

Philatelic Bulletin

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Introduction

This month is the tenth birthday of the *Bulletin* and an especially opportune moment to thank you all for your continued support and encouragement without which our task would not be such a pleasant one. We are also glad to acknowledge the help given by our

contributors, correspondents, designers and printers who combine to produce the *Bulletin* for our 75,000 readers to enjoy.

End of service for stamping customer's own stationery

One of the oldest services provided by the Post Office will be coming to an end on 31 October this year. Since 1853 it has been possible for the public to have their private stationery (envelopes, postcards wrappers and labels) impressed or printed with postage stamps. This work has been carried out for the Post Office by Her Majesty's Stationery Office and the Inland Revenue Stamping Department. However, with the availability of other posting arrangements such as franking machines and printed postage impressions, the popularity of stamps printed in this way has fallen and the current demand is too small to justify continuing this personal service. Any items handed in for stamping up to and including 31 October will be dealt with in the normal way.

Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference Stamps – Souvenir Booklet

As well as First Day Covers and Presentation Packs, we are providing for this issue a Souvenir booklet, illustrated and in full colour. It will be on sale from all offices selling packs and covers, price 60p, and the Philatelic Bureau, price 64½p.

Midlands Ideal Home Exhibition

The Post Office is participating in the Exhibition to be held at Bingley Hall, Birmingham between 26 September – 20 October. The Exhibition will be open daily, except Sundays from 2 – 10 pm.

The 1d to 1/- Definitive Issues of King George VI Part II, Values from 2d upwards

As has been noted in the previous article (*Bulletin* August 1973) only the $\frac{1}{2}d$ - $1\frac{1}{2}d$ and the $2\frac{1}{2}d$ values were issued during 1937. Work on these values threw up a new problem for Harrison & Son (the printers).

Early in September 1937 they reported that, owing to the deep etching of the cylinders of the new King George VI low values, not only was a great deal of ink needed but the cylinders themselves were giving only a fraction of the wear expected and costly renewals were needed frequently. They expected that these difficulties would be enhanced in producing a 2d value in the same design.

In October, Messrs Stanley Gibbons wrote to the Post Office drawing attention to "the thick bars of colour (similar to 'Jubilee Lines')" which had appeared below the stamps in the bottom margin of sheets in the latest printings of the $\frac{1}{2}d$ and $1\frac{1}{2}d$ values. Though no explanation was made public at the time, this was in fact an attempt to counteract the wearing of the cylinders. In previous issues (eg the King George V photo-gravures) the change from white margin to solid colour had been gradual, whereas (because of the new design and the deep etching) in the new stamps the change was sudden. The new bar of colour transferred the excessive wear to itself and away from the bottom row of stamps.

Although there is no documentary evidence to support the following conjecture it may well be that the adoption of a 'reversed design' for the 4d to 6d values was influenced, in part at least, by the technical disadvantage of the original solid background design used for the lower values.

Though an alternative design (by Gill) was considered for the 3d value, it was rejected and the 2d and 3d values were in the same design as the values already issued.

A colour essay of the $1\frac{1}{2}d$ in orange was prepared on 21 September and the final 2d essay approved by the PMG late in November 1937; the 3d final essay was approved on

30 December. Both stamps were put on sale on 31 January 1938.

The 4d to 6d Values

In the meantime thought had been given to designs for the next three low values - 4d to 6d. It is interesting to note that the Post Office handled the design and production of the King George VI definitives in groups of values.

In the case of the 4d to 6d group, though it seemed likely that the same basic Gill design would be used as for the first group of values up to 3d, at the same time, probably to make recognition when sorting more easy, Eric Gill was asked to prepare some alternative versions. The various alternatives were shown to the Postmaster General on 25 November 1937.

Firstly there was Gill's basic $\frac{1}{2}d$ to 3d "Four Emblems" design, dark on a light background (instead of light on dark) and with oak, ash, ivy and thorn leaves replacing the floral emblems (design G see fig 10). Earlier art work of this design exists with the figure of value inside a circle.

Secondly there was the 'light on dark' version of type G, Gill's 'four leaves' design (fig 11).

Thirdly there were two variants by Gill of a design using the heraldic lions of both England and Scotland: the dragon of Wales and, in one variant only, also the harp of Ireland (designs H and H2 see figs 12 and 13).

It is probable that the PMG considered the alternatives not in art work but in essay form. The Post Office collection in the NPM has essays dated 22 November 1937 of Gill's 'four leaves' design (G) light on dark (3d value) in green and two shades of violet; of the same design dark on light (6d value) in two shades of olive-green, and of Gill's 'lions and dragon' H2 design (9d value) in green and violet.

The Postmaster General rejected the H and H2 designs, but suggested that Eric Gill be asked to make a new version of the light and dark design G using instead the original four



Fig 10

flower emblems as used for the values up to 3d.

While Gill was working on this amended design (I), the two alternative types of design G were shown to the Council for Art in Industry who endorsed the PMG's preference for the 'dark on light' version for the new 4d to 6d values. The Council, however, recommended that Edmund Dulac should be asked to redraw the King's head to bring it into balance with the reversed tonal values they favoured.

Six weeks later, on 18 January 1938, the PMG was shown colour essays of the amended 'dark on light' design (I). In changing the design back from leaves to the four flower emblems, Gill had redrawn the daffodil and the shamrock so that they swept slightly upwards instead of drooping and he had deleted the circle round the value figure so that this latter could be drawn more boldly (fig 10a). The essays, all in the 6d value, used the King's head specially redrawn by Dulac and were printed in the approximate colours later used for the issued 4d, 5d and 6d values.

Further colour trials were made during 1938 which also incorporated some minor modifications such as the relative strength of tones between the head and the rest of the design; and the shading under the jaw. Final essays for the 4d and 6d values were approved on 12 August and for the 5d value on 25



Fig 10a

August 1938 (from a selection of no less than six shades of brown tried as essays during that month).

In a letter dated 29 October 1938 the PO Stores Department informed Post Office Headquarters that production of the 4d and 5d values were under way (they were actually issued on 21 November) but that the 6d value had run into difficulties because of the requirement that double fugitive ink would have to be used (an Inland Revenue ruling because this value was widely used for revenue purposes). It was finally issued on 30 January 1939, replacing the surface-printed King George V 6d value of 1926. Though a 6d value was planned for the King George V photogravure issue of 1934-35 it, too, had run into fugitive ink trouble and was never issued.



Fig 11



Fig 12



Fig 13



Fig 14



Fig 15

The National Postal Museum also possesses four other original designs dated June and July 1937, one by Eric Gill and three by Edmund Dulac, for a 6d value.

The Gill design is a 'light on dark' version of his floral emblems design but with the word 'sixpence' along the base and figures of value in both top corners in place of the

emblems. One Dulac design is very similar but 'dark on light'. Neither appears to have been essayed. The other two Dulac designs are modifications of his 1840 (or Early Victorian) designs which, it will be remembered, had been held over in February 1937 for further consideration (see figs 14 & 15).

(To be continued)

Royal Air Force Flown Covers

Two flown souvenir covers will be issued during September in the RAF Museum Squadron series. The first commemorating the Anniversary of the Battle of Britain will portray the WOODCOCK used by No 17 Squadron in 1927 and its present equipment the Phantom. These will be cancelled with a special BFPS handstamp (1413) on 15 September, flown on a special flight, and should be available from the Philatelic Officer, RAF Bruggen, BFPO 42, on or about 10 October at 25p plus 3p postage.

The second, depicting the Canberra which is the only aircraft so far used by No 360 Squadron, marks the Award of the Badge to the Squadron and will be cancelled with a commemorative BFPS handstamp (1421) on 28 September. Covers will be flown on a special flight and should be available from the Philatelic Officer, No 360 Squadron RAF Cottesmore, Oakham, Rutland on or about 30 October at 25p plus 3p postage.

Details of a further cover in the series

were not available for inclusion in last months issue and relate to No 51 Squadron which produced a cover on 27 August showing the B.E. 12 of 1916 and the Comet, the Squadron's present equipment. After a special flight covers will be available on or about 20 September from the Philatelic Officer, No 51 Squadron, RAF Wyton, Hunts at 25p plus 3p postage.

A cover not in the RAF Museum series will be issued to commemorate the 30th Anniversary of the First Flight of the Vampire. Showing the prototype, FB5 and T.11 Vampires it will be cancelled by a special BFPS commemorative handstamp (1404) on 20 September and flown in one of the last remaining Vampires. It should be available about 10 October from the Philatelic Officer, RAF Valley, Anglesey, Wales at 25p plus 3p postage.

All proceeds from these covers are donated to the Royal Air Force Museum Appeal Fund.

Phosphor Treated Postage Stamps

Historical

On arrival at a mechanised sorting office, letter mail is first separated into "machinable" items, consisting of letters and cards in the POP range, and "non-machinable" items including packets and outsize envelopes. This operation is performed by a "segregator". The machinable mail must then be "faced" or stacked face up so that the stamps can be machine cancelled and the addresses read. Separation into first and second class streams is carried out at the same time as facing.

In order to carry out the facing operation mechanically it is necessary to identify the front and top edge of the envelopes in a way that can be recognised by a machine. The postage stamp placed (usually) in the top right hand corner, is the obvious method. It may be recognised by its colour in contrast

to the envelope, or by some other property imparted to permit electrical or luminescent detection. It has been found by experience that this latter property is the most reliable and, provided that the right materials are used, is also cheap. (The graphite-lined stamps of 1957-8 were used to test a system utilising electrical detection but the failure-rate proved to be unacceptably high).

At a very early stage, it was necessary for the British Post Office to decide which form of luminescent coding would be more efficient in service. "Luminescence" implies the ability of a substance to absorb radiation in one wavelength range (usually the ultra-violet) and re-emit in another - usually the visible. There are, however, two basically different kinds of luminescence.

1 Fluorescence, an almost instantaneous phenomenon in which the emission ceases the moment the irradiating source is switched off so that there is no visible afterglow. Several foreign Postal Administrations have used fluorescent coding, but the build-up of optical whitening agents in paper, including envelope paper, is making it increasingly difficult to avoid interference from this source even though colour filters are used. Optical whitening agents, used to improve the visual appearance of stamp-paper in most countries, emit mainly blue light on irradiation with ultra-violet (UV), whereas the materials used for fluorescent postal coding emit mainly yellow or yellow-green light.

2 Phosphorescence*, where the emitted light does not cease the moment the UV source is extinguished, but continues to glow for a period of time sufficiently long to be perceived by the human eye. This afterglow persistence period may vary from a fraction of a second to several seconds, and with British stamps is sufficiently long to be able to move envelopes from the irradiating position to the detecting position, so avoiding any interference from fluorescence.

*It is stressed that the word "phosphor" does not imply the presence of the dangerous substance phosphorus, but is derived from the Greek "Phos"-light.

The Choice of Organic Phosphors by the British Post Office

It was decided in 1957 to investigate the practicality of using phosphorescent coding for stamp detection. Most of the phosphors then available were inorganic compounds, hard granular substances unsuitable for incorporation into printing inks, and also expensive. Organic resin phosphors, developed by Post Office Research Dept. chemists, proved to be cheap, easy to manufacture, comparatively soft and could be ground to very fine powders suitable for use in the form of printing inks without

appreciable loss of phosphorescent efficiency. The importance of softness is underlined by the American discovery that the use of inorganic phosphors caused premature blunting of perforating pins.

Phosphorescent ink can be printed in the form of a pattern such as vertical bars, or if desirable for technical or aesthetic reasons, it may be printed as an overall coating. Recent examples of the latter technique are:—

Silver Wedding:	November 1972
Explorers:	April 1973
County Cricket:	May 1973
British Painters:	July 1973
Inigo Jones:	August 1973

In addition to just detecting stamps, the British system requires separation into first class and second class tariff rates. One narrow vertical bar is recognised by the machines as second class, whereas more than this – including "overall" – is classified as first class.

Organic phosphors are used by the Post Office, not only for automatic stamp recognition but also to mark address codes on envelopes in the form of binary-code dots, subsequently used for automatic destination sorting. To avoid confusion with the stamp phosphor some form of distinction is necessary. The chosen method involves the use of a phosphor on stamps (and stamped stationery!) which does not respond to the UV lamps used to excite address-code dots. Current British stamps require short-wave UV irradiation (254nm) to excite them, whereas address-code dots respond to all UV lamps, but particularly to long-wave ("near-visible") UV (365nm).

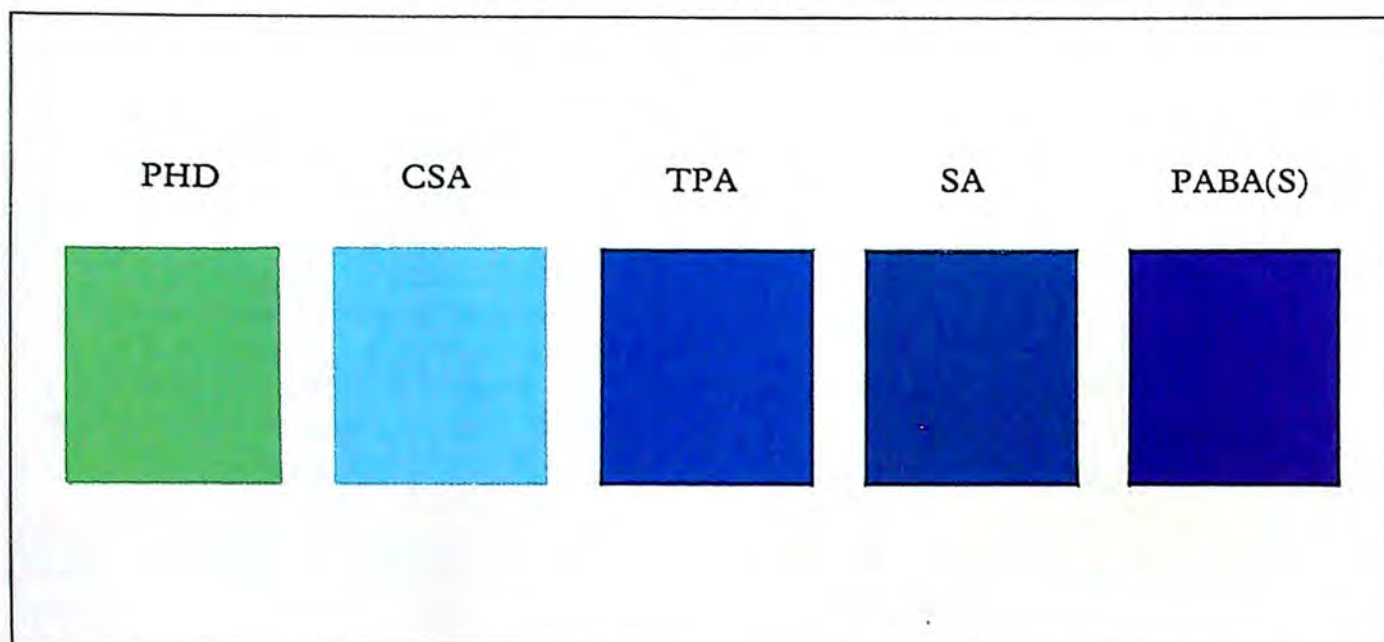
The colour description is approximate, but some idea may be obtained from the accompanying illustration.

CSA, developed as an address-code phosphor, is the only one in the above list which responds to long-wave UV. It was "borrowed" as a temporary measure as it gave a stronger signal than PHD, and was replaced by TPA in 1965 when destination

Different Phosphors used on British Stamps

A number of different phosphors have been used to date, and research still continues

	<i>PO Name</i>	<i>Printer's name</i>	<i>When used</i>	<i>Afterglow</i>
1	PHD	Lettalite B1	1959-61	Greenish, moderate-to-long duration
2	CSA	Lettalite B2	1961-65	Bright blue, long duration
3	TPA	Lettalite B3	1965	Violet blue, short duration
4	SA	DSU	1965 (De La Rue Technology issue)	Violet blue, short duration
5	TPA(S)	—	(1969 (Experimental 1/6d) (1971 (10p Definitive)	Violet blue short duration



coding, commenced experimentally at Luton in 1960, became more widespread.

SA, with optical properties similar to TPA, was more suitable for use on lithographic printed stamps.

TPA(S) was synthesised by a completely different method and incorporated into the paper coating; its optical properties are very similar to TPA and SA.

Visual Detection and Identification of Phosphor-coded Stamps

Being essentially colourless and transparent, code marks are not always revealed by direct observation in normal light, although the ink medium may yellow slightly with age. This is particularly true when the code-bars were

printed by typography ("letterpress"). Generally, examination is best made by holding the stamp in a nearly horizontal plane at about eye-level facing the light source, so that the light strikes the paper surface obliquely. Phosphor bars usually have a different degree of gloss from the rest of the stamp and so become visible. Of course, phosphor-coated or overall printed stamps cannot be detected by this means.

Identification requires the use of ultra-violet light. Before using such equipment, it is essential to take precautions to prevent damaging rays from entering the eyes. If the equipment is not specifically designed to prevent accidental eye damage, then the use of protective goggles or eye-shields, designed

for shielding against UV, is strongly recommended. Eye-shields intended for use in engineering workshops seldom afford protection for this purpose.

Because the light emitted by the afterglow is at a low level of intensity, the eyes should be dark-adapted for several minutes before attempting identification of phosphors. A dark room is ideal, but failing this a dark box may serve.

Equipment

Two schemes may be considered.

- 1 A dual-lamp assembly consisting of 2 separately switched lamps, one emitting in the 254nm region ("shortwave") and one in the 365nm region ("longwave"). Both may be fitted with filters to remove unwanted visible light, but for the shortwave lamp this is expensive.
- 2 One lamp emitting in long and short regions, with an interposable filter passing only long wave UV. Ordinary window-glass will suffice for this purpose.

Method of Viewing

Stamps are best examined against a matt-black background, or failing this, non-fluorescent paper, although this is increasingly difficult to obtain. Cheap buff wrapping paper is often suitable.

Philatelists sometimes ask for how long a stamp should be irradiated. This varies according to the power of the lamp and its distance from the stamp, but as an example 10 seconds would be about right for a stamp 6" from a 6 watt UV lamp.

The writer has found it helpful to keep the eyes closed during the irradiation period and open them at the instant of switching off the lamp (or smartly removing the stamp to a dark area). It will be seen that as the afterglow dies away its colour seems to change slightly, this is partly due to the fact that the eye is not equally sensitive to all wavelengths, particularly at low intensity.

Identification

CSA is the easiest to identify as it is the only British stamp phosphor to give a bright response (afterglow) under long wave UV, ie it glows when irradiated through window-glass. Several foreign postal administrations have issued phosphor-coded stamps coded in this way. (See Appendix).

Of the ones responding only to short-wave UV, PHD appears much greener than the others and its afterglow persists longer. It is extremely difficult to differentiate between TPA and SA, although there is a very slight subtle difference.

The best approach is to use known identified stamps as reference samples and compare unknown specimens with each in turn.

Future Policy

As has been mentioned, facing machines do not count bars, but ascertain only whether an area of one vertical narrow bar, or more than this is present. Thus 2 or 3 vertical bars are machine equivalent to an overall phosphor coating.

Although for aesthetic and technical reasons phosphor ink has been printed over the whole stamp area, this is an expensive process and there are obvious advantages in applying the material as part of the paper coating before printing, and in synthesising it "in situ", thus avoiding the costly grinding processes otherwise required to convert it into a fine pigment-grade powder.

The 1969 1/6d experiment whilst not completely satisfactory, yielded valuable information leading to important changes both in the formulation and method of synthesis of a new phosphor specifically designed for inclusion in the paper coating. Development work is nearing completion and stamps printed on the new phosphorescent paper may be expected during the next year.

The new phosphor may possibly be designated "PABA(S)". Optically, the duration of its afterglow is similar to that of TPA but its colour is somewhat more blue.

Appendix The system of postal coding pioneered by the British Post Office has led to an increasing use of automatic facing and cancelling of mail by Postal Administrations of other countries. This is illustrated by the following list, which is not claimed to be comprehensive.

<i>Country</i>	<i>Coding on Stamps</i>	<i>Machines used for Facing</i>	<i>Duration of Afterglow</i>	<i>Excitation Wavelength</i>	<i>Colour of emitted light</i>
Argentina	Phosphorescence	Telefunken	Moderate to short	Longwave U/V	Yellow-green
Australia	Phosphorescence	Pitney Bowes & Toshiba	Very short	Longwave U/V	Orange
Belgium	Phosphorescence	Telefunken & S.E.L.	Moderate to short	Longwave U/V	Yellow-green
Brazil	Phosphorescence	Telefunken	Moderate to short	Longwave U/V	Yellow-green
Canada	(i) Phosphorescence	Toshiba &	Fairly long	Longwave U/V	Bright blue
	(ii) Fluorescence	S.E.L.	None	Longwave U/V	Bright yellow
Denmark	Fluorescence	Telefunken	None	Longwave U/V	Nearly white
Finland	Phosphorescence	Telefunken	Moderate to short	Longwave U/V	Yellow-green
Formosa	3-colour optical	Toshiba	None	Visible	Colour of stamp
France	Phosphorescence	Own make & Toshiba	Moderate to short	Longwave U/V	Yellow-green
Germany	(i) Fluorescence	Telefunken &	None	Longwave U/V	Bright yellow
	(ii) Fluorescence	S.E.L.	None	Longwave U/V	Nearly white
Italy	Fluorescence	S.E.L.	None	Longwave U/V	Yellow
Japan	Phosphorescence	Toshiba & N.E.C.	Short	Shortwave U/V	Yellow-green
Jugoslavia	Phosphorescence	GEC-Elliott	Fairly long	Longwave U/V	Blue
Korea	3-colour optical	Toshiba	None	Visible	Colour of stamp
Lebanon	Phosphorescence	Telefunken	Moderate to short	Longwave U/V	Yellow-green
Mexico	Phosphorescence	Not known	Moderate to short	Longwave U/V	Yellow-green
Netherlands	(i) Fluorescence	Telefunken &	None	Longwave U/V	Yellow
	(ii) Phosphorescence	Toshiba	Moderate to short	Longwave U/V	Yellow-green
Norway	Phosphorescence	Telefunken	Moderate	Longwave U/V	Yellow-green
Russia	Fluorescence	Telefunken	None	Longwave U/V	Deep yellow
South Africa	Phosphorescence	S.E.L.	Moderate to long	Longwave U/V	Yellow-green
Spain	Optical	GEC-Elliott	None	Visible	Colour of stamp
Sweden	Phosphorescence	Telefunken	Moderate to short	Longwave U/V	Yellow-green
Switzerland	Phosphorescence	Telefunken	Moderate to short	Longwave U/V	Yellow-green
USA (Surface)	Phosphorescence	NCR	Moderate to short	Shortwave U/V	Green
USA (Air)	Phosphorescence	NCR	Very short	Shortwave U/V	Orange-red

Postmark Slogans

Unless otherwise stated, items for reposting should be forwarded to the Head Postmaster of the town where the slogan is to be used, with the outer cover marked "Postmark Slogan".

- 31 August - 6 September 1973
(Glasgow London only)
- 3 September - 9 September 1973
(Edinburgh only) (P)
**Europa Athletics Cup Final EC73
September 7 - 9 Edinburgh.** To be used
at:— Edinburgh, Glasgow, London -
WDO.
- 12 August - 27 October 1973 (4 dies - 1st
and 2nd Class)
**Blackpool Illuminations September
7 - October 27.** To be used at Blackpool,
Lancs.
- 1 October - 23 December 1973 (P)
Go Ahead Plant and Care for Trees.
To be used at Crewe.
Smoking Can Harm Your Health.
To be used as follows:—
- 3 September - 14 October 1973 Dumbarton.
- 3 September - 30 September 1973 Dundee.
- 3 September - 14 October 1973, 3 December
- 13 January 1974 Dunfermline
- 3 September - 30 September 1973 Hamilton
- 3 September - 11 November 1973 Perth
- 7 September - 20 January 1974 Glasgow.
- 3 September - 30 September 1973 (P)
Keep Fit at the Sports Centre.
- 1 October - 31 October 1973,
- 1 April - 30 April 1974 (P)
Pay Rates Promptly and Save Money.
- 1 November - 2 December 1973
**Harlow Playhouse Theatre and Arts
Centre Nightly.** (Repeat).
- 3 December - 31 December 1973 (P)
**Shop Early and see the Christmas
Lights.**
- 1 January - 31 January 1974 (P)
**Find a Bin Put It In Keep the Town
Tidy.**

- 1 February - 28 February 1974
**Be in the Swim at Harlow's Own
Swimming Pool.** (Repeat).
- 1 March - 31 March 1974 (P)
**Invest with your Council Profit from
Local Bonds.**
- 1 May - 2 June 1974
**I'm off to Pets Corner Harlow Town
Park.** (Repeat).
- 3 - 30 June 1974
**Free Public Entertainment in Harlow
Every Weekend May-August.** (Repeat).
All the above slogans to be used at Harlow,
Essex.
- 1 August 1973 - 31 July 1974
**Business has it's Routes in Bradford
M62 M1.** To be used at Bradford.
- 16 July - 2 September 1973 (P)
**Arts Council Exhibition Inigo Jones
Banqueting House, Whitehall 13 July
- 2 September.** To be used at London -
East Central Do, North Western Do,
Mount Pleasant.
- 5 August - 15 September 1973
**Wyvern Swindon 10 September - 22
September Lionel Barts Famous Lock
Up Your Daughters Now Booking
0793-24481.** To be used at Swindon, Wilts.
- 23 August - 20 September 1973 (P)
**The Basingstoke Show 22 and 23
September.** To be used at Basingstoke,
Hants.
- 16 September - 27 October 1973
**Wyvern Swindon 24 December 19
January Traditional Pantomime Dick
Whittington Now Booking 0793-24481.**
To be used at Swindon, Wilts.

Repeat Campaigns

- 15 July 1973 - 14 July 1974 (P)
**Nairn for Holidays Golfers Paradise
Golden Sands.** To be reused at Nairn.

'P' denotes Pictorial
'R' denotes Rectangular
'C' denotes Circular
'O' denotes Oval

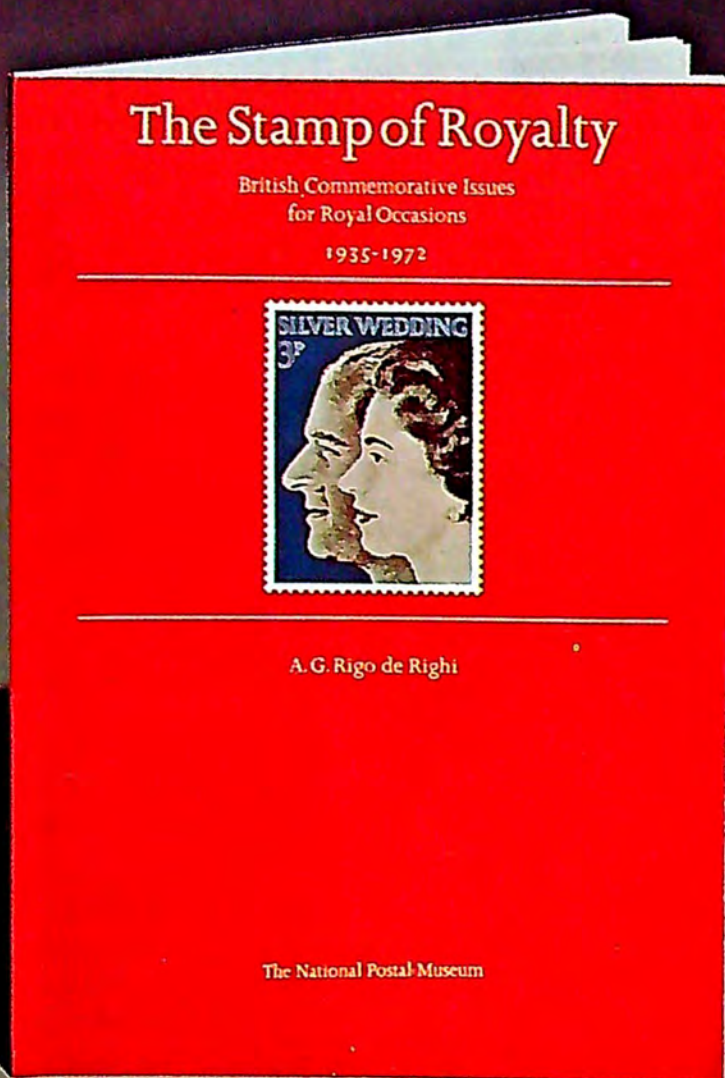
The Stamp of Royalty

British Commemorative Issues for Royal Occasions 1935-1972

The six sets of commemorative postage stamps marking special Royal Occasions are among the most memorable and sought-after twentieth century issues of Britain.

The keen personal interest of King George V, himself a noted philatelist, led to the very first such issue, four stamps to mark the Silver Jubilee in 1935 of the King's acces-

sion to the Throne. It has been followed by special issues for the Coronation of King George VI (1937), the Silver Wedding of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth (the Queen Mother) in 1948, the Queen's Coronation (1953), the Investiture of the Prince of Wales (1969) and the Silver Wedding of the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh in 1972.



This new book, published by the National Postal Museum in London, is a unique and fully illustrated account of the conception, design and production of these six fascinating commemorative stamp issues. The text of *The Stamp of Royalty*, by the Museum's Curator, Mr A. G. Rigo de Righi, Fellow of the Royal Philatelic Society, shows that the story of their production is one of an unusually close relationship between the Sovereign and the Post Office, a relationship made more personal by reason of the very nature of the subjects.

For the philatelist, particularly the collector of Great Britain stamps, the text provides an essential and absorbing background to the six issues, by describing in detail for the first time the various stages in the design and production of each issue. The written record is supplemented by over 90 illustrations, 73 of them in full colour, of rejected designs, essays, colour trials and proofs from the Post Office Collection at the National Postal Museum.

The book is available from 26 September 1973 from philatelic sales counters price 95p, or £1 from the Bureau inclusive of postage.

Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference Stamps

This stamp issue celebrates the nineteenth Conference of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, which takes place this year in London. The last conference in this country was in 1961, when the Post Office also issued 2 stamps, values 6d and 1.3d. The denominations of the 2 stamps to be issued on 12 September 1973 are 8p and 10p.

The designer is Richard Downer, MSIA, MSTD and this is his first successful stamp commission for the Post Office. He worked from aerial photographs and first hand references of the Palace of Westminster. He also designed the presentation pack and first day cover. The first day of issue is Wednesday



12 September 1973, to coincide with the opening of the conference by Her Majesty the Queen.

PRINTING DETAILS

Printer	Bradbury Wilkinson & Co Ltd
Size	41 x 30
Perforation	15 x 14
Number to Sheet	100
Paper	Coated, unwatermarked phosphor
Format	Horizontal
Process	Recess (intaglio) and letterpress
Date of issue	12 September 1973
Designer	Richard Downer, MSIA, MSTD
Colours	8p Black, buff 10p Black, gold

The British High Values of the 20th Century

A second opportunity for the Post Office to provide commemorative stamps – the first had been the Wembley Exhibition stamps of 1924/25 – was rather imposed upon them by the fact of their staunch membership of the Universal Postal Union, and by the importance of the Postal Union Congress due to be held in London in May 1929. It was the 55th anniversary of the first Postal Congress held in Berne, permanent HQ of the UPU, in 1874, and only the ninth Congress since that time. Furthermore, as host countries of the 7th and 8th Congresses in Madrid (1920) and Stockholm (1924) respectively, both Spain and Sweden had established the precedent of commemorative stamp issues.

Thus committed, the British postal authorities once again invited established artists to submit prospective designs for four low values and, greatly daring, a £1 stamp. "In for a penny, in for a pound" must have been the Post Office's response to the pressures for a stamp series in honour of the London conference, and the issue of a "super" stamp was certainly intended to make a worthwhile gift to visiting delegates, as well as furthering Britain's prestige in the fields of stamp design and printing.

It was Harold Nelson's bold, poster-style "Wembley Lion" which was finally selected from his six essays for the recess-printed British Empire Exhibition stamps, and his success can be judged by the fact that he was again asked to submit designs for the PUC £1 stamp of 1929. One of his unaccepted essays for the Wembley project (in which, incidentally, he had been in close rivalry with the celebrated engraver and typographer, Eric Gill) had been an imaginative conception of St George slaying the Dragon, a well-known and popular allegory illustrating the theme of "good vanquishing evil". It had significance in that St George, reputed to have suffered martyrdom under Diocletian circa AD 303, was the patron saint of England, having been adopted as such in the reign of Edward III.

Fortunately Mr Nelson had not scrapped



his Wembley "rejects", and he submitted the "St George" essay once again with a completely revised layout. The legendary Saint and the creature of evil were placed centrally in the design, the King's portrait in the upper left and the commemorative panel at the top. It was a bold concept which won instant approval and was accepted. His preliminary drawings for this issue are now collector's items, valued at from £100 each in *Gibbons GB Specialised Catalogue*, while proofs from a specially-prepared miniature sheet of four stamps on thin white card are priced at £500 per stamp.

Also accepted were the four small low-value stamps – a ½d and a 2½d with designs by John Farleigh, a well-known book-illustrator, and a 1d and 1½d showing the King's head superimposed on the Union Jack, designed by Ernest Linzell. These stamps were engraved by J A C Harrison and typographed by Waterlow & Sons, but their combined efforts failed to relieve the mediocrity of the designs – odd bedfellows for the £1! Indeed, the 2½d was rather gleefully linked to a somewhat similar label which adorned a well-known brand of bottled beer at that time.

By contrast, the PUC £1 was a truly magnificent stamp, a real work of art, with the

look and quality of a fine old print. It was impressively large in size, and Harold Nelson had struck a fine balance in his arrangement of the various components, finding appropriate space for the Imperial Crown, the shield bearing St George's Cross and bold figures of value. The King's head was based on Mackennal's sculpted bust for Georgian medals, enclosed in the same laurel wreath used in the Seahorse designs. The words "POSTAGE ONE POUND" were unobtrusively displayed in scroll form, while the unfortunate Dragon lies impaled and asprawl across the foot of the stamp with its claw gripping the bottom frame-line.

This handsome black stamp was engraved and recess-printed by Bradbury, Wilkinson & Co in sheets of 20 (five rows of four), on paper watermarked with an extra large GvR monogram surmounted by a crown. Quantities sold amounted to 61,000, not a large figure by present-day standards, and for many years its catalogue price remained steady at £5 or £6 unused. It is now catalogued at £75 unused, £65 used, and even at these prices it must still be regarded as a highly desirable stamp, and a "gilt-edged" investment for the future.

JAMES WATSON

Special Handstamps

Unless otherwise stated, items for reposting bearing at least 3p in postage should be sent to the Head Postmaster of the town in which the special posting box is located, with the outer cover marked "Special Handstamps".

3 November 1973 (P/R)

British Philatelic Exhibition NZS of GB 21st Year 3 November 1973 London W1. Special posting box at Seymour Hall W1.

22 September 1973 (P/R)

1873 - 1973 Ipswich YMCA 100 Years of Service 22 September 1973 Ipswich Suffolk. Special posting box at Christchurch Park, Ipswich.

Islay Postbus Service

25th Scottish Postbus, 1 October 1973

Port Ellen, Isle of Islay

Special posting box at Port Ellen Post Office.

On 1 October 1973, the Scottish Postal Board will issue the first "Scottish Postbus Services" timetable. This is a 60-page production containing timings, fares and history of all Scottish postbuses.

Requests for this timetable received by the Head Postmaster Oban before 29 September 1973 will be returned in a cover bearing the special hand stamp mentioned above. The cost is 15p.

New Postbus Service Billesdon, Leicester

A passenger-carrying postbus service will run from Billesdon, Leicester, starting 6 September. A special handstamp is to be provided.

Covers for reposting bearing at least 3p in postage should be sent to the Head Postmaster Leicester marking the outer cover "Special Handstamp".

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