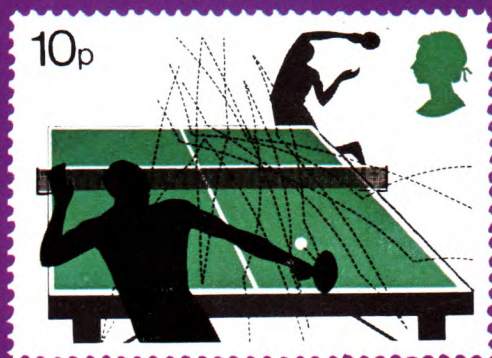


Philatelic Bulletin

Volume 14 Number 5 January 1977



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Editorial

We welcome in the new year by introducing a newcomer to our pages—Douglas Evans—who has contributed a series of articles on the recess printed high value stamps. The first of this series appears this month and will be followed by a further three.

James Watson, on the other hand, needs no introduction and we are confident that his new features "Stamps for Pleasure" will be as well received as his many other articles have been over the years.

There may be others of our readers who specialise in some facet of GB stamps—especially the more modern issues—who may like to contribute to the Bulletin. We are always happy to consider manuscripts of roughly

1000 words (or multiples of 1000 for major series). They should be sent, ideally, typed double spaced, to the address of the Editor shown on the back cover.

A similar invitation is extended to all those who would care to let us have comments for 'Letters to the Editor' column.

Some readers have written to say that they are not satisfied with our explanation, given in reply to Mr Jack Smith's letter published in the October edition of the Philatelic Bulletin, concerning the reasons why we do not issue 2nd class special stamps except at Christmas.

Suggestions have been made that the Post Office should issue 1st and 2nd class rate special stamps in predominantly differing colours that would make them easily recognisable one from another. It is our opinion that this would limit the designer considerably in his interpretation of the subject matter.

Another suggestion received indicates that it was the introduction of the two tier system which necessitated the need to separate mail into two classes. Let us not forget that before this system was introduced, there were two classes of mail, letters and printed papers.

The reasons stated previously are the valid ones however, and we have no plans to change our policy with regard to printing special stamps for the 2nd class postage rate.

New 50p Stamp Booklet

On 26 January a new stamp booklet, price 50p, will be issued. The new booklet is intended for sale through stamp vending machines and will update and replace the 10p booklet. Machine conversions will be phased and, including a trial of the new mechanism, will not be completed throughout the country for about 12 months. The booklet has a se-tenant pane of ten stamps ($4 \times 8\frac{1}{2}p$, $2 \times 6\frac{1}{2}p$, $2 \times 1p$, $2 \times \frac{1}{2}p$) and measures 40mm $\times$ 53mm. From 26 January the new booklet will be on sale at the Philatelic Bureau, 124 Lothian Road, Edinburgh, EH3 9BB and at Post Office philatelic counters.

Gems from the RM Phillips Collection

XLIII Penny Black Plate XI



Plate eleven is much the rarest of all the Black plates and it would therefore only be gilding the lily to over-emphasise the qualities of this month's magnificent gem from the Reginald M Phillips Collection. It is very doubtful whether there exists another comparable corner block with the plate number associated in the margin; just for good measure stamp BC is re-entered. This block can be positively identified as having once formed part of the incredible quarter sheet (top five rows) of plate XI which was owned by Frank Godden before the last war.

Plate XI of the penny was first used for printing in red, having been registered in this colour on 27 January 1841. On 1st and 2nd February seven hundred sheets (only) were printed in black as an emergency measure, hence the rarity of this stamp.

A plate number block of plate XI, from a red printing, on experimental Dickinson silk thread paper, was illustrated as Gem No IX in the Philatelic Bulletin for March 1974.

Gems No. XLI November 1976

We apologise for omitting the 4d design quoted and now publish it to complete the feature.



Stamps for Pleasure

1. Origins of the Postage Stamp

So much has been written in the past about the origins of the posts, and of postage stamps and their production and design, that it is a formidable task even just to select the essence of it all for a comparatively short series of articles. The purpose, however, is to provide a factual background of the beginnings and development of stamps for the many thousands of collectors of modern British issues to whom, perhaps, the Penny Black is vaguely remembered as the world's first postage stamp.

During the 300 years prior to 1840—the 'key' date in stamp history—Britain's postal services made haphazard, and sometimes, chaotic progress as private enterprise vied with the various official posts. The first 'Royal Mail' was for the exclusive use of the reigning monarch and it was the advent of the private letter-carrier which persuaded Queen Elizabeth's 'Master of the Posts', Thomas Randolph, to accept private letters . . . at exorbitant fees! Both Elizabeth I and James I failed to establish obligatory use of the official post which, in the eighteenth century, was augmented by the numerous private postal services and 'Penny Posts'.

To the enquiring mind of former schoolmaster, Rowland Hill, postal operations in the early 1830s presented an irresistible challenge. Postal charges were beyond the means of all but the most affluent; the rates increased with distance travelled and for additional sheets of notepaper in the letter, while invariably the recipient, who could often ill afford to pay, was responsible for the postal costs. Members of Parliament abused the privilege of having their mail 'franked' for free transit by signing letters for their friends, and illegal private posts were rampant.

Rowland Hill evolved a 'master plan' of postal reform: a uniform postage rate of one penny for each half ounce in weight to any destination in the United Kingdom, the postage to be prepaid by means of 'a bit of paper just large enough to bear the stamp, covered at the back with a glutinous wash' or by the use of pre-stamped envelopes and wrappers.

Despite derision and opposition, Hill's revolutionary plan for uniform penny postage was finally accepted by the Government in 1839, and he was given a post in the Treasury whence he sponsored a competition for suitable stamp designs.

To say that Rowland Hill 'invented' the postage stamp is to revive an age-old controversy. It seems that none of the submitted designs was acceptable, but that Hill himself elected the use of the Queen's portrait, within a layout suggested by one of the prize-winners in the Treasury design competition and in the format of existing small, rectangular Government tax stamps used on legal documents. Thus were born the Penny Black and Twopence Blue, issued on 6 May 1840.

Never in his wildest dreams could the great reformer have envisaged that his 'Blacks' and 'Blues' were to become the prototype—in the portrayal of the reigning sovereign, and in size and format—for the country's low-value definitive stamps for more than 135 years! His profile of Queen Victoria, copied from William Wyon's City Medal, struck to commemorate the young Queen's visit to the Guildhall in 1837, was in fact used on stamps throughout the long years of her reign—at her behest.

Elaborate preparations were put in hand for the new stamps. Uniform penny postage was introduced on 10 January 1840, but the stamps were not at that time printed in sufficient quantities for their release until the following May, hence letters were accepted with cash payment—these were hand-struck 'Paid' with a datestamp, a practice which continued for several years until the use of adhesive stamps became compulsory.

Wyon's engraved head of the Queen was sketched by Henry Corbould: the drawing served as the basis for the master die engraved by Frederick and Charles Heath for the Penny Black and its twin Twopence Blue—identical except for the colour and change of value. The basic design was simple in the extreme: just the word 'POSTAGE' in the top panel and the

value in words at the foot. Most striking—in retrospect—was the omission of the country name, 'Great Britain', which was probably never even considered at the time (as no other country had stamps), and which has become a lasting tradition with British stamps.

Rowland Hill and his colleagues were obsessed by the prospect of forgery and took remarkable precautions in the design of the new stamps to prevent them being forged. These included the engraved background of intricate lines, produced 'banknote style', by the printers, Perkins, Bacon and Petch, on their famous Rose engine; the use of a watermark in the paper—a single small crown for each stamp; and the introduction of corner letters at the foot with a different combination for each stamp in the sheet. The upper corners were filled with ornaments resembling a *croix pattée*, while the design was completed by more intricate tracery at the sides.

The stamps were printed by the line-engraved process—better known today as recess printing—and the master die was used, by means of a transfer roller, to produce the plates of 240 'stamp' images which were to comprise a sheet of stamps, a method which, with refinements, is still used today in the printing of engraved stamps.

Now we can better understand the sequence and arrangement of the corner letters, which had to be applied laboriously by hand to the steel printing plates. The stamps were arranged in 20 rows of 12 (related to the currency of 12 pence to 1 shilling or 240 pence to the £), each row starting with a letter of the alphabet as: Row 1—AA, AB, AC etc., Row 2—BA, BB, BC etc. to the bottom row—TA, TB, TC etc. In theory the forger would concentrate on one combination of letters and his misdeeds would be revealed!

Eleven different plates were used for printing the Penny Black, two only for the Twopence Blue. 'Plating'—a philatelic term for the reconstruction of a sheet of stamps (with each in its correct location) from a certain plate is both possible—from a close study of the differences

between the plates—and almost impossible these days with the increasing rarity of some of the stamps. Difficult enough to recreate a sheet from mixed plates using just the corner letters as a guide!

The stamps were issued imperforate and had to be cut from the sheets with scissors or knife: the first perforated stamps were issued in February 1854, long after the Penny Black had ceased to be used. In fact, the popular 'Black', which enjoyed tremendous sales, was in use for little more than ten months—to February 1841—when it was replaced by the Penny Red. At first the 'Blacks' were cancelled or postmarked by the so-called 'Maltese Cross' in contrasting red ink which—it was eventually realised—could easily be removed and the stamp used again. Belatedly, black ink was brought into use, but the problem was finally resolved with the issue of red stamps.

Reputedly 68 or 70 million Penny Blacks were printed and sold, and the very numerous flaws, re-entries and other printing varieties provide a vast field of research for the student and the specialist. An authoritative reference work is Stanley Gibbons' *Specialised Catalogue*, Volume I, which includes more than 170 pages of detailed information relating to the line-engraved issues of Great Britain.

Postal revenue was, predictably, down during the first year of uniform penny postage, and took many years to get in the 'black' again. Rowland Hill was summarily dismissed from the Treasury, but was recompensed with the sum of £13,000, raised by public subscription and, in 1846, he was appointed secretary to the Postmaster-General. In 1854 he became Chief Secretary to the Post Office, in sole charge of its operation and finances, and the final recognition of his services came in 1862 when he received his knighthood.

Perhaps the last word on the Penny Black comes from John Easton ('British Postage Stamp Design'), who wrote: 'The Penny Black . . . was not a work of art but a gem of craftsmanship, and therein lies the secret of its excellence'.

JAMES WATSON

The Mail Coach Stone

At the side of the A40 just a couple of miles east of Llandovery in South Wales stands a tall memorial stone surrounded by an iron fence. This is the mail coach stone, and marks the spot where the Gloucester to Carmarthen coach left the road one winter's evening and fell down a slope towards the Gwedderig river.

On the front the stone bears the inscription:

'This pillar is called Mail Coach Pillar and was erected as a caution to mail coach drivers to keep from intoxication, and in memory of the Gloucester and Carmarthen mail coach which was driven by Edward Jenkins on the 19th day of December in the year 1835, who was intoxicated at the time and drove the mail on the wrong side of the road, and going at full speed or gallop met a cart and permitted the leader to turn short round to the right hand and went down the precipice 121 feet, where, at the bottom near the river, it came against an ash tree when the coach was dashed into several pieces.

Colonel Gwynne of Glan Brian Park, Daniel Jones Esq., of Penybont, and a person of the name of Edwards were outside and David Lloyd Harries, Esq., of Llandovery, a solicitor, and a lad of the name of Kernick were inside passengers of the mail at the time, and John Compton, Guard.'

and on the side the unusual inscription:

'I have heard say, where there is a will there is a way. One person cannot assist many, but can assist a few, as this pillar will shew. Which was suggested, and designed and erected by J. Bull, Inspector of Mail Coaches, with the aid of Thirteen Pounds, sixteen shillings and sixpence received by him from forty one subscribers in the year 1841. The work of this pillar was executed by John Jones, Marble and stone mason, Llanddarog near Carmarthen.

'Repainted and restored by Postal Officials 1930.'

The *Cambrian* newspaper of 26 December gave a full account of the incident. To preserve

its sense I quote it in its entirety:

Dreadful Coach Accident! (From a correspondent).

The following are the facts of the dreadful accident that the Gloucester and Carmarthen Royal Mail met with on its route from Tre-castle to Llandovery on Saturday Evening last, the 19th instant. The mail left Tre-castle with five passengers, two inside and three outside besides the coachman and guard. The mail was horsed with the best and most spirited animals on the road from London to Llandovery. The coachman keeping the wrong side of the road at all times, I should say within six feet of the declivity for which that road is so far famed, although repeatedly entreated by the outside passengers as well as the guard to keep on the middle of the road. Nothing that was said had any effect upon him. Within two miles of Llandovery near a mill called Melingritto, in descending the last hill, the four horses galloping, and still on the wrong side of the road, a cart with one horse was discovered coming up from Llandovery at the distance of 100 or 150 yards, also on the wrong side; the coachman called out in the usual manner; the carter drew to his left, to get to his proper side of the road, the coachman on the contrary continued galloping on his original side up to the last.

The horses had no choice, but either to run over the cart and horse, or leap a poor but only fence between the road at that place and a dreadful precipice. The horses accordingly leaped and cleared the hedge, coach and all, and in a moment were all on the brink of destruction; and had not the Almighty God interfered all must have been murdered on the spot. The coach and four horses, the inside passengers (David Lloyd Harries Esq., of Llandovery and a young gentleman returning from school in Bristol), were dragged down a frightful precipice of 182 feet, as measured by Mr Steward, the inspector of mail coaches, from Carmarthen. The coach, horses, and inside passengers rolled over three separate times, and in its roll, the further descent of the coach

was arrested by the hind wheel coming into contact with a large ash tree, to which the coach and four horses were suspended in a most miraculous manner, and to which circumstance the preservation of the inside passengers as well as the horses may be attributed, for had the wheel or the tree given way, they must have met with instantaneous death.

Wonderful as it must appear, no one was seriously hurt. Mr Harries was chucked out through the front of the coach, down a further precipice of 12 or 15 feet into the river below, and was much hurt; the young gentleman got out through the window. The outside passengers, three in number and the coachman and guard, managed to leap off in the act of the coach going over, in the best way they could, without any hurt, with the exception of Daniel Jones Esq., of Penybont, near Llandovery, who was much bruised by his fall. The horses also escaped with little or no injury! The coach was dashed to atoms, and the remains are now suspended to the tree.

J. Bull, Inspector of Mail Coaches, travelled from Birmingham to investigate the accident. He examined the wrecked coach on 23 December and, because of continuous heavy frost, was able to see the tracks made by the wheels as they left the road. Although the guard and some of the others were sure that the coach had turned over a number of times during its descent the inspector concluded after a careful examination that it had not.

The passengers luggage and the mail bags had been thrown out as the coach went over. They were scattered down the bank and in the river. A draft for £850 which had been paid some years before but which was of the greatest importance to Col Gwynne in a suit in the Chancery Court was found on the following day trodden into the mud.

The inspector took the driver before the magistrate on 26 December. Jenkins pleaded guilty to the charge of negligence and misconduct but denied that he was drunk. On the evidence of the passengers, however, he was convicted and fined the full penalty of £5 plus



costs.

Jenkins, and Edwards who was a coachman but travelling as a passenger, had been "at a public house in Brecon and taken a glass of gin each but nothing else". When the coach left for Llandovery Jenkins "began to whip the horses and drove at a much faster rate than was required". Edwards, who sat on the box next to the driver soon fell asleep," and had like to have fallen off the coach" had not Daniel Jones taken hold of his collar several times.

After a passenger was dropped at Trecastle, Col Gwynne went to sit on the outside of the coach and observed that Jenkins "drove at a furious rate, sometimes at 14 or 16 miles per hour and in general on the wrong side of the road".

On the suggestion of Daniel Jones the remains of the coach were chained to the ash tree so that they could be examined by Mr Bull and left as a reminder to others. The stone was then erected as a more permanent memorial.

New Definitive Stamps
2 February 1977





A new series of three high value stamps in the definitive range are to be put on sale on 2 February 1977. The stamps will be in sheets of 100 but will alter in size to that of the commemorative issues—30 × 41 mm. The values will be £1, £2 and £5. On the same day a new 50p stamp in the low value range will be introduced.

The changes have resulted from pressure from customers especially business users posting heavy parcels overseas.

For the first time in the history of United Kingdom stamps the high value issue will be printed by photogravure instead of the traditional line engraved process.

Printing Details

Designer : Arnold Machin

Process : Photogravure

Printer : Harrison & Sons Ltd

Size : 30 × 41 mm (50p 19 × 22 mm)

Phosphor : None (50p 2 bars)

Format : Vertical

Perforation : 14 × 15

Paper : Coated unwatermarked

No to sheet : 100 (50p - 200)

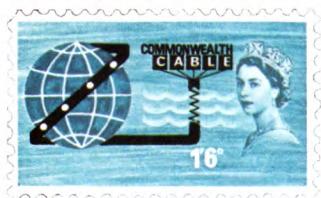
Gum : PVA Dextrin

Colours : £1 Head, Olive Green—tint, pale greenish yellow. £2 Head, Purple Brown—tint, pale green. £5 Head, Royal Blue—tint, pale pink. 50p Ochre.

27. Opening of 'COMPAC' 1963

This, the first telephone cable to be laid across the Pacific Ocean, linked Canada with Australia and New Zealand, via Hawaii and Fiji. Besides Great Britain, three Commonwealth countries—Australia, New Zealand and Fiji—issued stamps to commemorate the completion of what was then the biggest overseas cable-laying project ever undertaken.

The Post Office issued a single stamp for the event, a 1s 6d blue and black denomination depicting a symbolic globe encircled by the broad line of the cable. The designer was Peter Gauld, who had previously designed the



2½d Post Office Savings Bank stamp (1961) and who has enjoyed many design successes since. Australia and New Zealand adopted similar designs for their commemorative issues, inscribed 'COMMONWEALTH CABLE'. In fact, Mr Gauld modelled his design on them, extending the format to include the Queen's likeness. The four white dots on the 'cable' represent Vancouver, Suva (Fiji), New Zealand and Australia, and the Queen faces the globe across the Pacific 'waves'. This section of the cable covered 8,700 miles and cost £26 millions.

The stamp was photogravure-printed by Harrison and Sons in sheets of 120 (6 × 20) on 'multiple crowns' watermarked paper, ordinary and phosphor-banded. It is known with black omitted, and handstamped 'CANCELLED', the latter being applied to Post Office *Philatelic Bulletin* No. 3 (stuck down). Quantities sold: 8,015,880, phosphor 824,280. Prices £2.50, phosphor £15. JAMES WATSON

New Definitive Stamps 2 February 1977

First Day Cover Services

Two first day covers will be available. One specially designed, for the three high values and the usual definitive cover for the 50p stamp.

The following services will be offered by the Philatelic Bureau, Edinburgh.

Service A

The respective official Post Office cover will be addressed to the correct destination required and will have either the 3 high value or the 50p stamp affixed. The covers will be cancelled 'Philatelic Bureau Edinburgh' or 'Windsor Berks' as requested. Both cancellations are pictorial.

The charges will be £8.18 (£8.13½ for Deposit Account customers) for the High Value or 68p (63½p for Deposit Account customers) for the 50p.

Service B

Customers own pre-addressed covers bearing the correct postal address will have the 3 High Value or 50p stamp affixed and cancelled with the Bureau or Windsor cancellation for £8.08 or 58p respectively.

Service C

For bulk orders of 50 or more to the same address under the conditions of 'Service A' the prices will be £8.15½ or 65½p.

The usual first day facilities will be provided at offices with philatelic posting boxes.

Presentation Packs

Two new presentation packs will be on sale on 2 February 1977. The new High Value pack containing the £1, £2 and £5 stamp will cost £8.10. The low value pack will cost £1.83.

Both packs will be available from the Philatelic Bureau and all Head Offices.

Racket Sports

Some Background Notes

Lawn Tennis Real (or royal) tennis was an aristocratic game but lawn tennis, which developed from it, was, by contrast, a diversion of the middle classes. While real tennis declined because of the cost of providing the indoor halls to play it in, lawn tennis was made for the Victorians. As Lyttleton wrote in 1890: 'A lawn, a racket, a soft ball, a net, a pot of paint and an active member of either sex, here are all the materials needed for lawn tennis, and every country house and most suburban villas can supply them.'

It was a game, too, unlike real tennis, which women could play, a social sport and for the late Victorians a move towards emancipation. Clubs quickly sprang up, the first in Leamington Spa in 1872. To give the game a more standard format, the Marylebone Cricket Club took over its control for some years. But the significant step in tennis's early history came in 1875 when the All-England Croquet Club at Wimbledon introduced the game, and two years later decided to offer a 25 guinea trophy, presented by *The Field* magazine, as first prize in a club tennis championship. Twenty-two men took part, and only 200 watched, but within 10 years there were 3,500 spectators for the final alone.

Tennis had arrived as a spectator sport but it was another 50 years before any players were to earn their livings from entertaining them. Even then, those who became professionals, like Fred Perry and Don Budge, were outlawed from places like Wimbledon, and it was not until 1968 that Wimbledon and the game were thrown open to all. Ironically the wheel had turned full circle and the amateur player is in these days seldom good enough to compete in the Wimbledon Championships.

Table Tennis, as the name suggests, developed out of the Victorians' desire to create an indoor version of lawn tennis. The first patent on the game was established by a Gloucestershire man in 1891. But the major breakthrough came when an English athlete brought back from the United States a small celluloid toy ball.

The sound of this ball on the tables and

rackets in use at the time led to a friend of the athlete registering throughout the world, the onomatopoeic name of 'Ping-Pong'. The man's name was Jacques and the company bearing his name still remains the largest English table tennis company.

In the early days there was much rivalry. Different rules and different champions grew up in rival organisations, and the two main organisations differed most on the service, one permitting the ball to be hit directly over the net from below table-surface level and the other favouring the current style. Indeed, the British Museum catalogue lists 14 variant instruction books between 1899 and 1904, and the conflict led to a decline in the competitive nature of the sport.

Not until the 1920s was a national association formed but because the title chosen—the Ping Pong Association—contained a trade name, it had to be dissolved. Finally, with the support of a newspaper, the Table Tennis Association was formed to organise a national competition, and in 1926 the first European championship was staged in London.

Today, the sport is most popular in the Far East and Russian, and the number of players registered with national bodies world-wide now exceeds 9 million.

Squash is the boom sport of the 1970s. More than a million are estimated to be playing the game in Britain alone. The United States, too, has experienced an explosion of interest, and clubs are being created all over Europe as the Western civilisations seek ways in which to exercise their desk-bound bodies.

The game is a development of the tiny sport of rackets, and the governing bodies of the game still bear the joint name of 'squash rackets'. Boys playing rackets at Harrow School used to knock a ball about in a confined space adjoining the rackets court while waiting for a game, and squash gradually became a game in its own right at the school.

Other courts were built at country houses, and at public schools and in London West End social clubs in the second half of the 19th

century but it was not until 1928 that any uniformity was brought to the game by the creation of a Squash Rackets Association. It had only 25 affiliated clubs, 6 from overseas, but by 1939 it had 200 clubs in membership and was recognised all over the world as the game's governing body.

The British Open and British Amateur Championships are still considered the game's world championships but British players have long since been succeeded by champions from Australia and Pakistan. The game had been taken to the North-East Frontiers by British soldiers, and in the squash courts of the Officers Clubs a generation of brilliant native squash players grew up from whose ranks came the greatest of all players, Hashin Khan. **Badminton** derives its name from the place which is the seat of the Duke of Beaufort in Gloucestershire where it is thought to have developed from the children's game of battle-dore and shuttlecock around 1870. It was in India, where it was taken by army officers, that it grew in popularity and in Poona in the mid 1870s that the first laws were drawn up.

Even today, the game is still extremely strong in the Asian countries, particularly in Indonesia and Malaysia, but it was England that brought establishment to the mixture of rules and court dimensions which proliferated in the late 19th century. Finally, at a meeting in Hampshire in 1893, 14 clubs came together to form the Badminton Association, and the English Association has always been the most influential in the world game.

Its championship, the All-England, which started in 1899 has always been recognised as the unofficial world championships, and only this year (1977) has the International Badminton Federation initiated a World Championships, which will be held at Malmo, Sweden, in May. England ran the World game until 1934 when it was the prime mover in the foundation of an international body, and the headquarters of the IBF remains to this day in London, where it shares an office with the English Association.

The English players, too, still hold a high position in the world ranking lists but the men's game has been dominated in recent years by Indonesians, like Rudi Hartono, and the Danish player, Sven Pri. The women's game in recent times has been the preserve of the English housewife, Gillian Gilks, who currently holds the Commonwealth, European and All England titles.

Letters to the Editor

Dear Sir,

Modern Illustrated British Air Letters

The modern style of British airletter which is adorned by a sequence of relevant illustrations over almost the whole of its address side appeals to me and presumably to many others.

Having acquired several of these and with the prospects of many more yet to come I desire to display them to full advantage. Alas, when fully opened out these delightfully illustrated airletters are too large for a standard album sheet.

Please, oh please, can any reader offer a practical suggestion for housing and displaying these airletters to their best advantage.

Yours faithfully,

SYLVESTER PEAT

Ipswich Suffolk

Dear Editor,

I have been researching the 2¢ Postal Convention between the UK and USA which lowered rates of postage on letters exchanged between the two countries during 1908-31. I would like to correspond with any other collector who has knowledge of the treaty, with a possible exchange of information.

I would appreciate if possible your putting me in touch with someone or including a short paragraph to this effect in the Philatelic Bulletin. Thank you.

Sincerely yours,

JOE MOBERLY

*819E 48th Street Apt 19
Kansas City MO 64110 USA*

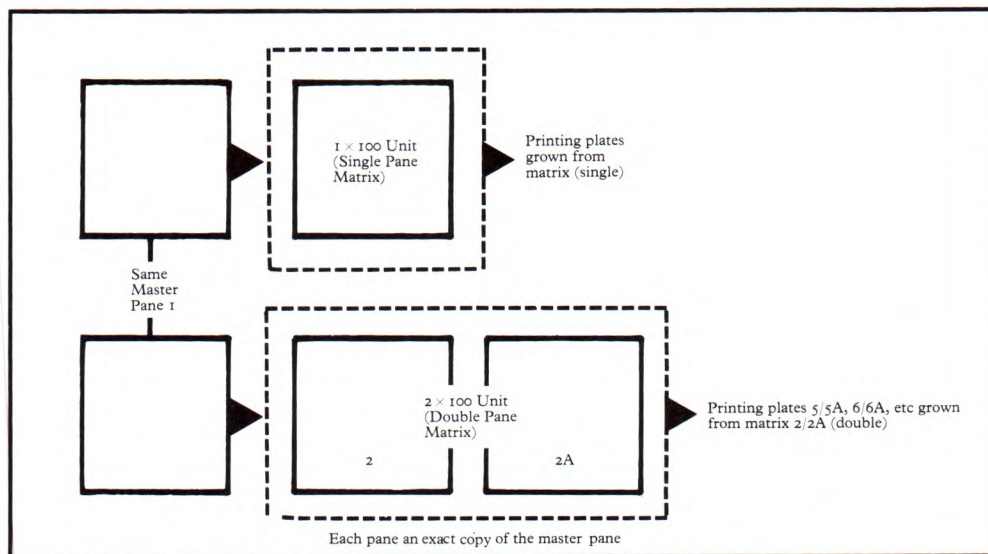
Some Aspects of the Machin Decimal High Values

By way of an introduction the writer has always had an interest in stamps, but through the necessity to counter the pressures of modern life has in restricting himself to a limited range of stamps—the recess printed Machin Decimal High Values—been able to delve deeper into them than otherwise would have been possible. Apart from information given publicly by the Post Office or contained in philatelic journals the content must be regarded as the opinion of the writer though there can be little doubt as to the accuracy. The enjoyment of collecting, lies in the pursuit of knowledge, and though the observation of individual plate characteristics has finally led to the formulation of a theory pertinent to plate construction and the satisfactory verification over successive plates, and later confirmed by the printers—the results have been given first and the characteristics afterwards.

The values are those recess printed by Messrs. Bradbury Wilkinson & Co. Ltd. of New Malden, Surrey being the 10p cerise, 20p olive green, 50p ultra marine and £1 bluish black. They were first put on sale on 17 June

1970 to accustom the general public to the changeover to decimalisation due on 15 February 1971. Messrs. Bradbury Wilkinson & Co. Ltd. held the contract to print the stamps, that is they performed a service using plates that though made by them belong to the Post Office. For reasons of security the Post Office supplied the paper during the first few years of the issue but later the printers were able to provide from their own suppliers. Security control is absolute for both plates and paper. To the philatelist, each time the 5-year print contract is subject to renewal, there must always exist the possibility of another printer being appointed and with that, different plate or cylinder constructions, sheet marketing etc.

Certainly the manufacture of the plates would not have been commercially viable had Messrs. Bradbury Wilkinson & Co. Ltd. followed the normal sequences of producing a recess plate. Even towards the end of the 'Castles' the number of plates required for the 2s 6d was increasing whilst for the 2s 6d sterling Machin there were 3 plates of 4 panes each over 15 months, so that to follow the



process of rocking via transfer roller each impression for each plate (20p to date over 100 plates of 100 units) would have been quite uneconomical and time consuming.

Basically for each value 10p, 20p, and 50p a master pane of 100 units 10 × 10 was made in the normal manner via a transfer roller and to which was added the sheet inscription "Total Sheet Value £—" (£10, £20 or £50 according to denomination). From the master pane was made a matrix and it is from this that the printing plates are (electrochemically) produced. As many plates as required can be easily produced and each would be an exact replica.

All early plates were made up as one pane of 100 units but from 1971 onward for the 20p, 50p, and £1 values the printing plates were made up of two panes each of 100 units laid side by side. The double pane was produced from a new matrix, itself comprising of two images of the master.

The characteristics of the master pane will be transmitted via the matrix to all printing plates irrespective of whether the construction is one or two pane because all panes will be from the same master. Examples of this includes the base line extension to the 50p.

row 7 no. 1 extension toward right hand margin

row 10 nos. 2, 7 and 8 toward left hand margin

found on all plates. Similarly for the £1 value there is a small coloured dot row 7 no. 9 bottom right corner, all plates.

The characteristics of the matrix will be transmitted to the printing plates, but for the double panes, the characteristic of each pane of the pair will be different though constant for each plate. For plates 12, 13 and 14 of the £1 value there is a small coloured blemish row 10 between stamps 9 and 10 top right hand side, there being nothing upon the 'A' plate (Plates prior to 12 were produced from a 1 × 100 pane matrix). Probably the two small coloured marks near to the plate number (left hand side) of the 1 × 100 pane plates 20p value belong to the same category.

A printing plate pane will also develop characteristics which will be peculiar to that pane, e.x. £1 value Plate 13 row 10 no. 9 downward extension to right hand frame line.
(To be continued) DOUGLAS EVANS

Royal Naval Air Service

A commemorative cover in the Royal Naval Air service series has recently been issued to commemorate the Battle of the Barents Sea, a short history of which follows.

It concerned the passage of Convoy JW51B from the UK to Murmansk, on 31 December 1942. This convoy was escorted by destroyers of the 17th flotilla—HMS Onslow (the Leader, Captain R St. V Sherbrooke DSO RN), Obedient, Orwell, Obdurate and the older destroyer Achates, and also some trawlers, minesweepers, with the 2 cruisers Sheffield (Rear Admiral R L Bennett CB OBE) and Jamaica as long range cover.

On the day in question, the convoy was proceeding on its course, in the usual grey, overcast, poor visibility and intense cold conditions when in the early morning, gun flashes were seen from the north west of the convoy and shortly afterwards it was seen that the enemy were about to attack the convoy. Captain Sherbrooke ordered his flotilla to join him on the north side between the enemy and the convoy. It was now evident that the enemy consisted of a German cruiser—The Hipper—and at least 5 destroyers. Captain Sherbrooke led his force in line abreast towards the enemy, making smoke and simulating torpedo attack—the destroyers main armament—thus attracting the enemy fire; this went on for some time, and eventually Onslow was hit and Sherbrooke badly wounded—but he kept on directing the battle until Obedient took over. Finally, the 2 cruisers, Sheffield and Jamaica came roaring out of the mist firing all guns, to relieve the hard pressed destroyers, and the enemy then made off into the distance.

The cover will portray a picture of the battle with a torpedo man's badge and the crest of HMS Hardy.

Unsigned covers will be available at 35p, one signature covers 82p, double signed covers £1.62. The covers will be signed by Capt N H G Austen DSO, RN who was captain of HMS Orwell and Commander P F Cole DSC RN who was First Lieutenant on board HMS Obedient. Requests for covers along with a SAE should be sent to Royal Naval Philatelic Officer, Royal Naval Air Station, Yeovilton, Somerset.

Royal Air Force Covers

A Royal Air Force cover (HA12) commemorating MRAF Lord Tedder of Glenguin and showing Lancasters of No 207 Squadron, a Squadron which he commanded, were cancelled by a special handstamp (BFPS 1552—60th Anniversary of Formation of 207 Sqn) on 15 November 1976 and then flown on a special flight to mark this anniversary. The cover is available from the Project Officer, Flt-Lt M Reeve, 207 Sqn, RAF Northolt, Middlesex at 35p plus 6½p postage.

Book Reviews

Stanley Gibbons New Stamp Catalogues

Two eagerly awaited postage stamp catalogues, the Great Britain Specialised Volume 4, first edition, and Elizabethan Specialised Catalogue of Modern British Commonwealth Stamps, thirteenth edition, were published by Stanley Gibbons Published in October.

The Great Britain catalogue is the first of the specialised volumes to be developed entirely to the decimal issues. Comprising 256 pages, it will retail at £5.00, by post 50p extra. Decimal stamps have been with us since 1970 and such is their philatelic interest that special groups for collectors have been set up and these gave helpful advice during the catalogue compilation.

Gibbons' Elizabethan Specialised Catalogue of Modern British Commonwealth Stamps covers all stamps issued in the present reign for British and Commonwealth countries and comprises 1152 pages. It will retail at £6.75, postage 50p extra, and for the stamps gives the

quantities printed, withdrawal dates and other specialised information. Since Queen Elizabeth II came to the throne in 1952 more than 22,000 stamps have been issued for Britain and the Commonwealth. A large number of these are illustrated in the catalogue and also the many interesting varieties which occur on them.

Special Handstamps

Unless otherwise stated, items for reposting should bear ½p in excess of the normal postage and should be sent to the Head Postmaster of the town where the Special Posting Box is located or the relevant District Postmaster in London marking the outer cover 'Special Handstamp'.

19 November 1976–28 February 1977 (P/S)

'Pompeii AD79 an exhibition at the Royal Academy of Arts LONDON W1'.

Special posting box at Burlington House, Piccadilly, London W1V 0DS.

Postmark Slogans

Unless otherwise stated, items for reposting bearing the appropriate postage rate should be forwarded to the Head Postmaster of the town where the slogan is to be used marking the outer cover 'Postmark Slogan'.

29 November 1975–UFN (P)

'Darlington Leading the war on Noise'.

To be used at Darlington.

6 December 1976–30 July 1977 (P)

'Centenary 77 Skegness Carnival Aug 7-13.' To be used at Skegness Lincs. 2nd Class.

5 January–31 May 1977 (P)

'Visit Staffa see Fingal's Cave.' To be used at Oban.

Repeat Campaigns

1 December 1976–29 March 1977 (P)

'Great Yarmouth Wish you were Here.'

To be reused at Great Yarmouth.

1st Class 1 December 1976–29 March 1977

12nd Class 1 December 1976–21 December 1976

'P' denotes pictorial 'S' denotes square.

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