

April 1995



Royal Mail

British Philatelic Bulletin

Volume 32. No: 8

The Royal Mail Magazine for Stamp Collectors Price 75p

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British Philatelic Bulletin

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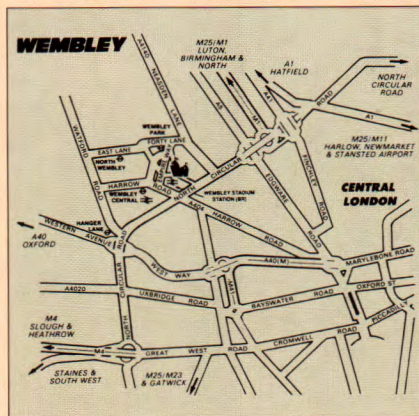
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Stamp '95 Exhibition

Royal Mail hope as many Bulletin readers as possible will attend this new exhibition at the Wembley Exhibition Centre, 27-30 April. Attractions include National Postal Museum display, philatelic sales counter, seminars, charity auction, Childrens play area & treasure hunt, and Design-A-Stamp competition. For free tickets phone 01425 461353



Royal Mail News

Peace & Freedom Stamps

The theme of the Europa Stamps for 1995 is "Peace and Freedom" and stamps on this subject will be issued by all postal administrations in the PostEurop organisation. Royal Mail will issue five stamps on 2 May, the issue date having been brought forward by one week from that originally announced. The five stamps reflect two very different aspects of the theme of Peace and Freedom. Three of the stamps honour two organisations involved in working for peace, the British Red Cross and the United Nations which was formed in 1945. The other two



commemorate the 50th anniversary of the end of the war. The stamps will be available at post offices, the British Philatelic Bureau and Post Office Counters philatelic outlets.

Three stamps feature designs symbolising peace and the work of the British Red Cross (19p) and United Nations (25p, 30p). The 25p and 30p values include the PostEurop's EUROPA symbol. These three stamps are the work of Jean-Michel Folon with the type layout of the

stamps designed by John Gorham.

Two stamps – 19p and 25p – depict the celebration of peace and freedom and Victory night in London. These are the work of John Gorham who designed the 1990 Queen Mother, 1990 Christmas, and 1992 Wintertime sets.

The stamps cover the basic 2nd class inland rate (19p), basic 1st class inland and European Union countries rate (25p) and the basic rate for letters and postcards to European countries not in the EU (30p).

To commemorate the end of the war in Europe over 50 heads of state and government have been invited to official events in London on 6 and 7 May. The events will centre on the theme of half a century of peace and international reconciliation. VE Day itself (8 May) will be a public holiday in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Special events include a concert in Hyde Park, and entertainment in front of Buckingham Palace where crowds gathered on VE night to see George VI and Queen Elizabeth (now The Queen Mother) on the Palace balcony. The exhibition in Hyde Park will be open to the public throughout the Bank Holiday weekend.

The end of the war in the Far East will be marked by events on 19-20 August, coinciding with the 50th anniversary of VJ (Victory in Japan) Day.

In announcing the official events, the Prime Minister, Mr John Major, spoke of the advice taken from the war veterans' organisations in the planning of the commemorative events as tributes to the veterans and all who gave their lives in the defence of freedom.

The British Red Cross Society celebrates its 125th anniversary this year. It was founded in 1870 in response to the Franco-Prussian War and the original Geneva Convention which laid down rules for the treatment of those wounded in battle. In both World Wars, the Society tended the sick and wounded and prisoners of war. Today the Society supports the work of the International Committee of the Red Cross and works closely with other Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, helping in world disasters. Through its 90 UK branches the Red Cross provides valuable services such as first aid training, medical loans and transport. Red Cross Week (6-13 May), the British Red Cross's annual fundraising event, this year coincides with the 50th anniversary of VE Day.

Stamps commemorating the International Red Cross Centenary Congress were issued by the



British Post Office in 1963 (SG 642/4).

The United Nations is a voluntary association of states that now has some 184 members – dedicated to maintain international peace and to solving problems through co-operation. In recent times the UN's work in the former Yugoslavia has been much in the news. The organisation evolved from a peace plan announced by President Roosevelt and Winston Churchill in August 1941. The UN Charter was signed in June 1945 at the end of a conference held in San Francisco. The organisation formally came into existence on 24 October 1945, annually commemorated as UN Day. The Executive Committee of the UN Preparatory Commission met at Church House, London in 1945, and in January/February 1946 the first meeting of the General Assembly was held at Central Hall, Westminster – known to older collectors as the venue for Stampex.

Stamps marking the 20th anniversary of the UN were issued by the Post Office in 1965 (SG681/2). The UN Postal Administration issues its own stamps for use on mail from its New York, Geneva and Vienna offices. Special issues this year mark the 50th anniversary. The Universal Postal Union, which co-ordinates international postal services, has been a specialised agency of the UN since 1947.

The Designers

Jean-Michel Folon is a world-famous artist, born in Belgium and now living in France. His father, a wholesale dealer in paper, wanted him to become an architect but Jean-Michel preferred to be an artist and left the Ecole Saint-Luc in Brussels and hitched to Paris with his drawing materials. In Paris he drew buildings and painted in watercolours (never oils) before working on posters for Olivetti, and front covers for *Time* and *New Yorker* magazines. His designs sometimes included a "little man" with whom, over the years, Folon has come to identify. He regards his work as very autobiographical.

Folon designed the official symbol for the bicentenary of the French Revolution, and for French television created a nightly 100-second sequence of little blue-hatted men flying through the sky, saying "Bonsoir". When it was taken off after eight years, thousands of children refused to go to bed until they had seen the blue men flying away! Folon describes himself as a "visualiser" rather than a painter, engraver or poster designer. As well as the Royal Mail 1991 Europe in Space stamps (SG 1560/3), he has also

designed issues for Belgium and France.

John Gorham was born in Uxbridge in 1937. He disliked school, apart from digging the school garden! After studies at Harrow College of Art, he worked as an apprentice in a silk-screen company, as a graphic designer for the *Daily Mirror*, and in the marketing department of *The Sunday Times*. Since 1968 he has run his own design studio and in the late 1970s and early 1980s taught at the London Royal College of Art. In 1991 he was granted the Silver award by the European Art Directors Club and in 1993 received the prestigious President's award of the Design & Art Director's Association of Great Britain.

His work has been described as "very English, humble not flashy, honest, and approachable... He wields personal craft skills, not a big team." Amongst his many acclaimed designs is the Lion chocolate bar. John Gorham is largely self-taught, his keen observation of design outweighing his lack of formal training. His output includes packaging design, posters, book design, film graphics, and direct mail as well as postage stamps. His involvement with Royal Mail began with design of the type layout for the 1987 Studio Pottery and 1990 RSPCA stamps which used photographs by the late Tony Evans. John designed the 1990 Queen Mother and Christmas issues, the latter using illustrations by Andrew Davidson. He has designed several presentation packs and first day covers, most recently the 1994 D-Day issue.

Technical Details

<i>Printers:</i> Harrison & Sons Ltd
<i>Process:</i> Photogravure
<i>Size:</i> 35 x 37mm
<i>Sheets:</i> 100
<i>Perforation:</i> 15 x 14
<i>Phosphor:</i> 19p (both) - 1 phosphor band 25p (both) & 30p - 2 phosphor bands
<i>Paper:</i> OBA free (OBA = Optical Brightening Agent)
<i>Gum:</i> PVA Dextrin

First Day Facilities

Unstamped first day cover envelopes will be available from main post offices, the British Philatelic Bureau and Post Office Counters philatelic outlets around a week before 2 May, price 25p.

The Bureau will provide a first day cover

service – collectors may order the Royal Mail cover bearing the stamps, cancelled with pictorial “First Day of Issue” postmarks of the Bureau or London SW, price £1.80 (including VAT) to UK addresses, £1.54 to overseas addresses (no VAT). Orders must be received at the Bureau by 2 May 1995.

Collectors may send their own stamped covers on 2 May for the pictorial cancels to: British Philatelic Bureau, 20 Brandon Street, EDINBURGH EH3 5TT or Special Handstamp Centre, Royal Mail, 53 Nine Elms Lane, LONDON SW8 5BB (London SW postmark). Please endorse the outer envelope “FD9509” (Bureau), or “FD9510” (London SW).

Collectors can post cover in First Day Posting Boxes at most main post offices to receive local, non-pictorial “First Day of Issue” handstamps.

Details of sponsored special handstamps will be announced in the *British Postmark Bulletin* (Royal Mail’s magazine for postmark collectors), which is available on subscription from the British Philatelic Bureau: £10 UK/Europe; £21.75 Rest of World (Airmail).

Collectors may affix just the 19p Peace & Freedom stamps to covers to receive all special cancels (“First Day of Issue”, sponsored and philatelic counters), in use on 2 May. The minimum 1st class rule is suspended for the day as the set includes 2nd class rate stamps; this concession applies only to the 19p Peace & Freedom stamps; covers bearing other than Peace & Freedom stamps are subject to the 1st class rule.

Presentation Pack and Stamp Cards

The pack (price £1.53) and stamp cards (25p each) will be available from the Bureau, Post Office Counters philatelic outlets and main post offices.

New Printings of High Value Stamps

New printings of all four Castle stamps were made last year and are now in general circulation. Although Royal Mail does not regard them as new stamps, it recognises that they are of interest to specialist collectors. The first to go into distribution was the £5 (Windsor Castle) value and enlarged illustrations of the old and new printings were published in the October 1994 *Bulletin* (page 37).

For the benefit of collectors who want to tell the different printings apart, we now publish enlarged illustrations of the remaining three values. The main difference can be seen in the



*Top. 1992 printing
Below. 1994 Printing*





Queen's head which now has a cellular rather than a cross-hatched appearance. Other differences in the castles on the new printings are as follows:

£1 - omission of small "white" window below first window at left on the castle tower; less lines on the small boat alongside the launch at right; more prominent windows on second boat from left.

£1.50 - darker windows (especially upper left) on side of building at left; windows less distinct on main tower. Overall appearance is a darker, almost "plum" shade compared to the "pink" of the earlier printing.

£2 - much darker cross-hatching on small turret at bottom right; dark window on second turret from right. Overall the appearance is rather darker, a more "indigo" blue than the previous printing.

In general the castles on the new printing are sharper - the reason for the change being to "enhance" the overall appearance of the stamp. The captioning too is generally sharper.

All four stamps from the new printings are available to specialist collectors who want them from the British Philatelic Bureau, quoting order codes FS013 (£1), FS153 (£1.50), FS023 (£2) and FS053 (£5). As these are not regarded as new

stamps, they are not being included on the Bureau's stock list.

Proposed Change to Presentation Packs

The general format of our presentation pack has remained the same for over 30 years since the Shakespeare Festival issue of April 1964. Stamps are enclosed in transparent strips on a black card which, with an information "brochure" is inserted in a polythene sleeve. Royal Mail are currently considering a new design, similar to that used by Australia Post. Here the stamps are mounted behind a transparent protective covering, all forming part of a single unit, four page card folder. As with the British packs information is given about the subject of the stamps. The Australian packs, which measure 202 x 120mm when closed, are in many ways easier for collectors to handle; the pack does not have to be taken apart in order to read the descriptive text. The stamps being "encapsulated" are less likely to get lost or damaged than stamps in the traditional British pack.

Before any decision is taken we should like to hear the views of Bulletin readers who regularly purchase our packs. Please write to: Steve Griffiths, Royal Mail National, 22 Finsbury Square, LONDON EC2A 1NL



National Postal Museum News

The Museum's current special exhibition - "Addressing Postcodes" will close on 21 April. Collectors of postal mechanisation material are advised to visit the exhibition which they will find of considerable interest. A report on the

exhibition was published here in July 1994.

The Museum's galleries will be closed from 22 April to 8 May inclusive for construction of the next special exhibition – "Victorian Posts" which opens on 9 May. The Museum shop will, however, be open on 5 May for the sale of two new sets of postcards – five associated with the new exhibition, and four featuring material from the Freddie Mercury Collection, a major NPM attraction. The cards will also be available by mail order from: British Philatelic Bureau, 20 Brandon Street, EDINBURGH EH3 5TT, price £1.25 per set (Victorian Posts), £1 (Freddie Mercury).

Three of the Freddie Mercury cards feature album pages from his collection showing his artistic layout of the stamps, one in the form of the letter "F". The fourth card features his "Blue Album" together with some of the album pages.

Two special handstamp will be in use on 5 May, in addition to the NPM's normal Maltese Cross cancel. Covers/cards to receive these cancels can be handed in at the shop or sent to: Special Handstamp Centre, Royal Mail, Mount Pleasant, Farringdon Road, LONDON EC1A 1BB. Please state clearly which cancel(s) required – Victorian Posts, Freddie Mercury, or Maltese Cross.

The Museum has now received registration sheets of the new 25p definitive 2 bands cylinder 5 dot and no dot. These registration sheets can be examined by prior arrangement.

The NPM, situated in King Edward Street, LONDON EC1A 1LP, a short walk from St Paul's Cathedral and underground station, is open Monday-Friday 9.30-16.30. Admission free.

Tony Gammons Retires from NPM

Many *Bulletin* readers will know the name Tony Gammons as a contributor to this magazine. Tony is also well-known to many visitors to the National Postal Museum and Post Office Archives. After 26 years in The Post Office, Tony has now decided that he wants more time to pursue his many interests and will "retire" on 8 April. Tony joined the staff of the Museum in 1977 and has been Exhibitions Officer since 1979. Over the years he has researched and put together many of the Museum's most popular special exhibitions, for example "Exhibitions of London, 1851-1951" (1983); "Post Office at War" (1984); "Speed, Regularity and Security" (1984/5); "Railways and the Post" (1988/9); "The Atlantic Ocean" (1989); "Postal Reform and the Penny Black" (1990/1); "Stamping the Mail" (1991); and "People in the Post" (1992). His last

special exhibition "Victorian Posts" opens at the Museum on 9 May.

Tony's contributions to this *Bulletin* are too numerous to list. Especially noteworthy were five articles on "The Early Days of the Postal Service", published in 1986 and subsequently reprinted in booklet form. Although he would regard himself as primarily a postal historian (i.e. a student of Post Office history), rather than a philatelist, Tony has, none-the-less, contributed many useful articles of a strictly philatelic nature – for example on the 1887 definitives (*Bulletin* March & April 1987) and 1955 Castle High Values (October 1986). The latter was written with his wife, better known as Jean Farrugia, MBE, the Post Office's Chief Archivist. Between them they have an almost unrivalled knowledge of Post Office history and sources of information.

Jean is not retiring yet and Tony intends spending some time in the Archives pursuing various lines of research. The history of Postal Uniforms is one "pet project" he has in mind – hopefully a book on the subject will be the end result. In recent years Tony and Jean have given many talks to local societies, philatelic and otherwise, sharing their knowledge and enthusiasm. Both have taken an active role in the Association of Friends of the NPM, Tony giving talks and contributing to the Association's journal, *Cross Post*. Tony has also supplied feature articles for the Museum's annual report (*The Philatelic Year*, 1988-91; *Review*, 1992-3), and was himself featured, in Victorian engineer's costume, working a replica "Pearson Hill" postmarking machine of 1857 on the front cover of 1991 *Philatelic Year*.

Between preparing exhibitions and writing articles, he has found time to research some of the Museum's postcard series and to design many of the special handstamps used at the Museum on the day of issue of new stamps/postcards.

I hope in "retirement" Tony will find time for some of his other interests, not least good food, fine wine and travel. During the time I worked with him at the Museum I learned a great deal from him on these subjects, as well as about postal history. Like me, he and Jean have great affection for all things Scottish and I look forward to hearing about their future trips "north of the border" (Don't forget the postcard, Tony). On behalf of his colleagues in Royal Mail, and I am sure many *Bulletin* readers, I wish him a happy, if busy, "retirement".

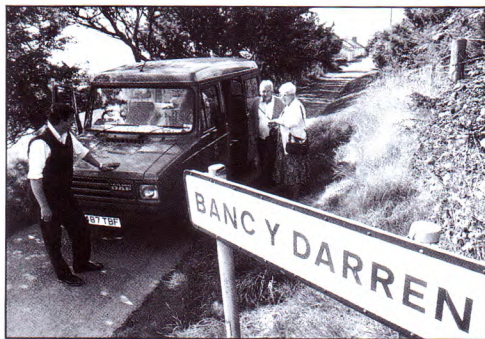
John Holman

Postbus News

A new postbus service, between Haywards Heath and Balcombe, Sussex was introduced by Royal Mail's South East Division on 13 March 1995. A special cover was produced and announced in last month's *Commemorative Covers Review*. Some may still be available – enquiries to Jack Wahlberg, Postbus Manager, Royal Mail South East, Redstone Hill, REDHILL RH1 1AA, Tel. 0737 777019.

Six postcards showing South East postbuses are in preparation, the first two will be issued on 11 April. Price per pair £1 unused, £2.30 with first day cancel and postbus cachet. Orders/enquiries to Mr Wahlberg, address above.

Postbuses, which carry passengers along with the mail were first introduced in 1967. There are now over 180 routes in the UK; the buses covering over 3.5 million miles and carrying some 120,000 passengers each year. Timetables for individual routes in England and Wales are available from local Royal Mail Customer Service Centres. Guide booklets to English & Welsh and Scottish postbus services are available free from The Post Office Public Affairs Unit, 130 Old Street, LONDON EC1V 9PQ. These include maps, photographs and details of places en route.



Postbus on the Aberystwyth-Cymerfryn route in Wales (see November 1994 Bulletin, page 64)

Revised Surcharge System

In the May 1994 *Bulletin* we mentioned that various systems of collecting unpaid or underpaid postage were being trialled in different parts of the country. A decision has now been reached for a new national system. Postmen will leave a card, similar to that notifying customers that an item could not be delivered, telling the addressee that an unpaid/underpaid letter is being held at the local delivery office. The addressee then has a choice

to either affix stamps of the appropriate amount of the postage deficiency to the card which is returned to the delivery office (the underpaid letter will then be delivered on the next round), or, alternatively, the addressee can call at the delivery office, pay the deficiency in cash and collect the mail. This system has been successfully trialled in Royal Mail's North East and Anglia Divisions.

The new surcharge system, which will only apply to consumer customers, will be operating throughout the country by April. Business customers will continue to be called on by the postman and To Pay labels may continue to be operated in those areas that currently use them. Consumer customers may request this attendance call approach rather than the card system if they wish, although this will only be a means of obtaining To Pay labels in areas retaining their use for surcharging.

This will mean, therefore, the end of To Pay labels on underpaid mail for consumers in those areas where To Pay labels are still in use, although they will continue to be used on packages where Customers/VAT charges are collected by Royal Mail on behalf of HM Custom & Excise in these areas.

Scottish Aerogramme

Please note that the illustration of the Glasgow School of Art aerogramme in the February *Bulletin* was of a proof. The issued aerogramme will show the Scottish, not the English, crown in the Royal Mail International logo. The aerogramme goes on sale at post offices in Scotland, the Bureau and philatelic outlets on 4 April, price 45p.

The aerogramme was designed by Michael Healey, not Richard Smith as stated in the February and March Bulletins. Mr Smith was the designer of the 1994 Robert Louis Stevenson aerogramme. We regret any confusion caused.

Special Stamps – Colours

The plate/cylinder numbers and colours of recent issues are as follows:

Cats

19p 1A (new blue) 1A (greenish-yellow) 1A (magenta) 1A (black) 1A (brown-red)

25p 1A (new blue) 1A (greenish-yellow) 1A (magenta) 1A (black) 1A (dull yellow green)

30p 1A (new blue) 1A (greenish-yellow) 1A (magenta) 1A (black) 1A (yellow-brown)

35p 1A (new blue) 1A (greenish-yellow) 1A (magenta) 1A (black) 1A (yellow)

41p 1A (new blue) 1A (greenish-yellow) 1A (magenta) 1A (black) 1A (reddish-orange)

The 19p, 25p, 30p and 41p are also reported from plates 2A2A2A2A2A.

Springtime

19p P16 (phosphor) 2A (silver) 1B (greenish yellow) 1C (magenta) 1D (green) 1E (grey-black)

25p P17 (phosphor) 1A (silver) 1B (greenish yellow) 1C (magenta) 1D (new blue) 1E (black)

30p P17 (phosphor) 1A (silver) 1B (greenish yellow) 2C (magenta) 1D (new blue) 1E (black)

35p P17 (phosphor) 1A (silver) 1B (greenish yellow) 1C (magenta) 1D (new blue) 1E (black)

41p P17 (phosphor) 1A (silver) 1B (greenish yellow) 1C (magenta) 1D (new blue) 1E (blue-green) 2F (black)

National Trust

19p P18 (phosphor) 2A (grey-green) 1B (stone) 1C (grey-brown) 1D (grey-black) 1E (gold)

25p P20 (phosphor) 2A (grey-green) 1B (greenish yellow) 1C (magenta) 1D (new blue) 1E (gold) 1F (black)

30p 1A (grey-green) 1B (greenish yellow) 1C (magenta) 1D (new blue) 1E (gold) 1F (black) 1G (slate-black)

35p P20 (phosphor) 2A (grey-green) 2B (greenish yellow) 1C (magenta) 1D (blue) 1E (gold) 1F (black)

41p 1A (grey-green) 1B (greenish yellow) 1C (bright green) 1D (slate-green) 1E (gold) 1F (blackish brown) 1G (black)

London North Special Handstamp Centre

The London North SHC is moving from King Edward Street to Mount Pleasant. The Centre will be operative from 3 April at: Special Handstamp Centre, Royal Mail Mount Pleasant, Room 139 LOB, Farringdon Road, LONDON EC1A 1BB, Tel. 0171-239 2671. The London South SHC will continue to operate from 53 Nine Elms Lane, LONDON SW8 5BB. The two SHCs will be merged at a date yet to be finalised.

Machin Definitive Colours

Please note the following amendments to J K Bird's listing in the February *Bulletin* (page 184): (1) The colour of the 5p should read ash (not ask) pink, (2) note 3 also applies to the 15p bright blue stamp.

Definitive Update

The 2p definitive by Enschedé, with elliptical

perforations on the vertical sides, will be available from the British Philatelic Bureau and Post Office Counters philatelic outlets from 11 April. The stamp will go on sale at post offices as stocks of the current (Harrison) printing are exhausted. Royal Mail does not regard it as a new stamp so it will not qualify, used alone or with National Trust stamps, for "First Day of Issue" postmarks in use on 11 April, day of issue of the NT stamps. Collectors may service covers bearing the new 2p stamp to receive Philatelic Counter or sponsored handstamps in use on 11 April. Such covers must bear stamps to the minimum 1st class rate (25p).

A new £2.50 book (10 x 1st class NVI) will be available from branches of W H Smith from 24 April. It will contain a voucher for 50p off purchases of W H Smith stationery. Please note this book will not be available from the Bureau and philatelic outlets until 3 October. The book has been printed by Walsall and contains stamps with 2 phosphor bands.

The 25p definitive printed by Harrisons with 2 phosphor bands will be available in coils (rolls) of 500 and 1000 from 16 May. Complete coils, singles or strips will be available from the Bureau and philatelic outlets. No first day facilities will be provided.

Stamp Master

Royal Mail and Philatelic Software Ltd regret that for the present they are unable to offer an Apple-Macintosh version of the StampMaster computer catalogue program. We regret any disappointment caused. For details of StampMaster see the inside front cover and page 176 of February *Bulletin*. StampMaster is available from the British Philatelic Bureau; enquiries to Philatelic Software Ltd on 01992-892729.

Withdrawal of Self-Adhesive Stamp Book

Royal Mail's first self-adhesive stamp book was officially taken off trial last year but remains available from the British Philatelic Bureau and Post Office Counters philatelic outlets until close of business on Friday 28 April 1995. This item has not met the exacting standards set by Royal Mail for its products.

As an exceptional service to philatelists, the stamp book and pack will stay on sale at the Royal Mail stand at the Stamp '95 exhibition until the exhibition closes on Sunday 30 April. This will be the last chance for collectors to buy the book from a Royal Mail source.

Stamp Scene

Stamp '95

This new exhibition – supported by Stanley Gibbons and Royal Mail – opens at the Wembley Exhibition Centre at Noon on 27 April. The exhibition continues until 30 April. Opening times are:

27 April 12.00-20.00
28 April 10.30-19.00
29 April 10.30-19.00
30 April 10.30-17.00

Free Admission Tickets

There has been considerable collector interest in this show – by mid-January over 10,000 requests for complimentary tickets had been received. Admission to the exhibition will be free but for advance tickets contact the Stamp '95 Hotline on 01425 461353 or write to: Stamp '95, 5 Parkside, Christchurch Road, RINGWOOD, Hants, BH24 3SH.

The ticket includes four pages of useful information on the exhibition – opening times, advice on getting to Wembley and details of the many features at the exhibition. A useful reminder of what's on offer – to read on your way to the exhibition.

Exhibition Catalogue

Visitors will receive a complimentary copy of the exhibition catalogue – a high quality A5 format handbook which will guide you round the show and prove useful afterwards in providing a directory of standholders, societies and other helpful associations. The catalogue will include many hints and tips for new collectors, quizzes and cartoons for younger visitors, also reviews on some of the valuable collections on show for the more experienced collector. The catalogue will include a limited edition commemorative black print of the 1925 Wembley British Empire Exhibition stamp.

Charity Stamp Auction

On 28 April Stanley Gibbons Auctions will conduct an auction of stamps, postal memorabilia and other collectables during a VIP and celebrity reception. The entire proceeds will go to The Children's Society. Late lots for this charity auction can be accepted up to 25 April.

Readers who wish to donate material should contact David Crocker, Ian Hunter or Philip Newby at Stanley Gibbons Auctions, Tel. 0171 836 8444.

Competitions

Open to all visitors will be a free prize draw with a first prize of an all expenses paid trip for two people to the Singapore '95 international stamp exhibition (1-10 September 1995).

There will also be a Royal Mail "Design-A-Stamp" competition aimed at younger visitors – entries can be computer generated or hand-drawn design. Judging will take place on the final day. This competition will be run in association with stamp printers, The House of Questa, who will have a presence on the Royal Mail stand.

Exhibition Souvenirs

A special exhibition handstamp will be applied to all mail posted at Stamp '95. For collectors unable to attend, a reposting service will be available. Covers bearing at least the 1st class rate (25p) or appropriate overseas rate should be sent to: Special Handstamp Centre, Royal Mail, Mount Pleasant, LONDON EC1A 1BB. Please state that Stamp '95 handstamp is required and the date(s) required.

A number of overseas postal administrations will be producing exclusive commemorative material for the show, including the Hong Kong Post Office which will have a limited edition first day cover. A model van bearing the Stamp '95 logo will be on sale at the exhibition. This is already available – details were published in the February *Bulletin* (page 179).

Seminars

A series of seminars is being held throughout the exhibition

"The National Philatelic Collections" – by David Beech of the British Library

"How It All Started – The Life & Times of Rowland Hill" by Tony Gammons of the National Postal Museum

"Beginning A Collection" by Lionel Jones (NPM) and John Holman (philatelic writer)

"New & Special Issues" by John Bliss & Rosena Robson of Royal Mail

"Collecting by Theme" by Franceska Rapkin, Margaret Morris, Dr Jean Alexander, and Graham Winters of the British Thematic Association

"Stamp Design & Printing Process" by staff of The House of Questa

"Specialised Collecting" by Tony Buckingham (on First Day Covers), Victor Short (Philatelic Appliances & History), Richard Payne (The History of Perkins Bacon) and by members of the Friends of the National Postal Museum (subject to be announced).

Visitors will be able to book for the seminars on arrival at the exhibition. The seminars will be held in an 80-seater auditorium, and last between 20 and 40 minutes.

A daily valuation service will be available from a team of specialists.

Attractions for Young Visitors

Stamp '95 will have many attractions for young people including a treasure hunt. Each young visitor will receive a goody bag containing a few of the essential items to start collecting.

Exhibits & Displays

On show will be a number of interesting displays by the Exhibitions Study Group, the National Postal Museum, and David Harrop. The NPM display will take visitors back in time with an illustrated history of the Penny Black, and into the future with StampMaster - a computerised catalogue of British stamps. Stamps from the Freddie Mercury collection will be on show.

David Harrop will show part of his extensive collection of postal memorabilia, under the title "From Post Boy to Air Mail". David's previous displays at Stampex, museums and country events have proved very popular. Peter Jennings will be showing part of his collection of aerogrammes and related material. Peter won a major award at EurApex 1993, is author of *Aerogrammes* (published 1972) and in this *Bulletin* writes on the 50th anniversary of the Forces Letter.

Rare Stamps of the World

An exhibition under this title is to be held at Claridges, London on 6-8 July. It has been conceived and organised by some of the leading British professional philatelists "to bring together the very best, the most sought-after pieces known to philately in a relaxed, non-competitive environment." The organisers comprise: Amateur Collector Ltd, Ritchie Bodily, Carmichael & Todd, Christie's Robson Lowe, Euro-Yu Stamp Collecting, Harmers of London, Brian Moorhouse, John Taylor, Argyll Etkin Ltd, David Brandon, Michael Chipperfield, Trevor Davis, Stanley Gibbons Ltd, W E Lea Ltd, and Sotheby's. The exhibition

will be open 12.00-18.00 on 6 July, 10.00-20.00 on 7 July and 10.00-18.00 on 8 July. Admission to this prestige exhibition will be £10 including a souvenir catalogue which is likely to become a collectors' item in its own right.

Cross Fertilisation of Ideas - MIDPEX '95

What is considered by its organisers to be the first exhibition and stamp fair of its kind in the UK, MIDPEX '95 will bring together some 40 specialist societies and 35 dealers, the latter catering for all philatelic interests.

The societies will be providing 4000 sheets of philatelic and postal history material, and members will be available to talk about covers and stamps with visitors, who can browse through wide-ranging displays. They will thereby have the opportunity to discover useful aspects about their own collecting areas that they may not hitherto have considered as being within their orbit.

Organised jointly by the Hungarian Philatelic Society of GB and the Midland Philatelic Federation, with support from British Philatelic Trust and the Association of British Philatelic Societies, MIDPEX '95 will be open 10am until 5pm on Saturday 10 June 1995, at the Midland Sports Centre for the Disabled, Cromwell Lane, Tile Hill, Coventry. The Centre provides free car parking, and is easily accessible from the M1, M40, M42 or the M6. Admission free.

Tile Hill railway station, on the main London (Euston) West Coast Route, is about 100 yards from the Sports Centre. Visitors travelling by rail should change at Coventry or Birmingham stations to the local half-hourly service. Visitors travelling over longer distances will find easy connection between Birmingham Airport and Birmingham (International) railway station.

Those wishing to stay overnight, or make a long weekend of it, will find accommodation in all price ranges within easy reach. The Midland Sports Centre has bar and refreshment facilities. MIDPEX '95 is organising an Open Forum for all specialist societies, some of whom will be holding their own meetings during the day. In view of the unique nature of the event, the organisers believe that MIDPEX '95 will be the philatelic event of the year outside London, and look forward to meeting collectors and specialists from all over the country. Make a date in your diary now!

Contact addresses: Secretary, Cloudshill Cottage, High Street, Shutford, BANBURY, Oxon OX15 6PQ, Tel: 0295 780225 or Chairman, 36 Beasley

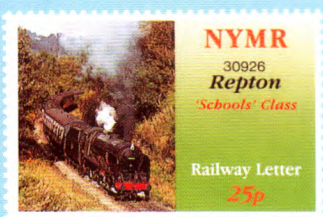
Grove, Great Barr, BIRMINGHAM B43 7HG, Tel. 0121-360 0704

Railway Letter Stamps

The North Yorkshire Moors Railway issued a new 25p railway letter stamp on 24 March showing Schools class locomotive No 30926 "Repton". The stamp is based on a design by Martyn Fry using a photograph of "Repton" by Peter Doel and artwork by The Moors Studio. Printing, in sheets of eight, was by Walsall Security Printers.

A further 25p stamp will be issued on 2 May to commemorate the 50th anniversary of VE Day. This coincides with the issue of Royal Mail's Peace & Freedom stamps. The NYMR stamp will feature an ex War Department steam locomotive. Printing again in sheets of eight by Walsall. Two further issues are expected later in the year – details to be announced.

NYMR stamps are available unused at face value plus postage. First day covers are produced for each new issue and also serviced, to order, on the day of issue of each new Royal Mail set of special stamps. For details send a stamped addressed envelope or international reply coupon to: Mrs M Atkins, 5 Tiber View, Brinsworth, ROTHERHAM, S. Yorkshire, S60 5EA.



The Nene Valley Railway issued a new 25p stamp showing Standard Class 5 "City of Peterborough" on 14 March. Three new 25p stamps showing locomotives in a "shed scene" will be issued on 2 May, printed horizontally ten to a sheet. The stamps are all printed in sheets of

ten. Available at face value plus postage from: Nene Valley Railway, Wansford Station, Stibbington, PETERBOROUGH PE8 6LR.

The NVR and NYMR are amongst a number of independent railways which operate a Railway Letter Service under an agreement with Royal Mail.

Royal Coat of Arms from Jersey

Readers may be interested in an attractive new £4 definitive stamp from Jersey which reproduces the Royal Arms of King George VI. These Arms, which are to be seen above the Bailiff's entrance to the recently redorated States' Building in St Helier, were unveiled by HM The Queen when she visited Jersey in 1957. The stamp, issued on 24 January 1995, was printed by The House of Questa Ltd in sheets of 10. It is available from the Jersey Philatelic Bureau, PO Box 304, JERSEY, Channel Islands, JE1 1AB, or from stamp dealers.



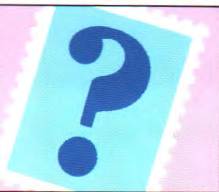
New Keeper of Royal Philatelic Collection

Mr John B Marriott, CVO, RDP will be retiring as Keeper of the Royal Philatelic Collection after 26 years in September. Mr Marriott, a noted collector, especially of Trinidad, signed the Roll of Distinguished Philatelists in 1972 and was President of the Royal Philatelic Society, London, 1983-86.

HM The Queen has appointed Mr Charles W Goodwyn, LLB, FRPSL as the new Keeper. Mr Goodwyn, a chartered surveyor by profession, is a noted collector of China. He was elected Fellow of the Royal in 1975, and served as Hon. Secretary of the Society 1982-90, Vice President 1990-92 and President 1992-94. Mr Goodwyn was born in 1934 and is married with four children.

Competition

SPONSORED BY:
AVON MIXTURES



Win a mint Queen Victoria 1883 10s.

This month's competition is sponsored by AVON MIXTURES, leading dealers supplying WORLDWIDE OFF-PAPER MIXTURES for collectors to pick from. The prizes, supplied by Avon Mixtures comprise:

* 1st prize: Great Britain Queen Victoria 1883 10s., an original gum example with traces of vertical gum crease, well centred, fresh and lovely appearance. SG 183, catalogued £750.

* 2nd prize: GB 1840 1d black plate 6, lettered GL, a very fine four margined example cancelled by vertical complete red Maltese Cross. SG catalogued £150.

* 3rd prize: Canada 1938 \$1 violet "Chateau", very fresh mint, well centred. SG 367, catalogued £65.

* 4th prize: Two prizes of collections of approx 500 different stamps of mainly older GERMANY. Retail up to £25 each.

Introducing AVON MIXTURES

Question: What costs as little as 2p each and take the next one free?

Answer: Collecting world stamps with Avon world Mixtures.

Can you think of anything more satisfying and rewarding that can be done on the dining table and costs so little? Although Avon stress their mixtures are unsuitable for specialists, apparently few collectors can resist. Over 33,000 orders supplied would seem to indicate that collectors really do approve of sorting through Avon World Mixtures.

Apparently it's the fun of sorting through a big bag of over 2000 assorted off-paper worldwide stamps, including thematics, combined with the fact that all stamps are offered regardless of catalogue value.

Avon's often imitated value for money (simple 2p each or free) concept allows the collector to concentrate on the stamps, and on what he or she might find, rather than count the cost.

And have they found anything? The company has evidence of literally hundreds of finds

ranging from curios to a classic Canada Cartier catalogued at £1100. Not bad for 2p or free!

Although the minimum purchase of £5 plus 75p post & packing (UK clients) enables the collector to pick 250 stamps at 2p each plus up to a further 250 free – DON'T send them any money... now *Bulletin* subscribers can view a bag on approval without prepayment or obligation, paying only if they select stamps and return the bag to AVON MIXTURES.

And they are offering a free gift of 100 different beautiful Russian thematics worth £2.50, yours to keep whatever you decide. Write now.

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To enter the competition answer the questions below and send, with your name and address, on a postcard or back of an envelope to: April Bulletin Competition, Royal Mail, 22 Finsbury Square, LONDON EC2A 1NL to arrive by 26 May. You may submit as many entries as you like but each must be posted separately; multiple entries in one envelope will be disregarded.

1. Where did the UN General assembly meet in January/February 1946?
2. Who describes himself as a "visualiser"?
3. Which company printed the Peace & Freedom stamps?
4. Where is "Stamp '95" exhibition being held?
5. In which year was the "Forces Letter" introduced?

The answers will be found in this *Bulletin*. The competition is not open to employees, their families and agents, of Royal Mail or Avon Mixtures.

The winners of the January competition were: Mrs S Jones of Cornwall (GB Queen Victoria 2s); I Gould of Middlesex (Australia 5s Kangaroo); C Chuah of Malaysia (Australia George VI 3d); and P Bowers of Berkshire (Canada George VI \$1). All prizes were donated by Omniphil Approvals.

The answers were: 1. Violette Szabo; 2. Falkirk; 3. General Postal Union; 4. £2.8 billion; 5. 1966.

Our thanks to all who entered.

The First British Sorting Machines

Part 2: Single Position Machine

DOUGLAS N MUIR *Curator, Philately National Postal Museum*

The idea of a smaller machine to sort letters arose from long-term research into coding marks, either fluorescent or phosphorescent. In 1951 a study group looking into this reported that a smaller machine than the interim machine, of less complicated construction, could be used to sort letters to which a code had been applied. This would obviate the problems of aggregation from multiple sorting positions and the need for large and complex control systems very susceptible to error. A single operator would sort into his own set of 120 boxes. This was a big change to all the thinking up to that time, but it was recognised that a smaller machine could be more useful in smaller offices.

Development took place over a number of years at the research centre at Dollis Hill. It was eventually moved to the Postal Engineering Development Unit at Mount Pleasant on 1 February 1954 and tests began with live mail on the same day. However, faults developed quickly and it was returned to Dollis Hill for the replacement of a large number of small parts.

Bath was about the smallest type of office at which the installation of a letter sorting machine would be an economic proposition and so it was chosen as a site for trials. Before field trials could

proceed slowly. However, exhaustive sorting trials were carried out at Mount Pleasant, during July 1955 and in the light of the results it was decided that the machine could be tried out experimentally in a sorting office. The machine was accordingly transferred to Bath sorting office for field trials commencing on 2 October, 1955.

The Bath Trials

At Bath the machine was used for outward sorting only with 120 selections and the trial was concluded on 26 May 1956. Training of five Postmen, Higher Grade had begun on 2 August, 1955. No operator identification device was used though this was incorporated when the machine

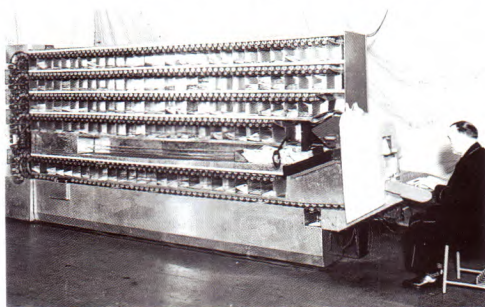


SPLSM on trial at Southampton in 1957, with prototype segregator and the first ALF.

was moved to Southampton.

The sorting plan comprised the manual primary sorting, the London South and East road and the North road, excluding Scotland. Each selection was given a two-letter code as with the interim machine. It was found that similarity between a place-name and the code was not essential – of more value was simplicity of keying.

The machine was then installed in the Southampton sorting office on 19 October 1956 and when the necessary training arrangements had been completed it was used experimentally for both outward and inward sorting. The experiment was interrupted twice, the first time to return to the manufacturers for 10 weeks over the Christmas period.



Trial SPLSM at Mount Pleasant, 1955.

be carried out, however, the prototype machine went to and fro between Dollis Hill and Mount Pleasant to eliminate various faults.

Work on the single position letter sorting machine ("Elsie" as it was popularly known; SPLSM to the more technically minded) had

Out of the Arc...

Curiosities from the Post Office Archives

10. Rocket Mail

The first experiments for carrying mail by rocket in England were tried by a 26 year old German inventor, Gerhard Zucker. The rocket was fired on the Sussex Downs near Rottingdean at dawn on 6 June 1934. It carried over 1000 letters each bearing a special 'rocket stamp', with six of the letters being addressed to the King. The rocket landed with little damage after a curved flight of about half a mile. The letters from this unofficial experiment were then taken to Brighton Post Office where, with an official stamp put on, they were posted in the normal way.

Herr Zucker then set his sights on firing his rocket over the sea for the first time. This trial took place in the Western Isles on Saturday 28 July 1934. The location was the foreshore of Scarp Island with the intention of sending the rocket over to Hushinish Point, on the Isle of Harris.

The local MP, Wilson Ramsay, who was present had asked the Post Office to send a representative to this experiment. The Head Postmaster of Lochmaddy, and the Sub-Postmaster of Harris both attended.

The apparatus was set up, Herr Zucker then signalled to the crowd to retire to a safe distance, connected up the electric fuse, and pressed the button, but instead of the rocket shooting over the Sound of Scarp there was a flash, a dull explosion and a cloud of smoke.

The 4800 letters in the rocket were scorched and fell like confetti on the beach. Zucker attributed the failure to the explosive used. The German Government had not allowed him to export the original powder, and he had had to arrange with an English firm to try to supply it. The second test three days later also met with a similar disaster. The Post Office concluded that it would be some time before the device could be adopted for the transmission of mails.

Zucker continued with a few more trials in England but did not have any success. He returned to Germany and is believed to have worked with Werner von Brown on the V1 and V2 rockets during the Second World War.

P.O. Reference: Post 33/5130 P22587/1936

Kevin Squelch



Rocket explosion on Scarp beach



Picking up the pieces!



1994 Special Stamps Poll

J R HOLMAN, *Editor*

In the December *Bulletin* we asked readers to nominate their three favourite sets of special and greetings stamps issued during 1994; also their favourite individual stamp from the 53 stamps in the 10 issues. We received a good response and thank all who responded. Voting forms were received from as far afield as South America, Australia and New Zealand.

Points were allocated from each vote for the sets: three points for the first choice, two points for the second; and one for the third. This enabled us to get a clear picture of the relative popularity of each issue. The voting was:

Age of Steam	1993
Prince of Wales	1806
Summertime	1666
D-Day	1285
Pictorial Postcards	1184
Christmas	1148
Medical Discoveries	766
Greetings	703
Golf	658
Channel Tunnel	301

For interest, the "winners" of earlier stamp polls were: 1986 – Nature Conservation; 1987 – Flowers; 1988 – Linnean Society; 1989 – Birds; 1990 – Queen Mother's 90th Birthday; 1991 – Maps; 1992 – Wintertime; 1993 – Autumn.

The voting for the favourite individual stamp was as follows (Note: stamp number as per December *Bulletin* in parentheses).

Greetings – Peter Rabbit (49)	140
Age of Steam 35p (4)	112
Age of Steam 25p (2)	111
Christmas 25p (40)	84
Age of Steam 41p (5)	81
Summertime 30p (32)	78
Medical Discoveries 25p (35)	75
Prince of Wales 25p (7)	69
D-Day – Commandos (22)	66
Christmas 19p (39)	66
Prince of Wales 30p (8)	61
Age of Steam 19p (1)	49
Pictorial Postcards 19p (11)	49
Age of Steam 30p (3)	47
Prince of Wales 41p (10)	46
Pictorial Postcards 25p (12)	45

Greetings – Paddington Bear (53)	45
Summertime 35p (33)	44
Christmas 30p (41)	40
Greetings – Rupert (46)	40
Pictorial Postcards 30p (13)	38
Golf 19p (25)	37
Prince of Wales 35p (9)	32
Summertime 25p (31)	30
Prince of Wales 19p (6)	29
Pictorial Postcards 35p (14)	29
Channel Tunnel 25p – Lion/Cock (16)	26
Summertime 19p (30)	26
Greetings – Orlando (51)	25
Summertime 41p (34)	22
D-Day – Advancing Inland (24)	19
Greetings – Dan Dare (44)	17
Golf 35p (28)	16
Channel Tunnel 41p Lion/Cock (18)	16
Medical Discoveries 35p (37)	16
Christmas 41p (43)	16
Christmas 35p (42)	15
Channel Tunnel 41p – Hands (19)	14
Medical Discoveries 41p (38)	14
Golf 41p (29)	14
D-Day – Coastal Bombardment (21)	12
Medical Discoveries 30p (36)	12
Greetings – Noggin (48)	12
Greetings – Biggles (52)	12
Channel Tunnel 25p Hands (17)	9
D-Day – Infantry Regrouping (23)	9
Greetings – Three Bears (45)	9
D-Day – Groundcrew Reloading (20)	8
Pictorial Postcards 41p (15)	5
Golf 25p (26)	5
Golf 30p (27)	4
Greetings – Alice (47)	3
Greetings – Red Riding Hood (50)	2

This was the fourth year we asked for votes for a favourite individual stamp; the previous winners were: 1991 – Dogs 22p; 1992 – Wintertime 18p; 1993 – Autumn 24p.

As *Bulletin* Editor I personally read all your comments – time-consuming but enjoyable. A selection – complimentary and derogatory is published below.

Age of Steam

This was the favourite set and all five stamps were amongst the 15 most popular individual stamps. Many of those who voted for this issue recalled the days of steam with great affection and wrote fondly of particular lines and stations – many now long gone. The Rev Rowell of Suffolk summed up many feelings: "These speeding monsters with snorting funnels,



Black and white neatly evokes the old railway

piercing whistles, and rhythmic clatter were part of the daily life of yesteryear which these miniatures clearly and nostalgically recall." Today's trains, clean and efficient although they may be, somehow do not compare with the old "puffers". M Gran of Germany describes today's intercity trains as "boring" in comparison with the steamers shown on the stamps. D Seymour of London commented on "the age of public transport of which we could be proud, such a contrast to today's belittling of public services."

Many of you commented on the use of black & white rather than multicolour for this set, the majority view being that monochrome reflected the era of the steam train. N Steele of Rutland whilst lauding this set felt that "two monochrome issues in a year is one too many". (The D-Day stamps also reproduced black & white photographs.) Mrs E Christie of Gloucestershire thought this set "would be better in a colour format." The choice of colour for The Queen's head and value tablet was praised by many – such as J Harvey of Derby who wrote: "The composition of the pictures and the use of black and white neatly evokes the old railway, with the colour of the Queen's head supplying a touch of modernity." P Williams of Oxfordshire suggested that "when The Queen's head is coloured, the colour be the same as that for the definitive values." Mr Ivanick of Japan commented: "Bravo for making denominations easy to find and easy to read on all UK stamps – well we'll overlook No. 50" (Greetings – Red Riding Hood). G Shaw of France praised the values and Queen's head – "an integral and changing part of the design – the only stamps in 1994 where this is successful."

Michael Lyster of London was so impressed with the 25p value he could "hear, see and smell the engine" – a feeling expressed by several readers. The stamps reminded Mr Lyster of Celia Johnson and Trevor Howard in the classic

film *Brief Encounter*, and Mr Ivanick wondered "is that Bogie (Humphrey Bogart) standing there behind that column?" on the 25p value. R Evans of Canada described the set as "like watching a "Memory Movie". A Harker of Oxford was reminded of the GPO publicity film *Night Mail* and W H Auden's famous lines "This is the Night Mail crossing the border..."

Prince of Wales

This set evoked a mixed response, ranging from superb to dreadful with Mrs Christie describing them as simply "the best of a bad bunch!" For M Donovan of Cheshire they "display the beauty of the British landscape which is the best in the world. This set is a gem in a year of high quality stamps. "A Ely of Wiltshire thinks the stamps "capture the pleasure, peace and tranquility which the Prince of Wales obviously gets from his paintings." Mr Halling of West Yorkshire found them "attractive, interesting and a coherent set." Mrs F Taylor thought the stamps "look well on most envelopes and...have a much less cluttered design than many other 1994 sets." Like many *Bulletin* readers, Mrs Taylor enjoyed the touring exhibition of the Prince's paintings, travelling from her home in Cumbria to Chester to see it. G Reynaud of France was surprised by the "rather sad colours" the Prince used for his paintings of Provence but on these stamps the colours were much brighter. He opined "What an ambassador, if you need any..."

As with all artists, the Prince has his admirers and detractors. M Taylor of West Yorkshire and R



"A talented artist"... "work of a complete amateur"

Payne of E Sussex described him as a “talented” and “very accomplished” artist and his work was also praised by a fellow artist, H Holmquest of Lincolnshire. P Boyle of London described the stamps as “an ambassador for UK standards”. C Phillips of N Yorkshire praised the artistry “as well as the balance of the component parts – design, Queen’s head, value and descriptions”, ending his comment “I never knew the Prince was such a talented artist.” S Cochrane of Suffolk however was not so keen, describing the stamps as “the work of a complete amateur – which is exactly what they look like.”

P Sherrington of London thought “the juxtaposition of Queen’s head and Prince’s coat of arms gives balance”, but for Miss A Mott of Essex “the positioning of the value spoiled the set, although I don’t know where else it could have gone.” The design work for this set, using Prince Charles’s paintings, exercised the skill of Howard Brown and it is a tribute to him that so few of you thought he got it wrong.

I was most interested in the views of P Thorne of Lancashire, J Browne of Liverpool and others that such designs would make good definitives. Both Mr Thorne and Mr Browne described the current Machin definitives as “boring”, Mr Browne commenting that it “has been around too long.” Several of you were pleased that all parts of the UK were represented in this set, in particular the inclusion of the Mourne Mountains in Northern Ireland. Pleasure in using these stamps to promote the UK was expressed, for example by A Dymond of Devon who commented: “As a keen collector of QEII stamps I was getting slightly disillusioned, but this set excited me. I was proud to send this set abroad.”

Pictorial Postcards

I was a little surprised at the popularity of this set, being under the impression that they were rather better received by the general public than by the philatelic fraternity. Many commented that these were stamps for postal use, a joy to use on holiday cards. G Fraser of Midlothian suggested that “Royal Mail might consider annual issues of stamps with a holiday theme.”

Whilst some thought the designs less than dignified, the overall view was that they the saucy seaside postcards were an important part of British social history, reflecting, as wrote J Whitworth of E Yorkshire, “all that is best in British humour – only the English can laugh at the fat lady enjoying herself on Blackpool Beach

in a force 10 gale.” J Archer of London found it “an original idea to have comic stamps of postcards instead of just stamps on comic postcards.” He described the stamps as “great fun. For me the best set in years.” P Foskett of Oxfordshire liked the stamps but was disappointed that “Blackpool Tower and Tower Bridge did not feature more significantly on stamps in 1994.”

M Billings of W Midlands relived “memories of glimpses of cheeky cards on those rotating stands, whilst being whisked along the prom by my parents.” J Rogers of W Sussex recalled that his mother found such cards “hilarious”. K Ellis of Birmingham was reminded of holidays of yesteryear and the “challenge to see who could send the rudest card.”

A Lewis of Essex praised the “sensible captions explaining the reason for issue”. G Small who runs a hotel in Hampshire found these stamps “bright and cheerful without being gaudy” and “fantastic for me to use when replying to customer enquiries.” J Slann of E Sussex bought a supply of the 19p and 25p values “for normal use to brighten up my correspondence” – exactly what the stamps are for! Mrs L Kay of Manchester suggested they “should be permanently available to use on picture postcards. Tourists would love them.” A Pickerill of Devon was reminded of the “Two Ronnies” TV programme and that one of the duo, Ronnie Barker, is a postcard collector and has written books on the subject.

“Only the UK”, wrote A Cutler of Herts, “could produce these stamps without being vulgar, i.e. not offending against refinement or good taste.” The words “fun” and “colourful” were frequently used and a number of you commented on the need to have some frivolous designs from time to time. There are, wrote J Grau of Germany, “far too many serious stamps anyway...” They were described by Mrs H Williams of Leeds and Mrs A Hardy of Kent as “typical, old-fashioned, old-value Britain”, and “quintessentially British”.

But the stamps were not to everyone’s taste and the 41p value in particular scored poorly as an individual stamp. P Dawson of Morayshire, whilst he liked the stamps, thought “the topic was hardly worthy of commemoration to the extent of five stamps.”

Channel Tunnel

I was not surprised that this was your least favourite set and many added comments after giving reasons for voting for their first choice.

The general feeling was that the Tunnel was a major engineering achievement and deserved a more prestigious set of stamps. "A lost (or wasted) opportunity" was a frequent remark. Comments on the size of the stamp were not generally appreciative.

But all was not gloom and doom. A Sarson of Leeds liked the "size and format of each value together with the artistic design, depicting the immensity of the engineering project and the potentiality of the union." P French of Essex remarked on the designs reflecting "the essence of the project – joint enterprise: how well the design translated into pence and francs." J Willard of France lauded "an original design. Traditional symbols and modern graphism combine to do justice to the historic occasion. When hands are shaken and fingers join entente is cordiale." Mrs S Sarel of Orkney praised "the gaiety of the designs", and R Grierson of Merseyside the "outstanding graphics...the humour in the quizzical face of the lion and cockerel's head add a beautiful touch of whimsy." G Burton of Kent described the stamps as "the first for a long time that do not perpetuate the same hackneyed, old-fashioned shape and design. British stamps are beautifully produced, but boringly the same."

S Bonney of Middlesex wrote: "The Channel Tunnel stamps (which will probably finish last in the poll) are an example of what stamps should be like – big, bold designs and strong colours which stand out from the envelope. Perhaps after these stamps and the Europe in Space set, our designers could learn from their counterparts across the Channel." Mrs M Redman of Kent found the stamps "too cumbersome for everyday envelopes" but the designs "dramatic...outside customary British format." To T Holyoake of Derby they were "very original and atmospheric". The dark background 25p stamps "worked better", he thought, "than the light on the 41p."

For Mrs E Christie of Gloucestershire they were the worst stamps of 1994, with "a lovesick cockerel on the right and a pop-eyed 'face' on left." Some of you went so far as to describe them as the worst ever British stamps, and one national newspaper quoted the Editor of *Gibbons Stamp Monthly* as describing them as "totally ghastly". Although I found the Tunnel opening rather an anticlimax (almost a non-event), the stamps, particularly the dark 25p values, had, for me, a somewhat 1960s nostalgic feel about them.



"Realism depicted"

D-Day

This, the fourth most popular set, was almost unanimously felt to me a fitting tribute to all those who took part in the D-Day landings. For E Bettinson of Devon, "they were a real commemorative set, remembering something special to millions of people. The content was actual and was of good contrast". Mrs M Jackson of Canada wrote: "These pictures are real and the event should never be forgotten! In stamp collections for the young, these facts can be taught and remembered."

A White of Staffordshire liked "the realism depicted" and found "the monochrome and red create a vivid picture – in contrast with the rather dull overall look of the Age of Steam set." Miss S MacGregor of Argyll liked the stamps but "was disappointed that the red on the stamps did not match the red on the first day cover." C Bielby praised both the "first class photographs" and "the suitable captions to explain the scenes". R Reed of Essex "lived through it all" and so can "relate to all five stamps which are clear, graphic and absolutely excellent." L Whalley of the USA expressed a view echoed by many readers – the stamps captured "the event so precisely" and made her "feel proud, yet sad."

A selection of your comments on the other five sets and some general remarks on the 1994 issues will be published next month, as will the names of the five readers whose voting forms were drawn first, earning them a 1994 Royal Mail Stamps Yearbook.

Decimal Stamp Books - 20

Specialist Report

D G A MYALL

Window book types

Writing in the *Bulletin* in October 1988, David Dale, then Manager Definitive Stamps, stated that the window books up to that time fell into one of three types. He gave the reason for these variations as 'window books are going through a period of intense development as the design is revised and new printers are introduced.' On this criterion, the number of types will shortly reach 10. To make references to past issues easier in these Reports, I propose to use these type numbers (with acknowledgments to the Great Britain Decimal Stamp Book Study Circle who have developed the system). Specialists recognise some subtypes (type 1A was mentioned in Mr Dale's article) but I do not think that we need be concerned with them here. The following summary shows the main features of the types, each representing a major stage in the ongoing development of these books.

Type 1 Large covers (60mm high); different sizes for four-stamp and ten-stamp books; separate barcodes for books sold through retail (series 1) and post office (series 2) outlets; code letter reference on back cover (A to J); laminated window cutout; stamp panes with wide margins all round, giving a 'miniature sheet' effect.

Type 2 As type 1 but smaller covers (56mm high); narrower pane margins; new code letter references (K to T).

Type 3 Still smaller covers (49mm high); uniform size for books of four and ten; no code letter references; laminated window replaced by full size reproduction of stamp, printed where the window was; wide crown on the cover.

Greetings book - front cover



Type 4 As type 3 but with a narrow crown on the cover; barcode series 2 discontinued and books from all printers in series 1. (All 1840 red books are of this type.)

Type 5 Stamp reproduction reduced in size; 'Pull Open' added to locking tab; new 'cruciform' logotype with crown on front cover.

Type 6 International logotype with 'airmail' surround; pane of airmail labels included.

Type 7 Books with promotional covers. These are numbered sequentially in order of appearance. Those issued to date are:

- (1) Olympic and Paralympic logotypes on front cover;
- (2) Rupert Bear Greetings book on back cover;
- (3) Free Greetings Cards;
- (4) Chance to Win a Kite;
- (5) Stampers;
- (6) Thornton's Chocolates.

NB The Kelloggs Bran Flakes book of July 1992 did not contain any reference to the promotion and is type 6.

Type 8 Books with commemorative labels. These were announced by Royal Mail as the start of a new occasional series. They are numbered sequentially in order of appearance. The first was the Bank of England tercentenary book; the second will be the R J Mitchell issue.

Type 9 The single stamp illustration on the front cover is replaced by a block of stamps at the left; fount changed to Stempel Garamond.

Type 10 Block illustration as type 9 but with the international logotype and a pane of airmail labels (planned for issue in May 1995).

It should be noted that some types had more than one kind of stamp content, such as National value stamps, Non Value Indicators, 1840 Anniversary stamps, security stamps with ellipses, etc.

New books

Several new stamp books have been issued in the last few months or are in the pipeline. The type 5 book of 4 x 2nd-class by Walsall and the eight type 9 books of 10 January were mentioned here in January. On 14 February, the sixth book in the promotional series was issued. This features an offer of a box of four of the famous Thornton chocolates together with a personalised greetings card. To get these, you have to use the order form printed on the inside cover of the book, send four *unused* 1st-class stamps and the cover of any other book of ten 1st-class stamps. The block illustration of the type 9 books is replaced

BEATRIX POTTER

The Countryside

In 1903 Beatrix Potter bought 1800 Tons
a Guernsey farmhouse with working land, with
money earned from the sale of her children's books.
This began her career as a Lake District sheepfarmer.
When she died in 1943, she left to the Trust
4,000 acres of land, farmhouses and cottages.



N T prestige book – mixed value pane of nine

by a picture of one of the four cards on offer and a box of the chocolates. The offer ends 30 June. The stamps were printed by Walsall and the plate combination seen in the first books was W36 W24 W30. I think this is the first time that a consumable has been featured in a stamp book offer so those of us who like to keep these have a problem. Maybe I'll just keep the wrappers!

The latest in the series of Greetings books was issued on 21 March. The 10 stamps and 20 labels have been printed by lithography for the first time. The stamps feature the 'art of greeting' and replaced the Animals set originally scheduled. The emphasis is on art and the 10 designs were produced by a variety of art forms: sculpture, painting, photography, papier mache, and so on. A circus clown from one of them is featured on the front cover. The book was printed by Walsall and the plate number combination seen was: W4 (yellow), W2 (blue), W4 (red), W2 (black) and W2 (silver). These appear on the gutter between the stamps and labels. The phosphor bars were printed from 19mm bands and appear only on the stamps; there is no number for the plate concerned and this is the usual Walsall practice. There is also a presentation pack but I had not seen this at the time of writing so I cannot say whether the pane differs from that in the book. The cover is barcoded 102313> in blue set vertically; the barcode on the packet is 102320>, printed in black.

On 4 April, the Harrison type 9 book of 10 x 1st-class stamps will be issued with two phosphor bars. This is the first time that the flame photogravure NVIs have had these; the stamp in the London Life prestige book of 1990 was black. The Harrison 25p stamps in the three machine-vend books, 50p, £1 and £2, will also have two bars soon, probably in the June set. The sheet stamp with two bars was issued on 20 December last.

This year's prestige book will be issued on 25 April. It celebrates the centenary of the National Trust. As usual, it is beautifully printed, with a varied stamp content totalling £6. The first pane contains six of the 25p National Trust special issue printed by Harrison in photogravure and these are identical to the sheet stamps. The other three panes contain a mix of National and Country definitives printed by Questa in lithography. One feature which is new as far as I am aware, is that the width of the phosphor bands on the definitive stamp panes varies. These are 8mm on the pane of nine and 9.5mm on the two panes of six. The result is that the 19p side-bar stamps have slightly different widths depending on which pane they come from. Although the stamp content of the set-tenant pane of nine is unchanged from that originally planned, the values have been switched around. The result is one of those complicated phosphor layouts for which prestige books are famous (or notorious). All three panes are on the OBA-free paper with C phosphor bands and ellipses.

The book provides several new stamps for the singles collector; these are:

Pane 2, se-tenant pane of 9 (all from 8mm bands)

10p 2B, 19p LB, 19p RB, 30p 2B, 35p 2B and 41p 2B

Pane 3, six Country stamps

19p RB Scotland, 19p RB Wales, 19p N, Ireland

Pane 4, six 19p National stamps (from 9.5mm bands)

19p LB, 19p RB.

The book has a link with the previous prestige book which featured Beatrix Potter. She bequeathed her 4000 acre farm to the National Trust in 1943 and this is mentioned on the stub of the pane of nine. Peter Rabbit and his friends went to live with Frederick Warne Ltd. Surprisingly, perhaps, prestige books are not yet barcoded.

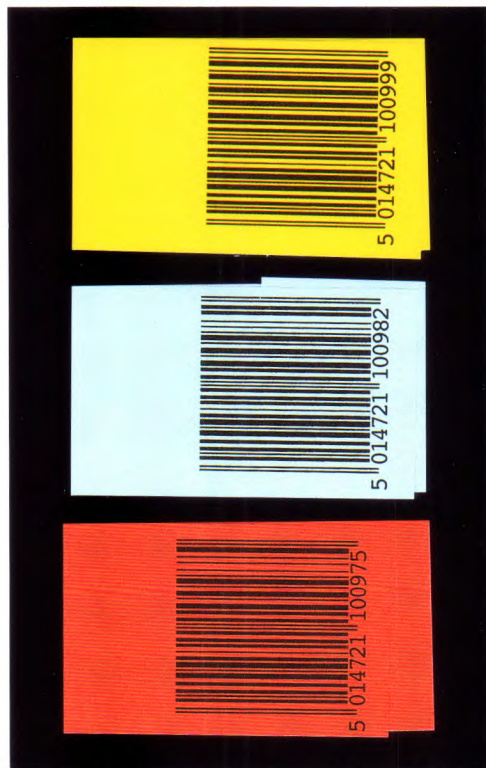
More on barcodes

In previous reports I have mentioned the spread of barcodes to the packaging of window books. This policy has now been applied to the three machine books of 7 February. These books are bundled into lots of 25, which is the smallest unit sold to retailers. To facilitate accounting, the paper bands round these bundles are now barcoded. The details are:

bundles of 50p books 100999 printed in black on yellow paper

bundles of £1 books 100982 printed in black on
pale blue paper
bundles of £2 books 100975 printed in black on
orange paper

The labels for packs of 400 books and for parcels of 4000 books are also printed in black on paper of the same colours as the wrapper bands but none has a barcode.



Bar-coded labels – bundles of 50p, £1 and £2 books (yellow, pale blue, orange)

Validity notices

I mentioned last time that the use of NVIs on overseas mail outside Europe is now officially sanctioned. I was surprised, therefore, to find that the Walsall book of 10 x 1st-class stamps, featuring the Rupert Bear Greetings book, was re-issued on 13 January with a prohibition against such use. The last previous issue of this book was on 29 July 1994. The new book is from plate combination W35 W23 W28, the same as the one seen in the first Walsall type 9 books. The result is that this combination appears concurrently in two books which give conflicting information to the public. The Rupert bear book states that the stamps 'should

not be used for any... international destinations', other than those listed, while the type 9 cover states that the stamps are valid for postage "to any country".

Duplicate cylinder number

Photogravure cylinders for booklet stamps printed by Harrison are numbered consecutively in a separate series for each value and prefixed B, for booklet. Each new cylinder prepared is given the next available number even if the stamp content differs. At least, that was the practice until very recently. Cylinder B4 for the machine book 25p stamps now exists in two versions. The full list of cylinder numbers for these photogravure stamps and the booklet in which each first appeared is as under:

- B1 pane of two + labels, 50p, Postal history No. 4, 1 November 1993
- B2 not used in any issued book
- B3 pane of eight, £2, Postal vehicles No. 1, 1 November 1993
- B4 pane of four, £1, Prime Ministers No. 2, 26 April 1994
- B4 pane of eight, £2, Rowland Hill No. 1, 7 February 1995
- B5 pane of two + labels, 50p, Inn signs No. 1, 6 April 1994
- B6 pane of four, £1, Prime Ministers No. 3, 6 June 1994.

This double numbering of B4 is most unusual. The only other occasion when something similar happened also affected the 50p machine book printed by Harrison. I remember investigating the curious incident of the fluctuating width of bands printed by phosphor cylinder B69 used to overprint the central bands on se-tenant panes of 6 (1p + 2 x 5p + 3 x 13p) in the 1987 books. The late Len Newbery and I examined many sheets at Swindon (one was taken from each print run at that time) and we came to the conclusion that the only feasible explanation was that there were two cylinders numbered B69. The printers denied that this was possible and the mystery has never been satisfactorily explained. Part of the reason given for double numbering not being possible was that each cylinder had its own storage place and duplication of numbers would soon have come to light. Now we have, incontrovertibly, two cylinders with the same number in concurrent use for the same value. I feel a little better about the erratic appearances of B69 now!

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50th Anniversary of "Forces Letter"

PETER JENNINGS FRPSL

The "Forces Letter" as it was known, was a special air letter form at a reduced postage rate of 1½d for use by and to military personnel serving in different theatres of the Second World War. The forms were transported by air whenever possible.

The service was inaugurated on 7 April 1945, primarily for troops serving in North Africa and the Middle East, and extended to South Africa and West Africa towards the end of April, and to Australasia in mid-July.

The forms, which incorporated a 1½d impressed stamp, were printed on a Timsons Rotary machine by McCorquodale & Co Ltd, at Wolverton.

Though printed on various shades of paper, there exist two basic types of "Forces Letter". The forms can easily be distinguished by the position of the lettering on the front panel. Type one has the letter "l" of "enclosures" below "ui" of "suitable". Type two has the letter "l" of "enclosures" below "u" of "suitable".

Both types of form are illustrated with this article. The used form shows a clear strike of the special "Victory Bells" postmark.

Anniversary Aerogramme Considered

Eric White, the newly appointed Head of Public Relations, Royal Mail International, told me that RMI "did consider producing a special aerogramme" to mark the 50th anniversary of the "Forces Letter", but "opted instead for general themes for pictorial aerogrammes during 1995, rather than those which are specifically related".

Mr White explained that one of the key aims when considering what to depict with pictorial aerogrammes is that "the subject matter should have a broad appeal to as many RMI customers as possible". He emphasised that the overriding reason for producing aerogrammes is "to stimulate people to write abroad", and RMI felt the "Forces Letter" anniversary did not match this.

However, he agreed that from a philatelic point of view there would have been some merit in choosing the "Forces Letter" theme. But he stressed that "philatelic sales of aerogrammes make up only a very small amount of total revenue".

Mr White revealed that "Trains" is the theme for RMI's next pictorial aerogramme, which will go on sale this Summer. The actual date is still to be confirmed.

He said that "train-related subjects are very popular among thematic collectors, but they are of interest generally, to young and old alike. It is also a good subject for reflecting something about Britain, which is always a consideration when choosing pictorial aerogramme themes".

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Editor's Note: At least one Forces Letter is known to have been used before the 7 April 1945 date.

Bulletin reader A S Goldstone reports an example clearly postmarked at Henlow Camp, Henlow, Beds on 4 April 1945.

The Development of Victorian Postal Stationery

COLIN BAKER

6. Registered Envelopes

On the 1 January 1878 the Post Office introduced a revised registration service under which, it was possible to send money through the post knowing that if this were lost in transit compensation would be payable. The upper limit for coin sent by this new service was initially £2, although by the end of the century compensation limits had risen to £120. However, in order to benefit from this new scheme it was necessary to use the specially prepared postal stationery envelopes released on the same date.

On 6 January 1841 the PO introduced inland registration with a fee of one shilling, reduced to 6d in 1848 and 4d 1862. Although these fees provided additional security for a letter or packet, no compensation was made in the event of any loss of money. The revised registration scheme, costing 2d per letter, changed all that and proved to be very popular, the new lower fee and added security making it attractive to many more people for whom bankers' cheques were out of the question. Cheques were in any case subject to 1d stamp duty, in addition to bankers' charges and so the new registration service was a very competitive one.

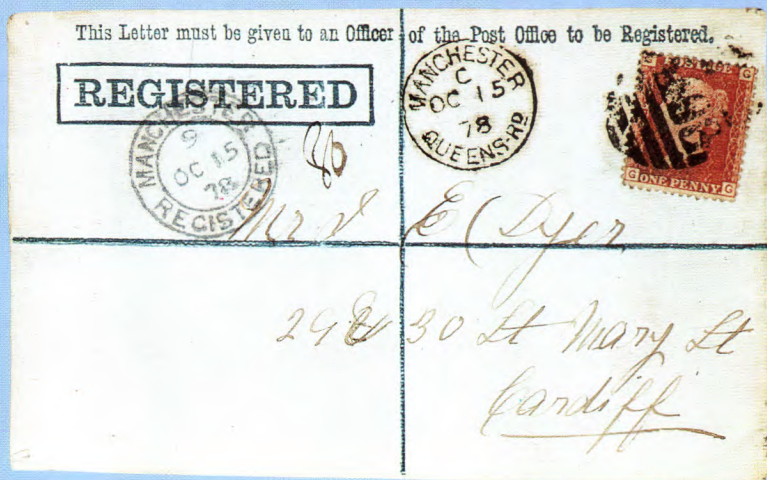
With the introduction of registered envelopes in 1878 it became possible to send coin through the post.

The Strengthened Envelope

During the development of a suitable envelope for use with the new registration scheme, the PO conducted extensive trials to ensure that during handling, the envelopes would not burst open under the weight of coins, causing consequent loss to the PO. The envelopes eventually approved were manufactured from a strong, heavy duty paper, reinforced on the inside with a coarse open weave linen material known as "scrim". These two layers were bonded together to form an extremely strong, yet light weight envelope. No scrim was provided to the gummed flap to allow it to be sealed more easily, and since all Victorian issues had the 2d registration stamp impressed on this flap, it avoided undue wear to the stamp dies which the scrim would otherwise have caused. The envelope was a success and proved it was as strong in use as it had been in the trials. The construction of these envelopes remaining basically the same until the latter half of this century when stronger papers were developed.

The Envelope Format

Registered envelopes were printed with blue crossed lines to indicate they were to be registered, a hangover from previous years when registered letters and packets had been tied with either green tape or green string. Included on the envelope front were instructions that for the item to benefit from registration, the envelope had to be handed to a PO official against a receipt and not simply dropped into the nearest





Revised envelope layouts with the registration stamp falling on the front first came into use in 1893

letter box.

This standard printing of registered envelopes was retained for the remainder of the Victorian period, although the instructions on the envelope front were amended from time to time and in 1881 an "R" was added to reinforce the registration requirement, it being enhanced even more in 1883 when it was set in an oval frame.

Registration Stamps

Three different designs for the registration fee stamp were prepared during the period 1878 to 1901, all of which indicated that only the registration fee had been paid. In all cases, postage had to be paid for registered letters by means of adhesive stamps which were added to the envelope front. The stamp impressed on the first series of registered envelopes was an emergency issue as the main design was still in the course of preparation. This first stamp used the normal 2d stationery die previously impressed on PO 2d envelopes which of course read "Postage Two Pence". To show that only the

The three basic registration stamps - January 1878, April 1878, April 1878, 1891

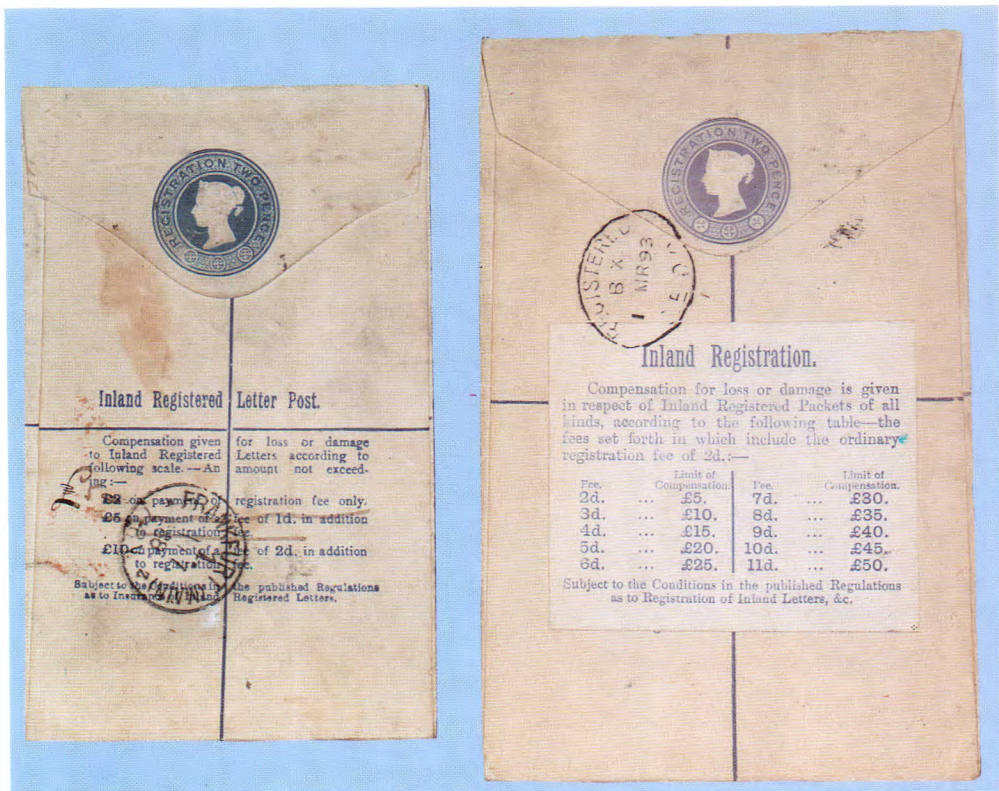
registration fee had been prepaid, a semicircular band or cartouche was added above the stamp with the words "For Registration Only".

Three months later in March 1878, the new stamp design was ready and this was then used for all registered envelopes. The new design was circular and initially included the printing date in three tiny circles in the lower section of the stamp border. These date plugs were similar to those used on other stationery dies, but as with those stamps the date plugs were abandoned and replaced with florets in 1882.

A further change was made in 1891 when a revised design of stamp was introduced, it being slightly smaller than the previous issue. Neither dates nor florets were included in this design and it remained in use until the end of Victoria's reign.

During the initial years following the introduction of the new envelopes the registration stamp was positioned such that it appeared on the reverse of the envelopes when





Typical envelope backs showing revised compensation tables, one amended in manuscript, the other with a pasted on label the flap was sealed. In this way it was clearly a registration stamp and could not pay for postage. By 1893 the PO felt the public were very aware of this and the envelope was redesigned with the flap folding over onto the envelope front, thus also placing the stamp on the front face, but lying sideways. Finally in 1901 the stamp was repositioned so that when the flap was closed, it fell into the normal position for any stamp, that is, on the envelope front, in the top right hand corner and in a vertical orientation.

Compensation Tables

As the registration facility developed and the PO became more confident that they were not incurring great losses, so compensation limits were extended. During this period the lower compensation limits were raised without any increase in the basic fee, but from 1886 the introduction of higher limits required correspondingly larger fees, with a top limit of £120, being available from 1898 for a fee of 1s 2d.

From 1886 to the end of the Victorian period,

the reverse sides of envelopes were printed with compensation tables, listing the maximum compensation payable for loss or damage in the post depending on the fee that had been prepaid. However, these compensation limits were frequently changed and extended, rendering stocks of envelopes obsolete. To avoid the necessity of destroying large quantities of envelopes merely because the tables were out of date, the PO prepared separate labels with details of the then current limits, which the counter clerks pasted over the original printing. However, not all envelopes were revised in this manner and in the case of the earlier issues, some were amended in manuscript where changes were relatively simple.

So in 1878, for the first time since the introduction of the Penny Post, there began a much needed system for sending coin and valuables through the post in the confident assurance that should anything go wrong the value of any loss would be made good by the PO.

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Events – April/May 1995

until 21 April: "Addressing Postcodes" exhibition at National Postal Museum, King Edward Street, London EC1. Open Mon-Fri 09.30-16.30. Enquiries: 0171-239 5420. Note: The Museum galleries will be closed 22 April-8 May for construction of the new "Victorian Posts" exhibition which opens on 9 May (see below).

8 April: Railway Philatelic Group Annual Convention at Queens Hall, London Road, Derby, 10.00-15.45. Enquiries: A Violet, 50 Roberts Road, Prestbury, CHELTENHAM, Glos, GL52 SDF.

8 April: Plymouth Phil Soc. Open Day at St Edwards Hall, Home Park Avenue, Peverell, Plymouth, 10.00-16.00. Children's Stamp Corner. Enquiries Mrs M Griffiths, 17 Berry Park Road, Plymstock, PLYMOUTH PL9 9AG.

15 April: Basildon Phil Soc Easter Stamp Day at Laindon Community Centre, Basildon. Open 10.00-17.00. Dealers, exhibition, refreshments, raffle, tombolas.

22 April: Telford Phil Soc stamp and postcard fair at Belmont Hall, Wellington, Telford, 10.00-16.00. Enquiries: P Morris-Jones, Tel. 01952-223926.

22 April: Philatelic Writers Society "Techniques of Philatelic Research" Seminar at Ifor Evans Hall, 109 Camden Road, London NW1. Guest speakers, discussions. Tickets £15. Enquiries: A P Berry, 24 Irwin Road, GUILDFORD, GU2 5PP.

22 April: Norfolk & Norwich Phil Soc Stamp & Postcard Fair/Exhibition at the University of East Anglia, 10.00-17.00. Enquiries: Peter Burnett, Tel. 01603-615460.

22 April: Northamptonshire PS Annual Stamp Fair at St Sepulchre's Parish Rooms, Church Lane, Northampton, 10.00-16.30. 15 dealers, exhibition, social section, refreshments, etc. Enquiries: N Watterson, Tel. Northampton 27323.

22 April: Exeter & Dist Phil Soc Annual Stamp Exhibition & Fair at The Priory School, Topsham Road, Exeter, 10.30-16.30. Dealers, refreshments. Enquiries: A Pavey, Tel. 0392 449823.

27-30 April: "Stamp '95" international stamp exhibition at Wembley Exhibition Centre, Wembley, Middx. Supported by Royal Mail and

Stanley Gibbons. Free Tickets Hotline Tel. 01425 461353 (weekdays) or write to: Stamp '95, 5 Parkside, Christchurch Road, RINGWOOD, Hants, BH24 3SH.

6 May: Federation of South Wales Phil Socs 1995 Convention at Princess Royal Theatre, Port Talbot, 10.00-16.30. Admission 50p. Stamp, postal history, postcard, and accessory dealers; displays; "Kids Korner"; Post Office sales counter; souvenir postcard. Enquiries: G N Prior, 20 Heol y Sheet, North Cornelly, BRIDGEND, Mid Glamorgan, CF33 4EY.

6 May: Worthing Phil Soc and Worthing Society of Postal Historians Jubilee Dinner at East Worthing Community Centre, Pages Lane, Worthing. Tickets £12.50. Enquiries: J E O Hobbs, Tel. Worthing 237440.

9 May - April 1996: "Victorian Posts" exhibition at National Postal Museum, King Edward Street, London EC1. Open Mon-Fri 09.30-16.30. Enquiries: 0171-239 5420.

10-15 May: Finlandia '95 – specialised world philatelic exhibition – postal history/postal stationery, Helsinki. Under FIP patronage.

13 May: "The Importance of British Revenues in Philately" – display by Gary Ryan, RDP FRPSL to National Philatelic Society, at British Philatelic Centre, 107 Charterhouse Street, London EC1, 15.15. Enquiries: NPS, 0171-251 5040.

19-21 May: Northeast Philatelic Weekend at Newcastle upon Tyne. Enquiries: Dorothy Martin, 46 Briardene Crescent, Kenton Park, NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE NE3 4RY.

Postal Memorabilia Displays

David Harrop will be displaying material from his extensive collection at:

8 April Marlborough Model Show & Organ Grind, Town Hall, Marlborough, Wilts

15-17 April Steam & Vintage Weekend, Avoncraft Museum of Buildings, Bromsgrove, Worcs

22 April Toy Fair, Torbay Leisure Centre, Paignton, Devon (10.30-15.30)

23 April Vintage Toy Fair, Merchants Suite, West of England University, Coldharbour Lane, Bristol

27-30 April Stamp '95 Exhibition, Wembley Exhibition Centre

6-8 May Llandudno Victorian Weekend, Castle Hotel, Promenade, Llandudno, Gwynedd

April/May Digest

To be issued in April/May

4 April: Scottish aerogramme – Glasgow School of Art. On sale at post offices in Scotland, and philatelic outlets (see below).

4 April: Stamp Books: 50p Sea Charts 2 (Land's End); £1 Inspiration for Victory 2 (Dame Vera Lynn); £2 Rowland Hill 2 (Educational Reform); 10 x 1st NVI stamp book, new cover design. Printed Harrison. Stamps in 50p-£2 books on Advanced Coated Paper as previous issues, NVI stamps 2 bands. Dates are for philatelic sale; books available from vending machines/retail outlets as supply situation requires.

4 April: National Trust stamp cards.

11 April: National Trust stamps, presentation pack, stamp packs (10 x 19p, 10 x 25p), NT "Images" book (containing set of stamps); and gift pack (contains pres pack, maxicards, NT centenary book).

11 April: 2p definitive, printed by Enschedé, elliptical perfs on vertical sides.

24 April 10 x 1st NVI book – W H Smith 50p voucher promotion. Available only from W H Smith shops; will go on philatelic sale in October. Printed Walsall

25 April: National Trust prestige stamp book, price £6.

25 April: Peace & Freedom stamp cards.

2 May: Peace & Freedom stamps and presentation pack.

5 May: National Postal Museum "Victorian Posts" postcards (5 cards); Freddie Mercury postcards (4). These will be available to callers at the NPM shop and by post from the British Philatelic Bureau.

16 May: Retail stamp books – £1.40 (4 x 35p), £1.64 (4 x 41p), £2.40 (4 x 60p) with new cover design (as January books) and revised wording with validity of stamps. Stamps as in previous issues.

16 May: £1 vended stamp book: Inspiration for Victory No 3 – R J Mitchell. Stamps have 2 phosphor bands.

16 May: 4 x 1 st NVI book with R J Mitchell commemorative label (similar to Bank of England book of July 1994). Unfolded panes from this book will be available from the Bureau.

Note: Some items are available only from the British Philatelic Bureau, 20 Brandon Street, EDINBURGH EH3 5TT and from Post Office Counters Ltd philatelic outlets at main post offices in: Bath, Belfast, Birmingham, Brighton, Bristol, Cambridge, Canterbury, Cardiff, Chester, Colchester, Coventry, Croydon, Durham, Edinburgh, Exeter, Glasgow, Gloucester, Guildford, Leeds, Leicester, Liverpool, London (Lombard Street & Trafalgar Square), Manchester, Newcastle upon Tyne, Nottingham, Oxford, Plymouth, Portsmouth, Romford, Southampton, Southend on Sea, Stratford upon Avon, Truro, Windsor, and York.

To be withdrawn in April/May

11 April: Pictorial Postcards stamps, presentation pack and stamp cards.

25 April: Stamp Books 50p Coaching Inns 2; £1 Prime Ministers 2; £2 Postal Vehicles 2.

28 April: Self-adhesive stamp book and pack. These will be withdrawn from sale at the Bureau and Post Office Counters philatelic outlets on 28 April. Available at the Royal Mail sales counter at the Stamp '95 exhibition until 30 April.

2 May: Channel Tunnel stamps, presentation pack and stamp cards.

5 May: National Postal Museum "Postcodes" postcards. These will be withdrawn at the Bureau on 5 May but will remain on sale, to callers, at the NPM shop.

Stop Press – Self Adhesive Last Day Postmark

A special handstamp will be used on 30 April to mark the final day of sale of the 1st class self-adhesive stamp. Covers should be sent, not later than 30 April, to: Special Handstamp Centre, Royal Mail, Mount Pleasant, Farringdon Road, LONDON EC1A 1BB, requesting "Self-Adhesive Stamp Postmark". A posting box will be provided at the Stamp '95 exhibition at Wembley. Note the self-adhesive stamp will remain valid for postage, although no longer on sale.

