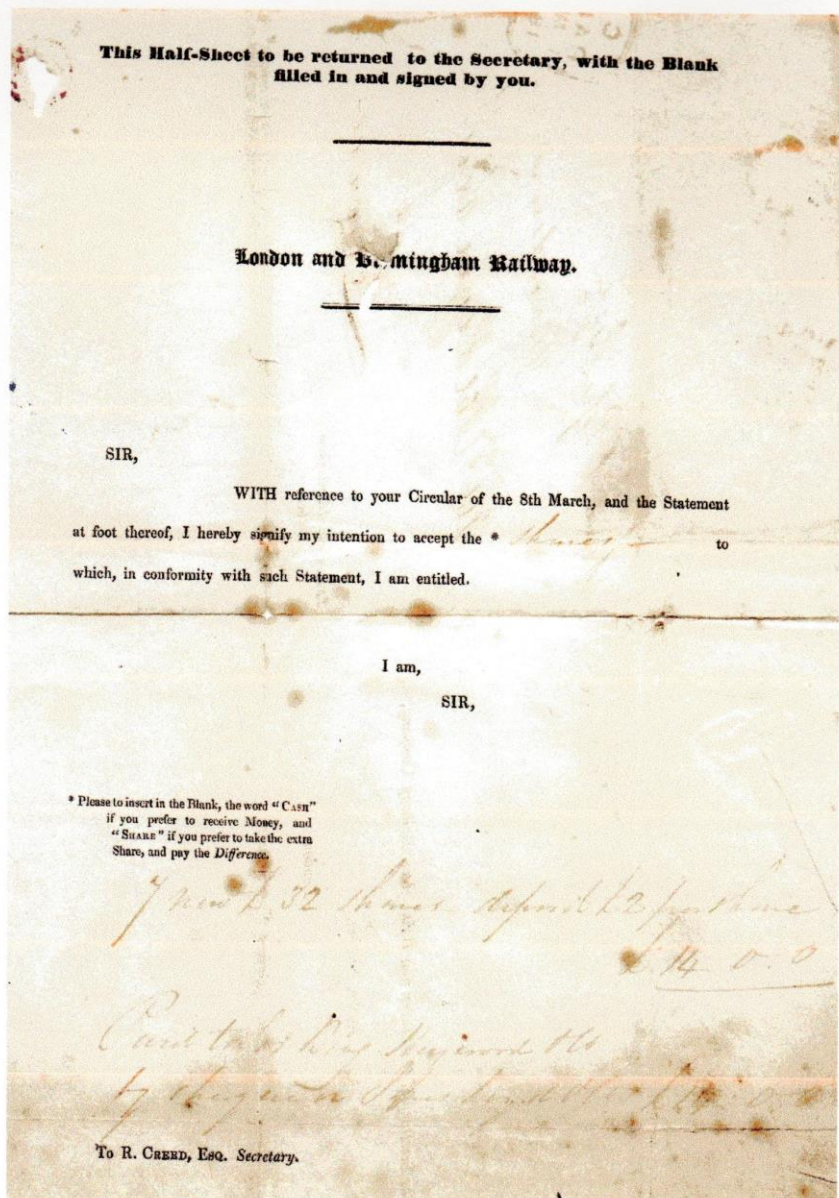
This London & Birmingham Railway Printed Form is a share of cash option to a Mr. Samuel Pope. Mr Popes entitlement is to 7 shares. Mr Pope had obviously moved from his original address to Manchester.

In order to reach him the letter has been re-directed. (*Known as a turned letter*)

Originally sent with a red Paid Handstamp dated Mar 1841 the Penny Black (Plate 7) was applied to pay for the re-direction.

**Historical Note**

The London & Birmingham's station in Birmingham was at Curzon Street, (later abandoned for New Street) and is now the intended destination for High Speed 2.



## 5.1 - Cont

The cover below posted in Liverpool and carried over the Liverpool & Manchester Railway 39 years after its opening. The cover carries a Traveling Post Office (TPO) mark on the rear for the Edinburgh & Carstairs Sorting Tender.



### BRITISH RAILWAY HISTORY SERIES BR8 - 125th ANNIVERSARY IRISH MAIL

The Irish Mail is the oldest named train operating in Britain. The inaugural train ran on the 1st August 1848 from London Euston to Bangor, passengers and mails completing the journey to Holyhead by road. The Chester and Holyhead Railway contributed to the building of the Holyhead harbour installations but the difficult crossing of the Menai Strait to link the harbour with the rail route to London was not completed until the Britannia Bridge was opened in 1850. The Chester & Holyhead Railway operated four ships on the crossing to Dublin these passing to the London & North Western Railway in 1858 when it absorbed the L & H.R. The Irish Mail trains, both day and night service, included two Post Office Sorting coaches and picked up mail at speed at many points between London & Holyhead although the present services no longer include the sorting coaches.

One of the most interesting items directly connected with the speedy carriage of the mail was the introduction of the first water pick-up troughs in the world. These were installed at Aber, near Bangor in 1859 to avoid stopping the Irish Mail at Chester for the locomotives to take water. The pick-up apparatus was invented by John Ramsbottom, the Locomotive Superintendent of the L.N.W.R.

The Irish Mail was run as a night train only from 1848 to 1873 when the L.N.W.R. started a day time service as well; the two services running till 1939. During the war the daytime Irish Mail only was in operation with the night service restored in October 1946. Since then, the increased competition from air services has led to the reduction of the service to the night Irish Mail except during the summer season.

This cover is a product of SCOTSMAN COVER SERVICES, 114 Tulketh Road, Preston, PR2 1AR, the specialists in Railway Philately. Send for full details of other covers in the series, Railway Letter Stamps and TPO postmarks.

The cover below commemorates the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Irish Mail stated to be the oldest named mail service.



## 5.1 – Cont

The card below shows the internal sorting arrangement within the Traveling Post Offices.



Mail sorted into pigeon holes shown left were then placed into post bags for the stops along the route.

Note – The Card carries a part of the poem by W. H. Auden "The Night Mail"

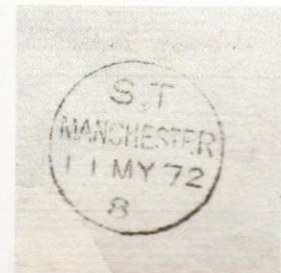
All mail handled would receive a handling mark such as that shown below.

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This is the night mail crossing the border,  
Bringing the cheque and the postal order,  
Letters for the rich, letters for the poor,  
The shop at the corner and the girl next door.

W H Auden

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**5.1 - Cont**

The original TPO cancels to incorporate the direction of travel using the terms UP (*towards London*) and DOWN (*away from London*) in conjunction with the TPO Name. For cross country routes the cancels showed direction of travel by reversal of the names.



## 5.1 - Cont

For many years the Royal Mail made significant use of the railway and scenes as portrayed below would have been a familiar sight. Note the view into the sorting carriage and the mail box for late letters. Scenes like this no longer exist with mail being moved by either road or air. **BUT FOR HOW LONG.**

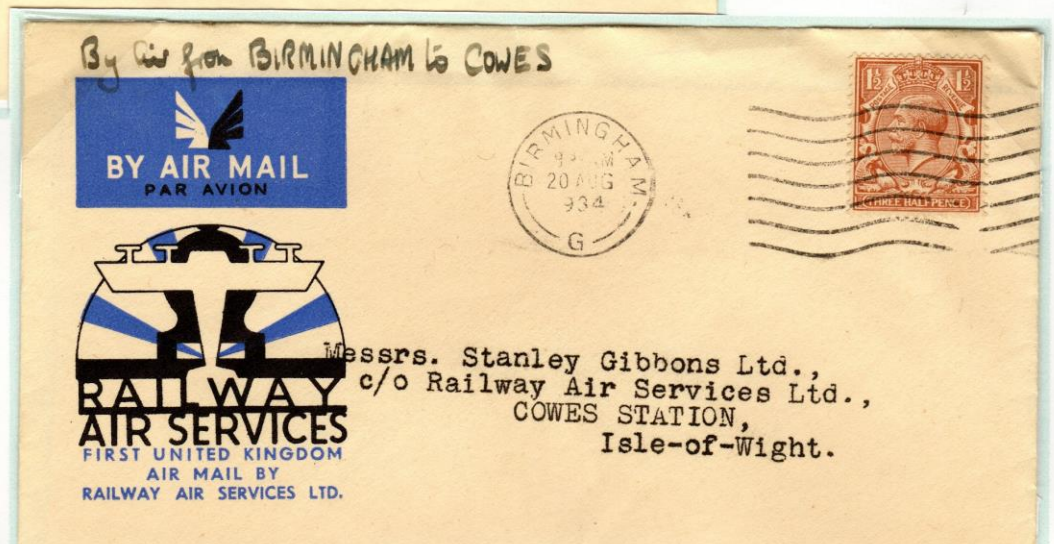


In London the Royal Mail operated its own underground railway for the movement of mail between the main line stations and Mount Pleasant the main sorting office. The railway is mothballed and mail is transported through the busy streets by road.



## 5.1 - Cont

The Railways from 20<sup>th</sup> August 1934 started to use aircraft as a means of transporting mail from railheads to British offshore islands such as the Isle of Man, Isle of Wight and Northern Ireland. These are all Imperial Airways test letters, used to test the route.



### 5.3 Railway Post Offices

Many Stations in addition to accepting mail for carriage by train also had full Royal mail postage facilities, the following are some examples.

Note – the use of a Duplex cancel at Normanton in 1906 is a Late Use of this type

