

One Man's Mission

The Great Britain 1864 Penny Reds

Penny Reds first went to press March 1, 1864 and ended December 4, 1879 producing 14 billion individual stamps, using 151 different numbered plates from 71 to 225. (See photo 1 showing an enlargement of these plate numbers.) The last plate number, 225, became the rarest, being in use for only 3 months, as new stamp issues were released (excluding a single sheet made on plate 77). The stamps were printed in sheets of 240 stamps arranged in 20 rows, each row with 12 stamps. This 12 by 20 sheet configuration was chosen because there are 12 pennies per shilling and 20 shillings per pound. Therefore, at the post office, a postman could tear off one row of stamps for a shilling or sell a complete sheet for one pound. As a method to deter forgery, each of the 240 different positions on the sheet bore a unique letter combination. The initial in the lower left corner designated the horizontal row location, these were in alphabetical order, from A to T; the initial in the lower right hand corner designated the vertical column from left to right, A to L.

Sections of this exhibit show a complete plate Reconstruction, of the first plate issued (plate 71) also Postmarks, covers sent within Great Britain and those sent to United States addresses, Overprints and Underprints, Perfins and multiple stamps.



Each Penny Red stamp has the plate number on both the right and left side.

Photo 1