

British Philatelic Bulletin

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Editorial

In this edition of the Philatelic Bulletin we are pleased to include the second 'Barry Robinson Column'. Due to lack of space in the August issue when the column started, we were unable to introduce it fully, and we are taking this opportunity to rectify the situation.

Despite rumours to the contrary, Barry Robinson is no relation to the mythical Mrs T Robinson of 200 Manorbier Road, ILKESTON, whose name appears on the Post Office First Day Covers! He is in fact, the Design Adviser to the Post Office, being responsible for all aspects of design within the business. His column will be devoted to the design involvement in the production of postage stamps and all other philatelic items, providing a fascinating insight into the behind-the-scenes activities.

We would like to thank all the readers who kindly wrote to us in response to the July editorial. Their comments about the positioning of cylinder numbers on sheets of stamps have all been noted. The general consensus of opinion was that the existing arrangements are satisfactory from a collecting point of view, and we can confirm that there are no imminent changes.

Many readers have kindly sent in photographs of interesting postboxes over the months, and we would like to thank them for their interest. We now have sufficient material for our immediate needs until we conclude the series, and must unfortunately decline any further contributions. A particular thank you to the Letter Box Study Group for all their invaluable help and advice.

CHARLES GOWEN

All the Fun of the Fair

The 'British Fairs' stamps issued on 4 October 1983, illustrate colourful aspects of a British tradition that has flourished for centuries.

During the summer season as many as 200 fairs are held in Britain each week: from the small country fair with one or two rides and coconut shys to the major events like Newcastle Town Moor, Kirkcaldy Links and Cardiff. The glittering, transient world of the fairground has woven its own special magic for centuries. But the forefathers of today's pleasure fairs were once of historic importance as vital centres of the nation's trade.

By the Middle Ages, the major part of British commerce depended on such great fairs as Stourbridge in Cambridgeshire. Founded in 1211, its hops and wool drew merchants from all over Europe. In turn, English merchants journeyed as far afield as the fairs of Lyons, Leipzig and Odessa to bring back rich hauls of furs, spices and silks.

While some fairs dealt in a general trading surplus of foodstuffs and luxury goods, others attracted traders of one commodity. Drove of over

20,000 geese once converged on the Old Nottingham Goose Fair and for centuries, St Bartholomew's Fair in London was England's main cloth fair. In the autumn months, 'Mop' or 'Statute' fairs like Stratford-upon-Avon, were held exclusively for the hiring of agricultural or domestic labour.

From the very earliest times, dancers, jugglers and tumblers had followed the fairs, attracted by the fat purses of contented merchants seeking entertainment. Whatever the ostensible trading purpose of a fair, entertainment soon became the chief attraction in a society where organised amusement was so rare.

To the tumblers and jesters of the Middle Ages the 17th century added conjurors, Punch and Judy, waxworks, freaks and wild beast shows. In the 18th century the restrictions on theatrical licenses brought unemployed actors and their companies to fairground booths.

Soon the serious business of a fair could be dispensed with in one or two days and the rest of the



chartered time given over to fun and revels. An 18th century writer visiting St Bartholomew's Fair was shocked to discover:

"a mere Carnival, a Season for the utmost Disorder and Debauchery, by reason of the Booths for Drinking, Music, Dancing, Stage-Plays, Drolls, Lotteries, Gaming, Raffling and What-Not!" In short, all the fun of the fair!

The 19th century was the heyday of the peep-shows and menageries. Singing mermaids, six-legged dogs, talking unicorns and learned pigs competed with bearded giantesses for the pennies of a happily gullible public avid for lavish spectacle. But as fairground entertainments reached their most extravagant style, the inexorable progress of the industrial revolution menaced them with extinction.

The arrival of easy rail transport to towns with market halls, shops and warehouses, full of consumer goods of mass factory production, diminished the trade revenues of the fairs. Increasing wealth created music halls and theatres in every small town. Circuses and menageries broke away and travelled separately or set up in permanent buildings, and a more sophisticated public were no longer as easily amused by jugglers and freak shows.

With the fortunes of the travelling fairs at their lowest ebb, in 1865 the first steam-powered roundabout appeared at Aylsham Fair in Norfolk. This encouraged the experiments of Frederick Savage, a Norfolk ironmaster who was literally to turn fairground fortunes around. By 1870, Savage had supplied three steam-powered 'rides' and the mechanised revolution had begun.

Revolving 'Velocipedes' and the shining horses of the 'Gallopers' won back the crowds and saved the fairs with a combination of engineering and fantasy: scientific invention turned to an Aladdin's Cave of colours, lights and music.

Fairs today are as good as their rides, with old favourites like the 'Gallopers' and 'Noah's Ark' standing cheek by jowl with the modern myths of spacetravel of the 'Jets', 'Skyliners' and 'Moon Rockets'. Many new rides are imported from the USA and Europe but the British made rides are still prized for their elaborate traditional decoration and workmanship and British 'Dodgems' are exported all over the world.

The yearly calendar of fairs begins for the 20,000 strong close-knit and independent society of the showmen, their families and employees on 14





February with the Kings Lynn Mart. Travelling in their magnificent vans and trucks, sideshows, stalls and rides come together and disperse throughout the year until 'back-end' time in November and the major Christmas Fairs.

A few fairs on the circuit still retain traces of their old trading heritage, chiefly for the sale of livestock and produce. But the traditional entertainment booths or 'joints' now take second place to the rides. 'Rounduns' or 'Hoop-las' fill in space between the rides with games of chance and the 'Side-stuff' booths of traditional games of skill and precision offer a gaudy treasure trove of dolls, sweets and ornaments — the showmen's 'swag'.

Fairs are more popular than ever in contrast to the drab environment of modern city centres. Agricultural shows and specialist trade exhibitions may have taken over the original role of the fair but the pleasure fair lives on. Whatever modern technology may bring in terms of ever more spectacular 'rides', the traditional fair with its magic glitter, noise and bustle, rides and organ music and flamboyant showmanship is sure to survive as part of the British heritage.

SUZANNE WOLSTENHOLME

Special Handstamping

The Post Office has recently received a number of commemorative covers with the appropriate stamps incorrectly affixed. In an effort to assist collectors when preparing their covers for subsequent cancelling, we offer the following advice.

1. Handstamps are used to cancel valid postage

stamps affixed to bona-fide items of mail only.

2. Postage stamps must be affixed at the right hand top corner of the address side of covers/envelopes. Where more than one stamp is affixed, they should be side by side in a horizontal line across the length of the envelope from the top right hand corner of the face side.

3. Items will not be accepted for special handstamping if they have an adhesive label or printed design resembling a postage stamp or postal impression.

4. Items submitted for cancellation must not bear previous postmarks.

5. Only those new commemorative or definitive stamps issued on the day in question qualify for a First Day of Issue handstamp.

6. Postcards with postage stamps affixed to their picture side are not normally accepted for postal transmission or cancellation.

7. Maximum cards — these are either the P.H.Q. cards for a particular commemorative stamp issue or privately produced cards of a subject-related design which exceptionally can have the new postage stamps affixed to the picture side and be cancelled on the First Day of Issue only. (This applies to the British Philatelic Bureau handstamp, first day of issue handstamps, and privately or officially sponsored handstamps only).

8. All items submitted for special handstamping (including first day of issue) must be fully addressed. Unaddressed items will be refused cancellation.

9. All items submitted for special pictorial philatelic counter (or other) handstamps must bear 3p in addition to the normal postage — ie a minimum of 15½p per item.

10. Under the reposting facility, collectors can post their covers locally if they wish to receive a special handstamp that is only available elsewhere in the country. Providing the outer cover is postmarked on or before the date of the special handstamp required, the enclosed philatelic items will duly qualify for the handstamp in question.

Christmas Pictorial Aerogramme

The 1983 aerogramme illustrating a 'Christmas Flora' theme set against a snow covered background, is designed by Harry Titcombe. It will be on sale from 16 November, price 30p, of which 26p is postage. Printed by McCorquodale Printers Ltd the aerogramme has two phosphor bars.

Stamp Subjects – Striking the Right Balance

The Barry Robinson Column

Each year the Post Office receives literally hundreds of suggestions for future stamp subjects from people in all walks of life as well as from organisations and government bodies. These suggestions cover a very wide range of subjects indeed – from moths to famous Cornishmen; dance band leaders to pop stars; Morris dancing to Punch and Judy shows; and from Arthurian legends to windmills.

The Post Office always welcomes suggestions but it does raise the question of how far popular demand should dictate policy on the choice of stamp subjects. In any one year, of course, only a fraction of the suggestions received can be implemented anyway for purely practical reasons.

Recent market research by the Post Office was very revealing on which subjects interest stamp collectors and casual collectors alike. Birds, for instance, topped the popular poll, followed closely by flowers, ships and architecture. Famous people and political events had the unenviable distinction of coming bottom of the league.

Market research has a role to play in helping to define our stamp issuing policy but it does have to be weighed against other factors. If we were to take the findings of such research too literally, the chances

are we would get ourselves trapped in a so-called formula for success which might work for a short time but, ultimately, would severely limit our range of options. The danger in those circumstances would be that the essential ingredient – a visual change of pace – that makes and keeps British stamps interesting would be stifled.

What then is our policy on stamp subjects and how do we decide which ones to include in a particular year's programme?

Britain's first special stamp issue in 1924 celebrated the British Empire Exhibition. From 1924 until 1961 however, special stamp issues were rare events marking only events of outstanding national or international importance, royal and postal events and anniversaries. During the early sixties this policy began to broaden and in 1964 was formalised in the following criteria:

to celebrate events of national and international importance; to commemorate important anniversaries; to reflect the British contribution to world affairs including the arts and science; to extend public patronage to the arts by encouraging the development of minuscule art.

Whilst these principles are still relevant today and we can claim to have kept faithfully to the spirit of the original objectives over the years, our overall aim in deciding upon a particular year's programme is to produce a varied and balanced programme of subjects which reflect the British way of life, are of popular interest and are suitable for translation into attractive stamp designs. It is important to remember that, while the choice of subjects rests solely with the Post Office, the advice on the design interpretation is given by the Stamp Advisory Committee.

A nation's stamps are important ambassadors for a country – our stamps, for instance, may be the only visible evidence that many people abroad see of Britain and of the British way of life. Every stamp we issue is an opportunity to demonstrate that our standards are high. Artistic excellence and printing quality are, therefore, of vital importance.

Judging how high our standards of design and printing are compared with those of other countries is never easy and I prefer to leave the verdict to the judgement of those who view the subject on a global rather than a national scale. One recent judgement was the annual world referendum conducted by the highly-respected 'Il Collezionista Italia Filatelica'.

Each year more than 40 countries submit an entry for this competition. Last year's entry – the Harlequin stamp in the British Theatre set – was voted number one choice by readers throughout the world. It was an achievement of which everyone



involved in the design and production of the British Theatre issue was immensely proud.

Our aim in issuing stamps is not only to maintain the highest standards of design and printing but also to ensure that British stamps reflect our national heritage, our way of life and our achievements. That is the way other serious stamp-issuing countries view their own philatelic operations.

Producing colourful stamps which do not reflect that purpose undermines the integrity of stamp collecting, not only for the serious collector but, ultimately, for the public at large. Thankfully, we have resisted the temptation to follow the example of some administrations which seem to issue stamps commemorating everything from Mickey Mouse to men on the Moon.

The present Post Office policy for a year's programme averages seven or eight issues — this has proved to be the optimum number because of the organisational logistics involved in design and production as well as the pressures new stamp issues cause for Post Office counters. It is also an acknowledgement that, since collectors like to have one of everything, every effort should be made to keep the cost of stamp collecting reasonable.

The planning for a new stamp often starts five years in advance. At that stage, a great deal of research is undertaken into anniversaries of all kinds scheduled to fall in the year in question. Obviously, there are occasions, Royal Weddings for instance, where the timescale has to be considerably shorter.

This research is very painstaking since the objective is to produce a short list of subjects which are deemed worthy of a stamp or a set of stamps. The criteria by which possible themes are judged fall into four broad categories. Is the subject of sufficient national importance? Does it have a uniquely British aspect? Does it offer interesting design opportunities? And does it provide the right balance in the overall stamp programme on a year-to-year basis — in other words, does it give us the opportunity for a visual change of pace?

Looking back at stamps we have issued over recent years, it can be seen that there is a pattern. Broadly speaking, each year's programme will attempt to cover the arts, history, science, flora and fauna, transport, architecture and industry in one way or another. What sustains collectors' interest is how we decide to cover those subjects; how much continuity we maintain with previous years and what degree of innovation we introduce. That is what I mean by visual change of pace.

Although the choice of stamp themes conforms with an overall pattern, there is no set formula used to arrive at the final short list for a particular year's programme. In any one year there may be a large number of anniversaries and centenaries worthy of consideration with little to choose between them. Often it is only when we examine the design possibilities that a more clear-cut decision can be made. For it is a fact that some subjects offer greater visual scope than others. Take votes for women — a significant subject, undoubtedly, but rather difficult when you want to sustain visual variety over a set of four stamps.

Then there are themes which, by themselves, might not have made the final short list if it had not been for the fact that they could be combined with others to provide an excellent composite of Lord Baden-Powell's birth and the 75th anniversary of the Scouting Movement. UNICEF had also declared 1982 the Year of Scouting. And 1983 happens to be the centenary of the Boys' Brigade. The collective strength of all these was to add weight to the argument for a set of stamps, especially when the subject was broadened to Youth Organisations.

Many new issues have a similar history to the Youth Organisations stamps. The 1982 British Theatre set, for example, owes a lot to the fact that a number of events and celebrations could be combined to form a very interesting subject. The year marked the opening of the Barbican Centre; the 250th anniversaries of the original Theatre Royal, Covent Garden, and of the dramatist John Gay; the 150th anniversary of the refurbishment of the Strand Theatre; the 100th anniversary of the opening of the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre at Stratford. As a result, a set of stamps on the theatre was a popular choice from the earliest planning stages.

A set of stamps highlighting the history of British Theatre also fitted in well with the CEPT Europa subject for 1982 — 'Historical Events'. Along with many other European countries in recent years, we have issued one new set on the CEPT title each year.

It is never easy to strike the right balance in a particular year's programme but we do try very hard to achieve it. Whilst our final choice of subjects is unlikely to satisfy absolutely everyone — that would be impossible anyway — we do find that our decisions receive a large measure of goodwill from the stamp collecting fraternity and the public at large. Our aim will be to maintain that blend of continuity, variety and innovation so that we can go on producing stamps which we can all be proud to call British.

National Postal Museum News

Two new NPM picture postcards will be available during the month of October. To coincide with a new temporary exhibition, '25 Years of British 'Regional' Definitive Stamps' to open on 26 October 1983, a new picture card (SS 18) will be on sale.

From 10 October 1983 a new presentation of the R.M. Phillips Collection for the 1983-1984 season will be staged, and to complement it, a picture postcard (SS 19) illustrating the William Wyon City Medal of 1837 and two 'penny black' stamps and two 'twopenny blue' stamps of 1840 will go on sale.

The cards will cost 20p each; bulk orders for 100 to 249 will receive a discount of 10%, and for 250 or more a discount of 20%. A handling charge of 17p applies to orders of up to £18 in value, all orders in excess of £18 will be despatched by registered post and a handling charge of £1.17 will apply.

Book Reviews

Registered Mail of the British Isles

By James A. Mackay.

Price: £12.00 (UK)
£15.60 (O'seas)

This book, with its 395 pages and nearly 1900 illustrations, is a major work of research and covers a longer period than many students will credit. The first reference dates back to 1556 and the first illustration to 1787.

Most standard works on Registration trace the service back only to 1841 the year which saw the introduction of an Inland Registration Postal service, thus ignoring the Irish service which was originated in 1809 and the well organised foreign services which date from the middle of the eighteenth century.

Mr. Mackay is far too knowledgeable a postal historian not to appreciate that 'documentation' and 'registration' are but two aspects of the same service. He speedily disposes of the argument that registration must equal compensation and points out that the transmission of diamonds from Amsterdam to London led the British Foreign Office to interest itself in the question of documentation as early as 1814.

From the evidence now available it appears that the Foreign Office had itself been recording packets

from abroad for more than fifty years and simply wished to devolve the task upon the Post Office which resisted on the ground that to do so would inevitably delay the movement of mails.

Why that resistance prevailed for so long and how it was finally overcome are clearly described and copiously illustrated in this fine work of scholarship by a recognised expert. This volume is an example to all postal historians who aspire to make the study of our postal services both eminently readable and absorbingly interesting.

The Postal History Annual 1983

By James A. Mackay Price: UK £3.50 O'seas £4.50
(post paid)

Mr. Mackay is the author of a large number of very comprehensive reference works covering all aspects of postal history with special emphasis on postal markings and their use.

His expertise in this field is undeniable and anything bearing his name is certain to be read with interest. It may also be quoted with confidence for it will have been scrupulously researched.

This is the fifth edition of his Postal History Annual, a yearly updating of the contents of no less than five major volumes. In it Mr. Mackay shares with his readers any new information which has come to light during the past twelve months while sparing them the expense of purchasing revised editions of the main works.

Very commendable too in the light of today's high cost of printing. This annual is an interesting read in its own right and invaluable to owners of the main works.

Scottish Twin-Arc Postmarks with Stampers Numbers 1894 to 1963

By James A. Mackay

Price: £3.50 (UK)
£4.50 (O'seas)

This book is a detailed study of Scottish 'combined' stamps, the name officially used to describe stamps which show dates and place-names which include concentric obliterating bars. From the early 1880's many of these stamps also included a time element. All are of particular interest to Scottish students of postmarks since the proposal to include time slugs originated at Edinburgh.

Stampers were persons of some standing in postal sorting offices in days of yore. In a number of larger offices they could command the use of one particular stamp, something which continued right into the service of people only recently retired. Many a retired inspector will still tell you that he could tell from the clarity or otherwise of a 'strike'

not only who had made it, but whether the user had partaken of refreshment before doing so!

Some notion of the comprehensive nature of Mr. Mackay's 53 page study may be gained from learning that it illustrates no fewer than 821 examples of twin arc stamps. Moreover it lists and identifies variations of usage for many of them. All in all it will prove indispensable to the serious student and of very great interest to the average collector.

The three books by James A. Mackay are available from him at 11, Newall Terrace, DUMFRIES DG1 1LN Scotland.

Stanley Gibbons Stamp Collectors Diary — 1984

The *Stanley Gibbons Stamp Collectors Diary* for 1984 — produced by leading diary publishers William Collins of Glasgow — is now available.

This diary contains over 60 pages of philatelic information that every collector, experienced or novice, will find interesting and useful.

One can read about the development of the postage stamp, the complexities of designing modern postage stamps and why thematic collecting is so popular.

In 1924 the British Post Office issued their first special stamps commemorating the Empire Exhibition at Wembley. Some of the best of the many commemorative stamps of the last 60 years are recalled in the *Stamp Design* section. Helpful information is given to enable collectors to get the best from Post Office philatelic services; the section *Collecting First Day Covers* will be of interest to an ever-growing number of collectors.

Notes on the major philatelic clubs and societies are included together with a review of current philatelic magazines and details of the wide range of Gibbons catalogues. Specially prepared tables are provided for collectors to list their 'wants' and to record their philatelic purchases.

The *Philatelic Equipment* section offers advice on the extensive range of philatelic accessories now available. The *Glossary of Philatelic Terms* will be of assistance to those who find philatelic jargon a 'foreign language'.

The philatelic aspects of London — centre of the British and international stamp world — are described in the *Philatelic London* section which has been designed for the philatelically-minded tourist. There is a special section outlining the treasures and facilities of the National Postal Museum.

The *Stanley Gibbons Stamp Collectors Diary* also contains the traditional diary information including London underground and Inter-City railway maps.

Illustrated in colour throughout. Retail price: £2.50. (U.K.).

The Bristol Post Office in the Age of Rowland Hill 1837-1864

By Daniel Briggs.

One of a series of studies published by the Bristol Branch of the Historical Association, this excellent little monograph would make a useful addition to any postal historian's library. Although seen mainly through Bristol's eyes, the story told touches upon several aspects of Hill's postal reform and the impact this had on postal services generally. It can be obtained from the Department of History, University of Bristol, Wills Memorial Building, Queens Road, BRISTOL, BS8 1RJ. Price 90p (plus 17 p&p).

Posting Boxes



No. 52. The Edward VII posting box illustrated this month is situated in the Highlands of Scotland at the Aberdeenshire end of the LAIRIG-GHRU pass which runs for about 28 miles through the Cairngorm Mountains. The box serves only a few houses. Our thanks for the photograph are due to Mr. J. Macpherson of Old Coulsdon in Surrey.

Variation to Existing Definitives

A litho version of ACP (alternative coated paper) has been produced by Harrisons for print quality trials by Waddingtons Ltd. The 16p Scottish definitive stamp has been chosen for this exercise and will be available from all philatelic counters and the British Philatelic Bureau from 2 November 1983. These stamps are not regarded as new issues and no official first day facilities will be offered.

6. John Travers Cornwell, V.C.

On the afternoon of 31 May 1916 the biggest naval battle of the First World War was fought off the coast of Jutland, Denmark, when 149 British vessels under Jellicoe and Beatty encountered 110 German ships under Von Scheer. The engagement was not decisive, Britain losing 14 and Germany 11 ships, but the German fleet returned to its base and did not again challenge the British fleet in a naval engagement.

Admiral Sir David Beatty's division of the British Grand Fleet, which comprised battle-cruisers, battleships, light cruisers and destroyers, was sweeping the North Sea ahead of the main portion of the fleet, under Sir John Jellicoe, when one of the light cruisers, the *Galatea*, signalled 'enemy vessels in sight' and at once the chase began, Beatty hoping to decoy the Germans to the north where Jellicoe's ships had already turned towards the battle zone. Rear-Admiral Hood, steaming in advance with his flagship *Invincible*, saw the flashes of distant gun-fire and ordered the cruiser *Chester*, under Captain Lawson, to sail ahead and locate the position of the ships. Soon she was in the midst of the battle and from the bridge Lawson saw the figure of a boy standing by his gun, waiting in vain for instructions through his earphones. The boy was John Travers Cornwell who was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross. The citation read:

'Boy, First Class, John Travers Cornwell, V.C. Died June 2nd 1916. Mortally wounded early in the action, he remained standing alone at a most exposed post quietly awaiting orders, until the end of the battle, with the gun's crew dead and wounded all round him. Age, 16½ years'. Cornwell was buried with full naval honours at Manor Park cemetery, London.



Sanctioned by Censor, Pressa Literata.

round him. Age, 16½ years'. Cornwell was buried with full naval honours at Manor Park cemetery, London.

MALCOLM JAMES

International Garden Festival – Liverpool 1984

As part of the government's commitment to Urban Renewal, an International Garden Festival (IGF) will be held in Liverpool from 2 May-14 October 1984. The Post Office will be helping to sponsor the exhibition and will also be actively involved in participating.

A set of four stamps will be issued in April 1984 as part of the 1984 commemorative stamp pro-

gramme. One of the stamps in the set will in fact feature Liverpool. A special philatelic and postal history display will be produced by the Post Office and will be on show at the exhibition. In addition a full Post Office philatelic service will be made available on or adjacent to the festival site. Further details will be announced later.

1984 Special Stamp Programme and Issue Dates

Heraldry (4 stamps) 17 January

depicting the Arms of the following: College of Arms: Richard III: The Earl Marshal and City of London

Cattle (5 stamps) 6 March

depicting Highland Cow: Chillingham Wild Bull: Hereford Bull: Welsh Black Bull: Irish Moiled Cow

Urban Renewal (4 stamps) 10 April

depicting Liverpool Garden Festival: Millburngate Centre Durham: Arnolfini Gallery Bristol Docks: Commercial Street, Redevelopment, Perth

Europa (4 stamps) 15 May

depicting a symbolic Bridge on two values: Goddess Europa on two values

The Greenwich Meridian (4 stamps) 26 June

depicting The Prime Meridian: Royal Greenwich Observatory: Navigational Map: Telescope

The Royal Mail (5 stamps) 31 July

depicting Bath Mail Coach: Exeter Mail Coach: Norwich Mail Coach: Holyhead to Liverpool Mail Coach: Edinburgh Mail Coach

The British Council (4 stamps) 25 September

depicting Asian Construction Site: British Orchestra in Greece: Medical Help to Africa: British Library in the Middle East

Christmas (5 stamps) 20 November

Subjects to be announced later

New Stamps Issue Day

Readers will have noticed that the stamps issue days for 1984 have been changed from Wednesday to Tuesday. This is because changing patterns of business mean that post offices are not so busy on

Tuesdays and fewer offices operate half day closing. It is hoped that the change will improve the service for collectors.

Christmas Stamps Issue 16 November 1983

Five special stamps will be issued on 16 November, the theme of which is, 'Goodwill at Christmas.' Each stamp will illustrate a dove, symbolising peace and goodwill.

The subject and denominations are: Christmas Post (12½p); The Three Kings (16p); World at Peace (20½p); Light of Christmas (28p); Christmas Dove (31p).

First Day Cover Service

A first day cover will be available, price 14p, and the following services will be provided, including a choice of two handstamps — 'Philatelic Bureau, Edinburgh,' and 'Bethlehem, Llandeilo, Dyfed.'

SERVICE 'A'

The official Post Office cover will be addressed to the correct postal address of the destination required and given all five stamps. The cover will be cancelled with either postmark and despatched.

SERVICE 'B'

Customers own pre-addressed covers bearing the correct postal address, will be given the full set of stamps, cancelled and despatched. The following charges will apply.

	Inland	Overseas
Service 'A'	£1.53	£1.33
Deposit account customers	£1.48	£1.29
Service 'B'	£1.39	£1.21

Customers who specifically require the Bethlehem postmark, should send their orders to the Head Postmaster (Philatelic Section) LLANELLI, Dyfed, SA15 1AA (Direct Giro Transfer account number 405 6515.) All orders for cancellations other than Bethlehem only, should be sent to the British Philatelic Bureau, 20 Brandon Street, EDINBURGH, EH3 5TT to arrive not later than 7 November 1983.

The 1894 Reply Stamp Essay

One of the lesser-known items on sale at Post Office counters today is the international reply coupon. While this is an accepted method for prepaying return postage from abroad, such a system did not operate during the early years of the Universal Postal Union. Following the Vienna Congress of the UPU, the second secretary of the General Post Office and Controller of Packet Services, H Buxton Forman, wrote a memorandum proposing the introduction of a reply-paid stamp for overseas mail, following the lead of the reply-paid postcard. Subsequently the Post Office authorised De La Rue & Co in 1894 to print two sheets from the plate of the current 1½d stamp, minus the value tablet. The gem from the Reginald M Phillips Collection this month looks at these particularly 'Victorian' essays.

The sheets printed by De La Rue were partly perforated 14 by a single line machine, and the curious essay produced can be found in various forms. The basic design of the essay is in three forms, with a moire background in the shield around the Queen's head with the background blank, and thirdly with the Queen's head set in a transverse oblong frame. Varieties of the essays also exist



overprinted 'United Kingdom Reply Stamp' and 'United Kingdom Double Stamp' 2½d (as illustrated) and several of these can be found in volume XLI/48 of the R M Phillips Collection in the National Postal Museum. While this particular proposal was not introduced it did result in the invention of the reply-paid letter coupon which performed the same function.

New North Western Board Regional Postcards

On 10 October the North Western Postal Board will issue a new set of regional postcards.

There will be four postcards all in composite each with four scenes. The cards will be on the theme 'Our Service To You' and each card will be on the following topics:- Mechanised Offices, Rural Postmen, Sub Post Offices and Philatelic Counters. There will also be a secondary theme whereby in the centre of each card four copies of the datestamp/cancellation/special handstamp applicable to the subject matter's office will be reproduced. On the mechanisation card there will also be phosphor dot reproductions again relevant to the particular office depicted.

The cards, price 13p each, will be available

from the philatelic counters at Blackpool, Carlisle, Liverpool, Manchester and Oldham and direct from the Philatelic Bureau, 20 Brandon Street, EDINBURGH EH3 5TT. For Collectors requiring serviced cards the cost will be 44p each which includes first class postage and handling charge. Orders for serviced cards should be sent to the Philatelic Bureau and remittances should be made payable to 'The Post Office' preferably by cheque or Giro Transfer (Giro A/C No. 110 0009).

One pictorial special handstamp at Manchester will be produced for the four cards and will include the words 'NWPB Postcards' 'Our Service To You' First Day of Sale Mechanised Offices Rural Postmen Sub Post Offices Philatelic Counters.

Letters to the Editor



Dear Sir

As a regular reader of 'The Philatelic Bulletin' and a satisfied customer of the Bureau Services, I feel that I must make a reply to some correspondence in a recent philatelic publication re grumbles about First Day Covers. You may possibly have seen the letter I refer to. I have sent a reply to the magazine on similar lines to that detailed below. I can only speak, for myself, as a very satisfied customer receiving FDCs both from Edinburgh and London, as I have done since 1964. Each of these have come through the *Normal* post, many to the Isle of Man, when I resided there, and not one has been blemished in any way. I can only speak very highly of the Postal Services concerned. For the last six years, I have Serviced my own FDCs and posted these at the Preston GPO (Philatelic Box) and they are just as perfect.

The correspondent goes on about FDCs being prepared and cancelled, before issue date. Perhaps he is unaware of the task involved for this service. I have been involved in preparation, addressing covers, licking and sticking etc, with perhaps a couple of hundred covers for a Club effort. No mean task!

I wonder if there is any Bureau, throughout the World, who actually cancel covers on Day of Issue.

All good wishes.

Your faithfully

SW LAYFIELD
Preston, Lancs

Thank you, Mr Layfield, for your kind words about the First Day of Issue service provided by the British Philatelic Bureau in Edinburgh. As with the daily press, it is always the 'bad' which makes the headlines, never the 'good' which is so often taken for granted and not considered newsworthy! It stands to reason that with the sheer volume of first day covers required for each commemorative issue, they cannot be prepared during the twenty-four hours of the issue date alone. By preparing first day covers before the issue date, the Bureau is able to meet the orders received without undue delays being suffered by customers. In addition, the somewhat dubious practice of handstamping covers after the official issue date — of which some other postal administrations appear to be guilty — is also avoided. Handstamping commences prior to the issue date and continues until all items qualifying under the reposting system have been received. We are proud of the service the Philatelic Bureau offers, and while we make no claims that

it is perfect, we feel that it is often taken for granted.

EDITOR

Dear Sir

I was delighted to read in this month's 'British Philatelic Bulletin' that current rumours about the replacement of the Machin definitives by landscape designs are unfounded.

Throughout the history of British Stamps the definitives by not being pictorial but small and based on the monarch's portrait have made them uniquely different from all other issues. Whilst I believe that a more up-to-date version of Arnold Machins plaster cast of the Queen is desirable, to replace our current stamps calls for someone with genius if he is to attain the same high standard.

Finally, I do not believe the British people want a large stamp to have to lick for their everyday mail — has not the Jersey Postal Authority discovered that?

Yours faithfully

P ALISTAIR BARTON
Godalming

Forthcoming Events

Dorchester and Weymouth Stamp Club

The Dorchester and Weymouth Stamp Club are holding their Sixteenth Annual Exhibition on Saturday, 29 October 1983, in the United Reformed Church Hall, Charles Street, Dorchester, from 10am to 5pm.

The Exhibition will be formally opened at 11am by Mr Ray P Hassell, Director of the South West Postal Region.

Hourly throughout the day Post Office video films will be shown in one of the lounges. Postmen in period costume, together with a 1940 horse-drawn mail-van will parade through the main streets.

There will be a Post Office Philatelic counter and several dealers in attendance at the Exhibition. Refreshments will be available all day. Car parking facilities will be found in either of the two town car-parks leading from Charles Street.

Welsh Philatelic Society

The WPS will open the new Season by participating in the 1983 Annual Meeting of the Federation of North Wales Philatelic Societies to be held at the Eagles Hotel, Llanrwst, on Saturday 15 October 1983, from 10.30am to 5pm.

The main item on the Agenda will be a talk and display by James Greenwood Taylor of Argyll Etkin Ltd., on GB Postal History, with reference to Wales.

This event will probably include a 'mini-auction' and static displays. A number of dealers

will be in attendance and the Post Office will provide a Philatelic Sales Counter.

Further particulars may be had from the Secretary of the Federation, Joan Harper, 28 Allanson Road, Rhos-on-Sea, COLWYN BAY, Clwyd, LL28 4HL or the acting Secretary of the WPS, Peter Brindley, School of Plant Biology, U.C.N.W., BANGOR Gwynedd, LL57 2UW (Bangor (0248) 351151, ext 287).

Southern Scotland Booklets Displays

Joe Spiteri, the Editor of "THE BOOKMARK", the journal of the GB Decimal Stamp Book Study Circle, will be touring Societies around the Glasgow area to give displays of his collection featuring the Decimal Stamp Books of Great Britain. Two forms of displays will be given. One will comprise all the different stamps and panes found in the decimal stamp books with the covers of the books. The other will feature varieties, oddities and errors found in Decimal Stamp Books.

The venues and dates are:

The Glasgow Philatelic Society, Tuesday 11 October 1983. Further details from Hon. Secretary — Tel. 041-882 5431.

The Paisley Philatelic Society, Wednesday 12 October 1983. Further details from Hon. Secretary — Tel. 041-884 4994.

The Caledonian Philatelic Society, Thursday 13 October 1983. Further details from Hon. Secretary — Tel. 041-634 537.

The United Nations Philatelic Exhibition

An exhibition of United Nations stamps and allied philatelic material will be held at: The Africa Centre, 38 King Street, Covent Garden, London, from 12 noon to 6.30pm. Friday 21 October, and from 10am to 4pm Saturday 22 October 1983.

The Africa Centre is next door to the Covent Garden Piazza.

Aldridge Philatelic Society

A Stamp Fair and Philatelic Display will be held on Saturday, 15 October 1983 at the Aldridge Community Centre, Middlemore Lane, Aldridge, near Walsall, between 10.30am-4.30pm.

There will be stamp and postcard dealers, free parking, refreshments and a stamp tombola.

Essex Autumn Stamp Day

The Brentwood and District P.S. will act as hosts for the Association of Essex Philatelic Societies Autumn Stamp Fair, to be held on Saturday 22 October 1983, at the Chelmer Institute of Higher Education, Sawyers Lane, Brentwood, Essex from 10.30am — 5.30pm. Admission is free. One of the attractions will include

a Post Office display and philatelic sales counter.

Southern Fairs

Three stamps, coins and postcard fairs will take place during October 1983.

Saturday 8 October at Bligh's Hotel, High Street, Sevenoaks, 10am-4.30pm. Admission is 10p.

Saturday 15 October at Civic Hall, London Road, Guildford, 10.30am-5pm. Admission 25p adults, 15p children under 14.

Saturday 29 October at Selsdon Hall, Selsdon, South Croydon, 10am to 4.30pm. Admission 10p.

Thurrock & District Stamp Club

A stamp bourse and auction, arranged by the T&D.S.C. to be held at the Norman Hall, Cromwell Road, off Orsett Road, Grays, Essex on Saturday 15 October from 10am-5pm. A coin and stamp fair will take place on Saturday 29 October at the same venue.

G.B. Decimal Stamp Book Study Circle AGM

The GBDSBSC will hold its Twelfth Annual General Meeting on Saturday 29th October 1983 at The Albright & Wilson Recreation Club Hall, Station Road, Langley, Oldbury, West Midlands.

Amongst the many attractions planned for the day will be many GB specialist dealers as well as the Birmingham Philatelic Counter. There will be displays of many aspects of the collecting of decimal stamp books and the activities of the day are planned to include lots of free time for visitors to meet the experts in this field and discuss any problems.

The venue is situated in the heart of the country and is easily accessible from the M5/M6 motorways at exit 2 in Oldbury, by British Rail local train service, by public transport or, for any overseas visitor, the local Birmingham Airport is just one hour away. For motorists there is ample car parking and anyone wishing to take lunch or require further details please contact: The Publicity Secretary, 18 Henlow Close, TIPTON, West Midlands, DY4 8BE, Tel: 021-557 5350.

Forces Covers

Sinking of U538

A commemorative cover to mark the 40th anniversary of the sinking of the U-Boat 538 will be available from 21 November 1983. The action was carried out by HMS Crane and Foley. The cover includes illustrations of both H.M. Ships and U538, together with the ships' badges. A 16p 'British Fairs' stamp is affixed and the charge is 80p.

Alternatively, the cover bearing a 28p 'British Fairs' stamp and signed by Vice Admiral Sir Peter

Gretton KCB DSO OBE DSC, Escort Group Commander, World War II, and Lieut. Comdr. D. E. Mansfield DSC RN, Commanding Officer, HMS 'Foley' during the action, will be available price, £2. In addition, the cover signed by Lieut. Comdr. Mansfield only, with a 20½p 'British Fairs' stamp affixed, the cost is £1.30.

All covers will be cancelled with BFPS 1817 special handstamp depicting the badge of HMS 'Crane.'

Orders with remittances made payable to 'The Fleet Air Arm Museum,' should be sent to, The Philatelic Officer, RNAS, Yeovilton, YEOVIL, Somerset BA22 8HL, accompanied by a 7" x 5" stamped addressed envelope.

Finningley Air Show

To commemorate the 1983 Finningley Air Show held on Saturday 17 September 1983, and the 200th Anniversary of the first hot air balloon flight by the Montgolfier Brothers in November 1783, a special pictorial handstamp was produced. Flown covers signed by FLT LT D Bendall and Macr N J Walsh commemorate the 20th Anniversary of the first flight of the DH125 (the forerunner of the RAF Dominic).

The cost is £2.00 each. Orders with remittances made payable to 'Battle of Britain Control Account' should be sent to FLT LT C Hickman, Dominic Sqn, RAF Finningley, DONCASTER, S. Yorkshire, DN9 3LQ.

Commemorative Covers

Smithfield Market

A commemorative cover illustrating Smithfield Market and Bartholomew Fair will be available from 5th October 1983 bearing all four 'British Fairs' stamps. The cover will be cancelled with a special handstamp which reads, 'Butchers Charitable Institution Salutes the 850th Anniversary of Bartholomew Fair 5 October 1983, Smithfield, LONDON, EC1.' The cost of the cover is £3.25 including postage and packing which can be obtained from, Hawkwood Stamps, FREEPOST, LONDON E4 7BR.

Dickens Celebrations

A Dickens Stamp Festival formed part of the 1982 Dickens Celebrations at Rochester (Kent), the four-day philatelic event being commemorated by a special cover bearing the 24p 'Maritime Heritage' stamp (one needs to buy the cover to find out why!) and cancelled with the one-day handstamp. The price is: £1.50.

Fifty (numbered) covers signed by "Samuel Pickwick" were carried on the 'Pickwick Special' from Victoria and in procession through Rochester to the King's Head Hotel on June 4. Including a donation to the Medway Branch for Muscular Dystrophy these carried covers cost: £2.50.

All orders, to Dave Stevens, 18 Gayhurst Close, GILLINGHAM, Kent ME8 9EA, must be accompanied by a large s.a.e. and the correct remittance.

Hornchurch Cricket Club

In its bicentennial year, the Hornchurch Cricket Club has produced a commemorative cover with a 17½p 'Cricket' stamp affixed with special cancellations for 8, 13, 24 and 26 August, the anniversary of the first recorded match. The cost of the cover is £1.25 including postage and packing. A limited number of covers bearing the 'British Gardens' stamps are now available price £3 including postage and packing. Orders should be sent to: Mr. D. N. Shewring, 78 Lakeside, RAINHAM, Essex RM13 9SW.

Mountbatten Statue Unveiling Ceremony

HM The Queen will unveil the statue of Admiral of the Fleet the Earl Mountbatten of Burma, on the Foreign Office Green, adjacent to Horse Guards Parade on 2 November 1983. An official commemorative cover, designed by Franta Belsky, the sculptor of the statue, approved by the Ministry of Defence is being produced by J and M Arlington Ltd.

Each cover will feature the head of the statue. A 15½p definitive stamp will be affixed, cancelled on the day of the unveiling ceremony with a special handstamp depicting the Royal Navy crown. The cost of the cover is £1.80 including postage and packing. 100 covers will be signed by the Countess Mountbatten of Burma and Franta Belsky at a cost of £10 each.

Further information and orders to J and M Arlington Ltd., 45 Lakenheath, LONDON N14 4RL.

Year of the Scout

To commemorate the Year of the Scout, a cover was produced for the 75th Anniversary of the first Scout Camp. A 26p 'Scout' stamp is affixed, cancelled with the London Scout Camp handstamp on 31 July 1982. Details are included of the 125th Anniversary Birthday of Lord Baden Powell and the 50th anniversary of the First Gang Show at the Scala Theatre, London. In addition a special tribute is paid to Ralph Reader (Mr. Gang Show). The cost is £4.50 including postage and packing. Orders with remittances made payable to Mr. G. K. Eldridge should be sent to 29 Chalk Hill, West End, SOUTHAMPTON SO3 3BY.

A Celebration of English Gardens

A commemorative cover illustrating portraits of 'Capability' Brown, Sir Joseph Paxton and Gertrude Jekyll, all of whom have influenced the creation of many beautiful gardens. The following prices will apply. The cover with the full set of 'Garden Stamps' – £3.25. The cover with either the 28p or 31p 'Gardens' stamp affixed – £1.75. The cover with either the 16p or 20½p stamp – £1.50. All charges include postage and packing in the UK. Remittances made payable to D. G. Taylor should be sent to him at, 202 Somervell Road, HARROW, Middlesex HA28TS.

The Showmen's Guild of Great Britain

The Showmen's Guild have produced a philatelic cover for 5 October 1983 illustrating modern fairground rides in colourful miniature pictures. All four 'British Fairs' stamps are affixed cancelled with a rectangular pictorial handstamp. The cost is £3.25 including postage and packing. In addition a limited number signed by the General Secretary, Mr. W. T. Woolrych and The President, Mr. W. Whitelegg are available, price £4.75 including p&p.

The text for the official Post Office cover and presentation pack was supplied by Mr. Wollrych. Covers with remittances made payable to, 'The Showmen's Guild of Great Britain' should be sent to them 41 Clarence Street, STAINES Middlesex TW18 4SY

North of England Motorshow

Some commemorative covers, produced to coincide with the 10th Anniversary North of England (International) Motorshow held during July, are still available. A limited number with the choice of the Austin Metro (15½p) stamp or the Ford Escort (19½p) stamp affixed at £1 each. There are a few covers bearing all four 'British Motor Cars' stamps at £2 each. Orders with remittances made payable to the 'Post Office Auto Club Ltd' should be sent to POAC House, 20 West Meadows Road, Cleadon, SUNDERLAND SR6 7TX

British Fairs

Two commemorative covers will be on sale from 5 October 1983. The first remembers 300 years of family entertainment by Chipperfield Circus, illustrating the Frost Fair on the River Thames in the 17th century. The second features Turner's Musical Merry-go-Round over 85 years ago. Both covers will have the full set of 'British Fairs' stamps affixed cancelled with special pictorial handstamps. Price £3 each plus postage and packing, the covers are available from: Benham (A. Buckingham) Ltd, 22-28 High Street, HYTHE, Kent, CT21 5AT

'Victory 83'

America's Cup Official Commemorative Cover showing a full colour picture of 'Victory 83' in full sail, from an original painting by John White with insert card giving the history of the Challenge, is currently available.

The Yacht is depicted on the Burnham on Crouch handstamp, 22 August 1983, (132nd Anniversary of the original race), cancelling a 24p HMS 'Victory' Stamp.

All covers were carried aboard 'Victory 83' in Newport, USA and cacheted.

250 numbered and signed Peter De Savary, Victory Syndicate Chairman, £7.50 each.

1500 Numbered but unsigned, £2.30 each.

In the event of 'Victory 83's' successful challenge, a special winners postmark was commissioned at Burnham on Crouch during September.

Details from and orders to: Pilgrim Philatelics Ltd, 33 St George's Place, CANTERBURY, Kent, CT1 2XX.

Philatelic Bulletin

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