

November 1995



British Philatelic Bulletin

Volume 33. No: 3 The Royal Mail Magazine for Stamp Collectors Price 75p



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British Philatelic Bulletin

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Royal Mail also publishes the fortnightly **British Postmark Bulletin** giving details of forthcoming special handstamps and postmark slogans. Available on annual subscription from British Philatelic Bureau (address above) UK & Europe £10, Rest of World £21.75.

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Feathers, Folklore and Philately 76

Philip Parker looks at Britain's national bird in folklore, on Christmas cards and stamps



Robins aplenty on the 1995 Christmas stamps

Royal Mail News

Blue Fluor Update

The 2p definitive has now been printed with the new blue fluor (see July *Bulletin* page 325) and will be available from the British Philatelic Bureau during November. Collectors are reminded that an ultra-violet lamp is necessary to check the colour (yellow or blue) of the fluor on stamps. The following is a check list of stamps so far printed with the new fluor;

Sheet stamps – printed by Enschedé

2p
4p
41p

Coils – printed by Harrisons

19p
25p

Books – printed by Harrisons

25p (£1 books)
2nd NVI (Books of 4)
1st NVI (Books of 10)

Books – printed by Questa

2nd NVI (Books of 10)
1st NVI (Books of 10)

Books – printed by Walsall

35p (Books of 4)
1st NVI (Books of 4 and 10)

Country Stamps – printed by Questa

19p Scotland
25p Scotland
19p Wales
25p Wales

All these items are available on request from the Bureau. Stamps issued in books are available only in the complete books. Information on the availability of further sheet, coil and book stamps with blue fluor will be published in this magazine as it is received.

New Definitive Pack

A revised pack, No. 34, containing the 1p, 2p, 4p, 5p, 6p, 10p, 19p, 20p, 25p, 29p, 30p, 35p, 36p, 38p, 41p, 50p, 60p, and £1.00 low value Machin definitives will be available from the Bureau and Post Office Counters philatelic

outlets from 21 November, price £5.45. All stamps are printed by Enschedé except 19p and 25p (Harrisons) and 60p (Walsall). The 60p stamp is normally only available in books of four.

New Stamp Books

Two books with the new multistamp front cover design, introduced from January 1995, will be available from the Bureau and Post Office Counters philatelic outlets from 12 December: 4 x 2nd class printed by Walsall (price 76p) and 10 x 2nd printed by Harrison (£1.90). The stamps will have blue fluor yielding one new variation for specialist collectors – 2nd NVI printed Walsall with blue fluor.

Royal Mail will, as in 1992, be sponsoring the British teams in the 1996 Olympic and Paralympic Games. The team logos will be incorporated on the covers of stamp books next year and the first are expected in January – details to be published shortly. The “Someone Special” promotion on books of 10 x 1st class stamps (September 1995) has proved popular and a further promotional book is planned for February 1996.

A book of four 1st class stamps and a commemorative label marking the 70th birthday of HM The Queen is to be issued next April. At the same time stamp cards will be issued bearing enlargements of this label and the two earlier ones – Bank of England (July 1994), and R J Mitchell (May 1995).

Railway Aerogrammes

The issue of Royal Mail International's new series of pictorial aerogrammes showing railway locomotives has been further delayed; these are not now expected until 1996. The new date of issue will be published here in due course.

NPM Christmas Postcards

Four new postcards issued by the National Postal Museum to coincide with the 1995 Christmas stamps are now available. The cards feature:

NPM95/18. “The Royal Mail in Snow”, c.1850 – painting by Samuel Henry Alken Jnr (1810-94).

NPM95/19. A 1943 Christmas Airgraph, sent from the Middle East to Glasgow.

NPM95/20. Postman trudging through the snow back to a Post Office Morris Minor 50cf van. Winter in Scotland, 1962.

NPM95/21. Post Office van being dug out of the snow. Winter in Scotland, 1962.

The illustrations on cards 18 & 19 are from NPM Collection, 20 & 21 from Post Office

Photograph Library.

The cards are available to callers at the Museum Shop, price 25p each, or by post price £1 the set of four from: British Philatelic Bureau, 20 Brandon Street, EDINBURGH EH3 5TT.

The National Postal Museum, King Edward Street, LONDON EC1A 1LP is a few minutes walk from St Paul's Cathedral and underground station. Open Mon-Fri 09.30-16.30, admission free. Enquiries: 0171-239 5420.

Friends of the NPM: Gift Suggestion

Selecting a Christmas gift that will be truly appreciated by the receiver is a problem which faces us all at the time of year. A handsome gift, suitable for him or her, is a two-year subscription to the Association of Friends of the National Postal Museum. The annual subscription costs £15, but in this season of goodwill we are offering a 10% reduction to £27. For this the recipient will be sent a package containing mint copies of this year's NPM postcards; Spring and Autumn issues of *Cross Post*, the Friends' journal; and the beautifully produced *NPM Review* for 1994. They will be despatched gift-wrapped together with your own dedication card. Then until 31 March 1997, we will send, at regular intervals, the latest issues of these items. Write to the Association's Secretary: Ray Pottle, PO Box 40, UCKFIELD, E Sussex, TN22 2SP with your order and cheque payable to "Friends of the NPM". Ray assures you this Friends package will make a very pleasing gift. To ensure delivery by Christmas please order by 10 December.

Christmas Stamp Colours

The cylinders and colours for the 1995 Christmas stamps are as follows:

19p P28 (phosphor) 1A (silver) 1B (greenish yellow) 1C (vermilion) 1D (orange-vermilion) 1E (bistre) 1F (black)

25p P31 1A (silver) 1B (greenish yellow) 1C (scarlet) 1D (pale blue) 1E (ochre) 2F (black)

30p P29 1A (silver) 3B (greenish yellow) 1C (rose-carmine) 2D (light green) 1E (olive-brown) 2F (grey)

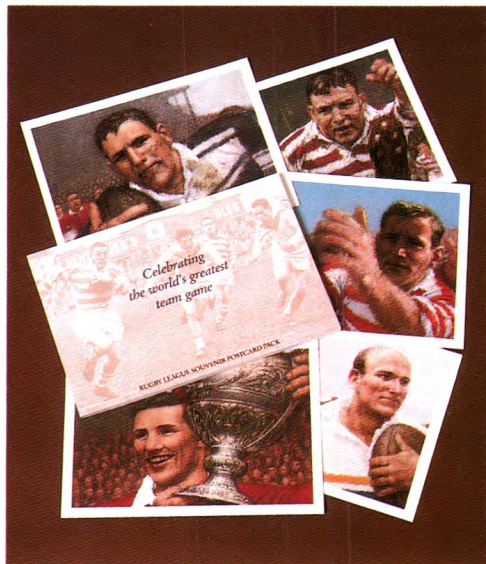
41p P31 1A (silver) 1B (greenish yellow) 1C (rose-red) 1D (dull blue) 1E (bistre) 1F (black)

60p P31 1A (silver) 1B (orange-yellow) 1C (red-orange) 1D (bistre) 1E (black)

Rugby League Souvenir Postcard Pack

This new pack contains 10 postcards, two of each of the five stamp designs for the Rugby League Centenary stamps. The cards reproduce

the artwork of the stamps, without The Queen's head, value and captions. The reverse of the cards gives the information about each player, as shown on the stamp cards (PHQ cards). The pack's introductory pages contain information and illustrations relating to Rugby League history and the Rugby League Hall of Fame which celebrates 10 of the greatest players ever to have played the game. Five of these feature on the stamps. The pack is available from the British Philatelic Bureau, price £2.95.



Rugby Stamps receive good press

The recent Rugby League stamps featured on BBC TV ("Look North" programme) and various BBC and commercial local radio stations. The poem especially commissioned for the Rugby league presentation pack featured in *The Guardian* and poet Steve Ellis was interviewed by Colin Welland on Radio Five Live. Royal Mail Editorial Manager Philip Parker told the *Bulletin* that he believed this was the first poem to have been commissioned by the Post Office since W H Auden's "Night Mail" in the 1930s, and he was delighted by the response, particularly since it was in time for National Poetry Day on 12 October.

Christmas Clanger!

There will be no Christmas gift pack as announced in error last month (page 39). We regret any inconvenience or disappointment caused. Gift packs are, however, still available for the 1995 Cats and National Trust issues.

London 2000 Exhibition

The staging of the next international stamp exhibition in London – “Stamp World 2000” at Earls Court, May 1990 – was formally announced at a well-attended philatelic trade and press preview at the Singapore '95 exhibition on 2 September. The announcement was carried as a stop press to September's *Bulletin*.

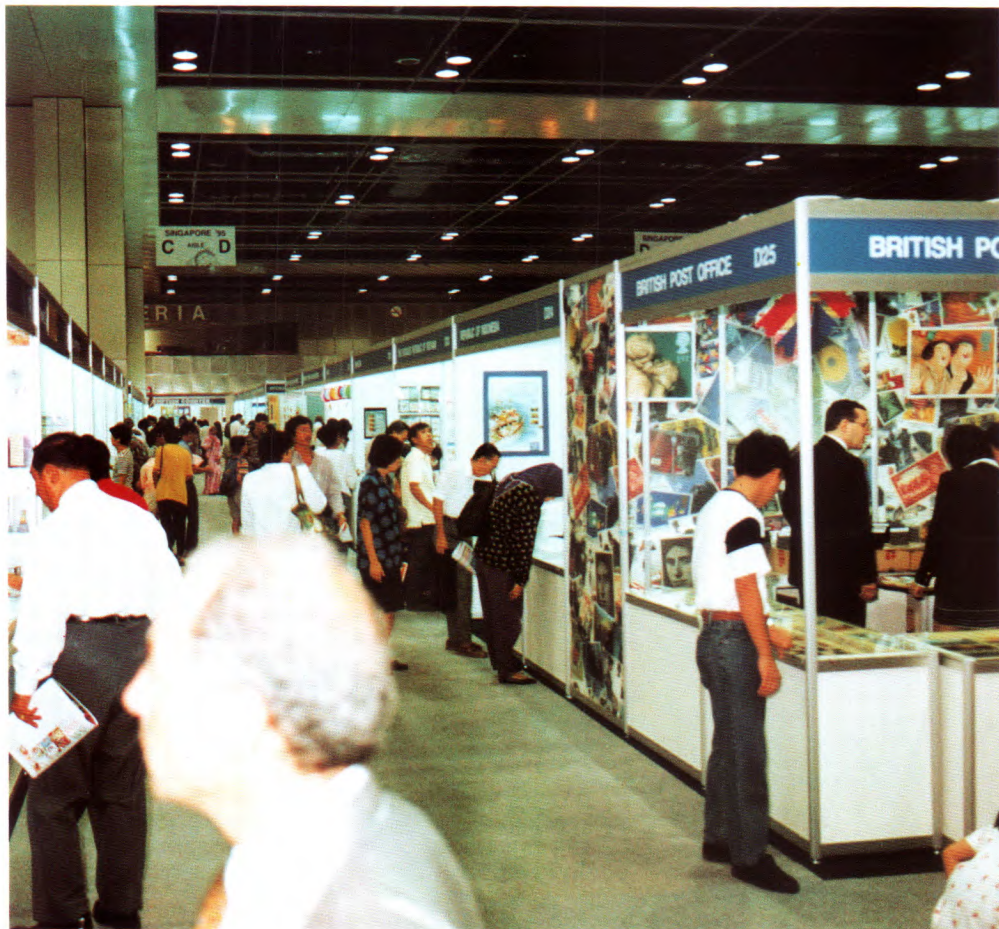
It is hoped that the exhibition will attract even more than the 93,000 visitors to Stamp World at Alexandra Palace in 1990.

Our photographs show a view of the Singapore '95 exhibition, and Patrick Pearson, Angela Reeves, and Terry Denham at the announcement of the London exhibition. Mr Pearson is Chairman of the London 2000 Working Group, Ms Reeves is Royal Mail's Project Manager for the exhibition, and Mr Denham Exhibitions Director of P&O Events,



the event staging subsidiary company of Earls Court Olympia Group.

“Stamp World 2000” will be held at Earls Court 1 exhibition hall, 22-28 May 2000.



Just published as twelfth in its series of yearbooks, **Royal Mail Special Stamps** makes a welcome appearance as a complete record of all the issues of 1995. As with previous editions, the book includes mint sets of all nine issues (a total of £12.94 face), for mounting in the transparent strips provided. Once again author Tim Shackleton has skilfully brought together the background detail to each set, allowing the various designers to explain the particular approaches they adopted in their work. These insights are especially valuable and should be read carefully by anyone taking part in the never-ending debate about the merits (or otherwise) of current British stamps. The interviews with these highly talented people show the dedication each has brought to this most difficult art of minuscule design.

The yearbook is a wonderful refresher of the memory. Can it really be as long ago as January that *Cats* were featured? The artist Elizabeth Blackadder says "I paint real cats, not idealised ones" and the book explains how each value achieves just that. March's set for Springtime came from a sculptor working in contemporary style, Andy Goldsworthy, and excited mixed reactions from philatelists. A clearer appreciation of how the designs "have a feeling of emerging growth" comes from reading of his extensive work with natural materials. April's National Trust set was based on photographs by the late

Tony Evans. In contrast to the Springtime images, here the designs convey permanence, an object for which the National Trust was founded.

May 1995 saw a combined set commemorating 50 years of Peace and Freedom, with sharply different approaches from the two designers. Jubilant images by John Gorham reflect the immense sense of relief that VE Day had brought in 1945. Watercolours from Jean-Michel Folon used poetic symbols of hands in the act of giving to characterise the work of the United Nations and the British Red Cross for their anniversaries. For June's Science Fiction set bold computer graphics from newcomer Siobhan Keaney conveyed "a heady and subversive sense of fun" in homage to H G Wells's revitalising of the genre 100 years earlier.

August's celebration of the re-creation of Shakespeare's Globe Theatre shows how designer C Walter Hodges has been able to pack the se-tenant strip with clear graphic detail to reflect life around the Globe and its neighbouring theatres. Painstaking historical research needed to be allied with "educated folklore" in creating this set, according to him.

The legendary skills of master-engraver, Czeslaw Slania, made a welcome return to British stamps with the September set for Communications. Rowland Hill's and Guglielmo Marconi's seminal work is





commemorated in "respectful" designs from The Four Hundred (Win Rogers and William Redfern), completely worthy of the subject-matter. Great players from a century of Rugby League saw homage in the October set from young artist Christian Birmingham. As he remarks, "we didn't want the cigarette-card look, with centre partings and baggy shorts"; his explanation of bringing out the sense of activity by suggestion and the "fractional difference beyond which you cannot go" makes interesting reading for philatelists concerned with studying design. Another busy stamp year was rounded off at the end of October by the Christmas issue designed by Ken Lilly. How he has shown the connection between his subject – the robin – and the post is well explained for this highly attractive issue.

Tim Shackleton's lucid text has been well served by picture research from Kathy Lockley and immaculate overall design of the yearbook by Silk Pearce. The highly informative notes under "Copyright and Acknowledgements" well repay study, too, in a series of books that has grown into an important archive. Royal Mail and all concerned will have the gratitude of collectors for another first-class production.

44 pages, hardbound, with decorative slip-case. The nine sets reviewed (43 stamps) are included mint. ISBN 0 946165 33 5. Price £22.50 (£75 leatherbound version) from the British Philatelic Bureau, 20 Brandon Street, EDINBURGH EH3 5TT. © James Negus, FRPSL

Railway Photographs at the NPM

The display relating to the recent Communications stamps will remain on show in the National Postal Museum's new temporary exhibitions gallery until the end of the year. This will be followed, from January to mid-February, by a display of railway photographs by Colin Gifford whose work featured on the 1994 Age of Steam stamps. This set was the most popular of the year in our Special Stamps Poll, and three of the five values were amongst the 10 most popular individual stamps.

A book reproducing nearly 240 of Mr Gifford's railway photographs was reviewed here in February 1995 (p 186). This exhibition will be enjoyed by all railway enthusiasts and railway philatelists.

1997 Stamp Programme

Royal Mail announces the 1997 programme as follows:

January	Tudor Times
Jan/Feb	Greetings
March	Christian Saints
May	Post Europ – Tales & Legends
June	Aircraft
July	Enid Blyton
August	Sub Post Offices
September	Horses
October	HM The Queen's Golden Wedding
October	Christmas

Dates to be announced, order and title of issues may change.

Stamp Scene



Britain in Bloom

John Gifford of Barnstaple submits a photograph of the Post Office entry in the 1995 "Britain in Bloom" competition. The display was situated, near the main post office, in Boutport Street. James Mackay sends a photograph of a gaily painted box, in Main Street, Pitlochry, Perthshire, used for donations to the "Pitlochry in Bloom" fund.

Astro-Space Stamp Society

The Society has sent in a copy of the September 1995 issue of its journal, *Orbit*. Edited by Jeff Dugdale, this includes features on US astronauts Kathy Sullivan and Anna Fisher; Andrew Swanston, doyen of British astrophilatelists; Space in Russia; Space Station Missions; 1975 Viking spacecraft; and a British mini-rocket. The journal is well-illustrated and provides much interesting reading for collectors of the space theme, whether newcomers to this subject, or dedicated specialists. For details of membership of this enterprising society write to: B Lockyer, 21 Exford Close, WESTON SUPER MARE, Avon, BS23 4RE, enclosing a stamped addressed envelope or two international reply coupons.



Railway Letter Stamps

The Bluebell Railway issued a new 25p stamp on 5 August 1995 to commemorate the 35th anniversary of the line's reopening by a preservation society following closure by British Railways in 1958. The stamp, printed in sheets of four, features locomotive No. 323 "Bluebell" heading a train. The stamp is available at face value plus postage from: Bluebell Railway Letter Service, 64 Gordon Road, CARSHALTON BEECHES, Surrey, SM5 3RE. Payment below £4 may be made in mint British stamps of up to 25p denomination. Remittances over £4 should be made payable to "Bluebell Railway Letter Service". For details of first day covers/postcards, see *Commemorative Covers Review*.

The Mid-Hants Railway issued the sixth stamp in its "Locomotive Series" on 2 September



1995. Printed in sheets of six, it features N class No. 31874. Large numbers of this class, designed by R E L Maunsell for the South Eastern & Chatham Railway, were built in the early 1920s. No. 31874, the last survivor, serving on British Railways until 1964, was rescued from the scrap yard, and restored for use on the MHR. Stamps available at face value, postage extra. Enquiries: Postal Co-ordinator, Mid-Hants Railway, ALRESFORD, Hants, SO24 9JG. See CCR for details of first day and commemorative covers.

The Bluebell and Mid-Hants are amongst a number of independent railways which operate a railway letter service under agreement with Royal Mail.

Stampex On the Move

Following careful consideration by the Stampex Committee and the Council of the PTS, Stampex will from 1996 be staged at the Business Design Centre, 52 Upper Street, LONDON N1 0QH. The dates for Spring Stampex 1996 have also been changed and will now be 24-28 January instead of 27 February-3 March. The theme of the exhibition will be the centenary of the modern Olympic Games.

The Business Design Centre is housed in a beautiful Victorian building, now fully modernised with excellent facilities and easy access to all levels. All dealers will now be located in one building. The exhibition organisers are planning many improvements to Stampex which will begin in 1996 and continue in future years.

The first Stampex exhibition was held in 1953 although it was not so designated, at least in the exhibition handstamp, until 1956. Prior to 1969 it was held at the Methodist Central Hall Westminster, then moving to the Royal Horticultural Halls. Two exhibitions (Spring and Autumn) have been organised since 1987 when the British Philatelic Exhibition, first held in 1965, was incorporated in Autumn Stampex.

THEMESCENE

BTA
BRITISH THEMATIC ASSOCIATION

In this issue:

Essays and Proofs
without Exclamation Points!
by Barbara Mueller

Problems with Thematic Regulations?
It's all a Myth!
says Hans-Walter Bosserhoff

What do YOU think about
the Future of Philately?
by Margaret Shaida

News of Thematica '95

And all the usual
Regular Features

BRITISH THEMATIC ASSOCIATION

Volume 12, No. 3, Whole Number 40.

Price: £1

Themescene

The British Thematic Association has recently published the 40th issue of its journal, *Themescene*. Edited by Margaret Shaida, the magazine contains several interesting articles. Barbara Mueller writes on "Essays and Proofs without Exclamation Points!" (reprinted from the US magazine *Topical Time*), David Jones looks at stamps showing snuff bottles, Hans-Walter Bosserhoff examines thematic regulations, and Ian Paton reviews stamps honouring the International Telegraph Union. There are reports of the activities of the BTA and various thematic societies – Exhibition Study Group; Society of Olympic Collectors; The Cat Club; Cricket Philatelic Society; and Philatelic Music Circle. There is an extensive listing of additions to the BTA library, also book reviews, and a members' wants section. For details of the Association contact the Membership Secretary: Ian Paton, 15 Humberstone Road, CAMBRIDGE CB4 1JD, Tel. 01223-461793.

Obituary – Mary Adshead

Mary Adshead (1904-95) designed several popular British stamps – 1949 Universal Postal Union 2½d (SG 499); 1951 2s 6d Victory & 5s



White Cliffs of Dover high values (509/10); 1953/4 8d, 9d, 10d & 11d Wilding definitives (525/8 et al); and 1957 Scouts Jubilee Jamboree 2½d (557). Her unadopted designs for the 1955 High Values, 1958 Welsh Regionals; 1963 Paris Postal Conference and Red Cross issues were reproduced in the March & August 1967, February 1971, September 1978, May 1985, and October 1986 issues of this magazine.

Mary Adshead, who trained at the Slade School, will be best remembered for a number of murals in restaurants, churches and public buildings, produced in mosaic, high fired tiles, cast iron, etc. In 1929 she married the artist Stephen Bone (1904-58); they had three children.

Thematica II – 95

Due to the overwhelming success of Thematica in the summer, a new Winter Thematic Stamp Show, Thematica II, has been arranged for 1-2 December, at Carisbrooke Hall, 63 Seymour Street, London W2.

Admission is free with prizes for 25 lucky visitors and invited thematic stamp displays in the entrance hall and on the balcony.

Thematic stamp & cover dealers from all over Britain as well as from abroad will bring a wealth of stamps, covers, postal history, cinderella and other material. This will provide a rare opportunity to browse through an Aladdin's philatelic cave in a welcoming and friendly

atmosphere. Meals, refreshments and bar facilities will be provided as well as plenty of tables and chairs to meet friends, swap stories or stamps.

Thematica II – 95 will be a most enjoyable couple of days for thematic and country stamp collectors at all levels.

Please note Thematica 96 will now be held on Saturday & Sunday 29-30 June 1996.

Enquiries: Thematic Exhibitions, Tel. 0181-343 2434, or Brian Sole, 01372-467652 (evenings).

Autumn Stampex Awards

As always there were many fine exhibits of British stamps, postal history, and literature on show at Autumn Stampex/BPE – held for the last time at the Royal Horticultural Society Halls, Westminster.

In the "International Class", the *Prix D'Honneur* The Harmsers Jubilee Trophy was awarded to J B Kirkham for his "Edward VII 1901-13 Essays etc". Mr Kirkham also received a large gold medal and the Great Britain Philatelic Society Shaida Trophy for this exhibit. Prof S Imperato was awarded a large gold for "The Mail from the Old Italian States to the United Kingdom".

In the "National Classes", W A Wiseman received the Royal Mail Trophy and large silver-gilt medal for "Government Parcels – the stamps 1883-1904", Mr Wiseman won the Trophy in 1993 with his "Army Official Stamps 1896-1904" exhibit. The National Postal Museum Medal was awarded to A G Rosser for his study "Source of the ½p Turquoise decimal definitive Machin", which also won him a silver medal.

Four Postal History exhibitors received gold awards – M N Metliss (British Post Offices & Agencies in Morocco 1857-1901), M B Montgomery (Underpaid Mail Exchanged with British North America 1851-80), J A Metliss (British Post Offices in the Levant 1857-1901), and I T Pickering (The Maltese Cross). In the Local & Revenue section, Dr R H Champion received a large silver-gilt for "Irish Newspaper, Almanac & Directory Stamps".

Top literature awards (large silver-gilt and William Ferris Bowl) went to the Scottish Postal History Society for *Postal Markings of Scotland to 1840* (2nd edition, reviewed here, July 1995), with silvers for M Barette's *London Fancy Geometric Postmarks*, M Furfie's *British Postage Due Mail 1914-71* (review March 1994), and R Gault's *Catalogue of Sloper's Wartime Provisionals GB 1940-45*.

Feathers, Folklore and Philately

PHILIP PARKER

Robin Legless

In the week of the launch of the British Birds set-tenant set in August 1966, the press reported that a number of imperfect – and potentially valuable – sheets had been discovered by a collector in Leicester. The poor robin and blackbird had been printed with no legs. A flurry of activity followed as further sheets were sought. One Essex man espied a sheet in his local post office in which the blue tit was printed upside-down. He immediately bought as much as he could with all the money on his person and proudly took his prize home, only to be informed that his ornithological knowledge was even worse than his philatelic – blue tits are usually depicted this way.

Robins on stamps are as old as Christmas itself, philatelically speaking. The British Birds set was followed four months later by the first Christmas issue. Now, 30 Christmases later, robins have alighted on a set of their own seasonal stamps, designed by Ken Lilly. Most people associate these tame birds with winter, and Christmas in particular, adorning millions of cards every year. But *why* do we love the robin so? What is the origin of the Christmas connection and that between the bird and deliveries to the door, especially the postal services, which is the spur behind the new stamps?

Robin is indeed a special name, conferred to a national hero (Robin Hood) and a favourite spirit (Robin Goodfellow, or Puck). Since Chaucer, the robin has been praised in literature, Wordsworth penned no less than 14 poems to it, “Art thou the bird whom man loves best...”, Thomas Hardy and Christina Rossetti likewise waxed lyrical in verse, and William Blake raged against the keeping of them as pets: “A Robin Redbreast in a Cage Puts all Heaven in a Rage.”

Even John Ruskin was moved to lecture on the superb design of the bird: “Commend me, I say, to the robin for use of his ankles – he is, of all birds, the pre-eminent and characteristic Hopper...do you think you would find it easy to hop like a robin if you had two – all but wooden – legs, like this?”



Britain's first Robin stamp – 1966

Britain's Bird

In 1960 the International Council for Bird Preservation (ICBP) recommended that each country designate a National Bird to promote conservation. Denmark was first off, announcing that it had chosen the skylark. The ICBP British Section, in characteristic British style, decided that public opinion should be sought – and where else to conduct a popular poll than in the correspondence columns of that British institution, *The Times*? Contained discretely in the letters page of the issue for 18 October 1960, the British Section Chairman Lord Hurcomb invited opinion on the prospective bird. And opinion flew in. For days the letters columns were filled with suggestions, *The Times* going so far as to print a league table of the running: one day the robin would be in the lead, another day the red grouse.



Robin – from a late Victorian Christmas card



Ravens, chickens and eagles had their champions, as did gulls, wrens and starlings. Pride, whimsy and self-depreciation motivated the letter writers, one wag proposing the puffin as an exponent of national character because it is "reserved with strangers and rather pompous".

At last, when the counting was over, Lord Hurcomb notified an expectant world via *The Times* just before Christmas: by overwhelming vote, the robin was nominated as Britain's Bird, and the radio carried this as one of the most important newspaper items of the day.

Just two months later Canada announced the result of its newspaper poll: rather predictably, the Canada Goose was victorious, with the robin coming in an honourable second. Within two years the goose was rewarded with a Canadian postage stamp. *The Times* enthused at the philatelic possibilities: "France, to the envy of British bird enthusiasts, has issued postage stamps on which are engraved puffins, bee-eaters, lapwings, and teal – all in the cause of nature conservation" but the robin still lacked official recognition as Britain's bird. The redbreast had to wait until 1966 for its debut on a stamp, in the issue following the World Cup set. England may have beaten West Germany at football, but the Germans were first in representing the European Robin on a stamp – in 1957. Several postal administrations have followed suit, including Hungary, the Isle of Man (in Christmas 1982) and even Malta. Japan and Australia have issued stamps of their versions of the redbreast.

Robin stamps worldwide

Folklore and firebirds

Birds have always held a special place in human thought, the gift of flight maybe symbolising the soul. Neanderthal man often put red rocks with the dead, and in the present day the colour red, of blood, is the colour of death and life. Hence perhaps robins' folklore connection with funeral rights: as in the tale of *The Babes in the Wood*, and Shakespeare's description of the robin in *Cymbeline* "with charitable bill" covering the dead with leaves.

Red, of course, is also the symbol of fire. Along with its soulmate, the wren, the robin is a traditional firebird. Ancient legend has it that it was the wren which brought fire from hell on a burning twig. On returning to earth the wren had caught fire and the robin flew to its aid, beating out the flames, and scorching its breast red in the process.

Wrens and robins too were victims of ancient practices – of being fastened or impaled on a stick over a fire, which could explain the Cornish game of "Robin's alight". Players, sitting by a fire, pass a whirling, burning stick from one to another. The one holding the stick when the flame expires pays a forfeit.

Robins and wrens are intertwined, as the *Marriage of Cock Robin and Jenny Wren* shows, and a host of country folklore protect them: "The robin and the wren, are god's almighty cock and hen". It is extremely unlucky to kill a robin, hence the full-scale enquiry after Cock Robin's death in the rhyme. The Cornish proverb: "he

that hurts a robin or wren, will never prosper boy or man" is typical. Robin's boldness in Britain, compared to its behaviour on the continent, has no doubt added to its popularity. And lores protecting it from harm only served to make it tamer.

Poor, poor Robin

But there is one day of the year when it is open season. Originally on 24 December, but more recently on the feast of St Stephen's, 26 December, wrens were hunted, and carried through villages on sticks to bring good luck. The custom began in Ancient Greece and Rome. Over time, the tradition transferred to the wren's northern counterpart, the robin, and in folklore these birds embody the spirit of the New Year. The occurrence of this hunt during Christmas no doubt led to a religious significance for the bird. On route to Calvary, a robin is traditionally believed to have helped Christ's suffering by removing a thorn from His head, and was stained by a drop of His blood in the process. In Scotland it was said that it was a sin to kill a robin because "he had a drop of Christ's blood in his veins".

Christianity also provides the earliest depiction of a robin. Look for the bird in Glasgow's coat of arms which is based on the seal of Robert Wyschard, Bishop of Glasgow in 1272. It depicts miracles performed by St Mungo, founder of Glasgow Cathedral, including the bringing back to life of a robin by the saint as a boy. The account of the robin taking food from the young serf in the sixth century is the earliest record of a tame robin in literature.

Pre-Christian and Christian associations of the bird, coupled with its tameness and conspicuous presence in the winter landscape forged a link between robins and the season of goodwill. So it is natural that the bird should alight on Christmas cards.

Christmas Robins

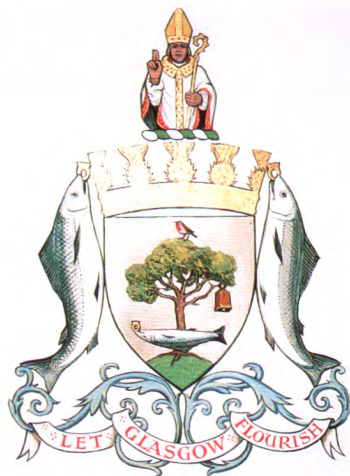
Even before Christmas cards became commercially available about 150 years ago, Valentine's Day cards were well established and frequently decorated with birds, emblems of love, including robins. When Christmas cards became mass produced, numerous designs took their cue from Valentines, and robins are a standard feature on some of the earliest.

By the 1880s the robin was already something of a Christmas cliché. *Punch* gave some seasonal

cookery hints: "Cards form a welcome and dainty addition to the Christmas morning breakfast. To prepare take two plump robins, a church tower with bells, and holly to taste. Season the whole with a couple of cheap rhymes and sprinkle thickly with frost... Enclose in an envelope and garnish with a pink stamp".

Today it comes as a surprise to find foreign Christmas cards without robins. In Finland, the winter is too severe for robins and they migrate south, and bullfinches come around houses in search of food. Traditionally, these birds have taken the place of robins on Finnish Christmas cards (and appeared on a 1981 Finnish Christmas stamp).

Glasgow's coat of arms includes a robin



Robin Postman

On many of the early Christmas and Valentine cards, the robin is depicted carrying a letter in its beak or knocking on a door. Often there is the legend along the lines of "A Message by the Morning Post". Around the time of the earliest Christmas cards (and when Valentines were commonplace), postmen wore a coat of a bright red colour. And since postmen are bringers of messages too, then could not robin and postman have become linked in the Victorian mind?

The world authority on robins, David Lack, persuasively puts forward this argument in his book *Robin Redbreast*, and he cites a passage in Anthony Trollope's novel *Framley Parsonage*, first serialised in 1860. The cook at Framley Parsonage calls to a character visiting with the post, "Come hither, *Robin Postman*, and warm theeself awhile". As a senior Post Office official



Robins on Christmas postmarks

Trollope must have known what a postman was called; why not this endearing nickname? Certainly it was not uncommon for red-coated officials to bear the name. The precursors of the police, the Bow Street Runners, were called redbreasts, first noted by Dickens in 1862.

The postman's red coat was withdrawn for a more sober blue as Trollope's novel was published, so the nickname lost its logic, although the colour remains to this day on letter boxes and in Royal Mail's "corporate red". Yet Robin Postman lived on, particularly in children's fiction. The scene in *Framley Parsonage* was echoed some 80 years later:

"Robin the postman flew to the door with some Christmas cards and a letter. The little bird rested and ate some breakfast while Hare examined the leaf with its tiny pointed scribble."

Robin the Postman (courtesy of William Collins Sons & Co Ltd)



This is from one of Allison Uttley's famous Little Grey Rabbit stories, the postman in question is a regular character in these tales. In most stories, he is relegated to a "strut on part". However, in *Little Grey Rabbit's Valentine* he had a more substantial role. Overburdened with letters (messages on leaves), robin enlists the services of a temporary assistant, Milkman Hedgehog, no less.

At the other end of the literary scale, the robin has been the impetus for the invention of a verb meaning "to be clad in a red waistcoat" (OED). James Joyce's enigmatic (and once banned) *Ulysses*, written in the early years of this century, describes "Tom Rochford, robinredbreasted, in cap and breeches".

Postscript

Exactly a century after *Framley Parsonage's* first appearance the robin was voted Britain's national bird. But this is not the end of the story. Selected in typically democratic style, the robin's status fell in the "Mother of Democracies". By June 1961 the British Section had requested the Home Office search through centuries of Acts of Parliament to find legislation enabling a national emblem to be adopted; but the search yielded nothing. Despondently, the Section turned to its own resources and shortly before Christmas it issued coloured stickers of Britain's national bird to keep the robin in the public mind. And so Robin Postman had his day, gracing the outside of the Christmas mail in 1961, and now again 34 Christmases later.

© Philip Parker 1995

Post Office Archives Historic Miniatures

The Post Office Archives & Records Centre is pleased to launch its second historic miniature this year commemorating the 50th anniversary of the end of the Second World War. This, the seventh in the series, depicts a 1940 Postwoman. As with all our previous miniatures, they are expertly crafted with great care taken down to the smallest detail.

The Second World War saw an increase in the numbers of postwomen, as postmen started to be called up for war service. This was similar to the First World War when postwomen were first issued with a uniform, which consisted of a straw hat, skirt, jacket and boots. By 1929 the general feeling was that the straw hat needed to be changed. Some of the reasons which were given as to the "non-use" of the hat in the Newcastle on Tyne district were: "hat too big"; "not worn since bobbed hair came into fashion"; "cannot keep on in a breeze"; "uncomfortable and unable to keep it on in windy weather (bobbed hair)"; "hat cannot be kept on head without hair". The new style adopted was a felt "Girl Guide" style of hat, similar to that of the Australian soldiers, this new hat however, only lasted until 1941 when it was superseded by a peaked cap.

"Cameron's"

Apart from the change in hat, little else changed in the Postwomen's uniform, putting aside skirt length. However, in 1941 a 19-year old Scottish postwoman, Jean Cameron of Glen Clova in Angus, successfully appealed to the Postmaster General and was given permission to wear trousers on official duties for the first time, instead of the regulation blue skirt. It didn't take long for other postwomen to ask for a change, with over 500 pairs of trousers issued in the first two months alone, 3000 applications by the end of 1941, and over 14,000 pairs by November 1943. As a tribute, these trousers became quickly referred to as "Cameron's" after the name of the first applicant.

As the war progressed, a number of economy measures came into force as a Press & Broadcast notice of 25 July 1941 states, "In view of the



The new figurine in 1/19th scale

present need for economy in clothes, no objection will be raised to women of any grade attending for any duty without stockings". Other measures included a reduction in the amount of red piping on uniforms, also the use of black composition for brass buttons which released a considerable amount of non-ferrous metal for the war effort. Badges were printed instead of embroidering them, cutting the cost of production by one-fifth. "Patching pieces" were supplied for repairing of garments so that they could be used longer.



Delivering the mail during the war. Note the adapted delivery bag



The "Girl Guide" style of hat



Showing off the new "Cameron's"

This figurine sees the postwoman carrying a tin helmet with a gas mask underneath, this was in case of air-raids while on duty. The bag she is carrying is an economy measure, as can be seen from contemporary photographs, it would seem that large mail bags were cut down, re-stitched, straps added and then used on delivery rounds.

As with the previous miniature (Second World War George VI double aperture box - see June 1995 *Bulletin*), this new figurine will be available for a limited period, until 31 December 1995, at a special introductory offer of £21.95, normal price £25. Please state *Philatelic Bulletin* with your order. Please note that there is a handling charge of 60p per order. Cheques should be made out to "The Post Office" in £ sterling and orders addressed to: Post Office Archives & Records Centre, Freeling House, Mount Pleasant Complex, Phoenix Place entrance, LONDON EC1A 1BB.

Kevin Squelch, Archivist



War tin helmet

Via Rome

Two words that made all the difference

RICHARD BEITH

Inscriptions, superscriptions, instructions, call them what you will, those typed or handwritten comments on the front of an envelope are often a source of great interest to philatelists. That the two covers shown here reached their intended destination is solely due to the two word inscription *Via Rome* plainly visible to the postal sorter. Both items were destined for the Spanish island of Majorca in the Balearics, but both were despatched from England during the time of the Spanish Civil War (1936-39).

When the civil war broke out in mid-July 1936, a number of areas immediately declared their allegiance to the insurgent rebels or Nationalists as they became known. These areas included the Canaries, Spanish Morocco, and the Balearic islands of Majorca and Ibiza as well as parts of mainland Spain. (Minorca remained loyal to the Republic until early 1939.) Prior to the outbreak of the war, mails from the UK to mainland Spain went overland by train (basic letter rate 2½ old pence), or by air via France (combined basic letter rate and air surcharge: 4d).

As far as the air route from GB was concerned, the effect of the civil war can be

Fig.1 Registered envelope sent by surface mail from Swiss Cottage, London NW to HBM Vice-Consul, Palma, June 1937



followed in the regular *Air Mail* leaflets printed for the British Post Office. Before the war broke out, mail for Spain, if posted up to 11.00 in the Air Mail Letter Box outside the Chief Post Office, London EC1, was expected to reach Barcelona the next morning and Madrid the next afternoon. By April 1938, after nearly two years war, air mail was accepted for *Barcelona and District of Catalonia only*. This must mean that the British PO was only happy to guarantee air mails which were carried (by *Air France*) to the Catalan capital, one of the hearts of legitimate Republican resistance. What was to be done if you wished to correspond with a rebel area? It would appear that no official advice was given. Indeed, it would have been wiser to offer advice about what not to do, as covers can be found destined for rebel areas which had obviously been included in mail bags sent to Republican Barcelona.

One such cover is illustrated by Elkins, dated 11 September 1936 and sent from New Milton, Hants, to Palma de Mallorca. The cover has reached Barcelona, been refused there and returned to England some months later where it received a boxed cachet RETURNED FROM ABROAD/REASON FOR NON DELIVERY/NOT STATED. No doubt our postal officials were, in fact, only too aware of why this letter was returned.

One slow way to ensure that your mail reached Majorca was to address it to the British Consul General in Marseille who sent the mail on by ship. Another faster way was to send the mail via Italy, as noted above. Mussolini and his fascist government were strong supporters of the Nationalist cause and very early in the conflict they helped out by arranging for the main Italian airline of the time, *Ala Littoria*, to operate a regular seaplane service along the route Rome-Majorca-Melilla (Spanish Morocco)-Cadiz, thus linking areas under Nationalist control with Rome as a gateway to the rest of the world. Mail carried by this line from Spanish territory is relatively common, incoming mail received via Rome, much harder to find.

The two covers shown here illustrate the importance of knowing that this Italian connection existed! Figure 1 shows a registered envelope sent by surface mail, addressed to HBM Vice-Consul in Palma de Mallorca, with a rather tentative inscription; *Via Roma?*, which has obviously worked, even though *Via Genoa* would have been more accurate. The envelope correctly franked with a total of 5½d (Letter rate 2½d plus

registration fee 3d) was postmarked REGISTERED SWISS COTTAGE BO NW on 11 June 1937. On the reverse are the following marks: MILANO FERR CORRISP. 12.6.37; GENOVA FERROVIA RACCO 13.6.37; AMB GENOVA-VENTIMIGLIA 49, 13.6.37 (TPO mark); and CERTIFICADO - PALMA DE MALLORCA 18 JUN 37

This suggests that for all the tentative



Fig.2 Airmail cover from Tunbridge Wells to Balearic Naval Base, Majorca, August 1937

reference to Rome, the sea route to Majorca was via Genoa or another port between Genoa and the Franco-Italian border. Certainly the letter was received in Majorca seven days later after posting in NW London, which seems quite speedy in the circumstances.

Figure 2 shows an air mail cover posted in Tunbridge Wells on 7 August 1937, addressed to a Captain of Corvettes at the Balearic Naval Base in Majorca, with a clear *Via Rome* in the same hand. It is correctly franked at 4d. This can only have travelled via the *Ala Littoria* service from Rome to Majorca, probably on a Cant Z 506 seaplane. On arrival at Majorca the cover has been opened by the military censor and given an arrival backstamp dated 11 August 1937, definitely a fast trip.

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 Gomez-Guillamon F, *Air Services in Nationalist Spain during the Civil War 1936-1939*, Hove, R G Shelley, 1994

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Friends of the NPM

Souvenirs of a decade's activities

JAMES NEGUS FRPSL

The Association of Friends of the National Postal Museum was formed in April 1985 and its Tenth Birthday has featured recently in this magazine. One notable part of the Association's work over the decade has been to prepare souvenir material for members. These items, which began in earnest in 1989, make an interesting collection in themselves, but are also building into a valuable record of events in the Friends' history.

Postcards

Though a few special covers have been produced, the bulk of souvenirs consist of cacheted postcards. The Association has a very active programme of visits and, for some of these, one or more picture postcards relevant to the venue have been selected from those commercially available. Suitably postmarked and given a variable-date "Special Visit" cachet that

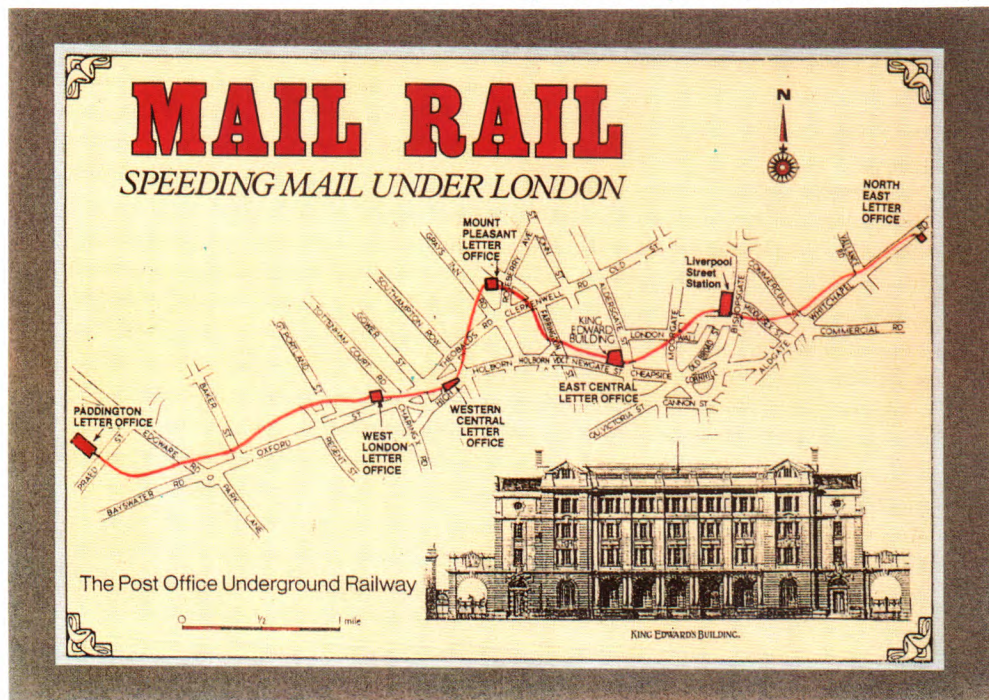
was designed by Richard Blake, they are fitting mementoes. As a welcome bonus, hosts for the visit will sometimes sign these cards, too.

Among the numerous imaginative trips arranged for parties of Friends have been those to Museums, including the one at the Bank of England at its Tercentenary. Parties have also, for example, been to Wingfield Stables in Diss, Norfolk, home of the Royal Mail coach-and-four; gone by minibus for a postal history tour of unusual letter boxes around Maidstone, Kent; and visited the Wedgwood Potteries at Stoke-on-Trent to view production of Royal Mail's "Famous Trains" plates and see the Wedgwood Museum.

VIP Travel

Two rounds of visits spread over several weeks in 1993 and 1994 saw groups of Friends travelling

Fig. 1. Mail Rail postcard (Richard Blake PH211A)





The Museum, situated in King Edward Street, London
 EC1A 1LP, is open from 9.30am - 4.30pm Monday to
 Thursday and 9.30am - 4.30pm Friday, admission free.
 Closed weekends and Bank Holiday.
 Printed by Clement and Foster Printers, London SE1 3AA

© National Postal Museum, London EC1A 1LP 1981



QUESTA ENCLIPSE

Fig. 2. Obsolete postmark in the Mail Rail set

on the VIP coach through Royal Mail's famous Underground Railway. The largest number of postcards to record the occasion were needed, so as to cover postmarking at each Sorting Office at which Mail Rail calls en route across London. The cards had illustrations of the Railway in a set of eight - two each of four cards (one is shown in Fig. 1); a different postmark was struck on each card plus the "Special Visit" cachet.

From the postal history viewpoint, this unusually elaborate commemoration has readily justified itself. Two operational changes occurring since Friends visited the Railway mean the cards already bear obsolete postmarks. Sorting at West London Letter Office was moved to Paddington from 30 April 1994 and stamping of mail at West Central (Fig. 2) ceased 1 August 1993, traffic now being handled at Mount Pleasant. Of all Friends' souvenirs this set of eight postcards remains my favourite.

Fig. 3. Cover for restored TPO Van No. 814

Covers

Since 1991 a souvenir cover has been produced for each November's Annual General Meeting. On these occasions formal business is followed after lunch by talks and presentations on a given theme. Over the years many well known philatelists and postal historians have entertained the large audiences this fixture attracts. The Manager of the National Postal Museum, Stan Goron, has signed the covers, but where appropriate the Association also applies another of its cachets - for "Guest Speakers" - and these covers will be signed also.

Perhaps the most attractive of all the souvenir covers, this time for the visit to the Didcot Railway Centre in 1994, is shown as Fig. 3. A band of preservation enthusiasts has worked for a long time on carefully restoring TPO Van No. 814 and Friends were present to see its return to service with a demonstration of TPO bag pick-up. Along with the stamp from the highly popular "Age of Steam" set, three "Letter Exchange Fee" labels of the Great Western Society and two cachets make a most appealing souvenir. (The labels are reserved for demonstration runs of the TPO Van.)

Only a brief indication is possible here of the range of material which the Association of Friends has produced. (I have published a detailed listing in the Spring 1995 issue of its journal, *Cross Post*.) Friends of the NPM have gained much from their membership in the past decade and have been specially well served with souvenirs of great interest and relevance.

© James Negus 1995



G.W.R. T.P.O. Van No. 814 Didcot Railway Centre



TPO 814 GROUP
 77 PENN ROAD
 HAZLEWERE
 HIGH WYCOMBE
 BUCKS. HP15 7LZ

Twentieth Century Postal Stationery

COLIN BAKER

Part 2. George V and Rising Postage Rates

When George V became King on 6 May 1910, following the death of his father Edward VII, the stability of postage rates looked set to continue for many years to come, the basic letter rate having remained at 1d for 70 years. Indeed the public were still pressing the PO for even lower postage rates, including a universal penny post, but this was not to be. In just a few years the toll of war in Europe would affect everybody, eventually doubling the cost of using the post.

New Stamp Designs on Familiar Stationery

Just over 12 months of the new King's reign had passed when new stationery envelopes were issued in 1911, with redesigned embossed stamps showing George V's head in profile. The 1d stamp retained a similar border to that used for the Edward VII issues, but for the first time the numerical value was included in the design in addition to the value in words around the border.

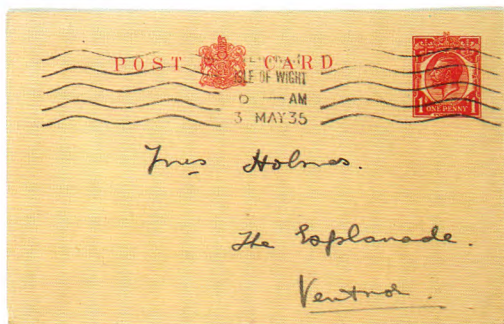
The Edward VII $\frac{1}{2}$ d embossed stamp had remained much the same size and design as that developed and used during the 19th century. However, for the new George V unsealed envelopes the $\frac{1}{2}$ d stamp was enlarged to the same size as the other George V embossed issues. A new border was prepared for this lower value surrounding the same profile as that used for the 1d stamp. Once again the value was incorporated into the border in both words and figures. Both the unsealed printed paper rate and the gummed letter rate envelopes were manufactured in the same sizes as those issued during the previous reign, these having proved popular with the public since the Victorian period.

Redesigned Impressed Stamps

The $\frac{1}{2}$ d and 1d stamps used for postcards, lettercards and newspaper wrappers continued to be impressed by the letterpress process. In addition to the changes made to some of the embossed stamps used for postal stationery, it was felt desirable to change the design of these letterpress stamps. The Edwardian issues of these stamps had been based on Victorian



George V's three-quarter portrait on the 1911 postcard and the revised design showing him in profile on the 1918 issue



designs, and the accession to the throne of a new monarch gave the PO the opportunity of bringing these up to date. The design for the new style border was prepared by William Pitcher under a commission from the Royal Mint. The three quarter profile photograph of the new king, taken by Court Photographers W & D Downey, was used as the basis for the engraving of the King's head. It took over a year for the new stamp designs to be finished and approved and these were eventually released on Coronation Day, 22 June 1911, along with the embossed envelopes and adhesive stamps.

One important change was made with the introduction of the new stationery. From the time that the stationery trade had successfully

campaign for a premium to be placed on PO postcards in 1872, cards had always been sold at a price above their face value. However, now that picture postcards had become very popular, and since it was no longer necessary to use stationery cards to enjoy the benefit of the $\frac{1}{2}$ d postage rate, the PO decided to sell thin buff cards at $\frac{1}{2}$ d each, although all other cards, envelopes and wrappers continued to be sold with a premium attached.

The stationery trade was naturally upset at this change, but the PO was adamant that the trade still had fair competition with their many other styles of postcard and insisted that the cheapest card in the PO range must be available at the new low price. This price reduction did not last long and on 2 July 1918, the selling price of all postcards was increased, the thin card then costing more than the value of the stamp. The opportunity of buying postcards at their face value was never repeated.

The First Increase in Postage Rates For 75 Years

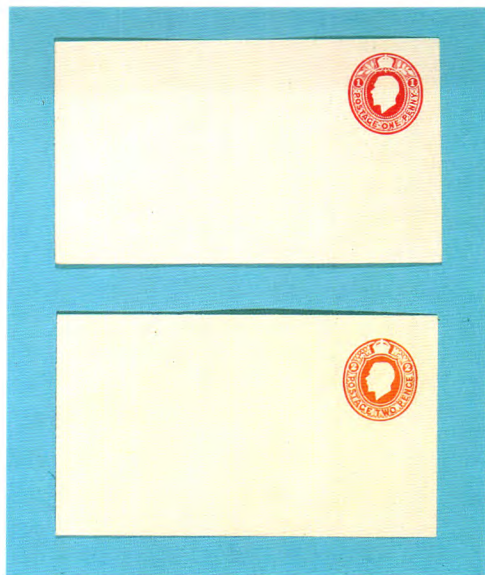
The outbreak of war in August 1914, which initially encompassed the whole of Europe and latterly many other countries throughout the world, eventually forced some British postage rates to be increased in 1915 (although at that time the basic rates were left unchanged), and again in 1918, 1920, and 1921, these last three rises also affecting basic postage rates.

In 1915 although the minimum postage rate was kept at 1d, this now only paid for 1oz, the cost of each step above that weight being similarly reduced.

On 3 June 1918 the minimum charge for inland letters became $1\frac{1}{2}$ d requiring new postal stationery to be issued. Dies for embossed stamps in this higher value were already available, having been prepared for impressing on private material and so the PO was able to issue new stationery envelopes early in 1919, eight months after postage rates were first increased.

Almost two years to the day after the first basic rate increase in 1918, the cost of sending a letter rose again to 2d on 1 June 1920. As before, dies in this value were already available and 2d stationery envelopes in this new value were quickly issued.

Three months later on 1 September 1920 the newspaper rate was also raised from $\frac{1}{2}$ d to 1d for 6oz. As 1d wrappers had been on sale since Coronation Day in 1911, there was no need for a new issue to be made.



The 1d bag and 2d sealed letter rate envelopes were prepared for the short lived postage rates applicable between June 1920 and May 1922

Although the first weight step for printed papers had been reduced from 2oz to 1oz in June 1918 the basic rate had been left at $\frac{1}{2}$ d during this period of postcard and letter rate increases. But on 17 June 1921, this rate finally succumbed to an increase and the minimum cost of sending unsealed envelopes became 1d. New bag type envelopes printed with the embossed 1d stamp were placed on sale in 1922. They had a short life and were replaced by the previous $\frac{1}{2}$ d envelopes when the printed paper rate was reduced a few months later.

In 1922, following a great deal of pressure from the public for a reduction in postage costs, the rates for inland letters, printed papers and postcards were reduced to their 1918 levels, at which they remained for the rest of George V's reign. The one exception to this general decrease was the rate for newspapers which remained at 1d per 6oz. However $\frac{1}{2}$ d wrappers continued to be sold by the Post Office and were used for printed papers weighing up to 1oz in 1922 or up to 2oz from May 1923 onwards.

After the rate reductions of May 1922 had come into force the PO made arrangements to exchange higher value stationery for equivalent items stamped with the correct values, refunding each $\frac{1}{2}$ d difference in cash. A refund was also made where cards and envelopes had been

overprinted and could not be exchanged, but to identify these to ensure only one refund was made, they were stamped with a triangular inspector's mark. It was the PO's policy that these inspector's marks were only used for identification purposes and never as cancellations, even though they sometimes encroached upon the stamp.

Foreign Postcards

It had been intended that all the new postal stationery would be ready for issue by Coronation Day in 1911, but delays in agreeing

the designs and preparing printing dies meant that the foreign postcard was not ready until 1912. In following the rules laid down by the UPU for foreign postcards, a similar format was adopted to that used for the Edward VII issue, but with the new three-quarter face stamp and the Garter Coat of Arms which had been adapted from a new design by Garth Jones.

Between 3 June 1918 and 29 May 1922 the rate for both inland and foreign postcards was the same, being 1d initially, rising to 1½d in 1921. It was only with the reduction of inland postage rates in 1922 that overseas cards once again became the more expensive to send, requiring a new issue of postcards in both single and reply versions.

With the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1921, the decision was taken to amend the heading on the foreign postcard, and once again only the name of Great Britain appeared on the front.

The PO were very slow in preparing 1½d foreign postcards. Apart from the two Empire Exhibition special issues of 1924-25, it was not until 1930 that these once again went on sale, the public having used inland cards with adhesive stamps for the previous eight years.

Under the agreement made between UPU members, the PO had always fixed the selling price of foreign postcards at the value of the printed stamp. From 1918, when inland cards were also used to foreign destinations, a premium had to be paid over the price of the stamp. Having persuaded the public to accept this for all postcards, the practice was continued, even when foreign cards were once again put on sale in 1930. As with the inland card, they were never again sold at their face value.

A large number of changes were made during George V's reign, far too many to discuss in a single article. Therefore, registered envelopes, stationery for the armed forces and other special issues will be reviewed next time.

© Colin Baker 1995

The first part in this series was published in September's *Bulletin*. Six articles by Mr Baker, on The Development of Victorian Postal Stationery appeared in the issues of September, October and November 1994, January, March and April 1995.



The three different lettercard rates, 1d from 1911, 1½d from 1918 and 2d from 1920. The 1½d rate again applied from 1922 onwards

Post Haste! at the National Postal Museum



Our photographs show some of the interesting artefacts currently on display at the National Postal Museum. This exhibition includes historic letterboxes and vehicles as well as many smaller items. Amongst those featured here are Victorian "Penfold" and "Science & Art" letterboxes, a 1935 Morris Minor mail van, and the famous 'Hen & Chickens' parcels cycle used at Horsham in the 1880s. See report in September Bulletin (page 10).

The Post Haste! exhibition is located in the area of the former London Chief Post Office. A new gallery, for temporary exhibitions, occupies the site of the Philatelic Counter; the first such exhibition featured the Communications stamps honouring Sir Rowland Hill and Guglielmo Marconi (see October Bulletin, page 44).

Competition

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To enter the competition answer the questions below and send, with your name & address, on a postcard or back of an envelope to: November Bulletin Competition, Royal Mail, 22 Finsbury Square, LONDON EC2A 1NL to arrive by 29 December. You may submit as many entries as you like but each must be posted separately. Multiple entries in one envelope will be disregarded.

1. Who were the Court photographers responsible for a three-quarter profile of King George V?
2. Name two of the four former South African "Homelands"?
3. Which Scottish postwoman was given permission, in 1941, to wear trousers instead of the regulation blue skirt?
4. What was the posting time at the London Chief Post Office for mail to Barcelona and Madrid before the Spanish Civil War?
5. When was the Association of Friends of the National Postal Museum formed?

The answers will be found in this magazine. The competition is not open to employees, their families and agents, of Royal

The winners of the August competition were: M Sandle of Norfolk (1st prize), Vandhana of Singapore and M Stiff of Leicestershire (2nd prizes), and J Jones of Surrey, C Burrow of Essex, C Coomans of Belgium, H Richardson of Tyne & Wear, and R Sheirtcliff of New Zealand (3rd prizes).

The answers were: 1. 1874; 2. Czeslaw Slania; 3. Cartoonist; 4. Singapore Post Pte; 5. Samuel Whitbread.

Posting Boxes

No. 157 Boxes in Ireland

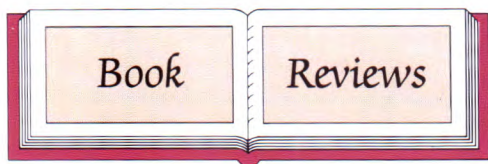
W Thompson of Essex submits this month's photographs showing a Victorian Penfold and an Edward VII wall box still in use in the Republic of Ireland – at Skibbereen, Co Cork, and Killarney, Co Kerry respectively. Both are now painted in the green livery of *An Post*, the Irish Post Office; the *An Post* logo is clearly seen on the collection plate on the Killarney box.



Another Penfold box in the Republic of Ireland was featured here in June 1989. An Edward VII lamp box in Irish PO green was illustrated in March 1994. One of the earliest surviving pillar boxes is preserved in the National Museum, Dublin and featured in No. 3 in this series way back in September 1978.

Readers interested in letter boxes should consider joining the Letter Box Study Group which has some 700 members. For details send a stamped addressed envelope to the Secretary: Sally Jones, 43 Miall Road, Hall Green, BIRMINGHAM B28 9BS.





The 1995 edition (98th) of Part 1 of the **Stanley Gibbons Stamp Catalogue** covering the issues of British Commonwealth countries is now available. This is published in two volumes, respectively covering the stamps of Great Britain and countries from Abu Dhabi to Ireland; and Jamaica to Zimbabwe. The GB section (Vol 1) comprises some 114 pages listing British stamps from the Penny Black to the Science Fiction issue (6 June 1995), Postage Due, Regional; Official and Postal Fiscal issues, as well as the stamps of the Channel Islands and Isle of Man.

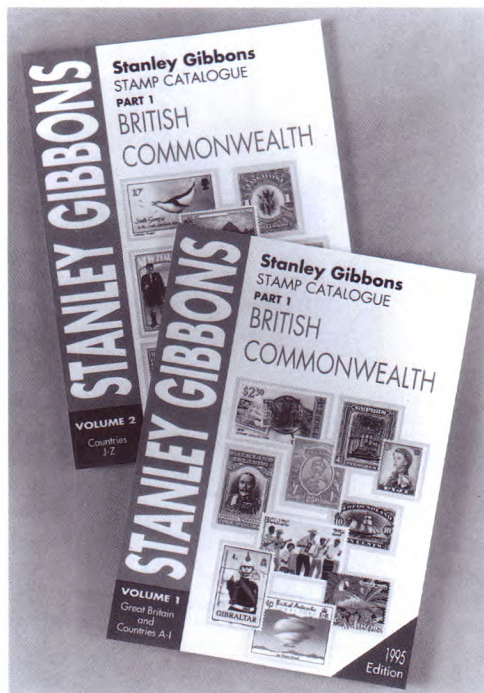
The GB section will be of the greatest interest to readers of this magazine. The listing for the 1872-73 6d has been improved, and a number of major errors, from a newly discovered Victorian watermark error to spectacular missing colours on modern issues, are included for the first time. There are a number of changes in the GB Used Abroad section, and the numeral Mail Boat cancellations, in use 1859-70, are reinstated. These have not been listed for over 60 years; prices for these scarce postmarks will be provided in future editions.

The numbers of the decimal Machins with standard perforations (X841-1058) remain unaltered although there have been some adjustments to the elliptical perforation series (Y1667-1755) to incorporate the 10p and 30p litho stamps from the 1995 National Trust stamp book. Oddly the price of the 19p litho stamp (Y1750) is given as £2 as a single but £1.75 in pane of six. No doubt adjustment will follow in the 1996 *Concise* catalogue. The price of the mixed value pane from the 1994 Northern Ireland prestige book (Y17481) is increased from £1.90 to £4. This pane includes the 6p litho stamp, only available from that book.

The major price changes made in the 1995 *GB Concise* catalogue (April 1995), concentrating on the later issues of Queen Victoria and up to 1937, are reproduced in the new Part 1. Prices of a number of major errors and some Official stamps have also been increased. There are few changes to Machin prices. The *Questa* 18p and 22p 2 bands (X1010, 1015) are both reduced by 50p mint/used, the 19p (X1013) is increased by

25p, and the humble *Walsall* 2p (X1050) goes up a further 20p to 35 times its face value of February 1993! There are price reductions for some of the 1977-87 Machin High Values (1026/8). The 1989 *Greetings* stamps are increased to £4 each mint but used prices are unaltered.

Much new information has been added to both volumes, including notes to assist the collector regarding the "Madame Joseph" forged cancellations applied in London to various colonial stamps issued before 1950 (see *Bulletin*, June 1994, page 299). There are additional notes on Commonwealth definitive printings with different imprint dates; where a stamp exists with two or more dates, or such dates can be used to distinguish between one listing and another, the catalogue now provides details of the dates, either in the set heading or as a footnote. Several new plate flaws have been added, as have the stamps of the former "Homelands" (Bophuthatswana, Ciskei, Transkei, and Venda) to the South Africa section. The listings of several countries have been extensively revised, including Cyprus, Egypt, Hong Kong, Sri Lanka (Ceylon "Pence" issues), and Tonga. The process of adding stamp books to the listings, started last year, continues.



Under Egypt there are improved notes on GB stamps used in that country, covering the now recognised use of the B01 cancellation at both Alexandria and Cairo before 1873. The stamps of the Suez Canal Company are now included in Vol 1 for the first time. Under India a number of additional George V plate flaws are added; the first issue of Alwar has been rewritten as has early Duttia, providing separate listings for the small and large Ganesh handstamps.

With assistance from the Ceylon Study Circle, the listing of the "Pence" issues of 1857-68 has been completely revised and the colour descriptions checked. This project, which took several years, has led to the amalgamation of the previous intermediate and rough 14 to 15% perforations. The Editor, David Aggersberg, hopes the new listing will provide a much better basis for the study of these fascinating issues. In his Preface, Mr Aggersberg thanks many specialist collectors who have made available their knowledge to ensure the catalogue listings are as comprehensive and accurate as possible.

The main areas of price revision are modern issues, George VI, Bermuda, British East Africa, Brunei, classic Canada, Hong Kong (especially George VI definitives and booklets), India, Leeward Islands, the Malayan group, and Nigeria. Mr Aggersberg, notes considerable price rises for Long Island, following the 1994 "Mountrobeck" sale, and unexpectedly it has been necessary to mark-up many of the issues for Bahawalpur. He and his colleagues have carried out a "radical reappraisal" of the prices of some earlier stamp books with notable revisions to the pre-1939 issues of New Zealand and South Africa. Looking ahead, he believes "areas worth watching" are Morocco Agencies where there has been activity in the Edward VII and George V stamps, also New Hebrides where used prices for the French-inscribed issues to 1957 have risen.

The two volumes together comprise over 1500 pages, containing many thousands of illustrations. The new-style laminated cover is welcomed by this reviewer. Price £27.50 per volume. Available from Stanley Gibbons Strand shop, stamp dealers and book shops, or by post from: Stanley Gibbons Publications, Parkside, RINGWOOD, Hants, BH24 3SH. Postage £3 UK (orders over £30 post free), £6 overseas. Free Credit Card Mail Order Hotline 0800 611622.

Volumes 1 & 2 of the three-volume 1995 edition of the Stanley Gibbons *Stamps of the*

World Catalogue are now available. These cover foreign countries A-J and K-Z. Volume 3 covering Commonwealth Countries, including Great Britain, will be published in December. Prices: Vols 1 & 2 £24.95 each, Vol. 3 £22.50. The 1995 (47th) edition of the popular *Collect British Stamps* will be published on 24 November, price £5.95.

The Falkirk & District Philatelic Society is to be congratulated on publication of the second edition of W W Clarkson's **The Post in Falkirk & District**, which first appeared in 1979. The new edition has been corrected and updated with respect to Falkirk and considerably expanded to give information on other post offices in the district, including Bo'ness, Grangemouth, Larbert, and Denny. The work is neatly divided into two parts – 1. General and Historical, charting the development of the postal services in this part of Stirlingshire since 1689 onwards; and 2. The Postal Markings of Falkirk District – describing and illustrating cancellations and other postal markings. Two of the seven appendices illustrate current local counter datestamps. A useful book for postmark collectors going on holiday to the area, as well as existing collectors and students of Falkirk postal history. 60 pages, well illustrated. Available from: J M Anderson, Taradon, Wallacestone Brae, FALKIRK FK2 0DH. Price £3.50 postpaid. Remittances payable to "Falkirk & District Philatelic Society".

Bulletin Back Numbers

Back issues are available for one year from the British Philatelic Bureau, 20 Brandon Street, EDINBURGH EH3 5TT, price 75p per copy. Some back issues are also available at the National Postal Museum, King Edward Street, LONDON EC1A 1LP.

For earlier issues a back number service is operated by Mr Maynard Davies of Surrey. He has for sale bound reprints of Vols 1 and 2, photocopies can be supplied of issues from Vols 3-6, and original copies of most issues from Vol 7 onwards. A limited supply of used binders is held. Mr Davies is interested in purchasing issues from Vols 3-6, but has adequate stocks of later issues. He regrets he cannot undertake the time-consuming task of searching and copying specific articles. All enquiries, accompanied by stamped addressed envelope or international reply coupon, should be sent to: Maynard Davies, 3 Eastwood, Bridgewater Road, WEYBRIDGE, Surrey, KT13 0EG.



Llangollen Postal Museum

D J Hiscock of Cornwall writes:

"While attending the International Eisteddfod at Llangollen this year, I visited the recently opened Post Museum in that town.

"It took a little finding, but what a surprise when finally located. Contained in the basement of the Post Office are many rarely seen objects from the early days of the Post Office, all carefully displayed and explained. All aspects of written communication are on show with a large section devoted to stamp collecting, which includes and explains almost every aspect of our hobby. This is a treat not to be missed – one of the best museums I have visited."

Perfined Scout Stamps

I C Burns of Stirlingshire writes:

"I refer you to p28 of the September *Bulletin* where Avon Stamps offer stamps perfined "BP". I should like to quote from the *Perfin Society Bulletin* of April 1993: 'A scouting stamp collector has spent time at Baden Powell House with their archivist but found no reference to them'. It would, therefore, appear that these perfins have no connection whatsoever with the Boy Scout movement."

I should be interested to hear from any reader who knows the origin of these perfined stamps. Ed.

Machin 2d Types I and II

Jim Dutton writes:

"There are two points in Matt Hinton's interesting article in the August *Bulletin*. The first is his statement that the 2d from cylinder 1 shows the value much closer to the bust than on copies from cylinders 5 and 6. This is inaccurate in several respects. The main visual difference is that in the so-called Type II the value tablet is appreciably closer to the left hand margin. Secondly, if you place a rule between the point of the bust and the point of the nose you will find (at least on the copies illustrated) that the value tablet of Type II is in fact nearer to the bust than

on Type I. Thirdly, as is explained in the SG *Specialised Catalogue* (Vol. 3) the main change between the two types is that the head has now been positioned more centrally in order to accord with other values in the set. One suspects that this is further evidence of Machin's scrupulous attention to detail.

"The second error, albeit minor, is his opening statement that 'originally two portraits of The Queen were used...' This gives a false impression of the design process involved. In reality Machin progressively developed two plaster casts, or plaques, one with a dark background (Heads A, B, etc), and one with a lighter gradated background which gave more of a three-dimensional effect (Head C). One of these casts still exists in the National Postal Museum, while the other has gone astray."

Mr Hinton replies:

"I am pleased to see that Mr Dutton continues to scrutinise my work, however I have to wonder just how long he has to spend searching for the 'errors' to which he refers. Whilst the 2d from cylinders 5 and 6 shows the bust positioned further to the left than on cylinder 1, the copies which I examined all showed the value tablet still further from the bust. Secondly, it is difficult enough to condense four years and hundreds of stamps into 2000 words without having to explain the intricacies of the printing process into the bargain. The bust provided a portrait for use on the stamps and it is sufficient to refer to it as such when dealing solely with the design. Incidentally, I do not refer to the backgrounds as 'graduated' but I note that Mr Dutton does. The overwhelming majority of feedback regarding my work has been highly complementary and I know that I am succeeding in my aim of highlighting how 'ordinary' stamps can be highly interesting."

The Editor is always pleased to receive contributions for Postbag, especially letters adding information to that already published, so benefitting fellow philatelists. All letters to the Editor are carefully read; matters of general interest will be dealt with in "Postbag". The Editor regrets that he is unable to reply personally to letters.

Events – November 1995

until-31 December: Display of St Kitts 1991 Flowers issue (stamps, artwork, proofs, etc) at British Library Philatelic Collections, Great Russell Street, London WC1. Open Mon-Sat 10.00-17.00; Sun 14.30-18.00. Enquiries: 0171-412 7635/6.

until February 1996: Designing Messages: European Stamp design exhibition at Design Museum, Shad Thames, London SE1. Open weekdays 11.30-18.00; weekends 12.00-18.00. Admission £4.50 adults, £3.50 concessions. Enquiries: 0891-715944.

until April 1996: "Victorian Posts" exhibition at National Postal Museum, King Edward Street, London EC1. Open Mon-Fri 09.30-16.30. Admission free. Enquiries: 0171-239 5420.

4 November: Cornex '95 – Cornwall Phil Fed Annual Exhibition & Fair at Public Halls, Liskeard, 10.00-16.00. Admission 30p (accompanied children free). Enquiries: John Booth, 01579-340079.

11 November: Midland Phil Fed Autumn Assembly at Community Centre, Middlemore Lane, Aldridge. 10.30-16.30. Hosted by Aldridge Phil Soc. Competitions, dealers, refreshments, car parking. Enquiries: Dr E Clark, 122 Coniston Road, WOLVERHAMPTON WV6 9DU.

11 November: Maidstone & Mid Kent Phil Soc Stamp Fayre at Oakwood Grammar School for Boys, Tonbridge Road, Maidstone. Enquiries: B R Stonestreet, 32 Bedgebury Close, Vinters Park, MAIDSTONE, Kent, ME14 5QZ.

24-25 November: Leeds Phil Soc Annual Stamp Fair at Pudsey Civic Hall, Dawson's Corner (junction of Ring Road and Leeds & Bradford Road). Fri 11.00-18.00; Sat 10.00-17.00. Enquiries: R Shiers, 0113-2682370.

25 November: Association of Friends of the National Postal Museum AGM at King Edward Hall, Newgate Street, London EC1. Enquiries: Ray Pottle, 01825-764913.

26 November: British Aerophilatelic Federation meeting at Guilden Sutton, Chester, 11.00. Course & members meeting with displays. Enquiries: R Beith, 01244-300777. Details of

BAeF membership from: M Smith, Catalina, Howell Hill Grove, EAST EWELL, Surrey, KT17 3ER.

1-2 December: Thematica II-95 exhibition at Carisbrooke Hall, 63 Seymour Street, London W2. Sat 10.30-19.00; Sun 10.30-17.30. Admission free. Enquiries: Thematic Exhibitions, 0181-343 2434 or Brian Sole, 01372-467652 (evenings).

Forthcoming Issues

Listed below are the proposed issues to April 1996. Any changes to dates will be notified in this magazine.

21 Nov	Definitive Collectors Pack No. 34
Nov	2p definitive with blue fluor
12 Dec	4 x 2nd book Walsall
12 Dec	10 x 2nd book Questa

1996

16 Jan	£1 vended book
16 Jan	£2 vended book
16 Jan	Burns stamp cards
25 Jan	Burns stamps & pack
Jan	Stamp books – Olympic logo
19 Feb	10 x 1st book Disney promotion
19 Feb	Greetings stamp cards
26 Feb	Greetings stamp book & pack
Feb	10 x 1st promotional book
5 Mar	Wildfowl Trust stamp cards
12 Mar	Wildfowl Trust stamps & pack
2 Apr	Scot aerogramme – Football
2 Apr	4 x 1 st book – Queen's birthday label
2 Apr	Stamp cards – commemorative labels
9 Apr	British Cinema stamp cards
16 Apr	British Cinema stamps & pack
Apr	£1 & £2 vended books

Notes:

1. The books of 12 December will have the multistamp cover design, introduced from January 1995.
2. The stamp cards, scheduled for 2 April, will reproduce the commemorative labels from the Bank of England (1994), R J Mitchell (1995), and Queen's 70th birthday (1996) stamp books
3. Date of issue of Railway pictorial aerogrammes to be announced; now postponed until 1996.

November/December Digest

To be issued in November/December

November: 2p definitive, printed by Enschedé, with blue fluor in phosphor. *Note: There will be no first day of issue or availability for this variation. Collectors are reminded that the fluor on stamps is only visible under ultra-violet light.*

21 November: Definitive Collectors Pack No. 34 containing 1p, 2p, 4p, 5p, 6p, 10p, 19p, 20p, 25p, 29p, 30p, 35p, 36p, 38p, 41p, 50p, 60p & £1 stamps. Price £5.45.

12 December: Stamp Books – 4 x 2nd class printed by Walsall, 10 x 2nd printed by Harrisons. Multistamp cover design; stamps have blue fluor.

Note: Some items are available only from the British Philatelic Bureau, 20 Brandon Street, EDINBURGH EH3 5TT and from Post Office Counters Ltd philatelic outlets at main post offices in: Bath, Belfast, Birmingham, Brighton, Bristol, Cambridge, Canterbury, Cardiff, Chester, Colchester, Coventry, Croydon, Durham, Edinburgh, Exeter, Glasgow, Gloucester, Guildford, Leeds, Leicester, Liverpool, London (Lombard Street, EC3 & Trafalgar Square, WC2), Manchester, Newcastle upon Tyne, Nottingham, Oxford, Plymouth, Portsmouth, Romford, Southampton, Southend on Sea, Stratford upon Avon, Truro, Windsor, and York.

To be withdrawn in November/December

13 November: 1994 Yearbook and Collectors Pack

30 November: Definitives – 19p (issued 26 October 1993 & 19 July 1994); 25p (26 October 1993 & 20 December 1994); 41p (26 October 1993). *Note: These stamps have yellow fluor, now superseded by the new blue fluor.*

30 November: Stamp Coils – 19p (1 November 1993); 25p ACP and 2 bands (1 November 1993 & 16 May 1995). *Note: 19p and 25p 2 bands have yellow fluor.*

30 November: Stamp Books – Harrison 4 x 2nd & 10 x 1st; Questa 10 x 2nd & 10 x 1st; Walsall 4 x 1st & 10 x 1st – all issued 10 January 1995. *Note: These books contain stamps with yellow fluor or ACP (Harrison 10 x 1st).*

30 November: Stamp Book – Harrison 10 x 1st issued 4 April 1995. *Note: This book contains stamps with 2 phosphor bands with yellow fluor.*

5 December: Stamp Book – Walsall 4 x 2nd, issued 6 December 1994.

Late News

Royal Mail's Christmas Card to the Nation

Christmas is important for Royal Mail and its customers, particularly for individuals who, at this time of year, overtake business customers in terms of the volume of mail posted. Each Christmas Royal Mail has to communicate a complex range of messages to individual consumers. This year a great deal of effort has gone into ensuring such messages are made available in a co-ordinated, consistent manner. Key information will be pulled together on a Christmas card to be delivered to all 25.5 million addresses in the UK during the period 20 November to 9 December.

The front of the card reproduces Ken Lilly's "Robin in Posting Box" design used on the 19p Christmas stamp. Lasting posting dates and postal rates are given on "page 2", opposite a seasonal message from Royal Mail's Managing Director, Peter Howarth CBE. The back page of the card features the Royal Mail cruciform logo, and the logos for the British Olympic and Paralympic teams for Atlanta 1996. Royal Mail is proud to be sponsoring both teams.

The cards are being printed in three versions, for delivery in England and Northern Ireland; Wales (with bilingual text); and Scotland (with Scottish crown in Royal Mail logo).

As well as containing useful information, the card will, no doubt, be welcomed by many philatelists as an interesting addition to their "Christmas 1995" collection.

The last posting dates for UK 2nd class mail and parcels will be 18 December, 1st class should be posted by 20 December to ensure delivery by Christmas. Christmas mail for Germany, Italy, and Spain should be posted by 11 December, other EU destinations by 14 December. Airmail letters to Canada and USA should be despatched by 6 December, for Asia, Australia, and New Zealand by 8 December.

