

Development of Royal Mail, 2000 to 2022 - examples from GB to Canada Mail

Synopsis of Exhibit (updated 23 Aug 2022) – I regret that I am unable to provide an electronic version for the judges prior to CPS 2022 BNAPEX as the exhibit is still a work in progress.

PURPOSE: Period starting January 1st 2000 has been the most challenging for national postal services since mail delivery began. Escalating costs, private competition, forgery, re-use of stamps, declining efficiency, declining volumes, new technology, scandals, pandemics and free, instantaneous communications - all contribute to the challenge.

This exhibit is completely new.

SCOPE: Major changes and impacts on Britain's Royal Mail between 2000 and 2022 are illustrated in chronological order in Part 1 of the Exhibit and cover the Y2K concern of late 1999 to the shock of COVID in 2020 and horror of Ukraine in 2022 (recent events are covered in Frame 3) . More detail on specific items is covered in Part 2. Final page of exhibit provides an 'Epilogue'.

Efficiency of service and postal rates are an important part of this exhibit. While I have incorporated the best items I can find; examples are focused on genuine commercial and personal usages which provide useful information rather than cancelled to order philatelic items. Average quality of machine and hand cancels has become very poor.

All examples are from commercial and personal mail sent from GB to Canada. The contribution by members of the Calgary Philatelic Society is acknowledged and much appreciated.

PERSONAL RESEARCH: I have been accumulating examples of mail between Great Britain and BNA (Canada) for 40+ years. In recent years, I have become more interested in mail which can tell a story of efficiency. Efficiency determination requires evidence of both mailing date (typically a postmark) and arrival date (typically a receiver stamp), other evidence of arrival dates come from corporate mail rooms, notes from recipient, forwarding dates, etc.) On-line tracking of "Special Delivery" items has become an important source of route and efficiency research, however this information is typically only available for a year before it disappears from Royal Mail and Canada Post websites.

To date, >1000 examples from period 1800 to Present have been recorded in a database. Many of these are in my collection but other data have been obtained from internet sales, auction catalogues, philatelic articles and input from other collectors. A summary of efficiency is presented in a graph on Title page . A complete documentation of findings is in preparation.

ORGANISATION AND TREATMENT: Part 2 of the exhibit covers specific topics in more detail:

2.1 Labels to Pay Postage (Frame 4, Page 2)

2.2 Special Delivery of Mail (Frame 5, Page 2)


2.3 Cancellation of stamps (Frame 5, Page 7)

2.4 Automatic sorting of mail (Frame 5, Page 15)

2.5 Revenue Protection – including values of NVI stamps (Frame 6, Page 10)

Exhibit ends with a brief Epilogue (Frame 6, Page 16)

CHALLENGE: Finding good dated examples to illustrate efficiency of modern mail services (mailing date and arrival date) is difficult to impossible. Royal Mail prefers labels to stamps for paying postage, some of these do have source information. Royal Mail has become very inefficient at cancelling stamps. 'Special delivery' type mail is somewhat better, but most of the preserved items are from philatelic mail which is increasingly paid by multiple old stamps. Modern items are rarely found but are more likely to be found in yard sales, and dealer's bargain boxes than they are in sorted dealer stock.

RARITY: Preserved volume of covers that meet dateable criteria of legible mailing date and evidence of receipt is a tiny fraction of mail crossing the Atlantic. It is particularly difficult to find examples using current stamps to pay specific International mail. Many items are the only examples I have found to date, some are high-lighted with 

I have referred to these as 'Unusual' as it will involve considerably more research and many decades to quantify the 'Rarity' of modern material.

Some of the UNUSUAL ITEMS in this exhibit.

Frame 1, Page 2: 30 Dec 1999 – Item in the mail at turn of Millennium

Frame 2, Page 5: 30 Apr 2012 – International Surface Rates were abolished having been rarely used since the 1970's except for mail when postage was underpaid.

Frame 2, Page 15: 26 Mar 2018 – A 'rare' postal rate reduction!

Frame 3, Page 11: The slowest GB to Canada mail I have found in the last **220 years, it took >115 days to be delivered in Calgary. (In fairness to Canada Post, it appears the item was sent unpaid).**

Frame 5, Page 11: Jan 2015 cover from Britain with very effective Canada Post cancellation.

Frame 5, Page 15: 17 Sep 2010 cover cancelled with a 'Test Scan'.

I am hoping to use this exhibit to encourage collectors to take a look at their holdings of modern GB to Canada material and advise of examples that could be added to my database.