

BRITISH PHILATELIC

The ROYAL MAIL magazine *for stamp collectors*

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Bulletin

Mythical Creatures • Wales •
A London travel collection

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Forthcoming issues and withdrawals



Cover The 1st class Country definitive for Wales, featuring the Welsh dragon, is one of four stamps included in the Celebrating Wales miniature sheet issued this month. The sheet was previewed in the November *Bulletin*.

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

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

4 February	Withdrawal Working Dogs stamps, presentation pack and stamp cards
12 February	Issue Darwin stamps, miniature sheet, prestige book, stamp cards, press sheet, Theory of Evolution coin cover
17 February	Issue Definitives with security features: 2nd and 1st class standard, 2nd and 1st class 'Large', 50p, £1, £1.50, £2, £3 and £5; presentation packs (2)
26 February	Issue Celebrating Wales miniature sheet, presentation pack and stamp cards (5)
27 February	Withdrawal Monarchs (Lancaster & York) press sheet • Smilers book (issued 17 October 2006)
2 March	Issue Concorde generic sheet; Concorde medal cover
10 March	Issue Pioneers of the Industrial Revolution stamps, presentation pack and stamp cards
10 March	Issue British Design Classics stamp book No 1 – Telephone Kiosk and Routemaster Bus stamps and 4 × 1st definitives
12 March	Withdrawal Mayday – Rescue at Sea stamps, presentation pack and stamp cards
17 March	Issue Northern Ireland Castles generic sheet
31 March	Issue New definitive & Country stamps • Definitives with security features: business sheets of 100 1st, 2nd, business sheets of 50 Large 1st, Large 2nd; NVI books – 6 × 1st, 12 × 1st, 12 × 2nd, 4 × Large 1st, 4 × Large 2nd
31 March	Withdrawal Country stamps 48p & 78p for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, and pack containing these stamps

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

NPS seminar For details and booking forms, send a SAE to Christopher Oliver, National Philatelic Society, c/o British Postal Museum & Archive, Freeling House, Phoenix Place, London WC1X 0DL or visit www.ukphilately.org.uk/ nps where a booking form is also available.

NPS membership Enquiries to Peter Mellor, Honorary General Secretary; telephone 020 7239 2571; email nps@ukphilately.org.uk

NPS computer seminar A day-long seminar on computers and philately is to be held on Saturday 7 March 2009. A hands-on guide to using your computer to enhance your philatelic collection, this seminar will be held at 20-21, Arcadia Avenue, London N3 (near Finchley Central underground station) commencing at 10.30 and finishing at about 16.00. A location map will be provided to those attending.

Computers are becoming an essential tool in research and writing-up collections. The seminar is aimed at improving skills in these areas, and will be based on Microsoft Word for Windows, use of the Internet, and simple graphics. It is not intended for absolute beginners, but for those who have some knowledge and who wish to expand it. Chris King will lead this tutorial seminar, which is limited to twelve places on a first-come first-served basis. Chris is a philatelist who is a member of a number of philatelic societies, including the National, both in this country and overseas. He organised the database for ABPS Croydon 2007; ABPS Harrogate 2008 and will do so again for London 2010 to ensure that both competition entrants and judges have the best possible electronic back-up at these shows.

The cost, including coffee and lunch is £8 for National Philatelic Society members and £10 for others. Places are limited and the deadline for application is 12 February 2009. For further details and a booking form, please send a stamped addressed envelope to Christopher Oliver, at the address given at left •

StampExpo enquiries visit www.stampexpo400.org

StampExpo 400 The 2009 Hudson-Fulton-Champlain Quadricentennial Stamp Exposition (StampExpo 400) takes place from 25-27 September 2009 on the Empire State Plaza Concourse beneath the legislative buildings in Albany, New York. StampExpo 400 is expected to be one of the largest philatelic shows on the continent in 2009. In addition to the planned 200 frames of competitive philatelic exhibits, a national literature competition and cachet competition will also be held. Court of Honour displays will feature items from the Smithsonian National Postal Museum and other notable collections. More than 80 dealers from the US, Canada, Great Britain and France are already confirmed, with space available for more than twice that number. The US Postal Service and United Nations Postal Administration will be in attendance, along with several other postal authorities •

'Celebrate America' Youth Contest The American Topical Association has announced a new contest based on the fact that stamps of the USA tell the story of its nation – its history, people, culture and landscapes. Youth are asked to create a one-page mini-exhibit about some aspect of the United States. Only stamps, covers and other philatelic material from the USA can be used. The page must have a title and either captions or a short write-up to tell the story. ►

Each entry must have the following information on the back of the exhibit page: the full name and mailing address (either home or school), and age. Prizes will be given in each of the following four age groups: 8 and younger; 9-10; 11-12; and 13 and older. The contest is open to foreign youth as well, but only US material can be used. Entries are limited to one per child. The one-page mini-exhibit will be judged on knowledge of subject/ topic, creativity, originality, neatness, arrangement, and write-up. First, second and third place prizes will be awarded in each of the age groups. Special prizes will be awarded for the most unique topic (theme) and the most informative text.

Only a photocopy of the page should be sent. Do not send the original mini-exhibit. Colour photocopies are preferred, but not necessary. These will not be returned. Winners will be announced in the philatelic media, *Topical Time*, and on the ATA website (www.american-topical-assn.org) following the National Topical Stamp Show on 12-14 June 2009. The deadline for receiving the contest entries is 15 May 2009. Send this to MaryAnn Bowman, PO Box 1451, Waukesha, WI 53187, USA.

The American Topical Association has announced the venues for the ATA National Topical Stamp Shows in 2010 and 2011. NTSS 10 will be held at the Crowne Plaza Denver International Airport Convention Center on 25-27 June 2010, and NTSS 11 at the Sheraton Milwaukee Brookfield Hotel on 24-26 June 2011. NTSS 09 will be held in Dayton, Ohio at the Dayton Convention Center on 12-14 June 2009 and will recognize the 60th anniversary of the ATA •

NTSS enquiries: Write to PO Box 57, Arlington, TX 76004-0057 USA, see website www.american-topical-assn.org or email american-topical@msn.com



Shown here are two of four stamps to be issued by Jersey Post on 10 February, to celebrate the 400th anniversary of Galileo Galilei's first telescopic observatory. This issue is Jersey Post's contribution to this year's Europa theme of Astronomy, so the Europa logo appears on two stamps. The stamps are designed by Jennifer Toombs, and printed in litho by Cartor Security Printing. Shown actual size.

Midpex thematic competitions The annual competitions organised by the Friends of Thematica will be staged as part of Midpex, at Xcel Leisure Centre, Mitchell Avenue, Canley, Coventry on 11 July. There are four competitions: the John Fosbery Thematic Trophy, for those who have not previously won a 'national' medal for thematic philately, requiring 16 sheets; British Thematic Association Trophy (32 sheets), judged to the 'national' rules for thematic philately; Inter-Federation Thematic (16 pages), entered by a Federation of a theme difficult to expand beyond 16 pages, or from a newcomer to competitive exhibiting; and Barclays Cup Young Collectors, in which originality is the keynote, divided into three age groups – up to 8 years (four pages), 9-12 years (eight pages), and 13-18 years (16 pages). For details and an entry form, write to Brian Sole (address given at right) •

Midpex competitions Entry forms and details from: Brian Sole, 3 Stockfield Road, Claygate, Esher, KT10 0QG. Applications to be returned by 15 May.



Friends of the BPMA Enquire to Avice Harms, Membership Secretary, Friends of the BPMA, 13 Amethyst Avenue, Davis Estate, Chatham ME5 9TX.

Membership is £15 (UK), £20 (overseas) per year. Cheques should be made payable to 'The Friends of the BPMA'.

Cross Post This journal appears twice yearly, ably edited for the Friends of the British Postal Museum & Archive by *Bulletin* contributor Richard West. The latest issue comprises 52 A4-sized full-colour pages on high quality paper, and it is full of interesting features, as is always the case.

The Autumn issue has a major 17-page article by Julian Stray entitled 'A New Shape for a British Icon', telling the story of the square pillar boxes introduced by the Post Office down the years, with emphasis on the more recent boxes of late '60s vintage. It is a fascinating story which has never previously been told and, naturally enough, with Julian being a curator at the BPMA he used the many archival resources at his disposal to great effect.

Other articles are of no less merit, comprising war heroes of the Post Office, the two-tier postal system, items added to BPMA collections, an interview with Royal Mail's Head of Stamp Production, news from Friends and the BPMA, book reviews and letters – surely something for everyone.

I am of the opinion that membership of the Friends would be worthwhile even if *Cross Post* was the only membership benefit, but it is not, as members also receive the BPMA quarterly Newsletter for free, plus annual events guide, 15% discount on tickets to BPMA paid events, 15% discount on BPMA shop products, special BPMA events arranged exclusively for the Friends including private views of exhibitions, and opportunities to volunteer and see behind the scenes at the BPMA.

Now that the exciting news about the Swindon relocation is in the public domain, there can surely be no better time to join the growing ranks of the Friends, for lack of concrete plans for a museum has previously been cited as the reason for not joining ●

SAPO profit The South African Post Office (SAPO) has been recognised as a Super Brand, an achievement most companies aspire to. Compared with Africa, which has one post office per 50,000 people, SAPO aims to have one outlet per 10,000 people, so its number of post offices is growing year-on-year, bucking the trend of many postal administrations now reducing the number of offices. A 7% rise in revenue and a 12% growth in profit before tax in the latest financial year, has resulted in a profit margin of over 10%.

The only worrying aspect of their operations seems to be postal theft, as highlighted in a recent Amazon case. Only 93% of mail is currently being delivered, so they are making strides in upping investment in security equipment including cameras and have set aside £50 million (£3.34 million) towards this in the next financial year. They are also actively engaging their staff to work in helping to stamp out the theft ●

Darwin exhibition An exhibition at the Natural History Museum in London includes hair from Darwin's beard, and two mockingbirds believed to have prompted his theory of evolution. Now on, until 19 April ●

Philatelic Bulletin donations Many thanks to all the readers who so kindly responded to my request on behalf of an overseas philatelic library for a back issue of the *Bulletin* of November 2004 to complete its collection ●

War memorials The first full register of more than 300 war memorials honouring the sacrifices of Royal Mail employees who lost their lives has now been published.

The war memorials project was funded by Royal Mail and coordinated by the BPMA. Information about the location of memorials was taken from building surveys undertaken on behalf of Royal Mail's estates department, supplemented by information supplied by Royal Mail staff in response to appeals. As a starting point, the database sets out to record the existence and location of each memorial and, where possible, an image. However, as time goes on, it is hoped to build the information base so that it includes the names listed on the monument, the inscription, the date and if possible even the stories of some of those honoured.

Royal Mail is, second only to the Church, the largest custodian of war memorials in the country. This reflects the heavy involvement in each war of the then General Post Office. An estimated 85,000 GPO staff fought in the Great War and 8,500 lost their lives ●

Royal Mail news New issues and products

New postal rates New postal rates will come into effect on 6 April. Basic 1st and 2nd class inland rates (standard size to 100g) will increase to 39p and 30p, letters to Europe (up to 20g) 56p, and worldwide airmail to 62p (10g) and 90p (20g).

Four new definitives will go on sale on 31 March – 17p olive green, 22p stone, 62p red and 90p ultramarine, also new 56p and 90p country stamps in existing 50p and 81p designs. Further details next month.

The new rates affect the values of the Tudor Monarchs set to be issued on 21 April. The values will now be 1st, 62p and 81p. The prices for this issue will now be: mint set £3.64; presentation pack £6.75; miniature sheet £2.58, FDC stamps £4.95 UK, £4.31 overseas; FDC miniature sheet £3.43 UK, £2.99 overseas.

The prices for the Endangered Species/Plants issue (19 May) will now be: set of stamps £3.90; presentation pack £7.00; FDC £4.95 UK, £4.31 overseas; FDC miniature sheet £3.43 UK, £2.99 overseas ●

VAT changes The reduction in VAT in December results in changes to the prices of the Pioneers of the Industrial Revolution issue (17 March). The FDC for UK customers will be £5.39, overseas £4.69. Stamp cards will be £3.12 for the set ●

2009 issues Details of this month's special stamps – Charles Darwin (12 February) and Celebrating Wales miniature sheet (26 February) – were given here in October and November 2008 respectively. The colours and cylinders for the Darwin stamps are: D1 black D1 cyan (blue) D1 yellow D1 magenta D1 phosphor. This month (pages 176-77) we preview the Mythical Creatures stamps for issue in June ●



Above: the Concorde medal cover (2 March), and Theory of Evolution coin cover (12 February).

Coin and medal covers A 'Theory of Evolution' coin cover, bearing the Darwin stamps cancelled by a special Down House postmark, will be available from 12 February, price £19.53. Down House was Darwin's home from the 1840s until his death in 1882.

A Concorde medal cover, on sale from 2 March, marks the 40th anniversary of the first flight, of Concorde 001. It is a limited edition of 12,500, price £14.63. Designed by Neon, the cover features the aircraft on the tarmac after an early test flight. A filler card gives a brief history of the famous aircraft, from early studies for long-range supersonic airliners to the final commercial flight in 2003. It also provides some fascinating Concorde statistics, for example its 25.55m wingspan is much less than conventional subsonic aircraft – the radical 'ogee/ogival' wings caused large low-pressure vortices on the upper surfaces at low air speeds to maintain lift.

Two covers in our 2009 range are already on sale – shown here last month. An attractive Mini medal cover bears a pair of Classic Design Mini stamps cancelled by a special Longbridge postmark dated 13 January, price £14.63. The Robert Burns coin cover bears the miniature sheet cancelled by a special Alloway postmark of 22 January, price £15.17 •

Silver stamps The second in our new Silver Stamp Collection, reproducing the 48p Belfast Cathedral stamp of May 2008, is now available. Silver stamps, manufactured in 999 sterling silver by processes pioneered and patented by the Royal Dutch Mint, are supplied in a sealed blister to protect the high quality finish and help prevent tarnishing. Silver stamps are not valid for postage. The collection includes a card with two views of the cathedral and bearing the 48p Cathedral stamp cancelled by a special Belfast postmark for 27 January. Available from Tallents House, price £24.42. Limited edition of 3000. The next in the series, available from 28 April, reproduces the 50p Gloucester Cathedral stamp. Collectors placing a regular order for the collection will receive a booklet about Cathedral stamps and a collection box •



New Collection A Celebrating UK miniature sheet collection contains the England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland sheets in an attractive folder featuring images of the UK. Availability to be announced.

Coming off sale Any remaining stock of the Working Dogs issue will be withdrawn on 4 February. The Smilers stamp book, issued 17 October 2006, comes off sale on 27 February; this contains the New Baby, Best Wishes, Thank You, Balloons, Fireworks, and Champagne Bottle stamps, all with standard (non-elliptical) perfs. The Houses of Lancaster & York miniature sheet press sheet will also be withdrawn 27 February.

The Mayday Rescue at Sea stamps are to be withdrawn on 12 March. Eight country stamps go off-sale on 31 March – the 48p and 78p values for England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland issued on 27 March 2007. Also to be withdrawn is the pack containing these stamps •

Security features for definitive stamps Changes are being made to 1st and 2nd class standard and 'Large' definitive stamps, also the 50p, £1, £1.50, £2, £3, and £5 values. Future printings will be self-adhesive (except rolls), and will feature four small semi-circular slits within the stamp, which prevent the removal of stamps from envelopes. In addition, each will be printed with an iridescent ink security pattern inscribed 'ROYAL MAIL' on the darker background around the Queen's head. The stamps are printed in gravure by De La Rue in sheets of 50 and in stamp books (6 × 1st, 12 × 1st and 12 × 2nd standard, 4 × 1st and 4 × 2nd Large), business sheets of 100 2nd and 1st class standard and of 50 2nd and 1st class Large Letter stamps. The new sheet stamps go on sale on 17 February 2009 and the new business sheets and books on 31 March. Two presentation packs will be available, NV1 and 50p and £1 stamps, price £3.60, high value stamps price £12 •





BRITISH DESIGN CLASSICS – POSTCARD AND STAMP PACK

Inside this pack are ten postcards to accompany the ten First Class stamps, each showing an icon of British design.

From the classic lines of the Spitfire and the stylish chic of Mary Quant's daring mini skirt to the iconic red Routemaster bus and the unique London Underground map, some of the best design work of the 20th century has been created in Britain.

Whether you are a fashionista, a petrolhead or an aviation buff, there's something here for everyone.

Visit www.royalmail.com/stamps for further information on this and other products.

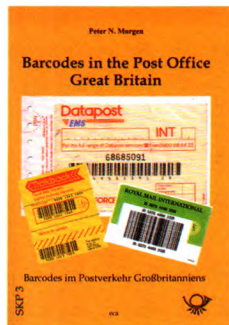
Stamps and Postcards pack A pack, containing the Design Classics stamps and a set of postcards showing the stamp designs against a Union Flag ('Union Jack') background, was issued on 13 January, price £6.19. The cards are larger than normal stamp cards, measuring 160 × 114mm. The pack also includes an informative filler card •



New Generic sheets The first of this year's generic sheets, entitled 'Design Classics – The Mini' is now available. It contains 20 1st class Mini stamps plus labels telling the story of this famous car and with evocative images of it and its enthusiastic drivers. Price £7.74. A second sheet, bearing 20 1st class Concorde stamps from the Design Classics set will be available from 2 March, marking the 40th anniversary of the first Concorde flight. Both Design Classics generic sheets are printed in litho by Cartor •

New stamp book series Three stamp books are to be issued containing Design Classics stamps and 1st class definitives (with security features). The first, containing four 1st class definitives and the Telephone Kiosk and Routemaster bus stamps will be available from 10 March, price £2.16. This is followed on 21 April by a book with two Mini stamps, and a third next year with Spitfire and Concorde. All self-adhesive, printed by Walsall •

Book review *Barcodes in the Post Office – Great Britain* (*Barcodes im Postverkehr Großbritannien*) by Peter N Morgen, has recently been published. Barcodes on their own are not the sexiest of things. On the other hand, they are applied to almost everything nowadays. In particular, they are applied to many Royal Mail forms and labels to enable the tracking of mail. This book lists and illustrates a vast number and great variety of these, mostly in colour, from the 1980s to the present day. Text throughout is in both English and German. As a compendium of envelopes and postal labels used by Royal Mail it is a remarkable achievement and will be useful to all collectors of such material. However, a bit of practice is needed in understanding the layout and author's numbering system to gain the most from it. Labels included are Datapost International, Parcel Force, Swiftair, Registered, Recorded, Special Delivery, Trakback with all their myriad variants, and also bag and service labels. 282 pages. Price 36 Euros in colour (26 Euros in black/white) from the address opposite ● *Douglas N. Muir*



Available from Peter N Morgen, Am Dorfanger 11, 12529 Schönefeld, Germany.

British Postal Museum & Archive Currently on show at the Museum is an exhibition marking the 50th anniversary of country (regional) stamps. The BPMA is open Monday to Wednesday and Friday 10.00-17.00, Thursday 10.00-19.00, also certain Saturdays – see website for dates and details of lectures and other events. The BPMA, located at Freeling House, Phoenix Place, London WC1X 0DL (near Mount Pleasant), contains the collections of the former National Postal Museum and Post Office Archives ●

BPMA For further information telephone 020 7239 2570, or see www.postalheritage.org.uk

2009 first day postmarks The special issues of the early part of 2009 are listed opposite, with the alternative first day of issue postmarks. Please note that the issue date for the Pioneers of the Industrial Revolution issue has been brought forward one week, from 17 to 10 March ●

12.02 Charles Darwin: Shrewsbury

26.02 Celebrating Wales miniature sheet: Tyddewi, St Davids

10.03 Industrial Revolution Pioneers: Steam Mills, Cinderford

21.04 Monarchs – House of Tudor: London SE10

19.05 Endangered Species – Plants: Kew, Richmond, Surrey

Submitting covers Readers are reminded that when submitting covers for special handstamps to Royal Mail's Special Handstamp Centres, the outer cover must bear full postage. Mail posted without payment, marked 'Free-post' (which does not apply to SHCs), or sent in the Royal Mail plastic 'see-through' envelopes used for the return of covers to collectors, may be subject to delay and refusal. Readers are also reminded that covers and cards submitted for handstamping must bear a return address – Royal Mail reserves the right to return any un-addressed items uncanceled. The address can be typed, handwritten (in ink or pencil), rubber-stamped, or by using an address label. However 'Post It' notes should not be used for this purpose as they can easily become detached.

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

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

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

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

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

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

February anniversaries

Below, bottom right: HM The Queen at the opening of the National Postal Museum, 19 February 1969. With her are Reginald M Phillips and John Stonehouse, the Postmaster General.

TWO IMPORTANT anniversaries fall this month. In February 1909 the first Philatelic Congress of Great Britain was held in Manchester. The 90th Congress returns to that city later this year. Shown below is a commercial cover (with an Edward VII 1d perfin stamp) cancelled by the 1909 Congress postmark. Martin Robinson wrote about Philatelic Congress postmarks and souvenirs in the *Bulletin* of July 2008.

Forty years ago, on 19 February 1969, HM The Queen opened the enlarged National Postal Museum at King Edward Building in London. KEB was home to the Museum from 1966 until 1998. The NPM collections are now part of the British Postal Museum & Archive, located at Freeling House, Mount Pleasant, London WC1. Shown below is a commemorative cover produced to mark the Royal opening and bearing the NPM's Maltese Cross postmark on its first day of use •



H.M. QUEEN ELIZABETH II



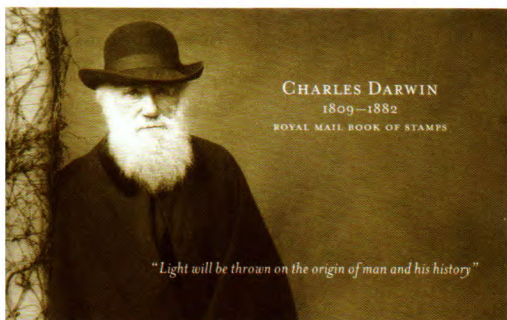
John Pickford:
Ty-
B;



The new Charles Darwin prestige book

A NEW BOOK, entitled *Charles Darwin 1809-1882*, is issued on 12 February. The book was designed by Howard Brown and printed by De La Rue; the Darwin stamps are gummed, as opposed to the sheet stamps, which are self-adhesive. The panes containing Darwin stamps are printed in gravure, the miniature sheet and definitive panes in litho. First day covers will be serviced bearing the label pane. The portrait of Darwin in the label pane is from the Natural History Museum and taken from a photo, taken in 1874, bound with Darwin's letters in the Museum's General Library. The colour has been added electronically. •

The prestige book goes on sale on 12 February, with the six Darwin stamps and the miniature sheet, shown in the October *Bulletin*.



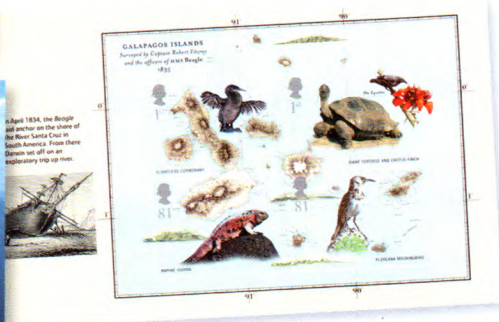
Darwin PSB The book contains four panes:

Pane 1 Darwin 48p, 50p and 56p stamps

Pane 2 Darwin miniature sheet

Pane 3 Darwin 1st, 72p and 81p stamps

Pane 4 Top row 5p, 10p and 48p definitives. Middle row two 1st class definitives separated by a Darwin label. Bottom row 48p, 10p and 5p definitives.



Charles Darwin A new issue celebrates the

In 1831 Darwin was appointed naturalist to the *Beagle* (right), during its five-year voyage of research in the South Seas.

HMS *Beagle* sails among the Galapagos Islands in October 1835.

Darwin later called the hydrographic voyage:

*"... by far the most important event in my life ...
[it] has determined my whole career."*



Six stamps, a miniature sheet, and a prestige book (above), go on sale on 12 February, the 200th anniversary of Charles Darwin's birth.

CHARLES DARWIN was born in Shrewsbury on 12 February 1809, the son of Robert Darwin, a physician, and a grandson of Erasmus Darwin, the botanist. He was educated at Shrewsbury, Edinburgh, and Christ's College, Cambridge. In 1831 he was appointed naturalist to the *Beagle*, which was to undertake a five-year voyage of scientific research in the South Seas. His journal of the geology and natural history of the various countries he visited was published in 1839. This was followed by the official record of the zoological observations made on the voyage.

During the course of his work on the voyage, Darwin was impressed by three discoveries: the similarities between fossil and recent animals in South America, the geographical distribution of animals in that continent, and the 'productions' of the Galapagos Islands, 'more especially by the manner in which they differ on each island of the group'. The Galapagos, a group of volcanic islands in the Pacific Ocean, are on the Equator 600 miles west of Ecuador. The land animals and plants which were able to colonise the islands had developed in isolation into new species, not only different from the nearby continent, but showing differences between the various islands.

The results of his work led Darwin to suspect that the many species of living creatures had been evolved or developed from slight differences in individuals, often resulting from differences in environment, which had been perpetuated and augmented in their descendants through the general struggle for existence, bringing about the survival of the fittest and a natural selection in breeding.

anniversary of the birth of the great naturalist



The Origin of a Naturalist

Charles Darwin's genetic inheritance equipped him perfectly for the great scientific revolution he triggered in his adult life – though in practice, his financial inheritance was just as important. Born at

The Mount, Shrewsbury, on 12 February 1809, Charles Robert Darwin came from a family that had no titles, but which was nonetheless part of a new aristocracy, one with fortunes founded in trade and industry. His father, Robert, was a physician to the area's wealthiest people, as well as being a shrewd investor. Charles's paternal grandfather, Erasmus Darwin, had been a poet, physician and a leading member of the legendary 'Lunar Society' of natural philosophers, inventors and businessmen. His poem

'The Temple of Nature' anticipated Charles's later ideas on evolution. Charles's mother, Susannah, was the eldest (and favourite) child of Josiah Wedgwood, another of the 'Lunatics'. Wedgwood had brought industrial production methods to the manufacture of pottery and had prospered fabulously as a result. Consequently, the joining together of the Darwin and Wedgwood families produced inquiring, active minds eager for knowledge, whether in pursuit of profit, or simply as an end in itself.



Above: Charles's grandfather, Erasmus Darwin (top) and Charles's father, Robert. **Left:** The Mount, Shrewsbury, where Charles was born in 1809.

"From my early youth I have had the strongest desire to understand or explain whatever I observed..."



In 1858 he had formulated his theory, but did not intend to present it to the scientific world until he had made further investigations. Then, learning that Alfred Wallace had arrived at similar conclusions, he presented, later in that year, both his and Wallace's papers to the Linnean Society. Wallace, informed of the coincidence of their theories, unselfishly stood aside, and in 1859 Darwin published his *On the Origin of Species*. After several more years of investigation and a huge accumulation of additional facts, he published, in 1868, *The Variation of Plants and Animals under Domestication*.

It was in 1871 however that Darwin published his best known work, *The Descent of Man*. The book aroused immediate and long-standing controversy, in that many non-scientific readers, in an age of strong religious belief, interpreted the Darwin theory as saying that men were descended from apes, whereas he merely held that, at some very remote period, men and apes had been evolved from a common ancestor of the anthropoid family.

Despite regular periods of ill health, he completed an amazing amount of work. Among his other books are, *The Expression of the Emotions in Men and Animals* (1872), *Insectivorous Plants* (1875), *The Power of Movement in Plants* (1880) and *The Formation of Vegetable Mould through the Action of Worms* (1881).

Darwin married his cousin Emma Wedgwood in 1839 and after a short period in London, spent the rest of his life at Downe in Kent. He died on 19 April 1882 and is buried in Westminster Abbey •



This article was published in the *Bulletin* in February 1982, coinciding with a stamp issue for the centenary of Darwin's death (above, top). The 26p stamp in the Scientists' Tale of the 1999 Millennium Series (above) commemorated his theory of evolution.

Mythical Creatures Our June special issue



SIX STAMPS depicting Mythical Creatures go on sale at Post Office branches and philatelic outlets and from Royal Mail Tallents House from 16 June. The stamps feature: Dragons and Unicorns (two 1st class), Giants and Pixies (two 62p), and Mermaids and Fairies (two 90p). The stamps are printed in separate sheets, not as se-tenant pairs. They were designed by Morgan Radcliffe using illustrations by Dave McKean, and printed in gravure by De La Rue Security Print. The stamps measure 35mm square (perf 14.5). Sheets of 25 will be supplied to Post Office branches and sheets of 50, with gutter margins, to Tallents House and Post Office philatelic outlets.

PHILATELIC PRODUCTS In the presentation pack, Neil Gaiman writes amusingly about the creatures shown on the stamps, including the King of Scotland's unicorn, which was left to run, tangle-maned and alone, across the highlands. The pack is designed and illustrated by Dave McKean.

The pictorial Tallents House and Dragonby postmarks will be shown in a future *Bulletin*.

FIRST DAY FACILITIES Orders for serviced FDCs must reach Tallents House (address below) by the date of issue. Collectors may send stamped covers on the day of issue to: Royal Mail Tallents House, 21 South Gyle Crescent, Edinburgh EH12 9PB (for Tallents House postmark), or to their nearest Royal Mail Special Handstamp Centre (Dragonby, Scunthorpe postmark) marking the outer envelope 'FD0915' or 'FD0916'. Covers can be posted or handed in at main Post Office branches for the Dragonby postmark.

Details of sponsored handstamps are announced in the *British Postmark Bulletin*, available on subscription from Tallents House (£12.25 UK/Europe; £24.95 elsewhere). For a sample copy write to The Editor, *British Postmark Bulletin*, Royal Mail, 35-50 Rathbone Place, London W1T 1HQ.



The pack (above), is written by Neil Gaiman. He describes the creatures on the stamps, including the dragons of the British Isles, called 'wyrms': they had poisonous breath and coiled snakelike around hills, but they could not fly or breathe fire.

Mythical creatures A number of earlier stamps are relevant to this theme. As far back as 1913, George V high values featured 'Sea-horses'. A Unicorn has been depicted on the George VI 2s6d and 5s high values of 1939, and on the 1951 £1 high value. During the current reign a unicorn has featured on the Scottish 1s3d regional stamp of 1958 (and the 2008 1st class version) and on the 28p and 31p Heraldry stamps of 1984 and 1987, also on one of the Queen's Beasts stamps of 1998.

St George fighting a dragon can be seen on the 1929 Postal Union Congress £1, George VI 10s high value of 1951, and the 78p stamp in the 2007 Celebrating England miniature sheet. A dragon also features on the 1998 Hobbit stamp (right), and the Welsh Dragon is depicted on 1958 and 1971 country stamps, the current 1st class country stamp, and the 1958 Empire & Commonwealth Games issue. An Ice Dragon is to be seen on the Noddy stamp in the 1994 Greetings issue. The Heraldry sets of 1984 and 1987 include mythical creatures as part of the coats of arms depicted – dragons on the City of London stamp (1984 31p), and unicorns and the winged bull (symbol of St Luke) on the Royal Scottish Academy of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture stamp (31p 1987). The 1998 Queen's Beasts set-tenant strip also features mythical creatures – the Griffin, Yale, Welsh Dragon, and Unicorn respectively on the first, third, fourth and fifth stamps. A Phoenix appears on the 37p value of the 1998 Children's Literature set. Other mythical creatures are featured on the book covers depicted on the Harry Potter stamps of 2007. Our thanks to Jeffery Matthews, MBE, designer of the Heraldry and Queen's Beasts stamps, for identifying the creatures •

Mythical creatures prices

Set of stamps	£3.82
Presentation pack	£4.35
FDC envelope	£0.30
Serviced FDC (UK customers)	£4.86
Serviced FDC (overseas)	£4.23
Stamp cards (set of six)	£2.34



Celebrating Wales

The last in the series of Country miniature sheets, by Karen Foy



'Dathlu Cymru – Celebrating Wales', the fourth in a series of Country miniature sheets, is to be issued on 26 February 2009, in time for St David's Day.

COMPRISING two 1st class stamps and two large-size 81p stamps, the new miniature sheet will take its place alongside its predecessors of Scotland, England and Northern Ireland, issued in 2006, 2007 and 2008 respectively. Printed in litho, the sheet measures 123mm × 70mm, with stamps set against a backdrop of rural Wales, and would not be complete without a glimpse of the obligatory castle – in this case Harlech, which was originally featured on the 1s3d Landscape stamp of 1966 – making this the perfect tribute to a country proud of its heritage, language and culture. East Anglian design company Silk Pearce has worked with

Royal Mail to produce this series by combining the best elements of both traditional and contemporary design, ensuring that every sheet provides a snapshot of each country's unique identity.

A lasting legacy The first of the larger stamps is a specially commissioned image of St David, in a landscape format. Known as *Dewi Sant* in Wales, St David is known for preaching, educating and founding monastic settlements throughout the country, as well as other monasteries further afield. His spiritual pilgrimages took him to both Jerusalem and Rome but it is in Pembrokeshire that he established a monastery from which to spread the word about his beliefs. Born in the area around 500AD, St David created a location which was to become one of medieval Christendom's most important shrines, and was even visited by William the Conqueror. Here, David enforced a strict regime, dictating that the monks should plough their land without the aid of animals, avoid eating meat but instead enjoy a diet of bread flavoured with salt and herbs, refraining from beer and drinking only water. It was a simple life for those who followed him, devoid of personal possessions with evenings spent reading, writing or in prayer. Each believed that this self-discipline and commitment would help them to serve God.

Large crowds would gather from far and wide to hear St David teach his holy work. Some would make the pilgrimage in the hope of finding a cure for an illness or a sick relative back at home whilst others wanted to show their devotion to God by bathing in the sacred waters near the holy site, even taking small bottles of the water home in the belief that it would protect them on their journey. On one occasion in Llanddewi Brefi, those at the back of the crowd complained that they could not see the preacher. At this point it is said that the ground on which St David was standing, rose up, elevating him before his followers, and a white dove settled on his shoulder as a symbol of God's blessing. Today, the village of Llanddewi Brefi is thought to be located on the spot where this miracle took place. ►

Photograph © NPLI / Joe Cornish

Right: the Glorious Wales generic sheet issued 1 March 2007 has 10 labels featuring scenery, buildings and landmarks of Wales. Below, a view of the Watkin Path, one of the six main routes to the summit of Mount Snowdon, in the Nantgwynant Valley, Snowdonia.





The three Welsh stamps from the miniature sheet issued in 2008 for the 50th anniversary of Country stamps. The leek and dragon are symbols long associated with Wales.

Named in his honour, St David's Cathedral now stands on the site of the original monastery. David is thought to have died on 1 March 589, and is buried at the Cathedral ensuring that this would be an important place of worship for generations to come. From the 12th century onwards, 1 March became a national saint's day – a time for celebration and feasting. David now took his rightful place alongside contemporaries of the British Isles – Saints George, Andrew and Patrick.

A picture of the past The Welsh are fiercely proud of their country, so the miniature sheet would be incomplete without an example of an existing 1st class definitive accompanied by a stamp featuring the country's national flag. With two equal horizontal stripes of white and green, the Welsh flag is both distinctive in colour and in its choice of image. Used as the symbol of a warrior or leader since ancient times, the large red dragon also represents independence and was adopted by the Tudor ancestors of King Henry VII as a tribute to his Welsh supporters. By 1901 it had become the official symbol of Wales, and the flag in its current form was flown at the investiture of the Prince of Wales in 1911, to help raise its prominence. This mythical creature has been drawn in many styles but on the flag, the red dragon – which is also known as the dragon of Cadwallader, Prince of Gwynedd – always faces to the left and covers equal portions of the green and white stripes. Coincidentally, these two colours are also those of the 'leek', another national emblem of Wales.

What is particularly appealing about this latest postal rendition is that the image has been illustrated to show movement, perhaps suggesting that the flag is flying proudly in a breeze, very much as it can be seen each day above the National Assembly Building on Cardiff's waterfront.

Great expectations 'Celebrating Wales' is not only a tribute to our past but an acknowledgment of our hopes for the future. Chosen as the image for the second 81p stamp is a glimpse into the 21st century with a snapshot of the National Assembly of Wales – the hub of Welsh parliament also known as the *Senedd*.

In July 1997, a White Paper was published by the Labour Government outlining plans to devolve power to Wales. It was decided that a new building was needed from which parliamentary debates would take place, presiding over issues which would include education, economic development, health, transport and the environment.

Costing a controversial £67 million pounds, the building was to become an architectural icon. It was designed by Lord Richard Rogers, and completed in February 2006 after a three year delay. Modern in appearance and constructed from concrete with slate walls, an undulating steel roof and a decorative timber ceiling, it incorporates numerous 'green' features including the use of renewable energy to construct, heat and maintain. At the heart of the Senedd is the debating chamber where the Assembly members meet to discuss all issues which will eventually have an impact on the whole of Wales.



Definitive deliberations and comparative commemoratives If you're looking for stamps with a patriotic feel, then this latest addition is definitely for you. Why not complement your Celtic collection by tracking down similar themed examples? In 2008, Royal Mail issued a nine-stamp miniature sheet celebrating the 50th anniversary of the introduction of regional stamps for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Originally the four countries which make up the United Kingdom shared definitives, but requests for 'regional' stamps unique to each area began in the 1930s. In August 1958, after years of debates and deliberations, Scotland, Northern Ireland, Wales, Jersey, Guernsey and the Isle of Man were finally allowed their own stamps, illustrated with recognised emblems and themes. In the 50th anniversary sheet, the 1st class Welsh stamps depict a passant dragon and a leek – symbolic images forever connected with Wales.

The Welsh symbols of the leek, dragon, daffodil and the Prince of Wales' feathers are featured on the current Welsh country stamps, first introduced in 1999. Originally the daffodil design was used for a non-value stamp designated 'E' for European rate, but later changed to a denominated stamp. Issued as a 40p in 2004, the European rate has increased since, yielding 40p, 42p, 44p, 48p, and now 50p stamps on which the daffodil, carved in Welsh slate, is set against a monochrome navy blue background.

For those who love their commemoratives, the set of six stamps issued on 15 June 2004 as part of the British Journey series gives us a scenic view of the beautiful landscape of Wales, including the Brecon Beacons, Dee Valley, and Marloes Sands. The labels adjoining the Welsh 1st class country stamp on the 'Cymru Wych – Glorious Wales' generic sheet of March 2007 show some of the country's best-loved landmarks, such as the Menai Suspension Bridge, Caerphilly and Caernarfon castles, Tintern Abbey, and Cader Idris. A further five labels on the 'Glorious UK' sheet of September 2008 depict the Welsh Assembly, Harlech Castle, statue of a miner at Tony-pandy, St Govan's Chapel, and a beach scene at Helvetia, Rhosili.

As with all the countries in the UK, Wales has a rich and diverse heritage. The 'Celebrating' series has pushed the boundaries to include something for everyone, by remembering our past but looking forward to the future, adding a mix of modern and traditional design, fabulous photography and exclusive artwork showcased on a medley of definitive and commemorative stamps neatly displayed in minisheet format. In truth, the perfect package – what more could anyone ask for! ●

The set of six British Journey stamps issued in June 2004 features views of the beautiful Welsh landscape. Above: the daffodil country stamp design, originally used as a non-value 'E' (European rate) stamp. The daffodil was carved from Welsh slate.

London transport Souvenirs of travelling in



Icons of London Transport's design history, as featured in the new Design Classics set (shown at reduced size).

IT IS A TESTIMONY to the design excellence of London Transport that two of the Design Classics stamps issued on 13 January feature its icons. Credit must be given to Frank Pick (1878-1941), the head of London Underground in the 1910s and 1920s, who went on to become head of the newly-created London Transport in the 1930s, laying the foundations for outstanding design recognised the world over. He became Chairman of the Council for Art and Industry, during which time he advised the Post Office on stamp design. It was in 1933 that Harry Beck devised his Underground map, stripping it of all except the essentials to help those using the system find their way around.

During the years that the Underground system was growing, probably no one thought of using postmarks as a means of publicity. However, the centenary of its beginnings was justification, with the slogan '1863-1963 Underground A Century in London's Service' used from 20 May to 16 June 1963 at 46 London offices. The Victoria Line, linking Walthamstow in northeast London with Brixton in the south, was the first completely new line for some years, and the opening of its first section, south to Victoria, was marked by a slogan used at 10 London offices from 7 to 20 March 1969. It read 'Victoria Line through the West End Now Open', and was used in the standard position, with the date stamp on the left and slogan on the right, at all except Battersea, where it is known transposed (with the slogan on the left). In 1971 the remainder of the line opened to Brixton, reason for another slogan 'Victoria Line Now Open to Brixton', used at five London offices from 23 July to 16 September, known also at London wc on 17 September.

For years it reached tantalisingly close, then in 1977 the Piccadilly Line was finally extended to connect with Heathrow Airport. On 16 December 1977 a handstamp was in use: 'Piccadilly Line Heathrow Airport Extension Hounslow Middx'. The opening was also publicised by a slogan campaign in London, from 2 to 15 December 1977 reading 'Underground to Heathrow Opens Dec 16', and then from 16 December 'Underground to Heathrow Now Open'. (A moveable date circular handstamp exists for Heathrow Airport reading 'Heathrow Airport London Hounslow Middx/Middlesex': the initial version, unframed and with 'Middx', was in use from 1 October 1974 until 21 November 1979; a second framed and slightly smaller version with 'Middlesex' was introduced on 22 November 1979.)

Below: handstamps marking stages in the Piccadilly Line's Heathrow Airport extension, and the Royal opening of the new Jubilee Line.



the capital, by Richard West

The Jubilee Line After much deliberation as to its course, another new line was opened in 1979, the Jubilee Line, taking over the Bakerloo Line from Stanmore to Baker Street, continuing to Charing Cross, and later to Stratford. (The initial thought was to call it the Fleet Line, passing through the Docklands area of London to Thamesmead.) A handstamp was in use on 30 April 1979, reading 'Opening by H.R.H. The Prince of Wales The Silver Jubilee Line London w.c.2'.

The new line and refurbished Charing Cross Station opened to the public on 1 May 1979. The seat recesses on the Jubilee Line platforms at the station (disused since the Jubilee Line was extended to Stratford) featured views of Nelson's Column, the work of the leading British stamp designer David Gentleman. David also created a mural for the station's Northern Line platforms, telling the story of the erection of the original Charing Cross, one of a number of crosses in memory of Eleanor of Castile, the wife of King Edward I. In fact, on the day, there was more press coverage for David's work than for the new Underground line.

Many areas that the Fleet Line was intended to reach in the rejuvenated parts of east London are now served by the Docklands Light Railway, a system of driverless trains opened in 1987. On 30 July 1987 a handstamp read 'Docklands Light Railway London E1'.

Anniversary postmarks Two other handstamps have marked anniversaries of London's rail network: on 8 August 1973 '75th anniversary Waterloo & City Railway Waterloo London SE' (the Waterloo & City Line connecting Waterloo Station to Bank is now part of London's Underground), and on 30 July 2000 'Centenary Central London Railway Shepherd's Bush W12' (now the Central Line).

At one time a branch of the Northern Line, originally known as the Northern City Line, linked Moorgate with Finsbury Park. This branch ceased to be part of the Northern Line, and closed for refurbishment, on 4 October 1975, another reason for a special handstamp.

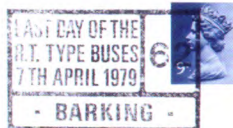
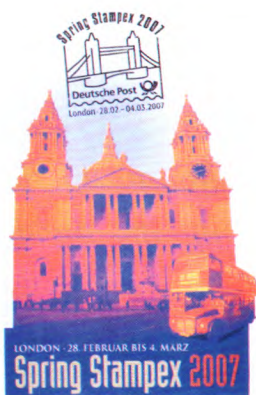
Thinking of the Northern Line, its origins are to be found in the City and South London Railway, opened to the public on 18 November 1890. The centenary was marked by the issue of a sheetlet of four 'Underground Letter Service' labels, designed by Darren Tatenden and printed by Enschedé of The Netherlands (shown above). The labels feature Northern Line stock of 1890, 1923, 1938 and 1972. It is worth noting that at one time several of the railways that now constitute the London Underground system operated letter and parcel services. Incidentally, while no British stamp has featured Underground stock, examples can be seen on stamps from Bequia, Fajera, Laos and Nevis. ►

Tube Centenary 4 November 1890-1990

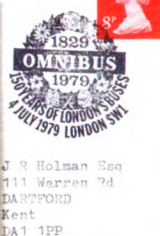


Above: a sheetlet of labels for the Northern Line's centenary, and a handstamp for the 75th anniversary of the Waterloo & City Railway. Below: a detail from David Gentleman's mural at Charing Cross station.





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From left: Routemasters on a German Stampex cover; 1979 handstamps for the last day of RT services and 150 years of London buses; a cover for Amersham bus garage's 60th anniversary; and a transport police anniversary handstamp.

The Routemaster London Transport came into being in 1933, and soon established a reputation for superb engineering and design, as exemplified by the 1938 Underground stock, the RT bus and later the Routemaster. Unveiled in 1954, the Routemaster underwent extensive development, so full production only began toward the end of the decade. Such was its durability that it survived its successors and finally, too soon for many, ceased normal service in London in December 2005.

The 50th anniversary of London Transport was the subject of a handstamp on 17 March 1983 reading '50th London Transport Golden Jubilee 1933-1983'. In 1993 the diamond jubilee was marked by a slogan postmark used at 17 offices from 1 July to 31 December reading '60 '33 '93 Sixty years passenger service for the Capital'. In 1979 London had celebrated the 150th anniversary of its first bus service, launched on 4 July 1829 using the omnibuses of George Shillibeer. The anniversary was marked by a special handstamp '1829 Omnibus 1979 150 Years of London's Buses London sw1'. That same year, the bus that preceded the Routemaster in London service, the RT, saw its last day in normal use; this was marked by a handstamp used at Barking on 7 April 1979 reading 'Last Day of the R.T. Type Bus Barking'.

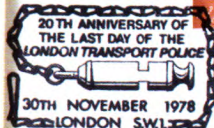
The Routemaster has, of course, previously appeared on a British stamp, in the Classic Double Deck Buses set issued 15 May 2001. Many special handstamps were in use on the day of issue, with a number being especially pertinent to London's transport. A handstamp used at the British Philatelic Bureau prominently featured 'RM' (the designation given to the Routemaster) in its design, while the style of the destination blind on the front of the Routemasters was adapted for a handstamp, with 'May 15 2001' and the route number, 'Classic British Double Decker Buses' as the points en route, and 'London WC2' as the final destination. The Routemaster was also depicted on the following handstamps: 'Leyland Lancashire 15th May 2001'; 'Classic British Buses Leyland Lanes 15th May 2001'; 'Classic British Buses Westminster London 15th May 2001'; 'Buses 15.5.01 Britain's Favourite Bus Magazine London sw'; 'British Buses London 15 May 2001'.



The Routemaster (third from left) in the 2001 Buses issue.



AMERSHAM BUS GARAGE – GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY
EDNESDAY, 14th AUGUST, 1935 - 1985



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The alternative handstamp from Royal Mail for the day of issue featured a bell push, and was inscribed 'Covent Garden'. This was a most appropriate location, as Covent Garden is the home of the London Transport Museum. Another handstamp in use on 15 May depicted the London Buses roundel with 'London's Transport Museum 15 May 2001'. The museum started life in Clapham in south London, and on 23 April 1973 a handstamp in use in London sw4 declared 'Museum of British Transport Final Day'. The museum then moved to Syon Park, before settling in its present premises at Covent Garden. There the new museum opening was marked by a handstamp on 28 March 1980 – 'The London Transport Museum Covent Garden'. (For a short time it was known as London's Transport Museum but in 2007, when the museum reopened after an extensive refurbishment, the apostrophe was dropped.)

The Routemaster also appears on a handstamp of 28 February 2007, and on the associated cover, from the German Post Office to mark Spring Stampex 2007.

Expanding the collection There are five final items for a collection linked to London Transport. A handstamp on 30 November 1978 recorded '20th anniversary of the Last Day of the London Transport Police London sw1'. A slogan reading 'UITP International Union of Public Transport 38th Congress May 11-17 London 69' was in use at London se1 from 11 to 15 May 1969 in the standard position, and from 15 to 17 May in the transposed position. On 1 March 1979 a handstamp recorded '125th Anniversary of Paddington Station London w2'. Another handstamp to celebrate a London terminus reads '125th anniversary waterloo Station 11th July 1972 London se'. Finally, to mark its golden jubilee Amersham Bus Garage held an open day on 14 August 1985, for which a special cover was produced, the stamp being cancelled with a normal Amersham handstamp: Amersham came within the 'Country' area of London Transport using buses painted green, instead of that image recognised the world over of the famous red London bus ●

References Various editions of *Slogan Postmarks of the United Kingdom*, by C R H Parsons, Colin G Peachey and George R Pearson; and *Special Events Postmarks of the United Kingdom* by G R Pearson; *Mails under London* by L C Stanway, published in 2000 by the Association of Essex Philatelic Societies.



Mainly Machins A report by Douglas Myall



Almond Blossom
Flower Fairies Friends

Date
Dear

From

As well as the 10 Sunflower stamps and labels, the Flower Fairies pack contains a bookmark, envelopes, notepaper, and a Flower Fairies figure to cut out.

Smilers for Kids On 28 October last year, Royal Mail issued the first four of a new series of packs designed specifically for children under 12. Sold under the name 'Smilers for Kids', the packs consist of an A5 sheet of 10 'social' stamps with adjoining circular labels depicting characters from popular children's stories. In addition, they include one or more from a selection of items designed to appeal to youngsters, such as writing paper with matching envelopes, colouring-in sheets, bookmarks, stickers, games or cards. The new packs feature Enid Blyton's Noddy and friends with the Five Balloons stamp, Roger Hargreaves' Mr Men, also with the Balloons stamp, C M Marker's Almond Blossom flower fairy, with the Gazania flower stamp, and Beatrix Potter's Peter Rabbit with the New Baby stamp. Of course pre-teenagers have little use for the latter pack, which includes five announcement cards, but these packs are also aimed at their parents and grandparents. Even so, there must be comparatively little demand for this stamp and I think that a better choice might have been the Thank You stamp. Maybe this will appear on a later issue in the series. The temporary reduction in VAT means that the cost of an A5 sheet has been reduced from £7.95 to £7.86, so maybe this is the time to buy some.

The stamps are printed in lithography by Cartor, and are slightly attached to their labels by incomplete die cuts. They and their associated labels have also been issued in A4 sheets of 20. I understand that the sheets of 10 were not printed using the same plates as the sheets of 20, but were paired: Noddy with the Mr Men and Peter with Almond blossom. We await the author who will tell us of the adventures of these new relationships!

Faststamps Most UK readers will be familiar with the Horizon labels used at post offices in place of stamps, and which are printed at the time of posting. Several trials have been conducted at selected locations of machines offering a similar service to the public. The first scheme was known as 'Weigh and Vend'. It offered a weighing facility and vended pre-paid labels for various services. The idea was to offer a quick self-service to avoid queuing. It operated for a few months in 2004.

This was followed in January 2007 by one known as 'Post & Go', using different and less complicated machines. These, too, offered a weighing facility and vended pre-paid labels, but only for the two basic inland letter rates. The labels, like those from the Horizon machines, included the post-code of the issuing office. Unlike the Horizon labels however, the P&G ones could be retained by the public if they wished.

A third scheme, using new machines dispensing two types of self-adhesive label and offering a wider range of services, began trials at a number of post offices last October. One type of label is very like the Horizon type, and offers eight services. These are 0.10kg (100g) 2nd class letter; 0.25kg (250g) 1st and 2nd class large letter; 0.25kg packet; 0.04kg (40g) airmail letters; 0.10kg airmail printed papers and 0.10kg airmail small packets. The codes printed on the labels are, respectively, 2L, 1LL, 2LL, 1PK, 2PK and A, with the three airmail services being distinguished by additional printing. These labels have the words 'Royal Mail' printed sideways in a repeating pattern at the left. They are dated and must be used within two days of purchase, although collectors can keep unused examples if they wish.

The second type of self-adhesive label is for 1st class letter and large letter, Europe up to 20g, and Worldwide letters to 10g and 20g; the service being printed thermally at the time of payment. There are only four buttons but the 10g airmail stamp can be obtained by placing an item below that weight on the scales. These five labels are officially called Faststamps and are genuine stamps rather than labels, having die-cut perforations, a Machin head and two phosphor bars. They are undated and can be used at any time, just like normal sheet and booklet stamps. They also incorporate a security feature, consisting of the words 'Royal Mail' repeated in an undulating 'wave' pattern gradated in density from left to right. This covers the whole background, not just at the left as on the time-limited labels.

Each location where the new machines are installed has a branch code which is printed on every label and Faststamp. In fact, every one of the latter is unique, as they bear a number which includes not only the branch code but also the machine number (most locations have two), and the session and transaction numbers. The first machines went live at Bristol on 8 October last, and a few first day covers with Faststamps and P&G labels were prepared showing their branch code, 020511. Because the labels have their last day of validity printed on them, FDCs for these are franked 8 October 2008 but the labels are dated 10 October. Covers with later dates are likely to be when the office concerned first vended them. It would be



One of the new Faststamps, on trial since last October.

interesting to collect a label from each location, determined from branch codes. At the time of writing there are 20 of these, with more to come as the roll-out proceeds. The towns where these machines are located were listed in the November *Bulletin*, page 95.

The labels and Faststamps are loaded into the machines in rolls. Faststamps are pre-printed in gravure by Walsall with the space for the service paid for left blank, to be added at the time of payment. Thus it is possible to get all five stamps on a single strip, although these cannot be regarded as true se-tenants. If you are wondering why there is no Faststamp for the 2nd class service, this is because they would have two phosphor bars. This does not rule out one for the 2nd class large letter service, and maybe a Faststamp for this will follow. I am sure that Faststamps are here to stay, and no doubt there will be changes in the future. Make sure you get these early examples while they are available. Meanwhile, one collectable variety exists. On one printing supplied to Bristol the phosphor bars were misplaced to the right, causing the right-hand bar to be narrower than normal and to extend over the edge of the stamp. This affects all five stamps.

Security stamps Fraudulent re-use of uncanceled stamps results in a very appreciable loss of revenue for Royal Mail. From 17 February a new type of stamp will incorporate three security features, designed to make convincing forgeries more difficult and to make soaking-off result in damaged stamps that are unusable.

The first new feature is an overprint in iridescent ink which reads 'ROYAL MAIL' printed in the background around The Queen's head in a pattern similar to that on Faststamps. This will replace the Iridodin ink presently printed over the background of high value stamps. The second is the addition of four U-shaped die cuts forming two ovals, one over the value and the other in the same position on the right of the stamp over the corner of The Queen's neck and corsage. This makes the stamp very difficult to remove from an envelope for reuse. Thirdly, a new laminate will be used for these stamps, which does not allow stamps to be soaked from the substrate.

The stamps affected are the four NV1s for the letter and large letter inland services, and six value stamps: 50p, £1, £1.50, £2, £3 and £5. They will be issued for the first time in counter sheets of 50, and the NV1s also in booklets, rolls, and business sheets. The counter sheets will be self-adhesive, another first.

The 10 stamps are split into two groups for issue in presentation packs. A low value pack comprises the four NV1s plus 50p and £1, and costs £3.60. A high value pack comprises the four values above £1 and costs £12, only 50p over face. The same two groups will be available on official FDCs.

The new counter sheets will, I believe, be printed from cylinders of the same format as those used for last year's Christmas stamps; in two panels of 25. This should mean that new cylinder numbers will be required. Numbers will appear on the sheets and the booklets. They have not hitherto been seen on business sheets and I do not think this will change. I will give more details in my next article ●

Commemorative covers New this month



Buckingham Covers celebrates the 250th anniversary of the birth of Robert Burns with a pair of FDCs. One bears the miniature sheet issued 22 January, and the other bears two stamps from the sheet plus two from the 1966 issue. A limited number are personally signed by Alexander McCall Smith, one of the world's most prolific and popular authors, who was a Professor of Medical Law at Edinburgh University for many years. **Prices** £10.95 or £24.95 signed by McCall Smith ●



GB Covers Official edition of 40 hand-made FDCs features Santa Claus pointing to a name on his Christmas list. Stamps are cancelled by a special handstamp which is a sketch of his face. Signed and numbered. **Price** £16 post-paid. Remittances payable to GB Covers ●



Nene Valley Railway A new 25p railway letter stamp featuring Father Christmas was issued on 4 November. FDCs were serviced bearing Royal Mail Christmas stamp(s) cancelled by a Birmingham special handstamp. **Prices** £6 with a full set of stamps, or £3 with single 1st class. Mint railway letter stamps available at 25p each. Postage 50p on all orders ●



M Tanner A QE2 cover in a numbered edition of 50 to mark the vessel's last voyage. Dual postmarks with 2nd/1st and QE2/26p stamps. The QE2 left Southampton on 11 November on its last voyage to Dubai sailing past Europa Point lighthouse on 14 November, to berth at Gibraltar. Supplied with a free colour postcard of the overall cover image. **Price** £17.99, postage £1.50 worldwide. Additional postcards 60p each plus postage if ordered separately. Two similar number maxicards £11 each plus postage (different postmarks) ●

Orders and enquiries

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

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

Nene Valley Railway (Stamps) Wansford Station, Stibbington, Peterborough PE8 6LR. Telephone 01780 784444.

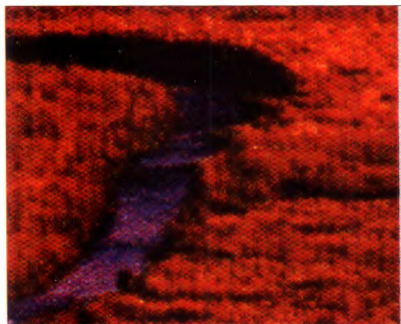
M Tanner 180 Whitehorse Road, West Croydon CR0 2LA. Fax/Answerphone 020 8684 9757 (credit card orders only)

Cover producers wishing to announce a recent or forthcoming cover should submit copy of up to 75 words in the style above. The text should briefly describe the cover, state the stamps and postmarks it will bear, and give retail prices and an address for orders and enquiries. Announcements are published on a first-come-first-served basis and may be modified or shortened at the Editor's discretion. Copy for consideration for the *April Bulletin* should be sent to The Editor (address on p163) by 6 February. Copy for May should arrive by 6 March. Royal Mail cannot enter into correspondence or telephone conversations concerning announcements in this Covers section.

Special draw Win one of five mystery prizes

ONCE AGAIN we offer our popular Mystery Prize draw, with some excellent prizes! To win one of five prizes, send your name and address on a postcard or the back of an envelope to: Mystery Prize Draw, British Philatelic Bulletin, Royal Mail, 35-50 Rathbone Place, London W1T 1HQ to arrive by 27 February ●

Competitions Enter for a chance to win Darwin collections



November identify The detail is from the 16p Mail Coaches (Norwich Mail) stamp of 1984. The winner was P Roberts of Shropshire.

November knowledge The answers: 1) brown and purple (or magenta); 2) So Design; 3) 1969. The winner was C Math of Switzerland.

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

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

- 1 What is the colour of the current 50p Machin definitive?
- 2 Which set of Millennium stamps featured football players?
- 3 When did the unicorn first feature on a British stamp?

Send your answer (addressed to either the February *Identify* competition or February *Knowledge* competition), name and address on a postcard or the back of a sealed envelope to: British Philatelic Bulletin, Royal Mail, 35-50 Rathbone Place, London W1T 1HQ. The senders of the first cards to be drawn in each competition on 13 March will receive a Darwin presentation pack, miniature sheet, stamp cards and prestige book. Runner-up prizes of packs, FDCs or stamp cards will be awarded in each competition. The competitions are not open to Royal Mail employees ●

Events

Until April 'Lions, Leopards, Unicorns & Dragons' exhibition commemorating 50 years of regional stamps at the BPMA, Freeling House, Phoenix Place, London WC1. **Enquiries** 020 7239 2570.

23 February - 19 April 12th Annual 'Stamp Lincs' exhibition at Museum of Lincolnshire Life, Burton Road, Lincoln. **Enquiries** P Wain, 01522 525984; Museum 01522 528448

25-28 February Spring Stampex at Business Design Centre, London N1. Cricket displays, dealers, youth activities, etc. **Enquiries** 01252 628006.

26-28 February Philatex (London International Stamp & Cover Show) at Lawrence Hall, Royal Horticultural Halls, Greycoat St, London SW1. **Enquiries** 01793 513431, www.stampshows.net

7 March Streetly Philatelic Society Stamp Fair at Collingwood Centre, Collingwood Drive, Pheasey, Birmingham B43 7NF, 10.00-16.30. National dealers in stamps, postal history, covers and postcards. Displays by society members. Admission 20p, children 10p. Light refreshments and parking available. **Enquiries** B Hyner, 0121 357 5340, or email a.smith229@btinternet.com

28 March WestBex 2009 stamp fair, Kennet School, Thatcham. Organised by Thatcham & District PS. 23 dealers.

10-16 April China 2009 FIP General World Stamp Exhibition at Luoyang City, Henan Province, China. **UK Enquiries** Richard West, 39 Waverley Avenue, Sutton SM1 3JX ●

Late news

Royal Mail update The first in a series of Castles generic sheets will go on sale on 17 March. This contains 20 Northern Ireland 1st class definitives, with labels featuring 10 castles in the Province (thus two of each label per sheet). Printed litho by Cartor on self-adhesive paper, price £7.74.

Cylinders for the low value security Machins (17 February) are D1 colour D1 security overprint D1 phosphor. The coils (rolls) of 1st and 2nd class stamps are not being issued with security features as originally announced; the changes affect sheet stamps, business sheets, and stamp books •

Spring Stampex The main display at Stampex (25-28 February) will be 'Going to the Cricket' – an eclectic mix of cricket artefacts, memorabilia and philately, much of it on display for the first time, arranged by *Stamp & Coin Mart*, Bletchley Park Post Office, MCC, Cricket Philatelic Society, National Trust, English Cricket Memorabilia and county cricket clubs. Highlights include Arthur Melville-Brown's superb philatelic display, the bat with which W G Grace scored his 1000th test run against Australia, and a fine MCC exhibition. Visitors can win a special signed ball and a special piece by Karen Neale, official MCC young artist, who will be on hand during the show. It is expected that a number of cricket personalities will make appearances and signings. Entries in the ABPS 'One-Frame' and Youth competitions will be on the mezzanine floor, and Royal Mail will have a Smilers booth so you can get your own image on labels adjoining the stamps. For further details of Stampex see www.philatelic-traders-society.co.uk •

Festival of Stamps *Bulletin* readers will be aware of the international stamp exhibition in London in May 2010, part of the Festival of Stamps, being coordinated by the British Postal Museum & Archive throughout the year. King George V, a keen philatelist, came to the throne on 6 May 1910, and his reign will be celebrated by a very special exhibition at the Guildhall Art Gallery in the City of London, 7 May - 25 July. This will include

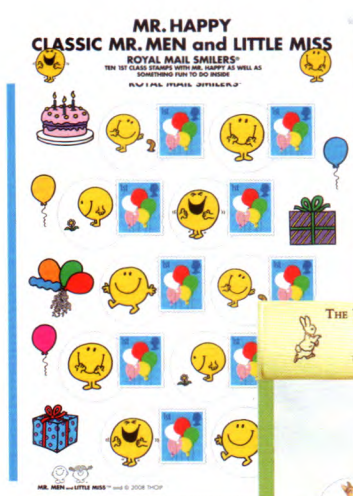
material from the Royal Philatelic Collection and the BPMA. On 6-7 May, the Royal Philatelic Society London will present dedicated displays in its meeting rooms in Devonshire Place, London W1; ticket details will be available later. On 5-7 May Philatex Extra, at the Royal Horticultural Society, Greycoat Street, London SW1, brings together a range of dealers, many with a postal history bias. For more details of London 2010 events, see www.london2010.org.uk •

Picture Postcard Annual The new 2009 edition includes essential reference information for postcard collectors, plus interesting features on Louis Wain cat cards, breaking the land speed barrier, Faith, Hope and Charity (an Edwardian theme), Bamforth comic and Boer War cards, and a useful town-by-town listing of the first recorded use of picture postcards after the GPO allowed privately-published cards to be sent via the post, in 1894. 100 pages, illustrated in colour. Price £4.75, £1 postage (UK), from Reflections of a Bygone Age, 15 Debdale Lane, Keyworth, Nottingham NG12 5HT; telephone 0115 937 4079. A new edition of the popular 36-page *Postcard Collecting: A Beginner's Guide* is available, price £3.95, postage 50p UK •

Bulletin back issues John Smith of Somerset has a run of the *Bulletin* from 1970 to 2007, offered free to any reader willing to collect or pay postage – contact him on 01984 623414 •

Auction news Grosvenor's GB sale in November realised over £1.3 million. It included more of the 'Davenport' collection of modern errors (see *Bulletin* November 2007 & May 2008): 1961 Parliament 1s3d green omitted £11,500; 1969 Concorde set in imperf imprimatur blocks £17,250; a 1979 Rowland Hill miniature sheet with grey-black and pale greenish-yellow omitted £40,250; and a 1980 Stamp World miniature sheet with recess black printing inverted £25,300. For details of future auctions, see www.grosvenorauctions.com or phone 020 7379 8789 •

Smilers for young collectors



The four sheets feature: Mr Happy from Mr Men (Balloons stamp), Almond Blossom from the Flower Fairies stories (Flower stamp), Peter Rabbit by Beatrix Potter ('New Baby' stamp), and Enid Blyton's ever-popular character Noddy (Balloons stamp).



Prices

Packs or sheets £7.86 each
 Handling charge £1.45 UK,
 £1.55 Europe, £2.15 rest of
 world

This new range of stamp sheets from Royal Mail has been created specifically with young collectors, parents and grandparents in mind.

Smilers for Kids sheets comprise 10 stamps plus pictorial labels, sold in packs with letter writing sets, games, cut-outs, stickers, bookmarks, and other items that will appeal to children and young collectors. The baby announcement cards in the Peter Rabbit pack will be especially useful to new parents.

Also available are the stamps and labels in A4 format themed sheets containing 20 stamps/labels.



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

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

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