

BRITISH PHILATELIC

The ROYAL MAIL magazine *for stamp collectors*

Bulletin

Volume 45 Number 4

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2007 stamps poll • Angels on stamps • Rescue at Sea issue



The Herald Angels sing:
as Royal Mail celebrates
Christmas with Charles
Wesley's renowned carol,
we look at a collection of
angels on stamp issues
from around the world.

Forthcoming issues and withdrawals



Cover Royal Mail's 2nd class Angels Christmas stamp, with details from earlier Royal Mail Christmas stamps and from Dorothy Martin's collection of angels, featured in this issue.

Issues All items are available from Royal Mail Tallents House (address below); selected items are available at Post Office branches and Post Office philatelic outlets at main post offices in Bath, Birmingham, Brighton, Bristol, Cambridge, Canterbury, Cardiff, Chester, Colchester, Coventry, Croydon, Durham, Edinburgh, Exeter, Glasgow, Grimsby, Harrogate, Leicester, London (Trafalgar Square & Eastcheap), Newcastle upon Tyne, Norwich, Nottingham, Plymouth, Portsmouth, Southampton, Southend-on-Sea, Stevenage, Stratford-on-Avon, Stroud, Truro, Windsor and York.

Royal Mail Tallents House 21 South Gyle Crescent, Edinburgh EH12 9PB, UK. Telephone order line (08.30 - 17.00 Monday to Friday): 08457 641 641; from overseas +44 131 316 7483. Minimum handling charge UK £1.45, Europe £1.55, rest of world (airmail) £2.15. Some products can be ordered on Royal Mail's website: www.royalmail.com/shop

30 November

Issue 'Glorious Scotland' generic sheet (20 × 1st class Scottish country stamp self adhesive). Smilers version with personal image on labels also available.

29 December

Withdrawal 37p Machin definitive.

31 December

Withdrawal 2005 Yearbook (standard and de luxe versions) and Yearpack.

8 January

Issue James Bond stamps, miniature sheet, prestige book, pack, stamp cards and press sheet.

8 January

Withdrawal Beatles stamps, miniature sheet, presentation pack and stamp cards.

15 January

Issue Stamp book containing 4 × 1st definitives and two 'Love' stamps with 'Be My Valentine' and 'S.W.A.L.K.' labels.

15 January

Issue Generic Smilers sheets with 10 or 20 × Union Flag, Hello, and Love stamps.

31 January

Withdrawal Sea Life stamps, presentation pack and stamp cards • Postcode advert stamp book (issued 1 Feb 2007).

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 Tallents House (address at left). Annual subscription £12.95 UK and Europe, £17.95 rest of world (airmail). Binders and storage boxes are available, at £8.50 and £9.95 respectively.



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The **British Philatelic Bulletin** is published monthly by Royal Mail, 35-50 Rathbone Place, London W1T 1HQ • **Editor** J R Holman • **Price** £1.20 each from Post Office Ltd philatelic outlets • **Annual subscription** £12.95 UK & Europe; £17.95 elsewhere. Send subscriptions to Royal Mail Talents House, 21 South Gyle Crescent, Edinburgh EH12 9PB • **Binders** (to hold 24 issues) £8.50, storage boxes (about 30 copies) £9.95 available by post from Royal Mail (Edinburgh address, above) • Royal Mail also publishes the fortnightly **British Postmark Bulletin**, giving details of forthcoming special handstamps. Available on annual subscription from Edinburgh address above: £12.25 UK and Europe, £24.95 rest of the world • **Copyright** Design & text Royal Mail Group Ltd, unless attributed to a specified author. All requests to reproduce any articles should be sent to the Editor, British Philatelic Bulletin, Royal Mail Letters, 35-50 Rathbone Place, London W1T 1HQ • **Design** Robert Maude • **Printed** in Great Britain by Beacon Press • **ISSN** 0953 8119 • Royal Mail is a trading name of Royal Mail Group Ltd. Registered in England and Wales no 4138203 registered office 148 Old Street, London EC1V 9HQ

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Stamp scene News and upcoming events: Glenn Morgan keeps you posted



Glenn Morgan

Inspired The Big Lottery Fund has announced that the Science Museum's Inspired project has been eliminated from the final round of the People's £50 million competition. Staff are extremely disappointed at this news, as Inspired is seen as a critical project for the nation's heritage and for attracting the next generation of scientists and engineers. They wish to assure everyone that they will now be exploring ways, with their partners, to make the world-class collections available to the public. The BPMA will continue to work on its relocation plans in spite of this setback ●

Postboxes disappear The USPS is removing mailboxes as the growth of the internet and competition from rival shipping companies takes hold. It is shifting its resources, concentrating where business is heaviest, resulting in some 13% of mailboxes vanishing from the streets of Philadelphia in the past two years. With fewer people posting first class letters year-on-year it has been 'inventorying' its iconic blue boxes nationwide and marking for removal those that get fewer than 25 letters a day. There is a saying that 'what America does today, Britain does tomorrow'; indeed from 28 October, Sunday and Public Holiday collections ceased from our pillar boxes ●

RDP nomination forms Dr Alan Huggins, 134 Berkeley Avenue, Chesham HP5 2RT.

Philatelic awards Nominations are sought, by 31 December, for the Roll of Distinguished Philatelists. Nominees must be philatelists, and distinguished by having contributed outstanding service to philately, either by study and research made available to others, or in some public or other capacity. The services are defined as: 1, published philatelic research or other significant works; 2, formation of notable collections which have been exhibited or displayed for the benefit of philately; and 3, journalistic activities and/or promotional work, at a high level, in connection with philatelic exhibitions, congresses or societies. Nominations, on the approved form, are invited from the ABPS, other national philatelic federations currently members of FIP, National Philatelic Society, Royal Philatelic Society London, overseas Royal Philatelic Societies, specialist societies and county/regional federations in the UK, and RDPs.

ABPS awards forms Susan Oliver, 46 Woodville Road, Ham, Richmond TW10 7QN. Telephone 020 8940 9833 or e-mail susan.m.oliver@virgin.net

The Association of British Philatelic Societies awards the Congress Medal and Awards of Merit. The Medal is awarded annually to a person who has distinguished themselves by promoting the hobby and helping others to enjoy it, usually by carrying out good work for a local society. Work at Federation level is also taken into consideration, and other help and assistance in the world of stamp collecting. This year's winner was Jean Wood – see Stamp Scene in the August *Bulletin* (page 359). Awards of Merit, comprising a framed certificate, are given to collectors who deserve appreciation of the work they undertake at society and possibly federation level. Nominations are considered by the ABPS Awards Committee in April and forms are available from Susan Oliver (see left) ●

Scouts stamps The winner by Scouts votes of the 2007 Europa stamp competition is Armenian postal operator Haypost. Europa stamps are special stamps issued by European postal administrations/enterprises, under the aegis of PostEurop, and which have Europe as their central theme. The Europa best stamp design competition is a yearly event which takes place during PostEurop's Plenary Assembly. The first competition, in 2002, saw Malta win best stamp design, with Monaco, Greenland, Iceland and Ukraine the winners respectively in 2003-2006.



In order to celebrate 100 years of Scouting and to stimulate the interest for Europa stamps among young scouts, it was decided that the Europa competition would be opened to scouts around the world, and they were invited to vote online for the stamp they liked best •

Meter franking There is a fascinating website for those interested in British meter franking marks. This site is managed by Alastair Nixon, who produces a monthly online newsletter that reports on all meter news – old and new. There are currently over 80 newsletters available for either online viewing, saving as a file on your computer, or which can even be printed off in colour if desired.

Enquiries visit website www.meterfranking.co.uk

The site also includes a feature about meter markings for the thematic collector (which has over 20 themes illustrated with appropriate markings), a listing of key events in meter franking from 1920, and a useful introductory page for those unfamiliar with this method of paying for (primarily) business postage. There is also a useful chart showing all of the prefixes used as part of the machine number so as to identify the model and manufacturer that an impression came from. An example number is T788579, which the chart was able to confirm came from a Francotyp-Postalia T1000 model first introduced to the British market in 1992 •

Dummy stamps If you are a collector of British Cinderella testing, sample, dummy, trial or promotional-type material, then a visit to the website www.stampprinters.info/dummystamps.htm may be of interest.

Dummy Stamps Newsletter was instigated by me in the summer of 2006, and covers items of interest from the world of British dummy philatelic material. Of variable length but comprising at least four A4 sides, it is published as an online publication when time permits, but roughly quarterly.

Issue six has recently been uploaded and this and all previous issues can be downloaded as a PDF file and printed on your own colour or black-and-white printer, or it can be saved as a file for screen viewing. There are sufficient margins at the top and bottom of each page for printed copies to be cut-down from A4 to fit American-sized binders and display books.

I freely admit to having been inspired to produce this newsletter by an American equivalent publication from the United States Stamp Society Dummy Stamp Group entitled *Dummy News and Views*, which is ably edited by Terry Scott. Visit www.usstamps.org/dssg.html to download the first eight issues if US Cinderella philately is of interest to you •

Post Offices of Europe See www.posteurop.org or order from La Poste/Siège Social, Comité pour l'histoire de La Poste, CP F 502, 44, boulevard de Vaugirard, 75757 Paris cedex 15 France.

PostEurop The French Committee for the History of the Post has recently published a bilingual publication compiling the papers of the first 'International colloquium on the history of European posts' which took place in Paris in June 2004. The book is entitled *Post Offices of Europe, 18th-21st Century – a Comparative History*. This conference was the first European scholarly event of its kind, gathering researchers from all fields in the humanities and social sciences. They developed questions and issues about organisations and network, focusing on comparative studies within Europe. This 920-page work is available for 27 Euros, post paid ●

Exponet enquiries See www.japhila.cz/hot

Exponet 300 An exhibit entitled Disinfected Mail owned by William F Sandrik of the USA became the 300th exhibit to be uploaded to the Exponet website. The six frames comprise US and Possessions disinfected mail from the 18th-20th centuries, Puerto Rico, Philippines and Colombia, the Pennsylvania TB Sanatoria, Anthrax Irradiation of the 21st century and Hawaii.

Paul Hirsch, who is displaying The Philately and Usage of Roumania's Post-Classic Issues of 1872-1889, and Otto Hornung with his Carpatho-Ukraine display, continue to be the only two collectors from the UK to have material on Exponet. The site is crying out for displays relating to the philately of Britain from any era, so why not consider uploading your material? It does not have to be a gold medal winning display; the idea is simply to make available to anyone anywhere in the world interesting collections that many collectors may never otherwise encounter ●

Philately on Broadway Philately came briefly to New York's famous Broadway theatreland when Theresa Rebeck's *Mauritius* opened at the Biltmore Theatre on 4 October for a limited engagement ending on 14 November. It received mixed reviews, and Associated Press called it 'a slick, often unconvincing new play that can't quite make up its mind about what it wants to be'. Katie Finneran and Alison Pill play half-sisters whose mother dies, leaving behind rare stamps. F Murray Abraham, Dylan Baker and Bobby Cannavale are three men who become interested in the collection when they become aware of its potential value.

Centred around the family feud regarding the collection, Michael Kuchwara of AP wrote 'For the most part, *Mauritius* is a play about possession and the lengths people are willing to go to get what they want. It's too bad that that single-mindedness, that clear focus, doesn't extend to the play itself.' Joe Dziemianowicz, the drama critic of the *New York Daily News* wrote that 'The sticky family stuff sounds juicy, even if stamp collecting is inherently nerdy.' How very dare he!

The authenticity of the play was assured thanks to the involvement of Robert Odenweller (a governor of The Collectors Club) and David Petruzelli (an expert from The Philatelic Foundation), who both helped make sure that it was letter-perfect by flagging language or situations that didn't ring true. Regardless of the reviews, it brought stamp collecting to the pages of major newspapers across America, which has to be good. There is nothing to indicate that the play will open in Britain ●



Visitors arriving at London's Business Design Centre for Autumn Stampex.

Autumn Stampex attracted some 4500 visitors over the four days from 19-22 September. The Royal Mail stand was particularly busy on the second day when the Army Uniforms stamps went on sale. To complement this, the British Forces Post Office's display on the Village Green included real Field Post Offices and the facility to send an e-bluey. At the stamp launch, Brigadier Mike Hickson and David Walker, Royal Mail's Stamps Director, signed special cacheted covers produced by Royal Mail and the BFPO (see the September *Bulletin*, page 11). Four in-pensioners from the Chelsea Hospital were present to add to the occasion. The Stampex business customised sheets with a Union Flag stamp and birds on the adjoining labels (see the September *Bulletin*, page 5) proved popular and at the Royal Mail stand collectors could obtain 'instant Smilers' sheets with their own image on labels adjoining the Union Flag or Hello stamps; these sheets have the Stampex logo in the sheet margin and on one of the labels. As always the Stamp Active Network stand attracted young visitors, especially the auction, conducted by Michael Thompson on the Saturday. Various societies held meetings at the exhibition, and the information stand, run by the National Philatelic Society and Association of British Philatelic Societies, provided a useful service and contact point.

Spring Stampex (27 February to 1 March 2008) will include a Village Green display by the Austrian Philatelic Society to mark its 60th anniversary. Royal Mail's Great British Monarchs stamps will be released on the second day of the exhibition •

Colonel Sanders A us online opinion poll conducted at www.postalnews.com recently asked whether Colonel Sanders should appear on a postage stamp, because Kentucky Fried Chicken had apparently put in a request to the USPS for such an issue. At the time of viewing the poll, the results from 801 votes were 56% in favour because 'he's an American icon'; 44% say no – 'KFC is a public health hazard'. One voter commented 'Colonel Sanders? He was not even a military Colonel. What an insult to retired and active duty officers who have earned their rank the hard way. Please, stop insulting the intelligence of the American people. You want an American icon? What about Sitting Bull or one of the other great American Indian leaders?' •

Royal Mail news Stamp poll • 2008 issues • New products • Christmas posting dates

2007 stamp poll Once again we invite you to vote for your favourite stamps and *Bulletin* writer of the year. The special stamps issued during 2007 are shown on pages 114-15. Tell us your top three sets and favourite individual stamp on the enclosed voting form. The favourite set of 2006 was Brunel; the most popular individual stamp was the Lest We Forget stamp. We also invite you to vote for your favourite FDC envelope and presentation pack of 2007 – please vote for the design of the envelope and pack only, not for the stamps for that issue. In 2006 your favourite FDC and pack designs were for the Brunel issue. Finally we seek your votes for favourite *Bulletin* author. The favourite author will receive £100 and the runner-up £50. Last year's winner was Douglas Myall, with Ron Negus in second place.

All voting forms received go into a prize draw and the first five 'out of the hat' will each be sent a 2007 Yearbook. Remember to return your form by 18 January – we look forward to hearing from you •

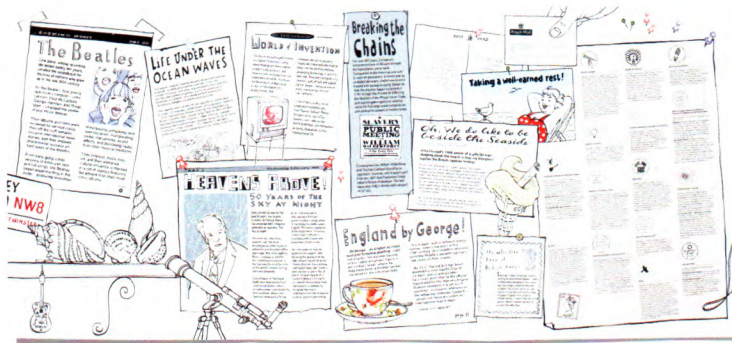
2008 issues Details of the James Bond (8 January) and Working Dogs (5 February) issues were given in October, and the first in a new Great British Monarchs series (28 February) were shown last month. The Rescue at Sea set (13 March) is previewed this month. The plate numbers and colours for the James Bond stamps are: D1 gold D1 cyan (blue) D1 magenta D1 yellow D1 black. The tiny year date '2008' can be found hidden in the design of the third (from left) book cover on each stamp.

The Insects stamps (15 April) feature: Adonis Blue butterfly, Southern Damselfly, Red Barbed Ant, Barberry Carpet moth, Stag Beetle, Hazel Pot Beetle, Field Cricket, Silver-spotted Skipper, Purbeck Mason Wasp, and Noble Chafer beetle.

The Cathedrals stamps (13 May) will depict Lichfield Cathedral, Belfast Cathedral (St Anne's), Gloucester Cathedral, St David's Cathedral, Westminster Cathedral and St Magnus Cathedral, Kirkwall, Orkney. The accompanying miniature sheet of four stamps features St Paul's Cathedral in London, to mark the 300th anniversary of its completion.

The set entitled Carry On Hammer (10 June) recalls the popular Carry On and Hammer horror series of films. The Airshows issue (17 July) marks the centenary of the first powered flight in the UK, at Farnborough. The Olympic Handover from Beijing to London will be marked on 26 August, and the RAF Uniforms set will be issued on 18 September, continuing the series started by the Army Uniforms set in September.

A miniature sheet will be issued on 29 September for the 50th anniversary of the country (regional) stamps. The Women of Achievement stamps (14 October) mark the 150th anniversary of the birth of Emmeline Pankhurst. The Christmas stamps (4 November) are on a theme of Traditional Pantomime. The final Lest We Forget miniature sheet (6 November) marks the 90th anniversary of the end of the First World War •



Year Collections The 2007 Yearbook and Yearpack, containing all of the year's special stamps, are now on sale. Both contain all the special stamps of 2007 and the Beatles, Machin, Harry Potter, Royal Diamond Wedding, and Lest We Forget miniature sheets. The standard version of the Yearbook costs £64.95, or £99.99 for the de-luxe, leather-bound version.

The colourful Yearpack, priced £57.45, includes concise background information on each of the special issues, with technical details of the stamps and illustrations of the alternative 'First Day' postmarks for each issue. 2007 Miniature Sheet Year Pack and Presentation Pack Collections are also available, priced £24.45 and £59.75 respectively.

Remaining stocks of the 2005 Yearbook and Yearpack will be withdrawn on 31 December, so order now if you still want these for your collection ●

Generic/Smilers sheets A 'Glorious Scotland' generic sheet, containing 20 Scottish 1st class stamps on self-adhesive paper, goes on sale on 30 November, price £7.35. A Smilers version, with personalised image on the labels, will also be available.

New-look Generic and Smilers sheets will be available from 15 January. The Generic sheet containing a mixture of 20 Union Flag, Love, or Hello stamps, with circular-shaped adjoining labels, is £7.35. Smilers sheets, with customers' own image on the labels, cost £7.50 for sheets of 10 or £13.50 for a sheet of 20 (£12.50 each for two or more sheets) plus handling charge. The Smilers sheets can be supplied with Union Flag, Love, or Hello stamps – please state clearly which is required when ordering ●

Stamp ingots The fourth ingot in stamps of the reigns of Edward VIII and George VI is now available, price £27.95. This features the George VI five shilling stamp of 1939. Handling charge on all ingots is £1.45 UK, £1.55 Europe, and £2.15 Rest of World. All orders and enquiries to Royal Mail Tallents House (see right) ●

New stamp book A book containing four 1st class definitives and two 'Love' stamps with adjoining 'Be My Valentine' and 's.w.A.L.K.' labels will be available from 15 January, price £2.04. The book, intended for customers sending Valentine cards, was printed by Walsall in gravure ●

For full details of the Smilers service see the leaflet in Post Office branches, phone the Smilers helpline on 0845 074 2000, or visit www.royalmail.com/smilers

Ingots Orders to: Royal Mail Tallents House, 21 South Gyle Crescent, Edinburgh EH12 9PB; UK order line 08457 641 641 (overseas +44 131 316 7483).

Coming off sale The Beatles stamps and miniature sheet will be withdrawn from sale on 8 January, and the Sea Life issue on 31 January. The 37p definitive stamp goes off sale on 29 December •

Collect British Stamps The 2008 (59th) edition of the ever-popular Stanley Gibbons *Collect British Stamps* colour checklist is now available from Royal Mail Tallents House, as well as from Stanley Gibbons, and stamp and book shops, priced £9.95 •

BPMA For further information telephone 020 7239 2570, see www.postalheritage.org.uk or write to Freeling House, Phoenix Place, London WC1X 0DL (near Mount Pleasant).

British Postal Museum & Archive Readers are reminded that in addition to its regular opening times (Monday to Wednesday and Friday 10.00-17.00, Thursday 10.00-19.00), the BPMA is also open on Saturday 8 December (10.00-17.00). Currently on show is an exhibition for the 40th anniversary of the Machin stamp – see the August *Bulletin*, pages 368-69. Details of lectures and film shows are given in our Events listing (see page 126). The BPMA contains the collections of the former National Postal Museum and Post Office Archives •

Christmas posting dates The recommended last day for posting Christmas cards within the UK is 17 December by 2nd class service, and 20 December for 1st class. Standard Parcels should be posted by 14 December and Special Delivery by 22 December. International airmail to Australia, New Zealand, South & Central America, Caribbean, Africa, Middle East, Asia and the Far East (except Japan) should be posted by 7 December; items for the USA, Canada, Japan and Eastern Europe by 10 December; and Western Europe by 13 December. See the Royal Mail website (www.royalmail.com/christmaspostingdates) for further information.

The vast majority of UK cards qualify for the 'Letter' rate of 34p or 24p (1st or 2nd class). The weight limit is now 100g. For larger cards with any dimension over 240mm long or 165mm wide or 5mm thick, the 'Large Letter' rate applies: 48p for 1st class or 40p for 2nd class, up to 100g. If using Parcelforce Worldwide services for sending parcels by time-guaranteed and express services, check www.parcelforce.com for last posting dates.

As usual Royal Mail will be assisting Santa in replying to children who write to him at Santa, Reindeerland SAN TA1 – such letters should arrive by 11 December •



Prize draw Miniature sheets

THIS MONTH we have two of the 2007 Miniature Sheet Collections for prizes. To enter, send your name and address on a postcard (or back of a sealed envelope) to: Miniature Sheet Draw, British Philatelic Bulletin, Royal Mail Letters, 35-50 Rathbone Place, London W1T 1HQ to arrive by 4 January 2008 •

The celestial hierarchy by Dorothy Martin

AT THE TIME OF writing this article, I am enjoying one of the few summer days we have had this year. The sun is shining and the sky is blue; it is even quite hot, and Christmas seems far away.

The subject of Royal Mail's Christmas stamps for 2007 is 'Angels', so it is appropriate that this article should follow along the same lines. The word Angel derives from the Greek word *angelos* and the Hebrew word *malak*, both meaning 'messenger'. To deliver important messages is one of the chief tasks of angels; as will be described later, they act as intermediaries between God and humanity. Angels have other duties: they are guardians and caretakers who watch over people at all times; they are also music makers who sing praises to God and carry out the tasks he gives to them for people on earth.

According to Dionysius, a 6th century theologian, there are nine choirs of angels divided into three triads, each with a special purpose, and which form the celestial hierarchy. Triad 1 are Seraphim, Cherubim and Thrones; Triad 2 the Dominations, Virtues and Powers; and Triad 3 the Principalities, Archangels and Angels. This theory was endorsed by St Thomas Aquinas who made a renowned study of angels in the 1260s, still accepted today.

In the Middle Ages miracles and supernatural events seemed to happen with amazing frequency, and even in modern times there are many people who seriously believe in the power of angels, and who get great comfort from them. When I started researching the subject of angels, I was astonished to discover the number of known named angels there are, most with their own particular duties, such as Ofaniel, angel of the moon. A large majority are good angels but there are also bad and evil ones. Satan, the Devil and Lucifer being the names for the leader of the fallen angels. I propose to mention only some of the good angels in this article.

The angels most well known in modern times are the three archangels, Michael, Gabriel and Raphael. The name Michael means 'who is like unto God'. Archangel Michael is considered superior to all angels. He is Patron Angel of Israel, the Chief of the Princes, Ruling Prince of the Archangels, Chief of the choir of virtues and, as Commander of the Heavenly host, he led the good angels in their successful conflict against Satan and the fallen angels. As the angel of mercy, he prevented Abraham from sacrificing his only son Isaac. Michael's intercession was so powerful that souls could be rescued from Hell and conveyed to Heaven. A plague in Rome ceased when Gregory the Great prayed to Michael and he appeared over the mausoleum, which was renamed Castle of the Holy Angel. Michael appeared to St Joan of Arc and led her to victory. He was also invoked for the care of the sick. These are just a few of his appearances and acts. ►



Angels have been featured on many of the world's Christmas stamps issues. Whether one believes in their power or not, they most certainly have been a source of great inspiration for many of the world's writers, composers and artists throughout history.

The archangel Michael's most famous shrine is in western Europe, at Mount St Michael, in Normandy, where a Benedictine abbey was founded in the 10th century. Numerous churches are dedicated to him. A huge modern bronze sculpture of Michael by Jacob Epstein can be seen outside of Coventry Cathedral. He is the patron saint of pharmacists, radiologists and cemeteries.

The name Gabriel means 'God is my strength', and along with Michael, he is one of the highest ranked of all the angels. He is the chief messenger, and is venerated as such because he was the chosen angel who carried the message to the Virgin Mary that she would give birth to a son whose name would be called Jesus. He also prophesied the birth of John the Baptist to Zechariah and his wife Elizabeth. According to tradition, Gabriel is said to be the angel of the power of God, and of judgement and of justice. He is also the chief of the Angelic Choir of the Cherubim and the angel who watches over every unborn child during pregnancy. Many churches have been dedicated to Gabriel. He was very aptly declared the patron saint of post offices, and telecommunications and Post Office workers in 1961.

The name Raphael means 'God heals'. He is honoured as the regent of the sun, the angel of knowledge, and chief of the order of virtues. He is identified as the angel who healed the earth when it was corrupted by sin. He guided Tobias and freed him of the demon. He had the power of healing, one occasion being curing the hip of Jacob after he wrestled with the Dark Angel. He is also named as the guardian of the Tree of Life; and as a guide to the Underworld. He possessed a happy disposition and had a very good sense of humour. He is patron saint of nurses, physicians and the blind.

The Feast Day of all three of these archangels is 29 September, but prior to 1969 they each had their own individual Feast Day. There are differing opinions regarding the number of archangels, ranging from four to 12, the most common number being seven. Michael and Gabriel appear in all the various lists; Raphael appears in several, and Uriel in at least two. The other three names do vary. ►

St. GABRIEL, ARCHANGEL

Feast Day - 29th September. Patron Saint of the Archangel Gabriel forecast the birth of John the



Three pages from Dorothy Martin's collection of angels. The stamps on the preceding and following pages, on the contents page, and some of those on the front cover, are also from Mrs Martin's collection.

Office & Telecommunications.
 to his father Zacharias; also brought the
 the Annunciation).



ANGELS





Angels are spiritual beings without gender, but are generally considered to be masculine. In Islamic lore the female angels are called daughters of God. Beatrice is one of the few female angels beheld by Dante in the *Divine Comedy* and the *Inferno*. Sophia is probably the most famous female angel, her name meaning 'wisdom'.

It is widely believed that everybody has their own particular guardian angel who guides and looks after them throughout their lives and under all circumstances. One of the most significant of Feast Days celebrated by the church is that of Guardian Angels, on 2 October.

Music plays a vital part in the lives and activities of the Heavenly Host. The angel of music is Israfel, and the musical angels play many instruments, the harp, lute and trumpet being the favourites. Uriel has authority over the choirs of angels. Many artists are inspired by the musical angels.

Angels have an important part to play at Christmas time, one often being placed at the top of the Christmas tree in a majority of homes. They are also mentioned in many Christmas carols, such as *While*

Shepherds Watched their Flocks and *Hark the Herald Angels Sing*.

Angels are accepted as having enormous influence over the planets, the days of the week, the months of the year, and the winds. The angels linked to the planets are: Raphael (the Sun), Gabriel (the Moon), Kokbiel (the stars), Michael (Mercury), Camael (Mars), Haniel (Venus), Orifiel (Saturn) and Zadkiel (Jupiter).

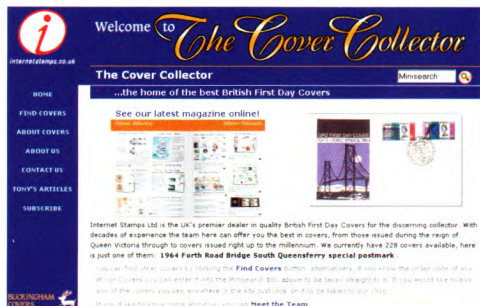
The angels associated with the seven days of the week are: Michael (Sunday), Gabriel (Monday), Camael (Tuesday), Raphael (Wednesday), Sachiell (Thursday), Haniel (Friday) and Cassiel (Saturday).

The angels linked to the months are: Gabriel (January), Barchiel (February), Melkial (March), Asmodel (April), Ambriel (May), Muriel (June), Verchiel (July), Hamaliel (August), Uriel (September), Barbiel (October), Adnachiell (November) and Hanael (December).

Finally, the angels associated with the winds are: Gabriel (the north wind), Uriel (south wind), Michael (east wind), Raphael (west wind), and Zaamiel (whirlwind).

Whether one believes in the power of angels or not, they most certainly have been a source of great inspiration for many famous writers and poets, composers and artists throughout the ages. A few of the names which come to mind are Dante, Milton, Shakespeare and Longfellow; Listz, Prokofiev and Schumann. The great masters of painting such as Fra Angelico, Durer, Leonardo da Vinci, Rembrandt, Michaelangelo and Memling were inspired by the subject – the Annunciation and the Nativity being two of their most popular subjects ●

Philately online Ron Negus examines a first day cover site



www.gbfirstdaycovers.co.uk This site has a free registration service for collectors wishing to receive a weekly e-mail. From week to week its content will vary, but is planned to include a selection of special offers, new items and items from stock.

FIRST DAY cover collecting is a very popular area and I have devoted some earlier columns to the websites that provide details for the enthusiasts in this field. Now a new site has appeared which concentrates on GB first day covers. This is the Cover Collector section of Internet Stamps Ltd. This group also includes Buckingham Covers and the Folkestone Stamp Shop.

The site illustrates the British first day covers issued from the reign of King George V up to the year 2000, and aims to provide at least a couple of different postmarks for most issues. The various types of postmarks that can be found on FDCs are explained, and attention is drawn to the fact that Royal Mail first day covers were not produced until 1964. Before that date, individuals and private companies produced these types of covers for many of the special stamp issues released.

It recognises that there are many competing suppliers in this market place, and advises that attempting to collect all the FDCs on offer for a particular stamp issue is probably not wise. In a question-and-answer section, the site gives the beginner help in setting realistic objectives for his FDC collection.

In addition to this, a section titled 'About Covers' is also aimed at the beginners. It contains a general introduction to the subject, tips on the practicability of FDCs as an investment, a jargon buster which gives an explanation of many common terms associated with cover collecting, some links to other sites of use to beginners and a final section which emphasises the importance of the cover's condition.

The main part of the site consists of illustrations of the GB covers that Internet Stamps Ltd have for sale. The images are shown initially in a small size, and grouped according to the search terms used. Clicking on any image brings up a full-size picture of the relevant cover, quotes the buying price, and allows the user to indicate his wish to buy the item. Covers are added to the site on a weekly basis, and visitors can sign up for weekly e-mail updates.

Tony Buckingham, noted for his famous range of first day covers, is the Chairman of Internet Stamps Ltd. He has written on this topic extensively over the 30 years that he has been involved in the trade, and three of his articles are reproduced on the site. These tell the story of GB covers over various time periods. The first of these includes first day covers up to 1939, then from 1940 to 1952, and finally the Elizabethan era from then up to the Millennium. The website's editor, Brian Austin, has plans to enlarge on this library of articles and would welcome submissions from collectors.

Details of the company's staff whom users can contact are provided on the site. An 'About Us' section gives photographs plus short biographies of staff members, and this is a useful feature that could be added to advantage on many dealers' websites.

Some FDC collectors prefer to find covers that have been signed by celebrities connected with the event being commemorated. This site does not concentrate on these, but it has plans to add them at a future date. In the meantime, a link is provided to the website of an associated company, Buckingham Covers, whose activities include selling signed covers.

Aimed at being a complete resource for GB first day cover collectors, this website will be worth a regular visit ●

Mayday: Rescue at Sea Royal Mail salutes the lifeboat and coastguard services



SIX STAMPS honouring the lifeboat and coastguard services go on sale at Post Office branches and Royal Mail Tallents House on 13 March. They feature rescue at sea at various locations around the British coast: Barra (Outer Hebrides), 1st class; Appledore, 46p; Portland, 48p; St Ives, 54p; Selsey, 69p; and Tenby, 78p. The stamps, designed by Hat-trick Design of London, are printed by Walsall in litho. The stamps have interrupted perforations along the top and bottom edges – gaps being created in the line of perforations by the omission of pins, to spell out ‘sos’.

FIRST DAY FACILITIES Orders for serviced FDCs must reach Tallents House (address below) by the day of issue. Collectors may send stamped covers on the day of issue to: Royal Mail Tallents House, 21 South Gyle Crescent, Edinburgh EH12 9PB (Tallents House postmark) or to their nearest Royal Mail Special Handstamp Centre (Poole postmark), marking the outer envelope ‘FDO808’ or ‘FDO809’. Covers can be posted or handed in at main Post Office branches for the Poole postmark.

For details of sponsored handstamps and addresses of the Handstamp Centres see the *British Postmark Bulletin* – available on subscription from Tallents House (£12.25 UK/Europe, £24.95 elsewhere). For a free sample copy write to: British Postmark Bulletin, Royal Mail, 35-50 Rathbone Place, London W1T 1HQ.

Rescue at sea stamps Earlier Royal Mail issues have featured stamps on this theme, including the 1963 Lifeboat Conference issue, the 1972 Anniversaries set (7½p 19th century Coastguard stamp), and the 1985 Safety at Sea issue •



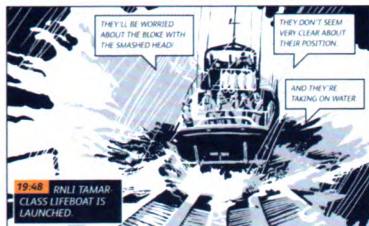
Left: the first day cover.

A presentation pack (below), designed by Hat-trick Design, provides an illustrated history of the lifeboat and coastguard services.



BY YEAR HUNDREDS OF
TECHS OFFSHORE PUT
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COMMERCIAL SHIPPING
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MAYDAY CALL BY RADIO
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THE MARITIME AND COASTGUARD AGENCY HAVE A NETWORK OF 19 COMMAND AND CONTROL CENTRES TO CO-ORDINATE SEARCH AND RESCUE ACTIVITIES AROUND THE COAST OF THE UNITED KINGDOM.

THE ROYAL NATIONAL LIFEBOAT INSTITUTION OPERATES A VARIETY OF DIFFERENT LIFEBOATS DEPENDING UPON THE RESPONSE REQUIRED. COMPREHENSIVELY EQUIPPED TO DEAL WITH ALL FORMS OF SURVIVAL PROBLEMS, BOTH SOLID HULL AND RIGID INFLATABLE BOATS (RIB) ARE USED.

THE TAMAR CLASS IS THE MOST MODERN LIFEBEAT IN SERVICE. DISPLACING 31.5 TONNES, THE TAMAR IS A FAST, SLIPWAY LAUNCHED, ALL-WEATHER BOAT WITH A SOPHISTICATED CONTROL SYSTEM. WITH A FIBRE REINFORCED COMPOSITE HULL AND TWIN DIESEL ENGINES, THE TAMAR CAN REACH 25 KNOTS AND HAS A RANGE OF 250 NAUTICAL MILES. THE TAMAR WILL EVENTUALLY REPLACE THE OLDER TYNE-CLASS LIFEBEAT (DISPLACEMENT 25 TONNES).

THE SEVERN-CLASS LIFEBOAT IS THE LARGEST IN THE FLEET WITH A DISPLACEMENT OF 41 TONNES. IT SHARES ITS HULL SHAPE WITH THE SMALLER, BUT BASICALLY SIMILAR TRENT-CLASS (DISPLACEMENT 27.5 TONNES). THE SEVERN AND TRENT HAVE RECENTLY REPLACED THE OLDER ARUN CLASS (21.5 TONNES).

THE MERSEY CLASS IS THE SMALLEST SOLID HULLED LIFEBOAT AND THE FIRST DESIGNED TO BE A FAST-CARRIAGE LAUNCHED BOAT.

DESIGNED FOR INSHORE,
ESTUARY AND RIVER RESCUE
THE RIB LIFEBOATS INCLUDE THE
8.5 METRE B-CLASS AND THE 5
METRE D-CLASS. THE SMALL AND
HIGHLY MANOEUVRABLE D-CLASS
CAN BE TRAILER MOUNTED.

COASTGUARD HELICOPTERS
ARE OPERATED FROM FOUR MCA
BASES AND THE MCA CAN CALL
ON ADDITIONAL SUPPORT FROM
TWO ROYAL NAVY AND SIX ROYAL
AIR FORCE HELICOPTER BASES,
ENSURING UK-WIDE SEARCH
AND RESCUE COVER.

1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025, 2026, 2027, 2028, 2029, 2030, 2031, 2032, 2033, 2034, 2035, 2036, 2037, 2038, 2039, 2040, 2041, 2042, 2043, 2044, 2045, 2046, 2047, 2048, 2049, 2050, 2051, 2052, 2053, 2054, 2055, 2056, 2057, 2058, 2059, 2060, 2061, 2062, 2063, 2064, 2065, 2066, 2067, 2068, 2069, 2070, 2071, 2072, 2073, 2074, 2075, 2076, 2077, 2078, 2079, 2080, 2081, 2082, 2083, 2084, 2085, 2086, 2087, 2088, 2089, 2090, 2091, 2092, 2093, 2094, 2095, 2096, 2097, 2098, 2099, 2100, 2101, 2102, 2103, 2104, 2105, 2106, 2107, 2108, 2109, 2110, 2111, 2112, 2113, 2114, 2115, 2116, 2117, 2118, 2119, 2120, 2121, 2122, 2123, 2124, 2125, 2126, 2127, 2128, 2129, 2130, 2131, 2132, 2133, 2134, 2135, 2136, 2137, 2138, 2139, 2140, 2141, 2142, 2143, 2144, 2145, 2146, 2147, 2148, 2149, 2150, 2151, 2152, 2153, 2154, 2155, 2156, 2157, 2158, 2159, 2160, 2161, 2162, 2163, 2164, 2165, 2166, 2167, 2168, 2169, 2170, 2171, 2172, 2173, 2174, 2175, 2176, 2177, 2178, 2179, 2180, 2181, 2182, 2183, 2184, 2185, 2186, 2187, 2188, 2189, 2190, 2191, 2192, 2193, 2194, 2195, 2196, 2197, 2198, 2199, 2200, 2201, 2202, 2203, 2204, 2205, 2206, 2207, 2208, 2209, 2210, 2211, 2212, 2213, 2214, 2215, 2216, 2217, 2218, 2219, 2220, 2221, 2222, 2223, 2224, 2225, 2226, 2227, 2228, 2229, 2230, 2231, 2232, 2233, 2234, 2235, 2236, 2237, 2238, 2239, 2240, 2241, 2242, 2243, 2244, 2245, 2246, 2247, 2248, 2249, 2250, 2251, 2252, 2253, 2254, 2255, 2256, 2257, 2258, 2259, 2260, 2261, 2262, 2263, 2264, 2265, 2266, 2267, 2268, 2269, 2270, 2271, 2272, 2273, 2274, 2275, 2276, 2277, 2278, 2279, 2280, 2281, 2282, 2283, 2284, 2285, 2286, 2287, 2288, 2289, 2290, 2291, 2292, 2293, 2294, 2295, 2296, 2297, 2298, 2299, 2300, 2301, 2302, 2303, 2304, 2305, 2306, 2307, 2308, 2309, 2310, 2311, 2312, 2313, 2314, 2315, 2316, 2317, 2318, 2319, 2320, 2321, 2322, 2323, 2324, 2325, 2326, 2327, 2328, 2329, 2330, 2331, 2332, 2333, 2334, 2335, 2336, 2337, 2338, 2339, 2340, 2341, 2342, 2343, 2344, 2345, 2346, 2347, 2348, 2349, 2350, 2351, 2352, 2353, 2354, 2355, 2356, 2357, 2358, 2359, 2360, 2361, 2362, 2363, 2364, 2365, 2366, 2367, 2368, 2369, 2370, 2371, 2372, 2373, 2374, 2375, 2376, 2377, 2378, 2379, 2380, 2381, 2382, 2383, 2384, 2385, 2386, 2387, 2388, 2389, 2390, 2391, 2392, 2393, 2394, 2395, 2396, 2397, 2398, 2399, 2400, 2401, 2402, 2403, 2404, 2405, 2406, 2407, 2408, 2409, 2410, 2411, 2412, 2413, 2414, 2415, 2416, 2417, 2418, 2419, 2420, 2421, 2422, 2423, 2424, 2425, 2426, 2427, 2428, 2429, 2430, 2431, 2432, 2433, 2434, 2435, 2436, 2437, 2438, 2439, 2440, 2441, 2442, 2443, 2444, 2445, 2446, 2447, 2448, 2449, 2450, 2451, 2452, 2453, 2454, 2455, 2456, 2457, 2458, 2459, 2460, 2461, 2462, 2463, 2464, 2465, 2466, 2467, 2468, 2469, 2470, 2471, 2472, 2473, 2474, 2475, 2476, 2477, 2478, 2479, 2480, 2481, 2482, 2483, 2484, 2485, 2486, 2487, 2488, 2489, 2490, 2491, 2492, 2493, 2494, 2495, 2496, 2497, 2498, 2499, 2500, 2501, 2502, 2503, 2504, 2505, 2506, 2507, 2508, 2509, 2510, 2511, 2512, 2513, 2514, 2515, 2516, 2517, 2518, 2519, 2520, 2521, 2522, 2523, 2524, 2525, 2526, 2527, 2528, 2529, 2530, 2531, 2532, 2533, 2534, 2535, 2536, 2537, 2538, 2539, 2540, 2541, 2542, 2543, 2544, 2545, 2546, 2547, 2548, 2549, 2550, 2551, 2552, 2553, 2554, 2555, 2556, 2557, 2558, 2559, 2560, 2561, 2562, 2563, 2564, 2565, 2566, 2567, 2568, 2569, 2570, 2571, 2572, 2573, 2574, 2575, 2576, 2577, 2578, 2579, 2580, 2581, 2582, 2583, 2584, 2585, 2586, 2587, 2588, 2589, 2590, 2591, 2592, 2593, 2594, 2595, 2596, 2597, 2598, 2599, 2600, 2601, 2602, 2603, 2604, 2605, 2606, 2607, 2608, 2609, 2610, 2611, 2612, 2613, 2614, 2615, 2616, 2617, 2618, 2619, 2620, 2621, 2622, 2623, 2624, 2625, 2626, 2627, 2628, 2629, 2630, 2631, 2632, 2633, 2634, 2635, 2636, 2637, 2638, 2639, 2640, 2641, 2642, 2643, 2644, 2645, 2646, 2647, 2648, 2649, 2650, 2651, 2652, 2653, 2654, 2655, 2656, 2657, 2658, 2659, 2660, 2661, 2662, 2663, 2664, 2665, 2666, 2667, 2668, 2669, 2670, 2671, 2672, 2673, 2674, 2675, 2676, 2677, 2678, 2679, 2680, 26



Mayday: Rescue at Sea Prices

Set of stamps	£3.29
Presentation pack	£3.80
FDC envelope	£0.30
Serviced FDC (UK orders)	£4.34
Serviced FDC (overseas)	£3.70
Stamp cards set	£1.80

Favourite stamps poll 2007 Vote for your

A voting form is enclosed with this *Bulletin*. Remember to return your form by 18 January for entry in our prize draw ●

The Beatles



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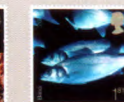
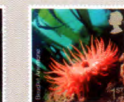


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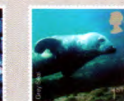
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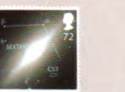
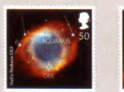
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Sky at Night



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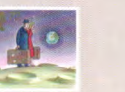
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World of Invention



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Abolition of the Slave Trade



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Celebrating England on miniature sheet



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Beside the Seaside



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Machin Anniversary on miniature sheet



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top three sets and favourite individual stamp



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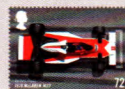
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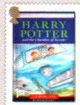


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Grand Prix



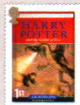
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Harry Potter



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Scouts



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British Army Uniforms



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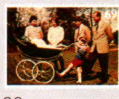


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Diamond Wedding



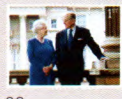
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Christmas



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Lest We Forget
on miniature sheet

Parliament and the post John Holman finds the House of

TEN YEARS AGO, shortly before the election that brought Tony Blair to power, I visited the Palace of Westminster and reported on the workings of the House of Commons Post Office (see the May 1997 *Bulletin*). A decade later, just after Tony Blair announced his resignation, I returned to see what changes had been made in the postal provision for MPs, peers, and their staff.

The first mentions of a postal service for Parliament date back to the 17th century, but it was in the 1830s that Parliamentary committees had sought improved services from the Treasury and the Postmaster General. By 1839 a PO official 'of the senior class of Letter Carrier' had been appointed, but the first Postmaster, H Lawford, did not take up his post until 1871. An office for the sale of money orders was established in 1853 and in 1884 it moved to the south-east corner of the Members Lobby. It was enlarged in the early 20th century. A large part of the business was the sending and receiving of telegrams – over 79,000 were handled during the Parliamentary session of 1891. Following the bombing of the Palace in 1941, the PO was temporarily installed in a blocked-off corridor between the Central and Members' lobbies. A new office was opened in 1950, when a special uniform was introduced for House of Commons postmen on the personal orders of the PMG. This led to similar special uniforms for the postal staff at Buckingham Palace.

At the time of my visit in May, the Commons Postmaster was Mark Pearce, who had held the post since 2001, but who was moving to another job and handing over to Mark Morrish, who has worked for Royal Mail for 27 years. The Postmaster is in overall charge of both counter and sorting services, each under separate managers.

Counter services Today there are three post office counters within the 'Parliamentary Estate' – the Palace of Westminster and 11 surrounding buildings in which the MPs and their staff and departments of the Lords and Commons are housed. Counter services are run by nine staff under the management of Paul Hemsley, who has worked

at the Commons PO since 1995. The main counter is at the Central Lobby (often seen on TV news programmes) and is open to the public visiting Parliament. This office is open Monday to Thursday, 08.00-22.30 or later if the House is sitting. On Friday the hours of business are 08.00-17.00. The Members Lobby office opens at 08.00, and closes on Monday to Thursday at 22.30 or half an hour after the House has risen, whichever is the later. The hours on Friday are 08.00-17.00, and Saturday from 08.00-16.00. At the Portcullis House office business is conducted 09.00-18.00 Monday to Thursday, and 09.00-17.00 on Friday. These times apply while Parliament is sitting, with reduced hours during recess.

In response to requests for a philatelic souvenir, the Commons Postmaster in 1997 introduced an attractive souvenir cover showing the Houses of Parliament. This can only be purchased by visitors at the Central Lobby office, for the price of £2 plus postage stamp. The covers can then be addressed and handed in for a 'House of Commons' philatelic datestamp exclusive to the covers. About 1000 are sold each year.

The smaller offices in the Members Lobby and in Portcullis House are both only accessible to Parliamentarians and staff. With just one counter position, the office in Portcullis House is probably the smallest crown post office, a distinction once held by the former office at the Royal Courts of Justice. Portcullis House was opened in 2001, and houses offices for some 200 MPs, and committee and reception rooms. The post office there replaced an earlier office at 1 Parliament Street. There are posting boxes for both internal and external mail, with three collections a day.

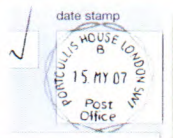
Mail sent from the post offices by Special Delivery is given a counter datestamp – House of Commons London SW1 (Central and Members Lobby offices) or Portcullis House, London SW1. All other stamped mail goes to the London South Mail Centre and receives the standard machine postmark of that office. House of Commons machine postmarks, once much collected, are sadly now a thing of the past. ►

Commons Post Office is as busy now as it was 10 years ago



Left: the Portcullis House Post Office.

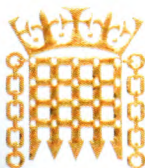
Below, from top: a House of Commons machine postmark, which was applied from 1965-1998, but sadly is no longer available; House of Commons counter datestamps; House of Commons 1st and 2nd paid envelopes; and a Palace of Westminster souvenir cover – these can be purchased only by visitors at the Central Lobby office, for the price of £2 plus postage stamp; about 1000 are sold each year.



House of Commons



House of Commons



Palace of Westminster

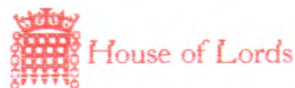


Incoming and outgoing mail The Sorting Office for the Parliamentary Estate was in the Palace of Westminster at the time of my 1997 visit but since 2001 it has enjoyed a more spacious location in Portcullis House. There some 30 staff work under Deputy Postmaster Brian Gosling, who reports to the Postmaster and to the Service Delivery Manager at the London South Mail Centre. Brian is proud of the fact that he and his staff have no less than 608 years Royal Mail employment between them, two staff members having 42 years service.

Until 2006 incoming mail was delivered to the Commons from the SW1 Delivery Office in Howick Place, but now comes from the London South Mail Centre in Nine Elms. Approximately 20,000 items of incoming mail are processed every day. Like any ordinary sorting office, the Commons office is fitted out with numerous sorting frames but instead of being headed with the names of towns, villages, roads or streets, the frames bear the names of all 646 MPs, 724 members of the House of Lords, and departments of both Houses. After a general election the staff work over a weekend to change all the frames to cater for the re-elected and newly-elected MPs. Brian recalls the 2005 election, his first time in charge of the change-over. Mail for former MPs is re-directed for a while after they have ceased to be Members but many letters and circulars continue to arrive for them, sometimes several years after they have left Parliament. This mail is returned to senders in the normal way. Some former MPs are elevated to the Lords, and thus mail addressed to them as an MP can be re-directed to their sorting frame under their new ennobled title. Keeping up with the changes can be relentless.

Two MPs have two frames owing to the volume of mail they receive – as you may guess, these are the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition. Where MPs and peers have the same surname, further identification ensures they receive the correct mail. The MP's constituency is included in the heading and those from the three main parties have a coloured dot to indicate the party.

MPs can have their mail delivered to the Members Lobby PO where they, or their secretary, can collect it, or have it delivered to their office in



Parliament, or forwarded to their home address or constituency office. MPs specify what they require and this can change daily so a special list is produced shortly before staff start the four daily deliveries from the sorting office so they have the latest information of how MPs want their mail delivered on that day. This, as you can imagine, is quite a logistical exercise! Some MPs want internal Commons mail treated differently to that which has arrived through the post. Mail to be sent on to MPs in their constituencies is sent in special large 'plastic' Special Delivery envelopes.

In my 1997 article I noted the system whereby some MPs' mail is placed for collection in a Letters Board in the Members Lobby. A considerable amount of mail is generated within Parliament (including outbuildings) and letters and packets addressed to MPs from fellow Members, ministers and officials, are placed in the Letters Board in the Lobby. Each MP has a pigeon hole in this board and his or her name is illuminated if there are letters to collect. All such mail is given a certifying stamp of the Speaker's Dept, with initials 'LB', for Letters Board. Letters still in the board at 23.00 are cleared and handed to the PO for delivery in the next morning's post. In the past such letters were given an Official Paid datestamp and weighed to calculate a handling charge. This no longer applies, ending the rather quaint practice of letters with two Parliamentary markings. The Letters Board is managed by the Door Keepers wearing a resplendent uniform and badge.

The sorting office receives seven deliveries each day from the Mail Centre, the first at 01.00 in the morning and the final one at mid-day. As well as delivering within the Palace of Westminster and Portcullis House, staff also take the mail to some



11 outbuildings housing over 100 departmental offices. Two transit vans are used to take mail to the outbuildings. Sadly, given the times in which we now live, all incoming mail is security checked before it arrives at the Commons, and a rubber stamp is applied to show this has been done.

The despatch of mail from the Parliamentary Estate is similarly well-organised. Mail is collected from some 80 posting boxes, in the main building from 08.00, and continuing every hour until 19.00. Most mail goes out in pre-paid envelopes supplied to MPs and peers. These bear a Machin head of The Queen, and are cancelled by normal machines at the London South Mail Centre – as is all mail bearing postage stamps. Mail from Parliamentary departments is treated differently, being given a certifying stamp (cachet) to denote office of origin, and a meter impression to indicate postage paid. The certifying stamps allow the postage costs to be allocated to the correct department. The Speaker's department certifying stamp is probably the best-known, although the Clerk of the Parliaments is quite often seen.

The volume of outgoing mail varies but averages about 20,000 a day. More mail tends to be received when a major national or international event prompts people to write to their MP. Brian was anticipating the change in leadership in June to cause an increase in incoming mail. Outgoing mail sacks are collected by van in Star Court, and taken to the Mail Centre for processing.

The Commons sorting office works from 23.00 on Sunday night to 12 noon on Saturday. All sorting is done manually, and the only concession to technology is the use of a 'bar code gun' to record the emptying of posting boxes – this allows Brian to ensure collections are made on time.

During my visit I was shown the former sorting office which still houses the old postmarking machine. This was introduced in 1965 at the request of Tony Benn (PMG at the time) so that staff didn't have to handstamp every item of mail. The machine remained in use until 1998.

Tour of the Palace As I noted in 1997, the Palace of Westminster is a fascinating place and one that I never tire of visiting, as there is so much to see, not least spotting well-known MPs or peers as they walk around the building. This time I saw a leading Cabinet minister, a former minister, a former Leader of the Opposition and an MP much in the news for his colourful lifestyle. I was also pleased to see the new, and rather commanding, statue of Baroness Thatcher, alongside those of other prominent 20th century Prime Ministers David Lloyd George, Clement Attlee and Sir Winston Churchill. This time however, I was not required to climb the stairs to the top of Big Ben!

Despite the telephone and e-mails, Parliamentarians still depend heavily on posted mail, and the Commons PO remains as busy and well-run at it was a decade ago. Long may it continue in this way.

For more information about the House of Commons PO and postmarks, readers are referred to a factsheet produced by the House of Commons Information Office, which can be seen on the Parliamentary website www.parliament.uk or supplied free by post. Useful information is contained in: James Mackay's *Official Mail of the British Isles* (1983); chapter 21 of the British Postmark Society's invaluable *Collect British Postmarks* (7th edition, 1997); and Colin Peachey's articles in the *British Postmark Bulletin* of 2 December 1994 and 13 December 1996.

I am obliged to Paul Hemsley and Brian Gosling and their staff for their patience in answering so many questions during my visit, and for checking the accuracy of this article before it was published. Information taken from the House of Commons Post Office factsheet has been used here with permission (Parliamentary copyright, House of Commons reserved) ●

Dedicated to stamps Richard West visits Walsall Security Printers to see how they print millions of stamps each week

ONE OF the most incredible stories over the years must be how Walsall Security Printers grew into a dominant force in the world of stamp printing. Prior to 1964, the company had not considered stamps, its speciality being the printing of labels. However, it was that capability which led to a request to produce self-adhesive stamps for Sierra Leone. Dismissed as a gimmick at the time, today it is hard to imagine the world without self-adhesive stamps. Walsall's first such stamp for Royal Mail was issued on 19 October 1993, although the company initially printed a stamp book containing 14p and 19p conventionally-gummed definitives, issued on 25 April 1989.

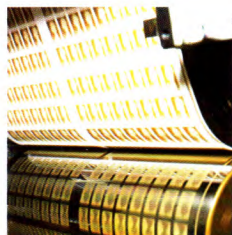
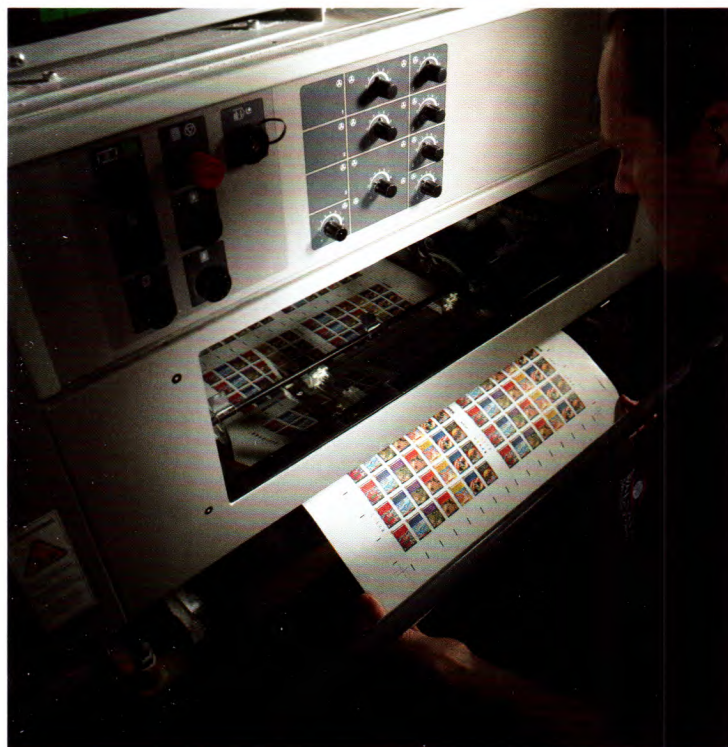
Today operations at Walsall are entirely dedicated to stamps – not only printing in litho and gravure, not just sheets but booklets and, increasingly important, business sheets, but also the production of items such as presentation packs and first day covers. However, all stamps start as a design, increasingly supplied digitally. The first action is to arrange a review meeting at which the best method of production, and the colours to be used, will be determined. Computer technology eases the tasks these days, enabling a design to be separated into its constituent colours, building up the sheet formation, and adding the necessary marginal markings and other printing aids. While many designs can be simply separated into the four process colours of magenta, yellow, cyan and black, these might not be ideal for a particular design. The computer can determine whether a specific colour would suit the design best, and adjust the other colours accordingly. It is not only colours that are important at this stage; all aspects of the production process must be determined, including the application of phosphor, and, for self-adhesive stamps, the die-cutting of perforations, the stripping off of the excess paper (matrix) and rouletting the backing paper.

Naturally the customer, such as Royal Mail, wishes to see proofs before printing begins. For some it is perfectly adequate to receive a chroma-

lin proof generated by the computer, without the need to resort to a printing press. However, Royal Mail understandably demands assurance that the finished product will be exactly as required, and therefore proofing cylinders are produced, with the proofs being printed on the actual press used for final printing.

As mentioned, at Walsall there is the capability to print using off-set lithography or gravure, although Royal Mail specifies gravure for all definitive work. At one time booklets in particular were often printed by litho, but the plates used have a much shorter life, and produce a less consistent product compared with gravure cylinders. When litho printing was used, Royal Mail's stamp books contained conventionally-gummed stamps.

While definitive work is now by gravure, some special issues, where the print runs are naturally lower, may be printed by litho. Whichever process is used, quality checks are made throughout production of the paper, adhesive and the phosphor. The tension on the paper can change as it passes through the press, affected by slight changes in temperature for example, and therefore the flow of paper has to be constantly adjusted, to ensure a product is in perfect register. If the stamps are conventionally-gummed, the sheets will be perforated during the pass through the printing press. However, it is Walsall's expertise with self-adhesive products that is principally utilised by Royal Mail, and this requires that all of the 'finishing' work be undertaken as a separate process. Nevertheless, the litho capability is used to produce such items as folders for presentation packs. By 'turning' the reel of paper halfway through the press, it is possible to print four colours on one side, and the paper is then turned to receive four colours on the 'back'. As the folders will require creasing and folding to create the presentation packs, it is essential that after printing the paper remains in a perfect reel. There has to be strict tolerance to ensure the creasing and folding is in exactly the right position.



Tolerance of the paper is a key factor throughout and, consequently, while there are reels of paper kept in store awaiting printing, such storage time is kept as short as possible. If kept too long, paper can easily distort.

Definitives On the gravure presses, definitive production is divided between booklets and business sheets. This may seem incidental, but you would be surprised. Judging by the mail most people receive it appears stamps have gone out of fashion. Yet booklets and business sheets are still needed in their millions – every day. Business sheets, in particular, have been a surprise, so high is the demand. The gravure press at Walsall has ten units, ample for virtually every issue, and certainly for Royal Mail's definitive products. The ability to turn the reel during printing is used to print both inside (stamps and any other promotional information) and outside (the outer covers) of booklets as one operation. This same capability is used

to provide a recent feature of self-adhesive special issues, namely to have information about the issue printed on the reverse of the backing paper.

After printing, separate production lines handle particular products. Business sheets undergo a process by which the individual stamps have the top ('stamp') paper die-cut to simulate perforations. Then the excess top paper (the 'matrix') is stripped away from around the stamps. This has to be an exact process, to ensure that none of the stamps are also inadvertently stripped away (readings are taken from the paper to ensure this has not happened). What makes the matrix stripping such a precise operation is that the 'headers' to the business sheets, on which are printed the details of the contents and the Royal Mail cruciform, tend to break the 'flow'. Consequently, not all the matrix is stripped away in one go – that around the stamps is removed first, after which the matrix on the edges of the sheets is removed in a separate operation. Removing the matrix can

be better appreciated for the skill and control required when it is realised it occurs at high speed. Normal sheets sold over post office counters will have the backing paper rouletted so that individual stamps can be sold, but there is no such need with the business sheets. However, such sheets do have to be trimmed, the production date is printed using matrix dots on the reverse, sheets are rouletted to enable them to be 'divided' into sections, and then the product is folded into a more usable size. Finally, sheets are counted and banded into conveniently-sized bundles.

Booklet production is similarly automated, the process including the 'notch' in the right-hand edge of the cover to show whether it contains 1st (one notch) or 2nd (two notches) class stamps. The 'perforations' are made using steel die-cutters anodised to prevent rusting. The matrix is removed as necessary: some books now have promotional information on the inside (left-hand half); this is printed on the 'stamp' paper, so it is left in position. Creasing, folding and bundling are all part of the automated process.

Naturally, throughout the production process, checks are made, with automatic scanning of the product, by weight, and visually. As ever, there is no substitute for the female eye when it comes to ensuring the printed sheets are perfect. However, automatic scanners play an increasing role, and can detect slight differences, and reject a product as faulty, yet totally acceptable to our eyes.

Philatelic services In addition to printing stamps and presentation packs, Walsall Security Printers has developed considerable expertise in the area of providing specialised philatelic products such as packs and first day covers. It has a dedicated section which it calls its 'Philatelic Bureau'.

One of the tasks undertaken is to fix the clear plastic 'carriers' to presentation packs. As will be recalled, at one time Royal Mail included separate black card carriers within the packs; now the plastic carriers are affixed to the pack itself. Gluing and affixing the plastic is a skilled operation, as it needs to be perfectly positioned every time – not always the easiest task to accomplish when handling plastic.

Stamps are placed in the packs by machine. For this the individual stamps are arranged in stacks. The equipment uses suction to lift the plastic carrier, and to lift one of each stamp from the stacks and place them where required. Not all tasks are automated; the sheets of stamps are still burst and arranged in stacks by hand. Most painstaking is when packs require self-adhesive stamps, wanted to appear like perforated stamps (for example, the self-adhesives in the definitive presentation packs for Royal Mail). These stamps are specially produced with die-cut 'perforations' penetrating both the stamp and backing paper. This has the effect of completely separating the stamps, which then have to be arranged in bundles or stacks by hand.

The equipment to fill presentation packs can handle a variety of shapes and sizes of stamps in one operation, but it can fill a maximum of nine stamps at a time. Consequently items such as Year Packs are often built up in stages throughout the year as the required stamps become available.

First day cover production is a similar process: the stamps are held in stacks in specially created 'blocks', which position the stamps as required, picking up one of each stamp, passing them over a sponge to moisten, then affixing to the cover. However, with self-adhesive stamps, when covers are required in reasonable quantities, it is normal to print the stamps on special coils, enabling the stamps to be positioned as required over the covers before being 'pressed' into place. Walsall undertakes first day cover production on behalf of many countries, and the quantities required in some cases do not require the use of automatic equipment. In such cases, there is no substitute to affixing stamps by hand, even if self-adhesive. Walsall also undertakes the cancellation of these covers, if requested by the country concerned.

Having pioneered the concept of self-adhesive stamps, Walsall Security Printers is aware that the product must be right, both for the consumer and the collector. Tests are undertaken regarding both migration of the adhesive, and the aging process. The paper used still has a soluble layer of adhesive between the stamp and the adhesive silicone, to allow collectors to remove used examples from envelopes with ease ●

Mainly Machins Country pictorial issues, by Douglas Myall

SINCE I LAST WROTE, there have been three new issues to report on: sheets for Northern Ireland, a miniature sheet with a 78p stamp from each of the four countries, and a generic sheet for Scotland. Each was printed in a different way.

Northern Ireland De La Rue's gravure printing of the Northern Ireland sheet NV15 were issued on 20 September, although the existing lithographic stamps will be sold to exhaustion in the province. Reading downwards, the cylinder numbers are: D1 (yellow), D1 (cyan), D1 (black) / D1 (phosphor) for the 1st class stamps, and D1 (magenta), D1 (yellow), D1 (cyan), D1 (black) / D1 (phosphor) for the 2nd class stamps. The cylinders are double-pane, and both no dot and dot blocks exist. Normally, The Queen's head is the cameo silhouette, non-Machin, version with the ribbons. This is usually printed in silver for gravure issues, but it is plain white on these new stamps. Previously, this form has been used mainly for lithographic printings, which, of course, was the production process used for this country. I do not think this was to maintain consistency in design. Rather, it reduces the number of colour cylinders needed for the issue. The effect is achieved by a process which printers refer to as 'reversing out'. This is not the first time that it has been used in a gravure printing though; De La Rue used it on the Wales stamps issued on 14 October 2003. The phosphor bars on the 1st class stamp are graduated, with a total width of 13mm.

Lest We Forget miniature sheet 2 This was issued on 8 November and commemorates the Battle of Passchendaele, which took place 90 years ago, in November 1917. The shadowy background of the sheet shows infantrymen advancing across open ground. This image is cleverly used again in the black centre of the single red poppy which is the design of the 1st class special stamp. To the right of this is a block of four 78p stamps, one from each country. This is the rate for 20g airmail letters outside of Europe. Last year's sheet had 72p stamps in the same designs but there was a tariff

change last April. A further change is that this year's sheet is printed by De La Rue in lithography, a method that has not previously been used for this value, so all four stamps are new.

The Queen's cameo head is reversed out on the Wales and Northern Ireland stamps, and is printed in silver on those for England and Scotland. Because the latter are lithographic, there is no screening and they are a solid silhouette. The phosphor bars are not graduated but they still total 13mm. There is no micro-printed copyright symbol and date on any of these stamps, so it seems that this may no longer be deemed necessary.

Glorious Scotland generic sheet The third in the series of five 'glorious country' sheets features Scotland. It comprises 20 1st class stamps depicting the heraldic Lion of Scotland. Each stamp is accompanied by a label from a set of 10, picturing a typical Scottish landscape or activity. These are miniature works of art and any of them would be a suitable subject for a stamp. I am surprised just how good they are for a lithographic printing and it seems that a very high resolution was used when making the plates. The sheet has been printed in lithography by Cartor, a member of the Walsall group based in France. As with the two earlier generic sheets, these stamps are self-adhesive; the only country pictorials to be issued in this form so far. Again, the phosphor bars are non-graduated 6.5mm at each side. The copyright symbol and year 2007 is printed on the sheet; it does not appear on the stamps.

I did not detect any textual errors on the labels, unlike the two predecessor sheets. Many readers will have heard of the mis-printing of White for Wight on one of the England sheet's labels. This was spotted in time to have the sheets reprinted with the correct text and issued on the scheduled date. A few of these errors were not recalled and were sold through philatelic outlets; these fetch high prices on eBay. An error on the Wales sheet, which I have not seen mentioned elsewhere, was drawn to my attention by reader Adrian Keppel. The mountain in south Snowdonia is known as



Cader Idris in English and Cadair Idris in Welsh, but the English spelling is used on the Welsh label although Snowdonia is translated (as Eryri, land of eagles). I have heard it said that the English for Castell Caernarfon should be Carnarvon Castle, but Caernarfon is equally acceptable; this is the spelling used on the £1.50 pictorial national definitive in the castles series.

Review of country pictorial stamps These stamps have been on sale quite some time now, and they have a good following among collectors. In my last article I mentioned the difficulty of keeping track of stamps with the same design being printed in gravure and lithography, sometimes by the same printer, and being on contemporary sale, and I promised to return to this subject. These stamps have been issued in counter sheets, miniature sheets, generic sheets and in prestige books. They have not been issued in retail books, or in coils. Some of them have also been issued in presentation packs, and all of the designs have been issued as stamp cards.

The new design stamps for Scotland and Wales were introduced in the May 1999 *Bulletin*, and went on sale on 8 June that year. The impetus for them was the establishment of a Parliament for Scotland and an Assembly for Wales on 12 May. There were four stamps for each country. The services they were intended to meet were the two basic inland letter rates, the basic European letter rate, and the second weight step for airmail letters outside Europe. The first three rates were NV1s, and the fourth a value stamp, at that time 64p. They are still the same services today but the European NV1 was replaced by a value stamp on 1 April 2004. The face values of the value stamps

have changed with revised tariffs, but the designs have not. Pictorial stamps were extended to Northern Ireland on 6 March 2001, and to England on 23 April 2001 to meet the same four services. On 14 October 2003 the designs of all 16 stamps were modified by adding a white border.

The subjects depicted on the Scotland stamps were chosen by popular ballot, with the intention that they would be changed after Parliament was opened, which happened on 5 October 2004. The old designs are still being used, but there have been additions to the range.

A series of miniature sheets celebrating each country began with the sheet for Scotland on 30 November 2006 and one for England on 23 April 2007. These dates are the Saint's days for those two countries. Additional sheets are planned for Northern Ireland and Wales, to be issued on or near their Saint's days. All four sheets follow the same pattern, consisting of two large stamps for the worldwide service and two 1st class definitive-size stamps. (*The Northern Ireland sheet will be shown in next month's Bulletin.* ED)

To provide an overall view, I have chosen one country, Scotland, and presented its stamps in tabular form (opposite). Taking each design and value in turn, I have given the date of first issue, the form of issue and the printer's initial and the method of printing. By taking account of other attributes such as different phosphor layouts, variations in the thickness and setting of service indicators and the appearance of some issues in more than one prestige book, specialists will recognise some stamps not shown in the table. In the eight years of their existence these pictorial definitives have presented much to interest collectors, and they look nice on the album page ●

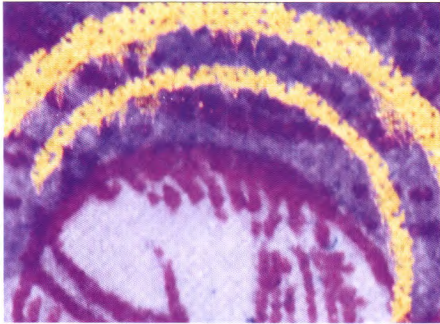


Stamp and design		Gravure			Lithography		
		Date	Form	Printer	Date	Form	Printer
1st	1st design, Heraldic Lion, no border	08.06.99	S	W			
		22.10.01	B	Q			
	2nd design, Heraldic lion, border	14.10.03	S	D	20.9.07	B	E
		05.10.04	MS	D			
	3rd design, Saltire flag	10.11.06	MS	D			
2nd	1st design, Saltire cross, no border	08.06.99	S	W			
		04.08.99	B	Q			
		05.06.02	S	D			
	2nd design, Saltire cross, border	14.10.03	S	D			
		16.03.04	B	D			
E	1st design, thistle, no border	08.06.99	S	W			
		22.10.01	B	Q			
	2nd design, thistle, border	14.10.03	S	D			
40p	2nd design, thistle, border	11.05.04	S	D			
		11.05.04	MS	D			
42p	2nd design, thistle, border	05.04.05	S	W			
		10.05.05	S	D			
44p	2nd design, thistle, border	28.03.06	S	D			
48p	2nd design, thistle, border	27.03.07	S	D			
64p	1st design, tartan, no border	08.06.99	S	W			
65p	1st design, tartan, no border	25.04.00	S	W			
		04.08.00	B	Q			
68p	1st design, tartan, no border	04.07.02	S	D			
	2nd design, tartan, border	14.10.03	S	D			
72p	2nd design, tartan, border	28.03.06	S	D			
		09.11.06	MS	D			
78p	2nd design, tartan, border	27.03.07	S	D	08.11.07	MS	D

Form Issued as: sheet (S), miniature sheet (MS), generic sheet (GS), or book pane (B).
Printer Cartor (C), De La Rue (D), Enschedé (E), Questa (Q) and Walsall (W).

Above and opposite: Scottish stamps in miniature sheets of 2004-07, and the six Scotland tartan stamps, 64p to 78p values, issued 1999-2007.

Competitions Enter for a chance to win the 2007 Yearbook



September identify The detail is from the Marsh Harrier Bird stamp of 2007. The winner is B Normanton, of Australia.

September knowledge The answers: 1) Business Design Centre, London; 2) 1989; 3) Red. The winner is G Dunlop, of Bristol.

Runner-up prizes were also sent for each competition. Our thanks to all who entered.

FIRSTLY, identify the stamp from the detail above. Send your answer to December *Identify* Competition. Secondly, test your philatelic knowledge by answering the questions below. Send your answer to December *Knowledge* Competition.

- 1 Who designed the 1978 Christmas stamps?
- 2 Which stamp issue featured an illustration of Lancaster House?
- 3 Which firm printed Britain's first self-adhesive stamp (1993)?

Send your answer (addressed to either December *Identify* competition or December *Knowledge* competition), name and address on a postcard or back of a sealed envelope to: British Philatelic Bulletin, Royal Mail Letters, 35-50 Rathbone Place, London W1T 1HQ. The senders of the first cards to be drawn in each competition on 11 January will each receive a 2007 Yearbook. Runner-up prizes of presentation packs, FDCs, or stamp cards will be awarded in each competition. The competitions are not open to Royal Mail employees. ●

Events

Until April/May 2008 'A Timeless Classic – The Evolution of Machin's Icon' exhibition, British Postal Museum & Archive, Freeling House, Phoenix Place, London WC1. **Enquiries** 020 7239 2570.

4 December Film showing *Christmas Under Fire* (1941 film about Christmas in the Blitz) at 18.30, followed by talk 'War Heres of the Post Office', 19.00 at British Postal Museum & Archive. To book tickets phone 029 7239 2570.

10-21 December British Postal Museum & Archive closed for stocktaking.

12 December Monthly Strand Stamp Fair, at Galleon Suite, Royal National Hotel, Bedford Way, London WC1H 0DG, 09.00-16.00. Free admission. Dealers, refreshments. **Enquiries** www.stampshows.net

17 January National Philatelic Society seminar on Research in Philately at Phoenix Centre, Phoenix Place, London WC1, 14.00-16.30. Bookings by 12 January (see Late News, opposite).

21-23 February Philatex at the Royal Horticultural Society, Lawrence Hall, Greycoat Street, London SW1. **Enquiries** phone 020 8946 4489 or website www.stampshows.net

27 February - 1 March Spring Stampex at Business Design Centre, Upper Street, London N1. Display by Austria Philatelic Society. **Enquiries** Stampex 01252 628006.

2-3 May ABPS Harrogate 2008, at the Harrogate International Centre, Hall Q, Kings Road. Exhibition, dealers. **Enquiries** www.harrogate2008.org.uk ●

Late news

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Nov. 2-4, 2007
Ikebukuro, TOKYO

JAPEX '07
Years of Machines

特別展示
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Valid for Royal Mail
First class up to 60g
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British Stamp
Study Group of
JPS



Royal Mail update The 'In the Post' Smilers sheet, with robin stamp, has been reprinted with Royal Mail Group Ltd copyright replacing Royal Mail Group PLC. The new sheet will be used for orders as stocks of the previous printing are used up.

Press sheets of miniature sheets will be available for the following 2008 issues: James Bond, Houses of Lancaster and York, Cathedrals, and 50th anniversary of country definitives. All sheets will be numbered, in a limited edition of 2008.

Readers have enquired about the use of micro-text to indicate the year of issue on special stamp issues and the transfer of the date to stamp cards. The date is printed on each stamp issue (and has been since the Motorcycles issue) in black micro-text hidden in the image, or the value. This is the case for all issues printed in litho. For all issues printed in gravure the standard has been to print the date in the phosphor. There is an exception – the National Portrait Gallery issue – which was printed in gravure, but had the date in microtext. This was because we were trialling a fine-screen gravure cylinder. As we cannot show the position of phosphor on the stampcards we have decided not to reproduce this detail on the product •

GB exhibition in Japan The British Stamp Study Group of Japan Philatelic Society had a 10-frame display entitled '40 Years of Machines' during their annual national exhibition, JAPEX '07 in Tokyo, 2-4 November. The Society produced 500 numbered JAPEX '07 overprints on the 1st class stamp pane (above), and eighty are reserved for *Bulletin* readers. To acquire a copy send six international reply coupons (to include postage) to: Michihiko Yokohagi, 11-4 Shimorenjaku 2chome, Mitaka-shi, Tokyo 181-0013, Japan •



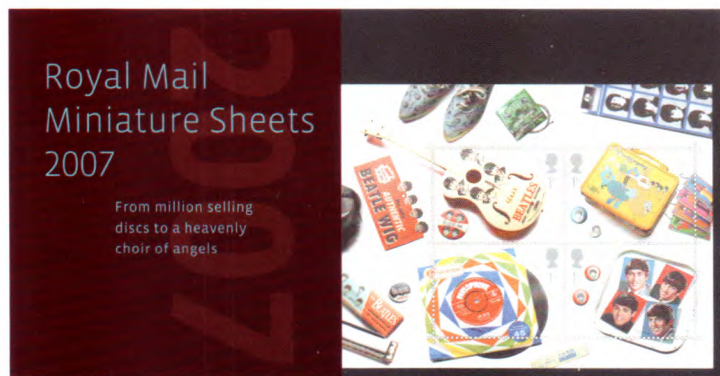
JAPEX overprint and Guernsey and Jersey Christmas stamps.

Christmas issues Shown above are two of the 2007 Christmas issues from Guernsey and Jersey, titled 'Deck the Halls' and 'Christmas Carols' respectively. Enquiries: Guernsey 01481 716486, e-mail philatelic@guernseypost.com; Jersey 01534 516320, e-mail stamps@jerseypost.com •

North of Ireland Philatelic Society The Society celebrated its centenary with a display at the Royal Philatelic Society London on 1 November. A centenary book was published earlier in the year – see July *Bulletin* (p325). Meetings for early 2008 are: Russia Post Offices Abroad by Alan Wishart (11 Jan), N Ireland Postmarks (John Gilpin 8 Feb), Masaryk's Czechoslovakia (Geoff McAuley 14 Mar) and Irish Postal History (Des Quail 11 Apr). The meetings are held at Hunterhouse College, Upper Lisburn Road, Finaghy, Belfast at 19.00. Enquiries: Norman Scott on 028 90 795530 •

Philatelic research seminar The National Philatelic Society will hold a 'How to Research in Philately' seminar at the Phoenix Centre, Phoenix Place, London WC1 (next door to Freeling House) on 17 January (14.00-16.30). It will be led by David Beech who will discuss methods, sources and disciplines for successful and enjoyable research, in light of developments such as the internet. David will follow up the seminar with an article in *Stamp Lover*, the NPS magazine. Tickets are £5 (£3 NPS members); places are limited so applications must be made by 12 January. For details and a booking form, send a SAE to Christopher Oliver, National Philatelic Society, c/o British Postal Museum & Archive, Freeling House, Phoenix Place, London WC1X 0DL or visit www.ukphilately.org.uk/nps where a booking form is also available •

Royal Mail collections: ideal gifts for Christmas



2007 Presentation Pack

Collection Price £59.75.
Order code PA728. Handling charge £2.95 UK, £5 Europe, £14 rest of world

2007 Miniature sheet

Collection Price £24.45.
Order code PA727. Handling charge £1.45 UK, £1.55 Europe, £2.15 rest of world

Presentation Pack Collection The 16 packs of 2007 are all contained within a stylish black box, embossed in silver with 'Royal Mail'.

Miniature Sheet Collection An attractively packaged set of all nine miniature sheets of 2007: Beatles, World of Invention, Celebrating England, Wembley Stadium, Machin 40th Anniversary, Harry Potter, Royal Diamond Wedding, Christmas and Lest We Forget.

Royal Mail

Tallents House, 21 South Gyle Crescent, Edinburgh EH12 9PB
Telephone orders: UK 08457 641 641; overseas +44 131 316 7483. Order online at: www.royalmail.com/shop



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