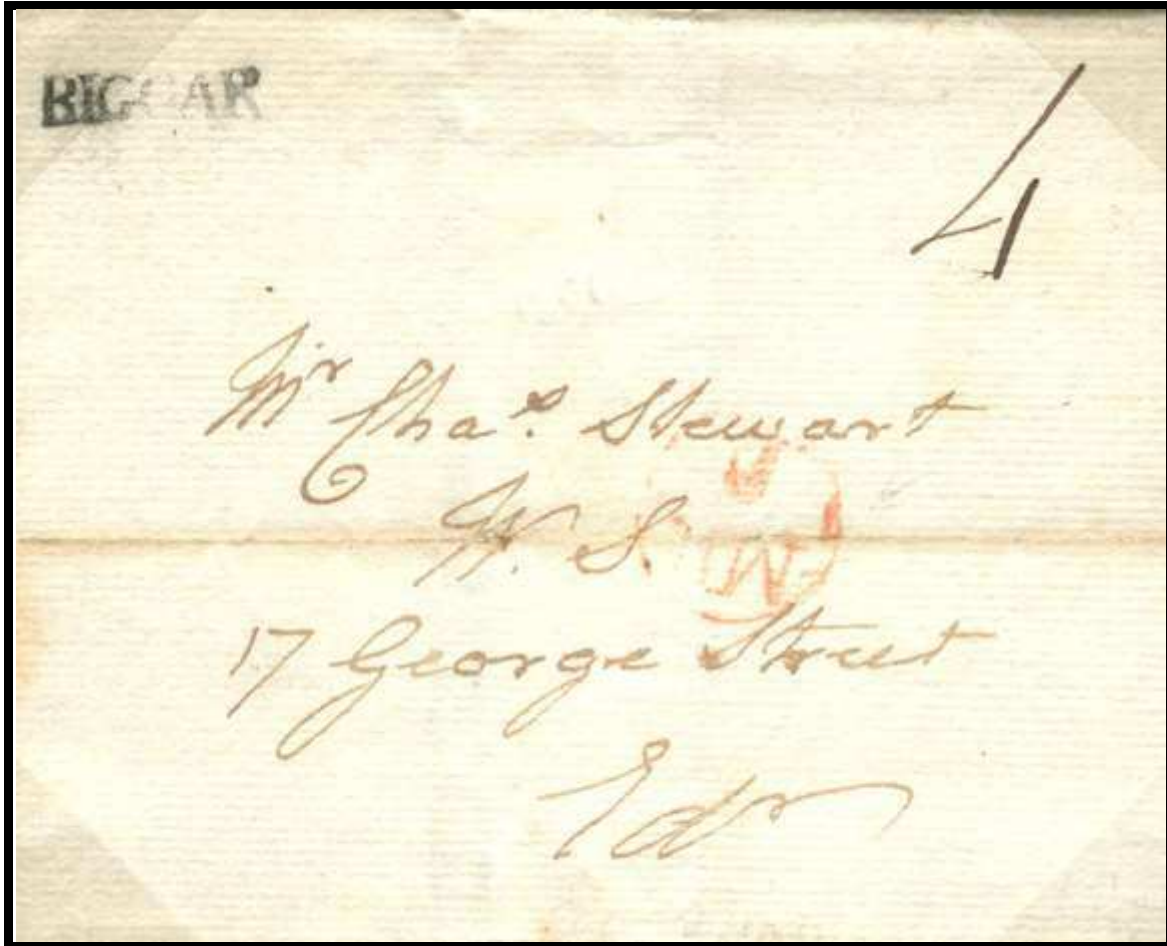


THE POSTAL HISTORY OF BIGGAR

Brian Dow

Biggar Post Office was established prior to 1715 (Mackay 1989). The first recorded mark used by Biggar Post Office was a **straight line** "BIGGAR" (LK22) which has been known to be used between 1793 and 1805 (Auckland 1995).



Straight line Biggar marking on 1801 letter from Biggar to Edinburgh.

A circular mileage mark (LK24) was known to have been introduced by 1808 and used until 1810. This marking showed a mileage of 423 miles (from London) through "E" (Edinburgh).



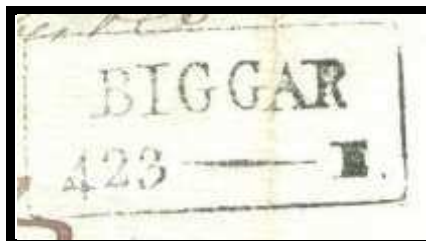
Circular mileage mark on 1810 letter from Biggar to Edinburgh.
(courtesy Terry Woods)

This **mileage mark** was replaced by a boxed BIGGAR/423-E (LK26) which has been known to be used from 1812 to 1827.



Boxed mileage mark from 1819

The rate for postage had by this time risen to 6½d – 6d for a distance of 20-30 miles and an additional ½d wheel tax.



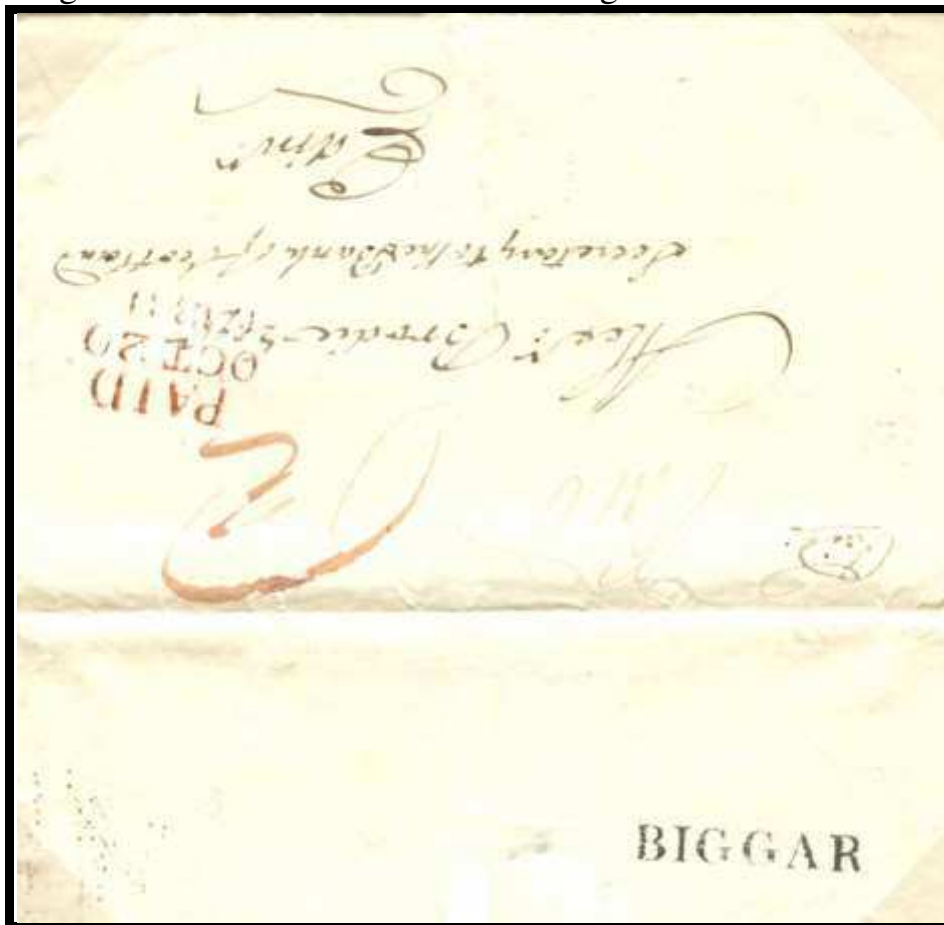
1820 (ex KL)

In 1829, Kirkwood's issued a **straight line** "BIGGAR" (LK28).

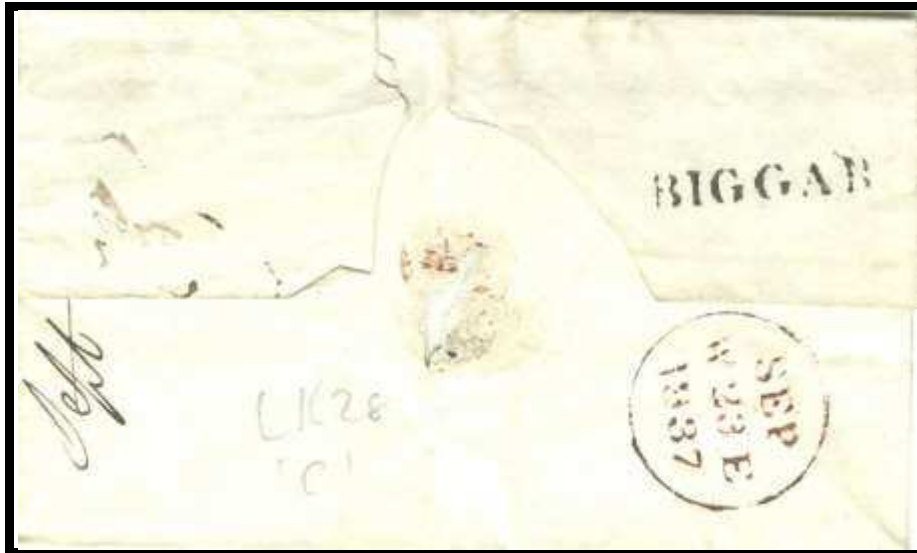


ex Kirkwood's proof books

This marking was used on mail from 1829 through until 1840:



1831



1837

Biggar in 1837 was a small town in the parish of its name, 27 miles from Edinburgh, 36 from Glasgow. 16 from Peebles, and 11 from Lanark, situated on the road between the two last-named towns. The town held a weekly market on Thursdays; and fairs on the last Thursday of January and the last Thursday of October.

Andrew Nicol was the postmaster. Letters from Edinburgh arrived every morning at 2.30am and were despatched every morning at 9.15am. Letters from Glasgow arrived every morning at 8.00am, and were despatched every morning at 3.00am.



13 October 1840

The above example of the “BIGGAR” straight line extends the latest recorded use by around 6 months. It shows an example of the penny black (plate 6) postage stamp cancelled with a red **Maltese cross** presumably from Biggar.

Kirkwood’s are known to have issued a “BIGGAR PENNY POST” mark (LK32) in 1839 but no recorded examples are yet known.



ex Kirkwood's proof books

This would suggest that Biggar Post Office had its own penny postal service whereby local letters were delivered for 1d whilst other letters would have been charged at 2d (up to 8 miles) and 4d beyond that distance. This would have changed from 10 January 1840 to only 1d.

The next handstamp produced by Kirkwood's for Biggar Post Office was a **boxed datestamp** (LK30) shown here



ex Kirkwood's proof books

This was first recorded used in December 1841 and last known used in October 1854.



Note upside-down last "8"



Letter from Biggar to Largs with imperforate penny brown cancelled with presumably the Biggar Maltese cross in black and showing the boxed Biggar datestamp for 17 July 1843

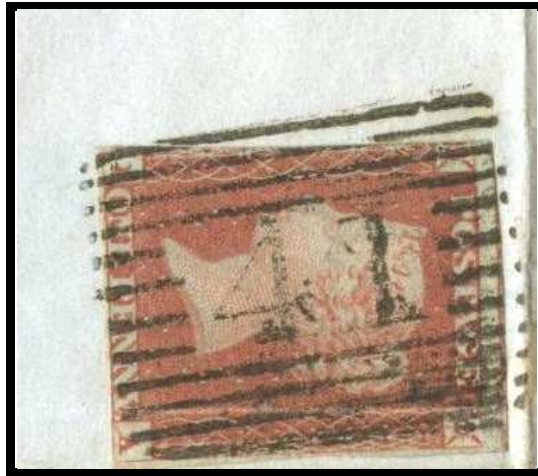
In 1843 Biggar's mail started from Edinburgh at 7.0am and arrived after the 35 miles at 10.30am. Mail was dispatched back to Edinburgh at 9.20am arriving at 2.00pm.

A "Missent to Biggar" mark (LK34) was provided to Biggar in 1844.



ex Kirkwood's proof books

During 1844, most larger Scottish Post Offices were issued with a numbered **obliterator**, issued sequentially from A to Z with Biggar being assigned a “41” (Mackay 1987).



Biggar-41 A1 obliterator (4-4-4 line format)

This obliterator stamp is known to have been used until 1852 and was replaced with an **A2 obliterator** (4-5-4 line format) handstamp in 1855 that was used until 1870.



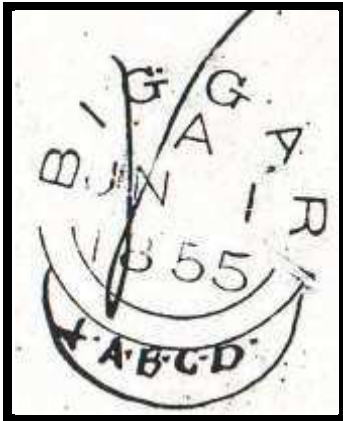
ex Kirkwood's proof books



Biggar-41 A2 obliterator (4-5-4 line format)
December 1858 (ex KL)

In 1852, mails were received at 1.10 am, 2.55 pm, and dispatched at 9.40 am, 9.25 pm.

During 1855, Biggar was issued with a new double-arc'd datestamp with code letters A through to D.



ex Kirkwood's proof books



1857



1858 (ex KL)

In 1860, this was replaced with a single-arc datestamp.



ex Kirkwood's proof books

By 1862, Biggar was issued with a **B3 duplex handstamp** replacing the need for both the obliterator and datestamp to cancel outgoing mail.



ex Kirkwood's proof books



Early usage (9 September 1862)

In 1861 Robert Glen was postmaster. Letters arrived from England, Ireland, & the south every morning at 6.40am; from Edinburgh, Glasgow, and the North of Scotland every night at 7.40pm; and despatched for Edinburgh, Glasgow, and the North of Scotland every morning at 5.20am; for England, Ireland, & the south every evening at 6.20pm.



1868



1865

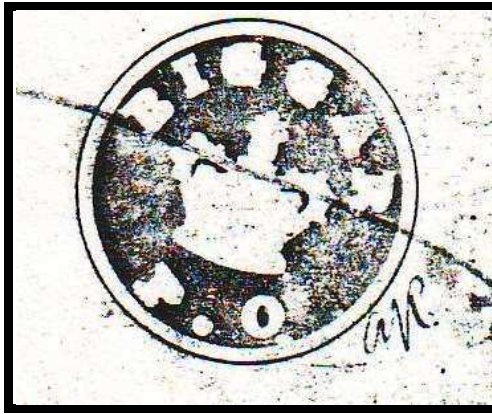
The 1865 letter had a missing stamp and a handstruck "2" has been placed alongside the Biggar-41 duplex canceller. This handstruck "2" handstamp (LK38) was originally used in the universal penny post era (in 1840) but was later used for postage due work.

Kirkwood's made a **single circle datestamp** in 1868 and this was replaced in 1899.

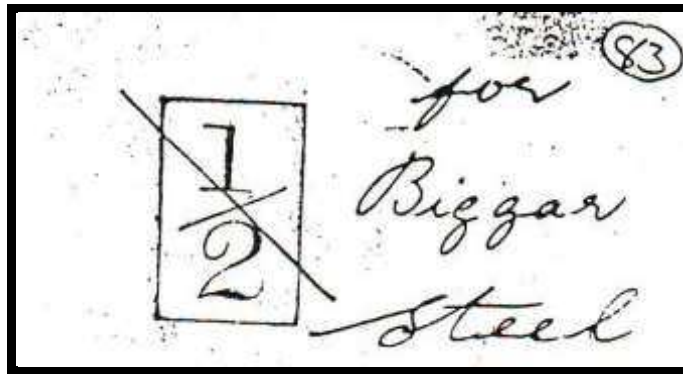


ex Kirkwood's proof books

Also found in the Kirkwood's proof books have been

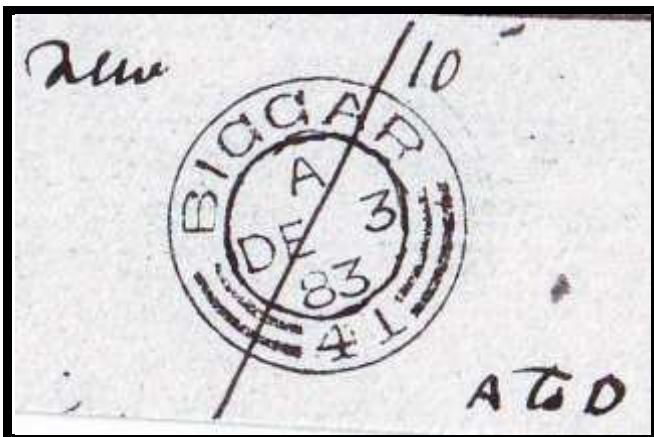


Biggar Post Office **Bag seal** 1868



Additional ½ mark 1873

In 1878 the postmaster was still Robert Glen. Letters arrived from Edinburgh, Glasgow, London, and all parts at 7.20am; and from Edinburgh, Glasgow, Lanark, and the North at 8.15pm. Letters were despatched to Edinburgh and Glasgow at 2.55pm; to Edinburgh, Glasgow, London, the North and South at 6pm; and to Edinburgh, Glasgow, Lanark, and the North at 10pm. The next handstamp to be issued from Kirkwood's was a combined datestamp which kept the "41" at the foot of a circular datestamp (C1).



ex Kirkwood's proof books (22mm diameter)



1885 (ex KL)

A later slightly smaller datestamp was issued in 1887.



ex Kirkwood's proof books (21mm diameter)

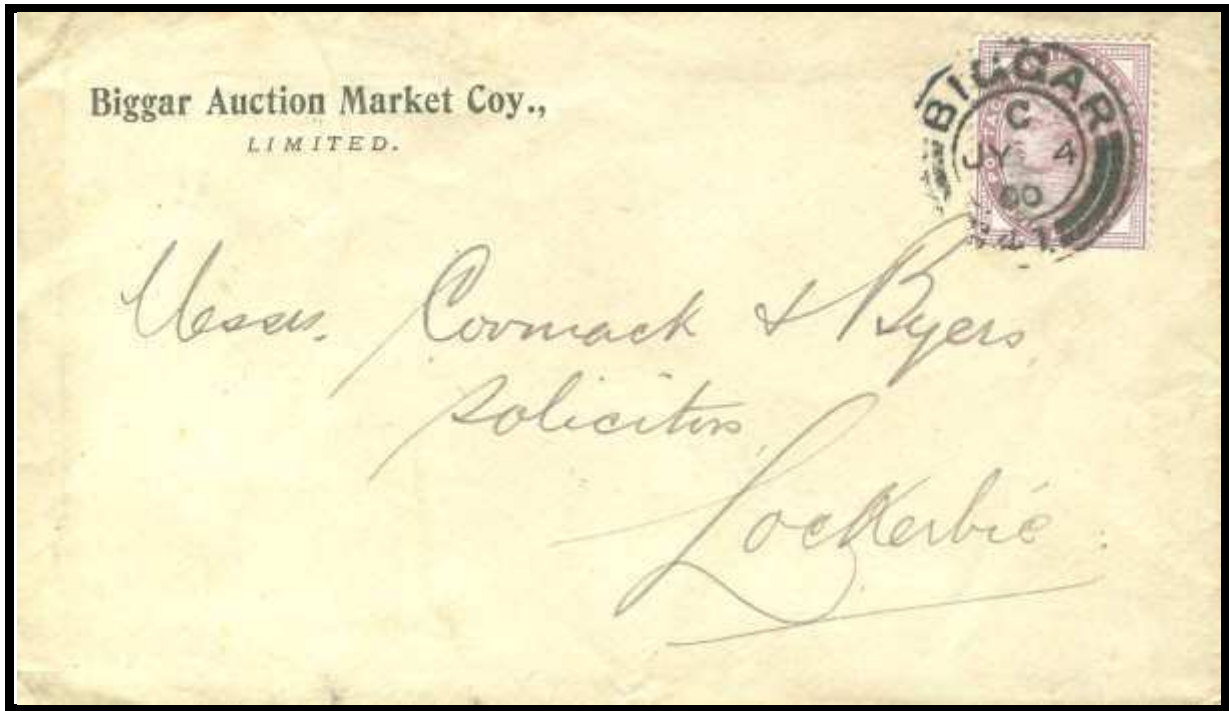


1893

From 5 March to 13 March 1894, a type 6 skeleton handstamp was in use (probably due to the loss or breakage of the previous handstamp) (Mackay 1978). Whilst this was in use, Kirkwood's were able to make a slightly larger C1 combined datestamp.



ex Kirkwood's proof books (25mm diameter)



1900



1903

In 1898, Kirkwood's issued a Biggar "target" handstamp that was usually used on parcel post items.



ex Kirkwood's proof books

In 1903, the postmaster was John Logan with deliveries at 6.15am, 12.15, 4 and 8pm. Dispatches were made at 10.30am, 1.50, 4.30, 5.50 and 10pm Sunday deliveries were to callers only from 9 to 10am with dispatches at 5.50 and 8pm.

From 18 February to 3 March 1904, a type 8 skeleton handstamp was in use indicating that the combined Biggar-41 handstamp was broken. This was replaced with a similar stamp with a cross pattee instead of the number "41".



1907



Letter from the Postmaster in Biggar, 1910



Post Office, Biggar 1912

By 1916, the Biggar handstamp had changed slightly – with thinner arcs and writing.



7 April 1916

A type 8 skeleton handstamp was recorded as being used in 22 September 1922. An earlier use of this handstamp is shown here:



17 April 1922

The next handstamp found was a further skeleton handstamp – a type 17, which has not been previously recorded



19 April 1923

It is assumed that this **skeleton handstamp** was replaced with a Biggar double circle handstamp with solid arcs (rather than thin arcs) and cross pattee.



5 June 1924

By 1928, the first BIGGAR/LANARKSHIRE with solid arc datestamp had appeared.



3 August 1928 (ex KL)

A further **skeleton handstamp** (a type 17) showing Biggar/Lanarkshire is reported to have been used between 25 July and 7 August 1933.



29 July 1933

Again, a further skeleton handstamp seems to have appeared. This has not been previously recorded:



1 September 1933

This would have been replaced by the BIGGAR/LANARKSHIRE with solid arc datestamp.



28 August 1933



11 June 1937



26 July 1950

By 1960, this handstamp had been replaced with a similar one with narrower typeface.



3 November 1960

In the 1970s, Biggar had a double arc datestamp with thin arcs

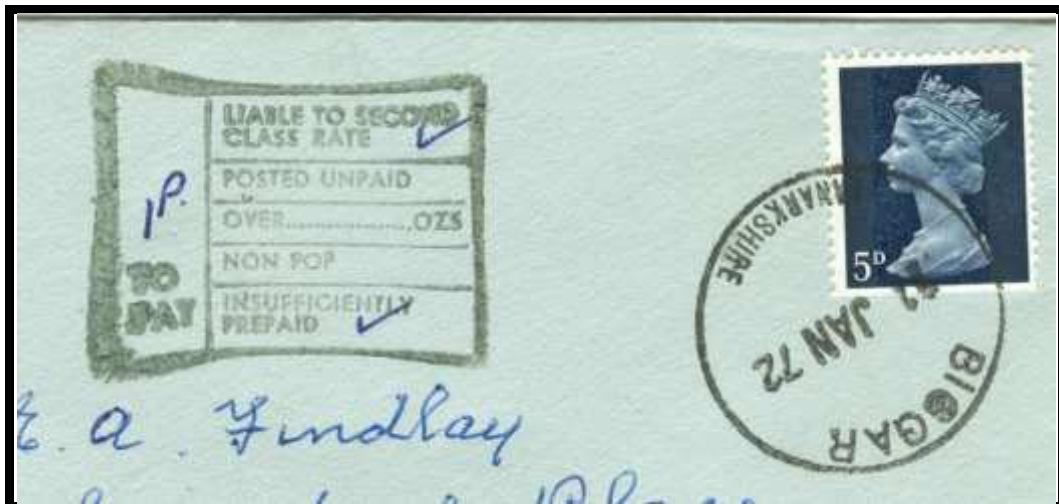


1976

A rubber datestamp was in use for small parcels.



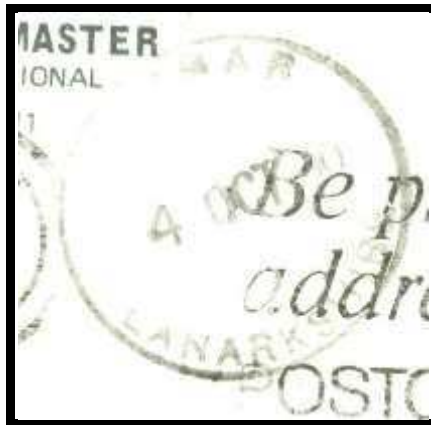
Boxed Postage Due mark (S108) together with rubber cancel 1966 (ex KL)



Boxed postage due mark and BIGGAR/LANARKSHIRE rubber
11 January 1972



1977 (narrow Lanarkshire)



1980 (broader Lanarkshire)



Late usage of BIGGAR/LANARKSHIRE rubber
18 April 1987 (ex KL)



Early usage of CLYDE VALLEY/ML12 rubber
21 April 1986 (ex KL)

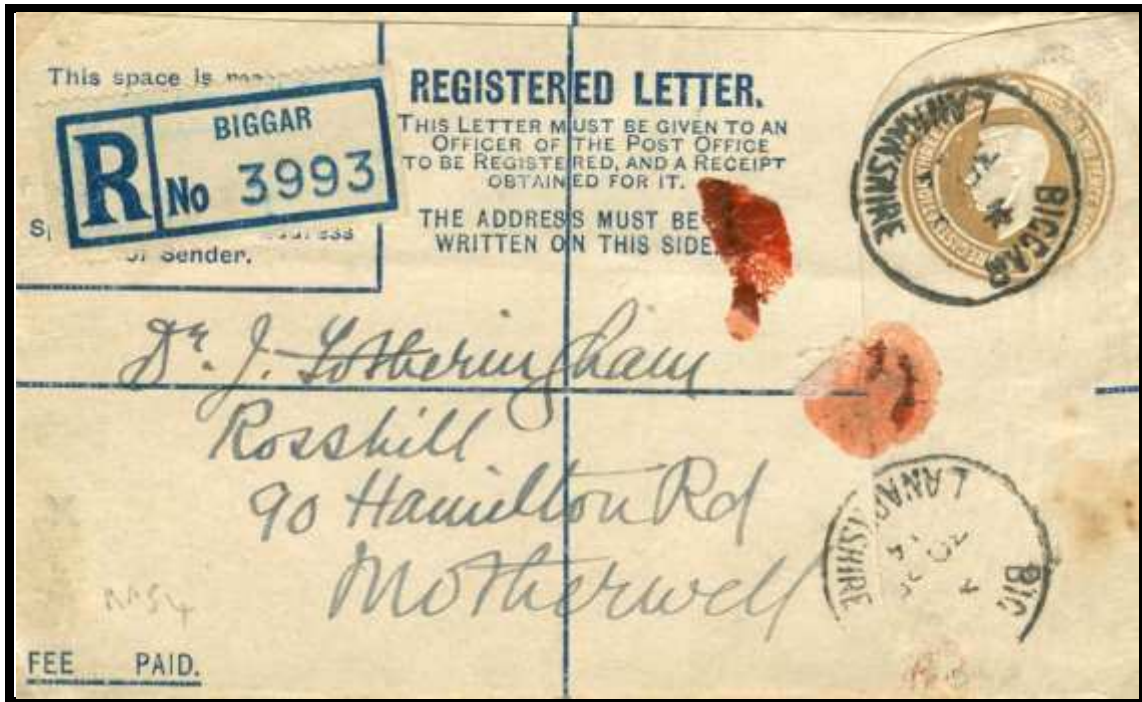
An early Registered envelope from Biggar is shown:



1882

An early example of a Biggar **registration label** (probably in the 1910s)





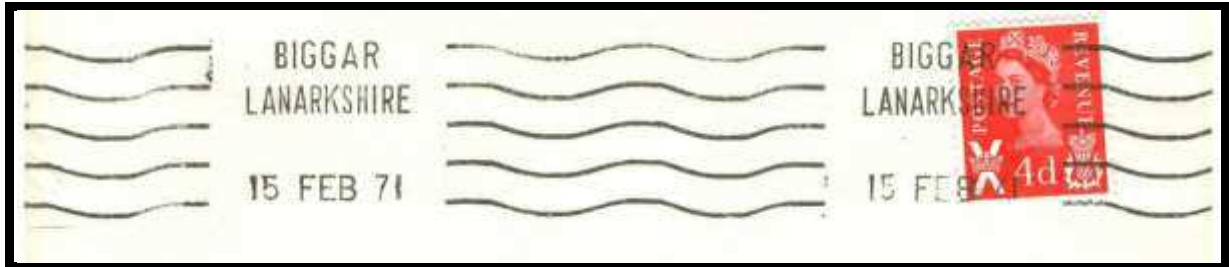
Biggar/Lanarkshire single circle datestamp, 1954

A **triangular handstamp** with three letter code of “BVG” was used for telegraphs



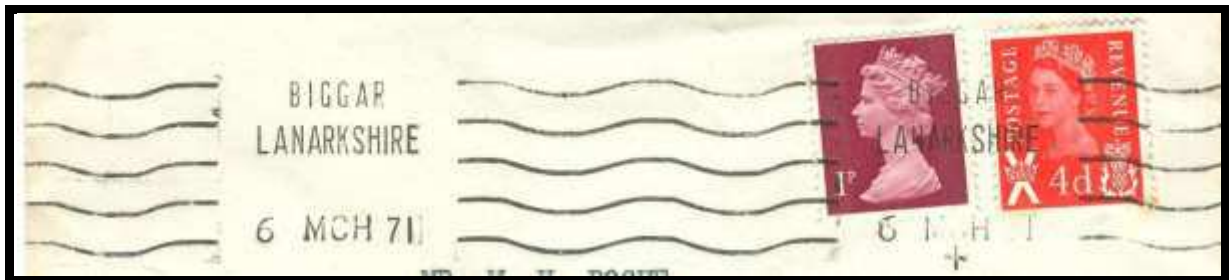
Used around 1967-8

Machine cancellation of letters came comparatively late to Biggar compared to other Post Offices in Lanarkshire. A Krag machine is known to have been used on 3rd November 1961 with widely spaced thin lettering (Mackay 1986)(Carter 2012). In 1964, this became broad lettering (in use until 1987).



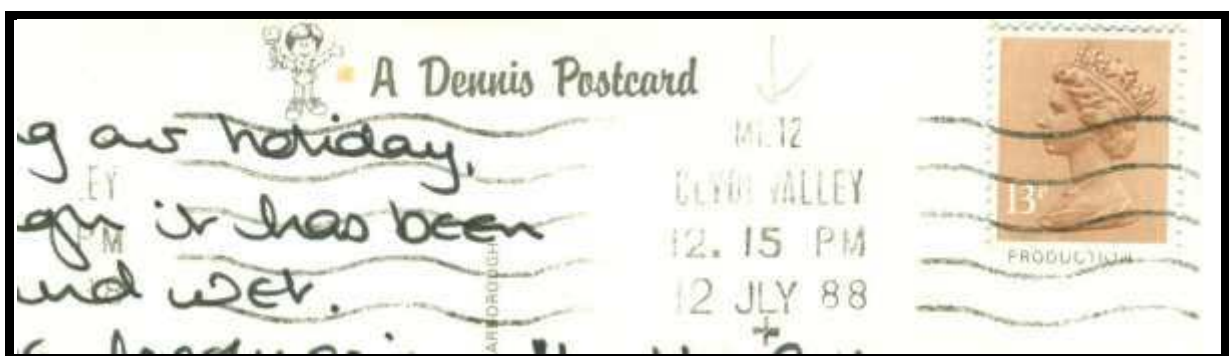
1971

Second class mail was cancelled with Biggar in narrow lettering from 1971 to 1987.



1971

From 21 April 1987 the “Biggar/Lanarkshire” was replaced with “ML12/Clyde Valley” and is known to have been used until 1993.



12 July 1988



15 July 1992



“Visit BIGGAR SHOW 7th August” used at Lanark 10 June to 4 August 1969
(ex KL)

Biggar had several Post Bus services:



1981



Postbus outside Biggar Post Office in 1995

Other handstamps used by Biggar include the counter datestamps:



1996



1997



“curly-wurly” 2010

All illustrations are either from my own personal collection, those of Dr Ken Liddell(KL), Mr Terry Woods, or from the Kirkwood proof books. For those interested in Lanarkshire or Scottish postal history, please click on the following links.

The Lanarkshire Postal History Collection

www.terrywoods.co.uk

The Scottish Postal History Society

<http://www.sphs.org.uk>

The Lanarkshire Philatelic Society

<http://www.lanarkshireps.co.uk/>

Biggar Museum Trust

<http://www.biggarmuseumtrust.co.uk/>

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Carter PT (2012) Krag machine postmarks of Great Britain & Ireland.
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Kirkwood Proof Books (2012) Digitised copy of proof books held by Scottish
Postal History Society.

Mackay JA (1978) The skeleton postmarks of Scotland.

Mackay JA (1986) Machine cancellations of Scotland.

Mackay JA (1987) Scottish Numeral Postmarks.

Mackay JA (1989) Scottish Post Offices.

Post Office Directories National Library of Scotland website.

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