

Machin Corner

Paper and Phosphor

One of the most frustrating elements, if not THE most frustrating element of sorting and collecting Machins (Pronounced May-chin) is the identification of phosphor and paper at any given timeframe.

With paper, the original pre-decimal Machins were printed on paper supplied to the General Post Office from another Government department the Stationary Office. In the late 1960's production of high value Machins was shared with other firms, other than Harrison & Sons, and as a result collectors identify a product known as "Contractor paper" by using selvaige markings.

The development was further expanded in the 1970 with pre-phosphorised paper (Embedded optical brighteners) and at the end of the omnibus editions it was back to "dead" paper that had no glow under UV light (OFNP).

Here is a listing of the mainstream paper and phosphor variants:

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| Post office paper | Original issue in 1967, replaced in the mid 1970's. No UV reaction. |
| Contractor Paper | Used by firms other than Harrison starting in 1967, replaced by the mid 1970's. No UV reaction. |
| Original Chalk Paper (OCP) | Used 1969 - 1971 when it was replaced gradually by FCP, dull glow under UV, did not perform well. |
| Fluorescent Chalk Paper (FCP) | Whiter glow than OCP, only used in the early 1970's, chalk could be scuffed off in handling. |
| Jet Phosphor | Contaminated phosphor that glows brown or green, a mistake at Harrisons in the early 1970's. |
| Advanced Coated Paper (ACP) | Very white under UV with a strong afterglow (1970's to the 80's) |
| Phosphor Coated Paper (PCP) | Phosphor added to the chalk gives a dull appearance and weak afterglow under UV, not a success |
| PCP 1 | Experimental coating only used on 4 Machin issues, Dull under UV, not a success |
| PCP 2 | Same as PCP 1 but with a longer afterglow, limited use. Better than PCP & PCP 1 but not a success either. |
| Preprinted Phosphor Paper (PPP) | FCP paper overprinted with all over phosphor, Only occurs on 3 Machin Issues, expensive to produce |
| OBA free Phosphorised Paper (OFPP) | A Phosphorised paper with no optical brightening agents, used on most modern Machins (1990 onwards) |
| OBA free Non Phosphorised Paper (OFNP) | Paper that does not glow at all, very common on most modern Machins |

Identifying these based upon useage, takes knowledge and expertise. To make it easier, I contacted a leading dealer in Great Britain and received them individually packaged and identified for under \$20. These low value MNH stamps now form the nucleus of my Machin reference collection. I now can compare suspects to my paper line up when I am unsure. I strongly recommend the Machin student follow this example.

It should be noted that phosphor will wash off. Soaking on paper stamps will remove the phosphor if the stamps are left in the water for a long time. It pays to check stamps prior to soaking to understand the phoshor or paper and to remove them from soaking as soon as they separate from the paper. I leave mine to air dry and don't touch them once they are on the drying towel face down.

Occasionally commerative stamps will be produced (In error) without the optical brightening agents. These stamps will be quite dull under UV when compared to other examples of the same stamp. These errors are only recently being identified and listed in the Stanley Gibbons reference works and likely will become tomorrows rarities.

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