

## British Postal Mechanisation

1860

## Address Simplification Codes

### Implementation

Rowland Hill had suggested this strategy of dividing a large city into postal districts in 1837 when the population of London was already a sizeable 1.9 million.



Early map of central London districts and sub districts

A first effort toward rationalization of addresses was made in 1856 with the announcement of *District Codes*.

These codes were intended to facilitate a narrowing down of the location of an address in London.

Scan of an 1856 Postmaster General release announcing District Codes and the assignment of district letters.

District Codes Announcement

The following additional information may prove useful.†

NAMES.	INITIALS.
Eastern Central District .....	E. C.
Western Central District .....	W. C.
Northern District .....	N.
North Eastern District .....	N. E.
Eastern District .....	E.
South Eastern District .....	S. E.
Southern District .....	S.
South Western District .....	S. W.
Western District .....	W.
North Western District .....	N. W.

\* Commencing with the new Edition to be issued on the 1st January, 1857.  
† Still further information, if desired, will be found at pp. 9 and 40 of the second Report of the Postmaster General.

1861, London EC (Feb 13), Local Mail ("E.C." written at the base of the letter to help faster delivery)



The origin of the idea of the Post Code can be seen in the progressive district code examples presented.



London W (1860)

Local Envelope to London 'W',  
only 'W' shown.

W = Western District



London SW1 (1929)

Sw1 =  
South Western  
District

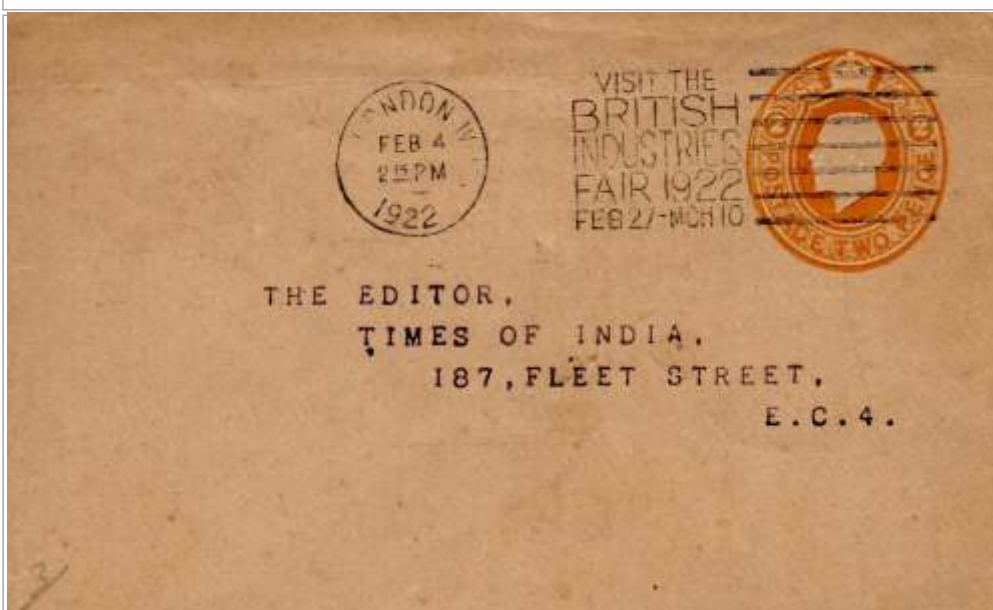


Envelope from  
Glasgow EDO to  
London SW1.  
(District Code  
SW1)

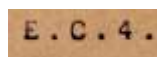


London EC4 (1922)

Ec4 =  
Eastern Central District  
No 4



Envelope from London  
W to London E.C.4  
(Local delivery - Ec4  
compad code EC4)



In 1916 sub-districts were assigned a number to help sorters more easily differentiate location. Therefore, the compass code evolved, for example, to E1; E2 or E3 replacing London E.



The Luton trials provided many lessons for the Post Office Development team to consider but most importantly, the concept of placing a phosphor bar code on an envelope and then using, that code to route the letter to a destination box was shown to be practical.

Publicity Leaflet (Scan) used during promotion

The leaflet is divided into several sections. At the top left, there are two envelopes. One is addressed to '97, New Road, NORWICH, Norfolk, NOR 36L' and the other to 'Mrs J Jones, 97, New Road, NORWICH, Norfolk, NOR 36L'. A GPO logo is between them. Below this, the text reads: 'NORWICH IS THE ONLY CITY IN THE WORLD . . . where postal codes are in use by the public; where the codes are used for sorting by machines.' This is followed by 'WHY IS NORWICH DIFFERENT?' and 'WHAT IS A POSTAL CODE?'. The middle section contains 'WHAT DOES A POSTAL CODE REPRESENT?' and 'WHO USES POSTAL CODES?'. The bottom left has 'HOW ARE POSTAL CODES SHOWN ON NOTEPAPER AND ENVELOPES?' and 'HOW YOU CAN HELP'. The right side features 'QUESTIONS OFTEN ASKED ABOUT POSTAL CODES' with a GPO logo and a list of questions and answers.

**NORWICH IS THE ONLY CITY IN THE WORLD . . .**  
where postal codes are in use by the public;  
where the codes are used for sorting by machines.

**WHY IS NORWICH DIFFERENT?**  
The Post Office is experimenting at Norwich with a new technique for sorting letters. The aim is to sort them entirely automatically. This aim will not be achieved overnight - long and patient research will be necessary - and it will never be achieved in full unless the public help by using postal codes as part of the normal postal address.

**WHAT IS A POSTAL CODE?**  
Norwich postal codes consist of six characters: three capital letters, a space, then two figures and one capital letter, e.g., NOR 36L. Every Norwich address has its own code.

**WHAT DOES A POSTAL CODE REPRESENT?**  
Take, for example, the code NOR 36L. The "NOR" in this code represents the post town "NORWICH" and the "36L" represents the name "New Road". The code "NOR 36L" therefore represents the address "New Road, NORWICH".

**WHO USES POSTAL CODES?**  
Postal codes have been given to all business houses, firms and residents who have a Norwich postal address. These people have been asked to include the postal code whenever they are called upon to give their address so that their correspondents can use it when replying.

**HOW ARE POSTAL CODES SHOWN ON NOTEPAPER AND ENVELOPES?**  
As the last line of the postal address at the head of notepaper and on envelopes. The illustrations above show how the codes should appear.

**HOW YOU CAN HELP**  
If you are a resident in the Norwich postal area you can help by always including your postal code as the last line of your address and by asking your correspondents to include the code in the address on the envelope when they write to you.  
But whether or not you live in this area you can all help by ensuring that when you send letters to anyone in the area you include the postal code in the address on the envelope.

If your address is in the Norwich postal area and you have not been given a postal code or you have forgotten it please telephone Norwich 17073 or write to:  
**The Head Postmaster,  
Head Post Office,  
Prince of Wales Road,  
NORWICH,  
Norfolk.  
NOR 99A.**

**QUESTIONS OFTEN ASKED ABOUT POSTAL CODES**

**Q** Why is it necessary to include Norfolk in Norwich postal addresses?  
**A** In most towns letters are sorted by Counties and it is essential for letters posted in other parts of the country to include Norfolk to help the sorter. It reduces the risk of Norwich letters being sent to towns with almost similar names - Hoewich, Harwich, Northwich.

**Q** How will postal codes help the public?  
**A** By helping to keep down postal charges. If the experiment is a success we can take full advantage of our new electronic sorting machines.

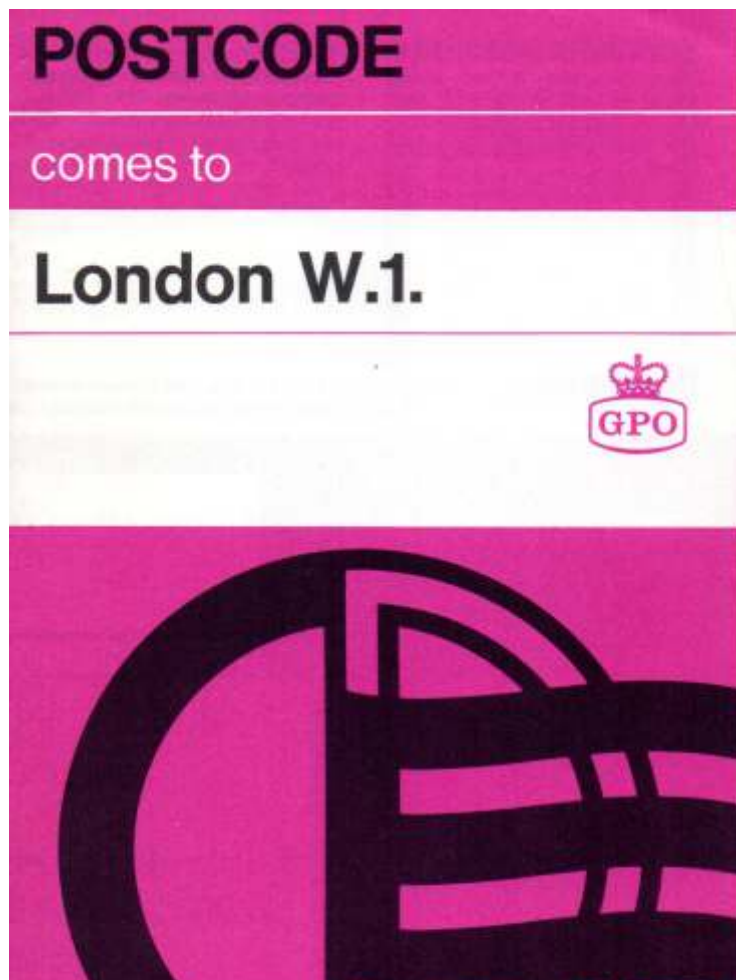
The Postmaster General announced, on July 28, 1959 that Norwich would be chosen for a trial of a prototype National Postcode structure.

1962 - Slogan Post Mark - "Norwich /Address /Needs /Post Code"



Norwich at this time had eight electromechanical SPLSMs in operation. These were configured to allow the operator to input the Incoming NOR code.

The General Post Office (GPO) began a long promotional campaign on 3 July, 1967 announcing the expansion of the post code. The letter explains the need to use the codes, A supply of labels, shown at bottom, was included and the public encouraged to apply them to outgoing mail.



Examples of Postal Code notification gummed labels used for notification



Examples of Postal Address Correction “Hand Stamp” used in Lewes, Sussex (1966)

Video



Scan QR Code



Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, 'postcode' slogans often featured on postmark slogans to raise public awareness. Below are three examples.



(1968)

(1979)

(1982)

(1990)

Red Ink, Posted at Bristol/(B-Dater), on 31<sup>st</sup> May 1990

(1)



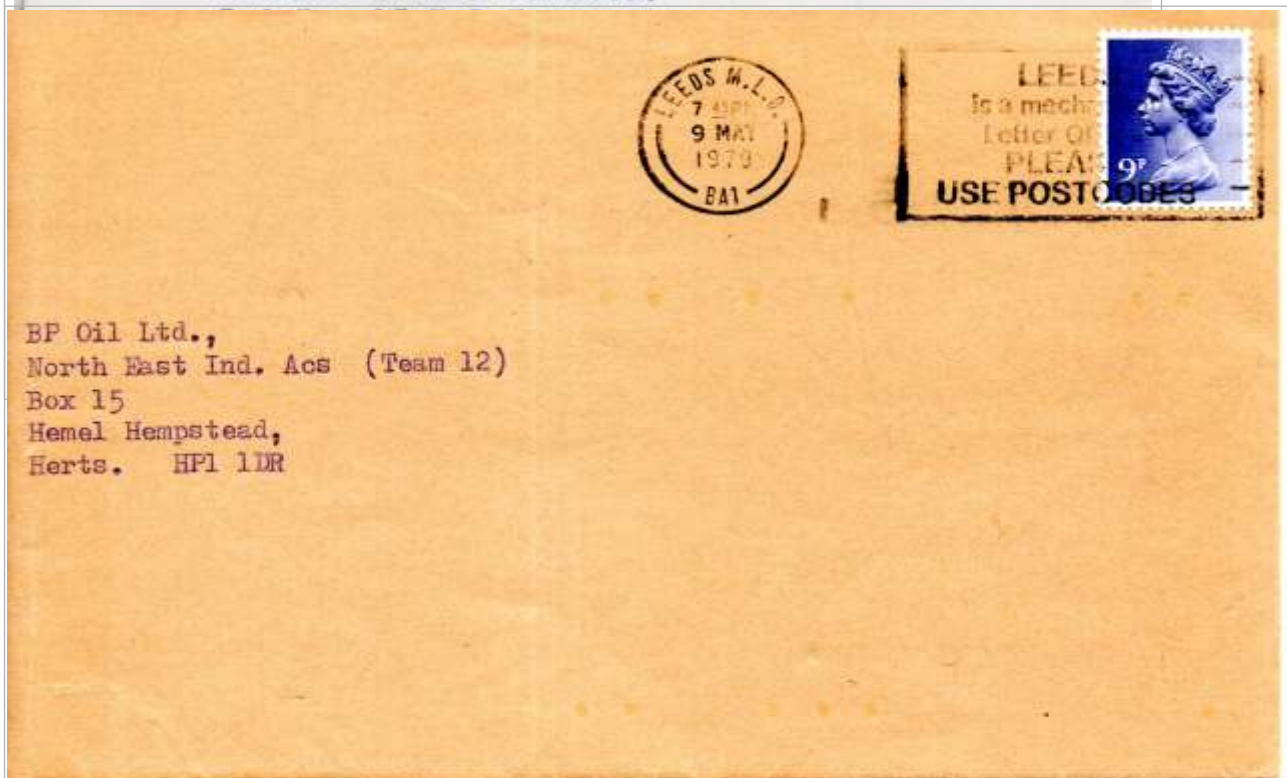
(2)



(3)



(4)



(1) Croydon (01.2.1979), (2) Bournemouth (08.3.79), (3) Guildford (03.5.79), (4) Leeds M.L.O. (09/5/79)



Other aspects of Postal Mechanisation that have taken place outside the sorting office include.

- |                                       |                   |                            |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Mechanical Cancelling Machine      | 3. Meter Franking | 5. Horizon Label           |
| 2. Automatic letter stamping Machines | 4. "Frama" Stamps | 6. Smart & Bar Coded Stamp |

**Early Mechanical Cancelling Machine - Pearson Hill Stamping Machine**

1869



1869 A covers to London bearing 1d reds

These were cancelled on the Pearson Hill stamping machine, which was introduced to Manchester in August 1865 and an improved model appeared in March 1868 known as the Parallel motion machine.

**Early Mechanical Cancelling Machine - Hoster Stamping Machine**

1885



In 1882/3 trials of German machines developed by Loffelhardt and Haller were conducted by the British Post Office. In 1884, Mr Hoster produced a machine based on these machines. The card below has the later (larger) version of 1885.

**Mechanical Cancelling Machine ( Used during Transorma Era.)**

**Universal Cancelling Machine-** Two different examples of usage.

‘T’  
→



‘Egg Head’ Labels issued by vending machine ; authorised as Postage Stamps

1½d (2oz) was the standard rate for mailing letters uptill 1st May 1940.

Letter Posted from Epsom/Surry on 4th April 1939 to London E9 .Postage 1d Paid , single letter rate was 1½d

Poached egg labels were one of three types of experimental labels sold in 1936 by mistake in place of coil postage of Great Britain. People had obtained specimens of these labels from vending machines dispensing adhesive postage stamps. This fact created a problem for the Post Office Department. The errors of selling labels in place of stamps. All these labels have been sold by error to the public; the people should have received halfpenny postage stamps, and since the post office has been paid for them they were all allowed to pay for postage.(1/2 d Value as indicated in cover above)



Small Numeral ‘23’  
This example:  
11 May 1953

Ident “23”  
←



2½d (2oz) was the standard rate for mailing letters from 1st May 1952.

Local delivery letter from Brighton (11/5/1953)



During 1991, a German Klussendorf stamp cancelling machine was trialled at London SE MLO on 1st and 2nd class paid mail. The trial started on 5 February 1991 and used pink fluorescent ink.



PMSC Cover, Klussendorf '2nd Paid' cancel,  
London Se1 - 21st May 1991.



Following some early internal development trials that took place between 1986 and 1991, the Post Office produced a prototype stamp cancelling machine fitted with a droplet-on-demand ink jet printer. The first trial involving live mail was carried out at Gloucester MLO using a BT slogan in November 1993 when approximately 800,000 items were cancelled. The machine was transferred to Darlington in December 1993 where a trial of self-adhesive stamps was taking place. Trials of this SCM also took place at Birmingham, Milton Keynes and Swidon in 1994.

IJP cancel in re ink, applied at London F.S., dated 15 Feb 1995



During August 1994, a culling machine (known as the 'chip fryer') was installed at London Foreign Section to segregate / face machineable mail.

At the beginning of 1995, two Ink-jet printers were fitted to this machine, enabling it to be used as a stamp cancelling machine. The machine was capable of printing a variety of different cancels, including 'pre-paid cancels' and Postage Paid Impressions (PPIs) on overseas-directed mail.



For a short period, in January 2004, a trial took place at Swindon to evaluate the use of an Ink Jet printer to cancel bulk stamp mailings.

The printer used was manufactured by Pitney Bowes and was similar to the one used for meter franking. Although the result produced very clear cancels, the trial was deemed unsuccessful because it was unable to meet the speed requirements.

The example below shows an example from this short-lived trial.



Wilkinson Machine - Postage Paid 'Early Meter' Postmark

Between 1909 - 1926, Mr. F. Wilkinson of Braintree, England, attempted to sell the British Post Office his 'Stampless Post Machine', which was infact a Self-Postmarking, coin-operated device... The mailer inserted a Pence-Coin and his/her letter/cover into the machine. A handle was turned twice whereupon a postage paid stamp-marking was applied to the cover, which was retained in the machine. A postal clerk would retrieve the mail at daily intervals and apply a time-dated handstamp. The only formal trial for the machine took place between 25 January - 31 August 1912 at the London E.C. Post Office. However, the machine was not adopted by the Post Office, Albelt this trial could be considered a forerunner for later Postage Meter Machines and related trials.



Red-Maroon  
Sept' 2012

Used from 25/Jan/12 to 31/Aug/12 at GPO London EC.

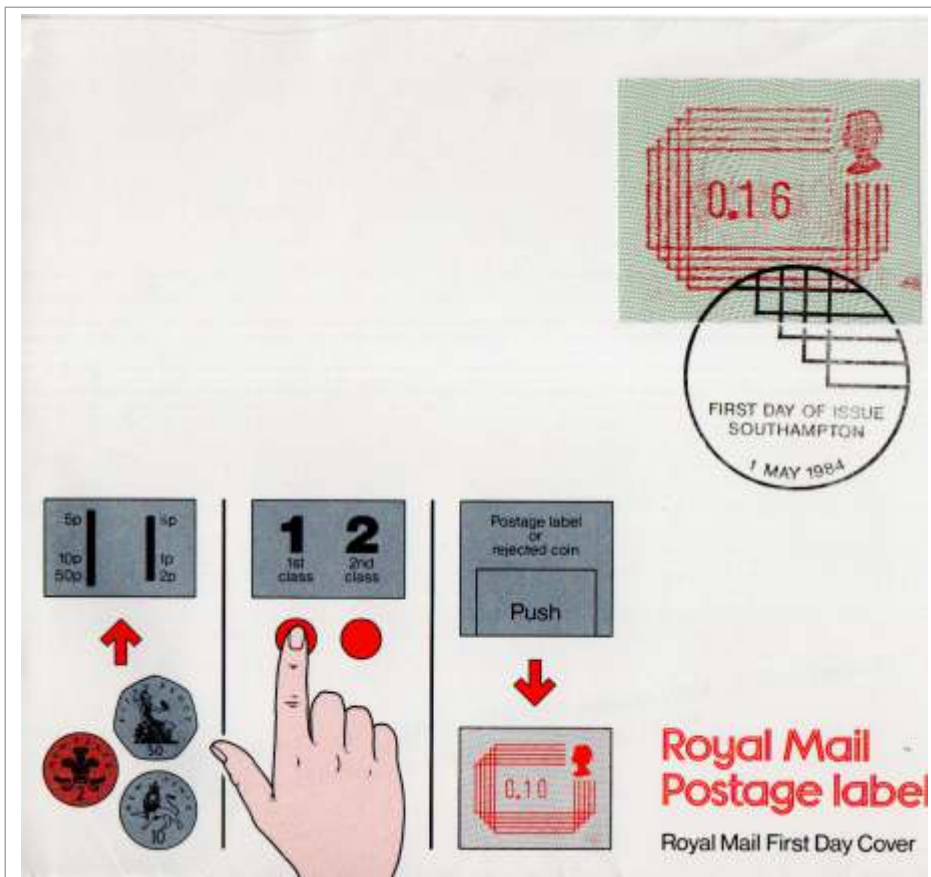
First Meter Mark to appear in GB was in 1924



"After the first World War, bulk users of the post were introduced to a method of prepayment by meter markings.

The system was accelerated by the approval for over seas usage by the UPU at the Madrid congress of 1920"

Used from 12th Jul 1929, West Bromwich, England



The advantage of a system to prepay by labels by dispensing machine was introduced in 1984.

There were variable value labels printed on phosphor coated paper. The value on the label could be suited to the customer needs.





Royal mail started a new postal label at PO counter for specific postal service, by Inkjet printers.  
Label size 59x65 (with four straight 30mm slit)



Plain white label used on a 'Signed for International' mail to India on 8th May 2004 from Cheshire (Wa14), GB.

Abbreviated Service Indicator 2015-22. FP= Fully Paid

A circular single use pre cancel positioned bottom right.

The new design has a machin head on a 'Royal Mail' wavy line background.



Used from West Midlands(CV6)/ to India 27<sup>th</sup> May 2021

**Ink Jet Printed Postage Paid Impression from Swindon APC 26 Aug 1994**



**HORIZON Label - Printed Postage Paid Impression 20 Jul 2020**



Horizon Label Used on "Signed For" post in GB 20<sup>th</sup> July 2020





Barcoded stamps were first introduced in the UK by Royal Mail in February 2022 in a bid to make deliveries safer and more efficient for customers. Royal Mail stated at the time that the move towards barcodes would open up possibilities for “new innovative services”.





←  
Jammed  
in Machine

A cover posted at  
York Mail Centre;  
damaged while going  
through the  
'AF' Machine

During the transit of covers, through a mechanised mail office.  
It is often possible that the cover can get damaged a stuck between mechanised elements of the machine.  
On inspection, such covers are adequately taped for further journey.