

STAMPS ON COVER. Prices are quoted, as a third price column, for those Victorian and Edwardian issues usually found used on cover. In general these prices refer to the cheapest version of each basic stamp with other shades, plates or varieties, together with unusual frankings and postmarks, being worth more.

UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND

QUEEN VICTORIA
20 June 1837—22 January 1901

MULREADY ENVELOPES AND LETTER SHEETS, so called from the name of the designer, William Mulready, were issued concurrently with the first British adhesive stamps



	1d. black	
Envelopes.	£325 <i>unused</i> ;	£425 <i>used</i> .
Letter Sheets:	£300 <i>unused</i> ;	£400 <i>used</i> .
	2d. blue	
Envelopes.	£400 <i>unused</i> ;	£1500 <i>used</i> .
Letter Sheets:	£375 <i>unused</i> ;	£1500 <i>used</i> .

LINE-ENGRAVED ISSUES

GENERAL NOTES

Brief notes on some aspects of the line-engraved stamps follow, but for further information and a full specialist treatment of these issues collectors are recommended to consult Volume 1 of the Stanley Gibbons *Great Britain Specialised Catalogue*.



Alphabet I



Alphabet II



Alphabet III



Alphabet IV

Typical Corner Letters of the four Alphabets

Alphabets. Four different styles were used for the corner letters on stamps prior to the issue with letters in all four corners, these being known to collectors as:

- Alphabet I.* Used for all plates made from 1840 to the end of 1851. Letters small.
- Alphabet II.* Plates from 1852 to mid-1855. Letters larger, heavier and broader.
- Alphabet III.* Plates from mid-1855 to end of period. Letters tall and more slender.
- Alphabet IV.* 1861. 1d. Die II, Plates 50 and 51 only. Letters were hand-engraved instead of being punched on the plate. They are therefore inconsistent in shape and size but generally larger and outstanding.

While the general descriptions and the illustrations of typical letters given above may be of some assistance, only long experience and published aids can enable every stamp to be allocated to its particular Alphabet without hesitation, as certain letters in each are similar to those in one of the others.

Blued Paper. The bluing of the paper of the earlier issues is believed to be due to the presence of prussiate of potash in the printing ink, or in the paper, which, under certain conditions, tended to colour the paper when the sheets were damped for printing. An alternative term is *bleuté* paper.

Corner Letters. The corner letters on the early British stamps were intended as a safeguard against forgery, each stamp in the sheet having a different combination of letters. Taking the first 1d. stamp, printed in 20 horizontal rows of 12, as an example, the lettering is as follows:

- Row 1. A A, A B, A C, etc. to A L.
- Row 2. B A, B B, B C, etc. to B L.
- and so on to
- Row 20. T A, T B, T C, etc. to T L.

On the stamps with four corner letters, those in the upper corners are in the reverse positions to those in the lower corners. Thus in a sheet of 240 (12 x 20) the sequence is:

- Row 1. A A B A C A etc. to L A
- A A A B A C etc. to A L
- Row 2. A B B B C B etc. to L B
- B A B B B C etc. to B L
- and so on to
- Row 20. A T B T C T etc. to L T
- T A T B T C T L