

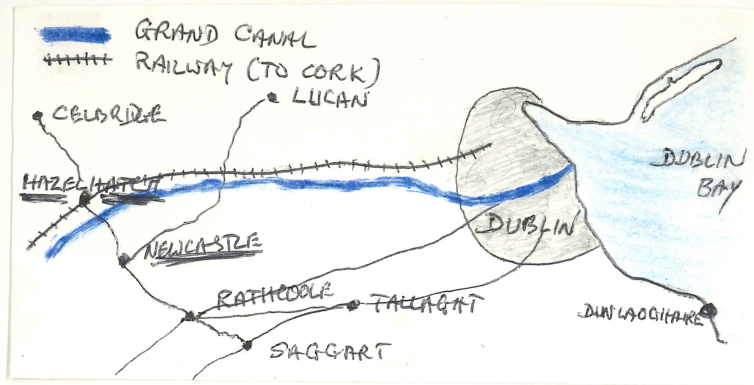
HAZELHATCH - a scarce cancellation.



HAZELHATCH -- this tiny hamlet is hard to find! How is it that Newcastle, a small town, should be under the jurisdiction of this office? It took a lot of investigation to find the facts. Hazelhatch is first mentioned in Watson's "Almanac" of 1809 as a "Receiving House" (or P.O.), but is not mentioned in the P.O. Directory of 1834, nor in Frazer's "Traveller's Guide" of 1854. In Brumell's "British P.O. Numbers, 1844-1906", 1874 list, the number 249 is assigned to Hazelhatch, though that number was previously allocated to Headford, Co. Galway. (To date no cover has been found with the number 249 that is without doubt from Hazelhatch). Dendy Marshall (1910) gives Hazelhatch with no. 249 in his 1885 list. The P.O. Guide for 1922 confirms that Newcastle was a sub-office under Hazelhatch, but by 1924 Hazelhatch had disappeared and Newcastle was listed as under Celbridge and later under Rathcoole. The only explanation for the various appearances and disappearances is that there was a Railway station at Hazelhurst and letters for Newcastle, Rathcoole etc. were unloaded there. With motor transport coming into use it was much easier to send letters for these places by road rather than by rail, and so Hazelhatch P.O. ceased to exist. Bill Kane, an authority on Irish cancellations, has stated that The "Newcastle / Hazelhurst" cancel "must be rare". F.E. Dixon has a double-ring skeleton 'Hazelhatch' of 1900 but to date none other is known. It has been suggested that Hazelhatch is a corruption of 'Hazelhurst' but Rocque's map of 1760 has Hasl Hatch, so the corruption is in the first part of the name rather than the second!

HAZELHATCH, a corruption of Hazelhurst (Coll-choill: Hazel Wood), Co. Dublin, lies midway between Celbridge (in Co. Kildare) and Newcastle (in Co. Dublin). In 1844, the Great Southern and Western Railway was formed to link Dublin to Cork City by rail. The very first section of track was laid from Dublin to Hazelhatch, after the Duke of Leinster had ceremonially cut the first sod in its construction in January 1845. William McCormick was the contractor for Dublin-Hazelhatch. Even as the country was bled of human life during the Great Famine, railway development proceeded rapidly. The GS&WR line (passing through Hazelhatch) as far as Carlow town was opened on August 4th, 1846. Time taken on those first runs between Dublin and Carlow was 2 hrs. 29½ minutes for a 56-mile journey. The track to Cork City was completed in 1849. On October 18th of that year, the first Dublin-Cork train reached Blackpool in 5½ hours. Blackpool was used as a temporary terminus until a tunnel was constructed which brought the GS&WR line into the city centre. People have asked why railway development was so prodigious at a time when the country suffered its greatest ever disaster, the Famine. The ravages of the famine, in fact, aided railway construction as wages were minimal and land costs were depressed. The ultimate effects of the extension of the railway system throughout Ireland were to aid in the growth of market towns, and to make it easier for workers to move in search of a livelihood (and also to encourage the drift from farms to urban centres like Dublin and Belfast, and make it easier to escape poverty and oppression by emigration to England, the Americas and Australia). In 1926, the various railway companies in the territory of the newly-formed Irish Free State were merged to form the Great Southern Railway, with headquarters at Kingsbridge (Heuston) Station and engineering works at Inchicore. Over the years competition from road traffic led gradually to losses and closures of unprofitable lines until, in 1945, Coras Iompar Eireann (Transport Company of Ireland) came into being and absorbed both the GSR and the Dublin United Transport Company. Virtually all rail and commercial road transport came under the jurisdiction of CIE. As in all other countries of the world, transport systems cannot make a profit and thus 'pay' for themselves. So in Ireland, Coras Iompar Eireann does not make a profit, but it provides a most efficient and valuable social service to all of our citizens in a way that no private, profit-seeking venture could hope to parallel. Total railway mileage was at a maximum in 1920 at 3,440 miles. Today, the total mileage of railway track stands at 1,500 miles approximately.

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Map of area around  
Hazelhatch.



Hazelhatch Railway Station, Co. Dublin, as it used to be.