

SOME LETTERS OF SIR FRANCIS DASHWOOD,
BARON LE DESPENCER, AS JOINT POST-
MASTER GENERAL, 1766-81

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SIR FRANCIS DASHWOOD (1708-81) was the grandson of Francis Dashwood (d. 1683) of Somerset, a Turkey merchant and alderman of London, and only son of Sir Francis Dashwood (d. 1724), first baronet, of West Wycombe, Buckinghamshire, by his second wife Mary Fane, eldest daughter of Vere, fourth Earl of Westmorland and sister of the fifth, sixth and seventh Earls. In April 1763 he was granted the barony of Le Despencer, which had fallen into abeyance on the death of the seventh Earl of Westmorland, fourteenth Baron Le Despencer, in August 1762. Dashwood was Member of Parliament for Romney from 1741 to 1761, and for Weymouth and Melcombe Regis from 1761 to 1763. In the House of Commons he played the part of an independent country gentleman, pressing in 1744 for double taxation of placemen and pensioners,¹ in 1745 for the freeing of the House of Commons from "undue influence",² and consistently opposing the "German war".³ He left independency in the 1760s, first to hold political office as Chancellor of the Exchequer in Bute's administration, May 1762 to April 1763, and again, in December 1766, in Pitt's administration, to hold the office of Joint Postmaster General, which he retained until his death in December 1781.

Politically, Despencer's appointment as Joint Postmaster General was regarded by Newcastle as proof that Chatham was openly seeking alliance with Bute,⁴ and was quoted by North

¹ *Parl. Hist.*, vol. xiii, p. 1033. 7 December 1744. Henry Archer's motion for the "double taxing of Places and Pensions . . . in ease of the landed interest of this kingdom".

² *Ibid.* vol. xiii, p. 1342. 17 October 1745.

³ Pitt's praise of his consistency in this respect is noted in Horace Walpole, *Memoirs of the Reign of George III* (ed. Barker), vol. ii, p. 188.

⁴ Albemarle, *Memoirs of the Marquis of Rockingham*, vol. ii, p. 28.

as part of Chatham's attempt to strengthen the government in the House of Lords.¹ But his long tenure of office² is more important administratively than politically, and he treated it rather as a placeman than as a politician. Indeed, the office of Postmaster General in the eighteenth century, though often held by rising politicians, was more of an administrative than a political post. The Post Office was a new department, more like the new revenue departments than the old political departments, but differing from both. It differed from the old political departments because it was established by statute and had no past association with the household, and because its head was debarred from sitting in the House of Commons, but it differed from and ranked higher than the other revenue departments, whose heads were also excluded from the Commons, because it performed a great public service.

The following selection of letters, taken, with three exceptions, from the Dashwood papers now deposited in the Bodleian Library,³ have been chosen primarily for their administrative interest. They are the earliest surviving letters of a Postmaster General, and for the period they cover the surviving "official" Post Office material consists only of four Establishment Books—one for 1768, two for 1769 and one for 1770—and the first three volumes of Treasury Letter Books, 1760-71, 1771-8 and 1778-83.⁴

Despencer's tenure of office began shortly after two changes which made the Post Office more fully a public department. In 1760 the Post Office revenues, with the rest of the hereditary

¹ Bodleian Library, North MSS. d. 24, fol. 20. Lord North to the Earl of Guilford, 6 December 1766.

² Of the twenty-eight Joint Postmasters General of George III's reign, eighteen held office for less than four years. Despencer had three colleagues during his period of office: the Earl of Hillsborough until December 1768; the Earl of Sandwich until December 1770; H. F. Thynne, later Lord Carteret.

³ See my note "Some Post Office Papers, 1766-81, in the Dashwood Collection" in the *Bodleian Library Record*, vol. iv, no. 4, p. 182. All the letters now published from the Dashwood Collection are in MSS. DD. Dashwood (Bucks) c. 13. I have to thank Sir John Dashwood for kindly permitting their publication.

⁴ I am grateful to Mr. E. C. Baker, Post Office Archivist, for much help given to me on my visits to St. Martins le Grand.

revenue, were taken over from the Crown and merged in the general revenue. In September 1764 the Bye and Cross Roads Letter Post, which had been farmed by Ralph Allen since 1720, was taken under the direct control and administration of the Postmaster General. This meant that, for the first time, the Post Office directly administered the four services it provided: the Inland Post, the Foreign Letter Post, the Penny Post and the Bye and Cross Roads Letter Post. Despencer's correspondence throws light both on the administration of these services and on the problems which the Post Office faced in the period before the reforms of the end of the eighteenth century.

Several letters illustrate the problems which the connection of eighteenth-century administration with politics set to a department with numerous local employees. There were more than four hundred post towns. The position of local deputy postmaster was generally regarded by members of parliament as part of the local patronage to which their membership entitled them, and their view was often accepted, though reluctantly, by the Post Office. For example, William Jolliffe, member for Petersfield, was even able to insist that the Petersfield postmastership went with the tenancy of an inn owned by Jolliffe (Todd to Despencer, 29 March 1769, 26 September 1770). There are signs that, at a higher level of appointment, the claims of political interest were not always admitted—at any rate North did not find it easy to persuade the Joint Postmasters that a contract for the provision of packet boats should be renewed because the member of parliament who held it was a useful supporter of government (Thynne to Despencer, 28 November 1773, North to Despencer, 29 January 1774, Despencer to North, 30 January 1774) and Despencer was able to insist that the successor to Franklin as Deputy Postmaster General of America should be resident (Despencer to Todd, 4 February 1774, Despencer to Thynne, 6 February 1774).

The problems connected with the privilege of franking (illustrated especially in the correspondence of November and December 1769 between Anthony Todd and Mathew Brickdale, member of parliament for Bristol) are also a commentary on the difficulties encountered by an administrative system which

is not allowed to be free from politics. The grant to members of both Houses of Parliament and to certain officials of the privilege of sending letters and packets, and, later, newspapers, free from postage duty could not fail to give rise to abuses and the attempt to discover and provide against them could hardly fail to lead to irritation on the part of the privileged groups. It is certain that none of the series of attempts to reduce the volume of fraud caused by the privilege had any considerable success, and there is evidence (e.g. in the Memorial of 17 November 1772) that the Post Office would have preferred to persuade members of parliament to relinquish their privilege, believing that there was no effective way of preventing its abuse. But here political considerations were too strong, and franking and the consequent legitimate and illegitimate loss to the revenue continued until 1839.

The relations of the Post Office with the Treasury were bound to be tainted, as were the relations of the Customs and Excise Departments with the Treasury, by the Treasury's political outlook on patronage. But the Dashwood letters provide one outstanding example (North to Despencer, 25 January 1775) of an attempt by the Post Office to obtain a comprehensive reform of the administration of the postal service which was thwarted not because of the Treasury's political preoccupations but, apparently, because of a mixture of dilatoriness and inability to give serious attention to anything but the American troubles. In November 1772, in response to a routine annual enquiry from the Treasury as to whether the Post Office wished to make any proposals for the better management of the Post Office revenue and the greater safety of correspondence, the Post Office submitted a Memorial stating and suggesting solutions to several difficult and long-standing administrative problems: the delivery of country letters to the persons to whom they were addressed instead of to the nearest post office, the exemption of mails and expresses from the payment of tolls, the further regulation of the privilege of franking, the limitation of orders by members of parliament for newspapers, compensation to the Clerks of the Roads for the reduction in their income caused by the extension to members of parliament of the right

to frank newspapers, the extension of franking to senior officials of the Post Office, the application of the postal laws to Ireland and to America, the simplification of the method of charging letters, and proposals for new postage rates and for a consolidated Postage Act. These proposals, like those sent to the Treasury on 30 January 1765,¹ which formed the basis of the Post Office Act of 1765,² were intended as "heads of clauses" of a bill to be presented to parliament, but neither the Memorial nor reminders from the Post Office during the remaining nine years of Despencer's tenure of office moved the Treasury to present a bill.

The proposals sent to the Treasury in November 1772 show that the Post Office was aware of weaknesses in the administration of the postal service and that it was anxious to remove them. Here the Post Office was hampered by its position as a statutory and dependent department without a political head in the House of Commons. But there were spheres in which the Post Office was successful in its efforts to improve administration, either because it managed to obtain Treasury approval or because recourse to the Treasury and to Parliament was unnecessary. Despencer's correspondence provides examples of such improvements: among them are the extension of the postal communications with Ireland (Hillsborough to Despencer, 10 October and 18 December 1767), the introduction of optional prepayment of postage on letters sent outside Great Britain (Todd to Despencer, 31 March 1769), the establishment of a Penny Post Office in Dublin (Walcot to Despencer, 1 May 1773), reforms in the system of collecting letters from Receiving Houses in London (Sandwich to Despencer, 28 September 1769), experiments with mail carts in order to provide speedier and safer carriage of letters (Todd to Despencer, 29 September 1770, etc.). The experiments with mail carts are especially interesting because the introduction of the first mail coach in 1784 has generally been regarded as a victory of enlightenment over a reactionary Post Office which tried hard to retain the "system of postboy on horseback" which it had kept undisturbed since the earliest

¹ General Post Office, Treasury Letter Book (1760-71), pp. 146-59.

² 5 Geo. 3, c. 50.

days of letter carriage. Clearly this was not so. Unfortunately no internal Post Office papers of this period (except Establishment Books) have survived, so that the letters now printed are the only record of the experiments, apart from an undated estimate, also in the Dashwood papers, of the "cost of a post cart", which suggests that the mail carts of the 1770s were not unlike the carts still used for the delivery of mail in the country districts of Ireland in the early twentieth century.

Lord Hyde¹ to Lord Le Despencer.

The Grove

17th December 1766

My dear Lord,

I was early taught by the late L^d Granville to wish my Friends in when I was out of Employment. Our long Acquaintance, never interrupted by private Discord, authorizes my Congratulations on Y^r accepting the Post Office.² They are cordial & thoroughly consistent with the Title I claim to make them. I will allow my Joy is tinctured with Interest. When I was in that Office I made Christopher,³ who you know plays

¹ Thomas Villiers (1709-86), Baron Hyde of Hindon, 1756, 1st Earl of Clarendon of the second reversion, 1776. He was Joint Postmaster General from September 1763 to July 1765 with Robert Hampden, 4th Baron Trevor (1706-83) and again with Lord Carteret from September to December 1786. From 1742 to 1744, when Granville (1690-1763) was Secretary of State, Villiers was Minister Plenipotentiary in Vienna.

² The *Dictionary of National Biography*, perhaps following an error in Despencer's obituary notice in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1781, gives the date as December 1770.

³ Christopher Saverland, one of the four Inspectors of Carriers in the Inland Department of the Post Office. He appears in the Post Office Establishment Book for 1768 and still held his post in 1788, when he is described in the *10th Report of the Commissioners appointed to enquire into the Fees, Gratuities, Perquisites and Emoluments . . . received . . . in Public Offices*, 1788, as one of the four Inspectors of Carriers, Coachmen and Watermen. The word "burnaby" appears to be an example of Post Office terminology. The Inspectors received a salary of £52 a year, with no extras, and their duty was to supervise the Post Office employees engaged in the collection and delivery of letters for the Inland Department. The Commissioners on Fees considered that the office was unnecessary and recommended its abolition (*10th Report*, 1788, p. 779). Another Christopher Saverland was appointed a junior clerk in the Secretary's office in

on the Fiddle, & has a thousand useful Qualifications, a Burnaby; that is an Inspector of Carriers etc. There are 4, none of much Utility. He was, thro' L^d Trevor's joint Indulgence, never to attend; our immediate Successors¹ had the same Goodness for Him and for me. It is the only sinecure I ever obtained after taking many years trouble myself: was He to be called upon He must resign, which I acknowledge in most cases to be a very foolish measure: but it brings in only ab^t 50[£] a year & He is so valuable to me that had He other Avocations my whole Plan² of rural Business & Happiness must be altered. I trust your Tenderness for us Both will spare Him. We shall Both be happy in paying our utmost duty at the Grove. None will officiate with more Zeal, than We shall, attend Here ever so closely: the more the happier I shall be: the brilliancy of the present Time don't obliterate the remembrance of the past. The Cordiality with which We lived you will, my dear Lord, ever find in y^r very affectionate & faithful humble Serv^t. Hyde.

British Museum, Egerton MS. 2136, fol. 96.

Lord Hillsborough³ to Lord Le Despencer.

Hanover Square
22 July 1767

My Dear Lord,

Enclosed I have the honour to send your Lordship a Draught of the Representation to the Treasury for the appointment of the New Clerk—& I request of your Lordship to enclose it

1770 and a Riding Surveyor (with the duty of instructing and supervising Deputy Postmasters) in 1786 (Post Office Establishment Book, 1770; *10th Report on Fees*, 1788, p. 779).

¹ Thomas Robinson (1695-1770), 1st Baron Grantham, and William Ponsonby (1704-93), 2nd Earl of Bessborough, Joint Postmasters General from July 1765 to December 1766.

² The Grove, Hyde's residence near Watford, was rebuilt in the 1760s (J. E. Cussans, *History of Hertfordshire*, vol. iii, p. 170).

³ Wills Hill (1718-93), 2nd Viscount Hillsborough, 1st Marquis of Downshire, Joint Postmaster General with Despencer from December 1766 to January 1768.

when signed to Mr Bradshaw¹ at the Treasury. Lord Warwick will send the Christian Name of the Person for whom I am engaged, to Potts.²

I have a Letter from Mr Stanley³ recommending a Person for Post Master at Southampton, the present Deputy intending to resign; I acquainted him in return, as I think I had the honour to inform you, of our Rule, & he has wrote me another Letter assuring me upon his honour that there is no pecuniary Agreement between the Two, & adding that it will be of real importance in his Election that the new Person should be nominated; I have wrote to him, that I would lay the matter before your Lordship & that if the present Deputy resigned, I did not doubt but your Lordship would agree with me in nominating the Person Mr Stanley should recommend; and I presume a Letter will come from him to the Office directed to us Both.

I set out tomorrow morning; but as this is a day at St James's full of expectation, if I learn any news I will write a Postscript in the Evening; in the meantime My Dear Lord accept my sincerest wishes for yr Health, and a happy Issue to the afflicting calamity⁴ that oppresses you at present; and do me the justice to believe me with respectfull & affectionate attachment.

Your Lordship's
Most Faithfull and
Most Obedient Servant
Hillsborough.

¹ Thomas Bradshaw (d. 1774), after serving in the War Office, was a Principal Clerk in the Treasury 1761, Secretary to the Treasury 1766-70 and a Lord Commissioner of the Treasury 1772. He was M.P. for Harwich 1767-8 and for Saltash 1768-74.

² Samuel Potts, an officer in the Post Office since 1747, Comptroller of the Inland Office since 1760.

³ Hans Stanley (c. 1720-80), M.P. for St. Alban's 1742-7 and for Southampton 1754-80. He was a Lord Commissioner of the Admiralty 1757, Governor of the Isle of Wight 1757, Cofferer of the Household 1766.

⁴ The illness of Lady Le Despencer, who died in January 1769. She was the daughter of Thomas Gould of Iver, Bucks, and married Dashwood in 1745, three years after the death of her former husband Sir Richard Ellis, of Wyham, Lincs.

British Museum, Egerton MS. 2136, fol. 105.

Lord Hillsborough to Lord Le Despencer.

Hillsborough
Oct 10 1767

My Dear Lord,

I have received the honour of your Lordship's Letter of the second Instant— I am obliged to you for the kind & partial opinion you express of me, & will endeavour to deserve as much of it as I can— I have had many conferences with Fortescue¹ & Wilson² in Relation to the Irish Office & do beleive much may be done both for the Improvement of the Revenue & of commercial Correspondence³— I have directed a very full Report to be made to us, which will be for our consideration when I have the pleasure to meet your Lordship in Lombard Street—Enclosed I send you the D. of Northumberland's⁴ & Sir W. Blackett's⁵ Letters to me about the Post Office at Newcastle. To the first I wrote that I did not doubt of Y^r Lordships' concurrence with me in appointing Mr W^m Parker, which if your Lordship does consent to, I should wish you would be pleased to give directions accordingly ; to Sir Walter I wrote I was sorry my Engagement to the previous application of the Duke put it out of our power to oblige him upon this occasion. I hope Your Lordship has received my Letter in which I express my Satisfaction at your having had an opportunity to make some provision for your young Relation⁶—I will

¹ William Henry Fortescue (1722-1806), Lord Clermont, Deputy Postmaster General in Ireland 1764-84.

² John Wilson, Secretary and Accountant to the Post Office in Ireland until 1768.

³ For the outcome of these conferences see letter of 18 December 1767.

⁴ Hugh Smithson (1712-86), created Earl Percy and Duke of Northumberland in 1766. He was Lord Lieutenant of Ireland 1763-5 and Master of the Horse 1778-80.

⁵ Sir Walter Blackett, M.P. for Newcastle-on-Tyne from 1734 until his death in 1777.

⁶ John Walcot (1740-1819), younger son of John Walcot of Walcot, Shropshire, and his wife Mary Dashwood King, Despencer's half-sister. He became Accountant General in the Post Office in November 1767, Secretary and Comptroller to the Post Office in Ireland in March 1771, Agent to the Postmaster

write to Potts in relation to the vacant Letter-Carriers' ¹ Places.

I am sorry for the Duke of York,² chiefly indeed upon the King's account, for I am sure the loss of a Brother must affect his aimiable Heart; for with all due respect to His Royal Highness I am not sure the Public Loss is very great.

My Lord Lieut^t ³ was not arrived when I left Dublin which was the 6th, nor was it then known what day he would come. When you mention your melancholly Confinement I do assure you My Dear Lord I feel the utmost concern for you, at the same time I cannot but admire your Patience, & your tender & affectionate conduct towards the Unhappy Lady who is the occasion of it; I do not mention my ineffectuale wishes upon this subject because they are so, & yet I cannot help forming them in the most fervent manner; such as they are My Dear Lord accept them in good part, & as a mark of the real respect & attachment with which I am

Your Lordship's
Most Obedient and most
Faithfull, Humble Servant
Hillsborough

British Museum, Egerton MS. 2136, fol. 112.

Lord Hillsborough to Lord Le Despencer.

Hanover Square
18 Dec 1767

My Dear Lord,

I am extremely sorry that your Lordship is not well and that Lady Despencer continues so ill, & yet I wish if it were not very

General at Dover and Deputy Postmaster at Dover in October 1774 (cf. his letters to Despencer in 1773 and 1774). His elder brother Charles (b. 1738) succeeded Dashwood as M.P. for Weymouth, 1763-8, and was High Sheriff of Shropshire in 1782.

¹ Cf. letter of 29 March 1769, note 4.

² Edward, Duke of York, 1739-67.

³ George Townshend (1724-1807), 4th Viscount and 1st Marquis Townshend, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland August 1767-October 1772.

inconvenient & disagreeable to you that you would come to Town. Mr Robinson¹ is I believe ready with his Report upon Fortescue's Papers, & as I am clear in my Opinion, that the carrying that measure² into Execution will be very advantageous in the consequence of it, both to the Public & the Revenue, I wish to partake in the honour of it— the Waters are troubled, the Sky lowrs, & everything portends a Storm, my little Bark is not so constructed as to live on tempestuous Seas, so that whatever becomes of your Lordship's better built vessel, to w^{ch} I wish a most prosperous voyage whithersoever you wish her to go, mine will probably sink. How soon this may happen I know not but I rather beleive very soon ;³ I shd therefore wish to complete everything your Lordship joins with me in thinking right as soon as possible. It will give me infinite satisfaction to hear that your domestick disquietudes incline to give your mind some respite ; indeed, My Dear Lord, I admire your Constancy & Patience but old Shakespere has told us, & I wish I did not know, that the bearing our misfortunes like Men, will not prevent our feeling them like Men—I am with the sincerest & most respectfull Esteem

Your Lordship's
Most Faithfull &
Most Obedient Servant
Hillsborough.

¹ Atkinson Robinson, Resident Surveyor in the Inland Department of the Post Office 1768-86.

² Fortescue's plan was to provide a "Six Days Post between England and Ireland" by adding three packet boats to the three existing ones between Holyhead and Dublin and establishing three additional inland posts between Dublin and Cork and between Dublin and Belfast. His plan was referred to Robinson, who reported favourably on it, and then sent, with the Postmaster General's recommendation, to the Treasury, which approved of the plan and authorised the necessary expenditure on 8 January 1768 (General Post Office, Treasury Letter Book (1760-71), pp. 228-36).

³ Hillsborough's "bark" did not sink during Grafton's attempts to strengthen the government in December 1767 and January 1768. On the contrary, he was appointed to the new office of Secretary of State for the Colonies in January 1768, and though he resigned in August 1772 he held office as Secretary of State for the Northern Department from 1779 to 1782.

*Anthony Todd*¹ to
The Right Honourable Lord Le Despencer.

General Post Office
March 29 1769

My Lord,

I have signified to M^r. Jolliffe,² that I should instantly transmit a copy of his Application now inclosed to Your Lordship and Lord Sandwich³ but I did not suppose You could meet at the Board here before the End of next Week, when it will be [time] sufficient to replace the two additional Supernumerary Porters Hurls and Sharp lately appointed, who think themselves overworked and refuse to go round for the Receivers Bags.⁴ I have taken the liberty to hint to Lord Sandwich a Desire to see them replaced by good honest sober active young Men, which indeed they should be, as the Duty is laborious and they are every Minute intrusted with His Majesty's Dispatches, and all sorts of Letters and Expresses public and private.

¹ An officer in the Post Office since 1738, Secretary of the Foreign Department 1752-87, Secretary of the Inland Department 1762-5 and 1768-98 (d. 1798).

² William Jolliffe (d. 1802), M.P. for Petersfield from 1768 to his death. He was appointed a Commissioner for Trade and Plantations in 1772 and a Lord of the Admiralty in 1783. The application referred to was possibly a recommendation for the Deputy Postmastership of Petersfield (cf. letter of 26 September 1770 and note).

³ John Montagu (1718-92), 4th Earl of Sandwich, was Joint Postmaster General with Despencer from January 1768 to December 1770, when he was appointed First Lord of the Admiralty.

⁴ The area of London in which letters were delivered to the houses of the persons to whom they were addressed by the Letter Carriers or Porters of the Inland Department was roughly 12 square miles, stretching about 4 miles to the west of the General Post Office, to Paddington, about 3 miles to the east, about a mile to the north and about 2 miles to the south. This fell within the area served by the Penny Post Office and was slightly smaller, especially to the east of the General Post Office. When the Inland Department Letter Carriers had finished their delivery, which began about 10 o'clock in the morning, they returned to the General Post Office, collecting and taking with them the bags containing letters which had been left at Receiving Houses. The Foreign Department and the Penny Post Office had their own Letter Carriers and Receiving Houses. In 1787 the Inland Department employed 110 Established and 12 Supernumerary Letter Carriers, the Foreign Department employed 12 Established Letter Carriers and the Penny Post Office employed 43 Town Letter Carriers, 33 Country Letter Carriers and 7 Supernumerary Letter Carriers (*10th Report on Fees*, 1788, p. 760).

Lord Sandwich ordered me to send the Letter inclosed for Jamaica for Your Lordship's Approbation as it contains an Augmentation to that Deputy's Salary which though double the present is certainly not too much or scarce enough, for it appears by his Accounts that his Clerk has had near £120 a year while the Principal had only £50 a year.¹

Mr Thos. Ripley of the Exchequer has just now said here that he knows for certain Lord Chatham will be at Court tomorrow, which is all I know of the Matter. I am ever

My Lord Your Lordship's most
truly obedient Serv^t
Anth. Todd.

As Your Lordship loves Mrs. Jones I inclose her Letter for your Amusement.

*Anthony Todd to
The Right Honourable Lord Le Despencer.*

General Post Office
March 31 1769

My Lord,

I am humbly to thank Your Lordship for the two kind Letters this Morning which accompanied a Number of Papers that I am happy to find have rec^d Your Lordship's Approbation.

I have wrote a Line to meet with Lord Sandwich on coming to Town concerning the Office at Uxbridge if it should just now be vacant, though if poor Hayes lives til to morrow it will be with Your Lordship to appoint. As I know Lord Sandwich is engaged on Monday and cannot come to the Office, I have signified that if You could both appoint Friday next or any Day certain I would according to my promise give all the Merchants using Old and New Lloyds Office Houses notice to attend the Board as they have directed, that Your Lordships may if possible settle one House only with them for the Ship News² to avoid

¹ In 1787 the Deputy Postmaster for Jamaica had a salary of £150, with an allowance of £114 7s. for his clerks. This was the highest paid of the Deputy Postmasterships for the Plantations, and the only one which had an allowance for clerks (ibid. p. 876).

² Information about the arrival and sailing of ships from all parts was sent to the Postmaster General and passed immediately to the Master of Lloyd's

the present Confusion, but, as I shall have the Pleasure to attend Your Lordship the beginning of next Week I need not say more for the present than that I am My Lord Your Lordship's forever most obedient Servant

Anth. Todd.

I have done everything relative to the inclosed from Dr. Franklin¹ which however Your Lordship will be much more glad to read than that from Mrs Jones. It is an high Satisfaction to observe already the great Utility of leaving it to the Option of the Writer to pay or not the postage beforehand to & from America &c.²—I find however the Deputy of Barbadoes has by that means had an Opportunity to get £300 in Debt to the Office and the Deputy of Grenada £150 but I shall call on them both in my Letters of next Wednesday in as serious a Manner as on Mess^{rs} Franklin & Foxcroft.³

*Lord Botetourt*⁴ to *Lord Le Despencer*.

Williamsburg
May 23 1769

A Million of thanks My Dear Lord for the kind attention you have shewn to my wishes relative to the Deputy Coffee House for his use. The sum of £200 a year which he paid for this service was divided equally between the Secretary and the Comptroller of the Inland Department.

¹ Benjamin Franklin (1706-90) was one of the two Deputy Postmasters General for North America from 1753 to 1774. (Cf. letter of 4 February 1774 for his dismissal.)

² On 30 January 1765 the Post Office recommended to the Treasury that it should allow prepayment of postage on letters sent out of Great Britain (Treasury Letter Book (1760-71), p. 155). In accordance with this recommendation, the Post Office Act of 1765 (5 Geo. 3, c. 25, s. 16) empowered the Postmaster General, at his discretion, to demand such prepayment.

³ John Foxcroft, the other Deputy Postmaster General for North America. He was forced to return to England about 1775: in 1778 he was given a grant of £200 towards his life subsistence, and in 1779 an allowance of £100 a year from 5 April 1775 "until reinstated . . . or otherwise provided for" (Treasury Letter Book (1770-8), pp. 253-4; Public Record Office, T29/48, p. 470). In the *10th Report on Fees*, 1788, he appears as Agent at New York with a pension of £150 a year as late Deputy Postmaster General for North America (*10th Report*, 1788, p. 876).

⁴ Norborne Berkeley, 4th Baron Botetourt. He was M.P. for Gloucestershire from 1741 to 1763, when the abeyance of the Barony of Botetourt was terminated

Postmasterships of Gloster; You have done perfectly right in giving way to the Duke of Grafton¹ and that that is my opinion You will clearly perceive by the inclosed Copy of my answer to His Grace—I cannot grieve at the colour of your paper—Lady Dashwood's miserable state of health made it impossible for her best friends to wish its continuance — You may depend upon my sending to you in the Autumn some curious Plants and seeds of this Country — My charming prospect of being able to answer the purposes of our Gracious Master in his Colony of Virginia seems at present to be at an end and so you will learn from our friend Lord Hillsborough — The trade of Basket making in a certain Stile is at a very low Ebb in Williamsburg, but agree with you that it will continue to flourish in the City of London — Have so completely lost every Idea of that sort, that I could not immediately understand your cheerful Paragraph — I grieve at your account of Lord Litchfield's² Dumb Gout; was pleased with the history of Lord Talbot's³ seizing the Rioters⁴ who attempted to disturb the Merchants when they were going to St James's and rejoice that he is well—

Most affectionately Y^{rs}

Botetourt.

in his favour, Groom of the Bedchamber 1760-4, Lord Lieutenant of Gloucestershire 1762-6. He was appointed Governor of Virginia in July 1768 in order to give Virginia a resident Governor in place of the non-resident Sir Jeffrey Amherst (cf. Bodleian Library, North MS. d. 24, fol. 44 and Albemarle, *Memoirs of Rockingham*, vol. ii. p. 79), and resided there until his death in October 1770. The importance attached to Botetourt's residence in America has a parallel in Despencer's insistence that Franklin's successor should be resident (cf. Despencer's notes to Todd, February 1774).

¹ Augustus Henry Fitzroy (1735-1811), 3rd Duke of Grafton, Secretary of State 1765-6, First Lord of the Treasury 1766-70, Lord Privy Seal 1771-5 and 1782-3.

² George Henry Lee (1718-72), M.P. for Oxfordshire 1740-3, 3rd Earl of Lichfield 1743, Chancellor of Oxford University 1762-72.

³ William Talbot (1710-82), 2nd Baron and 1st Earl Talbot, was appointed Lord Steward of the Household in 1761.

⁴ After Wilkes' expulsion by the House of Commons on 16 March 1769 his opponents carried a loyal address to St. James's, where they were intercepted by his supporters.

Lord Sandwich to Lord Le Despencer.

Southampton Street

Hitchingbrook
Sept 28 [1769]

My Dear Lord,

I am almost ashamed to write to you upon Post Office business having been so idle for the whole summer ; but indeed there is so little business that requires our attendance, & we have the good fortune to agree so perfectly well in every thing that requires an opinion, that there is very little occasion we should put ourselves to any inconvenience by a personal attendance.

It seems however to be wished that we might have an interview before the tenth of October when the new regulations in the Office¹ are to take place ; I desired Mr Todd to tell you that I thought it would be better we should put two Clerks at £50 a year & two boys, than to nominate four boys, as we shall then each of us have an opportunity of providing for two persons of different ages ; I shall be glad if this idea meets with your approbation.

Mr Todd will inform you that we have ordered four Post Masters to come to town from Durham & that neighbourhood to answer for their misbehaviour about sending an Express by an improper Conveyance.² I think when they come we should be both present to receive them, & had better regulate our meeting in town according to the time when they will be there : if that cannot be before the 10th of October, I think the nomination of our Clerks & Sorters may be made in our absence ; as I should be sorry to be obliged to take two journeys to London, & perhaps you may not have any more inclination for unnecessary journeys than myself.

¹ These regulations were concerned with the sending of letters to the General Post Office from the Receiving Houses in the metropolis. Hitherto Receiving Houses had been open for the receipt of letters only on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, the General or Grand Post Nights : it was now arranged that they should be open every night. The new arrangement, which was combined with an improvement in the method of stamping, sorting and taxing letters, necessitated an increase of four in the staff of the Inland Department and extra allowances to the Receivers and to the Carriers who brought the letters to the General Post Office. The new regulations and the additional expense were explained to the Treasury on 9 October 1769 (Treasury Letter Book (1760-71), pp. 287-9).

² Cf. letter of 26 September 1770 for another example of postmasters' misconduct in regard to expresses.

Mr Todd has an idea of saving the appointment of a Comptroller for the bye nights,¹ by the allotting that department (which is rendered necessary by our new regulation) to the management of one of the Clerks of the roads who is willing to do it for nothing.² I am allways a friend to oeconomy, & shall readily agree to this arrangement, if you approve it ; but I know that the consequence of it will be, that we shall deprive ourselves of the appointment to a good office, which some future Post Masters will dispose of : as I never knew any good come from people doing business for nothing ; which allways ends by either themselves, or their successors being paid for their trouble, sooner or later.

I am

My Dear Lord

Most faithfully yours

Sandwich.

Anthony Todd to Lord Le Despencer.

General Post Office
October 3 1769

My Lord,

I either have already or shall directly obey the several agreeable Commands in Your Lordships Letters of the 29 and 30th past,

¹ The Comptroller of the Bye-Nights shared with the Comptroller of the Inland Office the supervision of the business of the Inland Office, that is, the despatch of letters by the Clerks of the Roads in the evenings and the delivery of letters in the mornings. On Monday, Wednesday and Friday evenings (the Bye-Nights) and on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday mornings, this duty was performed by the Comptroller of the Bye-Nights ; on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday evenings (the Grand Nights) and on Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings it was performed by the Comptroller of the Inland Office. Until the middle of the eighteenth century mail was despatched to all parts of the country on the Grand Nights and only to certain parts on the Bye-Nights, but the terms Grand and Bye-Nights persisted into a period when mail was despatched to all parts on every night.

Todd's proposal seems to have been effected in spite of Sandwich's opposition. In 1788, for example, Jacob Shann, Clerk of the North Road, was Comptroller of the Bye-Nights, and his duties as Clerk were performed by junior officers in the Inland Department (*10th Report on Fees*, 1788, p. 811).

² There were six main post roads : Chester, North, West, Bristol, Yarmouth, Kent (or Dover). The mail for each road was in charge of a Clerk and an Assistant.

and in all Respects comformable also to the Wishes of Lord Sandwich in the inclosed, to which I gave an Answer last Night, and amongst other things signified that " the Appointment of a Bye Night Comptroller¹ will be better postponed until Your Lordships meet which may now perhaps be put off till near the Kings' Accession on the 25th, so that it will not be necessary for the present to offer any in addition to what I have before suggested, except that, seeing the want of such an Officer implies the Necessity to take him out of that very Office where they rise in Rotation, it can only occasion a Vacancy at the Bottom which the taking a Clerk of a Road for will occasion equally the same, and so far from some future Clerk of a Road expecting a Salary, any of them at any Time will be glad of it without, for it is only changing a more laborious Duty for a more easy and genteel one, and there cannot be a better proof of this, than that any one of the present Clerks of the Roads would now be glad to make the same change." With respect to the posts in Mr Foley's² Neighbour Road, as no Alteration therein can for want of time take place this Quarter there is Leisure to consider it further against the next.

To morrow I am to be at Chelmsford upon County Business, much against My Mind. I hope to return at Night, but at all Events Your Lordship may be certain of my receiving here on Friday Morning any Commands you may be pleased to send me, when I would beg the Favour to have Lord Sandwich's Letter returned to me.

As the Russian Fleet of 15 Sail has for certain passed the Sound, and the Wind being fair, we may every Hour expect to hear of them being upon our Coast and most likely the Humber first.

I am My Lord,
Your Lordship's most
faithful servant
Anth. Todd.

¹ Cf. letter of 29 September 1769.

² Probably Thomas Foley (d. 1793), M.P. for Herefordshire 1768-76, when he was created Baron Foley. He was Joint Postmaster General from May 1783 to January 1784.

Copy.

Mathew Brickdale¹ to Anthony Todd.

Bristol

November 27th 1769

Sir,

Inclosed are two Covers which are Charged to me, and which on Application to the Post Master here for a return of, he tells me he cannot make as there is a peculiar Mark on them for that purpose, and that I must therefore make Application to you. Be pleased therefore to give him directions to return me the Postage, and to whoever has made these Marks, not to make any more such, unless you can point out to me why they should be charged—I presume it was only done on a supposition that I had no concerns in the Copper Company.

I am &c

Math^w Brickdale.

Copy.

Anthony Todd to Mathew Brickdale.

General Post Office

November 30th 1769

Sir,

I have received the Letter you were pleased to write me the 27th Instant, with the Inclosed Covers, and beg leave to acquaint you in Answer thereto, that as the Act ² for preventing Frauds

¹ Mathew Brickdale, copper merchant, M.P. for Bristol 1768-74, 1780-4 and 1784-90. (The name appears by misprint as Martin Birckdale in L. B. Namier, *The Structure of Politics at the Accession of George III*, vol. ii, p. 582.)

² After 1760, when the Post Office revenue was merged in the general revenue of the country, the privilege of sending and receiving letters free of charge, previously granted to members of parliament (and to certain ministers and officials) by royal warrant, had to be considered by parliament. The Act of 1764 (4 Geo. 3, c. 24) continued the privilege, granting it to members of parliament during the session and for forty days before and after it, but imposed restrictions (based on the recommendations of a Committee appointed in 1764) designed to reduce the "great and notorious Frauds . . . frequently practised". Brickdale complains of one of these restrictions, imposed as a result of the Committee's finding that the practice of directing letters to members "at other places than the places of their usual Residence or where they actually are at the time, in order to carry Letters to other persons free," was widespread (Treasury

and Abuses in Franking declares that no Letter or Packets directed to a Lord or Member of Parliament shall be exempted from paying the Duty of Postage except such as are addressed to him at any of the Places of his usual Residence, or at the Place where he shall actually be at the time of the Delivery thereof, or at the House of Parliament, it is not in the Post Master General's Power to deliver any Letters free of Postage directed to you at the Copper Warehouse in Small Street Bristol, as it can by no means be considered as your Place of Residence, and indeed without this Limitation there would be great Abuses not only of the Revenue but of the Members Names which this Act, by the very Title of it, is intended to prevent.

If however you should signify upon any of the Covers that they were opened by you and were really for yourself, the Postage will be instantly returned, the true intent and meaning of the Act being, that Members at all Places should receive their Letters free.

I am &c
Anth. Todd, Secy.

Copy.

Mathew Brickdale to Anthony Todd.

Bristol

December 4 1769

Sir,

The Contents of your Letter of the 30th ult^o. do not at all convince me that I am not to receive my Letters free of Postage because directed to me at the Copper Warehouse, and as it is one of the Privileges annexed to Parliament by the Act you mention, and which was and is my Guide, I do not think myself at Liberty, if I was inclined, to give it up.

Letter Book (1760-71), p. 247). It is clear that neither this nor other restrictions imposed by the Act were effective. The Post Office Memorial of 17 November 1772 to the Treasury included among its "most material" proposals a request for more effective restriction of the privilege, and alleged that the loss to the revenue by franking frauds and abuses had increased steadily since 1764—the value of letters sent free (including letters sent to, from and through London, Bye and Cross Roads letters, Scotland and Ireland) increased from £51,818 in 1765 to £97,048 in 1772 (Treasury Letter Book (1770-8), pp. 28-36).

It's impossible the Act can, for it would be very strange if it did mean, that Postage should be charged to a Member of Parliament for Letters that should happen to be sent to him with more words on them than his Name and the Town where he resided, for the Town is undoubtedly the Construction to be put on the Words of the Act "the Place of his Residence", as the Postage does not arise on any Letter from the Delivery of it at a particular House in a Town, but because it's brought to the Town, where that House is.

As to the abuse that is possible to be made of a Member's Name; it is at the Peril of the Person who abuses it; there is no abuse of mine in the present Case, and I therefore trust I shall have no Occasion to give myself more trouble on this subject, but that you will give the directions mentioned in my last.

I am &c
Math^w Brickdale.

Copy.

Anthony Todd to Mathew Brickdale.

General Post Office
December 6th 1769

Sir,

I have received the Letter you were pleased to write me the 4th Instant, concerning the Letters addressed to you at the Copper Warehouse in Small Street Bristol being charged with the Duty of Postage.

There is no doubt but that Lords and Members of Parliament have a right to their own Letters free wherever they may receive them, and you will be pleased to observe by the inclosed Printed Instructions, which have been sent to every Deputy Post Master in the Kingdom, that such Directions were given upon the Commencement of the Act for preventing Frauds and Abuses in Franking; but, in order to preserve the advantages which have arisen to this Revenue from the Regulations contained in that Act, the Post Master General have discountenanced all Directions to Warehouses, Counting Houses etc though they may be the property of the Member, as conceiving such Places

not to come within the Letter or Spirit of the Term usual Residence. Their Lordships cannot therefore, as I informed you the 30th past, suffer any Letters addressed to you at the Copper Warehouse to pass free as that can by no means be considered as your Place of Residence; the Postage of such however as are really for yourself will be instantly returned by the deputy of Bristol on your taking the trouble to mark the Covers for that purpose.

I am &c
Anth. Todd, Secy.

Copy.

Mathew Brickdale to Anthony Todd.

Bristol
December 9th 1769

Sir,

Finding by your reply to my Letter of the 4th Instant, that, notwithstanding I have given Notice to your Office that Letters directed to me at the Copper Warehouse are for me, it's persisted in that they are not delivered to me free of Postage, I am driven to the disagreeable necessity, which I was in hopes to have avoided, of making Application to Parliament¹ the ensuing Sessions for their sense of the Act, of whose meaning I have in this Case, and, I cannot but think the House will have, a totally different Opinion to that you have given it. I neither want nor do I seek for anything but what I conceive to be, as I wrote you before, a Priviledge of Parliament, and therefore only intrusted with me, and not in my Power, or Will to part with; should the Members of Parliament chose to be more confined than by the present Act I shall have no objection to it, but as it stands at present, and in the present Instance I think the

¹ This threat does not seem to have been carried out. But the Post Office later consulted the Attorney General on the question of payment of postage on letters addressed to Members of Parliament at their places of business, and on 17 June 1772 reported to the Treasury his Opinion "that there can be no doubt in Cases where Members live in places absolutely different from those in which their Trade is carried on, that the Letters directed to them at the last place ought to be charged" (Treasury Letter Book (1771-8), p. 18; P.R.O. T29/42, p. 724).

Privilege violated ; as I do also in another which is in practice, I mean that of charging Postage for Ship Letters.¹ I could enlarge much on both these subjects, but shall now say no more than that I am &c

Math^w Brickdale.

Anthony Todd to Lord Le Despencer.

General Post Office
September 3rd 1770

My Lord,

I am proceeding about Mail Carts,² Guards &c exactly as Your Lordship agreed, and be pleased to Depend on it too, as fast as possible to avoid Mistakes and being laughed at by the Public, about which care must be taken, as we are all the while to convey Letters as at other Times without Mistake or Delay, so that I am too much employed to accept Your Lordship's kind Invitation for a Day this Week, and must beg two Holydays at Wicombe in Lieu of it upon a future Occasion I am therefore sure Your Lordship will not at this busy Time nor indeed at any other direct me to write more to Mr Hart than I have done in the inclosed which I now send with the Copy of his to me

¹ Ship letters were letters carried to or from the country not in packet boats but in private ships. Two clauses of the Post Office Act of 1711 (9 Anne, c. 10) referred to ship letters : section 6 imposed a charge of one penny, over and above the ordinary rates of postage, on letters brought from or taken to private ships, and section 15 provided that, in order to avoid delays in the delivery of ship letters brought to the country, the master of the ship bringing them should hand them immediately to the Deputy Postmaster of the area in which the port of arrival was situated, who would pay him one penny for each letter handed over. Brickdale's complaint is directed against two clauses of the Post Office Act of 1765 (5 Geo. 3, c. 25) : section 4 which imposed an extra penny on ship letters brought to the country, and section 3 which, in order to prevent evasion of section 15 of the Act of 1711, declared that no ship should be allowed to "break bulk or make entry" until the letters it carried had been handed to the Deputy Postmaster of the port of arrival, who was immediately to charge them and to forward them in the ordinary course of the post. To enforce these clauses the Commissioners of Customs forbade their officers to allow "any ship . . . to make entry till their letters are delivered" to the Deputy Postmaster (P.R.O., T29/40, p. 60 ; Treasury Letter Book (1760-71), p. 286).

² Cf. letter of 29 September 1770.

purely for Information, and beg leave to conclude with repeating how heartily I am

My Lord,

Your Lordship's most
devoted faithful servant
Anth. Todd.

Anthony Todd to Lord Le Despencer.

General Post Office
September 26th 1770

My Lord,

I send Duplicates of the Inclosures herewith to Lord Sandwich and wait Your Lordship's Pleasure upon them. As to Mr Jolliffe¹ it is rather making a property of the Office too much to desire to change the Postmaster every Time he takes a new Tenant, but as he is the Member it may perhaps be necessary to oblige him. As this is a second Time that the Postmasters of Coleshill and Litchfield have sent an Express by the Stage Coach² and have screened each other, perhaps at the next Board it may be thought necessary to appoint others. It was a great disappointment to me that Your Lordship could not see the new carriage on Monday, especially as one of them is to proceed down the North Road on Saturday Night with the Mail for Lord Sandwich's Inspection, and therefore I send it with the Mails of tomorrow Night to Your Lordship with Johnson³ to explain it and I am certain Your Lordship will like it, and it must return hither again on Friday to carry the Dutch

¹ Cf. letter of 29 March 1769. Thomas Page, Deputy Postmaster at Petersfield, sent his resignation to Todd on 24 September 1770, saying that Jolliffe had asked him to resign. On the same day Jolliffe wrote to Todd recommending James Wheatley, who had succeeded Page as tenant of the Old White Hart Inn, Petersfield, as his successor in the Deputy Postmastership.

² Letters of 20 and 22 September from the Deputy Postmasters of Coleshill and Lichfield to Todd, in answer to his enquiries, revealed that an Express had been sent from Coleshill to Lichfield by coach instead of by special messenger. Sandwich's letter of 28 September to Gower shows how seriously such a breach of regulations was regarded.

³ Possibly Edward Johnson, Letter Carrier in the Inland Department 1778, Inspector of Letter Carriers 1787, Comptroller of the London Penny Post Office, 1794.

Mail of that Night to Harwich. There will be no great difficulty to get the Deputies to build Bodies of such Carriages at least by giving of them £10 or so towards the first, provided it is built before some certain Day to be Mentioned.

As Mr Walcot is coming to Your Lordship it makes it not necessary to say more on the Scheme of Mr Osborne and Young Mr Walcot changing Employments,¹ which I shall explain to Lord Sandwich to Night and no doubt satisfactorily, as the two Clerks² in the Accomptants' Office below Mr Walcot junr and placed there by his Lordship make no Objection but on the contrary see it is their Interest to have Osborne stand before them instead of a younger man.

I am My Lord
Your Lordship's most
faithful servant
Anth. Todd.

Copy.

*Lord Sandwich to Earl Gower*³

Hinchingbrook
September 28th 1770

My Dear Lord,

The PostMasters of Litchfield & Coleshill have been guilty of one of the greatest offences that can be committed by a Post

¹ There were four Walcots in the Post Office during this period: John (cf. letter of 10 October 1767, note); Humphrey (b. 1753, son of Rev. Humphrey Walcot of Bitterley, Shropshire, of a younger branch of the Walcots) who started in the Accountant General's Office, became a Clerk in the Secretary's Office in 1770 and was 2nd Clerk and Inspector of Dead Letters 1783-6; his younger brother Charles (b. 1755) who was Accountant of the Penny Post Office in London 1782-4 and became Comptroller in December 1784; another Charles, who became a Clerk in the Accountant General's Office in April 1771, 1st Clerk in 1775 and deputy to the Comptroller of the Penny Post Office (the other Charles Walcot) in December 1784. The proposed exchange seems to have been between Humphrey, who moved from the Accountant's to the Secretary's Office in 1770, and John Osborne, who moved from the Secretary's to the Accountant's Office and apparently retired soon afterwards.

² Thomas Church and Thomas Mainwaring. There were 6 Clerks in the Secretary's Office and 3 in the Accountant's Office.

³ Granville Leveson Gower (1721-1803), 2nd Earl Gower (1754), 1st Marquis of Stafford (1786). He was Lord President of the Council 1767-79 and 1783-4.

Master, namely that of sending an Express by a Coach ; it is the same crime for which Mr Fuller of Hounslow & several others have been turned out ; & I could heartily wish it might be not of any material consequence to your interest that we should proceed against these Gentlemen as we have done on other similar occasions ; if they are excused it will be a precedent that will do immense prejudice to our business ; as it is extremely tempting to the Post Masters to be paid for Expresses, and to put the whole into their pocket without any charge of horses or Servants : you will easily conceive that this is not to be prevented but by our keeping a very tight hand over them, and not forgiving them when are found out, which seldom happens ; unless, as in the present case, when some accident or delay happens about the delivery of the Letter.

We shall wait your answer before any Measure is taken on this occasion, & I heartily wish you may give us leave to proceed according to our wish ; but if you lay a restraint upon our proceeding, which certainly no one has a better right to do than yourself, we must at all events terrify them & punish them as much as our power will allow us, without proceeding to the utmost extent of it, namely that of removal from office

I am &c
Sandwich.

Anthony Todd to Lord Le Despencer.

General Post Office
September 28th 1770

My Lord,

I am not a little uneasy to find the new Mail Cart was left in the Yard here last Night instead of being sent to Your Lordship's according to the Directions that had been given in the most distinct Manner, and as it is necessary to send it on the Harwich Road again it will be next Thursday Night at the soonest that it can come towards Wickham. Having received the inclosed this morning from Lord Sandwich, which be pleased to return, before I can forward one to Lord Gower, I presume it will be right for Mr Osborne to stay with me as at present and not

exchange with Mr Walcot jun^r until Your Lordships settle that point.

I am very glad it is so fallen out that Mr Piers,¹ who has the Option, very readily accepts the Window Man's place.² I am sure it is for both his Interest and Comfort, and he at the same [time] will be a creditable person at the Window, but on the other Hand I am sorry for the Necessity there was to day to suspend Oliver³ Your Housekeepers Brother for demanding of Mr Blackburn,⁴ a Merchant whom I have seen on the Occasion and face to face, half a Crown saying it was Mr Braithwaites⁵ Fee on the Express he delivered and a Shilling for himself as porter, neither of which was True, for the Fee is half a Crown only for the Established porter for whom Oliver carried it and nothing for himself. Upon searching into this practice I find the other Supernum^y Porters having none of his half Crown for themselves have shamefully begged at Times a little more, so that Oliver I do think ought to be restored, a strict Charge given that no more than the half Crown shall be taken, even if offered, and that these poor Supernumeraries should have a Shilling or half the Fee on any such Express as they actual carry, whether Inwards or Outwards from hence, to make it consistent by the Reward attending the Service, being the very reason that Mr

¹ Henry Piers, who was Alphabet Keeper and Window Man 1770-87 (Post Office Establishment Book, 1770; *10th Report on Fees* 1788, p. 817).

² The duty of the Window Man was to receive money for letters delivered and paid for at the Window of the Inland Office, money collected by Letter Carriers from Receiving Houses and money collected by the Penny Post Office, and to pay it over to the Receiver General of the Post Office.

³ Richard Oliver, a Supernumerary Messenger, who became an Established Messenger in 1770. The salary of Established Messengers was 12s. a week, with 3s. salary out of incidents and various allowances which brought their total emoluments to about £170 a year. They received 2s. 6d. for each Express (5s. if sent on horseback). The salary of Supernumerary Messengers was 15s. a week, with allowances which brought their total emoluments to about £60 a year. In 1787 there were three Established and four Supernumerary Messengers (*10th Report on Fees*, 1788, pp. 828-9).

⁴ John Blackburn, merchant. In 1776 he obtained a contract to supply 100,000 gallons of West India rum to the forces in America (P.R.O., T29/46, p. 59).

⁵ Daniel Braithwaite, First Clerk in the Secretary's Office 1765-8, Clerk to the Postmaster General, 1768.

Piers is made the Window Man and not Barnes,¹ who might have become a Clerk of a Road at the same Time he was collecting Fees for another person.

I forgot to day to ask Johnson about the Particulars of the Post Master of Witham's Carriage supposed Mr. Wright's, but on his return from Harwich he told me it was like that of Your Lordships at present in Use here. I have not advertised the Robbery of the Mail² near Steyning as it is of little value, would make a Noise, and the £50 is of course already offered. I am ever Your Lordships True Servant

Anth. Todd.

Anthony Todd to Lord Le Despencer.

General Post Office

September 29th 1770

My Lord,

Permit me for the present to send the inclosed only, which has been much too long promised, to thank Your Lordship for Your kind Letter of Yesterday, and to pledge myself that all the Contrivances³ that I have any concern in and now under Consideration are with the View of carrying Your Lordships original Idea into execution, not only to defend the Mails from Rogues and the Weather but to leave off the Leather Portmanteaus, and thereby in many Instances one Horse will be sufficient where two are in use at present; but it will require that each Post Master upon a Road should first have one Carriage of a proper Construction, otherwise upon the Mail Cart breaking down,

¹ Edward Barnes, an officer in the Post Office since 1762, became Clerk of the Chester Road and Deputy Comptroller of the Bye-Nights in 1782.

² The Post Office Act of 1765 (5 Geo. 3, c. 25, s. 18) stated that any person robbing the mail "shall be deemed guilty of Felony and shall suffer Death as a Felon".

³ These experiments with mail carts and with other methods of improving the speed and safety of the carriage of mail (referred to in the letter of 3 September and in this and the three following letters) have not been noticed in accounts of the Post Office. They suggest that the Post Office in this period was not as unprogressive as it has been painted. The official caution about the use of coaches to carry mail arose not from a stubborn refusal to consider new methods but from a reasonable doubt whether mail coaches would achieve what was claimed for them, and their introduction in 1784 clearly did not mean a revolutionary change from methods which had been unchanged from the beginning.

which must often happen, the Deputies will be at a Loss how to carry the Bags forward.

I am My Lord
Your Lordship's most
faithful Servant
Anth. Todd.

Anthony Todd to Lord Le Despencer.

General Post Office
October 1st 1770

My Lord,

There cannot possibly be a Kinder or more agreeable Letter than Your Lordships to me of Yesterday, with such good Nature towards me and candour about all our Office Matters, there cannot be a doubt of getting forward in all Your Improvements for the safe and secure Carriage of Letters, nor in anything else as it may occur, and I hope for very many Years to come, provided Your Lordship does not ambition any higher Post, and is content with Your present Situation as I am with mine. As the Mail Cart cannot be spared from the Harwich Road any Time this week except on Thursday Night, and I find Your Lordship being at home on Friday Morning is rather uncertain, the sending it down to West Wycombe had best be deferred to another Time.

Lord Sandwich thinks of being in Town this week & to come one Day, Friday I suppose, to the Office,

I am My Lord,
Your Lordship's forever
obedient Servant
Anth. Todd.

Mr Osborne may rely on my utmost care of his son whilst he stays with me.

Anthony Todd to Lord Le Despencer.

General Post Office.
October 4th 1770

My Lord,

I shall acquaint Lord Sandwich that your Lordship will meet Him on Thursday next at the Board, and as Mr Braithwaite

accompanies this to attend Your Lordship, which he is happy to have the opportunity of doing, in order to open the Mail Cart, I need not write much more, as he will explain to Your Lordship that the Vacancy by Mr Parry's Death gives you the Appointments attending it by any Changes that may be thought right, and all that may next Week be contributed to Your Lordships full Satisfaction ; in the mean time be pleased to believe me,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's very
devoted Servant

Anth. Todd.

Anthony Todd to Lord Le Despencer.

General Post Office

October 5th 1770

My Lord,

Mr. Johnson is returned from Boroughbridge safe and successful with the new 4 wheeled Mail Cart and will attend Your Lordships here on Thursday next ; in the mean Time we shall consider the proper Sizes of some Mail Cart Bodies for the Bags only, to Your Lordship's satisfaction I am very certain. I write Lord Sandwich the same to Night and have requested His Company, in case Your Lordship should be pleased to dine that Day with me, and though it is asking a great Favour, as I never presume to do it whilst Your Great Friends are in Town, I hope You will forgive me. Sir Brownlow Cust¹ has not only wrote politely but called to Day with his Uncle Peregrin Cust² to thank Your Lordships heartily for the offer to recommend a new Deputy at Grantham, but 2 or 3 of his Friends to whom he had named it, having refused to accept on the present Terms, he thought it more for the honour of the Office to thank Your Lordship for Your kind Intentions than to be liable to be refused

¹ Eldest son of Sir John Cust, Speaker 1761-70. He was M.P. for Ilchester 1768-74, and for Grantham 1774-6 when he went to the House of Lords as Baron Brownlow of Belton.

² Younger brother of Sir John Cust. He was M.P. for Bishop's Castle 1761-8, New Shoreham 1768-74, Ilchester 1774-5, Grantham 1776-80 and 1780 to his death in 1785.

by others, which was certainly right; but I must own I am rather hurt that Barnes,¹ Crabtree and others combine to make it believed the Office is not worth Acceptance, which is really £40 a Year, and if neither Your Lordship nor Lord Sandwich, who have both connections there, should think of any one on Thursday, no doubt but that a Surveyor sent down will find a proper person.

As the new 2 wheeled Carriage is returned from West Wicombe in order to take the Dutch Mail of this Night to Harwich, I presume that Mr. Braithwaites not being with it is owing to Your Lordship's well known Hospitality in detaining him, which is a Kindness he will be sensible of, as I am how much it becomes me to be forever My Lord Your Lordship's most heartily Obedient Servant

Anth. Todd.

John Walcot to Lord Le Despencer.

General Post Office
Dublin the 1st May
1773

My Dear Lord,

I received Your Lordship's Letter of the 17th Inst^t & I am much flattered in the approbation of my Penny Post Office scheme.² A calculation that will admit of a supposition of its being reduced to an eighth in actual produce must certainly appear to be nearly ideal; mine is so, as from the nature of it no certain ground can be obtained on which a calculation could

¹ Robert Barnes, the retiring Deputy Postmaster. According to the Post Office Establishment Book for 1768, his salary was £64 a year.

² Walcot's scheme for a Penny Post Office in Dublin, and his estimate of the staff necessary and the cost, was submitted to the Treasury on 16 August and approved by the Treasury on 30 August 1773 (Treasury Letter Book (1770-8), pp. 58-60; P.R.O. T29/43, p. 161). By his initiative Dublin was thus the first to take advantage of the clause in the Act of 1765 (5 Geo. 3, c. 25, s. 11) which authorized the establishment of a Penny Post Office in any city or town where the Postmaster General thought it desirable. Edinburgh and Manchester followed in 1793 and by 1839 there were more than 2,000. As in London, where a Penny Post had existed since 1680, prepayment of postage was compulsory and letters were delivered to the houses of the persons to whom they were addressed.

be made; for if the number of houses & inhabitants were exactly known it would nevertheless be impossible to know how many Letters would be wrote, or how generally the scheme would be used in the conveyance of them. I do not really suppose the produce will fall to an Eighth altho' I allow the supposition in the calculation, that I may not appear to be too sanguine or self sufficient. My Letter was certainly directed to your Lordship & not to the Post Master General. I say this on all the assurance of memory; but the covers will shew it & if I am wrong it must have been very much against my meaning, as your Lordship will see by my letter that I did not intend the scheme &c for the Board untill I had your Lordship's opinion of it, when I intended to have altered it in any manner you might have thought necessary & then to have sent it officially both to the Board & Lord Clermont; I cannot help adding my happiness that it meets your Lordship's kind approbation without alteration & my assurance that, if adopted, my most diligent attention will be given to the execution. Some few days agoe I received an official letter from Mr Todd relative to the new packets to be established on this station,¹ & from the following part of it (" & the Captains to be appointed will soon receive Commissions instructions etc. from hence ") I am rather apprehensive he intends they shall be removed from under the pay & the sub Comptrole of this office; if that is in contemplation I should be most happy if it were not carried into execution untill I am heard on the subject, with respect to the pay for the reasons I formerly troubled you with of my pretention to Agency etc, & with

¹ Cf. letter of 18 December 1767, note 2, for the establishment of a Six Days' Post between England and Ireland. In December 1772 the Post Office decided that this service could be maintained if the number of packet boats between Holyhead and Dublin was reduced from six to five and if the Post Office contracted individually with the commander of each packet boat instead of, as previously, with one contractor for all the boats (Treasury Letter Book (1770-8), pp. 44, 50; P.R.O. T29/42, p. 343). This was the arrangement which Walcot considered detrimental to his hopes of becoming a Packet Boat Agent. His hopes were however realized with his appointment as Agent at Dover in 1774 (cf. letter of 19 August 1774). (There were three Packet Boat Agents—at Dover, for mails to and from France and Flanders, at Falmouth, for mails to and from Lisbon, the West Indies and America, and at Harwich, for mails to and from Holland.)

respect to the sub Comptrole for many reasons material to the service with which I will not take up your Lordship's time on mere surmise ; but one respecting myself I will mention, which is, that it would certainly carry an appearance of slur to me as arising from a conviction of inattention or inability. Thank you My Dear Lord for your news & I should be happy to be able to repay you from hence ; but in that, as in all other matters, your Lordship must allow me to be your Debtor & to subscribe myself most truly

Your Grateful Affectionate Nephew
& Most Obedient Servant
John Walcot.

H. F. Thynne¹ to Lord Le Despencer.

Chippenham
November 28th 1773

My dear Lord,

I always imagined that Mr Lewis² would at last apply to L^d North. It was for that reason I proposed giving him two years more in his Contract. I think if we let L^d North know how inconvenient it is to continue any Contract, & that we let Mr. Lewis go on till the General Election to avoid giving trouble to the Minister, he will find a method of putting him off till that time as well as many others that he is daily oblig'd to pay with excuses, And I think if we were to acquiesce in it at present, after our repeated assurances to Mr Lewis that it should not be continued, We should give him a Victory that would Lower our situation & open a door for other People to go to, when we think their demands unreasonable. Mr Rigby³ & Mr

¹ Henry Frederick Thynne (1735-1826), M.P. for Staffordshire 1757-61, and for Weobley 1761-70, Clerk Comptroller of the Board of Green Cloth 1762-5, Master of the Household 1768-70, Joint Postmaster General January 1771 to September 1789. He took the name Carteret in 1776, on succeeding to some of the Carteret estates under the will of his uncle Earl Granville, and was created Baron Carteret in 1784.

² Edward Lewis of Downton, a London merchant, M.P. for New Radnor 1761-90.

³ Richard Rigby (1722-88), M.P. for Castle Rising 1745-7, Sudbury 1747-54, Tavistock 1754-84, one of the Vice-Treasurers for Ireland 1765, Paymaster of the Forces 1768.

Calvert¹ are coming here to day, & we propose having a great chace with Mr Pentons² hounds tomorrow. I wish you were of the party. I am sure we should find you had as few infirmities, & as capable of partaking of Mirth & Jollity, as either of them

I am My dear Lord

Most faithfully & obediently,

Yrs

H. F. Thynne

Lord North to Lord Despencer.

January 29th 1774

My Lord,

I inclose a memorial to your Lordship upon a subject on which I have wish'd to speak to you, but have not had an opportunity. Mr Lewis is a very honest, worthy man, & an excellent Member of Parliament. Nobody has more zealously & uniformly supported his Majesty's Government, from which he receives no advantage whatsoever except the contract which he holds with the Post Office. Notwithstanding his merit, I would by no means have him rewarded in a manner prejudicial to the Public, but, as he assures me that he will execute the Packet service as cheaply & as well as any other contractor, & will agree to any regulations that may be proposed by your Lordship & Mr Thynne, I hope that it will not be found impossible to oblige him & me, by continuing his contract for seven years, & by saving him from the heavy loss to which an earlier determination of it will make him liable. The Interest which I take in Mr Lewis success has prompted me to trouble your Lordship with this letter. Your goodness will excuse it; I do

¹ Nicolson Calvert (1725-93), a London brewer, High Sheriff of Hertfordshire 1749, M.P. for Tewkesbury 1754-74.

² Henry Penton (d. 1796?), M.P. for Winchester 1761-96. In 1761 he was appointed Court Post, or Carrier of the King's Letters between his Court or Palace of Residence and the first Post Stage or Post Office of the Postmaster General. His father, Henry Penton, M.P. for Tregoney 1734-47 and for Winchester 1747-61, was Court Post from 1741 to 1761. The office was executed by a deputy, who was paid £58 out of the salary of £2 a day. The Commissioners on Fees recommended its abolition (*10th Report on Fees*, 1788, pp. 782, 858). It and the office of Receiver General were the only patent offices in the Post Office.

assure you, that I think the King's affairs in Parliament may suffer, unless such good & steady friends as Mr Lewis have from Government all the countenance & favour that Justice & the Public service will permit. I am, with the truest attachment & respect,

My Lord

your most faithful
humble servant
North.

Copy.

Lord Le Despencer to Lord North.

Han^r Square

Jan^y 30th 1774

My Lord,

I received the honor of your Lordship's Letter yesterday with an inclosed memorial from Mr Lewis to Mr Thynne and myself. I hope your Lordship will not doubt of my cordial disposition (and I am confident Mr Thynne is equally well disposed) to support His Majesty's measures and the Administration, and I certainly well know it is necessary to shew complaisancy and favor to those who are steady to Government. The true state of the case is this, there was a resolution taken some years since (before Mr Thynne was my Colleague and now heartily acquiesced in by him) to put an end to all contracts in the Post Master Genr^{ls} department, finding by experience the impropriety and inexpediency of their continuance, and accordingly the contract for the Dublin Packets is now totally laid aside; the Contractors impose such hard terms on their Captains, which, we have reasons to fear, oblige them to take unwarrantable steps to the detriment of the Service, and we cannot so easily and immediately call each to account, as when they are directly under our own appointment. Mr Lewis makes at least £1200 a year and his allowance to his commanders is so small that they cannot make the appearance as those who have large shares in the Packets and receive all the pay allowed by the establishment, and therefore may be tempted to take steps the Commiss^{rs} of the Customs do not approve. Mr Lewis's contract is now at an end and we told him last winter (for I have not

seen him this) that in consideration of his having got a new vessel (notwithstanding he was assured three years ago of our intention to lay aside contracts) he should continue two years longer upon the same footing, from the expiration of his then contract. I do not know a more civil well bred Gentleman than Mr Lewis, but I protest to your Lordship I should think just the same about this matter if my Brother had been the Contractor. Mr Lewis sent us a Memorial some time since and has been with Mr Thynne and myself respectively many times, but finding we continued to deem the measure right and necessary, now indeed he has taken a method which, considering the personal regard and esteem I have for your L^dship, the situation you are in, and the reasons you give suitable to that situation, all unite to make me only first state my objections and then leave it to your determination and discretion. As Mr Lewis has one new ship suppose he was permitted to continue his Contract for four years instead of two, I own I wish not for seven. I will not trouble your Lordship with full remarks on almost every paragraph in Mr Lewis' memorial, only in general say it is very erroneous. I never understood a contract (except of matrimony) was for life. I feel your Lordship's reasonings and our inclinations correspond, your Lordship must decide, and be assured that I am with great cordiality of attachment and respect

My Lord

Your most faithfull and most
Obed^t humble Servant
Le Despencer

Lord Le Despencer

Copy of a paper I gave Mr Todd.

Feb^y 4. 1774

If Mr. Thynne thinks it necessary to come to an immediate Appointment, which I own I do not, I am content ; if he does not approve of Mr Finlay,¹ who for many reasons I apprehend

¹ Hugh Finlay, Deputy Postmaster at Quebec, who was appointed to succeed Franklin on 25 February 1774. In the *10th Report of the Commissioners on Fees*, 1788, he appears as Deputy Postmaster General for Canada, with a pension of £150 as late Deputy Postmaster General for North America (*10th Report*, 1788, p. 876).

would be the properest person, let us name one, upon condition that he remains constantly in America.

Lord North and the whole Cabinet know very well Dr Franklin was dismissed on Monday last¹ and would have determined concerning Mr Hutchinson's succeeding before this, but if that should be a Measure of Government and there is any Impropriety in that Measure let Administration take the blame to Themselves. I only plead against the Office being made a Sinecure by our Appointment. It would I apprehend be no mortification to Dr Franklin. I stil think the Place should be dropped.

Mem^m to Mr Todd for Mr Thynne.

[February 1774]

Mr Todd is desired to assure Mr Thynne of my cordial regard, good will and good opinion, that I hope I allwayes have behaved, and allwayes shall behave so as to deserve a reciprocal good opinion from Mr Thynne, that it is most disagreeable to me to differ with him so widely about this appointment, but I do and must confess, according to my (what some may call simple) Ideas, that the appointing a Deputy Post Master General for America who is never supposed or intended to set his foot in America seems to me unwarrantable and unjustifiable and would be liable to just obloquy and abuse.

Copy.

Lord Le Despencer to H. F. Thynne.

Han^r Sq^{re}

Feb 6th 1774

Dear Sir,

I yesterday was to wait on you about 4 oclock— the great regard I have for you makes me glad to shew it upon all occasion, altho it be to my own hindrance. I wish the method to satisfy and oblige you which was hinted to me by Mr Todd last Fryday

¹ Franklin was dismissed on 31 January 1774, after examination by a Committee of the Privy Council on 29 January.

night had been thought on before. Mr Jamineau ¹ I am informed is in a very declining state of health, and the appointment he has to provide news Papers to the Clerks etc. is worth to him about five hundred pounds a year. I promise you (if you think proper) upon the Demise of Mr Jamineau, that Mr John Garnier shall succede him. As I never yet broke my word I cannot doubt you giving me credit on this account. I objected to your former proposal certainly not from any disrespect for you or disregard for Mr Garnier but partly from the motive of impropriety, thinking it would have made us liable to just censure; and now I beseech you dear Sir let there not remain the least tincture of suspicion or animosity between us, but let me in all friendship shake you by the hand at the Post Office next Wednesday (or before) the sooner the better. If your intelligence is true and you think it likely that a deputy general to the Post Office in America may be too forcibly recommended, I should wish and advise that with very little additional expence Mr Finlay might be appointed with an injunction to continue to survey the Post houses through that vast country. Such a measure would carry with it propriety as well as Economy, and we should remain unembarrassed.

I am truly Dear Sir Your very faithfull and affect^o humble servant
Le Despencer

¹ Isaac Jamineau (d. c. 1792), appointed in 1742 to supply the Post Office and the Clerks of the Road with newspapers. For this service he received from the Clerks of the Roads, who had the privilege of franking newspapers, three halfpence a dozen newspapers and one newspaper for every twenty-five supplied. The office was executed by a deputy to whom Jamineau paid £200 a year. The profits of the Clerks of the Roads, and therefore of Jamineau, were considerably reduced by the Act of 1764 (4 Geo. 3, c. 24), which extended the privilege of franking newspapers to members of both Houses of Parliament. The Post Office Memorial of 17 November 1772 drew the attention of the Treasury to the very large orders of members of parliament for newspapers, and asked that their orders might be limited as to give some relief to the Clerks of the Roads, who paid out of their profits certain allowances to other officers in the Inland Department, and this request was repeated on 31 January 1781, but without effect (Treasury Letter Book (1770-8), p. 32; (1778-83), pp. 93-6). The Commissioners on Fees dealt with the problem by recommending that the Clerks of the Roads should lose their privilege of franking newspapers and should be paid entirely by salary and that Jamineau's post should be abolished and an annuity paid to him during his life (*10th Report on Fees*, 1788, pp. 787, 791).

John Walcot to Lord Le Despencer.

Dublin the 19th of Aug
1774.

I am indebted, My Dear Lord, for your two very kind letters of the 8th & the 13th ; but I cannot answer in print, as I have not yet learnt the business ; & if I had taken a few lessons I should be afraid to attempt it in answer to so great a Master. Mr Todd wrote me on the 9th “ that Mr Thynne appeared to approve the security from Mr Lees¹ only it did not appear necessary to give his friend’s name to be filled up untill the death of Barham,² when the respective Salaries & Annuity take place, or if it was necessary to fill up the name directly that then Mr Thynne should nominate another life if the one first nominated should die before Mr Barham ”. I mentioned the foregoing proposal to Mr Lees, who has signified his consent to it, as being reasonable that the risk of the life named & the Annuity should commence at one & the same time, & therefore Mr Thynne will now nominate without delay. The Security for £350 to Mr Thynne’s friend³ is to be directly from Mr Lees, & the draft for the security of it is drawn accordingly, for though in the Memorandum left with Mr Todd it is mentioned that the whole security should be given from Mr Lees to me & that I should grant a part to Mr Thynne’s friend, yet on mature consideration I thought it most advisable for me, & equal to Mr Thynne’s friend, to make the security for the £350 directly from Mr Lees himself, & thereby to exempt myself entirely from any future concern between them, in any case or on any

¹ John Lees, Secretary to the Post Office in Dublin 1774-81, Secretary at War in Ireland 1781-4, Secretary to the Irish Post Office in August 1784 on its separation from the English Post Office.

² Edmund Barham, Agent for the Packet Boats and Deputy Postmaster at Dover until 1774, when he retired, because of ill-health, after some fifty years’ service in the Post Office. He died in 1787, aged about 80.

³ Peregrine Treves. The Committee appointed in 1787 “ to enquire into certain Abuses in the Post Office ” examined Treves and stated that he “ had never performed any Public Service in the Post Office, or in any other Public Department, to entitle him to any Public Reward ” (*Commons’ Journals*, vol. xlii, p. 800, 23 May 1787). A Peregrine Treves was a junior Clerk in the Secretary’s Office in 1778.

account whatsoever.¹ I apprehend by your Lordship's letter that you have not seen the draft of the security I sent as it is drawn, as I have mentioned, without naming me & consequently no dismissal of Mr Lees or any other matter can make me liable to pay the Annuity; for the agreement left with Mr Todd is merely a Memorandum until the Securities &c are completed and it is to be given up when the appointment take place & the Securities are given. Mr Lees gives me a separate security for £150 per Annum, making the £500 specified in the Agreement. I flatter myself the Papers & letters lately sent by me on this Subject to Mr Todd, & which your Lordship will of course see, will have fully explained this matter, so that no further trouble will arise to your Lordship on it; for indeed I am very sorry thus to teaze you incessantly. I was with Lord Harcourt in the country Monday & Tuesday; His Excellency desired his best compliments when I wrote. Be assured, My Dear Lord, that I am truly sensible of your kind attention to my Interest in the business & that I am, with the utmost truth, My Dear Lord,

Your Lordships Affect^{te} & Obliged Nephew
& Faithful Servant
John Walcot.

I did not receive any letter from Mr Todd of the 13th on the foregoing subject as your Lordship expected I should do.

¹ Walcot was not successful in this aim, for it seems that he as well as Lees gave security for the payment of the annuity to Treves (Report of 1787 Committee, *Commons' Journals*, vol. xlii, p. 800). The three agreements finally made were: Walcot to succeed Barham and to pay him £800 a year during his lifetime; Lees to succeed Walcot and to pay him £750 a year while Barham lived and, after Barham's death, £150 a year if Lees' income proved to be more than £1,000 a year, or, if it proved to be less than £1,000 a year, half of the excess over £800; Lees to pay Treves, after Barham's death, £350 during the joint lives of Lees and Treves and for as long as Lees remained Secretary. The first and second of these agreements were concluded in November 1774 "by the order of the Postmaster General"; the third was made in August 1774. In 1788, when the Commissioners on Fees investigated the agreements, Treves had not received any payment from Lees, as Barham had only just died (*10th Report on Fees*, 1788, pp. 773, 781, 855), but the other payments had been made regularly. None of the agreements was held to be invalidated because of Lees' change of post in 1781 and 1784.

John Walcot to Lord Le Despencer.

Dublin 1st of Sept^r 1774

My Dear Sir,

I am truly sorry to have heard from Mr Todd that you have been very ill with rheumatism, & I shall still continue so as I have not heard of your recovery. I enclose the form of an Affidavit that your Lordship must make to entitle you to the Tontine Dividend, & it must be witnessed by two Witnesses. The signification must likewise be signed by your Lordship, & then the Dividend will be regularly paid half yearly at Mess^{rs} Brown & Collinsons Bankers in Lombard Street. The business could not be finished by Midsummer last, when half a year's dividend was due, so that one year's Interest will be to be paid at Xmas next. I sent Mr Todd last night the security from Mr Lees to Mr Treves, Mr Thynne's friend; but I did not bind myself, or will I do it, as I explained in my last letter to your Lordship more upon it; for if Mr Thynne concludes it as sent over it is very well, & if not I will not presume to break further in upon your Friendship by endless application. I am glad to have heard Mrs Barry¹ thrives & is well. My wife is not well though not worse than she most frequently is; but begs to join me in her best compliments to your Lordship & Mrs Barry. Lord Clermont leaves this place in a day or two for England. I will send in a post or two an Account Current of the Tontine business.

I am most Truly & Affectionately

My Dear Lord

Your Lordship's Faithful Nephew

& obedient Servant

John Walcot.

Your Lordship will return me the Affidavit as soon as you conveniently can.

¹ Mrs. Barry "presided over" Despencer's household from c. 1771 until his death in 1781. She died in 1795. (*A Vindication of Mrs. Lee's Conduct towards the Gordons, Written by herself* (London, 1807), *passim*.)

John Walcot to Lord Despencer.

Dublin the 16 Sept 1774

My Dear Lord,

I received a letter from Mr Todd of the 9th Instant, after his return from Wycomb, & I was extremely happy to learn by it that he left your Lordships in good spirits. I have not wrote on the progress of the Dover negociation as I was in daily hope of settling it; but Mr Todd has sent over from Mr Thynne a Joint Bond for Mr Lees and me to sign, & a Judgement against me for Three Thousand Pounds as a security to Mr Treves for his Annuity. I have wrote to Mr Todd that the having a Judgement recorded against me seems to me to be too severe; though I should be very happy to settle to Mr Thynnes' satisfaction; but that as this matter can be adjusted in one day if I was on the spot I request leave to come over for that purpose; & I will bring over all the papers &c. I shall by this means be able to lay the whole that has passed, since I was last in England, fully before your Lordship; & though I am anxious to a great degree to return to a settlement in England, yet I would not do it by any means your Lordship shall think wrong. By being on the spot I shall be able to find out the true value of Dover,¹ which Lord Clermont told me Mr Barham, since my return to Ireland, confessed to Mr Thynne to be better than £1100 a year; but Mr Todd has not given me any hint of it, & the value of Dover is a great circumstance to determine how far I ought to go in the security. If I shall not be able to close & settle this business I will return directly & I shall ever think myself equally indebted to your affectionate assistance towards my wishes. Your Lordship may be assured I would not ask to come to settle this business if any the smallest detriment to this office could attend my absence, or if a two months correspondence with Mr Todd, without effect, had not convinced me of the necessity of it. I was with Lord Harcourt in the country two days agoe & he charged me to make his best compliments to your

¹ In 1787 Walcot received, as Agent to the Postmaster General at Dover and Deputy Postmaster at Dover, a salary of £150, allowances of £210 and emoluments of £941 18s. (*10th Report on Fees*, 1788, pp. 854-5).

Lordship. My wife begs to join me in compliments to your Lordships & Mrs Barry. I cannot help thinking that the discovery of the value of Dover makes Mr Thynne desirous to break off the negociation; but as I hope so soon to lay the whole before your Lordship & to finish for ever the subject I will not add on it more now,

I am ever My Dear Lord
Your Grateful & Affectionate nephew
& Servant
John Walcot.

John Walcot to Lord Le Despencer.

Dunstable
27th Oct 1774

My Dear Lord,

I waited untill last night for Mr Barham; but as he was not then come, & it was not certain when he would (though hourly expected) I did not think myself at liberty to stay longer, lest the business at Dublin might suffer. I am sorry I could not call at Wycomb on my return; but as I look on my business as absolutely concluded I hope now to have many opportunities of doing myself that very sincere pleasure. I do not at present see that I may not be able to transact some business at Dover as a Merchant or Banker, or perhaps both; but untill I find whether it will clash with Minet & Factor, the rich & powerful opponents of the Packets, I have not mentioned a syllable of this scheme, & perhaps I may find it my Interest not to pursue it; though from my personal acquaintance with most of the first Bankers I think I shall be able to effect it after I have been a short time there; I am well aware Many Irons at once in the fire will not all heat, & I may therefore think more on this subject. I saw Mr Goostrey yesterday & he was come directly from Bath, where, he told me, Mr Whitehead¹ was still very ill though better than he had been; but I found he thought him still dangerously so, & I am sorry for it. I believe Mr Todd will

¹ Paul Whitehead, the poet (b. 1710), who died in December 1774. Despencer was his friend and patron (cf. *Annual Register*, 1775, p. 54, for his obituary notice).

have the appointments ready by the next Board day. My wife always begs to have the honour in joining me in best compliments, & she has lamented much that I could not allow her time to see Mrs Barry.

I am My Dear Lord

Your truly Obliged & Faithful Nephew

& Servant

John Walcot.

Lord North to Lord Le Despencer.

Wednesday morn

Jan 25[1775]

My Dear Lord,

I thank your Lordship extremely for your kindness in granting me one half of Lord Pembroke's¹ request, & am not much less obliged to you as an Officer of the Revenue for refusing me the other half, as you do it for reasons which I can not but approve: As soon as ever the present American hurry is abated, I hope to see your Lordship and to settle the long depending business of the delivery of the country letters.² In the mean while, your

¹ Henry Herbert (1734-94), 10th Earl of Pembroke, Lord Lieutenant of Wiltshire 1761-80.

² Country letters were defined by the Post Office as "all Letters from any Part to any Part of this Kingdom passing through London" (Treasury Letter Book (1760-71), p. 24). There was no statutory provision for delivery of country letters to the houses of the persons to whom they were addressed (cf. letter of 29 March 1769, note 4, for delivery of letters in London), but certain Deputy Postmasters had undertaken delivery on their own initiative, and the result of an action brought against the Deputy Postmaster of Sandwich in June 1772 showed that any Deputy who could prove some precedent for delivery would be upheld by the Courts (Treasury Letter Book (1770-8), pp. 15-16). In the Memorial of 17 November 1772 to the Treasury the Postmasters General requested that Parliament be asked to clarify the position by legislation defining the limits of delivery: they pointed out that the cost of providing delivery in all parts of the country would be enormous, and that in many cases such a delivery would inevitably be slower than the existing arrangements for collection of letters from local Post Offices (Treasury Letter Book (1770-8), pp. 28-9). In August 1773 a case of delivery at Ipswich, with the decision of the Court of Common Pleas and the Opinion of the Attorney General, was reported to the Treasury (*ibid.* p. 54), and in November 1773 the Treasury was again asked to act upon the proposals in the Memorial of 17 November 1772 (*ibid.* p. 62). But nothing was done.

Lordship will be so good as to direct a Bill to be prepared, & [a] short state of all the proceedings in the business to be made out for your humble servant. I am particularly desirous of having a clear account of the causes that have been tried upon this question & the grounds of the several decisions which have been made in each of them.¹

Although I have always found it very inconvenient to promise any place before it is vacant, yet, as I imagine that it will be agreeable to your Lordship to know something certain concerning Mr Walcot, I take the liberty of informing your Lordship that he shall be appointed a Commissioner of the Lottery upon the second vacancy that shall happen in the Commission from this time.² The first I am obliged to reserve for a gentleman who has been upon my List these four years & upwards, & by engaging the second to Mr Walcot I assure your Lordship that I prefer to a very considerable number of prior applications. I have the honour to be, with the greatest respect,

My dear Lord
Your most faithful
humble servant
North.

¹ As a result of North's request a meeting was held in March 1775 between the Postmasters General and the Treasury Board, and on 30 March the Post Office sent to the Treasury information about the number of Post Towns—more than 440—and an estimate of the cost of providing delivery at all of them, saying that it was impossible to estimate the cost of a "Universal Delivery" and repeating the arguments against one (Treasury Letter Book (1770-8), p. 117). In November 1775 a case of delivery at Hungerford was reported to the Treasury, with the "private opinion" of the Attorney General, Thurlow, that "the (Post) Office was not bound to deliver Letters beyond the Stage or Post House. But if the Construction of the Act (of 1711) is once carried beyond that, I know of no Construction which will . . . entitle them to refuse carrying Letters to every Hole and Corner of the Country" (Treasury Letter Book (1770-8), pp. 90-99). But in spite of these and other Post Office representations, by the end of 1781 neither the problem of the delivery of country letters nor the other problems raised in the Memorial of 17 November 1772 (of which the most important were franking by members of parliament, the limitation of their orders for newspapers, the exemption of mails from the payment of tolls, a change in the method of taxing letters) had been referred to parliament.

² None of the Walcots examined by the Commissioners on Fees in 1788 was a Lottery Commissioner.