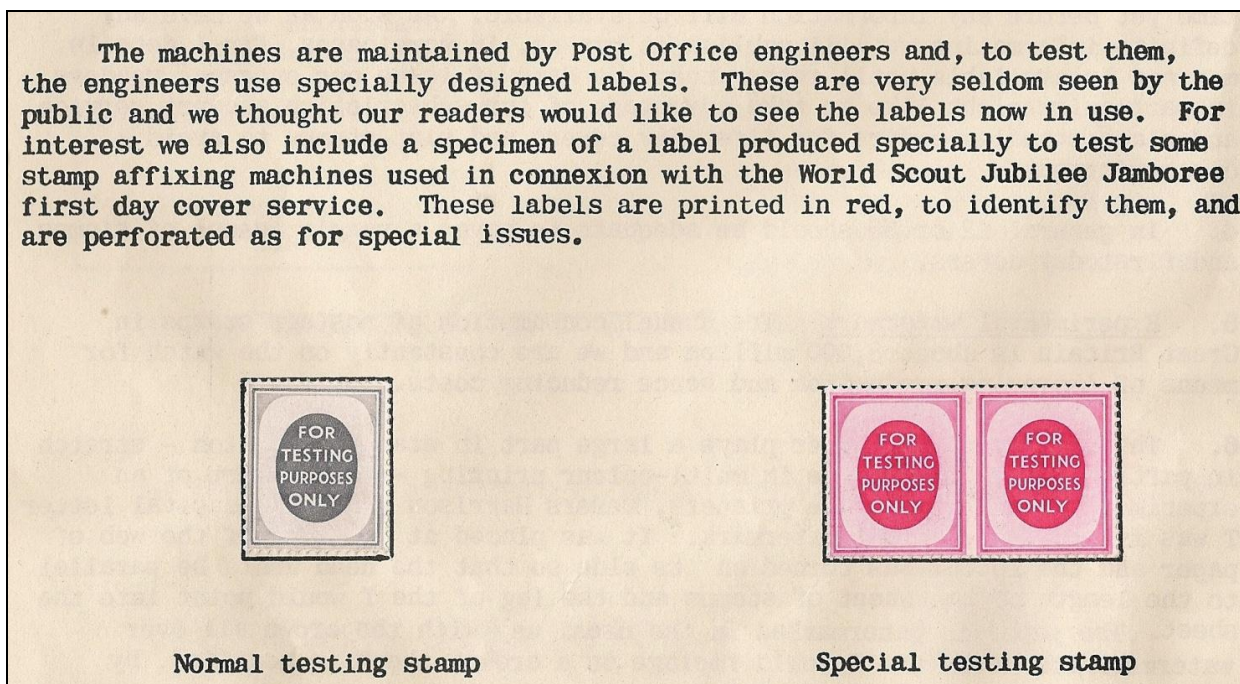


1962-64: Red Commemorative-Sized Testing Labels in Sheets

Glenn H Morgan FRPSL

The Post Office *Philatelic Bulletin* supposedly gave away samples of the Scout Jubilee testing labels in its issue of September/October 1964. They were, however, printed in red and there is no evidence that they were ever used for the purpose outlined in the *Bulletin*, i.e. as coils for use with testing stamp affixing machines at the Scout Jamboree.



Part of the page from the *Philatelic Bulletin*, 1964



(Image courtesy
Graham Eyre)

The red double-sized examples bear a Multiple Crowns watermark that was not introduced until over a year after the Jubilee had almost been forgotten in the minds of the public. Also, all four sides of the dummy stamp have been torn from a sheet and they certainly do not bear the tell-tale signs of having come from a coil, i.e. two cut vertical or horizontal edges.

Test Orders in BPMA Files

The implication of the above is that a sheet printed commemorative-sized label version of the Scouts label must have been requisitioned at some point and I have traced two orders for such an

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item among the files held at BPMA. Everything now makes sense, but sadly the file does not make mention of the colour of the labels supplied by Harrison, nor is there a sample appended to the file.

I suspect that as the official file fails to mention the colour, we will never have the opportunity of *totally* proving that this is the correct requisition, but the documentary evidence is strong enough, I feel, to finally put the mystery surrounding the so-called “red Scouts testing label” to bed after 52 years.



POST 52/441	Stamps – test sheets <i>No description.</i>	1962-68
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<u>Order / Date</u>	<u>Quantity</u>	<u>Supplied to</u>	<u>Order Value</u>
1. April 1962	500 sheets of 120	PO Supplies Dept	“£10 the lot”

On 12 April 1962 an initial request was made by a J Hobbs to the Supplies Department for some testing labels and he stated that “the stamps are required for stamp cancelling trials which we are anxious to arrange in the near future in connection with the probable introduction of a Post Office “First Day Cover” service”. Do dummy covers exist?

During the following month the order was placed with Harrison for 500 sheets of 120 (“120 set”) commemorative-sized labels using the design for the “Test Rolls, No. 1” printed on gummed watermarked paper. Delivery within two weeks was requested and the file outer cover indicates “Completed 11 May 1962”, so delivery will have been made *before that date*.

The same BPMA file indicates that a second, much larger, order was placed the following year:

<u>Order / Date</u>	<u>Quantity</u>	<u>Supplied to</u>	<u>Order Value</u>
2. October 1963	30,000 sheets of 240	PO Supplies Dept	£143 11s 0d (£143.55)

A Form of Tender dated 25 October 1963 detailed the requirements for more commemorative-sized testing labels in sheets “on crown all over watermarked paper”. It also stated that “selvedges at top and bottom are not essential”. Delivery was to be within 4-6 week of date of order.

A Schedule to Harrison followed indicating their successful tender (not that anyone else was ever invited to tender, as the near-monopoly by Harrison ensured that the business went their way, due also to the desire of the GPO for the test labels to totally mimic a real stamp of the period). A hand-annotation at the foot of the Schedule showed that 25,000 “good” sheets and 5,000 “waste” sheets had been received (for the GPO destroyed “waste” stocks at that time and not the printer).

On 10 January 1964, SPD Hemel Hempstead shipped 15 bags weighing 7cwt by security vehicle to Mr Bull of Supplies Department, Engineering Department, Materials Section, Test Section at Studd Street N1.

On 20 February a “Delivery Note for Specimens: Acknowledgment for Receipt” from Supplies Department for Engineering Department to approve and return related to the 30,000 sheets of 240 that had been forwarded the previous month. It was marked DUPLICATE in red ink, presumably because the initial form had gone astray.

On 13 March a second form was signed and returned with a hand-annotated note initialled by R L Bull stating: “This is the second D note I have been asked to sign – Do I expect more? RLB”. Many BPMA-held files include comments such as this, where it frequently appears that someone is trying to score points over a colleague or supplier!

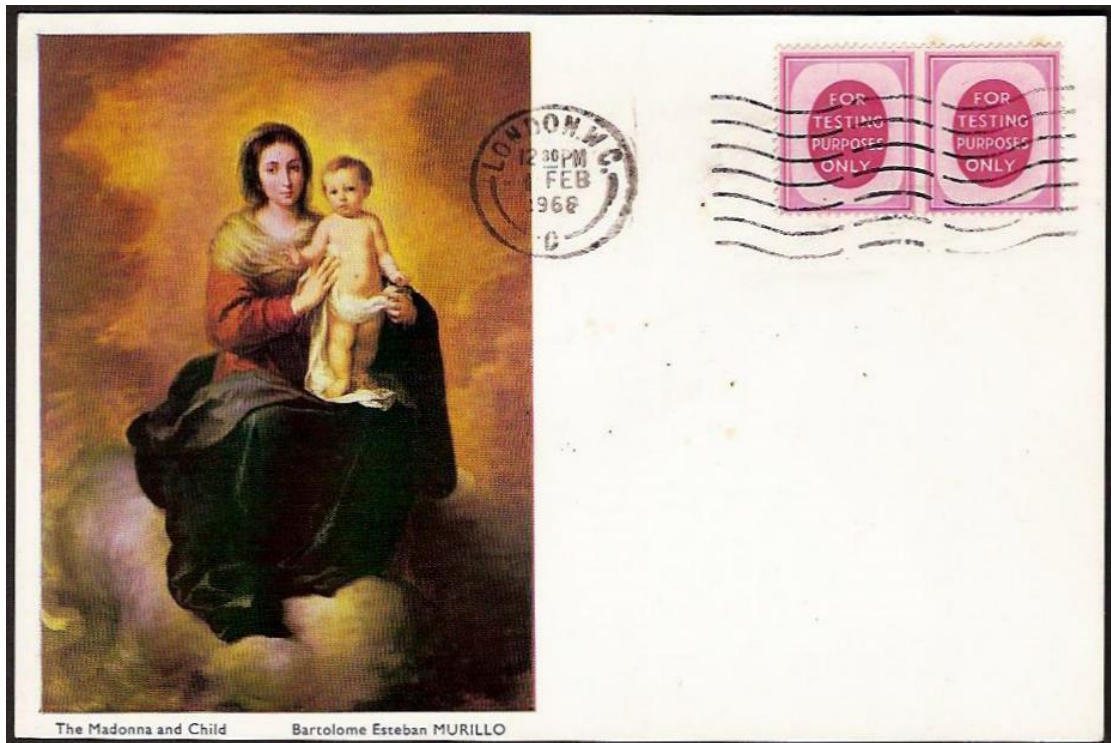


The initial order has to be the source of the *Philatelic Bulletin* give-away labels, as the subsequent order was delivered too late and everything else “fits”.

Collectors would be advised to check items held, as a difference may exist between the *Philatelic Bulletin* give-away version and the maximum card and booklet mock-up labels recorded below.

Dummy Maximum Card use

Surplus stock from above trials must have been retained, as this red label was subsequently used on maximum cards of the Christmas 1967 issue (at least). A fellow enthusiast for dummy items has one of the cards with a “LONDON W.C. / 12:30pm / 1 FEB 1968 / C” wavy line machine cancellation and he asserts that the labels are torn on all four sides and are not cut by machine, confirming that they are from the sheet printed issue and are not from a coil printing.



The 1968 dummy maximum card...
(Image courtesy Richard J West FRPSL)



...and an enlargement of the label and postal marking area
(Image courtesy Richard J West FRPSL)

Dummy Stamp Booklet Use

A further use for these red dummy stamps was for creating mock-ups of a new five shilling stamp booklet, sometime prior to September 1968, but almost certainly during 1968. A collector possesses a dummy hand-made stamp booklet containing two panes of 6 x 1d and two panes of 6 x 4d of the red label, the 1d of which is shown below.

The album page write-up records: “The essay comprises a 6/- December 1967 Advertisers’ Voucher Copy (AVC) with four panes of “Scout” commemorative coil testing stamps marked 4d or 1d as dummy booklet panes. The second 1d pane attached to the final interleaf has been unstuck.”



A dummy 1d stamp pane of six labels – the largest multiple known.
Note that the pane is actually one and a half labels wide and that the far right double-width label has been cut in half vertically.
(Image courtesy Ian Harvey FRPSL)

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