

Philatelic Bulletin

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Editorial

The response to our recent article by Aubrey Walker on some of the mysteries of phosphor stamps and the announcement of the formation of the Postal Mechanisation Study Circle do much to indicate the growing awareness of the various technical advances made in these areas. We have been fortunate, therefore, to have had the willing co-operation of Harrison and Sons in the preparation of an article 'Stamp Paper—a Product of Today's Technology' which we publish this month. The author—Adrian Topham—graduated in Chemical Engineering at Battersea College. He was employed at the Swedish Cellulose Institute and later as mill chemist with the Reed Paper Group. More recently he has been with Harrison and Sons, firstly as Chief Chemist and now as Sales Manager for stamp paper and converted products.

We conclude Douglas Evan's series on the Machin Decimal High Values and offer him our thanks for the considerable research he undertook.

Shapes of Commemorative Stamps

I am sure many will take exception to the views advanced by Jeremy Micklem (February Bulletin) and would not want the case to go by default without the opposite point being made.

The great advantage of the present format is that a style has been established for British stamps, if only by their shape. In recent years other countries, have established a style by using just one designer. That is a good approach but not suitable for us. France uses a particular printing method for the majority of its stamps and also provides an example of a constant format being used for the so-called Art series.

The shape in use for our commemorative stamps is aesthetically pleasing. I have no doubt that our printers prefer to work with the standard shape. A lot of the cost of printing involves the set up and in the case of different shapes quite complex planning. If there is a standard format then the cost is reduced and the majority of their efforts can be devoted to the quality of the printing.

I think it would be fair to say that the public, excluding the philatelist do not object to medium size commemorative stamps, but do object to what they regard as over large stamps. Certainly there was a lot of criticism of the stamps mentioned by Mr Micklem when they were issued.

This is not a question of the Post Office lacking originality. Instead they are taking a sensible approach and concentrating on the design, within the pattern of a consistent and pleasant shape.

The current reasons for the four denominations are well known and frequently publicised. This is the current thinking and should be accepted.

I D CRANE

Definitive Stamp Change

A 7p definitive stamp with a single phosphor bar to meet the recently introduced basic second class letter rate is now on sale.

32. Churchill Commemoration, 1965

The death of Sir Winston Churchill, soldier, statesman and most renowned of Englishmen, on 30 January 1965, spurred the Post Office to action with a prompt announcement of a forthcoming commemorative issue of stamps in his honour. Such an issue had been planned for the previous November for Churchill's 90th birthday, but was aborted by lack of time. In the event, the stamps were postponed from 24 May to 8 July, taking precedence over the eight other special issues of stamps which had been scheduled for release from May onwards during 1965. An overtime ban in the Post Office supplies department effectively delayed five issues including the Churchills.

The Churchill designs were the joint work of David Gentleman and Rosalind Dease, and it was almost a foregone conclusion that they would be briefed to feature the famous 'Angry Lion' (or, as some biographers preferred, 'British Bulldog') portrait of Churchill from the photograph taken by Yousuf Karsh at Ottawa in 1942. It was, and is, the best-known portrait of Churchill, the dynamic man who, at the outbreak of World War II, had 'nothing to offer (the British people) but blood, toil, sweat and tears'.

Thus inspired, the designers finally pooled their ideas and produced two striking—even startling—versions of the Karsh portrait, one 'close', for the 4d, the other 'closer', for the 1s 3d, with the great man's forehead boldly cropped to give powerful emphasis to the strength of his face.

The stamp portraits appear to have a photographic 'negative' (rather than 'positive') quality and this effect was achieved in novel fashion—first the original print was 'bleached' to get rid of the grey tones (a process used in printing to obtain 'line' blocks from 'half-tone' subjects), then a suitably intense black and white version was selected. The resulting portrait has none of the subtle tone graduations normally associated with the photogravure printing process, a sombre, symbolic Churchill, depicted in the prime of life.

Churchill's rather massive left shoulder, which seemingly extends to infinity on the 4d design, was relieved by a single verticle white line which provided a separate panel for the Queen's

'Wilding' portrait and the figures of value. It was perhaps the one subject for which any kind of commemorative inscription would have been superfluous—the whole world knew of Churchill and his achievements! The simple white line was, however, not so simple in the execution: the slightest shift in the printing of the portrait apropos of the background resulted in a conspicuous 'kink' in the line where it crossed the top of the shoulder of both values, providing a minor variety of no especial significance.

The colours, too, were sombre—black and olive-brown for the 4d and black and grey for the 1s 3d—and the critics were more critical of the colours than of any other aspect of the designs, which purported to commemorate Churchill's glorious life and not, as could be imagined, his death. David Gentleman also designed the Post Office envelope which showed Sir Winston smoking the familiar cigar.

Enormous quantities (detailed below) were printed of the 4d Churchill stamp, and three different printing presses were used by the printers, Harrison and Sons, to cope with their production. The respective printings are fully described in the Gibbons' *Specialised Catalogue Vol. 3*, but briefly most of the 4d stamps, ordinary and phosphor-banded, were printed on the 'Rembrandt' machine, cylinder-numbers 1A-1B dot and no dot, with a noticeable lack of shading on Churchill's portrait and poor definition of the Queen's portrait. Varieties include watermark inverted and a vertical scratch down Churchill's face, stamp 3 in row 20.

The 'Timson' press was employed for extra supplies of the 4d, printed from cylinders 5A-6B no dot on ordinary paper, Churchill's portrait showing more detail—furrow on forehead, his left eyebrow fully drawn (almost omitted on the 'Rembrandt') and a sharper, lighter Queen's portrait. The 'Linotype & Machinery No. 4' press was used to print the 1s 3d stamps, ordinary and phosphor, also found with watermark inverted. Two copies of the 4d stamp are known with the Queen's head omitted.

The stamps were photogravure-printed in sheets of 120 (6×20) on watermarked 'multiple



crowns' paper. Quantities issued (phosphor in brackets) were: 4d Rembrandt, 103,217,520 (10,322,760); Timson, 32,040,000; 1s 3d 7,893,480 (864,960). Presentation packs: 40,946.

JAMES WATSON

National Postal Museum Notes

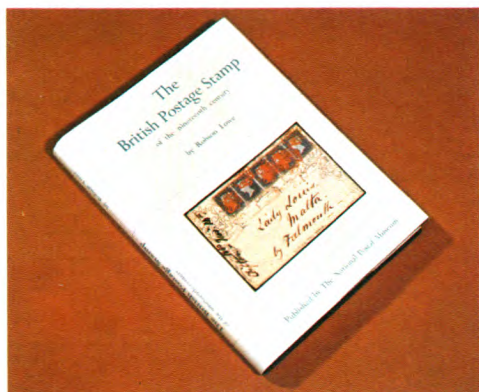
Foremost among the publications of the National Postal Museum is 'The British Postage Stamps of the Nineteenth Century', by Robson Lowe. This book details the generous gifts of his priceless philatelic collection to the nation, by Reginald M Phillips CBE, the founder of the Museum.

Individual studies of many of the lovely and interesting gems from this collection have been the subjects of regular articles featured in the Bulletin over the years. Readers may like to know that the book also covers extensively many other facets of the collection. Profusely illustrated with 192 colour plates, it does so much more than merely catalogue the contents of the collection; almost every page describes a highlight, setting—

in a scholarly and most readable way—the scene for Rowland Hill's reforms of 1840. It further records a comprehensive account of the Treasury Competition of 1839, and the many ideas submitted by the public for the pre-payment of postage, together with details of the inception of the 'penny black' and its various stages of production. Not forgotten are the many official and privately produced, illustrated envelopes of the period—including those published as propaganda for campaigns such as Ocean Penny Postage and Anti-Slavery, together with caricatures of Post Office issues, such as the Mulready stationery of 1840 and the souvenir covers issued in 1890 for the Jubilee of Uniform Penny Postage. The story of the many and varied cancellation trials of the early days is also dealt with in depth, as is the interesting story of the experiments which led to the perforation of postage stamps, in 1854. All British postage stamps issued during the reign of Queen Victoria are dealt with in turn—the story even extends to other forms of adhesive stamps produced by the Post Office, Government departments and private firms for different services, not all allied directly to the postal service. Included in this section are newspaper stamps, denoting the payment of Government tax on newspapers; stamps issued by railway companies—and even 'dummy' stamps produced by De La Rue and Co, the printers.

One of the purposes for which the book was written was to give to those unable to visit the Museum, the chance to read about the collection. This worthwhile publication describes philatelically all that went into the great reform brought to the Post Office by Rowland Hill, and the reasons for the many alterations to the postage stamps issued during the long reign of Queen Victoria. The book opens up to the enthusiastic philatelist new paths for research and discovery, and, at the same time enables the stamp collector to discover and examine any rarities he may possess.

Since the publication of the book in 1968, the Museum has been able to maintain the original price of £3.75. Stocks still available at this price are limited, and any new issue will have to



reflect the higher production costs of today. Those readers who do not have the book in their collections should not delay in availing themselves of the opportunity to buy a copy at the original price. It can be purchased direct from the Museum's sales counter; it must be stressed, however, that the Museum cannot undertake orders by post. Such orders should be sent to:-

The British PO
Philatelic Bureau
Lothian House
124 Lothian Road
EDINBURGH
EH3 9BB

with the remittance made payable to the 'Post Office Office' and crossed A/C payee.

JEAN FARRUGIA

Beamish Philatelic Week-End

The second Residential Philatelic Week-end, held at Beamish Hall, Co Durham during April, was most successful. The fully booked course was organised by Desmond Graham, Len Armstrong and Bob and Dorothy Martin in a congenial atmosphere amid pleasant surroundings. Beamish Hall has been reserved for a third philatelic week-end from 5-7 May 1978.

Further details can be obtained from Dorothy M Martin, 46 Briardene Crescent, Kenton Park, Newcastle Upon Tyne NE3 4RY.

The 1977 Melville Junior Stamp Competition

The Cup Winners in this year's Melville Junior Stamp Competition are:—

- Class A. 21-18 Years. Peter Richards. Woking P.S.
- Class B. 18-16 Years. Clive Roberts. British Airmail Society.
- Class C. 16-13 Years. Martyn Jackson. Midland Philatelic Federation.
- Class D. Under 13 Years. Michael Pain. Kent Philatelic Federation.

Silver Medals were awarded to:

- Class A. Peter Richards. Woking P.S.
- Class B. Clive Roberts. British Airmail Society.
- Class C. Martyn Jackson. Midland Philatelic Federation.
Gillian Humphrey. Kent Philatelic Federation.

Bronze/Silver Medals were awarded to:

- Class B. Graham Foster. Preston and District P.S.
- Class C. Andrew Cross. Bristol North P.S.
Denise Pain. Kent Philatelic Federation.
- Class D. Peirs Fuller. Kent Philatelic Federation.
Darren Willis. Henfield and District P.S.
Simon Rapkin. Germany and Colonies P.S.
Michael Pain. Kent Philatelic Federation.
Paul Lewis. Hull and District P.S.

Bronze Medals were awarded to:

- Class B. Antonio Fernandez. Cambridge P.S.
Antony Elliott. Epsom and Ewell P.S.
- Class C. Paul Blakey. Sunderland P.S.
Roger Newman. Witham P.S.
Howard Summers. Harrow P.S.
- Class D. Philip Blakey. Sunderland P.S.
Gavin Russell. Kent Philatelic Federation.
Antony Shine. Ilford and District P.S.
Sarah Newman. Witham P.S.

The Cartwright Medal

This has been awarded to Paul Lewis for his exhibit 'Russian Imperial Arms'.

The National Westminster Bank Prize

This has been awarded to Peter Richards for his exhibit 'G.B. Line Engraved'.

Certificates of Merit were awarded to:-

- Class A. Kevin Mason.
- Class B. Steven Woolven, David Simms.
- Class C. Christopher Macauley, Garrie Naden, Andrew Day.
- Class D. Andrew Allard, Paul White, Janet Stackhouse, Heather Stackhouse, Douglas Reid, Claire Shaw, Robert Arberry, Elizabeth Wood, Philip Wood, Andrew Tenison.

Royal Silver Jubilee Postcard

Following the issue of the new 9p Royal Silver Jubilee postage stamp, a postcard reproduction is now available at most main post offices, philatelic counters and the Philatelic Bureau, price 7p.

Windsor Handstamp

Our illustration shows the new design of the Windsor handstamp to be used on and after 11 July 1977.



Forces Covers

RAF Cover (AD) 26 will commemorate the B17 Flying Fortress of the Euroworld USAAF WWII Memorial Flight which participated in the flying display at the recently held 1977 Biggin Hill Air Fair. The covers were flown in the Flying Fortress and will be issued with a special commemorative handstamp, BFPS Biggin Hill 1560. The covers will be available in mid July from PRO, RAF Museum, Aerodrome Road, Hendon, London NW9 5LL at 35p plus postage.

RAF Cover (C46) will commemorate the last flight of the Belfast in RAF Service. The covers were flown on the last flight in Belfast XR 366 on 3 May 1977. They will be issued with a special commemorative handstamp BFPS 1579 and will be available from:

Flt Lt I Laurie
No 241 OCU
RAF Brize Norton
Oxford OX8 3LX

after 31 July at 35p plus postage. All proceeds of this cover will be devoted to the Battle of Britain Museum Appeal Fund.

RAF Cover (C47) is to commemorate the unfortunate closure of Royal Air Force Andover on 10 June 1977. Andover was one of Britain's earliest airfields and has been associated with service flying since 1916. The cover depicts a Handley Page 0/400 (1916), a Hart (1931), an Anson (1939) and a Devon (1977), all aircraft connected at sometime with the Station. The covers were flown on 10 June 1977 in a Harvard (aircraft of this type were based at Andover in 1944) and will be issued with a special commemorative handstamp, BFPS 1568. They will be available from:

Squadron Leader A D Walker (DP 01)
Headquarters RAF Support Command
RAF Brampton
Huntingdon
Cambs PE18 8QL

after 31 July at 35p plus postage.

All proceeds of this cover will be devoted to the Battle of Britain Appeal Fund.

Stamp Paper – a product of today's technology

To the general public postage stamps are associated with posting letters. They are licked, stuck to the envelope and dropped into the letter-box with little more thought than it takes to cross the road.

To a philatelist on the other hand, postage stamps are something entirely different. They are miniature art forms or small investment items which also offer the challenge of research into a variety of manufacturing techniques.

They are something different to the printer too, for the production of modern multi-coloured stamps represents just about the frontiers of today's printing technology.

Few, however, realise that their production has only been made possible through years of research and development into the most basic material of all—paper. Stamp paper though is no ordinary paper—it is a sophisticated product designed to meet the often conflicting demands of both user and producer. It must, for example, react to moisture in order to adhere to the envelope yet must also remain stable under extremes of temperature and humidity. It must possess precise qualities of stability and consistency to cope with today's high speed printing processes while at the same time contribute significantly to the security nature of the work. Increasingly it is required to take on new roles such as carrying the luminescent signal which triggers today's automated postal sorting procedures.

All this, and more has been achieved through developments in the production of base paper itself, together with highly complex formulations of coating and gum.

In terms of base paper, the type of fibre or furnish used for stamp paper has traditionally been rag or esparto. The trend today, however, is away from these expensive fibres as developments in the paper making make them unnecessary. Today's furnish is usually 'woodfree', which means that the paper is made from chemically pulped wood fibre without any mechanically produced wood pulp of the type found in newspapers. Both long and short fibres provide printability and stability.

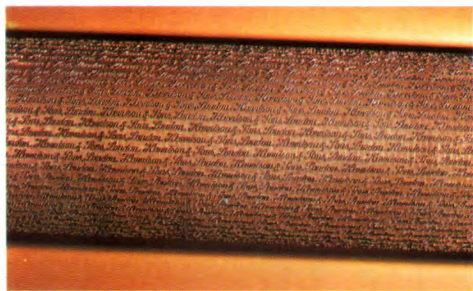
Base paper may be either plain or watermarked. Watermarking is used as a security device and introduced during the paper making process by a 'dandy roll'—a wire roll fixed on the wet end of the paper machine. A pattern is brazed to the dandy roll in relief, which compresses the wet fibre to produce a permanent pattern on the finished paper. Often, however, the watermark on a printed stamp is difficult to detect which, when added to the problems such marks can cause during the printing process, has led to a trend towards the use of unwatermarked papers in recent years. Sometimes coloured fibres are used instead of a watermark. These may be visible to the naked eye or they may require an ultra violet light for detection.

The weight of the base paper (substance) is referred to in grammes per square metre (gsm), and this may vary from 63gsm to 100gsm. A typical stamp paper would be made up of 70gsm base paper, 14gsm coating and 12gsm of gum. The substance of the paper used is often determined by the printing and perforating process. When the new stamp machine was installed for printing British stamps at Harrison's, the base paper substance was increased from 63gsm to 70gsm, as this was an overall requirement of the perforation process.

Apart from paper fibre, the base paper also contains a number of additives—the main ones being clay to fill up the gaps between fibres and size which is added to the bulk of the fibre to give the paper resistance to moisture. Size is also applied to the surface and this imparts a certain amount of 'stiffness' to the sheet and reduces the risk of loose fibres, which could cause problems during printing. A number of papers also contain optical bleaching agents to improve the whiteness of the sheet. Apart from these paper-making materials, luminescent materials are used from which signals activate automatic letterfacing machinery.

Coatings were initially applied to stamp paper as a security device to prevent removal of cancellation marks. It was found, however, that when the coating was suitably formulated an improvement in print quality could also be

obtained. Recently the coating has had a further use as a vehicle for luminescent materials as this places these expensive substances on the surface of the stamp where it is required, rather than distributing them throughout the base paper.



Dandy roll used for watermarking.

As the demand for special issues and higher quality stamps increased, so the search for improved coatings began. It was soon found that coatings had to be formulated to suit the printing process. Gravure and recess papers were required to be smooth and absorbent, while offset papers needed a stronger surface and were less absorbent.

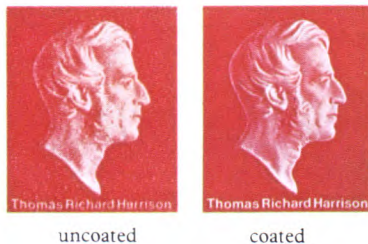
Differentiation between coated and uncoated papers can be difficult and this is certainly true for the various types of coating. The so-called 'chalk' coating can be detected by the 'silver pencil' test, although it is not necessary to use silver as a paper clip will suffice. The test is carried out by stroking the paper with the metal object when a black mark should appear. If the paper has been treated with an overall varnish or a phosphor ink as in the case of British special issues, the pencil test will not work. Similarly, with most offset stamp papers there is no reaction with the pencil test since there is little or no chalk in these coatings and the surface is less abrasive.

Postal automation systems depend upon the stamp as a trigger mechanism for facing and segregating, operating on phosphorescent or fluorescent properties. The luminescent material is either carried in the paper, the coating or printed on the stamp as a transparent ink. A higher and more consistent level of signal can be

achieved by carrying the materials in the coating since the material is on the surface where it is required, and further, does not come into contact with the tongue when the stamp is licked. Thus, coating the paper not only improves the print quality but acts as a carrier for the luminescent signal.

Luminescent signals can be divided into two types—phosphorescent materials which continue to glow after exposure to an ultra violet light and fluorescent materials which glow only while exposed to the UV light but which have no 'after glow'. In order to detect the luminescent materials in postage stamps, it is necessary to have an ultra violet lamp with long and short wave capabilities. British and American stamp phosphors are examples of luminescent materials requiring short wave UV for detection.

Some papers contain an optical bleaching agent as well as the luminescent materials and this could make identification of fluors more difficult. Although the signal is still present, the characteristic colour of the luminescence can be obscured by the OBA since the effect of luminescence is additive—thus yellow and blue do not make green but tend to make the paper appear whiter. Similarly, a yellow fluor in the presence of OBA will appear white, while a yellow on its own appears yellow. The effect of OBA can be eliminated by observing the colours through a red filter. It should be remembered not to look directly at an ultra violet lamp as this could cause damage to the eyes.



Gravure print on coated and uncoated stamp paper.

The traditional gum for stamp paper is Arabic. This is obtained from the Acacia tree in the Sudan. The gum is obtained from the bark and is left to dry on the sand. As a result, considerable filtration and cleaning is required before the gum can be used as it arrives combined with sand and bark. Arabic is classified as old and new crop, old crop being the type used for postage stamp gumming as new crop gives processing difficulties forming fine threads of gum around the gumming machines. Because of the variation in the quality of Arabic, and the difficulties in obtaining regular supplies, alternative gums were developed.

The first of these was Dextrine which is a modified starch obtained from potatoes and maize. Dextrine is a more consistent product and regular supplies can be obtained. Both Arabic and Dextrine have the disadvantage in that they are liable to curl and only a slight change in temperature or relative humidity can result in paper rolling up into a tube.

To prevent curl, the gummed paper is 'fractured'. This involves passing the paper over diagonally positioned knives at an acute angle. This process permits some dimensional changes in the gum without inducing the stresses in the paper which cause curl. A stamp which has been fractured has a crazed appearance when viewed under a magnifying glass and this is useful when identifying the type of gum, as a fractured surface indicates the presence of either Arabic or Dextrine.

In the late '60s, the British Post Office

started using polyvinylalcohol as this was found to be a superior adhesive with good lay-flat properties, and did not require fracturing. In fact, because of the elastic nature it could not be fractured and can be recognized by its less-



Fracturing machine showing knives.

glossy appearance and the absence of fracture cracks. Polyvinylalcohol is a much stronger adhesive than either Arabic or Dextrine and as a result less is required. It is normally applied at about 12-14gsm whereas Arabic or Dextrine require 20-30 gsm. Furthermore, because polyvinylalcohol does not become 'tacky' at high relative humidities, it is not necessary to interleave paper produced on this gum even in tropical countries. Because polyvinylalcohol is a synthetic material, obtained from petroleum derivatives, a consistent and regular supply is available.

The latest developments in gums is the particle gum which is applied from a solvent in which the gum is not soluble. Thus, discreet particles of the gum, which is usually a Dextrine derivative, can be applied to the surface to accommodate changes in moisture without curl. This makes it very useful on modern recess printing machines which require a high drying temperature. Furthermore, this type of gum can be applied on a printing machine using an etched plate, either as a patch or an all-over coating. Countries using this type of gum include Sweden, Denmark and the United States. Particle gum can easily be distinguished by its very matt appearance and is often mistaken for ungummed paper because of this.



Gummed surface showing fracture marks

It was stated earlier that today's stamp paper is the result of years of research and development. This has not stopped and new techniques and materials are constantly being evaluated. What changes then are we likely to see in future years?

Coated paper will be used increasingly, even on recess stamps where previously it was considered that there was little benefit to be gained. The trend towards matt papers will continue, even on offset papers, whilst still retaining the high print quality. Coating will become more sophisticated

and will be concerned more with chemical reactions than just mixing techniques.

Particle gum will be seen more frequently on stamps, particularly when its no-curling can be used to advantage on machinery where conventional gums are unsuitable.

On base paper, rag and esparto furnishes replaced by wood-free pulp. The spiral dandy roll will be used more and this could stimulate the use of more watermarked papers.

BY ADRIAN TOPHAM, B.SC., M.I. CHEM.ENG.

Some Aspects of the Machin Decimal High Value

To the purist the £1 issued at the same time as the 10p, 20p and 50p values on the 17 June 1970 certainly did not belong to the same class as the other values, for one the design was slightly different and for another the method of plate production entirely so. Common ground was that all were printed in sheets of 100 and the vertical sheet margins bore references to the total face value of the sheet. Prior to June 1970 the £1 was printed as four panes of each 40 units (5 horizontal rows of 8) being put on sale as separate panes whereas afterwards the sheet make up was changed to correspond to that of the decimals i.e. 100 units (10×10). Both were made in the usual manner for a recess printed stamp through probably the direction of rocking for one was down the stamp while for the other across the stamp. The specialist will be able to detect differences accounted by this but one must emphasise that the method of plate manufacture was no different to the normal for a recess printed stamp.

Following the repositioning of the figure of value to bring the whole series to a common style Messrs Bradbury Wilkinson & Co. produced the printing plates by the same manner as for the 10, 20, and 50p denominations i.e. by master pane and matrix. At first as single panes of 100 and later as twin panes 2×100 side by side.

A number is accorded to a plate to enable quick identification and usually different plate design or construction implies a renumbering. Thus the original £1 Sterling Machine 4 panes were printed from plates 3 and 4; the first 100 set (same design) from plates 2 and 3, the redesign from plate 4 onward. Presumably for the latter, redesign, plates 1-3 were not acceptable though at first sight the numbering seems to have continued from the previous sequence. The existence of original design plate 2 was known almost from the first day of issue but was not actually recorded as having been put on sale until October 1970 when a few copies were seen in places as far apart as the Midlands and Surrey. The numbers found have been very small and it would seem that they were distributed in error, the plate having been since destroyed.

£1

Post Office Supplied Paper—1970. Printed as one pane 10×10, Plates 2 and 3

£1 (redesigned)

Post Office Supplied Paper—1972. Single pane plate nos. 4 and 7

Contractor Supplied Paper—1973. Single pane plate nos. 8 and 9

Contractor Supplied Paper—1974. Single pane plate nos. 10 and 11. Also reissue 4 and 7

Contractor Supplied Paper—1975. Double pane plates 12/12A, 13/13A

Contractor Supplied Paper—1976. Double pane plates 14/14A.

The reissue of plates 4 and 7 was—like the 50—a ‘make do and mend’ measure whilst the double pane plates were being prepared.

For those who would like to pursue further into the Machin decimal high values—one supposes now called Series 1—the writer recommends membership to the British Decimal Stamps Study Circle; other pertinent matter will be found in the Gibbons Part IV and the Philatelic Bulletin dated September ’73,

December ’73 and April ’74. Other philatelic sources include “Stamp Collecting.”

The Post Office has recently pronounced the death knell of the recess printed high value stamp by the announcement of a new series of high values £1, £2 and £5 to be produced by the photogravure process. That is not to say the new issue will not have as much interest as those recently described but obviously will be of a different character and quite as challenging.

DOUGLAS EVANS

Stamps for Pleasure 6. The Regionals

It seems incredible that almost 20 years have elapsed since the Post Office launched their distinctive definitive stamps for Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales and Monmouthshire, Jersey, Guernsey, and the Isle of Man. ‘Yes, my son, I well remember that day in 1958 . . .’ It was a bold move and the then Assistant PMG, Kenneth Thompson, MP, declared at a press preview that he thought the new stamps were ‘a valuable and attractive addition to the present range’. ‘It was a good thing,’ he said, ‘for national characteristics to be known and recognised.’

The regional stamps would be permanent and would replace existing issues in the various regions, while also being valid for postage in all parts of the United Kingdom. The initial cost was between £50,000 and £60,000 for design preparation and the first stages of production. The new stamps had a rather mixed reception—‘Regionals Rampant’ was the heading of a leader in Gibbons’ *Stamp Monthly* which was critical of the employment of three artists for the three individual designs for one region, in all, ten artists for the twelve designs. But . . . the stamps have survived, and there’s no doubt that even today (perhaps more so with devolution in the air) the Northern Irish, Scottish and Welsh are patriotically pleased to have their own stamps!

All the designs featured the Wilding portrait of the Queen. Those for Northern Ireland (3d, 6d and 1s 3d) depicted the Red Right Hand of

Ulster, an ancient symbol; the flax plant, symbolising the linen industry; and, inexplicably, a field gate. The Scottish designs were more predictable in the choice of emblems—again 3d, 6d and 1s 3d—the St Andrew’s Cross or Saltire (a heraldic device); the thistle, ‘crowned’ on the 3d, and ‘in danger of being mistaken for shuttlecocks’ on the 6d; and two crowned and collared unicorns. For Wales and Monmouthshire, all three stamps (3d, 6d and 1s 3d) gave prominence to the Welsh dragon, with a sprouting leek—not a pretty vegetable—on the 3d and a smaller version on the 1s 3d. Only the three Welsh stamps were consistent in style: they were the work of one artist, Reynolds Stone.

The 3d stamps for Jersey, Guernsey and the Isle of Man were intended for both local residents and holiday-makers, and served their purpose well. The designs, too, were well thought out and presented—Jersey, the island’s Royal Mace, and Coat of Arms; Guernsey, the crown of William the Conqueror, and a stylised Guernsey lily; and Man, the ‘legs of man’, armoured and spurred (the arms of the ancient kingdom), and a runic ring chain of Norse origin which framed three sides of the stamp. Later, the Post Office introduced presentation packs for all regions except Jersey and Guernsey.

Subsequent increases in postal rates brought new values to each of the three main regions, in line with the ordinary GB definitives—the addition of 4d, 5d, 9d and 1s 6d denominations

was further complicated by colour changes (three for the 4d) and the introduction of phosphor bands. Jersey and Guernsey gained new 2½d stamps (in new designs) and 4d and 5d values before these islands established their own independent postal administrations and stamps, and the regional issues were withdrawn (1969). Man also had a new 2½d and a series of 4d and 5d stamps, and even entered the 'decimal era' with four new stamps—these were withdrawn when, in its turn, the Manx independent postal administration was inaugurated in 1973.

The 'decimal regionals', introduced in July 1971, at once dated the forerunners as obsolete, both in usage and in design. Designer Jeffery Matthews, responsible for the GB Royal Silver Wedding stamps, our current postage dues and many other designs, dispensed with the clutter of emblems and symbols which had all but swamped the previous regionals, and adapted the familiar Machine profile to each of the four regions with

just one emblem for each, perfectly balanced in relation to the portrait and to the figures of value. 'POSTAGE' and 'REVENUE', inherited from the 'bad old days', were conveniently ditched.

Again, changes in postal rates and of the appropriate stamps requiring a single phosphor band (for second-class mail) and two bands respectively have brought additional denominations into the regional range. Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales and Monmouthshire started in 1971 with 2½p, 3p, 5p and 7½p values. These have been supplanted by a single-banded 3p, two 3½p versions, 4½p, 5½p (2) and 8p stamps, and more recently, 6½p and 8½p.

Varieties abound in all issues and whether you are partial to Ulster's 'Red Hand', the Scottish 'Lion' or the Welsh 'Dragon', there is scope aplenty for an interesting and satisfying specialised collection. (*Since 1971 the Post Office has referred to Regionals as 'Country' Stamps.*)

JAMES WATSON

British Postage Stamps as seen through the eyes of a Dutch philatelist

I have been asked by the Editor to give, in this short paper, some impressions of how collectors in Holland assess British postage stamps.

It is a good thing he did not put this question to me say 25 years ago, because the answer then would simply have been—dull, drab, interesting only to specialists, and with some exceptions obtainable in this country at a fifth of the catalogue value as far as used copies are concerned.

These are reflections of the days when stamps did not have the philatelic appeal they enjoy today.

There has always been one clear exception—the 'penny black', well known to collectors and non-collectors alike in my country. It is curious that no one speaks of the 'two penny blue' in quite the same vein although it made its appearance at the same time. However, these the world's first postage stamps deserve their fame because their dignity and quality have seldom been surpassed

during 137 years. They are real securities, comparable to banknotes and coins, and far above the 'match box labels' issued now by many countries as postage stamps. Add to this the 'mysterious ever changing letters in the bottom corners, the uncommon black colour, and you have some reasons for the reputation of the perfect line-engraved, 'mother' of all stamps.

During the ensuing years the interest shown by the general collector was relatively small because the designs were more or less the same—Queen Victoria portraying ever-lasting youth. An interesting issue however, was that of the embossed stamps of 1847-1854, but unfortunately many copies seen here are cut out around the octagonal design and accepted that way simply because people did not know exactly how these stamps were meant to be cut.

The majority of Dutch collectors are not so

much interested in plate numbers, watermarks and more recently phosphor bands, as their British counterparts appear to be. These areas of study are left to the specialist. The specialized collectors of pre-war British stamps are not often seen in exhibitions in Holland, unlike the collections of old Germany, the German States, France and Switzerland which seem to possess a greater appeal.

The appearance of the bicoloured stamps in 1887 broke the monotony somewhat, but interest shown by the average collector here has grown with the introduction of commemorative stamps with varied designs, and giving information about British history and the British way of life. The Battle of Hastings set, with its superb printing in nine colours of scenes depicted in the Bayeux Tapestry, is a good example. Subjects such as British Architecture, Discoveries, Ships, Paintings, and Sir Winston Churchill have a strong appeal, particularly to the thematic collectors.

It is appreciated among Dutch collectors that the British Post Office restricts its issue of stamps and that prices are within the limits of everyone's pocket. We hope that it will continue with this policy which also prevails in Holland.

Recently the Dutch Post Office held a Gallop poll on the collecting habits of the people of the Netherlands. It showed that in some 400,000 families there was one or more persons over the age of 15 years who collected postage stamps. Dutch stamps are collected by 90% of them, and of that figure, about 150,000 collected 'other countries'. The ratio of 'classics' collectors to 'thematic' collectors is about 1 to 1. Those collecting 'other countries' often base their priorities on design and craftsmanship; Austrian and Swiss are but two examples. The poll does not give an indication as to the numbers of GB collectors we have, but when the author has discussed this question with stamp club members and private collectors, one gets the strong impression that the popularity and interest in them has grown dramatically in recent years. I think that the sets of colour slides illustrating your stamps and accompanying texts in our language, made available by the British Post

Office to all stamp clubs in Holland, has contributed to this. One notices more and more in philatelic exhibitions representative collections of modern British stamps—the Machin definitives are examples.

This growing appreciation has brought with it an increasing interest in the earlier stamps and it is noticeable that prices of these stamps, neglected for nearly 100 years, are steadily rising.

When speaking to Dutch philatelists about the stamps of Great Britain, questions are asked, and one in particular. We cannot understand the failure of the 1974 Charity stamp with the additions 1½p made available to charitable organisations. In Holland we have two sets of such stamps issued each year with rather high surcharges, in particular the children's sets released just before Christmas which are always a big success and bring in millions of guilders to children's funds. Is it traditional in Britain that a stamp should be available only as its operational price?

May I ask a final question—why are British collectors so interested in, and prepared to pay for, varieties such as missing colours etc?

As you will see, this article does not deal with specific issues. This aspect has been covered in the Bulletin by contributors more qualified than I, although many words of praise could be said about such issues as the Christmas stamps, the excellence of the Roses and Jane Austen issues, not forgetting Sailing and the 500 anniversary of Printing. Unfortunately the black Social Reform set is less admired. One more thing which puzzles Dutch collectors is the necessity for Regional stamps. They do, however, add to the charm of collecting British stamps.

We hope that future philatelic exhibitions held in Holland will contain more outstanding collections, showing various facets of British philately, thus enabling us to appreciate more this field of collecting.

Stamp collecting is a universal hobby which promotes friendships. British postage stamps have an important part to play in this.

JAN SCHAFER

Special Handstamps

Unless otherwise stated, items for reposting should bear $\frac{1}{2}p$ in excess of the normal postage and should be sent to the Head Postmaster of the town where the special posting box is located or the relevant District Postmaster in London, marking the outer cover 'Special Handstamp'.

9 June-24 August 1977 (P/R)

Silver Jubilee Exhibition Trafalgar Square London WC2. Special posting box at the Silver Jubilee Appeal Mobile Unit, Trafalgar Square, London WC2.

12 July 1977 (P/C)

119 Years of Local News Barnsley Chronicle Group 12 July 1977 Silver Jubilee Year. Special posting box at Barnsley Chronicle Main Office, Church Street, Barnsley, South Yorkshire S70 2AS.

12 July 1977 (P/R)

The Star Commemorates the Royal Jubilee Visit July 12 1977 Sheffield. Special posting box at the Sheffield Newspapers Promotions Reception Office, York Street, Sheffield S1 1PU.

15 July 1977 (P/R)

Royal Visit to Cramlington Northumberland 15 July 1977. Special posting box at the Concordia Leisure Centre, Forum Way, Cramlington, Northumberland NE23 6YB.

15 July 1977 (P/R)

Roan Schools' Anniversary 15 July 1977 Blackheath SE3. Special posting box at the main Lobby Roan Boys' School, Maze Hill, Blackheath, London SE3 7UD.

16 July 1977 (P/R)

Kirriemuir District Agricultural Association Centenary 1877-1977 Kirriemuir Angus 16th July 1977. Special posting box at the Showground, Kirriemuir, Angus DD8 4AA.

16 July 1977 (C)

The Rotary Club of High Wycombe 50th Anniversary 16 July 1977. Special posting box at Wycombe Abbey School, Abbey Way, High Wycombe, Bucks HP11 1PE.

29 July 1977 (P/R)

Cheltenham 25 Gottingen 25 Anniversary Celebrations 29 July 1977 Cheltenham Spa Glos. Special posting box at the Town Hall, Imperial Square, Cheltenham Spa, Glos GL50 1QA.

5 August 1977 (P/C)

Royal Visit Semper Fidelis Exeter 5 Aug 1977. Special posting box at the Civic Centre, Guild Hall and Museum, Exeter.

Postmark Slogans

Unless otherwise stated, items for reposting bearing the appropriate postage rate should be forwarded to the Head Postmaster of the town where the slogan is to be used marking the outer cover 'Postmark Slogan'.

1 June-30 July 1977 (P)

Girling Moto-Cross Grand-Prix Hawkstone Park Salop 31st July. To be used at Shrewsbury. 1st and 2nd class.

13 June-13 August 1977

Cardiff Searchlight Tattoo Cardiff Castle August 4th to 13th (excluding Sunday 7th) Details from City Hall Cardiff. To be used at Cardiff. 2nd class.

1st July-30 September 1977 (P)

Sun Sea Sand Hastings Is Grand. To be used at Hastings. 1st and 2nd class.

14 October 1977 (P)

Oyez Oyez Its Hastings Day. To be used at Hastings. 1st and 2nd class.

P denotes Pictorial

C denotes Circular

R denotes Rectangular

Letters to the Editor

Dear Sir,

Storing GB Air Letter Forms

The response to my SOS in your January issue revealed an unexpected interest in this subject and I am most grateful to all those who took the time and trouble to write to you and also to me. Mr E R Westlake of Brixham, Devon, and Mr

Peter Wilson of Norwich have supplied me with details of a commercial album (designed for drawings and plans etc) which has stiff covers and stout transparent pockets which comfortably house foolscap sheets. I obtained one of these from a local stationer's shop. This album can be obtained with either 18 or 24 pockets and I understand that single pockets are obtainable. All my British illustrated air letters are now accommodated in this album. The one serious snag is that the album is fast bound but for storing such air letters is quite satisfactory.

If all my problems could be solved as easily as this one, how much more enjoyable life would be. May I say a hearty thank you to the many readers who came to my rescue.

Appreciatively yours

Ipswich, Suffolk

SYLVESTER PEAT

Dear Sir

In the April Edition of the Philatelic Bulletin, your correspondent D C Maclay brought to the attention of readers a certain 'Mail Coach Stone' on the Moffat/Edinburgh road beside the Devils Beef Tub, and he suggested that further information as to the 'stone' may come from elsewhere. In this regard I am pleased to advise you that an event is commemorated as follows:-

NEAR THE HEAD OF THIS BURN

ON 1st FEB 1831

JAMES McGEORGE—GUARD

and JOHN GOODFELLOW—DRIVER
of the DUMFRIES TO EDINBURGH MAIL

LOST THEIR LIVES IN THE SNOW

AFTER CARRYING THE BAGS THUS FAR.

ERECTED 1931

I would mention that the memorial is on a granite tablet inserted into a fine cairn of local stone some 10 feet high by 10 feet breadth, the granite tablet is emblazoned with a bugle shaped horn.

The 1930's must have been a generous age, for within sight of this mail stone there is another granite tablet erected in 1935 on the edge of the Devils Beef Tub, which tells the passer-by that John Hunter, covenantor, was shot by Douglas

Dragoons in 1685 on the hillside opposite, and his grave may be found in the Tweedsmuir Kirk Yard.

I trust this information is of interest to your readers and particularly your correspondent.

Yours faithfully

ANNAN DUMFRIESSHIRE

J B LIDGLEY

Dear Sir,

In my office, only about 20% of incoming mail carries postage stamps. Stamps are almost obsolete for any sizeable business, for Government Departments, Local Authorities, and so on, as they all use franking machines or various forms of prepayment. Even the Philatelic Bureau doesn't use stamps.

So our too-frequent and ephemeral special issues seem to be aimed mainly at collectors; in particular, first-day covers, which to my mind have no philatelic interest as they serve no purpose postally. Two items from recent Bulletins — the news that nearly half the 1975 charity stamps were bought by dealers and collectors, and the feeble reasons given for not issuing second-class special stamps except at Christmas time — illustrate the increasing orientation of stamps towards collectors rather than postal services. An old-established phenomenon in many countries, but a comparatively new one in Britain.

Franking machines and prepayment are here to stay for obvious reason of convenience and efficiency. So I would like to suggest, firstly, that the standard of design and production of the labels and imprints should be raised towards the usually very high standard of our adhesive stamps (for instance, by the revival of the use of embossed stationery); and secondly, that special issues of stamps should be made more widely available to those who still use them, by the inclusion of second-class stamps and perhaps other low values. Surely it is particularly unfortunate that the Jubilee stamps will not include values for minimum-weight inland second-class mail or for postcards abroad.

Yours faithfully

Ipswich, Suffolk

ADAM GORDON

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