

Bulletin

Endangered Species stamps
• A Christmas collection



Six new stamps feature some of Britain's most endangered animals, plants and birds, a small selection from the list of rapidly declining and rare species.

Dormouse

Song thrush

Mole cricket

Shining ram's-horn snail

Forthcoming issues and withdrawals



Front cover Recovery plans have been developed for some of Britain's most endangered species. Some of these 'action plan' species are shown with the mole cricket, by John Curtis, from the 43p Endangered Species stamp.

Late news: Collect '97 This fair at London's Olympia, 24-26 October, was a successful first venture for organisers Stanley Gibbons, with over 8000 visitors. Standholders catered for collectors of stamps, coins, medals, models, militaria, postcards, cigarette and telephone cards, banknotes and much more. The fair was opened by the Chief Cashier of the Bank of England, Mr G A Kentfield, himself a stamp collector.



The Directors and staff of Royal Mail wish all *Bulletin* readers a happy and peaceful Christmas and New Year

Issues Some items listed above are available only from the British Philatelic Bureau and Post Office Counters philatelic outlets at 41 main post offices

1 December

Withdrawal Definitives: 1p, 2p, 4p, 5p, 6p, 10p, 30p, 31p, 37p, 39p, 43p, 50p, 63p, £1.00 printed by Enschedé with blue fluor and 20p & 26p printed by Harrisons using acid-etched cylinders. Also £1.50, £2, £3 and £5 Castle high values printed by Harrison. *Note: Stock of £1.00 stamp exhausted at Bureau.*

1 December

Withdrawal Country stamps N Ireland/Scotland/Wales 20p, 26p, 37p and 63p printed by Questa.

31 December

Withdrawal 1st and 2nd class stamped envelopes (blue paper, first issued 1983) *Note: Date of withdrawal from Bureau and philatelic outlets; will remain on sale at post offices until stocks exhausted.*

5 January

Issue Flowers Greetings book with 'ChocExpress' promotion. Stamps same as books issued January and February 1997

12 January

Withdrawal Asda promotion book (10 × 1st class)

13 January

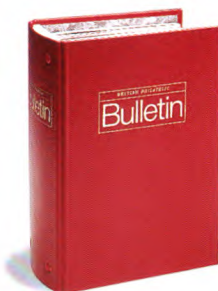
Issue Endangered Species stamp cards

20 January

Issue Endangered Species stamps and presentation pack

20 January

Withdrawal Great Tudor (Henry VIII) stamps, presentation pack and stamp cards



A subscription to this magazine makes an ideal Christmas present for a philatelic friend or relation. It keeps them informed of new Royal Mail issues and events in the philatelic world and provides interesting articles by leading philatelists and postal historians. To book a subscription send the name and address of your friend or relative to the Bureau (address below). Annual subscription £9.50 UK and Europe, £13.50 rest of world (airmail). Binders are available, price £7.

British Philatelic Bureau, 20 Brandon Street, Edinburgh EH3 5TT. UK order line 0345 641 641

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My Christmas favourites

Dorothy Martin describes her extensive collection of Christmas material, and the difficulty of choosing from it the two pages featured in this issue **112**

The British Philatelic Bulletin is published monthly by Royal Mail, Royal London House, 22 Finsbury Square, London EC2A 1NL. • **Editor** JR Holman • **Price** 85p single copies from Collections, philatelic counters, and National Postal Museum • **Annual subscriptions** UK and Europe £9.50, rest of the world £13.50. Subscriptions should be sent to British Philatelic Bureau, 20 Brandon Street, Edinburgh EH3 5TT • **Binders** to hold 24 issues, price £7. Available by post from British Philatelic Bureau (address above) • Royal Mail also publishes the fortnightly *British Postmark Bulletin*, giving details of forthcoming special handstamps and postmark slogans. Available on annual subscription from British Philatelic Bureau (address above) UK & Europe £10, rest of world £21.75 • **Copyright** Unless copyright attributed to specific authors, all articles and features may be reproduced without formal permission, but acknowledgement should be given to *British Philatelic Bulletin*. Requests to reproduce copyright articles should be sent to the Editor, 22 Finsbury Square, London EC2A 1NL • **Design** by Robert Maude • **Printed** in Great Britain by The White Dove Press • **ISSN** 0953 8119

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Mrs J Robinson
200 Manorbie Road
Ilkerton
Derbyshire
DE7 4AB

Presentation pack and stamp cards A well-illustrated pack (price £2.25) and stamp cards (25p each) will be available from main post offices and philatelic outlets. The pack folds out like a colourful illustrated poster, to give details of the threats to wildlife and conservation work. It was written by Dr Roger Mitchell who leads the Species Recovery Programme for English Nature.

The wealth of wildlife

This country's wildlife has inspired painters, composers and poets for centuries. Despite the relatively small size of these islands, the animal and plant communities are remarkably varied. This diversity is not secure – more than 100 plants and animals are thought to have become extinct in the UK this century, including the Norfolk damselfly, the mouse-eared bat and the summer lady's-tresses orchid. The tiny Ilex's ca anemone was last seen 15 years ago in a small coastal lagoon in Sussex; it has never been seen anywhere else in the world.

This country has a special responsibility for threatened species which only occur on these islands, such as the Lundy cabbage (only found in the cliffs of Lundy Island), Welsh groundsel and Shetland mouse-ear. And there are other species of which we have a large proportion of the world population such as the grey seal, bog reindeer and gannet.

Even species we take for granted, familiar from the pages of literature, are crashing in numbers. The skylark singing overhead is really soon 'scarce' to the eye in some areas. Some 19 of our breeding birds have declined in numbers by more than half in the last quarter century (the grey heron has fallen by a staggering 75 per cent).

Part of the problem is that there is now less room for wild animals and plants. Industrialisation gave us the ability to change the landscape with machines more.

In the 130 years since the hare and the cornucopia were given names, as the Huddersfield's Sea Pinks their numbers have halved, and the water vole (Platy from Wood in the Wilton's has almost vanished from its riverbank home. The Lush's dogfish is really now scarce present to the eye.



There was a table on our under a tree in front of the house, and the March Hare and the Hatter were having tea at a Dromedary was sitting between them, but they and the other two were sitting at one of a cushion resting their elbows on it, and talking over its head.



ROYAL MAIL MINT STAMPS



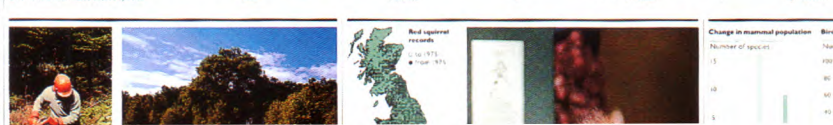
Endangered species Water vole Red squirrel Brown hare Otter Harbour porpoise Greater mouse-eared bat Skylark Corncrake Bittern Greater horseshoe bat Pipistrelle bat Stone curlew Aquatic warbler Capercaillie

Floating water plantain Schismatomma graphidioides Shore dock Early gentian Young's helleborine orchid Slender naiad Fen orchid Three-lobed water crowfoot Killarney fern Wild cotoneaster Eyebrights Western ramping-fumitory Cornish path moss Holly-leaved naiad Mountain scurvy-grass Yellow marsh saxifrage Derbyshire feather moss Action plan species



AN 1800-year-old action plan is beginning to pay off. Species back from the brink. This takes the form of the careful protection and management of the areas where these species still exist and, in many cases, increasing the numbers in the wild by reintroducing rare species from one area to another or from stocks bred up in zoos and botanic gardens. Species extinct in Britain have been successfully brought back – such as the white-tailed sea eagle from Norway and the beautiful grey blue butterfly from Sweden. Sometimes lost species have re-appeared – ditch clearance in the

The irreversibility of life is too profound to be measured. Estimates for the total number of species on the planet range from 10 million to 100 million. The UK is home to an estimated 88,000 species.



Royal Mail news Endangered Species • Promotional Greetings book • Prize draws • NPM displays • New Archives miniature

Endangered Species Stamps featuring six of Britain's most endangered animals, birds and plants will go on sale at post offices and philatelic outlets on 20 January.

The **20p** stamp (inland 2nd class rate), headed 'Decline in distribution' features the common dormouse (*Muscardinus avellanarius*), made famous in Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*.

The **26p** denomination (1st class inland and EU rate), entitled 'Decline in sites' depicts the lady's slipper orchid (*Cypripedium calceolus*). After many years of successful propagation of thousands of seedlings by the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, the reintroduction of these plants to a number of secret sites in northern England is being co-ordinated by a group of orchid experts and local conservationists supported by English Nature.

The subject for the **31p** value (European, non EU countries, rate) on the theme 'Decline in population' is the song thrush (*Turdus philomelos*). Of our 247 breeding bird species, more than half are in decline owing to agricultural changes. As well as the song thrush, the skylark and tree sparrow have declined in numbers over the past 25 years.

The shining ram's-horn snail (*Segmentina nitida*) is shown on the **37p** value (airmail postcard rate), headed 'Decline in distribution'. The Wildlife Trusts with the Environment Agency are leading the work on this species to understand its ecology which depends on the maintenance of grazing marsh habitat.

The **43p** value (basic airmail letter rate) features the mole cricket (*Gryllotalpa gryllotalpa*) representing 'Decline in sightings'. Most of the studies of this species, co-ordinated by English Nature and the Natural History Museum, is focused on the location and safeguarding of the few surviving colonies. A captive breeding population has been established for possible future reintroductions.

Finally, the **63p** denomination (airmail letters, second rate step), depicts the Devil's bolete (*Boletus satanas*) which, like the 26p stamp, is entitled 'Decline in sites'. This poisonous fungi is one of

Technical details

Printers The House of Questa Ltd

Process Offset lithography

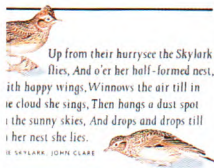
Size 30 × 41mm

Sheets 100

Perforation 14 × 14.5

Phosphor One band 20p
two bands others

Gum PVA



Other species: Threatened Nationally scarce: Not at risk





The designer The stamps are the work of Robert Maude, designer of this *Bulletin*, using five antique paintings from the Natural History Museum, and one newly-commissioned illustration. He has cleverly included a graph motif behind each of the subjects to show their rate of decline. Mr Maude, who also designed the presentation pack, first day cover and first day postmarks, will be writing about his work on this set next month.

the species benefitting from the 'Action for Plants' campaign run by the conservation charity Plantlife in association with English Nature. Scientific surveys of existing sites are in progress to establish the habitat management needed to restore populations.

The United Nations estimates over 13 million species of lifeforms on the planet, of which an estimated 88,000 species are to be found in the United Kingdom. Some 116 species which are globally threatened and considered the most endangered have been selected for special attention. All six featured on the stamps come into this category. Six stamps were required to do justice to this theme; thereafter issues will revert to the usual four or five stamp sets.

Questa are using a new very fine screen for this – 600 dots per inch, as opposed to the more usual 300; this will yield an improved image on the stamps.

FIRST DAY FACILITIES Unstamped Royal Mail first day cover envelopes will be available from main post offices and philatelic outlets around a week before 20 January, price 25p.

Orders for the Royal Mail cover bearing the stamps, cancelled with a pictorial 'first day of issue' postmark of the Bureau or Selborne, Alton, price £3 UK (including VAT) or £2.56 overseas (no VAT), must reach the Bureau by 20 January. Alternatively, collectors may send stamped covers on the day of issue, to: British Philatelic Bureau, 20 Brandon Street, Edinburgh EH3 5TT, or Special Handstamp Centre, Royal Mail, Wexham Road, Slough SL1 1AA (for Selborne postmark). The outer envelope should be marked 'FD9801' (Bureau), or 'FD9802' (Selborne).

First day posting boxes will be provided at main post offices for collectors to receive local (mostly non-pictorial) 'first day of issue' handstamps. Sponsored special handstamps will be

announced in the *British Postmark Bulletin* – available on subscription from the Bureau (£10 UK/Europe; £21.75 rest of world).

Collectors may submit covers bearing just the 20p Endangered Species stamp for all first day, philatelic and sponsored handstamps in use on 20 January, the 1st class rule for special handstamps being waived on this day ●

1996 special stamp quantities

Robert Burns

19p	22,285,100
25p	24,034,200
41p	5,431,500
60p	5,357,000
Stamp cards sets	65,930

Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust

19p	21,709,000
25p	23,294,500
30p	5,039,200
35p	4,869,900
41p	5,189,000
Stamp cards sets	54,732

Cinema

19p	20,989,300
25p	22,820,700
30p	4,782,000
35p	4,610,200
41p	4,939,500
Stamp cards sets	52,848

Football

19p	21,443,800
25p	23,235,300
35p	5,069,700
41p	5,187,700
60p	5,098,500
Stamp cards sets	57,560

Olympics

5 x 26p	37,545,000
Stamp cards sets	57,712

Women of Achievement

20p	21,002,600
26p	22,976,000
31p	4,964,000
37p	4,809,100
43p	5,117,200
Stamp cards sets	50,600

Children's TV

20p	21,247,700
26p	23,003,000
31p	4,977,000
37p	4,819,700
43p	5,169,200
Stamp cards sets	51,248

Cars

20p	20,739,600
26p	22,732,700
37p	4,682,600
43p	4,961,800
63p	4,891,700
Stamp cards sets	49,984

Christmas

2nd	262,209,300
1st	120,300,500
31p	12,972,000
43p	15,851,500
63p	14,168,400
Stamp cards sets	59,272
Stamp book (1st)	4,004,075
Stamp book (2nd)	5,090,450
Aerogramme	541,075

List of 1997 definitives Our annual list of new definitive and country stamps and stamp books will be published next month

Archives new historical miniature A new historical miniature of a 1930s airmail pillar box is the latest addition to a series exclusively produced by Post Office Archives. As with all miniatures, it has been produced following extensive research to ensure historical accuracy. From the introduction of the first public overseas airmail service between London and Paris in 1919, the PO began to look at ways to speed the mail. Plans were made in 1929 for special pillar boxes in which only airmail items could be posted. In June 1930, 11 of these boxes were opened experimentally in London, offering later times of posting and delivery direct to the airmail despatching point after collection. The boxes were originally pillar boxes (type B) painted Air Force blue; an enamelled 'Air Mail' sign was fixed to the top. Collections were made by special airmail vans, also painted blue. The success of the London experiment led to the extension of the scheme, and by 1936 there were over 300 such boxes nationwide. From July, the special boxes were phased out as airmail became a normal feature of postal operations •



The new miniature is available from Post Office Archives, Mount Pleasant (Phoenix Place entrance) London EC1A 1BB, price £23.95 plus 60p handling charge.

Remittances should be payable to 'The Post Office' in £ sterling. Please allow 28 days for delivery.



Plate numbers at time of going to press: W11 W14 W17 W10 W9 W15

party as a gift, with a gift message tag. Purchasers can make up their own message for the card. The offer closes on 1 June 1999 and is open to UK residents and UK delivery addresses only. A Disney Holiday promotion book is planned for issue in February ●

Sidney Amery September
Colin Baker January, March
Martin Balls December
Richard Beith April, May, June, November
Daniel E Cooke November
Sara Eade and Neill Oakley May
Michael Furnell February
Fred Gee March
Matt Hinton January, June, July, August, October
James Mackay January, February, March, April, June, July, August, October, November
Dorothy M Martin December

Jean Matheson May, November
Glenn Morgan November
D G A Myall February, March, April, June, August, October, December
James Negus November
Ron Negus March, May, July, October
Martin Robinson February
Alan Sabey February
Don Staddon March, December
Tom Wilson January
William Aubrey Witham September, November

Promotional Greetings book A special promotional book containing the 1997 Greetings flower stamps will be available from main post offices and philatelic outlets from 5 January, price £2.60. The front and back covers of the book give details of a promotion with ChocExpress, a mail order chocolates company, with an illustration of a box of chocolates which purchasers can buy at a special price. Purchasers can send the front cover of the book, as proof of purchase, and £3.95 for a box of six luxury Belgian chocolates produced by ChocExpress. The order form and terms and conditions are printed on the inside of the book covers. The chocolates can be sent to a third

Cast your votes in £500 prize draws We invite you to vote for your favourite special and greetings stamps of 1997 – shown on pages 108-9. Tell us your top three sets and favourite individual stamp (numbered 1-52) on the enclosed voting form. All forms will be entered in a prize draw – the sender of the first ‘out of the hat’ will win £250, with £50 each to the next three drawn. Return your voting form by Friday 23 January 1998. The favourite set of 1996 was the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust issue, with the 19p value of that set the most popular individual stamp. The results were published here in April.

We are also asking you to vote (on the same form) for your favourite *Bulletin* writer of the year. The writers are listed opposite, with the

months their articles were published. All voting forms go into a second draw, the sender of the first drawn will receive £100. The favourite author will also receive £100. Last year's winner was Douglas Myall for his Decimal Stamp Books articles.

Note: articles by the Editor and other Post Office/Royal Mail staff are excluded from this listing ●

Self-adhesive stamps Following trials at selected post offices in Scotland and Northern Ireland, these stamps are now available at all offices which wish to stock them in the two countries. They are expected to be available at offices in England and Wales in the Spring ●

National Postal Museum displays Three special exhibitions are currently on show at the Museum. 'The Mediterranean' exhibition of stamps from Gibraltar, Malta, Crete, Ionian Islands, Cyprus, Long Island and Mount Athos from the collection of HM The Queen is on view until 17 December. The 'Golden and Glorious' exhibition, marking The Queen's golden wedding anniversary, traces the development of the 1953 Coronation and 1972 Silver Jubilee issues. The Museum's book on the Coronation issue (price £7.50) was reviewed here in September. Finally 'Etchings into Stamps' – an exhibition of the work of artist Terence Millington – can be seen in the temporary exhibition gallery on the ground floor.

The pull-out frames in the main gallery house the Reginald M Phillips Collection of Victorian stamps, a collection of stamps of the world, and a number of specialist displays: 1929 Postal Union Congress, 1940 Stamp Centenary, 1974 UPU Centenary, 1967 British Wild Flowers, 1990 Penny Black Anniversary, 1988-92 First day special postmarks, 1957-61 Qatar definitives, and 1964 Botanical Congress. Thematic collectors will enjoy displays of stamps, postmarks and postcards relating to: Roses, Safety at Sea, Letter Boxes, Charles Dickens, British Wildlife, British Birds, Sea Birds, British Wild Flowers, British Butterflies, Domestic Cats, Wild Cats, Royal Wedding, Great Western Railway, and Farming.

On the ground and mezzanine floors visitors can see the 'Victorian Posts' exhibition – a blend of philately, postal history and related documentation and artefacts – and the 'Post Haste!' display of vehicles and artefacts, telling the story of the postal service from medieval times. Details of these exhibitions were published here in August, September and November 1995

The NPM shop sells a wide range of postcards and souvenirs •



Cyril Macey

Design for 1953 Coronation stamp by A W Porter, from 'Golden and Glorious' exhibition, and mail van and letter box in Post Haste! display

The National Postal Museum in King Edward Street, London EC1A 1LP, is a short walk from St Paul's Cathedral and underground station. Open Monday to Friday 09.30-16.30. Closed public holidays. Admission is free. Enquiries 0171 776 3636



Horror book Readers are reminded that an illustrated book containing the Horror stamps of Britain, USA and Canada and the miniature sheet (left) from Ireland has been jointly produced by the four postal administrations. It is available from the British Philatelic Bureau, price £8.95

Stamp scene Russian Royal stamp album

• Indepex '97 • Societies news • Mauritius



Orders Norman Scott, 49 Kingsdale Park, Belfast BT5 7BZ. Price 20p unused, 50p with first day postmark. Postage 30p.

Place, Belfast. The President, Robert Scott, has been a member for 60 years. To commemorate the anniversary a postcard depicting an early air mail flight into Newtownards Airport, was issued on 12 September •

How convenient! A reader in Hampshire submitted a cutting from his local paper about the post office in the village of Shawford. Following the closure of the previous premises, the office relocated to the ladies' toilets of the village hall. The Postmistress, Vanessa Smith, is delighted with her office which was adapted for use by the parish council •

Enquiries and entries (by 17 January) to F N Soutar, 1 Campbell Drive, Larbert FK5 4PP

Scottish national junior competition The Association of Scottish Philatelic Societies runs an annual competition for young collectors up to age 18, resident in Scotland. Entries can be submitted through a school, philatelic society or direct to the competition organiser. Entries will be judged in four age groups: up to 8 years, 9-12 years, 13-15 years and 16-17 years. The winner in each group will be receive a medal. Certificates will be awarded to all participants. The Alba Salver will be awarded to the best overall entry •

The Indian Post Office's special Indepex stamp issued on 5 October 1996 (SG 1681), features the exhibition logo – a caparisoned elephant, a symbol of ceremonial traditional welcome in India. The carpet on which the elephant stands has the semblance of a postage stamp – a magic carpet symbolising the journey of a stamp around the world as a country's little ambassador.



Indepex '97 A world stamp exhibition, under the patronage of FIP (Fédération Internationale de Philatélie), will be held in Delhi, 15-22 December, to mark the 50th anniversary of India's independence. Organised by India's Department of Posts in cooperation with the Philatelic Congress of India, the exhibition has the President of India, Dr Shanker Dayal Sharma, as its Patron-in-Chief. It will be the fifth international in India, following the exhibitions of 1954, 1973, 1980 and 1989. Seminars and social events are being organised and numerous dealers and postal administrations will have stands •

Russian Royal stamp album In our reports on the Rare Stamps of the World exhibition (July and September), mention was made of the album belonging to the Tsarevich Alexi, murdered with his parents and sisters in 1918. Now in the collection of HM The Queen, pages from the album were displayed at the exhibition and attracted much interest. In July, James Mackay wrote: 'There can be few philatelic items more poignant or laden with pathos than this little album.' By gracious permission of HM The Queen, and with the kind co-operation of Charles Goodwyn, Keeper of the Royal Collection, we are delighted to show here one of the pages from this historic album ●



NPS Appraisal Scheme If you would like to enter Stampex but not sure if your collection is good enough, try the 1998 National Philatelic Society Appraisal Scheme. You can submit two, three, or four frames, ie 32, 48 or 64 sheets, in one of the recognised classes – Traditional, Postal History, Aerophilately, Thematic, Postal Stationery, or Revenues. There will be a £10 fee for administration costs, but no charge for NPS members. Applications will be accepted up to 15 December 1997 and your entry, required by 19 January 1998, will be appraised by national, accredited judges who will tell you the medal standard your entry is likely to achieve and advise on how it might be improved. If there is sufficient space, and with your agreement, your entry will be displayed at Spring Stampex, 25 February-1 March ●

Enquiries NPS (Appraisal Scheme), British Philatelic Centre, 107 Charterhouse Street, London EC1M 6PT.

Best music stamps of 1996 Each year the Philatelic Music Circle chooses the best music stamps of the previous year. The winners for 1996 were: New Zealand Symphony Orchestra stamps, designed by Martin Bailey; Israel Mendelssohn and Mahler stamps, by Naomi and Meir Eschel; and Austria Anton Bruckner stamp, by Peter Sinaweil ●

For details of the PMC write to Ian Summers, 8 Alderwood Grove, Edenfield, Bury BL0 0HO or Mrs C Osborne, PO Box 1781, Sequim, Washington 98382, USA.

Insurance & Banking Philatelic Society The Society holds monthly meetings in London and Manchester from September to May each season. Auctions are held twice per year at the London meetings. Membership is open to anybody who is working in or retired from a job in insurance or banking ●

For details and application form write to John Payne, Kelso, Devonshire Avenue, Amersham HP6 5JE

Mauritius sesquicentenary Mention was made here in September (page 13) of the stamps issued by the Mauritius Post Office on 22 September to mark the 150th anniversary of the island's first stamps. The anniversary stamps, which reproduce the famous classic issues, comprise 60 cents, and 4, 5 and 10 rupees values, also a 20r in miniature sheet format. The 60c and 4r values are printed in sheets of 12 containing seven 60c and five 4r stamps. All four stamps are also produced in booklets of 10. The stamps proved very popular on the island and first day covers quickly sold out ●



1997 Favourite stamps poll

FOR THE 12TH YEAR running we are inviting you to vote for your favourite stamps. Shown below are the special and greetings stamps of 1997. Tell us your top three sets and favourite individual stamp (numbered 1-52) on the enclosed voting form. Remember to return your form by 23 January for entry in our £500 prize draw.

Stamps are shown as they appear in the 1997 Yearpack (note the Greetings Stamps are not included in the Yearpack) •

Stamps in each set are numbered from left to right

The Great Tudor

1



The Great Tudor

2 3 4 5 6 7



Missions of Faith

8 9 10 11



Tales of Terror

12 13 14 15



Architects of the Air

16 17 18 19 20



All The Queen's Horses

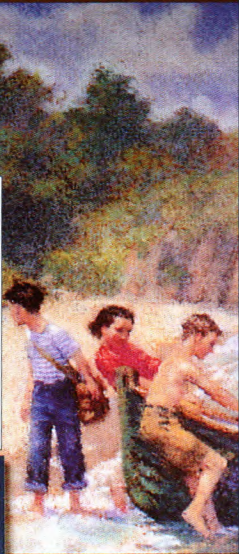
21 22 23 24



Greetings (Flowers)

Top row: 43 44 45 46 47

Bottom: 48 49 50 51 52



Post Offices

25 26 27 28



Enid Blyton Famous Five

29 30 31 32 33



Royal Golden Wedding

34 35 36 37

Issued after the Christmas stamps, as a mark of respect following the death of Diana, Princess of Wales



Christmas

38 39 40 41 42

'New image' definitives A year of change, by Don Staddon



ACCORDING to Royal Mail, 1997 is the year of the 'new image' definitives. But the question has been asked exactly what this means. As we know, printing of the small format definitives has moved from Enschedé to Harrison & Sons, since September renamed De La Rue Security Print, with all values from 1p to £1 now on sale. We also know that Walsall Security Printers have taken over the printing of Country definitives from The House of Questa, using the gravure process instead of lithography. Walsall is also using its recently installed gravure press for NVI sheet stamps, and retail booklets.

The official attitude of Royal Mail is that with two exceptions, these were not new stamps and did not qualify for a 'first day of issue' service. One exception was the range of definitives for Wales, which is different because the 'p' of pence was removed. Another was the printing of 'gold' 26p and 1st class NVI stamps for the golden wedding of The Queen and The Duke of Edinburgh.

Specialist collectors such as Doug Myall who is a feature writer in this magazine have concluded that this year's stamps portray one of the original Machin heads. It is the 'B' head which has two curved lines of shading in the hair, a pearl

missing from the necklace, and a solid dark background. So from this it can be concluded that the image is not new. So what is the difference?

In fact, the new image has been created by the technique used by Harrisons to produce the gravure cylinders from one of the original Machin photographs. Previously Harrisons employed photography to create multipositives, with the photographic images then transferred to the printing cylinders by an acid etch process relying heavily on human skills. This often included some retouching of the photograph, with some differences in retouching taking place by each of the stamp printers. The end result might be the same basic head, but with variations.

The new technique was to laser scan the original photograph to create a digital image, recorded on to a computer disk. The disk is then used to drive an electronic process for engraving the cylinders. All of this is done automatically, and without human 'interference'. As a result all of the engraved images are as near identical as it is possible to get. Copies of the disk are sent to each of the printers, who in turn have cylinders electronically engraved. The end result is Machin heads which are identical and very close to the



Opposite page from left: new Welsh stamp – without 'p' (pence); the original Machin photograph; and the 'new image' (enlarged 39p stamp)

Left shade difference between Harrison and Enschedé printings on 1p, 10p and 31p stamps

Above enlargement of old (left) and new image 20p stamp, showing difference in pattern of screening dots

original master photograph.

Incidentally, the same disk was used by Enschedé for the 1st class XVI 'Boots' label on 29 April despite the fact that the printing process was offset lithography and not gravure. Specialist collectors have reported the lighter and less muddy appearance of the 'new' stamps, and the much crisper image.

There are also some significant colour differences from the Enschedé stamps, with the most obvious example being the 1p, but also noticeably affecting the 10p and 31p. Compared to the previous Harrison stamps, the shadow at the right of the mouth is absent; there is a clear curved line on the nostril, and full lips with a spot on the front of the lower one. Study under magnification also reveals a significant difference in the pattern of screening dots. These features can be seen by comparing the 20p Harrisons stamps from ink cylinder 13 (old image) and 16 (new image).

Other visual differences were caused by the fact that prior to 1997 two of the four printers of GB definitives used offset litho, and frequently found it necessary to use a two colour process instead of one in their efforts to match the photogravure stamps produced by Enschedé and

Harrisons. In 1996 Royal Mail announced its intention to have all small format definitives printed by gravure so as to achieve a standardised result across the board. This has just about been achieved except for the stamps which continue to be produced in litho by The House of Questa; the litho printed Boots label; and a 4 × 1st Walsall with a label commemorating the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in Edinburgh issued on 21 October 1997.

The end result of all this is that modern GB specialists will accept these as new stamps whatever Royal Mail has said, and whether or not the image is truly new or more correctly a new reproduction of an original master positive. They will no doubt be shown separately in dealers' price lists and specialised catalogues. My own point of view is that stamps which are modified over time to meet operational needs, or to take advantage of advances in technology are important both in terms of postal history and in providing a continuation of interest to collectors.

It would be easy to say that with Royal Mail having achieved its objective of standardisation we can expect only few changes from now on. Past experience has shown otherwise! ●

My Christmas favourites Dorothy M Martin describes the

Fair Isle Christmas Flight
24th December.
Santa Claus Mail



FIRST UNOFFICIAL AIR MAIL.
ORKNEY - FAIR ISLE.
CHRISTMAS, 1937.

Capt. J. A. Hankins
c/o Post Office.
Lerwick

Christmas Drop Mail 1950
to
"Weather Explorer"

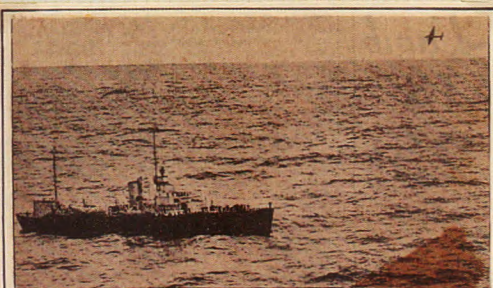
For Delivery at Sea



1950 XMAS
DROP MAIL
28 DEC 1950

Captain H. D. Wilkinson,
O.W.S. "Weather Explorer",
Great Haulan,
Greenock.

Ocean Weather Service - The Lancaster flew from Kinloss.
Cover cancelled at Glasgow with Post Early Xmas slogan.
Signed by Captain Wilkinson



"Weather Explorer" operating 200 miles south of Scotland.
Mail dropped in two canisters.

His Flight
nesley Hankins
outward flight
& return flight.
28.12.57.
Kew to Fair Isle
28. Santa Claus
16, with present
, 13 boys and
half an hour at
emergency aer
and "Mail Office"
parcelled in c
in case they
a plane
It was fought as

difficult choice of two pages from her Christmas collection

WHEN I WAS INVITED to have my two favourite pages illustrated in the Christmas edition of the *Bulletin*, I knew it would be a very difficult task to select just two sheets from my collection of Christmas material. Should it be the earliest 25 December postmark which is a Bishop mark of 1700, (if any reader has an earlier one I would like to know); or the very first postal history item I found, an entire written on Christmas Day 1766?

Maybe a page from the Wartime section showing a couple of cards from soldiers in far away places, or a letter from a homesick soldier written in the trenches on Christmas Day, telling his mother of activities and how much he and his men had enjoyed her home-made Xmas pud.

Or should I select a more colourful page illustrating The Nativity? – after all that is what Christmas is all about, though sometimes the real reason for Christmas celebrations seems to disappear in the rush of searching for presents and cards, and all the other preparations for the festive season.

I have finally decided to show two Christmas flight covers. The first is one of 40 flown on the special flight on 24 December 1937 from Orkney to Fair Isle by Captain Hankins who dressed as Santa Claus to deliver Christmas presents for the lonely island's 17 children. He made a perfect landing on what is regarded as an emergency aerodrome near the lighthouse. The toys had been well parcelled in case a landing was impossible, in which case they would have been dropped from the plane. The return flight was fought against a gale.

This is my most treasured cover because of the way I achieved it. I had been searching for this cover for several years and wrote to a member of BAMS who I did not know, regarding a souvenir flight cover which we were producing for the annual Northeast Philatelic Weekend. I happened to mention my interest in Christmas Flights, especially the Fair Isle cover. To my complete amazement and delight back came this cover with a note saying it would have a much better home in my collection than lying in a box in a cupboard. To me this illustrates the helpfulness and generosity of fellow stamp collectors to each other, even if unknown.

The other item is from the 1950 Christmas Drop Mail to the ocean weather service ship *Weather Explorer*. Letters, cards and presents were sent

Christmas flight covers

Dropped from a Lancaster to the weather service ship *Weather Explorer* 200 miles south of Iceland, and a cover flown from Orkney to Fair Isle on 24 December 1937.



to family and friends from their loved ones. A Lancaster flew from Kinloss with mail to men on the weather ship operating 200 miles south of Iceland, a six-hour flight in good weather. Mail was dropped in cannisters and a dinghy was launched to pick up the cannisters.

My Christmas collection After three years collecting stamps of GB and Malta, I wanted to expand my horizon so decided to start a thematic collection which would embrace stamps from all over the world. Ultimately I chose Christmas issues because I thought I would be able to form a complete collection. How mistaken I was, very soon discovering that by 1970, some 66 countries were issuing Christmas stamps, some not even Christian countries. Many had jumped on the bandwagon and were producing high valued and unnecessary stamps merely for income, others hadn't even got a postal service!

This led me along new paths, I started searching for items bearing 25 December postmarks, special pictorial cancellations such as the Austrian Christkindl and German Weihnachtsmarkt cancels. Christmas Flights, Forces material and letters from Santa Claus were also in my mind for collecting. It must be remembered that at this time, more than 20 years ago, thematic collecting was frowned upon and treated as a poor relation in philately. It is only because of the hard work and persistence of several well-known and enthusiastic thematic collectors that thematic collecting now has its rightful place in the philatelic world. Then, there were no books of reference or check lists for thematic collectors, they had to do all their own research and discovery. Now there are helpful books and lists on popular subjects.

During the last two years, I have developed a section entitled 'Christmas in Victorian times' which includes a couple of covers bearing Penny Blacks with black and red Maltese Cross cancels used on the first Christmas Day after the introduction of adhesive stamps, and some very attractive Victorian Christmas cards. Another section consists of stamps and cards illustrating the Development of Art from the early manuscripts and wall paintings to the paintings of the Italian, German, French and Netherlands masters. A very high proportion of Christmas stamps depict paintings by these great early artists.

Christmas is a happy time, a time of gaiety and laughter, of feasting and fun, of generosity, kindness and thinking of others. I am very fortunate – with my collection I have Christmas with me all year round ●

Editor's Note Mrs Martin is well-known as the organiser of the annual North East Philatelic Weekend in Newcastle upon Tyne. Parts of her popular Christmas collection have been displayed at the Royal Philatelic Society London, to local societies in Croydon, Edinburgh, Harrogate, Leeds and Rayleigh, and at the Newcastle '96, Stamp '96 Autumn (Birmingham) and Stamp '97 exhibitions. I hope to feature other items from her collection in a future *Bulletin*.

Chairman's comments In the first of a quarterly series, Adam Novak, Director and General Manager of Royal Mail National and Chairman of the Stamp Advisory Committee, looks back at 1997

I WELCOME the opportunity offered by the Editor to contribute a regular series of articles on issues of topical interest to readers of the *Bulletin*. In these articles I will be offering my perspective of developments not just as Chairman of the Stamp Advisory Committee but also as Director and General Manager of Royal Mail National.

At this juncture, it is probably appropriate if I begin by explaining my credentials to readers. My academic background is somewhat unusual in that I am an honours graduate in microbiology and have a post-graduate MBA in marketing. Before joining Royal Mail, I had gained considerable marketing, sales, distribution and general management experience with Rowntree Mackintosh, Crown Paints, Johnson Wax and the Caradon Group over a period of 18 years, some of which was spent in an overseas capacity.

In 1991 I became Marketing and Sales Director of Royal Mail International with responsibility to manage and optimise postal business services principally from the UK for international destinations. Two years later, my brief was extended to manage and develop Royal Mail's global expansion strategy into Europe and North America. In 1995, I was appointed Director and General Manager of Royal Mail National where I am accountable for sales of £3 billion, expenditure of over £100 million and a staff of more than 300. My responsibilities cover all the strategy and support programmes for the main part of Royal Mail business including first and second class, priority services, ancillary products and philately.

Since we are approaching the end of 1997, I thought it opportune to look back at some of the highlights of this year's stamp programme. Containing many delightful sets, it is a programme of which Royal Mail can be very proud, especially for the remarkable balance of subject mat-



ter and design translation achieved. Everyone will have their own favourites and mine are The Great Tudor, Architects of the Air, Enid Blyton and Christmas Crackers sets.

We started the year with The Great Tudor stamps, the first set of seven stamps we have ever issued. What was also unusual about this set was that one of the stamps – that of Henry VIII – is much bigger than the others. One problem we encountered was that no entirely authenticated painting of Catherine Howard exists. The one we used is attributed to her and it did not come as a complete surprise when we were challenged on this point – a good honest and healthy debate does none of us any harm!

Two aspects of the Architects of the Air stamps appeal to me. One is the fact that the technology featured has had a major influence on modern aeronautical design, underlining the importance of technology transfer between military and civilian applications. The other appealing point is the way the images of the aircraft designers are ghosted in the backgrounds – once you realise that these are there, you see the images every time you look at the stamps.



What I like about the Enid Blyton and Christmas stamps is the creation of a warm glow of nostalgia. The Christmas stamps also have a charming element of coincidence since the inventor of the cracker, Tom Smith, used to have his factory just around the corner from my office in Finsbury Square.

On a much sadder note, we had to respond quickly to the tragic and untimely death of Diana, Princess of Wales. Believing that a commemorative issue would be an entirely fitting tribute to her, we developed designs very quickly and as I write this article await an indication from the Spencer family as to when they think it would be appropriate to proceed with this issue. Following consultations with Buckingham Palace, it was also agreed that the issue of The Queen's Golden Wedding stamps should be rescheduled from 7 October to 13 November. We regret any disappointment caused by this change but trust that philatelists would have accepted the understandable reasons for it.

A number of changes took place within Royal Mail National this year. We were sorry to see Alistair Sharp leave and we wish him every success in his new career in Canada. His successor, Diana Kenning, joins us in January.

We have taken the opportunity to examine whether we should structure ourselves in a different way to meet the challenges of the millennium and beyond. Back in the summer, for example, the British Philatelic Bureau was restructured and we aim to build on the centre of excellence John Wright and his team have created by investing in more resources which will enable the Bureau to respond effectively as demands on its services grow.

We have also welcomed Prue Leith and John

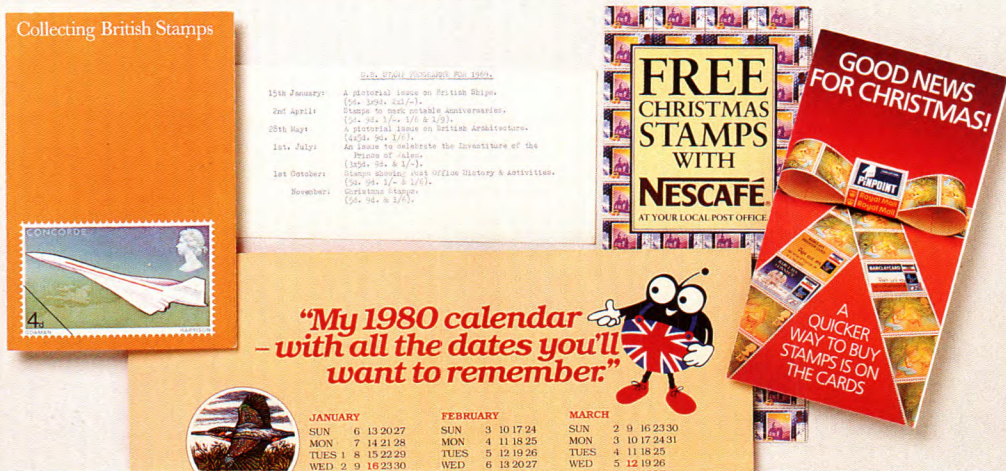
Hegarty as new members of the Stamp Advisory Committee. Having chaired the SAC in the last two years, I always find that the unique set of skills which members offer makes for highly stimulating discussion. In a future article, I hope to return to the subject of the SAC in more detail.

Moving even further from internal Royal Mail affairs, there is little doubt that one of the highlights of the year was the presentation of the Rowland Hill Awards at the Victoria & Albert Museum. Although the objectives of recognising and rewarding achievement in promoting stamp collecting were clear, I must admit that we approached this new event with some trepidation since we were stepping into uncharted territory. As it happened, the response which the co-sponsors – Royal Mail, the British Philatelic Trust and the Philatelic Traders' Society – received was very positive indeed. I believe this was because our aim to raise standards within the industry and increase its visibility was widely recognised and appreciated. With such a promising beginning, we are very hopeful that this will develop into a prestigious annual event to which we intend to give our full and continuing support.

Since our relationship with the philatelic community is of paramount importance, I am pleased that we are forging stronger links with other philatelic bodies, especially the British Philatelic Trust. We get together regularly to exchange ideas and to combine our strategies where possible. The relationship between Royal Mail and BPT has probably never been stronger. It is vital that this should continue since it promotes a much better mutual understanding of our respective objectives and strategies and avoids the kind of misconceptions which often arise through lack of dialogue.

1997 is almost gone and our thinking is already well focussed into 1999 and beyond to the millennium. We know that the philatelic community is expecting us to do something different for the millennium. All I can say at this point is that we will not disappoint that expectation. Our plans for the millennium – and The Stamp Show 2000 – are well advanced. More about these anon ●

A GB collector's view of stamp marketing by Martin Balls



From left: Collecting British stamps leaflet and stamp programme (above), 1969; first Stamp Bug calendar and Collector's Guide (below), 1980; and leaflets for Christmas stamp promotions, 1988 and 1987

IN MY FIRST ARTICLE last December, I mentioned that I enjoyed collecting stamps and covers that have been genuinely used, be it for private correspondence, for commerce or government rather than philatelic items specially marketed to collectors. But displaying just stamps on album pages can make a collection fairly monotonous, however attractive – even valuable – the stamps are in themselves. I remember a fantastic collection of Classic Mauritius at a noted exhibition that lacked any 'oomph' at all. So I have tried to set my stamps in context by looking at stamp 'marketing' when putting my collection together – my thumbnail definition might be 'how these stamps were sold'.

Accordingly, here I aim to outline some of these areas. This article is very much a framework, and still requires much information: data is not yet published in many areas, and I welcome corrections to my inaccuracies, or further facts and ideas. The intention was originally to write just on one part of stamp marketing, retail stamp point-of-sale, but hopefully this will establish a pattern for future articles by other writers – lots of research is possible. It is hard to write without access to statistics but I'm sure these will emerge from time to time, so it's a personal view, with

some guesswork. Much material on individual issues and promotions has been gleaned by observation, and proved difficult to research; those who sell stamps are invariably unaware of a collector's motives, indeed they are often suspicious of them – with large retailers such information is seen as competitively sensitive; but it's the sort of marketing data that may well be consigned to the bin in a few years time.

Bureau customers will be well aware of how Post Office stamp information services have mushroomed since 1963. The *Bulletin* itself, initially a typed sheet, is now a most successful publication of Royal Mail's Design Department; the Bureau's little black and white *Insight* of forthcoming issues was replaced in late 1996 by *Stamp Preview*, accompanied by coloured mailshots – what a difference from the first tentative lists issued on 'Ronco-ed' paper back in 1960s. At the other end of the scale, to encourage young collectors, apart from the regular reply from Santa every Christmas to young hopefuls The Post Office came up with Sammy the Stamp Bug. The Stamp Bug Club had started by 1980, and now has over 70,000 members world-wide. It became the Collectors Club in 1995, and is augmented by Young Letter Writer competitions and so on.

Serious marketing After the profusion of stamp issues from 1963 and progressing through the 1960s and 70s with first day covers, presentation packs (Shakespeare 1964), year packs and miniature sheets, (SG MS 1058/1099/1119), we saw the start of serious marketing in 1979 with Christmas stamp booklets – items produced to meet a real user need. By 1985, discounted stamp booklets were becoming an annual issue. Stamps issued in such booklets are easy to spot when mint, as they have stars in various forms printed on the back over the gum. You can obtain good used copies of these by checking to see if there is a possibility of them being issued with such stars, then by floating them off very carefully and quickly. The 1985 10 × 17p stamp booklet for the price of 9 (£1.53) was issued with a double D over the gum, (incidentally, the only time a recent special stamp other than a Christmas stamp was issued on its own in a booklet). Although I've never seen comparative sales figures for discounted booklets, the evidence is that for some major discounts they were highly successful; over half the 17p stamps which I have subsequently come across in kiloware (surely a random sample) have this D on the back (SG1290Eu) although they were also issued in sheet form without the D (SG1290). I'm sure there is scope for a repeat of this.

After the arrangements with *Reader's Digest* which ran from 1981 on an annual project basis at least until 1995, other attempts were made for deals with commercial companies. Between 21 November and 17 December 1987, at Waterloo and Cardiff stations it was possible to buy a pack of 36 × 13p (SG1375) Christmas stamps using your Barclaycard PIN number from a PINPOINT dispenser, all for £4.60, a saving of 8p! The experiment was not repeated.

In November and December 1988, an offer was made with Nescafé for Christmas stamps in exchange for coffee jar labels. First you had to redeem your labels with Nestlé for vouchers to be swapped at the PO counter, 2100 grammes

worth of labels for 20 × 2nd class stamps (SG1414). It meant buying seven large jars, and again I did not see a repeat.

A whole new avenue of collecting

These minor ventures were overshadowed by the major innovation that took place in selling stamps to the public in August 1987, selling stamps through shops other than post offices. A whole new avenue of collecting – retail booklets – was made possible. A most obvious side effect with the launch of these 'windows' books through shops and the setting up of Royal Mail Retail was the growth of postal ephemera (literally material that only lasts a day).

To start with these were just small notices advising customers that a 1st class stamp cost 19p, but as new post office have replaced Crown POS within high street retailers, even in CPOs themselves, we've seen flyers and stickers from signs on doors 'Stamps sold here/buy your stamps here' (in English and Welsh), through shelf edges, till stickers and shelf wobblers, to single and double counter display units with their pilfer-proof sample books and cards, A4 clear plastic poster holders and Greetings stamp carrier bags.

Retail Post, sent to participating shopkeepers from Royal Mail Retail, details exactly when booklets are to be issued and withdrawn, accompanied by point of sale with wobbling reindeer (1993) wobbling Olympic booklets or robins (1996).

In the 10 years since the changes, there have been numerous variations, with different type-faces, formats and designs. Of course, point-of-sale in post offices themselves is not new, and although the formats themselves have changed, full colour A4 sheets have been placed in most POS where space permits for most special issues since at least 1975. We have even seen A0 sized backlit posters for both the 1994 Messages and 1995 greetings booklets in bus shelters.



ST. AUGUSTINE & ST. COLUMBA

CHRISTMAS STAMPS NOW



ISSUE DATE

1st
February



PHOTO 2046

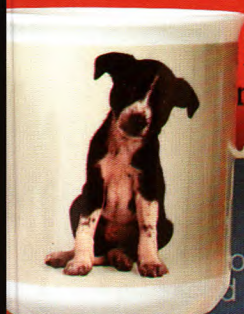


Stamps Stimulate

Missions of Faith

Stamps available from 11 March.

Charity Stamp



22 January 1975
only on request



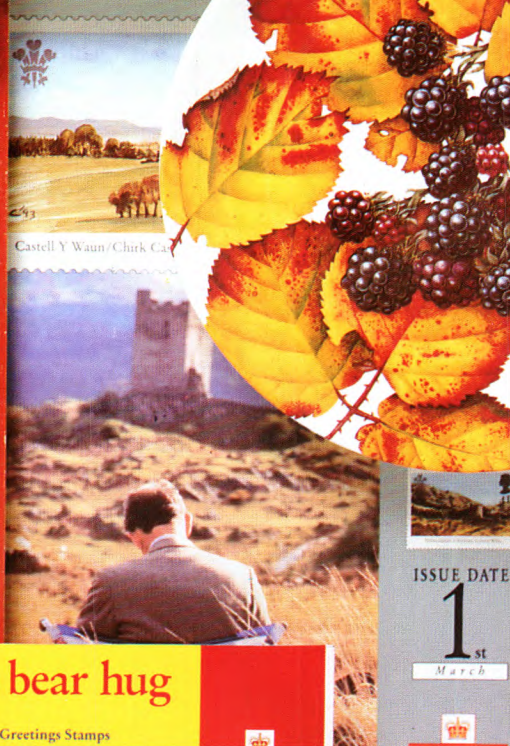
This stamp has a postage value of 4 1/2p

The net proceeds of the 1 1/2p donation will be distributed to the Trustees of the charities appointed by the National Council for the Disabled.



Send them a bear hug

New books of 12 First Class Greetings Stamps



ISSUE DATE

1st
March



Back in early 1960s 2s stamp booklets were sold with 2½d and ½d stamps in various formats for holiday makers to make up the 2½d postcard and 3d letter rates. But by 1989, the 'Teddies' Greetings stamps (SG1423-7) were being issued, slow to start with but later selling quite successfully depending on design. Maybe we will have tourist booklets in the future?



up' in any way after such a promotion, which is surprising. I have yet to work out how to mount a cake (or four!), let alone a kite, but the supporting point-of-sale and offer details are most colourful and informative.

Special promotions In-house experiments using stamp booklets in marketing certain items like 'stampers' (1994), Benjy Bear/Harry Hedgehog (1995) and trips to the Olympics (1996) proved quite successful (I wonder who won?), while the 1996 'Send a Cake' promotion really took off. I've got the note telling me I'd have to wait for my cake due to huge public demand! Apparently the 1997 Flowers offer was even better supported.

As promotions and sales through retailers have increased, Royal Mail has set up deals with particular chains to sell stamps in their own way. I find these particularly fascinating. So far, there have been promotions with Thorntons Chocolates (1994), W H Smith (kites and stationery), J Sainsbury (1995), ASDA (1996), Boots (for greetings cards in August 1994, since moved out further into other high street card shops), and the recent Marks & Spencer blister packs (Christmas 1996-March 1997).

W H Smith Business Supplies (Niceday) made great play of the Cartoons Greetings stamps, and I have had much amusement tracking down how these promotions worked in practice, but it is not my place here to guess why some promotions seem to have failed or at least only been pursued once. Public pilfering seems to be a major cause of failure...while staff training (or lack of it) seems to be another. How many collectors have been into a retail outlet a couple of weeks after the launch of a certain special booklet offer to be met by blank stares from shop staff, or even suspicion from managers when we know more than they do? Yet I must appear now on dozens of mailing lists, and have never been 'followed

TV marketing Even with the advent of the Internet for cheap and instant use, the volume of posted mail has increased, and Royal Mail now extends its marketing to television advertising. Shortly before most new issues of special stamps we see prime time 20 and 30 second slots on the commercial TV channels. The current campaign takes as its theme 'Stamps stimulate!'.

PR or public relations is a part of the marketing mix, even for stamps. The Royal Mail Newsroom issues regular press releases to the national, local and philatelic press, with background information written in a fairly general style, accompanied by black & white and coloured photographs for reproduction in their publications. These sit well with a specialist modern GB collection. With the benefit of hindsight some journalists criticise their accuracy, as they are often written some time before stamps are issued: however I feel it has to be said that they do a good job in keeping us in touch with what is going on – I for one do not wish to be spoon-fed my hobby, although with the efficient way the Bureau runs now, there must be many armchair collectors who haven't visited a post office for years! They can even buy their keyrings, stamp plates and paperweights by mail order...now how do they mount those, I wonder? ●

The author Martin Balls has been collecting stamps since he was six – over 35 years. Whilst specialising in marketing and promotions, he worked for Stanley Gibbons between 1979 and 1982, where he met his wife – not a collector! In 1982 he moved into advertising agencies, then PR; he subsequently ran his own high-tech PR consultancy. He now specialises in mid-range computer software and hardware marketing, working from home in France over the Internet. He collects Great Britain mint and used generally up to 1981, with specialist collections of retail and greetings stamps, Machin definitives and 'regional' country stamps...all preferably on cover.

Decimal stamp books 36 Specialist report by D G A Myall

10 × 1st class NVI cylinders

B1A gold, B1B greenish yellow, B3C bright magenta, B1D new blue, B1E grey black and B15 phosphor.

20 × 2nd class NVI cylinders

B2A gold, B1B greenish yellow, B4C bright magenta, B1D new blue, B2E grey black and B14 phosphor.

Royal Mail
Wishes You
a Very Merry
Christmas

B1A
B1B
B3C
B1D
B1E

Royal Mail
Wishes You
a Very Merry
Christmas

B2A
B1B
B4C
B1D
B2E



Christmas stamp books The themes chosen for the annual Christmas stamps alternate between the religious and the secular. This year it is the turn of the non-religious and the stamps are based on the images familiar to us from the stickers on Christmas crackers. These were invented 150 years ago by the firm of Tom Smith and have become as necessary to the celebration of the festival as the Christmas tree. I like the designs very much, especially the one chosen for the 1st-class stamp. This, and the one pre-paying the 2nd-class minimum letter rate, are pictorial NVIs and this seems to have become the preferred format for these two values. As last year, the two stamps have been issued in booklet form.

The cylinders used for the stamps in the book of 10 1st class NVIs are given above. The blue fluor phosphor bands are 13.5mm wide, except at the extreme left where they are only 6.5mm. The wider bands are printed over the perforations but offset so that each stamp has a narrow band at the left and a wide one at the right. The cylinders for the book of 20 2nd class NVIs are also shown. These have a single band of blue fluor phosphor 4.5mm wide offset to the right.

The reason for such offsets is to place the bands over that part of the design which will give the best response in the automatic facing machines. On the 2nd class stamps this is Santa's white beard, face and base of his cap; the rest of the design is rather dark and would tend to dilute the

strength of the phosphor reaction. This is probably why the design with the lighter background was chosen for the 1st-class stamps, which need two phosphor bars. Here, the offset bars keep the phosphor off any dark part of the design.

Both books bear the phrase 'Season's Greetings' on the yellow strip, the same as last year. This is complemented by 'Royal Mail Wishes You a Very Merry Christmas' printed on the inside front cover. The inside back cover contains information about last posting dates but no mention of the validity of the stamps on overseas mail. To get the right postcodes for your Christmas card list you are advised to call 0345 111 222, a number which incurs a local rate charge. Unusually, the designs of the covers are not attributed.

The stamps and covers were printed by Harrison & Sons and their imprint appears on the inside cover under the pane of stamps. Since their acquisition by De la Rue International plc, their name has been changed to De la Rue Security Print and they are now a division of the multinational company. This probably means that the De la Rue name will replace the Harrison imprint in booklets and that the initial H which appears under the barcode on retail books (it is not on the two Christmas books) will be replaced with an initial D. Keep a lookout.

For the record the plate numbers in the 4 × 1st Commonwealth Heads of Government booklet (21 October) were w56w59w69.



Perforation oddities Both Harrison and Walsall use APS perforators on their current stamp production. These have a large cylinder with short protruding pins in the desired perforating pattern. The paper is pulled tightly over the pin cylinder with the printed side facing the pins and the resulting bumps are ground off by a system of cutters. There are three sets of these: one for the centre of the web followed by two for the outer edges. Tension between the cutters is maintained by an adjustable roller.

An unusual perforation variety is known on some Harrison books of $10 \times 1\text{st}$ and $10 \times 2\text{nd}$. It affects the two stamps at the right of the pane as can be seen in the illustration above. The first three holes are normal. The next two are doubled, while the rest are normal but are slightly higher than the rest. The portion perforated by the centre cutter did not meet exactly the same row of pins when it reached the two outside cutters so there was a slight mismatch. The dumb-bell-shaped holes were caused by a misregister where the centre cutter overlapped with the two outside cutters.

A similar effect has been seen on Walsall printings although not, as far as I am aware, in stamp books. One of the most interesting, if I am not exceeding my brief too much, occurred on the first printing of the Wales 20 (p) sheet stamp. All the stamps in the first column had an extra horizontal perforation hole, 15 instead of 14. The result varied from an oversized stamp to one with just a doubled hole. This '15-hole variety' occurred in the same column of stamps because it was at that point that the perforations changed from the

centre to the outside cutter. Proper adjustment of the equipment allows perfect alignment of the cutters and the fault was probably caused by a roll of paper which had been exposed to unusual humidity conditions, causing it to become either tight or loose at the edges and making consistent tension control impossible.

Such varieties, although non-constant, are of great interest to collectors who seem to value the imperfect over the perfect. Another reason, of course, is their rarity, a tribute to the skill and professionalism of the printers.

Making a deep impression A reader sent me a Walsall book of $4 \times 1\text{st}$ lithographed stamps with a distinct diagonal impression across the cover, about 4.5mm wide. In fact, this is visible all the way through the book, including the back cover. It has caused the pane perforations to be impressed into the pane selvage. Also, the grain of the cover card has been 'embossed' into the face of the stamps. My correspondent found a sequence of 12 copies in the same bundle. One peculiarity is that the position of the bar varies slightly in length, position and angle from booklet to booklet. He asks what could have caused the fault.

The bookmaking process differs slightly with each of the firms involved but, essentially, the covers are printed in large sheets and cut to size before the stamp panes are married to them, after which they are folded. At Walsall, a small area between the printed covers is guillotined away and removed as waste just before the folded books pass through rollers to confirm the fold. It seems that a small strip of this excess cover card got carried into the rollers. These exert quite a heavy pressure, causing the deep impression noted by my correspondent. The strip soon fell away, but it stayed long enough to affect about a dozen books ●

Editor's note Douglas Myall celebrates his 75th birthday this month. On behalf of all readers who have enjoyed his Decimal Stamp Book articles since May 1992, I wish him a very happy birthday.

Competition Win £150 worth of first day covers

THIS MONTH'S COMPETITION is sponsored by A G Bradbury. Adrian Bradbury, trading as A G Bradbury, developed his love for British first day covers into a business over 20 years ago. Initially he specialised in obtaining relevant cds (counter date stamps) and slogan postmarks on FDC rather than the more plentiful towns FDCs or special handstamps. Adrian's early customers will testify what a good investment many of these covers have proved to be. For example, the 1974 Fire Engines FDC with Burnt House Lane, Exeter cds or 'The Fire Brigade Needs Men of Courage' slogan postmarks would easily realise £400-£500 each at a specialised FDC auction, and yet a cover with an ordinary town FDC postmark would struggle to fetch £1. There are many more examples, eg Stoke Charity cds (Winchester) for the 1975 Charity issue, New York (Lincoln) for the 1976 USA Bicentenary, etc.

Adrian now designs at least two FDCs and special postmarks for each stamp issue. The LFDC (Leicester First Day Covers) series commenced in 1980 and is usually limited to 1000 numbered copies. Many of these covers are produced with the cooperation of organisations connected with the stamp issue. For example his LFDC cover for this year's Horses issue was produced for the British Horse Society, and the Post Offices cover for the National Federation of Subpostmasters. For each issue there are also special signed editions, eg Lord Snowdon for The Queen's Golden Wedding, Keith Michell for Henry VIII, Johnny Johnson for Aircraft, etc.

The other series features Victorian prints or engravings and started in 1985. These are normally limited to 500 numbered copies. Signed versions are also available for these, eg Frank Finlay for Tales of Terror, one of The Queen's bridesmaid for Golden Wedding, Noel Edmonds for Christmas.

Each year Adrian also publishes the *Collecting British First Day Covers* catalogue – now in its 17th successful year.

To enter the competition answer the questions below and send, with your name and address, on a postcard or back of an envelope to: December Bulletin Competition, Royal Mail, 22 Finsbury Square, London EC2A 1NL to arrive by 23 January. Entries must be posted separately; multiple entries in one envelope will be disregarded.

- 1 Who designed the Endangered Species stamps?
- 2 What do the initials FIP stand for?
- 3 Who was a regular visitor at the Philatelic Congress of GB?
- 4 Name two of the thematic displays at the National Postal Museum
- 5 Which Association presents the Alba Salver?

The answers will be found in this *Bulletin*. The competition is not open to employees, their families and agents, of Royal Mail or A G Bradbury ●



1st prize Full set of A G Bradbury 1997 FDCs (18 covers), all with special postmarks. Retail approx £150

2 × 2nd prize Architects of the Air FDC featuring 617 (Dambusters) Squadron and signed by Richard Todd who played Guy Gibson in the film. Retail £27.50

3 × 3rd prize Bank of England official FDC issued in 1994 with Royal Mail's first commemorative label. Retail £20

4 × 4th prize Hong Kong double dated souvenir cover marking hand-over to China. Retail £17.50

The winners of September's competition were D Taylor of Inverness-shire, R Glander of Germany, and R Dorin of Berkshire

The answers 1) 7 October 1997; 2) Midlands Sports Centre for the Disabled, Coventry; 3) Giles Allen; 4) 10 May 1940. Our thanks to all who entered.

Books *Collecting British First Day Covers* • New publications from Stanley Gibbons • *Higlett Bijou Bibliography*

Collecting British First Day Covers The 1998 edition of this popular catalogue lists all FDCs and postmark types for special and definitive issues. Prices for special handstamps are given for examples on ordinary (or commercial) covers and for use on the official cover produced by the handstamp sponsor. There is often considerable price difference between the two. Listings and prices

are also provided for covers with relevant counter datestamps and slogan postmarks – increasingly in demand in recent years. The listings for definitive FDCs includes changes to perforation, papers and phosphors where dates of issue are known. A FDC of the Penny Black is priced at £20,000 but many more recent covers are valued in hundreds of pounds, for example the 20p Machin high value on Contractor's Paper (30 Nov 1973) and 6p, 7p, 9p and 10p definitives, printed on the Halley Press (31 Oct 1977) at £400 and £225 respectively. As always the catalogue is handsomely produced, with well-written introductory notes (every user should read these carefully at least once) and profusely illustrated. Available from good stamp shops or direct from the publisher, A G Bradbury, 3 Link Road, Leicester LE2 3RA. Price £4.95, postage £1.55 UK. Collectors ordering from the publisher will be sent five free covers •

New Stanley Gibbons publications The 1998 edition of the *Part 1 (British Commonwealth)* catalogue comprises two volumes, 1 covering GB and countries A-I, and 2 countries J-Z. Price £27.50 each. To celebrate the 100th edition of this important reference work, inverted watermarks on Commonwealth stamps issued after 1936 are included and it is hoped to extend this listing to earlier issues in subsequent editions. Inverted water-

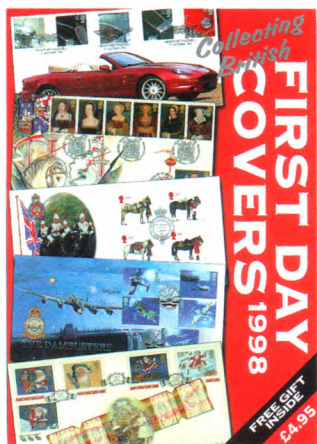
marks on British stamps are listed in the *GB Concise* catalogue, but not in Part 1. Newly reported booklets have been added to the listings for Australia, India, South Africa, Sri Lanka, and Trinidad & Tobago.

The recent signs of recovery in the stamp market are evident with major price revisions for Batum, Bermuda, Bushire, Canada (including Newfoundland and Prince Edward Island), Hong Kong, India, Jamaica, Kenya, Malaysia, Mauritius used in Seychelles, New Zealand, Singapore, Trinidad & Tobago, and Uganda & Tanganyika. Collectors of British stamps will also note quite a few price rises since the *Concise* was published in April. These include the George V 1924-26 and 1934-36 definitives, 1924-25 Empire Exhibition, 1929 PUC low values and 1935 Silver Jubilee, 1937-47 George VI definitives, 1939-48 and 1951 high values,

1948 Silver Wedding £1, 1952-54 Tudor watermark definitives used, 1957 Graphites, and some of the 1963-65 phosphor commemoratives. Amongst the inordinately long listing of Machin definitives, the 10p orange-brown Type II, 2 bands and 31p purple 2 bands from 1984 and 1986 prestige books are increased by £3 and £1 respectively, mint and used.

The 1998 edition of the *Stamps of the World* catalogue is published in three volumes. Volumes 1 and 2 Foreign Countries A-J and K-Z (£24.95 each) and Vol 3 Commonwealth (£22.95). In total this amounts to over 3000 pages listing in excess of 330,000 basic stamps issued since 1840. No fewer than 10,000 stamps and 3000 illustrations have been added since the 1997 edition!

The 1998 edition of the popular *Collect British Stamps* checklist provides a clear, well-illustrated guide to basic British stamps from 1840 to date,



with prices for first day covers, presentation packs, stamp cards, Yearbooks and Yearpacks. First published in 1967, over 3.5 million copies of *CBS* have been sold. Price £6.95.

All sg catalogues are available from their Strand shop and by mail order from: Stanley Gibbons Publications, Parkside, Ringwood, BH24 3SH. Credit card telephone order line: 0800 611622. *CBS* is also available from the British Philatelic Bureau •

Higlett Bijou Bibliography by Gavin Fryer is a comprehensive survey of the 64 satirical essays that George Allen Higlett (1860-1940) wrote between 1913 and 1938. These essays, printed privately as leaflets or booklets, are usually referred to as 'Higletts' and are keenly sought after by collectors with an interest in philatelic literature.

In this book each title is listed, in chronological order, and an overview of its content is given. The very small quantities printed has led to some titles becoming rarities of philatelic literature and these are identified. In preparing the listing, Gavin Fryer has researched the holdings of the major philatelic libraries in England and abroad to supplement his own studies from 25 years of collecting these amusing publications. The text is amplified further by quotations from letters sent by Higlett to various philatelic friends, which he wrote to accompany their personal copy of a particular leaflet or booklet.

Higlett's essays followed a common pattern. One or more stamp issues were selected which the author used to illustrate his writing. The finished piece was intended to poke fun at the design, collecting fads, collectors or committees. The leaflets themselves had the actual stamps stuck into them, when possible, using copies bought in bulk by Higlett. In some cases, insufficient stamps were available, and the purchaser was advised (on an inserted slip) that he should buy a copy of the required stamp and insert it in the space allowed.

Overall, 194 different stamps from 75 stamp issuing territories were allowed for in the text of the complete series. However, in some situations, Higlett used alternatives. These variants are

noted in the book against the relevant entries, and take the number of possible stamps used in the whole series to more than 200. A detailed listing of the 'expected' stamps is given arranged alphabetically by country.

Gavin Fryer's book also contains Appendices giving two examples in the Higlett style which he has written himself. The first is a reprint of a piece he first published in 1974 called 'Epilogue to Captain Cook's Last Voyage', which had four pages of text and gave spaces for five stamps. This was a follow-up to Higlett's original 40-page booklet published in 1929 entitled *Captain Cook's Last Voyage*.

The second Appendix uses a British stamp – the 24p value of the 1992 set issued by Royal Mail to draw attention to Environmental Problems – to illustrate a paper called 'Acid Rain'. The stamp design, based on a child's painting, depicts raindrops on a wilting flower with the inscription 'Acid Rain Kills', and there is a space for this stamp to be affixed. On either side, a further illustration of the stamp is printed but in altered colours. Beneath these three copies the following captions are shown: 'As it might have been', 'As issued' and 'The consequence', and the accompanying text makes the point that had acid rain been falling the grass would have withered as well as the flower.

George Higlett was also a philatelist of distinction, and was accorded the honour of election to the Roll of Distinguished Philatelists in 1925. He was a regular visitor at the Philatelic Congress of Great Britain, and served, on occasion, as the delegate for the City of London Philatelic Society. Some of his leaflets were written specifically for, or to raise funds for, Congress. With this association in mind, Gavin Fryer has chosen to publish this summary of Higlett's written work so that it could be made available, in the first instance, to delegates to the 1997 Congress at Coventry.

In addition to his humorous writing, Higlett produced a number of serious studies on the stamps of Turkey, Sweden and Columbia, together with articles on other countries, many of which were published in the *Philatelic Journal of Great Britain*. A listing of these articles is in-

cluded here, arranged by date of publication.

This new book provides a worthwhile introduction to these publications, which, in the words of its author, 'are keenly sought after by those who are aware of them.' He goes on to say 'Now others can find out what is available and enjoy the amusement that is to be had from them.'

With the exception of the first two, all the leaflets and booklets measured $8\frac{1}{2} \times 5\frac{1}{2}$ inches in upright format, and Gavin Fryer's book retains this size. 96 pages, card covers. ISBN 0 9529178 07. Price £20, post free, from the author at The Old Oak Barn, Oak End Way, Woodham, Addlestone, KT15 3DU. *Review by Ron Negus* ●

Postbag

Stamp designers I read with interest the article on British special stamp designers by W A Witham in the September *Bulletin*. I was happy to see my own company Carroll, Dempsey & Thirkell (now shortened to CDT Design) featured but alas one issue of stamps designed by us, Pictorial Postcards, issued 12 April 1994, was omitted. So to put the record straight, we have been responsible for five special issues between 1987 and 1994. MIKE DEMPSEY RDI, CDT Design, London WC1 ●

1890 Penny Postage Jubilee I am researching material to compile a reference work on the celebrations of the Jubilee of Uniform Penny Postage in 1890. In particular, I would like to trace examples of: 1) Perkins Bacon Guildhall reprints of the Penny Black, 2d, $\frac{1}{2}$ d and $1\frac{1}{2}$ d; 2) Guildhall letter card, proof in black, also in red without the stamp in the right-hand corner or varieties of the card printed both sides or miscut, etc; 3) Essays for the Guildhall handstamp (58 were submitted); 4) South Kensington envelope overprinted SPECIMEN; 5) 1890 Committee Badge on scarf; 6) 1890 Exhibition Award Certificate; and 7) Colour trials of the Furniss caricature. I have also come across various press cuttings and articles by the following people: Robert White, Peter Stannard, E R Page, P J Merry of Sussex Stamp Centre. If any reader can put me in touch with these individuals, I would be most grateful. JOHN DAVIES, 3 Longfellow Road, Banbury OX16 9LB ●

Bulletin back issues J Wathen of Uplands, 51 Wellhouse Road, Beech, Alton GU34 4AQ has for disposal a run of the *Bulletin* from September 1987 to November 1991 ●

All The Queen's Horses stamps Together with the Greetings (Flowers) and Henry VIII issues, the Queen's Horses stamps seem the most attractive ones issued by the Royal Mail this year. The representation of the horses and their grooms is unique and the details are stunning. Nevertheless it might be useful to take the following remarks into consideration. 1) As the stamps have the form of a near square, the artist had to put the profile of The Queen and the face value in the top left hand corner. As a consequence the horses on the stamps show their backs to The Queen, which does not seem very suitable. 2) On the 20p and 43p stamps the groom and the drummer respectively are standing on the left of the horses so that they are partly covered by them, which creates a strange effect as the heads seem to be cut off. 3) On the 26p and 63p stamps both the Guard of the Royal Household and the groom show their backs to the observer. It might have been better to use an oblong form for the stamps so that the grooms could have stood in front of the horses with their bodies directed towards the observer, their faces looking in the horses' direction. The face value of the stamps could have been placed in the top left hand corner in slightly bigger print and the profile of The Queen could have been put in the top right hand corner, looking left. However, this issue of stamps is really magnificent and shows an aspect of the high value of British tradition. GUIDEMILIO PIAZZOLI, ITALY ●

All letters to the Editor are carefully read; matters of general interest will be dealt with in 'Postbag'. The Editor regrets that he is unable to reply personally to letters.

Posting boxes 171

THIS MONTH'S ILLUSTRATIONS show two Penfold boxes in southern England. The first, submitted by Norman Atherden of Liphook Hants, shows the box in the High Street, Haslemere, splendidly painted in green and gold. Alongside is a brass plate which reads: 'Penfold Post Box. This type of postbox was designed by John Wornham Penfold (1828-1909) and was introduced in 1866. He was a resident of Haslemere and lived at Courts Hill House (now Penfolds) Sandrocks Corner, Lower Street, Haslemere, Surrey.' The plate on the box indicates that collections are made at 8.45am and 5pm on weekdays and 8.45am and 12 noon on Saturday.

The second photograph, depicting a Penfold box on the seafront at Brighton, was sent in by Mr W Arthur Forse of Reading ●

Right John Wornham Penfold, and posting boxes of his design in Haslemere, left, and Brighton.

For details of the Letter Box Study Group send a stamped addressed envelope or international reply coupon to the Membership Secretary: Mrs V Scott, 38 Leopold Avenue, Handsworth Wood, Birmingham B20 1ES



courtesy of Haslemere Educational Museum



Events

Now showing at National Postal Museum 'Golden and Glorious' exhibition (Royal stamp issues); 'Etchings into Stamps' (work of Terence Millington, designer of Post Offices stamps), and until 17 December 'The Mediterranean' (stamps from the Royal Collection). National Postal Museum, King Edward Street, London EC1A 1LP. Open Mon-Fri 09.30-16.30. Admission free. **Enquiries** 0171 776 3636

Now showing A display of Royal Mail stamp artwork from 1981 is currently on show at the Pentagram Gallery, 11 Needham Road, London W11 2RP. Open Mon-Fri 10.00-17.30. **Enquiries** 0171 229 3477

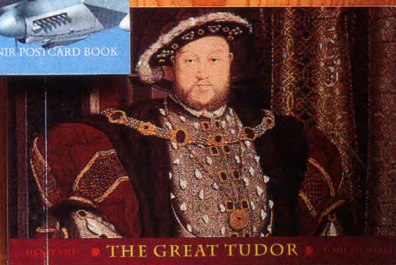
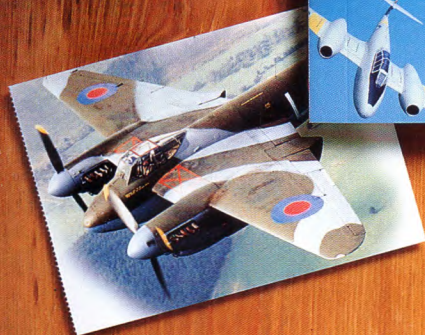
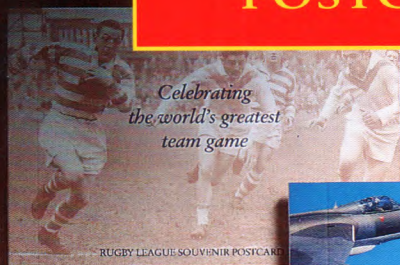
1-6 December Mefivil '97 – first international exhibition of philatelic audio-visual and computer systems, Buenos Aires. **Enquiries** P Pearson, 0181 675 0962

15-22 December Indepex '97 international exhibition at Pragati Maidan, New Delhi, India. Commemorates 50th anniversary of Indian independence. **Enquiries** UK Commissioner R Payne, Anso Corner Farm, Hampstead, Safron Walden CB10 2NU

19-20 December Sport and Olympic Postcards display at Leeds Book and Postcard Fair, Pudsey Town Hall. Includes display by Society of Olympic Collectors. **Enquiries** A Sabey, 0181 843 9920

17 January 1998 GB Philatelic Society displays – Revolution of 1870 (D Brookfield) and Lilac & Green Issues (O Fooks) at British Philatelic Centre, Charterhouse Street, London EC1. Opens 11.00. **Enquiries** A Lajer, 01189 344151

ROYAL MAIL SOUVENIR POSTCARD BOOKS



Royal Mail's popular stamp cards, introduced in 1973, are well-known to collectors. Less well-known are the new souvenir postcard books which often contain exclusive postcards plus interesting information.

The book for the Rugby League issue is still available – until 28 February 1998 – price £2.95. Also available, Great Tudor, and Architects of the Air, price £3.50 each.

The Architects of the Air book contains cards reproducing the five stamp designs (backs of the cards differ to the stamp (PHQ) cards) plus cards showing the five aircraft in full colour. The cards

showing the Avro Lancaster and Hawker Hunter also feature the designers, Roy Chadwick and Sir Sydney Camm. The book will be of considerable interest to aircraft enthusiasts as well as collectors of Royal Mail postcards.

Postcard books are available from the British Philatelic Bureau and selected Post Office Counter philatelic outlets.

British Philatelic Bureau, 20 Brandon Street, Edinburgh EH3 5TT
UK Telephone order line 0345 641 641



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