

boxes or plates, &c. Locks and hinges should be frequently oiled. Street receiving-boxes are painted with Berger's signal-red paint in varnish, and finished with carriage-varnish. Letter-boxes are to be painted once a year, the Secretary's approval being first obtained. When tenders are called for, the following specification is to be used, viz.: The boxes are to be first thoroughly cleaned and painted with one coat of Berger's signal-red paint in varnish. After the paint is dry, one coat of carriage-varnish is to be applied. The paint is not to be used from the original tin, but to be emptied therefrom into a larger tin, so that it can be well stirred and mixed before being applied. No turps, driers, terebine, or other mixture is to be used in either the paint or the varnish.

665. A responsible officer must periodically inspect all boxes in which mail-matter is deposited. When the colour of receiving-boxes has faded (perhaps six months after painting) the box should be cleaned and a coat of carriage-varnish applied. Any damage, insecurity arising from the shrinkage of wood, &c., should at once be reported to the Inspector of Post-offices. If a box is insecure, or is out of use for any time, even though short, the aperture should be closed, and a notice pasted on the box stating that it is closed temporarily during repair or disuse. If a box be wantonly damaged, the circumstances must be reported to the police. Pad-locks are to be used for securing round and hexagonal iron pillar-boxes.

666. Chief Postmasters and Postmasters at offices where there are town receiving-boxes have a system of open-card check—meaning the use of a card exhibiting its purpose to the person clearing the receiver—for the clearance of receivers. These cards are to be posted at irregular intervals by one of the officers named, and in unspecified boxes known only to the officer himself. Strict record must be kept of the postings and returns. The check should in no case be made less than once a week. There is no need to post in all the receivers or in most of them so long as the person clearing has no knowledge of the dates or places of posting. The officer performing the clearance must invariably put his hand inside the box as far as the posting-aperture to see that there is no block of posted matter.

667. The alleged loss of a key should be strictly investigated, and if the key be not found the police should be communicated with and the lock changed. The Postmaster should at once report the circumstance to the Inspector of Post-offices. When a lost key is found a reward of 5s. to the finder must always be made good by the person through whose carelessness the loss may have taken place.

INQUIRIES FOR MISSING LETTERS, PARCELS, ETC.

668. When inquiry is made for a letter, packet, parcel, or other posted article said to be missing, the Postmaster should have a missing-letter form, P.O. 36, filled up by the sender of the alleged missing article and forward it to the Chief Postmaster with any report he may have to make. Only in special cases should the addressee be allowed to fill up a missing-letter form. In ordinary cases of inquiry made by an addressee the name and address of the sender of the article should be obtained and the Chief Postmaster advised of the inquiry. *As far as possible, missing-letter inquiries should be commenced at the office of posting.* In the case of foreign inquiries, however, some exception to this rule may be made. The inquiry form must always be returned, when inquiry has been completed, to the chief office