

# Private stationery stamped to order part 2 The printed paper and postcard rates, by Colin Baker

*In case of non-delivery to be returned to*

**W. H. SMITH & SON, LTD.**  
Strand House, London W.C.2



QUOD PETIS HIC EST!



*F. W. Dunston Esq*  
*Burltons*

*Donhead St Mary*  
*Salisbury*



FIRST PRIZE WILTSHIRE BACON

REGISTERED TELEGRAPHIC ADDRESS  
HARRIS, CALNE

(To be returned in case of non-delivery)



*Mr J. Hughes,*  
*89. Great Market,*  
*Oxford.*



*In case of non-delivery to be returned to*

**W. H. SMITH & SON, LTD.**  
Strand House, London W.C.2

*In case of Non-Delivery to be returned to*

**W. H. SMITH & SON,**  
186, Strand, London,  
W.C.

Stop after Dec. 31, 1895

**Mr. J. Webster,**  
MIDDLEBURG,  
HOLLAND



*J. Webster*

**PULL FROM HERE TO**

Part one of this series described the introduction of the stamped to order facility in 1855, allowing private envelopes and lettersheets to be impressed with stamps of different values of those businesses that preferred to use their own stationery rather than that prepared by the Post Office.

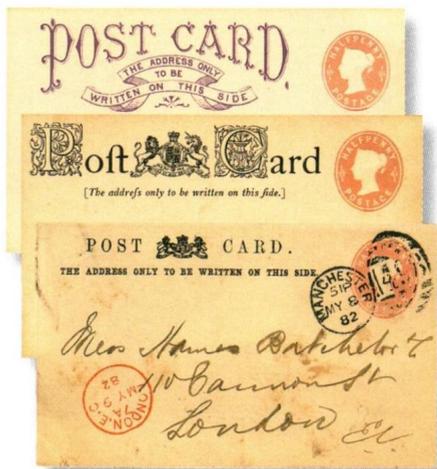
In early 1870s, following the introduction of the postcard, the stationery trade campaigned for their members to be allowed to prepare and sell privately produced postcards. The PO eventually agreed to this and arranged for a new ½d die to be prepared, which was impressed in pink on private postcards from June 1872. This gave rise to the one exception to the standard system of dating stationery stamps used on envelopes and lettersheets, as the new ½d stamp never included date plugs within its design.

**Abuse of the regulations** Regulations required that private cards followed the rules laid down for all postcards. The cards had to be printed in a standard colour and could only include on the front the words 'Post card/The address only to be written on this side'. Many postcards followed these rules but some publishers consistently used alternative colours with fancy printing and occasionally included the Royal coat of arms.

The continual abuse of this system led the PO to make a complete change to the printing arrangements for private cards and from 1884 not just the stamp but the fronts of cards were printed at the Stamping Branch of the Inland Revenue at Somerset House. The new printing arrangements incorporated a revised design of postcard which was exactly the same as that employed on PO cards, but with one major difference. The coat of arms was deliberately omitted in order to identify private cards and to reinforce the authority's reasons for changing the stamping arrangements. However, from 1889 the coat of arms was reinstated, but because of the similarity that then existed between both the private and PO issues, it was felt necessary to distinguish between them. A section of chain on the neck of the unicorn in the coat of arms on private cards was removed, making it as easy today as it was then to identify the two types.

Following the introduction of these new printing arrangements, privately stamped postcards started to lead the field rather than follow the PO's initiative. Court cards were first available from private stationers, followed by a campaign by them to allow a message to be carried on the front of cards, after which they pressed the PO to increase the maximum size of the postcard allowable to that used on the Continent for picture postcards. In all these cases the PO eventually relaxed the rules, giving in to pressure from the trade. The stationery trade was also involved in having the regulations relaxed to allow postcards to pass with adhesive stamps, which was granted from 1894 onwards, only stationery postcards having been permitted at the ½d rate prior to this date. Cards which infringed this rule were treated as underpaid letter and surcharged 1d.

**Opposite** From the top: commercial wrapper for heavy weight papers or magazines; private newspaper wrappers, 1897 and 1903; another commercial wrapper (as at top); typical Victorian newspaper wrapper using a single embossed 2d stamp.



Extravagant printing such as this and the illegal use of the Royal coat of arms forced the Post Office to change the stamping arrangement.

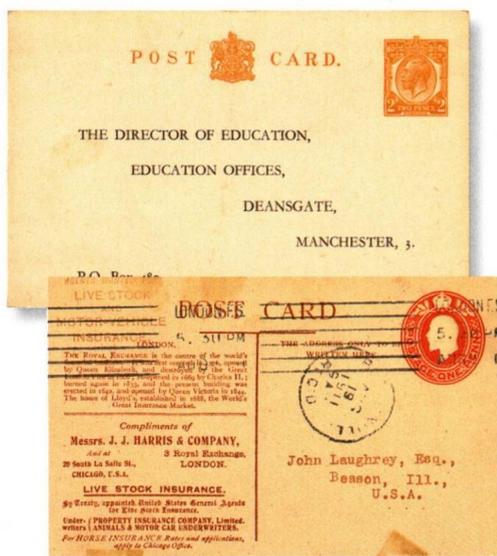


One other innovation introduced by certain businesses at the beginning of this century, but never undertaken by the PO, was the use of folded cards with tuck-up flaps (in both single and reply versions). Although these were ungummed, they gave a certain degree of privacy and the reply versions helped prevent the cards being reversed in the post, thus being inadvertently returned to the sender. Technically these cards were not 'postcards' but went under the heading of 'printed paper rate' material, and therefore some of these items carried embossed rather than letterpress stamps. However the postage rate of ½d was the same for both types of material and it made little difference to most people under which system they were charged.

In the 20th century the fronts of private postcards continued to be printed at Somerset House with various devices employed to identify these from the PO's own versions.

From 1908 a dot (or full stop) was printed after the words POSTCARD and in addition, during George V's reign, a dot was also included on the stamp design after its value in words, so that HALFPENNY indicated a stamped to order item, whereas HALFPENNY was PO issue. However this

practice of differentiating between the stamps ceased with the George VI designs and in 1941 the stop after CARD was omitted, so that from that date onwards the only means of identifying private cards from their PO counterparts is by the size, colour and printing details.



The postage rate for postcards was increased in 1918 and again in 1920, and then decreased in 1992, matching similar changes to the letter rates over the same period, all of which required revised stamp values. This did not create any problems in George V's reign as the 1d and 1½d dies were already available and in use on lettercards in 1918 and 1920 respectively. However, in 1940 no George VI 2d die was available and private cards had to be printed using the George V 2d die, even though his son had been on the throne for more than four years. This was at complete variance with the PO issued cards of the same period which had two George VI 1d stamps printed side by side until the new 2d die was made available. (See part 4 of 'Twentieth Century Postal Stationery' *Bulletin* March 1996).

**Newspaper wrappers** From 1855 publishers had the choice of having their newspapers taxed, which then afforded them free postage, or in not doing so and paying postage at the book post rate (which eventually became the printed paper rate). In either case wrappers were used so that the ends of the newspapers and their tax stamps were clearly visible in the post and it was obvious to PO officials that only printed matter was being sent. Many publishers who preferred not to pay the newspaper tax used stationery wrappers, having them privately stamped at Somerset House at the appropriate rate.

However in 1870 the newspaper tax and its associated free postage was abolished and new printed paper rates introduced. The PO introduced their own stationery wrappers, although publishers and private manufacturers could continue to have their own material privately stamped at Somerset House. From that date on, generally the standard ½d and 1d letterpress stamps prepared for PO wrappers were used to stamp private items at the ½d and 1d rates, although occasionally some of the embossed dies normally employed on envelopes and other private items were also impressed on newspaper wrappers, particularly if the rate to be stamped exceeded 1d. In the 19th century it was the general rule only to apply one stamp to private newspaper wrappers, combinations of ½d and 1d letterpress stamps rarely being used. In later years however, higher postage rates on wrappers were made with combination of either letterpress or embossed stamps.

In 1857 the PO officially sanctioned the addition of firms' names in a ring around embossed stamps used for stamping private material, which have today become known as advertising rings. Some of these stamp and ring combinations were printed in one operation at Somerset House, but many were added later by private printers in an attempt to simulate the official versions. The colours of these added rings often vary from, and can be incorrectly aligned with, the embossed stamps which can help in their identification. Mostly it was newspaper wrappers which were impressed in this way, although occasionally this arrangement was also used on envelopes.

Despite the name now given to these rings it is highly unlikely that they were added solely for advertising purposes, since most wrappers would already be boldly printed with firms' names and addresses. It is much more likely that these rings would have been yet another security device to prevent the fraudulent use of wrappers. Whatever the reason, the scheme lacked popularity and the use of rings was dropped towards the end of the 19th century. There are about 50 firms who are known to have used rings in this way, of which only 10 had the official stamp/ring combination impressed, the remainder preferring to have the rings added later by private printers. Relatively few of these wrappers and envelopes survive ●

**Opposite** Above, an example of the fold-over card with tuck-in flap sent at the printed paper rate. This example prepared for the Army and Navy Stores in Victoria Street. Below, private postcard stamp with the George V 2d die for use after the rate rise on 1 May 1940, and a rare private postcard stamped at the foreign rate of 1d.

**Advertising rings** Above, integrally printed at Somerset House. The stamp has been precancelled, partly to reduce the risk of fraud and partly to speed up its despatch through the post. Below: added subsequently by a private printer; printed at Somerset House with the stamp.

