

Mapping Modernity: The London Postal Map of 1856

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Abstract

Mapping Modernity: The London Postal Map

The London Postal Map was introduced in 1856. It drew a boundary around London, and then divided the city into ten districts: EC, WC, N, NE, E, SE, S, SW, W and NW.

It was a technological innovation that greatly increased the speed and efficiency of the movement of post around London, in a period when the postal service was the primary form of communication. Service became incredibly quick, frequent, and accessible; almost as instantaneous as the internet today. Deliveries began at 7.22am, with deliveries on the hour, every hour throughout the day. Letters posted at 7.30pm in central London would reach outer London suburbs that same evening.

This thesis considers a period from 1830 until 1918, corresponding to the period of the beginnings of the Map's story, to a major change in the Map during the First World War. It describes the origins of the Postal Map, and then explores its effects in the context of a rapidly developing city. It speculates on meanings of mapping the city where new names and boundaries are introduced and visualized. It investigates the development of the city, understanding the post as an essential part of London's infrastructure. It considers how people experienced a city in which millions of letters, thousands of postmen, and hundreds of mail carts were moving each week.

The Postal Map is argued to be one of the causal factors of modernity within London; it meant urban space was linked to a particular temporality – modern, fast-paced, connected. It changed how Londoner's conceived their city through providing a new framework for labelling places in relation to each other, stating what was east, what was west.

The project uses the extensive archives held by the Postal Museum, which include hundreds of maps, to tell the story of the Postal Map. It combines methodologies from social history, technological and administrative histories, mapping theory, urban planning history, and design history to gain a rich understanding of the full spatial implications of this designed object: the London Postal Map.

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Author's Declaration

During the period of registered study in which this thesis was prepared the author has not been registered for any other academic award or qualification. The material included in this thesis has not been submitted wholly or in part for any academic award or qualification other than that for which it is now submitted.

Signature:

Date:

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Introduction Part I: Introduction and Literature Review

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1. THE MAZE OF LONDON



Fig. 1: 'A Postal Guide to the Maze of London'¹

¹ POST 110/2507: *A Postal Guide to the Maze of London*, Sep 1951

London suggests the labyrinth: its nonsensical street pattern; its layers of innumerable tunnels below and bridges above; its hundreds of years of history imprinted on its built environment; its easy-to-mispronounce place names... London is a jungle, a maze.² And yet it works; order can be drawn from the seemingly chaotic. London's infrastructure allows it to function, though perhaps with a level of secrecy, perhaps incomprehensibly to its people.

The image above is a poster designed by Jan Lewitt and George Him in 1951, advertising the '*Postal Guide to London*'.³ Houses spiral out from the centre abstractly, angular streets hit each other, irregular corners fold upon themselves. The city is black and white, confused, houses in terraced rows appearing more like medieval castle walls than suburban homes. Into this landscape a small red star, a guiding light, appears as the focus for the postman carrying his mailbag through the city. Perhaps too it is the moment at which a glimpse of order is coaxed from the inherent dizziness of the urban environment. The postman becomes representative of the unnoticed systems that operate within the city, and which make sense of the labyrinth.

This image acts symbolically to visualize the subject matter of this thesis. It shows that somehow the maze of London, at certain moments, can be ordered, can be made rational, can be understood, through the agency of a system- like the postal service.

² I have heard Joe Kerr speak about London in his lectures as a city of certain tropes. I think London as a maze is one of these. This is the same lecture or seminar where Joe discusses questions that have foxed Londoners for time immemorial- such as, where is the centre of London? Although a London geek for many years before I met Joe, my thinking about the city has been incredibly enriched by him, and he is undoubtedly one of the best commentators of London, as anyone who has been treated to a walking tour with him will attest! My thanks go to him for the supervision he has given me during this PhD.

³ POST 110/2507: *A Postal Guide to the Maze of London*, Sep 1951

2. THE RESEARCH QUESTION

The research question guiding this thesis is:

How did the largely forgotten London Postal Map of 1856 assist in, and allow for, the construction of modernity in London?

Each chapter will address this question from a different perspective, to build up a picture of what the Postal Map was, and what impact it had.

The subject matter, therefore, is the London Postal Map of 1856:

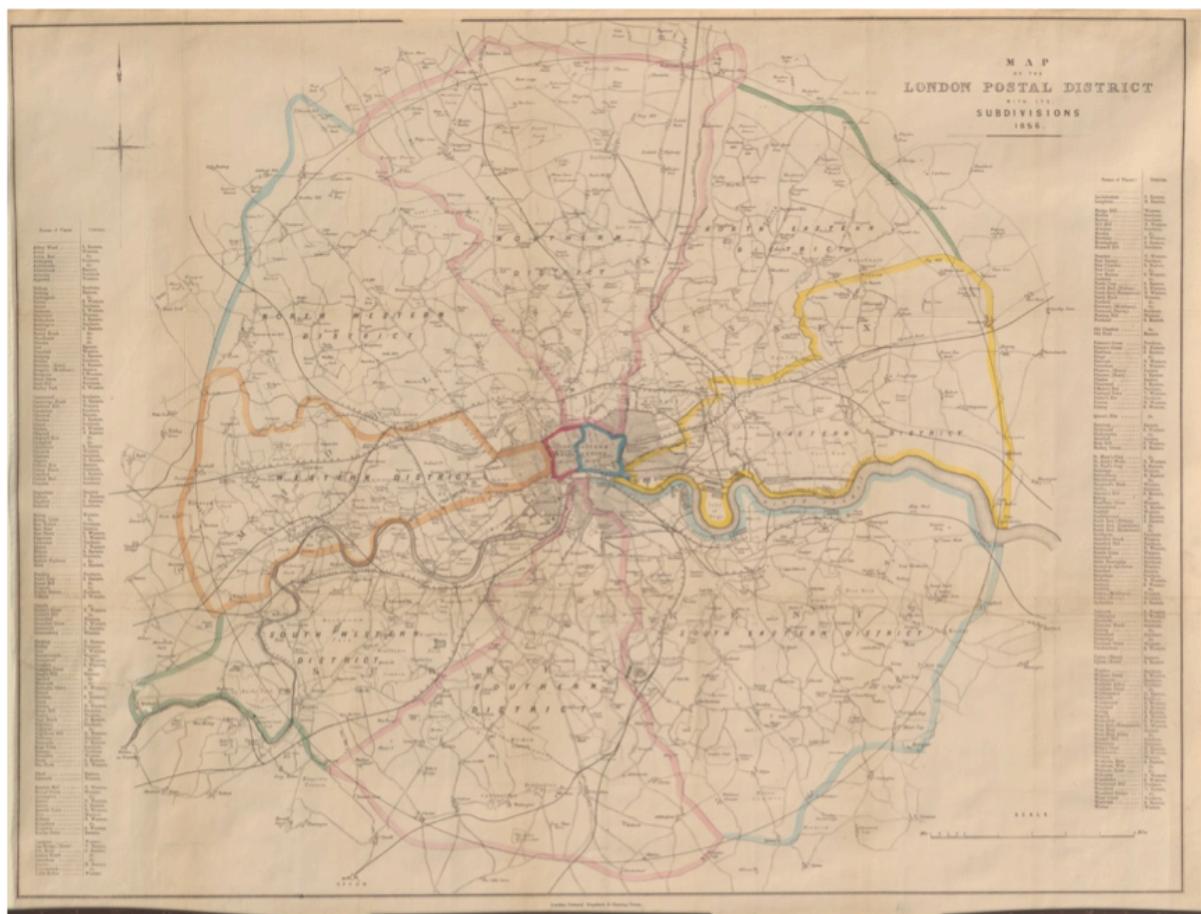


Fig. 2: The London Postal Map, 1856⁴

⁴ POST 21/71: 'Map of the London Postal District with the sub-divisions', 1856. The Map is held in the Postal Museum, where, as a student with a Collaborative Doctoral Award, I conducted most of my research. My thanks go to Adrian and Vicky, my supervisors at the Postal Museum, and all the staff there who helped me in my research over the years.

The Map's significance lies in its role as part of a series of communications reforms. Its introduction heralded an incredibly fast, modern, communications system, specific to London, whereby post travelled around the city incredibly quickly, with a first delivery starting just after 7am, and deliveries – as many as 12 a day – continuing until 9pm. This, at a time when London was growing rapidly in size, in population, and in the scale of its economy. Good communications and rapid economic development went hand in hand. These communications improvements were introduced through a system of decentralisation, which saw London divided into ten districts: East Central; West Central; Eastern, North Eastern, Northern; North Western; Western; South Western; Southern; and South Eastern.

When considering the Map, what is actually under investigation are two different but related things: firstly the object of the London Postal Map itself; and secondly the reforms to London's postal service that were visualised by the Map. The two have been treated differently in the historiography, with the reforms having had some, albeit limited, coverage in historical literature, whilst the Map itself is seemingly almost absent from historical sources. That is why this thesis exists: to place the Postal Map into a historiography where it is currently missing, but where, I contest, it deserves a place; and to draw conclusions from the place it takes.

3. CHAPTER STRUCTURE

The guiding idea of the thesis is based on ‘reading’ the Map in four ways.⁵ My approach is based on an analogy: a moving, multi-dimensional line.

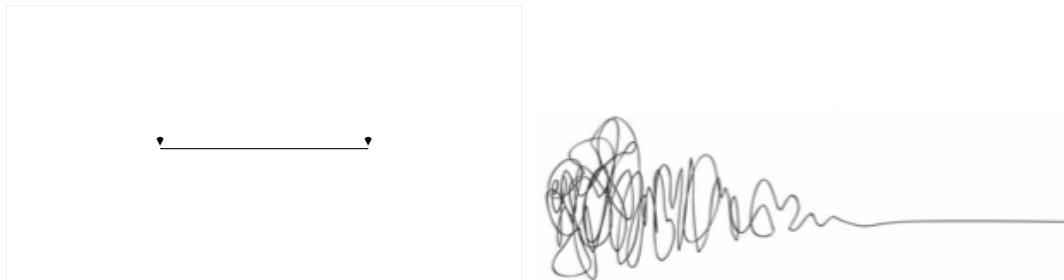


Fig. 3: The line⁶

The line represents a temporal, linear narrative, the metropolitan history of London starting at one particular moment, from which point the narrative travels along its route, through time, finishing at a later date. At certain moments the line slows down, and thickens, as narrative at that moment becomes denser. At other times there is almost no width to the line as it whips through time at fast speed, barely halting to notice what is happening during the moments it rushes past. It is not straight, it turns round, circles, loops, goes forward for a while then out of nowhere turns on itself. The line is the approach of *historical narrative* of the Map.

⁵ In this thesis, the London Postal Map of 1856 that is the focus of the research will be designated by capitalization, either as the Map, the Postal Map or the London Postal Map, to distinguish it from other maps or postal maps.

⁶ Images from <https://mapzen.com/blog/lines/> (left); and <http://cliparts.co/clipart/3616784> (right). (accessed 01/01/17)

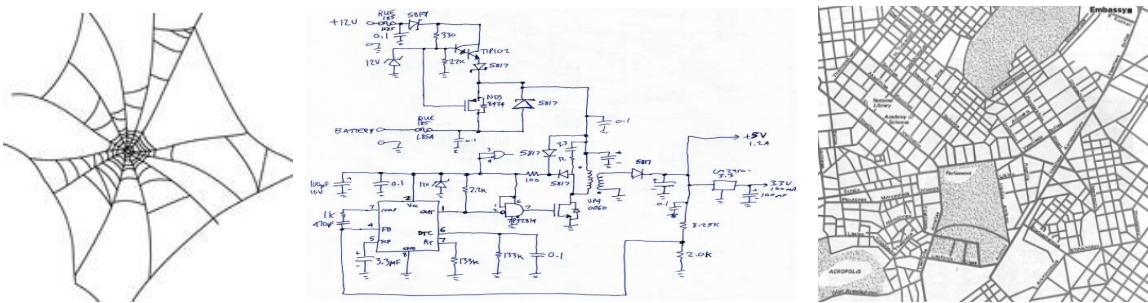


Fig 4: The web⁷

Secondly the line spreads out, branching off in many directions, the meandering route demonstrating that it is not one line, but has two dimensions, splitting off, multiple lines move outwards simultaneously. It becomes a map, lines spreading out all over the city, growing, expanding across space. If the line is history, the web is geography. We move from time, to space. The outward sprawl of London is considered, its width and length, London as an intricate spiderweb. The spatial implications of the Postal Map will be considered: how the Map drew space; how it connected people, who it connected, where they were; and what the boundaries it drew around and within the city, meant.

⁷ Images from: <http://www.gograph.com/vector-clip-art/cobweb.html> (left); https://www.pjrc.com/mp3/schematic_rev3.html (middle); http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/world_cities.html (right). (Accessed 01/01/17)

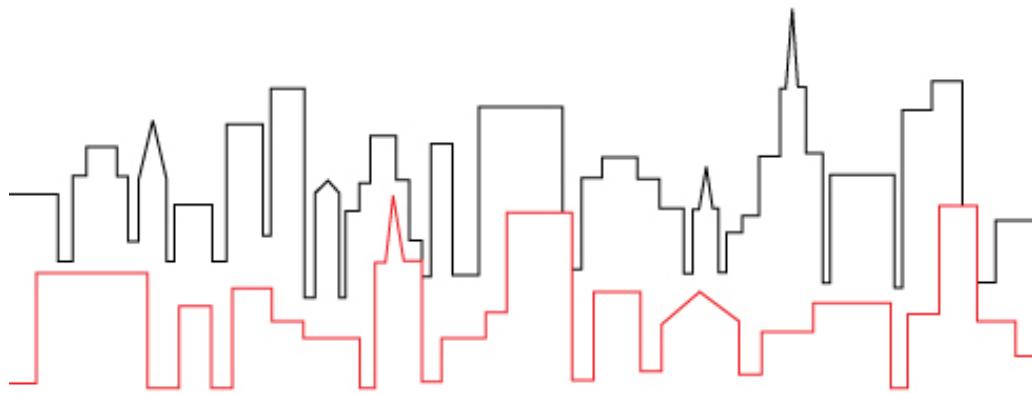


Fig. 5: The City⁸

This multiple set of lines stretching across space, within time, are then given a third dimension. They are no longer flat on a page, a new dimension is formed as buildings grow up from the ground towards the sky, tunnels are built below the city, stretching down, and trains, ships, mail carts, messengers move around this three-dimensional site. Buildings grow along routes – postal buildings and others: railway stations, places of business, new homes. The third focus is architecture and the structures and ephemera of the built environment, and how their development was influenced by postal communications.

⁸ Image from <http://www.wikihow.com/Draw-a-Cityscape> (accessed 01/01/17)



Fig. 6: The solid city, melting⁹

Finally, after constructing this fully-formed, three-dimensional, dynamic, modern city, with buildings and infrastructures in place, the next stage is to witness the crumbling of this city before our eyes. The last stage deconstructs the city, sees it “melt into air”,¹⁰ analysing the perception of the city by those people experiencing it every day. This is the cognitive space of the city, the perceived and experienced city: what made the city ‘modern’ in the minds of those in the city.

A multi-disciplinary approach is rendered with some order, with various techniques used to understand:

- A temporal narrative of the city,
- The way the spatial geography of the city was described,
- The physical buildings and infrastructures of the city, and
- The lived experiences of its people.

⁹ Image from: <https://versouk.wordpress.com/2009/11/03/blueprint-reviews-marshall-bermans-on-the-town/verso-9780860917854-all-that-is-solid-melts/> (accessed 01/01/17)

¹⁰ Marshall Berman, *All that is solid melts into air: the experience of modernity*, N.Y.: Simon and Schuster, 1982. The concept is from Marx, originally.

Chapter Synopsis

The thesis is divided into four chapters, each with their particular subject matter, approach, and argument. They are designed to be read consecutively and to gradually build to a final picture. It should be noted that the thesis deals both with the actual Map itself, and a set of reforms that went with, and were enabled by, the Map. These reforms include the division of London into ten separate post towns, and the increase in daily postal deliveries in London.

Chapter 1

The first chapter, '*History: The Biography of the London Postal Map*' is a biographical document, giving a narrative of how the map came into being. To argue for the importance of the London Postal Map and related reforms, we first need to set out what it was.

The chapter sets the scene for the Postal Map, looking at contexts of the early Victorian period, an era of great reforms. It describes the need for the reforms that were brought in by the Postal Map, and introduces the main characters in its story. The story of the Map was not straight-forward. Spanning a period of over twenty years, the narrative of the introduction of the Postal Map explains the various twists and turns in its story. When we eventually reach the Map's introduction, the chronological journey slows, and the chapter focuses on 1854-57 when the Map was introduced, giving details about the reforms that took place. Along this narrative route, causal factors are accounted for, the immediate effects of the Map are given, and an initial assessment made about the successes and limits to the reforms. The chapter argues that a form of modernity introduced by the map, including speed of service, cheapness, regularity, which was achieved through taking out inefficiencies.

Chapter 2

The Chronological structure presented in chapter 1 is left aside for a moment. Chapter 2, '*The Image of the Postal Map: A Vision of Modernity*', focuses on the map as an object and how it described London on paper, looking at its visual properties, its form, its materiality, the way it was made, how it circulated and was used. This chapter argues that the form of the Map suggested possible functions it might have had. It states that a visual expression of modernity was provided by the map, relevant because a part of modernity is its being *understood* as modern, a conception of modernity. Maps have powers of persuasion, they are not neutral, and the London Postal Map persuaded its viewers of the system's modernity through its form, which exudes rationalization.

Chapter two explains the Map's context within a history of mapping in London, which in the period had a crucial link to both observing London, and planning London. It considers one of the most fundamental, and distinctive, elements of the Map: that it is designed to make London look circular, exploring what it might mean to conceive of a city in this way. The frames of reference for the chapter are geographically sprawling and chronologically non-linear. The text uses mapping theory to understand how the Map both reflects, and creates the city, arguing that this creative act was 'modern'.

Chapter 3

The third chapter is titled, '*Effects of the Postal Map Part 1: Speed of Communications, the People Who Created it, and the People Who Used it*'. The chapter understands that introducing a 'modern' system is not the end of the story, and asks what impact did that system have? It begins by looking at the network of the letter post that developed in this period, and how that network allowed for mail to be delivered at high speeds.

This chapter is a consideration of the way that the London Postal Map was experienced. It considers the experience of the people who worked for the postal system in London, and how their experiences changed after the introduction of the Map. Then it considers the experience of the people using the post, taking a case study from one geographic

area: the City of London, and one industry: financial services. It takes as its source material the letters of many users of the post in London. It partners the new speed of communications up with the operations of the financial services industry in the City, which was, simultaneously to the developments in communications, itself quickly developing in a newly deregulated environment.

Taking this investigation further, we consider what this network meant *for* London: how it allowed for modern developments in the city's economy. This was a city that was developing as a financial centre, with an economy based less on things than on words. Good communication was key to the way that London developed, but historically the letter post has been missing from histories that seek to understand this.

Chapter 4

Titled, '*Effects of the Postal Map Part 2: Place-making, the Built Environment of London, and Conceptions of the City*', the fourth chapter takes as its focus the three-dimensional city, questioning how the Map had an effect on the buildings and streetscape of London, and on the people in that city. Whilst the second chapter looks at London from above – a god-like, omniscient view - this chapter concerns itself with the 'street-level' view of London as seen by the people who experienced it.

Firstly it looks at Post Office buildings in London, considering the way in which the Postal Map might have encouraged a huge growth in postal buildings in the city, which served the new system. It also looks at the streetscape of the post, including objects such as pillar boxes, and street signs. The question of street signs, along with street naming and house numbering, gives a real insight into the attempts of the state to bring about a rational system for organising London- and the limits to this ambition. The chapter states that the Map provided a modern streetscape for London, and altered conceptions of the city in the mind of Londoners, providing a modern framework through which they could make sense of the city.

Then the piece carries on its chronological journey after the Map was introduced, considering the fact that the Map was not one object set at the moment of its introduction, but was rather an idea that altered over and over again over time, reconstituting itself when politics dictated or demand changed. Through looking at changes to the Map we can explore the experience of London from a non-postal perspective. The Postal Map affected the perception of the city, seen by looking in particular at the case of the disappearance of the 'NE' section of the map, in which the residents of that area refused to accept the change of their district from NE to E. The Postal Map had a fundamental effect on the city; influencing the way that its inhabitants understood their city, and identified themselves within it.



Fig. 7: A London street in Hackney, with signs showing the postal district, as all street signs in London do; but this one also has the old 'NE' sign as well.¹¹

¹¹ Author's photograph of a Hackney Street.

4. REVISION

This thesis is an act of revision. In its most simple form it asserts the importance of the London Postal Map to the development of the city. The setting is both the physical built environment, and the intangible cognitive space, of London. The Map introduced a form of modern communications in what was, at the time, the largest city in the world.¹² However, the Map has not generally been considered by historians to be a crucial part of the narrative of London's transition to modernity in the Victorian period.

There are very few references in history to the Postal Map, despite the fact that it was used by hundreds of thousands of people across the capital every day. If the 'Maze of London' image is a symbol of a hidden infrastructure that acts to make sense of the city, so too it is a symbol for this research, which aims to reveal a history of the city that has previously been hidden. Frequently in research I have witnessed the Map itself pulling away from historical investigation – it operates in a world where it is simultaneously ubiquitous, but errant. One of the reasons the Map is such a compelling object is its status within London, which moves between being utterly fundamental and completely forgotten. There are very few archival sources that deal specifically with the Map itself. Perhaps the Map too is a maze within the maze of London, and the task is to explore the subject in many different directions.

Where historians consider communications as causal factors in the incredible growth of London, the systems referenced are the well-known and well-researched railways, and the telegraph.¹³ The workings of the postal system however are a mystery, despite the fact that it operated effectively to provide communications to millions of people, and employed a huge body of staff. If the Map does represent a significant aspect of the

¹² 'The sheer physical growth of London on the ground, and the huge accretion of people sucked into it, were probably the dominant facts in contemporaries' minds, at least from the 1830s on. In 1800 London's population was probably just larger than that of Paris, its close rival. By 1900 it was two and a half times greater and London was incomparably the largest city the world had ever seen.' Jerry White, *London in the Nineteenth Century: 'A Human Awful Wonder of God'*, London: Jonathan Cape, 2007, p. 3

¹³ In addition, the rise of popular press and broadsides is also described as 'communications' in this period; see for example, Victor E. Neuberg, 'The Literature of the Streets', in H. J. Dyos and Michael Wolff (eds), *The Victorian city: images and realities*, 2 vols, London & Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973, p. 191.

development of the city, why it is absent from history requires consideration. To do this, it is important to state the extent to which the Map is missing currently in the literature.

In the recent *Masters of the Post*¹⁴ Campbell-Smith referenced the division of London into postal districts in 1856 as part of a roll-call of reforms by Rowland Hill:¹⁵

The list of advances made under Hill's leadership is a long and remarkable one [...] Within the capital, which accounted for roughly a quarter of the Post Office's business, the old distinctions between the Inland, Foreign and District Posts were finally scrapped. All three were subsumed within a new Circulation Office, headed by a Controller of the London Postal Service, whose territory was organized round ten new districts. This ended (not before time) the need for St Martin's-le-Grand to be treated as a central clearing house for letters posted within the capital to a London address. The districts were named in relation to their compass bearings from St Martin's – thus, the Westminster area at the heart of the capital was South-West, the City of London on the doorstep of St Martin's was East Central, and so on – and were instantly known to all by their initials. The resulting letters (SW, EC, E, N, NW, W, WC and SE – plus NE and S, which were soon amalgamated into their neighbours) remain the basis of London's postcodes to this day.¹⁶

Masters of the Post thus hints at the significance of the London service by including it in this list of reforms, but goes no further; this passage is the only reference to the changes of 1856. That the Map itself is not mentioned by name as a key tool in this process of reform is fairly representative of the way in which these changes have been discussed by historians. Of these, Martin Daunton's *Royal Mail: The Post Office since 1840* gives the most detailed description of the London Post reforms to date, describing the reforms as a major improvement to the service.¹⁷

¹⁴ Duncan Campbell-Smith, *Masters of the Post: the Authorized History of the Royal Mail*, London: Allen Lane, 2011. This is the Royal Mail-commissioned official history of the Postal Service.

¹⁵ Hill introduced the Postal Map, and will be a key figure in this thesis.

¹⁶ Campbell-Smith, p. 146-7

¹⁷ M. J. Daunton, *Royal Mail: the Post Office since 1840* London: Athlone, 1985

The London Postal District is tackled briefly in an article by Lesley Clarke, which discusses the design of the postcode system,¹⁸ and Raper, Rhind and Shepherd give a short history of postal districts in London and postcodes.¹⁹ A more comprehensive reading is given in an article for the London Topographical Society, *The London Postal Districts*, by Simon Morris,²⁰ which asserts that the postal districts are worthy of study,²¹ but does not pursue analysis of the Map's effects to any great extent.

The lack of advocacy of the importance of the Map means that even in places where one might expect to see its presence, it is absent. Peter Whitfield's *London: A Life in Maps*, for example, describes many maps and panoramas of the city from 1550, but with no London Postal Map.²²

The absence of the Map is not only an omission; on occasion it leads to historically inaccurate claims being made. The Whitfield book is a case in point: Whitfield claims that the London County Council (LCC), established in 1889, represented 'the first, historic recognition of London's identity beyond the City and Westminster',²³ misrepresenting both the absent Postal Map which did this 33 years earlier, and the LCC. Another example where a lack of historical presence of the Postal Map results in misleading claims is found when Campbell-Smith describes the introduction of numerical sub-divisions (E2, SW7, etc.) to London in 1917. He discusses male staff in the Post Office being unhappy with women's role during the war:

it nettled establishment staff to hear the 'temps' – seven out of ten of them women – praised for their rapid mastery of tasks supposedly needing a long apprenticeship. Work genuinely requiring years of experience had in some instances been demystified to suit the

¹⁸ Lesley Clarke, 'The Power of the Postcode', *British Philatelic Bulletin*, vol. 30, no. 7 March 1993

¹⁹ J. F. Raper, D. W. Rhind and J. W. Shepherd, *Postcodes: the New Geography*, Harlow: Longman Scientific and Technical, 1992. This book came from a government report into the use of postcodes to map social phenomena as a national data set. They take a geographical perspective, placing the postcode in a position of importance as a tool for data analysis alongside the Ordnance Survey.

²⁰ Simon Morris, 'The London Postal Districts', *London Topographical Society Newsletter* no. 29 November 1989

²¹ "by reason of their permanence and prominence the postal districts have become a permanent feature of London topography, and an essential element in every Londoner's mental map". *Ibid*, p. 2

²² Peter Whitfield, *London: A Life in Maps*, London: British Library, 2006

²³ *Ibid*, p. 172

newcomers. (In 1917, for example, London's postal sub-districts had been assigned numbers – as in 'SW6' for Fulham or 'E2' for Bethnal Green – so that uninitiated women sorters could more reliably allocate their mails to the correct districts.)²⁴

However, an exploration of the archive suggests that the employment of women and temporary staff in the war was *the excuse*, but not the reason, for the changes made in 1917 to the postal districts.²⁵ The changes had in fact been suggested before the war but rejected because it was felt the public would not adjust their addressing practices, nor look favourably on the interruption to service that the changes would entail.²⁶ However, the authorities at the Post Office felt that, in wartime, the public would react differently: 'the recognition by the public of the disturbance of ordinary Post Office arrangements brought about by the war, and the consequent inclination to accept without complaint changes tending to lighten the pressure, seem to provide a favourable opportunity to introduce the simpler form of address in which the name of the sub postal District would be superseded by a number'.²⁷

The role performed by this research therefore is a task of revision.²⁸ Within the fields of both postal histories and histories of London, the part played by the reforms to London's postal service and the London Postal Map, that has previously been overlooked, will be demonstrated to be significant.

²⁴ Campbell-Smith, p. 250

²⁵ POST 30/4010: *London Postal Service: letters for London Postal Area, simplified address, Part 1*. See the 'Women and War' section of Chapter 4.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ It should be noted that the texts outlined here do, very occasionally and briefly, address certain issues that will be covered in more detail in this thesis. Lesley Clarke, for example, refers to the context of London's growth in the period, which "was so rapid during the early part of the nineteenth century that the Post Office had to regard the city, for the purposes of sorting mail, not as a single town, but as many smaller ones". See Lesley Clarke, 'The Power of the Postcode', *British Philatelic Bulletin*, vol. 30, no. 7 March 1993

The Map in Primary Sources

Primary archive sources specifically relating to the London Postal Map are rare.²⁹ The collections in The Postal Museum where the Map is held are vast, but aside from the Map itself, there are very few manuscript sources that refer directly to it. The extent to which this is the case is at times laughable- it seems almost deliberate, the Map avoiding the glare of investigation in any way it knows how. Examples of this will be highlighted, and include the official report and evidence from the Post Office Committee that considered the introduction of the Postal Map having gone missing; and Rowland Hill, who devised the Map, deciding to stop writing diary entries just at the moment the Postal Map was considered. Even the way the Map has been catalogued and organised in the archive seems to reject investigation: it has been moved away from any files that might relate to it, and is placed in a ‘maps’ series along with other maps, most unrelated to it.

However, although a London Postal Map archive is not forthcoming, there are many sources that relate to it in some way in the archive, not collected into one group, but found among all sorts of different archive collections. What emerged, eventually, was a set of disparate sources, which have been put together here to present a specific argument.

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²⁹ The point is important. As an historian, one clear signpost for what to study as an historical topic is the archive relating to that subject. Extant archives beg investigation; their materials often will have been kept for a reason, which may be considered to be historically significant.

Lack of consciousness about the Map starts from the very beginning of its history.³⁰ Rowland Hill, the Victorian civil servant extraordinaire who was instrumental in bringing the Map into being, began the trend of banishing the Map from history. Hill reformed the Post Office in the nineteenth century, most famously through the introduction of the ‘penny post’. Rarely one to play down his own achievements, he nonetheless became coy when discussing the reforms visualised by the Map in his autobiography.³¹ He refrained from providing the reader with detail on this account, declaring the reforms to be too complicated to explain.³²

Therefore Hill, the man most closely associated with the introduction the Postal Map, advised that a history of London’s reforms should not be attempted. This history was never explained, and so we cannot be clear about Hill’s own process for instigating unprecedented levels of fast communications in London. Thus the beginning of what is now a well-established historical tradition of *not* talking about the London Postal Map. It was not that Hill was modest, he was happy enough to discuss his other achievements and to lay out his story for posterity in relation to the penny post.³³ The very act of Hill signposting future historians away from the Postal Map is revealing; it perhaps was a reason for historians to be less than probing about this history, happy to simply retell a well-known narrative, following Hill’s guidance and focusing on the penny post reforms over anything else.³⁴

³⁰ In 1917 the Postal Map was amended to include sub-divisions of its districts. In designing these changes, officers at the Post Office undertook the task of researching how the Map had originally been put into place. In doing this, they discovered that the main papers relating to the creation of the districts ‘have unfortunately been lost’. Minute dated 30th August 1917. POST 30/4011: *London Postal Service: letters for London Postal Area, simplified address, Part 2*

³¹ Predictably, the actual map itself was not mentioned at all in his biography.

³² Hill stated: ‘to obtain rapid intercommunication between the different parts of the metropolis, required changes so complicated, that their details could not be set forth without wearying the reader’ Sir Rowland Hill and George Birkbeck Norman Hill, *The life of Sir Rowland Hill and the history of the penny postage. By Sir R. Hill and his nephew G.B. Hill*. London: Thos. De La Rue and Company, 1880, p. 271

³³ On the death of Hill’s father, he stated the following in his Journal: “He died apparently without any pain about half past eight in the evening [...] Nothing was so acceptable to him, even up to the time of my visiting him last night, as an account of any improvements in progress in the Post Office” Journal entry for 13 June, 1851. POST 100/10: *Rowland Hill’s Post Office Journal*, 11 Apr 1850-29 Oct 1851

³⁴ One method of history is to follow what people of the time pointed out as important. Richard Price warns against considering the developments from the Victorian period to the early twentieth century as a linear march of progress: “the habit of treating the nineteenth century as if it were prefigurative of the twentieth century is a proclivity that has its origins in the Victorian times. The idea that the early nineteenth century was the moment of modernity, the turning point from the “old” world to the “new”, is not an invention of historians. It was an invention of the Victorian intelligentsia.” Richard Price, *British society, 1680-1880: dynamism, containment, and change*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

This is the first instance in a long line of missed opportunities for exploring and understanding the history of the Map. It then drops out of history, and historical accounts of London's past fail to investigate the huge effects of rapid communications in the form of letter post.

It can be considered too, *why* it might be that Hill did not want to explain the London Postal Map. Given Hill's success in achieving reform to the London District, it is tempting to see the reforms in a simple, linear narrative. However, the introduction of the Postal Map was by no means simple. Hill suggested the London reforms in 1837, alongside his uniform penny postage. The penny post was introduced in 1840 – rapid action for a heavily bureaucratized government department – but the London reforms were not implemented until 1856, almost twenty years after they were suggested. This fact alone hints at the slightly complicated true nature of the story, which is the subject of Chapter 1.



Fig 8: Two maps, both used every day by Londoners³⁵

One other potential reason that the Map has not been present historically is the simple fact that it is not now a visible object, reminding us daily of its existence. The tube map, seen every day by Londoners, is an interesting contrast.³⁶ The Postal Map, however, is

³⁵ London Underground map on the left, the 1856 London Postal Map on the right. Image source for the underground map: <https://tfl.gov.uk/maps/track/tube> (accessed 01/01/17)

³⁶ It is of course a fascinating example of diagrammatic mapping and graphic design history, and as such merits attention, as well as being highly visible. See Ken Garland, *Mr Beck's underground map*, Harrow Weald: Capital Transport Publishing, 1994.

present to Londoners, mostly in forms that are not map-based. The Map is largely cognitive, or is represented only in part, as on street signs.

Another reason – paradoxically – might be the Map's ubiquity. Historians often focus on the introduction of something notably different, and in general tend to avoid the mundane, the everyday, the unchanging, and the assumed.³⁷ It could simply be that the division of London into postal districts is so ubiquitous that critical enquiry just is not considered. Everyone in London has an initial in their address; why question something that is seemingly just *there*? If the initials all changed, or suddenly disappeared, perhaps enquiry might be more forthcoming, but for now they are just a part of what makes London, London.



Fig. 9: Images of London Street Signs, all with Postal Districts

Finally, our current context in which the internet has changed the way that we use maps, and the way we use the postal service, is important. The internet (and before it, the telephone) has diminished the importance of the postal service in our lives, perhaps allowing us to forget the impact the post once had. But this thesis asserts that it is important to consider the post not in terms of its current function, but on how it played

³⁷ As ever, the exceptions are crucial. Here they might include the Annales school, whose work I regularly attempted, but usually failed, to read as an undergrad. They dealt with the day-to-day life of people over hundreds of years. See, for example, the work of Fernand Braudel and Marc Bloch. Social historians have also worked to uncover new histories, particularly those of non-elites. And, there has been a trend to write popular history 'biographies' of mundane things, e.g. Mark Kurlansky, *Cod: a biography of the fish that changed the world*, Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf Canada, c1997, a book about a seemingly innocuous thing which highlighted their historical significance.

a huge role in society in the past, even if that is rather alien to us today.³⁸

Having said that, excitement about postal technology was tempered even in the nineteenth century, overshadowed by much newer, more exciting technologies. Although the London Postal Map assisted in bringing modern communications to London, it did not do so in a way that was inherently or demonstrably *new*. Instead, the Postal Map story is one of *old* technologies being used to herald a new, modern age. Rather than concentrate on technology that the Victorians identified as fast, new and modern, this thesis is derived instead from the everyday experience of the Victorians, the majority of whom, whilst astonished by the technology of the telegraph, nonetheless rarely used it, meanwhile, they used the letter post many times a day. Whilst it is wholly understandable why historians have focused on the introduction of new technologies and when studying this period, it misses out something of what it was actually *like* to live then.

The postal system was reformed just as the country was urbanising at a rapid rate. Any causal relationship between the two is not easily drawn out, but certain aspects of the growth of the city mirror developments in the communications system; as indeed did growth of communications mirror in growth in literacy rates.³⁹ As London grew, it did so without there being one government of the city as a whole, planning for the city. Before 1856, London's administration and governance was based on ad-hoc boundaries related to private land ownership, parishes, school board districts, old rural counties, or water boards.⁴⁰

³⁸ In some cases, earlier sources took the London Postal Map into account- for example other Victorian maps (given in detail later, in 'mapping modernity' section), or a book about London architecture produced in the 1950s- see De Maré, Eric, *The London Dore saw: a Victorian Evocation*, London: A. Lane, 1973. The postal map might have fallen out of history over time, as the postal service itself became less used, and no longer a fundamental part of everyday life.

³⁹ Whyman is interesting on the causal effects of literacy rates, stating that the Royal Mail and the practice of letter writing encouraged literacy, rather than the other way around. Whyman, p. 6 and p. 147.

⁴⁰ 'It is hard today to appreciate the state of mind which, prior to the formation of the L.C.C. in 1889, and even more before the creation of the Metropolitan Board of Works in 1855, could allow the metropolis to be governed as if it were a collection of separate and autonomous villages. In 1855 Sir Benjamin Hall estimated that London was governed by no fewer than there hundred different authorities. The confused and overlapping jurisdictions, together with the ineffectiveness or corruption of many of the governing bodies, explains how, with "no government and no idea", early Victorian London "drifted just as events directed, into a cholera epidemic, with a chaos which was too stupid and serious to be allowed to go on." Donald J Olsen, *Town Planning in London. The Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*, New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1964, p. xxii, Quoting Gomme, London in the Reign of Victoria, 1898.

Another reason that the London Postal Map was significant was that it represented wider London, as an entity more than the two cities of London and Westminster, to be understood by the people of London as 'London'.⁴¹ The Postal Map divided and named the districts in the city with the aim of being understood by the public at large, it was never merely a 'back of house' administrative tool. It had to be understood to be effective, because the system depended on the public addressing their letters correctly. To take full advantage of the speed of the service, letters had to include their district name initial, 'E' denoting 'Eastern' district for example. It was therefore significant to the history of London's identity, being an early conception of London as a whole city, defined in a thoroughly public way. Londoners knew they were Londoners if they were included in the Postal Map. The outer boundary was significant, as being inside that line meant a difference of infrastructure and service provision.

So too were the internal boundaries created by the Map, that defined different parts of London as distinctive from each other, significant. From the inception of the Map the *meaning* of the boundaries created were considered as consciously relating to identity. Districts were seen as reflecting the particular character of place.⁴² The effect of the Map on the psychology of Londoners merits a level of investigation. The Map undeniably altered the perception of the city in the minds of all those whom addressed letters. The case of the 'NE' district, covered later in the thesis, shows this dynamic.⁴³

Finally, the Postal Map is also worthy of study for the very fact of its longevity. It established a system still in use today, having been adapted as the basis of the postcode system in the 1960s. The boundaries of the Map may have changed over time, but the place they hold in the mind of Londoners remains. The initials representing certain areas took on significance outside a postal context from the beginning, and this remains

⁴¹ The Metropolitan Police were another example, and they defined London earlier than the Post. Each defined London, but their boundary-making was never comprehensively understood by the general public, in the way that the 1856 London Postal map was. As in Whitfield, histories of London, or mapping, often cite the introduction of the London County Council as the first time that this defining of the city occurs, but that did not take place until 1889.

⁴² The Postmaster in 1855, for example stated, "in determining the district boundaries in London itself [...] we have likewise aimed at keeping together the several parts of any locality which has a connected and peculiar character"

⁴³ POST 30/4011: *London Postal Service: letters for London Postal Area, simplified address, Part 2*

to this day, manifesting itself in, for example, discussions of land values or social data analysis based on postcodes.

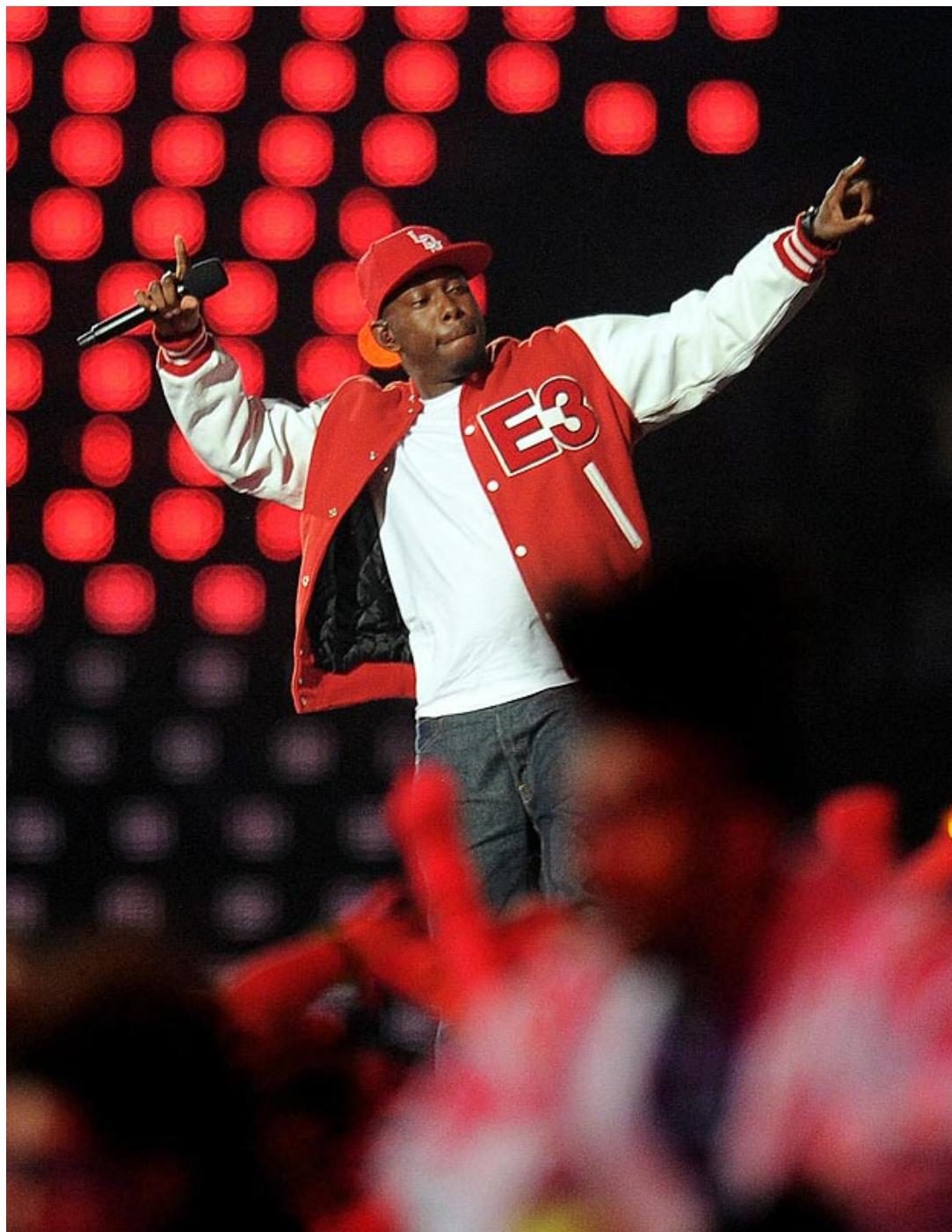


Fig. 10: Dizzee Rascal wearing his postcode, at the opening ceremony for the Olympic Games in London in 2012, watched by 900 million people world-wide. 27 million British people saw the ceremony.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ See <http://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-oly-ratings-day-idUKBRE8760V820120807>, site accessed 20/02/16. The picture source is: <https://www.thesun.co.uk/archives/news/796934/pageantry-parody-and-pistols-it-was-perfect/> (accessed 01/01/17)

In the 2012 London Olympic opening ceremony, Dizzee Rascal wore a jacket during his performance with 'E3' emblazoned on it; he was denoting to the world the fact that he was from Bow, on the doorstep of the Olympic site,⁴⁵ and choosing to do this through the language of the Postal Map. This was not an obscure gesture, it was chosen precisely because it would be understood by the viewers of the show.⁴⁶

These facts:

- that the Map was part of a series of reforms that allowed for an incredibly fast communications system;
- that the Map represented to Londoners their city, defined as a whole;
- and that the Map introduced a new way of conceptualising the city and its constituent parts that is still in place today,

demonstrate that this object had a profound impact on the city. The Postal Map introduced modern services, and modern ways of conceptualising the city.

⁴⁵ The Olympic site itself, reimagined as a new London neighbourhood, now has a new postcode: E20

⁴⁶ See here, also, from The Londonist website, <https://londonist.com/2015/06/got-a-sexy-postcode-then-ruddy-well-flaunt-it> (accessed 14/03/16). Fig. 11: Postcode T-shirts

27 JUNE 2015 | BEST OF LONDON | BY: LONDONIST

Got A Sexy Postcode? Then Ruddy Well Flaunt It

SHARE



5. MAPPING 'MODERNITY'

In order to 'map modernity', the term must be defined. Many texts define a concept of modernity, and whilst they debate nuances around the term's meaning, from them can be found a common understanding of its nature, that is relevant to the Postal Map:

- a definite, distinct and dramatic 'break' from the past⁴⁷ an introduction of the 'new', including - new forms of industrialisation, new forms of economic integration, new urban societies, new social bonds, new identities⁴⁸
- contemporary acknowledgement that such a break was taking place⁴⁹
- discoveries in the sciences and technology⁵⁰
- speeding up the tempo of life⁵¹
- changes to the built environment through human action
- new forms of corporate power and new forms of class struggle
- systems of mass communications
- huge movement of peoples
- heightened economic competition and a commercial ethos within ever-expanding capitalism⁵²

⁴⁷ for example: 'the worst aspects of nineteenth century urban growth are reasonably well known. The great industrial cities came into existence on the new economic foundations laid in the eighteenth century with the growth in population and the expansion of industry. the pressure of rapidly increasing numbers of people, and the social consequences of the introduction of new industrial techniques and new ways of organising work, involved a sharp break with the past.', Asa Briggs, *Victorian Cities*, London: Odhams Press, 1964, p. 18

⁴⁸ Lynda Nead gives this definition of 'modernity': it is understood "in terms of a distinct temporality, and the formation of a particular historical periodisation with its associated social experiences." – i.e., new experiences. Lynda Nead, *Victorian Babylon: people, streets and images in nineteenth-century London*, New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2000, p. 4

⁴⁹ The historian Richard Price asserts this, saying "the habit of treating the nineteenth century as if it were prefigurative of the twentieth century is a proclivity that has its origins in the Victorian times. The idea that the early nineteenth century was the moment of modernity, the turning point from the "old" world to the "new", is not an invention of historians. It was an invention of the Victorian intelligentsia." Price, p. 4.

⁵⁰ The Great Exhibition in 1851 was to showcase these, in a huge palace full of 'modernity'. See- 'It is, of course, true that aristocrats, businessmen, clerks, skilled workers and many others too flocked to the Crystal Palace to revel in the modernity of the age, in its progress, its enlightenment, its expansiveness'.

K. Theodore Hoppen, *The mid-Victorian generation, 1846-1886*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1998, p. 2

⁵¹ A concept from Marx: that technological innovation reduces distance, a 'time-space' compression. In Marx's formulation the time-space compression is linked with the development and continual working of capitalism. See, for example, David Harvey, *Spaces of capital: towards a critical geography*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2001; and Marshall Berman, *All that is solid melts into air: the experience of modernity*, N.Y.: Simon and Schuster, 1982

⁵² See the definition of 'modernity' given by Marshall Berman, who can provide us with detail about the types of everyday experiences new to people in a 'modern' society:

For an history interested in the development of London, to this list of elements of the concept of modernity must be added a link to urban growth. This growth in the London context has been characterised as chaotic, but as we will see, so too were there efforts to rationalise the city amidst all the chaos.

This map below shows London at the starting date, for this thesis, in 1837: a city poised to become modern. The city reached – but did not yet quite engulf – Hyde Park and Regent's Park. The docklands were starting to develop in the Isle of Dogs, and roads stretching through Southwark were starting to become populated with new buildings. In the bottom right hand corner is a new feature – a railway line - a new technology that was to change the tempo of life.⁵³ Speed is a crucial element to the definition of modernity, including the speed of communications. With the ability to communicate easily with other parts of the city, services could be located in separate places. Workers no longer needed to live within walking distance of work, so places of work and places of residence became segregated, with different parts of the city developing different characters to each other; this segregation was another element that defined modernity.

The maelstrom of modern life has been fed from many sources: great discoveries in the physical sciences, changing our images of the universe and our place in it; the industrialization of production, which transforms scientific knowledge into technology, creates new human environments and destroys old ones, speeds up the whole tempo of life, generates new forms of corporate power and class struggle; immense demographic upheavals, severing millions of people from their ancestral habitats, hurtling them halfway across the world into new lives; rapid and often cataclysmic urban growth; systems of mass communication, dynamic in their development, enveloping and binding together the most diverse people and societies; increasingly powerful nation states, bureaucratically structured and operated, continually striving to expand their powers; mass social movements of people, and peoples, challenging their political and economic rulers, striving to gain some control over their lives; finally, bearing and driving all these people and initiatives along, an ever-expanding drastically fluctuating capitalist world market.

Marshall Berman, *All that is solid melts into air: the experience of modernity*, N.Y.: Simon and Schuster, 1982.

⁵³ 'The Railway was the revolutionary invention of the age. For many it marked the true beginning of the nineteenth century. It recast conceptions of time and jettisoned notions of speed.' [...] and 'the bullying power of the railway, the rapidity with which it devoured streets and houses to make way for its triumphant iron road and blistering steam, had a transformative effect on old London, too, in more ways than one'. White, p. 37

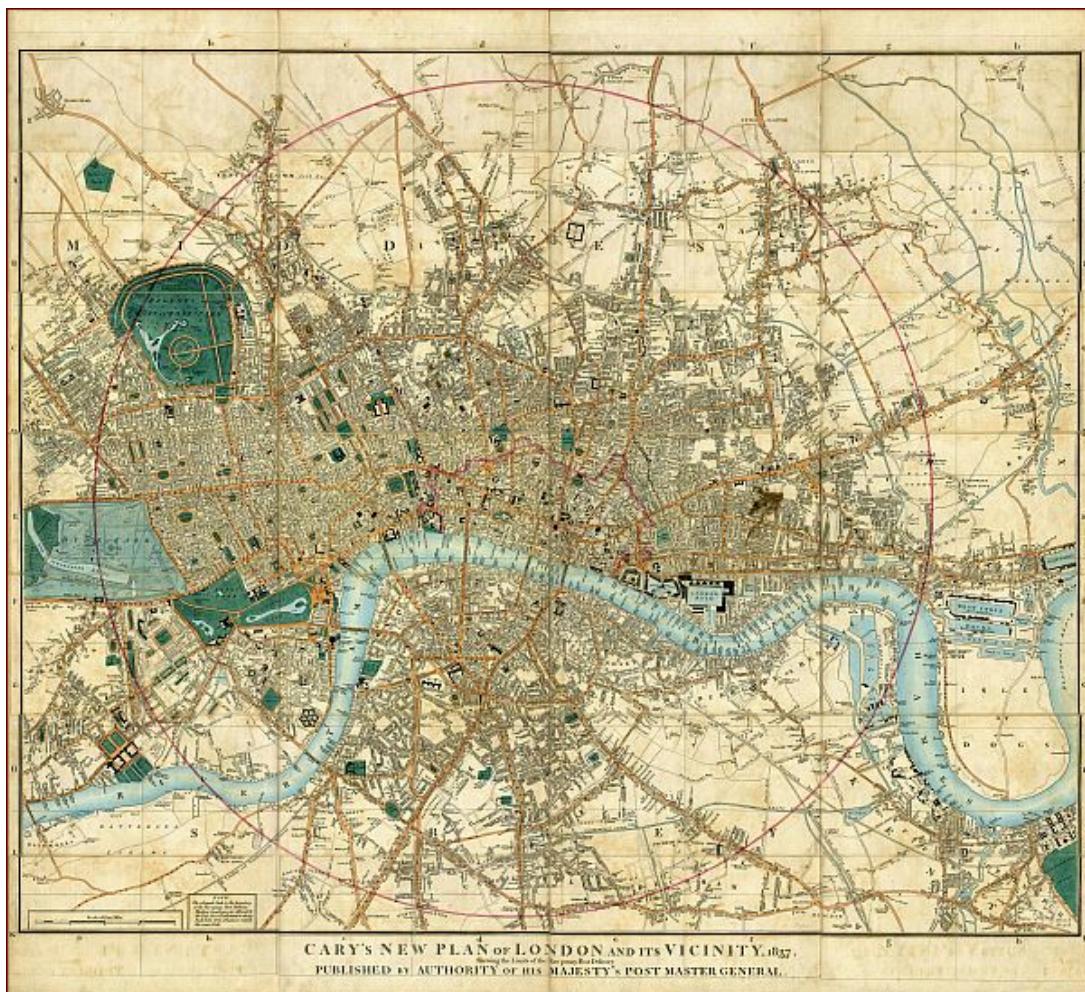


Fig. 12: Cary's New Plan Of London And Its Vicinity 1837⁵⁴

The city was to grow incredibly; the vast majority of the spaces that are here shown as blank would, by the end of the century be filled in, and much more beyond the scope of this map. The very fact of exponential growth is important- London was modern simply by the merit of it being much larger than anywhere else- in this period, it had just become the largest city in the world.⁵⁵

London's own, specific version of modernity has been chronicled by many. Jerry White, for example, lists the ways in which London changed after 1800, as London being: brighter, with many gas-lit streets; greener, with new central London parks; grander due to street widening projects; more mobile, due to growth of the city and

⁵⁴ Mapco, accessed 20/02/15: <http://mapco.net/cary1837/carynb.htm>

⁵⁵ Prior to around 1825 when London became the world's largest city, Beijing had been the largest city in the world. By 1925 New York City had taken over the title. See Dyos and Wolff (eds), p 9. And, in addition: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_largest_cities_throughout_history (accessed 20/02/16)

corresponding improvements in transport; taller, in terms of its architecture and built environment, and lastly, ‘up to date’.⁵⁶ Indeed, one might say, ‘modern’.

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To this understanding of ‘modernity’ comes a periodisation. Defining where the above form of ‘modernity’ begun or ended is not the role of this thesis, but it should be understood that this form of modernity did end. Taking a long view, this thesis runs from the moment just before the map was conceived of, 1830, to the period at the end of the First World War. At this moment the Postal Map was substantially changed, with its districts being sub-divided. It was also this moment that the decline in use of postal technology began; after the war the telephone began to start its ascent in popularity and letter use in London gradually declined.⁵⁷ This thesis, therefore, covers the ‘peak’ period for letter use in London: describing the measures that heralded a massive increase in the use of the letter post, discussing some of the implications of the new letter post system in this ‘peak’, and then trailing off after it hit its peak before the First World War.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ White, pp. 60-65

⁵⁷ The Post Office originally licensed out the telephone service, but it was nationalized in 1911, following which telephone use grew. Campbell-Smith, p. 195

⁵⁸ Daunton p. 426. Although I have reasoned my choice of timeframe here, inevitably periodisation, of course, remains a problem for historians. But, nonetheless, it is a ‘methodological necessity’. Hoppen, p. 2.

Mapping the field

Secondly, mapping modernity involves a process of 'mapping' the field in which this sits. Of the historical texts that this thesis has been guided by, learnt from, and in some cases attempts to revise, Fryer and Ackerman's *Reform of the Post Office*,⁵⁹ which reproduces many manuscript sources from the period, and Daunton's *Royal Mail*,⁶⁰ were particularly important for postal history. Both take different views on Hill; Fryer and Ackerman casting him in a heroic light, whilst Daunton performs a revisionist act, outlining Hill's faults.⁶¹ The role of this thesis, however, is to add to Hill's story, to include the Postal Map within it. In this field, so too were Duncan Campbell-Smith,⁶² Robinson,⁶³ and Douglas Muir's texts useful in understanding the postal context for the Map.⁶⁴ They have something to say in the recurring debate surrounding whether the Post Office's primary aim was as a service to the public, or as a revenue stream for the government.⁶⁵ These texts all dissect the role of our main protagonist, Rowland Hill, as of course did Hill's biographies and indeed his autobiography.⁶⁶ Biographies of other postal figures, including Hill's antagonist in Postal Map matters, Trollope, also proved useful.⁶⁷

⁵⁹ Fryer, G and Akerman, C (eds), *The Reform of the Post Office in the Victorian Era and its Impact on Economics and Social Activity*, 2 vols. London: Royal Philatelic Society, 2000. The Fryer and Ackerman text was consistently consulted as it includes typed versions of many important primary sources, including the full set of Rowland Hill's diary entries. It also includes an Illustrated London News article about the introduction of the Postal Map, and a number of other relevant articles relating to the operation of the London district in the period I am concerned with.

⁶⁰ Daunton's text is perhaps the key text for Victorian postal history, and was consulted regularly in this thesis.

⁶¹ They open: 'Rowland Hill [...] transformed the British postal service from an expensive, eccentric and inefficient tax-raising department into a cheap, easily accessible and remarkably efficient service-providing institution.' Fryer and Akerman (eds), p. xxiii

⁶² Duncan Campbell-Smith, *Masters of the Post: the Authorized History of the Royal Mail*, London: Allen Lane, 2011

⁶³ Howard Robinson, *The British Post Office. A History*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1948.

⁶⁴ Douglas N. Muir, *Postal reform and the penny black: a new appreciation*, London: National Postal Museum, 1990

⁶⁵ There was a theme that ran through this period relating to the lasting debate about whether the post was a service to the public, or a form of revenue-raising for the government. It was telling that in this period the services the post offered grew massively; meanwhile the profit as a % of revenue of the post office (i.e. the sum fed back into the Treasury) decreased, from 86% in 1839, to 29% in 1870, and then 14% in 1910. C. R. Perry, *Victorian Post Office: Growth of a Bureaucracy*, Royal Hist. Soc., 1992, p. 36

⁶⁶ Sir Rowland Hill and George Birkbeck Hill, *The Life of Sir Rowland Hill and the History of the Penny Postage* (Two Volumes), London: Thos. De La Rue and Company, 1880

⁶⁷ For example, N. John Hall, *Trollope: a biography*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1991, and R. H. Super, *Trollope in the Post Office*, Ann Arbor: Michigan U P, 1981

Although the Post Office remains a niche interest within historical texts, some consideration of the post has been included recently in social histories of the period, the most useful being the work of Catherine Golden,⁶⁸ who considers the material culture of the post, Pauline Nestor⁶⁹ who looked at the post from a literary studies perspective, and Susan Whyman's work on the use of the post by working class people in the eighteenth century.⁷⁰ All looked at the role of letters and letter-writing in a social history context, all foreground women in their stories, and in some respects Whyman's work was a model for this thesis in its use of archives of letters as its source material.⁷¹ Two texts that describe the importance of state departments, have been influential in this thesis. Patrick Joyce's work, which does not mention the Postal Map, but which provides a model for this research, analysed the Post Office as a state department whose material culture had an impact on the way people lived their lives.⁷² Similarly, Jo Guldi's⁷³ *Roads to Power*, about the state's role in building the country's road network also demonstrates how to tackle the importance of the state, in a context of a period of a dominance of 'free trade' philosophy.

Victorian postal history, of course, exists within a much broader field of histories of the Victorian period more generally. Of these texts, the publications focused on in this thesis were those that considered the economic history of the period, and the relationship that

⁶⁸ Catherine J. Golden, *Posting it: the Victorian revolution in letter writing*, Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2009, p. 116. She largely focuses on more ephemeral, paper-based products, though, rather than larger street objects as my thesis will include.

⁶⁹ Nestor, P., 'New Opportunities for Self-reflection and Self-fashioning: Women, Letters and the Novel in mid-Victorian England', *Literature and history: a new journal for the humanities*. vol 19; no. 2; 2010, 18-35, Manchester University Press, 2010. Her work is from the field of literary history and criticism, and looks at the influence of the Penny Post reforms on creation of self for women in Victorian England.

⁷⁰ Susan E. Whyman, *The Pen and the People: English letter writers 1660-1800*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009

⁷¹ Whyman looks at what people wrote to each other, how often, how they managed to pay the cost (or avoid the charges) of sending letters, and what kinds of routines the act of letter-writing imposed on people.

⁷² Patrick Joyce, *The State of Freedom: A Social History of the British State since 1800*, Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013

⁷³ Joanna Guldi, *Roads to Power: Britain Invents the Infrastructure State*, Cambridge, Mass.; London: Harvard University Press, 2012, p. 29: "government, rather than private enterprise, supplied the great funds that drove technological innovation" [...] "the story of how the state drove the transport revolution refutes the myth that Britain rode into prosperity in the absence of government". Her work also touches on the difference in philosophies behind infrastructure projects in this period (and later), in which the notion of a universal 'public good' is espoused on one side, and the idea of a profit-making exercise, paid for by only the people who use the infrastructure, on the other. This issue comes up time and time again in texts about the Post Office, as well.

the City had with the empire, such as the work of Cain and Hopkins who discuss the 'Gentlemanly Capitalist', linking the financial economy in the City to the global empire.⁷⁴ The development of the empire and the economy in this period had close links with communications, hence their relevance for this thesis. Alongside Cain and Hopkins, other works which learn from them and add new insight into economic, social, and political developments, such as those of John Darwin, who acknowledges the importance of the financial control exerted from London throughout the world,⁷⁵ but states this did not mean there was one consistent Victorian viewpoint on Empire but rather different geographic and political contexts gave rise to different approaches.⁷⁶ Michael Mann's work on the sources of power in societies,⁷⁷ which describes the mid-nineteenth century period as one where the combined power sources of 'economics-politics' were in the ascendant, and David Priestland's description of power relations based on a 'caste' system, discussing the role of the 'merchant' caste which allowed for the economic growth witnessed were illuminating ways of framing the period in question.⁷⁸

The thesis occasionally focuses in on the workings of the financial City of London area, where there was great use of the letter post, and in providing context for this, Kynaston's comprehensive histories of the City of London,⁷⁹ and the work of Church,⁸⁰ and Charles Jones⁸¹ on business history were crucial. Notably, in the works cited above, the letter post is absent when causal factors for the development of London's economy

⁷⁴ P.J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism: 1688-2000*, Routledge, 2014. Cain and Hopkins, p. 7, and indeed throughout the whole work

⁷⁵ Darwin, p. xi. John Darwin, *The Empire Project: the Rise and Fall of the British World-System, 1830-1970*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009. In this, Darwin suggests that the term 'British Empire' is misleading, preferring instead the term 'British world system'.

⁷⁶ "despite what Cain and Hopkins say about 'gentlemanly capitalism'; "in fact, the relationship between government and business in the imperial sphere were marked not by a sense of common purpose but by deep mutual mistrust and a conscious disparity in outlook and values" Darwin, p. 89

⁷⁷ Michael Mann, *The Sources of Social Power, vol. II: The Rise of Classes and Nation-States, 1760-1914*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012. He identifies four potential sources of power, being ideological, economic, military and political.

⁷⁸ David Priestland, *Merchant, Soldier, Sage: a New History of Power*, London: Allen Lane, 2012.

⁷⁹ David Kynaston, *The City of London Vol.1, A World of Its Own, 1815-1890*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1994

⁸⁰ Roy Church (ed), *The Dynamics of Victorian Business: Problems and perspectives to the 1870's*, Allen and Unwin, 1980

⁸¹ Charles A Jones, *International Business in the Nineteenth Century: the Rise and Fall of a Cosmopolitan Bourgeoisie*, Brighton: Wheatsheaf, 1987

are described. In addition, Asa Briggs was a constant source for understanding Victorian society, and the development of cities in this period.⁸²

Taking as it does the subject matter of a map, this particular history thesis needed to leap outside its discipline a little to understand a variety of ways in which maps have been analysed, for example in the field of geography. Mapping histories, such as popular works by Simon Garfield,⁸³ and Jerry Brotton,⁸⁴ who both delve into the issues of maps being political and cultural products of their particular contexts, and Rachel Hewitt's excellent study of the Ordnance Survey were considered.⁸⁵ In addition, texts that treat historical maps in a more visual manner, showing full colour images of them, such as Peter Barber⁸⁶ or Peter Whitfield's⁸⁷ overviews were important to this thesis, which too aims to describe maps through their images. Cheshire and Uberti's⁸⁸ collections of contemporary maps, or experimental approaches of displaying maps such as the collection of maps by Geoff Dyer et al, *Where We Are*,⁸⁹ or the work that describes artistic experimental mapping, *Else/where Mapping* by Abrams and Hall,⁹⁰ whilst not usually relating to historical maps such as the Postal Map, were important in considering the artistic and experimental potential of mapping.

⁸² Asa Briggs, *Victorian Cities*; Briggs, *Victorian people: some reassessments of people, institutions, ideas and events, 1851-1867*, London: Odhams Press, 1954; and Briggs, *Victorian Things*, London: Batsford, 1988

⁸³ Simon Garfield, *On the Map: Why the World Looks the Way it Does*, London: Profile, 2012. Strangely, when I was doing my MA thesis about typography in road signage, he published 'Just my Type' which included a section on road signage. And then, as I was researching my PhD on the Post Office, his next book was 'To the Letter'- a history of letter writing. One of us is a research stalker; I'm not sure which.

⁸⁴ Jerry Brotton, *A History of the World in Twelve Maps*, London: Allen Lane, 2012

⁸⁵ Rachel Hewitt, *Map of a Nation: a Biography of the Ordnance Survey*, London: Granta, 2010

⁸⁶ Peter Barber, *London: a History in Maps*, London: London Topographical Society in association with The British Library, 2012.

⁸⁷ Peter Whitfield, *London: a Life in Maps*, London: British Library, 2006.

⁸⁸ James Cheshire and Oliver Uberti, *London: The Information Capital; 100 Maps and Graphics that will change how you view the City*, London: Particular Books, 2014.

⁸⁹ Will Gompertz (introduction), *Where we are: a book of maps that will leave you feeling completely lost*, London: Visual Editions, 2013. This included contributions by such diverse writers as the geographer Denis Woods, and the artist Olafur Eliason.

⁹⁰ Abrams and Hall (eds) – *Else/where: Mapping New cartographies of Networks and Territories*. Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota Design Institute; [Bristol : University Presses Marketing, distributor], 2006. It includes examples of artistic practice that use GIS software and other mapping techniques.

The processes of map-making has been considered, via Tooley,⁹¹ Barber and Board,⁹² and Steffoff,⁹³ to understand how the Map's making process was crucial to its design. To this knowledge was added an understanding of the principles behind mapping theory, in which the work of geographers Cosgrove, Matless, Corner and Pickles were used to better analyse the hidden implications of the Postal Map.⁹⁴ Related to the map, was the plan. The proposal in this thesis that the London Postal Map was a form of planning in London was developed through reading a number of texts concerning the history of planning, including Olsen's work on town planning,⁹⁵ Spiro Kostof's work on the semiotics of the plan,⁹⁶ and Choay's work contextualising planning.⁹⁷

This thesis aims to place itself within the context of urban histories, particularly histories of London, of which the starting point is the classic text *Victorian Cities* by Asa Briggs.⁹⁸ His work considers the architecture, plan, and built environment of London interwoven with social, economic and political issues, and considers administrative boundaries and governing institutions in the city – all relevant to this thesis.⁹⁹ Other chroniclers of London, including Tristram Hunt, Jerry White, and Roy Porter¹⁰⁰ have

⁹¹ R. V. Tooley, *A dictionary of mapmakers : including cartographers, geographers, publishers, engravers, etc from the earliest times to 1900*, London: Map Collectors' circle, 1973

⁹² Peter Barber and Christopher Board (eds), *Tales from the Map Room: fact and fiction about maps and their makers*, London: BBC Books, 1993

⁹³ Rebecca Steffoff, *The British Library companion to maps and mapmaking*, London: British Library, 1995

⁹⁴ Cosgrove, Denis (ed), *Mappings*, London: Reaktion Books Ltd, 1999. This work was an introduction to mapping theory for me, but also remained a guide throughout; David Matless, 'The Uses of Cartographic Literacy: Mapping, Survey and Citizenship in Twentieth century Britain', in Cosgrove, Denis (ed), *Mappings*; James Corner, 'The Agency of Mapping: Speculation, Critique and Invention', in Denis Cosgrove (ed), *Mappings*, London: Reaktion Books Ltd, 1999; John Pickles, *A History of Spaces: Cartographic Reason, Mapping, and the Geo-Coded World*, London: Routledge, 2004

⁹⁵ Donald J Olsen, *Town Planning in London. The Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*, New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1964

⁹⁶ Spiro Kostof, *The City Shaped: Urban Patterns and Meanings Through History*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1991

⁹⁷ Françoise Choay, *Modern City: Planning in the Nineteenth Century*, S.l.: Bragiller, 1969.

⁹⁸ Asa Briggs, *Victorian Cities*, London: Odhams Press, 1964

⁹⁹ For example- "no fewer than 250 Acts of Parliament had been raised relating to particular districts of London, and 10,000 commissioners were exercising varying functions and degrees of authority" Briggs, *Victorian Cities*, p. 332

¹⁰⁰ Tristram Hunt, *Building Jerusalem: The Rise and Fall of the Victorian City*, London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2004; Jerry White, *London in the Nineteenth Century: 'A Human Awful Wonder of God'*, London: Jonathan Cape, 2007; Roy Porter, *London: A Social History*, London: Penguin, 2000

also been used for histories of London, and Liza Picard,¹⁰¹ who, notably, has included the postal reforms in London in her text.¹⁰²

For writers who deal with the post from an urban, spatial perspective, we need to look abroad, to David Henkin who analysed post offices in the nineteenth century United States as public spaces.¹⁰³ In the UK, the literature on postal architecture is rather brief, with this thesis having considered the work of Julian Stray,¹⁰⁴ Julian Osley,¹⁰⁵ and James A Norris,¹⁰⁶ but this has been placed alongside works about Victorian architecture more generally, in which postal architecture is often missing.¹⁰⁷ Texts that perform a task of outlining people's experiences in cities, such as Lynda Nead's *Victorian Babylon*,¹⁰⁸ Ben Highmore's writing,¹⁰⁹ and the work of Rachel Lichenstein,¹¹⁰ have given various examples of how the ephemeral and subjective world of human experience of urban environments can be contemplated.

¹⁰¹ Liza Picard, *Victorian London: The Life of a City 1840-70*, London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2005

¹⁰² "There were ten collections a day from local sorting offices and pillar boxes, beginning at 9 a.m. Delivery within the inner London area was promised within one and a half hours, and within a 12-mile radius of Charing Cross within three hours. Mid-Victorian Londoners could expect twelve deliveries, one every hour during the day." Picard, p. 83

¹⁰³ David Henkin, *The Postal Age: The Emergence of Modern Communications in Nineteenth-Century America*, University of Chicago Press, 2006.

¹⁰⁴ Julian Stray, *Post Offices*, Oxford: Shire, 2010

¹⁰⁵ Julian Osley, *Built for Service: Post Office Architecture*, London: British Postal Museum & Archive, 2010

¹⁰⁶ James A Norris, *A Photographic and Cartographic Compilation of London District Post Offices in the Victorian and Edwardian Era*, Carshalton, Surrey: London Postal History Group, 2009

¹⁰⁷ For example, as in Roger Dixon and Stefan Muthesius, *Victorian Architecture*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1978.

¹⁰⁸ Lynda Nead, *Victorian Babylon: People, Streets and Images in Nineteenth Century London*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000

¹⁰⁹ Ben Highmore, 'Cultural history's crumpled handkerchief: Re-presenting the Metropolis: Architecture, Urban Experience and Social Life in London 1800-1840, *Art history*. VOL 25; PART 5; 2002, 702-706

¹¹⁰ Particularly Rachel Lichenstein's 'Rodinsky's Room', with its highly evocative account of the Jewish experience of the East End of London. Rachel Lichenstein and Iain Sinclair, *Rodinsky's Room*, London: Granta, 1999



Fig. 13: Still images from 'N or NW'¹¹¹

These images are stills from the short film, '*N or NW*', made for the Post Office in 1938 by the director Len Lye.¹¹² This thesis does not analyse this film, as it was made in a later period, but it functions here to represent another factor relating to the map: the psychological perspective of Londoners who were having their conceptions of the city shaped by the Postal Map. Perceptions of London and how they were influenced by the postal system will be a key theme within this thesis.

To understand the impact of the Map in the city, this thesis has looked at design histories, and texts about objects, materiality and visual culture including work by Jeremy Aynsley¹¹³ and Penny Sparke,¹¹⁴ and writers who deal with technology

¹¹¹ Image source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-x4fzZ7KTiI> (accessed 01/01/17)

¹¹² Kevin Jackson, 'the Joy of Drooling: In Praise of Len Lye' in Scott Anthony and James G. Mansell (eds), *The projection of Britain: a history of the GPO Film Unit*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011, p. 94

¹¹³ For example, Jeremy Aynsley, *Pioneers of Modern Graphic Design: a Complete History*, London: Mitchell Beazley, 2004. Jeremy was one of my MA supervisors and I would like to thank him for his inspirational teaching.

¹¹⁴ For example, Penny Sparke, *As long as it's pink: the sexual politics of taste*, London: Pandora, 1995. This book has a place in my heart being one of my introductions to the field of Design History.

development such as Standage's writing on the development of the telegraph,¹¹⁵ Kellet's work on the impact of the railway on London.¹¹⁶ The Postal Map has been conceived of as a form of technology, and in thinking through this the work of Bjiker about the 'social' development of the bicycle,¹¹⁷ Giddeon on the mechanical and technical context of objects, were important guides.¹¹⁸ Also consulted were anthropologists and philosophers who consider objects, such as Timothy Morton, and Bruno Latour.¹¹⁹

In addition, of great importance to this thesis has been the work of non-traditional researchers, historians, writers, curators and more, such as Pamela Smith who uses methods of reconstruction in history, Louise Purbrick's interdisciplinary working, and Carolyn Steedman, contemplating on the process of history writing.¹²⁰ Teasley's work that acts out an interplay between history and current policy-making has also been highly important.¹²¹ The work of artists who discuss urban sites, such as Richard Wentworth¹²² and Dunne and Raby,¹²³ and architectural writers who pioneered understanding the city in new ways, such as Borden, Kerr, Pivaro and Rendell's,

¹¹⁵ Tom Standage, *The Victorian Internet: The Remarkable Story of the Telegraph and the Nineteenth Century's Online Pioneers*, London: Phoenix, 1999

¹¹⁶ J. R. Kellett, *The Impact of Railways on Victorian Cities*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969

¹¹⁷ Weibe E. Bjiker, *Of Bicycles, Bakelites, and Bulbs: Toward a Theory of Sociotechnical Change*, Cambridge, Mass.; London: MIT Press, 1995

¹¹⁸ Siegfried Giedion, *Mechanization Takes Command*, New York: O.U.P., 1948 1970

¹¹⁹ Timothy Morton, *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology After the End of the World*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013; Bruno Latour, *Aramis: or the Love of Technology*; translated by Catherine Porter, Cambridge, Mass.; London: Harvard University Press, 1996

¹²⁰ See Smith's 'Making and Knowing' project at Columbia. <http://www.makingandknowing.org> (accessed 11/12/16); For Purbrick, see <http://arts.brighton.ac.uk/projects/traces-of-nitrate> (accessed 12/03/15), and also the talk she gave at the RCA, 14/02/13. The project involves work with historians and photographers to explore the materiality of nitrate, and many aspects of its lifespan as an object – its mining in Chile and the technology, labour, and displacement of peoples that were put in place to undertake the mining, as well as the movement of the nitrates, and their place in British industrialization, and technologies of war; Also Carolyn Steedman, 'What a Rag Rug Means', *Journal of Material Culture*, Vol 3; Number 3; 1998, p. 259-282, Sage Publications 1998

¹²¹ Teasley spoke about this as part of a panel in the Design History Society conference in San Francisco in 2015. *Annual Design History Society Conference, "How We Live, and How we Might Live": Design and the Spirit of Critical Utopianism*, September 11-13 2015, California College of the Arts, San Francisco, California

¹²² <http://www.southbankcentre.co.uk/whatson/history-is-now-7-artists-take-88866> (accessed 12/03/15). This exhibition takes on a quality of collection of hundreds of different fragments of history, placed together to create one overall 'object' that, despite its disparate contents, manages to generate a unifying sense of meaning

¹²³ Anthony Dunne & Fiona Raby, *Speculative Everything: Design, Fiction, and Social Dreaming*, Cambridge, Massachusetts; London: The MIT Press, 2013

Strangely Familiar have also been influential in inspiring a widened scope for this thesis.¹²⁴

The vast majority of the manuscript and unpublished sources used in the text are from The Postal Museum,¹²⁵ with the other major archives used being London Metropolitan Archive,¹²⁶ archives at Bruce Castle, Parliamentary records, Newspaper archives, and the archive of the Bank of England. Of published primary sources, fictional works which dealt with the experience of Victorian London, including works of Dickens and of Trollope, were supplemented by non-fiction, from those dealing explicitly with London, such as accounts of the city and its people by Engels, John Snow, Henry Mayhew, Bagehot, and Booth's Poverty Map work, to more speculative, scientific, philosophic, utopian, and critical works, by the likes of Ebenezer Howard, Joseph Paxton, Charles Darwin, and John Ruskin. And finally, primary material left to us by Rowland Hill, in the form of his autobiography and his journals was considered.

Of the primary sources, the most significant were the postal maps themselves. These are listed in the appendix, but are also used throughout the thesis, guiding, illustrating and even steering the text at certain moments. Original maps in the Postal Museum, the London Metropolitan Archives, the British Library, the Bodleian Library and the Royal Geographic Society were consulted.

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The thesis connects archival materials that have not previously been considered alongside each other to give new insights in a history that is largely revisionist in nature. The Map itself has guided the structure of the thesis. Mapping is a 'fundamentally non-linear representational system', a means of opening up thinking and discussion.¹²⁷ The ambition of this thesis is to combine both the linear structure of

¹²⁴ Iain Borden (ed), *Strangely Familiar: Narratives of Architecture in the City*, London: Routledge, 1996

¹²⁵ Until recently, the British Postal Museum and Archive (BPMA)

¹²⁶ Including records of the Metropolitan Board of Works, and on a larger scale, for its massive business records, which I consulted to use as my case studies of the users of the post in London

¹²⁷ Pickles, p. 209

history writing, and the non-linear nature of the Map, that presents a spatial structure, as a way of opening up the subject.

The research constructs a dialogue within different intellectual contexts, engaging with the current notions of the importance of interdisciplinarity which guide much research today. The making of history is a creative act. Its subjectivity has been long accepted; historiography has charted the acceptance that views presented in history are never neutral, but are always reflective of the particular contexts and personality of the historian.¹²⁸

Given the range of texts cited here, the literary and intellectual context for the thesis is varied, however, the key intellectual place and audience is that of urban histories. This is a postal history, a mapping history, a social history, but, more than any of those, it relates to how London developed as a conurbation; it is a history of London.

¹²⁸ This is also, really, the point that Carolyn Steedman has made in 'What a Rag Rug Means'

6. CONCLUSION

This thesis argues that the London Postal Map formed a crucial part of London's development in the period when London was at its greatest influence in the world. Building from the narrative of the Map itself, the story becomes not just one of a particular form of infrastructure, but a story of the city itself – a portrait of a rapidly modernising metropolis at the centre of a global trading empire. The Map is demonstrated to be a crucial part of the story of London.

In constructing a thesis that borrows from history of technology, social history, architectural and urban planning histories, geography, design history and others, the project aims at gaining a rich understanding of the full spatial implications of this key piece of design: the London Postal Map. An approach is therefore created that is wholly appropriate for the subject matter; histories of cities being necessarily amalgams of various elements, just as cities themselves are.¹²⁹ The first step in this process is to consider the focus of the research, the Map itself, in more detail.

¹²⁹ This point is rephrasing what Traganou states, see Jilly Traganou, 'Architectural and Spatial Design Studies: Inscribing Architecture in Design Studies', *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 22 No. 2; 2009, 173-181, Oxford University Press, 2009

Part II:

Introducing the London Postal Map

CONTENTS

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2. CONTEXT AND FORM: OTHER MAPS – p. 61
3. MAPPING: MAKING THE LONDON POSTAL MAP – p. 70

1. DESIGN HISTORY AND THE MAP

Before we begin to consider the history of the Postal Map, some points about this singular object, and the context in which it is being discussed, should be made. Firstly, to outline the intellectual background for the thesis as coming from a design history perspective. The importance of object-based histories is to be asserted. Secondly, some consideration of the form of the Map alongside its own mapping context, including within Post Office mapping, will be described. Thirdly, an outline of the Map's maker and its making processes will be given. This will build towards some fundamental starting points relating to the Map, including that it was a unique object in many respects, whose importance is to be reflected as this thesis develops.

At the centre of this thesis is one object: the London Postal Map. The practice of introducing objects as sources is well established in the work of museum professionals and design historians. Design History works on the principle of objects being source material for historical thought.¹³⁰ The discipline seeks to consider objects' biography, design, material, usages, placing them alongside science and technology histories to understand technological innovation; and architecture and art to understand visual qualities of objects. The discipline is also linked to that of anthropology, which considers the circulation of goods and meaning of objects through, for example, practices of gift-giving.¹³¹

This thesis deals with the form of the Map in some depth; design historians know well the dictat that 'form follows function' is never simple, analysing both, questioning how the form of the Map came into being, and what effect the Map's form had on its function.

¹³⁰ See the Journal of Design History special edition: 'The Current State of Design History', *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 22, No. 4, 2009

¹³¹ The anthropologist Daniel Miller makes a good point about the study of objects, by comparing it to the study of language: "...no one thought to have an academic discipline whose specific area of study would be artefacts, the object world created by humanity. It could so easily have been otherwise. Consider the degree to which established academic disciplines, from archaeology to architecture, from sociology to design, require theories and perspectives on the material world. If material culture had existed for a century of established study in thousands of colleges, it would have been as taken for granted as linguistics is today.", Daniel Miller, *Stuff*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010, p. 2

Histories which state their method of dealing with the designed material of the past are in some respects marginal to the wider study of history, where use of written manuscript sources retains dominance; but this appears to be changing. More recently the understanding of objects as important sources has had increasing impact on the discipline of history.¹³² A ‘material turn’ has been identified that places objects within the frame of analysis for historians.¹³³

An example can be seen in the work of Patrick Joyce who notes the lack of historians’ treatment of ‘things’ and the material world, and stresses the importance of an object-based methodology within the field of history.¹³⁴ Joyce’s work also includes analysis of the Post Office as a key state agency.¹³⁵ He argues that the Post Office is absolutely the sort of institution that requires analysis of its objects, because it was through these objects that the state held its real power.¹³⁶ In the period before the welfare state, many people may not have had substantial contact with the state, but by writing a letter and posting it within the postal system, millions of people had a daily connection to state bureaucracy.¹³⁷ Joyce considers objects to have agency in people’s lives,¹³⁸ by changing the way people acted, with ‘mediators’ like letterboxes playing crucial roles.¹³⁹ They did so without notice, becoming naturalised.¹⁴⁰ Thus the postal system became ‘a learned

¹³² This is obviously a generalisation – some texts, notably Asa Brigg’s ‘Victorian Things’ have made it into the history ‘mainstream’ bringing object analysis with them. But they are certainly a minority.

¹³³ See, for example, Tony Bennett and Patrick Joyce (eds), *Material Powers: Cultural Studies, history and the material turn*, London: Routledge, 2010. Bennet and Joyce are explicit in their understanding of materials and materiality as being via anthropology, sociology, and Marxism.

¹³⁴ Patrick Joyce, *The State of Freedom: A Social History of the British State since 1800*, Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013

¹³⁵ He asks, ‘what is the state?’, and uses the *things* of the state – its organisation, people and practices - to answer this question, referring to how ‘the state’ was given meaning in everyday life through its objects. *Ibid*, p. 10

¹³⁶ He states, “it is the importance of non-human things and their place in history that needs to be most urgently recognised, for it is through these that power and social relations, and hence the state, are made real.” *Ibid*, p. 10 Joyce understands the post Office as a perfect case study to understand these considerations.

¹³⁷ *Ibid*, p. 25

¹³⁸ With the term ‘agency’ being drawn from anthropology - In particular from Bruno Latour.

¹³⁹ “For a crucial part was played by seemingly unimportant “mediators” like letterboxes, stamps and envelopes, and the “translations” these brought about; and also by the agency of unheralded human beings”. Joyce, p. 58

¹⁴⁰ “Their very reliability, durability, and replicability giving them a self-evident quality which very often masks the fact that they have human designs built into them, even if in practice these designs are constantly thwarted by the agency of their own materialities, as well as by the failings of humans.”, *Ibid*, p. 54

reality'; we 'become habituated to their existence',¹⁴¹ technologies becoming so part of life as to be practically unnoticed.¹⁴²

The discipline of history is not alone in its new-found appreciation for objects. Connectedly, a 'turn' has taken place in the discipline of philosophy, as well through the recent rise of 'Object Orientated Ontologists' (O.O.O.). Timothy Morton, writing about modern "objects" such as climate change, described O.O.O. as a philosophical movement committed to non-anthropomorphic thinking.¹⁴³ He cites Latour's user-network theory, stating that O.O.O. insists 'my being is not everything it's cracked up to be – or rather that the being of a paper cup is as profound as mine'.¹⁴⁴ Alongside this he references Heidegger's 'Tool Analysis', which states that when equipment is functioning it 'withdraws from access': only when a tool is broken does it become 'present-at-hand'.¹⁴⁵ This type of thought can be applied easily to everyday experiences of the 'objects' of the Post Office, whose vast network became most visible to people when it did not meet their expectations. We will see examples of this throughout the thesis.

Steven Connor's work¹⁴⁶ analyses 'everyday' objects: newspapers, rubber bands, buttons, for example, considering how they are used and experienced, including their additional, unintended uses.¹⁴⁷ In his piece on newspapers, for example, he describes their use for wrapping fish and chips, or to light a fire, and more.¹⁴⁸ He sees some objects as symbols; some as having 'affordance', prompting you to act in a certain way; some as 'fidgetables' – things you can play with; and some that are seen as

¹⁴¹ *Ibid*, p. 56; p. 54

¹⁴² The argument is given by Miller as well: objects have a "somewhat unexpected capacity of objects to fade out of focus and remain peripheral to our vision, and yet determinant of our behavior and identity..." [...] "There is a wonderfully felicitous phrase, the 'blindingly obvious'. This implies that when something is sufficiently evident it can reach a point at which we are blinded to its presence, rather than reminded of its presence. One of the problems we have had in persuading people that the study of blue denim is so significant is that its ubiquity seems to make people regard it as less of interest, rather than more of interest" Daniel Miller, *Stuff*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010, p.51

¹⁴³ Timothy Morton, *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology After the End of the World*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013, p. 2

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid*, p. 17

¹⁴⁵ Morton, p. 14

¹⁴⁶ Steven Connor, *Paraphernalia: The Curious Lives of Magical Things*, London: Profile, 2011

¹⁴⁷ His work states that objects conjure up idea of being distinct to human experience, but a 'magical object' is that which "seems to escape its own fortitude, its doughty objectish being-there, to go beyond, or spill to the side of, what it merely is or does." Connor, p. 2

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid*, p. 127

anachronistic.¹⁴⁹ His work becomes a point of entry into thinking about the Map in its distinction between ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ objects, where matter is hard, and information is soft.¹⁵⁰ Connor uses this definition to analyse newspapers, but the analogy with the postal map is easily found: the map as an object being ‘hard’, with the information printed on it ‘soft’.¹⁵¹

Material and visual properties of the Map will be investigated to understand its effects in a much richer way.¹⁵² This thesis is concerned with understanding the development of London, including consideration of the human experience of place. Just as Joyce is interested in the ‘things’ that were part of the state because ‘they help us understand the state as it actually was,¹⁵³ so too should we consider the ‘things’ of the communication system, which help us to understand London as it actually was.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid*, p. 3

¹⁵⁰ “Hard things are physical – stone, water, glass, metal, flesh, and so on. Soft things are soft [...] in the sense that they are the form or the conception rather than the substance of a thing. *Ibid*, p. 120

¹⁵¹ The materiality of paper is therefore important. Connor states, “more than any other matter, paper moves and mediates between these orders of the hard and the soft” [...] “the newspaper actually moves from the soft to the hard, from information to matter, from idea to stuff”. *Ibid*, p. 121

¹⁵² Agreeing with Miller, who stated, “the best way to understand, convey and appreciate our humanity is through attention to our fundamental materiality”. Miller, p. 4

¹⁵³ Joyce, p. 21

2. CONTEXT AND FORM: OTHER MAPS

Postal maps were not working in isolation; all maps have other geographical and mapping contexts. One context for the London Postal Map – whose purpose was to denote new boundary lines around and within London – was the *other* boundary lines shown on maps of London in this period. There were many different types of boundary lines, showing different information in different forms, which the London Postal boundaries had to work alongside. We can see this through, for example, noting other boundaries shown, on the Bacon's Map below which lists county, Parliamentary borough, and Parish boundaries as given alongside postal districts:¹⁵⁴

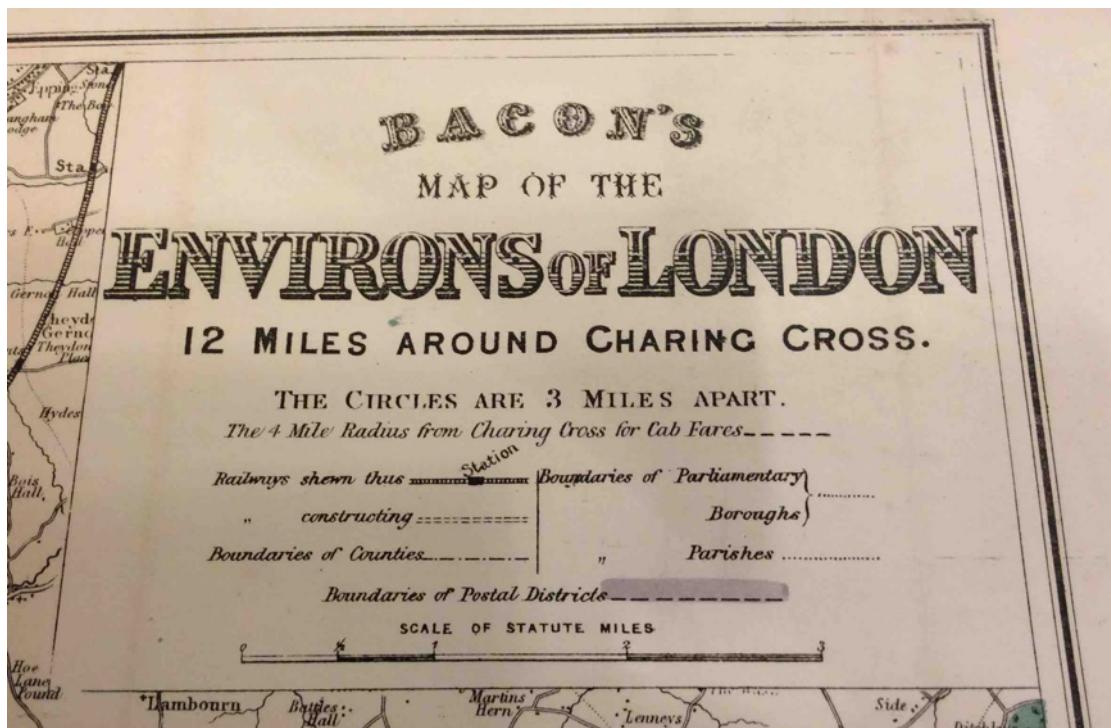


Fig. 14: Bacon's Map, detail showing the different boundaries drawn on the map¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁴ Bodleian Library: C17:40 (17): *Bacon's map of the environs of London 12 miles around Charing Cross. [Together with] Guide [cartographic material]*, [S.l.]: G.W. Bacon & Co., 1870

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

For the London Postal Map of 1856, one important context was the history of Post Office mapping prior to 1856; a survey therefore follows, to explain, visually, where the Postal Map came from. A distinctive design from c.1770 shows all the post towns in England and Wales, with connecting routes shown, and numbers given on each route, denoting distances. It could be used to calculate a distance from any one place to another:



Fig. 16: A new and correct post map of the great and cross roads through England and Wales, c.1770¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁶ POST 21/157: 'A new and correct post map of the great and cross roads through England and Wales. Laid down from the surveys hitherto made describing the cities, boroughs and market towns in each county ...', c.1770

A number of country-wide postal maps were produced for the different government Committees in the 1830. For example, this one from 1838 shows distances via circles radiating out from specific places:

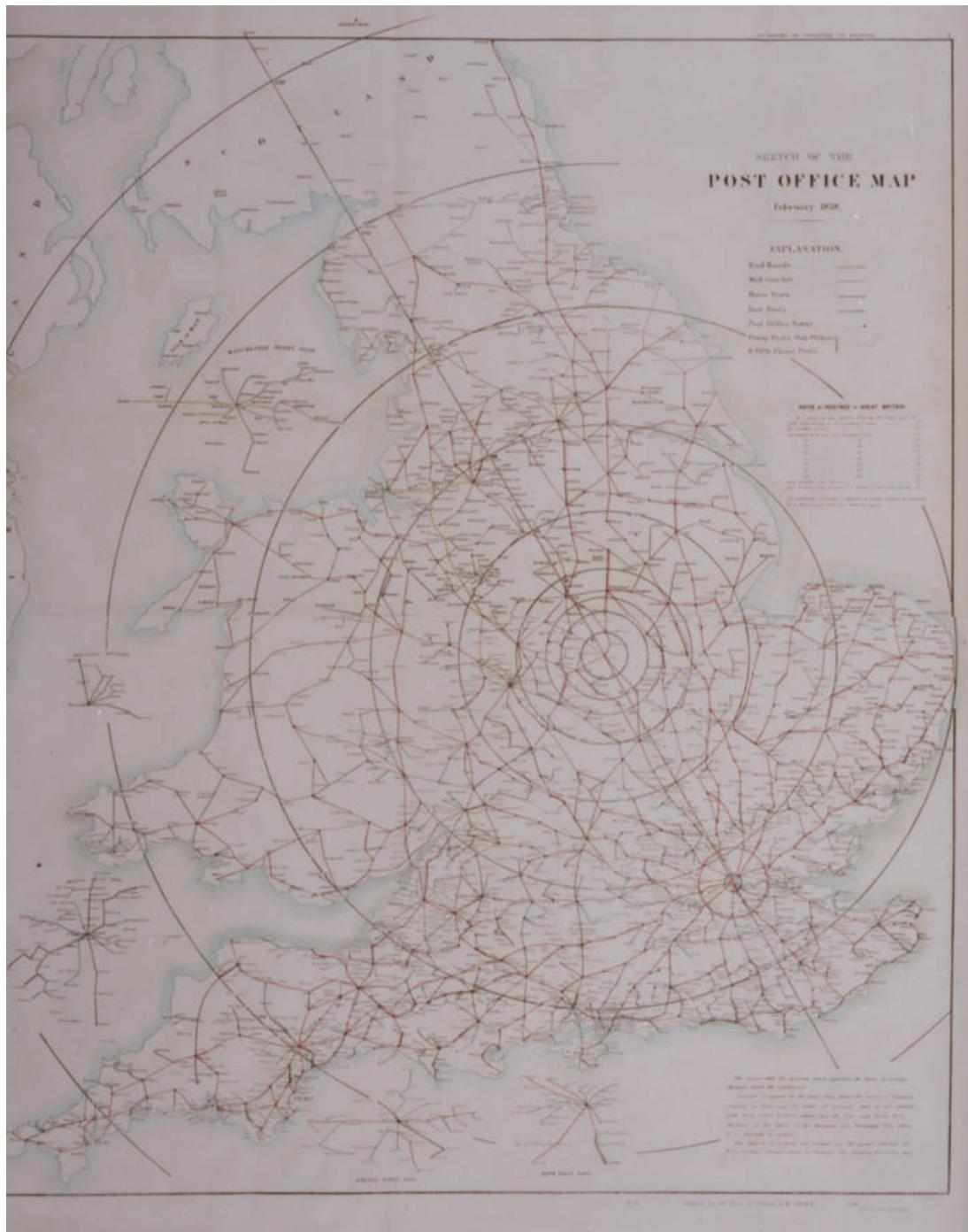


Fig. 15: Post Office Map, 1838¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁷ POST 21/156: 'England & Wales, Sketch of the Post Office Map' [extracted from the 2nd Report of the Committee on Postage], Feb 1838

There were also many pre-1856 maps featuring London, showing us the extent to which the 1856 map diverged from form and function of the usual way that the Post Office represented London. Take for example Cary's Pocket Plan, from 1791.¹⁵⁸ Cary's maps were a common 'type'; many versions of effectively the same map appeared in this period, year after year.¹⁵⁹ The 1790s saw changes and expansions to the London postal system which were still in effect by the 1830s. The only boundary marked out is that of the City, by a red line. Information given below the map includes postal fares, alongside the cost of fares for Hackney Coach rides.¹⁶⁰



Fig. 17: Cary's Pocket Plan¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁸ POST 21/54: 'Cary's New Pocket Plan of London, Westminster and Southwark with all the adjacent buildings in St George's Fields &c. &c. to which are annexed (from Authority) the exact Boundary of the Rules of the King's Bench Prison; the situation of the Receiving Houses of the General Penny Post Offices; Reference to the Public Buildings. See also a correct List of Upwards of 350 Hackney Coach Fares', 1791

¹⁵⁹ Another example is the British Library-held map, 'Cary's New Pocket Plan'. On the top left corner it shows list of receiving houses of the 'GPO in Lombard Street', named and numbered – e.g. 'Berkeley Square next Hay Hill No. 2', and along bottom are listed the 'Penny Post receiving houses' – divided into Westminster and City, with list of c.136 houses. See also the Appendix for many more.

¹⁶⁰ Contrast this to the coloured 1814 Bowles map, featured in chapter 1.

¹⁶¹ POST 21/54: 'Cary's New Pocket Plan of London, Westminster and Southwark with all the adjacent buildings in St George's Fields &c. &c. to which are annexed (from Authority) the exact Boundary of the Rules of the King's Bench Prison; the situation of the Receiving Houses of the General Penny Post Offices; Reference to the Public Buildings. See also a correct List of Upwards of 350 Hackney Coach Fares', 1791

Moving forward to 1830 is a map showing all the different postal services operating in London prior to the reforms. Although the map has no scale shown, it is completely different to the Cary's maps, as central London is shown to be very small in the middle of the image, with the counties around it all given; a much bigger, much more comprehensive conception of what 'London' was.

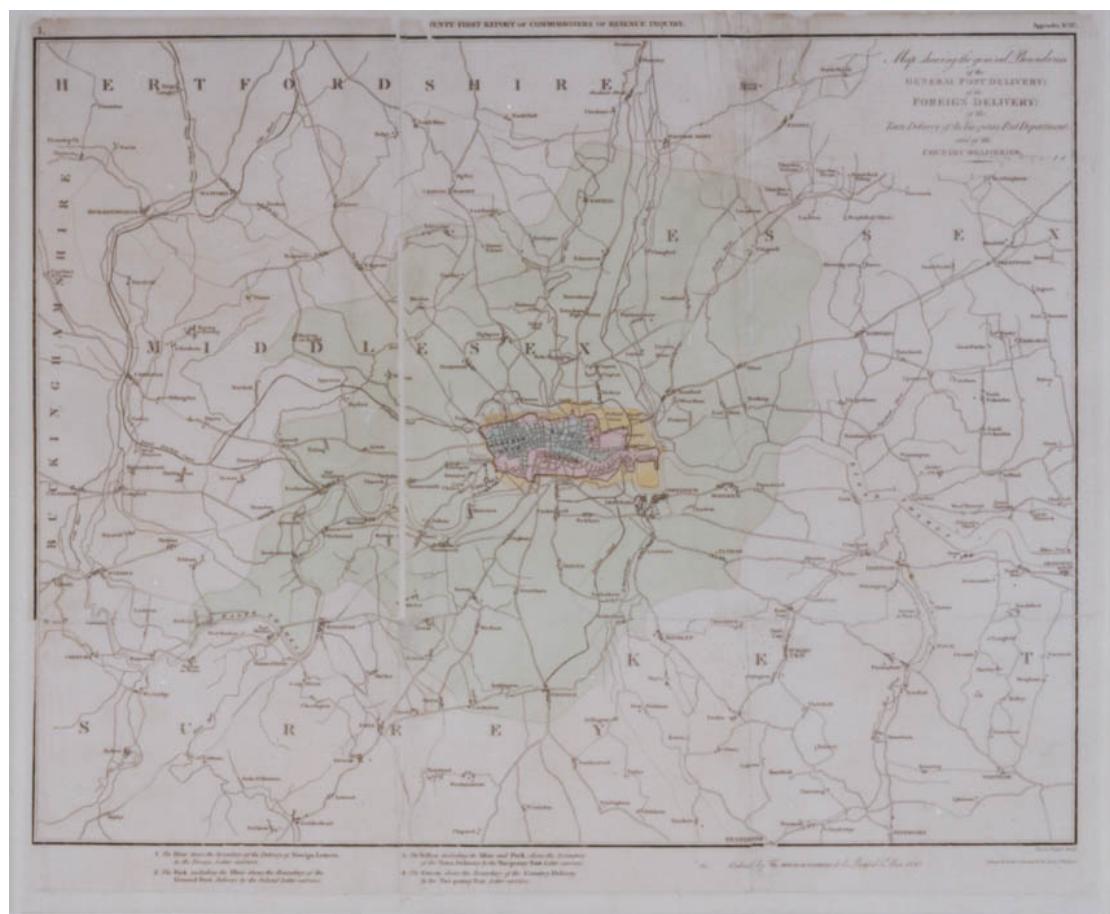


Fig. 18: Map of the different postal services in London¹⁶²

¹⁶² POST 21/56: 'Map shewing [sic] the general Boundaries of the General Post Delivery; of the foreign Delivery; of the Town Delivery of the Two-penny Post Department and of the Country Deliveries' [London], 1830

Another map from 1830 shows a similar large coverage, but from a slightly different perspective, showing 'Rides' – types of postal districts - listed in bottom right-hand corner numbered and colour-coded. A central zone that is not coloured is given in the centre.

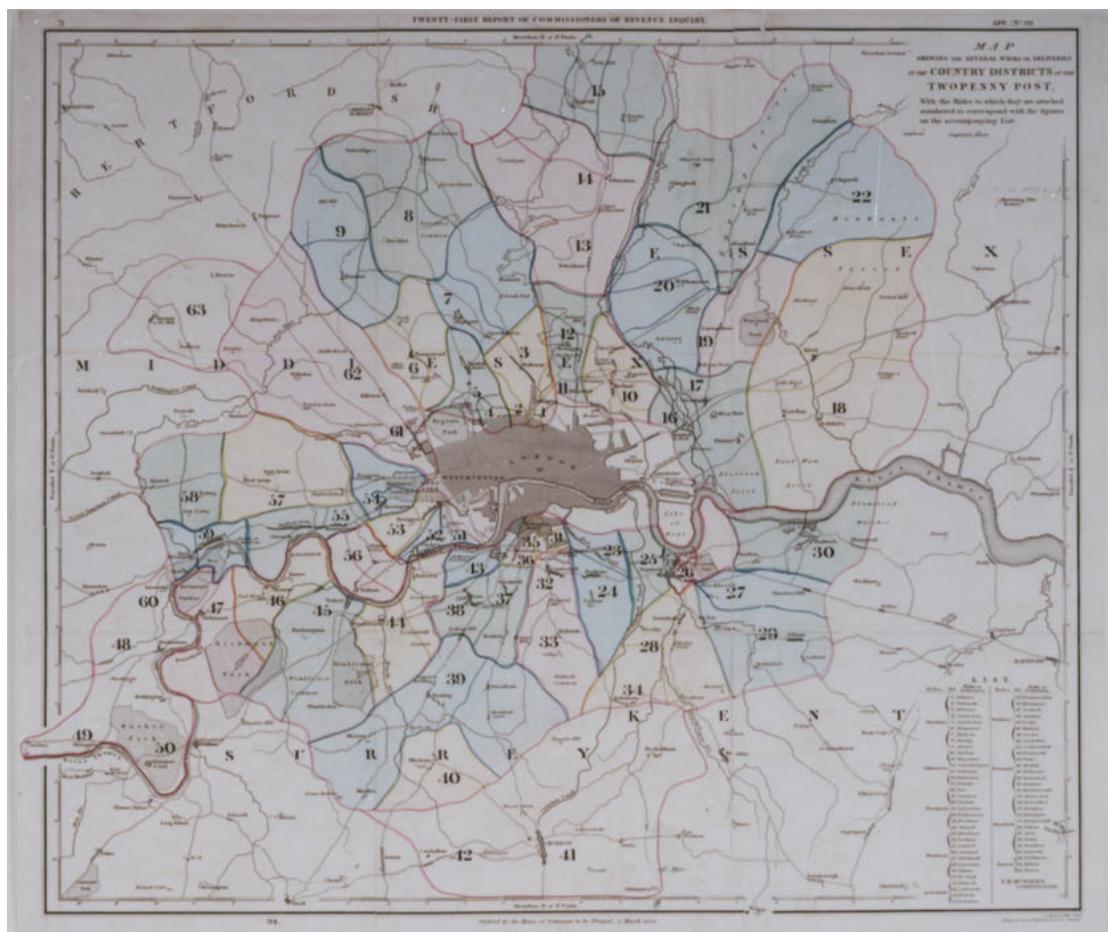


Fig. 19: Map Shewing the Walks or Deliveries¹⁶³

¹⁶³ POST 21/57: 'Map showing the several walks or deliveries in the Country Districts of the Twopenny Post. With the rides to which they are attached numbered to correspond with the figures on the accompanying list' [London], 1830

Then lastly for the pre-London Postal Map maps, one from just before that period, in 1854. It is not a postal map, but a general map of London which contains some postal information. As an object, the map is ‘miniature’ – about 7x7 inches. As this map was pre-1856, no postal districts are given, instead the key boundaries shown here are the county boundaries of Middlesex, Surrey, Essex, Kent.

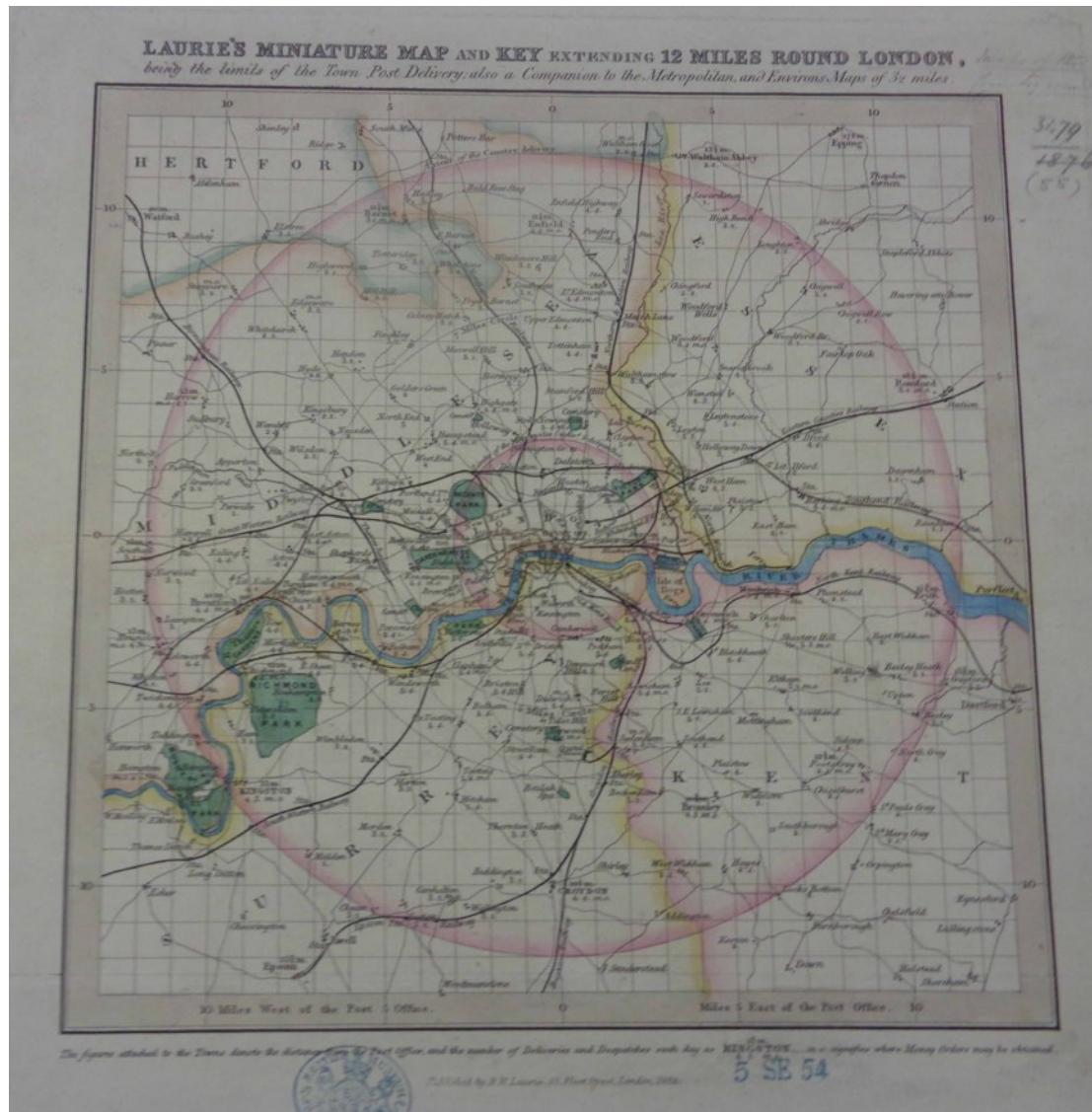


Fig. 20: Laurie's Miniature Map and Key extending 12 Miles round London¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁴ Cartographic Items Maps 3479.(55.): Laurie's Miniature Map and Key extending 12 miles round London, being the limits of the Town Post Delivery, also a companion to the Metropolitan and Environs Maps of 32 miles, London, 1854.

When considering the mapping context out of which the Map came, including looking at other Postal Maps, what is apparent is that the London Postal Map's form was almost unique. For example: the orientation of the map with the G.P.O. at its centre was rare, even for postal maps in this period. The other postal maps published in 1856 or just after, are often made in very strong colours; the London Postal Map was therefore unusual in its rather moderate use of colour.



Fig. 30: Bacon's Map. Whilst the 1856 Map was comparatively moderate in its use of colour, others had no such compunctions. The occasional map appears in the archive like Bacon's map, above: completely flamboyant and erratic in its colour scheme, a kind of map equivalent of the aesthetic experience of the Albert Memorial in Hyde Park. Here the different areas of London that are given in colour-coded shading denote the county boundaries, not the postal districts. To show the postal boundaries, on top of the already colourful map is drawn thick bright purple lines showing the outline of the postal areas. The names of the postal districts are given in bold red capital initials. And the scale of the map, shown in circles radiating out from the centre, are in a thick bright pink.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁵ Bodleian Library: C17:40 (17): *Bacon's map of the environs of London 12 miles around Charing Cross. [Together with] Guide [cartographic material]*, [S.l.]: G.W. Bacon & Co., 1870

The scale of the Map was also highly unusual, with only one other map found in archive collections depicting London as the same size. The 24-mile diameter was very large, and allowed for London to be summarised as a whole, to be seen as complete. This was significant. So too was the way that it described this ‘complete’ London: the most unique feature of the map was that London was visualised as a circular city, bounded in a rather uniform and geometric way. This very rational form marked the London Postal Map out as a map with a specific vision for London. The importance of this unique Map is the focus of this thesis.

These few maps given here are something of a summary of the Post Office mapping context in which the London Postal Map was made. Now, to turn to the actual Map and consider the way that it was made.

3. MAPPING: MAKING THE LONDON POSTAL MAP



Fig. 21: The London Postal Map, 1856¹⁶⁶

The Map is a large piece of paper, the size of which is roughly 1m by 1m. The front has a printed image, whilst the back is blank. The title of the image states 'Map of the London Postal District with the Subdivisions 1856', in the top right hand corner. The top left corner shows a delicate 'Compass Rose' giving the orientation of the map as north at the top of the image. On the bottom right hand corner is a scale, which shows a scale of 2.5cm: 1 mile. Framing the map image on both the left and right sides is a long list of all of the 'major post towns' in the London postal district, given in alphabetical order, with the corresponding Postal District that they belong to. There is a black border around the whole image, and just outside this border on the bottom are the words, 'Edward Stanford 6 Charing Cross': the name and address of the cartographer and publisher of

¹⁶⁶ POST 21/71: 'Map of the London Postal District with the sub-divisions', 1856.

the map. In the centre is the map itself, the image of London chosen to depict the London postal districts.

The cartographer of the Postal Map was Edward Stanford. Born in London in 1827, Stanford was apprenticed in 1841 and joined the map making firm of T.W. Saunders, where he became partner from 1852-53 working from Charing Cross.¹⁶⁷ Saunders had previously printed one map of London prior to this date, Benjamin Rees Davies's map of 'London and its Environs' of 1847.¹⁶⁸ During the period in which the company was Saunders and Stanford, there are no records of any maps of London being produced. The first map at the Postal Museum with the name of Stanford dates from 1855.¹⁶⁹

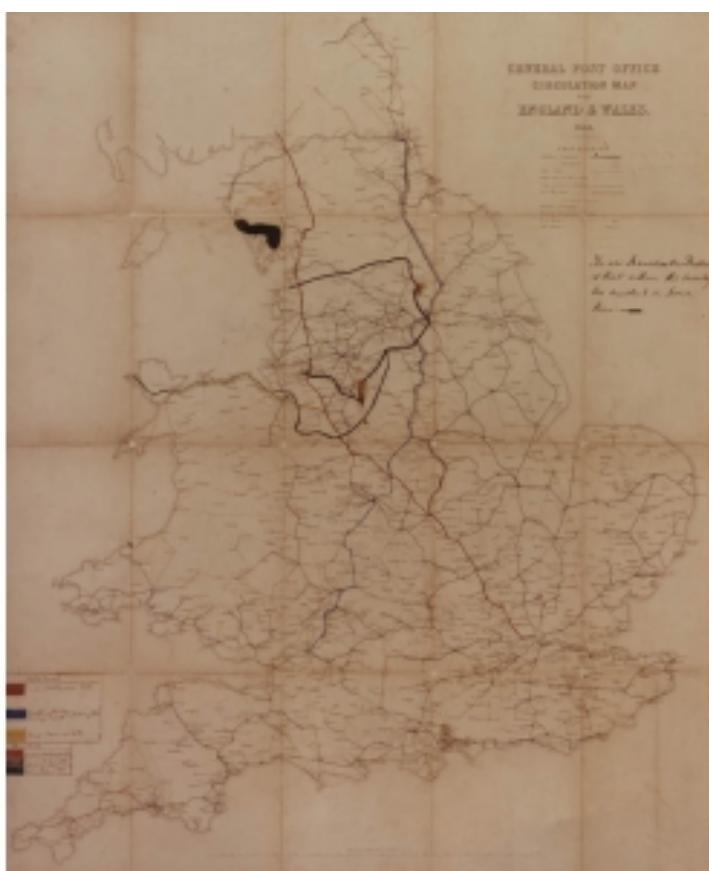


Fig. 22: The first record of a map published by Stanford (working in partnership with Saunders) held at the Postal Museum¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁷ As 'Saunders and Stanford'. R. V. Tooley, *A dictionary of mapmakers: including cartographers, geographers, publishers, engravers, etc. from the earliest times to 1900*, London: Map Collectors' circle, 1973

¹⁶⁸ Tooley, p. 108

¹⁶⁹ The map appears to have been used to mark out the Manchester surveyor's district upon it. POST 21/393: 'General Post Office Circulation map for England and Wales', 05 Jan 1855

¹⁷⁰ POST 21/393: 'General Post Office Circulation map for England and Wales', 05 Jan 1855

In 1854 Stanford's itself was established, which throughout the century would grow to become a major business, occupying two central London premises.¹⁷¹ At first Stanford did not make maps, but built up stock by acquiring the printing plates of the 'Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge'.¹⁷² Rowland Hill had a connection to the Society from which Stanford purchased most of his body of maps, therefore we might speculate that Hill had some say in the use of Stanford as the map-maker for the London Postal Map. In doing so, the Post Office was instrumental in establishing Stanford's. Whilst this can only be speculation, Hill's biography reveals an interest in the practice of mapping, when in his youth he unsuccessfully attempted to become a cartographer.¹⁷³ He did teach himself land-surveying, and made a map of the local area around his local area, Hill top.¹⁷⁴

In some cases Stanford made maps specially, in others he acted as publisher.¹⁷⁵ At Stanford's premises in Long Acre and Charing Cross, "maps went through all their stages of production- conception, information retrieval, drawing, editing, engraving, printing, mounting, and sale to the public."¹⁷⁶ The list of maps that Stanford produced in the nineteenth century is impressive,¹⁷⁷ giving a good understanding of the subjects people wanted mapping in this period. His clients included the Ordnance Survey, the Admiralty, the Geographical Society, as well as organisations like the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, the Metropolitan Board of Works, the School Board of

¹⁷¹ From 1857. Later to be named, 'Stanford's Geographical Establishment'. This was the same Stanford's that we now know as the map publisher and bookstore in Covent Garden today. Tooley, p. 202

¹⁷² Peter Whitfield, *The mapmakers: a history of Stanfords*, London: Compendium, 2003, p. 19. In an interesting coincidence (or perhaps not a coincidence), Rowland Hill was one of the original promoters of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge. Fryer and Akerman (eds), p. 1093

¹⁷³ His biography states that at the age of 16, Hill tried his hand at map-making – "This was" R. wrote in his Journal, a few years later, "a much greater undertaking than I at first imagined, owing to the great difference that exists in the works that it was necessary to consult. In a chart of the Mediterranean belonging to my father, Algiers is as much as three inches from its proper place [...] I have given it up entirely. I could not be satisfied with copying from another map, and from the great number of books and maps it was necessary to consult, I found that, with the little time I could devote to it, it must be the work of not less than ten or fifteen years." Sir Rowland Hill and George Birkbeck Norman Hill, *The life of Sir Rowland Hill and the history of the penny postage. By Sir R. Hill and his nephew G.B. Hill.* London: Thos. De La Rue and Company, 1880, p. 79

¹⁷⁴ Which was later "copied by a dishonest tradesman", in a period around 1817. *Ibid*, p. 85. An early incident of Hill being 'thwarted'...

¹⁷⁵ Of the 'Stanford's' own maps, his chief cartographer was one John Buton.

¹⁷⁶ Peter Whitfield, *The mapmakers: a history of Stanfords*, London: Compendium, 2003, p. 8

¹⁷⁷ List given in Tooley.

London¹⁷⁸ Stanford was able to tap into a newfound interest in the use of maps in many fields,¹⁷⁹ and he soon became a key figure in mapping.¹⁸⁰

Whitfield's history notes Stanford's quick development; it was certainly the case that from 1856 he was publishing a remarkable number of maps for many different clients.¹⁸¹ The earliest maps he published showed steam routes to South Australia via the Panama Canal, the allied position at Sebastopol, England and Wales divided into counties, geological features of India, and the eastern franchise of the Cape Colony.¹⁸²

By the 1860s Stanford's was mapping huge changes that were occurring around the country.¹⁸³ He also became the outlet through which 'official' maps were altered for sale to the public,¹⁸⁴ such as the Ordnance Survey and the Hydrographic Office maps. One massive project, with Saunders, was the production of a series of 'Library Maps' of London reduced from the hot-off-the-press Ordnance Survey maps of London.¹⁸⁵ Although on first glance, being made by such a well-known map-maker as Stanford would not seem too significant, it appears that the London Postal Map in fact represents two 'firsts' for Stanford: as one of the earliest, if not the earliest, map of which Stanford could claim to be the cartographer, and the earliest map of London that he was to produce.

¹⁷⁸ No Postal Maps from this period are mentioned though. Tooley, p 202.

¹⁷⁹ He states, "The mid-nineteenth century, when Stanford's was founded, saw a tremendous increase in the use of maps by individuals and organisations: maps became a familiar part of the social and professional landscape in a way that they had never been before. The essence of Stanford's success was to perceive this historical development and to exploit it in various ways.", Peter Whitfield, *The mapmakers: a history of Stanfords*, London: Compendium, 2003, p. 6

¹⁸⁰ Whitfield, *The Mapmakers: A History of Stanford's*, pg. 8. He had a huge range of overseas maps - "The great offices of state- the War office, the Foreign Office, the Commonwealth Office and the India Office - were amongst Stanford's regular customers.", *Ibid*, p. 10

¹⁸¹ "The more striking thing about these first few years is the speed and energy with which Stanford set about building a publishing operation" *Ibid*, p. 16

¹⁸² Tooley, p. 202

¹⁸³ Whitfield links the mapping of England to the enormous changes that were taking place there in the period, stating that a society which is static has little use for a map, whereas one that is constantly changing requires them: "while a dynamic society will constantly make new maps to chart its changing world, and no society has been more dynamic than that of Victorian England." *Ibid*, p. 10. Whitfield States that Stanford had the widest supply of maps in Victorian England

¹⁸⁴ Stanford had become "an intermediary between official map sources and the general public" *Ibid*, p. 24

¹⁸⁵ The 1862 Library map of London "was a milestone in the mapmaking of the capital because it was the first to make use of the recently completed large-scale Ordnance Survey of London.", *Ibid*, p. 25

The London Postal Map was made using the technique of engraving, whereby an image is cut (engraved) into a metal plate with acid or a steel tool. Then the metal plate is covered with ink, which seeps into the lines. The metal plate is then wiped down, cleaning the face of the plate, but leaving the ink in the cut lines. A piece of paper is pressed against the plate, and the ink from the lines transfers to the sheet of paper, so the paper now shows the image.¹⁸⁶ Although often overlooked, understanding the work of the engraver is critical to the visual properties of a map.¹⁸⁷ It is also important to understand how highly skilled the job of engraver was, and how labour-intensive engraving a map was. The London Postal Map was an expensive object.

Although the London Postal Map was engraved, understanding other developments in mapping technology is relevant, as later London postal maps were developed using newer, cheaper techniques. One such important technology was Lithography, where an image was drawn onto a surface with a substance that would hold ink. The surface was then inked, and rinsed off, with the ink staying on the parts that had been treated. The surface was then pressed against a sheet of paper, so the inked image would stick to the paper.¹⁸⁸ This technique was popular from about 1825, was cheaper than copperplate engraving, and took less time,¹⁸⁹ and therefore 'offered printers a way to meet the growing demand for inexpensive, mass-produced maps'.¹⁹⁰ By 1860 printers developed colour lithography, with colour used to fill in the spaces in maps.¹⁹¹

This was a technique that would become widely used in London postal maps, as it enabled the map to show very clearly the distinction between two different districts.

¹⁸⁶ Entry on 'engraving', in Rebecca Stefoff, *The British Library companion to maps and mapmaking*, London: British Library, 1995, p. 119

¹⁸⁷ The map historian Stefoff stated that, "the role of the engraver is often overlooked by students of mapmaking, who focus on the geographic content of maps over the years, but students of art history know that the engraver's contribution was crucial to the success of the map" *Ibid*, p. 119

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid*, p. 180

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid*, p. 180

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 180

¹⁹¹ *Ibid*, p. 180

One example was Nicholson's postal map, which shows signs of this making process.¹⁹² The map has been made with the districts being printed in different coloured blocks, with streets and other details left uncoloured. The colours used are more distinctive and bolder than most other maps, and there are 'gaps' between them. This indicates a process of lithography; still a fairly rare technique in postal mapping in this period.

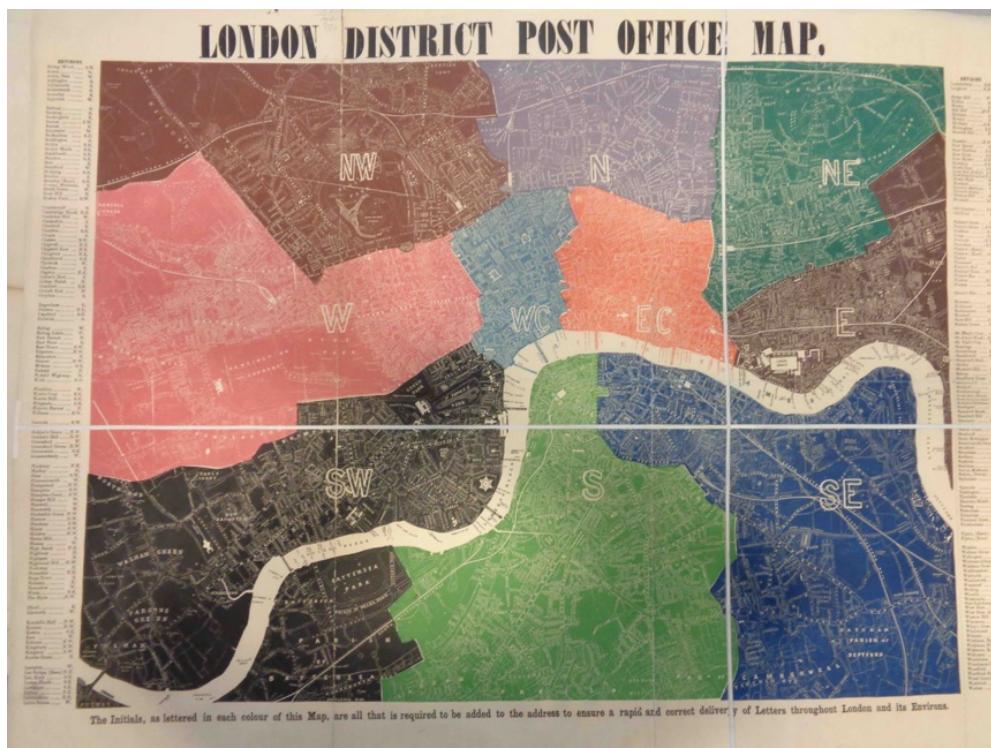


Fig. 24: Nicholson's map¹⁹³

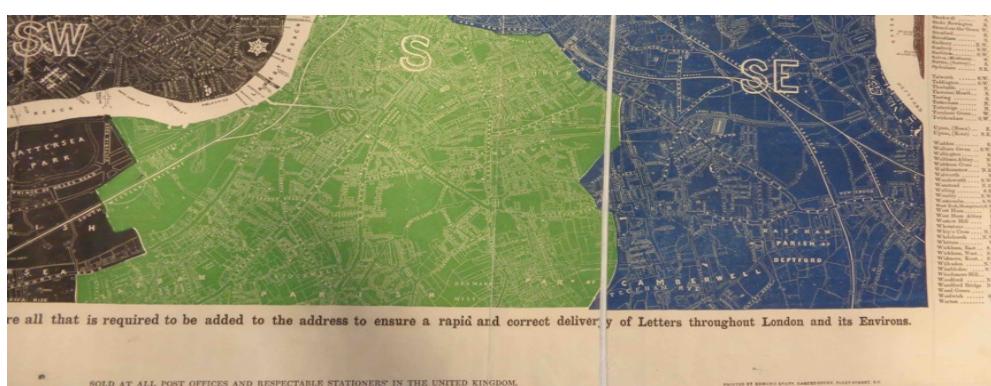


Fig. 25: We can see here the 'gaps' in the colour, between the green and blue, and green and black block sections¹⁹⁴

¹⁹² "Designed and published by William Nicholson (late of the G.P.O), 4. Wine Office-court, Fleet Street, E.C." British Library. Cartographic Items Maps 3485.(17.): *The London District Post Office Map. Designed and published by W. Nicholson, London, 1857*

¹⁹³ Cartographic Items Maps 3485.(17.): *The London District Post Office Map. Designed and published by W. Nicholson, London, 1857*

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

Soon after the original London Postal Map, mapmakers made other postal maps using the lithographic technology, meaning they could be produced cheaper and more quickly, which aided the dissemination of those maps, and of the knowledge contained on them. The technology of engraving and hand colouring that was used in the London Postal Map of 1856 was therefore soon to become obsolete.¹⁹⁵ The practice of mapping itself was changing, demonstrated in the variety of postal maps produced in the period.

After the Postal Map was made in 1856, a large number of other 'London postal maps' were produced quickly, showing on them the new postal districts. That so many were produced was testament to the public demand for them, in the context of the changes brought about by the Map. For example one map appears in 1857 explicitly stating it is for members of the public, sold with the *Illustrated Times*.¹⁹⁶ Many of these maps, too, betray hints of their making processes. This map states, like many maps of this period do, its engraver- one 'Firmin Gillot, engraver' in this case, and also states: 'Paniconographie de Gillot A Paris' – 'paniconography' was a new technique that had been invented in 1852, an example of postal maps using pioneering technology in their development.

¹⁹⁵ The technique was popular, and cost-effective, and, "the practice of using a limited number of carefully arranged colours soon became standard, and hand-coloured maps, like engraved ones, were no longer produced after the mid nineteenth century" *Ibid*, p. 180

¹⁹⁶ Sold with the Illustrated Times of 21st March 1857. Cartographic Items Maps Crace Port. 19.51: 'Paniconographie de Gillot a Paris. Firmin Gillot, 'Postal District Map of London Issued with the Illustrated Times', London: Illustrated Times, 1857

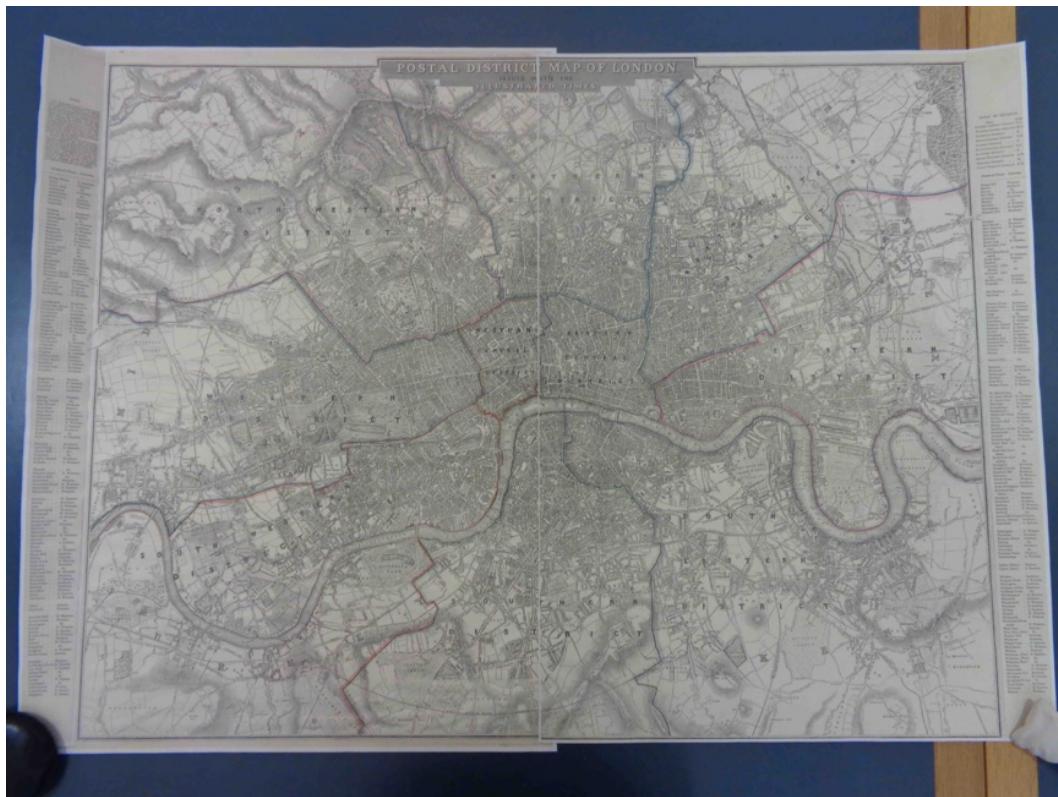


Fig. 23: Postal District Map of London Issued with the Illustrated Times¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁷ Cartographic Items Maps Crace Port. 19.51: Panicographie de Gillot à Paris. Firmin Gillot, 'Postal District Map of London Issued with the Illustrated Times', London: Illustrated Times, 1857

Another example is a Cruchley's map dated 1860. One rather nice insight that this map gives us – and which reoccurs on a small number of others - is a slight error in its making. In the SW district the boundary line has been drawn onto the map with dark black ink, but the cartographer has made a mistake, drawing a boundary line along both sides of the River Thames. The cartographer apparently only realised the error when he reached the northern side of the river and realised that he had accidentally duplicated the boundary, at which point it simply trails off into nothing, the boundary left hanging.



Fig. 26: Cruchley's Map, detail showing cartographer's error in the SW district¹⁹⁸

Similar small errors are seen occasionally on the maps, betraying the human hand that was a crucial part of the production of these maps. Although the maps sometimes appear machine-made due to their level of accuracy and intricacy, it is likely that most of the postal maps were made by drawing postal boundary lines onto a 'base' map of London. Errors like the one above demonstrate that some maps did not have the boundaries as part of the original engraved map, but rather were added on after the

¹⁹⁸ G.F. Cruchley, Bodleian Library: C17:70 London (80), *Cruchley's new postal district map of London. [Together with] Street index [cartographic material]*, 1860

map had been printed. Such practice would have saved money for the printer, who could use the engraving of the base map for many different purposes, therefore getting more for the cost expended that it took to make the original engraved map.

Cross's New Plan of London also shows some evidence of its making. It has a slightly mismatched join running down the middle, indicating it was made in parts, rather than printed as one whole, and then joined together afterwards:



Fig. 27: Cross' Map of London¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁹ Bodleian Library: C17:70 London (321): *Cross's new plan of London [cartographic material]*, 1859

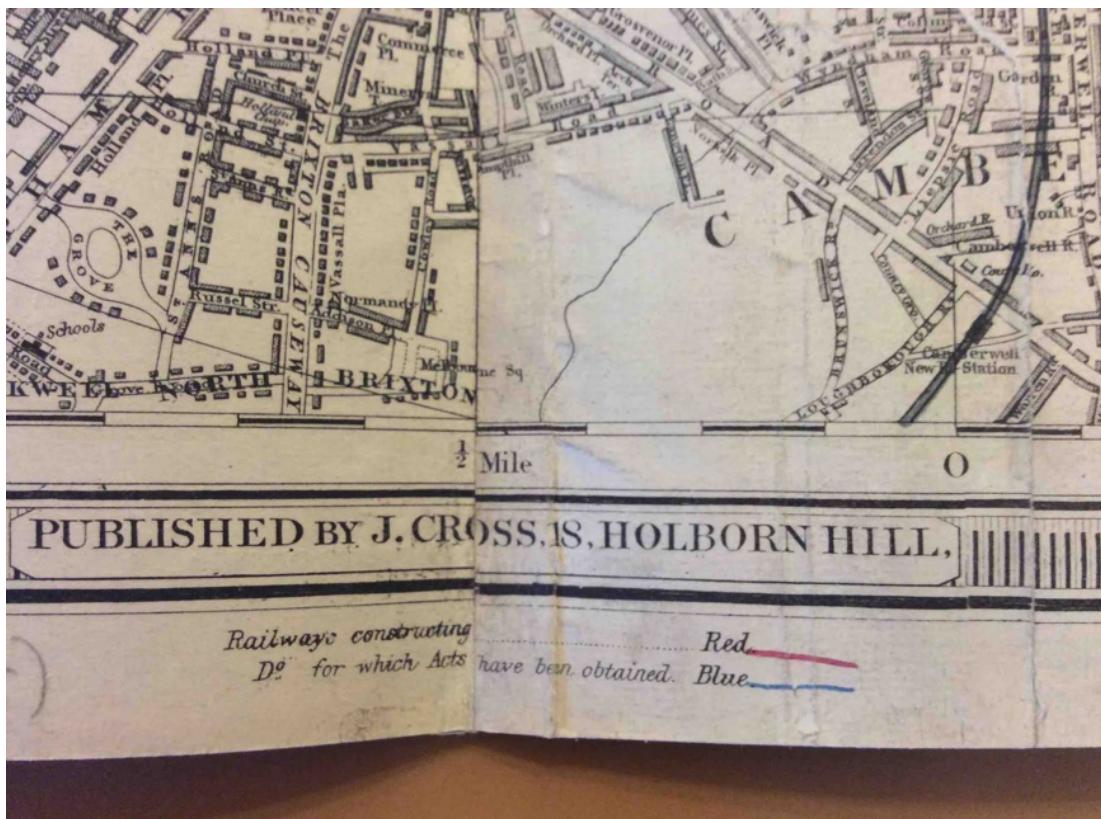


Fig. 28: Cross' Map, detail showing the slightly uneven join²⁰⁰

It is also relevant to note the nature of the circulation of maps in this period, and the way they were used. Maps were looked at, but they were also passed around, held, drawn on, amended by hand: they were interactive images. There was an interesting practice of using maps as bases onto which information could be added, for example a Royal Geographic Society map has hand-drawn additions: pencil drawn circles and dots in various locations, though it is unclear what these denote.²⁰¹ Some of these dots are also given in red ink and there are some pencil lines drawn onto this map as well, and a signed name scribbled across the top.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ This map states at the bottom, "London. Edward Stanford 6 Charing Cross SW", but also includes a tiny faint note, "Revised to the Present date by BR Davies, September 1st, 1856". Royal Geographic Society: mr Eng. & Wales S/S.89 (B): London with its Postal Sub-Divisions. Reduced from the map prepared by Edward Stanford for use in the London & Provincial Post Offices by command of the Post Master General, London: E. Stanford, 1856

Cruchley's New Postal map of London dated 1857, also betrays the evidence of human hand; ink and pencil marks on the NE postal district, seemingly going nowhere.²⁰² These types of amendments to the maps are in fact not uncommon, and each handmade amendment prompts its own questions about who was making these additions, and why. One speculation might be that Post Office officials were using the maps to try out changes to the district boundaries, or to demonstrate where different postmen's 'walks' were to be.

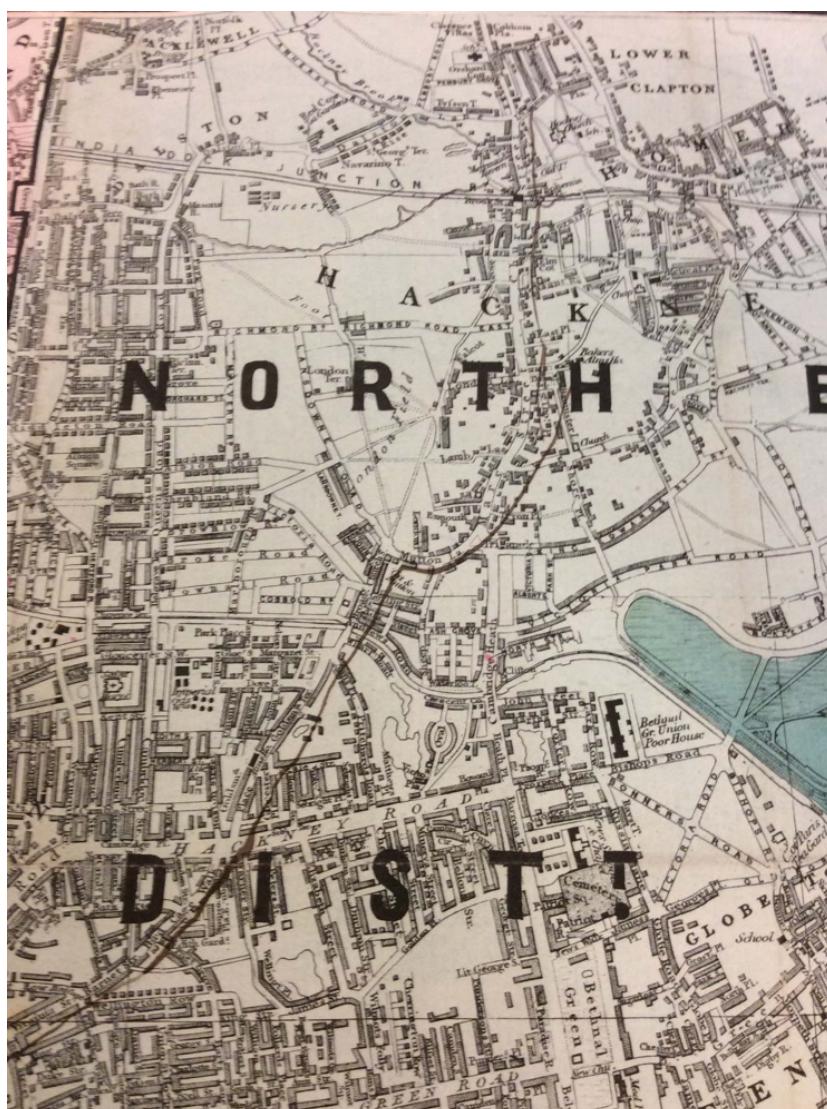


Fig. 29: Detail of Cruchley's New Postal District Map of London, with addition in NE district²⁰³

²⁰² "London. Published by G. F. Cruchley Map Seller & Globe Maker, 81 Fleet Street". Bodleian Library: C17:70 London (46): Cruchley's New Postal district map of London. [Together with] Guide [cartographic material], 1857

²⁰³ *Ibid.*

What we can be certain of was that these maps, although beautiful, were not merely objects to be looked at; they were active, used, objects, which were interacted with in a number of different ways. We shall see examples of how the map was circulated in the world throughout the four chapters in this thesis.

Chapter 1

History: The Biography of the London Postal Map

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to obtain rapid intercommunication between the different parts of the metropolis, required changes so complicated, that their details could not be set forth without wearying the reader.²⁰⁴

²⁰⁴ Sir Rowland Hill and George Birkbeck Norman Hill, *The life of Sir Rowland Hill and the history of the penny postage. By Sir R. Hill and his nephew G.B. Hill.* London: Thos. De La Rue and Company, 1880, p. 271

1. INTRODUCTION

This text is the biography of one object, the London Postal Map, and the communications reforms related to it. Historians have, by and large, heeded Rowland Hill's warning that this tale cannot be told without 'wearying the reader'.²⁰⁵ And, ironically, for the vast majority of this biography, the Map itself will be absent, doomed to be missed even from a text specifically setting out to tell its story.

The title of this thesis is 'Mapping Modernity' and the task is to argue that in mapping London's journey to modernity, the reforms relating to the Postal Map were one causal factor whose story has yet to be told. However, this chapter will argue that the modernity of the Postal Map was not arrived at through a set of actions progressing along a path to modernity. Instead, it will argue that the story of the Map is one of a long, winding and sometimes tortured journey to modernity. This is the route that will be 'mapped' here, and to tell the story properly, we begin before the Map's introduction, tracing a path that lead to its creation. The history does not lead from A to B directly, but instead starts, stops, goes backwards, disappears from view, until, very quickly, the pace speeds up and the map is produced almost in a flash. In telling this story of the Map we can understand that the path to modernity itself was not linear, not a necessary result or an historical certainty.

The chapter has been inspired by three texts, whose approaches guided the research methods of this thesis insofar as they warned against a straight-forward analysis of the Map as being the design of one 'maker'. The first is the narrative of the design of the bicycle given in *Of Bicycles, Bakelite and Bulbs* by Weibe E Bjiker.²⁰⁶ Bjiker considers the bicycle as "socially designed" over a period of time, rather than as created by one person at one moment, or through the force of technology itself.²⁰⁷ This text

²⁰⁵ We have seen in the literature review that one reason for this was that many of the sources relating to its creation have gone missing.

²⁰⁶ 'King of the Road: The Social Construction of the Safety Bicycle', in Weibe E. Bjiker, *Of Bicycles, Bakelite, and Bulbs: Toward a Theory of Sociotechnical Change*, Cambridge, Mass.; London: MIT Press, 1995

²⁰⁷ It describes the development of the bicycle, focusing particularly on the "strange detour" that the bike took on its route in the form of the 'high wheeled bicycle' – the penny farthing. Bjiker, p. 19

demonstrates that no designed object has had a clear linear progression through its developmental stages, and highlights the importance in the design process of 'detours' along the route. The second text is Siegfried Giedion's *Mechanisation Takes Command*.²⁰⁸ This incredible volume, now over seventy years old, provides us with a clear statement against a focus on personal biography of inventors or designers in histories of technology, instead considering other forces in the development of technology, such as technological contexts. It prompts any researcher to ask what other developments led to the innovation of the Postal Map; keeping research open to the myriad of other reforms related to the Map. Thirdly, Bruno Latour's account of the development of a mass rapid transit system in Paris, in *Aramis* was important.²⁰⁹ It describes a political and bureaucratic story in which a seemingly successful design was developed but then failed to be implemented, with the design itself taking a backseat, instead focusing on the various institutions, individuals, and groups that were related to the project.²¹⁰ Latour's work provides a lesson on not focusing too strongly on any one causal factor, instead looking at the whole picture, perhaps not even ever needing to ascribe causation.²¹¹ If a story is too complicated to fit into a linear narrative, so be it.²¹²

Now-ubiquitous objects or systems were products of hundreds of design decisions, of trial and error, of failure. They were designed by a set of people in a specific historic, geographic, and professional context. In the case of the London Postal Map, we can apply a form of analysis to this object like Bjiker, Latour and Gideon- because we are dealing with a dynamic object that existed in a number of contexts. These contexts are identified, assessed, and the progress – or lack of progress – of innovations can be traced, and explain what the different causal factors were in creating change.

²⁰⁸ Siegfried Giedion, *Mechanization Takes Command*, New York: O.U.P., 1948 1970

²⁰⁹ Aramis was the story of a design that did what design should do; it solved a number of pressing problems in a highly realisable way- and yet it failed. Latour's story relates to understanding whether any one person, organisation, event or context, can be ascribed with the blame for the Aramis project not working. What is revealed is a tale so complicated, with so many factors involved, that no one narrative can be right, no one set of causal factors can be ascribed to the outcome. Bruno Latour, *Aramis: or the Love of Technology*; translated by Catherine Porter, Cambridge, Mass.; London: Harvard University Press, 1996

²¹⁰ Latour describes a 'social bond' between humans and object: "I had to restore freedom to all the realities involved before any of them could succeed in unifying the others", *Ibid*, p. ix

²¹¹ "can we unravel the tortuous history of a state-of-the-art technology from beginning to end...?" *Ibid*, p. vii

²¹² Latour's tale also provides us with an unconventional method for tackling what might have otherwise been a very dry narrative of a set of government bureaucracies at work – a great lesson for anyone involved in histories of that great state bureaucracy, the Post Office.

Bureaucracies are revealed as influential, and human and non-human actors all played parts in the story of the Map. These approaches, more than anything, lead to an understanding that the Postal Map's story was less one of an object introduced by one individual, but rather was a product of a set of systems. It might, really, have been 'designed' by the system itself: by the demands of postal bureaucracy, much more than by any one 'maker'.

In telling this story of different influential factors, and of twists and turns in the tale, an argument is presented here that the Map and the London postal reforms brought a form of modernity to London, but the contradiction was that this modernity was in itself haltingly introduced, complicated, and the result of a very long journey; the result may have been modern, but the process to get there was anything but.²¹³

To understand this, we have to start more than two decades before the Map was made, to 1830. It was in the 1830s that the reforms were first conceived by Rowland Hill. Many of its elements, when finally introduced in the 1850s, were in fact almost exactly the same as he had conceived in the 1830s.

²¹³ The process is one of complicating the concept of Modernity – for example as understood in Ogborn's description of 'Modernity'. Miles Ogborn, *Spaces of Modernity: London's geographies, 1680-1780*, New York; London: Guilford Press, c1998

2. THE POSTAL SERVICE c.1830

This was a period in which Britain, and London, was poised for change. One of the products of the industrialisation that had characterised the years up till 1830 was just about to make itself felt in London: the railway.²¹⁴ In 1830 London was still railway free, in the City its roads still followed the medieval street plan, and in the West End elegant new squares were populated by horse-drawn vehicles and people on foot. Although London had begun to expand slowly, the City and adjoining Westminster were still surrounded by open countryside, with outlying villages not yet swallowed up by urban sprawl. But change was coming quickly- modernity was on the horizon. Key evidence for this was seen in the huge expansion of the city's docks, which moved eastwards, getting bigger to allow for increased levels of goods coming in and out of London, and populations sprang up in the East End to serve these docks.²¹⁵

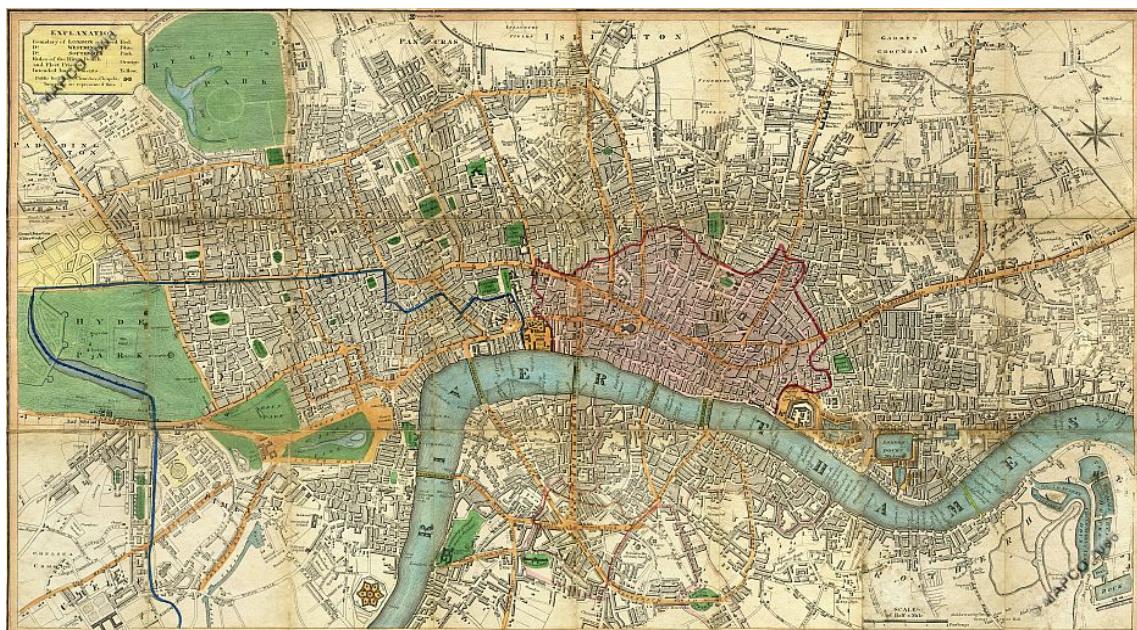


Fig. 31: London c.1830²¹⁶

²¹⁴ London's first railway, the London and Greenwich railway opened 1836 in February, and was extended to London Bridge in December 1836. T.C. Barker and Michael Robbins, *A History of London Transport: Passenger Travel and the Development of the Metropolis*, vol.1, The Nineteenth Century, London: Allen and Unwin for the London Transport Executive, 1975, p. 45.

²¹⁵ Roy Porter, *London: a social history*, London: Penguin, 2000, p 230

²¹⁶ Smith's New Map Of London, Charles Smith, 172 Strand. Source Mapco: accessed 19/07/2016: <http://mapco.net/smith/smith.htm>



Fig. 32: This excerpt from Crutchley's 1827 map shows the docks developing in the Isle of Dogs²¹⁷

One overriding philosophy preoccupying politics was the call for 'free trade'.²¹⁸ The period before had been characterised by trading operations being reserved for monopoly companies, strict regulation across many industries, laws dictating prices; customs duties that erected trading barriers between specific places. However, this was shifting dramatically. Public debate was dominated by a cry to abolish the monopolies and restrictions of the eighteenth century. The free trade lobby was becoming increasingly successful, and by the 1830s controls were lifting. The East India Trading Company lost its monopoly in 1813. The Corn Laws that regulated corn prices dominated public discourse until they were repealed in 1846.²¹⁹ Trade was opening up; anyone with enough capital – or enough credit – could get involved.²²⁰ That old state-sponsored monopolies were broken up was particularly important for global trade, not least within a context of expanding empire. As the numbers of people and businesses involved in world trade expanded, so too did the support industries related to trade. In London new companies for investment abroad were set up, and with them, services

²¹⁷ Source Mapco: accessed 19/07/2016: <http://mapco.net/cruchley/cruchley.htm>

²¹⁸ '...the ideology which spoke most powerfully to the condition of the new industrial society was that which had sprung from the so-called classical economist and then been filtered through the utilitarianism of Jeremy Bentham and his disciples'. Hoppen, it should be noted, qualifies this statement, stating that a philosophy of 'refined' *laissez-faire* was the dominant approach in the nineteenth century. Hoppen, p. 92

²¹⁹ Hoppen, p 704

²²⁰ Jones, p. 104

such as shipping agents, insurance companies and legal firms boomed – all sending letters as part of their everyday business life.²²¹

But whilst the old monopolies were being abolished, one monopoly remained: the postal service.

By the 1830s, the postal service in Britain had existed in some form or other for hundreds of years. Its origins lay in the reigning monarch's own personal messenger service, which communicated the business of state around the country.²²² The Royal Mail was opened up for public access in 1635, partly as a way of gathering revenue: the public paid for the privilege of sending mail, thereby funding the King's mail.²²³ A sorting office and accounting office were established in London to sort the country's mail and to administer the service.²²⁴ The General Post Office (G.P.O.) was established in 1657, run by the 'Postmaster General', a government minister.²²⁵ Much of the day-to-day operation of sending mail around the country was undertaken by contractors, although this reduced in 1677 when the Post Office became part of the Treasury.²²⁶ Use of contractors for different elements of the service continued throughout Post Office history.²²⁷ Through the eighteenth century the service developed, becoming available to many parts of the country, and with the introduction of 'cross' and 'bye' posts that connected up different routes around the country.

It has been argued that the invention of cross posts effectively prepared the way for the industrial revolution, by allowing for communication between newly growing cities

²²¹ Fryer and Akerman (eds), p. xxiii

²²² The oldest object in the archive at the Postal Museum relates to the development of the mail as public, rather than exclusively Royal: POST 23/1: *Letter relating to the setting up of the public postal service*, 28 Jan 1636.

²²³ Muir, p. 11

²²⁴ *Ibid*, p. 12. These were established the same year, 1635.

²²⁵ *Ibid*, p. 13. The General Post Office therefore was almost two hundred years old by the time the reforms of the London Postal Map were brought in.

²²⁶ *Ibid*, p. 13

²²⁷ One archive file, for example, showed how the use of contractors could be a problem when the postal service was being used for other means. The file describes an Act of Parliament which required vessels, including packet ships, going to Ireland, or the Isles of Scilly, Man, Jersey and Guernsey, to take on one "Rogue, Vagabond or incorrigible Rogue" for each "20 tons burden" the ship was carrying. POST 74/731: *As to conveyance of Irish vagrants by Post Office packet boats*, Aug 1823-Jul 1862

outside London.²²⁸ They initially started as a form of 'black market',²²⁹ controlled by one Ralph Allen, but were brought into Post Office operations in 1764.²³⁰

The G.P.O. held a monopoly; all letter communications took place under the control of the government. That the G.P.O. held a monopoly was contentious, but the argument 'for' monopoly was that it allowed the service to be fairly universal, with profitable parts of the business subsidising unprofitable parts.²³¹ However, people sending mail in profitable parts of the country could not take advantage of their position and enjoy cheaper mails- which, it was argued, was effectively costing people in these areas.²³²

By the late eighteenth century, a period of road building began through the country – a remarkable and unprecedented intervention by the government.²³³ This was crucial for the development of the post, as the road network and the postal service were ultimately intertwined. The road network was based on a set of 'Post Roads' that stretched outwards from London.²³⁴ With this new road technology, another communications innovator was quick to see the advantage; one Palmer, who introduced new speedy mail coaches in 1784.²³⁵ The days of the mail coach service²³⁶ in the years that followed has been described as a 'Golden Age' of coaching.²³⁷ The mail coach achieved remarkable speeds travelling across the country, carrying precious news, and people travelled in mail carts as the transport infrastructure taking them around the country, stopping at coaching inns all over the country for rest, food and society.²³⁸ Guards rode with the

²²⁸ Campbell-Smith, p. 73

²²⁹ *Ibid*, p. 68

²³⁰ Muir, p. 19

²³¹ And there were many attempts to break it, such as when Allen started his bye post service outside of the Post Office department; after being abolished for breaking the monopoly rules, this service was brought into the postal operations. See Daunton, p. 53

²³² *Ibid*, p. 54

²³³ This has been described as the first example of the 'infrastructure state' in Britain, see Joanna Guldi, *Roads to Power: Britain Invents the Infrastructure State*, Cambridge, Mass.; London: Harvard University Press, 2012

²³⁴ In Scotland, a comparable system was in place based on Edinburgh, and in Ireland based in Dublin

²³⁵ Campbell-Smith, p. 90

²³⁶ Muir, p. 20, states Mail Coach services began 1784

²³⁷ The time from the early 1800s to the beginning of the railway age, which by 1845 had brought about the end of the mail coach services. See Webster, p. 7.

²³⁸ Up to the first half of the nineteenth century the speed of the coaches was up to 10mph; a journey from Edinburgh to London, 400miles, was given 45.5 hours. London to York was given 20 hours, London to Manchester 19 hours and London to Holyhead 27 hours. *Ibid*.

mail, in 12-hour stretches at a time.²³⁹ This was no luxury; mail coaches had often risked attacks from highwaymen,²⁴⁰ and there was one much-reported infamous incident of a lioness attacking the mail coach in Exeter in 1817.²⁴¹ Less excitingly, coaches were also at risk from the British weather, not least snow – archives include not only illustrations of mail coaches stuck in the snow,²⁴² but also designs for new types of snow ploughs for mail coaches.²⁴³

That the Post Office was experimenting with inventions such as snow ploughs was characteristic. The Post was a stimulus for innovation in technology, and development of shipping technologies, roads, horse-carts and more depended on the patronage of the Royal Mail. This link continued with the development of the railways, bicycles, underground rail, and motor vehicles.²⁴⁴

²³⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁰ Campbell-Smith notes that highwaymen theft of mail bags from mail carts had been a problem since the 1700s. Campbell-Smith, p. 87. This is borne out by the numbers of 'Notices' in the Postal Museum from this period that advise the public of the thefts. The problem was that people sent money and their valuables in the post, so they were good targets for criminals. To protect against this, the practice of cutting banknotes in half, and sending the different halves in different letters, started in 1782. Campbell-Smith, p. 88

²⁴¹ POST 111/43: Newspaper cuttings. Also a set of low-quality images from the Observer on 30th September 1911. A number of pictures in the collection depict the incident, e.g. PE003 (reproduction).

²⁴² Image PE036: 'the Birmingham Mail fast in the Snow' 1837

²⁴³ Image H6156: 'Design for a snowplough'. See also POST 10/232: *Snowplough Design*, 1814; and POST 10/164: 'Waterford, snowplough provided without authority: payment', 1838.

²⁴⁴ This was the case with the development of more obscure technologies, too, such as the pneumatic tube technology that features later in this thesis, or the development of strange-looking bicycles such as the 'Hen and Chicks' five-wheeled bicycle.

Fig. 33: *Hen and Chickens*



See <https://postalheritage.wordpress.com/tag/hen-chicks/> for the image; and a blog article about it (accessed 17/12/16)

The Post was connected to a wide international network of letter communications that spread out across the globe. The nineteenth century was a period of imperial expansion for Britain, and postal communications kept the whole of the empire connected. There was a growing demand for cheap communication as people from Britain emigrated to the colonies, with the Post Office subsidising mail to them.²⁴⁵ In the nineteenth century the Admiralty took on the operation of the mail packet steamer ships, rather than hiring private companies.²⁴⁶ Newspapers also travelled by the post, in a period in which the newspaper trade was growing quickly.²⁴⁷

Despite the development of new technologies, at the heart of day-to-day operations was simple man power: the labour of letter carriers who delivered mail, the sorters who sorted it, and the postmasters that operated post offices around the country.²⁴⁸ Before ‘pre-payment’ for mails was introduced in 1841, letters were paid for on their receipt or delivered to the post office for picking up.²⁴⁹ A ‘letter carrier’ would collect the fee from the person receiving the letter, according to a series of seemingly unfathomable charges based on where the letter was going to and from, and how.²⁵⁰ The charging system took time and personnel to administer, requiring somebody to assess where the mail was going and what route it was taking, and somebody to deliver the letter and wait in person for the receiver to pay them the correct fare.

Described as “complex and capricious”, the charging system for the mail was complicated, and also costly to the public.²⁵¹ Although writing a letter was an expensive business, people with limited means did find ways of communicating via the post, as documented by Susan Whyman.²⁵² Whilst there may be a cliché in our popular

²⁴⁵ Robinson, pp. 387 - 390

²⁴⁶ *Ibid*, p. 388

²⁴⁷ Campbell-Smith, p. 97

²⁴⁸ effectively the old term for a postman. The title of postman did not come in until the introduction of the parcel post in the 1880s, which meant ‘letter carriers’ dealt with more than just letters- so their name correspondingly changed

²⁴⁹ Daunton, p. 7

²⁵⁰ Complicated charges, but usually expensive: ‘In 1837, the average general postage was estimated at 9 1/2d. per letter; exclusive of foreign letters it was still as high as 8 ¾ d.’ Lewins, p. 162

²⁵¹ There had been increases to postal charges in 1801, 1805, and 1812 in response to a need to raise revenue during the Napoleonic wars. See Muir, also David P. Allam, *The Social and Economic Importance of Postal Reform in 1840*, Batley, W. Yorkshire: Harry Hayes, 1976, p. 3

²⁵² Through looking at family archives of letters, she demonstrated how people wrote letters to each other, how they cherished them, and found ways of paying for them; or avoided paying for them in

understanding of letter writing in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century as something undertaken by gentlemen and ladies living in country estates; in fact it was more open.



Fig. 34: Darcy. Our understanding of the use of the mail in this period often derives from literature – where time and time again the letter does the job of effecting a shift in the plotline...²⁵³

The upper classes had a much larger share in the use of the mail, though not always paid for in a fair manner: many members of the elite had access to free mail, through the ‘franking’ system, which allowed free mail for members of Parliament²⁵⁴ and many others, comprising perhaps 12.5% of mail in the system.²⁵⁵ The system was abused, with relatives, friends and associates using the frank of somebody they knew.²⁵⁶

By the 1830s, the Post sorted and delivered mail to and from people all over the country, and to a huge number of destinations around the globe, including to the

ingenious ways. Susan E. Whyman, *The Pen and the People: English letter writers 1660-1800*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009

²⁵³ Image source: <https://janeausteninvermont.files.wordpress.com/2013/12/darcyletter-writing.jpg> (accessed 01/01/17)

²⁵⁴ One archived file shows an interesting instance in relation to franked mail; it shows a short case relating to franked mail privileges when the law changed to allow Quakers to sit as MPs. Quakers used a system of numbering, rather than naming months and days (to avoid using the Roman/ pagan names), and so when a Quaker member of Parliament was elected, one Mr Pease, it was enquired whether the Post Office might relax its rules on his behalf, to allow him to still enjoy the privilege of franked mail. POST 74/696: 'Franking, as to Quakers on dating number of months', 1833

²⁵⁵ Muir, p. 25. Also Allam puts the proportion at 12.5% of all mail travelling for free through this system, see Allam, p. 3

²⁵⁶ Demonstrating how the Post Office was governed by politics, espionage, and hereditary rights and privileges. The system of free franking for peers “was, by the very magnitude of its abuse, a scandal”, Allam, p. 3

expanding British Empire. The system grew with the population and rises in literacy, with people of all classes using the mail. Right at the centre of the vast national and international communications system was one city: London.

3. THE POST IN LONDON

London's postal operations were crucial to the whole of the country's postal system. To understand the changes related to the London Postal Map, it is important to understand the situation of postal operations in London before it was introduced: they explain why the reforms were needed. The systems in place in the 1830s wanted reforming, and this need would only grow in the period between the 1830s and the date of the Map, 1856.

In 1830, London was served by a postal system that was comparatively cheap, at two or three pence a letter, and it was just about possible, in the central areas, to send a letter and receive a reply in the same day.²⁵⁷ London's postal operations, however, were inefficient and wasteful, for two reasons: its overcentralised operations and the duplication of postal services. These two systematic issues caused a third: the system was increasingly not able to cope with growth.

Small, haphazard changes to adjust the system slightly had occurred, but never a fundamental re-thinking of the system as a whole. So for example, a Parliamentary Commission in 1830 into the Post Office²⁵⁸ found the boundaries of the London post to be "irregular", and questioned the time needed to receive an answer to a letter in London, recommended very few changes for London.²⁵⁹ It did review the district boundaries, extending the boundaries to a more regular 15 miles, to be served by 9 horse-driven delivery routes that dropped post off *en route* to towns.²⁶⁰

²⁵⁷ It found that a reply would be received the same day if the letter was sent, pre-paid, in the two-penny district early in the day, but a letter from Chelsea to Hackney would take over 24 hours. Robinson, p. 198

²⁵⁸ Fryer and Akerman (eds), p. xxv. Among other facts, it noted that in the 'town' district the number of letters varied from 300-1000 per day.

²⁵⁹ And "When they asked the Comptroller [i.e. of the London District Post] why, in one instance, the circulation extended as far as fifteen miles he replied: "How this anomaly crept in, I am not aware" Robinson, p. 196

²⁶⁰ Simon Morris, The London Postal Districts, in *London Topographical Society Newsletter* no. 29 November 1989

'Over'-centralisation

London was centre of the national system, housing the headquarters of the postal service in the G.P.O. building of St. Martin's le Grand.²⁶¹ Sited just north of St Paul's Cathedral, St. Martin's was designed by Robert Smirke and opened in 1829.²⁶²

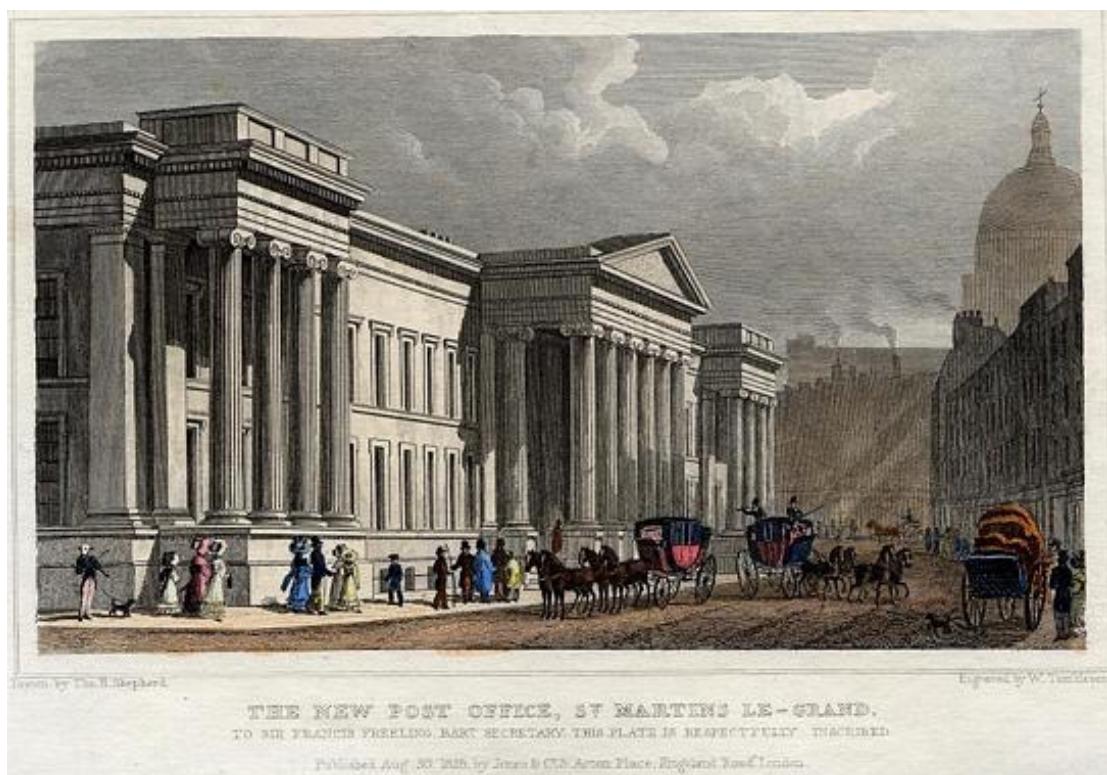


Fig. 35: St Martin's le Grand²⁶³

Although a government department, the G.P.O. was located in the City rather than Whitehall, within the square mile where London's commercial and trade activities took place. Here the the Secretary, its most senior civil servant, was based. Decisions made here were issued to postmasters in provinces, including decisions of apparently minute importance, there being very few delegations of powers.²⁶⁴ It was from here that mail

²⁶¹ St. Martins was opened in 1829 after the service had grown out of its earlier building in Lombard Street. First Report of the Postmaster General on the Post Office (from POST 71/55 – Parliamentary Papers 1854-55 (vol. 25)) – states that in 1814, there were measures to move the Post office building as Lombard Street was too small. St Martin's was eventually opened 1829.

²⁶² Architect of the British Museum. See White p. 27 – 28 for the tale of St. Martin's and the CPO used to clear its site.

²⁶³ Object Number: 2009-0036: '*The New Post Office, St. Martins Le-Grand. To Sir Francis Freeling Bart. Secretary*' - Hand coloured steel engraving

²⁶⁴ Perry, p. 24

bags were sent to the rest of the country.²⁶⁵ The postal system was heavily London-centric, usually requiring post to go via London, even if not destined for there.²⁶⁶ This was in part due to the road network, with many roads leading to London, and in part due to the post functioning as a form of surveillance performed upon the people of Britain.²⁶⁷ When a letter arrived in London it was held up to a candle to see its contents, or opened by a government official²⁶⁸ – it suited these purposes to have all mail come to London. If London was the centre of the postal service in the country and ultimately the empire, St Martin's le Grand was its heart. This centralisation is visualised explicitly by postal maps showing the roads used by the system in England and Wales prior to the building of the railways:

²⁶⁵ With the coming of the railways the prominence of this building in all postal operations did not change, despite the fact that there was a shift away from horse-drawn mail coaches as the primary means of transporting mail around the country.

²⁶⁶ "The post roads consisted, even as late as 1660, of some half-dozen main routes. They were like the spokes of a great wheel, the hub being London with the six spokes of uneven length radiating from this centre.", Robinson, p. 64

²⁶⁷ Campbell-Smith, p. 34

²⁶⁸ This practice continued until at least the 1840s. Robinson, p. 271



Fig. 36: Circulation of letters in England & Wales, 1807 - note the extent to which the roads were centralised on London²⁶⁹

In the 1830s mail was collected in the GPO by mail carts, which then made a first stop at a Coaching Inn to pick up passengers. Routes would start at specific inns: the Aberdeen and Edinburgh coaches from the Bull & Mouth Inn situated next to St Martin's le Grand; the York, Edinburgh and Newcastle coach from the Saracen's Head, Friday Street (Snow Hill, south of Smithfield),²⁷⁰ and the route to Dover from the Golden Cross at Charing

²⁶⁹ POST 21/154: *The circulation of letters to and from [England & Wales], 1807*

²⁷⁰ Webster, p. 12. Other examples included the two great terminal posting houses – the Bull & Mouth and the Swan with Two Necks, *Ibid* p. 18; the Swan with Two Necks (was at the corner of Milk Street and Lad

Cross.²⁷¹ Filled with passengers and mail bags the horse-drawn coaches departed at advertised times along the post roads for their long journeys, day and night.²⁷² Roads starting in London went to the edges of the country- the Great North Road to Edinburgh, the Chester Road to Holyhead,²⁷³ the western route to Penzance and others, hundreds of miles long, carried mail in coaches that left London daily.²⁷⁴ By 1822, the map publisher Cary's showed 801 long distance coaches, leaving London from around 50 inns for all parts of the country.²⁷⁵ London was also the centre of postal communications to the rest of the world. Post roads to ports at Harwich, Dover, Falmouth, Holyhead, Liverpool, transferred mail bags for overseas destinations on contracted ships, and back on return journeys from countries all over the world, ending up again at London.

Lane – now Gresham Street), *Ibid* p. 21; and The Angel Inn and the Elephant and Castle that were key posting houses- but not termini.

²⁷¹ Robinson, p. 235

²⁷² "the mail coach service regarded London as the hub of the Post Office", Robinson, p. 224

²⁷³ Webster, p. 5

²⁷⁴ Mail coaches were not owned by the Post Office but by contractors who were paid by the Post Office to transport mail, a mail guard who was a postal employee along with the ride.

²⁷⁵ Webster, p.11

London received and sorted a disproportionate amount of the country's mail at St Martin's.²⁷⁶ This schematic map of 1856 demonstrates the extent to which the system was centralised. It shows postal roads drawn in lines running into London, with names of the 'post towns' and sorting offices.

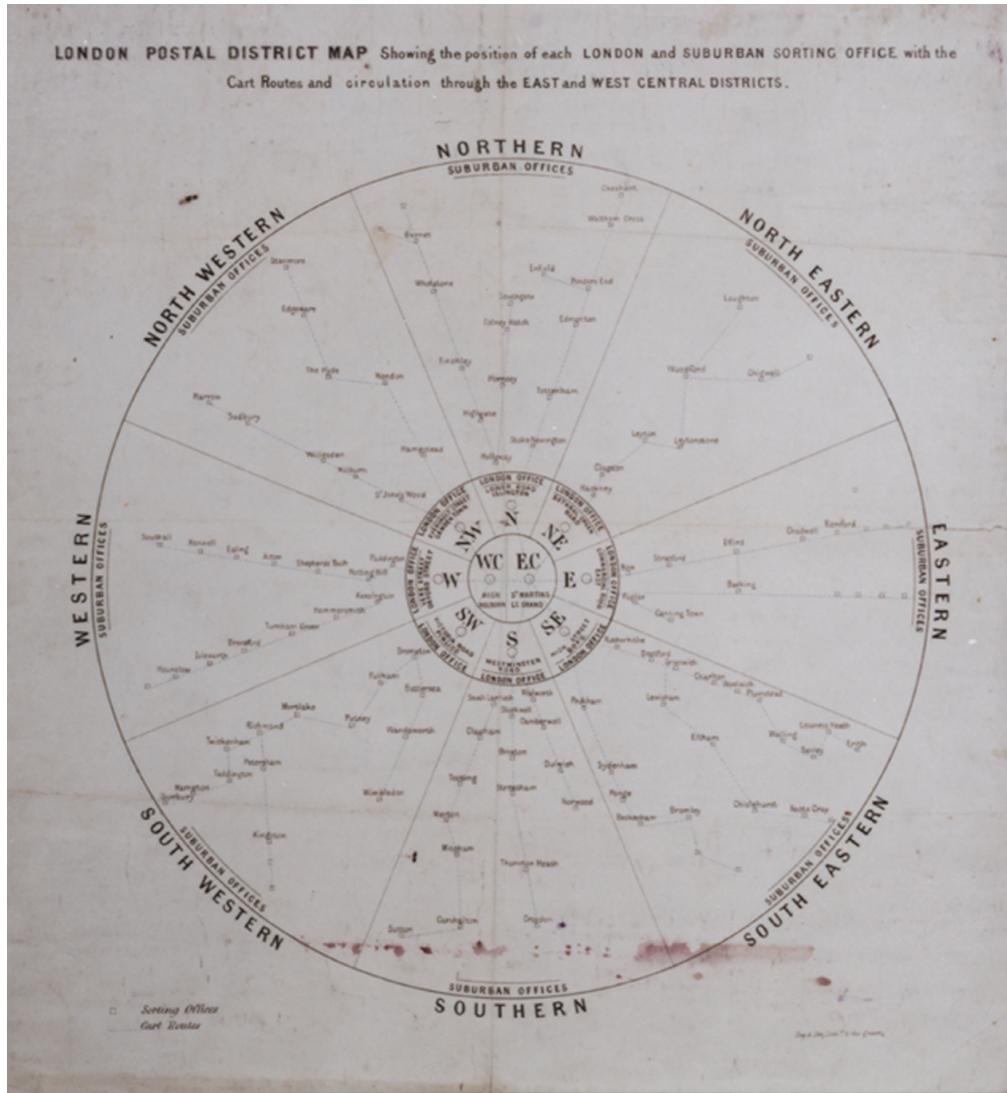


Fig. 37: London Postal District map: Showing the position of each London and Suburban Sorting Office with the Cart routes and circulation through the East and West Central Districts²⁷⁷

Here it is clearly demonstrated that the system was entirely based on all roads coming in and out of the centre, with sorting offices in post towns not connected to each other

²⁷⁶ Between a quarter and a third of all the country's mail, depending on who is making the claim

²⁷⁷ POST 21/761: 'London Postal District map: Showing the position of each London and Suburban Sorting Office with the Cart routes and circulation through the East and West Central Districts', 1838. This map is misdated in the catalogue, it is actually from c.1856. The confusion arises because the map is describing a system that had been in place for many years, back to the 1830s.

unless they sat along the same post road. Centralisation on London was in reality *over*-centralisation- London's service suffered from mail coming via the centre. So a Highgate to Hampstead letter, for example, would travel miles to reach its destination, rather than be sent straight across to the neighbouring town.

This meant was there was an inherent time-delay and waste of labour built into the system that had developed till the 1830s. The reason was simply historic, a relic from the post's origins as the royal mail, the practice of inspecting mail, and the fact that all major roads led to London. Although these historic reasons for sending letters through London had largely fallen away over time, the system had not been adapted to suit its new circumstances. Additionally, before this period, London itself was smaller and there was not a huge volume of letter traffic, so the act of crossing London was not the problem it would later become.

Duplication

Not only was centralisation a problem, so too was the duplication of services. In the 1830s Londoners had access to three different services: the London 'Two-Penny' Post, the Foreign Office Post, and the General Post.

London had a long tradition of its own distinct postal service, which by the 1830s was known as the 'Two-Penny Post'. This service was run out of St. Martin's, but its origins lay in a service introduced independently in 1680 by William Dockwra, who defied the monopoly to set up a system of letter carriers and sorting houses in the capital.²⁷⁸ This service cost one penny a letter - revolutionary in the age of the expensive, official, Royal Mail - and was based on pre-payment of letters rather than payment on receipt.²⁷⁹ To organise the system, Dockwra divided London into a set of districts, with five main offices, along with hundreds of 'receiving houses' where mail could be handed in.²⁸⁰ For this service, 'London' was deemed to cover an area seven miles east to west, as far as Poplar at the eastern boundary.²⁸¹ Deliveries were made to 'country districts' on the outskirts of London for an additional penny.²⁸²

Despite (or perhaps because of) the convenience and cheap access of the scheme, Dockwra's penny post was criticised, his messengers were attacked, and the service was denounced as Popish.²⁸³ It was found to be in breach of the government monopoly and closed down in 1682,²⁸⁴ but the Post Office had understood how popular - and profitable - the service was, and so the G.P.O. re-introduced it as an official part of the service within London.²⁸⁵ The 'British Act of 1711' marked the limits of the London

²⁷⁸ Robinson, p. 70

²⁷⁹ Illustrated London News article, 'Post Office Operations', 1844 in Fryer and Akerman(eds), p. 1128

²⁸⁰ They were located at: St Paul's – Queen's Head Alley; Temple- Chancery Lane; Westminster – St Martin's Lane; Southwark – near St Mary Overy; Hermitage – in Smithfield, Robinson, p. 71

²⁸¹ *Ibid*, p. 71

²⁸² *Ibid*, p. 72

²⁸³ *Ibid*, p. 73

²⁸⁴ Muir, p. 18

²⁸⁵ Robinson, p. 73. Then, in 1709, another attempt at a privately-run service was made, when one Povey set up a ½ penny post in London in 1709- also shut down by the Post Office for breaching the monopoly, though not without demonstrating how a rate as low as ½ d could be profitable in London, see Campbell-Smith, p. 61.

penny post service as a radius of ten miles around London.²⁸⁶ Penny Posts were also set up in Dublin, Edinburgh, Manchester and Glasgow.²⁸⁷ The penny post head office was in St. Christopher's Alley in Threadneedle Street, next to Lombard Street, then the location of the G.P.O. The service had its own administration and a staff of around 80 messengers.²⁸⁸

The next changes were in 1794, when the district boundaries and the shape and size of the 'walks' - the area covered by each postman - were altered to reflect London's growth. At this date the charge for the 'suburban' district was increased to 2d.²⁸⁹ In 1805 the London penny post increased from 1 to 2d in the centre, and to 3d in the suburban area; hence the 'two-penny' and 'three-penny' posts that comprised the London District by the 1830s.²⁹⁰

By 1830 the districts introduced in 1794 were still in place, despite the growth of the city that had occurred.²⁹¹ The two-penny post used just two offices, St Martin's and Gerard Street,²⁹² although mail could be posted at one of 148 receiving houses in 'town' or 202 receiving houses in the 'country' area - often sited in shops, these were open until 8pm.²⁹³ The two-penny post district covered the developed area of London at that time, roughly corresponding to the City, Westminster, and the part of Southwark closest to the river.²⁹⁴ The Three-penny post covered an area that ranged from around 12 miles out of London to 15 miles in some places, though the boundary between the two- and three-penny posts was not necessarily obvious at this date.²⁹⁵

²⁸⁶ Robinson, p. 75

²⁸⁷ *Ibid*, p. 208

²⁸⁸ *Ibid*, p. 111

²⁸⁹ *Ibid*, p. 193

²⁹⁰ Illustrated London News article, 'Post Office Operations', 1844, in Fryer and Akerman (eds), p. 1128. This increase occurred in 1805.

²⁹¹ Simon Morris, 'The London Postal Districts', *London Topographical Society Newsletter no. 29 November 1989*

²⁹² Robinson, p. 196. This had been reduced from the initial, more ambitious system.

²⁹³ *Ibid*, p. 197

²⁹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 196

²⁹⁵ "By 1829 the distinction between the two [2d and 3d areas] was having less meaning, as London grew to merge with many a district that in an earlier day had been a separate village", *Ibid*, p. 196

London was also served by two other postal systems: the Inland or General Post, and the Foreign Office.²⁹⁶ The duplicated services had historic roots: different systems had grown up for various reasons over many years until the London postal service was a mass of complex arrangements. At no point had there been a great effort to consider the whole, no real desire for coherence. The three (or four) different arrangements within London can be seen in this 1830 map:

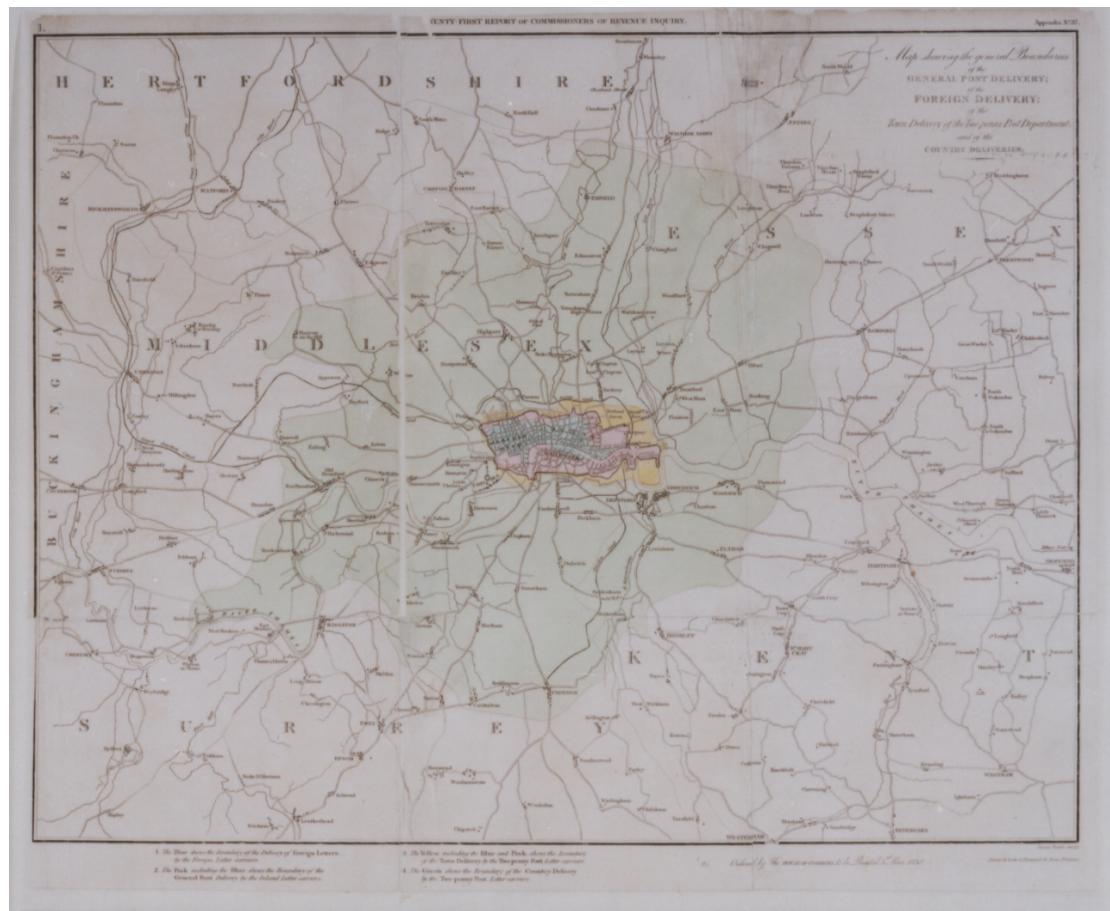


Fig. 38: Map of the different postal services in London in 1830²⁹⁷

1. The smallest area in blue at the centre denotes the area covered by the "Foreign Office", the service for sending and receiving mails from abroad, with London at the centre of a huge global communications network.

²⁹⁶ Ibid, p. 195

²⁹⁷ POST 21/56: 'Map shewing [sic] the general Boundaries of the General Post Delivery; of the foreign Delivery; of the Town Delivery of the Two-penny Post Department and of the Country Deliveries' [London], 1830

2. Covering a slightly larger area than the Foreign Office boundary, shown on the map as the pink district, was the 'General' or 'Inland' post: the London part of the national post.
3. The reaches of the London 'Three-penny Post' can be seen on this map in green; 15 miles appears to be the service boundary in some areas, but closer to the centre in others. The Three-penny Post boundary stretched far out, into areas not recognisably 'London' but rural in character.
4. The boundary of the Two-penny post limits is given in yellow.

The map below shows in detail the Foreign Office area in 1814. Within the Foreign Office the city was divided into 9 'walks': the area covered by each letter carrier. This map shows the walks named after a person, perhaps the letter carrier who walked that district: 'Rainstey's Walk', 'Abbot's Walk' and so on. The outer boundaries of the Foreign Office district were haphazard, organic looking, betraying the fact that the system had not been conceived of as a whole.

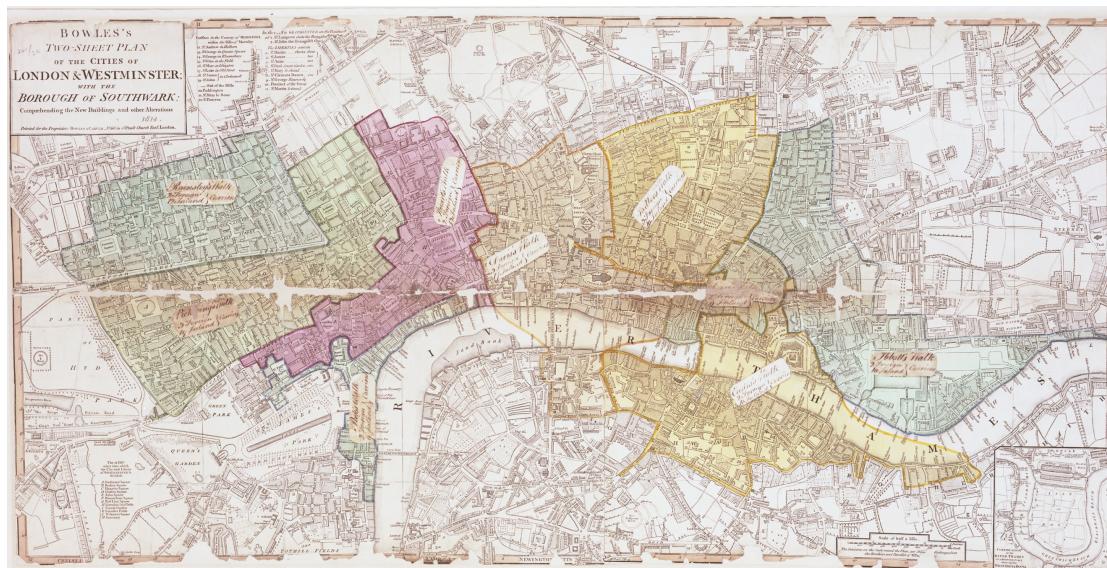


Fig. 39: Bowles's plan of London, Westminster and Southwark, 1814²⁹⁸

Archives relating to the General Post boundary give a similar impression; that it had no system of logic behind it.²⁹⁹ For example, individuals, businesses, and pressure groups

²⁹⁸ POST 21/361: 'Bowles's two sheet plan of the cities of London and Westminster with the borough of Southwark comprehending the new buildings and other alterations', 1814

²⁹⁹ The 'General' Post in this period was also referred to as the 'Inland' Post. On account of it all needing to be more complicated.

from local areas appealed to the Post Office administration for their local area to be included in the General Post boundary.³⁰⁰ Requests came from tradesmen in Bermondsey, who wanted their post to arrive earlier, and from parish groups in Belgrave Square who campaigned over time to be included in the postal district.³⁰¹ Although in most cases the requests were not agreed with, there was something of a responsive approach to the system. The General Post was run separately to the London two-penny post, and the Foreign Office. It operated from St Martin's, employing letter carriers and sorters, and had 71 receiving houses in the London General Post area,³⁰² some of which shared premises with those for the two-penny post.³⁰³

The key moment in the daily routine for the General Post was the first delivery of the day, which included the mail from the rest of the country. Merchants and others paid extra to receive it up to two hours earlier than the normal delivery, usually guaranteeing they would receive it before 10am.³⁰⁴ General Post letters, unlike the two-penny post, were not paid for in advance, nor a set fee, so the sorting process involved individually pricing each letter according to where it had come from and what route it had taken, and then the letter carriers on their delivery needed to collect payment, all of which slowed down the delivery.³⁰⁵ Similarly, the last collection of the day, around 6pm, was important. Here the letter carriers became 'bellmen'; walking the streets ringing a bell advertise they were making the last collection, in which bellmen would take letters pre-paid from places like coffee houses, for a fee.³⁰⁶

By 1830, these three distinct postal services acting within the centre of London meant needless duplication.³⁰⁷ Members of the public could hand letters to any of the letter carriers regardless of which service they worked for, and they would eventually reach their correct destination, but less quickly and potentially with much more expense. The

³⁰⁰ Letters and minutes from the 1820s and 30s show evidence of this. See POST 30/19: *London Delivery: General Post Boundary Extended*, c.1825

³⁰¹ In response officers stated, "the same objection applies to this case as to others, that if once the established boundaries are broken through, it is impossible to say to what extent they would be used, or what additional expense would fall upon the Revenue". *Ibid.*

³⁰² Robinson, p. 204

³⁰³ Lewins, p. 158

³⁰⁴ Robinson, p. 205. The Commissioners in 1830 condemned this practice, but it continued regardless.

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 205

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 205

³⁰⁷ Daunton, p. 5

cards below show the different uniforms of the General Post Office (Inland) letter carrier (as 'bellmen') on the left in bright red livery, and the Twopenny Post letter carrier on the right, with a pale coat:



Fig. 40: The different uniforms: on the left, the GPO letter carrier, on the right the Two-penny post carrier³⁰⁸

As these letter carriers were employed by different, autonomous systems, they had different rates of pay, and different employment terms. Any attempt to eradicate the duplication would involve bringing the letter carriers together onto the same pay scales, with the potential for some or all of the letter carriers losing out as a result. Very few people at the top of the Post Office had the desire to begin this process.³⁰⁹

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³⁰⁸ Object number 2010-0384/02: '*General Post Letter Carrier, 1793-1855*' Cigarette Card, and Object number 2010-0383/21: '*Old London Two-Penny Postman*' Wills's Cigarette Card

³⁰⁹ Hence the Commission of 1830 resulted in very few actual recommendations for the service

That the postal situation in London had developed as it did – with overlapping services, differing boundaries and services, and little coherent logic – was in many ways characteristic of London itself. Up to this period London had grown in a vaguely haphazard way, motivated largely by the ambitions of private landowners.³¹⁰ The city did not have a single unified governing body with control over the city who could implement a town plan or a set of policies for the development of the city. Linked to this, there was no real conception of what London actually was. There was a defined old centre, the City of London, governed by a corporation and guilds and livery companies; Westminster; and Southwark south of the river. Outside these three central areas were a number of smaller villages scattered around the outskirts of the city, destined soon to be swallowed up by the great metropolis. These were in the counties of Middlesex in the north, and Surrey in the south. The tasks of ‘local government’ in these places was largely undertaken by parishes, landowners, or ad-hoc boards.

This situation continued to the middle of the nineteenth century, to the extent that in 1850 *The Times* calculated there were around three hundred separate bodies operating on various building works and other projects in London.³¹¹ The railways became the obvious example: many private companies built competing, sometimes duplicating, lines around the city; but there were many other such enterprises too, such as water companies, or indeed the Post Office. Charities built, as did workhouses, hospitals, prisons. London lacked any sense of central control or planning. The result was patchy infrastructure, and the laissez faire attitude to services meant that disease, poverty, poor housing and more were hardly surprising. In 1856 Engels wrote that London seemed, ‘the result of a gigantic accident’.³¹²

In the 1830s, London had no definition: the city would not be officially governed as a whole until the creation of the Metropolitan Board of Works in 1855.³¹³ Nobody had the same understanding of what was inside the boundary of this place called ‘London’, and

³¹⁰ See the map of London divided into private estates in Peter Whitfield, *London: a Life in Maps*, London: British Library, 2006, p. 56

³¹¹ *Ibid*, p. 110

³¹² Engels, *Die Cage*, Saturday Review, vol. 1, 1856, p. 48. Quoted in Françoise Choay, *Modern City: Planning in the Nineteenth Century*, S.l.: Bragiller, 1969, p. 10

³¹³ Briggs, *Victorian Cities*, p. 354

what was outside – no one city boundary, no one government or mayor, no uniform conception within the minds of Londoners.³¹⁴

It is therefore not too surprising that the London postal services had developed in the way that they did; they appear to be conforming to type. It is here where the London Postal Map came in; it defined London, visually, for everyone to understand. Secondly, it brought changes to the postal service that ended the wasteful centralisation on the centre, by introducing ‘cross posts’ between different parts of London, without going via the centre; and it ended the duplication of services by instituting one London District system for all letters from and to London. But all of this was in the future- between the 1830s and when those changes happened in 1856, there was quite a story to get through.

³¹⁴ This was not to say that the issue was ignored. The great historian of the Victorian Age, Asa Briggs, asserted the importance of boundary making and identity to the Victorian experience of the city, “It was the question of the relationship of the constituent parts to the whole which gave point to most of the other questions contemporaries were asking about London. What was the whole? Did its constituent parts have a real life of their own? Was there any real sense in which London was one?” Briggs, p. 331

4. ROWLAND HILL and POSTAL REFORM

By the late 1830s change was afoot. A new innovation in postal pricing was just about to increase the numbers of letters massively: the ‘penny post’, instigated by the reformer Rowland Hill. Hill’s penny post was a famous innovation featuring in many histories of Victorian England. However, whilst rightly famous for the penny post, he in fact spent a great deal more time on a different project: the reforms related to the London Postal Map.

Hill was not an employee of the Post Office in the 1830s, but an interested outsider. He was born in 1795, to a family interested in Radical reform, free trade, and Benthamite utilitarian philosophy.³¹⁵ His family ran a school based on new educational principles, where Hill taught from the age of 12.³¹⁶ He was an advocate for the work of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge from 1822,³¹⁷ and in 1833 he published a pamphlet about the colonisation of South Australia.³¹⁸ Then in January 1837, Hill published a pamphlet setting the ball rolling for postal reform.³¹⁹ The pamphlet coincided with a series of investigations and Select Committees into the operations of the Post Office³²⁰ after what had been a period of conservatism in the Post Office under the leadership of Francis Freeling.³²¹

Hill wanted the complex series of different rates for letters swept aside, replaced with a system of charging one pence per letter, regardless of distance. He opposed ‘artificial impediments’ such as the Corn Laws,³²² in line with the ‘free trade’ ethos of the period,³²³ and therefore campaigned against the unnecessary burden of high postage costs,³²⁴ understanding that postal service charging did not represent the actual cost of

³¹⁵ Daunton, p. 13-15

³¹⁶ Fryer and Akerman (eds), p. xxiv

³¹⁷ *Ibid*

³¹⁸ He worked for the colonisation effort from 1835-39. *Ibid*, p. xxv

³¹⁹ Rowland Hill, *Post Office Reform: Its Importance and Practicability* London: Privately printed, 1837

³²⁰ The Commission of the Post Office Inquiry had begun sitting in 1835, and produced many reports over the next few years.

³²¹ Secretary 1798 – 1836. Campbell-Smith, p. 106

³²² Hill linked his ideas to loosening restrictions in trade, Fryer and Akerman (eds), p. xxix

³²³ Daunton, p. 9 and p. 50. See also Allam p. 9 and 13.

³²⁴ Daunton, p. 15

transporting mail around the country. Hill argued that by reducing the price of mail to one penny, no matter where the letter was going to in the country, the number of letters posted would increase so dramatically that the system would remain profitable. Hill aimed, more than anything, for simplicity of operations- and a uniform postal rate was a key simplification measure which would make the system more efficient, and drive costs down.³²⁵

The famous section of Hill's pamphlet was his 'Uniform Penny Post', a simple idea that could be communicated easily, and became the masthead in his campaign for postal reform.³²⁶ However, the reforms Hill suggested initially included four main elements:

1. Uniform rate of penny postage
2. Increase speed in the delivery of letters
3. Greater facilities for their despatch
4. Simplification in operations of the Post Office with the object of reducing the cost of the establishment to a minimum³²⁷

Hill saw that the massive increases in mail that would result from making the service widely accessible would require operational changes in the collecting, sorting and delivering of letters. Penny post and operational changes went hand in hand.³²⁸

London Proposals

In 1837 Hill highlighted the problems of over-centralization on London and duplication of services. He noted the slowness of letters in London, and criticised the lack of sorting before letters reached the Central Office.³²⁹ He proposed a number of solutions to the problems of the London district, including dividing London into a number of separate districts, each to operate as individual post towns in order to better handle the amount

³²⁵ Daunton, p. 5

³²⁶ Which, as Campbell-Smith points out had great marketability as a slogan. Campbell-Smith, pp. 123-125

³²⁷ Fryer and Akerman (eds), p. xl. Also see Lewins, p. 173. In addition, Hill also advocated for the introduction of a parcel post for sending books in the mail, primarily for educational purposes. See Daunton, p. 55

³²⁸ On 27th September Hill witnessed the sorting of the two-penny post, which under "the Gallant Colonel" is "radically bad". POST 100/4: *Rowland Hill's Post Office Journal*, Sep 1839-Dec 1840. Hill was adamant that sorting processes at the Post Office were in need of huge changes.

³²⁹ Rowland Hill, *Post Office Reform: Its Importance and Practicability* London: Privately printed, 1837, Appendix 2, p. 33.

of mail in the capital.³³⁰ He suggested that the numbers of deliveries within the boundary of London be increased.³³¹ Hill originally suggested that the uniform penny post be trialled in London only, which, given the history of the penny post in London, was hardly radical.³³²

The publishing of Hill's pamphlet came at just the right time, not long after the Reform Act of 1832. The very act of publishing a pamphlet and petitioning for a cause, was a regular part of the political and social practices at a time when reforming sentiment was widespread.³³³ Not only did Hill's idea chime with reformist sentiments, it was also a means of encouraging reform: 'A particular attraction was that cheap postage would be of huge assistance in circulating broadsheets and pamphlets through the country'.³³⁴ The period was one of change, exemplified in the building of the railways, and with a new generation of reformers in power in the Post Office.³³⁵

A public campaign began, and huge levels of interest amongst City businesses, charities, and more was generated.³³⁶ A 'Mercantile Committee on Postage', comprised of City professionals was set up to campaign for the penny post, with Henry Cole as Secretary and Bates of Baring's Bank as Chairman.³³⁷ City grandes clearly understood the effect the measure would have on business, and the scheme had appeal to very different people, with social reformers too seeing its value.³³⁸ The uniform penny post campaign

³³⁰ *Ibid.*

³³¹ In his testimony to the Committee in 1838, the controller of the two-penny post stated that the proposals would need an increase of letter carriers in order to increase the deliveries, and to deal with the extra letters that the penny post would entail. POST 71/25: *Parliamentary Papers relating to the Post Office*: Volume 24, 1837

³³² Robinson, p. 271

³³³ "The climate for reform and change in the 1830s meant that the public were already accustomed to every type of organisation circulating petitions and seeking views for discussion and comment", Fryer and Akerman (eds), p. xxxiv

³³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. xxix

³³⁵ "The first twin-tracked commercial railway opened for business in 1830, and if the engine of the state in that pre-Victorian era was a train of few carriages, the Post Office was definitely one of them. With a switch in government from the long-dominant Tory party to a Whig party bent on electoral reform, the train was sent off down a different line, and the Post Office was inevitably pulled along behind it." Campbell-Smith, p. 115

³³⁶ POST 100/40: *London Mercantile Committee on postage. Correspondence, reports etc., 1837-1845*

³³⁷ Hill invited Henry Cole to be the Secretary to the Mercantile Committee. Cole was later to become famous as the organiser of the Great Exhibition in 1851. See Fryer and Akerman (eds), p. xxxv; and POST 100/40: *London Mercantile Committee on postage. Correspondence, reports etc., 1837-1845*. See also Allam, p. 19

³³⁸ "In the mercantile world especially, Mr Hill's proposals were at once understood, eagerly adopted, and spread rapidly" Lewins, p. 173

was incredibly successful: after Hill's pamphlet a Parliamentary Commission was set up to investigate Hill's proposals in 1838,³³⁹ its findings circulated later that year.³⁴⁰

Officers of the Post Office – right up to the Postmaster General - were less than enamoured with the suggestion,³⁴¹ with authorities believing the one penny rate was 'so suicidal a policy'.³⁴² Although this resistance has been characterised as stubbornness, it was rooted in the operations of the service itself.³⁴³ However, in the face of the public and business pressure that was placed on the government, the penny post was approved via an Act of Parliament in 1839.³⁴⁴ Hill was appointed by the Treasury to oversee the implementation of the new rates, and in what now seems like remarkable speed for an overhaul of a nationwide system, the penny post was introduced on the 10th January 1840, action perhaps mirroring the speed of the railways.³⁴⁵ By early 1840, everybody in the country could send a letter to anywhere in the country for the cost of just one penny, pre-paid. Numbers of letters dramatically increased overnight.³⁴⁶ It could not be denied that Hill had changed the post- to one universal low rate system of pre-payment, and the introduction of the stamp, allowing for even faster postal operations.³⁴⁷

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The post was not an end in itself, so much as a means to many different ends. Uniform penny postage was a massive change with far-reaching implications. Greater access to the post meant people whose relatives had moved to different parts of the country during this rapidly urbanising period could stay in touch; it meant reforming

³³⁹ POST 71/25: *Parliamentary Papers relating to the Post Office: Volume 24*. Hill, as a witness to the committee, gave more detail about his ideas here.

³⁴⁰ Fryer and Akerman (eds), p. xxiv

³⁴¹ Allam, p. 19

³⁴² Lewins, p. 174

³⁴³ Daunton, p. 5

³⁴⁴ Allam, p. 23

³⁴⁵ Fryer and Akerman (eds) for a full chronology.

³⁴⁶ Of course no data is straight-forward, and there were questions raised about what actually caused the leap in letter communications. One argument was whether the penny post increased mail in Britain, or if it was "the progress of commerce and the spread of education", Robinson, p. 375.

³⁴⁷ Fryer and Akerman (eds), p. xxiii

movements could gather support; it meant better prospects for education and health reform; and it gave businesses opportunity to communicate frequently and cheaply. From 1840 onwards the Penny Post has rightly been seen as a Victorian innovation that fundamentally changed the way that people lived and worked.³⁴⁸

The penny postage also brought a new way for people to experience spaces of the post, as seen in an oft-quoted newspaper article from 1840, which gives a vivid picture of the post's popularity, and of people's encounters with St. Martin's by describing the incredible rush to get to the last post of the evening.³⁴⁹ The article shows the extent to which the system in the central office was stretched to the absolute limits of its capacity. This brings us to the next point about the 1840 reforms: what it was they, crucially, did *not* include.

The success of the penny post somewhat obscures the fact that a uniform rate of one penny was only *one* part of the reforms suggested by Hill. Concentrating the campaign for reform on this one issue somewhat distracted from the wider goals. In the event, penny postage was introduced without the 'back of house' reforms required to fully modernise the service, with Hill's other proposed measures being rejected. In his 1838 Committee appearance, Hill recommended 8 to 10 sorting offices in the London District, not just the one at St. Martin's,³⁵⁰ and that different sorting offices be reflected in the addresses that people used for their letters, e.g. 'Cromwell Terrace, London A' – but his

³⁴⁸ Improved communications allowed for specialisation of industry. *Ibid.* pp. xxiii-xxv. See also Lewins, p. 198-199

³⁴⁹ "People now rush to pay postage as they rush to the pit of a theatre on a crowded night. During the last half hour at the principal offices, especially in Lombard Street, the fore of the Post Office for taking in letters is far overtaxed. A night or two after the change to a penny, we ourselves witnessed a scene at St. Martin's-le-Grand. The great hall was nearly filled with spectators, marshalled in a line by the police, to watch crowds pressing, scuffling, and fighting to get first to the window. The superintending president of the Inland office, with praiseworthy zeal, was in all quarters directing the energy of his officers where the pressure was greatest. Formerly one window sufficed to receive letters. On this evening six windows, with two receivers at each, were so bombarded by applicants. As the last quarter of an hour approached, and the crowd still thickened, a seventh window was opened, and that none might be turned away, Mr Bokenham made some other opening and took in letters and money himself. To the credit of the Post Office, not a single person lost the time, and we learnt that on this evening upwards of 3,000 letters had been posted in St. Martins-le-Grand between 5 and 6 o'clock." London and Westminster Review, Vol. 33, 1840, see Fryer and Akerman (eds)

³⁵⁰ Simon Morris, 'The London Postal Districts', *London Topographical Society*, Newsletter no. 29 November 1989

suggestions were rejected because they would be difficult to implement while the letters were not pre-paid.³⁵¹

A large part of the reason why reforms were not undertaken stemmed from hostility within the Post Office to Hill and his proposals. If reforms could be opposed, they were. To implement the penny post, Hill was appointed to the Treasury; notably *not* inside the Post Office administration. Already in 1839 Hill was struggling to carry out the London reforms. He noted that the space for sorting in the G.P.O. was too small for his requirements,³⁵² and that it would be unwise to carry out his plan for sorting into districts with its current size,³⁵³ convinced that individual districts were needed after witnessing the sorting of the two-penny post.³⁵⁴ In October he visited Paris, and noted that Paris has one set of letter carriers, adding to his conviction that one set would work fine.³⁵⁵ Many journal entries from this period mention the proposal for the district system in London,³⁵⁶ but at this point – 1839 – Hill was resigned to postponing reform to create a district system in London until after the penny post introduction, to avoid delays in the adoption of the penny post. But it is clear from frequent references that he did not intend the postponement to be a long one.³⁵⁷

The need for a dramatic overhaul of Post Office systems, however, appeared to be far from the dominant feeling within the department. Senior Post Office personnel were content to believe – perhaps a little hopefully – that once the penny post had been instituted, Hill would disappear.

³⁵¹ *Ibid.* See also - POST 30/4011: *London Postal Service: letters for London Postal Area, simplified address, Part 2 (end)*. A memo states that "Mr Hill suggested [in 1837] that the district might either be indicated by distinguishing letters or be made to conform with some existing (Parliamentary or other) division of the Metropolis" The main problem was that the plan would only work if all letters sent were pre-paid, and the committee did not want to recommend that.

³⁵² POST 100/4: *Rowland Hill's Post Office Journal*, Sep 1839-Dec 1840, 16th and 17th Sep 1839; and on 19th September: "[re. the District Offices] I stated that, although I considered them essential to the quick delivery of the metropolis, I would not recommend their immediate adoption if the G.P.O. were at all large enough for the work."

³⁵³ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁴ *Ibid.* Stating it was "radically bad". 27th Sep 1839 entry

³⁵⁵ *Ibid.* Early October 1839

³⁵⁶ Such as when Hill spoke to the Chancellor of the Exchequer about the plan. He noted that he "is strongly impressed with the importance of postponing the adoption of the district offices (even if absolutely desirable, which he is not yet convinced) till after the reduction in the rates".

³⁵⁷ *Ibid.* See 14th Jan, 1840.

5. 1840-46 LONDON POST

Hill stayed at the Treasury until 1842, overseeing the penny post. After its introduction the numbers of letters went up and up, and with it, the need to reform the London system got greater. Hill made this point publicly in a report for the London Statistical Society in 1841, using the following table of number of letters through the London General Post-

Four weeks ending	1839	1840	1841
2nd March	1,557,880	3,338,074	5,031,452
30th March	1,604,356	3,372,667	5,060,127
27th April	1,656,316	3,404,900	4,966,929
12 Weeks total	4,818,532	10,115,641	15,058,929 ³⁵⁸

Fig. 41: Table 1. Increases in letters after the introduction of the Penny Post

The dramatic impact that the penny post had on London from before 1839, to after it was introduced in 1840 is understood when we see that the *increase* in the numbers of letters in the surveyed period was more than 100% of the *total* pre-penny post letters.

Hill divided the London letters into 3 types:

1. Those delivered in London
2. Those posted in London
3. Those merely passing through

And noted that the increase in 1) was 65%, in 2) 70% and in 3) well over 100%.³⁵⁹ Thus his argument for his full reforms: firstly, that the G.P.O. was too small for business,

³⁵⁸ Up until 1839, these figures had been steady, as Hill had pointed out in his pamphlet that there should have been increases in mail due to the recent increases in addresses in London, but there had not been any notable increases. Rowland Hill, *Post Office Reform: Its Importance and Practicability* London: Privately printed, 1837

³⁵⁹ POST 23/203: *Remarks on a paper by Rowland Hill, Esq on the Results of the New Postage Arrangements*, John Oliverier, London, 1841. London, 13th May 1841

secondly, that the growth of letters was going to continue, with the problem only getting worse, and thirdly, with every reform of the system, use increased; as the post became an ever more useful facility for the public, the public increasingly used it.³⁶⁰

As was becoming a habit, Post Office officials did not see things the same way, and for the period until 1842 Hill became increasingly frustrated as his efforts to complete his reforms – including London reforms – were rebuffed. Again Hill’s Journal shows how things progressed (or otherwise), from his perspective.³⁶¹ From other archives we see that Hill’s often-repeated suggestion for dividing London into Districts did not materialise.³⁶²

In 1841 Hill again brought up his London plans with the Chancellor, who appeared well disposed, but nothing was settled.³⁶³ In the following year a report from the Postmaster General was produced about the London postal service, which recommended increasing the number of daily deliveries by one³⁶⁴ including an “additional evening delivery in the suburbs within 6 miles of the Post Office.”³⁶⁵ Such half-measures – as Hill considered them – in dealing with the London service only served to frustrate him even more. Despite his efforts during his three years at the Treasury, his message did not appear to get through. Once Hill’s penny post initiative had been completed, and the political climate changed with a Tory government in power, Hill’s appointment was terminated in 1842.³⁶⁶

³⁶⁰ He proclaimed the results given in the statistics was not a one-off phenomenon, but that, “From this fact, therefore, an important inference may be drawn as to the augmentation to be expected whenever the *increased facility originally recommended shall be carried to their full extent*”. *Ibid.* My italics.

³⁶¹ On the 17th January 1840, he noted that “the crush at Lombard Street tonight was worse than ever” POST 100/4: *Rowland Hill’s Post Office Journal*, Sep 1839-Dec 1840.

³⁶² Evidence for this is found in the memo logs of the letter carrier inspectors, which in this period show the divisions of letter carrier ‘walks’; grouped into other traditional areas. These were North-West; West City; Lombard W; North East; East; and Southwark, with a list of chief office sand branches at the Chief Office (St. Martin’s); Charing Cross; North Row; Portland Street; Stepney; and Southwark. POST 14/3: *Memoranda book relating to administration and organisation of the Twopenny Post Office*. Duty Memo book- Inspector of Letter Carriers, Inland Office, c. 1840.

³⁶³ POST 100/5: *Rowland Hill’s Post Office Journal*. Jan-Dec 1841.

³⁶⁴ POST 100/6: *Rowland Hill’s Post Office Journal*. Jan 1842-30 Mar 1843

³⁶⁵ April 1842 entry. POST 100/6: *Rowland Hill’s Post Office Journal*. Jan 1842-30 Mar 1843

³⁶⁶ “Both Chancellor and Postmaster General held the basic view that uniform penny postage, optionally prepaid by stamps, constituted the entirety of Hill’s vision, and they couldn’t understand why he was still employed by the Treasury.” Fryer and Akerman (eds)

Despite not being an employee of the Treasury or the Post Office from 1842, Hill continued to push for reform. The division of London into districts to facilitate sending huge numbers of letters did not materialise for years after this, despite it being described, advocated, and dismissed numerous times over the years. Hill was facing recriminations from the Post Office and from government. After the introduction of the penny post, the number of letters had gone up dramatically, but the projected increases in the amount of revenue collected by the Post Office did not materialise. Gross revenue in fact fell, not to recover for many years,³⁶⁷ and this decrease only gave his critics further firepower.³⁶⁸ Hill's position remained clear: that the Post Office revenue 'depended on the carrying out of *all* his plans'.³⁶⁹ The government was alarmed, and put together a Committee in 1843-44 in which Hill was effectively on trial:³⁷⁰ 'the failure of the 'Penny Postage' to attain the financial solvency rashly prophesised by Hill did much to detract from the undoubted "revolution" in national correspondence which took place in the 1840s, and also provided a platform for which the enemies of the Hill reforms could "counter-attack".³⁷¹

Hill however was not contrite and worked to clear his name and press on with reform, in the best way he knew how: writing another pamphlet.³⁷² In the 1843 pamphlet³⁷³ Hill demonstrated that he understood that lack of revenue was problematic to the Treasury,³⁷⁴ but his argument presented a dilemma: he was adamant he needed *full* reforms to complete the job and increase revenue, whilst the Post Office refused to undertake any further reforms until the revenue improved.

³⁶⁷ Allam, p. 23

³⁶⁸ Although part of the cause may have lain in one operational point that bore no relation to Hill's ideas: the use of the new railways to transport mail. Lewins, p. 205

³⁶⁹ POST 100/4: *Rowland Hill's Post Office Journal, Sep 1839-Dec 1840*. Also see Lewins, p. 203

³⁷⁰ Allam, p. 25

³⁷¹ *Ibid*, p. 23.

³⁷² 'The State and Prospects of Penny Postage', 4 April, 1843. POST 23/204: *The State and Prospects of Penny Postage, as developed in the Evidence taken before the Postage Committee of 1843, with incidental remarks on the Testimony of the Post Office Authorities and an Appendix of Correspondence*.

³⁷³ Rowland Hill, *Requisites to the Completion of Mr Roland Hill's Plan of Post Office Improvement Number 1, April 24th 1843*. In *Ibid*.

³⁷⁴ Fryer and Akerman (eds), p. 874.

The 1843 pamphlet, accompanied by a petition to Parliament that same year, and Hill's evidence to the Select Committee,³⁷⁵ all gave a good indication of Hill's plans for London, in more detail than he had hitherto given. Hill advocated changes in London including: earlier delivery of letters; late letter facilities; faster circulation within the London District by establishing hourly collections and deliveries, intra-London cross-posts; better sorting methods; and "conveniences for the transmission, at extra charge, of prints, maps, and other similar articles".³⁷⁶ He stated,

the interchange of letters by the District Post is so slow, that special messengers are employed by the public, whenever dispatch is important.

The time ordinarily required to send a letter and receive a reply between one part of London and another, is about seven or eight hours, and between London and the suburbs ten or eleven hours, even when night does not intervene [...]

Remedies. – In London, make the collection and delivery of letters once an hour, instead of once in two hours; and establish District Offices, so as to avoid the necessity of making all letters, as at present, pass through St Martin's-le-Grand³⁷⁷

This suggestion would 'remedy' the problem of over-centralisation of operations on the centre at St Martin's.³⁷⁸

Hill focused on what he saw as unreasonably slow and infrequent levels of service, and suggested remedies such as the uniting of the various 'corps' of letter carriers into one service.³⁷⁹ Therefore, by this point Hill's ideas for the reforms to London were well-formed, similar to what was introduced when the London service was finally reformed in the 1850s. By 1843 Hill had proposed: hourly delivery of mail in London, the

³⁷⁵ Published into "Administration of the Post Office from the Introduction of Mr Rowland Hill's Plan of Penny Postage up to the Present Time". *Ibid.*

³⁷⁶ POST 23/204: *The State and Prospects of Penny Postage, as developed in the Evidence taken before the Postage Committee of 1843, with incidental remarks on the Testimony of the Post Office Authorities and an Appendix of Correspondence.*

³⁷⁷ Rowland Hill, *Requisites to the Completion of Mr Roland Hill's Plan of Post Office Improvement Number 1, April 24th 1843.*

³⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁹ Rowland Hill, *Requisites to the Completion of Mr Roland Hill's Plan of Post Office Improvement Number 1, April 24th 1843. POST 23/204: The State and Prospects of Penny Postage, as developed in the Evidence taken before the Postage Committee of 1843, with incidental remarks on the Testimony of the Post Office Authorities and an Appendix of Correspondence.*

amalgamation of the different postal services operating in London, and dividing London into different districts- the act undertaken by the Postal Map of 1856.

Hill's evidence to the Select Committee in 1843 is also useful because it demonstrated the arguments that were used *against* Hill in this period.³⁸⁰ Expense was the usual argument³⁸¹ followed by operational explanations to counter Hill's suggestions.³⁸² The inner workings of the Post Office were revealed, showing the extent to which Postal staff misunderstood (wilfully or otherwise) Hill's suggestions. One instance was an argument against quick delivery in London, using an example of a letter from Pimlico to Westminster: "First, the letter in question must be collected by the letter carrier, it has then to be conveyed to the District Office, and then to the GPO to be sorted there, the sorting itself will take some time, it has then to be despatched to the District Office, Whitechapel; it has there to be taken out by the letter carrier and delivered".³⁸³ This fundamentally misunderstood Hill's idea, in which letters would not be sorted many different times, as the quote suggested, but just once, away from St. Martin's.

Significantly, the Committee also argued that whilst a letter possibly *could* be delivered within the hour in that District, *why* would it be sent, when the person could walk it?³⁸⁴ After the introduction of the Postal Map, one of the measures of its success was that letters were frequently used to transmit information over very short distances, sometimes only a matter of a few streets away; a fundamental change to people's use of the post, their daily routines, and ultimately their experience of living in London. The man who knew more about London operations than any other, the 'Superintending President' Mr Bokenham, added his weight to the cause, stating of both hourly delivery,

³⁸⁰ One simple example was that the committee claimed the amalgamation of the General and London District Post letter carriers would be very expensive. *Administration of the Post Office from the Introduction of Mr. Roland Hill's Plan of Penny Postage up to the Present Time*, 1844, reprinted in Rowland Hill, *The Post Office of Fifty Years ago. Containing reprint of Sir Rowland Hill's famous pamphlet dated 22nd February, 1837, proposing penny postage, et cetera*. London: Cassell and Company, 1887

³⁸¹ Another example being when the Post Office Secretary, Maberly, stated that sorting in District Offices, rather than the head office, would increase expense 'Evidence of the Select Committee', in *Ibid*, p. 93

³⁸² Daunton notes for example that the separation of London into districts was considered to be impracticable, as letters would need sorting in to these districts, increasing expense, and potentially confusion. Daunton p. 46

³⁸³ 'Evidence of the Select Committee', which was later published in 1844 as '*Administration of the Post Office from the Introduction of Mr. Roland Hill's Plan of Penny Postage up to the Present Time*', p. 93

³⁸⁴ *Ibid*, p. 93

and of the division of London into ten districts 'I do not use the word impracticable (he says) but it really amounts to it in my opinion. [...] It would lead to endless confusion'.³⁸⁵

One such possible 'confusion' postulated was changes to the daily services: 'It is well known that all places within 6 miles from the General Post Office have 6 deliveries per diem; within 3 miles there are 6-7; between 3 and 6 miles there are 5.'³⁸⁶ This point demonstrates that in this period people knew the times of the mails each day; indicating the extent to which the routine of the post was part of daily life.

The Select Committee proceedings were thoroughly acrimonious, going so far as to state that Hill had deceived the public.³⁸⁷ It was claimed that businesses and those with money used the Penny Post, whilst the poor had not benefitted at all.³⁸⁸ The cold reception of the 1843 pamphlet is clear from the evidence of the Committee, which stated Hill's ideas "would be almost physically impossible",³⁸⁹ and that his claim there could be hourly deliveries in London "was a mere trick upon the public."³⁹⁰ The level of resentment felt by many of Hill was one reason why his reforms for London took almost twenty years.³⁹¹

Despite the enmity felt towards Hill, he had a point. If anything, his 'back of house' reforms were even more critical than before, given that after the penny post was introduced, the numbers of letters circulating around the system had increased

³⁸⁵ The full quote is rather nice: "his evidence confirms that of Mr Smith both as to the expense and inefficiency of the project [hourly delivery]. He is of the same opinion as to another "suggestion" of Mr Hill; viz. the division of London into ten different districts for Post Office purposes. "I do not use the word impracticable (he says) but it really amounts to it in my opinion. The effect of the branches would be this; that every Post Office in the kingdom would necessarily have ten bags to make up for London; the consequence would be that the country Postmasters could never sort the London letters. It would lead to endless confusion", *Ibid* p. 100

³⁸⁶ *Ibid*, p. 99. The other argument against increasing deliveries, was, of course, cost- it being noted that the recent increase in the number of deliveries cost £3,500, which has not repaid its expense.

³⁸⁷ 'Administration of the Post Office from the Introduction of Mr. Roland Hill's Plan of Penny Postage up to the Present Time' 1844, p. 101

³⁸⁸ There was a section on the 'moral and social effects of the Penny Postage' *Ibid*, p. 193

³⁸⁹ *Ibid*, Committee evidence p. 91

³⁹⁰ *Ibid*. p. 92

³⁹¹ "Not only was the scheme not fairly worked, and the improvement only partially carried out, *but they were crippled in their operation by officials who, if not hostile, were half-hearted and far from anxious for a successful issue*". My Italics. Lewins, p. 203

significantly.³⁹² The systems in place were designed for an earlier time, so in London the penny post had flooded an already outdated system.

Hill then dropped out of the story until 1846,³⁹³ when he returned to the Post Office. Pausing here, we can take stock of the London postal service in the mid-1840s, after the introduction of the penny post but before the London reforms. A newspaper article of 1844 tells us the London District Post was “currently an establishment in itself” with ‘Smith’ the Superintending President, and: 1 chief clerk; 4 assistant clerks; one surveyor; 1 remittance clerk; 2 presidents; 3 vice-presidents; 2 windowmen; 12 clerks of business; 14 assistant clerks; 18 sorters; 19 sub-sorters; 1 inspector of letter carriers; 2 assistant inspectors; 5 sub assistants; 14 stampers; and c.400 letter carriers.³⁹⁴ A series of branch offices for sub-sorting were in place around the city.³⁹⁵ The London district, as before, was divided into ‘walks’, but the old ‘Two-penny’ and ‘Three-penny’ designations were no more, after the penny post had introduced one uniform price. There was still a ‘London District Post’, separate to the ‘General Post’, with no amalgamation taking place. All mail was still coming into St. Martin’s le Grand with few efforts to stop centralisation, or duplication.³⁹⁶

³⁹² In the first year of the uniform penny post, number of letters in the system doubled, from 82.5m to 168.8m. Campbell-Smith, p. 140

³⁹³ In this period Hill had something of a hiatus on Post matters, holding a post as Chairman and Director of the London and Brighton Railway Company from 1843-46. Fryer and Akerman (eds), p. xxv

³⁹⁴ *Illustrated London News*, ‘Post Office Operations’, 1844. Reproduced in *Ibid*, p. 1128

³⁹⁵ *Ibid*. The article describes the way the system was used by the public: “for the convenience of letter carriers and expediting the delivery of letters, branch offices are established in different parts of town, where the second assortment, or arrangement of the letters for delivery in the immediate neighbourhood, takes place. It is at these offices that the majority if the assistant-inspectors of letter carriers are employed”.

³⁹⁶ “In the practice of the two-penny post there are some anomalies; for instance the rigid rule that all letters, wherever they may be posted, must pass through the chief office in St. Martin’s-le-Grand before they are delivered. This produces both vexation and delay. Improvements, however, have, in many instances, been made: and there can be no question that the *vis inertia* introduced into the Establishment by the new principal of Mr Hill, will eventually lead to the removal of prejudices to which a long and interrupted flow of official practice has given a character of unalienable sacredness; and with which it has been considered almost impious to interfere.” *Ibid*. The system in place in the 1840s did not stop the post having what, to our mind, is an incredibly quick and frequent service in London- with up to 10 deliveries daily of London local letters; 1st at 8am; 2nd at 10; 3rd, 12; 4th- 1pm; 5th - 2pm; 6th - 3pm; 7th - 4pm; 8th - 5pm; 9th - 6pm; 10th - 8pm – and collections are made at the same time.

6. YEARS OF 'OBSTRUCTIONS': 1846 - 1854

Although the penny post has, rightly, been heralded as a modern, progressive measure that stands within the canon of Victorian innovations, a triumphalist reading of Hill's success in the penny post rather obscures the full picture. After the penny post achievement, comes sixteen more years of frustrations.³⁹⁷ The London Postal Map offers a different perspective to the success story of the penny post, a story of frequent frustrating failures on the part of Hill to progress his reform agenda.

Despite the cold reception of his campaigning publications, Hill maintained his interest in the Post Office and gained his first position there in 1846. Hill wanted to be Secretary, the highest position in the Post Office, but this post was taken. Hill was therefore appointed under a new job title, a second 'Secretary', with ambiguous powers but a general remit for reform. In his appointment, there was recognition that Hill's reforming ideas and efforts were a good thing – and seen as such by the British public - but his subsequent career suggests a lack of understanding or interest over where his reforming energies might best be spent. Thus began a strange period of limbo for Hill, that lasted from his return in 1846, to his appointment as the sole Secretary of the Post Office in 1854.

The signs were not altogether bad in terms of the prospects for London reform in this period. An extra delivery was added to the service; although its not having paid for itself lessened the chance of similar additions. In 1846 'bell ringing' was abolished, along with the abolition of the additional early delivery that letter carriers charged extra for; these changes brought with them protests from the letter carriers.³⁹⁸ There were attempts to

³⁹⁷ "This is a story of opportunity frustrated by bureaucracy which was overcome by Hill's sheer persistence and hard work during almost thirty years; the results were described as a benefit to all mankind.", Fryer and Akerman, p. xxvi

³⁹⁸ As 'bell-men' and the people who collected the payment for early delivery, letter carriers had effectively 'owned' their patch- the right to collect these dues on their 'walk'. This right had meant an addition to their salary, and when these rights were abolished, their income went down. The year 1846 therefore saw a series of memorials (protests) from the letter carriers to the post office authorities about their reduction in wages. POST 30/116A: *Letter Carriers: bell ringing abolished, compensation for loss of profits*. Protests included the petition of July 1846 with 251 signatories about letter carrier's wages; the October 1846 letter to Bokenham appealing for better wages – linked to the abolition of bell ringing and

solve the problem of St. Martin's being too small, building a new sorting room that had higher capacity and could deal with letters quicker.³⁹⁹ But whatever measures were made, the next ten years provided more of the same for Hill, and for London's post: his efforts to pursue his reform agenda for London were not accomplished, with a series of 'obstructions' apparently placed in Hill's way.⁴⁰⁰

At various times Hill was interested in changing sorting arrangements in London, extending the time of deliveries earlier and later in the day.⁴⁰¹ He also considered the amalgamation of the letter carriers from the General and London District Posts, but plans in 1846 to consolidate them by January, to save £2,000 a year⁴⁰² came to nothing, with Hill facing pressure from letter carriers, from whom he received deputations regularly.⁴⁰³ Problems in 1847 over staff terms, for messengers as well as letter carriers, are highlighted throughout Hill's accounts.⁴⁰⁴ He received notice that the staff of the London District Post wanted to be on the same terms as the Inland Office; another complication in the proposed amalgamation of the letter carriers.⁴⁰⁵

Ideally, Hill wanted to make one comprehensive reform of London, rather than small incremental steps. But the problem with this 'all or nothing' approach was that Hill did not have a fully-worked up plan for this- he had only 'suggestions'.⁴⁰⁶ It was dilemma:

the money that went with this; and a series of letters stating disappointment at the ending of the early and late deliveries.

³⁹⁹ An article in the Illustrated London News on May 16th 1846 describes the new room. Reproduced in Fryer and Akerman, p. 1132

⁴⁰⁰ Hill's role in the Post Office in this pre-1854 period is well documented in his Journal, which gives a good idea of the sort of activity he was engaged in: the control of the new Money Order Office; postal staff terms in response to a changing – and growing - workforce and growing rate of staff memorials to the department; dealing with the sticky problem of Sunday working; and more. POST 100: 1-18: *Rowland Hill's Post Office Journals*.

⁴⁰¹ POST 100/7: *Rowland Hill's Post Office Journal*, 28 Nov 1846-17 Dec 1847. Entry dated 28 Nov 1846. Hill notes that the first collection in London is to alter from 8 to 8.15am in December.

⁴⁰² *Ibid.* The 1 December 1846 journal entry. He remarks that consolidation will "release 80 supernumerary letter-carriers and saves more than £2,000 a year".

⁴⁰³ In January of 1847 Hill received a deputation from letter carriers. He was planning "extensive changes" to the letter carriers in the amalgamation: "the letter carriers states that they had been appointed a deputation at a meeting at which nearly 800 were present" *Ibid.* 22 January 1847 Journal entry

⁴⁰⁴ On 28 August when Hill stated, "Sunday. William James, a messenger in the Inland Office, called this morning, and left a letter complaining of persecution in consequence of having some time ago made suggestions for the improvement of the Post Office, and asking for an interview". *Ibid.* 28 August 1847 entry

⁴⁰⁵ *Ibid.* 11 September 1847 entry

⁴⁰⁶ The fact that his ideas were still merely 'suggestions' rankled with the Post Office establishment, who saw Hill as an outsider, ignorant of the detailed working of the Post Office, unable to understand why the system operated in the way that they did, and therefore unable to understand why Hill's suggestions were

Hill could not prove the reforms would work, unless they were put into place wholesale, but there was reluctance to implement any untested system in its entirety due to the risks involved with fixed costs, the infrastructure needed, and sacking or recruiting staff. This perhaps explains evidence of Hill undertaking vaguely clandestine activity to develop his ideas through experimentation and testing into more workable plans with operational detail. In 1849 Hill confesses:

8th October – with the assistance of Ormond and Julian [Hill] completed the arrangements sufficiently for a rude experiment in sorting, and in the afternoon, sorted about a thousand forward letters in my own room. About one hundred, with incomplete addresses, being left unsorted. Considering the rudeness of the apparatus, the result was satisfactory

9th October – Altered the arrangements to some extent, sacrificing somewhat speed for the sake of greater simplicity, and sorted another 1,000 letters; but still with very incomplete and insufficient apparatus.⁴⁰⁷

Hill's diary entries continued to include bitter statements, showing resentment that his changes were not taken up, now ten years after they had been suggested.⁴⁰⁸ He continued to push for earlier and more frequent posts, occasionally making some progress- for example he considered the way mail was transported, noticing the suburbs had an extra delivery compared to a collection, so messengers were going over

in fact potentially disastrous. One example of this attitude is seen in Maberly's testimony quoted in 1843 report: "[of the implementation of changes to the LDP] What we have always wished to ascertain from Mr Hill has been the exact plan by which we should work out in detail his 'suggestions', if we were to carry them out, and that we have never been able to fix him; I mean how many men, and what it means, he proposes to employ to convey the letters from one office to another; how many sorters, how many letter carriers in each walk, and the expense of them. Let him work that out in detail, in the way in which we work out a Post office arrangement, and then we can meet him." *'Administration of the Post Office from the Introduction of Mr. Roland Hill's Plan of the Penny Postage up to the Present Time 1844'* – report of evidence by the Select Committee on Postage. Reproduced in Rowland Hill, *The Post Office of Fifty Years ago. Containing reprint of Sir Rowland Hill's famous pamphlet dated 22nd February, 1837, proposing penny postage, et cetera*. London: Cassell and Company, 1887, p. 172

⁴⁰⁷ Where did he get the letters from?! *POST 100/9: Rowland Hill's Post Office Journal*. 30 Mar 1849-10 Apr 1850. Entries for 8th and 9th October 1849.

⁴⁰⁸ For example, "Mr Hart, Chief Clerk in the London District Post, writes to suggest improvements in sorting, which he says will reduce the time required to one fourth its present amount. Sent for him, and showed him that I had proposed the same plan to the Commissioners of the Post Office Inquiry (9th report) 10 years ago.", entry 1st Feb 1847. *POST 100/7: Rowland Hill's Post Office Journal*, 28 Nov 1846-17 Dec 1847

ground empty-handed.⁴⁰⁹ He added in the extra collection, at little cost.⁴¹⁰ Interestingly in these references, he referred to post towns in the London suburbs as ‘villages’ – fairly accurately describing what were, at that point in time, actual villages – the urban sprawl of London not yet enveloping them by development.⁴¹¹

But in general he faced the same problem of objections to measures that ‘are such that I have been obliged for the present to withdraw the measure. There are real difficulties, but I feel little doubt that they might have been removed by some exertion’.⁴¹² He continually attempted – but failed - to make changes that were to eventually be made in 1856/57, for example ‘alphabetic’ sorting of letters.⁴¹³

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The huge mega-event that was the Great Exhibition in 1851 increased post in London,⁴¹⁴ and vice versa, with the post greatly assisting the organisation of the exhibition.⁴¹⁵ Hill used the Exhibition as an excuse to introduce a reform: letter-boxes in doors.⁴¹⁶ But the Great Exhibition aside, Hill was still making only tiny gains in London.⁴¹⁷ Letter boxes were introduced in the Channel Islands,⁴¹⁸ though Hill could

⁴⁰⁹ POST 100/7: *Rowland Hill's Post Office Journal*, 28 Nov 1846-17 Dec 1847

⁴¹⁰ *Ibid.* Entry dated 12 Mar 1847.

⁴¹¹ *Ibid.* 20 Mar 1847– “this week I have been engaged chiefly in preparing a Minute proposing an additional despatch from each of the 120 additional villages in the London District Post”

⁴¹² *Ibid.* 16 Oct 1847 journal entry

⁴¹³ He noted that the Money Order Office used an alphabetic sorting system - “As, in this transaction, they have nothing to do with the “roads”, there is no false analogy to lead them astray, and the assortment is alphabetic, that is to say, on the same plan as that which I proposed long ago for letters.” Entry 25th Mar 1847. *Ibid*.

⁴¹⁴ London letters. “It is remarkable that the London General Post letters which increased to the extent of about 200,000 a week soon after the opening of the Exhibition, continue now that it is closed to be as numerous as ever”, Hill’s Journal, 19th January, 1851. POST 100/10: *Rowland Hill's Post Office Journal*, 11 Apr 1850-29 Oct 1851

⁴¹⁵ “Cole, in returning thanks for the Executive Committee, said that the Exhibition could not have existed but for the aid of the Penny Post”. Entry dated 12 July 1851. *Ibid.*

⁴¹⁶ “the Postmaster General has sanctioned a notice to be issued in London again recommending street-door letter-boxes – making the Great Exhibition a reason for their immediate adoption”. *Ibid.* 27 March 1851.

⁴¹⁷ For example, in 1851 he noted he had instituted General Post delivery 2 hours earlier in the day to Brixton, and plan to extend them to other places, including Hampstead Heath: “The measure will be a step towards the more perfect plan which I attempted to carry out more than four years ago, but which I was obliged to abandon for the time in consequence of Smith’s objections (9 Sep 1847)”— 31 Dec, 1851. POST 100/11: *Rowland Hill's Post Office Journal*. 29 Oct 1851-16 Aug 1853

⁴¹⁸ *Ibid.* 2 January 1852 entry.

not yet persuade the Postmaster General to include them in London.⁴¹⁹ Some later collections were approved,⁴²⁰ and Hill managed to persuade the Postmaster General about ‘careful addressing of letters’ in London – though nothing, yet, about the actual meaning of this for the service.⁴²¹ Rumbling about letter carrier wages continued.⁴²²

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Hill’s slow progress with London reforms had a personal side. Hill blamed his lack of progress in reforming the London district prior to 1856 on the ‘obstructions’ of his colleague Colonel Maberly.⁴²³ Maberly was the Post Office Secretary, holding the job that Hill coveted. Holding the highest non-political post at the department, and subordinate only to the Postmaster General, it was Maberly who had to approve all changes to his department.⁴²⁴ Despite this, Hill consistently strived to work beyond his role, failed, became frustrated, and pointed blame directly on Maberly.⁴²⁵

⁴¹⁹ *Ibid.* 8 January 1852 entry.

⁴²⁰ *Ibid.* 31 Jan 1852.

⁴²¹ *Ibid.* On 20 April 1852 the Postmaster General approved a minute “the object of which is to induce greater care in the addressing of letters for the environs of London, so as to enable the country postmasters to separate them from the letters for London itself, with a view to a further improvement in the deliveries”

⁴²² On 24 Mar 1851 Hill submitted a minute with “facts of the case” about the letter carriers, but the Postmaster General requested he withdraw it; on 12 June Hill wanted to refer all memoranda he had received about Metropolitan wages to the commission, which is due to be set up in the autumn. Then on 7th May 1852: “the Postmaster General having called upon me to set about the amalgamation of the two corps of letter-carriers, I explained to him the circumstances which have hitherto delayed the measure. He fully admits the force of my objections, and talks of placing the Inland and District Offices under my charge, with a view to their complete amalgamation; but wishes the matter to be delayed for the present”. POST 100/10: *Rowland Hill's Post Office Journal*, 11 Apr 1850-29 Oct 1851 and POST 100/11: *Rowland Hill's Post Office Journal*. 29 Oct 1851-16 Aug 1853

⁴²³ Hill’s Journal entry includes hundreds of references to events that are headlined, ‘Obstructions’. Often, they read, more specifically, ‘Maberly. Obstructions.’ POST 100/8: *Rowland Hill's Post Office Journal*, 17 Dec 1847-29 Mar 1849

⁴²⁴ Hill was not to be allowed to act unilaterally –all decisions had to be approved by Maberly. In a minute to the Postmaster in response Maberly, on requesting papers by Hill go through the Secretary’s office, stated “as it is not intended that Mr Hill shall interfere in the general business but only take part in such special matters as your Lordship shall think fit to refer to him”. Entry of 8 December 1846, POST 100/7: *Rowland Hill's Post Office Journal*, 28 Nov 1846-17 Dec 1847

⁴²⁵ “I dare not attempt at present so complex and extensive an improvement as the District posts and hourly deliveries.” 2 Oct 1847 entry, *Ibid.*



Fig. 42: The man himself. Colonel William Maberly, Post Office Secretary, 1836 - 1854⁴²⁶

Colonel William Maberly was Secretary from 1836 to 1854,⁴²⁷ coinciding with Hill's Post Office tenure for 15 years.⁴²⁸ He was an aristocratic, absentee Irish landlord, retired from the military; a fairly classic early nineteenth century senior civil servant – and likely no evil genius out to thwart Hill maliciously (as Hill paints him).⁴²⁹ By the 1850s, Hill's paranoia about him had reached a peak, but it had started much earlier, in the period of the Penny Post introduction.⁴³⁰

Hill wanted nothing less than for Maberly to be removed from his position at the Post Office, and Hill's behaviour in this 1846-54 period worked towards this goal. Hill attempted to oust his rival, the "Gallant Colonel" as he sarcastically refers to him, with

⁴²⁶ Picture source, M. J. Daunton, *Royal Mail: the Post Office since 1840* London: Athlone, 1985

⁴²⁷ Lewins tells us that in 1836, [the previous Secretary] Freeling died, and "his place was filled by Lieutenant-Colonel Maberly. The latter gentleman, who is described as having been an entire stranger to the office", Lewins, p. 16

⁴²⁸ Despite his prominence, very little has been written about Maberly from any perspective other than references to his (thoroughly reluctant) relationship with Hill. To a large extent, we are forced to gather our opinion of him from Roland Hill. And that opinion is particularly lacking in nuance.

⁴²⁹ Rather, perhaps, a fairly neutral officer keen to maintain the status quo and avoid disruption to services and personnel- fairly typical in the civil service. "Of course, the *non possumus* argument was frequently introduced and adhered to" Lewins, p. 212

⁴³⁰ Already in the committee in 1843 Hill noted how Maberly had purposely worked against him, by referencing Maberly's evidence to the Committee. POST 23/204: *The State and Prospects of Penny Postage, as developed in the Evidence taken before the Postage Committee of 1843, with incidental remarks on the Testimony of the Post Office Authorities and an Appendix of Correspondence*.

such an incredible lack of subtlety as to be bordering on hilarious.⁴³¹ Hill was convinced that Maberly was going behind his back to stir up trouble, and reported his misgivings to the Treasury- beginning a period in which Hill actively campaigned for Maberly to be sacked from his Post Office role, with the Postmaster needing, rather diplomatically, to refuse such unorthodox requests.⁴³² Seemingly undeterred, Hill continued his quest to oust Maberly with the aim of installing himself in post instead.⁴³³

For all Hill's bluster, it appears there was a problem within the Post Office related to Hill's official role; it was certainly difficult for reform to be enacted when there were two apparent leaders in the department.⁴³⁴ Postmasters General attempted to codify Hill and Maberly's working relationship, usually to no avail, in an attempt to resolve this problem.⁴³⁵ For his part, Maberly remained concerned that Hill was issuing orders contradictory to his own to Maberly's staff.⁴³⁶ One Postmaster General – looking at this peculiar situation with fresh eyes – took perhaps the wisest form of action and made light of the slightly ridiculous feud, joking, 'I'll make you shake hands, and sit in the same room!'⁴³⁷ and had a practical solution, establishing a system whereby each Secretary report to him, separately, on a weekly basis.⁴³⁸

⁴³¹POST 100/4: *Rowland Hill's Post Office Journal*, Sep 1839-Dec 1840

⁴³² See Letter from Rowland Hill to the Postmaster General, dated 26th March 1849. POST 100/8: *Rowland Hill's Post Office Journal*, 17 Dec 1847-29 Mar 1849. He replied four days later sending Hill's letter back, reminding Hill that he [Hill] had no authority to request the removal of the Secretary of the Post Office, and gently suggesting that Hill's actions had been inappropriate, "this is a proposal to remove another officer – a proposition very unusual to be so mooted in and Department, and one which I think you will see, on consideration, I could not thus entertain".

⁴³³ In 1851 he went as far as the Chancellor of the Exchequer with his requests, much to the Chancellor's horror: "I must also beg to remind you that, although I said that for myself I should think you a fit person to succeed Colonel Maberly in the event of his being removed, I, as distinctly I told you that the appointment did not rest with me [...] And I never, therefore, either did, or could, make you any promise of succeeding him." POST 100/10: *Rowland Hill's Post Office Journal*, 11 Apr 1850-29 Oct 1851

⁴³⁴ Hill was appointed into a slightly ill-defined role at the Post Office that was created for him: in effect a kind of 'minister without portfolio'. POST 30/239A: *Second Report of Committee of Public Accounts: dispute between Rowland Hill and Colonel Maberly regarding their duties*.

⁴³⁵ The outgoing Postmaster General, Clancairde, aimed to get some clarity for a 'handover' to the incoming Postmaster. POST 30/239A: *Second Report of Committee of Public Accounts: dispute between Rowland Hill and Colonel Maberly regarding their duties*.

⁴³⁶ Maberly requested that there be a clarification of the division of duties in a Minute dated 28 Feb 1852. Maberly's point was not without merit – there had been many instances of contradictory orders coming from both Rowland and Frederic Hill without Maberly being aware of them beforehand, but with him still holding responsibility for them. (Hill had installed his brother as an 'Assistant Secretary', slightly in contradiction, one might assume, to Hill's espousal of promotion by merit). *Ibid.*

⁴³⁷ *Ibid.* 3 April 1852 minute.

⁴³⁸ He had earlier said, to Hill, "There cannot", he says, "be two Kings of Brentford"! – though his frustration at the two had not later led to him getting rid of the dual arrangement. 3 April 1852 minute. *Ibid.*

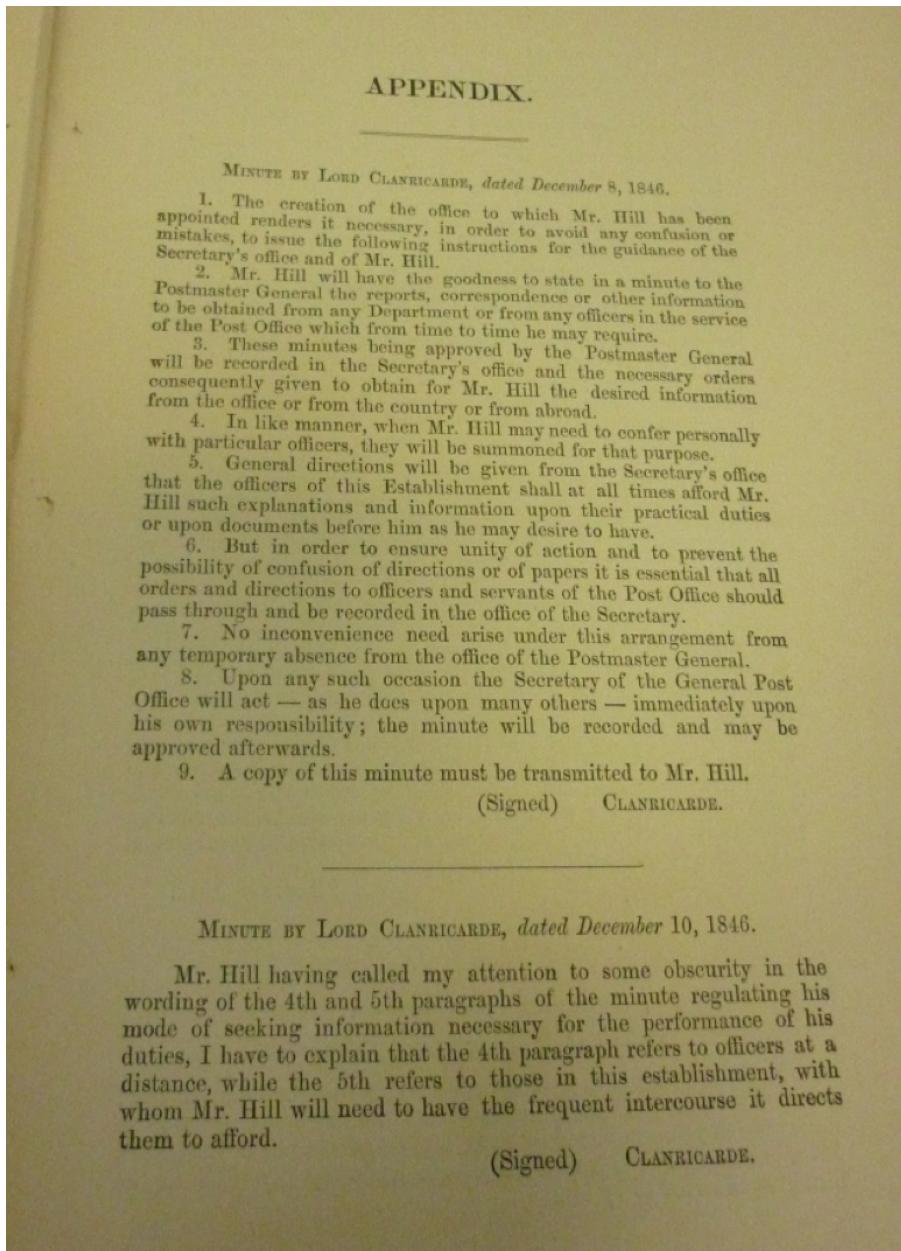


Fig. 43: Procedure governing Hill's role at the Post Office, dated 1846⁴³⁹

Hill's feud – or perceived feud – with the senior civil servant at the Post Office dominated these years, with Hill regularly adding to a long and petty list of misdemeanours Maberly was guilty of.⁴⁴⁰ However, it was highly relevant for the Postal

⁴³⁹ Excerpt from minutes. *Ibid.*

⁴⁴⁰ In 1850 Hill noted that "Maberly is throwing obstacles in our way"- see- Journal 5 Jan 1850 – related to Sunday duties. Also that year, this entry is given: "French Treaty. Maberly's Blunders. The retention of such a man in office is the most monstrous extravagance. His retirement would be cheaply purchased at ten times the amount of his salary" - 21 Mar, 1850. Hill also noted that the 1851 Post Office Directory lists

Map, as Hill regularly associated his failure to reform London explicitly as a result of the personal feud with Maberly.⁴⁴¹ Hill believed that reform simply would not be accomplished whilst Maberly was still in office; and claimed that not only was Maberly preventing progress in London, he was actually introducing measures to *reduce* services.⁴⁴²

What the feud demonstrates is the reality that no technical innovation occurs on its own, without an institutional or bureaucratic context. The context in which ideas are placed, and the way that people are able to navigate that context, is significant. This is where Hill fell down- he had the ideas but regularly failed to understand the need to deal with his context appropriately. He went beyond his agreed duties, earning the ire of his colleagues. He was endlessly socially awkward,⁴⁴³ not capable of being diplomatic in a world in which diplomacy and personal relationships had a disproportionate influence. Unfortunately, the entire saga paints Rowland Hill as embattled, bitter, and clumsy in his attempts to oust his colleague Colonel Maberly, and shows his inability to understand the gentlemanly etiquette required of the senior civil service.⁴⁴⁴

Meanwhile, the postal system in London remained no nearer to reform than in 1837. It was not until 1854 that the first hints of real change for London were evident.

his position only in very small lettering- "all that relates to the Post Office was, and I believe, still is, revised in Maberly's office; so that it is not improbable that this silly insult may be another instance of the systematic undermining of my authority which I have had repeatedly to notice". POST 100/10: *Rowland Hill's Post Office Journal*, 11 Apr 1850-29 Oct 1851

⁴⁴¹ 7 March 1851. *Ibid.*

⁴⁴² POST 100/8: *Rowland Hill's Post Office Journal*, 17 Dec 1847-29 Mar 1849. A more balanced view, however, might suggest that Maberly merely understood the economics of the postal system and the nuances of the large bureaucracy of the Post. For example - "[of Hill's condemnation] Such a judgement does not do justice to the complexity of the situation. Maberly did at times evidence a relaxed approach to administration, as his attention was often focused on the management of family land in Ireland. But he was not incompetent. He had a clearer understanding of the economics of the postal service, and a better grasp of the nuances of administering a large bureaucracy, than did Hill. Maberly also worked harder to implement penny post than Hill recognized." C.R.Perry, 'Maberly, William Leader (1798-1885)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004

⁴⁴³ In case we were ever in doubt of the extent to which Hill's social awkwardness knew no bounds, his diary entries for 1851 were incredible, with this particularly humble entry: "Returned home, riding in the same carriage with three of the foreign commissioners [...] – all three very intelligent men, and, of course, as a consequence – great admirers of mine" Journal entry for 13 July, 1851. Well, "of course.". POST 100/10: *Rowland Hill's Post Office Journal*, 11 Apr 1850-29 Oct 1851.

⁴⁴⁴ POST 100/6: *Rowland Hill's Post Office Journal*. Jan 1842-30 Mar 1843. See also Daunton, p. 5

7. 1854 ONWARDS: THE LONDON POSTAL MAP

From 1837 and Hill's first proposing of changes to London, to 1854 when he pressed ahead with reforms, the infrastructure of London's communications system was effectively ignored.

A general complacency in letting London's systems rumble on, without change, was arguably a feature of the period, not just a phenomenon peculiar to the internal workings of the Post Office.⁴⁴⁵ 1851 saw the Great Exhibition open in London, the brainchild of a former postal campaigner Henry Cole; its staging led to a dramatic increase in mail communications in the capital.⁴⁴⁶ But despite the success of this event that proclaimed modernity in many guises, the city itself was strained on a number of fronts. The city was plagued by cholera, documented and analysed by John Snow's maps, through which he was able to identify the particular water pumps that were the source of the disease and understand its nature as water-borne.⁴⁴⁷ The city and its people were suffering from its unplanned nature, and the lack of any real governance that could tackle the problems of urbanisation.

⁴⁴⁵ Hoppen states there were two main reasons for London's 'fragmentary administrative machinery': firstly a widespread fear of centralisation; and secondly, the 'inconspicuousness' of London's electorate, with the city being represented by many fewer MPs to population than elsewhere. The city, as well, was almost too difficult to comprehend; 'Best, then, to leave London alone'. Hoppen, pp. 51-52.

⁴⁴⁶ Hill's Journal, entry dated 19 January 1851. POST 100/10: *Rowland Hill's Post Office Journal*, 11 Apr 1850-29 Oct 1851

⁴⁴⁷ Snow's maps formed part of his printed report. John Snow, *On the mode of communication of Cholera*, London, 1849.

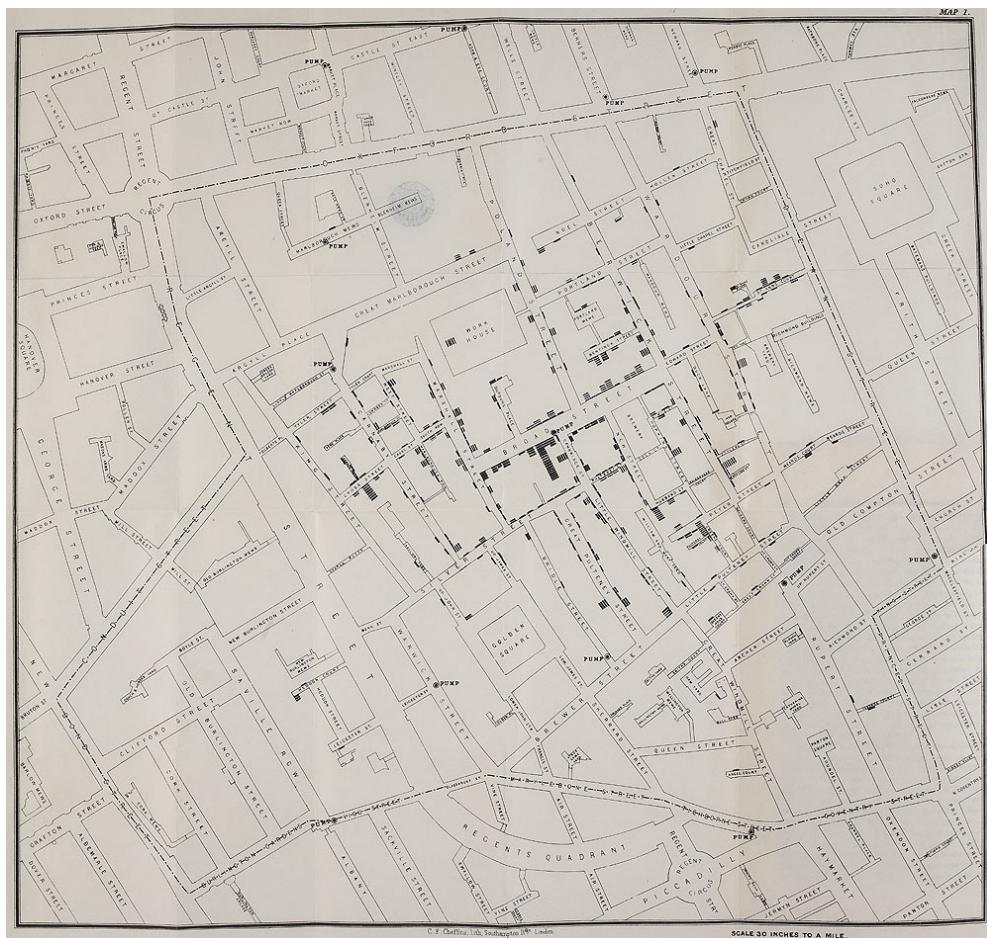


Fig. 44: John Snow's Cholera Map⁴⁴⁸

But, there were hints of change by the 1850s. A Royal Commission was set up to make recommendations for London's governance, and although in 1854 it stressed that a local government for all of London would be unpracticable,⁴⁴⁹ in 1855 the Metropolitan Board of Works (MBW) was formed.⁴⁵⁰ By 1858 the lack of proper sewers in the city had caused such a problem that the Houses of Parliament were closed in the 'Great Stink', prompting, at last, the MBW to act on Bazalgette's proposed overhaul of the sewerage system.⁴⁵¹

This was also a period of speculative urban planning that took the city as a whole into consideration.⁴⁵² It was becoming accepted knowledge that the city was a massive,

⁴⁴⁸ John Snow, *On the Mode of Communication of Cholera*, 1855. Picture credit: British Library online access.

⁴⁴⁹ Briggs, p. 332

⁴⁵⁰ Through the Metropolis Management Act, 1855. Hoppen, p. 706

⁴⁵¹ Deborah Cadbury, *Seven Wonders of the Industrial World*, London: Fourth Estate, 2003, p. 153

⁴⁵² This was the period of Paxton's 'Great Victorian Way', in which the engineer, famous for his Crystal Palace that housed the great Exhibition in 1851, proposed building a communications ring around the

complex, sprawling beast that had been left alone to develop without guidance for too long. London's path through modernity was being given shape; the period of rampant, uncontrolled urban development, spurred on by the forces of industrialisation, was starting to shift.⁴⁵³ Victorian urban commentators began to usher in a new phase of modernity – one in which some control over the planning of cities was taken. There was a concerted aim that no more would cities seem the result of a gigantic accident.⁴⁵⁴

Change was coming to the Post Office too, with a 1854 government report 'Upon the Post Office'.⁴⁵⁵ That report stated: 'There are several circumstances which combine to give interest in an inquiry into the Department of the Post Office. It is one with the good management of which every person is directly concerned, and which is felt to be of peculiar value to a nation so largely engaged in home and foreign commerce, and in colonial enterprise, as our own.'⁴⁵⁶ It noted the duplication of services in London: the four 'subdivisions' of the Circulation department,⁴⁵⁷ and the 'double secretariat', stating it was 'essential' that these be brought together into one post.⁴⁵⁸ Although the report held back from making any far-reaching recommendations for the London system,⁴⁵⁹ usefully for Hill it recommended 'that a general re-organisation of the Circulation Departments, comprising the union of the Inland and London District Offices, as part of a more extensive plan, may advantageously be carried into effect'⁴⁶⁰

city, comprised of railways and raised walkways covered in glass in a plan presented to the Select Committee on Metropolitan Improvements in 1855. See Choay, p. 24. We will see more of the city planning that was developed in London in chapter two.

⁴⁵³ There was a new Prime Minister – Palmerston – in 1855, and a new PMG: Viscount Canning. Hoppen, p. 718

⁴⁵⁴ Engels, *Die Cage*, Saturday Review, vol. 1, 1856, p. 48. Quoted in Choay, p. 10

⁴⁵⁵ Along with the whole of the civil service the post was being 'opened up' through the reforms to staffing arising from the Northcote-Trevelyan Report. Daunton, p. 31 and POST 59/179: *Draft report on the Post Office by Commissioners, with notes by L Canning, Lieutenant Colonel Maberly, and J Tilley*.

⁴⁵⁶ POST 59/177- *Report Upon the Post Office 1854*, p. 3

⁴⁵⁷ The Inland Office, the London District Office, the Mail Coach Office and the Dead Letter Office". *Ibid.* p. 4

⁴⁵⁸ It also noted there were two assistant secretaries as well. *Ibid.* p. 4

⁴⁵⁹ For example, it stopped short of stating the different corps of letter carriers should be amalgamated. *Ibid.* An early draft of the report was explicit about how the report was *not* going to make specific recommendations: "having thus explained our plan for the constitution of the inland department upon a new footing, we abstain from entering into any of the important, but collateral questions connected with its working, which have naturally attracted our attention in the course of our inquiry. Such are the questions of hourly delivery of Branch Offices, of the separation of the Metropolis into distinct postal districts, and of the alteration of the method of sorting letters. We consider that these, and similar matters, are better left to the decision of Post office authorities"

⁴⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

Whether the report promoted radical change or not, the Post Office in London was about to experience it anyway. After years of frustration and fierce bureaucratic wrangling, Rowland Hill finally got the position he desired: he was made Secretary of the Post Office. At last he was able to implement the changes he had in mind for nearly twenty years.⁴⁶¹ A number of Hill's long-cherished ideas were 'made effective when he had the power to put them into force' such as the union of the London District and General Post, and the division of the London Postal Service into Districts.⁴⁶²

Daunton asserted that 'The Post Office in 1840 had not experienced a complete transformation and the revolutionary impact of Penny Postage should certainly not be exaggerated. The internal administration of the Department was not to be placed on a new basis until 1854, which was in many ways as significant a date in the history of the Post Office as 1840.'⁴⁶³ It is to this, arguably more revolutionary moment for the Post Office in London than the penny post, that we now turn.

⁴⁶¹ This was the period, the end of which, it could justifiably said that: "[his achievement] was one of the many results of a long and hard-fought battle between the forces of conservatism and the historical imperative of a broad swathe of technological changes". Fryer and Akerman, p. xxiii

⁴⁶² Robinson, p. 353

⁴⁶³ Daunton, p. 36. For London specifically, this claim is valid – London after all had long had cheap mail in the twopenny post.

At Last! The London Postal Map

In 1856 the London Postal Map was introduced. It was the tool that was used alongside the reform of the London system, to visualise the creation of ten new districts for London.

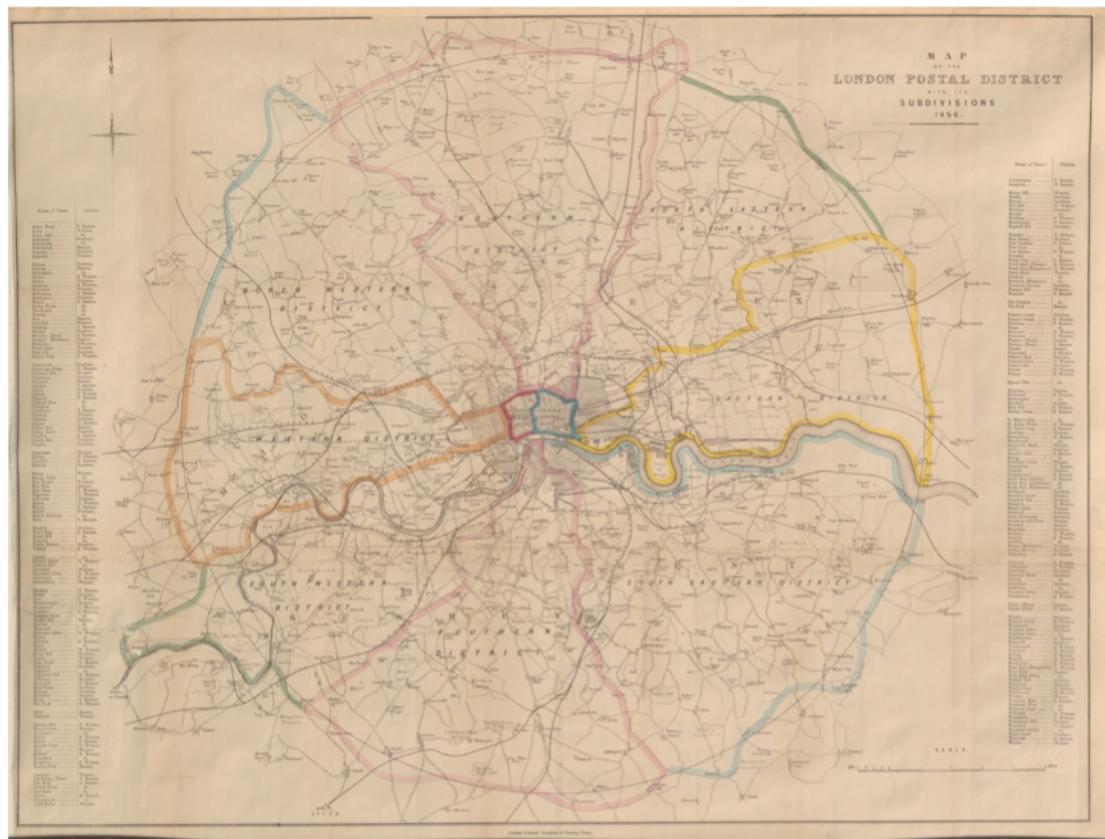


Fig. 45: And here it is....

In tracing the Map's early history, the original aims of the London reforms were a crucial yardstick. Ultimately, their task was to modernise the out-of-date systems that had previously been in place. To do this, the reforms directly addressed some of the inefficiencies of the pre-1856 period. They aimed to:

- expand the capacity of the system, by splitting it from one over-stretched administrative unit into ten separate units;
- avoid unnecessary journeys that arose from the over-centralisation of services on one Post Office in the middle of London;

- avoid waste from the duplication of services due to the existence of different letter post systems operating in the same area, each using different staff and different buildings for practically the same jobs;

and, they aimed to draw on these administrative and operational changes as a basis for allowing the service to improve further. The first change to be introduced, beginning in 1854-55, was the amalgamation of the letter carriers in London, merging the London District and the General Post operating in London.⁴⁶⁴ Following that reform came a raft of others which saw the transformation of the service in the city, all of which were dependent on splitting London into ten.⁴⁶⁵ The new London districts, depicted clearly in the Postal Map, were named according to their geographic relationship to St. Martin's with for example the 'Eastern' district being east of St. Martin's. They soon became known by their initials as: EC, WC, E, NE, N, NW, W, SW, S, SE and E.

One of the problems of the pre-1856 service – over centralisation of mails – had been solved: London was shifted from being one place into a collection of ten different places. London was split into districts, with letters now no longer travelling miles via the central sorting office. Local letters would remain in their district, or exchanged directly between districts.⁴⁶⁶ Each district had its own boundaries and its own letter carrier 'walks'. Each had its own staff, its own chief office, sorting offices, and branch offices. Each had its own objects- its mail bags, mail carts, pillar boxes. The district system also had an effect on operations outside of London: where before letters were addressed and sorted to 'London', after reform they were sorted into ten different 'Londons'.⁴⁶⁷ Initial sorting into districts was done before reaching London, thereby reducing pressure and

⁴⁶⁴ Daunton, p. 44; Daunton, p. 281

⁴⁶⁵ The changes enacted from 1854-57 were listed in Hill's autobiography as: unite the two corps of letter-carriers, rearrange their "walks"; divide London into districts, each to be treated as a separate town; procure suitable buildings for district offices or build new offices; adopt a new plan of sorting at the chief office; and sort mails according to the new districts before reaching London." In addition, the completion of the first delivery within London was brought forward to 9am, and the number of deliveries was initially raised to ten a day, later to increase to twelve. See Sir Rowland Hill and George Birkbeck Norman Hill, *The life of Sir Rowland Hill and the history of the penny postage. By Sir R. Hill and his nephew G.B. Hill.* London: Thos. De La Rue and Company, 1880. Daunton summarised the measures as well, see Daunton, p. 44 and 46.

⁴⁶⁶ Daunton, p. 46

⁴⁶⁷ POST 71/58: *Parliamentary Papers relating to the Post Office: Volume XXVI*, 1856, p. 9. The second report of the Postmaster General in 1856 noted that letters were divided into districts, then sub districts- "letters thus divided being subsequently subsorted [sic] for the walks by district sorters, who alone have the minute local knowledge required for this latter process". POST 92/1: *Report upon the Post Office and Reports of the Postmaster General on the Post Office*

speeding delivery,⁴⁶⁸ and mail from the rest of the country was received in business headquarters in London in time for the beginning of the working day.⁴⁶⁹

Secondly, the problem of duplication of staffing had been resolved: London now had an amalgamated body of staff who were now all working for a new London District, within a 'Circulation' Department.⁴⁷⁰ The Postmaster General stated the object of the amalgamation of these two classes of letter carrier, so far as regards the public, is to avoid the waste of time and the trouble caused by two men going over the same ground to distribute different classes of letter, which might be delivered altogether'.⁴⁷¹

As a result of halting the inefficiencies of over-centralisation, and duplication, the service was able to expand, making improvements for the user that were the result of a more efficient system, for example by introducing an early morning delivery throughout the city that was to be completed before 9am.⁴⁷² 1856 saw the introduction of first collections from letter boxes in London at 5am, an important point that would contribute to the aim of bringing the first delivery earlier in the day.⁴⁷³ Head offices were provided with 12 deliveries a day, and suburban offices 6 to 7 daily.⁴⁷⁴ There was alarm about the cost of the more frequent deliveries – hourly from 7.30am – but the London service was profitable so these matters mattered less than had they been running at a loss.⁴⁷⁵

⁴⁶⁸ Daunton, p. 46

⁴⁶⁹ POST 71/58: *Parliamentary Papers relating to the Post Office: Volume XXVI*, 1856, p. 20.

⁴⁷⁰"one important change consisted in the amalgamation of the two corps of letter-carriers, effected soon after the installation of the Duke of Argyll at the Post office. The two classes of 'General Post' and 'London District' letter carriers were perhaps best known before 1855, by the former wearing a red, and the latter a blue, uniform" [...] "the object of this amalgamation... was to avoid the waste of time, trouble, and expense consequent on two different men going over the same ground to distribute two classes of letter which might, without any real difficulty, be delivered together", Lewins, p. 234

⁴⁷¹ 'First Report of the Postmaster General on the Post Office'. POST 71/55: *Parliamentary Papers relating to the Post Office: Volume XXV*, 1854-55, p. 35

⁴⁷² "the early completion of the first daily delivery of letters in London has long been justly regarded as an object of great importance, comprising, as it does, the great bulk of the correspondence both from other parts of the United Kingdom and from foreign countries

I hope that by the gradual introduction of various measures, the time for completing this important delivery throughout the Metropolis may be eventually brought as early as 9A.M." POST 92/1: *Report upon the Post Office and Reports of the Postmaster General on the Post Office*

⁴⁷³ POST 92/49: *British Postal Guide*, 1856. This was from the October edition. From 1856 there were first collections from letter boxes at 5am, p.148

⁴⁷⁴ "despite Bokenham's forebodings", Daunton, p. 46

⁴⁷⁵ *Ibid.* p. 46

We can look here in more detail to explain how the reforms above took place. Although Hill largely had the ideas in his mind – and on paper- for many years, it nonetheless took a great deal of work to actually bring the reforms in during this period. Almost as soon as Hill had become Secretary, a committee of officers was set up to investigate, and test, his London-based proposals.⁴⁷⁶ The investigations gave the proposals the detail that was missing in their original form, and the legitimacy that had been lacking during the original Select Committee performance all those years ago in 1843, when Hill's ideas had been summarily dismissed.

Unfortunately the report of the committee of officers has not survived, and herewith the loss of potentially the greatest collection of evidence about the intricacies of the proposals that we might have had.⁴⁷⁷ (Another loss also occurs at this point: Hill stopped writing his journal. On 9 May 1854, once Hill had been appointed the sole Post Office Secretary, he noted he would not continue his journal as it had functioned as “a necessary means towards Colonel Maberly’s removal”: once Hill had finally succeeded Maberly, he no longer needed the journal.⁴⁷⁸) Fortunately we do have a *summary* of the committee’s evidence.⁴⁷⁹ The remit of the committee was to consider the decentralisation of services from the Chief Office at St Martin’s le Grand, to ‘several distinct districts’ around London,⁴⁸⁰ explicitly addressing over-centralisation. Added to this were connections from the new railway stations to the district offices- an issue that had not been foreseen by Hill in 1837, before the use of railways by the Post.⁴⁸¹

⁴⁷⁶ “that everything might be done with the utmost circumspection, I nominated a committee of officers to consider the details involved in the necessary changes, which committee made a very elaborate and able report” Sir Rowland Hill and George Birkbeck Norman Hill, *The life of Sir Rowland Hill and the history of the penny postage. By Sir R. Hill and his nephew G.B. Hill*. London: Thos. De La Rue and Company, 1880, p. 271

⁴⁷⁷ The loss is even worse knowing that Hill described the report as “elaborate”. Oh, for that detail...

⁴⁷⁸ And with that, went another source that might have yielded great insight into the making of the postal map. 9 May 1854 entry. POST 100/12: *Rowland Hill’s Post Office Journal, 17 Aug 1853-Jun 1855*

⁴⁷⁹ POST 92/1: *Report upon the Post Office and Reports of the Postmaster General on the Post Office, 1854-1858*

⁴⁸⁰ Officially, the Committee considered “the division of London for Post Office purposes into several distinct Districts, with a separate sorting office for each, and the establishment of hourly deliveries (during 12 hours of the day) in London, to be made conjointly by the General Post and the London District Letter Carriers.” *Second Report of the Postmaster General on the Post Office, 1856*, Appendix A. *Ibid.*

⁴⁸¹ Letters went straight from train stations to districts, rather than via St Martins. Robinson, p. 354

The officers' committee approached the task with scientific accuracy, 'Officers have designed the plan through investigation of effects of various options' [...] 'it being evident that, by varying the different details, a large variety of results, more or less affecting the success of the measure, might be obtained' and 'numerous calculations bearing on the subject' were made.⁴⁸² The results came back, with officers now clear of the benefits they could produce,⁴⁸³ which comprised:

- 'the establishment of two additional deliveries in London',
- to be delivered by 'carefully applying the services of the two corps of Letter Carriers' so not creating large additional costs;
- a 'continuous series of hourly deliveries' including a 'punctual despatch' at 7.30am of letter carriers for the first delivery of the day.
- Regular deliveries would mean that all letters not ready at 7.30 might be reserved for the next delivery, which would quickly follow'.⁴⁸⁴

The splitting of London into districts was a crucial means for achieving these plans.⁴⁸⁵

The system of decentralisation of duties meant that,

- Circulation of letters would be expedited 'by employing the Letter Carriers at District Offices to assist in the stamping and sorting duties',⁴⁸⁶
- and letter carriers starting from their District Offices would arrive more quickly at 'the ground they have to serve'.
- Distribution of duties to District Offices would 'relieve the Chief Office in St Martin's-le-Grand, (now so much crowded and deficient in space,) of a large portion of business; and would thereby tend to prevent confusion and ensure greater regularity in the performance of the duties'.⁴⁸⁷

⁴⁸²Report to Secretary of the Post Office by a Committee of Officer (4th July 1855) (extract). POST 30/4011: *London Postal Service: letters for London Postal Area, simplified address, Part 2*

⁴⁸³ "we are decidedly of the opinion that the form of arrangement we are about to submit will afford the best means of realising the designs in view, being that which, taken as a whole, offers the greatest balance of advantages to the service, whether as regards increase of public accommodation, simplicity and uniformity of character, or capability of being worked with convenience and regularity" *Ibid.*

⁴⁸⁴ Post 30/4011: *London Postal Service: letters for London Postal Area, simplified address, Part 2*

⁴⁸⁵ "the distribution of that large portion of London District letters intended for delivery near to the place of posting [...] might be much accelerated in the outer parts of the Metropolis, by stopping those letters at a local sorting Office (instead of sending them as at present to one Central Office for all London)" *Ibid.*

⁴⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

Officers detailed the operational changes that would be required in order to create these benefits. From this detail we start to see the way the Postal Map reformed the internal workings of the postal service in London:

- i. We propose that London be divided into ten Districts, each with a distinct sorting Office, viz.: two central and eight out Districts; - the out Districts stretching through the environs of London, and beyond, until they reach the 12 mile circle by which the present London District is bounded
- ii. The collection, sorting, dispatch and delivery of all London District letters should be made through the agency of these District Offices
- iii. The dispatch of provincial mails to be undertaken from the District Offices only after they are in proper working order; that in the meantime these continue to be sorted and dispatched from St Martin's
- iv. That parts of London with ten deliveries should be increased to twelve deliveries in the course of the day
- v. Collections from 'Town' Receiving Houses should be made prior to each delivery, as well as from the District Offices
- vi. Letters to be sorted at the District Office in which the letter has been received, and dispatched directly to its delivery Office: 'Every District Office should send a bag to and receive one from all other Offices'
- vii. Communications between the District Offices and Receiving Houses to be made by mail cart: 'the carts from the three outer districts on the western side of London should run from the Western Central Office; and those from the other five to the Eastern Central office', with the Western and Eastern Central Offices sending mail bags between each other. 'by these means letters will circulate (counting from the time of collection) between all parts of London, within the town limits, in about one hour'
- viii. Letters should be sorted and sent out immediately as they arrive in; in outer offices letters arriving from Receiving Houses 'as are intended for *local* delivery should at once be selected and sent out by the letter carriers who are at the point of starting [their next delivery]. This arrangement will effect to the utmost possible extent, that acceleration of 'local' letters, which, as we have thought from the outset, the plan of District Offices is so especially adapted to produce'

- ix. Letters posted for 'town' parts of an 'out District' will participate in this acceleration (as above), and letters posted in a 'town' area to a 'country' part of the district may be posted later than at present
- x. At the Central Offices, waiting times will be shorter to receive mails, so Letter Carriers will go out on delivery earlier, before the next collection is brought in and sorted: 'it would be unprofitable to retard the delivery (for about 20 minutes), for the sake of including the local letters contained in the next collection; therefore those letters will not be distributed so rapidly in the two centres as in the other districts, but must wait for the next delivery'
- xi. All mails, from provinces, or foreign or colonial services, arriving 'not in time for the first morning delivery, will fall into one of the subsequent deliveries'
- xii. In addition to the eleven collections already mentioned, the present collection of the General Post Letters at 5.30p.m., the partial newspaper collection at 5p.m., and the night collection at 10p.m. for the Morning Mails outwards, and for the first morning delivery, should be continued.
- xiii. The majority of services available at the Chief Office at St Martin's will be extended to the District Offices, with the exception of the Money Order Office (although this may be extended too, in time)⁴⁸⁸

Here was the basis of the new system that was brought in in 1856 with the London Postal Map. The principle of decentralisation was settled as a key part of London postal reforms. The amalgamation of letter carriers' corps, the additional deliveries, the quicker delivery times- all were based on the principle of the London district system. The ten districts and the 12-mile radius circle for London were the foundation of the measures, implemented through their visual description on the London Postal Map.

Minutes between the Secretary and the Postmaster General are another source that reveal more about the workings of the Post Office at this crucial point.⁴⁸⁹ Hill referred to

⁴⁸⁸ Minute of 21st December 1854 in 'Report to the Secretary of the Post Office by a Committee of Officers', 4th July 1855 (summary). *Ibid.*

⁴⁸⁹ For example, a minute from Hill to the Postmaster General in 1855 explained the proposed reforms, "Your Lordship is aware of my intention to submit to you the expediency of carrying into effect certain

the recent ‘consolidation’ of Inland and London District offices,⁴⁹⁰ and lists the membership of the committee set up to analyse London reforms,⁴⁹¹ but does not include its report, again denying us that valuable evidence.⁴⁹² Also included was a network map, showing in outline how the different offices would communicate with each other in diagram form:

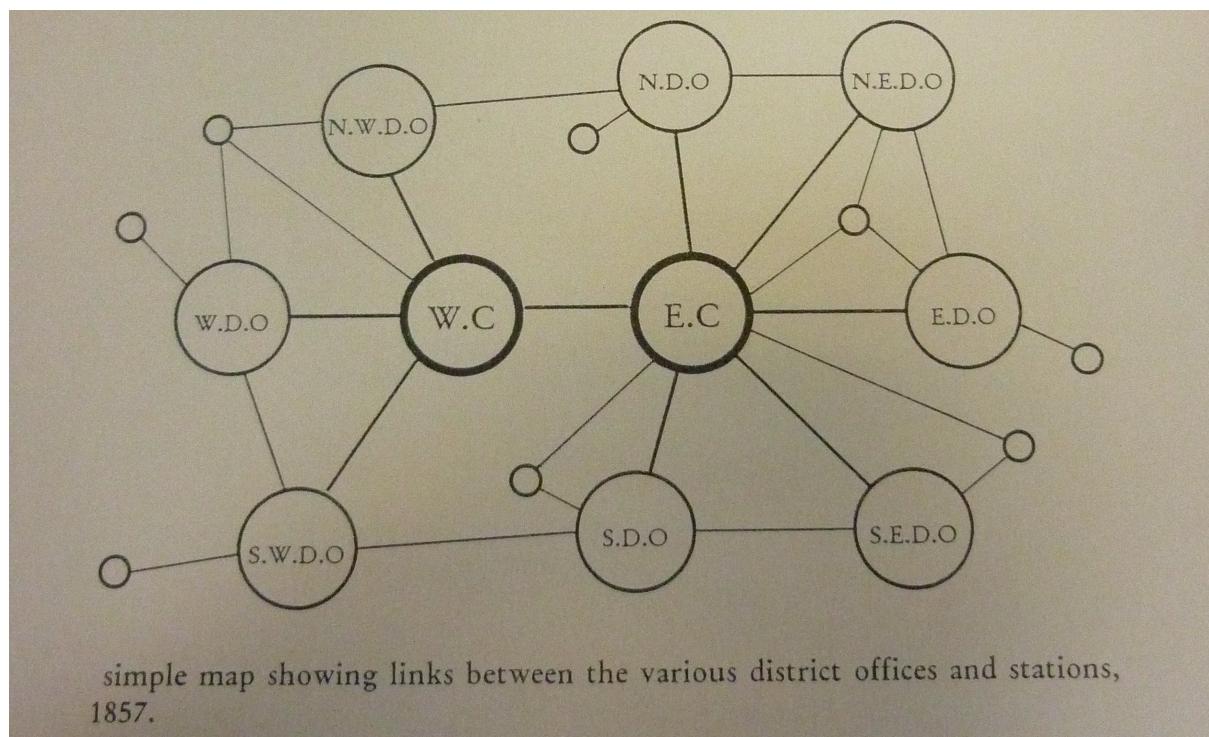


Fig 46: Connections of London head offices, 1857⁴⁹³

Hill noted that “the measure thus submitted is very incomplete, but it has been thought well, looking to the great extent and complicated machinery of the service affected, to make as few alterations at first as possible”:⁴⁹⁴ the implication being that he feared the Postmaster General would always favour small incremental steps, avoiding revolution.

proposals long since made by me for improving the circulation and delivery of letters in London and its environs, namely by dividing London into separate sorting districts, and by increasing the number of Town deliveries to 12 daily, to be performed by the amalgamated Corps of the General Post and London District letter carriers” Minute dated 4th July, Hill to the Postmaster General. POST 30/4010: *London Postal Service: letters for London Postal Area, simplified address, Part 1*

⁴⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹¹ The membership was: included Mr Bokenham; Mr Baker of the Secretary’s office; Mr Boucher, the Deputy Controller in the Circulation Department; Mr Cooke and Mr Gapes, Inspectors of letter carriers; Mr Pearson Hill. Copy of minute dated 4th July, Hill to the Postmaster General, Canning. *Ibid.*

⁴⁹² He did, however, give further operational detail about the plans. *Ibid.*

⁴⁹³ Map in ‘*London Postal Districts and House Numbering Portfolio*’, uncatalogued, in the Postal Museum, 1857

⁴⁹⁴ POST 30/4010: *London Postal Service: letters for London Postal Area, simplified address, Part 1*

The benefits of the proposed system were given, including noting that the system would be easily understood by the public.⁴⁹⁵ It was anticipated that as a result of increases in letter speeds would come corresponding increases in the use of the letter post.⁴⁹⁶ And lastly, the rapidity of service was expected to lead to increases in income generated by the London post for the department.⁴⁹⁷

Possibly not learning his lesson from the Penny Post, Hill also gave a wildly optimistic estimate of the costs of the measures, stating that they could be achieved with additional expenditure of only £478p.a.⁴⁹⁸ Alongside this, he noted that the Post Office had already saved £2,080 p.a. with partial amalgamation of two sets of letter carriers in 1847. Even on the matter of buying up potentially expensive properties in London for use as new district post offices, he was optimistic.⁴⁹⁹ Only very occasionally did Hill give some balance to his claims: 'the departure from the present system of centralization will not be altogether free from disadvantages' [...] 'some increased delay will probably take place in disposing of imperfectly addressed letters. This evil however will obviously tend to its own cure'.⁵⁰⁰

This passage reveals one of the most crucial points about the introduction of the new district system in relation to their relationship with the users of the post. A new routine was being introduced: users of the post needed to add the district to the address when writing letters. Addresses were now known as being part of a district, part of 'EC' for example. Only letters that had the district written as part of their addresses would be

⁴⁹⁵ "more understood by public as will be uniform deliveries"- showing the importance of the public in the system. *Ibid.*

⁴⁹⁶ "The circulation of letters in London will in general be greatly accelerated; and as increase in correspondence and of postage revenue has invariably followed the extension of Public accommodation, it is fair to anticipate a like result from the additional facilities now proposed to be effected; and the more especially, as in this case, the acceleration will be the greatest precisely when the Post Office comes more immediately into competition with private messengers", *Ibid.*

⁴⁹⁷ "so expeditious a means of communication seems likely to lead to a considerable increase of Revenue", *Ibid.*

⁴⁹⁸ "the addition of the current expenses of the department will be small for although the services of 70 additional men will be required, the cost of their employment will be almost entirely met by the discontinuance of extra duty, and the net balance of permanent increased charge under all heads after deducting present and prospective diminutions of expenditure is established at £478.17.5 per annum." *Ibid.*

⁴⁹⁹ "A further expense will have to be incurred for altering and fitting up premises for the proposed District Offices. This, however, will probably for less than the cost of obtaining an equal increase of space of the Chief Office, even if the latter were practicable, of which there is some doubt" *Ibid.*

⁵⁰⁰ Not unreasonably he anticipates errors in sorting will be minimised with time and practice. *Ibid.*

included in the quickest deliveries; the district initial was needed if users wanted the fastest service. It was crucial therefore that users of the system adapted to add the district initials to their letters, and postal employees worked to ensure that this was explained clearly and quickly to the public.

One other source from this period was the Post Office report from 1855, which detailed in a practical way how Hill's measures would have an effect on life in London: 'It is obvious that this arrangement will, in many cases, greatly reduce the time of transmission. Thus a letter from Cavendish Square to Grosvenor Square, instead of travelling four or five miles, as at present, would go almost directly from one place to the other'.⁵⁰¹ In that report he also noted the manpower required to make the system work: 481 letter carriers would be used for the first morning delivery.⁵⁰²

The 1857 Postmaster General's report also detailed the reforms, stating once again the ultimate aim to bring the first delivery to before 9am and to secure speedy transmission of mail between one part of London to another.⁵⁰³ This report explained that the Post office intended to proceed with caution, so as not to 'interfere with the public convenience'.⁵⁰⁴ The key method for achieving all of these ends was the division of London into ten: 'To remove the obstacle arising out of the enormous magnitude of London – obstacles constantly on the increase – the whole Metropolis has been divided into ten districts, and each district will be treated in many respects as a separate town'.⁵⁰⁵ One notable point here was the exactness of the specific times given in the recommendations. The report was clear there would be a 'punctual despatch' at 7.30am every day.

⁵⁰¹ Extract from the Post Office report for 1855. POST 30/4010: *London Postal Service: letters for London Postal Area, simplified address, Part 1*

⁵⁰² *Ibid.*

⁵⁰³ Postmaster General's report no. 2. POST 92/1: *Report upon the Post Office and Reports of the Postmaster General on the Post Office, 1854-1858*

⁵⁰⁴ "For some time past measures have been in progress for attaining both these important ends, but the machinery involved is so extensive and complex that it is necessary to proceed with great caution, since any violent change might produce an amount of derangement which, however temporary, would interfere most seriously with the public convenience", *Ibid.*

⁵⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

The next year, the first data was published about the reforms. The 'average times at which deliveries were completed' was given in a table, comparing the pre- and post-reform performance:

Times at which deliveries were completed	First six weeks of 1856	First six weeks of 1857
	Average time at which the deliveries commenced: 7.55am	Average time at which the deliveries commenced: 7.22am
At, or before 9.0 A.M.	5.022 per cent	65.152 per cent
Between 9.0 and 9.15 "	13.999 "	18.046 "
" 9.15 " 9.30 "	25.374 "	9.555 "
" 9.30 " 9.45 "	22.683 "	4.865 "
" 9.45 " 10.0 "	15.537 "	2.021 "

Fig. 47: Table 2, excerpt from the Postmaster General's Report in 1858⁵⁰⁶

The average delivery commencement time was 7.55am in 1856, reduced to 7.22am in 1857.⁵⁰⁷ The precision of '7.22' and '7.55' is notable, as is the inclusion of three numbers after the decimal.⁵⁰⁸ There was importance placed on what seem to us to be small differences; any improvement was significant. The biggest change was the move from 5% of letters delivered before 9.00am to 65% of letters; in many cases the business day would now start with communication from elsewhere having already arrived. The year after it was reported that this first delivery had further improved and letters delivered by 9am was up to 93%.⁵⁰⁹

⁵⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰⁷ *The Third Report of the Postmaster General on the Post Office*, 1857. POST 92/1: *Report upon the Post Office and Reports of the Postmaster General on the Post Office*, 1854-1858

⁵⁰⁸ The table is an Extract from "Table showing what Per-cent-age of the Letter Carriers in London employed in the first Morning Delivery of each Day during the first Six Weeks of 1856 and 1857 respectively completed their Deliveries at the Times stated below" - *The Third Report of the Postmaster General on the Post Office*, 1857, Appendix A. *Ibid.*

⁵⁰⁹ *The Forth Report of the Postmaster General on the Post Office*, 1858, *Ibid.*

APPENDIX.

APPENDIX (A.)

TABLE showing what Per-cent of the LETTER CARRIERS in London employed in the first Morning Delivery of each Day during the first SIX WEEKS of 1856 and 1857 respectively completed their DELIVERIES at the TIMES stated below.

Times at which the Deliveries were completed.	First Six Weeks of 1856.		First Six Weeks of 1857.	
	Average time at which the deliveries commenced.	7.55 A.M.	Average time at which the deliveries commenced	7.22 A.M.
At, or before 9.0 A.M.	5.022	per cent.	65.152	per cent.
Between 9.0 and 9.15 "	13.999	"	18.046	"
" 9.15 " 9.30 "	25.374	"	9.555	"
" 9.30 " 9.45 "	22.683	"	4.865	"
" 9.45 " 10.0 "	15.537	"	2.021	"
" 10.0 " 10.15 "	8.250	"	.293	"
" 10.15 " 10.30 "	4.925	"	.045	"
" 10.30 " 10.45 "	2.435	"	.011	"
" 10.45 " 11.0 "	1.111	"	.006	"
" 11.0 " 11.15 "	.348	"	.006	"
" 11.15 " 11.30 "	.146	"		
" 11.30 " 11.45 "	.079	"		
" 11.45 " 12.0 noon	.061	"		
" 12.0 " 12.15 P.M.	.006	"		
" 12.15 " 12.30 "	.006	"		
" 12.30 " 12.45 "	.006	"		
At 1.45 "	.006	"		
At 2.10 "	.006	"		
	100.000		100.000	

Fig. 48: Postmaster General's report: table showing the delivery times in London⁵¹⁰

510 *Ibid.*

In order for the system to be successful, it needed to be understood and used by the public, who had to be active in choosing to use the system. Publicity of the system was therefore crucial. The public were made aware of the changes through various means.⁵¹¹ Post Office reports summarised the current issues and activity, asserting the Post Office's own importance in the country as a catalyst to growth in industry and improvements in education.⁵¹² The report detailed the 'present powers and duties of the Post Office' including conveying letters around the UK, newspapers, books, and small sums of money, via railways, steam boats, mail coaches, stage coaches, omnibuses, mail carts, mounted and foot messengers.⁵¹³ It gave an overview of the London service, and explained the recent changes, including the introduction of an 'improved' salary scale in the London office relating to the classes and duties of staff.⁵¹⁴ In this report the Postmaster made a series of suggestions to the public to improve the mail service: post early; make sure addresses are correct and legible; provide a letter box for letters to be posted into.⁵¹⁵ He ended on a conservative note - in true Post Office style - stating that changes in the Post Office must be made cautiously.⁵¹⁶

⁵¹¹ Some of which will be explained in more detail in chapter 2.

⁵¹² "There is, perhaps, no department of Government the business of which, if duly recorded, will furnish more striking evidence of the prosperity and progress of Empire than the Post Office; whether as regards the increase of the general wealth, the growing importance of the several colonies, the improved education and intelligence of some classes, or the stirring industry and energy which is the national characteristic of all" First Report of the Postmaster General on the Post Office' p. 7. POST 71/55: *Parliamentary Papers relating to the Post Office: Volume XXV, 1854-55*

⁵¹³ 'First Report of the Postmaster General on the Post Office', p. 19. *Ibid.*

⁵¹⁴ Of the changes, the Postmaster General stated, "The unusually favourable opportunity which this reorganisation has afforded me, of giving advancement to the most meritorious officers of the Department, and of marking the sense which is entertained of intelligent and zealous service, will not be without its good effect". 'First Report of the Postmaster General on the Post Office', p. 33. *Ibid.*

⁵¹⁵ 'First Report of the Postmaster General on the Post Office', p. 43. *Ibid.*

⁵¹⁶ 'First Report of the Postmaster General on the Post Office', p. 45. *Ibid.*

Two means of publicising the system to the public:

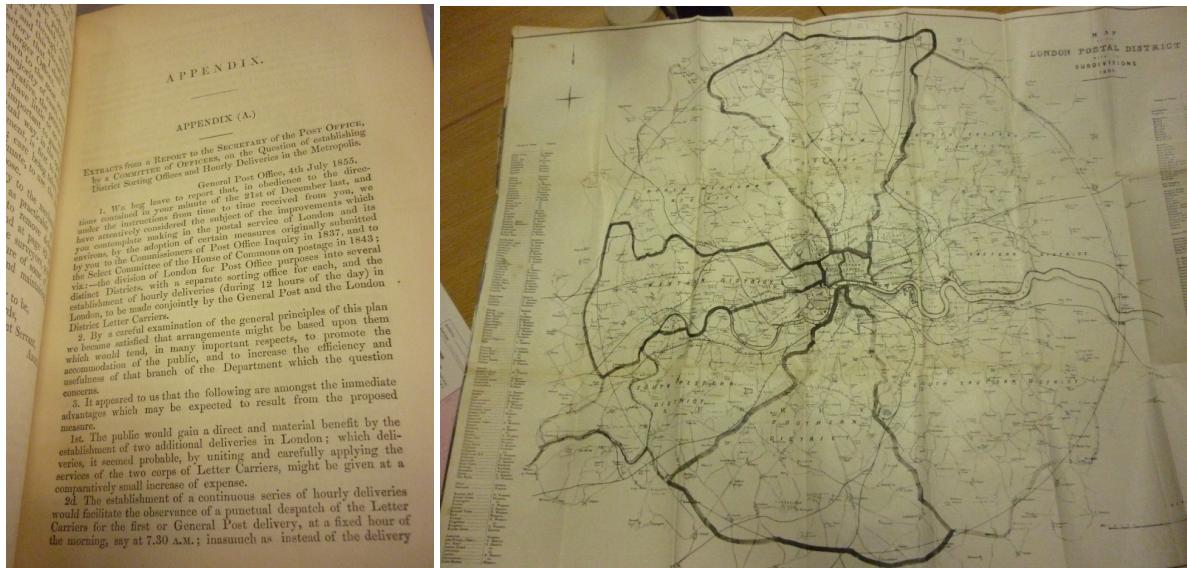


Fig. 49: *The Postmaster General's 2nd Report: Appendix on the London District reforms, including the postal map*⁵¹⁷

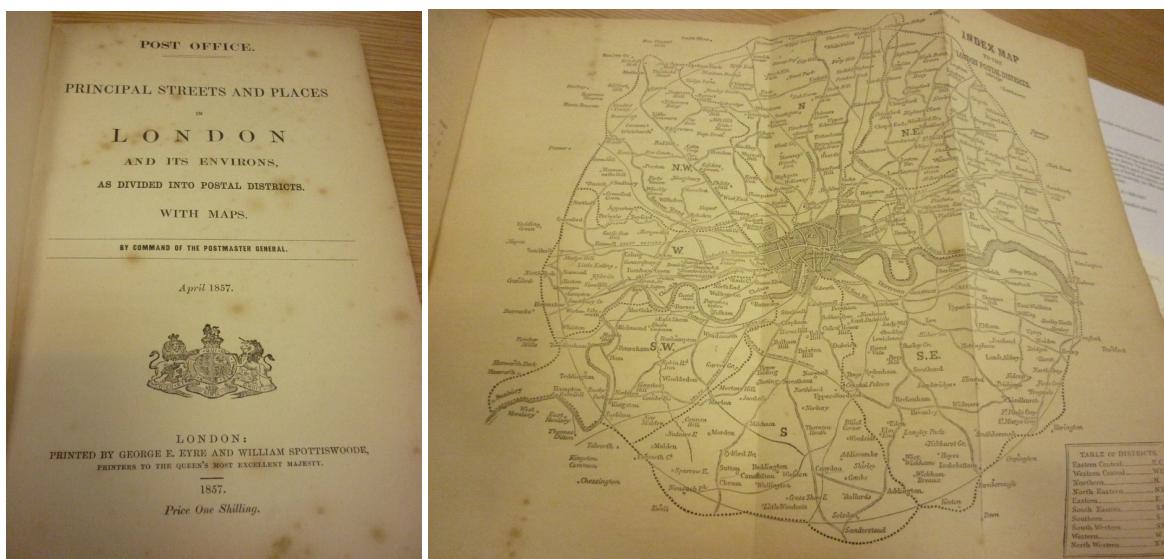


Fig. 50: *List of Principal Streets and Places sold to the Public: one way the Post Office publicised the changes in London*⁵¹⁸

517 Second Report of the Postmaster General on the Post Office'. POST 71/55: Parliamentary Papers relating to the Post Office: Volume XXV, 1854-55

518 POST 17/3: Post Office sorting list of the principal streets and places in the London delivery

A pamphlet was sent to every resident and business in London, advising them of the new scheme.⁵¹⁹ It included instructions about how to address letters, with a list of all the new postal districts, and 265,000 copies were printed for London households.⁵²⁰

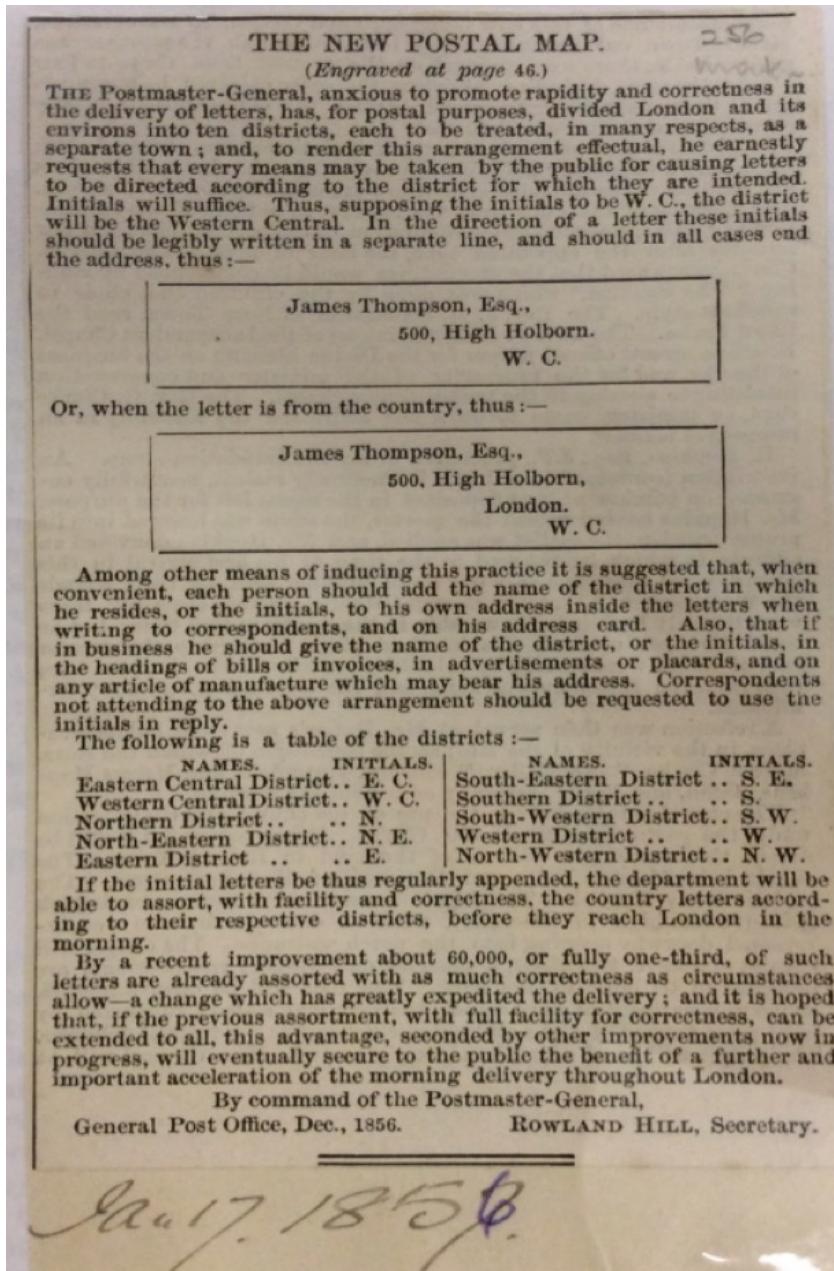


Fig. 51: This note, or a similar version, was circulated widely, including in newspapers, and a version specific to each person's postal district was sent to every address in London.⁵²¹

⁵¹⁹ It stated, 'The Postmaster General, anxious to promote rapidity and correctness in the delivery of letters, has, for postal purposes, designated London and its environs into TEN DISTRICTS, each to be treated, in many respects, as a separate town'. POST 30/120A: *London Postal Area: initials of main postal districts introduced as part of addresses*

⁵²⁰ *Ibid.* It should be noted that this pamphlet was also copied and attached to many maps of this period, as we will see in Chapter 2.

⁵²¹ This particular version was circulated in the Illustrated London News. Bruce Castle, 256 Morten: Newspaper Clippings, 'Introduction of Numbers for London District Post Areas 1917'

Official Post Office channels were not the only means by which the changes were communicated to the public. The media publicised the changes, giving information to the public – for example this reproduction of the London Postal Map in the *London Illustrated News*:⁵²²

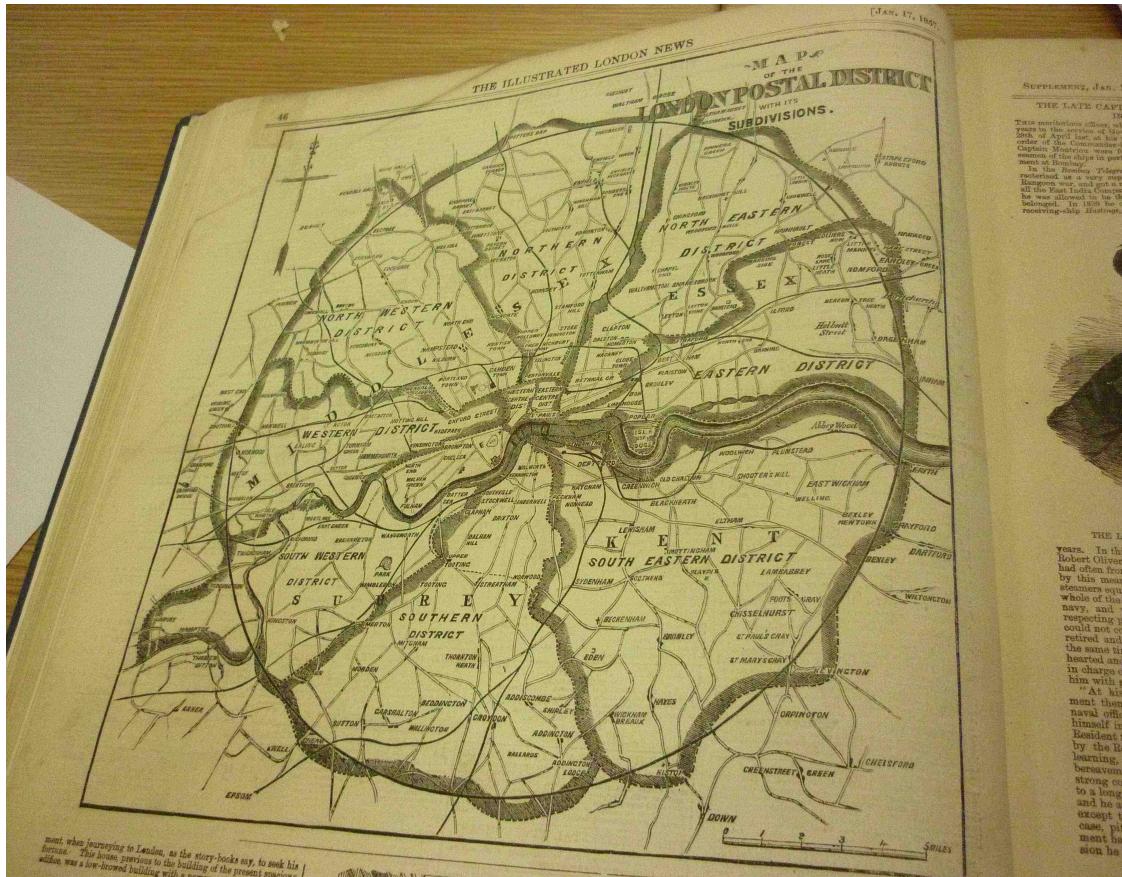


Fig. 52: The London Postal Map in the press⁵²³

The press were not just occupied with publicising the scheme; they had their own, sometimes critical, opinions of it as well. One article stated that the way the change was being advertised to people was misleading, as it told people how to write their own address, but not other peoples' addresses.⁵²⁴ Another article, in the satirical magazine Punch, took the opportunity to point out the failures of the postal service in certain areas, stating of Hammersmith that it is 'much farther from the Metropolis than Southampton' [owing to the time it takes mail to get there] 'Under the new

⁵²² *Illustrated London News*, Saturday January 17th, 1857, p. 44-46

⁵²³ *Ibid.*

⁵²⁴ 'As the circular now stands it is more applicable to any other other nine districts than to the Western, where it was distributed the best thing that could happen for the public would be that all the circulars should get shuffled up together in the bags, so that each district should receive the explanatory lesson intended for some other'. Bruce Castle, 256 Morten: *Newspaper Clippings*, 'Introduction of Numbers for London District Post Areas 1917'

arrangements Hammersmith is marked "W." for West. This is at present a mistake. The mark for that so-called suburb ought to be "F.W." signifying Far West.⁵²⁵

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Just as the story of the origins of the reforms and the Map was not straight-forward, neither were their successes immediately, nor completely, implemented. 1856 was not the moment at which they were introduced; rather it was one key marker in a period of reform that lasted a number of years. It was not until his report in 1861 that the Postmaster General felt able to declare that the reforms planned for the London service in 1855 were actually complete.⁵²⁶

In 1857 we see evidence that the reforms were taking longer than expected: the Postal Guide states that 'Arrangements are *in progress* for the division of London and the Suburban villages etc. into Ten Postal Districts',⁵²⁷ in progress, not yet complete. By October we see progress, with Chief Offices for each district listed, demonstrating that some of the districts were beginning to establish their own administration, headquarters, and hierarchies. By the next year, the reforms had been carried out 'to a considerable extent', and it was noted that around 110,000 letters a day were sorted before they reached London – more than half the total.⁵²⁸ Public cooperation with the new system was noted, with 55,000 letters a day – 1/3 of those posted in London – using the new addressing system.⁵²⁹ The Post Office as a whole employed 23,130 staff members, of which a full 1,700 were based at the Chief Office in London.⁵³⁰ The letter carriers had been amalgamated, denoted by their new uniform- where before one set

⁵²⁵ BCPHC/1/19/19: *Punch, or the London Carival*, January 31, 1857, Bruce Castle.

⁵²⁶ The Postmaster General's report for 1861. POST 92/2: *Reports of the Postmaster General on the Post Office*. 1855-1864

⁵²⁷ POST 92/50, *British Postal Guide*, January 1857. My italics.

⁵²⁸ *Ibid.* Also noted was that nearly 25% of all the country's letters were delivered in London, and nearly 50% travelled through London in some way or other.

⁵²⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵³⁰ *Ibid.*

had worn one and the other blue, under the new London District system, both wore scarlet frock coats.⁵³¹ Thus the initial stages of the London reforms had been completed.

⁵³¹ After the amalgamation, all the postmen wore scarlet frock coats, and a Post Office historian was to say, "I am glad to be able to give you this bit of archaeological information. A dodo would hardly create more sensation if it re-appeared, than one of these primitive postmen" POST 61/63: *Note [to G D Thomson] from J C Hooley describing the changes in uniform resulting from the 1855 amalgamation of the General and Twopenny Postmen, 1894*

8. EARLY DAYS: 1858-1866

The late 1850s in some ways offered continuity in the Map's story: ongoing, rather than finite, reforms. By 1859 the sense of a gradual series of changes rolling out across the system was the dominant message. We hear that the first delivery in London had been 'further accelerated', and that in the suburban districts the delivery of General Post letters had been expedited, arriving earlier in the morning, more frequently throughout the day, and later in the evening. Letters leaving London at 7.30pm would reach their destination the same evening.⁵³² This small statistic, thrown in indiscriminately with the others, is perhaps the most remarkable – here is real sense of the modernity of this system: a letter could be sent, in the mail, from central London after the end of the working day, and arrive at its destination that same evening.

In 1859 it was stated that the improvements had resulted in a huge increase in letters.⁵³³ That year data compared the current situation with that of pre-reform: the increase in letters from the whole decade of 1847-57 was given as less than 1.5m. In 1857 number of letters was 4,239,000, in 1858 this was up to 6,270,000- an increase of nearly 2m in one year, and at the start of 1859 the increase was even higher.⁵³⁴ The Postmaster General also described the way the system was used by members of the public.⁵³⁵ However, whilst achievements were noted, that year also saw the acknowledgement that the full reforms had not yet come into effect, although much had

⁵³² [that there has been an] "extension to all places within 6 or 7 miles of London (isolated houses and scattered neighbourhoods excepted) of a late evening delivery, so that letters leaving the London office about 7.30pm may reach the hands of the public the same night, instead of remaining undelivered till the next morning". The Postmaster General's fourth report, 1858. POST 92/1: *Report upon the Post Office and Reports of the Postmaster General on the Post Office*.

⁵³³ "the public have largely availed themselves of the increased facility of postal communication in the London District consequent on the recent improvements is shown by the great increase in the number of district letters". The Postmaster General's fifth report, 1859. *Ibid.*

⁵³⁴ The Postmaster General's fifth report, 1859. *Ibid.*

⁵³⁵ "I feel pleasure in noticing the extensive compliance by the public with the wishes of the department that the addresses to London or its neighbourhood should include the initials of the Postal District in which they are to be delivered; and in its desire that when, as in the London Receiving Offices, there are two separate letter boxes for different classes of letters, care should be taken, in posting, to drop letters into the right box." The Postmaster General's fifth report, 1859. POST 92/2: *Reports of the Postmaster General on the Post Office*. 1855-1864

been done for improvements in ‘the towns and villages around London’, there was much more still to do, ‘owing to the vast amounts of detail’ of the measures.⁵³⁶

That the system was still not fully in place was reiterated in 1860.⁵³⁷ The numbers of staff in the Chief Office in London appear to have reduced, to 1,500 –evidence of the increasing efforts to decentralise services (numbers of staff in London as a whole were given as 3,300).⁵³⁸ The public were now using ‘door letter boxes’; the numbers of deliveries increased to 11 (from 10); and a late delivery was established within 6 miles of London.⁵³⁹ This late delivery brought the suburbs into the service, meaning that people could write home from work in the centre of town that would be received before they arrived home that evening.⁵⁴⁰

In 1861 it was declared that the original recommendations of 1856 had been completed.⁵⁴¹ In regards to the limits to the district system – of which we see some each report – this year the Postmaster General discussed the circa 20,000 letters which arrived into London daily without the district initial, instead just stating, ‘London’ on their address.⁵⁴² There were always ways that the system could be improved. Particularly interesting data given in 1861 was a snapshot into a part of the system that was one of the most modern features: Londoners being able to communicate with each other conveniently at top speeds between their local areas. Of the 19m additional letters circulating in the system in London in 1860, it was stated that 3.5m were local, with 2m for delivery in the same district as they were posted. This, the Postmaster General stated, was ‘showing to how large an extent the public have availed themselves, *even in*

⁵³⁶ The Postmaster General’s fifth report, 1859. *Ibid.*

⁵³⁷ when the Postmaster’s report stated, “When the District Offices are complete, instead of possessing as formerly, only one Post Office at which mails are despatched and received, and letters send out for delivery, London will have 10 such Post Offices.” The Postmaster General’s sixth report, 1860. *Ibid.*

⁵³⁸ The Postmaster General’s sixth report, 1860. *Ibid.*

⁵³⁹ The Postmaster General’s sixth report, 1860. *Ibid.*

⁵⁴⁰ This ability to send mails frequently through the day was also remarked upon: [there is now no difficulty in] “a person in London writing to a friend there, obtaining a reply, and sending a rejoinder, all in the same day” The Postmaster General’s sixth report, 1860, p. 9. *Ibid.*

⁵⁴¹ Other stats given in 1861 included: By 1861 there was an additional daily post in London and upwards of 70,000 letters per week were reaching their destinations 1 hour earlier. 1,573 staff were employed in the Chief Office, and 3,650 staff in London district as a whole; and provision had been made for the large number of new houses in the district: 7,500 that year. The Postmaster General’s seventh report, 1861, p. 6-7. *Ibid.*

⁵⁴² He stated- “a practice which, besides retarding the sorting, not infrequently causes delay in their delivery.” The Postmaster General’s seventh report, 1861, p. 6-7. *Ibid.*

communicating with persons in the same neighbourhood, of the means now provided for the quick delivery of letters.⁵⁴³ The total numbers of letters in the system in London was 137m in 1860, of which the total number of letters posted and delivered in same district was c.11.5m – a not inconsiderable number.

The report in 1862 did not provide much additional information, demonstrating the statement that the recommendations had now been completed. It did state that there had been another increase in post in London, stating that this ‘is the more remarkable considering the depression in trade.’⁵⁴⁴ Consideration of social context was also given in 1863, when the report stated that the rapid growth of businesses and houses in London needed providing for.⁵⁴⁵

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This service lasted until the period of the First World War.⁵⁴⁶ Hill’s own biography considered the system three years after it had been introduced, by which time he stated that ‘although still imperfect, [it] was in some sort established throughout’.⁵⁴⁷ He listed its effects as: the increase of the district letters from less than 1.5m a year to more than 6.25m;⁵⁴⁸ and ‘the number of deliveries, too, was raised to ten, and communication within the whole suburban district rendered much more frequent and rapid.’⁵⁴⁹

In 1866 one William Lewins published *Her Majesty’s Mails*, which provides a good source of the reforms to that date. His work considered the matter with hindsight as

⁵⁴³ My italics. The Postmaster General’s seventh report, 1861, p. 10. *Ibid.*

⁵⁴⁴ Letters posted and delivered in the same district has increased by 10%, an addition of 1.25m, and an increase in newspapers in the London District was above the average. The Postmaster General’s eighth report, 1862. *Ibid.*

⁵⁴⁵ “there have been further improvements in the Chief Office at St. Martin’s-le-Grand, and in some of the suburban offices, partly to provide for the constant and rapid increase of business in the London District, within which, during the last year, more than 11,000 new houses were built, viz., about 2,300 within the town limits, and more than 9,400 in the suburbs.” The Postmaster General’s ninth report, 1863. *Ibid.*

⁵⁴⁶ For context - the number of deliveries in provincial towns also increased in this period – e.g. Birmingham went from 3 in 1850 to 6 in 1900 daily. Daunton, p. 47

⁵⁴⁷ Sir Rowland Hill and George Birkbeck Norman Hill, *The life of Sir Rowland Hill and the history of the penny postage. By Sir R. Hill and his nephew G.B. Hill.* London: Thos. De La Rue and Company, 1880, vol. II, p. 272

⁵⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 272

⁵⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 272

being of a much more revolutionary nature than the official channels were wont to let on at the time. He noted, for example, that difficulty of amalgamating the letter carriers and the various complications that arose from this.⁵⁵⁰ Of the Postal Map reforms he stated: 'Still more important was the division of London into ten postal districts, carried out during the year 1856' [...] 'the immense magnitude of the Metropolis necessitated this scheme'⁵⁵¹ [...] 'An important part of the new scheme was that London should be considered in the principal provincial Post Offices as ten different towns, each with its own centre of operations, and that the letters should be assorted and despatched on this principal.'⁵⁵² He also stated that 'country' letters would be delivered without intermediary sorting to their district,⁵⁵³ and that mail sorted on trains into London was taken direct from stations to district offices.⁵⁵⁴

⁵⁵⁰ "the greatest objection in the Post office itself to completing the change, arose from the different *status* of the two bodies of men, the one class being paid at a much higher rate of wages and with better prospects than the other class." Lewins, p. 234

⁵⁵¹ *Ibid*, p. 234

⁵⁵² *Ibid*, p. 235

⁵⁵³ "country letters would be delivered straight away- without any intermediary sorting- to that particular part of London for which they were destined; whilst the sorters there having the necessary local knowledge, would distribute them immediately into postmen's walks" *Ibid*, p. 235

⁵⁵⁴ "with respect to the smaller provincial towns, it was provided that their London correspondence should be sorted into districts on the railway during their journey to the Metropolis. Thus, on the arrival of the different mails at the several railway termini, the letters would not be sent as formerly to the G.P.O., but direct to each district office, in bags prepared in the course of the journey" *Ibid*, p. 235

Another measure of success can be seen in data from 1864, which made direct comparisons between before and after the London reforms had come into effect, as follows:

	1854	1863
Number of inhabited houses	382,949	445,787
Population	2,831,950	3,316,932
Number of receptacles for letters	471	1,045
Number of deliveries daily	See table below	See table below
Total number of letters delivered in the year	103,000,000	161,000,000
Proportion of letters to population	36	48
Proportion of local letters	/	22
Estimated number of local letters	/	76,000,000

Fig. 53: Table 3: Statistics of the London post, before and after the London Postal Map⁵⁵⁵

	1854	1863
Number of deliveries per day		
'Town' (3 mile circle)	10	12
3-4 miles	6	7
4-5 miles	5	6
Principle places in 5-12 miles	4	5
Other places 5-12 miles	3	4

Fig. 54: Table 4: Deliveries per day, before and after the London Postal Map⁵⁵⁶

⁵⁵⁵ The Postmaster General's tenth report, 1864. POST 92/2: *Reports of the Postmaster General on the Post Office*. 1855-1864

⁵⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

The full meaning of this data is understood by considering it within various contexts. Of the main table, the simple fact was that the number of letters had risen dramatically; by 60% in less than a decade. Part of this increase may have been due to rising numbers of people in the district, but population growth does not necessarily equate to rises in actual users of the system.⁵⁵⁷ This point is more telling when placed alongside the statistic relating to the proportion of letters per population, which had also seen a 33% increase. It was also becoming more convenient to post a letter, with a rise in the numbers of 'receptacles' to use, whereas before one had to take a letter to a receiving house or post office, or hand it to a postman, now at any time of day a letter could be put into a post box.

The initial problem of the pre-1856 service was that it was already at capacity. The pre-1856 incarnation of the system would not have been able to absorb the large increase in population and in addresses that occurred; but the system devised by Hill was able to cope with the demands placed on it in the future, as London was growing and modernising, giving: 'a continually increasing proportion of accommodation'.⁵⁵⁸ We can see this by considering the increases alongside the second table of 'deliveries' data. Not only was the system able to cope with the influx of new people and new addresses, it was actually able to *increase* its services at the same time that use was growing rapidly. If London had remained 'One Town' it could not have increased its numbers of receptacles; it would be too costly and time-consuming to bring mail collected from them to the Central Office, or if all the letter carriers had to work from the Central Office, travelling miles back and forth to their 'walk'.

The second table shows an increase in the numbers of deliveries a day. At first glance, these increases do not seem too significant; the situation pre-1856 was already very impressive as there were 10 mails a day in the 'Town' area. The increase to 12 at this

⁵⁵⁷ As Rowland Hill was quick to point out in 1837, when he explained that the rises in population had not, to that point, resulted in rises in levels of use of the postal system. Rowland Hill, *Post Office Reform: Its Importance and Practicability* London: Privately printed, 1837

⁵⁵⁸ The Postmaster stated, "Sir Rowland Hill's scheme possesses the striking merit of satisfying not merely the requirement of the London for which it was devised, but for the greater requirements of the London of our own time" The Postmaster General's tenth report, 1864. POST 92/2: *Reports of the Postmaster General on the Post Office*. 1855-1864

reading seems marginal.⁵⁵⁹ However, the type of improvement is important. Crucially, although prior to 1856 there were many deliveries, there had not been many chances to send letters and receive replies *in the same day*. Pre-1856, of the ten daily deliveries, perhaps only one delivery might have included letters sent that same day. Letters were collected later in the day and less frequently, and sent on long detours in and out of the centre to be sorted, then sub-sorted, before being sent to their destination. After 1856, the ability to communicate quickly across the city exponentially increased. This was the difference between merely sending a message, and communicating back and forth: having a conversation. The ability to send and receive responses many times over the course of the same day was a substantial change after 1856.

This shift, which made a real difference to people's experiences in London, was enabled by sorting processes. Within this, London District letters were privileged,⁵⁶⁰ so when a mail bag arrived at a sorting office, the first letters sorted and delivered – 'privileged' – would be the local, London, letters; these would always be the fastest part of the system. The new sorting into districts was highly important, as it meant letters and letter carriers travelled much shorter distances.⁵⁶¹ The new focus on sending letter carriers on their rounds very soon after letters had been brought in for sorting meant that there were more deliveries a day, and the news contained within these deliveries was much more up-to-date. This was achieved through emphasis being placed on making sure that letter carriers were able to commence their delivery rounds promptly so they did not wait for delayed letters before leaving on their rounds.⁵⁶² It was in this that modernity was found, here that the reforms related to the city itself.

⁵⁵⁹ 12 deliveries was of course a great achievement – even though it was not a massive *increase* as such

⁵⁶⁰ "[letters] as are intended for *local* delivery should at once be selected and sent out by the letter carriers who are at the point of starting [their next delivery]." See *Second Report of the Postmaster General on the Post Office*, 1856, Appendix A. Post 30/4011: *London Postal Service: letters for London Postal Area, simplified address, Part 2*

⁵⁶¹ "the distribution of that large portion of London District letters intended for delivery near to the place of posting [...] might be much accelerated in the outer parts of the Metropolis, by stopping those letters at a local sorting Office (instead of sending them as at present to one Central Office for all London)". *Ibid.*

⁵⁶² "it would be unprofitable to retard the delivery (for about 20 minutes), for the sake of including the local letters..." *Ibid.* This arrangement was made possible by many deliveries a day – any letters arriving late would simply be placed in the next delivery, which will be sent out an hour, or less, later.

9. CONCLUSION

By 1866, when Lewins was writing his account, the changes – which he noted had taken a while – were now in place.⁵⁶³ In the end, his conclusion was that ‘the time and trouble saved by this arrangement is, as expected, enormous’.⁵⁶⁴ The historian of the Post, Daunton, was also to conclude that, ‘Hill secured a major improvement on the quality of the London mail service’, and ‘The district system was, despite Bokenham’s foreboding, a major improvement in efficiency’.⁵⁶⁵

Finally, one last measure of the initial success of the London district system was the fact that its adoption was followed by other towns, as well- Liverpool, Calcutta,⁵⁶⁶ and Manchester which was divided into 8 postal districts in 1869.⁵⁶⁷ The introduction of the system elsewhere can be seen as a clear vindication of Hill’s work in pushing for the system.

Therefore, despite limitations, the reforms should be understood to be a success in a number of ways. The first delivery of the day was completed earlier, to a time prior to the start of the business day. Similarly, the last posts were later, meaning that people could communicate even after work had finished. And the frequency of deliveries meant that, effectively, people could discuss issues through the day, sending letters back and forth and receiving replies to their notes. All of this, added up to a highly modern service. So it was that the London Postal Map and the London postal reforms were crucial elements in London’s modernity. The reforms instituted an incredibly impressive communications system that was fast, regular, cheap and accessible.

⁵⁶³ “Nearly the whole of these recommendations were combated – and successfully so – by the officers of the Post Office, though it is certainly remarkable that, in the face of their opinions, the great majority of the proposals have subsequently been carried out with unquestioned advantage to the service” *Ibid*, p. 212; p. 235

⁵⁶⁴ Lewins, p. 235

⁵⁶⁵ Daunton, p. 46

⁵⁶⁶ Sir Rowland Hill and George Birkbeck Norman Hill, *The life of Sir Rowland Hill and the history of the penny postage. By Sir R. Hill and his nephew G.B. Hill.* London: Thos. De La Rue and Company, 1880, p. 272

⁵⁶⁷ Fryer and Akerman (eds)

Chapter 2

The Image of the Postal Map: A Vision of Modernity

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What the districts mean, is yet not clearly known to all; but the knowledge is gradually coming. There are monster maps of London staring at us in the shop-windows, belonging to Guides, and Handbooks, and newspaper supplements

[...]

- maps in which N. and W., and E.C. and S.E., and other initials, are shown as belonging each to a huge slice taken out of the metropolis⁵⁶⁸

⁵⁶⁸ Quote taken from an article from 1857 about the postal system: Bruce Castle, Morten 352: 'The Postman's Knock', *Chambers' Journal*, 20 June 1857

1. INTRODUCTION

When the London Postal Map was introduced in 1856, the nature of communications in London changed; and so too, London itself. When the London public were seeing the London Postal Map, they saw their city conceived in a particular way: a particular shape, a particular set of boundaries, a particular system of naming. Their city had a distinctive form. The reason for its distinctiveness in form was its intended function: not as a map *of* London so much as a plan *for* London: a vision for a future that was rational, uniform, logical.

This chapter understands the Map to be an object with an agenda. All maps are persuasive, none of them merely visualize information in a wholly neutral manner; but their power comes from their ability to persuade their audience of their factual nature, their neutrality, their ability to represent something about relationships between different places.⁵⁶⁹ The London Postal Map acted to persuade its public. What its message was, that the map was persuading, was twofold:

- Firstly, that it represented a plan for a future London, and
- Secondly, that this plan was rational, methodical, almost innate in its method of organising and classifying London

Both of these points constituted elements of modernity: the act of planning, the act of envisaging a new, rational London, was modern. The Map was acting to impose a *vision of modernity* on the city. Modernity was in the eye of the beholder; one element of modernity was understanding that one was experiencing it. We have seen in chapter one how the postal service instituted a modern way of organising communications in London. We will see in chapters three and four that the postal service introduced modern streetscape into the capital, and how people experienced modern communications. Here, we concern ourselves with the *image* of modernity, and how that image was constructed through the London Postal Map.

⁵⁶⁹ What makes mapping compelling is that power relations at play are hidden, secret perhaps, as the 'scientific' or 'neutral' nature of the map hides its bias, means it is doubly affective at its job, avoiding questions as to its agenda or effects. Corner explains that the inventive capacities of mapping are not widely acknowledged – the surveys etc. they are based on are seen as neutral. James Corner, 'The Agency of Mapping: Speculation, Critique and Invention' in Cosgrove, p. 215

The London Postal Map was the first of its kind, and the 'official' postal district map; but it was joined soon by many other versions of maps which displayed the London postal districts, many of which claimed to be 'London Postal Maps'.⁵⁷⁰ Its significance lies in the fact that it was the first, but it very quickly inspired new maps showing the postal districts, replicated over and over again on a large number of other maps that were produced in this period.⁵⁷¹ Here we consider some of these maps to understand what was distinctive about the Map's form.

The Map's design will be considered in detail, including the choices made in its creation, the Map's visual properties, and the assessment it made of London, such as drawing of boundaries, and the naming of its districts. A close analysis of the relationship between *form* and *function* that was at play in the object of the Map, will be given. For example, when the Map drew a line to define London (its form), it decided which places would have access to the new services offered by the reformed London Postal District- and which would not (its function).

This chapter considers the nature of the Map as an object. It was commissioned by somebody, then designed, printed, and circulated, influencing the actions of the people who encountered it. It was reprinted in the national press. Over time it was adapted, drawn on, folded up, posted out to postmasters, ripped, pinned onto walls, and thrown away. It had a life.

⁵⁷⁰ The Postal Museum holds a great selection of Postal Maps, but it is not the only archive consulted. Collections of London Postal Maps can be found in the British Library, the Bodleian, the Royal Geographic Society, and the Library of Congress in Washington DC.

⁵⁷¹ See the Appendix for full list of maps consulted.

2. THE LONDON POSTAL MAP IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE

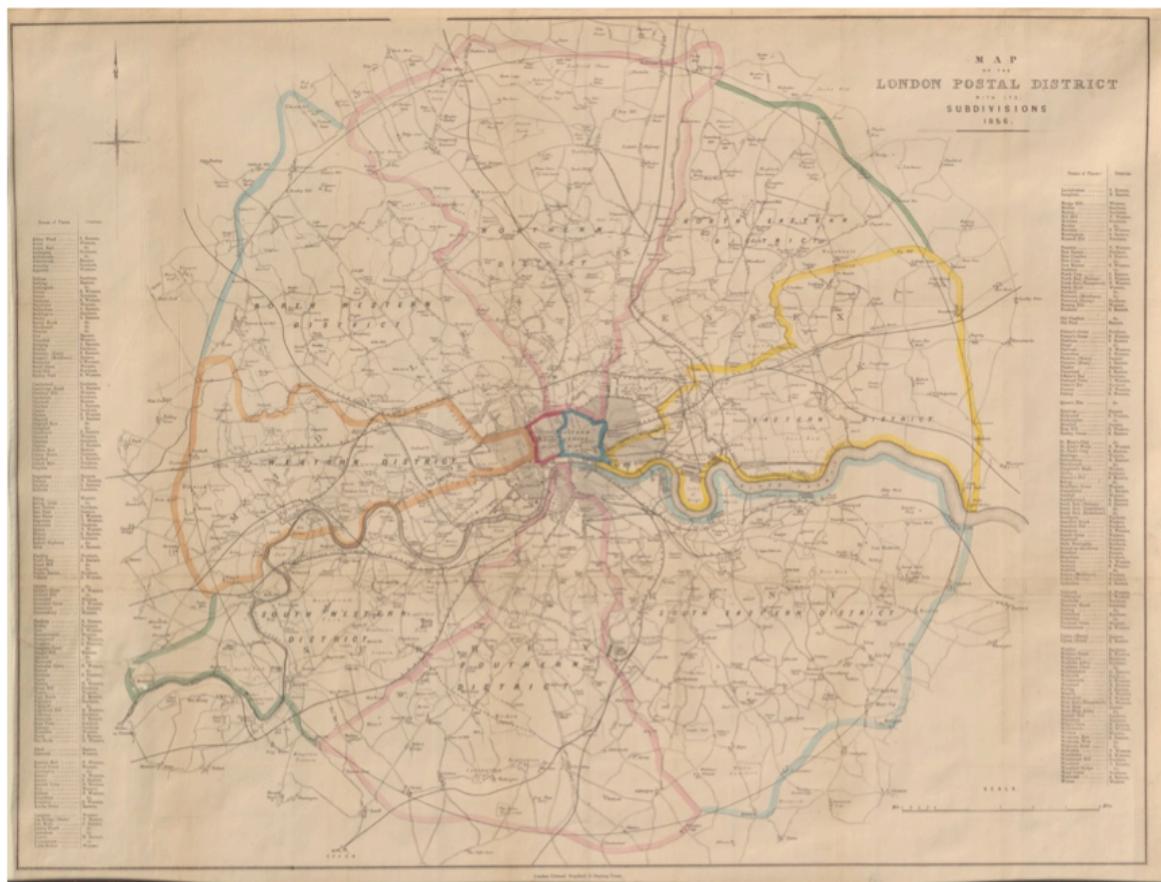


Fig. 55: The London Postal Map⁵⁷²

The London Postal Map was doing something rather more than describing a new system. It was describing a new vision, a new plan for the city. Where this act became significant was in the fact that this plan was visualised highly publicly. It has been stated already that the Postal Map was an early example of modern London being defined as a whole. Whilst the Metropolitan Board of Works and Peel's Police force defined the city slightly earlier than the Postal Map, their definition of London, and the drawing of different boundaries within the city, did not have the link to the public the Postal Map had; it did not matter if the public knew where in London they were according to these maps, whereas the public did need to know where they were placed on the Postal Map.

⁵⁷² POST 21/71: 'Map of the London Postal District with the sub-divisions', 1856

A key element of any map is the way that it is used, its context, and the interpretations of space that it achieves. The map itself is only half of the story; the other half relates to how the map was interpreted, how it is used, how the people in the map's story played their part.⁵⁷³ If we are to understand the meaning of the visualisations contained in the Postal Map, we first need to establish that it was actually seen by people. Our crucial first point is to consider the circulation of the Postal Map in the world.⁵⁷⁴

Sources relating to the Map demonstrate the presence of the Map in a number of ways:

1. Manuscript sources reveal the various ways that the Post Office circulated the Map to the public;
2. Manuscript sources explain the way that the Map was disseminated within the postal system, for postal staff to assist them in working within the new system, and;
3. Postal maps as sources themselves reveal, through their form, a number of different designs for different uses.

The Map Circulated to the Public

How the changes were communicated to the public, how they were induced to interact with the new system was of great importance, given that the reforms would only be successful if the public changed their letter addressing habits. In the summer of 1855, as the plans for the Postal Map were materialising, the Committee of Officers recommended use of maps: 'we recommend that the advantages attending to such a practice [addressing letters] be brought to public notice, and that outline maps and lists of places within the several districts be prepared and circulated for general information'.⁵⁷⁵

⁵⁷³ A map is (only) one of several elements in a series of transactions: objective reality; the document; explorers/observers; the map-maker; the map reader/ community of map readers. He states, "like any other technology and product, the map must be interrogated in its social contexts of emergence, dissemination and use", Pickles, pp. 47-48.

⁵⁷⁴ As ever with the archive relating to the London Postal Map, there is not a great deal of source material relating to the use and circulation of the map; the exceptions to this rule are described.

⁵⁷⁵ Report to Secretary of the Post Office by a Committee of Officer (4th July 1855) (extract). POST 30/4011: *London Postal Service: letters for London Postal Area, simplified address, Part 2*

In 1856 when Hill sent his notices to Postmasters advising them of the changes, he also advised that a leaflet would be printed for the public with a 'smaller list of streets' for sale, using the postal service's own infrastructure to sell them: letter carriers acting as door to door salesmen. 383,170 were printed,⁵⁷⁶ and of these 341,077 were sold to members of the public for one penny. In addition, a 'larger list with maps' was published: 10,000 were printed in May 1857, and indicating that these were popular, in December 1857 a reprint of 3,000 was ordered.⁵⁷⁷ By the end of June 1857 a 'new and superior edition, with maps', and notices, had been issued.⁵⁷⁸ Post Office notices would also have been seen by the public, operating as posters put up in and outside post offices. A pamphlet was also sent to residents of London, and businesses, advising them of the new scheme.⁵⁷⁹

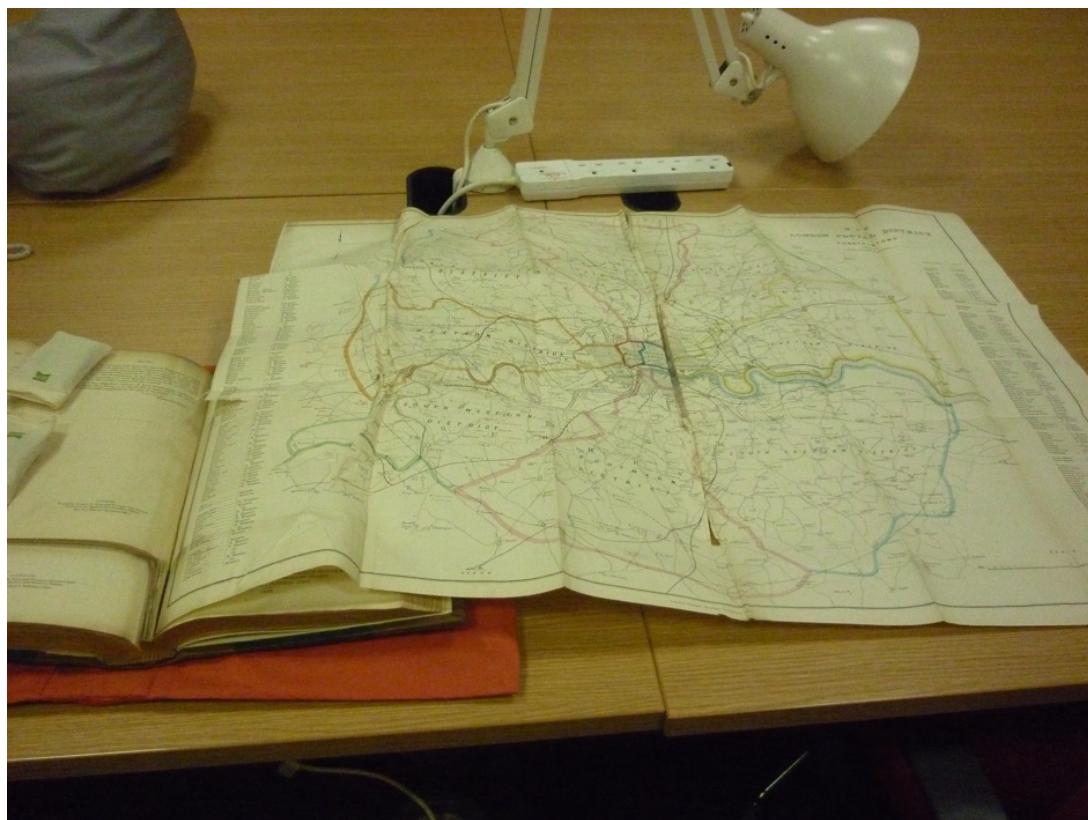


Fig. 56: Copies of the Postal Map⁵⁸⁰

⁵⁷⁶ Sources state that an initial run of 265,000 leaflets explaining the change were printed. POST 30/120A: *London Postal Area: initials of main postal districts introduced as part of addresses*

⁵⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸⁰ This one appeared with the Postmaster General's report. POST 92/1: *Report upon the Post Office and Reports of the Postmaster General on the Post Office, 1854-1858*

As well as the Post Office advising the general public of the new system, there was external publicity, most obviously through the press. The Illustrated London News in an article of Saturday January 17th, 1857 edition included a note about the London Postal divisions, along with a printed copy of the map itself.⁵⁸¹



Fig. 57: *The Illustrated London News*

⁵⁸¹ *The Illustrated London News*, Saturday January 17th, 1857, p. 46. The circulation figures for the paper at this time were between 150,000 and 200,000.

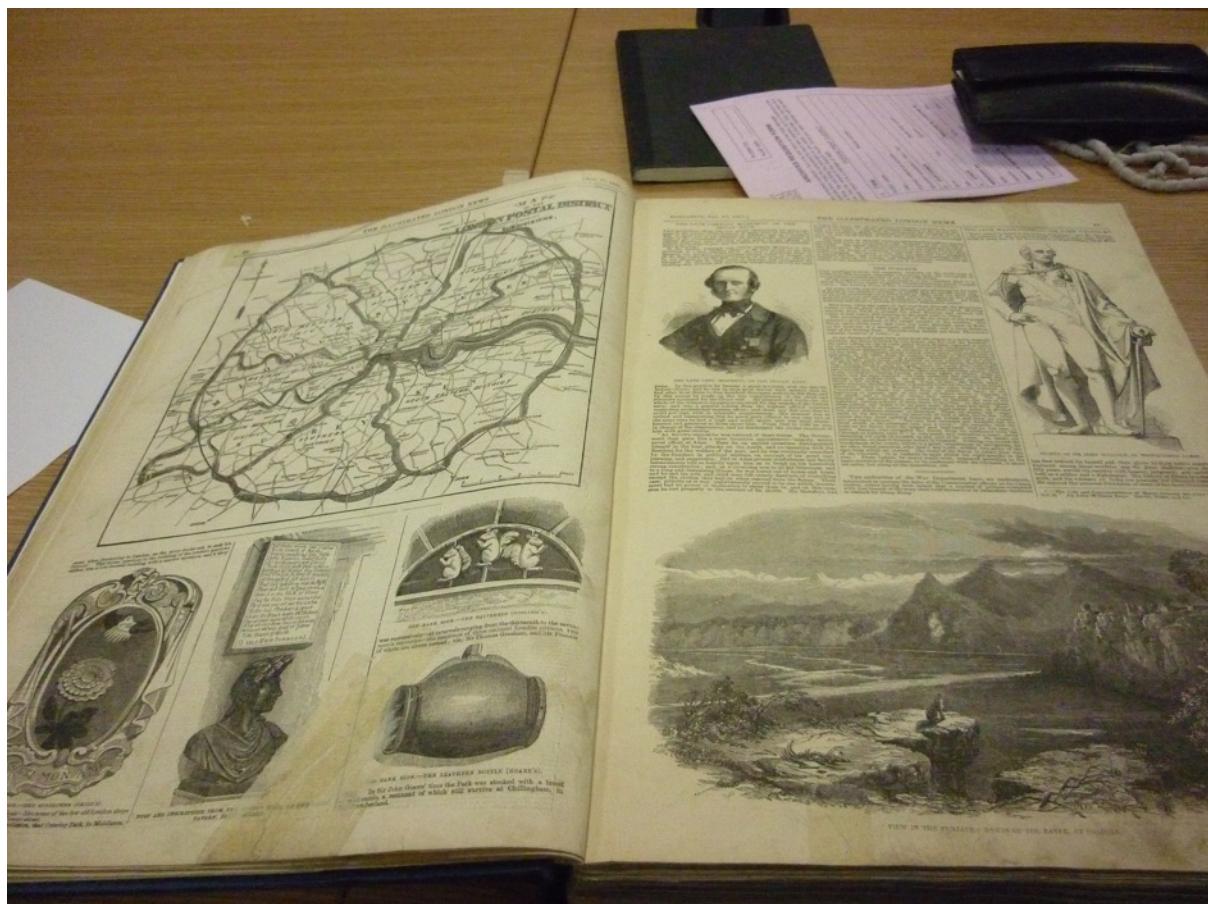


Fig. 58: The Illustrated London News featured the London Postal Map⁵⁸²

⁵⁸² The Illustrated London News, Saturday 17th January 1857

In addition the following map appeared in 1857 explicitly stating it is for members of the public, being sold with the Illustrated Times:⁵⁸³



Fig. 59: Postal District Map of London, sold with the Illustrated Times⁵⁸⁴

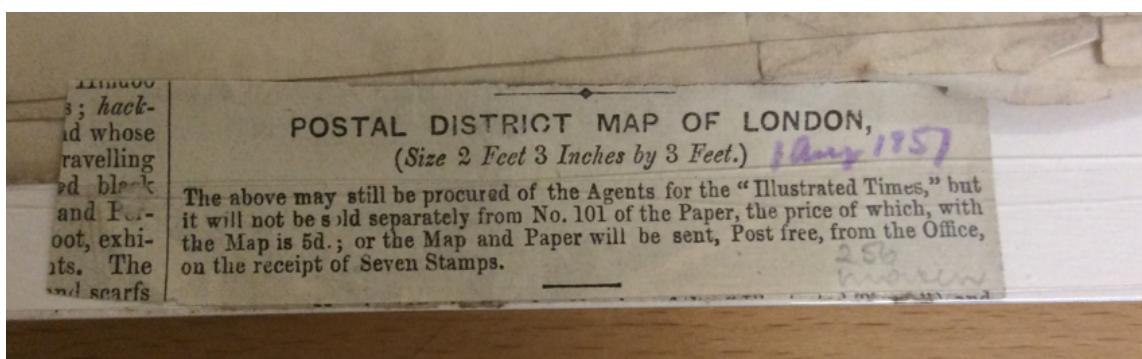


Fig. 60: Note from a later Illustrated Times, offering further sales of the above map⁵⁸⁵

⁵⁸³ Sold with *The Illustrated Times*, 21st March 1857. Cartographic Items Maps Crace Port. 19.51: Panicongraphie de Gillot a Paris. Firmin Gillot, 'Postal District Map of London Issued with the Illustrated Times', London: Illustrated Times, 1857

⁵⁸⁴ Bruce Castle, Morten Collection. BCPHC/1/19/15: *Postal District Map of London*, 1857. A very well-kept version of this map is held at the British Library. ref: Cartographic Items Maps Crace Port. 19.51: Panicongraphie de Gillot a Paris. Firmin Gillot, 'Postal District Map of London Issued with the Illustrated Times', London: Illustrated Times, 1857

⁵⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

The Map and the Postal Service

The London changes organised by the Postal Map were advised within the postal system's internal hierarchy in a number of ways. In 1856, when the Map was introduced, the Secretary stated: 'the officers from Manchester and Derby, are now well acquainted with the sorting of the London letters, to the several Postal Districts; and with the assistance of the Maps, and lists, with which they have been supplied, will, I believe, be able to perform satisfactorily the duties required of them'.⁵⁸⁶ A second reference occurred with a request for maps and lists to be sent to Sheffield for commencing London district sorting.⁵⁸⁷ These two short references demonstrate that the map was circulated to the provincial offices, Manchester, Derby and Sheffield, as would be expected when they would need to sort letters into the new districts.

In 1856 a notice was sent to every Postmaster in the country advising them of the change and the details related to its implementation⁵⁸⁸ and 265,000 of these notices were printed.⁵⁸⁹ In the letter to the Postmasters, Rowland Hill instructed all Postmasters to display the notice in every post office, markets, and 'other public places';⁵⁹⁰ showing that Hill intended the changes to be highly visible in public. This was to be essential if people outside of London were to address letters correctly.⁵⁹¹

Interestingly, the notice was redrafted a number of times by Post Office officials, and in this redrafting a point relating to the Post Office and its reluctance to spend money on the Map is revealed. The initial draft included reference to a map that would be sent to

⁵⁸⁶ Minute dated June 13th 1856. POST 30/127B: *London Divisional Sorting in Provincial Post Offices and on Travelling Post Offices (TPO) introduced*

⁵⁸⁷ Letter also in June. *Ibid.*

⁵⁸⁸ The notice stated, "the Postmaster General, anxious to promote rapidity and correctness in the delivery of letters, has, for postal purposes, divided London and its environs into TEN DISTRICTS, each to be treated, in many respects, as a separate town" – in a clear reference to the postal map divisions. POST 30/120A: *London Postal Area: initials of main postal districts introduced as part of addresses*

⁵⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹⁰ "You will cause copies of this Notice to be posted up in the Market and other public places in your Town, as well as in your own Post Office windows, and you will direct the Letter Carriers to distribute a few copies to the principal shopkeepers who are willing to exhibit them for public information". Letter dated February 1857. *Ibid.*

⁵⁹¹ He noted that "If the initial letters be thus regularly appended, the Department will be able to assort, with facility and correctness, the county letters, according to their representative districts, before they reach London in the morning" *Ibid.*

every Postmaster showing the London districts. The later amended version did not include this, as explained by the Secretary in a note to the Postmaster General; ‘the most important one [changes from the first draft] – 1st; the omission of “maps” from amongst the means of information proposed to be supplied to the public [...] as regards the [maps]; it appeared, on further examination, that to provide every Head Post Office and every London District Receiving House (about 1,600 altogether) with the prerequisite maps suitably mounted, would cost a large sum of money, with no commensurate advantage, since other aids are to be afforded, and I, therefore, propose that this intention be abandoned.’⁵⁹² Many of the post offices around the country, were not supplied with the official London Postal Map at first; later, cheaper maps were sent to post offices, and other providers stepped in to sell maps as we shall see, with many other ways that the Map was circulated, albeit in cheaper forms.

This initial reluctance to reproduce an expensive version of the Postal Map perhaps accounts for the many non-official London Postal Maps that existed. Given this context, Nicholson’s map is important;⁵⁹³ its existence suggested that the G.P.O. itself, in deciding not to print the map, missed a crucial market, attesting as it does to the market for postal maps in London. This map was “Sold at all post offices and respectable stationers in the United Kingdom”, and was “Designed and published by William Nicholson (late of the G.P.O).”⁵⁹⁴ The Post Office commissioned its own maps- however, an employee saw an unfulfilled market for a map of the new London districts. The map was also designed for folding, showing that it was meant to be handy, portable, and pocket-sized, unlike the official, Post Office-commissioned, London Postal Map. There were many different versions of this map; demand was enough for it to run to a series of versions.

⁵⁹² October 1856 minute. *Ibid.*

⁵⁹³ Cartographic Items Maps 3485.(17.): *The London District Post Office Map. Designed and published by W. Nicholson, London, 1857*

⁵⁹⁴ at “4. Wine Office-court, Fleet Street, E.C.”. Given that fact that Nicholson worked at the G.P.O, it can be assumed that he understood that the post was not filling the gap on the market for maps of the new London district, and decided to step in himself on a commercial basis.

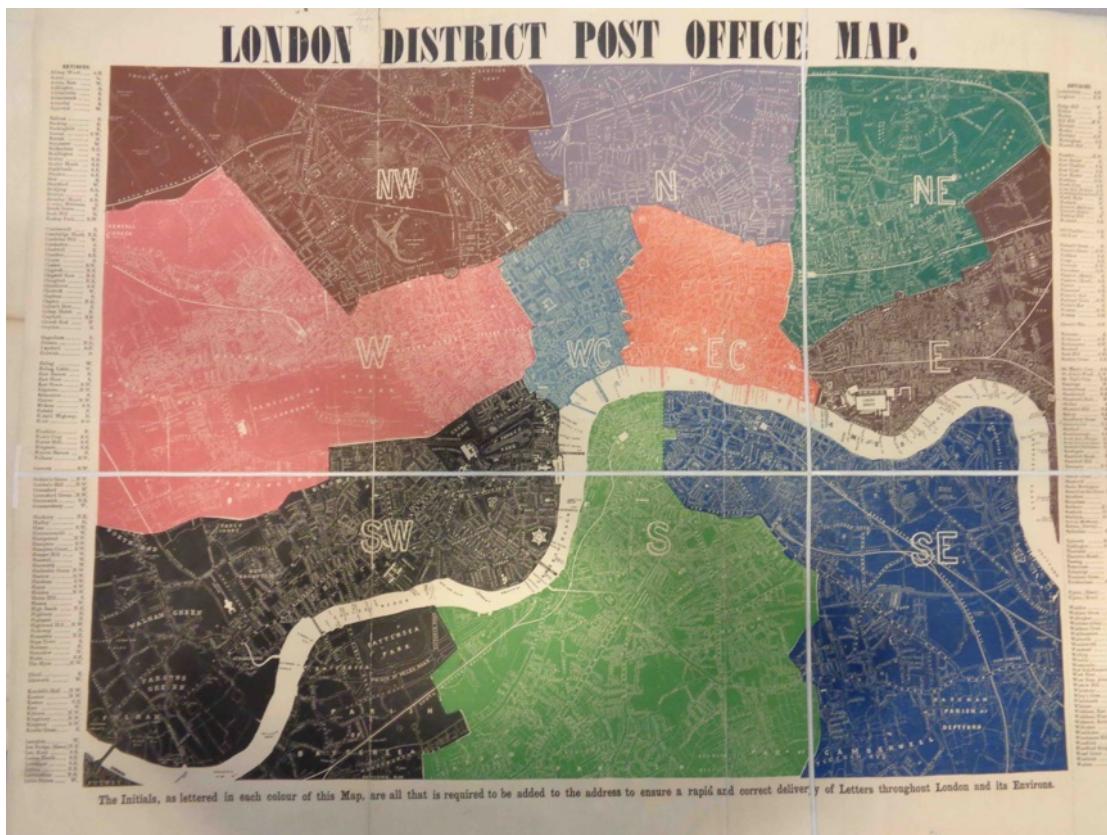


Fig. 61: Nicholson's London District Post Office Map, 1857⁵⁹⁵

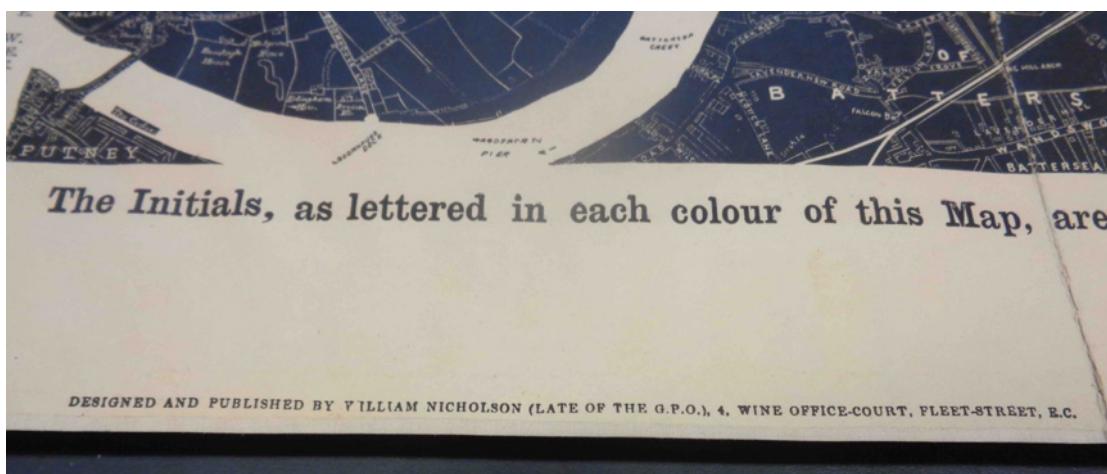


Fig. 62: Detail from Nicholson's London District Post Office Map⁵⁹⁶

Despite this, archives show a concerted effort to advertise the changes to postal staff around the country. A booklet of "Principal Street and Places" was sent out which listed areas of London alongside their postal district, and in some cases included a map.⁵⁹⁷

⁵⁹⁵ Cartographic Items Maps 3485.(17.): *The London District Post Office Map*. Designed and published by W. Nicholson, London, 1857

⁵⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹⁷ POST 30/120A: *London Postal Area: initials of main postal districts introduced as part of addresses*

British Postal Guides also published information about the postal districts,⁵⁹⁸ including lists of streets with their corresponding district given, and timetables for the despatch of letters according to their district.⁵⁹⁹ A poster was made which showed how letters were sorted in each of the London districts.⁶⁰⁰

The following list of 'Principal Streets and Places', including a version of the Map, was in every Post Office, and sent to many businesses:

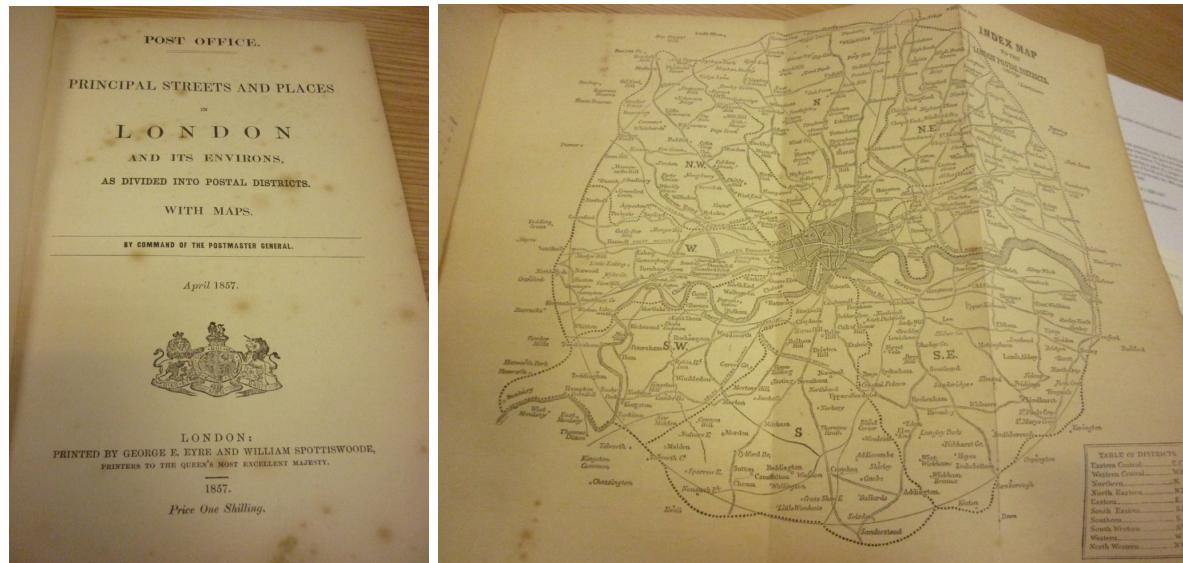


Fig. 63: *Principal Streets and places list, with map of the districts*⁶⁰¹

⁵⁹⁸ The May and then October editions in 1856 have a section on the London districts to advise postal workers of their introduction, but again do not include a map. Instead the report is something of a halfway house, showing London divided into chief office, branch offices, sub offices and receiving houses. POST 92/48: British Postal Guide May 1856; POST 92/49: British Postal Guide October 1856

⁵⁹⁹ POST 92/50 Postal Guide 1857

⁶⁰⁰ Titled 'Sorting List of Places' POST 30/127B: London District Sorting in Provincial Post Offices and in TPOs- Introduction

⁶⁰¹ POST 92/1220: *Principal Streets and Places in London and its Environs, as divided into Postal Districts, with maps*, 1857

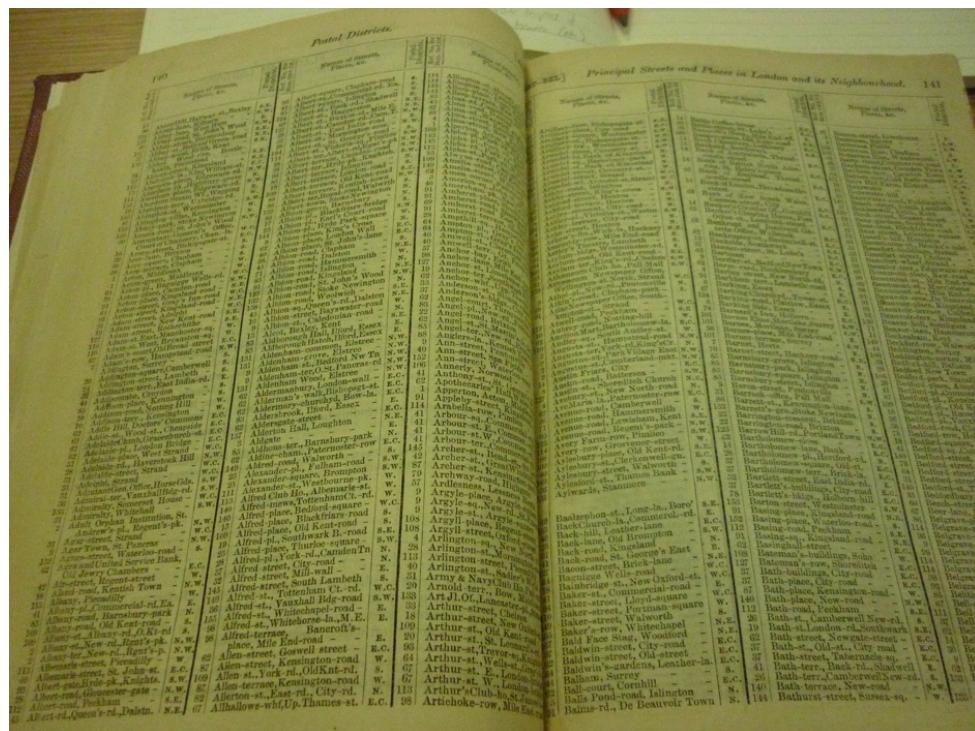
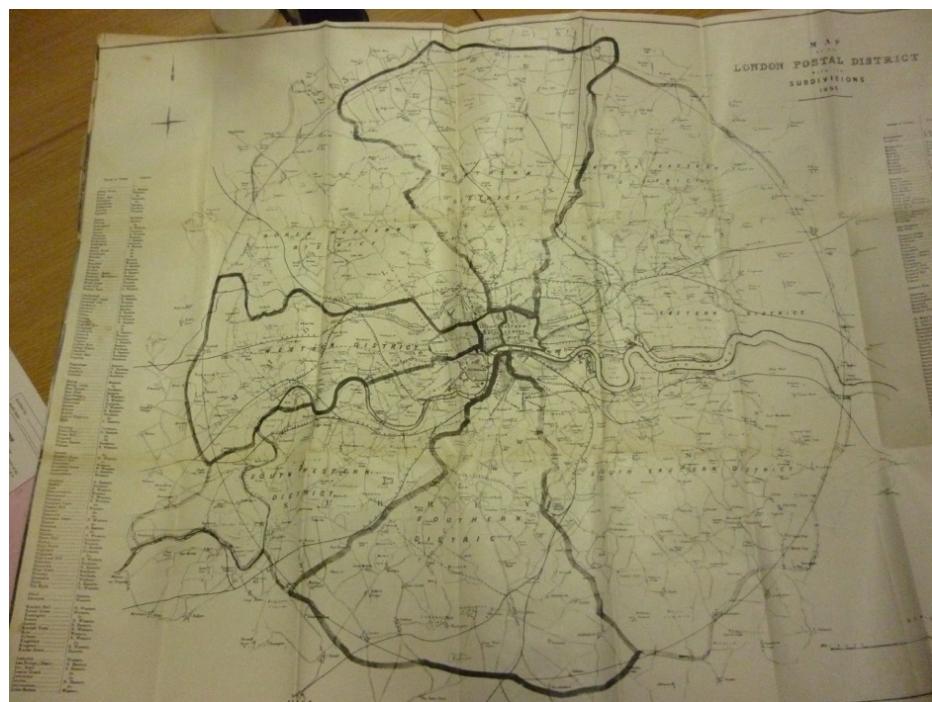


Fig. 64: List of streets with corresponding postal district⁶⁰²

And the following copy of the Map appeared in the Postal Guide, again for access by the public:



*Fig. 65: Map as an appendix to the Postal Guide*⁶⁰³

602 POST 92/1220: Principal Streets and Places in London and its Environs, as divided into Postal Districts, with maps, 1857

603 POST 92/49: *British Postal Guide*, 1856

Maps as Sources

Another set of sources tells a story of the Map being highly prominent: the extant maps themselves. From 1856 onwards, a large number of different versions of the Postal Map were produced every year. We can see this for example by considering just the versions of the map found extant in various archives from 1856. Refer to the Appendix for the full list in chronological order, with the maps from 1856 being:

- the London Postal Map
- the 'Sketch Map of the London postal District, with its Subdivisions', dated 1856.⁶⁰⁴
- Stanford's 'Map of London with the Postal Sub Divisions'.⁶⁰⁵
- a fourth style of London Postal Map produced, another Stanford's map.⁶⁰⁶
- Another Stanford's map, but with each division in a different colour.⁶⁰⁷
- One other, last Stanford's 1856 map.⁶⁰⁸

The extant maps for just this one year are a small snapshot of the many different maps that were produced. The same story is replicated in 1857, 1858 and later, as many new postal maps were made. They were expensive items; although new cheaper making technologies were being developed, these were elite objects that almost always included some handmade element. They were objects that required a skilled hand to make them, that required access to other expensive maps, or to survey materials. A 'budget' option for the Post Office might have meant drawing new boundaries on top of an old map, but that was not taken: the London Postal Map was a new commission. There are a large selection of different versions of these maps, each made with a care and expertise. This indicates the market there must have been for them. A great many

⁶⁰⁴ This map is held in the British Library. Cartographic Items Maps 3485.(12.): E. Stanford, *Sketch Map of the London Postal District, with its subdivisions*. London, 1856.

⁶⁰⁵ Bodleian Library C17:70 London (356): Edward Stanford, *Map of London with its postal sub-divisions*, 1854 (dated incorrectly in the catalogue)

⁶⁰⁶ There are versions of this map in the Bodleian, the British Library and the RGS. For example, Bodleian Library C17:70 London (97): *London with its postal sub-divisions reduced from the map prepared by Edward Stanford for use in the London and provincial post office [Together with] guide [cartographic material]*, 1856

⁶⁰⁷ Bodleian Library C17:70 London (355): *London, with its postal subdivisions*, 1856

⁶⁰⁸ Cartographic Items Maps 3485.(11.): *Map of London with its Postal Subdivisions. Prepared by E. Stanford*, London, 1856.

postal maps *were* made, many in the same year as each other, by many different map makers and published and sold by many different map publishers and sellers.

Form

We learn a great deal about maps in the public sphere just by reflecting on the form of the maps themselves. A Stanford's map in 1856 Stanford's map shows each division in a different colour, with their boundary outlines a bolder, strong version of the district colour.⁶⁰⁹ This was much smaller than many others, and usually it is found with fold marks, indicating this version would have been folded into a small, pocket-sized map for carrying around:⁶¹⁰



Fig. 66: Stanford's 1856 map showing central London, in a portable version⁶¹¹

⁶⁰⁹ Bodleian Library C17:70 London (355): *London, with its postal subdivisions*, 1856

⁶¹⁰ c.10cmx 20cm

⁶¹¹ Bodleian Library C17:70 London (97): *London with its postal sub-divisions reduced from the map prepared by Edward Stanford for use in the London and provincial post office [Together with] guide [cartographic material]*, 1856

The British Library has a version of this colour map that includes a small printed guide as well 'Principal Streets and Places' book for 1856 with the streets and their districts listed as well as an explanation of the new system:



Fig. 67: London with its Postal Subdivisions⁶¹²

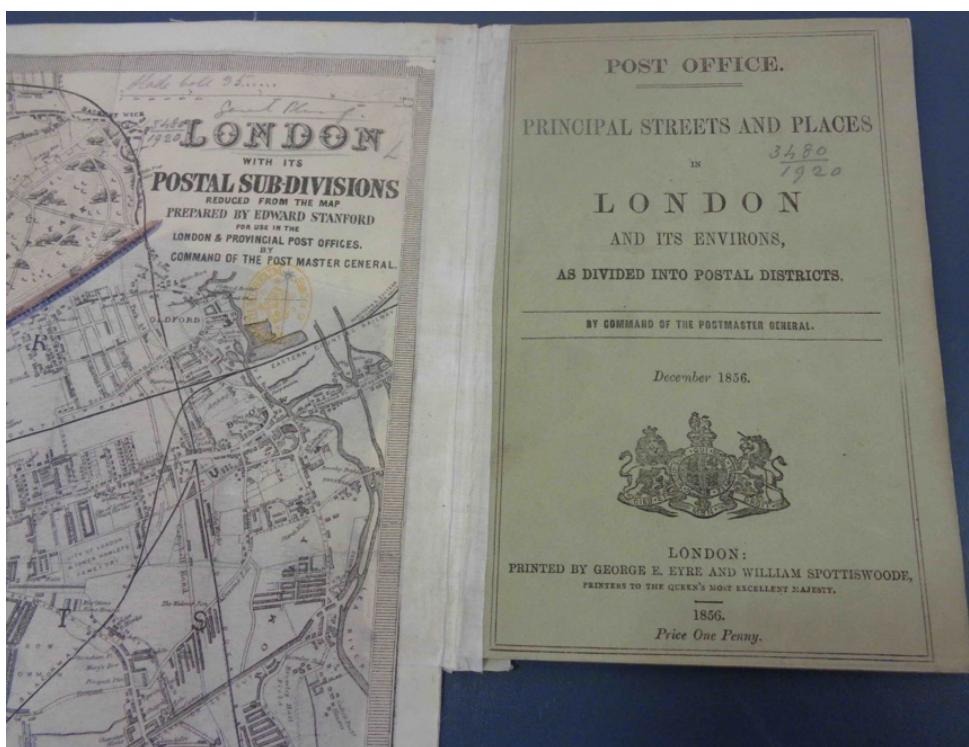


Fig. 68: London with its Postal Subdivisions, detail with a small book of streets and places⁶¹³

⁶¹² Cartographic Items Maps 3480.(143.): *London with its Postal Subdivisions, reduced from the Map prepared by E. Stanford for use in the London and Provincial Post Offices, by command of the Post Master General. [With Street Directory for 1856]*, London, 1856.

⁶¹³ *Ibid.*

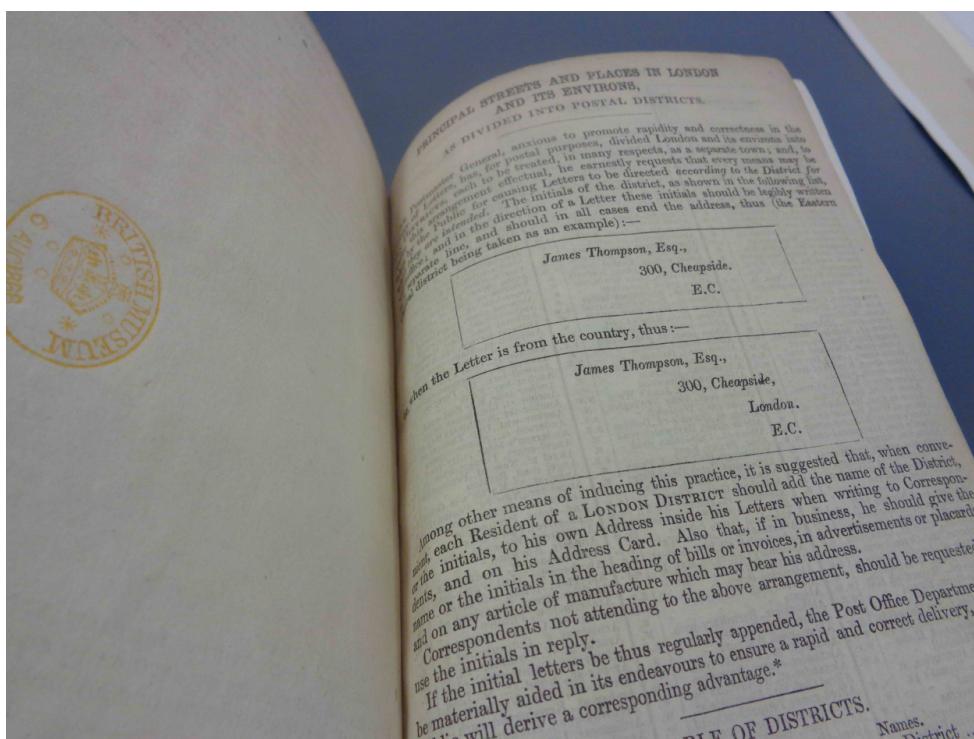


Fig. 69: Street Directory with the Map, explanatory note⁶¹⁴

The following map would have been circulated to post offices around the country and would have had a big audience. Its smaller, more portable size and its cheaper production value may have appealed to a Post Office obsessed with the cost of its services.

⁶¹⁴ Ibid.



Fig. 70: London with its Postal Sub-Divisions.⁶¹⁵

Another example of form demonstrating use can be seen in those maps that show a temporary structure on them, for example, this map with the buildings of the International Exhibition of 1862:



Fig. 71: Postal Map showing the Exhibition site of 1862⁶¹⁶

⁶¹⁵ Bodleian Library C17:70 London (97): *London with its postal sub-divisions reduced from the map prepared by Edward Stanford for use in the London and provincial post office [Together with] guide [cartographic material]*, 1856

⁶¹⁶ Bodleian Library: C17:70 London (4): *London with its postal sub-divisions reduced from the map prepared by Edward Stanford for use in the London & Provincial post offices. [together with] guide [cartographic material]*, 1862



Fig. 72: Postal Map showing the Exhibition site of 1862⁶¹⁷

The makers of maps understood that there was a market for the London districts for visitors to the great exhibitions which included the postal districts on them. They were, by this time, becoming standard features of London maps, including maps for visitors; all the better for them to use the postal system. We see another example of this in 1866 with a visitors' map – a 'Guide to London' – pocket sized edition with an explanation of the city, cab fares, and the postal system:

⁶¹⁷ *Ibid.*



Fig. 73: A visitor's guide to London⁶¹⁸

618 Cartographic Items Maps 3480.(197.): J. Skinner, [Waistcoat Pocket Map of] London, with the Postal Districts, Railways and Stations, and with all the latest improvements; divided into squares of half a mile each way for calculating Cab Fares. [Accompanied by a] Guide to London, London, 1866

Maps in Public Sphere: Conclusion

The evidence cited above indicates that the London Postal Map was an object that was visible publicly within Victorian London. The Map is understood to be a significant part of the lives of people in London at that time.

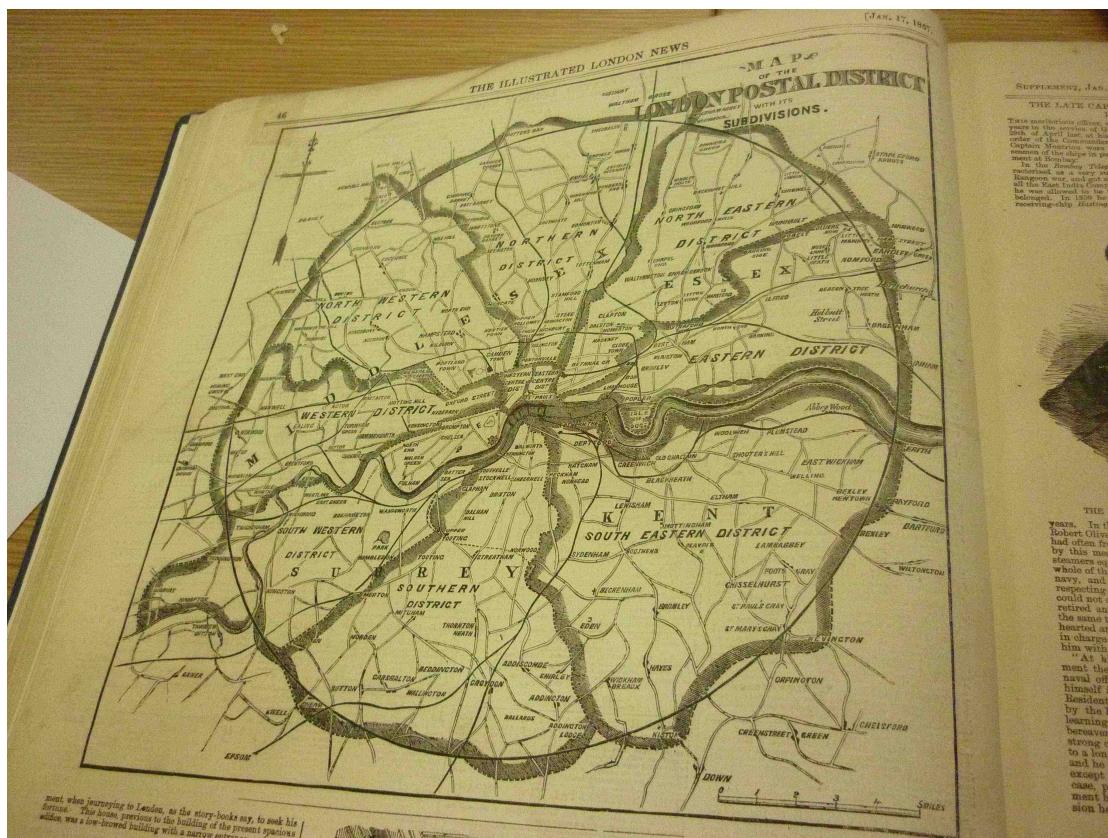


Fig. 74: The map in the press⁶¹⁹

Of the many versions of the Map, it was the original London Postal Map that was the vision of London in the public sphere. It was copies of this Map which were reproduced in the press, held in every Post Office, and in the Postal Guides. By reproducing this Map many times, it meant that the people of London were being made aware of something else: a new way of visualising their city. The London Postal Map was the first time that London was depicted for the public as one administrative unit. The way that the city was depicted – the map's form – was therefore highly important, it influenced the way people conceptualised their city.

⁶¹⁹ *The Illustrated London News*, Saturday 17th January 1857

3. THE LONDON POSTAL MAP AS A PLAN

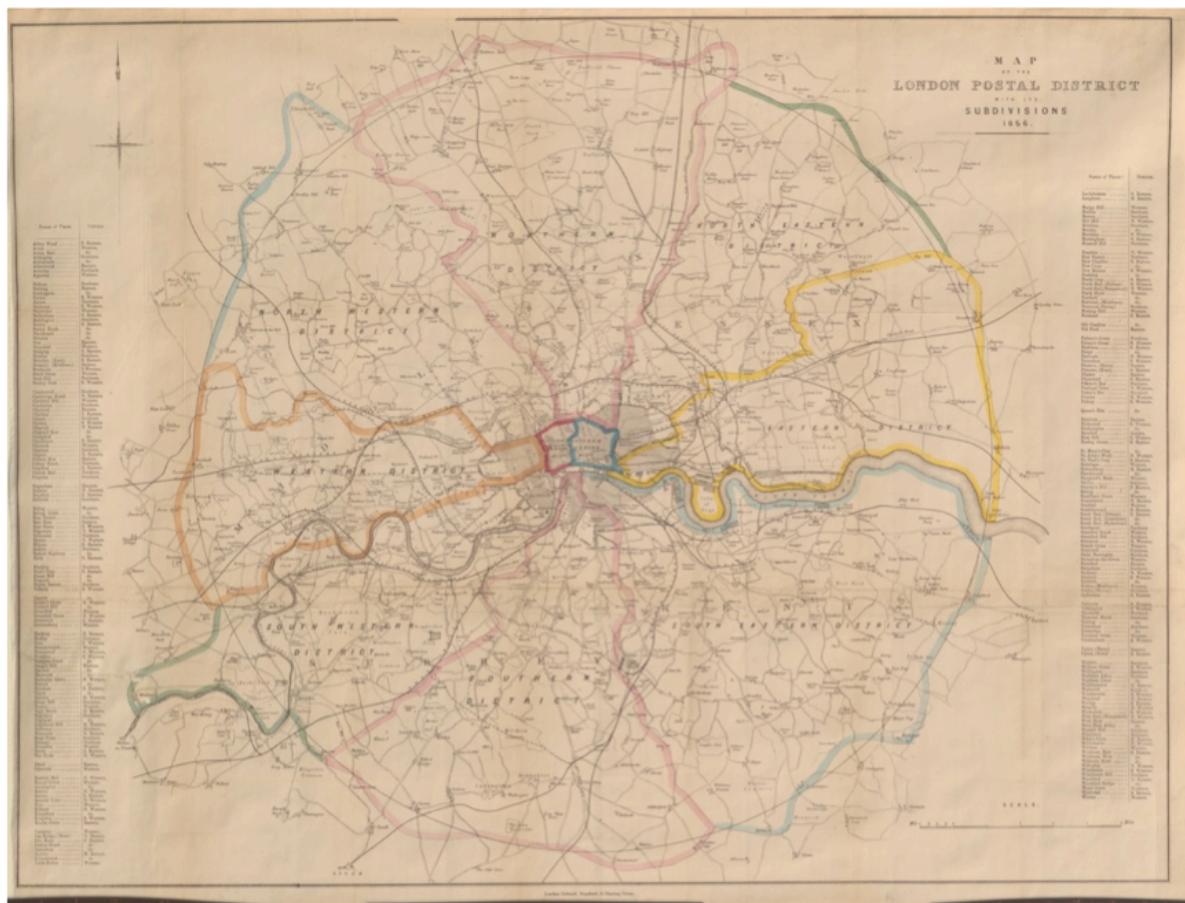


Fig. 75: The London Postal Map, 1856⁶²⁰

Here then we consider the form of the Map. The Map's centre is the General Post Office at St Martin's le Grand – although this site itself is not marked. London extends 12 miles out from this central point, the 12-mile radius marked on the map by a thin black line. That London was depicted 24 miles from one end to the other, was a massive extent: London in this period was developed in only a tiny portion of this massive overall area. The definition of 'London' on the map is not much smaller than that which defines London today by the M25, bigger than the London postal districts of today, and much bigger than the Metropolitan Board of Works definition of London, made around the same time. The scale does not allow for much detail, there is not space for many individual roads or such to be marked. This is significant: it is an overview of the city, not a map you could use to navigate when walking the streets of London.

⁶²⁰ POST 21/71: 'Map of the London Postal District with the sub-divisions', 1856.

The densest areas, the Cities of London and Westminster, and parts of Southwark, are shaded to denote their density, but within these areas very little detail of particular urban features are given. Certain important elements are shown, including the river, canals, railway lines, some major roads, some docks, and the names of certain areas. This detail is all engraved in thin black lines.

The Map shows the boundaries of the new 'Subdivisions' of the London district, effectively new Post Towns, that have been created. Their boundary lines are given in a fine dark line supplemented by thick hand-colouring. These colours ensure that the boundary lines are clearly visible, as they contrast with the other detail on the Map. Again, these boundaries are an overview: the scale does not allow for showing all roads, so a precise understanding of exactly where the boundaries were cannot be gained from this map. Within each area the name of the subdivision is given, in black capital letters with a typeface that differs notably from those used elsewhere on the map, again meaning these are easily distinguished from less important information on the map. These names are 'North Eastern District', 'Eastern District', 'Southern District' and so on. The two central districts are small; the eight outer districts are surprisingly uniform in size and shape, representing about one eighth of the total area, and starting very small near the centre, becoming wider as the district gets further from town. The outer boundary is a fairly uniform circle shape apart from a notable exception in the Southwest, where the boundary leaps out to embrace Sunbury.

Selection was key: understanding what was chosen to be depicted on the map and what was omitted, and whether anything in the frame was left blank.⁶²¹ As has been noted earlier, when looking at the form of the Map, it can be understood to be unique, and by comparing it to different versions of ostensibly the same map the meanings and implications of the unique qualities of the Map can then be investigated.

⁶²¹ "Draughtsmanship in mapping [...] is a complicated and learned process whose practice involves as many acts of forgetting as of observing and remembering." Cosgrove, p. 7-9

The Plan

The Postal Map gave the people of London a way of conceiving of their city in a particular way; a way of conceiving of the city that was highly public, being seen in many newspapers and in the post offices in London. The Map appeared just as the new districts were being introduced, it showed the public a plan for how a new, rational service in London would work.

The conception of London through the map was an act of planning occurring just as the practice of planning in London was developing. Planning cities, generally, relates to both their aesthetic, ensuring cities are pleasing to the eye when experiencing them, and to their function: cities need to work, their systems and structures (housing, transport etc.) need to be used easily by inhabitants.⁶²² London, in the mid nineteenth century, was only starting to put into place some of these qualities.⁶²³

Planning a city goes back as far as cities themselves, even those cities that seemingly sprang up out of nowhere were born of a combination of geographic circumstance *and* human decision; decisions amounting what we might call ‘planning’ a city.⁶²⁴ Ancient Greek city states, for example, were characterised by their strict controls on size, and planning of colonial settlements.⁶²⁵ In the Renaissance period, planning was influenced by new conceptions in human understanding, such as perspective.⁶²⁶ Another critical

⁶²² “These are the two main approaches to town planning, the aesthetic and the functional”. Donald J Olsen, p. 12

⁶²³ “Since London has so few buildings of the first importance [i.e. especially in comparison with continental cities] and since those few are often poorly situated, it is easy to conclude that the metropolis is badly planned and architecturally insignificant. The ordinary Londoner is certain that this is an unplanned city” [...] “[re. aesthetic] The planning that has in fact taken place is not the kind that immediately impresses itself upon the beholder”. *Ibid*, p. 4

⁶²⁴ Although ‘Town Planning’ as term was first noted in the OED of 1905, “yet in fact town planning is as ancient as the town”. And, “the establishment of a town or city necessarily involves some governing intelligence”. *Ibid*, p. xxi

⁶²⁵ “It was an essential part of the Greek concept of urban life that the city should remain of a manageable size, and this concept lay behind the Greek’s role as colonisers. As soon as a city’s population grew beyond the optimum level, groups of citizens departed to found new cities, not only in Greece, but also throughout the Mediterranean region”, Peter Whitfield, *Cities of the world: a history in maps*, London: British Library, 2005, p. 11

⁶²⁶ “The Renaissance study of perspective led to a concern with the vista, with the harmony that should exist between different buildings and, indeed, with theoretical plans for the ideal city [...]. The essential framework was ordered space, both in the physical and social sense, within which

shift occurred in the baroque period, wherein conceptions about cities focused on seeing, in particular seeing displays of political power.⁶²⁷ If the renaissance city was ordered around individuality and personality, meeting and discussing, the baroque city related to totalitarianism, when displaying power and regulating action became functions of the city.⁶²⁸ Regardless of whether a city was governed by concepts of seeing, or by understanding of the city as democratic, one fact remained throughout: all cities, in some way, reflect the society in which they were developed.⁶²⁹

Prior to the industrial revolution, lines of communication demonstrated power structures, and controlled behaviour in cities.⁶³⁰ However, once the industrial revolution came, all changed. Towns were often not planned, but built urgently and without care.⁶³¹ Urbanism and migration of peoples from the countryside into cities, built new cities where before there had been hamlets, as in Manchester, or contributed to huge population growth in already large cities, like London, which was largely unplanned.⁶³²

The giant city was a new phenomenon, built in part by the industrial revolution, and correspondingly led to a near complete confusion on the part of Victorians as to how to deal with its particular problems.⁶³³ Rapidly growing cities were not just unplanned- in

individuality of design and of personality could flourish", *Ibid.*, p. 17

⁶²⁷"The city transformed into a spectacle". Choay, p. 8. "The Baroque city of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries emerged as the expression of political absolutism, where the city became the setting for displays of royal power and self-glorification", Peter Whitfield, *Cities of the world*, p. 19

⁶²⁸ "All the features of the baroque city – its avenues, its palaces, its bastions – were evidence of a centralised plan and a centralised power; they seemed to show that the city could and should function like a mechanism, not like a spontaneous meeting place of men and ideas", *Ibid*, p. 20

⁶²⁹ "Every town plan is designed to meet the needs, real or supposed, of the society for which it is formulated. If the needs are thought to be chiefly military or defensive, the result will be Palma Nuova or Carcassonne. If the needs are thought to be the glorification of an absolute prince, the result will be Versailles or Karlsruhe." Olsen, p. 12

⁶³⁰ Choay

⁶³¹ Whitfield stated that industrialisation stopped any idea of town planning – he claimed it was a force of its own, Peter Whitfield, *Cities of the world*, p. 22

⁶³² "The city itself seemed to be on the move, gathering up villages, towns and open fields in all directions of the old City of London, grouping new neighbourhoods and districts into an extended version of its oldest and most labyrinth streets and passages." Paul Ellman, Signal Failure, in Abrams and Hall, p. 172

⁶³³ The huge cities that we now know- London, New York or Tokyo, was a thing that was in the first half of the nineteenth century entirely new: "By and large, the now thoroughly familiar idea of the *big city* as a unified entity was still foreign to the mentality of Haussmann's period [Haussmann's Paris plan was 1866]. In Great Britain, for example, the first official proposal for comprehensive treatment of the capital was not made until 1901, when John Burns introduced the Town Planning Bill", Choay, p. 17

many respects they were utterly hellish.⁶³⁴ By the 1840s there was a new generation who were campaigning for better conditions in cities.⁶³⁵ This period saw varied responses to the chaos of urbanism, including the building of new planned cities like Saltaire and Bourneville, which aimed at creating pleasant towns for workers, rather than letting unsanitary towns spring up haphazardly. This was a period of planning and paternalism⁶³⁶ that was to have echoes later, at the end of the century, with Ebenezer Howard.⁶³⁷

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London's growth was due to various forces, including the industrial revolution, and London attracted more and more of the population from the rest of the country throughout the century. The city was growing rapidly, though population growth did not necessarily go hand in hand with building, and often new populations were squeezing into old, cramped, and unsanitary sites in the city.⁶³⁸

Another factor influencing the way London grew was its character as not being one place, but a set of different areas, individual villages.⁶³⁹ Different parts of London were owned by landed gentry, whose estates were gradually developed by leasing land to developers, whilst stipulating the type of resident, or regulating industry. London was never 'planned' as one city, instead each aristocratic landowner developed their own estates according to their own wishes, resulting in a lack of unity.⁶⁴⁰

⁶³⁴ 'Victorian Cities were places where problems often overwhelmed people', Briggs, p. 21. See also any London-based Dickens....

⁶³⁵ "labour laws, medical services, domestic architecture, water supply, sewers, schools, transport – all of these things must be refashioned and integrated one with another, in order to transform the city into a civilised environment", Peter Whitfield, *Cities of the world*, p. 23

⁶³⁶ Choay, p. 29

⁶³⁷ Choay, p. 107

⁶³⁸ "It is for one thing necessary to distinguish between the growth of the population of Greater London and the increase in its physical size. Great building booms sometimes accompanied a period of relative stability in population, while population growth did not itself build houses". Olsen, p. 14

⁶³⁹ "A collection of villages, each of which have been carefully planned within themselves but with little reference to the adjoining villages" [...] "Those who accuse London of having no plan usually contrast to with Paris. Actually London and Paris are both planned, but their plans differ completely in aim and character", Olsen, p. 5

⁶⁴⁰ "Since this form of hygienic and rational planning was motivated solely by the private interests of the individual landlord, the agglomeration as a whole was condemned to fragmentation." Choay, p. 13

The historian Asa Briggs stated that “most changes [in cities] however, were the result of a multitude of single decisions, public and private. The general plan of the Victorian city continued to express this. At the end of the reign the cities were confused and complicated, a patchwork of private properties, developed separately with little sense of common plan, a jumble of sites and buildings with few formal frontiers, a bewildering variety of heights and eye-levels, a profusion of noises and smells, a social disorder with districts of deprivation and ostentation and every architectural style, past and present, to add to the confusion.”⁶⁴¹

Confusion abounded. The city was absent of control – “a monstrous deformity” that led Londoners to make social studies of the city, by the likes of writers including Dickens.⁶⁴² Although it should be recognised that this ‘chaos’ might be limited, with cities functioning regardless, perhaps order within the chaos.⁶⁴³

The Metropolitan Board of Works (MBW), founded in 1855, is often cited as the first body put in place to consider London as a whole.⁶⁴⁴ However, the MBW had very little power over what we might now term ‘planning’. It was able to introduce the great sewerage works and embankments, but its work was largely reactive, making amendments or enforcing rules on what other powers were planning. It operated through various Vestries and Boards of each area in London, rather than one centralised body. It remained the case that there were many bodies taking on the challenge of planning works for specific parts of London;⁶⁴⁵ an oft-quoted fact was that there were

⁶⁴¹ Briggs, p. 22

⁶⁴² Dickens is regularly cited when discussing London in this period, and with reason: “Dickens’s vast panoramas boldly revealed the labyrinths of the new urban world” Sharpe and Wallock, ‘From “Great Towns” to “Nonplace Urban Realm”: Reading the Modern City’, in Sharpe and Wallock, p. 32. Also Choay, p. 9

⁶⁴³ “As the example of Manchester and other nineteenth century cities shows, what looks chaotic at first may come in time to appear coherently organised”. Sharpe and Wallock, p. 32

⁶⁴⁴ Before then the key planner was the aristocratic landlord, and the developer: “Before the formation of the Metropolitan Board of Works in 1855, and to a great extent thereafter, the primary planning unit in London was the landed estate”, Olsen, p. 6

⁶⁴⁵ “In London, similar efforts [to Haussmann in Paris] were the work of official organisations such as the Office of Works and Forests, the Metropolitan Board of Works, and later the London County Council, who for expediency’s sake cut wide empirical openings through the old urban fabric: Trafalgar Square, New Oxford street, Shaftesbury Avenue, Charing Cross Road, Kingsway.” Choay, p. 21

three hundred different authorities who could affect the shape of the city.⁶⁴⁶ In all this jumble of authority, any changes were the result of bargains and compromises, rather than planning as such.⁶⁴⁷

But in this context of chaos, there were some occasional, rare, organisations capable of considering London as a whole, and planning for it. One, was the Post Office, its plan for London embodied in the London Postal Map.

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In the task of planning for London, maps were crucial. Simple maps, without decoration, were chosen as the way to represent the modernising city.⁶⁴⁸ This was a contrast to the more decorative maps of the previous century; now maps were chosen to make the city legible.⁶⁴⁹ This was what the London Postal Map was doing; making the city legible, showing it as rational, logical, and modern. Maps influence, create change, shape opinion. Maps are tools to build places.⁶⁵⁰ They not only act to shape place, they act to change the minds and mentalities of people,⁶⁵¹ influencing how people understand the world.⁶⁵² The way that maps are able to achieve this dual role, was by showing both

⁶⁴⁶ A late Victorian was quoted as saying, "It is hard today [i.e. at the end of the nineteenth century] to appreciate the state of mind which, prior to the formation of the L.C.C in 1889, and even more before the creation of the Metropolitan Board of Works in 1855, could allow the metropolis to be governed as if it were a collection of separate and autonomous villages. In 1855 Sir Benjamin Hall estimated that London was governed by no fewer than three hundred different authorities." Quote from Gomme, *London in the Reign of Victoria*, 1898. In Olsen, p. xxii

⁶⁴⁷ "The general plan of the Victorian city continued to express this. At the end of the reign the cities were confused and complicated, a patchwork of private properties, developed separately with little sense of common plan, a jumble of sites and buildings with few formal frontiers, a bewildering variety of heights and eye-levels, a profusion of noises and smells, a social disorder with districts of deprivation and ostentation and every architectural style, past and present, to add to the confusion." Briggs, p. 22

⁶⁴⁸ "London was to be represented as potential process, as a geography of flow and movement". Nead, p. 21

⁶⁴⁹ "The rational city is a legible city, in which it is always possible to plot positions and to imagine the relationship of the parts with the whole. The modern map performs this function. It compartmentalises, classifies and explains the logics of the metropolis; it lays out its boundaries and its priorities" *Ibid*, p. 26

⁶⁵⁰ "The function of mapping is less to mirror reality than to engender the re-shaping of the worlds in which people live". James Corner, 'The Agency of Mapping: Speculation, Critique and Invention', in Cosgrove, p. 213

⁶⁵¹ "the central role that mapping practices have played in shaping and figuring western modernity... make them a vital entry point into an appreciation of changing mentalities", Cosgrove, p. 13

⁶⁵² "The ways in which the world has been represented usually have, historically, been important elements of the ways in which we have come to understand and act upon the world" Pickles, p. 5

what is, and what is not yet, and by doing this they become an agent for change.⁶⁵³ This is the key point for this thesis: how the London Postal Map became an agent for change by showing both what was, and what was not, yet. Not a map of a current situation, but a plan for a future scenario.

Unlike many other plans from history, concerned with the layout, street grid, shape and size of a city, the London Postal Map did not plan the city's streets. Rather, the Postal Map was a plan for a type of infrastructure, laid on top of London, that allowed it to operate effectively.

The act of drawing a map is a creative act, as well as a scientific one.⁶⁵⁴ But they are not figments of the imagination, all maps are based on certain realities – on records, field observations, sketches, surveys, (and now) satellite images and so on.⁶⁵⁵ But although they are based on specific sources and on the world itself, maps are distinct, each their own object because they each select different things to represent, and different ways to represent them.⁶⁵⁶ This selection process is the true creative act of mapping, but this creativity must include visual coherence and consistency in order to be successful.⁶⁵⁷ This is why the form of the Map is so significant.

The process of choosing items for the map combines with a system for representing these features in a certain way: an ‘architecture of signs’ that constructs and translates space.⁶⁵⁸ Once the form of the map has been completed, selections made, and its architecture of signs has been put into place, a ‘fixing’ occurred, in which the signs gain meaning and the space had been given its characteristics.⁶⁵⁹ The ‘fixing’ that occurs

⁶⁵³ James Corner, ‘The Agency of Mapping: Speculation, Critique and Invention’, in Cosgrove, p. 214

⁶⁵⁴ “mapping is perhaps the most formative and creative act of any design process”: Corner is in fact more interested in the creative act of mapping than in the finished product. *Ibid*, p. 216

⁶⁵⁵ Cosgrove, p. 13

⁶⁵⁶ “The map differentiates itself from the territory precisely through acts of selection”, *Ibid*, p. 11

⁶⁵⁷ A mapmakers’ hallmark is “consistent selectivity” – “In this most basic of senses, by selecting some features and ignoring others, maps act like cultural expressions indicative of the society that produced them”, Pickles, p. 35

⁶⁵⁸ “Mapping is a process which involves both a ‘complex architecture of signs’ (graphic elements with internal forms and logics capable of theoretical disconnection from any geographical reference) and a ‘visual architecture’ through which the words they construct are selected, translated, organised and shaped.”, Cosgrove, p. 3

⁶⁵⁹ “The world has literally been made, domesticated, and ordered by drawing lines, distinctions, taxonomies and hierarchies”, Pickles, p. 5

when the signs on a map become accepted and the conception of the space that is mapped becomes guided by these signs, represents an ordering of space conceptually.⁶⁶⁰ The London Postal Map demonstrates this clearly, given that it defines certain parts of London as being in the 'East' or 'Southwest', and by doing so, 'fixes' this understanding of London. It is important to consider how the map chose to depict London, and what this meant.

Boundary lines: Framing Territory

The role of the Postal Map was to demonstrate how London was to be defined, as a city 24 miles across, with the G.P.O. at its centre; and how it would be divided, into ten districts. The Map drew a line around the city and stating everything within that line was 'London', for postal purposes.⁶⁶¹ It also divided London into different parts, naming them and making them distinctive from each other.

Notably, though, one thing the Map did *not* do was provide a particularly useful tool for postal sorters who had to understand where the new boundary lines were precisely. We see evidence for this in an item sent to Postmasters for their sorters and postal workers: a large list showing places on or near to the postal boundaries, stating which district they were in.⁶⁶² It is likely that the document was hung up on walls in sorting offices around the country.⁶⁶³ The existence of the 'Boundary Lines' lists implies the Map did not make it clear where certain places actually were it was not detailed enough; unlike the full lists of streets which were also produced, which did show which district every place was in – but one can imagine them being far too unwieldy to use at haste when sorting letters. Sorters worked at great speeds so would not use massive books listing

⁶⁶⁰ "The concept and practice of precise and permanent separation, of spatial 'fixing', inherent in boundary definition and conventional mapping [...] represent an urge towards classification, order, cordial and 'purification'", Cosgrove, p. 4

⁶⁶¹ The act chimed with what Briggs understood: "It was the question of the relationship of the constituent parts of the whole which gave point to most of the other questions contemporaries were asking about London. What was the whole? Did its constituent parts have a life of its own? Was there any real sense in which London was one?" Briggs, p. 331

⁶⁶² titled "Principal Streets, Places, &c., on Each Side of the Town Boundary Lines of the Postal Districts", POST 17/3: *Post Office sorting list of the principal streets and places in the London delivery*, 1856

⁶⁶³ POST 30/127B: *London Divisional Sorting in Provincial Post Offices and on Travelling Post Offices (TPO) introduced*

streets every time an ambiguous address was found; sorters would simply have pinned up a copy of the Map and the boundary list on a wall, which could be referenced just by a glance.

A LIST OF THE PRINCIPAL STREETS, PLACES, &c., ON E...

*Aldgate		*Blackfriars Road		Maida Hill		Districts		Great Windmill Street		Cock and Castle Lane	
<i>Between Eastern AND East Central Districts.</i>		<i>Between Southern AND South Eastern Districts.</i>		<i>Between Western AND North Western Districts.</i>		<i>Between North Eastern AND North Eastern Districts.</i>		<i>Between South Central AND South Western Districts.</i>		<i>Between East Central AND North Eastern Districts.</i>	
<i>Aldgate</i>	E	<i>Bridge Place</i>	E	<i>Maida Hill</i>	E	<i>Great Windmill Street</i>	W	<i>Cock and Castle Lane</i>	N		
<i>Aldgate</i>	E	" " <i>Wharf</i>	S	" " <i>East</i>	W	" " <i>Laycock Street</i>	W	<i>Commercial Place</i>	N		
<i>Aldgate High Street</i>	E	<i>Britannia Street</i>	N	" " <i>West</i>	W	" " <i>Levi Majesty's</i>	S W	<i>Commercial Place</i>	N		
<i>Black Horse Yard</i>	E	<i>Brunswick Cottages</i>	E C	<i>Maida Place</i>	W	" " <i>James Street</i>	S W	<i>Commercial Place</i>	N		
<i>Binders Row</i>	E	" " <i>Places</i>	N	<i>Manning Street</i>	N W	" " <i>Lemon Tree Yard</i>	S W	<i>Commercial Place</i>	N		
<i>Chester Yard</i>	E	<i>Canning Place</i>	E C	<i>Molyneux Street</i>	W	" " <i>Norris Street</i>	S W	<i>Commercial Place</i>	N		
<i>Church Row</i>	N E	<i>Caroline Place</i>	E C	<i>Moor Street</i>	W	" " <i>Oxford Street</i>	S W	<i>Commercial Place</i>	N		
<i>Crown Place</i>	E	<i>Catharine Street</i>	E C	" " <i>Penton Square</i>	W	" " <i>Panton Square</i>	W	<i>Commercial Place</i>	N		
<i>Duke Street</i>	E C	<i>Charles Street</i>	S E	<i>New Church Street</i>	N W	" " <i>Street</i>	S W	<i>Commercial Place</i>	N		
<i>Dukes Place</i>	E C	<i>Chapel Street</i>	S	<i>Newham Street</i>	W	<i>Porter Street</i>	W	<i>Commercial Place</i>	N		
<i>Harrow Alley</i>	E C	<i>Burrows Mews</i>	S	<i>North Norfolk Crescent</i>	W	<i>Rupert Street</i>	W	<i>Commercial Place</i>	N		
<i>Jewry Street</i>	E C	<i>City Road</i>	E C	" " <i>(Lisson Grove)</i>	N W	<i>St. Albans Place</i>	S W	<i>Commercial Place</i>	N		
<i>Leadenhall Street</i>	E C	<i>Commercial Place</i>	E C	<i>Northwick Terrace</i>	N W	<i>St. James's Market</i>	S W	<i>Commercial Place</i>	N		
<i>Minories</i>	E C	<i>Cottage Lane</i>	E C	<i>Nuttford Place</i>	W	<i>Sherrard Street</i>	W	<i>Commercial Place</i>	N		
" " Street	E C	<i>Cooper Street</i>	E C	<i>Old Church Street</i>	W	<i>Suffolk Place and Street</i>	S W	<i>Commercial Place</i>	N		
<i>Sarcens Head Yard</i>	E	<i>Craven Buildings</i>	N	<i>Orchard Street</i>	W	<i>Grange Road</i>	W	<i>Commercial Place</i>	N		
<i>Saville Buildings</i>	E	" " <i>Terrace</i>	W	<i>Titchborne Street</i>	W	<i>Hare Walk</i>	W	<i>Commercial Place</i>	N		
<i>Somerset Street</i>	E	<i>Craven Buildings</i>	N	<i>Whitcomb Street</i>	W C	<i>Haye Place</i>	W	<i>Commercial Place</i>	N		
<i>Sun Court</i>	E	<i>Craven Street</i>	N	<i>Prins Agt's Place</i>	W	<i>High Street</i>	W	<i>Commercial Place</i>	N		
<i>—</i>		<i>Cross Street</i>	S	<i>Portman Market</i>	N W	<i>Huntingdon Street</i>	N	<i>Commercial Place</i>	N		
<i>*Amwell Street</i>		<i>Dally Terrace</i>	E C	" " <i>Paces</i>	W	<i>John Street</i>	N	<i>Commercial Place</i>	N		
<i>Between East Central AND West Central Districts.</i>		<i>Duncan Place (Lower)</i>	E C	<i>Portslade Terrace</i>	W	<i>Kings Road</i>	N	<i>Commercial Place</i>	N		
<i>Amwell Street</i>	E C	" " <i>(Upper)</i>	E C	<i>Portsmouth Place</i>	W	<i>Kingsland Basin</i>	N	<i>Commercial Place</i>	N		
<i>Bond Street</i>	E C	<i>Terrace</i>	N	<i>Porchester Place</i>	W	<i>n Crescent</i>	N	<i>Commercial Place</i>	N		
<i>Percy Street</i>	W C	<i>Eagle Street</i>	N	<i>Prased Street</i>	W	<i>n Green</i>	N	<i>Commercial Place</i>	N		
<i>Upper Baker Street</i>	W C	<i>East Road</i>	N	<i>Prinsesse Street</i>	N W	<i>n Place</i>	N	<i>Commercial Place</i>	N		
<i>Upper Chudwell Street</i>	E C	<i>Featherstone Street</i>	E C	<i>Prospect Place</i>	W	<i>Road</i>	N	<i>Commercial Place</i>	N		
<i>River Street</i>	E C	<i>Finsbury Terrace</i>	E C	<i>Queen Street</i>	W	<i>Lamb Place</i>	N	<i>Commercial Place</i>	N		
<i>—</i>		<i>Fountain Court</i>	E C	<i>Richmond Street</i>	N W	<i>Le Street</i>	N	<i>Commercial Place</i>	N		
<i>*Bishopsgate Street</i>		<i>Gwynn's Place</i>	E C	<i>St. Alans Place</i>	W	<i>Manfield Street</i>	N	<i>Commercial Place</i>	N		
<i>Between East Central AND North Eastern Districts.</i>		" " <i>Place</i>	E C	<i>Sale Street</i>	W	<i>Maria Street</i>	N	<i>Commercial Place</i>	N		
<i>Acorn Street</i>	E C	<i>Harrow Street</i>	E C	<i>Seymour Place</i>	W	<i>Mary Street</i>	N	<i>Commercial Place</i>	N		
<i>—</i>		<i>Hastestock Street</i>	N	<i>Shoreditch Street</i>	W	<i>Marys Place</i>	N	<i>Commercial Place</i>	N		
<i>Marlborough Street</i>	S	<i>Lasdowne Place</i>	E C	<i>Southwark Row</i>	N W	<i>Middleton Road</i>	N	<i>Commercial Place</i>	N		
<i>Martin Street</i>	S E	" " <i>Terrace</i>	E C	<i>Star Street</i>	W	<i>Mill Row</i>	N	<i>Commercial Place</i>	N		
<i>Coburg Street</i>	S E	<i>Lewingtons Buildings</i>	E C	<i>Stamner Place</i>	W	<i>Mortimer Road</i>	N	<i>Commercial Place</i>	N		
<i>Nelson Square</i>	S	<i>Lower Fountain Place</i>	E C	<i>Tarlington Place</i>	W	<i>North Place</i>	N	<i>Commercial Place</i>	N		
<i>Obelisk Street</i>	S E	<i>Macclesfield Place</i>	E C	<i>Titchborne Street</i>	W	<i>Orchard Place</i>	N	<i>Commercial Place</i>	N		
<i>Queen Street</i>	S	" " <i>Macclesfield Street North</i>	E C	<i>Upper Berkeley Street</i>	W	<i>Park Place</i>	N	<i>Commercial Place</i>	N		
<i>Union Street</i>	S E	" " <i>Street South</i>	E C	<i>Upper Bishopston Street</i>	W	<i>Pearson Street</i>	N	<i>Commercial Place</i>	N		
<i>Upper Ground Street</i>	S	" " <i>Terrace</i>	E C	<i>Upper Dorset Street</i>	W	<i>Philip Street</i>	N	<i>Commercial Place</i>	N		
<i>Valentine Place</i>	S	<i>Morgan Place</i>	E C	<i>Upper George Street</i>	W	<i>Pleasant Place</i>	N	<i>Commercial Place</i>	N		
" " Street	S	<i>Nelson Place</i>	E C	<i>Upper Seymour Street</i>	W	<i>Prospect Place</i>	N	<i>Commercial Place</i>	N		
<i>Weber Row</i>	S	<i>Nelson Place</i>	E C	" " <i>West</i>	W	<i>Queens Street</i>	N	<i>Commercial Place</i>	N		
" " Street	S	<i>Parrs Place</i>	E C	<i>Upper Soouthwick Street</i>	W	<i>Queens Head Walk</i>	N	<i>Commercial Place</i>	N		
<i>Warwick Street</i>	S E	<i>Pearce Place</i>	E C	<i>Vernulam Terrace</i>	N W	<i>Red Lion Street</i>	N	<i>Commercial Place</i>	N		
<i>Wellington Place</i>	S E	" " <i>Row</i>	E C	<i>Winchester Row</i>	N W	<i>Rosebury Place</i>	N	<i>Commercial Place</i>	N		
" " Street	S E	<i>Pennington Street</i>	N	<i>Windsor Terrace</i>	W	<i>Thomas Street</i>	N	<i>Commercial Place</i>	N		
<i>William Street</i>	S E	<i>Pickard Street</i>	E C	<i>Wilton Gate</i>	S W	<i>Tottenham Street</i>	N	<i>Commercial Place</i>	N		
<i>Wirtemburgh Place</i>	S	<i>Plumber Street</i>	N	<i>St. Georges Hospital</i>	S W	<i>Upaliow Street</i>	N	<i>Commercial Place</i>	N		
<i>York Street</i>	S E	<i>Plumbers Row</i>	E C	" " <i>Place</i>	S W	<i>Wilmer Gardens, Hoxton</i>	N	<i>Commercial Place</i>	N		

All Places distincted Hyde Park to be sorted to the Western District, except the following Places, which must be sorted to the South Western District.

Fig. 76: List of places near the boundaries on the London Postal Map, to be referenced by sorters at a glance⁶⁶⁴

The Post Office could have produced a map that showed the level of detail that showed road names and so on, as other map makers did – although they would not have been able to produce one for the whole of London if it kept the 24miles diameter, as this would have been far too large a map as to be useful. However, they chose not to show that level of detail on the London Postal Map, and instead use it to give an overview of the system, from a 'top down' perspective, able to comprehend the whole city and the whole system, able to conceptualise one version of 'London'.⁶⁶⁵

⁶⁶⁴ POST 17/3: *Post Office sorting list of the principal streets and places in the London delivery, 1856*

⁶⁶⁵ Without wanting to push any colonial/ mapping analogy too far, an article by J.W. Donaldson about British colonial mapping in Northern Rhodesia (as then was) has proven useful in formulating ideas of boundary-making. He discusses the different uses of maps compared to actual boundary stones or other markers built physically on the land, stating: 'Boundary maps were durable and portable representations

The Circle

The London Postal Map was an overview vision of London. It showed a London that had a surprising level of uniformity of its parts, with divisions of almost equal size and shape. This uniformity was directed by one particular visual property: the Map's outer line defines 'London' as nearly a perfect circle. Within the circle the Postal Districts divided the circular city like slices of a cake.⁶⁶⁶ Significantly, this act rationalised the city.



Fig. 77: The circle of London: London Postal Map

The Map depicts London, however, at first glance it is not London that is seen; the eye first comprehends a shape, an almost geometrically perfect circle. London of course is not a circle; it was not built outwards in rings, or uniformly designed to be a perfectly geometric circle. Here is what London looked like in this period 'on the ground':

of territorial power that did not require a physical manifestation.' The Postal Map, in not depicting a clear physical boundary so much as a 'representation', follows this logic: that it was the *image* of the boundary that was important. John W. Donaldson, 'Pillars and perspective: demarcation of the Belgian Congo-Northern Rhodesia boundary', *Journal of Historical Geography*, vol. 34, 2008, p. 486

⁶⁶⁶ A visual quality noticed at the time; see the quote that opens this chapter.



Fig. 83: Tallis' London map, 1851⁶⁶⁷

Not a circle, but a configuration that followed the pattern of a dense mass in the middle, with buildings outside of the dense area being developed along roads that lead into the middle. The London Postal Map showed a different conception of London to the city 'on the ground' in an unusual, intentional, design choice, that we can try to understand.

Why, then, was the circle used on this map?

⁶⁶⁷ Tallis's Illustrated Plan of London and its Environs, 1851. Image source: https://www.raremaps.com/gallery/detail/34180/Talliss_Illustrated_Plan_of_London_and_its_Environs/Tallis.html (accessed 01/01/17)

The Map was a tool for understanding a place, made up of different elements: the circle is one such element. Frequently in this period a circle drawn onto a map denoted scale, showing distance from a point, and therefore acting as a device to aid comprehension. We can see an example of this in the map below, in which the circles denoted distances in England and Wales:

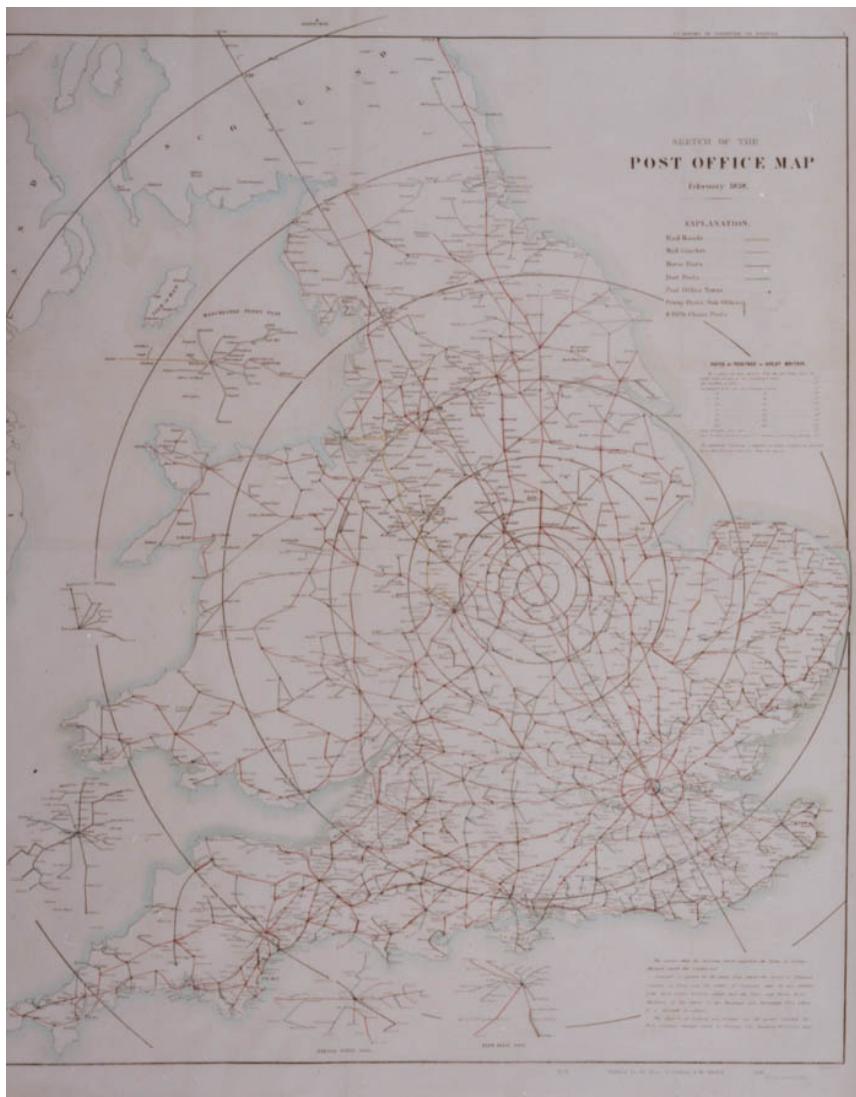


Fig. 78: Post Office Map, 1838⁶⁶⁸

The circle on the London Postal Map was a standard form to use to denote an area 12 miles out for the centre. However, the Map is different to examples like the one above, because it did not *just* use the circle to denote distance. It drew a circle line to denote scale, and then onto this line overlaid the actual boundary of the London service itself-

⁶⁶⁸ POST 21/156: '*England & Wales, Sketch of the Post Office Map*' [extracted from the 2nd Report of the Committee on Postage], Feb 1838

so that the coverage of the system included just about everywhere 12 miles from the centre. In doing this, it described London itself as a circle. The boundary of the service retained its geometrically perfect form remarkably consistently, to the extent that, at the occasional moment when the circle was deviated from, it became a notable and visually obvious exception – such as Sunbury in the Southwest. When the boundary leapt out at Sunbury, it was acting *more* like a real city, with an organic, uneven growth. But here, Sunbury looks exceptional.

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The Post Office was redrawing the cognitive map of London, choosing in 1856 to interpret the city as a circle in a unique act. We understand its uniqueness by looking at other examples of maps, which act differently.⁶⁶⁹ Other London postal maps which came later all filled the square or rectangular frame of the image with map imagery, but the London Postal Map is unique in leaving areas within the frame blank; areas around the outside of the circle, which serve to make the circle image stronger.

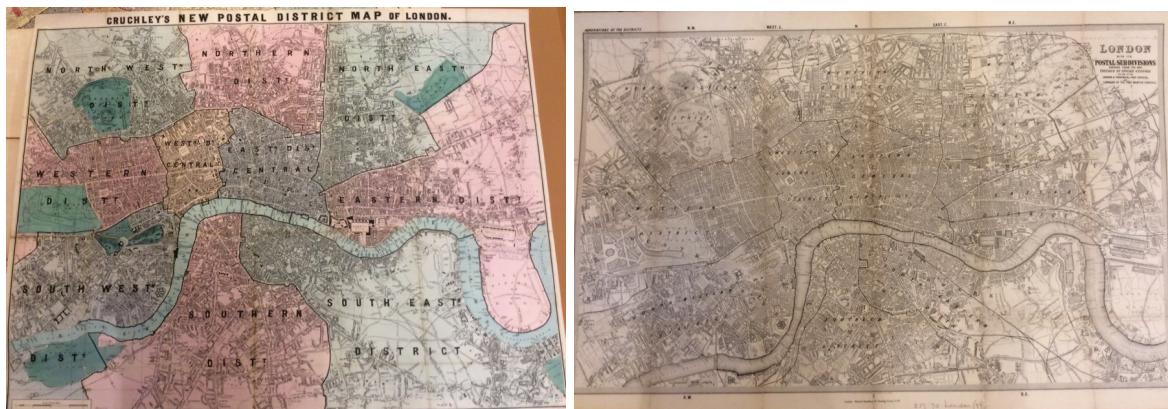
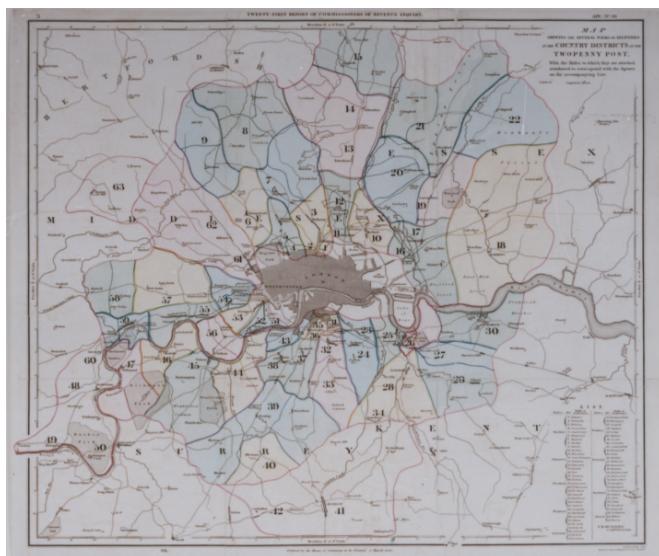


Fig. 79: Map imagery usually fills the whole rectangular frame⁶⁷⁰

⁶⁶⁹ It should be noted that there were earlier precedents of the ‘circular’ arrangement; for instance, the hackney carriage licensing authorities operated within a 4-mile radius of Charing Cross; and the Metropolitan Police District was drawn on a 12-mile, later 15-mile radius, with local excrescences. My thanks to Jerry White for this statement.

⁶⁷⁰ On the left: Bodleian Library: C17:70 London (46): *Cruchley's New Postal district map of London. [Together with] Guide [cartographic material]*, 1857; on the right: Bodleian Library C17:70 London (97): *London with its postal sub-divisions reduced from the map prepared by Edward Stanford for use in the London and provincial post office [Together with] guide [cartographic material]*, 1856



This map, made a little more than a decade after the 1856 map, shows an irregular mass on the bottom right hand corner of the city, and a much less strict outer boundary: the circle form was lost. London was now smaller, more organic looking and less uniform. The Map changed many times; below is the 1870 version, having lost its circle completely. When compared side by side, it is clear that the 1856 map was operating visually in an entirely different way to the other postal maps of London. The 1856 map extended London outwards in all directions, in an even manner, despite the city 'on the ground' not being built in this way:



Fig. 82: Four Maps. 1830 postal map (left) alongside the 1856 map⁶⁷³



The 1870 map (left) alongside an 1856 map⁶⁷⁴

⁶⁷³ POST 21/57: 'Map showing the several walks or deliveries in the Country Districts of the Twopenny Post. With the rides to which they are attached numbered to correspond with the figures on the accompanying list' [London], 1830 (left); and POST 21/71: 'Map of the London Postal District with the sub-divisions', 1856 (right).

⁶⁷⁴ POST 21/69: Official map of the London postal districts 1870 (left); Bodleian Library: C17:70 London (46): Cruchley's New Postal district map of London. [Together with] Guide [cartographic material], 1857 (right)

There is very little evidence in the archives that directly reveals the reasons why the Map took the form that it did; instead hints must be inferred from the available, scant, evidence. The group of officers commissioned to investigate how to enact reform in London reported that the London districts had been very intentionally designed.⁶⁷⁵

Referencing the discussion of that issue, the Postmaster General explained,

[of the division of London] The dimensions proper of these several districts have been very fully and carefully considered. The two Central Districts, we have thought, should include such an area, having the River Thames for the southern boundary, as will admit of all the letter carriers reaching the points of which their deliveries will commence in about ten or fifteen minutes from the time of leaving the District Office.

The boundary lines of the outer districts will radiate from those of the two centres until they reach the twelve mile circle.

In determining the district boundaries in London itself, we have endeavoured, where practicable, to select main streets or roads, which present clear and well-defined lines: we have likewise aimed at keeping together the several parts of any locality which has a connected and peculiar character; and care has been necessary so to arrange the ground that no part shall be at too great a distance from a District Office.

In defining the boundary lines which will divide the outer Districts from one another, we have, after quitting London itself, followed the existing limits of the county deliveries of the London District Post except in a few instances – preserving to a great extent, the present routes of the mail cart service. We have been able, in so doing, to observe a tolerably correct geographical distribution of the ground, in harmony with the designation given to the proposed Districts.⁶⁷⁶

This ‘careful consideration’ of the districts includes the outer boundary, 12 miles out, although little else is said specifically relating to the outer boundary itself. When describing the outer parts of the districts, the phrase “after quitting London itself” is

⁶⁷⁵ As described in chapter 1, the evidence of this committee is no longer extant.

⁶⁷⁶ The Postmaster General’s second report (appendix A), pg. 45. POST 92/1: *Report upon the Post Office and Reports of the Postmaster General on the Post Office, 1854-1858*

used to describe the outer areas- clearly implying that the officers believed that the London Postal Map's version of London was much larger than what London itself actually was.⁶⁷⁷

Despite claims that the boundaries had been carefully considered, the form of the map itself highlights the fact that there was an uneasy dynamic between the need to retain the 'peculiar' characteristics of particular 'localities',⁶⁷⁸ and a need to organise the city in a systematic manner. On the one hand, the "connected and peculiar character" of the different postal areas, with the area denoted 'West', having a different character to that denoted 'East', for example. But on the other, the pure geometry of the circle meant that in fact, the Map effectively divided the eight outer districts into areas roughly the same size, regardless of character: whether they were heavily built up, or rural, largely domestic, or industrial.

If this passage was the only manuscript hint we have as to how the Map was constructed, it would leave us with many questions unanswered. But it is not the only evidence: we have the maps themselves. Other maps in the archive help us to build a visual picture of why the Map took the shape it did. One possible reason for constructing the Map as a circle was that the G.P.O. was visualising the city as a circle for its own administration purposes:

⁶⁷⁷ "At the heart of this messy political debate [into who should govern London] was the question of London's identity. Was it a single entity, or a conglomeration of many? Did it have sufficient common interest, for it to be governed as a whole? What did London mean in the middle of the nineteenth century?" Nead, p. 18

⁶⁷⁸ "Keeping together the several parts of any locality which has a connected and peculiar character". The Postmaster General's second report (appendix A), p. 45. POST 92/1: *Report upon the Post Office and Reports of the Postmaster General on the Post Office, 1854-1858*

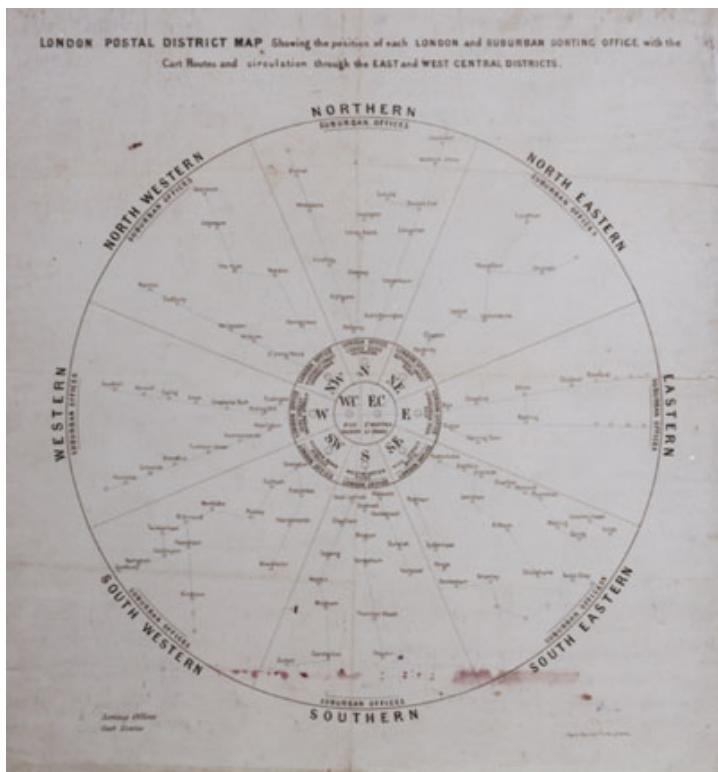


Fig. 84: The Schematic map⁶⁷⁹

This schematic map was described in chapter one as depicting the centralisation of London's mail prior to 1856. It split the city into a small central inner ring and a large suburban outer ring. The inner ring is split into two small sections labelled 'EC' and 'WC', and the much bigger outer ring is split into eight sections each of the same size and dimensions. The areas are organised by, and named after, the initials of compass points, and their relationship to the centre.⁶⁸⁰

The map is labelled as a 'schematic' map of London. It does not claim to give a representation of the 'real' city, but it constructs a diagrammatic guide for a particular purpose. It describes the city as a perfect circle, which as a schematic, it can do. Its form is one that reduces real facts on the ground to simple form that shows the way something works, such as connections between different elements. It does not need to

⁶⁷⁹ POST 21/761: 'London Postal District map: Showing the position of each London and Suburban Sorting Office with the Cart routes and circulation through the East and West Central Districts'

⁶⁸⁰ That the diagram contains a centre of 'London', the inner ring, and then a series of post routes coming out of London reflects the fact that "in the nineteenth century, London was really made up of nothing more than a number of dormitory villages juxtaposed around the City" Choay, p. 143. Although the different outer areas are the same size on the map, they contain varying numbers of post towns – the north-eastern section, for example, contains only one main road with a couple of spurs, and fewer than ten post towns; much less than the Northern or Southern sections.

show any extra details, nor does it need to have geographical or topographic accuracy. In diagrammatic maps, realism is not the top priority.

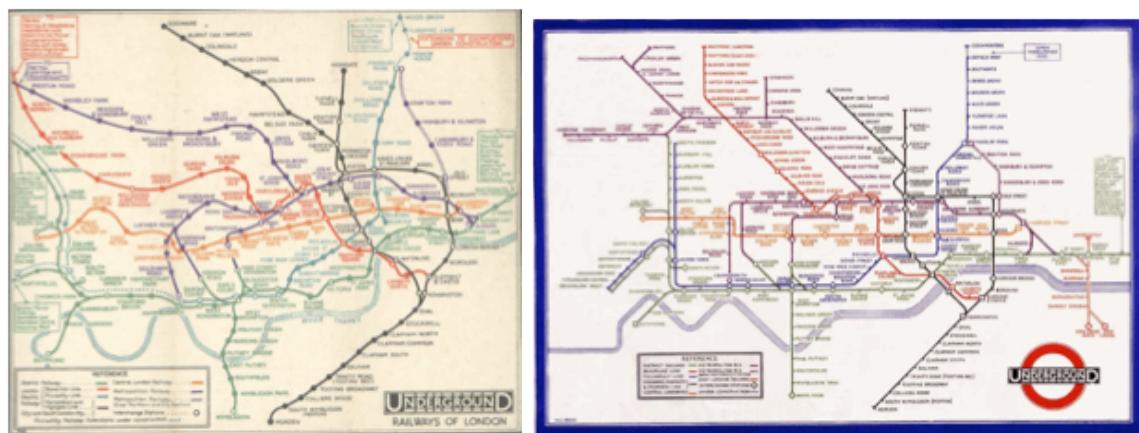


Fig. 85: Geographic map of the tube on the left, compared to schematic map on the right⁶⁸¹

The best example of this form of mapping in London is Harry Beck's map for the London Underground, dated 1933.⁶⁸² Before Beck, the tube map depicted the underground lines placed in roughly their actual geographic locations in London, seen on the left above. Beck famously turned this map into a schematic, on the right, which he based on electric circuit diagrams.⁶⁸³ His representation of the London tube system diverged from realism in order to provide a much more effective function, instantly easier to use practically. It did not matter that the geography was inaccurate, the point was to understand how stations related to each other, not needing to explain how the underground lines related to the city itself. The key concern was not how to depict London, but how to make the complicated tube system legible, and the tube lines are easy to understand at a glance.⁶⁸⁴ The tube map has been seen as part of a wider trajectory in design at the time: as part of this general development of modernism in design, concerns about efficiency and legibility were having an impact on form. And of

⁶⁸¹ Source for images: <https://inlanding.wordpress.com/2014/07/14/wonderful-maps-3-london-underground/> (accessed 01/01/17)

⁶⁸² Ken Garland, *Mr Beck's underground map*, Harrow Weald: Capital Transport Publishing, 1994

⁶⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸⁴ "In Henry Beck's map [...] each station on the London Underground system was identified on a colour-coded line. The lines were arranged as a grid of verticals, horizontals, and 45-degree diagonals. Although in reality the distance between stations varied greatly, regular spacing gave the network the appearance of a unified structure. This may have encouraged passengers to undertake journeys that turned out to be longer than expected." Aynsley, p. 131

course, no map truly ‘looks’ like its subject matter; all are a form of diagram in some way or other.⁶⁸⁵

Part of the reason Beck’s map is so famous is that it is still, largely unchanged, in use in one of the largest cities in the world. It is ubiquitous, linked with London in many of our minds. But the other reason it is so famous is that it was quite revolutionary. Although historians have noted that other maps using similar visual techniques came earlier,⁶⁸⁶ the Beck underground map changed this kind of mapping forever. And Beck’s technique was taken up by a huge number of urban transport maps around the world.⁶⁸⁷

The tube map also changed our conception of London as a city. The graphic designer Ken Garland asserted that, “Before them [i.e. visitors/Londoners] was an orderly simulacrum for a disorderly, disjointed accumulation of urban villages, only barely discernible from one another on the ground”.⁶⁸⁸

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The schematic postal map might have been doing what Beck did, but 100 years earlier. It took something as unmanageable as the sprawling communications system of nineteenth century London and conceptualised it visually into a coherent, understandable system. It did not depict London as it really was, but stripped away all the extraneous detail, leaving a representation that was still recognizable but also showed the routes, the towns, and how they were organised in relation to each other, in

⁶⁸⁵ “Maps looking nothing like their subject, not only because of their vantage point but also because they present all parts at once, with an immediacy unavailable to the grounded intellectual”. James Corner, ‘The Agency of Mapping: Speculation, Critique and Invention’, in Cosgrove, p. 225

⁶⁸⁶ Elman for example notes that G.P.O. telegraph maps of 1890 show system that prefigures the Beck tube map. Paul Ellman, ‘Signal Failure’ in Abrams and Hall (eds)

⁶⁸⁷ “Most important for subsequent designs was Pick’s commission of Henry Beck, an engineering draughtsman, to devise a plan for the entire underground system in 1931. The solution became a paradigm for later maps in many other cities, including the subway plan for the New York Metropolitan Transport Authority designed by Massimo Vignelli and Bob Noorda from 1966...” Aynsley, 2004, p. 130

⁶⁸⁸ Garland, p. 7

a functional manner.⁶⁸⁹ This map may have been ahead of its time in suggesting ways of mapping London that use diagrammatic, schematic forms.

This becomes interesting for the Postal Map when it is understood how influential the schematic was. Looking at the two side by side, the basic form of the Map was highly informed by the schematic. The circle drawn around the city is the same, as are the boundary lines that divide the different districts within the city, and the places outlined in each section correspond almost exactly. Although the lines of the Map are not uniform and straight as in the schematic, it is clear now where the lines come from—effectively a diagram had been imposed upon a map of London.

⁶⁸⁹ One might contrast this to other postal maps at the time, which were much less legible—for example, Fig. 86: Postal map showing the distance in miles between different towns:



detail of POST 21/157: 'A new and correct post map of the great and cross roads through England and Wales. Laid down from the surveys hitherto made describing the cities, boroughs and market towns in each county ...', c.1770

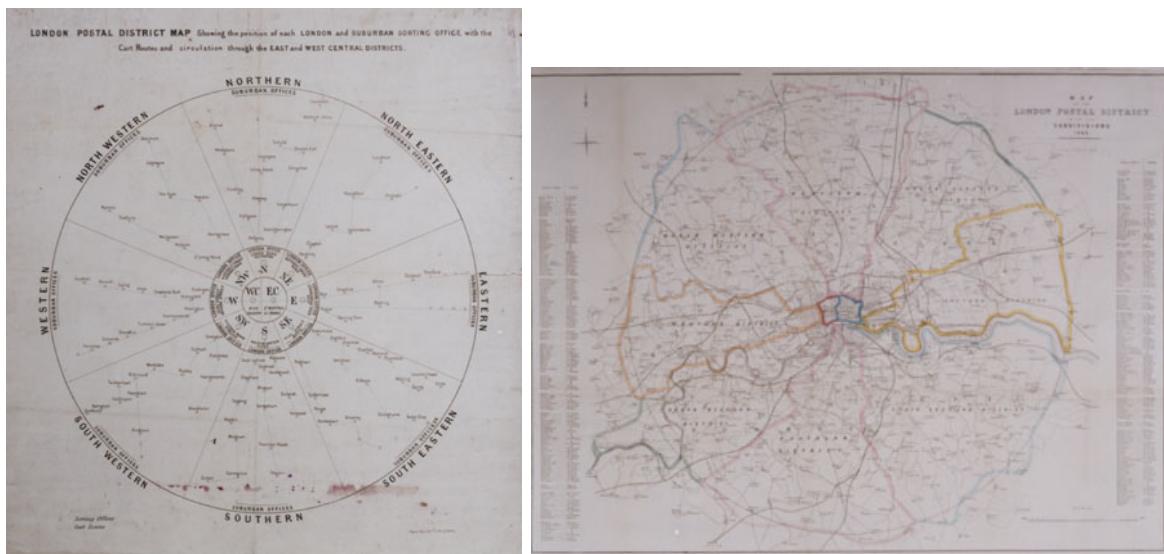


Fig. 87: The Schematic (left) and the London Postal Map⁶⁹⁰

Looking at the two side by side, it becomes apparent that the Map may not be so much a map at all, in fact, but a schematic as well. The Map does show places in London in relation to each other with geographic accuracy, unlike the schematic, but it does not give enough detail to understand certain crucial details, such as exactly where the boundary lines really lie- only a map with enough detail to show individual roads would be able to do this. This shines a new light on the Map: that it was not intended to be an accurate representation of London, but rather a schematic diagram. The London Postal Map was an attempt to make a difficult, complicated system, comprehensible. In so doing it demonstrated that the reforms were rational, a systematic plan for the future of the city.

Comparisons with the schematic also highlights the extent to which the makers of the Map chose the circle form as their boundary. The circle may have had historic precedent; but it was a conscious design choice with a visual impact on the Map, which in turn had a series of semiotic effects.

⁶⁹⁰ POST 21/761: 'London Postal District map: Showing the position of each London and Suburban Sorting Office with the Cart routes and circulation through the East and West Central Districts', 1838 (left); and POST 21/71: 'Map of the London Postal District with the sub-divisions', 1856

There was a decision to map London as a circle. London had not developed as a circular shaped city, but the Post Office imposed this shape onto the city. That the Map defined London in such a geometrically simple way was significant: it gave a strong statement about the system's ability to rationalise the city. A geometrically perfect shape bestowed a simple 'orderliness' onto the place of London.

The circle is a complete shape, unbroken and regular. Having an 'inside' and an 'outside' meant the circle defines a space definitively, closing the space it encircles. This is what was happening with the Postal Map of 1856: it represented a form of administration that dealt with 'London' as a whole. The Postal Map performed a visual ordering act. This reflected the service itself, which gave order in a city through its reliable, consistently accessible service with uniform coverage. In so doing, its function of providing 'order' reflects its circular form, which has a semiotic role to play in projecting the *idea of 'order'*.⁶⁹¹

This type of visualisation was not an uncommon phenomenon. In Bentham's Panopticon,⁶⁹² a building born out of enlightenment principles that sought to rationalise the penal system, his building was circular. The circle was rational – and for Bentham (and later Foucault) it was also a means of creating control.⁶⁹³

⁶⁹¹ Highmore makes a nice point about the Victorian search for order, and now, as historians, our rather different, Post-Modern sounding approach: 'If, as has been widely remarked upon, nineteenth century social engineers and explorers sought to give order to what was perceived as a frighteningly heterogeneous social body, then the cultural historian's task might aim to recover the heterogeneity of the real.' Ben Highmore, 'Cultural History's Crumpled handkerchief', *Art History*, vol. 25 no. 5 November 2002.

⁶⁹² Jeremy Bentham, *Panopticon; or, the Inspection-House: containing the idea of a new principle of construction applicable to ... penitentiary-houses, prisons ... and schools; with a plan of management, etc.* London: T. Payne, 1791

⁶⁹³ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and punish: the birth of the prison / translated from the French by Alan Sheridan*, New York: Vintage Books, 1995

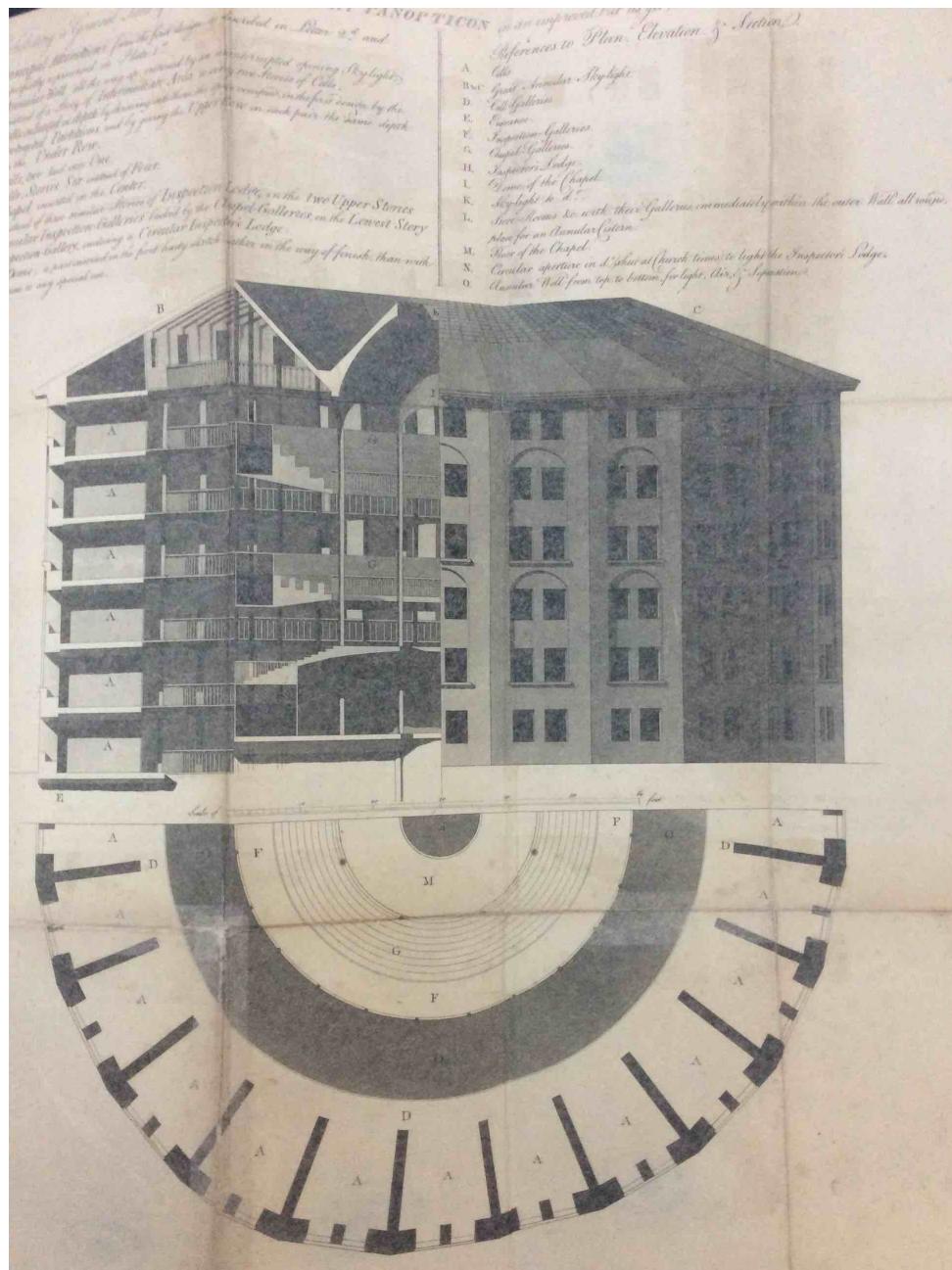


Fig. 88: Bentham's Panopticon⁶⁹⁴

A map denoting London as a rational shape was unusual, but in a different type of depiction, city plans, it was less so. In the history of nineteenth century urban planning, drawn circles, grids, straight lines, and other geometrical lines were used regularly in

⁶⁹⁴ Jeremy Bentham, *Panopticon; or, the Inspection-House: containing the idea of a new principle of construction applicable to ... penitentiary-houses, prisons ... and schools; with a plan of management, etc.* London: T. Payne, 1791

planning cities. Their use related to the fact that the shapes used in city plans for specific places gave particular meaning, and particular aspirations for those sites.⁶⁹⁵

The concept of the circle therefore had resonances in urban planning in this period, which itself was a developing profession at that time. In the nineteenth century, plans were used to produce cities that were rational, and impose order at the moment when people started to take note of the city as a whole, rather than accepting piecemeal set of developments. We can see something of this totalising spirit in the Postal Map, which defined London as a whole, and then rationalized it, in two ways: firstly through rationalizing its communications systems, and secondly through presenting a concept, a visualisation, of order.

This impulse was most explicitly shown in the redevelopment of Paris by Haussmann, which involved envisaging a rational town plan, and then implementing it through razing huge amounts of Paris to the ground- particularly dense slum areas – and building grand, straight boulevards. Haussmann stated that he aimed to ‘cut a cross, north to south, and east to west, through the centre of Paris, bringing the city’s cardinal points into direct communication’.⁶⁹⁶ The plan imprinted a geometric scheme onto a city that brought order- the very bricks and stones of Haussmann’s city would be capable of avoiding the terror that had been seen in Paris during the revolutionary barricades.⁶⁹⁷

⁶⁹⁵ Spiro Kostof, *The City Shaped: Urban Patterns and Meanings Through History*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1991 discusses the semiotics of the grid convincingly.

⁶⁹⁶ Françoise Choay, *Modern City: Planning in the Nineteenth Century*, S.l.: Bragiller, 1969

⁶⁹⁷ Spiro Kostof, *The City Shaped: Urban Patterns and Meanings Through History*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1991



Fig. 89: Haussmann's Paris⁶⁹⁸

The circle as an urban form had resonances with other geometric devices that played a role in the development planning. One particular form that provided interesting comparison was the grid system for street layouts in cities. The urban plan in New York City of the 1811 commission was a grid moving north through Manhattan all the way up to 155th Street, planned in a period when only as far north as 23rd street was inhabited.⁶⁹⁹ Kostof states that the grid was the most common form of plan for (planned) cities in history⁷⁰⁰ and that it had a meaning related to democratic ideals.⁷⁰¹

⁶⁹⁸ Françoise Choay, *Modern City: Planning in the Nineteenth Century*, S.l.: Bragiller, 1969

⁶⁹⁹ Spiro Kostof, p. 116

⁷⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰¹ "The most persistent belief that urban grid represent as egalitarian system of land distribution is expressed in the context of modern democracies, principally the United States", *Ibid*, p. 100

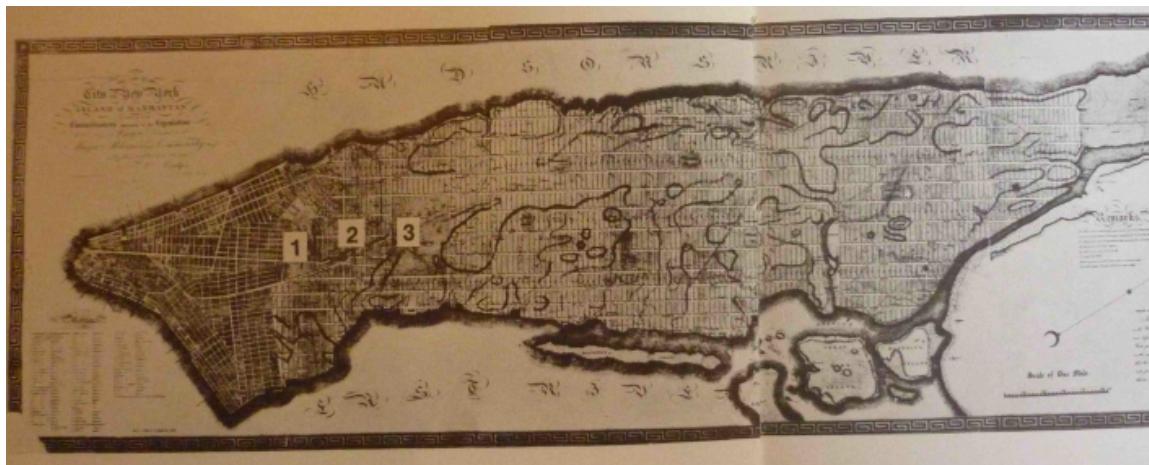


Fig. 90: The grid: New York's 1811 plan⁷⁰²

If the grid could, in certain circumstances, represent a form of democracy, it could also be used to symbolize modernity, and order.⁷⁰³ The grid was also a way of facilitating orderly, standardised, settlements, as used by colonisers handing out parcels of land in Australia.⁷⁰⁴ One example can be seen in Adelaide, Australia, a city closely connected to Rowland Hill, who had worked on the Australian colonies earlier in his career.⁷⁰⁵ Like most else, whilst some have emphasised the meanings attached to the grid system, others have argued that its flexibility and ability to be used in different circumstances⁷⁰⁶ made it almost meaningless in itself.⁷⁰⁷

⁷⁰² Françoise Choay, *Modern City: Planning in the Nineteenth Century*, S.l.: Bragiller, 1969

⁷⁰³ "Historically, the grid has served two main purposes. The first is to facilitate orderly settlement, colonization in its broad sense. [...] the other application of the grid has been as an instrument of modernisation, and of contrast to what existed that was not as orderly". Kostof, p. 102

⁷⁰⁴ Kostof, p. 121

⁷⁰⁵ Fryer and Akerman, p. xxv

⁷⁰⁶ "After serving colonizers, traders and gold seekers, it became the instrument of industrial capitalism, simultaneously available for speculation or traffic circulation." Choay, p. 18

⁷⁰⁷ Such as this assessment by Choay of Adelaide's grid pattern in the 1830s: "semantically meagre, the gridiron pattern has no other meaning than that of an efficient tool." Choay, p. 14

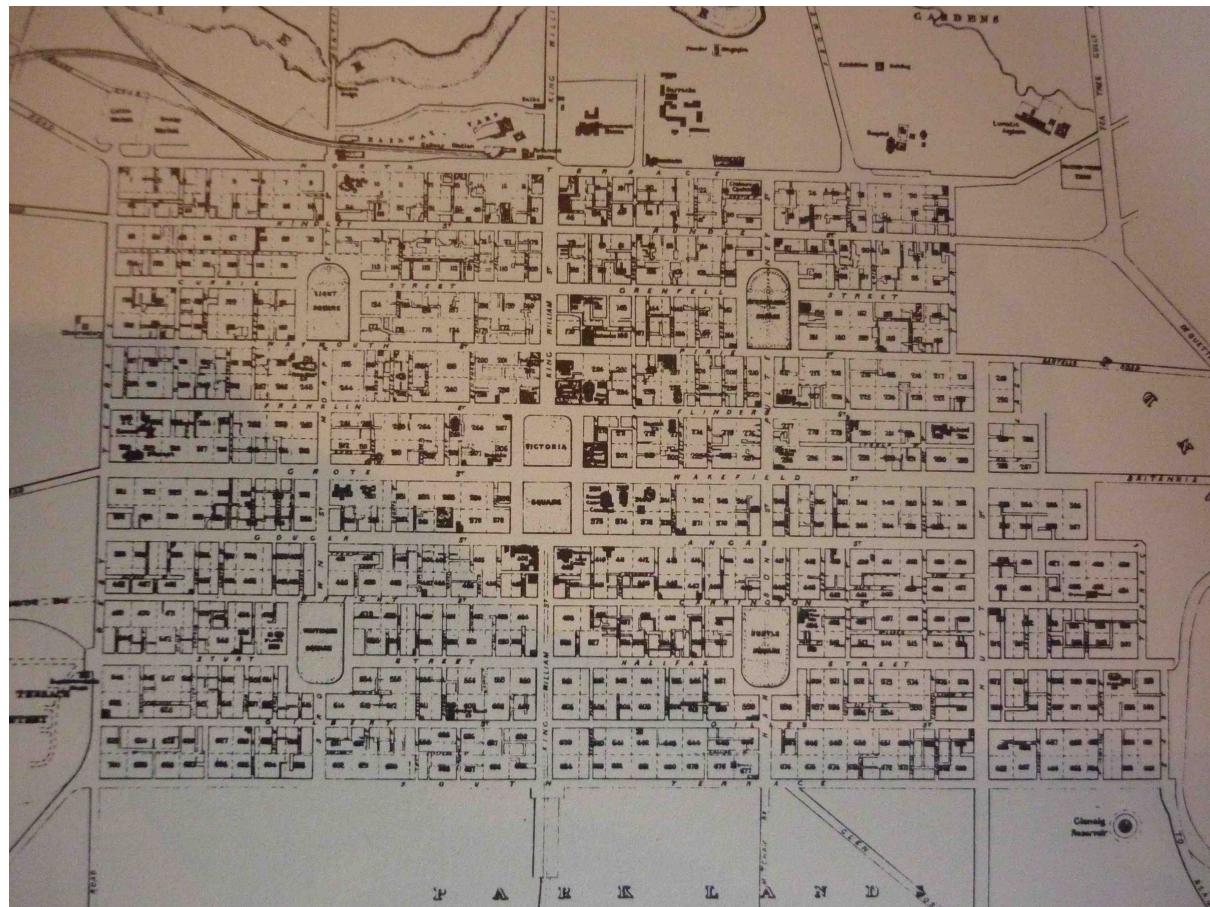


Fig. 91: Adelaide's grid pattern streets, designed in 1837⁷⁰⁸

The grid in New York, Adelaide, and countless other cities used a geometric, planned form to build a city; the first step of which was to draw the streets on paper in lines. These examples of ordering devices in city planning started life on paper, but the grid pattern has a tangible effect on the city in its formation of streets. The grid-based street layout in New York is a contrast to London, where a haphazard street layout speaks of a lack of plan, laissez-faire forces, and a lack of will or means by a government.

⁷⁰⁸ Image from Françoise Choay



Fig. 92: City of London map 1673⁷⁰⁹

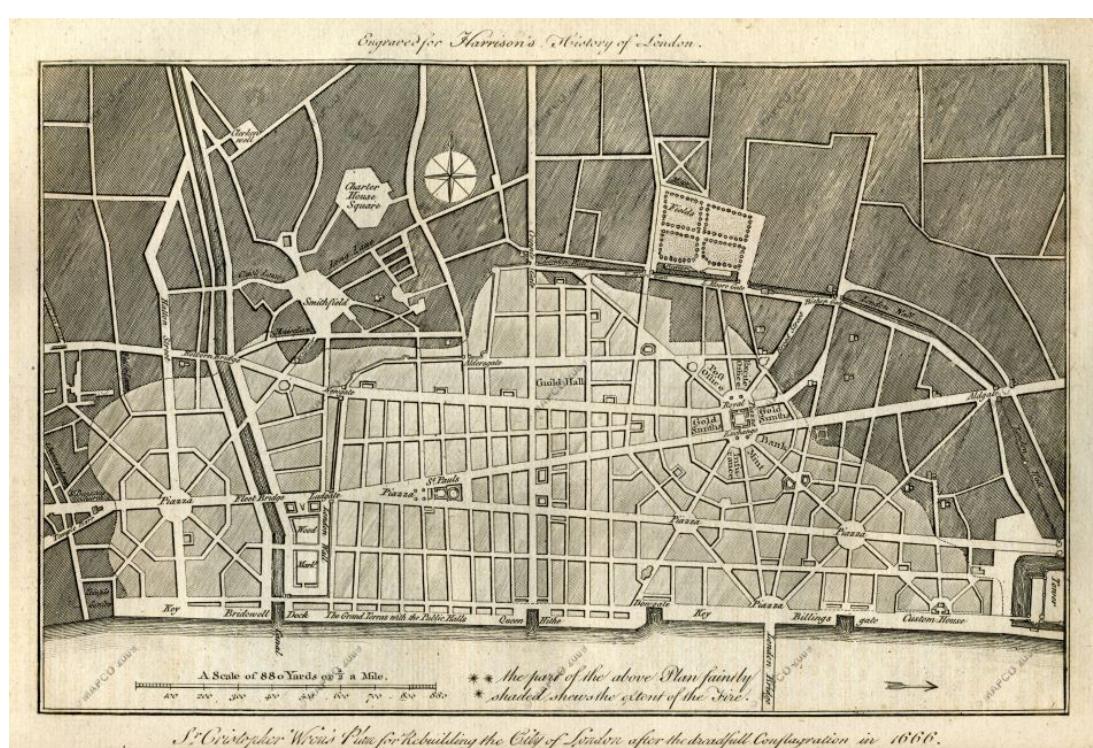


Fig. 93: Wren's unrealised city plan⁷¹⁰

⁷⁰⁹ Ogilby's London. Image source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_London (accessed 01/01/17)

⁷¹⁰ Image source: <http://mapco.net/london/1666wren.htm>

London's lack of plan was exemplified through its historic street layout; based on a medieval system of roads that had grown up seemingly organically. Famously, after the great fire of 1666 the city had the opportunity to be rebuilt along planned, modern, ordered lines, but the plans of the architect Christopher Wren, who produced a famous modernising street layout for the City, never came to pass. There was no straightforward, visual order to London through its street plan, and no centralised planning effort that designed the infrastructures and systems for the city as a whole⁷¹¹. Except, for the London Postal Map – which represented an attempt to visualise order in the city.

The London Postal Map came into being at what was an interesting time in the development of planning practice in London. The second half of the nineteenth century was the period in which terms such as 'urban planning', 'town planning' and 'urbanism' were first coming into being;⁷¹² planners were just starting to formalise their activities into a profession. In part, this was a response to the situation that urban dwellers found themselves in, thanks to the changes that had occurred in cities during the industrial revolution, which had led to a 'new relationship of the city to man'.⁷¹³

As urban planning was developing, so too were radical thinkers and writers reimagining the city. Speculative plans were developed by writers and thinkers who saw the modern city as chaotic and unruly, concerned with what were seen as great city-specific social problems, environmental issues, issues of hygiene, pollution, disease, and traffic on streets. In response, utopian city planning was developed, either promoting a return to a slightly mythologized, nostalgic, pre-industrialised ideal, or pushing for a futuristic, modern and often socialist model. Interestingly, the form of the circle was used time and time again.

⁷¹¹ Not for want of trying. Buckingham's model city 'Victoria' in 1849 was, according to Briggs, an ideal that strove for order, symmetry, space – all things visualised in the Postal Map, too. Briggs, p. 71

⁷¹² Choay, p. 7

⁷¹³ *Ibid*, p. 7

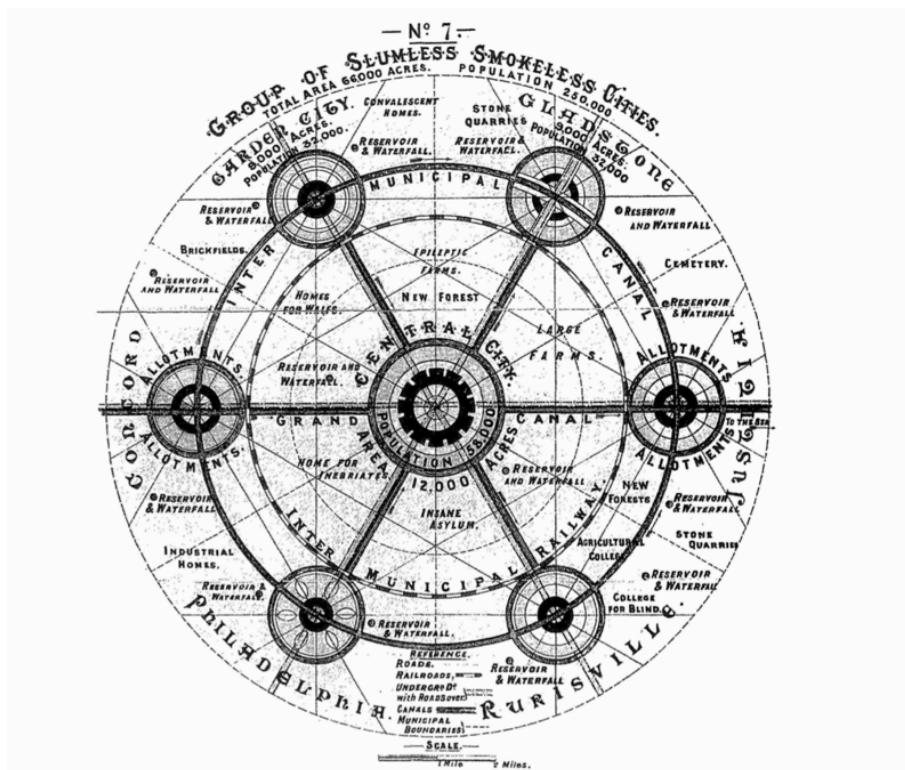


Fig. 94: Ebenezer Howard's Garden City plan⁷¹⁴

One of the most explicit examples of this is Ebenezer Howard's 1898 publication, *Tomorrow, A Peaceful Path to Real Reform* which described a new form of town planning that combined the benefits of both town and country into small 'Garden Cities', surrounded by green land.⁷¹⁵ His designs were a possible solution to the problems that the Victorian city had thrown up – they were intended to have many different methods for socialising, and for work and industry, but be limited in size to allow for every inhabitant to enjoy the countryside, and to limit the pollution caused by industry.⁷¹⁶

⁷¹⁴ Ebenezer Howard, Sir, *Garden Cities of tomorrow*. Edited, with a preface, by F. J. Osborn, London: Faber & Faber, 1965

⁷¹⁵ Howard, *Tomorrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform* was published in 1898, and re-issued in 1902 as 'Garden Cities of Tomorrow'. Howard also lectured widely on his subject matter, and formed a Garden City Association in 1899 with enthusiasts of the idea to advocate this form of town planning. See the Preface by F.J. Osborn to the 1965 edition of 'Garden Cities'. His ideas were used widely in the first half of the twentieth century, and have recently been revived in political rhetoric by the coalition government in 2012 – see for example <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-25694465> (accessed 26/11/2016).

Ebenezer Howard, Sir, *Garden Cities of tomorrow*. Edited, with a preface, by F. J. Osborn, London: Faber & Faber, 1965

⁷¹⁶ Howard's model was a town-country 'marriage', that would draw people in, like a magnet. Howard, p. 50

The qualities of a circle as a complete, final, form, unlike the democratic grid, which can expand indefinitely made it ideal for Howard, one of whose main tenets was limits in size and population for his Garden Cities.

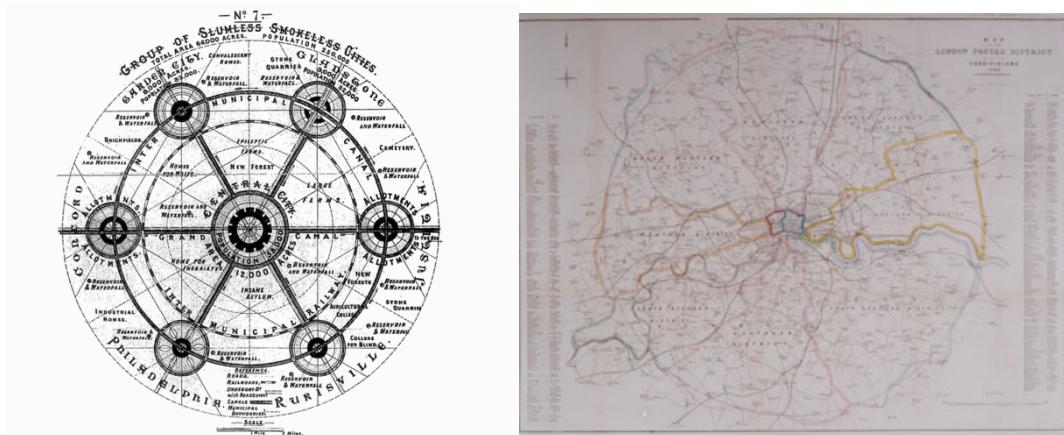


Fig 95: The Garden City envisaged with a circular plan (left) and the London Postal Map⁷¹⁷

The striking visual similarities of Howard's Garden Cities plan to the Postal Map provokes some consideration. It was not intended that garden cities be literally built in a circle. But the garden city was a *plan*; and like the London Postal Map it projected a progressive future.

It should be noted that the form of the circle was not necessarily or inherently linked to the notion of utopia in city planning or in visualization of space. The simple, perfect geometry of the shape was used for many purposes, and used to conceptualise physical spaces that were less than utopian just as easily:

⁷¹⁷ Ebenezer Howard, Sir, *Garden Cities of tomorrow*; and POST 21/71: 'Map of the London Postal District with the sub-divisions', 1856

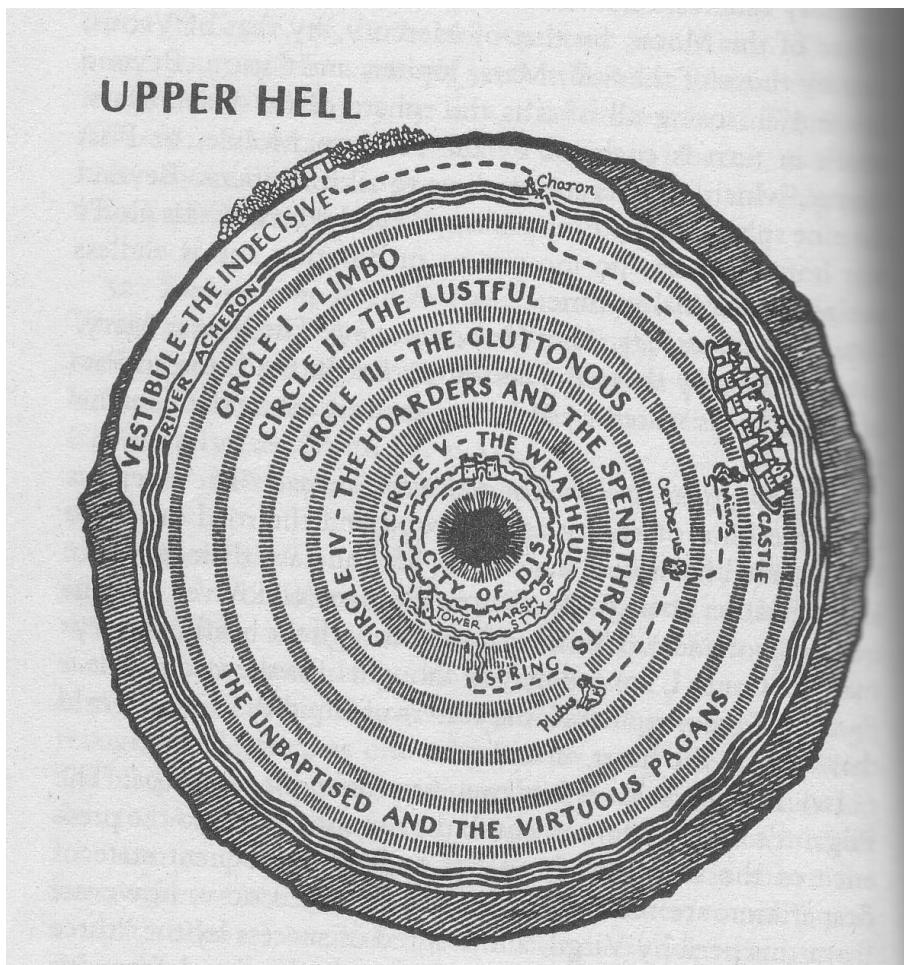


Fig. 96: Dante's seven circles of hell⁷¹⁸

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The visual of the circle was not merely a stylistic choice used to promote an idea. The link between the visual circle and the services provided by the Postal Map, was important. Form followed function. A key principle of the Map was that it provided a service with an extraordinary level of uniformity. Every person in the circle received the same modern services. If you fell within the circle of London, you were entitled to use the services of the London Postal District. This was the same in the crowded, polluted east as in the opulent west. The Postal Map visualised a sense of order in a chaotic at the same time as introducing to the city a vast efficient infrastructure, that was uniform and ordered in its service to all Londoners. There was an interplay between the visualisation of the city on the Map, and the actual services provided. The city,

⁷¹⁸ Map source: <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/99008891782639750/> (accessed 01/01/17)

presented as rational in the Map, was actually becoming more rational through the provisions of its communications network. Alongside the circle form being used for utopian planning, and it was also used for the planning of infrastructure.



Fig. 97: Cross-section of Paxton's Great Victorian Way⁷¹⁹

In this, the circle form had practical as well as semiotic purposes. In 1855, Joseph Paxton presented plans to the Committee on Metropolitan Communications for the 'Great Victorian Way'.⁷²⁰ Described by Paxton as "a boulevard, or what I call a railway girdle"; it was an enclosed raised walkway that included a rail network, for transporting people around London.⁷²¹ The walkway was enclosed in glass, reminiscent of Paxton's Crystal Palace of 1851; wholly appropriate in form for this modern contraption.⁷²² The plan was a looping, rounded and perhaps circular, route. Transport, communication around the city was a primary aim that involved movement around the city in an easy and pleasant manner.⁷²³ Paxton's 'magnificent promenade' would change character as it

⁷¹⁹ Image source: <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/01108503/design-for-the-great-victorian-drawing-paxton-joseph-sir/> (accessed 01/01/17)

⁷²⁰ Paxton was the head gardener at Chatsworth in Derbyshire, who turned engineer and famously designed the 'Crystal Palace' in Hyde Park for the Great Exhibition of 1851. John Anthony, *Joseph Paxton, An Illustrated Life of Sir Joseph Paxton 1803-1865*, Aylesbury: Shire Publications, 1973

⁷²¹ Paxton had an ongoing relationship with the development of railway travel at this time – being, for example, a Director of the Midland Railway from 1848. *Ibid.*, p. 19

⁷²² Interesting, Howard's Garden City, discussed above, included a 'Crystal Palace' as an inner ring: an glass walkway for the inhabitants of the town – in a circle. His plans also included a circular railway. Ebenezer Howard, Sir, *Garden Cities of tomorrow*, p. 53-54.

⁷²³ "Whether by means of ventilation or pneumatic railway, the arcade is in a state of constant circulation" Nead, p. 28

moved around London, with shops in the City, residential in the west, responding to the nature ‘on the ground’ in London; similar to the ‘peculiar character’ referenced in the Post Office plans.⁷²⁴

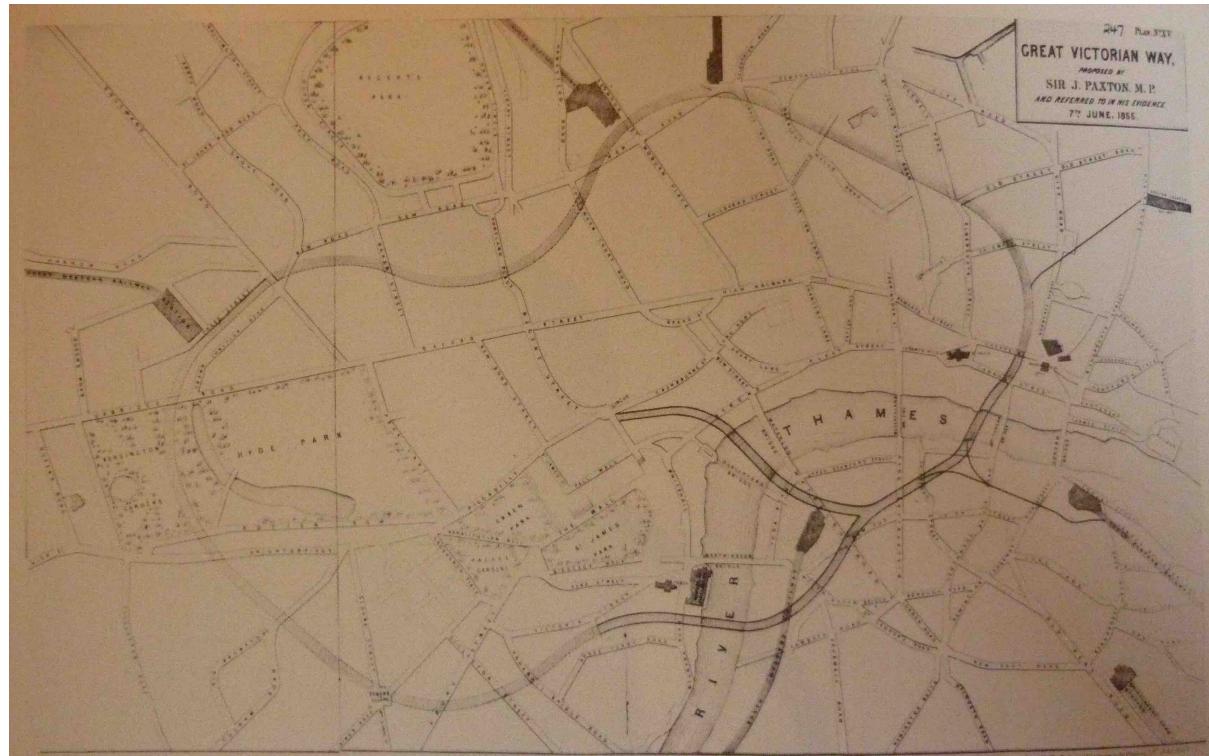


Fig. 98: Paxton's Great Victorian Way⁷²⁵

Discussions of Paxton's route describe it as a forerunner of the circle line, another important urban circle. Originally built to connect the different main railway stations that brought trains from all over the country into the city, the full circle was completed in 1884. Since then this line has been providing a revealing example of the agency of mapping; it visually encircles London, but in doing so it claims London is something unrepresentative of London on the ground: it does not go south of the river, and it includes west London as far out at Notting Hill, only makes it as far east as Aldgate, barely outside of the City.

⁷²⁴ Nead, p. 28

⁷²⁵ Image from Françoise Choay, *Modern City: Planning in the Nineteenth Century*, S.l.: Bragiller, 1969

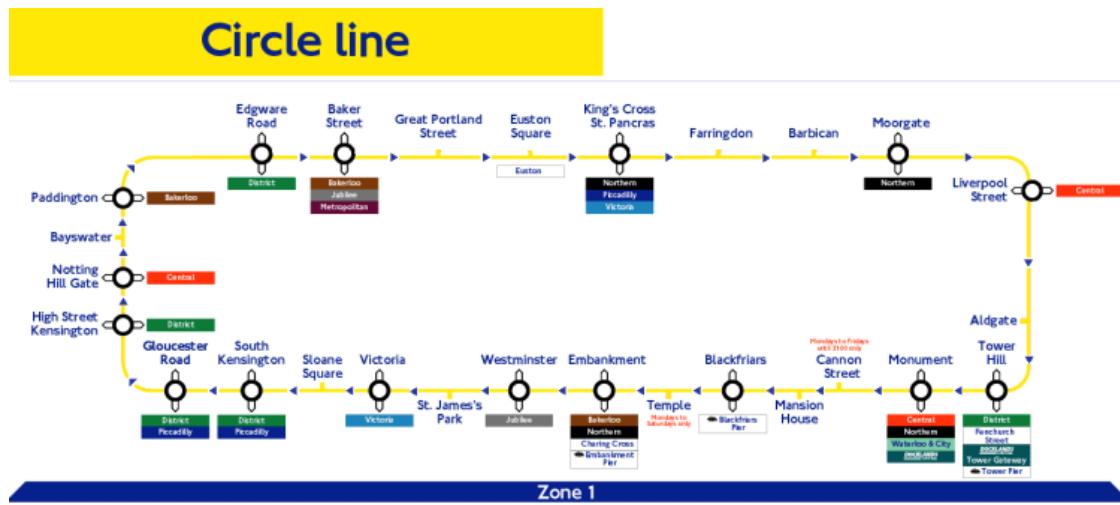


Fig. 99: The circle line (when it was a circle – it now has a second branch and the perfect circle is broken)

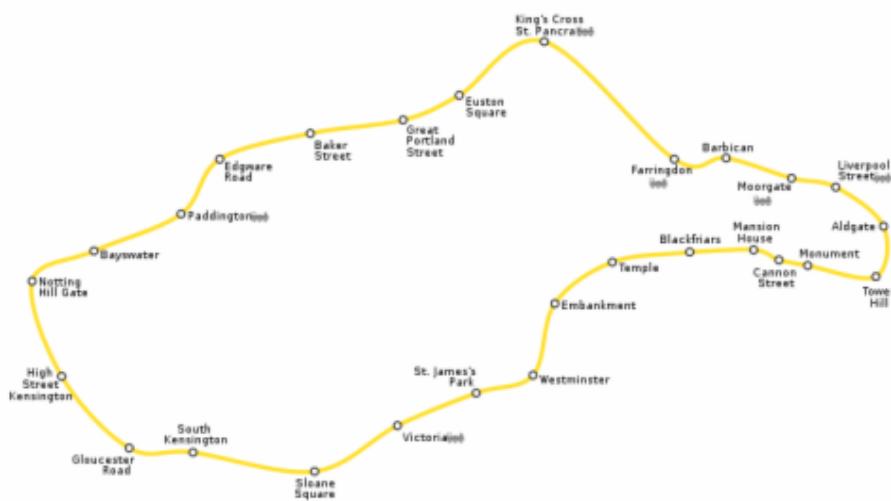


Fig. 100: The geographic locations of the circle line – showing a similar shape to Paxton's way⁷²⁶

The London Postal Map was used to plan a function of a city, its communications system. The Map also allowed for a conceptualisation of London as a uniform shape, rather than the reality of being a sprawling metropolis that had grown out in different directions haphazardly. By describing London in this way, the Map is not just altering the postal services in London; it is altering one's conception of London, which in turn changes how we act within the city.

⁷²⁶ Image source:
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Circle_line_\(London_Underground\)#/media/File:Circle_Line_\(old\).svg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Circle_line_(London_Underground)#/media/File:Circle_Line_(old).svg)
 (accessed 01/01/17)

That the Postal Map might be more reasonably described as a postal 'Plan' for modern London, is borne out by two things. The first is that its aesthetic and its form was unlike the vast majority of other maps in this period, but it *was* like city plans of the period. The second reason is that the London Postal Map presented a 'London' that was not representative of the city itself, but a plan for the future. The fact was that almost as soon as the Postal Map was published, its ambition was scaled back. Some of the towns on the outer edge of the Map were taken out of the system, which altered the uniform and perfectly circular outer boundary. The plan for London that the London Postal Map represented was ultimately not realised: which in itself surely is a defining feature of city plans.

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The depiction of London as circular was something that was new in the act of the London Postal Map, where before the city had been depicted either filing a square space, or as what it was: the organically growing cities of London and Westminster side by side, with Southwark developed along the south side of the river. However, once the Postal Map had made London circular, many others followed. We see this, for example, in the way that London was described in the Greater London Plan of 1944, which planned for a post-war London in a way that described as being in four concentric 'rings'.

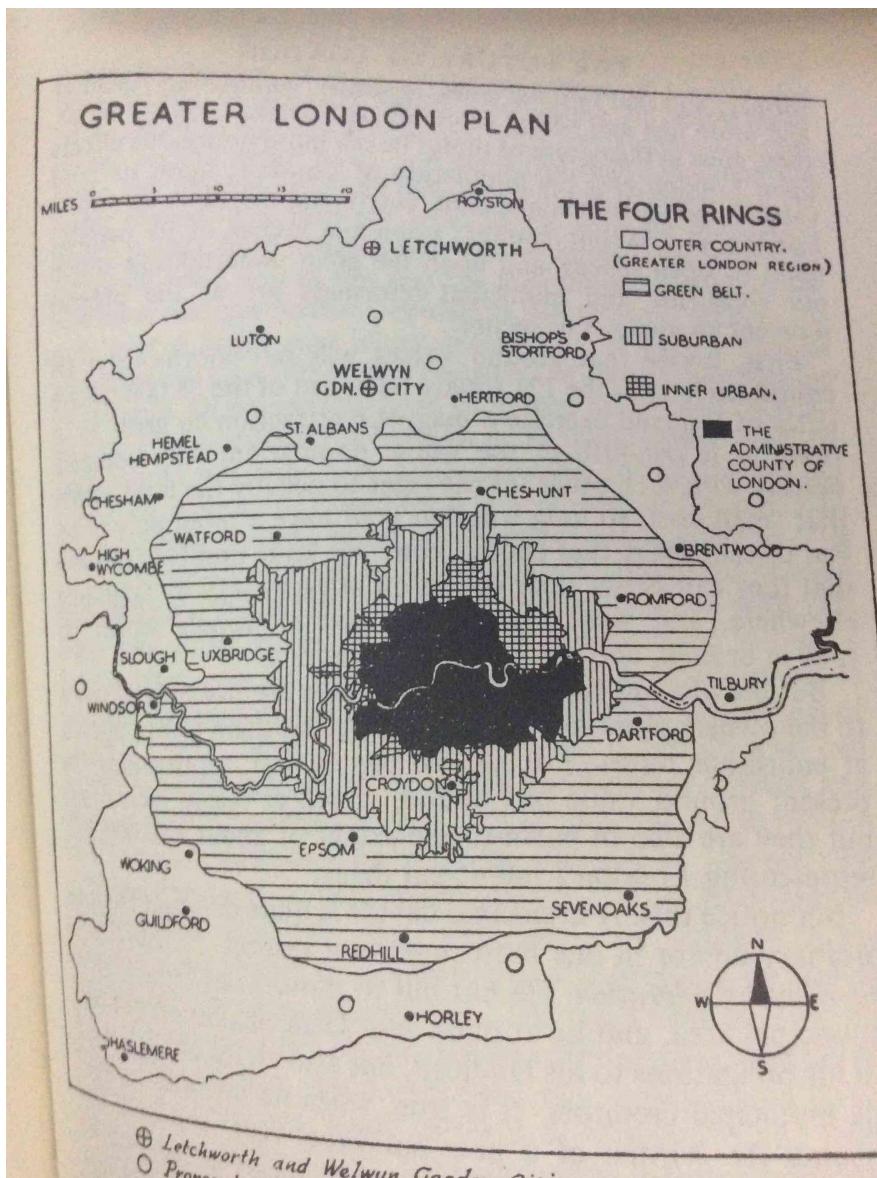


Fig. 101: The Greater London Plan⁷²⁷

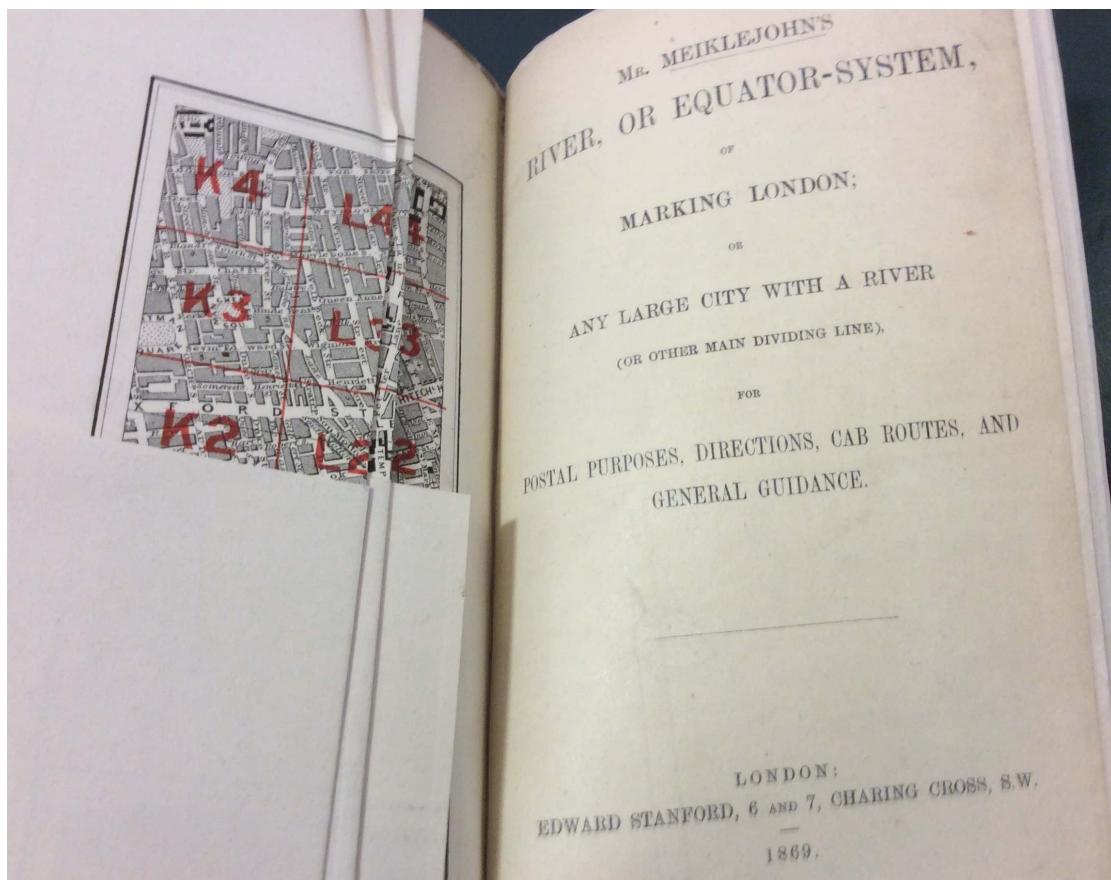
The Postal Map, therefore, introduced a *new way* of conceiving London visually, as a circle.

Internal Boundaries, Categories, Segregation

As well as defining the totality of London and creating it into a shape, the Postal Map defined the inner districts of London as well. Just as the use of a circle to outline London was a choice, so too the inner boundaries of the city were based on conscious decisions,

⁷²⁷ Patrick Abercrombie, *Greater London Plan 1944*. [With plates and maps.]

and could easily have been different. This we know, from looking at earlier maps that divided London into sections by the Post Office, by the Metropolitan Board of Works, and the many Parishes and Vestries that had responsibility for different parts of the city. There were also different speculations about how to organise the city in the future, as the workings of the city became ever more complicated and a modern solution was required, like this example dated 1869, found in the British Library, which suggested that London be divided into a regular, modern, grid system:



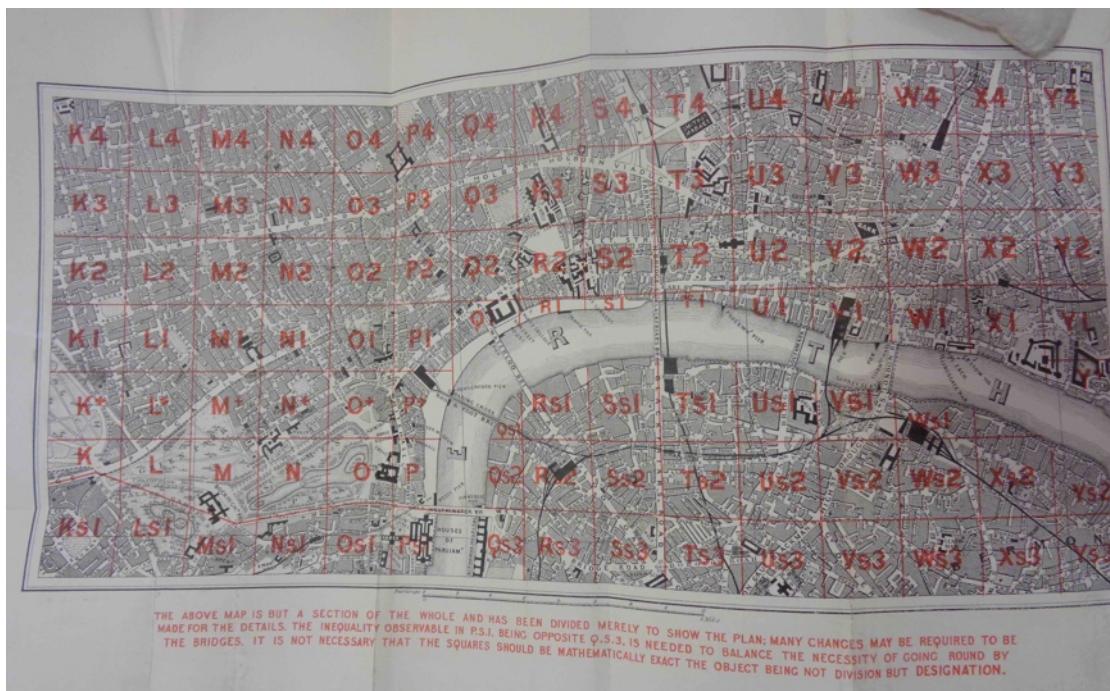


Fig. 102: Mr Meiklejohn's River, or Equator-System of Marking London.⁷²⁸

One crucial factor in the decision of how to divide London for the London Postal map was that the districts needed to be easy to use, memorable, and logical. If the public did not remember the correct districts, they would not address their letters correctly, and the whole system would fail (this was where the London postal districts were different to the Police or the MBW).

The districts introduced were equal in shape, with N, SE, S and NW being 'predominately rural'. Paradoxically, this uniformity in shape resulted in effect in an *inequality* in districts- with some districts being much more populous than others.⁷²⁹ To understand why this design of district was chosen, we return to the Committee of Officers. An extract from their report states that they explored various options, stating that 'numerous calculations bearing on the subject' had been made.⁷³⁰ Given these

⁷²⁸ 8247.bb.37.(8.): John Miller Dow Meiklejohn, *Mr. Meiklejohn's River, or Equator-system of marking London ... for postal purposes, directions, cab routes, and general guidance. [With map.]*, London, 1869.

⁷²⁹ "It was this inequality in size that was shortly to necessitate further reorganisation" Simon Morris, 'The London Postal Districts', *London Topographical Society Newsletter* no. 29 November 1989, p. 3

⁷³⁰ "It being evident that, by varying the different details, a large variety of results, more or less affecting the success of the measure, might be contained". Report to Secretary of the Post Office by a Committee of Officers, 4th July 1855. POST 30/4011: *London Postal Service: letters for London Postal Area, simplified address, Part 2*

different experiments they were confident that their solution provided the right balance of advantages to the service itself, and convenience for the public.⁷³¹

The districts of course had to function practically from a Post Office perspective. When the Postmaster explained the design of the boundaries he stated that central districts, for example, were small enough to allow a letter carrier to get to their 'walk' in fifteen minutes.⁷³² Of boundaries in London, some were straight-forwardly drawn along main roads, whilst care was taken to keep areas that had a particular 'character' together in the same district, and keeping the districts sizes workable by ensuring the District Office was close enough to its constituent area.⁷³³ Alongside all of these considerations, was precedent: in many cases the boundary lines reflected service boundaries that had been in place before the changes.⁷³⁴

⁷³¹ Officers were, "decidedly of opinion that the form of arrangement we are about to submit will afford the best means of realising the designs in view, being that which, taken as a whole, offers the greatest balance of advantages to the service, whether as regards increase of public accommodation, simplicity and uniformity of character, or capability of being worked with convenience and regularity" *Ibid.*

⁷³² The Postmaster General's second report (appendix A), p. 45. POST 92/1: *Report upon the Post Office and Reports of the Postmaster General on the Post Office, 1854-1858*

⁷³³ "In determining the district boundaries in London itself, we have endeavoured, where practicable, to select main streets or roads, which present clear and well-defined lines", *Ibid.*; "We have likewise aimed at keeping together the several parts of any locality which has a connected and peculiar character" The Postmaster General's second report (appendix A), p. 45. *Ibid.*; "Care has been necessary so to arrange the ground that no part shall be at too great a distance from a District Office." The Postmaster General's second report (appendix A), p. 45. *Ibid.*

⁷³⁴ "In defining the boundary lines which will divide the outer Districts from one another, we have, after quitting London itself, followed the existing limits of the county deliveries of the London District Post except in a few instances – preserving to a great extent, the present routes of the mail cart service." *Ibid.*

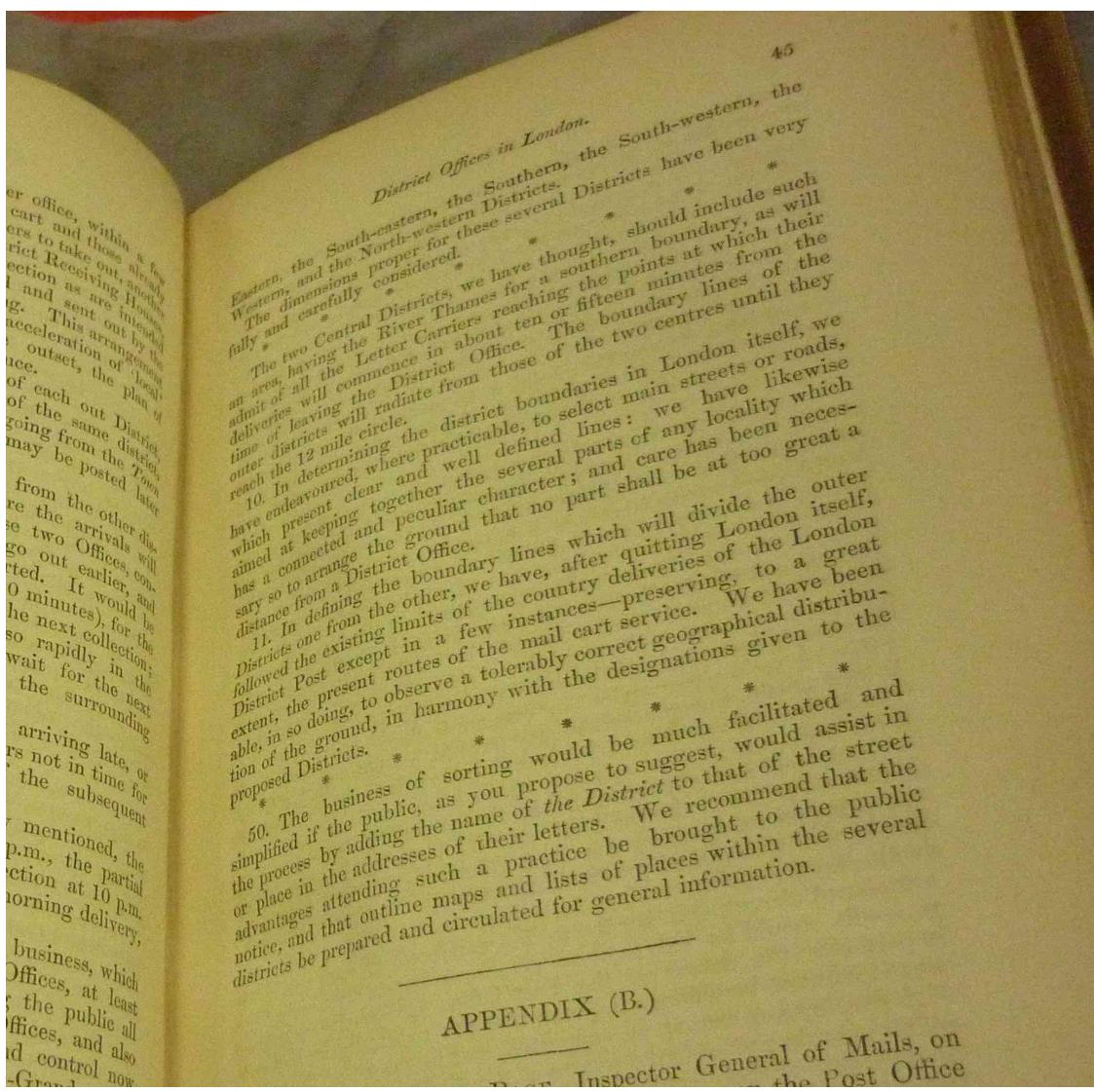


Fig. 103: Extract from the report stating areas of a 'connected and peculiar character' were grouped together⁷³⁵

Notably the Postmaster General stated that the districts of London reflected localities with a 'connected and peculiar character'. On dividing London, the Postal Map's new districts responded to London itself. This was particularly important for a system intended to be recognised, accepted, and used by Londoners from the start. That the system was based on what was already there – including how Londoners themselves viewed their city – was crucial in moving towards the Maps' acceptance by the public. This acceptance would lead to correct use in the addressing of letters, and therefore assist the sorting of letters into districts, and the more letters that could be sorted in this way, the better the system would work. Linking districts to the 'peculiar character'

⁷³⁵ The Postmaster General's second report (appendix A), p. 45. *Ibid.*

that already existed was a canny way of achieving success in the take-up of the new system by the public.

That the divisions of the London districts were accepted fairly immediately is attested to by the number of maps that started to include them. Very quickly after 1856, maps that were not 'Postal Maps' began to depict the postal districts, demonstrating their importance to the city.⁷³⁶ We can see this, for example, in this map of 'The British Metropolis and Suburbs' of 1860:⁷³⁷

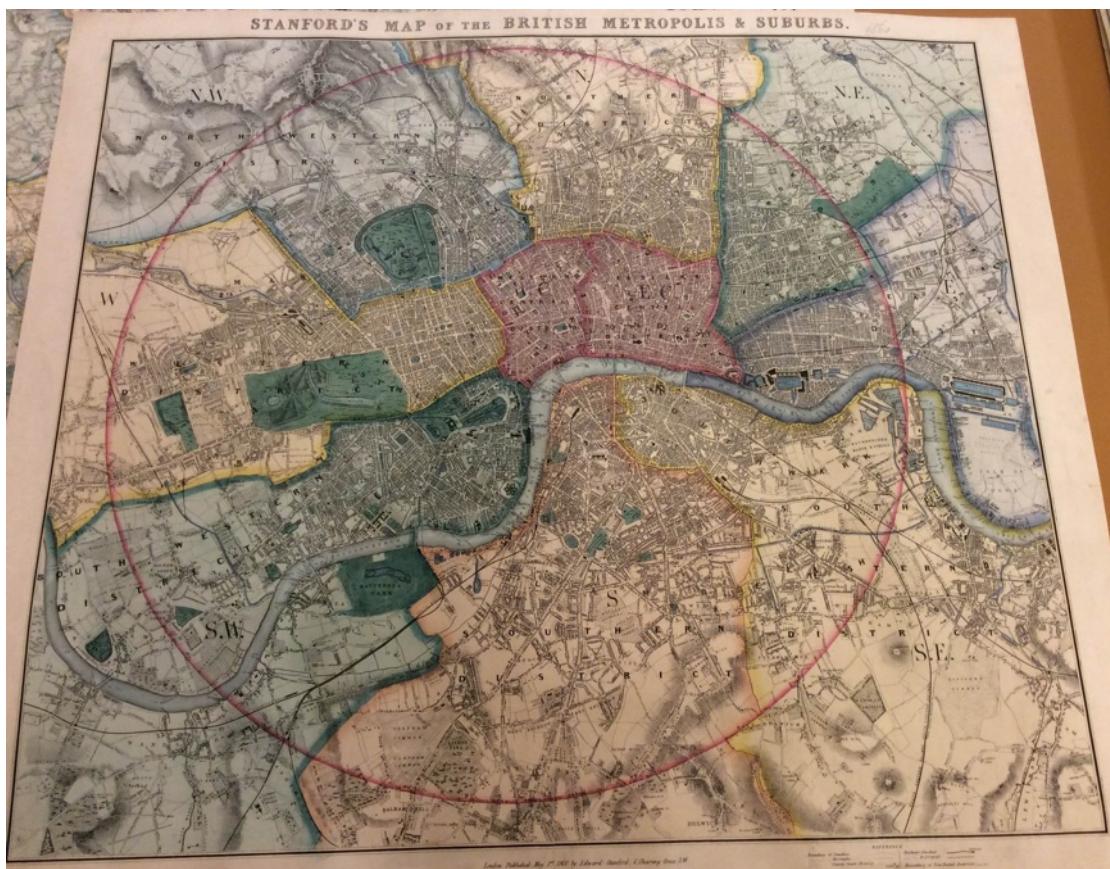


Fig. 104: Stanford's Map of the British Metropolis & Suburbs⁷³⁸

⁷³⁶ "The new districts were immediately and strikingly reflected in most contemporary maps. London maps immediately prior to 1856 which showed any district boundaries tended to feature the borough boundaries, of possibly only those of the City of London" ... "after 1856, the new postal districts were given equal, if not greater, prominence than municipal boundaries". [...] "The prominence given to the postal districts no doubt reflected the importance of the post as the sole means of communication at the time other than personal visits" Simon Morris, 'The London Postal Districts', *London Topographical Society Newsletter* no. 29 November 1989, p. 4

⁷³⁷ This version is dated 1860. Bodleian Library C17:70 London (322): *Stanfords' map of the British metropolis and suburbs*, 1860

⁷³⁸ *Ibid.*

The speed of the service was all-important, so districts were designed to allow for efficient movement of staff around the district. The references to letter carriers being able to reach their deliveries in ten or fifteen minutes bears this out, with the journey to and from offices to deliveries being wasted time. The introduction of the district system meant that this wastage could be dramatically reduced. The design of the districts, therefore, was based on three things: operational practicality, making their shape efficient for the movement of letter carriers; a response to the city itself, making the districts fit with the particular character of each area; and on the historical operation of the area, based on the routes of the current mail cart services.

These three reasons behind the configuration of the districts given in the written archives are added to by one further influential factor on the design of the Postal Map, not given in the written manuscript archives, but revealed through looking at the Map itself: the design of the Map aimed at a geometric uniformity in the size and shape of the districts. This geometry was drawn onto London, regardless of the actual situation on the ground; aesthetic form was a guiding force. The districts were of relatively uniform sizes and shapes, each radiating out from the centre until they hit an outer boundary that is part of a large, almost completely uniform shape.

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Now, we can turn to the effect that dividing London in this way had. To think about this, we should go back to the point that the form of the Map linked to its function of providing good communications in the city. The link between city plans and forms of communication was established: what Haussmann did for Paris was allow for a network of communication, a 'circulatory system'.⁷³⁹

So too was Paxton, whose plan's 'object was the improvement of the general system of communications'.⁷⁴⁰ In many ways, Paxton's methods and those of the London Postal

⁷³⁹ Haussmann stated that he aimed to "cut a cross, north to south, and east to west, through the centre of Paris, bringing the city's cardinal points into direct communication". Quoted from Haussmann's memoirs 1890-93, Françoise Choay, *Modern City: Planning in the Nineteenth Century*, S.l.: Bragiller, 1969, p. 18

⁷⁴⁰ *Ibid*, p. 24

Map were very similar, and occurring at the same time, in the same place, revealing perhaps the same type of thinking emerging at this time. Paxton was 'planning': thinking comprehensively about London and its systems.⁷⁴¹ One noticeable recurring theme in plans that impose a circle on London was their relationship with communication. The circle line, Paxton's way, and the Postal Map, all aimed to improve, speed up, modernize communications. Linguistically the term 'circulation', applied so often to moving around the city, recalls this circular image.⁷⁴²

Of particular relevance for the London Postal Map is the visualization of *circling round*, and contrast between circulation and moving back and forth, out and in, as this was the fundamental change brought in with the Map. The schematic shows the process of moving mail in and out of the centre of London that was the basis upon which the whole system worked. One of the fundamental changes that the Postal Map brought in was a shift that mail no longer had to go into the centre, instead the different districts in London were able to communicate with each other. Mail could go from E to NE, for example, without having to go via the centre.

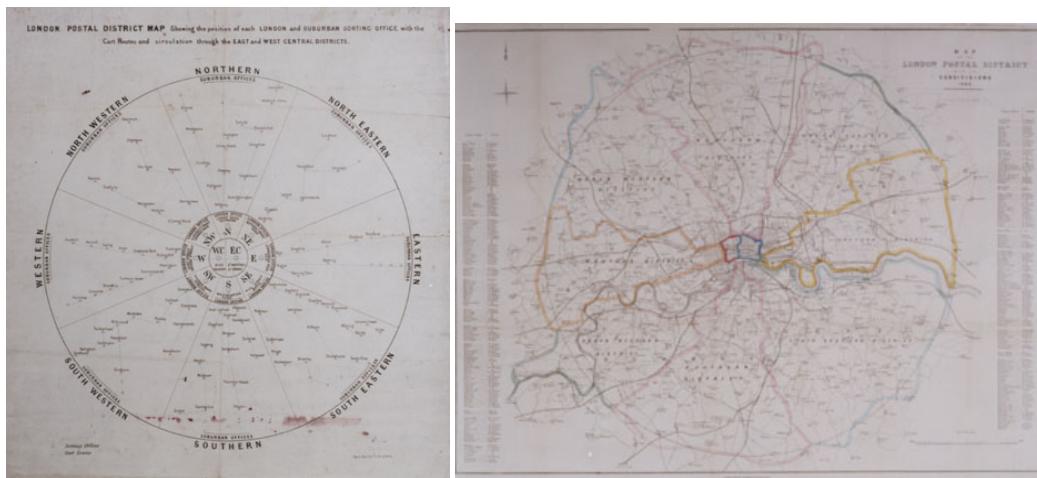


Fig. 105: The Schematic and the Postal Map⁷⁴³

⁷⁴¹ "He thinks in comprehensive terms, considers the city as a whole. He viewed it in its historical perspective, criticized former plans, analysed the various forms and currents of traffic flow and inventoried existing streets." *Ibid*, p. 24

⁷⁴² Choay stated of Paxton's plan that "the real basis as well as the originality of his planning lies in the dual concept of a circulatory and respiratory system." *Ibid.*, p. 19

⁷⁴³ POST 21/761: 'London Postal District map: Showing the position of each London and Suburban Sorting Office with the Cart routes and circulation through the East and West Central Districts', 1838 (left); and POST 21/71: 'Map of the London Postal District with the sub-divisions', 1856

This decentralisation of services to the different regions was to become extremely important as London grew throughout the nineteenth century. London around 1820, was comprised of villages such as Hackney and Camberwell around a centre,⁷⁴⁴ with the individual villages that had a relationship with the well-defined centre. In this London, it would make sense for mail from the country to come into the small, well-defined centre.

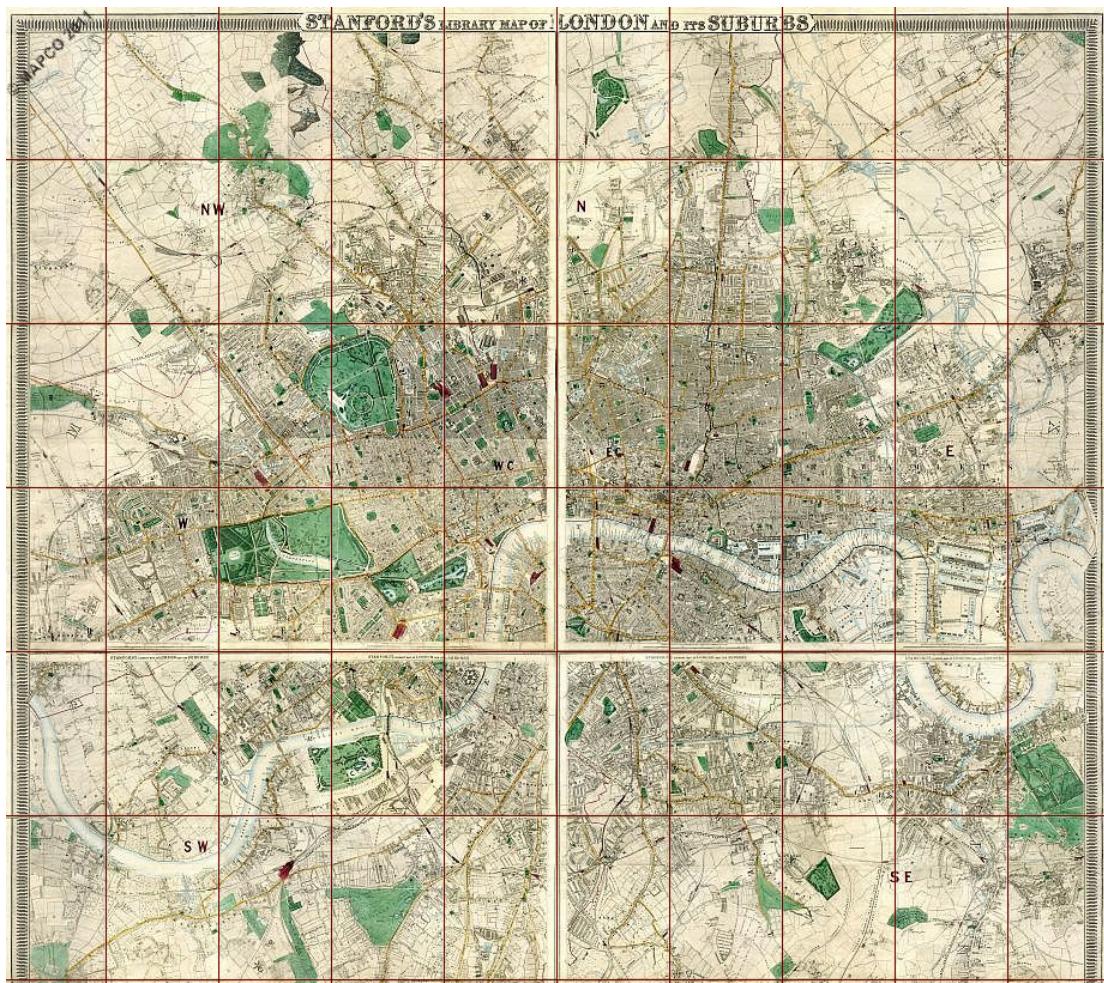


Fig. 106: London's growth: Stanford 1872⁷⁴⁵

Moving to 1872, the spread of London has been rapid. Hyde Park was completely enveloped, south of the river was developed all the way to Clapham. Victoria Park had been laid out, and buildings were quickly spreading around it. In this London, it made little sense for all communications to go in and out of the old historic centre of the City, because London was now much more than that. London was no longer a small centre

⁷⁴⁴ "in the nineteenth century, London was really made up of nothing more than a number of dormitory villages juxtaposed around the City" Olsen, p. 13

⁷⁴⁵ Image source: <http://london1872.com/hover2.htm> (accessed 01/01/17)

surrounded by countryside and villages, the villages have been swallowed up to become part of the city. This was a city large enough to merit a series of large 'centres', as the Postal Map had introduced, which were all able to communicate with each other, and with the rest of the country, without reference to one single 'centre' in the middle.

This was not just growth; it was a specific form of growth, that incorporated some segregation of function. Certain industries grew up in particular areas, housing was in other areas, and government functions tended to focus on Whitehall. This was a marked difference to earlier periods in London's history, where the different functions of the city were generally all placed in one geographical area: the City of London.⁷⁴⁶ The City started to house commercial activity only, in particular the financial services, and its residential population diminished. Industry became centred on the East End, and South of the river, and residential populations moved to fast growing suburbs. This pattern of growth in which different areas had different functions was enabled by the development of communications systems. Once communications were good enough, different parts of the city could communicate effectively with each other and this type of segregation could occur.⁷⁴⁷ Instead of people needing to be physically present in the same place to allow for the exchange that marks a city – be that social, commercial, or intellectual exchange - information could travel quickly. People could be physically separate from each other without losing contact.⁷⁴⁸ The key in the development of industry and commerce was 'increasingly abstract means of communication'; the railway, the daily press, the telegraph.⁷⁴⁹ The city was becoming a sophisticated capitalist machine, enabled by its different parts communicating to each other.

The postal reforms, by allowing for good communications between different parts of the city, allowed for capitalist growth; if it was cheaper or more successful for a factory to be sited in one particular place, but its bank in a different place, its warehouses

⁷⁴⁶ An exception to this was the split of function between the government/monarch in Westminster and the City.

⁷⁴⁷ One characteristic of modernity in this period was London developing as a site in which urban functions – factories, commerce, retail, slums, expensive housing – became segregated. Nead, p. 28

⁷⁴⁸ Choay links communication explicitly to the development of cities, explaining that scales of urbanism did not actually start to tip until the railways came to cities; it railways (i.e. communication) them that brought new forms of predictions and encouraged communication between urban centres. Choay, p. 11

⁷⁴⁹ Notably, and predictably, the letter post is absent in this list – as is usual in account of city development in the nineteenth century. Choay, p. 9

somewhere else, and its workers living in yet a different location, improved communications in the Victorian period allowed for this to happen. The different sites could all communicate with each other easily, linked by rail, telegraph, and letter post. They did not need to be located in the same place, as they had been previously⁷⁵⁰.

When the reforms allowed for communication between different parts of the city with different functions, the Map allowed for different parts of the city to be categorised as particular types. This was the beginning of categorisation of the city through mapping that was to reach its culmination in the maps of Abercrombie and Forshore in the Second World War. They produced a schematic map of the city with the aim of using the mapping to understand how best to rebuild the city after it had been destroyed by bombing. Their map describes London through its different neighbourhoods; each of which have a different character, shown as circles or ovals and named, and colour-coded based on function.

⁷⁵⁰ In Harvey's view of capitalism, even building by a government is a result of capitalist forces, where interventions in the fabric of a city such as transportation provision "implies a conscious recognition and anticipation of capitalism's future needs". What he is stating is that the way cities develop is based on the needs of capitalism – What this means is that when a city is able to communicate with its own parts effectively, different functions – say docks, or a factory, or an office building – can be located in different places, connected not physically but through lines of communication. David Harvey, *Spaces of capital: towards a critical geography*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2001



Fig. 107: Abercrombie's London map of 1943 shows the 'categorisation' of places in the city⁷⁵¹

As for the London Postal Map, its categorising of the city worked on two levels. Firstly, through the introduction of a sophisticated communications system, the reforms allowed the city to start segregating itself, so that its different parts could be categorised. And on a second level, this form of categorising was exactly how the Map itself described the city, how it visualised London, when it drew boundary lines around and within the city.

The categories were districts, named E, W, S and so on. The Map was not describing the city, so much as it was decreeing which parts of the city fell into which category; the Map was performing the Victorian habit of classification. The Postal Map categorised London into ten distinct parts, separating spaces visually by drawing boundaries on a Map; each of which had their own characteristics. The Postal Map made clear distinctions between areas, decreeing that one place was in the 'west' whilst another was 'south western'. Even the naming of these districts was a conscious choice, with loaded meaning.

⁷⁵¹ Image source: <http://mappinglondon.co.uk/2012/map-of-london-social-and-functional-analysis-1943/> (accessed 01/01/17)

Naming

The classification of areas of London was enacted by the Map through its drawing of boundaries, included giving areas specific names. The names given to the different districts in London: Northern, North Eastern, etc. have an inherent logic to them which gives the impression that they are common sense, perhaps even inevitable, names. But archives reveal that, just like every other design decision on the Map, names were contingent. We can see that they were not inevitable when looking at other maps in the period which divided London into different named districts, such as the Metropolitan Police districts. The Police, also in the mid nineteenth century, named their districts in London after the general area they covered, and then assigned them each a letter. The system was completely different to that of the Postal Map with much less obvious logic. The central areas were labelled A to M, the outer areas as follows:

- Y – Highgate
- N – Islington
- K – Stepney
- R – Greenwich
- P – Camberwell
- W – Clapham
- V – Wandsworth
- T – Kensington
- X – Paddington
- S – Hampstead⁷⁵²

In fact, archival evidence suggests that the naming of the districts as compass points, according to their relationship with St Martin's, was a relatively late addition to the design of the Map. Instead, we see in the archives that the system was referred to as being based on 'alphabetical' sorting. The 1843 Select Committee that savaged Hill's plans went into some detail about the plan to divide London, in order to demonstrate

⁷⁵² MBW/2573: *Map Showing Metropolitan Police Districts, Stations and Divisions, 1870.* This was also a Stanford's map, stating: 'Stanford's geographical Establishment, 6&7 Charing cross, S.W.'

how it would be impracticable. The Committee heard from one Mr Bokenham, the Superintendent President of the Inland Post Office, who asserted, 'I do not use the word impracticable but it really does amount to it in my opinion.'⁷⁵³ The Report stated that, due to Mr Bokenham, the Select Committee has been able to achieve the

exposure of another of the "suggestions" of Mr Hill; that of arranging the letters for despatch in the evening by the post-towns, alphabetically, instead of by the division into particular roads. The Post Office, he says, is "a mass of details" – of which, we regret to say, Mr Hill is altogether ignorant, having never probably condescended to direct his attention to it. He proceeds: - "the plan for sorting might be adopted as regards post-towns, but it could be of no use whatsoever, [...] the difficulty in getting the letters to their final places of disposal, would be very great by alphabetical sorting; for instance, there are a number of letters addressed to Strathfeildsaye; (the Duke himself will never address to Hartford Bridge, but simply Strathfeildsaye;) such letters, with an alphabetical sorting, would be sent to letter S, whereas they ought to go to letter H."⁷⁵⁴

The Committee understands 'alphabetical sorting' as a system in which letters were to be sorted, alphabetically, based on the initial letter of each place name. The objection then followed that certain places are referred to under different names, and would be mis-sorted when an initial other than the 'official' initial was used. Of course what in fact transpired was alphabetical sorting not based on place names at all – not 'H' for 'Hartford', but instead named according to their geographical relationship to the central sorting office. So Whitechapel, east of St Martin's was in the 'E' district, whilst Kennington was 'S' and Camden 'NW'. This was more an ordered, logical, system (based on compass points), rather than a 'representative' system like naming after particular places.⁷⁵⁵

⁷⁵³ *Administration of the Post Office from the Introduction of Mr. Roland Hill's Plan of Penny Postage up to the Present Time* 1844, p. 100

⁷⁵⁴ *Ibid.* p. 104

⁷⁵⁵ There is another early reference to sorting alphabetically in the Rowland Hill Journal, when in an entry dated 25 March 1847 he states: "in the Money Order Office, c.10,000 letters a day from paying offices are sorted using an alphabetical system – "As, in this transaction, they have nothing to do with the "roads", there is no false analogy to lead them astray, and the assortment is alphabetic, that is to say, on the same plan as that which I proposed long ago for letters." POST 100/7: *Rowland Hill's Post Office Journal*, 28 Nov 1846-17 Dec 1847

The names that were implemented that were the initial letters of compass points soon became accepted by the public at large. Postal initials, first instituted in 1856 for something as mundane as to speed up sorting processes has had a fundamental effect on how the city is understood, and how citizens of London identify themselves.⁷⁵⁶ However, the incident demonstrates that 'H' for 'Hartford' was in fact a potential design choice for the system, just as 'E' for 'Eastern' district was.

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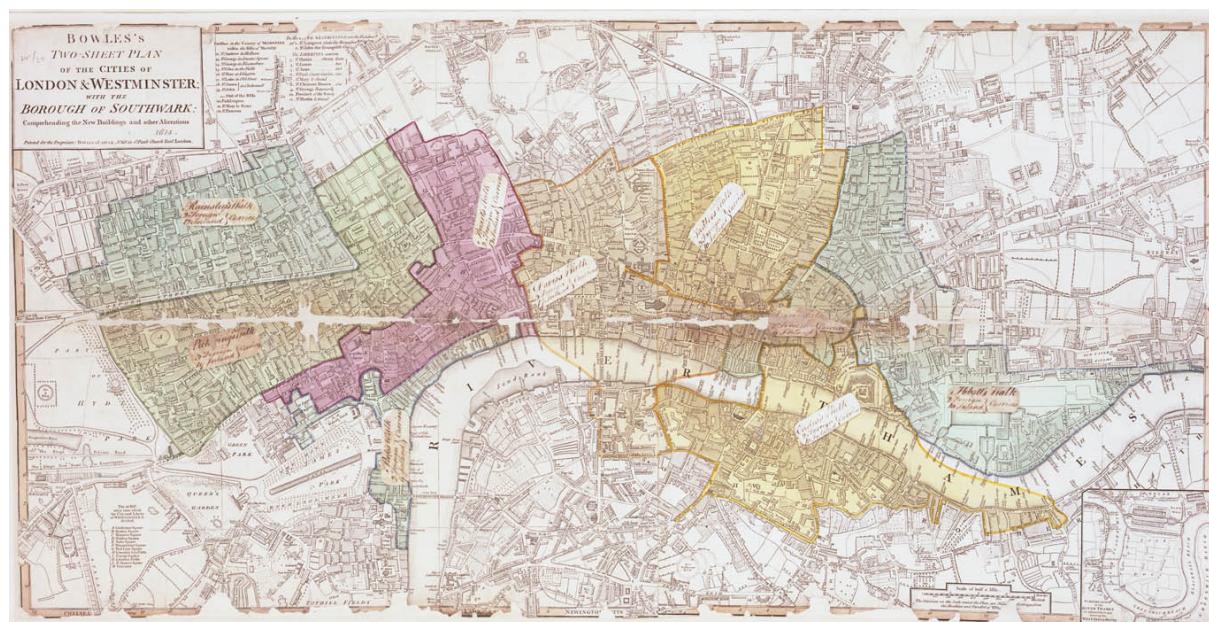


Fig. 108: Bowles' plan dated 1814⁷⁵⁷

The above Bowles Plan of 1814 demonstrates that there were alternative ways of naming districts used by the post before. It shows the 'walks', of letter carriers in London were labelled after a person, perhaps the person with administrative control or the letter carrier in each walk.⁷⁵⁸ This type of naming based on historic precedent takes place in certain city systems, for example in the naming of London's streets. We can therefore understand how the naming system that Hill adopted was in fact

⁷⁵⁶ Mark Mason is quite nice on this, his introduction for example shows many ways that postcodes have entered the consciousness for more than just their postal implications. Mark Mason, *Mail obsession: a journey round Britain by postcode*, Rearsby: Clipper Large Print Books, 2016.

⁷⁵⁷ POST 21/361: 'Bowles's two sheet plan of the cities of London and Westminster with the borough of Southwark comprehending the new buildings and other alterations', 1814

⁷⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

revolutionary; a break with the past, in a way that was not necessary but in fact a specific design choice made by a set of people in particular historic, geographic, and professional contexts.

This issue can prompt us to question what the effects of naming choices could be. The process of mapping results in a set of assumptions about a place being codified, set into stone, given a legitimacy. This creates a type of cognitive understanding of the city in the minds of its people that is influenced by the Map, in this case in the type of naming that the Map places on the city.

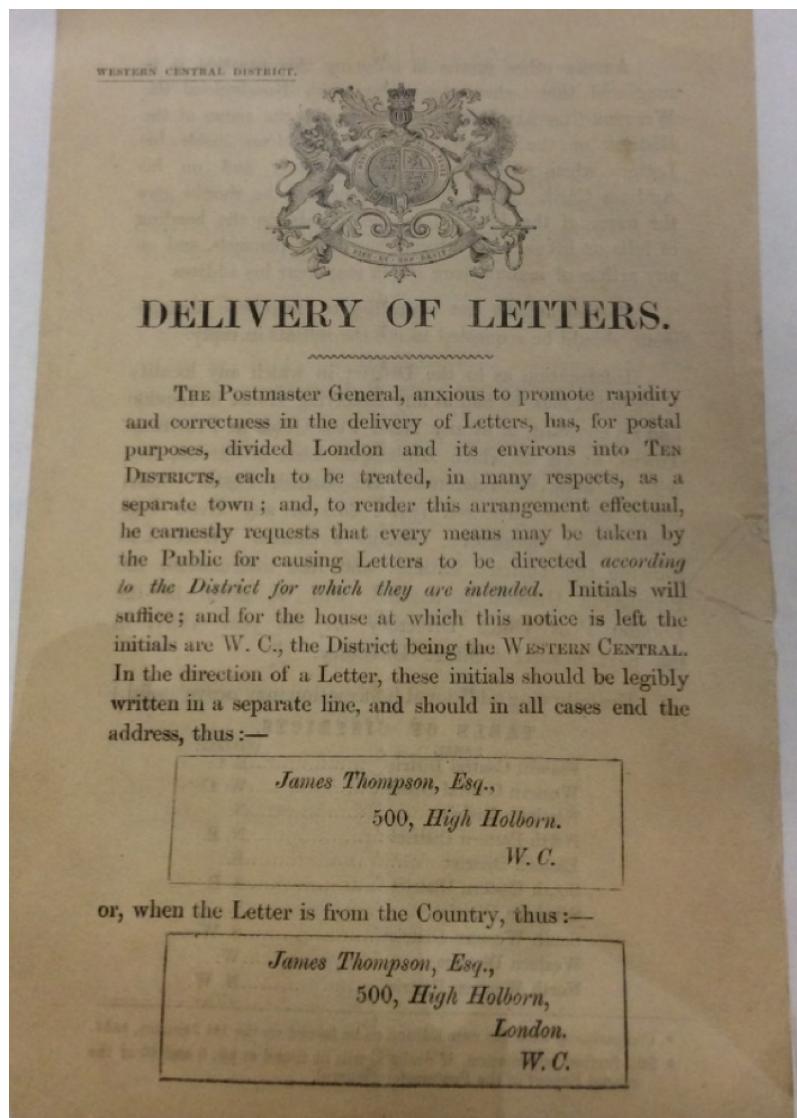


Fig. 109: Pamphlet advising people of London about the new addressing system⁷⁵⁹

⁷⁵⁹ Morten Collection, Bruce Castle. BCPHC/1/19/4: Notice

Naming was important in ensuring that the public accepted the system.⁷⁶⁰ The fact that the careful naming of the system aimed at the public's correct use of the system could be seen through the publicity that was developed to advise people in London of the changes. To influence this, a pamphlet was sent to residents of London, to businesses, and of course to post offices, advising them of the new scheme.⁷⁶¹ The pamphlet included a list of all the new postal districts, and a sample road name address for each one:

- EC – Cheapside
- WC – High Holborn
- N – Upper Street
- NE – Bethnal Green Road
- E – Whitechapel Road
- SE – High Street, Borough
- S – Blackfriars Road
- SW – Pall Mall
- W – Piccadilly
- NW – Albany Street⁷⁶²

The archive shows various drafts that have been amended and annotated which are highly revealing; one of the changes was the substituting of 'Mile End' for 'Whitechapel Road' as the 'E' district sample address, and 'Waterloo Road' for 'S' was crossed out and became 'Blackfriars Road'.⁷⁶³ The process that was enacted included a consideration on the behalf of the writers of this document as to the *most appropriate* example to give for each district. Not just using a particularly large, long or well-populated road in the district, but rather an issue of which road was most recognisably related to that district – which road might be emblematic of the area it was situated within. The assumption was that residents of London would already have a cognitive map of the city in which

⁷⁶⁰ In 1856, once the Postal Map was drawn up, the Post Office used various means to advise the public, including public notices, articles in newspapers, publicity in Post Offices, listing of full addresses including postal districts in guides and street directories, to ensure that the general public would use the correct addresses on their letters. Public knowledge of the correct usage of the system was fundamental to its success, so it was imperative that public habits changed as soon as possible.

⁷⁶¹ POST 30/120A: *London Postal Area: initials of main postal districts introduced as part of addresses*

⁷⁶² *Ibid.*

⁷⁶³ *Ibid.*

the name 'East', 'West', etc., would bear a relationship to the type of place contained within it. The roads chosen had to represent the district that they belonged to.⁷⁶⁴ The reader would have to be able to see instantly the relationship between the letter 'E' and the road, 'Whitechapel Road': Whitechapel Road *becomes* the East End. With a quick glance, a Londoner would see the pairing of initial letter, 'E', with the street name, and instantly understand the logic behind the system.

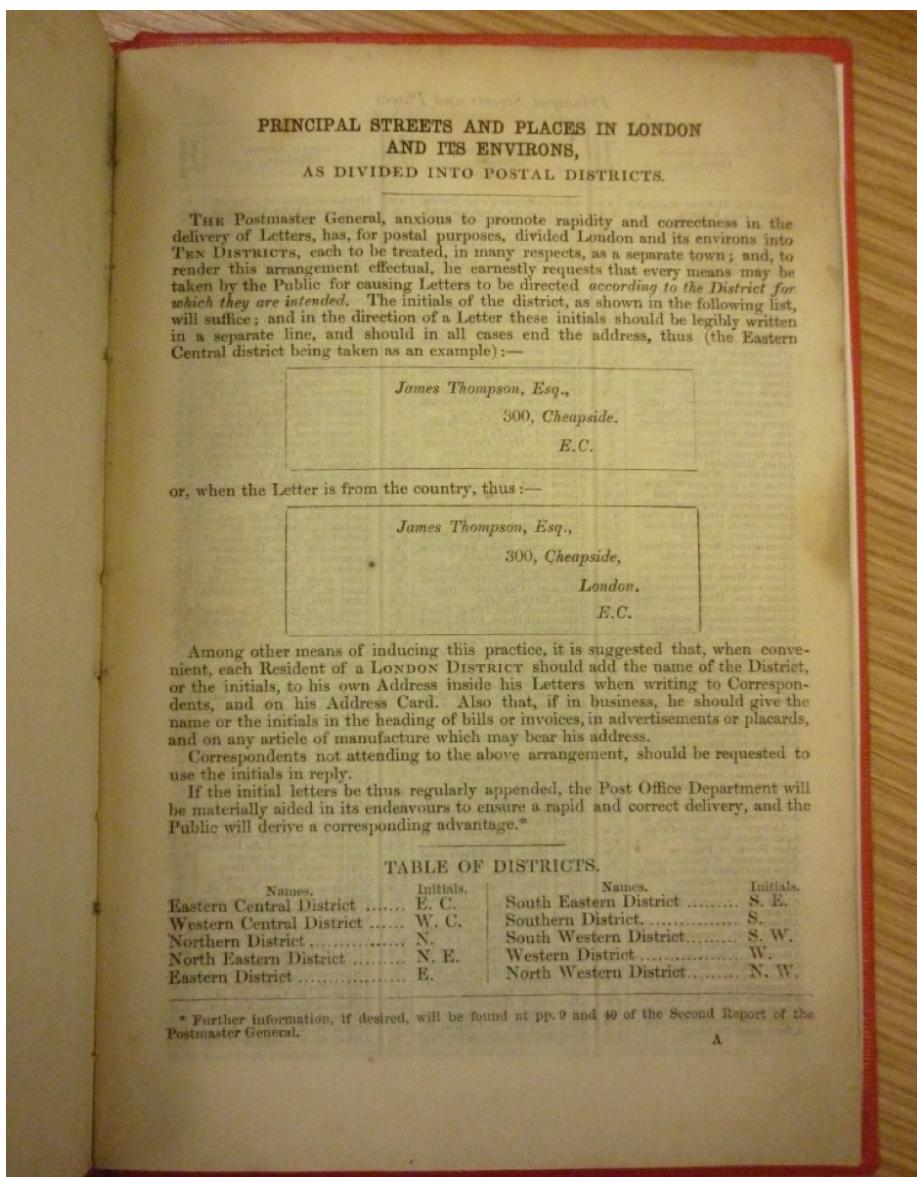


Fig. 110: Example of the Post Office's publicity of the naming system, with Cheapside as the example EC address⁷⁶⁵

⁷⁶⁴ To take this concept further, the Postal Map names could have easily adopted the same system, in which the 'E' district is not named 'E' but rather 'Whitechapel', after an area that is recognisably and easily remembered to be geographically in the east of the city. This is a system used in part in the Underground, as with the name of the 'Piccadilly' line, for example, along which only one of the stops is Piccadilly Circus, but that name becomes emblematic of the line as a whole.

⁷⁶⁵ POST 30/120A: London Postal Area: initials of main postal districts introduced as part of addresses

Moving on a step forward from this, we see insight into way Londoners understood the social implications of the geography and character of areas of their city; the most notable manifestation of which being the distinction between East and West. The Map reflected the conceptualisation that Londoners had of their city. However, by placing certain places in certain districts the Map actively fixes those places into their district.⁷⁶⁶

Nowhere is this better seen than in a brilliant ballad printed by Punch in when the Map was introduced. The ballad, '*The Ten Towns. Or, Mr. Punch's Complete Handbook to his friend Mr. Hill's New Postal Plan*' took as its subject matter the new London districts, and linked the names of the districts explicitly to the character of the districts. In this form, 'E' becomes 'Empire', the home of the docklands, whilst 'W.C.', housing the theatres and other similar pursuits, becomes 'Wicked Creatures':⁷⁶⁷

⁷⁶⁶ "The world has literally been made, domesticated and ordered by drawing lines, distinctions, taxonomies and hierarchies" Pickles, p. 5

⁷⁶⁷ BCPHC/1/19/19: Punch, or the London Carival, 7 February, 1857. Bruce Castle, 256 Morten Collection.

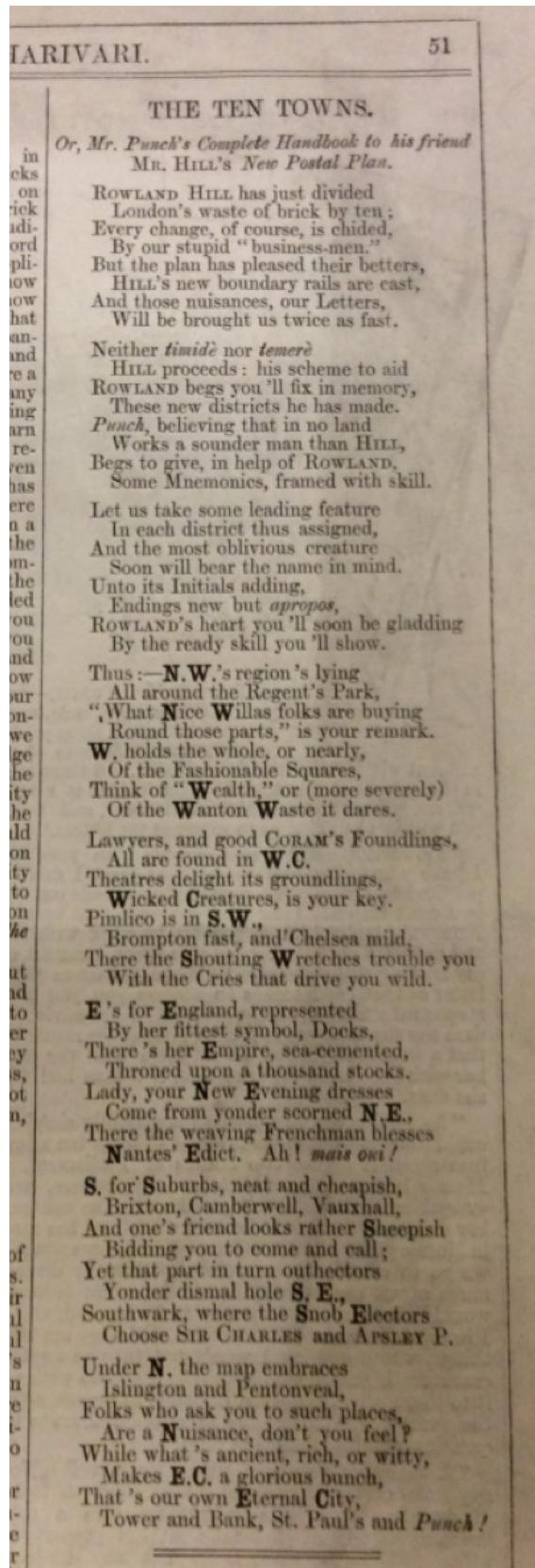


Fig. 111: The Ballad of the Postal Map!⁷⁶⁸

Although the naming was by no means a 'natural' outcome, but a clear decision over a set of different alternatives, the district names were added to the map, and then many other maps afterwards, dividing the city into easily remembered categories, based roughly on their geographic relation to a 'centre': the G.P.O. This was a new form of classification; it was how the Postal Map depicted a rational city.

4. THE POWER OF VISUALISING: CREATING THE CITY

The London Postal Map was a visual object, which used a series of visual techniques.⁷⁶⁹ The visual sphere is an important consideration for this chapter; it combines our attention to the way that the Map was seen in public, with the meanings and consequences of using a visual object to understand our city.⁷⁷⁰ There is an interplay between the visual object of a map, and the mental map.⁷⁷¹ Mental maps are the perceptions that are built up in our minds about certain places that allow us to navigate them, to understand them.⁷⁷² They do not always accurately reflect the actual land on the ground, as the work of Kevin Lynch, for example, has shown us.⁷⁷³ In planning London, the London Postal Map was a visual representation of the city that in turn influenced people's mental maps of London, allowing them to conceptualise the city. A series of visual techniques were used to explain the city and give it a place in Londoner's cognitive map of the city.

Visualising through Maps

The Postal Map was acting within a context of other practices of mapping London. Mapping, in terms of producing a visual representation of a place, had been used by people all over the world for centuries, with connections between mapping and 'modernity' forged from at least the early fifteenth century, at which time the Latin translation of Ptolemy's *Geographica* was produced, becoming heavily influential in the

⁷⁶⁹ "A map is a drawing that shows where various things are located in relation to one another" [noting that they need not be geographical 'things'] Stefoff entry on 'Maps'

⁷⁷⁰ Cosgrove notes that Vision is more than just seeing; it informs a type of understanding that 'creates images in the mind's eye, which exceed in various ways those registered on the retina of the physical eye by light from the external world.' Quoted in Miles Ogborn, review of 'Denis Cosgrove, Geography and Vision: Seeing, Imagining and Representing the World', *Journal of Historical Geography*, vol. 35 (2009), p. 617

⁷⁷¹ Stefoff on "Mental maps" states that these started to be studied in the twentieth century – defined as "the 'invisible landscapes' that people carry in their heads" from Gould and White, p. 186. Rebecca Stefoff, *The British Library companion to maps and mapmaking*, London: British Library, 1995

⁷⁷² Mental maps "shape our thinking in ways of which we may not even be aware". *Ibid.*

⁷⁷³ Kevin Lynch, *The Image of the City*, Cambridge, Mass.: Technology Press & Harvard University Press, 1960

development of western thought.⁷⁷⁴ In London, maps first developed as panoramas—images that depicted a scene of London from a particular point, often labelling notable buildings.



Fig. 112: 'Norden Panorama' of 1593⁷⁷⁵.

In the seventeenth century, Ogilby and Morgan's 1676 map of London was one of the first to give a scaled map rather than a panorama.⁷⁷⁶ Maps in that period developed to plan wars, or changes such as the widening of streets for carriages drawn by horses, or the new Westminster Bridge.⁷⁷⁷ In the eighteenth century, the influence of the enlightenment brought maps that prioritised realism, developed from surveys and mathematical calculations. By the early nineteenth century there were accurate representational techniques in use which produced maps that are recognizable to us

⁷⁷⁴ Cosgrove, p. 16

⁷⁷⁵ Peter Whitfield, *London: a Life in Maps*, London: British Library, 2006

⁷⁷⁶ Simon Garfield, *On the Map: Why the World Looks the Way it Does*, London: Profile, 2012, p. 172. Garfield notes that this map may have been the first to depict London in a way that intended to help you actually find your way around.

⁷⁷⁷ Shown on John Rocque's 1745 map of London. Peter Whitfield, *London: a Life in Maps*, London: British Library, 2006

today. 'Thematic' maps, of winds, or tides for example, which began in the late seventeenth century, became widespread in the nineteenth century.⁷⁷⁸

Maps were used to plan, and to explain public improvements, like sewers or underground railways: they envisaged a different London, a modern London.⁷⁷⁹ In the 1830s, railway 'mania' hit, with Davis' 1832 map of London an early example of a London map showing railways and stations.⁷⁸⁰ Large-scale mapping of London started in 1840 with the 6 inch to a mile scale Ordnance Survey maps.⁷⁸¹ By the 1850s the impulse to map improvements was reaching its culmination, many people were pushing for urban (and social) change in London.⁷⁸² Edwin Chadwick for example, campaigning for a central sewage system, said that to do this, the city needed to be mapped.⁷⁸³ In 1855 the Metropolitan Board of Works was formed, with parks, roads, cemeteries, water supply, slum clearances all planned using the tool of maps.⁷⁸⁴ The huge increase in mapping happened alongside a shift in the form of maps, from elaborately decorated maps, some illustrations, to ones described as having 'mathematical accuracy': simpler, standardised, more 'scientific'.⁷⁸⁵

⁷⁷⁸ "Studies in the natural sciences, the industrial and social revolutions of recent times and the development of statistics had stimulated the demand for maps that represented the geographical complexities of physical and cultural phenomena" Peter Barber and Christopher Board, p. 18

⁷⁷⁹ Such as the 'Metropolitan Improvements' maps for the 1827 scheme for Charing Cross and the Strand. In addition lots of architectural schemes were drawn up in that period, which involved new plans, such as the new Houses of Parliament, the new G.P.O, the National Gallery in Trafalgar Square. Peter Whitfield, *London: a Life in Maps*, London: British Library, 2006

⁷⁸⁰ Whitfield was to suggest that the impact of the railways on the city was immense, stating, "So successful were the railways in dispersing the population, that people began to ask where London would stop." *Ibid.*, p. 108

⁷⁸¹ Peter Barber and Christopher Board

⁷⁸² As Lynda Nead explains, John Snow's cholera maps of London were a case in point: "Snow's contribution to cartography subsequently developed in two directions. As one of a growing number of sanitary reformers whose cause was made more urgent by the outbreaks of fatal disease, Snow and his colleagues were significant in persuading the government to establish the local Boards of Health, whose brief was to ensure proper drainage and sewerage systems. The Boards in their turn required adequate maps with which to plan urban improvements, and it was from this demand that the Ordnance Survey large-scale plans were born". Peter Barber and Christopher Board, p. 145

⁷⁸³ Nead, p. 19

⁷⁸⁴ "The Metropolitan Board of Works began modernising London in both political and engineering terms". Peter Whitfield, *London: a Life in Maps*, London: British Library, 2006, p. 110

⁷⁸⁵ "Mapmaking underwent many changes in the nineteenth century, in Britain as elsewhere. The ornate, elaborately decorated maps and atlases of earlier years began to fall out of favour; an English atlas published in 1851 is one of the last to feature vignettes of people, animals and landscapes on each map. The maps that were published with explorer's books became less fanciful and more earnest as scientific progress became the watchword of the era. In the age of the railroad and the steamship, people wanted practical, functional maps." Stefoff, p. 63.

There was a huge demand in this period for maps, which was linked to colonial efforts and exploration abroad as much as improvements at home.⁷⁸⁶ Nead notes that in supplying these maps, 'the surveyor and the capitalist were the two creative forces of the modern map', with maps crucial to capitalist expansion and building all over the world.⁷⁸⁷ By the end of the nineteenth century, thematic maps including social data such as Booth's 'Poverty Maps' were developed- the culmination of the twin developments during the second half of the nineteenth century of a desire for social improvements, and an impulse to plan the city.⁷⁸⁸ But before this came the London Postal Map: an early example of how mapping envisaged an improved London.

The Vision of the Postal Map

When the Postal Map divided the city, segregating it into function and naming its districts, the city became categorised into type; it allowed itself to divide into classifications. The Postal Map was acting using graphic vocabulary to categorise, and in doing this, was falling into the traditions and practices of its time. The use of graphic means to visually explain new categorisations that were occurring in many areas of life in the same period was a practice utterly of its time. Victorians categorised all manner of places, things, phenomena, as a route into new knowledge about the world, or to understand what was right, and what was wrong in the world.

⁷⁸⁶ Whitfield notes that the 'geographical scene' in the mid-nineteenth century was one of strong demand and availability of data for a number of reasons: "these factors included Britain's role as a colonial and maritime power; the exploration of major unmapped areas of the world; the rise of geography as an academic discipline; the work of the Ordnance Survey in producing a national map-base; and the growth of tourism to international destinations." Peter Whitfield, *Cities of the world*, p. 19

⁷⁸⁷ "It [mapping] was the primary tool for entrepreneurial capital expansion; for the destruction and construction associated with the building of London's sewers and railways. The map enabled London to get building" Nead, p. 22

⁷⁸⁸ "A more critical grasp of statistics and more sophisticated cartographic techniques led to the creation of thematic maps such as Booth's 'Poverty Maps', which made a serious contribution to the understanding of major social problems." Peter Barber and Christopher Board, p. 19

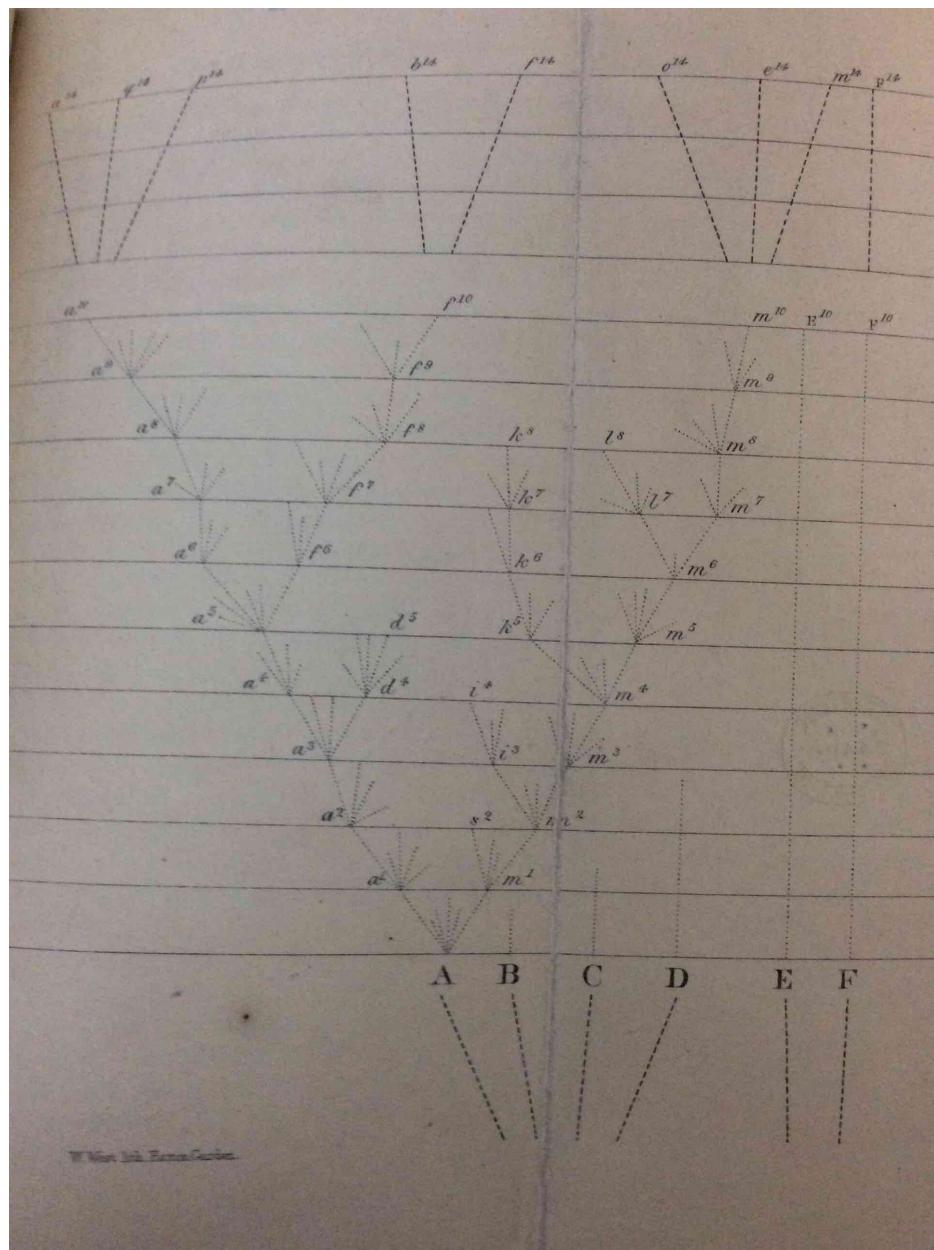


Fig. 113: A page from Darwin's *Origin of Species* of 1859⁷⁸⁹

Darwin's work is one of the most famous examples of introducing categorisations in order to understand the world. In this period, this practice was undertaken by Darwin, by the placing of man-made goods at the Great Exhibition, or the ordering of architecture that Ruskin gave us in *The Stones of Venice*.⁷⁹⁰

⁷⁸⁹ Charles Darwin: *On the origin of species*, London: John Murray, 1861 p. 122

⁷⁹⁰ John Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice*; edited and introduced by Jan Morris, London: Folio Society, 2001, c1981 (text originally published 1851-1853)

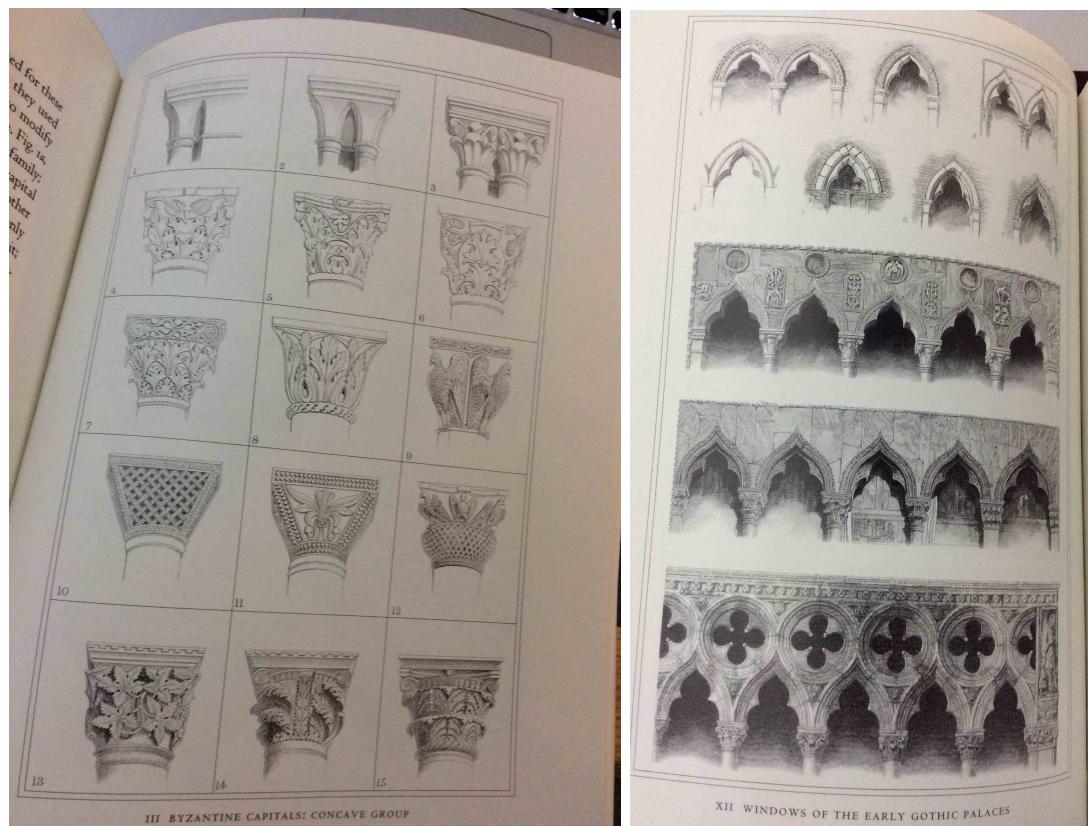


Fig. 114: Ruskin's categorisations, *Stones of Venice*⁷⁹¹

It is the graphic techniques that were used to explain these categorisations in this period that are particularly relevant to understand the context of the Postal Map: the schematic map showed the postal routes radiating out from the centre of London in the same thin branches Darwin used in his explanations of the results of genetic mutations.

⁷⁹¹ John Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice*; edited and introduced by Jan Morris, London: Folio Society, 2001, c1981 (text originally published 1851-1853), Plate XII.

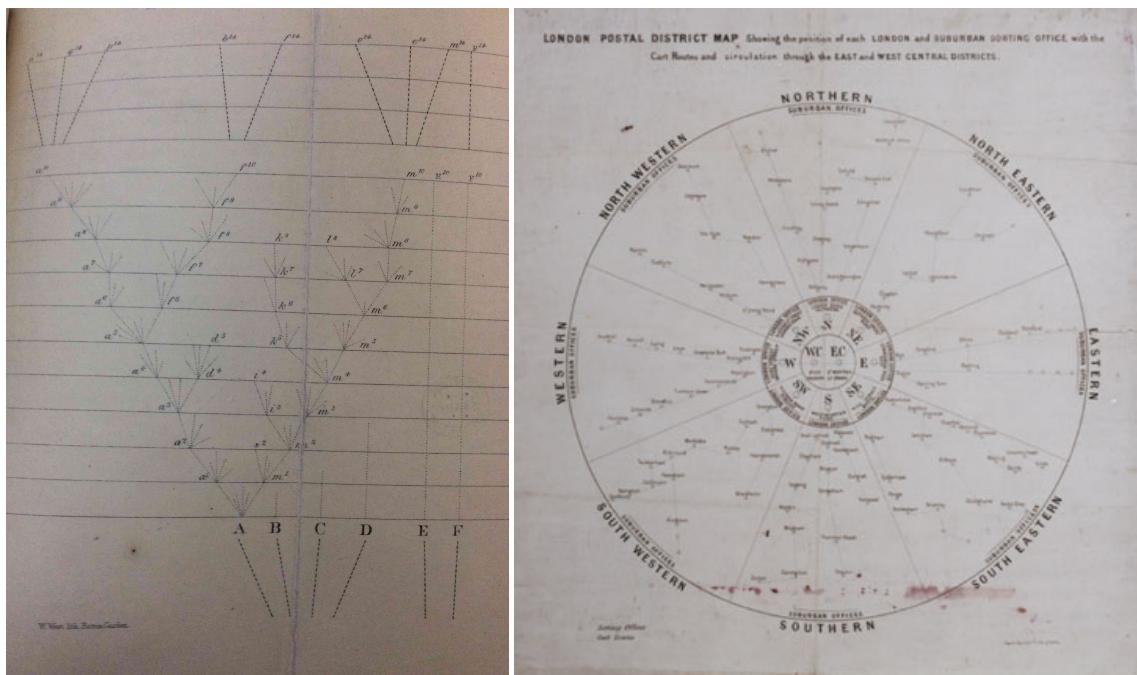


Fig. 115: The similar visual language of Darwin (left) and the Schematic Map⁷⁹²

There are hundreds such examples, but where this Victorian intellectual ordering – and the visual language they use to explain this ordering and to project rationality – was most relevant to the Postal Map was when it related to urban spaces, and to London in particular. The point at which this type of classification of things met the urban sphere, was seen in the example of Henry Mayhew, who spent years walking around the city interviewing people and observing them, and dividing them into categories.⁷⁹³ London was being pored over in this period, investigated and analysed, just as Darwin was categorising Species, and Ruskin was explaining architectural forms.

⁷⁹² Charles Darwin: *On the origin of species*, London: John Murray, 1861 p. 122 (left), and POST 21/761: 'London Postal District map: Showing the position of each London and Suburban Sorting Office with the Cart routes and circulation through the East and West Central Districts', 1838

⁷⁹³ Briggs noted, 'he [Mayhew] began, however, not with individuals but with a classification of types, recognizing that exact classification appealed to Victorians, but not knowing that it would appeal less to their descendants' Henry Mayhew, *The illustrated Mayhew's London: the classic account of London street life and characters in the time of Charles Dickens and Queen Victoria*, edited by John Canning; introduced by Asa Briggs, London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1986, p. 10



Fig. 116: Mayhew's categorisations of people⁷⁹⁴

In presenting a visual mode of representation of an ideal city system, the Map was presenting a plan for London. The Post Office was acting to modernise London, and in modernising efforts, their plans were shown visually through a map. The Map itself was a way of persuading people of its truth or of a particular political argument: maps had 'persuasive power'.⁷⁹⁵ The historian Jo Guldi describes the power of maps as political tools in her work on road building,⁷⁹⁶ in which she ascribes agency to maps in the

⁷⁹⁴ Henry Mayhew, *Mayhew's London: being selections from 'London labour and the London poor'* by Henry Mayhew (first published 1851), London; New York: Spring Books, 1969

⁷⁹⁵ Jo Guldi in her 'Roads to Power' in section on "Techniques of Persuasion", discusses how engineers in early nineteenth century drove the agenda on road building to ensure that their plans (e.g. for building techniques, types of materials used, form of surveying etc.) became standardised in the country's road building projects. They used the method of making clear presentations to the relevant government Select Committees – e.g. the Select Committee on Turnpikes, 1811). Joanna Guldi, *Roads to Power: Britain Invents the Infrastructure State*, Cambridge, Mass.; London: Harvard University Press, 2012

⁷⁹⁶ Her work describes how engineers who were involved in bidding for work to build new roads across the country in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries used various persuasive techniques to persuade Parliamentary committees of the merits of their particular schemes. On the discussion over whether to use 'Macadamisation' as road building technique, or other methods, Guldi stated "which

political lobbying process, due to their ability to seem impartial and authoritative⁷⁹⁷. It was the act of visualising data that made maps so powerful in their ability to persuade their viewer of their legitimacy, and of their neutrality.⁷⁹⁸ Guldi suggests the persuasive power of maps in a British government context; we can consider how this might have been the case with the London Postal Map.

Certainly the Post Office was well used to maps in a government committee context, as the evidence of the Select Committees in the 1830s shows. However, the Post Office often used maps to describe a situation to Select Committees, rather than to plan for future systems. The maps of the 1830s show this: they were not projections of a future state, but descriptions of the way the service actually worked at that time. The London Postal Map was acting differently, however: rather than describing a current situation, it was an active part of the reforms in London. It was a formulative part of the exercise rather than a mere description of a system. In this, it needed to present itself as neutral, rational, objective.

We see something of this spirit in the officer's report about the proposed London district in 1855.⁷⁹⁹ The power of data and scientific technique to persuade people in authority of a recommendation was demonstrated as Officers described the recommended measures as the 'best means' for realising the reforms.⁸⁰⁰ The claims made were exactly the sort that would be well-backed up by a good vision of efficiency, neutrality; in a map. The officers use language such as 'greatest balance;

general rule would prevail was not a matter that could be settled by science; it depended on the work of political debate" [...] "the matter was settled not by equations, but by lobbying". *Ibid.*

⁷⁹⁷ "The presentation of maps in committee ensured that they would receive a favourable reception as impartial and authoritative sources of information" *Ibid*, p. 59

⁷⁹⁸ "In the era of Parliamentary debate, where paper evidence won arguments, traditional methods of practical road making without documents won nothing. It was visually displayed evidence represented in maps that persuaded politicians. Icons of labour and detailed study in the field, maps helped establish the official surveyors commissioned by the Parliamentary committees as legitimate sources of authority above local surveyors and other witnesses, persuading the rest of Parliament and the Treasury about the validity of the information they received about the road network." *Ibid*, p. 62; "Maps substantiated Parliamentary claims by establishing the surveyor as a nonpartisan authority" *Ibid*, p. 61

⁷⁹⁹ Report to Secretary of the Post Office by a Committee of Officer, 4th July 1855. POST 30/4011: *London Postal Service: letters for London Postal Area, simplified address, Part 2*

⁸⁰⁰ "We are decidedly of the opinion that the form of arrangement we are about to submit will afford the best means of realising the designs in view, being that which, taken as a whole, offers the greatest balance of advantages to the service, whether as regards increase of public accommodation, simplicity and uniformity of character, or capability of being worked with convenience and regularity" *Ibid.*

'accommodation; 'Simplicity and uniformity; 'convenience and regularity' - all qualities that chime with the kind of information the Postal Map was portraying. The use of the Map was to persuade postal workers, and Londoners as a whole, of the 'simplicity and uniformity' of the new system, it was attempting to demonstrate "greatest balance" through visual means.

There was, therefore, a link between the function of the Map, and its form.⁸⁰¹ A link between the information of the Map, what it was intended to convey, and the type of visual characteristics that were used to make up the form of the Map. The object of the Map performed many functions, for example the boundaries drawn by the Map helped to define the different regions of London, and allowed Londoners to conceptualise their city. The outer boundary of the Map selected a administrative boundary of the city as large, thoroughly modern, and rational city. The names of the districts chosen by the Postal Map became part of Londoners' definitions of the city, tools to define different areas, and as a means of collecting information relating to them. The Map itself was circulated all over the country, and its definitions of the city were taken on by many people in many different forms, becoming a basic feature of maps of the period.

Above all else, the Map was a visual object, projecting a particular vision of the city. The specific mode of representation chosen by the Map was significant in many ways.

⁸⁰¹ Form of the map was ever linked to function: "And not only do the design, colouring, and lettering of man seventeenth century Dutch and French maps make it appropriate to refer to them as 'Baroque' and relate them to aesthetic choice and styles in architecture, painting and illustration, but the very complexity and exhausting mass of intricately wrought and interlocking detail of their content unconsciously map too a mentality pivoting on the cusp of an overextended encyclopaedism, threatening to collapse into incoherence under the sheer mass of the information they sought to synthesise." Cosgrove, p. 13

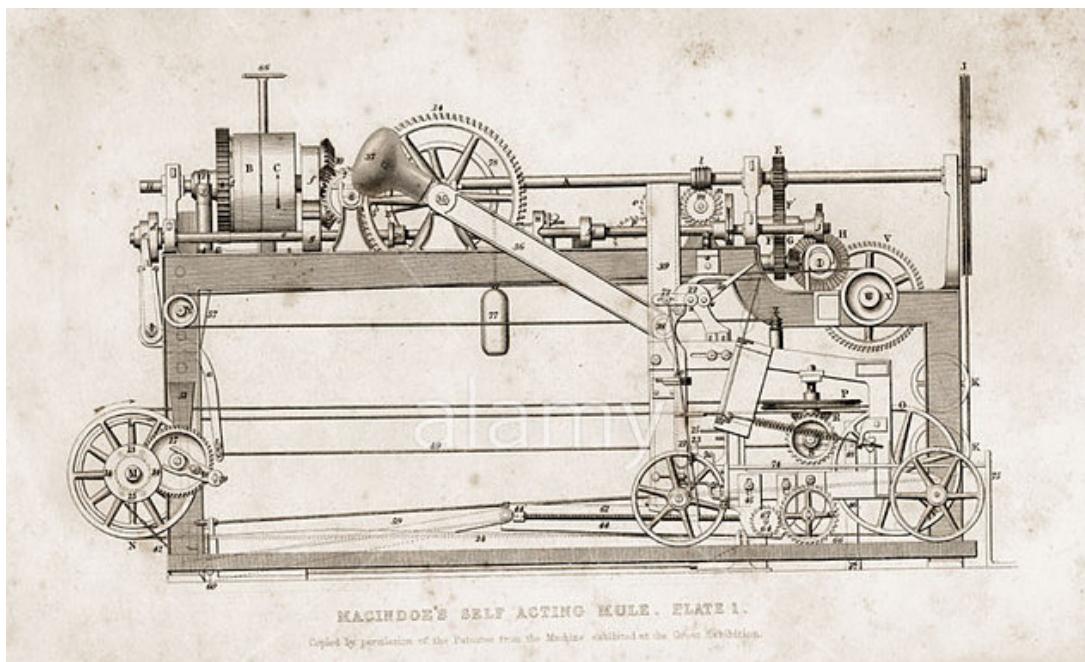


Fig. 117: The 'self-acting' mule⁸⁰²

The historian Louise Purbrick has written about the use of machinery, the impact of mechanization on labour, and the role that visualization of machinery had.⁸⁰³ She described the 'scientific' visualisation of the self-acting mule, explaining that the drawings of the machines were not instructive, but rather the function of the image was to impress the scientific nature of the machine upon the viewer. The machine *appeared* to act without people, in effect to act as a non-human strike breaker; a solution to the problem of labour, but in fact the machine always needed human skill to work it. The salient issue was that the viewer of the image of the machine would think it was 'self-acting'; the image gave a clear and persuasive, if inaccurate, impression.

Purbrick's work suggest a type of analysis that can be applied to the Postal Map. The Map made the 'machine' of the city more efficient, but it acted to de-skill; it meant that letter sorters needed less knowledge of the city as a whole because they could look to the initial letters on the address to see the destination district, rather than needing to know where each street in the whole city was located. This 'tool' for de-skilling of labour had important links to its own visualisation. The Map was the way of visualising

⁸⁰² Image source: <http://www.alamy.com/stock-photo-macindoe-s-self-acting-mule-596232.html> (accessed 02/01/17)

⁸⁰³ Louise Purbrick, 'Ideologically Technical: Illustration, Automation and Spinning Cotton around the Middle of the Nineteenth Century', *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 11, No. 4, 1998

how the new postal system in London would work; and by showing itself to be geometric, to be ordered, to be modern, it was persuading the viewer of the efficiency of the new system.

But so too was the story of the Postal Map much more complicated than its own visualisation suggests. In this story of labour de-skilling, the Map also acted as a tool for the organisation of labour to resist attempts to devalue their work, and to push for employee rights; as we will see in chapter three, employees used the district system to aid their own self-organisation.⁸⁰⁴

Visualization allows for a series of other, seemingly unrelated, implications. The Postal Map also did this: when it visualized a London that was divided into ten, it also allowed for other, seemingly unrelated, consequences. Maps can be seen to have unintended impact on that world; their life goes beyond their author's control.⁸⁰⁵ Although the Postal Map was made for the very practical purpose of moving mail around London quickly, once it was in place it had unintended side effects.

Division and segregation of the city's parts were effects of the Map. When the Map categorized, it also allowed for a form of social analysis, like that found in Mayhew's journalism which categorised people but which took on a specifically *spatial* form. With the introduction of the Postal Map, certain events in the city were able to be analysed on a district-by-district basis. This type of categorising of data and analysis- in effect a form of social science- was, like town planning, a quickly developing practice in this period.⁸⁰⁶

⁸⁰⁴ The Postmaster General's reports from the 1850s and 60s describe grievances that letter carriers have had in relation to their working conditions, and it is clear from these accounts that the letter carriers and other staff members were organizing themselves within their new districts in proto-unions, holding meetings in these locations, away from the administrative centre of St Martins. This was alarming to the powers that be. The Postmaster General in 1859 issued a letter to the South Western district office stating; "The Postmaster general holds every man who was present at that meeting, especially those who took an active part, responsible for its proceedings; and he warns all others not to follow any example tending to subvert discipline, to impede public service, and to bring disgrace and dismissal on this concerned". Undoubtedly the fact that these meetings were taking place in a location physically separate from the Postmaster and the centralized hierarchy of the Post Office had significance that was worrying to the powers that be at the time. These meetings held in workplaces away from the G.P.O. would not have so easily taken place without the reforms of the London Postal Map. Fifth Report of the Postmaster General, 1859, POST 92/2: *Reports of the Postmaster General on the Post Office. 1855-1864*

⁸⁰⁵ Pickles, p. 43

⁸⁰⁶ Peter Barber and Christopher Board, p. 131

Mayhew divided his London 'street folk' into 6 categories, which he then sub-divided.⁸⁰⁷ Mayhew, in his method, likened himself to an ethnologist.⁸⁰⁸ This was the use of a type of 'analytical method' in the nineteenth century; the use of classification.⁸⁰⁹

Towards the end of the century saw one of the most famous examples of visual categorisation that, like the Postal Map, dealt explicitly with the space of London: Charles Booth and his poverty maps.⁸¹⁰ Booth performed social analysis in which mapping was a crucial part of the new science of understanding society. Booth's map took four years to make, and it plotted streets in colour according to its inhabitants' wealth, for example, 'dark blue' was 'very poor'⁸¹¹ in a highly visual method for explaining social conditions. And, it was a way of making data spatial, of relating social conditions directly to place.⁸¹²

⁸⁰⁷ Henry Mayhew, *The illustrated Mayhew's London*. See Brigg's introduction, p. 10. See also Gertrude Himmelfarb, 'The Culture of Poverty', in H. J. Dyos and Michael Wolff (eds), p. 707.

⁸⁰⁸ Mayhew "wanted to alter the conventional judgements of his audience by forcing it to see the working poor through the lens of a moral science" Deborah Epstein Nord, 'The Social Explorer as Anthropologist: Victorian Travellers among the Urban Poor' in W Sharpe and Wallack (eds), p. 125

⁸⁰⁹ Choay, p. 27

⁸¹⁰ By the end of the nineteenth century, 'a more critical grasp of statistics and more sophisticated cartographic techniques led to the creation of thematic maps, such as Charles Booth's Poverty Maps, which made a serious contribution to the understanding of major social problems'. Peter Barber and Christopher Board (eds), p. 19

⁸¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 131

⁸¹² Sharpe and Wallock note that surveys such as those of Mayhew and Engels, "demonstrate that the concentration of a heterogeneous population and the division of labour on an extended scale had given the city a new spatial order and social structure that were decidedly modern." Sharpe and Wallock, p. 9

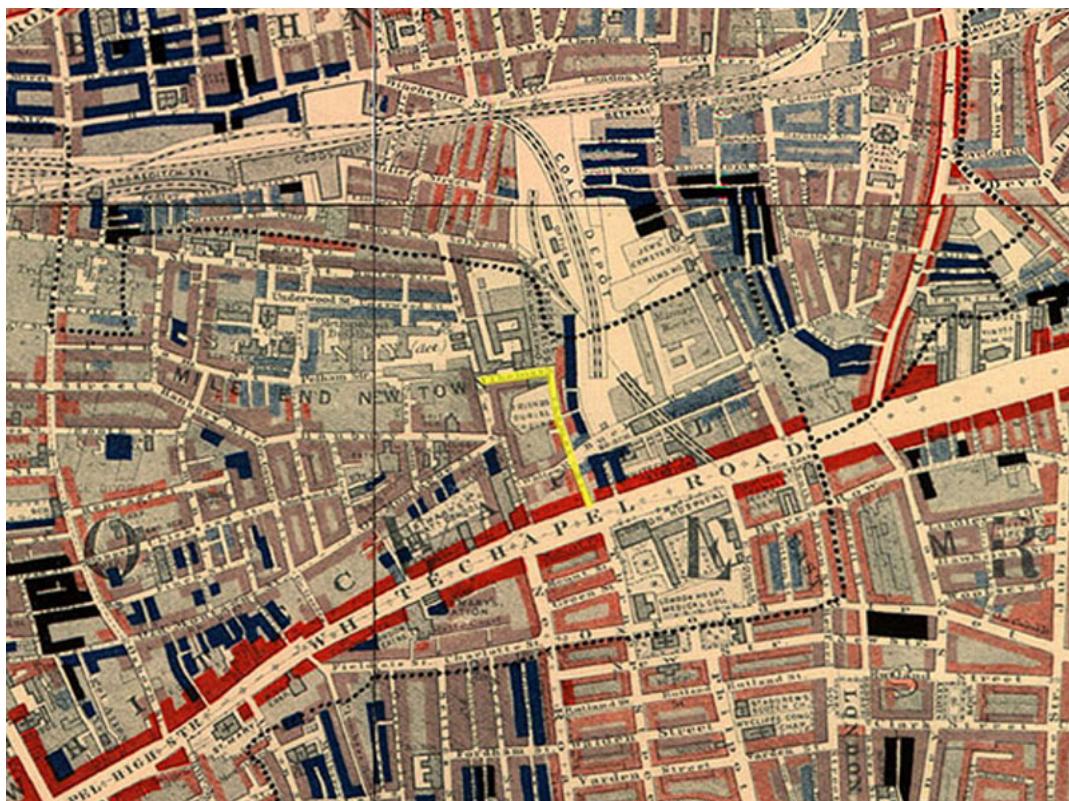


Fig. 118: Booth's spatial categorisations⁸¹³

That was key: the bringing together of physical space in the city with social investigations and data collection. The practice of categorisation as scientific technique, was decidedly modern, it was part of the modern envisaging of the city. It was directly linked in this period to the newly developing practice of city planning, feeding into it, because by collecting data based on the conditions in specific places – and desegregating that data by place - planners could target specific areas for new schemes.⁸¹⁴

In some respects – say, for example, in the codified class relations of its citizens – the city was ordered, or predictable.⁸¹⁵ In this period, all manner of ‘temporal and spatial

⁸¹³ Image source: <http://www.guy-singer.com/family-history/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/1889-booth-poverty-sm.jpg> (accessed 02/01/17)

⁸¹⁴ “Enlightenment statistical mapping of urban poverty, crime, or other social pathology was driven by the same implicitly totalising impulse to visualise and authorise a new order, reaching a kind of apotheosis in the comprehensive planning strategies of the mid-twentieth centuries” Cosgrove, p. 16

⁸¹⁵ Sharpe and Wallock note that cities like London, whilst in some people’s opinions were haphazard and chaotic, in others, in fact, saw order: “regarded from the point of view of either its ecology or its class relations, this “classic” city was a product of the Age of Capital whose internal dynamics could be specified. Thus, far from being the chaotic, haphazard and indecipherable environment it appeared to many casual observers, the nineteenth century city was an integrated, ordered, and knowable entity” Sharpe and Wallock, p. 9

'scheduling' existed which could be used to organise city life.⁸¹⁶ Mapping in the city, for example through the new Ordnance Survey data set,⁸¹⁷ could be combined with data such as the new census regime.⁸¹⁸

The postal system too provided some order, making the city more 'knowable' from a data collection perspective. Specifically, the London Postal Map was starting to allow for the desegregation of communications data by area of London. The Postmaster General gives an example of this:

The division of London into its Postal Districts has brought to light some of the causes which there influence the increase in correspondence, and which could not have been ascertained had the circulation continued to be through one central office.

As may be supposed, the greatest variations are found in the two Central Districts, and in the West and South-Western; the first two being chiefly influenced by circumstances affecting the commercial community, and the two latter by the meeting of Parliament and by the London season.

A decrease in the London District correspondence occurred after Midsummer last year (as compared with the corresponding period in the previous year), and was apparently caused partly by the unusual number of persons who left town in consequence of the great heat of the weather; partly by the absence of the large number of election circulars posted in the previous summer; partly by a temporary check to trade, while this season in 1858 was one of unusual activity; and partly by the builders' strike, by which many branches of trade were suspended.⁸¹⁹

⁸¹⁶ "These brought into public view a vast amount of information about the functioning of towns and cities which enabled people to schedule their lives with a new exactness" Joyce, p. 127; "This exactness could be utilised in the organisation of city life in new ways" *Ibid*, p. 127

⁸¹⁷ The process of collecting data "was as gradual a process as the systematic mapping of the country carried out by the Ordnance Survey in stages between 1791 and the 1860s". Harvie and Matthew, p. 2

⁸¹⁸ *Ibid*, p. 2

⁸¹⁹ The sixth report of the Postmaster General, 1860. POST 92/2: *Reports of the Postmaster General on the Post Office*. 1855-1864

What this demonstrates is the beginnings of a type of data collection and analysis that linked communications data to both place, and event, in London. In another instance the Postmaster General, later, notes that the number of letters posted in relation to the Marylebone election was upwards of 70,000.⁸²⁰ This is the beginnings of what could later become a highly sophisticated data set, organised not only by number or date, but by area, and will eventually lead to such issues as what we now understand as the 'postcode lottery'.⁸²¹

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The Map allowed for the combining of spatial data with social analysis of the city and its inhabitants. Desegregated data can be created, and particular social phenomena, such as poverty, or disease, or education, can be placed into their specific spatial contexts. The findings can then be fed back into the process of the newly emerging practice of urban planning.⁸²² Thus control, and order, could be planned via the spatial and social data the Map assisted in producing.⁸²³

The nineteenth century Victorian context, as ever, was key, when everywhere lay the proof of the evils of the lack of a plan.⁸²⁴ Many forms of understanding of the city, something like urban-based social science was developing, including work of journalists, of which Dickens is our most famous example. One of Dicken's urban portraits was his description of the demolishing huge parts of London for the railway in

⁸²⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸²¹ J. F. Raper, D. W. Rhind and J. W. Shepherd, *Postcodes: the New Geography*, Harlow: Longman Scientific and Technical, 1992

⁸²² As people and things become increasingly calculable, they become increasingly able to be regulated. Joyce, p. 55

⁸²³ Of the postal system in London, "order was brought to the system by the adoption of postcodes after 1856" *Ibid*, p. 126

⁸²⁴ "The nineteenth century is the century of criticism: in the case of city planning, there is a definite correlation between the semantic impoverishment of the urban system itself, and the appearance of theoretical treatises preceding and justifying various functional proposals." Choay, p. 25

*Dombey and Son.*⁸²⁵ Dickens not only understood how changes in the built environment effected Londoners – he was an active agent in that change.⁸²⁶

There was an impulse to improve upon the current haphazard city plan, which, it was believed, allowed for poverty and urban strife. New city planning schemes used maps to demonstrate the potential of good city administration.⁸²⁷ Plans were used to imagine a new city that cured the social ills that had been discovered through the use of maps in urban investigations: the map was used in both diagnosing symptoms, and in promoting a cure. The reaction was varied- some planners attempted to improve the city,⁸²⁸ others, such as Richard Norman Shaw who in 1875-81 built the suburban village of Bedford Park in Turnham Green, were more interested in simply escaping the city with developments banning urban industry.⁸²⁹

As we know, London had nothing in the way of a unified single government in this period.⁸³⁰ Something was needed to temper the feeling of being overwhelmed by the problems of the city, something that seemed rational.⁸³¹ If the Map described London was, it also categorised its parts, which rationalised the city, and through this allowed for making the city legible.⁸³²

⁸²⁵ His description “stands not only for the building of the new “Great Towns” but also for the revolution in lifestyle and consciousness brought about by the powerful centripetal forces of urbanization Sharpe and Wallock, p. 18

⁸²⁶ “Dickens was not the only one who perceived the complementary relation between the radical discontinuity of the built environment and that of the new forms of thought and social organisation” *Ibid.*, p. 19

⁸²⁷ “Such plans were the foundation for specialised surveys of disease, poverty, postal services, public transport and with the arrival of detailed statistics, social conditions from the census. Good administration requires good maps and nowhere more than in the ever changing city.” Peter Barber and Christopher Board, p. 131

⁸²⁸ “in the process of regularisation, urban “disorder” was examined in an effort to extract a potential order out of it; this order itself was not questioned, however.” Choay, p. 31

⁸²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 28

⁸³⁰ Nead discusses the issue of governance of London in this context: “At the heart of this messy political debate [into who should govern London] was the question of London’s identity. Was it a single entity, or a conglomeration of many? Did it have sufficient common interest, for it to be governed as a whole? What did London mean in the middle of the nineteenth century?” Nead, p. 18

⁸³¹ “Victorian cities were places where problems often overwhelmed people” Briggs, p. 21

⁸³² [Not speaking specifically of the postal map in this quote] “the rational city is a legible city, in which it is always possible to plot positions and to imagine the relationship of the parts with the whole. The modern map performs this function. It compartmentalises, classifies and explains the logics of the metropolis; it lays out its boundaries and its priorities” Nead, p. 26

One of the ways that the Postal Map made London more legible was its naming of the divisions of the city after compass points. This heightened a sense of there being a difference in London between what was seen as ‘east’, and what was ‘west’.⁸³³ These two had always been diametrically opposed in the minds of Londoners, not least as they had developed architecturally in such different ways.⁸³⁴ This division was also noted in literature of the period, with the East End even described using tropes of comparing the urban poor with ‘uncivilised’ people in foreign lands.⁸³⁵

In 1891 Margaret Harkness had identified ‘two nations, East and West’; East and West London. The East and West was compared to Britain and its empire,⁸³⁶ an example being George Sims in *How the Poor Live* who stated, “I propose to record the result of a journey into a region which lies at our own doors – into a dark continent that is within easy walking distance of the G.P.O.”⁸³⁷ So it was the trope of the empire and its deepest darkest reaches that was used in Victorian literature to describe its forgotten East End. Booth compared the East End to ‘darkest Africa’, and said the English were not just guilty of neglect, but of outright exploitation of the poor.⁸³⁸ British concerns at home were linked explicitly with concerns abroad.⁸³⁹ Add to this the fact that the East End, especially the docks, were very international in the period, and we have a dense and meaningful spatial metaphor.⁸⁴⁰ The analogy of the East End with the poor was not new, which lends credence to the idea that the London Postal Map was reacting to the way that Londoners saw the city already; there was already an understanding of a distinctness of ‘East’ and ‘West’ that the Postal Map aimed to capitalise on through its naming system.

⁸³³ ‘The contrast between East End and West End in London, which reflected what the Quarterly Review called “the complete separation of the residences of different classes of the community” was the great contrast of the 1880s and 1890s.’ Briggs, p. 325

⁸³⁴ ‘Topographically even, the wayward growth of the East had contrasted with the relative orderliness of the West, the alley with the square, [...] the railway embankment with the mews.’ Briggs, p. 327

⁸³⁵ ‘Those late-Victorian decades in which poverty was “rediscovered” as a national issue and in which numerous middle-class explorers travelled into the terra incognita of urban slums, particularly those of the East End of London’ Deborah Epstein Nord, in Sharpe and Wallock (eds), p. 119

⁸³⁶ ‘The dichotomy of West and East doubled, of course, For England and its Empire’ *Ibid.*, p. 120

⁸³⁷ Referring to the 1880s in London. *Ibid.*

⁸³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 121

⁸³⁹ ‘The language of domestic social investigation cannot be fully understood without an appreciation of England’s place in the constellation of world politics, that England’s national concerns – and the way they were discussed – were inseparable from its international ones’ *Ibid.*, p. 122

⁸⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 122-123

The start of a type of data collection that can be classified by area was really something that was in the twentieth century to develop to its full extent: the postcode.⁸⁴¹ This was something that would become a way of describing areas, targeting marketing, using data for insurance and more, not least as it was able to unambiguously describe space.⁸⁴² All of this future use came from something in the past – the postcodes in the 1960s were designed around the historic London districts.⁸⁴³

⁸⁴¹ we see an explanation of this, which is useful for us in thinking about the system one hundred and fifty years earlier: “the very core of our argument is that something designed and funded for one purpose can be useful – even vital – for many others” J. F. Raper, D. W. Rhind and J. W. Shepherd, *Postcodes: the New Geography*, Harlow: Longman Scientific and Technical, 1992, p. 1

⁸⁴² Looking to the future: “postcodes are going to be vital in future to the way in which we allocate resources, target our marketing and describe how any part of the country differs from its neighbours” [...] “The geographic description of place needs ideally to be unambiguous, terse, accurate, familiar, and easy to use for a variety of different purposes” *Ibid*, p. 19

⁸⁴³ Rapier, Rhind and Shepherd stated that when postcodes were introduced in the 1960s, they were alpha-numeric, one reason being “the format chosen allowed continuing use of the historic London and other District codes in almost all cases” *Ibid*, p. 31

5. CONCLUSION

When we consider what it was the public were seeing in the Postal Map, it is important to understand that the different choices made in deciding the Postal Map's form all contributed to the Map's persuasive power. In considering the persuasive power of the map, mapping theory presents a number of paths for analysis that we may wish to traverse.

Maps all claim to show a representation of a place. However, when analysing maps, the first step is to acknowledge that their claims to be rational, accurate, or neutral, must be treated with suspicion: as all maps are illusions.⁸⁴⁴ A map's supposed neutrality should be questioned in a way that seeks to understand the power relations at play in the creation of the map. A huge body of work exists to analyse the nature of maps and the different power relations at play in the practice of mapping; in this the geographer Brian Harley looms large. Harley, along with David Woodward, revolutionised the academic field of cartography and mapping theory, by considering maps from a social and cultural perspective⁸⁴⁵ - they pioneered the concept of power relations being a crucial part of mapping.⁸⁴⁶ The political act of using mapping as propaganda is a clear example of this type of behaviour; in fact the map has been an archetype for hegemonic processes, through the construction of nation states.⁸⁴⁷

Baudrillard explained, 'the map always precedes the territory, in that space only becomes territory through acts of bounding and making visible, which are primary

⁸⁴⁴ As Barber and Board warn us, "Maps are one of the greatest illusions known to man, and yet we instinctively put our faith in them" Peter Barber and Christopher Board, p. 7

⁸⁴⁵ Their work is still influential to this day, and alongside other methods this thesis follows the guidance laid down by Harley and Woodward, in that it attempts to understand how the map was effected by its surroundings, and how the map in turn had an impact on its surroundings. Cosgrove notes that the 1980 University of Chicago's publication 'History of Cartography' by Woodward and Harley marked a 'turn' in academia on mapping, away from assuming mapping is a neutral activity. Cosgrove, p. 3

⁸⁴⁶ Also influenced, like cultural studies at the time was, by Foucault in their conceptions of power relations in mapping. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and punish: the birth of the prison / translated from the French by Alan Sheridan*, New York: Vintage Books, 1995

⁸⁴⁷ Pickles describes the large use of 'propaganda' maps in the early twentieth century. In fact the criticism of these has slightly diverted attention away from the fact that all maps work in that way. Pickles, pp. 39 - 40

functions of mapping.⁸⁴⁸ The London Postal Map drew a line around ‘London’; an inherently political act. Drawing a boundary may accord with what the mapmaker understands the boundary to be, but this may only be an opinion, with another vested interest perhaps considering the boundary to be somewhere else, or not existing at all. The state dictated the definition of London, via the Map, which replicated the state’s own ideologies; questions can be raised about how an object designed by the state had an impact on the city and its people.⁸⁴⁹

Moving forwards from Harley and Woodward, many geographers have added other ways of analysing maps. Semiotics have been included in analysis,⁸⁵⁰ to understand the meanings behind a map’s form, and through this type of analysis we consider the aesthetic and representative form of the design of the map, as through the circle form, for example.⁸⁵¹ Similarly, more routine, ‘everyday’ issues relating to the objects have been considered,⁸⁵² with relevance to the Postal Map, which was ubiquitous in London life, even banal. Mapping has also been described as a means of exploring, discovering, and formulating knowledge about a place.⁸⁵³ And, we should not be too quick to assume that power relations work only in one direction, nor that they are always a primary role of mapping, where so many other acts are being undertaken as well.⁸⁵⁴

⁸⁴⁸ Corner, p. 222

⁸⁴⁹ The General Post Office had a specific set of aims that affected the way that the map represented the place it mapped, it replicated the state’s ideologies. Pickles references a quote of Harley: “As cartography became more “objective” through the state’s patronage, so it was imprisoned by a different subjectivity, that inherent in its replication of the state’s dominate ideology” Pickles, p. 49.

⁸⁵⁰ Cosgrove, for example, notes an interest in the methods of semiotics, stating that map form acts “to secure a consistent semiotic connection between sign and signified (map and territory)”. Cosgrove, p. 10

⁸⁵¹ My own understanding of semiotics has come by way of Barthes’ ‘Mythologies’, which I draw from when describing the circle of the London Postal Map.

⁸⁵² “I address rather the politics and aesthetics of common cartographic literacy, considering a place and time where the map emerges as an ordinary, even banal document, a common object.” David Matless, ‘The Uses of Cartographic Literacy: Mapping, Survey and Citizenship in Twentieth century Britain’, in Denis Cosgrove, p. 193

⁸⁵³ Control and power are not the only things mapping involves- it is also a method of “searching, disclosing, and engendering new sets of possibility” James Corner, ‘The Agency of Mapping: Speculation, Critique and Invention’ Cosgrove, p. 225

⁸⁵⁴ Questioning the importance of power relations in mapping has become one of the key elements of a post-Harley and Woodward critique, with Cosgrove stating that although selection in mapping raises questions and anxiety about the status of the knowledge presented in the map. Cosgrove, p. 11

The Postal Map too must be understood in light of its many contexts:⁸⁵⁵ geographic context, the characteristics of the physical space being mapped; and cultural context as well. The Postal Map was both a 'cultural outcome' of a place, and simultaneously had a role when placed back in its context, circulating within it.⁸⁵⁶ Maps exist in a context of other maps, of mapping norms;⁸⁵⁷ highly relevant for a map of London in a period when mapping was becoming crucial to the development of the city. And not least was its social context, relating to how the Map was perceived personally and in society by a variety of people who comprehended it.⁸⁵⁸ It is important to consider how it was received just as much as how it was made, and the impact of its users as much as the people who made the Map.⁸⁵⁹

The form of the Map details both the literal and the conceptual at the same time:⁸⁶⁰ it shows an actual thing, London- but does so through a set of metaphors for elements of space, with black lines representing train lines, for example.⁸⁶¹ As a visual object it uses many layers of concept, figure and representation that are prescribed graphically.⁸⁶² Maps are mental as well as graphic constructs - ideas - as 'there are some phenomena that can *only* achieve visibility through representation rather than through direct experience'.⁸⁶³ The conceptual element of a map, such as a boundary line drawn on a map, which is not actually literally seen on the ground, is an essential element of human

⁸⁵⁵ "Maps are not objective pictures of reality; the truth is that into the making of maps go the aims, the beliefs, the priorities, the prejudices and the tastes of each new generation." Whitfield, p. 10

⁸⁵⁶ Cosgrove suggests two contexts: firstly, considering the map as 'cultural outcome' of the complex authority surrounding the map's production (as in the myriad of different twists in history that influenced a map's making, seen in chapter one); secondly, considering the insertion of maps into "circuits of use, exchange and meaning [...] the map as an element of material culture". Cosgrove, p. 9

⁸⁵⁷ All maps exists within 'unacknowledged context' of other maps. Pickles, p. 42

⁸⁵⁸ Matless describes this process as 'cartographic literacy', meaning how the map was used; who was able to use it; what forms of knowledge it registered; and what kinds of citizenship it cultivated. Matless, David, 'The Uses of Cartographic Literacy: Mapping, Survey and Citizenship in Twentieth century Britain' in Cosgrove, p. 193

⁸⁵⁹ Matless states that "cartographic literacy figured as basic to a form of citizenship, to a geographical self, whereby people could know their place – in all senses of the term." *Ibid*, p. 194

⁸⁶⁰ "The map as a document is always at once concrete and abstract" *Ibid*, p. 198

⁸⁶¹ The mixture of the literal and the conceptual of course reflects life itself, and experience of places - "the experience of spatial life today is as much immaterial as it is physical". James Corner, 'The Agency of Mapping: Speculation, Critique and Invention' in Denis Cosgrove (ed), 1999, p. 249

⁸⁶² "the perception of a graphical image is not a purely psychological reception of information but a complex social play of images present and absent, in the context of other symbolic, ideological and national concerns." Pickles, p. 44

⁸⁶³ Corner, 'The Agency of Mapping: Speculation, Critique and Invention' in Cosgrove, p. 229; and p. 249

experience. A map that is a literal representation of the ground it surveys is not a map at all.⁸⁶⁴ The Map, therefore, performs an act of solidifying or codifying concepts.

The thread that ties these various historiographic points together is the basic understanding that a map performs two roles: it reflects the world; and it creates the world.⁸⁶⁵ In considering maps, there is a tendency to see what maps *represent*, rather than what they *do*.⁸⁶⁶ There is however a dual nature to every map. Maps perform an act of representation, whether the representation of a geographical place, or of particular interests or ideologies.⁸⁶⁷ The Postal Map was a depiction of London, and in many places would have become the object that stood in for London, for example in sorting offices in towns around the country. It was a form of communication.⁸⁶⁸ By framing the Postal Map through these debates, the form of the Postal Map and the impact that this form had, becomes ever more compelling.

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The postal reforms enabled a rapid change in the postal system in London, and as part of this the Map was a tool operating within a specific environment. It was situated within two layers of systems: both the postal system, and within the wider city. But it also had a number of secondary, unexpected, indirect side effects. It visually divided the city, leading to a cognitive map of the city that even one hundred and fifty years later would still be used as a cultural marker, as a statement of identity based on geographic location. Within this city, today, 'SW7' and 'E2', whilst both equal in weight and importance within the postal system, nonetheless have meanings that diverge dramatically from each other in the minds of Londoners.

⁸⁶⁴ The many citations of the Lewis Carroll/ Borges map in mapping theories shows this clearly.

⁸⁶⁵ "An implicit claim of mapping has conventionally been to represent spatial stability, at times to act as a tool to achieving it". Cosgrove, pg. 5

⁸⁶⁶ Corner, 'The Agency of Mapping: Speculation, Critique and Invention' in Cosgrove, p. 216

⁸⁶⁷ "official state topographic map series, for example, generally produced by military or at least state personnel, and marked with crests and symbols of state authority, have conventionally claimed to stand 'for the country'." Cosgrove, pg. 5

⁸⁶⁸ This representative quality of maps means that they provide us with some knowledge of the world, and are forms of communication of information. "Acts of mapping are creative, sometimes anxious, moments in coming to knowledge of the world." Cosgrove, p. 2

If the Map categorized, it also allowed for a form of social analysis that took on a specifically spatial form.⁸⁶⁹ With the introduction of the Postal Map, certain events in the city were able to be analysed on a district by district basis. The Map meant that people were able to use data to make decisions about the city, to plan for the city.

Reports of events and occurrences can then be fed back into the process of the newly emerging practice of urban planning. Thus the Map became a tool for something utterly unrelated to the internal systems of the postal service; it became a tool through which the idealistic, utopian image of the City as depicted in the London Postal Map, could be made real.⁸⁷⁰ The Map reflected the city – but it also created the city. Mapping differs from planning as it involves searching, finding and unfolding. Planning suggests an end, but mapping, a means.⁸⁷¹ The London Postal Map, by this count, was both a map and a plan, it suggested both an end, and a means.

In summing up, we should return to the Map, and to modernity, which by its nature was visual; and its vision was trusted by its viewers.⁸⁷² The Postal Map showed London to be rational, with equal parts, and with unified services.

The Map projected order and a rational system for all of London. The aim was achieved through ensuring that the Map was a visual object, in the public eye, to be seen by millions of people.

⁸⁶⁹ It can be fit into what Hewitt explains was an interest in statistic, mapping and urban reform, which went along with what she described as 'the Victorian tradition of utilizing Science to remedy social ills' Lucy E. Hewitt, 'The Civic Survey of Greater London: social mapping, planners and urban space in the early twentieth century', *Journal of Historical Geography*, vol. 38, 2012, p. 247

⁸⁷⁰ Maps could be a productive instrument – as in planning and design. James Corner, in Cosgrove
⁸⁷¹ Corner, in Cosgrove (ed), p. 228

⁸⁷² "Modernity is distinguished by its concern with the human eye's physical capacity to register and to visualise materiality at every scale" Cosgrove, p. 18 "British faith in the power of mapping to sustain and advance civic cohesion appears, characteristically, more pragmatic and pedestrian, and also eccentric, even bizarre..." Cosgrove, p. 22

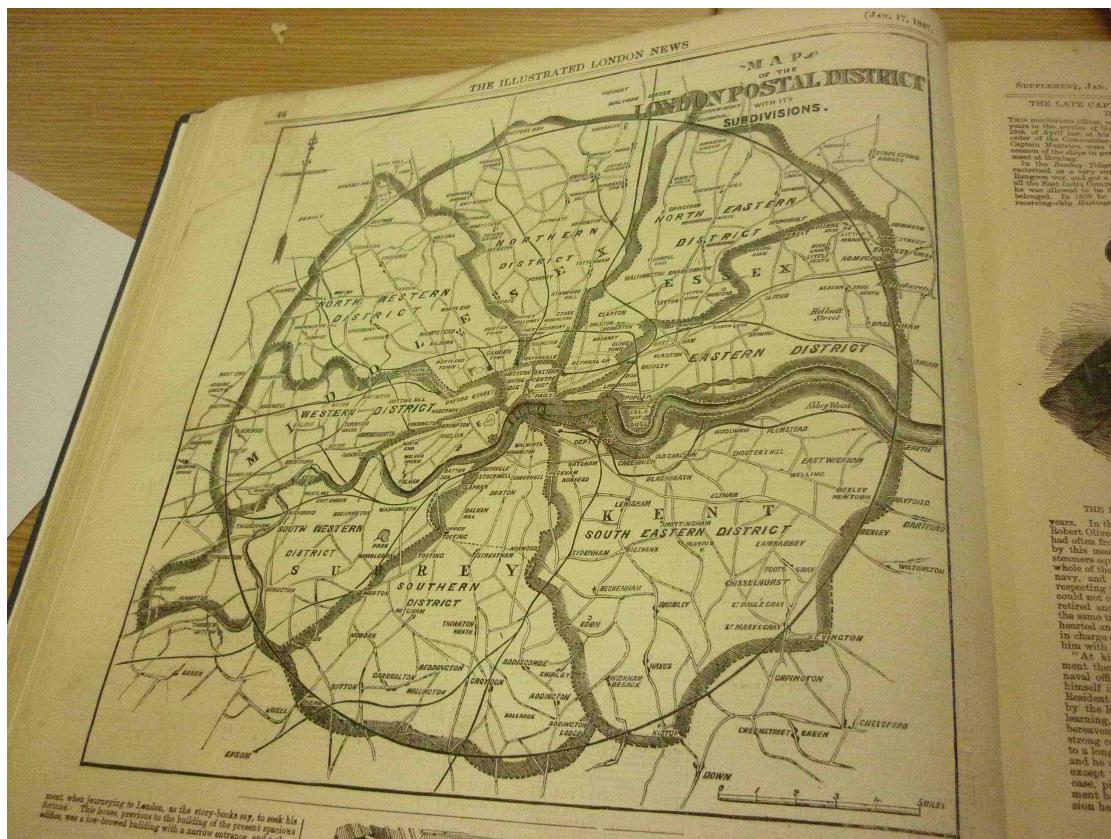


Fig. 119: The Postal Map in the press, and in the public eye⁸⁷³

We can end with a quote from Whitfield, who, from looking at maps of London as sources, argued: 'by the end of the century, everything in London had become bigger, more organised, more planned and more professional [...] and it had worked; there had been no revolution; Engel's grim prophesy had failed; London had somehow, and in a tentative way, been civilised'.⁸⁷⁴ Perhaps, in the ways outlined above, the London Postal Map played a part in this story.

We will now move on from this image of modernity, to understand how the image translated into modern services, in a modern city, with modern perceptions of city life.

⁸⁷³ *The Illustrated London News*, Saturday 17th January 1857

⁸⁷⁴ Peter Whitfield, *London: a Life in Maps*, p. 113

Chapter 3

Effects of the Postal Map Part 1: Speed of Communications, the People Who Created it, and the People Who Used it

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nothing is cheaper or more convenient than to get an errand promptly done for a penny

[...]

It is in the small brief communications arising from our daily needs that the Post Office has found its modern sphere of action.⁸⁷⁵

⁸⁷⁵ *The Times*, January 24, 1866

1. INTRODUCTION

Now that the biography of the Map has been laid out, and the visual impact of the Map has been explored, we turn to consider the effect that the Map had outside of itself, and outside its own postal context.

To understand the reforms from another perspective, and in so doing to begin to comprehend the various effects of the reforms, we can look to the national press. The article below is dated 1866, and is revealing about the London reforms as it linked data relating to London services with analysis of the use of the service, stating the real reasons why it was a modern and widely used service, and what this meant.⁸⁷⁶

The Times, in an article in January 1866, stated:

if we could analyse this mass of correspondence, we should probably be surprised at the results [...] the great multiplication of letters in what is termed the district service of large towns, and above all, in the Metropolis; for whereas the letters delivered to the whole of England and Wales, London excepted, were but 390m, they were 170m in London alone. It is in this immense capital, where, though we are all inhabitants of one city, we are, nevertheless, all out of each other's reach, that letters are made to do so much work for us. The Post Office is every man's servant, carrying small messages at all hours of the day. There are not nearly so many letters written in all Scotland and Ireland together as in the London district. Nothing like so many are dispatched to all the States of the Continent and all over Colonies. We believe this to be the grand secret not only of the present, but also of the future prosperity of the Post Office. The practice of employing the Post for small purposes of hourly communication will probably creep into all our towns in proportion as deliveries are multiplied. It prevails more or less even now wherever there is more than

⁸⁷⁶ The articles relate firstly to the retirement of Rowland Hill, and then his obituaries, and as such would perhaps be more likely to praise Hill's reforms...

one delivery, for nothing is cheaper or more convenient than to get an errand promptly done for a penny. Orders for the day can be sent to tradesmen, and a very considerable part of the work of a household transacted through this agency. It is not the old-fashioned "correspondence" that has increased with the Penny Postage; in fact we should be disposed to doubt whether the ancient fashion of letter-writing between friends – young ladies excepted – has not rather declined than extended in this busy age. It is in the small brief communications arising from our daily needs that the Post Office has found its modern sphere of action.⁸⁷⁷

The overwhelming message drawn out from this article was that the capital was a place where small messages were sent throughout the day: 'an errand promptly done for a penny'. This service could compete with the likes of messenger boys running through the city. *'It is in this immense capital, where, though we are all inhabitants of one city, we are, nevertheless, all out of each other's reach, that letters are made to do so much work for us. The Post Office is every man's servant, carrying small messages at all hours of the day'*. And it was a service that produced its own demand: *'The practice of employing the Post for small purposes of hourly communication will probably creep into all our towns in proportion as deliveries are multiplied'*. The introduction of regular services prompted use creating demand where it may not have been before. And, above all, it was a thoroughly modern service: *'It is in the small brief communications arising from our daily needs that the Post Office has found its modern sphere of action'*.

This chapter considers what it meant to have fast communication in the city, looking at who used the 'small brief communications', alongside understanding what the implications of the new system were on labour; on the people working in the post. This chapter, therefore, is all about experience, and how experiences changed because of the reforms related to the London Postal Map.

⁸⁷⁷ *The Times*, January 24 1866

One of the main reasons for introducing the London Postal Map system was to increase the speed of communications in the city – to ‘obtain rapid intercommunication’ within London, as Rowland Hill would have it.⁸⁷⁸ This aim was repeated again and again. This was significant because it was this speed – and the experience of fast communications – that marked the experience of the post in this period. Therefore, firstly, the speed of the post itself is considered, and the letter post is understood to be part of a much wider network of postal infrastructure.

Secondly, the staff are considered. One of the most important effects of the Postal Map was that which it had on the post office staff who administered the new system. The realities of the new service had implications for labour; the truly ‘modern’ service had implications for the people who created it, changing their experiences, their daily routines, their working relations.

Thirdly, the chapter considers issues of globalization and communications networks influencing the speed and time-frames of business and the development of financial services. The postal service had something of a dual nature: it was an end in itself, with its own direct effect on the environment; and secondly, it was a means to different ends, good communication being a tool that allowed for the development of many other things.⁸⁷⁹ In this chapter, the concept of the post being a means to non-postal ‘ends’ is described using the case study of the financial services sector in London.

The reason for the choice of the financial services sector is due to a number of factors. The moment when the London Postal Map was introduced and communication in London became faster, was just the time when the financial services industry was being deregulated and was experiencing boom. Not only that, it was also occurring at a time when the British Empire was expanding greatly, using City-based financial services to fund building projects abroad; indeed, the financial services were becoming one of the

⁸⁷⁸ Sir Rowland Hill and George Birkbeck Norman Hill, *The life of Sir Rowland Hill and the history of the penny postage. By Sir R. Hill and his nephew G.B. Hill*. London: Thos. De La Rue and Company, 1880, p. 271

⁸⁷⁹ ‘Improvements in the movement of public information had analogous effects in the economic realm. Widely circulating information spurred economic development by integrating distant services into a national, even international system and by fostering regional specialisation. Richard B Kielbowicz, *News in the Mail: the press, post office, and public information, 1700-1860s*, New York; London: Greenwood, 1989

dominant factors not only in London, but across the empire.⁸⁸⁰ The City – the EC district after 1856 – was the area that most readily used and benefitted from the ‘hourly communications’ of the London Postal Map. It had the largest number of deliveries daily in London, and here was the place that letters could be received and replies sent many times in a day.⁸⁸¹ This, in a part of London small enough to be able to physically walk to meet somebody if you so wished; letter carriers were able to get from the G.P.O. in St Martin’s by foot to the outer edge of the EC boundary in 15 minutes or less.⁸⁸² The *form* of the financial services industry was also relevant: changes in this period saw a shift away from an economy based on producing actual goods, and trading them, to an economy based on the financial services required for creating credit in order to allow for the trading of goods,⁸⁸³ This type of economy, more than any other, is dependent on good communications.

It is this form of communication that was distinct to London in this period. London had by far the fastest and most frequent communication system in the country, it was Londoners that experienced this specific form of modernity.

The speed of post and the implications it had, for both the people who made the post, and the people who used the post, will be demonstrated to be effects of the London postal reforms. They will also, at various points, be understood as introducing forms of modernity to London and to experiences in the city.

⁸⁸⁰ ‘this was the century which firmly embedded London at the centre of the world economy. The world was bound to London through its manufactures, through its great publishing and printing and communications industry, which helped shape the world’s values and opinions, and through its enormous port, at the heart of world shipping and even, for a time, world shipbuilding. But these ties were not as important as those less tangible ligaments which chained the world’s finances to London through the organisation of interest rates, capital, credit, shares and bills of trade. For perhaps the entire century, certainly from 1815, London was the financial heart that kept money pumping the whole world over. It was this aspect of London, more than the trappings of court or state, which could claim for it the crown and title of ‘Imperial City’. White, pg. 3

⁸⁸¹ POST 59/62: *General Post Office: Major and Minor Establishments, Circulation Department, 1867-77*

⁸⁸² The Postmaster General’s second report (appendix A), p. 45. POST 92/1: *Report upon the Post Office and Reports of the Postmaster General on the Post Office, 1854-1858*

⁸⁸³ P.J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism: 1688-2000*, Routledge, 2014, p. 55

2. SPEED OF THE POST IN LONDON

The crucial difference between the pre- and post-London Postal Map service was the ability to send letters back and forth across the city in a day. This was achieved through the administration and sorting processes changing, in order to introduce greater speeds into the system.

The Postal Map was not the only manifestation of this impulse towards speed within the postal system, just as the letter post was not the only fast communications system experienced by the people of London. Post offices and sorting offices were all elements of the network that mail was transported around. Post was part of a spiderweb of routes that linked post offices to railway stations and other key sites- and a constant aim was increasing the speed of mail traveling around this network.⁸⁸⁴

When mail reached London it was taken from trains in postal bags to the station postal depot, from where it was sent out to the London district post offices via mail carts called 'accelerators'.⁸⁸⁵ The use of mail carts to transport mail around the city was not without controversy; they were seen as liable to holding the service ransom to the vagaries of London traffic. Whilst the Postal Map achieved a much speedier transfer of mail around the city, there were always improvements which could be made. Limits to the speed of the postal service in London were commented on publicly, with perceived problems in the service described by the press. An article in *The Times* that appeared over two days, on 29th and 30th March 1860 painted quite a picture.⁸⁸⁶ The inadequacies of the system

⁸⁸⁴ "In each District the morning delivery within London proper and the despatch to the suburbs are now made from the District Office, the mail bags being brought to it direct from the railway station, instead of being first conveyed, as formerly, to the General Office in St Martin's le Grand, and the result is a greater punctuality in the deliveries, and diminished labour to the letter carriers, who are no longer required to come on duty at so early an hour as when they all were required to assemble at the Chief Office" The Postmaster General's sixth report, 1860. p. 8. POST 92/2: *Reports of the Postmaster General on the Post Office*. 1855-1864

⁸⁸⁵ "An improved van has been devised for conveying the mails between the General Post Office and the Metropolitan railway stations; and a model van on this better construction is nearly completed. The chief advantage sought is a ready means of throwing the roof and back of the van completely open, for the purpose of rapid loading and unloading. This new carriage bids fair greatly to excel the old-fashioned ad somewhat clumsy vehicles now in use", *Ibid.*

⁸⁸⁶ The slightly hysterical article is littered with a number of inaccurate claims – including a claim that large City banks do not pay for registered mail, and as such the article should be treated with a pinch of salt, but nonetheless it must have caused enough of a stir for some action to be instigated within the Post

were laid bare, and postal transport infrastructure in use in London came under colourful attack: it stated that once sorting had finished,

the sacks [of mail] at last are bundled into their huge vans – half fire-engine, half water-cart, drawn by horses as meagre-looking and as slow as the poor extra sorters in the Post office at 10s. a-week. These vans were once called “accelerators” and the name is still retained in a bitter pleasantry’ [the vans leave at 8.30am], ‘at such an hour these “accelerators” may be seen, laden with the letters and papers of the previous day, lumbering slowly down Ludgate Hill.⁸⁸⁷



*Fig. 120: The 'Post Office Accelerator'*⁸⁸⁸

The sarcastic reference to the ‘accelerators’ is telling. Although in this period speed of mail around the country was being increased through the use of the train, in London these horse-drawn mail carts transported mail around the city, along with letter

Office to investigate the claims made. The article began, “the public will require very little apology from us for directing their attention to a subject of such wide-spread interest, and such deep public importance, as that of the arrangements and present working systems of the General Post Office.” *The Times*, March 29th 1860.

⁸⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸⁸ ref: <http://www.magnoliabox.com/art/550634/post-office-accelerator-with-passengers-holborn-london>

carriers on foot, as the primary form of transportation.⁸⁸⁹ This was important; it meant that the speed of the system was only ever going to be as fast as the traffic allowed.

Whilst the Postal Map aimed at rationalising the system to mean ever faster communication, in practice the system was dependent on something outside the control of the Post Office.

One possible solution to the problem of traffic on roads was to use rails. The building of the new London Underground, the first line of which opened in 1863,⁸⁹⁰ was eagerly anticipated by the Post Office.⁸⁹¹ The Postmaster General stated, 'For a much more important improvement in this part of the service, however, I look forward to the Metropolitan railway, now at length in course of construction, which is to link together the greatest railways which start from London. Ultimately, I hope that all the Metropolitan railways will be thus united.'⁸⁹² This quote is particularly interesting in the context of the history of the Metropolitan line railway – the first underground railway in London – which, under the plans of its original route, would have gone straight to the G.P.O.⁸⁹³ The connection between the movement of mail and letter communications, with railway technology, could not have been more explicit.⁸⁹⁴

Another key element in the postal network in London was the pillar box, which in this period was just being introduced. It meant that instead of having to take mail to the local post office or receiving house, or hand it to a letter carrier, people could now just post a letter in their local pillar box.

⁸⁸⁹ The officers working on speeding up the system stated that mail carts were to travel between the District Offices and Receiving Houses. Report to Secretary of the Post Office by a Committee of Officers (extract), 4th July 1855. *Post 30/4011: London Postal Service: letters for London Postal Area, simplified address, Part 2*

⁸⁹⁰ T.C. Barker and Michael Robbins, *A history of London transport: passenger travel and the development of the metropolis, Vol.1, The nineteenth century*, London: Allen and Unwin for the London Transport Executive, 1975, p. 113.

⁸⁹¹ The Postmaster General's sixth report, 1860. p. 12 POST 92/2: *Reports of the Postmaster General on the Post Office. 1855-1864*

⁸⁹² *Ibid.*

⁸⁹³ The Metropolitan Line was to have a 'City Terminus' at the G.P.O., 'to veer South-East at Cowcross Street, and go from there to the G.P.O. at St. Martin's le Grand and enter the basement there so that mails could be loaded on trains without being moved from the building'. These plans were in 1853. The extension to the G.P.O. was eventually taken out because of the cost. Barker and Robbins, pp. 108-113.

⁸⁹⁴ Archive files show the negotiations between the Post Office and the railway companies about transporting mail around the country. *POST 30/174: Royal Commission on Railways: list of arbitration cases furnished, part 1, 1866*

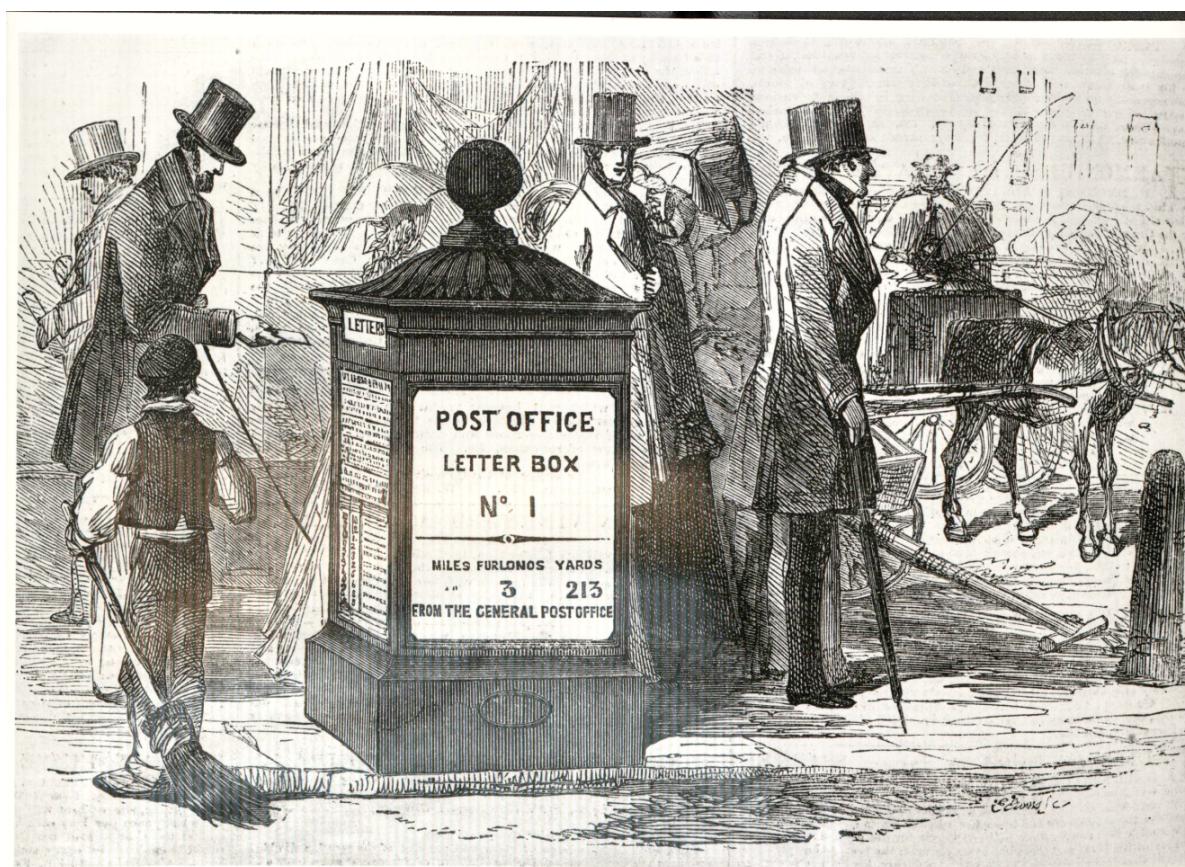


Fig. 121: London's first Pillar box⁸⁹⁵

This period also saw a series of attempts – some more successful than others – to add to the Postal Map, the pillar box and the train, to increase the speed of the mail. One such attempt was undertaken in 1861, when Rowland Hill experimented with a system of underground pneumatic tubes that, he hoped, would connect the central and district offices, and major railway termini, sending mail bags at incredibly fast speeds, not subject to the traffic above ground.⁸⁹⁶ The system was to work using vacuum pump technology, and Hill set up an experiment to test the innovation in Battersea Park, that

⁸⁹⁵ Source: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/world-history/rhodri-marsdens-interesting-objects-londons-first-pillar-box-10162493.html> (accessed 28/11/16)

⁸⁹⁶ "the division of London into districts naturally induced inquiring as to the swiftest and cheapest means of conveyance over the comparatively short distances between office and office. Mail carts were at once put into use, but I was inclined to hope that a swifter mode might be found- one, too, less liable to interruption." Hill then goes on to describe the scheme for 'tubular conveyance' in a tunnel vacuum. He states that it was a good experiment, but the expense could not be justified. Sir Rowland Hill and George Birkbeck Norman Hill, *The life of Sir Rowland Hill and the history of the penny postage. By Sir R. Hill and his nephew G.B. Hill.* London: Thos. De La Rue and Company, 1880, vol. II, p. 316. Hill was also keen for the increase in frequency of despatch that the technique would cause in London, see *Ibid* p. 338.

was described in the *Illustrated London News*.⁸⁹⁷ However, as the authors of '*The Reform of Post Office*' noted, 'It failed.'⁸⁹⁸

In fact, despite Hill's failed experiment, a pneumatic system *was* built and operated in the 1860s, transporting mail underground from Euston station after its opening in 1863.⁸⁹⁹ It closed in 1874, having not achieved any significant increase in the speed of transporting mail, but apparently not before becoming, 'the 'theme park of its day' with reports of thrill seeking, and often inebriated, Victorian gentlemen climbing on board before being fired off down the tunnel at speeds of up to 30mph'.⁹⁰⁰

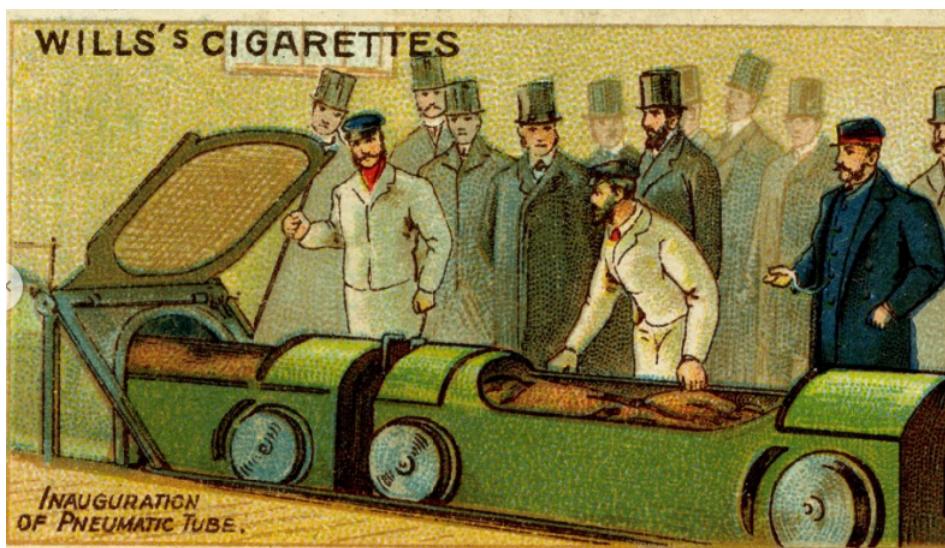


Fig. 122: The experimental pneumatic tube to transport mail⁹⁰¹

⁸⁹⁷ *Illustrated London News*, August 1861

⁸⁹⁸ "Many ideas – sane and insane – were from time to time proposed to accelerate or simplify the operations at the Post office. One of these, mentioned by Hill, was the "pneumatic" process, by which a series of tubes about two feet in diameter linked the Central Office with District Offices (and, maybe, with the principal railway termini) with gigantic centrifugal vacuum pumps extracting the air at the centre, and little cars, fitting the tubes fairly closely, carrying mail-bags from the periphery and propelled by the pressure of the air behind them. An experimental installation in Battersea Park was built in 1861. It failed." Fryer and Akerman, p. 1135.

⁸⁹⁹ As the Postal Museum's online exhibition 'Post Haste' explains, "It originally ran between Euston station and Eversholt Street sorting office in Central London, then in 1866 was extended down to Holborn." quotes from online exhibition here: <http://beta.postalheritage.org.uk/whats-on/onlineexhibitions/post-haste/> accessed 30/03/15

⁹⁰⁰ quotes from online exhibition here: <http://beta.postalheritage.org.uk/whats-on/onlineexhibitions/post-haste/> accessed 30/03/15

⁹⁰¹ *Illustrated London News*, August 24th 1861, on the 'Pneumatic Experiment', reproduced in Fryer and Akerman, p. 1135. See also: *Illustrated London News*, 18th November 1865 about a pneumatic despatch tube at Holborn; and *Illustrated London News*, February 28th 1863 stating that a pneumatic tube had opened successfully between Euston and the NWDO at Eversholt Street. It was around a third of a mile long and the journey of mail bags took 1 minute. As the experiment was successful, it is planned the tube will be extended to Holborn. POST 111/99: *Newspaper Cuttings*, 3 Mar 1860-25 May 1869. Image taken from <http://postalmuseum.org/discover/explore-online/our-stories/post-haste/> (accessed 17/12/16).

The search for ever faster ways of transporting of mail around the city would continue, and would eventually lead to the building of the 'Mail Rail' underground railway service which opened in 1927.⁹⁰²

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Moving forward in time, in 1883, a Select Committee questioned the London Controller, Jeffreys, who gave specific details about the extreme speed of the service. He showed that processing mail in London was so fast that letters were processed in a matter of minutes.⁹⁰³ He described letters pouring into the branch offices and the Chief Office in such volume that mail had to leave the office over six different dispatches every evening just to keep up.⁹⁰⁴ Despite all of this speed, he stated that in the City, the London service's customers – the businessmen of the City – would always wish the mail to be even faster, showing the 'importance and urgency' of letter communication for business.⁹⁰⁵

This point is significant: it was the businessmen in the City who relied on – and who demanded – fast mail; and it will be these people whom we will return to later in this chapter.

⁹⁰² <http://postalmuseum.org/discover/explore-online/our-stories/post-haste/> (accessed 17/12/16).

⁹⁰³ "The letters that are posted now at these branch offices, &c., are forwarded here so quickly that they are with us in a few minutes." POST 91/85: '*Central Post Office Buildings and Establishments: Minutes of Evidence, 1883*', p. 36

⁹⁰⁴ "...we shall have to dispatch as many as six times in the course of the evening to each of the dépôts previously mentioned, otherwise they would be flooded at the dépôts if they got the letters there altogether at last. At present the letters are poured into the Chief Office very rapidly by means of frequent mail carts and in that way the work is going on here while further posting is going on at Lombard Street, Mark Lane, and Throgmorton Avenue, so that when the last mail comes up from those places there is only that to dispose of." *Ibid*, p. 37

⁹⁰⁵ q- "what is the difference between the time of posting at one of the offices nearest the Bank and to here?"

A - "None whatever. At Lombard Street and in most of the branch offices in that direction it is the same as here."

Q "That of course is, for commercial purposes, of great importance and urgency, and any restriction in that time would be much complained of?"

A " - Yes, the cry is for change in the other direction." *Ibid*, p. 38

Effect on the Country-wide Network

The Postal Map reforms brought the first delivery of the day earlier, meaning letters from the rest of the country could be delivered over breakfast, or be at the office before the working day began. This involved not just the London postal system, but also postal workers all over the country. The importance of the railways was depicted in London by this postal map from 1881, which shows a number of the post offices and sorting offices, in red and blue dots, along with green lines that indicate the connections between the main London railway termini and chief offices. London rail stations were connected with main postal sites, crucial for the moving of the mail.⁹⁰⁶

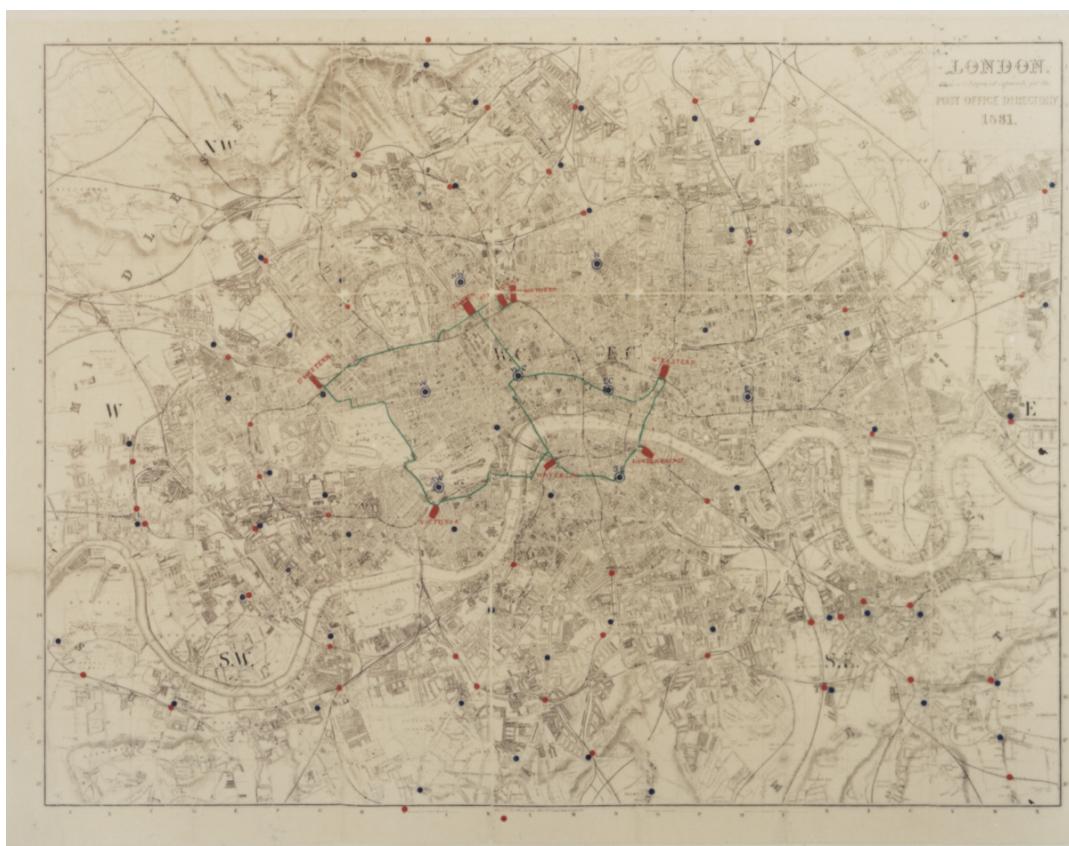


Fig. 123: London's connections between railways and postal sites⁹⁰⁷

Baines in the 1880s rather poetically noted of the London services: 'while 11,583 persons are borne on the vote for the London Postal Service, no fewer than 20,449

⁹⁰⁶ The Postmaster General's report makes a point linking the postal district system to the introduction of the railways in London. Letters were now being brought direct to District Offices from railways. The Postmaster General's sixth report, 1860. p. 12 POST 92/2: *Reports of the Postmaster General on the Post Office*. 1855-1864

⁹⁰⁷ POST 21/72: *London drawn and engraved expressly for the Post Office Directory, 1881*

persons, including the Telegraph staff, obey the beck of the Controller and keep the ship running free.⁹⁰⁸ If the London night mail was the backbone of the country, London was the country's communications heart.

Later, with the introduction of the telegraph came another communications technology linked to the letter post.⁹⁰⁹ In the impulse to increase the speed of communication, the telegraph also dominated public imagination.⁹¹⁰ In this period new telegraph companies were being established, bringing almost instant communications to the country for the first time.⁹¹¹ Messages from many parts of the world could be received in London the same day that they were sent. The incredible benefits of the telegraph have been explained elsewhere; where this thesis enters the story is the moment at which the telegraph reached its destination in London.

Along with changes in London, there were therefore corresponding changes in the rest of the country; other cities sending mail to London needed to address letters correctly to ensure letters were sorted into Districts before they reached London.⁹¹² Often letters were sorted on trains as they sped towards London. Sorters outside London now would not see London as one place, but as ten individual towns, with different mail bags, different destinations, different railway lines, just like the other towns outside London that mail was being sent to.

This system was put in place through a number of measures. Before the Map was introduced, the Postmaster General asked all postmasters in the country to submit a form stating the numbers of letters that were sent from their towns for London from

⁹⁰⁸ F.E. Baines, *Forty years at the post office. A personal narrative*. London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1895, pg. 193

⁹⁰⁹ Although London's postal service operated independently from an internal post office administrative perspective, it was experienced by the people of London as one part of a much wider set of communications systems. We see in the archives in particular in relation to the telegraph. Businesses in the City often used stationary that had pre-printed letterheads showing the name of the firm and various details; often the postal address of the headquarters with the London district given on one side, and the local telegraph office on the other side. To Londoners working in the City, modern life meant regularly use of both types of communications technology, working alongside each other to use the different strengths of both systems.

⁹¹⁰ Tom Standage, *The Victorian Internet: The Remarkable Story of the Telegraph and the Nineteenth Century's Online Pioneers*, London: Phoenix, 1999

⁹¹¹ From 1845 telegraph lines in the UK took off. Standage, p. 56.

⁹¹² POST 30/127B: *London Divisional Sorting in Provincial Post Offices and on Travelling Post Offices (TPO) introduced, c.1859*

10th- 15th February 1856. Under the new system, all towns that sent at least 500 letters per day into London would need to sort letters into districts.⁹¹³

<small>The Postmaster is desired to tear off the fly half-sheet of this Form, and to fold this half up so that the printed Address on the back of it may be plainly seen.</small>		
<p align="center">RETURN of the Number of Letters (including all Packets paying the full Letter Rates of Postage), and of Book Packets and Newspapers, (whether chargeable or free,) sent from the Post Office at _____ : and from all its Sub-Offices and Receiving Offices, on each of the six days commencing 10th February and ending 15th February, 1856, both days inclusive, for the delivery of London and the London District; but not including any Letters, Book Packets, or Newspapers intended to be forwarded through London for places beyond the London District, or for places Abroad.</p>		
DATE	Letters including all Packets paying the full Letter Rates of Postage	Book Packets and Newspapers
10th February.....	_____	_____
11th ,, 	_____	_____
12th ,, 	_____	_____
13th ,, 	_____	_____
14th ,, 	_____	_____
15th ,, 	_____	_____
TOTALS.....	_____	_____

I Certify that the above is, to the best of my belief, a correct Return.

Signature of } Postmaster. } _____

Fig. 124: Research into the number of letters posted to London⁹¹⁴

To ensure the changes went off smoothly, some sorting staff were sent from London to the bigger offices around the country, such as Bristol, to direct post office employees about the new system, and some staff from provincial offices were sent to London to be

⁹¹³ A letter from the Postmaster General to Surveyors outlining the new system in June 1856 explained this. *Ibid.*

⁹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

trained.⁹¹⁵ Copies of the London Postal Map were sent to the provincial offices, as a letter from 13th June stated: 'the officers from Manchester and Derby are now well acquainted with the sorting of the London letters, to the several Postal Districts; and, with the assistance of the Maps, and lists, with which they have been supplied, will, I believe, be able to perform satisfactorily the duties required of them.'⁹¹⁶ Alongside the map, a list of towns and places in each District was sent, including a list of places along the boundary lines of the district.

It appeared the system was adopted quickly and easily: it was soon extended into towns that sent anything over 200 letters per day to London.⁹¹⁷ There were some costs associated, acknowledged through a payment of 2/6s per week to offices that had to sort to London Districts to cover the extra costs.⁹¹⁸ In 1857, more thought was given to the delivery of letters into London and the processes of sorting *en route* in TPOs.⁹¹⁹ A memo noted the division of letters 'renders it necessary that the present system of opening the mail bags on their arrival in London should be revised':⁹²⁰ mails should not need to be opened on arrival into London, because their district office should already have been decided. Minutes relating to this change reveal a high level of detail, from looking into the shape and size of the rail carriages used for this duty, to designing every detail of the fixtures and fittings of the carriages.⁹²¹

That Post Office authorities concerned themselves with minute detail can be seen clearly from another file, showing the process for changing labels on mail bags.⁹²² In May 1857 a new label was designed, and introduced to standardise the system. It was to show only the name of the destination, where before labels had often included the

⁹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹¹⁶ Letter June 13th 1856. However, there is also a hint that not everything was sent out as smoothly as it might; also in June there was a request maps and lists to be sent to Sheffield for commencement of the sorting. *Ibid.*

⁹¹⁷ Another indicator was that Hill himself noted its success. *Ibid.*

⁹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹¹⁹ Memo titled 'London Mails Inwards' dated March 1857. POST 30/130C: *London Divisional Sorting in Provincial Post Offices and on Travelling Post Offices (TPO): London bags opened on 'Up' trains*

⁹²⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹²¹ The main aim was the acceleration of the morning delivery on London - the crucial first delivery that held such a place in the aims of the London District reforms: to have this first delivery ever earlier, so that people could read their mails over breakfast, or first thing on arrival in the office. *Ibid.*

⁹²² Note to the Postmasters in October 1857. POST 30/121B: *New system of labelling mail bags: proposed exclusive mail trains, first suggestion of 'Limited mail trains'*

origin as well, and it was to be made of a tough leather and metal plaque. The purpose for the change was 'to secure uniformity and to save time',⁹²³ and we can see this in one other, tiny detail: the new mail bag labels were for attaching to both the front and the back of the bag, meaning that postmen would not need to pick up the bag and turn it over in order to see its destination, saving only the most marginal of time difference, and yet carefully thought through. The new labelling system was introduced and found to be 'most satisfactory' by November 1857.⁹²⁴

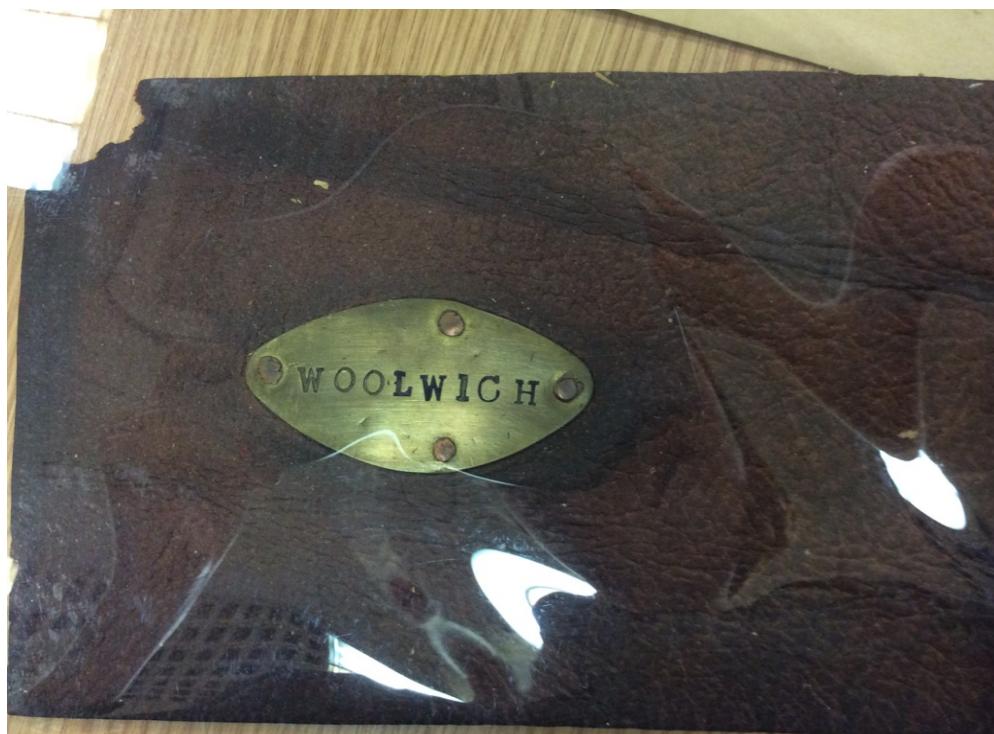


Fig. 125: New system of labelling⁹²⁵

More tweaks to the system were introduced through the late 1850s and early 1860s. Over time new rail carriages were developed,⁹²⁶ and in the early 1860s a further extension of the system to smaller postal towns was made.⁹²⁷ As ever, not every plan worked; we see an instance of the Secretary's frustration when some of these towns did

⁹²³ *Ibid.*

⁹²⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹²⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹²⁶ A note in January 1860, for example, states how the recent extension of sorting in the Great Western District Sorting carriage has been working well. POST 30/127B: *London Divisional Sorting in Provincial Post Offices and on Travelling Post Offices (TPO) introduced*

⁹²⁷ In some cases this was only a part-extension; in town with less letter traffic to London, Postmasters were asked to bag letters to EC, WC, and W districts for the night mails separately, with the rest going to London more generally. Memo June 1865 to Postmasters. Previously all London mail had been bagged up for 'London Postal District'. POST 30/177A: *Direct bags for District Post offices.*

not take on the changes and reminder notices were sent out; 'I request that you will attend to this at once, and send me any explanation you may have to offer why you have not already done so'.⁹²⁸ In this vast, sprawling, country-wide machine with thousands of staff even small changes would not always take off instantly and as expected. Despite some frustrations, however, there was a significant number of bags from around the country that arrived at the Eastern Central District Office by 5am.⁹²⁹ (Although the London Postal Map measures aimed to decentralise services, a majority of letters still came directly to the EC office at St Martin's le Grand. This was still the centre of the country's postal service, as it would continue to be for many years).⁹³⁰

Despite setbacks, measures to introduce sorting into London districts in provincial towns were introduced successfully. An evaluation was made by the Secretary on 5th November 1856: 'the performance of the London divisional sorting in the country offices has been achieved with so much success that it seems desirable to extend the system; (i.e.) by lowering the standard that regulates the class of officers which are to undertake the duty.'⁹³¹ This quote also reveals the link between the system and the personnel who administered it. What Hill suggested was a de-grading of the staff who performed particular duties. His idea was not popular and there were objections by the Surveyors, showing it to be unpopular not only in the 'lower ranks' of the force, but at the higher grades too.⁹³²

It is important, too, to look further than merely the London-based reforms of this period, and consider the context they took place within. This was not the Post Office of the 1830s, but a national system that had been transformed in the previous decade: the

⁹²⁸ There were a series of responses noted to the reprimand, some didn't understand the instruction properly, whilst some had made the changes, thank you very much. *Ibid.*

⁹²⁹ The total number included 47 major towns and cities in the country. *Ibid.*

⁹³⁰ Not only were a large proportion of country-wide letters coming to London passing through St Martin's, the building was still a place of passage for lots of letters that did not have London as their destination at all. As Daunton explains: "The correspondence to and from London certainly formed a large part of total traffic. London also stayed as an important point of transit for letters sent between provincial towns. The principle adopted until 1865 was that letters should be circulated through London unless this would cause a delay". Daunton p. 123. The issue of how centralised or decentralised the service was, and whether the GPO site in St Martin's could ever cope with the demands placed on it, will be a theme returned to throughout the life of that building.

⁹³¹ POST 30/127B: *London Divisional Sorting in Provincial Post Offices and on Travelling Post Offices (TPO) introduced*

⁹³² What this hints at is Hill's own approach to the workforce who would be carrying out his measures. This is an issue we will return to in more detail.

1850s saw the extension of rural free posts throughout the country.⁹³³ The Post Office was expanding its services both geographically and in type, with, for example, the Post Office Savings Bank opening in September 1861.

⁹³³ Daunton, p. 44

3. HOW SPEED WAS ACHIEVED: EFFECT ON POSTAL STAFF

Whether around the country or in London, more than technology, or new innovations, or political will, the Post depended on its sorters, letter carriers and clerks; the staff working in the district offices in their hundreds processing the mail every day. The reforms had an effect on staff that was manifested in a number of ways. Firstly, decentralisation meant that the daily routines of many staff changed, as they assembled in different places, experienced new buildings, and walked different routes every day. Secondly, the reforms led directly to a greater proportion of auxiliary staff being employed; this affected staff conditions, wages, and treatment. In time, it affected how staff were able to unionise and win rights.

The staff of the Post Office in this period were divided into 'Establishment' and non-Established; those who enjoyed the benefits of full-time and stable terms and conditions and pay, and those who did not.⁹³⁴ Conditions reflected the fact that the Post was a department of the civil service, used to hierarchy and grading scales. Labour costs in this period in general were low; as the century progressed, and conditions for Established workers improved, the costs of staffing the Post Office correspondingly increased.⁹³⁵

The very first part of the London reforms that was enacted was explicitly related to staffing: in 1854 the amalgamation of the different corps of staff in London took place.⁹³⁶ Prior to the amalgamation, there were three different sets of staff, the Foreign; the Two-penny Post; and the General post.⁹³⁷ In March 1855 the abolition of the London District Office, Dead Letter Office and General Office was enacted, merging all into one

⁹³⁴ The Establishment was a key issue. PMG reports often only detailed full time staff. Establishment was a privilege compared to 'outsider' staff. Women and men also were divided, as were inside and outside staff, and aside from these divisions, was "a bewildering array of grades and classes". See Daunton, p. 198.

⁹³⁵ Labour costs of the Post office were 35.4% in 1870/71, and 67% in 1914. *Ibid*, p. 193

⁹³⁶ A Committee recommended the initial union of the two corps of letter carriers- London district and General - including the rearrangement of their walks. POST 59/17: *Report Upon the Post Office*, 1854, p. 9. Parliamentary papers announced the change, see POST 71/55: *Parliamentary Papers relating to the Post Office: Volume XXV*

⁹³⁷ The Foreign Office had been abolished before 1854, but had left the much bigger services of the London and General posts separate.

'Circulation Department',⁹³⁸ and new salary rates were brought in.⁹³⁹ All sorters worked to sort letters into the ten districts.⁹⁴⁰

The amalgamation process was not altogether smooth.⁹⁴¹ There was conflict because the London District and General workers' conditions were made uniform after amalgamation, in some cases not for the better.⁹⁴² There was also conflict related to the distinction between 'Old' and 'New' Establishment. Some staff were kept on old rates, whilst new staff went directly onto the new rates.⁹⁴³ Staff who under the old system had extra wages for out of hours working, or late delivery work, were compensated; but only after fighting for this compensation, otherwise they stood to lose.⁹⁴⁴ This had also occurred in 1846 when 'bell ringing' in London and taking extra fees for early deliveries, were abolished, letter carriers' wages went down, and compensation was then provided.⁹⁴⁵ Norman Candy, dealing with the Post from a trade union perspective, states that the 1856 changes led to a number of industrial relations problems. Regulations forbade men from campaigning publicly against management changes,⁹⁴⁶ but the summer 1856 saw an illegal meeting of workers in Hole in the Wall pub, central London, starting off a process of agitation that culminated in July 1858 when the Postmaster General agreed to meet with the workers, including representatives of the South Western District Office (SWDO) and North Western District Office (NWDO).⁹⁴⁷

⁹³⁸ POST 30/117C: *London Postal Service (Circulation Department): Promotions and Revisions*, 1858

⁹³⁹ A report into Civil Service Superannuation in 1856 noted that Tilley, the Assistant Secretary, described an unfair system of annuation at the Post Office that caused resentment. It was noted that salaries were 'rearranged' in 1854. The appendices to the report included many petitions from postal staff (from all around the country, not just London) petitioning for improved conditions. POST 71/57: *Parliamentary Papers relating to the Post Office: Volume XXV*, 1856

⁹⁴⁰ Letters were divided into districts, then sub districts: "letters thus divided being subsequently sub-sorted for the walks by district sorters, who alone have the minute local knowledge required for this latter process." Postmaster General's Second Report p. 9. POST 71/58: *Parliamentary Papers relating to the Post Office: Volume XXVI*, 1856

⁹⁴¹ It had been tough to get there, too, with many early false-starts in the process, as Chapter 1 attests.

⁹⁴² We see a hint of this when the Postmaster General in 1856, Argyll, stated, "since under the old system London had been differently divided with reference to the duties of each class, whilst neither mode of division was found suitable to the service when united." Second report of the Postmaster General, p. 8. POST 71/58: *Parliamentary Papers relating to the Post Office: Volume XXVI*, 1856

⁹⁴³ Campbell-Smith, pp. 171-173

⁹⁴⁴ POST 30/117C: *London Postal Service (Circulation Department): Promotions and Revisions*, 1858

⁹⁴⁵ There was a shift away from sense that the letter carriers had a private 'property right' to their walks, to one of public service – by 1857 Tilley was stating that no individual could make private profit from a public office. – "this was a relatively recent position, marking the adoption of the bureaucratic principle of a complete separation between the personal property of the official and the property belonging to the organisation." Daunton, p. 239

⁹⁴⁶ Norman Candy, *London Postal Workers: a Trade Union History 1839-2000*, England: Blue Collar, 2014

⁹⁴⁷ Candy, p. 19

Increases in staffing

After 1856, more staff were needed to cope with increases in use of the postal system, including additional use from new addresses, with costs correspondingly going up.⁹⁴⁸ The aspiration for creating a new service that needed no additional staff was revealed as wholly unrealistic, as more staff were needed as the service increased.⁹⁴⁹ Service was also, by public request, being extended geographically, to improve services in the suburbs too.⁹⁵⁰

The Post Office did not have control over its own levels of staffing. All extensions to staff had to be approved by the Treasury, prompting much correspondence between the Treasury and the Post, in which the Post Office had to make the case for more men.⁹⁵¹ The Treasury expressed concern about increases in staff and the way the Post Office was budgeting for them.⁹⁵² Hill, characteristically, responded to orders from the Treasury for more frugality with a request for more men.⁹⁵³ Hill believed that the supply offered by the Post Office should respond to demand: new houses in the suburbs were being built, which increased demand, and the Post needed to keep up. In reality, the process of organising staff involved a set of negotiations in which certain requests

⁹⁴⁸ Alongside increases in letters, another significant issue was the increase in the population of London, and the numbers of houses that were being delivered to. Really it was these changes to London as a city that the system needed to be able to respond to, and which were a key driver in the alterations to the London service that took place from the 1850s. Note from Boucher to Hill dated 22nd July 1858. POST 30/165D: *London, Circulation Department: Minor establishment. Merging of extra duty pay in fixed wages, extra force for additional deliveries, postal arrangements in suburbs improved.* 1864

⁹⁴⁹ Correspondence between the Post Office and the Treasury about the staff changes. *Ibid.* In May 1858, Boucher, the Controller of the London service stated that one reason that 12 deliveries per day had not yet been implemented was a need for staff. He states that 24 extra men for stamping and collecting letters after 10pm, 130 extra Establishment men and 40 additional auxiliaries were needed. Note from Boucher, 4th May 1858: "In every branch the business has greatly increased and with additional facilities of transmission a further augmentation must be expected, - additional force is therefore greatly needed to afford necessary relief and the prevent delay in carrying out the proposed improvements."

⁹⁵⁰ Boucher pointed out that this extension required additional staff. *Ibid.*

⁹⁵¹ Requests for extra staff became commonplace. By July of the same year, Boucher is sending a minute to recommend "immediate appointment of this additional force of 61 men." 23 July 1858 minute. For example, in July 1858, Hill stated that the service had increased 15%, and improved revenue by £70,000 p.a., and that more men were needed to complete the reforms. Hill letter to the Treasury, 5th July 1858. At this time the reasons were seen as justified, and Trevelyan in the Treasury agreed to Hill's proposed increases for the Parliamentary budget of 1859-60. *Ibid.*

⁹⁵² See letter from C Trevelyan, dated 15th July 1858. *Ibid.*

⁹⁵³ He justified this by going into detail about increases in daily deliveries he planned. See response from Hill, dated 26th July 1858. *Ibid.*

from the Post Office were granted, and others were negotiated down.⁹⁵⁴ In addition, Messengers, Sorters, and others were divided into different classes in an early attempt to put the service on a less costly footing in the face of staff increases.⁹⁵⁵ The period of 1840-60 saw many more people employed by the Post Office, but at lower rates of pay than previously.⁹⁵⁶

New routines

Where before the vast majority of staff were based at St. Martin's, the Postal Map introduced new District Offices all over London.⁹⁵⁷ By 1860, 1,500 officers worked at the Chief Office, of 3,300 in the London District as a whole.⁹⁵⁸ At that date it was noted that the increase in mails by 12m in London since 1855 had been achieved without any additional staff,⁹⁵⁹ but merely by moving them around.⁹⁶⁰ Decentralization of staff meant that letter carriers were stationed closer to their walks, meaning they did not need to pick up mail bags from a central location and then travel to their 'walk', instead they were already at their locality. Less time was lost in travelling to and from a particular area, adding to the efficiency and speed of the mail. The location of many of the staff, and their daily routines, changed fundamentally.

⁹⁵⁴ For example, in March 1862 the Postmaster appealed to the Treasury for 5 additional 'deputy controllers' in the London Area. The Treasury would not approve this, but they did offer 5 clerks. POST 30/4011: *London Postal Service: letters for London Postal Area, simplified address, Part 2*

⁹⁵⁵ POST 30/165D: *London, Circulation Department: Minor establishment. Merging of extra duty pay in fixed wages, extra force for additional deliveries, postal arrangements in suburbs improved. 1864*

⁹⁵⁶ Candy, p. 16

⁹⁵⁷ Numbers of staff were reduced in the Chief Office at St. Martin's, and distributed to the London Districts. In 1859 the Postmaster stated that the numbers of staff attached to the Chief Office in London has gone down "owing to the removal of many men to the District Offices", and as a result there are now 1,700 officers in the Chief office in London. The Postmaster General's fifth report, 1859. POST 92/2: *Reports of the Postmaster General on the Post Office. 1855-1864*

⁹⁵⁸ The Postmaster General's sixth report, 1860. *Ibid.*

⁹⁵⁹ "by improved arrangements in sorting, this great increase has been disposed of without any additional labour being thrown on the offices; and except as regards delivery, without any addition to the force" The Postmaster General's sixth report, 1860. *Ibid.*

⁹⁶⁰ This ability to expand services without adding to staff could not continue indefinitely. Perhaps not intentionally, shifting staff to the District Offices was in effect something that was trialled and changed as problems relating to the system became apparent. Although many staff did start to work in the District Offices, the numbers of staff in St Martin's remained higher than anticipated.

In addition, many of the workers moved to work in new Chief Offices in the new London districts were working in buildings that were inappropriate. Given the length of time it took the Post Office to negotiate leases for buildings, in many cases sites were chosen for temporary district offices that could be used whilst the search went on for permanent offices.⁹⁶¹ Temporary offices were rarely fit for inhabitation, but there was little incentive to make improvements.⁹⁶² The poor health of officers working in these unsanitary buildings was documented⁹⁶³ by Medical Officers, who reviewed conditions and confirmed that the new offices provided good conditions for workers whilst the temporary offices did not.⁹⁶⁴

⁹⁶¹ Seventh Report of the Postmaster General, 1861. *Ibid.*

⁹⁶² Where new permanent buildings were built, they were of a better quality, as Lord Argyll, who as Postmaster General commissioned reports into poor working conditions of staff asserted in 1859. The Postmaster General's fifth report, 1859. *Ibid*

⁹⁶³ For example in 1856 Hill proposes lodgings for the Letter Carriers close to work, that are sanitary. POST 71/58: *Parliamentary Papers relating to the Post Office: Volume XXVI*, 1856

⁹⁶⁴ He also had great concerns about the Chief Office – St. Martin's le Grand – where the majority of staff were based. "I beg to call to attention the state of the temporary offices in some of the districts where permanent offices have not yet been erected. I allude more particularly to the Southern, South-Eastern, and South-Western Offices. It is very desirable that no time should be lost in replacing these by more healthy buildings.". The Postmaster General's sixth report, 1860, p. 73. POST 92/2: *Reports of the Postmaster General on the Post Office*. 1855-1864

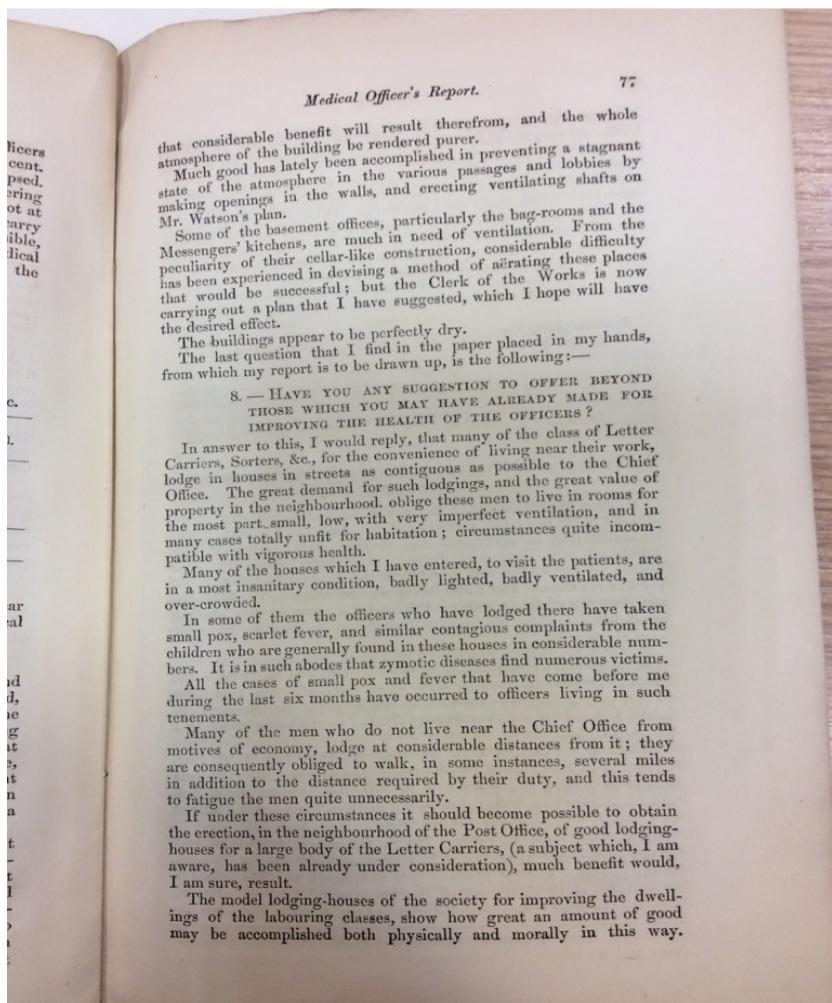


Fig. 126: Excerpt from the Medical Officer's report⁹⁶⁵

Medical officers were appointed to all District Offices in London, to improve health and prevent staff absences through sickness.⁹⁶⁶ Filtered water was made available in St Martin's, and it was recommended this measure be extended to all the District Offices.⁹⁶⁷ Facilities for staff were improving, through a combination of Post Office decree, and worker initiative. In 1861, the Medical Officer's update stated that he found the health in the new offices much better,⁹⁶⁸ although sickness was much higher in the

⁹⁶⁵ The Postmaster General's sixth report, 1860. *Ibid.*

⁹⁶⁶ With the Medical Officer stating; "I believe, when the system comes fairly and fully into work, it will be found to be the means, not only of curing, but by the cases being seen early and attended to promptly and regularly, of preventing much sickness among our officers". The Postmaster General's sixth report, 1860, p. 73. *Ibid.* Also in 1860, it was reported that, "At the Chief Office at St Martins-le-Grand, and at each of the London District Offices except the South Western, a library, on a greater or smaller scale, and including generally some newspapers, has been established for the letter carriers, and in great part at their own cost. I am glad that men should have so rational means of relaxation and improvement, and hope that their efforts will be attended with permanent and increasing success." And saving money on sick pay and costs of auxiliaries to provide relief during staff absence.

⁹⁶⁷ The Postmaster General's sixth report, 1860. *Ibid.*

⁹⁶⁸ The Postmaster General's seventh report, 1861, p. 10. *Ibid.*

SE district- "an old office".⁹⁶⁹ A year later the medical officer reported again, noting that absence due to sickness was less at the newly-built SW office.⁹⁷⁰ His report also notes the problem of offices heated by gas, stating, "Instructions have been given to remedy this evil".⁹⁷¹

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The Post Office was a highly paternalistic organisation, with staff employed in a semi-militaristic fashion, behaving in regimental ways, responding to series of rules and codified behaviour. In this context, the decentralisation of London's post was problematic: there was fear that staff could not be observed when away from St. Martin's.⁹⁷² Staff discipline was high in the thoughts of the Post Office hierarchy; though not enough to prevent them from pushing through measures which would antagonize staff, such as lowering wages.

We see one effect of this in 1860, when Boucher applied for more 'Inspectors' in the London offices.⁹⁷³ His justification was that he could not, currently, maintain 'proper supervision' of staff throughout the different London offices.⁹⁷⁴ In implementing the district system, no place was made for expanding the force of Inspectors. He believed that Inspectors had played a key role in making sure the new district system was a success.⁹⁷⁵ But, more were needed, recommending an additional seven as the minimal

⁹⁶⁹ The Postmaster General's eighth report, 1862. *Ibid.*

⁹⁷⁰ The Postmaster General's ninth report, 1863. *Ibid.*

⁹⁷¹ The Postmaster General's ninth report, 1863, p. 48. *Ibid.*

⁹⁷² On the other hand, if enough supervision of staff could be implemented within the new district offices, the lower ranks would be better observed, and controlled, than in St. Martin's- the committee of officer's report in 1854 that recommended the Postal Map reforms noted a particular bonus that would result: "it would have the further great advantage of furnishing the means of bringing large numbers of the Letter Carriers under better supervision and control than can at present be maintained." POST 30/4011: *London Postal Service: letters for London Postal Area, simplified address, Part 2.* p. 41-42

⁹⁷³ He asserted that there were 100 sorting offices to be inspected, and upwards of 2000 letter carriers and auxiliaries, and not enough inspectors. POST 30/139C: *London Postal Service, Circulation Department: force revised: auxiliaries nominated Letter Carriers, restricted Civil Service Certificate imposed, 1860*

⁹⁷⁴ "Notwithstanding the additions made to the force of inspectors in 1856 and 1858, I beg to report that I still find great difficulty in maintaining a proper supervision of the letter carriers in London and the suburbs." Minute to the Secretary, March 15th 1860. *Ibid.*

⁹⁷⁵ "The great increase of correspondence that immediately followed upon the establishment of the District Forces, and the additional postal facilities afforded in the suburbs necessitated the greatest watchfulness and attention on the part of the Inspectors but for whose industry and zeal the revision of

to 'maintain strict discipline'.⁹⁷⁶ In addition, he proposed to alter the grades of the inspectors to ensure the progression was clear from letter carrier to sorter to inspector.⁹⁷⁷ His recommendations were agreed to in 1860, and the Inspectors were brought into service to work in the new London districts.

New conditions

The use of inspectors in the new London districts was linked to one of the absolutely fundamental ways in which the London reforms changed the experience of postal staff in London: the shift to the employment of casual and part-time staff occurred on a much larger scale than before as a result of the reforms. These were staff described variously as auxiliary, assistant, and youth staff members; what united them was that they were all members of staff who were cheaper to employ as they did not have the same benefits as 'Established' members of staff.⁹⁷⁸ The Postal Map reforms directly led to a much greater proportion of auxiliary staff being employed.

Firstly, numbers of auxiliary staff increased in general, just as the numbers of Established staff increased, due to the huge increases in work that occurred post-reforms,⁹⁷⁹ which we see for example in 1860 when Boucher recommended splitting

the London District (the growth of many years) could not have been effected without much public inconvenience and additional expenditure" *Ibid.*

⁹⁷⁶ "So much advantage has already been derived from the services of the Inspectors appointed in 1856 and 1858, that I am most anxious that the force shall be sufficiently strengthened to enable them to denote more attention than has hitherto been possible to the manner in which the letter carriers duties are performed both in and out of the office, and the lowest estimate I can form of the force required to maintain strict discipline, and give the requisite attention to the duties of the letter carriers is forty two inspectors, being an addition of seven to the present numbers.". *Ibid.*

⁹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷⁸ Daunton notes that there was strict policy that part-time staff could not enjoy the benefits of the establishment. Daunton, p. 199

⁹⁷⁹ Boucher stated: "In this District there has not only been a greater increase in the numbers of letters for delivery than in any other; - the returns showing that 573,000 are delivered weekly at the present time against 468,000 in 1857, or an increase of 22 per cent in three years; but, owing to the large number of houses that have been converted into chambers, almost every room in which is a distinct office, requiring to be separately delivered, the letter carriers have now nearly as many stairs to mount and descend, on several of the City walks, as in the Inns of Court.

"This, together with the increase of correspondence, and of book packets and foreign newspapers which add very materially to the letter carrier's loads, has made it indisputable that the extent of the walks should be reduced, in order that the duties may be brought to a proper average, and the necessary punctuality in the completion of the hourly deliveries secured." Minute of 24th April 1860. *Ibid.*

the EC district further to create 9 new walks; 60 additional letter carriers; 40 labourers; 20 auxiliaries; 25 youths, and the Secretary agreed the recommendation.⁹⁸⁰ Greater numbers of staff were also needed as benefits of Established staff were introduced as well, such as holiday allowances.⁹⁸¹

Secondly, the large increase in the *proportion* of auxiliary staff was directly related to the decentralization. Rather than employ additional permanent staff, the Post Office started to employ many more auxiliaries working part-time hours without guaranteed shifts and wages, youths who could be employed on cheaper rates, and 'assistants'.⁹⁸² This was an important shift. The Post Office, although in many ways a good employer for the period with a sound set of principles around holiday pay, medical officers, and pensions, was simultaneously in this period creating two classes of worker.⁹⁸³ This kept costs down, but led very quickly to worker discontent, which would be a near permanent feature of the period.

This was linked to the reforms because by decentralising staff, letter carriers and sorters could only share work within their own district. When staff were amassed in one big building, during a peak period many non-sorting staff could be assigned to sort letters until the peak was over. This flexibility was reduced under the district system, and the Post Office, in appointing auxiliaries, was attempting to replace it with a slightly different form of flexibility, wherein extra members of staff were drafted in during peak periods, and then sent away again once the peak was over.⁹⁸⁴ In 1860 the Controller

⁹⁸⁰ The response was: "there can be no doubt that the further additional force applied for by Mr. Boucher in the enclosed report is urgently needed." *Ibid.*

⁹⁸¹ The need for auxiliaries to cover Establishment men's holidays only increased as the numbers of Established officers went up. Minutes from the Controller in May 1855 noted that men of the major establishment were granted a month's annual holiday, and the minor establishment two weeks. This meant more men were needed to fill in the gaps of service- equating to an increase of 427 men. Minutes from the Controller, May 1855. *Ibid.*

⁹⁸² In 1870s was large increase in 'boy sorters' – young boys on ¼ pay (these included those who were working in brothel in Cleveland Street), Candy, p. 43

⁹⁸³ Although not related directly to the Postal Map, for context: the Post Office was also employing cheap staff in the form of female clerks, whom they paid much less than the men. See POST 30/214A: *Counterwomen in Metropolitan District: pay, c.1871*; and POST 30/219A: *Risk allowance to counter clerks including women in Metropolitan District, c.1872*

⁹⁸⁴ A way of explaining this is found later in the archives, in a review conducted in 1880- but which applied equally to this period. The Controller explained that it paid to have a large number of men working in one place, to transfer work between them according to peaks in workload. "breaking up of the letters into lines of road must be done very quickly in order that they may be sent elsewhere for the further stages. To effect this a very large body of men must be employed in the preliminary or sorting

stated: 'the new system of District Offices has also made it desirable to divide the supernumeraries according to the number of men employed in each district, and the whole force cannot, therefore, be so readily made use of for any sudden presence as when the bulk of the men assembled at this office.'⁹⁸⁵ The decentralization of services into districts had led to a lack of ready men available in the Chief Office, when there was high demand- such as during the evening rush between 5-8pm.

In 1860 the Controller stated a need of a force of 50 more letter carriers, including one important caveat – that none of the new appointments would be "Established", as it would not be 'economical'. Auxiliaries, he explained, could do the job without need to pay them pension or fixed wages.⁹⁸⁶ This occurred simultaneously to addition of auxiliaries to the EC district, and in June 1860 160 auxiliaries at 10/- per week were added in other districts⁹⁸⁷. So it was that the use of auxiliary staff to meet the demands of the service became commonplace in the London District. Staff could be called upon when needed in peaks, and not be paid for lull periods, as would have been the case if staff were 'Established'.

Not surprisingly, worker's agitation, in many forms, became commonplace. The policy of using auxiliaries to cope with the increasing demand was protested in September

stage, and when that is over there is nothing else for the men to do, as the work is transferred to district offices as swiftly as the mail carts can travel." Centralisation on the Chief Office was understood to be cheaper, because this same large body of men can then be sent off to do other work in the same place: "the dispersal of force results in a very great loss". Evidence of Mr T Jeffrey, Controller of the London Postal Service (examined Wednesday 28th November 1883), p. 39. POST 91/85: '*Central Post Office Buildings and Establishments: Minutes of Evidence, 1883'*

⁹⁸⁵ Minutes of March 1860. POST 30/139C: *London Postal Service, Circulation Department: force revised: auxiliaries nominated Letter Carriers, restricted Civil Service Certificate imposed*. 1860.

⁹⁸⁶ "I do not propose, however, that any more Established men should be appointed for this purpose; for looking to the rapid growth of the suburbs in every direction, my attention has, for some time past, been directed to the most economical mode of supplying the continual demands from these districts for additional assistance; and after fully testing the experiment I find that, in most cases, the suburban walks can be more advantageously worked, and in many instances, more accommodation afforded to the public, by two auxiliaries of 9/- per week each, than by one Established letter carrier; while the charge to the revenue is lessened, inasmuch as the fixed wages of the two auxiliaries do not exceed the minimum charge for a regular man, and the prospective expense of annual increments, and pensions, is saved." He recommended the appointment of: 90 auxiliaries at 9/- per week in the suburbs; 20 auxiliaries at 10/- per week in the city; 10 'youth's appointed (c.14 years) to work as messengers at 7/- per week, and also adding 14 more clerks and 8 sorters. *Ibid.*

⁹⁸⁷ At this date, there were also references to a 'Committee of Inquiry' to sit on the topic of Post Office staffing. Minute of 22 June 1860. *Ibid.*

1860.⁹⁸⁸ In one case a deputation was sent to Mansion House and talks with an Alderman took place; the deputation was covered in *The Times* and the *Morning Star*.⁹⁸⁹ The Post Office noted that the number of assistant and auxiliary letter carriers totalled 1,247 at that point – a not inconsiderable number when total staff was being given as 3,300 at that time.

This was also a period of reforms in the Post Office that affected the entire workforce, not just the London staff, and not just the ‘lower’ grades: the introduction of the ‘Northcote-Trevelyan principles’, which aimed to modernize the Civil Service.⁹⁹⁰ In the 1850s the civil service was reorganised with an aim that appointments to the service, and progression through the ranks, be made due to merit, rather than to personal connections or seniority.⁹⁹¹ To assess ‘merit’, examinations were introduced, with every department having specific tests. Postmen had to be tested on reading, writing and arithmetic from 1855 onwards.⁹⁹²

⁹⁸⁸ Auxiliaries protested changes to terms and rates. Men were protesting the loss of wages when they were not needed for certain shifts, meaning wages went from 16/- per week to 10/- per week. POST 111/99: *Newspaper Cuttings*, 3 Mar 1860-25 May 1869

⁹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹⁰ “starting with a formal Report Upon the Post Office in 1854, and beginning with an elaboration of its traditional organisation, the Post Office set out to shape its own early industrial workforce onto one of the first civilian bureaucracies of the modern world”. Campbell-Smith, p. 170

⁹⁹¹ A notice from Hill dated 28th August 1854 stated, ‘I am directed to call your special attention to the important rule under which promotion in the department will henceforth depend entirely on merit; and to express Lord Canning’s confident expectation that this regulation will serve to stimulate the Officers to increased exertions in the performance of their duties’. POST 30/117C: *London Postal Service (Circulation Department): promotions and revisions*, c.1858

⁹⁹² Daunton p. 248- 252

ION.	2. Accuracy in copying. 3. Arithmetic (elementary). 4. English Composition (ordinary principles).
FICE.	
S.	
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be a	
ices'	
	POST OFFICE.
I.	SECRETARY'S OFFICE. (d)
	1. Writing from Dictation. 2. Arithmetic (including Vulgar Fractions). 3. English Composition. 4. Précis. 5. French or German.
II.	OTHER OFFICES.
	1. Writing from Dictation. 2. Arithmetic (including Reduction, Rule of Three, and Practice).

raphy, correspondence, and the other heads, would extend much

Fig. 127: Report listing which tests were needed for entry into the Post Office

No. of Candidate.	GENERAL POST OFFICE.					
	CLERKS (in all Offices but the Secretary's).					
<i>Prescribed Subjects.—1. Writing from dictation; and 2. Arithmetic, including Reduction, Rule of Three, and Practice.</i>						
		Book-keeping	Very fair.			
		of the principles.				
1	{	French	-	-	-	Considerable proficiency.
		Spanish	-	-	-	Ditto.
		Algebra (elementary)	-	-	-	Fair acquaintance.
		Book-keeping	-	-	-	Satisfactory proficiency.
2	{	French	-	-	-	Fair proficiency.
		Latin	-	-	-	Some knowledge.
		Book-keeping	-	-	-	Creditable knowledge.
3	{	English Grammar	-	-	-	Creditable proficiency.
4	{	French	-	-	-	Very creditable proficiency.

Fig. 128: Excerpts from report about the new Civil Service tests⁹⁹³

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EXAMINATION PAPERS.

1855.]

any other man more respected than himself, because he thought he deserved more, and did better require it. For he was in his friendships just and constant, and would not have practised foully against those he took to be enemies. No man had credit enough with him to corrupt him in point of loyalty to the king, whilst he thought himself wise enough to know what treason was; but the new doctrine and distinction of allegiance, and of the king's power, in and out of parliament, and the new notion of ordinances, were too hard for him, and it did really intoxicate his understanding, and made him quit his own to follow theirs, who he thought wished as well and judged better than himself.

115
I.
Papers used
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PRÉCIS.

Read the following Despatches, &c.:

From Earl GREY to Governor Sir C. A. FITZROY.

Downing-street, 24th November 1846.

SIR, I HAVE the honour to inform you that in consequence of the information recently received from New Zealand, Her Majesty's servants have determined that an increase of the military force now in that colony should be effected with the least possible delay. With that view, I have to instruct you to make immediate arrangements in concert with the officer commanding the troops in New South Wales for sending the whole of the disposable force now serving there to Wellington, with the utmost practicable despatch. It will, I calculate, be in your power, without danger, to send at least 900 men for this service, still retaining a small force at Sydney, which, under the present circumstances of New South Wales, is all that I consider indispensable. New South Wales may be regarded as being ~~safe~~ ~~least~~ ~~from~~ ~~any~~ ~~attack~~ ~~from~~ ~~a~~ ~~foreign~~ ~~enemy~~; there are

XV. royal prerogative of mercy.
XVI. This Act shall commence and take effect from and after the first day of November in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and fifty-two, and continue in force for two years.

159

III.
Miscellaneous
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Examinati

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D.

Select one of the following subjects for English Composition:—

1. A letter from an Australian colonist, describing the effects of the discovery of gold, and speculating as to its future consequences:

Or,

2. A comparison of the merits and defects of any two historians with whose works you are acquainted:

Or,

3. An essay on the influence of increased habits of travelling on national character.

E.

Write a letter applying for a situation in a mercantile house, selecting any branch of business you please. State fully the duties you are prepared to undertake, the nature of your previous employment, and any other circumstances which would naturally be mentioned in such an application.

The letter should fill about two folio pages.

F.

Supposing yourself to have been asked to undertake the management of a gentleman's estate, write a letter accepting or rejecting the offer.

State as fully as you can the duties you conceive to be attached to the situation, and the reasons which have influenced your decision.

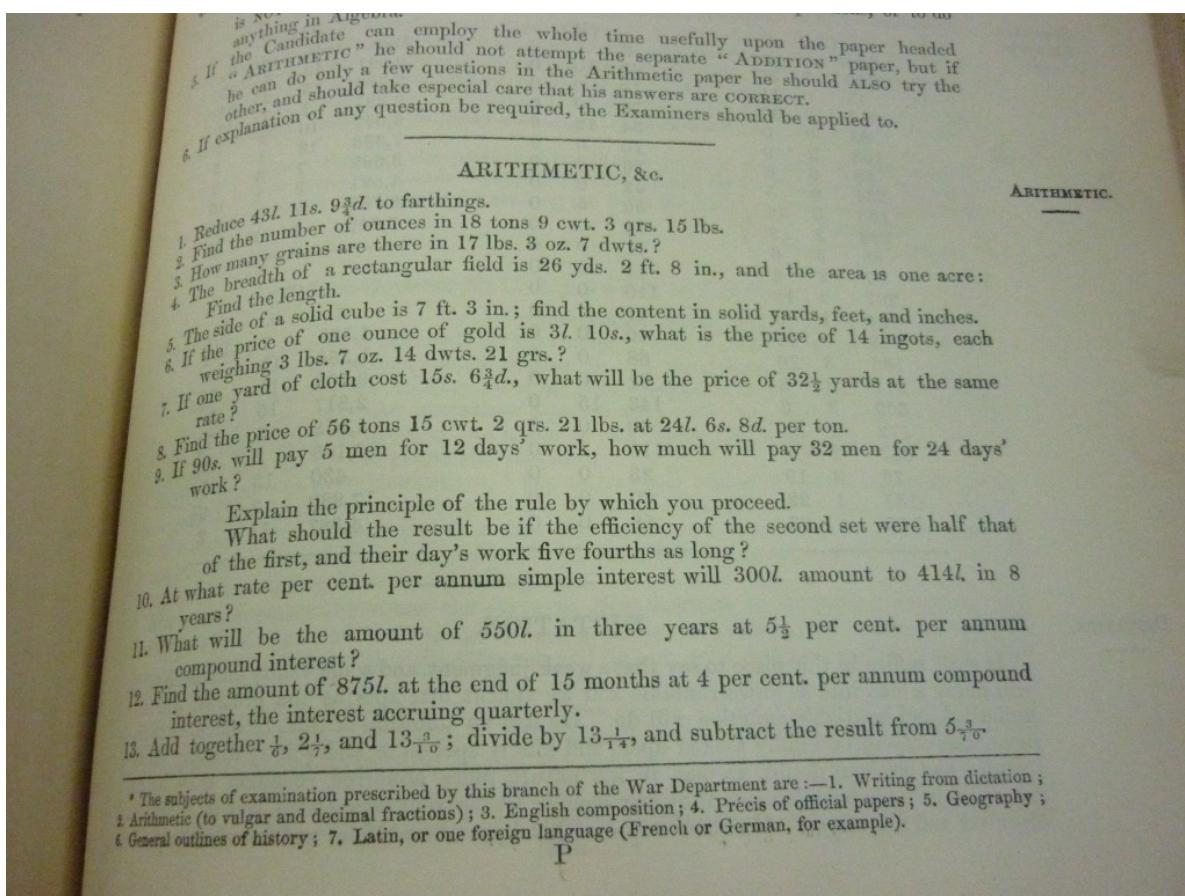


Fig. 129: Examples of test questions⁹⁹⁴

When the civil service reforms were introduced in the 1850s, as the Post Office held less prestige than the other civil service departments, it did not attract the best men to its posts.⁹⁹⁵ This was not the only problem the reforms posed; the Post had difficulty promoting men to the Establishment who they knew were capable -say who were auxiliary or assistant letter carriers - because they did not pass the correct test. In the case of the letter carriers, this often resulted in the Postmaster General applying for special permission to the Treasury to appoint these men regardless.⁹⁹⁶ The reforms of the Post Office classes and terms and conditions for its staff must been seen in the context of the Post Office applying the principal of 'merit'.⁹⁹⁷ Not only did many workers

⁹⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁹⁵ Daunton p. 244

⁹⁹⁶ POST 30/165D: London, Circulation Department: Minor establishment. Merging of extra duty pay in fixed wages, extra force for additional deliveries, postal arrangements in suburbs improved. 1864

⁹⁹⁷ A letter from Rowland Hill to staff in 1854 explained: "I am directed to call your special attention to the important rule under which promotion in the Department will henceforth depend entirely on merit; and to express Lord Canning's [the PMG] confident expectation that this regulation will serve to stimulate the Officers to increased exertions in the performance of their duties." Letter dated 28th August 1854 from Hill. POST 30/117C: London Postal Service (Circulation Department): Promotions and Revisions, 1858

protest the changes, many at the top of the hierarchy opposed the principle. Trollope, a Post Office Surveyor, opposed the measures openly.⁹⁹⁸ Perhaps not surprisingly, what in fact gradually emerged was a system that combined both the principle of merit, and the system of seniority,⁹⁹⁹ wherein pragmatism was asserted at key moments.¹⁰⁰⁰

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1860 had seen staff discontent as an issue at the fore; that year a significant article in *The Times* appeared over two days highlighting poor staff conditions at the Post Office.¹⁰⁰¹ The huge increases of work that came with the Postal Map brought further problems in terms of staff conditions.¹⁰⁰² Staffing conditions were described, "...even stonebreaking on the roadside would not be harder labour and scarcely less remunerative."¹⁰⁰³ The article prompted a committee being set up to assess conditions, hearing detail from staff about grievances, reporting in July 1861¹⁰⁰⁴ and recommending pay increases and improvement of conditions of the lower classes of staff (letter carriers and sorters).¹⁰⁰⁵ However, changes in London stalled again, and in 1863 the Chief Office at St Martin's was still considered to be overburdened.¹⁰⁰⁶

⁹⁹⁸ Daunton, p. 249; R. H. Super, *Trollope in the Post Office*, Ann Arbor: Michigan U P, 1981, p. 31

⁹⁹⁹ Daunton p. 252

¹⁰⁰⁰ This could be seen in the case of the auxiliary letter carriers: it was noted by Hill in 1862, looking back to the 1854 government inquiry that led to revisions of scales and promotions, that the rises due to 'merit' had not materialised. Reference to Hill's journal entry, March 31 1862, in Fryer and Akerman.

¹⁰⁰¹ The article highlighted a number of specific complaints about the working conditions, including the use of a surveillance tower in the middle of the sorting room to observe staff, making sure that they do not steal from letters. It was claimed the tower was instituted because the staff were so poorly paid there was much temptation to theft. *The Times*, March 29th 1860

¹⁰⁰² The article went into some detail on this point, citing a lack "of enough hands to do the duty properly", and the lack of adequate space with St Martin's three times too small for its work. The inadequacies of the system were explicitly blamed on the reforms of 1856 and the postal map: "to the want of space, and constant diminution of staff, it is due that the public have been called upon to discharge Post Office work by affixing the district initials to their letters." *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰³ *The Times*, March 30th 1860

¹⁰⁰⁴ 'Committee of Enquiry into Internal Arrangements of the Circulation Department', 1860. POST 14/232: *Papers relating to internal arrangements in the Circulation Department, 1860-1867*. Although absent on sick leave Rowland Hill objected, and after clumsy attempts to gain his brother, Frederic Hill, influence in the process, the committee resigned, was reformed, was disbanded after more infighting, and then finally resumed work again. Candy, p. 24

¹⁰⁰⁵ Changes were implemented following this report, with an article in the Illustrated Times in 1862, reporting improvements to letter carrier's conditions in London, including uniforms being provided, libraries set up in district offices, paid leave, and a medical officer employed.

¹⁰⁰⁶ POST 30/4011: *London Postal Service: letters for London Postal Area, simplified address, Part 2*

The Times article claimed that the postal staff were paid so little that they were tempted to steal from work. Archival evidence appears to agree, with instances of accusations, charges, trials and convictions of postal staff found. Postal staff were accused of different types of theft and misconduct, showing there evidently was a temptation to steal amongst staff.¹⁰⁰⁷

Interestingly for our purposes, files related to postmen who were suspected of criminal activity reveal the daily routines of auxiliary staff, as they were watched by inspectors, who secretly kept a log of all their activity at work and at home.¹⁰⁰⁸ We are witness to postmen walking the city, and can understand how they moved in the district system.¹⁰⁰⁹

A typed account of an inspector following one 'Hobbs', a postman (an auxiliary) suspected of stealing from letters, shows his movements:

- 2.15pm- Hobbs leaves home- High Street, Shadwell. Meets friend.
- Goes to the laundry, then the pub, then to a second pub in Wapping Wall until 5.40pm, then home
- 6.55pm- leaves home in full uniform
- proceeds to first box- Broad Street – for collection at 7pm.
- then to the Sorting office at the EDO (Eastern District Office)
- 7.35pm- Hobbs seen sorting letters. "his movements were very suspicious" – seen trying to ascertain the contents of letters
- 8.30-8.45 – carried letters from "facing up tables" to the "local sorting table" and switched off the lights above the table
- left at 8.40pm
- went on the 9.00pm collection
- back to the EDO by 9.25pm

Hobbs was reported to Inspector and interviewed, eventually tried at Bow Court and found guilty.¹⁰¹⁰

¹⁰⁰⁷ POST 120/257: *Questioning of suspected persons: methods pursued by officers of the Investigation Branch*, Dec 1906

¹⁰⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰⁹ *Ibid.* The files are from the early twentieth century, but show a type of routine that was typical in the 1860s and the second half of the nineteenth century as well.

¹⁰¹⁰ Hobbs account dated December 19th 1906. *Ibid.*

A second example shows the movements of one Alexander David Wolff, a postman from Plaistow, given as part of his evidence:

- He was on duty in Plaistow Sorting office 1.05pm-1.45pm
- left for a delivery, which finished at 3pm
- then went to mother's house
- 4pm commenced collection at Plashet Road Sorting office
- 4.12pm cleared Terrence Road letter box
- Returned to Sorting Office 4.20pm
- Wolff's usual hours are 1.05pm- 3pm; 4-5pm; and 6-10.10pm
- "commences a collection at 4pm away from the Sorting office and brings this collection to the Sorting Office at 4.23pm"
- From 4.23 to 4.25 he sorts correspondence
- "P.S. The 2pm Postmark would be in use between 1.15pm and 2.35pm"¹⁰¹¹

These two examples are representative of many other similar cases, and from their level of detail we see the everyday routine of postal staff. Here are details like the relatively short shifts of auxiliary workers – around 6pm to 10pm in the first example; the speed of the sorting process, taking only a matter of minutes; the different times of postmarks in use through the day, denoting the frequency of the deliveries; the lateness of some collections as late as 9pm; that collections were quick, taking less than half an hour to leave the sorting office, make the collection, and get back to the sorting office. These speeds were only possible in a situation where sorting offices were placed near collection locations, enabled by the decentralisation of the Postal Map.

¹⁰¹¹ Wolff's case was in 15th October 1908. POST 120/273: *Questioning of suspected persons: methods pursued by officers of the Investigation Branch file LXXXI*, Oct 1908

Protest

The appointment of Inspectors to district offices, and anger over treatment of workers including them being suspected, spied on, and being questioned in public, and agitation in the London offices, point to the effect that splitting London into districts had on the growing discontent in London offices. At this time the unionisation of the workforce in London was aiming to improve workers' conditions.¹⁰¹² One fundamental issue was the question of how to determine wage rates: whether through market factors, comparison with private sector, or even consideration of social equality;¹⁰¹³ usually the Post set wage rates to keep costs down as low as possible.¹⁰¹⁴

The Post Office did not tolerate unionisation, staff associations, or staff meetings in this period. However, occurrences of this type of action grew and grew.¹⁰¹⁵ In the 1850s two secret organisations were formed by postal workers, the General Commission Agent and the Phallax, meetings were held to elect committees, and by 1858 the Postmaster even agreed to meet representatives – notably of the SWDO and NWDO.¹⁰¹⁶ A huge meeting of workers in August 1858 saw a series of grievances voiced, including pay, delivery workloads, covering sick colleagues, night collection allowances, disputing fines, extra deliveries, and bullying by supervisors. No progress was made, and leaders were sacked. This was to set the pattern for many years to come– but little was to change in a world in which workers did not have legal rights.¹⁰¹⁷

¹⁰¹² The last years of Rowland Hill's Secretaryship were marked by conflicts over wages and conditions of the London workforce. Daunton, p. 222

¹⁰¹³ *Ibid.* p. 226

¹⁰¹⁴ Until the 1880s, the official labour policy at the Post Office was "uncompromising as ever". Campbell-Smith, p. 188

¹⁰¹⁵ In the 1850s staff began collectively to push for better wages and conditions, for men and women. Candy, p. 19

¹⁰¹⁶ The 29th May 1853 saw meeting of 500 London postal workers to elect a representative committee. Summer 1856 saw illegal meeting of workers in the Hole in the Wall pub, in central London. In July 1858 the Postmaster General agreed to meet them, including representatives of the SWDO and NWDO. *Ibid.* p. 19

¹⁰¹⁷ Workers met, set up associations, campaigned on specific issues, powers-that-be agreed to meet them, leaders were sacked, protests were made, committees were set up – and so on. So we see, in March 1860, the Times articles put poor industrial relations into spotlight, but the evidence of the committee set up as a result was not published. Candy tells us that: in July 1862, George Bowyer MP presented postal workers grievances to Parliament; in 1866 Annerley issued a memo prohibiting postal workers from holding meetings; a committee leader was sacked, and the committee went underground; In August 67, the first edition of 'The Postman' published; Meetings held throughout 1870s, including in 1873 a mass

Workers' actions were sufficiently worrying to the Post Office hierarchy to call for reports and minutes to various superiors to deal with the issue.¹⁰¹⁸ The Postmaster General considered improvements in Terms and Conditions, but threatened that those measures would halt if the meetings continued. Some measures were taken to improve working conditions for staff, and occasionally grievances were addressed.¹⁰¹⁹ There was also a 'Post Office Library and Literary Association' established in London organised by the clerks at this time.¹⁰²⁰ Hill, however, remained firm during his tenure, and his mind appeared not to be swayed by appeals of letter carriers.¹⁰²¹

1860 was a year of much activity, with postal workers learning lessons of the past about association organization.¹⁰²² In the 1870s the GPO decided to test the market and advertise for new sorter and letters carriers, but only a few made the grade, so it was apparent the workforce could not be so easily replaced.¹⁰²³ The 1880s saw changes in labour relations in the Post Office with 'Fawcett's Scheme',¹⁰²⁴ but unionization was still forbidden. Fawcett was interested in the Post Office as way of diffusing knowledge,

meeting called of the Newspaper branch in the GPO, with 2,000 people from the London offices in attendance, and reporter from the Standard there; leaders argued for setting up trade union and putting forward a parliamentary petition. *Ibid.*, pp. 24- 32.

¹⁰¹⁸ So we see, for example, in 1859 the appendix to the Postmaster's report states the Letter Carriers' complaints, and relates a meeting in SW District- to which the replay was, that "The Postmaster General holds every man who was present at that meeting, especially those who took an active part, responsible for its proceedings; and he warns all others not to follow example tending to subvert discipline, to impede public service, and to bring disgrace and dismissal on those concerned" The Postmaster General's fifth report, 1859, p. 40. POST 92/2: *Reports of the Postmaster General on the Post Office*. 1855-1864

¹⁰¹⁹ In November 1858, for example, Bokenham agreed to increase in wages to 25s a week. The Postmaster General's fifth report, 1859. *Ibid.* In 1859, for example, the Postmaster General reports that there had been some 'misconduct' among some letter carriers in London, but after 'inspection', some of the letter carriers grievances were addressed and terms changed, "these alterations have considerably improved the condition of a large body of Letter Carriers, and have, I trust, rendered every industrious and well-conducted Letter Carrier fully contented" The Postmaster General's fifth report, 1859, p. 24. *Ibid.*

¹⁰²⁰ "When this association shall have been some time established and be able to afford useful experience, I hope to see a similar institution, adopted to the different circumstances, arise among the Letter Carriers" The Postmaster General's fifth report, 1859. *Ibid.*

¹⁰²¹ in his journal entries for 1861, for example, he refers to "extravagance in the circulation office – less work and higher pay." Hill's Journal 1861- June 27th, 1861. POST 100/14: *Rowland Hill's Post Office Journal*, 26 Jan-16 Dec 1861

¹⁰²² It was that year that Candy notes as the time by which Postal clerks had started to organise as well. Candy p. 25

¹⁰²³ *Ibid.*, p. 38

¹⁰²⁴ Campbell-Smith p. 190

trade, and prosperity, but his recommended reforms were not taken up, instead living on as a ‘manifesto’ for workers to strive towards.¹⁰²⁵

In the 1880s agitation for labour reform generally was widespread in the city, with unionisation on the rise, protests and riots in Trafalgar Square in 1886 and 87 campaigning for better working rights, and against the dire poverty experienced in the city.¹⁰²⁶ 1870 had seen the introduction of an Education and Public Health Acts; 1881 saw the setting up of the London Municipal Reform League, and in 1884 the London Government Bill was passed. At last London was starting to claim a level of democratic representation: the London County Council (LCC) was formed in 1889,¹⁰²⁷ and dominated initially by labour-leaning politics¹⁰²⁸. Mount Pleasant, where more agitation proved possible than at St. Martin’s, opened 1889.¹⁰²⁹

Things only really began to change in the 1890s, when staff meetings were no longer outlawed, and postmen held their first meetings since 1860 that were not banned by the authorities.¹⁰³⁰ The context was one of a great deal of trades union activity around the whole country, membership was growing, and formal political representation was on the cards. A huge meeting and march for workers in 1890 in Clerkenwell, included a speech by Kier Hardy.¹⁰³¹ At the same time, however, the Post Office hierarchy remained firm; strikebreakers were employed when a full-scale strike was on the cards. The 1890 Postmen’s strike in Mount Pleasant fact never actually spread to St. Martin’s, although hundreds of Post Office employees were sacked;¹⁰³² but it was a learning curve for union leaders.¹⁰³³

¹⁰²⁵ Eventually one of the first unions was called the ‘Fawcett Association’. *Ibid.*, p. 190

¹⁰²⁶ Briggs, *Victorian Cities*, p. 64

¹⁰²⁷ *Ibid.* p. 354

¹⁰²⁸ Without using that terminology: ‘Progressives’ at the time, in contrast to the conservative ‘Moderates’

¹⁰²⁹ Campbell-Smith p. 202

¹⁰³⁰ Campbell-Smith notes that there were four different major post office unions when the restrictions on meetings of unions were finally lifted, *Ibid.*, p. 203. Candy notes that by 1892 all major grades of Post office workers had unions, Candy, p. 62

¹⁰³¹ Candy, p. 57

¹⁰³² Campbell-Smith p. 204

¹⁰³³ “step by step over the next dozen years or so, the four nascent postal unions squeezing their way into a formally acknowledged role as representatives of the workforce.” *Ibid* p. 203

Where this relates to the London Postal Map was: firstly, as has been seen, the use of auxiliary workers was influenced by the Postal Map, and secondly, in the way that the Map altered patterns of worker's movements in the City. The union development outlined above was typical of many early campaigns for workers' rights in many industries and in many places around the country. However, there were instances in this story that were specific to the London District context. For example; the London letter carriers used their knowledge of London and the people on their walks to help their own efforts. Letter carriers in Clerkenwell used contacts with printers to publish their workers' magazines, and letter carriers whose walks were around Temple and the Inns of Court used contacts there to gain legal representation.¹⁰³⁴ Thirdly, the London context was important for organisation, as workers used their Districts as the headquarters of workers' unions (seen too in Post Office fears about decentralization of staff meaning less observation of staff); and the Postmaster met with the representatives of the NW or SW districts, and the Clapham area in particular was active in its ability to organise.¹⁰³⁵

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Therefore, in the case of the experience of letter carriers, sorters and others in the London District, significant changes took place as a result of the London reforms. Appointment and progression became based on testing and measurable service, the location of their work in many cases changed, from St. Martin's to other district offices somewhere else in London, and working conditions changed: in some cases, men were employed on reasonable rates with holiday pay, sick pay, and pensions, but these men would be sharing work and office space with others on temporary contracts, for different

¹⁰³⁴ Candy, p. 37

¹⁰³⁵ The Postmaster General reprimanded these officers in his report in 1859. Fifth Report of the Postmaster General, 1859, POST 92/2: *Reports of the Postmaster General on the Post Office*. 1855-1864. In addition, the Civil Service Gazette in 1858 includes a memorial to the Postmaster General signed by 'the Committee' which included representatives of each district, labelled as such, demonstrating that officers were organising their own committee (prior to the date of official unions) actions through the district system. See Fryer and Akerman for a reproduction of the Civil Service Gazette, dated August 24th 1858.

times of day each week, for less pay, and for no benefits.¹⁰³⁶ And, the postal districts also worked to provide a base from which worker agitation could be cultivated.

¹⁰³⁶ Campbell-Smith p. 171

4. HOW SPEED WAS USED: EXPERIENCE OF THE POST IN THE CITY

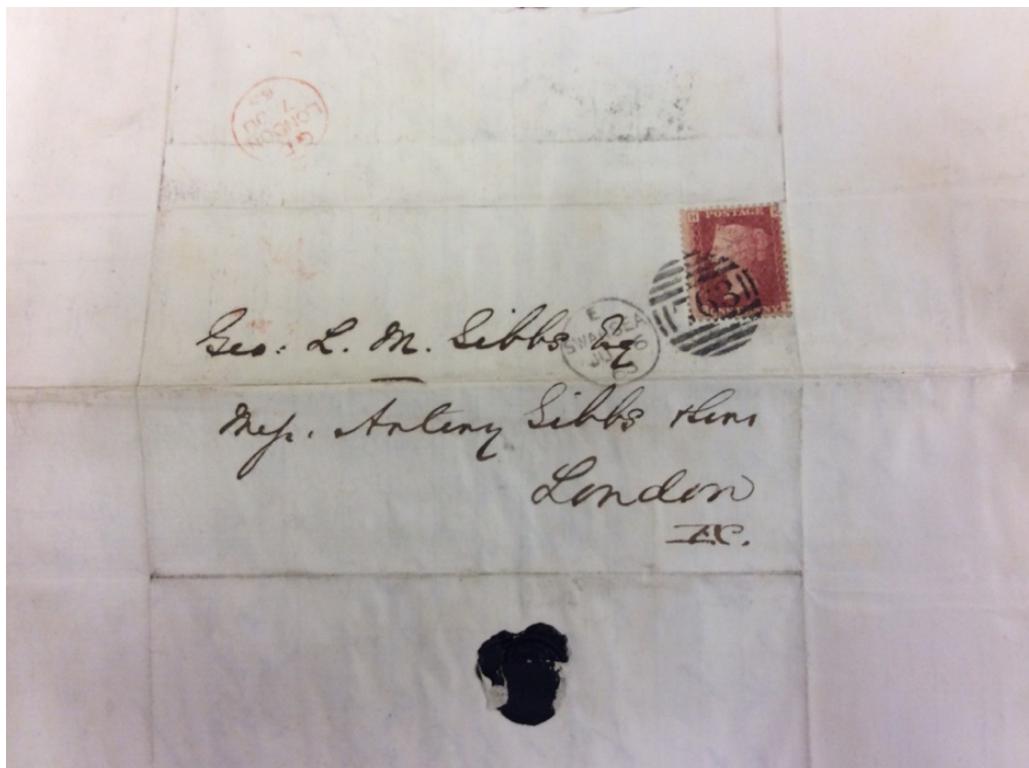


Fig. 130: Business letter addressed to the EC district¹⁰³⁷

If the London Postal Map changed the routines and experiences of people who *made* the Post, it also changed the experiences of people who used the post every day. This part of the chapter asks the question of how experiences of people in the city – of users of the post – changed as a result of the Postal Map. The everyday routines of those using the post were influenced by the Map; exploring this allows us to understand what it really meant to introduce a wholly modern communications system to a city.

Baines, a chronicler of the Post Office from the 1880s, documented this view of a member of the public on the operations of the Post Office, ‘a vestry man sitting next to me at Hampstead once remarked: ‘My four o’clock letters sometimes do not come till five. I mean to write to Mr Fawcett about it’.¹⁰³⁸ This demonstrates the public expectation of the service at that time– that hourly deliveries be received promptly.

¹⁰³⁷ CLC/B/012/MS11067: *Correspondence and papers relating to partnership agreements, 1852 - 1875*

¹⁰³⁸ Fawcett was the Secretary of the Post Office. F.E. Baines, *Forty years at the post office. A personal narrative*. London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1895, pg. 212.

In addition, Baines makes a contrast between his own period and that of 1838:

We both [i.e. Baines, and a postal work predecessor from 1838] resided in our time, two or three miles from Oxford Street – he at Hammersmith, I at Hampstead. If he had a letter for London, and did not post it before 4pm, it was not delivered until noon the next day. If I posted a letter as late as 3 in the morning, it was delivered to any part of London at 8. I could receive a letter from Kilburn at 6pm, reply to it at 7pm, and get an answer, written that same night, at 8 the next morning.¹⁰³⁹

The key comparison given here was the ability in the 1880s to send many letters a day, back and forth, received and replied to the same day. It was this that the people in London in the 1880s used the post for, and it is this phenomenon of frequent rapid postal communications that is the subject matter of this part of the chapter, because understanding this is understanding the impact the Postal Map, specifically, had on Londoners.

This experience was discussed at the time. A *Daily Telegraph* article from 1864 specifically referenced the London Postal service as part of the development of modern London:

We Londoners, at whose door the postman thunders a dozen times during the course of the twenty four hours [...] The separation of this overgrown metropolis into different postal districts, which are virtually small post-towns – a measure which has conduced more than any other to the comfort and convenience of commercial London¹⁰⁴⁰

Picking up from the quote, this chapter investigates how achieving greater speed and frequency of communications through the Postal Map had an impact on Londoners involved in ‘commercial London’- those businesses and individuals that used the service in commercial life.

¹⁰³⁹ F.E. Baines, *Forty years at the post office. A personal narrative*. London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1895, pg. 208

¹⁰⁴⁰ *Daily Telegraph*, March 1864

The financial city provides a case study to answer the research question of how might the London Postal Map have had a wider impact outside of itself. There were many causes of London's development as a financial centre in this period – but was the Map one of them? To test the idea, this thesis asks whether people in the City used the post, and if the Map reforms changed the way they used it. The question links the Map's effect on the system to increase the speed of the post, combined with the financial context in London in that period; the two being highly influential elements of development happening alongside each other, feeding into each other, within a context of a dominance of 'free trade' policies.

Historical narratives that discuss the post have taken letter writing for messages of a personal nature as their subject matter.¹⁰⁴¹ But there were other ways in which the post was used that have not received as much attention.¹⁰⁴² One different use of the letter post was to send messages between people who were in touch personally anyway - people who could walk to each other's places of business in a few minutes, but who nonetheless used letters to communicate to each other. They wrote short notes, rather than significant personal letters over which time was taken.

Here postal administrative sources are considered, alongside a similar methodology to the historian Susan Whyman, who used archives of letters to understand the users of the postal system, but this chapter does so in a nineteenth century context, relating to business archives. Although the postal system was designed to be cheap and accessible to all users, those who used the fast and efficient service in the City included major international businesses. Looking at archival records of City-based businesses builds up a picture of the use of the mail system. By looking at collections of letters it is possible to understand the impact that letter communications and letter writing had on the

¹⁰⁴¹ The historian Susan Whyman, in 'The Pen and the People', gives a fascinating account of the use of the postal service in the eighteenth century, using a methodology of dense archival work looking at letters from this period – but she concentrates on family relationships, and on people sending letters to loved ones around the country, often in cases where people have been removed from each other geographically, for example when children were sent away to school. Susan E. Whyman, *The Pen and the People: English letter writers 1660-1800*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009

¹⁰⁴² Letters are used as sources for other histories, but, "we have... barely begun to study the modern posted letter as its own distinctive historical practice", Henkin, p. 6.

everyday lives and routines of the people working in the City and how the speed of the post had an effect on the rituals of conducting business, which included commenting on the postal system regularly.¹⁰⁴³

The case studies analysed here include the archival records relating to Anthony Gibbs and Sons,¹⁰⁴⁴ a large City-based private banker, Lampards,¹⁰⁴⁵ Hambros,¹⁰⁴⁶ a major Danish-British bank that loaned to the British government among others, and various merchants engaged in global trade throughout the empire,¹⁰⁴⁷ based in the City.¹⁰⁴⁸

¹⁰⁴³ The Postal Museum's exhibition, 'Post Haste' includes the note that, "For the British postal service speed was everything, even a two minute delay needed explanation – in writing!" This expresses not only the desire for speed within the organisation of the post itself, it also hints at the fact that the people who were writing letters – i.e. the users of the system – were also concerned with the speed of the post, and were in the habit of commenting on this very issue within the letters that they wrote.

<http://beta.postalheritage.org.uk/whats-on/onlineexhibitions/post-haste/> (accessed 30/03/15)

¹⁰⁴⁴ See the huge archive at the LMA: CLC/B/012: Antony Gibbs and Sons Limited

¹⁰⁴⁵ CLC/B/112/MS37041: Arthur Lampard (*partner and director 1894-1916*): general correspondence

¹⁰⁴⁶ Such as CLC/B/110/MS19063: "Private letters", consisting of personal correspondence of Carl Joachim Hambro (to 1877) and Everard Hambro (to 1925) and partners, relating to all aspects of the business of the firm and family and personal matters. 1861-1892. \$n[bundles 1-16].

¹⁰⁴⁷ For example, CLC/B/140/MS22034: *Register of enquiries received by Kleinwort, Cohen and Co, and Kleinwort, Sons and Co, concerning firms, clients etc., giving date received and date reply given. Arranged alphabetically by name of enquiring firm, 1880 - 1899*

¹⁰⁴⁸ The case studies have been chosen based on the availability of relevant records, with a sizable enough extant set of letters to allow building up convincing conclusions. They have also been chosen as they are examples of firms that, whilst based in the city, have a large number of interests abroad- allowing for an understanding of how the trade that took place in the City had a significant international dimension: the City-based network was one part of a global network. The companies chosen have archival evidence stretching over a long enough period to gain some understanding of the changes that happened through time in their operations.



Fig. 131: A bundle of Hambro letters, at the London Metropolitan Archive

In cases where the businesses have letter collections extant, it is not possible to understand what proportion of letters that were sent and received have been kept for archiving, however, even the selection that has survived paints a very clear picture. There are boxes and boxes of correspondence, of many, many, letters sent every day. This alone is enough to understand that any image of the Victorian city, in which communication took place via messenger or telegraph, ignores a substantial part of the story: that letter post was the most popular means of communication.¹⁰⁴⁹

¹⁰⁴⁹ Because of problems with congestion in the wires in the 1850s, telegrams were not generally sent around London; rather they were used to send messages from London to other places. Standage, p. 90. Kynaston, p. 168 describes the importance of the telegraph to the City.



Fig. 132: A file of letters from the Gibbs archive. Understanding that this is just one of hundreds of files gives an indication of the numbers of business letters archived.¹⁰⁵⁰

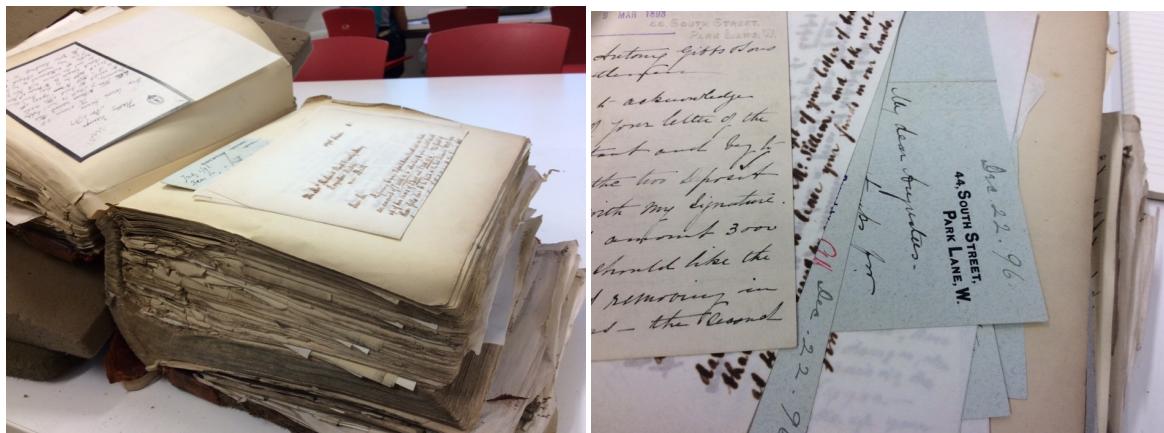


Fig. 133: Within each page of the huge volume above, are kept many short letters, for example those seen here.¹⁰⁵¹

¹⁰⁵⁰ LMA. CLC/B/012/MS11092: *Scrapbook of deposit letters, 1880 - 1910*

¹⁰⁵¹ *Ibid.*

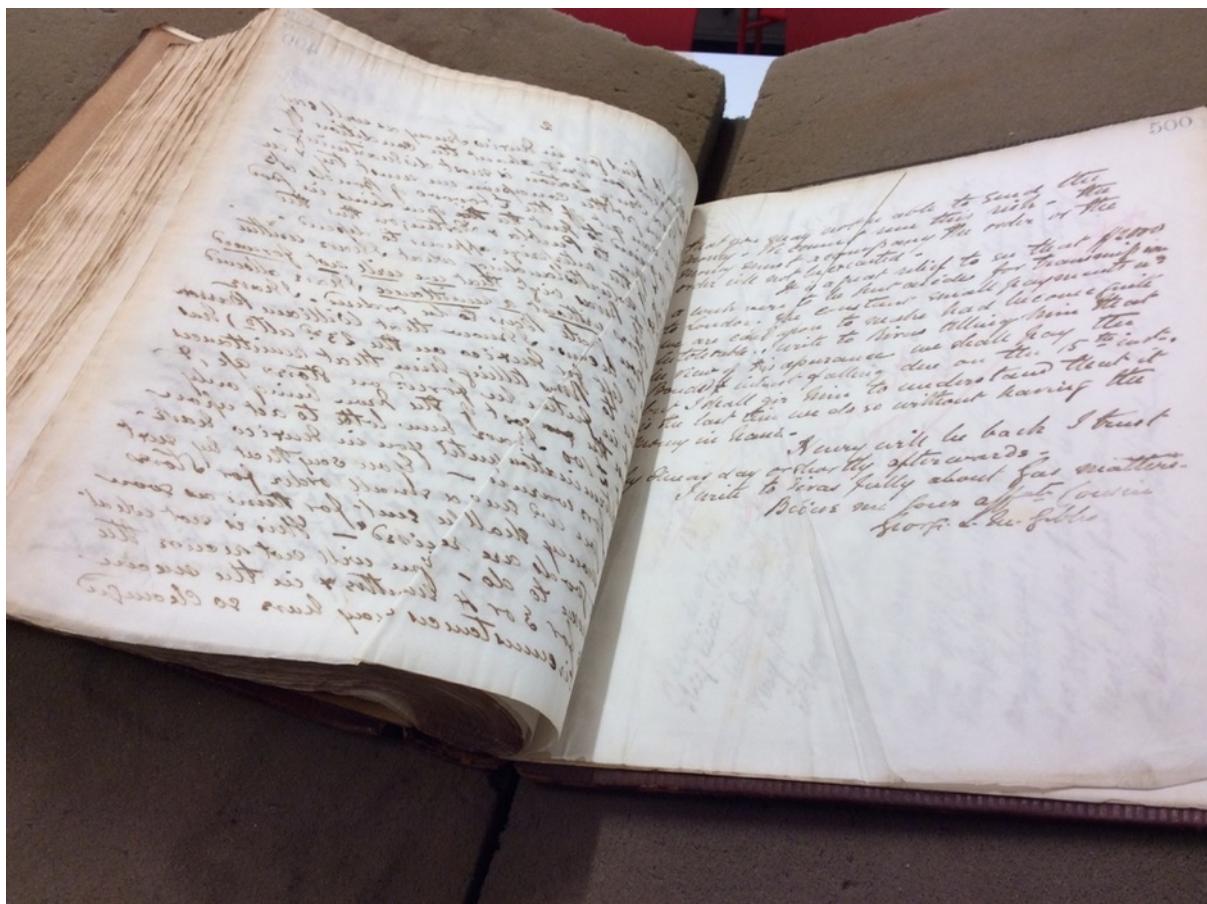


Fig. 134: Another example of letters in business archives are these bound copies of letters, the edition above – again one of many - showing there are more than 500 pages of letters in this one volume alone¹⁰⁵²

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We turn here to ‘commercial London’, to the world of financial services. The financial services industry in the City readily used and benefitted from the ‘hourly communications’: rapid letters spread intelligence across the City, that allowed for financial transactions to take place, setting the rate for stocks, dictating the value of goods. The case studies for this part of the essay include institutions, organisations, businesses and individuals located within the ‘square mile’ City of London: the historic heart of London that had for many years before the 1850s been the geographical area in which trade, commerce, finance, and manufacturing had been located. Much of the content of the letters moving through this huge system were related to business.

¹⁰⁵² CLC/B/012/MS11037/2: Out-letter books ('private') of George Louis Monck Gibbs (in South American service from 1862, partner and director of the London firm 1865-81), 5 Volumes, 1863 - 1881

London, above all, was a trading city, and its built environment reflected this.¹⁰⁵³ The map below shows the site of the City, the historical centre of London, delineated here by a red boundary on this map from 1801:



Fig. 135: Wallis' Plan of the Cities of London and Westminster, 1801¹⁰⁵⁴

When the London Postal Map reforms were introduced, the old City was included in the 'EC' district, as seen in the map below (along with some additions to the north of the City).

¹⁰⁵³ The growth of the dockland sites in this period attested to London's growth as a trading capital: the building of docks, warehouses and train lines for transporting goods were physical manifestations of the impact that London's role as a global trading capital was having on the city.

In Marx's theory of accumulation under capitalist modes of production, "capitalism is bound to expand through both an intensification of relationships in the centres of capitalist production and a geographical extension of those relationships in space." Thus capitalism has a relationship with the development of the urban environment - it dictates the way that cities develop. See our guide through concepts of capital, David Harvey's explanation of the fundamental aspects of capitalism that are important for this piece. Harvey, p. 255

¹⁰⁵⁴ Mapco, accessed 20/02/15: <http://mapco.net/wallis/wallis.htm>



Fig. 136: Detail from 'Kelly's Post Office Directory Map Of London', 1857¹⁰⁵⁵

The EC district was also the home of the headquarters of the G.P.O., the site on the corner of Cheapside and St Martin's le Grand, just north of St Paul's Cathedral. It made sense that the building with this function be located in the City, because it was here that trading in London was based, and the communication system that facilitated this trade was the postal service. The City was the place where the services required for trade were located: the banks, the insurance firms, the solicitors. Like now, these different sectors had their geographical spaces in the City, with law centred around the Inns of Court in the west, and insurance around Leadenhall in the east of the City. In addition to these geographic locations within the City, the City had connections west, to the residencies, businesses, sites of leisure and consumption, to government offices in London, and connections east with the docks.

The connection between the development of trading businesses and related operations like insurance, shipping, and warehousing, and the institution of the Post Office was

¹⁰⁵⁵ Mapco, accessed 20/02/15: <http://mapco.net/kelly1857/kellynb.htm>

strong enough that Lloyd's Coffee House had moved its headquarters to be close to the G.P.O. building in 1691. This link was to continue throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, only to get stronger in the nineteenth century, as the financial services industry began to dominate within the British economy.

The City at the beginning of the nineteenth century had a large residential population of 122,000,¹⁰⁵⁶ and it was still a place where manufacturing and hard industries took place. By the end of the century, the economy in this place had shifted, as had the nature of the activity taking place there; firms had grown, and had diversified, but had done so at the expense of smaller businesses, which were no longer housed in the City.¹⁰⁵⁷ It had become a place almost exclusively of business, with very few residents actually living in the City itself, most of the hundreds of thousands of people working here now commuted each day from the outlying suburbs.¹⁰⁵⁸ The City had now shifted to be a place of finance.

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In historical accounts that look to explain London's development into the global leader in finance in this period, a number of causal factors are often cited.¹⁰⁵⁹ Our task is to understand whether the administration of the postal service, including the London Postal Map, was in fact one of the causal factors that led to the growth of this industry in London, by providing 'comfort and convenience' to commercial London.

¹⁰⁵⁶ David Kynaston, *The City of London Vol.1, A World of Its Own, 1815-1890*, p. 30

¹⁰⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 140-142

¹⁰⁵⁸ Around 200,000 people per day walked into the City in the mid-1850s. *Ibid.*, p. 149. By 1881 this was up to 261,000. *Ibid.* p. 287.

¹⁰⁵⁹ Cain and Hopkins, for example, link the growth of the financial services sector to an acceptance of the aristocracy to dealing with, and becoming part of, the City, in contrast to the elite's perception of 'captains of industry'. P.J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism: 1688-2000*, Routledge, 2014, p. 40. Charles Jones, in another example ascribes causality to technology changes: 'the evolution of more regular, speedier and more capital-intensive systems of transport and communications, and new techniques for the storing and processing of raw materials and foodstuffs is seen as the root cause of the institutional changes with which this book is concerned' – though notably he does not include letter post in his idea of 'communications'. Jones, p. 4

We can summarise the causal factors that have been cited in this development. Firstly, was a political and social acceptance of the philosophy of ‘free trade’ as one of the conditions for economic success,¹⁰⁶⁰ with London’s dominance in finance not being ‘natural’, but rather the result of many barriers to trade being removed.¹⁰⁶¹ The volume of trade that took place in London indicated the popularity of London’s combination of suitable infrastructure with ‘free trade’ policies.¹⁰⁶² The more banks relocating to the City, the more came, its success in attracting business only led to more success.

The breaking up of state-sponsored monopolies was particularly important for global trade, not least within the ever-expanding empire. The numbers of people and businesses involved in world trade, and financial services supporting trade, started to expand.¹⁰⁶³

Perhaps paradoxically, alongside free trade and unbridled capitalism existed a set of centralized, state-run systems were also rapidly developing, and which were also highly important for London’s growth as a business centre.¹⁰⁶⁴ State-run systems allowed for the development of commercial enterprise, not merely by their absence, as a free trader might insist, but by their inserting necessary infrastructures to allow for trade, including the London Postal Map reforms.¹⁰⁶⁵ With the British state becoming more involved in communications from 1800, the post became a vital infrastructure for ‘free trade’.¹⁰⁶⁶ The other state-backed system was that run by the Bank of England, which

¹⁰⁶⁰ The period leading to 1850 was one in which ‘conveniences’ – including the post - were being rapidly accumulated within the space of London. Harvey explains this type of phenomenon in a different way, from the perspective of capital itself, stating: “The survival of capitalism is predicated on the continued ability to accumulate, *by whatever means is easiest*. The path of capital accumulation will move to *wherever the resistance is weakest*. It is the task of historical and theoretical analyses to identify these points of least resistance, of greatest weakness.” Harvey, p. 264

¹⁰⁶¹ “there was nothing “natural” about London being the centre of the state. It was deliberately made so by human design” Joyce, p. 61

¹⁰⁶² Kynaston, p. 309

¹⁰⁶³ Jones, p. 106

¹⁰⁶⁴ Not everyone would see this as a paradox. The economist and historical geographer David Harvey describes the growth of cities as being driven by capitalism. According to Harvey, “factories and fields, schools, churches, shopping centres and parks, roads and railways litter a landscape that has been indelibly and irreversibly carved out according to the dictates of capitalism”.

¹⁰⁶⁵ Joyce states that the Post Office was one of the first large-scale technological systems, and in being so, it combined “the reproduction of the state *and* capitalism” Joyce, p. 38

¹⁰⁶⁶ The understanding here is that the concept of ‘free trade’ as practiced in the Victorian context was in fact a system that because a set of highly centralised authorities were providing the stable context to allow for its growth. The Post Office represented one of the most explicit manifestations of this particular centralised authority. It can be argued that the Bank of England was a highly centralised authority, too:

not only aimed to stabilise the financial system, but also acted as a go-between, distributing capital.¹⁰⁶⁷ London, in many respects, was seen as a safe bet for overseas investment.¹⁰⁶⁸

The development of technology allowed for London's growth, with the Victorian economic system relying on cheap and rapid communications,¹⁰⁶⁹ not least over long distances.¹⁰⁷⁰ The railways undoubtedly were crucial, and the railway network in the rest of the country was connected utterly with London's postal operations.¹⁰⁷¹

The part played by the deregulation of the financial services sector was crucial,¹⁰⁷² as it led to London being overwhelmingly the location of choice for generating credit.¹⁰⁷³ This deregulation included movement away from previous restrictions on companies being set up with a 'limited liability' form.¹⁰⁷⁴ This was achieved through a series of laws in the 1850s, and the Companies Act of 1862,¹⁰⁷⁵ which allowed for the setting up of Joint-stock companies,¹⁰⁷⁶ selling stock in anything from government loans to property

"Sterling provided an international monetary standard into which separate national currencies were exchangeable at fixed rates: and the custodian of the standard of sterling was the London money market, ultimately controlled by the Bank of England. [...] This gave the City a sort of constant control over the money of the world, and meant that the world economic order, which was regarded by laissez-faire economist as part of the natural order, was in fact controlled by a highly centralised authority situated in London.", Thompson, p. 141

¹⁰⁶⁷ So the whole credit system rests on the Bank – "On the wisdom of the direction of that one joint-stock company, it depends whether *England shall be insolvent or solvent*" Walter Bagehot, *Lombard Street: a description of the money market*. London: Kegan Paul, Trench and Co, 1888, p. 36

¹⁰⁶⁸ Bagehot, p. 28

¹⁰⁶⁹ "The capitalist mode of production promotes the production of cheap and rapid forms of communications and transportation." Harvey, p. 244

¹⁰⁷⁰ "The credit system allows for a geographical extension of the market by establishing continuity where there was none before. The necessity to annihilate space by time can in part be compensated for by an emerging system of credit." Harvey, quoting Marx 1967, vol. 2: 251-2. See Harvey, p. 245

¹⁰⁷¹ Baines stated, "The London night mail is the backbone of the circulation of letters throughout the country". F.E. Baines, *Forty years at the post office. A personal narrative*. London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1895, p. 193

¹⁰⁷² The political and social context into which the London Postal Map was inserted was one in which debates on the theory and practice of free trade were dominant. A series of controls on trade had been in place throughout the eighteenth century, but as the nineteenth century progressed, these controls started to be taken away. The monopolies of the Trading Companies such as the East India Trading Company were broken up (1813 it lost its monopoly) in this period. The Corn Laws that regulated corn prices dominated public discourse until their repeal in 1846. The effect of this was that trade was opening up; anyone with enough capital – or enough credit – could get involved

¹⁰⁷³ Cain and Hopkins, p. 26; p. 44; p. 63; **p. 172**

¹⁰⁷⁴ The Limited Liability Act was passed in 1855, along with a further Act in 1856. Hoppen, p. 706.

¹⁰⁷⁵ Jones, p. 104

¹⁰⁷⁶ The National Discount Company was first of the joint stocks to set up in 1856. King pp. 218 - 230

to drainage,¹⁰⁷⁷ and many such companies being set up specifically to take part in the bill brokering business.¹⁰⁷⁸ London discount houses were cheaper than provincial banks so London started to grow in a disproportionate amount to the rest of the financial centres in the country.¹⁰⁷⁹

This was a shift away from the dominance of privately-owned banks of the past which had previously funded capital works, including works abroad. Once ventures could be set up as joint stock companies, with limited liability, they no longer needed personal (often family) control overseas.¹⁰⁸⁰ Good communication between the local site abroad, and the financier in London was crucial. This added to London's place - which had been developing since the beginning of the century - as the global headquarters for foreign loans.¹⁰⁸¹

Alongside this, there was only very limited competition from other potential global financial centres in this period, with the London-based financial system benefitting from turmoil abroad.¹⁰⁸² Poorer countries could not offer credit, so could not function as competitors to London, and London's share of the world market compared to other financial centres grew in this period notably.¹⁰⁸³ Importantly, a series of secondary markets was being developed in London, with English bankers lending to people who then lent to foreign states.¹⁰⁸⁴ Despite foreign turmoil, there were many opportunities

¹⁰⁷⁷ King, p. 231

¹⁰⁷⁸ The first of these was the National Discount Company, set up in 1856, its Articles of Agreement being signed and sealed on 1st August 1856. The 'Articles of association for National Discount Company Limited' shows the company has a capital of £1m, of which around 4% only had been paid up front. The set of documents that remain archived related to the company describe how the everyday business of the company was to be dependent on the infrastructure of the post. LMA, CLC/B/097/MS18122: *Subscription contracts for shares in an intended additional capital of £1,000,000.*

¹⁰⁷⁹ King, p. 40

¹⁰⁸⁰ Jones, pg. 105

¹⁰⁸¹ Soon in to the 1800s banks based in London were starting to purchase foreign loans; in 1818 Rothschilds purchased a loan to the Prussian government that was payable in London, in sterling. Foreign loans were to become increasingly important as the century wore on. By the "early 1850s the international economy was in the process of taking off spectacularly, so that by 1870 the volume of international trade would be five times what it had been back in 1840" Kynaston, p.167

¹⁰⁸² The Franco-Prussian war in continental Europe and the civil war in the United States interrupted trade, the stability of their currencies, and the movement of credit. Prior to the Franco-Prussian war, the Bank of France kept some of Europe's reserves alongside the Bank of England, but since then, England kept them all, due largely to suspension of payments by the Bank of France at that time.

¹⁰⁸³ This was demonstrated by the figures for London's 'loan fund', which in 1872/73 stood at £120m. This was the total of the known deposits in banks in the City; in comparison the figure for Paris in the same period was £13m, New York £40m, and the German Empire £8m. Bagehot, p.4- 6

¹⁰⁸⁴ "English bankers are [...] great lenders to those who lend". Bagehot, p. 7

for overseas trade and expansion of financial services that London was able to capitalise on, such as the fact that countries in South America were being liberated, and therefore opening up to trade and needing state and private infrastructure projects.¹⁰⁸⁵ In fact, British financial services became so reliant on overseas loans that a major financial crash was only just averted in 1890 when Barings bank, far too exposed by Argentine loans, nearly went bust.¹⁰⁸⁶

Lastly, was the point of critical mass. London was becoming the primary centre for financial services because of the number of people and businesses who sent funds there to be traded.¹⁰⁸⁷

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With London's business activity developing in this way, developments in postal technology were crucial. Take for example the workings of the Discount Bill market, a key part of the financial services industry.¹⁰⁸⁸ The Discount Bill industry was a technique for generating credit that was a communications-based, bringing liquidity to the market.¹⁰⁸⁹ The Discount Bill was a piece of paper, a representation of value that

¹⁰⁸⁵ The bank Hambros, for example received, amongst its many letters from this period, a considerable number from abroad that discuss the matter. A letter from the US in December 1890 for example states that there has been uncertainty in the New York market, "...it has been impossible to get money on time and for commercial purposes, and meanwhile a letter from Gothenburg in Sweden of 17 November 1890 discussed a rumour that Barings had suspended payments, only to then hear that the Bank of England had given it assistance. CLC/B/110/MS19063: "Private letters", consisting of personal correspondence of Carl Joachim Hambro (to 1877) and Everard Hambro (to 1925) and partners, relating to all aspects of the business of the firm and family and personal matters. 1861-1892. \$n[bundles 1-16].

¹⁰⁸⁶ Found in the archives are letters giving evidence of the panic caused by the Barings crisis abroad – which highlight the importance of British finance globally, as well as highlighting the incredible levels of speculation in the markets that occurred in this period. A note from New York on 18th November 1890 stated that in New York there were "many rumours flying about", and that "The magnitude of the possible disaster and the fear that many others concerned, until then considered prime, might also be involved, created a general scare verging on actual panic." *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸⁷ Bagehot, p. 32

¹⁰⁸⁸ It was particularly important because legally, London's financial system was very secure in this period- many thought too secure. Wary of the boom and bust nature of the credit market, and the damage it could cause, the government imposed restrictions through the 1844 Bank Charter Act. This Act set out the role of the Bank of England, and limited the amount of currency available in the system; linking the notes issued to gold bullion, and limiting the amount of notes issued above the gold value held by the Bank of England to £14m. Bagehot, p. 30

¹⁰⁸⁹ The 'international bill on London was London's real raison d'être'. In other places, the Bill of Exchange was the "earning asset" of the central bank – but in London it was on the open market." King, p. viii-xi

was a mechanism for merchants to buy and sell goods without actually paying cash up front.¹⁰⁹⁰ Significantly, the Bill market was developing at exactly the time the Postal Map was being introduced.¹⁰⁹¹ Interestingly, transactions in Bills created profit not from trade in goods, but from trade in the *debt* related to the credit loaned for the purchase of goods. Profits were generated from their sales without actually producing anything new. The credit system itself was generating its own series of profits for brokers and for banks. Where this is interesting for the Postal Map, was that the City was developing financial services which created profit based on finance itself: a business wholly dependent on communications, the written word, trust.

A number of factors were coalescing that meant that London had in place a set of conditions that were, at that time, unique.¹⁰⁹² It was the space in which two types of reforms were coming together: both the quickest letter communications, and the home of an industry that was being rapidly deregulated, and which was developing in ways previously unimagined.¹⁰⁹³ London was developing into a place where the commercial ‘conveniences’ encouraged, or at least allowed for, huge levels of speculation with money. London was the place in which vast levels of wealth could be generated, and lost.¹⁰⁹⁴

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Now we move to look at letter archives to demonstrate the way in which the Post was used in this context. The points to be drawn out from the archives are that:

¹⁰⁹⁰ They functioned as “embodiments of indebtedness or for payments to trade creditors”. King p. xv. Wholesale transactions are usually bill transactions rather than cash ones, Bagehot, p. 133.

¹⁰⁹¹ It is the period from the 1850s that King was to state was, “the most grave cycles of credit abuse” in the history of the market. King, p. 177.

¹⁰⁹² It should be noted, too, that London’s increasingly global-focused financial services were rapidly outstripping those in provincial centres, that largely focused on regional and local services. In London, although domestic bills were traded, their importance was becoming outstripped by foreign and exchange bills. The impact of the financial services was felt outside itself- when capital was distributed globally instead of being invested domestically, internal investment in Britain was decreasing, leading to slowdowns in technological advances and innovation and more.

¹⁰⁹³ The rise of the joint-stocks that trade in capital for schemes abroad was both a method for quick profits, and a method for huge, risky speculation. King, p. 39.

¹⁰⁹⁴ It was a world in which the type of financial activity had the potential to be inherently risky. The shift from private banking to joint stock meant risks and liabilities were spread across different people. And, “the detail of all this is incredible, and it needs a special machinery to cope with it”. pp. 252-262.

- The letter post was one element of a wide global network of communication, in which letter post and telegraph were complementary services
- Fast-moving mail in London, enabled by the reforms of the postal service in London, was used specifically for its speed
- The routine of letter-writing was altered as a result of the introduction of the reforms
- The locations of businesses in London that were writing to each other demonstrate that it was common for letters to be sent between places that were very close to each other
- Letters were used for their convenience in both habitual ways, and in unusual times, such as times of crisis in the markets.

Global trade centred on London

There was a global nature to the communications network that was centred on London. We have seen that London was becoming the centre of a global credit system,¹⁰⁹⁵ vital for the trading of goods around the world.¹⁰⁹⁶ With foreign trade based in London depending on intelligence from local managers at sites of production being able to reach London easily, channels of communication between the bankers and merchants in the City and the local agents across the world were crucial. This took place via both the telegraph and the post.

The archives reveal a network of communications in which London was the point of connection for vast global trade. The usual routine of communications tended to be that companies based in the City of London received a mixture of letters, telegrams, and parcels (such as samples of goods) from their local managers, agents, other connections abroad. These might include letters relating to the amounts of goods to be sold or bought, and invoices for them; letters with details about claims for damaged goods; letters with reports and valuations; letters with detail about how certain goods are

¹⁰⁹⁵ "credit means that a certain confidence is given, and a certain trust reposed" Bagehot, p. 22; Credit is "the disposition of one man to trust another", Bagehot, g. 124

¹⁰⁹⁶ Based around Lombard Street, by the Bank of England: "Lombard Street is an organisation of credit" Bagehot, p. 21

being received in foreign markets: 'even highly fired teas are not liked'.¹⁰⁹⁷ The communications system between London and abroad was multifaceted and efficient.

Archives of City firms provide many examples that demonstrate the importance of a combination of the telegraph and the letter post to trade.¹⁰⁹⁸ For example, the archive of the firm Lampard and Son, a global trading business with its headquarters in London, trading in the late nineteenth century, shows the types of transactions taking place regularly.¹⁰⁹⁹ A telegraph from India, containing information about the price of a batch of tea on a certain day would be received in London.¹¹⁰⁰ Later that day, a telegraph might be sent from London to Canada, where the tea will eventually be sold onto the market there. In between these two messages, decisions needed to be made in the tea trader's headquarters about the amount of tea to buy, and the rate at which it was to be sold on, and how the transactions would be financed.¹¹⁰¹ There were a series of decisions made that governed how the movement of the tea transpired; strategic decisions were being made at the company headquarters in London.

Alongside telegraph and letter communication abroad, a large part of the daily routine of working for a trading company meant communicating quickly *within* London, where in many instances it was not the telegraph that was being used to communicate, but the postal service. The telegraph was much more expensive than the penny post, and not much faster.¹¹⁰² So whilst the communications from abroad via telegram or letter post containing trading intelligence was vital, there is a link in this story that is often neglected when understanding how trade took place; that the whole network was dependent on the notes that were being sent between different people within London, which allowed for key decisions to be made. London was the geographic centre of this type of global trade.¹¹⁰³

¹⁰⁹⁷ CLC/B/112/MS37041: *Arthur Lampard (partner and director 1894-1916): general correspondence*

¹⁰⁹⁸ Many files in the business archives consulted showed this; a set of archive documents that were particularly interesting in this regard were those of the Hambro correspondence. *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰² 'The expense involved [of sending a telegram] meant that only the rich could afford to use the network to send trivial messages; most people only used the telegraph to convey really urgent news'. Standage, p. 61. A telegraph was 6d, in contrast to the post's 1d.

¹¹⁰³ Porter notes that the Greenwich Meridian, created in 1884, marked London as the centre, and 'London thus put the world in its place - development which confirmed, on a global scale, a similar

The form of letters in the archives show that the communications system was multifaceted. Firms wrote letters on printed stationary, that in many cases had the address printed (complete with the 'EC' London Postal District),¹¹⁰⁴ and the firm's telegraph address:

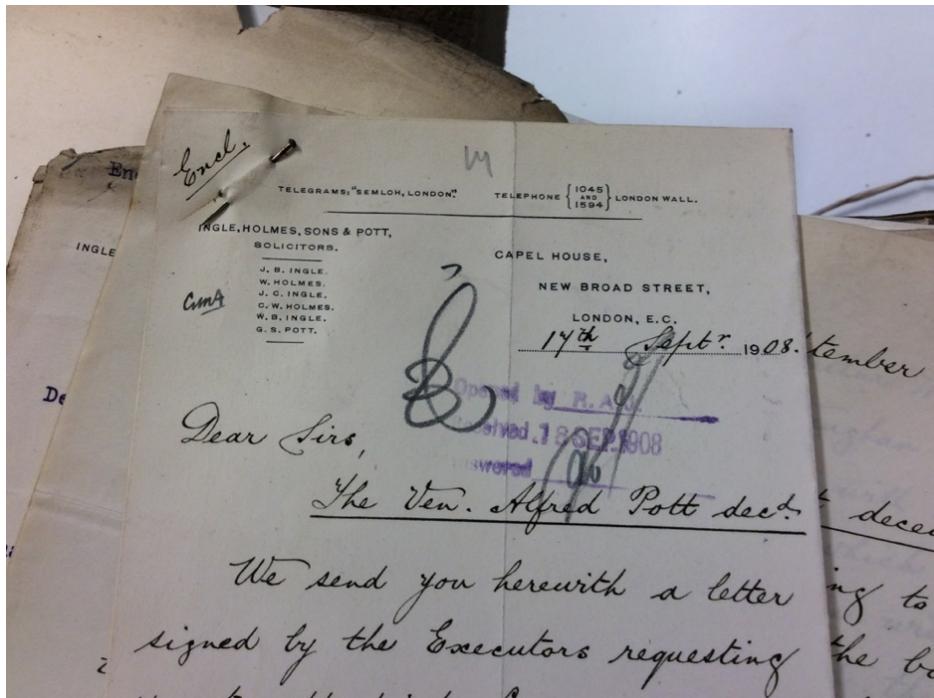


Fig. 137: Stationary often had both the telegram code and the address listed at the top¹¹⁰⁵

Archives show communication with contacts in Canada, with letters from Ontario about what to buy and what not to buy, and others from Montreal;¹¹⁰⁶ from India, with letters referring to "cabling" Calcutta;¹¹⁰⁷ in the United States, with letters received from New York, and Chicago, and alongside letters from the US, there were telegraph receipts from the Western Union Telegraph Company, a telegraph company that connects to the US that had four offices in the EC district, two in the WC district, and one in the SE district;¹¹⁰⁸ in Ceylon (Sri Lanka);¹¹⁰⁹ and closer to home, with buyers in Manchester.¹¹¹⁰

symbolic status already achieved within the nation'. Roy Porter, *London: a social history*, London: Penguin, 2000, p. 225

¹¹⁰⁴ Often in the top right corner, but sometimes across the top and occasionally with a flourish

¹¹⁰⁵ CLC/B/012/MS11092: *Scrapbook of deposit letters, 1880 - 1910*

¹¹⁰⁶ CLC/B/112/MS37041: *Arthur Lampard (partner and director 1894-1916): general correspondence*

¹¹⁰⁷ *Ibid*

¹¹⁰⁸ CLC/B/112/MS37041: *Arthur Lampard (partner and director 1894-1916): general correspondence*

¹¹⁰⁹ *Ibid*

¹¹¹⁰ *Ibid*

And there were the communications within London relating to the communications coming from abroad. We see the way that London at the centre controlled the whole system. The same firm that had letters, telegrams and parcels coming in from Canada, the United States, India, also had correspondence with a large number of businesses with 'EC' and some 'WC' district addresses.¹¹¹¹ Letters were moving around London, controlling global trade.

There was a high volume of letters moving between the City and the Docks in the East End, where warehouses were located.¹¹¹² We see letters going back and forth between the City and 'SE' district warehouses relating to the receipt of particular goods, and their quality. It is in the correspondence between the City and the docklands areas that we get a real sense of the extent to which London was the trading hub of the period – in, for example, references to tea that was shipped from Ceylon to Canada, but which was taken into London in between its origin and destination. This practice – of holding goods in London that were neither made there, nor going to be sold there, was extremely common, and accounted for much of the rapid growth of the docklands in London.

Another point was the ancillary services relating to trade. The letters that were sent within London included receipts of cheques from banks and other financiers, letters from commercial sales rooms,¹¹¹³ and letters to insurance companies.¹¹¹⁴ The network that is revealed then is one in which a variety of different forms of communication are used to send intelligence from global trading contacts to London.

The telegraph and the post appear to be, not competitors in the communications industry, but rather complimentary services. However, whilst messages from abroad came in a variety of forms, what is notable is that, *within London*, the letter was the dominant form of communication used by businesses. So where the London postal

¹¹¹¹ Such as: 70 Gracechurch Street London EC, 23 Lime Street EC; 24 Torrington Square WC; 11 Montague Street, Russell Square WC; 96-98 Leadenhall Street EC; 37 Mincing Lane EC. *Ibid.*

¹¹¹² An example is the note that states, "Dear sirs: we have received your favour of today's date with samples of desiccated coconut just landed at Cotton's Wharf, for which we thank you. We hope to be able to make you a bid tomorrow" *Ibid.*

¹¹¹³ For example, one in Mincing Lane. *Ibid.*

¹¹¹⁴ One address given is at 23 Cornhill, EC, *Ibid.*

reforms had brought in fast, frequent and cheap communications, they were very well used.

Mail used for its speed

Importantly, the archival evidence of business correspondence shows that not only were businesses in the City using the mail, but that they were using it for its speed and its convenience – exactly those things introduced alongside the London Postal Map. The use of the mail in everyday life in the City developed rapidly in the period 1850-1900. With this rapid development came changes in the everyday routines of the many thousands of people who worked in the City. The role of the company clerk was crucial: very quickly there were hundreds such people employed to write and copy the letters that were sent around the City every day.¹¹¹⁵

In the National Discount company's archive, for example, we see people making enquiries via letter, receipts sent out, adverts from other businesses, receipts from telegraph companies, all using the post; and, the bills of exchange that were given, and vouchers for salaries, all used postage stamps.¹¹¹⁶ The archive for Kleinworts shows a similar use of the post, including a record of letters with dates listed in 'when received' and 'replied', almost always the same date.¹¹¹⁷ Enquiries were made relating to all sorts of firms, from all over the world. From the archive is found a real sense of many clerks working all day copying this content down.¹¹¹⁸

References within letters show a consciousness of the different posts that were despatched throughout the day, showing that the correspondents were sending letters

¹¹¹⁵ 'Ultimately, what abided – day after day, week after week, year after year – was not so much the larger environment as the actual, grinding routine: the voluminous ledgers, the salient account books, the endless, pernickety correspondence'. Kynaston, p. 247

¹¹¹⁶ CLC/B/097/MS18122: *Subscription contracts for shares in an intended additional capital of £1,000,000, 1856*; and CLC/B/097/MS18190: *Receipts and miscellaneous correspondence, 1856 - 1857* Correspondence of the National Discount Company for 1856

¹¹¹⁷ CLC/B/140/MS22034: *Register of enquiries received by Kleinwort, Cohen and Co, and Kleinwort, Sons and Co, concerning firms, clients etc., giving date received and date reply given. Arranged alphabetically by name of enquiring firm, 1880 - 1899*

¹¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

at different posts in the day, to the same people, and making it clear when it was these letters were being sent in relation to each other. For example on the 2nd December 1868 a correspondent writes, 'after the dispatch of the mail I feel freer than I did...' and 'I did not make myself clearly understood in my former letters...'.¹¹¹⁹ In February 1869, a letter of 22nd states, 'I have only time before the post to tell you...' in what is a very short note that quotes a telegraph just received.¹¹²⁰ There are examples where having repeated posts throughout the day was taken advantage of, when people are sending letters knowing that they will be received that same day – for example in setting up meetings, such as a letter dated 25th June which arranged a breakfast meeting 'tomorrow', implying that the letters confirming the meeting would be received before then, i.e. later the same day.¹¹²¹

The practice of letter writing in the City did not necessarily need to wait until all information was gathered before sending off a letter, and letters were written throughout the day responding to when information came in. In March 8th, a letter states, 'I have no letter from you. I daresay I shall tonight or tomorrow, and meanwhile I write...'.¹¹²² Letter writing was responsive, immediate, and often not waiting for later communications that same day before moving intelligence onwards in the communication chains. This quote also provides proof of the use of posts that arrive late in the evening, 'I daresay I shall tonight...'.¹¹²³ And a note later that month on 23rd states 'I wrote to you last on the 19th, and almost as usual, received a letter from you that same evening'.¹¹²⁴

We also see evidence of this use of the post through references to those times when letters were not immediately dispatched in reply; in which case the sender was specific about mentioning the lateness of the reply and why this was the case. "Thank you for

¹¹¹⁹ CLC/B/012/MS11036/vol.4: *Out-letter books ('private') of Henry Hucks Gibbs, afterwards First Baron Aldenham, 1845 - 1882*

¹¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹²¹ CLC/B/012/MS11021/19: *Letters and other items collected and arranged by Henry Hucks Gibbs (First Baron Aldenham) relating mainly to the private affairs of the Gibbs family, but also directly or indirectly to the business of Antony Gibbs and Sons. 1855-1875*

¹¹²² CLC/B/012/MS11036/vol.4: *Out-letter books ('private') of Henry Hucks Gibbs, afterwards First Baron Aldenham, 1845 - 1882*

¹¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

your two notes received this morning [...] I am sorry that my absence from town has prevented me from replying”,¹¹²⁵ and “I wrote to you yesterday and have *only now* to send you a letter”,¹¹²⁶ indicating that a reply to a response the next day was felt to be late enough to mention it specifically. And there are signs that the specific context of a particular letter was information that was by no means extraneous, including the likes of, “since seeing you this morning I have been speaking to my partners” to explain the sequence of events that have taken place leading up to this next letter.¹¹²⁷

The materiality of the note itself suggests that it circulated within a system in which speed was a fundamental part. A great many letters in the collections were short notes, often roughly A6 size, containing no more than a two or three sentences. The state of the handwriting often betrays a note written at speed, rather than with great care, with notes scrawled in an untidy script that often borders on unreadable.

¹¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹²⁶ My italics. CLC/B/012/MS11036/vol.3.: *Out-letter books ('private') of Henry Hucks Gibbs, afterwards First Baron Aldenham, 1845 - 1882*

¹¹²⁷ CLC/B/012/MS11037/2: *Out-letter books ('private') of George Louis Monck Gibbs (in South American service from 1862, partner and director of the London firm 1865-81), 5 Volumes, 1863 - 1881*

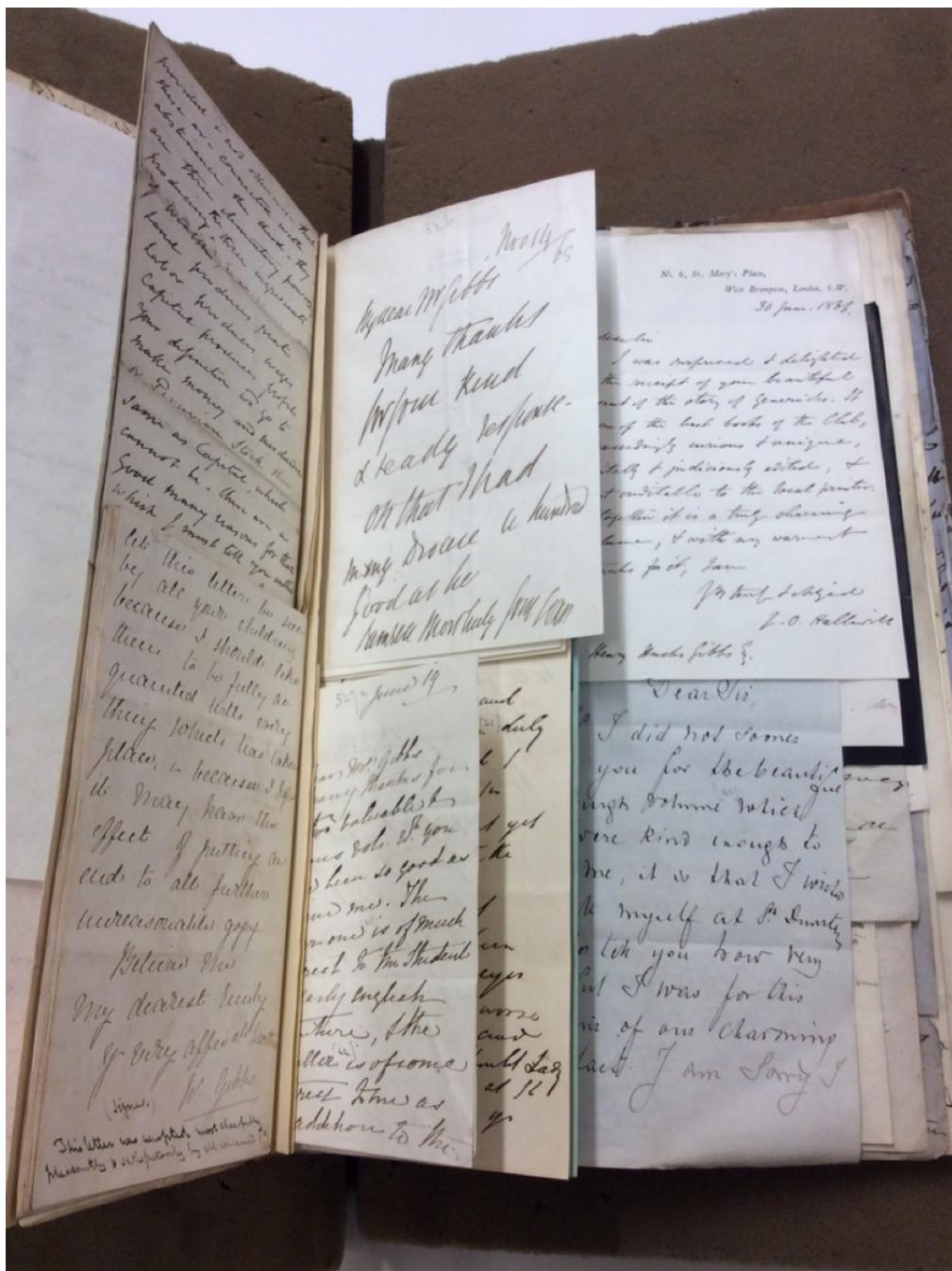


Fig. 138: Archives of letters show many examples of short notes scrawled onto very small writing paper¹¹²⁸

It is clear from the many letters extant relating to business that the standard time taken to rely to a letter was no more than a day; often less time was taken. There was something of an expectation that letters should be received and replied to quickly, as there is today in business with receiving emails.¹¹²⁹

¹¹²⁸ CLC/B/012/MS11021/19: Letters and other items collected and arranged by Henry Hucks Gibbs (First Baron Aldenham) relating mainly to the private affairs of the Gibbs family, but also directly or indirectly to the business of Antony Gibbs and Sons. 1855-1875

¹¹²⁹ For example, a selection of the Gibbs letters from the late 1860s show that often letter writers did not merely acknowledge when a letter was received and a response sent, but also more specific information.

Letter-writing routines

We begin to see a picture building up in which the everyday routine of life in the City for people in the financial services industries involved writing a large number of letters to correspondents throughout the day, including people who were writing to the same correspondents many times in the same day. It would appear, that in the City at least, the benefits of the postal reforms were being felt, and their services relied upon.

Archival records reveal that the routine of letter writing was a highly structured action that repeated itself many times in the day. This routine is shown most clearly through the standardised nature of many of the letters that were sent and received. Many letters were short notes, and there were specific ways of addressing the letters, in many cases with the London district initial, and there were ways of beginning and ending letters that appeared to follow a standard pattern. Within them was a standard form of language, vocabulary made explicit the postal system as a technology at use within daily communication.

The beginnings of the letters reveal a great deal about the nature of letter writing in the City in this period. They betray the extent to which the users of the mail identified their own processes, with use of the mail itself highly routine, highly remarked upon, usually at the beginning of the letter. Almost every letter begins with some form of recognition of the last letter received, sometimes showing the time that the letter writer has taken to respond. Openings of letters include the statements, '...your letter received today';¹¹³⁰ 'many thanks for your letter received this morning';¹¹³¹ 'thank you for your letter

Correspondence shows numerous references, "I sent you two letters..." and "I wrote yesterday..." - and so on; all short sentences that reveal the context of the many letters in series that were being sent to the same correspondents. CLC/B/012/MS11036/vol.4: *Out-letter books ('private') of Henry Hucks Gibbs, afterwards First Baron Aldenham, 1845 - 1882*

¹¹³⁰ This is a general statement found in many of the letters, but specifically can be seen in Gibbs: CLC/B/012/MS11092: *Scrapbook of deposit letters, 1880 - 1910*

¹¹³¹ CLC/B/012/MS11021/20: *Letters and other items collected and arranged by Henry Hucks Gibbs (First Baron Aldenham) relating mainly to the private affairs of the Gibbs family, but also directly or indirectly to the business of Antony Gibbs and Sons, 1876-80*

received this morning';¹¹³² 'I observe by your letter of this morning...';¹¹³³ 'I am obliged by yours of yesterday's date...' ¹¹³⁴

Without getting any further than the first line of a letter, therefore, we can see a clear indication of the importance of situating sending and receiving of letters within a daily context. The usual format of letters reveals the importance of acknowledging the moment letters were received. It also hints at a need to refer to respondents' own diligence in replying. The stock format, therefore, implies a temporality in letter-writing that was important to those sending and receiving the letters. Letters were placed in a particular moment in time; they also had to be situated within a sequence relative to the timing of other letters received and sent. Timing of letters was explicitly contextualised in a situation where many letters were being sent all across the city all day.

Despite the fact that there were stock forms to start letters, the archives also show instances in which the distinct personalities of letter writers is revealed, where we also see hints of use of the fast and frequent London postal system. The contents of letters show deviations from this standard, occasionally in a way that feels subversive of the strict standards of letter writing that appear to have become custom. For example, there is evidence of people finding the practice tiring, boring, or taking too long. Again, the descriptions of letter writing within the letters help to set the scene: 'it's now 8 o'clock and I have been writing since 6.30.'¹¹³⁵ Another example is a rather nice note from Henry Gibbs, in which he describes himself as not being very attentive to letters, stating that he does not have time for them because of the rest of his business duties: 'but when letters must be written, and I leave home directly after breakfast and return just in time for dinner, very disinclined for pen and ink, it cannot be but that some arrears will creep into business hours. I cut my correspondence very short however...' ¹¹³⁶ This, coming from someone who, from the evidence available, is revealed to us in the 21st century as

¹¹³² CLC/B/012/MS11037/1 (*Out-letter books ('private') of George Louis Monck Gibbs (in South American service from 1862, partner and director of the London firm 1865-81)*, 1863-1865

¹¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹¹³⁴ CLC/B/112/MS37041: *Arthur Lampard (partner and director 1894-1916): general correspondence*

¹¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹³⁶ CLC/B/012/MS11021/19: *Letters and other items collected and arranged by Henry Hucks Gibbs (First Baron Aldenham) relating mainly to the private affairs of the Gibbs family, but also directly or indirectly to the business of Antony Gibbs and Sons*. 1855-1875

a highly prolific letter writer.¹¹³⁷

On November 6th 1868, Henry Gibbs wrote, 'Dearest Uncle William, I wrote and sent off half a letter to you just now, and before I go home I will break the neck of a letter I meant to write to you about Mexican Railway business...'¹¹³⁸ This slightly innocuous sounding sentence demonstrates the extent to which small short notes were sent throughout the day, often to the same correspondents. The note referred both to a separate letter sent earlier that day, and a letter to be sent later that same day: so here we witness three different letters, sent in the same day, to the same person, in three different posts. This frequent letter writing was the very thing that was enabled by the postal reforms, and depicted on the London Postal Map.

And then there are also many examples of the use of the letter for no apparent purpose except to say that a letter has been received, and that another one will be on its way soon; rather like the acknowledgment of receipt email that acts as a holder until enough information can be gathered for a full reply, which happens a great deal in the Lampard letters in particular, when samples of goods are received from the warehouses as they arrive into the dock in the East End.¹¹³⁹ But it also happens over just the simple receipt of a letter as well, 'I have your nice letters to which I reply in detail tomorrow'.¹¹⁴⁰ There are even some nice examples of letters being sent for apparently no reason at all, except for sending a letter: 'My dearest Uncle William, I wrote to you yesterday, and have no news for you today! There being (at present at least – noon) no letter or telegraph from Paris...'¹¹⁴¹

This practice of using the letter to not really *do* anything in particular: to do no more than acknowledge receipt, or let someone know that you will send a further letter later, is revealing. It shows that the mail system was a thoroughly embedded part of working

¹¹³⁷ It begs the question of what standards he was setting himself- and to whom was he comparing himself to that was presumably writing, apparently as standard, many more letters?

¹¹³⁸ CLC/B/012/MS11036/vol.4: *Out-letter books ('private') of Henry Hucks Gibbs, afterwards First Baron Aldenham, 1845 - 1882*

¹¹³⁹ CLC/B/112/MS37041: *Arthur Lampard (partner and director 1894-1916): general correspondence*

¹¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴¹ CLC/B/012/MS11036/vol.3: *Out-letter books ('private') of Henry Hucks Gibbs, afterwards First Baron Aldenham, 1845 - 1882*

life, to the extent that you can imagine an almost kneejerk reaction to receiving a letter that involves sending something in response, often by the end of the same day, even if there was nothing really to say. This is a practice that mirrors our use of email in the workplace today, and perhaps demonstrates something, like the use of email today, about the way workers then thought about their communications system- in that they perhaps almost took it for granted. Now, we do not consider issues such as the cost of sending an email, either financially or environmentally, it is just a simple and very easy part of our routine. Letter writing practice in the nineteenth century City has a similar feel; the costs (in whatever form) of letter writing do not appear to be considered to the extent that somebody would think twice about sending off a quick note. And the actual postal system appears to be working smoothly enough to merit this habit. There is a surprising lack of complaint about the system evident within the letters, which is the surest sign that the system itself was forgotten, was simply assumed to be there, to be an infrastructure that was to be used but little questioned. It was an utterly ubiquitous part of business life.

Locations of correspondents



Fig. 139: Letters from the Gibbs collections, with their District initials¹¹⁴²

¹¹⁴² CLC/B/012/MS11092: *Scrapbook of deposit letters, 1880 – 1910*; and CLC/B/012/MS11021/19: *Letters and other items collected and arranged by Henry Hucks Gibbs (First Baron Aldenham) relating*

Another method for considering the impact of the Map based on archival letter evidence is through considering the location of the addresses of recipients. The addresses written on the letters reveal whether or not they are to correspondents in the postal district: if the given address is 'London, EC', we know they are using the system.¹¹⁴³

Through looking at addresses we can see that people are using the postal service to send information to close neighbours that could feasibly have been sent by messengers or spoken in a quick meeting. Although in many of the collections there were letters that travel internationally, to America, Canada, Europe, South America and so on, and to locations all around the UK, in some collections over half of the sets of letters are for locations within the London Postal Map districts.¹¹⁴⁴ Of the letters with London addresses, the most common postal districts are EC, WC, SE and W; a large portion are to addresses in the EC district, i.e. the same district as the bases of the businesses.¹¹⁴⁵ Many letters were sent between locations in the EC district, with correspondents only a matter of streets away.¹¹⁴⁶

Plotting addresses from sample extant letters from archives on a map of the City, we see that many of the correspondents were neighbours, on streets in the close vicinity.¹¹⁴⁷

mainly to the private affairs of the Gibbs family, but also directly or indirectly to the business of Antony Gibbs and Sons. 1855-1875

¹¹⁴³ It should be noted here that not every letter to London in the archives sampled used the London initials. A high proportion of letters that had their addresses on them, did.

¹¹⁴⁴ CLC/B/012/MS11036/vols. 1- 4: *Out-letter books ('private') of Henry Hucks Gibbs, afterwards First Baron Aldenham, 1845 - 1882*

¹¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴⁶ In the Gibbs collections, letters that were being sent between the Gibbs headquarters in 15 Bishopsgate Street Within, EC, and the following addresses:

- The College of Arms, London EC
- 4 Brick Court, Temple, EC
- Gresham Street EC
- 7 Mincing Lane EC
- King William Street EC
- 53 New Broad Street EC
- 139 Temple Chambers EC
- 24 Austin Friars EC
- Temple Chambers Whitefriars EC
- Great Winchester Street EC
- Billiter Street EC
- 85 Cannon Street EC
- Leadenhall Buildings EC

CLC/B/012/MS11092: *Scrapbook of deposit letters, 1880 - 1910*

¹¹⁴⁷ The sample is the list of Gibbs letters in the footnote above, alongside addresses from the Lampard

The expediting of speed when sending letters to places in the same postal area was exactly the point of the Postal Map reforms. What the mapping process shows visually is that these companies were choosing to send short letters in the post to businesses that were on neighbouring streets; they clearly felt that sending a letter in the post was more convenient than handing a note over in person, sending a messenger, or walking round to see the correspondent in person. That this was the case is due to the impact of the postal reforms.

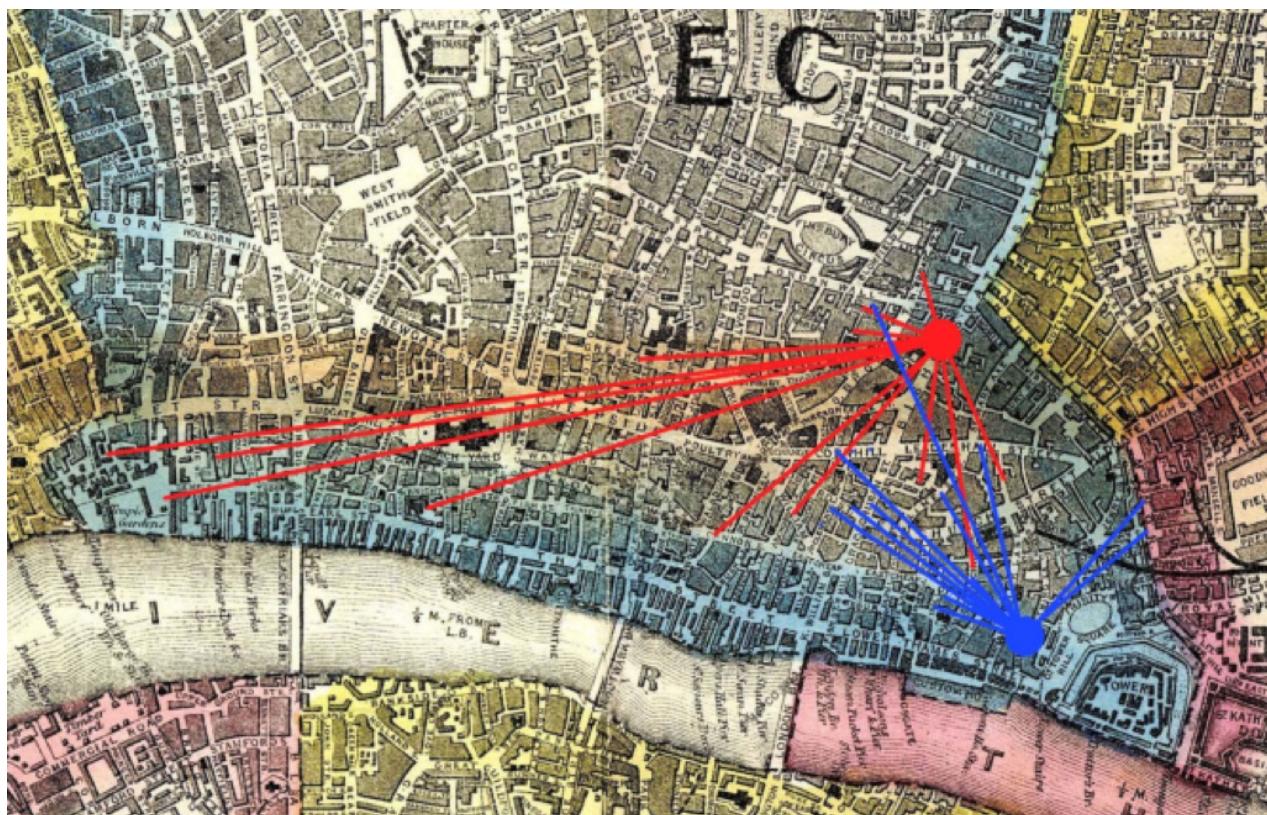


Fig. 140: Map of correspondents' addresses. The red is a snapshot of Gibb's City correspondents, with Gibbs

collection – a company based 3 Tower Street London EC, includes a large volume of letters from local addresses including:

- 70 Gracechurch street London EC
- 23 Lime Street London EC
- 96-98 Leadenhall Street London EC
- 37 Mincing Lane London EC
- 10&12 Minories London EC
- 11 Idol Lane EC
- 14 Great Tower Street London EC
- 10 Clements Lane
- Lombard Street London EC
- 1 Great Tower Street EC
- 39 Old Broad Street EC
- Winchester House London EC
- 23 Cornhill London EC

bank at the large dot and the lines moving out to their destinations. The blue is Lampard letters.

Speculation and crisis

This all builds to an idea of the place of London as the world described by the Post Office employee Trollope in *The Way We Live Now*, a world of speculation, built upon a series of paper transactions, of booms and busts.¹¹⁴⁸ One example of this type of activity was the fall of the firm Overend and Gurney, who speculated on a grand scale, became a joint stock with prominent investors,¹¹⁴⁹ became massively overstretched, and crashed out in 1867, triggering a crisis in the financial markets in London.¹¹⁵⁰

We see this in any number of City-based companies increasingly over the period 1850-1900. There is a distinction between companies set up specifically to build a new infrastructure, say a new telegraph company, or a company to build a ship - and the types of banks that deal in shares of these companies – the banks are one step removed, and hold any number of shares for all kinds of different concerns in their portfolios.¹¹⁵¹ A business like Overends would have interests in hundreds of projects like railway building, electric companies, ships, irrigation. These City-based companies, although they were not directly involved in anything too related to the actual practice of building or managing these projects, by providing the facilities for the people who were actually doing the building to gain the financial liquidity they needed, were contributing to the building of the nineteenth century world.

¹¹⁴⁸ Anthony Trollope, *The Way we live now*, London, 1876

¹¹⁴⁹ Overend and Gurney dominated the bill market in the first half of the nineteenth century. The story of its demise was linked to the deregulation of the sector and the limited liability boom, and subsequent huge speculation. King, p. 124. The limited liability boom reached peak in 1865, the the year that Overend's announced they would move to limited liability joint stock. Despite The Economist realising they held a lot of bad bills, it was floated successfully, with £5m capital, and prominent City names on the board. King, p. 238 - 239

¹¹⁵⁰ Problems became apparent as early as 1866, and by late '66 and early '67, depositors were panicking and withdrawing their money. *Ibid*, p. 244. In May Overend's was subject to a "bear attack" – the short selling of their stock – which exacerbated the problem. On the 10th May they suspended payments and panic in the City ensued. By the evening of the 11th, a Friday, the governors of the Bank of England met and demanded that the Banking Act be suspended. It was, and the wider system was offered a reprieve, but by then Overends was no more. *Ibid*, p. 244

¹¹⁵¹ John Darwin, *The Empire Project*, p. 10

All this financial activity was pinned down by improvements in the communications system. When communications improve, everything can get faster. Faster transactions, faster buying, faster selling. Risks grow and grow. Booms get bigger, busts become more devastating. Availability of credit is one thing; in London this availability was combined with another significant factor; a communications system in which the speed of the letter post was an integral part.

///

The post also had a place in moments that were out of the ordinary. The Baring's crisis of 1890/91 provides an insight into this. In many ways this crisis was the culmination of decades of speculative transactions that took place in a highly mundane manner, those described here as happening all day, every day, in the City. But in 1890, one of the City's top banks, Barings, realised it was overstretched,¹¹⁵² fast running out of capital and unable to fulfil its commitments, and the ensuing crisis threatened to overturn the British economy.¹¹⁵³ This was a huge bank, with interests in many other parts of the financial services sector in London. If Barings went down, who knew how many other banks and industries it would take with it. A panic on the market would be caused immediately, instantly threatening London's place as the biggest and most profitable financial market in the world. Barings, was, therefore, deemed to be '*too big to fail*'.

Early November 1890 saw the City's establishment join forces with Westminster to prevent this crisis from occurring. Prominent individuals met with each other regularly, quickly coming to a set of agreements between themselves over the action to be taken.¹¹⁵⁴ Barings was saved because the Chancellor kept personal connections with

¹¹⁵² Barings had for a long time traded on foreign shares, and had floated foreign loans on the markets in London. They were particularly involved with loans for infrastructure projects in South America; in Argentina Barings alone was responsible for over 25% of all British interest in Argentina. Kynaston, *The City of London- A World of its Own, 1815-1890*

¹¹⁵³ As 1890 approached, it became gradually clear that Barings had liabilities that it may not be able to fulfil. The shares that it had tried to sell for the Argentine loans had not raised enough capital, making huge losses for the bank, and a number of big payments out were due on the horizon. During the summer in 1890 the problem became clear. A payment of £1.5m was due to the Russian government on 11th November; Barings knew it did not have the cash available. *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵⁴ The Prime Minister, Chancellor of the Exchequer, Governor of the Bank of England, and leading bankers including Rothschild, Hambro, Martins and Glyns, over a series of days negotiated a number of deals that lifted Barings out of imminent collapse. *Ibid.*

Rothschild, Hambro, and key individuals at the Bank of England.¹¹⁵⁵ Without a doubt, personal connections were crucial. Historians' descriptions of this crisis explain the way it was resolved focusing on the personal networks that were utilised – the Chancellor with the head of Barings, with the heads of other banks, with the Governor of the Bank of England.¹¹⁵⁶ Whilst it was true that personal networks were of great importance, the story leaves out a crucial ingredient – that these individuals, as well as meeting in person, were relying on the fast and private postal service to transmit their messages around the capital at top speeds, to help them make decisions quickly and resolve the crisis. There were a huge number of letters flying around the capital, containing urgent, secret, information about the issue. There were letters *arranging* for these key individuals to meet up. Letters sent out to other banks to ask for their help. Letters sent from other banks, offering help. There was an entire communications infrastructure that was used during this time of crisis, that was able to deliver messages across the capital at incredibly quick speeds, and numerous times a day. The post was a vital part of this story.

The archives at the Bank of England that relate to the Barings affair show a number of examples in which the speed of the post was utilised during this crisis. The files include a number of letters and references to letters that used the system for its speed, for its same-day service. On the 8th November 1890, as the crisis was reaching its key moments, the Governor of the Bank received a note in the mail from Hambro, requesting a meeting that same day, a Saturday.¹¹⁵⁷ There is a record of a series of letters sent by Revelstoke on the 15th November, again on a Saturday, including letters to Lidderdale and to the Governor of the Bank.¹¹⁵⁸ Much action took place on the weekend of 15th-16th November. By Monday 17th November, the headline on the front

¹¹⁵⁵ This was not merely a set of professional connections, but a group of men who travelled in the same circles, were members of the same clubs, whose children married into each other's families. Kynaston, whose account of the crisis is thorough and gives a real sense of the quick pace of the events, describes the crisis within this context, stating, "Perhaps above all the crisis showed the importance of the personal touch" *Ibid*, p. 436

¹¹⁵⁶ Over a series of days in early November these individuals met with each other repeatedly to organise a response to the crisis, in secret, before it became known the outside world and created panic in the markets. *Ibid*, p. 433

¹¹⁵⁷ Bank of England archive: G15/189: *Secretary's files: Baring Brothers & Co crisis, 1890, 14 Nov 1888 - Dec 1891. Minutes of meeting of the Court of Directors of the Bank of England, 20th November 1890*

¹¹⁵⁸ G15/189: *Secretary's files: Baring Brothers & Co crisis, 1890, 14 Nov 1888 - Dec 1891*

page of the Financial Times was, "SAVED".¹¹⁵⁹

In the aftermath after the crisis, we see similar instances, with for example a letter of 10th December 1890 from the deputy Governor of the Bank to Francis Baring asking for a meeting with the Governors at 2pm that same day.¹¹⁶⁰ On the 23rd December 1890 there is a letter from Grenfell at 15 St James Place SW to the Governor of the Bank, stating, "I do not think I shall be able to go out today, so I write a line..." implying that he understands his letter will reach its recipient before the moment at which he might have been expected to be there in person. The letter also said, "I said it was very unlikely you would be able to see him today, but in case you should wish to do so..."; showing that the letter would reach its destination in time for its recipient to set up a meeting with a third party, that same day.¹¹⁶¹

We also see instances of the use of the letter post to secure the loans that Barings needed from other banks in order to pay its liabilities. For example there is a letter of the 23rd December 1890 from a business at 96 Gresham House to the bank, agreeing to secure an advance of £72,000 and credit of £150,000 to Barings to allow Barings to meet their bills on 1st January 1891.¹¹⁶² In a number of the letters we see references to the contents of telegrams received, demonstrating again the point that both letters and telegrams were used by the same people within the wider communications network.

In the case of the Barings crisis a set of communications infrastructures were used in the resolution of the crisis: of meetings in person, of the telegraph, perhaps also the messenger, and the use of the postal service, which was being used specifically as a quick means of communicating within London. The post therefore was a key tool, one used by the key individuals in some of the most powerful positions in the country, at absolutely crucial moments in their professional careers. The letter post was one of the ways in which the financial services industry was able to function, was able to avert crisis, and was able to carry on and to grow exponentially.

¹¹⁵⁹ Kynaston, p. 433.

¹¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶¹ Letter dated 23rd Dec 1890. G15/189: *Secretary's files: Baring Brothers & Co crisis, 1890, 14 Nov 1888 - Dec 1891*

¹¹⁶² *Ibid.*

So it was, that the Postal Map's effects were felt in the world of the City, whether during routine moments, or in times of crisis. The many uses of letters in the financial services industry aided the circulation of goods and creation of value. In looking at the ways in which the post has been used by businesses in the City, we can see how the postal service was an integral part of the development of the financial services industry in the City. It was a means for trading intelligence, making deals, a means for speculating on the market. The post changed the city by assisting in the development of the financial services, which had a huge impact on the way in which London developed, on the type of city it was.

5. CONCLUSION

The London Postal Map and the postal reforms of 1856 had an effect on the people who worked in the post, and the people who used the post, due to the way that it facilitated a great increase in the speed of letter communication in the capital. We can see a contemporary understanding of this in a newspaper article of 1866:

The revenue of the Post Office has simply grown with the correspondence of the country and that correspondence has been multiplied beyond imagination through the facilities which the Post Office has provided for it [...] the extraordinary increase of correspondence has arisen [...] in what may be termed "local" business – that is to say, in the extension of the district posts. Letters are now posted not merely to correspondents several miles off, but to persons in the next street, or another quarter of the town. Half the business of everyday life is conducted through the Post Office. A stamped envelope is made to do the duty of an errand-boy or messenger. It saves many a visit and many a walk. The commonest orders for the commonest matters are now conveyed through this channel, and the result is an incredible multiplication of letters. We entirely agree, too, with the Postmaster General in the belief that the extension of the system will still be prodigious. Wherever the Office plants a letter-box or a letter-pillar, there the correspondence begins at once to grow. Wherever the deliveries are multiplied, letters are multiplied immediately [...] Already Mr Gladstone could state that the heavy charges incurred for the enlargements in London had been in great part overtaken by the growth of income¹¹⁶³

This was a world in which the post was a fundamental part of life, short messages, 'local' business, notes relating to errands are transported through the city all day, rushing around and getting work done for London's inhabitants. This not just an administrative point: everything affected everyday people in London. This was the period of a huge

¹¹⁶³ *The Times*, May 18th 1866

increase in clerks sitting in desks scribbling notes,¹¹⁶⁴ and of letter carriers dashing through the city. It changed the experiences of people in the city by altering their daily routines, including letter writing, and being able to communicate very fast, perhaps feeling the burden of constant communication.

This was a technology that made its impact felt on the lives of the people who used the post, and, as we shall see in the next chapter, on all the inhabitants of London, whether they used the post or not.

¹¹⁶⁴ Note that the numbers of people engaged in City-type work that would be using letter communications rose sharply in the period (line for 'commerce, clerks and misc. in the table):

Fig. 141: Table 5: Table showing employment of males in 'non-agricultural middle-class occupations'

	1851		1891	
	000s	%	000s	%
Professions and administration	183	4	289	3.6
Commerce, clerks, miscellaneous	121	2.7	514	6.5
Dealers and assistants	483	10.7	769	9.7
Other employers	129	2.8	190	2.3
TOTAL	916	20.2	1,762	22.1

Statistics from Hoppen, p. 33

Chapter 4

Effects of the Postal Map Part 2: Place-making, the Built Environment of London, and Conceptions of the City

Contents

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1. INTRODUCTION

Nineteenth century London was a city built on communications. This is a point widely understood in relation to the railways as a causal factor in the growth of the city.¹¹⁶⁵ This chapter is concerned with how the place of London developed:¹¹⁶⁶ what the character of London was in the second half of the nineteenth century, what it looked like, its architecture and infrastructures, how people understood it, and what impact the Postal Map had on this. The chapter takes a ‘street-level’ view of London, as seen by the people who experienced the city; and not just those who used the post every day.

The framing of this chapter is influenced by David Henkin, the postal historian of the United States, who has written about postal sites in the US as important places in cities, and in the public sphere. Henkin stated that, ‘[in 1845-1857] a critical mass of Americans began reorganising their perceptions of time, space, and community around the existence of the post’.¹¹⁶⁷ Whilst dealing with London, rather than the US, this chapter learns from Henkin’s approach, which is less interested in the administrative history of the post, instead focusing on the ‘world of everyday experience and belief [...] a diffuse *culture* of the post’;¹¹⁶⁸ where ‘The new postal culture was a cluster of new practices, attitudes, norms, discussions, and crucially, habits – of communication, inquiry, and expectation – that grew up around a modern postal system’.¹¹⁶⁹ Henkin states that post offices were ‘paradigmatic sites of public life’.¹¹⁷⁰ Here, too, we consider the role of the post as sites in the public life of in the city it was situated in, through the impact of the post on the street.

¹¹⁶⁵ For example, in Whitfield’ history of London as told via maps: ‘So successful were the railways in dispersing the population, that people began to ask where London would stop’, Peter Whitfield, *London: a Life in Maps*, London: British Library, 2006, p. 108.

¹¹⁶⁶ Although I use the term ‘Place of London was made’ rather than ‘Placemaking’, in fact this concept was what this idea was based on. Whilst the term *Placemaking* is not necessarily appropriate here in this thesis, being a word from today used in the context of urban planning, it nonetheless as been useful. It is concerned with the creation of character, feeling, identity, and conception of a place; it places user involvement at its core; it deals with public, rather than private space; and it is often concerned with the urban public realm rather than simply architecture/ buildings - all of which are relevant points when considering the London Postal Map reforms’ impact on London, as we will see.

¹¹⁶⁷ David Henkin, *The Postal Age: The Emergence of Modern Communications in Nineteenth-Century America*, University of Chicago Press, 2006, p. 3

¹¹⁶⁸ *Ibid*, p. 5

¹¹⁶⁹ *Ibid*, p. 5

¹¹⁷⁰ *Ibid*, p. 64

Discussed here are two approaches to understanding the impact of the Postal Map on London. The first section details the buildings, the modern streetscape, and the rationalizing of London's streets that the post introduced. The second section looks at how the map altered conceptions of the city. Where the first chapter detailed the origins of the map, the second chapter meditated on the map's form, the third chapter considered the people directly affected by the map, this fourth chapter explores the effects that the map had on the city, and the people in the city.

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The first consideration is the way the Postal Map reforms put a physical imprint on London. Post Office buildings in London are discussed, and the way in which the reforms might have encouraged a huge growth in postal buildings in the city, serving the new system. In this period the post was becoming a daily part of life through its physical impact in the city. The people of London, everywhere they walked, saw physical manifestations of the postal service in the built environment of their city. As the century went on, more and more buildings were becoming postal buildings, pillar boxes were becoming commonplace, as were letter boxes on doors of properties.¹¹⁷¹

This text therefore looks at the architecture and built environment of the post, including objects such as pillar boxes and street signs. The introduction of these items into London was affected specifically by the introduction of the Postal Map in a number of ways that will be outlined. The question of street signs, along with street naming and house numbering gives insight into the attempts of the state to bring about a rational – modern – system for organising London- and the limits to this ambition.

The second half of the chapter considers the experience of Londoners, but in a way that casts a wide net, looking at how the Postal Map reforms affected the way the city was understood by Londoners generally, completely outside the postal context. Regardless

¹¹⁷¹ A government report of 1856 notes that many new pillar boxes have been installed in country. POST 71/58: *Parliamentary Papers relating to the Post Office: Volume XXVI, 1856*

of how much one availed oneself of the post and its modern communications system, when the Postal Map was introduced, its visualisation of London was a new way of conceptualising London whose effects were much wider than communication: they changed the way that everyone understood the city and their place within it. In its implementation, the Postal Map defined 'London' and then divided and named its different parts. Everyone in the city- whether they used the letter post regularly or not – existed within a new conception of the city and its parts that the London Postal Map had introduced.

The link between the public and the Map was explicit from the start. Throughout, the use of the Map by the public was crucial to the success of the postal reforms- the public had to be ever conscious of it. The little act of adding an 'NW' to an address was crucial; and despite its incredible simplicity, it became complicated over time through its politicisation.

The way that this can be analysed is by looking at key moments of change in the Map, seeing how they were enacted and how people responded to them. By looking at these moments we can see what people felt about the Map and its effects. Here the key moments are the abolition of the North Eastern and Southern districts in the 1860s, and the introduction of sub-districts during World War One. These examples reveal how Londoners understood their city, based on their postal district.

This fourth chapter, through the approaches outlined above, therefore demonstrates how different elements of the modernity introduced by the Postal Map had an impact on the way London developed, and the way that London was understood by its people.

2. SPACES OF THE POST: ARCHITECTURE AND BUILDINGS

The experience of the city on the street was changing rapidly in the nineteenth century. Writers documenting the growth of the city in this period note many changes that were encountered by the people: the smells of the sewers, or the traffic, or the building works caused by the new underground railways that were tearing up the streets. All these were part of the streetscape and the everyday life of Londoners. But the presence of the post is rarely mentioned, and yet it was encountered continually by Londoners.

Similarly, the new buildings going up all over the city – new railways stations, new bank buildings, new museums, wider streets, are often discussed. But buildings with a postal use seem to drop out of the historical view of the streetscape. In part this may have related to the lack of architectural interest in Post Office properties, where many surveys of Victorian architecture appear uninterested in this form of civic architecture, compared, say, to new town halls or new railway stations.¹¹⁷²

The introduction of the reforms and the Map in 1856 prompted a shift in the way that the letter post operated in London. From this period onwards, services expanded, the city's population grew, and the letter post correspondingly increased. By 1888 the service had been completely established in the workings of the city and in the minds and daily routines of Londoners. In that year a long-serving former postal employee, FE Baines, published a book that went into some detail about the postal service in London.¹¹⁷³ One particular section, about the experience of the modern postal system in London, can be quoted in full:

London itself, as all the world knows, is divided into eight postal districts, under a plan formed by Sir Rowland Hill, reported on by a committee of officers on July 4th 1855, and worked out by Mr Boucher. Each district is a post-town complete in itself. The Eastern Central District, or City portion, is certainly the busiest. More than 900 postmen are needed to deliver its letters.

¹¹⁷² See, for example, the overview given in Roger Dixon and Stefan Muthesius, *Victorian Architecture*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1978.

¹¹⁷³ F.E. Baines, *Forty years at the post office. A personal narrative*. London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1895

Some devoted statistician has reckoned that in the whole of the Metropolis postmen walk 46,000 miles daily. The calculation is probably within the mark. Say that 700,000,000 letters are delivered annually in the Metropolis; about 5,500 postmen are engaged in delivering them. Therefore each man delivers about 430 letters a day, and hardly walks less than 10 miles in doing so, looking at the number of deliveries and the walk to and from the sorting office. Here would be 55,000 miles a day. But something must be deducted on account of illness and annual holiday. So a mileage which lies between 40,000 and 50,000 miles a day seems the lowest reasonable estimate.

But E.C., being in the heart of the Metropolis, includes no suburban area. Most other districts do. Let us therefore take the North-Western, which extends from the Euston Road to Mill Hill, as a sample. It is provided with a chief district post office near Euston Square railway terminus; it has sub-district post-offices at Kentish Town, Hampstead, Kilburn and elsewhere.

We will post a handful of letters in coloured envelopes at a letter-box in Hampstead, near the Heath, shortly before five o'clock in the afternoon, and see what becomes of them.

Soon the collecting postman with his bag clears the box and carries the contents to the sub-district or postmen's sorting office in Downshire Hill. The letters are turned out on a table, arranged address uppermost, struck over the postage stamp with a date in black ink, and sorted.

Our letter for Belsize Square is set aside for inclusion in the next local delivery. The letter for Vere Street and that for Euston Square are tied in a bundle for the North-Western District Office. The latter the North-Western District Office will deliver locally; the former letter it will send by cart to the Western District Office. If the Western letters are very numerous at Hampstead, they go by themselves in a bundle labelled 'W', but still to the district office- North-West.

Our pink letters for Birmingham, Dublin and Glasgow, as well as those which we posted for Germany and Australia, are easily traced; they are all tied up and labelled, the British letters in bundles corresponding to railway divisions, and the foreign and colonial in others, and sent to the

General Post Office. On arrival, the bag containing them will be cut open, its contents turned out on a table, and the bundles taken direct to their respective divisions, there to be untied and mixed with letters posted under the clock received from other offices in town and country bags.

Here is the district system in a nutshell¹¹⁷⁴

As the quote explains, this system was based on the new network that was introduced by the London postal reforms, where by 1888 over 5,000 postmen walked the streets of the city every day, and letters posted after 5pm within London were immediately delivered. This activity could not have occurred without any impact on the city it took place within. Not only were the people of the city encountering many postmen walking the streets, the quote also mentions letter boxes, chief district post offices (the N-W, for example), sub-district post offices, railway stations, postmen's sorting offices, mails carts, and trains, all of which had a place in the city, making their mark on the streetscape and on the experience of city life.

Postal Buildings

Here we question how the reforms had a direct impact on the built city- on its buildings and its streetscape. The main contribution to placing Post Offices in architectural history comes from two short works, Julian Osley's *Built for Service*¹¹⁷⁵ and Julian Stray's *Post Offices*.¹¹⁷⁶ These attest to the fact that there were some interesting post offices built in the nineteenth century that were notable architecturally; the most obvious example being the G.P.O. itself, St. Martin's le Grand,¹¹⁷⁷ the design for which was

¹¹⁷⁴ F.E. Baines, *Forty years at the post office. A personal narrative*. London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1895, pg. 188

¹¹⁷⁵ Julian Osley, *Built for Service: Post Office Architecture*, London: British Postal Museum & Archive, 2010

¹¹⁷⁶ Julian Stray, *Post Offices*, Oxford: Shire, 2010

¹¹⁷⁷ Although some might have considered St Martin's to be of certain architectural merit, for those at the Post Office the key concern was that the building was simply not up to the job. It was designed for a different time, and when the penny post time was introduced, it was soon found to be inadequate. Perry notes, "As the Times noted in 1866, 'Rooms have been overcrowded, closets turned into offices, extra rooms hung by (...) rods to the girders of the ceiling'". He also stated that there was a lack of natural light in St. Martin's, it was poorly ventilated, and staff were ill from the gas lights. In response, he says, that the following new buildings were added: 1874 – GPO West opened for the telegraph; 1895 – GPO North for the PMG and the senior administration; 1880 – Savings bank opened in Queen Victoria Street, later moved

subject to an architectural competition.¹¹⁷⁸ Osley notes that the period after the penny post reform was one of great expansion of the Post Office, with many new buildings required.¹¹⁷⁹

St Martin's had an important role in the Postal Map story, because Rowland Hill stated that the use of district chief offices – a measure introduced by the reforms, and depicted by the Map – would not be necessary had the chief office at St Martin's been adequate for the job.¹¹⁸⁰ The statement seems slightly disingenuous as postal work kept increasing well after the district offices were introduced, and St Martin's was added to with many other buildings around its site.¹¹⁸¹ Postal buildings in London were never really adequate in this period, and they were being continually expanded.¹¹⁸²

One of the reasons why postal buildings often fail to make the cut in architectural surveys was that Post Offices were rarely designed by a named architect, instead being designed by civil service staff.¹¹⁸³ There were some post offices built by 'named' architects in the period, which include the NE district office at Bethnal Green: a direct product of the Postal Map reforms.¹¹⁸⁴

to South Kensington; 1887 – Sorting office at Mount Pleasant opened (offices there included temporary rooms in the prison building that was on the site). Perry, pp. 4-5.

¹¹⁷⁸ The final design was not one of the competition entries. The commission ended up going to Smirke, also the architect of the British Museum. The site chosen for St Martin's was a notorious slum; its development was therefore also an early case of slum clearance. Osley, p. 4

¹¹⁷⁹ Osley, p. 6

¹¹⁸⁰ 'Mr. Hill explained the object in view, describing the district system as [...] indefinitely postponing necessity for a new Central Post Office.' POST 30/183A: *Liverpool: 'District' Post Offices provided in lieu of new Head Office, part 2 (end)*, c.1868

¹¹⁸¹ "Great relief too has been obtained by the transfer to the District Offices of much of the business previously transacted at the Chief Offices, so that, with relief, to the quantity of work performed, the Chief Office is now more commodious than it had been for many years". The Postmaster General's sixth report, 1860, p. 8. POST 92/2: *Reports of the Postmaster General on the Post Office*. 1855-1864

¹¹⁸² The purchase of the site of the old Bull and Mouth Inn – once a key coaching inn during the coaching days – next to the G.P.O., added a new 6-story building of 152,700sq ft. of space to the complex. See POST 91/87: *'Report on Post Office Buildings, 1884, and Sites Bill, 1885'*

¹¹⁸³ In instances when they were built new, post offices were designed by the Office of Works, a government department whose workers were often unnamed civil servants, so there is rarely an understanding of who exactly the architect was. The buildings therefore cannot appear in the biographies or monographs of famous individuals.

¹¹⁸⁴ The architects that Osley does list as designing London post office buildings included:

- James Williams: Bedford Street, Convent Garden (1883-4); Lower Tooting (1884); NE District Post Office, Bethnal Green (1860); GPO West/ Central Telegraph Office (1874)
- Sir Henry Tanner: Croydon (1894); GPO North (1889-95); King Edward Building (1910); Mount Pleasant (1889); NW District Post Office (1893 extension); Paddington District Parcels Office

Another reason post offices often do not appear in architectural histories is that fact that in many cases, post office sites were not built for that purpose, but were adapted from other buildings.¹¹⁸⁵ The new construction of major buildings for postal purposes only really began in earnest at the beginning of the nineteenth century.¹¹⁸⁶ Postal buildings therefore do not appear in reviews of the time, they were not subject to detailed and controversial architectural competitions, not the work of named architects; the usual sources for architectural historians are thin on the ground.

Given that Post Office buildings in this period were often conversions of existing buildings, considering buildings' later 'afterlife' and changes of use become more relevant.¹¹⁸⁷ Post Office buildings were numerous, well used and had a real impact on city life, and for that reason they are interesting to us. The buildings of the post represented a clear encounter of the people of London with 'the state', in a period prior to the days of the NHS or nationalised railways. These buildings were additions to the streetscape for Victorian Londoners; and alongside the presence of their facades was the fact that they were buildings that members of the public were actively engaged with. Unlike other state buildings of the time, post offices were buildings that anyone could enter, that almost everybody used at some time or other.¹¹⁸⁸ More than just buildings you could look at from the outside, or barely notice as you rushed past, these were public spaces, key parts of their communities. The scenes in the regularly-cited painting

(c.1900); South Kensington (1908-9); West Kensington (1903-4); West Central District Post Office (1895-7)

- John Rutherford: Action (1911); Battersea (1912 extension); Kingston Sorting Office (1907); Notting Hill (1910); Poplar (1911); Richmond (1904); SE District Office (1911); SW District Office (1892); Sutton (1906); Twickenham (1907-8); Uxbridge (1908)
- Jasper Wager: Aldgate East (1908); Barnet (1904); Chelsea (1905); Eastern District Post Office (1905 extension); Enfield (1906); Ilford (1903); Kentish Town Sorting Office (1903); Knightsbridge (1903); West Brompton (1900); Northern District Office (1906); NW District Office (1903-5 extension); Walton Green, Fulham (c.1900); Wimbledon (189- and 1901 alterations); Woodford Green (1904)

¹¹⁸⁵ For example, the Vere Street property that was converted into the Western District Office. POST 30/149A: *London, Western District Office: first lease of premises at Vere Street. c.1861*

¹¹⁸⁶ Osley, p. 1

¹¹⁸⁷ The book *Strangely Familiar* has been my inspiration for considering the 'afterlife' of buildings. Iain Borden (ed), *Strangely Familiar: Narratives of Architecture in the City*, London: Routledge, 1996

¹¹⁸⁸ Post Office buildings were parts of public and community life, places where 'intermingling' of people that would not happen elsewhere took place, Henkin p. 9. He notes that in particular they were sites where women could acceptably be seen on their own. Henkin, p. 63

'The Post Office at 6 O'Clock' were obviously exceptional- but smaller, less hectic scenes were replicated all over the city at different times of day.¹¹⁸⁹

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The postal reforms had a huge impact on the city through its instigation of building many new buildings and postal structures. In the period prior to the 1830s, London was served by one giant postal building: St Martin's le Grand.¹¹⁹⁰ Jumping forward to the 1880s, after the effects of the 1856 reforms had been fully felt, the situation was very different. Numbers of post office buildings were increasing rapidly, and in addition (though not directly relating to the Postal Map), over the next couple of decades new types of post buildings were being added, including Post Office Savings Bank buildings, new Money Order Offices, and after the nationalisation of the service in 1871, Telegraph Offices.

One type of new postal buildings *were* a direct result of the district system: the new district offices. Soon after the introduction of the Map, with London divided into ten 'towns', with nine new chief office situated in each of the districts. These were large buildings with huge numbers of staff and much activity entering and leaving these buildings.¹¹⁹¹ These nine new major offices replaced some functions of St Martin's, and whilst they had a 'back office' function, they were also all large, civic buildings. By 1859 the Chief District Offices were all in place, and were:

EC: St Martin's le Grand

¹¹⁸⁹ Picard, Liza, *Victorian London: The Life of a City 1840-70*, London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2005

¹¹⁹⁰ Other buildings were 'receiving houses' for mail, often shops that also had a postal function. But all mail came to St Martin's.

¹¹⁹¹ The staff that assembled at the district offices included: a Postmaster, a Principle Clerk, Clerks, Temporary Writers, Assistant Superintendents, Counter Clerks, inspector of letter carriers, Overseers, Sorters (42 in the EC district in 1861, soon rising to 60), Stampers, Sub-sorters, Assistants, Junior Sorters, Indoor Assistants, Boy Indoor Assistants, letter carriers (in EC 320 in 1860), Assistant letter carriers (increasing from 100 to 207), Labourers, Auxiliary letter carriers (morning and evening), Porters, and Boy Messengers. POST 59/62: *General Post Office: Major and Minor Establishments, Circulation Department 1867-77*

WC: Southampton Street, 1856, then High Holborn, 1857¹¹⁹²

N: Essex Road (formerly Lower Street), 1858

NE: Church Street, Bethnal Green, 1858¹¹⁹³

E: Commercial Road, 1857, then Whitechapel Road, 1858¹¹⁹⁴

SE: Borough High Street, 1857

S: Westminster Road, Lambeth, 1858, then moved Kennington Road

SW: Buckingham Palace Road, then Howick Place, Victoria Street

W: Vere Street, 1857

NW: Eversholt Street, Camden, 1857¹¹⁹⁵

As can be seen from the following pictures, the district offices were not insubstantial; each one added a very definite element to the streetscape in its area.

¹¹⁹² There is an archive mention of this first office in Southampton Street. POST 91/30: '*List of Buildings and Other Properties Owned or Rented by the Post Office Department, with Particulars of Cost, Tenures and Rents*', 1877

¹¹⁹³ NEDO is listed in Osley as being built in 1860 in Bethnal Green.

¹¹⁹⁴ POST 91/30: '*List of Buildings and Other Properties Owned or Rented by the Post Office Department, with Particulars of Cost, Tenures and Rents*', 1877

¹¹⁹⁵ James A Norris, *A Photographic and Cartographic Compilation of London District Post Offices in the Victorian and Edwardian Era*, Carshalton, Surrey: London Postal History Group, 2009. In addition to the list above, Norris also details that:

- A New C.T.O. was built across the road in 1870
- Paddington D.O. added from 1890s
- Tunnel was built between Paddington station and the Paddington D.O. from 1892
- Wandsworth D.O. from 1881
- Mount Pleasant S.O., W.C., site open 1885. In 1887 the Post Office took over more of the site for sorting and took over the full premises in 1889. An extension was built in 1900



Fig. 142: WCDO: 126 High Holborn, opened 1857¹¹⁹⁶

¹¹⁹⁶ All images from James A Norris, *A Photographic and Cartographic Compilation of London District Post Offices in the Victorian and Edwardian Era*, Carshalton, Surrey: London Postal History Group, 2009

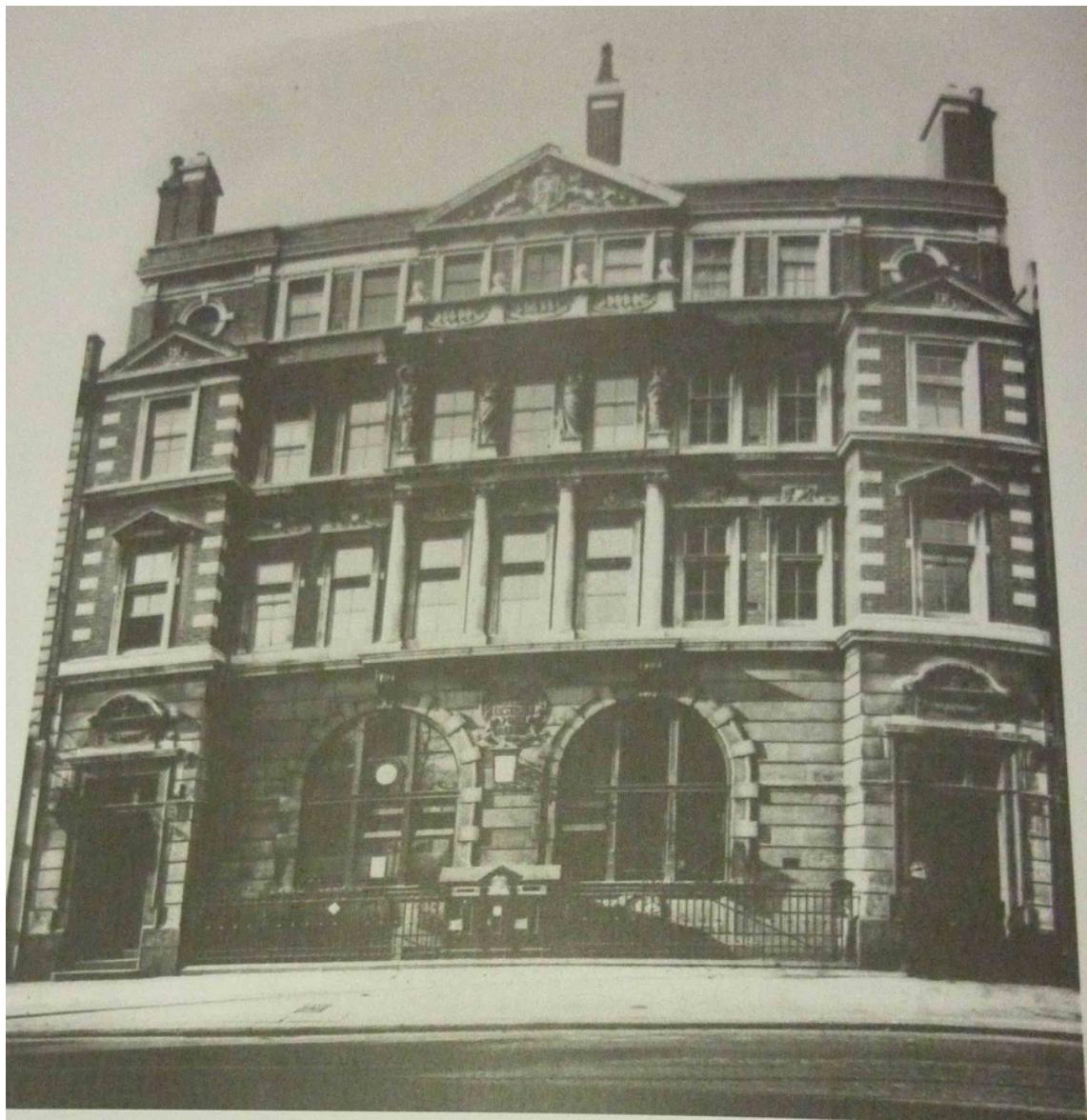


Fig. 143: NDO: Essex Road, opened 1858



Fig. 144: EDO: 206 Whitechapel Road (opened 1858)



Fig. 145: SEDO: 239 Borough High Street (opened 1857)



Fig. 146: SWDO: Howick Place, Victoria Street, opened 1857



Fig. 147: WDO: Vere Street, corner of Oxford Street, opened 1857



Fig. 148: NWDO: Eversholt Street, Camden, opened 1857

Courtesy PO Archive

Alongside these chief offices being some of the London postal reform's most tangible effects on the city, they were for a number of years also some of the most problematic

elements. They represented notable costs to the Post Office,¹¹⁹⁷ in a context of the Post Office still attempting to minimise costs at all turns. From 1856, the difficulty of finding decent buildings for the Chief Offices was cited as the main reason why the reforms were not completed time and time again in Postmaster General's reports.¹¹⁹⁸ Despite claims that the Post Office was attempting to find Chief Office buildings, their procurement remained a problem for some time, with the Postmaster General in 1858 stating that suitable buildings were still being searched for.¹¹⁹⁹ The Controller of the London district remained conscious that the reforms could not properly be complete without proper District Offices in place.¹²⁰⁰ All was not doom and gloom though: offices had been opened in W, WC, NW, SE districts by 1858, which had the impact of allowing for quick delivery within those districts.¹²⁰¹

The problem of finding district office buildings was also combined with the continuing issue of the St Martin's building being in many respects not fit for duty. Internally the rooms were configured in a way that made certain areas cramped and wasted space in other areas, it was dark, and it was acknowledged as the cause of problems with the health of staff. The hope was that the new district offices would provide relief to St Martin's.¹²⁰²

¹¹⁹⁷ "the increase in the cost of buildings is attributable partly to improvements in the office of St. Martin's-le-Grand, partly to expenses connected with the new London District Offices, and partly to alterations and new erections in provincial towns". The Postmaster General's third report, 1857. POST 92/2: *Reports of the Postmaster General on the Post Office*. 1855-1864, p. 20

¹¹⁹⁸ At the first reporting of the reforms in 1856, the Postmaster General stated that hourly deliveries have begun in the Metropolis, but, "the chief obstacle encountered in the establishment of the district system is the want of suitable buildings; a want, however, which the Department is supplying as fast as circumstances allows", p. 9. POST 71/58: *Parliamentary Papers relating to the Post Office: Volume XXVI*, 1856

¹¹⁹⁹ "so far as its object was to expedite the interchange of correspondence between district and district, the system of postal divisions in London is still, owing to the want of offices, only in very partial operation" [...] "in some districts no suitable building, or even site, has yet been found, and in others unforeseen obstacles have arisen to retard the completion of the arrangements, even when considerable progress have been made". *Ibid.*

¹²⁰⁰ The Controller of the London district, Boucher, in 1858 stated, "the delay that has occurred in obtaining suitable sites for the District Offices, has hitherto and will probably for some time to come, prevent the possibility of carrying out this part of the plan." Minute from Boucher dated 4th May 1858. POST 30/165D: *London, Circulation Department: Minor establishment. Merging of extra duty pay in fixed wages, extra force for additional deliveries, postal arrangements in suburbs improved*. 1864

¹²⁰¹ "and not only is there already some interchange of bags between these districts, but in all of them that part of the plan which provides for the speedy delivery of letters posted in the same district in which they are to be delivered has been brought into its full operation". POST 92/2: *Reports of the Postmaster General on the Post Office*. 1855-1864. Report dated 1858.

¹²⁰² "the vast increase in the work of the office during the last 20 years caused such a pressure for room and such obstacles to the rapid discharge of the duties, that, as your Lordships are aware, it was at one

By 1859, there were still hesitations to declare the system complete, but progress had nonetheless been made in the shape of every district having a temporary Chief Office, if not a permanent one.¹²⁰³ In every district, mail delivered within that district was sped up thanks to the new sorting system whereby 'local' letters – those destined for the same district they were posted in – were identified immediately and sorted and delivered first.¹²⁰⁴ In 1860, a statement was made updating readers about new and temporary offices in use, with one district office in particular is mentioned in the report: a new District Office in the W District in Vere Street.¹²⁰⁵

The reference to the office in Vere Street does not quite do justice to the length of time and energy the procurement and refit of the Vere Street office had taken. The site for the W office was of great importance, it being anticipated to be the busiest office after the EC and WC districts. Archives reveal a huge amount of correspondence relating to choosing a building. Different negotiations around various buildings that might work as the WDO were undertaken, including Vere St; Harewood House (the owner eventually decided not to sell); and 114 Boford Street (eventually deemed too expensive).¹²⁰⁶ Once it had become clear that Vere Street was a good candidate, the Surveyor John Tilley inspected the property, and in a letter of April 27th 1858 stated that the buildings at Vere Street could be adapted for use.¹²⁰⁷ Then commenced a huge amount of correspondence: letters with agents, surveyors, lawyers and more, which lasted for months about the lease terms, and costs of refurbishment, until 7th May 1859, when a minute stated, finally, that the lease agreements 'were completed yesterday'.¹²⁰⁸ Then commenced extensions and refurbishments to be completed by June 1860,¹²⁰⁹ under

time in contemplation to build an entirely new office in another situation; a measure which would necessarily have entailed a very great expense. By a careful examination, however, [...] I have no fear of the building proving sufficient for its requirements; especially considering the relief which will be afforded by the district offices." *Ibid.*

¹²⁰³ *Ibid.* Report dated 1859, p. 8.

¹²⁰⁴ "As regards the town portions of the Districts, in every case (provided they bear the District initials) the letters posted at a Receiving Office or Road Letter Box for the same District are at once selected at the District Office for delivery" *Ibid.* Report dated 1859, pg. 9

¹²⁰⁵ *Ibid.* Report dated 1861.

¹²⁰⁶ POST 30/149A: *London, Western District Office: first lease of premises at Vere Street. c.1861*

¹²⁰⁷ "they would afford ample space for the required purpose and that the position they occupy would appear to be favourable for the public convenience and adaptable to the requirements of the service." Letter from John Tilley April 27th 1858. *Ibid.*

¹²⁰⁸ Minute dated 7th May 1859. *Ibid.*

¹²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

the remit of the Board of Works, with the building finally handed to the post office in December.¹²¹⁰ This was the story of just one of the new Post Offices procured or built in relation to the introduction of the London postal districts.

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Despite lengthy processes of moving services from temporary to permanent buildings in the city, London saw many new postal buildings in this period, as a result of the reforms. The Map was having a fundamental impact on the built environment of the city. It was noted that every house in the city would be within easy walking distance of a postal building.¹²¹¹ By 1859 there had also been an increase in road letter boxes in London by 465 to 1,168,¹²¹² and an arrangement to supply local shop keepers with mobile letter boxes, and to allow them to sell stamps, has been set up. Everywhere in the city was close to a physical embodiment of the Post Office bureaucracy.

In addition, many other postal buildings that were acquired in the period of the second half of the nineteenth century in London were also the result of the London Postal Map reforms, albeit indirectly, as they responded to the rapidly growing demand that was generated in part by the postal reforms or in the very least was *allowed for* by them, which encouraged growth through its huge increase in capacity in the system.

To get a real sense of what this meant for London, we can move forward in time to a period when the effects of the London reforms had been fully realized.¹²¹³ The 1870s

¹²¹⁰ A minute of 3rd Dec 1860 from Boucher, stated he had just completed an inspection of the site and – “found that the fittings had been placed in their proper positions and the arrangements generally carried out in a very satisfactory manner.” *Ibid.*

¹²¹¹ “When the arrangements consequent upon this revision shall have been completed (and this has now nearly been done), no house in London, unless in some exceptional case, will be more than a quarter of a mile from a Money Order Office, or more than a furlong from either a Receiving Office or a Road Letter box; and in the neighbourhood of the Royal Exchange, where the greatest numbers of letters is posted, the maximum distance will still be less” Postmaster General’s fifth report, 1859, p. 8. POST 92/2: *Reports of the Postmaster General on the Post Office*. 1855-1864

¹²¹² *Ibid.*

¹²¹³ In 1866/7, the ‘NE’ head office was closed, and the ‘S’ district was abolished 1868. As well as these changes to the postal district sizes, which would have been communicated to the public, some behind-the-scenes changes were made as well in the 1870s and 1880s that altered the map. In 1878 ‘head offices’ in Paddington and Ealing were established to handle the increasing numbers of mail in areas of the Western District. These new head offices meant that postal staff had to send letters to new places to be sorted, but

were boom years in expansion of Post Office buildings. The 1880s saw a number of other changes to the postal service in London based on the Post Office's expansion in this period to other services, such as the 1881 introduction of postal orders, and the setting up of the parcel post in 1883. By 1889 the site of Mount Pleasant had opened as the parcel office, becoming as important in the London system as any of the District head offices.¹²¹⁴

The incredible extent of Post Office properties in London in the second half of the nineteenth century can be seen in a property survey of 1877. An example page of this survey can be seen below, showing: the type of post office, such as district, post or occasionally a telegraph office; the parish and the county it was situated in; a description of the building; the date the building became a post office property; the type of tenure (i.e. rented or owned by the Post Office); cost if built from scratch; rent; and 'remarks'. The buildings are listed according to their location, with London buildings listed according to which District they were in.¹²¹⁵

no changes to addresses was needed. In 1879 sub-districts of Putney and Wimbledon were added in the South West. The additional districts of 'Wandsworth' in the South West and 'Norwood' in the South East were similarly established in 1880, and 'Battersea' (essentially a re-named Wandsworth') in 1897. One source is a typed report "Division of London into Postal Districts: and District Numbering" (undated) in a 'portfolio', uncatalogued, in the Postal Museum. List of districts and their founding dates as follows:

- In 1878 the districts were:
 - WCDO – est. 1878
 - WDO – est. 1878 from separation of WD, Paddington and Ealing
 - Ealing – 1878
 - EDO – 1858
 - SWDO – 1858
 - Wandsworth – 1880
 - SEDO – 1857
 - Norwood – 1880
 - NDO – 1858
 - NWDO – 1857
- and the defunct:
 - NE – 1858-1867
 - S – 1858 – 1868
- Battersea 1897

¹²¹⁴ Campbell-Smith, p. 202

¹²¹⁵ They do not include 'receiving houses', which were non-Post Office buildings that took in mail, such as shops or coffee houses, of which there were hundreds in London.

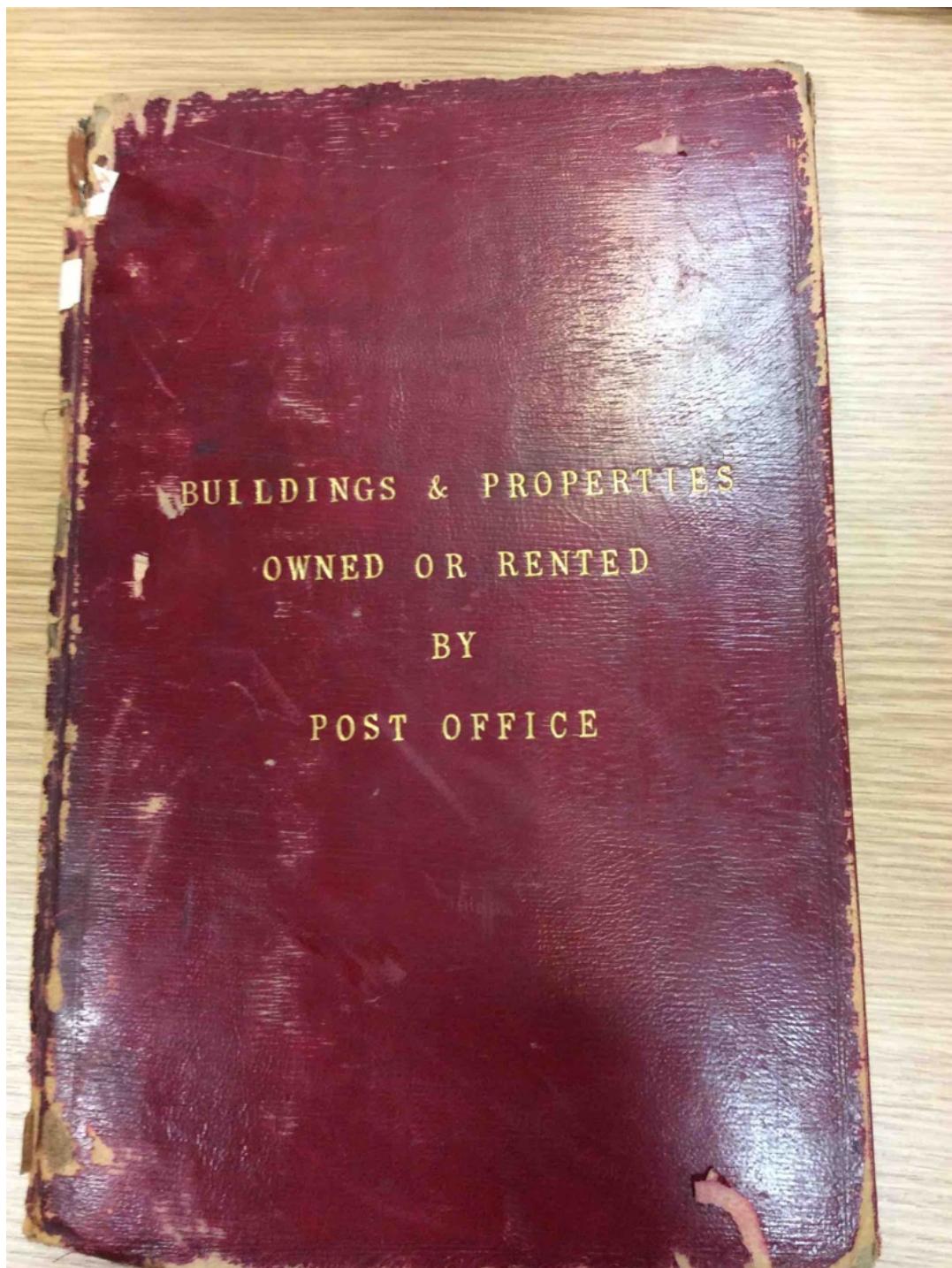


Fig. 149: Survey Cover¹²¹⁶

¹²¹⁶ POST 91/30: 'List of Buildings and Other Properties Owned or Rented by the Post Office Department, with Particulars of Cost, Tenures and Rents', 1877

18 POST OFFICE PROPERTIES.

Office.	Parish.	County.	Description of Property.	Date at which the Post Office passed to the Crown.	Nature of Tenure.	Cost of Site and Building, if Freehold.	Rent (with Premium, if any), if not Freehold.	Remarks.
EASTERN CENTRAL DISTRICT—contd.								
Cornhill (27), B.O.	St. Michael	Middlesex	Building	—	Lease expiring 25th Mar. 1879.	—	620 <i>l.</i> a year	Acquired under Telegraph Act. Part sublet for 229 <i>l.</i> 10 <i>s.</i> a year.
Eastcheap (3), B.O.	St. Benet's Gracechurch and St. Leonard's Eastcheap.	"	"	1870	Lease expiring 29th Sept. 1880.	—	200 <i>l.</i> a year	3 sets of spare rooms sublet on annual and quarterly tenancies for 4 <i>l.</i> , 20 <i>l.</i> , and 20 <i>l.</i> a year respectively.
Fenchurch Street (42), B.O. and 1, Mincing Lane.	St. Gabriel	"	"	Sept 26 17/79.	Lease expiring 29th Sept. 1888.	—	650 <i>l.</i> a year	Acquired under Telegraph Acts. Part sublet for 250 <i>l.</i> for rest of lease.
Finsbury Square B.O. 5, City Road.	St. Luke's	"	"	1869	Lease expiring 29th Sept. 1890.	—	125 <i>l.</i> a year.	Upper rooms sublet for 35 <i>l.</i> a year.
General Post Office, St. Martin's-le-Grand.	St. Luke's	"	"	1869	Lease expiring 29th Sept. 1890.	—	125 <i>l.</i> a year.	Upper rooms sublet for 35 <i>l.</i> a year.
(Old Building) — " New Building" — Chief Money Order Office.	Various	"	"	1818-29	Freehold.	—	—	Building erected in 1847.
Gracechurch Street B.O. (82.)	Allhallows	"	"	1876	Lease 7, 14, or 21 years from Midsummer.	—	750 <i>l.</i> a year	Lessors insure and pay all rates and taxes.
Gresham House B.O.	St. Helen's Bishopsgate.	"	"	1870	Lease not completed.	—	240 <i>l.</i> a year	Landlord pays rates.
Gresham Street (9)	St. Lawrence Jewry.	"	"	1873	Annual from 24th June 1876.	40 <i>l.</i> , alterations	60 <i>l.</i> a year	—
Holborn Viaduct B.O. 110, Hatton Garden	St. Andrews	"	"	1869	Lease 11 <i>½</i> years expiring 24th June 1881.	—	140 <i>l.</i> a year.	—
Leadenhall Street B.O. (150)	St. Peter Cornhill.	"	"	—	Lease expiring Michaelmas 1890.	—	300 <i>l.</i> a year	An old Telegraph Company's Office, but new lease taken.
Little Tower Street B.O. (16)	St. Margaret Patten.	"	"	—	Annual	—	260 <i>l.</i> a year	Acquired under the Telegraph Acts. Part sublet for 140 <i>l.</i> a year. Landlord pays rates.
Lombard Exchange, 59, Lombard Street.	Allhallows	"	"	1875	Lease for 3 years from 25th Mar. 1875.	—	75 <i>l.</i> a year	Acquired under the Telegraph Acts. Landlord pays rates.
Lombard Street B.O. (10)	St. Mary Woolnoth.	"	"	1854	Part freehold, part Leasehold.	The freehold is a portion of the old General Post Office, which was reserved when the rest was sold about 1829.	157 <i>l.</i> , 10 <i>s.</i> a year, and 100 <i>l.</i> premium, per annum 700 <i>l.</i> a year	Upper part of 86, King William Street, sublet for 350 <i>l.</i> a year. Tenant paying all rates and taxes.
86, King William Street.	"	"	"	—	Leasehold	—	—	—
Lothbury B.O., Founds Court.	St. Stephen	"	"	—	Lease expiring Christmas 1927.	—	400 <i>l.</i> a year	Part sublet for 300 <i>l.</i> a year. Acquired under Telegraph Acts.
Lower Thames Street B.O., (76.)	St. Dunstan-in-the-East.	"	"	1873	Lease expiring Christmas 1893.	—	240 <i>l.</i> a year	Part sublet for 110 <i>l.</i> a year.
Ludgate Circus B.O., 107, Fleet Street.	St. Bride	"	"	1873	Lease expiring 25th March 1894.	—	350 <i>l.</i> a year.	—
Mark Lane, B.O.	All Hallows Staining.	"	"	—	Lease expiring 25th March 1878.	—	180 <i>l.</i> a year	Part sublet for 60 <i>l.</i> a year. Acquired under Telegraph Acts.

Fig. 150: Sample page, showing some offices in the EC district¹²¹⁷

Properties included branch offices, sorting offices, railway stations, and telegraph offices. The extent to which the 1856 reforms caused a great deal of physical effect on the city is clear- the vast majority of the postal buildings dated from the period after 1856, when postal reforms created huge new levels of use. The data covers all the post office properties nationwide, so the extent to which London's system was outstripping

1217 Ibid.

those in other places is seen. Manchester, a city big enough to merit the introduction of a district system had 21 properties within its boundaries,¹²¹⁸ and Liverpool had 14 properties in all.¹²¹⁹

London, however, was on a thoroughly different scale. The section on London takes up a completely separate part of the report, and each individual district usually had more post office properties than other whole cities. The Eastern district had 16 properties; there were 10 properties in the Northern district; the NW district had 12; SE had 28; SW 18; W district had 19 properties; WC had 11; and by far the best served district was the Eastern Central district, with 42 properties in all.¹²²⁰ The London district as a whole therefore included 156 properties owned or leased by the Post office; compare this to a total of 65 in the whole of Scotland, and 68 in total in Ireland.¹²²¹ The number and size of postal buildings was directly related to the amount of business coming through the area;¹²²² and in London, this resulted from the improvements in the service brought in by the postal reforms.

¹²¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²¹⁹ Liverpool also had a district system. *Ibid.*

¹²²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²²² We see this, for example, with the continuing debate about St. Martin's and whether it was adequate for the job. A review of G.P.O. East in the late 1890s took place to see if the work carried out there could be reduced. Some operations were diverted to Mount Pleasant, but G.P.O. business filled up again, e.g. foreign letters up by 35%, and personnel up from 2,100 to 3,020 (increases due to lower rates for postage and packages to colonies). There were increasing numbers of mail carts and vans coming into the G.P.O., and Inland work moved to Mount Pleasant, and there was a plan to buy up Christ's Hospital site. POST 91/65: *Draft report of a Committee established to consider in what manner accommodation can best be provided for branches of Post Office work carried out in General Post Office [GPO] East, c.1900*



Fig. 151: The Post Offices in the City (EC) mapped – many within walking distance of each other.

The above image maps the offices in the EC district, showing visually how many offices were all in the same area; some streets had 3, 4, or even 5 offices on them.

Accommodating growth

Further evidence relating to attempts to accommodate the growth of mails in the centre of London was seen in a government committee set up in 1883 to investigate the buildings at the G.P.O. site with the intention of determining whether the buildings needed extending or a new site was required. There was clearly a sense that the functions of the Post Office had outgrown the site. Of particular importance was the testimony that Mr. T Jeffrey, the Controller of the London Postal Service.¹²²³ From his evidence we see a snapshot of how it was the London Postal service operated in the EC district, and how mail travelled around the capital. He stated that new post offices for

¹²²³ Jeffreys was interviewed by the committee on the 28th November 1883. POST 91/85: 'Central Post Office Buildings and Establishments: Minutes of Evidence, 1883'

receiving and sorting mail were opening at the train stations Euston¹²²⁴, Waterloo and Kings Cross. These would join the station offices already open at London Bridge, Liverpool Street and Paddington.¹²²⁵

Jeffreys went into detail about the evening rush at head office of the EC district in London. At the London 'Chief Office', between 5 and 8 o'clock in the evening, nearly 1.2m letters, book-packets and newspapers were handled.¹²²⁶ Of this huge amount of letters, he stated that 700,000 were sent to the provinces by the night mails, 135,000 to foreign countries, and 340,000 delivered within London and the suburbs.¹²²⁷ He stated that the other London District Offices did send mail directly to the provinces as well, not all came to the Chief Office for sorting and sending on. Of letters sorted in the 5-8pm period, 115,000 were posted in the EC district, for delivery in the EC district. In addition 225,000 letters posted in EC were for destinations in other parts of London.¹²²⁸

The testimony also gives a number of facts about the operation of the system in general, including that in the city, alongside the EC post offices, there were 20 'branch offices' where sorting took place, including ones at Lombard Street, Mark Lane, and Throgmorton Avenue.¹²²⁹ The fact that these offices were geographically close to each other betrays the density of the service, and the demand for letter post that in this very small area, three branch offices were required (this was the area where the Discount Bill industry, and the stock exchange, was located). Indeed, Jeffreys gives another hint at the scale of operations in the City when he states that 'Not unusually we have 250,000 letters brought here by one firm for different parts of the United Kingdom'.¹²³⁰ In relation to staffing he gives a statistic on the letter to staff ratio in the Chief Office: '2,000 letters a night would be about a man's work under fair condition',¹²³¹ and states that between 5-8pm there are c.1,800 men working at the Chief Office.¹²³² On the issue of growth, he states that there was growth in letters in the London Postal Service in the

¹²²⁴ the Euston office "will be fed by every district office in London"

¹²²⁵ POST 91/85: '*Central Post Office Buildings and Establishments: Minutes of Evidence, 1883*', pg. 35

¹²²⁶ *Ibid*, pg. 35

¹²²⁷ *Ibid*, pg. 35

¹²²⁸ *Ibid*, pg. 35

¹²²⁹ *Ibid*, pg. 37

¹²³⁰ *Ibid*, pg. 40

¹²³¹ *Ibid*, pg. 38

¹²³² *Ibid*, pg. 41

period 1871-78, but that it appeared to have levelled off, with letters increasing only 4.1% in the previous year,¹²³³ implying that such growth was small, and much higher growth had been experienced as normal previously.

One point from Jeffrey's testimony was an issue of capacity of the actual spaces that were in use by the Post Office. The Post Office was adamant in its aim to achieve ever faster sorting and delivery of letters.¹²³⁴ It could be inferred that the reason for this was to achieve an ever better service for Londoners. But there was another reason too, that the Post Office simply did not have space in its buildings to hold letters for very long. The sorter needed to act quickly because as soon as they were done with one set of letters sent out of the building, a new set would be arriving to fill up the spaces allocated for them in the building. The issue was one of capacity. The building that dealt with the EC posted letters had a certain capacity, and only a certain number of letters could fit into the spaces, and so they had to be processed incredibly quickly.

There was a sort of self-perpetuating cycle to this. The more letters that came in, the faster they needed to be sorted. The faster they were sorted, the more efficient the service was, the better the service to the public. The better the service for the public, the more popular it became and was used ever more. The more it was used, the faster the sorting and processing of the mail needed to become in order to keep the levels in the sorting offices low enough for there to be room for them all. And so it continued, the service getting ever faster and the numbers of mails in the system ever increasing.

The Streetscape of the Post in London

If the Post Office was putting its stamp on the city through its many buildings, it also had an impact on every single street in the city – through street signs and other street ephemera. The 'Streetscape' of London was one in which the Post Office featured

¹²³³ *Ibid*, pg. 44

¹²³⁴ "The letters that are posted now at these branch offices, &c., are forwarded here so quickly that they are with us in a few minutes..." *Ibid*, p. 36

regularly in the eye of people walking the streets, including not only buildings, but roads, lamps, horse-drawn carts, many many pedestrians, shop signs, and more.¹²³⁵

The Post Office's impact on the street was occasionally commented on at the time. In 1855 in the *Illustrated London News*, for example, depicted – slightly mockingly – a number of attempts by the Post Office to make to their services more noticeable in the city's streetscape.¹²³⁶ The article was related to the introduction of letter boxes in England, a famous instance of the Post Office's impact on the streets. The second half of the nineteenth century saw a huge increase in the post's street presence, with pillar boxes being introduced, many mail carts on the roads, telegraph messengers running the streets, and more. In London, the Post's impact on the streetscape took on a regional and specific character, linked specifically to the postal reforms: the most well-known manifestation of the Map in the street, and in public consciousness, being street signs with the street name and the postal district placed on every road in the city.

The street signs were linked to street naming, and house numbering. The system of streets in the city was being made more coherent, organised, and easily navigated in an attempt to rationalise the city. The Post Office was having an impact on the city through making it more ordered, more understandable.¹²³⁷ But, as ever, there was a journey to the position whereby every street sign in the city displayed its postal district. This period saw an ongoing saga between the Post Office and the Metropolitan Board of

¹²³⁵ Although written one hundred years after the focus of this thesis, my own understanding of 'Streetscape' has been heavily influenced by a number of mid-twentieth century writers on cities and buildings, most notably Gordon Cullen, whose 'Townscape' and articles for the *Architectural Review* illustrated the importance of the eye and seeing whilst moving around a city; his colleague Ian Nairn whose 'Outrage!' weighed in against the proliferation of street ephemera in our cities. See: I. de Wolfe and G. Cullen, 'Townscape: a plea for an English visual philosophy founded on the true rock of Sir Uvedale Price, followed by a Townscape casebook', *Architectural Review*, 1949 Dec., p. 354-374; Gordon Cullen, *Townscape*, London: Architectural Press, 1961 (1964 printing); Ian Nairn, *Outrage*, London: Architectural Press, 1955.

¹²³⁶ "Formerly a receiving House was decorated by a richly emblazoned pane, in which the time-honoured British lion shone in full national blazonry; and here and there the titular animal's mouth was the receptacle of letters; [...] Next, the example was set by the French post office authorities of having cast-iron pillars set up in various streets of Paris, for the reception of letters; and this experiment having been found successful, a similar plan has been adopted by the authorities in St. Martin's-le-Grand". *Illustrated London News*, 24th March 1855

¹²³⁷ Rose-Redwood provides a guide here, in his article about house numbering in the U.S., which nicely outlines the practice as producing a 'typography' of the city, in which the city itself is conceived of as a text, with house numbers its page numbers, the street signs its index. He states that this was 'key to understanding the modernist project of constructing legible urban spaces. Rose-Redwood, p. 289. We, too, are concerned with legibility of city spaces, albeit before the modernist period.

Works about this street furniture that would, in time, become a distinctive and absolutely standard part of the London streetscape.

Frustrated attempts at rationalisation: street names and house numbering

Street signs and street naming were linked to the ability of Post Office sorters and letter carriers to organise mail into its proper destination, important in increasing the speed of the delivery of the mail in London. They helped the public to understand the city and the layout of the streets, and which postal district the streets were in; which meant that they would become able to address their mail more accurately, and increase the speed of the overall system.

Street nomenclature was also linked with house numbering, which was causing just as many problems due to its similarly incoherent nature¹²³⁸ in a period when house numbering had not been standardised.¹²³⁹ In 1859 the Postmaster General's report stated that some progress had been made on street nomenclature, "but the main work has still to be accomplished",¹²⁴⁰ and it was still a hindrance in delivering letters¹²⁴¹ because confusing numbering slowed down letter carriers.¹²⁴² The reason why numbering and naming should be so incoherent in the first place being, of course, that there had not been any one governing body for issues such as street names and

¹²³⁸ "since my last report some little has been done towards improving the nomenclature of the streets in London, and the numbering of the houses; and so far, the delivery of letters has been much facilitated; but the work proceeds very slowly, and much remains to be accomplished. A good street nomenclature and a proper numbering of the houses not only tend to increase rapidity in the delivery, but are a considerable security against errors". The fourth report of the Postmaster General, 1858, p.10. POST 92/1: *Report upon the Post Office and Reports of the Postmaster General on the Post Office, 1854-1858*

¹²³⁹ House numbering had been compulsory in the City from 1765, but the rules that applied in that square mile were not necessarily followed in the rest of London. 1765 was also the year that street signs in the City were made compulsory. Rose-Redwood, p. 287

¹²⁴⁰ The fifth report of the Postmaster General, 1859. POST 92/2: *Reports of the Postmaster General on the Post Office, 1855-1864*

¹²⁴¹ an appendix was supplied that gave more detail on the extent of the problem – stating, "the irregularity in the numbering of houses is one of the greatest hindrances to the delivery of letters". The first report of the Postmaster General, 1855. POST 92/1: *Report upon the Post Office and Reports of the Postmaster General on the Post Office, 1854-1858*

¹²⁴² "the number of alleys and courts having houses without numbers, or badly numbered, occupy the time of the Letter Carriers so long, that the delivery of the important letters in the neighbourhood is frequently delayed." The first report of the Postmaster General, 1855. *Ibid.*

numbering, developers and house owners being free to number houses how they saw fit.¹²⁴³

The Post Office report considering this gives a piece of anecdotal evidence to nicely paint a picture about the kinds of practices that were going on:

On arriving at a house in the middle of a street, I observed a brass number 95 on the door, the houses on each side being numbered respectively 14 and 16. A woman came to the door, when I requested to be informed why 95 should appear between 14 and 16, she said it was the number of a house she formerly lived at in another street, and it (meaning the brass plate) being a very good one she thought it would do for her present residence as well as any other.¹²⁴⁴

In 1855 it was recognised that there was a need or a form of control street-organising systems in what was a massively growing urban place, and the issue was included on the Bill that founded the MBW.¹²⁴⁵ Its government was based on a system of 'Vestries' and 'Boards' for each district.¹²⁴⁶ On street names and house numbering, the Bill gave a variety of powers to the MBW, including to change or set street names, and to affix signs.¹²⁴⁷ The MBW was, therefore, the proper body to which the Post Office could apply to campaign for changes in street names and to enforce coherent house numbering in

¹²⁴³ As the appendix explains, "In the construction of new streets, the building of houses may commence at both ends, and on each side at the same time. The four corner houses are sometimes all called number one. The other parts of the street may be afterwards built by different persons, who now can give to their houses whatever names they think proper. One may prefer Albert Terrace, another Wellington Place, and a third wishing to preserve the family name, will call his houses Smith's, Taylor's or Bacon's Cottages, as the case there be. Each set of houses having a number one, will cause seven houses in the same street to be of the same number." The first report of the Postmaster General, 1855. *Ibid.*

¹²⁴⁴ The first report of the Postmaster General, 1855. *Ibid.*

¹²⁴⁵ The 'An Act for the Better Local Management of the Metropolis', 1855, set out the powers and processes of the Metropolitan Board of Works (MBW) as being for "the better Local Management of the Metropolis in Respect of the Sewerage and Drainage, and the Paving, Cleansing, Lighting and Improvements Thereof." POST 114/148: *Miscellaneous Acts*, Aug 1855-06 Aug 1897

¹²⁴⁶ The MBW Bill defines 'London' in a way that brings home the point that there was not really any definition of 'London' until that point: "CLXXXV. In the construction of this Act, "the Metropolis" shall be deemed to include the City of London, and the Parishes and Places mentioned in the Schedules (A.), (B.), and (C.) to this Act; the "City of London" shall be deemed to include all Parts now within the Jurisdiction of the Commissioners of Sewers for the City of London; and the word "Parish" shall include any Hamlet, Tithing, Ville, Liberty, Precinct or Place maintaining its own Poor, and where Parishes have been united by Act of Parliament for any Purposes shall mean each of the Parishes so united or reunited...", p. 65. *Ibid.*

¹²⁴⁷ See p. 30. *Ibid.*

order that the mail processes could be sped up.¹²⁴⁸ The Post Office could not act on this issue unilaterally, instead relying on the MBW. Rowland Hill had originally lobbied for a bigger role for the Post Office in this, suggesting that either the Post Office should be responsible for street naming and house numbering, or else that it be mandatory to consult with the Post Office on the issue.¹²⁴⁹ This was not the eventual arrangement; instead the Post office was occasionally consulted on issues if they were London-wide, or more often, had to try and campaign for occasional changes.

Street nomenclature in London was an issue that was tied closely to the London Postal Map. During the period of the Map's introduction, inconsistent and confusing street naming was highlighted repeatedly by the Post Office as a problem – for example the fact of their being 50 different 'King Streets' – and improving the situation was largely out of the hands of the Post Office.¹²⁵⁰ When sorting letters, a large number of the same street name would slow down proceedings considerably- something that was not to be tolerated under the new system.¹²⁵¹ The problem was not one of postal workers being unable to sort letters, but rather one of lack of familiarity of those sending letters, who might not be aware there were multiple versions of their correspondents' address and so would not know to be more specific in their addressing of letters.¹²⁵²

¹²⁴⁸ "This advantage [of Postal Map reforms] might be greatly extended should the Metropolitan Board of Works, in the exercise of one of its powers, see fit to remedy the evil pointed out in the first Annual Report on the Post Office, so far as to get rid of duplicate names when found in the same district." Postmaster General's Second report 1856, p. 10. POST 71/58: Parliamentary Papers relating to the Post Office: Volume XXVI, 1856

¹²⁴⁹ Hill minute stating that one central authority should be responsible for street naming, as Local Boards would not be too interested in the whole of the city. Hill wants mention of the Post Office in the MBW Bill as the authority to decide on street naming, but he does not get this – see a letter from the MBW dated 30 April 1855. POST 30/140D: *Street Nomenclature, London, c.1860*

¹²⁵⁰ "Much confusion and delay in the delivery of letters arises from there being in the same town several streets of the same name. By a report from an intelligent Inspector of Letter Carriers, which will be found in the Appendix, it will be seen that in London there are about 50 King Streets, 50 Queen Streets, and 60 John Streets and William Streets. But this is an inconvenience which neither correspondents nor the Post Office can correct." The first report of the Postmaster General, 1855. POST 92/1: *Report upon the Post Office and Reports of the Postmaster General on the Post Office, 1854-1858*

¹²⁵¹ As was stated in 1857, when the street naming issue had not particularly been improved; "so long as the present endless repetition of names continues, it will be impossible to prevent delays and mistakes in postal delivery." *Ibid.*

¹²⁵² "It is thought by some persons that no alteration is necessary; since at present every street, even where there are several at the same name, can be fully designated; as, for example, King St., Cheapside, and King St, Covent Garden. But the necessity for such distinction is frequently unknown, especially by persons living at a distance, and, in fact, it is in numerous instances disregarded." The third report of the Postmaster General, 1857. *Ibid.*

The issue was discussed in an article appearing in *The Times* in March 1856, which notes that the MBW was auditing the streets of London to see how many had the same names, with a view to getting rid of duplication.¹²⁵³ A follow up to this article was published on April 5th, which specified that a motion was being brought forward to state that no two streets in London should have the same name, it being recognised that this would be particularly useful to the Post Office.¹²⁵⁴ The MBW consulted with the Post Office on this measure, and the Controller of the London service, Mr Boucher, took the opportunity to put together a set of recommendations from the Post Office to the MBW about street names and house numbers, that went far, basically amounting to a significant re-ordering of London's streets. The recommendations were extensive, clearly written directly from the experience of the letter carriers and sorters themselves, and drawing from their experience of what currently delayed their work, including no duplication of street names, no streets to cross district boundaries, and names of districts being painted on the street at intersections.¹²⁵⁵

Boucher's recommendations were not just to be of assistance to the Post Office; he was concerned, too, with the fact that the people walking on London's streets would be encountering street names, house numbers and street signs as well, as part of their streetscape, and they should be able to use them, helping people find their way. In this respect, his recommendations envisaged a highly rationalised, legible, street system, whereby all streets and house numbers would relate to one central point, so people would orientate themselves no matter where they were: he suggested St. Paul's.¹²⁵⁶

¹²⁵³ To do this they sent a letter to the Vestries and District Boards asking for full lists of their streets. *The Times*, March 29 1856. Excerpt in POST 30/140D: *Street Nomenclature, London, c.1860*

¹²⁵⁴ *The Times*, April 5th 1856. Excerpt in *Ibid.*

¹²⁵⁵ They included the following:

"1. There should not be two streets of the same name in London. 2. Streets should not cross the boundaries of the Post Office District. 2. The names of the streets, places &c. should be painted conspicuously at the corners and at all appoints of intersection – the initial letters of the Postal Districts being placed below. [...] not only is this, therefore, a matter for Post Office consideration, but the Public have as interest in seeing that the names of the streets are conspicuously exhibited." He also recommends: "3. Main streets should not be too long." The recommendations went through a number of drafts, with different ordering of the suggestions, hence the occasional duplication of numbering in this list. The early version of this memo is May 2nd, later versions in May 26th. *Ibid.*

¹²⁵⁶ "4. The numbers of the houses in a street, should follow a regular order [...] streets proceeding East to West should as a rule be numbered from the Eastern end, and those proceeding North to South from the Northern end." – what this would mean was that 'Oxford Road' would be split into 'Oxford Road East' and 'Oxford Road West'. *Ibid.*

Alas, Boucher's suggestions were not to be. The MBW did not opt for this comprehensive overhaul, and the Post Office had to make do with the occasional small change to the system, such as a reducing of the number of 'New Road's.¹²⁵⁷ For a meeting of the MBW to agree 'One Law for regulating the formation of New Streets in the Metropolis', Boucher prepared a list of duplicated street names.¹²⁵⁸ These were used to agree some 'streamlining' of roads, taking out some duplication.¹²⁵⁹ Rowland Hill was a witness to this meeting, during which it was noted that there were 571 streets that had the same 17 names, causing confusion and mistakes in postal operations.¹²⁶⁰ Further, house numbering inconsistencies were noted, but it was decided not to pursue that issue.¹²⁶¹

Eventually some small progress was made in the form of a renaming of places along one main road into the same name. The measure did not rename duplicated streets, but instead previous names of places had been absorbed into a new street name. Upper Street, Islington (N.) for example included 25 places that were all renamed as Upper Street.¹²⁶² Nothing else was heard of Boucher's various recommendations.

It was a source of consternation to the Postmaster General that street naming was not something that could be solved by any postal measure, and that the MBW appeared not to view the issue as being one that required urgent attention. The Postal Map could only

¹²⁵⁷ In November, Mr Boucher recommended getting rid of the 'New Roads' in London of which there were many, in what seems to be a one-off recommendation, and a scaling back of ambition compared to his previous complete overhaul ideas. Correspondence from Hill to the MBW (one E. Cresy). Letter and minutes dated November 7th 1856. *Ibid.*

¹²⁵⁸ Notice, dated Nov 11, 1856. *Ibid.*

¹²⁵⁹ Another newspaper article, in December, states that the aim of the meeting with Vestries and Districts Boards was related to an Act "that empowered the Board to name all the streets in the Metropolis, so as to prevent any two streets from being the same". *The Times*, Sat Dec 13th 1856. *Ibid.*

¹²⁶⁰ It was noted there was "enormous amount of inconvenience, loss of time, and waste of labour that must arise both as regard the delivery of letters and the transaction of the daily business of the community from a practice so replete with all elements of confusion and mistake". *Ibid.*

¹²⁶¹ In St Georges-in-the-East there were 81 streets that were mis-numbered; in Oxford Street 54 houses didn't have any numbers; numbers didn't follow the correct order. Given all this, the Committee saw the sense in renaming all the streets that were a duplication (as per the Post Office's original recommendation), however - they recommended starting with these 17 first, in order not to cause too much confusion at first. *Ibid.*

¹²⁶² A small leaflet was produced that showed which streets or places had been renamed. Kings Road, Chelsea (S.W.) now includes 27 previous places of different names; and likewise the streets Marylebone Road (N.W.), Euston Road (N.W.), Pentonville Road (N.), Manor Street, Clapham (S.), and Wirtenburg Street, Clapham (S.) have been similarly made more coherent. Leaflet titled, 'Street Nomenclature'. *Ibid.*

do so much to rationalise the city; after that was frustration. In 1857 the Postmaster General was complaining,

So long as the present endless repetition of names continues, it will be impossible to prevent delays and mistakes in postal delivery [...] Not only should the names of no two streets be identical, but the distinction between them should be broad and clear. Repeated complaints have been made in the neighbourhood of Westbourne Terrace on account of delays in delivery arising from the great similarity in several of the names thereabout, such as Westbourne Park Cottages, Westbourne Park Crescent, Westbourne Park Place, Westbourne Park Road, Westbourne Park Terrace, and Westbourne Park Villas.¹²⁶³

In the issue of house numbering and street names, what we see is another manifestation of the Post Office imprinting (or attempting to, at least), its own sense of order and rationality onto London.¹²⁶⁴

Signs

In 1857, Hill started to push for the inclusion of postal districts on street signs (as is the practice to this day) in order that London's people would associate each street with the postal system.¹²⁶⁵ Hill, like Boucher the year before, was making the point that these changes to London's streetscape would have an impact not only on postal efficiency, but on the everyday lives of Londoners. 'Public convenience' was a constant theme, and not just in terms of the convenience of having a good postal system; it included the ability to cognitively map the city; to navigate the place easily using the city's street signs.

¹²⁶³ *The Third Report of the Postmaster General on the Post Office*, 1857, p. 5. POST 92/1: *Report upon the Post Office and Reports of the Postmaster General on the Post Office, 1854-1858*

¹²⁶⁴ Rose-Redwood asserts that house numbering was 'a spatial practice that has arguably been one of the principal strategies for rationalizing the geographic spaces of everyday life over the course of the last two centuries.' Rose-Redwood, p. 286

¹²⁶⁵ Hill recommends to have postal districts "conspicuously painted below the names of streets, places &c., at the corners and points of intersection..." [...] "a consideration of the expense involved which could not possibly be large and it would be an evident advantage to the Post Office, if the public were familiarised with the names of the Districts, and taught to which of them each street in London belongs." Minute of 2 March 1857. *Ibid.*

Interestingly Hill also referenced that a practice had been cropping up – in an ad hoc fashion, of course – where certain streets had been given signs that stated cardinal points of the compass on them; clearly this would only confuse matters if the Post Office was to also place cardinal points on signs, which may be different to those already on them.¹²⁶⁶

Hill's attempts to sway the MBW to prioritise these issues went the same way as Boucher's earlier efforts. A letter from the clerk of the Board in May 1857 to Hill stated that the cost of the measure could not be justified by the MBW.¹²⁶⁷ Archive evidence all relates to one-off recommendations, such as the attempt by Boucher in 1860 to see a new street in Kensington named not the proposed "Princess Gate", but be named something else, e.g. "Rutland gate", as there were other "Princess" streets just on the other side of the postal boundary. He used a map to show the boundary and illustrated the confusion that would arise in the naming of places either side of the boundary such similar names. There was still no coherent and uniform process for street naming, and related confusion continued to hamper Post Office ambitions indefinitely.

Although the Post Office wanted to rationalise street names, signs and house numbering, but did not have the powers to change the street names or put up street signs, whereas the MBW, which did have these powers, was not keen to use them. For example, when in 1869 a Post Office surveyor submitted a list of street signs to the MBW that had the wrong postal district on them, he was rebuffed.¹²⁶⁸ Although this shows the Post Office again being ignored, it does also provide evidence that street signs with postal districts on them had been put up in the period before 1869; the surveyor's

¹²⁶⁶ "a further reason for now taking up this question, is presented by the fact that, in some cases, the street name = Boards have been marked with letters indicating the cardinal points of the compass, N., S., E., W; and if this practice is continued, a confusion of these letters with the District initials is likely to arise." Minute of 2 March 1857. *Ibid.*

¹²⁶⁷ "The MBW having had under their consideration your letter of the 6th March written by desire of the PMG have directed me to inform you that in their opinion it is not competent for them having regard to the provisions of the Act under which their powers are exercised to adopt the suggestion of placing the initial of the Postal Districts below the names of streets and that whilst fully recognising the public advantages which would result in from the proposed improvement they do not think that the cost of it ought to fall upon the ratepayers of the MBW." Letter from the MBW on 17th May 1857. *Ibid.*

¹²⁶⁸ His response from the MBW was that the duty to do this rested with "the several Vestries and Boards." POST 30/4011: *London Postal Service: letters for London Postal Area, simplified address, Part 2*

list shows those which were wrong, whereas there would have been many more that were correct.

The various problems relating to street signs that were experienced at the introduction of the London Postal Map were to remain throughout. Archives reveal the situation in 1919, for example, right at the end of our period. A newspaper article reveals that the public were interested in the issue, showing how they had become valued parts of the city's streetscape.¹²⁶⁹ Correspondence shows that some boroughs made efforts to replace old street signs with ones that showed the new sub-districts, but in 1919 only three had completely change their signs: Camberwell, Hackney and Paddington.¹²⁷⁰ The rest took a more gradual and piecemeal approach; to this day signs can be found around London that do not show the sub district number. The excuse was that the post-war context meant that labour, time, and materials were scarce, and changing signs was simply not a priority.¹²⁷¹

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As well as having a permanent role in London's streetscape through signs and buildings, the Post Office was also having a temporary effect on the street in the same way that other institutions like the water board were having: through digging up roads and other streetworks.¹²⁷² Disruption caused by roadworks were such an issue that a proposal

¹²⁶⁹ A letter published in the Daily Express states, 'Sir – would it not be a good plan if postal district numbers were painted on street name plates after the names of thoroughfares, thus: Peckham-road, S.E.5?' The public would soon learn how to address letters'. Daily Express, 12 March 1917. Bruce Castle, Morten Collection, 256 Morten: Newspaper Clippings, 'Introduction of Numbers for London District Post Areas 1917'

¹²⁷⁰ File about street signs from 1919 shows communications with local boroughs replacing signs, for example a letter from Ealing asking where the boundary lay. A reply of Dec 1919 sends a 'piece of a map' showing it. POST 30/4011: *London Postal Service: letters for London Postal Area, simplified address, Part 2*

¹²⁷¹ One cause of the delay was stated in a letter from the London Controller to the Post Office Secretary in June 1919: "it is understood that towards the close of the war period the Secretary asked the municipal authorities responsible for exhibiting the names of streets, etc., to add to the Delivery Office Numbers to the District initials shewn on name plates or painted on buildings, but that with one or two exceptions the response was not encouraging, mainly it is thought because labour and other conditions at the time were unfavourable." The letter goes on to state that now conditions are more favourable and Local Authorities are making repairs, it seems a good time to renew requests. File about street signs from 1919, letter from Bruce to Secretary 17th June 1919. *Ibid.*

¹²⁷² A report of 1905 in the archive shows the extent to which this had been a problem in the city, with many traffic jams caused by the "breaking up of streets" in the capital. POST 30/1211C: *Royal Commission on London Traffic: Postmaster General's position in regard to breaking up of streets, solicitor's opinion, 1905*

was put forward to creation of the 'London Traffic Board', which was suggested to resolve the problem of the different organisations and Boards digging up the streets in London and causing traffic in an uncoordinated manner for Gasworks; Water board; Electric lights; Tramways; Telegraphs. There was still a sense that London's governance was not united, even by the turn of the century.¹²⁷³

That Post Office infrastructure was truly public, out in the open and experienced by all, is highlighted by the designs by the Post Office for lampposts.¹²⁷⁴ The Post Office was working to make itself even more visible on the streetscape of London, considering ways to make its offices noticeable to the people walking on the streets in darkness. One idea was to advertise on lampposts in the area, as this would solve the problem of needing to light signs. A number of designs were trialled, from stencilling the location of the post office to the actual lamp, to hanging a sign from the lamp, and to alerting the attention of the walker by placing a large red ball on the lamppost.

¹²⁷³ Letter to the Secretary states, "They also recommend that the statutory rights and obligations of the various Companies and bodies having authority to break up the streets, should, as far as possible, be made uniform. At present, as the Secretary is aware, the powers of the Postmaster General are in some respects inferior to those possessed by the Water Bard and the Gas Companies". *Ibid.*

¹²⁷⁴ POST 30/198B: *Post Office Signs: indicators for street lamps*, c.1870



Fig. 152: Design for sign that uses lamppost light to indicate the location of a post office¹²⁷⁵

¹²⁷⁵ Ibid.

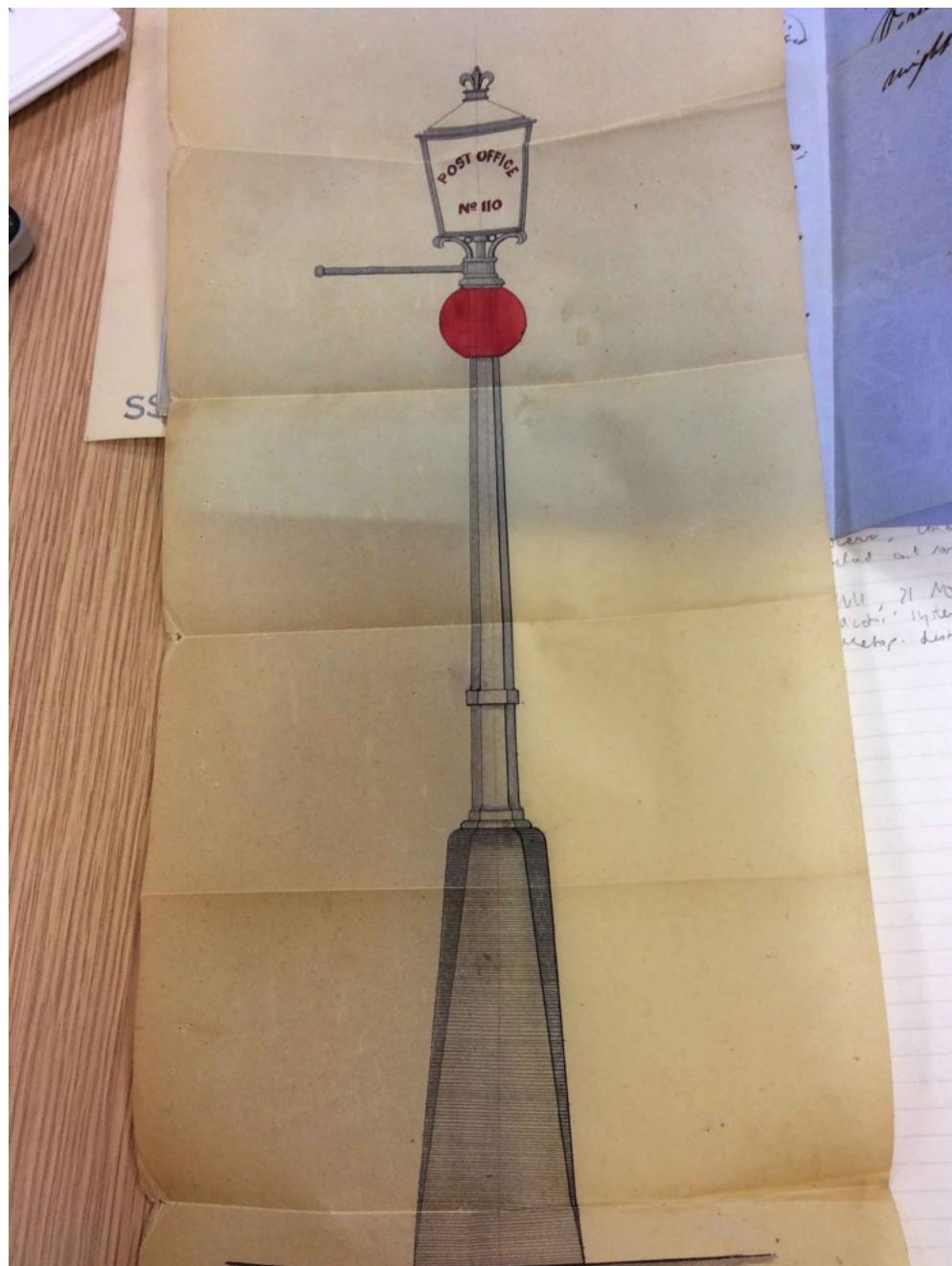


Fig. 153: A second design; the sign notice for the local post office is painted directly onto the lamp, with a giant red ball on the lamppost so that it stands out on the street.¹²⁷⁶

¹²⁷⁶ Ibid.

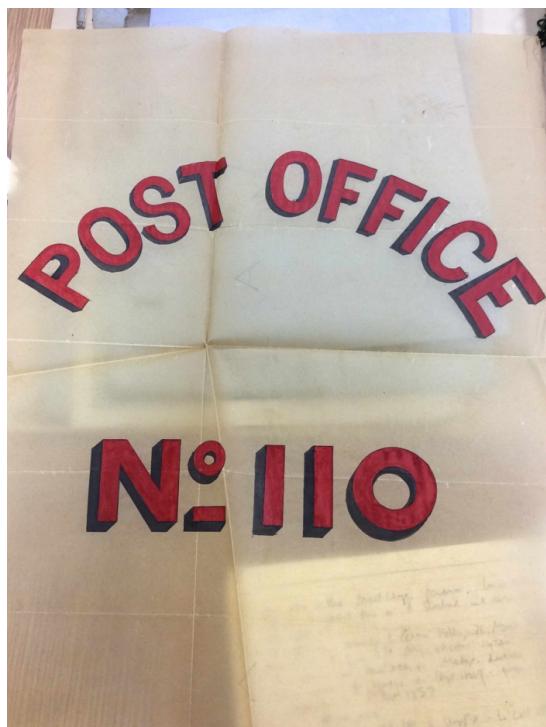


Fig. 154: Stencil design for the sign on the lamps¹²⁷⁷

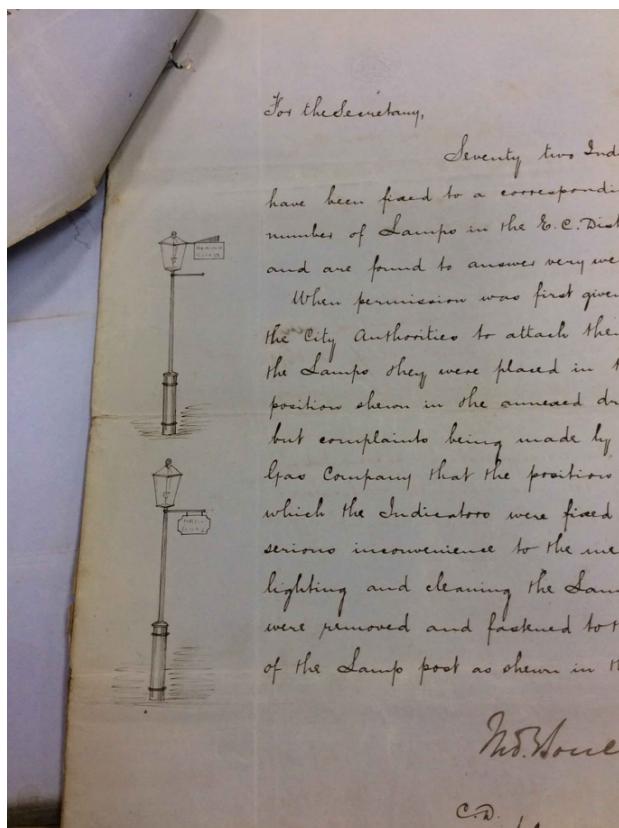


Fig. 155: Drawings illustrating the designs for signs in post office records¹²⁷⁸

¹²⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁷⁸ Ibid.

Indicators	
Pillar Boxes	Nearest Lamps
Bishopsgate Without by N ^o 145	by N ^o 145
Cannon Street by P ^o 101	by N ^o 97
Coat Expenses.	by N ^o 28 St Mary at Hill
Cochbury by N ^o 40	Lamps attached to the Bank of England
Little Tower Street by N ^o 20	by N ^o 20
French Street by N ^o 17	by N ^o 19
Bishopsgate Street N ^o by N ^o 186	by N ^o 93
Leadenhall Street by N ^o 6	by N ^o 13
Leadenhall Street by N ^o 86	by N ^o 89
Cochbury by N ^o 40	Lamps attached to the Bank of England

Fig. 156: List of locations of the lamppost signs¹²⁷⁹

The different designs for the lamps reveal the simple fact of how much the Post Office was interested in making an impact on the streetscape of London. In most cases the purpose of these interventions was the same: to improve the way that people interacted with the post through a further rationalization of the system, to make things simpler, easier, more understandable for the public. This was not just making the new London

¹²⁷⁹ Ibid.

postal system more understandable; it was making *the city itself* more easily understood.

All of these street objects added to the place of London, they became regular features of the streetscape and meant that when walking around London one was constantly given small visual reminders of the Post Office and its role. The Post Office always in the eye-line became a feature of London.

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Considering postal street ephemera, alongside the buildings of the post in London, we start to build up a picture of the total impact that the post was having on the streets of London. Street signs, buildings and more were ways in which the Post effected Londoners' experiences of the city. They affected how Londoners understood their city: a key theme of the London Postal Map that we will now turn to.

3. EXPERIENCE: CONCEPTUALISING THE CITY

The second section of the chapter investigates how the Postal Map affected the way the city was understood by Londoners, outside the postal context. When the Postal Map was introduced it changed the way that everyone understood the city and their place within it. Everyone in the city, whether they used the letter post regularly or not, existed within a new conception of the city and its parts. It is an investigation into that phenomenon which forms the last section of this chapter.

There are a number of themes that emerge in considering the way that the Map influenced the way that Londoners understood their city. One that frequently recurs is the snobbery, or anticipated snobbery, of Londoners relating to different parts of the city. This is not dissimilar to the snobbery that exists today in relation to which postcode area you might live in, this was a phenomenon that began very quickly in the Postal Map's history. Another theme is that of the user's involvement in the redesign of the Map; the Post Office was responsive to the way that the Map was used, and altered services accordingly- the Map therefore became a changing document, not static, altering as the city it serviced altered.

The link between the public and the Map was explicit from the start. Throughout, the way the public used the map was crucial as their response to it decided the Map's success. Whether the public accepted the dividing of London and the naming of the districts was an important part of this.

Over the years the Map developed, altering its shape and size many times. Soon after 1856 it started to change, to have its boundaries redrawn and its services altered. The trend in the second half of the nineteenth century was for the Postal Map to reduce in size; between 1865 and 1870, some 30 'towns' were transferred out of the London Postal Area.¹²⁸⁰ However, although by 1870 a number of outlying towns had been taken

¹²⁸⁰ Simon Morris in 'The London Postal Districts' states that the reasons for this were that it was soon realized the Postal District areas were too large and unwieldy. In response some areas at the outer edges of the districts were taken out and given to local control, e.g. Romford, Sutton, Beckenham. In 1865-70, 30

out, as London continued to grow some were brought back in, e.g. Wood Green in N, Walthamstow in E, and Woolwich, Eltham, Abbey Wood and Charlton in SE.¹²⁸¹ The changes are seen in the 1870 version of the map:

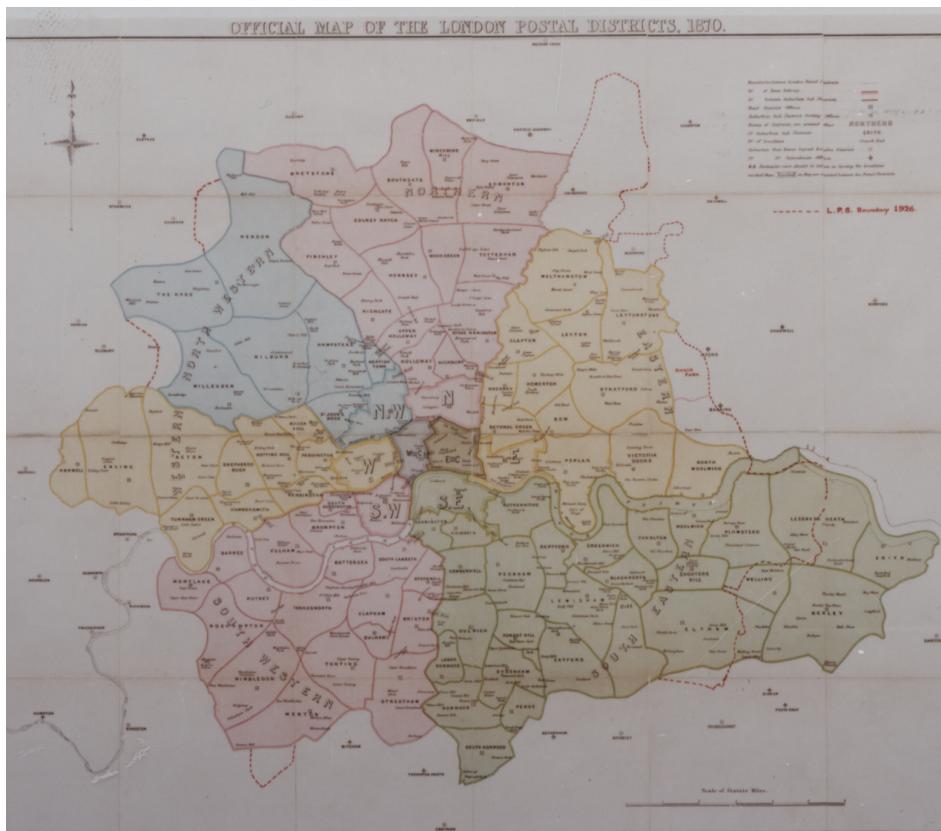


Fig. 157: 1870 London Postal Map¹²⁸²

These changes indicate a re-thinking of the original concept for a London postal service that would define London in a wide-reaching way; fairly quickly providing a standard service to the entirety of the 1856 definition of the city was seen as unrealistic, and was reduced.

When it is understood that the Postal Map changed often over time, the reasons for the changes can start to be investigated, as can the response by the public to these changes. Through this a number of points can be revealed about the nature of the Postal Map's relationship with its audiences.

towns were taken out. Simon Morris, 'The London Postal Districts', *London Topographical Society Newsletter no. 29 November 1989*

¹²⁸¹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸² POST 21/69: *Official map of the London postal districts 1870*

NE and S

The most fundamental of the changes to the Postal Map happened within its first fifteen years of operation: it lost two of its districts, the North Eastern (NE) and Southern (S). It is a fairly well-told myth that the dissolution of these districts was a slightly malicious deed by the novelist Anthony Trollope,¹²⁸³ a Surveyor at the Post Office, acting out of a profound dislike for Rowland Hill.¹²⁸⁴ It was certainly true that Trollope recommended the change, and that Hill wrote to campaign against it, to no avail¹²⁸⁵. However, that reading of the tale unnecessarily foregrounds these two individual personalities, whereas the stories related to the dissolution of these districts were more interesting. Although Hill and Trollope had parts to play, so too did the irregular pace of development in different areas in the city; the press; popular concern; local businessmen, professionals and politicians campaigning for their postal service; and economic expediency.

As we have seen, the full extent of the reforms intended for the London service had not been implemented by the early 1860s, with some district offices still operating out of temporary accommodation, and some of the suburban services were operated centrally from the Chief Office at St Martin's.¹²⁸⁶ The district offices were not yet technically fully 'Post Towns', as they were not under the control of their own postmasters, though there had been an introduction of a 'Controller' of the London district as a whole.

That the situation in London was one of stunted reform was highlighted by scathing articles in *The Times* in March 1860.¹²⁸⁷ The article began by stating the importance of

¹²⁸³ Hill was Trollope's 'old adversary'. N. John Hall, *Trollope: a biography*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1991, p. 242. Trollope is now best known to us as the author of major works of Victorian fiction, including *The Way We Live Now*, which has been mentioned elsewhere in this thesis, but for many years he was also a post office employee, including working as a surveyor in the London district.

¹²⁸⁴ There was certainly no love lost between the two men. For example, in 1860, stoking the rumours about the personal enmity between Hill and Trollope, at the same time, Trollope gave a lecture at this time that was widely seen as criticising Hill. R. H. Super, *Trollope in the Post Office*, Ann Arbor: Michigan U P, 1981.

¹²⁸⁵ 'History of the LPA' note for the Controller (internal memo) describes the change to the NE district. POST 30/4011: *London Postal Service: letters for London Postal Area, simplified address, Part 2*

¹²⁸⁶ This was the situation by 1863. *Ibid.*

¹²⁸⁷ *The Times*, 29th and 30th March 1860

postal matters to the general public,¹²⁸⁸ and went on to complain that had the Post Office been adequately staffed and given proper facilities, it would not have devolved some of its work to the public via the new addressing system. The article presented the introduction of the Postal Map not as a benefit for the public, but as the imposition of an inconvenient additional duty. The argument throughout the article was that the Post Office saw itself not as a provider of a service, but as a method through which the government could collect revenue from the public, and neglected investment in its services accordingly.¹²⁸⁹

A damning attack was given about the use of initials on addresses for letters to the London Districts, stating that the system was a failure, and that the public did not use the correct initials:¹²⁹⁰

...In a large proportion of instances, [users] were found to have affixed the wrong initials, which led to the letters being mis-sorted, and actually delayed in consequence, while there are instances of letters marked N.W. and S. W., being sent to North and South Wales.

The article goes so far as to claim that no accommodation had been made whatsoever for the increase in letters that the Penny Post introduced- denying the impact of the London reforms completely.¹²⁹¹ The slightly hysterical article was littered with a

¹²⁸⁸ "the public will require very little apology from us for directing their attention to a subject of such wide-spread interest, and such deep public importance, as that of the arrangements and present working systems of the General Post Office." *The Times*, March 29th 1860. POST 30/148B: *Circulation Department, London: Committee of Enquiry Report, minor establishment revised, new classifications and pay scales*. C.1861

¹²⁸⁹ Therefore its service was neglected with a lack of investment in order to avoid increasing costs and to protect its revenue, all of which constituted an "evasion of duty" [...] "to the want of space, and constant diminution of staff, is it due that the public have been called upon to discharge the Post Office work by affixing the district initials to their letters. Partly form the same cause has also arisen the necessity of discouraging to the utmost the transmission of newspapers through the post, and by this evasion of duty leaving it to newsagents to perform a most important part of its functions throughout the entire kingdom". *The Times* article, March 29th 1860

¹²⁹⁰ "The recent attempt to save labour in the letter department of the office by compelling the public to affix the initials of the postal district has proved almost a failure for letters posted in London. At the General Post Office it is stated that the sorters never look now at the initial letter at all, and that, when they did do so, the public, in a large proportion of instances, were found to have affixed the wrong initials, which led to the letters being mis-sorted, and actually delayed in consequence, while there are instances of letters marked N.W. and S. W., being sent to North and South Wales." *The Times*, March 30th 1860

¹²⁹¹ "since the penny post there has been an immense increase in the business of the G.P.O., an increase which daily continues, though there has been no corresponding extension of the system of any simplification of arrangements for meeting that extra duty". *Ibid.*

number of inaccurate claims,¹²⁹² but nonetheless caused enough of a stir for the Post Office to investigate its claims. In addition, the city was growing massively, with, in 1862 alone, 11,000 new houses built in London.¹²⁹³ The Post Office was therefore delivering letters to an ever increasing number of houses, in new housing developments, in new streets, even new districts of the city.

In 1864, Rowland Hill retired. The new Secretary was Tilley, related by marriage to Trollope, who, despite this family connection, was subsequently passed over for the role of Assistant Secretary.¹²⁹⁴ That post was filled by one Scudamore, who would later become Post Office Secretary,¹²⁹⁵ whilst Tilley appointed Trollope in 1866 to review collections and deliveries, and to produce a feasibility study into possible changes in London. Appointed in March of that year, Trollope reported by June, making a number of recommendations. The changes included further devolution of powers from the centre to the London districts, including the establishment of Postmasters in the districts. He also proposed the appointment of a Surveyor dealing specifically with the London area, which was ratified by the Treasury later that year.¹²⁹⁶

The most fundamental change that Trollope proposed was to the London Postal Map. After reviewing collections and deliveries in the London area he recommended that the Southern district be amalgamated into the South Eastern and South Western districts, and that the North Eastern district be abolished.¹²⁹⁷ In doing this he was taking

¹²⁹² One of my favourite sections is: "Sir Rowland Hill's creation is eating him up!" [...] "Everything went right with the new postal system except that it could not be worked within the old establishment, whereas to that it has been confined." *Ibid.*

¹²⁹³ As noted by the Postmaster general in 1863: "there have been further improvements in the Chief Office at St Martin's le Grand and in some of the suburban offices, partly to provide for the constant and rapid increase of business in the London District, within which, during the last year, more than 11,000 new houses were built, viz. about 2,300 within the town limits, and more than 9,400 in the suburbs." Postmaster General's ninth report, 1863, p. 5. POST 92/2: *Reports of the Postmaster General on the Post Office*. 1855-1864

¹²⁹⁴ N. John Hall, *Trollope: a biography*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1991, p. 260

¹²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 260

¹²⁹⁶ Trollope himself acted as the Surveyor on a temporary basis, but did not accept the post when offered it as a permanent job; he was soon to retire from the Post Office to concentrate on his writing career. R. H. Super, *Trollope in the Post Office*, Ann Arbor: Michigan U P, 1981

¹²⁹⁷ POST 30/199A: *London Districts: South Postal District abolished*, c.1870. The changes were to fundamentally alter Rowland Hill's vision for the London districts, and Hill protested the change – but there was no love lost between Trollope and Hill. When Hill was in office he had stated his perception that Trollope was neglecting his Post Office duties due to his writing, not least when taking a sabbatical to visit the States. Hill's complaints about this fell on deaf ears, Trollope being on much friendlier terms with the Postmaster General of the time than Hill.

advantage of the fact that some of the 1856 reforms were still incomplete: the lack of a controller of the Southern district, for example, meant that this district was an easy choice for dissolution.¹²⁹⁸

The primary reason given was one of cost in relation to level of need: the districts did not generate as much letter traffic as the others, and savings could be made by merging operations.¹²⁹⁹ The change would require a new District Office to be acquired or built in Kennington, at an estimated cost of £1,600, but this was to be offset by hiring out the current Southern District Office.¹³⁰⁰ Trollope's recommendations were put into place quickly, and by 1868 the 'S' and 'NE' districts were no longer operational. With this act the near-perfect symmetry of the 1856 Postal Map arrangements was broken.

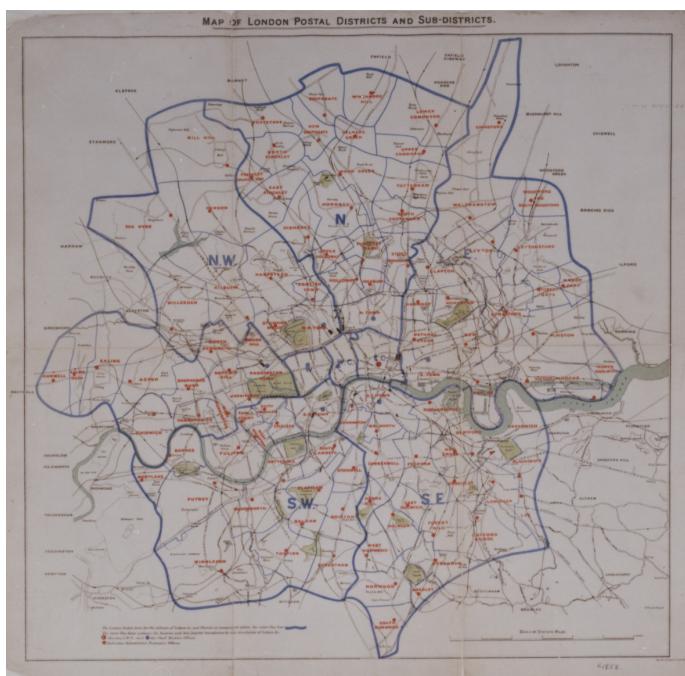


Fig. 158: Map of London Postal Districts¹³⁰¹

Along with costs, to justify the measures it was stated the demand for communication in these districts was not high enough to merit the service being provided by the Post

¹²⁹⁸ Noted in a Report of 13 August 1867. *Ibid.*

¹²⁹⁹ It was estimated, for example, that closing the Southern district would result in savings of £2,000 p.a. *Ibid.*

¹³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰¹ POST 21/55: *Map of London Postal Districts and Sub-Districts*, c.1860s (mis-catalogued; actual date c.1911)

Office.¹³⁰² However, other evidence suggests that the London area was still growing rapidly; demand was increasing, with certain parts of London requesting increased services.¹³⁰³ District offices continued to be very busy, and to employ a large number of staff, these were not small post offices. The largest office was the WDO with 285 people employed; the smallest was the NEDO with 112 persons,¹³⁰⁴ perhaps another reason why Trollope singled this district out for abolition was its smaller status. It was still being reported that the Chief Office was over-burdened, as well,¹³⁰⁵, and recommendations were made to relieve the Chief Office with appointment of a Surveyor to London, with 3 clerks under him.¹³⁰⁶

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After the 1866 recommendation the Southern District was amalgamated with its neighbours in 1868; but not without a level of protest from some members of the public about the change. The *Daily News* published an article expressing concern about the reduction to services that would result in the former 'S' area,¹³⁰⁷ and the Post Office received communication from interested locals, including the MP for Lambeth who

¹³⁰² POST 30/199A: *London Districts: South Postal District abolished, c.1870*

¹³⁰³ For example, a new request to Treasury was sent in June 1866, stating that the Post Office had (since 1856) placed some 'outlying towns' in the London District into the control of provincial surveyors – e.g. Croydon. However, by 1866, this has created a problem as "the immediate suburbs of London increase with such rapidity" that they "need further relief". POST 30/139C: *London Postal Service, Circulation Department: force revised: auxiliaries nominated Letter Carriers, restricted Civil Service Certificate imposed. 1860*

¹³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

In addition, Simon Morris implies that the changes were effectively to 'correct' the original map, which was perhaps unrealistic in its divisions of London - the original districts were big and very equal in size, which meant that some districts contained lots of built-up area and therefore lots of addresses, whereas some districts, e.g. N, SE, S, and NW were 'predominantly rural': "It was this inequality in size that was shortly to necessitate further reorganisation". Simon Morris, 'The London Postal Districts', *London Topographical Society Newsletter no. 29 November 1989*

¹³⁰⁵ "much work is now thrown upon the Chief office which might be better done in the District Offices" therefore the Postmaster General proposes "a radical change" to "cut off from the Circulation Department all the District Offices proper" (not E and WC) "and to constitute these districts Post Towns, placing them under the inspection of a Surveyor, like Manchester, Liverpool and other offices in the country." The Chief Office "will then no longer be the sole centre of control". POST 30/139C: *London Postal Service, Circulation Department: force revised: auxiliaries nominated Letter Carriers, restricted Civil Service Certificate imposed. 1860*

¹³⁰⁶ This was agreed by the Treasury 19th June 1866. *Ibid.*

¹³⁰⁷ *The Daily News*, March 28th, 1868

protested that the change would be damaging to trade and growth in his constituency.¹³⁰⁸

One notable protest unsurprisingly came from Rowland Hill, in whose diary he described the change as ‘mischievous’,¹³⁰⁹ and wrote, ‘the subjoined extract from the *Daily News* of today shows that the mischievous changes made in the London District systems (March 28th) are causing dissatisfaction – many letters of complaint appeared in the newspapers about this time’.¹³¹⁰ He sent a number of letters to Tilley stating, ‘the whole matter seemed so impossible that I scarcely regarded it...’¹³¹¹ but possible it was, and Hill was powerless to stop the change.¹³¹²

Discussion was had in Parliament about the change, and pamphlets were sent out to residents of the affected area to advise them to amend their addresses accordingly, and by the end of 1868 the Southern District was no longer operational. In a nice nod to the importance of naming, the Postmaster General remarked that once the Southern district had been amalgamated the South Eastern District should be renamed ‘Southern’; his reasoning seems to be that removing the ‘South’ designation from the map was absurd, from a naming perspective rather than any operational reason. In the event, the renaming did not happen, and to this day there is no Southern District in London. The actual impact of services was mixed; some places within the old ‘S’ district received an improved service, some a reduced one.¹³¹³

The situation with regards the North Eastern District was more complicated. After the recommendation in 1866 to abolish it, the NE District Office was closed in 1867. However, unlike the Southern District, the change was not initially communicated to the public. Tilley stated, ‘to make a formal announcement to the public involving the

¹³⁰⁸ POST 30/199A: *London Districts: South Postal District abolished, c.1870*

¹³⁰⁹ POST 100/4: *Rowland Hill's Post Office Journal*

¹³¹⁰ August 1st. Hill noted that there was an article in the Daily News about the abolition of the Southern District, which expressed concern over the number of deliveries reducing, and giving inhabitants proper notice. POST 100/18: *Rowland Hill's Post Office Journal*, Jan 1865-Dec 1869

¹³¹¹ A file named, ‘Sir Rowland Hill’s strictures’ dated 1868 records this. POST 30/199A: *London Districts: South Postal District abolished, c.1870*

¹³¹² A letter from the Treasury confirmed the changes on 6th December 1867: ‘adverting to the considerable saving of expenditure which the adoption of the proposed measure will involve, my Lords have no hesitation in approving it and are pleased to sanction the transfer.’ *Ibid.*

¹³¹³ Minute to the Secretary, 12 October 1867. *Ibid.*

alteration of the district initials on the name-boards of streets and in the addresses of all persons within the NE District might give rise to exaggerated apprehensions.¹³¹⁴ The public therefore went on addressing their letters to the area with 'NE' initials, though operationally the district did not exist: those letters with NE initials were placed with the 'E' letters and sorted alongside them. Predictably Rowland Hill was furious, noting that Manchester – smaller than one London district alone – was divided into 8.¹³¹⁵

Then in 1869 it was decided to communicate the change to the public. Despite the fact that this was not a 'consultation' but an advertisement of a change that had already taken place, many people in the former NE district simply rejected the change. The street signs in the area displaying 'NE' were kept up, and NE initials continued to be used for addressing letters and naming on street signs up until 1917, despite the district not actually existing. The NE district existed in the mind. The fact that the NE district did not exist operationally did not stop the city's ephemera from responding to the public's insistence of the district, and street signs that display the NE district remain to this day.



Fig. 159: The refusal to give up the 'NE' label has left a number of extant street signs in that part of London displaying erroneous addresses¹³¹⁶

In 1897 a group of Hackney businessmen and others, including a doctor, petitioned to bring back the 'NE' district, citing an objection to being labelled as 'Eastern': this

¹³¹⁴ Memo: 'London Postal Area – Amalgamation of NE and E District' POST 30/4011: *London Postal Service: letters for London Postal Area, simplified address, Part 2*

¹³¹⁵ "[the 15th Report of the PMG] states that Manchester has been divided into 8 postal districts but it does not explain why concurrently with this doubtless desirable change, London districts should have been combined so as to form, in effect, towns equally large with undivided Manchester". Noted in Hill's Journal on July 28, 1869. POST 100/18: *Rowland Hill's Post Office Journal*, Jan 1865-Dec 1869

¹³¹⁶ Image source: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/sludgeulper/tags/sign/> (accessed 02/01/17)

geographical association, they claimed, was harming their business.¹³¹⁷ The petition gives an insight into the relationship that the people of London had with the naming and dividing of the city that the Postal Map imposed. Here we see the dynamic that existed between people, the city, and the Postal Map.

The Trollope reforms were brought in to adjust supply to meet demand, but part of the opposition to the removal of the NE district was that there had been a 65% increase in mails there 1860-65, and the district made a profit.¹³¹⁸ The changes in the 1860s also show some indication of the way that London's inhabitants quickly assimilated the postal districts into their understanding of the city. References to the need to change street signs where districts had changed shows that in the space of ten years the postal divisions of the city had become a part of the visual experience of the city. Although the Postal Map was a paper object, it had an effect of the visual experience of the city.

The instance of the refusal to give up the 'NE' indicates that the postal divisions were understood by a large enough section of the public as not just an administrative measure, but as a marker of a geographical identity that had social, cultural, possibly financial implications. The understanding of, for example, the east as an area of poverty in contrast to the affluent west was a wide enough phenomenon that this designation on ones' address held meaning from the start.

1911-1921: Women and war

The next significant change to the postal map came during the First World War, with the introduction of numbered sub-divisions of each London district; so addresses were "SE5" and "E2" rather than just SE or E.

Through the late nineteenth century and into the early twentieth century, the postal service in the city continued to expand, and the numbers of letters it handled increased

¹³¹⁷"transferring them to the East End affected the value of local property, the selling price of businesses, and deterred new residents" Simon Morris, 'The London Postal Districts', *London Topographical Society Newsletter no. 29 November 1989*, pg. 6

¹³¹⁸ POST 30/4011: *London Postal Service: letters for London Postal Area, simplified address, Part 2*

year on year, as did the numbers of staff employed in the district,¹³¹⁹ mirroring the continuing growth in population and number of dwellings in the city. The period from 1856 to the outbreak of the war in 1914 saw a level of service provided in the capital that was not achieved before or since. By the time war broke out, social conditions in the city had changed. Labour was pressing for improved conditions and higher wages, and the gains made in this field would mean that an extremely cheap labour pool working long and irregular hours was starting to recede.

In 1911 the Controller of the London Postal Service, one Robert Bruce, gave a speech about the service stating that it was the speed of the service in London that meant people used it.¹³²⁰ In a postal area covering 224sq miles and a population of 16.75m, the Post Office provided up to 12 deliveries a day, by employing a staff of 30,000,¹³²¹ including 2,300 at Mount Pleasant, who handled one third of the total letters posted in the UK, amounting to 34m letters a week.¹³²² The speech described the transportation of mail bags around the city via mail carts and railway,¹³²³ but for which some motor vehicles were beginning to be introduced.¹³²⁴ To the original postal districts had been added the Paddington district, and the outer postal districts were divided into 99 sub-districts.¹³²⁵ Within London there were 116 Head district and Branch Offices, and 938 town sub-offices and shopkeepers' offices.

¹³¹⁹ 'Lecture delivered by Robert Bruce C.B Controller of the London Postal Service', POST 73/15: *Lecture on postal organisation, with special reference to the London Postal Service*, 29 Jul 1911

¹³²⁰ "By these means, rapid communication between all parts of London is secured, and as this is well known to the public, it is very largely used." 'Lecture delivered by Robert Bruce C.B Controller of the London Postal Service', *Ibid.*

¹³²¹ Up to 40,000 at Christmas. Included in this was an estimated 850 women staff- counter clerks and telegraphists (for comparison- there were also 650 male counter clerks and telegraphists). 'Lecture delivered by Robert Bruce C.B Controller of the London Postal Service', *Ibid.*

¹³²² The site of the headquarters of the Parcel Post in Clerkenwell. The centre of operations in the city shifted northwards in 1900, as the London letter post Head Office moved from St Martin's to Mount Pleasant, finally ending the almost century-long debate on whether St Martin's was right for the job.

¹³²³ Noting for example that 105 railway stations that have telegraph business for the P.O. 'Lecture delivered by Robert Bruce C.B Controller of the London Postal Service', *Ibid.*

¹³²⁴ The major factor in the speeding of mail, as had been the case since the reforms of the mid-nineteenth century, was the traffic on the roads. Here Bruce advocates for the need of an underground railway for the mails, and indicates that work was being done to investigate the possibility of setting up such. 'Lecture delivered by Robert Bruce C.B Controller of the London Postal Service', *Ibid.*

¹³²⁵ These were administrative, 'back of house' districts to aid sorters, not new districts that had been communicated to the public. *Ibid.*

1911 also saw a proposal to sub-divide the London districts, which was suggested repeatedly until 1917.¹³²⁶ The identified need to do this mirrored that in 1856: more letters circulating in London needed an ever more segregated and decentralised sorting system. In 1914 a postman working in the West Kensington area, one E.A. Trendall, proposed sub-dividing the London Districts into numbered areas, in order that sorting and delivery be made quicker and easier.¹³²⁷ The suggestion was given consideration, but although the concept was understood to be one that would improve matters internally for the staff and systems of the Post Office, it was rejected on the grounds that any sub division would not gather the required public support.¹³²⁸ Just as in 1856, any new system of addressing would rest on the public's correct understanding for its success. A note by the Controller of the London service explained that the idea had been considered many times, but concern that the public would not adapt to the new system was too great.¹³²⁹

It was not imagined that the public would ever accept a change to the way that they addressed letters.¹³³⁰ There had been a half-hearted attempt to encourage the public use of a type of sub district system before the war, in which areas within the London Districts were named after local places. The failed attempt was based on adding the name of the local post district, so letters would be addressed, 'Sansom Street, Camberwell, SE', with 'Camberwell' in this case being the appropriate post town. Areas were grouped and named after one place in that area, so the 'Walthamstow' sub-district in the East incorporated areas in and around Walthamstow. It also split some places up,

¹³²⁶ The Controller of the London region noted that the change had been suggested by different people in 1902, 1909, 1911 and 1914. POST 30/4010: *London Postal Service: letters for London Postal Area, simplified address, Part 1*

¹³²⁷ Minute dated 28th February, 1914. *Ibid.*

¹³²⁸ Minute dated 28th February, 1914. *Ibid.*

¹³²⁹ "The suggestion that in order to facilitate the correct addresses of Letters the delivery offices should be numbered instead of distinguished by name is one which has been considered on several previous occasions. It has, however, never been recommended for adoption because, although such an arrangement would be convenient from a departmental point of view, it has always been felt that there would be very great difficulty in inducing the public to adopt the plan of including the number of the delivery office in the address." Memo to Secretary from R Bruce 5th July 1916. Bruce here was echoing the sentiment made in 1914, that "the public could hardly be compelled to make such a change and there is not the least likelihood of their doing so voluntarily.", note of LPS Controller, 8th February 1914. *Ibid.*

¹³³⁰ "while there would be obvious advantages from a Departmental point of view in adopting such a plan, the insuperable objections to suggestions for substituting numbers for the names of localities is that the public could hardly be compelled to make such a change, and there is not the least likelihood of their doing so voluntarily". Minute dated 28th Feb 1914. POST 30/4011: *London Postal Service: letters for London Postal Area, simplified address, Part 2*

with part of Crouch End being in 'Finsbury Park', whilst the other was in 'Hornsey'. This system had not taken off, it was not particularly well thought-out in relation to the always crucial publicity of the system and how the public might respond to it. It was thwarted, in some respects, by what seems to be a particularly London form of snobbery, whereby, for example, in the Kensington and Earls Court sub districts,

There are people residing in the borough who prefer to risk the delay of their letters rather than adopt as part of the postal address the name of a sub postal district which indicates a locality less important socially than Kensington or South Kensington.¹³³¹

People in London, on being told that they had to write their locality on their address as well as the District initial, more often gave their own, self-identifying address rather than the designated area that they were actually in. This failure to address correctly was due to a conceptualising of place that was different to the Post Office. The end result of inaccurate addressing was rather universal.¹³³² We see this reported in the press too, with the Daily Express explaining that delays are usually caused by people adopting 'High Sounding names' for their address.¹³³³

¹³³¹ Minute 22 Jan 1917 – i.e. prior to the introduction of numbers. The minute explains that the public were not including the name of the sub-postal district in addresses, and in response suggested the use of numbered codes. POST 30/4010: *London Postal Service: letters for London Postal Area, simplified address, Part 1*

¹³³² The effect on the postal side was minimal: sorters in the London districts ended up often disregarding the address in large part, and sorting according to the street name, London district, and their own expertise – as they always had done. "The result of failure of the public to mention the proper sub Postal District in the addresses of letters etc; is that an expert letter sorter in a London District office, or even at the larger Provincial Offices, usually disregards altogether the name of the locality appearing in the address and sorts the letter or packet to the proper postal sub district according to the name of the street included in the address" *Ibid.*

¹³³³ 'Delays are commonly due to people using high-sounding names for their localities – such as West Hampstead for Kilburn, Blackheath for Lewisham, and Kensington for Notting Hill-gate [sic]. This amiable weakness must shaken off.' Daily Express, '*Learn Your Number!*', 24 February 1917. 256 Morten: Newspaper Clippings, 'Introduction of Numbers for London District Post Areas 1917'

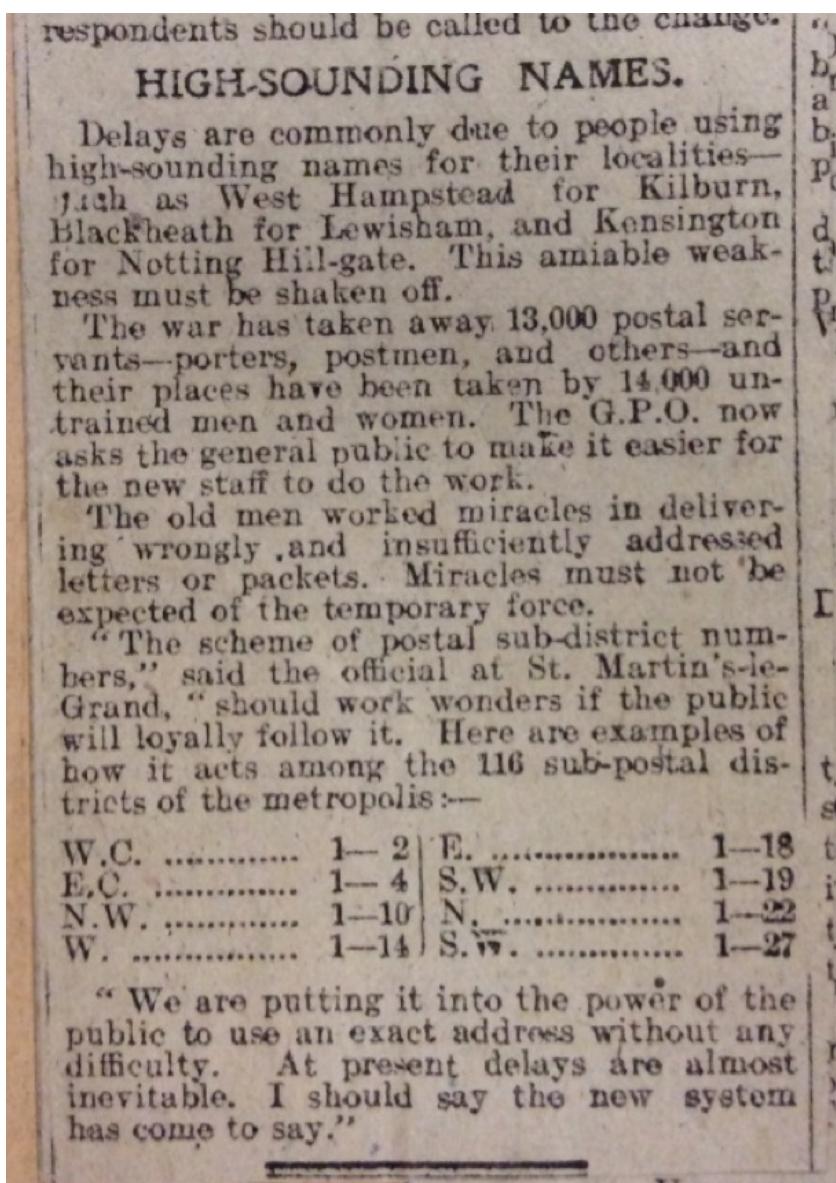


Fig. 160: Newspaper article pointing out London place-based snobbery¹³³⁴

In 1916, a member of the public, Percy Holland, made the same suggestion of subdividing London districts to his local MP.¹³³⁵ The Postmaster General asked the Secretary to consider the issue, who this time made more of a substantial investigation into the matter. The Secretary consulted with major post offices in the country on the matter in September 1916. Letters in response show that the Postmaster of Brighton was of the opinion that very few members of the public would take the new addresses

¹³³⁴ Ibid.

¹³³⁵ Letter dated 5th June 1916, sent to his MP, one J. A. Pease. Holland's letter cites Berlin as a guide – "the numbering of delivery districts works well in Berlin". POST 30/4010: *London Postal Service: letters for London Postal Area, simplified address, Part 1*

up;¹³³⁶ Birmingham was, if anything, less optimistic about the idea¹³³⁷; Manchester on the other hand was very positive;¹³³⁸ Liverpool claimed it already sub-sorted anyway;¹³³⁹ and Glasgow stated that any saving of force in London, would correspondingly increase force in Glasgow, citing the current wartime context as particularly 'inopportune'.¹³⁴⁰

Consideration was also given to the possibility of conducting a trial, in the W District, for example, to assess public take up; this was dismissed as it was felt that local businesses would not alter their addresses if they thought that the change might be temporary.¹³⁴¹ A change, if decided upon, had to be all or nothing.

The Post Office certainly saw the benefits of the idea, but until 1916 did not feel able to introduce new divisions. What changed by 1916 was context: Britain, now at war, was feeling the full effects of the conflict both at home and abroad. The Post Office made a huge contribution to the war effort; many of its staff called up to fight,¹³⁴² and the incredible level of communication required during the war was provided by the Post Office¹³⁴³ - making sure that information was carried through the continent in wartime,

¹³³⁶ Letter from the Brighton Postmaster, 2nd Sep: would require additional sorting time; also more space; does not think the public would take it up; "I fear that with the exception of the correspondence between business houses, which only form a small percentage of the letters etc., for London from the provinces, considerable difficulty would arise in educating the provincial letter writers and that it would be found necessary to maintain skilled London District sorters." *Ibid.*

¹³³⁷ Birmingham: 20% of letters to London are incorrectly addressed or do not use initials. "Apparently the senders, in many instances, are uncertain as to the correct address and so omit the initials. If a number were required, as well as initial letters, the percentage of omission would probably be much larger". Suggests starting with the EC district only, as this is where the take up was most likely

¹³³⁸ Manchester: the arrangements "would greatly facilitate the sorting in the provinces". Would mean could employ less experienced sorters. *Ibid.*

¹³³⁹ Liverpool: already sub-divides the EC district. *Ibid.*

¹³⁴⁰ Glasgow: "If it be the case that the London letters would have to be sorted into 112 divisions, I am afraid that instead of saving force, the alteration, if carried out, would necessitate a considerable increase of force at Provincial offices on account of the slower sorting following on the increase in the number of divisions from 11 at present, to 112 under the proposals." "I might add that, so far as this office is affected, the present time seems to be very inopportune for introducing such a change as this. Nearly all my best men are away, and there is great difficulty in training the temporary women on the London, and English roads, sorting." *Ibid.*

¹³⁴¹ Is discussion of a possible trial in just EC and WC areas, but note of Controller to Secretary in 20 Dec 1916 states, "I would strongly recommend that the arrangement if adopted should apply to the whole of London, and that as far as possible the public should not be led to regard it as an experiment which may be discontinued at any time". *Ibid.*

¹³⁴² On conscription nearly all Post Office men were conscripted, c. 54,000 men. Campbell-Smith p. 257.

¹³⁴³ the Post Office sent over 19,000 men for the signals service, the Royal Flying Corps, and the telephone service. The REPS set up postal network and a 'home depot' for sorting in Regent's Park. There was also an Army Postal Service Unit as well (APS), Campbell-Smith p. 221

it was trusted with carrying confidential intelligence about enemy movements, and had the important job of informing loved ones of casualties and deaths of soldiers in the field.¹³⁴⁴

One issue was expertise, which was discussed increasingly as the war continued, as new officers were employed to replace staff who had left to fight.¹³⁴⁵ There had always been ‘temporary staff’ at the London District offices, for times of acute need, but the specific conditions of war led to an increase in these temporary staff members, and, importantly, to a change in their demographic: a large number of women were now being engaged in roles that before had been male-only.

Bruce therefore considered the matter in further detail this time, understanding that the measure was ‘desirable’ and that the only reason it had been rejected previously was the anticipated unwillingness of the public to adopt it.¹³⁴⁶ He stated that in the favour of making the change were cost savings (including savings due to having to deal with fewer complaints!),¹³⁴⁷ and the system hopefully working that much better.¹³⁴⁸

That the sub-division of the London districts was a sensible one was decided. The London administration was clear that the workings of the service in the capital would be greatly improved. This had been understood before the war, but now, there was a hope that the public might, on account of the specific circumstances of war, be more amenable to suffering a little temporary upheaval in order to assist the service in the long run. The Controller was able to state that the present context was in fact a ‘favourable opportunity’ to make the changes.¹³⁴⁹

¹³⁴⁴ The Home Depot had to deal with unopened letters to men killed on the front. It had to ensure letters sent back were not received until after the official telegram.

¹³⁴⁵ The Controller had stated at the beginning of 1917 that, “when an officer is not well versed in the names of the streets the sorting is slowed down or is incorrectly done. This difficulty is accentuated at the present time by the inexperience of the temporary staff.” Minute dated 22 January, 1917. POST 30/4010: *London Postal Service: letters for London Postal Area, simplified address, Part 1*

¹³⁴⁶ stated in a minute to the Secretary that, “The change would be a desirable one in every way from a Post Office point of view, and in the past no good reason except the probable unwillingness of the public to adopt it has ever been advanced against it” Bruce’s note to the Secretary. *Ibid.*

¹³⁴⁷ Savings would be £2,500 if 25% of letters were addressed correctly, £5,000 if 50% and so on. *Ibid.*

¹³⁴⁸ notes new system would also enable letters to be sent directly to sub-districts, therefore saving on the handling of correspondence through the District Offices, also would be fewer misspent letters, therefore fewer complaints- and savings due to not having to deal with these, *Ibid.*

¹³⁴⁹ “The recognition by the public of the disturbance of ordinary Post Office arrangements brought about by the war, and the consequent inclination to accept without complaint changes tending to lighten the

There was therefore an understanding that the public might feel better disposed to a new system of addressing their letters during a time of war than before 1914. Part of this was related to women being employed as sorters:

it is considered that at the present time the public would be far more likely to assent to such a change than they would have been when the matter was last considered, because it is generally recognised that the Post Office has given up many experienced officers and has replaced them by temporary male and female sorters and Postwomen and if the change is to be made at all it would be better defended now than after the war.¹³⁵⁰

However, what was important was that the Post Office administration wanted to introduce this change regardless of the fact that there were women now working as sorters and postwomen. The presence of women sorters meant that the Post Offices had an *excuse* to make changes; this being a ‘favourable opportunity’ in which the changes ‘might be better defended’. Accounts of the change being a result of the inexperience of the female sorters now employed in the city, for example by Campbell-Smith, were not therefore wholly accurate.¹³⁵¹ There was an element of ‘deskilling’ in the changes that meant sorting was less reliant on having the skill of knowing the city well, but this was not introduced because women were not able to sort or work as letter carriers to the same degree of speed as the men in peacetime.¹³⁵²

The matter seemed sensible financially as well: it was estimated that if twenty-five percent of the letters circulating around London bore the numbers of the London

pressure, seem to provide a favourable opportunity to introduce the simpler form of address in which the name of the sub postal district could be superseded by a number.” *Ibid.*

¹³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵¹ Campbell-Smith, in his official history for example, makes this claim – “in 1917 ... London’s postal sub-districts had been assigned numbers – as in ‘SW6’ for Fulham or ‘E2’ for Bethnal green – so that uninitiated women sorters could more reliably allocate their mails to the correct districts.” Campbell-Smith, p. 250

¹³⁵² Morris makes a similar claim: In 1916 a member of the public, Mr Percy Holland, suggested to the Post Office the idea of sub-divisions: “he was proposing the right suggestion at just the right moment. What had changed was that, under war conditions, new and inexperienced sorters were finding it difficult to sort the London post into over one hundred correct sub-divisions by the name given on the letter”, Simon Morris, ‘The London Postal Districts’, *London Topographical Society Newsletter no. 29 November 1989*, p. 6

districts, there would be a saving of around £2,500, with savings rising incrementally as the number of people using the system increased.

The Post Office hierarchy made their decisions based on consideration of how the changes might be responded to by the public; this was mirrored in the interest that the public took in the matter. There was something of a campaign for the introduction of numbered postal districts in the popular press – which included journalists asserting the opposition in the Post Office to any useful change. The *Evening Standard* ran an article on the 24th July 1916¹³⁵³ that was sceptical about any changes, but willing to consider the system if it meant greater speed of delivery.¹³⁵⁴ By 1917, however, the *Standard* was actively campaigning for the change. An article in the *Evening Standard* of January 1917 stated,

perhaps Mr Illingworth [the Postmaster General] will take note of my readers' views. Any plan to obviate the postal delays we are suffering at the present time deserves consideration. I speak with feeling. An important letter posted three hundred yards from this office had just taken a day and a half to reach me.¹³⁵⁵

When the changes were introduced in 1917, and London's districts were subdivided by number, the public had already had warning of the change, and may have understood its need.

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The Post Office introduced sub-district numbering in 1917. The new division was based on the previous districts that had been in place from 1856, into N, NW etc. It then

¹³⁵³ The Evening Standard article, interestingly for what we have just learnt about public reluctance to give up the NE district, includes a list of areas, but gets some wrong, with Bethnal Green listed as 'NE1'. *Evening Standard*, 24th July 1916

¹³⁵⁴ "Public Suspicion. The public generally look with some suspicion on the idea. How are we, it is asked, to remember all these different numbers? The answer is that it will not be necessary to remember them; the Post Office will probably supply a card containing the full list, and this may be hung in front of one's desk for reference. The public will be mollified, however by the knowledge that the system will result in the acceleration of the delivery of letters, postcards and parcels" *Evening Standard*, 24th July 1916

¹³⁵⁵ The article is reporting that plans to divide districts "was hung up", and a correspondent asks, "can you do nothing.... To revive this plan?". *Evening Standard*, 6th January 1917.

subdivided these areas by number, rather than dividing the whole of London into the same numbering sequence. There were therefore eight '1' districts – one for each London postal area, SW1, SE1, E1 and so on.¹³⁵⁶ The system was based on alphabetical ordering, with '1' being the division that contained the Chief Office, and all the other districts following alphabetically - rather than, say, geographically.¹³⁵⁷ For example, the eastern district:

- E1 – Eastern District Office
- E2 – Bethnal Green
- E3 – Bow
- E4 – Chingford
- E5 – Clapton
- E6 – East Ham
- E7 – Forest gate
- E8 – Hackney
- E9 – Homerton
- E10 – Leyton
- E11 – Leytonstone
- E12 – Manor Park
- E13 – Plaistow
- E14 – Poplar
- E15 – Stratford
- E16 – Victoria Docks and North Woolwich
- E17 – Walthamstow
- E18 – Woodford and South Woodford

In an interesting contrast to the naming of the divisions in 1856, the divisions introduced were based not on familiarity of place, but on quite the opposite – on a

¹³⁵⁶ This system was recommended by the Controller Bruce – he recommended that numbers be sorted into districts, rather than continuous across all of London, based on "the alphabetical order of the delivery offices", with the Head Office number 1. Note to Secretary, 5th July 1916. POST 30/4010: *London Postal Service: letters for London Postal Area, simplified address, Part 1*

¹³⁵⁷ Anecdotally, it appears people in London often understand the numbering system to be geographical, with the lowest numbers being closer to the centre of town than the highest numbers. Whilst the number '1' districts all *are* the closest to town, from 2 onwards the numbers become alphabetical.

systematic ignoring of place, a renaming via an abstract system of numbers that seem to bear little relation to the areas they named. The numbered system did not have much consideration of geography. E1, the district with Chief Office, was situated close to central London (as all '1' sub-districts were), but next to E1 might be E3, but also E14, whilst E4 would head out of London itself. This seemingly random numbering of districts gave the system an abstract nature. This was seen as an advantage compared to a division based on place names, wherein snobbery might make people reluctant to give their address properly:

The difficulty which arises owing to the reluctance of the public to use a particular Postal address would probably to a large extent be removed if the delivery offices were numbered' [...] 'The difficulty would of course be got over under the existing system if the residents in the area in the delivery of the Paddington Office would use the word 'Paddington' in the address, but there is not the least probability that residents in the Bayswater Road and the locality adjoining would agree to describe their address as 'Paddington', but they would probably be willing to use a number after the District initial W.¹³⁵⁸

The difficulty of confusion arising from different people's varying ideas of what their own local area was identified to be, would be mitigated, through the use of a system that seemed distinct from the city itself, that seemed to have less identification with 'place'. The Post Office was also assisted in the fact that the telegraph system in the capital was already in place, which used a three-lettered code that was based on place, but had an air of the abstract, and their acceptance by the public paved the way for the sub-districts.¹³⁵⁹ There was, from this moment, therefore a contradictory mix of systems in play within London postal addresses: the London districts worked because they were familiar, whereas the naming of the sub-districts worked because they were abstract.

¹³⁵⁸ POST 30/4010: *London Postal Service: letters for London Postal Area, simplified address, Part 1*

¹³⁵⁹ "the business people of London took more kindly than I should have expected to a system somewhat analogous which was introduced a few years ago in connexion with the abbreviated addresses of telegrams. See annexed extracts from the Annual Reports of 1912 and 1913. You are probably familiar with the system: the Abbey Press in Westminster, for instance, uses the abbreviated address "Abbeyitic Vic" indicating that their telegrams are delivered from Victoria Post Office." *Ibid.*

The Post Office decided against involving or consulting with any other London organisations, such as local authorities in the changes to avoid delays in introducing the plan.¹³⁶⁰ The Post Office in London was not organised along the same boundary lines as the Metropolitan boroughs, and involving the boroughs might give them reason to suggest the reorganisation of Postal London wholesale, along the lines of the borough boundaries. This would cause a massive upheaval that the Post Office did not want to encourage.¹³⁶¹ The Post Office did contact local authorities to make their work a little easier in war time through the changing of street signs to include the new postal sub districts.¹³⁶² But, as was usually the case with these matters, the local authorities were slow to take up the matter, the LCC understandably citing a lack of materials and men to carry out the changes during wartime.¹³⁶³ Eventually the changes were made after the war, and even if slower than the Post Office would have desired, the postal areas feature on street signs in the city to this day.¹³⁶⁴

In advising Post Office staff of the changes, a circular was sent to staff informing them on the 6th March 1917,¹³⁶⁵ alongside a rather hesitant note from the Controller, stating

I must confess to some scepticism as to the prospect of getting sufficient public support to make the scheme a success; but the benefit to Postal Administration to be derived from success is, I think, solid, and therefore worth trying for. If you consent, I propose to proceed accordingly.¹³⁶⁶

¹³⁶⁰ "we suggest that it is hardly recommended or desirable to consult the local authorities before adopting the proposed numbering arrangement [...] to do so is almost certain to cause considerable delay in carrying it out, or to invite opposition in a matter which really does not concern them." Note to the Secretary dated 7th August 1916. POST 30/4011: *London Postal Service: letters for London Postal Area, simplified address, Part 2*.

¹³⁶¹ The rationale given was that postal services depend heavily on the railways, which borough boundaries do not; any postal re-arrangements of boundaries therefore should be dictated by developments in the railways, rather than by changes in local government. *Ibid.*

¹³⁶² "It has been suggested to the Postmaster General that it would be of advantage to the public if the Postal District Initials and the number of the Office of Delivery could be shown on all Street name plates. The arrangement would encourage the general use of the proper postal address and would thus facilitate the work of the Post Office, especially at the present time when so many skilled sorters are serving with the naval and military forces" Letter to Local Authorities 31 July 1918. *Ibid.*

¹³⁶³ File relating to Local Authorities. *Ibid.*

¹³⁶⁴ File relating to Local Authorities. *Ibid.*

¹³⁶⁵ POST 30/4010: *London Postal Service: letters for London Postal Area, simplified address, Part 1*

¹³⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

Like the changes that had been made to the system in 1856,¹³⁶⁷ the sub-district system was advertised to the public through notices in every post office, publicity in the press, leaflets for distribution by postmen,¹³⁶⁸ and books with lists of street names and their districts in post offices and sent to businesses.¹³⁶⁹ A 'London Delivery Book' was produced for the Post Office 'servants', with 32,000 places and streets listed,¹³⁷⁰ and *The Daily Telegraph* index to its postal map included 9,500 entries, the Post Office helping with its production.¹³⁷¹ This time, publicity included LCC-published lists, and public posters, along with different printed versions of the map.¹³⁷² A list of 'Principal Streets' booklet showing the districts includes an introduction by Illingsworth, in which he stated, 'I wish to appeal to the public in London, and to their correspondents in the Provinces to adopt a simple system which will improve the Postal Service at the cost of very little trouble to themselves. By doing so they will be helping to save labour and money, which the country requires for War purposes.'¹³⁷³ The Postmaster General therefore made explicit the reference to the changes being required because of war, just as was planned before the introduction of the changes that were acknowledged as needed, regardless of war or peacetime conditions.

¹³⁶⁷ These were informed by considering what publicity measures had been taken in 1856, and replicating certain efforts from then. Officers stated that the main papers relating to 1856 "have unfortunately been lost" ... "to supply this gap copies of various documents bearing on the matter have been made and are attached" POST 30/4011: *London Postal Service: letters for London Postal Area, simplified address, Part 2*

¹³⁶⁸ 341,097 sold by letter carriers, August 1917. *Ibid.*

¹³⁶⁹ A Post Office Circular dated 6 March 1917 stated, 'Postmasters and Sub-Postmasters should make it their business to supply copies of the list unasked for all persons who are known to carry on a large correspondence, and no difficulty should be raised about supplying additional copies of the list to any reasonable number to any person, firm, or Company likely to make use of them.' Bruce Castle, Morten Collection. BCPHC/1/19/9: Post Office Circular, 6 March 1917

¹³⁷⁰ POST 30/4011: *London Postal Service: letters for London Postal Area, simplified address, Part 2*

¹³⁷¹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷² Notices sent to local authorities about the new district numbers, and street signs; Plans dated 9th July 1918 are for a public notice; a notice to the press; memo to government departments; appeal to publishers of directories; and appeal to municipal authorities; Public notice dated 23rd July 1918 – "letters for the London Postal Areas: New and Simpler Method of Address" – states a new street list is available for 4d. The Post Office also put together a list of local authorities including their name, where the town hall is, and relevant district offices for each- which, for us, serves to highlight where the districts and borough boundaries did and did not match up. The 1918 edition of the publication "Streets and Places in the London Postal Area" also noted that "the Post Office delivery areas do not necessarily correspond with the Municipal or Parliamentary Divisions bearing the same name". *Ibid.*

¹³⁷³ Principal Streets, 1 March 1917. POST 30/4010: *London Postal Service: letters for London Postal Area, simplified address, Part 1*

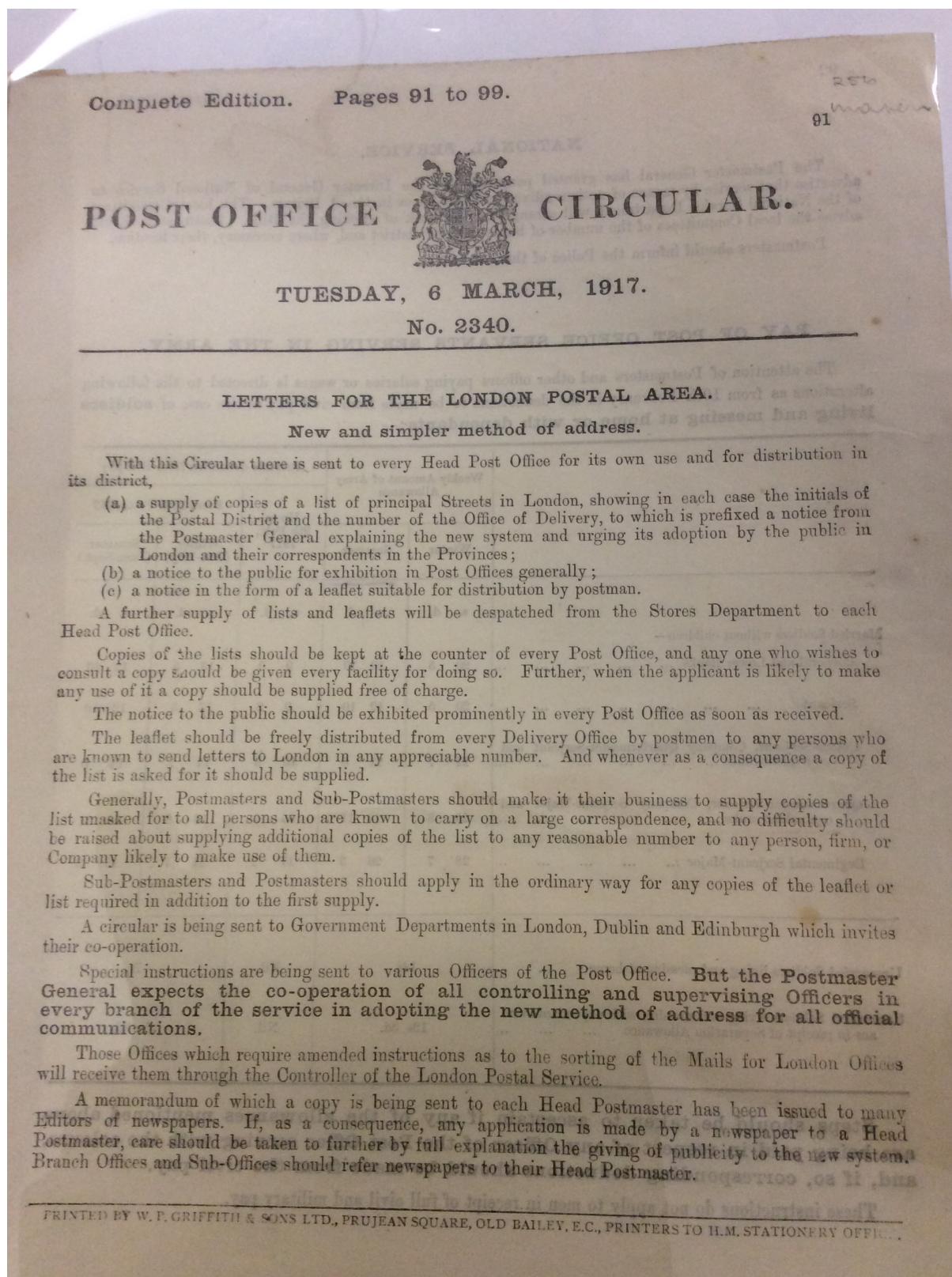


Fig. 161: Post Office Circular, stating how every post office should advertise the new system¹³⁷⁴

¹³⁷⁴ Bruce Castle, Morten Collection. BCPHC/1/19/9: Post Office Circular, 6 March 1917

Copies of the new London Postal Map were distributed and sold, although like in 1856, not to the extent that the Post Office staff may have wished, again due to cost.¹³⁷⁵ And, like in 1856, other, non-postal map-makers stepped in, including postal districts on maps of London that did not necessarily have a postal purpose, so the postal districts were therefore available to the public even if the Post Office itself was not involved.

Press clippings reveal that an ongoing commentary about the changes was provided in the press, with articles reporting on the proposals in the *Evening News* and a series of articles in the *Daily Express*, including an article that claims the *Express* recommended exactly the change proposed, a year earlier.¹³⁷⁶ The articles pick up on the issue of wartime temporary staff, ‘the old men worked miracles in delivering wrongly and insufficiently addressed letters or packets. Miracles must not be expected of the temporary force’.¹³⁷⁷

¹³⁷⁵ “you will no doubt have observed that the list put on sale at 1/- in 1857 contained an official map shewing the divisions. I should like very much to make such a map part of the proposed complete list, but I fear that it could not be made at all useful without adding a great deal too much to the cost of the publication.” The officer here is mistaken, and in fact postal maps produced by the post office were few and far between in 1856. POST 30/4011: *London Postal Service: letters for London Postal Area, simplified address, Part 2*

¹³⁷⁶ Indeed an article in July 1916 had suggested that numbers be used for the post in London. Daily Express, ‘*Postal Areas by Number*’, 22 July 1916. 256 Morten: Newspaper Clippings, ‘Introduction of Numbers for London District Post Areas 1917’

¹³⁷⁷ Daily Express, ‘*Learn Your Number!*’, 24 February 1917. *Ibid.*

LEARN YOUR NUMBER!

DETAILS OF THE NEW POST OFFICE SYSTEM.

LONDON IN 116 PARTS

The correct district, initials, and number for your house are —

In a few days every London householder will receive from the General Post Office a handbill explaining the new system—announced in yesterday's "Daily Express"—of addressing letters to make sure that there will be the least possible delay in sorting and delivery.

The above direction will be printed in bold type, and the number of your postal district will be filled in for you at the end.

In a word, your correct address will be a sub-district postal number.

The whole plan was explained to a "Daily Express" representative yesterday by an official at the office of the Secretary of the General Post Office. The following is a typical new form of address:

NUMBER.
256
EVERY
256
under the
ostal dis-
l arise in
ed in the
ice on this
secretary's
Office to a
on Satur-
give free
h contains
0 London
initials and
lost people
east once
therefore,
ight thing.
lence itself
t incurring
ch to Lon-
r example.
when the
d out into
in a nut-
ddress is
write it
may go to
turn it 'o
to deliver
ke 8's, 's

Fig. 162: Press article detailing the changes¹³⁷⁸

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¹³⁷⁸ Daily Express, 'Learn Your Number!', 24 February 1917. Ibid.

By April 1918 some 50% of letters posted to London were addressed using the new system- a 'gratifying' amount, and it was asserted that the number was increasing.¹³⁷⁹ It was reported that the change, as planned, had 'very materially' assisted the new temporary sorters.¹³⁸⁰ Letters in many places were despatched directly to their sub districts.

The new system had some surprising results; in a report of May 1917 the Controller stated that the take up of the new system amongst the public was higher in poorer residential districts of E and SE, than in 'the better class residential districts in the West and Southwest of London such as the Paddington and South West Districts'.¹³⁸¹ This contrasts rather nicely with the expectations of the senior administration before the changes were introduced, who had advised the Secretary that the professional and better educated classes would adopt the system most quickly.¹³⁸² The same officers had also stated, 'the number of letters posted and received by the less educated and poorer classes, among whom the adoption of the proposed new form of address is likely to be less general, is comparatively insignificant'.¹³⁸³ Assumptions about how different classes of people used the post were discussed in the press, too, with an article in 1917 quoting the Assistant Controller saying that trouble for Post Office sorters was caused mostly by educated classes: 'our greatest trouble is with educated and literary people. On the whole the working classes write more legibly than the professional and leisured classes.'¹³⁸⁴

¹³⁷⁹ Report from Bruce to Sec 29th April 1918. POST 30/4011: *London Postal Service: letters for London Postal Area, simplified address, Part 2*

¹³⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸¹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸² "We think that there is a reasonable expectation that the new form of address would, under existing circumstances, be quickly and generally adopted by the commercial, professional and better educated portions of the community and it is these classes which post and receive the great bulk of the correspondence." Note to the Secretary dated 7th August 1916. *Ibid.*

¹³⁸³ Note to the Secretary dated 7th August 1916. Good traditions of the senior civil service being happily out of touch with life here demonstrated as being maintained. *Ibid.*

¹³⁸⁴ Daily Express, 'Ask for your Number', 28 February 1917. 256 Morten: Newspaper Clippings, 'Introduction of Numbers for London District Post Areas 1917'. That same article included a nice mention of a suggestion by a member of the public, responding to the Assistant Secretary who had explained that mis-sorting occurred due to unclear numbers written on addresses. The member pf eth public had suggested using roman numerals instead of the 'EC2' form. The reply was given, 'The suggestion of a correspondent that Roman numerals might be less liable to mis-sorting, is not officially favoured. "A domestic servant would be puzzled if she had to write ECxxvii instead of EC27. The cursive of Arabic figures in common use are best" said the Assistant Controller. "the domestic clock would only be a guide up to xii. After that pitfalls and chaos for the sorters!"'

As ever, there were limitations to the success of the reforms; one organisation that was consistent in its lack of regard for the new system irritated the Post Office establishment in particular: a memo to the government's own departments dated 15th July 1918 stated, "it is of course embarrassing to the Post Office when it is urging this system on the public to be confronted with cases in which it has not been used by a Government office."¹³⁸⁵

Perhaps predictably by now, the savings that the new system was initially claimed to be able to achieve were perhaps never realised. The Post Office was unsure about the savings, as in the wartime period they were used to offset costs of increased registered letter work, employment of women, and increased posting from the government departments. It was asserted that after the war the situation would settle down and peace-time savings can be understood and assessed.¹³⁸⁶

And again, in keeping with the introduction of earlier changes, some further tinkering with the system was undertaken before it became properly 'fixed': some new head offices were established and new sub divisions numbered in the initial years after the change – having an effect of further abstracting the numerical system, with, for example, 'Anerley' assigned as SE20 despite its beginning with an 'A'.¹³⁸⁷ Similarly 'West Wimbledon' was SW20, but the closely alphabetically 'Wimbledon' was SW12, with the likes of Barnes, 'SW13, between the two.¹³⁸⁸ After these initial amendments, the system settled in, and no further significant changes were made to the London Postal Map until the introduction of the full postcode system in the 1960s.

¹³⁸⁵ POST 30/4011: *London Postal Service: letters for London Postal Area, simplified address, Part 2*

¹³⁸⁶ "It is not possible to give any realistic estimate of the financial saving which has attended the introduction of the new arrangement at the present time, because the economies which have been effected have been used to meet deficiencies of force resulting from the increase in the Registered letter work, the employment of women instead of men, and the increased posting from Government Officers" – notes a proper idea of the actual savings will be found when circumstances return to normal. However, it was noted that before the war c.15m letters were delivered in London weekly so it is anticipated the saving will be considerable. Report from Bruce to Sec 29th April 1918. *Ibid.*

¹³⁸⁷ In 1921

¹³⁸⁸ Morris also notes that Battersea began a new sequence starting with SW11, Norwood began a new one at SE19, and Golders Green – NW11 and West Wimbledon SW20 were added later out of sequence. Simon Morris, 'The London Postal Districts', *London Topographical Society Newsletter no. 29 November 1989*

Each of the instances of the major changes to the London Postal Map – the eradication of S and NE, and the introduction of various failed, or indeed the successful sub-district systems – reveal the way that Londoners understood their city, based on their postal district. Also revealed was the users' agency in the development of the Postal Map; we have seen that enough Londoners were snobs about the geographic location of their residence to influence the way in which the Post Office developed the technology of the Map.

What occurred surprisingly early on was a belief that one's postal district was not merely an administrative tool. It was a marker of place, but not of place in relation to the G.P.O. at St Martin's, as was originally intended, but of place in relation to the complicated social hierarchies of London, in which one's address played a large part. The letters at the end of your address that were introduced for the first time as part of the London Postal Map reforms were intended merely as a tool to aid the quick movement of mail around the city. But perhaps their most lasting effect had nothing related to communications at all, but was an entirely unpredicted effect: that of being a tool for Londoners to evoke the specificity of their place.

This was a phenomenon that related to the sense of snobbery that feels particularly English that was demonstrated in the examples shown here; it was always a means of making a statement about your social standing. The postal district became, fairly early on, a way for marking place through the practice of data collection and analysis that was categorized into place by the use of postal districts. The effect of the London Postal Map was the start of the practice of categorizing people by postcodes, and of then using postcode data to make assumptions, and then base other decisions and policies on these assumptions. This is the beginning of the 'Postcode lottery'.

And so we see a clear indication that the London Postal Map had effects well outside of its original intended remit of easing an administrative burden specifically within one government department. The Map had effects that were unpredictable, and that were completely outside of the world of postal communications.

4. CONCLUSION

We have seen over the course of these chapters that Modern London was a place in which fast communications were assumed. But alongside communications, the postal reforms brought in other elements of urban life that soon became assumed, soon were taken for granted, part of the streetscape and the cognitive understanding of the city.

The reforms had an impact on the way that the city was experienced: on the life that the city contained, on what people saw on the streets every day. It was a place where there were many new buildings and new objects on the streets, in the eye lines of people in the city, placed there as a result of the new postal systems. The city was transforming in many ways; it was developing as a place, due to items of postal infrastructure.

But just as significant as the Map reform's impact on the streets of London, was the impact they had on the way that people understood the city. The street signs on every street helped to rationalise the postal system: they also helped to rationalise the city itself. The letters on the street signs began to have new, non-postal implications for Londoners. It was a place that had been defined by a Map which became a tool through which its inhabitants used to conceptualise the city, and to understand their place within it. Modernity came through these attempts at rationalisation, and from these new ways of understanding space.

Conclusion

Signed, sealed, delivered

Although a work of postal history, this PhD thesis was born from a love of cities, and of London in particular. This project, this labour of love, is concerned with how this fascinating city works, and how it worked in the past. It is my hope that it will contribute in some way to understanding the London of the past a little better.

The thesis ends at the point where the twin concerns of this work, the post and the city, reach a peak. By the end of the nineteenth century London was the biggest and one of the most significant cities in the world, and what happened there had its impact felt all across the globe.¹³⁸⁹ At the same time, the post was being used as never before, or since, with letters a crucial means through which people from all different walks of life were able to communicate.¹³⁹⁰ After the First World War both of these changed significantly.

The conclusions in this work seek to assert a number of points within this context. Firstly, that the London Postal Map was an important and influential object in the city. Secondly, that the reforms introduced alongside the Postal Map meant a highly modern communications system in London. And thirdly, that the Map and its related communications system had a much wider impact than has previously been understood: on the post, on the city, and on the people in that city.

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The original research question asked how the largely forgotten London Postal Map of 1856 assisted in, and allowed for, the construction of modernity in London. Over the course of this work, we have seen that the postal reforms contributed to the modernization of London in the second half of the nineteenth century in a number of ways:

¹³⁸⁹ ‘At the end of Victorian England, London, the London of the Jubilee, of the Empire, of the great political movements, was in ascendancy’, Briggs, p. 370.

¹³⁹⁰ ‘The level of deliveries which had been reached by 1914 was to be the peak of the British letter post’, Daunton, p. 48.

- After the reforms, communications were able to become ever faster and more frequent. Londoners had the ability to send letters to each other many times in the day, right up to the evening; letters leaving central London at 7.30pm would reach their destination the same evening¹³⁹¹.
- This service was not just theoretically available, people in London *used* the service regularly, and used it specifically because it was fast and convenient¹³⁹².
- There was a shift from merely sending a message, to communicating back and forth. The ability to send and receive responses many times over the course of the same day - having a conversation, in effect - was a substantial change.
- The city was growing rapidly, and yet the postal service was seemingly able to cope; its systems were now designed in a way that allowed for expansion.
- The post in some respects allowed for the great growth of London; it was one of the infrastructures that encouraged development of the city. We have seen this in relation to the expansion of the financial services industry centred on London. Just as now, when trading companies with a faster internet connection are able to make earlier decisions about which stocks to buy and sell, so in the 1850s were the financial services dependent on fast communications. This was an industry based on words, on numbers, on the trust that one person has in another person, and on credit: a paper-based concept.
- The fast communications system meant the city could segregate itself, so that its different parts became functions for different things, communicating with each other.

Alongside these ways in which the Map played a part in London's modernity, the thesis has also asserted the significance of the London Postal Map in other ways:

- The London Postal Map was an object in the public sphere, featuring in the press, and its districts being seen on every street in the city
- It defined 'London' in a highly public way.

¹³⁹¹ "letters leaving the London office about 7.30pm may reach the hands of the public the same night, instead of remaining undelivered till the next morning". The Postmaster General's fourth report, 1858. POST 92/1: *Report upon the Post Office and Reports of the Postmaster General on the Post Office*.

¹³⁹² The Postmaster General in 1860 noted increases in letters sent within the same district, 'showing to how large an extent the public have availed themselves, *even in communicating with persons in the same neighbourhood*, of the means now provided for the quick delivery of letters.' My italics. POST 92/2: *Reports of the Postmaster General on the Post Office*. 1855-1864

- It was significant to its maker, Stanford's, being the first major commission of a London map from that company.
- It showed how to envisage a new London, a rational London, in a rational shape: a practice that would also develop as the years went on.

However, whilst the thesis outlines these issues in relation to the Postal Map, I could just as easily have written a completely different thesis about this object. There are many elements of the Postal Map story on which, had I made different choices, I could have focused my research. The most obvious way that this thesis could be expanded upon would be to move forward chronologically, to include consideration of the introduction of the postcodes in the 1960s and 70s. Another area of research would have been related to a compelling set of documents I found in the archive which showed plans for alterations to the Postal Map in the 1930s and early 1940s.¹³⁹³ I might also have pursued initial ideas to look at similar changes that occurred in the United States in this period, or, in India.

In addition, there were two themes explored in this thesis which I felt could have a great deal more said about them; firstly the role of letter writing in the development of business around the Empire, based from the City of London; and secondly the impact that the post had on urban space in the form of the architecture it built all over the city. As I was undertaking research I felt that both of these points could be given a great deal more attention, and that I was only scratching the surface.

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The experience of undertaking this thesis was strange, from the very beginning when I was chosen for a research project into an object never heard of, to the very end, as I now look back and consider all the different ways I could have completed this research. This could have been a very different text. One of my favourite ideas was to produce the thesis in the form of a set of short essays, each with a different approach and design,

¹³⁹³ POST 73/211: *London Postal Region Annual Reports, 1937-1944* and POST 73/239: *London Postal Region: Scheme for concentration of Outer Area posted traffic in 'ring' offices situated about 12 miles from Central London, Nov 1945*

incorporating such ideas as walking tours, photo essays, even completely fabricated sources.¹³⁹⁴ At one point I spent days stitching together newly-digitised nineteenth century OS maps, so that I could then plot Victorian postal boundaries, letter movement, and postal buildings onto their accurate spatial contexts. I wanted in particular to explore (in a very literal sense!) the idea of the boundaries of the map, and what they meant on the ground. Ultimately these different approaches did not end up in the thesis.¹³⁹⁵

Looking to the future, I expect that the way I will follow this thesis will be through shorter, creative writing that uses thematic approaches to the material; walking tours of related sites in London; and museum talks and map handling sessions for the public in the new Postal Museum, opening in 2017. The subject matter can be compelling to many people, and I hope that this research is brought out of a strictly academic context into a wider public sphere.

Having said that, there are a number of places in an academic sphere that I see the work fitting into. The research is, as stated, an act of revision. In this way, I consider that the London Postal Map and its effects should be written into:

- Histories of Victorian London, especially those which look into the everyday experiences of people in the city. It is worth noting the way that people communicated, and the speed and frequency of the postal system they used.
- History of London's administration, and how the city was defined
- Histories of mapping, to show the importance of the postal system, registering how the postal districts appeared on so many maps of London straight away (they were features of most maps, even if they were not postal maps).

¹³⁹⁴ I even considered how to incorporate my Postal Playlist, which includes: 'signed, sealed, delivered' by Stevie Wonder; 'Maps' by the Yeah Yeah Yeahs; 'Return to Sender' by Elvis; the Marvelette's 'Please Mr Postman'; and occasionally, 'Night mail' by Public Service Broadcasting.

¹³⁹⁵ These ideas came from both my own instinct, and my context within a highly creative art college, where my inspiration was drawn much more from artists, designers and architects than (alas!) from great historians.

- Histories of the development of finance, the economy, the City of London and related histories, to show that the effects of the Postal Map innovations meant that the letter post had a huge part to play in this story.

I would also work to see more of the postal maps themselves in more popular contexts. They are completely beautiful objects, and the best days I spent in the archives were days looking at these maps.



Fig. 163: Crutchley's Map¹³⁹⁶

¹³⁹⁶ Crutchley's New Postal District Map of London'. Ref: Maps 3485.(16.)

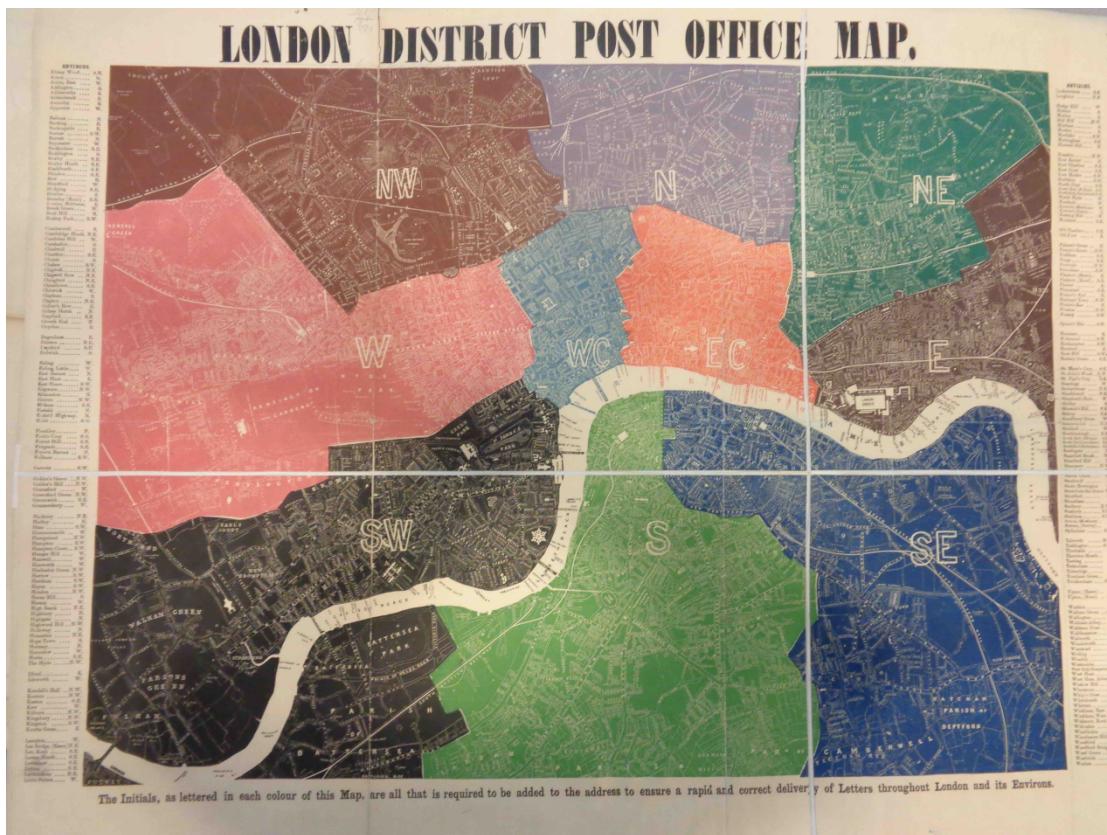


Fig. 164: Nicholson's map¹³⁹⁷

And not only are they beautiful, but they also contain information that is enduring in our popular culture. I grew up with East 17; on moving to London I saw in bookshop windows Zadie Smith's 'NW'; as I researched this thesis more and more people sent me links to websites that referenced the postal districts. Nowhere does self-identification in the way London does, by its postcodes. There is an enduring interest in how postal areas have become social markers in the city; how one's postcode has become a synecdoche for one's place. It does not necessarily make sense to me- someone brought up outside of London, in a place where 'N8' had no meaning – that this code has been taken on by Londoners as a cultural marker. But, in a city that I love for its incomprehensibility as much as for the joy of revealing the historical reason for its madness, I am happy that the Postal Map has a part in the story of London.

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¹³⁹⁷ British Library. 'London District Post Office Map', ref: .3485.(17.)

Reflecting the approach that was outlined at the very beginning of the thesis, the Postal Map has been considered in terms of its own history, explaining the Map's biography from conception until its maturing and through to the largest changes to its form before the postcodes. The form of the Map has been meditated upon, looking at the lines on the page that construct the Map to understand what their configuration might mean. The built environment of the city has been investigated, to see how the Map and its related reforms had an impact on the city's streetscape. And lastly the lived experience of people in London has been remarked upon, with incidents brought out to highlight the role of the map on the cognitive experience of the city. Modernity was experienced in many ways, in a city that had now been defined by a visual object, the London Postal Map.

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POST 21/56: '*Map shewing [sic] the general Boundaries of the General Post Delivery; of the foreign Delivery; of the Town Delivery of the Two-penny Post Department and of the Country Deliveries' [London], 1830*

POST 21/57: '*Map showing the several walks or deliveries in the Country Districts of the Twopenny Post. With the rides to which they are attached numbered to correspond with the figures on the accompanying list' [London], 1830*

POST 21/58: '*London 1848 drawn and engraved expressly for the Post Office Directory'*

POST 21/69: *Official map of the London postal districts 1870*

POST 21/70: '*Map of London and its environs 1816*', 1816

POST 21/71: '*Map of the London Postal District with the sub-divisions*', 1856

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POST 21/156: '*England & Wales, Sketch of the Post Office Map' [extracted from the 2nd Report of the Committee on Postage]*, Feb 1838

POST 21/157: '*A new and correct post map of the great and cross roads through England and Wales. Laid down from the surveys hitherto made describing the cities, boroughs and market towns in each county ...*', c.1770

POST 21/361: '*Bowles's two sheet plan of the cities of London and Westminster with the borough of Southwark comprehending the new buildings and other alterations*', 1814

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Annual Design History Society Conference, "How We Live, and How we Might Live": Design and the Spirit of Critical Utopianism, September 11-13 2015, California College of the Arts, San Francisco, California

Louise Purbrick seminar on Nitrate, Royal College of Art, 14th February, 2013

Appendix:
The London Postal Maps

At various moments many more London postal maps featured in the thesis than in its final version. This appendix is a full list of the maps consulted, with my comments and with images where possible. The list is given in chronological order.

1. Cary's

The earliest London Postal Map considered in this thesis is this map, Cary's Pocket Plan, from 1791¹. The Cary's maps appear to be a good place to start because they are a common 'type'; many versions of effectively the same map appear in this period. The 1790s saw some changes and expansions to the London postal system which were still in effect by the time that the period considered in this thesis begins, which means that they represent a good 'snapshot' of the practice of mapping the London mails for the very start of this thesis. Information given below the map includes postal fares – as this was in the period of different fares for different places, alongside the cost of fares for Hackney Coach rides.



Cary's Pocket Plan

¹ POST 21/54 Cary's New Pocket Plan of London

2. Cary's Plan, no. 2

Cary's New Pocket Plan of London, Westminster and Southwark; with all the adjacent buildings in St. George's Fields &c.&c.



Cary's plan version 2. picture credit- British Library²

3. Cary's Plan, no. 3

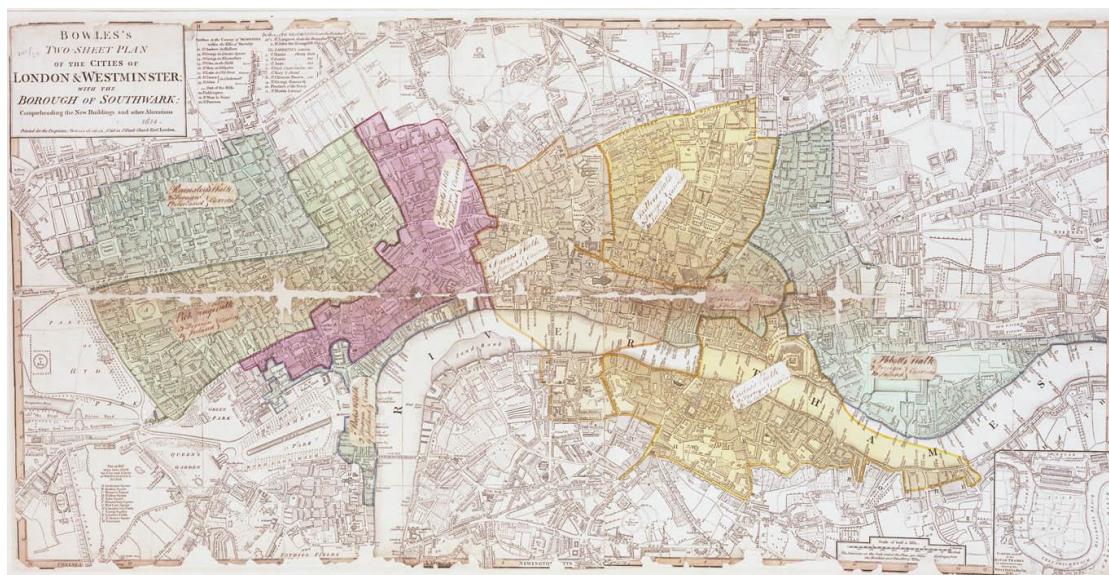
Another example is the British Library-held map, 'Cary's New Pocket Plan of London, Westminster and Southwark³'. This one is dated 1797, and uses colour. The map shows London from the 'Serpentine River' in the West, to the top of City Road in the North, Blackwall in the East, and Newington in the South. On the top left corner it shows list of receiving houses of the 'GPO in Lombard Street', named and numbered – e.g. 'Berkeley Square next Hay Hill No. 2', and along bottom are listed the 'Penny Post receiving houses' – divided into Westminster and City, with list of c.136 houses. Below that is a list of penny-post receiving houses, and a list of 'Hackney Coach Fares'.

² Cartographic Items Maps Crace Port. 5.165

³ Cartographic Items Maps C.25.c.5.

4. Bowles

These maps of 1790s show London to be a similar shape to the next map, the 1814 'Bowles' Map of the Cities of London and Westminster. This map, which is colour coded into nine sections which correspond to the letter carriers 'walks' (their own districts). The Bowles' map shows the breadth of London as basically the same as the 1791 maps, but there is a sense that the city has grown; the built up area is starting to push out of the boundaries of the image.



Bowles' Map of the Cities of London and Westminster⁴

⁴ POST 21/361: Bowles' Map of the Cities of London and Westminster

5. POST 21/56

Moving forward to 1830, a map from the Postal Museum collection showing all the different postal services operating in London prior to the reforms that form the basis of this thesis. Although the map has no scale shown, it is a completely different sort to the ones given above, as central London is shown to be very small in the middle of the image, with the counties around it all given; the map reaches out to Epping, Gravesend, Leatherhead, Staines, Watford and Broxbourne.

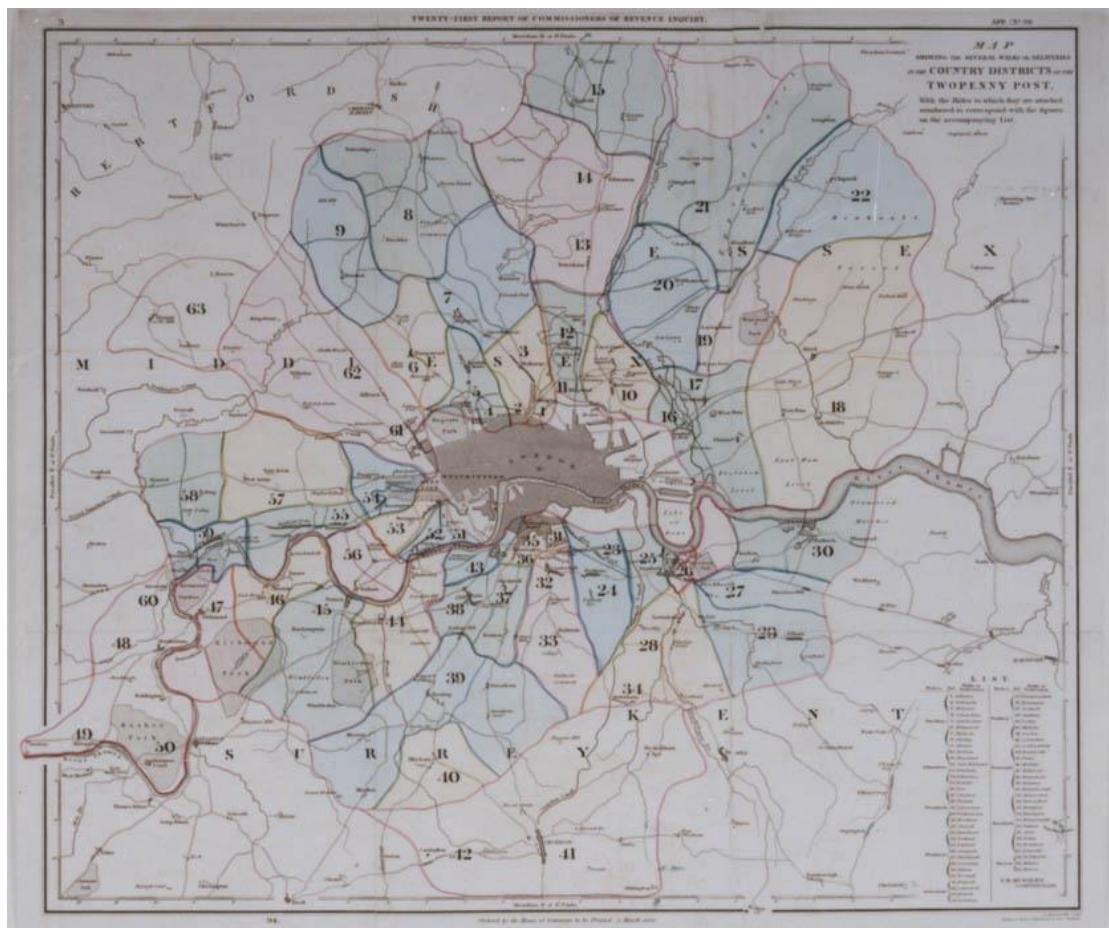


POST 21/56⁵

⁵ POST 21/56: 'Map shewing [sic] the general Boundaries of the General Post Delivery; of the foreign Delivery; of the Town Delivery of the Two-penny Post Department and of the Country Deliveries' [London], 1830

6. POST 21/57

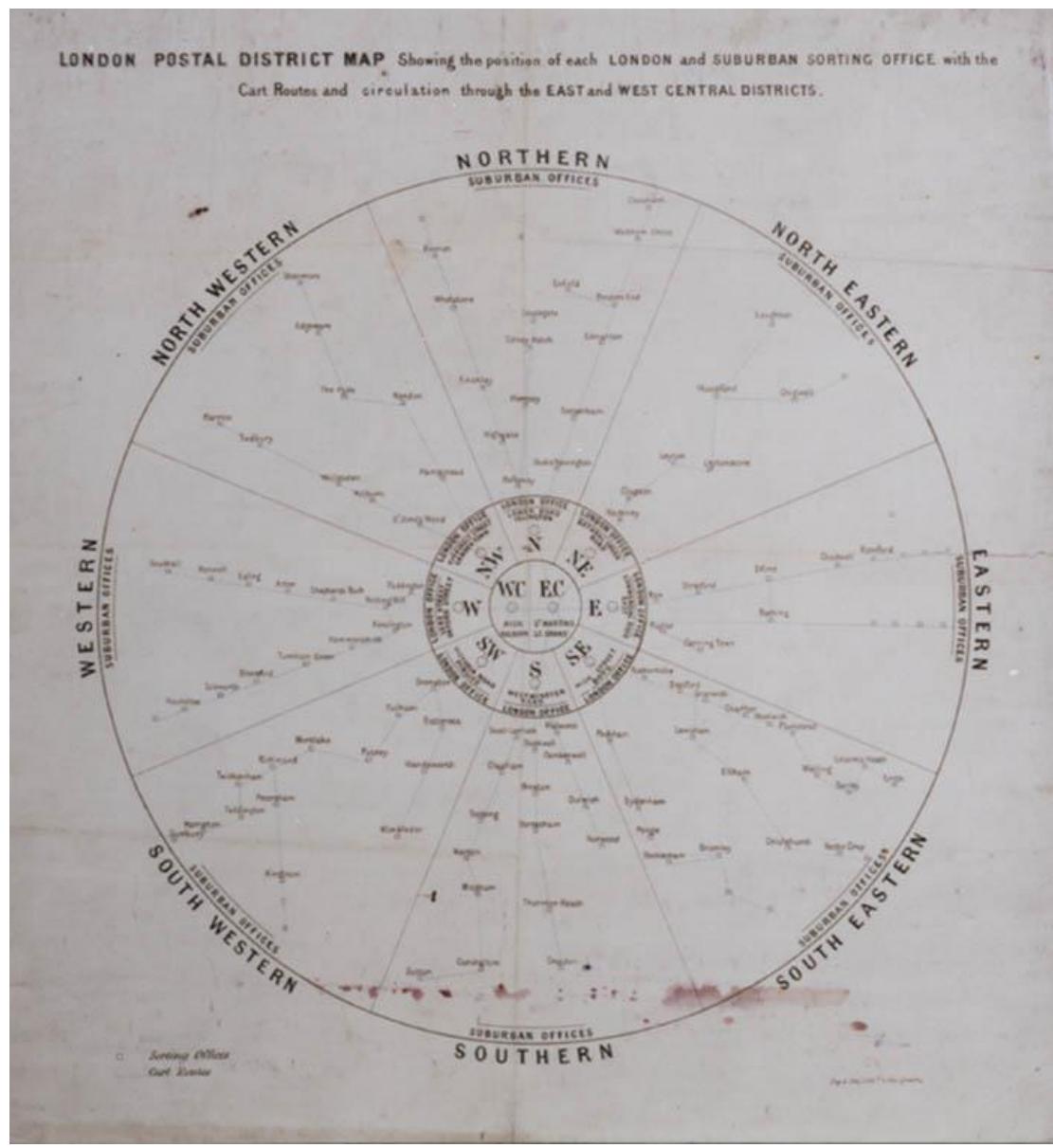
This map gives a similarly large coverage, this time showing the and with the 'Rides' (effectively areas covered by different postmen on horseback), listed in bottom corner, which on the map are divided, numbered and colour-coded.



POST 21/57⁶

⁶ POST 21/57: Map Shewing the Several Walks or Deliveries in the County Districts if the Twopenny Post, and with the Rides to which they are attached numbered to correspond with the figures on the accompanying list. The title notes it is from the 'twenty-first report of the commissioners of revenue inquiry'

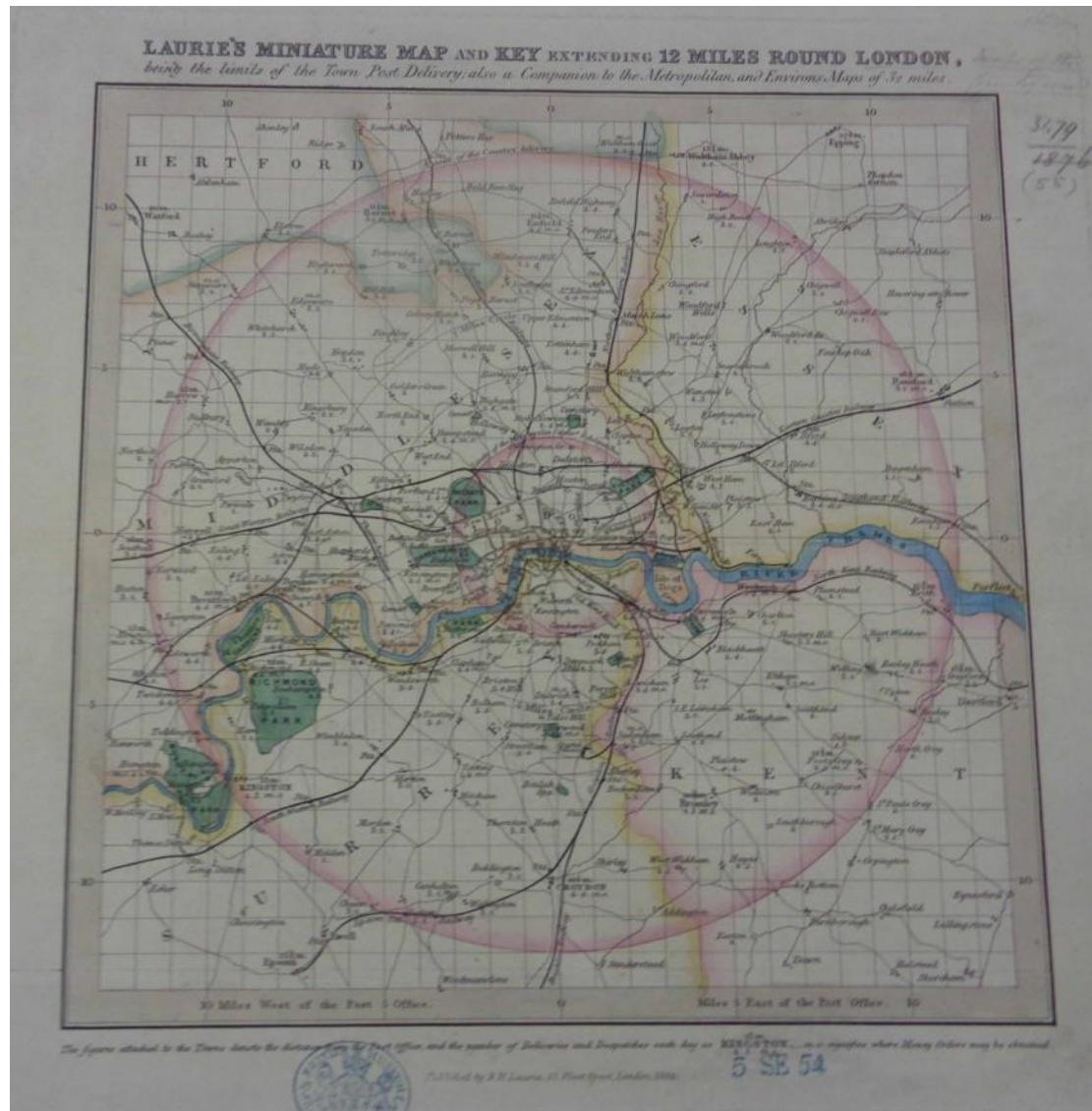
7. A schematic map, which showing London divided as two rings: an inner ring of London offices and their sorting offices with an outer ring divided into eight sections. There are mail cart routes shown by dotted lines that join up named post towns along each route in and out of London.



POST 21/761⁷

⁷ POST 21/761: 'London Postal District map: Showing the position of each London and Suburban Sorting Office with the Cart routes and circulation through the East and West Central Districts'

8. Then lastly for the pre-London Postal Map maps, we end with a map just before that period, in 1854: Laurie's Miniature Map and Key extending 12 Miles round London. This shows the 'county' post delivery as 12 miles out – and depicts this as a perfect circle; a trope which will be considered in great detail in chapter 2 of this thesis. The metropolitan district is also given, about 3 miles out of centre, with boundaries drawn on and coloured in pink. As this map was pre-1856, no postal districts are given, instead the key boundaries shown here are the county boundaries of Middlesex, Surrey, Essex, Kent.



Laurie's Miniature Map and Key extending 12 Miles round London⁸

⁸ Cartographic Items Maps 3479.(55.): *Laurie's Miniature Map and Key extending 12 miles round London, being the limits of the Town Post Delivery, also a companion to the Metropolitan and Environs Maps of 32 miles*, London, 1854.

The London Postal Maps

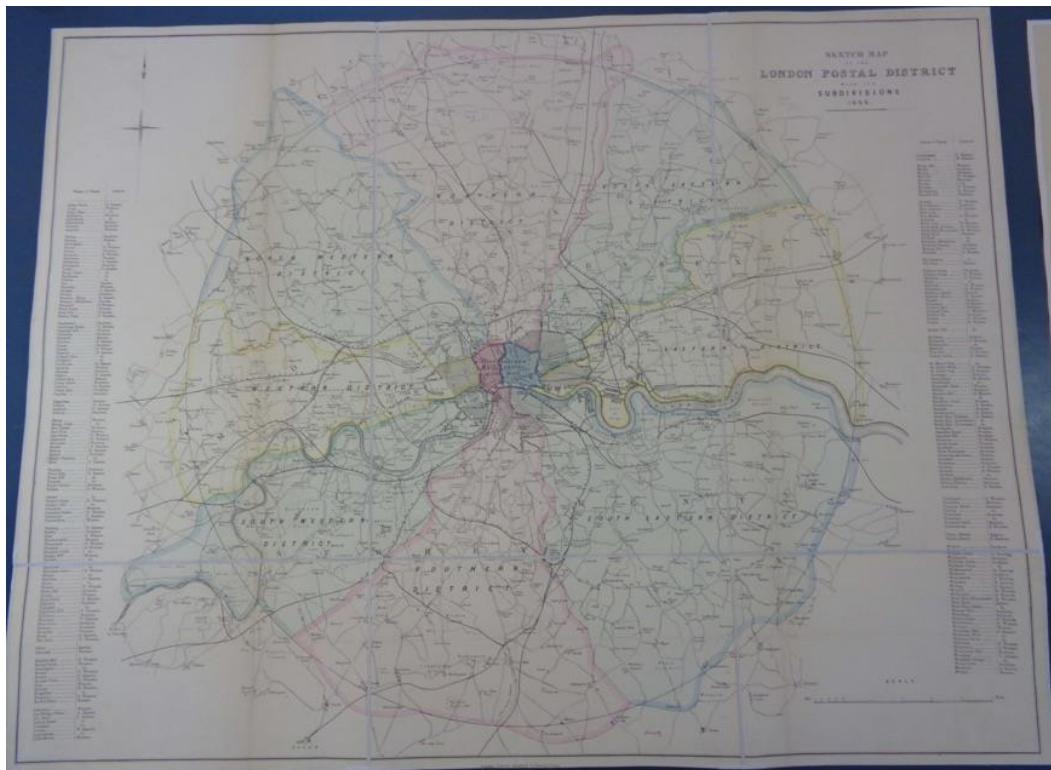
There are a number of different London Postal Map types, which will be listed in the chronological order of the first time appear in archives:

9. The London Postal Map itself, dated 1856. This map is held in the Postal Museum, where it forms the focus of the research, but other versions of the same map also appear in archives at the British Library and the RGS.

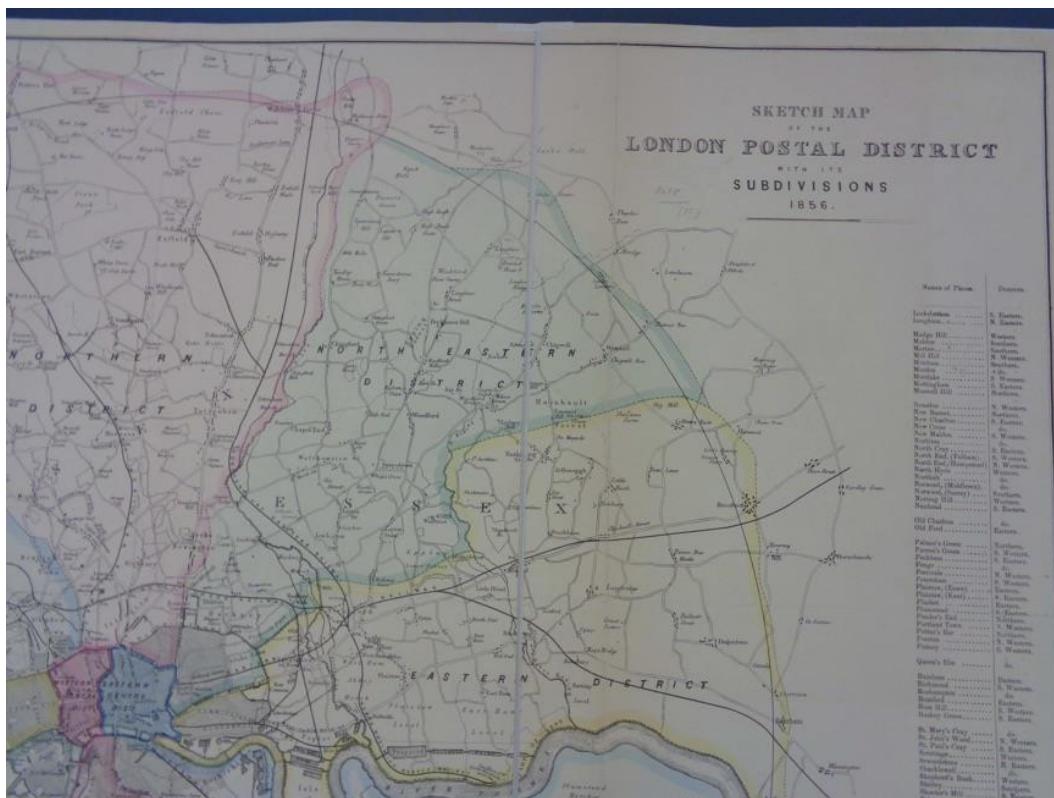
10. And, a second version of the map, which is slightly different, called a 'Sketch Map', is held at the British Library.

The British Library holds a map called, 'Sketch Map of the London postal District, with its Subdivisions', dated 1856. In appearance, this map is identical to that held by the postal archive, except for some tiny differences- the quality of the colouring, for example, is slightly higher, with the colour clearer and crisper than the original BPMA version. But the one crucial difference is: the name of the British Library version is a 'Sketch Map', whereas the BPMA version *is* the map, not a 'sketch' for the map. The other details are exactly the same – the two have an identical design except for this one point⁹. We might also ask whether or not the single object of the London Postal Map is really just one object that alone dictated London's boundaries. The existence of the sketch map implies otherwise – there was not one map, but rather a series of maps, developed along the way with amendments at each stage.

⁹ The RGS also holds a Sketch Map version of the 1856 postal map, the 'Sketch Map of the London Postal District with its Sub Divisions 1856'. It looks the same as the other version, except that where this version differs from the others is that it is annotated – it has added on the turnpikes, drawn in red/pink ink, demonstrating firstly that these maps were used for purposes other than those explicitly intended, and secondly that these maps were not necessarily finished products, but were bases upon which other information could be inscribed, or at least tried out.



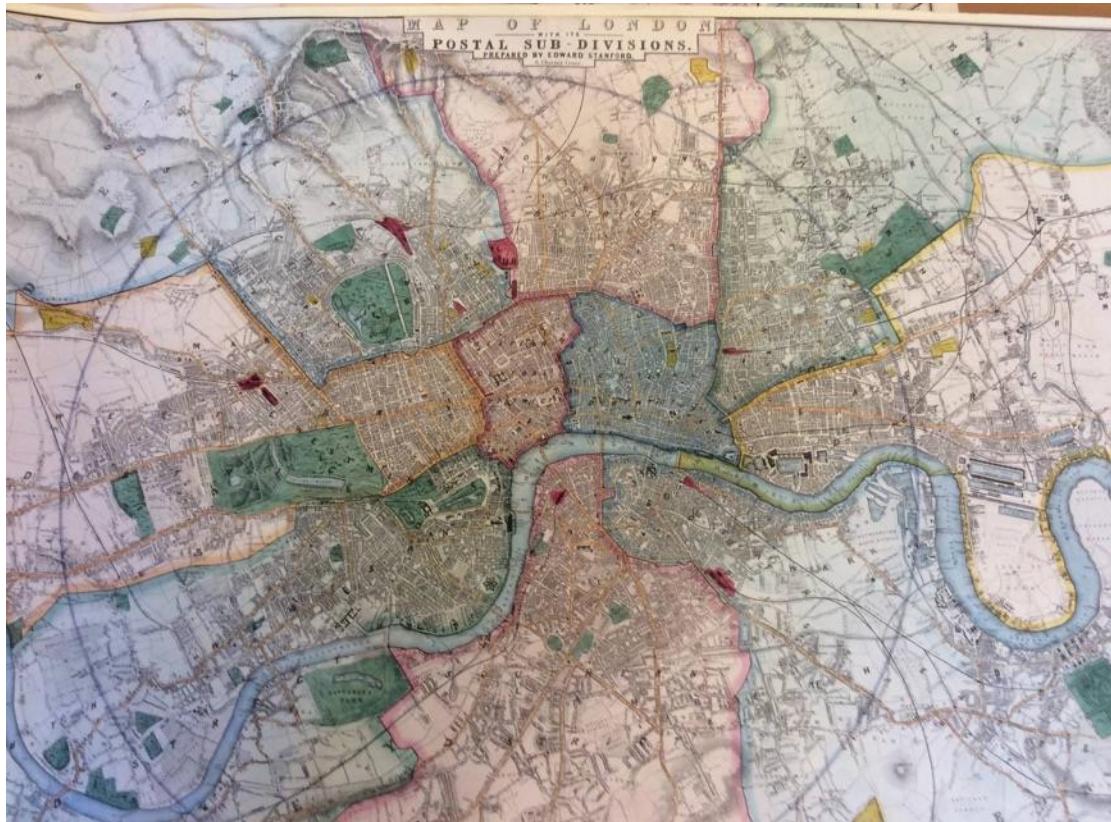
Sketch Map of the London Postal District, 1856 (British Library)¹⁰



Sketch Map of the London Postal District, 1856 - Detail (NE section of map).

¹⁰ Cartographic Items Maps 3485.(12.): E. Stanford, *Sketch Map of the London Postal District, with its subdivisions*. London, 1856.

11. The third ‘type’ is Stanford’s ‘Map of London with the Postal Sub Divisions’¹¹. This one is the first that takes the ‘zoomed in’ approach to the map, concentrating purely on the ‘town’ portion of London. It has lots of detail, including the topography of the land, with etched hill features shown. It is also the first of the brightly coloured district maps, with each district coloured in. Has a circle radius shown, denoting 4 miles from Charing Cross. Names of the districts are given in full, in sans serif caps.



*Map of London with the Postal Sub Divisions*¹²

Where this map is interesting primarily for us is in its contrast to the London Postal Map. It is made by the same cartographer, at exactly the same time, but it is completely different. The map is much bolder, with full colour used where the original map uses colour only on the outline of the boundaries. It is also much closer into London, showing in some places three miles out from the centre, in others five, but no more- so it does not show anything like the full extent of the postal districts. And it shows a great deal more detail. All of which can only indicate that the two maps, which on the surface are of exactly the same thing, were in fact used for very different purposes- hence their complete difference in style and form.

¹¹ BL catalogue states date as 1854; likely to be later; and Bod Ref: C17:70 London (356)

¹² Bodleian Library C17:70 London (356): Edward Stanford, *Map of London with its postal sub-divisions*, 1854

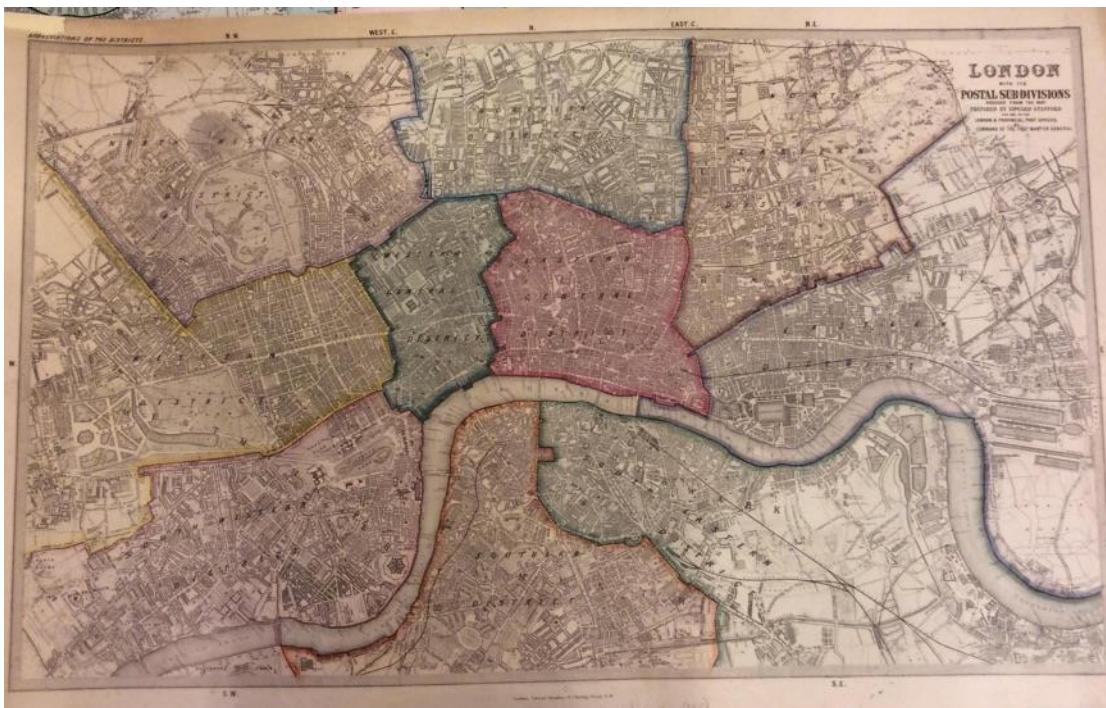
12. The fourth Stanford's map type is also dated 1856; there are versions of this map in the Bod, BL and RGS. This one is much smaller than the other two (around 1,25ft x 2 ft), and usually it is found with fold marks – it appears this version would have been folded into a small, pocket-sized map for carrying around (c.10cmx 20cm). This map, as well as being smaller, has no colour, just simply a black engraving on paper.



London with its Postal Sub-Divisions reduced from the map prepared by Edward Stanford for use in the London & Provincial Post Office by Command of the postmaster general¹³.

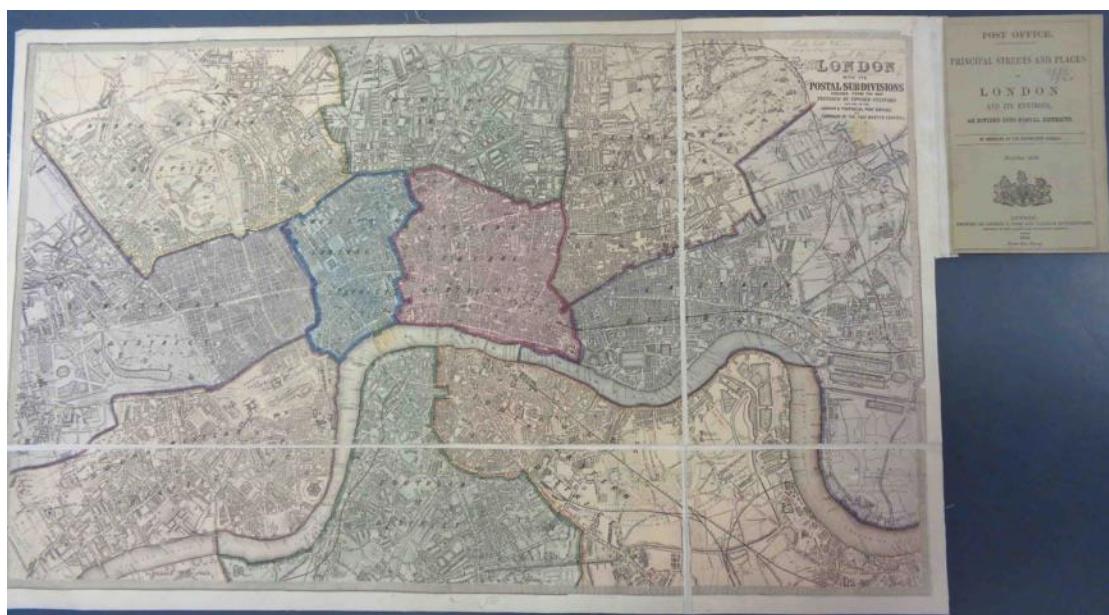
¹³ Bodleian Library C17:70 London (97): *London with its postal sub-divisions reduced from the map prepared by Edward Stanford for use in the London and provincial post office [Together with] guide [cartographic material]*, 1856

13. The fifth map is also a Stanford's, the same as map type 3, but this time with colour. Each of the divisions is coloured a different colour, with their boundary outlines a bolder, strong version of the district colour. Also dated 1856.



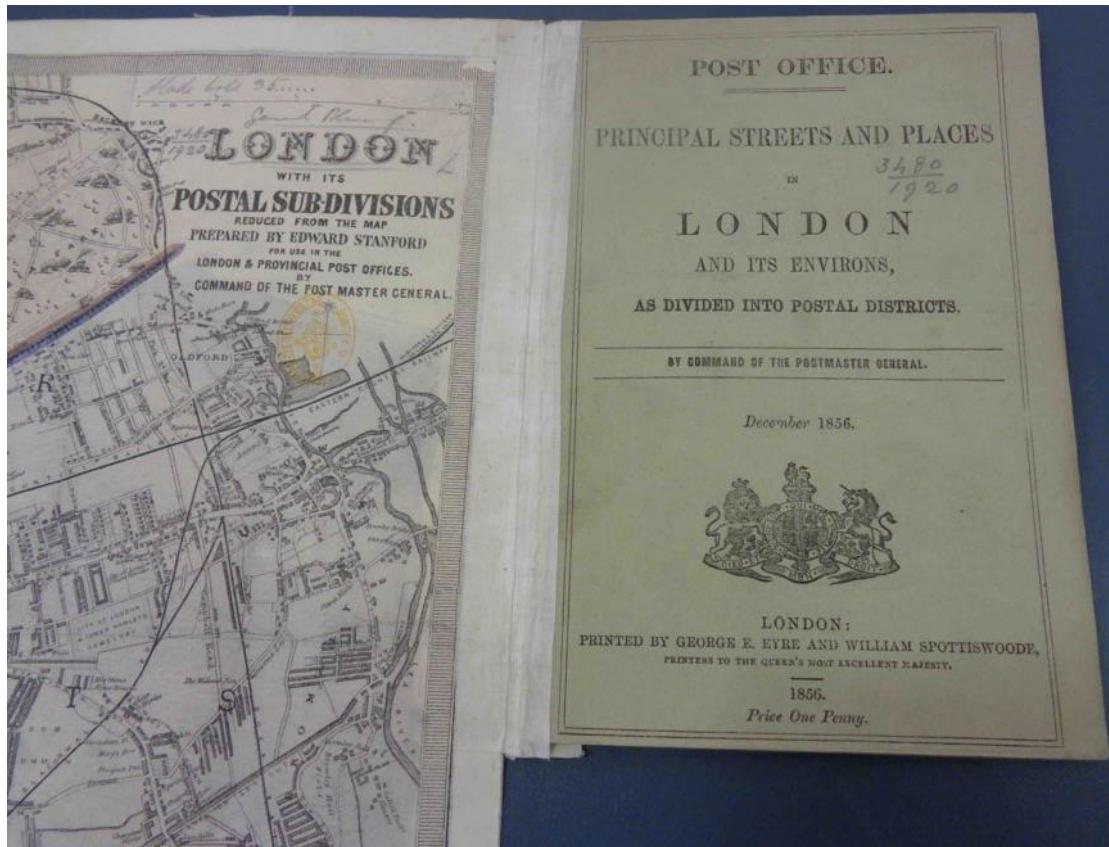
Postal map¹⁴

The British Library has a version of this colour map that includes a little printed guide as well, a little 'Principal Streets and Places' book for 1856 with the streets and their districts listed as well as an explanation of the new system.

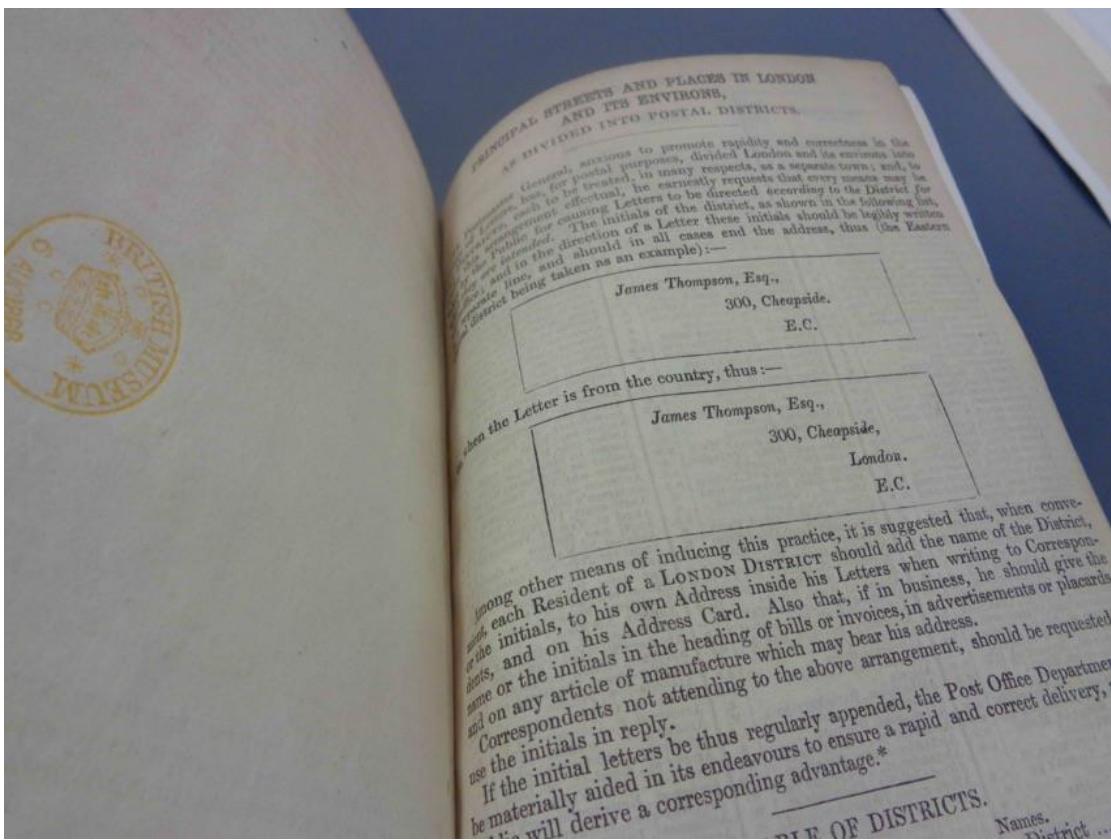


London with its Postal Subdivisions¹⁵

¹⁴ Bodleian Library C17:70 London (355): *London, with its postal subdivisions*, 1856



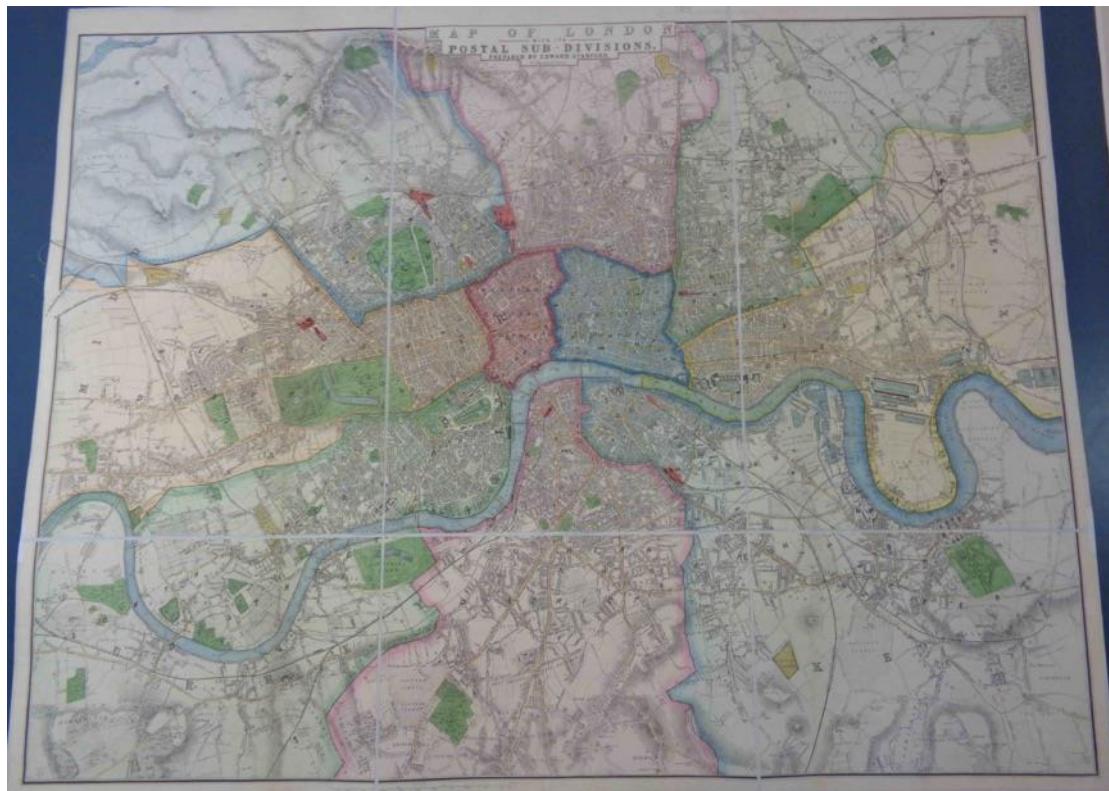
¹⁵ Maps 3480.(143.) (British library): London with its Postal Subdivisions, reduced from the Map prepared by E. Stanford for use in the London and Provincial Post Offices by Command of the Postmaster General



The Royal Geographic Society version of this map¹⁶ states at the bottom, "London. Edward Stanford 6 Charing Cross SW", but also includes a tiny faint note, "*Revised to the Present date by BR Davies, September 1st, 1856*". Like the version of this map in the Bod (though not the BL version), this map shows outside the frame of the map the initials of the districts, placed corresponding with their locations. Unlike the other versions of this map, the RGS version has hand-drawn additions: pencil drawn circles and dots in various locations – though it is unclear what these denote. Some of these dots are also given in red ink – e.g. in WC district, and there are some pencil lines drawn onto this map as well. Lastly it has a signed name scribbled across the top, which is fairly illegible.

¹⁶ mr Eng. & Wales S/S.89 (B): *London with its Postal Sub-Divisions. Reduced from the map prepared by Edward Stanford for use in the London & Provincial Post Offices by command of the Post Master General*, London: E. Stanford, 1856

14. 'Map of London with its Postal Subdivisions', 1856. This one depicts the postal boundaries, and more, except that it shows slightly more of London than the other type, making London slightly bigger, covering 9 miles height and 12 miles across. With this bigger coverage one gets a better sense of how big the city was at that time. There are many rural areas that can still be seen, e.g. east of Victoria Park; South of Brixton and Peckham; West of Holland Park, and North of Camden and Islington are all rural. The map also shows contours of the city for rural areas, so Hampstead Heath and Denmark Hill can both be clearly seen.



Map of London with its Postal Subdivisions¹⁷

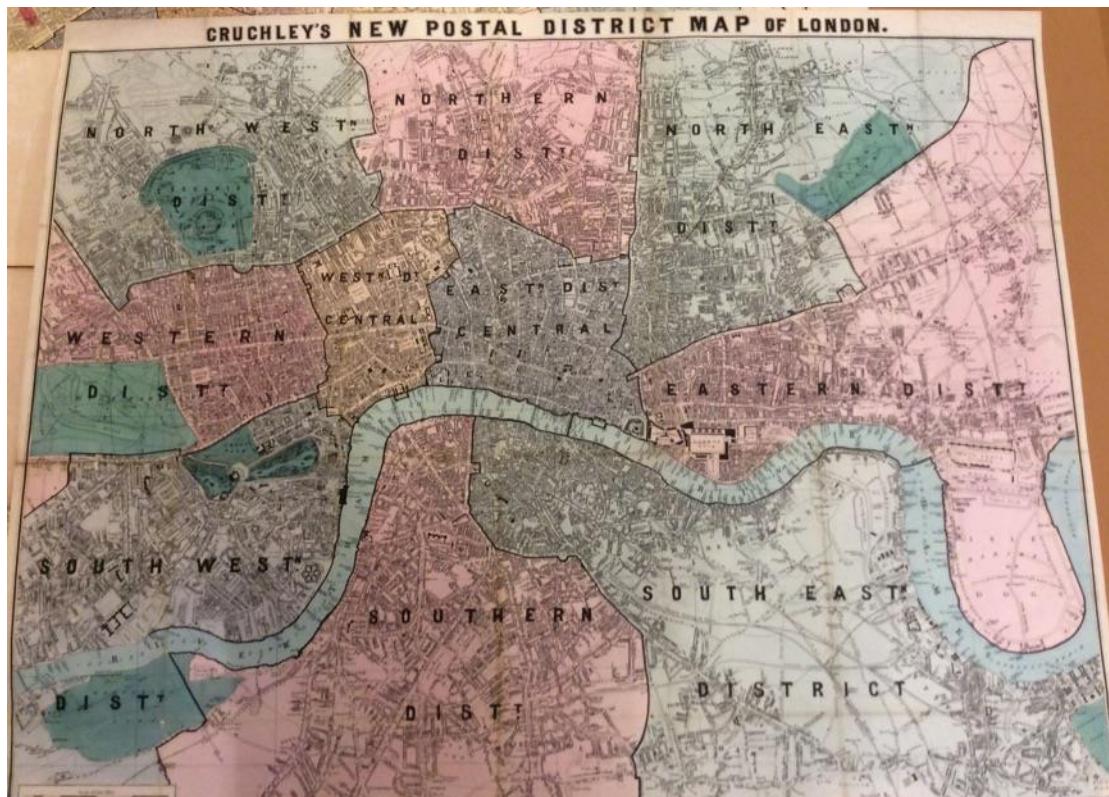
A version of this map is also held in the RGS¹⁸, and somebody has drawn pencil lines on top of this map; but no key or indication of what these lines might mean. The lines go across different parts of the map, connecting small pencil-drawn crosses. The lines sometimes cross over each other. Many of the lines are straight 'as the crow flies', but some follow the curves of the roads on the map.

Then, after all these maps in 1856, we move on to a number from 1857- again another good year for mapping London – like in 1856, the variety of Postal Maps being made in this year is remarkable.

¹⁷ Cartographic Items Maps 3485.(11.): *Map of London with its Postal Subdivisions*. Prepared by E. Stanford, London, 1856.

¹⁸ mr Eng. & Wales S/S.90 (B): *Map of London with its Postal Sub-Divisions.*, London: E. Stanford, 1856

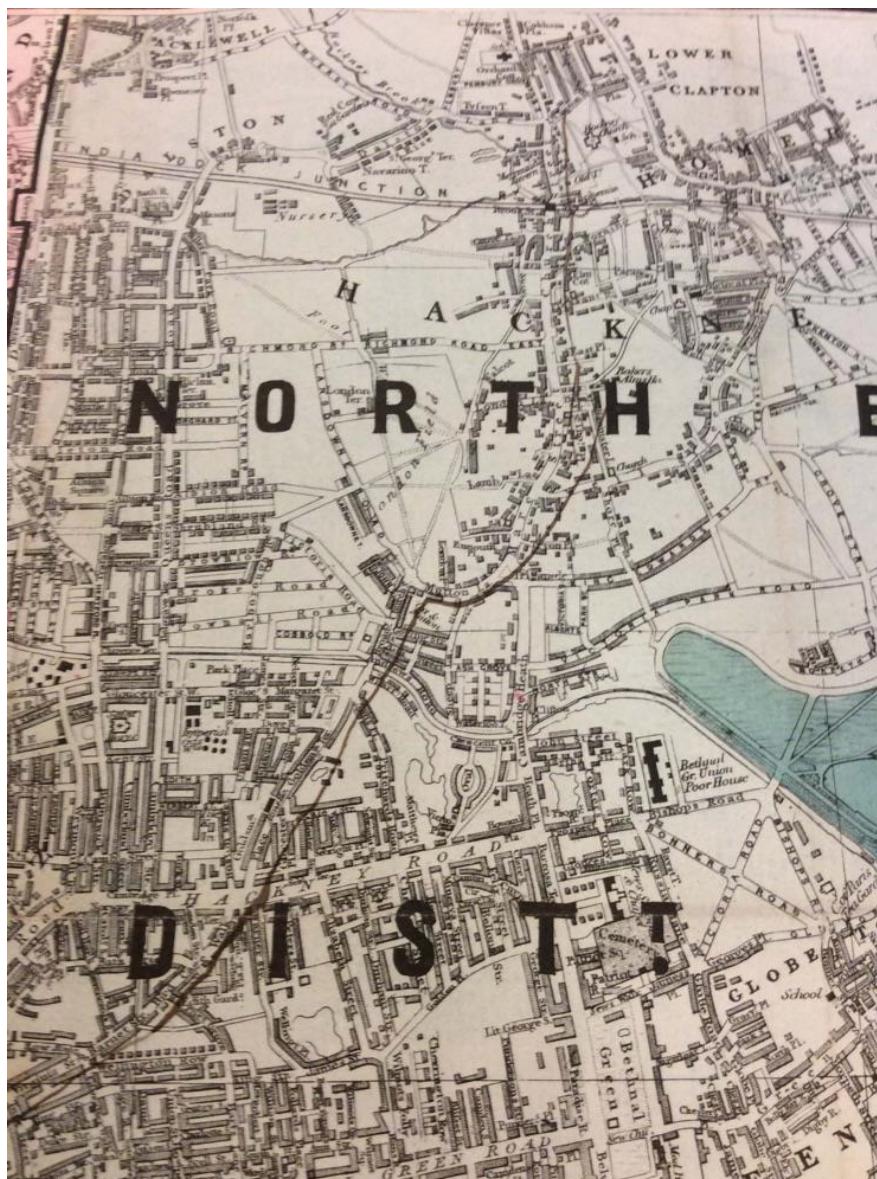
15. Cruchley's New Postal map of London is the sixth type. States: "London. Published by G. F. Cruchley Map Seller & Globe Maker, 81 Fleet Street". Dated 1857, it is different in style to the previous ones due to its boldness – the districts are coloured in brightly, and the names of the districts are given in full in large, bold black sans serif letters. The districts outlines are also in a solid black line. The title of the map is given at the top, in the centre, and again is in bold black sans serif type in capitals.



London. Published by G. F. Cruchley¹⁹ Map Seller & Globe Maker, 81 Fleet Street, Bod C17:70 London (46)

One particularly interesting feature of this map is that it betrays the evidence of human hand- an ink and pencil mark are on the NE postal district, seemingly going nowhere. These types of amendments to the maps are in fact not uncommon- and each handmade amendment prompts its own questions, into who it was that was making these additions, and why. One speculation might be that post office officials were using the maps themselves to try out changes to the district boundaries, or to demonstrate where different postmen's 'walks' were to be. But regardless of speculation, of which we can never be completely sure, what we can be certain of was that these maps, although beautiful, were not merely objects to be looked at – they were active, used, objects, which were interacted with in a number of different ways every day.

¹⁹ Bodleian Library: C17:70 London (46): Cruchley's New Postal district map of London. [Together with] Guide [cartographic material], 1857



Detail of Cruchley's New Postal District Map of London, with addition in NE district²⁰

On this version there is a typed note on bottom left corner, stating – “Additions to 1857”. A pencil note in the top right states that the map was purchased December 1857 for 1/6.

²⁰ Cartographic Items Maps 3485.(16.): Cruchley's New Postal District Map of London. [Scale, 4 1/4 inches to a mile, London, 1857]

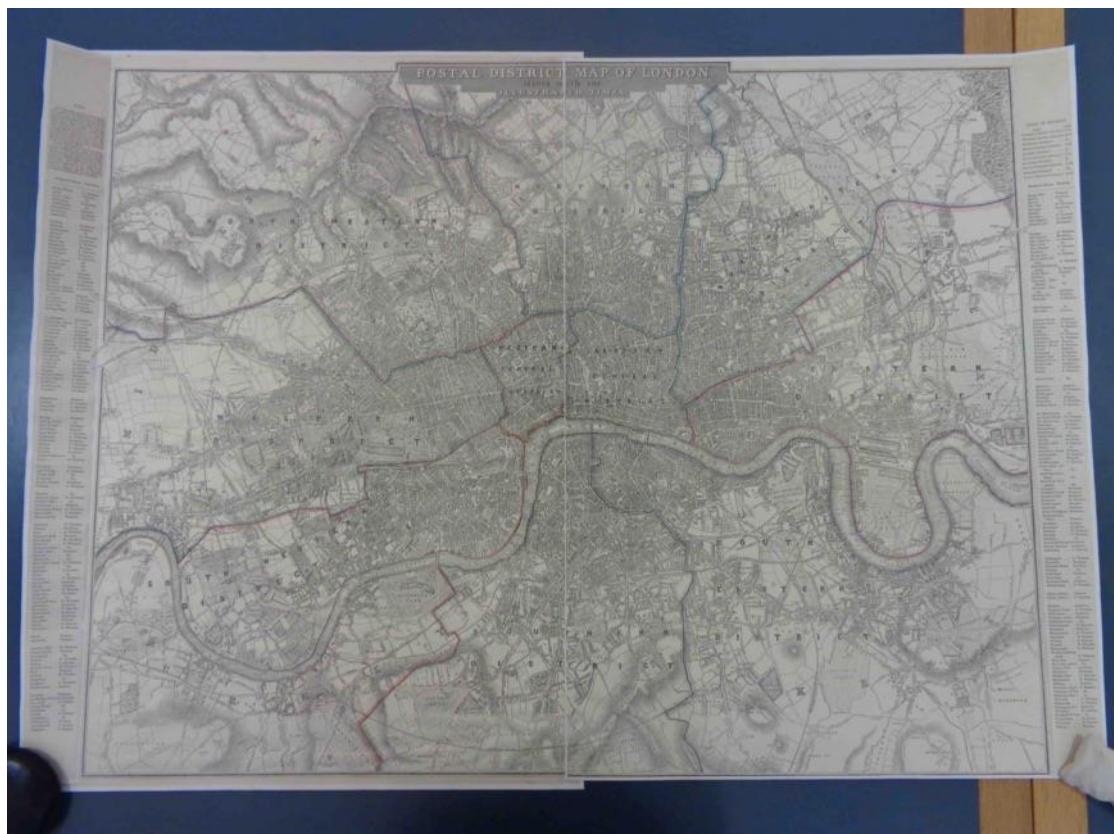


In fact, the British Library holds two versions of the same type of map²¹:



²¹ reference for the second one: 'Crutchey's New Postal District Map of London', Maps Crace Port. 19.50

16. Quite a different style map also appears in 1857, this time explicitly stating it is for members of the public, as it is sold with the Illustrated Times. This map includes an explanatory note, describing why the Postmaster General has issued the map. The map includes lots of detail and coverage including individual streets and names, but also shows areas outside the built up areas. The districts are not coloured in, but are left white except for the outline of the district – the boundary – has colour, with a different colour for each district. This map states, like many maps of this period do, its engraver- one ‘Firmin Gillot, engraver’ in this case, but it also states: ‘Paniconographie de Gillot A Paris’ – ‘paniconography’ was a new technique that had been invented in 1852 – a photoengraving technique.



*Postal District Map of London Issued with the Illustrated Times*²²

²² Maps Crace Port. 19.51- in the British Library. catalogue states it is based on ‘Benjamin Res Davies’ New Map of the British Metropolis’, first published 1852.

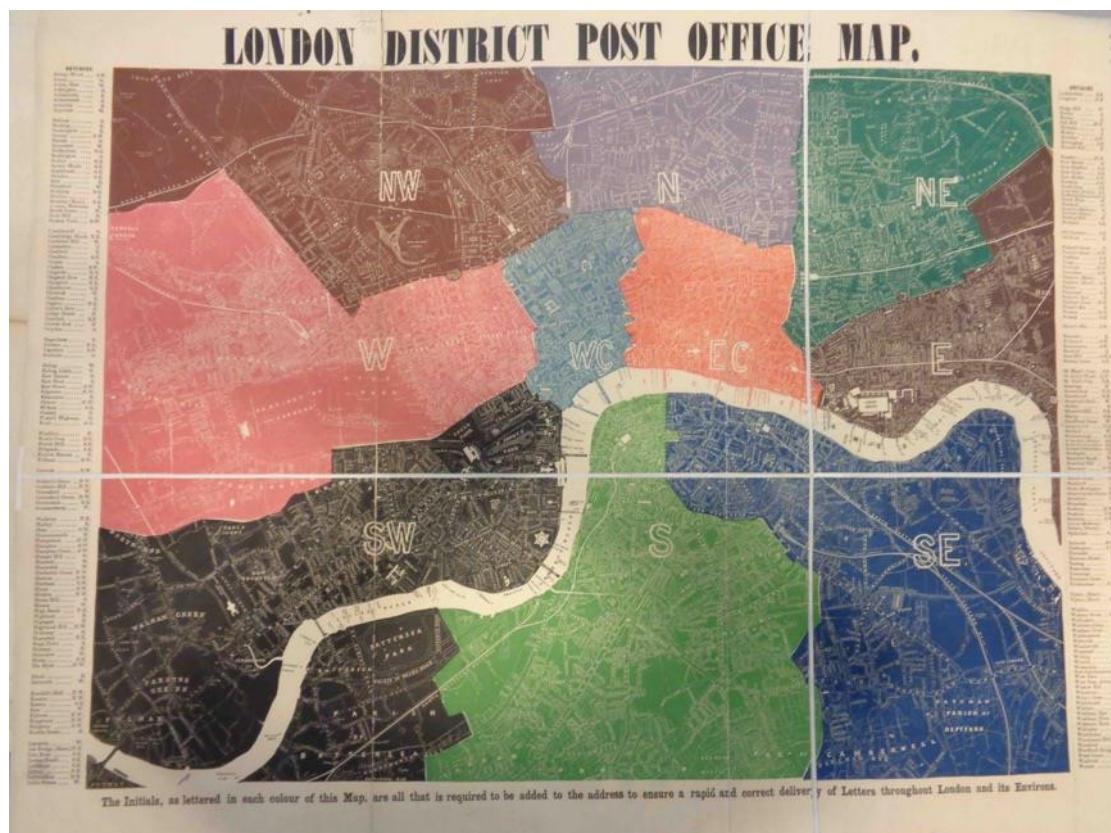
NOTE.

THE Postmaster-General, anxious to promote rapidity and correctness in the delivery of Letters, has, for postal purposes, divided London and its environs into TEN DISTRICTS, each to be treated, in many respects, as a separate town; and, to render this arrangement effectual, he earnestly requests that every means may be taken by the Public for causing Letters to be directed according to *the District for which they are intended*. The initials of the district will suffice; and in the direction of a Letter these initials should be legibly written in a separate line, and should in all cases end the address.

Among other means of inducing this practice, it is suggested that, when convenient, each Resident of a LONDON DISTRICT should add the name of the District, or the initials, to his own Address inside his Letters when writing to Correspondents, and on his Address Card. Also that, if in business, he should give the name or the initials in the heading of bills or invoices, in advertisements, or placards, and on any article of manufacture which may bear his address.



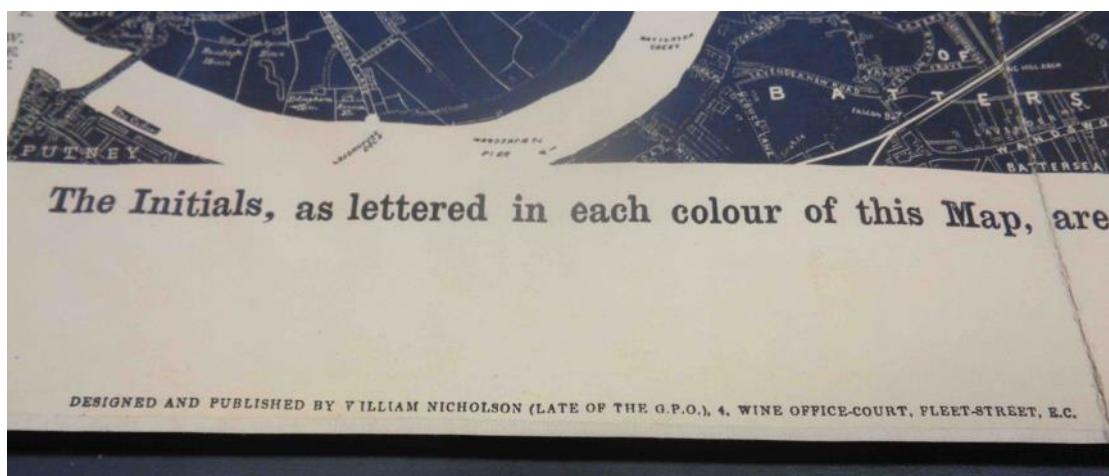
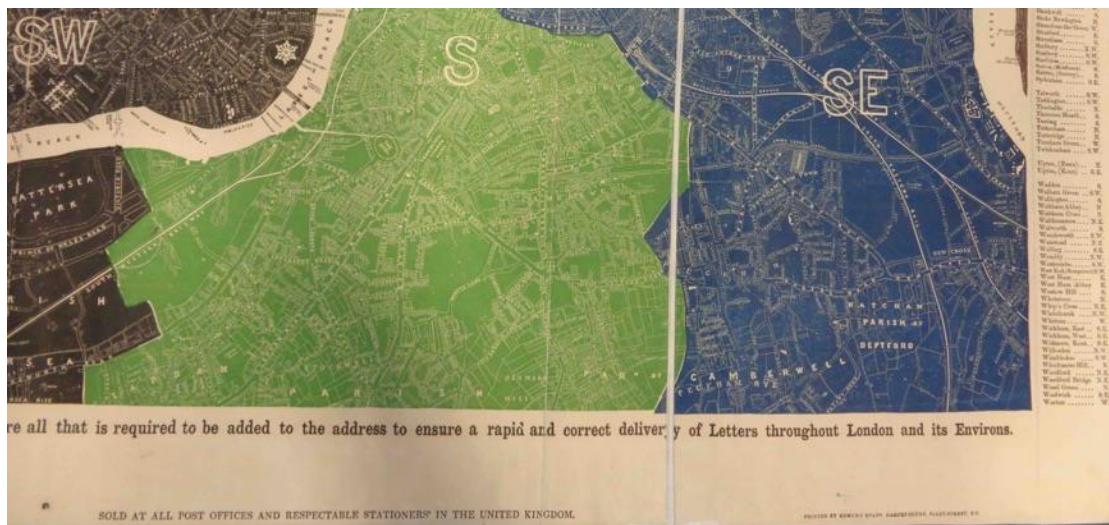
17. Nicholson's postal map is an intriguing one for this research²³. This map states that it is "Sold at all post offices and respectable stationers in the United Kingdom", and that it is "Designed and published by William Nicholson (late of the G.P.O), 4. Wine Office-court, Fleet Street, E.C." The post office made its own postal maps- however, an employee of the post office felt that there would be a market for a postal map that was not produced by the post office. This indicates the extent to which the post office was slightly ignorant of the need for the postal map as an object in the public sphere ("at all post offices and respectable stationers"). The map is also designed for folding, showing that it was meant to be handy, portable, and pocket-sized (maybe half the size of most of the other postal maps)- unlike the official, Post Office commissioned, London Postal Map.



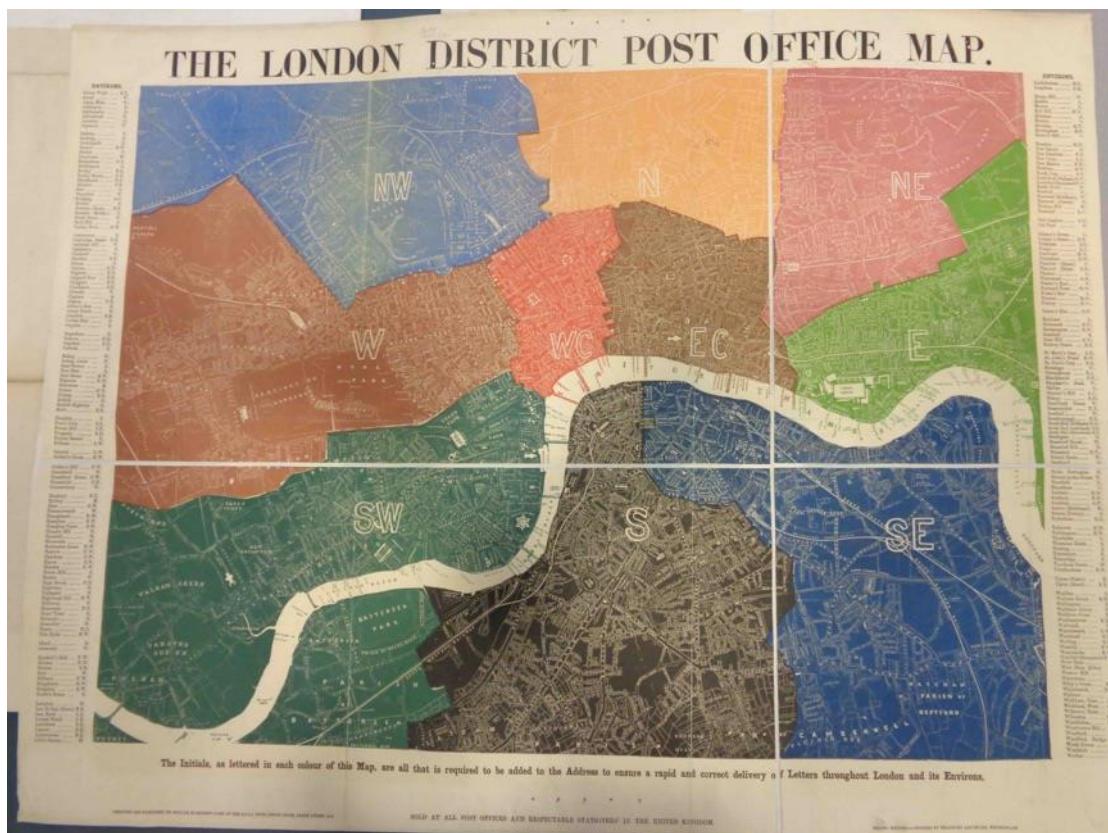
*London District Post Office Map*²⁴

²³ British Library. 'London District Post Office Map', ref: .3485.(17.)

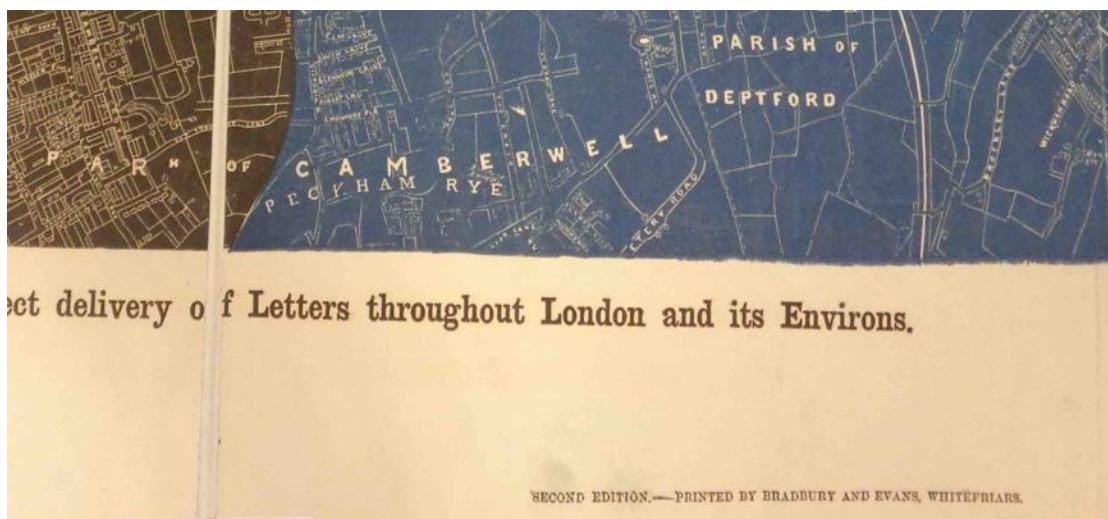
²⁴ Cartographic Items Maps 3485.(17.): *The London District Post Office Map. Designed and published by W. Nicholson, London, 1857*



18. There are two others like this one, almost identical but with some tiny differences in colouring and in small detail: the 'London District Post Office Map', which states at the bottom edge that it is a: "Second Edition – Printed by Bradbury and Evans, Whitefriars".



London District Post Office Map²⁵

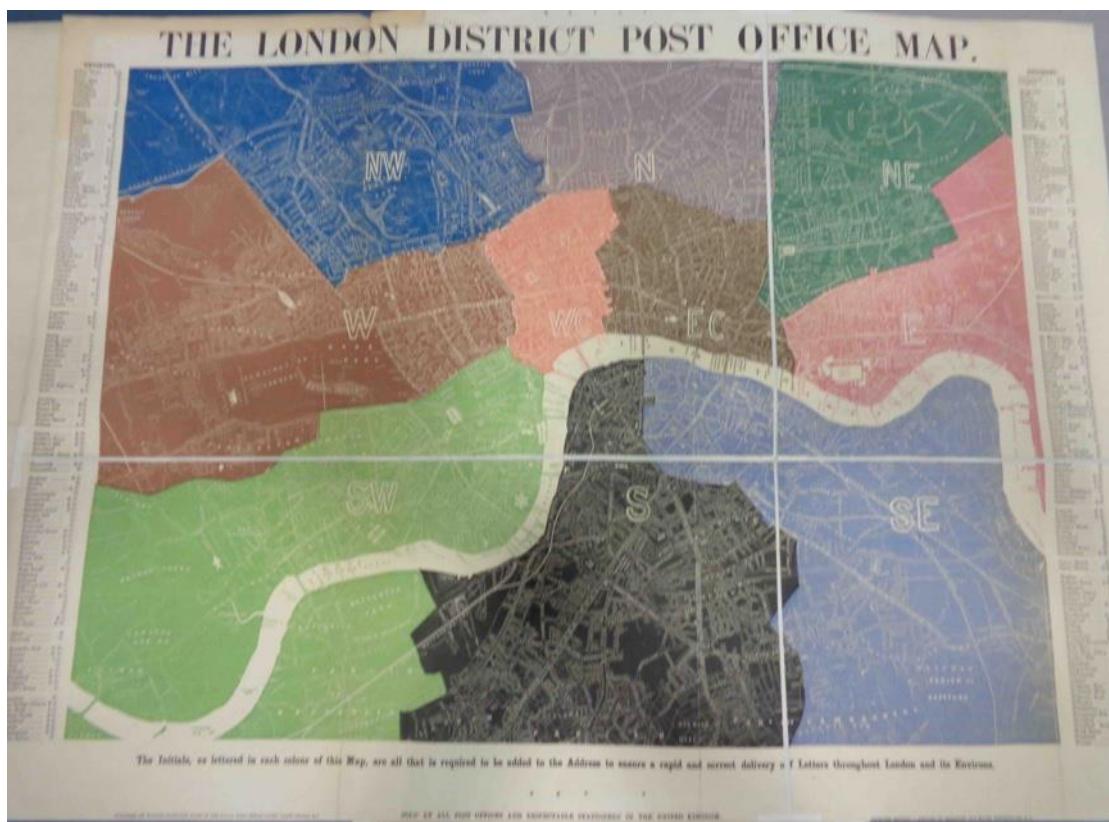


ect delivery o f Letters throughout London and its Environs.

SECOND EDITION.—PRINTED BY BRADBURY AND EVANS, WHITEFRIARS.

²⁵ Cartographic Items Maps 3485.(18.): *The London District Post Office Map. Designed and published by W. Nicholson, London, 1857*

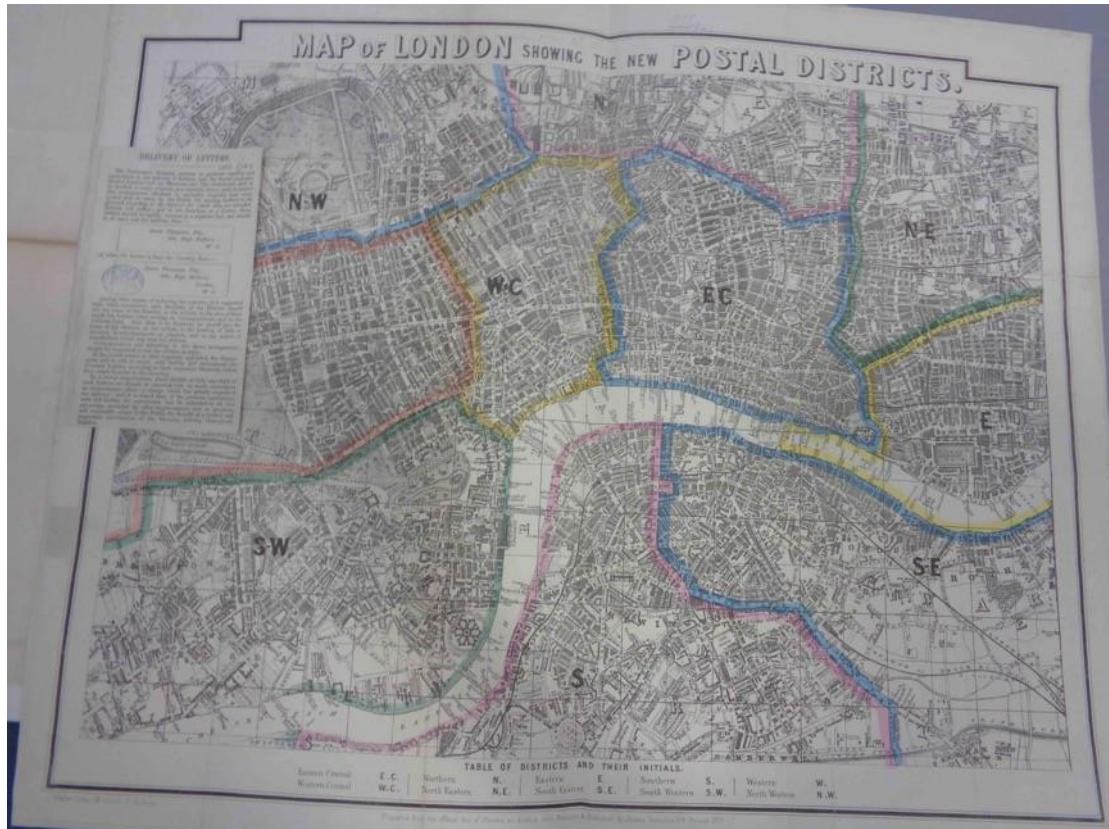
19. And the 'London District Post Office Map', also dated 1857, and almost identical to the others excepts for a note stating: "Improved edition – Printed by Bradbury and Evans, Whitefriars, E.C."



London District Post Office Map²⁶

²⁶ Cartographic Items Maps 3485.(19.): *The London District Post Office Map. Designed and published by W. Nicholson, London, 1857*

20. One final new type for 1857 is Reynold's map, which like the smaller Stanford's of 1856, includes a small written guide to the postal map and the new districts. This map shows streets and names, and housing blocks are shaded. The districts are not coloured, but the boundaries are given in bold colour and the district initials given in bold black solid sans serif.



Reynold's Map²⁷

Then we move forward in chronology- the next group of maps were published in 1859.

²⁷ Cartographic Items Maps 3485.(14.): *Map of London, showing the New Postal Districts. Prepared from the official list of streets, as divided into districts.*, London: J. Reynolds, 1857.

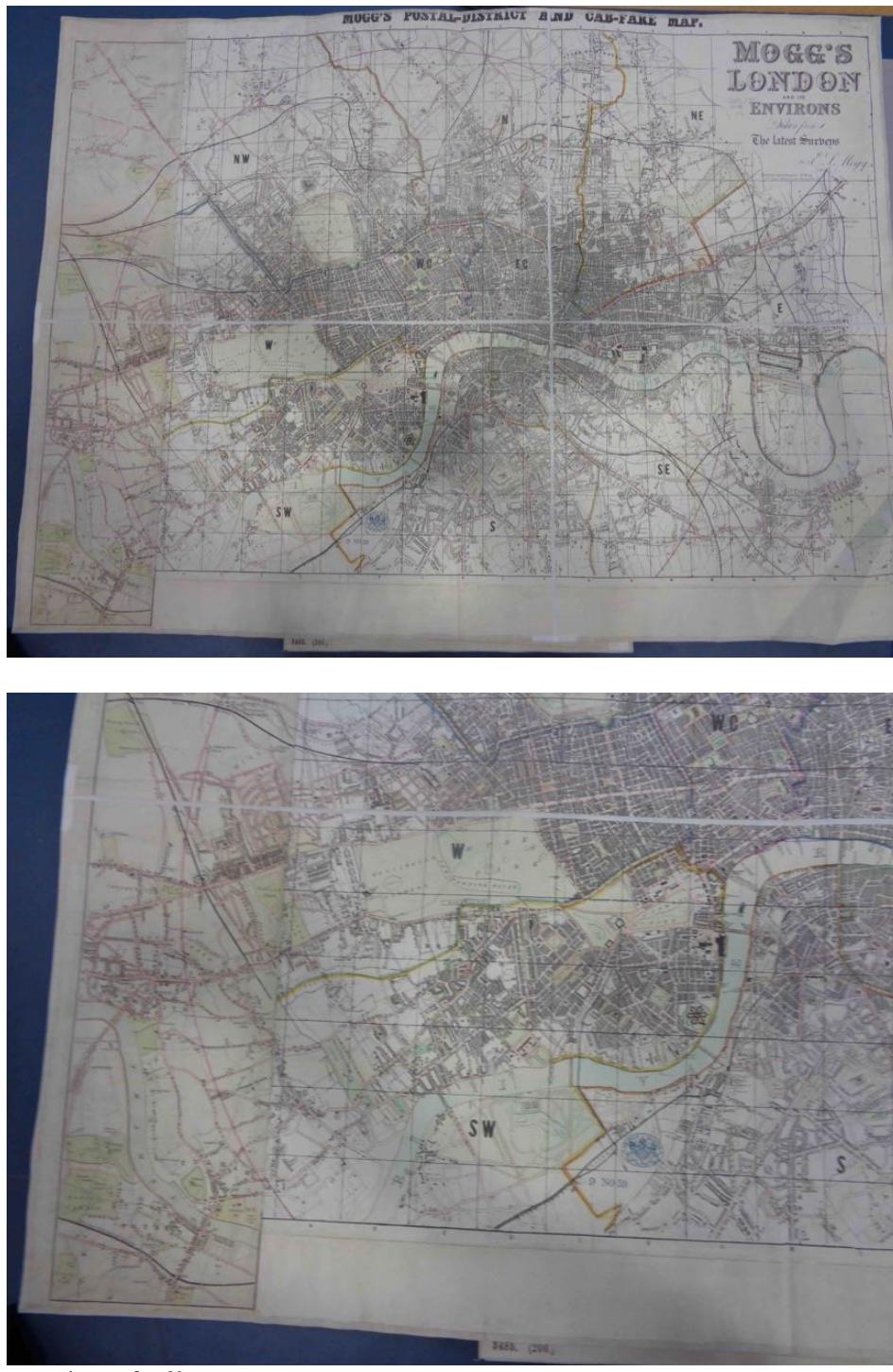
21. Cruchley's New Postal District Map of London, here showing the British Library version dated 1859 is another type, which is familiar in a number of respects but with small differences, for example in the types of colour of the districts, and notably in the typeface of the district initials, which unlike other similar versions, is serifed. This map is another large one, with a high level of detail.



Cruchley's Map²⁸

²⁸ Cartographic Items Maps 3480.(155.): [Cruchley's New Postal District Map of London. [Scale, 1/4 inches to a mile. Coloured]], London, 1859

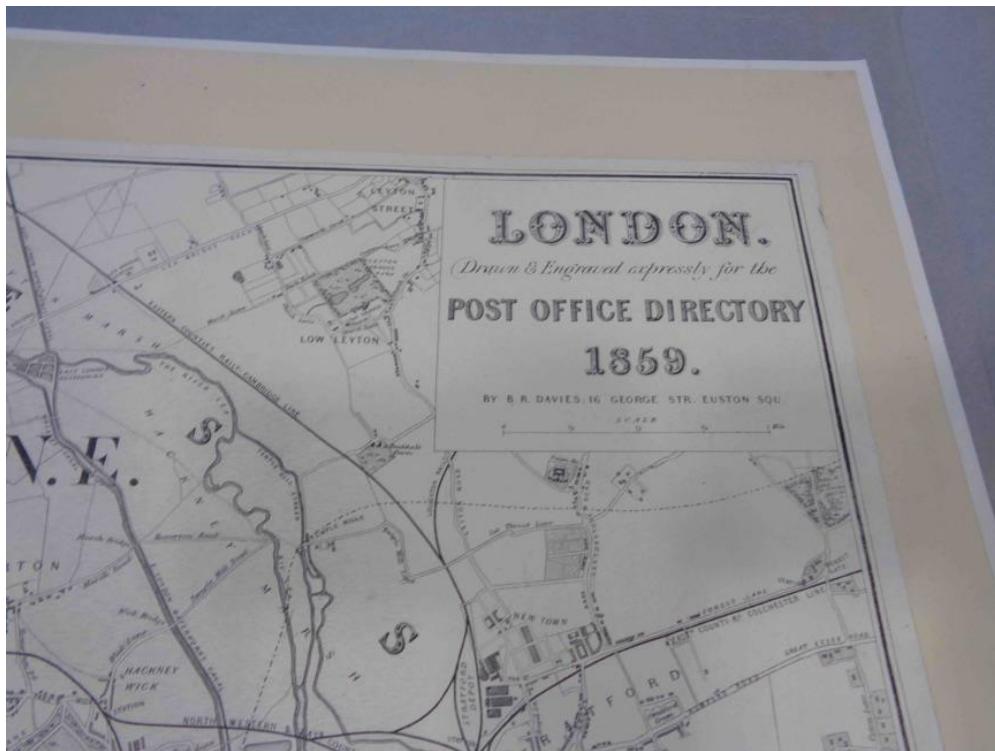
22. Another map produced in 1859 was made by one Mogg. It is particularly enjoyable because it has a nicely awkward addition; in fact the map is almost in two parts: the main map, and additional strip on left side added on, corresponding in detail to main map, but with some differences, e.g. main map is divided into a grid, while the extra section is not.



*Mogg's London*²⁹

²⁹ Cartographic Items Maps 3480.(156.): W. Mogg, *Mogg's London and its environs. Drawn by E.S. Mogg. (Mogg's Postal-District and Cab Fare Map.)*, London, 1859

23. London Drawn and Engraved expressly for the Post Office Directory is another variation, this one without any colour.

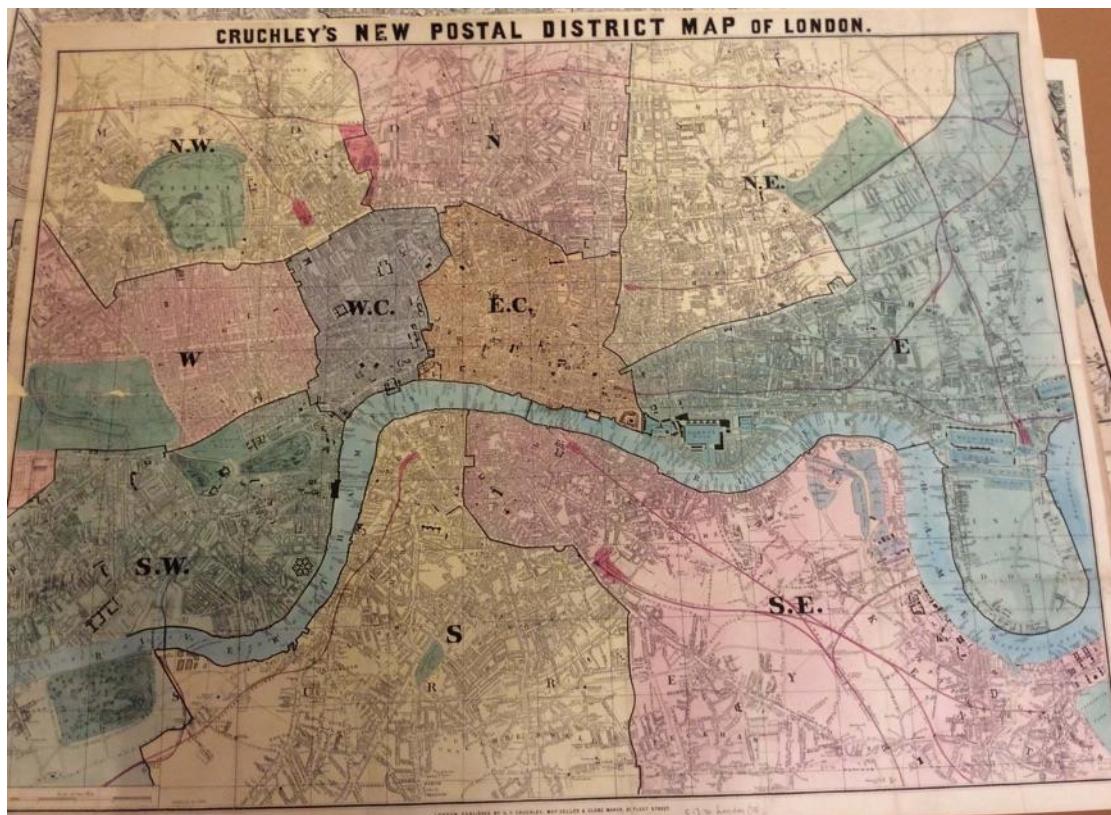


London Drawn and Engraved for the Post Office Directory³⁰

³⁰ Bodleian Library: C17:70 London (175): *London drawn & engraved expressly for the Post Office directory, 1864 [cartographic material]*, London, 1864

Then we move on to 1860 for yet more new types of postal maps.

24. The particular version of the Cruchley's map photographed below, is held in the Bodleian Library – dated 1860 - also has some evidence of human error: in the SW district where the river lies just north of Battersea Park, and then following the river east we can see an error with the boundary line appearing twice, on both sides of the river.



Cruchley's New Postal District Map of London³¹

³¹ Bodleian Library: C17:70 London (80), *Cruchley's new postal district map of London. [Together with] Street index [cartographic material]*, 1860

25. Type fifteen is the same, a Cruchley's map, but this one is without any colour³². The version below is part of the collections in the Bodleian Library, and is dated 1860. This one also does not have a scale in the bottom left, unlike the type 5 map.



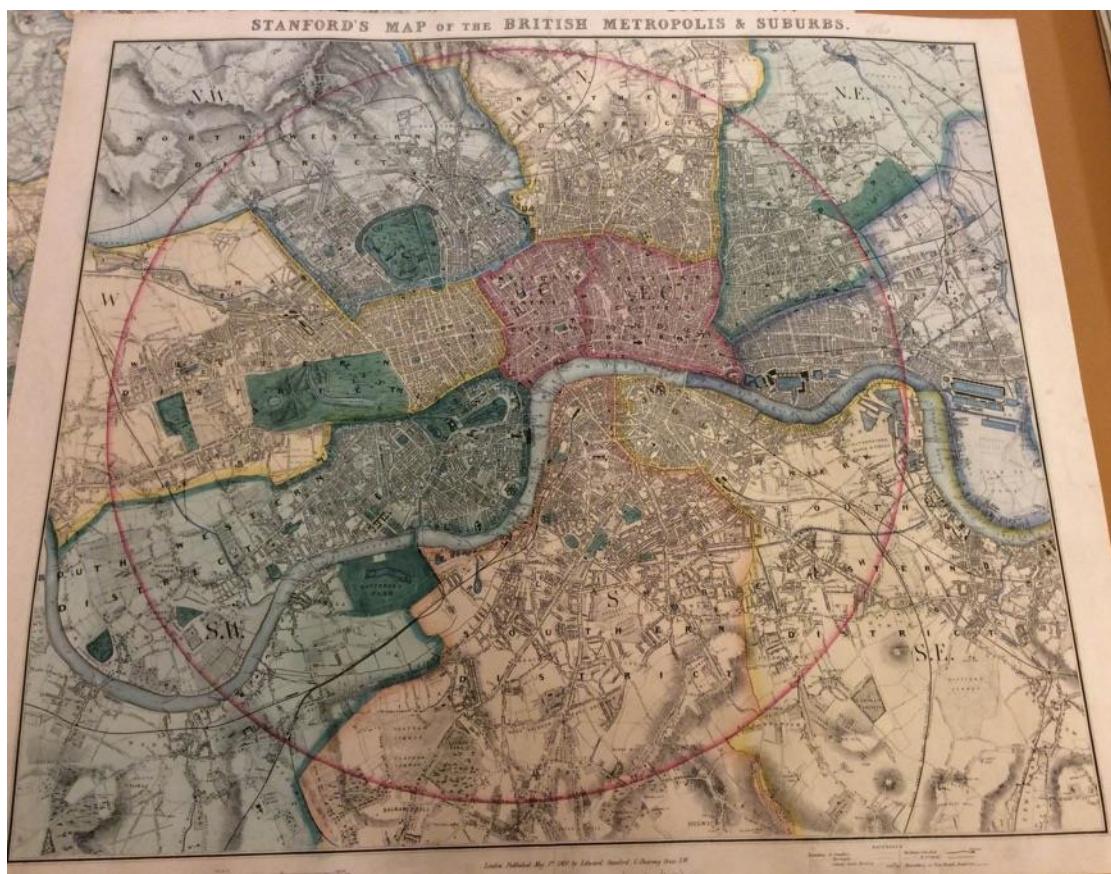
Cruchley's New Postal Map of London

One rather nice insight that this map gives us – and which reoccurs on a small number of others, too - is a slight error in its making. You can see in the SW district that the boundary line has been drawn on the 'base' map with dark black ink, but the cartographer has made a mistake, drawing a boundary line along both sides of the River Thames. It appears that the cartographer only realised the error when he reached the northern side of the river and realised that he had accidentally duplicated the boundary, and it simply trails off into nothing, the boundary left hanging. Similar small errors are seen occasionally on the maps and they betray the human hand that was a crucial part of the production of these maps.

³² Bod ref: C17:70 London (80)



26. Stanford's Map of the British Metropolis & Suburbs. It is similar to size and look as the type 3 map; although it shows the full extent of the 4 mile boundary to the south, which the type 2 map cuts off. It shows London with a radius circle drawn on, at a distance of four miles from Charing Cross, given in a pink/red. Or, what is said to be a line showing the distance from Charing Cross- in reality, the circle actually appears to have a centre further west, possibly south west, than Charing Cross. Regardless, the circle here takes in much more of western London than occurred in maps previously, indicating something of a shift in focus from east to west by this period. Presumably this relates to the new developments around Hyde Park – the old Great Exhibition site – which pushed the conception of what was 'central' London much further west.



Stanford's Map of the British Metropolis & Suburbs³³

³³ Bodleian Library C17:70 London (322): *Stanfords' map of the British metropolis and suburbs*, 1860

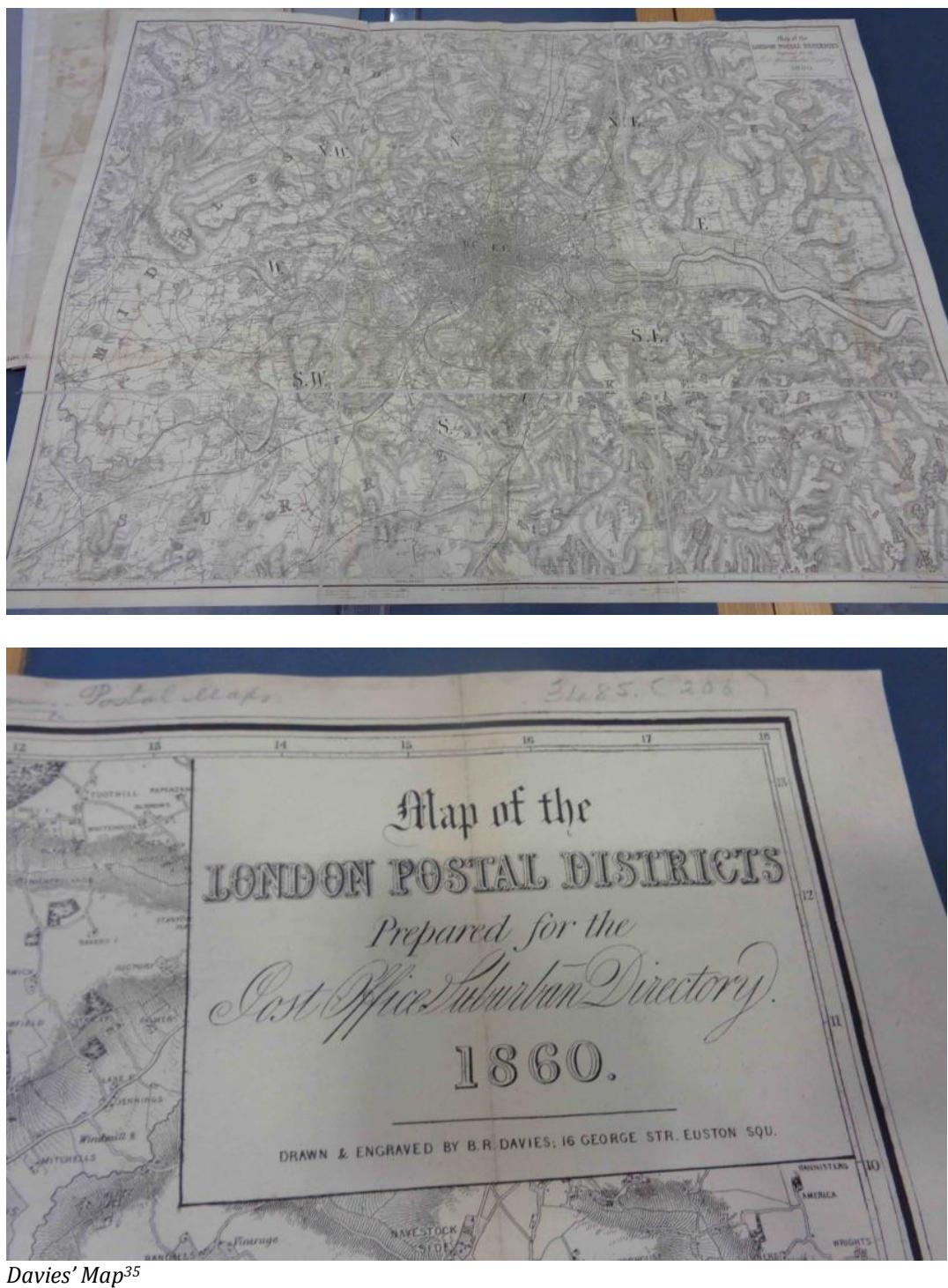
27. Stanford's Map of 12 Miles Round London, dated 1860 is the next map. This one is very rare, in that it is the only map to date found that includes the full extent of the postal districts – the full 12 mile radius- along with detail of the topography as well. The London Postal Map itself does not go into this level of detail.



Stanford's Map of 12 Miles Round London³⁴

³⁴ Bodleian Library: C17:40 (86): *Stanford's map of 12 miles round London [cartographic material]*, Edward Stanford, 1860

28. Davies' 1860 map is another which shows a huge area for London; this being linked, one images to the fact that the map describes itself as being used for the 'Post Office Suburban Directory'- and the London Postal Map described the 'suburbs' of London as a very large area in this period.



Davies' Map³⁵

³⁵ Bodleian Library: C17:40 (109): *Davies's map of the environs of London. Engraved by B.R. Davies [cartographic material], [S.l.]: Edward Stanford Ltd, 1859*

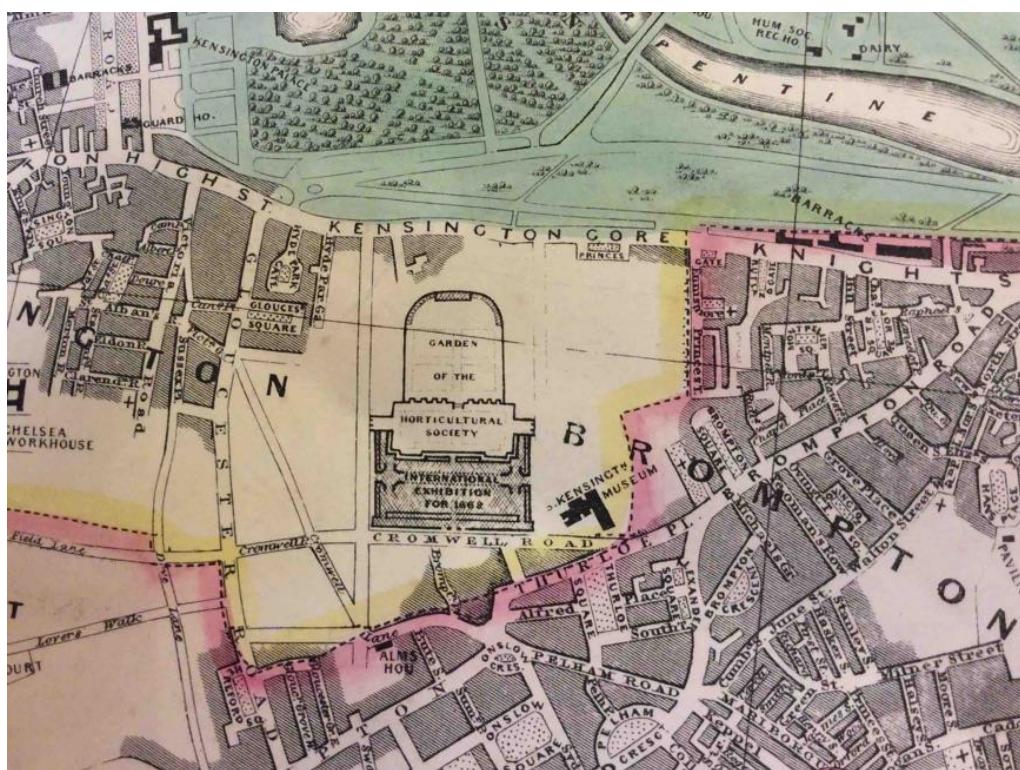
29. Then we have a set of three maps which are distinctive to the collection because they show a temporary structure on them: the buildings of the International Exhibition of 1862.



Stanford's Map, showing the International Exhibition³⁶

³⁶ Bodleian Library: C17:70 London (4): London with its postal sub-divisions reduced from the map prepared by Edward Stanford for use in the London & Provincial post offices. [together with] guide [cartographic material], 1862

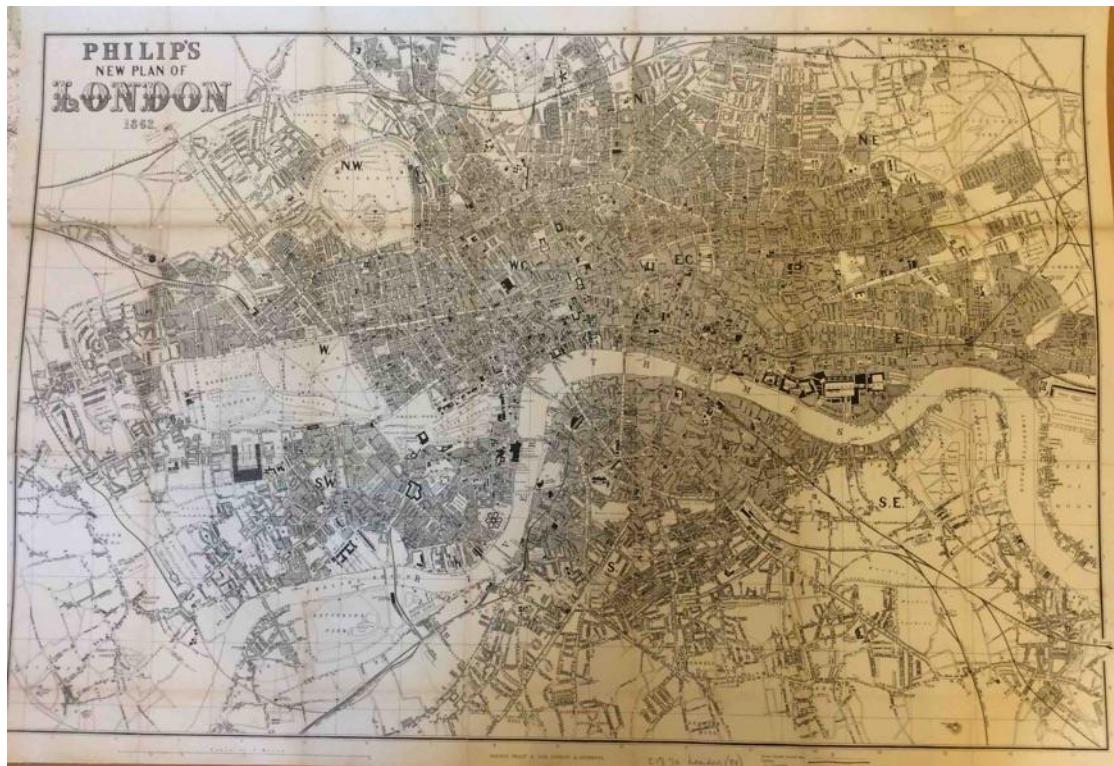
30. Collin's Standard Map of London (also with 1862 site shown)



Collin's Map³⁷

³⁷ Bodleian Library: C17:70 London (323): *Collins' standard map of London*. By Richd. Jarman [cartographic material]. Edward Stanford, 1862

31. And Philip's New Plan of London, also dated 1862

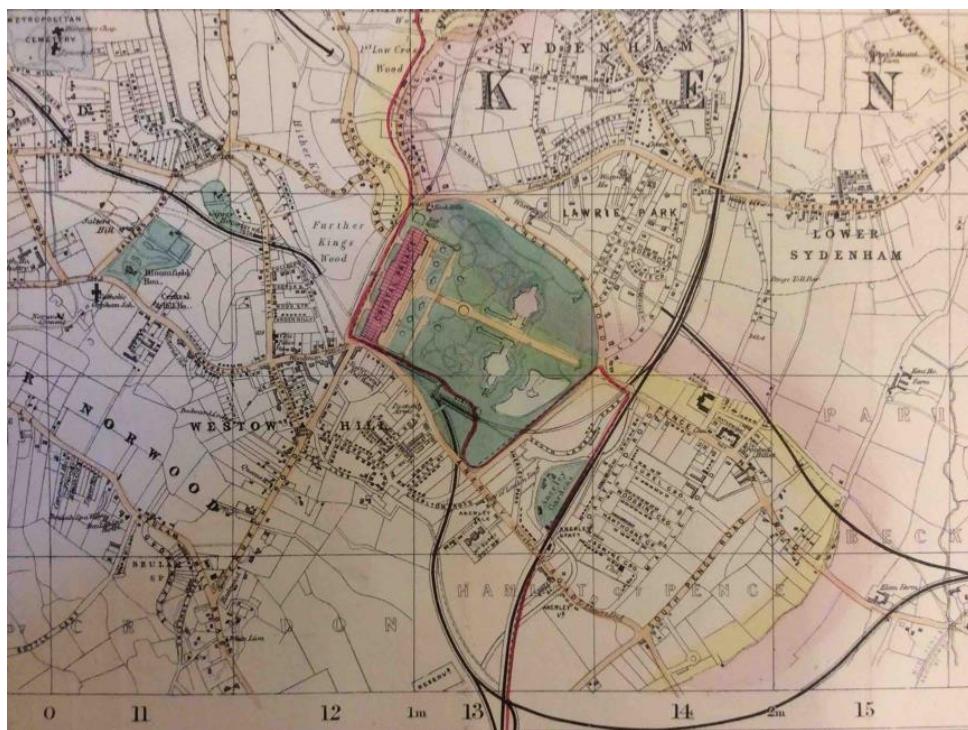


32. Moving forward to 1863, a new type of map again: Whitbread's New Crystal Palace Map of London (dated 1854, with corrections to 1863). The distinctive feature of this map is that although it concentrates on one particular area of London, like many of the others, that area is not the usual City/Westminster, but rather the area south of the river. The reason for this is that the crystal palace – moved south to Sydenham – is the focus of this map.



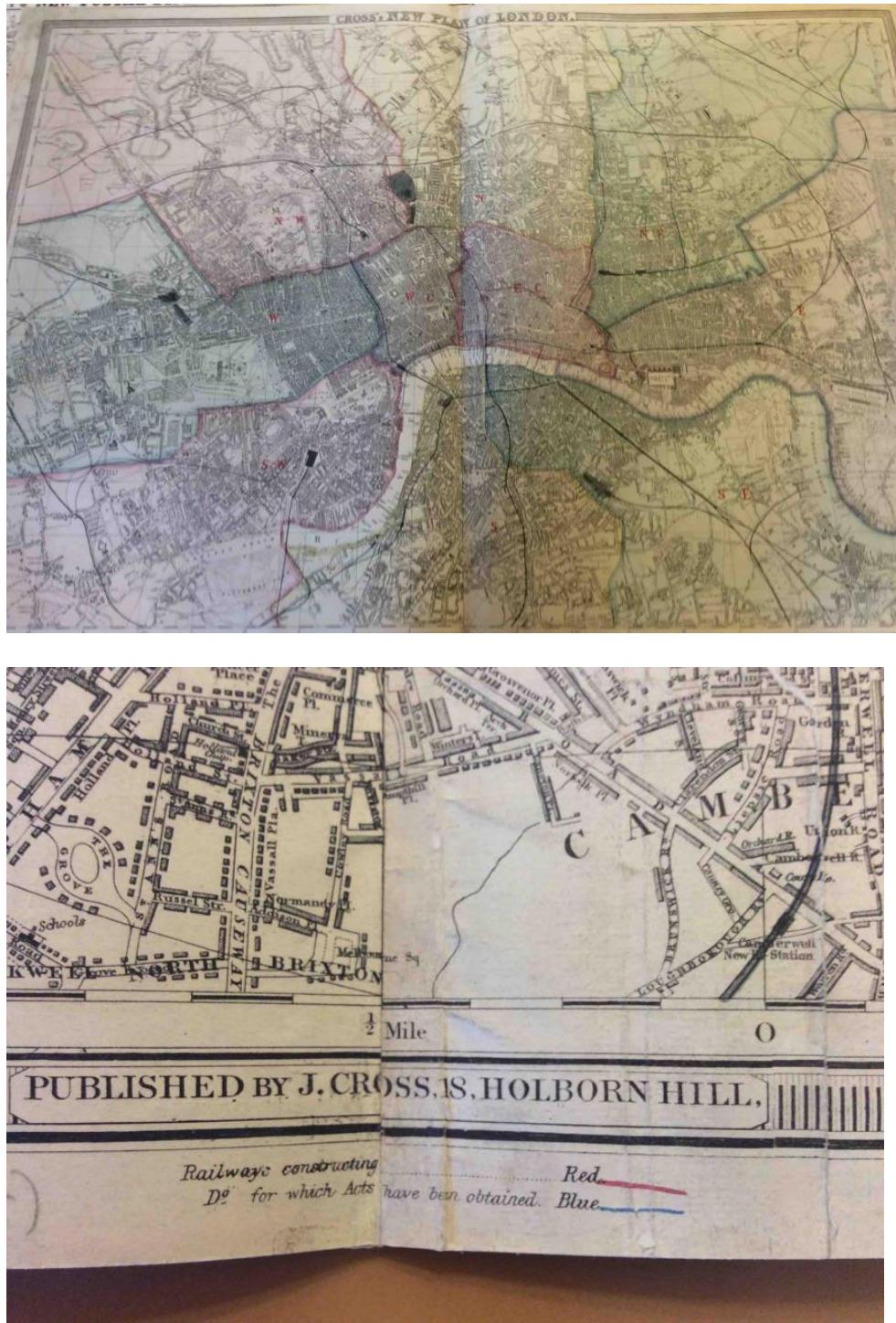
Whitbread's Crystal Palace Map³⁸

³⁸ Bodleian Library: C17:70 London (47): *Whitbread's New Crystal Palace Map of London. [Together with] Guide [cartographic material]*, London, 1863



What these maps which include the great exhibition sites as a focus indicate, is that the makers of maps understood that there was a market for maps of London for visitors to the great exhibitions that included the postal districts on them. They were by this time becoming standard features of London maps, including maps for visitors.

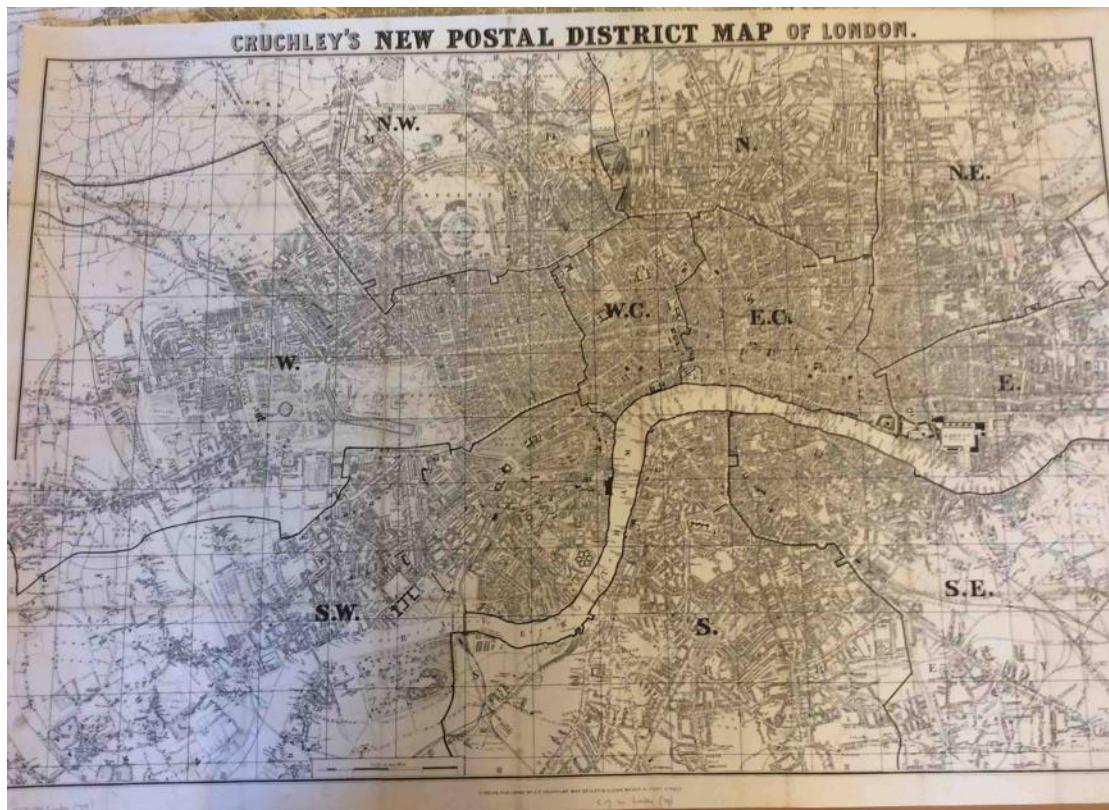
33. Cross's New Plan of London. The next type is Cross' map, which also shows some evidence of its making. It has a slightly miss-matched join running down the middle, which would indicate that some of these maps were made in parts, rather than printed as one whole, and then joined together afterwards.



*Cross's London*³⁹

³⁹ Bodleian Library: C17:70 London (145): *Cross's new plan of London [cartographic material]*, London, 1863

34. Cruchley's New Postal District Map of London. This Map is similar to many of the other Cruchley's maps that have been seen, with the exception that this one really clearly has shifted its focus for London westwards- we see a great deal more of west London, right into the rural areas, than we do of east London here. This is a marked difference from the pre-1830 maps we saw earlier.



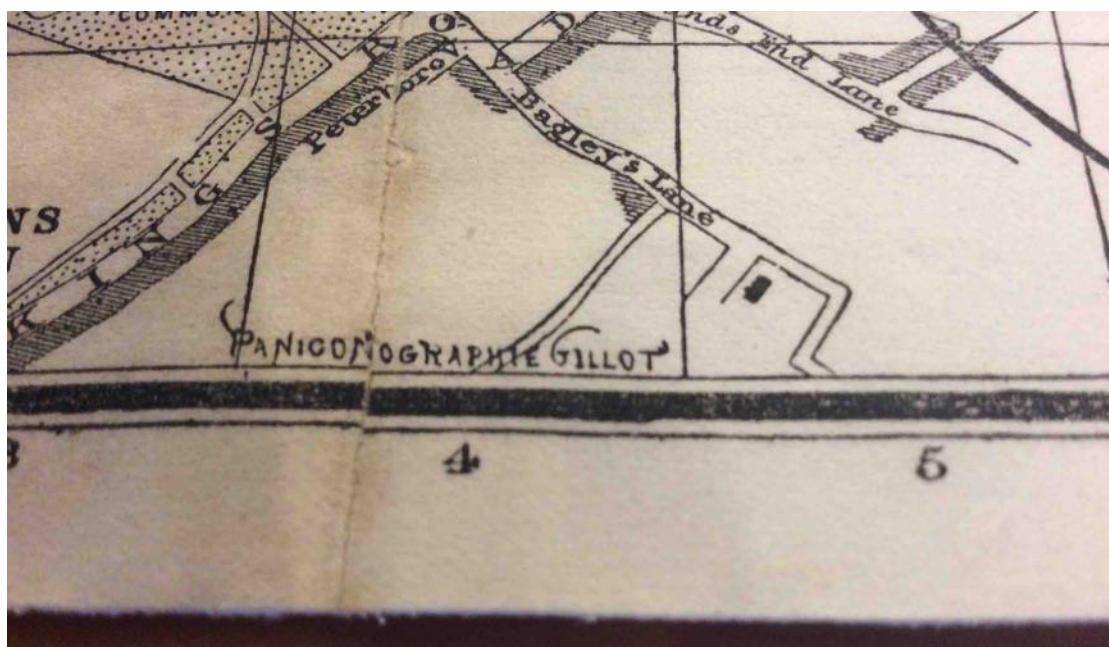
Cruchley's Map⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Bodleian Library: C17:70 London (79): *Cruchley's new postal district map of London. [Together with] Index [cartographic material]*, London, 1864

35. Reynold's Map of Modern London. Reynold's map is notable because it states it has been made by the 'Paniconographie' method.

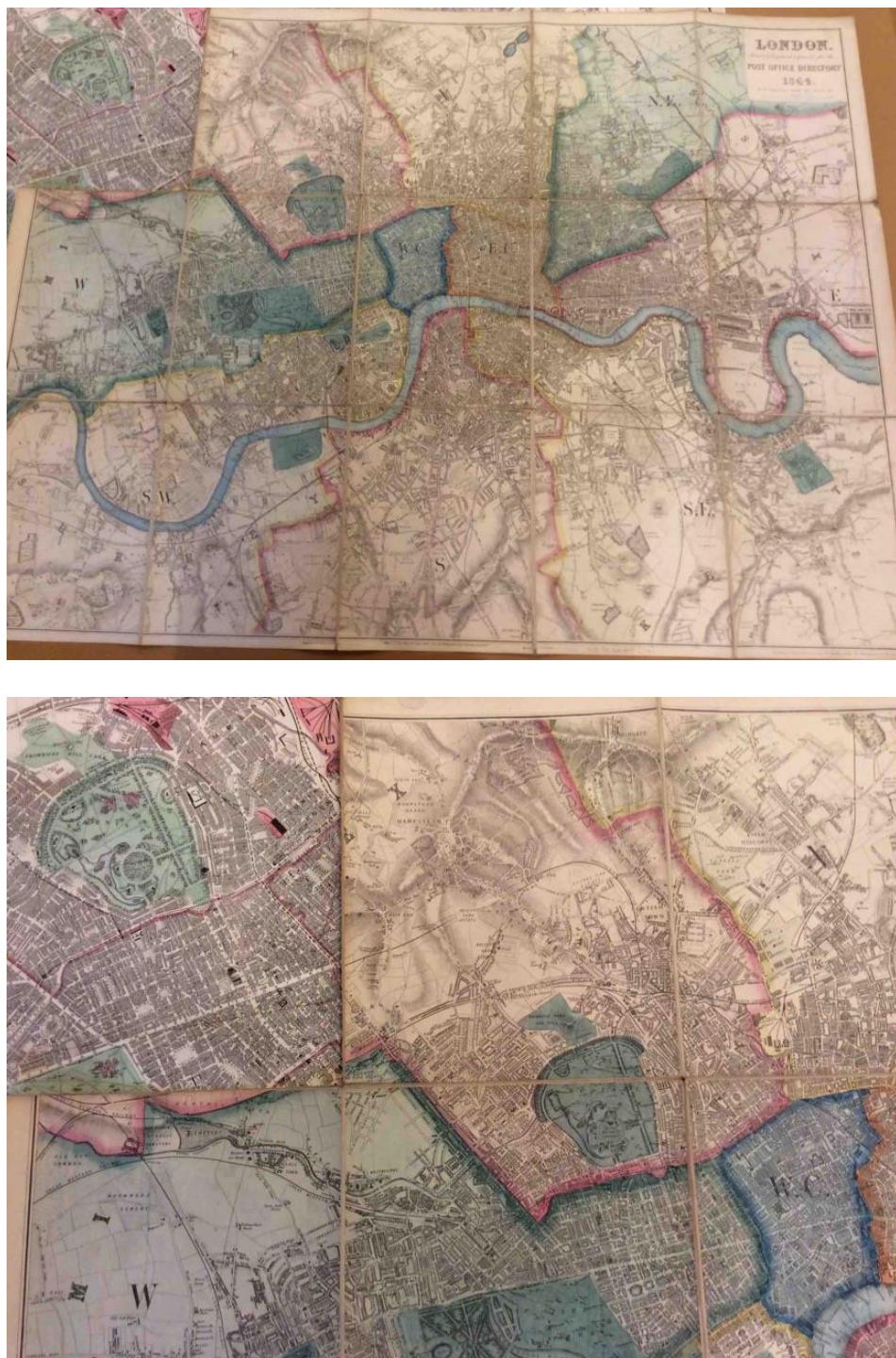


Reynold's Map⁴¹



⁴¹ Bodleian Library: C17:70 London (90): *Reynolds's map of modern London. [Together with] Guide [cartographic material]*, London, 1864

36. London Drawn and Engraved Expressly for the Post Office Directory, 1864 (Davies). Davies's map is another map that has a strange addition; this time a slightly misplaced additional section in the top left hand corner- what seems to be a completely different map, focusing on Regent's Park, has been attached to the area of London north west of Regent's Park.



Davies' Map⁴²

⁴² Bodleian Library: C17:70 London (175): *London drawn & engraved expressly for the Post Office directory, 1864 [cartographic material]*, London, 1864

37. Waistcoat map. In 1866 we have a map that appears to be a visitors or tourists map – a ‘Guide to London’, a pocket sized edition with written explanation of the city and its cab fares, and the postal system.

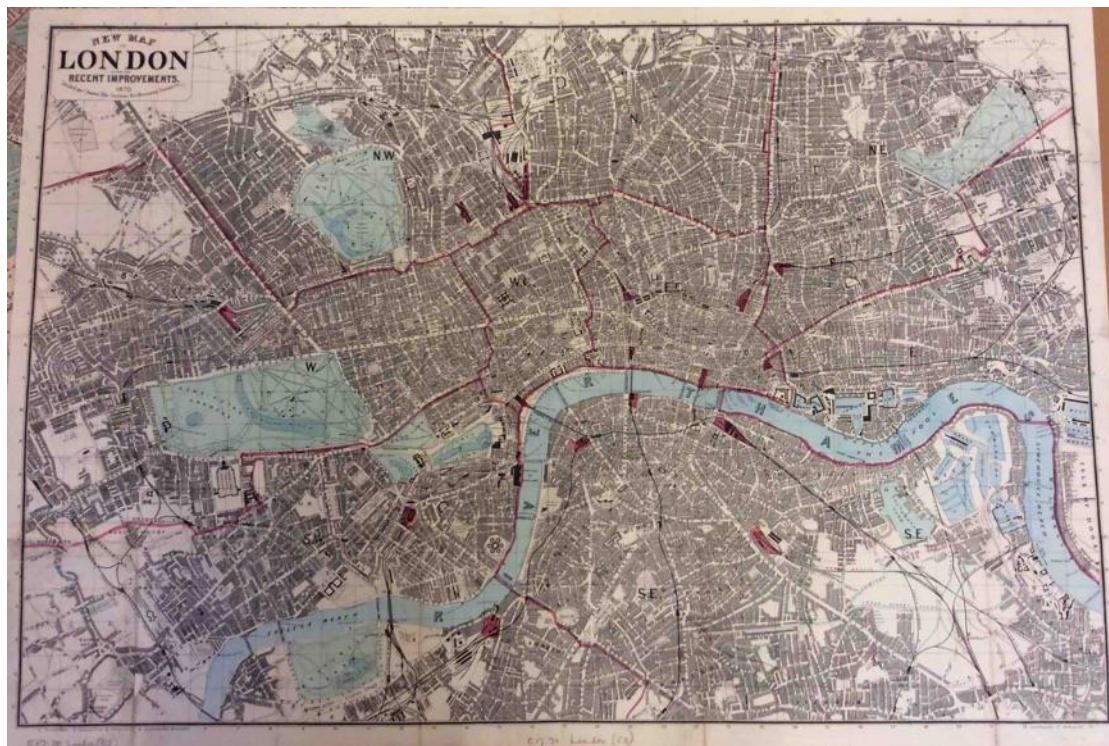


Waistcoat Map⁴³

⁴³ Cartographic Items Maps 3480.(197.): J. Skinner, [Waistcoat Pocket Map of] London, with the Postal Districts, Railways and Stations, and with all the latest improvements; divided into squares of half a mile each way for calculating Cab Fares. [Accompanied by a] Guide to London, London, 1866



38. New Map of London with the Recent Improvements (1870). The 'New Map of London With Recent Improvements' dated 1870 is similar in style to other maps- such as the Waistcoat Map, for example- but is notable for our purposes because it is the first appearance of a map which has incorporated changes to the original postal boundaries- that is, it no longer has a 'Southern' district on the map; instead on here we can see a clear 'SE' district and an 'SW', with nothing in between. However, the 'NE' district is still on the map- a point we will come back to later in the fourth chapter.

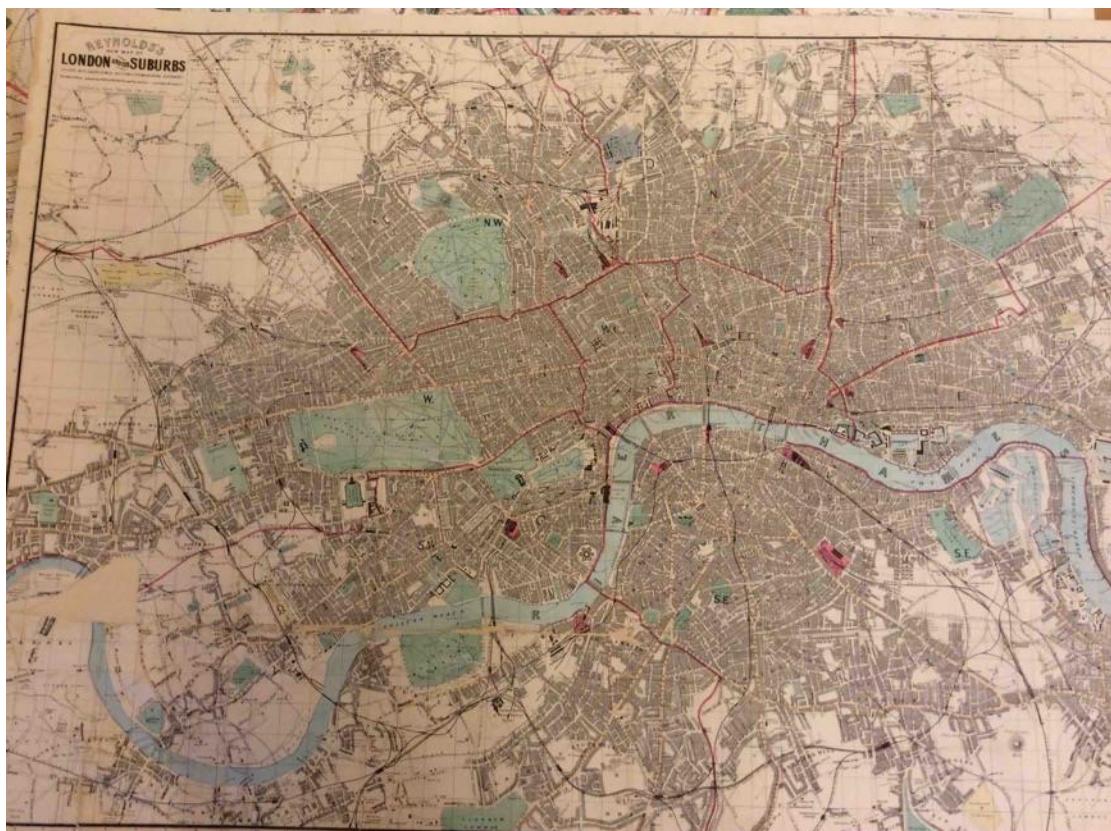




Map of recent improvements⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Bodleian Library: C17:70 London (53): *New map of London with the recent improvements, 1870. [Together with] Guide book [cartographic material]*, London, 1870

39. Reynold's New Map of London and the Suburbs, 1870. Similar as above with the Reynold's map, also dated 1870.



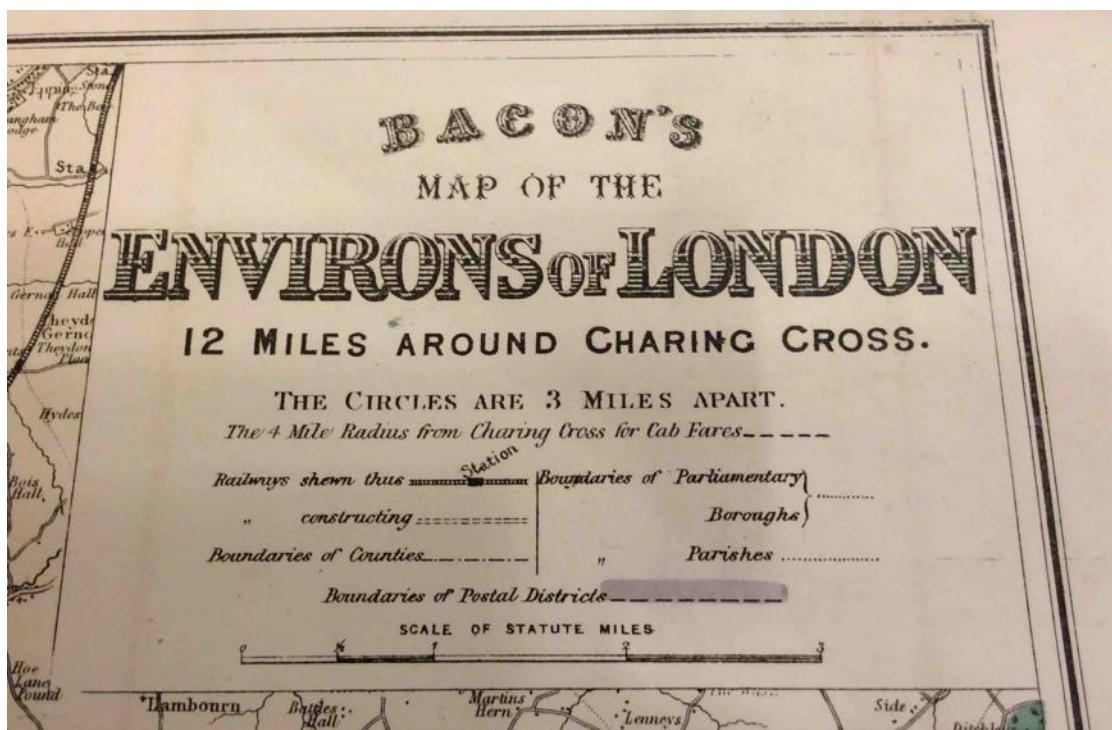
Reynold's Map⁴⁵

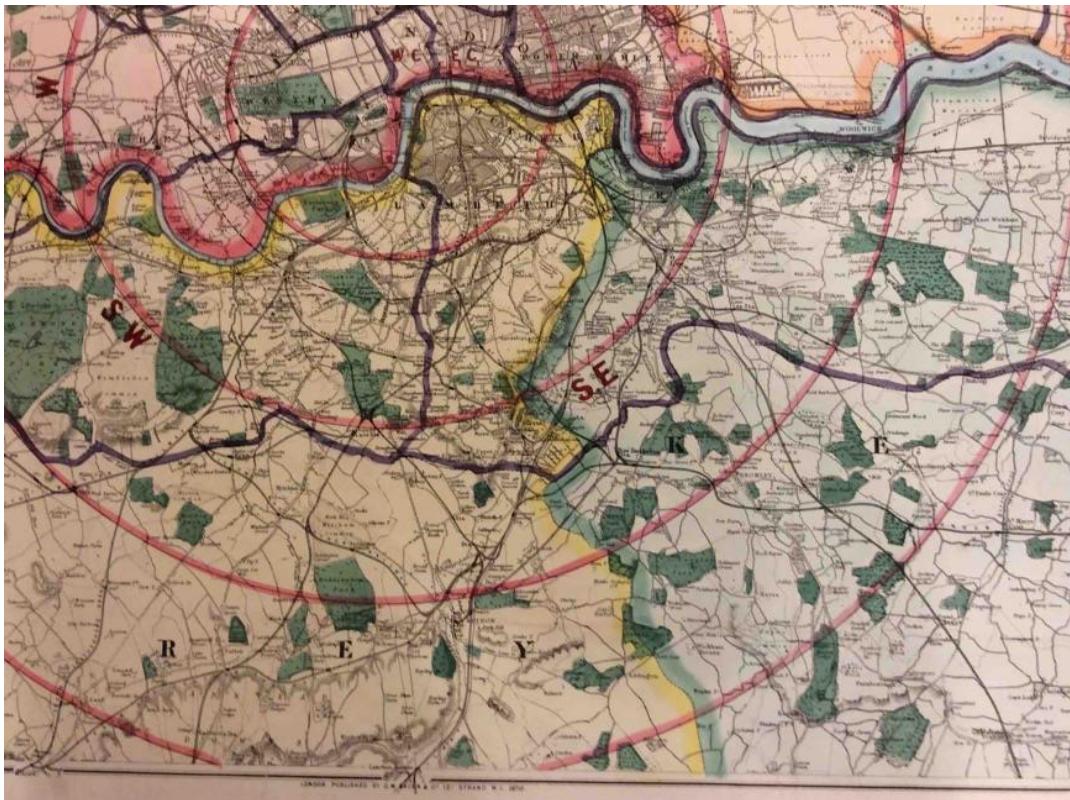
40. Bacon's Map of the Environs of London. Now, one of my absolute favourites. Bacon's map is incredibly distinctive, the only map of this type that I have seen. It is the boldest map by far, with a completely flamboyant and erratic colour scheme. It is the kind of map that reminds you that the Victorians were capable of designing the Albert Memorial in Hyde Park. So much is going on here as to render the whole thing almost completely incoherent- except for the fact that its loud style is the thing that makes it coherent. Here the different areas of London that are given in colour-coded shading denote the county boundaries, not the postal districts. To show the postal boundaries, on top of the already colourful map is drawn thick bright purple lines showing the outline of the postal areas. The names of the postal districts are given in bold red capital initials. And the scale of the map, shown in circles radiating out from the centre, are in a thick bright pink.

Aside from its aesthetic, this map is notable for another reason- it is the first map in a while, chronologically speaking, to show us the full extent of the postal boundaries (most tend to focus in on only the central area). And, what this reveals is important. Not only has 'S' and 'NE' both

⁴⁵ Bodleian Library: C17:70 London (208): *Reynolds's new map of London and its suburbs. [With] Visitor's guide [cartographic material]*, London, 1870

disappeared, but the whole outer boundaries of the London Postal Districts have completely changed. They are now much smaller, and have changed character, gone is the precise, geometric circle shape that defined the outer boundary at first, now instead we have a ragged, organic looking, irregular shape.

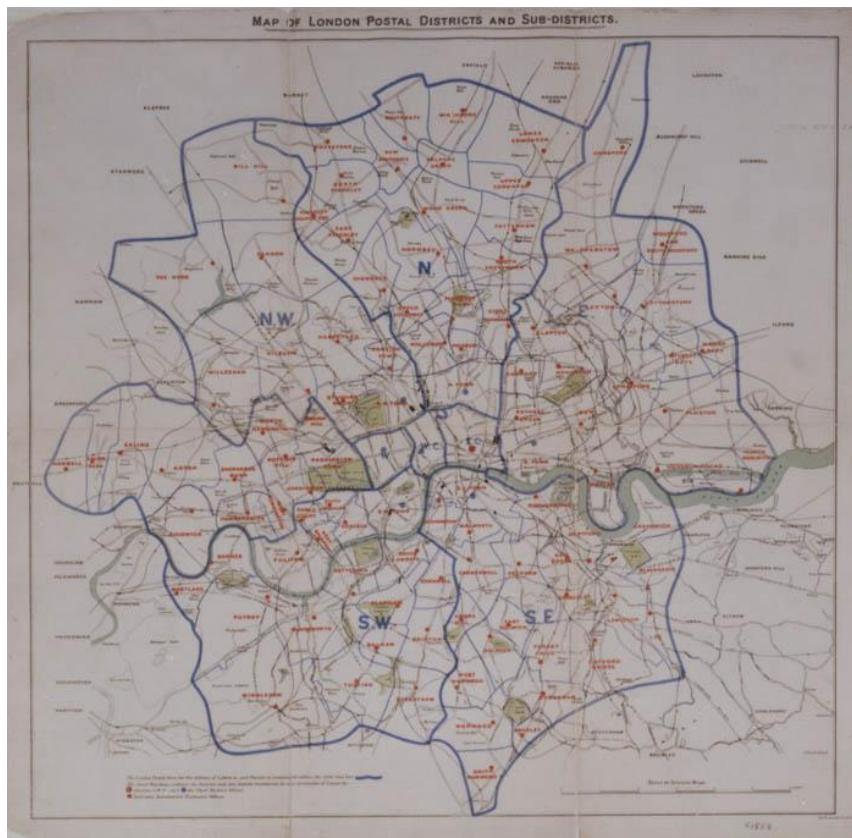




Bacon's Map⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Bodleian Library: C17:40 (17): *Bacon's map of the environs of London 12 miles around Charing Cross. [Together with] Guide [cartographic material]*, [S.l.]: G.W. Bacon & Co., 1870

41. We move forward now to a 'Map of London Postal Districts and Sub-Districts'⁴⁷ which the BPMA catalogue states is dated from the 1870s, but in likelihood is actually later. The scope of London here is smaller, with the districts reduced in size from the other maps from the 1870s that we have seen above; the size of them in fact corresponds to the size of districts in the early twentieth century. Again this map is a very distinctive style, with a very pleasing aesthetic of simple colour scheme of blue boundary lines, and inner boundaries and postal sites in red. The lettering is a straight-forward sans serif, consistent throughout. It does not have the feel of a Victorian map.



42. 'Stanford's Special Map of the Railways and Railway Stations and Tramways, Postal Districts and Sub-Divisions in London and its Environs'⁴⁸ dated 1874 is the next map, held in the RGS collections. This map covers an area of 25x25 miles square, *nearly* the extent of London in the 1856⁴⁹. Perhaps due to this scale, the map does not have very much detail on it. The outer London boundary given is smaller than the 1856 version. Each district is divided into sub districts. This map is interesting because it allows us to speculate on how the boundary lines within

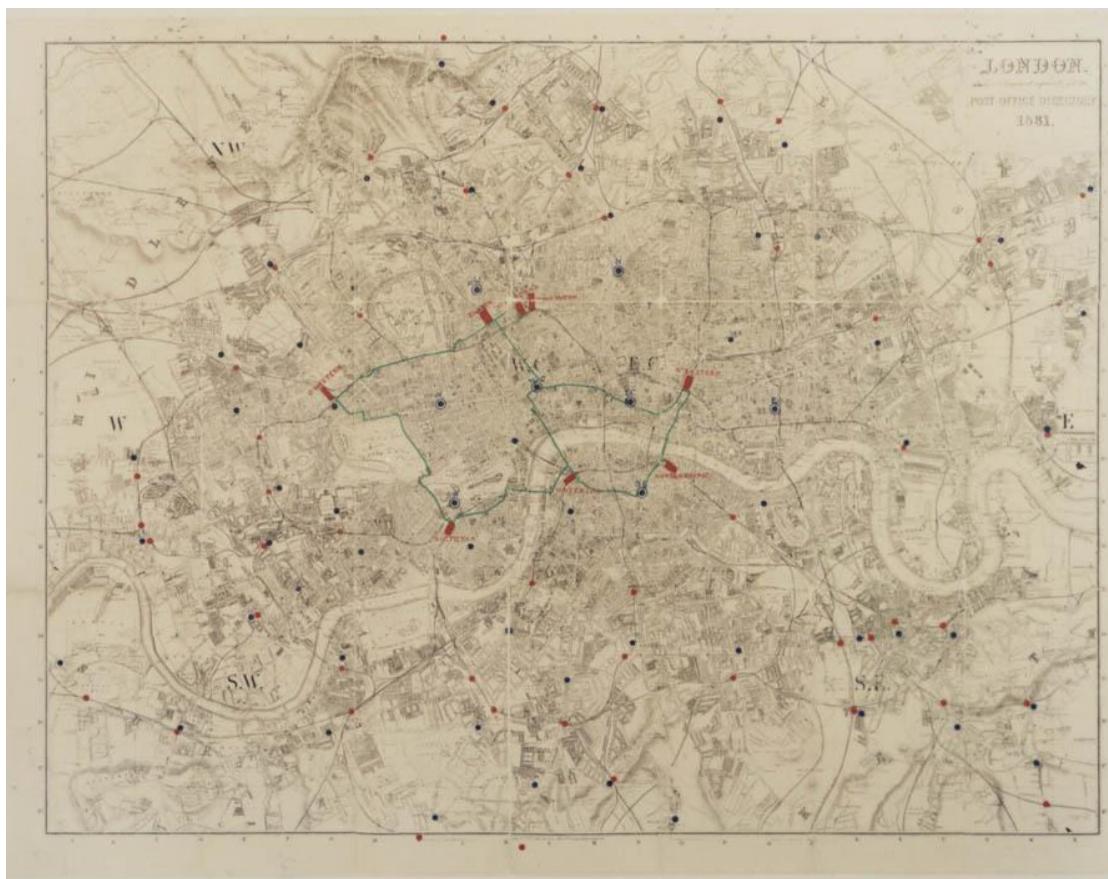
⁴⁷ POST 21/55: *Map of London Postal Districts and Sub-Districts*, c.1860s

⁴⁸ RGS - Stanford's Special Map of the Railways and Railway Stations and Tramways, Postal Districts and Sub-Divisions in London and its Environs

⁴⁹ The full extent of the map is not shown on the map itself – the SE district falls off the side of it

London were drawn. We can see that in some areas the outer boundary appears to make sense, for example it follows the line of a river; whereas in others it is just a sweeping curve across open land, which looks good aesthetically on map, but appears to bear no relation to what is happening on the ground. It perhaps indicates that the land it denotes has not yet been developed, so it does not need to follow road boundaries.

43. 'London Drawn and Engraved expressly for the Post Office Directory' dated 1881⁵⁰ is another new type of map, quite distinctive from many of the others. It does not make a feature of the postal districts – although they are clearly labelled on the map – rather it makes a feature of showing railway stations, head district offices, sorting offices and stations in immediate locale of letter carrier offices; and the connecting networks between these sites.



44. The Daily Telegraph Postal Map of London⁵¹ is the next map. It is undated but appears to correspond with other maps that show the new sub-districts that were introduced in 1917. It was published by a new mapmaker to our collection, one Alexander Gross F.R.G.S. It is a large map, showing the built up areas of London and the Postal Districts shown in red lines – thick red for the district boundaries, and thin red for the sub-

⁵⁰ POST 21/72: *London drawn and engraved expressly for the Post Office Directory, 1881*

⁵¹ RGS - The Daily Telegraph Postal Map of London

district boundaries, each sub district is labelled – e.g. SW14. Unlike other maps in the collection, a sense of the ‘panorama’ of London is introduced into the form of this map, as it shows some buildings on the map drawn in 3-D, for example the Exhibition Site, Museums and South Ken, Parliament, and major train stations. It also includes a guide to using the map, as follows: “Boundaries of the Postal Districts shown thus –

Boundaries of Sub-Postal Districts shown thus –

Red initials and numbers shown in each sub Postal-District should be used when sending letters, etc., to any address situated in their respective sub Postal-District”

45. ‘Philips’ A.B.C Pocket Atlas Guide to London with New Postal Areas’⁵² is the last RGS map that I have considered for including in this thesis, dated August 1917. It is a small pocket atlas, with pages in the front detailing the sites of London, with history and illustrations. It includes tube and rail maps over a series of pages of plates showing map of London that is very detailed with names of roads given, and all the usual features. Each map page shows the postal boundary, with its name (e.g. NW6) with both boundary lines and names in bright red, and each Postal District includes its sorting office, marked with a clear red circle. The list of public buildings it gives includes the GPO. It has a ‘preface’ which states: “A new and valuable feature of the present edition is the insertion on the sectional maps of the new Postal Sub Divisions. From the boundaries and numbers of these sub-divisions, as shown on the maps, the correct postal address can be ascertained for the 7,500 streets given in the index at the end of the volume.” What this map shows is how integral the postal districts were to visitors to London in this period- they needed to be able to communicate when in London just as much as they needed to be able to use the tube. This type of publication would not be needed today, and I think this one shows the extent to which we have forgotten how much people used the letter post in London as an integral part of daily life, comparable to the tube, whose importance has of course continued to this day.

46. The last map included, ‘Official Map of the London Postal Districts’⁵³, is both a map from the 1870s, and from the 1920s. The map shows colour-coded postal districts from the 1870s, and also it has ‘L.P.S. Boundary 1926’ note added to it in pink ink – and the boundary line drawn on top of the map. This additional boundary line shows some areas slightly extended, others slightly cut down. It shows how these maps were used by the Post Office – as working documents, rather than museum pieces. This

⁵² RGS- Philips’ A.B.C Pocket Atlas Guide to London with New Postal Areas

⁵³ POST 21/69: *Official map of the London postal districts* 1870

map from the 1870s had been used by post office staff in the 1920s to explain, and perhaps to design, changes to the postal boundaries.

