

GREAT BRITAIN.—PROCLAMATIONS CONCERNING THE POST.

1 Charles I. 14 January, 1625-26.

— [By the Privy Council.] Concerning the Foreign Posts.

(No place or date.) One folio Roman letter.

Two copies known. Public Record Office, Society of Antiquaries. Lord Stanhope had appointed Henry Billingsley as a messenger for the Company of Merchant Adventurers to carry foreign letters to and from Louisa. This order is to forbid Billingsley to meddle with the transporting of letters until the case at law between him and Matthew de Quester, Postmaster for Foreign Service, is settled and determined.

2 Charles I. 15 August, 1626.

— [By the Privy Council.] Concerning the Foreign Posts. (Billingsley.) London, Norton and Bill, 1626.

One folio Roman letter.

Two copies known. Public Record Office, Society of Antiquaries. Following on from the last. It has become known that Billingsley still takes letters by means of his servants, though ordered not to meddle with the foreign posts. He excuses himself that the order of the Privy Council of date 14 January last was made against himself personally, not against his servants! Orders are now issued against him, and also against Thomas Albertus, George Robins, William Eilam, William Scope, late servants and agents of the said Billingsley.

2 Charles I. 22 November, 1626.

— [By the Privy Council.] On the Foreign Posts.

No printed copy exists.

The effect of this order was to permit the Merchant Adventurers and other companies of merchants to send their letters and dispatches by messengers of their own.

3 Charles I. 24 October, 1627.

— [By the Privy Council.] On the Foreign Posts. London, Norton and Bill, 1627.

One folio Roman letter.

Two copies known. Public Record Office and Society of Antiquaries.

By this the privilege of sending letters by private messenger, granted by 22 November, 1626, is revoked, and the Merchant Adventurers only may send their own letters, and then solely to Hamburg and Delft.

The messenger may take no other letters, and may not wear any badge or sign of a postmaster.

All other letters are to be sent through Matthew de Quester.

In times of war or danger the messengers of the Merchant Adventurers are to be approved of by the Secretary of State, and letters are not to be sent without his sanction.

3 Charles I. 20 January, 1627-28.

— By the King. Confirming Matthew de Quester as Foreign Postmaster. London, Norton and Bill, 1627-28.

One folio Gothic letter.

One copy known. Public Record Office.

Cites the Proclamation James I., 27 January, 1615-16. Granting letters patent to M. de Quester as Postmaster for foreign posts. Notwithstanding the orders of Elizabeth and James, his privileges have been infringed upon.

No one is to collect or forward letters to foreign parts except Matthew de Quester or his servants.

The Lord Chamberlain, Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports, and the Secretaries of State are to see that notice is duly given to the merchants.

Searchers and officers of the Customs are to arrest all persons unauthorized, carrying packets of letters out of or into the country.

8 Charles I. 19 July, 1632.

— By the King. Concerning the Postmaster of England for Foreign Parts. London, B. Barker, and Assigns of Bill, 1632.

One folio Gothic letter.

Two copies known. British Museum, Public Record Office, Privy Council, Society of Antiquaries, Bibl. Lindes.

After releasing the duties of the office, states that the son of Matthew de Quester having died, William Frisell and Thomas

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Witherings were appointed by him as his deputies. The King confirms them in the office, and prohibits all other persons from transmitting any packets or letters out of or into the kingdom. This proclamation is reprinted at length in Rymer's *Foedera*, vol. xii. 385.

11 Charles I. 31 July, 1635.

— By the King. For settling the Letter Office of England and Scotland.

London, Barker and Assigns Bill, 1635.

Two folios Gothic letter.

Six copies known. British Museum, Public Record Office, Privy Council, Queen's College, Society of Antiquaries, Bibl. Lindes.

T. Witherings has been ordered to settle posts as follow:—Edinburgh and London there and back in six days, taking and receiving to and from any post town on the road, with bye posts to and from Lincoln and Hull.

The charge, 2d. under 80 miles; 4d. between 80 and 140; 6d. over 140 miles; the Borders and Scotland, 8d.

Two or more letters in a packet to be charged accordingly, and paid for on delivery.

A post to Holyhead and Ireland in six days, there and back; another to Plymouth and Exeter, also six days, there and back. These posts are to commence on 29 September next.

Others are promised to Oxford, Bristol, Colchester, and Norwich. Horses to be paid 24d. a mile.

People may send private messengers, or by common known carriers, or by a friend (? if using the post horses?).

Printed in Rymer, xii. 440.

11 Charles I. No date, but before November, 1635.

— Declaration by T. Witherings. (This is a poster.) London, E. P. for T. Withering, 1635.

One folio Roman letter.

One copy known. British Museum (Harl. 5954. 1).

This is an advertisement to the public on the Running Post to Dublin (or at least Holyhead), if the winds serve. Begins 8 p.m. Tuesday next, and weekly at that hour. Answers returned on Monday night.

Takes letters for St. Albans, Dunstable, Brickhill, Stony Stratford, Daventry, Coventry, Tamworth, Lichfield, Stafford, Scions, Nantwich, Chester, Flint, Rutland, Aber Conway, Beaumaris, and Holyhead.

Office at Thomas Witherings, Sherborne Lane, near Lombard Street. 2d., single letter under 80 miles; 4d. to 140 miles; 6d. over 140; Ireland, 9d. single letter, or 2s. 6d. per ounce. Same rates from Dublin.

13 Charles I. 13 April, 1637.

— Confirming an agreement made between Witherings and Mons. Denouveau, Postmaster to the French King, and signed at Calais, 11 May, 1636. . . .

That all letters from England to France shall pass by Dover, Calais, Bulleyn, Abbeville, and Amiens.

No copy of this proclamation is known to have survived in print.

13 Charles I. 22 June, 1637.

— By the King. Concerning the carrying . . . of letters. London, Barker and Bill, 1637.

Three folios Gothic letter.

Two copies known. Public Record Office, Privy Council Office.

Commences with notice of the agreement with France citing the last noted and missing proclamation.

In continuation declares that no letters are to leave the country by way of Rye and Diepe (Dieppe), or by any than the messengers of Witherings.

No person save the common carriers is to collect or carry letters. Rates are 2d., single; 4d., double letters; or 9d. the ounce to 80 miles; up to 140, 6d., 8d., or 9d. the ounce. Above 140, 6d., 12d., or 12d. the ounce.

For Ireland 9d., or 2s. 6d. the ounce. The mayors of all post towns and all justices are to assist Witherings in carrying out these orders.

In 1637.

Lord Stanhope surrendered his Patent of Postmaster-General to the King, and His Majesty appointed Witherings to the vacant post, thus combining in one the offices of the Postmaster General, Inland and Foreign. I have not found any proclamation making this appointment, but it certainly must have existed.