

WARWICKSHIRE INDUSTRIAL ARCHAEOLOGY SOCIETY
WIAS Leaflet Number 1

Some Telegraphic Notes on Warwick and Leamington Spa

The electric telegraph arrived with the railways. It is not known when the first public telegraph offices opened in Warwick or Leamington Spa, but by 1852 Warwick was reported [3] to be in telegraphic communication with Coventry and Rugby, with another line from Birmingham to Buckingham under construction. The telegraphs were operated by the Electric Telegraph Company, certainly from the railway station at Warwick - the author has seen a telegram from Warwick station c. 1855 - and most probably also from the station in Leamington Spa. Towards the end of 1853, the Electric Telegraph Company advised Leamington Town Council of its intention to lay underground telegraph cables from the area of High Street and Clemens Street to a new office in the North Lodge of Jephson Gardens [1]. The existence of this office is confirmed in Kelly's Directory of 1860. In 1864 the same company was seeking permission to extend its lines into Warwick [3], this time by fixing the wires to the houses. It is not known whether the town office was open at that time but Kelly's Directory for 1866 only records an office at the GWR station.

From 1863 the Postmaster General had the power to acquire and maintain electric telegraphs and a further Act of 1869 gave him the 'Exclusive Privilege of Transmitting Telegraphs within the United Kingdom.' From the 1st. February 1870, the telegraph service was a Crown Monopoly centred on Post Offices.

In Warwick, an application by the Post Office to erect telegraph poles along the Saltisford from the GWR line to the town was considered in November 1869 [2]. This was rejected - the committee recommending instead that the lines should either be fixed to the houses or laid underground. The outcome of this application is not known but by 1st. January 1870 telegrams could be sent from the Post Office in Warwick Market Place [5]. The opening of the new office brought about the closure of the GWR station office and one other office in the town. For a short while, and until nationalisation was complete, the new office was manned by the Electric Telegraph Company. When first opened the new office had three instruments - two known as 'Morse' and the other a 'Needle' telegraph [6]. In 1886/87 the telegraph office was moved to the new Post Office in the Old Market where the equipment was located on the first floor with the batteries above.

At first the telegraphs were only worked by men but soon after nationalisation the Post Office found it advantageous to employ women for this work and opened training schools in London and Dublin to train girls for this purpose [7].

The first telephone companies started in 1877. Soon the Postmaster General concluded that these were infringing on its 'Exclusive Privileges'. In 1881 the Postmaster General took over the trunk network whilst licensing the local network to public companies. As a consequence, the trunk switchboards had to be physically removed from the Local Exchanges to new Post Office Trunk Exchanges. Towns thus had two exchanges until 1912 when virtually the whole telephone network was nationalised. (The exceptions were areas where telephone services were run by Local Authorities. Most of these quickly fell into the hands of the Post Office, with only Hull remaining independent.)

The National Telephone Company opened its first exchange in Warwick in 1891 [9]. The location of the first trunk exchange is not known.

The original telephone licences did not allow the telephone companies to offer a service to the general public (i.e. people who were not subscribers) but this was changed in 1884. The first Public Call Offices appeared in shops, restaurants and railway stations but soon free-standing Local Call Offices - often of exotic design - appeared in public places. These first 'Offices' required an attendant to set up the call, but soon 'Offices' appeared that did not require the attendant. Access was obtained through 'coin in the slot' door locks.

Kelly's Directory for 1896 gives no local telephone offices but that for 1900 gives a National Telephone Company 'Call Office' at 65 Regent Street, Leamington Spa, and an ordinary office at 60 Market Place, Warwick.

The early telegraph and telephone wires were carried on telegraph poles or, in town, fixed to the houses. However, after nationalisation of the telephones it became common practice to use underground cables for the trunk circuits, especially in built-up areas. When cables were used, indicator posts were placed to locate the cable joints. Warwick and Leamington Spa are fortunate in having kept many of the Victorian and Edwardian Cable Joint Markers which were placed at the back of the pavement facing the road.

Locations of these Cable Joint Markers are listed on the following page, and the three versions to be found in the area are illustrated on the reverse of this leaflet. The author would be keen to learn of any other such markers in the area. He can be contacted through the Warwickshire Industrial Archaeology Society at the address listed below.

Research is continuing on the history of telephones in Warwick.

Notes

- [1] The Warwick Advertiser 26th November 1853
- [2] Warwick County Council Committee Report for 4th November 1869 [CRO W34/3]
- [3] A Victoria County History of Warwickshire Vol VIII
- [4] The Warwick Advertiser 12th December 1885
- [5] The Warwick Advertiser 1st January 1870
- [6] The Warwick Advertiser 29th January 1870
- [7] The Warwick Advertiser 18th. February 1871
- [8] A Victoria County History of Warwickshire Vol VIII

John Brace 1996

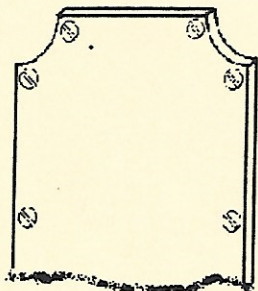
For further information on the Warwickshire Industrial Archaeology Society, please contact: Martin Green,
Secretary WIAS,
Argyll,
2B Union Road,
Leamington Spa. CV32 5LT

LOCATION OF CABLE JOINT MARKERS

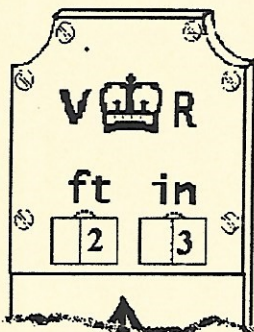
Type	GR	AGL	Location
2	SP269656	3.5 ins	E. side of Birmingham Rd., N. of Cemetery Entrance.
2	SP270656	5.0 ins	E. side of Birmingham Rd., S. of Cemetery Entrance.
2	SP277654	8.5 ins	E. side Saltisford., outside No. 134 on town side of the railway bridge.
2	SP278653		E. side Salitisford., near Renault garage.
3	SP285650	12.5 ins	W. side of Gerrard St., opposite alley behind shops.
2	SP287648	10.5 ins	E. side of Banbury Rd. outside St. Nicholas Church.
3	SP289646		N. side of Myton Rd. at Warwick end. Opposite roundabout traffic sign and behind GAS indicator.
1	SP293647	7.5 ins	N. side of Myton Rd., opposite Warwick School Junior House and outside No. 118.
1	SP296648	12.0 ins	N. side of Myton Rd., outside No. 172.
1	SP298649	6.0 ins	N. side of Myton Rd., outside No. 182, and west of Myton Crescent .
1	SP315652	8.0 ins	N. side of Myton Rd., W. of entrance to Ballingers Yard.
1	SP316652	9.0 ins	N. side of Myton Rd., E. of entrance to Ballingers Yard.
1	SP319652	9.0 ins	S. side of High St, Leamington Spa. at corner of Wise St., and outside HSS.
2	SP324653	10.5 ins	S. side of Radford Rd., outside No. 16 on hospital site.
1	SP325653	12.5 ins	S. side of Radford Rd., outside No. 46., 10m E. of Clapham Terrace.
	SP327654	8.0 ins	N. side of Radford Rd., outside No. 87 and W. of St. Mary's Rd.
2	SP328654		N. side of Radford Rd., outside the Oak Inn car park.
2	SP329654	8.5 ins	S. side of Radford Rd., W. of Eastnor Grove.

GR: Grid Reference; AGL: Above Ground Level

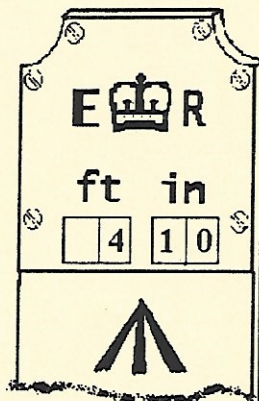
CABLE JOINT MARKERS OF WARWICK AND LEAMINGTON SPA



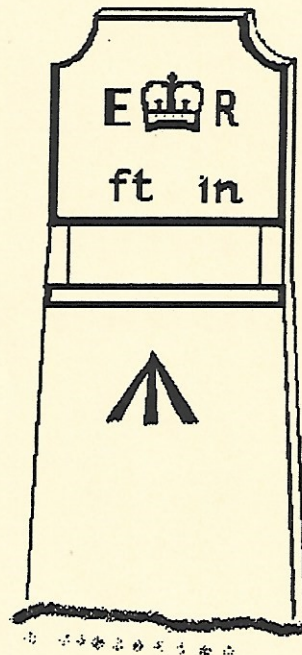
TYPE 1



TYPE 2



TYPE 3



A SIMILAR POST OFFICE CABLE
JOINT MARKER SHOWN BY
HAARON IN "PILLAR TO POST"
Pub. F Warne 1982.