

British Philatelic Bulletin

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Contents

- 70 New Issue of 'Crosspost'
- Editorial
- 71 Flowers: 20 January 1987
- 73 Flowers Covers
- 74 New Country Definitives: 6 January 1987
- 75 New Stamp Books in January
- Phosphor Band Layouts in Stamp Books
- 76 Customs of Christmastide
- 79 Benham Celebrate their 21st
- Airgraph Service
- 80 Private Airletters
- 82 The Early Days of the Postal Service
- 83 International Year of the Child, 1979
- Commemorative Covers
- 84 A Happy Christmas — Via the Post Box
- 87 New Cylinders and Plates
- 88 The Genesis of the Machin Design: Part 6
- 89 Variation to 13p definitives
- 90 Philatelic Terms Explained
- Gems from the R M Phillips Collection
- 91 National Postal Museum Cards for 1987
- NPM Cards for Victoria's 'Jubilee' Issue
- NPM Exhibition for Queen Victoria's Jubilee
- December Digest
- 92 More details of the 1987 Programme
- P.O. Archives Xmas Closing

New Issue of 'Crosspost'

The third number of *Crosspost* the journal of the Association of Friends of the National Postal Museum has recently been published. Edited by Cyril Parsons, it contains articles on The 'Peover Papers', aspects of the Phillips Collection with reference to the Dendy Marshall postmark collection and the 1879 letterpress tender, Mobile Post Offices 1936-1986 and rocket mail. The journal is available only to members of the Association of Friends of the National Postal Museum whose Secretary is J F A Spiteri, 18-20 Henlow Close, Tipton, WEST MIDLANDS DY4 8BE.

Editorial

DOUGLAS N MUIR

Christmas Greetings

Christmas is a very busy time for everybody, but especially The Post Office, dealing as it does with the vast increase in mail at this time. This year, Christmas is also a busy and very interesting time for the philatelist. From 2 to 24 December there will be three different discount offers — a Christmas present to our customers. This will enable people to send their Christmas cards second class at a cost of 12p.

These discount offers come in the form of a discounted booklet of 10 x 13p definitives at £1.20; a sheetlet of 36 x 13p Christmas stamps specially printed and inserted in a pack costing £4.30; and perhaps most important of all a 12p Christmas stamp, basically in the design of the 13p. All will go on sale on 2 December with certain specific restrictions, but philatelists will have three important new items to add to their collections. However, they will only be available until 24 December when they go off sale everywhere including the Bureau (if stocks are not exhausted beforehand). Details were published in the *Bulletin* last month.

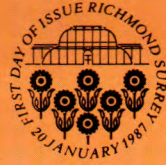
Next year promises to be an excellent one in terms of new special issues, the first of the designs being published in this *Bulletin*. As far as 1986 stamps are concerned, remember to vote for your favourite. A form was enclosed in the November *Bulletin* and a 1986 Royal Mail Yearbook will be given to those with the three best comments. Closing date is 5 January 1987.

I hope that you have enjoyed the *Bulletin* over the past year and that you will continue to do so in the future. Any comments or suggestions you might have as to contents or future articles are always welcome, though it is obviously not possible to do everything at once.

Merry Christmas and best wishes for an exciting new collecting year!

Flowers

20 January 1987



The first issue of special stamps in 1987 will feature popular cultivated flowers and will be released on 20 January. Part of the continuing series of Flora and Fauna stamps, they are based on photographs by Alfred Lammer who came to Britain in 1934, having been born in Austria in 1909. They are startling in their effect with remarkable fine detail and subtlety being retained in the final printed stamps.

On the 18p stamp is *Gaillardia* or a North American Blanket Flower, so named because of the resemblance of the bright, patterned colours and the designs of the blankets woven by American Indians. The name of the genus commemorates Gaillard de Charentonneau, an 18th century French magistrate and patron of botany.



Mexico or other tropical and sub-tropical parts of North America.

The flowers of Meadow Saffron or Autumn Crocus bear a strong resemblance to those of



crocuses, although the two plants belong to completely different families. *Colchicum* flowers, as shown on the 34p stamp, have six anthers (the processes inside the flower that carry the pollen) rather than three as in the true crocuses. Nearly all *colchicums* flower in autumn. The leaves, which are broad, pointed and bright, shiny green, do not

The 22p stamp features *Echinops* or a tall Globe Thistle. Although these grow wild in many countries in Europe and western Asia, in Britain they are found only in gardens. The flower head shown on the stamp is in bud: each of the spiky points is a tiny roll of petals that will expand into a small, sweetly scented, pale blue star.

Echeveria, a succulent, is shown on the 31p stamp. These are usually grown for their neat symmetrical, waxy or velvety rosettes of leaves, but the small flowers (as shown on the stamp) are also very beautiful if studied closely. The genus was named after a Mexican botanical artist, Atanasio Echeverria, who lived in the 18th century. *Echeverias* come from



appear until the spring, long after the flowers have faded, and the seed pods develop with the leaves. The name *Colchicum* derives from Colchis, an area on the coast of the Black Sea in the USSR. In his photograph Lammer has captured the delicate opalescence of the petals as they shade from pale magenta to its bluey-green opposite in the flower tube.



Technical Details

Designed by Alfred Lammer the stamps have been printed in photogravure by Harrison & Sons Ltd. In format they are vertically 'off-square', 35 x 37mm, perf. 14½ x 14, printed on unwatermarked, phosphor-coated paper in sheets of 100 on PVA Dextrin gum. The side margins of the stamps are very slightly wider to provide a strong enough signal for cancelling machines. The year '1987' is printed in the margin of the stamps.

PHQ Cards

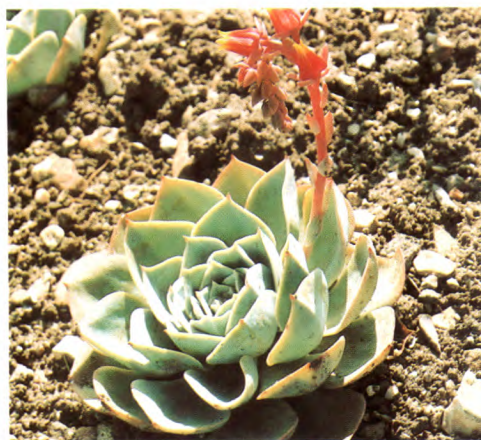
PHQ cards (Nos 99 A-D) featuring each of the four stamps will be available from 6 January, costing 15p.

Presentation Pack

The presentation pack will cost £1.27 and was designed by John Gibbs, being illustrated by Philip Sutton. Photographs depicted are from the Harry Smith Horticultural Photographic Collection and text is by Patrick Roper. For the first time a thematically related stamp will be illustrated on the back of the pack in black. On this occasion the stamp shown is the 13p value of the British Flowers issue of 1979.

First Day Cover

The first day cover features a flowery panel and was designed by John Gibbs. It costs 16p. Two pictorial postmarks will be used for the first day cover service, one from the British Philatelic Bureau featuring a



bee; the other is from Richmond, the nearest office to Kew Gardens, the foremost botanical gardens in Britain, and shows a symbolic representation of flowers in a greenhouse.

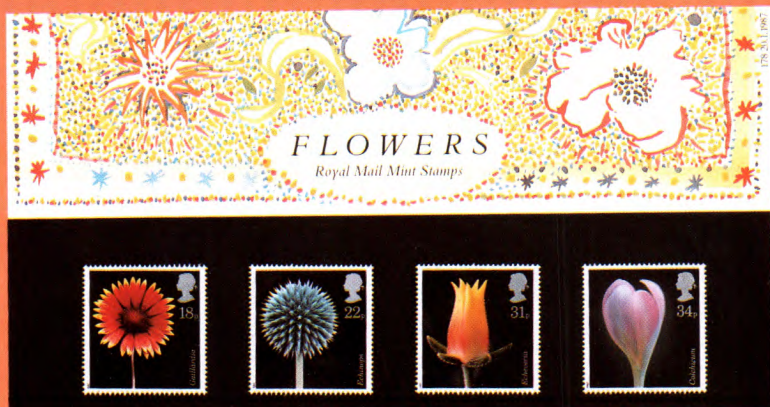
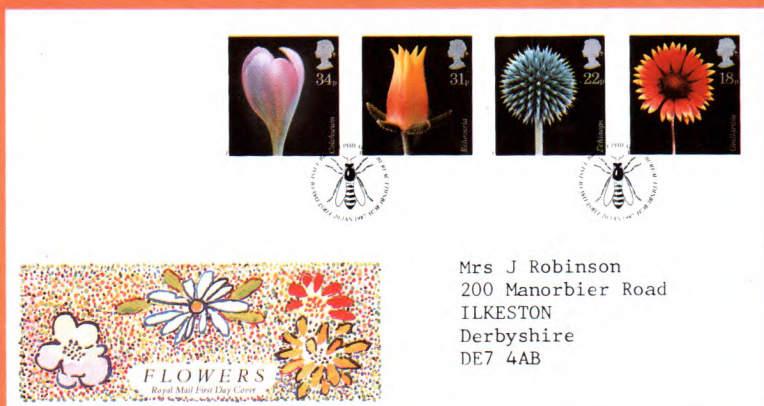
A first day cover service will be provided by the Bureau with the official Royal Mail cover addressed to the destination required with the four stamps cancelled with either postmark. The charges will be £1.51 (inland) and £1.32 (overseas). Application forms, available from the Bureau and at Head Post Offices, should be returned not later than 20 January.

Customers requiring only the special pictorial postmarks may obtain them under the reposting facility by sending on the first day of issue a stamped addressed envelope under an outer cover endorsed 'Special First Day of Issue Handstamp' to:

'British Philatelic Bureau' 20 Brandon Street,
EDINBURGH EH3 5TT.

'Richmond' Special Postmark Duty,
Letter District Office,
109 London Road,
TWICKENHAM TW1 1AA





Flowers Covers

The following are some of the commercial first day covers being prepared for the Flowers stamps on 20 January 1987. All postmarks can also be obtained under the reposting facility by writing to Special Postmark Duty at the Head Post Office concerned.

Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. Marking the opening of a new conservatory to be named after the Princess of Wales two different covers will be serviced with the full set of stamps and a special handstamp from Richmond appropriately inscribed. Cost is £3.80 each (or £5.30 signed by the Gardens Director) from The Philatelic Agents, Westcliff House, FOLKESTONE CT20 1SZ.

Royal Horticultural Society. A first day cover featuring Wisley Garden (home of the Society) with a full set of stamps will cost £3.80 bearing a postmark

from Wisley, Woking. A further set of four covers with single stamps will be produced from Wisley; Chelsea, London SW3; the Lindley Library, London SW1; and the Royal Horticultural Halls, also London SW1 with different postmarks from each. The set will cost £6.30. All are available from The Philatelic Agents, Westcliff House, FOLKESTONE CT20 1SZ.

Stephen Thomas Exhibition. Marking an exhibition of flora and fauna watercolour paintings by Sussex artist Stephen Thomas a cover will bear the full set cancelled by an Ovingdean Brighton handstamp and will cost £4.00 (or £2.50 with single stamp, £6.00 if signed by the artist). Postage and packing add 50p (overseas £1.50). Orders with remittances made out to 'Greenberg & Porter', 13 Fordyke Road, Becontree Heath, DAGENHAM, Essex RM8 1PJ.

New Country Definitives

6 January 1987

New 18p 'Country' stamps to meet the basic first class letter rate will be issued for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland on 6 January 1987. The new stamps will be in the same standard 'country' designs with national symbols and the colour will be olive green, the same as for the National 18p stamps. Printing will be in offset litho by The House of Questa on ACP paper with PVA Dextrin gum, perf. 15 x 14.

First day covers, priced 16p each, and pictorial handstamps will be provided by the Post Office for each of the countries. The three covers and stamps will be available from the British Philatelic Bureau and from all philatelic counters. Each country's cover will also be sold at head post offices in the respective country, as of course will the stamps.

The Bureau will provide first day cover services. Three covers (one for each country) addressed as requested and given the new stamps, will be cancelled as required — either with the pictorial handstamp 'British Philatelic Bureau Edinburgh' or with the names of the capital cities of the countries, Cardiff Edinburgh and Belfast. First day covers will be provided in sets of three — one set with the Bureau handstamp, the other with the handstamps

of the capitals. Either set will cost £1.53 (inland) £1.35 (overseas). Application forms, available from the Bureau and Head Post Offices, should be returned by 6 January.

For customers who wish to post their own covers on the day of issue, first day of issue cancellation facilities will be in use at all offices which normally provide them in each of the three countries and at all philatelic counter offices in England. Also on that day the normal reposting facility will apply for special cancellations. Covers bearing the new 'Country' stamps may be sent under cover to the following addresses marking the outer cover 'First Day of Issue Cancellation'.

'British Philatelic Bureau' 20 Brandon Street, EDINBURGH EH3 5TT		
Scotland	Special Postmark Duty, South Letter DO, Royal Mail House, Brunswick Road, EDINBURGH EH7 1XX	
Wales	Special Postmark Duty, LDO, 220/228 Penarth Road, CARDIFF CF1 1AA	
Northern Ireland	Special Postmark Duty, LDO, 20/22 Donegal Quay, BELFAST BT1 1AA	



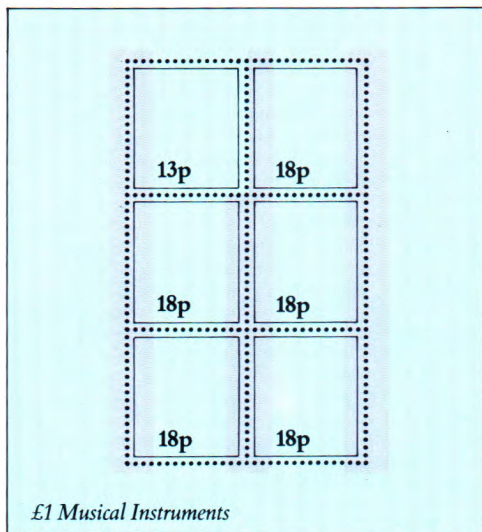
New Stamp Books in January

27 January 1987

Five new stamp book cover changes are proposed for issue on 27 January 1987. These will include two counter books and three vending machine books.

The counter books price £1.30 (containing 10 x 13p stamps with single central phosphor bar) and at £1.80 (containing 10 x 18p stamps on phosphor-coated paper) will carry a special promotion offering customers the opportunity to send off for a special 'Keep In Touch' stationery gift pack. Details of the covers will be given next month.

The three machine-vended books include two 50p books and a £1 book. One 50p book cover continues the Roman Britain theme, No. 3 in the



series featuring Porchester Castle, Hampshire, designed by Norman Battershill. Contents are 2 x 18p (two bands), 1 x 13p (one right side band) and 1 x 1p (one left side band) with the layout as illustrated.

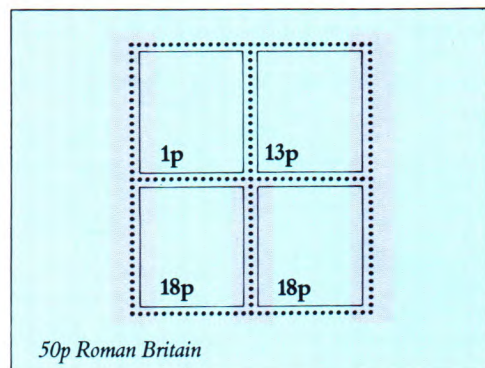
The second 50p book cover, No. 4 in the series on Pond Life, features the Great Pond Snail and the Great Ram's Horn Snail and was designed by Peter Morter. Contents are 3 x 13p, 2 x 5p and 1 x 1p, all with a single central band.

The £1 book will be No. 3 in the series on Musical Instruments and features the Bass Clarinet, designed by Martin Newton with illustrations by Stanley Paine. Contents are 5 x 18p (two bands) and

1 x 13p (one left side band) with the layout as illustrated.

Stamps are printed in photogravure by Harrison & Sons Ltd., the stamps on the Chambon press and covers on the Libra bookmaking machine. Cylinder numbers will appear on every sixth counter book and on every eighth vending machine book. The £1.30 and £1.80 counter books only will appear in both left and right hand formats.

All five stamp books will be available initially from philatelic sales counters or by post from the British Philatelic Bureau, 20 Brandon St., EDINBURGH EH3 5TT. The books will become generally available from post offices or vending machines once existing stocks are used up. The £1 and 50p 'Pond Life' books will be available only from the new electronic stamp-vending machines recently installed in the Brighton area.



Phosphor Band Layouts in Stamp Books

The information provided in the September *Bulletin* (pp3-4) on the phosphor band layouts for the new stamp books which appeared on 20 October was unfortunately incorrect. The contents of the 50p Pond Life book and of the £1.30 and £1.80 counter books were as described. However, the issued 50p Roman Britain and the £1 Musical Instruments books had stamps with different phosphor band arrangements from those originally proposed. The correct layouts for these two books are shown here, and these will continue for the books to be issued in January 1987. We apologise for any inconvenience or puzzlement this misinformation may have caused.

It is reported, however, that the October 50p Roman Britain book does exist with the phosphor bands as originally illustrated. This resulted from a shift in the registration of the phosphor bands during the printing and is an error. It is thus not available on order from the British Philatelic Bureau.

Customs of Christmastide

BARBARA LAST

Celebrations of the birth of Christ, in Old English *Cristes Maesse*, were not observed actually on 25 December until the date was fixed by Julius I, Bishop of Rome, in 350AD. However tradition maintains that the feast itself had been celebrated as early as 98AD, and that Telesphorus, Bishop of Rome, ordered it to be observed as a solemn feast in 137AD. In England it is said that Christmas was first kept in 521 after King Arthur retook York, and in the ninth century Alfred the Great set aside twelve days for the observance of the Christmas festival. Julius chose 25 December because it was already the pagan festival of Mithras, the Persian deity of Light, the Unconquerable Sun (*Sol Invictus*), and this title he now claimed for Christ.

At the time of the winter solstice each year pagan ceremonies for the fertility of crops and animals in the coming year were part of the North European cultures. The early Church, unable to abolish ingrained customs, sensibly absorbed and Christianised the old rites, and saints replaced the pagan deities. Evergreens that do not die in winter,

were part of the Celtic veneration for trees, and were also carried indoors by the followers of Woden as proof of unbroken life throughout the months of darkness. They still decorate our homes and churches as a symbol of the continuing life through Christ, holly as the most important of the evergreens representing Christ's Crown of Thorns and its scarlet berries his blood of the Resurrection.

Only the parasitic mistletoe, sacred to Druidic rites, is never taken into church, but has remained in our homes as a vestigial reminder of the mediaeval kissing-bush of evergreens and mistletoe suspended from the ceiling and hung with small apples, oranges, ribbons and nuts. Over the twelve days of Christmas, stretching from Christmas Eve to Epiphany which heralds the arrival of Three Kings, each guest received beneath the mistletoe-bough at least twelve kisses. He exchanged there one of his twelve presents in memory of God's gift of Christ, and the presents of gold, frankincense and myrrh brought by the Magi to the manger. Christmas is, in essence, a festival of love.





Holly, ivy and mistletoe not only festoon our hearths but also our stamps, aerogrammes, and stamp books, and with bells and candles decorate meter marks on our festal mail. Light and fire were important in pagan and Christian rituals as symbols of the return of the sun and life everlasting. The yule log smouldered in the hearth for the twelve days, with a small piece reserved to kindle the log the following Christmas, as a reminder that the spirit of Christmas should last twelve months and be refueled at Christmas. Candles as a symbol of the birth of the Light of the World, accompanied the carol singers, or 'Waits' who sang for charity, and we still observe the festival with carols by candlelight, many old songs telling of forgotten customs in lilting, simple tunes reflecting the limited range of notes possible on early musical instruments.

In Wales, that land of song, the old traditional Plygain carol service by brilliant candlelight survived in a few districts into this century. On Christmas Eve the congregation would stay awake, merrymaking and decorating their homes. Between 3 and 6am on Christmas morning they would wend their way to the local church or chapel for the communal singing of the Plygain carol service, carrying elaborately decorated candles. This ancient custom is no longer observed, but the Tanad Valley Plygain is delightfully captured on this year's 18p stamp.

Christmas bells have always rung out their joyful message, and an old bell-ringing custom in Yorkshire has survived since the thirteenth century. At Dewsbury Parish Church on Christmas Eve the tenor bell is rung once for each year since the birth of Christ, the peals ending on the stroke of midnight to welcome in the festive day. The Dewsbury Parish Church Knell (also known as 'Ringing the Devil's Knell') tolled the passing of the Devil who died when Christ was born, and villagers believed the custom protected the parish from Satan's activities throughout the coming year. The original bell was known as 'Black Tom of Soothill', named after Sir Thomas Warren of Soothill who gave the bell. He



started the mediaeval custom, according to tradition, in order to expiate his crime of slaying a servant who had attended Christmas communion instead of seeing to his duties. The bell he donated was melted down with others and recast in 1874, but still the extra stroke tolls each year (31p) in one of the numerous quaint local customs observed in various parts of Britain.

On 17 December the Roman feast of Saturnalia was observed with masked revels and riotous celebrations. All work ceased. The world turned topsy-turvy as slaves had temporary freedom. Men dressed as women, and women as men as recollected by our traditional Christmas pantomimes, and lords and chieftains waited upon their men. Gifts were exchanged at midwinter festivals long before the birth of Christ, and Christianity merely altered the emphasis to sharing the festivities and distributing bounty by the giving of gifts and alms to the poor. A local ceremony, now fallen into disuse but recorded into the beginning of this century, was the Hebrides Tribute or *Dioladh Dierce* of the fishing communities of the island of Uist. According to Hebridean folklore, Christ commanded Peter to row exactly 707 strokes before letting down his net to catch the fish containing the silver coin which paid the Capernaum temple tribute (*Matthew 17.27*). Therefore, on Christmas morning the young fishermen from Uist in the Western Isles would row the 707 strokes, and any fish then caught would be given to the needy, as a 'tribute' to Christ and his disciple (22p).



Many traditions live on in song and stamps. 'Good King Wenceslas' was the 10th century saint and martyr who took food and fuel to the peasant as a practical form of almsgiving. 'Little Jack Horner' eating his Christmas Pie (Tristan 1980 SG289) illustrates festive fare. The original Christmas pudding was a sort of soup made from boiled bones thickened with bread, dried fruit and spices, boiled until solid, and eaten with meat or poultry. Mince pies too started as savoury meat pies made from small pieces of meat and suet baked in a crust. But meat was an expensive luxury, and was replaced by anything suitable like fruit and nuts, and 'plums' for Jack Horner.

St. Nicholas, 4th century Bishop of Myra, Asia Minor, and symbol of unselfish generosity, is the patron saint of children, sailors, unmarried girls, merchants, pawnbrokers, apothecaries and perfumiers who are all linked to various episodes of his many legendary acts. He is said to have tossed three purses of gold (the origin of the pawnbroker's three gold balls) anonymously through a window at night as dowries to save three daughters of a poor man from being sold into slavery. One purse fell into a stocking drying by the chimney, and he became 'Santa Claus', the bringer of children's gifts. His portrayal as a gaunt old man in black robes and a crown of holly changed into the modern rubicund spirit of Christmas, with his magical reindeer and sledge.

Nicholas was saintly from such an early age that choir boys of cathedrals, churches and some church schools would in his honour enthrone a temporary Boy Bishop, who was dressed in miniature mitre and robes (34p). The Boy Bishop's term often lasted from 6 December, St. Nicholas Day, to Holy Innocents Day on 28 December, when Herod slew all male children in Bethlehem under two years old, in his



desire to kill Christ. This event was celebrated as a reminder that pain and sorrow are not spread evenly in life, and that the innocent suffer. The youthful bishop had considerable powers, and when his time came he was drummed out of office by his fellows wielding sticks. This ancient British custom dates back over a thousand years. It was abolished by Henry VIII, revived by his daughter Mary, and



suppressed by Elizabeth I, only surviving as odd fragments or mentioned in archives. In recent years this old custom of childhood innocence has been revived in many parts of the country.

One of the oldest British legends concerns St. Joseph of Arimathea, the Jewish councillor and secret disciple of Jesus. He begged Pilate for Christ's body after the Crucifixion, and laid it in his new rock tomb. French legend connects him with the Holy Grail, the cup that received Christ's blood at Calvary, and long sought by Arthur's Knights of the Round Table (Sir Galahad 1985 34p). One of many tales tells of the Apostle Philip sending Joseph from Gaul to England with twelve disciples to preach the Gospel. The pagan chief who received the travellers would not become a Christian, but he gave them the Isle of Yniswitrin (Glastonbury) where they build a wattle church to St. Mary. Joseph thrust his staff into the ground to signify the end of his wanderings. He performed many miracles in the West Country. Tradition has it that the Glastonbury Thorn sprang

from either St. Joseph's staff or from a piece of the Crown of Thorns. It flowered twice a year, once at Christmas and again in Spring (13p). In mediaeval times Glastonbury Abbey made much of the old and probably apocryphal legends surrounding Joseph of Arimathea and King Arthur whose body was believed to have been rowed secretly through the Somerset fens, and buried in the Abbey. Even today the Abbey ruins and the high church-crowned Glastonbury Tor have a mystical atmosphere. They are considered to be very holy ground, and a place of annual pilgrimage. The Glastonbury Thorn, said to be a graft of the original tree, still lives.

These Christmas stamps have the charming naïveté reminiscent of figures from ancient documents, and go well with the Tayburn designs commemorating mediaeval life and the Domesday Book. They will give pleasure to many with their muted soft-toned hues. Lynda Gray is to be congratulated for her delightful contribution to the festive season.



Benham Celebrate their 21st

In December, Benham (A. Buckingham Ltd) of Folkestone, famous for their first day covers, celebrate their 21st anniversary. At BPE in October they marked this in style with a cake produced in the form of one of their 'silk-look' first day covers (of the Roses issue). This is pictured above on the Benham stand held by Tony Buckingham (left) and Richard Skinner (before going out on the town). *Photo — Bill Grouit.*



Airgraph Service

Illustrated is a seasonally appropriate airgraph sent in by a reader, Keith T. Hiskins of Didcot. It shows Santa on a camel riding to victory in 1941.

The airgraph service began on 21 April 1941 from Cairo when members of the forces in the Middle East could send messages to relatives in Britain. The form was microfilmed and the film sent by air and then developed and enlarged at the receiving end. Later in 1942 the service was opened to the public.

JEAN FARRUGIA Post Office Archivist

Ordinary pre-stamped airletters were introduced in December 1942. They replaced the existing 3d air-postcard service to HM Forces in the Middle East and beyond (except for Malta) and supplemented the 3d airgraph service. This new 6d airletter form resulted from the government's recent decision to provide more aircraft space for Troops' mail, and the need to restrict such mail to easily recognisable lightweight items specially designed to conserve aircraft capacity. Its design was based on the 'Gumbley letter card', a modified version of which (as Army form W 3077) was already being used by Middle East Forces. Twenty million of the

distinctive, blue lightweight airletters were printed for the Post Office; and, at first, the service was strictly restricted to Troops and Merchant Navy personnel. Unlike air letters for civilians which, under war conditions, were carried most of the way by ship, the new Forces' airletters went all the way by air.

Because of the paper shortage, the Post Office faced the problem of producing sufficient forms to meet the estimated public demand; and the stationery trade were also voicing strong disappointment at the loss of 'their' postcard service for the Troops. A solution came from John Dickinson & Co Ltd in October 1942. This was a suggestion for the manufacture of specially approved un-stamped, private airletter forms for sale in stationers' shops. The Post Office agreed; but with certain conditions: such forms would have to conform strictly with its requirements as regards





Rare Christmas greetings airletter form printed for a client by Glovers Advertising of Bristol as No 71995/44. October 1948

weight, size and appearance (ie they would have to closely match the official pre-stamped airletter) and they would have to bear a printed indication that they had been approved by the Postmaster General. Additionally, the manufacturer would have to obtain fresh approval for any reprint.

The Post Office was insistent, too (despite pressure from the trade), that the price of its airletter form would have to remain at 6d, which was regarded as quite sufficient to cover its cost and conveyance by air to the respective Base overseas.

With a target issue date of 1 January 1943 in mind, several versions of its proposed airletter were submitted by Dickinsons during the subsequent weeks. The one eventually approved in December 1942 was of a similar weight to the Post Office form (180 to the lb); and it bore the required inscription 'Form approved by the Postmaster General' and a unique 'licence' number: '71995/1'. All such privately-printed airletters were to bear the reference '71995'; but a different suffix was issued to each approved manufacturer (eg 'No 71995/2' was allocated in September 1943 to forms printed by Pirie, Appleton & Co Ltd). Why '71995'? This was no more than the serial number of the Post Office's first file on the subject to be registered in its HQ

Registry! Sold for ½d, Dickinson's sales were good, and they successfully applied for a reprint (under a new serial number '71995/1A') as early as 8 January 1943. By 1948, their airletters had reached reprint 'No 71995/1E'.

From the beginning, both the Post Office airletter form, and the approved private versions of it, bore the indication 'By Air Mail' in reverse type rather than in the form of a facsimile air mail label. This was because the design of the standard form was considered sufficiently distinctive and also because one of the major problems at the time of its introduction was the production of a sufficient quantity to meet the estimated demand. Any Post Office insistence on the use of a 'By Air Mail' indication requiring a two-colour printing process would not have been welcomed by the printers! Only one of the applicants for approval to print a private version of the standard form appears to have produced one bearing a facsimile of the air mail label: Armstrong Siddeley Motors Ltd, who printed from 1948 under No. 71995/32.

Another unusual variety were the forms printed by Pirie, Appleton & Co Ltd from 1955. Inexplicably, these were printed under 'licence' No 91; and their 'By Air Mail' indication formed not

the reverse-letters type used hitherto; but a version of the more decorative design used on the Post Office's new standard version (based on the 1953 Coronation airletter) introduced in 1954. In 1962 they also obtained the Postmaster General's approval to add the words 'Air Line Aerogrammes' on a new version of No 91 (91A) and to add 'Imperial Air Mail Aerogrammes' on their forms printed under No 71995/2E.

At first, the air letter forms sold at post offices came with an adhesive postage stamp; but from 1943 they began to bear an imprinted 6d stamp. By October 1944, however, with the introduction of a civilian air letter service, the Post Office came under pressure to provide un-stamped forms. Unable to concede, it began to recommend to firms with a heavy usage that they should consider using their own privately-printed forms instead. Opacity remained important. It had to be sufficient to ensure that writing or printing of the firm's letter-headings etc on the inside would not show through and interfere with the sorter's easy reading of the address. Shading or stippling was permissible; but this had to cover the whole of the address side, leaving no blank space for the stamp, and could not be darker in tone than the official form.

By 1956 some 70 firms obtained the Postmaster General's approval to print, or have printed, such forms for their own use. Each such approval (or failed application even) was given a unique serial number under the registration prefix 71995. Unstamped airletter forms, for sale in stationers' shops, were also being produced by Dickinsons (No 1, from 1943); Pirie, Appleton & Co Ltd (No 2, from 1943); McCorquodale & Co Ltd (No 4, from 1945); Messent & Bond Ltd (No 30, from 1948); Kenrick and Jefferson (No 50, from 1949); and Waddie & Co Ltd (No 52, from 1950).

To date, many thousands of such private airletter forms have been registered at the Post Office, printed and sent to places overseas through a wide variety of firms' etc business correspondence, firms and organisations as diverse as the Mansfield Shoe Co (No 8, from 1945) the BBC (No 19, from 1946); and even Cunard White Star Ltd (No 60, from 1949), with its airletter forms specially printed for use as ships' stationery by passengers of RMS *Queen Elizabeth*. Many more would have been bought at stationers' shops by the general public for sending overseas. How many have survived, I wonder, in the countries of their destination, perhaps unrecognised by collectors overseas as interesting examples of British 'postal' stationery, or even mistaken, because of their endorsement 'Approved by the Postmaster General', as ordinary official airletter forms? Official



Airletter form approved for use by Armstrong Siddeley Motors Ltd as No 71995/32 and bearing a perhaps unique air mail label facsimile. March 1948

or not in the accepted sense, they have a unique interest of their own, if only for their variety and because their origin lies in the British Post Office's efforts to speed heartening letters from home to our servicemen and women overseas in the dark days of World War II.

'The Early Days of the Postal Service'

A new booklet is now available from the National Postal Museum entitled 'The Early Days of the Postal Service' by Tony Gammons. This is a reprint of the series of five articles published in the *British Philatelic Bulletin* in the first half of this year which is now available in handy booklet form.

Highly acclaimed for its original research and the amount of new information it contains the booklet tells the story of the postal service in Great Britain from its origins in the late 15th century to the end of the mailcoach era.

The booklet, numbered BPB1, is 16pp in length with limp binding and costs £1 (plus 18p handling charge) from the National Postal Museum, King Edward Street, LONDON EC1A 1LP.

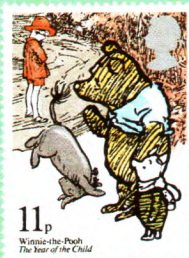
International Year of the Child, 1979

FRANCIS KENNEDY

British participation in the UN-sponsored International Year of the Child worldwide 'omnibus' issue resulted in four imaginative and attractive designs by Edward Hughes, then a part-time lecturer at Maidstone College of Art in Kent, with three previous sets of stamp designs to his credit.

Mr Hughes appropriately drew on classics among children's books for his subjects which were: — 9p, Peter Rabbit, Jemima Puddleduck, the Fox and Squirrel Nutkin, from *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* by Beatrix Potter; 10½p, Toad of Toad Hall, Mole, Rat and Mr Badger, from Kenneth Grahame's *Wind in the Willows*; 11p, Winnie-the-Pooh, Eeyore the donkey,

the four of these stamps inscribed, 'ISSUED BY AUTHORITY OF THE BRITISH POST OFFICE' and '50P' in the sheet margin. This was a private production, printed by lithography, and had no postal validity. It was produced by a private individual who exceeded the permission given for reproduction of the stamps under strict conditions, which did not include the right to use the CEPT symbol (which also appeared in the sheet margin) or claim official status for the sheet. Other logos in the margins were those of the International Year of the Child, LUFTHANSA and War on Want, the last-named charity inadvertently lending its name and prestige to the product.



Owl, Piglet and Christopher Robin from *Winnie-the-Pooh* by AA Milne; 13p Alice, the Mad Hatter and the Cheshire Cat from the oldest of the four books, Lewis Carroll's everlasting, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, first published in 1865.

By drawing all the figures in outline and leaving the lower part of each stamp blank, the artist created an issue unique in British stamp designing and easy for children to identify the characters portrayed.

The required Queen's head, in silver, was unobtrusive and the small italic inscription, '*The Year of the Child*' established the occasion of the issue without the use of the obtrusive UN symbol used on other countries' stamps. Printing in photogravure, by Harrison's, was in sheets of 100. Quantities issued were: — 9p, 54,990,000; 10½p, 18,950,000; 11p, 18,400,000; 13p, 17,690,000.

Collectors should beware of a miniature sheet of

Commemorative Covers

'The Mexico' Lifeboat Disaster. Marking the centenary of the worst disaster to befall the lifeboat service, when in 1886 27 lifeboat men died while rescuing survivors from the barque *The Mexico* from Hamburg, is a cover dated 7 December (a Sunday) from Lytham St. Annes, Lancs. Serviced covers cost £1.50 (£2.70 signed by the artist) from RNLI Agents, PO Box 20, CANTERBURY CT1 2XX.

Forces. Marking the 45th anniversary of the raid on Vaagso, Norway, a cover will be serviced on 27 December with a handstamp showing the badge of HMS *Kenya*. Bearing the Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference stamp it will cost £1.10. Orders (with cheques made payable to FAA Museum) to RN Philatelic Officer, FAA Museum, RNAS Yeovilton, SOMERSET BA22 8HT.

A Happy Christmas – Via the Post Box

IAN G WILKINSON

As the Publications Officer of The Letter Box Study Group, I suppose it's not surprising that I collect all forms of ephemera depicting letter boxes. And one of my favourite themes is letter boxes on Christmas cards.

In late Victorian/early Edwardian times when such a high percentage of the population were away from home 'in service', their only means of contacting their loved ones was often via the post. There were, of course, no telephones in those days and many could not afford to use public transport — even if they had sufficient time-off to make a journey home. With postage down to one penny for a letter and a halfpenny for a postcard, this had to be their best means of communication and, as the postcard collecting fraternity know, many millions of cards were sent at that time. As most of these would have been posted in street letter boxes, it is not surprising that the pillar box should appear quite frequently on cards at that time.

Could the housemaid in the service of some city household have ever imagined that the card she sent to her boyfriend in the army would end up, some eighty years later, as the treasured possession of a collector like me?



Fig. 1



Fig. 2

The popularity of the letter box as an illustration on greetings cards seems to have waned since those days although I'm glad to say that it appears to be coming back into vogue. Over the past few years the number of cards I have found depicting letter boxes has increased year by year and a most rewarding collection can be formed from modern cards — with the addition of older ones as and when they turn up to add a bit more interest.

In the spirit of 'Christmas Present' and through the courtesy of your Editor, I am pleased to be able to share with you some of my favourite cards from 'Christmas's Past'.

The first (Fig 1) is a card cut to the shape of a pillar box and in place of the Times of Collection plate, there is a picture of a dog playing a barrel organ upon the front of which is the plea "Kind friends please pity the poor blind" and in the foreground is a kitten with a notice round its neck reading "Born



Fig. 3



Fig. 4

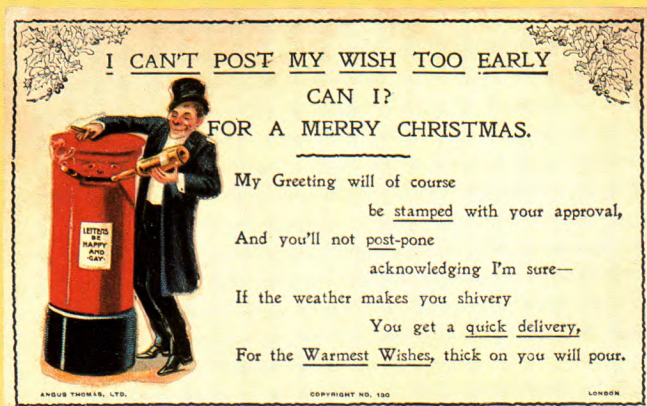


Fig. 5

Blind” — a bit of humour typical of the time. As will be seen, the ‘Next Collection’ tablet reads December 25th and inside there is a printed Christmas message dated 1911.

There is not a lot one can say about this pretty little card (Fig 2) other than, what happened to the colour of the pillar box? Many of the coloured cards of this period were printed in Germany and their pillar boxes were blue at that time. So I assume that the artist had seen an illustration of a British pillar box in black and white and thought that our boxes, like theirs, were also blue. Besides the word ‘POST’ above the aperture, the design is nothing like any German box that I have seen illustrated so I don’t think it is a card produced for sale in Germany that got used over here. The message on the back reads “For Lalla — with Aunties Love” and this message, coupled with the size of the card, tells us that this was a child’s Christmas card. Quite a number of the cards that I have depicting letter boxes seem to have been designed especially for children, like the next one (Fig 3).

The card bears a very simple message on the back in a child’s writing “From Ernest to Doris” and the legend on the back of the mail van on the picture side reads “Christmas Presents from Toyland”. You can imagine the delight of little Doris when she opened the flap on the mail van to reveal a concertina pull-out showing, not seaside views as is usual with cards like this, but twelve little pictures in full colour

of party games. There’s Postman’s Knock (what else?), Hunt the Slipper, Musical chairs, Ring-o-Roses to name just a few — and one called ‘Snapdragon’. I wonder how many readers have ever heard of this, let alone played it. My dictionary tells me that it was a game of snatching raisins from a dish of burning brandy! I don’t think many of today’s Mums would be very happy about their little ones playing this (or indeed Dad seeing his brandy being used in this way).

Next we have another postcard (Fig 4) which, besides the greeting ‘MERRY XMAS’ carries the caption “Can’t stop to write. Last post just going”. This was possibly truer than the artist knew as the postmark on the other side reads “12.15am DE 25 07” and no doubt it was delivered later on Christmas morning. Lets hope so as the message starts “Dear Miss..... Couldn’t exist if I didn’t send you a card...” Christmas day cancellations are always nice to find, and doubly so when tied to a Christmas card.

The card (Fig 5) is not a postcard although it has the same proportions. The illustration is not printed on the card but is a ‘scrap’ stuck on to it and as there is no printing on the other side, this would almost certainly have been sent enclosed in an envelope.

This little picture shows a man who obviously had a great love of pillar boxes — so much so that he



Fig. 6A



Fig. 6B



Fig. 6C

was prepared to share his cigars and whisky with one (I know many members of the Letter Box Study Group who have a considerable affection for pillar boxes but none who would go this far!). The card is full of puns and I particularly like the wording on the Times of Collection plate "LETTERS BE HAPPY AND GAY" which was, of course, written long before the word had a double meaning. The rhyme reads —

My Greeting will of course be *stamped* with your approval

And you'll not *post*-pone acknowledging I'm sure —

If the weather makes you shivery, You get a *quick delivery*

For the *Warmest Wishes* thick on you will pour.

As will be seen, the italics are theirs, not mine.

And finally we come to what must be my favourite card. It is another one that is cut to the shape of a pillar box and seems to be overflowing with Christmas mail (Fig 6A). When one pulls the riband at the top, the letters and postcards pop back out of the box (Fig 6B) to reveal the fact that they all have tiny replicas of actual Victorian stamps on them — including postal stationery items. And if you pull the riband just a little harder, the centre letters fall forward to delight us with a further treat (Fig 6C) — a reproduction of a Victorian postal order! On this one can just about make out the date on the

cancellation which appears to be DE 88 and I'm fairly sure that this is about the time this delightful card was produced.

Perhaps I can finish by wishing you the same greeting that is printed around the roof of this box —

Whatsoever Time may bear thee,
May kind Heav'n all joys bestow,
May thy hearts desire be granted,
May thy hopes fruition know.

Details of membership of the Letter Box Study Group may be obtained by sending an SAE to: The Secretary, 43 Miall Road, Hall Green, BIRMINGHAM B28 9BS.

New Cylinders and Plates

Recent printings of National and Country definitives have taken place from the following cylinders and plates.

By Harrisons (sheets and rolls)

- 12p cylinder 13 (phosphor 18)
- 13p cylinder 14 (phosphor 18)
- 17p cylinders 13, 15
- 18p cylinder 4
- 24p cylinder 1
- 28p ACP cylinder 1
- 50p cylinder 21
- £1.50 cylinders 1A3B
- 18p roll longways cylinder B2
- 12p SA roll cylinder R1 (phosphor R14)
- 13p SB roll cylinder R1 (phosphor R13)

By Harrisons (stamp books)

- 50p first class cylinders B21 B4 B30 (phos B69)
(1p, 13p, 18p) B21 B4 B31 (phos B69)
- 50p second class cylinders B1 B24 B32 (phos B68)
(1p, 5p, 13p) B1 B27 B32 (phos B68)
- £1 first class cylinders B5 B26 (phos B70)
(13p, 18p)
- £1.30 (13p) cylinders B12 (phos B62)
B12 (phos B65)
B13 (phos B62)
- £1.70 (17p) cylinder B22
- £1.80 (18p) cylinders B1, B2

By Questa

- 2p plates Q13/Q14
- 5p plates Q15/Q16
- 75p Coated Papers Ltd paper, plates Q5/Q6
- 13p Scottish plates Q1 Q1/Q2 Q2
- 18p Scottish plates Q1 Q1/Q2 Q2
- 13p Northern Ireland plates Q1 Q1/Q2 Q2
- 18p Northern Ireland plates Q1 Q1/Q2 Q2

The Genesis of the Machin Design

Part 6

DON STADDON

Out of the decision to have a design with a corsage came the final cast, and one only, from which all of the stamp variations have been derived. It is one of nine plaster casts which have been identified, six of which are at Harrisons but which are likely to join the three already transferred to the National Postal Museum.

One cast has the background blackened with graphite in an unsuccessful attempt to strengthen the appearance of the head. The contrast was found to be too great. Another cast was prepared for special stamps only.

The finally approved cast was all white, and there were literally hundreds of photographs taken by a Kodak 10" x 8" film pack camera still at the printers.

From these a final master positive was chosen and approved for stamp production purposes. This positive has been preserved, and is still available for use if and when necessary.



The final cast as used for the issued stamps.

Essays with the third portrait head and alternative layouts recommended to the Queen in February 1967.



Final essays proofed in blocks of four, regarded as the finest Machins ever printed. (The 1d is in an unadopted colour.)





Essays for Queen's head for commemoratives — large cameo head.



Plaster cast for the head for commemoratives with the surround blackened.

Bromides taken from the master positive were found to need some retouching — to darken the background, to eliminate a blemish on the cheek which was said to look like a football, and to strengthen various aspects of the diadem, lips and jaw outline. The stamp values were not sculpted, but stepped in separately.



Small cameo head essays, plain and embossed.



Medium cameo head essays, supplied by Harrisons on 5 December 1967.

Variation to 13p Definitives

Following the successful trial of a new phosphor ink on 12p definitives, the phosphor is also to be used on 13p stamps.

The new ink should overcome the discolouration problem previously encountered, which was caused by the solvent in the phosphor 'dissolving' the coloured stamp ink, thus tinting the phosphor ink and affecting the printability. The phosphor mix used in the new ink is exactly the same as that used

for ACP paper and will be gradually introduced on 13p sheet, book and coil stamps as reprints are required.

The 13p stamps, printed by Harrison & Sons Ltd. in photogravure and bearing the new phosphor, will be available initially from 27 January 1987 from philatelic counters or by post from the British Philatelic Bureau, 20 Brandon St., EDINBURGH EH3 5TT.

As the stamps are not regarded as new issues no official first day of issue facilities will be offered.

Philatelic Terms Explained

KENNETH F CHAPMAN

No. 7 Combination Covers

Before the advent, in 1874, of the General Postal Union (later, the Universal Postal Union) adhesive stamps issued by countries which had followed the example of Great Britain were only valid for use within the boundaries of the issuing country. There were very few exceptions, these being the result of bi-lateral postal treaties between neighbouring countries who accepted one another's stamps as fully prepaying letters to their destinations. Another example was the treaty between France and Great Britain which brought about Britain's first letterpress-printed stamp, the 4d of 1855, to frank letters for delivery in France; and, of course, Britain reciprocated by accepting French adhesives on letters.

Apart from these exceptions, letters for delivery abroad had to be franked with stamps of the home country and stamps of the country of destination. Envelopes bearing, *in these circumstances*, the stamps of two countries are known as combination covers. They represent an interesting stage of pre-UPU

postal history. Once the UPU was established, all member countries contracted to accept mail bearing government-issued adhesives as franked to destination in any other member country.

There remained exceptions among the comparatively few non-UPU nations, such as Nepal whose outgoing foreign mail was mailed through India. The latter country could insist on Indian stamps to the full rate, applicable as if the letter had been posted in India. These conditions applied until Nepal joined the UPU in 1959.

Examples of combination covers occur in South and Central America where British consulates added British stamps to any letters franked with national stamps and addressed via the consulate to addresses in Great Britain. Letters handed in to the consulates by the senders only required British and, therefore, are *not* combination covers although they are interesting examples of British stamps correctly used abroad.

Not all dual frankings are classed as combination covers. For instance, prior to the formation of the Union of South Africa, each province issued its own stamps — Cape of Good Hope, Natal, Orange River Colony and Transvaal. All these became valid for use in any part of the Union from 31 May 1910, until new Union definitives became available. Letters posted in, say, the Cape could be franked with stamps of Orange River Colony and Transvaal. Stamps thus used are known as 'inter-provincials' but the covers merely bear 'mixed frankings' and do not rate as combination covers.

Gems from the RM Phillips Collection

140. The Early Letterpress Era

An essay for the 1856 1s value, the ornamentation between the words and in the corners being different from the approved design.

This item can be seen in Frame 20 of the open display of the RM Phillips collection at the National Postal Museum during normal hours — 9.30am to 4.30pm Monday to Thursday and 9.30am to 4.00pm on Fridays.



National Postal Museum Cards for 1987

The provisional programme of postcards to be issued by the National Postal Museum in 1987 was given in the September *Bulletin* (page 20). Since then the Museum has been giving some more thought to its issuing policy and has decided to make some fundamental changes. In future, cards will be issued in sets of three and will relate closely to the Museum's collections or to major exhibitions at the Museum. There will be three such issues in 1987, starting with three cards commemorating the 1887 so-called 'Jubilee' issue and tied in with the major exhibition which the Museum will be opening in January. The other two sets are planned to appear in May and September. Details will be given in future *Bulletins*. These cards will be on sale for more than one year.

Please note that as from 2 January 1987, there will be a minimum mail order of 60p plus handling charge (18p) for items ordered from the Museum.

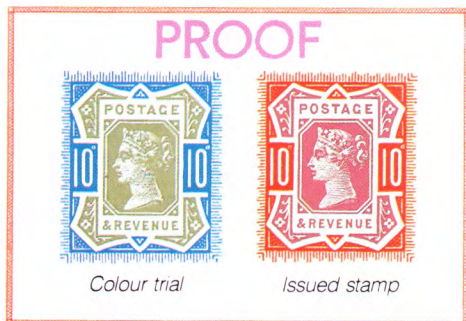
STAN GORON

NPM Cards for Victoria's "Jubilee" Issue

On 6 January the National Postal Museum will issue a set of three cards numbered 87/1, 87/2 and 87/3. They will feature the 2d, 10d and 1s values from the 1887 so-called 'Jubilee' issue. Each card will show an issued stamp together with one of the colour trials for that value.

The set of cards will cost 60p (plus 18p handling charge) and will be available from the National Postal Museum, KEB, King Edward St., LONDON EC1A 1LP.

A special handstamp will be in use from 6 January till the end of 1987 marking the exhibition on show at the Museum — Queen Victoria's Jubilee 1887. This will feature the Victorian Royal Cypher as used on pillar boxes and this was in fact introduced in 1887 to replace the existing series of boxes which had blank cases.



Although the exhibition and special handstamp will cease at the end of the year, the cards will remain on sale.

NPM Exhibition for Queen Victoria's Jubilee

To commemorate the centenary of Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee the National Postal Museum is devoting the major part of its main exhibition for 1987 to the 'Jubilee' stamp issue of 1887. The exhibition will also show some of the changes in, and introductions to, the postal services that took place in the Jubilee year. As detailed elsewhere a set of three cards will be issued and a special handstamp will be in use. A more detailed description of the exhibition will appear in a later *Bulletin*.



December Digest

Issued in December

- 2 December **Christmas discount 12p stamp**
designer: Lynda Gray
printing: Harrisons, photogravure, 41mm x 30mm, perf. 15 x 14, sheets 100, PVA Dextrin gum, one central phosphor bar
No Bureau alternative f.d. handstamp, presentation pack or PHQ card
- 2 December **Christmas discount pack £4.30**, containing 36 x 13p Christmas stamps
printing: Harrisons, photogravure, perf. 15 x 14 in sheetlets of 2 panes of 18, PVA Dextrin gum, one central phosphor bar, on starred paper.
- 2 December **Discount stamp book £1.20**, containing 10 x 13p definitives
printing: Harrisons, photogravure, on starred paper

Withdrawn in December

- 24 December **All the above discount items.**

More Details of the 1987 Programme

Flowers, Sir Isaac Newton, architecture, the St. John Ambulance Brigade, Scottish Heraldry, Victorian Britain and studio pottery are all special stamp topics to be issued next year.

The first special issue of the year will show popular cultivated flowers, details of which appear elsewhere in this *Bulletin*.

On 24 March famous works by **Sir Isaac Newton** are illustrated on four stamps commemorating the 300th anniversary of the publication of his *Philosophiae Naturalis Principia Mathematica* (Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy) in which he established the universal law of gravitation. The stamps feature the *Principia* and the titles of his other works — *Motion of Bodies in Ellipses*, *Opticks* and the *System of the World* — and were designed by Sarah Goodwin, winner of the Royal Society of Arts Bursary competition two years ago which was for this postage stamp design. These stamps are the first she has designed for The Post Office.

British Architects in Europe is the subject of stamps being issued on 12 May to reflect the annual Europa stamps theme recommended by the Conference of European Posts and Telecommunications — 'Modern Arts, with the emphasis on Architecture'. Designs are by the London illustration studio Minale Tattersfield and show work by important British architects in Britain and Europe. These are the Staatsgalerie, Stuttgart (Stirling and Wilford); the Pompidou Centre, Paris (Rogers and Piano); the Willis Faber & Dumas building, Ipswich (Foster) and the European Investment Bank, Luxembourg (Lasdun).

Next year is the centenary of the **St. John Ambulance Brigade** and four stamps designed by Debbie Cook, her first for the Post Office, will be issued on 16 June. They illustrate 100 years of the Brigade at work in various ways: the first stretcher carrier in 1887; the Blitz of World War II; a pop concert in the 1960s and the transport of transplant organs in the 1980s.

Jeffery Matthews has designed the **Scottish Heraldry** stamps to go on sale on 21 July. These are in the same format as the Heraldry stamps of 1984, also designed by Jeffery Matthews. This set is being issued to coincide with the tercentenary of the revival of the Order of the Thistle, an ancient of chivalry. The stamps show the arms of the Lord Lyon King of Arms; the arms of the Royal Society of Edinburgh; the arms of the Royal Scottish Academy of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture; and the arms of the Duke of Rothesay (Prince Charles).

Many aspects of **Victorian Britain** are featured

on a set of four stamps being issued on 8 September to mark the 150th anniversary of Queen Victoria's accession (and of course the centenary of her Golden Jubilee). Among key elements and events of Victorian life included in the designs are Landseer's painting *Monarch of the Glen*; the Great Exhibition; Grace Darling's rescue; the launching of Brunel's *Great Eastern* steamship; Mrs Beeton's *Book of Household Management*; Prince Albert Memorial; Disraeli; and the Boer War. Each of the stamps designed by the Carroll and Dempsey studio also include a different portrait of Queen Victoria.

Stamps featuring **studio pottery** to be issued on 13 October will celebrate the centenary of the birth of Bernard Leach, a key figure in the revival of studio pottery in Britain. Designs will be taken from photographs by Tony Evans, the first time he has designed stamps.

The 1987 **Christmas** stamps, to be issued on 17 November, will reflect a secular theme. More details of this will be announced later.

PO Archives Xmas Closing

Over the Christmas period Post Office Archives will be closed on and from 24 December to reopen on Tuesday 31 December. On New Year's Day it will also be closed. The National Postal Museum will only be closed on public holidays.

British Philatelic Bulletin

Editor Douglas N. Muir

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