

METER NEWS

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Meter of the Month

It is sometimes a bit of a risk buying mixed lots from an auction, but when you find a little gem like this one it more than makes up for all the disappointments. Last year, Peter Mantell bought a lot from eBay that included this interesting item. It is from 1963 and bears the unusual town die 'LONDON / F.S.' on an OHMS envelope, but what does "F.S." stand for as that is not a London District?

Your editor wonders whether it could have stood for 'Foreign Section'. Luckily there was a second example, dated 1967, which may give us a clue!



On this example the sender has typed in the word 'BRITANNIC' between the words 'Her' and 'Majesty's' and the return address on the reverse of that example reads:

ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT
2 - 12 Gresham Street, LONDON, E.C.2.
Telex : 21266 (PO ENGCHIEF LDN)
Telegrams : Engchief London E.C.2.

Your editor would be very pleased to hear from anyone who is able to throw any light on this. In particular, if 'F.S.' does stand for 'Foreign Section', why would that GPO sorting office have its own meter franking machine?

Acknowledgements

My thanks this month go to Jon Aitchison, Jim Ashby, Patrick Awcock, Dave Baker, Alan Godfrey, Peter Huss, Peter Mantell, Rick Stambaugh and Peter Wood for their reports, communications or contributions.

Latest Numbers

Below is the list of 'latest numbers' as at the end of February 2013 – with updates shown in red. Please could I have the next reports by 28th March - thanks.

In the list below, the part of the serial number that directly relates to the model is underlined.

Frama (UK)

Matrix F2, F4, F6	<u>F1002463</u>	03.12.12	See MN 146
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Francotyp-Postalia

Optimail 25/35	<u>F04114813</u>	24.01.13	See MN 147
Centormail 240/300	<u>FC5110606</u>	30.11.12	See MN 146
MyMail / PostagePro	<u>FM2654301</u>	10.12.12	See MN 146
Ultimail	<u>FU3117033</u>	26.09.12	See MN 144

Neopost

IS-330	<u>N1052182</u>	01.06.12	See MN 140
IS-350	<u>N1181247</u>	11.12.12	Reported by AN
Various upgraded	<u>N1240644</u>	09.11.12	See MN 147
IJ-80/90/110	<u>N1254484</u>	16.01.13	See MN 147
IS-460 (Ex IJ-50)	<u>N1373650</u>	18.09.12	See MN 147
IS-420 (Ex IJ-30)	<u>N1385456</u>	06.02.13	Reported by PM
IS-440 (Ex IJ-40)	<u>N1390617</u>	31.07.12	See MN 146
IS-480	<u>N3025610</u>	11.02.13	Reported by PM
IS-240 / IS-280	<u>N3312412</u>	22.01.13	Reported by PM
IS-5000/6000	<u>N5001438</u>	21.01.13	See MN 147

Pitney Bowes

DM50, 55	<u>PB099054</u>	14.12.12	See MN 146
DM160i/220i	<u>PB160825</u>	08.02.13	Reported by PM
DM50, 55	<u>PB332905</u>	11.02.13	Reported by PM
DM 810, 900 etc.	<u>PB527633</u>	02.07.12	See MN 146
Connect+ 1000 etc.	<u>PB551659</u>	01.11.12	See MN 145
Connect+ 10FC etc.	<u>PB556374</u>	28.01.13	See MN 147
DM 400, 450, 475	<u>PB618165</u>	21.02.13	Reported by PM
DM100i, 150i etc.	<u>PB872855</u>	08.02.13	Reported by PM

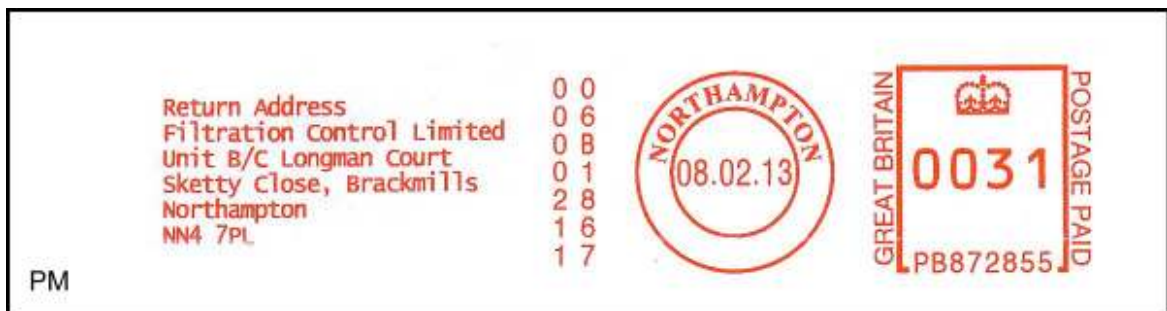
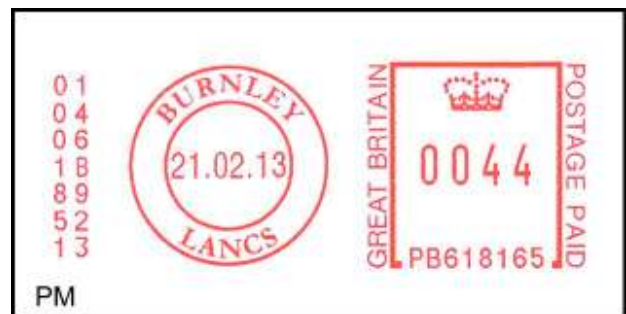
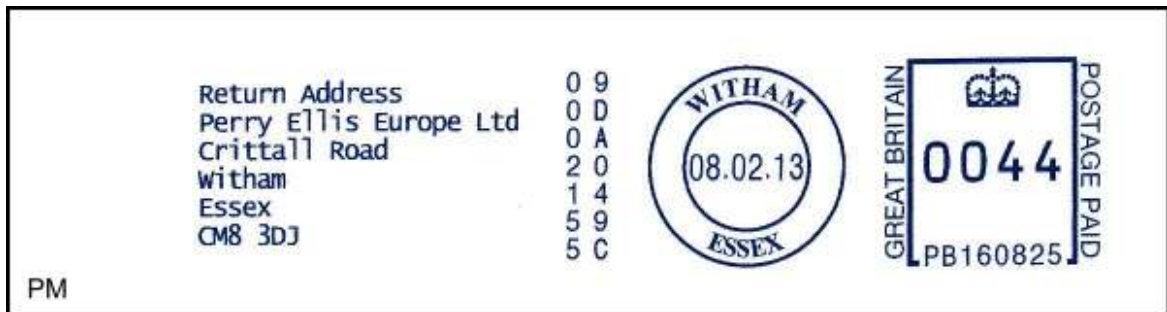
Advanced Mail Codes

AAEU-LR	F1002463	03.12.12	See MN 146
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As indicated last month, the long-running N1208 series has now been retired from this list as no further increases have been reported for almost a year.

Latest Number Images

Below are images of the latest numbers reported this month – with contributor’s initials shown in the bottom left of the image.

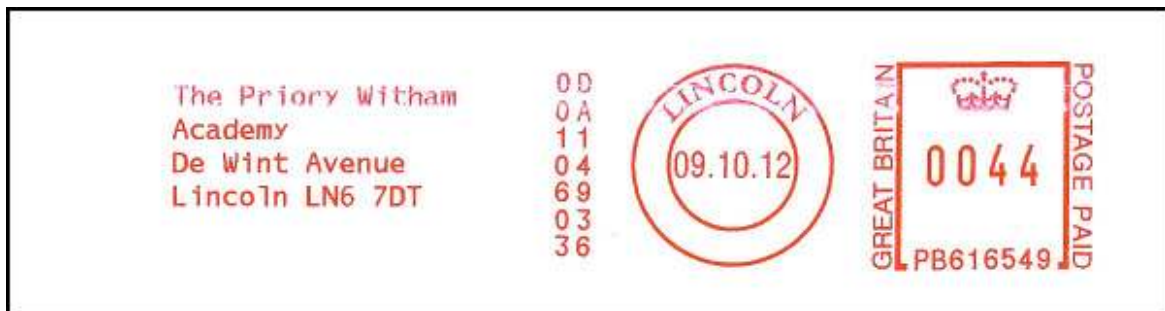
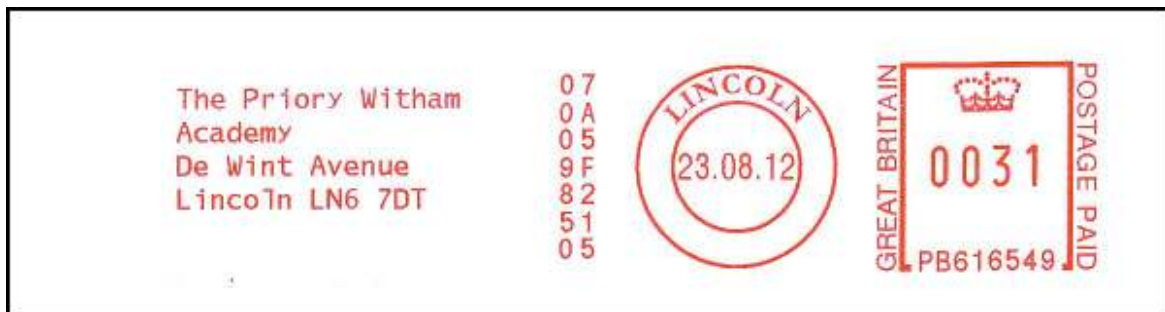


Recent Interesting Items

Peter Mantell reports this unusual frank where the company's web address has been included in the Return Address field. The company is called Kibble and its web page <http://www.kibble.org/> shows that it provides services for young people. Another meter 'first', possibly!



Peter Mantell reports a strange occurrence with machine PB616549 between August and October last year, which your editor is unable to explain. The user is the Priory Witham Academy based in Lincoln and each of the three examples shown below bears the same return address. However, on one occasion in September the townmark changed from Lincoln to Loughborough – a distance of 42 miles! One possible clue is that one of their publications on their web site makes reference to their gardens being enhanced by a sculpture programme, through Loughborough University. But would that explain it?



Royal Mail Branding

The long-awaited Royal Mail branding of meter-franked mail was finally rolled out at the end of January. The image below shows the cruciform logo positioned in the top left-hand corner of a DL-sized envelope – thankfully (from a collector's view point), well clear of most meter frank impressions.



Patrick Awcock reports that the earliest recorded example was on a meter franked item from Leicester dated 24th January 2013 with the logo applied by Royal Mail on machine 203 (Leicester IMP 3) between 07:30 and 08:00 on the 25th January. The item, from a black and white scan, is shown below.

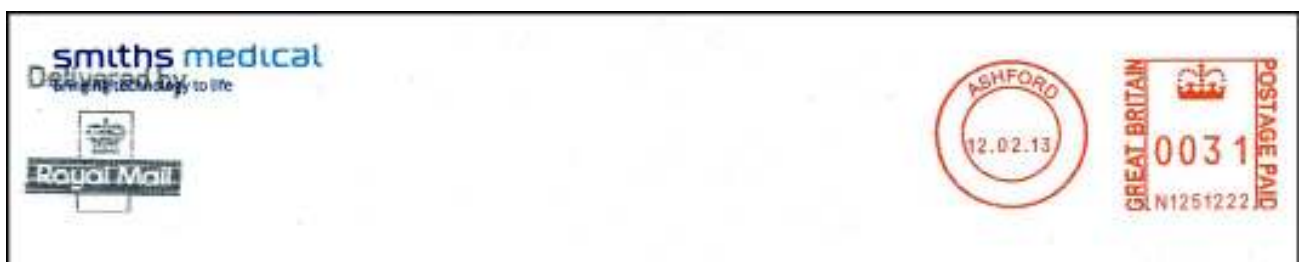


During February, the branding appears to have been rolled-out at most (if not all) Mail Centres with IMPs.

It must be noted, however, that a number of examples seen to date are of rather poor quality - similar to the example shown below:



The positioning of the logo means, of course, that it is often going to be superimposed on top of any pre-printed company logo positioned in the top left-hand corner of envelopes as this example shows:



Use of Blue Ink on Smart Franking Machines

Alan Godfrey has kindly forwarded a copy of a letter from Neopost Ltd. that was sent to customers regarding the change of ink colour from red to blue on their IS 'Smart' franking machines. The letter reads as follows:

"In anticipation of future changes by Royal Mail to upgrade sorting automation in Mail Centres, Neopost is transitioning from red to blue ink for our IS range. This is a progressive change in our supply arrangements and no special is required by you. Please note:

- *This change is part of Royal Mail modernisation plans to upgrade sorting automation throughout its Mail Centre Network. For further information please visit:
<http://royalmail.com/packet-despatch-low/uk-delivery/how-buy-our-services/franking#faq-19350428-19350426>*
- *Royal Mail have not indicated a mandatory date for completion of this change, but sufficient time will be allowed for stocks of red ink cartridges to be run down. There is therefore no requirement to replace functioning red cartridges.*
- *From February 2013 all deliveries of new Neopost IS franking machines will include a blue cartridge.*
- *From April/May 2013 any orders for replacement ink cartridges for IS machines will be dispatched containing blue ink.*
- *If you are currently using red ink in your IS machine, there is no requirement for engineer visits to implement this change – simply load the blue cartridge and the machine will function as normal immediately and will print blue after a number of cycles.*
- *There is no change for standard meter machines, including the IJ-range – we will continue to supply red ink cartridges against this requirement.*

If you have any questions please call our contact centre on 0845 880 0000"

Note that the link to the Royal Mail web site above, takes you to a statement that says:

Ink must only be ordered from authorised ink suppliers or their retailers. All Smart machines users must use Royal Mail approved blue ink, while non-Smart machines will require approved red ink.

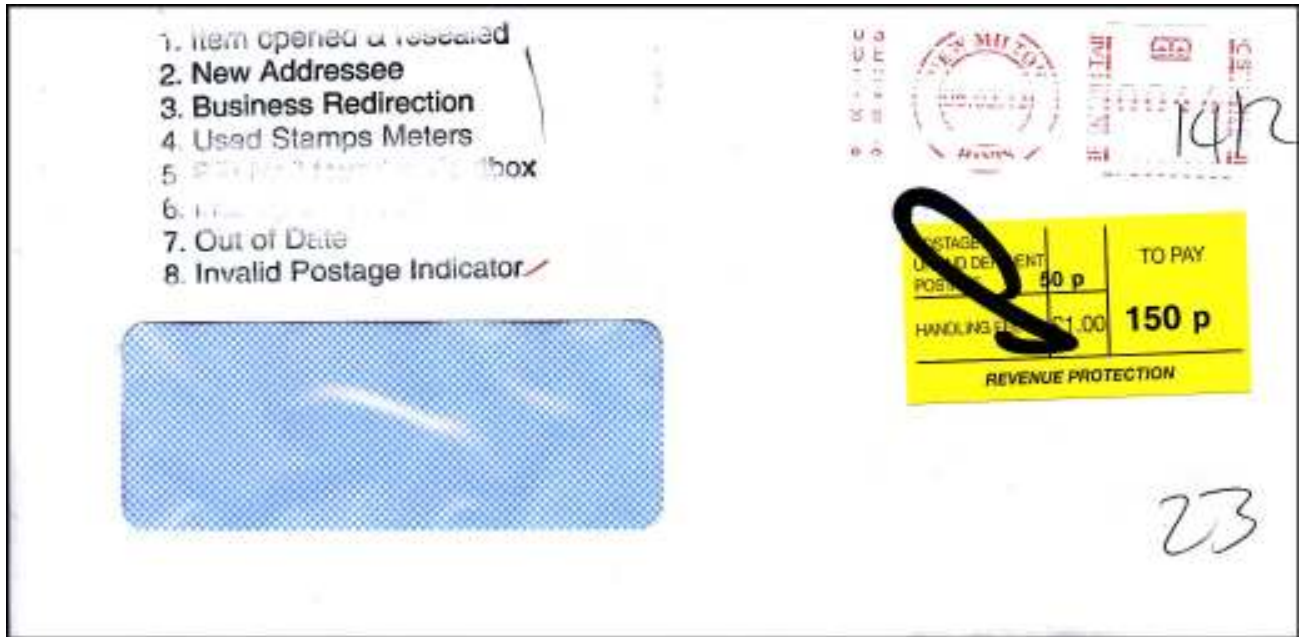
On page 138-3 it was stated that MyMail3 (FM265 prefix) machines were Smart machines. Your editor has recently found an example dated 27.02.13 that shows the use of blue ink on a MyMail3 machine that would have been in use for about 6 months and likely to have recently been converted to blue ink.



Note that this is only the second example seen of blue ink use on a MyMail3 machine – the only other example was shown on p133-3 but the use of blue at that time was unexplained.

Instructional Handstamps

Your editor reports this new instructional handstamp that was applied at Southampton Mail Centre on an item with a poorly printed frank.



The handstamp comprises a list of 8 options and is, itself, hard to make out in places, but 7 of the 8 options are listed below. Other examples would be welcome.

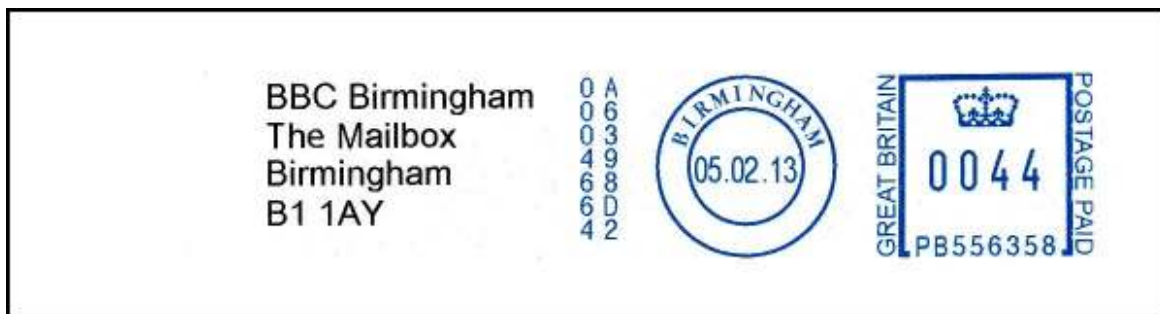
- | | | | |
|---|------------------------|---|---------------------------|
| 1 | Item opened & resealed | 5 | PPI Mail found in Postbox |
| 2 | New Addressee | 6 | ????? |
| 3 | Business Redirection | 7 | Out of Date |
| 4 | Used Stamps Meters | 8 | Invalid Postage Indicator |

Your editor also reports this large Revenue Protection handstamp from Preston Mail Centre that was applied to a zero-value frank.



Pitney Bowes Connect+ Coloured Slogans

Peter Mantell reports one new 'black' Connect+ this month from the BBC in Birmingham.



Historic Meter Items

Peter Mantell sends this very attractive French slogan from 1964, received via Enrique Gomez. The emblem on this 'Visit England by Train' slogan depicts what railway enthusiasts call 'The Cycling Lion'!



This USA avionics thematic specimen from 1936 was recently sold on Ebay.



Further to page 147-10, Jim Ashby kindly points out a couple of errors that appeared in this section last month regarding 'Model CV' meters. First of all, the 'P' series actually ran from P1 to P100 (and not P1 to P99). Secondly, Jim questions the name 'Constant Value' that I used in connection with these machines. I do not know where that came from and I cannot find any such reference, so my apologies for that.

Jim also points out that the earlier PB Models A/B/F mailing machines used a Model M (locking Meter) or Model C (non-locking Counter). The Model CV meter was a development of the earlier designs... Jim remembers reading somewhere that in its original form (in the US) it had five values, hence the Roman "V" in the name. However, as stated on page 147-10, the Model CV used in the UK was a LV6 machine. The CV part was the detachable meter, used on Model AV or FS mailing machines.

Brochures for these have been uploaded to my web site under a new heading 'Brochures'.

Index Cards for Meter Collections

The question of how to collect and store our meter-franked items has long been one that has troubled many collectors. For small collections, you can keep everything on nicely written-up albums pages. However, as our collecting interest grows, this soon becomes impractical on many different levels.

Perhaps the most important consideration is the ability to retrieve any particular item quickly. Many collectors keep records electronically in a spreadsheet or database but , on its own, is that the best approach?

Jim Ashby writes to say that he used to house his collection in folders, but due to space (and cost) he has now resorted to transferring them to boxes. As such, he keeps all his Hong Kong meters in numerical order (e.g. U1 upwards for the Universal Multi-Value).

In order to accompany this collecting method, Jim is starting to put together an electronic record of die changes, slogans, users, TM changes, etc., but he also makes use of record cards. The prime reason for this is to highlight these varieties for the examples he has within the storage boxes.

The layout of the index cards that Jim has come up with is shown below and he has kindly offered to make these cards available to other meter franking collectors.

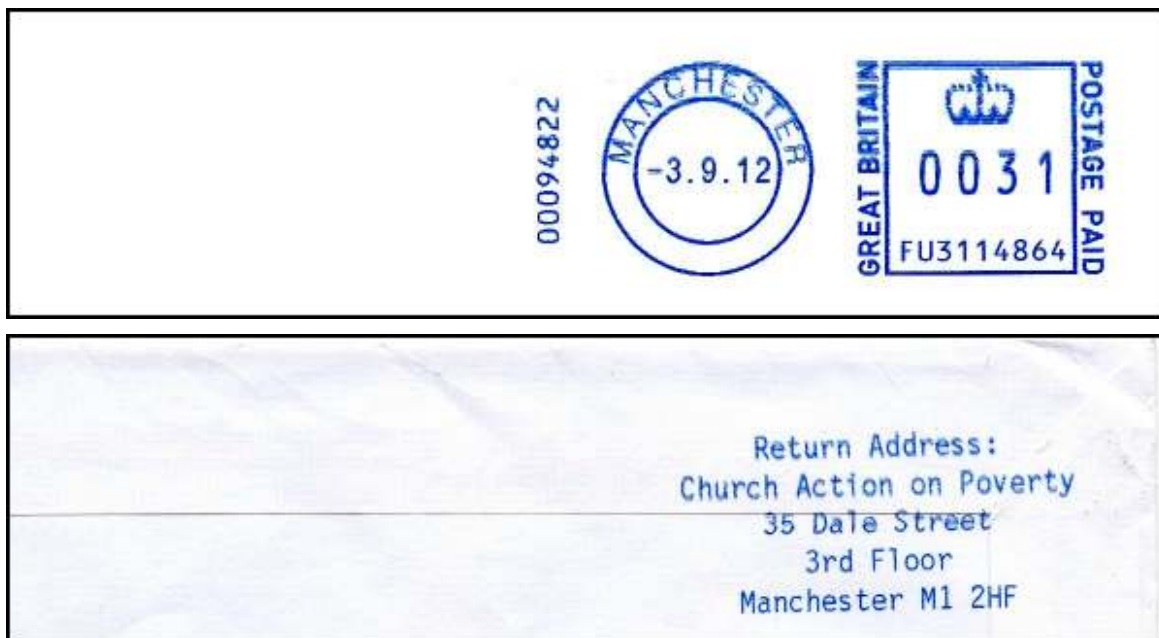
COUNTRY NAME				<u>Catalogue No.</u>	
<u>Die Number</u>	<u>Manufacturer</u>	<u>Model</u>	<u>Value Format</u>	<u>Earliest</u>	<u>Latest</u>
<u>TM Format</u>	<u>Post Office / Town Die</u>		<u>Date Format</u>	<u>Earliest</u>	<u>Latest</u>
<u>Slogan</u>				<u>Earliest</u>	<u>Latest</u>
<u>User</u>				<u>Earliest</u>	<u>Latest</u>
<u>Notes</u>				<u>Earliest</u>	<u>Latest</u>

The company that Jim is going to use (in Hong Kong) can print them in batches of 1000, at a price of approximately USD30 per set. If anyone wants multiples of 100 instead, he is willing to break up packs, although he would prefer not to do so. Orders of 2000 would attract a 5% discount, or 10% for 3000+. The cards should be thin enough to pass through most printers.

If anyone is interested please contact Jim directly at ashby@netvigator.com

A New Development in Franking Machine Technology

It is understood that the Pitney Bowes Connect+ franking machines have the capability of printing messages on the reverse side of envelopes on the same single-pass through the machine. Such examples have not yet been reported but it appears that the Francotyp Postalia Ultimail may also have this capability. The example below, supplied by Dave Baker, shows the front and reverse of an item which, from the matching ink colour, would tend to suggest that the Ultimail machine is also capable of printing in this way.



Meter Thematics

Peter Mantell sends two thematics this month. Firstly, this rather nice silhouette of a bear.



However, my Meter Thematic of the Month award goes to Peter for this superb image of a Spitfire applied to a PPI mail item. It is not known whether this was pre-printed on the envelope, or whether it was produced by a PB Connect+ machine that was printing in PPI mode. However, your editor is giving it the benefit of the doubt by assuming it is the latter!

