

Cotgrave Post Office

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| 1841 Census | Jane Hames 53 | ‘School Mistress’ | No mention of P.O. |
| 1851 Census | William Hames 27 | ‘Cordwainer’ | No mention of P.O. |
| 1853 Whites | ‘Post at William Hames’ | ‘Letters arrive 10-30 am, despatched 4-45 pm’ | |
| 1861 Census | Jane Hames Widow 73 | ‘Post Mistress at Post Office’ | |
| | William Hames 37 | ‘Master Shoe Maker’ | |
| 1871 Census | Jane Hames Widow 83 | ‘Post Mistress’ | |
| 1881 Census | Sarah Cupitt Widow 73 | ‘Shopkeeper’ Main Road | |
| 1891 Census | Sarah Cupitt Widow 83 | ‘Post Mistress and Grocer’ | |
| 1901 Census | John Cupitt 66 (Boarder) | Postman Civ. S? | |
| | Walter White 27 | Plumber, Plumtree Road | |
| | Winifred White 21 | Grocer/Shopkeeper | |
| 1911 Census | Walter White 37 | ‘Plumber/Painter’ | |
| | Winifred White 31 | ‘Grocer’ Address ‘Post Office’ | |
| | 2 Daughters, 1 Son, 2 Servants | | |
| | Arthur Denholm Crampton 25 Telegraph Clerk | | |
| 1939 Census | Walter White 65 | ‘Plumber and Postmaster’ | |
| | Winifred White 60 | ‘Grocer and Post Office Assistant’ | |

Footnote: The Penny Post was inaugurated in 1840 so there must have been some system for delivering and collecting letters in 1840 but it seems that, in Cotgrave, this was very much on the ‘informal’ side, making use of a convenient local shop. In this case, at least in 1851, it was the Shoemaking shop used by William Hames. Prior to that we have no information – Hames was not in Cotgrave for the 1841 Census – he was probably learning his Shoe Making trade elsewhere. It is interesting to see that this letter-handling stayed in the Hames family up to 1871 when William’s mother Jane, then in her eighties, was designated ‘Post Mistress’ and actually worked in the ‘Post Office’. Another old lady, Sarah Cupitt took over until the early 1890s and it continued to be something of a part-time activity right up to 1939. The White family probably took it over from about 1900 but Walter White still referred to himself as a ‘Plumber’, while his wife Winifred was primarily a Grocer. Note that there is only one reference in these censuses to a ‘Postman’ – John Cupitt (already in his mid-sixties) served in that capacity in the early 1900s. Before that, one can only assume that villagers collected their mail from the Post Office. This is consistent with the comment in the 1853 edition of White’s Trade Directory that: “Letters arrive 10-30 am and are dispatched at 4-45 pm”. This

somewhat casual approach (compared with our present arrangements) is well-illustrated by the fact that householders were not given specific addresses even as late as the 1911 Census.

Similarly, there is only one reference to a 'Telegraph Clerk', a young man Arthur Denholm Crampton, in 1911. The first commercially successful telegraph systems were developed in the middle of the nineteenth century but the Post Office only took over responsibility for the National Telegraph in 1870. One wonders quite what was happening in Cotgrave during the forty years between this date and the appointment of an official 'Telegraph Clerk' in 1911. Again, we must assume that the sending of Telegrams was treated informally – someone doing it part-time, along with their principal employment.

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