

BRITISH STAMP DESIGN 1993

For over quarter of a century the Stamp Advisory Committee has carefully examined designs for future British Stamps. This is no rubber-stamp body - its members express strong views and their comments and decisions ensure that British stamps are amongst the best designed and most interesting in the world. British stamps have won many top design and philatelic awards.

In this book James Negus, a former Editor of the Stanley Gibbons Stamp Catalogue, reviews the work of the Committee on the eleven issues of 1993. The subjects covered ranged from flora (Orchids and Autumn fruits) to history (Roman Britain) and literature (Sherlock Holmes). The issues included the popular Greetings stamps and Britain's first £10 stamp featuring Britannia.

This is essential reading for all collectors of modern British stamps, and for all interested in stamp design.

"A fascinating insight which all collectors of modern Great Britain will enjoy." (*Stamp Magazine* on the 1992 Stamp Advisory Committee Review.)



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BRITISH STAMP DESIGN 1993

The Work of the Stamp Advisory Committee



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Definitions

Supplied by Royal Mail Design Division.

Two terms – ‘essay’ and ‘(presentation) visual’ – are used extensively in his book. These terms are defined as follows:

Presentation visuals are the original submitted work of the designer. These are usually a four-times linear enlargement of the actual stamp size. These presentation visuals are also photographically reduced to stamp size but have no special terminology other than ‘photo reductions’.

The Stamp Advisory Committee (SAC) sees the original presentation visuals on display panels which members view prior to the formal start of the committee meeting. When the meeting commences, each member has the photographic reductions in front of them.

Royal Mail never refers to presentation

visuals as artwork as, in design/print terms, artwork is always the master from which something is printed. It is very rare indeed for presentation visuals to be accepted and used as the master for printing. ‘Artwork’ is the designer’s original work that is used by the printer to produce the ‘essays’. The committee never sees the original artwork.

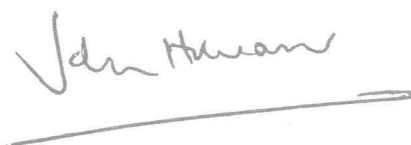
Essay is a term used in the production of stamps and really means printer’s proof. The SAC studies these essays in considerable detail and it is sometimes necessary to see three essays before members are entirely happy with the printer’s translation of artwork into print. Once an essay has been accepted, it becomes the master standard to which all the subsequent mass-produced stamps must match. The final essays are sent to Her Majesty The Queen for approval.

Introduction

Royal Mail’s Stamp Advisory Committee in its present form was established in 1968 to advise on the subject and design of British special issues. The composition of the Committee changes from time to time but not the experience and dedication which members bring to the task of examining and commenting on the designs set before them. They have to take into account the likely response to the stamps of the public at large, not just the philatelic community. As sometimes happens, stamp designs not universally admired by stamp collectors are hugely popular with the general public.

It is important to the philatelic record that the deliberations of the SAC and the designs it considers are made available and in 1993 Royal Mail published a review of the work of the Committee on the 1992 stamp programme. I am very pleased that this second review, on the issues of 1993, is now being produced as a *British Philatelic Bulletin* publication, and especially that it has been written by James Negus, a noted philatelist and philatelic writer. Mr Negus has skilfully distilled the lengthy and detailed discussions of the Committee into a concise account of how the designs of each issue evolved. No one reading his account will doubt that the Committee takes its work very seriously, both in the wider aspects of the subject of the stamps and in attention to detail in ensuring accuracy in design and captioning.

I am sure that many collectors of modern special stamps will enjoy looking at the unadopted designs reproduced as space allowed, and reading about the progress of the designs through the Committee. Understanding the background to an issue is an important part of enjoying one’s collection.



J. R. Holman
Editor, *British Philatelic Bulletin*

1. Swans

Stamps for the 600th anniversary of the Abbotsbury Swannery in Dorset.

Members at the Stamp Advisory Committee's meeting in September 1991 were asked to consider two sets of presentation visuals on this pleasant theme. Abbotsbury Swannery was an important wildlife sanctuary and its inclusion in the stamp-issuing programme would emphasise Britain's prominent support for conservation. Both designers had reflected in their approach the life cycle of swans, with David Boys choosing to do so in

*Designs commissioned from:
David Boys
David Gentleman*

general fashion [1.1]. David Gentleman, on the other hand, had personalised his designs to Abbotsbury.

His six visuals impressed the Committee and he was requested to develop four of them [1.2]. Two were not selected [1.3], in part because the inclusion of human figures was not favoured, and members put forward ideas for completing the set, which was to comprise five denominations. The remaining stamp, for example, could show a pair of



*Stamps by David Gentleman as issued 19 January 1993.
The set was printed by Harrison & Sons in photogravure.*

David Boys



1.1

David Gentleman



1.2



1.3

swans to illustrate that they often formed stable partnerships for life. The set overall would depict not only this male and female but should certainly include a cygnet as well. The natural grace of a swan gliding along the water could perhaps be featured. A member commented finally on the eggs, where it was important they should not give the impression of being pebbles.

The Committee decided that the stamps as developed would not be captioned. Though David Boys's designs had not been selected for this set, they would be considered by Royal Mail for possible use in the presentation pack or schools pack. Royal Mail was also reminded of the existence of the charity Save Our Swans.

In October 1991, when the SAC next met, a visual for the fifth value was ready. This showed a pair of swans and a cygnet and, with the set now complete, there was agreement to proceed to first essays. When they were shown in January 1992 values had been allocated, but an important change was made at this stage. The 'eggs' stamp had been planned as the 24p but, as it did not of itself portray an image of Swans, it became the 33p instead. This meant issuing the first class 24p stamp in the design showing the cygnet and duck decoy, rather than that of an alternative suggestion, the swan's head and St Catherine's Chapel, which remained at 18p. The newly produced design of the pair of swans went forward as the 28p.

The first essays of January were reasonably satisfactory, but more work on details was put in train to improve a somewhat flat appearance and to respond to the

Committee's observations. Second essays were considered at the March 1992 meeting, by which time the following modifications had been carried out:

18p - Flecks in the neck were reduced in strength and the junction of the neck with the stamp margin was softened;

24p - The modelling of the cygnet was made less harsh;

28p - More detail was added to the black area of the bills;

33p - The drawing of the nest was improved and a yellowish cast to the eggs removed. There was more detail to the thatch of the Barn, its outer edges were better defined, and the thatch was not now too close to the value;

39p - The length of the neck was extended and its white halo at either side eliminated. The grey colour of the bill was adjusted.

Further discussion nevertheless ensued on colour fidelity and balance. In the 24p the colour was too light and the area above the reeds was blue, when it should be green. The 28p, with white swans against a white background, likewise appeared too light. Members also recommended final checks with experts to ensure complete accuracy in remaining details. The design of the beaks on the 28p needed verification as did the shape of the eggs and the feathers in the foreground of the 33p.

The SAC agreed at this meeting of 26 March 1992 that, once the final points had been resolved by Royal Mail, the set should be submitted for approval by Her Majesty The Queen.

2. Greetings

*Designs commissioned from:
Newell & Sorrell, The Partners,
Silk Pearce, Michael Peters*

Stamps on the theme of Gift Giving added to the annual series.

The Stamp Advisory Committee was much occupied at two meetings in March and May 1992 on Greetings stamps in general and those for 1993 in particular. Lengthy discussion took place on their purpose and appeal both commercially and otherwise, how they related to the Special Stamps programme, and how they were regarded by customers, retail outlets and philatelists. Some apprehension was aired - and dispelled - that Britain might find itself with a 'Disney' type series of stamps unrelated to the country of issue.

Members had a variety of sets before them in March, four different approaches by The Partners being shown firstly. Their visuals illustrated the work of Beatrix Potter; the language of flowers; maxims and sayings; and different ways of saying 'hello'. Silk Pearce's

sets [2.1-2] were on the theme of a beautiful world with designs representative of Britain. Newell & Sorrell had produced three sets to depict flowers that represented happy situations; kisses; and the act of giving by well known characters [as 2.3-5].

Likes and dislikes divided opinion but there appeared a universal worry at the danger of issuing postage stamps that some might regard as no better than labels. An option considered was to have a mix of designs from different sets of visuals, enabling the best of each to be featured. It could remove certain designs found vulgar or offensive, but the idea did not find general agreement.

No immediate choice was made and a consensus did not emerge till the subsequent detailed discussion at the May meeting. By



*Stamps by Newell & Sorrell as issued 2 February 1993.
The set was printed by Harrison & Sons in photogravure*

Silk Pearce



2.1



2.2

Newell & Sorrell



2.3



2.4

then Royal Mail had considered which sets had further design potential so that members were now asked to adjudicate on three themes. The first, for Beatrix Potter, had not been changed because the designs were already of sufficient quality. The second, for flowers, had been developed. With the third, on the theme 'Giving', four stamps from the original set had been replaced with better known characters. Since last time, visuals from Michael Peters entitled 'Cheers' had been received but had not been seen as suitable for development [2.6].

The Committee was once again divided on its individual preferences, but a general view was eventually reached. Members felt the flowers stamps were not wholly successful as stamp designs; also the Beatrix Potter designs were admired, but were not quite Greetings

stamps. It was agreed the giving/cartoons set should be the one to be developed.

By the September meeting this had been done and the SAC studied the first essays of stamps and labels. Members were reminded that the greetings labels corresponded in position with the pane of stamps. On the whole the Committee thought the stamps were fun and the imagery was good, though it was less happy at using metallic ink for the Queen's head and value. The labels caused lingering concern: 'squalid' thought one member, the wording POOP-POOP and 'happy blooming holiday' receiving negative comments.

A set provoking mixed reaction in the annual programme, it was finally agreed at this meeting of 17 September 1992 to send it for approval by Her Majesty The Queen.

Newell & Sorrell



2.5

Michael Peters



2.6

3. Marine Timekeepers

Stamps for the 300th anniversary of the birth of John Harrison, who perfected the marine chronometer.

For this set Howard Brown had been commissioned to produce three different approaches to the way it might be tackled. The resulting visuals were put before the Committee at its October 1991 meeting and members were asked to choose which approach they would like to see developed.

As the stamps were in commemoration of John Harrison, the first group showed five clocks which had been designed and made by

him. They are known as H1 to H5 and it was H4 that had solved the problem of finding longitude at sea. Three of the five visuals are illustrated [3.1].

The second group of designs [as 3.2] featured the work of four British clockmakers, including one value (26p) devoted to Harrison.

The third approach [as 3.3] could be one illustrating the mechanical detail of escape-ments invented by various British clockmak-



*Stamps by Howard Brown & David Penny as issued 16 February 1993.
The set was printed by The House of Questa Ltd. in offset lithography*

Howard Brown



3.1



3.2

Howard Brown & David Penny



3.3

ers. Here, Harrison's work would appear on two values. For the submitted five visuals the designer had collaborated with David Penny as illustrator.

In the discussion there was an initial query about whether the theme merited inclusion in the stamp programme at all. It was resolved with the recognition of Harrison's persistence throughout his life towards his goal of a reliable measure of maritime longitude, enabling Britain to achieve a world lead in navigation. Such supporting material as the presentation pack would be used in explaining the historical background and showing why Harrison's work remained of importance in the modern world.

The designs themselves were commented upon favourably, with the escapement set [3.3] being found 'decorative' and the black backgrounds in the Harrison-timepieces set [3.1] described as 'dramatic'. There was, however, criticism that no design indicated the size of the timepieces.

The Committee's choice among the possible options was to make John Harrison the theme of the set. A member's suggestion for the consequent treatment was then adopted: this would show only H4 of Harrison's clocks, but would feature different angles and mechanisms. For this work David Penny was confirmed as preferred illustrator for Howard Brown's designs.

From this team three different visuals were shown in December 1991, so that the Committee could select one for development. The first visual was of four designs, one from each of the quarters of the clock face. The whole of the H4 clock face was

depicted when assembled as a square, but this format was felt difficult for first day covers.

The second visual depicted key parts of the clock three-dimensionally, while the third illustrated four different layers of clock H4.

The beauty of the third, layered treatment won unanimous support, but with a reservation that metallic ink should be avoided.

Strong appreciation of the designs was seen again at the meeting in May 1992, when members expressed their delight at the essays then on view. These had been produced in sets identical except for the colour of the background, so that the Committee could indicate which they favoured. In the event buff was preferred over white.

Some misgiving at the typographical part of the design was aired in the detailed discussion of the essays. The word 'number' would need to be added to 'H4' to avoid confusion and, indeed, 'H4' looked rather lost. The copyright symbol also needed adding. Whether to put year of issue into the typography was raised, but standard practice was now to omit this whenever anniversary dates were also shown. A final suggestion was that more detail was required on the clock-face illustration in the 24p stamp.

This Committee meeting of 7 May 1992 approved the designs subject to the various typographical points being resolved. Members agreed that they did not need to see these in further proof before the set was submitted to Her Majesty.

4. Ten Pound Definitive

*Designs commissioned from:
Mike Denny, Jeffery Matthews,
Sedley Place*

The new high value arising from postal requirements.

Royal Mail informed the Stamp Advisory Committee in April 1991 that a £10 stamp was clearly becoming necessary for postal use and requested members' views on a suitable design. The Royal Arms or a new portrait of The Queen were suggested but the Committee felt it preferable not simply to add a further Castle to the existing range.

Some early pencil visuals from Jeffery Matthews and Sedley Place were available in May, also some from Mike Denny (Roundel Design Group) in September. Discussion at this stage centred around the security features called for in such a new high value and the importance of craftsmanship in making the stamp look to be worth £10.

At the December meeting the SAC learned that issue date was now planned as February 1993 and visuals in two different approaches were available for study. Jeffery Matthews had produced two designs in traditional style depicting the Queen's head [4.1], while Mike Denny's three designs showed Britannia in modern style [as 4.2]. Initial reactions tended to be mixed. An embossed Queen's head was disliked by some and others were unhappy at depicting Britannia in a modern setting with a design looking like a banknote. After much debate, which was resumed subsequently at the February 1992 meeting, the Committee favoured Britannia as an acceptable motif after studying further artwork from Jeffery Matthews and Mike Denny.

Essays of the Britannia design were produced by both The House of Questa Ltd. and Harrison & Sons Ltd. Some involved intaglio (recess) as well as photogravure or

lithography printing.

Members also deliberated on three combinations of printing process that might be used, deciding that lithography was best pursued. Second essays of the Britannia design printed in metallic ink [as 4.3] were on view at the June meeting, but were felt not to match the quality of the original artwork, even though Britannia had been completely redrawn. Improvements to this lady's anatomy were suggested and criticisms were aired of the bold captions, cloud formations and general glitter.

In response to the observations a third essay using conventional inks was produced for the meeting on 6 August 1992. Apart from remarks on the strength of the 'ten pounds' caption, members were a great deal happier with the result. They agreed the essay could now be developed for the issued stamp, remitting to Royal Mail final considerations of the built-in security features. Postal requirement had thus added a flagship to the High Values range, meriting a fresh design approach.



Stamp by Roundel Design Group as issued 2 March 1993. It was printed by The House of Questa Ltd. in offset lithography

Jeffery Matthews



4.1 Essay printed by Harrison



4.1 Essay printed by Questa

Mike Denny of Roundel Design Group



4.2 Essay printed by Harrison (intaglio & litho)



4.3 Essay printed by Harrison (litho, intaglio, foil blocking and embossing).

5. Orchids

*Designs commissioned from:
Elizabeth Blackadder, Jill McDougall,
Mary Mendum, Pandora Sellars*

Stamps marking the World Orchid Conference in Glasgow.

The Stamp Advisory Committee began detailed consideration of designs for this set at its meeting in July 1991. A Scottish link with the Conference was mentioned in that three of the invited artists were Edinburgh-based; the fourth (Pandora Sellars) had drawn orchids selected by experts at Kew Gardens.

The first set of eight visuals shown [as 5.1a, b] had come from Elizabeth Blackadder. They were quite well received and were recommended for further development to overcome the present rather uneasy mix of her normal images with what she believed would be required of a stamp.

Mary Mendum's five designs [as 5.2] contained orchids native to Scotland with

Scottish locations in the background. This type of approach found support but members thought the execution less successful than that in Pandora Sellars's work.

Jill McDougall had preferred to approach the subject quite differently from the others and four visuals of hers were studied [as 5.3]. Her designs showed conservation work and the threat to orchids from the loss of rain forests.

Pandora Sellars's set of five designs [as 5.4a, b] drew admiring comment for the quality of its artwork and the SAC also chose hers for further development. Since at the same time it had asked to see further work from Elizabeth Blackadder, the overall spread of illustration came under discussion. As one



*Stamps by Pandora Sellars as issued 16 March 1993.
The set was printed by Harrison & Sons in photogravure*

Elizabeth Blackadder



5.1a



5.1b



5.1c

Mary Mendum



5.2



Jill McDougall



5.3



Pandora Sellars



5.4a



5.4b



5.4c

member observed, any country could issue a set of world orchids, but Royal Mail should concentrate on British species. It would also be advisable to feature British orchids rather than Scottish orchids alone. The absence of any caption with the word 'orchid' was also queried, since not everyone would recognise the flowers as such.

When the Committee met in September 1991 it was shown the new visuals, which Elizabeth Blackadder had produced at its request [as 5.1c]. They were modifications of four of her original designs and considered an improvement. One member thought them more interesting than Pandora Sellars's, but another felt they did not work at stamp size. It was decided not to proceed with them further.

Also as requested, Pandora Sellars now provided two further visuals [as 5.4c] to meet the point that the set ought to include some Scottish-linked orchids. Help with her choice had been sought from the orchid expert at the Edinburgh Botanical Gardens. With a total of seven designs now available, Royal Mail would itself take advice on which five should be used for the issued stamps. The Committee reiterated its strong support for Pandora Sellars's treatment and suggested both the Scottish-linked orchids ought to be included. A member thought colour differentiation between the various values of importance when making the overall choice.

Members remained impressed when the chosen five designs were available as first essays for the meeting in December 1991. The discussion then centred on improving some details and settling the order of the

values. The flowers on the 28p and 33p could be stronger, for example, and it would be better to move the value of the 28p away from the edge. The use of silver metallic ink was criticised as cheapening the stamps, apart from its illegibility. One member recommended black for the Queen's head, but there was greater support for its being shown in green and printed in halftone.

A sequence of values was agreed that offered the greatest visual difference to separate the first and second class stamps. This involved moving to 18p what was currently allocated as 39p: it led to the sequence of values that was followed in the issued set.

The SAC gave final consideration to the Orchids stamps in February 1992 and were still enthusiastic about them. The meeting that month saw second essays in which the colours of the Queen's heads, the captions and the value indicators had been changed from silver to green. Only the green colouring of the 28p was out of step and would need to be brought into line with the rest of the set. Members welcomed seeing the Queen's head in its new green colour and one thought that the 28p head should be the colour used there throughout. Another member noted that, while values rested on white backgrounds, that in the 33p was shown on green. A final important recommendation was to change captioning from a medium to a light typeface.

Remitting these points of detail to Royal Mail for resolution, the Advisory Committee was pleased to give approval of the set at this meeting on 13 February 1992.

6. Art in the Twentieth Century

Stamps on CEP's chosen Europa theme for 1993.

Royal Mail participates each year in a theme chosen by CEP, the Conference of European Postal Administrations. For 1993 the subject was 'Art in the Twentieth Century' and the stamps were planned for issue in May of that year.

Two points of principle were settled when the Stamp Advisory Committee met in September 1991. Although an eminent contemporary British artist had been approached and was willing to undertake designing stamps for the whole set, the Committee unanimously rejected the idea. A choice of work by different artists was held to be preferable. It was secondly agreed that the stamps should reproduce works already in existence.

With these points established, members suggested sculpture could well be included and the coverage should not neglect paintings from early years in the century. It was important to feature artists who were internationally known, the name of Henry Moore being a prominent example.

Following Royal Mail's consulting a wide range of experts and art galleries, visuals for stamps from three designers in styles repre-

*Designs commissioned from:
Ashted Dastor, Tom Eckersley,
Dick Senior*

sented here were presented at the meeting in February 1992. Two sets from Dick Senior were shown, the first [as 6.1] illustrative of the work of five different British sculptors. It was felt to lack cohesion as a set. The second group of visuals [6.2] had been produced specific to Henry Moore and showed a broad range of his sculptures.

Tom Eckersley's submission [6.3] was of paintings by British artists framed in an easel. The stamps gave an impression to some of having rather too much empty space.

Ashted Dastor had provided three sets of designs, featuring paintings in oil [6.4] and watercolour [6.5] as well as graphics [6.6].

With this large number of 31 visuals to consider, it became clear that no consensus was going to emerge on which set to choose for development. Ashted Dastor's layout itself found support and the white panels for the designs were commended. One member was happy with a mixed set of sculptures and paintings, but another decidedly not, commenting that the work being considered was a miserable representation of modern British art. A third voice stressed that, as any artist represented should be of the world stature of Henry Moore, the set should be

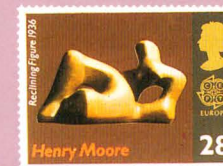


Stamps by Ashted Dastor as issued 11 May 1993. Photogravure printed by Harrison & Sons

Dick Senior



6.1



6.2

Tom Eckersley



6.3

Ashted Dastor



6.4



6.5



6.6

his alone. Yet another view expressed was that no chosen artist should still be living.

A solution to the temporary impasse was found. On this occasion the Committee delegated to two of its members the task of choosing the most appropriate artists and artwork in conjunction with Royal Mail. This sub-committee reported back at the May 1992 meeting, explaining the principles underlying its choice. It had firstly disregarded artists who were still living, since only the work of a deceased figure could be considered a complete artistic statement. It agreed that the greatest British artist of this century was Henry Moore, but not that the set should be devoted only to him. A broad spread of visual styles and mediums was the aim of the set, making Stanley Spencer and Ben Nicholson obvious choices in addition to Moore. The fourth candidate was the most controversial, but in Edward Bawden an entirely different aspect of British art was represented. The sub-committee felt its choice of artists for the four stamps gave visual variety and could depict work of the highest calibre within each particular type.

The SAC accepted this choice and studied new visuals from their preferred designer. Ashted Dastor had prepared eight of these, two for each artist, from which members could say which of the illustrated works of art should go forward. In three cases this soon became clear.

Of Moore's two sculptures, the 'Family Group' was chosen. For Spencer the 'Bridge at Cookham' was too busy in detail and the 'St Francis' was preferred, especially as this was known to be a hugely popular painting. With Nicholson the Still Life Odyssey was favoured. As ever, Bawden provoked further debate since neither example of his work seemed acceptable, the Church visual especially. It was finally agreed to include Bawden, but to devolve finding more suitable artwork to the sub-committee.

This would not hold up work on preparing

first essays, which would take account of a comment to space the value numerals less widely. A suggestion that the set be increased with a second class denomination was not possible, since CEPT limited the number of stamps in the issue.

First essays were shown to the SAC at the meeting in August 1992. The final choice for Bawden had been made and was part of his poster for Kew Gardens. By agreement it was to be used for the 28p value, with the Spencer painting at 33p, and was found acceptable. Discussion now turned to the fidelity of reproduction with the four selected works of art and the detailed colour balance to achieve it. Silver ink for the Queen's head and value was not favoured and a better colour, grey, was put forward. The precarious angle of the Bawden pagoda needed attention in the cropping, as did the legibility of the hand in Spencer's St Francis.

Members returned to the set at the next meeting in September, when second essays were presented. Much progress was evident but some points of detail still provoked comment. This time it was differing weights of captions, especially as concerned the Nicholson stamp, and whether they were too small. The attitude of St Francis still worried one member - was he dancing or kissing? The break-up of the mandatory Europa symbol was noted, though this style was due to be replaced in any case.

The lengthy deliberations caused by this set concluded with discussion on whether its appeal would be limited and the peculiar difficulties met in depicting works of art on stamps. In general it was felt to be a worthwhile treatment of the CEPT theme and one providing balance to the year's programme. Subject to the final details being resolved to Royal Mail's satisfaction, the Advisory Committee agreed at this meeting of 17 September 1992 that the set should be submitted for the approval of Her Majesty The Queen.

7. Roman Britain

Stamps to mark the 1950th anniversary of the Roman occupation of Britain.

A great deal of thought went into finding the right concept for this set, during which the Advisory Committee studied the work of six designers. Meetings beginning in February 1992 found such varied reactions from members to the suggested approaches that a final consensus was not achieved until lengthy debate had taken place.

The initial three designers were represented by sets of presentation visuals shown at the first of the meetings. Harry Brockway had featured woodcut portraits of significant figures from Roman times: Claudius, Boudicca, Agricola, Hadrian and Constantine. The treatment was in the style of [7.1] for colour and the same set of five was repeated in black and white. Five visuals in square format came from Richard Long (as developed by Keith Bassford). Mr Long chose a long-distance walk, showing features along Hadrian's Wall [7.2], including one that was wholly typographic [7.3].

John Gibbs produced three approaches. The first set had five different mosaic details

of the type [7.4]. Also in square format were six visuals as [7.5] portraying heads from Roman times in a variety of media. For his third approach the designer treated heads in close-up, a set of five vertical stamps in the style of [7.6].

The 36 designs under study drew only muted reaction and no set was felt acceptable. One member doubted whether depicting Constantine was justified, his supposed introduction of Christianity to Britain being disputed, and said that swastikas in the mosaic designs were also hardly appropriate. The SAC was asked for its own suggestions, at which members emphasised the need to stress Roman links with Britain. It could be achieved through artists' impressions of Roman life-styles; or there could be depictions of reconstructed Roman structures.

Some other ideas emerged as worth investigating. A member suggested the use of roman numerals; another wondered if a philatelic precedent could be set by printing information about a design on the back of the stamp. Issue of the set as a se-tenant strip



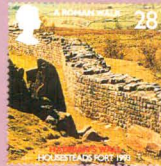
*Stamps by John Gibbs as issued 15 June 1993.
The set was printed by Harrison & Sons in photogravure*

Harry Brockway



7.1

Richard Long



7.2



7.3

John Gibbs



7.4



7.5



7.6

Frank Gardiner



7.7

Derek Lucas



7.8

Michael Taylor



7.9

could be considered and the presentation pack might include a papyrus leaflet.

Additional designs were produced for the May 1992 meeting. A set of five by Frank Gardiner, as [7.7], showed reconstructions of Roman Britain: he had depicted Richborough Monument, the Port of London, Lullingstone Villa, Caerleon Amphitheatre and Hadrian's Wall. Derek Lucas [7.8] approached Roman life-styles with five drawings in chronological progression. These covered: Claudius, Surrender at Colchester, AD 43; Boudicca, Sacking of St Albans, AD 61; Agricola, Invasion of Anglesey, AD 78; Hadrian's Wall under Construction, AD 123; and Constantinius, Liberation of London, AD 296. The third new set of visuals came from Michael Taylor, five photographs of Roman remains which tourists could visit [7.9]. Here the subjects were Hadrian's Wall, the Great Bath, Caerleon Amphitheatre, Wade's Causeway and the Porchester Shore Fort.

Before considering the visuals, the Committee was told of reservations over authentication expressed by the British Museum, the Museum of London and the Roman Society. Personal reactions to the work of the six designers now on display soon proved very divided, members liking and disliking different sets. The originality of Richard Long's walk along Hadrian's Wall eventually found most favour. His map of the route was also hardly clear enough and a member thought the set might lack popular appeal, even though it strongly represented Roman Britain. Michael Taylor's tourist sites approach seemed acceptable to some if better photographs and more attractive locations could be found. Criticism of John Gibbs's artefacts set centred on how specific they were to Britain and, likewise, another member felt that the Frank Gardiner reconstructed buildings resembled a children's textbook.

Though Richard Long's set for the Roman

walk had been chosen, John Gibbs's artefacts would be taken to artwork stage as first reserve. In the event this was wise. When the Committee met in August 1992 it learned that Richard Long was unfortunately uncontactable. In the circumstances discussion resumed on making a straight choice between the two remaining approaches that had attracted most earlier support. They were the Gibbs set of Roman figures crafted and found in Britain and the Brockway illustrations of the heads of well known personalities from the Roman occupation. The view emerging from all the individual preferences was that, providing there were captions explaining the British connection, John Gibbs's designs should go forward.

Second essays, fine-tuned from a first set as time was available, were scrutinised by the SAC in December and again brought many detailed comments. These essays developed the Gibbs 'smaller head' style of [7.5], with captions added to show where the artefacts had been found. The actual wording for this struck one member as long-winded and another as too small, particularly on the bilingual 33p; its word Roma did not read well either and the vignette needed softening. A disappearing Queen's head certainly needed review and might be better produced as silhouette in place of halftone. There were worries about the captioning of the mosaic figure on the 39p stamp. A simple word 'Christ' would be read by some people as an expletive, so that either a Latin version or adding a cross would be advisable. To use 'Jesus Christ' would unbalance the captioning. A final suggestion for printing values in Roman numerals was ruled out as contrary to UPU regulations.

At this meeting of 10 December 1992 the Advisory Committee agreed that, once members' reservations had been cleared, the set should be sent for approval by Her Majesty.

8. Inland Waterways

Stamps for the 200th anniversary of the peak of canal building in Britain.

Visual realisation of this subject was not an easy matter and it took some time before the Advisory Committee could be certain which of two approaches was the more acceptable. Should the emphasis be solely on canals or should there be a broader treatment of waterways activities in general? The set in fact noted not only the Grand Junction Canal's 200th anniversary but complemented the series of canals events in 1993 organised by the Inland Waterways Association.

At the May 1992 meeting the SAC had presentation visuals before it from four

*Designs commissioned from:
Reg Cartwright, Debbie Cook,
Tony Lewery, Trickett & Webb*

designers. Debbie Cook had produced detailed drawings of two craft, but this approach did not find favour. Reg Cartwright's submission [as 8.1] was four pictures of modern canals, a possibility for development as the set instantly conveyed the themes of water and communications.

The two other designers were Trickett & Webb and Tony Lewery, whose approaches were different. Trickett & Webb were illustrating a broad spread of British canal life; this remained consistent throughout two more stages of visuals asked for by the Committee, the total of 20 showing changed



*Stamps by Tony Lewery as issued 20 July 1993.
The set was printed by The House of Questa Ltd. in offset lithography*

Reg Cartwright



8.1

Trickett & Webb



8.2

Tony Lewery



8.3

pictures and with panels and more colour added [as 8.2]. Tony Lewery used the subject by reflecting his work in the traditional decoration of canal boats and likewise developed nine visuals altogether [as 8.3].

No final choice seemed possible at the next (June) meeting, when members returned to the Inland Waterways set. Reactions remained mixed: the match of monochrome photograph and superimposed image from Trickett & Webb was found interesting and the depicted scenes nostalgic. Whether the photographs were cropped to best advantage, however, was queried and one member found the designs too complicated. There were similar worries with Tony Lewery's work at this stage. Striking and original as they were, the designs left one member simply confused. Another reckoned them ambiguous in meaning. The meeting nevertheless wanted both designers to continue and produce artwork and visuals were shown in September 1992.

It helped a choice emerge in the course of discussion, as reactions were at first divided. Favouring Trickett & Webb were that their stamps faithfully reflected the subject of inland waterways in geographic diversity, featuring actual scenes rather than stylised drawings or symbolism. Against this was a feeling that the many alternatives they had developed on request had not really produced a set any more viable than that first presented. Tony Lewery had a freshness of approach some found attractive but with designs in the set that others thought too similar. A better balance between foreground and background and attention to making

numerals of value clearer was called for, but in general his was the approach that members finally agreed to support. His designs were also reckoned to make a useful contrast with the adjacent Roman Britain and Autumn sets in the programme.

For the January 1993 meeting first essays were available of Tony Lewery's designs as finally modified. They were well received and the matters raised concerned points of detail, in particular the colours of sky and water. The unusually large margins provoked discussion but found general approbation. A member felt the lettering on the 33p stamp looked out of focus, but another was pleased to see the horse was at last made more visible in the design! All in all the meeting recognised how much more successful the set had become during its development and the Committee gave formal agreement on 14 January 1993 for it to sent to Her Majesty for approval.



9. Autumn

Stamps in continuation of the Four Seasons series.

*Designs commissioned from:
Don Cordery, Jennifer Eachus,
Charlotte Knox, Peter Murphy,
Chris Wormell*

First consideration at the January 1992 meeting of the Stamp Advisory Committee was of the Four Seasons series as a whole. The first set in this series, Wintertime, was issued on 14 January 1992.

In 1993 the season to be depicted was Autumn and for the meeting a total of 31 visuals had been prepared. They had come from five designers, but on this occasion a consensus quickly emerged on which set to choose for development to first essay stage. Members chose Charlotte Knox's work [as 9.1], commenting that the designs appeared the most positive and inviting.

The other designers' visuals showed a variety of interesting approaches. Chris Wormell

[9.2] had used wood engravings of country scenes framed in leaves. Jennifer Eachus showed pottery as autumnal fruits and leaves. Peter Murphy produced country scenes carved from wood. The final submission was of two sets from Don Cordery. Those in horizontal format [9.3] featured landscapes with a wide geographic spread and the square-format set [9.4] was of autumn leaves.

First essays of Charlotte Knox's designs were before the Committee at its June meeting. A caption 'Autumn' and some background colour had been added and, for legibility, the Queen's head and value were in white reversed out of colour. One member felt the designs had moved away from the



*Stamps by Charlotte Knox as issued 14 September 1993.
The set was printed by Harrison & Sons in photogravure*

Charlotte Knox



9.1

Chris Wormell



9.2

Don Cordery



9.3

original artwork and another that the white border was disruptive. The words 'jam labels' were even voiced at one point and the use of white background was criticised, since fruits would never be seen in such a setting.

A troublesome detail proved to be captioning. The present 'Autumn' was unpleasant in colour and position in one member's opinion and the typography 'unsightly' according to another. A third believed the designs were obvious and no caption was needed, a view then disputed on behalf of purchasers who would not be clear what the stamps referred to. Suggestions were made to include the names of the fruits and these could, perhaps, make a small caption with the word Autumn

along the bottom of the stamps.

All these comments were taken into consideration so as to have further essays ready for the Committee meeting in September. Work had been done in making the stamps mellower in colour and improving the definition. An unobtrusive 'Autumn' caption now appeared in the left margin away from the design. There was a parting shot from one member who would have preferred values in the bottom left-hand corner rather than next to the Queen's head. Nevertheless, the SAC expressed its agreement at this meeting of 17 September 1992 for the set to be submitted to The Queen for approval.

Don Cordery



9.4

10. Sherlock Holmes

Stamps for the centenary of the great detective's reported death.

An issue for the opening of the Channel Tunnel was in preparation for 1993 but, as this event looked likely to be postponed, contingency plans were put in hand. In June 1992 members of the Advisory Committee adopted the replacement subject of Sherlock Holmes; they were also agreeable in principle to this being part of a future programme even if the Tunnel opened on schedule after all.

Visuals for a Holmes set from two designers were studied at the meeting, to allow the SAC to state its preference. Chris Wormell's designs [10.1] illustrated four of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's stories - The Reigate Squires, The Naval Treaty, The Cardboard Box and The Final Problem. Similar subject matter

*Designs commissioned from:
Andrew Davidson
Chris Wormell*

could be seen in Andrew Davidson's four visuals [10.2], except that The Greek Interpreter replaced The Naval Treaty. These selections of stories drew a request for The Hound of the Baskervilles to be included.

Chris Wormell's treatment found some support for its light-hearted drawings and the very original faces, but it was felt that the set would look too much like the 1992 Civil War issue.

A clear preference for Andrew Davidson's set became apparent, leading to ideas on how it might be developed. The need for more colour in the designs was generally felt, the typography might need improving, and there was little differentiation between the separate



*Stamps by Andrew Davidson as issued 12 October 1993.
The set was printed by The House of Questa Ltd. in offset lithography*

Chris Wormell



10.1

Andrew Davidson



10.2

designs. This sameness suggested making the issue a se-tenant strip. Some criticism was heard that the stamps looked like book illustrations, which ought to be avoided. In fact Andrew Davidson's brief had asked him to illustrate the designs in that style; the well known engravings used with the original stories in *The Strand Magazine*, however, would have been difficult to use as the basis for the stamp designs. A member thought some people would find the designs disagreeable but another advocated adding a mystery clue to each of the stamps to make them more interesting. A further novelty was the adoption of an unusually long vertical dimension.

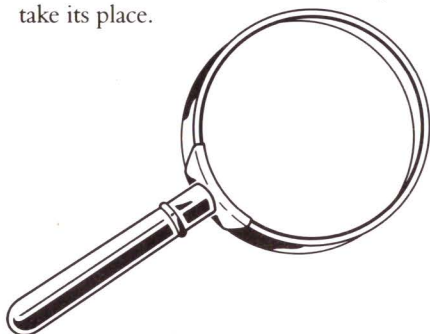
Further designs from Andrew Davidson were on view at the meeting in September 1992. This was in response to the suggestion for some better known stories to be depicted and the seven visuals now comprised: The Reigate Squire (in the singular, the correct title); The Final Problem; The Cardboard Box; The Greek Interpreter; The Hound of the Baskervilles; The Six Napoleons and A Study in Scarlet. It had meant the original scheme only to use stories published in the year 1893 had been abandoned, but 1993 as issue date was still valid: that would mark the centenary of publication of Sherlock Holmes's supposed death over the Reichenbach Falls.

As Royal Mail were likely to issue the set as five se-tenant stamps in first class rate, the Committee was asked to confirm which titles from those displayed it wished to go forward. The casualties proved to be The Cardboard Box and A Study in Scarlet and they were eliminated. The strip was recommended to

be in the sequence light-dark-light-dark-light.

First essays were shown to the SAC in December 1992. Through lack of time they had not been perforated and it was recognised that the black was too heavy at present and would need adjustment. Members expressed great enthusiasm for the set, with lingering concerns that they could be lighter in colour, especially the too dark faces in The Six Napoleons stamp. The value indicators were difficult to read on some stamps too. Of the designs themselves The Greek Interpreter seemed a little obscure and one member, mindful of the interest in Holmesian scholarship, cautioned Royal Mail to check that the phase of the moon in The Hound of the Baskervilles stamp corresponded with the story.

Members were shown second essays at the meeting on 1 April 1993. They were approved subject to modification to a shadow under Dr Watson's nose and the strengthening of values on the lighter stamps. The Chairman informed the Committee that, as anticipated, the Channel Tunnel issue intended for the Autumn would be delayed and that the Sherlock Holmes stamps would take its place.



11. Christmas 1993

Seasonal stamps celebrating the 150th anniversary of Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol*.

Designs commissioned from:
Quentin Blake, Carroll Dempsey &
Thirkell, Simon Larbalestier,
Peter Windett

Charles Dickens's well loved novel had been chosen as the theme for the 1993 Christmas stamps. However, in case it proved impossible to produce suitable designs Royal Mail had taken the precaution of commissioning a further set. The Stamp Advisory Committee's meeting in August 1992 saw five visuals for this [as 11.1], the work of Simon Larbalestier. This designer had used photography to achieve a rich array of Victorian images.

Approaches for the designated Christmas Carol theme were also on view from three other designers. Peter Windett [11.2] illustrated a single character on each stamp, with

the 18p for Tiny Tim, 24p Ebenezer Scrooge, 28p The Ghost of Christmas Present, 33p Bob Cratchit, and 39p Marley's Ghost. Each was identified by caption, while a right-hand panel explained the anniversary; a decorative border unified the denominations, all containing Christmas symbols.

Carroll Dempsey & Thirkell's treatment of individuals [11.3] formed a story-board traceable through the right-hand panels. The story unfolded as follows: (18p) Scrooge condemns Christmas as humbug; (24p) Marley's ghost warns Scrooge; (28p) Scrooge observes happiness in others; (33p) Scrooge honours Christmas in his heart; (39p) Tiny Tim asks God to bless everyone. Though



Stamps by Quentin Blake as issued 9 November 1993.
The set was printed by Harrison & Sons in photogravure

Simon Larbalestier



11.1

Peter Windett



11.2

read in conjunction, care had nevertheless been taken that each stamp could stand alone as a design.

The Committee was, however, unanimous in support of a third Christmas Carol set, five visuals from Quentin Blake [as 11.4] depicting characters in a light, contemporary style. Admiring comments were made, with a word of dissent that the value indicators should preferably be drawn rather than typeset. At this stage Quentin Blake had proposed spreading characters among the denominations in the order: 18p Scrooge, 24p Bob Cratchit & Tiny Tim, 28p Mr & Mrs Fezziwig, 33p The Prize Turkey, and 39p Mr Scrooge's Nephew. A member preferred Scrooge to be moved away from the most widely used second-class value.

This rearrangement had been effected in the first essays considered by the SAC in December 1992. The first three values were

now allocated in the sequence used (with subsequent uprating) in the issued stamps. Members once again voiced their enthusiasm for the designs as a whole, but offered some last-minute suggestions. Perhaps the caption 'A Christmas Carol' would be better typeset? Probably not, as the handwriting was part of the character of the set. Perhaps the price indicator could be less active? Doubtful, because of the operational requirement that the stamps should be seen to be different. But since the head and value were, indeed, powerful in relation to the delicate artwork it was acknowledged there needed to be a careful balance of tone.

The Committee at this meeting of 12 December 1992 had no hesitation in agreeing that the set should be submitted for approval by Her Majesty. It was a pleasant finale to the advice it had given for eleven stamp issues in the 1993 programme.

Carroll Dempsey & Thirkell



11.3

Quentin Blake



11.4

The Stamp Advisory Committee

List of Members as from 1 April 1993

Paul Hopper	<i>Marketing and Sales Director, Royal Mail (Chairman)</i>
Colin C M Pawson	<i>Head of Philatelic Marketing, Royal Mail (Secretary)</i>
Barry J Robinson	<i>Design Director, Royal Mail</i>
Dr Jean Alexander	<i>Food scientist and philatelist</i>
Floella Benjamin	<i>Television presenter</i>
Lady Casson	<i>Architect and Designer</i>
Brenda Dean	<i>(Baroness Dean from June 1993), former trade union leader</i>
Gwyneth Dunwoody	<i>Member of Parliament</i>
Mary Lewis	<i>Director of design consultancy</i>
Prof Alan Livingston	<i>Principal of Falmouth School of Art & Design</i>
John McConnell	<i>Design Consultant</i>
Richard Negus	<i>Design Consultant</i>
Eric Ogden	<i>Former Member of Parliament</i>
Sybil Smith	<i>Representative of Department of Trade & Industry</i>
Prof Herbert Spencer	<i>Professor of Graphic Arts, Royal College of Art, 1978-84</i>
Jean Varga	<i>Stamp dealer and catalogue publisher</i>

Note: This review covers Committee meetings of April 1991 to April 1993. In that period Prof Dan Fern, Dr Alan Huggins and the late Christian Petersen were serving members.

The Chairman at April 1991 was Keith Fisher, then General Manager, Royal Mail Stamps. He was succeeded October 1991 to April 1993 by David Lane, Director and General Manager, Royal Mail National.

Attending in a technical advisory capacity were: (for Harrison & Sons Ltd) Derrick Howlett, succeeded July 1991 by John Orford, and (for The House of Questa Ltd) Wally Rodgers.

Where required, Royal Mail staff from relevant Departments attended certain meetings at the invitation of the Chairman.

The Author

James Negus BSc, FRPSL was born in London in 1927 and his career was in book editing and technical information. He changed subjects to philately on becoming the Stanley Gibbons Catalogue Editor in 1977.

A stamp collector continuously since boyhood, he has been active in many philatelic societies, including the National (formerly Junior) Philatelic Society and the China Philatelic Society of London. He was Associate Editor of the prestigious *Philatelic Literature Review*, 1969-75. He edited books in the Heinemann Philatelic Series 1969-75 and was a Consultant Editor to the magazine *Stamp World* in 1987.

Mr Negus is noted for numerous indexes, including several large-scale cumulative works. His first magazine article appeared in 1950; since then his published articles, reviews, letters and columns have run into hundreds.

After leaving Stanley Gibbons in 1981, James Negus edited the *Connoisseur Catalogue of Machin Stamps* and wrote the much-praised *Philatelic Literature: Compilation Techniques and Reference Sources* (1991). The book has received several high awards up to Gold at major philatelic exhibitions. Mr Negus's name was inscribed in the Hall of Fame of the American Philatelic Society Writers Unit in 1992.

He was first elected a Fellow of the Royal Philatelic Society in 1968 and has been a member of the Philatelic Writers Society since its formation. He is not related to Stamp Advisory Committee member Richard Negus.

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