

BRITISH PHILATELIC

The ROYAL MAIL magazine *for stamp collectors*

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Bulletin

British air letters • Congress
report • Mainly Machins



Navy Uniform: the third and final issue in Royal Mail's series on service dress goes on sale on 17 September.

Forthcoming issues and withdrawals



Cover A Victorian Royal Navy officer's cap badge. The Navy Uniforms issue was featured here in June. Badge supplied by Hand & Lock. Photograph by Geoff Dann.

Availability All items available from Royal Mail Tallents House (address below). Selected items are available at Post Office branches and Post Office philatelic outlets at the main post offices in: Bristol, Cambridge, Chester, Colchester, Coventry, Croydon, Durham, Edinburgh, Exeter, Glasgow, Grimsby, Harrogate, Lichfield, London (Eastcheap & Trafalgar Sq), Norwich, Nottingham, Plymouth, Portsmouth, Southampton (High St and Hedge End), Southend-on-Sea, Stevenage, Stroud, Trowbridge, Truro and York.

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

1 September	Issue Fire and Rescue Service stamps, presentation pack, stamp cards and medal cover
17 September	Issue Naval Uniforms stamps, presentation pack, prestige book, stamp cards, cachet cover, miniature medal collection • Military Uniforms collection
17 September	Issue British Design Classics stamp book No 4 – 2 x Mary Quant Mini Skirt stamps and 4 x 1st definitives
18 September	Issue Big Ben commemorative sheet and medal cover
28 September	Withdrawal 50th anniversary of Country (Regional) stamps miniature sheet, presentation pack, prestige book, press sheet and UK coin cover
28 September	Withdrawal Glorious series generic sheets: England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and UK
7 October	Issue 800th anniversary of Cambridge University commemorative sheet
8 October	Issue Eminent Britons stamps, presentation pack and stamp cards
13 October	Withdrawal Women of Distinction stamps, presentation pack and stamp cards
20 October	Issue Silver Stamp Collection No 5: 72p Westminster Cathedral stamp
21 October	Issue Italia 2009 exhibition sheet

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

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This month The Editor previews this issue

There are two new stamp issues this month – Fire & Rescue Services on 1 September (shown in the May *Bulletin*) and Navy Uniforms (shown in June) on the second day of Autumn Stampex, 17 September. There should be plenty for visitors to see this time, as the National Competitions are returning to Stampex.

2009 is turning out to be a classic year for anniversaries – University of Cambridge (800th), Robert Burns (250th), Darwin (200th), Big Ben (150th), and Concorde, Moon landing and Prince of Wales Investiture (all 40th) amongst many others. One that is not being commemorated but worthy of mention is the 40th anniversary of the ending of the GPO as a government department on 30 September 1969 and transfer of the postal service to a public corporation the next day. The Post Office corporation became a government owned company in 2001, initially known as Consignia, and now Royal Mail Group. The government has recently announced that the proposed partial privatisation of Royal Mail is being deferred.

As a government department the GPO was headed by a minister, the Postmaster General, a title dating back to 1660. Three of the last four PMGs are still with us – Tony Benn (1964-66), Edward Short, Lord Glenamara (1966-68), and Roy Mason, Lord Mason of Barnsley (1968). All have been enthusiastic supporters of this *Bulletin*, and their contributions to the stamp programme have been recorded here over the years. To some *Bulletin* readers this may be ancient history, but for many others (me included) it all seems only yesterday...

This month we begin a new series on postal stationery by Colin Baker, and Glenn Morgan reports on the activities of the Birmingham Philatelic Society as it celebrates its 125th anniversary – yes, yet another anniversary! JOHN HOLMAN, EDITOR •

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



Forthcoming exhibitions Autumn Stampex will be at the Business Design Centre, Upper Street, Islington, London N1, 16-19 September. Opening hours are: 12.00-19.00 on Wednesday, 09.30-18.00 Thursday and Friday, and 09.30-17.00 Saturday. Many dealers (including about 20% from overseas) will offer everything from classic stamps to new issues, postal history to philatelic accessories. The National Youth Stamp Group will cater for younger visitors with a range of activities, including a popular Saturday afternoon auction. The Royal Mail stand will offer the full range of current stamps and philatelic products. The Naval Uniforms stamps and prestige book go on sale on the Thursday when a special Stampex first day of issue postmark will be available. Smilers collectors will be able to get their image on labels at the Instant Smilers booth on the Royal Mail stand.

At the exhibition information stand, visitors will be able to buy the latest Stampex business customised sheet and obtain a free exhibition postcard – both now becoming an interesting series of exhibition souvenirs. The Business Design Centre is near Angel underground station (Northern line) and there are plenty of eating places nearby.

A Philatelic Festival is to be held in Rome at the Palazzo dei Congressi in the EUR quarter, from 21 to 25 October 2009, organised by Poste Italiane, Federation of the Italian Philatelic Societies, and Association of Italian Philatelic Traders. Italia 2009 will include a competitive exhibition open to collectors from European and Mediterranean countries, as well as from Canada, the USA, Argentina, South Africa and Australia – countries with large communities of Italian immigrants and their descendants •

Italia 2009 enquiries See www.italia2009.it

Sweden and Denmark Posts merge The postal services of Sweden and Denmark have recently merged operations to form a new jointly-owned company comprising over 50,000 employees and with sales in excess of 45 billion Swedish Kronor. Only time will tell whether this merger will have an impact on the philately of both countries, but in the meantime it is expected that there will be no obvious changes for the collector •

Delivering the Mail The British Postal Museum & Archive (BPMA) has collaborated with Adrian Bradbury on his latest stamp sheet, 'Delivering the Mail', planned as the first in an annual BPMA series. Adrian is supporting the BPMA's charitable aims through sales of this sheet, which is a visual interpretation of early Post Office history, from the 1635 proclamation by King Charles I through to the issue of the first uniforms supplied to London letter carriers in 1793. The sheet is limited to 1000 copies, with design by Adrian Bradbury and printing by Cartor in France. Available from A G Bradbury, and it is understood that Royal Mail will also be stocking this sheet.

The BPMA is the leading resource for all aspects of British postal history. It is a combined museum and archive, bringing together the Royal Mail Archive and the Museum Store. With collections ranging from staff records to stamps, poster design to photography and from transport to telegrams, it cares for the visual, written and physical records from over 400 years of innovation and service, illuminating the fascinating story of British communications. Records in the Royal Mail Archive are designated as being of outstanding national importance. For more information see www.postalheritage.org.uk •



Delivering the Mail sheet Available from A G Bradbury, 3 Link Road, Stonegate, Leicester LE2 3RS, or from his website at www.bfcd.co.uk (enter stock code 30965 in the search box). Price £28.99.



Sheet enquiries Buckingham
Covers, Warren House,
Shearway Road, Folkestone
CT19 4BF. Telephone 01303
278 137 or see website [www.
buckinghamcovers.com](http://www.buckinghamcovers.com)



Business customised sheets The heroic efforts of Pilots John Alcock and Arthur Whitten Brown in crossing the Atlantic non-stop in 1919 are celebrated in an Aviation Heroes commemorative stamp sheet from Buckingham Covers. A small number of sheets are available signed by modern-day record breaker Capt Les Scott, World Speed Record Holder for his transatlantic Concorde flight. The unsigned sheet is £26.95, signed by Capt Scott is £34.95. Either can be mounted ready for framing for an additional £5.

To mark the 40th anniversary of the Moon landing, Buckingham Covers have worked officially with the National Science Museum to produce a stamp sheet presentation pack. Featuring images from the Science & Society Picture Library, a limited number of the sheets are available signed by the 6th man to walk on the Moon, Dr Edgar Mitchell. The unsigned sheet is £26.95, or £44.95 signed by Dr Mitchell •

Machin banknotes In February the Bermuda Monetary Authority (BMA) released a set of six banknotes in \$2, \$5, \$10, \$20, \$50 and \$100 denominations. They are unique in that they include the Arnold Machin portrait of HM The Queen; the portrait appears on the front left corner of each note and is much smaller than on previous Bermudian banknote designs; indeed it could easily be missed at first glance. The BMA states that its Currency Unit worked alongside internationally recognised, UK-based note printers De La Rue Currency to develop the look and features of the notes and that the portrait of The Queen is ‘the traditional image of Her Majesty

that is featured on the stamps of the UK'. Reproduction restrictions on current banknotes to prevent counterfeiting mean that we cannot illustrate them here, but a visit to www.banknotenews.com/files/tag-bermuda.html will reveal them in all their glory. These notes should be available from banks in the UK, although tracking down uncirculated copies outside of the island may prove to be something of a challenge. Mint sets are available from coin and banknote dealers worldwide, but at a considerable price above their face value. Expect to pay a figure of around £350 for a set with matching serial numbers. (The face value as at 6 July was around £116, as the currency is on a par with the US dollar.) ●



RSA Design Directions Since its inception, the RSA (Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce) has generated new and imaginative ideas to promote social progress. The RSA established its awards scheme for students in 1924, with the aim of linking education and industry in beneficial partnerships. Today this scheme, which encourages students to use their skills to address social challenges, continues to identify, support and reward the most promising and creative students.

This year's winners in the Stamp Design category are Lynessa Hancock, Courtney Mullings, Sam Bestwick, Alicia Malkin, Kayleigh Smith and Kevin Daly. These students have each won various sums of money, internships and/or travel awards from Royal Mail and De La Rue. The theme for the stamp design contest was the environment and the issues facing our planet. A visit to www.rsadesigndirections.org/design-directions/2008-09/exh/index.php will enable you to see an online exhibition of all of the students' work and some of the excellent winning entries are shown here ●

Three of the winning entries in the Stamp Design category of this year's RSA Design Directions, by (from left) Alicia Malkin, Lynessa Hancock and Sam Bestwick.

Obama stamp portrait An artist named Pete Mason from Staffordshire has created a stamp portrait of Barack Obama. Measuring 3ft by 4ft, it comprises around 2000 stamps, giving it a pixelated appearance. The artist claims that by choosing an everyday object, such as a postage stamp, and using it in an obscure manner, it enables the audience to see 'art' with new eyes. Enquiries: visit www.thepostpopartman.co.uk to see this and other work by the artist, while <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/7838823.stm> contains a small video of the stamp portrait being designed and discussed ●





The special handstamp postmark used on 18 August

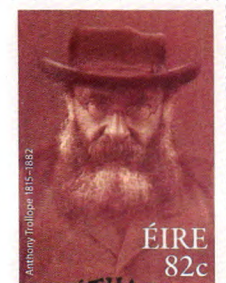
Birmingham PS anniversary The Birmingham Philatelic Society is starting celebrations marking its 125th season with a packed programme of meetings and a revamped website (see *The World of Online Philately*, page 25). There is also an exhibition entitled 'Birmingham Philatelic' at the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, now open and running until 9 January 2010. This exhibition, a collaboration between the Society and the Museum, looks at the history of the postage stamp and the art of collecting. The majority of objects will be loans from the Society and from the Museum and Art Gallery's world-famous Evans collection, bequeathed by Thomas Evans who collected over 44,000 stamps over his lifetime.

Do try to see this exhibition, as it is not often that the hobby has this sort of exposure in a non-philatelic environment. Although not officially part of the Festival of Stamps planned for next year, the exhibition will be open at the start of what is sure to be an exciting year for British philately.

Admission is free, open 10.00-17.00 Monday to Thursday and Saturday, 10:30-17.00 Friday, and 12:30-17.00 Sunday. The Museum is in Chamberlain Square, Birmingham B3 3DH. Visit www.bmag.org.uk or telephone 0121 303 2834. The Birmingham Philatelic Society's website can be found at www.birminghamphilatelic.co.uk •

BAMS For details of membership write to W E Trower, 192 Ferry Road, Hockley SS5 6JZ.

British Air Mail Society The BAMS, formerly known as the British Aero Philatelic Federation, held its AGM at the end of May at the Royal Philatelic Society London, where two competitions were held once the business of the day had been concluded. After lunch, there was a grand display of Turkey by Bill Robertson, followed by a 355-lot auction. The next event will be held at the same venue on 5 December when the Christmas meeting will include a display by Laurence Kimpton •



Anthony Trollope On 26 June 2009, An Post (Irish Post Office), issued a stamp to honour the life and work of Anthony Trollope. Born in England in 1815, Trollope joined the Irish Post Office as a surveyor's clerk in 1841. During his time there, he began his writing career and wrote three novels, the first of which was *The Macdermots of Ballycloran* (1847). His fame today rests chiefly on two fictional cycles. The Chronicles of Barsetshire are gentle satires of provincial life in the West Country, while The Palliser novels are gritty tales of political intrigue. He left Ireland in 1859 and went on to a successful career as a novelist and Post Office official. While his famous novels keep his name alive, those in the mail business honour him as a postal pioneer and the man responsible for popularising the pillar-box.

The new Irish stamp is based on an albumen print of Anthony Trollope taken in 1864 by Julia Margaret Cameron. The stamp appears to mark the 150th anniversary of the departure of Trollope from Ireland.

When in London, visit 39 Montague Square, W1, where Trollope lived from 1873, to see a blue plaque worded 'Ulster History Circle / Anthony Trollope / 1815-1882 / Novelist / worked here as / Post Office / Surveyor'. It is to be found under the balustrade on the west side of the Custom House, to the right of the steps •

Enquiries www.irishstamps.ie

Post Office branding A growing number of Post Office branches are being re-branded with the new red and white livery of Post Office Ltd, replacing the red, yellow and green colour scheme used for the past few years. The change is also to be reflected in the colour of stamp vending machines, which are reverting to the more traditional red colour instead of the relatively short-lived turquoise scheme. The first sites to have the new overlays fitted to the outdoor 'Thomas Automatics 6002s' stamp vending machines (svms) were Wakefield, completed at 09:57 on 18 November 2008 and Pontefract, which followed at 10:58 on the same date. None of the internal stamp vending machines, which are also in turquoise, have so far been altered back to red and I do not have any information as to whether conversions will be carried out •



Stamp vending machine in red-and-white Post Office livery

Irish svms The Irish Post Office is now using the same Thomas Automatics model of stamp vending machine as found outside some 500 UK Post Office branches, but they are generally coloured green in keeping with An Post's corporate branding scheme. The one exception is at GPO Dublin in O'Connell Street, where the svm has a special antique metal bronze front to match the nearby inset post boxes.

Irish stamp specialist Brian Warren kindly provided details of these machines, together with a photograph of the Tallaght location to share with *Bulletin* readers. He wrote: 'A new stamp vending machine which dispenses both 5.50 and 8.20 euro self-adhesive booklets was introduced in late April 2008. To date, I have noted the new machine outside post offices at the GPO Dublin 1; Ballsbridge, Dublin 4; Rathmines, Dublin 6; and at The Square, Tallaght, Dublin 24. I do not know if they exist at any other offices, but do know that I was the first customer to use the machine at the GPO Dublin.

The new machines replaced machines dispensing 2 euro booklets or, in the case of Ballsbridge, an out of order 4.80 euro booklet, which was never converted to take a 5.50 euro booklet. The machines only accept coins, but do give change. As far as I can recall, they are the first Irish stamp vending machines to give change. This type of svm is also the first to dispense self-adhesive stamps in Ireland. An Post advised that dampness had affected earlier machines re self-adhesives and thus gummed booklets were used.' •





Museum's anniversary The excellent Bath Postal Museum recently celebrated the 30th anniversary of its opening. Bath was buzzing that day, with many events marking the opening and Tom Jackson (Secretary, Postal Workers Union) the guest of honour. Our photograph shows the postman waving goodbye to Don Cameron's balloon carrying 1000 Museum covers. Bath played a vital role in the development of British postal services, and can boast many 'firsts'. The Museum moved to new premises in 2006 – a feature about some of its many attractions was published in the January 2007 *Bulletin*.

The Museum is open 11.00-17.00 Monday to Saturday (16.30 in winter), and by request for large groups on Monday or Sunday. It is located at 27 Northgate Street, Bath BA1 1AJ; telephone 01225 460333. Visit www.bathpostalmuseum.co.uk or email info@bathpostalmuseum.org ●

Website www.freewebs.com/popos

Posters and grille cards There is a new website dedicated to the collecting of Post Office posters, grille cards and similar material, which has been compiled by Dr Paul Jones. He notes that: 'What might be rubbish to you, only fit for the bin, might be hours of fun for me and other collectors.' There are already over 500 such items illustrated, with about double that amount still to come, and it offers a fascinating glimpse into how the Post Office has publicised new stamp issues and other promotions since about the time of the introduction of the Machin definitives in 1967. English, Welsh and bilingual (English/Welsh) items are each separately recorded. Special issues, country definitives, greetings stamps, stamp booklets, postage dues, postal rate changes, overseas agencies and dealers' items are also covered in what is increasingly becoming a most useful site ●

Grosvenor auctions Phone 020 7379 8799 or see www.grosvenorauctions.com for details of future auctions.

Auction news Grosvenor's sale on 11 June included some fine GB material. Highlight of the Penny Black section was the newly discovered marginal example from plate 1b used on entire tied by red Maltese Cross and red Hampstead Rd handstamp. Estimated at £2800, it went for £14,346. A plate 2 used on cover tied by the sharpest impressions of the black Maltese Cross made £2510 (est £800). An 1841 1d red on cover with red 'Tombstone' cancel made £9564 (£5000) and a lovely unused vertical block of six with the margin at right, each stamp overprinted Specimen made £10,250 (£8000). George V lots sold well – a marginal 1929 PUC 2½d with watermark inverted made £2869 (£1500), and a rare mint block of four of the Silver Jubilee 2½d Prussian Blue error of colour made £40,647 (£25,000). Errors on Elizabeth II issues remain popular – a 1966 Birds block of four with four colours omitted made £10,759 (£8000), and a 1967 Paintings 1s 6d with gold omitted (only two believed known) achieved £9564 (£8000) ●

Royal Mail news New issues and products

Special stamps There are two special issues this month – Fire Service (1st) and Navy Uniforms (17th). The stamps were respectively shown in the May and June issues of the *Bulletin*. The cylinders and colours for the Uniforms stamps are: C1 silver C1 yellow C1 magenta C1 cyan (blue) C1 black C1 phosphor. They were printed ‘four up’, providing four cylinder grid box positions for collectors. The gutter is between horizontal strips of stamps •

Coming off sale The country definitives 50th anniversary miniature sheet, prestige book, and stamp cards come off sale on 28 September, and the Women of Distinction stamps, pack and stamp cards on 13 October •

Silver stamps The fifth in our silver stamp collection, reproducing the 72p Westminster Cathedral stamp (below) will be available from 20 October •



New stamp book The fourth stamp book in the ‘British Design Classics’ series will be available from 17 September. It includes two Mary Quant miniskirt stamps, as well as four definitives. The book costs £2.34 •



2009 First day postmarks The special issues for the rest of 2009 are listed below, with the alternative First Day of Issue postmarks •

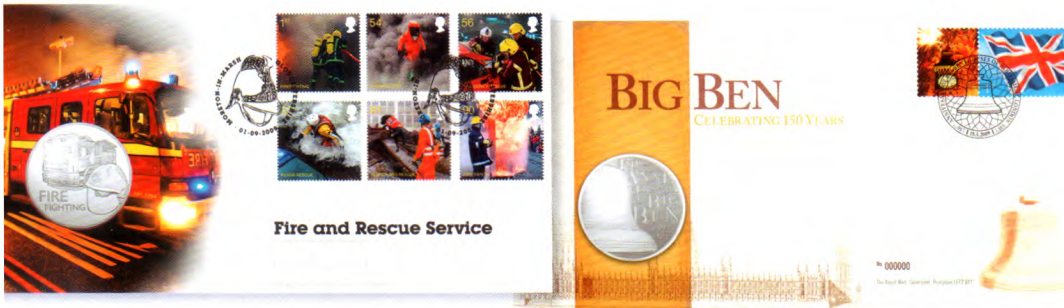
01.09 Fire & Rescue Services: Hose, Melton Mowbray

08.10 Eminent Britons: Britannia, Bacup

17.09 Royal Navy Uniforms (stamps and PSB): Portsmouth

03.11 Christmas: Bethlehem, Llandello

Post & Go machines Machines are scheduled to be installed during September at main Post Office branches in Cardiff, Dartford, Glasgow (St Vincent St), Hereford, Inverness, London (London Bridge), Oxford and Stevenage. The design of the Post & Go labels has been amended and is now similar to the design used for SmartStamps. The design of the Post & Go stamps (with Machin head of The Queen) remains unaltered •



Above: The Fire and Rescue Service and Big Ben medal covers (1 and 18 September respectively).

Opposite page: the Royal Navy Uniforms cachet cover, and commemorative sheets for the anniversaries of Big Ben (18 September) and the University of Cambridge (7 October).

Medal and cachet covers A medal cover is available from 1 September for the Fire and Rescue Service stamps. It features a modern fire engine, and bears the six stamps cancelled by a special Moreton-in-Marsh handstamp depicting a fireman's helmet. The filler card provides a look at the service in the 21st century, and at firefighting in the past, with an illustration of the Great Fire of London. The medal features a fire engine and fireman's helmet. Limited edition of 10,000. Price £14.75.

A further medal cover, available from 18 September, marks the 150th anniversary of Big Ben. It bears a Union Flag stamp (large-size, gummed) with attached label showing the clock tower and fireworks, cancelled by a special Houses of Parliament postmark. The cover design features the Palace of Westminster and the famous bell. The informative illustrated filler card provides key facts about the bell and clock mechanism. Until 1913 the clock was wound by hand, which took 30 hours a week; it is now done by electric motor. A timeline gives a history of the bell and clock – the bell was cast in 1858, and tolled for the deaths of Kings Edward VII, George V and George VI, and to mark the state funeral of Sir Winston Churchill in 1965. The cover, produced in a limited edition of 12,500, was designed by Creator Communications Ltd. Price £14.75.

The cachet cover for the Navy Uniforms stamps carries the six stamps cancelled by the Tallents House first day of issue postmark and has a cachet denoting carriage on a Royal Navy vessel. The covers will be carried on a number of vessels, which will all return to Portsmouth during September. The filler card provides details of the British Forces Post Office service in delivering mail to Royal Navy ships. Limited edition of 5000. Price £9.99. Limited quantities of the two earlier Uniform cachet covers are still available from Tallents House – Army Uniforms (September 2007), and RAF Uniforms (September 2008), price £9.99 each •

Below: pages from the Army Medals Collection booklet.

MILITARY CROSS

The MC was introduced in late 1914 as a gallantry award for senior officers and has since been awarded to the same rank and other gallantry medals, reward and subsequent awards are awarded to a few more senior ranks.

In 1915 it was made possible to award the MC posthumously. In 1993 the Military Medal was abolished, and the MC was awarded to officers and senior non-commissioned personnel alike. It commemorates the 'first half gallantry' awarded for actions, including the Victoria Cross and the Companion of the Order.



Decorations The Military Cross is awarded to officers and senior non-commissioned personnel for gallantry. It is awarded to officers and senior non-commissioned personnel for gallantry. It is awarded to officers and senior non-commissioned personnel for gallantry.



ARMY LONG SERVICE & GOOD CONDUCT MEDAL

This medal, introduced in 1930, was the first official medal to recognize long service. The medal is still issued today. Currently a regular soldier needs to complete 12 years of complete service to gain the medal which has available for a number of years. There are regulations if the great majority of their service has been in the ranks.

The medal's great symbolic importance is equally apparent, and a comprehensive award branch of discipline will appear a soldier of the right to it.



Decorations The Army Long Service & Good Conduct Medal is awarded to soldiers for long service. It is awarded to soldiers for long service. It is awarded to soldiers for long service.



New Miniature Medals The final collection will feature Royal Navy medals and be available from 17 September when the Naval Uniforms stamps go on sale. Limited edition of 1000, available from Tallents House, price £89.95. The three collections – Army, RAF and Navy Medals – are available at a discount price of £245 •


ROYAL NAVY
UNIFORMS
dees
Royal Mail


The clock mechanism about 4.5 metres and underneath the bells in the clock tower.

Ben of the public can also their local MP to set a clock tower visit.

At 10.15pm, the clock tower will be illuminated in blue and white.

Lower took 16 years to build and was one of the last parts of the new Parliament buildings to be completed.

During the night, the clock tower will be illuminated in blue and white.



The Acton light was installed in 1855 and is still in use, after being in use for 150 years.

Augusta Pugin (left) was responsible for the design and decoration of the clock face working from and inspired Charles Barry's specifications (Barry painted right).

The clock tower and clock face were built in 1859 and 1861, respectively.

To co-ordinate with existing buildings, only Elizabethan and Gothic designs were considered for the new Houses of Parliament.

Big Ben has been a focal point for New Year celebrations since the chimes were first heard on radio in 1921.

Commemorative sheets The next commemorative sheet marks the 150th anniversary of 'Big Ben' and will be available from 18 September. It bears 10 1st class Union Flag stamps (definitive size, self-adhesive) with attached labels featuring the bell, clockface and clock tower. The sheet, printed by Cartor, costs £13.50. See opposite page for details of the Big Ben medal cover.

A further commemorative sheet (to be issued 7 October) commemorates the 800th anniversary of the University of Cambridge. This bears the 1st class Fireworks stamp with attached labels featuring Charles Darwin (Christ's College), Isaac Newton's Law of Universal Gravitation, medicine (William Harvey's description of blood circulation), DNA (Francis Crick and James Watson determined the molecular structure of DNA at the Cavendish Laboratories), sport (Oxford and Cambridge boat race), literature (a John Milton draft), history (Macaulay's *History of England*), engineering (nanotechnology), comedy (Footlights Dramatic Club), and music (the Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols, King's College). The sheet shows King's College Chapel, and is bordered by the names of some famous Cambridge graduates including: Oliver Cromwell, Ernest Rutherford, William Wilberforce, Frank Whittle, John Milton, Peter Cook, John Cleese, Samuel Pepys, Charles Babbage, David Frost and Lord Byron. The sheet is supplied in a pack which includes a timeline of the University from 1209 to the present. Dates of foundation are given for each college. The commemorative sheet and the pack were designed by Frontmedia Studio, and the pack was written by Sarah Collins. The sheet was printed in litho by Cartor. Price £13.50 •

The World Famous Clocktower
150th Anniversary of Big Ben

IN 2009, BIG BEN CELEBRATES ITS 150TH ANNIVERSARY. IN 1859 THE CLOCK TOWER WAS COMPLETED, THE CLOCK STARTED RUNNING AND THE GREAT BELL, BIG BEN ITSELF, BEGAN ITS LONG SERVICE CHIMING THE HOUR. BIG BEN HAS BEEN A CONSTANT PART OF LONDON LIFE EVER SINCE. IT IS AN ENDURING LEGACY OF THE POMF AND GRANDEUR OF VICTORIAN LONDON. IT REMAINS A LANDMARK FOR TOURISTS AND A FOCUS FOR NATIONAL CELEBRATION.


UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
800TH ANNIVERSARY
UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
 1209-2009

ENGAGEMENT • ACHIEVEMENT • INSPIRATION
ENGAGEMENT

The University of Cambridge is a leading institution of higher learning, with a long history of excellence in research and teaching.

ACHIEVEMENT

The University of Cambridge has produced many of the world's leading scientists, writers, and thinkers.

INSPIRATION

The University of Cambridge is a place of inspiration, where students and staff work together to create a better world.


LIMITED EDITION N°
OF 10,000


Exhibition sheets Sheets for the Italia and Monacophil exhibitions (shown opposite) will be available from 21 October and 4 December respectively. They contain 20 1st class 'Hello' stamps with labels respectively showing landmarks of Rome, and an aerial view of Monaco ●

Generic sheets The third of the Castles generic sheets (shown opposite, at bottom) will go on sale on 30 November (St Andrew's Day) and feature castles of Scotland. The sheet will contain 20 1st class Scottish Flag country stamps (self-adhesive) with 10 labels (two of each). The Northern Ireland and England sheets are already on sale (price £8.35 each), and a sheet featuring Welsh castles will be issued on 1 March 2010 (St David's Day) ●

The BPMA Freeling House,
Phoenix Place, London WC1X
0DL (near Mount Pleasant).
Phone 020 7239 2570 or see
www.postalheritage.org.uk

British Postal Museum & Archive Now on show is a special exhibition honouring the eminent stamp designer David Gentleman, who has designed more than 100 issued stamps for Royal Mail since 1962. The exhibition features artwork for many of these, and some designs which have never before been seen in public. It also focuses on the revolutionary 'Gentleman Album' of 1966, which greatly influenced British stamp design – see the articles by Douglas Muir (June 2007 *Bulletin*) and Richard West (June 2009).

The BPMA is open Monday-Wednesday and Friday 10.00-17.00, Thursday 10.00-19.00, and on certain Saturdays – see their website for dates and details of BPMA lectures and other events ●

Exhibitions A touring exhibition in Scotland will be of interest to collectors of this year's stamps. 'Zig-Zag: The Paths of Robert Burns' is on show at the Hunterian Museum in Glasgow in October and November. A 'Samuel Johnson and London' exhibition is on at the British Library in London until 30 September. Dr Johnson features on one of the Eminent Britons stamps, issued in October. For details of exhibitions relating to the 500th anniversary of the accession of Henry VIII see the May *Bulletin*, p287 ●

Submitting covers Readers are reminded that when submitting covers for special handstamps to Royal Mail's Special Handstamp Centres, the outer cover must bear full postage. Mail posted without payment, marked 'Free-post' (which does not apply to SHCs), or sent in the Royal Mail plastic 'see-through' envelopes used for the return of covers to collectors, may be

subject to delay and refusal. Readers are also reminded that covers and cards submitted for handstamping must bear a return address – Royal Mail reserves the right to return any unaddressed items uncanceled. The address can be typed, handwritten (in ink or pencil), rubber-stamped, or by using an address label. However 'Post It' notes should not be used for this purpose as they can easily become detached.

The addresses of Royal Mail's Special Handstamp Centres are shown opposite ●

London Special Handstamp Centre Royal Mail, Mount Pleasant, London EC1A 1BB

Wales & The West Special Handstamp Centre 220-228 Penarth Road, Cardiff CF11 8TA

Scotland & Northern Ireland Special Handstamp Centre Rutherglen DO, Duchess Place, Rutherglen, Glasgow G73 1BT

Northern England Special Handstamp Centre South Shields DO, Keppell Street, South Shields NE33 1AA

Midland Special Handstamp Centre Birmingham Mail Centre, St Stephens Street, Birmingham B6 4AA



Italy exhibition sheet Labels on the sheet (right) feature: the Colosseum, St Peter's Basilica, ruins at the ancient Forum, the Vittorio Emanuele monument, the Pantheon, the temple of Antoninus Pius and Faustina, the Trevi Fountain at dawn, Trajan's Column, the Arch of Constantine, and the Castel Sant' Angelo.



British air letters

In the first part of his new series, Colin Baker looks at definitive issues

In this four-part article I will look at the history of the air letter, its development and over the last few years its declining popularity. Of course air letters are still available at all post offices, but there have been no new issues for several years. Even the popular Christmas air letter has not been redesigned, the 2006 version being re-issued in 2007 and 2008.

THE NAME 'AIR LETTER' describes the item quite well, but they have not always been called that. The world's first air letter was called an 'air mail letter sheet', a name that Britain adopted for its first unstamped issue in 1941. However, with the issue of a postal stationery air letter in 1943, the name was changed to 'air letter'. The revision to the design of air letters at the start of our present Queen's reign saw 'aerogramme' added beneath the 'air mail' etiquette. The etiquette is the design on the left-hand side, showing that the item is to go by air, and not by surface transport. In 1986, with a further change to the layout of the air letter, its name was altered for the fourth time, to 'aerogramme'. No mention was made of the term 'air letter'. But in 2000 Royal Mail had a change of heart, and reinstated 'air letter' as the accepted name for the item, 'aerogramme' being dropped altogether. This revision has remained unchanged up to the present day.

Air mail routes were gradually developed around the world, both for internal mails and for those crossing borders and continents. Although much faster than surface mail, air mail was an expensive way to send a letter, and was not for the average correspondent.

The need for air mail Throughout history, civilisations have wanted to speed up the carrying of messages. At first, teams of runners would carry letters in stages, passing it from one messenger to another along the chain, rather like passing the baton in relay races of today. Later, horses were utilised to operate in relays in much the same fashion. They were much faster, and able to cover longer distances, which speeded up the delivery of mail. The most famous route served by such teams of horses and expert riders was the American Pony Express, operating from California in the 1860s. But despite this increase in speed, it was still not fast enough.

Birds could fly long distances, in a straight line and at a much faster rate than man or beasts. One problem with using them was that they could not be trained or controlled, except in the case of homing pigeons. Useful as these birds were, they could only be relied upon to return to their home base and had to be taken out to the mail despatch point before every trip. The other problem was the little weight they could carry. Messages would be stored in a tube attached to their legs. Flimsy, lightweight paper was used for the messages at first, until microfilming was developed in the late 1860s and used to great effect during the siege of Paris in 1870.

With these problems before him, man realised he needed to be able to carry the mails himself. Balloons were tried, but were only partly successful when the wind was in the right direction, and the weather was good enough for the pilot to see where he was going. Many a balloon was lost, or ended up in totally the wrong place, making the mail even slower to reach its destination.



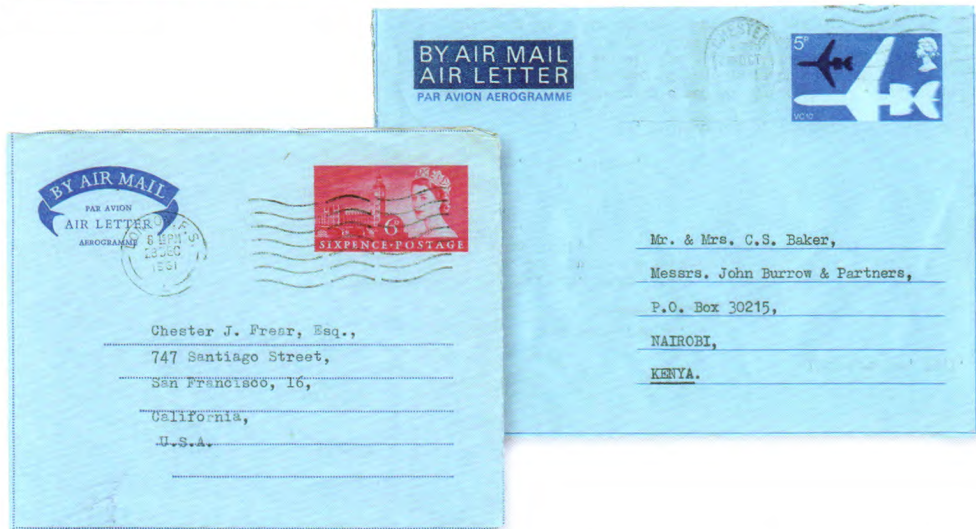


It was not until powered flight was developed at the beginning of the 20th century that sending letters by air became a real possibility. Early aircraft were fragile and unreliable, and could travel only relatively short distances. Despite these drawbacks, the first air mail flight took place in India, on 18 February 1911 near the city of Allahabad when a Humber Sommer biplane carried 6,500 letters and cards. Later that year on 9 September the first UK air mail service was run between Hendon and Windsor. Over the next few days thousands of special cards were carried, and King George V gave permission for the aircraft to land in the grounds of Windsor Castle.

The first air letter The idea of providing a much cheaper method of sending letters by air did not come from one of the large postal administrations in Europe, or from a country where distances were a problem. It was Iraq that pioneered cheap air mail. Their Inspector-General of Posts and Telegraphs was Douglas W Gumbley, who was born in Guernsey in 1880. He saw that the way to lower the cost of air mail post was to make letters much lighter, so that many more items of mail could be carried on each flight. He designed a sheet of paper weighing only 4 grams that could be folded into four and sealed with gummed flaps. It was printed with a 15 fils stamp that paid the air mail postage and was issued on 15 July 1933. Even though they were printed on thin paper, he called them air mail letter cards, the name used by the British Post Office for their first issue of air letters.

Great Britain was slow to adopt this design of air letter. It was not until families separated during the Second World War demanded cheap, rapid communication, that a British air mail letter card was introduced. At first they were available only to service personnel in North Africa and the Middle East, and were issued unstamped. Those in Britain had to pay full air mail postage, or allow several weeks for letters to be delivered by surface mail. Eventually the air mail letter card was made available in Britain, an

From left: the world's first air letter, issued by Iraq in 1933; the unstamped British air mail letter card used by our forces in the Middle East from 1941; and the first civilian air letter which could be used to many countries around the world, issued in 1943.



Left: the new stamp design introduced for air letters in 1957, featuring Big Ben and the Houses of Parliament. Right: an air letter bearing a new stamp featuring Britain's VC10 aeroplane, introduced in 1968, and continued after decimalisation in 1971.

unstamped version being released in December 1942. The postage on these was 6d. The stamped version followed the next year in June 1943, with the name being changed to air letter. It became the first of many different types of postal stationery air letters to be issued in Great Britain.

Air letters followed a simple format. In the beginning they were approximately 201×246 mm excluding their sealing flaps, folded into four to give $1\frac{1}{2}$ sides to write a message. The paper used for the first issues was very thin and the two exposed sides were printed with a blue-grey overlay to prevent the ink from showing through. By 1950 better quality paper was available and the printed overlay was no longer needed.

The first Queen Elizabeth issues were very similar to those of her father's reign, but in 1968 a new layout was used incorporating a 9d stamp with a design based on Britain's VC10 airliner. These air letters were folded into three rather than four and appeared larger. In fact they were 150×316 mm and had about 15% less writing area than the first issues.

New layouts and sizes This revised layout continued for about seven years with only minor changes to the text and layout but with price increases due to the steady rise in inflation. In 1972 a new stamp design was introduced featuring the Machin head, with a value set near the base of the neck. This was very similar in design to the definitive adhesive stamps. The new air letter was larger than the 1968 issue, at 209×296 mm, and had an increased writing area of about 14% compared with the very first air letters.

Both sizes of air letter were available from 1972 to 1980, the larger size costing an extra $\frac{1}{2}$ p. With the next price increase in 1981 only the larger size was issued. At the same time a red and blue diagonally banded border was added making it easy in the sorting offices to identify them as mail to go by air. However from 2004 only the left-hand edge of the address side has been printed with this identifying strip.

I agor, torrer yma/To open, slit here

I agor, torrer yma/To open, slit here

POST AWYR
par awion
Post BrenhinolLlythyr Awyr
Airletter1 Great
Britain
Postage
Paid

Royal Mail

POST AWYR
par awion
Post BrenhinolLlythyr Awyr
Airletter1 Great
Britain
Postage
Paid

Royal Mail

From the 1970s there were many changes to the postage rates for air letters. This meant they had to be reprinted every other year simply because of price rises. It was a wasteful process and it finally prompted the Post Office to introduce air letters in 1986 that carried a non value indicator (NVI) stamp. These never go out of date, and although they were sold at the rate applicable at the time of their sale, they can still be used to anywhere in the world today.

Other changes have taken place in the last few years. From 1998 separate air letters, including those produced for Christmas, have been issued for sale in Wales, with text in both English and Welsh. However, no bilingual definitive air letters have been issued for Scotland. In 2006 a change was made in the colour of the paper used for air letters. Following a trend set by commemorative issues a few years earlier, all definitive issues of air letters from 2006 to the present day have been printed on white paper.

There have also been many changes to the air mail etiquette over the years. These are the designs in the top left corner of the address panels that show the item should be despatched by air. They have changed from the simple 'By Air Mail' boxes of 1943 to the bilingual versions used today. Various Royal Mail logos have also been added to the front panels on the left of the address lines. These have changed over the years, and at times have also included bilingual versions.

Finally, in this overview of the definitive air letter, it is worth looking for a small star, which from 1988 has been printed on one of the sealing flaps. This indicates that the air letters have come from discounted packs of five or six. It is there as a deterrent to PO staff not to break up discounted packs and sell them at their full face value.

I doubt that this is the end of the story of the definitive air letter, as I am sure it will continue for many years, despite the email and texting facilities we all use. It will be interesting to see what is the next development ●

Air letters with English and Welsh text were introduced in 1998. Since 2006 all definitive issues of air letters have been printed on white paper.

Mainly Machins

Horizon Machin labels and developments in definitives, by Douglas Myall

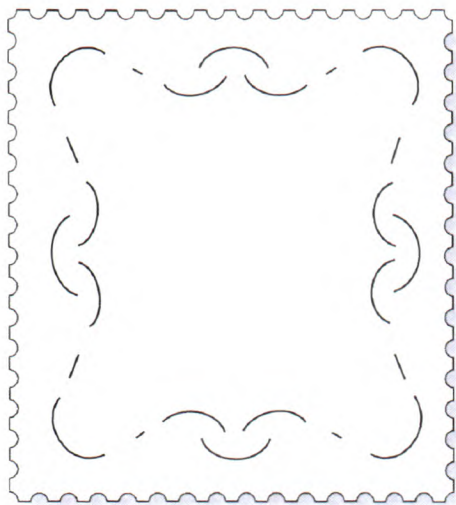


Illustration showing simulated perforations and security slits on the trial Horizon Machin label (actual size). Illustration by Vince Patel.

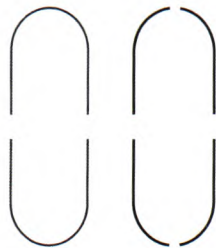
The Horizon Machin label trial From 8 to 30 June the Camden High Street Post Office in London carried out a trial of Horizon labels with the Machin head for the special delivery (SD) service. The purpose of this trial was to evaluate the functionality of the new label, which contains several features not previously included on Horizon labels. Post Office Ltd needed to ensure that it released easily, compared with the current plain label. The trial was limited to SD transactions because it is intended to change a few of the overprints in light of the new label design, and until this software change could be delivered the trial was limited to a single transaction which wouldn't have an operational impact. Camden was chosen because it has a good level of Special Delivery business.

As well as the Machin head, the label incorporates security features recently introduced to the definitive stamps. The edges have simulated perforations with die cuts which gauge 5×5 . Because of its size (59mm $\times$ 65mm), the label has more security slits and the shapes differ from those on stamps. It has the wavy background pattern formed by the words ROYAL MAIL as seen on the Faststamps issued last October and on normal postage stamps since last February. There is no hidden code; the origin of these labels is obvious from the information printed on them. The size resulted in the overall iridescent ink, which was the same as used on self-adhesive stamps, giving the label a gold appearance.

The enhanced security on the new label, unlike the stamps, was not primarily aimed at preventing re-use. The current plain label used in post offices has no inherent security other than it is, or should be, applied behind the counter. It may be that some are used out of course, and the simplicity of the current label makes it too easy for copies to be made, hence the new design ensures that labels cannot be generated from home printers etc. The new label does not have the non-removable laminate at this stage. The material was as specified for the machines used in post offices but the possibility of bringing the self-adhesive material into line with other products will be considered when evaluating the results of the trial.

The decision to include the Machin head in the design was made because it is better, from a brand viewpoint, to carry The Queen's head rather than the plain label currently used, and to provide a level of consistency across the range of label/stamp designs. Machin collectors will be very interested in the outcome of the trials. Some became aware of the trial in time to have a few first day covers made up; one of them fetched £95 when it was auctioned on eBay.

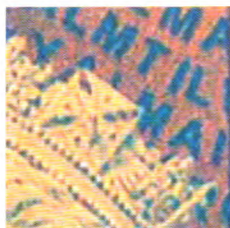
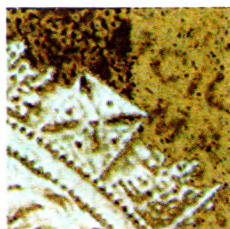
Security slit shapes In my last article I mentioned that the slits on De La Rue's stamps differ from those on Walsall's by having only two sections instead of four. This is because Walsall's are split at the apex of the curves. It now appears that the width of these gaps can vary. The narrower gap is reported on stamps from the Walsall books of six × 1st which include two special issues. Of course, there are several of these die-cutting heads, and they may be made by more than one firm. It is possible that in the future the same type will appear on stamps from more than one printer. So, rather than describe these variations by reference to the printer, I number them as types. Thus we have, so far, Type 1 with two cuts to each oval and Type 2 with four. The latter can be divided into two subtypes; Type 2a with the wider gap and Type 2b with the narrower gap. This can help in identifying the source of single stamps. However, there is an easier way for the NVIS.



Security slit shapes on De La Rue (left) and Walsall issues. Recent DLR printings of the four business sheets have the Type 2 slits.

FOYAL MAIL Last April, shortly after submitting copy for the June *Bulletin*, I discovered that the non-security Machin NVIS have a hidden code which identifies the format in which the stamp was issued, and I mentioned it on my website (www.deegam.com). As you know, the words ROYAL MAIL are printed with an iridescent ink in a wave pattern over the background of all security stamps. On the four inland NVIS, apart from those issued in counter sheets, one of the letters of ROYAL MAIL, not always the same one, is changed to either B, C, F, S or T. In fact, there are two versions with the letter B. These hidden codes appear in the top right corner of the stamps, above the diadem. Stamps from counter sheets do not carry a code. The code letter tells which product the stamp came from. If the A of ROYAL is replaced by a B, the stamp came from a business sheet of 50 large 1st or 2nd class; if it replaces the A of MAIL it came from a business sheet of 100 standard letter stamps. The letter F replacing the R of ROYAL identifies the source as a book of four large letter stamps. The other codes replace the A of MAIL. The letter C stands for Custom and is used on the stamps in books of six mixed definitives and specials. The letters S and T refer to books of six and twelve definitives respectively.

These codes were not inserted to make life easy for us collectors; they have an operational reason for their existence. Royal Mail explained this to me as follows. 'The primary reason for the inclusion of the identifier is to differentiate by format rather than by value; therefore only the 1st and 2nd class stamps will carry the various identifiers, as all others are sheet stamps. Where we get an issue, for example with phosphor band read, it has been difficult to trace the stamp back to its original format and therefore correct any production issues. The identifiers will help us to do that.'



Examples of the code letters on Machin NVIS: the letter A in 'MAIL' is replaced with a C (top) and with a T (above).

Prestige stamp books The June *Bulletin* informed us of the content of the August and September prestige books, with illustrations of the panes in them. I will report on these in my next article but I can say already that all of the definitives are new since only the 1p has previously been issued in lithography and that was by Questa in the £1 machine vend books of 1996. Then there are all those se-tenant pairs. Until next time, then ●

The Centenary Congress by Richard West



IN 1909 the first Philatelic Congress in Great Britain was held in Manchester, in conjunction with an exhibition organised by the Manchester Junior Philatelic Society (so called because it was established as a branch of the Junior – now National – Philatelic Society). On 16-19 July the Philatelic Congress of GB returned to Greater Manchester to celebrate its centenary – albeit the venue was in fact in the City of Salford.

The Centenary Congress attracted many collectors, several with their partners, including a large number of signatories to the Roll of Distinguished Philatelists (the Roll was first signed in 1921) and recipients of the Congress Medal (first awarded in 1959). When introduced, Congress was a forum for lively debate, and so it remained until recent years, when discussion has been replaced by philatelic displays. Manchester 2009 provided superb material, but also brought a teasing glimpse of what Congress once did so well. Alan Huggins examined 'Stamp Collecting and Philately – Past, Present and The Future?', but sadly time permitted just a handful of questions, and no time for debate. Francis Kiddle, in presenting 'The Evolution of Congress from The Past to The Future', fortunately allowed the opportunity for discussion, but this could have continued much longer.

Displays came largely from members of the North Western Federation of Philatelic Societies, including Sudan by Richard Stock, the English Civil War by Malcolm Ray Smith, Early Rhodesia Mail by Colin Hoffman, the First Congress by Martin Davies, King Edward VIII by Stephen Parkin and New Hebrides by Jim Compton, while Paul Gaywood, Chairman of this year's Congress (ably assisted by Beryl Jones), presented A Welsh Miscellany. Several other local collectors also provided free-standing exhibits.

A major aspect of Congress is the Signing of the Roll of Distinguished Philatelists. Five signed the Roll this year, the ceremony taking place at Manchester Town Hall. They were: George Barker (UK), Dr Geoffrey Kellow (Australia), Barbara Mueller (USA), John Sussex (UK) and Robin Start-up (New Zealand). The Congress Medal is presented at the same time, this year to Frank Soutar.

For many however, it is the social side that makes Congress enjoyable, and the venue, the Copthorne Hotel, provided the ideal atmosphere. The Queen was Patron of the Centenary Congress, which was officially opened by The Mayor of Salford, while the Lord Mayor of Manchester attended the RDP Ceremony and Congress Banquet.

For those who have not sampled Congress, the next opportunity will be on 22-25 July 2010, at Kenilworth. Maybe see you there? ●

Top, from left: Valerie Fleet, the Lady Mayoress of Salford; Paul Gaywood, Chairman of the Centenary Congress; John Baron, Chairman of the ABPS Executive; and Roger Lightup, Mayor of Salford.

Above: signatories to the Roll of Distinguished Philatelists George Barker (left) and John Sussex (centre), and recipient of the Congress Medal Frank Soutar (right).

The world of online philately by Glenn H Morgan FRPSL

FOUNDED ON 5 December 1884 by C J Phillips, the Birmingham Philatelic Society is celebrating its 125th continuous season. It is thought to be the second oldest UK local philatelic society still functioning, behind Plymouth (founded in 1876).

From the home page of their newly-revamped website (shown right), we immediately learn that the BPS meets on most Wednesday evenings from September to May at the John Peek Room of the Birmingham & Midland Institute, in Margaret Street, Birmingham B3 3BS and that the room is usually open from 6.00pm with meetings commencing at 6.30pm. This is the type of information that should always be to the fore in a website if potential new members are to be encouraged, but which can frequently be hidden away from view.

There is a very clean and uncluttered look to this website and it utilises a bright blue, white and black colour scheme. The menu bar is positioned vertically at the left of every page, and this gives immediate access to the entire site, regardless of what page you are visiting. There are just enough words to record what needs to be written about each feature – if you want to read a lot of superfluous text, then go and buy a book! ‘Less is more’ really does apply to web writing, but not many webmasters comprehend the need for a difference between a website and a paper-based publication.

Site features include the aims of the society, details of the annual auction and informal meetings, competitions and awards, library and archive (including several illustrated examples of holdings), origins of the BPS logo (which is based on the Birmingham ‘Chandelier’ postmark), and how to make contact with the secretary.

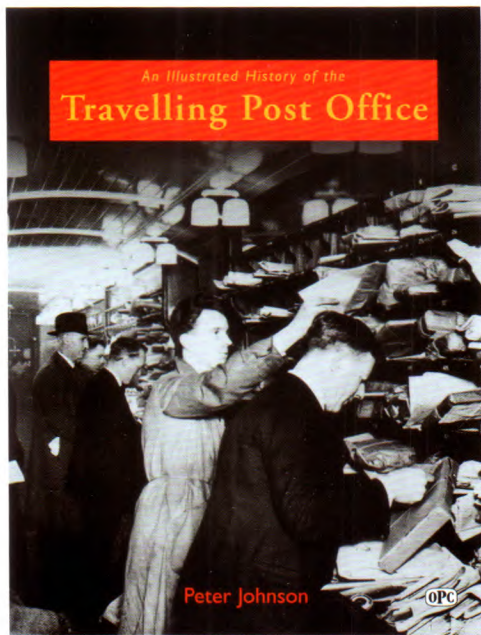
There are 21 meetings and events listed for the 125th season, including displays by James Grimwood Taylor, Colin Searle, John Baron and Society members. A celebratory dinner and a lunchtime lecture (open to the public) on the subject of letter boxes add interesting variety to the programme. A new page records all that is planned for the celebratory year ahead and illustrates some of the souvenirs to be issued for the Society’s important milestone, including three postcards, a cover, labels and two books.

The final section of this website has five philatelic articles which can be accessed on screen, printed or saved. They are entitled ‘Postal History – Where will it End?’, ‘The 1897 Jubilee Issue of Canada’, ‘The Birmingham Post Office in the First Half of the 19th Century’, ‘The Philatelic Congress of Great Britain’, and ‘The Stamps and History of The Principality of Trinidad’. All are interesting and deserve the wider audience that the internet offers.

It is clear that Birmingham Philatelic Society is thriving, and the *Bulletin* team at Royal Mail wishes it every success for this special season and the years to come ●

www.birminghamphilatelic.co.uk The homepage of the Birmingham Philatelic Society's website.

Book review Peter Johnson's TPO history



An Illustrated History of the Travelling Post Office £19.99 from Ian Allan bookshops in Birmingham, Cardiff, London and Manchester, and from all good bookshops.

IT IS NOW five years since the last Travelling Post Office trains ended, but there is still considerable interest in them and the many postmarks applied on these services. To mark the end of TPO services we published *The Travelling Post Office 1838-2004* as No 10 in the Bulletin Publication series. This was written by Peter Johnson, a leading authority and author of two earlier books on the subject, published by specialist railway publisher Ian Allan in 1985 and 1995. Now Peter has added *An Illustrated History of the Travelling Post Office* to his ever-growing list of publications. He returned to original sources at the British Postal Museum & Archive and at the National Archives (formerly Public Record Office) to find further information and studied the research papers of the late Allan Harvey, a travelling inspector of TPOs – most of the data in chapter 2 (TPO Services) is based on his researches. In the National Archives he studied correspondence between the Grand Junction and the London & Birmingham Railways and the GPO concerning the carriage of mail by rail from 1837, the TPO centenary in 1838, and the British

Railways Board's investment suggestions for the last TPO stock built in 1976-77. Files studied at the BPMA concerned TPO rolling stock, the relationship between the GPO and some of the railway companies, the row between Robert Stephenson and the GPO over the significance of the railways in postal operations, the Late Fee, AM datestamps and much else.

The book comprises three chapters covering TPO history, the services (route by route, alphabetically), and rolling stock (by railway company, alphabetically). The last-named includes a four-page section on preserved TPO carriages, with a listing of where they can be found on heritage railways. A one-page postscript gives details of the mail trains that replaced the TPOs; important although they are they do not have the same kudos and appeal. The book has some nine appendices covering GPO payments for the conveyance of mail by rail; bag tenders; stock allocations; postal vehicles; working the lineside apparatus; and TPO postmarks, late fee and collectables. The final appendix includes illustrations of some covers from the author's collection with interesting TPO postmarks and photos of the late fee posting boxes on the trains and stations. The book concludes with a useful bibliography. It is well-illustrated throughout; many of the photographs are by the author, with others from official and private collections. It is well-written, handsomely illustrated, and printed on quality art paper. 144 pages, hardbound. Price £19.99 from Ian Allan bookshops in Birmingham, Cardiff, London, and Manchester, and from all good bookshops •

My covers collection by Martin Robinson



THE Jubilee International Stamp Exhibition was held from 14-19 October 1912 at the Royal Horticultural Hall in London. Commemorative labels were printed there by Waterlow Bros & Layton in sheets of 240 on an Elliott Wharfedale machine, which combined flatbed and cylinder, by the Prin-tex method, a simple form of photogravure.

The 'Downey Head' stamps of King George V issued in 1911, designed by Bertram Mackennal (head) and G W Eve (frames) and based on a photograph by court photographers W & D Downey, were so unpopular that the Junior Philatelic Society (now the National Philatelic Society) staged a competition to find the 'ideal stamp'. The labels produced in 1912 were designed by T S Harrison and, although the Post Office never adopted the design, it was sufficiently moved to produce its own improved stamps in 1912.

The labels were perforated or imperforate and produced in a variety of shades of black, blue, brown, green, orange, purple and red. They originally sold for 1d a label, and 24,000 were produced at the exhibition so they are still relatively easy to find at a reasonable price.

A commemorative postcard was also sold at the exhibition, featuring an enlarged bicoloured image of the 'ideal stamp'. Whoever posted the card above (possibly the reverend gentleman to whom it is addressed), has flouted the 'embarrassing packets' postal regulation, which forbids affixing on the address side 'an adhesive label or printed design resembling a postage stamp in shape or size', and stuck an 'ideal stamp' alongside a 1/2d green Downey head, so that both were cancelled by the exhibition postmark. ●

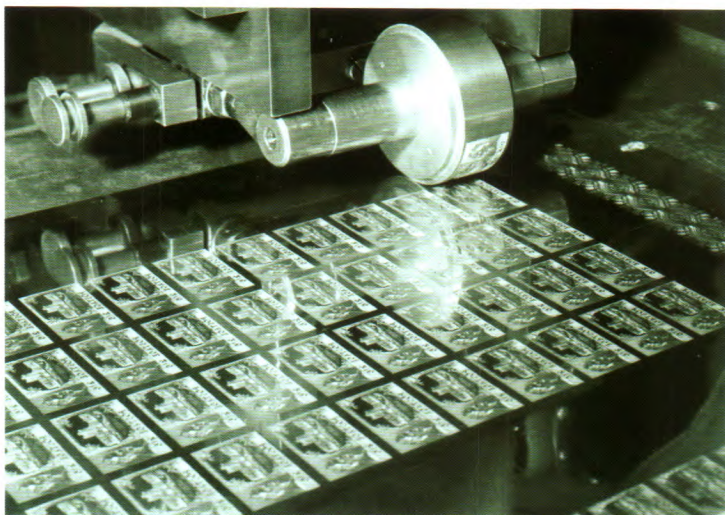
Stamp printing The 1950s Castles stamps

AMONGST old photographs in our archives, we have come across two relating to production of the 1950s Castle definitives. The first shows a skilled engraver (most likely Mr H J Bard of printers Waterlow & Sons) working on the 2s 6d Carrickfergus Castle stamp. Lynton Lamb, the stamp designer, thought Waterlow 'made a beautiful job' of the dies. The second photo shows creation of the printing plate for the 2s 6d value from the original die. This photo was shown in Bulletin Publication No 11 *The First Elizabeth 11 Castle High Value Definitives*, sent out free with the March 2005 *Bulletin* •

This photograph is captioned on the reverse 'Engraving the master plate from the artist's original drawing of the design'.



This photograph shows the creation of the printing plate for the 2s 6d value from the original die.



Posting boxes Photographs by our readers

WE FEATURE photographs of four boxes sent in by readers. Two, from Peter Fowke of Devon, show boxes in Cyprus – a yellow-painted box at Paphos and a red George VI box, no longer in use, in Nicosia. The rather ornate George V box inside the entrance of the India Building, Brunswick Street, Liverpool, was photographed by Don Staddon. Finally, we feature an Edward VII box located outside the offices of the Royal Malaysian Customs (formerly the Malayan Railway building) in China Street Ghaut, in Malaysia. This photo was submitted by W R Johnston of Penang •



Clockwise from far left: post boxes in Paphos, Cyprus; Liverpool; Penang, Malaysia; and Nicosia, Cyprus.

Commemorative covers New this month

Orders and enquiries

Bath Postal Museum Contact
Buckingham Covers (see
below)

Bletchley Park Post Office

The Mansion, Bletchley Park,
Milton Keynes MK3 6EB.
Telephone/fax 01908 631797.
www.bletchleycovers.com

BPMA Telephone 020 7239
5125.

Buckingham Covers Warren
House, Shearway Road,
Folkestone, Kent CT19 4BF
Telephone 01303 278137.
www.buckinghamcovers.com

Civil Defence Association

T Essex-Lopresti, 24 Paxton
Close, Matlock DE4 3TD.
Telephone 01629 55738. e-
mail aedissel@btinternet.com

Ffestiniog Railway Rosebank,
1 Kepax Gardens, Barbourne,
Worcester WR3 7LB. Tele-
phone 01905 28233. e-mail
robgay@tiscali.co.uk

Fresson Trust Culbin House,
Findhorn, Forres IV36 3YN.
www.fressontrust.org.uk

GB Covers 102 Regal Way,
Kenton, Harrow HA3 0RY. e-
mail derek@gbcovers.co.uk

Methodist Philatelic Society
R J Macmillan, Clunwy, 11
Cullaloe Court, Dalgety Bay,
Dunfermline KY11 9NW.

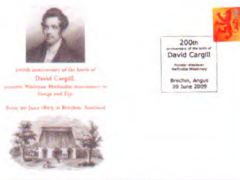
Mid Suffolk Light Railway

B R Reynolds, 74 Edgecomb
Road, Stowmarket IP14 2DW.
e-mail barry.reynolds@tiscali.
co.uk to order by credit card,
via PayPal

M Tanner 180 Whitehorse
Road, West Croydon CR0
2LA. Fax/Answerphone 020
8684 9757 (credit card orders
only)



Bletchley Park Post Office FDC serviced on
19 May for the Endangered Plants stamps (in
an edition of 250) and Kew Gardens miniature
sheet (edition of 50), featuring the National
Trust's Stowe Landscape Gardens. **Price** £15
each, postage £1.50 ●



Methodist Philatelic Society Cover marking
the 200th anniversary of the birth of pioneer
missionary David Cargill, featuring a portrait of
Cargill and the Fiji church where he started his
calling. Scottish 1st class stamp cancelled by
special 20 June Brechin handstamp. Filler card
with biography. **Price** £2.50 postpaid. For MPS
details send SAE to T M Smart, 11 Northwood
Park, Woodlesford, Leeds LS26 8PE ●

SEVEN MEN AND COACH TRIP ALONG THE
ROUTE OF THE LINE 4 - 5 APRIL 2009



Mid-Suffolk Light Railway FDC for Members
Day and a journey in a 1959 coach. Edition of
50, featuring the coach and the loco on duty.
1st class stamp cancelled by a special hand-
stamp and two MSLR carriage labels tied by a
cachet. **Price** £3.25. Block of six labels (perf
or imperf) £1.50; A5 sheet £3; A4 sheet £6.
Postage 60p UK, £1.10 Europe, £1.50 rest of
world. Remittances payable to B R Reynolds ●

THE BRITISH
POSTAL
MUSEUM
& ARCHIVE



British Postal Museum & Archive A cover to
mark the opening of the Victorian Post Office
at Blists Hill. A 1st gold definitive is cancelled
with a one day cancel for the opening event
on 30 April 2009. The Victorian PO is part of a
major project at Blists Hill; this year the upper
floor will open as a museum of the Post Office
in the Community. The building was funded by
the BPMA. Limited edition. **Price** £2.50, plus
postage £2 ●



Ffestiniog Railway Cover serviced 1 July for
the 40th anniversary of the Investiture of the
Prince of Wales, available in English or Welsh.
A FR letter stamp is cancelled at Beddgelert
and a Welsh 1st class stamp and label from
the Prince of Wales 60th birthday commemo-
rative sheet (November 2008) tied by a special
railway handstamp in red. **Price** £6 each, £10
for the two language versions, plus postage ●



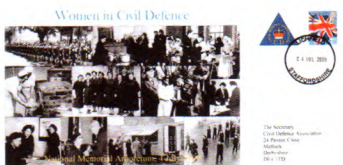
M Tanner Concorde anniversary cover (35
numbered), featuring French 001 and British
002 first flights. Dual postmarked 2 March and
9 April 2009. **Price** £16.99, with postcard of
cover image. Postage £1.50 worldwide. Extra
cards 60p each plus postage if ordered separa-
tely. Similar maximum card (same dates but
different postmarks, six produced) £11 plus
postage. PSB pane cover also available ●



Buckingham Covers FDC bearing the full set of Fire Service stamps, cancelled London EC1. **Price** £10.95 unsigned, £24.95 signed by Sir Kenneth Knight, Chief Fire & Rescue Advisor and HM Chief Inspector of Fire Services UK •



GB Covers A limited edition of 40 official first day covers, featuring a firefighter at a car blaze, cancelled with a special 'Fire Bell Lane, Surbiton' handstamp. Each cover is signed and numbered. **Price** £16.50 plus £1 postage. Remittances payable to GB Covers •



Civil Defence Association A 'Women in Civil Defence' cover, issued on 4 July for the 8th Annual Commemoration at the Civil Defence Memorial. **Price** £8.85 including UK postage. Remittances to 'Civil Defence Association' •



Bath Postal Museum A Post Boxes cover, produced by Buckingham Covers, features the miniature sheet issued 18 August, cancelled on the day with the Bath Postal Museum postmark. An alternative FDC carries the stamps taken from the miniature sheet, also cancelled with the Bath Postal Museum postmark. A limited number of both are available signed by Lord Bath, Patron of the Bath Postal Museum. **Prices** £10.95 unsigned, or £22.95 signed by Lord Bath •



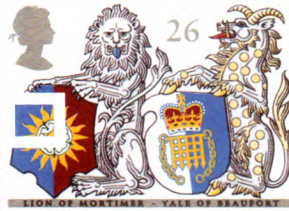
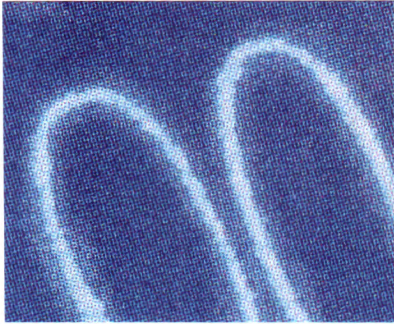
Fresson Trust Cover serviced 29 May (edition of 450) for the 75th anniversary of the first regular UK airmail service from Inverness to Orkney (see May *Bulletin*, p269). Ceremonies

Cover producers wishing to announce a recent or forthcoming cover should submit copy of up to 75 words in the style above. The text should briefly describe the cover, state the stamps and postmarks it will bear, and give retail prices and an address for orders and enquiries. Announcements are published on a first-come-first-served basis and may be modified or shortened at the Editor's discretion. Copy for consideration for the November *Bulletin* should be sent to The Editor (address on p3) by 8 September. Copy for December should arrive by 8 October. Royal Mail cannot enter into correspondence or telephone conversations concerning announcements made here.

Prize draw Win the new Navy Uniforms PSB

WE HAVE THREE of this month's prestige book for prizes. To enter, simply write your name and address on the back of a postcard or sealed envelope and send it to: Prestige Book Draw, British Philatelic Bulletin, Royal Mail, 35-50 Rathbone Place, London W1T 1HQ, to arrive by 30 September •

Competitions Enter for a chance to win the 2008 Yearbook



June identify The detail was from the 1998 Queen's Beasts (Lion of Mortimer) stamp. The winner was C Math of Switzerland.

June knowledge Answers: 1) 1996; 2) Laura Stoddart; 3) Manchester. The winner was D Lucas of Kent.

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

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

- 1 Who designed the British Conductors stamps of 1980?
- 2 What was the colour of the George VI 8d definitive stamps?
- 3 In which year was a stamp issued for the 62nd Inter-Parliamentary Union Conference?

Send your answer (addressed to either September *Identify* competition or September *Knowledge* competition), name and address on a postcard or back of a sealed envelope to: British Philatelic Bulletin, Royal Mail, 35-50 Rathbone Place, London W1T 1HQ. The senders of the first cards to be drawn in each competition on 16 October will each receive a 2008 Yearbook. Runner-up prizes of presentation packs, first day covers or stamp cards will be awarded for each competition. The competitions are not open to Royal Mail employees ●

Events

Until Spring 2010 David Gentleman exhibition at British Postal Museum & Archive. See page 14.

3-5 September The Picture Postcard Show 2009 at Royal Horticultural Society Lawrence Hall, Greycoat & Elverton Streets, London SW1. Open Thursday 11.00-20.00, Friday 11.00-19.00, Saturday 10.00-17.00. Admission £3 (season ticket £7). **Enquiries** 020 8886 0469 or 01702 587603.

5 September City of Preston PS Stamp & Card Fair, Barton Village Hall, Garstang Rd near Preston, 10.00-16.00. Approx 20 dealers, Federation competitive entries. **Enquiries** P Gaywood, 01772 713917.

12 September - 9 January 2010 Philatelic Exhibition at Birmingham Museums & Art Gallery to mark the 125th anniversary of the Birmingham PS. See page 8. **Enquiries** A Spencer, 0121 459 7650.

16-21 September Autumn Stampex at the Business Design Centre, London N1. Includes national competitions. **Enquiries** 01252 628006.

26 September Portadown Stampex and Collectors Fair, Portadown Town Hall, 10.00-16.00. Admission free. Dealers, Society displays and refreshments. **Enquiries** J Proctor, 028 38 334964.

26 September Kent Federation of Philatelic Societies Stamp Fair & Rally, East Malling Village Hall (Sat Nav ME19 6DD), 10.00-16.00. 15 dealers, competitions, refreshments. **Enquiries** M Thompson, 01474 325507.

10 October Thatcham & District PS Annual Stamp Fair at Memorial Hall, Bath Road, Thatcham, 10.00-16.00. 11 dealers, free admission and parking, refreshments available. **Enquiries** 01635 866942 ●

Late news

Royal Mail update Cylinders and colours for the British Design Classics Concorde book (18 August) are: w1 cyan (blue) w1 (magenta) w1 yellow w1 black w1 silver w1 gold w1 iridescent back-ground w1 phosphor.

The designation on some Horizon labels was changed from 27 July. Labels for Large Letters are now inscribed ILG, 2LG or BLG (1st class, 2nd class, Forces mail) instead of ILL, 2LL, and BLL. Labels for the Airsure service are now inscribed AAX, previously AX.

A Military Uniforms Collection, available from 17 September, comprises the three Military Uniforms stamp issues (Army, RAF and Navy) within a 'cruciform' pack similar to those for the Lest We Forget and Brilliant Britain miniature sheet collections. The pack also includes a high quality replica of a Post Office Rifles cap badge, a wall chart featuring the uniforms shown on the stamps, and specially commissioned pictures of military uniforms and the stories of VC winner Alfred Knight of the PO Rifles and of the PO Rifles badge carved in the chalk hillside near Fovat in Wiltshire. Price £29.95 (order code PB408) •

Midpex Over 850 people attended Midpex, the largest specialist event for stamp collectors in the UK, held for the first time at the new Xcel Centre at Canley, Coventry on 11 July. Over 50 dealers and 45 specialist societies took part. Chairman of the Organising Committee, Bryan Jones, said 'The new venue at Canley proved to be a big hit with a record attendance... everyone was delighted with the improved facilities and both dealers and collectors praised the event.' Midpex included the Friends of Thematica competitions. The winner of the John Fosbery Trophy, judged by visitors, was David Rossall with his unusual 'Luke Howard – A Remarkable Man'. Other competitions were judged by the stamp designer Jeffery Matthews, John Hayward, Stuart Henderson, Brian Sole and Richard West. The Inter-Federation competition was won by the Association of Sussex Philatelic Societies' entry by Grace Davies, 'Story of the Peace Rose'. In the British Thematic

Association competition Anne Stammers won a large vermeil medal and BTA trophy for 'Rocks to Riches'. Gary Green's 'Bee Keeping and the Life of the Honey Bee', and Wendy Buckle's 'Tell it in Print' won vermeil. Winners in the Barclays Cup competition for young collectors were: up to 8 years, Portia Girvan with 'Food for Thought'; 9-12 years, Claire Mitchell 'A Walk in the Park'; and 13-18 years, Jacqs Scourfield 'A Childhood in Stamps' •



New postcard for London 2010 The British Postal Museum & Archive will publish its third postcard to promote the London 2010: Festival of Stamps at Autumn Stampex (16-19 September). It features a head of King George VI by Edmund Dulac used for the effigy on all his definitives, and an essay of November 1937 of Eric Gill's unadopted 'Heraldic Lions and Dragon' design, incorporating Dulac's effigy. The first postcard in the series, issued at Autumn Stampex 2008, reproduced an initial engraving of the 1984 Mailcoach Bicentenary stamp by Czeslaw Slania. The second card, featuring an essay for an Edward VIII coronation stamp showing St James's Palace, is currently available from selected shows organised by member federations of the Association of British Philatelic Societies •

Bulletin competition winners The winners of the Knowledge and Identify competitions in the April *Bulletin* were: S Klar of London, and K Webb of New Zealand •

Brilliant Britain!



This new pack uniquely features all four of the Country miniature Sheets (Celebrating England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales) within beautifully designed packaging. The pack also contains a stunning full-size map of the British Isles, a composite of six faithfully reproduced historic maps from the British Library's archives. As a delightful extra, a Royal Mail branded compass is included, representing a truly unique collectible opportunity.

Features A bespoke, fully working branded compass featuring a unique, exclusive design • A stunning full-size, full-colour map of the British Isles • Accurate reproductions of elements of historic maps from the British Museum Archives • An intriguing historical overview of map development and cartography with a contribution from Peter Barber, Head of Map Collections at the British Museum • Exclusivity assured with an issue limit of just 5000

Brilliant Britain miniature sheet collection Price: £31.95 Product code: PB407



Royal Mail, Tallents House,
21 South Gyle Crescent,
Edinburgh EH12 9PB

Telephone orders:
UK 08457 641 641
overseas +44 131 316 7483
www.royalmail.com/shop

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