

# THE 'OTHER SIDE' OF BRITISH STAMPS

**INTRODUCTION:** Occasionally, British stamps can be found with printing applied to the back as well as the front. This exhibit examines these markings and explains the reasons behind them.



Great Eastern Railway official underprint

Official underprint

Unofficial underprint

**SECURITY:** From 1867, to stop the pilfering of stamps by company employees, controls were printed on the backs of British stamps. Four firms used the official service, having their names printed on the backs of their stamps by the stamp printers, under the gum. Others simply printed their own controls over the gum.



Under the gum (usually found used)

Over the gum

**ADVERTISING:** In 1888 two different Pears' Soap advertisements appeared on the backs of 1/2d and 1d stamps. The adverts were not sanctioned by the GPO. Official trials were conducted in 1922 however; 1d 'specimen' stamps had slogans, promoting post office services, printed on the back in red. The trial did not proceed any further.



'Colour Trial E' = 'M/B Scarlet 2562'

**COLOUR TRIALS:** In 1912 colour trials were conducted to ascertain the best shade of red for the 1d definitive. Eight inks were tested, from three different suppliers, one of which was Mander Brothers. The stamps were marked on the back with an identification letter ranging from 'A' to 'H'.

## POSTAL MECHANISATION:

Graphite lines were printed on the backs of 'Wilding' definitives, for use with experimental letter facing and sorting machinery installed at Southampton in 1957.



One line: printed matter rate



Two lines: all other values

**ACCOUNTING:** Some booklet stamps issued between 1982 and 1986 can be found with blue emblems printed on the back, over the gum. The booklets were sold to the public at less than face value; the devices on the back identified the discounted stamps for accounting purposes.



Imperfinate paper sample