

/

a pictorial record of early

STAMP VENDING MACHINES

1858 to 1928

*when H.T.A. was formed, a time when the machinery
can be said to have largely left the experimental stage
and 'come of age'*

text compiled by
Glenn H Morgan

illustrations drawn by
Graham Eyre

The basis for this scrapbook is the article written by Glenn Morgan and illustrated by Graham Eyre for The Friends of the British Postal Museum & Archive's journal *Cross Post* 2007.

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The top text of each new section is in **dark red** and represents the original wording lifted from our article. If section does not start in dark red but in **black**, then the text was not part of the *Cross Post* article, but is from other research by Glenn.

Text that then appears below the first black line in **black** is proposed text for that section for use in Graham's *Coil Handbook*. It represents the latest knowledge on the subject

Text and picture captions that appear below the second black line are again in **dark red** and comprise supporting evidence for the original text and helps prove - or disprove - what we had originally written for *Cross Post*.

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The ability to produce this expanded scrapbook is mainly down to The British Library and Find My Past collaborating in a huge newspaper digitisation project that has, as of June 2013, enabled more than seven million pages to be available as searchable / printable articles or snippets.

It provides a wonderful insight into stamp vending and massive thanks are due to the original writers and BL/FMP for making this material available to us.

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Manufacturers to 1928

The following companies were involved in early SVM production for the period 1858-1928.

Abel Stamp Automatic Co. Ltd, Germany. Abel produced a pair of trial postal vending machines in 1907 installed at GPO East dispensing either a 1d stamp or postcards. Not reliable, despite the number in use on the continent.

Balfour & Co. Ltd., London. This company was granted a licence in 1890 for the automatic vending of postcards and postage stamps.

British Automatic Stamp and Ticket Delivery Co. Ltd. (BASTDC), London. This Kermode-owned company was around from the early days of SVMs having been formed on 31 December 1907. On 22 November 1911 they signed a contract with the GPO to supply them with 100 machines. In 1928 BASTDC was reformed to become Hall Telephone Accessories and changes to manufacturing methods occurred at this point. Previously, polished and lacquered brass was heavily used in construction, whereas items became fabricated from sheet steel or were produced as nickel-plated stampings.

British Electric Automatic Machines Ltd. (BEAM), London. BEAM was the British offshoot of the German Abel Company.

Dickie and Brown, New Zealand. See the Kermode / Dickie and Brown entry below.

Hall Telephone Accessories (1928) Ltd, London. Incorporated on 21 January 1928 as Hall Telephone Accessories from the old BASTDC, it later became Associated Automation Ltd. HTA opened a factory in Dudden Hill Lane, grew in WWII and again in 1960 and had 920 staff by 1974, which was reduced by 1978 to 600. In 1994 it was listed as one of 633 subsidiaries of GEC-Marconi.

Kermode / Dickie and Brown, London / New Zealand. In 1906, Mrs Kermode demonstrated to the GPO a machine made by Robert J Dickie and John H Brown of New Zealand, along with engineer W Andrews who produced the first functioning model. Georgina Elizabeth Kermode and her sister Katrine Ellen Fawns were granted a British Patent under licence to Dickie, who Kermode had met on board a ship and had offered to help promote his machines. Eventually, the so-called Kermode machines were to be dominant in the British marketplace after she had set-up the British Stamp and Ticket Delivery Company Limited.

Other Terms for 'Stamp Vending Machine'

These days, the term stamp vending machine is almost in universal use within Britain. It has not always been the case, though....

English Language

These terms were found within the newspaper reports and other sources examined:

- Automatic Post Office
- Automatic Postage Stamp Delivery Machine
- Automatic Stamp Delivery Machine
- Automatic Stamp Machine
- Automatic Stamp Machinery
- Automatic Stamp Supply Machine
- Automatic Stamp Vending Machine
- Automatic Stamp Vendor
- Penny-in-the-Slot Automatic Stamp Machine
- Penny-in-the-Slot Stamp Machine
- Postage Stamp Automatic Machine
- Postage Stamp Issuing Machine
- Stamp Automatic
- Stamp Automatic Machine
- Stamp Issuing Machine
- Stamp Machine
- Stamp Selling Machine
- Stamp Vending Machine
- Stamp Vending Slot Machine

Foreign Language

These terms were found on a website and are logged here in case they are of future interest. Stupidly, they only showed the flag and did not name the country, so apologies if one or two are wrong! At least the spelling is correct, so will assist searching:

| | |
|----------------|---|
| Czech Republic | Predajne Automaty na Znamky |
| Denmark | Frimaerkautomater |
| Estonia | Margiautomaadid |
| Finland | Postimerkkiautomaatit |
| France | Distributeurs Automatiques de Timbres |
| Germany | Briefmarkenautomaten |
| Hungary | Belyegarusito Automata |
| Italy | Distributori Automatici di Francobolli |
| Latvia | Pastmarku Tirdzniecibas Automati |
| Netherlands | Postzegelautomaten |
| Portugal | Distribuidores Automaticos de Selos |
| Romania | Distribuitoare Automate de Timbre |
| Slovakia | Pasto Zenklu Prekybos Automatai |
| Slovenia | Automaty do Sprzedazy Znaczkow |
| Spain | Maquinas Expenedoras Automaticas de Sellos |
| Sweden | Frimarksautomater |
| No idea! | Automatski Stroji za Prodajo Znamk Projedni Automaty na Znamky |

Pre-1906: Early Private Trials

| Code | Year | Mechanism | Power | Vended | Producer |
|----------------|----------|-----------|---------|---------|----------|
| Private trials | pre-1906 | Various | Various | Various | Various |

Many trials were undertaken with different coil SVMs that had varying degrees of success, or, more often than not, failure! All were of private origin and were not utilised by the GPO, instead most were sensibly just licenced for use by them.

The first postal vending machines sited in Britain away from Post Office premises were privately made and owned, appearing initially in the 1880s, although it was as early as 1857 that the first patent for a stamp-selling machine was applied for.

A piece in *The Times* for 8 May 1858 recorded that a postage stamp distributor had been invented by a Mr Derham of Wakefield. "The instrument was intended for the delivery of postage or other stamps singly to purchasers, so as to dispense with the attendance of an official for this purpose at post-offices. A penny being put into a hole near the top unlocks the instrument, and allows a handle to be used to such an extent as to protrude from between two rollers a single stamp, which the purchaser tears off. One stamp only can be had at a time, and a halfpenny or a smaller coin is rejected."

All of the original machines were extremely crude or complicated to use, mainly being manual with some of a clockwork or motor type. The Postcard and Stamped Letter Company in being granted a licence in 1884 had to agree to have a plate affixed to their machines stating that they had no link with the General Post Office. A later machine from c1890 was known as the Balfour and for one penny could dispense either a 1d stamp with paper and envelope or a one-half penny stamp and a stamped postcard. To effect a dispense it was necessary to pull a handle until a bell rang.

Machines located on Post Office property did not appear until 1891, when ten machines were affixed to letter boxes. These had been produced by the Stamp Distribution Syndicate, but complaints from the public that the mechanism was not always reliable resulted in their eventual removal, as they were bringing down the reputation of the GPO in the eyes of the public. An average of 3,103 stamps per day (each held within a memoranda book) had been sold between May and August 1891, proving that there was a need for such innovation.

| <i>Mechanism</i> | <i>Power</i> | <i>Vended</i> | <i>Producer</i> |
|------------------|--------------|---------------|-----------------|
| Various | Various | Various | Various |

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offices. A penny being put into a hole near the top unlocks the instrument, and allows a handle to be used to such an extent as to protrude from between two rollers a single stamp, which the purchaser tears off. One stamp only can be had at a time, and a halfpenny or a smaller coin is rejected.”

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Focus on the pages that follow is to be on machines used inside or outside of Post Office premises, or at their pillar boxes. These machines would have been officially commissioned or officially sanctioned (or tolerated!) by the General Post Office of the time.

1906: Kermode / Dickie and Brown Trials

| Code | Year | Mechanism | Power | Vended | Producer |
|-------|------|------------|------------|-------------------------|------------------|
| Trial | 1906 | Mechanical | Coin-freed | 1 x 1/2d or 1 x 1d coil | Kermode / D&B NZ |

In the summer of 1906 so-called "Kermode" machines, which were the brainchild of New Zealander's Dickie and Brown, had been imported by Mrs Georgina Kermode into Britain and appeared inside Post Offices as an experiment, initially at Threadneedle Street and the House of Commons branch offices. After modifications they subsequently appeared nationwide (termed Type A by the Post Office) and set the standard for most machines that followed.

On 6 November 1906 the Treasury gave authority for the hire of 12 machines following a successful demonstration of the Dickie and Brown machine by Mrs G Kermode to the GPO in the inner lobby of the House of Commons in August of that year. The test proved to be a great success, having lasted about a week.

| Mechanism | Power | Vended | Producer |
|------------|------------|-------------------------------|------------------|
| Mechanical | Coin-freed | 1 x 1/2d or 1 x 1d coil stamp | Kermode / D&B NZ |

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While the House of Commons trial had been extensively covered in the press, nothing has been seen in print about the Threadneedle Street trial. Could there be a confusion in the minds of early collectors with the REX affixing machine trial undertaken at Threadneedle Street during 19[year]?

www.nzedge.com records how the trial came about:

"Selling to the World - In 1906 Dickie sailed from Wellington to San Francisco on board the SS Sierra. He was working as a mail agent, but took his machine with him with hopes of securing the US patent. During the trip a wealthy and business-savvy Tasmanian woman named Georgina Kermode approached Dickie and asked about the international rights for the machine outside the US and Commonwealth.

They started a successful partnership with Dickie selling the machine in Britain, the US, Australia and New Zealand and Kermode owning the Continental rights. Together they had a winning product and also came up with novel and effective marketing ideas."

Sources:

Evening Telegraph, Monday 30 July 1906.

Hull Daily Mail, Monday 30 July 1906.

Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser, Monday 30 July 1906.

Western Times, Tuesday 31 July 1906.

Western Times, Friday 3 August 1906.

Grantham Journal, Saturday 4 August 1906.

Exeter and Plymouth Gazette, Friday 10 August 1906.

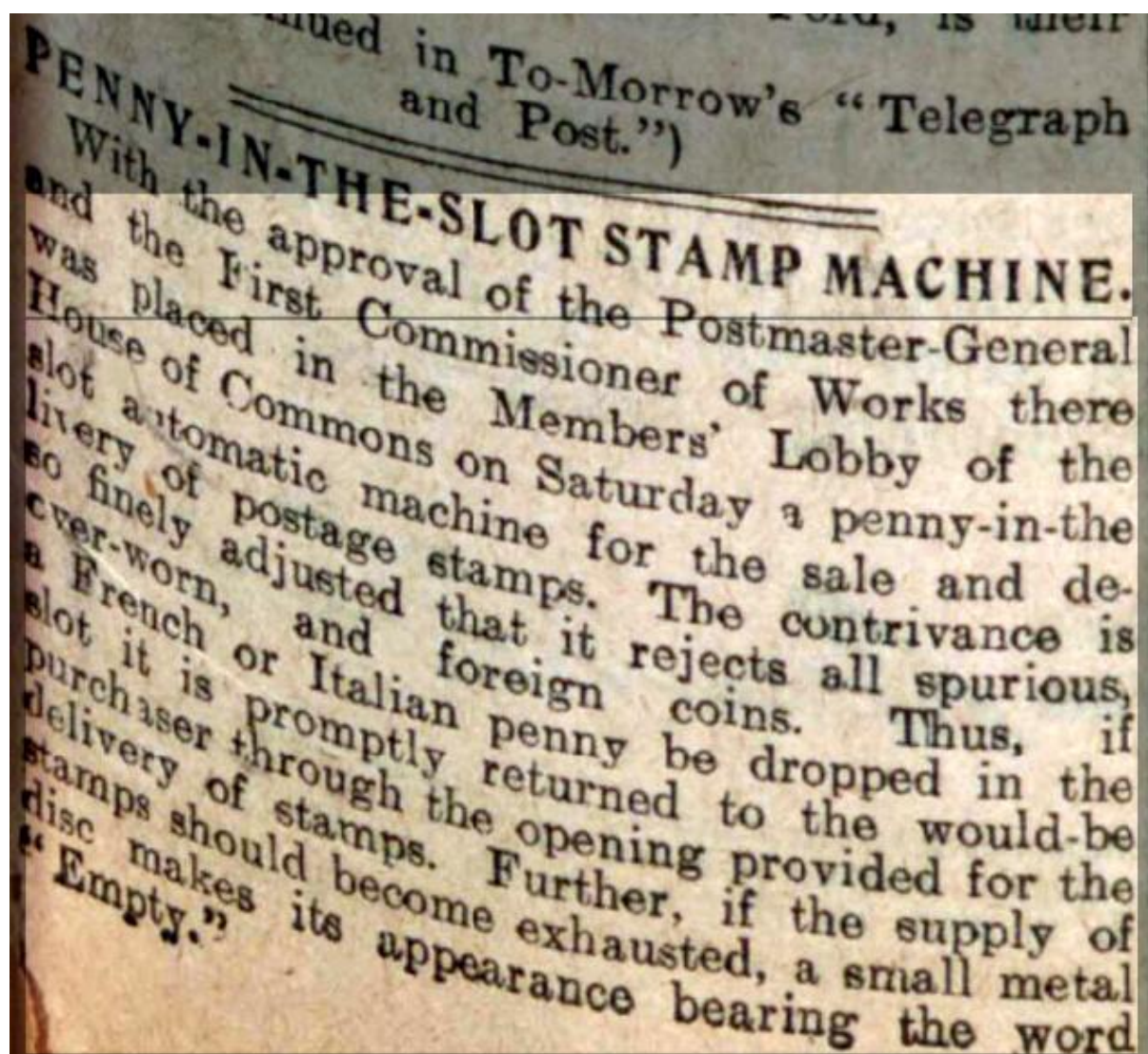
www.nzedge.com/heroes/dickie.html

"Selling to the World"

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<http://www.nzedge.com/heroes/dickie.html>



Evening Telegraph, Monday 30 July 1906

PENNY-IN-THE-SLOT POSTAGE STAMPS.

With the approval of the Postmaster-General and the First Commissioner of Works, there was placed in the Members' Lobby of the House of Commons on Saturday a penny-in-the-slot automatic machine for the sale and delivery of postage stamps.

Hull Daily Mail, Monday 30 July 1906

Mr. Sydney Buxton, the Postmaster-General, has had a test made at the House of Commons of a novel invention for the automatic sale of postage stamps. The machine was in operation throughout yesterday in the Inner Lobby, and attracted considerable attention. The test was, I am told, a complete success, and a large number of stamps was sold during the day. The Dickie automatic stamp supply machine is an ingenious and simple little contrivance on the slot principle, compact in form, incapable of being tampered with, and easily worked by anyone. The mechanism is so finely adjusted that it will reject all spurious, overworn, or foreign coins. For example, if a French or Italian penny be dropped in the slot it will be promptly returned to the user through the opening provided for the delivery of stamps.

Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser, Monday 30 July 1906

The Postmaster-General has had a test made at the House of Commons of an invention for the automatic sale of stamps. The invention—the Dickie automatic stamp supply machine—was in operation throughout Saturday, and the test is claimed to have been a complete success.

Western Times, Tuesday 31 July 1906

The Postmaster-General has had a test made at the House of Commons of an invention for the automatic sale of stamps. The invention—the Dickie automatic stamp supply machine—was in operation throughout Saturday, and the test is claimed to have been a complete success.

Western Times, Friday 3 August 1906

The Postmaster-General has had a test made at the House of Commons of an invention for the automatic sale of stamps. The invention was in operation throughout Saturday in the inner lobby, and attracted considerable attention. The test is claimed to have been a complete success.

Grantham Journal, Saturday 4 August 1906

—❖—

The Postmaster General has had a test made at the House of Commons of an invention for the automatic sale of stamps. The invention was in operation throughout Saturday, July 28, in the inner Lobby, and attracted considerable attention. The test is claimed to have been a complete success, and a large number of stamps were sold during the day.

Exeter and Plymouth Gazette, Friday 10 August 1906

1906: 12 Kermode Machines Hired by PO

| <u>Code</u> | <u>Year</u> | <u>Mechanism</u> | <u>Power</u> | <u>Vended</u> | <u>Producer</u> |
|--------------|-------------|-------------------|-------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Trial | 1906 | Mechanical | Coin-freed | 1 x 1/2d or 1 x 1d coil | Kermode / D&B NZ |

On 6 November 1906 the Treasury gave authority for the hire of 12 machines following a successful demonstration of the Dickie and Brown machine by Mrs G Kermode to the GPO in the inner lobby of the House of Commons in August of that year. The test proved to be a great success, having lasted about a week.

| <u>Mechanism</u> | <u>Power</u> | <u>Vended</u> | <u>Producer</u> |
|-------------------|-------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Mechanical | Coin-freed | 1 x 1/2d or 1 x 1d coil stamp | Kermode / D&B NZ |

On 6 November 1906 the Treasury gave authority for the hire by the Post Office of 12 machines following the successful demonstration earlier that year.

(Reading on, it will be seen that your authors write "1908 finally saw the extensive in-service trial of 12 hired machines". It is wondered whether these 1906 machines did not get installed until 1908, but it has not been possible to ascertain whether this is the case. In a period of such experimentation, there could well have been two lots of 12 machines.)

1907: Abel Trials

| <u>Code</u> | <u>Year</u> | <u>Mechanism</u> | <u>Power</u> | <u>Vended</u> | <u>Producer</u> |
|--------------|-------------|------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|
| Trial | 1907 | Clockwork motor | Coin activated | 1 x 1d coil stamp | ABEL |

The Abel Co. installed a postcard and a coil SVM at GPO East, London. The trial started on 14 February 1907 and finished on 13 July 1907 following complaints from the public about their unreliability.

| <u><i>Mechanism</i></u> | <u><i>Power</i></u> | <u><i>Vended</i></u> | <u><i>Producer</i></u> |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|--|------------------------|
| Clockwork motor | Coin activated | 1 x 1d coil stamp or 6 x Pack of Postcards | Abel |

The Abel Company installed a postcard SVM and a coil SVM at GPO East, St Martin's le Grand, London. the machines were located externally in the portico, enabling out of hours usage.



GPO East, St Martin's Le Grand, with its portico at centre

The trial started on Thursday 14 February 1907 and finished on 13 July 1907 following complaints from the public about the unreliability of the equipment.

Sources:

Cheltenham Chronicle, Saturday 16 February 1907.
Gloucester Citizen, Monday 18 February 1907.
North Devon Journal, Thursday 21 February 1907.
Evening Telegraph, Tuesday 26 March 1907.
Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser, Tuesday 26 March 1907.
The Derby Daily Telegraph, Wednesday 27 March 1907.
Dundee Courier, Wednesday 27 March 1907.
Western Times, Wednesday 27 March 1907.
The Derby Daily Telegraph, Tuesday 2 April 1907.
The Derby Daily Telegraph, Friday 10 May 1907.
Hull Daily Mail, Friday 10 May 1907.
Dundee Courier, 27 July 1907.
Gibbons Stamp Weekly, 2 May 1908.
Gibbons Stamp Weekly, 9 January 1909.

The Post Office wanted a building that would reflect its increased national importance, so it employed Sir Robert Smirke, the architect who had designed the British Museum.

Construction was complete in 1829 and the entire General Post Office was relocated from Lombard Street to their imposing new premises. Known as the 'General Post Office', the building combined the functions of administrative headquarters, sorting office and London's principal public Post Office.

The structure was nearly 400 feet long, with a Grecian-style frontage facing onto the east side of St Martins-le-Grand. At night, the exterior was lit by a thousand gas burners.

Running the width of the building – 130 feet from the Portico on St. Martin's-le-Grand through to Foster Lane at the rear – was a grand public hall with a 50-foot ceiling supported by six columns of Portland Stone.

BPMA WORDING



The British Installation.

STAMPS BY A SLOT MACHINE.

A USEFUL INVENTION.

Two automatic machines for the supply of penny stamps and sixpenny packets of post-cards were placed in the portico of the General Post-office, St. Martin's-le-Grand, on Thursday.

The machines are so accurately adjusted that they reject all coins but those for which they are designed, and any foreign pieces of money are returned.

It is proposed to add two further machines for the supply of halfpenny stamps and of packets of three post-cards for twopence, and should these be successful they will be widely adopted, for use particularly when post-offices are closed.

Cheltenham Chronicle, Saturday 16 February 1907

STAMP AUTOMATIC MACHINES.

The postage-stamp automatic machines have quite an official look beneath the portico of the General Post Office. But they are not exactly official, though the Post Office authorities, by way of experiment, are allowing them to be tried there. - If they come to be placed in railway stations and places of amusement a company will undertake the development of the service, as in the case of other automatic trading. Clearly, the public are pleased with the novelty, which is not so great a curiosity to those who have seen them in Berlin. One encounters them, too, in London clubs. It is, however, the new public machines about which people are now talking. People walk up to St. Martin's-le-Grand in order to put in a penny and see them working. That omnivorous machine has re-

ceived as many as 600 coppers in a single day. The mechanism is extremely simple. The weight of the coin brings forward the stamp, and there is a "window" to each machine, with a couple of stamps in it, to show the sort of commodities purveyed within.

Gloucester Citizen, Monday 18 February 1907

Two automatic machines for the supply of penny stamps and sixpenny packets of postcards were a few days ago placed in the portico of the General Post-Office, London, as an experiment. The machines are so accurately adjusted that they reject all coins but those for which they are designed, and any foreign pieces of money are returned. It is proposed to add two further machines for the supply of half-penny stamps and of packets of three postcards for twopence, and should these be successful they will be widely adopted, for use particularly when post-offices are closed. The idea, excellent as it is, is by no means new. Nearly twenty years ago an automatic machine, designed for Post-Office work, was produced by Mr. C. W. Vosper, who then resided at Barnstaple, and a full description of it was published in the *Journal* at the time. But while Mr. Vosper's machine could be adapted to the sale of stamps or postcards, the apparatus was intended to do away with the use of an adhesive stamp, the machine automatically making an impress on any letter placed in it, and thus obviating the necessity of cancellation at the Post-Office. The machine was so ingeniously constructed that the chance of fraud was reduced to the minimum, the arrangement for stamping the date on the letters being specially clever. But although the late Mr. William Vaughan, of Torrington, actively interested himself in the invention, the Post-Office authorities in London could not be induced to give it a trial. A more enterprising spirit now seems to prevail at St. Martin's-le-Grand, and while there is a chance of the automatic machine being given a place among Post-Office conveniences, perhaps Mr. Vosper may find it worth while to press the merits of his invention.

North Devon Journal, Thursday 21 February 1907

ouse of Commons, Tuesday.

The Speaker took the chair at 2.45.

Mr Buxton said the Post Office were making experiments with an automatic machine for the sale of postage stamps, and if the result proved satisfactory machines would be placed where they were most likely to meet the public demand.

Evening Telegraph, Tuesday 26 March 1907

Like the motor car, the automatic machine has come to stay. On the Continent its use is greater than in this country, for some of the railway stations afford marvellous facilities for obtaining various kinds of eatables and drinkables. British developments so far have been in the direction of "sweetness and light" in the form of penny-in-the-slot chocolate and gas. The POSTMASTER-GENERAL is now to be asked to sanction the use of automatic machines for the supply of penny and halfpenny stamps, so that the public can procure them when the ordinary sources of supply are closed. Edinburgh has already been the scene of such an experiment, but at times the machine was found sticking to the penny instead of the stamp to the letter. In general, however, the automatic machine has more than justified itself, and such an adjunct to the postal service of the country would be invaluable, especially on Sundays and Bank Holidays. The tendency of the age is to provide increased facilities for correspondence, and the automatic sale of stamps would be a development in the right direction. For the sake of the public, however, let the machine be so constructed that when it gets out of order a danger signal is given. The Post Office makes enough profit without defrauding its clients.

Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser, Tuesday 26 March 1907

(BY TELEGRAPH.)
TO-DAY'S PARLIAMENT.

House of Commons, Tuesday.

The Speaker took the chair at 2.50.

AUTOMATIC STAMP MACHINES

Mr. Liddell asked the Postmaster-General whether he would arrange for automatic machines for the supply of penny and halfpenny stamps, to be placed on the various railway stations so that the public might be enabled to procure stamps on Sundays, Bank Holidays, and at other times when the post offices were closed—Mr. Buxton said experiments were being made with a certain automatic machine, and if the result proved satisfactory machines would be placed where they were most likely to meet the public demand.

The Derby Daily Telegraph, Wednesday 27 March 1907

QUESTIONS IN COMMONS.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL informed Mr Liddell in the House of Commons yesterday that experiments were being made with certain automatic machines for the supply of postage stamps, and if the results were satisfactory machines would be placed at railway stations and other places where they were most likely to meet a public demand.

Dundee Courier, Wednesday 27 March 1907

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Automatic Post Offices.

Mr. Liddell asked the Postmaster-General whether he would arrange for automatic machines for the supply of penny and half-penny stamps to be placed on various railway stations, so that the public might be enabled to procure stamps on Sundays, bank holidays, and at other times when the Post Offices are closed?

Mr. Buxton replied that experiments were being made, and if the results were satisfactory machines would be placed where they were most likely to meet the public demand. A perfect machine had not been made.

Western Times, Wednesday 27 March 1907

Among the many innovations and experiments which the Post Office is making under the present regime, one of the most interesting is the trial to which the authorities are putting automatic machines for the supply of stamps and postcards. For about a month two of these machines have been in operation in the portico of the General Post Office in London, and, although no official report as to their success is available, it is believed they have been working well, and they are of particular service on Sundays, when post-

offices are closed. The chief drawback of most automatic machines—the liability to fraud by means of bad coins—has been eliminated by this machine, which, in ingenious fashion, returns all coins but the genuine, whether they be bent, foreign, or specially manufactured. The two which have been on trial supply penny stamps and sixpenny packets of post-cards; and coins which differ only slightly, and scarcely perceptibly from the necessary penny or sixpence are ignominiously returned to the would-be purchaser having run through the machine without any effect. Another advantage of this invention is that no lever or handle has to be manipulated, the machinery being worked entirely by the weight of the coin.

Derby Daily Telegraph, Tuesday 2 April 1907

A postal reform the public may soon see will be the establishment of automatic stamp machines, which have been tried at St. Martin's and found wanting. When the machine is perfected it will be possible for a man to obtain his penny stamp without that bothering counter delay in a busy post-office which is so trying to a business man in a hurry. As at present tried the machine cannot be guaranteed to give the purchaser a stamp for his money. Sometimes they do not respond to the gentle pressure of the coin. On the other hand the benefit does not always remain on the side of the machine. The other day one of these patents poured forth three and sixpenny-worth of stamps, to the great joy of the lucky visitor who had ventured a penny. This, however, was an exception. As a rule the stamp machine has not been the sufferer in its brief business transaction with the public.

Derby Daily Telegraph, Friday 10 May 1907

* * *

He was considering the supply of stamps by automatic machines, and experiments were being made. Some of these machines took the penny and gave no stamp (laughter). That he did not so much object to, but he did object to the machine which took it into its head suddenly to disgorge 3s 6d in stamps without receiving even a penny.—The Postmaster-General in Parliament, yesterday.

* * *

Hull Daily Mail, Friday 10 May 1907

at in future these movements of
steers shall take place on week days.
The automatic machines which for
months past have been mechanically re-
moving stamps at the General Post Office
have been removed. They were a great
inconvenience after closing hours and on Sunday,
it is on record that 96,000 stamps
have been sold through their instrumen-
tality. The Postmaster - General has
another machine under consideration
which will replace the old contrivance.

Dundee Courier, 27 July 1907

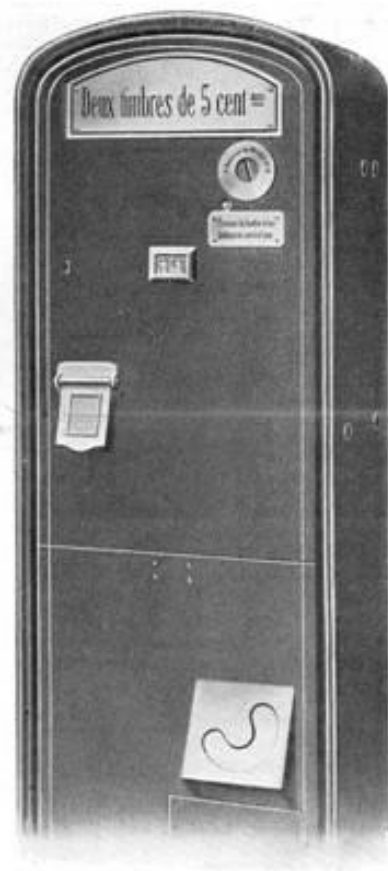
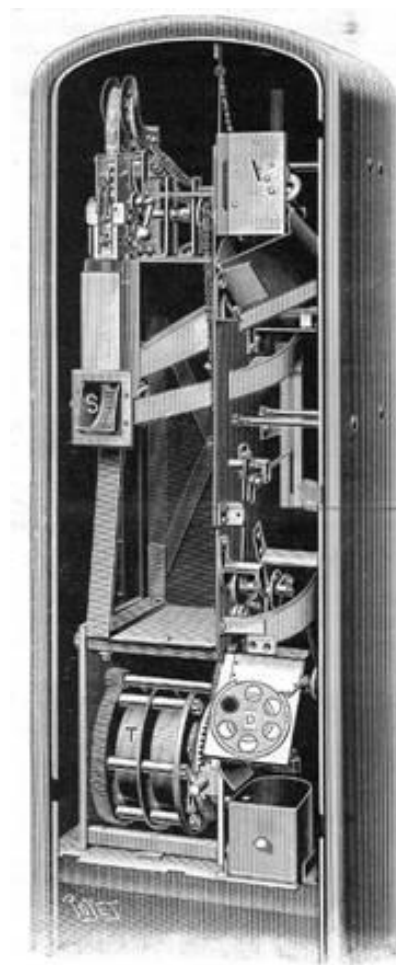
French Equivalent ABEL Machine Installation

1908 'Automatic Machine for Stamps'

To add to the fairly frequent inventions of the last few years of machines for distributing stamps automatically, there is yet another at work in a Parisian post office. The machine in use only distributes stamps of 10 centimes, which are placed in the machine in rolls of 500. A 10 centime piece is placed in a slot, and a lever depressed, when a single stamp is delivered from another slot. When the machine is empty, a bell rings to call an employee to refill it.

I should think that a machine of this description would be rather more trouble than it is worth. Stamps would have to be specially printed in rolls, and if it only held 500 it would probably suffer from chronic emptiness; in London, at least, the bell would not make a great difference. Post office employees are getting too accustomed to the telephone to take any notice of such a mundane occurrence as the ringing of a bell!

Gibbons Stamp Weekly, 2 May 1908



1908 - 10c dispense

[Distributeur de timbres à 10 centimes] : [photographie de presse] / [Agence Rol]

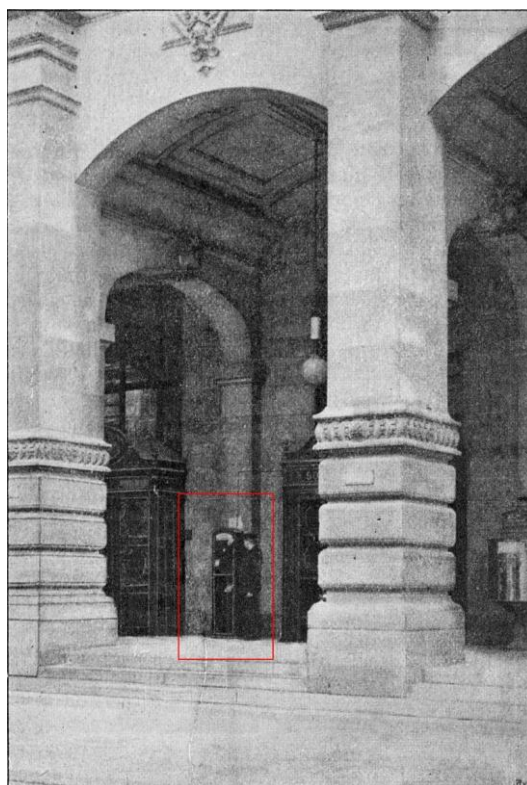


Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

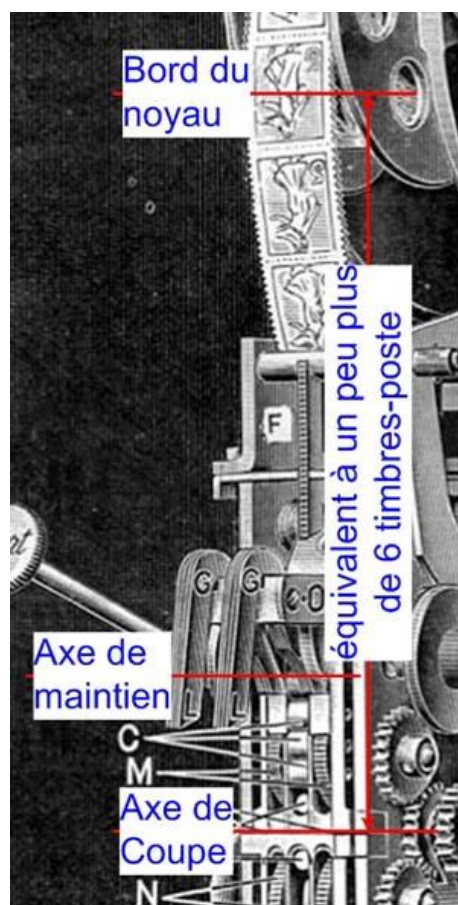
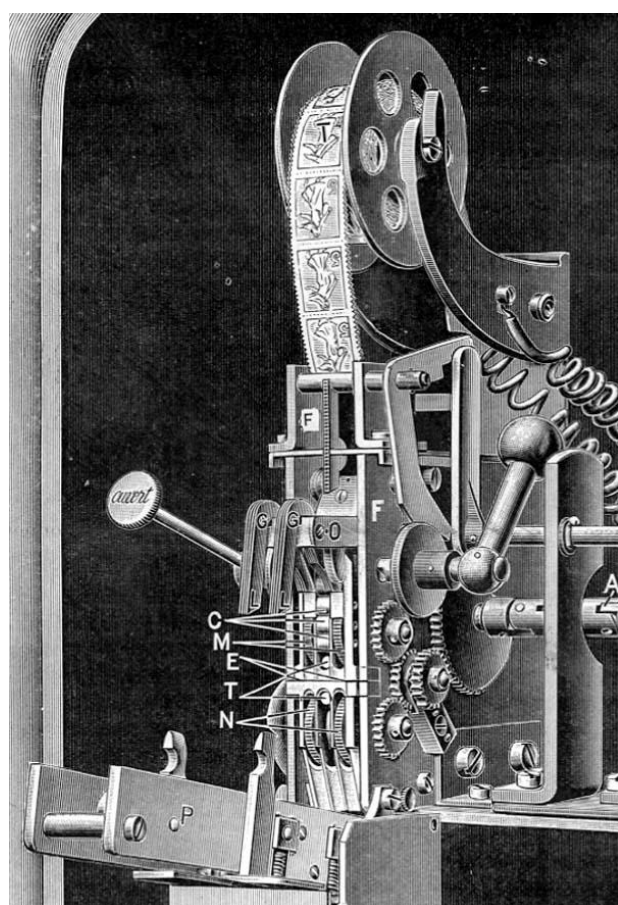
1908 - 10c dispense



DISTRIBUTEUR DES TIMBRES. — Type du distributeur automatique de timbres-postes. Deux de ces appareils nouveaux fonctionnent à la Poste centrale, rue du Louvre.



1908 - 10c dispense



1908 - 10c dispense

German Equivalent ABEL Machine Installation

1908 'Automatic Stamp-vending Machine'

THE sale of postage stamps by automatic machines has been a problem which has offered more difficulties than one would believe for very many years past. The postal authorities of all countries are naturally very interested in any means of distributing stamps to the public in a simpler and cheaper way than by sale over the counter.

Numberless automatic machines have been installed on trial, but have proved unsatisfactory owing to the fact that in all machines the user was obliged to help them to perform their work.(e.g. pull a handle, etc.). It followed that the part of the machine operated .by the user was very liable to get out of order if improperly used.

A few months ago two engineers, Messrs. Abel and Oehring, succeeded in overcoming this defect: the same gentlemen had already made another pattern of an automatic stamp-vending machine in 1905. Their new machine requires absolutely no co-operation of the user to make it do its work. The apparatus is being marketed by a syndicate, under the name of "Internationale Abelschen – Briefmarken – Automaten – Vertriebsgesellschaft" of Berlin and works simply by dropping the particular coin for which the machine is made into a slot.

Bad money is delivered back by the machine, as also are pieces of other than the proper value. Should several coins be put in at once, the machine operates as though one coin only had been used; it supplies the stamp desired and. returns the rest of the coins. As soon as the supply of stamps (500 or 1000) is exhausted, a bell is rung automatically in the nearest post office.

The German postal authorities have had three of these machines working in each of thirty-five post offices for some time, and up to April 1, 1908, no less than 15,300,000 stamps had been sold by them. It speaks well for the machines that the loss due to bad money and other causes is only one in 20,000, while the average loss when stamps are sold over the counter is one in 1250.

It is stated that the Abel machines are to be installed in all German post offices, and that many of the machines have been supplied on trial to the British and French Governments. – *Philatelisten-Zeitung*

Gibbons Stamp Weekly, 9 January 1909



Mexican Equivalent ABEL Machine Installation



(Machine held in postal museum, Mexico)



(Machine held in postal museum, Mexico)

1907: BASTDC Trials

| <u>Code</u> | <u>Year</u> | <u>Mechanism</u> | <u>Power</u> | <u>Vended</u> | <u>Producer</u> |
|--------------|-------------|-------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| Trial | 1907 | Mechanical | Coin activated | 1 x 1/2d or 1 x 1d coil | BASTDC |

Trialled from 1907 following various modifications by BASTDC, which included a change to the coin acceptance method; much was learnt about their operation and maintenance. The first machine had been installed at the House of Commons on 25 July 1907.

By 1911, the GPO had placed a contract with BASTDC for 100 pairs of 1/2d and 1d machines and payment to BASTDC was based on the number of stamps sold per machine. Some machines were modified in 1918 following an increase in the inland letter postal rates that year to 11/2d. The 1d and 11/2d machines were adapted to dispense a 2d stamp in exchange for two 1d coins in 1920 following a further rise in postal rates and 106 extra pairs of 1/2d and 2d machines were purchased by the GPO.

They were all installed in pairs to give maximum flexibility to the customer and 30 of these pairs continued in service until at least 1937. Experiments with these machines outside Post Offices proved that they required further modifications to prevent dampness and so both the stamp roll and the feeding mechanism were then enclosed in a chamber.

| <u>Mechanism</u> | <u>Power</u> | <u>Vended</u> | <u>Producer</u> |
|-------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Mechanical | Coin activated | 1 x 1/2d or 1 x 1d coil stamp | BASTDC |

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Sources:

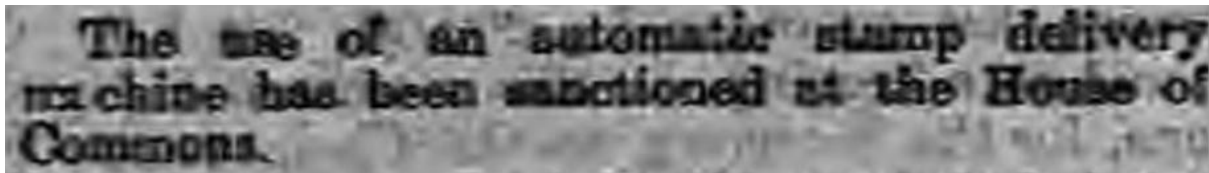
Luton Times and Advertiser, Friday 16 August 1907.

Gloucester Journal, Saturday 17 August 1907.

www.nzedge.com/heroes/dickie.html

"In 1907, in an attempt to gain British approval for the vending machines, Dickie had one of the machines set up in the lobby of the House of Commons where, according to the 1960 Dominion feature, it was a popular curiosity: "Frock-coated members stopped and stared as they passed through the lobby... like children at the fair, the venerable Edwardians could not resist the temptation to try out the world's first practical stamp-selling machine."

<http://www.nzedge.com/heroes/dickie.html>



Luton Times and Advertiser, Friday 16 August 1907

Some time ago the Post Office adopted an ingenious patented machine which distributed single stamps. By placing a penny in the slot the stamp was produced. It became very popular, and is at work to-day in most of the London Clubs and other places of public resort. The enthusiasm of the Post Office authorities was, however, checked by discovery among the coins of a considerable proportion of foreigners. Holiday-makers returning from the Continent with a surplussage of coppers found the stamp box a convenient and expeditious method of getting rid of them. French pennies, in particular, abounded, the aggregate representing a considerable reduction on a month's takings. Withdrawal of the machines, practically determined upon, has been averted by an improvement in the mechanism. There has just been placed in the Lobby of the House of Commons an improved machine which counteracts the "laches" whether of the careless or the designing operator. If he places in the slot a penny of the precise weight of a good English coin he will get his stamp. If the coin be defaced or of foreign currency it will be politely returned to him by another aperture. The working of this ingenious mechanism gives huge delight to hon. Members bored with the twin Land Bills and wearied with all-night sittings.

Gloucester Journal, Saturday 17 August 1907

1908: 12 Hired Machines Installed

| <u>Code</u> | <u>Year</u> | <u>Mechanism</u> | <u>Power</u> | <u>Vended</u> | <u>Producer</u> |
|-------------|-------------|------------------|----------------|-------------------------|-----------------|
| Trial | 1908 | Mechanical | Coin activated | 1 x 1/2d or 1 x 1d coil | BASTDC |

1908 finally saw the extensive in-service trial of 12 hired machines, six used in London Post Offices and six in provincial towns.

| <u>Mechanism</u> | <u>Power</u> | <u>Vended</u> | <u>Producer</u> |
|------------------|----------------|-------------------------------|-----------------|
| Mechanical | Coin activated | 1 x 1/2d or 1 x 1d coil stamp | BASTDC |

1908 finally saw the extensive in-service trial of 12 hired machines, six used in London Post Offices and six in provincial towns.

(As mentioned previously, there is the possibility that these trial installations had been delayed from 1906.)

Nothing found in the press.

1909: First Model Installed Outside a PO

| <u>Code</u> | <u>Year</u> | <u>Mechanism</u> | <u>Power</u> | <u>Vended</u> | <u>Producer</u> |
|-------------|-------------|------------------|----------------|-------------------------|-----------------|
| Trial | 1909 | Mechanical | Coin activated | 1 x 1/2d or 1 x 1d coil | BASTDC |

January 1909 saw the maintenance of the machines by the Post Office Engineering Department for the first time and the installation of a pair of indoor-use machines *outside* 294 Regent Street, London, working with moderate success for many years.

| <u>Mechanism</u> | <u>Power</u> | <u>Vended</u> | <u>Producer</u> |
|------------------|----------------|-------------------------------|-----------------|
| Mechanical | Coin activated | 1 x 1/2d or 1 x 1d coil stamp | BASTDC |

January 1909 saw the maintenance of the machines by the Post Office Engineering Department for the first time and the installation of a pair of indoor-use machines *outside* 294 Regent Street, London, working with moderate success for many years.

In February 1914, the Assistant Postmaster General, Captain Norton is quoted as saying in a House of Commons debate that he was "considering the desirability of installing automatic stamp vending machines outside post offices", but that "some time must elapse before a decision could be reached".

Norton made no reference to the 1907 Abel installations at GPO East and the 1909 trial at Regent Street PO, London, both of which comprised externally located machines.

Sources:

Aberdeen Journal, Wednesday 25 February 1914.

AUTOMATIC STAMP VENDORS.

Mr Cowan asked the Postmaster-General whether he would consider the desirability of making arrangements to afford the public postal facilities at all sub-post offices where other business was carried on during the hours of closing under the Shops Act, and whether the inconvenience to the public of being unable to buy postage stamps before or after closing hours could be mitigated by the provision of automatic or penny-in-the-slot machines placed in such positions as to be always accessible to purchasers.

Captain Norton (Assistant-Postmaster-General) said there was no power to keep open for post office business during the statutory weekly half-holiday a non-telegraph sub-post office carried on in a shop unless it could be certified that the exigencies of the postal service required that post office business should be transacted during the period in question. If the hon member had any particular case in mind, he would be glad to have inquiry made as to the circumstances. He was considering the desirability of installing automatic stamp vending machines outside post offices, but some time must elapse before a decision could be reached.

Aberdeen Journal, Wednesday 25 February 1914

1910: KEB Trials New Model

| <u>Code</u> | <u>Year</u> | <u>Mechanism</u> | <u>Power</u> | <u>Vended</u> | <u>Producer</u> |
|--------------|-------------|-------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|-----------------|
| Trial | 1910 | Mechanical | Coin activated | Coil stamp [type?] | BEAM |

A machine was installed on 19 November 1910 at the GPO King Edward Building, but it was not found to be acceptable and was scrapped.

| <u>Mechanism</u> | <u>Power</u> | <u>Vended</u> | <u>Producer</u> |
|-------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|-----------------|
| Mechanical | Coin activated | Coil stamp [type?] | BEAM |

A machine was installed on 19 November 1910 at the GPO King Edward Building, but it was not found to be acceptable and was scrapped.

Sources:

Evening Telegraph, Monday 7 November 1910.

Evening Telegraph, Thursday 17 November 1910.

G.P.O. MOVES.

The General Post Office has "moved."

Its transference to King Edward Street was commenced last night, and to-day the large staff of sorters and postmen are working in the commodious new buildings which have been erected on the site of the old Christ's Hospital.

There was no "moving" in the house-re-mover's sense of the term. The new offices were all ready, and all that was done was to finish Sunday night's work at St Martin's-le-Grand and start Monday's at King Edward Street.

The only part of the old building where work is still being carried on is the public office, which will close its doors to-night.

Evening Telegraph, Monday 7 November 1910.

Note how KEB had been opened for business that day. It would explain why SVMs were tried there.

The automatic postage stamp delivery machines are being withdrawn by the Post Office.

Evening Telegraph, Thursday 17 November 1910.

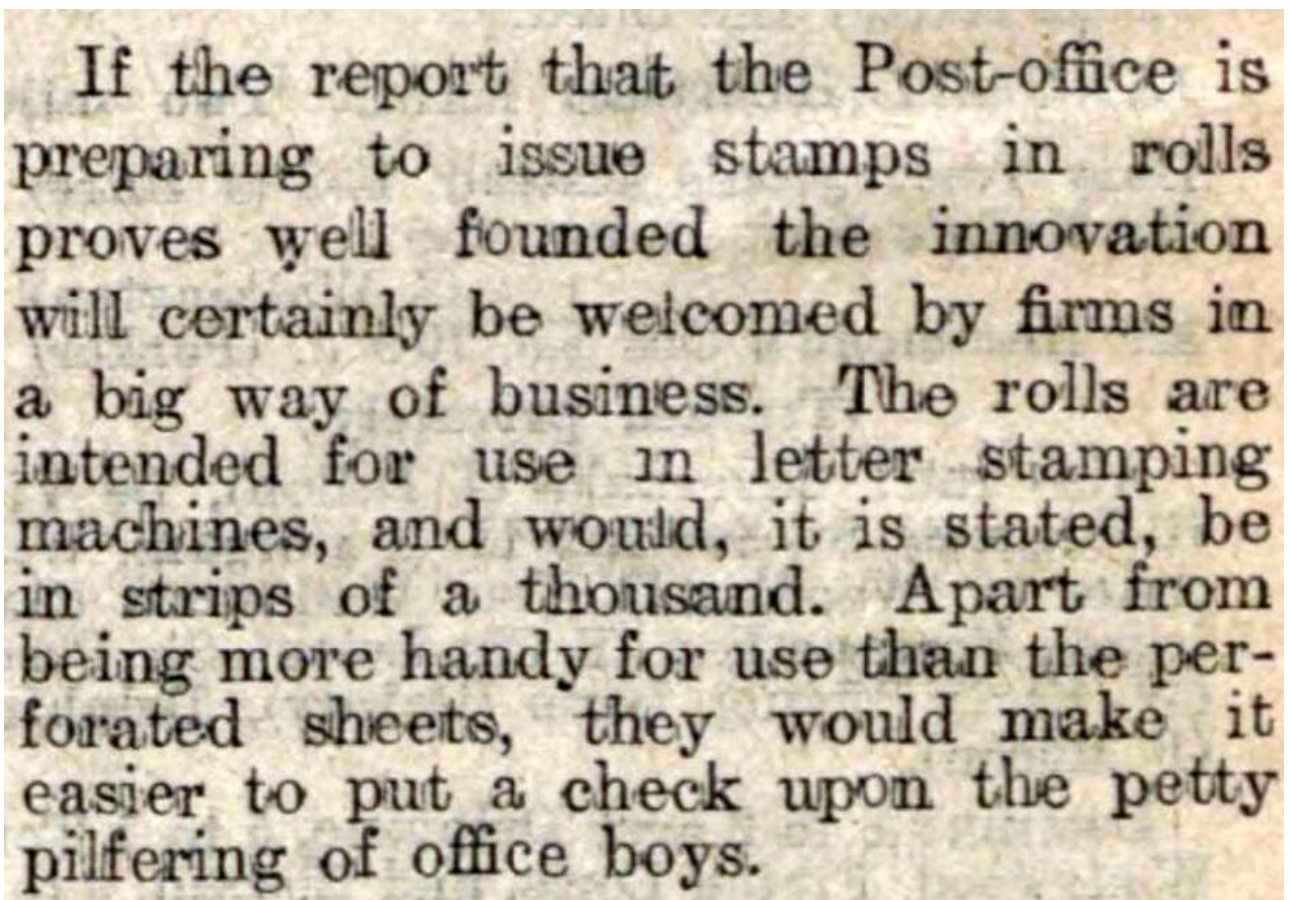
Strangely, this is two days BEFORE the installation, unless the 19th is an error, of course.

1911: Potential for Stamps in Coils of 1,000

This was not reported in the original article, so there is no "base" text to start from.

Sources:

Exeter and Plymouth Gazette, Monday 16 January 1911.



If the report that the Post-office is preparing to issue stamps in rolls proves well founded the innovation will certainly be welcomed by firms in a big way of business. The rolls are intended for use in letter stamping machines, and would, it is stated, be in strips of a thousand. Apart from being more handy for use than the perforated sheets, they would make it easier to put a check upon the petty pilfering of office boys.

Exeter and Plymouth Gazette, Monday 16 January 1911

1911: BASTDC Improves Mechanism

| <u>Code</u> | <u>Year</u> | <u>Mechanism</u> | <u>Power</u> | <u>Vended</u> | <u>Producer</u> |
|--------------|-------------|-------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| Trial | 1911 | Mechanical | Coin activated | 1 x 1/2d or 1 x 1d coil | BASTDC |

On 16 February 1911, an improved machine appeared at the same location as the 1910 failed trial and this was found to be more popular with the public than the Kermode machines located nearby. The trial machine was in-situ until 1914.

By 1911, the GPO had placed a contract with BASTDC for 100 pairs of 1/2d and 1d machines and payment was based on the number of stamps sold per machine, i.e. on a commission basis. Some machines were modified in 1918 following an increase in the inland letter postal rates that year to 11/2d. The 1d and 11/2d machines were adapted to dispense a 2d stamp in exchange for two 1d coins in 1920 following a further rise in postal rates and 106 extra pairs of 1/2d and 2d machines were purchased by the GPO.

In 1920 the agreement with BASTDC was terminated and the GPO purchased the machines outright.

| <u>Mechanism</u> | <u>Power</u> | <u>Vended</u> | <u>Producer</u> |
|-------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------|
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In 1920 the agreement with BASTDC was terminated and the GPO purchased the machines outright.

Sources:

Newcastle Journal, Thursday 12 January 1911.
Newcastle Journal, Thursday 26 January 1911.

The automatic postage stamp-vending machine has passed through the trial stage in London with success, and a licence has been obtained by the British Electric Automatic Machines, Ltd., of Caxton House, S.W., enabling the company to erect their machines for public use in Great Britain, and shortly it is proposed to place 100 of these machines in various public positions in London. The frames of the machines will be devoted to advertising purposes. Arrangements are being made with railway companies in this country, and one machine is to be used at Newcastle by the North-Eastern Railway Company. The machines are also being adopted in India, Egypt, and South Africa, and in Russia and Germany.

Newcastle Journal, Thursday 12 January 1911

AUTOMATIC TICKET ISSUE

INTERESTING MACHINE AT CENTRAL STATION.

There was put into use yesterday at the Central Railway Station, Newcastle, an electric machine which not only dates tickets automatically, but prints them as well. It has been erected by the British Electric Automatic Machines, Ltd., of London, and is the first of the kind, we understand, to be used at North-Eastern stations. The machine is equipped for the instantaneous printing of tickets for journeys to Gateshead, Felling, and Pelaw; Jarrow, Tyne Dock, High Shields and South Shields, and Sunderland.

There are five rolls of ticket paper, and the printing of the ticket is done by the pressing of a button on the front of the machine over the name of the place for which a ticket is required. The ticket drops into a trough immediately after the button is pressed, and by turning a handle on an indicator ten, twenty, thirty, forty, or fifty tickets can be printed at one time, so that when there is heavy traffic the rapidity with which tickets can be given out will be greatly accelerated.

Newcastle Journal, Thursday 26 January 1911

Although this is not SVM, but ticket issuing, it is included out of interest to show what the company was also involved in.

1912: Continuous Coils an Increasing Possibility

This was not reported in the original article, so there is no "base" text to start from.

On 12 November 1912, Mr Alan Sykes asked the Postmaster-General in a House of Commons debate whether he would consider "the advisability of printing the rolls of 500 postage stamps in a continuous strip instead of piecing the strips together as at present at every twenty stamps, which not only entails labour but is also apt to cause irregular running in the stamp machines in which these rolls are used".

Mr Masterman responded that "This matter is under the consideration of the Board of Inland Revenue, who are the Department now charged with the manufacture of stamps".

Sources:

Hansard: HC Deb 12 November 1912 vol 43 c1815.

<http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1912/nov/12/postage-st...>

Postage Stamps (Printing).

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Postage Stamps (Printing). (Hansard, 12 November 1912)

<http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1912/nov/12/postage-st...>

1921: Type A Coil Machine Introduced

| <u>Code</u> | <u>Year</u> | <u>Mechanism</u> | <u>Power</u> | <u>Vended</u> | <u>Producer</u> |
|-------------|-------------|------------------|----------------|-------------------------|-----------------|
| A | 1921 | Mechanical | Coin activated | 1 x 1/2d or 1 x 2d coil | BASTDC |

Following modifications in 1920, a further order for 240 pairs of 1/2d and 2d machines was placed by the GPO. As these were the first general-purpose machine, i.e. they could be used both internally and externally, they received the designation "Type A".

It was 1921 when SVMs started appearing *outside* Post Offices to service customers requiring a stamp out of hours or at times when the counter service was busy. Sir William Preece FRS (1834-1913), who had retired from the GPO as its Engineer-in-Chief, became interested in pursuing the development of these SVMs and is credited with being instrumental in forming the company that pursued the British patent rights and for developing and improving machines through experience in use.

| <u>Mechanism</u> | <u>Power</u> | <u>Vended</u> | <u>Producer</u> |
|------------------|----------------|-------------------------------|-----------------|
| Mechanical | Coin activated | 1 x 1/2d or 1 x 2d coil stamp | BASTDC |

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It was 1921 when SVMs started appearing *outside* Post Offices (except for the 1907 Abel and the 1909 Regent Street PO trials) to service customers requiring a stamp out of hours or at times when the counter service was busy. Sir William Preece FRS (1834-1913), who had retired from the GPO as its Engineer-in-Chief, became interested in pursuing the development of these SVMs and is credited with being instrumental in forming the company that pursued the British patent rights and for developing and improving machines through experience in use.

Nothing found in the press.

1922: Type A1 Coil Machine Introduced

| <u>Code</u> | <u>Year</u> | <u>Mechanism</u> | <u>Power</u> | <u>Vended</u> | <u>Producer</u> |
|-------------|-------------|------------------|----------------|-------------------------|-----------------|
| A1 | 1922 | Mechanical | Coin activated | 1 x 1/2d or 1 x 1d coil | BASTDC |

Following reductions in rates, machines reverted to 1/2d / 1d operating. This SVM was in production until 1924, when Type B came into service.

| <u>Mechanism</u> | <u>Power</u> | <u>Vended</u> | <u>Producer</u> |
|------------------|----------------|-------------------------------|-----------------|
| Mechanical | Coin activated | 1 x 1/2d or 1 x 1d coil stamp | BASTDC |

Following reductions in rates, machines reverted to 1/2d and 1d operating. This SVM was in production until 1924, when Type B came into service.

Type A set the standard for most machines that followed right up until the computer age.

Nothing found in the press.

1924: Type B Coil Machine Introduced

| <u>Code</u> | <u>Year</u> | <u>Mechanism</u> | <u>Power</u> | <u>Vended</u> | <u>Producer</u> |
|-------------|-------------|-------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| B | 1924 | Mechanical | Coin activated | 1 x 1/2d or 1 x 1d coil | BASTDC |

1/2d or 1d coins (the final modified version accepted 3d coins) activated these machines, which dispensed single stamps from vertical coils. A total of 1500 extra pairs of 1/2d and 1d machines incorporating all the modifications made to Type A were purchased between 1924 and 1929. 1928 saw BASTDC reforming as HTA. With the prospect of varying face values of stamps being dispensed, the brass casting no longer bore the large 1/2d or 1d.

| <u>Mechanism</u> | <u>Power</u> | <u>Vended</u> | <u>Producer</u> |
|-------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------|
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With the prospect of varying face values of stamps being dispensed, the brass casting no longer bore the large 1/2d or 1d.

Nothing found in the press.

1927: Stamp Machines on Pillar Boxes

This was not reported in the original article, so there is no "base" text to start from.

On 15 November 1927, Colonel Day asked the Postmaster-General in a House of Commons debate whether "any arrangements have been made by his Department for the erection of stamp machines on pillar boxes; and whether he will state the cost of these machines?".

Sir W Mitchell-Thomson responded that "arrangements are being made, as an experimental measure, for a small number of stamp-selling machines to be affixed to pillar boxes. As regards the cost, I would refer the hon. Member to the answer given to his question on the 5th April last".

Sources:

HC Deb 15 November 1927 vol 210 c836W.

http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/written_answers/1927/nov/15/stam...

STAMP-SELLING MACHINES.

HC Deb 15 November 1927 vol 210 c836W

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STAMP-SELLING MACHINES. (Hansard, 15 November 1927)

http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/written_answers/1927/nov/15/stam...

In 1928 Hall Telephone Accessories was formed and took over SVM manufacturing and many other producers have followed in their wake to this day.

By this time, the early years of coil SVMs was over and this equipment had become a permanent and useful part of the GPOs arsenal of services to its customers, adding to the bewildering array of street vending automation that could dispense anything from peppermints to cigarettes and razor blades to railway platform tickets, plus many other types of small packaged product, at all hours of the day or night.

Stamps in booklets were also soon to be officially introduced by the Post Office.