

A Note About Queen Victoria's Visit to Sheffield

by Keith Branigan

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In collecting mail to and from the Royal Household I do not normally bother with telegrams - I regard them (wrongly perhaps) as not really anything to do with 'the mail'. But I made an exception when I was offered one group of telegrams about five years ago - because they concerned Queen Victoria's visit to Sheffield.

Queen Victoria paid her first, and only, visit to Sheffield in the year of the Golden Jubilee, 1897. Although she was 77 years old at the time, she traveled widely, and on this occasion she agreed to break her journey from Windsor to Balmoral, where she would celebrate her birthday on May 24th, in order to open the new Town Hall. The visit took place on May 21st, and she was in the city for precisely two and a half hours. Because it was such a brief visit no accommodation was required for the Queen and those who traveled with her (the Duke of Connaught and Princess Beatrice), and of course no special postal facilities were required.

However the telegrams I acquired reveal correspondences about the complex arrangements which the brief visit required, spread over a period of three months. The telegrams were sent from the Office of the Master of the Horse (in the Royal Mews), which seems to have been responsible for making sure the arrangements as requested by the Queen and her Crown Equerry were in place.

On March 5th, the Equerry sent a telegram (Figure 1) to Cammell (the steel works) fixing a visit to see the process of rolling a steel plate! The next day a second telegram was sent to the Royal Victoria Station Hotel (now the Holiday

Inn Royal Victoria) to book overnight accommodation for Sir Henry Ewart (the Equerry) during his visit to Cammell. Ewart's visit was successful, and a visit to The Cyclops Works for the Queen to see a steel plate being made for her new warship HMS Ocean was put into the programme for May 21st.

The reason for the Master of the Horse being in charge of arrangements becomes clear in the next telegrams from the second week of May. On May 12th he wrote to inform the authorities in Sheffield that on Wednesday 19th May (two days before the visit) 30 horses, 5 carriages, and 30 men would arrive by train. These were staff from the Royal Mews. The Queen's escort was to be provided by the Second Life Guards and the Master sent a separate telegram with details of this party - 114 Officers and men, plus 2 farriers (Figure 2). He doesn't mention them, but there must obviously have been as many horses as men, so the Escort probably required a train of its own!

It is well known that Queen Victoria was a stickler for detail and at this point she began to interfere. Six days before the visit she announced she wanted to change the carriages to be used to those with India Rubber tyres. This meant that the platform from which she would watch the steel plate being rolled had to be made wider by 1 inch and lower by 1 inch (yes, by 1 inch). The Master of the Horse sent the orders by telegram to the Cammell Works on May 15th. Just two days before the visit another telegram arrived from London, this time sent to the Master of the Horse who by now was

staying at the Royal Victoria Station Hotel himself. The Queen had decided she wanted a step of 6 inches from the railway platform into her landau but (graciously) she "... does not mind it being quite level into the railway saloon". The Master was ordered to see to it!

Finally, a flurry of telegrams on the 20th provided last minute orders for the Lord Chamberlain (the Duke of Norfolk) and confirmation that the Queen would be leaving Windsor Castle at 11.35am the next day.

The visit seems to have gone off well. The Queen arrived on time at 5.00pm and processed through the packed streets to the Town Hall which she duly declared open. The procession then moved to Norfolk Park where 50,000 school-children sang Rule Britannia and God Save the Queen, after which the Queen was driven to the Cammell Works where a huge red hot steel plate was rolled from the furnace before her eyes. The Queen returned to the station and caught the night train for the long journey to Balmoral at 7.30pm. How the Queen's mail reached her at Balmoral is quite another (complex) story!


POST OFFICE TELEGRAPHS.
(Inland Official Telegrams only.)

Prefix A.0 Code MS No. of Telegram 6

Office of Origin and Service Instructions. O.H.M.S. Words. 50 Sent At 10-80 a.m. I certify that this Telegram is sent on the service of the The Master of Horse

ESP. To J By HT (Signature) _____

Attention is called to the Regulations printed at the back hereof.

Reply to Mr Messrs Cammells Works Sheffield Date MAR 5 1897

Can	You	show	Sir	Henry
Ewart	The	Process	of	Rolling
a	Steel	plate	if	the
come's	to	Sheffield	on	Monday
Afternoon	between	2-3	2.30 & 3pm	the
FROM	arriving	about		3 E

The Name and Address of the Sender, IF NOT TO BE TELEGRAPHED, should be written in the Space provided at the Back of the Form.

[WYMAN AND SONS, LIMITED, PRINTERS, LONDON.]

Figure 1 – The Queen's brief visit was meticulously planned. This telegraph was from the Queen's Equerry, Sir Henry Ewart, to Cammell arranging to see a steel plate being rolled in advance of Her Majesty's visit.


Counter No. 874
Foreign No. _____
Handed over to Cable Comp. at _____

POST OFFICE TELEGRAPHS.

Government Telegram
 To be forwarded by the best route available }

I Certify that this Telegram is sent on the business of the Master of the Horse
 Signature *R. Nicholas*

For use of Post Office

Prefix	N. of Chargeable Words	3H	SERVICE INSTRUCTIONS AS TO ROUTE	CHARGES	i.	s.	d.
<i>3 2 3/4</i>	<i>3 2 3/4</i>		<i>Let M</i>	Telegram Repetition Acknowledgment Reply Extra Copies No. direction Special charges Total			
Code Time	No. of Copies	No. of Pages Words					
Sent at							
To	By whom to sign here						
By me	<i>R. Nicholas</i>						

The Name and Address of the Sender, if to be telegraphed, must be written at the end of the Telegram.

TO { *Captain Baynton
Cammell's Works
Sheffield*

The Escort from 2nd Life Guards consists of:

*1 Field Officer 2 Captains
4 Lieut. 2 Sub. Majors, 8 Sergeants
2 Farriers, 1 Trumpeter, 96 Privates*

Nicholas

Figure 2 – Telegraph from the Master of the Horse to Cammell informing them of the size and members of the Royal party which will be visiting.

You can find more articles on Sheffield's postal history at our web site.

The Sheffield Philatelic Society meets at 7.15 pm on the 2nd and 4th Thursday of each month (except August) at the Central United Reformed Church, 60 Norfolk Street, Sheffield, S1 2JB.

For a programme of events please visit:

www.sheffieldps.org.uk