

METER NEWS

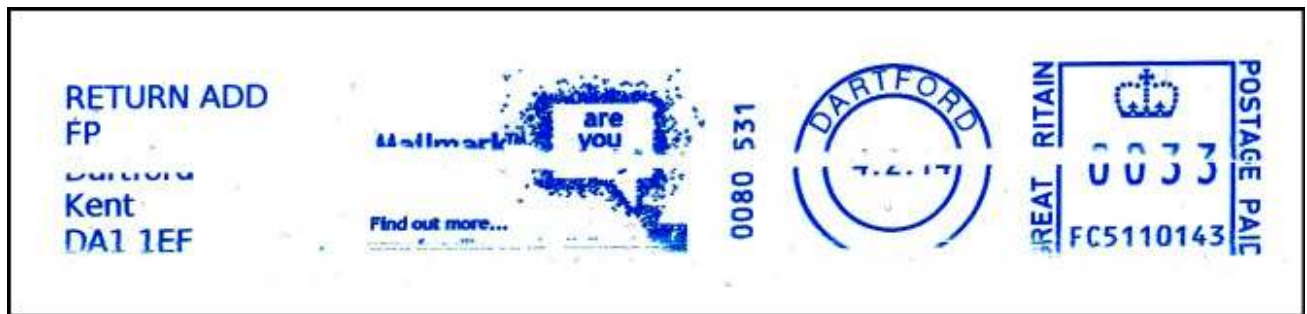
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Meter of the Month

Further to the news on page 159-7, your editor reports this slogan from Francotyp-Postalia advertising Mailmark™. The frank is, unfortunately, poorly printed but the slogan presumably reads “are you ready?”. The full image is shown below:



New Francotyp-Postalia PostBase Variant

Francotyp-Postalia have recently announced a new variant of the PostBase – the Qi9. Details are not known at this stage but the “9” presumably indicates that it is capable of processing 90 items per minute. No changes in the “FP6” prefix are expected, so it is unlikely that we shall be able to distinguish these franks from the other PostBase variants.

Editorial

To the Meter Franking collector, the forthcoming introduction of Mailmark™ brings some excitement and anticipation but at the same time it sadly brings to the end some aspects of our hobby. Firstly, we shall no longer have any townmark visible. This has been the case in other countries such as Germany for the last 14 years or so but it is a useful piece of information nonetheless. Secondly, the Advanced Mail block in the frank will eventually disappear. Your editor, amongst others no doubt, will be sorry to see that disappear. More news on Mailmark is contained throughout this issue of the newsletter.

Acknowledgements

My thanks this month go to Jim Ashby, Jon Aitchison, Dave Baker, Keith Downing, Gwynne Harries, Alan Godfrey, Peter Mantell, Peter Huss, Richard Peck, Jos Wessels and Peter Wood for their reports, communications or contributions.

Latest Numbers

Below is the list of 'latest numbers' as at the end of February 2014 – with updates shown in red. Please could I have the next reports by 26th 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>F1003594</u>	12.02.14	Reported by AN
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Francotyp-Postalia

Optimail 25/35	<u>F04115317</u>	27.02.14	Reported by AN
Centormail 240/300	<u>FC5110668</u>	05.06.13	See MN 152
MyMail / PostagePro	<u>FM2655540</u>	03.09.13	See MN 155
PostBase	<u>FP6110743</u>	31.01.14	Reported by PM
Ultimail	<u>FU3117271</u>	08.07.13	See MN 153

Neopost

IS-330	<u>N1052705</u>	06.08.13	See MN 154
IS-350	<u>N1181955</u>	14.02.14	Reported by PM
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-460 (Ex IJ-50)	<u>N1373678</u>	23.04.13	See MN 150
IS-420 (Ex IJ-30)	<u>N1385456</u>	06.02.13	See MN 148
IS-440 (Ex IJ-40)	<u>N1390685</u>	22.08.13	See MN 154
IS-480	<u>N3029521</u>	14.02.14	Reported by PM
IS-240 / IS-280	<u>N3318581</u>	24.02.14	Reported by PM
IS-5000/6000	<u>N5001663</u>	04.02.14	Reported by PM

Pitney Bowes

DM50, 55	<u>PB099074</u>	15.03.13	See MN 149
DM160i/220i	<u>PB163623</u>	26.02.14	Reported by AN
DM50, 55	<u>PB350524</u>	28.02.14	Reported by AN
DM 810, 900 etc.	<u>PB527641</u>	18.03.13	See MN 151
Connect+ 1000 etc.	<u>PB551781</u>	26.11.13	See MN 157
Connect+ 10FC etc.	<u>PB556903</u>	19.02.14	Reported by AN
DM 400, 450, 475	<u>PB619737</u>	27.02.14	Reported by AN
DM100i, 150i etc.	<u>PB879833</u>	21.02.14	Reported by PM

Advanced Mail Codes

AAGA-UL	N3027730	10.09.13	See MN 155
AAGJ-HH	HQ25668	PPI no date	Reported by AN

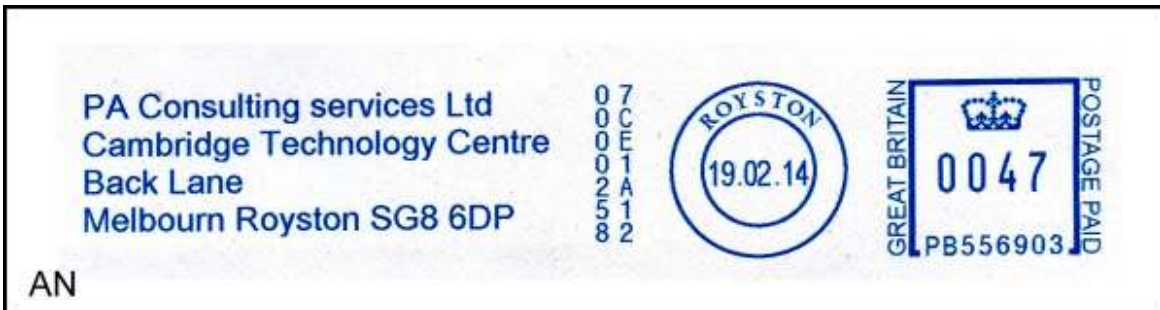
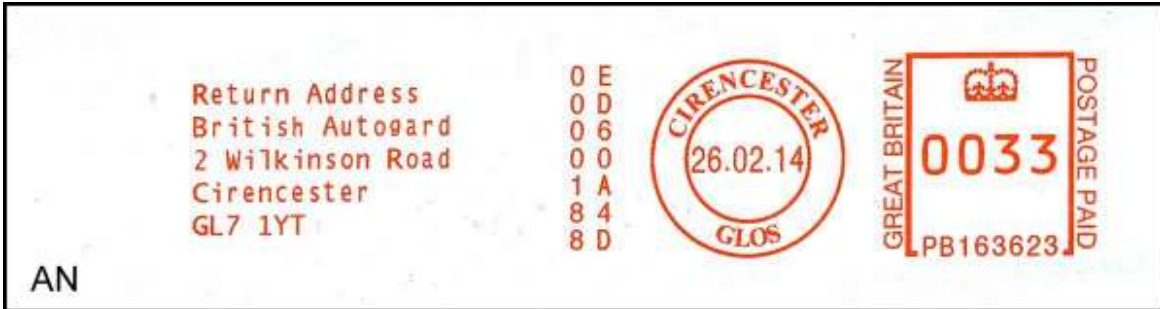
My thanks also go to Alan Godfrey for his reports of N5001639 (24.02.14) and PB163579 (14.02.14), which almost made the formal list.

Latest Number Images

Here are images of the latest numbers reported this month – with contributor's initials shown in the bottom left of the image. Note that N5001663 is Neopost's own machine.

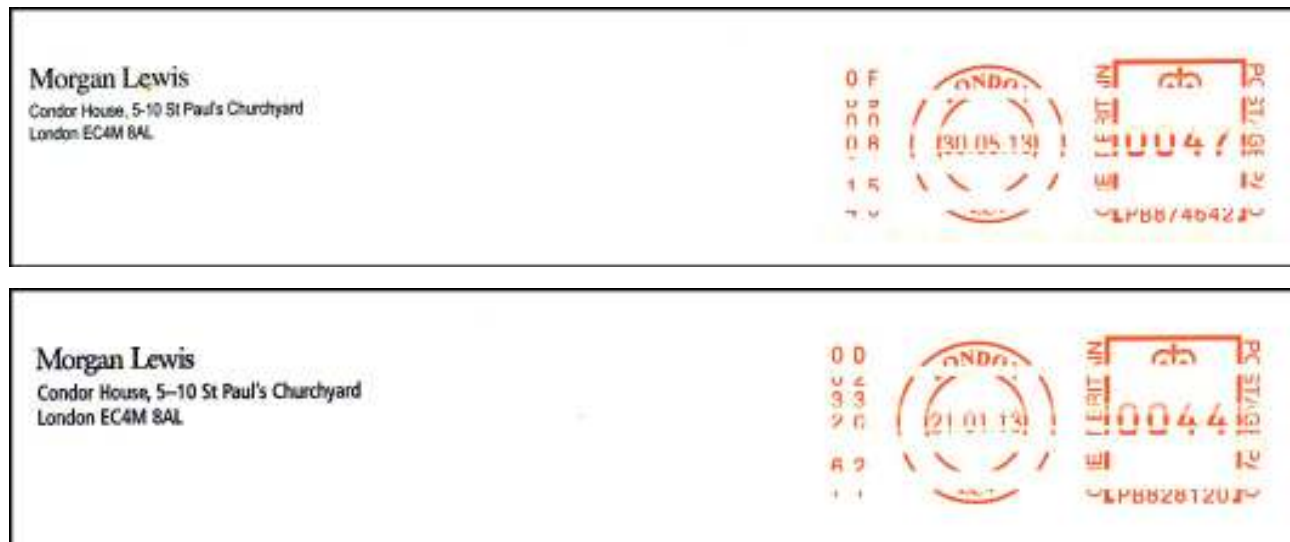


Latest Number Images Continued



Recent Interesting Items

Peter Mantell has noticed that when some Pitney Bowes machines are replaced, the printing characteristics of the old machines are similarly reflected in the replacement machines. Here is an example where a replacement machine (PB874642) has the identical printing flaws of its predecessor (PB828120).



This is quite remarkable and it is not a one-off as Peter has found some similar examples. So what is going on? To help find the answer, Peter called in the assistance of Jim Ashby to see whether he could throw any light on this.

By a strange co-incidence, Jim has found the explanation, we believe. The other day Jim was talking to his mailroom lady at work where they operate a Pitney Bowes DM100 machine. She mentioned in passing that apparently the battery needs to be replaced every couple of years, and that this is a big issue because when the battery is replaced the licence is renewed (and therefore, presumably, the meter number).

Further enquiries reveal that the battery is attached to a printed circuit board (PCB) with the Postal Security Device which is used to store user information, i.e. account details, funds remaining, etc. The use of an in-built battery allows the data to be retained, even when the mains power is shut off. There is also a PB patent that states that the battery is used to assist in deleting the user's data if the machine is tampered with, even while unplugged. If that is the case, it explains the identical ink flaws as the ink cartridge and print head haven't been removed because it's the same machine but with a new meter number.

It is not known, at this stage if all Pitney Bowes models are affected or indeed whether other manufacturers' machines are similarly designed. Importantly, this does throw an element of doubt on the figures produced in your editor's annual (January) analysis of 'new' machines as it gives the impression that Pitney Bowes are selling more new machines than they actually are.

It is worth pointing out that the sales trends in this analysis remain valid and I shall continue with this in the future. This 'discovery' does not affect the 'mail volume analysis' given annually in the March newsletter.

Recent Interesting Items Continued

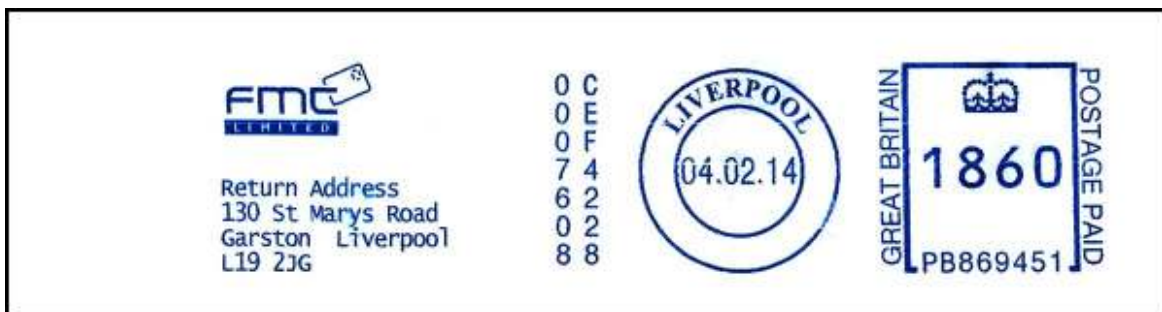
On page 29-1, we reported the message “mymail / THE entry-level / franking machine” appearing on new Francotyp-Postalia Mymail machines. Over the years several people have reported this message appearing with the characters at the end being omitted - an example from Dave Baker is shown below.



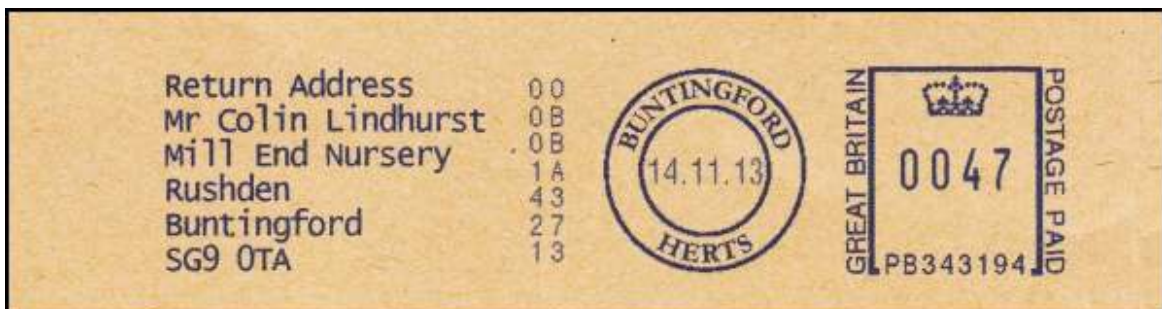
Now Peter Mantell reports a new message “mymail / good for me / and my mail” but with the same curtailing problem still remaining.



Jim Ashby sends this Pitney Bowes frank being used by the 'Franking Machine Company'.



It is unusual to find named individuals on UK meter franks. However, Peter Mantell reports this example received via Keith Downing.



Mailmark™

Further to last month's report on page 159-7, there is now a wealth of information on the Royal Mail website <http://www.royalmail.com/mailmark>. The following are two key aspects taken from these pages and related brochures, starting with these PPI formats:



From April 2015 the Advanced Mail service will only be available to Mailmark users and, as mentioned earlier, the Advanced Mail block will not be visible in Mailmark franks.



New Postal Rates

Royal Mail have announced that the following new rates will apply as from Monday 31st March 2014:

Type of Posting	First Class	Second Class
Stamped Mail	62p	53p
Franked Mail - Traditional	50p	37p
Franked Mail - Mailmark™	49p	35p
Franked Mail - Advanced Mail	45p	31p

Note 1

Note 2

Note 1: Royal Mail are providing a small incentive for users to convert to Mailmark franking - with a further reduction of 1p and 2p for First and Second class mailings.


Note 2: These approximate net prices based on the discount given to Advanced Mail Users of 10.5% and 16.5% respectively for First and Second class mailings of 500 or more.

QR and Mailmark™ Matrix Decoding

On page 151-5 we illustrated how a QR matrix code on a mail item can be decoded using a smart phone app. However, both Jos Wessels and your editor have now found a website that will decode a scanned QR image directly from your PC. The website concerned is <http://zxing.org/w/decode.jspx> and is free to use. Two examples have been tried, the first was the matrix part of this SmartStamp PPI:




This was interpreted as:

 **Decode Succeeded**

Raw text	JGBA01A8EA5U7A	0000000032221062220601E7F6E9E5C9EDF640
Raw bytes	e6 92 f0 58 26 59 73 59 3c 13 3c 13 3c 13 3c 13 8c c0 98 88 83 e6 72 4c fe 31 81 22 b8 4f a5 7c	0b 46 f4 13 3c 13 3c 13 3c fe 82 82 82 82 a2 98 41 5a 71 f9 54 22 78 59 14 aa 41 d7 6a 06
Barcode format	DATA_MATRIX	
Parsed Result Type	TEXT	
Parsed Result	JGBA01A8EA5U7A	0000000032221062220601E7F6E9E5C9EDF640

The second example was the Mailmark code illustrated last month on page 159-7.

 **Decode Succeeded**

Raw text	JGB B1999995PB165010 00057590004400091013	F2EFP6216BBA8561
Raw bytes	e6 92 f0 15 1e 53 56 53 a5 3a 02 51 e5 1a 49 19 3c 13 3c 13 3c 77 c3 79 32	52 b7 9e 3f ed 1f e4 19 a5 52 0d 20 5c 13 3c 13 c3 26 53 60 27 4c 73 fe
Barcode format	DATA_MATRIX	
Parsed Result Type	TEXT	
Parsed Result	JGB B1999995PB165010 00057590004400091013	F2EFP6216BBA8561

Obviously, a number of examples from the same machine (preferably on the same day) are needed for a better understanding of the results. Meanwhile, your editor would be pleased to hear of any other similar web sites that offer this decoding facility.

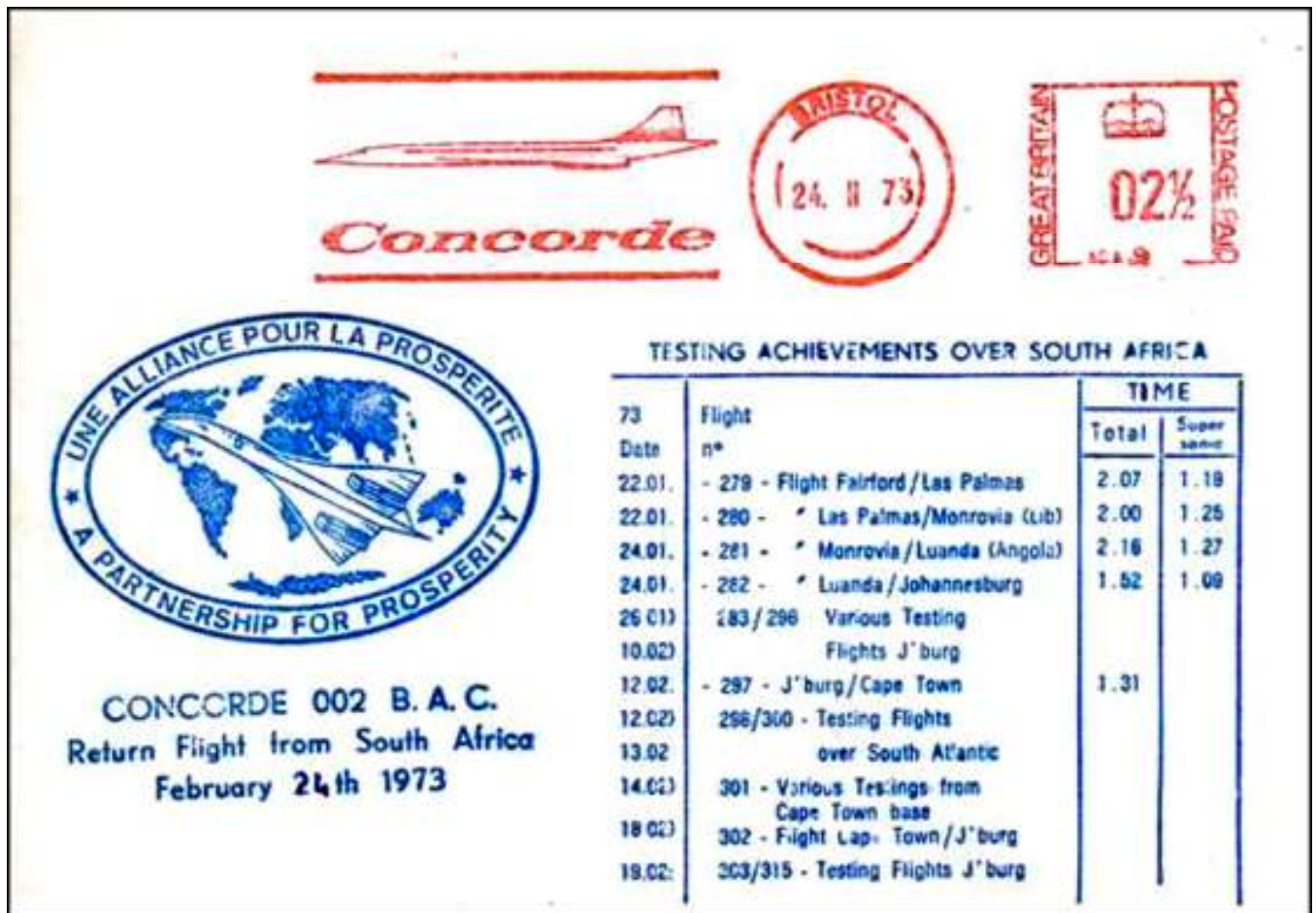
Pitney Bowes Connect+ Coloured Franks

Your editor reports this month's only Pitney Bowes Connect+ coloured slogan machine - from the headquarters of Girlguiding South West England (formerly known as the Guide Association), based in Salisbury.



Interesting Historic Items

Peter Huss sends this very attractive Concorde cover from 1973, commemorating the first flight from South Africa and the testing achievements over that country. The meter frank was produced by an Acral A9000 machine (serial ACA.9)



Meter Thematics

Peter Mantell kindly supplies all the thematic items this month. Further to page 137-10, we notice that the 'Old Pond' frog has now turned blue!



Slogans that advertise single-day events are always collectable. Here is one such example from the Moulton College in Northampton that also depicts an ear of wheat.



This slogan from SME Invoice Finance depicts a nice leopard (or puma or jaguar?).



Finally, Peter has recently acquired this most attractive 2004 frank from the Bressingham Steam Museum Trust in Norfolk and it wins my 'Meter Thematic of the Month' award.

