

February 1996



Royal Mail

British Philatelic Bulletin

Volume 33. No: 6 The Royal Mail Magazine for Stamp Collectors Price 75p



The Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust



Royal Mail Collector Plates

33p Rowan



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39p Pear

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Royal Mail

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British Philatelic Bulletin

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cygnets at WWT Slimbridge.
© Joe Blossom/WWT.

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Main Feature

Decimal Machin Silver Jubilee 176

James Mackay looks back over to the introduction of decimalisation a quarter of a century ago



Early decimal Machins

Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust Stamps

A flock of migrating swans is the last great wildlife spectacle left in Britain.

Sir Peter Scott

Five stamps commemorating the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust go on sale at post offices, and philatelic outlets on 12 March. The stamps feature paintings of birds by C F Tunnicliffe, reproduced by permission of the Oriel Gallery.

The 19p stamp (basic inland 2nd class rate) features the Muscovy Duck (*Cairina moschata*), a native of South America, noted for its musk smell.

The 25p value (basic inland 1st class & EU rate) shows the Lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*), also known as the Green Plover or Peewit. It is a graceful bird, found in most parts of the UK. During the winter large numbers arrive from abroad and can be seen by visitors to all eight WWT centres. It is noted for its fine long crest and iridescent plumage. It lives mainly in fields, pastures, marshes and on tidal mudflats. The nest is made in a slight depression in the ground, usually lined by grass or straw. Some three to five eggs are laid in March to July; these vary in colour from plain blue to reddish but are usually olive or buff, heavily blotched in dark brown and sharply pointed at the narrow end. Lapwings feed on wireworms, snails, slugs, insects and larvae.

The White Fronted Goose (*Anser albifrons*), the subject of the 30p denomination (Europe, non-



The Lapwing

EU countries rate), is a winter visitor. It differs from the Grey Lag Goose in having black patches or bars on its breast and a white patch at the base of the bill. It lives on moors and marshes, and is more commonly found along the west coast. The nest is constructed from heather, sticks, leaves and grass; four to six eggs are laid in April. The Trust's centre at Slimbridge is host to the largest over-wintering flock of these geese. It was finding these, and the rarer Lesser White-fronted Geese among them, that persuaded Peter Scott to found the WWT at Slimbridge.

The 35p stamp (worldwide postcard rate) features the Bittern (*Botaurus steallaris*), one of the heron family, and now a rare species in the UK. For 30 years until 1911 it nearly became extinct in the UK. Bitterns are sometimes seen at WWT centres and it is hoped more extensive and managed reedbeds at the Llanelli and Martin Mere centres will attract this bird. The Bittern is noted for its warm buff and brown plumage. It is a shy and secretive bird, which is often hidden in reed beds. If disturbed it points its bill upwards and straightens its neck so as to become invisible amongst the reeds. It feeds on fish, eels, and





...in 1960s. Although the work was adequate to cover accommodation in the local B & B, I fell in love with the place. On those long summer evenings, with birds all around and the occasional skin of geese silhouetted against the deepening sky, I felt for the first time in my life something like 'the call of the wild'. The fact that people of my age could have stood on that spot time after time over thousands of years and experienced an identical link with the natural world, made a powerful impression on me.

So, too, did one of Sir Peter Scott's principal exhibits at Slimbridge: a large murret bearing the message, *You are now looking at the most destructive animal in the world.* I watched the visitors as they stared at their reflections. Some just laughed, but many more (especially if they were with children) readily took the point. People learn a lot at Slimbridge, even as they have fun. For 120,000 schoolchildren every year, a good recreational experience provides the best possible educational context and, for 50 years now, Slimbridge and the other WWT Centres have provided some of the most stimulating open-air classrooms to be found in the UK. What they have done above all else is to stop people thinking of wetlands as watery wastelands. In fact, they are some of the most productive ecosystems in the world, second only to rainforests in terms of the number of species they support.

As so often, Sir Peter was decades ahead of his time in terms of their intrinsic beauty, not just benefits there...

...about the ecology of wetlands. Today it's utterly inexhaustible.

Inspired in large part by WWT, which itself employs 35 full-time researchers, a huge number of research programmes are in place in different parts of the world unravelling the mysteries of wetlands and the countless species that depend on them. All this serves to remind us of just how dependent we human beings are on the wetlands for our own wellbeing.

In addition, WWT is directly involved in several captive breeding programmes to rescue species from the brink of extinction. There were just 50 Hawaiian Geese (or Nene) in existence in the early 1950s when three were sent to Slimbridge. From these more than 2000 have been reared, and 200 returned to their native Hawaii to re-establish the population. Recently I was lucky enough to see some of these birds flourishing in the wild in Hawaii; that's when programmes of this kind truly begin to make sense - you can see they really do work.

It's this kind of knowledge and experience that enables campaigning bodies to push for further legislative measures to protect wetlands. Things are steadily improving. Under the international treaty, the Ramsar Convention, more than 740 wetland sites worldwide (totalling in excess of 45 million hectares) have been designated for protected status.



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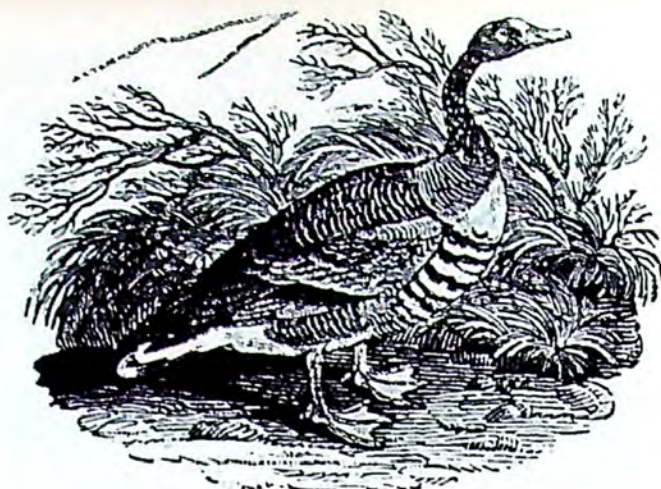
frogs. During the breeding season the males are noted for their deep booming sound which can carry very long distances. The eggs, usually four or five, are laid in March-June and are sandy or olive-brown in colour. The nest is made in dense reed beds and is small considering the size of the bird.



The 41p value (basic airmail letter rate) depicts the Whooper Swan (*Cygnus cygnus*), a large bird, measuring 5 feet, which over-winters from Iceland in the British Isles. It is to be seen at the WWT centres at Welney, Martin Mere, and Caerlaverock. The natural habitat is mainly salt water lochs and inlets of the sea where it feeds on water weeds and shellfish. It emits a deep ringing call, likened to a bugle. It is similar to the Bewick's Swan which featured on the 31p Linnean Society stamp in 1988.

The Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust

In December 1945 Sir Peter Scott (1909-89) visited Slimbridge on the River Severn near Gloucester. Watching the wildfowl he decided that this was the place in which anyone who loved wild geese must live. Within a year he founded the Wildfowl Trust (now the WWT) at Slimbridge. The Trust now has eight centres, with 1500 hectares of land, attracting over 3/4 million visitors each year. A feature on the work of the Trust will be published in next month's *Bulletin*.



The White-Fronted Wild Goose

Collectors may send their own stamped covers on the day of issue, for these cancels, to: British Philatelic Bureau, 20 Brandon Street, EDINBURGH EH3 5TT, or Special Handstamp Centre, Royal Mail, BIRMINGHAM B1 1AA (Slimbridge postmark). The outer envelope should be endorsed "FD9605" (Bureau), or "FD9606" (Slimbridge).

First Day Posting Boxes will be provided at most main post offices for collectors who wish to post covers to receive local (mostly non-pictorial) "First Day of Issue" handstamps.

Details of other special handstamps, sponsored by Royal Mail, stamp dealers and others, will be found in the *British Postmark Bulletin* – the Royal Mail's magazine for postmark collectors. It is available on subscription from the British Philatelic Bureau: £10 UK and Europe; £21.75 Rest of World (Airmail).

Collectors are reminded that it will be in order to affix just the 19p WWT stamp to covers to receive all special cancels ("First Day of Issue", sponsored and philatelic counters), in use on 12 March. The minimum 1st class rule is suspended on this day as this set includes a 2nd class rate stamp. It should be noted that this concession applies only to WWT stamps; covers bearing other stamps must bear at least 1st class postage.

The Designer

The stamps were designed by Moseley Webb using paintings by Charles Frederick Tunnicliffe (1901-79) who devoted his life to studying, drawing and painting the wild birds of Britain. Tunnicliffe was born at Langley, near Macclesfield, son of a shoemaker turned farmer. He was educated at the Macclesfield School of Art and the Royal College of Art. His work included drawings for the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and wood engraving

illustrations for Henry Williamson's books *Tarka the Otter* (1927) and *Salar the Salmon* (1935). He published a number of books of his own including *Bird Portraiture* (1945) and *Shorelands Summer Diary* (1952). His wildlife drawings were greatly admired by Sir Peter Scott.

Tunncliffe designed stamps (local carriage labels) for Lundy (Bristol Channel) in 1964 and 1967; these featured a falcon and a group of puffins.

Technical details

Pinters: Harrison & Sons Ltd
Process: Photogravure
Size: 37 x 35 mm
Sheets: 100
Perforation: 14 x 14.5
Phosphor: 19p – one phosphor band
 Blue fluor in phosphor
 25p-41p phosphor coated
Paper: OBA free (OBA = Optical
 Brightening Agent)
Gum: PVA

First Day Facilities

Unstamped Royal Mail first day cover envelopes will be available from main post offices, the British Philatelic Bureau and Post Office Counters philatelic outlets around a week before 12 March, price 25p.

The Bureau will provide a first day cover service – collectors may order the Royal Mail cover bearing the stamps, cancelled with a pictorial "First Day of Issue" postmark of the Bureau or Slimbridge, price £2.18 (including VAT) to UK addresses, £1.86 to overseas addresses (no VAT). Orders for first day covers must be received at the Bureau by 12 March 1996.

Presentation Pack and Stamp Cards

A presentation pack (price £1.85) and stamp cards (25p each) will be available from the Bureau, Post Office Counters philatelic outlets, and main post offices.

Souvenir Postcard Book

The third postcard book will be produced – beautifully illustrated with Peter Scott and Tunncliffe paintings, and containing 10 cards featuring the five designs of the WWT stamps, and five of the birds in natural settings. It will be available from the Bureau and Post Office Counters philatelic outlets, price £2.95. The

cards featuring the stamp designs differ from the stamp cards ("PHQ cards") in reproducing the design without The Queen's head and value; they are ideal for postal use or for mounting in the stamp album with the stamps. Earlier postcard books were produced for the 1995 Cats and Rugby League stamps. The Rugby League book is still available from the Bureau (code PB200, price £2.95).

Earlier Bird Stamps

Birds have featured on numerous British stamps – either as the main, or subsidiary, part of the design, or in symbolic form:

1937 Coronation 1½d (The Ampulla)
 1946 Victory 3d
 1953 Coronation 2½d & 4d (Ampulla)
 1957 Scouts Jamboree 4d
 1961 PO Savings Bank 3d
 1961 CEPT 4d & 10d
 1963 National Nature week 4½d
 1966 Birds
 1977 Christmas 7p & 9p
 1980 Birds
 1981 Folklore 14p
 1982 Darwin 26p
 1982 Textiles 15½p
 1982 Information Technology 15½p
 1982 Christmas 15½p
 1983 Fairs 31p
 1983 Christmas
 1984 College of Arms 16p
 1984 Royal Mail (Swan's Head inn sign)
 1985 Composers 31p & 34p
 1986 Conservation 17p
 1987 Christmas 34p
 1988 Linnean Society 31p
 1988 Edward Lear 19p & 35p
 1989 Birds
 1989 Food & Farming 27p
 1990 RSPCA 34p
 1991 Greetings – 4 stamps
 1992 Wintertime 33p
 1993 Swans
 1993 Greetings – Parrot
 1993 20th Century Art 33p
 1993 Christmas 35p (Turkey)
 1994 Greetings – Rupert stamp
 1994 Pictorial Postcards (seagulls in sky)
 1994 Channel Tunnel (French cock)
 1995 Peace & Freedom 25p UN
 1995 Shakespeare's Globe – Swan
 1995 Christmas

No doubt sharp-eyed readers will find others! Ed.

Definitive Plate & Cylinder Numbers

Lionel Jones of the National Postal Museum reports the following plates received for the Museum's collection:

£1	3C, 3E, 3F, 3G, 3H, 3J, 3K
£1.50	2II, 2LL, 4A, 4B, 4C, 4D, 4E, 4F, 4G, 4I, 4J
£2	3A, 3B, 3D, 3E, 3F, 3H, 3I, 3J, 3K, 3L
£5	7B, 7C

Cylinder numbers reported for recent definitives are:

Printed by Enschedé – blue fluor

2p, 4p, 25p (blue-tinted & opaque gums), 41p, £1.00 – all 1

Printed by Questa – blue fluor

2nd & 1st NVI – both Q4Q4

Scotland 19p Q12Q12

Scotland 25p Q10Q10

Wales 19p Q8Q8

Wales 25p Q9Q9

Printed by Harrisons – blue fluor

19p 4 phosphor 41

25p 7 phosphor 43

Harrisons revert to PVA gum

New supplies of stamps printed by Harrisons will have PVA as opposed to PVA Dextrin gum (PVA = Polyvinyl Alcohol). Supplies of the £1.50 Caernarfon Castle stamp with PVA gum will shortly be available from the British Philatelic Bureau. There will be no first day of availability. Details of new printings of other stamps with PVA gum will be announced in the *Bulletin* so collectors can order from the Bureau. The stamps will be available at post offices as supplies of stamps with PVA Dextrin gum are exhausted. PVA gum will be used for the Wildfowl and Wetlands stamps (12 March). The removal of Dextrin from the current formulation of gum used by Harrisons produces a product which is less susceptible to environmental changes and consequently causes fewer handling problems through the manufacturing process. Dextrin was introduced in 1973; announced in the December 1973 *Bulletin* (page 7). More recently, Harrisons produced a trial 19p stamp with PVA gum (July 1994); stamps currently printed by Enschedé, Questa, and Walsall are already on paper with PVA gum.

1995 Greetings Book Reprinted

A new printing has been made of the 1995

Greetings book. The stamps now have blue instead of yellow fluor in the phosphor and the opportunity has been taken to include 1996 dates for Mother's Day and other greetings occasions on the inside front cover. Supplies of the reprinted book will shortly be available from the British Philatelic Bureau.

New 25p Coil

A new coil containing 500 x 25p definitives, reeled sideways, will shortly be available. The stamps have been printed by Harrisons, with two phosphor bands (blue fluor) but with standard (non-elliptical) perforations. This is necessary to prevent splitting on sideways reeled coils. Collectors will be able to order singles, strips, or complete coils from the British Philatelic Bureau.

Blue Fluor Update

The 29p definitive and 19p Northern Ireland have now been printed with blue fluor and are available from the British Philatelic Bureau. There was no first day of availability. The 1p and 50p definitives and Northern Ireland 25p will shortly be printed with blue fluor and should be available from the Bureau by the end of February.

Railway Aerogrammes

Royal Mail International issued a set of six pictorial aerogrammes featuring Railways on 30 January. The designs are:

1. Pre-Grouping – MR Compound No. 1000; Stirling Single No. 1; Stephenson's Rocket
2. Great Western Railway – Iron Duke; City of Truro; Caerphilly Castle
3. London Midland Scottish Railway – Class 5 No. 5305; Cornwall; Duchess of Hamilton
4. London and North Eastern Railway – Mallard; Peppercorn "Pacific" Blue Peter; Flying Scotsman
5. Southern Railway – Cheltenham; Repton; Sir Lamiel
6. British Rail – Deltic; Intercity 125; Eurostar

The aerogrammes, sold in packs of six, were designed by IMP, with illustrations by Also Balding, and printed by McCorquodale Envelopes Limited. They will be available from the British Philatelic Bureau, Post Office Counters philatelic outlets, and main post offices.

German Award for Royal Mail Stamps

Royal Mail recently received the German Prize

for Communications Design 1995, awarded by the *Design Zentrum Nordrhein Westfalen*, for stamp issues of 1993-5: Marine Timekeepers (designed by Howard Brown), Autumn (Charlotte Knox), 1993 Christmas (Quentin Blake), Age of Steam (Brian Delaney), Pictorial Postcards (Mike Dempsey), Springtime (Andy Goldsworthy), Peace & Freedom (Jean Michel Folon), and Science Fiction (Siobhan Keaney).

New Stamp Books

Five new books go on philatelic sale on 6 February – all bear the Olympic/Paralympic logos on the covers. Royal Mail is sponsoring the British teams in both Games. The books are:

10 x 2nd class, printed by Harrison

10 x 2nd class, printed by Questa

4 x 1st, 4 x 2nd, and 10 x 1st, printed by Walsall

The stamps bear phosphor bands with blue fluor. The books will be available from the British Philatelic Bureau and Post Office Counters philatelic outlets from 6 February, and at post offices and retail outlets as stocks of earlier books are exhausted. Other books with the Olympic/Paralympic logos are scheduled for philatelic release on 19 March: 10 x 1st printed by Harrison, 4 x 35p, 4 x 41p, and 4 x 60p printed by Walsall.

A book of 10 x 1st class stamps with details of a Disney promotion on the covers will go on philatelic sale from 19 February. Printed by Harrison, the stamps have two phosphor bands (blue fluor).

Cross Post Journal

The Autumn 1995 issue of the journal of the Association of Friends of the National Postal Museum, is now available. Edited by Allan Daniell, this includes articles on Booklets from Private Vending Machines (by Jean Alexander), a Provincial Town stamp of Holmes Chapel Cheshire (Michael Bament), Mail delivery in the bad winter of 1830-1 (Tony Gammons), Early Free Franks (Bill Stone), The Vaile Postmark Machine (Douglas Muir), De Quincey's London Mail Coach (Jim Dutton), and the Thames River Post (Frank O'Neill). Christine Jones reports on artefacts recently acquired by the Museum, and there is a profile of the Association's Publicity Officer John Maxwell Jones. Copies are available at £2 from the address below.

The Friends have an interesting programme of events for 1996 including visits to the British Philatelic Bureau, the Scottish Philatelic

Congress, Royal Mail Technology Centre, Bath Postal Museum, Isle of Man Philatelic Bureau and Museum, TPO Depot, etc. For full details of the Association's activities write to: Ray Pottle Friends of the NPM, PO Box 40, UCKFIELD, E Sussex, TN22 2SP.

Burns Stamps on Extended Sale

The Robert Burns stamps will remain on sale for about nine months at about 50 main post offices in Scotland. These include the postshops at the following offices:

489 Union Street, ABERDEEN AB9 1GG

4 St Nicholas Shopping Centre, ABERDEEN AB1 1HN

65 Sandgate, AYR KA7 1AA

7 Great King Street, DUMFRIES DG1 1AA

4 Meadowside, DUNDEE DD1 1AA

42/44 Queen Anne Street, DUNFERMLINE KY12 7AA

265 Morningside Road, EDINBURGH EH10 4RD

87-91 Bothwell Street, GLASGOW G2 7AA

1-5 George Square, GLASGOW G2 1AA (*expected to close in March*)

14-16 Queensgate, INVERNESS IV1 1AA

165 High Street, IRVINE KA12 8AE

71 Johnfinnie Street, KILMARNOCK KA1 1AA

County Square, PAISLEY PA1 1AA

South Street, PERTH PH1 1AA

The *Burns Bicentenary* 1996 book – No. 3 in the British Philatelic Publications series – is on sale at postshops plus in the main post offices in: Bath, Belfast, Birmingham, Brighton, Bristol, Cambridge, Cardiff, Chester, Colchester, Coventry, Croydon, Durham, Exeter, Gatwick Airport, Glasgow, Gloucester, Guildford, Harrogate, Leeds, Leicester, Liverpool, London (Lombard Street, EC3; Trafalgar Square, WC2) Manchester, Newcastle upon Tyne, Nottingham, Plymouth, Portsmouth, Romford, Southampton, Southend on Sea, Stratford upon Avon, Windsor, and York.

The book was issued free to *Bulletin* subscribers last month. Copies are also available from the British Philatelic Bureau, 20 Brandon Street, EDINBURGH EH3 5TT, price £2.95.

Burns & Greetings – Plates/Colours

The plates used for the Burns stamps are:

19p 1A (cream) 1A (bistre-brown) 1A (black), also 2A2A2A

25p, 41p & 60p 1A (cream) 1A (bistre-brown) 1A (black) 1A (magenta) 1A (bistre-yellow) 1A (new blue)

The plates for the Greetings (Cartoons) book are: W2 (new blue) W2 (blue-green) W2 (bright violet) W2 (bright mauve) W2 (vermilion) W2 (black)

Royal Mail Walt Disney Promotion

Buying stamps from the post office can win you a dream family holiday in Walt Disney World Florida in a spectacular joint promotion by Royal Mail and Walt Disney Attractions. A Disney scratchcard campaign will run in 20,000 post offices from 19 February until 6 April. When you buy stamps worth £2.50 or more, you will be given a scratchcard and the chance to win a holiday or exclusive Disney merchandise. Some 25 holidays are on offer.

This is the first time that scratchcards have been used in a Post Office promotion and colourful Disney branding featured on the covers of a new £2.50 stamp book which goes on sale on 19 February. (It contains ten 1st class NVI stamps, printed by Harrisons.) The campaign is being supported by press advertising, posters inside post offices, television commercials, photocalls and other media events.

Giles Finnemore, leader of the Royal Mail team organising the promotion, explains how the idea was developed.

"We had run a number of promotions over the last year, offering customers gifts such as chocolate or small teddy bear ornaments. One of the reasons behind that was to show people how easy it is to send gifts through the post, but following that we wanted to organise a promotion with a third party, one with a high perception of quality and which would have something particularly good to offer to our customers." Among many names, Walt Disney was suggested. Giles's team then did some background research on Disney and other names and discovered that with the British public, Walt Disney World Florida is high on the list of most highly perceived brands in terms of quality, following names like Mercedes-Benz and BMW.

"Disney is the second largest media company in the world", says Giles, and "were overwhelmed by the exposure that would result from their branding appearing on the front cover of stamp books available through our post offices."

Such is the quality of the Royal Mail promotion that Walt Disney World is investigating whether a similar scheme can be launched with the US Post Office.

The decision of the type of prizes developed

from the fact that this year marks the 25th anniversary of Walt Disney World Florida, and the idea of a 25 year-25 holidays link was mooted. The anniversary idea was then dropped but the holidays remained. "We are very pleased that they gave us this level of support", comments Giles, "because Walt Disney World Florida is a truly amazing place and the holidays are worth thousands of pounds".

The lucky winners will be flown to Florida and transferred to Walt Disney World Florida – an unforgettable place, 20 miles south-west of Orlando, covering some 43 square miles. It includes Future World, which is focused on discovery and scientific achievements, with themes such as Spacespace Earth, Universe of Energy and Wonders of Life. The World Showcase is a fascinating exhibition of 11 nations, including the UK.

If you don't win one of the holidays, don't despair – you might still win some of the 100,000 exclusive Disney-branded baseball caps, keyrings, badges, and pencil cases on offer.

The image is a composite of two promotional materials. The top part is a scratchcard with a yellow border. At the top, it says "WIN A FAMILY TRIP TO WALT DISNEY WORLD, FLORIDA - INSTANTLY!". Below this is a large Mickey Mouse head silhouette. To the right of the silhouette is a photograph of Cinderella Castle with fireworks. A young boy is shown in the bottom right corner of the card, holding a string. To the left of the castle, there is a list of conditions under the heading "CONDITIONS". Below the list, it says "HO" and "If you're the lucky winner, you'll win a family trip to Walt Disney World, Florida, for up to 10 people, including accommodation, travel, and more." Below this is a "VOID IF REMOVED" stamp. At the bottom, it says "POP THE BALLOON AND YOU COULD BE UP, UP AND AWAY" and "Royal Mail". The bottom part of the image shows the front cover of a stamp book. It has a red background. On the left, it says "Walt Disney World Instant Win" and "10 First Class Stamps". In the center, there is a large "10" and "First Class Stamps". Below this is a "Royal Mail" logo. On the right, it says "DETAILS INSIDE". The bottom part of the cover features a photograph of Cinderella Castle and a young boy.

Exhibition News

Capex '96

CAPEX '96, a World Philatelic Exhibition, will be held at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre in Toronto, Canada from June 8 to 16, 1996 and is presented with the support of Canada Post Corporation. Expected to draw more than 80,000 visitors over its nine day run, CAPEX '96 covers over 100,000 square feet of exhibit space and will feature a wide range of attractions and displays, including 4000 exhibit frames and an international marketplace of over 200 stamp dealers and postal administrations.

The United States Postal Service will be a major participant in this important international philatelic exhibition. The USPS will be creating a unique "US Destination", a special area on the exhibition floor that includes a large USPS sales area, related displays, exhibits from the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, plus information booths for the American Philatelic Society and the American Stamp Dealers' Association.

Mr Randy Neil, President of the American Philatelic Society applauded the USPS participation in CAPEX '96, adding that "the APS will be holding its Spring Meeting of members at CAPEX '96 and our membership is looking forward to visiting Toronto, Canada."

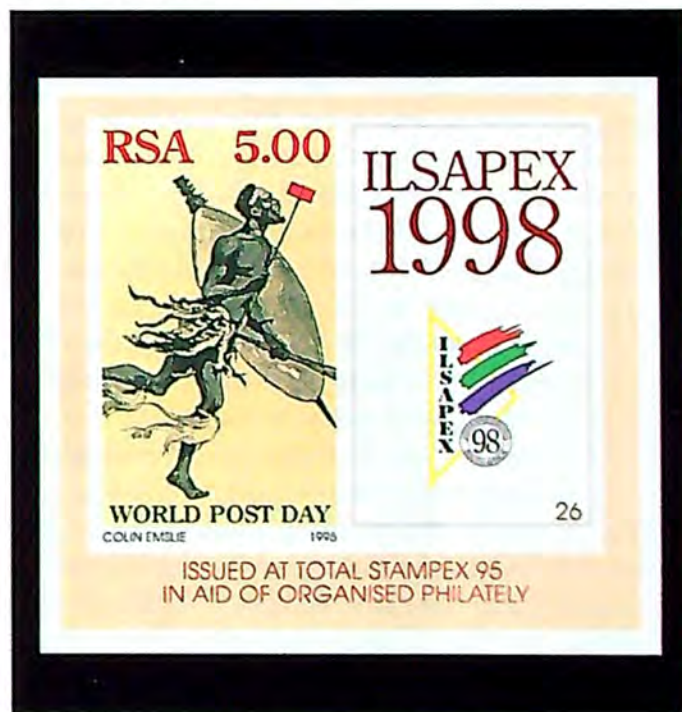
Collectors wishing to learn more about the exhibition should write to CAPEX '96, PO Box 204, Station Q, Toronto, Ontario, M4T 2M1, CANADA.



Ilsapex 98

This international philatelic exhibition will be held at the Gallagher's Estate Exhibition Centre, Johannesburg, South Africa, 20-25 October 1998, jointly organised by the Society of Israel Philately-Johannesburg and the South African Philatelic Dealer's Association. Exhibits will

include material from the Royal Philatelic Collection, the Israel and South African PO Archives as well as from renowned collections worldwide. The Congress of the Philatelic Federation of South Africa will be held during the exhibition. To promote Ilsapex, the South African PO featured the exhibition logo on its World Post Day miniature sheet (October 1995). Enquiries about the exhibition to: Ilsapex 98, PO Box 1916, Houghton, Johannesburg 2041, South Africa.



Philatelic Displays at British Library

Visitors to the British Library can see an additional display of material from the Library's outstanding Philatelic Collections. Every three months there is a new display and for 1996 these will be of selected stamp issues from the Crown Agents Philatelic and Security Printing Archive, showing artwork, essays, proofs and issued stamps illustrating the development of the designs.

Until 31 March the display will feature the four designs of stamps from Ascension for the 1995 Flowers issue, designed by Jennifer Toombs, followed by Seychelles/Zil Elwanngen Sesel 1983 Wildlife issue (1 April-30 June), and Tristan Da Cunha 1980 150th Anniversary of Royal Geographical Society (1 July-30 September).

The British Library Exhibition Galleries are in Great Russell Street, London WC1, nearest tubes Holborn and Tottenham Court Road. Opening hours are Monday-Saturday 10.00-17.00; Sunday 14.30-18.00. Admission free. The Galleries are closed on Good Friday (5 April) and Monday 6 May.

Twice across the Atlantic to the UK

An unusual Second World War Air Mail route from West Africa & further afield.

RICHARD BEITH

By 1941, the extreme shortage of "civilian" planes meant that the British Post Office was unable to offer a civilian air mail service to West Africa. Even priority military and diplomatic mail faced a great lack of capacity. Mail for South Africa, North Africa, the Middle East and Australasia was mainly carried by sea to Durban and then transferred to the famous "Horseshoe" air mail service operated by BOAC and its associates (Ref 1). Of course, prior to entry of the Japanese into the war, mail could be sent to the Far East across the North Atlantic and then on Pan American's Trans-Pacific service, but the postal charges were high and there was still a capacity problem on the North Atlantic.

In December 1941 Pan American initiated a new air mail service from Miami to the Belgian Congo as part of providing assistance to the Allied war effort in Africa and beyond. One of the presumably unplanned spin offs from the operation of this route, was the decision of various postal authorities, colonial and others, to utilise the return flights from West Africa to Florida as a way of helping air mails on their way to the UK. Of course, the mail still had to get back to the UK via New York and the North Atlantic air route. The writer has strong suspicions that some (much?) of this mail, often franked at very high postal rates, was still held up in New York waiting for passage to GB and may sometimes have crossed the North Atlantic by sea rather than by air.

The object of this article is to give the background to this American route and to describe a number of covers which have all the appearances of having completed two crossings of the Atlantic prior to reaching the UK.

The Lack of British Air Mail Capacity

There never had been a direct British air mail route to British West Africa prior to the Second World War. Air mails were carried on the regular South African services of Imperial Airways via the Mediterranean and down the Nile to Khartoum. From Khartoum a branch line operated to Kano and Lagos in Nigeria where connections were made by Elder Colonial

Airways to the Gold Coast. (If war hadn't broken out, British Airways Limited would eventually have opened a UK-South America service via Bathurst, Gambia, Refs 2 & 3).

The fall of France and the cutting of the Mediterranean with the entry of Italy into the war in Summer 1940 had an obvious effect on the peace time routes – the main result was the routing of mail by sea to Durban for onward transmission by air, as noted above. A brief survey of the civil aviation history of this area, soon reveals that there was a constant battle to provide enough carrying capacity for urgent military mails, diplomatic despatches and priority passengers without even considering the possibility of carrying ordinary civilian mails. Between October 1940 and late 1941 priority traffic was maintained with a mere handful of flying boats. The Empire boats *Clyde* and *Clare* operated a Poole (Dorset)-Lisbon-Bathurst-Freetown-Lagos service at approximately 10 day intervals, but the frequency was cut after *Clyde* sank at her Lisbon moorings. Various other stop-gap planes were used, but as noted by the anonymous author of *Merchant Airmen: Still the load that could be carried was insufficient for the urgency of communication*. By February 1942 "C" class Empire flying boats from the Mediterranean were transferred to the West African route and in July 1942 the "G" class flying boats *Golden Hind* and *Golden Horn* began a service for priority passengers and diplomatic mail from Poole to Foynes (Eire) and thence Lisbon, Bathurst, Freetown, Accra and Lagos. It was as late as April 1944 before BOAC were able to introduce a UK-Lagos service using DC3s (Refs 4-6).

Reference to the *British Post Office Circulars* of the period shows that a civil air mail service was still available from the UK to British West Africa in October 1939, but that Nigeria, Gold Coast, etc, had already been omitted from the list of air mail destinations by August 1940. As late as August 1944 the phrase *No service* was still in use and it was not until July 1945 that a qualified "yes" was given: *By air throughout to the extent that aircraft capacity is available after military priority requirements have been met.*

Hence, its not surprising that when the new American route was opened at the end of 1941, colonial postal officials took an interest in the possibility of sending mails to the "Old Country" via the USA.

The new American route – FAM22

While the USA remained neutral, President Roosevelt had to act carefully to avoid upsetting isolationist feelings at home. However, within these constraints, he was concerned to help the Allies as much as possible and in September 1941 the President asked Pan American Airways to inaugurate an air route to the Congo to facilitate communications with the Belgian, British and Free French authorities in Central Africa. A new company, Pan-American Airways-Africa Ltd was set up and 2000 employees were transferred to establish the route and ground facilities. The route ran from Miami via San

described these elsewhere in the philatelic press (Ref 7). The first flight, using the Boeing 314A flying boat *Cape Town Clipper*, actually left American territory on 6 December 1941, one day before the attack on Pearl Harbour, so the conventions of neutrality only applied for the first day of the new service. Readers interested in the historical and political background to the development of this route are referred to Deborah W Ray's detailed account, Ref 8). The autobiography of the *Cape Town Clipper's* chief pilot, Captain Masland, also makes good reading, but he had a very low opinion of philatelists owing to the numerous delays encountered while waiting for first flight covers to be serviced at each stop. As the Captain said: *If you have a philatelist for President, you must take the good with the bad* (Ref 9).

Mail from Africa to the UK

Figure 1(below) shows a cover from the first return flight carried from Nigeria to Miami by FAM22 and bearing the special handstamp/cachet prepared by the Nigerian Post Office: FIRST AIRMAIL USA-NIGERIA 14 DE 1941. However, the cover is addressed to Ayr in Scotland and bears the manuscript instruction: *Via Pan-American Airways Brazil-Miami-New York-Lisbon and Imperial Airways to London*. Apart from the fact that Imperial Airways had long been absorbed into BOAC, the instruction indicates that the sender (whose location is given on the rear of the envelope as *c/o Chief Accountant, Posts and Telegraphs, Lagos*) had a fair



Juan, Port of Spain (Trinidad), Belem and Natal (Brazil) to Bathurst (Gambia), Monrovia (Liberia), Lagos, and Leopoldville in the Belgian Congo. This, of course, also provided the ground facilities which enabled war planes to reach the Middle and Far East under their own power.

The mail route is usually known as FAM22, that is, Foreign Air Mail Route No.22 of the United States Post Office. A full range of first flight covers were flown, the writer has already

idea of the opportunities provided by the new service. Note the very high franking – five shillings (25p). Figure 2 shows a December 1942 cover from Bangui in Oubangi-Chari franked with 24.25 francs worth of Free French stamps addressed to London. The manuscript note *Par Clipper* suggests carriage via Pan American was preferred; this routing is confirmed by the fact that the code number on the American censor tape EXAMINED BY 5519 refers to a censor operating in New York (Ref 10).



Figure 2(above) and Figure 3(below)

Mail from the Middle and Far East to UK

Figure 3 shows a 2 August 1942 registered cover from Bat Yam, near Tel Aviv, Palestine to Surbiton, Surrey. Registered covers usually tell us more about mail routes, thanks to the practice of backstamping in transit. This cover has received transit marks in Miami (19 August 1942) and New York (20 August 1942) followed by a Surbiton, Surrey cds for 12 September 1942. The presumed route taken is shown in Figure 4.

Figure 5 shows a cover from Chaoting, China, dated 6 August 1943 to Felixstowe with manuscript endorsement: *By BOAC to Lagos via Calcutta and thence by PAA to destination*. There are

no transit marks to prove this route, but this type of route instruction seems relatively common on air mail from China to the UK at this time.

Postscript

The continuing history of FAM22 during the rest of the Second World War has not been accorded the attention it deserves from aerophilatelists. This present study is but one aspect of a larger story. Apparently FAM22 continued to operate until

8 January 1945, but the line between civil and military mail carrying along this route obviously became blurred. The writer will be happy to receive any additional information/photocopies on any aspect of FAM22 for comment via the Editor.

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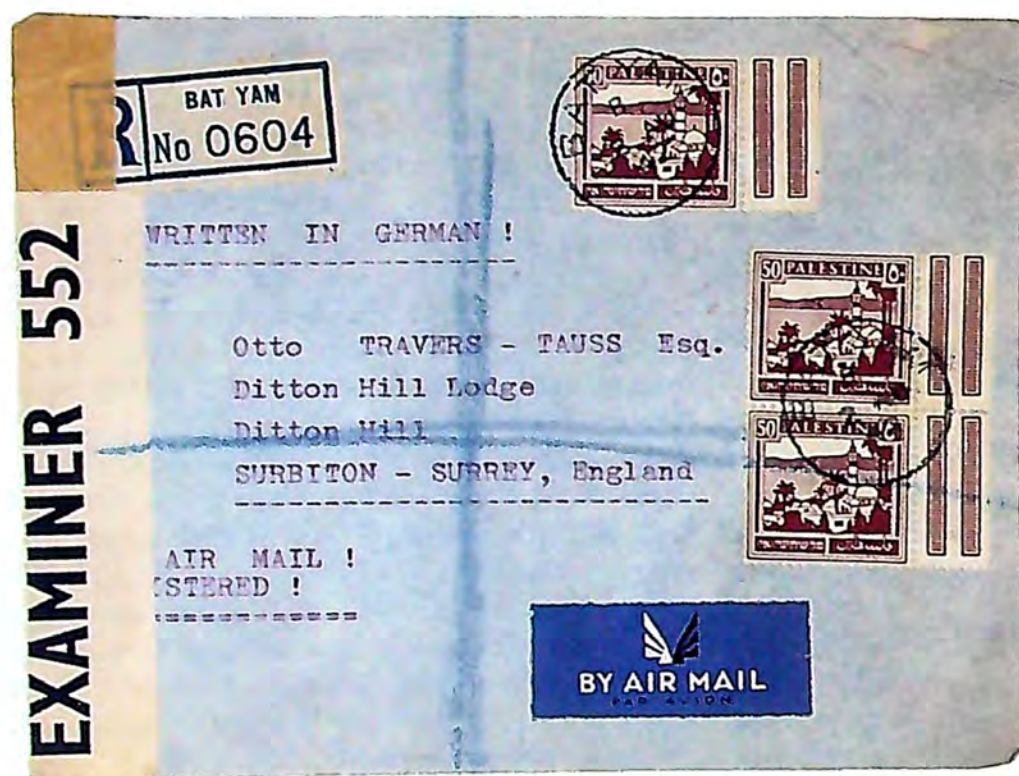


Figure 4

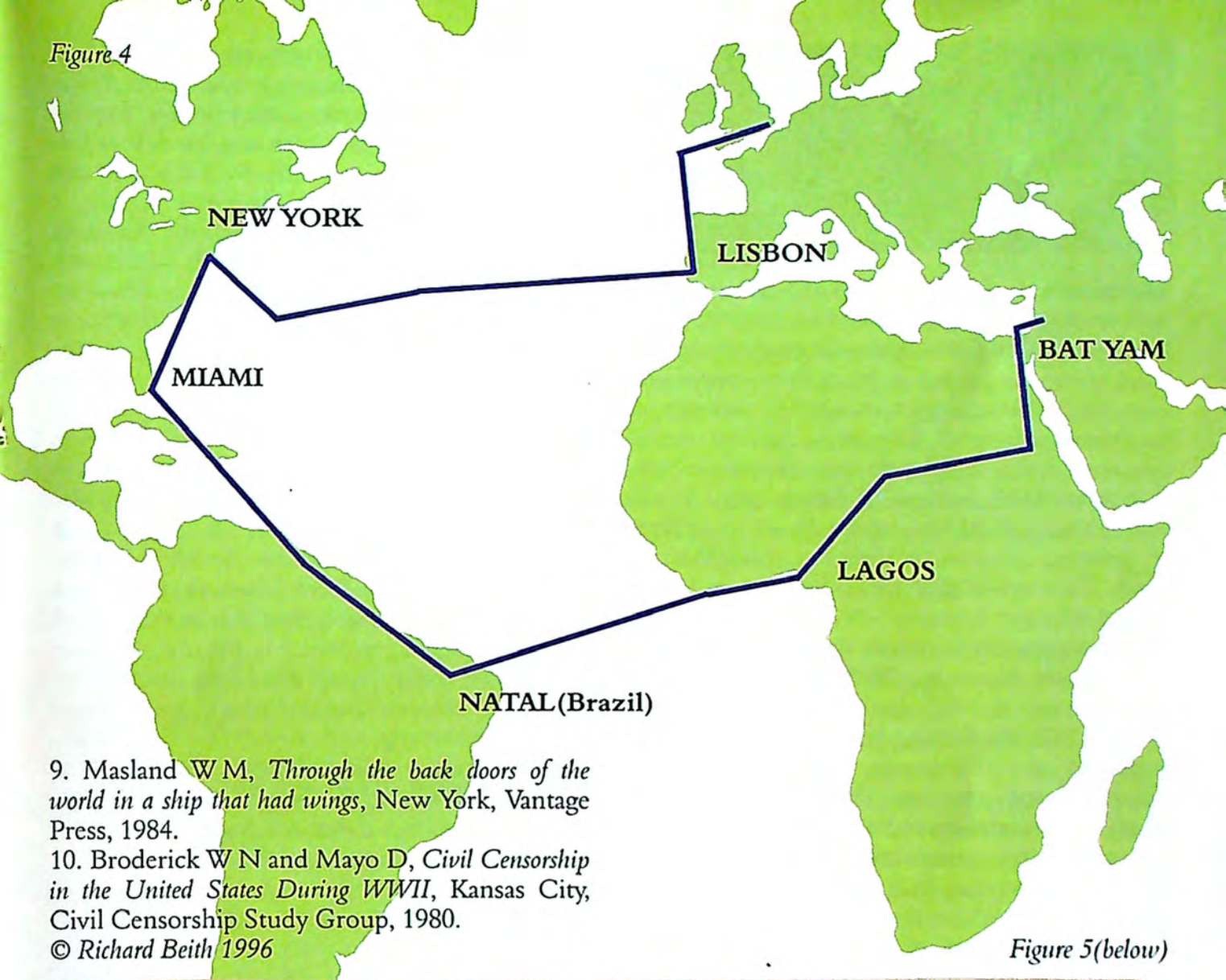
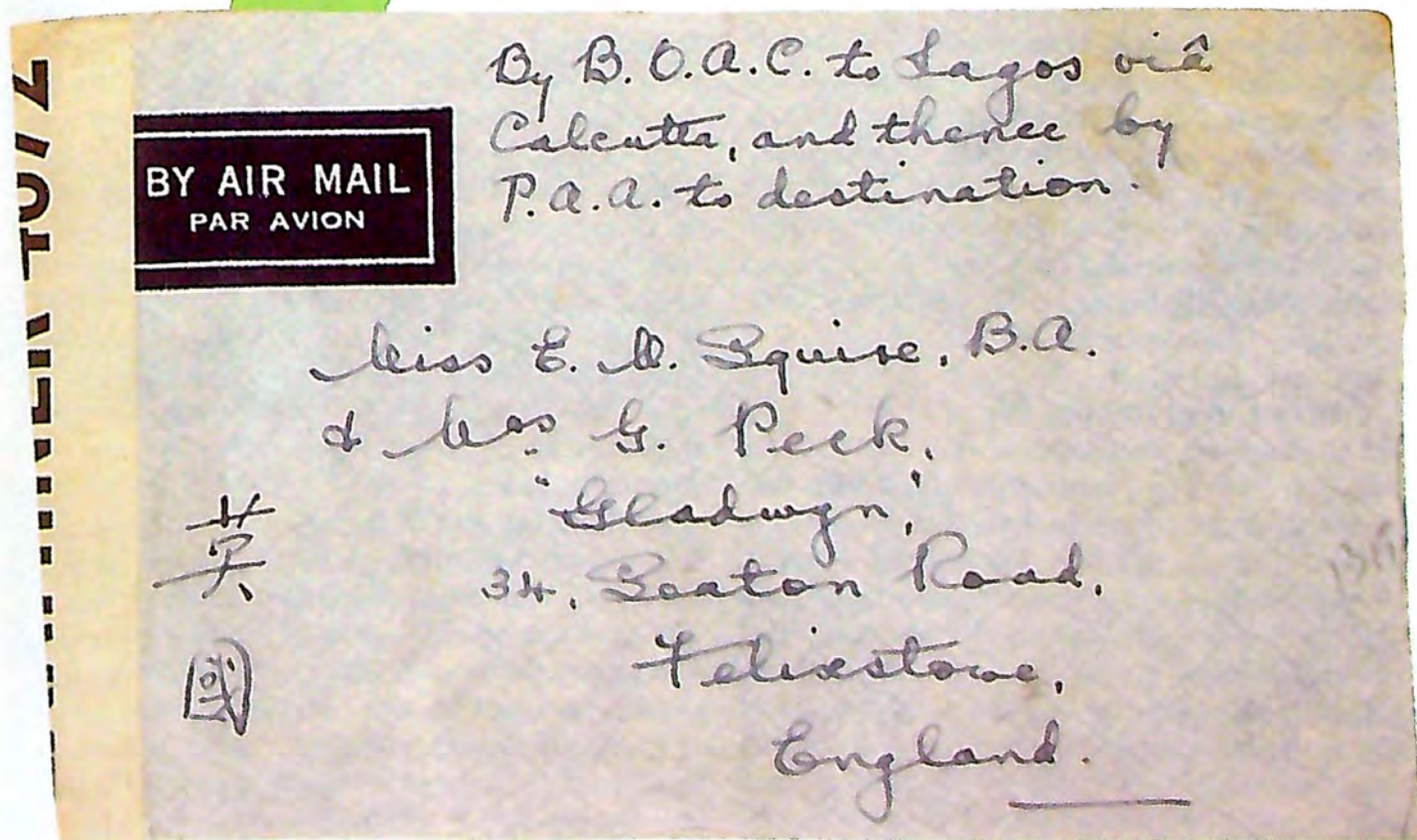


Figure 5(below)



Decimal Machin Silver Jubilee

JAMES MACKAY

The medieval schoolmen used to argue endlessly over how many angels could dance on the point of a needle. A debate of similar proportions has been going on for some years now concerning the number of different collectable varieties in the Machin decimal definitives. At one end of the scale you could take the listing in the Commonwealth volume of *Stamps of the World*, concentrating solely on basic colours, regardless of printing process, perforation, phosphor or paper. This would give you a basic series which started life in February 1971 with 12 small denominations by Harrison and Sons, converted to a baker's dozen by the addition of the 10p photogravure in the small format in August 1971. That simplified, basic series has now grown to over 100 stamps, from ½p to £1, and what an eye-catching display they make, arranged in ascending order of value.

But even the newest recruit to philately would very quickly realise that there is much, much more to the Machins than that. This list counts as one stamp the 1p crimson which is the only denomination still in its original colour 25 years later. Even that statement is grossly oversimplifying matters, and blithely ignores the wide range of distinct shades of crimson which have been employed over the years. Furthermore the simplified listing does not distinguish between the grey-blue of the 14p of 1981-3 (X902 or X944) and the deep blue of the 14p of August 1988 (X903-4 or X1007), lumping them all together in *Stamps of the World* as "blue".

Record in Longevity and Prolificity

Five years ago, as the Machins were approaching their 20th birthday, I examined the series on this very simplified basis and found that the set had swollen to 79. At that time I wondered whether it would be allowed to continue, with the fervent hope that it would some day overtake the Portuguese Ceres definitives of 1912-30 which eventually ran to some 86 stamps on the same criteria. Now the Machins have beaten both the Ceres records, in terms of longevity and prolificity, and Arnold Machin's design seems set to remain current for the foreseeable future.

How many Machins are there, of course, depends on which catalogue you use. From Stanley Gibbons comes *Collect British Stamps*, whose 47th edition is just to hand and bids fair to rival the Machins both in longevity and number. This catalogue is extremely popular, I suspect, because it has pitched the level of specialisation at a fairly basic level, which will probably appeal to the greatest number of collectors. Unlike *Stamps of the World*, it distinguishes between the basic technical details. In the listing of the decimal Machins (pages 32-6), therefore, we find 192 stamps listed (X841 to X1058, but no X923), with distinctions in paper, phosphor and printing process as well as colour. To this we must add the eight large-format high-values (£1 to £5) of 1977-87, 29 stamps with elliptical perforations, issued since 1993, and the 21 NVI stamps since 1989, which swell the total to 250. Many collectors, however, would regard combinations of perforation with one or more imperforate sides (from booklets) as separate collectable varieties, and this adds a further score of stamps with top, bottom or side imperforate. Taking the *Great Britain Concise Catalogue* as the yardstick, however, we would find 112 basic stamps with values expressed, together with 193 varieties, making a total of 305, while the four basic NVI stamps (on change of colour alone) have 39 variations in printer, process, perforation and phosphor, so that the total now rises to 348!

These statistics apply solely to the "national" series, but if we take the regional or "country" versions into consideration then the number of collectable Machins even on a simplified basis will be substantially augmented. In 1971 four regions were using such stamps, each having a set of four denominations consisting of the basic Machin design with a national emblem inserted in the upper left-hand corner. The Isle of Man dropped out in 1973, but Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales have continued to issue their own distinctive stamps to this day, and to date the number of basic regional stamps runs to some 200 alone.

At the other end of the spectrum there is the listing provided in such catalogues as the Stanley Gibbons *Great Britain Specialised*, volume 4 and *The Connoisseur Catalogue of Machin Stamps*, running to 688 and 508 pages respectively, and entirely devoted to this definitive series. The slogan on the cover of the latter reads "Machins made intelligible" and it must be conceded that it has a more logical approach to this exceedingly complex series, and avoids the pitfalls and

discrepancies which advanced specialists have apparently detected in the Gibbons volume. On the other hand, the Gibbons version is infinitely better illustrated and inevitably contains about as much detailed background information as it is possible to find.

Longest Running but not longest lasting

Clearly the Machin series is not the longest-running in the world, but in terms of longevity is a comparative youngster of 28, dating from the first £sd stamps. Norway's Posthorn series first appeared in 1871 in skilling denominations and since 1877 in ore and krone values, latterly in two-colour combinations. Runner-up is Denmark's Numeral series, introduced in 1905 and still going strong, but on a simplified basis there have been only 68 Posthorns and 58 Numerals over the years. Denmark's Arms set, introduced in 1946, has notched up 51 stamps in half a century. Other series with a long life were used by Tonga (1897-1953) and Ireland (1922-69) while the Camel Postman stamps of Sudan were in use 1898-1941 and 1948-51, but none of these came anywhere near the Machins in number.



Pre-decimal Machins; £1 stamps – 1969-70 printing and 1972 redrawn value

Pre- and early Decimal Issues

To the vast range of decimal values, we can add the pre-decimal issues of 1967-9 in £sd currency a mere 16 values, ranging from the old ½d to the bi-coloured 1s 9d. Then there are the recess-printed high values in the same, but an enlarged

design. Back in March 1969 when they made their appearance, it was considered sufficient to have £1 as the highest denomination. Now, little more than a quarter of a century on, we have the spectacle of the £1 stamp reduced in format and process to the status of a low value.

The decimal high values, in fact, actually preceded their photogravure counterparts and were issued ahead of the advent of decimal currency, on 17 June 1970. Of the three lower denominations, only the 50p (equivalent of 10s) corresponded directly in colour and actual value, new colours being adopted for the 10p and 20p stamps. The £1 stamp, while retaining its black colour, was redrawn with a Roman flat-topped I instead of an Arabic slope-topped 1, issued in 1972.

The release of the low value decimal Machins, on scheduled for 15 February 1971, was bedevilled by the postal strike paralysing much of the country. In some areas, however, post offices were functioning normally and mail was even collected and delivered, thus giving rise to two important facets of contemporary postal history: covers bearing the new stamps commercially used within restricted areas, and the vast range of cachets applied after the event to first day covers which had been delayed by the strike. The latter study has absorbed postal historians for decades now and even spawned a specialist literature of its own.

Areas of Specialisation

Along with the decimal Machins came stamp booklets which revived the prewar practice of commercial advertising on se-tenant labels. This immediately triggered off another area of specialisation that has grown out of all recognition over the intervening years. Although such commercial advertising was itself discontinued in 1973, it had launched the study of Machin booklets in fine style. The earliest low-value booklets were stitched in the traditional manner but they were generally phased out in 1976 and replaced by folded booklets of the Swedish pattern. What the later booklets may have lacked in the variety of the advertising material has been amply compensated for in the astonishing range of se-tenant combinations. Labels bearing postal announcements (Postcode Helpline) continue to appear in the 50p booklet panes, but even they may soon be a thing of the past. Of course, there is no telling what requirements for labels to make up awkward spaces in booklets may not



25p stamp printed in photogravure (Harrison and Enschedé) and lithography (Questa and Walsall)

arise in the future, depending on increases in postal rates. Even the attractive pictorial covers, pioneered in the 1960s and giving a new dimension to thematics, have now been abandoned in favour of the glossy red and yellow covers that extend across the entire range of Royal Mail booklets, but along the way we have had the nuances of window booklets and barcodes to add zest to this facet of the Machins.

Prestige Books – a separate art form

Although prestige booklets had their origins in the pre-decimal "Stamps for Cooks" £1 booklet, this phenomenon has been brought to the level of a separate art form within the decimal period. The Wedgwood £1 booklet of May 1972 contained a pane of six stamps – a vertical strip of three ½p stamps with two phosphor bands, and a strip comprising two 2½p and one ½p with a single band at the left. This created an entirely new collectable variety, the ½p with left band, and as it only occurred in this booklet many collectors were caught napping at the time, hence the £60 mint and £25 used quoted in the Gibbons catalogues. What probably began purely as expedience has subsequently become a tradition in its own right, so that each new

Same values–different colours



prestige booklet is eagerly awaited for the mixed-value pane, to see how many new collectable variations it yields.

Another phenomenon which continued with the decimal Machins in February 1971 was the multi-value coil strip. By inserting a 5p coin in the slot one could obtain a horizontal strip of five stamps comprising a 2p and pairs of ½p and 1p stamps. By the end of 1973 10p strips (6p + 2p + 1p + pair of ½p) were available. Although the last of these available from slot machines was the strip of 8p plus pairs of 1p and postal announcement labels (January 1980), the multi-value strip was given renewed impetus when the *Reader's Digest* commissioned strips of four stamps, sent out with mail-shots to enable customers to respond to offers of publications. These strips, compose stamps making up the current second-class rate.

Recent Innovations

More recently there have been a couple of interesting developments in the NVI first class stamps. The first of these was the release of a £1 booklet containing a block of four stamps with a large label alongside to commemorate the tercentenary of the Bank of England, and this has since been followed by a similar booklet with label paying tribute to R J Mitchell the inventor of the Spitfire fighter aircraft of the Second World War. Clearly this is potentially an exciting medium for commemorative purposes, on occasions when it may not be felt worthy of distinctive commemorative stamps.

The second development was the appearance of a single NVI first class stamp in what is effectively a miniature sheet with diagonal rouletting designed in such a way that the sheet can be folded across the corner of a greetings card in a packaged form. This began in 1994 as a trial with Boots and bore the elliptical logo of that company. Since then the sheet has been reprinted without the logo so that it can be used by other retail outlets.

Technical Features

Of course, the Machins owe much of their complexity and infinite philatelic interest to their technical features. In 1971 Harrison and Sons enjoyed a monopoly of production of the low value definitives using the photogravure method. Although Harrisons continue to print the Machins by this process to the present time, it should be noted that the Dutch firm of Johann Enschedé en Zonen was given a contract to print 8p stamps by photogravure in 1979. This was followed, in 1992, by a contract to print certain other denominations. To the untutored eye the Enschedé printings may appear identical to their Harrison counterparts, but collectors get around this problem by taking them in imprint blocks of six from the lower left-hand corner of the sheet.

Back in 1971 Harrisons printed stamps on ordinary paper with a single phosphor band (the basic second class stamp) or two phosphor bands (other denominations), but by 1979 all-over phosphor or phosphorised paper was coming into use. These distinctions can easily be detected with the naked eye, and are probably about as far as many collectors would wish to go at a basic level, without getting into the subtleties of original coated paper (OCP) or fluorescent coated paper (FCP), let alone advanced coated paper (ACP) or the lustrous pearlescent effects found on the latest £1 stamps.

In 1980 the Post Office decided to widen its options by giving contracts to printers who did not have photogravure facilities. In this manner Machin stamps came to be lithographed by The House of Questa, John Waddington and Walsall Security Printers. These versions can readily be distinguished from their photogravure counterparts by colour and screening as well as

perforation in many cases. Here again, collectors prefer to take mint specimens in positional blocks of six showing the printer's imprint, and these can be used for comparison in identifying used examples more accurately. Apart from the basic perforations (15 x 14 for Harrison and Enschedé or 14 (for the lithographic printers), it should be noted that some Questa printings also have a gauge of 15 x 14. Since 1993, however, elliptical perforations have been added at the sides as a security feature, and this is now being extended throughout the entire range.

I shall leave to far more expert students than I to dilate on the subtleties of modifications in heads and numerals, as well as papers, gums, perforators, phosphors and fluors. There remains one other aspect of the Machin definitives which must be mentioned and that is the experiment with self-adhesive booklets which were launched in the Tyne-Tees area in October 1993. Lithographed by Walsall, they differed radically from all other Machins in having a horizontal, rather than a vertical, format. The stamps, in panes of 20 with diecut perforations, were printed on paper supplied by Coated Papers Limited with a water soluble gum even though an acrylic was also used. This got around the problem for collectors of soaking off used examples. This is potentially an area for great expansion, if the experience of other countries is anything to judge by.

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Editor's Note: In a future article Dr Mackay will examine in more detail some of the long-running definitive series from other countries

Definitive longevity – issues from Norway, Denmark, Portugal and Ireland



Recent Developments in Postal Mechanisation

OCR/VCS and red codemarks

PATRICK G AWCOCK

In my previous article (May 1993 pp216-7), I referred to the Optical Character Recognition Systems (OCR) installed by Royal Mail over the period 1987-92. These systems, manufactured by AEG, can machine read typewritten addresses, and they will be referred to as AEG OCRs within this article, to distinguish them from the more recently introduced combined Optical Character Recognition and Video Coding systems (OCR/VCS). This article relates mainly to these two systems, which print codemarks of bars formed from a fine line of droplets of ink.

Optical Character Recognition and Video Coding

Royal Mail have installed 35 OCR/VCS systems over the period 1993-95, the first installation being at Swindon in April 1993 and the final one at Peterborough in August 1995. Each system consists of one or more Mail Transport Systems (MTT, from the French, *Machine de Tri à Tasseurs*), a number of sets of four video coding desks and a number of Letter Sorting Machines, all interlinked by computer software. Machine readable items (i.e. those bearing a printed address or a clear *handwritten postcode*) will receive a route-code only – a bar code which actually indicates the address – whilst other items will receive a tag-code initially and the route-code will be added later, after the image has been viewed by a coder on a video screen. The tag code is simply a means of identifying that particular letter.

Route-codes and tag-codes

In all there are four types of codemarks which can be applied to mail, all of which can be read by the latest sorting machines. The four types of route-codes are:

1. Standard $\frac{1}{4}$ " pitch codemarks (i.e. the minimum distance between two bars is $\frac{1}{4}$ "). These are the codemarks, in two rows, which have appeared for many years and have been used by the manual coding desks (blue dots) and the AEG OCRs.

2. $\frac{1}{8}$ " pitch transitional codemarks. These contain exactly the same information as before, but



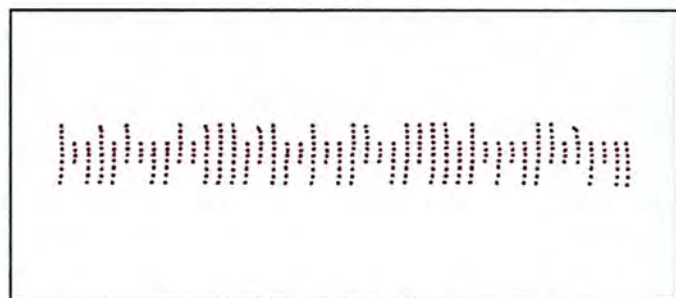
Standard $\frac{1}{4}$ " pitch codemarks for RH19 (lower line) 1LD (upper line)



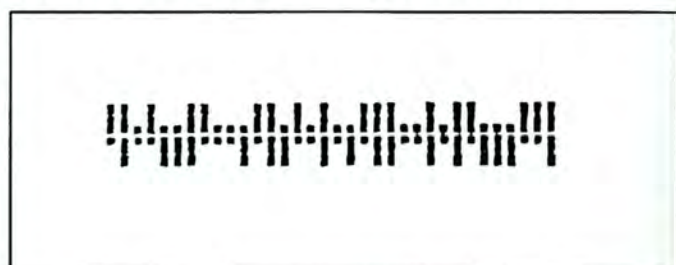
$\frac{1}{8}$ " pitch transitional tag-code (upper) and route-code (lower) for RH19 1LD

condensed into one line of bars at the base of the envelope. The new OCR/VCS system uses these codemarks and some of the AEG-OCRs have been converted to print them.

3. Royal Mail 4-state codemarks. Royal Mail have developed a 4-state bar code only used by the new OCR/VCS systems which includes a very detailed checking system, enabling the bar code to be correctly interpreted even if part of it



Royal Mail 4-state codemarks for RH19 1LD



4-state Customer bar-coding for RH19 1LD

is missing or unreadable. These codes are so called because each character can take one of four forms. This type of bar code cannot be decoded other than with the detailed computer software and so cannot be decoded by collectors.

Suffice it to say that the route code will consist of 24, 44 or 64 characters according to how much information it contains. The normal postcode is represented by 44 characters. If only

position, about 2½" from the base of the envelope and exist in two forms only – transitional codemarks or 64 character 4-state codemarks. This tag-code identifies the specific letter and contains the following data – MTT number, date within-the month, time (in ½ hr intervals) and an item number.

4-state tag-code (upper) and extract route code for EAST GRINSTEAD (lower)



JETSAVE LTD
EAST GRINSTEAD
W. SUSSEX

24 characters appear then it represents the first half of the postcode or an extract of the address because the postcode was unknown. The 64 character code has not yet been used operationally, but will represent an enlarged postcode, with two extra characters, to give every delivery point a *unique* postcode – don't worry, you will not have to learn all new postcodes as these extra characters will only be used when they have been extracted from the address by a computer database. These 4-state bar codes were introduced in April 1995 on all mail passing through the OCR/VCS systems at Glasgow and in October were extended to the rest of the Scotland/Northern Ireland region by being introduced at Aberdeen, Belfast and Edinburgh.

4. 4-state Customer bar-coding. These bar codes are printed in black, by the sender, usually above the address panel. These can be decoded by collectors as each letter or numeral of the postcode is represented by a specific set of four characters. They are used by large mailing customers who receive an additional discount on their mailing costs when these bar codes are preprinted.

Tag codes can only appear on mail sorted by the OCR/VCS system. They appear in the upper

Coding Inks

In the past the phosphor ink used has been blue coloured and just visible to the naked eye. After Christmas 1994, a new acrylic phosphor ink was introduced. This new ink had been developed to give more reliable machine readability, but was very difficult to see with the naked eye. Experiments had already been carried out by adding a red fluor to the ink and this was first used operationally at Wolverhampton in February 1995. It was used at a few more offices in April, prior to general introduction at all offices with OCR/VCS or AEG-OCR systems in May or shortly afterwards. Many offices changed over all their printers from blue to red ink simultaneously, whilst others changed them gradually, which resulted in some interesting covers around May-June 1995 with the route-code in blue and the tag-code in red or vice-versa.

For more detailed information readers should consult the Postal Mechanisation Study Circle newsletters (Secretary, T L Mullins, 27 Elizabeth Road, Hunters Ride, HENLEY-ON-THAMES, Oxon, RG9 1RA), or the second edition of my book *Automatic Letter Sorting in the United Kingdom volume 2*

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Decimal Stamp Books-25

Specialist Report

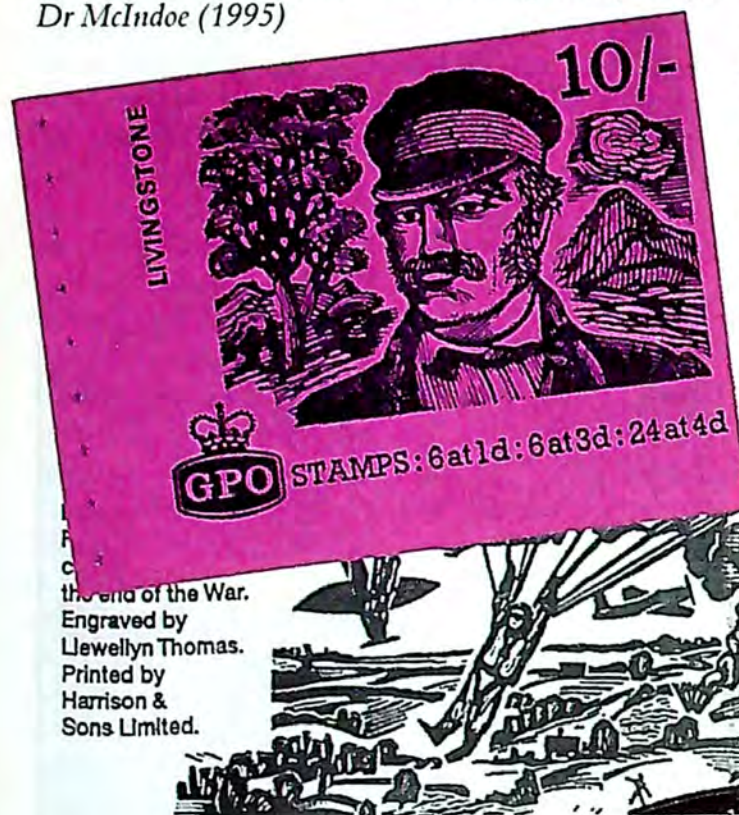
D G A MYALI

Demise of theme books

After almost 28 years, stamps sold in books with illustrated covers are to end. These have always proved popular with "theme" collectors as well as collectors of books *per se*, and they have often provided a forerunner for a series of special issues. The first pictorial book to be issued was the May 1968 edition of the 10 shilling book, pre-released at Stampex 1968. It featured David Livingstone in a series on explorers and contained pre-decimal Machin stamps. It is a coincidence that the last "theme" book should also feature a medical man, Sir Archibald McIndoe, on the current 50p.

Another theme, British birds, proved so popular that it was repeated. The first series was on the pre-decimal 6 shilling books. It ran to 10 designs, starting with the Kingfisher in June 1968. The second was for the decimal 30p books. This featured eight more species, and the books had some useful notes about each bird on the inside front cover. Birds have also been

First and last theme covers – Dr Livingstone (1968), Dr McIndoe (1995)



included on special issues three times, in 1966, 1980 and 1989.

The smaller covers of the machine vend books did not carry illustrations until the 10p decimal books of February 1971. These showed British pillar boxes, another series which ran to 10 designs. Later theme sets were shorter but made a point of featuring the diversity of the countries which comprise the United Kingdom; each of them would provide the source for at least one design in the set.

The last counter books were issued in January 1989, being superseded by the ubiquitous red books. Since then, only machine-vended books, the prestige books and the occasional promotional red book have carried designs on their covers.

New vended stamp books

Although machine-vended books are to continue, they will cease to have illustrated covers. Instead, they will be re-branded in the same image as the red books, with glossy red covers and the Royal Mail cruciform logo. They will even have a yellow strip at the right, although there is, of course, no thumb tab. The change of design is because the general public have become so used to buying their stamps in red books that they expect to get the same thing from machines, so powerful are today's modern marketing techniques. "Get-up", as it is known, is as telling an indicator of source as more conventional trade marks. Because of their smaller size, the new books do not have a multiple stamp design. Also unlike their retail counterparts, they carry no barcode.

The new £1 and £2 books will initially be trialled in selected areas for one month and will gradually replace the themed books elsewhere as stocks are used up. They have the same stamp

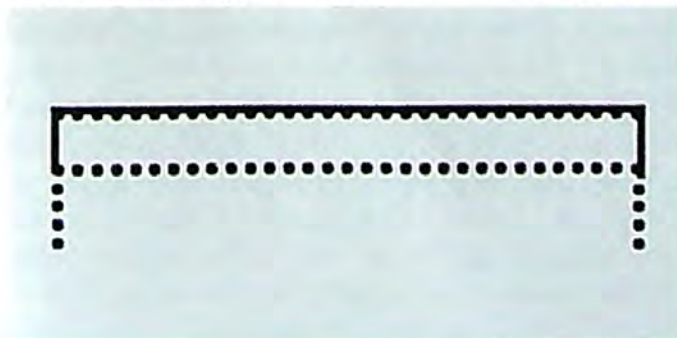




Questa vended books – plate numbers Q1Q1 phos Q1

content as the books they replace but are printed by Questa for the first time. The plate numbers seen so far are Q1 light red, Q1 dark red and Q1 phosphor, but no doubt there will be many more to come. The numbers are the same in both books. They appear in the margin by which the pane is affixed to the cover, above the stamp in position 1. As well as making new plates, Questa had to make a new perforator and this gives an entirely new marginal perforation type. Specialists like to collect these and the GB Decimal Stamp Book Study Circle system recognises almost 50 different types. The new one is illustrated here.

New perforation type on Questa machine vend panes



There are no plans for further 50p books as the conversion of the machines which vend them is almost complete. It is likely that any unconverted remaining when supplies of the 50p book run out will be allowed to remain empty. If it is decided to reprint the McIndoe book, the stamps will have blue fluor for the first time, yielding a new single (because the phosphor bars are short at the top so as not to encroach onto the labels) and a new se-tenant pair.

However, se-tenant pairs, which have been one of the most interesting features of vended books may still be seen in the future. The face value of these books will not change as they are sold in coin-operated machines. Experience with change-giving coil machines does not indicate that the same policy will be adopted for books. As a result, any future tariff change will probably be accommodated by altering the make-up of the panes. Normal red books contain non-value stamps but it is unlikely that the machine books will do so as the selling price would still have to alter.

The phasing out of 50p coin-operated machines has anticipated the change in the size of this coin which has been announced to appear in the next two years. Also to come is a £2 coin for general use. (Those minted to date have been to commemorate special occasions, such as the 50th anniversary of the end of the Second World War.) By that time, it is possible that machines will have been adapted to take the new coin for the £2 books. Incidentally, British coins have also been featured on stamp book covers; there was a short series of three on the 35p and 45p books of 1973-74.

Greetings books

This year's Greetings book – to be issued on 26 February – features some amusing cartoons. I expect everyone will have a favourite; mine is illustrated here. I presume he is the original dogsbody! The book has been printed by Walsall. In view of the long selling period for Greetings books I expect that this will mean a large number of plate combinations, as has happened with their 1995 book. I understand that one reason for the very large number of combinations is that plates are changed in good time to maintain quality of print. Whether the numbers have to appear on the books at all is, of course, another matter. Numbers seen on an advance copy shown to me by the Editor are: W2 (new blue) W2 (blue-green) W2 (bright-violet) W2 (bright mauve) W2 (vermilion) W2 (black).



"Fetch This, Fetch That..." – Mr Myall's favourite of the 1996 Greetings stamps

A new feature of this year's Greetings book is that the panes, which combine the stamps at the left with a sheet of labels at the right, have a phosphorised coating only on that part which contains the stamps. These, accordingly, do not have phosphor bands, and the labels are on unphosphorised paper. Walsall use a sheet-fed press so if that well-known law attributed to an Irishman is still operating, some sheets will be fed the wrong way round, resulting in phosphorised labels and non-phosphorised stamps! Of course, whether such items would escape the printer's exemplary quality assurance checks is another matter entirely. If any did, they would soon show up in the mail sorting machines and alert the authorities.

Greetings books are not withdrawn when a new version comes out. This is in order to provide a wide choice for the public. The 1995 book, the Art of Greetings, has been reprinted in order to include the 1996 dates of the anniversaries mentioned on the inside front cover. The reprint is also distinguishable from the original version because the stamps have the blue, instead of the yellow, fluor. It is possible that certain plate combinations will appear with both and collectors are advised to be vigilant if they wish to acquire a complete set.

Primary sheet layouts

The three Christmas books by Harrison and the new Greetings book by Walsall are all printed eight rows to a sheet. The Greetings book and the 20 x 19p Christmas book contain very wide panes and there is only one column. The 10 x 25p has two columns, each with a set of cylinder numbers although neither of them has a dot after the numbers, which is unusual. The 4 x 60p pane is printed in three columns, each with a set of cylinder numbers.

© D G A Myall 1996

Stamp Scene

Thematica II

Visitors to this exhibition (1-2 December 1995) enjoyed some splendid displays of thematic material covering Printing (Wendy Buckle), Archery (Chris Earle), "All things bright and beautiful" (Samantha Earle), Cats (John Fosbery), Wine and Roses (Sheila Foster), Motorcycles (John Hayward), Scouts (Ron Pickett), Wembley Exhibitions (Alan Sabey), Bicycles (Brian Sole), Airships and Horses (Ken Taylor), and Birds (Pat Woolford). All displays were of a high order and a pleasure to study for both the dedicated collector and casual visitor. Part of the thematic section of the popular "Stampway to the World" exhibition, which toured the country 1988-90, was also on display. The 17 dealers present offered a wide range of material, as well as thematics.

The next Thematica exhibition will be held at Carisbrooke Hall, Seymour Street, London W2 on 29-30 June 1996. Enquiries: Thematic Exhibitions, PO Box 8843, LONDON N3 1HL, Tel. 0181-343 2434.

Astro Space Stamp Society

The Society, now celebrating its 10th anniversary, is keen to hear from secretaries of school, college and university stamp societies. Collectors of space stamps, covers, and other collectables will find its journal interesting and useful. For membership details send stamped addressed envelope or two international reply coupons to: Brian Lockyer, 21 Exford Close, WESTON-SUPER-MARE, Avon, BS23 4RE.

Themescene

The December 1995 issue of the British Thematic Association's journal includes special features on the Mid-Winter Festival, A Philatelic Pub Crawl, Thematic Interest and Fun, and a review of 1995 leading exhibitions. There are numerous regular features – all of interest and use to thematic collectors, including a Wants, Swaps and Sales section, and a listing of books and articles added to the BTA library. The "Handstamp Special" page reproduces a number of special handstamps, taken from recent issues

of the *British Postmark Bulletin*. For details of the Association write to the Membership Secretary: Ian Paton, 15 Humberstone Road, CAMBRIDGE CB4 1JD.

Picture Postcard Monthly 200th Issue

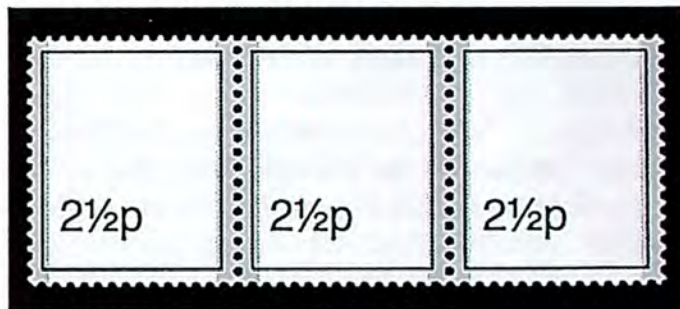
Congratulations to Brian and Mary Lund on the 200th issue (December 1995) of their well-produced and highly informative magazine. This began life in August 1978 and has been published under the current title since February 1980. The anniversary issue includes a most useful review of the magazine's first 100 issues, highlighting the main features in each. Major features in No. 200 includes articles on postcards showing umbrellas and parasols, St Michael's Mount, Arachnophobia (fear of spiders), Christmas children, and Grand Prix motor racing. John Hughes reviews the postcards of artist Lawson Wood (1878-1959); Michael Goldsmith looks ahead to the year 2000 and the future of the hobby; and Pete Davies provides his usual update on modern cards. All this is supplemented by information on forthcoming postcard fairs and club meetings, letters, postcard news, etc. A good read. 64 pages. Price £1.70 single copy (UK postage 50p). Annual subscription £20 UK, £25 Europe, £36 Canada/USA, £40 Rest of World, £24 surface mail outside Europe. Enquiries: Picture Postcard Monthly, 15 Debdale Lane, Keyworth, NOTTINGHAM NG12 5HT, Tel. 0115-9374079.

New Machin discovery

Pete Daniels, the specialist Machin dealer and President of the British Decimal Stamps Study Circle, reports the discovery of a new addition to the list of recorded decimal Machin stitched booklet panes – 2½p pink OCP/PVA x 5 plus perforated "Tear Off" label, with the central phosphor bands displaced leftwards, producing stamps with two narrow phosphor bands.



Purchased at a London auction in September 1995, the unique pane provides five copies of a new specialised Machin definitive single, having remained undetected and unrecorded since its issue 25 years ago! Enquiries: Pete Daniels, 70 Moor Park Close, Rainham, GILLINGHAM, Kent, ME8 8QT, Tel. 01634-376268.

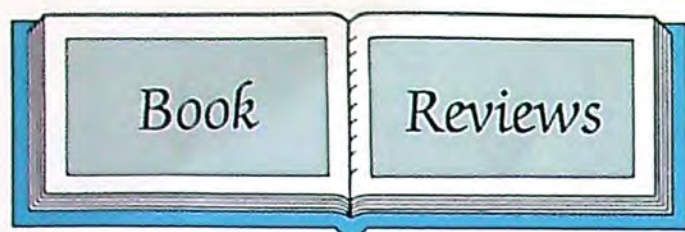


Strand Dealers Link Forces

Malcolm Sprei, of M & S Stamps, and Steven Schusman have now linked forces and are combining efforts in the running of three businesses: Steven Scott; M & S; and Richard Allan, all of which operate from The Strand. New customers are always welcome at the shop, which is open six days a week (Mon-Fri 10.00-17.30; Sat 10.00-16.30). All three businesses publish lists – Steven Scott's Winter list is 95% GB; M & S illustrated list is exclusively GB and selected Empire; and Richard Allan's Postbid Sales List includes much GB material. Copies of the lists (SAE appreciated) are available on request from the above address. *Bulletin* readers may also be interested in the specialised FDC mail bid auction, a copy of the next list will be sent on request. These lists usually contain over 500 lots of the more obscure and unusual. All enquiries to: Steven Scott, 77 The Strand, LONDON WC2R 0DE, Tel. 0171 836 2341; Fax 0171 240 5419.

Philatelist Honoured

We are pleased to record that well-known philatelist Dr Alan Huggins was awarded the MBE in the New Year Honours List, "for services to the British Philatelic Trust". Dr Huggins, a university administrator and specialist on postal stationery, is the author of *British Postal Stationery* (1970), *The De La Rue Book* (1979), and *Specimen Stamps and Stationery of Great Britain* (with Marcus Samuel, 1980). He was Chairman of Stamp World London '90, and President of the Royal Philatelic Society, London, 1990-92. He has been Chairman of the British Philatelic Trust since 1986. We hope this will be the first of many honours given in public recognition of philatelic service.



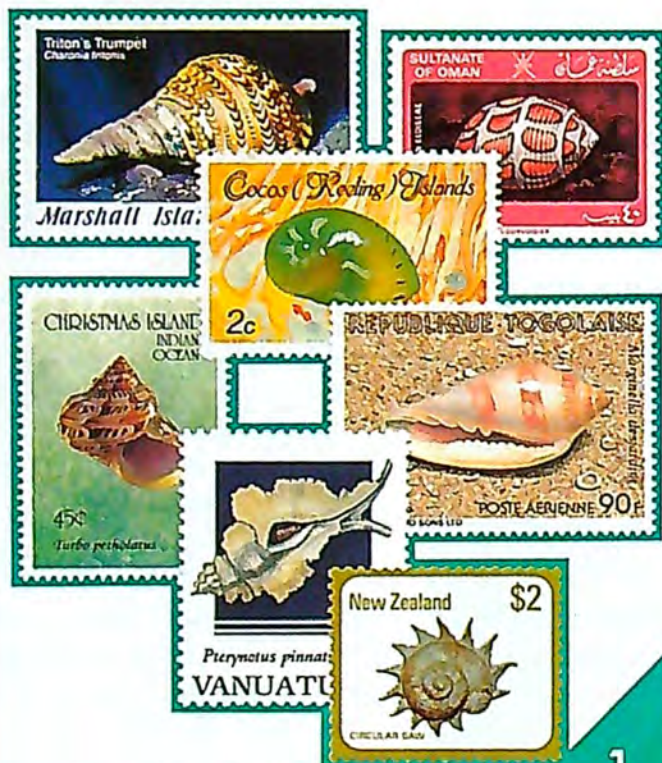
Stanley Gibbons Thematic Catalogues are now well-established, having started with Birds back in 1983 (4th edition due soon). The latest addition to the series is **Collect Shells and Other Molluscs on Stamps**, compiled by Dr Tom Walker. In his foreword, S Peter Dance writes: "Long before the dawn of recorded history men and women collected shells and treasured them as exotic and curious objects." The earliest representation of a shell on a postage stamp appears on a Bahamas 1d stamp of 1859, showing a young Queen Victoria with,

appropriately, a stylised Queen Conch in one corner. Dr Walker's listings record over 3200 different stamps depicting over 750 identified living molluscs, sea slugs, squids, and octopuses, as well as many unidentified shells, and over 30 fossil shells. Miniature sheets are listed where they contain designs different from those in the basic set or which form a natural extension of a stamp series. Subjects in sheet borders are disregarded. Where molluscs feature only as a minor part of a stamp's design, this is indicated by an asterisk; statues and fountains showing very stylised forms of scallop are excluded from the listings. The Countries Section, arranged alphabetically from Aitutaki to Zil Elwanyen Sesel, lists stamps in date order. A set price only is given. Issues where all the designs in an issue depict shells; stamps from "broken" sets are priced individually. The GB section lists just five

stamps – the George V "Seahorse" high values showing a scallop as Britannia's chariot, and a 1991 Greetings stamp depicting a snail (SG 1541). Shell stamp collectors fare rather better with issues from Guernsey, Jersey, and the Isle of Man, and there are extensive listings of shell stamps from exotic places such as Palau, Papua New Guinea, Turks & Caicos Islands, and Tuvalu. The Systematic Listing includes Indexes by English and Zoological Name, and Classification of Species. Stamps depicting shells with hermit crabs and living animals; with the image of the shell reversed; shells used as musical instruments or as money; and paintings showing shells are to be found in a "Theme Lists" section. 208 pages, card covers. ISBN 0 85259 394 5. Available from Stanley Gibbons Strand shop, or by post from Stanley Gibbons Publications, Parkside, RINGWOOD, Hants, BH24 3SH. Price £16.95. Postage £3 UK, £6 overseas. Free Credit

Stanley Gibbons

COLLECT SHELLS ON STAMPS



A **Stanley Gibbons**
Thematic Catalogue

1st
Edition

Stanley Gibbons

COLLECT SHELLS ON STAMPS

1st Edition



STANLEY GIBBONS

Peter Clegg is a well known aviation historian and, as Chairman of the Fresson Trust, was greatly involved in the 1994 celebrations for the 60th anniversary of the Inverness-Orkney air mail service, as reported in the *Bulletin*. His latest book on Scottish aviation history: **Wings Over the Glens** is a most useful 192 page softback containing reminiscences of Northern and Scottish Airways Limited (NSA) and Scottish Airways Limited. Scottish Airways was formed in 1937 by combining the activities of NSA and the Inverness based Highland Airways. Peter's book carries the story of Scottish Airways right through the Second World War and on to its eventual nationalisation and incorporation in BEA. The book is replete with many nostalgic photographs, timetables, route maps and tabulated statistics. The carriage of mail by air is mentioned on several occasions with an illustration of the first NSA mail into Campbeltown (Kintyre) in March 1937 and useful background to Scottish Airways Second World War Western Isles service which provided an essential link to keep the mails flowing to and from many a lonely RAF Station. Recommended. Published by GMS Enterprises, 67 Pyhill, Bretton, PETERBOROUGH PE3 8QQ, price £14.95 plus postage.

Richard Beith

The 1996 **Picture Postcard Annual** will be welcomed by postcard collectors (deltiologists) of all levels, from beginner to specialist. This is the 16th edition of this most useful reference work which, like its predecessors, contains a number of interesting articles as well as a 1996 diary, directory of postcard dealers, geographical guide to postcard shopping, lists of fair organisers, auction houses, and accessory suppliers, etc. A review of 1995 records events, club activities, exhibitions, auctions, and, sadly, the passing of a number of leading figures in the postcard world. The three main feature articles concern The Comic Cards of Donald McGill and Douglas Tempest in World War One (by Peter Tucker); The Last Steam Tram (Wolverton-Stony Stratford, by Tony Taylor), and "Where be the Blackbird do?" (comic cards of the West Country, by Jim Crawford). Collectors of modern cards are well catered for with Editor Brian Lund and four others selecting their favourite new cards of 1995. Cards for VE Day and Rugby League/Union feature, not surprisingly, and it was good to see Royal Mail

Shakespeare's Globe PHQ card 172(c) amongst the chosen. The index to previous *Annuals* and *Picture Postcard Monthly* and its forerunners (August 1978-October 1995), is especially useful for collectors looking for articles on specific themes or locations. The mass on information on events, dealers and clubs alone makes this *Annual* worth the modest cover price of £2.95. Available from: Picture Postcard Annual, 15 Debdale Lane, Keyworth, NOTTINGHAM NG12 5HT. Postage 75p UK, £1 overseas surface mail.

The 1995 (47th) edition of the ever-popular **Stanley Gibbons Collect British Stamps** was published at the end of November. This provides a simple, well-illustrated listing of British stamps from the Penny Black to the 1995 Christmas issue, and includes Postage Dues, Regional Issues, Channel Island wartime stamps, Royal Mail Postage Labels ("Framas"), and Official Stamps. 144 pages. Price £5.95. Available from stamp shops, Stanley Gibbons Strand shop, and by post from Stanley Gibbons Publications, Parkside, RINGWOOD, Hants, BH24 3SH or British Philatelic Bureau, 20 Brandon Street, EDINBURGH EH3 5TT.

A new edition of the Stanley Gibbons booklet for new collectors – **Stamp Collecting – How to start** – has recently been published. First written by the late James Watson and published in 1983, the new edition has been revised by John Holman (*Bulletin* Editor and former Editor of *Gibbons Stamp Monthly*). The book gives sound advice on obtaining stamps, sorting and mounting them, using stamp catalogues, choosing an album, and learning about stamps. Well-illustrated with a useful glossary of the main philatelic terms. 32 pages. Price £2.95 from Stanley Gibbons (addresses above), stamp and book shops.

The Joint Services Philatelic Charities Fund Catalogue of Flown Covers

The 1995 supplement to the catalogue is now in print. Price £6.75, postage 43p 2nd class (57p 1st class). All other supplements and extra loose leaf binders are available. SAE for details of prices. Orders/enquiries: A J Munday, 92 Countess Road, Amesbury, SALISBURY SP4 7AT.

Stanley Brown of Perth has recently published two useful little books – **Shetland and Philately** and **Perth and Philately – The Last 20 Years**. In his introduction to the former he

writes: "Shetland may be remote but it is not without philatelic interest...we have had a postage stamp, a stamp booklet and two aerogrammes all with a Shetland association." His book illustrates the stamp (1978 Horses 10½p, SG 1064), the book (1986 Christmas, FX9) and aerogramme (1976 Scottish), as well as Shetland special handstamps and slogans used in recent years – both on the islands and at the Special Handstamp Centre in Glasgow. A special handstamp has been used for 20 years now for the annual Up Helly Aa fire festival. The Haroldswick – Britain's Northernmost Post Office cancels are included, also relevant modern special covers and postcards. Some operational circular datestamps are shown but for a comprehensive account collectors will turn to James Mackay's Shetland volume in his Islands Postal History series. Readers interested in modern Shetland postal history will enjoy Mr Brown's book. The front and back covers illustrate, in colour, six machine postmarks and four special handstamps. 24 pages, A5 format. Price £1, postage 20p UK, 50p overseas.

The book on Perth follows a similar pattern. Mr Brown writes: "The postal history of Perth (1689-1900) was recorded in an excellent and well-researched booklet by the late Colonel Neil Blair in 1976. However, unlike previous centuries, when letters were kept especially by banks and solicitors, very little will survive in the modern era. So to help redress the balance, this modest publication is an attempt to record, philatelically, some of the happenings in the City of Perth during the last twenty years. "He illustrates and describes operational as well as philatelic postmarks, TPO cancels, metermarks, commemorative covers and press cuttings to tell the story. Perth featured on the 31p value in the 1984 Urban Renewal set (SG 1248) when a special handstamp was used and a cover produced by the District Council. A limited edition private stamp book was produced for the 1982 Scottish Congress held in the city. Mention is also made of the Christmas post operated by the local Boys Brigade in 1982. The colourful front cover reproduces machine postmarks, applied at Perth in black, green and red inks, from 1979 to 1995. The back cover shows the 1984 stamp and the scene as it is today. 32 pages card covers. Price £1, postage 20p UK, 50p overseas. Both books available from: Stanley Brown, 14 Buchan Drive, PERTH PH1 1NQ.

Last Orders for Royal Mail Publications

The British Philatelic Bureau will withdraw nine Royal Mail publications from sale on 29 March 1996. Collectors still wanting copies for their libraries are advised to order early as only limited quantities remain of some titles. The books are listed below, with date of review in the *Bulletin*:

The British Postage Stamp of the nineteenth century by Robson Lowe, price £10 (October 1968)

Royal Mail: The Post Office since 1840 by Martin Daunt, price £18.50 (November 1985)

Postal Reform and the Penny Black: A New Appreciation by Douglas Muir, price £12.50 (June 1990)

The Post in Scotland by James Grimwood-Taylor, price £15 (March 1991)

Connoisseur Catalogue of Machin Stamps, 9th edition, price £16.95 (January 1993)

The Royal Mail Stamp Advisory Committee First Review (1992), price £9.87 (May 1993)

British Special Stamps 1985-86 by Francis Kennedy (British Philatelic Bulletin Publication No. 1), price £3.95 (November 1993)

British Stamp Design 1993 by James Negus (BPB Publication No.2), price £4.99 (April 1994)

National Postal Museum Review of 1993, edited by Douglas Muir, price £5 (June 1994)

Connoisseur Catalogue of Machin Stamps

We regret the telephone number given in the review of this catalogue (December *Bulletin*) was incomplete. The full number is: 01732 743387. Connoisseur Publications ask us to point out that posting & packing rates for the catalogue are: £3.40 inland, £4.30 Europe and £9.10 Overseas (Airmail).

Late News

The £2 book (Sir Rowland Hill No. 4) has been reprinted and the stamps now have blue as opposed to yellow fluor. Supplies of the reprint will be available from the Bureau during February.

We are pleased to announce that Mr Michael Heron, the Chairman of The Post Office, received a knighthood in recognition of his "services to vocation education and training."

Out of the Arc...

Curiosities from the Post Office Archives

16. The Airgraph Service

During the Second World War, in order to save aircraft space, the Post Office in conjunction with Kodak introduced the Airgraph service (1941-45). This consisted of the sender completing a special message form, which was then given an identification number and photographed onto microfilm. On arrival at its destination the film was developed and each message was enveloped and delivered.

By the end of the war over 330 million airgraph messages had been sent and received. The photograph shows the original Airgraph sent by Winston Churchill to General Smuts in 1942 (PO Archives Ref POST 56/28).

Frank O'Neill: Information Manager

33

335501

TO: GENERAL THE RT HON W. SMUTS
C. M. K. C. M. P.
PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE
PRETORIA UNION OF SOUTH AFRICA

Write the message very plainly below this line.

Sender's Address: 11 Downing Street, S.W.1.

Date: 9 September, 1942.

Last May, when the novel means of communication by airgraph was first instituted for correspondence from the Union of South Africa to the United Kingdom, you will have seen as a letter by the first despatch. The first Airgraph service is being inaugurated, I wish to send you by the same means the message of my first greeting. I am sure that this will be the first of many possible links of friendship between the two countries. I am sure that the message will be received with interest and that the message will be read with interest.

Winston Churchill

This space should not be used.

MAKE SURE THAT THE ADDRESS IS WRITTEN IN LARGE BLOCK LETTERS IN THE PANEL ABOVE

Post Office Archives is open to the public Monday-Friday, 09.00-16.15. A leaflet giving details of the services can be obtained by sending a DL size stamped addressed envelope to: Post Office Archives, Freeling House, Mount Pleasant (Phoenix Place Entrance), LONDON EC1A 1BB.

Postbag



1971 Decimals FDC

Back in February 1991 we published a list of post offices known to have been open during the 1971 strike at which first day covers of the low value decimal definitives were serviced on 15 February 1971. Many readers subsequently reported other offices. Tom Valentine of Montrose recently found a cover bearing the double-circle datestamp of Lockerbie, Dumfriesshire with this all-important date.

1d Inland Revenue Stamps

Referring to the small format 1d Inland Revenue stamps of 1868-1881 which were the subject of Fred Gee's "Varieties of Yesteryear" article in the October 1995 *Bulletin* (page 59), Mr A M Gilbert of Brookmans Park writes to point out that the difference of corner ornaments is not the only variety occurring in the stamps without the cross-hatched background: in the final die used for this series (i.e. that with the type C corner ornaments) the letters in the oval frame show differences from those of the earlier dies. Fred Gee confirms that this is particularly apparent in the case of the O, the P, and the N's, and agrees that it is therefore a useful way of distinguishing stamps with type C ornaments from those with type B, where comparison of the corner ornaments may not be conclusive.

Guide Dog Appeal

Adrian Warner writes concerning his appeal published last August: "I would like to thank each and every reader for sending me stamps for the Guide Dog Appeal on my local radio station. I received well over 15,000 stamps. A second dog was achieved, and a third dog is well on its way. Please keep sending the stamps, direct to the radio station: Stamp Appeal, Great Yorkshire Gold, Forster Square, BRADFORD BD1 5NE. Readers sending stamps will receive a reply from the head of the appeal. Once again our thanks to *Bulletin* readers who responded to this appeal."

Competition

SPONSORED BY:
AVON MIXTURES
UPON APPROVAL



WIN A FAMOUS CAPE OF GOOD HOPE 4d
WOODBLOCK TRIANGULAR - SG CAT. £1500

The prizes this month have been supplied by AVON MIXTURES who now offer collectors the inexpensive alternative of collecting stamps area by area or of the WORLD for as little as £5 + 75p P&P. If you order AVON will include a FREE £5 CAT.VALUE BRITISH STAMP - YOURS TO KEEP WHATEVER YOU DECIDE.



* **1st prize:** CAPE OF GOOD HOPE - the RARE 4d Milky Blue WOODBLOCK TRIANGULAR; one of the famous triangular stamps that set young Stanley Gibbons on his way to fame over 100 years ago. An attractive fine colour example, not perfect but genuine, with good margins and lightly cancelled. SG 14, cat. £1500.

* **2nd prize:** GB 1840 1d black, letters BH, plate 5, fine used, lovely condition, good margins example cancelled by red Maltese Cross. SG cat. £175.

* **3rd prize:** GB Edward VII 10s ultramarine, the De La Rue high value in average condition with good colour and circular Covent Garden cancellation. SG 265, cat. £200.

Introducing AVON MIXTURES UPON APPROVAL
HIGH PRICE STAMPS CAN TAKE ALL THE FUN OUT OF COLLECTING

Imagine the fun of your being able to build one of the largest stamp collections in the world...FOR THE LEAST AMOUNT OF MONEY! You don't have to be as rich as Croesus to build one of the world's largest collections.

NOW, with AVON MIXTURES, YOU CAN pick from up to 200,000 different world stamps, area by area, starting from as little as £5 plus 75p P&P.

ASK to see our WORLD MIXTURES - then each stamp is 2p or FREE and you will never have to pay more than 15p, and often much less each

stamp from other other area bags, (that is our promise), and all...REGARDLESS OF CATALOGUE VALUE.

PLUS - as you would expect the more you pick the lower the price you pay - and all regardless of catalogue value, with deposit money back guarantee naturally.

To view your first bag(s) all you have to do is enclose cheque/postal order payable AVON MIXTURES for £5 + 75p P&P (outside UK £7 includes £2 P&P) or advise Access/Visa number and expiry date.

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We will send your first bag(s) upon 12 days approval. Just pick the stamps you want to the value of your £5 deposit, pay for any others selected, return the rest. Stop anytime.

For sheer collecting pleasure without paining your pocket, plus a FREE £5 cat. value BRITISH stamp - yours to keep whatever you decide - send your deposit and choice of 1 to 8 today to:

AVON MIXTURES FREE £5 CAT OFFER
PO Box 23
RUGBY CV22 6SQ

To enter the competition send the answers to the questions below with your name and address, on a postcard or back of an envelope to: February Bulletin Competition, Royal Mail, 22 Finsbury Square, LONDON EC2A 1NL to arrive by 26 April 1996. Each entry must be posted separately; multiple entries in one envelope will be disregarded.

1. Who watched wildfowl at Slimbridge in 1945?
2. What were the *Golden Hind* and *Golden Horn*?
3. Which Scottish city did Colonel Neil Blair write about?
4. Where will the Ilapex exhibition be held?

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

Winners of the November competition were: M Campbell of Canada (1st prize); J Leighton of West Lothian (2nd); S Gill of Bucks (3rd); and J Fisher of Wirral (4th)

Answers: 1. W & D Downey; 2. Bophuthatswana, Ciskei, Transkei, Venda; 3. Jean Cameron; 4. 11.00; 5. April 1985.

Posting Boxes

No. 159 Manchester Blue Box

This month's contribution, from Mr John Gore of Manchester, shows a George V box, painted in "airmail blue" in Liverpool Road, Manchester. He also submitted a cutting from a local paper which explains that the box is outside the city's Air and Space Museum and its repainting in blue "proudly boasts its historical connection with air mail". The colour is as close as possible to the blue used on airmail boxes in the 1930s. Another blue box, near Windsor Castle, was illustrated here in October 1991. An airmail box and van were featured on the 8p stamp in the 1974 Universal Postal Union Centenary issue (SG 956).



Events – February/March 1996

until 23 February: Colin Gifford Railway Photographs exhibition at National Postal Museum, King Edward Street, London EC1. Open Mon-Fri 09.30-16.30. Admission free.

until 3 March: Exhibition of stamps and associated material, by Luton & District Phil Soc, at Wardown Museum, Luton. Enquiries: R Head, 98 Mancroft Road, Caddington, LUTON LU1 4EN.

until 31 March: Display of Ascension 1995 Flowers issue (artwork, essays, proofs, issued stamps) at British Library, Great Russell Street, London WC1. Open Mon-Sat 10.00-17.00, Sun 14.30-18.00.

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

14 February: Display "Great Britain King George V" by D Knight to Guildford & District Phil Soc, at Friends Meeting House, North Street, Guildford, 19.00. Enquiries: Patricia Stokoe, 01483-416066.

27 February: "The Turbulent History of The Postal Service: From Roman Times until 1840" – display by J A Jessop to Bournemouth & District Phil Soc, St John's Churchill Hall, Surrey Road, Westbourne, Bournemouth, 19.45. Enquiries: Mrs P Luscombe, 01202-395338.

2 March: Scout & Guide Stamps Club annual exhibition at Baden Powell House, Queen's Gate, South Kensington, London SW7. Open 11.00-17.00. Admission free. Dealers, displays, etc. Enquiries: P Duck, 0181-891 5746.

CUSTOMER KNOWS BEST.



February/March Digest

To be issued in February/March

6 February: NVI stamp books with Olympic/Paralympic logo on cover – 10 x 2nd class Harrison; 10 x 2nd Questa; 4 x 1st, 4 x 2nd, and 10 x 1st Walsall.

6 February: 25p definitive, printed Harrison in sideways delivery coil.

19 February: 10 x 1st book, Disney promotion.

19 February: Greetings stamp cards.

26 February: Greetings stamp book and presentation pack.

5 March: Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust stamp cards.

12 March: Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust stamps, presentation pack, and postcard book.

19 March: Stamp books with Olympic/Paralympic logos on cover – 10 x 1st Harrison; 4 x 35p, 4 x 41p, and 4 x 60p Walsall.

March: 1995 Greetings book reprint – blue fluor on stamps, changed greetings events dates on inside cover.

March: £1.50 Caernarfon Castle definitive, PVA gum.

Note: Some items 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, Guildford, Harrogate, Leeds, Leicester, Liverpool, London (Lombard Street & Trafalgar Square), Manchester, Newcastle upon Tyne, Nottingham, Oxford, Plymouth, Portsmouth, Romford, Southampton, Southend on Sea, Stratford upon Avon, Truro, Windsor, and York.

To be withdrawn in February/March

6 February: 50p, £1 and £2 stamp books – No. 1 in Sea Charts, Inspiration for Victory, and Sir Rowland Hill series.

13 February: 10 x 1st stamp book – Thorntons Promotion.

13 March: Springtime stamps, presentation pack & stamp cards.

29 March: 2p, 4p, 35p definitives, 1st & 2nd class NVI stamps from sheets, 19p and 25p Country stamps all with yellow fluor.

29 March: Greetings books – Smiles II (Reprint, 3 March 1992); Gift Giving (Reprints, 15 June and 17 August 1993).

Forthcoming Issues

Listed below are the proposed issues for the next six months. Any changes/additions will be notified in this magazine.

6 Feb	Stamp books – Olympic/Paralympic logos
19 Feb	10 x 1st book Disney promotion
19 Feb	Greetings stamp cards
26 Feb	Greetings stamp book & pack
5 Mar	Wildfowl Trust stamp cards
12 Mar	W T stamps, pack, postcard book
19 Mar	Stamp books – Olympiclogos
2 Apr	Scot aerogramme – Football
9 Apr	British Cinema stamp cards
16 Apr	4 x 1st book – Queen's birthday label
16 Apr	Stamp cards – commemorative labels
16 Apr	British Cinema stamps & pack
21 Apr	Queen's Birthday Phil/Numismatic cover
6 May	Stamp book – Olympic Promotion
6 May	Football Legends stamp cards
14 May	Football stamps, pack, postcard book
14 May	European Football prestige book
2 Jul	Scot aerogramme – Edinburgh Festival
2 Jul	Olympic stamp cards
9 Jul	Olympic stamps & pack
21 Jul	Burns stamped postcards
30 Jul	Women of Achievement stamp cards

Stop Press

We regret to record the recent death of Terence Cuneo whose paintings were used on the 1985 Famous Trains stamps.

