

Before 1840 most letters were sent unpaid; writers expected the receiver of a letter to pay the postal charges. This helped to make sure letters arrived safely, but it was a cumbersome and expensive system of running a postal service and there was ever increasing pressure on the government of the day to make changes.

When postal reform was finally introduced into Great Britain in 1840, to be copied in later years by governments throughout the rest of the world, the British Post Office gave the public three methods of paying the postage on letters. They could pay in cash at the post office or they could buy adhesive stamps and stick them onto their letters. The third alternative was to buy an envelope or letter sheet on which postage had already been paid, so that it could be handed to a letter carrier or left at the post office without the need to queue or to trust servants with money. These envelopes and letter sheets carried a printed impression that showed they were prepaid and they became known as Postal Stationery.

So to answer the question 'What is Postal Stationery', to put it in its most simple form, Postal Stationery is something that has a stamp printed on it to show that a fee has been paid to the Post Office. It could be an envelope, a postcard, a letter sheet (for example aerogrammes are still sold today where the price includes postage), a telegraph form, or some other item sold by the Post Office.



The first design used on prepaid Postal Stationery in Great Britain was extremely ornate. It was created by an eminent artist, William Mulready RA, but was despised by the public who wanted to see a simple clean design such as that created for the Penny Black adhesive stamp. As far as Postal Stationery was concerned, the British Post Office had got it wrong and they quickly changed to using a much smaller, coloured embossed stamp.



This was readily accepted by the public and once again it set a standard for many countries in the world to follow, being superseded in the last century by colourful stamps printed by the letterpress or lithograph method.

#### HOW CAN I COLLECT IT?

There are two ways of collecting Postal Stationery; the first is to buy complete envelopes, postcards and other items and to mount them on album pages, adding notes about their known origins and uses. Many collectors use loose leaf albums and clear photo-mounts to hold their items on the page. The other way to collect Postal Stationery is to buy the impressed or embossed stamps that have been cut from envelopes, etc, known to collectors as "cut-outs". This was very popular a hundred years ago, but collectors today realise that collecting in this form loses much of the detail of Postal Stationery as well as ignoring the way the items have been used.

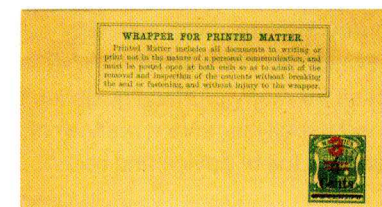
In addition, the same Postal Stationery stamps were often used in a variety of ways, which cut-outs cannot show.



#### WHAT SHOULD I COLLECT?

Almost every country in the world has issued Postal Stationery - indeed it was an international requirement at one time. But today some administrations issue little or none at all, while others still produce a huge variety. So the choice of what to collect is up to the individual concerned.

The only advice that can be given is to recommend that the area chosen is not too large, otherwise cost and the space to keep it all may become prohibitive. Just like any other hobby, collecting Postal Stationery is a personal matter and you should feel free to collect the country, period or type of Postal Stationery that pleases you. Of course there are rules for those who want to exhibit their collections or enter competitions, but this is something that a collector can look into later, once a collection has been established and the knowledge gained that must go with it.



## WHERE CAN I BUY POSTAL STATIONERY?

Starting a Postal Stationery collection can be very simple. Sometimes you will find basic collections included in philatelic auctions or offered for sale at stamp fairs. These can start you off, but unless you are very lucky, they will only comprise some of the basic material. The next step is to locate a catalogue covering the country in which you are interested. If you cannot locate one readily, ask other collectors or look on philatelic websites. Other collectors will always be happy to help you get started.

Once you have begun, small groups of stationery or individual items will be found in dealers stocks (go to stamp shops and stamp fairs), or in philatelic auctions. A modern favourite way of buying is to look on internet auction sites - eBay and Delcampe are the most popular, but there are others coming along all the time. Worried about security of the internet? If you are then ask a collector friend for help and advice. Most sites are well run and those that are not are soon talked about.



## I'M INTERESTED SO WHAT DO I DO NEXT?

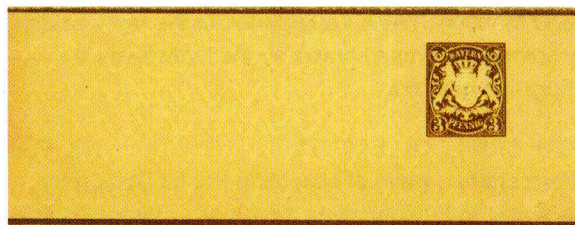
The best advice that can be given is to join a society that specialises in your area of interest, such as the Postal Stationery Society which caters for collectors of all Postal Stationery irrespective of where they live. The annual fees for many of these societies are very low and you will usually receive a number of magazines packed full of advice and recent

discoveries. Many societies hold auctions of material aimed at your collecting sphere and there are usually several meetings a year that you can attend to see what other people collect and how they mount their material.

For further details of the Postal Stationery Society contact:

The Membership Secretary  
The Postal Stationery Society  
Mr E J Caesley  
Trepheane House, 5 Tenderah Court  
Church Hill  
HELSTON  
Cornwall  
TR13 8NP

or go to the website:  
[www.postalstationery.org.uk](http://www.postalstationery.org.uk)



## FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE A.B.P.S.

please contact  
the ABPS General Secretary:  
e-mail: [secretary@abps.org.uk](mailto:secretary@abps.org.uk)

**ABPS c/o RPSL  
15 Abchurch Lane  
London EC4N 7BW**



# ABPS

## What is Postal Stationery?

Association of British Philatelic Societies