

British Postal Mechanisation: From TRANSORMA to the Modern Era

The story of the postal automation in the U.K.

Purpose: To present the story of the co-dependent development of four mechanisation threads that enabled post office mail handling to become automated. These threads are:

- A. Machine-readable stamp identity
- B. Letter facing + service class + cancel integration
- C. Letter destination sorting
- D. Postcode structure + Implementation

Organization

- 1: Early Mechanised Sorting 1935-55
- 2: The Search for Stamp Identity 1945-59
- 3: Production Phosphor Compounds 1960-93
- 4: Automatic Letter Facing (ALF) & Sorting (ALS) 1939-74 and Postcode Structure & Implementation
- 5: The Modern Letter Processing Era 1975-Present

Presentation Approach: This exhibit uses elements of Postal History, Marcophily, Display and Traditional categories to tell the story. A minimum number of philatelic items are included for important event markers.

Exhibit Scope

Royal Mail commenced automated mail sorting operations at its Brighton office in 1935, using a Dutch TRANSORMA machine, thus beginning a decades long development program to automate and integrate letter facing and sorting processes. This effort is on-going today with the principal elements of development over this time span representing the scope of the exhibit.



◀ A 1935 letter which passed through the TRANSORMA sorting machine at Brighton. The red, sideways S, known as an 'Ident' is representative of the philatelic trail left by the TRANSORMA. Considerable manual labor was required to support operations.



A 2011 letter which passed through the facing, service class determination, cancelling and sorting operations without human intervention. ▶

This exhibit is about the story, told through the philatelic trails of the advancements in materials science, engineering and address data structure, that has enabled this remarkable advance in automation.

Symbols Used: Original & Primary Research ▲ ▲ Items of high importance