

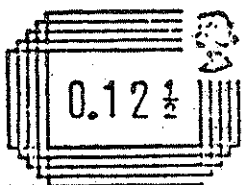
HON. SECRETARY
and TREASURER:

John C. Mann,
19 Chartham Road,
LONDON, SE25 4HN

FRAMA, FRAMA wherefore art thou, FRAMA?
=====

It was as long ago as 1976 that the first coin-operated Frama machines came into use in Switzerland, at first with just a few machines numbered A1 to A4 and then later growing into several hundred.

Other countries have followed, some we have already recorded and others will be included under the appropriate countries notes in due course, but they include Norway, Belgium, Brazil, Portugal, Finland, Iceland, Austria and Luxembourg. No doubt more are on the way.



For nearly as long as all this has taken we have been expecting them to appear in Great Britain, indeed, on more than one occasion definite dates have been announced for the installation of a few trial machines. "Stamp Collecting", who have been consistently reporting them, even showed a design to be used here.

These rumours have never amounted to much and the most definite statement we have seen was a Post Office Press Release of August 1983 which said that they could not confirm a date but expected it to be towards the end of the year. Since then we have heard 1984!

As to the reasons for this long delay in introducing what must in fact be a well tried and tested machine we have no knowledge. Our American colleagues in the Meter Stamp Society Bulletin suggested "problems with the labor union", as an alternative we have heard it said that recent changes in our coinage (new 20p and £1 coins) made alterations necessary.

Even more extraordinary to us was the suggestion that the delay was caused by problems in preparing presentation packs before the issue date.

This last brings us to consider how in fact the labels are being looked at by the Post Office and the philatelic world in general.

The Post Office are so far calling them Royal Mail Postage Labels (the first adhesive stamps were called labels but the public never adopted this name), and it seems from an illustration we have seen that the machine will have two coin slots, one for $\frac{1}{2}$ p, 1p and 2p coins (the bronze ones which are in fact weight related) and the other for the 5p and 10p (which are weight related to each other) and the 50p (which is not). As coins are inserted the total paid for is displayed. There are three buttons, one for the fixed minimum Second Class Rate (currently 12 $\frac{1}{2}$ p) and one for the fixed minimum First Class Rate (currently 16p). The third is for any other amount that is displayed in the window. Using the First or Second Class buttons reduces the amount available so this becomes in fact the "change" if the correct coinage has not been put in. Presumably if, say, a 50p was inserted and the First Class button pressed a 16p label would emerge and the total be reduced to 34p. A second and third depression of this First Class button would result in two more 16p labels and 2p left for "change". Alternatively additional coins could be put in to bring the amount up to some larger amount.

If our assumptions are correct then it seems that a label for any amount up to the maximum (?99p) can be obtained with the right coins but we do feel that a number of people will end up with odd-amount labels which they will have to save and use later. They might even, if they are in a hurry, leave the odd amount in the machine for someone else!

No amendment to the Post Office Guide has been seen covering these labels yet so again it is an assumption on our part that they will be available for use anywhere and at any time, as normal adhesives. They will obviously have to be cancelled and unless there is some additive to the paper will not activate the automatic facing/cancelling machines. It does not seem possible for the label to show any form of phosphor line for segregating purposes.

As far as locations are concerned, six have been named. They are Cambridge, Colchester and Edinburgh Head Offices, London Chief Office, Shirley Branch Office at Southampton and finally the Windsor Branch Office. Meter collectors of Great Britain will find familiar names here. London Chief Office is where the old Wilkinson machine was tried out so many years ago and in more recent times Cambridge was one of the offices used for experiments leading to the few Simplex Parcel Machines.

One wonders sometimes how offices are selected for such experiments. The willingness of the staff concerned must count as would the expected use. Some of the names suggest tourist centres but others do not (to us).

As meter collectors we are of course all in favour of such devices but having talked to a number of non-philatelic friends we wonder how they will be viewed by the general public.

When we look at the attitude that is reportedly being taken by the Post Office to Philatelists the story becomes even more strange. The Philatelic Bureau are said to be planning two types of presentation pack, one with just the 12 $\frac{1}{2}$ p and 16p labels and one with all values from $\frac{1}{2}$ p to 16p (32 labels in all). Such a pack would give a wonderful opportunity to produce a potted history of coin-freed machines either in this country or in general, but we have no knowledge of what is planned.

As for the philatelic world in general, well!!

Many writers in the magazines we have seen have faithfully recorded all the news of the introduction of Frama machines in a number of countries. We would perhaps be forgiven if we said that there have been machines before. The more recent German machines have been noted but there has been a distinct lack of reference to, for instance, any of the early machines designed for use by the public in the USA, New Zealand, Australia and France.

Quite serious discussion has actually taken place within an organisation of stamp catalogue editors (we did not even know it existed) as to their approach to them, but the various editors all seem to have different ideas. Some of them advocate listing all possible values, some postal rates only, others will ignore them or relegate them to a mention in a footnote.

Great excitement seems to have been generated by ribbon colour variations in Germany and at the exhibition Belgica 82 it was reported that "there were long queues all day" at the machine installed there with a special commemorative die. It took over 100,000 Belgian Francs in the first two days and it has been estimated that "only 100,000" labels exist. Compare that with our own Festival of Britain machine (admittedly not quite the same) where only just over 100 were issued.

We await the GB debut with great interest.

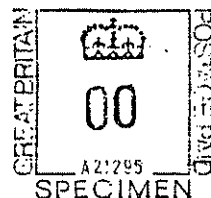
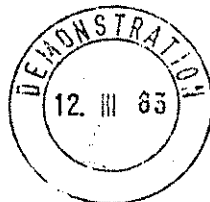
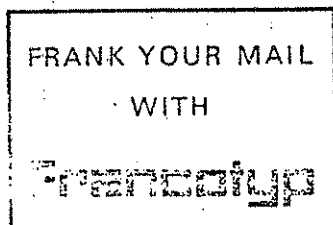
A GREAT BRITAIN UPDATE
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In our last Bulletin we reported on the meters on show at the Birmingham IBS. Since then there have been a number of such shows which we have attended (not just to look at the meters) and these included the Mailing Efficiency Exhibition held separately now. What follows is a brief summary of what has been happening apart from the Frama label-issuing machines noted above.

In alphabetical order.



Envopak Group Sales Ltd is a new name for us for meters and they have had on show the Francotyp A9100 machine which had some years ago been marketed here by Acral Ltd. There appear to have been no great changes, but the outer cover has certainly been re-designed and is now blue instead of ?brown.

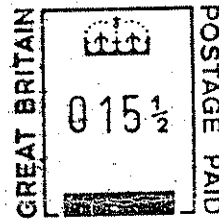
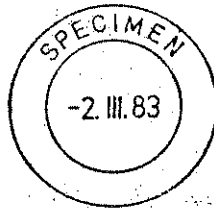
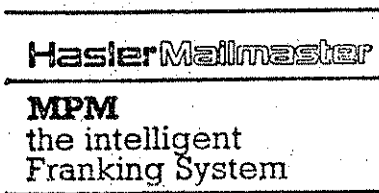


The specimens that we have seen so far are all numbered with a simple "A" prefix, as A21295 and we assume that these are in fact the machine numbers. Members will recall that when these machines were first tried out on the GB market some years ago they used a prefix of AC.A followed by a sequential number. Townmarks seem to all have DEMONSTRATION at the top and SPECIMEN under the frank, the latter a new departure. We understand that approval was in fact from 1st April 1983.

Also being shown, but we have not seen a specimen from one, was the smaller MS 5 machine. We do not know whether this particular model has been approved.

Hasler

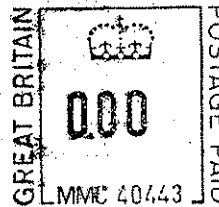
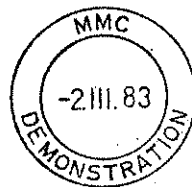
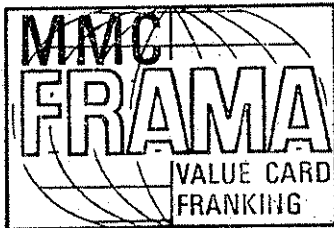
Hasler (Great Britain) Ltd have been showing their full range of machines and most of them are fitted to a variety of bases. Manufacturers have a habit of referring to a set-up consisting of the basic meter and the base with all kinds of names and numbers, Hasler do this as well.



Some of the impressions we have seen have had an HF prefix and a machine number as is normal with these, but at least one had an unengraved block. In the case of this manufacturer the townmarks use either DEMONSTRATION or SPECIMEN.



Mailing and Mechanisation Ltd have been showing the Frama Model 100. We have previously seen this and reported on it after a visit to Birmingham and at that time understood that approval was imminent. In fact approval was not given until late in 1982. We were told some time ago that over 200 had been sold.



They were using an MMC prefix followed by the machine number and demonstration machines had MMC at the top and DEMONSTRATION at the bottom.

SCRIPTOMATIC

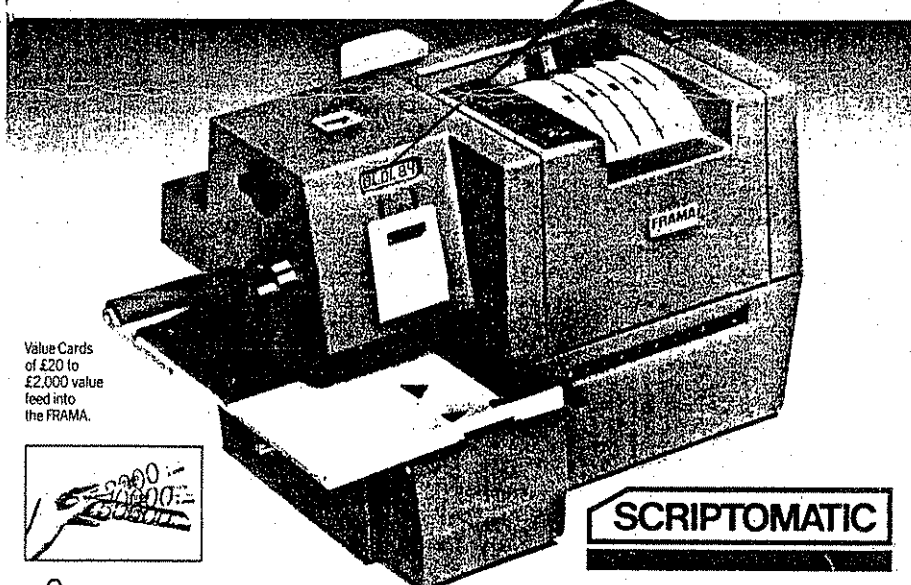
However, this particular agent seems now to have been replaced by a Company within the General Electric Co group called Scriptomatic.

They are advertising a slightly more advanced machine - we cannot see a model number from the illustrations seen so far - which has the facility of changing the date automatically. As they say "the last problem in franking machines is now solved". Does it remember leap years?

Value cards are used - the literature from MMC for the Model 100 did not have any mention of them - and are available up to no less than £2,000

The franking machine that automatically makes all others out of date.

01. 01. 84



Value Cards of £20 to £2,000 value feed into the FRAMA.



SCRIPTOMATIC

A **S&C** company

Changing the date each day - the last problem in franking machines - has now been solved.

The new Swiss made FRAMA automatically adjusts the letters and figures even when the machine is switched off. No more loss through incorrect dating. Automatic date change is just the latest in the long list of FRAMA advantages.

Value Card loading means no more rental and no more journeys with the meter to the Post Office. Cards of the appropriate value can be bought over the counter.

The FRAMA is clean; a disposable ink cartridge delivers 20,000 clear, smudge-free impressions.

The FRAMA automatically feeds envelopes through for precise placing and value adjustment is foolproof - so you don't lose postage.

There is also a large, easy-change slogan plate, registers for amount of postage left and used, and a fast label dispenser.

The modular system allows automatic units to be added for parcel labels, envelope sealing, auto-letter feed, etc.

Scriptomatic, established specialists in post room equipment, bring you the FRAMA with a 24 hour guarantee of service.

Keep up to date on the latest development in franking by filling in the coupon or phoning us.

To: Scriptomatic Limited, Scriptomatic House, Torrington Park, London N12 9SU

URGENT! Please post me further details of the new FRAMA automatic date change franking machine

Please ask a representative to telephone for an appointment

Name _____

Company _____

Position _____

Address _____

Tel: 01-445 0163

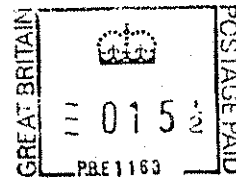
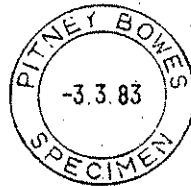
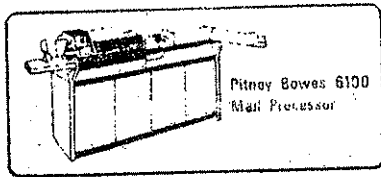
Telex: 299480



Pitney Bowes

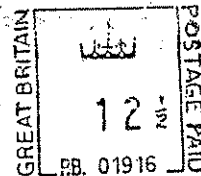
Pitney Bowes plc have again had their full range of machines, with many varieties of mailing machine bases incorporating other functions.

The models included the "electronic" Model 6500, using a PBE prefix and with, incidentally, what looks like a space after the number for a suffix letter. This last will depend, of course, whether they continue to number machines in the old way rather than switch to machine numbers.



We have now seen the Remote Meter Re-Setting system demonstrated several times and this always seems to generate a good deal of interest. We are not sure but it may be these RMRS machines that are using a plain PB prefix followed by a 5-digit number.

MRC Virology Unit
Institute of Virology
University of Glasgow



Also new at Pitney Bowes is an extended version of the Model 6300, which now has a range up to 9.99½ instead of 99½. We think these extended range models are the ones on which we have seen the three wavy lines preceding the pence figures, such as w16 (the "w" representing the group of 3 lines). They seem otherwise to still be continuing with the PBL000x numbers.



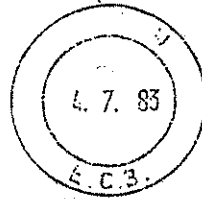
Roneo Alcatel Ltd have been the ones with a completely new machine, the Neopost AFM7, described as being completely electronic.

We are not mechanical/electronic experts but the obvious difference to us was that all the odd things that are displayed are on a panel like those on pocket calculators. These include such things as the value that is to be franked, total credit remaining and, at the beginning of the day it also indicates things like "CHANGE DATE". There is provision for a batch total and both low credit and the use of the Pound figure (high values) are shown with flashing figures as a warning. The date change itself for Day and Month is external and the only time access is required is to change the year itself.

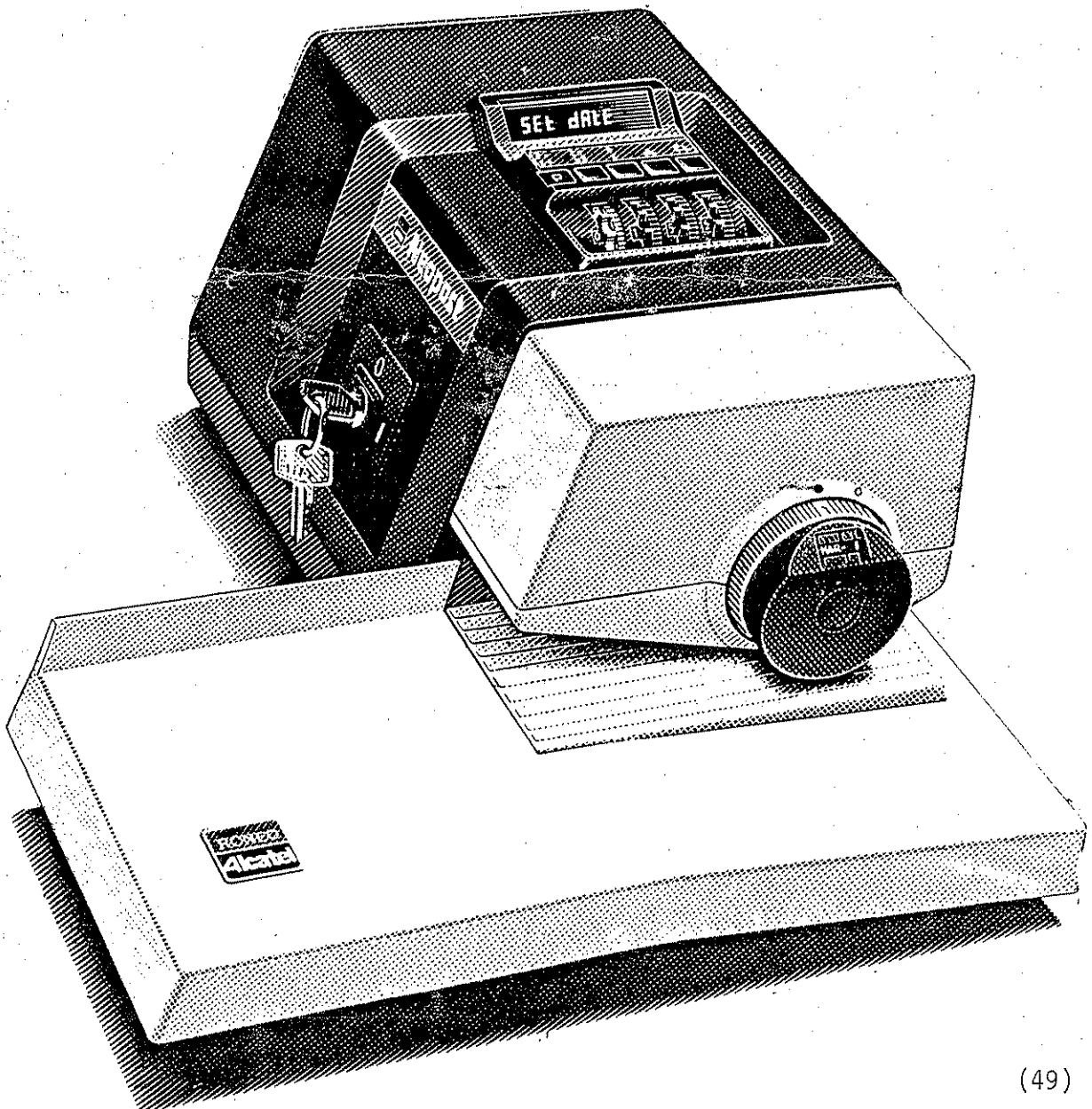
Impressions as the various shows had NEOPOST/SPECIMEN in the townmark and were all numbered with a 6NE prefix as 6 NE 00001. Actual used examples also show this

prefix and a small group of three wavy lines replaces the first digit if this is not required.

THE
BRITISH AVIATION
INSURANCE COMPANY LIMITED
110/112 Fenchurch Street
London EC3M 5AB



GREATBRITAIN
POSTAGE PAID
6 NE 10649
12½



Apart from this new Model EFM7, Roneo-Alcatel have also been showing the Model 405 and the Model 505 in various configurations, but no others. We are told that the Model 2205 is being phased out although many remain in service and will be maintained. The older Model 605 (Postalia) no longer appears in the range offered.

To sum up, an interesting situation, with new machines coming on and some of the older ones fading out. One comment we must make is to thank once again the unfailing courtesy and consideration shown by the representatives on the various stands we have visited. In every case they have with great patience tried to answer what must often seem daft questions. If they are anything to go by then working in meters must be a happy job.

We started this issue with a look at the future, Frama, followed with a look at the present and now move on to a look at what is (for meters) the dim and distant past.

NEW ZEALAND - More "Wales" covers found.

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The Barfoot-Simon Catalogue (1953) lists as Type 2 a machine used on a trial basis at Dunedin and producing an upright oval impression, 1d value, and records it as "make unknown".

Albert H. Harris, a pioneer meter collector and publisher, illustrated in "The Stamp Collectors Annual for 1939" (page 71) a first day cover from this machine, recording that it was the only one he had heard of. At the same time he mentioned that he had a note that it was a "Wales" machine but could not at that time remember where he had the name from. In addition to the frank it had a Dunedin "squared circle" paid hand-stamp.

The paid hand-stamp was applied to all inland covers for some years as these impressions from machines had not been legally validated and overseas covers had adhesive stamps affixed (by the Post Office) at first although later the paid hand-stamps were used on both inland and overseas mail.

"The Postage Stamps of New Zealand" (1955) has a chapter (XXXIII of Vol III) devoted to meter stamps with many illustrations and much of this was summarised by Alfred Dewey in our Bulletins between numbers 54 and 59. In the second of the installments in MSB 56, apart from recording the existence of one extra copy that had not passed through the post, it was related how a machine that had been invented by a Mr W. Hollingworth (or Hollinsworth according to the NZ book) had been tried outside the GPO in Brisbane, Australia, between April and June 1903.

One of these machines, designated the "Hollingsworth Automatic Postage Stamping Machine", had been imported into New Zealand in April 1903 by a Mr A. J. Park of Dunedin and demonstrated by him to the Chief Postmaster of that city. He apparently found it unsatisfactory and it was taken away by Mr Robert Wales, an engineer acting for Mr Park, who had formed the New Zealand Franking Machine Company Limited to promote the machine.

During the fifteen months that followed Mr Wales developed a new machine (how much was based on the Australian machine is not known) and this was submitted to the GPO in June 1904, just after the second trial of the first Moss machine in Wellington. It was installed outside the GPO in Dunedin and between 7th July 1904 and 7th February 1905 no less than 47,024 impressions were taken.

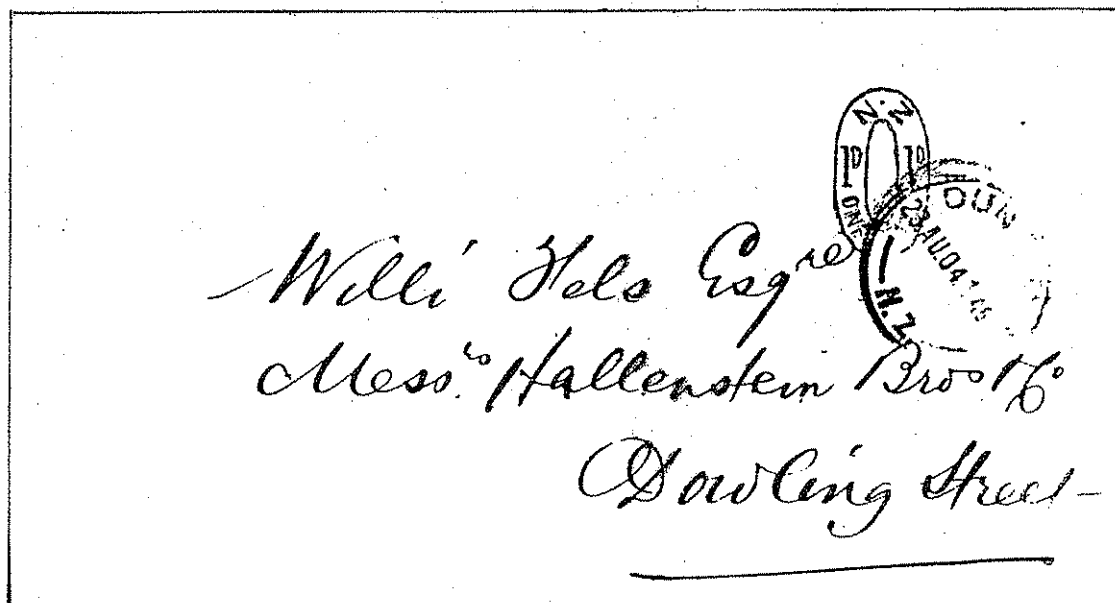
It was eventually removed as the Dunedin Postmaster was not keen on it and its eventual fate is unknown.

A supplementary volume to "The Postage Stamps of New Zealand" was later published, which contained addenda to the original work and this, as we noted in MSB 70, recorded a hitherto unknown design from the same machine.

Again, it is an upright oval but this time omitting the 1d at each side and having NEW ZEALAND in full at the top instead of N.Z., ONE PENNY at the bottom as before and, in addition, PAID reading upwards in the centre of the inner oval.

Three copies of this new die had been seen (we have not seen illustrations of any of them) and all date from the period between October 1904 and February 1905, so it appears reasonable to assume that this was a new die fitted as a replacement for the original. If the rate of use was fairly constant then the original die had in any case by then produced many thousands of impressions.

Now, to the discoveries reported by our member in Switzerland, Henry Durst. First, another cover with the original die, which we show here.

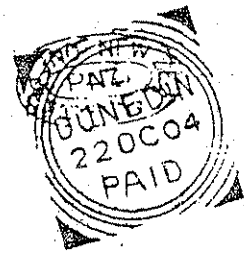
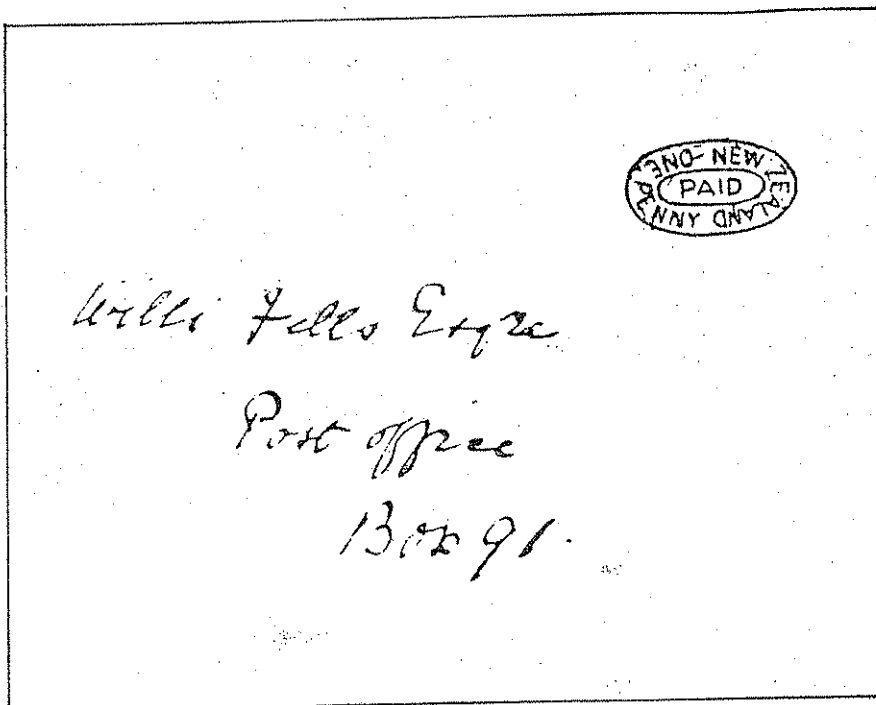


It is not the one illustrated by Harris in 1939 as that had a squared circle handstamp on the first day whereas this "new" one has a circular handstamp dated 23.AU.04 and a time of 1.45. In fact it does not have the word "paid" in the handstamp although Dunedin was certainly using a similar circular handstamp which included Paid on a Moss Model B in February 1910.

So now there are two (where is the Harris copy now?)

The other one he shows us is from the later die and the meter frank is very heavily over stamped with a "squared circle" handstamp of 22 OC 04.

Henry has managed to reproduce these separately and we show them both below.



As we have not seen the three mentioned in the addenda to the NZ book we cannot be certain that this is a fourth one, but it seems likely that it is. That only leaves some 47,017 impressions to account for!!

Truly, after all these years, remarkable discoveries.

What this does prove to us is that there are still very early metered covers lurking "undiscovered" in odd places. To us it always seems worth while to look through odd bundles in the hope that something like this will come our way. It makes life interesting if nothing else.

A NOTE FOR METER STAMP STUDY GROUP MEMBERS

Again, unfortunately, this is the first Bulletin that we have been able to produce for some time.

It has been produced and printed at no cost to the Group, as a training exercise by Students at a Training Centre, and the cost of postage has been covered by a donation.

We hope to get back to normal now.

Inevitably, having just written a fairly hostile article on the Frama labels, the Post Office have announced that FOUR machines will be put into trial use on the 1st May. This of course will be reported fully in the next issue.

It is our intention to use Frama labels for future issues as they are sent out, provided they are available.

~~"Orchard Cottage"~~

~~FC Ash Road,~~

~~Stamington,~~

Middlesex. TW17 0BN.