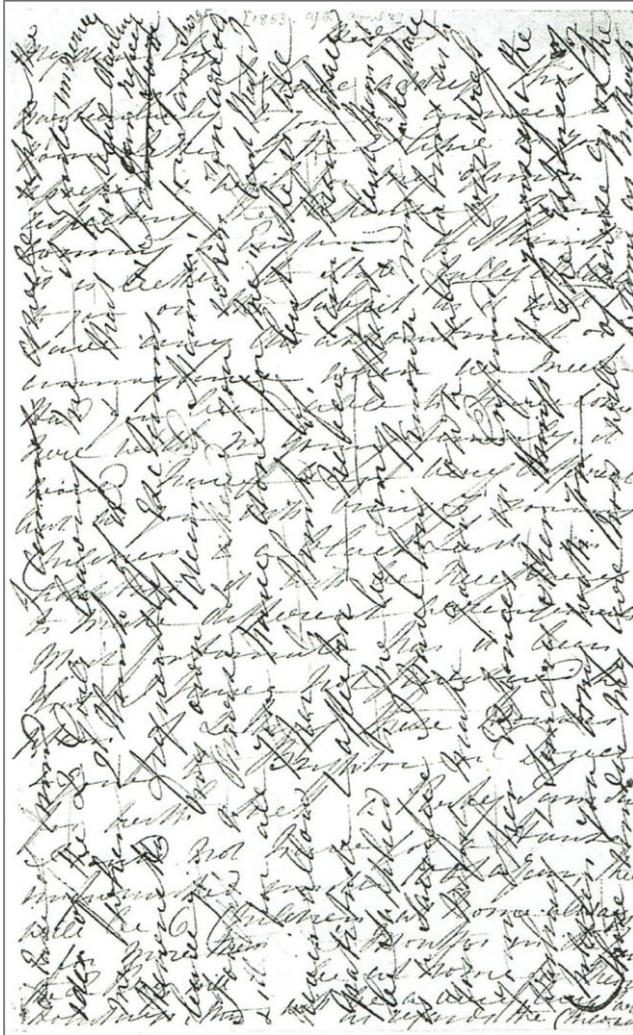


Postal/Communications Services - Then and Now

Downscaling and increased cost of postal services have been in our news of recent months. While the changes have caused some concern, they also highlight the various forms of communication media now available. What a huge shift from the way people communicated in the past!

When researching the connection of the name 'Ommaney' with the local area, we obtained copies of 19th century Ommaney family correspondence - but they created a learning curve for modern



readers. Ommaney family members, living on different continents, wrote letters using the cross-hatching technique. This involved two sets of writing on the one page, with one set of handwritten lines written at right angles over the other. This ploy, commonly used at one time to save paper and reduce postal charges, resulted from extremely high postage costs based on both distance and weight (i.e. number of pages).

There was no mail service directly to the Centenary suburbs area in the pioneer days of settlement. The horse-drawn Cobb and Co coaches carried mail between Brisbane, Ipswich and Toowoomba. Mail depots at the old Oxley Hotel and Goodna were the nearest collection points for what is now the Centenary suburbs. With very poor local roads, it is not surprising that our local pioneers featured frequently in lists of names of addressees on unclaimed mail. Such lists were published regularly in the *Qld Government Gazette* and in the daily newspaper.

After the Brisbane-Ipswich railway line opened in 1875, a travelling post office in the form of a mail van attached to a train,

delivered and collected mail at railway stations twice daily. The station master was responsible for distribution. Centenary area residents had to go to Railway Stations at Oxley or Darra. So as we open the emails, we should spare a thought for young Edward Maurer who, in the 1890s, sometimes walked or ran 2.5 miles from school in Goggs Road to Oxley Station, then back again, to post or collect mail or stamps for his parents!

Read more in *When River Was Roadway* (details at www.cshsoc.org.au/publications).

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