The Development of British Postage Printed on Site

This one frame display depicts the development of postage printed by, or in front of, the customer and the machines used in QEII's reign up to 2011. The story begins when Penny-in-the-Slot and meter franking machines were introduced in the early 20th century, but it was not until 1947 that machines were first installed at some Post Office counters nationwide that printed variable value adhesive labels for use with parcel mailing.

From the latter part of the 20th century there has been a steady increase in new machine types, either in long- or short-term use, or for a set trial period of as little as four days. As these machines gained in sophistication, more postal services were provided resulting in lots of similar looking mail items. Invariably these differed only in the overprinted face value or other text, therefore examples of all service types are not included here. Also generally excluded are receipts from the machines, where issued, and traditional postage stamps that have been printed in their entirety by a Post Office print supplier and later vended from coin-operated equipment

Special emphasis has been placed on displaying behind-the-scenes material such as unadopted clichè designs, engineers' machine testing and setting labels, and un-overprinted base label stock. It contains original published research and discovery, as marked *Item first reported and recorded by owner at foot of relevant pages.

Parcel Meters: Post Office Counter Machines

First seen in 1947, trials of staff operated counter parcel meter machines were carried-out using several makes over a long period, with the TIM [Ticket Issue Machines] Ltd and Setright Registers Ltd versions being produced in the highest volumes (100 and 600 machines respectively).

The final machines were not withdrawn until just prior to decimalisation in 1971.

SPECIMEN version of a die from the machine known internally within the Post Office as 'Parcel Post Machine Number Two' .*

An issued label from the machine that was installed in the town of St Peter Port on the Channel Island of Guernsey.

*Item first reported and recorded by owner

Stamp Meters: A Continuing Success Story

Meter franking machines used by customers at their business premises have a long and proud history dating back to the 1920s and development continues to this day with equipment now having entered the digital age.

A selection of more recent demonstration machine dies from the major suppliers are depicted below.
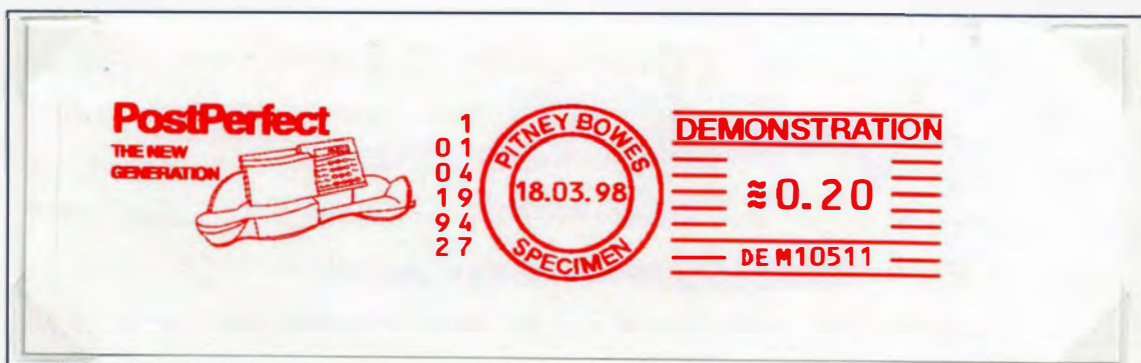

Frama.
Model: *Sensonic 21-2600.*

Hasler.
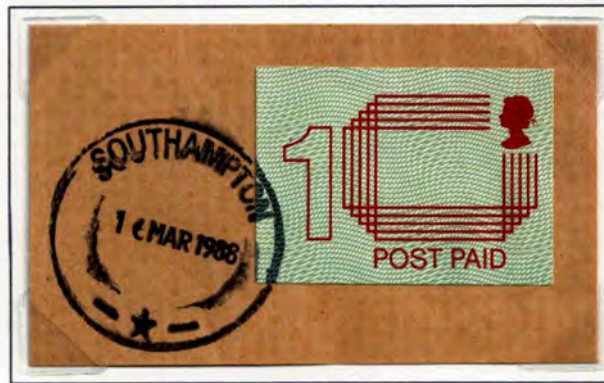Model: *F series.*

Neopost.
Model: *SM22.*

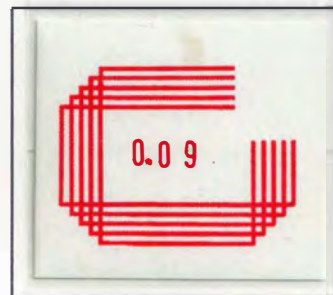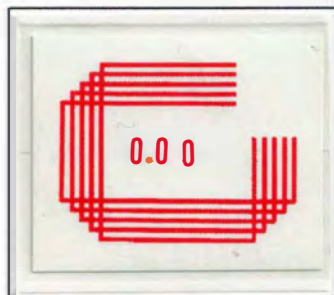**Pitney Bowes.**
Model:
Post Perfect.

1984 Frama: Postage Label Machines

After many delays, Frama machines finally appeared in 1984 at four sites (King Edward Building in London, Cambridge, Shirley and Windsor). Micro-processor controlled, they could vend a large range of face values and gave change in either low-value labels or coins. Some say that the machines were destined for failure as the chosen sites generally received little out-of-hours custom.

The genesis of the Frama design was the post paid Post A Book and Letter Cassette promotional labels.

Trials and testing of Frama machines invariably involved the use of dummy rolls of paper (either plain unprinted or with a pre-printed design), and/or unique clichès (with or without text and imagery). These items rarely left the secure environment of the manufacturer or postal administration.

Engineering zero value* and 0.09p face value* labels.
1984 British trial design labels printed on PVA Dextrin stamp paper, minus Her Majesty the Queen's head at top right.

Blank length of the issued design label base stock*.

*Item first reported and recorded by owner.

1984 Frama: Postage Label Machines *(continued)*

The machines were in use for just one year between 1 May 1984 and 30 April 1985, with one relocated to the National Postal Museum from 6 May 1988, where it dispensed souvenir labels until it broke-down.

It was to be many years before anything similar appeared on the streets of the United Kingdom.

Engineering 0.00 test label.

16p on white engineering test paper.

Britain used a three button Frama vending machine for 1st, class 2nd class and 'change'.

Issued 12 1/2p 'button' label.

Issued 15 1/2p 'button' label.

NPM engineering 0.00 test label.

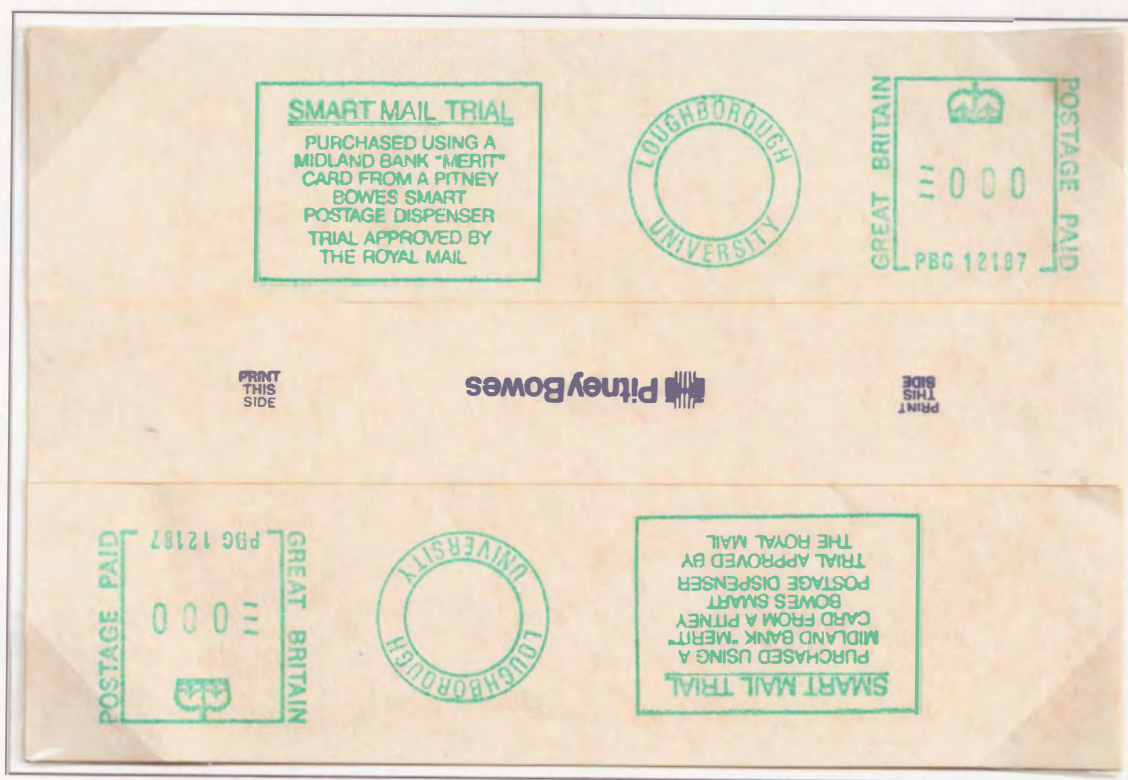# 1989 Pitney Bowes / GEC / Midland Bank MeritCard: Smart Postage Meter

Designed by Pitney Bowes for a Midland Bank smart card trial at Loughborough University, this adapted PB meter machine franked mail via a GEC produced MeritCard from 12 June 1989 to 30 August 1990.

It was only accessible by students and staff working on-site and was never extended beyond the campus.

A specimen GEC Midland Bank MeritCard.*

The Smart Postage dispenser was installed in the foyer of the Student Union block of the university.

Proof impressions of unique green meter marking, chosen to clearly identify the marking from any others then in use by the Post Office.*

*Item first reported and recorded by owner

2002 Fujitsu: Horizon Counter Automation

The Post Office contracted Fujitsu to produce a counter automation system named Horizon and, from 14 February 2002, labels instead of postage stamps have increasingly been seen on mail.

An experiment using Horizon with Special Delivery mail occurred at Albemarle Street PO, London.

1 st
Royal Mail
POSTAGE   PAID   UK
16/08/04   £0.18   LA1
2418   4-1912317-1

Type 1/1a - Unprinted labels.
These existed initially without, and subsequently with, security slits for revenue protection reasons.

Type 2 - Special Delivery experimental Horizon version. This unique label sheet was in use from 10 June 2004 for three months only. Labels were printed using a specially converted Epson counter printer.

Royal Mail
specialdelivery
guaranteed by 12 noon   **next day**

Name
to
Building name or number

Street

Postcode in full

For branch use
Ref:
ZU 3320 8576 5GB
ZU 3320 8576 5GB
SD 12 noon
ZU 3320 8576 5GB
ZU 3320 8576 5GB
SD 12 noon
ZU 3320 8576 5GB
SD 12 noon
ZU 3320 8576 5GB

Royal Mail
specialdelivery
guaranteed by 12 noon   **next day**

Moneyback guarantee for delay.
You can claim compensation of up to £250 for lost or damaged items.
If you want a higher compensation limit, tick one level (this costs more): ○ Up to £1,000 ○ Up to £2,500
Hand this label and your package in at a Post Office® branch.

from

Postcode in full

Unlike traditional postage stamps, Horizon labels are affixed directly to the postal item and customers may not take away mint copies, or affix the labels themselves.

Many service designators and typesetting differences continue to occur as operational needs evolve.

Type 4 - *(below)*
Machin head design with imperforate edges. A replacement for Type 3, which often got stuck within the printer.

Introduced in 2010.

Type 3 - *(above)*
Machin head design with perforated edges.

Introduced in 2009.

1PK
Royal Mail
POSTAGE PAID UK
23-08-10 £3.49   CB24
t54113   2-3343283

1L
Royal Mail
POSTAGE PAID UK
07/01/11 £1.15   EX14
5510   7-4574010

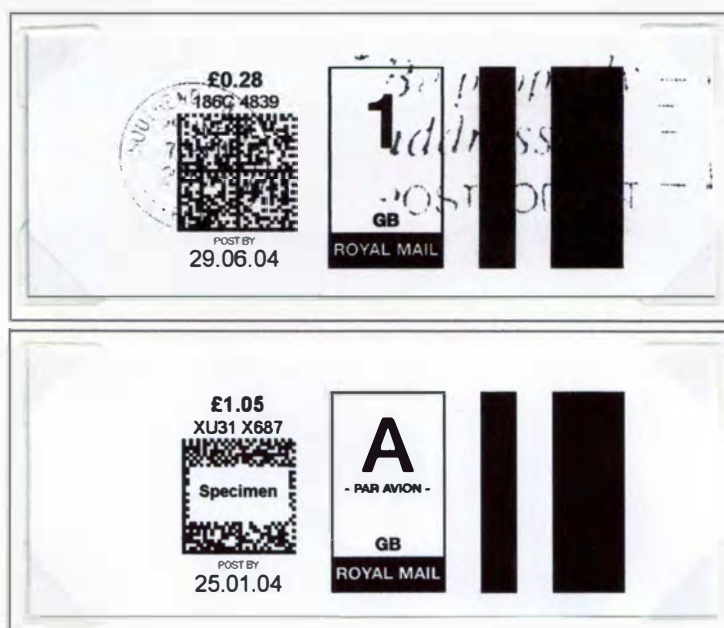# 2004/6 Lockheed Martin: SmartStamp and Online Postage Services

SmartStamp launched in January 2004 aimed at small businesses and home-based individuals. An account and monthly fee applied. In September 2006, Online Postage began for smaller users, with postage being paid online by debit or credit card. There is no monthly fee or the need for an account. In both instances, customers print the 'stamp' using their own printer. Various layouts of marking have occurred over time.

SmartStamp Service

1st and 2nd class examples of SmartStamp indicia on labels, with attractive advertising print alongside in single and multi-colours. Note SmartStamp.co.uk web address under service indicator.
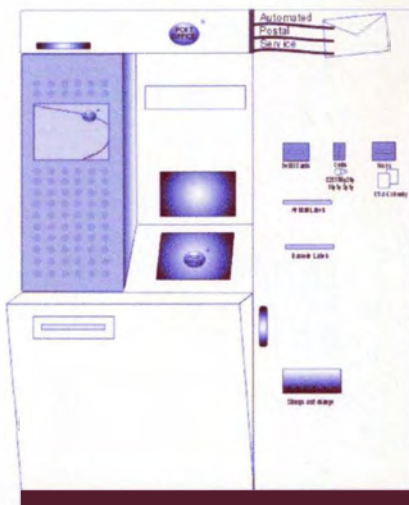
Online Postage Service

1st class example of Online Postage, together with a Specimen version of an Airmail indicia that customers can print as a test to ensure that their printer is functioning.

2004 Samkyung: Automated Postal Service Machines

From March 2004 a six-month trial in Luton, Alfreton and at the Broadgate Centre in London, saw South Korean Samkyung equipment in use. The trials each ended on 20 October 2004.
About the size of a photo-booth and weighing a massive metric tonne, they were withdrawn primarily because they were extremely slow to use and proved unpopular with the public.

These were complex machines to operate for the customer and could involve much typing on a keyboard, putting mail items into the machine, removing it and reinserting, all while listening to an annoying voice that would keep reminding you that you had not done what had been asked!

2nd
Royal Mail
POSTAGE   PAID   UK
12/10/04   £0.21   EC2M
0250031   0002 6841

Please attach the label above to your mail item and dispose of this label carefully.

(above) Unprinted label.
Previously unrecorded. *

BY AIR MAIL
par avion
Royal Mail

(right) 2nd class label in mint condition, which should not exist, but collectors found a way of manipulating the system!

BY AIR MAIL
par avion
Royal Mail

BY AIR MAIL
par avion
Royal Mail

BY AIR MAIL
par avion
Royal Mail

Airmail services automatically dispensed a single airmail label from a roll that was unique to this machine.

Multiple copies are previously unrecorded. *

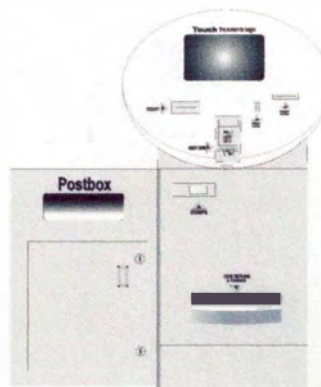*Item first reported and recorded by owner

2007 Pitney Bowes and Fujitsu: Post & Go Machines

29 January 2007 saw Birmingham Post Office undertake a three-month 'proof of concept' trial using two Pitney Bowes machines. South Shields, Doncaster and The Galleries in Bristol followed later that year. From February 2007, Belfast* and Maidstone trialled Fujitsu machines. Sunderland, Gorton (Manchester) and Clapham Common (London) followed. They were all frequently out of order and in need of repair.

*Belfast was to have had IBM equipment installed, but for unrecorded reasons it failed to materialise.

Pitney Bowes.

Fujitsu.

1st

Royal Mail

POSTAGE PAID UK

2/3/2007   £ 0.32   B2

0132012   82B2700C – 135013 – 01

First class mint label from the Pitney Bowes trial machine.

Birmingham B2 postcode area.

2nd

Royal Mail

POSTAGE PAID UK

22/02/07   £0.37   ME14

129410   PAG-000645-1

Second class commercially used example affixed to (windowed) cover from the Fujitsu trial machine

Maidstone ME14 postcode area.

2nd

Royal Mail

POSTAGE PAID UK

2/3/2007   £ 0.23   B2

0132012   82B2700C – 135046 – 01

Second class mint label from the Pitney Bowes trial machine.

Birmingham B2 postcode area.

2008 Wincor Nixdorf: Post & Go Machines

Made by New Vision of Portugal, Wincor Nixdorf supplied Post & Go equipment of a design that was rolled-out nationwide. It is intended that these machines become the workhorse of the Post Office.

Trials and Demonstrations.

New Vision demonstrated its new Pro Postal 2000 machines with Wincor Nixdorf at Post Expo 2007, the leading postal industry exhibition.*   >>

WINCOR-NIXDORF SAMPLE
EUR 0.10
02.10.2007   16:18:35

POST-EXPO 2007
newvision
€ 0,10

WINCOR-NIXDORF Sample
Wert: EUR 0.55
Datum: 09/06/08 09:57:21

WINCOR NIXDORF RECEIPT
33100 Post Filiale Paderborn
PB21 124683 8888 DE
Postal stamps
Amount: EUR 0.55
Date: 09/06/08 09:57:39
Thank you!

From 6-7 September 2008 sample labels were created on a demonstration Post & Go machine for visitors to the Sub-Postmaster and CTN World show, Olympia, London. A trial design of label was utilised that had the repeat Royal Mail gold text inset from the left edge of label.

WINCOR-NIXDORF Sample
Wert: EUR 0.55
Datum: 09/30/08 09:36:17

WINCOR NIXDORF RECEIPT
33100 Post Filiale Paderborn
PB21 124683 8888 DE
Postal stamps
Amount: EUR 2.80
Date: 09/30/08 09:36:54
Thank you!

Prior to the UK launch of Post & Go, Wincor Nixdorf demonstrated the equipment at Post Expo in London from 30 Sept. - 2 Oct. 2008. Royal Mail would not permit use of its labels, so yellow labels were again used.   >>
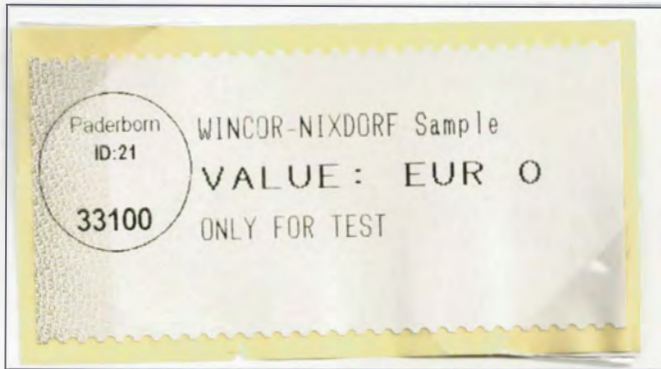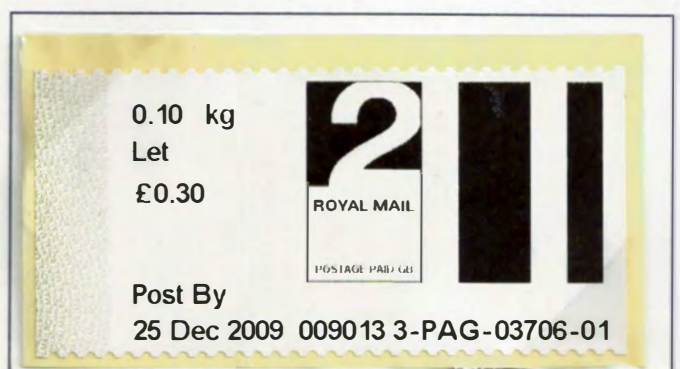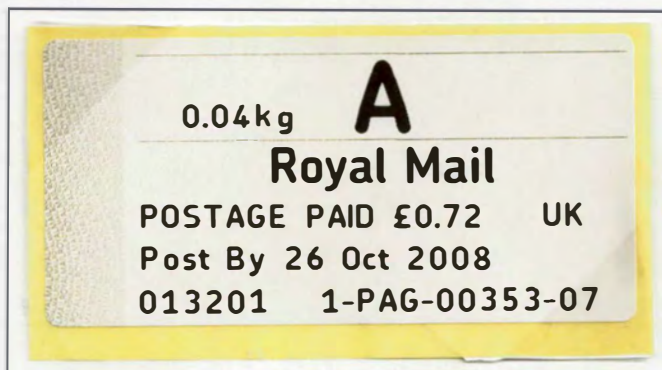
Items first reported and recorded by owner

Same day use Post & Go stamps.

These stamps are intended for postal items brought to the Post Office and so would be mailed that day, although labels are dated the following day for those who miss the final letter box collection.

Paderborn
ID:21
33100

WINCOR-NIXDORF Sample
VALUE: EUR 0
ONLY FOR TEST

Two engineering testing labels, the first of which is to ensure quality of printing and software.
The second label contains a very thin rule near the outer edges to assist with correct label alignment.
Note that these are the issued design of label with repeat Royal Mail gold text tight against the left edge.
They are also the second type that incorporated die-cut perforations at the top and bottom of the labels.

0.04kg **A**
Royal Mail
POSTAGE PAID £0.72   UK
Post By 26 Oct 2008
013201   1-PAG-00353-07

0.10 kg
P.Paper
£1.21

A II
ROYAL MAIL
POSTAGE PAID GB
Par Avion

Post By
05 Jul 2009   013207 1-PAG-07277-12

0.25kg **1LL**
Royal Mail
POSTAGE PAID £0.78   UK
Post By 17 Feb 2009
005008   2-PAG-05200-01

0.10 kg
Let
£0.30

2 II
ROYAL MAIL
POSTAGE PAID GB

Post By
25 Dec 2009 009013 3-PAG-03706-01

Many postage rates are covered by Post & Go and the above four labels are typical of two overseas and two inland postal rates.
Note the change in indicia type on labels two and four, as introduced in 2009. Label four also bears a Christmas Day latest posting date.

2008 Wincor Nixdorf: Post & Go Machines *(continued)*

Post & Go stamps for use at a later time.

These stamps do not bear a "Post by" date and are NVIs, so can be used at any time now or in the future.

Two engineering testing labels, the first of which is to ensure quality of printing and software.
The second label contains a very thin rule near the outer edges to assist with correct label alignment.

The five vended postal rates with original text setting.
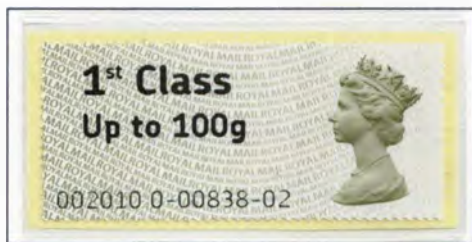
Unprinted strip of five labels
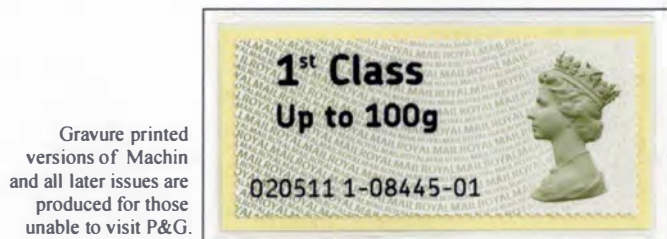
Labels become a philatelic product.

The Post Office attended London 2010 and Stampex, vending Machin labels. 24 Bird labels designed with retention in mind were later announced and only time will reveal how long collectors tolerate this excess.

0.10 kg
Let
£0.32
ROYAL MAIL
POSTAGE PAID GB
Post By
08 May 2010 002010 0-PAG-00273-01

0.10 kg
Let
£0.32
ROYAL MAIL
POSTAGE PAID GB
Post By
16 May 2010 002010 0-PAG-00838-01

London 2010 same day posting labels originally used left-over trial labels in error. After the roll ran out, correct labels were used. Note machine office ID of 002010 and how the left hand label bears an 8th May latest posting date, proving that it had been bought the day before the show opened to the public.
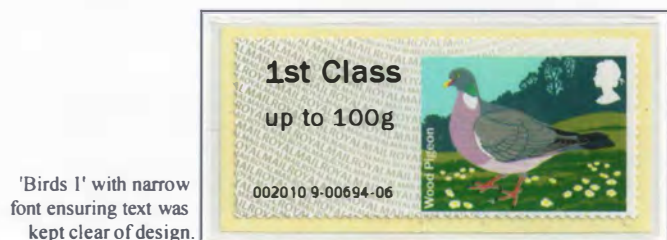

1st Class
Up to 100g
002010 0-00838-02

London 2010 Machin label with its 002010 office identifier.

1st Class
Up to 100g
020511 1-08445-01

Gravure printed versions of Machin and all later issues are produced for those unable to visit P&G.

1st Class
up to 100g
002010 9-00134-01

Autumn Stampex 2010 Machin with 002010 ID and narrow font in readiness for 'Birds I'.

1st Class
up to 100g
002010 9-00694-06

'Birds 1' with narrow font ensuring text was kept clear of design.

1st Class
up to 100g
242007 4-04561-01

1st Class
up to 100g
242007 4-04561-02

1st Class
up to 100g
242007 4-04561-03

1st Class
up to 100g
242007 4-04561-04
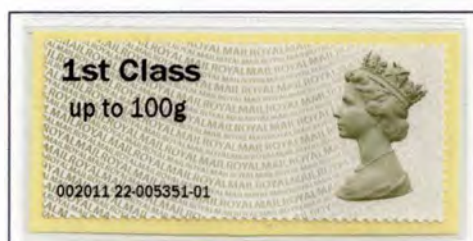
1st Class
up to 100g
242007 4-04561-05

'Birds 2' strip of five labels (of six designs) from the Tudor Street, London auto-mated PO.

These labels with 242007 branch code were in use in just one of the four machines for one day only by a philatelic cover producer.

2011 Hytech and Zebra: Postal Vision Post & Go Terminals and Printers

23-26 February 2011 saw two Hytech Postal Vision terminals and two Zebra printers produce P&G Machin labels at Stampex. After evaluation, they are intended for use at the bureau to print stamp dealer stocks.

Installation at Post Office counters to undertake non-philatelic transactions is also under consideration.

Single label from machine 22.

(above) Strip of six labels from machine 21. Strips of more than five have never been available previously.

(left) Strip of five labels from machine 22.

The machines were numbered 21 and 22 and had been programmed in advance to dispense either one, five or six Machin head Post & Go labels. However, most sales were in strips of five, comprising 1st Class, 1st Class Large, Worldwide 10g, Worldwide 20g and European 20g mail service rates.
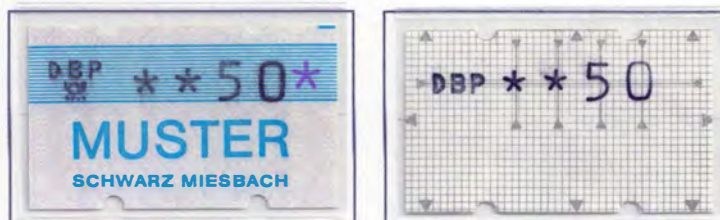
What Might Have Been - Internal Trials and Demonstrations

Not every machine that the Post Office has tried-out reaches the customer. The following machine types are known to have been used for internal evaluation or trial only and while the examples of output are not necessarily those from the actual UK trials (which have not generally reached the collector market), they are indicative of the label type used in the demonstrations by potential Post Office suppliers.

1990s Klüssendorf, Germany.*

(left label) For internal tests in the Post Technology Central Office of Deutsche Post.
(right label) Used for adjustment of text and face value overprints.

2002 Prokent, Germany.*

Prokent AG took-over from Klüssendorf when the business failed and was itself taken over by Wincor Nixdorf, but not before undertaking in 2002 a demonstration of its vending equipment to the UK Post Office using above label type.

1998 Avery Dennison, USA and Midland Bank, UK.*

Avery Dennison and Midland Bank plc used the above stamp vending sheets in a staff ATM machine in a trial to see whether stamps would be vended alongside cash. Midland concluded that it could not spare its valuable cash hoppers for stamps.

c2004 Wincor Nixdorf, Germany.*

Wincor Nixdorf created the above two labels for use when demonstrating its equipment to potential purchasers. As it won the contract for supplying the Post & Go terminals, it just might have used these labels at some point in its demonstrations to the Post Office.

It is inevitable that many more trials will occur in the coming years, as successful machines are extremely cost-effective in a world where staff salaries form such a large percentage of the overall operating costs.

*Usage of Item first reported and recorded by owner