

METER NEWS

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Meter of the Month

This month we go back 18 years to the early days of the Pitney Bowes 'B720' series machine. Model 'B721' was assigned to production machines, whereas demonstration machines (like the one shown here) were known as Model 'B722'.

This item was kindly supplied by Ray Woodward-Clarke and shows a 'B722' specimen frank with the serial "ODEM0000" together with an 11-digit security number "15132800076". The full image with the slogan "PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL" is shown below.



The B721 model series was first introduced onto the UK market in the second half of 1995. These machines applied the franks by thermal transfer to leave the frank with a glossy print effect. Although this is the first time that a B722 specimen frank has been reported in Meter News, actually, it is the second such report - a similar item was reported in the October 1995 edition of the Postal Mechanisation Study Circle (PMSC) newsletter. The item shown at that time was dated 11.09.95 and had the security number string "18732000077".

The production model, as we know, had the 11-digit security number appearing as two vertical columns to the left of the town die (the 5-digits item count on the left and the 6-digit encryption on the right). At the time, because of the "0000" string in the middle, it was not certain whether the split in the B722 model was "6-5" or "5-6". Ray's report now enables us to confirm the latter as we can see that the character string "32" aligns in each case. Readers will recall that these characters are 'model-dependent' (see the report on MN page 7-3 for details).

Acknowledgements

My thanks this month go to Jon Aitchison, Patrick Awcock, Alan Godfrey, Gwynne Harries, Peter Huss, David Jones, Kamal Maheshwari, Peter Mantell, John Notton, Robert Rowe, Peter Shaw, Greg Spring, Rick Stambaugh, Peter Wood and Ray Woodward-Clarke, for their reports, communications or contributions.

Latest Numbers

Below is the list of 'latest numbers' as at the end of June 2014 – with updates shown in red. Please could I have the next reports by 28th July - 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>F1003746</u>	08.05.14	See MN 163
Matrix F12 etc.	<u>FR2000060</u>	24-04-14	See MN 162

Francotyp-Postalia

Optimail 25/35	<u>F04115620</u>	04.06.14	Reported by AN
Centormail 240/300	<u>FC5110688</u>	28.04.13	See MN 163
MyMail / PostagePro	<u>FM2655540</u>	03.09.13	See MN 155
PostBase Qi3/4/6/9	<u>FP6110743</u>	31.01.14	See MN 160
PostBase Qi3/4/6/9	<u>FP6112404</u>	15-05-14	See MN 163
Ultimail	<u>FU3117315</u>	23.05.14	Reported by PM

Neopost

IS-330	<u>N1052705</u>	06.08.13	See MN 154
IS-350	<u>N1181955</u>	14.02.14	See MN 160
Various upgraded	<u>N1240674</u>	18.11.13	See MN 158
IJ-80/90/110	<u>N1254487</u>	11.07.13	See MN 158
IS-440 (Ex IJ-40)	<u>N1390685</u>	22.08.13	See MN 154
IS-480	<u>N3030138</u>	12.06.14	Reported by PM
IS-240 / IS-280	<u>N3319102</u>	15.04.14	See MN 162
IS-5000/6000	<u>N5001663</u>	04.02.14	See MN 160
IS-240/280	<u>NE6000999</u>	11-06-14	Reported by PM
IS-480	<u>NE8001588</u>	29-05-14	Reported by PM, see below
IS-5000/6000	<u>NE9000088</u>	31-05-14	Reported by PM

Pitney Bowes

DM50, 55	<u>PB099074</u>	15.03.13	See MN 149
DM160i/220i	<u>PB164705</u>	04.06.14	Reported by AN
DM50, 55	<u>PB353407</u>	18.04.14	See MN 162
DM 810, 900 etc.	<u>PB527641</u>	18.03.13	See MN 151
Connect+ 1000 etc.	<u>PB551797</u>	23.04.14	See MN 162
Connect+ 10FC etc.	<u>PB557161</u>	11-06-14	Reported by AN
DM 400, 450, 475	<u>PB620146</u>	07.04.14	See MN 163
DM100i, 150i etc.	<u>PB880678</u>	18.06.14	Reported by PM

Advanced Mail Codes

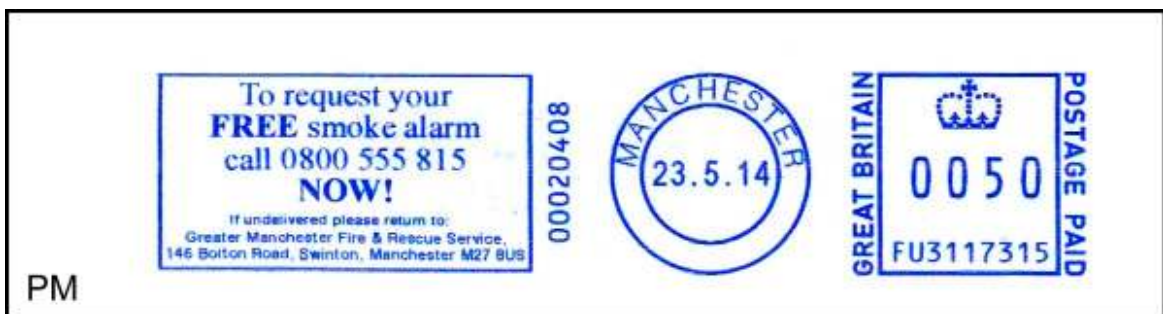
AAGB-UH	<u>PB619298</u>	25.06.14	Reported by PM
AAGJ-HH	<u>HQ25668</u>	PPI no date	See MN 160

Note that NE8001147 was reported last month by Alan Godfrey on page 163-1 but, in error, was omitted from the highest number list on page 163-2.

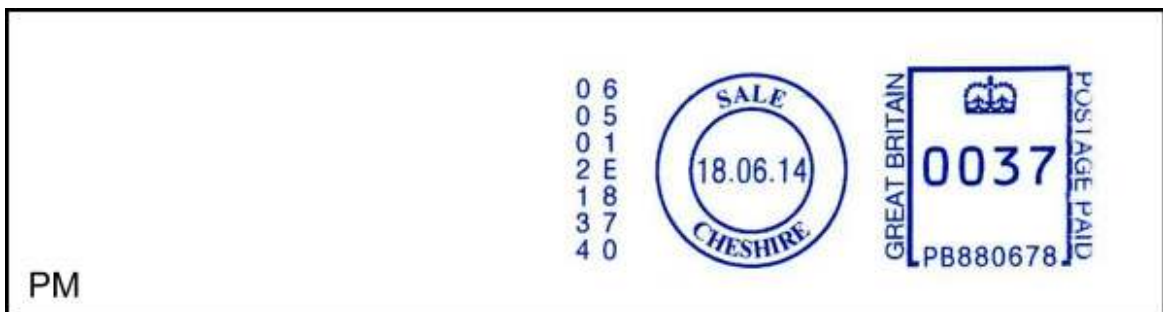
This month the N137 and N138 series have been dropped from the list as there have not been any updates to these series for over a year.

Latest Number Images

Here are images of the latest numbers reported this month – with contributor’s initials shown in the bottom left of each image, together with a repeat of the serial number for Mailmark items as the serials on these are in such a small font size.



Latest Number Images Continued



Recent Interesting Items

This month, Peter Mantell reports two Design J franks in red ink. The first is NE6000999 shown on page 3 of this newsletter and the second is NE8001129, shown below.



Peter Mantell reports this 'Last of Breed' item from a Pitney Bowes B921 (PB9 prefix) machine: There really can't be many of these old-technology machines still in use and any other reports would be welcome.



On the topic of old-technology machines and further to page 161-6, Peter also reports another T-1000 machine using blue ink:

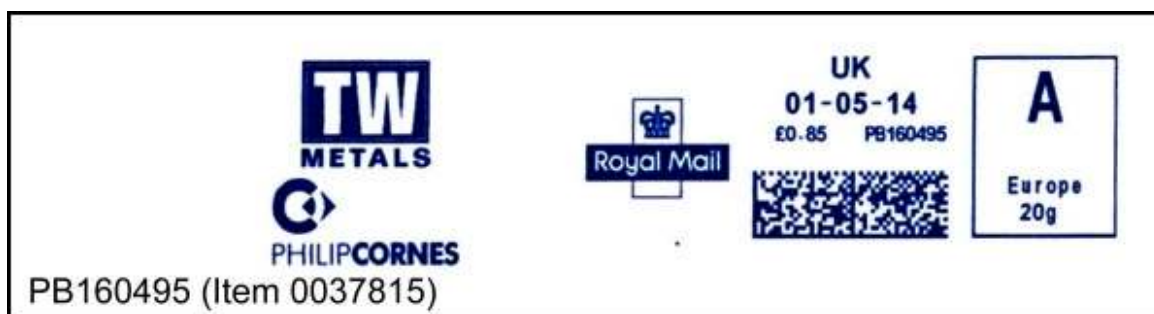


Further to page 129-1 and earlier, Peter Mantell reports a further example of a single-ring town die. It is interesting to note that all examples seen to date have 7-character town names. Is this just a co-incidence, I wonder?



Mailmark™ News

This month we can report two new Design J formats. Peter Huss reports our first example of a Design J format frank with an 'A' (Airmail) in the indicia box.



Meanwhile, Peter Mantell reports a new 'Design J' format, namely '1 L Letter 500g' as shown below:



Note that the handstamp in red in the above illustration almost certainly indicates a department number as we have seen this particular user identify departments in the past – see reports on page 151-4 and earlier.

The above examples enable the 'Mail Type' table to be extended as follows:

Mail Type Code	Type Description	First Reports
0000	Zero Test	Page 163-1
0001	1 Letter, 2 Letter	Pages 161-3 and 161-1
0100	(Special Delivery) 1 PM 100g	Page 162-3
0101	1 L Letter 100g, 2 L Letter 100g	Pages 162-4 and 161-7
0102	1 L Letter 250g, 2 L Letter 250g	Pages 161-7 and 163-5
0103	1 L Letter 500g	See above
0104	2 L Letter 750g	Page 162-3
1111	1 Small Parcel	Page 161-7
1403	1 Advanced	Page 161-7
1503	2 Advanced	Page 161-7
5000	(Special Delivery) 9 AM 100g	Page 162-4
6001	A Europe 20g	See above
9999	Surcharge Payment	Page 163-1

Coloured Slogans

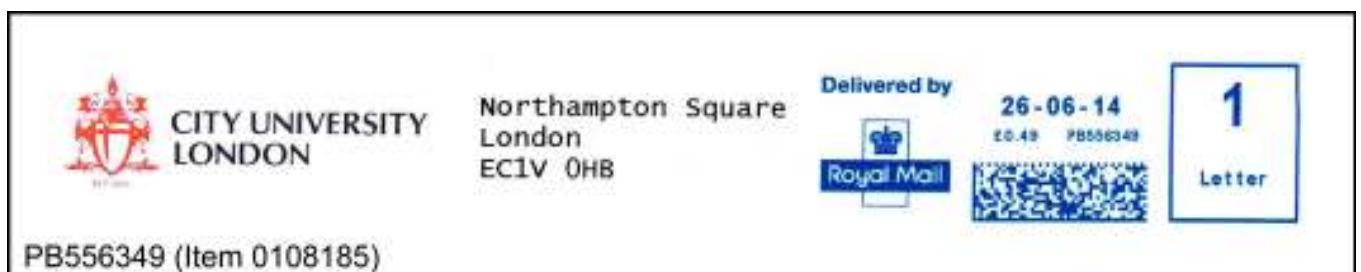
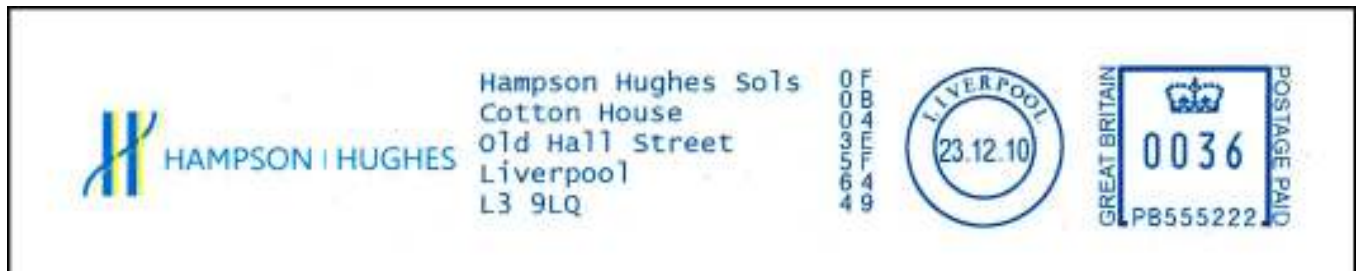
On page 158-8 we showed this slogan from the Country Style Group in Maidstone. Now Peter Wood sends another example of the same slogan but this time with the new Design J format.



Your editor reports this example of use of black ink in the return address block.



Peter Mantell provides these three examples:



Business Mail Advanced (BMA) Bar Codes

Peter Mantell reports a new development with respect to the Advanced Mail Code block. Two examples have been seen where a 36-Bar 4-state code has been included under the normal Advanced Mail Code visible characters.



The Southampton 169 item is from Winchester Castle and Peter has several examples of this – all second class with the same bar code. From the Royal Mail tagcode, your editor can confirm that they were processed on different days, the earliest being 30th May 2014,

Royal Mail provides a 'User Guide for Machine-Readable Letters' to explain this new format:

http://www.royalmail.com/sites/default/files/Machine_readable_Letters_and_Large_Letters_Mailmark_version_Nov_2013.pdf

The whole document makes interesting reading and the regulations have been effective since 1st January 2014. Section 13 states that Business Mail Advanced (BMA) requires a 'licence plate' to be printed on every envelope with machine-readable Advanced option mailings. The licence plate comprises licence text and a licence barcode. **The unique licence number is encoded in the licence barcode, together with information regarding the format and service speed of the mail piece. The Guide states that barcodes are not yet required on franked BMA items.**

The Guide recommends that the Business Mail Advanced Artwork Generator is used to generate a graphic of the PPI indicia, the licence plate text (including the licence number) and the related licence barcode. Another point of interest in the User Guide is that the character set used for the BMA licence number is ABCEGHJKLRSTUXYZ.

It is worth noting that your editor has only recorded one example over the years that has used a letter that is not from that character set – where a 'V' has been used (illustration not currently to hand).

Your editor, for the time being at least, would appreciate scans of all BMA Bar Codes seen.

Forged Meter Marks on Mail from Nigeria – by Rob May

Jon Aitchison has kindly forwarded an interesting article sent to him by Rob May that describes past meter mail forgeries in Nigeria. I am pleased to be able to reproduce it here.

In the 1980s, 1990s and early 2000s a large volume of mail was sent to commercial addresses in USA, Britain, Europe and New Zealand from people claiming to be Nigerian princes, large corporations and the like, asking for help to extract money from various traps in the banking system. The offer made to the recipient was a share of the cash once “liberated”, but the cost would be a varying amount of “seed-money” to be put in by the new partner up front. The scammer may also phish for enough material to steal the victim’s identity. This was, of course, a fraud which quickly became very well-known to the Police in both the developed world and in Nigeria. It is known as advance fee fraud and was made illegal in Nigeria in 1980 under article 419 of the Nigerian penal code. It is therefore also called “419 Fraud”. An early version was the Spanish prisoner fraud from the late 16th century and, right up to date, a favourite version now is the e-mail fraud that sends an e-mail from a hijacked real e-mail account to all their contacts saying they are stuck abroad and please send money urgently by wire transfer.

Almost all this fraud is now conducted on-line by e-mail and via social media. However those tools did not exist in earlier years and so the perpetrators used the post. A cottage industry in Nigeria was set up to address huge numbers of letters by hand, taking addresses from stolen directories (Ref. 1). This is a numbers game. The scam relies on maybe one in a few hundred people being greedy, or naïve, enough to be taken in, so the cost of legitimate postage would soon mount up. Postage stamps and postmarks were therefore forged in order to avoid the postage cost. The Nigerian Post Office was quickly alert to these forgeries. I have not yet seen any forged Nigerian stamps on 419 fraud mail envelopes which bear legitimate Nigerian postmarks, but a few probably exist.

On the other hand, many overseas postal authorities were caught unawares at first and, during the 1990s, the UK and US post offices actually delivered huge numbers of these letters, until it was pointed out to them that they could lawfully intercept and destroy such mail because it was not “validly pre-paid”. To be able to intercept such fraud mail legally they had to be able to identify the forged stamps, so inevitably some continued to get through. Most of the adhesive stamp forgeries were colour photocopies of varying quality, with very rough perforations, gauge about 11, so a practised eye could spot them.

When adhesive stamped mail was increasingly intercepted, the Nigerian scammers became more creative by forging meter marks instead, probably using rubber hand-stamps. These were much harder to identify. The Nigerian post office withdrew all postage meter machines from their commercial users in 1995 because of the widespread forgery of meter marks by that time, and they have not been re-instated since. I can illustrate a selection of these forged Nigerian meter marks (figure 1). The authors of The International Postage Meter Stamp Catalog (freely available online) are also aware of them and have illustrated some on their page 823.

419 fraud became increasingly associated with postal mail from Nigeria, until fax and e-mail offered cheaper access to potential victims (Ref. 2). In an effort to disguise the origin of later letters in around 1999 some meter marks of other countries were also forged. I can illustrate examples purporting to be from Hong Kong and from Tanzania, both of which were created

in Nigeria using rubber stamps (figure 2). The contents of these letters need to be kept with the cover in order to prove their real origin; the return telephone number on the letters in these envelopes includes international dialling code 234 which is the code for Nigeria.



Figure 1



Figure 2

References

- 1. Robinson, Jeffrey, The Merger, Chapter 12, Simon & Schuster UK Ltd, 1999
- 2. Many more references can be found at the end of the Wikipedia entry for "419 scams"

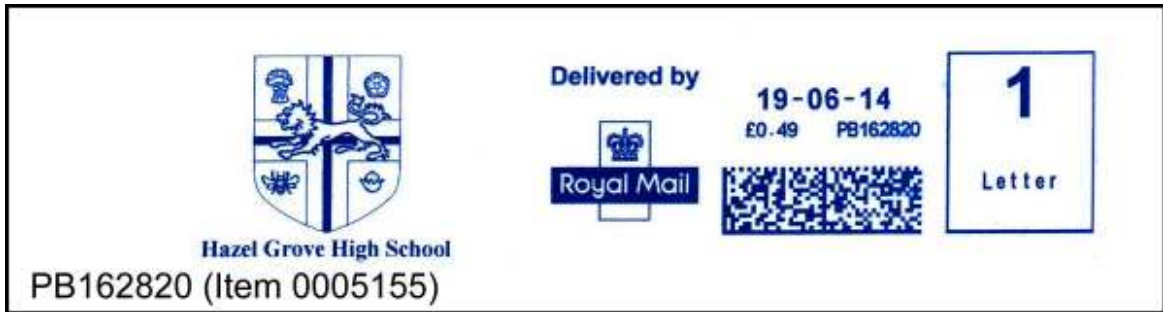
Interesting Historic Items

Further to page 163-7, here are some more specimen franks from the collection that Jon Aitchison has recently acquired.



Meter Thematics

Peter Mantell sends this attractive Coat of Arms design from the Hazel Grove High School in Stockport, depicting a lion (and a bee).



Greg Spring has supplied this coat of arms from 'The Company of Cutlers in Hallamshire' – Hallam or Hallamshire being an historical name for an area of South Yorkshire.



Your editor has found this 'tourism' thematic from the Belgian Tourist Office.



Finally, your editor has found this attractive 'religious' thematic from the Diocese of Portsmouth and it receives this month's Meter Thematic of the Month' award.

