

BRITISH PHILATELIC

The ROYAL MAIL magazine *for stamp collectors*

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Bulletin

Towards a new millennium •
Postmarks for Christmas



Forthcoming issues and withdrawals



Cover photograph Details of Royal Mail's 1998 Christmas stamps, aerogramme and aircard. The stamps and aircard were featured in last month's *Bulletin*. Photograph by Geoff Dann.

2 November

Issue Christmas stamps, presentation pack, stamp books (20 × 20p, 10 × 26p), 1998 Year Pack and Year Book

7 November

Withdrawal 10 × 1st book by Walsall, issued Nov 97

12 November

Withdrawal Queen's Golden Wedding stamps, pack, stamp cards and souvenir book; 1997 Year Book and Year Pack

14 November

Issue 4 × 1st book with commemorative label for 50th birthday of The Prince of Wales. (Unfolded pane also available, from Bureau only.) Prince of Wales Philatelic Numismatic Cover (PNC) with £5 crown

1 December

Issue £1 and £2 machine books, 10 × 1st and 10 × 2nd NVI books containing stamps printed by Questa by gravure.

31 December

Withdrawal 1997 Aircards (pack of five); 1995 Registered and Special Delivery envelopes, 1994 International Recorded Delivery envelope

31 December

Withdrawal Definitive packs Nos 27 (Castles), 33 (£3 stamp), 34 and 35 (low values), Country Pack No 36 (20p, 26p, 37p, 63p litho stamps)

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

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ROYAL MAIL FIRST DAY COVER

Win this first day cover from Bethlehem (Wales) in our Prize Draw. See page 87 for details.

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This month The Editor previews this issue

THIS MONTH'S issue contains two features reminding us (if that is necessary!) that Christmas is not too far away. Every year thousands of collectors receive first day covers of the Christmas stamps with a Bethlehem postmark. David Watkins tells us about this small Welsh village known the world-over through its postmark. James Mackay looks at Christmas postmarks from Britain and overseas. These two articles will, I am sure, be welcomed by collectors of the Christmas theme. Jim Mackay also looks at Millennium stamps; the first of Royal Mail's 12 sets for 1999 will be previewed next month.

Last month we previewed the special label booklet marking the 50th birthday of HRH The Prince of Wales. We remind you that this goes on sale on the Prince's birthday – Saturday, 14 November.

There are three major UK exhibitions this month – in London, Manchester, and Hove. The Irish national stamp exhibition will be held in Dublin. I hope many readers will enjoy their visits to these exhibitions. See the Stamp scene and Events sections of this *Bulletin* for details.

Nominations are being invited for the Rowland Hill Awards for philatelic achievement during 1998; these will be presented next April. *Bulletin* readers can take part by nominating post offices which they consider give exceptional service to collectors. A nomination form for the Post Office Excellence award is included with this *Bulletin*. JOHN HOLMAN, EDITOR •

Royal Mail news Christmas stamps • New PNCs • NPM exhibits • Prince of Wales label

Christmas 1998 The 33rd set of British Christmas stamps goes on sale at post offices and philatelic outlets on 2 November. The 20p, 26p, 30p, 43p and 63p stamps feature angels as do the Christmas aerogramme and air-card issued last month.

Books containing twenty 20p and ten 26p Christmas stamps will be available from post offices, the Bureau, philatelic outlets and many retailers from 2 November, price £4 and £2.60 respectively.

The cylinder numbers are: B1A (gold) B1B (greenish yellow) B1C (magenta) B1D (new blue) B1E (grey-black) in both books, phosphor B16 (20p book) B17 (26p book) •

Philatelic Numismatic Covers Royal Mail and Royal Mint will produce four Philatelic Numismatic (Medallic) Covers during 1999 to commemorate the Berlin Airlift, the Scottish Parliament, Rugby World Cup, and the Millennium. The Berlin Airlift cover will include a medal, the others Royal Mint coins. Details will be published in due course. A Royal Mail PNC album with 15 leaves for storing these popular covers is now available from the British Philatelic Bureau, price £16.50 •

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

Please note that the Museum will be closing at its current location on 24 December. Plans to find a new location are underway. The Post Office Chief Executive, Mr John Roberts, says, 'The Post Office's heritage is a huge asset – and we are looking at proposals for a new centre to make it as accessible as possible in the new Millennium.' The NPM collection of stamps will, meanwhile, move to an expanded Post Office Archives Centre at Mount Pleasant; visitors will be able to see the stamp collection by appointment •



It's Only a Game Unadopted design by Anne Magill for Rugby League Centenary issue of 1995.

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

1998 Year Book and Year Pack The 1988 Year Book and Pack will be available from 2 November. The handsomely produced Year Book contains sets of and background information about the development of the year's special issues: Endangered Species, Diana, Princess of Wales, The Queen's Beasts, Lighthouses, Comedians, Health, Magical Worlds, Carnival, Speed, and Christmas. The hardbound book is supplied with matching slipcase. Price £23.95 from the Bureau, philatelic outlets and main post offices. A leather-bound edition, price £75, is available exclusively from the Bureau. The 1998 Year Pack contains all special stamps mounted on a quality display board with an informative brochure about the issues, price £17.95.

Bulletin readers may order the Year Book or Year Pack at special prices by using the order form enclosed with this *Bulletin*.

The 1997 Year Book and Year Pack will be withdrawn from sale on 12 November; collectors wanting these should order immediately from the British Philatelic Bureau •

New stamp books As readers will have noted from Douglas Myall's article last month, The House of Questa are now using gravure rather than litho for printing Royal Mail stamp books. Books of 10 1st and 2nd class NVT stamps and £1 and £2 machine books containing gravure stamps will be available from philatelic outlets from 1 December. The books will be distributed to post offices and retail outlets as required •

1997 quantities The quantities issued of the 1997 aerogrammes were: Alexander Graham Bell, 54,100; Nature of Scotland, 44,125; Christmas, 557,700. The figure for the BBC prestige book was 165,300 •

All enquiries about membership, souvenir covers and gift subscriptions to: Ray Pottle, Friends of the NPM, PO Box 40, Uckfield TN22 2SP. Telephone 01825 766546.

Please enclose stamped addressed envelope or international reply coupon with written enquiries.

The Association of Friends of the National Postal Museum will hold its annual general meeting at the Staff Hall, Mount Pleasant, London EC1 on 28 November. Souvenir covers are being produced.

The Association offers its usual gift package of a special rate two-year subscription – an ideal Christmas (or birthday) gift for any philatelist or postal historian. The annual subscription for UK members normally costs £15, overseas £20. For the festive season only the two-year subscription is just £25 UK, £35 overseas – a saving of £5. On joining a new Friend will receive material produced since 1 April 1998, including copies of the Association's excellent magazine *Cross Post*. New material issued up to 31 March 2000 will be despatched as it becomes available. To ensure delivery by Christmas, please order by 30 November. Please state clearly the name and address of the person you want the subscription for ●

Prince of Wales label booklet and cover The sixth of Royal Mail's pictorial label booklets will be available from the Bureau, philatelic outlets and selected post offices from 14 November. This commemorates the 50th birthday of HRH The Prince of Wales and honours the work of The Prince's Trust. The £1.04 book, printed by Walsall, contains a pane of four 1st class stamps and adjoining label reproducing Prince Charles's painting of the mountain Ben Arkle previously illustrated on one of the 25th anniversary of Prince of Wales investiture stamps of 1994. The pane of stamps and label will be available unfolded only from the British Philatelic Bureau, price £1.04.

As the stamps in the pane are not new, no Royal Mail first day cover or first day of issue postmarks will be available. However Royal Mail and the Royal Mint will be producing a Philatelic Numismatic Cover (PNC) bearing the pane cancelled with a pictorial Tetbury postmark, and the Royal Mint £5 coin commemorating the Prince's birthday. Price £15.95; early ordering is advised ●



Most easterly post office The North Lowestoft PO, the most easterly in the British Isles, has recently been renovated both outside and inside and the frontage now proclaims its significant location. The Sub-Postmaster, Mr Perry, has also produced a cachet to this effect which can be applied to cards and covers on request, but cannot be used to cancel postage stamps. Readers may submit up to six stamped covers for this cachet to: Mr Perry, North Lowestoft PO, 53 High Street, Lowestoft NR32 1JA. Mr Perry also reports that his office won a bronze award in this year's 'Lowestoft in Bloom' competition. The office before its recent renovation was shown here in August 1997, page 373 ●

Towards the new millennium In the build-up to the year 2000, James Mackay takes a look at some new issues marking the event

AS THE FIRST MILLENIUM of the Christian era approached, Christendom was sharply divided between those who believed that at dawn on the first day of the year 1000 the world would come to an end, and those who were convinced that Christ himself would return to rule the world for a thousand years. Both schools of thought envisaged a mighty battle between good and evil and a day of judgement when some would be saved for eternity and others damned in perpetuity.

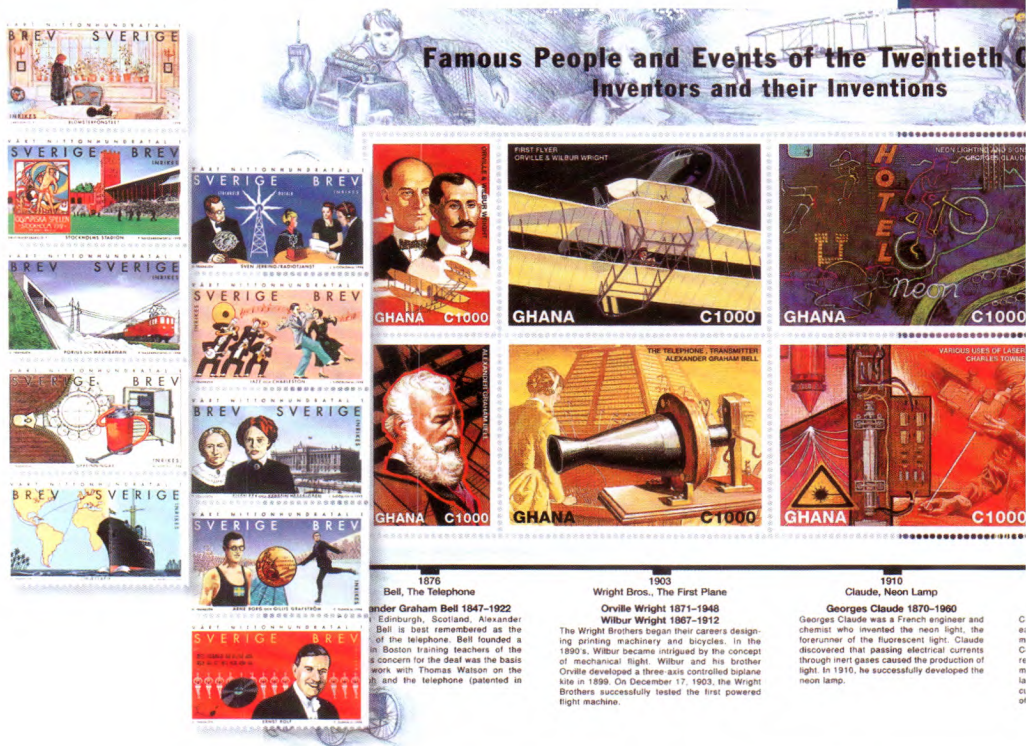
Even the optimists who believed in the second coming also held the view that at the end of Christ's rule, in or about the year 2000, Satan would be let loose on the world. Cynics would argue that that part of the prophecy has already been fulfilled. At any rate, as the end of the first millenium approached, there was a prevailing sense of dread and an increasing religiosity, manifest in the coins of many countries which depicted the hand of God, the holy dove or the Paschal lamb.

In the run-up to the second millenium, numismatists are having a field day, with long sets of coins from Gibraltar, the Isle of Man, the Vatican and San Marino looking back at the achievements of mankind or looking forward to the Holy Year 2000.

In the philatelic field the theme of the majority of stamps issued so far has been a backward glance. Such has been the speed of technological development over the past century alone that the countries which have already launched their issues have concentrated on the years from 1900 onwards. Royal Mail alone has taken the more difficult option of reviewing British achievements in 12 different areas over a far longer period.

First off the mark was the Marshall Islands which released the first of ten sheets in April 1997. These are being issued at the rate of two or three a year. The first sheet, entitled *Decade of New Possibilities (1900-09)*, ranged from New World immigrants to the quest for oil in the deserts of Arabia, via the Dowager Empress of China, Marconi, Einstein, the Wright Brothers and Gandhi.

The second sheet, released late in 1997, was called *Decade of Revolution and Great War* and ranged from the womens' suffrage movement to the Congress of Versailles, via Lenin, Sun Yat-sen, Padraig Pearse and Baron von Richthofen. The sheets released so far this year have covered the period up to the outbreak of the Second World War. *The Decade of Optimism and Disillusionment (1920-29)* charts sweeping social and political changes in Russia and Turkey, the spread of wireless and the invention of television, the world flights of the *Graf Zeppelin* and the first tentative steps in rocketry, the Jazz Age and the first talking pictures, the discovery of Tutankhamen's tomb and penicillin, the rise of fascism and the Wall Street crash.



Above Stamps from one of Sweden's series of booklets. One features Swedish inventions: the zipper, refrigerator, ball-bearing and the vacuum cleaner. A couple dancing the Charleston and a jazz band show American influences already apparent in the 1920s.

Above right Ghana's sheet showing inventors and their contribution to science and technology.

In the *Decade of the Great Depression* (1930-39) the stamps begin with the unemployed at a soup kitchen and end with a smiling audience enjoying the escapist entertainment of the cinema. In between we have scientists splitting the atom, a mighty hydro-electric dam harnessing the force of nature, streamlining in the design of locomotives and aircraft and labour-saving devices which would one day make life much easier. The dark side of the decade, however, was illustrated by Stalin's terror campaign, the rise of Nazi militarism, the Spanish Civil War, the Japanese rape of Nan-king, *Kristallnacht* and the destruction of synagogues in Germany. There is a smug Chamberlain brandishing the document guaranteeing 'peace in our time' and Stukas bombing Poland.

The USA has adopted a similar approach, with a series of 10 sheets under the generic title of 'Celebrate the Century'. There are fifteen 32¢ stamps in each sheet, but they are arranged in random fashion as pairs, blocks, strips or even single stamps, with a background picture highlighting an outstanding feature of each decade: the Wright Brothers *Flyer* at Kitty Hawk in 1903, flag-waving 'doughboys' returning at the end of the First World War, and a line of bathing beauties dancing an impromptu Charleston on the beach to symbolise the Roaring Twenties.



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60.



Designers: Paul Calle and Chris Calle

©1998 MIPs

The subjects of the stamps are specifically American, though it is interesting to note the Scots-born preservationist John Muir on the first sheet and Londoner Charlie Chaplin on the second. Later sheets are now in the pipeline, including some of the postwar decades whose subjects have been selected by popular vote.

Much more modest is Sweden's series of three booklets, each containing 10 stamps. The first, released on 3 October, covers the period from 1900 to 1938, during which Sweden moved from an essentially rural country to a welfare state. Like the American issues, the stamps concentrate on the course of the century through Swedish eyes. Outstanding personalities of the period include the painter Carl Larsson, the suffragists Ellen Key and Kerstin Hesselgren, the Olympic gold medallists Arne Borg and Gillis Grafstrom and the popular entertainer Ernst Rolf whose catch-phrase 'Better and better day by day' summed up the optimism of the period.

The countries in the Inter-Governmental Philatelic Corporation ensemble have adopted a different approach. Each will be issuing a pair of sheets concentrating on some aspect of human achievement in this century. The sheets contain eight stamps: four large stamps in the centre, flanked by vertical pairs portraying the people associated with a particular field of

Above *Decade of Optimism and Disillusionment*, one of 10 sheets to be issued by the Marshall Islands. Designed by father and son Paul and Chris Calle, the sheets contain 15 different 60c stamps.

endeavour, Liberia's sheets feature artists and their paintings, St Vincent concentrates on opera singers and Ghana shows inventors and their contributions to the development of science and technology. Each sheet has a medley of images in the sheet margins and detailed descriptive texts along the foot. They are accompanied by pairs of souvenir sheets publicising individual figures in each category. Although the countries range from Africa to the West Indies, the majority of the subjects chosen so far have been American, an indication of the chief market for these stamps.

Montserrat's contribution (May 1998) has been two sets, in sheetlets of four, devoted to royalty of the 20th century, followed by personalities of the same period. While the choice of monarchs and their flags is fairly predictable, it is interesting to note the celebrities regarded as the most important of this century: Eva Peron, Pablo Picasso, Wernher von Braun, David Ben Gurion, Jean Henri Dunant, Dwight Eisenhower, Gandhi, Charles Lindbergh, Mao Tse-tung, Earl Mountbatten, Konrad Adenauer, Anne Frank and John F Kennedy. The Vatican is on safer ground with its series which, from March 1998 onwards, will portray the more outstanding Popes from Boniface VIII in 1300 down to the present day. These stamps are being issued in sheets of ten – a vertical strip of five stamps with an armorial label se-tenant.

All of the stamps described so far, like Royal Mail's marathon series of 48, look back to historic events, personalities and achievements. The only country which has so far issued stamps that look forward to the Millennium is, appropriately enough, Tonga which, astride the International Date-line, is the place to be at dawn on 1 January 2000 to witness the first sunrise of the new century and already tour operators are taking bookings from people wishing to do just that.

In the build-up to this event Tonga released two sheets, each containing three pairs of stamps depicting a panoramic view of Nuku'alofa, the country's capital. On one, the sun breaks on a globe over the central Pacific, while the other shows a telecommunications satellite. The message across the bottom proclaims 'The very first letter to be posted in the next century will be posted in Tonga. Catch the first post of the next millennium.' Further issues in this genre are scheduled for late 1998 and 1999.

Many philatelists are expanding their coverage of the millennium by including any stamp that looks forward to the year 2000. In this category come the stamps issued by Austria welcoming visitors to Vienna in June 2000 for what promises to be one of the largest stamp exhibitions ever held. Pre-publicity stamps for Espana 2000 in Madrid (October) and Indonesia 2000 in Bandung (August) have already appeared; and do not forget Royal Mail's series of prestige booklets which began last March and will continue through next year to publicise Stamp Show 2000 at Earl's Court in May. Glasgow 2000 (November) may be a more modest philatelic exhibition, but there has already been an issue of attractive publicity labels for it. Doubtless there will be many more stamps, miniature sheets, booklet panes, postal stationery, labels and postmarks publicising these events, to swell the millennium theme considerably ●

The titles and dates for the 12 sets of Royal Mail Millennium stamps were given in the September *Bulletin* (page 22). The first set will be previewed next month.

Text © James Mackay 1998

Your history through the letterbox Martin

Balls reads his family's story in their letters

I ADMIT TO BEING A LAYMAN compared to many other collectors and true philatelists: these few paragraphs follow on from my earlier comments that however much one spends on the stamps themselves, collecting one stamp mint and/or used of each set doesn't really help the non-specialist viewer of the collection to understand how the stamps were used in practise. Some exhibits at even large shows seem to fail because the display has not really explained this to me as a collector with knowledge of only GB material.

It seems that the ideal way to show how a stamp is used is for it to be on ordinary cover. First day and commemorative covers have their place, but with a commercial cover you can see how the stamp makes up a postage rate, when the letter was sent, where it went to and with luck, who sent it. Some GB specialists will find the postmark, phosphor dots/bar-coding, backstamping or other laser markings of interest too.

Tomorrow's postal history These covers can often readily be displayed alongside the written up album page mounted with single stamps by using cover pages. Of course, such items of 'postal history' can be great rarities, affordable only by those with deeper pockets. Yet all major collections start somewhere. I encourage myself by bearing in mind that tomorrow's postal history – with its rarities – comes through my letterbox today.

It also arrives at the office, and at school. It comes to friends and relatives. Often it sits around, still holding its correspondence in files after it's been answered awaiting disposal. Collectors should be encouraged not to tear the stamps off such items, but to sort the covers out and put them safely away, hopefully in a cover album or alongside the issues themselves. Few may be valuable items but in a few years time, they will be hard to replace. In 1998 it's very difficult to find even the GB special stamps of the early 1990s – issued in hundreds of millions – still on ordinary cover at a stamp dealers: virtually all have been soaked off.

Once carefully sorted, the accumulation could become a true collection, a framework that can be built upon perhaps by study, buying or preferably swapping to fill the gaps; the Collectors Club has been helpful here.

Apart from day to day post, I have found that the best items come from older relatives. True, they have been around for longer, but they seem to keep items that matter for maybe years: letters from the council, letters from employers, sweethearts, postcards from overseas or from brothers in the forces or on national service. And fortunately, much that was received through the letterboxes of both sets of my grandparents was indeed just put away. This material formed the affordable foundation for my general collection of GB postal history.

This is the third in a series on enhancing a general collection. The first (December 1996) looked at methods of acquiring even quite specialised stamps in an organised way without having to spend a fortune on them: the second (December 1997) tried to set some GB stamps in context by exploring how they are sold and 'marketed'. Here we examine how for an affordable price a collection might easily illustrate the way a stamp was used.

Below A locally-produced card showing celebrations at Ringsfield for the coronation of George V, postmarked 8 September 1911; and the last card sent back to the village from the trenches of the First World War, dated 24 November 1916.

It is quite a privilege to be able to show *Bulletin* readers that virtually any collector can build a straightforward postal history framework with covers acquired through the family letterbox, using my own collection as an example. Really I suppose this is one of the joys of philately – sharing your collection with fellow collectors. Readers will probably note that the items illustrated are not worth more than a couple of pounds each, although they are to me.

But first, a couple of observations – rarely can every item be perfect, although those illustrated here are near enough. Typewritten addresses go by the board unless you are very lucky. But the covers are far more fun than CTO collectors' covers!

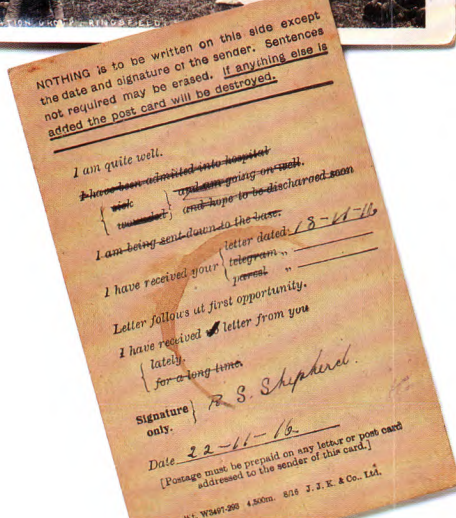
The spin off is that rather than just having a reasonable and more interesting stamp collection, I also have a family archive covering grandparents (one of whom married twice), their brothers and sisters, my parents and of course myself! The archive swelled, and the family interest expanded, when my father-in-law realised my interest. He is himself a collector, a former Fleet Air Arm pilot who was posted all over the country and to Canada, who had the foresight to keep many of the covers he was sent during and after the Second World War in a bureau drawer – the source of some fascinating items. I could perhaps have done with a couple of aunts and uncles abroad between the wars, but no such luck.



Golden age of postcards The items cover every reign from Edward VII, and usually represent lower values. The fashion for locally-produced, even home made postcards of the Edwardian and early George V era, with photographs printed in card format, gave two wonderful items. The first is a card (bearing SG 217) to my grandmother on her 11th birthday with her own portrait as a 10 year old, the second a card (again with SG 217) of the village Coronation celebrations for George V in front of the marquee at Ringsfield, near Beccles in Suffolk, postmarked 8 September 1911, about three months after the event itself (22 June). George V Downey head stamps are represented too.

A sadder turn is taken with the outbreak of the First World War. I have cards from the trenches – unstamped as they were pre-paid, back to the village with FPOs 36 and 42, and censor marks. The last is dated 24 November 1916: great great uncle Reggie was later killed.

Between the wars, holiday postcards provide some insight to family life. Cards from Augusta 'Gussie' back to my grandmother then aged 21 feature scenes of Clacton. By then the postcard





rate had increased to 1d. A card posted on board ship (above top left), bearing 1½d (SG 420) red brown, wmk block cypher, franked 'PAQUEBO 28JA28' features Vesuvius – it must have been delivered back to the UK via Italy. By the following year, the letter rate was also 1½d: an envelope received by my grandparents, at their new home bears a neatly machine cancelled 1½d PUC commemorative (SG 436) from the local town, Lowestoft. They had just married; it was to be their address for nearly 50 years.

The Silver Jubilee of George v is represented by a cover found in the items of my step grandmother (above, top centre) – a neat cover bearing a strip of three of the 1/2d green (sg 453) from the South Wales Petroleum Company to Neath Omnibus Company. She was proud of being Welsh, but I've no idea how she came by it and another similar cover to the same address.

By 1938, my father-in-law was travelling Europe, being closely followed by his mail, which never seems to have quite found him. An envelope posted in Bromley (above, lower right) addressed to him at his school party in an unspecified Copenhagen youth hostel, bearing five of the normally inconsequential George VI ½d dark green stamp (SG 462), left England on 22 August. It was franked at various times by most of the sub offices in København, probably ones which each had a youth hostel near them, on at least 5, 12, 13 and 14 September before being returned undelivered to Bromley a month later on 21 September. He passed it to me nearly 50 years later.

The Second World War led to delivery rates for a standard letter at 2½d inland: another neat cover bearing a long since vanished village po hand-franking 'Dickleborough, Diss, Norfolk 21 August 1940' (above, top right) carries the ½d and 2d of the Penny Black centenary issue (sg 479, 482).

From top left card posted on board ship; a cover bearing a strip of three George V Silver Jubilee stamps; a cover with the 1/2d and 2d of the Penny Black centenary issue, 1940; an envelope received by my grandparents bearing a neatly machine cancelled 1 1/2d PUC commemorative; and a cover which closely followed my father-in-law around Europe in 1938.

Opposite from top: a cover from my father-in-law to his mother, 1944; a registered letter bearing SG 491, Victory 2½d, 1949; Forces Letter (a lightweight aerogramme format); a cover bearing a complete booklet pane of 6½d stamps, 1960; and a card featuring 'Smoky Owdham', 1962.

A cover, interesting because it shows the wartime wish to re-use as much as possible, was sent by my father-in-law to his mother in Bromley, postmarked Douglas, Isle of Man, 10 August 1944, bearing SG 489, the light blue 'watered down ink' definitive of George VI. Beneath the economy Royal Naval War Library address label and stamp are the outbound address and stamps, a pair of the light green ½d and a 1½d of the same issue.

Registered letters seemed to be the only way of finding my father-in-law immediately after the war. Again, the mail followed him around the country to Royal Naval Air Stations, aircraft carriers and so on. A registered letter from Ilford (3 May 1949) delivered to one station in Cornwall (Helston, 9 May) was then hastily forwarded with sticky labels to HMS *Implacable* care of the GPO, London, then forwarded to Invergordon in Scotland (10 May). I have covers addressed to him individually bearing every stamp in the 1949 UPU set, yet all with different addresses. All the other commemorative issues of George VI are well represented too.

A new reign Later, his post followed him to Canadian air stations and on to HM Canadian Ship *Shearwater*. Several examples of Forces Letters mailed to this ship at Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, straddle the end of the definitives of George VI and the introduction of the Wildings. They are interesting because they are complete and still bear all the correspondence.

Lower value Wildings are still easy to find on cover, and my collection has many. A wonderful cover back to Suffolk, in my father's immaculate print, bears a complete booklet pane of six ½d stamps (SG 570) postmarked from our then home of Hemel Hempstead in November 1960. Postcards were still being sent: by 1962 we were looking to follow my father's job to Lancashire. A card featuring the delights of pre-smokeless zone 'Owdham' (sic caption) tries to make light of the change, which lasted just 15 months. It also bears booklet stamps: SG 570 and 572.

It helps that my parents wrote to both sets of grandparents weekly – neither was on the phone. Many commemorative sets figure, at least in the lower values; National Productivity Year 1962 (SG 631), Freedom from Hunger (634) and so on. The 3d Shakespeare stamp (646) was used on a letter to my father-in-law who had by then left the Fleet Air Arm to work for a leading frozen chicken company.

A first day cover of the 1968 General Anniversaries 4d (SG 767) contained the weekly letter sent on 29 May to my grandparents' holiday hotel – c/o Norfolk Motor Services, Royal Hotel, Edinburgh, Scotland ('Arriving at Hotel on Evening of Friday 31st May'). Virtually all the issues of the 1960s are represented, up to the Prince of Wales Investiture Issue. That day (1 July 1969), my grandmother died – and my father encouraged my grandfather to install a phone. So the weekly letters stopped.

But the framework of items continues, forming the basis of my Machin and postage due/to pay collections. Covers bearing decimal issues feature strongly too, not to mention the covers I have since acquired or bought from other sources. But perhaps I have written enough here to illustrate that a collection can be fascinating for more than just its stamps ●

Martin Balls has been collecting stamps since he was six – 37 years. Whilst specialising in marketing and promotions, he worked for Stanley Gibbons from 1979 to 1982, where he met his wife. In 1982, he moved into advertising agencies, then PR; he subsequently ran his own high-tech PR consultancy. He now specialises in mid-range computer software and hardware marketing, working from home over the Internet. He collects Great Britain mint and used generally up to 1981, with specialist collections of retail and greetings stamps, Machin definitives and 'regional' country stamps, all preferably on cover.

Text © Martin Balls 1998 Photographs by Geoff Dann



Christmas postmarks James Mackay tells of special arrangements for Christmas mail



Slogans exhorting the public to post early for Christmas, from Canada and Switzerland, above, and Britain, opposite.

MANY COUNTRIES have organised special postal facilities to handle Christmas mail and a wide range of distinctive postmarks has been produced.

At one time the British Post Office actually delivered mail on Christmas Day itself, and it was customary for people to receive their cards on Christmas morning. This practice, however, placed an intolerable burden on the postal staff and by the end of the 19th century the PO was urging people to post their cards in advance.

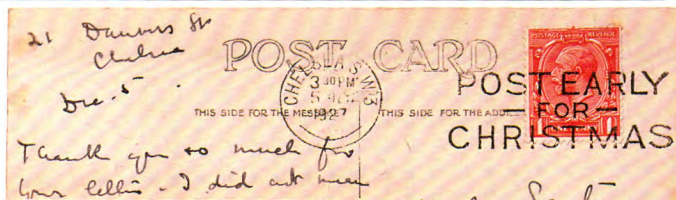
As the public persisted in the desire to get cards on the day itself, the PO eventually devised a

scheme to make this possible while, at the same time, relieving the pressure which built up on Christmas Eve. The scheme was tried experimentally at Rochdale in December 1902, and the public were encouraged to post their cards well in advance, with the promise that they would be sorted and held for delivery on Christmas Day.

An oval postmark was used, inscribed POSTED IN ADVANCE FOR DELIVERY ON CHRISTMAS DAY and applied in red to halfpenny items and in black to penny letters, both being very scarce. This scheme was such a success that it was extended to other towns in Cheshire and Lancashire the following year. Double oval stamps were used with the inscription at top and bottom. In the centre appeared the two- or three-letter telegraphic code identifying the town, above the year. An entirely new design was introduced in 1907, with the name of the office at the top and the year digits flanking a large x, with MAS underneath. Manchester had a special die fitted to a Columbia machine and this was used during the Christmas periods of 1907-9.

Although about 40 towns participated, mainly in England but including several in Scotland, Ireland and the Isle of Man, the scheme did not justify the expense of the special postmark dies. After the initial enthusiasm had worn off, however, the public reverted to their old practices and by 1909 the advance posting scheme was being regarded as more trouble than it was worth, so the PO quietly dropped it. Judging by the rarity of the postmarks – in some cases no actual examples have yet been found, though the marks are known to have been issued – the public do not seem to have supported the scheme as widely as the PO had hoped.

Canada operated a similar system between 1926 and 1945. Though special postmarks like the British were not used, machine cancellation was applied in red instead of black, to enable sorters to distinguish the Christmas mail. This scheme which eventually operated in Winnipeg, Toronto, Montreal, Halifax, St John and Barrie (Ontario) was backed by slogan postmarks urging the public to USE ADVANCE POSTING FOR CHRISTMAS.



David H. Jones Esq.,
7 Saughtonhall Place,
Edinburgh.12.



is du Sauty
Beichy. Head
de of Health
Hampstead
M.W.B.

In 1958 plastic-faced dies were used experimentally at Coventry, Croydon, Leicester and Romford and Dagenham (left). These may be recognised by their frame-line and generally fuzzier appearance. The unsuccessful experiment was not repeated.

Most countries have contented themselves with slogans exhorting the public to post early for Christmas. Britain began using such slogans in 1925 and variations on this theme continued till 1966. Later dies omitted the lines flanking the word FOR and in this guise continued till the end of the Second World War, being one of the few slogans used during that period. In 1946 a new design, incorporating holly leaves, was introduced. A cruder version of the holly design was used in a few machines from 1947 till 1952, but in that year a new design with solid leaves and patterns of three berries was adopted. In 1960 a die incorporating a Christmas candle was introduced and superseded the holly design in all but a few offices. In 1961 an additional 50 machines were fitted with a slogan THINK OF THE OLD AT CHRISTMAS.

While the holly and candle dies continued sporadically till the late 1960s, they were generally superseded in 1966 by a slogan inscribed 'Post your Christmas cards by the 20th December'. This continued till 1970 when the public were asked PLEASE POST CARDS IN BUNDLES. Having tried to educate the public in these matters for almost half a century the PO then gave up and since then slogans have taken the form of Christmas greetings, a bilingual version being used in Wales.

Since 1964 a number of towns have sponsored individual slogans, usually alluding to their Christmas shopping facilities and seasonal attractions. A few have even used Christmas greetings to drum up goodwill at a time when most people are thinking of booking holidays for the following summer, and in more recent years slogans have advertised pantomimes.



The relaxation of the rules on commercial advertising has inevitably affected Christmas, the ultimate being this slogan advertising Diamond brand walnuts from California.

Opposite The best known of the Christmas post offices is Christkindl ('little Christ child') in Austria, whose pictorial handstamps invariably show Nativity figures or scenes or other religious subjects.

Places with a suitable name also get in on the act. Santa Claus (Indiana and California), Christmas (Florida), Santas Land (Vermont) and Christmas Hills (Victoria) all use pictorial postmarks. Since December 1966 Bethlehem (Wales) has had special handstamps and even machine dies for use on FDCs of Christmas stamps. Recently similar facilities have been provided in the original Bethlehem and Nazareth, first by the Israeli PO and latterly by the Palestinian Authority.

The US Postal Service has recently provided a temporary facility at North Pole in Alaska (zip code AK 99705), with suitable postmarks.

Slogans urging the public to post early for Christmas have been used in many countries. While the United States has used pictorial slogans urging the public to shop as well as mail early for Christmas, Canada, by contrast, favoured a slogan PUT CHRIST BACK INTO CHRISTMAS. Slogans with Christmas greetings from the Post Office originated in Italy in the 1950s and have now spread world-wide.

Several countries also operate a scheme enabling children to communicate with Santa Claus. In Britain, letters written to fantasy addresses such as Reindeerland, Toyland or Snowland, find their way to a special Royal Mail Centre where Santa and his helpers duly send out cards to his admirers. These cards are contained in envelopes which, at one time, were franked by a special postmark showing the indefatigable saint jingling across the night sky, the paid dater die bearing the name of Reindeerland. In more recent years, however, although the envelopes have become more pictorial, a prosaic Postage Paid Impression has replaced the Reindeerland slogan.

Letters addressed to Santa at the North Pole are required, under Universal Postal Union regulations, to be forwarded to their destination as this is a real place. Letters to Santa in Greenland elicited a response in special pictorial envelopes with distinctive paid machine dies (opposite, lower right).

In France, children who write in receive in due course a charming reply from Pere Noel. New Zealand's Post Office at one time operated a Santa Claus service free to its youthful correspondents, but on the other side of the Tasman Sea the service is operated by the Australian Stamp Promotion Council which publishes personalised postcards with greetings from Santa. People wishing to have one of these cards sent to a child have to send a remittance to the Promotion Council's office in the local state capital. The cards are despatched with a special postmark on 6 December, St Nicholas Day. This scheme is used to raise money for children's charities.

Many philatelic bureaux have a charming custom of sending Christmas cards to their customers. In some cases these cards bear actual Christmas stamps, cancelled with an appropriate Christmas postmark. At one time the Isle of Man PO used a facsimile of the large-diameter circular handstamp of 1907-9 employed on mail posted in advance for delivery on Christmas Day.

Since 1981 British legislation has permitted local delivery of Christmas cards by the youth movements, church groups and charity organisations, a condition of the service being that any profits accruing must be used for charitable purposes. While the vast majority of these services use stamps, surprisingly few appear to employ 'postmarks' which actually allude to Christmas in their inscription. Among the exceptions noted are Rugby (RUGBY CHRISTMAS POST), 6th Wembley Scouts (SEASONS GREETINGS), and Derby Venture Scouts (CHRISTMAS GREETINGS - STAMP & DELIVER). Staplehurst has a pictorial handstamp headed CHRISTMAS and featuring a Christmas tree. On the other hand Bridlington Scouts in the 1980s did not use adhesive stamps but applied a rectangular datestamp inscribed CHRISTMAS POST across the foot ●

Articles by Dr Mackay on British and Overseas Christmas stamps were published here in November and December 1994.



4411
CHRIST
KINDL
24.12.1997

Christkindl
21.12.58-18



Glory to God
in the Highest



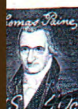
CHRISTMAS
Orange County, Fla.
1959

CHRISTMAS
DEC
25
P.M.
1959
FLA.



CHRISTMAS GREETINGS

BETHLEHEM, PA
DEC
10
A.M.
1965
40007



NORTH POLE, AK
FEB
5
1996
99705



SEASONS
GREETINGS
NORTH POLE AK 99705



Christmas Greetings
Frohe Weihnachten
24 December 1979
Bethlehem
Llandello Dyfed



14 SEP 1995
HILLS YARRA GLEN VIC



SANTA CLAUS
CALIF.

CARPINTERIA, CALIF.
DEC
21
2.30PM
1959
SANTA CLAUS RVR.



COPENHAGEN
19 DEC
1961
OMK.

GREENLAND DANMARK
12 ØRE

Nela Jaffray
1116 W Santa Barbara Ave
Los Angeles 37
California

Miller
odge

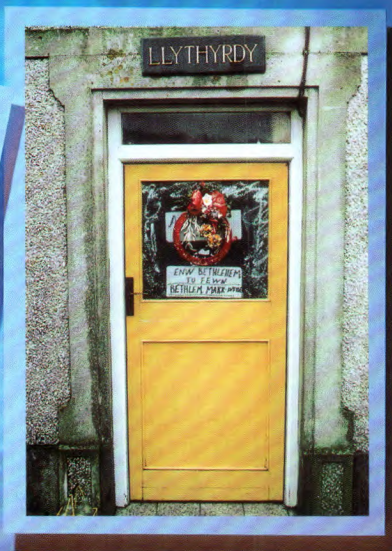
PUNY, VI.
DEC
25
A.M.
1960
SANTAS LAND STA.



Ayrshire
Scotland



Santa Claus
Greenland, Denmark



- **Bethlehem**



Greetings from Bethlehem (Wales) This Christmas, as every year, the little town of Bethlehem in Judea will feature largely in our celebrations, while a little Welsh town adjusts to seasonal fame. By David Watkins

THIS YEAR, as every year, the little town of Bethlehem in Judea will play a large part in all our Christmas celebrations. But did you know that some 70 miles from the bustling city of Cardiff another Bethlehem exists? It's just a tiny, unexpected dot on the map, and it's situated in the middle of the remote countryside of West Wales near the Black Mountains, right on the fringe of the Brecon Beacons National Park.

Christmas comes early to the village of Bethlehem – the Dyfed Bethlehem, that is, not the scene of the Holy Birth – since it always celebrates the coming of Christmas more than a month in advance as the famous village name is stamped on hundreds and hundreds of Christmas card envelopes.

At the end of November and throughout the whole of the month of December there is an influx of thousands of visitors – all making their way there to have their Christmas cards and parcels stamped with the words 'Bethlehem Post Office'.

Difficult to find So many of the visitors to Bethlehem have extreme difficulty in actually finding the village and its Christmas post office since it's a place well away from any traffic; there's no hotel, no garage or petrol station and there isn't even a pub or village hall here – in fact, there are only a dozen houses and some scattered farms in the locality where the population is just over 100 and the local school has only 20 pupils.

So remote is it indeed that many people find themselves forced to phone the post office here for help and instructions on how to arrive. The postmaster and his wife will readily render such help as is necessary, and very often they will add most facetiously that they should attempt to 'follow the Star'.

One enterprising man actually made a round journey all the way from London just to post 75 Christmas cards here. Many Christmas visitors are truly amazed to discover when they arrive at Bethlehem that there is no actual post office here at all.

The village post office was closed in 1988 when the owner of a shop which acted as a post office decided that the salary offered to him in such a capacity was just not enough since it did not even cover fixed costs such as heating and lighting. So all the postal equipment was removed except for the vital mailbox embedded in the front wall and the word 'LLYTHYRDY' (Post Office) above the shop door. For some years after the closure, Royal Mail sent a mobile unit to the village on the first day of issue of Christmas stamps.

Opposite The sign above the shop door, *Llythyrdy*, identifies the former 'post office' for the many seasonal visitors to the little town of Bethlehem.

Below A Bethlehem first day postmark, top, and a private cachet, below.





First Day of Issue 23 Nov 70



As Christmas approaches, the local grocer's shop now becomes a temporary 'post office', and over the counter passes mail to be sent to all corners of the world.

Important world figures who have all received Christmas greetings franked with the word 'Bethlehem' include The Queen and various members of the Royal Family, John Major the former Prime Minister, Presidents Gorbachev and Yeltsin of Russia, Chancellor Kohl of Germany, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Bishop Tutu of South Africa, and American Presidents Reagan, Bush and Clinton. Various film stars have also been the recipients of such cards, such as Elizabeth Taylor and Sean Connery as well as pop stars such as Michael Jackson, Gary Glitter and Elton John. However, the most unique card of all sent by a member of the public from this post office was one which was written completely in Latin and was addressed to The Pope in Rome.

Far-seeing summer visitors to the area who wish to have Bethlehem cards sent to friends and relatives will leave them at the shop with special Christmas mailing instructions for the end of the year. Strangely enough, some of the cards will even be addressed to babies who have not been born yet by doting parents and grandparents, and these will all be faithfully despatched through the post just before Christmas.

Very often, mail will arrive from other far-off countries with the special request that it be posted via the little Welsh village, and one recent batch of letters was thus received from Bethlehem in Israel.

Naturally enough, the village grocer and his wife are kept extremely busy as they attempt together to keep up with the bustling Christmas rush. After all, they have very few regular customers during the rest of the year, and then they suddenly find themselves inundated with a truly huge mail. Both recount fondly how so many tiny children arrive here with their parents, innocently believing that they are now at the very place where Jesus was born. The kind postmaster never disillusioned these starry-eyed infants who are so full of the Christmas spirit.

Village re-named Very many of the public are truly amazed and puzzled at the very strange name of the village. The simple answer to this lies in the fact that a very large number of small country villages throughout the Welsh countryside have actually adopted names from The Bible. There's Salem, Saron, Tabor and Golan...

In the case of Bethlehem village, the name dated back to the year 1800 when an Independent chapel bearing this name was built here, and the name of the village was actually Dyffryn Ceidrych. However, the village

people liked the name of the chapel so much that they decided to change the name of the village to Bethlehem.

As soon as the Christmas season is over, the village itself regains its special character of being a quiet and remote Welsh hamlet, but its Christmas message of tranquility and simplicity has been passed on once again as in so many previous years. The children of Bethlehem Primary School will have glorified the Yuletide festival by singing familiar and well-loved Christmas carols and the franking of the famous name of Bethlehem on countless Christmas card envelopes and parcels brought on added pleasure to thousands of recipients worldwide.

Editor's note Shown below, courtesy of Adrian Bradbury, is a cover mailed from the post office at Bethlehem in 1982 bearing the office's registration label and the datestamp in use until the office closed in 1988. The Llythyrdy/Bethlehem marking now in use is a private cachet. When Christmas stamps were introduced in 1966 a special Bethlehem first day postmark came into use, initially applied in the village and at Llanelli Head Post Office. It is now applied at the Wales & West Special Handstamp Centre in Cardiff. A first day of issue slogan postmark was also used for some years and more recently special handstamps sponsored by cover producers. In 1996 two sponsored handstamps were used for another Bethlehem, near Haverfordwest – for details see Colin Peachey's article, *British Postmark Bulletin*, 24 January 1997 •

Prize draw Win a Bethlehem first day cover



To win this 1982 FDC with the Bethlehem registration label and counter datestamp send your name and address on a postcard (or back of an envelope) to: Philatelic Bulletin Bethlehem Draw, Royal Mail, 22 Finsbury Square, London EC2A 1NL. The sender of the first card drawn on 11 December will receive the cover. Ten runners-up will be sent a 1998 FDC with the Bethlehem first day of issue postmark •

Varieties in the 1962 National Productivity Year issue



Far left The 3d value, top, with the missing head error below – from the right hand half of the one sheet found (print courtesy of Stanley Gibbons Ltd).

Left Lake in Yorkshire variety (Cyl 2C2B dot, R19/1). Detail 600% actual size.

IT SEEMS unthinkable now for phosphor bands to be of any real consequence on any stamps other than definitives, but in November 1962 a new period in British philately began when a commemorative set was released both with and without phosphor bands on the front. The set, commemorating National Productivity Year – an industry related initiative – consisted of three values: 2½d, 3d and 1s3d. The 2½d value was produced with some copies bearing one left-hand phosphor band, and the other two values bore two. The bands were applied by means of flexography. Far more stamps from this set were printed without the bands than with – the exact figures showing that more than 12 times as many non-phosphor copies of the 2½d were purchased, and more than 13 and six times as many were sold of the non-phosphor 3d and 1s3d respectively than their phosphor-bearing counterparts. This set also displays other interesting characteristics; for a start the 2½d and 3d values are printed on paper with an inverted watermark.

Good shade variations All values, especially the 2½d and 3d, show some interesting shade variations as a result of reprinting. The major listed variations on the non-phosphor 2½d are myrtle green and carmine red, deep green and bright carmine red and blackish olive and carmine red. The phosphor version exists only in the last of these three shade combinations. The non-phos-

phor 3d can be collected with either violet or deep bluish purple in addition to the light blue colour used for The Queen's head and arrows. The phosphor version was printed only in the violet shade. It is relatively easy to differentiate between these shades.

The quantities involved – more than 100 million 2½d and 185 million 3d and the necessary reprinting, caused damage to the printing cylinders – very apt, as the set was intended to emphasise the need for greater UK productivity! This can be used as a useful guide to distinguishing between the various shades, as different varieties and errors can often only be found on stamps emanating from one, or maybe two, printings – this being sufficient evidence of a variation in shade. Most helpful are the cylinder retouches. Some good retouches are seen on the 2½d, both plain and phosphor versions. These include the Queen's neck retouch on the dot cylinder, position R15/4 (15th row down, fourth stamp from left), the emblem and arrows and arrow retouches from the no dot cylinder, positions R3/3 and 4/4.

Errors and varieties The light blue colour (The Queen's head) was omitted from a number of the 3d non-phosphor stamps. Some 76 examples of this spectacular error were found in a sheet (of 120) purchased at a London post office on 14 March 1963 and the right-hand half of the sheet (60 errors) exhibited at Stampex the following

Matthew Hinton finds some interesting differences in this set

Right The retouched arrow on the 2½d value (Cyl 1D1B dot, R19/6), compared to the unretouched arrow, far right. Details 500% actual size.



Below right Different shades of green on The Queen's head, 2½d value.



day. The error, given considerable press attention because The Queen's head was missing, was originally offered at £85 and is now catalogued at £700. The same error occurred on the non-phosphor 1s3d and this is even scarcer – catalogued at £3750.

However the features which for me make this issue particularly special, are the small flaws and varieties which can always be acquired so very cheaply. To begin with the 3d, perhaps the most famous is the 'Kent omitted' variety – retailing for around £2 or less, and caused by a light blue dot over the area on the map. This is found on cylinder 2C2B no dot, R18/2. I also like the 'Lake in Yorkshire' flaw (cylinder 2C2B dot, R19/1), similarly created and obtainable for an equally modest cost. The 'Lake in Scotland' variety occurs on cylinder 2A2B dot, R1/3. Also look out for a horizontal line running across The Queen's head on cylinder 2D2B no dot, R17/6; this was gradually retouched leaving a white mark, and eventually removed altogether.

On the 2½d stamp it is worth looking out for the prominent white spot on The Queen's nose from the dot cylinder, R2/6 and the smudge on the centre cube, dot cylinder, R18/3.

Minor flaws Some of the better minor constant flaws which are generally not sold individually but can often be found in kiloware lots for next to nothing, these include, on the 3d dots to the

left of The Queen's left eye (cylinder 2C2B dot, R15/6), and dark area above the R of PRODUCTIVITY (cylinder 2C2B no dot, R6/5), and on the 1s3d a white flaw on The Queen's face, to the left of her earring (no dot cylinder, R13/4). Also check for the retouching to the area around The Queen's mouth on the 2½d (no dot cylinder, R3/4), retouching in Yorkshire on the 3d (cylinder 2D2B dot, R1/3), and retouching on the tail of the main blue arrows on the 1s3d (no dot cylinder, R6/2).

Perforation differences Three different perforation arrangements were employed during the production of this set – although this is not of consequence to single stamp collectors as the differences only affect the sheet margins. The two lower values were produced on sheets perforated by one hole extending from the perforation rows into the vertical margins, and with the horizontal sheet margins left untouched by the perforator, as well as a number of the 1s3d value. This value however also appeared on sheets where either the horizontal margins were perforated right through and the vertical ones have been left untouched, or where the horizontal margins were perforated whilst the vertical margins had one hole extending into the margins at each row. The last two versions are by far the scarcest, and cylinder blocks are worth looking out for. One other cylinder block worth a few times more than most others is the 3d 2A2B ●

Competition Prizes worth £2400 to be won



1st prize George V 1929 Postal Union Congress £1 black, superb mint, slightly brownish gum example which appears unmounted. Full perfs, well centred, excellent colour and impression, beautiful stamp – a joy to own. SG 438, cat £650.

2nd prize QV 1867-83 £1 brown-lilac Maltese Cross watermark, letters ?-F, an extraordinary stamp which at first glance could even be a postal forgery which would be very rare – but probably a massively repaired/retouched example or chemically affected colour changeling. Either way a fabulous spacefiller of a rare stamp SG 129, cat £1500.

3rd prize QV 1883-4, 10s pale ultramarine, letters B-J, an average used part oval registered datestamp example, well centred, SG 183a, cat £275.

The winners of the August competition were F M and M E Godden of W Yorkshire, H Zeisig of Germany, and P Dawson of Bristol

The answers 1) Roundel Design Group; 2) R Martin Willcocks; 3) South Africa; 4) 1857. Our thanks to all who entered.

Sponsored by Omniphil GB British Commonwealth and World Home Approvals Service Last chance to try Omniphil Home Approvals and pick your first £10 worth free. Because this is the last *Bulletin* competition they are sponsoring, Omniphil are keener than ever to make it worth your while to try their approvals – which is why when you request a selection of their fine approvals, to be sent to you for 10 days home viewing without obligation – you can pick your first £10 worth free. There are no strings attached – you can pick £10 worth free at their ticket prices already heavily discounted off SG catalogue – and return the rest without further obligation.

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

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

Tell them if you collect used and mint, and all the countries you are interested in. This is your last chance this year, so write now for your first £10 worth free to: **Omniphil Home Service, Bulletin Free £10 Offer, PO Box 29, Stroud GL6 6RW.** Applications valid until 10 January 1999.

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

To enter the competition answer the questions below and send, with your name and address, on a postcard or back of an envelope to: November Bulletin Competition, Royal Mail, 22 Finsbury Square, London EC2A 1NL to arrive by 18 December. Entries must be posted separately, multiple entries in one envelope will be disregarded.

- 1 How many 1962 NPV 3d stamps were discovered with The Queen's head missing?
- 2 Which organisation is staging the Brighton & Hove 98 exhibition?
- 3 Where is the most easterly post office in the British Isles?
- 4 What does the Welsh word Llythyrdy mean?

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

Stamp scene Exhibits and Societies news

Stamp & Collectables This 'international collectors' fair', sponsored by Royal Mail and Stanley Gibbons, will be held at the G-Mex Centre, Manchester, 13-15 November. There will be over 150 stands catering for collectors of stamps, coins, postcards and many other collectables. Every visitor will receive a free gift and young visitors will enjoy the Royal Mail's Children's area with a Design-a-Comedy Stamp Competition. Royal Mail will have a stand offering its usual range of philatelic products. The commemorative label book for the 50th birthday of The Prince of Wales goes on sale on his birthday, Saturday 14 November and will be available from the Royal Mail stand. A special Stamp & Collectables handstamp will be used on mail posted at the stand or sent to the Special Handstamp Centre, Royal Mail, Forth Street, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 1AA, requesting Stamp & Collectables handstamp and stating date(s) required. Covers must be submitted not later than the date(s) requested. Stanley Gibbons will provide a free stamp valuation service – a popular attraction at earlier exhibitions •

Admission £3 or free with the ticket enclosed in last month's *Bulletin*. For additional free tickets phone 0800 611 622.

Opening times

13 November	16.00-19.00
14 November	10.00-18.00
15 November	10.00-17.00

Exhibition enquiries Sylvia Cook, 01425 472363

Brighton & Hove 98 This, the second national exhibition organised by the Association of British Philatelic Societies (ABPS), will be held at Hove Town Hall, 21-22 November. Displays will cover a wide range of philatelic subjects and include national thematic, revenue and cinderella stamp competitions. Amongst special exhibits will be a display from the Royal Collection of thematic sets from Great Britain, Falkland Islands, Cyprus, and Mauritius with proofs, artwork and much supplementary material. Both the National Postal Museum and Royal Philatelic Society London will exhibit scarce and unusual material and many rare and historic items from the Postal History of Brighton and Hove collection of G Howard Longden will be on display. Over 40 dealers will have stands and information desks will be manned by the ABPS, Royal Philatelic Society London, British Thematic Association, Revenue Society of Great Britain, Cinderella Stamp Club, British Philatelic Trust and Friends of the National Postal Museum •

Hove Town Hall is less than a mile from Hove railway station; the area is well-served by local buses. Refreshment facilities will be available.

Opening times

21 November	09.30-17.30
22 November	09.30-17.00

Thematica II The second Thematica exhibition of 1998 will be held at the Carisbrooke Hall, Semour Street, London W2 on 25-26 November. As usual there will be a good mixture of displays and dealers' stands. Refreshments available. Seymour Street is a short walk from Marble Arch underground station •

Raflet Stamp Club The Club has celebrated its 40th anniversary with a special edition of its *Raflet Philatelic Magazine*. This contains many interesting short articles and a useful history of the Club by its General Secretary, Eric Cowley. Raflet was founded by the late Geoff Groom who had been Secretary of the Royal Air Forces Association Stamp Club, 1951-58. This Club was wound up and Geoff decided it was a shame all his hard work had come to nought, so Raflet was created, this time with no ties whatsoever with the RAF or any other organisation. It started off with a modest 30 founder

Enquiries to the Membership Secretary, Ron Champness, PO Box 3484, Colchester CO4 4XX.

Membership is £9 a year.

members. There are now over 1150 members enjoying a wide range of popular services. A special handstamp was used at the Northern England Special Handstamp Centre on 29 September to mark Raflet's anniversary ●

Australia '99 enquiries to Australia '99, GPO Box 1999, Melbourne, Vic 3001, Australia



IBRA '99 enquiries to IBRA Philatelie GmbH, Mainzer Landstrasse 221/223, D-60326 Frankfurt, Germany

Forthcoming international exhibitions The organisers of the AUSTRALIA '99 exhibition (Melbourne, 19-24 March 1999) have announced that in addition to the three FIP classes (Traditional, Postal Stationery, and Revenues), the exhibition will include an experimental class known as 'Social Philately'. This class has been developed in Australia and New Zealand over the last decade for collectors who collect collateral material directly related to the post office or the postal service in addition to stamps and covers. While this class will be judged competitively, it will not have medals awarded as for the FIP sanctioned classes. Visitors to Australia '99 will be kept busy with a host of special attractions including stamp launches, an auction, philatelic passports, on-site printing press display, a children's area, and activities based on daily themes.

Amongst the attractions at the IBRA '99 international exhibition (Nuremberg, 27 April-4 May 1999) will be a tour through the history of mail arranged by the Nuremberg Transport Museum entitled 'from Stagecoach time to the Mail of the 21st century'. On show will be a letter bearing a block of six of the first Bavarian stamp – the Bayern 1 Kreuzer of 1849. Over 100 dealers will have sales booths and about 35 postal administrations are expected to attend. Each day of the exhibition will be dedicated to a particular theme or subject: 150 years of German stamps, German Federal Republic, Mail, Youth, Stamp Collector/FIP, German-American Saloon, Sport, and FEPA (Federation of European Philatelic Associations). Special postmarks, designed in an open competition, will be used each day ●

Book review *The Post in the Hills* by Katharine Stewart

I KNOW from my own excursions to Scotland that once one starts visiting post offices, travelling on postbuses etc, somehow there's an immediate involvement with *people* in a way that doesn't seem to happen in the 'rush rush' environment of the south. I usually come home with a few stories of my own. Yet here it is, a whole book of lovely stories, written by a lady who has run a post office in the Scottish Highlands for many years, and full of fascinating tales, not just gossip but genuine tales of postal history.

The book is arranged in 33 chapters from 'Early Days' covering 'all Weathers', 'Changes', 'From Bishopmark to Postmark', 'The Post Takes to the air' to 'Links with the Future' as a selection. Here, in brief, are the terms of reference for

running a small post office, as well as, of course, running the postal side and remembering to shut the gate to keep out the sheep: 'questions from passing walkers or motorists to be answered, questions about fishing rights on the loch, camp sites, rights of way, houses for sale, homes of long-lost forbears, where to get milk or drinking water or a cup of tea, bed-and-breakfast places or even the way to an almost illegible address on a crumpled piece of paper'. Then (an oldie but a goodie) there's those seeking directions to Elgin to see (yes, you've guessed!) the Elgin marbles!

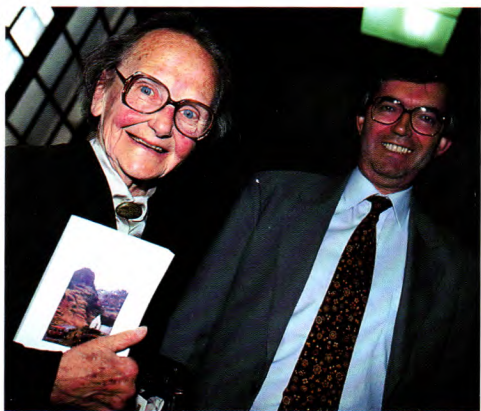
In 'The acceleration of the Mail' chapter the mail delays of the 18th century are aired, also that there had been (a letter in 1710) 'intercepting, delaying, opening several letters sent in the

bags of Inverness to the great Prejudice of Correspondence and the diminution of this branch of Her Majesty's Revenue' – problems also with safe carriage of goods. The answers to the 'acceleration' were of course scheduled mail coaches and later the railway, but the problems of the Inverness area were not easily solved.

In another chapter Katharine's little post office at Abriachan, near Inverness, hits the papers, supposedly as the smallest post office in the Highlands. She recounts the visit of the photographer and her brief moment of fame that followed.

Katharine clearly liked to take holidays and travel to other Highland post offices, hence a lovely chapter recounting the extra problems encountered by post offices on the Western Isles. There's a charming picture of a pensioner collecting his pension on the Isle of Coll. And how many would say 'Raasay was an island I long wanted to visit' (actually I do!)?

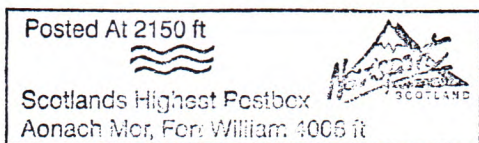
In all a book with lots of entertainment, and a few pictures of post offices, travelling post offices, postbuses and even, yes, a postmark! The book is not designed for the straitlaced postal historian of course (are any of them straitlaced?) but it is a fun book, charmingly written and with a special appeal to 'fans' of Scotland and its postal services. *Review by Colin Peachey* •



Katharine Stewart with Richard Dykes, Managing Director of Royal Mail, at the National Postal Museum, London.

The Post in the Hills by Katharine Stewart, published 1997 by The Mercat Press, 53 South Bridge, Edinburgh EH1 1YS (174 pages, softback, price £8.99)

Posting boxes 181



THE FIRST of this month's photographs, submitted by Colin Peachey and taken by his wife Valerie, shows the private posting box on Aonach Mor – a neighbouring mountain to Ben Nevis, Britain's highest peak. Mail posted in this box is given a special cachet testifying to the fact that it is Scotland's highest postbox. An earlier Aonach Mor cachet was recorded here in September and December 1996.

The second illustration is of a replica Penfold box on the Isle of Iona, off the west coast of Scotland. Other replica boxes were featured here in October, November and December 1989, and February and April 1991. The Iona photograph was submitted by the Postmaster, Mr Crawford Morison, who took over in 1988. His original temporary office – in a caravan – and new post office were shown in the *Bulletin* in May 1991. The replica Penfold box was installed later that year. Mr Morison was kept busy last year when stamps commemorating the 1400th anniversary of St Columba's landing on Iona were issued •

For details of the Letter Box Study Group send a SAE or IRC to the Membership Secretary, Mrs V Scott, 38 Leopold Avenue, Handsworth Wood, Birmingham B20 1ES. The Group produces many interesting publications and postcards.

Postbag

Real stamps The *Bulletin* gets better by the month but the latest contribution by James Mackay (July) promises yet more. Overprinted British stamps generated a *frisson* that Lewis Carroll *et al* could never manage in a month of Sundays. Those were the days when stamps were stamps; replete with the authoritative significance of mails transported across continents by linked human endeavour. One can sense how and why the mails always got through just by looking carefully at them. Nostalgia? The musings of old age? I think not. Communications become easier, faster and increasingly transparent by the decade. By whatever means transmitted, they now no longer carry any indication of the effort involved; they have no history to tell, nothing of value for those who use them.

I am looking forward to further instalments from James Mackay but, pray, not too much *frisson* as that can be bad for the heart. D A A FAGAN-DINI, LONDON SE21 •

Mounting special issues Of recent issues, the Comedians and Health sets demand a black-paged album and the margin-less Lighthouses and Magical Worlds seem to me to need a white page. I should be interested to learn how other collectors deal with this problem. I find the fact that colour printing does not always cover the perforation gives unmarginated stamps an untidy appearance even when torn by the careful hands at the Bureau; this would not be noticed against a white page but screams out against a black background. M SOKEL, PAPHOS, CYPRUS •

Special handstamps I read with interest Susan Turner's letter (July). I agree there are now too many sponsored handstamps for each new issue of stamps. Time was when special handstamps were used only for particular events and made a worthy addition to our collections. I have long since limited my collection to handstamps for events such as Wimbledon Tennis, Stampex and (until recent years) the Philatelic Congress. Each collector will decide for his or herself which handstamps to collect but I don't imagine there

are now many trying to maintain a complete collection of British handstamps. Even on a small, plain cover such a collection would take up a lot of space. The one saving grace is the fact that covers can now be sent in batches to the six handstamp centres rather than individually to dozens of different head post offices as in the past. G M THORPE, DARLINGTON •

T E Lawrence designs It was with great interest that I read James Mackay's article on overprinted stamps (August). He mentions that from the end of September 1914 Turkey suppressed all foreign post offices on its territory. Is it correct that in June 1916 Britain issued a set of commemorative stamps of the Grand Sherif of Mecca, ruler of the province of Hejaz? These stamps were I believe designed by T E Lawrence (Lawrence of Arabia) in Cairo and were intended as a morale booster to the Sherif who had just fired the first shot from his Mecca balcony at the neighbouring Turkish barracks thus opening the insurrection. I would welcome more information regarding these stamps. MEL HARRIS, REEDHAM, NORFOLK

James Mackay writes: The stamps referred to here were issued by Hejaz in October 1916 and are found in Part 19 of the Gibbons catalogue, under Saudi Arabia: Hejaz. There were three values, each with two different perforations, thus sg 1-6. They were designed by Agami Effendi and Mustafa Effendi Gozlan and printed by the Survey of Egypt in Cairo. The arabesque motifs were derived from the facades of mosques in Egypt. The concept, however, was that of Major Lawrence (as he then was), and he may have suggested the use of mosque ornament. sg 1 is illustrated below •



Northern Ireland slogan I note that in Brian Warren's otherwise excellent article on Northern Ireland regionals (August) he illustrates the 1968 slogan advertising the new 4d and 5d stamps. He has clearly taken the illustration from the 1974 edition of *Slogan Postmarks of the UK: 1917-1969* which showed the slogan without a flower at the right of the design. The actual slogan does however have a flower in that position. Slogans were usually impressed over the stamp in those days so it was often difficult to get a decent version of the slogan to show in the book. A corrected illustration was included in the 1986 edition. The slogan is listed in the book as NO 1122t and was in

use 19 August to 4 September at eight offices in Northern Ireland. It was not introduced at Londonderry until 29 August. Readers may like to know that *Slogan Postmarks of the UK* is still available from me, price £9.95, postage £1.30 UK, £2 overseas. COLIN PEACHEY, 19 Moorland Road, Hemel Hempstead HP1 1NH •



Events

Until 22 November Speed exhibition, sponsored by Royal Mail, at Whitechapel Art Gallery, Whitechapel High Street, London E1. Open Tue-Sun 11.00-17.00 (Wed until 20.00). Admission £4, concessions £2.50, free on Tuesdays. **Enquiries** 0171 522 7888

Now showing Postal Memorabilia displays at Museum of Lincolnshire Life, Burton Road, Lincoln.

Enquiries D Harrop, 15 Hawthorn Road, Stockport SK4 3DQ

6-8 November Stampa '98 (national stamp exhibition), RDS Concert Hall, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4, 11.00-18.00. **Enquiries** Stampa, PO Box 2723, Dublin 1, Ireland.

7 November Midland Phil Federation Convention at Knowle, Solihull

7-8 November Scotex at Scottish Exhibition & Conference Centre, Glasgow

13-15 November Stamp & Collectables exhibition at G-Mex Centre, Manchester, See page 91.

14 November Maidstone & Mid Kent Phil Soc stamp fair at The Grove Green Community Centre, Maidstone, 10.00-16.00. Close to junction 7, M20.

Enquiries B Stonestreet, 01622 675784.

21 November Stuart Rossiter Lecture - 'Amazing Wonder Stories from the Franco-German War of 1870-71', 11.00, University College London WC1. Tickets from British Philatelic Trust, 107 Charterhouse Street, London EC1M 6PT.

21-22 November Brighton & Hove '98 national exhibition organised by Assn of British Phil Socs, at Hove Town Hall, 09.30-17.30 21st, 09.30-17.00 22nd. Includes Themex 98 exhibition. **Enquiries** M Pullan, Tai Ping, Western Road, Crowborough, TN6 3EH.

25-26 November Thematica at Carisbrooke Hall, Seymour Street, London W2. **Enquiries** Thematic Exhibitions, 0181 343 2434

27-28 November Leeds Phil Soc Annual Fair at Pudsey Civic Hall, 10.30-17.30 27th, 09.30-16.30 28th. 45 dealers, free admission. **Enquiries** R Shiers, 0113 2682370.

28 November Friends of the National Postal Museum AGM at Staff Hall, Royal Mail Mount Pleasant, London EC1, 10.30. Display by GB Overprint Society. Souvenir cover. **Enquiries** R Pottle, 01825 766546.

13 December Birmingham Stamp and Postal History Fair at National Motorcycle Museum. **Enquiries** 01279 758854.

GIFTS FOR YOURSELF OR A FELLOW COLLECTOR



The lavishly-illustrated Royal Mail Year Books provide authoritative background stories on each issue of special stamps based on interviews with the stamp designers. Stamps are supplied on stock cards ready for mounting in the book. Each book supplied in a matching slip-case.

The **1997 Year Book** containing 42 special stamps from the Great Tudor (Henry VIII) to The Queen's Golden Wedding, is available whilst stocks last, until 12 November, price £23.50 (£75 luxury leather-bound edition). The **1998 Year Book**, with 49 special stamps from Endangered Species to Christmas Angels, goes on sale on 2 November, price £23.95 (£75 leather-bound). *Leather-bound versions available only from Bureau.*

The popular Royal Mail Collectors Packs contain stamps on stock cards with a colourful and informative brochure giving details of the stamp subjects. **1997 Year Pack** available until 12 November, price £15.95. **1998 Year Pack** on sale from 2 November, price £17.95.

On sale at the Bureau, Post Office Counters philatelic outlets and main post offices.

British Philatelic Bureau, 20 Brandon Street, Edinburgh EH3 5TT

