

British Stamp Vending Machines

An Update

Glenn H. Morgan and Graham Eyre take a further look at British stamp vending machines.

The Spring 2007 issue of *Cross Post* featured an article we compiled on the history of British stamp vending machines. This follow-up article continues the story with new discoveries following further research.

Section One: BPMA's holdings and missing machines

The opportunity has been taken to: a) log for potential researchers the models held by BPMA; and b) to record those models yet to be acquired in the hope that readers can assist in filling gaps in BPMA's holdings.

a) Types held by BPMA

Shortly after the first article appeared we were involved with Rebecca Thomlinson, assistant BPMA curator at the time, in helping to fully catalogue the holdings of SVMs the BPMA held and to identify duplicates suitable for disposal to other museums or for transfer into the handling collection.

Publication of the article proved to be a useful exercise, especially as our dealings with Dave Miles of Avery Weigh-Tronix Global enabled us to subsequently arrange for the transfer of a dozen previously missing machine types, including a Type S and a Type T, to BPMA holdings. Similarly, Mark Edmundson of Thomas Automatics ensured that a unique prototype of the Type R book machine was saved from destruction.

This type of interaction between BPMA and its Friends who possess specialist knowledge in particular areas is vital if all eras, particularly the present one, are to be fully represented in what is an age of rapid change. Other Friends are encouraged to let BPMA know (via info@postalheritage.org.uk or on 020 7239 2570) if they

Coil Machines:		Type	Year
Type	Year	F2	1977
B2	c1930/1	H	1979
B4	1935	J	1979
B6	1958	FMJ	c1983
G1	1969	K	c1985
G2	1971	K1	1986
G3	1975	K2	1987
Frama	1984	L	1987
1712T	c1988	Premier	1987
VSS1	1989	VSS2	1989
CSS4	1993	B52	-
PASS	2004	P2	-
		P4	-
		R	1995
		S	2002
		T	c2003
Booklet Machines:			
F	1957		
F1	1971		

Coil machines:		Booklet machines:	
Type	Year	Type	Year
Private	pre-1906	Trial	1931
Trial	1906	Trial	1937
Trials	1907	Trial	1940
Trial	1910	D	1947
A	1921	E	1951
A1	1922	Trial	1955
B	1924	Marquis	1987
B1	1929	Trials	1988
B3	1932	SIFM	by 1991
B5	1947	HLFM	by 1991
C	1926	Mini	c1992
C1	1930	PCM1625B	1994
C2	c1930/1	P1	1995
C3	1932	P3	-
C4	1935	Q1	-
D6	1951	Q2	-
D7	-	DCD1	2000
Trial	1987	DCD2	2000
Trial	1989	Prototype	c2005
DC22	1993		

learn of any postal-related material that becomes available. The museum has an acquisitions policy that will help to decide whether an item moves forward the particular story, so understandably not everything can be accepted into the holdings – but don't let that stop you from offering items.

Below left there appears a straightforward listing of model types, which needs to be read in conjunction with the BPMA Online Catalogue (found at www.postalheritage.org.uk/page/collections) and the original *Cross Post* article to avoid needless repetition within these pages.

Viewing these machines is possible by arranging an appointment with BPMA staff using either of the above contact details. All machines are currently located at the Museum Store in Debden, Essex.

b) Model types yet to be acquired by BPMA

The models listed at the top of this column are potentially lurking in dark corners of garages and sheds, as many would have been liberated by postal staff and others when the SVMs became surplus to requirements.

If you either own or know of the whereabouts of any of the machine types listed below, then BPMA may be in a position to offer them a good home if they are no longer required by you. Even if the SVM is not able to be donated to the museum, then details of where it is located would be of use, especially if imagery can be supplied to enable differences between model types to be recorded.

Section Two: Machine reports found in early magazines and newspapers

Many philatelic magazines and local and national newspaper reports were examined to track down information for this article. Some of the views being expressed at the time are quoted here, for with the benefit of hindsight they make for interesting reading.

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 May 8, 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 and/or complicated to use, mainly being manual with some of a clockwork or motor type. The General Post Office (GPO) in Great Britain was conducting trials of various machines in the early 1900s. Just like today, the philatelic press editors and contributors were not backward in conveying their views on the matter of stamp vending to the readership at large.

These journalists seem to have glossed over the 1906 machine that was trialled in the Threadneedle Street Post Office and within the House of Commons lobby. The

About 12 months ago a company was formed in England called the Stamp Distribution Company, with a capital of £150,000, with Mr J. Henniker Heaton as chairman. The object of the company was to develop a scheme for the automatic delivery of postage stamps at all hours of the day and night by means of a specially constructed machine. I have not heard that it has come into general use, but it was tried. The method was what is known as the "penny in the slot" machine, and by depositing the penny as usual the customer was immediately supplied with a penny stamp, a memorandum book, and an envelope. The profits of the company were expected to be derived from advertisements and from the sale of the patent rights all over the country.

Fig. 1



Fig. 2

following year saw Dickie permanently installing the latter machine, which according to a 1960 (yes, not 1906)

Dominion newspaper feature 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.'*

The following two years saw a dozen extra machines going into different locations across Britain.

1908 ~ Philatelic comment: 'Stamp Chatter by I. M. Perf'

The West-End Philatelist, July 1908

Nowadays, all sorts of articles including cigarettes, sweets, scent, and railway tickets can be obtained from automatic machines, and it is a matter for surprise to many people that these machines have not been adapted for the sale of postage stamps.

There is no doubt that they would be exceedingly useful,



Fig. 3

especially if placed in such public places as railway stations. Experiments have been made with these machines by the British postal authorities, but so far they have failed to act satisfactorily. The Postmaster-General, in referring to these experiments, remarked that though the pennies go in all right, stamps are not always forthcoming, though, on the other hand, one machine dispensed 3s6d worth of stamps before anyone put in a 1d at all!

Machines of the former type would, doubtless, result in a profit to the revenue, though they would hardly be

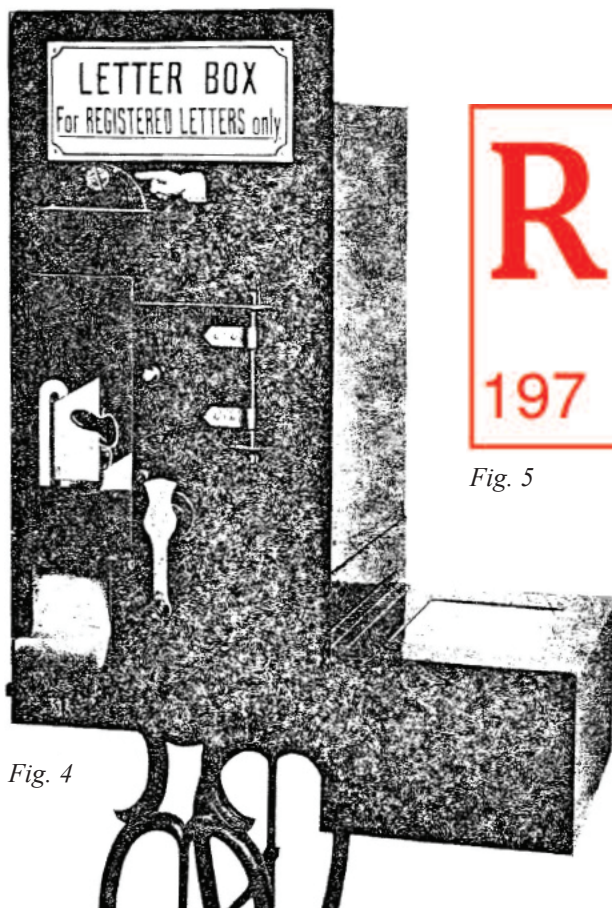


Fig. 4



Fig. 5

appreciated by the public, while those of the latter type would be a boon to the impecunious, but would not give unbounded satisfaction to the postal authorities.

What is wanted is a machine that will please post and public, and one of these will be perfected before long, we have no doubt. Automatic machines have been in use in New Zealand for some time, and apparently work quite satisfactorily, and the United States authorities are now experimenting in this direction.

1909 ~ Philatelic comment: 'Editorial'

The West-End Philatelist, August 1909

ALTHOUGH the use of automatic stamp-vending machines in this country has made little headway during the past ten years, they are extensively used in New Zealand and the United States. In the latter country various machines have been patented, and the Post Office issues stamps imperforate, so that they may be cut into strips for use in these. There is little doubt that the general adoption of automatic machines for the sale of 1/2d and 1d stamps in this country cannot be long deferred. These will certainly save an enormous amount of time in the despatch of business in our larger post offices, as anyone who has watched the unending stream of people who enter an office to purchase one stamp only, can testify. If these machines were in use, it would tend to lighten the work of the postal clerks and considerably relieve the congestion that is now the usual state of things at the counter of every busy office.

To meet the requirements of these stamp-vending machines, the sheets of stamps have to be cut into vertical strips, which are then pasted together to form a continuous band.

As the number of automatic machines grows, some new way of printing the stamps will have to be devised, so as to obviate the necessity of cutting the sheets into strips. Indeed, a gentleman occupying a high position in the United States

Government Bureau of Engraving and Printing predicts that in two years' time sheets of stamps will be entirely done away with, and all values will be sold in rolls, or on reels. From their introduction, in 1840, to the present day, stamps have always been printed in sheets, and the very idea of printing or selling them in rolls is revolutionary in the extreme. And yet, from the point of view of utility, it would be a step in the right direction, for only those who use a number of stamps know the time wasted in endeavouring to tear up a sheet into suitable strips, so that the stamps can be affixed quickly.

There are, of course, difficulties in the way of manufacture, but already the United States postal authorities are experimenting with certain machines that have been



Figs 6

designed to print stamps in rolls. Or, rather, the stamps are printed in sheets, and these are automatically cut into strips, gummed, and rolled on to reels, all ready for use.

Thus, it will probably not be so very long before we shall have to purchase our stamps at so much per reel, or by the yard! And then, what will the collector of blocks of four do?

Section Three: Machines used at Post Offices

Machines in this section were either officially commissioned for production directly by the Post Office for use on their own premises, or were private productions that were allowed to be trialled at Post Offices, invariably with the involvement and approval of the Postmaster General.

1891: The 'Stamp Distribution Syndicate Ltd', later the 'Stamp Distribution (Parent) Co Ltd'

Machines located on Post Office property did not appear until 1891, when 20 mechanical coin activated machines measuring 20 inches high by five inches deep were affixed to letter boxes as part of a private experiment by the Stamp Distribution Syndicate Ltd (SDS). Interestingly, two of the machines were affixed to 'pillar posts' (letter boxes) at Mount Pleasant, the current home to BPMA.

SDS went into voluntary liquidation the following year. The Stamp Distribution (Parent) Co Ltd (SDC) came about in 1892 to take-over the business of SDS, but by 1895 a petition for the winding-up of SDC had also occurred.

The machines were patronised, 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 one penny stamps per day (each held within a memoranda book) had been sold between May and August



Fig. 7

1891, proving that there was a need for such innovation. It is understood that sales then gradually dwindled, hastening the demise of the experiment.

An announcement appeared in the *Otago Witness* newspaper of New Zealand (issue 2,084 dated February 1, 1894) regarding SDC (Fig. 1). The newspaper clipping indicates that profit for SDC was intended to come from the sale of the advertising space in the memoranda books, but clearly insufficient ads were sold to make continuance of the experiment worthwhile. The perfinned stamps are therefore quite difficult to find and while the example illustrated nearby has a few short perforations, try and find a better example!

A rough line drawing of the machine was shown in the *Daily Graphic* dated April 30, 1891 (Fig. 2). The penny lilac stamps of Queen Victoria can be found with the scarce SDC Perfin (Fig. 3). These perfinned stamps were sold from vending machines owned by the Stamp Distribution Company, as featured in *Gibbons Stamp Monthly*, January 1952, and the *Perfin Society Bulletin*, April 2002.

The line drawing from the *Pall Mall Gazette* gives a flavour as to the size, shape and position of the unit on the pillar box. A photostat of a further poor quality hand sketch of unknown copyright and origin is also held, so cannot be shown here for fear of breach. However, the wording on the machine is largely revealed: 'POSTAGE / STAMPS / [horizontal coin slot] / [upward pointing finger] / PLACE 1d IN SLOT / DRAW OUT SLIDE / TO FULL EXTENT / THEN SLOWLY / FORCE IT BACK / UNTIL THE BLACK / SPOT ON SLIDE / DISAPPEARS. / [key lock



Fig. 8

hole] / STAMP PACKET / WILL BE FOUND AT / BACK
OF MACHINE. / PENNY SLOT CLOSED / WHEN
MACHINE EMPTY. / [unreadable] / THE STAMP
DISTRIBUTION / SYNDICATE LTD / [unreadable] /
LONDON E.C. / [unreadable] / [unreadable].’ (The slash
symbol signifies a new line of text on the explanatory plate.)

1910: The ‘ABEL/BEAM Registration Machine’

If Great Britain had adopted the ABEL/BEAM registration machine that had been planned at one stage (Fig. 4) then it is thought that the postal marking would have resembled the mock-up shown (Fig. 5). This computer-generated design is based purely on examples seen from live mail from Germany and elsewhere. Has any reader seen such a marking on mail, or perhaps as a proof pull? It is worth looking for, as examples would be a true rarity if found.

The machines were made by DAPAG of Germany and a poor quality illustration of the proposed British example appears here, taken from a flyer, or it could be an extract from a magazine article. A quality image would be welcomed.

The description reads:

AUTOMATIC LETTER BOX FOR REGISTERED LETTERS

Of which 20 are in public use on the Continent.

The only one of its kind in London, the whole operation of



Mrs. Ann Wyatt, first customer for new machine supplying shilling book of stamps at London Chief Office

Fig. 9

registering a letter only takes half-a-minute. His Majesty’s Postmaster General announced lately in Parliament that it is intended to issue receipts for ordinary letters on payment of’ an extra $\frac{1}{2}$ d. This is the machine which will make it possible to introduce such a system. It is therefore expected that many hundreds of these boxes will be put up at Post Offices and Office Buildings all over England.

There is nothing to indicate that trials were ever undertaken in the field in Britain, indeed according to the write-up on the album page displaying the flyer/article: ‘The machine was adopted for use in Germany in November 1909. A year later the machine was inspected by the GPO but a trial was refused until the trial of the Vending Machine at King Edward Building was satisfactory.’ SVMs clearly proved to be the more popular choice.

1920s: Type A versus Type B Coil Machines

The opportunity of photographing the outside and inside of a half-penny and a one-penny Type A (1920) (Figs 6) located in a private posting suite recently arose. Comparing it with Type B (1924) imagery (Fig. 7) it was soon apparent that the differences inside are truly minimal. For example, Type A has four holding lugs, while Type B only has two, etc. The outside of the SVM is a different story though, for the large embossed $\frac{1}{2}$ d and 1d information is missing on Type B, which allowed for easier implementation of increases in postal rates, often with the use of a replaceable enamel (later metal or plastic) information plate.

1948: Type D One Shilling Booklet Machine

The London Evening Standard for January 15, 1948

included a photograph (Fig. 8) headed ‘Machine sells 1s.



Fig. 10

Stamp Books'. It was captioned 'New to London are the 1s.-in-the-slot Stampbook machines, first of which is in the City. You get four 1½d, four 1d and four ½d stamps.' The photograph (Fig. 9) is taken from the February 1948 issue of the *Post Office Magazine* showing the first dispense being made at the King Edward Street Post Office.

This SVM model was known as Type D and these are the first two known pictures of it. The first installation had actually occurred at Tooting Bec, SW17, Post Office on December 12, 1947, so the *Evening Standard* comments are incorrect.

1966: The Post Office Tower Shop

You can be excused for possibly not being aware of these machines, as it was only visitors to the Tower Post Office shop who will have had the opportunity of using the vending equipment. The BPMA's 'Post Office Tower Stamp History file' covers the story extensively within its 14 pages. The key elements are contained in a Minute by A. Mead of Postal Services to the Supply Department on February 22, 1966 indicating that the commemorative stamps would be available in the following formats:

1. Envelopes containing a block of four 3d or a pair of 1s 3d Tower stamps sold by machine (sold at 1/- and 2s 6d respectively).
2. Presentation packs containing one of each stamp sold by machine (sold at 2s 6d – face plus 1/-) (Fig. 10).



Fig. 11

3. 'J' stamp rolls (480 x 6d) reeled lengthwise, lower end first, to be sold from Post Office vending machines which are to be adapted to accept these rolls.

4. Commemorative envelopes, Tower issue unstamped sold in the Post Office shop.

Unfortunately for collectors there is no evidence to suggest that the stamps were ever produced or sold in roll formats and it has to be assumed that the idea was abandoned at a later date, for when the Tower opened to the public on May 19, 1966 the stamps were available in the first two formats outlined above only. Does any reader possess an image of the vending equipment that dispensed the envelopes and presentation packs? If so, then the authors would welcome a scan.

One of the envelopes in which the mint stamps were sold



Fig. 12

is shown stamped with the special issue and posted at the Tower (Fig. 11).

1979: Type H Booklet Machine

The acquisition by BPMA of a bronze-painted Type H mechanism held within a wooden cabinet, as distinct from its more normal home mounted in a metal casing on the side of a pillar box, revealed that it did not have a lock on its face (BPMA accession number OB1994.319/2) (Fig. 12 - Image ©BPMA). Entry to this variant machine is made via a hinged-door on the left hand side of the wooden cabinet, making a further lock superfluous.

This new sub-type may not be earth shattering, but it does prove that not all SVM models are manufactured to the same specification and that apparently identical models warrant close comparison.

1980s: Dual Telephone Card and Stamp Booklet Machine

At some point during possibly the 1980s, or maybe early 1990s, a machine of unknown manufacture appeared in Post Offices. Comprising two options, it could dispense British

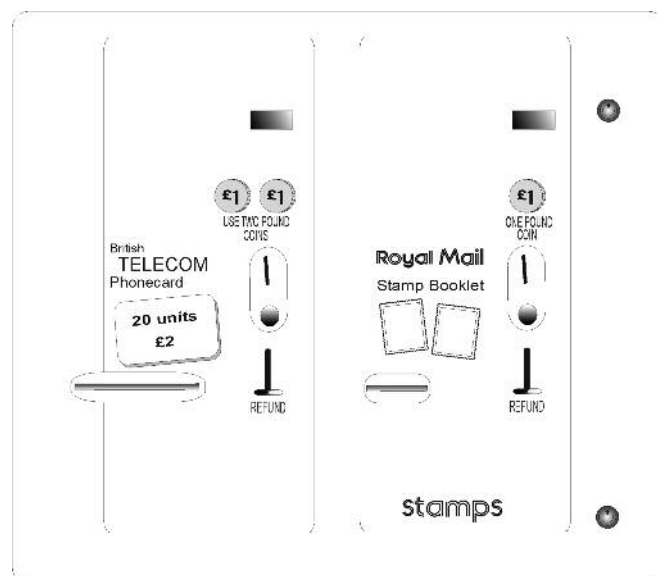


Fig. 13



Fig. 14

Telecom phonecards from the left mechanism, or Royal Mail stamp booklets from the right (Fig. 13).

2000s: The 'Post & Go' Coil Machine Story

This article does not include details about Post & Go vending units, which have already proved to be quite a complex subject, with different brands (Pitney Bowes, Fujitsu, Wincor Nixdorf and Hytech) being trialled, or rolled out.

It is clear that these machines are already resulting in the gradual demise of traditional stamp vending machines and they are appearing in more and more offices nationwide in the Wincor Nixdorf and, more recently, Hytech branded versions. The Hytech machines are increasingly seen at stamp exhibitions and short-term locations, such as the Camden 'pop-up' Post Office of Christmas 2012. The first long-term installation was at the BPMA in late 2012. It is thought that Hytech machines will see more mainstream deployment at Post Offices following the introduction of 2nd class labels at Spring Stampex 2013.

The story of these machines deserves to be fully told in a



Fig. 15

although it seems most unlikely.

Subsequent to the original article appearing, Thomas Automatics advised:

'Following an EU Public Tender, we were selected by the UK Post Office to design, manufacture and supply its new generation of "through the wall" postage stamp booklet machines. The equipment, which is now installed in main Post Offices throughout the UK, for 24/7

future issue of *Cross Post*, but probably not until the implementation of machine types stabilises somewhat.

2008: Rebranding of 'Thomas Automatics' Booklet Machines

A growing number of Post Office branches have been rebranded to reflect the red and white livery of The Post Office Ltd, replacing the red, yellow and green colour scheme used for the past few years.

The change is also reflected in the colour of the few remaining stamp vending machines that are reverting to the more traditional red colour instead of the relatively short-lived turquoise (Fig. 14). (As an aside, it is a mystery why such a non-corporate colour as turquoise was ever chosen.) The first site to have the new overlays fitted to the outdoor 'Thomas Automatics 6002S' stamp vending machines were Wakefield completed at 09:57 on November 18, 2008, closely followed by Pontefract at 10:58 on the same date. The SVM at Pinfold Street, Birmingham is illustrated (Fig 15).

None of the internal stamp vending machines, which are also in turquoise, have so far been seen altered back to red and we do not have any information as to whether conversions will ever be carried out,

Fig. 16



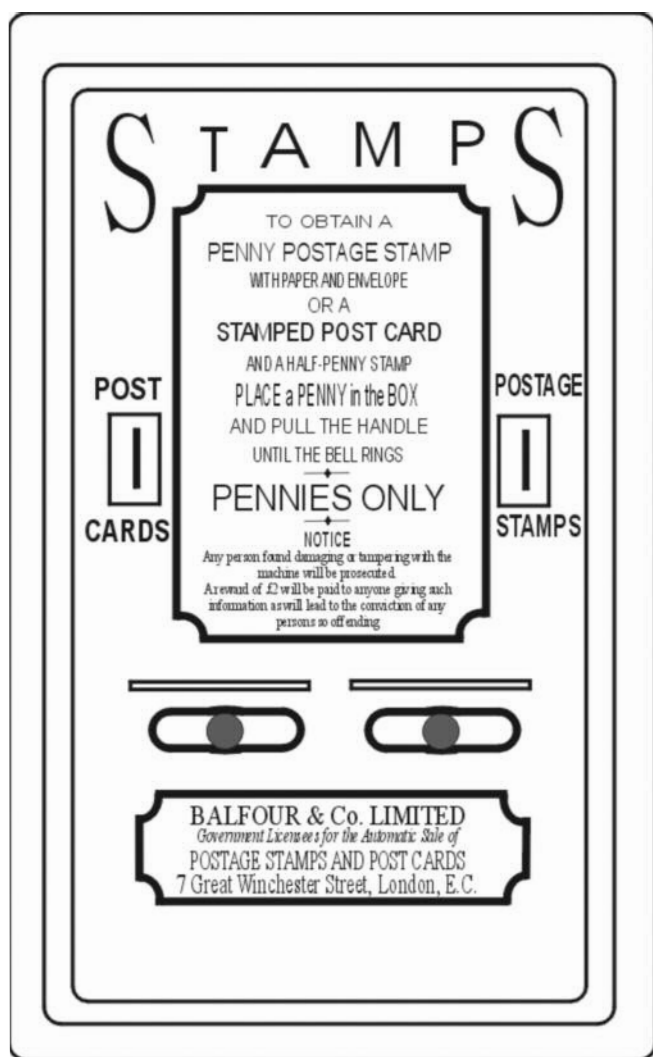


Fig. 17

outdoor use, accept payment in coins, with full escrow and change giving facilities, vend two denominations of postage stamp booklets, give full audit data and are easily and quickly updatable, in the event of pricing change.'

Section Four: Private machines

The vending machines included within this section are representative of developments that have been undertaken by the private sector down the years. Rarely were they used in Post Office branches (those that were are in Section Three). One or two of the more recent models have been seen in sub-office environments. This probably came about because machines had been purchased or leased by the store owner independently of any Post Office related franchise.

c1884: 'The Post Card Automatic Supply Company Ltd'

It is thought that this company may be the predecessor of the company immediately following. Certainly it appears to have the same aims, namely to vend envelopes and postcards with adhesive stamps from machinery. In the absence of any illustration of the equipment, it is speculation as to its appearance, or its connection with the other company.

A deceased collector once possessed a half-penny



Figs 18

stamped-to-order postcard and an envelope with a pre-affixed Queen Victorian penny stamp (with 16 dots in each corner, thereby helping to date it). Both items of postal stationery bore a printed garter surmounted by a crown with the name of the company within the belt.

1885: 'The Postcard and Stamped Letter Public Supply Company'

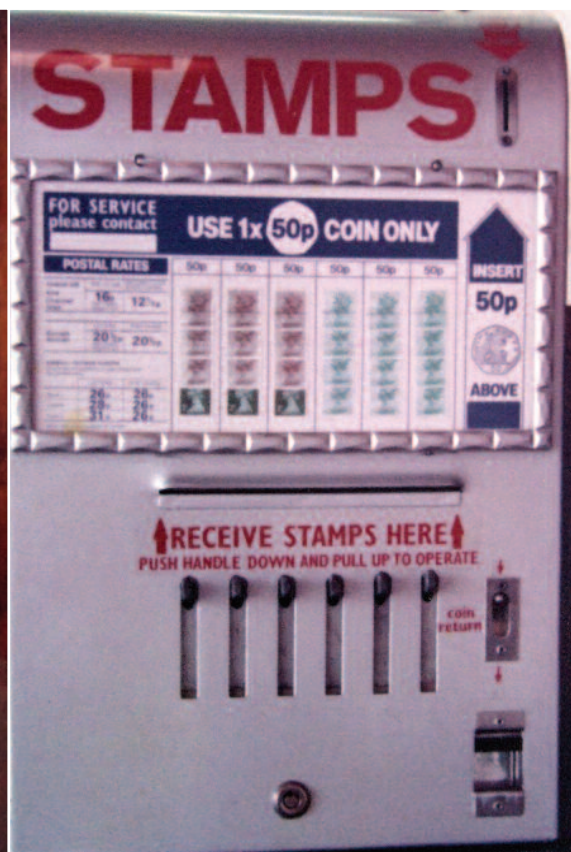
This snappily-named company had been formed by 1885. It had devised a slot machine that delivered a post card for a penny, or an envelope containing a folded sheet of notepaper for two pence. An image and description of the machine is shown on one of its leaflets held in the BPMA collection (Ref: POST30/611. Title: Automatic Stamp Machines: Stamp Distribution Co and other firms c1892) (Fig. 16 - Image ©BPMA: POST 30/611).

In being granted a licence, the company had to agree to have a plate affixed to its machines stating that it had no link with the General Post Office. If the machines proved to be unreliable, then clearly the GPO did not wish to be associated with the company, as it would only serve to bring down the reputation of the Post Office.

Despite the company's grandiose initial scheme to install more than 3,000 machines (especially at railway stations), the idea never really took-off, with the company presumably eventually winding-up.

1890: The 'Balfour'

A successful private machine dating from 1890 was known as the Balfour and for one penny could dispense either a 1d stamp with paper and envelope or a half penny stamp and a



stamped postcard (Fig. 17). The instructions read: 'TO OBTAIN A PENNY POSTAGE STAMP WITH PAPER AND ENVELOPE OR A STAMPED POST CARD AND A HALFPENNY STAMP PLACE A PENNY IN THE BOX AND PULL THE HANDLE UNTIL THE BELL RINGS. PENNIES ONLY. NOTICE: ANY PERSON FOUND DAMAGING OR TAMPERING WITH THIS MACHINE WILL BE PROSECUTED. A REWARD OF £2 WILL BE PAID TO ANYONE GIVING SUCH INFORMATION AS WILL LEAD TO THE CONVICTION OF ANY PERSONS SO OFFENDING.'

It appears that a special licence had been granted to Balfour by the Inland Revenue on the recommendation of the Postmaster General, but despite this there had been serious delays in getting permission to install the machines in Bath, but finally the local Council agreed '... upon the Company entering into an agreement to remove them when required'.

An example of the machine (one of four or five known to have survived) was still in-situ until quite recently at Pembroke Dock and hopefully it is still there or, if not, has been taken into the care of a local museum.

1891: Dud Coin Detection

The *Pall Mall Gazette* for April 22, 1891 records an unknown device that quite possibly never made it past the idea stage. An inventor called Mr Walsh or Mr Walch (the newspaper seemed unsure which name applied) came-up with the idea of attaching to a letter box 'an automatic stamping arrangement which, on the insertion of a coin, stamps the letter with a franking mark bearing a consecutive number, and at the same time deposits the coins in an indexed column in the same order as the letters are numbered'. The idea was to detect dud coins or metal

blanks, as coin checkers were too primitive at the time to stop vending machines being defrauded.

1892: Express Delivery of Letters

An interesting item in *The Times* for December 13, 1892 records an Express Mail machine. The piece reads: 'EXPRESS DELIVERY OF LETTERS – The Post Office has just placed in front of the Royal Exchange, as an experiment, an automatic box which is intended to be an adjunct to the express delivery of letters and parcels. By dropping a penny in a slot the purchaser obtains an outer envelope, enclosing a small white envelope and card, on which the desired communication may be written, resting upon a small desk which falls from the front of the box. At the same time an electric bell calls a messenger from the nearest post-office, which is Threadneedle-street. If it is desired to forward a parcel by express delivery, the arrival of the messenger must be awaited, but a letter may be deposited in the message receptacle for immediate despatch. The necessary fee has in each case to be enclosed in the envelope bearing the name of the addressee, and should the payment be insufficient, he will be required to pay simply the difference. For this service ordinary postage is not charged, and the fees specified in the scale, which are at the rate of 3d per mile, include train and omnibus fares. If the sender requires a cab to be used, the fare must be enclosed in the outer envelope, which has to be marked "by cab". If the convenience thus provided be appreciated at the Royal Exchange, the authorities of the Post Office are prepared to introduce it in many other centres.'

The *Hampshire Advertiser* for December 14, 1892 also contains a brief report on the scheme, probably extracted from *The Times* of the day before, but scathingly refers to the



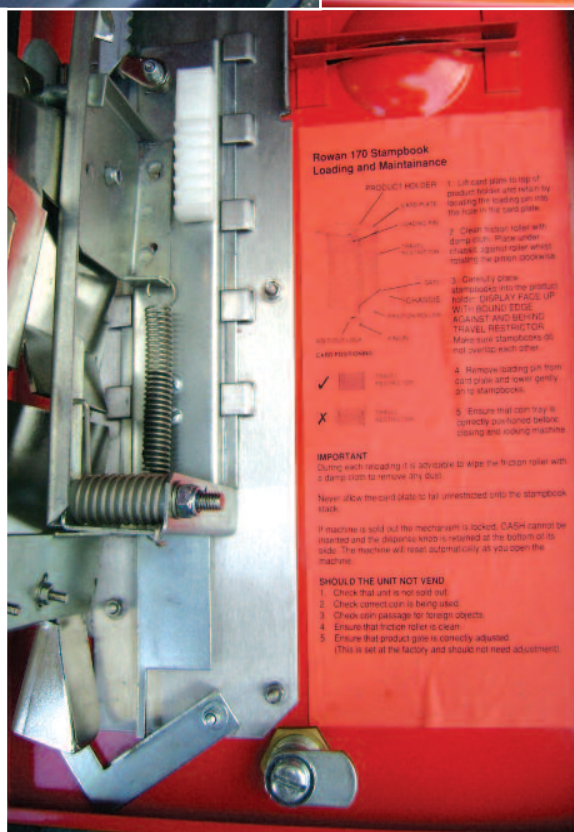
‘... very much criticised postal department ...’.

Neither article illustrates the machine in question, although it seems reminiscent of the c1884 and the 1885 machines recorded previously, but with a direct link to the Post Office now incorporated.

1970s: American Style Booklet Machines

Some hotels mainly in London once utilised American SVMs marketed primarily by Automated Postal Services of London (Figs 18). These initially dispensed 20p stamp ‘booklets’ in plain or printed folders for 20p (a Cancer Research appeal version is known) containing 16p of stamps, in exchange for two 10p coins. Later, 50p stamp folders without a premium over face-value were dispensed as a service to guests.

These products were made-up from counter sheets and were inserted loose into the private folders and later versions incorporated commercial advertising to offset the costs and to provide a profit. Stamp booklets produced by Royal Mail were never dispensed from this type of equipment, which could be seen in several different liveries.



Figs 19

1980s: ‘The Rowan 170 Stampbook’ Machine

This machine was unknown to the authors until this article was almost finalised, when an unused example was found for sale on eBay (Figs 19).

The manufacturer, Rowan Industries of Southampton, is now a dissolved company and further information could not be obtained.

1987: ‘Barclaycard PinPoint’ Christmas Pack Experiment

Barclays Bank had electronic Barclaycard PinPoint card-activated vending machines located at Waterloo (London) and Cardiff railway stations during the lead-up to Christmas in 1987.

The Cardiff machine with its dual-language branding is illustrated (Fig. 20). Also illustrated is the promotional leaflet (Fig. 21).

These machines vended packs of 36 Royal Mail second-class Christmas stamps at £4.60, which was 8p below the face value of £4.68 (Fig. 22). Four million of the packs were made-up by Walsall Security Printers, but it must be stressed



Fig. 20

by Post Card Express Ltd. The machines apparently dispensed Royal Mail booklets, with the option of having an advertisement label stuck over the pictorial cover. A Barclays Bank label version has been reported, but not seen.

References Consulted

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- 'Another Slot Machine' by M. Harp. *Great Britain Journal* [GB], volume 13, number 1, April 1975.
- 'Automatic Postage Stamp Delivery'. *Standard* [GB], April 30, 1891, as repeated in [Gibbons'] *Monthly Journal* [GB], May 30, 1891.
- 'Balfours (sic) and Co Ltd Postage Stamp and Stamped Post Card Machine' by W. L. Morton. *Great Britain Journal* [GB], volume 21, number 3, May/June 1983.
- 'Glimpses of the Past. II The Mother of all Booklets'. *Gibbons Stamp Monthly* [GB], January 1952.
- 'The Mother of all Booklets'. *Gibbons Stamp Monthly* [GB], March 1952.
- 'Post Card Automatic Supply Company' by G. V. Eltringham. *Stamp Collecting Weekly* [GB], December 12, 1968.

and finally

There is always new information to be found about stamp vending machines and it is hoped that this round-up of recent research will have made for an interesting read. Examples of machines not recorded in the original or current article are welcomed, especially if scans and any background information can be supplied.

that these packs were not solely for Barclaycard's project, as the identical product was also sold over the counter at Post Offices that year. The bank card scheme was not pursued beyond this initial trial.

1988: 'Post Card Express Ltd' Booklet Machines

In 1988 it was reported that stamp booklet machines were appearing across the country that were made by Essex Engineering & Coin-Op Controls Ltd of London and supplied

Left: Fig. 21
Below: Fig. 22

This article was in part researched at the Royal Mail Archive, at the BPMA.

