

Philatelic Bulletin

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accepted Marcus Arman’s notes of his lecture on the subject.

Don’t forget the two issues coming on 17 June – the new HV decimal and the first decimal ‘To Pay’ labels.

50th Anniversary of the School of Artillery

On 18 July 1970, the School of Artillery, Larkhill, celebrates its 50th Anniversary.

In connection with the celebration a Special Commemorative Cover will be issued and will portray the latest British self-propelled field-gun, the Abbott, and also the Royal Artillery Badge.

Fully serviced covers, cancelled with a Special British Forces Postal Service hand-stamp will be on sale at Larkhill during the public display and also obtainable, price 4s 6d each, from:

The Philatelic Officer,
School of Artillery,
Larkhill,
Wiltshire,

where a posting box will be provided on the day.

Special Handstamp

The special handstamp for Fettes College Founders Day will be used at Edinburgh on 13 June and not as quoted in the article on page 3 of the *May Bulletin*.

Introduction

There is so much to print this month that we have been compelled to cut down the colour reproductions with which we usually illustrate our features.

Our main article covers the recent Stamp Design seminar and gives particulars of the erudite discussions which took place on a subject close to philatelists’ hearts.

The current exhibition at the National Postal Museum of the work of Gill and Dulac has aroused so much interest that we eagerly

Eric Gill and Edmund Dulac Artists and Men of Letters

We reproduce below the substance of Marcus Arman's last lecture in the National Postal Museum as the Museum's Curator.

Thirty-three years ago, at the Royal Institution in Albemarle Street, at 3 o'clock precisely, the doors of the lecture theatre opened and Eric Gill commenced his address on 'Sacred and Secular in Modern Industry'. I was there. It was an unforgettable occasion. There in the flesh stood an eminent artist-craftsman, a lay member of the Order of St Dominic, justifying his attitude to art, industry and design in terms of his own personal religious experience.

Even earlier, as a small boy, during the 1914-18 war, I was given a Gift Book produced to raise funds for the Red Cross. A book of Fairy Tales from many lands written and illustrated by Edmund Dulac whose imagination and pictorial virtuosity stimulated my youthful mind and visual awareness.

A week ago we opened in the National Postal Museum an exhibition of the work of these artists who influenced the design of postage stamps over four reigns. The exhibition is a visual exercise in the art of communication and we have supported it with special notes about the stamps and designs displayed which appeared in the April issue of the *Philatelic Bulletin*.

The spirit which informed these artists of differing temperament and outlook, but united of their concern to make a good job of whatever they did, came out strongly in the heated correspondence which *The Times* published following the issue of the simple but quite revolutionary accession stamps of King Edward VIII's short reign. In this correspondence the artistic conscience of both these artists and men of letters was laid bare.

As a supplement to the exhibition, which I trust will make its own impact in visual terms, I shall try in this talk to describe the very divergent views these artists held as to the nature of postage stamps, their design and production. The end product – that is the stamps for which they were responsible – was a

synthesis of often conflicting points of view.

The issued accession definitive stamps of King Edward VIII were the most uncluttered stamps ever issued in this country before the Machin head definitives of our own time.

They were conceived by A. J. Brown, a youth of 18, at Torquay, who submitted a sketch design to the Post Office. This design, subject to the introduction of a photographic head of the Sovereign by Hugh Cecil and the elimination of the words 'and revenue', was worked over by Harrison's and became the issued stamps.

Initially the new stamps were well received although there was some criticism because the head of the King was cut off in the manner of a sculptural relief. Nevertheless *The Times* said: 'The fundamental simplicity of the postage stamps of the new reign is an immense gain. For the first time for many years the country is given a stamp which explains itself and its purpose without any irrelevant or distracting detail.' Frederick Wall in *Gibbon's Stamp Monthly* expressed the view that these were simple, effective and dignified stamps and went on to say, 'The Royal likeness is good, this is where the photographer scores over the artist, and if the Crown is considered too small or ill placed, then let those who criticize try to better matters.'

The world of art was divided. Henry Rushbury, RA, described the design as 'absolutely unworthy'. Charles Dugdale, ARA, attacked the use of a photographer instead of an artist, and Charles Wheeler said he could imagine nothing worse!

It was the design-conscious administrator Frank Pick who, in the thirties, had done so much to develop with distinction the House style of London Transport threw a spanner into the works on 16 September 1936 in a letter to *The Times*. Pick wrote 'when the content of the design is settled the task of the designer begins. So far as the new stamps are concerned it also ended, for there is no design – the content is only neatly placed within the given framework. They illustrate a current weakness more

apparent perhaps in architecture. We have become afraid of decoration, not knowing what to call good or bad, so we ran away, in a cowardly fashion, from all decorative treatment hoping to escape judgement.'

This trenchant criticism sparked off a vigorous correspondence from notable artists and critics including Milner Grey of the Society of Industrial Artists, Sir Francis Meynell, Sir William Rothenstein, Noel Carrington and many others. The London dailies, the provincial papers and specialized journals including *Apollo* and *The Artist* all became stamp design conscious to an extent which has rarely been known since that time.

Eric Gill and Edmund Dulac enter the Lists

Foremost in this array of protagonists for and against the simplified stamps were Eric Gill and Edmund Dulac. I cannot quote their contributions in full but the following excerpts edited in dialogue form will perhaps indicate where there were strong divergencies of opinion between them.

ERIC GILL (*The Times* 22.9.36)

The new stamps are exceedingly good both in themselves as postage stamps and in relation to current methods of facture. A pictorial device to be used by the million cannot properly be produced except by the most expensive and intensive use of machinery. Such methods are in their nature impersonal and those who employ them are well advised to eschew the fanciful and the ornamental, however natural and even inevitable such things were in a pre-machine economy.

Therefore I regret the opinion expressed by Mr Frank Pick. The new stamps are eminently an improvement on previous issues and mark a bold step in the right direction. The photograph is obviously a good photograph and its reproduction is an admirable example of mechanical expertise.

EDMUND DULAC (*The Times* 24.9.36)

The only question of importance is whether in the opinion of those who ought to know, the design is good or bad. One is therefore surprised to find such an authority as Eric Gill adding further to the confusion. His argument seems to be that since photography is a mechanical process stamps must necessarily follow those rules of 'functionalism' that apply to the manufacture in large numbers of other objects. It is possible for such things as household articles, wireless sets or furniture which are mass produced to dispense with unnecessary ornament because their shape and material give the artist enough scope for good design. A flat piece of paper offers no such opportunities. It must be covered with lettering, ornaments or figures. Mr Gill does not hesitate to add devices and symbols to his book plates. Even where he uses lettering pure and simple he is not satisfied with a commonplace type and haphazard proportions and spacing. The only good piece of designing in it is the water mark.

ERIC GILL (*The Times* 28.9.36)

Suppose I take a piece of wood and with my own fairy fingers make scratches on it with a nail: the result will make a print. This sounds primitive, but is in fact no more primitive than the art of wood engraving. To suggest that there is any similarity between this primitive craft and the production of modern postage stamps is grossly misleading.

A postage stamp is primarily a symbolic device, not a picture. It has to be produced by the million. The business of making stamps is about as far removed from the studio as can be and the job of the designer is a strictly functional one. The mercy for which we ought to be thankful is that the Post Office has in fact confined the matter to bare essentials.

EDMUND DULAC (*The Times* 29.9.36)

He (Eric Gill) once more insists on the interdependence of three elements that really have

only a very slight relation to one another: machine production, functionalism and good design.

The machine does not care whether it produces or prints one or a million. It treats with the same efficient impartiality a bottle shaped like the Laocoon group or a plain one, a stamp bearing the simple word 'halfpenny' or a picture of the battle of Waterloo. The question of functionalism is settled long before the bottle or the stamp reaches the machine: it is settled by their design.

ERIC GILL (*The Times* 3.10.36)

Surely Mr Dulac's statement is a monstrous error. It is very largely because we have accepted this false teaching that things made by machinery (postage stamps are only one small example) have fallen so much lower in quality than the machines themselves. The whole Renaissance idea is that 'design' is something imposed by an 'artist' and has 'only a slight relation' to the purpose of things, the methods of production or the economics of labour. We have blandly supposed that figs could be gathered from thistles. Beauty is an accident of right making and not its object. A bottle shaped like the Laocoon group is an absurd thing to make by machinery.

As was to be expected this correspondence in *The Times*, while relevant enough to the subject under discussion, was inconclusive.

In 1937 Gill's credo for stamp design was more precisely defined.

Eric Gill's Ideas about Stamp Design

Writing to his brother Evan in May 1937, just before the first issue of King George VI stamps were put on sale, he said, 'I am glad if you are pleased about the new stamps. I can't write much now but, you know, the responsibility for the design is more the Post Office's than mine. I only drew the stuff as instructed.' Three years later, again in a letter to Evan, Eric commented on the Post Office centenary stamp designed by H. L. Palmer. 'HMPO is quite

childlike in its innocence, and, tho' the photo-gravure reproduction of the 1840 engraving goes badly alongside the 1940 head GVI, the innocent idea is clear enough, and, as they've done me the great honour of using what in a vague way, I may call *my* lettering, and a not too bad crown, the show – might be a lot worse.'

Eric Gill's 'credo' for stamp designing seems to have been fully formulated when in February 1937 he wrote to A. Tydeman, Controller of the Post Office Supplies Department, 'From my point of view the whole idea of a picture stamp is essentially unreasonable. The essential things in a postage stamp are the statement that the thing is a stamp (the words "postage", etc) the denomination, and some sign that the thing has official origin (the King's head, a crown, etc). It seems to me that to use a pictorial subject is simply pondering to sentimentality and the appetite of collectors for anything curious. But if, for reasons unknown to me, it is decided to use a pictorial subject then I think it is desirable that the situation be faced quite frankly and that a really good photograph (i.e. good for the purpose) of the subject chosen be made and the necessary information (the word postage, the denomination, the crown) be frankly imposed upon the photograph and no attempt made to combine the two things because they are essentially incompatible.'

Edmund Dulac's Ideas about Stamp Design

Dulac's ideas about stamp design are on record in an article he wrote for *The Listener*, of 3 February 1944, from which I quote:

Like a label, a stamp must be clear and easy to read, it must convey all the information it is destined to convey: country of origin, value and the word meaning postage. One could be satisfied with this alone, set in good type and agreeably laid out. Other considerations, however, soon intervene as reasons for putting more on a stamp than simple lettering and figures. One is the fear of forgery which in the early days led to an elaboration of engraving devices that often produced very attractive

50th Anniversary of the First RAF Flying Display—Hendon

results. Another is nothing less than a desire to advertise—to call attention to the good position of a nation in the world by displaying portraits of its ruler or its great men, views of the land or pictures of its history and commercial activities.

A good artist is an invaluable asset. I mean by this a man who combines good drawing with a sense of pattern; and by pattern I mean an arrangement of patches of black and white, preferably on simple lines, that in itself will give pleasure to the eye and is made up of elements so broadly treated or so simplified that the idea to be conveyed stands out clearly.

It is only when the label becomes a picture that stamp design degenerates. This does not mean that good design is altogether incompatible with the picture notion of a stamp—excellent results can be achieved when stamp designing is considered to be the business of an artist.

Much of what Gill and Dulac said a quarter of a century ago is still relevant to stamp design and it would indeed be fascinating to have their views on the more recently issued commemoratives and special stamps. Nevertheless, this account of the views they held so strongly may help us today to establish criteria as to what makes a good stamp or conversely a bad one!

New High Value Decimal Stamps

The first of the new decimal stamps will be issued on 17 June when the 10p, 20p and 50p appear, in sheets of 100.

The designs, size, perforation and printing methods are unchanged from existing HV stamps except that the denominations are shown in decimals, and the colours are now: 10p cerise; 20p olive green; 50p blue.

The remainder of the decimal series will be issued on 15 February 1971.

Presentation packs will be available priced 17s each.

A cover featuring the Sopwith Snipe will be issued at RAF Hendon to commemorate this Anniversary. A pictorial British Forces Postal Service handstamp No. 1114 will be used to cancel the 5d Alcock & Brown stamp. All covers will be flown in an aircraft of the RED ARROWS AEROBATIC TEAM. Five cachets will be used, one for each of the Gnat aircraft in which the covers are flown.



BRITISH FORCES 1114 POSTAL SERVICE

A single cover costs 5s, and a set of five, each with a different cachet, costs 25s. Orders with remittances should be sent to:

The Philatelic Officer,
RAF Hendon,
The Hyde,
London NW19.

25th Anniversary School of Infantry—Open Day

To commemorate the 25th Anniversary of the School of Infantry at Warminster a special commemorative cover will be produced for sale on 13 June 1970 when the school will stage its first Open Day.

The cover, which depicts the insignia of the school, will be stamped with the 1s 6d stamp to be issued on 3 June 1970, and cancelled with a special British Forces Postal Service handstamp.

These covers are available, at 5s each, from:

The Philatelic Officer,
The School of Infantry,
Warminster,
Wiltshire

where a posting box will be provided on the day.

Special Handstamps

Sebright School Wolverley 1620-1970
5 July 1970 Kidderminster Worcs will be used to cancel items posted in the special posting box at Sebright School, Wolverley, Kidderminster, Worcs.

Chief Scout's Visit 20 June 1970 Coventry will be used to cancel items posted in the special collecting box at Butts Sports Ground, Coventry.

Church of St John 1870-1970 27 June 70
Hindon Salisbury Wilts will be used to cancel items posted in the special collecting box at the Church of St John.

14-20 June Mayflower '70 Celebrations
Immingham Grimsby Lincs will be used to cancel items posted in the special collecting box at Immingham Post Office.

National Savings Britain's 'Common Wealth' will be used transposed at Edinburgh: North Western District Office, Western District Office, Southern District Office, South Western District Office, Eastern Central District Office; Dell, Dalkeith and Leith from 6-25 July and the **National Savings Save as you Earn** slogan will be used at the above offices from 26 July to 25 September 1970.

Industrialists stay on the map, invest & take advantage of easy to develop sites now ask Aberdare UDC will continue in use at Aberdare until 24 February 1971.

Visit the Wolverhampton Festival of Sport June 13-20 1970 will be used transposed at Wolverhampton until 19 June 1970.

Royal Signals 1920-1970 will be used transposed at Richmond (Yorks) from 7 June to 4 July 1970.

Buxton Wells Dressing will be used transposed at Buxton until 11 July 1970.

See Britain see Buxton will be used transposed at Buxton from 12 July to 30 September 1970.

12th World Naturist Congress Orpington (North Kent) 10-14 August will be used transposed at Bromley, Orpington and Sidcup until 14 August 1970.

Buxton Ideal Centre for Light Industry will be used transposed at Buxton from 1 October to 31 December 1970.

Remember to use the Postcode will be used transposed at Aberystwyth and Machynlleth from 22 June to 12 July 1970.

Cardiff Battalion Bataliwn Caerdydd 1 July 1970 Cardiff will be used to cancel items posted in the special collecting box at the City Hall, Cardiff. The rectangular design includes the badge of the Boys Brigade.

New Town 21 Anniversary 20 June 1970 Basildon Essex will be used to cancel items posted in the special collecting box at St Martin's Church Hall, Pagel Mead, Basildon.

Highland Games 20 August 1970 Ballater Aberdeenshire will be used to cancel items posted in the special collecting box at the Highland Games Field at Monaltrie Park.

XXX Anniversary of the 2nd Polish Rifle Division 1940-1970 20 June 1970 London SW7 will be used to cancel items posted in the special collecting box at the Polish Institute and General Sikorski Museum, London SW7.

Roundhead 15 June 1970 British Forces 1209 Postal Service. Items for reposting should be sent to Capt. A. W. Tarbett, RE, DPCC(MoD), Room 505, First Avenue House, High Holborn, London WC1V 6HE.

Air Mail Covers



This cover should interest both the postmark devotee and the air mail enthusiast. The reverse of the cover bears seventeen cancellations!

Discussions on Mechanized Mail Sorting

'We face a great opportunity to put our postal service years ahead of any other postal business in the world,' Lord Hall, Chairman of the Post Office, said in London recently.

Lord Hall was referring to a plan which could revolutionize mail handling methods. The plan is based on a mail sorting and circulation concept to be discussed by management and unions.

The new plan envisages the reduction of some 1,600 manual mail sorting offices to about

120 fully-mechanized centres by the 1980s. By taking full advantage of the automatic letter sorting machinery now coming into increasing use the Post Office expects to reduce costs and increase the reliability of the service.

The sorting system in use at the moment relies on the dispersal of work between hundreds of offices, most of them too small to justify future mechanization. A letter may have to be manually sorted between three and six times before delivery.

Under the proposals about to be discussed all mail sorting could eventually be done within the mechanized system. After posting,



mail would be taken into a mechanized office where it would be automatically segregated into letters and packets, and postmarked.

Letters would then be passed to a coding console where an operator would read the post-code and copy it on a keyboard. This would translate the letters in the address and cause a pattern of almost invisible phosphorescent dots to be printed on the envelope. Automatic sorting machines can read this dot pattern and sort the letters at high speed during all stages of its journey until it reaches the postman who is to deliver it.

Mail would be transported between the

mechanized offices by road, rail or air.

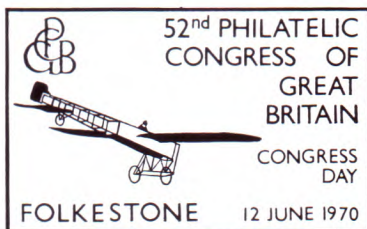
The introduction of the proposed changes, if agreement is reached, would be phased over a number of years and normal staff wastage is expected to offset any reduction of staff numbers due to automation and concentration, thus avoiding any redundancy problem.

At the moment the Post Office has not decided on the offices to be mechanized, but a 'short list' of 133, from which the final choice could be made, has been drawn up.

Lord Hall emphasized that the final plan must be the product of talks right along the line between management and staff.

The Philatelic Congress of Great Britain

52nd Congress, Folkestone, 9-12 June 1970



Shown here are the four special handstamps to be used at Folkestone during the occasion of the 52nd Philatelic Congress of Great Britain. Each handstamp will be used for one day only, between 9 and 12 June 1970.

'International Year' Congress

Recognized as a major forum for issues of national and international importance, the Philatelic Congress of Great Britain, meeting at Folkestone in June will focus on matters of international interest and concern. Two papers will be discussed 'The Importance of International Exhibitions' by Mr Ewart Gerrish, OBE, a distinguished philatelist, Chairman of the 1960 London International Stamp Exhibition and a Past President of the Royal Philatelic Society, London, and 'International Aspects of Philately' by Mr Miroslav Bojanowicz, a distinguished philatelist and International Commissioner.

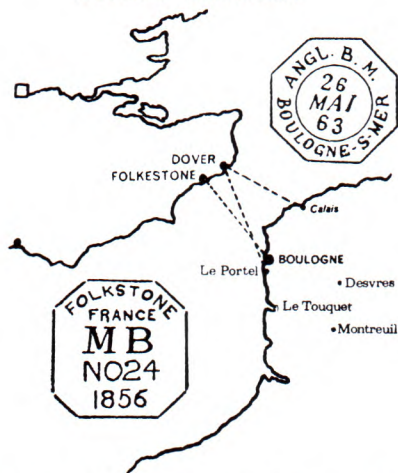
This Congress will be the occasion of the first international goodwill visit to be made by Congress. On Thursday 11 June members and

delegates will travel by Hovercraft to Boulogne to meet members of the Association Philatélique du Boulonnais and the Société Philatélique Franco-Britannique. After an Official Reception by the Senator-Mayor of Boulogne at the Town Hall, there will be displays entitled 'Franco-British Philately of the Channel Ports' and 'Pas de Calais Postal History' by the members of both societies.

The theme of this 'International Year' Congress will be reflected in the four one-day attractive handstamps to be used for the cancellation of Congress mail. These incorporate a second theme, 'First Crossings of the Channel'; the first regular Folkestone-Boulogne Post Office Packet service; the first balloon to cross the Channel (Blanchard and Jeffries); the first aircraft to make the crossing (Louis

52nd

PHILATELIC CONGRESS OF GREAT BRITAIN



FOLKESTONE: 9-12 JUNE, 1970

Shown here is the special Congress envelope issued in connection with the 52nd Philatelic Congress at Folkestone.

Bleriot) and the first visit by Congress outside the United Kingdom by the latest means of travel, an SRN4 Hovercraft.⁷

A temporary Post Office will be set up at the Grand Hotel, Folkestone, for the four days. The Post Office will also have on display an exhibition of Art Work of recent commemorative issues.

Those unable to attend Congress may obtain the special Congress envelopes continuing the Channel theme, in sets of four colours, fully serviced (i.e. addressed to the sender, stamped and each bearing one of the special one-day cancellations) at 5s 6d per set, from the Secretary, The Philatelic Congress of Great Britain, c/o The Grand Hotel, The Leas, Folkestone, Kent. Orders must arrive not later than Monday 8 June.

New Curator for National Postal Museum

We welcome Mr A. G. Rigo de Righi who has been appointed Curator of the National Postal Museum in succession to Marcus Arman.

Mr de Righi is a Fellow of the Royal Philatelic Society; Hon. Editor of *Postal History*; Member of the Council, Postal History Society and Society of Postal Historians; and Member of the Jury, British Philatelic Exhibition 1964-70 and Stampex 1969-70. He has contributed to philatelic journals in Britain, the USA and Australia and is a joint holder of the Research Medal of the Australian Commonwealth Specialists Society. He is a Reader/Adviser in Literature to the forthcoming Philypia exhibition in London.

Falkirk's Spring Fayre



Not all our exhibitions are of 'Philympia' proportions and we thought readers might be interested to see something of the smaller travelling displays mounted by the Bureau.

This one embodied a sales counter and was recently on show at Falkirk's Spring Fayre where it attracted much favourable comment from stamp collectors.

50th Anniversary Corps of Royal Signals

A special souvenir cover will be issued on 28 June 1970 to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the Corps of Royal Signals.

The cover, which portrays the various facets of communications, will be stamped with the 9d Telecommunications stamp issued on 1 October 1969 and cancelled with a special British Forces Postal Service handstamp.



Fully serviced covers, at a cost of 5s each, are available from:

The Philatelic Officer,
11th Signal Regiment,
Catterick Camp,
Yorkshire

where a posting box will be provided on the day.

Aldershot Army Display

A special souvenir cover will be issued for the Aldershot Army Display on 20 and 21 June 1970.

The cover will portray a self-propelled field-gun and the Royal Engineers Badge.

Fully serviced covers, cancelled with a Special British Forces Postal Service handstamp, will be on sale during the display and are also obtainable, price 4s, from:

The Philatelic Officer,
HQ Training Brigade,
Queen's Avenue,
Aldershot,
Hants,

where a posting box will be provided.

Postmark Slogans

Action for the Crippled Child will be used transposed at Stirling, Coatbridge, Sheffield, Wakefield, Rugby, Manchester and three London Offices, Western District Office, South Western District Office and Battersea (one die at Tooting and one die at Wimbledon) until 2 August 1970.

Orsett Show First Saturday in September will be used transposed at Romford and Grays from 7 June to 5 September 1970.

Festival of Flowers in Liverpool Cathedral St James Mount 4-7 June 1970 will be used transposed at Liverpool until 7 June 1970.

Powis Castle open June to Sept will be used transposed at Welshpool from 8 June to 1 August 1970.

Manchester Society of Chartered Accountants 100 1871-1971 will be used transposed at Manchester from 1 January to 31 March 1971.

Becket 1170-1970 Festival Brentwood Brochure 3/6 Post Paid from Council Offices Ingrave Road will be used transposed at Brentwood until 31 July 1970.

My Hat Some Sand England's friendliest Resort Walton on Naze Essex is continuing in use at Walton on Naze until further notice.

The Holiday Coast Fleetwood, Thornton, Cleveleys, Blackpool Lytham St Anne's will be used transposed at Blackpool until 11 July 1970.

Stockport 1220-1970 Charter Anniversary will be used transposed at Stockport until 27 June 1970.

Amgueddfa Werin Cymru Lloches Ein Hanes Ni Welsh Folk Museum St Fagans The Treasure House of Wales will be used transposed at Cardiff until 31 July 1970.

National Trust Seventy-fifth Birthday Year will be used transposed at Dorking, Aldershot, Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells until 14 June 1970.

Remember to use the Postcode will be used transposed at Northern District Office, London, from 22 June until further notice.

Churchill History Blenheim Palace - Son et Lumiere will be used transposed at Birmingham District Offices: Aston, Camp-hill, Eastern, Erdington, Hockley, Moseley and Western, until 26 September 1970.

Victoria & Albert Museum Dickens Centenary Exhibition 10 June-20 September will be used transposed at five London District Offices: Northern District Office, South Eastern District Office, South Western District Office, Western Central District Office and Western District Office from 10-30 June 1970.

New High Value 'To Pay' Labels

Your new high value 'To Pay' labels will be issued on 17 June 1970 priced 10p (2s), 20p (4s), 50p (10s) and £1.

They have been designed by Jeffery Matthews and show the denomination and the words 'To Pay' in contemporary lettering on a shaded background.

Printing details

Printer : Harrison & Sons

Paper : White, coated, unwatermarked

Process : Photogravure

Colours : 10p Cerise

20p Olive green

50p Blue

£1 Black

Invisible Cylinder Numbers

In addition to the normal cylinder numbers printed in ordinary ink an invisible number will be printed in phosphor ink in the margin adjacent to the original.

The visible number identifies the colour printing cylinders and the invisible number will pinpoint the cylinders used for printing the phosphor bars.

The General Anniversaries of 1 April was the first issue to bear the new numbers and all future special stamps will carry them. The invisible numbers will be used on definitive stamps as new cylinders are prepared.

Post Office Seminar on Stamp Design

One of the largest meetings of its kind was recently held at the Royal College of Art when designers, artists, philatelists, dealers, stamp printers and representatives from overseas met the Post Office and the Stamp Advisory Committee to discuss stamp design.

In his opening remarks, the Chairman, Mr Whitney Straight, outlined the purpose of the meeting which was, he said, to take stock of our present position and to obtain help and guidance from the many experts present to make British stamps the best in the world.

The first speaker was Sir Hugh Casson, Professor of Interior Design, Royal College of Art, who in a witty and provocative speech admitted that he personally disliked postage stamps and could see no reason for anyone wishing to collect them. He paid generous tribute, however, to our designers and printers for their work.

He then posed the question 'Has the stamp any future and need it be retained?' He developed this theme by discussing the growing use of metered post and wondered whether there should not be a more sophisticated way of paying for postage than by sticking pieces of paper to the items.

Turning to more general aspects Sir Hugh stressed the importance of design education in stamp design and said that the more comprehensive the basic knowledge of design the better the end product would be. He then made the point that a touch of individual arrogance is a good thing in design and that ultimately a designer designs for himself and should not create specifically to satisfy others' whims.

During the questions and answers in response to Sir Hugh's talk, many interesting points arose. One favoured a trawl of talent from art schools; another suggested a biennial competition to discover new designers; and others referred to colours and the possibilities of embossed pictorial envelopes. For the Post Office, George Downes, Director of Operations and Overseas, mentioned that only about one-third of mail is franked by meter and that he envisaged the postage stamp having a long

life. He was in favour of a competition on the lines mentioned and hoped that this would give up and coming designers a chance to show their capabilities.

Several speakers asked whether any improvement could be expected in the standards of date stamping. They were reassured by a Post Office spokesman who said that the Post Office is constantly carrying out research into cancelling techniques and improved inks.

The next speaker was Brian Coulton, Chairman and Managing Director of Harrison & Sons, printers of our photogravure stamps, who illustrated his talk on Stamp Printing by a selection of colour slides. He described the various printing methods and discussed in full the shortcomings and benefits of differing processes.

He was followed by George Downes who explained the Post Office's operational requirements in stamp design. Among the many points he touched on were that stamps are produced primarily for postage purposes and that in addition to satisfying the customer, we also have a duty to ensure that our counter clerks and sorters are not confused by size or colour. Some colours, particularly yellow and orange, are not entirely satisfactory for our automatic letter-facing machines and this has to be borne in mind.

Mr Downes went on to talk about the new range of colours to be used for the decimal definitive stamps to be issued in 1971. Sixty essays in different colours were examined by Post Office engineers and chemists and twenty-five of those found acceptable for machine purposes were sent to the Applied Psychology Research Unit at Cambridge who were asked to find the least confusing colours. Panels of housewives and postmen helped in the Unit's experiment by studying the different shades. The results of the Cambridge test were tabulated and then used to draw up a colour range for the new stamps. The new range was then discussed with sorters and other operational experts.

John Marriott, Keeper of the Royal Collec-

tion, then gave the philatelist's point of view. He described the charms of stamp collecting and mentioned the independence and freedom of choice each individual collector has to do just what he likes with his own collection. He gave as considerations likely to appeal to the philatelist the following points:

Are the stamps attractive?

Will they combine with existing stamps in collections?

A reasonable number of new issues.

No unnecessary issues and a reasonable cost in denominations.

Will the stamps have some recovery value?

Mr Marriott insisted that the Post Office must pursue an ethical stamp issue policy and make no effort to swamp the market for revenue purposes; also that it should take every precaution to prevent errors reaching the public.

Turning to some of the points made by earlier speakers Mr Marriott welcomed the idea of a competition to find new stamp designers but suggested that there would be no necessity to print the winner's design. He also thought that a set with a common subject is better than a mixture and one designer for a set gives superior results to using more than one unless the artists had worked together on the set. He dislikes the idea of having political themes TUC, ILO, EFTA as stamp subjects and asked that the proposed themes should be such that the public could readily appreciate them. He wondered how many collectors realized the significance of the recent Declaration of Arbroath stamp.

Mr Sem Hartz, General Art Director of Joh Enschede en Zonen of Holland, the famous stamp designer, then gave an authoritative discourse from the overseas viewpoint. He, like Mr Coulton, used many coloured slides to show faults and good points of various designs, and his expert views were well received. Mr Hartz thought that perfect designs were those where the image and lettering were beautifully combined.

The Seminar ended with a panel of well-

known British designers discussing common problems with Stuart Rose, the Post Office Director of Design. The panel covered a wide range of subjects, the more important of which were:

Denominations to be kept as low as possible.

One good stamp is better than several mediocre.

Designs must be matched to printing methods.

A longer period of planning needed to produce good designs.

The designer should be involved in the long term planning of stamps and choice of subjects.

In his closing remarks, Mr Whitney Straight, Deputy Chairman of the Post Office Board, thanked everyone for their helpful contribution to a unique event and promised that careful consideration would be given to the many useful suggestions made.

Commonwealth Games First-Day Cover Services

On 15 July 1970 three stamps will be issued for the IX British Commonwealth Games to be held in Edinburgh. The denominations are 5d, 1s 6d and 1s 9d.

Our normal first-day cover services will be available as follows:

Service A

The specially designed Post Office cover with typed address, the full set of stamps and Philatelic Bureau cancellation – 6s 8d.

Service B

The full set of stamps affixed to customers' own pre-addressed covers and Bureau cancellation – 4s 8d.

Service C

As Service A. A minimum of 50 covers to the same address is required – envelopes addressed by machine plate – 5s 8d.

The philatelic posting boxes throughout the country will be opened on 15 July for collectors who wish to receive 'First Day of Issue' cancellations on their own covers.

