

THE
METER STAMP

BULLETIN

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Meter Stamp Study Group

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REPORT FOR 1952

I am pleased to be able to report that, for the third year of this Group's existence, the membership has again shown an increase, the total number eleven more than during the previous year and amounting to 49. Five of the previous year's members did not renew their membership (and it is regretted that from four of these nothing whatever has been heard), but these were offset by sixteen new members.

A feature which is however perhaps rather unsatisfactory, inasmuch as this Group was originally started in order to bring together and encourage meter-stamp collectors in this country, is that no less than 11 of the 16 new members live abroad, seven of them in the U.S.A. In fact, out of the whole 49 members, barely more than half live in the United Kingdom. Of the other 24, there are 11 in the U.S.A. 3 in the Netherlands, 2 each in South Africa and Australia, and one each in the Irish Republic, Sweden, Switzerland, Argentina, Hong Kong, and Kenya.

Two further members (in England) joined at the end of the year and their subscriptions have been credited to 1953, so that they are omitted from the foregoing figures.

50.) Thanks are again due to the philatelic press of this country for notices which have brought in several enquiries. But surely there must be more than 27 people here interested in meter-stamp collecting! Any suggestions for increasing the membership will be gratefully appreciated; would any member be willing to perform the job of "publicity officer"?

The detailed accounts for the year to 31st December last are printed separately, with comparative figures for the previous year, and are sent herewith to members only. They show that the cost of duplicating the Bulletins increased by nearly £2 over the previous year, and postages increased by over £2; on the other hand, donations decreased by £5, but the increase in number of subscriptions enabled us still to end up on the right side, with a surplus of 10½d.!

In the hope that the number of subscribers will continue to grow and that costs of duplicating and postage will not increase much more, it has been decided again to maintain the subscription at 7s.6d. or U.S. \$ 1.00. It will be appreciated if members will be kind enough to remit this as early as possible. (If there are any members who do not wish to continue, I shall be grateful if they will notify me, as I do not like members to disappear in silence.)

GIFTS FOR MEMBERS

There are sent with this Bulletin to members a cover bearing Great Britain Universal multi-value (intermediate model) UA 916 with slogan, and a "tape" (see page 54.) bearing UB 626 which is unusual in having the name of the user rather than the identification no. printed along it. (Some unusual values such as 10½d. will also be found.) Thanks for these are due to Messrs F. Lloyd Parton and Walter M. Swan.

As most members will have heard, a "National Stamp Exhibition" was held in London in January. As it had been announced that it was "hoped the displays would illustrate all branches of philately," your Editor offered a general exhibit of meter stamps designed to be of interest to those unacquainted with this branch; however, the organizers declined it, and in the event there was not a single meter stamp to be found in the whole Exhibition. Other members have complained in the past of similar treatment of meter stamps at important exhibitions, and it is evident that the conventional philatelic mind has not yet appreciated that meter stamps really are postage stamps, and of serious philatelic interest. It is somewhat ironical that one of the displays at this Exhibition which reviewers specially commended contained such things as "Hat Tax" stamps whose postal interest is, to say the least, obscure!

May I suggest that, next time such an exhibition is announced, as many members as possible should offer displays of meter stamps (no matter of what kind or standard), so that the organizers will be obliged to take notice of this branch of philately, and perhaps accept at least one of them?

GREAT BRITAIN: FIRST PITNEY-BOWES TYPE

Harris's Catalogue, as well as the early check-lists of this type published in "The Stamp Lover" of Nov. and Dec. 1926, distinguishes two "Types" or "Dies" - perhaps more suitably termed "Varieties" - of this design (large square type with figures of value in each corner and wavy lines at sides), which was the first generally used in Great Britain, having come into use in September 1922. (Although replaced by the Royal Cipher type as long ago as 1927, one or two of the dies have remained in use up to the present time.)

Harris stated that the main difference between the two varieties lies in the small loops or knobs which project from the outermost arcs at the top and bottom of the frame: in Variety 1, these loops are large, and in Variety 2 they are small. He mentioned no other points of difference, but examination of a number of different stamps will show that the distinction given is not wholly sound. Although some dies have loops which are undoubtedly "large," and others which are undoubtedly "small," there are intermediate sizes, and there is no clear-cut distinction between "large" and "small."

It may accordingly seem that there is no point in endeavouring to distinguish two varieties of die. But they can in fact be separated into two definite varieties, or rather groups, by a simple test. In variety 1, the letter "G" of "POSTAGE" in the bottom semicircle is either to the right of the loop or directly above it, while in variety 2, the "G" is clearly to the left of the loop and the letters "GE" are centrally over the loop. It will then be found that apart from the figures and words of value, all dies of variety 2 are identical in all respects, having a very small loop and regularly and evenly spaced lettering, whereas the dies of variety 1 differ considerably among themselves but almost all have large loops and large and less evenly spaced lettering. Exceptions are No.13, 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ d., which has small lettering differently spaced from variety 2 and small loops only slightly larger than variety 2; and No.26, 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ d., which has small loops but large lettering.

The earliest stamps, with dates in 1922, are all of var.1, and the earliest date I have found in var.2 is 10 DEC 1924 (No.19, 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ d.). Just over three-quarters of all the different dies bearing Nos.1 to 12 are of var.1, and just over three-quarters of all the dies with higher Nos. are of var.2.

The inference seems to be that the earlier dies, of var.1, were all individually hand-cut without using a pattern or master die, whereas the later dies, of var.2, were cut mechanically from a master die. Thus there appears to be a real and significant distinction between the two varieties, even though the so-called "var.1" is in fact a whole group of slightly different varieties. (The same feature is known in the contemporary Pitney-Bowes dies of the United States - the oval design likewise with wavy lines at each side.)

For the sake of completeness, it should be added that a sub-variety of each occurs, designated 1a and 2a, in which the identification nos. (machine nos.) are small, of uniform thickness and without serifs, instead of being larger with thick and thin strokes and serifs (except of course on Nos. such as "0" and "8"). This is independent of the main classification dealt with above, in which var.1a is included with var.1, and 2a with 2. One die, No.12, improvised ld.value, has large sans-serif figures but has to be classified as var.2a.

- A. A. D.

GREAT BRITAIN: E II R TYPES

Although the design adopted is, disappointingly, exactly the same as that used for over 25 years but for the change of Royal Cipher, it was not finally approved by the G.P.O. until 22nd January. Some time necessarily being required for the dies to be manufactured and brought into use, the first day of use would be some time later, but was not known at the time of writing. The style is of course the same as that officially adopted for mail vans, letter boxes etc; the letters "E II R" and the Crown are now in solid colour instead of being in outline as formerly. There is no possibility of its being confused with the Edward VIII cipher, the letters of which are entirely different in shape.

When franking machines were first authorized in Great Britain, it was laid down that the impressions must be made directly on to the envelopes, cards or wrappers, which of course made it impossible to use the machines for parcels and packets (hence the scarcity of high values in the early types.) At a later date, the Post Office decided to allow impressions on gummed labels subsequently affixed to the packet etc., provided that the labels were pre-printed with the name and address of the licensee of the machine or his town and identification no. (It is not easy, incidentally, to understand the reason for this latter provision seeing that the town and no. are again printed by the franking machine.)

Meter stamps printed on such gummed labels have an even closer affinity with what most people regard as "real" postage stamps than have those printed direct on to the envelope etc., and form an interesting field of study in themselves.

The labels used, both by the Frankopost machines (principally the Universal multi-value and Midget - they are rarely if ever used with the Pitney-Bowes and Simplex machines) and by the Neoposts, fall into two distinct categories. Firstly there are the so-called "tapes," - pieces torn off as required from a continuous reel which is fitted to the machine by a special attachment; and secondly, labels, - cut in advance and fed into the machine in the same way as an envelope or card.

The Frankopost tapes are 37 mm. in width, of pale yellow paper printed in light greenish with an all-over wavy line pattern including either the words "METERED MAIL" in ovals parallel to the length of the strip or, more recently, "FRANKOPOST" in ovals at right-angles to the length. The long edges are cut in a zig-zag, and the short edges, being torn off against a serrated cutter, also are notched; but it is not strictly correct to term

the pieces "zig-zag rouletted." Normally the identification no. followed by the name of the town is printed along the bottom of the strip and repeated at intervals of roughly 53mm. (measured from the beginning of one repetition to the beginning of the next; the space between varies according to the length of the name.) But in a few cases, of which the piece (UB 626) enclosed with this Bulletin is one, the name of the user is given instead, probably because they employ more than one machine so that the tapes can then be used for any machine. The reel attachment is fitted to only very few Midget machines and only one or two of the "P" and "H" machines, so that "tapes" are rarely found except with Universal multi-value stamps.

Neopost tapes are of two main styles. One, termed by the Company "patterned," closely resembles the Frankopost tape but is printed in yellow on white paper with the word "NEOPOST" contained in a rectangle repeated in the wavy-line pattern. The edges of the strip are cut straight, and also it is straight where torn off. The other and far more common style is on plain white paper and is a good deal wider (about 50 mm. instead of 41 mm.) The method of showing the identification no. and town varies, being in some cases horizontally but more usually at right-angles to the length, and either way occurs in one, two or three lines and all in capitals or with lower-case letters in the town name. One, N.11.Bury, is unusual in having this printed in red instead of black. As this is wider than most (56 mm.), it is probably privately printed. As with the Frankopost, occasionally the name of the user is given instead of the no., and one, "N.76 Biology London" (used by T.Gerrard & Co., Ltd., Biological Technicians etc.) shows a curious mixture. A classification of all the various varieties would require an article in itself. The reel attachment for the use of tapes cannot be employed with the electrically - operated

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Neopost machines owing to the automatic ejector device; with these, the individual cut labels must be used.

The labels, both Frankopost and Neopost, are usually wider than the tapes, and mostly are printed at one end with the name and address of the user, though occasionally the identification No. is found instead or in addition. As these appear to be mostly produced by the user of the machine, they show even greater variation than do the tapes.

Sometimes users of machines with reel attachment, with an eye to economy, have inserted rolls of plain brown gummed tape (as made for sealing parcels), though this is contrary to P.O. regulations.

In conclusion it should be mentioned that gummed labels such as "envelope economy labels" and other kinds of address labels which are affixed to the envelopes before being passed through the franking machine, do not rank with the specially-made tapes and labels described above, and are of no special interest; it is however not always easy to distinguish them when soaked off the envelopes, though they do not of course bear the printed name and address or identification no. in the same way.

- A.A.D.

G. B. PROGRESS.

In the Universal multi-value, the UE series same in before the end of 1952 and nos. up to UE 166 have been reported. The Simplex likewise has entered the SA series; both have the G vi R cipher. Neopost nos. are approaching 999 in some districts (being nearest in London W.1.), after which it is intended to follow the same scheme as Universal and Simplex, starting with prefix NA.

NEW ZEALAND: FIRST STAMP (1904)

The first franking machine used in New Zealand was the invention of one Ernest Moss, and was a coin-operated ("penny in the slot") machine set up experimentally outside the chief post offices

first at Christchurch and then at Wellington (57 in the early part of 1904. Although there had been a trial of a machine of the same nature in Norway four years before, New Zealand was the first country to adopt the machines commercially.

The "Moss" machine printed a frank consisting of a double circle inscribed "N.Z. POSTAL STAMP No. 1." between the circles, with "LD. PAID" in the centre, the impression being in black. At first a rubber die was used, the outer and inner circles measuring $19\frac{1}{2}$ and $11\frac{1}{2}$ mm. in diameter, but a steel die was later substituted, producing circles 21 and 13 mm. in diameter. The earliest and latest dates known, according to Harris's Catalogue, are March 31 and July 14. Like most N.Z. meter stamps until now, these appear to have been postmarked when used.

Copies of these franks must be exceedingly scarce (in 1938, Harris wrote that, apart from a single reference in a contemporary Australian magazine, he had never even heard of them.) We have however recently been shown an unused envelope bearing an impression from the rubber die - presumably a "proof" or "specimen"; the envelope bears no address or date, but on the back is printed the inscription (in old-fashioned style) "International .. Henry Hughes - Patent and Trade-Marks Office, Queen's Chambers, Opposite Post Office, Wellington, N.Z." It seems possible that this firm had some connexion with the manufacture of the machine; can anyone give any further information ?

- A. A. D.

SOUTH AFRICAN NOTES.

(Reported by Mr. R. Axer)

The approximate numbers of machines of the various makes used up to the end of 1952 are as follows: Neopost, 1,000; Universal MV, 700; Midget, 400; Simplex, 200; Mercury, 75; Franco-typ, 40; Hasler, 27 - a total of over 2,400.

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In the locally-made Mercury machines, all the 1d. dies are numbered from 1 up and the 2d. dies from 440 up. Although, as previously mentioned, these are usually not postmarked in spite of the absence of a townmark, an occasional machine - cancelled item is found.

The first Simplex in South-West Africa, S.L., is used at Windhoek, and the first in Southern Rhodesia, also S.L., at Gatoona. Both are of the South African design with altered name of the country.

A Universal multi-value machine has been introduced in Nyasaland, the first there.

NETHERLANDS METERS : A SUMMARY

The meter stamps of the Netherlands form a particularly interesting group, because of the number of different makes of machine that have been used and because each (with one exception) has an entirely different and unusual design of frank; the exception is the Simplex which employs practically the same design as the Universal multi-value of the same manufacturers. Two makes, Francotyp and Hasler, each have had two different designs in succession. Even the townmarks are distinctive, only the Universal multi-value and Simplex using the circular form almost invariable in other countries (and some of the Simplex have only a half-circle.)

Each make is numbered in a separate series, and the following summary (in order of introduction) shows the date of first use and the serial (identification) nos.

Universal NZ model (British) - Sept. 1925.
(now all out of use.) Nos. 1 to 24.

Francotyp (German):
First design (large transverse rectangular) -
Sept. 1927. Nos. 101 to 134.

Second design (narrower, with top tablet wider than bottom) - Jan. 1929

Nos. 102 to 1723, F 1724 up;

also Nos. 5001 to 5056, FR 5057 up;

(The letter prefix was introduced in 1951.)

Hasler (Swiss):

First design (very large "NEDERLAND" at top and "CENT" at bottom) - Dec. 1929

Nos. H 501 to H 622.

Second design (winged helmet and posthorn at top) - Sept. 1937

Nos. H 623 up;

also No. HR 01 up.

Komusina (German) - Oct. 1930

(Now all out of use) Nos. K 101 to K 193.

Neopost (British) - Aug. 1931 Nos. N 250 up.

Safag (Swiss) - Nov. 1948. Nos. SA 500 up.

Universal multi-value (British) -

Feb. 1950

Nos. U 101 up.

Simplex (British) - May 1951 Nos. US 501 up.

Postalia (German) - May 1951 Nos. P 101 up;

also Nos. PR 151 up.

Satas (French) - .. 1951 Nos. S 101 up.

The "FR" "HR" and "PR" series, also the Francotyp nos. 5001 up without prefix, indicate machines working on the "current account" payment system under which the meter is set by the post office for a given amount of franking, whereas the "F", "H" and "P" series, and the Francotyp nos. 101 to 1723 without prefix are machines working on the "value card" system under which a card representing a certain total value (f. 100 or F.1,000) of franking is purchased from a post office and inserted into the machine whereupon it is enabled to frank up to that value.

The Universal NZ model are "fixed-value" machines, the Neopost and Simplex are "limited-value", and all the others "multi-value."

60) Acknowledgement is made to Mr. W. J. Pieterse, Jr. (Bilthoven) and to detailed lists compiled by Mr. E. J. Enschede for the information on which the above is based.

UNITED NATIONS METER STAMPS.

The last four issues of this Bulletin have included lists of United States meters (Pitney-Bowes "Model R") used by the United Nations, mostly before the introduction of the special U.N. type. Dr Detlof Schmidt (Hamburg) reports yet another no., 181017 (New York, N.Y.) with date 10.11.50 but no slogan, and also the first no., 108314 used without slogan or date.

Dr. Schmidt also points out two variations of the slogan "UNITED NATIONS OFFICIAL MAIL" between bars at the left of the U.N. Globe emblem, one being much closer to the town circle than the other. But as the same meters are found with either variety, the difference may not be of any real significance.

The original list included one meter (no. 116710) used at Washington, D.C., by the F.A.O. Since the removal of its headquarters to Rome in April 1951, the F.A.O. has until recently made use of ordinary Italian adhesive stamps. But a franking machine was adopted towards the end of last year. The frank is of the ordinary current Italian design, with floral ornaments in the side panels, but the figures of value (°012.= in the first copy seen, dated 19.12.52) and the townmark (a double circle with the name "ROMA" breaking the inner circle) are of a different style from any Italians hitherto seen, and presumably a new make; the date and value figures are larger than most. Between townmark and frank appears the full name and address in English thus; "F.A.O. / FOOD AND / AGRICULTURE / ORGANIZATION / OF THE / UNITED NATIONS / VIALE DELLE TERME DI CARACALLA / ROME."

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