

BRITISH PHILATELIC

The ROYAL MAIL magazine *for stamp collectors*

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Bulletin

Bletchley Park • Handstamp
Centre • Machin displays



Forthcoming issues and withdrawals



Cover A preliminary drawing by Arnold Machin, on show at the BPMA's exhibition at the Royal College of Art, London. See page 368. © BPMA.

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

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26 July	Issue Scouts stamps, presentation pack, stamped postcards and coin cover
5 August	Withdrawal Bobby Moore medal cover
17 August	Withdrawal National Portrait Gallery medal cover
18 August	Withdrawal 49p Machin definitive
28 August	Issue Endangered Species (Birds) stamp cards
28 August	Issue 6 × 1st stamp book with Harry Potter advert on inside front cover, printed Walsall
30 August	Withdrawal Three Kings miniature sheet
4 September	Issue Endangered Species (Birds) stamps and presentation pack
11 September	Withdrawal Business sheets: 100 × 2nd class, 100 × 1st class, issued May 2006
13 September	Issue Army Uniforms stamp cards
16 September	Withdrawal Stamp books: 6 × 1st, 12 × 2nd, 12 × 1st, issued April 2006
20 September	Issue Army Uniforms stamps, presentation pack, prestige book and Royal Mail/BFPO joint cover
20 September	Issue Northern Ireland 2nd and 1st class stamps printed in gravure
20 September	Issue 6 × 1st stamp book with bilingual postcode information on inside front cover, printed Walsall
20 September	Withdrawal VC stamps, miniature sheet, prestige book, pack and stamp cards
30 September	Withdrawal VC miniature sheet press sheet



The Dressed Head mould: on show at the Royal College of Art

Timeless and Classic The BPMA celebrates 40 years of the Machin with two special displays in London **368**

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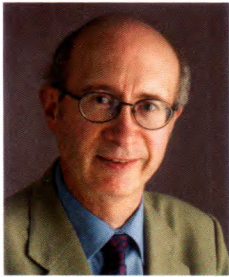
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Looking forward A preview by the Editor



John Holman, Editor

THE HOLIDAY month of August is traditionally a fairly quiet one for philatelists. However if you are in London this month and are a keen Machin collector don't forget to visit the two Machin anniversary exhibitions – one at the British Postal Museum & Archive (on show until next Spring), and one at the Royal College of Art, near the Albert Hall, until 15 August. The Picture Postcard Show (Royal Horticultural Society Halls, London SW1, 30 August - 1 September) attracts many philatelists/postal historians who also collect postcards, not least for the postmarks.

Looking ahead, there are many events in the Autumn, including Stampex (19-22 September), Philatex (1-3 November), the ABPS exhibition at Croydon (23-24 November), and the Thematica and Eurothema shows in London (24-25 November). Away from the capital, there is Scotex in Perth (20-21 October), and across the Irish Sea the popular Stampex in Dublin (12-14 October). All have their regular clientele and all are worth a visit.

As well as these major exhibitions, there are many good local stamp exhibitions and fairs, often organised by local philatelic societies, where you can buy stamps, see displays, and simply just meet and talk to other collectors. Details of some of these are given in our Events listing. To commemorate its centenary, the Croydon Philatelic Society is staging Croydex at the Fairfield Halls, Croydon, 3-8 September, which includes the Surrey Federation Convention plus dealers and a display from the Royal Philatelic Collection on 8 September. It sounds a worthy celebration to me.

This month's *Bulletin* includes Douglas Myall's report for Machin collectors, a review of a new specialised Elizabeth II catalogue, and a feature on the London Special Handstamp Centre where many collectors send their FDCs for processing. Martin Robinson looks at Bletchley Park mail now acquired by the BPMA, and James Mackay recalls the author Virginia Woolf, recently depicted on a Romanian stamp. We conclude with our annual index, completing 44 years of this magazine. Sadly the first Editor back in 1963, Frank Langfield, died recently and an appreciation of him appears on page 364. Frank read the magazine until the end of his life, and hopefully would have enjoyed this issue also. JOHN HOLMAN •

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



Glenn Morgan

Croydon 2007 The Fairfield Halls in Croydon, Surrey, are the venue for the ABPS Exhibition and National Competitions on 23-24 November. Opening times are 10.00-18.00 on Friday and 10.00-17.00 on Saturday. Visitors will receive a free stock book. The event includes the 89th annual Philatelic Congress of Great Britain. Tony Walker will present the Congress paper, 'The 40th Anniversary of Machin Stamps', and there will be a presentation by one of the new signatories to the Roll of Distinguished Philatelists.

The national competitions will be on show at the Fairfield Halls, except entries in the thematic class, which will be displayed and judged at Eurothema 07 held in conjunction with Thematica 11 at Carisbrooke Hall, Seymour Street, London W2 on 24-25 November 2007. The hours of opening are 10.30-17.30 on Saturday and 10.30-17.00 on Sunday.

Various societies will hold meetings at Croydon 2007 – Polar Postal History Society of Great Britain (Friday 11.00), GB Philatelic Society (Friday, 14.00) and Cinderella Stamp Club (Saturday, 11.00). The Arnhem Gallery at the Fairfield Halls will be reserved for trade stands.

The Fairfield Halls are close to East Croydon railway station, served by frequent trains from Victoria, Charing Cross, London Bridge, Clapham Junction, Gatwick Airport, Brighton, Bedford, etc. Croydon Tramlink (connections from West Croydon and Wimbledon) passes nearby. The Juries Inn and Fairfield hotels, and a Travelodge, are within walking distance of the Halls, and the Selsdon Park Hotel offers superior accommodation.

The Croydon exhibition follows on from similar shows in Newcastle (1996), Hove (1998), Glasgow (2000), Chester (2002), Basildon (2004), and Torquay (2006). The 2008 exhibition will be held at the Harrogate International Centre, Harrogate (2-3 May), and the 2008 Philatelic Congress at Stratford upon Avon (July) ●

See www.harrogate2008.org.uk for details of the Harrogate exhibition.

Auctions On 11 June Shreves Philatelic Galleries auctioned the William H Gross collection of GB line-engraved issues 1840-41 and rare and fine-quality stamps of Victoria, Edward VII and George V. The collection, sold on behalf of the charity Doctors Without Borders/Medecins Sans Frontieres, realised US\$9,136,000 (est \$4-5 million). A cover bearing a Penny Black used on the first day of validity, 6 May 1840, made \$80,000; an Edward VII 1911 6d bright magenta on chalk-surfaced paper, perf 14, Somerset House (SG 296) \$19,000; and Edward VII 6d and £1 IR Officials \$350,000 and \$57,500 respectively. A double-printed George V ½d green watermark block cypher went for \$10,500 and a 4d grey-green from the same series, printed on gummed side made \$4250. Mr Gross, founder of Pacific Investment Management Co and known as the bond guru, manages over \$700 billion of fixed income securities. He was quoted in the *Daily Telegraph* as saying the auction results amounted to 'four times profit – better than the stock market'. His quoted comments on his collecting habit may seem odd to many philatelists: 'It's a process of bringing order from disorder. It's a common human interest. It's just like wanting to clean your house.' ●

Shreves Philatelic Galleries
www.shreves.com

Spink's 6 June auction included the 'KM' collection of GB line-engraved, the David M Cohen Channel Islands collection, a selection of stamp boxes, and GB stamps of all reigns. Total realisations were £530,647. A die proof of the Penny Black, inscribed OLD ORIGINAL, made £7500 (est £7000-8000), an unissued 30p Joyce Grenfell stamp of 1998 £1400 (£1000-1200), and an imperf block of four 1977 8½p Silver Jubilee £1100 (£700-800). Results for 50 stamp boxes ranged from £80 to £3500. Spink will auction the 'Victoriana' collection of GB on 4 October; this comprises stamps, specimens and covers from a collection untouched for over 40 years ●

Spink Telephone 020 7563 4000. www.spink.com



The Royal Philatelic Society The RPSL occupies an elegant building at 41 Devonshire Place, which comprises four stories and a basement and houses a magnificent library, a comprehensive museum and some unique collections of stamps. This building, which was built over 200 years ago, has been the Society's home for more than 80 years and has a charm which has endeared it to many generations of the world's leading philatelists.

One problem with a building of this age is that it was not constructed in accordance with modern building standards, and requires a high level of maintenance. It has been recognised for some years that the interior needed renovation. In November 2006 Brian Trotter, the newly appointed secretary, was given responsibility for co-ordinating a comprehensive refurbishment, which was completed at the end of March 2007.

The whole building has been redecorated and rewired and changes have been made to ensure compliance with fire regulations. Every effort has been made to retain the character of the building, and the Meeting Room and Large Library have been substantially improved.

New free-standing display frames have been acquired to replace the old frames, which needed to stand on tables. This allows more space for viewing, and personal comfort has been increased by the installation of an air-conditioning system. The purchase of new chairs and a powerful projector now enable more people to enjoy video displays of philatelic material in a room which has maintained its elegance and charm.

This is the first stage in a programme of reorganisation, which is still being developed and is expected to involve the relocation of the Expert Committee to a more suitable location in due course.

The meeting room facilities at the Royal are available for hire, and since the closure of the British Philatelic Centre there has been an increase in the demand for society meetings to be held at 41 Devonshire Place. The changes, which have been made during the past six months, make this a very attractive venue for philatelic meetings. *Michael Pitt-Payne* ●

Post Expo enquiries website
www.postexpo.com

Post Expo 2007 On 2-4 October Barcelona will host the world's leading exhibition and conference for the postal, parcel and mailing industries. The event opens with a forum on climate change and the postal sector's response to this worldwide problem facing our planet. At over 1000 euros for a three-day conference pass that will permit access to over a dozen workshops and sessions, it is clearly not aimed at collectors, but instead is an opportunity for the world's post offices to raise and try to resolve the common problems facing an industry in the midst of major change ●

The Julian Chapman Memorial Scholarship Applications are invited for this travelling scholarship from philatelists, wherever resident, wishing to study Commonwealth stamps or postal history. The scholarship, for a sum of up to £2500, will be a contribution towards travelling costs, accommodation and subsistence for a trip, particularly overseas.

Applications, which must be received before 30 September 2007, should include: an outline of the subject to be studied, and how it relates to the applicant's previous philatelic research; intentions as to publication of the results after completion of the study; an accurate costing of the trip, including places and organisations to be visited; a short philatelic curriculum vitae (including personal details, collecting interests, previous publications and philatelic achievements) •

Applications limited to two sides of an A4 sheet of paper, should be posted to: Julian Chapman Memorial Scholarship, Royal Philatelic Society London, 41 Devonshire Place, London W1G 6JY.

New RDPs for 2007 The Roll of Distinguished Philatelists was established in 1921 by the Philatelic Congress of Great Britain with the approval of King George V, who was the first Signatory. An invitation to sign the Roll is regarded as the world's premier philatelic honour. Including the newly elected RDPs, of some 330 philatelists from 45 countries who have achieved this distinction, there are at present 70 Signatories from 27 countries, including 13 from the UK. At a recent meeting of the Board of Election, it was unanimously agreed to ask Paulo Comelli (Brazil), Dr Ulrich Ferchenbauer (Austria) and Dr Peter P McCann (USA) to sign the Roll at the next Philatelic Congress of GB to be held at Croydon on 24 November 2007 •

Periodicals received The office has received several GB-related periodicals of late, including *The GB Journal* and *The GBPS Newsletter* for March/April and May/June. From abroad has come *The GBCC Journal* (USA) April issue and *Rundbrief* number 146 (Germany), both of which give a different slant on British philately. These periodicals are all up to their usual very high standard and are a must for any true collector of GB, and offer studies and snippets on many subjects not covered elsewhere.

Enquiry addresses are as follows. GB Philatelic Society: the Membership Secretary, Peter Tanner, Highstandings, 13 St Hubert's Close, Gerrards Cross SL9 7EN • GB Collectors Club: Parker A Bailey, 2341 SW 86th Terrace, Davie, FL 33324, USA (email pbaileyjr@comcast.net) • Forschungsgemeinschaft Grossbritannien EV: Theo Brauers, Landwehring 52, B-4731 Raeren-Lichtenbusch (email Brauers@gws-dueren.de) •

Congress Medal The award for long-term service to philately is the Congress Medal. This prestigious award is presented to just one person each year at the Philatelic Congress of GB, together with a distinctive lapel pin. It is in recognition of dedication to the hobby over many years. The award is not for philatelic excellence, but for voluntary endeavours, particularly at national level. This year the award goes to Jean M Wood, who is described as 'one of those quiet people who get on with the job, not frightened to undertake any task'. Congratulations to Jean, who is a worthy recipient of this philatelic honour •



Jean Wood

Enquiries Write to Geoff Longbottom, ABPS Publicity and Publications Officer, Mill Close, Hickling NR12 0YT, telephone (01692 598844) or e-mail abps.phil@elics.co.uk

ABPS Handbook and Directory This publication has long been recognised as an unrivalled reference to the society network in the UK. Published every two years, it lists all philatelic societies in the UK, whether local, national or specialist. Additional information relates to museums, publications, philatelic bureaux and other international institutions. Price £15 post-free in the UK, or £7.50 post-free in the UK to members of affiliated societies ●

ABPS Award of Merit Those who play a major part in philately on a local and regional basis can receive the ABPS Award of Merit. Taking the form of a framed certificate, this recognises voluntary effort. Candidates must be members of an organisation affiliated to the ABPS and not more than 15 awards are made each year.

The Awards of Merit for 2007 went to: John Berridge, Southampton and District Philatelic Society; John Campbell, Hampshire Philatelic Federation; Paul Gaywood, North Western Philatelic Federation; Peter Kirk, North West Philatelic Federation; John Lea, Woking and District Philatelic Society; Alan Rigby, Bolton Philatelic Society; and Richard Stroud, Somerset and Dorset Philatelic Federation.

Congratulations to these hard-working people who unselfishly give up their time for the benefit of our hobby ●

Orders Cheques payable to 'Postal Heritage Services Ltd' can be sent to Product Sales, Postal Heritage Services Ltd, Freeling House, Phoenix Place, London WC1X 0DL. It is also possible to telephone the BPMA shop on 020 7239 5125 to pay by credit card.

Visit www.postalheritage.org.uk/shop to see other items for sale.

BPMA postcards For almost 30 years, the postcard series issued by the old National Postal Museum (NPM) were extremely popular with collectors and a complete collection comprises around 400 cards including the distinctly identifiable reprints. This long series ceased to produce new cards when the museum closed its doors in 1998, but is now being continued by the British Postal Museum & Archive (BPMA). So far they have issued six sets of four cards, and all are still available from BPMA. They illustrate in colour, or black-and-white, fascinating imagery from their holdings, including Night Mail and TPO rail services, posters, vehicles, First World War themes, etc. Priced at £2.50 per set, they are available to order from the BPMA website, or by post or phone ●

Friends enquiries Write to the Membership Secretary, Avice Harms, Friends of the BPMA, 13 Amethyst Avenue, Davis Estate, Chatham ME5 9TX. Annual membership costs £15 (UK) or £20 (overseas). Make your cheque payable to 'The Friends of the BPMA'.

Friends of the BPMA This organisation is incredibly important to the work undertaken by the BPMA, and last year celebrated 21 years of loyalty to British postal heritage. The Friends have used funds from membership fees to help with preservation projects, including restoration of postal vehicles from the collection. They enjoy the BPMA events programme, and arrange their own trips and activities. Perhaps even more importantly, the Friends are ambassadors for the BPMA, helping to raise awareness of its work. The Friends also provide volunteers to help run events safely and successfully.

Benefits include the journal *Cross Post*, containing features on all aspects of postal history; the BPMA quarterly Newsletter, plus annual events guide; 15% discount on tickets to BPMA paid events; 15% discount on BPMA shop products (such as the postcards mentioned above); special BPMA events arranged exclusively for Friends, including private views of exhibitions; plus opportunities to volunteer and see behind the scenes at the BPMA ●

Royal Mail news New issues and products

Special issues There are no special issues in August. The programme resumes in September with sets on Endangered Birds (shown here in May), and Army Uniforms (shown in June). The issue for the diamond wedding anniversary of HM The Queen and HRH The Duke of Edinburgh were shown last month. Next month we will preview the 2007 Christmas stamps.

The plate numbers and colours for the Birds stamps are D1 cream D1 cyan (blue) D1 magenta D1 yellow D1 black D1 phosphor. The year '2007' is micro-printed on each stamp – some easier to find than others! Canada and New Zealand have issued stamps featuring Endangered Species and Native Wildlife; packs containing these stamps can be ordered from Talents House from 4 September, priced £6.95 and £7.95 respectively.

Please note that first day covers bearing the Harry Potter stamps and/or miniature sheets can be submitted to our Special Handstamp Centres for first day postmarking until 14 August •

Generic and Smilers sheets Following the Wales and England sheets (1 March and 23 April 2007), a Glorious Scotland generic sheet goes on sale on 30 November, containing 20 1st class Lion Rampant stamps and labels featuring Eilean Donan, Isle of Skye, Forth Rail Bridge, Bagpipes, Rosslyn Chapel, Edinburgh Castle, The Old Course St Andrews, Skara Brae Orkney, Highland Games and Spean Bridge. Price £7.35. A Smilers version, with your own image printed on the labels, will be available.

The Royal Mail stand at Autumn Stampex (19-22 September) will have an instant Smilers booth. This will provide personalized images on labels adjoining the Union Flag Smilers stamp. The Stampex logo will be printed in the top sheet margin and on one of the labels. See the May *Bulletin* (p260) for an illustration of the sheet available at Spring Stampex last February •

Generic sheets for 2008

(+S indicates Smilers will also be available)

11.03	Glorious N Ireland (+S)
17.07	Airshow
29.09	Glorious UK
04.11	Christmas (+S)
06.11	We Will Remember

A Beijing Expo sheet is to be confirmed.

The Glorious Scotland sheet, on sale from 30 November.

For information on the Smilers service phone 0845 074 2000 (UK customers) or +44 131 316 7489 (overseas), or see website www.royalmail.com/smilers



2008 issues Further information is to hand concerning next year's stamp and miniature sheet programme. The dates of issue and number of stamps per issue is as follows. MS = miniature sheet; PSB = prestige stamp book ●

08.01	James Bond	6, MS & PSB	17.07	Airshows	6
05.02	Working Dogs	6	26.08	Olympic Games 2008	MS
28.02	The House of Lancaster & York	6 & MS	18.09	RAF Uniforms	6 & PSB
11.03	Celebrating Northern Ireland	MS	29.09	50 years of Country Definitives	MS & PSB
13.03	Rescue at Sea	6	14.10	Women of Achievement	6
15.04	Action for Species/Insects	10	04.11	Christmas	6 & MS
13.05	Cathedrals	6 & MS	06.11	Lest We Forget	MS
10.06	Classic Carry On and Hammer films	6			

Buy now! Any remaining stock of the Bobby Moore and National Portrait Gallery medal covers will be withdrawn from sale on 5 August and 17 August respectively. The 49p definitive comes off sale on 18 August, and the Three Kings miniature sheet on 30 August. Sales of the Victoria Cross stamps, miniature sheet, pack, and stamp cards end on 20 September. The VC coin cover remains on sale ●

Lest We Forget Shown below and on the opposite page are the miniature sheet and generic sheet to be issued on 8 November. Both were designed by hat-trick Design of London. The miniature sheet is printed in gravure by De La Rue, and the generic sheet in litho by Cartor. The miniature sheet, which contains a new Poppy special stamp and four 78p country stamps, marks the goth anniversary of the Battle of Passchendaele. The final miniature sheet in this series will be issued in 2008 to mark the goth anniversary of the Armistice, ending the Great War ●



2nd Kings Royal Rifle Corps
After being posted to Nieuport les Bains, Harry was listed as missing in July 1917. He had in fact been taken prisoner by the German army, and wrote the following postcard home, from a German Prisoner of War Camp. Sadly a letter sent to his mother on 17 February 1919 was to give her the awful news that her son had died from as inflammation of the lungs on 27 November, at Raystruth just 16 days after the end of the war.

10th August, 1917
Dear Mother
I am in good health & if you
write to the address below
it will find me. No doubt my
last card reached you & I am
looking forward any week to
hear how all of you are getting
on. The Post Office will give
necessary particulars if you
are in doubt where forwarding
anything. Let me know how
you all are. Uncle Ben, Aunt Alice,
Ethel, Mimi! Don't worry about
me. I am fine & have finished with
the war. Give my love to May & all
in West End.
Fondest love to all from
Harry x
Postbrüderhilfe
Deutschland

8th Battalion, the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry.

For most of June 1916 the 1st King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry trained for the Battle of Albert. On 29 June it moved up into trenches near the eastern perimeter of Authuille Wood. The following day, Boswell wrote a final letter home to his father in Strassburg, London, that he hoped would never need to be sent. He was only 22 years old when he was killed in

Dorothy Field volunteered to work abroad as a Voluntary Detachment nurse. She was wounded from the battle throughout the Battle. Many dying it was a terrible times, depressing experience. But like the front-line soldiers the hospital staff took a pride in the fighting and the theatrical entertainment when quiet.

2nd September, 1916



William Bowen Stephens brought up in Parc-ha-hau, Llanddewi Ynion to joining up, he was at Carmarthen Training Camp. Stephens was reported as missing on 16th April 1917, just two weeks after writing his last letter.

There was
Lan public
drey. Prior
a student
ing College
ed missing
on 18
days after
home.

END, TO THE

Dear Mother

I am in good health & if you send to the address below it will find me. No doubt my last card reached you & I am looking forward any week to hear how all of you are getting on. The Post Office will give necessary particulars if you are in doubt when forwarding anything. Let me know how you all are. Uncle Ben, Aunt Alice, Aunt Mary, & all the family as I have finished with the war. Give my love to May & sit at West End.

Finest love to all from
Harry x

Postbefriedungsstelle
Deutschland

the Sonne.

30th June, 1916

Dear Father,

I am just writing you a short note which you will receive only if anything has happened to me during the next few days.

The Hun is going to get consummate hell just in this quarter & we are going over the parapet tomorrow, when I hope to spend a few more hours in chasing the Boches over the place. I am absolutely certain that I shall get off all right, but in case the unexpected does happen I shall rest content with the knowledge that I have done duty - and one can't do more.

Good Bye & wish the Best to all.

Love to all

Thanks most awfully to those which have arrived safely. I had got down in France, though pay day in London could have sent him off to the front. I am sure that the rest of our field would be black – if so there will be rejoicings. Since last Tue. have been more or less on my own show – a test beds – full almost all of the smaller surgical ...

... we went to a concert ... night at the Convent ... Camp, specially got up ... visitors and M.C.s. ... enclosing the program ... Staff Sergt Holmes the Zestander had a beautiful voice. It was quite a joy ...

Heaps of love to all from us both.

Yours loving wife
M. G. C.

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quite
my last
but so I
There
get
es
great
day I
running
26
some
...
st
et
r.
m
-
dw
tumor
affair.

...I am quite happy
imagine what comfort
derive through my
prayers.

If I return to civil life
shall be a much better
This trial will be my
is only lately that I
realized that the
war is "Man's Foolish
not worry about
that you grieve about
course that is only

Well, as regards this
I am glad to tell you
thoroughly enjoyed
contents. The cakes
exceedingly nice and
sandwiches delicious.

I shall not write a
letter this time. No
With all my love to
your family

You cannot
 I do
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 again I
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 conversation.
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 I know
 me of
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 pared, that I
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 time.
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END, THEY REMAIN

THE LAST POST

Northern Ireland stamps The 2nd and 1st class values have now been printed in gravure, and will go on sale at Post Office branches in the Province as supplies of the existing litho printings are used up. Supplies will go on philatelic sale on 20 September •

British Postal Museum & Archive Two Machin exhibitions are currently on show. Visitors to the BPMA at Freeling House can see ‘A Timeless Classic: The Evolution of Machin’s Icon’ – see page 368 of this *Bulletin*.

The second Machin exhibition, entitled ‘Timeless and Classic: Elizabeth, Queen and Icon’ is on display at the Royal College of Art, near the Royal Albert Hall, London sw7 until 15 August (open Monday to Friday 10.00-17.00, admission free). It explores the development of Machin’s design from its original inspiration in the Victorian Penny Black to the final portrait – shown through original portrait photography and plaster casts, including works by Dorothy Wilding, Lord Snowdon, John Hedgecoe and David Gentleman. Also featured are the radical stamp designs of 1965-66 instigated by the then Postmaster General Tony Benn – the subject of a three-part article by Douglas Muir in the April, May and June issues of this *Bulletin*.

Vehicles from the BPMA's 'Moving the Mail' exhibition can be seen at the Grampian Transport Museum, Alford, Aberdeenshire until 31 October.

The BPMA, run by the Postal Heritage Trust, comprises the collections of the former National Postal Museum and Post Office Archives •

BPMA British Postal Museum and Archive, Freeling House, Phoenix Place, London WC1, near Mount Pleasant sorting office.

Open Monday-Wednesday & Friday 10.00-17.00, Thursday 10.00-19.00. Open Saturdays 11 August, 13 October and 8 December, from 10.00-17.00. Archive Tours at 14.00 on the last Thursday of each month until November.

For further information see
website www.postalheritage.org.uk



Frank Langfield

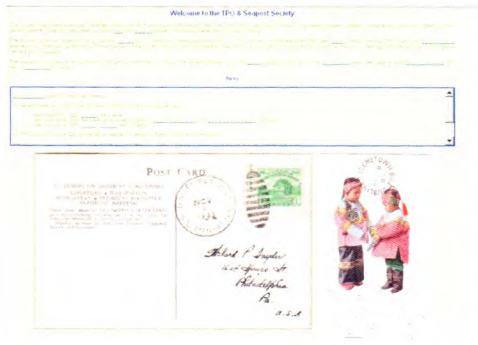
Obituary Frank Langfield, who set up the Philatelic Bureau and was the first Editor of this *Bulletin*, died in June, aged 92. Frank joined the GPO in 1928 and by 1955 was in charge of Stamp Duty in the Home Mails Branch, responsible for getting stamps designed and printed. At that time stamp issues were almost all definitives; special (commemorative) issues were rare and in Frank's own words 'unimaginative in their use of colour'. Philatelic activity was frowned upon by senior GPO staff – participation in exhibitions was half-hearted, collectors' enquiries were dealt with by a routine correspondence duty, and reproduction of stamps in magazines was permitted grudgingly. As Frank wrote in 1993, in the 1950s and early 60s 'nothing more than was absolutely necessary was done' for collectors and the stamp trade.

Establishing a Philatelic Bureau was considered and rejected in the late 1950s, but then suddenly in 1963 the GPO changed its attitude, and the then Postmaster General Reginald Bevins announced no fewer than five issues of stamps (a sixth was later added) and the setting up of a Bureau alongside GPO Headquarters in London. With modest accommodation and few staff, Frank had it up and running in just five weeks. The Bureau opened its doors on 1 May 1963. It was clear that senior officials had little idea of the growing interest in British stamps, caused by the new issues, and Frank battled for staff and facilities to deal with the deluge of orders, especially for the Shakespeare stamps in 1964. It is a testament to his organisational ability and persistence that they coped as well as they did. Frank early on saw the need for a newsletter to deal with requests for information. Thus the *Bulletin* was born in September 1963; Frank edited the early issues before a full-time Editor was appointed. Readers interested in the early days of the Bureau are referred to Frank's article in this magazine in May 1993.

In 1965 he left the Bureau, handing over to a successor who, he said, was horrified at the task she was taking on. Frank went on to run the TV Licensing Centre in Bristol, and introduced the stamps that used to be affixed to TV licences. Many years later he was sad to see that TV licences were no longer sold at Post Office counters.

After retiring he lovingly cared for his wife Elsie, and made gadgets of all sorts in his workshop – some being put to use in equipment for disabled people. He kept in touch with the Post Office and regularly came to London to visit the PO Archives, and to see me (his sixth successor as *Bulletin* Editor), and often wrote to me about changes in the PO, with details of practices in his day. The Bureau was the project that gave him most pride, and after his wife died he wanted to see how it had changed. I accompanied him on this visit in 1998, to Brandon Street in Edinburgh, and he was pleased that most of the services he introduced were still going, but with staff and facilities he could only dream about in the 1960s. In 2001 he was a guest of honour at the official opening of Tallents House. I last met him in September 2004 when his activity and enthusiasm certainly belied his age. I was due to meet him again last month, and was sorry and surprised to hear of his sudden death. I will miss his lengthy but interesting letters, and our occasional phone conversations and meetings. We extend our condolences to his daughters, Judith and Valerie. JOHN HOLMAN •

Philately online Ron Negus travels two byways of philately



As collectors learn more about the hobby, they often become less interested in straight forward stamp issues, and find their enjoyment from pursuing related material. Amongst the byways that can be explored, for most countries of the world, are the cancels and associated markings used on mail handled via Travelling Post Office (TPO) and Seapost services. A specialist study circle exists in the UK for those interested in such markings, and has its own website (address above).

The TPO & Seapost Society was established in 1938. Its current membership exceeds 200, and this includes collectors drawn from all over the world. The founder and secretary, Norman Hill, produced a small magazine, called *TPO*, for the first time in 1947 and this continues today. Details of cumulative indexes and back numbers of the journal are given on the website. The magazine has always been very highly regarded, and has won awards at a number of international philatelic exhibitions.

In the TPO section of the website, there are a number of short articles giving a general background to the services provided in different countries. These serve as introductory guides and are illustrated with examples of markings. Amongst the details given here is that, whilst Great Britain and the countries from the British Empire use the term TPO, other countries with TPO systems gave their operations different names. Canada and the USA use the term RPO while other countries used the names Ambulant, Ambte, Ambu, and Ambulancia. Other terms include Fahrend, Postamt,

www.tpo-seapost.org.uk A leaflet containing all details of the TPO & Seapost Society, and containing an application form, can be printed from this site by clicking on the 'Membership' tab shown on the home page.

Messaggeri, Postvagon, and Vagon Postal. All of these terms mean the same thing.

The TPO service in the UK was the topic of the *British Philatelic Bulletin Publication* No 10, issued in 2004, on the occasion of the ending of the service in that year.

Introducing the section on Seapost services, the website points out that these cover the whole range of postmarks available to collectors of mail of maritime origin. For convenience, these marks can be classified under the four headings of Ship Letters, Transatlantic Mail, Paquebot Postmarks, and Sea Post Offices. As with TPOs, the Seapost pages include a number of illustrated articles giving further background about these topics.

Apart from the magazine, mentioned above, there is an increasing amount of literature being written about these joint subjects. The site contains a separate section devoted to Publications, from which copies of the relevant booklets can be purchased. For members, there is a lending library service, and information about the large number of books available is listed.

The Society also caters for collectors who wish to begin on either of these byways by listing items for direct sale on the site. These offer world-wide maritime and TPO covers at reasonable prices. Once again, members have their own access to material by participating in the postal auctions that the Society holds four times each year. There are also occasional meetings held at UK regional centres, where members are encouraged to exchange news and views.

The site concludes with the normal administrative pages detailing the officers, providing information on how to join and providing links to other sites that will be of interest to TPO and Seapost collectors. As a good example of how to provide useful summarised details for those who are interested in non-mainstream philatelic topics, this site is recommended ●

Treasures of the BPMA Martin Robinson looks at wartime

IN MARCH the British Postal Museum & Archive issued a news release to announce that six items of mail addressed to Bletchley Park, the home of the Second World War codebreakers, had been acquired. As can be seen from the two covers illustrated on the opposite page, the site of this vital intelligence activity was so secret that an under-cover address was used for any correspondence addressed there: Box 111, Bletchley.

The Post Office has a direct connection with the activities of the Bletchley Park codebreakers, for it was the Post Office researcher and engineer Tommy Flowers who led the team that designed and built the Colossus computers. These were to be used for the decoding of high-level German messages encrypted using the Lorenz SZ 40/42 cipher machine, and were the world's first large-scale digital computers, operational two years before the American ENIAC machine was switched on, but kept in the dark by post-war secrecy until the 1970s.

It was Sir Herbert Samuel Leon, the financier and Liberal MP, who bought the Bletchley estate in 1883 and replaced the existing farmhouse with the present mansion, which is a fascinating building in itself, constructed in a mixture of architectural styles: Victorian Gothic, Tudor and Dutch Baroque. Following the death of Leon's wife in 1937 (Leon himself having died in 1926) the site was sold to a builder, who was going to demolish the house and build a housing estate. Fortunately it was bought in the nick of time by Admiral Sir Hugh Sinclair, Director of Naval Intelligence, head of MI6 and the founder of the Government Code and Cipher school. He knew that it would suit his purposes well, being conveniently situated halfway between the universities of Oxford and Cambridge and near the A5, only 40 miles from central London.

The first contingent of the Code and Cypher School moved to Bletchley Park in August 1939, occupying the main house and outbuildings, as well as the famous huts erected in the grounds, and a nearby boarding school. A wireless room was set up and code-named Station X, the name

which is now often used in referring to the whole code-breaking operation. Listening stations were established to gather signals, which were sent by courier, or later by teleprinter, to Bletchley. The cryptanalysts, who were led by a number of eccentric but brilliant men, such as the mathematician Alan Turing, were helped in their work by the development of groundbreaking (as well as codebreaking) electronic machines, like the Turing Bombe and Colossus, working examples of both of which have recently been reconstructed. By January of 1945 9,000 people were working at Bletchley Park, and over 10,000 worked there at some point during the war. The information from the Bletchley decrypts, codenamed 'Ultra', had to be used with discretion so as not to arouse German suspicions, but it was invaluable to the Allied war effort, particularly so in winning the battle of the Atlantic.

Following the war, much of the equipment and the design plans were destroyed and the staff remained sworn to secrecy, as the government was anxious to keep such intelligence activities under wraps during the Cold War. It was not until the publication in 1974 of F W Winterbottom's *The Ultra Secret* that the details began to emerge, and since then dozens of books have added much to our knowledge. Among the best known of these are: Michael Smith's *Station X: Secrets of the Codebreakers* (1999), Hugh Sebag-Montefiore's *Enigma – the Battle for the Codes* (2000) and the excellent 1995 novel by Robert Harris, *Enigma*, from which a film was made.

It is much to the credit of Tony Lane, the first curator of Bletchley Park, and a group of fellow enthusiasts and sponsors, that the site was saved from demolition and redevelopment, and that today it is home to a thriving, multi-faceted exhibition area, at the heart of which is the National Codes Centre, opened by HRH The Duke of Kent in 2004. I was privileged to visit Bletchley about ten years ago with a group of Friends of Postal Heritage (on one of their many interesting excursions) and to be shown round by Tony Lane himself, an experience not to be forgotten ●

mail sent to the Bletchley Park codebreakers



For further information at
Bletchley Park, phone 01
640404 or visit their web
www.bletchleypark.org.uk

For information on the BPA
phone 020 7239 2574 or

BPMA exhibitions for the Machin's 40th anniversary

Now ON SHOW at the British Postal Museum & Archive in London is an interesting display to mark the 40th anniversary of the Machin definitives series. The title of this display, 'A Timeless Classic: The Evolution of Machin's Icon', is appropriate as Arnold Machin's timeless portrait of The Queen has been reproduced on an estimated 200 billion stamps since 1967 making it one of the most enduring and instantly recognisable images of the 20th century, standing alongside the mini-skirt, telephone box, and the Mini as British design classics.

A tutor at the Royal College of Art and a Master of Sculpture at the Royal Academy Schools, Arnold Machin (1911-99) came from an exemplary culture of design. He worked for Wedgwood for many years, and created the award-winning sculpture *Spring*, which was purchased by the Tate Gallery. The development of the Machin stamp is fascinating, and this exhibition documents the design process using original photographic portraits, plaster casts and unique artwork. It incorporates material from the BPMA collection and loans from the Royal Mint and the Machin Arts Foundation. Some of the items have never been displayed before. A short film titled *The Story of the Stamp*, featuring Machin at work in his studio, is on show at the exhibition.

In 1965, five artists were invited to submit 'renderings' of The Queen's head, as stamp designers found the portrait by Dorothy Wilding, in use since 1952, difficult to work with. These five were Reginald Brill, Stuart Devlin, David Gentleman, John Ward and Arnold Machin, the designer of the decimal coinage effigy. The new portrait ideas were based on the photographs by Lord Snowdon taken for the new decimal coinage in 1962. Machin drew a large number of sketches based on the Penny Black, his work for coins, and his drawings from life. The Stamp Advisory Committee preferred his approach, and in February 1966 he began work on the design.

Starting from a plaster mould he had created for the coins, Machin developed an image of The Queen wearing a tiara. Created originally in clay,

a mould was taken from the adapted design and a relief cast made. He simplified this 'Coinage Head' and worked from May to August 1966 on the head and surrounding design until it consisted of the head and value alone on a solid colour background. Trial stamps of the simplified design were produced in October, still with The Queen wearing a tiara, and compared with others based on a photograph by John Hedgecoe where The Queen wore the diadem. Machin's simple design was again preferred, but the SAC suggested that the diadem replace the tiara. Machin created a new 'Diadem Head' cast in October 1966, which was described as a vast improvement. To eliminate the sharp cut-off at the shoulder he added a corsage (clothing), producing another cast called the 'Dressed Head' which was preferred by The Queen. Her Majesty selected a particular colour for the 4d inland letter rate stamp, deliberately echoing back to the Penny Black of 1840.

Douglas Muir, Curator Philately at the BPMA, has written an absorbing and informative book to accompany the exhibition. *A Timeless Classic: The Evolution of Machin's icon*, reviewed here last month, is available at the BPMA and by post from Royal Mail Tallents House in Edinburgh. Price £19.99, handling charge £2.95 UK, £5 Europe, £14 rest of the world.

The BPMA is staging a second Machin exhibition, at the Royal College of Art near the Royal Albert Hall, London SW7. 'Timeless and Classic: Elizabeth, Queen and Icon' will be on show until 15 August, open Monday to Friday, 10.00-17.00, admission free. This explores the development of Machin's design from his inspiration in the Penny Black to the final portrait so familiar today. The evolution of the design is shown using original portrait photography and plaster casts, including works by Dorothy Wilding, Lord Snowdon, John Hedgecoe and David Gentleman. The exhibition also features the radical stamp designs of 1965-66 instigated by Tony Benn, then Postmaster General, without The Queen's portrait. The monarch has remained on stamps, but these miniature works of art changed forever ●



Above: a cast of the 'Diadem Head' of October 1966, prior to the addition of the corsage. Far right; artwork based upon the 'Coinage Head'; this was further simplified, and used to print trial stamps in October 1966 (shown at top right with the first of the issued stamps in the new 'Machin' design). Right: the BPMA logo for the 40th anniversary events.



Britain abroad James Mackay on the tragic life of novelist and essayist Virginia Woolf



The portrait on the Romanian stamp is from the photograph opposite, by George Charles Beresford. This photograph was also used in Royal Mail's National Portrait Gallery set of 2006. Above: Virginia with her father Sir Leslie Stephen, also by Beresford.

A RECENT Romanian stamp portrays Virginia Woolf, widely regarded as in the front rank of the modernist literary figures of the early 20th century. Born in London on 25 January 1882, she shared her birthday with Robert Burns, and suffered from the same bouts of elation and depression nowadays known as a bipolar disorder. Virginia was the daughter of Sir Leslie Stephen by his second wife. Both parents had been married and widowed and had children by their first marriages, so Virginia, with sister Vanessa and brothers Thoby and Adrian, had several half-brothers and sisters.

Sir Leslie Stephen was one of the most eminent literary figures of the late-Victorian period, a journalist who edited the influential *Cornhill Magazine* and was the founding editor of the *Dictionary of National Biography*. His family moved in the highest literary circles.

Virginia's life was marred by tragedy. The deaths of her mother (1895), half-sister Stella (1897) and her beloved father (1904) triggered off mental breakdowns. Virginia was briefly institutionalised after her father's death, and subsequently she, Vanessa and Adrian sold the family home at 22 Hyde Park Gate and moved to Gordon Square in Bloomsbury.

Virginia had no formal education, but grew up in a world of books and art. Vanessa became a painter and designer, and married Clive Bell, while Virginia pursued a literary career with her husband Leonard Woolf, who founded the Hogarth Press. Recurring depression led to her suicide on 28 March 1941, filling her pockets with rocks and wading into the River Ouse.

Today Virginia is chiefly remembered for her novels *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), *To the Lighthouse* (1927) and *Orlando* (1928) but instead of these, the Romanian stamp features the cover of *Hyde Park Gate News*. This was the Stephen family newspaper, hand-written by Virginia and Thoby and illustrated by Vanessa, which they produced from 1891 to 1895. For over a century the manuscript lay in the British Library archives, but it was published in 2002. The periodical terminated abruptly with the death of their mother, but the title page bears the married names of Virginia Woolf and Vanessa Bell ●



Mainly Machins Douglas Myall on the Machin Anniversary



Machin coin and stamp presentation set As is well known, Arnold Machin developed his renowned portrait of The Queen from work he had done for a new coinage in 1968. This association was commemorated with a presentation folder containing a set of 16 mint pre-decimal stamps from 1/2d to 19gd, together with the first five decimal coins, from 1/2d to 10p, minted with the coinage head. This image was replaced in 1984 at a time when a replacement for the Machin profile for stamps was also under consideration. The accompanying document tells us that during 17 years of use the coinage head was minted over 16 billion times, an annual rate that has been comfortably exceeded by the image used on stamps but, of course, unlike the coins, the stamps could be used only once. The folder has one curious sentence. It states that a philatelist was fined £30,000 in 1968 for forging a Machin definitive. I know of no forgeries earlier than 1993 and the figure quoted was imposed on a dealer who pleaded guilty to forging Machins in 1995. These were aimed at defrauding collectors, not Royal Mail.

Stamps in this folder were not all meant to be the first issues because both colours of the 4d and 8d are present, but I was curious to see exactly which stamps were included. Whilst every folder no doubt has the same number of stamps, with the same face values and colours, it is possible that different folders have stamps which vary in their details. Here is what I found in the one I examined. The 1/2d was from the paler shade cylinder 3, issued a month after the stamps from

Above: the cover and pane 3 from *The Machin: The Making of a Masterpiece*. The image of the Machin head on the cover is shaded and embossed. Right: the commemorative document cover. Opposite page: pane 4 from the PSB, containing the last official issue of the standard PIP designs.

cylinder 2. The 1d had Head B, which was not issued from sheets until October 1968. The 2d was the first issue, with the value spacing error. The real surprise was the 3d. The one in my folder had two phosphor bars, pva gum and Head A, which was not issued until 20 August 1969, two years after the first 3d Machin appeared and that had a single central bar. The 4d was the two-bar sepia with pva and Head A. The red 4d was from a booklet. The 9p was from the original gum arabic printing not from the later pva printing. The 10p and 1s were the original versions with coarse screen (150 lpi) phosphor. The 156d and 19gd were both on gum arabic paper, the former with a screened value. All in all, an eclectic mix. There were no imperforates, and no stamps with missing phosphor, but you could be more fortunate.

Machin collectors pack All 20 low value stamps in the current range have been issued in a collectors pack, often called a presentation pack. It is pack number 77. It describes the stamps as being issued on 5 June 2007 but, of course, many of them were issued much earlier. Only the ruby £1 and the standard letter NVTs with the pre-PIP designs were issued on that date. It contains all the

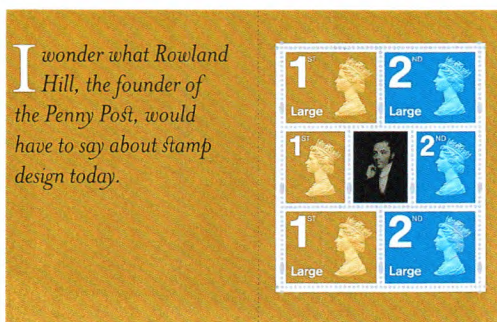
products, and recent developments in new definitive issues



new stamps issued on 27 March, including the light grey 50p and the re-printed 46p with lower value setting. It also contains the three universal airmail stamps issued a few years ago. These are the ones stamped out from coils with plain white substrate; mint ones from booklets have part of the printed back cover. Packs are the only source of these coil stamps.

The pack has two rows of mount to hold the stamps. Unfortunately, this does not give enough room to contain them all without overlapping, which is not advisable for long-term storage. The overall size of packs is limited so that they will fit into the albums sold by Tallents House, but there is room on the mount for a third row, and this might have been a preferred solution to the problem. The illustration of the pack in Royal Mail's *Preview* (No 166) shows no overlap but this is because it omits one of the airmail stamps.

The Making of a Masterpiece This is the title of the prestige stamp book issued to commemorate the creation of the Machin head. It is beautifully produced, and I love the feel of the embossed cover. As well as the panes of stamps, illustrated in previous *Bulletins*, the pane stubs and inter-



leaves are full of photographs of the artist and his development of the iconic image, and have many quotations from the film made of the production at Harrison's factory. Everyone interested in the subject will want one.

Collectors of se-tenant pairs will find the last pane in the book most interesting because of the juxtaposition of stamps for standard and large letters. These are different sizes and create some unusual shapes for the vertical pairs. Should you include the label or not? If you do, you will have a trio not a pair, and it will still be an awkward shape. I retain half a label in my pairs, so as to make a regular shape and as proof of the pair's origin. This pane is the last official issue of the standard PIP designs.

Machin commemorative document This contains three folders contained in a showcase box. The box and each folder is titled 'The Colourful Art of Arnold Machin'. One folder has the Machin anniversary miniature sheet nicely cancelled with a Stoke-on-Trent impression. Another has a 1st class 'stamp' in sterling silver minted in Holland, complete with 'perforations'. The third holds the greatest interest for me. It deals with the different colours used for printing Machin stamps over the years and has information not previously placed in the public domain. There is an account of the Cambridge pre-decimal trials of 1969. However, I think this folder could have been titled 'The Colourful Art of Jeffery Matthews', as most of it is about how he created the colour range which



Reversion to the standard pre-PIP design, shown in book of 12 1st class stamps, cylinder W4.

has been used for the past 20 years or so, and details of the mix of three of the colours are shown. There are essays of the first 16 colours, using the head of Thomas Richard Harrison. Finally, there is a reproduction of his palette of 30 colours that was exhibited at StampShow 2000 and signed by him in August 1988.

Colours Readers of the June *Bulletin* might have noticed that the new sheets with the revised NV1 designs have the colour name printed in the left margins. It is interesting that neither of these colours, bright blue and gold, is from the Jeffery Matthews palette. I call these cylinders colour-tied because they are limited in use to the named colour. If, for example, the 1st class NV1 were ever to revert to its former colour, flame, it would be incongruous to have it printed from a cylinder which names the colour as gold and, moreover prints the word gold in flame. Colour changes of any value in current use do not, of course, occur very frequently, so maybe this problem is more apparent than real.

Colour naming of stamps is a subject about which there is no general agreement. Catalogue publishers have their own names and it is odd to see the same colour being described in different terms, depending on which catalogue you use. For example, Royal Mail's ash pink is one editor's claret and another editor's dull red-brown. The catalogues are full of this sort of thing, which is a source of some confusion among collectors. I doubt whether the names now being included on

cylinders will persuade editors to use them. In my Machin Handbook I always use the official names unless there is a good reason why not and when I depart from them I give my reasons. A complete list of official names was published in the September 1991 issue of the *Bulletin*.

Even more difficult for collectors is the fact that there is no standard for the naming of shades. It is impossible to describe these in words that will provide any certainty of identification. The problem has been with us almost since philately began and often a valuable shade must be submitted for expertisation before one can fork out one's hard-earned cash with any confidence. Would that colorimeters were as cheap as ultra-violet lamps.

Reversion to pre-PIP designs The decision to revert to the earlier standard letter NV1 designs with smaller service indicator in the Jeffery Matthews fount at the lower left of the stamps has led to several new issues. At the time that the PIP designs were introduced it was not expected that they would last less than a year and all the old cylinders were taken out of service and re-furnished ready for new duties. At the time of writing I have seen the following sheets and booklets, all of which are printed from cylinders with new colour numbers although the phosphor cylinders are unchanged. All were issued on 5 June. The business sheets of 100 of each class do not have cylinder numbers, and so far I have not seen any later printing dates than those which I mentioned last time.



One of the self-adhesive labels of 1972 (at 71% actual size).

Counter sheets printed by De La Rue: 1st gold, D2/D1 no dot and dot; 2nd bright blue, D3/D1 no dot and dot; both gummed PVA.

Books of self-adhesives printed by Walsall: 12 × 2nd, W3/W1; 12 × 1st, W4/W1. These phosphor numbers are very faint. They are different cylinders, as they print a single central bar on the 2nd class stamps and two bars on the others. I have not yet seen a cylinder book of 6 × 1st, possibly because the books with Arnold Machin's facsimile signature are still in plentiful supply, but the stamps are indistinguishable from those in the larger books. All these books have a validity notice on the back cover which gives the maximum dimensions and weight for mail to qualify for the standard service.

Britain's first self-adhesives In the *Machin Time-line* booklet which was distributed with the May *Bulletin*, I mentioned the self-adhesive stamped to order (STO) stamp labels that were produced in 1973. Reader John Daynes has kindly written to say that he had some sheets of self-adhesive labels with the Machin head (see above) printed by HMSO earlier, in June 1972. There were three values, 2½p, 3p and 3½p, each being printed in sheets of nine. Each label measured 3½ inches by 2½ inches, and there was room on it for the address to be typed or written. One could argue whether these labels are stamps or postal stationery. The following year all three were uprated by the addition of a ½p stamp impression in the same design. •

Special handstamping

Richard West visits London's Special Handstamp Centre

WHEN YOU POST a cover, perhaps on the day of issue of a new set of stamps, or at an exhibition, do you ever wonder what happens from the time you post that cover until it is returned safely to you? In 1990 Royal Mail established a number of specialised centres specifically to handle covers that are sent in by collectors for handstamping. There may be some who feel uncomfortable with the thought that covers once posted are not cancelled locally. However, bear in mind that normal sorting and postmarking might not be done anywhere near where the item is posted. These days Royal Mail will transport items to locations where sorting can take place most efficiently and quickly. So it is with the handstamping of covers – the prime objective is to undertake the task efficiently and to the complete satisfaction of their customers.

One of the busiest of the Special Handstamp Centres (SHCS) is that based in London, within the Mount Pleasant complex. Here Pritpal Mann and his team of five ensure that customer satisfaction is supreme.

The covers received are divided into three categories: those from dealers or those sponsoring special handstamps; those posted in philatelic posting boxes (referred to as branch office work), and those from collectors requesting a specific handstamp and using the re-posting facility.

Most of the requirements from dealers are for covers posted on the day of issue of a new set, often to be cancelled with a handstamp that the dealer has sponsored to complement the stamps. Such covers will arrive in bulk, bearing just the address of the dealer concerned, and will likewise be returned in bulk. These covers are given priority; indeed cancellation will inevitably begin some days before the stamps are officially issued. Pritpal realises that these covers represent the livelihood of the dealer concerned, who will have customers eager to receive their orders. ►

Most of the covers are cancelled using specially designed machines that ensure a first class impression perfectly positioned on the cover. The design of the handstamp is laser etched onto a foil, placed in the machine, and then inked from an ink well. The inked impression is transferred onto a rubber roller, and thence onto the cover (not unlike offset litho printing). The operators can see on a screen exactly where the handstamp will fall, so can adjust the position of the cover until everything is right. A foot control applies the handstamp to the cover, exactly in the position required.

Over the years, staff at the London SHC have made adjustments to their equipment, so that it meets all requirements. A problem was occurring with large covers, say covers bearing the generic Smilers sheets. Having cancelled half the stamps on the cover using the normal foil, the cover is turned round, and a new foil inserted on which the handstamp is inverted: thus the remaining stamps are correctly cancelled.

Posting boxes The second category is the covers placed in the philatelic posting boxes that arrive from the branch offices. The London SHC serves about 850 branch offices, and the covers arrive in pouches, with about 12,000 covers arriving on the days following a new issue of stamps. These covers will receive the pictorial 'first day of issue' handstamp provided as the alternative to the one used by Tallents House. A non-pictorial first day of issue handstamp is also available, but this has to be specially requested. After it has been cancelled, each cover is put into a special clear envelope for onward transmission, to prevent damage in the postal system.

Finally there are those covers submitted by collectors requesting a particular handstamp. Such handstamps are announced in the *Postmark Bulletin*, and each is allocated a specific reference number. As the requests come in, they are housed in special containers, one for each handstamp, awaiting the day the marking is brought into use. Collectors invariably enclose an addressed envelope for the return of their covers, which are naturally kept with the covers themselves.



Complications arise when collectors send in several covers, each one requiring a different handstamp. These are carefully processed, marking on the outer envelope the reference numbers of the handstamps required, and dealing with one handstamp at a time. The majority of the handstamping is undertaken using the 'foil' method, as this ensures not only accurate positioning, but also the quality and crispness of the postmark impression. However, there are handstamps which are continually in use, known as the 'rolling handstamps', such as those applied to covers posted at special locations. These have a variable date and so would not be suitable to be in the form of foils. Consequently these are the standard handstamps, carefully inked before applying to the cover.

It may come as a surprise to learn of some of the handstamps available, such as one reading 'Happy Birthday' and another with 'Congratulations'. Tours around Mount Pleasant Sorting Office are popular, especially with school groups, and these include a visit to the Handstamp Cen-



Opposite page: some of the sponsored postmarks used in recent weeks at the London Special Handstamp Centre. Above: some postmarks in permanent or long-term use at the London SHC. Left: applying special handstamps using a PAD canceller.

tre. There visitors are presented with a souvenir of a specially designed postcard, stamped with the centre's own 'Smilers' stamp, using the Union Flag stamp design with a label depicting Mount Pleasant. The stamp is then cancelled with whichever current handstamp the visitor prefers. Other handstamps include one specially sponsored each year for Christmas by the staff at the Centre; the SHC operates throughout the entire year, so it is possible to have this handstamp applied on 25 December.

Satisfied customers The London SHC is ideally located so that the majority of handstamps in use fall within its jurisdiction. The prime aim of the staff is customer satisfaction, and, with years of experience, they believe they fully understand the needs of their customers, every one being treated the same, irrespective of how many covers are being sent. Satisfied customers come from all parts of the world, including Europe, the USA, Canada, and Australia. Whenever surveys are

conducted to rate the service, the response is invariably 'excellent' in every category. It is quite normal for a single handstamp on the first day of issue to be applied to around 10,000 covers: one handstamp used to mark the new Millennium was applied to no fewer than 100,000 covers.

Just two of the comments from satisfied customers say it all. Pritpal 'fully understands the handstamp significance to cover producers and is always prepared to listen and help as and when required. A perfect gentleman to be in charge of such an operation – we really do appreciate his enthusiasm for the job and this seems to affect the staff. A good PR for Royal Mail.' (Dawn Covers). 'As an old stamp dealer with Cameo Stamps and Cameo International I have been involved with covers since the Olympic Games in 1948 and with the Philatelic Bureau since it started in 1963. I can honestly say I have never received a better or more polite, helpful service over all these years.' (Cameo International).

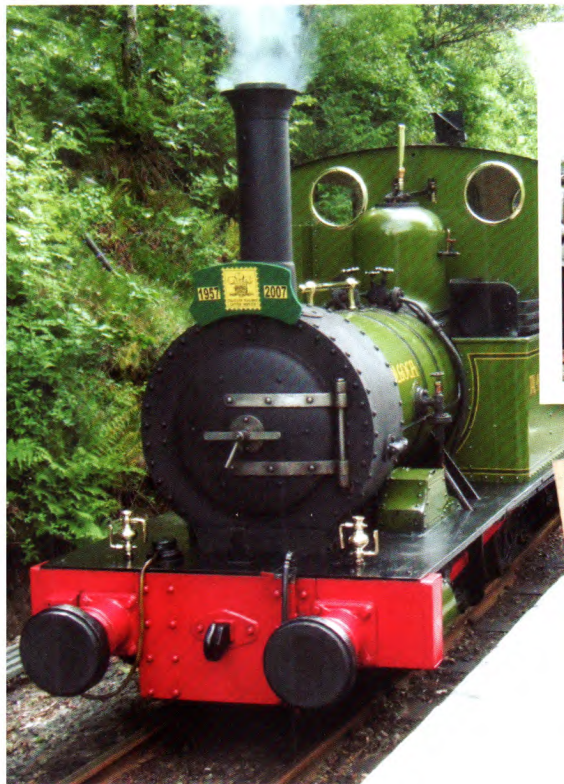
But, of course, not everyone is always satisfied. For some years now the London SHC has dealt with complaints and returns, normally sent in via local Customer Care Centres, from around the UK. There sometimes has to be a fine line drawn between meeting the wishes of the customer and the guidelines laid down by Royal Mail. Occasionally firm action is needed. However, it is recognised that sometimes mistakes are made, but what is important is how mistakes are handled, and the impression left with the customer.

There is absolutely no doubt that Pritpal and his staff are dedicated to the service they provide, and in the end it is the customer, the collector, who benefits.

Royal Mail operates five SHCs, located in London, Birmingham, Cardiff, Glasgow, and South Shields. The addresses are given in each issue of the *British Postmark Bulletin* and occasionally also in this *Bulletin* – see April, page 233. For a free sample copy of the *Postmark Bulletin* write to: The Editor, British Philatelic Bulletin, Royal Mail, 148 Old Street, London EC1V 9HQ. Subscriptions to the *Postmark Bulletin* (£12.25 UK and Europe, £24.95 rest of world) should be sent to Tallents House in Edinburgh •

Talyllyn Railway Celebrating 50 years of the Letter Service

THE Railway Letter Service, originally introduced in 1891, continues on a number of preserved railways including the narrow-gauge Talyllyn Railway in Wales. In May the Railway celebrated the 50th anniversary of its RLS with a special train and commemorative stamps reproducing the designs of its 1957 issue. For further details of the Talyllyn's RLS see the May 1997 *Bulletin* •



Right: Nine 25p railway letter stamps were issued on 23 May to mark the anniversary. They feature the design of the 1957 issue, maps of the line, and the Railway's logo. Mint sheet £2.25 plus 50p postage. FDCs have railway stamps cancelled by a special Wharf Station cancel and Welsh 1st class by a bilingual Chester postmark. £5.50 postpaid.

Orders to: The Postmaster, Talyllyn Railway Letter Service, Wharf station, Tywyn LL36 9EY. Phone 01654 710472.



David Broadbent
37 Maple Road
MANCHESTER
M23 9HN

To be posted on arrival at
Abergynolwyn Station

Book review A specialised catalogue for all QEII definitives

THIS WORK is not for the faint hearted, but if you are one of the many collectors who like to take a detailed look at GB definitives, then at just under £36 these two volumes could prove a wise investment. Although this catalogue is published by the Machin Collectors Club, it embraces all the QEII definitives, including the Wildings.

In whatever format a stamp has been issued, it is detailed here, whether it be sheets, including cylinder blocks and date blocks, booklets from stitched to self-adhesive, coils including leaders, Regionals, postage dues, even training stamps.

Much is illustrated; in many ways the illustrations are as useful as the text in identifying items. Thus all booklet covers, booklet panes, coil leaders, etc are shown but, more importantly, the key features are highlighted. If, for example, you have a pile of retail stamp books, and wonder how you will ever manage to sort them, this catalogue will come to your rescue. Wherever feasible, items are priced, which must in itself have been a horrendous undertaking. Not all pricing seems to agree with Gibbons: for example, the 2001 Submarines book with imperforate pane is priced £650 (2007 Concise has this item at £4,500).

It takes a while to familiarise oneself with this work, but that is understandable given its complexity, and at first finding a particular item can take some time. However, once one has become comfortable with the various sections and with the style of listing, it proves invaluable.

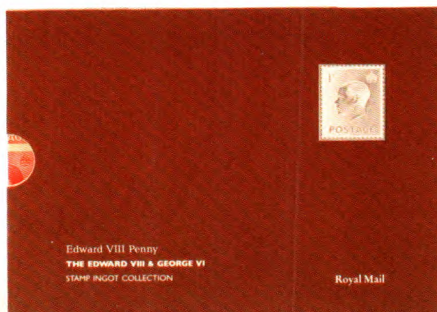
If you study definitives, and perhaps need to put your own collection in order, then these two volumes should be by your side. *Richard West* •



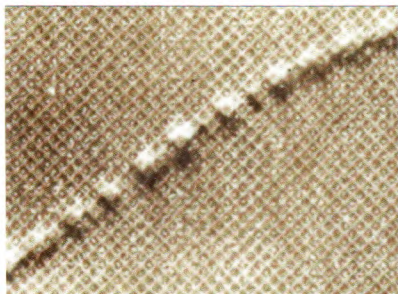
Queen Elizabeth II Definitives Specialised Catalogue
Published in two volumes by the Machin Collectors Club, 8 Jannys Close, Aylsham, Norfolk NR11 6DL. £35.95 the two volumes, plus postage at £5 (UK), £10 (elsewhere).

Prize draw Edward VIII Ingot

FOR THIS month's draw we have the Edward VIII 1d stamp silver ingot. Four runners-up will be sent a Three Kings miniature sheet. To enter the draw, write your name and address on the back of a postcard and send it to: Ingot Draw, British Philatelic Bulletin, Royal Mail, 148 Old Street, London EC1V 9HQ, to arrive by 31 August •



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



May identify The detail was from the Mr Punch Greetings stamp. The winner was K Boyce of Australia.

May knowledge The answers: 1) 1991; 2) brown; 3) Carisbrooke Hall. The winner was D McCormick, N Ireland.

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 August *Identify* Competition. Secondly, test your philatelic knowledge by answering the questions below. Send your answer to August *Knowledge* Competition.

- 1 Who designed the 1973 and 1974 Trees stamps?
- 2 Where will the ABPS national exhibition be held in November?
- 3 In which year did Aberfeldy Bridge feature on a stamp?

Send your answer (addressed to either the August *Identify* competition or the August *Knowledge* competition), name and address on a postcard or back of a sealed envelope to: British Philatelic Bulletin, Royal Mail, 148 Old Street, London EC1V 9HQ. The senders of the first cards drawn in each competition on 14 September will each receive £50. Runner-up prizes of presentation packs, first day covers or stamp cards will be awarded in each competition. These competitions are not open to Royal Mail employees ●

Events

Until 15 August 'Timeless and Classic: Elizabeth, Queen & Icon' at Royal College of Art. See p368.

Until 31 October Vehicles from the 'Moving the Mail' exhibition on display at Grampian Transport Museum, Alford, Aberdeenshire. Exhibition organised by the BPMA. **Enquiries** 020 7239 2570.

Until April 2008 'A Timeless Classic: The Evolution of Machin's Icon' exhibition at British Postal Museum & Archive, London WC1. **Enquiries** 020 7239 2570.

31 July Talk 'Envelopes: a Puzzling Journey Through the Royal Mail' at British Postal Museum & Archive, London WC1, 19.00. Book tickets on 020 7239 2570 or e-mail info@postalheritage.org.uk

4 August Norfolk & Norwich PS Stamp and Postcard Fair at Hewett School, Cecil Road, Norwich, 10.00-16.30. **Enquiries** 01603 623502.

30 August - 1 September Picture Postcard Show at Lawrence Hall, the Royal Horticultural Society Halls, London SW1. **Enquiries** 020 8886 0469.

1 September City of Preston PS Stamp & Card Fair, Barton Village Hall, Garstang Road (A6) near Preston, 10.00-16.00. Approx 20 dealers.

4 September Talk 'Tommy Flowers and the Birth of Colossus' at BPMA. Book tickets on 020 7239 2570 or e-mail info@postalheritage.org.uk

19-22 September Autumn Stampex at Business Design Centre, Upper Street, London N1. **Enquiries** Stampex 01252 628006.

29 September Autumn BasPex stamp fair and exhibition, organised by Basildon Philatelic Society, at Barstable School, Timberlog Close, Basildon, 10.00-16.00. Free admission and car park. Dealers ●

Late news

Royal Mail update The Poppy stamp in the 2006 Lest We Forget miniature sheet was awarded Best Stamp 2006 in the Asiago International Prize for Philatelic Art •

A new edition of the popular *Queen Elizabeth II: A Portrait in Stamps* book, first published for The Queen's golden jubilee, will shortly be available. The stories behind the stamps featuring Her Majesty are revealed in this unique book, a joint Royal Mail/British Library production, written by Fay Sweet. Paperback, 128 pages, 250 colour images. Price £9.95 plus handling charge £2.95 UK, £5 Europe, £14 rest of the world •

Readers will be aware of the current series of generic sheets featuring the countries of the UK: Wales (issued March 2007), England (April 2007), Scotland (November 2007) and Northern Ireland (March 2008). It is also proposed to issue a Glorious UK sheet featuring all four countries in September 2008, with labels on a particular theme. We invite your suggestions for themes (eg architecture, the countryside, flora and fauna, sport, transport, etc). Write your five suggested themes on a postcard and send it, with your name and address, to: UK Themes, British Philatelic Bulletin, Royal Mail, 148 Old Street, London EC1V 9HQ by 28 September. All cards will be entered into a draw and the senders of the first six drawn will be sent the four country generic sheets •

New discovery B Alan (Stamps) Ltd reports a remarkable new find on the 1973 Cricket issue. The stamps were originally printed with two phosphor bands which were unsightly on the pastel background so were reprinted as an all-over phosphor coating. Unnoticed among normal sets in a dealer's stock since 1973, 29 sets with two phosphor bands have now surfaced from the supposedly destroyed printing. For more information on the find and availability, contact B Alan Ltd on 01732 743387 or info@balanstamps.co.uk •

Titanic's mailroom keys Three keys and a chain from RMS *Titanic's* mailroom sold for £100,000 in an auction in Devizes in April – the most ever

paid for a single item of *Titanic* memorabilia. The keys were recovered from the body of Oscar S Woody, one of the five postal workers who lost their lives on the vessel. A feature on the *Titanic* was published in the *Bulletin* in September 1995 •

Croydex 100 To mark its centenary, the Croydon Philatelic Society will stage an exhibition at the Fairfield Halls (near East Croydon station), 3-8 September. The exhibition, open daily from 10.00 to 16.30, will comprise 25 small displays covering a wide range of philatelic subjects including Paris Post, Brunswick & Hannover, New Zealand, and, not surprisingly, Croydon postal history. A centenary dinner will be held on 7 September, attended by the Mayor of Croydon, representatives of the Royal Philatelic Society London, and representatives from European philatelic societies visited by the Croydon Philatelic Society in recent years. There will be a stamp fair (with 28 dealers) and a display of GB material from the reigns of Victoria, George V, George VI and Elizabeth II from the Royal Philatelic Collection on Saturday 8 September. Staff from Bonhams auctioneers will be on hand to give free valuations, and members of the Croydon Philatelic Society will also be present to answer questions about the Society and the displays. The Croydon Philatelic Society has over 130 members; visit their website, www.croydonps.org.uk for details. Croydex promises to be a worthwhile celebratory event in the lead-up to the ABPS Croydon 2007 exhibition and Philatelic Congress, also to be staged at the Fairfield Halls, in November •

Obituary We are sorry to report the death in June of Julie Pearson (formerly Dunwiddie) who joined Royal Mail in the 1990s, involved in overseas philatelic sales and exhibition work. She attended a number of UK and overseas exhibitions, including The Stamp Show 2000. Julie was married to the eminent philatelist Patrick Pearson, to whom we extend our sympathy. She had a good knowledge of philatelic organisations and was interested in early French stamps •

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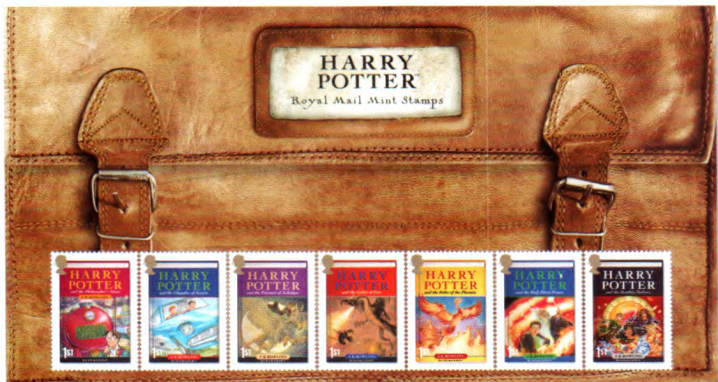
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Notes

(MS) = miniature sheet
 PS = Philatelic Society
 Authors' names are in italics
 Each issue contained a supplement listing commemorative covers.
 The May issue included the booklet *Machin Stamps Time-line* (British Philatelic Bulletin Publication No 13).

Celebrate the final Harry Potter



To celebrate publication of the seventh and final Harry Potter book on 21 July, Royal Mail has issued twelve 1st class stamps. Seven feature the covers of the books in a se-tenant strip, and five (in a miniature sheet) show the Hogwarts school crest and the symbols of the school's four houses. The stamps will delight all Harry Potter fans.

Stamp set	£2.38
Miniature sheet	£1.70
Pack (stamps + min sheet)	£4.60
Stamp cards	£3.90
Generic sheet	£7.35

Serviced FDCs (order by 14 August)	
Stamps: UK orders	£3.27
Stamps: overseas	£2.79
Miniature sheet: UK orders	£2.47
Miniature sheet: overseas	£2.11

Handling charges: £1.45 UK, £1.55 Europe, £2.15 elsewhere. There is no charge if ordering FDCs only



Royal Mail

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

