

Knackstedt + Näther in London

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Knackstedt + Näther

As well as printing for others, K+N issued their own numbered series of London views. This was quite an extensive series going up to 80 odd cards. They are scarce and I can only give a partial list of the cards here

In the course of collecting pre 1901 British PPC's, I have come across a K+N published PPC series for London. I have also found clear evidence of K+N printing for other major British PPC publishers, circa 1900.

My K+N research was done using the English trade magazines of the time and this together with details of their British PPC printings forms the basis of this article.

In the British pre PPC era, K+N were busy in London and in 1894 the firm was described as "A colotype printer with an export business to England" (Stationer Printer and Fancy Trade Register 1894, p 305).

No mention of Christa Pieska's "stamp labels" in this reference. I think as far as the pre 1901 English market was concerned, K+N were good quality colotype printers. This is how I have always thought of them, whatever other printing activities they pursued.

The earliest British K+N printed PPC that I know of is P/U on 20 November 1898. It was done for Freke, a Cardiff photographer. It explicitly states "Made by K+N Hamburg". I illustrate the card here as it uses a very distinctive type for the words "Post Card" that can be used to identify other K+N printings.

O. & Co.

I have a few pre 1900 court size cards of London issued by "O. & Co.", sometimes described as "Made in Germany", and sometimes "Hamburg". They are colotype printed. The words "Post Card" are in identical type to the explicit K+N printing for Cardiff. Henry Toms specialises in Hamburg cards and he knows of two possible candidates for "O. & Co.", one is *G. A. Otto* and the other is *Ortmann & Cie*, both of Hamburg. It seems that Ortmann & Cie would give the best fit for "O. & Co."

What is clear is that the London photographs used, although printed in the ordinary way (mono) were originally taken with stereo publishing in mind. To increase the stereo effect, it was common to take photographs with a "deep" perspective and strong light/dark contrast. A perfect example is the illustration here of the *Hôtel Metropole*, by O. & Co. Although printed in mono, it is part way to a stereo view already with its extreme perspective and high contrast. All "O. & Co." London cards are like this. I imagine "O. & Co." were Hamburg photographers/publishers.

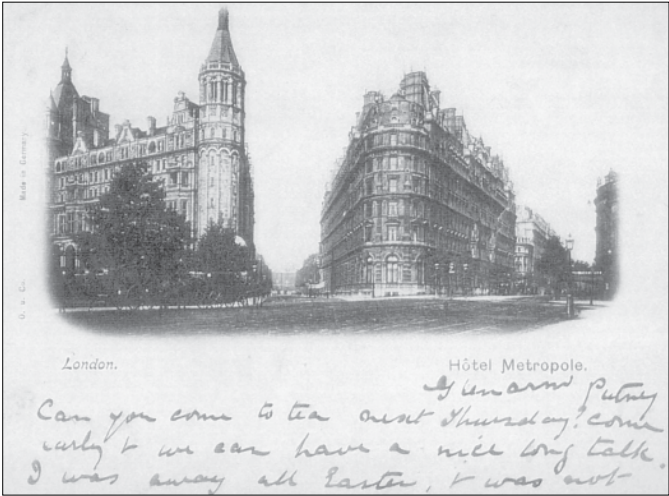
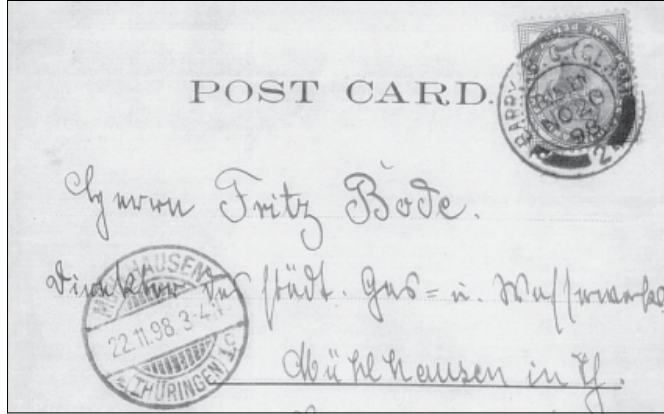
Knackstedt + Näther: A numbered series of London PPC views (circa 1899)

1. Cleopatras Needle
2. Hotel Cecil
3. Hotels Cecil & Savoy
6. Thames Embankment
7. Somerset House
10. Nelsons Statue
12. Big Wheel, Earls Court
17. Clock Tower and Houses of Parliament
19. St Pauls
23. St James Park
25. Houses of Parliament
26. Albert Embankment
32. Tower and Tower Bridge
33. Blue Coat School
37. Holborn Bars
48. St James' Palace
49. Cockspur Street
53. Athaneum Club
58. Buckingham Palace
62. St Georges' Hospital
67. Rotten Row
68. Billingsgate
69. Grand Hotel
70. Bank of England
72. Hotel Great Central
78. Royal Aquarium
88. Hotel Great Central

These cards are scarce and I would very much welcome information on the missing numbers. (con't next page)



↑↓ **Cardiff Castle:** This card explicitly said to be printed by K+N for the Cardiff photographer Freke. The type used for the word "POST CARD" is also used for K+N's own London series and can be used as one example, to identify K+N as the printer for London Stereo. The postmark of Nov 20th 1898 is the earliest I know of for K+N in Britain.



↑ **Hôtel Metropole:** This card was published by "O. & Co." and uses the same type face for the words "POST CARD" as known K+N printed cards. To me, this is a typical of a photo taken with stereo in mind. Although in mono, it has a "deep" perspective and extreme high/low lighting contrast.

I illustrate card No 48. This is explicitly attributed to Knackstedt + Näther with an address at 6/7 Barbican, London, and is explicitly said to be "Printed at the works in Hamburg". The printing is by collotype and the words "POST CARD" are in identical type to the above for Cardiff and "O. & Co". I would think the card was printed about 1899. (Full sized cards were allowed in 1900 rendering this shape of card obsolete after 1899). This makes it clear that K+N had their own address at the Barbican in Central London in 1899 and were well situated in the London "Post Card District" to take orders from any English PPC publishers who wanted high quality collotype.

London Stereoscopic Co. Ltd.

This was a major photographic firm in London. They were very well established and financed and held a very large library of photographs in connection with the stereoscopic craze of previous decades. They were in a perfect position to enter the picture card market. The stationery journals record that they issued court sized views of London in collotype and also London views in tinted half tone. There is no mention in the contemporary literature of who printed these cards, but it is absolutely clear that it was Knackstedt + Näther. I show typical examples of the collotype and tinted half tone London views in court size. K+N were not much given to changing their type and one can see that the word "London" on the London Stereo picture side is identical to "London" on the explicit K+N series (Apart from a couple of inserted dots!). Also the words "Post Card" on the address side is set in the same type. The only difference is the extended gap between "Post" and "Card". These London Stereo court cards are very common and must have been sold by the hundreds of thousands. It would need a major printer to handle this volume of production.

This is an interesting finding, in showing that at least one major stereo photographic firm went straight to K+N for high volume high quality collotype printing. It is reasonable to say that London Stereo was the equivalent in London of LL in Paris. Both were major players in the previous stereo photo craze. Helmfried has put forward evidence that suggests it was K+N who printed the initial LL cards. I fully support this, indeed I would possibly go a bit further than him on the LL front pre WW1.

LL

Of course there are doubts about the French LL using a German printer. These are based on the hatred engendered by the Franco Prussian and other wars. Maybe the French LL could not have tolerated a Prussian (Berlin) printer, but Hamburg was different. It had a history of formerly being an independent city state, noted more for its interest in trading and making money rather than in fighting Prussian wars. I think this, together with low prices for high volume quality printing for photographic firms made K+N in Hamburg an obvious possibility for the initial LL printer.

I feel that LL printing needs more research. There are a number of questions and doubts that I have in mind regarding their printing

- I do not think that LL's premises at 44 Rue Letelier, Paris were big enough to house a printing works. Possibly this was outside Paris, but where?
- The colouring used on LL cards does remind me of Rotograph printings, which seems to have had a K+N connection.
- We cannot rule out the possibility that K+N set up a printing works in France allowing LL to use the designation "Imprime en France"
- During WW1 the quality of LL's collotype declines very noticeably.
- LL finally ended up as part of Compagnie des Arts Photomecaniques of Strasbourg. This city has a dual French/German identity.

Possibly these LL uncertainties all have reasonable explanations? Taken as a whole however they do suggest the possibility of a German printer pre WW1?

Whatever the truth about LL printing, it is certain that London Stereoscopic, the British equivalent of LL, went to Knackstedt + Näther in Hamburg when it needed high quality, high volume collotype printing for its PPC's in 1899.



↑ **London St. James Palace:** This card is explicitly published and printed by K+N. The type for "POST CARD" is the usual K+N type. The lettering used for the word "London" on the picture side, was also used for the London Stereo printings. These cards are scarce and were only issued in small numbers. Presumably K+N discontinued their own London series when they got the big London Stereo contract.



↑ **London Ludgate Hill:** This is one of the collotype series issued by London Stereo. The word "London" on the picture side is in identical type to known K+N type (with the addition of a couple of dots in the "O's"). This series is one of the commonest court size cards that I know of. They must have been issued in large quantities and would have needed a high volume printer.

→ **London Shipping below London Bridge:**

This is one of the tinted half tone cards issued by London Stereo.

The tint in this case is a light blue. The type for "London" on the picture side and "POST CARD" on the address side is the usual K+N type. These were definitely printed by Knackstedt and Näther, Hamburg.

