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Editorial

It is always surprising how quickly time passes, and it hardly seems like a year ago when we were looking ahead to the philatelic events and special stamp issues of 1984. A healthy interest in British stamps has continued over past months, and we can once again look ahead to a new year. The varied and interesting 1985 special stamp programme should maintain this and hold something of interest for everyone. A particular growth area has been the collecting of special postmarks and commemorative covers. With the wide range of subjects covered by the 1985 special stamp issues and the new handstamping rules and regulations which came into force in late 1984, this collecting area should continue to expand.

1985 also marks the 50th anniversary of an important change in the handling of mail by the British Post Office. In 1935 the transorma in Brighton became the first sorting machine to be used by the Post Office. As well as being an important operational change, it also provided an interesting philatelic record for collectors of postal mechanisation material. The highly-sophisticated modern sorting machines and the use of phosphor dots, and phosphor papers and markings on stamps, owe their existence to these humble beginnings. To celebrate this anniversary, we are including in this issue of the Bulletin, the first half of a two-part article on the transorma machine by Douglas Muir, an expert on postal mechanisation. The second part of the article will appear in the February Bulletin.

Some of the many excellent preliminary stamp designs submitted for the 1983 stamp programme are illustrated in this issue. We will be featuring further preliminary designs covering the 1984 special stamp issues during the coming months, so that readers can see the stamps that might have been.

Finally, with the arrival of 1985 we are at the halfway stage between London 1980 and the next London International Stamp Exhibition scheduled for 1990. Although it seems a long way off, planning has already started on the latter. The 1990 exhibition promises to be a philatelic treat for collectors of all interests. It will be interesting to see if any miniature sheets are planned for issue, as with London 1980!

CHARLES GOWEN

Royal Mail Cover Famine in Africa Appeal

The Post Office is issuing a special cover for the Famine in Africa Appeal which will go on sale from 27 December 1984 to 5 January 1985. For details of the cover please see the accompanying notice and order form.

An Unusual 'Abnormal'

Standing high among stories of Great Britain's philately and postal history must be the events which resulted in the existence of a particular so-called 'abnormal'—Queen Victoria 9d. 'straw', printed from Plate 5.

The direct but uninformative answer to the question "What are 'abnormals'?" is that they are so termed to distinguish them from normal stamps. To elaborate that answer: the normal stamp is one printed in a particular colour or on a particular watermarked paper from a particular plate. An 'abnormal' is a stamp printed in a different from normal colour or on a different from normal watermarked paper. Sometimes an "abnormal" is printed from a plate never used for producing stamps for issue to the public.

The 'abnormals' are to be found only among the letterpress-printed stamps issued between 1862 and about 1880.

Letterpress is relief printing, that is, printing from the non-recessed portions of the plate (only plates were used in those days for such stamps). Some works refer to the products of that form of printing as 'surface printed', but that is a confusing misnomer. Strictly, surface printing is

printing which takes place from a virtually uniform surface, such as is the case with lithography, where the ink-holding portions of the printing 'plate' are neither recessed (as in intaglio) nor non-recessed (as in relief).

Only 12 stamps are generally recognised as 'abnormals' and they came into existence because of the invariable practice of printing, from a new plate, a sheet for approval and marking it 'imprimatur', meaning 'let it be printed'. At the same time the general but not invariable practice was to print five more sheets—they are referred to generally as 'the usual five extra sheets'.

The imprimatur sheet then was registered and kept in the archives at Somerset House—now they, or their remnants, are in the National Postal Museum.

The imprimatur sheet was not perforated. However, the usual five extra sheets were perforated in the normal way and issued.

In some cases no general issue was made after the imprimatur sheet from the plate had been registered. Sometimes a general issue was delayed for a long time after such registration. In either of those two events stamps from the usual five extra sheets are



termed "abnormals". All are rare. Some are great rarities.

The most unusual 'abnormal' is the 9d. Plate 5 and the circumstances in which the stamps became available are remarkable.

Plate 5 was registered on 24 April 1866. It was never put to press. If the usual five extra sheets were ever printed it is probable that they were destroyed before 1890, as will appear later. The 'imprimatur' sheet of course was printed and filed.

In order to trace the emergence of the perforated stamps it is necessary to go forward from their production to more than 20 years later.

De La Rue & Co had succeeded in so impressing the authorities with doubly fugitive inks as being safeguards to the revenue in preventing cleaning and re-use of stamps that a series of stamps in those inks was produced and issued between August 1883 and April 1884. That issue is known as the "Unified Series" because the stamps did duty not only for postage but also for revenue purposes, and they bore such inscriptions.

Those stamps were most unattractive in appearance. They have been called a monstrous inelegance. They aroused a veritable storm of criticism. A commission of inquiry was appointed by the House of Commons.

A Stamp Committee was set up to consider preparation of a scheme for a new series of stamps. There was a chairman and four members. They sat on eleven days between November 1884 and March 1885 and received evidence from numerous persons in official positions and also Judge Philbrick QC, then the president of the Philatelic Society, London. The eventual result was the production of the so-called 'Jubilee' issue of 1887-92, which apart from the 1d. first appeared during the year of Queen Victoria's golden jubilee.

When preparations were in train to celebrate the Post Office's golden jubilee of 1890, marking the fiftieth anniversary of the issue of the Penny Black in 1840, the Inland Revenue authorities became involved in an undertaking to present mementoes to members of 'the Stamp Committee'.

Each memento took the form of an album titled *Before and After the Stamp Committee*. It consisted of a luxurious cover bearing the title in gold leaf and a decorated border front and back. It contained just four leaves of card. Three of the leaves were sunk to contain stamps. The stamps were, of course, stuck down.

The first leaf was headed 'Series suppressed by the issue of April, 1884! The stamps on that sheet were from issues made between 1865 and 1881. In

ascending order of values they were: ½d., 1d., 1½d., 2d., 2½d., 3d., 4d., 5d., 6d., 9d. and 1s.

The second leaf was headed 'Series issued April, 1884'. The stamps on that sheet were mainly those of 1883-84 but also the ½d. of 1880 and the 1d. of 1881.

The next sheet with stamps was headed 'Series determined upon by the Stamp Committee and issued January, 1887'. The stamps it bore were the 'Jubilee' issue but included the 1d. of 1881.

The other leaf bore the names and offices of the Postmaster-General, the Secretary to the Post Office, the Chairman of the Board of Inland Revenue, the five members of the Committee and the names of Warren and Warren William De La Rue, with their official appointments to the Board of Inland Revenue.

Obtaining the 9d. for inclusion on the first page of stamps presented certain difficulties. For the mementoes, 36 examples were removed from what was left of the imprimatur sheet of Plate 5 in 1890.

Twelve of the stamps had been removed in 1883 and a further six in 1886.

Because the stamps were removed from the imprimatur sheet the deduction has been made that, if the usual five extra sheets ever were printed, they had been destroyed before 1890.

The 36 stamps were perforated by De La Rue & Co. Twelve of the perforated stamps were replaced and stuck back on to the imprimatur sheet.

Relating to the removal in 1890, the annotation on the imprimatur sheet (of which examination was facilitated by the curator of the National Postal Museum, Mr Raife Wellsted) reads: 'probably 36 from K L(?) M & N rows'. The 12 replaced are all in one row: nine from the N row and then M, K, M.

At least 12 of the perforated stamps were used in the mementoes of 1890.

The 9d. Plate 5 'abnormal' is known today only unused, although the discovery of a used example is recorded in the *History of the Adhesive Stamps of the British Isles* by Hastings E. Wright and A. B. Creeke jun, published in London in 1899.

The Royal Collection contains an example lettered M-C in the lower corners. Another example, lettered K-L was presented from the collection by King George V to be sold in aid of the National Philatelic War Funds on 13 March 1916.

Records exist also of at least K-F, K-J, L-D, L-K and N-K.

Examples of the album *Before and After the Stamp Committee* rarely come on the market. One was auctioned by Harmers of London on 3 March 1983. It contained the 9d. Plate 5 lettered L-D.

L N WILLIAMS

The Railway Letter Service

Part 4

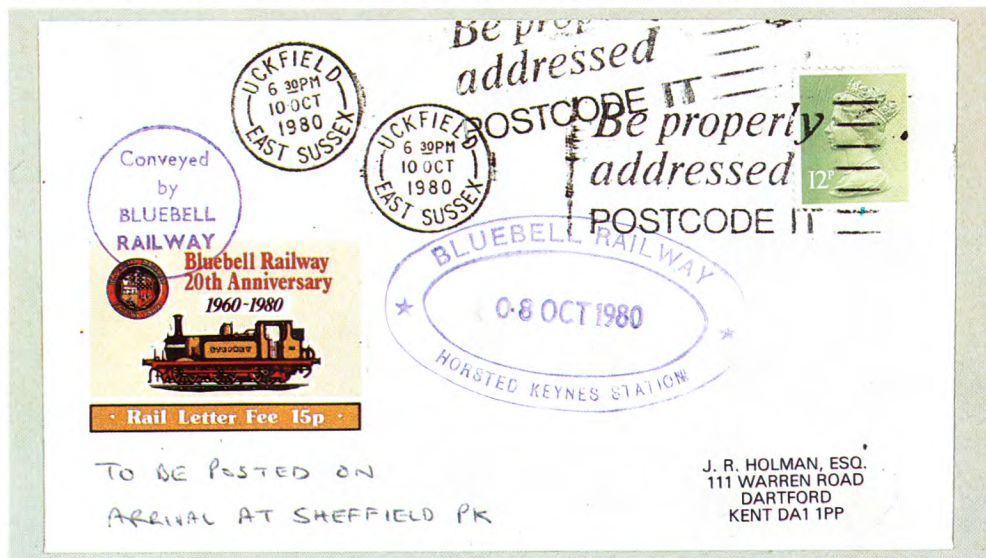
This time we move away from Wales to look at the railway letter stamps of four railways in the south of England — the narrow-gauge Romney, Hythe & Dymchurch Railway and the standard gauge Bluebell, Kent & East Sussex and Mid-Hants railways. They are dealt with in the order of issuing railway letter stamps.

Bluebell Railway

This railway, which runs for five miles in East Sussex, is part of the former East Grinstead to Lewes line opened in 1882. Following the closure of the line by British Railways in 1958, a preservation society was formed and part of the line reopened from Horsted Keynes to Sheffield Park in August 1960. The company is currently hoping to relay the track north of Horsted Keynes and again run services into East Grinstead. The Bluebell Railway is famous for its extensive collection of vintage locomotives, principally London Brighton & South Coast Railway terrier tank engines *Stepney* and *Fenchurch*, built in the 1870s. Staff at both stations are often dressed in

Victorian costume and the stations have been painstakingly restored to their L.B. & S.C.R. splendour.

The company issued a 10p stamp depicting locomotive *Bluebell* in September 1972 although it had not then signed the Railway Letter Agreement. This it did in July 1974 and a railway letter service proper started early in 1975. The 1972 stamp was then used officially. A second 10p stamp was released in August 1975 — this featured former London & South Western Rly. locomotive No. 488, built in 1885. This stamp was surcharged 15p in April 1978; 15p stamps featuring *Fenchurch* and *Bluebell* were issued in May 1978 and March 1979 respectively. A 15p commemorative celebrating the 20th anniversary of the reopening was issued in August 1980; this featured *Stepney* which had hauled the first train in 1960. This stamp was subsequently surcharged 20p when the letter fee was increased. The centenary of the opening of the East Grinstead and Lewes Railway way commemorated by a 20p stamp in August 1982 and the following month a joint railway letter stamp was issued by the Bluebell and



Bluebell Rly. — cover bearing 15p 20th anniversary stamp despatched from Horsted Keynes station and posted on arrival at Sheffield Park. Unusually the railway has applied two handstamps, normally only the 'Conveyed by BLUEBELL RAILWAY' cancel is used.

Keighley & Worth Valley railways (*details of the Keighley & Worth Valley Rly will be given in the next article*). This stamp marked the centenary of the birth of railway locomotive engineer O V S Bulleid and featured one of his locomotives heading the 'Atlantic Coast Express'.

A number of different handstamps have been used to cancel railway stamps, some are inscribed with the station names, others 'T.P.O.' ('Travelling Post Office) or 'Conveyed by Bluebell Railway'.

Romney, Hythe & Dymchurch Railway

This famous railway runs from Hythe to Dungeness via Dymchurch and New Romney, a distance of 14 miles. The track is laid to a 15" gauge and the line has the distinction of being the only miniature railway in the British Isles authorised by a Light Railway Order. The line was built by a railway enthusiast Captain J E P Howey to serve a part of Kent devoid of rail services. The first section from Hythe to New Romney was opened in July 1927, to Pilot (near Dungeness) in May 1928, the final section to Dungeness Point followed in February 1929. The railway was taken over by the military during World War II and reopened for civilian traffic in March 1946.

The railway company signed the Railway Letter Agreement with the P.O. late in 1976 or early in 1977 and the first railway letter stamp was issued on 11 May 1977 — a 10p value depicting locomotive No. 9 *Winston Churchill*. This was overprinted '1927-1977' in gold to commemorate the line's golden jubilee (July 1977). Following the increase in the railway letter fee more 10p stamps were surcharged 15p (May 1978). A new 15p definitive featuring locomotive

No. 8 *Hurricane* was issued the same month and a large size commemorative marking the 700th anniversary of the Cinque Ports (including Hythe and Romney) was released in July 1978. Following the increase in the letter fee to 20p (November 1980) the railway affixed two 10p stamps to covers or a 15p stamp together with a cachet denoting payment of the extra 5p. In February 1982 the 15p on 10p *Winston Churchill*, 15p *Hurricane* and 15p Cinque Ports stamps were provisionally surcharged with the 'FIVE PENCE/5p/FEE PAID' cachet, followed in June by properly surcharged 20p stamps. Some of these surcharges — handstamped provisionals and printed — were produced in small quantities and could well become scarce in time.

Cancellation stamps are held at Hythe, New Romney and Dymchurch stations — all are circular and have the date across the centre. They are normally struck in black ink, occasionally in blue. A number of special handstamps have also been used.

Mid-Hants Railway

This line is operated by the Winchester & Alton Railway Ltd along the Itchen Valley in Hampshire from Alresford to Medstead & Four Marks, a distance of 5¾ miles. There is one intermediate station at Ropley. The line is part of the former Winchester-Alton railway which was closed by British Rail in February 1973 (the line east from Alton to Aldershot is still operated by B.R.). The section from Alresford to Ropley was reopened in April 1977, the service on the Ropley to Medstead section was restored in June 1983. The railway is sometimes referred to as 'the Watercress Line'.

The company issued four 10p labels in 1977 also a commemorative label for the Queen's Silver Jubilee inscribed 'SPECIAL JUBILEE RUN' — these were not proper railway letter stamps. The railway letter service started in March 1979 when a single 15p stamp was issued — depicting locomotive No. 34016 *Bodmin*. The stamp is inscribed 'MID HANTS RAILWAY/PRESERVATION SOCIETY LTD' in two lines but has the second line deleted by a single bar overprint. At the time of writing no further stamps have been issued despite the increase in the letter fee to 20p. Two cancellation stamps are used — one at Alresford, the other at Ropley. Both are circular, dated across the centre and struck in black ink.

Kent & East Sussex Railway

This line — originally known as the Rother Valley Railway — was opened in 1900-05 and ran from Headcorn on the Tonbridge-Ashford main line to Robertsbridge on the Tunbridge Wells-Hastings line.



Romney, Hythe & Dymchurch Rly. — 15p Hurricane and Cinque Port stamps surcharged 20p (June 1982).



Mid-Hants Rly. — Cover carried from Alresford to Ropley, franked with 15p stamp. The rate at the time this cover was carried was 20p but the railway has not issued a 20p stamp.

Passenger services were withdrawn in 1954 and freight services ceased in 1961. The Kent & East Sussex Railway Preservation Society has reopened the line from Tenterden Town as far as Wittersham Road, a distance of four miles. There is one intermediate station at Rolvenden; eventually trains will run to Bodiam — a village famed for its fine medieval castle.

The railway letter service was introduced on 11 July 1979 when two 15p stamps (printed horizontally *se-tenant*) were issued — depicting locomotives Nos. 23 *Holman F. Stephens* and 10 *Sutton*. Col. H F Stephens was owner of the railway until his death in 1931. The stamps were printed in sheets of 10, the large borders of the sheet are printed drawings of a goods train and a portrait of Stephens. The stamps were surcharged 20p in December 1980 following the increase in the letter fee the previous month. New definitives — two at 10p and one 20p stamp were issued in May 1981 — these feature locomotive *Hecate*; a Royal railway coach and Col. Stephens and locomotive *Tenterden*; they are printed in horizontal strips of three.

Dated oval handstamps are used to cancel railway

letter stamps. Initially the 'Tenterden Town' cancel was used on mail from all three stations. A Wittersham Road cancel was introduced in March 1980 and a similar handstamp was in use at Rolvenden by July 1980. They are normally struck in black, but the Wittersham Road cancel has been seen in red. Special cancels were used on the day the service was introduced and to mark the 80th anniversary of the opening of the line in 1900 (12 March 1980).

Details of the stamps currently available can be obtained by sending a stamped addressed envelope to: General Manager, Bluebell Rly. Ltd., Sheffield Park Station, UCKFIELD, East Sussex, TN22 3QL; Souvenir Sales, Romney, Hythe & Dymchurch Rly., NEW ROMNEY, Kent, TN28 8PL; Marketing Officer, Mid-Hants Rly., Alresford Station, ALRESFORD, Hants, SO24 9JG and General Manager, Kent & East Sussex Rly., Tenterden Town Station, TENTERDEN, Kent, TN30 6HE.

In the fifth article in this series we move to the north of England to examine the stamps of the Keighley & Worth Valley Railway, the North York Moors Railway and the narrow gauge Ravenglass & Eskdale Railway.

JOHN HOLMAN



Kent & East Sussex Rly. — 15p stamps issued July 1979; these were later surcharged 20p.

1. The Transorma

Modern postal history is largely the history of postal mechanisation. For a hundred years Post Offices have been trying to cut their costs and cope more efficiently with rising postal traffic. Since most cost is incurred by labour this has meant that gradually machines have taken over the work previously done by men. This first began with the cancelling of stamps, the first machine being the Pearson Hill canceller of as far back as 1857. At the turn of the century more efficient machines were introduced culminating in the speedy ALFs and facer-canceller tables of today. All these have left their mark on the envelopes and postcards which were processed through them.

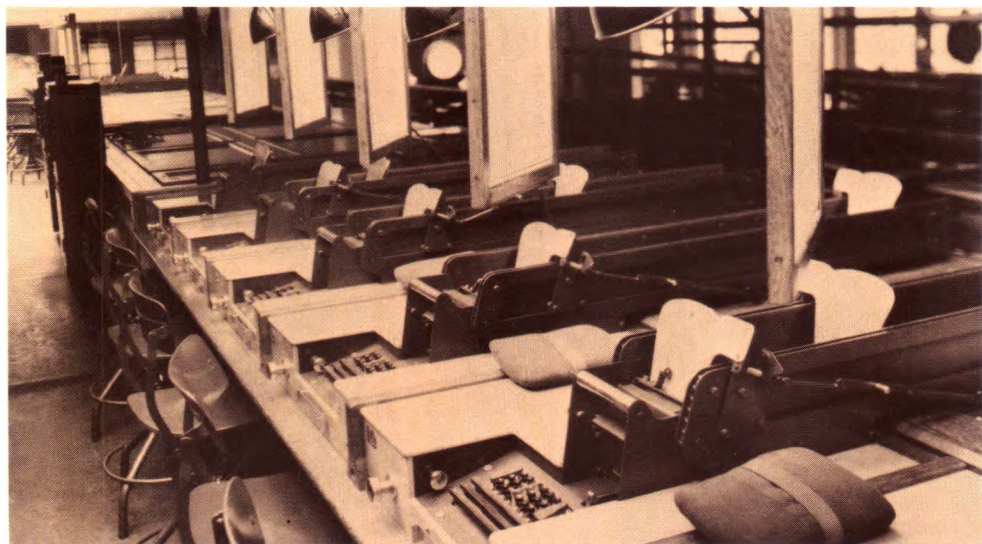
But the main process of mechanisation was to come later. Most people were, and are, employed in sorting the mail. To do this by hand is a very time-consuming and therefore labour-intensive occupation. One man could only comfortably reach 48 holes in a 'frame' and so that was the number of selections or pigeon-holes available. Clearly, it is not possible to cover every destination, outward or inward, in such a small number of boxes and so it was necessary for the letters to be sorted over and over again until they could be bundled and bagged and

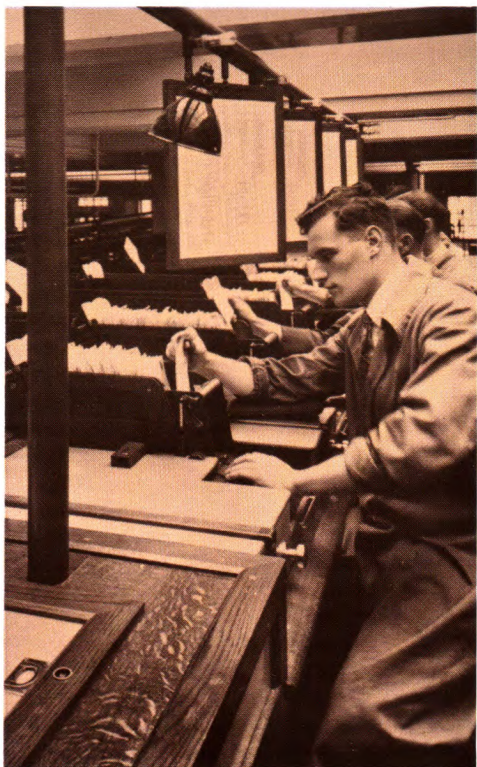
sent off to wherever they were going. This was called primary and secondary sorting. And the process was not finished with sorting letters to, say, Birmingham. In the Birmingham sorting office they all had to be sorted out all over again until they were in the correct order for the postmen's walk.

If a machine could do most, or all of this, then great savings could be made. Yet it was not until the 1930s that the first successful sorting machine was developed and even today the British Post Office is still in the process of completing its programme of Mechanised Letter Offices to cover the country.

The first sorting machine to be used in Great Britain is the subject of this article. It was called the Transorma and came from Holland. Transorma came from TRANsportation of mail, SORTing, and the initials of the Dutch inventors Marchand and Andriessen. Trials of other unsuccessful apparatus had taken place in the past, right back to 1910 but none was considered suitable. The Transorma was introduced at Brighton on 7th October, 1935, and worked there successfully for 33 years before being demolished in June 1968.

Apart from being the first such machine, and thus the forerunner of all modern sorting machines, it is also important in the postal history *collecting* field because it put a mark on every letter or card which went through it. These marks took the form of small letters or numbers and identified the operator who processed the item. They are thus called 'idents' (not to be confused with 'indents' as many people write). It is these markings which prove that the item was





sorted by the Transorma machine and thus demonstrate sorting by mechanical means rather than manual. By this, the letters become part of postal history.

Rotterdam was the first site of a Transorma machine with the original prototype being introduced in 1931, in February of that year. A second machine was installed the following year. Negotiations with the British Post Office were carried out over three or four years before final decisions were made. Then two machines were ordered for installation at Brighton in 1935.

Five operators sat at each machine. Letters were automatically pushed towards them along troughs. The operator picked up the letter in his right hand, read the address and dropped the letter into the slot in front of him. At the same time he depressed up to three keys with his left hand, the number corresponding with the box to which it was to go. There were 250 box receptacles, numbered 0 to 124 and 200 to 324.

The machine had its own rhythm, 50 'beats' to the minute. It was only at a certain point that a letter could be inserted into the machinery. This meant that the upper limit of the rate of sorting was 50 per minute per operator.

By depressing the keys on the keyboard, selector bars were set on the carrier holding the letter. This now meant that the carrier had the information



116. Royal Silver Jubilee, 1977

required to deposit the letter in the correct chute leading to the box appropriate to the destination. The carrier was part of an endless chain which went round the back of the machine and there dropped the letters into the receptacles beneath.

Before the operator could begin he had to insert his own personal key. This was the ident which impressed its mark on to the letters he sorted. Thus, any missorting could be traced back to the originating desk and operator. This was a check on the efficiency of both the operator and the machine. Sometimes, mechanical faults would develop which could be remedied more quickly by having this check. The idents which were used were A to Z, a to z, and the numbers 2 to 37. These were not used all the time and some had different versions. There were also varying colours and shades.

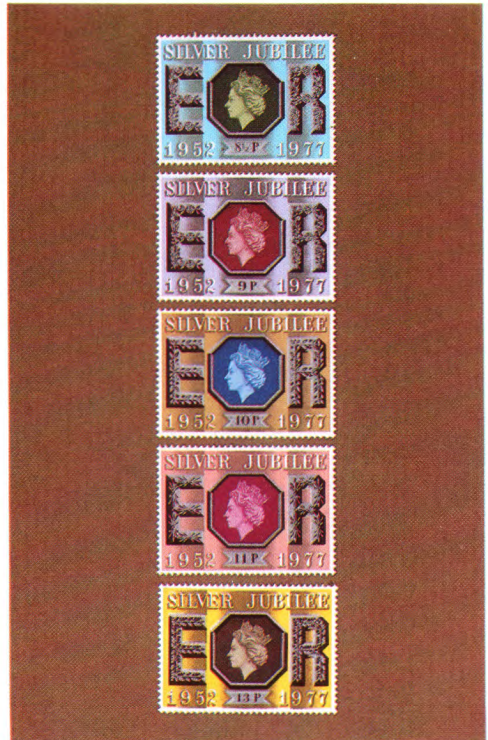
Why did the British Post Office buy a foreign machine? It certainly was not for want of trying to get a British machine. But all attempts had been failures. The Dutch machine was the first to operate successfully under normal field conditions. Its main advantage was that it combined primary and secondary sorting. Under purely manual conditions the sorter had in front of him a frame of 48 boxes with therefore only 48 selections. This meant that letters had to be sorted more than once before they were ready. And the 48 box frame was a fairly new introduction. It only appeared in the 1920s. Before that the normal frame was of 36 selections. Therefore, to have the possibility of one man sorting to 250 divisions was a great boon. Letters did not need to be sorted again before they left Brighton, at least not normally.

Tests on one of the machines began on 10th September, 1935, but the official opening was not until 7th October. These tests were carried out on 'live' mail as can be proved from a few covers of the period with idents on them. As might be imagined, these covers are scarce and very much sought after. The number of items surviving is quite small but in fact very large amounts of mail went through the machine. An average of 600,000 letters and cards were sorted each week in the first few weeks! Sorting rates averaged 40 per minute for postmen sorting inwardly to addresses in Brighton but only 32 per minute for sorting clerks and telegraphists who sorted outgoing mail. This was because of the large number of codes they had to learn. There were some 234 different numbers covering the country but many of these included fairly large areas and the sorter had to know just where every village and town lay.

DOUGLAS N MUIR

Four stamps commemorating the 25th anniversary of the Queen's accession to the throne were issued on 11 May 1977. The basic design comprised a profile portrait of the Queen within a central octagon, flanked by the large capital letters 'ER'. each pair of letters differing only in the decoration of the silver initials. The denominations (background colours in brackets) were 8½p (pale turquoise-green), 10p (ochre), 11p (rose-pink) and 13p (bistre-yellow). Due to an increase in the first class inland letter rate on 13 June 1977, an additional value of 9p (lavender) in the same basic design as the 8½p, was released on the 15th.

Only on one previous occasion had the Post Office issued a set for a Royal Silver Jubilee — to celebrate 25 years of the reign of King George V in 1935. The new stamps, which bore a superficial resemblance to the previous jubilee issue, were



designed by Richard Guyatt, C.B.E., Professor of Graphic Arts (and now Rector) at the Royal College of Art in London. He was born in 1914 and was educated at Charterhouse School. Before the war he worked in various studios, becoming the Regional Camouflage Officer for Scotland. Following the end of hostilities, he gained his appointment at the Royal College of Art (1948) and he was awarded the C.B.E. for his services to graphic arts in 1969. Later he built up a freelance design practice and became senior partner of the Guyatt/Jenkins Design Group.

For his Jubilee roughs, Professor Guyatt first used prints taken from the Machin head on the definitive stamps, but when these proved unsatisfactory he prepared a drawing of a new head, working from photographs and using a grisaille technique — soft pencil upon a watercolour wash, adding highlights in body colour — eventually producing an acceptable portrait. The stamps were photogravure-printed by Harrison and Sons in sheets of 100 (two panes of 50, 10 x 5) on unwatermarked paper with 'all-over' phosphor. No major printing flaws were recorded. Quantities issued were: 8½p 73,960,000; 9p 42,620,000; 10p 21,580,000; 11p 19,380,000 and 13p 17,720,000.

Letter to the Editor



Dear Mr. Gowen,

In the August issue of the Philatelic Bulletin the new definitives, on sale on August 28th were described, and the perforations were given as 14 x 15.

I believe that the usual convention with perfs is that the top (horizontal) perf is stated first, followed by the side (vertical) perf.

On examining the new definitives, and here confining my attention to the 13p stamp, I find that the side perf is certainly 14, so that 14 x 15 should presumably be 15 x 14.

TOTNES
Devon

Yours sincerely
E. N. Masson Phillips

The perforation details for the new definitive stamps announced in the August Bulletin were incorrect as you rightly say. They should have been shown as 15 x 14, following the normal convention of stating the horizontal perforation first. Thank you for pointing out the error.

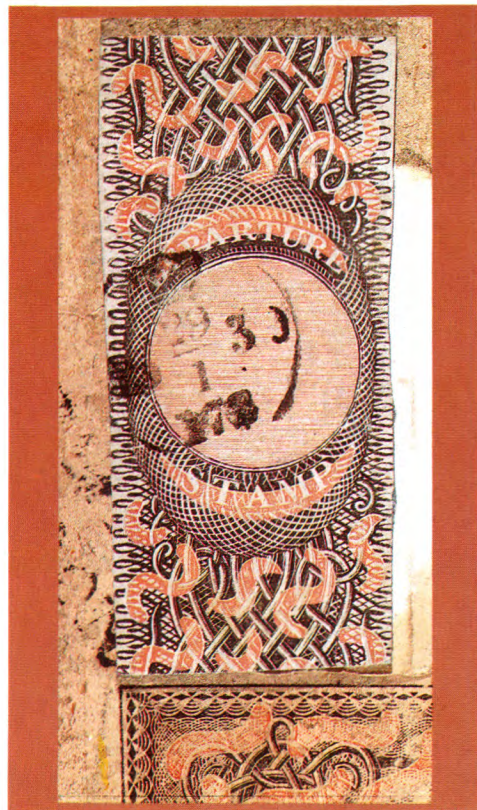
EDITOR

Treasury Competition – Entries

The Treasury Competition, closing date for entries 15 October 1839, attracted over 2,600 entries. Although none of the entries were destined to be used, a great number of the designs displayed imagination, flair, originality and graphical skill, coupled with a real grasp of the practicalities involved. Indeed, prophetically, many of the designs incorporated concepts that were eventually to be used on issued stamps.

Inevitably, among such a large number of entries, there were some that were not of quite such a high quality.

Entry TN19073 from Mr J C Dalwig of Manchester, was an unoriginal suggestion to copy something already in use, a Paper Excise stamp inscribed



'Departure Stamp'. This was printed on the Congreve principle in black and red, measuring 85 x 37mm.

Had the committee decided to use this concept, the name Dalwig would, of course, be 'writ large' in philatelic history. As it is, the name is remembered only for the fact that he submitted an entry, no matter how unoriginal and impracticable, to the Treasury Competition. The fickle figure of fate.

This example can be seen in the R M Phillips Collection (volume 1, page 16) at the National Postal Museum during normal opening hours 10am-4.30pm Monday to Thursday, 10am-4pm Friday

JOHN MEMMOTT Assist. Curator

National Postal Museum News

To coincide with the 'Famous Trains' stamp issue on 22 January 1985, the National Postal Museum is putting on a railway exhibition in the Museum's main gallery. The exhibition will feature stamp artwork from the 150th Anniversary of Public Railways issue of 1975 and from the 150th Anniversary of the Liverpool and Manchester set of 1980. As 1985 is the 150th Anniversary of the Great Western Railway, part of the display will be devoted to ephemera featuring 'Gods Wonderful Railway'. A working model 'GWR' railway will also be on show for the duration of the exhibition — 22 January to 3 May 1985.

Although not the first company to carry mail by rail, the Great Western Railway can claim to have run the first 'Postal Train' in the world. In 1854 with a view to ensuring greater regularity and speed of the Night Mail between London and the North, Rowland Hill, then Secretary to the Post Office, offered to incur the expense of a Special Train to Glasgow and Edinburgh, to be used exclusively for the conveyance of mail; however, the offer was rejected. A similar offer made to the GWR was accepted. The 'Special Mail', as it was officially called, began running on 1 February 1855. The down train leaving Paddington at 8.46pm reached Bristol at 12.30am, where it overtook the passenger train which had started at 8.10pm, and combined with it reached Plymouth at 5.45am. The 'Special' was a light train, consisting as a rule of two sorting carriages and a van and was always worked by one of the GWR 7 foot single engines and known affectionately as the 'little mail'. In June 1869 the Post

Office was persuaded to allow one first class coach to be attached in each direction for a limited number of passengers between London and Bristol. With this innovation the trains ceased to be 'Special' and became 'Limited' like those already running on the London and North Western Railway, the line wrongly said to have run the first 'Special' mail train.

To accompany the Exhibits the National Postal Museum is issuing a postcard, SS30, featuring a GWR Poster c1940 and a Great Western TPO handstamp. Price 20p.

Insects Stamps Issue 12 March 1985

This set of stamps, to be issued by The Post Office, showing Insects, has been produced to commemorate the 100th Anniversary of the Royal Entomological Society (R.E.S.). Much of the early study of insects and their effect on the natural world and our own lives, was pioneered by the Society through their work in Britain and elsewhere.

First Day Cover Service

The following services for first day covers will be provided. Two pictorial handstamps will be available, 'London SW' (the home of the RES) and 'British Philatelic Bureau, Edinburgh'.

SERVICE 'A'

This service consists of the official first day cover — price 15p — addressed to the correct address of the destination required, and bearing all five stamps. The cover will be cancelled, 'London SW' or 'British Philatelic Bureau, Edinburgh', as requested and despatched.

SERVICE 'B'

Customers own pre-addressed covers, bearing the correct postal address, will be given the stamps, cancelled as requested and despatched. The following charges will apply:

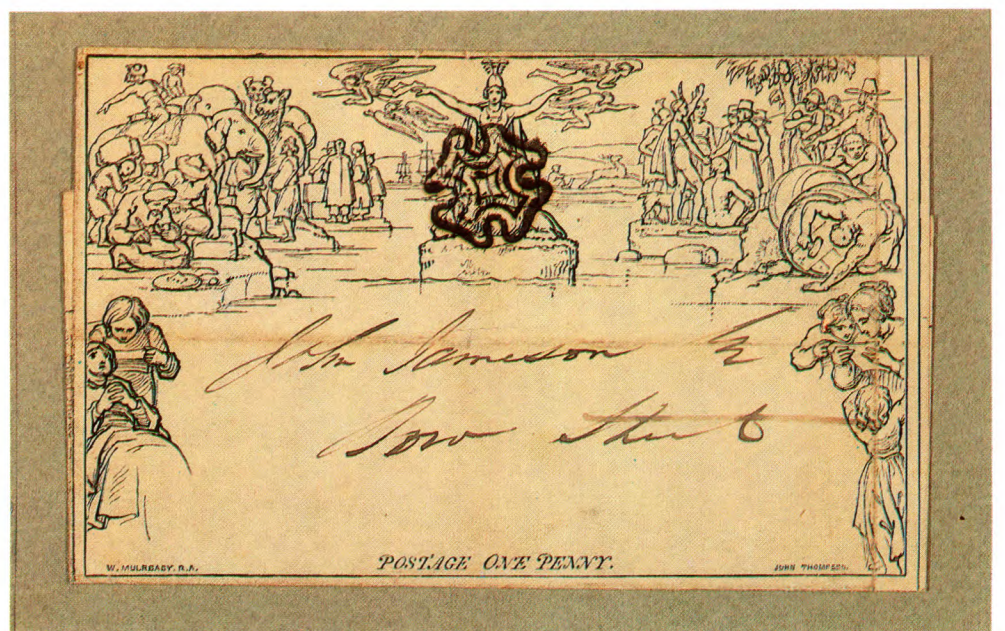
	INLAND	OVERSEAS
Service 'A'	£1.82	£1.59
Deposit account Customers	£1.77	£1.54
Service 'B'	£1.67	£1.46

The first day of issue facilities will be available at offices with philatelic posting boxes. Application forms, available from the British Philatelic Bureau, Edinburgh, and at Head Post Offices, should be returned not later than 1 March 1985.

4. The Mulready and the Maltese Cross

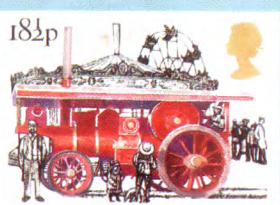
When faced with the task of implementing his own project for Uniform Penny Postage, Rowland Hill was almost obsessively insistent on promoting the use of postal stationery or, in his own words, 'stamped covers', intending the use of the adhesive stamps — Penny Black and Twopence Blue — as an alternative if and when the stationery items were unavailable. The letter sheets and envelopes were designed by William Mulready, R.A., who pictured Britannia with outstretched arms, a shield depicting the Union Jack and a British lion at her feet, apparently embracing the ocean and the peoples of the world and despatching winged messengers to distant parts — we see elephants on the left and Red Indians on the right; avid readers in the borders. The 1d. and 2d. letter sheets and envelopes were put on sale in London on 1 May 1840 and brought into use, with the 1d. black adhesives, on 6 May. Alas, the 'Mulreadies' were almost instantly scorned, ridiculed and caricatured by a derisive public while, much to Rowland Hill's surprise and disappointment, the adhesive stamps sold like the proverbial hot cakes.

The introduction of postal stationery and adhesive stamps required special consideration and thought on the question of cancellation, handstamps so designed as to obviate fraudulent re-use. In the event, the 'Maltese Cross' cancellations were officially issued for use with the Mulready stationery and the first postage stamps, and in this respect Rowland Hill was compensated for his poor judgement over the 'Mulreadies' — the 'Maltese Crosses' were effective and successful. The handstamps were individually hand-made and their numerous variations enable one to identify source locations. Postmasters were instructed to strike a 'Maltese Cross' cancellation on the figure of Britannia in the centre of the Mulready design. Red ink was first employed, but was superseded by black in February 1841. My example shows a 'Mulready' 1d. letter-sheet, posted in London and addressed locally to Bow Street, dated 30 March 1841, and bearing a superb black 'Maltese Cross' *Next month: The Mulready Caricatures.*
MALCOLM JAMES

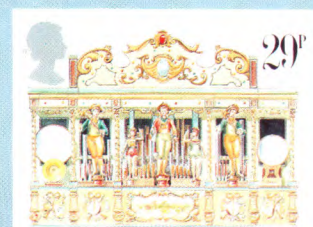
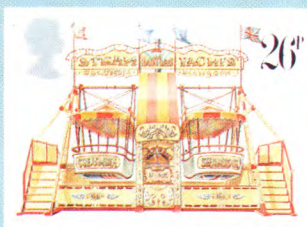
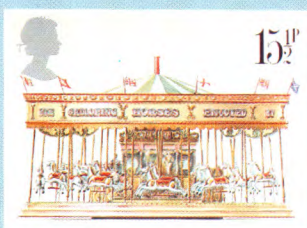


Preliminary Designs

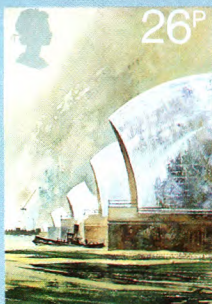
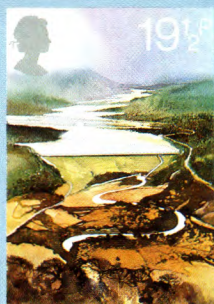
Once again we have pleasure in reproducing a number of stamp designs for the 1983 programme.



Andrew Restall



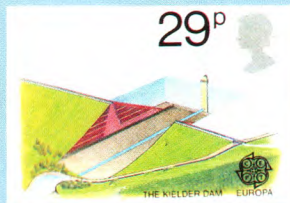
Geoffrey Wheeler



John Blockley



John Gibbs



Marjorie Blamey

Liz Butler



Posting Boxes



No. 67. The photograph this month has been sent to us by Stephen Sharp of Cambridge who spent a holiday in Argyll, Scotland. The location of the box is probably more interesting than the box itself which is situated on the Ardrumurchan Peninsular at the Achateny cross road and is of great importance to the people of the townships of Achateny, Kilmory and Ockle which are between 2 and 3 miles away.

Stephen says that the box appears to be in the middle of nowhere with only the sheep for company, but in fact it is approximately midway between the three towns in the north and Kilchoan in the south. The most westerly box on the peninsular is at Achosnich (Portuairk).

Thank you Stephen for an interesting picture.

Protection of Stamps and Documents

From time to time we are asked to recommend protective material to be used in conjunction with storing postage stamps and documents. The characteristics of various types of films available on the market are listed below:

GLASSINE A translucent form of paper which is relatively cheap, gives rise to no problems of static electricity charge, and does not readily degrade. It tears fairly easily and is not optically clear.

POLYETHYLENE (Polythene) Cheap, chemi-

cally safe, but very flexible and not optically clear. Does not degrade if protected from prolonged exposure to light or ultra violet.

POLYPROPYLENE (Propathane) Similar to polyethylene but tougher. Optically clear film is available. Not easy to find an adhesive suitable for fixing it to paper. More expensive than polyethylene. Safe. Co-extruded polypropylene film is now available faced with a layer of heat sealing compound.

POLYSTYRENE Used for certain popular strips

and pockets. Chemically safe, stable under normal storage conditions. Optically clear, cheap, but crazes or creases easily.

VINYL (PVC, PVAc, etc) Normally contains a plasticiser which could migrate over a period and damage stamps in contact. PVC can also degrade over a long period releasing hydrochloric acid, particularly in sunlight or ultra violet. NOT recommended.

POLYESTER FILM Optically clear grades are readily available. Chemically safe, stable, does not degrade under normal storage conditions, but prone to acquire static electrical charge in dry conditions; hence may collect dust. The most promising protective film available.

CELLULOSE ACETATE Fairly cheap, tear strength somewhat variable, and usually not optically clear. Useful as a backing material. Chemically safe.

NOTE Polypropylene and Polyester films are also available with a heat-bonding backing, and also in 'anti-stat' treated versions. They do not bond readily to paper, unless the paper has been pre-treated.

13p 'Country' Definitive Stamps

On page 9 of the September 1984 Bulletin, we stated that the 13p 'Country' definitive stamps have a single central phosphor bar. This is incorrect. In fact the stamps have a single side bar. So sorry about this.

'Famous Trains' Stamps

It was not possible to include the colours of the 'Famous Trains' stamps in the December edition of the Bulletin. Here they are now.

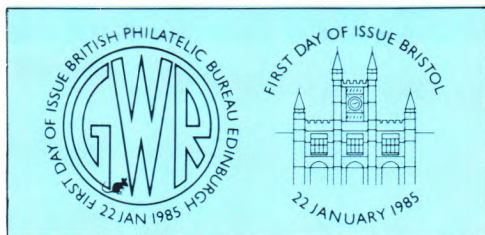
17p: lemon, bright rose, new blue, grey black, black, gold.

22p: lemon, bright rose, new blue, grey black, black, gold.

29p: lemon, new blue, grey black, black, cerise, gold.

31p: lemon, bright rose, new blue, grey black, black, gold.

34p: lemon, bright rose, new blue, grey black, black, gold.



These are the special handstamps for this issue being applied at the British Philatelic Bureau, Edinburgh and at Bristol. The Bristol handstamp depicts Temple Meads railway station.

New Postcards

Midland Postal Region

A new picture postcard illustrating the locomotive 'Rowland Hill', built at Crewe for the old London and North Western Railway, will be available from 22 January 1985 at all philatelic sales counters in the Midland Postal Region, price 14p each. Bulk orders for mint cards may be obtained from the British Philatelic Bureau, 20 Brandon Street, EDINBURGH, EH3 5TT, where normal handling charges will apply.

Serviced cards bearing a 17p 'Flying Scotsman' stamp cancelled with a first day of sale handstamp can be ordered by post from: The Head Postmaster, Head Post Office, 2 Weston Road, CREWE, CW1 1AA, for a charge of 45p each. Orders must be received by 15 January 1985. Remittances should be made payable to, 'The Post Office' or by Direct Giro Bank transfer account number 616 5117.

Darlington Philatelic Counter

A special postcard will be issued by Darlington Philatelic Counter on 22 January 1985 to coincide with the issue of the Famous Trains stamps. The card will depict 'Locomotion', the engine which hauled the first passenger train in 1825. The card is available, price 15p, from Darlington Philatelic Counter and the National Postal Museum. A serviced card bearing a 17p 'Famous Trains' stamp and cancelled on 22 January 1985 with the Darlington Philatelic Counter handstamp is also available at 45p. Orders with the appropriate remittance (including 18p to cover handling) should be sent to Darlington Philatelic Counter, Crown Street, DARLINGTON, DL1 1AB, by 22 January 1985.

Stamp Bug Club

Since May 1983, members of the Stamp Bug Club visiting the National Postal Museum have received a special postcard as a souvenir of their visit. Any

remaining cards will be withdrawn on 28 February 1985, and they will not be available after that date.

Looking to the future, the Stamp Bug Club celebrates its fifth birthday in March 1985. As part of the celebrations a special postcard is planned for issue featuring the Stamp Bug. Further details will be announced in the next issue of the Philatelic Bulletin.

Post Office Archives

The Postal Headquarters Building, home of Post Office Archives, is to be refurbished and it is necessary therefore to move all the archival material to a new address which will be: Freeling House, 23 Glass Hill Street, LONDON SE1 0BQ (telephone 01-261 1145).

In order to prepare the new Search Room at Freeling House, Post Office Archives is now closed to the public. It will re-open at the new address on Monday 4 February 1985.

Withdrawn Items

The following items will be withdrawn from sale during January.

'Heraldry' stamps and Presentation Pack on 16 January 1985.

12½p and 16p 'Welsh' definitives with old perforations on 10 January 1985.

Stampex 1985

Stampex 1985 will be held at the Royal Horticultural Society, using both halls in Greycoat Street and Vincent Square, LONDON, SW1 from Tuesday 26 February until Sunday 3 March 1985.

Hours of Opening: Tuesday 1pm — 8pm; Wednesday, Thursday and Friday 10.30am — 8pm; Saturday and Sunday 10.30am — 6pm.

Prices of admission: first day £2; other days £1. Children and OAPs 50p. Season tickets including catalogue £4.

Once again The Post Office will provide a philatelic sales counter/display stand including a British Philatelic Bureau information kiosk. We hope to meet many old friends and new collectors.

Stampex Prospectus

The new Stampex Prospectus is now available. Exhibitors are asked to apply for copies immediately from Stampex Ltd., 27 John Adam Street, LONDON, WC2N 6HZ.

Cheerio John Mackay

John Mackay, Assistant Director in charge of Stamp Marketing, has left Postal Headquarters in London to take up an appointment as Controller Mails and Operations at the Scottish Postal Board. Over the last five years he has presided over many important changes in Post Office services for philatelists which have helped maintain a continuing interest in British Stamps. We wish him every success in his new post.



Philatelic Gift Vouchers

The philatelic gift voucher service was withdrawn on 15 August 1984 after a relatively brief life. Its demise was largely due to misuse of the scheme by various people, being used as a means of exchanging unwanted stamps for new without paying the 15% repurchase fee levied by The Post Office. It was also used for disposing of unwanted material from stamp booklet panes once particular stamps had been removed.

Vouchers issued prior to 15 August 1984 continued to be redeemed until 12 November 1984. Since then, the normal repurchase arrangements have applied. Any collectors or dealers who still have vouchers in their possession should send them together with a form P674G (obtainable from any money order post office) duly completed for refund of the value of the stamps to: Postal Headquarters, Postal Finance Department (PF3.4), Cashier's Sub Group, Chetwynd House, CHESTERFIELD, Derbyshire S49 1PF.

Refunds will be made on the face value of the stamps less the 15% repurchase fee.

Forces Cover

20th Anniversary of Sir Winston Churchill's Funeral

To mark this event on 30 January 1985 a philatelic cover will be available depicting a Royal Naval gun carriage crew hauling the coffin along a street on the processional route. A 17p 'Famous Trains' stamp will be affixed cancelled with a pictorial handstamp illustrating the badge of HMS 'Excellent'. The charge will be 95p.

In addition, the cover bearing a 31p 'Famous Trains' stamp cancelled as above, but signed by Mr Winston Churchill, grandson of Sir Winston, and signed also by Rear Admiral J J Oswald, Carriage Officer, funeral gun carriage crew, is priced at £2.15.

Signed by Rear Admiral Oswald only, the cover with a 22p 'Famous Trains' stamp affixed will cost £1.40. Orders with remittances made payable to 'FAA Museum' should be sent to R N Philatelic Officer, Fleet Air Arm Museum, RNAS Yeovilton YEOVEL, Somerset BA22 8HL, accompanied by a 7" x 5" stamped addressed envelope.

Commemorative Covers

TPO 814 Group Didcot

A special philatelic cover has been produced by the TPO 814 Group at Didcot to commemorate the 150th Anniversary of the Great Western Railway, to coincide with the issue of the Famous Trains stamps on 22 January 1985. The covers will bear the full set of stamps and be cancelled with a special Didcot handstamp. A special cachet will also be applied when the covers are exchanged via the TPO Mail

Apparatus in the Didcot Railway Centre. The cost of the covers is £2.50 each plus 30p for postage and packing. Orders with the appropriate remittance made payable to TPO 814 Group should be sent to: TPO 814 Group, 77 Penn Road, Hazlemere, HIGH WYCOMBE, Bucks, HP15 7LZ.

Salvation Army Cover

To commemorate the opening of a new buildings complex on 24 November 1984, the Boscombe Corps of the Salvation Army has produced a special philatelic cover bearing the 17p 'Christmas' stamp. A pictorial handstamp was used to cancel the cover, which is now available, price £1.70, including return postage and packing. Orders with remittances made payable to, 'Boscombe Corps Salvation Army', should be sent to: Mr D Lawrence, 32 Victoria Avenue, Winton, BOURNEMOUTH, Dorset, BH9 2RW.

The Cornish Riviera Express

A special philatelic cover has been produced to commemorate the GWR 150th Anniversary and in particular the famous Cornish Riviera Express. Two postmarks have been sponsored, one at Penzance and one at Paddington Station. The two covers are available both depicting the Cornish Riviera and each cover will bear the full set of five railway stamps to be issued on 22 January 1985. It is hoped that the covers will be carried on the Cornish Riviera Express, and they will be available at £3.50 each or £7.00 for the matching pair from Benham (A Buckingham) Ltd, 22-28 High Street, HYTHE, Kent, CT21 5AT.

The Christening of Prince Henry

Two philatelic covers have been produced to commemorate the Christening of Prince Henry. The covers are illustrated with Lord Snowdon pictures of the happy family in 'silk look' finish, enclosed in a gold block border. Special pictorial postmarks have been sponsored for use at Windsor and London SW1 for the day of the Christening. A limited number of covers will be produced and they are available individually at £1.55 or as a matching pair at £2.80. Both prices include postage and packing. Orders with the appropriate remittance should be made payable to Benham (A Buckingham) Ltd, and sent to First Day Cover Shop, 22-28 High Street, HYTHE, Kent, CT21 5AT.

Venice Simplon-Orient-Express

A special philatelic cover is being produced on 22 January 1985 on behalf of the Venice Simplon-Orient-Express Ltd, featuring the Golden Arrow (Flèche d'Or) and the Orient Express. The

histories of these famous trains are very much intertwined, and today one of the English Pullmans in the Venice Simplon-Orient-Express (VSOE), Ibis, was part of the Golden Arrow from 1930 onwards. A special handstamp has also been sponsored and will be in use at Victoria Station on 22 January 1985, the day of issue of the Famous Trains stamps.

The covers are available bearing the 22p Golden Arrow stamp only at £2.50, or bearing the full set of Famous Trains stamps at £4.00. A limited number of covers will also be available signed by a notable person connected with the VSOE at £5.50 each. Prices are inclusive of postage and packing, but £1 should be added for overseas orders.

Orders with the appropriate remittance made payable to Greenberg and Porter, should be sent to: The Golden Arrow/VSOE Cover, Greenberg and Porter, 13 Fordyke Road, Becontree Heath, DAGENGHAM, Essex, RM8 1PJ.

Victory in Europe 1945

A special series of limited edition covers and postcards has been produced to commemorate the 40th anniversary of 'Victory in Europe 1945'. Each separate issue will bear a full-colour illustration from the artist's originals, depicting various seminal events and battles that led up to V E Day. Recent stamp issues such as the British Army, Heraldry and Europa will be used for specific anniversaries. These will also be special handstamps. Further details are available from R Lewitt, 72 Scraftoft Lane, Humberstone, LEICESTER, LE5 1HW. (SAE please).

Wolverhampton Millenium

To commemorate the 1000th anniversary of the first known Charter of Wolverhampton a special philatelic cover is being produced on 2 January 1985. The cover depicts the granting of the Charter in 985 by King Aethelred the Unready to Lady Wulfruna, after whom the town is named. A limited number of covers are being produced, and they will have a single Royal Mail stamp affixed, cancelled with a special handstamp featuring the millenium logo. The cost of the cover is £1 including postage and packing. Orders with the appropriate remittance made payable to Wolverhampton Borough Council should be sent to: I D Blackhouse, Public Relations Officer, Wolverhampton Metropolitan Borough Council, Civic Centre, St Peter's Square, WOLVERHAMPTON, WV1 1RG.

North Staffordshire Railway Co (1978) Ltd

A special philatelic cover is being produced by the North Staffordshire Railway Co (1978) Ltd to coincide with the Famous Trains stamp issue on 22

January 1985. The specially designed cover depicts an LMS Class 8F Locomotive steaming past Cheddleton Station, the Headquarters of the Railway, with empty wagons en route for the quarries at Oakmoor on a winter's day. The covers will be cancelled with a special pictorial handstamp on 22 January 1985 depicting a North Staffordshire Railway New L Class Locomotive.

The cost of a single cover bearing the 17p Flying Scotsman stamp is £1.13; a set of five covers each bearing a different Famous Trains special issue stamp will cost £5.24. A single cover bearing the 31p Royal Scot stamp, signed by the Chairman of the North Staffordshire Railway Company, is also available at £4.13. All prices include postage and packing. Proceeds will go to the North Staffordshire Railway and Newcastle Volleyball Club. Orders with remittances made payable to Newcastle Volleyball Commemorative should be sent to: NVC, 5a Sneyd Avenue, NEWCASTLE, Staffs, ST5 2PZ.

Philatelic Bulletin

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