

Royal Post-Horse Routes in South West England in the Reigns of Elizabeth I and James I

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(Figures 1-5)

INTRODUCTION

Those wishing to travel speedily by road in Elizabethan England and Wales faced a choice. Either they could make private arrangements for a relay of fresh horses to be available at regular intervals along their route, or they could trust to luck in being able to hire horses in customary 'post-stage' towns. Since the former option would be beyond the resources of all but the most important citizens or their messengers, most travellers chose the latter. By the Tudor period, 'stages' were customarily spaced ten or fifteen miles apart and on heavily used routes commercial livery stables were plentiful.¹ It is, however, almost impossible to compile a comprehensive list of all the places in the West Country where a sixteenth-century traveller might have been able to find such a service on offer, although an enumeration by county of inns, taverns, and alehouses, called for by the Privy Council in 1577, perhaps provides a guide to the overall total (Table I). While it is unrealistic to suppose that all of the 120 inns and 40 taverns in Devon would have offered posting facilities, the majority probably did so. There were also 400 alehouses, but it seems likely that these were mostly rather modest establishments not offering horse-hire services to through-travellers. The apparent lack of inns in Cornwall may simply reflect a misunderstanding regarding definitions. The borough records of both Exeter and Plymouth in fact indicate payments for post horses hired by those on town business in many relatively remote parts of Devon and Cornwall, well away from the arterial roads usually associated with posting.² But

TABLE I. West Country Inns, Taverns and Alehouses, 1577.

	Innholders	Taverns	Alehouses
Cornwall	—	30	132
Devon	120	40	400
Dorset	28	17	209
Somerset	100	16	215
Totals:	248	103	956

Source: PRO, State Papers Domestic, Elizabeth, SP12/96/405: 'certificate returned of the inns, alehouses and taverns within sundry shires in the realm, 1577'.

while such routes may have been locally significant, they were scarcely likely to feature as part of the principal post-horse network.

In the sixteenth century the private traveller could expect to pay two pence or three pence per mile for his post horses.³ He would be obliged to hire two horses, the second one carrying the obligatory guide whose function was to show the way, blow the horn, and to return eventually with both horses to the home stage. The guide's statutory fee was one groat (four pence).⁴ Thus a man riding a post horse from, say, Honiton to Exeter, a distance of about twelve miles, could expect to pay between 2s. and 3s. for his own mount plus an equal sum for the horse ridden by the guide. Added to the guide's fee of 4d., the total would therefore have been between 4s.4d. and 6s.4d. To ride via all ten stages from London to Exeter, a journey estimated by travellers at the time to be about 150 miles, would involve horse-hire and guide fees of at least 53s.4d.⁵ These calculations take no account of the additional expense on such a lengthy journey of board and lodging in an inn or tavern for at least one night en route.

By contrast, messengers of the chamber and important courtiers required to ride 'in post' on her majesty's special service enjoyed two privileges. Both were authorised by signed Privy Council warrants or 'placards'.⁶ On presenting one of these documents to a local mayor, constable, justice of the peace, or parish officer at an established post stage, the rider could expect to receive immediate attention. The warrant empowered local officials to requisition horses on behalf of the Queen's rider and they were expected to do so without delay. A royal rider's second privilege was the right to be furnished with 'able and sufficient' post horses at the rate of only one penny a mile (or half the prevailing commercial rate).⁷ Thus the Queen and her Council could send couriers with letters and despatches, as well as other officials ordered to carry out government business, riding 'post' from London to Exeter for only 28s.4d., a sum including fees for ten guides at four pence each. In an emergency the flow of these authorised royal riders increased

and when local reserves of suitable post horses ran out, hard-pressed mayors were obliged to send around nearby fields and orchards to find whatever mounts they could. Quite apart from the unsuitability of work-horses for riding post, when they were peremptorily snatched away their owners understandably raised vehement objections. Some horse-owners took the illegal step of hiding their best animals if news came that a Court messenger or other authorised royal rider was about to arrive. Delays were therefore encountered both in the delivery by messenger of government correspondence and in the journeys of gentlemen sent from the Court to carry out government business.

A solution had been found on the heavily used routes between London and Dover and between London and Berwick in the reign of Henry VIII when Sir Brian Tuke was appointed as England's first Master of the King's Posts. Tuke established relays of officers called 'standing posts' in the customary stages towards Dover and Berwick.⁸ These standing posts (also referred to as postmasters or simply 'posts') were paid a regular daily wage of between twelve and twenty pence by the Exchequer. Thereafter, whenever occasion demanded, the local standing posts undertook to send their post-boys to ride with the King's packet (of letters or despatches) to the next stage. Moreover, any royal messenger or other important rider carrying a signed warrant was to be accorded priority in the supply of fresh horses at the King's customary rate. In return for meeting royal needs at such relatively low wages and hire fees, the standing posts were accorded a monopoly of all other commercial horse-hiring in the town. This made service as a royal standing post worth while and it was repeatedly confirmed in ordinances defining the duties of posts, most notably in the time of Philip and Mary.⁹ Although the royal standing posts undertook to forward the King's packets from stage to stage, Court messengers were still employed to convey urgent or secret letters. Gradually, however, the number of couriers riding as 'through-posts' diminished and wherever a royal standing post was established the bulk of government correspondence was sent instead by this means.¹⁰ Thus by Elizabeth's reign the term 'posting', which hitherto had simply meant *travel* using a relay of post horses hired in customary stages, had also come to mean the *sending of letters* via the standing post system. Moreover, although not at first strictly permitted, the post-boys employed by standing posts frequently undertook to carry private letters when they rode from stage to stage with royal packets.¹¹ 'Foot-posts' were employed to take letters addressed to important gentlemen from the 'post-room' at a principal stage to their residences in towns or villages nearby thus extending still further the impact of an arterial post route. The costs of private letter carriage were generally calculated either according to the weight or the delivery

distance involved and the seeds were thus sown of a modern, regular and reliable letter-carrying service. Together these developments exerted a profound impact on inter-urban and regional communications in Elizabethan England. As more royal routes were formed, towns and villages both on or close to the selected itineraries came into more direct contact. Post horses for personal travel were more readily available and correspondence was conveyed speedily to distant parts of the realm.

This paper seeks to identify the circumstances in which royal post-horse routes towards the South West were established and to define the post-stages in use, the wages paid, and the services offered during the reign of Elizabeth I and the reign of James I. Although evidence regarding the extent and operation of Devon's sixteenth- and seventeenth-century royal post routes is scarce, from 1566 the Master General and Comptroller of the Queen's Posts periodically prepared accounts for presentation to the Treasury and these documents are the chief source of information.¹²

THE EARLIEST WEST COUNTRY STANDING POSTS

Customary stages on the road westward from London to Devon and Cornwall were established long before Tuke was appointed as England's Master of the Posts in 1512. Towns located at convenient distances were simply the most obvious points at which to change tired horses and to take refreshment. When William Harrison named nineteen stages between London and west Cornwall in his *Description of England* written in the 1570s he was merely recording a well-known itinerary, a thoroughfare of 'greatest travel'. Harrison mentions ten stages between London and Chard beyond which the route ran to Honiton, Exeter, Crockernwell, Okehampton, Launceston, Bodmin, Truro, St Buryan and St Michael's Mount. Together with other itineraries mentioning stages at Chudleigh, Ashburton, South Brent, Plymouth and Tavistock, Harrison's list of towns and mileages from London to Cornwall also appears in the manuscript notes added to Lord Burghley's personal copy of Christopher Saxton's Atlas of English county maps.¹³ Harrison reports that riders could hire horses and seek accommodation in numerous inns 'builded . . . for receiving of such travellers and strangers as pass to and fro'. He was clearly not describing *royal* stages where individual postmasters received Exchequer wages and enjoyed a monopoly of all horse-hiring in the town. Harrison was instead referring to the much-frequented *customary* stages at which anyone undertaking a journey by post horse could pause. Until royal postmasters were engaged these customary stages were also used by messengers of the chamber and courtiers for whom placards were issued both in Tuke's period of office

(1512-45), as well as during the time of his successor, Sir John Mason (1545-66). It has been suggested by David Cornelius that permanent Exchequer-funded posts to Exeter were first laid in 1574.¹⁴ Although no reference is provided, Cornelius probably based this suggestion on a letter from the Privy Council dated 12 July 1574 requiring Thomas Randolph (Master of the Posts, 1566-90) to:

give order presently that post horses be laid in all convenient places betwixt the Court and Exeter for the speedy conveyance of all such packets as shall be sent from the Earl of Bedford out of the West Country.¹⁵

A week later a placard was issued to Robert Gascoigne, the Court postmaster, enabling him to ride 'in post' to the 'west parts' to make the arrangements.¹⁶ It is, however, doubtful whether royal postmasters were actually appointed. Temporary relays of horses were often briefly arranged at customary stages on certain busy itineraries without establishing royal standing posts. Moreover, as already noted, when Thomas Randolph was appointed to succeed Mason in 1566 he introduced audited accounts and these disclose nothing about standing posts to Exeter until 1579.¹⁷ Since it is unlikely that expenditure on the wages of West Country postmasters would have been omitted from accounts prepared especially for scrutiny by the Lords of the Treasury, the Privy Council's instructions to arrange a relay of post horses between London and Exeter in 1574 do not appear to indicate the creation that year of an Exchequer-funded post horse route.

Further evidence of the lack of royal postmasters between London and the South West is provided by an incident occurring in Exeter in February 1579. A certain Mr Marshall complained to the Privy Council that one of the borough officials, Degory Baker, had requisitioned his horse in order to 'furnish' a warrant presented by the Earl of Cumberland. The Council wrote to Devon's Lord Lieutenant, the Earl of Bedford, to ask him to persuade Marshall to 'give over' his threat to take the grievance to the Queen's Bench and the matter appears to have been dropped.¹⁸ But if there had been a royal postmaster in Exeter at the beginning of 1579 responsible for supplying post horses to important gentlemen the dispute would not have occurred.

Later that year, however, according to Randolph's accounts twelve royal postmasters were at last engaged between London and Devon for four months from 1 August until 30 November 1579. This coincides almost exactly with the Fitzmaurice and Desmond rebellion in Ireland when the need for better communications inevitably increased. Indeed Randolph explicitly stated that these 'ordinary posts were laid' towards Ireland 'between London and Tavistock for more speedy intercourse in

conveyance of letters and despatch of other her majesty's business according to the importance thereof.¹⁹ Thus 1579 marks the beginning of an intimate relationship between the operation of royal post routes in South West England and the longstanding struggle of the Elizabethan state to control the Irish.²⁰ Tavistock was a logical terminus as a property of Devon's Lord Lieutenant, the Earl of Bedford. But neither the name of any postmaster in Tavistock, nor any schedule of his wages is recorded and it seems that in practice Exchequer funding extended only as far as Crediton. All the new royal postmasters were engaged by Robert Brown, a messenger of the chamber, who received a Privy Council warrant on 28 July 1579 to enable him to ride into the West Country to establish the route. This commenced in the post room of the City of London run by William Beswick, but instead of proceeding to the old customary stage of Bagshot mentioned by William Harrison, the 1579 route ran to Thomas Dove's establishment at Staines. Then it continued via Hartfordbridge, Basingstoke, Andover, Salisbury, Shaftesbury, Sherborne, Crewkerne, Honiton, Exeter and Crediton. Wages were fixed at twenty pence per day and since the total daily wage costs of the new postmasters on the West Country route amounted to only twenty shillings, a sum significantly lower than that needed to hire horses and guides for a messenger of the chamber, it may be deduced that here as elsewhere decisions were taken to establish Exchequer-paid postmasters when the flow of royal packets directed to a particular destination began on average to exceed one per day.

WEST COUNTRY POST-HORSE COMMUNICATIONS DURING THE ARMADA EMERGENCY

Somewhat surprisingly, there were no royal standing posts in the South West in receipt of Exchequer wages at the time of the Spanish Armada. Although David Cornelius has argued that 'posts were laid as far as Exeter in . . . 1588', Randolph's accounts yield no evidence in support of this claim. Postmasters on the Crediton route were discharged nine years earlier and none of the post rooms lying between London and Devon were re-engaged until 1595.²¹ Government communications were maintained only by increasing substantially the number of court messengers riding as through posts to Plymouth. A record of the issue of placards and claims for payment are preserved amongst the State Papers (Table II). Between May and September 1588, fifteen messengers in all were involved in carrying letters from London to Plymouth at a total cost of more than £140.²² This figure almost certainly underestimates the total expense since boroughs also appear to have paid considerable sums for the horse hire and the board and lodging of both important gentlemen

TABLE II. Payments to Court Messengers Riding to Plymouth, May–September 1588.

	£	s.	d.
John Hedd	8	0	0
William Page	7	0	0
John Ryding	8	0	0
John Deacons	3	0	0
Richard Swanson	9	0	0
Carey Reynold	5	0	0
John Deacons	4	0	0
Captain Cross	20	0	0
William Page	7	0	0
William Saunders	9	0	0
Thomas Jobson	5	0	0
Jonas Bodenham	10	0	0
Valentine Harris	10	0	0
Arthur Gytins	10	0	0
Gabriel Halls	4	13	4
Arthur Gytins	10	0	0
sum	129	13	4
William Starling ¹	6	13	4
Adam Choulton ¹	10	0	0
sum	16	13	4
total	146	6	8

Source: PRO, SP12/216/55. 'The names of such grooms, messengers and others as have had any allowance within the office of the treasurer of her majesty's chamber for the carriage of letters between the court and the town of Plymouth in the months of May, June, July, August and September 1588'.

Note: 1. These were paid separately but 'within the time above mentioned for the like service'.

riding on official business and Court messengers bringing letters for the mayors. The Receivers' Accounts of both Exeter and Plymouth regularly contain references to the hire of post horses as well as payments to local men who carried letters on the orders of the mayors and corporations. Thus John Smythe 'the sergeant' organised the conveyance of official letters in Exeter. He personally carried important packets, hiring his horses at borough expense. In addition foot-posts were employed to deliver the Privy Council's letters directed to Sir Robert Dennis and Sir William Courtenay, who both lived near Exeter, and to Sir John Gilbert at Greenway and the Earl of Bath at Tawstock. In Plymouth the borough's foot-post was Nicholas Lane. He received payments for taking Privy Council letters addressed to gentlemen residing not only near the borough but also further afield. Thus for example he was often obliged to run on foot with the Council's letters to Sir Francis Godolphin's home in Cornwall. As might have been expected, during the time of the Spanish threat in the 1580s, this kind of local expenditure had sharply increased.²³

During the Receivership of John Levermore in 1584–85, the Exeter accounts contain a separate section detailing ‘all charges bestowed for post horses’.²⁴ Amongst these is recorded the hire of sixteen horses for Sir Philip Sidney and his retinue, who arrived in Exeter on 16 September 1585 on his journey to Plymouth. Lacking a royal post room in the borough, the mayor was required to supply seven horses from local stables and another nine from ‘strangers’. Each horse cost half-a-crown and was to cover the stage to Ashburton; even the hay to feed them was purchased. Though the size of Sir Philip’s entourage of fifteen was unusual, it was it seems normal, both in Exeter and in Plymouth, for the hire charges of post horses for important men to be met by the boroughs. Some charges connected with post horses were, however, highly irregular. For example, one of the Queen’s messengers, Captain Cross, left Exeter in 1587 before paying for his hired horse and the borough paid the bill. Rather worse was the need to pay out ten shillings to cover the cost of a ‘saddle and bridle which one of Sir Frances Drake’s captains had in post and never brought again’.²⁵

For the critical year 1588 an even lengthier section of the Exeter accounts records expenditure on post horses²⁶ (Fig. 1). Although many messages were carried by foot-posts, the costs of hiring numerous horses were unavoidable. The arrival of Sir Walter Raleigh in Exeter during December 1587 increased the demand for post horses to maintain frequent contact with the Earl of Bath and with the county’s deputy lieutenants. Indeed it seems that such was the level of need during the emergency that the corporations of both Exeter and Plymouth resolved to keep a small number of horses permanently in their service. Thus the Exeter accounts refer to money spent on the town’s own post horses, and to a fee paid ‘to Justice Periam’s horseman for keeping and trimming of our horses’, while in Plymouth a fee was paid to Vincent Scoble, Martin White, Zachary Hoyle (also spelt Howell) and John Rowby for ‘keeping of post horses this year by order of the town’. Borough funds were even used to supply three ‘leather bags’ for these posts to carry their letters.²⁷

Whether the keeping of borough post horses represents a response to orders sent from the Privy Council remains unclear. Instructions were certainly issued to the posts of Kent in 1588 to increase the number of horses and post-boys available, and it is possible that comparable orders were sent to Devon.²⁸ Neither the Queen nor the Privy Council were exactly sure where the Spaniards intended to land their forces in 1588 and this may perhaps explain why no standing posts were engaged. In terms of communication requirements the Armada crisis was rather less predictable than the series of rebellions in sixteenth-century Ireland. In the latter case it was necessary to provide a reliable link between Westminster and the Dublin headquarters of the Queen’s Lord Deputy

Poste horses

S^r Walter
 Danlyppe charge p^r upon S^r Walter Danlyppe
 his company in December by command
 of M^r Mayor & the Justice
 for the hire of 7 horses for M^r Quarter
 & one of the S^r Gante. at Birtlye 2 1 10
 To George Searell & hymed to Birtlye 10
 for horse and his foale
 for 2 horse for a man of S^r walter's
 to Birtlye at S^r Robert Demy 1 10
 for another horse for a man of his
 rydinge against my Lord of Barts 10
 To John Solwe for a horse for John
 Smythe to ryde to my Lord of Barts } 2 10 bid
 in S^r walter's busines
 for John Smythe charge at that tyme 10 10
 To George Searell rydinge to Dorkmyn 1
 in S^r walter's busines 1 10
 for the post wange of 21 horse for S^r
 walter to Exynbave by ni Southgate
 at Bonaie away for 25 10 at 10 10 10th 10 10 10th
 for my horse



FIG. 1. Part of the 1588 Exeter Receiver's Accounts devoted exclusively to expenditure on post horses. DRO, Receiver's Accounts, Elizabeth I, 29-30. Reproduced by permission of Exeter City Council.

in Ireland. From the mid 1560s a succession of royal postmasters was engaged between London and Chester and between London and Holyhead. Ships crossing the Irish Sea from these ports were expected to carry both royal packets and Courtiers despatched to Dublin. But even when military campaigning intensified, notably when it spread towards Munster, and when contacts were required with Irish locations other than Dublin, extra post-horse itineraries could be planned and organised

to strategic ports in South Wales and South West England from where dependable communications with the Court were ensured.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF ORDINARY STANDING POSTS TO DEVON AND CORNWALL

Early in 1589 'inhabitants' of the boroughs used as customary stages between London and Devon submitted a petition to a group of Privy Councillors in which they complained of the burdens imposed on local people in supplying post horses to those travelling on her majesty's service. They asked that a 'competent number of post horses may be laid and placed' at each stage 'for the disburdening of the towns of their former charges'.²⁹ The matter appears to have been referred to Thomas Randolph who replied to the Privy Council on 6 June 1589 and acknowledged:

. . . the great abuses daily committed by sundry [persons] riding in post . . . as they pass between the Court and Plymouth contrary to her majesty's gracious pleasure that tendeth nothing else than the disquieting and evil using of her loving subjects.³⁰

As an interim measure, 'until her majesty may conveniently be moved for some allowance of wages by the day', that is to say until the Queen established Exchequer-paid postmasters, it seems that the Privy Council resolved to issue new 'orders and ordinances' applicable to all riders (royal or otherwise) henceforth travelling between London and Plymouth. They were all to be charged two pence a mile for their horses payable at the time of hire, a hired horse was to be ridden only to the 'next appointed stage' and was to carry no more than 50 pounds in weight of luggage. To ensure compliance with these new regulations, Randolph then wrote to the mayors in all the post-stage towns.³¹ He recommended *inter alia*:

. . . that some discreet and able person be appointed to attend the service, assisted and relieved by you and the voluntary contribution of the country next you.

Randolph commented that 'the passage' between London and Plymouth was used 'as frequently as to any quarters or coasts within her highness's dominions' and, aware that the Privy Council's new measures fell well short of establishing Treasury-funded royal postmasters, he recognised that they did nothing to lessen the difficulties encountered by boroughs in requisitioning post horses for royal riders. In view of this he advised the mayors that:

. . . upon any disorder herein offered or arising, to take the advice

and assistance of the Justices of the Peace next adjoining, by whom their Lordships' pleasure is that your endeavours shall be specially favoured and furthered.

As already noted, since 1588 the corporations of both Exeter and Plymouth had employed local men to keep borough post horses, but it is not clear whether in response to Randolph's new instructions extra 'discreet and able' officers were appointed in 1589 'to attend the service' of hiring out horses at each stage. There is evidence which indicates that by the early 1590s royal letters directed to recipients in the South West were paid for 'by the packet' and carried by relays of post-boys, and this may imply that borough-funded postmasters did exist.³² However, the experiences of Sir Thomas Gorges in July 1595 show that problems could still occur.

On 11 July 1595 Gorges was journeying to Plymouth to inspect the ships that Sir John Hawkins and Sir Francis Drake were preparing for their West Indies expedition.³³ All went well until he arrived in Exeter. His angry letter of complaint to Sir Robert Cecil vividly illustrates his problems:

Coming on Friday night last to Exeter about seven of the clock, I presently sent my commission for post horses to Mr Mayor, who negligent in these affairs, not respecting her majesty's service, nor me, but as ordinary, it was nine o'clock next day before I could find any horses, and then none but such as carry wood up and down the town, very unfit horses if her majesty's service require haste. I thought good to advertise your lordship of this, much desiring you to do me that credit as to write a letter down to Mr Mayor commanding him to make his repair before you to answer his contempt, then to leave it at my discretion. It will be a great terrifying unto him and an occasion that those that come from her majesty shall be better regarded. I beseech your lordship direct your letter to Mr John Davy, the Mayor, and to one Hugh Crossing, one of the stewards of Exeter.³⁴

Gorges's vexations in Exeter were not uncommon on the road from London towards the South West at this time. And yet if he had been able to delay his journey by just two weeks he would certainly have met with fewer difficulties. At the beginning of August 1595 for the first time in sixteen years royal standing posts to the West Country were finally engaged on Exchequer wages (Fig. 2).³⁵

The route began in the London post room of William Goffe, who received twenty pence daily for handling westward-bound packets. It then ran to Staines, where the new postmaster was paid two shillings, and on to Hartfordbridge, where Gilbert Lippescombe earned twenty

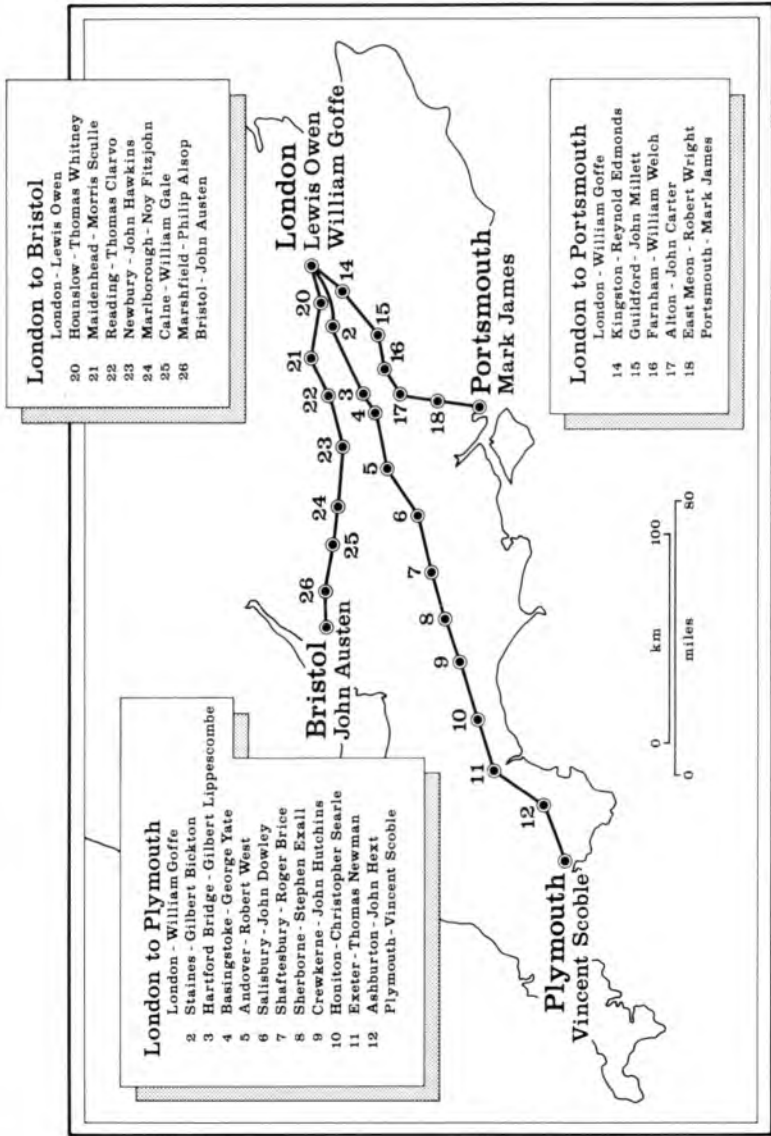


FIG. 2. West Country Royal Standing Posts in the 1590s (standing posts to Plymouth and Portsmouth were engaged in August 1595, and to Bristol in February 1598).

pence a day. Thereafter the route proceeded via eleven post rooms (in each the daily wages were two shillings) to terminate in Plymouth where Vincent Scoble was appointed to serve as postmaster for twenty pence a day. Unlike William Harrison's itinerary of Devon's customary stages referred to earlier which ran north of Dartmoor through Okehampton towards Launceston, with a branch to Tavistock and Plymouth, the royal route of 1595 instead followed the stages listed by Randolph in his letters of 1589 and proceeded from Exeter via Ashburton to Plymouth (Fig. 3). Moreover, neither Chudleigh nor South Brent, mentioned as stages in some earlier claims for payment submitted by messengers of the chamber, were included.³⁶ Of the postmasters who had previously served the Queen in 1579, only Stephen Exall of Sherborne and John Hutchins of Crewkerne remained; the rest were new men.

The uprising of Hugh O'Neill in Ireland in the Spring of 1595 was the immediate reason for the re-establishment of royal standing posts towards Devon. Because the new rebellion was centred in southern Ireland a better link between South West England and London was deemed essential to facilitate the rapid conveyance of royal packets to and from the ports of Wexford, Waterford and Cork. Incidentally, fears that Spanish forces based in the Netherlands and France might come to the assistance of the Irish also prompted the establishment that year of 'ordinary' royal standing posts to Portsmouth. In any case on-going programmes of fortifications in both Portsmouth and Plymouth had further increased the flow of official correspondence since 1589 to a point where a more regular posting arrangement was desirable.³⁷ However, by 1598 the Irish uprising intensified.³⁸ Posts towards Bristol 'to serve her majesty's realm of Ireland' were engaged in February, thereby completing Exchequer-funded links between the Court and England's three most important southern ports.³⁹ By August O'Neill had crushed the English under Sir Henry Bagenal in the battle of the Yellow Ford and this sparked off a general insurrection in Connaught, Munster, throughout Leinster and to the borders of the Pale itself.⁴⁰ Roads to the west were thick not only with post-boys hurrying from stage to stage with packets, but with soldiers and with waggons loaded with supplies. An army of 20,000 men commanded by the Earl of Essex was transported to Ireland from the western ports in April 1599. The Earl was later replaced by Charles Blount, Lord Mountjoy, who established his headquarters at Londonderry and drew most of his supplies not from the South West but from Chester and Holyhead. Even so, the Privy Council was alerted to the 'great delays found in the sending of her majesty's packets into the western parts'. On 12 August 1600 Sir John Stanhope, by then the Master of the Posts, was informed by the Council that 'it is thought meet for the more speedy conveying of letters . . . that

John Butchyns postmaster of Crewkehorne
 for his wages & for his horse by the space of one
 whole year and 243 days beginning the first of
 August 1595 and ended the last of March 1597 at
 the rate of $\text{xx} \text{ s. } \text{vi} \text{ d.}$

Christopher Sarelles postmaster of Honiton
 for his wages & for his horse by the space of one
 whole year at the rate of $\text{xx} \text{ s. } \text{vi} \text{ d.}$

Thomas Newman postmaster of Exeter
 for his wages & for his horse by the space of one
 whole year at the rate of $\text{xx} \text{ s. } \text{vi} \text{ d.}$

John Beyle postmaster of Ashburton for
 his wages & for his horse by the space of one
 whole year at the rate of $\text{xx} \text{ s. } \text{vi} \text{ d.}$

Vincente Scoble postmaster of Plymouth
 for his wages & for his horse by the space of one
 whole year at the rate of $\text{xx} \text{ s. } \text{vi} \text{ d.}$

In all the said wages & for the horse by the space of one
 whole year and 243 days by the rate of $\text{xx} \text{ s. } \text{vi} \text{ d.}$

FIG. 3. Extract from the Accounts of the Queen's Master of the Posts, 1 April 1594–31 March 1597, showing the stages laid at Crewkerne, Honiton, Exeter, Ashburton and Plymouth on 1 August 1595. The name of each postmaster and his wages for 'one whole year and 243 days' is entered. PRO, AOI/1951/9. Reproduced by permission of the Controller of HM Stationery Office.

there shall be stages laid between Plymouth, Looe, St Austell, Truro and Falmouth.⁴¹ The motives of the Council were more explicitly revealed in a second letter to Stanhope on 23 October 1601 which argued that:

In regard of the late descent of the Spaniards in the Province of Munster, it is thought fit for the same respects to establish the like stages to Padstow in the north coast of Cornwall . . . we require you to take order for the performance of the same . . . as also for the entertaining of a post barque at Padstow for the like speedy conveyance of letters from time to time by sea.⁴²

A Spanish fleet with 4,000 troops on board had landed in Ireland a month earlier but Stanhope's accounts indicate that post stages in Cornwall had already been laid. Commencing on 1 October 1600 Vincent Scoble's wages in Plymouth were raised by four pence a day and new stages were laid at Looe, St Austell, Truro and Penryn. John Cumming in Looe received twenty pence per day for directing some packets to St Austell, and eight pence for sending others to Bodmin and Padstow. The postmaster of Padstow, Robert Belman, was paid £10 per month 'as well for carrying the packets by land to Bodmin, as for keeping a barque with men and furniture to transport the same into Ireland' (Fig. 4).⁴³

In October 1601 some 975 soldiers appointed to go to Waterford as reinforcements for Lord Mountjoy's siege of the Spanish at Kinsale arrived for embarkation in Barnstaple. The port was overwhelmed: the mayor wrote to the Privy Council protesting that he had not 'convenient means to lodge' the soldiers. He was told that the troops could be 'aptly and commodiously disposed for their said passage in the next adjoining towns of Torrington, Bideford and Ilfracombe'.⁴⁴ Barnstaple's involvement in English attempts to eject the Spaniards from Kinsale undoubtedly influenced the Privy Council decision on 1 November 1601 to lay posts from Exeter to North Devon. John Newman was engaged to serve in Chulmleigh and John Bryan acted as postmaster in Barnstaple, 'sending letters to and from Ireland for her majesty's service'.⁴⁵ These were probably well-established customary stages on the route connecting Exeter and Tawstock, the home of Devon's Lord Lieutenant, the Earl of Bath. But as a royal post route, the Barnstaple link lasted only a little longer than the O'Neill rebellion. In 1602 the Spanish surrendered on terms which allowed them free to return home and Mountjoy began to push the Irish rebels northwards to Ulster. By March 1603, O'Neill's final submission was inevitable. It came just six days after Queen Elizabeth's death. Within another four months John Newman of the Chulmleigh post room, and John Bryan of Barnstaple were discharged. And, by the end of September, all the royal postmasters in Cornwall had also gone.⁴⁶

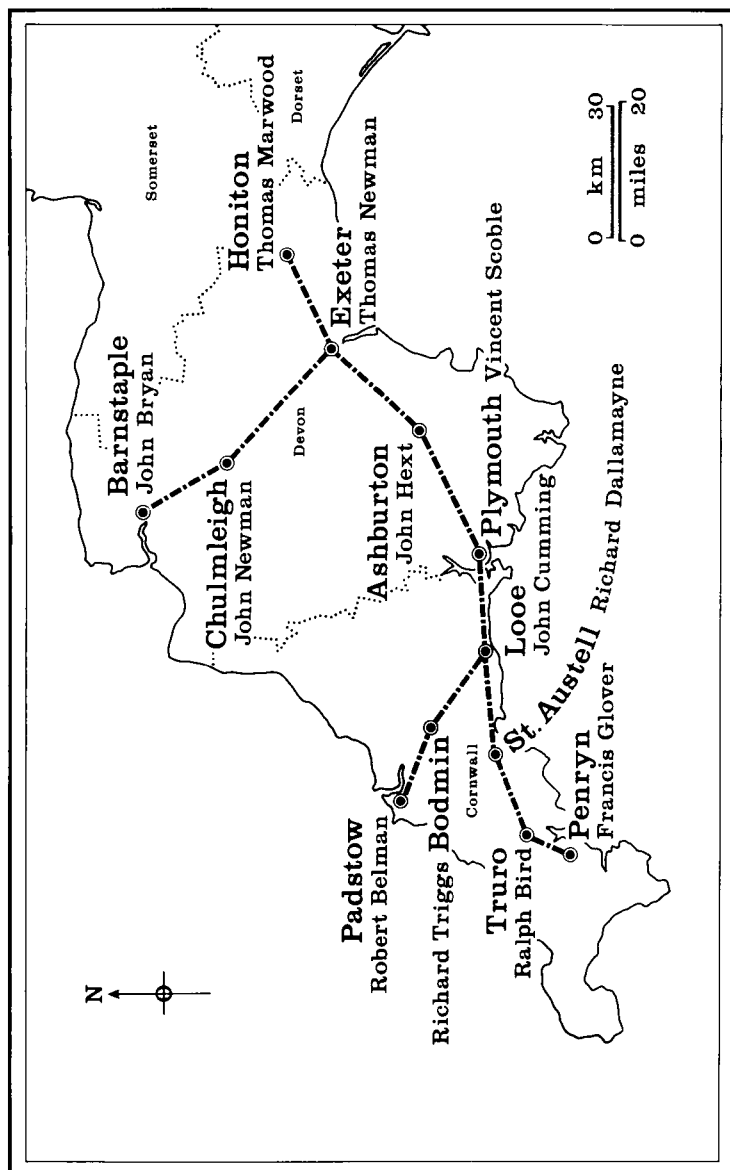


FIG. 4. Royal Standing Posts in Devon and Cornwall, 1595-1601 (posts to Plymouth were engaged in 1595 but extensions to Padstow and Penryn were not added until October 1600, and to Barnstaple in November 1601).

For the next five years the Exchequer provided funding only for the main arterial West Country route terminating in Plymouth. But under the terms of a new Privy Council warrant, dated 5 June 1608, the stages of Looe, Bodmin and Padstow were reinstated.⁴⁷ This limited line of standing posts into Cornwall was, however, maintained only until the end of March 1611 when the entire West Country route was again discharged and thereafter remained absent from the Master of the Post's schedule for nine years.⁴⁸ But notwithstanding the fact that in their origins the royal standing posts of the West Country owed much to political troubles in Ireland, when Treasury support was periodically withdrawn provincial post rooms did not close down. They continued to serve the horse-hiring requirements of through travellers and many were commercially successful in conveying private letters. Gradually they became much less dependent upon Treasury wages. By the reign of James I the practice of establishing royal standing posts had widely demonstrated and advertised the advantages of reliable and secure letter carriage by the post. Royal postmasters were required to deliver letters to any destination within a radius of twenty miles of the post stage town and this service was also increasingly offered by commercial posts.⁴⁹ Men of business and trade increasingly used the services of the provincial post rooms and the volume of private correspondence sent by the post appears to have greatly increased. There was, moreover, a good deal more personal travel by means of hired horses. The whole post-horse system (both royal and customary) had responded to increased levels of demand. Indeed, by the 1620s it would have been most unusual for a traveller to encounter difficulty in securing a post horse at an accustomed stage, or a private letter to be long delayed before the post-boy conveyed it to the postmaster in the next town.⁵⁰

DEVON'S POSTMASTERS

The names of those engaged as royal standing posts in Devon are recorded in the accounts of the Master General of the Posts, but little else is known about them. However, as shown in Table III, some of the county's Elizabethan postmasters were wealthy enough to pay tax in the Subsidy of 1581, and one or two served the Queen for more than a decade.⁵¹ John Hext of Ashburton, for example, assessed in 1581 at £4 in goods, ran the royal post room for almost fourteen years until he was succeeded by Thomas Cruse. Since the entire route was discharged in 1611 it is not easy thereafter to trace the careers of Devon's postmasters. Cruse does appear again when the route was re-established in 1620, but his career was certainly exceeded in length by that of Thomas Newman of Exeter. First appointed in 1595, Newman served until discharged in

TABLE III. Royal Standing Posts in Devon, 1579-1611.

Post Stage	Postmaster	Dates of Service	Daily Wage	Assessment in 1581 Subsidy
Exeter	(1) Richard Beckingham	1 Aug.- 30 Nov. 1579	1s. 8d.	£8 goods
	(2) Thomas Newman ¹	1 Aug. 1595- 31 Mar. 1611	2s. od.	—
Honiton	(1) Richard Hilliard	1 Aug.- 30 Nov. 1579	1s. 8d.	£8 goods
	(2) Christopher Searle	1 Aug. 1595- 1 Mar. 1599	2s. od.	£9 goods
	(3) Thomas Marwood	1 Mar. 1599- 30 Sep. 1603	2s. od.	—
	(4) Robert Searle	1 Jan. 1604- 31 Mar. 1611	1s. 8d.	—
Ashburton	(1) John Hext	1 Aug. 1595- 31 Mar. 1609	2s. od.	£4 goods
	(2) Thomas Cruse	31 Mar. 1609- 31 Mar. 1611	2s. od.	—
Plymouth	(1) Vincent Scoble ²	1 Aug. 1595- 31 Mar. 1611	1s. 8d.	£4 goods
Chulmleigh	(1) John Newman	1 Nov. 1601 30 Sep. 1603	2s. od.	—
Barnstaple	(1) John Bryan	1 Nov. 1601- 30 Sep. 1603	1s. 8d.	—

Sources: PRO, AOI/1950/2A; AOI/1951/9; AOI/1951/10; AOI/1951/11; AOI/1951/12; AOI/1951/13; AOI/1951/14; AOI/1952/15. PRO, E179/100/384-8.

Notes: 1. Newman was paid an extra shilling while the Barnstaple route was engaged between 1 Nov. 1601-30 Sep. 1603.

2. Scoble was paid an extra four pence and later eight pence while the route into Cornwall was engaged between 1 Oct. 1600 and 30 Sep. 1603. He again received the extra four pence when the Cornwall route was re-engaged between 21 May 1608 and 31 March 1611.

1611. The accounts indicate that he was re-appointed in 1620 and served a further year, making a total of seventeen years in royal service and probably twenty-six years as a supplier of post horses in Exeter. Vincent Scoble of Plymouth is mentioned in the Receiver's Accounts of the 1580s as the owner of post horses hired by the borough and he was clearly later employed as the town's royal postmaster between 1595 and 1611. His barns in Plymouth were temporarily rented to the Corporation in 1588 as accommodation for sick soldiers and sailors brought ashore from ships waiting for the Spanish Armada in Plymouth Sound, and it seems likely that he also had a large inn and a livery stable.⁵² Scoble died in 1615 and he was succeeded in the Plymouth post room by Abraham Jennings.⁵³

In the later 1590s when they were engaged as 'ordinary' standing

posts, the annual cost to the Treasury in wages of the men employed on the route between London and Plymouth was £456.5s.od. This represented 23 per cent of the total spent by the government in payments to royal postmasters throughout England and Wales.⁵⁴ Moreover, during the brief period when stages towards Padstow, Penryn and Barnstaple were also laid, annual spending on the wages of postmasters on the South West route rose to £554.17s.9d.⁵⁵ But these extra Devon and Cornwall stages were engaged at a time when new routes were also laid into Wales, north-west England and towards the southern coast. Hence the South West route accounted for only 18 per cent of total expenditure. And yet, of the 109 postmasters serving the Queen throughout England and Wales in 1600, 23 were employed in stages on the South West route.⁵⁶ Since its establishment as an Exchequer-funded route only five years earlier, the post road into the West Country had clearly become a highly significant and costly part of the royal network.

HASTE POST, HASTE

Royal postmasters were responsible for keeping 'able and sufficient' post horses ready for travellers to hire—usually a minimum of six, including two for the post-boy's use in conveying the packets of letters to the next stage. Payment of the boy's wages, the supply of a leather bag, 'well-lined with cotton or baize', and the provision of a horn to be blown regularly on the road, were all the responsibility of the local postmaster. But his most important task was to record in a 'well-bound book of ten or eleven quires of paper' all the horses he hired, and to whom he hired them. The time of arrival of all official letters was to be recorded, together with the names of their senders and recipients. All this information was required to be relayed to the Master General of the Posts each month. Moreover, on the outer covering or 'parcel' of each letter, the local postmaster at every stage was obliged to enter the time and date of its arrival in his office.⁵⁷ This information should in theory yield an indication of the speed at which official correspondence was conveyed by means of post-horse riders at this time, but unfortunately very few parcels have survived. This is not surprising. After all, the purpose of the wrapping was to keep the letters themselves clean as they were passed from one post-boy's grubby hand to the next. After extracting the contents, these heavily soiled bits of paper would be discarded by the recipient. Even so, a few examples do exist. One of the most remarkable enclosed a letter written by Lieutenant Edward Doddington on 25 July 1599.⁵⁸ Doddington was working on the new Plymouth Hoe fortress when he saw ships coming into the Sound.

Imagining them to be hostile he dashed off a brief letter to alert the Privy Council:

Right Honourables: There is a fleet at this present bearing in upon us, the wind at the north west. By all likelihood it be the enemy. Haste makes me to think I can write no more. I beseech your lordships to pardon me, and so I refer all to your lordships most closest consideration.

Doddington signed the letter and folded it (Fig. 5). No wrapping was used, instead he addressed the outside of his letter 'For Her Majesty's special service. To the right honourables the Lords of Her Majesty's Most Ho. Privy Council'. Below he wrote 'from the work at Plymouth the 25 of July at seven of the clock at night'. He added a little gallows



FIG. 5. The letter of Lieutenant Edward Doddington, 25 July 1599. This shows the endorsements of the Royal Postmasters' noting the time of arrival of Doddington's letter at each stage between Plymouth and London (except Salisbury). PRO, SP12/271/116. Reproduced by permission of the Controller of HM Stationery Office.

and the message 'hast post, hast for life, hast hast post, hast for life'. It would already have been past seven o'clock when Doddington's servant arrived at Vincent Scoble's post room, but the letter's urgency ensured its immediate despatch. The post-boy doubtless saddled up his horse while Scoble entered the details in his ledger. From this point onwards the letter's progress can be monitored because, as Figure 5 shows, all except one postmaster recorded its time of arrival at their stage. The Plymouth post-boy managed to reach Ashburton by 2.00 a.m. His average speed had been only four miles per hour, but he had been obliged to ride this lengthy stage of very difficult roads mostly during the night. The Ashburton boy reached Thomas Newman in Exeter by 6.00 a.m. He too had travelled rather slowly but he had been wakened in the early hours and had started his journey before daybreak. Having the benefit of a night's sleep, the Exeter post-boy travelled at eight miles per hour to reach Thomas Marwood in Honiton at 8.00 a.m. It took another three hours for the letter to reach Richard Hutchins in Crewkerne but the Honiton boy may have been delayed by the traffic choking the lanes on the way to the annual fair in Chard held on that date. Thereafter the letter travelled to Sherborne arriving at 1.00 p.m. Shaftesbury was not reached until 4.00 p.m. and no entry at all appears from the postmaster of Salisbury, John Dowley, though the letter must have passed through his office. It was 8.00 a.m. the following morning when the letter reached Andover and it arrived in Basingstoke at 1.00 p.m. By 3.30 p.m. it was at Hartfordbridge and, finally, at 7.00 p.m. on 27 July, 48 hours after leaving Plymouth, Doddington's letter was received by William Goffe in London. On a journey of 215 miles the letter had been carried at an average speed of 4.5 miles per hour. Ordinances laid down for the regulation of the royal posts specified speeds averaging at least six miles per hour in summer. Clearly the post-boys riding with Doddington's message had made very slow progress. According to the ordinances, an urgent letter from Plymouth should have arrived in London within 36 hours in summer and within no more than 55 hours in winter. But the posts' apparent lack of alacrity may reflect the fact that Lieutenant Doddington had mistaken a harmless group of fishing boats for an enemy fleet on its way to attack Plymouth. By midnight on 25 July, only five hours after the despatch of his first letter, Doddington wrote to explain his error to the Privy Council:

The fleet that I advertised to your lordships as being discovered by a pinnace that was sent out, were ships bound for Rochelle. The manner of their working caused us here much to doubt them, whereof I thought it my duty to give your lordships the speediest news that I could. Now humbly beseeching your lordships to pardon my past writing.⁵⁹

Although the wrapping of this second letter—cancelling the news contained in the first—has not survived, it is likely that Scoble sent it to Ashburton at first light on 26 July. Being daylight, the post-boys made better time. Indeed it is probable that Doddington's second letter actually caught up the first one either at Crewkerne or Sherborne. The two letters may even have been carried by the same post-boy over Salisbury Plain. Along with the sealed letter, verbal rumours of the alarm in Plymouth were undoubtedly conveyed from one post room to the next by the post-boys. Similarly the news that the ships seen in Plymouth were after all found to be friendly would have been brought as gossip by the second post-boy who carried Doddington's message of retraction. Thus, if this second letter did arrive in Crewkerne before the first had been despatched, one can almost hear the redoubtable Richard Hutchins instructing his boy to proceed with both letters but to spare the horse because the panic was over.

CONCLUSION

By 1600 the royal post routes of Devon and Cornwall were clearly well established, but Exchequer-funded standing posts were not a permanent feature of the road towards the west throughout the Tudor period. Indeed, there were no royal postmasters until the 1570s. And thereafter they were engaged and discharged largely according to the fluctuating need for rapid communications with southern Ireland. While it had been possible to hire post horses in the West Country long before there were royal standing posts, services were not guaranteed and there was no speedy means of sending personal correspondence. The efficient carriage of government letters, and the supply by royal postmasters of post horses to those who needed to travel on official business, demonstrated to the public at large the great potential of a properly organised post-horse system for private communications, and by the reign of James I facilities appear to have continued to function even when Exchequer support was periodically withdrawn, as it was in 1611. This was clearly an advantage to the Privy Council since it made the re-establishment of a route an easy task: the same post rooms were simply re-hired. The formal character and relative reliability of royal standing posts produced conditions which allowed permanent commercial posting facilities to flourish and although Treasury-funded royal stages towards the South West had been established rather later than those to other parts of England such as the Kent coast or the Scottish border, in the late 1620s this was the first region in which a regular public letter-carrying service was offered.⁶⁰ In 1629 the postmasters of the 'western stages' sought Privy Council permission 'to undertake the speedy despatch of all private letters

weekly from London to Plymouth and from Plymouth to London' arguing that such a service would benefit 'both his majesty's service and the common good of others'. In response the Privy Council wrote to the mayors of Plymouth, Exeter, Salisbury and 'all others whom it may concern' to bestow their approval.⁶¹ This official endorsement of scheduled letter-carrying services into and out of the West Country marks the beginning of an important new chapter in the development of post horse communications in Stuart England but it must, however, form the subject of a later enquiry.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. See for example the stages from London to various destinations listed in B[ritish] L[ibrary], Royal 18 D.III, ff. 4, 13, 15, 23, 85; P[ublic] R[ecord] O[ffice], State Papers Domestic, Elizabeth, SP12, 235/66: posts between London and Plymouth and the miles between each station; PRO, SP 12, 96/192: the names of the post towns coming out of Ireland from the sea side to London with the number of miles distance one from the other. See also Edelen, Georges (ed.), 1968. *William Harrison: the Description of England*, New York, pp. 397-406.
2. There are many examples in the Exeter Receiver's Accounts (D[evon] R[ecord] O[ffice], 22-33, Elizabeth, 1580-91), and the Plymouth Receiver's Accounts (W[est] D[evon] R[ecord] O[ffice], W130).
3. For the cost of post-horse travel see: Crofts, J. R., 1967. *Packhorse, Waggon and Post: Land Carriage and Communications under the Tudors and Stuarts*, Toronto, pp. 84-6. See also: Joyce, H., 1893. *The History of the Post Office*, London p. 92; Robinson, H., 1948. *The British Post Office: A History*, Princeton, New Jersey, pp. 11-22; Willcocks, R. M., 1975. *England's Postal History until 1840*, Perth, pp. 6-7; Walker, G., 1938. *Haste, Post, Haste: Postmen and Post Roads Through the Ages*, London, pp. 116-17.
4. Robinson, 1948, p. 15; *Historical Manuscripts Commission*, Report on the Records of the City of Exeter. Vol. 73, 1916, 65, No. 329; BL, Lansdowne MS 78, 92: 'orders set forth in Queen Mary's time: ordinances devised for the king and queen's majesty for the order of the posts'.
5. William Harrison's itinerary amounts to only 139 miles. The same figures are noted in one of the lists of stages in the Saxton Atlas (see note 1). Later lists put the journey at 160 miles.
6. There are numerous examples in J. Roche-Dasent, 1893. *A[cts of the] P[arliamentary] C[ouncil of England]*, New Series, VII., HMSO; see also BL, Lansdowne 78, 93: 'orders appointed by the lords of her majesty's most honourable privy council touching the posts established in this realm'.
7. BL, Lansdowne 78, 93; also BL, Stowe 570, I, 100: 'orders appointed by the Queen's most excellent majesty to be generally observed by her highness' posts'.
8. For an outline of Tuke's career see Walker, 1938, pp. 31-7. The term 'postmaster' was not in general use until the seventeenth century—until then the men who ran post-rooms were known simply as 'posts'. But to avoid confusion in this paper the term postmaster has been adopted throughout.

9. See BL, Lansdowne 78, 92.
10. This is based upon an analysis of the Declared Accounts of the Masters of the Posts, 1566–1622. PRO, AOI/1950/1–7; AOI/1951/8–14; AOI/1952/15–22; AOI/1953/23.
11. It appears to have been common by the reign of Elizabeth. See Walker, 1938, pp. 55 & 116–28; Robinson, 1948, pp. 15–16.
12. See note 11.
13. Many had been 'accustomed stages' since the thirteenth century. See Hindle, B. P., 1976. The Road Network of Medieval England and Wales, *Journal of Historical Geography*, 2, 207–21; Edelen, 1968, pp. 397–400. The customary stages are mapped in Brayshay, M., 1987. Plymouth's Coastal Defences in the Year of the Spanish Armada, *Rep. Trans. Devon. Ass. Advmt Sci.*, 119, p. 190.
14. Cornelius, D. B., 1973. *Devon & Cornwall: A Postal Survey*, Reigate, 2.
15. *APC*, New Series, VIII, 1571–75, 268–9.
16. *APC*, New Series, VIII, 1571–75, 271.
17. His first quinquennial account was presented for audit in 1571. PRO, AOI/1950/1.
18. *APC*, New Series Vol. XI, 46–7: 'to the Earl of Bedford upon a complaint made by the Mayor and Bailiffs of Exeter against one Marshall that commenced a suit in the Queen's Bench against one Degory Baker'. Although dated February 1578 by the old calendar, the incident occurred at the start of 1579.
19. PRO, AOI/1950/2A; See also *APC*, New Series, XI, 1578–80, 209; PRO, SP12/132/67: 'A note of the charges of all posts extraordinary', 30th November 1579.
20. See Beckett, J. C., 1979. *A Short History of Ireland*, London, pp. 50–1; also Black, J. B., 1987. *The Reign of Elizabeth, 1558–1603*, Oxford, pp. 473–80.
21. Cornelius, 1973, p. 2. PRO, AOI/1950/4; *APC*, New Series, XV, 1587–88, 16–17, 68, 126, 132, 133, 198; PRO, SP12/235/66.
22. See also *APC*, New Series, XV, 16–17, 68 where George Cobham, Richard Gribble and Davyd Jenkins (messengers of the chamber) received warrants or placards to take up post-horses to ride to the West Country in April, May & June 1588.
23. DRO, Exeter Receiver's Accounts, 31–32, Elizabeth I, 1589–90, f. 2.
24. DRO, Exeter Receiver's Accounts, 26–27, Elizabeth I, 1584–5, f. 7.
25. DRO, Exeter Receiver's Accounts, 28–29, Elizabeth I, 1586–7, f. 5.
26. DRO, Exeter Receiver's Accounts, 29–30, Elizabeth I, 1587–8.
27. DRO, Exeter Receiver's Accounts, 29–30, Elizabeth I, 1587–8: Thomas Spicer's account. Also see WDRO, W130, Plymouth Receiver's Accounts, 1587–8, f. 5: 'item paid for 3 leather bags delivered to Mr Blithman, Vincent Scoble and John Slye . . . 18d'.
28. PRO, AOI/1950/4.
29. DRO, H.H/3/55, Exeter Freeman's Book, f. 180.
30. DRO, H.H/3/55, f. 181, also printed in *HMC*, LXXIII, 64.
31. DRO, H.H/3/55, f. 182.
32. PRO, AOI/1951/9. The preamble to the accounts mentions that packets had been forwarded to the South West but no details are provided about the cost, the method of despatch or the numbers of packets.
33. See Gill, C., 1966. *Plymouth: A New History*. Newton Abbot, Vol. 1, pp. 185–8.
34. PRO, SP12/253/18: Sir Thomas Gorges to Sir Robert Cecil, Plymouth, 16 July 1595; SP12/253/19: Sir Thomas Gorges to Sir Robert Cecil, Exeter, 16 July 1595.
35. PRO, AOI/1950/9; BL, Royal, 18 D.III, f. 113: 'Towards Plymouth—stages where posts are appointed to be laid between London and Plymouth, 1595'.
36. Edelen, 1968, pp. 401, 443. PRO, SP12/235/66. The customary stages at Chudleigh and South Brent were never laid with royal posts.
37. Colvin, H. M., 1982. *The History of the King's Works*, IV, 1485–1660, Part II, pp. 591–3.
38. Beckett, 1979, pp. 56–8.
39. PRO, AOI/1951/10. Declaration of the Accounts of Sir John Stanhope, knight, Master of the Posts, 1 April 1597–3 March 1599: 'extraordinary posts laid for her majesty's service for the realm of Ireland'.
40. Beckett, 1979, p. 57; also see Black, 1987, pp. 485–6.
41. *APC*, New Series, XXX, 1599–1600, 587.
42. *APC*, New Series, XXXII, 1601–1604, 304.

43. PRO, AOI/1951/111.
44. *APC*, New Series, XXXII, 1601–1604. Letters from the Privy Council to the Mayor of Barnstaple, Sir Robert Basset, John Acland, Thomas Browne and Thomas Hinson, 20 October 1601.
45. Beckett, 1979, 58; PRO, AOI/1951/111.
46. PRO, AOI/1951/12: Declaration of the Account of John, Lord Stanhope, Master of the Posts, 1 April 1602–31 March 1605.
47. Privy Council Warrant quoted in: PRO, AOI/1951/14, 1 April 1607–31 March 1609.
48. PRO, AOI/1953/23, 27 January 1625. By this time wages were in arrears and the Account covers payments for varying periods between 1619 and 1622. Plymouth stages were re-engaged on 27 October 1620.
49. DRO, H.H/5/329.
50. Walker, 1938, p. 155.
51. Stoate, T. L., 1988. *Devon Taxes, 1581–1660*, Bristol, pp. 8, 69, 103, 108–9.
52. See: Brayshay, 1987, pp. 175–6.
53. PRO, AOI/1953/23. The Devon stages were re-engaged in October 1620, Abraham Jennings had succeeded Scoble as the postmaster in Plymouth.
54. PRO, AOI/1951/10.
55. PRO, AOI/1951/11. For a full analysis of the wage costs of all the royal post routes see: Brayshay, M., 1991. Royal Post-Horse Routes in England and Wales: The Evolution of the Network in the Later-Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Century, *Journal of Historical Geography*, 17, 4, Table 2.
56. PRO, AOI/1951/12.
57. See notes 7 & 10. See also PRO, SP12/41/189: 'Ordinances', 1566; PRO, SP12/163/77; PRO, SP12/167/24: 'Orders to be Printed' 14 January 1584; PRO SP12, 96/193, ff. 108–10: 'regulations concerning punishments of post boys found asleep in the saddle'.
58. PRO, SP12/271/115. The Doddington case is also discussed by Crofts, 1975, pp. 59, 141, and by Walker, 1938, p. 119. Both appear to overlook the effect which Doddington's second letter may have had upon the progress of his first.
59. PRO, SP12/271/116; PRO, SP12/271/117.
60. Oswald, N. C., 1989. Some Devon Postmarks, *Rep. Trans. Devon. Ass. Advmt Sci.*, 121, p. 173. Dates the weekly service to 1620; Worth, R. N., 1890. *History of Plymouth*, Plymouth, pp. 335–6. Dates the weekly service to 1630 or 1635. No source is provided. See, however, DRO, H.H/5/329. Letter dated 21 November 1629.
61. *HMC*, LXXIII, 65.