

# MACHINATIONS

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## Collecting Machin Postal Stationery

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The Queen Elizabeth II adhesive stamps of the United Kingdom depicting a sculpted profile of the Queen designed by Arnold Machin have been immensely popular with collectors of adhesive stamps since their introduction on 5 June 1967.

The portrait has also been extensively used on postal stationery and the collection of UK Machin postal stationery has much to offer the collector. Given its use over fifty years, Machin postal stationery has encompassed many changes and innovations in stamp printing and postal services.

Postcards using the Machin Head design were first issued on 16 September 1968. The portrait was in a rectangular frame with the denomination underneath and "POSTAGE" on the left and right (Figure 1). The original issue comprised 4d sepia single cards and 4d+4d sepia reply cards. The 4d sepia postcards with no phosphor bands were replaced by 4d vermilion postcards with a single phosphor band in 1970.

Following the introduction of decimal currency in 1971, the design was changed to a Machin Head portrait in an octagonal frame (Figure 2). Decimal postcards were originally issued in 2½p denomination but due to postage rate increases were issued in eight denominations up to 12p in the period 1971-1980 with either 1 or two phosphor bands. No decimal reply cards were issued due to the extremely low demand for reply cards.



*Figure 1: 4d Vermillion Machin Head in Rectangular Border.*



*Figure 2: 2½p Postcard with Machin Head in Octagonal Border.*

## Machinations

4d and 5d lettercards were issued for the 2<sup>nd</sup> class (1969) and 1<sup>st</sup> class (1968) mail services respectively and used a design similar to the 4d postcards. The 5d lettercards exist with either no phosphor bands or two phosphor bands. The first printings were by letterpress while later printings were done by photogravure. Decimal currency lettercards were first issued as 2½ d lettercards in 1971 with many changes in denomination up to 14p (Figure 3) over the period 1971-1981. The 3p, 3½p, 7p and 10p lettercards exist with either one or two phosphor bands.



Figure 3: 8p Lettercard with Machin Head in Octagonal Border.

Envelopes with the Machin Head design were first issued on 7 October 1969 to pay the 5d first class mail rate. The impressed stamp had the Machin Head in an octagonal frame and were embossed and had 2 phosphor bands. A 4d envelope for 2<sup>nd</sup> class mail was issued in 1970 while decimal currency envelopes were issued in 1971. In 1974 the embossed stamp design on envelopes was replaced by a letterpress design. 3p, 7p and 10p envelopes were issued with either one or two phosphor bands as the postage rates changed. The period 1971-1982 saw many postage rate increases which together with the envelopes being issued for 1<sup>st</sup> and second class mail services resulting in 16 different denominations being issued from 1971 to 1982. In 1973 the 3p embossed envelope was revalued to 3½p by overprinting with a double ring with ½p in the centre and 'POSTAGE PAID EXTRA' (Figure 4).



Figure 4: 3p + ½p Envelope with Embossed Machin Head in Octagonal Border.

Registered envelopes with the Machin Head design were issued to cover the postage and registration fee in 1970, with decimal currency envelopes being issued in 1971. The first issues used the embossed octagonal design (Figure 5) with later issues produced by letterpress. Three sizes were issued for the inland rate (G, H, K). As for the other class of stationery the many postage rate increases from 1971-1984 resulted in many different denominations of registered envelopes. 3/- and 15p registered envelopes were issued in 1970 and 1971 for the international use. From 1971-1984 a series of registered envelopes were issued for use to members of the armed forces overseas (Figure 6) at reduced rates. These are inscribed 'FORCES OVERSEAS'.



Figure 5: 23p + 6½p Registered Envelope Used to Australia.

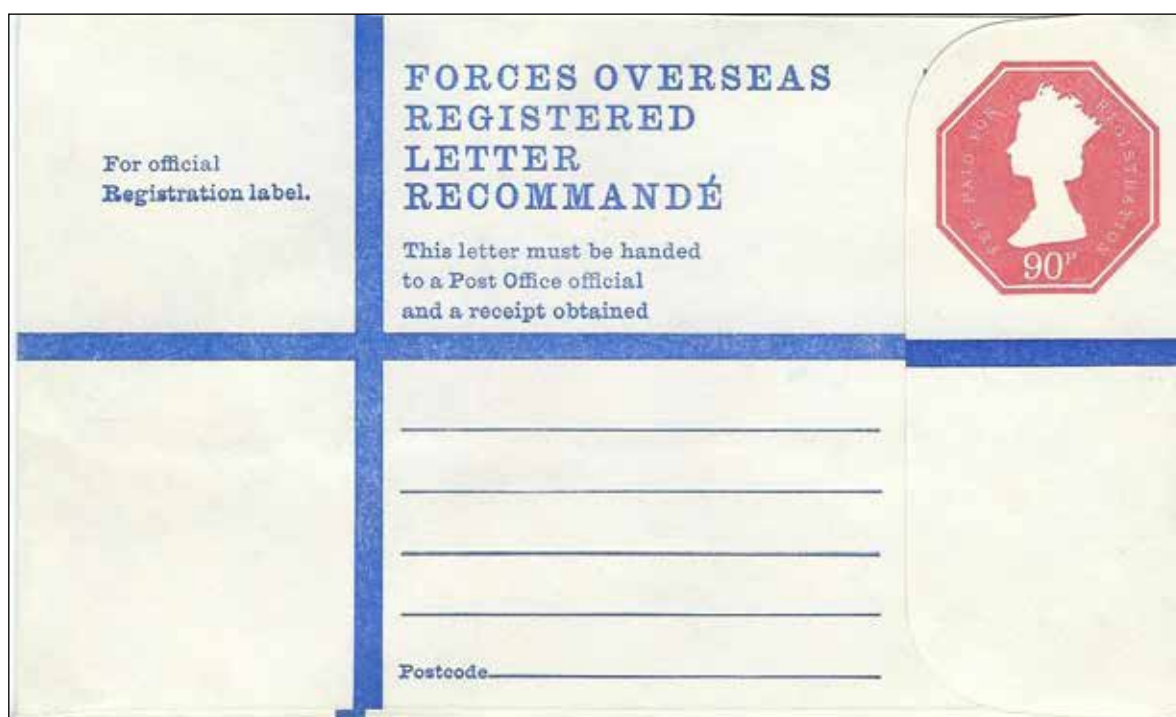


Figure 6: 90p Forces Registered Envelope.

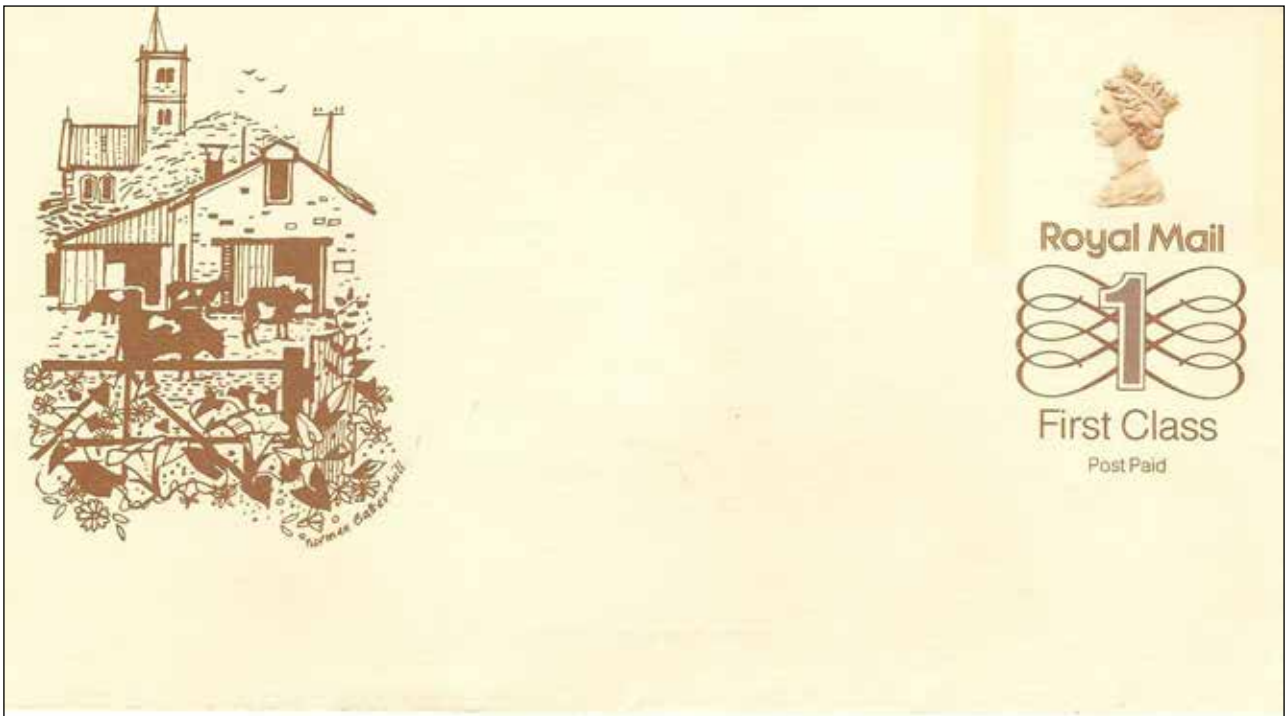


Figure 7: Non-denominated Machin 'Postnote' Lettersheet.

In 1982 Lettersheets were issued which were known as 'Postnotes' in the UK. These lettersheets had a Machin Head design but were non-denominated with the stamp inscribed 'Post Paid' (Figure 7). This design was extended to envelopes in 1983 (Figure 8) but was replaced by a 'Post Paid' design with the Machin Head in an octagonal border in 1991 and to a Machin Head design without order but surrounded by 'POSTAGE PAID POSTAGE PAID' arranged in a circle around the portrait in 1995 with 'either '1st' or '2nd' on the right indication the postage service paid (Figure 9). The current stamped envelopes sold by Royal Mail are essentially of this design. Registered envelopes were issued with non-denominated stamps from 1993.

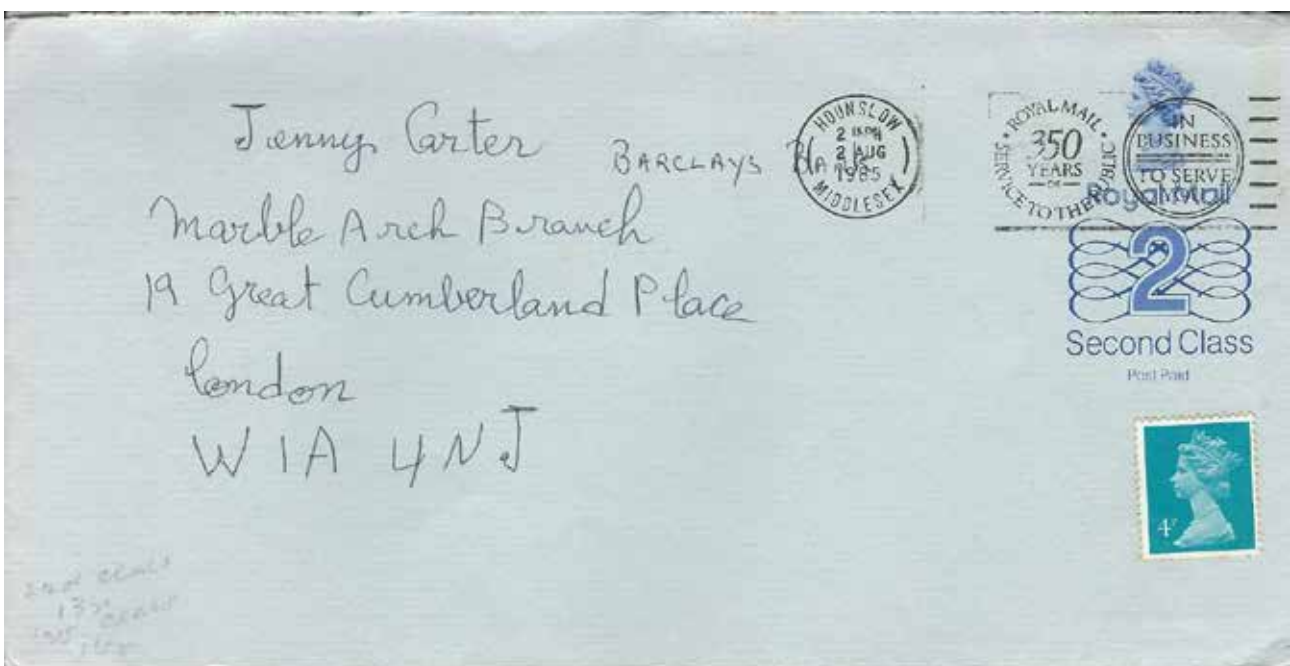
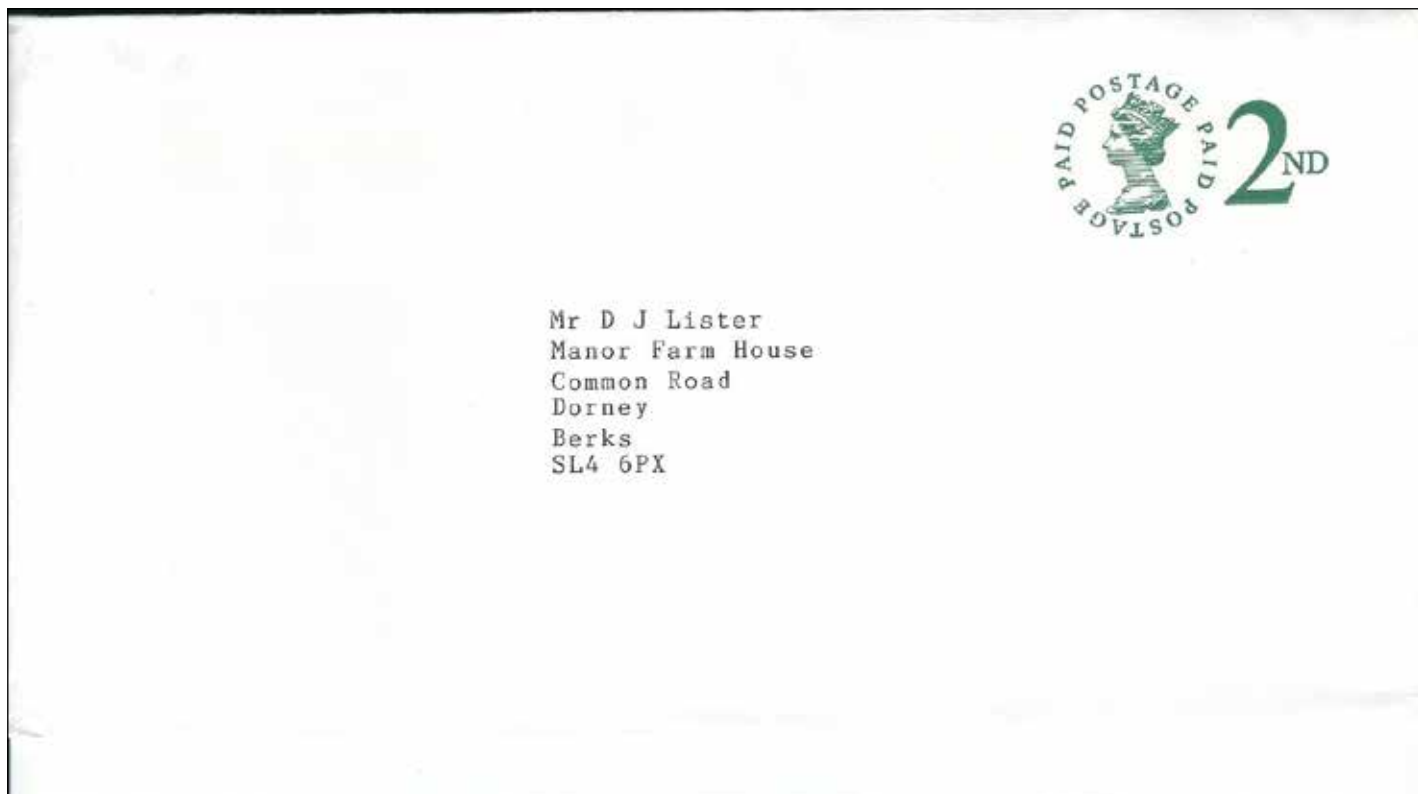


Figure 8: 1983 Non-denominated Machin Envelope with Service Indicator for 2nd Class Mail.

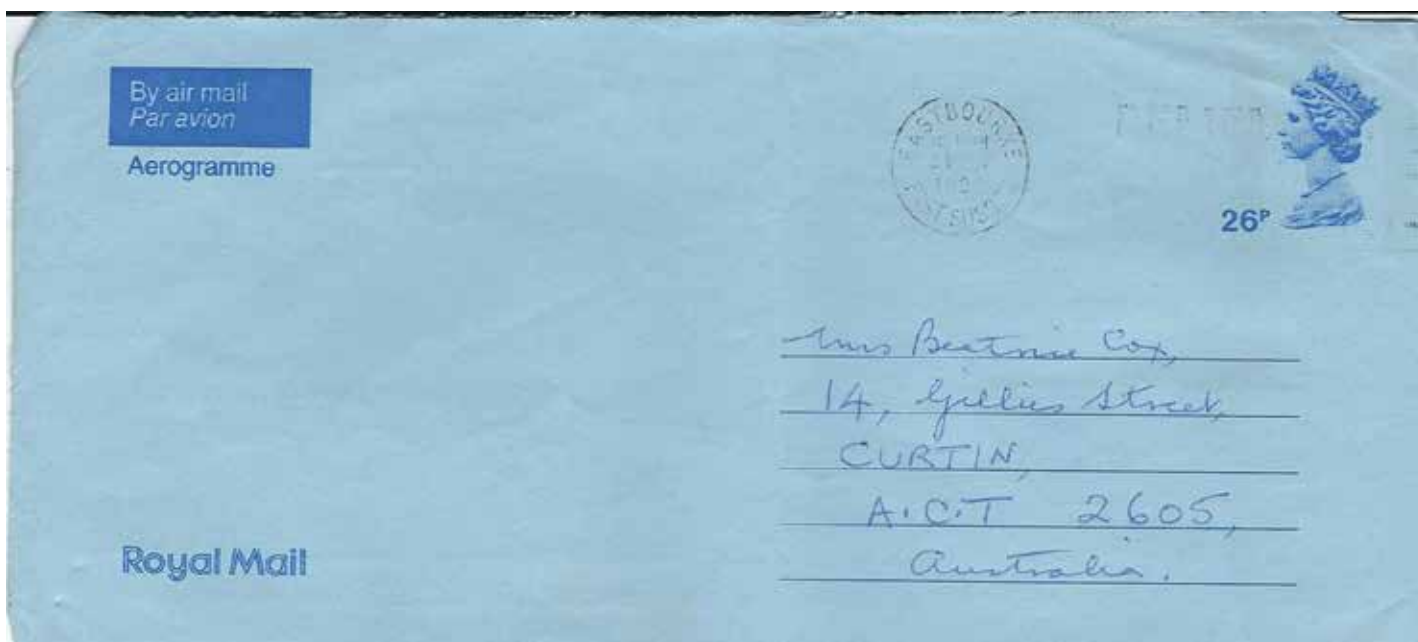




*Figure 9: Non-denominated Machin Envelope with Circular Design for 2nd Class Mail.*

*Used From 1995 to the Present.*

Aerogrammes using the Machin Head design (Figure 10) were not issued until 1972 when a 6½p aerogramme was issued with an unframed Machin Head and the value. This design was used until 1981. Aerogrammes with a non-denominated stamp were issued from 1988 and include a wide variety of commemorative and Christmas aerogrammes including issues with text in Welsh (Figure 11) and Scottish.



*Figure 10: 1984 26p Machin Aerogramme.*



Figure 11: 1998 *The Snow Spider* Aerogramme with text in Welsh and a non-denominated Machin Stamp.

The British Post Office provided a PTPO service using Machin Head designed impressed stamps which was extensively used. A wide variety of postcards, envelopes, lettercards, registered envelopes, wrappers and labels (many philatelically inspired) as well as some aerogrammes (Figure 12), certificates of posting and other stationery have been stamped-to-order with Machin Head design stamps. In 1987, the British Post Office introduced a service which provided envelopes to customer’s design with company message and logo with a non-denominated stamp (Figure 13).



Figure 12: Private Order Envelope for the Comet Science Group.

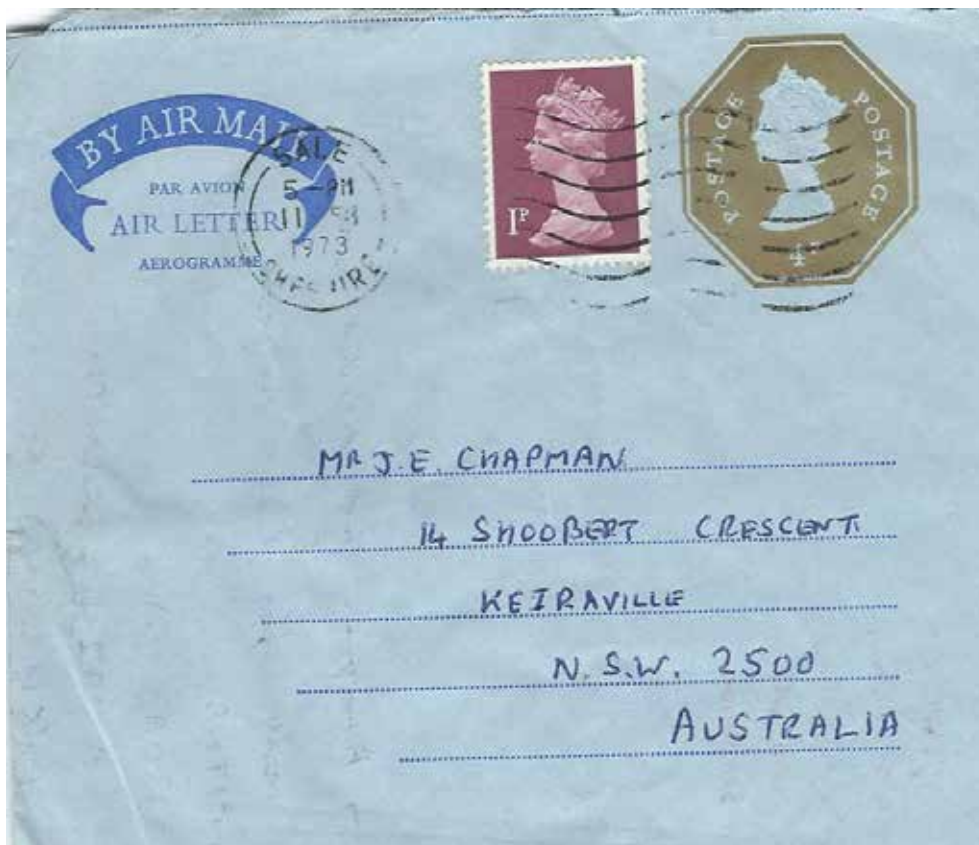


Figure 13: 4p PTPO Aerogramme.

Machin Head non-denominated stamps have also been used on a wide variety of other postal stationery including plastic ‘Mail Pack’ envelopes, Registered Plus Envelopes, Guaranteed Delivery envelopes (Figure 14) and House of Commons envelopes (Figure 15) and air mail postcards (Figure 16).

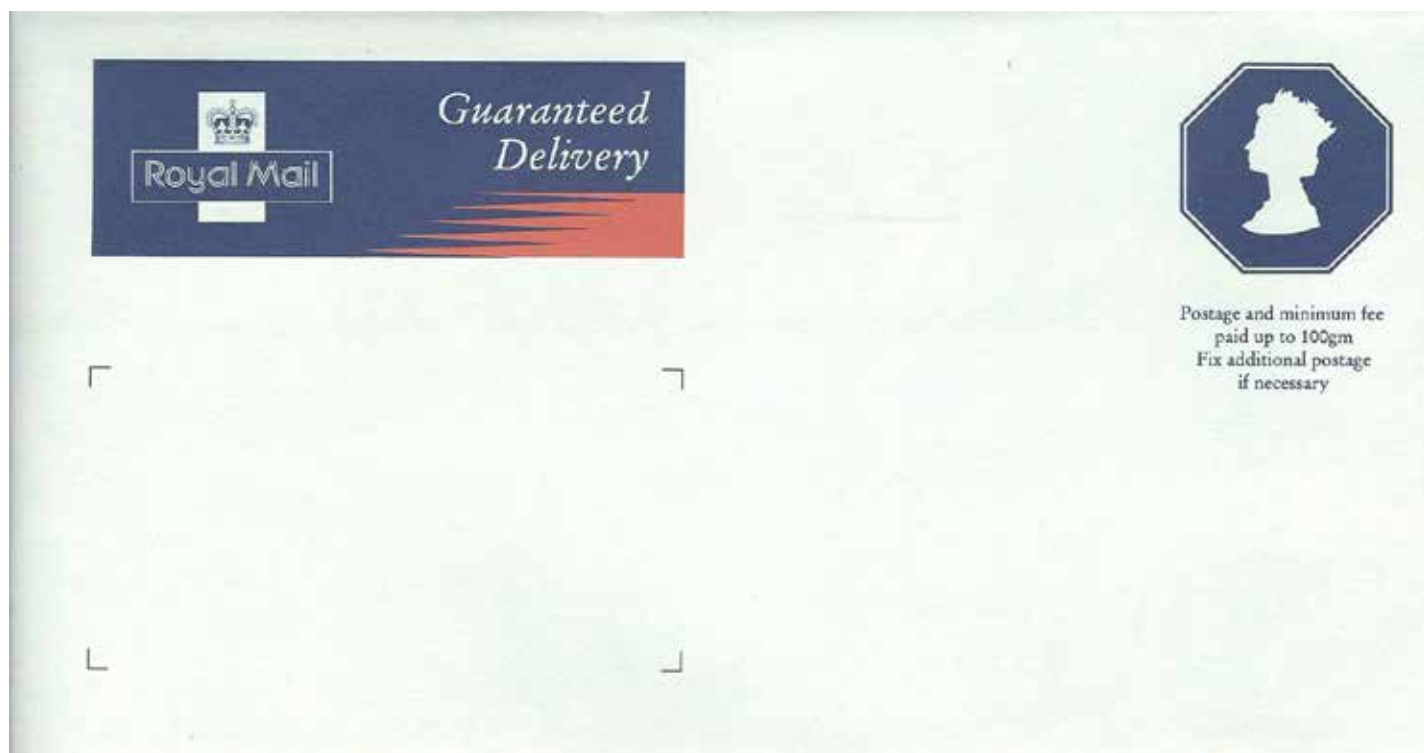


Figure 14: Guaranteed Delivery Envelope with non-denominated Machin Stamp.

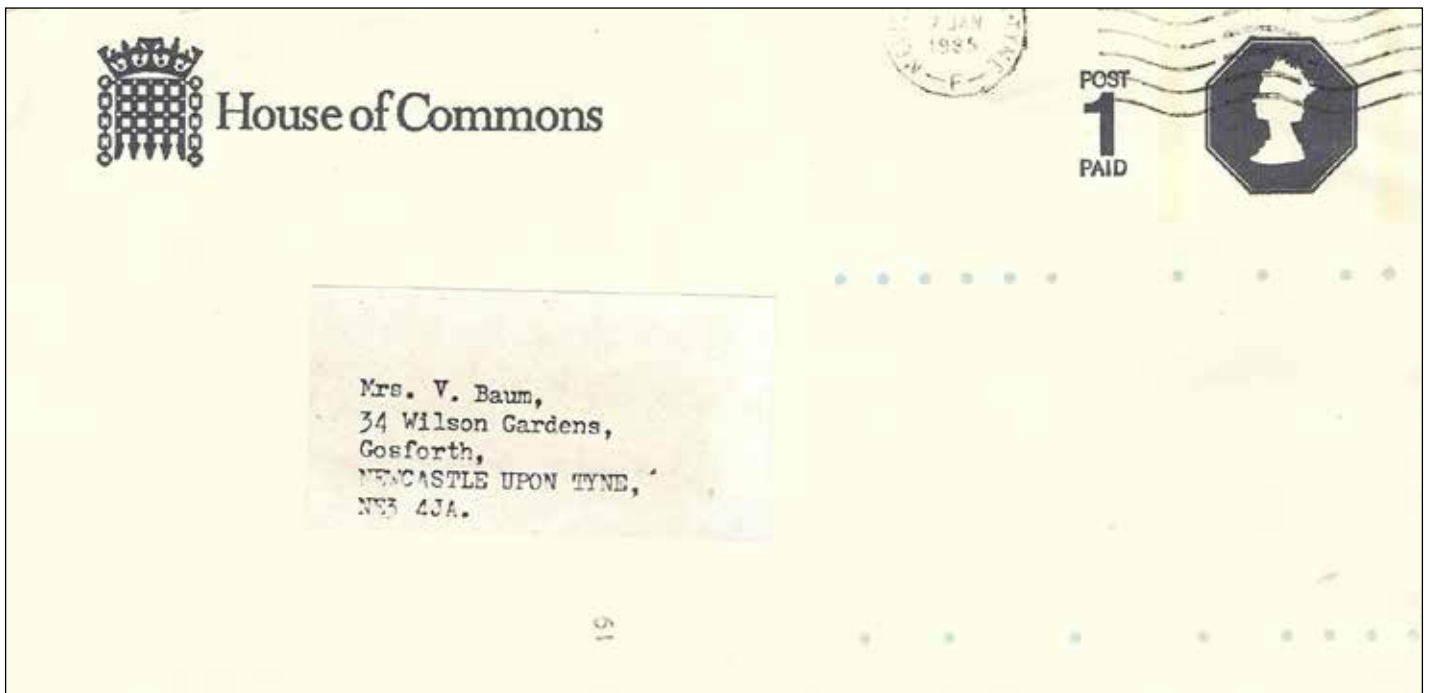


Figure 15: Machin Envelope for the House of Commons.

I hope this quick overview provides you with an idea of the scope of UK Machin postal stationery. The range of postal stationery types and over 50 years of use mean that these issues provide considerable scope for an interesting collection.

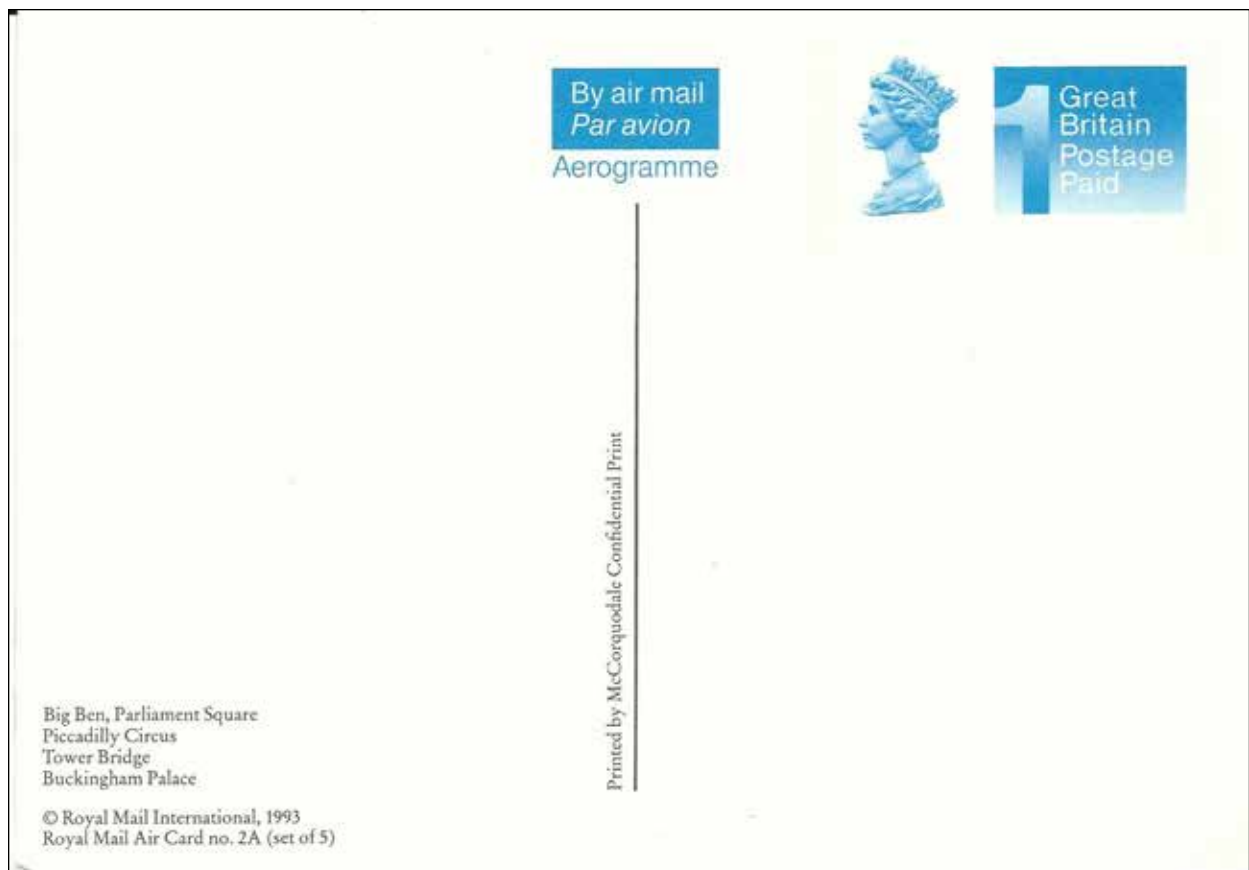


Figure 16: 1993 Airmail Postcard.