

METER NEWS

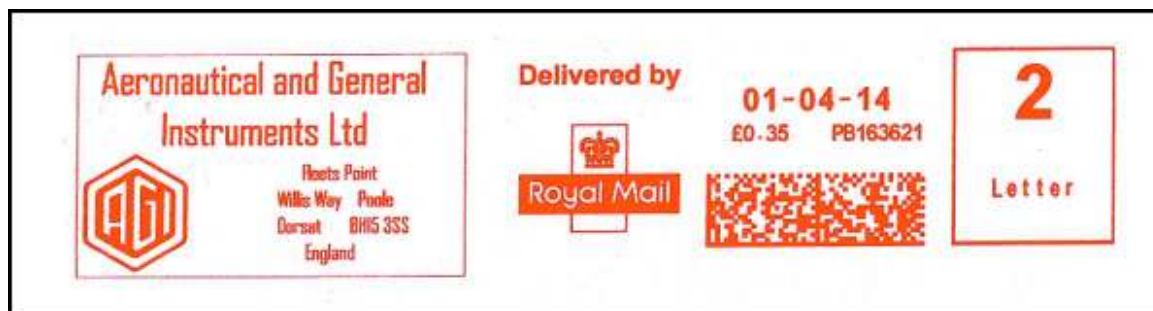
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Meter of the Month

We can report our first examples of a Design J frank in red ink. The example above is from Peter Mantell and the one shown below is from your editor. It is somewhat surprising to find such examples as I expected all Mailmark™ franks to be using blue ink. However, your editor is unable to find anything on the Royal Mail website that mandates use of blue ink.



Re-branding of Frama Matrix Machines

Further to last month, we are now able to confirm that the 'FR' prefix does, indeed, indicate a Frama machine. An example from Frama themselves with an FR2 prefix shown on page 3 of this newsletter confirms this.

Editorial

There is much to report this month and, indeed, I was spoilt for choice for my Meter of the Month. For example, Peter Mantell has acquired some very nice examples of Frama zero-value Mailmark franks that were also strong contenders – see page 5.

This month we extend a warm welcome to Lawrence Fisher as member number 0041. Lawrence lives in Israel and has been collecting stamps for almost 50 years. He is a keen thematic collector dealing mainly with Judaic subjects. Lawrence has won international large vermeil awards with his exhibits.

Acknowledgements

My thanks this month go to Jon Aitchison, Dave Baker, Michael Dobbs, Gwynne Harries, Peter Huss, David Jones, Peter Mantell, John McCallum, Robert Petts, Robert Rowe and Greg Spring, for their reports, communications or contributions.

Latest Numbers

Below is the list of 'latest numbers' as at the end of April 2014 – with updates shown in red. Please could I have the next reports by 28th May - 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	See MN 160
Matrix F12 etc.	<u>FR2000060</u>	24.04.14	Reported by PM. Note 1

Francotyp-Postalia

Optimail 25/35	<u>F04115546</u>	28.02.14	See MN 161
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	See MN 160
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	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-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>N3029799</u>	17.04.14	Reported by PM
IS-240 / IS-280	<u>N3319102</u>	15.04.14	Reported by PM
IS-5000/6000	<u>N5001663</u>	04.02.14	See MN 160
IS-240/280	<u>NE6000667</u>	08.04.14	Reported by PM. Note 2
IS-480	<u>NE8000603</u>	11.04.14	Reported by PM. Note 2
IS-5000/6000	<u>NE9000041</u>	25.04.14	Reported by PM. Note 2

Pitney Bowes

DM50, 55	<u>PB099074</u>	15.03.13	See MN 149
DM160i/220i	<u>PB164165</u>	18.03.14	See MN 161
DM50, 55	<u>PB353407</u>	18.04.14	Reported by PM
DM 810, 900 etc.	<u>PB527641</u>	18.03.13	See MN 151
Connect+ 1000 etc.	<u>PB551797</u>	23.04.14	Reported by PM
Connect+ 10FC etc.	<u>PB556984</u>	18.03.14	See MN 161
DM 400, 450, 475	<u>PB619863</u>	04.04.14	Reported by PM
DM100i, 150i etc.	<u>PB879833</u>	21.02.14	See MN 160

Advanced Mail Codes

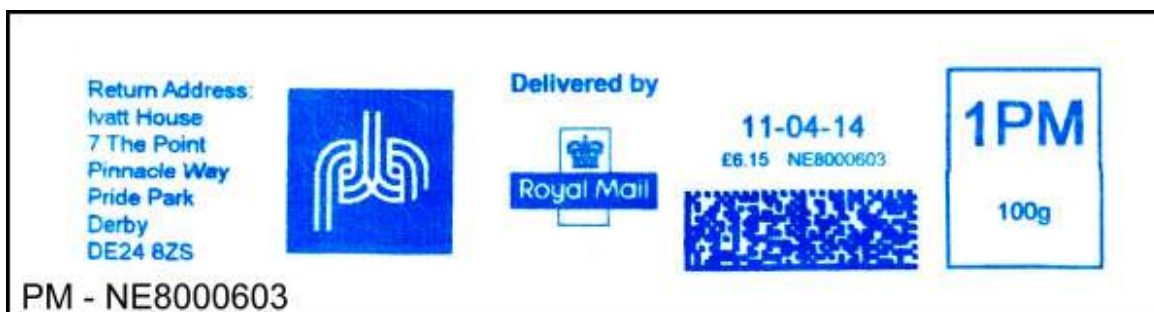
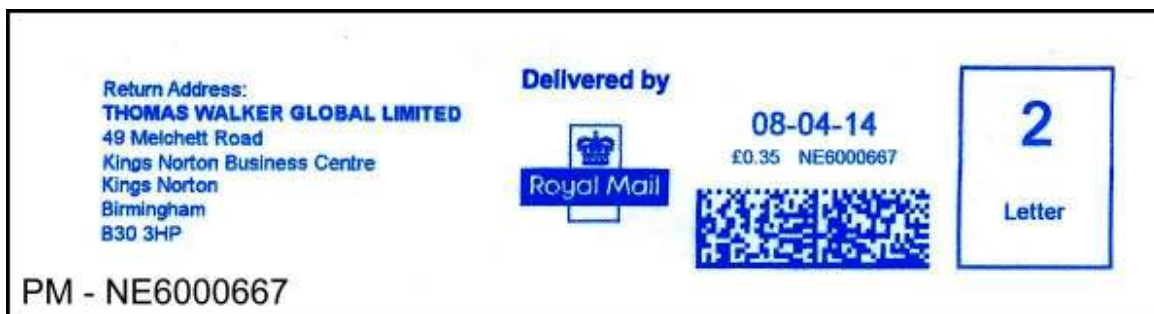
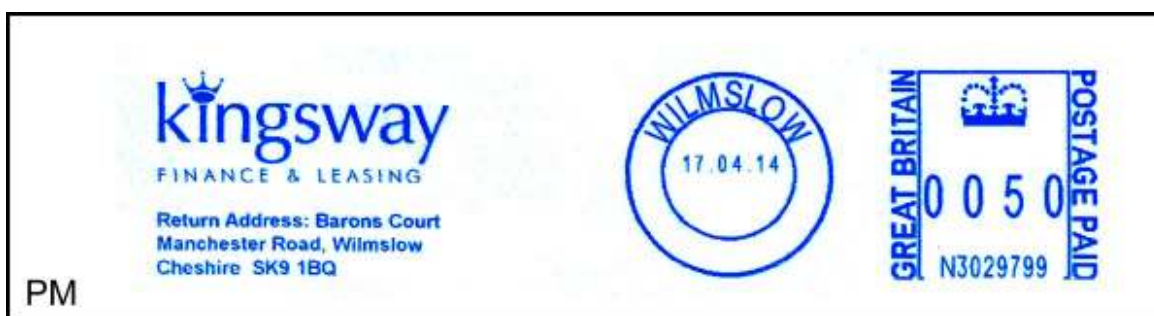
AAGB-BU	PB619053	07.03.14	See MN 161
AAGJ-HH	HQ25668	PPI no date	See MN 160

Note 1. These Frama 'Mailmark' machines are from models F12, F22/32, F42/62 and F82

Note 2. See page 5 for how the new Neopost series were mapped to these prefixes.

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. It is, perhaps, worth noting that this is the first month when all of the latest number reports are in blue ink.



Latest Number Images Continued



Recent Interesting Items

Further to page 161-7, three new 'Design J' Mailmark™ formats have been recorded this month.

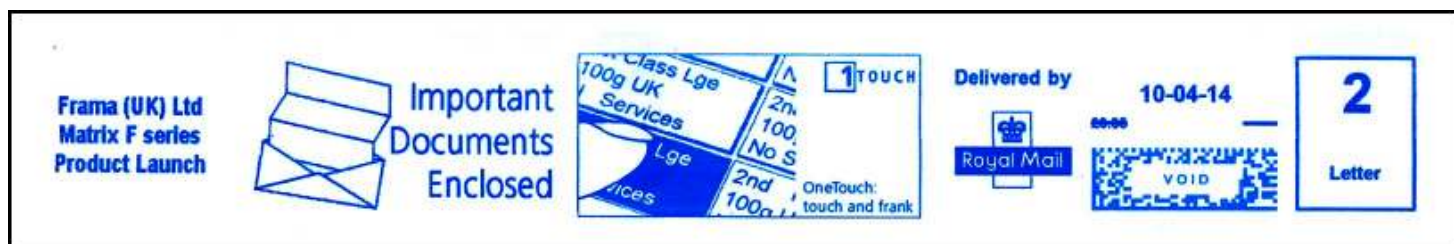
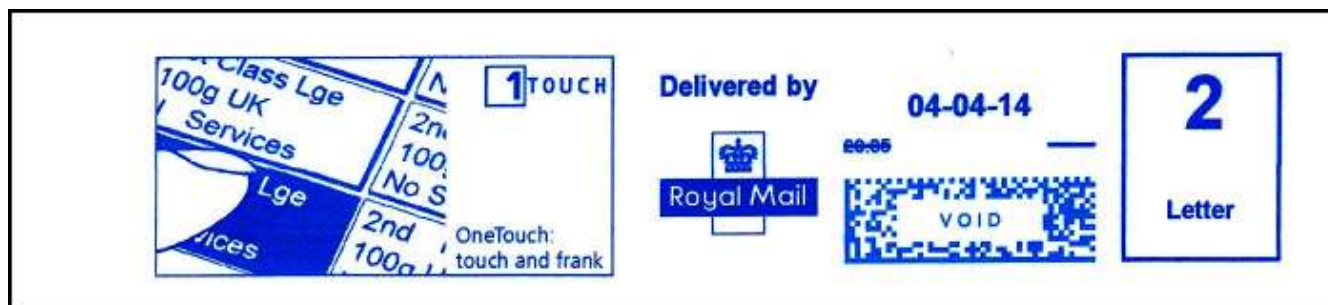
The first new format is the '2 L Letter 750g' - shown on the previous page. The second one is the (Special Delivery) '1PM 100g' – also shown on the previous page.

The third is this (Special Delivery) '9AM 100g' example from your editor. Note the high price that was paid for using this service, i.e. £16.32.



Recent Interesting Items continued

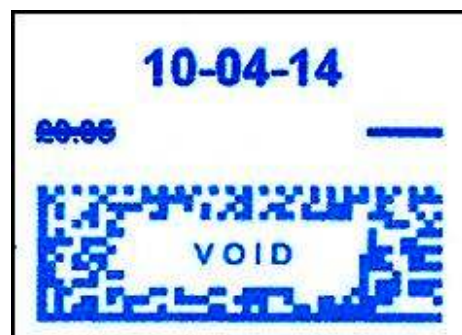
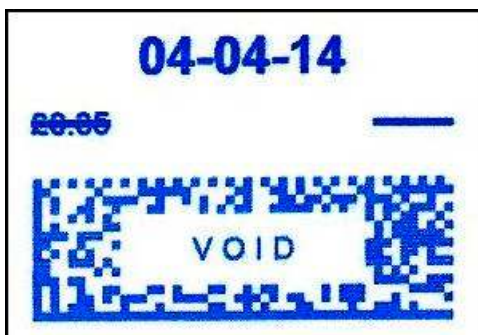
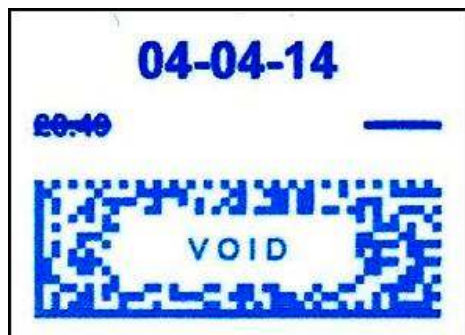
Peter Mantell has been fortunate to acquire three Frama specimen franks in the new Mailmark™ format.



The franks were printed by one or more of the recently re-branded Matrix machines, although the precise models that produced them (namely the F12, F22/32, F42/62 or F82) are unknown.

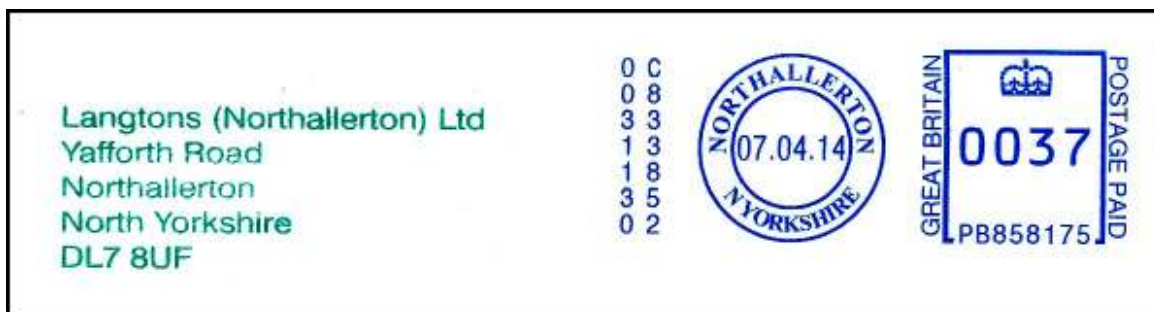
None of these specimen franks show any serial number – just a horizontal line where the serial number normally is. The value amounts have been scored through and each has the word 'VOID' in the centre of the matrix.

The matrix sections of each are shown enlarged below.



Recent Interesting Items Continued

Your editor reports our first sighting of colour being used on a Pitney Bowes DM100i machine! Similar reports would be most welcome.



Peter Mantell reports this frank in the new format from Neopost themselves. Previously, machine N5001663 was being used with this 'AAAA-BK' Advanced Mail code.



It is worth noting that the Neopost franks include an Item number encoded into the matrix block. This is, of course, the first time that Neopost machines have included this information in their franks. For example, the item count on the above item is '0048620'. This is also the case for Frama – the item count for the FR2000060 frank, shown on page 3, is '0003578'.

Gwynne Harries reports this unusual item produced by a Francotyp-Postalia Centormail 240/300 machine in 2009. According to pencilled information on the reverse, the item came from the Data Access & Compliance Unit of the Ministry of Justice.



The item shows a DX (Direct Exchange – a private mail service often used by solicitors) frank that has been overprinted with a 'normal' frank - the two being almost perfectly aligned. The DX frank contains the user Return Address, the date (without the town die), and a 'DX-MAIL' indicia that bears a solid border and the serial number (DX4562). The 'normal' frank also printed the user return address, together with the item count, the town die, as well as a 'normal' Centormail indicia (serial FC5110122).

Mapping Neopost 'NE' Series to Model Types

So, this month we have three new Neopost 'NE' prefixes producing franks with Mailmark™ indicia, namely 'NE6', 'NE8' and 'NE9', but how do these series map to the different Neopost models? Furthermore, are these machines all brand new machines, or are they existing machines capable of being converted to use the new format? It must be said that, at this stage, the complete picture is still far from clear!

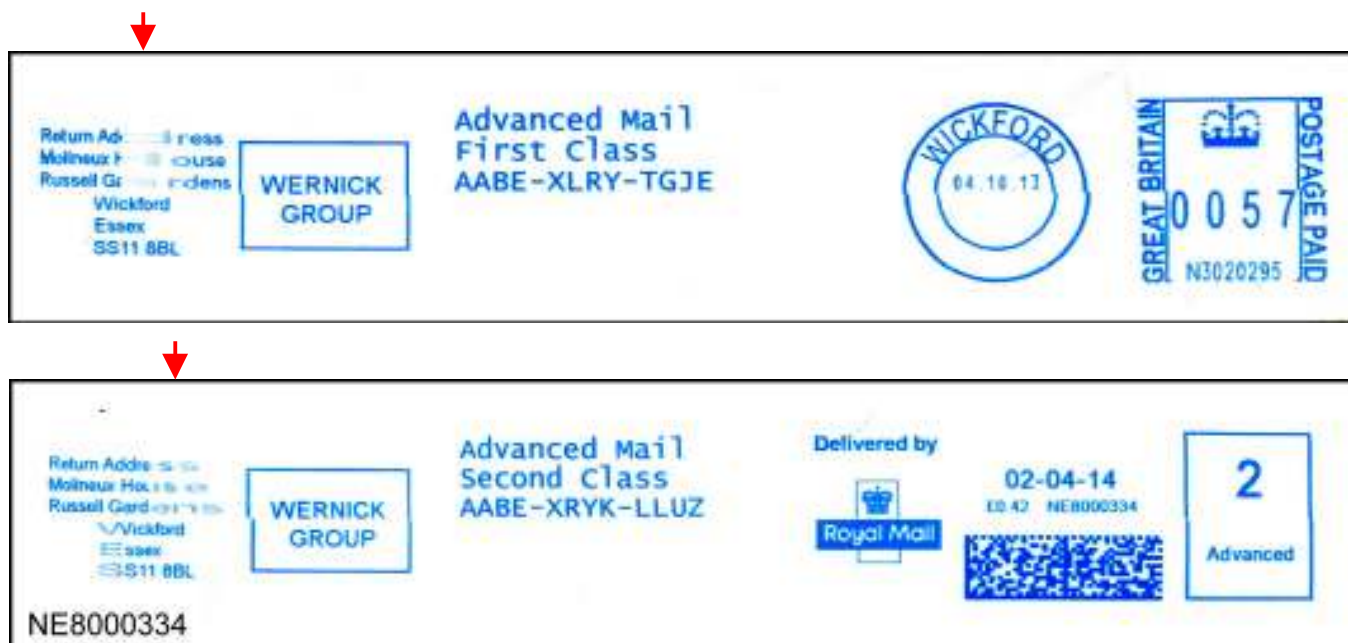
Peter Mantell and your editor have been trying to make sense of it all. There are essentially four ways to find out – (1) ask the manufacturer, (2) look at the manufacturer's web site for clues, (3) ask a user, or (4) draw conclusions by observing live mail examples.

Method 1 Peter recently made a phone call to Neopost and the response he obtained was: "The NE8 is still an IS-480 machine (existing N3 prefix) but is now in the IS-200(!) Mailmark series. Likewise, the NE9 is still an IS-5000/6000 series machine (existing N5 prefix) but again has been re-branded into the new IS-200 Mailmark series".

Method 2 Your editor has been trying to relate the above statement with what is currently available on the internet – in particular the Neopost UK web site. At the time of writing, I am unable to find any reference to this re-branding or the 'new IS-200 Mailmark' series.

Method 3 Peter recently made a personal visit to Thomas Walker Global Ltd to discover that their NE6000667 is a brand new machine - series IS-240/280 'Mailmark' model. For what it is worth, the serial number on the back of this machine is AA1403015937, and also had the Product Id: AOO19030 and 'GB EIB BASE'. This is, therefore, our first firm mapping for new machines, but it does not necessarily mean that all Neopost machines bearing a Mailmark indicia are brand new machines.

Method 4 Peter has noticed that, in some cases, the printing characteristics of users' old machines are similarly present on the new 'Mailmark' machines. An example is shown below:



Initially, our thoughts were that this must indicate that this was an old machine that had been converted to the new format, but is that definitely the case? Could the PCB that held the user account details have been transferred to the new machine, continuing the printing problem?

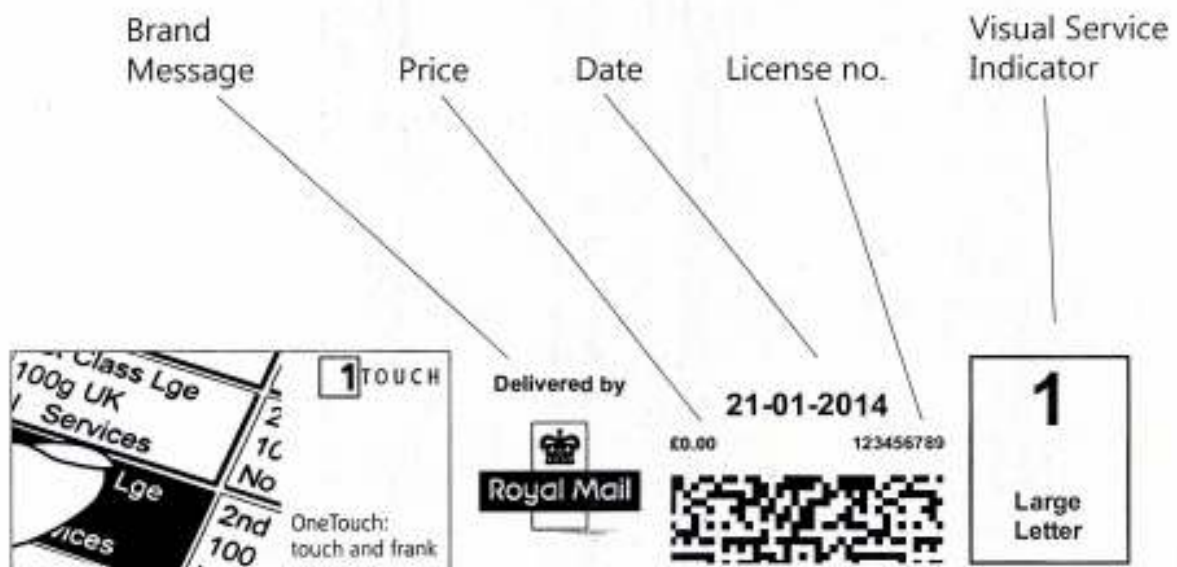
Mailmark™ News

A friend of Peter Mantell has kindly supplied a scan of this extract from a Launch brochure illustrating the format of the new Frama Mailmark designs. It is interesting to see the indicia block on the right referred to as the 'Visual Service Indicator'.

Matrix F series launch - Royal Mail Mailmark™

F R A M A ■
SMART MAILING

Mailmark™ for franking users – New Indicia



23rd January 2014

Royal Mail Mailmark™ is a registered trademark of Royal Mail Ltd.

Useful Website Links

Peter Mantell reports the following Royal Mail website that provides the formal definition of the new Mailmark™ format.

http://www.royalmail.com/sites/default/files/Royal_Mail_Mailmark_barcode_definition_document_Feb_2014.pdf

Peter also has found a Barcode Reader website called Inlite that enables the new Mailmark™ format to be read and decoded. This appears to work much better than the Zxing website given on page MN160-8.

<http://online-barcode-reader.inlitteresearch.com/>

CMDM Mailmark™ Definition

The Royal Mail Barcode Definition document (see link on previous page) provides a formal definition for the Complex Mail Data Mark (CMDM) Mailmark™ barcodes. At a high level, barcodes can either be 2-Dimensional (2D) CMDM barcodes or 4-state Mailmark™ barcodes.

Tables 2.2.1 and 2.2.4.3 of the definition document combine to specify the overall format in use for meter franking. This information has therefore been used to update the table given on page MN 161-8. Comments that are not in the formal definition are shown in italics to reflect your editor's own observations.

Field	Posn.	Length	Definition	Comments
1	1	4	Country ID	Identifies the UPU Country ID. Always set to 'JGB <space>' for the UK.
2	5	1	Information Type ID (based on table 2.2.1)	Identifies the Royal Mail CMDM Mailmark™ barcode for each product type. 0 = Domestic Sorted and Unsorted 1 = International Sorted and Unsorted 2 = Response Services 3 to 9 unallocated A = Online postage (<i>Smart Stamps</i>) B = Meter Franking C = Consolidation D to Z unallocated
3	6	1	Version ID	1 = Mailmark™ barcode '0', '2' to '9' and 'A' to 'Z' are reserved for future use. <i>Note that all Frama Mailmark™ franks recorded so far, have this field set to '0'.</i>
4	7	1	Format (based on table 2.2.1) <i>See Field 6 comment</i>	0 = Null or Test 1 = Letter 2 = Large Letter 3 = Packet (for potential future use) 4 = Parcel (for potential future use) 5 to 9 and A to Z spare <i>Examples seen do not appear to align with this formal definition. All letters, whether normal or large, appear to repeat the Mail Class, i.e. the Field 5 code. Code '4' in this field has been seen on a 'Special Delivery 9AM' item.</i>
5	8	1	Mail Class (based on table 2.2.1) <i>See Field 6 comment</i>	0 = Null or Test 1 = 1st Class (Retail) 2 = 2nd Class (Retail) 3 = 3rd Class (Retail) 4 = Premium (Retail Publishing Mail) 5 = Deferred (Retail) 6 = Air (Retail) 7 = Surface (Retail) 8 = Premium (Network Access) 9 = Standard (Network Access) <i>Codes '1', and '2' are regularly seen. Code '8' is allocated for all Advanced Mail items. Note, however, that code 3 has been observed on a 'Special Delivery 9AM' item. This appears to conflict with the formal definition.</i>

Mailmark™ Definition Continued

Field	Posn.	Length	Definition	Comments
6	9	4	Mail Type (based on table 2.2.4.3)	The Royal Mail definition document in table 2.2.4.3 combines this field with fields 4 and 5 to form a 6-character field called the 'Product Group Code (PGC). The following 4-character codes extracted from the PGC field have been observed: 0001 = Letter (1st or 2nd Class) 0100 = Special Delivery 1PM 100g 0101 = Large Letter (up to) 100g 0102 = Large Letter (up to) 250g 0104 = Large Letter (up to) 750g 1111 = Small Parcel 1403 = Advanced Mail (1st Class) 1503 = Advanced Mail (2nd Class) 5000 = Special Delivery 9AM PPI items have not yet been seen.
7	13	9	Die Number	Identifies the physical franking machine PSD (Product Serial Die). Where the serial number is less than 9 characters, <space> characters are used to pad out the field after the data string. <i>Pitney Bowes machines include a space at the end.</i>
8	22	7	Item ID	Leading zeros are used to pad out the data string if required. This is known as the 'Piece Counter' for franking machines.
9	29	5	Postage Value	This is the price paid in pence. Leading zeros are used to pad out the data string if required.
10	34	1	Tariff Rate	This field contains a numeric reference to the tariff rate (table) that is being used. <i>All items seen so far have '0' in this field.</i>
11	35	1	Tariff Version	This field contains a numeric reference to the version of the Tariff Rate (table) being used. <i>Items dated prior to 31st March 2014 have this field set to '1'. Items dated on or after 31st March 2014 have a '2' in this field.</i>
12	36	6	Date	Decimal expression of the date in the form DDMMYY to represent Day Month Year. DD '01' to '31', MM '01' to '12' and YY '00' to '99'.

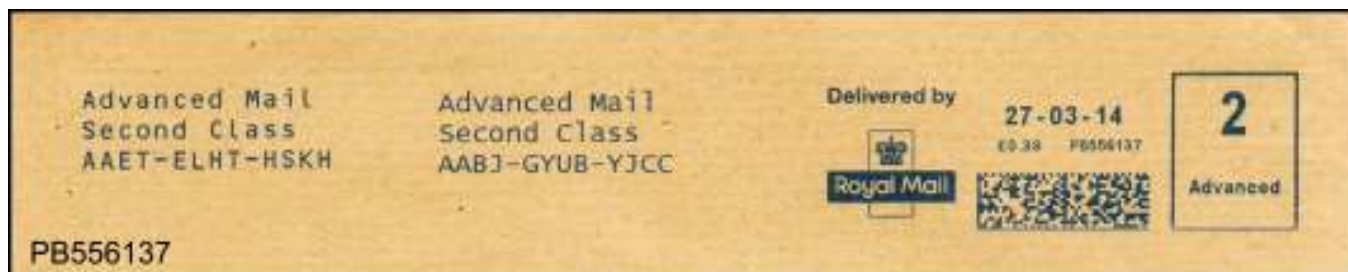
Pitney Bowes Connect+ Coloured Slogans

Over the years, the machine PB555206 (operated by Pitney Bowes themselves) must have featured in Meter News more than any other machine. This is the latest 'goldfish' incarnation in the new Mailmark™ format, reported by Peter Mantell.



Advanced Mail Codes

Peter Mantell reports this most unusual item. It shows two different Advanced Mail Codes in the frank. Yes, each user has two codes allocated – one for 1st Class and one for 2nd Class, but they are always allocated consecutively. Peter has previously recorded “AABJ-GY” for this machine, so the “AAET-EL” code on the left would seem to be the imposter! How can this occur, I wonder? Note also that the two codes are in a slightly different font.



Historic Items & Thematics

Philatelists always like to depict errors in their collection and this is a beauty! Gwynne Harries sends an image of this mis-spelling of “STORNAWAY” in the town die of a Roneo-Neopost Model 205. The correct spelling is, of course, in the pre-printed user details on the left.



Dave Baker has found this nice ‘Sign of the Times’ slogan from 1959. It reads “AVOID FOOD POISONING - Hands should always be washed before preparing food”.



Dave Baker also reports this ‘caterpillar digger’ from 1966.



Meter Thematics

Peter Mantell reports this 'politics' thematic associated with forthcoming European and local elections.



Peter also sends these two 'motor' thematics from the 'Rover' site near his home. The business operates two accounts – one for the MG Motor Group and one for the Chinese owners 'SAIC'. Both accounts use the same franking machine, PB866564.



Dave Baker has found this attractive 'red indian' design from 2008.



Finally, my 'Meter Thematic of the Month' award goes to the attractive 'goldfish' design on page 10.