

Part one of this article (published in last month's *GSM*) introduced the subject and recorded current postal and certifying markings. This concluding part starts with mourning and celebratory mail and goes on to give a brief history of each residence served by the Court Post Office, records where members of the Royal Family currently live and details the Royal Mail office that is used to process incoming and outgoing mail.



The Court Post Office: Part Two

By Glenn H Morgan and John Holman

Mourning Mail

The past few years have witnessed much sadness for the Royal Family, although their grieving is far less private than for most of us. They go into immediate mourning, traditionally for a period of up to six months depending on who has died, although these days it tends to be only for a few days.

When Princess Diana, Princess Margaret and HM Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother passed away there were huge increases in mail received at the Royal residences. At the height of mourning for Princess Diana, between 80 and 100 mailbags a day were being received, compared to the more usual two or three.

From a collecting viewpoint, Royal deaths produce mourning stationery in the form of envelopes and letterheads framed with a black border, which are brought into service as a mark of respect on all outgoing mail. There are funeral invitations to post, acceptances to process and letters of thanks in respect of the condolences expressed to despatch totalling many thousands of additional mail items.

Celebratory Mail

There is a long tradition of a Monarch sending greetings to subjects reaching a milestone in life, be it a significant age or wedding anniversary. King George V introduced a service in 1917 that marked 100th birthdays and diamond (60th) wedding anniversaries. This tradition has been continued, and expanded. Her Majesty now sends messages for diamond, 65th and platinum (70th) wedding anniversaries and every year thereafter, and for 100th and 105th birthdays and every year thereafter.

Royal Cards

The Inland Telegram Service had been used until 1982, when Telemessages took their place. Royal Cards have replaced these since 12 June 1999. Many people do not realise that it is necessary to apply for a congratulatory message, believing that a card will magically appear. This is not feasible, not least because of Data Protection Act legislation which would preclude the Royal Household from having access to the dates of every potential celebrant. A form addressed to the Anniversaries Office at Buckingham Palace will, however, result in a card being sent. Applications must not be made more than three weeks in advance, but can be sent

up to six months after the event has been celebrated. As it is The Queen's custom to send messages only to citizens of one of Her Realms or UK Overseas Territories, those born or married overseas, or who currently live abroad, must provide evidence of their British nationality.

Wherever possible, cards are 'pulled' in instances where death of a proposed recipient has been advised in time, to avoid impacting on the grief of the family. This can involve contacting the local delivery office on the proposed date of delivery—something that was never possible with Telemessages. In such circumstances, Her Majesty's Private Secretary sends a letter of condolence to the family on behalf of The Queen.

In 2002, a total of 22,000 cards were despatched, all of which were sent by Royal Mail Special Delivery two days prior to the intended receipt date. If the celebrant lives in Australia, Canada or New Zealand, the completed application form is submitted to the relevant Governor-General, who, as The Queen's personal representative in these countries, arranges for despatch of the greetings.

Royal Cards are intended for recipients residing in the UK. An insert bears the Royal Coat of Arms, a greeting from Her Majesty and a facsimile of her signature. A BP (Buckingham Palace) prefix on the Special Delivery label's number identifies the source of the mail item to Royal Mail officials.

There are currently two Royal Cards in use, both depicting Her Majesty. The first is a semi-permanent card showing Her in a white checked blue dress, intended for recipients celebrating their 100th birthday or diamond wedding anniversaries. The second design is changed annually and presently shows Her Majesty in a blue coat, which is used for all other celebrants covered by the scheme. The annual change was brought about when an elderly recipient of 109 observed that she was receiving an identical card every year. Prince William made a personal visit to Catherine Masters at her nursing home by way of an apology promising that his Grandma would wear a different outfit for her next card. Previous recent designs have been seen where she is wearing a red or a yellow dress and others undoubtedly exist.

Recent Royal weddings

A Royal wedding always captures the public's imagination and there have been several such

events in the past few years, the most recent, of course, being that of Prince William to Miss Catherine Middleton, now the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge. Senders of greetings letters and cards who included their name and address details received an attractive card depicting the happy couple on their wedding day with the standard red meter PPI marking of Buckingham Palace used on the return envelope and an embossed 'W' monogram on its flap.

The 2012 Diamond Jubilee celebrations

The historic occasion of the Diamond Jubilee has seen the creation of a Royal 'thank you' card with six images of Her Majesty on it. The envelope offers a unique souvenir of the event as it bears the Royal Mail first class Diamond Jubilee Machin definitive cancelled with an amended version of the standard franking machine die. The PPI has been replaced by a series of wavy lines to cancel the stamp and will be used on replies to all such mail received during this special year, but not on day-to-day mail despatched from Buckingham Palace, or on any mail using the Windsor Castle franking machine. Early responses bore the gold Machin stamp until the 'Diamond Blue' colour was issued (see **Type 8** image in part one of this article).

The Residences served

When Her Majesty or other qualifying member of the Royal Family is in residence, staff from the Court Post Office is sent to meet their needs and apply the appropriate handstamps to outgoing mail. At all other times the PPI handstamps are applied by Royal Household staff. Incidentally, a duplicate set of most handstamps are retained at Buckingham Palace.

Balmoral Castle

Balmoral Castle on the Balmoral Estate in Aberdeenshire, Scotland, is the private residence of The Queen. Mail from this castle is collected and handled by Royal Mail at Aberdeen. Post office counter services were permanently withdrawn on 9 October 2000.

Buckingham Palace

Buckingham Palace has served as the official London residence of Britain's sovereigns since 1837 and today is the administrative headquarters of the Monarch. Mail from this palace is collected and handled by Royal Mail



at its Nine Elms Mail Centre, although this is set to change later in 2012.

Birkhall

When at Birkhall, The Prince of Wales and The Duchess of Cornwall enjoy fishing and walking in the Scottish countryside. Mail from this residence is collected and handled by Balmoral Castle when Their Royal Highnesses are in residence.

Castle of Mey

In 1952 Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother saw the Castle and despite its poor condition, she purchased it that year and set about renovating and restoring both the Castle and its gardens. In 1996, The Queen Mother established The Queen Elizabeth Castle of Mey Trust, to which the castle was transferred later that year. Mail from this residence is collected and flown to London and cancelled by the Buckingham Palace meter franking when Royalty are in residence.

Clarence House

Clarence House, which stands beside St James's Palace, was built between 1825 and 1827 to the designs of John Nash for Prince William Henry, Duke of Clarence. Today, Clarence House is the official London residence of The Prince of Wales and The Duchess of Cornwall, and Princes William and Harry. Mail from this house is collected and handled by Buckingham Palace, hence the lack of Clarence House postal markings.

Estate and Other Offices

These are located across the Kingdom and invariably utilise a commercial meter franking machine, often with a pictorial element at left of the town die. The mail items are simply taken to the local post office.

Highgrove House

Highgrove House near Tetbury in Gloucestershire is The Prince of Wales and The Duchess of Cornwall's family home. The Duchy of Cornwall owns Highgrove, and bought the house, garden and nearby farmland now known as Duchy Home Farm in 1980. Mail from this house is collected and handled by Royal Mail at Gloucester when Their Royal Highnesses are in residence.

Kensington Palace

Today, Kensington Palace contains the offices and London residences of The Duke



Photo credit: Buckingham Palace - David Baron



The Buckingham Palace and Windsor Castle badges used by the postmen at these residences

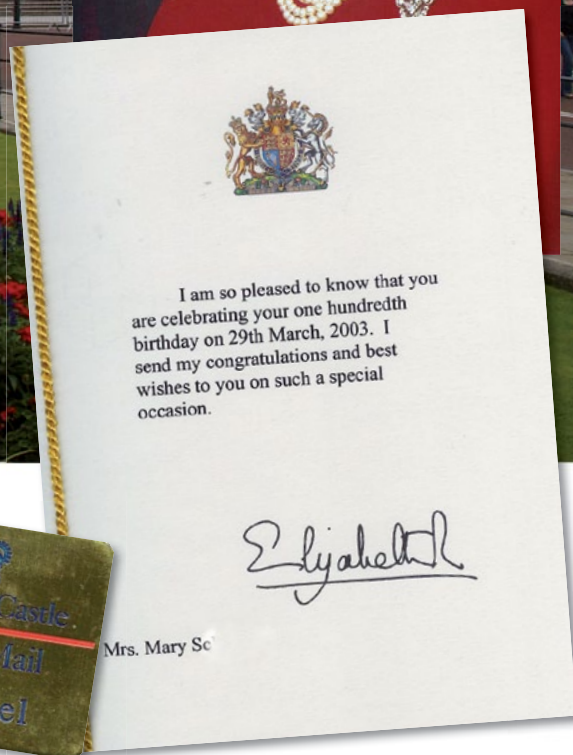
and Duchess of Gloucester, The Duke and Duchess of Kent and Prince and Princess Michael of Kent. Mail from this palace is collected and handled by Buckingham Palace, hence the lack of Kensington Palace postal markings.

Palace of Holyroodhouse

Founded as a monastery in 1128, the Palace of Holyroodhouse in Edinburgh is The Queen's official residence in Scotland. Mail from this palace is collected and handled by Royal Mail at Edinburgh. Post office counter services were permanently withdrawn on 6 July 2000.

St James's Palace

St James's Palace is the senior palace of the Sovereign, with a long history as a Royal residence. The offices of the Royal Collection Department, the Marshal of the Diplomatic Corps, the Central Chancery of the Orders of Knighthood, the Chapel Royal, the Gentlemen at Arms, the Yeomen of the Guard and the Queen's Watermen are all located at St James's Palace. Since January 2009, the Household Office of Prince William



An original Royal Card depicting Her Majesty in a red dress, as inserted into the white envelope. And the inside message to the original Royal Card.

and Prince Harry has also been based at St James's Palace, although their official residence remains Clarence House. St James's Palace contains the London residences of The Prince of Wales, The Princess Royal and Princess Alexandra. Mail from this palace is handled by Buckingham Palace, hence the lack of St James's Palace postal markings, although a couple of certifying stamps (**Type 10**) do remain in use.

Sandringham House

Sandringham House in Norfolk has been the private home of four generations of Sovereigns since 1862. Mail from this residence is collected and handled by Royal Mail at King's Lynn. Post office counter services were permanently withdrawn on 11 February 2001.

Windsor Castle

Windsor Castle is an official residence of The Queen and the largest occupied castle in the world. A Royal home and fortress for over 900 years, the Castle remains a working palace today. Mail from this residence is collected and handled by Royal Mail at Slough.

The original Telemessage envelope with a 'FROM THE QUEEN' sticker affixed



The original Telemessage card design featuring an illustration of a mailcoach

(Right) The replacement Telemessage card design featuring Windsor Castle for English celebrants



ROYAL CARDS

The outer envelope used for Royal Cards



The Special Delivery label used for Royal Cards with its unique 'BP' (Buckingham Palace) prefix



An inner envelope that has its address typed on in such a position as to be visible in the window of the blue outer envelope

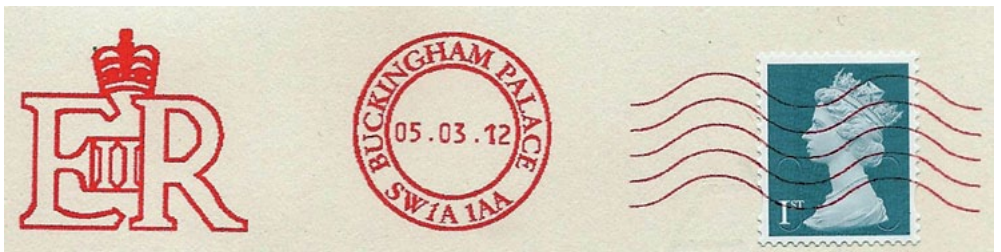
Gorseyfields
Droylsden
Manchester
M43 6DX



The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge were immensely touched that you should take the trouble to write as you did on the occasion of their Wedding and have been overwhelmed by the kind letters and cards that they have received. It really was most thoughtful of you and Their Royal Highnesses wish to send you their warmest thanks and best wishes.



The front and back of the 'thank you' card sent to those who wrote to the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge congratulating them on their marriage, together with the embossed 'W'



Type 8



Type 10

Thanks

Special thanks to David Baxter for the time that he so willingly gave in answering the many questions posed, and to the Royal Household for agreeing to the meeting and for its subsequent approval of the use of the text and imagery before you.