Letter from Fakenham

It was in the late 17th century when the GPO started. It used Letter Carriers and a complex system of cross posts and it was a bit hit or miss with the recipient paying the postage by the distance.

By 1839 the Government decided that the system needed to be reviewed and early the next year, they set up a short-lived fourpenny post. In May of that year the penny black postage stamp was introduced, thereby setting up the penny post.

At that time the post at Fakenham was handled on a type of franchise basis. An old photograph of the Market Place shows a building market 'Post Office' at the top of Bridge Street, this may have worked with the two nearby coaching inns to handle the post. It came in from King's Lynn via a cross-post at Wells, this may have come around the coast by boat.

By the 1850s things were more organised in Fakenham and a post office was opened at Martin Bambridge's in Lower Market (Old Post Office Street) by which time the mail probably came in by rail.

In 1906 the GPO opened a dedicated Post Office at the top end of Bridge Street. The mail was brought in from Dereham by a contracted motor van. At the back was an embryonic Telephone Exchange. When the nearby printing works caught fire in November 1914 it was feared the the Post Office would get burned, but it was saved.

1933 saw the opening of a splendid new Crown Post Office at the junction of Holt Road and Queens Road. This had its own fleet of motor vans. Later in1939 a new Telephone Exchange was built but it was not operational until 1944, just in time for D-Day.

This grand building served the town until the Post Office and Royal Mail split in 1995, since when the Post Office has rotated around different venues in the town.

The Post Office had consideration for those who lived a distance from the Head Post Office in Queens Road and so Sub Offices were set up for their benefit. One was opened in Sculthorpe Road in 1937. This end of the town got another Sub

Office in 1951 when one was opened in a former WWI wooden hut in Wells Road. A new shop was built nearby in 1972 and the Sub Office moved into it until 2008. At the other end of the town at Fakenham Heath a Sub Office was opened in 1938 in a domestic situation and then, in the 1960s a new shop was built in the area that housed the Sub Office until 1977.

It is interesting to note that in 1886 the Post Office was open from 7am until 8pm, closing at noon on a bank holiday. There were limited facilities 8am to 10am on Sundays, Good Friday and Christmas Day!