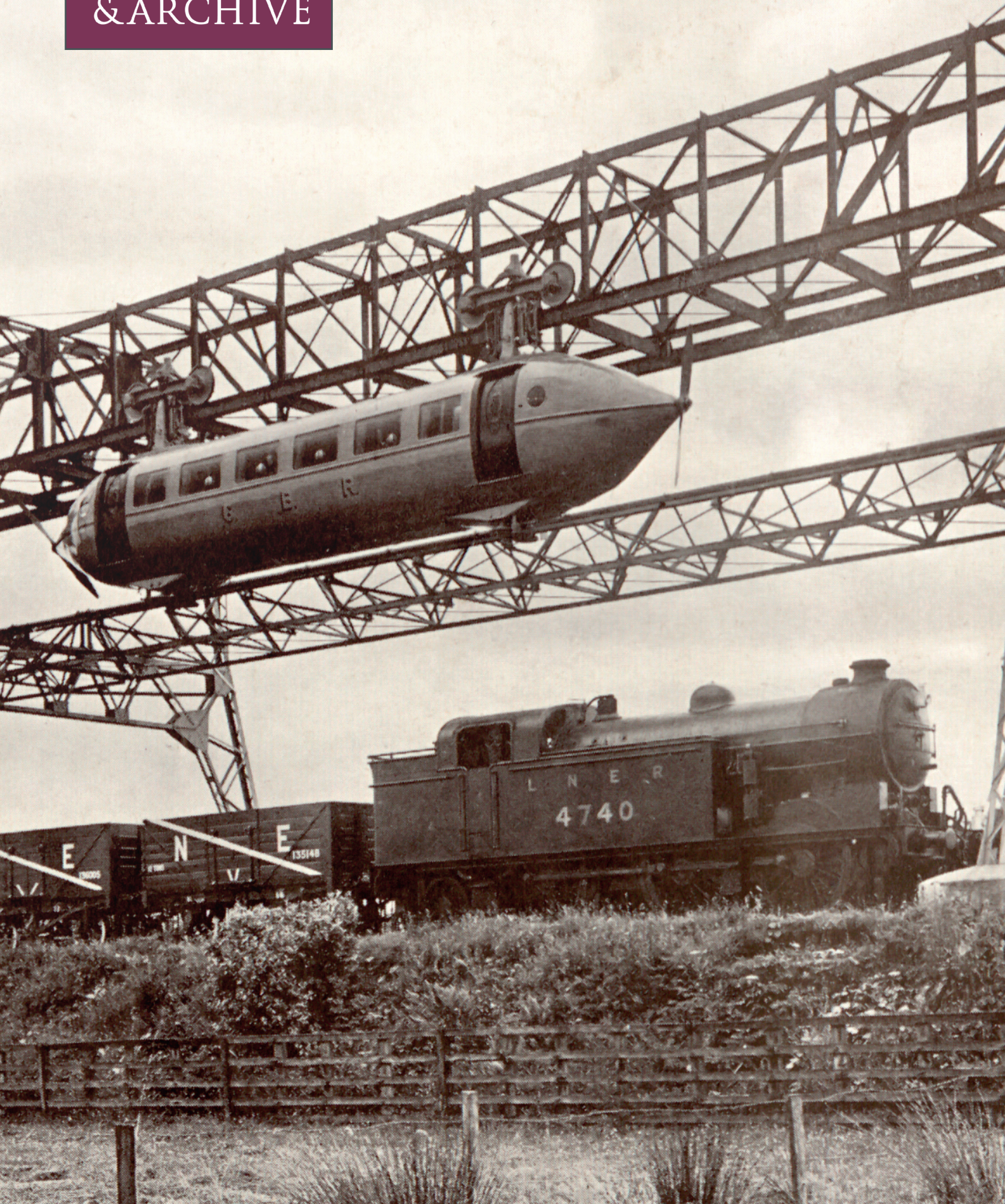


THE BRITISH
POSTAL
MUSEUM
& ARCHIVE

Newsletter

www.postalheritage.org.uk
June 2014



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Front cover: 'The Railplane System of Transport: Stability and Safety.'

Publication: 'Railway Wonders of the World'

Published by: Amalgamated Press c 1935

The British Postal Museum & Archive
Freeling House
Phoenix Place
LONDON WC1X 0DL

info@postalheritage.org.uk
www.postalheritage.org.uk

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Welcome

2014 is shaping up to be a memorable year at the BPMA. In March we celebrated our 10th birthday, and received a pretty amazing (albeit early) present – planning permission to open up a section of Mail Rail as a ride. On 20 May the good news continued when HLF approved our second round grant application, unlocking £4.5 million towards our fundraising campaign. This fantastic development means that we are now over 95% funded for The Postal Museum and Mail Rail, and we can commence construction on The Postal Museum itself in just a few weeks' time. Raising the final amount will now become our focus for the remainder of 2014.

Away from the new museum activity shows no signs of slowing down. Our flagship exhibition *Last Post: Remembering the First World War* – telling the story of the postal service in conflict both at home and on the fighting line – launched in April to great fanfare at Coalbrookdale Museum of Iron at Ironbridge and is proving very popular. A touring version is making its way around the country, you can find venues near you on our website.

In addition, the Learning Team have been busy helping some very talented young people through their Bronze Arts Award on the theme of communicating conflict – which looked at interpretation of events during the First World War. See this edition's news section for more information.

You can keep up to date with what we're up to in a number of ways. Our website provides up to date information of all our latest events, exhibitions, talks and tours of both the Museum Store and Archive. Alternatively, you can consult our Events Guide, the latest edition of which is included in this issue, outlining all our exciting activity for the second half of the year. Full booking information can be found towards the back.

Finally, if this newsletter doesn't satiate your hunger for all things BPMA, you may be interested to know that we have now launched a website dedicated entirely to providing the latest news and information related to our progress on The Postal Museum – postalmuseum.org.

I hope you enjoy this issue of the newsletter and look forward to updating you all with our progress towards The Postal Museum in October.

Adrian Steel, Director



adrian.steel@postalheritage.org.uk
Twitter: @BPMA_Adrian



Meet the volunteer

“As a requirement for my Masters program in Museum Studies, I was expected to complete an internship in the museum sector. At the start of term, I was presented with an extensive list of museums to pick from and as soon as I saw that the BPMA was offering an internship, I knew that this was the organisation I wanted to work with. Only a few days prior I had come across the BPMA's website and was very impressed with their policies and the personal touch felt in their blog posts. Working with the staff at the BPMA has been even more rewarding than I ever could have expected. I have had the opportunity to gain hands-on experience in collections management from a team of highly trained professionals and experience that I know will greatly strengthen my CV and confidence when I seek full time employment. Every-day I feel welcomed and comfortable approaching anyone for help, which means a lot to me.”

Melissa Collins UCL Museum Studies MA Student

To find out more about volunteering or how you can support the BPMA please see our website:
www.postalheritage.org.uk/support



HLF grant puts The Postal Museum on track

The BPMA is delighted to announce that it has secured £4.5m in funding towards The Postal Museum, including Mail Rail, following a successful application to the Heritage Lottery Fund.

The news means that we have now raised over 95% of the funds needed to build a new, national museum in Central London and open up the old Post Office Underground Railway to the general public for the first time in its 100 year history.

Talking about the decision Sue Bowers, Head of HLF London, said:

“This wonderful new museum and archive repository are set to be enhanced by plans to open up the historic ‘Mail Rail’ for visitors to experience. Proposals for major redevelopment work will help people learn more about the key role the postal service played in shaping the modern world. It will also regenerate a part of London that has strong community involvement but ranks high on the list of social deprivation. The combination of all these factors make for an exciting project and we’re delighted to be confirming an investment of £4.5m.”

We’re now working to secure the last necessary funds to move into the build phase for the museum, which will begin later this year.

Coinciding with this exciting development we’re also happy to announce that we have now set up a website specifically for news and information relating to our plans. **Postalmuseum.org** is a one-stop-shop providing all the latest on The Postal Museum and Mail Rail. This website will provide all the latest news and updates on plans for The Postal Museum and Mail Rail, background to the project and fundraising information in one easy to navigate place. Content will be regularly uploaded in the form of blog posts, photographs and videos, charting the progress of The Postal Museum and Mail Rail as they move towards opening.

Finally, I’d personally like to thank all those that have supported us to date and will continue to do so in the future as we begin to realise our dream of opening up this nationally, and internationally, important part of our collective social history. We couldn’t have got here without you.

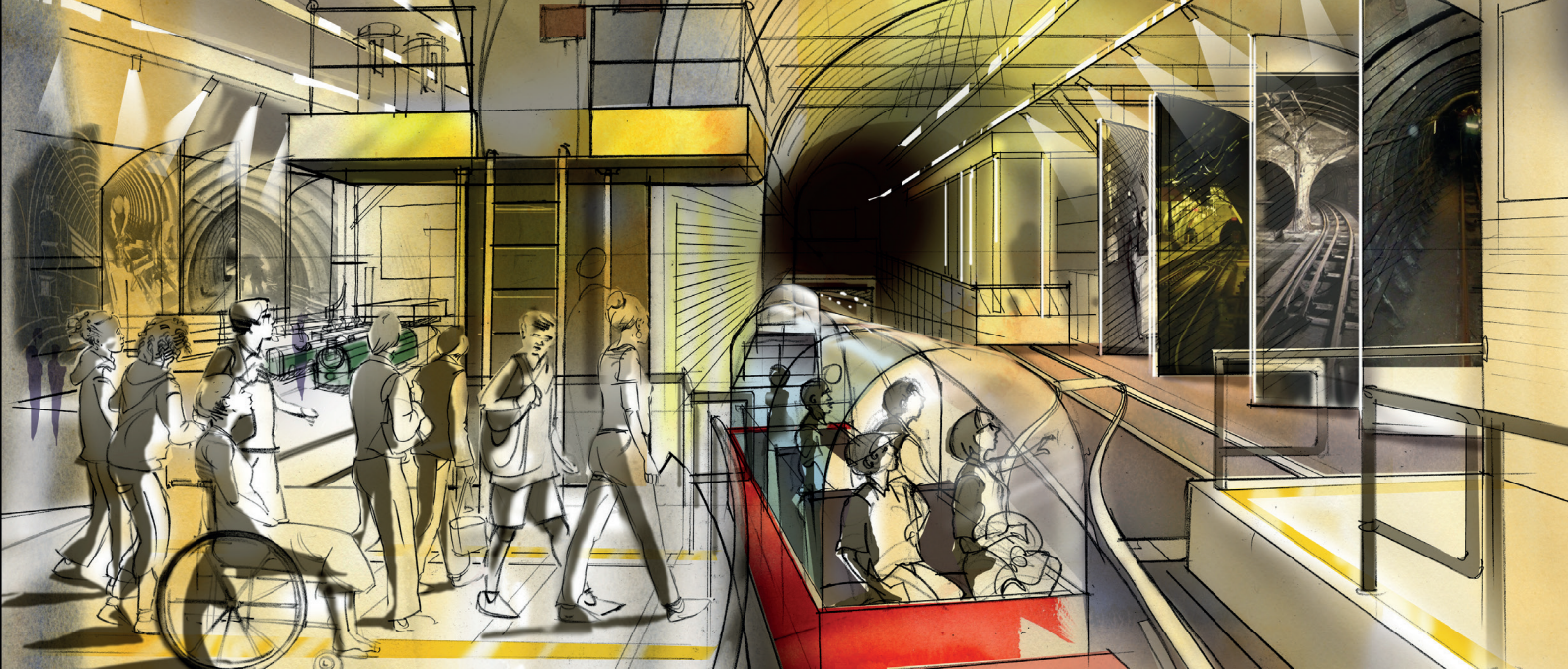
Adrian Steel, Director

Top: Staff celebrate HLF grant news in Car Depot of Mail Rail

Above: Visualisation of the front of The Postal Museum

Above right: Artists impression of Car Depot 2016





Planning permission granted for Mail Rail

On 10 March Islington Borough Council approved the BPMA's planning application to develop a stretch of the old Post Office Underground Railway – Mail Rail – into a unique subterranean ride. The announcement resulted in widespread media interest and was covered by a number of major outlets including TimeOut, Daily Mail, Wired and BBC News.

The decision means that, as part of a visit to The Postal Museum, due to open in central London in 2016, visitors will be able to explore the hidden world of Mail Rail under Mount Pleasant in an interactive exhibition and underground ride through the original tunnels, following the same route that much of the nation's mail took for more than three quarters of a century from 1927-2003. Read more about the history of Mail Rail later in this issue.

News in Brief:

Post & Go Machine

A new A001 Post & Go machine has been installed at Freeling House. First introduced at Spring Stampex 2014, the A001 has been further developed to be easier to use, ensuring we can offer the best service to its customers. The A1 Post & Go machine that was replaced in Freeling House has been accessioned into the Museum Collection.

Eleanor Laing visits Debden

On Friday 9 May Eleanor Laing, MP for Epping Forest and Deputy Speaker of the House of Commons paid a visit to the Museum Store at Debden. As well as a tour of the collections with Chairman Helen Forde and Senior Curator Julian Stray that took in the 18th Century Mail Coach (recently returned from an extended stay at Grampian Transport Museum), Eleanor also had the opportunity to hear about the plans for The Postal Museum and Mail Rail to which she has pledged her support. She was particularly pleased to hear about BPMA's plans to keep the Museum Store at Debden, which is located within her constituency.

Haverstock School

Congratulations to the twenty five students from Haverstock School in Camden who successfully achieved the Bronze Arts Award for their First World War project 'Communicating Conflict'. The students worked with poet Joelle Taylor of Apples and Snakes, the leading organisation for performance poetry in England, to write poems inspired by First World War objects and stories in the BPMA collection. The poems were the basis for a performance by the students at Camden Roundhouse to an audience of BPMA supporters and family members. Of the performance, Caroline Bray, Arts Award advisor for Museums, Heritage and Libraries said;

"I had hoped that one of the things the (First World War) commemorations would achieve was a greater understanding of the war's impact on 'ordinary' people and the heartfelt poems and seriousness with which the young people approached the performance showed this can be true".

The BPMA has been privileged to work with such a talented group of young people who have so thoughtfully commemorated the human experience of the First World War in their own words.



BPMA TURNS TEN

The last few months have brought a couple of major milestones here at the British Postal Museum & Archive. On 9 April I celebrated five years at the helm of the good ship BPMA, and even more excitingly on 29 March, BPMA itself was 10 years old.

Back in 2004 there was a great deal of work being done to set up what was then a very new idea: an independent charity to manage the heritage services of a larger institution. This is now more commonplace but was then pioneering.

Looking back over the ten years, BPMA's achievement is not one of big bangs but stage-by-stage advance. Under the leadership of Tony Conder, BPMA's first CEO, we established our independence from Royal Mail through a series of partnerships, exhibitions and ventures culminating in the opening of the Museum of the Post Office in the Community at Ironbridge in 2009. For the first time BPMA had its own exhibition space and its own visitors, over 100,000 in the first year. Other exhibitions such as 'Moving the Mail' at the Coventry Transport Museum also began to draw the crowds.

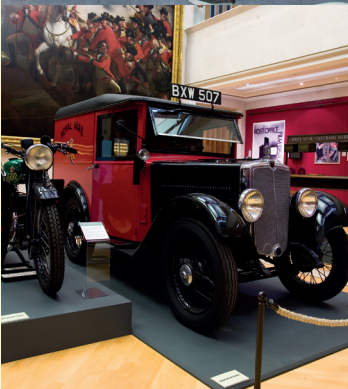
There were also attempts at pursuing our core mission – giving Britain's postal heritage a new home – but, for a whole series of reasons and much to BPMA's great regret they never came to fruition. In the end, 2011 proved to be the year when things started to go right for us in this regard. The Postal Services Act, granted Royal Assent on 13 June of that year, affirmed the importance of securing Britain's postal heritage. That same year Royal Mail offered us a building in London – Calthorpe House – plus core funding, to make the museum happen. Calthorpe House, as many of you will know, is now under our leasehold and will be for the next 999 years, and in less than three years time it will become The Postal Museum.

Planning permission for Calthorpe House was granted in 2012, along with a Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) Round One pass and grant for our project. 2014 brought us planning permission for Mail Rail and, just a few weeks ago, we enjoyed the success of our HLF Round Two application, providing us with a further £4.5m of grant income. It goes without saying that there have been bumps along the way, and BPMA colleagues past and present have put in a phenomenal effort to get us where we are today. With a shortfall of £0.5m we are finally in a position to literally begin to build our future.

Our vision for the next ten years is to secure and open this first class new home, The Postal Museum & Mail Rail, in 2016; cement our place as a sustainable, national, cultural attraction; grow the BPMA's services nationally and internationally; and, from the base we will have, to develop digitally, grow our funding and build for the future. Based on our record to date I am sure that we will successfully deliver on this.

Here's to the next ten years of the BPMA!

Adrian Steel





Post people from the past...

Post People from the Past took a class of Year 2 students back in time to discover how letters have been carried, posted and delivered through 400 years of postal history.

Sally Sculthorpe, Learning Officer explains how a partnership with St Luke's Primary School in Islington and actors from Big Wheel Theatre Company allowed delivery of an exciting literacy focused project as part of the BPMA's trial programme of learning activities for The Postal Museum.

The class began their journey by meeting Albert, a letter carrier from the 1700s. They learnt about the problems with the postal service at this time – there were no stamps, letters cost a lot to send and it was the recipient not the sender who paid for the letter. The students took part in different tasks to help Albert collect and deliver letters.

Next, the students met Fred, a Victorian postman who told them about Rowland Hill and the important changes he proposed for the post office. The children entered the competition to design the world's first pre-paid postage stamp that Rowland Hill organised in the 1830s. Of course, the iconic Penny Black was the winner.

In the last classroom workshop, they met Edith, a First World War post woman. Edith recruited the class to work with her in the Home Depot in Regent's Park where letters between the home and fighting fronts were sorted during the war. She explained the importance of censorship and as part of their training the children created and read their own secret coded messages.

Finally, the class visited our museum store in Debden to explore our treasure trove of postal objects and discover more stories from our collection. The students met modern day postman Roland who asked for their help to deliver letters to the past. This activity put their newfound postal knowledge to the test.

Post People from the Past brought hidden stories from our collection to life in the classroom. Activities were developed in collaboration with Mr Grey, St Lukes Literacy Co-ordinator. Of the project he enthused, "Sally and her team of actors made postal history very accessible for the children. Lots of great learning and enjoyment was had by all."

This project is part of our trial programme of school workshops and activities. By working closely with teachers we're making sure we deliver a first class schools programme in The Postal Museum and Mail Rail.

To find out more about our schools programme you can email me at sally.sculthorpe@postalheritage.org.uk



Photography: Brendan Foster



Gathering parcel sacks into a pile (POST 56/6)

Last Post: Remembering the role of the Post Office in the First World War

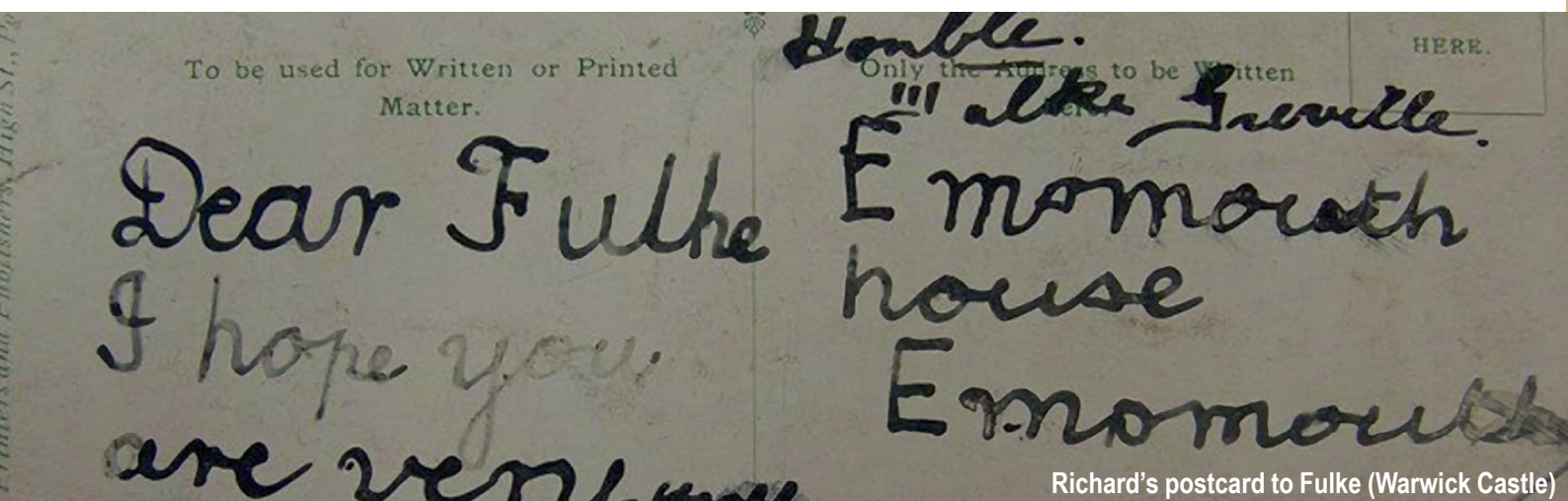
Thursday 10 July, 7.00pm - 8.00pm

Saturday 12 July, 1.30pm-2.30pm

Phoenix Centre next to the BPMA Search Room

Guildford Museum, Castle Arch, Guildford, GU1 3SX

Join BPMA Head of Collections Chris Taft as he explores the story of the Post Office during the First World War. From the loss of thousands of postal workers on foreign battlefields to the emergence of women in the workplace and the importance of commemoration today, Chris will reveal the changing face of an organisation at war and the vital role the post played in maintaining morale not only on the fighting lines, but on the Home Front and throughout the British Empire.



Richard's postcard to Fulke (Warwick Castle)

'To Warwick with Love': The private postcards of an aristocratic family 1914-1917

Thursday 14 August, 7.00pm - 8.00pm

Phoenix Centre next to the BPMA Search Room

The brutal impact of the First World War tore through all levels of society; from the poorest labourers to the wealthiest landowners. For the first time, Warwick Castle's History Team reveal the hidden trauma of how war tore apart the family of the Earl of Warwick, told through the intimate postcards sent by a mother and father on the front line to their children back home. These postcards reveal the trauma, tragedy, heartbreak, and irony of the Great War and how it tore apart this aristocratic family.

Last Post

Remembering the First World War

11 April 2014 to 27 March 2015

Coalbrookdale Gallery, adjacent to Enginuity



©Royal Mail Group Ltd., courtesy British Postal Museum & Archive

This poignant exhibition explores the role of the postal service during the First World War

**FREE
EXHIBITION
OPEN MONDAY
TO FRIDAY**

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Moving the Mail

Mail Rail

By the turn of the 20th century, with thick smog regularly bringing the already heavily congested thoroughfares of London to a standstill, mail transported between main Post Offices and railway stations was subject to severe delays. To ensure the continued timeliness of deliveries, the General Post Office sought ways to resolve this issue.

Having scoped out possible options, in February 1911 a Government Departmental Committee recommended the construction of an ingenious underground electric railway with driverless trains –the first of its kind anywhere in the world. In 1913 the Post Office (London) Railway Bill was passed as an Act. The new railway was to consist of six and a half miles of tunnels at an average of 70 feet below ground. It would connect the West and East ends of London via eight stations and reduce the time taken for mail to cross London from many hours to just 30 minutes.

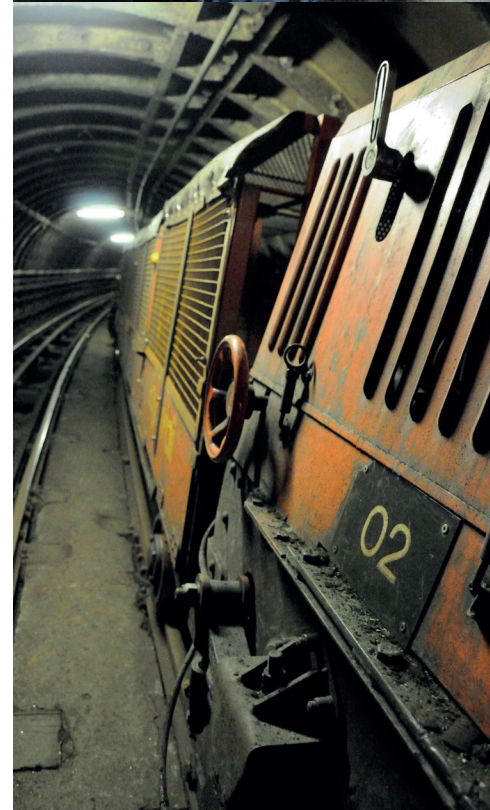
Tunnelling began in 1914 and was completed in 1917 but, with raw materials diverted in support of the ongoing war effort, the Treasury would not allow the Post Office to order or install any operating equipment, including track. The tunnels were instead used to protect art treasures belonging to the National Portrait Gallery and the Tate Gallery. The price of materials remained high for some time following the end of the First World War, meaning that work on the railway did not resume until 1923. It finally opened on 5 December 1927, 13 years after the ground was first struck.

Designed to run trains just a couple of feet in width, Mail Rail's tunnels are much smaller than on London's passenger underground although the stations look much the same, with grand circular walls and the familiar sound of approaching trains. Each train was able to carry four mail bag containers with every container holding an average 15 bags of letters or six bags of parcels. At its peak, that equated to more than six million bags of mail a year – around four million letters every day.

The railway played a pivotal role in the transportation of mail for 76 years. Its continued, rarely interrupted, service – the trains ran throughout the Second World War – is testament to the skilled engineering and maintenance teams that kept the system running. Despite the vital role the railway had played, declining use and closure of offices above stations meant it eventually became un-economical to run. In 2003 the system was suspended and today remains closed, save for a team of three engineers who maintain the tunnels. Although unique, Mail Rail isn't the only example of ingenious ways of moving the mail...

Submarine Mail

Although first used during the First World War, perhaps the most interesting episode in submarine mail history occurred during the Spanish Civil War. By August 1938 Republican strongholds were becoming increasingly isolated as the Nationalists, under the leadership of General Franco took control of much of the mainland and many of the Balearic Islands. Catalonia, home to Republican capital Barcelona, was cut off from other Republican outposts in the south east of the country and Minorca, the only Balearic Island to support the Republican cause was all but isolated in the western Mediterranean Sea. With air, land and sea under the control of the enemy, the Republicans looked beneath the waves to re-establish contact. On 12 August 1938 a submarine carrying mail to the Republicans in Minorca left Barcelona harbour, arriving safely in Mahon at 1pm the following day.

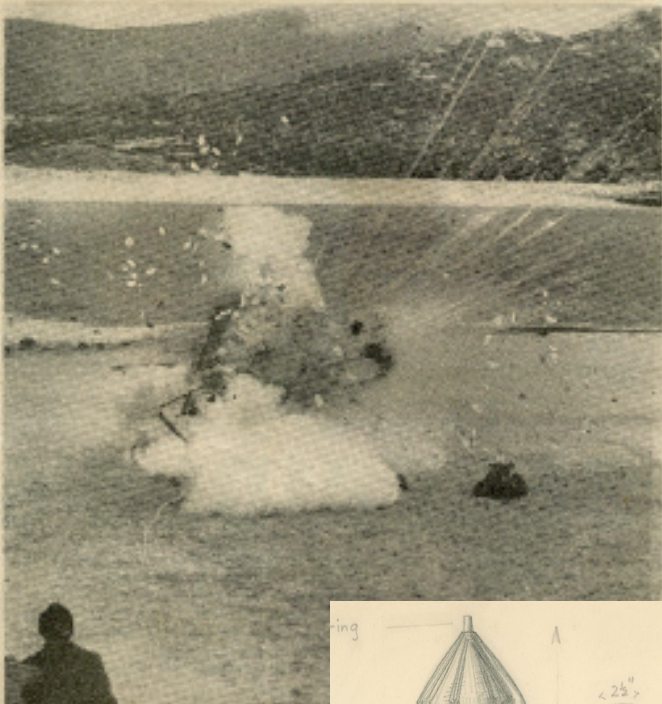


Top: Two engineers work on a locomotive. 1969 (POST 118/CT00357)

02 © Bradley Photography

Right: Laying conductor rail in the mail rail tunnel (POST20355.24)





Rocket Mail

First devised (but never tested) by the French during the Siege of Paris during the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71, rocket mail was seen as an ingenious and innovative solution to the problems of transporting mail to otherwise inaccessible places. Between 1934 and 1935 a number of trials were undertaken across the globe. From the UK to the Netherlands, Germany, France, Italy and India, rockets were seen as a means of significantly speeding up the mail and keeping remote areas, such as far-flung Scottish islands, in touch with the mainland. Contemporary reports suggest varying levels of success. Tests near Trieste in November 1934 made it to 22,000ft before landing safely with all contents intact, others completely failed. Gerhard Zucker, a German inventor, carried out a number of tests in the UK between June and December 1934, packing letters into his explosive driven zinc cylinder before watching them blown to pieces. All but one of the tests he undertook in the UK resulted in failure. As the Daily Record put it following a failed launch at Amhuinnisuidh in the Western Isles in July of that year, "Following a vivid flash and a cloud of smoke... close to 5000 letters were scattered to the four winds of heaven... when the smoke cleared, the rocket mail was falling like confetti". Those letters that did survive their "trial by fire" were handed to the Post Office "for delivery by the more prosaic but reliable method".

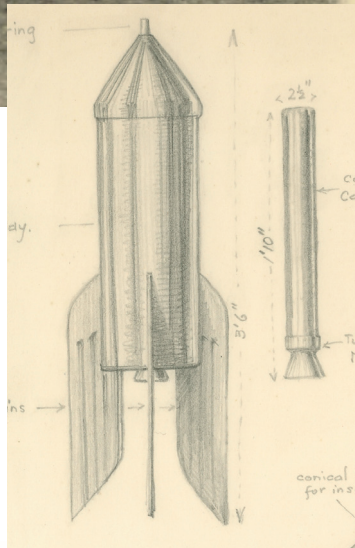
Safe to say, the Post Office never opted to pursue this method of delivering letters and plans for mail by rocket remained grounded. As for Herr Zucker, it is believed that he returned to Germany and later became part of the team that created the V-2 rocket, responsible for many casualties in London and beyond during the Second World War.

Above: Letters fly in all directions as a rocket carrying mail explodes during a test in Scotland's Western Isles - Daily Telegraph, August 1934.

Right: Sketch diagram of rocket 1934 (POST 33.5130)

Below: 'The Railplane System of Transport: Stability and Safety.'

Publication: 'Railway Wonders of the World' Published by: Amalgamated Press c 1935



Railplane

Invented in 1930 by George Benny as a means of conveying the mail, 'Railplane' was intended to reduce the journey time of transporting post from central London to the outskirts. Benny intended that the Railplane would run on a monorail above the railway lines, initially between the Holborn Viaduct and Croydon. This, he estimated, would reduce journey time from an hour to only ten minutes. A test line was set up in Milngavie near Glasgow in July 1930 but never progressed, meaning Benny's hopes of its wide-spread use remained but a pipe-dream.



My Favourite Object

One of the most exciting aspects of working in any museum is getting to know the collection and the BPMA is no different. Although I now work in our Fundraising Team, I have been fortunate that several of my previous incarnations at the BPMA have involved working closely with our collections and learning more about the often unexpected stories behind them.

Which is why, when asked to consider my favourite object, I instantly thought of my favourite story, which I came across listening to previous BPMA podcasts – that of the ‘Human Letters’. Within the Archives are documents relating to two suffragettes, Miss Solomon and Miss McLellan, who – rather extraordinarily – posted themselves to 10 Downing Street in an attempt to deliver a message personally to the then Prime Minister Herbert Asquith.

In the early 20th Century, Post Office regulations allowed individuals to be “posted” by express messenger. So, on 23rd February 1909, these two intrepid women went to the East Strand Post Office and were placed in the care of A.S. Palmer, a telegraph messenger boy, who was charged with “delivering” them to Downing Street. There, an official refused to sign for the “human letters” and eventually the pair were returned to the offices of the Women’s Social and Political Union. This outcome is unsurprising as Asquith was a noted anti-suffragist. Contemporary accounts record that the procession from the East Strand Post Office to Downing Street attracted quite a crowd and one can imagine that it must have been a rather unusual sight!

A file on this event is held in the Archive (POST 30/1655a) and includes a Post Office Express Service form showing that the suffragettes were charged 3d and that the recipient did not sign for the “letters” delivered by A.S. Palmer.

As per Post Office regulations, poor Palmer had to write a report explaining why he had not obtained a signature for the delivery of the rather unusual “letters”. This is also within the file and can be read in the transcript below right.

This story really captured my imagination as a new starter at the BPMA, having never previously thought of there being any connection between the Post Office and the Suffrage movement. I still enjoy the opportunity to share it with new visitors and even helped to organise a small re-enactment of the episode with BPMA colleagues and The Big Wheel Theatre Company at a Museums at Night event at the BPMA Museum Store in

Debden last year! It just goes to show that the Post Office really was involved in some way in many of the major events of the 20th Century.

Sarah Jenkins, Campaign Events Assistant



Above: A.S. Palmer delivers Miss Solomon and Miss McLellan to 10 Downing Street, 23rd February 1909. (POST 30/1655a/3)

Below (letter): Suffragettes sent to prime minister 1909 3 A.S Palmer’s report explaining why he did not obtain a signature for the delivery of the suffragettes, 23rd February 1909. (POST 30/1655a)

Date 23rd Feb. 1909.

The Postmaster.

Sir, I beg to state in reply to the above report, that I took the 2 Ladies to Mr Asquith's house, but the police would not let them go in. I went in but the butler would not sign the form because he did not have the letters to sign for, because the ladies themselves said they were the letters. And Mr Asquith

23 February 1909

The Postmaster,

Sir, I beg to state in reply to the above report that I took the Ladies to Mr Asquith's house but the police would not let them go in. I went in but the butler would not sign the form because he did not have the letters to sign for, because the ladies themselves said they were the letters. And Mr Asquith refused to see them.

I am

Sir

Your Obedient Servant

A.S. Palmer

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100cm in length. Shipped in a postage tube.

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CORRESPONDENCE CARDS £3.50 £1.00

Cover design by Hans Schleger 1945.

20 detachable standard sized (A6) plain white postcards.



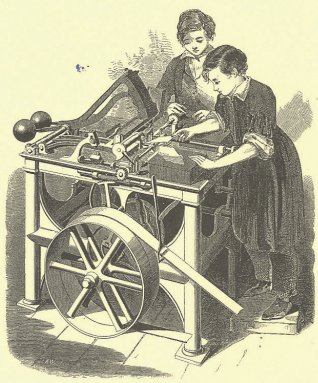
£1.00



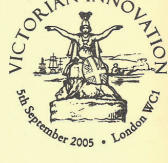
£1.00



£4.99



THE BRITISH
POSTAL
MUSEUM
& ARCHIVE



£1.99

BPMA-E1

The British Postal Museum & Archive, Freeling House, Phoenix Place, London WC1X 0DL

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110mm x 220mm



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Black Basalt Queen Victoria plate

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The postcards include the poster advertising the first scheduled air mail service and the Edward VII 2d 'Tyrian Plum' Stamp.



£3.00

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~~£5.99~~ **£3.00**

This CD features contributions from a wide variety of postal workers past and present including counter staff, mail sorters, a former Postmaster General and of course, postmen. Covering 60 years of history from the 1930s, it provides a fascinating insight into our postal past and its people.

Free delivery on orders over £10 quote 10PLUS

How to order

www.postalheritage.org.uk/shop

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Or fill in the order form and return to Product Sales, BPMA, Room 305, 5 Almeida St, N1 1AA Please make cheques or postal orders payable to 'Postal Heritage Services Ltd'.

Add the following to your order for postage & packaging: UK £3.50, EU £6.50, Rest of World £8.50

Please remember to give the product name, quantity, your telephone number and delivery address when ordering. All orders are sent by standard first class mail.



**3 for
£3.00**

GPO LEAFLET SET

~~£5.00~~ **£3.00**

3 GPO promotional booklets produced to advertise and explain postal services have been beautifully reprinted by the BPMA, capturing the look and feel of the originals.

Air Mail	Night Mail	Mobile Post Office
£1.50	£3.50	£2.50
120x180mm	120x180mm	120x180mm
2 pp	16 pp	4 pp



£9.99

A TIMELESS CLASSIC -THE EVOLUTION OF MACHIN'S ICON

BY DOUGLAS MUIR

~~£19.95~~ **£9.99**

Softback 235 PP

A look at the history behind the first stamp issued with the now iconic image of Queen Elizabeth II created by Arnold Machin. Douglas Muir traces the evolution of Machin's definitive stamp design from conception to British icon reproduced more than 200 billion times.

Includes a foreword by Tony Benn and introduction by David Gentleman.

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Navy 100% silk

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£2.49

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£9.49