

IDENTIFYING EARLY BRITISH

LETTERS AND NUMBERS ON STAMPS

SHORTLY AFTER POSTAGE STAMPS WERE INVENTED, THE PRACTISE OF RE-USING PARTS OF CANCELLED STAMPS TO MAKE UNUSED STAMPS WAS DEvised! THIS BECAME VERY PREVALENT WHEN, IN 1858, THE USE OF STAMPS WAS MADE MANDATORY.

IN BRITAIN FROM THE BEGINNING, LETTERS WERE PUT IN THE LOWER CORNERS OF THE STAMP, AS IN THE PENNY BLACK AND THE TWO PENCE BLUE. IN 1858, THIS PRACTISE WAS EXTENDED TO INCLUDE LETTERS IN THE UPPER CORNERS.

ALSO IN 1858, THE PRACTISE OF PUTTING THE PLATE LETTERS IN REVERSE ON THE UPPER CORNERS OF THE STAMP WAS FURTHER DETRIMENT TO THE UNLAWFUL USE OF ALREADY USED STAMPS.

THE APPEARANCE OF THE PLATE NUMBER ON THE FACE OF THE STAMP THEN BECAME AN INTERGRAL PART OF THE STAMP DESIGN. EVENTUALLY, STAMPS WERE CATALOGED AS TO THE SCARCITY OF EACH PLATE NUMBER!

THIS EXHIBIT IS INTENDED TO ASSIST COLLECTORS IN IDENTIFYING THE MANY VARIETIES OF THESE STAMPS.

WE START WITH BRITAIN'S FIRST STAMP, THE PENNY BLACK, AND WILL CONTINUE TO STAMPS ISSUED IN 1880.