

BRITISH PHILATELIC

The ROYAL MAIL magazine *for stamp collectors*

Bulletin

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British Monarchs issue • De
La Rue • Eurothema 2007



Forthcoming issues and withdrawals



Cover *Madonna and Child* by William Dyce, c1827-30, the painting featured on one of the two 2nd class stamps in this year's Christmas issue. © Tate Gallery, London.

Issues All items are available from Royal Mail Tallents House (address below); selected items are available at Post Office branches and Post Office philatelic outlets at main post offices in Bath, Birmingham, Brighton, Bristol, Cambridge, Canterbury, Cardiff, Chester, Colchester, Coventry, Croydon, Durham, Edinburgh, Exeter, Glasgow, Grimsby, Harrogate, Leicester, London (Trafalgar Square & Eastcheap), Newcastle upon Tyne, Norwich, Nottingham, Plymouth, Portsmouth, Southampton, Southend-on-Sea, Stevenage, Stratford-on-Avon, Stroud, Truro, Windsor 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

30 October

Issue Christmas stamp cards (nine cards: eight stamps and miniature sheet)

6 November

Issue 2007 Christmas stamps (Angels & Madonna), miniature sheet (Angels), presentation pack (Angels & Madonna), Generic sheet, three Smilers sheets (Angels), stamp books (Angels), airletters (national and Welsh)

6 November

Withdrawal 2006 Christmas stamps, miniature sheet, presentation pack, stamp books and stamp cards

8 November

Issue Lest We Forget miniature sheet, presentation pack and generic sheet • 2007 Yearbook (standard & de luxe versions), Yearpack, Miniature Sheet Collection and Presentation Pack Collection.

13 November

Withdrawal Belgica exhibition generic sheet

20 November

Issue Royal Diamond Wedding Anniversary coin cover and commemorative document • Edward VIII & George VI ingot pack No 4

30 November

Issue 'Glorious Scotland' generic sheet (20 x 1st class Scottish country stamp self adhesive); Smilers version with personalised image on labels also available

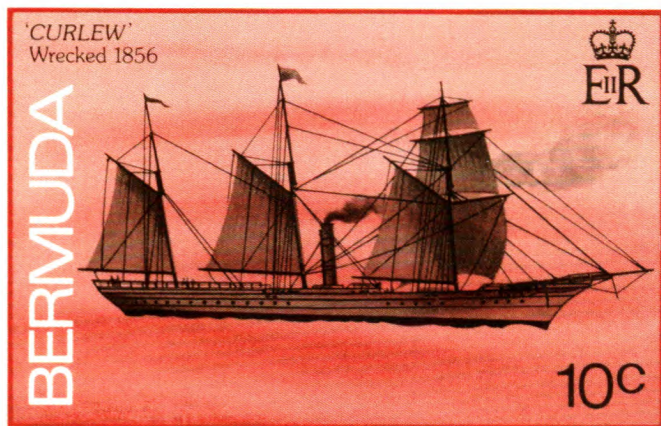
29 December

Withdrawal 37p Machin definitive

31 December

Withdrawal 2005 Yearbook (standard & de luxe versions) and Yearpack

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



Glenn Morgan

UK Commissioner Brian Stole
IBRA '09, 3 Stockfield Road,
Claygate, Esher, Surrey KT10
0QG. For entry forms, please
enclose £1 in stamps.

Enquiries & bookings Send a
stamped addressed envelope
to Christopher Oliver, National
Philatelic Society, c/o BPMA,
Freeling House, Phoenix
Place, London WC1X 0DL, or
visit www.ukphilately.org.uk/
nps where the booking form is
also available.

NPS enquiries Peter Mellor,
Honorary Secretary: phone
020 7239 2571, email nps@ukphilately.org.uk
or see the
society's website at www.ukphilately.org.uk/nps

IBRA '09 This is an international stamp exhibition, which will be held from 6-10 May 2009 at the 'Messe Essen', Essen, under patronage of the Federation of European Philatelic Associations (FEPA) with recognition of the Fédération Internationale de Philatélie (FIP) and patronage of the Association Internationale des Journalistes Philatélique (AIJP).

It will have five competitive classes, namely Traditional Philately, Postal History, Thematic Philately, Aerophilately and Philatelic Literature. The display frames will be 97.5cm wide x 101cm high and hold 12 sheets, in three rows of four. First time entrants whose exhibits have been awarded a minimum of a Vermeil medal (75 points) at national level, and entrants whose exhibits have previously received a Vermeil medal or lower at a FIP/FEPA exhibition will be allocated seven frames (84 pages). Entrants with exhibits that have been awarded a Large Vermeil medal, or a higher award, at a FIP/FEPA exhibition will be allocated 11 frames (132 sheets).

Bulletin 1 and entry forms are available from the UK Commissioner (left). Entry forms should be returned by 1 April 2008. It is intended that National Commissioners will receive advice of acceptances by 31 October 2008. The entry fee is 30 Euros per frame and 30 Euros per Literature entry ●

Computer seminar A day-long seminar on computers and philately will be held by the National Philatelic Society on Saturday 17 November 2007. A 'hands-on' guide to using your computer to enhance your philatelic collection, this seminar will be held at 20/21 Arcadia Avenue, London N3 2JU (a location map will be provided to those attending), from 10.30 to 16.00.

Computers are now an essential tool in research and writing up collections, so the seminar is aimed at improving skills in these areas, and will be based on Microsoft Word for Windows, use of the internet and simple graphics. It is not intended for absolute beginners, but for those with some knowledge who wish to expand it. Chris King will lead this tutorial seminar, which is limited to twelve places on a first come-first served basis.

There will be a charge of £10 (£8 for NPS members). The deadline for applications falls on the day this *Bulletin* is mailed, but late applications will be considered and a further seminar will be held if demand warrants it ●

National Philatelic Society Saturday meetings are normally held at City University, London on the second Saturday of the month with a 400-lot room and postal members' auction at 13.00 and the display at 14.45. Members enjoy the magazine *Stamp Lover*, Literature Sales, separate Stamp and Postal History Circulating Packets, and the renowned NPS Library, now located at the British Postal Museum & Archive. Forthcoming displays at the National include 'Aspects of British Booklets 1900-1975' by Ian Harvey FRPSL on Saturday 10 November, and the traditional Christmas meeting on Saturday 8 December. Visitors are always welcome to attend ●



Errors at auction Grosvenor's November sale will include missing colours and imperf errors from the 'Davenport' collection, including: 1961 CEPT rod with pale green omitted in a progressive strip (SG cat £12,000); 1961 Parliamentary Conference 153d blue omitted in progressive strip (£15,000); 1963 Red Cross 3d phosphor red omitted (£20,000); 1964 Botanical Congress 153d unique corner strip with complete and partial omission of yellow (£35,000+); 1969 Christmas 5d cylinder block of six with brown, red, gold and phosphor omitted from two stamps (£18,000+); 1970 Commonwealth Games 5d greenish-yellow omitted (£12,000); 1971 British Anniversaries 3p black omitted, the only known mint example (unpriced); 1974 Christmas 3½p light stone background shading omitted (£20,000); 1980 Sports 12p gold Queen's head omitted, only known example (unpriced); and 1990 Stamp World London 90 miniature sheet with black recess printed omitted, believed to be the only known example (£15,000) •

Grosvenor Telephone 020 7379 8789, or website www.grosvenorauctions.com

Auctions Corbitts are dealers, auctioneers and valuers of postage stamps, coins, banknotes, medals, cigarette cards and autographs. They have been established over 30 years and have a large and well-established clientele throughout the world. Corbitts hold regular public stamp auctions, coin auctions, and auctions of cigarette cards, trading cards and autographs in Newcastle upon Tyne and the catalogues for these auctions are published on their website roughly one month prior to the auction date. They will be holding their next general sale on the 15th of this month •

Corbitts 5 Mosley Street, Newcastle Upon Tyne NE1 1YE. Telephone 0191 232 7268. www.corbitts.com

Hospice help You can help Royal Mail's supplier Walsall Security Printers to get a hospice for its town. Registered charity Walsall Hospice has campaigned for over 15 years for a hospice in Walsall, which has one of the highest rates of cancer in the UK. Work has now begun to build Walsall's first fully integrated Palliative Care Centre, which will include a 12-bed inpatient hospice, on the former Goscote Hospital site. Scheduled to open in 2009, this is a much-needed and welcome addition to health care services in the Borough. If you are a user of an internet search engine, why not forsake your usual favourite by logging on to www.getagallery.com/wsps/ask.html and help Walsall Hospice by using this form to search the internet. This is a free service provided by wsp, so it won't cost anything to use it, but you will ensure that a valuable donation of 10p goes to the Hospice •

Enquiries Walsall Hospice, telephone 01922 858631 or www.walsallhospice.org.uk/



High Speed 1 On 14 November a new high speed line opens and sees the Eurostar trains departing from St Pancras International instead of Waterloo. Brussels will then be under two hours from London, while Paris can be reached in just two hours and twenty minutes. FDC producer Adrian Bradbury is commemorating this milestone in rail travel with a limited edition of 2000 Business Customised Sheets, price £30 including postage.

Enquiries: email brad@bfdc.co.uk, or write to him at A G Bradbury, 3 Link Road, Stoneygate, Leicester LE2 3RA. Orders can be placed online at www.bfdc.co.uk ●

Mercury Project This web-based project, named as homage to the 'Mercury Stamp Journal' of the late Edwin Mueller, is a website for scholarly articles on various aspects of philately. Contributors are participants at Richard Frajola's Board for Philatelists. The concept is to create a place where articles can be archived or previewed for peer review prior to possible further publication in print, or material exhibited. There are currently around 20 articles, with an American bias, but including

useful articles on how to look after your collection, 'Mail between BNA and the UK 1766-1875' and 'The Cope Line of Liverpool-Philadelphia Packets'.

It is worth a regular visit, for interesting items such as a 16-page exhibit entitled 'Great Britain Imperforate Line Engraved – the Vanity and the Insanity' and 'A Group of Early Postage Stamp Related Song Sheets', a most nostalgic set of covers. Who could resist *The Trolley Mail Gallop* (sic), or *How are you off for stamps*! The lyrics for *The Stamp Collector's Song* include: 'So here's to the praise of the best of craze, and the daily increase of our treasures, for as long as it pays let us follow the craze the pleasure of kings and king of all pleasures. With its fortune un-told, for the young and old it has charms for the judge and the rector, for the clerk on his stool and the youngster at school. Hurrah for the stamp collector.' Hurrah indeed. Enquiries: For Project Mercury visit www.rfrajola.com/mercury/mercury.htm and for the Frajola home page go to www.rfrajola.com ●

Enquiries Write to ATA, PO Box 57, Arlington, TX 76004-0057, USA. Website www.americanphilatellists.org

Publications received The American Topical Association's 92-page *Topical Time* for July/August has been received, with its usual mix of valuable information for members and useful articles, including bat operas, hotels, aviation workhorses and weather radar. Regular features include Cinderella Corner, publication reviews, topical meter stamps, postal stationery and postmarks, among others. The September/October issue covers Greek mythology, cattle drives, First World War aces and their aircraft, short wave certification cards and the tragedies of Shakespeare ●

The September issue of *Britannia News*, from the Studiegroep Britannia, contains much of interest to collectors of all aspects of British philately, within its 92 black-and-white A4 pages. Partly in English, but mainly in Dutch, the latest issue has articles on seaposts, King George VI, great rarities, Electro Mechanical Engraving of Machines and new British stamps, among others such as society news and events •

The Insurance and Banking Philatelic Society of Great Britain's publication *I&BPS Newsletter* is edited by Brian Sole. The September issue is of 28 A5 pages and includes features on mail detained in France in June 1940 and a book review. Membership is open to anyone in, or retired from, the financial services sector and costs a mere £5 per year to belong •

The Great Britain Collectors Club produces a 36-page journal of a high standard entitled *The GBCC Chronicle*. The July issue was the last to be edited by Paul J Phillips, and former president Tom Myers has taken over from the September issue onwards. Features in issue 112 include overseas mail of the 1840s, identifying early Machin definitives from books and coils, GB catalogue comparisons and make-up rate items •

Studiegroep Britannia P R de Rooij, Verlengde Horstlaan 4, 3971 MP Driebergen-Rijsenburg, The Netherlands. www.sgbritannia.nl

I&BPS Write to Dudley Baker, 25 Banbury Way, Downs View, Epsom KT17 4JP or email him at: dudley.baker1@ntlworld.com

GBCC Secretary-treasurer, Larry Rosenblum, 1030 East El Camino Real, PMB107, Sunnyvale, CA 94087, USA. Email lr@gbstamps.com or see www.gbstamps.com/gbcc

New book *The British Post Office Service in Morocco 1907-1957* by Dr David A Stotter has recently been published by the Postal History Society, British Philatelic Trust. It has been supported by the GB Overprints Society. The book is hardbound with a dust jacket, and comprises around 400 pages with many colour illustrations.

Send orders to John Sussex, 8 Jenkins Close, Pocklington, York YO42 2PA. Cheques payable to The Postal History Society. Email johndc.sussex@btinternet.com

Described as the first full-length book on the Morocco Agencies to be published, this volume comprises 12 chapters and two additional sections which focus entirely on postal history. Section I covers: 1 1907, Change from Gibraltar Administration to the GPO; 2 The Post Offices – Tangier and the Spanish Area; 3 The Post Offices – the French Area; 4 The Competitive Position of the British Post Offices; 5 Emerging Problems; 6 The Great War and the First Closures; 7 First Major Threat; 8 New Developments and Financial Review; 9 Closure of the Post Offices in the French Zone; 10 The Spanish Zone and Tangier; 11 Wartime (Spanish Civil War & World War II); and 12 The end of the Morocco Agencies. Section II relates to Cancellations, while Section III covers Postage Rates.

The UK retail price is £49 plus postage and packing (in a specially fitted protective box) of £7.20 (UK), £12 (Europe and rest of world by surface) or £22 (by air). Overseas buyers may pay by PayPal; contact johndc.sussex@btinternet.com •

Royal diamond wedding Amongst the new issues commemorating the diamond wedding of The Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh is this £3 stamp from Jersey, on sale from 20 November. It was designed by Andrew Robinson, using photographs supplied by Camera Press, London, and printed in four colours plus gold ink in sheets of four by Cartor. Address enquiries to: Jersey Philatelic Bureau, Postal Headquarters, Jersey JE1 1AB, or telephone 01534 516320 •





Croydon centenary exhibition In early September John Holman and I visited the exhibition to mark the centenary of the Croydon Philatelic Society, at the Fairfield Halls in Croydon. The exhibition was well presented and included some fine displays by members of the Society.

Visitors received an attractive little brochure about the Society and its centenary, in which we learned that the town's Postmaster, Mr F G Bing, was the first President, and that its distinguished members have included Edward Denny Bacon, Kenneth Chapman, Cyril Harmer, and Robson Lowe – all household names in UK philatelic history. The 32 displays covered a broad variety of subjects ranging from local postal history to Fiji postal stationery, the Lufthansa service to South America, and Australian postage dues – so all visitors should have found something to interest them. Two exhibits were related to the Society itself, with material from its archives, and a photographic record of its recent activities. Whilst many societies keep archives, not all record current events, which is a pity. The Society publishes an excellent magazine which was runner-up in the ABPS society journal competition earlier this year (see September Stamp Scene).

Amongst the displays we found particularly appealing were those on Croydon post offices which have now closed (showing examples of their postal markings), New Zealand counter coils of George VI and Elizabeth II, Sir Francis Chichester, self-adhesive stamps of Sierra Leone, Special Offices and the franchise in Paris to 1848 (Royal and government mail), Zemstvo Posts of Russia, and modern postpaid labels. This indicates the wide collecting range of members of the Croydon Society. Of special interest to collectors of GB stamps were the displays of the use of British ½d stamps from Queen Victoria onwards, and 'The Ubiquitous Sea Horses' by Peter Harris, who will give a display and talk on this subject to the Society next June. The Society meets at 19.15 on the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month in the United Reformed Church, Addiscombe Grove, East Croydon. Visit www.croydonps.org.uk for further information.

We will soon be returning to the Fairfield Halls, for the ABPS National Exhibition, 23-24 November. This includes the national stamp competitions (formerly staged at Stampex) and the annual Philatelic Congress of GB. It promises to be a memorable philatelic weekend ●

Visit <http://machinmania.blogspot.com/> (note that the lack of 'www' in the address is correct).

Machin mania Larry Rosenblum has taken over the running of a blog (web log) about Machin stamps that *Bulletin* readers will wish to consult regularly. It is produced in partnership with his website www.gbmachins.co.uk and at the time of writing included 121 entries this year, including features on Boots labels, PSBs going litho, 20 years of window books and much else besides ●

Royal Mail news Special issues • Issues for 2008 • Year collections • Smilers • Ingots



Royal Diamond Wedding coin cover with Diamond Wedding stamps and miniature sheet and £5 crown coin.

Special issues The annual Christmas issue (6 November) comprises six stamps and a miniature sheet, all featuring angels, plus an additional two 'religious' stamps depicting the Madonna and Child. The second of the 'Lest We Forget' miniature sheets will be issued on 8 November (£3.46 or £4 in presentation pack), together with a generic sheet (£7.35).

Further Diamond Wedding products which will be available from 20 November include a coin cover with Diamond Wedding stamps and miniature sheet and £5 crown coin (above, £19.95), and a commemorative document including silver versions of the stamps (£60) •

Year collections The 2007 Yearbook and Yearpack, containing all the year's special stamps, will go on sale on 8 November and will remain available until the end of 2009. Both contain all the special stamps of 2007, as well as the Beatles, Machin, Harry Potter, Royal Diamond Wedding and Lest We Forget miniature sheets. The standard version of the Yearbook costs £64.95, or £99.99 for the de-luxe, leather-bound version.

The colourful Yearpack (right, £57.45), gives concise background information on each of the special issues, with technical details of the stamps and illustrations of the alternative 'First Day' postmarks for each issue.

2007 Miniature Sheet Year Pack and Presentation Pack Collections will also be available from 8 November, price £24.45 and £59.75 respectively •



Coming off sale Any remaining stocks of the 2006 Christmas stamps and related products will be withdrawn on 6 November, although the Christmas airletters will remain on sale •

2008 issues Details of the first two special issues for 2008 – James Bond (8 January) and Working Dogs (5 February) – were given last month. This month we preview the first in a new Great British Monarchs series, featuring the Houses of Lancaster and York (28 February).

The Insects set (15 April) continues the Endangered/Recovering Species series started with the Birds stamps in September. The Cathedrals stamps (13 May) commemorate the 300th anniversary of the completion of St Paul's Cathedral in London. The set entitled Carry on Hammer (10 June) recall the popular Hammer Horror and Carry On films. The Airshows issue (17 July) marks the centenary of the first powered flight in the UK, at Farnborough. The Olympic Handover from Beijing to London will be commemorated on 26 August, and the RAF Uniforms issue (18 September) will continue the series started by the Army Uniforms set in September.

A miniature sheet will be issued on 29 September for the 50th anniversary of the country (regional) stamps. The Women of Achievement stamps (14 October) are linked to the 150th anniversary of the birth of Emmeline Pankhurst. Christmas stamps go on sale on 4 November, the theme being Traditional Pantomime. The final Lest We Forget miniature sheet (6 November) marks the 90th anniversary of the end of the First World War •

For full details of the Smilers service see the leaflet in Post Office branches, phone the Smilers helpline on 0845 074 2000, or visit www.royalmail.com/smilers



Generic and Smilers sheets The Christmas generic sheet, on sale 6 November, contains eight 1st class, eight 2nd class and four 78p Angels Christmas stamps, priced £8.30 (see October *Bulletin* p41). There will be three Christmas Smilers sheets: 20 × 2nd class (above), 20 × 1st class, and 10 × 78p.

The 'Glorious Scotland' generic sheet, containing 20 Scottish 1st class stamps on self-adhesive paper, goes on sale on 30 November, priced £7.35. A Smilers version, for personalising with your own image on the labels, will also be available •

Stamp ingots The fourth ingot in stamps of the reigns of Edward VIII and George VI will be available from 20 November, price £27.95. This features the George VI five shilling stamp of 1939. Handling charge on all ingots is £1.45 UK, £1.55 Europe, £2.15 Rest of World. All orders and enquiries to: Royal Mail Tallents House, 21 South Gyle Crescent, Edinburgh EH12 9PB; UK order line 08457 641 641 (overseas +44 131 316 7483) ●

British Postal Museum & Archive Readers are reminded that in addition to its regular opening times (Monday to Wednesday and Friday 10.00-17.00, Thursday 10.00-19.00), the BPMA is also open on Saturday 8 December (10.00-17.00). Tours of the Archives are held at 14.00 on the last Thursday of each month until November. Currently on show is an exhibition marking the 40th anniversary of the Machin stamps – see the August *Bulletin*, pages 368-69. Details of lectures and film shows are given in our Events listing (see page 94).

The BPMA, located at Freeling House, Phoenix Place, London WC1X 0DL (near Mount Pleasant), contains the collections of the former National Postal Museum and Post Office Archives. For further details contact the BPMA on 020 7239 2570 or see their website www.postalheritage.org.uk ●

Collect British Stamps The 2008 (59th) edition of the ever-popular Stanley Gibbons *Collect British Stamps* colour checklist will be published in November, price £9.95. It will be available from Royal Mail Tallents House as well as from Stanley Gibbons, and stamp and book shops ●

Prize draw 2007 pack collections to be won



WE HAVE TWO of the new 2007 Presentation Pack Collection for our prizes this month. To enter, simply send you name and address on a postcard or back of a sealed envelope to: 2007 Draw, British Philatelic Bulletin, Royal Mail, 35-50 Rathbone Place, London W1T 1HQ by 30 November ●

Treasures of the BPMA *'a loaded blunderbuss lay atop of six or eight loaded horse-pistols, deposited on a substratum of cutlass.'*

Martin Robinson looks at the story of the armed Mail Guards

'THE GUARD of the Dover mail stood on his own particular perch behind the mail, beating his feet and keeping an eye and a hand on the arm-chest before him, where a loaded blunderbuss lay atop of six or eight loaded horse-pistols, deposited on a substratum of cutlass.' So we read in the second chapter of Charles Dickens' novel *A Tale of Two Cities*, where a rider stops the Dover mail at the top of Shooters Hill to deliver a message to one of its passengers and nearly gets shot for his pains.

In spite of the discomfort and danger of travelling by mail coach in the late 18th century and the first half of the 19th, with inclement weather, poor roads, a lack of springs and frequent accidents, this subject is usually surrounded by a romantic aura, created by references in literature and the numerous prints and paintings which glamorised it, and which are still a favourite subject on Christmas cards, along with pillar boxes with snow and robins.

By January of 1786 the service was well established, with mail coaches running from London to Bath and Bristol, Birmingham, Carlisle, Chester and Holyhead, Cirencester and Stroud, Dover, Exeter, Gloucester, Hereford, Liverpool, Manchester, Norwich and Yarmouth, Nottingham and Leeds, Portsmouth, Shrewsbury, Southampton and Poole, Worcester and Ludlow, and Windsor. The last ran to Norwich in 1846, the railways having taken over the service.

Stage coach passengers were always fearful of being robbed by a highwayman, but the Royal Mail coaches which began to run in 1784 have a fine record of safety from that point of view. The main reason for this was no doubt the fact that their guards were well armed with a blunderbuss and a pair of pistols, which they would not hesitate to use. In 1786 a highwayman tried to hold up a mail coach and was shot dead on the spot; no other attempts were made on mail coaches.

A letter written in 1812 by Thomas Hasker, the Surveyor and Superintendent of Mails, reminds the mail guards that 'It is a Guard's duty always to have a bag of tools complete, and every week when they go to receive their wages, the Postmaster has orders to examine their firearms to see if they are perfectly clean – barrel, lock and every part – that they have a blunderbuss and case, a pair of pistols and holsters, a powder horn, bullet mould, screwdriver and touch-hole picker' as well as a variety of other tools and spare parts to carry out any running repairs, and of course the locked timepiece and time bill. The guard was a Post Office employee, unlike the driver who was employed by the coach contractor, so it was the guard's responsibility to ensure that a coach ran safely and on time.

We are fortunate that a good number of mail guards' weapons have survived: the British Postal Museum & Archive has two blunderbusses and eight pistols and there are many more held in the Royal Armouries Collection and in other museums, including Haringey Council's Bruce Castle, and private collections. The BPMA's two blunderbusses date from 1788-1816; both of these are made of walnut and brass and have 14-inch barrels whose bore widens towards the muzzle. One is inscribed 'H. W. MORTIMER – LONDON GUN-MAKER TO HIS MAJESTY – 110' and has London proof marks; whilst the other has Birmingham proof marks but no manufacturer's name.

The pistols are all of similar design, and date from before 1804 to 1841. Like the blunderbusses, they are made of walnut and brass, and are inscribed with their manufacturers' names Wilkinson, H Nock, J Harding and Mortimer, and some carry around the muzzle the inscription FOR HIS MAJESTY'S MAIL COACHES. Two of them, those manufactured by H Nock, have metal clips alongside their barrels, which fitted over a belt. These were almost certainly owned by the captain of a

These 'maritime' pistols are very similar to a mail guard's pistols, but have a clip to fit over a seaman's belt. These pistols were carried on packet boats.



packet ship, as holsters were not worn at sea. H Nock was the main supplier of guns to the Weymouth and Falmouth packet stations.

The BPMA also has a vast collection of documents relating to the mail coaches, guards and firearms, including a file about the accidental discharge of a mail guard's blunderbuss in Ballina, County Mayo, in 1835. A mail coach was about to leave and the guard was putting away his blunderbuss when it fell to the ground and went off; a bystander received a ball through the body and was killed. After an inquest and an examination of the weapon, the guard was exonerated and the Postmaster General agreed to pay a pension to the man's widow.

The collection also contains other firearms, including three replica revolvers: two Smith and Wessons and a Webley, which came among other objects from the Post Office Security and Investigation Service. Replicas like these were used in mock raids on post offices for training purposes. As yet uncatalogued is an accumulation of firearms, ranging from handguns to shotguns, and worse, which were used in actual robberies.

Frederick Wilkinson's *Royal Mail Coaches* (published by Tempus Publishing 2007) is to be recommended as a history of mail coaches based on

contemporary sources, and is particularly good on the guards, their weapons and other gear. For more details of the BPMA collections, and for visitor information, write to them at Freeling House, Phoenix Place, London WC1X 0DL, see their website www.postalheritage.org.uk or ring them on 020 7239 2570.

National Postal Museum Card 96/5 is one of a set issued on 16 April 1996 for the Post Haste! exhibition of postal artefacts, opened on 12 July 1995. This features the 'maritime' pistols shown above, made by Henry Nock of London (bottom) before 1804, and his son-in-law J Wilkinson (top) in about 1810. Both are very similar to the mail guard pistols, but have a clip to fit over a seaman's belt and were carried on packet boats.

As this article was being written, news came that the range of treasures and histories in the extensive W V Morten Postal History Collection at the Bruce Castle Museum are to be revealed to the world, thanks to the grant of £49,800 from the Heritage Lottery Fund to fund the project 'Pistols, Packets and Postmen' to catalogue and digitise the 30,000 items of this nationally-important collection covering everything from highwaymen and mail coaches to postmen and letterboxes •

Britain abroad Isle of Man stamps marking



The Isle of Man's issue marking 800 years of the city of Liverpool: a celebration of history, culture and the spirit of a people, from King John to the Beatles.

MOST COUNTRIES ISSUE STAMPS to mark the important anniversaries of towns and cities, but Britain has rarely produced any commemoratives of this type. The 800th anniversary of the charter granted by King John to Liverpool in August 1207 would therefore have passed unnoticed, were it not for the Isle of Man, which produced a set of six on 10 May. Created by Fusion Design, the set depicts places and persons associated with the long and illustrious history of one of the major port cities of the British Isles.

King John is portrayed on the 31p stamp bestowing the royal letters patent, which invited people to settle in his new port in return for liberal privileges, with a reproduction of his great seal between the royal cypher and the value.

The higher denominations feature some of the diverse aspects of the modern city. The 48p shows the Anglican and Roman Catholic Cathedrals, reflecting the spiritual heart of Liverpool. The 54p pays tributes to Liverpool's war heroes, including Captain Noel Chavasse, one of only three men to win the Victoria Cross twice.

The rich architectural heritage of Liverpool is epitomised by the 74p depicting St George's Hall, a splendid neo-classical building at the core of the city's cultural quarter. Overhead can be seen an airliner taking off from John Lennon International Airport.

The 80p shows a dramatic view of Liverpool's waterfront floodlit against the night sky – the Royal Liver, Port of Liverpool and Cunard Buildings. No series devoted to Liverpool would be complete without a reference to the Merseybeat. The £1 features a part of the Wall of Fame, with statues

Liverpool's octocentenary, by James Mackay



of the Beatles in the foreground. Look closely at the wall behind them and you will find some of the names of the Liverpool pop stars who have scored 54 number one chart hits since 1952.

The set is accompanied by a miniature sheet concentrating on the Isle of Man's links with Liverpool and portraying four of the great entrepreneurs connected to the island and its principal mainland port. The 25p features James Brown, a Liverpudlian who settled on the island in 1861, founded the *Isle of Man Times* and who, as a politician, fought long and hard to transform the medieval House of Keys into a democratically elected parliament in 1867.

Joseph Cunningham (40p) organised clubs for working-class boys in Liverpool and took them on camping holidays at Laxey. In 1894 he established the very first holiday camp in the British Isles.

Dalrymple Maitland (80p) was of Scots descent, born in Liverpool, but raised in the Isle of Man, eventually becoming chairman of the Isle of Man Bank, the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company and the Isle of Man Railway Company before his elevation as Speaker of the House of Keys. He was also a senior director of the *Liverpool Mercury*, *The Daily Post* and *Echo*.

The other 80p marks the 150th anniversary of the giant floating Princess Landing Stage at Liverpool created by William Gill (80p) and first used by the Manx paddle steamer *Mona's Queen* on 1 September 1857 •

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Sadly this will be the last of the many Bulletin articles by James Mackay, who died in August (see the October Bulletin, p60).

Great British Monarchs The first issue in a



THE FIRST set in a new series of stamps depicting Great British Monarchs goes on sale at Post Office branches and Royal Mail Tallents House on 28 February. The stamps feature: King Henry IV (1399-1413) and Henry V (1413-22), 1st class; Henry VI (1422-61 & 1470-71) and Edward IV (1461-70 & 1471-83), 54p; and Edward V (1483) and Richard III (1483-85), 69p. The stamps were designed by Ian Chilvers of Atelier Works design group, and printed in single sheets by Walsall in litho.

In addition there will be a miniature sheet, entitled 'The Age of Lancaster and York', containing two 1st class and two 78p stamps featuring Owain Glyndwr, the Battle of Agincourt, the Battle of Tewkesbury, and William Caxton.

FIRST DAY FACILITIES Orders for serviced FDCs must reach Tallents House (address below) by the day of issue. Collectors may send stamped covers on the day of issue to: Royal Mail Tallents House, 21 South Gyle Crescent, Edinburgh EH12 9PB (Tallents House postmark) or to their nearest Royal Mail Special Handstamp Centre (for Tewkesbury postmark), marking the outer envelope 'FDO801' or 'FDO802'. Covers can be posted or handed in at main Post Office branches for the Tewkesbury postmark.

For details of sponsored handstamps and addresses of the Handstamp Centres see the *British Postmark Bulletin* – available on subscription from Tallents House (£12.25 UK/Europe, £24.95 elsewhere). For a free sample copy write to: British Postmark Bulletin, Royal Mail, 35-50 Rathbone Place, London W1T 1HQ.

PHILATELIC PRODUCTS A well-illustrated presentation pack (not shown) gives brief biographies of the six monarchs featured on the stamps, and a history of the Wars of the Roses and the Hundred Years War. The pack's author, historian Bettany Hughes, describes the long dynastic struggle between the House of York (whose symbol was a white rose) and the House of Lancaster (a red rose), and looks at the many fundamental changes taking place in England's society in this period.

The stamp cards reproduce the six sheet stamps, the four from the miniature sheet and the sheet itself, 11 cards in total. ►

new series: the Houses of Lancaster and York



Set of stamps	£ 3.14
Miniature sheet	£ 2.24
Presentation pack (stamps and miniature sheet)	£ 5.90
FDC envelope	£ 0.30
Serviced FDC: stamps (UK customers)	£ 4.17
Serviced FDC: stamps (overseas customers)	£ 3.55
Serviced FDC: miniature sheet (UK customers)	£ 3.11
Serviced FDC: miniature sheet (overseas customers)	£ 2.65
Stamp cards set (11 cards)	£ 3.30
Miniature sheet press sheet	£63.50

THE AGE OF LANCASTER AND YORK

100 YEARS' WAR
1337-1453

WELSH REVOLT
1400-1409

WARS OF THE ROSES
1455-1485

PRINTING IN ENGLAND
1477

HENRY IV 1399	HENRY V 1413	HENRY VI 1422	EDWARD IV 1461	EDWARD IV 1471 HENRY VI 1470	EDWARD V 1483 RICHARD III 1483-1485
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SENEDD OWAIN GLYN DŴR
PARLIAMENT — 1404

BATTLE OF AGINCOURT
1415 HENRY V's TRIUMPH

BATTLE OF TEWKESBURY
1471 YORKIST VICTORY

WILLIAM CAXTON
1477 FIRST ENGLISH PRINTER

THE HOUSES OF LANCASTER AND YORK
KINGS AND QUEENS

Royal Mail First Day Cover

Mrs J Robinson
200 Manorbie Road
Ilkeston
Derbyshire
DE7 4AB

Royal Mail 'Talents House' 21 South Gate 'Crests' Edinburgh EH12 6PR



Monarchs on stamps The monarch's head has been featured on all British stamps since the Penny Black, in 1840. A few stamps have depicted earlier monarchs: Elizabeth I (issued 1968); Henry VIII (1982 and 1997), James I (VI of Scotland) (1999) and Robert the Bruce, King of Scotland (1999) •



Below: the murder of the Princes in the Tower, described in Shakespeare's play *Richard III*.



Above: Henry VI on a silver coin from his reign. He inherited the thrones of England and France from his father King Henry V, but the war continued.

sc. 3.

King Richard iii.

111

O, let me think on Hastings, and be gone
To Brecknock, while my fearful head is on.
[Exit.

SCENE III.—*The Same.**Enter Tyrrel.*

Tyr. The tyrannous and bloody act is done ;
The most arch deed of piteous massacre
That ever yet this land was guilty of.
Dighton and Forrest, whom I did suborn
To do this piece of ruthless butchery,
Albeit they were flesh'd villains, bloody dogs,
Melting with tenderness and mild compassion,
Wept like to children in their death's sad story.

Left: King Henry V winning his most famous victory, at Agincourt, 1415. His father Henry IV, right, was King by force rather than by right.



Eurothema 2007 Simon Moorcroft awaits a

From 24-25 November one of the largest specialist thematic exhibitions ever to be held in the UK will be staged in London. Eurothema promises to be a truly splendid event attracting visitors from across Europe to celebrate thematic philately. The BTA is working hard to ensure that there is something for everyone, and that no one will be disappointed.

THE Eurothema 2007 exhibition will be staged by the British Thematic Association (BTA), in conjunction with the usual Thematica II exhibition. The BTA is delighted to announce that Margaret Morris, a past president of the BTA, will act as Patron for the exhibition.

Eurothema has its origins 23 years ago in 1984 in Belgium. For ten years a 'Weekend of Thematic Philately', dedicated each year to a different theme, was held in Wetteren. In 1993, on the occasion of the tenth event, it was felt by the organisers that a larger and altogether more prestigious event was needed. Thus the Netherlands, Luxembourg and Germany were invited to participate in DEBENELUX, an international thematic competition. In addition to each country supplying a number of thematic exhibits, a small number of judges was also sent to form a jury. This first show was held in Wetteren and subsequently bi-annually in Luxembourg, Germany and the Netherlands.

By the year 2000 the show was attracting many visitors and had proven to be a success. Word of the exhibition had now spread to other countries in Europe and many were interested in participating in this type of competition. Belgium, as the founder of DEBENELUX, felt that the show needed to expand and develop. Having some preliminary ideas, one of the founders of the original 'Weekend', visited Motiv 2000 in Denmark, Stampex 2000 in London and the French national stamp exhibition to discuss with relevant parties the idea of staging a new format exhibition, Eurothema. Although these plans were treated with some scepticism by Germany and Luxembourg the committee of the British Thematic Association were keen on the idea and felt Britain should be involved in any such new venture. From this, detailed proposals were formulated and agreed upon. The show would have seven participating countries including France, Great Britain and Denmark, along with those who participated in DEBENELUX.

The first Eurothema exhibition was held in Wetteren in 2001. Great Britain, participating for the first time, came a very credible second. The BTA's involvement with the show was recognised by it being awarded the Rowland Hill Award for New Horizons in 2001. Subsequent shows have been held biannually in the Netherlands and France, with the next one to be held in London. Rules for exhibits are now that each country is allotted nine frames, and must field a team consisting of at least three thematic exhibits. The winning team is decided by taking the three highest marked entries of each country. An interesting feature of Eurothema is that no-one can participate if they have competed at FEPA or FIP level. The idea behind this was to provide a stepping stone for exhibitors between their respective national level competitions and full international level.

The founders of Eurothema were always keen that their show should remain on a small scale, for two reasons. Firstly they wanted the nations involved to foster better relations. Secondly they wanted philatelists from

great philatelic event to be staged this month

all nations to be able to visit events without too much difficulty. Since Britain first participated, a large number of British philatelists, mainly from the BTA, has always attended. Eurothema offers an excellent opportunity to meet fellow thematic philatelists and to see the broadest possible range of thematic material. It is a great honour for the BTA to organise Eurothema 2007.

Naturally, the most important element of Eurothema is the exhibits. Some of today's best thematic exhibitors have entered Eurothema and have gone on to win major international awards. The British team this year is: Jim Etherington, with '1940, A Desperate Year'; Peter Wood, 'The Irish Empire'; Peter Denly, 'Man's Marine Adventure'; Richard Wheeler, 'Mask, Myths, Mimes'; Stuart Henderson, 'World War One' and Sheila Foster, 'Aspects of Photography'. These exhibits are of a high quality and many of the exhibitors have won numerous awards at federation or national level in Britain. The wide thematic nature of the British entries will be mirrored by those coming from the continent, with music being a very popular theme this year with four exhibits. The following paragraphs will provide an insight into three of the British exhibits which will be on show.

Peter Denly's 'Man's Marine Adventure', will be of great interest to anyone with a passion for ships or maritime affairs. It is an exhibit that details the development of ships and the uses that they have been put to in addition to looking at the various aids, equipment and services which have been devised or created to ensure safety and easier navigation at sea. Section one of the exhibit tells the story of the ships. Peter firstly details the small primitive country craft which were used for centuries to transport small quantities of goods and looks at how fishing boats have developed throughout the centuries. He then examines how small craft developed into great sailing ships and the technological overhauls necessary for this transition. Peter explains in his introduction that the most important development in shipping took place in the late 19th century, when sail power, with its reliance on wind, was replaced by motive power with steam and later diesel and in some cases nuclear propulsion. One page, illustrated above, shows how the first vessels to begin this transition combined sail and steam power, and explains that such ships became more plentiful as people began to realise the benefits of motorised power. This section also illustrates the designs of some modern ships, the development of sailing as a recreational sport and the evolution of naval vessels. ►



This page from Peter Denly's exhibit 'Man's Marine Adventure' looks at the introduction of ships driven by both propeller and sail power in the late 19th century.

The thrust of Peter's second section, Safeguarding the Marine Adventure, is, as the title suggests, mainly concerned with improving the safety of ships and sailors while at sea with the main intention of preventing the ultimate disaster, shipwrecks. Shipwrecks were so common in the 18th century that sailors had a life expectancy of only 32 years. Today, shipwrecks and deaths at sea are so infrequent that they are of insignificance. Goods can now be sent on the high seas and be almost guaranteed to reach their destination. This vast improvement in safety over the last 200 years is due mainly to the development of accurate charts and navigational equipment, much of which can be attributed to the pioneering work of Captain Cook, light-houses, light buoys and lightships and the creation of specialist rescue services which respond to disasters at sea.

Jim Etherington's fascinating display telling the story of the desperate year of 1940 will be of considerable enjoyment to anyone interested in the Second World War. Jim, in his introduction, recounts that in the beginning 1940 was very quiet, with very little action in the West, and certainly none which affected mainland Britain. However in April the Germans unleashed the devastating military strategy of *Blitzkrieg*, or 'Lightning War', against Western Europe which crushed and overwhelmed the armies in such countries as France and the Low Countries, as well as Norway and Denmark. One sheet demonstrates that this caused a mass retreat of civilians as well as military personnel across northern France. By June Great Britain stood alone. Jim tells the story of this desperate but also tumultuous year in great detail, illustrating all aspects of the war that year. Of particular interest is the section entitled 'Debate in the West'. This details the end of the 'Phoney War', when the Germans pushed west. It mentions Winston Churchill becoming Prime Minister in May, with France collapsing. Also illustrated is the Battle of Britain. Possibly one of the most important events of the whole war, Jim explores how it began and developed from looking at the Luftwaffe to detailing how the Germans switched from the concentrated bombing of airfields to the area bombardment of cities during the 'blitz'.

Richard Wheeler's exhibit illustrates how puppets have been closely involved in the development of the theatre, and how they have featured in many different cultures throughout time. For visitors who enjoy the theatre, who owned or still own a puppet or enjoyed watching Punch and Judy as a child, this exhibit is something which should not be missed. Richard looks at where the story began 2500 years ago and how the first reference of puppets is through the use of theatrical masks. One sheet, reproduced opposite, details one of the most significant uses of masks, and one which is now the symbol of theatre across the world: comedy and tragedy. This came about due to the actors of Rome and Greece, who wore masks to portray the characters they were playing. These masks were changed to indicate if the character was happy or sad. The exhibit in addition illustrates the importance of puppets in eastern culture, and how some have gone on to become symbols of civilisations or continents. Puppets developed greatly in the west during the middle ages with some favourite clown

characters evolving during that time. The largest section, 'Puppets in Performance', looks at how puppets have been used as essential parts of performances which, for example, have appeared in the broadcast media.

As can be appreciated, the exhibits which will be present each have their unique individual style and their own personal story to relate. They will demonstrate the immensely diversified nature of thematic philately, and how much thought, time and effort goes into researching and developing thematic exhibits. Although the exhibitors will not have entered FEPA or FIP exhibitions, the exhibits will nonetheless be judged according to the rules and schedules used at such exhibitions. For that reason, studying these exhibits will be of great use for anyone planning a competitive thematic exhibit, or for anyone who requires additional ideas about how to develop and/or expand their own thematic exhibit.

The exhibition will be held at the Carrisbrooke Hall (part of the Victory Services Club), Seymour Street, London W2 on Saturday 24 and Sunday 25 November 2007 between 10.00 and 17.30, and 10.00 and 17.00 respectively. The nearest underground station is Marble Arch. Throughout the exhibition the BTA will have a manned table where any questions regarding thematic philately or the association can hopefully be answered. As Eurothema is being held in conjunction with Thematica 11, there will be a large number of excellent dealers who will be supplying a huge range of thematic material across a broad range of themes. In addition to the Eurothema entries, the thematic exhibits in the British National/International competitive classes will also be displayed on both days. Social events taking place during the show include an informal buffet on the evening of Friday 23 November. This is to welcome philatelists who have travelled from the continent and for exhibitors, and will be held at the Victory Services Club beginning at 6.30pm. On Saturday the 24th, a formal Palmares dinner will take place in the Trafalgar Room of the VSC beginning with a drinks reception. This promises to be a truly excellent event and where the winning country will be presented with the coveted Eurothema Trophy. Both events should not be missed. Accommodation is available at the large selection of hotels in the area.

The BTA has endeavoured in organising the show to provide something for everyone. The breadth of material on offer from the many dealers, the high standard of the varied exhibits and two large social events will ensure that no one should be disappointed. All of us at the BTA look forward to welcoming you to the show ●



This page of Richard Wheeler's exhibit 'Mask, Myths, Mimes' explores the use of masks in theatre, and the classical origins of the masks symbolizing comedy and tragedy.

For more information on the Eurothema exhibition see www.brit-thematic-assoc.com/eurothem07.htm or telephone John Hayward: 01276 29246.

Philately online Ron Negus returns to an American GB site

Welcome to **GBStamps.com**
The Place on the Web for Great Britain Philately



WHEN I first visited the American site run by the Great Britain Collectors Club (GBCC) in August of 2001, it was a single one covering all aspects of GB philately. When I looked at it again, it had been divided into three separate sections. In the September 2006 *Bulletin* I reviewed one of these sections that was called MachinMania.

The other two sections were allocated to GB Stamps and to the GBCC respectively. The combined site had been developed and run by two philatelists, Larry Rosenblum and David Alderfer, who were also joint contributors to a monthly GB news column in US magazine *Linn's Stamp News*. Since 2002, however, David Alderfer has written this column alone.

The GB Stamps section contains a wealth of information for GB collectors, written in a friendly style. Of particular interest here is a group of pages comparing the Stoneham GB Stamp Catalogue with Gibbons GB Concise Catalogue using various criteria. Stoneham was a popular alternative to Gibbons some years ago, but was discontinued. Its strength was the claim that it used market prices. Now the Stoneham Catalogue has been redesigned, under new ownership, and this evaluation is relevant and timely. The site says it plans to publish a similar comparison of the new Stoneham versus Gibbons *Collect British Stamps* publication at a later date.

This section also features a Virtual GB Album. This interesting and well-illustrated part of the site covers two areas at present. The first is devoted to the pictorial regional issues. The second

www.gbstamps.com A sample copy of the *GBCC Chronicle*, journal of the GB Collectors Club, can be obtained by post from Larry Rosenblum, 1030 East El Camino Real, PMB 107, Sunnyvale CA 94087-3759 USA. The cost is \$2, or the equivalent in mint full-gum or self-adhesive US stamps.

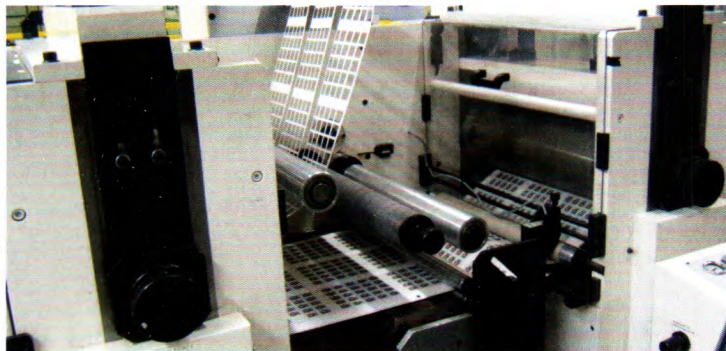
covers postal history and shows various items, from the pre-stamp period to the present, each with an interesting background story. Also to be found in this section are news items from Royal Mail which have been recorded on the site since 1998, which form a useful archive. There is also a listing called 'What's New' that enables users to see what has changed in all sections of the site since their last visit.

The GBCC claims that theirs is the only North American club for GB collectors. The Club issues a quarterly printed magazine called the *GBCC Chronicle*. Several articles from this publication have been reproduced on the site, and these offer a good indication of the range of material it covers. Over the years, the Editor of the magazine has interviewed many leading GB philatelists. A number of these conversations (in question and answer format) are included on the site and make fascinating reading. Another useful feature to be found on the GBCC pages is a listing of GB postage rates during the Machin period, from 1967 to date.

When I reviewed the composite site six years ago I finished by saying 'Any GB collector, regardless of his depth of knowledge, is sure to find a visit worthwhile, and will discover something of interest'. The passage of time has done nothing to alter my opinion of all three separate sections of the website today.

I WAS SORRY to read recently that the Philatelic Computing Study Group has now been disbanded. This American-based organisation, that I reviewed here in the September 2005 *Bulletin*, had been unable to find any members willing to undertake the administration of the group. Its magazine was especially useful for providing in-depth reviews of new philatelic software, and its passing will be missed ●

Dunstable's early Christmas Richard West at De La Rue



Stripping of the matrix from sheets of self-adhesive stamps. This is a meticulous operation to ensure that only the matrix is being removed, and none of the stamps.

CHRISTMAS comes early in Dunstable. Well before Easter, active work had begun at De La Rue (DLR) on printing the 2007 Christmas issue, and a few days after Easter the miniature sheets were completed. The millions of Christmas stamps required by Royal Mail each year mean that this is a major undertaking, requiring the resources at DLR for several months.

Being the world's largest commercial security printer, the company is well equipped to handle this task, and can call upon generations of experience. Thomas De La Rue founded the company in Guernsey in 1813; its first postage stamp was printed in 1855, and its first banknote five years later. The acquisition of Portals, manufacturers of currency paper, in 1995, gave DLR an unrivalled position in the production of banknotes. It now prints for around 150 countries, has a presence in no fewer than 30, employs 6200, and in fact prints all the Bank of England banknotes.

An issue like the Christmas stamps demands gravure printing, simply because the cylinders are far longer-lasting, and maintain a constant product over long runs. Hence the process is also used for British definitives. However, DLR does have the facility to print in offset-litho, and used the process for the Birds set issued in September.

As with any issue, the first task is to assess the design and determine the best approach to printing, particularly in relation to the colours to be used. Whilst some designs are still submitted as traditional artwork, increasingly material is being supplied electronically. Most designs can be re-

produced from a combination of the four 'process colours': magenta, cyan (blue), yellow and black. However, to recreate the design perfectly it might be necessary to use 'spot' colours, if not for all the colours used, then at least in part.

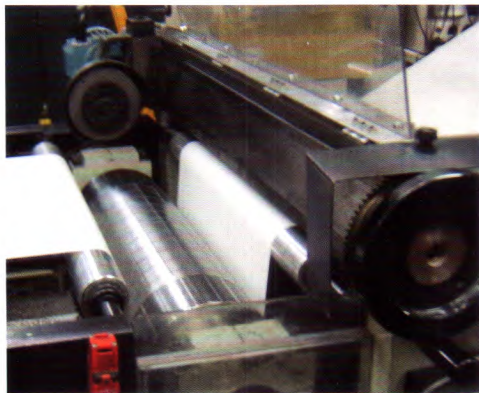
Either using the electronic design, or by scanning artwork, DLR's pre-press studio will build up the cylinder pattern for each colour used, having determined how many 'sheets' will be printed at each revolution of the printing cylinder, and adding the marginal markings. Each 'sheet' as printed may comprise, say, four 'sheets' or 'panes' for issue to post offices (in fact, the sheets supplied to post offices are half the size of those sold by Tallents House and philatelic outlets). A major change over recent years is that all this pre-press work is now done on-screen using computer technology. Gone are the step-and-repeat cameras, the acid etching, and the careful retouching to provide an acceptable printing cylinder. Today a perfect result is assured, although, as with most printers, DLR does not itself produce the cylinders, but electronically supplies all the necessary information to a specialist company.

However, the first requirement is not printing cylinders, but proofing cylinders. For individual stamps (as for Christmas), rather than se-tenant stamps (as with Birds), the separate values will be proofed together. This might be done on a separate proofing press, or the gravure press to be used for the actual stamps can be used. Either way, the customer, in this case Royal Mail, can check that the final product will be precisely as required. ►

In the case of Christmas, where there will be not only a requirement for sheets of stamps but also a miniature sheet and first day covers (more of which later), the likelihood is that all the values would be printed using the same colours. It may seem odd that the first item to be printed is the miniature sheet, but this is deliberate. Because it combines all the values of the Christmas issue, it enables the printers to check that all designs are being perfectly reproduced when actually printed. To this end, although the miniature sheets as supplied to Royal Mail are all on conventionally gummed paper, the sheet stamps will instead be printed on self-adhesive paper. As is appreciated, self-adhesive paper is thicker, so there needs to be this further check that the designs will also reproduce exactly when printed in sheets.

Gravure printing at DLR is undertaken on an ATN, originally installed at Byfleet by The House of Questa. As is known, DLR acquired the long-established security printer Harrison and Sons in 1997, and initially printed their stamps at High Wycombe. Later DLR also acquired Questa, and consequently moved their operations to Byfleet. Following a major rationalisation programme of its Global Services division, DLR Byfleet closed, and the stamp printing moved to Dunstable.

The ATN is a multi-unit gravure press, capable of printing not only in the required ink colours, but also adding the phosphor and perforating the stamps. Understandably, the strength of the phosphor signal is crucial for use with automatic sorting equipment. The signal is therefore monitored throughout the printing process, while samples are still analysed by Royal Mail at laboratories at Swindon. In the case of self-adhesive stamps, the perforating unit is not used. While much of the information that appears in the sheet margins is etched into the cylinder, additional details such as the sheet number and the date of printing are added using an ink jet during the pass through the press. (Incidentally, it has been Royal Mail's decision that a company's logo no longer appear in the sheet margins, it being felt that the cylinder numbers, in the case of DLR being prefixed by a 'D', provide sufficient indication of the printer of the stamps.) The paper is reel-fed into



Perforating the stamps as part of the main printing line.

the press: in fact, there are invariably two reels in place, so when the first is finished the second is automatically spliced in. After passing through the press, the printed reel might be guillotined into individual sheets, or re-reeled, depending on the final requirement.

Self-adhesive stamps require additional processing off the main printing line, and thus will need to be kept as reels. Although strictly unnecessary these days, customers still expect stamps to show perforations around the edges. To ease the removal of stamps from the backing paper, it is better that the stamp stands alone on the backing paper, and all surrounding stamp paper, the so-called 'matrix', is removed. So that individual stamps can be sold over post office counters, and handled by customers, it is necessary for the backing paper to be rouletted. These are all precise operations, particularly the first. Creating the perforations is achieved using die-cutting, which results in the die cutting through the stamp paper, but not penetrating the backing paper. If the die-cutting is not exactly to the correct depth, the silicone adhesive could seep, which would be totally unacceptable. The first operation is the die-cutting, after which the matrix is stripped away. This again is a meticulous operation to ensure it is just the matrix that is being removed, and none of the stamps. The process is carefully monitored and if it is detected that a stamp has been stripped away, then not only is the faulty sheet ejected, but also



The ATN press at De La Rue.

the sheets either side. Finally, the backing paper is rouletted, and the reels are guillotined into individual sheets.

Christmas of course not only means stamps in sheets; many millions are also sold in booklets. In 2001 the first self-adhesive Christmas stamps were issued, in a square format larger than the size of the standard definitives. As these would not fit the size of standard booklets, it was DLR that came up with the concept of a 'concertina' as a way of offering Christmas stamps in a compact form. However, upon the introduction of Pricing in Proportion (PIP) in 2006, Royal Mail decided it would save confusion if the Christmas stamps were the same size as the respective definitives. Consequently the booklets are likewise now in the standard format.

The booklets are still printed on the ATN press, but the reel is turned during production, enabling the stamps, and the decorative design that appears down the right-hand border, to be printed on one side, and the outer covers on the other. Again, die-cutting and matrix stripping is undertaken separately. Retaining the decorative strip increases the skill needed in removing the matrix.

In the case of booklets, further operations are required, namely adding the fold marks, folding the books, then clear-wrapping the books in batches of 50 with a group of 25 books in opposite directions, so that the front cover is visible on both sides of the pack.

Definitive stamps However important the Christmas issue is each year, it is only part of the work done by DLR for Royal Mail. For some years the definitive stamps have been printed by the company (the values up to £1 were previously printed by Harrison and Sons). The printing is as for the Christmas stamps, except that the perforating will take place on line. Unless coils are being produced, the reels will be guillotined into sheets after printing and perforating.

Stamps needed for coils are naturally kept in the reels, with the leaders and tailers being glued across the full width of the reel at the appropriate places, before the reels are guillotined into individual coils.

Mention has been made of the booklets that come off the production line, but prestige stamp books require much more individual treatment. While the panes of stamps might be printed in gravure, the interleaving panes will be produced on the litho press. It is essential that all the panes match, so as to produce the perfect product when assembled into the finished books. The panes and covers are hand-stitched, and the spine tape is applied before finally being guillotined into individual books.

Naturally with security printing, careful control has to be maintained of paper stock throughout the production process. To ensure that every aspect of the process is working smoothly, DLR will often use a 'test' paper in the initial stages. However this, and all the paper used, is strictly accounted for: the printed sheets, for example, are counted using sheet counting equipment.

While DLR uses sophisticated camera inspection systems throughout the process of printing stamps, visual checks are also undertaken of the finished products to monitor the quality of the product. So, when you come to look forward to Christmas, and you are happily affixing special stamps on your greetings cards, pause for a moment to consider the months of work and years of expertise that have gone into their production. And spare a thought for all those who work at DLR in Dunstable – having been handling Christmas stamps over so many months, does it dampen the festive spirit? ●

Cover corner



A postmark for the 40th anniversary of the launch of the QE2, used at the Scotland & Northern Ireland Special Handstamp Centre on 20 September.



TWO INTERESTING covers this month. The first, submitted by David Clarke, is an official OHMS envelope posted on 21 November 1947, the day after the wedding of Princess Elizabeth to Prince Philip (now The Queen and Duke of Edinburgh), and carries an Official Paid version of the 'EP' wedding bells slogan commemorating their marriage. The C & E coding on the envelope and address label indicates it originated from an office of the Customs & Excise.

The second cover, sent in by Peter Miles, was posted on board RMS *Queen Elizabeth 2*, which has been in the news recently as it is to be taken out

of service and become a floating hotel. The cover bears the 5d QE2 stamp issued in January 1969 cancelled at Santa Cruz, Tenerife, on its preview cruise. The cover bears strikes of the QE2 'Posted on board/Preview Cruise' and 'Posted on board/High Seas mail' cachets. Mr Miles also supplied photocopies of other QE2 cachets, and a postcard of the ship. A special postmark (top) was used at the Scotland & Northern Ireland Special Handstamp Centre on 20 September 2007 to mark the 40th anniversary of the launch of the ship. (This postmark was announced in the *British Postmark Bulletin*, 31 August 2007) •

Posting boxes

Four boxes are featured this month. The first (right) is a Penfold design, to be found at the Bunratty Castle & Folk Park in Co Clare, Ireland. On the left below is a George V lamp box in Burren Road, situated about halfway between Dromara and Ballynahinch in Co Down. Next (centre) is a box in the wall of what was once a milking shed for Hall Farm in the hamlet of Owthorpe in the Vale of Belvoir, in Nottinghamshire. The building has now been converted into apartments but the box remains in its original position with the VR cipher and POST OFFICE lettering quite discernible. The last photo is of a Victorian wall box located in the outside wall of Hinton Hall, Herefordshire. The collection plate indicates the box is emptied daily (Monday-Saturday) at 11am.

Our thanks to Peter Fowke, Anne Coulter, Peter Hancock and Dr L P Thomas for submitting their photographs.

Readers interested in posting boxes are reminded of the existence of the Letter Box Study Group – see www.lbsg.org for details •



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Forces PO The Forces Post Office and Philatelic Bureau has recently moved from Inglis Barracks, London NW7. The new address is: British Forces Post Office, West End Road, Ruislip, Middlesex, HA4 6DQ •

Isle of Man Christmas stamps This year's Manx Christmas stamps are on the theme of 'Hark the Herald Angels Sing' and were designed by local artist Julia Ashby-Smyth. The five stamp set costs £3.33 or £4.08 in a presentation pack. They were printed in sheets of 20, self-adhesive. Enquiries: Isle of Man Philatelic Bureau, PO Box 10M, Douglas, Isle of Man IM99 1PB, or by e-mail to stamps@iompost.com •

says this is to meet readers' wishes for listing 'the interesting and attractive issues from the early years of the present reign'. For this edition, more of the pre-1952 illustrations are now in colour, and prices have been carefully revised in line with the current market for both major rarities as well as more modestly priced material. However there are only limited price changes for GB stamps since publication of the GB *Concise Catalogue* 2007 edition, but some significant changes to prices of GB Used Abroad and to GB stamps used in specific countries, eg Jamaica, listed under those country names. The new catalogue is available from SG Strand Shop and by mail order from SG in Ringwood (01425 472363), price £69.95 •

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Competitions Win £100 in two easy-to-enter competitions



August identify The detail is from the 4d Machin definitive stamp of 1967. The winner was K Beaney of Essex.

August knowledge Answers: 1) David Gentleman; 2) Croydon; 3) 1968. The winner was K Bowler of Canada.

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 (addressed to either November Identify competition or November Knowledge com-

A new range of Smilers sheets for Christmas



The Christmas Generic sheet was shown in last month's *Bulletin*. The 2nd class Smiler is shown on page 74 of this issue. For details of the Smilers service see the leaflet/order form in post offices, phone 0845 074 2000 UK (+44 131 316 7489 overseas), or visit www.royalmail.com/smilers

This Christmas you can have your image printed on the labels of three new Smilers sheets, containing 20 1st class (£13.50), 20 2nd class (£8.50) or ten 78p stamps for overseas mail (£13.50). Discounts apply to orders for two or more of the same sheet – enquire for details.

In addition you can order a Generic sheet containing eight 1st class, eight 2nd class and four 78p Christmas stamps with pre-printed labels, price £8.30.

All four sheets contain the Angels Christmas stamps, a theme chosen to celebrate the 300th anniversary of the birth of Charles Wesley, author of the original version of the popular carol *Hark! the Herald Angels Sing*.

Handling charges: £1.45 UK, £1.55 Europe, £2.15 elsewhere.

Royal Mail

Tallents House, 21 South Gyle Crescent, Edinburgh EH12 9PB
Telephone orders: UK 08457 641 641; overseas +44 131 316 7483. Order online at: www.royalmail.com/shop



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Late news

Bulletin office change of address Please note that on 5 November we are moving from Royal Mail Headquarters at 148 Old Street, London EC1. Our new address will be: British Philatelic Bulletin, Royal Mail Letters, 35-50 Rathbone Place, London W1T 1HQ •

Royal Mail update & corrections Please note that the Lest We Forget miniature sheet (8 November) has been printed in litho, not gravure as originally intended and as announced in the August *Bulletin*. The new 'Valentine' stamp book to be issued in January will contain four 1st class definitives and two 'Love' stamps, not five definitives and one Love stamp as stated here in October (p63).

Incorrect answers were given in the July competition results in the October *Bulletin*. The answer to the Identify competition was World of Invention Locomotive stamp; answers for Knowledge were 1) M Cook, 2) the British Postal Museum & Archive, 3) 1980.

To clarify some information in earlier *Bulletins* – the gutter of the Sea Life sheets is horizontal, yielding vertical gutter pairs (November 2006 *Bulletin*), and the list of definitives in Forthcoming issues and withdrawals (April 2007) includes a 69p value in error for 54p. In December we said the gutter pair format for the World of Invention stamps was to be advised: the pairs are vertical •

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Bulletin back issues Russell Shaw offers a run of the *Bulletin* from September 1971 to January 2007 in *Bulletin* binders and boxes, also reprint in book form of volumes 1 and 2, to anyone willing to collect from the South Essex area. Contact him on 01268 491945 •

2010 stamp programme The Stamp Programme Manager is grateful to all the *Bulletin* readers who voted for subjects on the form sent out with the September issue. All of the forms went in a draw, and Yearbooks are being sent to: J Jones, Staffs; B Lindup, W Sussex; I Hartog, London; Dr D Smith, Devon; and R Meijer, Netherlands •

Equiano exhibition One of the 1st class stamps in our Abolition of Slavery issue (22 March 2007) features Olaudah Equiano, an enslaved African, sailor, war veteran, writer, and abolitionist. Readers will be interested to know that an exhibition of his extraordinary life is now on show, at the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, Chamberlain Square, Birmingham B3 3DH until 13 January 2008. Enquiries: 0121 303 1966, or see www.bmag.org.uk or www.equiano.org •

New SG catalogue The 2008 edition of Stanley Gibbons' *Commonwealth & British Empire Stamps* now covers the period 1840 to 1970; previous editions ended in 1952. The Editor, Hugh Jefferies, says this is to meet readers' wishes for listing 'the interesting and attractive issues from the early years of the present reign'. For this edition, more of the pre-1952 illustrations are now in colour, and prices have been carefully revised in line with the current market for both major rarities as well as more modestly priced material. However there are only limited price changes for GB stamps since publication of the GB *Concise Catalogue* 2007 edition, but some significant changes to prices of GB Used Abroad and to GB stamps used in specific countries, eg Jamaica, listed under those country names. The new catalogue is available from SG Strand Shop and by mail order from SG in Ringwood (01425 472363), price £69.95 •

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