

"Number please"

In 1876 Alexander Graham Bell designed the first telephone to transmit recognisable speech. Nearly half a century elapsed before the Chipping district was "on the phone".



The very first telephones simply connected two addresses, but telephone exchanges with lines radiating out to many subscribers were soon devised. In 1881 exchanges were set up in Preston. By 1892 Clitheroe had an exchange, Longridge in 1893, and Brock in 1905.

After the First War, the Government encouraged telephone development in rural areas. The "awakening" of remoter areas to the advantages of the telephone was expected to "brighten village life". Chipping's exchange opened April 3rd 1923 at the Post Office, which was then at Sunnyside on Club Lane. Shortly afterwards exchanges were established at Dunsop Bridge, Broughton, Ribchester, Goosnargh and Stonyhurst.

During autumn 1922, wireless broadcasting began, and a national system of wireless communication was looking likely. However it was the immediate usefulness of the telephone that aroused interest among rural businesses. Factories and the more commercially minded farmers needed contact with markets. Garages and motor engineers could be just a phone call away to service the growing number of cars, lorries and charabancs on the roads. This increase in road traffic was bringing more visitors into rural areas so hoteliers were pleased to subscribe.

In 1923 the Post Office required a minimum of 8 subscribers to justify the setting up of a new country exchange. (There were 10 subscribers when the Chipping exchange opened.) If these subscribers lived within a radial mile of the exchange the rent was £8 a year, but for more distant subscribers there was an addition of £1 a year for every extra furlong. If 14 subscribers could be found then the rent dropped to £7 10s a year for businesses, and £6 for residential users.

The early telephone system in Chipping was not in continuous operation. The exchange was open only 8 a.m. -- 8 p.m. on weekdays (including Bank Holidays); 8.30 a.m. -- 10.00 a.m. and 5 p.m. -- 7 p.m. on Sundays.

Do you remember? Chipping had 3 figure telephone numbers until 5 figures were introduced on 20th Oct 1988, by adding the prefix 61. At the same time the exchange became digital using the 0995 code. Then there were 470 lines from the exchange. The code altered to 01995 on 16th April 1995. Now (in autumn 1997) there are 650 lines from the Chipping exchange.

USEFUL PHONE NUMBERS

| | | | | |
|----------|----|---|------|-----------------|
| Chipping | 11 | Ashworth Albert, Cream Factor, Farmer | .... | Lower Core Farm |
| Chipping | 8 | Baines R., Cycle, Motor Engineer | .... | Back Lane |
| Chipping | 2 | Berkeley John | .... | Leagram Hall |
| Chipping | 6 | Berry H.J., Chair Maker | .... | Kirk Mill |
| Chipping | 7 | Brennand A.E., Motor Services & Engineers | .... | Brabin's House |
| Chipping | 4 | Carr Thomas, Farmer | .... | The Laund |
| Chipping | 1 | Chipping Call Office [public telephone box] | .... | Post Office |
| Chipping | 3 | Chipping Dairy & Farm [Goose Lane] | .... | Chipping |
| Chipping | 9 | Proctor T., Corn Miller | .... | Chipping Mill |
| Chipping | 10 | Tweedy & Co. Ltd., Iron, Brass Foundry | .... | Chipping |
| Chipping | 5 | Whalley J., Hotel Proprietor | .... | Talbot Hotel |

[The full list of subscribers on the Chipping exchange in 1923]

From reports in the Lancashire Daily Post, 4 Apr 1923, and the Preston Guardian, 7 Apr 1923. Information also kindly supplied by B.T. Archives, London, from the Post Office Circular 1923, the National Telephone Journal 1908, and the North of England Telephone Directory 1923.