

# A Short History of Dry Drayton Post and Post Office

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## Introduction

The writer welcomes any suggestions from more knowledgeable researchers on how this article might be improved. What follows draws heavily on Ken Smith's research and on his excellent UK Post Office List site at: <https://sites.google.com/site/ukpostofficesbycounty/> . We are also most grateful to him for permission to use the illustrations of local postmarks below.

The history of mail handling in Britain is long and complex (endnote <sup>1</sup>). The origins of the UK Post Office can be traced to the 13th Century and by the 19th Century the Post Office was a large state run monopoly with exclusive rights to deliver letters in the United Kingdom and many years experience of doing so.

## The Village Letter Receiving House

Let us imagine that it is 1835: Samuel Smith MA DD, the Rector of Dry Drayton, has just finished writing a letter to the Master of his old College in Oxford. How does his letter get from his house in Dry Drayton to Oxford, and how does a reply get back to him at Dry Drayton? First the Rector had to get his letter into the postal system. His first step would be for his servant to hand in the letter at the local Dry Drayton letter receiving house, a predecessor of the idea of a village post office. A letter collector, on a daily walking round, through a number of villages, would have picked up the letter and taken it to the Post Office for the district, in Cambridge. In 1848 the Dry Drayton letter

collector was described as "the post-lad" (endnote <sup>2</sup>) which may suggest younger employees could best handle such a physically demanding job.

At this time the charge for the letter would normally have been collected from the recipient. A letter handler at Cambridge, or later at the main London Post Office at St Martin's-le-Grand would rate or work out the price for the letter and mark it accordingly. It was possible for the sender to pre-pay at a post office as an alternative. In that case the Rector would have needed to take his letter first to Cambridge, where the Post Office opening hours were 7.30am to 10pm summer and 8.00am to 10pm winter. (endnote <sup>3</sup>) Indeed in newspaper advertisements requiring applications by letter the advertiser would often specify "reply by letter, post paid to ...."

Letters were relatively expensive to send and were charged by a combination of distance travelled and weight. For this reason the Rector would not have used an envelope but, having written his letter on one or more sheets of paper, would have folded and sealed them to keep the contents private. In our example the Rector's letter would probably have cost the recipient 4d.

From Cambridge the Rector's letter would go on a mail coach run to London (Endnote <sup>4</sup>), departing from the Post Office in Green Street Cambridge every night at Midnight, then by another mail coach to Oxford and finally to the College for delivery on foot by another letter collector, who would collect the fee on delivery. A reply would follow roughly the same route in reverse. Daily mail coach arrivals at Cambridge from London were at 1.45am.

The location of the early 19th Century letter receiving house in Dry Drayton is not currently known. We can speculate that it would have been somewhere fairly centrally located in the village. It could have been a private house, or perhaps somewhere where a trade or business was carried out. The location of the letter receiving house would be common knowledge in the village and so there was probably no need for any signage. Facilities were probably no more than an opening window or hatch in a door. The 1841 and 1851 census returns do not list any residents with the occupation of letter receiver. The Post Office would only have paid a pittance for the letter receiving house, so it is not surprising that nobody listed this as their occupation. There were a few trades people who might possibly have had this role (endnote <sup>5</sup>) but for the moment this remains a mystery.

Gardner's 1851 Directory of Cambridgeshire p343 describes postal arrangements for Dry Drayton: "Letters are received through the Cambridge Post Office" (endnote <sup>6</sup>).

## **The First Dry Drayton Post Office**

As literacy improved, demands for better and cheaper postal services grew and reform became inevitable. The Government set up a Treasury Commission to inquire into the management of the Post Office Department. This sat for two and a half years and produced ten substantial reports between 1835 and 1838. In 1837 Rowland Hill published his 'Post-Office Reforms' recommending that the cost of sending a letter should be paid by the sender instead of the receiver and that prices should be reduced, simplified and made independent of the distance the letter travelled. Reduced charges, he argued, would be offset by increased volume. Subsequently, after much consideration, in January 1840 the British Parliament followed Hill's recommendations and introduced its penny post system and on May 6th 1840 the first adhesive postage stamp, the 1d black, was issued. To facilitate the pre-payment of letters, as part of these reforms, the Post Office set about expanding its network of post offices, particularly in rural areas. (endnote <sup>7</sup>)

As part of the national expansion of the network, the first Dry Drayton Post Office opened in 1853. The Post Office proof books in the Postal Museum contain a copy of an undated circular postmark

for Dry Drayton, issued June 1853, under the District Post Office in Cambridge. This entry suggests that the village Post Office opened within a few weeks of that date. The proof book entry does not give an address for the village Post Office or details of the postmaster or postmistress. (endnote <sup>8</sup>)



*Undated circular postmark for Dry Drayton issued in June 1853, image courtesy of Ken Smith. We understand that the use of postmarks at small offices and sub-offices was discontinued in 1860, but restarted again piecemeal from about 1870. (endnote <sup>9</sup>)*

In 1854 The Postmaster General described the powers and duties of the Post Office.

“The British Post Office has with few exceptions an exclusive authority to convey letters within the United Kingdom. It is also required to convey newspapers; and it undertakes the conveyance of books and the remittance of small sums of money; but it is only as regards letters that the Office possesses any privilege the other branches of its business being open to any persons who may choose to undertake them. By means of the railways, and of steam boats, mail coaches, stage coaches, omnibuses, mail carts and mounted and foot messengers, letters and other postal packets are despatched and received daily in almost every part of the country, and in many cases, including nearly all important towns, the communication is twice a day or oftener; and by packets or private ships, mails are despatched at short intervals to all parts of the globe” (endnote <sup>10</sup>)

The 1861 census does not list any individual as the village postmaster or postmistress. There were a couple of families who were shop-keepers. (endnote <sup>11</sup>)

The 1869 Kelly’s Directory of Cambridgeshire, P59, has the earliest reference found to date naming the village Post Mistress. Under “Dry Drayton” is an entry; “Post Office - Mrs Elizabeth Markham, receiver. Letters arrive from Cambridge at 9am; box closes at 5.15pm. The nearest money order office is at Cambridge”. An entry in the 1879 Kelly’s Directory of Cambridgeshire, P76, has similar information except the box closing time was shown as 5.30pm. In the 1871 census Elizabeth Markham was a 78 year old widow, living on her own. She was the widow of William Markham b. Dry Drayton 1787, who had died 4 August 1864. Elizabeth died in March 1880. In 1851 William was a relieving Officer for Chesterton Union and in 1861 he was a retired Relieving Officer. This role would not have been incompatible with that of a village postmaster. In fact a search through the UK Postal Service Appointment Books 1737-1969 reveals that William Markham, Dry Drayton, entered the employment of the Post Office on or about 7<sup>th</sup> April 1853. <sup>12</sup> His role is not recorded in the records, but his appointed place of duty, Dry Drayton, leaves little doubt that he took charge of the first Dry Drayton Post Office. All of this suggests that William Markham was the Postmaster from 1853 until his death in 1864 and that his wife Elizabeth took over the role until her death in 1880.

But, where was the Markhams’ Post Office? After Elizabeth’s death we get a tantalising glimpse of her residence in a sale notice in the press (endnote <sup>13</sup>) as “capital Freehold and Tithe-free COTTAGE, with Garden front and back, late in the occupation of Mrs. Markham, deceased.....situate near the centre of the village...” The 1851 and 1861 census returns include the Markham’s home in the High Street. The enumerators do not generally pin down addresses in the census return, but the order in

which the entries appear can give a clue. In these two returns the Markhams' household was recorded next to The Rectory and to a public house run by James Silk and his family. This would have been the Three Horse Shoes PH (now a private house at 3 High Street). This suggests that the Markhams' post office was somewhere at the Park Street end of the High Street, close to the current Rectory Drive.

The UK Postal Service Appointment Books show another employee taken on by the Post Office at the time of the opening of the Dry Drayton Post Office. William Topping was appointed as a messenger, Cambridge to Dry Drayton, on 13 April 1853. Was this the job title for a letter carrier, or was there perhaps some subtle difference?

Post Office Records reveal a number of other employees linked with Dry Drayton.

- William Coulson 2 Dec 1863 Messenger Cambridge to Dry Drayton 27838/63
- W Curtis August 1866 Messenger, to Dry Drayton 72590
- N Gilby Oct 1866 and 1867, Messenger Cambridge to Dry Drayton 81577
- William Wakelin 1867 Messenger Cambridge to Dry Drayton 85352
- F Leite 1871 Messenger, Cambridge to Dry Drayton 166862
- J Churchman 1872 Messenger, Cambridge to Dry Drayton 91498
- G Fenton 1872 Messenger Cambridge to Dry Drayton 32547
- J G Hodges 1872 Messenger Cambridge to Dry Drayton 42669
- C Morley 1872 Messenger, Cambridge to Dry Drayton
- J S Constable 1874 Messenger Cambridge to Dry Drayton 72393
- Fredk J Cooke November 1891 Messenger Cambridge to Dry Drayton
- Geo Wm S Hills 13 Aug 1894 Postman Cambridge to Dry Drayton 282929
- Ethelbert Burling Oct 1896 Dry Drayton Postman 401593

Of the above, the only matching name in the Dry Drayton census returns is Jabez Constable age 30 in 1871, then a shoemaker, living and born in Dry Drayton. (endnote <sup>14</sup>)

## The Second Dry Drayton Post Office

Sometime after 1879, certainly by 1881, (endnote <sup>15</sup>) the Post Office was in the High Street at No 48 and was being run by Frederick Walker and his wife Elizabeth. Frederick's wife was the granddaughter of Postmistress Mrs Elizabeth Markham (endnote <sup>16</sup>). Frederick was a carpenter as well as the Postmaster. He was the son of a Dry Drayton carpenter and wheelwright and had been born in the village in 1838. His wife Elizabeth was also a local woman, born in Dry Drayton in 1836. Frederick and Elizabeth were to run the village Post Office at least until 1920, also raising six children and Frederick continuing to work as a carpenter. (endnote <sup>17</sup>) In 1883 a local directory recorded Mrs Walker as the Receiver, with letters arriving from Cambridge at 9am, the box closing at 5.30. The nearest money order and telegraph office was at Cambridge. (endnote <sup>18</sup>)

The postmaster clearly knew the village well, and house numbers were a thing of the future, so some individuals might have used the Post Office Dry Drayton as their address. (endnote <sup>19</sup>)

Improvements to the mail delivery were anticipated in 1897 and at the end of the year a new mail cart was introduced. (endnote <sup>20</sup>) . Letters arrived at 5.30 am and were delivered about an hour later. The mail returned in the evening about 8.40 pm.



*48 High Street Dry Drayton, formerly the second village Post Office and shop, now a private house. On the southern gable end of this house can be seen the marks from a single storey pitched roof extension which may have been the actual shop and post office part of the building.*

### **The Third Dry Drayton Post Office**

On 24 Feb 1920 Frederick Walker, the postmaster, died. His wife, Elizabeth Walker, had died in 1919. At some point thereafter and certainly before 1939, the running of the Post Office and shop passed to their daughter, spinster Fanny Emma Walker, b 1865 at Dry Drayton, who had trained as a telephonist (endnote <sup>21</sup>). Fanny was the postmistress, assisted by her sister Alice E Walker b 1870. Her brother Frederick Harold Walker b 1875 was an auxiliary postman in 1939 and assisted in delivering the mail (endnote <sup>22</sup>). In 1939 the morning postal deliveries were made by Sarah A Watts b 4/1/1885 who lived at Hill View. The two Walker sisters operated the post office from one of the two 18<sup>th</sup> Century thatched cottages on Pump Green, known as Post Office Cottages, 26 and 28 High Street, which were owned by the Walker family. The date of the move from 48 High Street is not currently known. Alice died in December 1948, Fanny died in March 1950 and Frederick died in 1956. Frederick married three times and his third wife, Janet Scambler, took over the postal delivery round after Fred died.



*Frederick Harold Walker in 1892*



*Post Office Cottages in the High Street at Pump Green. One of these served as the village shop and the third Dry Drayton Post Office, run by the Walker sisters*



*1930s village road sign showing "Post Office Only" along the High Street. (photo: Chris Turner)*

## **The Fourth Dry Drayton Post Office**

It was at this point that the Post Office moved to its next location. On 15 Jan 1951 planning permission (Endnote <sup>23</sup>) was given by Chesterton Rural District Council allowing "Cash Stores" High Street Dry Drayton to

1. change the use of part of dwelling house to a shop (general store) and
2. install a shop front.

The permission was granted to F.C.Goodwin Esq and the approval notice was issued to Mr Wynn, builder, 41 Saffron Road, Histon, Cambs. (Planning application C/0460/50/) Although the full address was not given in the planning documents it seems likely that the shop was at 5 High Street, now Phypers' Farmhouse, a private dwelling.



*View of the High Street in the 1930s. The Post Office was housed (1920-1950?) in one of the two thatched cottages on the right, later (1951) moving to 5 High Street, the large ivy clad house behind the hedge just in front of the parked van.*



*This view of the High Street in the 1950s shows the village shop and fourth Dry Drayton Post Office at what is now Phypers Farmhouse. A wall letter box is near the front left corner of the building.*

In his “Memories of Dry Drayton”, Sid Martin recalled Violet Thompson, born Huddleston, being “a postmistress and local newscaster” at some point. In 1939 Violet was living in the High St, employment – domestic – so if she was a postmistress in the village this would have been after the Walkers, or possibly working for them.

By the 1970s the shop and post office at 5 High Street were being run by Vic Butler, his wife and sister in law. Village postal deliveries were made by Bernie Martin who used to deliver on his motor bike/ scooter, which he managed to power noisily right up to the recipients’ letterboxes.

At some point around 1977 the post office and shop was taken over by Wendy and Martin Coxon. Wendy ran the shop and post office whilst Martin worked for Athena and later a publishing company. Mail deliveries were done by Maureen Hankins from Oakington Road. The village shop and Post Office was a key village facility. One local resident recalls, for example, that one of the local GPs would, every Tuesday and Friday afternoon, deliver prescriptions to the shop for collection by local patients. However, this proved to be a difficult time for local village shops, many of which were closing (endnote <sup>24</sup>). In Dry Drayton there was powerful competition from the Tesco Super Store at Bar Hill, which opened in 1977 and changed shopping habits for many residents. The Coxons continued running the shop for some years but in 1994 they retired. A planning application S/0257/94/F allowed the change of use of 5 High Street from a residential / shop / post office to single residential use. In June 1994 the property was sold as a private house and the Coxons left, spending their retirement in Cheveley and in Spain.

## The Final Dry Drayton Post Office

After the closure of the village shop and Post Office, attempts were made to continue the PO functions locally. On a temporary basis from 1996 Post Office services were operated from the Village Hall one day per week by the Postmistress of the Oakington Post Office. Low volume of business and security concerns led to its final closure on 6<sup>th</sup> October 1999.



*Dry Drayton postmark with 8p red stamp from the 1970s, image courtesy of Ken Smith.*

## The Telegraph and the Telephone

A number of British telegraph companies were nationalised under the Telegraph Act 1868 and operated as part of the Post Office from 1870. The Post Office set about connecting the telegraph to all Post Offices where money orders could be purchased. In 1872 the telegraph connected 5000 post offices. Policy changed and the telegraph was later only connected to Post Offices where the

installation was likely to be profitable. It was therefore not until 1898 that the telegraph wires were installed locally and the Dry Drayton Post Office became also a telegram / telegraph office, serving Dry Drayton, Lolworth and Childerley. (endnote <sup>25</sup>) New postmarks were issued. Dry Drayton Post Office was allocated the three letter code DDA – a shorthand saving the need to key the address in full. From this point on the office would have had at least one person on hand who could deliver telegrams locally. The minimum charge for a telegram in the 1890s was sixpence for 12 words and by 1900 over 90 million messages were being sent nationally per year. The cost was much higher than postal charges and so this medium was mainly used by the better-off, businesses and in emergencies. In the 1901 census Sarah Ann Walker, then aged 24, daughter of the Postmaster Frederick Walker was employed as a telegraph worker. Much later John Hacker recalled that in Dry Drayton the messenger received sixpence for delivering the telegram on foot and returning with any replies received. Telegraph codes were sometimes used in postmarks at bigger offices, but not in smaller village offices



*Dry Drayton Climax rubber handstamp issued in 1897. Postmark issued when the village Post Office became part of the telegraph network. Images courtesy of Ken Smith.*

The telephone was invented in the USA in 1875 and the first company in Britain to operate a telephone system did so in 1879. In 1880 the Post Office won an important court case interpreting their powers under the Telegraph Acts and holding that the telegraph and the telephone were one and the same. The next year the government formally authorised the Post Office to offer telephone services. In 1881 the Post Office started to convert some of its telegraph infrastructure to telephone networks. A number of different companies were formed providing telephone services and in 1904 a Wireless Telegraphy Act gave the Postmaster General licensing powers. By 1912 a unified telephone system was in existence (Endnote <sup>26</sup>). We don't know when the first telephone was installed in the village, but it seems likely that it was in the Post Office at 48 High Street. Sid Martin states that at one point the only telephone in the village was at the Post Office. Local resident John Cole's father had a haulage business at Honey Hill in the 1910s and 20s, and the village post lady used to take telephone messages for him. On his headed note paper was "Telephone Dry Drayton number one" which presumably was the Post Office's number.

## **More recent Memories of the Post Office**

From "Dry Drayton Remembered" by Sid Martin <https://www.drydrayton.net/pdfs/DDMemories.pdf>

"The post office, which had the only telephone in the village, was kept by Fanny Walker and her brother Fred who was the postman. He always rode a lady's cycle which he said was easier to mount and dismount. Fred married the village schoolteacher and when she died, he married her sister. When his second wife died, Fred married Janet Scambler and they lived in one of the two cottages they owned on Pump Green. They also owned other land - a plot next to Coventry field on Pettitt's Lane, which he used as a farmyard, and two or three fields with orchards on the opposite side of the lane. When Fred died, Janet took over the post round, but she distributed the letters from an old pram.

Bernard (Thompson - son of Frank Thompson, licensee of the Queens Head) married Violet Huddlestone (1904), a postmistress and local newscaster, and they lived in one of the cottages on Pump Green belonging to Mr. Walker. This cottage with its big open fireplace was the local post office at this time.

Bernie Martin, Sid's brother, took on the post delivery round in 1954 until he retired in 1983 aged 65.

Before I close I would like to remind you that we had two shops in the Village In those poor old days! The Misses Fanny and Alice Walker ran the Post Office and Stores at what is now 47 (sic) High Street. It was a dark, smoky little place where I used to buy ½ oz. of Arts of Ook (Hearts of Oak) nearly every day for my old grandad. Billy Missen had the other shop; a corrugated tin roof lean-to attached to his house. Billy had a grocery-round in other villages. He owned a Raleigh 3-wheeler van which had a motor-bike seat and handlebars!

## Village Post Boxes.

Nationally road side letter boxes were introduced in 1858 and the public receptacles for the receipt of letters numbered 13,370 in 1859 as compared with 4,518 before the establishment of penny postage. (endnote<sup>27</sup>) "Pillar letter boxes" were first mentioned in the Postmaster General's 2nd report published in 1856 p7.

There are a number of entries in Kelly's Directories to "box closes at 5.30pm", which suggest that this was the collection time from a box of some sort at the village Post Office (Kelly's 1879, 1888, 1892 and 1896). The 1916 Kelly's Directory lists two Letter boxes: Duck End cleared at 11.25 and 8.35pm and Scotland Road cleared at 8.40 am and 6.20 pm, Sundays 9.15am.



*E2R lamp letter boxes in the village currently in Oakington Road and Park Lane. Both are probably recent replacements for earlier boxes. The first location was probably chosen in the late 1930s when the Hill View houses were built. The Park Lane location may be the location of an earlier box recorded as being in Duck End in 1916.*



*The two village E2R pillar boxes. On the left from the High Street is an Elizabeth II Type K Pillar Box, installed after the closure of the Village Post Office opposite, and replacing the wall box there. The one on the right, at Scotland Farm, is from the 1990s and replaces an earlier box. In 1977 in his *Curiosities of Rural Cambridgeshire*, Peter Jeevar recorded that the letter box at Scotland farm was then one of 20 Victorian boxes remaining in the County, sadly now replaced.*

## References

Ken Smith's site: <https://sites.google.com/site/ukpostofficesbycounty/>

Campbell-Smith, Duncan, *Masters of the Post, the Authorised History of the Royal Mail*. Penguin Books 2012

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> The First Annual Report of the Postmaster General for 1854 has an 18 page summary of the history of the mail in Britain from 1481 to the 1840s [https://www.gbps.org.uk/information/sources/pmg-reports/Report%20of%20the%20Postmaster%20General%20on%20the%20Post%20Office%20No%201%20\(1855\).pdf](https://www.gbps.org.uk/information/sources/pmg-reports/Report%20of%20the%20Postmaster%20General%20on%20the%20Post%20Office%20No%201%20(1855).pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Cambridge Chronicle and Journal - Saturday 4 November 1848 p4 report of a drunken assault on the Relieving Officer Mr Markham – evidence of Markham.

<sup>3</sup> The arrival of an expensive letter could be a major problem for a poor recipient. Where an advertisement, for example for a job vacancy, invited applicants to apply in writing, the advertiser, quite sensibly, would have specified: "Reply by letter, post paid to ...."

<sup>4</sup> Pigott's Directory of Cambridge 1830/31 gives details of postal arrangements in Cambridge. The Cambridge Post Office was then in Green Street. Letters to London were despatched every night at 12 and letters from

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London arrived at Cambridge every day at quarter past two in the morning. Letters from Newmarket and all parts of Norfolk and Suffolk arrived daily by mail cart at quarter past one in the morning and left in the opposite direction daily at the same time. Letters to and from Huntingdon and the North arrived and departed at the same time. Letters from Saffron Walden and Luton arrived every evening at half past seven and departed at six thirty in the morning. Letters from Ely arrived at half past eight in the evening and departed at half past six in the morning.

<sup>5</sup> In 1841 Alexander Bell, Grocer and baker, aged 48 and his wife Jane 48, resided at what was described in 1842 as a "general shop and baking premises" (endnote <sup>5</sup>). There were also a couple of publicans: Sarah Dilley aged 55 and John Ansell, 30, carpenter and publican and his wife, Esther, aged 30. The Post Office certainly used coaching inns as letter receiving houses, but it is not known whether ordinary village beer houses would have been considered as suitable for this purpose. In 1850 a shop was being kept in the village by David Watts, described as a general shopkeeper. In May 1850 Watts' shop was visited by the local Inspector of weights and measures. He found that the shop-keeper's scales had been deliberately rigged to cheat the customer. Magistrates felt this was a particularly bad case and fined the shopkeeper £2.10s., and 16s. expenses.

The 1851 Dry Drayton Census Return does not list any resident with the occupation of letter receiver or postmistress/master. Again, there were some local businesses which might possibly have included this function. For example:

- Alexander Bell 58 Grocer and baker and his wife Jane 57 (living in a cottage)
- William Wilmott 32, agricultural labourer and Grocer and his wife Ann 27 (residence described as "grocer shop")
- Stephen Chapman 34, Publican and Farmer and his wife Jane Chapman 35. (public house)
- William Thompson 25, inn keeper and his wife Alice 24 (public house)
- John Ansell, 43 carpenter and wife Eliza 34 (public house)
- By June 1851 William Binge was a shopkeeper in the village. He too fell foul of the weights and measures Inspector and was summoned for having short weights.

<sup>6</sup> Some of the traders mentioned in Dry Drayton in this 1851 Directory were: Alexander Bell baker etc, William Willimont baker etc, Chapman S, 5 Bells public House, John Ansell, Sarah Dilley and James Silk all beer retailers.

<sup>7</sup> Numbers of post offices: First Annual Report of the Postmaster General 1954 P20, Extension of Inland Services in 1854. "During the last year the number of Post Offices in the United Kingdom was increased by 515; making the whole present number 9,973. Of these 935 are Head Post Offices (that is Offices which exchange bags with a Metropolitan Office) and 9038 Sub Post Offices or Receiving Offices, the latter being branch Offices in towns and, as indicated by their name, used chiefly for the receipt of letters. On the establishment of Penny Postage in 1840 the whole number of Post Offices was 4,028, or less than half the present number. Most of the new Offices have been opened in the rural districts; and postal communication in those districts has been further extended (where the amount of correspondence was insufficient to warrant the establishment of a Post Office) by the appointment of additional Rural Messengers, who in a walk including generally several small villages, afford the inhabitants frequent and regular opportunities of sending and receiving letters.

The extension of the rural posts is a work which has been in steady progress for several years and has, I have no doubt, assisted materially to produce the great increase that has taken place in the total number of letters. [https://www.gbps.org.uk/information/sources/pmg-reports/Report%20of%20the%20Postmaster%20General%20on%20the%20Post%20Office%20No%201%20\(1855\).pdf](https://www.gbps.org.uk/information/sources/pmg-reports/Report%20of%20the%20Postmaster%20General%20on%20the%20Post%20Office%20No%201%20(1855).pdf)

<sup>8</sup> From the same proof books we can see that the postmark for Dry Drayton was issued before those of most of the surrounding villages. Oakington 1873, Hardwick 1933, Madingley 1897, Girton 1877 Boxworth 1881 but Elsworth was also issued in 1853. We understand that they stopped using postmarks at small offices and sub-offices in 1860, but restarted again piecemeal from about 1870.

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<sup>9</sup> Comments by Maurice Buxton (GBPS website administrator)

<sup>10</sup> These duties were carried out by 21,574 staff. Postmaster General's First Report 1854  
[https://www.gbps.org.uk/information/sources/pmg-reports/Report%20of%20the%20Postmaster%20General%20on%20the%20Post%20Office%20No%201%20\(1855\).pdf](https://www.gbps.org.uk/information/sources/pmg-reports/Report%20of%20the%20Postmaster%20General%20on%20the%20Post%20Office%20No%201%20(1855).pdf)

<sup>11</sup> These were Ann Willmot, 30, grocer and Alexander Bell, 67, his wife Jane Bell, 67 and their son Henry Bell, 35, baker and grocer.

<sup>12</sup> UK Postal Service Appointment Books 1737-1969. Indexed Minutes of Appointments Jan-Nov 1853 p122 record 557, 7 April 1853.

<sup>13</sup> Cambridge Independent Press 3 April 1880 p4 and 12 June 1880 p4

<sup>14</sup> The UK Postal Service Appointment Books 1737-1969 are available on Ancestry. We have pulled out the records relating to Dry Drayton. There are many more records linked to Cambridge and we can only assume that other messengers and postmen serving Dry Drayton are buried amongst the large number of records for Cambridge. The only postmaster linked to Dry Drayton found in these records is William Markham. Family History Guide on the Postal Museum site ([https://www.postalmuseum.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Family\\_History\\_Research\\_Guide.pdf](https://www.postalmuseum.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Family_History_Research_Guide.pdf)) suggest that shopkeepers who also ran Post Offices were not treated in the same way as employees and so do not generally feature in these records.

<sup>15</sup> 1881 census, High Street Dry Drayton lists Frederick Walker age 42, carpenter and postmaster b. Dry Drayton, Cambs and his wife Elizabeth Walker, age 44 Sub post mistress b. Dry Drayton, Cambs and their children Alfred E Walker 14, Alice E Walker 11, Bertha A Walker 8, Frederick A Walker, 6 and Sarah R Walker 4.

<sup>16</sup> Report of the Funeral of Frederick Walker, Cambridge Independent Press - Friday 5 March 1920 p12

<sup>17</sup> 1888 Kelly's directory of Cambridgeshire, Dry Drayton: Post Office - Mrs Walker receiver. Letters arrive from Cambridge at 9am. Box closes at 5.30pm. The nearest money order and telegraph office is at Cambridge.

1891 census: Post Office, Frederick Walker 53, Carpenter and Postmaster, his wife Elizabeth Walker 54 Asst, and children:

Fanny E Walker domestic servant  
Alfred E Walker Carpenter and joiner  
Alice E Walker Domestic servant  
Bertha A Walker Domestic servant  
Frederick H Walker Carpenter  
Sarah Ann Walker

1892 Kelly's Directory of Cambridgeshire entry for Childerley: "Nearest wall letter box is at Dry Drayton. Cleared at 5.30. Dry Drayton Post Office Mrs Elizabeth Walker, receiver. Letters arrive from Cambridge at 9am box closes at 5.30pm. The nearest money order office is at Cambridge."

1896 Kelly's Directory of Cambridgeshire Dry Drayton: "Post Office Frederick Walker, sub-Postmaster. Letters arrive from Cambridge at 9am box closes at 5.30pm. The nearest money order office is at Cambridge."

Cambridge Chronicle 5th October 1900 p8. Frederick Walker, Post Master of Dry Drayton, gave evidence at an inquest into a fatal fall from an apple tree by Stephen Chapman .

1911 census of Dry Drayton: School House, Frederick Harold Walker, 36, Rural Aux Postman GPO and Anne Parry Walker wife, 43 Certificated (school) Mistress, Cambs County Council

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High Street, Post Office, Frederick Walker 70, Postmaster, Elizabeth Walker wife 72, Fanny Emma Walker 42  
Telephonist, Alfred Ernest Walker 40 Builder and Cyril Orion Walker, grandson aged 7

1916 Kelly's Directory of Cambridgeshire, Dry Drayton: Post: "T & Telephonic Express Delivery Office Fredk.  
Walker, sub postmaster. Letters arrive through Cambridge at 7am and 12.30pm; Sundays 6.30am. Despatched  
at 11.30am and 8.40pm, Sundays 10.5. Boxworth is the nearest money order office."

1939 Register, Dry Drayton

Hill View, Watts, Sarah A. b.4/1/1885. Post. Morning Delivery

High Street, Walker, Fanny E. Post Mistress, and Walker, Alice b.4/9/1869, Household duties

High Street Walker, Frederick H. b.17/8/1874, Aux postman part time and land worker and Walker, Clara S.  
b.2/11/1877, Invalid.

<sup>18</sup> Kelly's Post Office Directory 1883, 1892

<sup>19</sup> For example Stamford Mercury - Friday 3 October 1879 p8. Situations wanted "To Drapers. A re-engagement  
by a young man in Manchester or dress department. Six years experience, good references. Apply William  
Taylor, Post-Office, Dry Drayton."

<sup>20</sup> Cambridge Chronicle 5th February 1897 p4. "The inhabitants of this and other villages hope that earlier  
delivery of letters etc. will soon take place." Cambridge Chronicle 31st December 1897 p8. "The first run of the  
new mail cart takes place on New Year's Day"

<sup>21</sup> Thus the Dry Drayton Post Office passed through three generations of the same family. This was not an  
uncommon occurrence for the time, proper selection processes on merit alone in line with other civil service  
appointments came after 1907.

<sup>22</sup> UK Postal Service Appointment Books 1737-1969 show Frederick Walker employed as a Postman,  
Cambridge, from August 1935.

<sup>23</sup> Planning application C/0460/50/

<sup>24</sup> This was a continuing trend over a number of years. The Cambridge Daily News - Thursday 12 July 1990 p6  
reported that around 150 small village shops and post offices had closed during the previous two years.

<sup>25</sup> Cambridge Chronicle 21st January 1898 p4. Telegraph Communication.

"The telegram poles and wire were placed between the "Five Bells" and the Post Office here last week and will  
no doubt soon be in working order."

Cambridge Chronicle 28th January p5. Telegram Communication. "The telegraph is now in working order here.  
The office opened on Wednesday."

<sup>25</sup> J.C.Hemmeon, History of the British Post Office, 1912, P7

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.britishtelephones.com/histuk.htm> for a detailed history of telephones in Britain