

BRITISH PHILATELIC

The ROYAL MAIL magazine for stamp collectors

Volume 36 Number 2

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Bulletin

Innovation at The House of
Questa • Christmas stamps



Forthcoming issues and withdrawals



Cover A Christmas Angel, made from the presentation pack for the 1998 Christmas stamps. The stamps, which feature Angels, are shown in Royal Mail news, page 38. Photograph by Geoff Dann.

Issues Note some items are available only from the British Philatelic Bureau and Post Office Counters philatelic outlets at main post offices in Bath, Belfast, Birmingham Brighton, Bristol, Cambridge Canterbury, Cardiff, Chester Colchester, Coventry, Croydon Durham, Edinburgh, Exeter Gatwick Airport, Glasgow Gloucester, Grimsby, Guildford Harrogate, Leeds, Leicester Liverpool, London (Lombard Street and Trafalgar Square) Manchester, Newcastle upon Tyne, Norwich, Nottingham Oxford, Plymouth, Portsmouth Southampton, Southend-on-Sea, Stevenage, Stratford-on-Avon, Truro, Windsor and York

6 October	Issue 1998 Christmas aerogramme and aircard
6 October	Withdrawal 1997 Christmas aerogramme
12 October	Issue Special Delivery envelopes – three sizes: C5 and C4 (£3.50 each) and C3 (£4.60). Envelopes will be available in English and English/Welsh versions
13 October	Issue 'Breaking Barriers' (Speed) prestige stamp book (£6.16)
20 October	Issue Presentation packs: Low Value definitives, 1p-£1 and 1st and 2nd NVI (£5.50); Country stamps (£4.75)
21 October	Withdrawal 4 x 1st stamp book with Commonwealth Heads of government commemorative label
26 October	Withdrawal 1997 Christmas stamps, presentation pack, stamp cards, and stamp books
27 October	Issue Christmas stamp cards
2 November	Issue Christmas stamps, presentation pack, stamp books (20 x 20p, 10 x 26p), 1998 Year Pack and Year Book
12 November	Withdrawal Queen's Golden Wedding stamps, pack, stamp cards and souvenir book; 1997 Yearbook and Yearpack
14 November	Issue 4 x 1st book with commemorative label for 50th birthday of The Prince of Wales. (Unfolded pane also available, from Bureau only.) Prince of Wales Philatelic Numismatic Cover (PNC) with £5 crown
17 November	Withdrawal 10 x 1st books by Harrison and Walsall, issued 18 Nov '97

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Printed at The House of Questa in Conjunction with Royal Mail

An unperforated proof of the souvenir sheet included with this issue. The sheet was printed as part of the trials of The House of Questa's new gravure press.

Quest(a) for excellence

The name of The House of Questa is known to stamp collectors all over the world. Douglas Myall talks to them about recent developments and future plans 52

The British Philatelic Bulletin is published monthly by Royal Mail, Royal London House, 22 Finsbury Square, London EC2A 1NL ● **Editor** JR Holman ● **Price** 85p single copies from Collections, philatelic counters, and National Postal Museum ● **Annual subscriptions** UK and Europe £9.50, rest of the world £13.50. Subscriptions should be sent to British Philatelic Bureau, 20 Brandon Street, Edinburgh EH3 5TT ● **Binders** to hold 24 issues, price £7. Available by post from British Philatelic Bureau (address above) ● Royal Mail also publishes the fortnightly *British Postmark Bulletin*, giving details of forthcoming special handstamps and postmark slogans. Available on annual subscription from British Philatelic Bureau (address above) UK & Europe £10, rest of world £21.75 ● **Copyright** Unless copyright attributed to specific authors, all articles and features may be reproduced without formal permission, but acknowledgement should be given to *British Philatelic Bulletin*. Requests to reproduce copyright articles should be sent to the Editor, 22 Finsbury Square, London EC2A 1NL ● **Design** by Robert Maude ● **Printed** in Great Britain by The White Dove Press ● **ISSN** 0953 8119

This month The Editor previews this issue

SHOWN BELOW are the 1998 Christmas stamps to be issued on 2 November; please note the issue on a Monday instead of the usual Tuesday for special stamps. The stamps, also the aerogramme and aircard (on sale from 6 October) feature angels. We also preview the special label booklet to be issued on Saturday 14 November to mark the 50th birthday of HRH The Prince of Wales.

Douglas Myall has been particularly busy recently – not only providing his ever-popular update for specialist collectors of new stamp books, but reporting on new printing machinery at The House of Questa. Enclosed with this *Bulletin* is an exclusive souvenir sheet printed by Questa in gravure. This reproduces some unadopted designs for recent special stamps, and will, I am sure, be of considerable interest to many readers. Our thanks to Questa for making these sheets available.

There are two exhibitions in London this month – Autumn Stampex (Business Design Centre, 30 September–4 October), and Stanley Gibbons Collect 98 exhibition (Olympia, 23–25 October) – and international exhibitions open in Johannesburg and Milan on 20 and 23 October respectively. If you visit any of these exhibitions, I hope you will enjoy the displays, meet old friends and find some good items to add to your collection. JOHN HOLMAN, EDITOR •

Royal Mail news Christmas • New priority services • Prince of Wales label • Aircards

Technical details

Printers De La Rue Security Print

Process Gravure

Size 41 x 30mm

Sheets 100

Perforation 15 x 14

Phosphor One band 20p • two bands others

Gum PVA

Cylinders and colours The ink cylinders used are the same for each value: 1A (gold) • 1B (greenish yellow) • 1C (magenta) • 1D (new blue) • 1E (grey-black).

The phosphor numbers are: 20p P73 • 26p P73 • 30p P73 • 43 and 63p P75

Christmas 1998 The 33rd set of British Christmas stamps goes on sale at post offices and philatelic outlets on 2 November. The stamps all feature angels, very much part of the Christmas story.

The 20p and 26p stamps (basic inland 2nd and 1st class letter rates) show Adoring and Praying Angels. The 30p (European basic letter rate) features an Angel playing a pipe. The 43p and 63p stamps (airmail basic letter rates) depict an Angel playing a lute and an Angel in prayer. Readers will note that the 2nd and 1st class rate stamps revert to valued stamps, 20p and 26p, after the non-value indicator issues of recent years. Overall the cost of the set is 1p less than in 1996 and 1997 as the European rate stamp is now 30p. Previously the inland 1st class stamp also covered letters to EU countries, 31p was the basic rate for non-EU countries.

FIRST DAY FACILITIES Unstamped Royal Mail FDC envelopes will be available from main post offices and philatelic outlets about a week before 2 November, price 25p. Orders for FDCs with the stamps cancelled by pictorial 'first day of issue' postmark of the Bureau or Bethlehem, Llandeilo, must reach the Bureau by 2 November. Price £2.56 UK (including VAT) or £2.18 overseas (no VAT).



Christmas Angels

Mrs J Robinson
200 Manorbier Road
Ilkeston
Derbyshire
DE7 4AB



Christmas stamp books

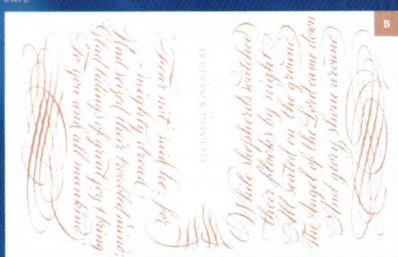
containing twenty 20p and ten 26p Christmas stamps will be available from post offices, the Bureau, philatelic outlets and many retailers from 2 November, price £4 and £2.60 respectively. Left, proofs of the two covers. Books containing Christmas stamps were introduced in 1984.



CHRISTMAS Angels



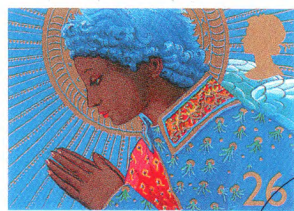
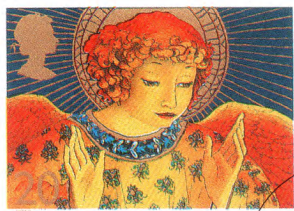
CAPE



Presentation pack and stamp cards

A well-illustrated pack (price £2.15) and stamp cards (25p each) will be available from main post offices and philatelic outlets. The pack includes an angel which can be cut out and assembled to make an attractive Christmas decoration.

The stamps are the work of Irene von Treskow who was born in Berlin in 1940. She has produced poster designs for the National Theatre, Covent Garden Opera and Bonn Opera, as well as book jacket illustrations. Irene designed the Tennyson set of 1992, and the forthcoming 1998 Christmas aerogramme and aircard (see p41).



For the first time, De La Rue have used ink-jet printers to add the secure stock order (warrant) and sheet numbers, and printing date in the sheet margins.

Alternatively, collectors may send stamped covers on the day of issue, to: British Philatelic Bureau, 20 Brandon Street, Edinburgh EH3 5TT, or Special Handstamp Centre, Royal Mail, Penarth Road, Cardiff CF1 1AA (Bethlehem postmark), marking the outer envelope 'FD9817' (Bureau), or 'FD9818' (Bethlehem). Collectors can post or hand in covers at main post offices for local (mostly non-pictorial) first day handstamps. Sponsored handstamps will be announced in the *British Postmark Bulletin* – available on subscription from the Bureau (£10 UK/Europe; £21.75 elsewhere). Covers may be posted bearing just the 20p Christmas stamp for any philatelic postmark in use on 2 November; the normal 1st class rule is waived.

Speed prestige book Further to the information published in last month's *Bulletin*, collectors should note that all the definitive and country stamps in the *Breaking Barriers* prestige book (13 October) are perforation gauge 14 (sheet stamps perf 15 x 14). The four 20p Speed stamps in the first pane are perf 14.5 x 13.5 (15 x 14 sheet stamp issued 29 September). Sharp-eyed collectors will also note that the 20p Speed stamps in the book do not have the copyright date at bottom right.

Correction The re-posting address for the Chislehurst first day of issue handstamp is: South East Special Handstamp Centre, Royal Mail, Wexham Road, Slough SL1 1AA, not the London Handstamp Centre quoted here in September. We regret any confusion caused.

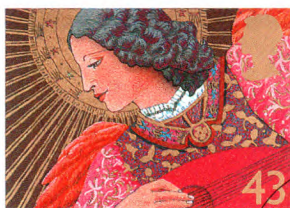
WITHDRAWAL OF CHRISTMAS STAMPS Any remaining stocks of 1998 Christmas stamps, stamp books, aerogramme and aircard will be withdrawn from sale at post offices on 24 December. All will remain on sale at the Bureau and philatelic outlets for one year from the date of issue, unless sold out earlier. The 1997 Christmas aerogramme (45p) will be withdrawn on 6 October, and the stamps (£1.83 set), stamp books (20 x 2nd class, 10 x 1st class), presentation pack (£2.20) and stamp cards (£1.25 set) on 26 October 1998.

CHRISTMAS STAMPS Britain's first Christmas stamps, featuring childrens' paintings, were issued in 1966. Including the 1998 set, some 149 Christmas stamps have been issued. To this total can be added phosphor versions of the 1966 issue and underprints on 13p values (1984, 1986, 1987) and 12p value (1985) from books or packs.

The 1998 stamps are not the first to feature angels – the Herald Angel was shown on Fritz Wegner's 4d Christmas stamp in 1969. Angels have also featured on Christmas stamps of 1970, 1971, 1972, 1975, 1976, 1979, 1981, 1994, and 1996.

Two sets have been devoted entirely to angels – montage designs by Sally Stiff in 1972, and woodcut-style designs by Richard Downer in 1975. The 1981 set featured childrens' paintings; the 18p stamp depicting a flying angel by six year old Lucinda Blackmore. The 41p stamp of the 1994 set, by Yvonne Gilbert, featured two children dressed as angels for their Christmas play.

The 1995 Christmas stamps, depicting robins, were the most popular set of that year with *Bulletin* readers. The 1996 and 1997 sets came fourth in their respective years. The 1997 1st class stamp was the second most popular individual stamp of the year.



CHRISTMAS AEROGramME AND AIRCARD The 1998 Christmas aerogramme will be issued on 6 October; price 45p. Designed by Irene von Treskow it features Christmas angels which have been shown on a number of the Christmas aerogrammes since they were first issued in 1965, a year ahead of the Christmas stamps. Also being issued on 6 October is the first Christmas Aircard – see section on aircards below •

Prince of Wales label booklet and cover The sixth of Royal Mail's pictorial label booklets will be available from the Bureau, philatelic outlets and selected post offices from 14 November. The book is being issued to mark the 50th birthday of HRH The Prince of Wales. The £1.04 book, printed by Walsall, contains a pane of four 1st class stamps and adjoining label reproducing Prince Charles's painting of the mountain Ben Arkle previously illustrated on the 25p stamp of 1994 marking the 25th anniversary of his investiture as Prince of Wales. Ben Arkle, 2580 feet, is located in the Reay Forest, noted for its deer, about eight miles to the east of the coastal village of Scourie in north west Scotland. When the Prince painted this scene in October 1991, the mountains were swathed in mist for part of the time so he had to work from memory. Ben Arkle, or simply Arkle as it is referred to locally, is composed of Cambrian quartzite and has bandings of white scree.

The pane of stamps and label will also be available as a separate, unfoldable item, available only from the British Philatelic Bureau in Edinburgh, price £1.04.

As the stamps in the pane are not new, the book/pane will not be accorded first day treatment and no Royal Mail first day cover or first day of issue postmarks will be available. Details of any sponsored handstamps for 14 November will be announced in the *British Postmark Bulletin* •



TO COMMEMORATE THE 50TH BIRTHDAY
OF HRH THE PRINCE OF WALES

Philatelic Numismatic Cover

Royal Mail and the Royal Mint will be producing a PNC bearing the pane cancelled with a pictorial postmark for Tetbury (post-town for the Prince's home, Highgrove House) and the £5 coin honouring the work of The Prince's Trust. The PNC costs £15.95 and early ordering is advised. A similar cover produced in 1994 for the 25th anniversary of the investiture proved very popular and quickly sold out.

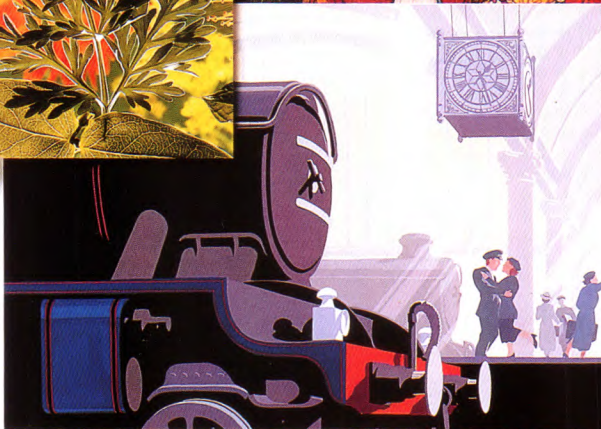
New definitive packs New presentation packs (nos 41 and 42) containing the current low value definitives (1p-£1 and 1st and 2nd nvi stamps), and the current Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales country stamps will be available from the Bureau and philatelic outlets from 20 October, price £5.50 and £4.75 respectively •

Aircards Aircards are self-sealing greetings cards, the price including postage to anywhere in the world, including inland. They were originally trialled on a limited basis from 16 September 1997, and the six new designs and packaging reflect the customer feedback received through the reply paid response card which was inserted into all cards. Five aircards, designed to appeal to a wide and diverse audience were launched on 1 September 1998. A Christmas aircard will be launched on 6 October, featuring 'Angel in prayer' by Irene von Treskow.

The aircard has been designed to stimulate growth in the short term message market by facilitating the writing process and making it more attractive. It is intended to fill the gap between a letter and a greetings card. Cards have become a popular way of communicating with friends and family. Despite the ease of use and affordability of the telephone and



Flowers & Herbs, by Carol Sharp (above) Carol Sharp, born in Bedfordshire, studied Graphic Design at Brighton College of Art, specialising in photography in her final year. She then became a photographic assistant, and has worked on her own as a professional photographer for 13 years. She is now one of the top food and flower photographers. Her studio is in London.



Train, by Andrew Davidson (above right) Andrew Davidson, born in Cambridge in 1958, grew up in Scotland, and studied Graphic design at the Norwich School of Art and the Royal College of Art. Andrew, who works in two media, flat designers' colour and wood engraving, lives with his wife and two sons in an 18th century cottage in Gloucestershire, working from an oak-built studio set amongst the trees in his garden.

Hello, by Sara Fanelli (right) Sara Fanelli, born in Florence in 1969, studied Graphic Design at Camberwell College of Art and the Royal College of Art. Since graduating from the RCA in 1995, she has worked as a freelance illustrator, becoming increasingly well-known for her magical children's books, including *Wolf* (1997) and *A Dog's Life* (1998). She is both author and illustrator. Sara spends her time between London and Florence.



other methods of keeping in touch, sending a message in the mail retains a special and personal edge. Research in 1996 revealed that letter writing is a widespread habit for a large proportion of the population, and with the extent to which people travel, more and more people are building a network of contacts abroad with whom they communicate. Written messages in the mail are the preferred medium for expressing emotions and are more satisfying for both the recipient and the sender, reflecting the importance of the relationship. Royal Mail has focused on the promotion of the short message market in its advertising for over two years and continues to run high profile campaigns.

Photograph by Geoff Dann

The new aircards (price £1.30 each) are initially being sold in 51 postshops around the country and will gradually appear in other offices as demand dictates. Availability through other outlets is being investigated •



The Procession, by Graham Percy (left) Graham Percy was born in New Zealand, where he started drawing and painting when a small child. He came to England to study at the Royal College of Art, then travelled to the USA on a scholarship, and began work as a freelance illustrator when he returned to London. His preferred medium is coloured pencil together with watercolour but he constantly experiments with new media. Graham lives in Wimbledon with his wife, who is an art photographer.



London, by Rebecca Gibbon (below left) Rebecca Gibbon, born in 1968, studied Graphic Design at Liverpool Polytechnic, and Illustration at the Royal College of Art. She lives in London and works as a freelance illustrator in London, Paris and New York for many magazines, design studios and advertising agencies. She was runner-up for her book illustrations 'Ten Dogs' in the Macmillan Book Prize in 1991.

Angel in Prayer, by Irene von Treskow (below) Irene von Treskow was born in Berlin and studied Art History in Bonn and Illustration in Warsaw. She is well-known for her collage work in poster design and book jackets. She lives and works in Kew, Surrey, and was ordained as an Anglican priest in 1995.



1998 Year Book price £23.95 from the Bureau, philatelic outlets and main post offices. A leather-bound edition, price £75, is available exclusively from the Bureau.

1998 Year Pack price £17.95.

Both will be available from 2 November.

1998 Year Book and Year Pack The handsomely produced Royal Mail Special Stamps Year Book for 1998, on sale from 2 November, contains background information about the development of all the year's special issues. The book is hardbound with a matching slipcase and includes sets of the following: Endangered Species, Diana, Princess of Wales, The Queen's Beasts, Lighthouses, Comedians, Health, Magical Worlds, Carnival, Speed, and Christmas. The 1998 Year Pack contains all special stamps mounted on a quality display board with an informative brochure about the issues.

The 1997 Year Book (£23.50, leather bound version £75) and Year Pack (£15.95) will be withdrawn from sale on 12 November; the leather-bound Year Book is only available from the Bureau •

First day of issue postmarks Royal Mail announces that the local 'first day of issue' postmarks will be used for the last time for the 1998 Christmas issue (2 November). For future issues, first day facilities will continue to be available at main post offices but all covers posted will receive the pictorial 'alternative' postmark such as Bethlehem for the Christmas issue. The current pictorial first day cancels used at London, Scotland (town differs each issue), Birmingham, Durham, and St Albans will also be withdrawn after 2 November.

This change follows the successful use of an alternative pictorial postmark (Kensington) for all covers bearing the Diana, Princess of Wales stamps issued last February.

For collectors wanting a non-pictorial postmark, one bearing the name of the alternative office will be available for each new issue. Covers should be sent to one of Royal Mail's six Special Handstamp Centres. The non-pictorial postmark, with re-posting address, will be announced in both this and the *British Postmark Bulletin* •



Priority services revised Royal Mail will be revising its priority services from 12 October. The names Registered and Registered Plus will be discontinued, these services becoming part of an improved Special Delivery service. Existing Special Delivery, Registered, and Registered Plus pre-paid envelopes will be replaced by new envelopes and a new silver-coloured Special Delivery label will supersede the current Special Delivery, Registered, and Registered Plus labels. The new labels will be available in English and English/Welsh versions. The new Special Delivery service provides for compensation up to £250 for lost or damaged items, with extra fees paid for compensation to £1000 or £2500. The compensation level required and total fee paid is indicated on the receipt given to the sender of the Special Delivery item. Confirmation of delivery can be obtained by phoning the number quoted on the label (0345 00 1200) or by visiting the Royal Mail Web site where tracking facilities will be available.

English and English/Welsh versions of the new silver-coloured Special Delivery envelopes will be available at post offices and from the Bureau, in three sizes c5, c4 (£3.50 each) and c3 (£4.60). Postage is paid to 500g (c5 and c4) and to 1000g (c3) by a PPS (printed postage symbol) •

Rowland Hill Awards In October 1996 Royal Mail announced the Rowland Hill Awards for achievements in promoting stamp collecting, sponsored by Royal Mail, the British Philatelic Trust, and the Philatelic Traders' Society. The awards for achievements during 1998 will be made at a ceremony in London next April. Nominations for all awards will shortly be invited and next month's *Bulletin* will include a nomination form for the Royal Mail Innovation Award for Post Office Excellence. This goes to the office providing the best access to a range of philatelic products, tailored services for stamp collectors, and supporting stamp collectors by providing access to information and a welcoming environment with helpful staff. The 1997 winner was the Truro Branch Post Office •

National Postal Museum Currently on show at the NPM are 'It's Only a Game' (Sports), 'Victorian Posts', and 'Going Places with the British Post Office' special exhibitions as well as permanent displays from the R M Phillips Collection of Victorian stamps, and 'All-World' and thematic issues. The 'Post Haste!' exhibition of postal vehicles, letter boxes and artefacts is on the ground floor.

The Museum will be closing to the public at its present location on 24 December. Thereafter the stamp collections can be seen by appointment at Post Office Archives at Mount Pleasant •

Special stamps cylinder

numbers The National Postal Museum reports the following cylinder combinations not previously recorded here.

Diana, Princess of Wales: 1A 3B3C3D2E

Lighthouses 20p and 26p:
2A2A2A2A2A, 3A3A3A3A3A
and 4A4A4A4A4

Health 43p: 2A2A2A2A2A

The NPM, in King Edward Street, London EC1A 1LP, is open Monday to Friday 09.30-16.30. Admission is free.

Enquiries 0171 776 3636

Stamp scene Societies • Stanley Gibbons

• GB stamps at auction • New island labels

Mail van model BFM Collectables have hand-converted a Yesteryear Renault model into an authentic Royal Mail post van used in the Leicester and Stony Stratford area in the mid-1910s. The van (4 inches long) is in a limited edition of 250 only with a numbered certificate and a post card featuring a painting of the original mail van. Price £18.95 postpaid from BFM Collectables, PO Box 69, Fleet GU13 9YN •



Astro Space Stamp Society Two of the Society members won medals at the Israel 98 international exhibition. The first 50 readers who write in for details of the Society will be sent a football FDC. Enclose large SAE (UK) or two international reply coupons for details. Enquiries: Brian Lockyer, 21 Exford Close, Weston-super-Mare BS23 4RE •

Worthing exhibition We wish to put the record straight concerning the report of the Worthing exhibition on page 346 of the June *Bulletin*. It was the arrival in the town, not the birth, of Princess Amelia that helped regularise the postal service in Worthing in 1798. The Princess was born in 1783 •

Enquiries Stanley Gibbons Publications, telephone 01425 472363

Stanley Gibbons catalogues The 1999 edition of the Part 1 catalogue (British Commonwealth) was published on 25 September. This is in two volumes, GB and countries A-I and countries J-Z, price £28.95 each. The 10th edition of the *GB Specialised Catalogue* vol 3 – Elizabeth II Pre-decimal issues will be available from 23 October, price £24.95, and the 1999 edition of *Collect British Stamps* will be published on 27 November, price £6.95.

Volume 1 of the 1999 edition of the *Stamps of the World* catalogue is now available; this covers foreign countries A-J, price £27.50. Volume 2 – foreign countries K-Z will be available from 23 October, price £27.50 and volume 3 Commonwealth countries on 27 November, price £24.95. A *Collect Fish on Stamps* thematic catalogue will be published during the Autumn •

Enquiries Alan Crozier, 45 Grasmere Way, Linslade, Leighton Buzzard LU7 7QL

Films, videos and slides The Association of British Philatelic Societies has published a useful *Catalogue of Films, Videos and Slides on stamps, stamp collecting and the postal service*. All are available for purchase or loan. The booklet will be of particular value to philatelic society secretaries •

Enquiries Harmers of London, telephone 0171 629 0218

High prices for good GB Harmers of London auctioned over 1700 lots on 30 July. Amongst these were 140 lots of Great Britain. Good prices were paid for early essays. A mint block of four 1840 Penny Blacks brought £3750 despite some faults. Lot 787, a collection of line engraved issues estimated at £750 sold in the room for £1900 after spirited bidding. A selection of Edward VII issues estimated at £1400 finally went for £2400. In general the market for GB material, be it collections or single rarities, seems strong •

Enquiries B L Asquith, Alandale, Radcliffe Gardens, Carshalton SM5 4PQ

Concorde Study Circle The Circle has recently celebrated its 20th anniversary. The June CSC Newsletter includes a report of the anniversary meeting, with articles on the Concorde flight covers of the Royal International Air Tattoo, 1997; French cinderella labels and metermarks featuring Concorde; details of commemorative postmarks and postcards and a review of new stamps featuring the aircraft. The Circle will be holding a meeting at Autumn Stampex – 10.30 on 4 October •



Island labels Last year the Postmaster on the Isle of Iona, Crawford Morison, issued 'commemorative stickers' to mark the 1400th anniversary of the landing of St Columba on Iona – see April 1997 *Bulletin*, page 238. Mr Morison has now produced two further sets, each of five stickers, featuring the neighbouring island of Staffa and Seabirds. These are available, together with the St Columba stickers, at 70p for one set, £1.30 for two or £1.90 for all three. The Staffa/Seabirds sets are printed in sheets of 15 comprising two sets of Staffa and one set of Seabird stickers. Postage extra on all orders – 25p UK, 45p overseas. The stickers, popular with visitors to the island's post office, have no postal validity and Royal Mail stamps are required to pre-pay postage.

Orders and enquiries to: C S Morison, Iona Post Office, Isle of Iona, Scotland PA76 6SJ; remittances payable to 'C S Morison' •

Post offices on the road to the Isles From Fort William to Mallaig, by Colin G Peachey of the British Postmark Society



The post office at Banavie, on the canal towpath.

An article by Colin Peachey on the post offices and postmarks of Knoydart was published in the *British Postmark Bulletin*, 28 August 1998.

AS I SAT in a restaurant in Fort William overlooking the waterfront I could see (though I really needed binoculars) the rural post office of Trislaig across the waters of Loch Linnhe about a mile away, but about 20 miles by road. For an enthusiast who likes to spend his holidays studying postal services, what better way to pursue this interest than to combine it with the stunning scenery of the west of Scotland! Trislaig is on the edge of the Ardnamurchan peninsula, which I had visited on a previous trip. This time, in 1998 (though some of the post offices were covered on previous visits), I was to concentrate on the road west of Fort William.

'The Road to the Isles' is the name given to the 45 mile-or-so road from Fort William to Mallaig, where a ferry can still be caught to the Isle of Skye (further north is the recently-built bridge from Kyle to Skye). The road provides an exciting drive though thankfully much of it has recently been upgraded and further work is in hand on the rest! Around 1900 the West Highland railway line was extended from Fort William to Mallaig following much the same route as the road, so for the transport enthusiast it is a delight, with the Glenfinnan Viaduct probably being the best known spot on the line. In the summer months steam locos are used (at least once per day), and the steam enthusiast can be seen on the hillsides in even greater numbers photographing this phenomenon. Unfortunately one can no longer see

the old Fort William station (though there are pictures of it in the tourist books available) as it was demolished and a new anonymous-looking station built in the 1970s, with the railway 'cut back' some 400 yards to accommodate the town's 'inner ring road'.

Counting post offices from east to west, the first is Fort William itself, the only office mentioned here to use SIDs (self inking date stamps), though the sorting office uses a 'Delivery Office' rubber handstamp on local mail and machine postmarks most of its outward mail. The second office is Inverlochry (a Fort William town sub office) and the third is Caol, a busy but unexciting residential area on the edge of Fort William.

Now we come to the Caledonian Canal, a Thomas Telford engineering masterpiece, which joins Loch Ness to the north with the sea at Fort William. This is a 'must' for the visitor, but what a shame the guide books do not do it justice. The fourth post office, at Banavie, is also a 'must' for the post office enthusiast, for it is not on a road at all, but on the canal towpath. This is at Neptune's Staircase, a series of locks bringing the canal down to sea level in the final stages of its voyage to the sea. The post office has been situated there since about 1992. The next post office (number 5) is at Corpach, where the canal crosses both the road (with one of those bridges that pivots at one end) and the railway line to join the sea.

11 Mallaig

10 Morar

9 Arisaig

8 Lochailort

7 Glenfinnan

6 Kinlocheil

Corpach 5 4 Banavie

Caol 3 2 Inverlochty

Fort William 1



Before we head further west I will here take a brief diversion. My wife and I followed a sign indicating that under the Scottish Gardens Scheme a country house and garden was open for the day. And so it was! After paying our fee and circling the charming gardens of rhododendrons and azaleas (this was Sunday 31 May, during 'rhody' season) we viewed the house. The pictures on the lounge wall revealed that we had just met, clad in kilt and greeting his guests in the garden, Colonel Sir Donald Cameron of Locheil, the 26th Chief of the Cameron clan. The house was only open for the day though a Cameron museum is open daily in what was the old post office and accordingly I learned a good deal of the Cameron clan history. The 19th Chief, known as 'the Gentle Locheil', was closely allied to Bonnie Prince Charlie in 1745, and after Culloden in 1746 he was exiled to France and the family were ruined. Gradually in later years they re-established themselves, partly via the Cameron Highlanders regiment, and the Locheil estates were restored to the family in the 1780s.

Back in the 20th century, the post office (which I have not numbered) was moved to a newer cot-

tage in 1961 and this is still open, effectively the post office serving the estate surrounding Sir Donald's charming home. The village is called Achnacarry and the postmark is shown here (obtained by returning on a weekday of course).

Back on 'the road' and heading west, we hit open country and the beautiful Loch Eil, and the next post office is Kinlocheil (6), hidden up a small track and not obvious to the average passer-by. A postbus service from Fort William serves this road, and is another feature for the transport enthusiast to look out for. A Ford Escort Estate with a capacity for four passengers can give the visitor a spectacular circular tour of Loch Eil and Loch Linnhe, including Trislaig which I mentioned earlier, and back to Fort William. In fact I suspect few passengers are carried.

Then we move on to Glenfinnan with its excellent National Trust for Scotland Visitor Centre and car park from which the railway and viaduct can be witnessed on the north side. The books on sale in the Visitor Centre are full of the professional photographs of the viaduct – far better than mine, partly as I do not have access to a helicopter, and the car park is too distant from the



Post offices at Lochailort, top, Glenfinnan, left, and Arisaig

viaduct. To the south side is the Bonnie Prince Charlie monument (near the point where he unfurled his father's standard) and the glorious Loch Shiel, best viewed from climbing to the view point, overlooking one of the most famous views in Scotland. Glenfinnan post office (7) is not given any tourist treatment. It is clearly strictly for the locals, hidden down a narrow lane from the main road, looking like a garden shed and opening mornings only and with no opening hours displayed. Insignificant though it may appear, it is surprisingly one of two offices on this road where outward mail is still handstamped. Mail from the other offices receives a Fort William postmark.

Moving on we come to Lochailort (8) where the post office is now located in Inverailort Castle although it is not signposted. Then after some spectacular roads (some improved to modern standards, some not so!) we come to Arisaig (9), with its lovely setting on the west coast, from where a ferry leaves in the summer to the islands of Eigg, Muck and Rhum. The post office here has two handstamps, one for counter use and one for the mail. At first they may appear the same

but a careful inspection of the two illustrations will show the differences.

Now we come to Morar, with the road now heading north for Mallaig. Morar's post office (10) has closed in the last couple of years, and I was shown (on my recent visit) the house built on the spot where the post office had been demolished. The road at Morar bridges Britain's shortest river (so a recent *Sunday Times* quiz tells me) as it runs for less than a mile from Loch Morar to the east (Britain's deepest fresh water loch) joining it to the sea to the west.

Lastly we come to the busy fishing port of Mallaig. From the quay the mail leaves for the Knoydart peninsula which has no land access and it relies on Mallaig for mail and other supplies. At Mallaig post office (11) mail is no longer stamped but counter handstamps are of course still in use.

The Road to the Isles and its tourist attractions are well known and visited by thousands each year. Not so well known are the post offices on this road, and although provided to serve the local community they each have their own character and in my view should not be missed! ●

The Indian Round Table Conference

Pradip Jain looks at the stamps and postmarks marking this event in 1930-1932



Regn. No. 59 Certificate of Posting of a Registered Postal Packet.

A Postal Packet addressed as under, upon which a Fee of Three Pence has been paid, in addition to the Postage, has been registered and posted here this day:-
(For Parcels only.)

Willy Hess
Hamburg

Accepting Officer's Signature
(or Initials)



(P.T.O.)

R LONDON, S.W. 227
No. 42

USE THE
AIR MAIL



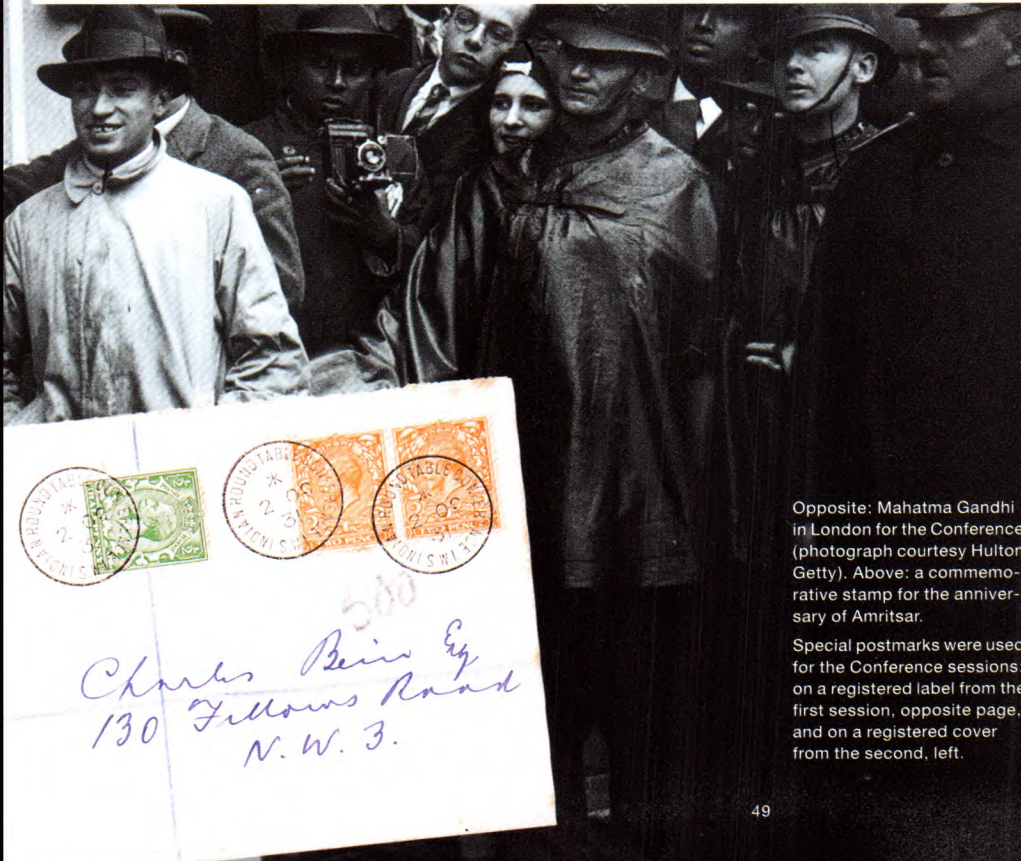
IN 1927, THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT set up the Indian Statutory Commission under Sir John Simon (later Viscount Simon) and this produced the 'Simon Report' in 1930, which recommended an increase in responsible government in the provinces, and indirect elections for the central legislature.

However, in June 1929, the Viceroy of India, Lord Irwin, had returned to London for a conference with the new British Government – the Labour Party under Ramsay Macdonald having been re-elected. On his return, Lord Irwin made an official statement the 'the natural issue of India's constitutional progress is the attainment of Dominion status'. He also announced that the British Government had accepted the suggestion made by Sir John Simon for a Round Table Conference.

This announcement killed whatever interest there might have been in the Simon Report and, when this was published on 27 May 1930, the Indian political parties, notably the Congress Party, rejected the report. The British Government then convened the Round Table conference in London to discuss the matter of admitting the right of Indians to participate in the forming of their own constitution.

Continued on following page

Much of the bitterness which bedevilled Anglo-Indian relations before independence began with the Amritsar riots of 1919. On 10 April that year, General Dyer ordered troops to fire on an angry but unarmed mob, killing 379 Indians and wounding hundreds. The ill-will so created led to the campaign of civil disobedience and passive resistance organised by Mohandas Gandhi, leader of the Indian Congress Party.



Opposite: Mahatma Gandhi in London for the Conference (photograph courtesy Hulton Getty). Above: a commemorative stamp for the anniversary of Amritsar.

Special postmarks were used for the Conference sessions: on a registered label from the first session, opposite page, and on a registered cover from the second, left.



King George V, as Emperor of India, inaugurated the first session of the Conference.

There were three sessions of the Conference: 1930/31, 1931 and 1932. The Congress Party boycotted the first and third sessions, although Gandhi attended the second session as the sole representative of the Indian National Congress.

First session Held in London from 12 November 1930 to 19 January 1931, the first session was inaugurated by King George V as Emperor of India and was presided over by Ramsay Macdonald. There were 89 delegates, of which 16 were British MPs, 16 were Princes of India and 57 were delegates from British India, nominated by the Viceroy. Among those in attendance were Dr B R Ambedkar and Srinivas Shastri (opposite page).

It was obvious from the start that without the support of the Congress Party the Round Table Conference could not make any workable decisions and the session was recessed in January 1931.

Second session A week after the adjournment, Lord Irwin ordered the unconditional release of all members of the Congress Working Committee. Shortly afterwards an understanding known as the Gandhi-Irwin Pact, was reached and all political prisoners were released. In return, the Congress agreed to suspend their civil disobedience movement and to participate in the second session of the Round Table Conference.

This session opened on 7 September 1931 and was open until 1 December. It was attended by Gandhi, accompanied by Pandit Malaviya, Mrs Saronjini Naidu and G D Birla (opposite page). The special postmark was again in service and an example on the headed notepaper of the Conference is shown opposite.

Despite much better relations on both sides, no firm decisions were taken and the session recessed again on 1 December 1931.

Third session This last Conference was again boycotted by the Congress Party and was doomed before it began. It opened on 17 November 1932 and closed on 1 December. There was no special postmark (or at least one has not been recorded) and there were only 46 delegates.

India Act 1935 Following the Round Table Conference and a government 'white paper' in 1933, a new India Act was introduced to transform the Indian Empire into a federation which would include the Princely States as well as the provinces of British India. The Act gave greater authority to the provincial assemblies allowing 11 of them fully responsible government within their areas. These came into force on 1 April 1937, but the divisions among the differing Indian communities delayed the start of a federal government before the outbreak of war in 1939. With the decision to give India Dominion status after the war, the federal section of the 1935 Act was never put into effect.

So even this simple postmark which can be found in collections and dealer's boxes takes on a more important position when placed in its full historical context •

Pradip Jain, a member of the Philatelic Advisory Committee of the Indian Post Office, has exhibited at many international exhibitions, receiving gold and large gold medals. He was Commissioner for India for the Singapore 95 exhibition. He has done much to promote philately in India, giving talks on radio and television and writing newspaper articles.



From top left, Round Table Conference delegates Dr B R Ambedkar, Srinivas Shastri, Pandit Malaviya, Mrs Saronjini Naidu and G D Birla. Two stamps mark Mahatma Gandhi's 1931 visit to London: Mauritius, and Antigua and Barbuda.

Mrs Naidu also appears on the Antigua and Barbuda stamp. Below: the special postmark of the second session, on the Conference's notepaper.

INDIAN ROUND-TABLE CONFERENCE.



Tel. No.
GERRARD 4040.

ST. JAMES'S PALACE,

S.W.1.



Quest(a) for excellence D G A Myall describes some new

Decline in sightings



43 ENDANGERED SPECIES
Mole cricket
Gryllotalpa gryllotalpa



Superlitho The screen for the Endangered Species stamps was 600 lpi, holding twice the image information achieved in conventional lithography. The result can be fully appreciated only under magnification; even a 10× glass reveals no trace of a screen, but details such as the hairs on the mole cricket's legs are seen to astonishing effect. Detail 10 × actual size.

THE NAME OF The House of Questa is well-known to stamp collectors all over the world as printers of postage stamps and their Q logo resembling a balloon canopy has come to symbolise lithographic printing of the highest quality. The firm was originally a three-man partnership but was taken over by Waddingtons in 1983 and later by MDC Communications Corporation. MDC is a dynamic and fast-growing Canadian multinational whose Secure Transaction Products and Services Division specialises in stamps, cheques, credit cards and transportation and events tickets. The Stamp Services Group embraces the specialist stamp manufacturers Ashton Potter Canada, Ashton Potter USA and The House of Questa, all leading suppliers to their national postal authorities and who together service in excess of 100 authorities around the world. The parent company's policy is to allow each unit in the group as much autonomy as possible and this approach encourages innovation. Today, Questa's affairs are in the capable hands of Richard

Ashwell, managing director, Peter Chapman, commercial director and Ken McAllen, one of the original founding partners who is now Chairman. In an interview at the beginning of August they told me something of recent developments and their plans for the future. I would like to share these with you.

Superlitho The modern lithographic process as practised by stamp printers involves scanning the original artwork and transferring the image to paper via the stages of computer imaging, film and plate. At each stage, resolution is lost progressively and, although the scanning resolution can be as high as 1000 lpi (lines per inch), the final output is usually around 300-350 lpi. Questa have found a way of maintaining a high resolution through these later stages and can achieve a printing resolution of as much as 850 lpi. Even higher resolutions are possible but 850 has been found sufficient to retain all the detail desired. Developed over a mere 9 to 12 months, the new

developments in high quality printing at The House of Questa

To the naked eye no copyright notice is visible on the Lighthouses stamps, but your 10x glass will reveal it at the right of the black rule at the bottom. It is an incredible 0.4 point (72 points equals approximately 1 inch) and 'reversed out' (white on a dark background), much harder to achieve than the more usual dark text on light. Detail 20 x actual size.



The somewhat stark images of the four Health stamps do not, at first, appear to be in the same quality range as the other two. However, again the 10x glass reveals the incredible detail that Superlitho can attain. The tiny wrinkles at the joints of the fingers and the complex shading produce a photographic quality never seen in conventional litho. Detail 10 x actual size.



process, which they have dubbed 'Superlitho', has already been used for printing stamps for overseas administrations and Royal Mail. You can judge the results for yourself from three recent special issues.

The first use of the new process for British stamps was the set of six values for the Endangered Species issue of 20 January 1998. Keen-eyed collectors (is there any other kind?) will notice what appears to be a smudge in the background of each stamp just above the word 'species'. The glass reveals this to be the year 1998 with the copyright symbol, indicating the Post Office's claim to copyright in the designs. It is printed on backgrounds of varying colours in navy blue, the colour of the other text. Each stamp was printed in four process colours, two special colours including navy, and the required phosphor, a total of seven.

The next Superlitho printing of our stamps was the Lighthouse issue of 24 March 1998; this employed a screen of 850lpi. The effect is stun-

ning. Even experienced printers have difficulty in believing that this is a lithographic printing. Among the details that would not be there if standard techniques had been employed are the lines of rigging on the flag-pole of the 20p and the steps up the side of the Eddystone light on the 63p. Each stamp was printed from six plates: the four CMYK process colours of cyan, magenta, yellow and black, gold for the Queen's head and value, and phosphor.

The latest Superlitho special issue was the set of four Health stamps of 23 June 1998. These were printed at a resolution of 700lpi. This time five colours plus phosphor were used. It is easy to see how the new process might be mistaken for gravure. This time, the copyright notice is much larger and very visible in the bottom left corner of each stamp although still not readable with the unaided eye.

Taken together, these three issues amply demonstrate the capabilities of Superlitho but they are by no means the only stamps to have

been printed by this technique. Among other stunning examples I was shown was a commemorative souvenir sheet for the Hong Kong stamp exhibition of 1997. The centre of the sheet has the perforated Superlitho label designed from an amalgam of colour transparencies, while border and other images were printed in conventional 300 screen. This demonstrates the ability to combine the old and new processes in a single issue. This is achievable because Superlitho does not require special printing presses; plates with all resolutions can be mounted in conventional presses. Just how is the new effect achieved? Well that is Questa's secret and application has been made to patent the technology. All that can be said at present is that a lot depends on the skill of the different operatives at each stage. Like most graphics printers, Questa use Apple Macintosh computers for their image manipulation. At this stage, the colour of each individual cell can be altered. When you consider that at 850 lpi there are 722,500 of these every square inch you can begin to see the incredible control which Superlitho offers. On the press, the minder has to be highly skilled and experienced, able to hold colour register on the machine and with enough confidence in his ability to be able to extend the boundaries of what is possible.

Even more interesting is the fact that the resolution can be varied on a single design. I was told that the choice of resolution is dependent on the amount of detail in the original artwork. If the detail is not there, there is no point in going higher than the figure needed to preserve what is. Questa told me that one of the surprising things they found was that at the higher resolutions, details which were not apparent on the original were unexpectedly brought out in the finished product and instanced one case where the artist's preliminary pencil lines could be seen. This has an important significance for the artist. Whereas he might leave out detail which could not be reproduced at stamp size by standard technology, the new process means that he has more freedom to give artistic expression to his brief. He can be confident that no detail will be lost en route to the finished product. This also means

that artwork does not have to be the conventional four times actual; really large drawings can be prepared, limited only by the size of the scanning drum.

This is not the only beneficial effect of the new technique. I have already referred to the photographic quality of the hands in the Health issue. Lithography is a planographic process which means that the printing parts of the image are in the same plane as the non-printing parts and not recessed as in gravure or raised as in letterpress. The effect is that the printed image is rather flat when compared to these other methods. Somewhat fortuitously, perhaps, Superlitho can create a three-dimensional effect especially at the higher resolutions. I noticed this particularly in the pagoda on the Hong Kong sheet. To some extent, perhaps, this may depend on the contrast between the colours chosen for image and background but it offers a potentially fertile field for further development.

Another capability that Superlitho offers has been indicated by my reference to the microscopic copyright text on the lighthouse stamps. Any would-be forger of this issue would find it extremely difficult to reproduce this and without it the forgery could be easily detected. This presents opportunities for incorporating security marks in all manner of subjects. It is not confined to postage stamps. Secret marks and subtle colour changes, coupled with the ability to vary the screen in a random manner, provide security printing of great interest to other customers besides postal administrations.

The essence of Superlitho is that each stage of the process is adapted to retain all the detail of the original artwork in an integrated fashion. There is a small premium to be paid for this, eg, in make-ready time on the press, but this is clearly outweighed by the benefits of a greater range of artistic creation, matchless reproduction and increased security. It is clear that Superlitho has an outstanding future.

Gravure While lithography is still used for some special issues, Royal Mail have a definite preference for gravure for definitives. They view this

as a more secure process, in view of the relative scarcity and high cost of suitable gravure presses. Today, the only definitives still printed by lithography are those in Questa's £1 and £2 machine-vend books and Enschedé's 'Boots' sheetlet with a single 1st class XVI. Mindful of this, Questa decided that part of the development of the firm under its new management would be to acquire a gravure capability.

One advantage of coming late to gravure was that Questa were able to start with a blank sheet. Rather than buy a new press and build their capability around it, they first planned in detail what they would like to have and only then approached potential suppliers. Questa's management team were determined to push the technical boundaries forward and create a new benchmark for gravure printing. Encouraged by their success with lithography, high resolution figured prominently in their plans. Current gravure screens for stamp printing are around 350lpi; Questa are confident that resolutions of up to 500lpi can be achieved, although this is not likely to be specified for the Machin definitives as Royal Mail is doing its best to make one firm's Machin indistinguishable from another's.

The name of the press they settled on must remain undisclosed for the present, pending a formal launch later in the year but I am able to give you some advance information about the new press. It has nine colour units capable of running two different jobs at the same time. These could be two different values and colours or even two different designs. The press provides on-line dot to dot inspection with automatic tension control and advanced register facility. It has an on-line APS perforator and the tools include one for perforating definitives with the now required ellipses. Questa have formed partnerships with selected cylinder makers and the very latest techniques are employed in this field. The extent of the innovation and the parent company's commitment to it may be gauged by the fact that the gravure investment alone is a staggering £3 million. The new press has been installed at Byfleet, West London and it is Questa's intention to re-locate their whole operation there and,

sadly, to close their Camberwell operation.

Bulletin readers have an early opportunity of seeing what the new press can do. Included with this issue is a souvenir sheet printed and perforated as part of its installation and trials. It comprises four unadopted designs for recent special issues which are printed at the normal 300lpi as specified by Royal Mail. These were printed in eight colours; the normal four CMYK process colours, two special colours of beige and blue, and two metallic colours of silver and gold. These were chosen to provide a suitable test run. One feature of interest is that the Q logo is printed once in the margin by each unit; they are not numbered but only one was used for each colour. The ninth unit could have overprinted phosphor bands but these were not necessary, indeed, would have been undesirable, in view of the fact that these are not stamps intended to be used for postage. It is also why they do not carry The Queen's head. The four 'stamps' are perforated. The first trials were in June this year, stated around a Maltese cross 'cancellation' on the sheet.

Readers will know that lithographic printing of the Machin head usually requires two or three plates even although the image is monochrome. This is to realise Arnold Machin's intended relief effect. Although the Superlitho process seems quite capable of achieving this with a single plate, it is Royal Mail's intention to phase out lithography altogether for the small size definitives and it seems that not even Superlitho's capabilities will tempt them to change their mind. Accordingly, from 1 November, all Questa's booklet stamps, in both machine-vend and retail books, will be by gravure on the new press. This is of major interest to collectors who will have several new singles to add to the ever-growing list of Machins. The book of 10 × 1st issued on 7 September will be their last in litho.

It is clear that Questa is at the leading edge of high quality security printing in both lithography and gravure. Their innovative approach has already paid dividends in securing new contracts and no doubt this is only the beginning ●

Questa books printed in gravure will be available from 1 December. ED

With our create a card offer you can design your own personalised postcards and Christmas cards. The cards feature a transparent cover which safely seals in your photograph or design, making their morning post really memorable. So, make the most of the special offer inside this stamp book.

[illegible]

signed to enable the effect of the offer to be gauged, although the take-up depended on whether the books were ordered (only the book of 10 × 1st was supplied as standard) and used in time (delivery of the Christmas cards was not promised before 16 October).

This is the first time that a promotion has included Greetings books and normal retail books with both XVI and value stamps. Because of this, the wording on the yellow strip is identical on all four books, viz: 'See inside for offer details'. The validity of the value stamps, which is normally stated on this yellow strip is now given, rather more fully, on the inside front covers.

Apart from the changes required by the promotion, the covers show some interesting differences from other current books. For example, the 10 x 1st has the usual printer's initial on the back cover near the barcode but this is omitted from the three Walsall books. The two overseas covers have, instead, the name of the printer set out in full. They also have smaller barcodes to accommodate the terms of the offer and there is no mention of the UK recommended price.

The books were available only in the Midlands until 7 September when they went on general and philatelic sale. The restricted sale was de-

Other promotions It seems that retail book covers are regarded as a useful vehicle for promoting sales. There have been two examples this year



using De La Rue's book of 10 x 1st NV1 stamps. Both used the back cover as a coupon to enter a competition for a valuable prize. The first was available from Woolworth stores from 6 May and offered a chance of winning a Peugeot 106 car. The wording on the yellow strip read: 'Win a Peugeot 106', making yet another variety in what has become a collecting field in its own right. The books went on philatelic sale on 23 June, three days before the draw closed. The second had 25 JVC camcorders as prizes and was available from all retailers from 1 July. This time the yellow strip read: 'Win a JVC camcorder'. The promotion ended on 27 August, first day of philatelic sale.

The stamps in the Peugeot and JVC camcorder books were printed from cylinder B14, phosphor B12. Those in the create a card book are from cylinders B13, phosphor B12. It is not at all unusual for colour cylinder numbers to appear out of sequence. For what are likely to be long print runs, more than one cylinder is made with one kept in reserve for when the other is taken out of service for cleaning or re-chroming. After some months of use, the cleaned cylinder will be brought back into use. This is what has happened with cylinder B13. The use of these two cylinders so far is given below and readers might like to ensure that they have them in all the available covers.

Cylinder B13, 10 x 1st, Harrison/De La Rue

21.04.97 gold stamp; standard (non-Olympic) covers
03.08.98 flame stamps; revised European validity notice
03.08.98 flame stamps; create a card promotion

Cylinder B14, 10 x 1st, Harrison/De La Rue

30.05.97 gold stamps; standard (non-Olympic) covers
18.11.97 flame stamps; standard (non-Olympic) covers
15.09.97 flame stamps; holiday currency promotion
02.02.98 flame stamps; Disney animal kingdom scratch panels
19.03.98 flame stamps; revised European validity notice
06.05.98 flame stamps; Peugeot 106 prize draw
01.06.98 flame stamps; JVC camcorder prize draw

Questa £1 book changes The stamps in Questa's machine vended booklets are printed by lithography. The plates for this method of printing do not last as long as gravure cylinders so on a long print run number changes are more likely. Also, once taken out of service, plates are not re-used. Another difference between litho and gravure versions of the Machin definitives is that two plates are used to achieve the desired relief effect compared with only one for gravure. (Exceptionally, Walsall used two gravure cylinders for their gold stamps.) All printers use only one plate or cylinder to print the phosphor bands but Walsall, alone among them, do not number theirs.



Ellipses on new panes are more sharply tapered compared to the rounded shape of the earlier perforator. Far left, an ellipse from pane Q1 and, left, from pane Q9 (10× actual size).

were used for some sheet printings of Regionals.) The numbers used were given here in August. Since that was written, combination Q10 Q10 Q10 Q10 Q10 / Q3 appeared on 17 July. Note that this is the first use of phosphor Q3. Now that numbers have reached double figures, space is at a premium and they are slightly smaller than before.

Another change that has occurred on the panes for the £1 books is rather more subtle. A new perforating tool was brought into use around last April. This has the usual gauge of $14\frac{3}{4} \times 14$ and the required ellipses the length of three normal holes at left and right. However, the shape of these ellipses is different. Even singles can be distinguished. All the Q9 and Q10 panes have the new ellipse; Q8 books exist with both types and specialists are likely to want both. If this interests you, make sure of your books while they are still easily available. Of course, it is possible that the former perforator will be brought back into use but it is likely that the plate combination will have changed by then •

Since there are three values on the panes for the £1 books, there are seven plate numbers to be accommodated along the very narrow margin which is used to affix the pane to the cover. (The wording on the two labels is printed in the colour of the 1p stamps and from the same plates.) Each pair of numbers changes together; in other words, Q1 Q1 is succeeded by Q2 Q2; combinations such as Q1 Q2 for the same colour do not exist on booklet stamps. (Mixed number pairs

Cover corner



An interesting cover posted at a Science meeting in 1953, submitted by Geoff Isherwood of Cheshire

THIS MONTH'S cover comprises a cover issued by the British Philatelic Association and the Philatelic Traders' Society for the Coronation stamps of 1953. This example however was not used as a first day cover but to acquire the special skeleton postmark used at the British Association for Advancement of Science meeting at Liverpool on 3 September 1953. This handstamp was in use 2-7 September and is number 387 in *Special Event Postmarks of the UK* (4th edition, British Postmark Society, 1991). The cover bears four Wilding definitives totalling $8\frac{1}{2}$ d: $2\frac{1}{2}$ d postage and 6d registration fee; a 'blank' registration label was affixed and also datestamped at the temporary post office at the Association meeting. The datestamp was also applied to the reverse of the cover, making four impressions in all •

Competition Win a GB 1929 Postal Union Congress £1 catalogued at £425

Sponsored by Omniphil GB Home Approvals and GB Select-Direct Try Omniphil Approvals and pick your first £10 worth free. Omniphil are keener than ever to make it worth your while to try their approvals so when you request a selection of their fine approvals – sent to you for 10 days home viewing without obligation – you can pick your first £10 worth free.

There are no strings attached – you can pick £10 worth free at their ticket prices, already heavily discounted off SG catalogue – and return the rest without further obligation. You get £10 worth free.

However, if you spend as little as £12, you'll be able to pick stamps worth £16 in addition to your first £10 worth free – that's £26 for just £12! Plus you'll be entitled to pick £5 worth free off your second selection and £2.50 worth off your third you decide to continue collecting with Omniphil Approvals.

They have been established over 40 years and serve hundreds of collectors worldwide. They have wide stocks of most countries/areas and in particular GB (some countries such as China are already over-subscribed). Omniphil offers the biggest loyalty discount programme in the approvals business. Full details are sent with each selection and there is no obligation to purchase. The service can be cancelled at any time.

Tell them if you collect used and mint, and all the countries you are interested in. This is virtually your last chance this year, so write now for your first £10 worth free to: **Omniphil Home Service, Bulletin Free £10 Offer, PO Box 29, Stroud GL6 6RW.**

For well-priced examples of scarce GB high values catalogued at £50 and over (similar to the competition prizes), write to GB Select Direct, PO Box 99, Market Harborough LE16 8ZR quoting SG numbers, mint or used and condition required for no obligation quotation.

To enter the competition answer the questions below and send, with your name and address, on a postcard or back of an envelope to: October Bulletin Competition, Royal Mail, 22 Finsbury Square, London EC2A 1NL to arrive by 20 November. Entries must be posted separately, multiple entries in one envelope will be disregarded.

- 1 Who designed the 1998 Christmas stamps?
- 2 Where will the Italia '98 exhibition be held?
- 3 Who is Managing Director of The House of Questa?
- 4 Which Scottish post office is situated on a canal towpath?

Answers will be found in this *Bulletin*. The competition is not open to employees, families or agents of Royal Mail or Omniphil/GB Select-Direct •



1st prize George V 1929 Postal Union Congress £1 black, attractive used, repaired corner hence affordable example, cancelled by part oval registered date-stamp, superb colour and impression. SG 438, cat £425. GB Select-Direct selling price £185.

2nd prize QV 1883 10s ultramarine, letters B-F, beautiful appearance, fine Belfast 1892 full cds postmark, slightly off-centre with traces of red registered crayon. SG 183, cat £275, GB Select-Direct price £75.

3rd prize QV 1867 5s rose, letters J-B, excellent colour, average used example, centred NE, plate 1. SG 126, cat £325, GB Select-Direct price £50.

The winners of the July competition were M Laverty of Co Down, G Jones of Cardiff, and J Fleming of Co Kerry, Ireland.

The answers 1) about half a dozen; 2) Tim Hazael; 3) Leif Rasmussen; 4) 1537. Our thanks to all who entered.

Exhibition news

For opening times phone
Richard White: 01450 373457

Catch the Post An exhibition of local postal history is on show at the Hawick Museum, Wilton Park Lodge, Hawick in the Scottish Borders until 1 November. This traces the postal history of the town with over 100 examples of postmarks, letters, envelopes, and parcel postmarks from 1768 to the present. There are two local VR letterboxes on display – a rare Ludlow and one from Shankend near Hawick – and a small reconstructed rural post office with post office paraphernalia used in the 1930s – this was recently found in the attic of a former office near Hawick. Other items on show include an early 19th century coach horn, examples of old postal scales, savings banks and other items ●

Admission to the exhibition will be £3 on opening day, £1 other days.

Opening times

30 September	12.00-19.00
1-3 October	10.30-18.00
4 October	10.30-16.00

Enquiries 0171 490 1005

Autumn Stampex This traditional exhibition is on at the Business Design Centre, Islington, London N1, until 4 October. The entries in the National Competitions, organised by the British Philatelic Trust, will be on view in the 'Village Green' area of the Centre, with a Youth Activities Area at the rear of the hall. Dealers will include many from overseas, and, after a long absence, Stanley Gibbons will be back at Stampex with a large stand in the centre of the hall. Royal Mail will have its 'supermarket' stand (as at Stamp '98 at Wembley in April), and the Guernsey, Isle of Man, and Jersey postal administrations will be present. A special postmark will be applied to mail posted at the Royal Mail stand at the exhibition. Collectors unable to visit the exhibition may send covers, bearing at least 1st class postage, to Special Handstamp Centre, Royal Mail, Mount Pleasant, London EC1A 1BB requesting the Stampex handstamp and stating date(s) required. Covers must be submitted by the date requested ●

Ilsapex '98 opens at the Gallagher Estate Exhibition Centre near Johannesburg on 20 October.

Ilsapex '98 Some 2000 competitive frames, Court of Honour, invited exhibits, dealers and postal administrations will all be housed in one hall, in the first FIP-supported exhibition in South Africa. The exhibition is jointly sponsored by the Society of Israel Philately (Johannesburg) and the South African Philatelic Dealers Association. Sadly the Chairman of Ilsapex, David Stern, died, after a short illness, on 18 July. He worked extremely hard for the success of the exhibition and will be greatly missed. Henk de Lange has taken over as Acting Chairman ●

Admission £3 or free with advance ticket: phone 0800 611 622.

Collect '98 Following the success of the first Collect exhibition last year, Stanley Gibbons are supporting a second exhibition at Olympia, London W14 on 23-25 October. Opening times 12.00-18.00 23rd, 10.00-17.00 24th, 10.00-16.00 25th. There will be over 150 stands selling stamps, coins, models, medals, postcards, phone cards, books, autographs and memorabilia. Material on sale will appeal to specialised collectors and beginners alike ●

Italia '98 This specialised international exhibition of aerophilately, postal history, and thematics opens at the Fiera di Milano (Milan Fair) on 23 October. It is anticipated the exhibition will amount to over 4000 frames

in total. Italia '98 is organised by the Italian Post Office and the Italian Federation of Philatelic Societies. The Milan Fair was the location for the noted 1934 exhibition •

Stamp & Collectables Following on from its Stamp exhibition in Birmingham in 1996, Stanley Gibbons, with support from Royal Mail, is holding a new exhibition at the G-Mex Centre, Manchester on 13-15 November. Opening times 16.00-19.00 13th, 10.00-18.00 14th, 10.00-17.00 15th. There will be some 150 stands catering for collectors of coins, postcards, phone cards, memorabilia as well as stamps. The G-Mex Centre offers good catering facilities and is easily accessible by road and rail •

Admission £3 or free with ticket enclosed with this *Bulletin*. For more tickets phone 0800 611 622.

Brighton & Hove '98 This, the second national exhibition organised by the Association of British Philatelic Societies, will be held at Hove Town Hall, 21-22 November. Displays will cover a wide range of philatelic subjects and include the national thematic, revenue and cinderella stamp competitions promoted respectively by the British Thematic Association, Revenue Society of GB and Cinderella Stamp Club •

For further information see May *Bulletin*, page 267.

Posting boxes 180



THIS MONTH's illustrations are rather different from usual, comprising four stamps featuring letter boxes issued by *An Post*, the Irish Post Office, on 3 September. The stamps feature an Ashworth box of 1855, Saorstát Éireann wall box of 1922, double pillar box of 1899, and Penfold of 1866. A Penfold box in Co Wicklow, Ireland featured here in June 1989.

Post boxes were first introduced in Ireland in 1855, installed in Dublin, Belfast and Ballymena.

None of these 'Ashworth' boxes remain in place today, but a Dublin box dating from 1857 can be seen in the National Museum Dublin (see *Posting Boxes*, September 1978). At Kent Railway Station, Cork, the oldest operational box still stands on its original site, which dates from 1857. After the establishment of the Free State in 1922 post boxes were painted green •

The new stamps are available from the Philatelic Bureau, PO Box 1981, Dublin 1, Ireland. Information supplied by *An Post*.

Postbag

Postage methods I read with interest Mr Howell's letter in June. After collecting generally for many years, I specialised in Commonwealth and then GB. I eventually gave up at decimalisation. I then started to put aside the unpopular perfins and the despised PPIS (printed postage impressions). I have now amassed many thousands of PPIS and entirely agree with Mr Howell's comments that they should be collected as a progression of postal history. Some companies now using PPIS previously used perfins so there is some continuity. His table of various postage methods is interesting in that PPIS are the most frequently used item.

I am fortunate to acquire all the envelopes from two local businesses, one an office furniture factory, the other an insurance underwriters office. I search through these for PPIS, interesting postmarks and remove the surplus stamps for charity. I summarise below the various types received during the past month as a commercial mail comparison to Mr Howell's domestic mail.

Meter impressions form the greatest proportion from both sources whereas PPIS were the sec-

ond greatest from the factory and stamped mail from the office. I hope this is of interest to other readers. KEN DEE, MIDDIX ●

Self-adhesives Having studied the recent self-adhesive definitives, it seems to me that they are indistinguishable from the gummed ones, once they have been affixed to an envelope. As I aim to have copies of self-adhesive stamps in my collection ('uncleaned', but with a paper margin) as well as the gummed ones ('cleaned'), where these are available, I would be very interested to hear if anyone has discovered how one can distinguish the two types. P G JEFFERY, AYLESBURY ●

Dearth of commemoratives The dearth of special commemorative stamps on their incoming mail, reported by your correspondents in June and August – something which I have also noted with my own mail – has a fairly simple explanation, if the experience of this town is anything to go by. With the single exception of the Christmas issue, it is virtually impossible, either in the main or sub post offices, to obtain any special issue beyond two or three days after the date of issue. Counter staff tell me that they only receive a limited allocation of special stamps of each issue which is quickly snapped up. They are then obliged to revert to the dreary Machin definitives.

There was a time when British postage stamps, especially definitives, always bore the words 'Postage and Revenue' or just 'Postage'. Sadly it seems that the issue of stamps, particularly commemoratives, for postage purposes has become a minor consideration. One suspects that, apart from a nominal issue to post offices for postal use, the bulk of each new issue is diverted to philatelic outlets at home and abroad. It is not that special issues are of 'such little interest to the general public' as suggested by Mr Smith (August); it is rather the case that special issues do not seem to be available in sufficient quantities and for long enough for the general public to be able to take a proper interest in them, and to use them on correspondence. R G MARTIN, BEVERLEY ●

	Factory mail		Office mail	
Stamped mail	Number	%	Number	%
Definitives (valued)	97	14	534	33
Country stamps	0	0	21	1
NVI stamps	65	9	180	11
Self-adhesive stamps	0	0	4	0
Special stamps	5	1	43	3
Surcharged	0	0	6	0
Recorded Delivery	2	0	5	0
Total stamped mail	169		793	
Non-stamped mail	Number	%	Number	%
Postal stationery	5	1	14	1
Post paid postmark	25	5	0	0
Meter impression	318	45	701	44
PPI	185	26	90	6
Surcharged	0	0	1	0
Recorded Delivery	0	0	7	0
Total non-stamped mail	533		813	
Total mail	702		1606	

Events

30 September-4 October Autumn Stampex at Business Design Centre, London N1. See page 60.

Enquiries 0171 490 1005

3 October Philatelic Music Circle convention at British Philatelic Centre, 107 Charterhouse Street, London EC1M 6PT. **Enquiries** Ian Summers, 01706 826655

3 October South West Scotland Philatelic Congress, hosted by Ayrshire Phil Soc, at Queen Margaret Academy, Dalmellington Road, Ayr. Displays, etc. **Enquiries** B Keutzer, 01292 283801

10 October Ashford Phil Soc Stamp & Postcard Fair at Norton Knatchbull Grammar school, Hythe Road, Ashford, Kent, 10.00-16.30. **Enquiries** D Todd, The Cottage, Bockhanger Lane, Kennington, Ashford TN24 9BP

11 October Hinckley and District Phil Soc Stamp, Postcard, Coin Fair and Exhibition at St John Ambulance Hall, Brunel Road, Hinckley, 10.00-16.00. Admission free, refreshments, raffle for Penny Black, parking nearby. **Enquiries** C Smith, 26 Orchard Close, Witherley, Atherstone CV9 3LX

11 October Birmingham Stamp & Postal History Fair at National Motorcycle Museum. **Enquiries** 01279 758854

13 October Display The Royal Corps of Transport and Its Predecessors by B Quist to Camberley & District Stamp Club at St Michael's Church Hall, London Road, Camberley, 19.30. **Enquiries** H Capsey, 01344 424984

16-18 October Rail-Mail event at Great Northern Railway Hotel, Peterborough. Hosted by Nene Valley Railway. Attendance must be pre-booked. **Enquiries** B White, Nene Valley Railway, 01780 782854

17-18 October South Coast Stamp & Postal History Fair (Big Stamp) at Town Hall, Church Road, Hove. Admission free. **Enquiries** 01279 758854.

24 October Association of Essex Phil Socs Autumn Rally Stamp Exhibition and Fair at Stanway Village Hall, Villa Road, Stanway, Colchester, 10.30-16.30. Dealers, refreshments, free admission. **Enquiries** D Sapsford, 24 Thurlston Close, Colchester CO4 3HF

24 October Salvation Army Philatelic Circle annual convention and exhibition at Citadel, Gillygate, York, 10.30-17.00. Displays, talks, sales table. Admission free but donations from non-members appreciated. **Enquiries** H Hayes, 01904 764660

23-25 October Collect '98, Olympia, London W14, 12.00-18.00 23rd, 10.00-17.00 24th, 10.00-16.00 25th. 150 stands: stamps, coins, models, postcards, phonecards, memorabilia. Admission £3, free with advance ticket – phone 0800 611 622.

24 October Hampex '98 Hants Fed Convention, Kings School, Winchester

27 October Display GB Used in Malta by G Tapper to Camberley and District Stamp Club at St Michael's Church Hall, London Road, Camberley, 19.30. **Enquiries** H Capsey, 01344 424984

29-31 October London International Stamp & Cover Show at Horticultural Hall 2, Greycoat Street, London SW1. 110 dealers. Open 29th 11.00-19.00, 30th 10.00-18.00, 31st 10.00-17.00. Admission free. **Enquiries** C Rainey 01268 726687

31 October Amersham and District Phil Soc 40th anniversary day at Amersham Community Centre, Chiltern Ave, 10.00-18.00. Dealers, auction (starts 16.00), refreshments, souvenir stamp book in collaboration with Amersham Scout Post on sale. Admission free. **Enquiries** Ian Miller, 01494 773189

31 October Sussex Philatelic Federation Autumn Convention at Masonic Hall, East Ascent, St Leonards on Sea, 10.30-16.45. Dealers, displays, refreshments. Hosted by Hastings & East Sussex Phil Soc, celebrating its 75th anniversary. **Enquiries** L Jones, 0171 776 3629 ●

UPDATED DEFINITIVE AND COUNTRY PRESENTATION PACKS



Revised Low Value Definitive and Country Stamps packs will be available from 20 October.

The Low Value Definitives pack (NO 41) contains 18 stamps – 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 10, 20, 26, 30, 31, 37, 39, 43, 50 and 63p and £1 values printed by De La Rue and the 1st and 2nd class NVI stamps by Walsall Security Printers. All the stamps are printed in gravure, using computer controlled engraving of the cylinders. Price £5.50.

The new Country Stamps pack (NO 42), contains the 12 stamps issued in July 1997 – 20p, 26p, 37p and 63p values for Northern Ireland,

Scotland, and Wales. The stamps are printed in gravure by Walsall Security Printers. The Welsh stamps do not bear the p (pence) value symbol. Price £4.75.

The packs, designed by Sedley Place (Definitives) and Martin Newton (Country issues) and printed by the White Dove Press, complement these ever-popular Machin head stamps.

Available from British Philatelic Bureau, 20 Brandon Street, Edinburgh EH3 5TT or Post Office Counters philatelic outlets.

