

British Philatelic Bulletin

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Stamp Collecting among Children

Much has been said and written in recent months about declining interest among children in stamp collecting. Concern is expressed by collectors who simply see a possible decline in the hobby they love and by those who depend on collectors for their livelihood.

Most collectors will recall that their own interest in stamps was not prompted by commercial advertisements but through the enthusiasm of a parent or relative who may well have passed on part or all of his own collection. Ultimately, the future of the hobby lies very much in the hands of you the collector. Whether it flourishes depends on your interest and enthusiasm in helping children and to attract today's child stamps must be presented as both rewarding and fun.

So what is the Post Office doing to help? The Post Office has for several years aimed to foster awareness of special stamps among children by means of wallcharts and supported by suggestions for class projects based on the subject matter of the stamps. We currently mail approximately 12,000 schools of all types and age ranges. We have also sought to promote the hobby by various means and often in collaboration with other philatelic interests eg Stamp Collecting Promotion Council or the Melville Committee of the British Philatelic Federation.

Our highest profile activity in recent years has been the Stamp Bug Club with which most readers will be familiar – and of which not a few will be members! Very briefly, this aims to keep young collectors aware of new British stamps by presenting information in a regular magazine written and illustrated to appeal more to the child than does the average stamp magazine.

The Post Office's Royal Mail Stamps and Philately Division has increased its commitment to the encouragement of collecting by children. Our first efforts are going into enhancing our existing activities. But in addition and as a separate exercise we aim to support existing and encourage new stamp clubs in schools. We have already started research among members and

non-members to determine how the Stamp Bug Club can be improved and attract more children. We have increased our support and participation in the two national stamp exhibitions with a stand under the aegis of the Stamp Bug Club where we concentrate on the less serious side of stamps.

In addition we want to encourage new initiatives by groups or individuals who have the ideas or enthusiasm to encourage children in the hobby. We should be delighted to hear from any *Bulletin* readers who share our view that while being a rewarding hobby stamps can also be fun for children. Any suggestions – or constructive criticisms – would be welcomed by me at Royal Mail Stamps & Philately, 22–25 Finsbury Square, LONDON EC2A 1PH.

Contents

142	Forum
143	Mary Queen of Scots Aerogramme
144	P & O £5 Prestige Stamp Book
145	Gems from the R M Phillips Collection: 143. The Early Letterpress Era
146	150 Years of the P & O: Part 2
150	Sarah Godwin: Newton Stamps Designer
151	Spring Stampex '87 Newton Cylinders James Watson
152	Problems Behind the 1887 Issue: Part 1
155	Cricket & Sherlock Holmes on New Stamp Book Covers
156	Philatelic Terms Explained: 10. Crowned Circle Telecom Postcards Show Vehicles CUP-PEX '87 Flowers Pack
157	British Special Issues: 133. Christmas 1979
158	Official British Inland Airmails: Part 3
163	Letters to the Editor
164	Variations to Definitives New Cylinders and Plates March Digest

front cover: contemporary portrait of Mary, Queen of Scots, the inspiration for part of the forthcoming aerogramme.

Mary Queen of Scots Aerogramme

14 April 1987

On 14 April a new Scottish aerogramme will be issued to mark the 400th anniversary of the death of Mary, Queen of Scots. It will feature portraits of Mary Stuart and places associated with her life and death. Costing 30p, the aerogramme has been designed and illustrated by Aileen Paterson in collaboration with Forth Studios Ltd. Printing for the first time is by The House of Questa.

Mary Stuart was born in the **Palace of Linlithgow** on 28 December 1542 only six days before the death of her father, James V. At the age of nine months she was crowned Queen of Scotland in Stirling Castle and when only five years old was promised in marriage to the Dauphin of France. She spent her childhood in France, becoming Queen in 1559.

Shortly after her husband's death she returned to Scotland in 1561 to take up residence in the **Palace of Holyroodhouse** on the outskirts of Edinburgh. As a Catholic in a largely Protestant country she lived through turbulent times. She was married to Henry Stuart, Lord Darnley in 1565 but he fell prey to pleasure-seeking and ambition and had David

Riccio, the Queen's secretary done to death in her private apartments. Mary effectively dealt with the rebellion of some of her lords and in 1567 Darnley was murdered. The murder was attributed to James Hepburn, Earl of Bothwell who then "kidnapped" the Queen, divorced his wife and married Mary. Bothwell had the wardship of **Hermitage Castle** near Jedburgh and Mary had visited him there previously.

The scandal lost her most of her support and she was imprisoned the same year in **Lochleven Castle** and was forced to abdicate. Later she escaped but was forced to ask Elizabeth of England for protection. For the next 20 years she was kept prisoner in a series of mansions ending with **Fotheringhay Castle** in Northamptonshire. In October 1586 she was tried and condemned to death for complicity in attempted risings of English Catholics against Elizabeth, though it was not until 8 February 1587 that she was beheaded. Ever since she has exerted the same romantic hold over many people's imaginations that she did in her own lifetime.

Part of the aerogramme illustration

Printed at The House of Questa
for the British Post Office

FIRST FOLD HERE (AN CEUD PHILLEADH AN SEO)

Born at Linlithgow in 1542, Mary was sent for safety to France, where she married the Dauphin. On his death she returned to rule her troubled country successfully until her second husband, Darnley, was murdered. When she married Bothwell, the man accused of the crime, her lords imprisoned her, forcing her to abdicate. She escaped, was defeated, fled to England and after eighteen years of imprisonment, was executed at Fotheringhay.

Drawing of Mary below is based on the portrait at Haggis Castle, Glasgow, and on the miniature by Nicholas Hilliard.



Palace of Holyroodhouse, Edinburgh, from an engraving dated 1647



Linlithgow Palace, Linlithgow



Hermitage Castle, near Hawick, home of the Earl of Bothwell



The ruins of Fotheringhay Castle, near Kettering, from an engraving dated 1824



Loch Leven Castle, near Kinross, based on a reconstruction drawn in 1887

P & O £5 Prestige Stamp Book

3 March 1987

L F NEWBERRY

The seventh in a series of Prestige stamp books will be issued on 3 March by the Post Office in conjunction with P & O to mark the 150th anniversary of the first mail contract with the Peninsular Steam Navigation Co.

The book was designed by Aitken Blakeley Designers with the text by Stephen Rabson, the Group Librarian for P & O and was printed and bound by Harrison & Sons Ltd.

The story of P & O from its inception in the early 1800s to the present day is unfolded with illustrations in colour on the cover, interleaves and stamp pane stubs.

Technical Details

The cover card of 250 gsm Huntsman Silk and the four interleaves of 115 gsm Huntsman Silk were sheet-fed printed by offset litho on Roland Favorit presses. The 12-up format was in three columns of four book panes.

The printing and perforating of the stamp panes and stubs was on the Jumelle. Previously, printing of such books was on the Rembrandt press.

The stamps and stubs were reel-fed printed in photogravure in a 12-up format of 3 x 4 to match that of the covers and interleaves. Each book pane is bordered by a selvedge of a half stamp width.

The panes were straight line APS perforated at the time of printing. Perforations are continuous with the selvedge between the panes perforated. Opposite each row in both the left and right selvedge there is a single extension hole.

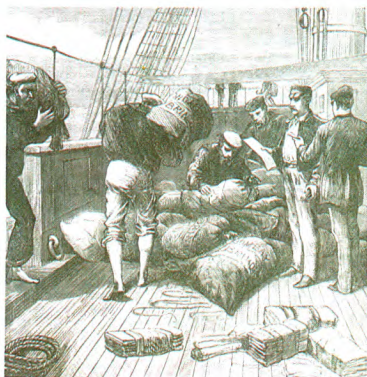
After the printing and perforating the web is sheeted into 12-up working sheets. All marginal markings were trimmed off with the waste at one stage or another in making up the books, the main ones being traffic lights and page numbers. For this book no cylinder numbers were engraved on the cylinders. Only one set of cylinders was used for each value and stub.

The four panes of stamps and stubs are arranged as follows (the phosphor band layout was illustrated last month).



P&O not only carried mail between countries, it did its best to deliver it to its own passengers!





An 1872 engraving showing mail bags being brought on board a mail steamship at Brindisi



Pane 3

- Pane 1** 9 x 18p (3 x 3) on ACP with stub: P & O Royal Charter.
- Pane 2** 9 x 13p (3 x 3) with 1 CB with stub: P & O mail delivery to its own passengers.
- Pane 3** se-tenant pane (3 x 3) 5 x 18p 2B, 2 x 13p 1 RB, 1 x 1p 1 RB and 1 x 26p 2B with stub: 1872 mail steamship at Brindisi.
- Pane 4** 6 x 13p (2 x 3) with 1 CB and stub: poster of 1937 sailing mail steamship routes.

The phosphor bars, where present, are carried right across the top and bottom margins.

Making and binding the books.

The front and back covers, four interleaves and four stamp panes and stubs are collated in the 12-up sheets. About 20 to 25 masses are guillotined into gangs or columns of four in the issued width. The columns are then sewn on Singer sewing machines. The sewn masses are checked for content and quality. Any faulty or incorrect pane is replaced by another not necessarily from the same column and the mass is resewn.

The checked sewn columns then have the spine covered with a white self-adhesive plastic strip on a back-stripping machine. The surplus at top and bottom is trimmed off and the remainder cut into four issued books.

Gems from the R M Phillips Collection

143. The Early Letterpress Era

An 1872 colour trial of the 3d with large white letters, plate 8.

This item can be seen in Frame 23 of the open display of the R M Phillips collection at the National Postal Museum during normal hours – 9.30am to 4.30pm Monday to Thursday and 9.30am to 4.00pm on Fridays.



150 Years of the P & O

Part 2

BARBARA LAST

The first modern-style cruises were introduced in 1904 for first class passengers only with Thomas Cook organising the shore excursions. Over the years requirements changed, and in the thirties cruises were made from UK ports in the "off-peak" northern summer season when passenger trade dropped off. An Indian stamp (SG862) illustrates foreign mail arriving at Ballard Pier, Bombay, in 1927. Another Indian stamp (SG256) showed *Strathnaver I* as part of the long George VI set of 1937. She was a fine looking 22,270-ton turbo-electric vessel built in 1931 for the

On 3 March a new £5 prestige stamp book is being issued to mark the 150th anniversary of the first mail contract with P & O. This two-part article gives the postal history and thematic background. Part 1 appeared last month.

Zealand, and is seen under her new name *Monowai* (Cook Is. SG111).

The Asiatic Steam Navigation Co. was founded in 1878. It was a British company based on Calcutta under Turner Morrison & Co. originally for trading in the Bay of Bengal. It extended and developed a network of services to Bombay and East Africa, and eastwards to Burma, Malaya and Java, carrying teak and wood, rice, coal, sugar and general cargoes. It was typical of the smaller firms that were, in effect, swallowed by P & O, firstly by being associated with the Nourse Line, which in turn in 1917 merged with British India Line, already part of P & O. Eventually, after British India Line acquired a controlling interest in the thirties, P & O took over the remaining Asiatic shares in 1961, and the handful of vessels were transferred to the P & O fleet. The last three Asiatic ships, *Kohinur*, *Nurjehan* and *Nurmahal*, were given "Strath" names later and integrated into the general cargo division.

Meanwhile, the Asiatic continued to be run on the lines of a family business with Turners

Tangier ship letter



Australia run, and was reclassified as tourist class only after World War II. In this pre-war period ships were mainly routed via Bombay. Occasional calls at Tangier were introduced in 1933, becoming so popular that this stop became a regular feature of the Australia mail service, and an airmail service from Paris caught the Indian and Australian mailships at Marseilles.

The amalgamation with the British India Line in 1914 was the first of very many mergers or take-overs that made the P & O Group the largest shipping concern in the world. Each company retained its separate identity and individual management, and continued to use its own livery and flag. The *Razmaz* of 1925 was transferred from P & O to the subsidiary Union Steamship Co. of New

acting as managing agents. The ships with their traditional names and own company colours were mainly about 5,000 – 7,000 tons specifically built for the shallow coastal trade. They had British officers and lascar crews. Five men of my father's family served the Asiatic as Masters and officers for over fifty years. They survived two world wars with vessels torpedoed, bombed and mined. After the war, Indian independence and rising nationalism restricted the coastwise trade to Indian-owned tonnage. New cargoes and markets had to be found, and traditional routes replaced by voyages to China and the Pacific.

The first true cargo vessel had entered the P & O service in 1896, and this side of the company's activities expanded to become the world's biggest and most versatile group of merchant shipping. For the 60th anniversary of the postal service in 1969 Dubai's stamps included British India Line's *Bamora* of 1914, a cargo ship of 3,285 tons, and *Chandpara* of 1949, more than twice her size (SG277 and SG281). British India Line's *Sirdhana* of 1947 (SG279) worked the Bombay-Karachi-Persian Gulf route carrying cargoes and crammed with pilgrims.

A horrifying number of ships were lost by P & O during World War II. The Asiatic itself lost eight vessels. My father's brand new *Havildar*, in convoy out of Liverpool, was mined and nearly sunk in the Irish Sea in 1940. But patched up, and an inch shorter, she served the Asiatic until sold in 1960. Merchant ships were requisitioned, and plied seas far from their normal routes. Passenger liners acted as troopships, or were converted as armed merchant cruisers. P & O's *Strathnaver* in the Red Sea acted as a training ship for the invasion of Italy. British India Line's 9,182-ton liner *Neuralia* of 1912 (Gibraltar SG212) was mined and sunk in 1945 when approaching Taranto as a troop-carrier to pick up German POWs.

The 16,697-ton HMS *Rawalpindi*, (1925) which had been on the P & O's Indian and Far East routes, was now on convoy duty as an armed merchant cruiser. Her armament of eight 6-inch guns was reasonably adequate for normal use, but totally useless against the might of the two 32,000-ton battlecruisers *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* which were sighted on 23 November 1939 looking for rich pickings off Iceland. Captain E C Kennedy RN ordered his convoy to scatter. Placing

himself between his flock and the approaching wolves, he deliberately engaged the enemy. Almost immediately mortally damaged, pulverised and on fire, *Rawalpindi* continued the action for 40 minutes before breaking in two and sinking, with the loss of 265 men and her captain. There were 11 survivors. Her self-sacrifice allowed her convoy to escape safely, and 35 years later she was commemorated by a cover and special handstamp in the first of the naval series (RN17).



After the war a huge ship-building programme was put in hand. Classes were abolished on liners, and P & O developed into one of the largest cruise operators in the world. The company had in 1919 acquired a substantial holding in the London-based Orient Steam Navigation Co. which had been prominent in the Australian passenger emigrant trade since 1877. When the famous Sydney Harbour Bridge was opened, the line of merchantmen that sailed under it as part of the official ceremony was led by Orient's *Orford* (Australia SG141). She was lost when bombed at Marseilles during the German invasion of France.

The last of the true Orient liners was the 27,632-ton *Oronsay* (Fiji SG599). Built in 1951 she sailed the extended Pacific route from Australia to Los Angeles, before being transferred to P & O in 1964. From 1958 Orient & Pacific Lines (ie P & O-Orient)



developed a network of services across the Pacific. *Himalaya III* (Solomons SG275) inaugurated the transpacific route from Sydney to San Francisco via Auckland, Suva, Honolulu and Vancouver in March 1958. On her third voyage in February the following year she returned from Vancouver via Japan, Hong Kong and Singapore, opening up a second transpacific route.

There were no rigid mail contracts after the war, although company vessels continued to carry surface mail if and when required. The *Chusan III* (Singapore SG49) was the last P & O mailship to India in 1970. P & O had been primarily concerned with mails for over 130 years, and had made an enormous and major contribution to the expansion of commerce world-wide. From August 1971 the Bulk Shipping Division took in all the general cargo vessels of the group under one management, and the separate trading companies ceased to exist.

Radical changes owing to containerisation and intercontinental air transport phased out scheduled passenger liner services, and the Group was reformed in 1960 into the P & O-Orient Lines (Passenger Services Ltd) with joint services and common management, developing a triangle of routes from Australia to North America and the Far East. As the emigrant trade decreased, tourist sailings

round the world introduced additional calls at Miami and Caribbean islands. *Orontes* (Cocos SG30) went to the breakers, and *Himalaya*, *Arcadia*, *Iberia* (Hong Kong SG247) were extensively refitted, tourist class only, as ocean cruising developed as a leisure market. The 41,915-ton *Oriana* entered service in 1960, and is seen on her regular Pacific route at Suva (Fiji SG363) and Point Cruz, Honiara (Solomons SG541).

The flagship *Canberra*, 45,733-tons, the largest liner to be built for the Australian trade, joined the Group in 1961, her passengers paying £5 per day as compared with £52 per day some 25 years later. Scrapping was considered in 1973, but she was reprieved, and a further £6 million refit last year extends her life for another 10 years. *Canberra* is illustrated on about seven stamps from Gibraltar to the Caribbean and Pacific. But she is probably best known for her Falkland interlude as "The Great White Whale", off-loading troops in San Carlos Water. The best depiction of this valiant vessel came from the Falklands in 1983 when they picked *Canberra* for their first anniversary commemorative set (SG349), together with another P & O ship, the North Sea roll on/roll off ferry *Norland*, to represent the huge variety of merchantmen that did duty with the Task Force. Some special first day covers using the mixed pane of stamps from the P & O £5 book will be carried on *Canberra* from Bangkok to Southampton on the homeward half of her 1987 world cruise.

One of British India Line's most famous ships was the *Uganda* of 1952, which was employed for school educational cruises in Europe and the Mediterranean. When the Falkland crisis blew up in 1982, the school children on board were flown home, and the vessel was requisitioned for the Task Force as a *Canberra* ship letter



hospital ship. She repatriated P O Ws, and finished as a trooper ferrying personnel between Ascension and the Falkland Islands until April 1985.

In 1966, Orient Line as a name came to an end when "Orient" was dropped from the Company title, and P & O fully integrated the fleets. *Oriana*, the last ship with an Orient name, although owned by P & O and wearing their livery, was sold to Japan in 1986. *Uganda* went to the breakers that same year leaving *Canberra* as the only British-based cruise vessel.

Upon the acquisition of Princess Cruises Inc. *Spirit of London* was in 1974 renamed *Sun Princess* and operated along the west coast of North America from Alaska to Mexico according to the season. She was joined by *Sea Princess* (ex *Kungsholm* of 1966, shown on Barbados SG753) purchased in 1978 from the Swedish-America Line. The latest vessel of the "Princess" fleet, the 44,348-ton *Royal Princess*, was named by the Princess of Wales at



Southampton on 15 November 1984, and is based on San Francisco. Fares from £2,000 to £4,000 for a 16-day fly-cruise include air fare from London and overnight hotel accommodation. The Princess Cruises concentrate on the American market and operate fly-cruises from Britain or the States. This year, *Pacific Princess* makes the first attempt of the U S-based Princess Cruises to break into the U K market. Her arrival at Tilbury in May will see the return of P & O to the Thames. A perusal of the fleet list today will find the P & O passenger fleet, apart from passenger/freight ferries, reduced to *Canberra* and the *Princesses*.

On the other hand, the cargo division has increased to cover practically every type of merchant ship except ice-breakers — refrigerator ships, powder and liquid bulk carriers,



Uganda FPO 40 of August 1983

ferries, hovercraft, and containers. As a co-founder and now owner of Overseas Containers Ltd, P & O pioneered the biggest revolution in ship-handling that ever hit the merchant navy, where even the basic ship design was totally altered.

In the mid-seventies the Group deliberately diversified, and operate a wide range of services not only in the British Isles but in the USA and Australia. They commenced a door-to-door road haulage business with seven roll on/roll off freight ferries and a large fleet of articulated lorries that cross the sea and deliver cargoes to their destinations in Britain and Europe (Ferry-master Ltd and Pandoro Ltd). The housebuilding/construction group Bovis was acquired in 1974, and among other projects Bovis built the new Lloyds building, opened by the Queen on 13 November 1986. Investments were also made in catering services to industrial/commercial concerns like schools and hospitals, and in services to offshore oil and gas industries.

In 1985 a merger took place with the industrial services and property group, the Sterling Guarantee Trust, thus acquiring offices, shops and commercial properties including shopping centres and the Earls Court and Olympia exhibition halls in London. The P & O Group is now a broadly based shipping and services group of subsidiary and associated companies. The internationally respected P & O name has been retained. No longer only a shipping company, the quartered Spanish and Portuguese colours of the P & O flag now fly as a symbol over offices, buildings and ships of about 200 diversified companies operating in over forty countries round the world — which would be a great source of amazement to the original founders!

Sarah Godwin: Newton Stamps Designer

Sarah Godwin was born in 1964 in Manchester. She completed her graphic design course at Manchester Polytechnic in July 1986, and is presently working at Newell and Sorrell Design Ltd. She hopes to work as a freelance illustrator in the near future.



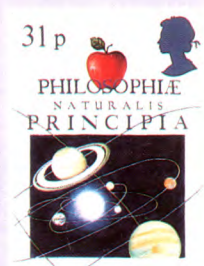
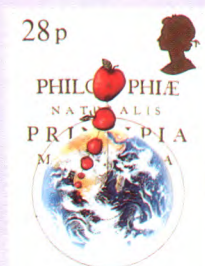
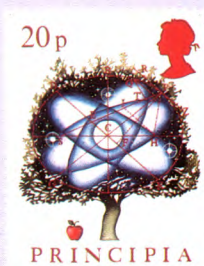
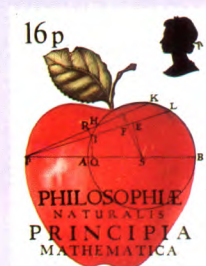
25 September, 1984. The first day back at college at the beginning of the second year, and our tutors saw fit to give us all various briefs from the annual Royal Society of Arts bursary competition. I had never even heard of the R S A before. The briefs we were allowed to tackle were: 'Graphic Design', 'Packaging', 'Television Graphics' and 'Postage Stamps'. I chose the stamps for the very simple reason that I saw it as an outlet for using my suppressed, frustrated, illustrative abilities. I was quite a problem student.

Seven weeks of very hard work followed – being swamped in physics and astronomy books (some in Latin!) and finding that my grade C at O Level physics really hadn't prepared me for life at all – then five weeks of exploring design concepts and illustrative styles, and one sleepless week doing the actual illustrations.

The brief called for the design of four

stamps commemorating the tercentenary of the publication of Sir Isaac Newton's *Philosophiæ Naturalis Principia Mathematica* or *Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy* in layman's terms. I have to thank the book-checker man at Manchester's Central Library for my solutions. He asked what I was doing with such intellectual-looking books (not being an intellectual-looking person, obviously) and retorted to my explanation, "Oh! Newton? That bloke with the apple on his head?" It was so simple and obvious. And

Sarah's winning submissions to the Royal Society of Arts



playing around on the Grant Enlarger with Newton's diagrammatic explanation of gravity, I found that it could be made to fit inside the apple. The typography comes almost directly from the original title page of the *Principia*. The other three stamps merely followed a similar pattern of illustration, diagram and original typography, zooming from the apple into outer space.

In January 1985 I was called for interview at the Royal Society of Arts as one of six finalists out of 206 entries. The day after, I was asked by the Post Office to continue developing the ideas along the same lines as the apple. Three more strong graphic images were needed, and it took another year of continual research and development of ideas to find them. It was stressed that this was merely a student exercise and they probably wouldn't be printed.

Needless to say, I am thrilled about the outcome of it all. The reality of it only sank in when I actually witnessed my stamps coming off the press. For this moment I have to thank my long-suffering tutors at Manchester and many others, too many to name here.

Spring Stampex '87

Stampex is taking place from 3 to 8 March at the Royal Horticultural Halls, London SW1. Illustrated are the special handstamp to be used on mail posted in the special posting box at the exhibition and the slogan die in use at London SW1 in advance.



As can be seen, the exhibition name is now "Spring Stampex" and as this implies the former BPE has also been renamed "Autumn Stampex/BPE".

Newton Cylinders

The cylinder numbers and colours printed of the Sir Isaac Newton stamps to be issued on 24 March are as follows:

18p

Black 1A	Greenish Yellow 1B	Cerise 1C	Blue green 1D	Grey black 1E	Silver 2F
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22p

Black 1A	Greenish yellow 1B	Bright orange 1C	Blue 1D	Bright Emerald 1E	Silver 2F	Bluish violet 1G
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31p

Black 1A	Greenish yellow 1B	Scarlet 1C	New blue 1D	Bronze green 1E	Silver 2F	Slate green 3G
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34p

Black 1A	Greenish yellow 1B	Red 1C	Bright blue 1D	Grey black 1E	Silver 2F
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James Watson

James Watson, the well-known philatelic journalist and author, died on 23 January, aged 70. Known to all his many friends simply as 'Jim', he began his long career in stamps with Stanley Gibbons Ltd in 1951. Regular features appeared in *Gibbons Stamp Monthly* from then until March 1986, written in his easy style. He remained Deputy or Associate Editor of that journal until his final retirement in 1981, though he continued to write articles for all the main philatelic journals including the *British Philatelic Bulletin* until illness prevented this. Jim was also the author of many of the best-known introductory books on stamp collecting, general and thematic, and his interest in postcards helped to popularise that subject. His quiet wit, friendship and knowledge which he willingly shared, will be greatly missed. He leaves a widow, Esme, who also worked for Stanley Gibbons.

DOUGLAS N MUIR

Problems Behind the 1887 Issue

Part 1

TONY GAMMONS

From the beginning it was obvious that the "Lilac and Green" issue of 1884 was not popular. The public disliked the design and Post Office employees found it almost impossible, under gas light, to differentiate between cancelled stamps of different values but of the same colour. This situation had been brought about when, in 1881, the Chancellor of the Exchequer decided to "unify" all stamps up to, and including, the 1s value. The Inland Revenue insisted that the stamps be printed in doubly-fugitive inks, only available in green and lilac, while the Post Office wanted stamps that were "markedly unlike to one another so that, even when heavily obliterated, they could not be mistaken one for another." Thus, as De La Rue stated in a letter to Sir Algernon West, Chairman of the Board of Inland Revenue, "a problem was set which promised of no easy solution."

Fig. 1



Items illustrated and described in this article are on show in an exhibition at the National Postal Museum on the 1887 issue, which will last until the end of the year.

On 13 June 1884 De La Rue put forward an idea showing the effect of printing the unified stamps, with the exception of the 1d and 4d, on coloured paper using the doubly-fugitive green and "purple" inks. The 1d and 4d values were to remain on white paper.

In order to avoid delay in preparing the scheme only the 1½d, 2d, 2½d and 3d plates were used, the higher values being represented by printing the lower values on different coloured paper (fig. 1). On 25 June 1884, J S Purcell, Controller of Stamps at Somerset House, sent to the Secretary of the Post Office eight coloured sheets, each containing 120 stamps and also one sheet each of the 1d and 4d values. He stressed that the colours were not finite but served to illustrate the proposal so as to enable the Post Office officials to form an opinion as to whether the coloured papers would overcome the problem. Specimens were sent to the London Postal Service, the Accountant General's Department, the Confidential Enquiry Branch and the Head Postmasters of Edinburgh, Dublin, Glasgow, Manchester, Liverpool and Birmingham for comment.

The test stamps were circulated throughout the various districts and reports were returned to the Secretary during July. The general opinion was that although the new stamps were easily distinguishable one from another in mint form they could still be confused when cancelled.

The most wide-ranging of the reports was that sent in by T Jeffery, Controller of the London Postal Service. (Jeffery had definite ideas about the design of postage stamps and had put forward his own scheme during the preparation for the unified series in 1881.) Jeffery carried out a comprehensive series of

tests on De La Rue's "coloured paper stamps." He made up dummy letters bearing different stamps and passed these through the sorting offices in his charge, getting similar results as with the ill-fated "Lilac and Green" issue, ie confusability of values under operating conditions. He found that the 1d and the proposed 5d stamps were barely distinguishable one from another, the same being true of the ½d and 6d and the 3d and 4d values. He concluded his report by stating that "this scheme would not much mend matters, in fact it would almost be repeating the objectionable features of the old plans by getting too many stamps of the same tint or nearly so." After a report like this it is not surprising that the scheme was not adopted.

The 1884 Stamp Committee.

On 18 October 1884 the Secretary to the Post Office, Sir Arthur Blackwood, wrote to the Postmaster General, Henry Fawcett, suggesting setting up a committee to consider that "in any new scheme of postage stamps which may be devised there should be such a variety of colour, form and design as to render the stamps of different values easily distinguishable from one another." Later that month the "1884 Stamp Committee" was set up charged with the task of preparing a scheme for a new series of stamps to be printed in such a manner as to prevent their fraudulent re-use and to enable the various values to be distinguished one from another. The Committee consisted of T Jeffery as chairman, J S Purcell, R Page (Secretary's Office, GPO), W H Mulock (Director of the Confidential Enquiry Branch, GPO) and T C Bokenham (Assistant Controller of Stamps, Somerset House).

The Committee sat for 11 days during the period from 3 November 1884 to 16 March 1885. During this time they interviewed many officials from the Post Office and the Inland Revenue. Also called in to give his opinion was Mr Justice Philbrick, President of the Philatelic Society of London. Warren De La Rue and Warren William De La Rue attended as advisors, in their capacities as Engraver and Deputy Acting Engraver to the Board of Inland Revenue.

In order to show the Committee the problem it faced the Post Office produced a number of covers where the stamp had been confused with one of another value. In one example (fig.2) the letter weighed over one



Fig. 2

ounce, for which the rate was 1½d and was therefore correctly franked. The stamp had been mistaken, possibly in poor light, for the 1d lilac and thus 1d postage due was charged (½d deficiency + ½d fine).

Two of the Postmasters that had been involved in the investigation into De La Rue's "coloured paper" scheme earlier in 1884 put forward designs for consideration. Figure 3 shows the design submitted by Mr Bryson, Postmaster of Kirkcaldy, while figure 4 shows that submitted by Mr W. Walliker, Postmaster of Birmingham. The dates given to these two submissions in the exhibition are those on which the two postmasters were questioned. It



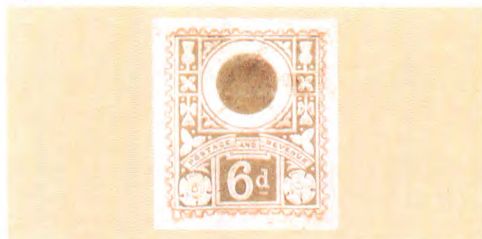
Above: Fig. 3; Below: Fig. 4



is, however, possible that the designs relate to the reports of July as they were, loosely, connected with the earlier papers on file. If this is the case the "open" figures on the Walliker design could represent watermarks as in his letter of 8 July 1884 he stressed the need for a watermark to make forgery difficult.

The Chairman of the Committee put forward a proposal of his own. He suggested that "to make fraudulent reproduction more difficult" part of the stamp should be embossed. De La Rue produced a number of essays of an embossed 6d design (fig. 5) and although the idea was rejected by other members of the Committee there is no doubt that these essays formed the basis for the issued 6d value.

Fig. 5



One popular suggestion was for the use of very large figures and one such scheme, produced by De La Rue, was shown to various officers attending the Committee (fig. 6). Although the general feeling on the "large figure" proposals was that it would be "discourteous to Her Majesty to have her protrait in an inferior position to the figures", the figures on the issued stamps were larger than any that had been previously used on low value stamps.

Fig. 6



Fig. 7

Another idea which was used, in modified form, in the issued stamps is to be found in the scheme put forward by W Adams, a clerk in the office of the Controller of Stamps. Originally, his idea which was put to the Committee on 1 December 1884 was that all the stamps should be of a different shape. When it was pointed out to him that this would cause insurmountable problems in perforating the sheets he suggested that his "shapes" should be printed on a plain rectangular background with the figures "outside the main design" (fig. 7). It is this aspect of Adams' idea that appears in certain of the issued stamps.

Another novel idea was that put forward by G R Smith, Controller of the Returned Letter Office of the G P O. His approach was to have the value shown "not only by a figure but by bars also – ie two bars under the '2' and four bars under the '4' etc. (fig. 8). The idea was

rejected because it was felt that the bars could easily be covered by the various "barred" cancellations in use at the time. Smith later submitted an alternative design without bars.

The schemes mentioned in this article are only the tip of the iceberg. The Committee must have looked at many schemes outside its "formal" sittings. This is borne out by a passage from a letter to the Inland Revenue from De La Rue & Co. which states that "no less than 350 designs were from first to last submitted by us to the Committee, and that an equivalent amount of work had to be done in connection with those designs and enquiries that were put to us."

The final report of the Committee recommended that the stamps should be surface-printed in doubly or singly fugitive inks and that they should be either bi-coloured or printed on coloured papers with pink, blue and yellow being the only colours considered suitable. The words "Postage and Revenue" should appear on all values up to one shilling and that corner letters should be abolished. The Committee produced detailed proposals for every stamp and on 30 May 1885 the Inland Revenue issued a warrant instructing De La Rue to prepare dies for the new issue.

References

P O Archives file E6959/1887

Report of the Joint Committee on Postage Stamps 1885

De La Rue Archives I R 6-10

Fig. 8



Cricket & Sherlock Holmes on New Stamp Book Covers

Five new stamp books will be issued on 14 April. They include two counter books and three machine-vended books.

The counter books are priced at £1.30 (10 x 13p stamps with one central phosphor band) and £1.80 (10 x 18p ACP). The covers are designed by Hannah Firmin and have a gardening theme, carrying a special promotion offering customers the opportunity to send off for a set of leaflets giving advice to domestic gardeners on six topics of basic gardening interest. They will appear in both left and right hand formats.

Of the machine-vended books one 50p book cover will be number 1 in the series issued to mark the MCC (Lords) Bicentenary and will feature the famous 'Famous Time' weather vane and Thomas Lord's original ground in 1787. Containing 2 x 18p, 1 x 13p and 1 x 1p with phosphor band arrangement as before, the book cover was designed by Patricia Howes.

The other two machine-vended books are for the new electronic vending machines, originally installed in the Brighton area. The 50p book cover was designed by Graham Evernden and is number 1 in the series on Botanical Gardens, featuring the Bodnant Gardens, Colwyn Bay. Contents are 3 x 13p, 2 x 5p and 1 x 1p, all with one central phosphor band.

The £1 book covers feature Sherlock Holmes and portray some of the fictional detective's greatest cases. Number 1 in the series is entitled *A Study in Scarlet*. The covers are designed by Andrew Davidson based on an idea by Mark Collicott submitted when he was a student at the School of Communication Arts. Contents are 5 x 18p and 1 x 13p with phosphor band arrangement as before.

Stamps are printed in photogravure by Harrison & Sons Ltd., the stamps on the Chambon press and the covers on the Libra book-making machine. Cylinder numbers will appear on every sixth counter book and on every eighth vending machine book.

All five stamp books will be available initially from philatelic sales counters or by post from the British Philatelic Bureau, 20 Brandon St., Edinburgh EH3 5TT. The books will become generally available from post offices or vending machines, as appropriate, once existing stocks are used up.

Philatelic Terms Explained

KENNETH F CHAPMAN

No.10: Crowned Circle

The Crowned Circle handstamp is a postmark (but not a cancellation) of special significance in the history of the British Post Office. Following the issue of the Penny Black in Great Britain in 1840, many colonial post offices (then only branches of the G.P.O. in London) clamoured for stamps of their own, but were refused that privilege. Instead, they were issued, from 1842, with handstamps consisting of a single- or double-circle, the circumference bearing a crown at the top, inscribed PAID AT, followed by the name of the post office concerned. This was applied to all pre-paid letters which were also postmarked with the date of posting and a manuscript marking of the amount paid.

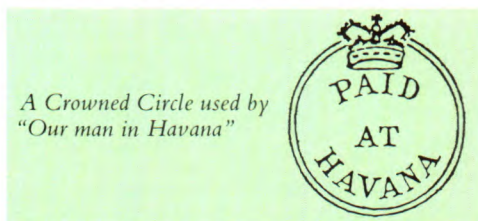
By the mid-19th century the British General Post Office had extended its activities into many *foreign* countries, especially the Americas, north and south, and the Caribbean area. British offices operated by consular officials, accepted mail for transmission by the packet service working in conjunction with the Royal Mail Steam Packet Co. Letters from and to foreign ports had to be prepaid and the local Crowned Circle handstamp was applied to confirm this. Letters from the *colonies* to destinations other than Great Britain were treated in the same way.

Letters posted in the colonies and addressed to the home country were forwarded unpaid, postage being collected on delivery. Use of the Crowned Circle on U.K. bound letters is known but is somewhat rare.

The Crowned Circle was in general use until 1862. Where British Offices still operated on foreign soil, British stamps were brought into use and they were cancelled on the spot with a duplex cancellation which combined the place name and a distinctive number (eg B32, Buenos Ayres; C51, St. Thomas, Danish West Indies). These agencies were gradually closed down after 1874 as the countries concerned joined the Universal Postal Union and their stamps became valid internationally.

Some colonial post offices also used British stamps, pending release of their own issues and these, too, were cancelled by a numbered duplex (eg A67, Port Royal, Jamaica).

Comprehensive collections of Crowned Circles are unusual because most specialists only take the items appropriate to their area of study. That made the Christie's-Robson Lowe sale of the Henry D Hicks collection in May 1984 of particular importance. All the 128 lots were sold and prices ranged from £24 to £4,644 for individual items, the latter bid being for a Santiago, Cuba Crowned Circle on cover addressed to St. Thomas, Danish West Indies which had a pre-sale estimate of £1,000.



Telecom Postcards Show Vehicles

Telecom Technology Showcase are issuing three new postcards on 18 March. They feature vehicles from their historical collection. No.1 depicts an Albion van which was used between 1927 and 1958 by men engaged on overhead line construction. No.2 shows a BSA motorcycle and sidecar used in the late 1920s and 1930s by one man working on line installation. No.3 shows a Morris 8 van, also from the 1930s and used for overhead line maintenance.

Costing 10p each mint (or 40p each cacheted on the first day) the cards are available from Telecom Technology Showcase, 135 Queen Victoria St., London EC4V 4AT with remittances made out to British Telecom (adding 40p for post and packing).

CUP-PEX '87 Flowers Pack

At the Cup-pex '87 exhibition in Perth, Western Australia, which took place from 31 January till 8 February, the Flowers presentation pack was available from the Max Stern exhibition stand specially overprinted for the exhibition. This pack was only available at the exhibition, or, subject to stock, by mail order from Max Stern & Co., 234 Flinders St., Port Phillip Arcade, Box 997H GPO, Melbourne 3001, Australia. Some 1,000 packs were overprinted.

Christmas 1979

British Special Issues: No.133

FRANCIS KENNEDY

The Christmas stamps of 1979 were exceptional in that, for the first time, there were five different values, to allow for the inclusion of an 11½p stamp covering the basic letter rate to Europe. Some earlier Christmas issues had comprised up to six stamps but these included more than one design (as in 1973) for the lowest value.

For the designer, Fritz Wegner, it was the second Christmas issue for which he had been commissioned and it is not surprising that these stamps bear a "family likeness" to the 1969 trio. The colours are strong and the unifying factor is a narrow decorative frame around each design, although each frame motif differs in detail. The Queen's head is in gold.

Once again, the Nativity story provided the theme and the five stamps gave the artist greater scope than in 1969. The designs



were: **8p**, the Three Kings following the Star; **10p**, the Angel appearing to the Shepherds; **11½p**, the Nativity, stable scene; **13p**, Mary and Joseph on the road to Jerusalem; **15p**, the Annunciation. The stamps were issued on 21 November 1979.

The 8p value, for second class mail, carried a 4mm centrally-placed phosphor bar, the remaining stamps being all-over phosphor. The gum was PVA Dextrin. Printing, in photogravure by Harrison and Sons Ltd., was in sheets of 100 divided by a gutter into two panes (10 x 5). All the stamps were perf. 15 x 14.

Inevitably with such detailed design, there are several minor constant printing flaws on each value and a total of seven more prominent constant flaws occurring on four of the five values (the 15p being the exception) are illustrated in *Stanley Gibbons Great Britain Specialised Catalogue (Vol.4)*. Two values, the 8p and 10p, are known to have been issued imperforate in error and are offered in joined pairs.

The accompanying Post Office first day cover broke new ground by being increased in length to allow for the five stamps to be placed in one row. This size was subsequently adopted as standard for all special issues, even if only four stamps were involved.

The quantities sold indicated the increasing popularity of Christmas stamps among the general public. Sales were: 8p, 304,780,000; 10p, 146,200,000; 11½p, 26,300,000; 15p, 23,980,000.

Official British Inland Airmails

Part 3

JOHN C W FIELD

In the previous article we saw how the Post Office recognised the usefulness of the aeroplane for carrying — perhaps more correctly ‘speeding up the carriage of’ — the mail by granting the first contract for the carriage of British internal airmail to Highland Airways in May, 1934. Further contracts followed rapidly — two in this same year of 1934.

Railway Air Services Ltd

Readers of the very first article in this series (January *Bulletin*) will recall that it dealt with the Great Western Railway airmail services of 1933 (which, according to Davies, was actually operated for the railway by Imperial Airways). The experience gained caused three of the railway companies (Great Western, London Midland and Scottish, and Southern) to form Railway Air Services Ltd. in which Imperial Airways also held shares.

The company's first services in 1933 were operated by Spartan Airlines (a company

formed by Whitehall Securities), but the first route of Railway Air Services Ltd. with its own machines was Plymouth to Liverpool, via Teignmouth, Cardiff and Birmingham (7 May 1934, for GWR); this was followed with Birmingham to Cowes, via Bristol and Southampton (29 July 1934, for GWR/SR); and London to Glasgow, via Birmingham, Manchester and Belfast (20 August 1934, for LMS).

It will be seen that whereas Highland Airways provided a local service, RAS was much more of a national network. It was on that date of 20 August 1934, that the company received a Post Office contract for carriage of mails over all routes. A history of some complexity arose, forming in fact the longest chapter in Redgrove.

To begin with, that which should have happened on 20 August did not do so for a very good reason: a gale was raging. Consequently, only a portion of the services was operated, full schedules not coming into

Postcard showing aircraft at Liverpool's Speke airport



LIVERPOOL, SPEKE AIRPORT.

V5132



Lady M. Higgins
2 Chichester
% R.A.S. Ltd
Great Train Service
Birmingham

RAS flight cover from London to Birmingham, 20 August 1934

operation until 21 August. Unfortunately, no-one appears to have approached the Post Office at the time to obtain full and correct information and I cannot recollect any recent research on this particular subject into the original archives which would now be open to the public for inspection.

It would probably be best to list first of all the services that were planned for 20 August:

- 1 Glasgow — Croydon, via Belfast, Manchester and Birmingham.
 - a. connecting shuttle Belfast to Manchester, via Douglas.

2. Liverpool — Plymouth, via Birmingham, Cardiff and Haldon (for Teignmouth).
3. Birmingham — Cowes, via Bristol and Southampton.

a. service from Cardiff to Bristol. This was to be operated for RAS by Norman Edgar (later known as Western Airways) based on a very frequent passenger service. Mails, though, were to be carried only in the direction indicated twice a day.

Redgrove gives considerable detail of the flights carried out wholly or in part on 20 August, which can be summarised thus:

RAS flight cover from London to Liverpool, 20 August 1934

BY AIR FROM LONDON-LIVERPOOL.
via Birmingham.



Mr. J.J. Brennan,
1a. Fonthill House,
Melrose Road,
L I V E R P O O L.



Flight cover from Glasgow to Birmingham, 21 August 1934

Glasgow to Belfast, Douglas and Manchester

Belfast to Douglas and Manchester

Douglas to Manchester

London to Birmingham and Liverpool

Of these, some services were operated completely, some only partly, and in some cases the aeroplanes flew on but without carrying mail. Lists of routes and sectors will be found in both Redgrove and in Baldwin (although at the time of the flights there was some dissension amongst collectors as to what, exactly, took place), and perhaps what we ought to record here is that no mail was unloaded at Haldon (for Teignmouth) in the southbound direction on 20 August — in fact, Teignmouth was cut out of the airmail-carrying programme entirely after that date.

On the following day (21 August), the RAS service operated to schedule; again reference should be made to Redgrove and to Baldwin for lists of routes and sectors flown. It will be apparent that first flight covers were thus carried on two different dates for the opening of this nationwide service and collectors really must have access to references in order to authenticate covers.

We may now profitably come to certain other matters associated with Railway Air Services. Imperial Airways (the parent company) issued souvenir envelopes which were sold to the public and there were also some privately issued covers and labels used.

Postal markings are essential, but it was apparently only in London that a postmark

was used containing the words "Air Mail" and these were the normal machine or handstamp type reading "London F.S." which one would normally expect to find on mail going out of the country.

Redgrove draws our attention to the opportunity raised by this service for the despatch of railway letters and Railex mail — which opportunity appears to have been missed by most interested parties.

Both systems were in operation until recently. Briefly, Railex offered a service under which mail handed in at a post office was taken by messenger to a railway station (or port in the case of mail to and from Northern Ireland), carried by rail to the nearest station of destination where it was met by a messenger who then delivered it direct to the addressee or to a postal sorting office for normal routing. In the 1930's it was possible, according to Redgrove, to have a Railex letter delivered (presumably) to an airport served by RAS for transmission by aeroplane rather than by train.

Railway letters were mentioned in the first article in this series. Again briefly, a railway company could accept first class mail at railway stations for carriage to another station whence it would be put into the postal service or called for by the addressee. This has been superseded for the airmail collector by the airway letter service but in 1934, of course, the airway system was not in operation so letters were accepted by Railway Air Services (under the railway letter concession) for transmission

by air services as distinct from the parent lines' rail routes.

RAS began to accept railway letters for this type of transmission on 23 August 1934. The company had prepared (and had introduced on 20 August) a boxed cachet reading "R.A.S./ 3d PAID" and used this in due course on Railex and railway letter acceptances. The rate stated was correct for a railway letter — requiring an additional fee of 3d in addition to regular postage for an item not exceeding 2 oz. in weight — but the rate (again for an item not exceeding 2 oz.) for Railex was 2/6d. This cachet was used in place of the pre-paid parcel labels that would have been found on items not due for transmission by air. Again, the story is somewhat complex and should be read by collectors wishing to be fully informed, but basically one should remember that Railex mails normally bear the postmark of the office of despatch, whereas railway letters bear the postmark of the post office of receipt, as do airway letters.

On 29 September 1934, RAS made its last flights over all its routes other than that between Glasgow and Croydon, via Belfast, Manchester and Birmingham. A completely new timetable and routing came into operation on 1 November 1934, when Birmingham and Manchester were dropped from the network, being replaced by Liverpool. The principal

service thus became Belfast—Liverpool—London (that is the airports at Alder Grove, Speke and Croydon respectively, with a connecting service from Glasgow to Belfast).

There is one incident of interrupted mail from this period when, on 31 October 1934, the northbound aircraft (piloted by Captain E C Poole) force-landed at Stokemere Aerodrome, Stoke. One of the interesting sidelights from this was that mail accepted at Birmingham for Manchester (this was the last flight to include these two places) and stamped with the "RAS 3d Paid" cachet was returned to the senders with the cachet overstamped "CANCELLED" in violet.

On 30 November 1934, the contract with the Post Office came to an end to be taken over by Hillman's Airways Ltd. whose services we will look into in the next article. However, on the expiry of the Hillman's contract the Post Office reverted to RAS which began carrying mails again on 2 December 1935, the route being London-Liverpool-Belfast-Glasgow.

Some rather interesting things occurred. According to Redgrove, the Railex and railway letter acceptances had ceased with Hillman's because they were not a railway company. But it was not the intention of the Post Office to introduce these again when the contract reverted to RAS. Because no definite instructions appear to have been issued,

RAS 3d paid cachet of 24 September 1934





Cover marking RAS resumption of services on 1 September 1941.

however, some Raillex letters were accepted at London and Glasgow.

Also, at London, the old RAS cachet had been lost with the result that another "3d. PAID" one was put into use.

RAS introduced an accelerated service from 2 May to 3 September 1938 in conjunction with the Empire Exhibition in Glasgow. This was achieved by flying direct from Glasgow to Liverpool (connecting with the Belfast—London service) and by introducing an auxiliary service between Glasgow and Belfast (Harbour airport).

Davies tabulates that in 1939 RAS was using seven de Havilland craft and from Jackson it would appear that the fleet started off with D.H. 84 Dragon 2s, to be followed by D.H. 86s and D.H. 89 Dragon Rapides.

The war, of course, stopped things in their tracks. Mail-carrying ceased so far as RAS was concerned, and National Air Communications was set up to co-ordinate the domestic services of RAS, Olley Air Services, Air Despatch and Western Airways. On 5 May 1940, Associated Airways Joint Committee (AAJC) was formed, which in effect continued the RAS routes as its own and these, in turn, provided the framework for British European Airways domestic network. I would assume that it is these that are recorded by Baldwin under the name of "Railway Air Services Wartime Services" on 1 September 1941 (Liverpool—

Belfast air mail service resumed with additional 3d air fee) and 9 February 1942 (first acceptance of mail from Belfast to be carried on to Scotland — again the extra 3d air fee applied, but it is not clear whether the onward transmission from Liverpool was by surface or air).

Postwar services by RAS re-commenced on 13 November 1944 (London—Liverpool and London—Glasgow); 3 December 1945 (non-stop London—Belfast); 15 April 1946 (London—Glasgow direct). New aircraft came into use: the Avro 19 (civil version of the Anson), DC—3 (but Davies lumps the civil DC—3 together with the military C—47 Dakota 3; I believe these to be Dakotas), and ex-Luftwaffe Junkers Ju52/3m (which were actually BEA's but were operated in civilian airline duties from 18 November 1946, under RAS management).

British European Airways Corporation (BEA) was established officially on 1 August 1946 and took over, amongst other things, all U.K. internal airlines. On 1 February 1947, RAS and seven other independent airlines were officially taken over by BEA. The only air mail reference I can find to matters dealt with in this and the immediately preceding paragraph is in Baldwin, where on 17 February 1947, the additional air mail fee was reduced from 3d to 2d for the Liverpool—Belfast service.

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Letters to the Editor



Guernsey to India

Sir,
In his article on postal history 'Guernsey to India' (January *Bulletin*), John Simpson seeks information about the words 'Returned Cash' on the letter illustrated in fig. 1. They would make some sense if read as 'Returned back', especially since the handwriting appears to correspond with the second rendering of 'Trichinopoly', this evidently being the place to which the letter was being returned.
Llanfyllin, Powys

A H GILDING

P & O Illustration Error

Sir,
I would like to point out a terrible blunder which was made in the January *Bulletin*.

Your illustration of the first day cover for the forthcoming P & O stamp book shows that the pane of stamps is cancelled with the NAFAS handstamp 20 January 1987, London SW1.

As the issue date for the above is 3 March 1987, you are no doubt aware of the aforementioned blunder.

May I take this opportunity of saying that, on the whole, the *Bulletin* is a well produced and very interesting piece of reading matter.

I look forward to the next issue.

Darwin, Lancs.

B R STEVENS

Prestige Stamp Books

Sir,
In many ways the British Post Office do much to promote stamp collecting. But I am sorry to have to say that the release of "Prestige Stamp Books" of the kind to be issued on 3 March 1987

may very well have a negative effect.

The majority of collectors collect mint stamps and also want to include stamps printed se-tenant in their collection. The P & O book will contain one such small sheet with a face value of £1.43. But in order to obtain that a collector must pay £5. A British collector may, of course, use the remaining £3.57 for postage. But many collectors abroad may be so annoyed that they may very well give up collecting British stamps.

Therefore, the Post Office should think twice before issuing more of this kind.
Glamsbjerg, Denmark

F NEVE

Official British Inland Airmails

Sir,

There are two points I feel constrained to raise in John C W Field's excellent and interesting article (January *Bulletin*).

I do not understand "in those days (1933) a railway train would have had to go up to Gloucester before turning south for the (Devon and Cornwall) seaside resorts". May I respectfully point out that the Severn Tunnel was opened in 1886.

A Westland Wessex tri-plane? From where I am standing the illustration looks remarkably like a three-engined mono-plane. The very few tri-planes ever had three planes (wings).

Kidderminster, Worcs.

J M ROBINSON

Sir,

I was most interested to read Part 1 of this article by John C W Field. However, for the sake of recent historical accuracy it should be recorded that contrary to his opening remarks, the first internal air mail service via Liverpool Airport, Speke, was on 2 July 1979.

The 'Spit' to which he refers at Castle Bromwich was a Mark L.F.IX example, serial No. ML427 which had been built at Castle Bromwich in 1944. After a relatively uneventful life it was placed on display at Castle Bromwich in 1954. When the airfield closed down it was handed over to the Museum of Science & Industry and can still be seen on display in the premises at Newhall St., Birmingham. The aircraft carries the code letters ST-A.

I look forward to the further parts of this article which, I hope, will throw some light on pre-war air mails via Liverpool Airport.

Liverpool

S G JONES

Variations to Definitives

Four new definitive variations are to be issued on 14 April. The values will include 13p Country stamps for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, which are to be printed on paper supplied by Coated Papers Ltd., and 31p Northern Ireland stamps which are to be printed on ACP (Advanced Coated Paper).

The stamps are printed in offset-litho by The House of Questa and will be initially available from the British Philatelic Bureau and philatelic counters.

These stamps are not regarded as new issues and thus no official first day of issue facilities will be offered.

New Cylinders and Plates

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

By Harrisons

13p (sheets) cylinders 7, 14 and 15, all with phosphor cylinder 18 on HS2 paper

13p (£1.30 booklets) cylinder B37 (phos. B62)

18p (£1.80 booklets) cylinder B9

By Questa

20p ACP plates Q5Q5/Q6Q6

March Digest

Issued in March

3 March **Definitive presentation packs:**
High value pack No.13 (contents
£1, £2 and £5) £8.22

Low value pack No. 9 (contents
1p, 2p, 3p, 4p, 5p, 7p, 10p, 12p,
13p, 17p, 18p, 20p, 22p, 24p,
26p, 28p, 31p, 34p, 50p and 75p)
£4.24

Scotland pack No. 10 (contents
12p, 13p, 17p, 18p, 22p, 26p, 28p
and 31p) £1.89

Wales pack No. 11 (contents 12p,
13p, 17p, 18p, 22p, 26p, 28p and
31p) £1.89

Northern Ireland pack No. 12
(contents 12p, 13p, 17p, 18p,
22p, 26p, 28p and 31p) £1.89

3 March **£5 Prestige Stamp Book for
P & O.** Contents: pane 1 - 9 x
18p ACP; pane 2 - 9 x 13p 1CB;

pane 3 - 5 x 18p 2B, 2 x 13p 1RB,
1 x 26p 2B, 1 x 1p 1RB; pane 4 -
6 x 13p 1CB

printing: Harrisons, photogravure
on Jumelle (stamps).

**Bureau f.d. service alternative
handstamp** (for pane 3) —
Falmouth.

10 March **Isaac Newton PHQ cards** (Nos.
100 A-D) 15p each

24 March **Isaac Newton stamps** 18p, 22p,
31p, 34p

designer: Sarah Godwin

printing: Harrisons, photogravure,
30mm x 41mm, perf. 14 x 15,
printed on unwatermarked,
phosphor-coated paper in sheets
of 100 on PVA Dextrin gum.

**Bureau f.d. service alternative
handstamp** — Woolsthorpe.
presentation pack £1.27

Withdrawn in March

2 March **Definitive packs** No. 5 low values,
No. 6 Scotland, No. 8 Northern
Ireland. (Wales and high value
packs are exhausted.)

17 March **British Rail £5 prestige stamp
book** (issued 18 March 1986)

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Editor Douglas N. Muir

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