BRITISH PHILATELIC

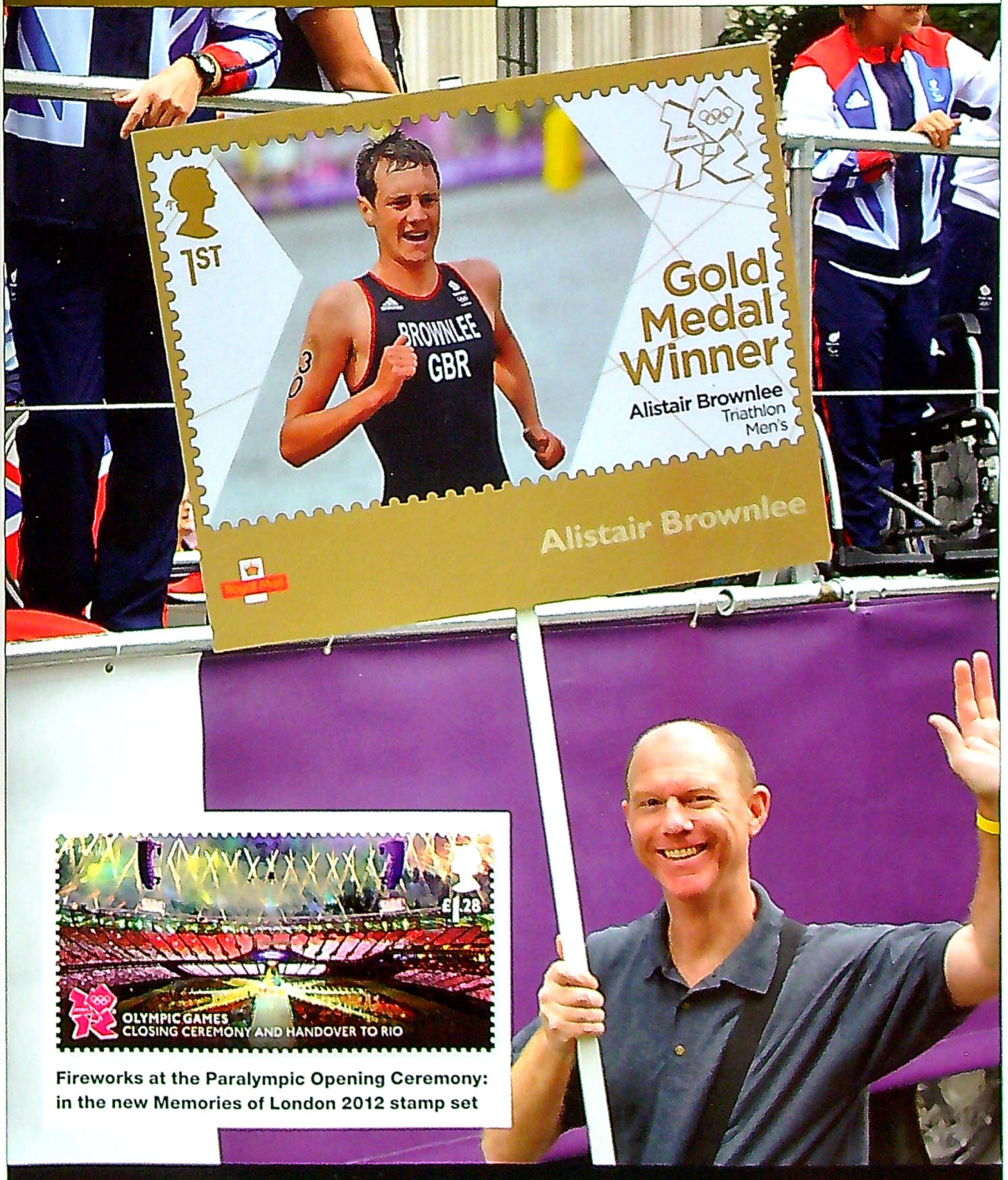
Bulletin

Volume 50 Number 2

The Royal Mail magazine for stamp collectors

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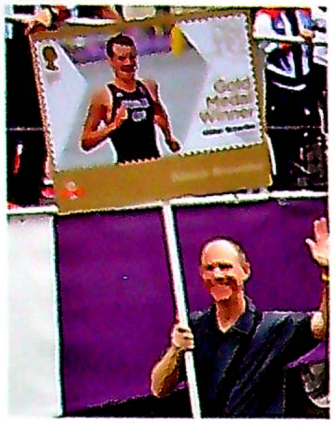
Stamps on parade • Horror thematic • Space Science



Fireworks at the Paralympic Opening Ceremony: in the new Memories of London 2012 stamp set

PREVIEW CHRISTMAS 2012 • WIN SPACE SCIENCE SPECIALS • POST BOXES ERII

Issues and withdrawals



Cover: William Doherty in the London 2012 Our Greatest Team Parade, carrying a giant version of the Alistair Brownlee Gold Medal Winner stamp. Photograph: Paul Elmes

5 October	**Issue** The Last Goon Show Of All: Commemorative Sheet
16 October	**Issue** Space Science: Stamps, Presentation Pack, Stamp Cards
23 October	**Issue** Lest We Forget definitive-sized Poppy Stamp Sheets
23 October	**Re-issue** Madonna and Child: 1st and 2nd Class Stamps
8 November	**Issue** Christmas 2012: Stamps, Miniature Sheet, Presentation Pack, Generic Sheet, Smilers® Sheet, 1st and 2nd Class Stamp Books
8 November	**Issue** 2012 Annual Collections: Yearpack, Yearbook, Year of Miniature Sheets, Year of Presentation Packs
8 November	**Issue** 150th Anniversary of Notts County Football Club: Commemorative Sheet
8 November	**Withdrawal** Christmas 2011: King James Bible Stamps, Miniature Sheet, Presentation Pack, Smilers® Sheet, Stamp Cards
31 December	**Withdrawal** 2010 Annual Collections: Yearbook, Yearpack, Year of Miniature Sheets, Year of Presentation Packs

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Photograph: Claes Gellerbrink

Postbox and inbox

1st class letter

Hats off to the Stamp Makers

Dear Royal Mail Design team,

This may seem strange to you, but I want to thank whoever decided on the images chosen for Diamond Jubilee pictorial stamps.

I worked as a milliner for Her Majesty for 34 years, so I was delighted to see my work on four of the stamps in the special issue: Royal Welsh, Silver Jubilee, Golden Jubilee and Commonwealth Games stamps.

The clothes are Hardy Amis. We worked together and produced, dare I say, the best fashion worn by The Queen during those years.

I write to convey a big thank you to the design team. It is so rewarding to be appreciated knowingly or unknowningly.

Frederick D Fox, London



Royal Mail Design Manager Catharine Brandy and designer Kate Stephens looked through hundreds of photographs before making the final choice for the Diamond Jubilee stamps, so the fact that four of your hats were chosen unknowingly is a great tribute to your work. Watch out for an exclusive interview with Kate Stephens in a future issue of *Bulletin*.

Stamps love fashions in general, especially hats. They capture the mood of a special occasion and evoke memories of the fashions of a bygone era in a way that communicates well from the small image area available.

Do any readers have a thematic hats-on-stamps collection or know of someone who has? If so, we may well discover more philatelic references to Frederick Fox's fabulous career.

Well, we just had to share this one...

I have now been designing and marketing my own limited edition first day covers for 32 years. When Royal Mail first announced their intentions to produce the Gold Medal Winners stamps for this year's Olympics, I envisaged all sorts of problems. But my fears were completely unfounded. I should have had more faith!

From design and production and then through to next-day distribution and press coverage of the London 2012 Gold Medal Winners stamps, everything was perfect. The quick turnaround of my first day covers at the Tallents House Special Handstamp Centre made despatch to my customers so much easier than I had anticipated. For this I must thank the team for their work in keeping the trade informed of each win.

Their efforts in making the images available for download within a few hours was the 'icing on the cake'. To be able to get all the images online and on to my Stamp Organiser within hours made an immense difference. I know that the team worked very late into the evening seven days a week to achieve this – I was downloading the images within minutes of them being available!

So, a big thank you to everyone involved at TeamRM – well done!

Adrian Bradbury, BFDC Ltd

Write to... The Editor, *British Philatelic Bulletin*, Tallents House, 21 South Gyle Crescent, Edinburgh EH12 9PB. Or email bulletin.enquiries@royalmail.com.

All readers' letters chosen for publication will receive a thank-you gift and the sender of the '1st class letter' receives the *Bulletin* binder.

October update Philatelic celebrations of London 2012 conclude in style with a new stamp set and commemorative cover – and a role in the Victory Parade



Memories of London 2012 Under wraps and with no details confirmed until two weeks before its issue on September 27, the four-stamp set entitled Memories of London 2012 is Royal Mail's final set of stamps marking the London 2012 Olympic Games and Paralympic Games.

A Games Maker stamp highlights the role of the 70,000 Games Makers in making the London 2012 Games such a great success. The first-class stamp features a group of the Games Makers – all volunteers – in their distinctive purple and red uniforms, walking towards the London 2012 stadium.

The Paralympic Games feature on two of the stamps – the £1.28 with an image of the spectacular firework display during the Paralympic Opening Ceremony and a first-class stamp showing the ParalympicsGB team entering the stadium to conclude the procession of the participating athletes.

A fourth stamp, another £1.28 value, shows a memorable scene from the Closing Ceremony, in which the athletes and officials of all the participating countries formed a spectacular human version of the Union Flag in the Olympic Stadium.

The four stamps are printed within a border featuring a quote from Lord Coe.

The lavishly illustrated Presentation Pack (£4.30) contains the Memories of London 2012 Miniature Sheet and text by Richard Rae. The envelope and filler card of the First Day Cover (£4.99 by mail order) were designed by The Chase, Manchester, and feature the names of the gold-medal-winning GB athletes. A set of five Stamp Cards is also available (£2.25).

'We want these new stamps to remind people of the truly iconic moments of the London ▸

Memories of London 2012, clockwise from top left: Fireworks at the Paralympic Opening Ceremony, ParalympicsGB team, Memories of London 2012: Games Makers, Closing Ceremony

Memories of London 2012 Miniature Sheet	
Number of stamps	2 x 1st and 2 x £1.28
Price	£3.76
Size of Sheet	192mm x 74mm
Design	The Chase, Manchester
Stamp format	Landscape
Stamp Size	60mm x 30mm
Printer	Walsall Security
Print Process	Lithography
Perforations	15 x 14.5
Phosphor	All over
Gum	PVA

The official Emblems of the London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games and Paralympic Games Ltd are © 2007 The London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games and Paralympic Games Limited.



Above: Andrew Hammond at Royal Mail Stamps and Collectibles Department, London 2012

Olympic Games and Paralympic Games,' said Andrew Hammond, Managing Director of Stamps and Collectibles. 'Royal Mail has been delighted to mark the build-up to the Games and each success of TeamGB and ParalympicGB's gold-medal-winning athletes with a series of stamp issues. It is fitting that we conclude the special issues by marking some of the stand-out memories that have helped to make London 2012 one of the most successful Games ever.'

To find your nearest Post Office branch selling London 2012 stamps, visit www.postoffice.co.uk and select the 'branch finder' option •

***Bulletin* Manager on the Victory Parade** William Doherty, Royal Mail Stamps and Collectibles Magazine Manager, leapt at the opportunity to take part in last month's London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic victory parade.

William gathered with other Royal Mail employees on 10 September to join some 800 athletes in the Our Greatest Team Parade in the capital. They marched three miles from Mansion House in the City of London to the Queen Victoria Memorial in front of Buckingham Palace. The Royal Mail contingent comprised Royal Mail, Romec and Post Office employees. They represented the teams who helped issue the Gold Medal Winner stamps, painted more than 90 gold post boxes in winners' home towns or towns where they trained, processed and delivered 7.5 million tickets, and delivered mail to the Olympic Village. They walked alongside the 21 victors' floats, proudly carrying giant versions of the 63 Medal Winner stamps Royal Mail has produced to mark Olympic and Paralympic victories.



Below: William Doherty with a giant version of the stamp showing Alistair Brownlee, Gold Medal Winner of the Men's Triathlon

The parade rounded off an amazing 'Olympic summer' for William. First, his son Patrick, along with classmates, sang at the Olympic Torch Relay in Ayr, his local town. 'Then to be selected to take part in the Athletes Parade was such a privilege and an honour,' said William. 'As soon as the Brownlee brothers spotted me with the giant stamp they immediately wanted their photo taken with it!

'Our placards featured large on the BBC's coverage, with rowers Katherine Grainger and Anna Watkins signing theirs live on TV. And David Weir, who won gold four times in the Paralympics, was interviewed against the backdrop of one of our stamp placards.'

Also taking part in the parade was Andy Neale, a postman in Stroud, Gloucestershire. 'The stamps were nearly as popular as the athletes!' he said. 'As we walked round, people were shouting: "Royal Mail guy, give us a wave".'

Another participant, Romec technician Darren Stranks, added: 'I would like to say a big

Photographs: Conor Masterton; Paul Elmes











thank you to Royal Mail for acknowledging the contribution made by Romec in painting the post boxes gold.'

It was an occasion to congratulate our sporting heroes, but the Royal Mail team certainly deserved to enjoy the moment. The Stamps and Collectibles department and everyone involved in printing and distributing the stamps did an extraordinary job, producing the Gold Medal Winner stamps within hours of each British victory. This was the first time anyone had created next-day stamps with images of the actual events taking place: they made philatelic history.

The *Bulletin* editorial team is not involved in the production of stamps – and the unprecedented timing meant we were unable to show readers new London 2012 stamps in advance, as we normally endeavour to do with new issues. But from the sidelines we have witnessed the quiet dedication, the camaraderie and the dogged attention to detail that lies at the heart of philately. Royal Mail employees might not have won the 5,000 metres or the heptathlon, but theirs was a truly Olympian effort! As Royal Mail Chief Executive Moya Greene said of their achievement: 'In my time here there have been many things I have been proud of, but nothing tops this.' •

Clockwise from bottom left: the Royal Mail contingent gathers to join the parade; Cat Hill's giant stamp was signed by Mark Colbourne; crowds gathered outside the Bank of England; Yasin Sheikh with the Ben Ainslie Gold Medal Winner stamp; spectators cheer on the parade from the windows of Ye Olde Cock Tavern on London's Fleet Street



Right: the Handover Commemorative Cover and filler card, released on September 27, the same days as the four-stamp set Memories of London 2012

Handover Commemorative Cover To mark the handover of the Olympic and Paralympic Games from London to Rio, Royal Mail issued a Special Handover Commemorative Cover on 27 September.

The cover includes a beautifully illustrated envelope bearing the £1.28 Olympic Handover stamp from the Memories of London 2012 Miniature Sheet, cancelled with a special postmark – LONDON E20, chosen because it is the location of the Olympic Park.

Designed by hat-trick design, the cover contains a fold-out filler card featuring images of the official handover of the Games together with information about London and Rio de Janeiro, where the 2016 Olympic and Paralympic Games will be held. Also on the filler card is a summary of all the host countries of the modern Olympiad up to 2016.

The Handover Commemorative Cover costs £2.50 •



Above: everyone's favourite, the poppy stamp, is to be released in sheets in good time for Remembrance Day. Below: one of the Christmas 2011 stamp – your last chance to buy is 8 November



Seasonal issues: 23 October sees the issue of the popular Lest We Forget poppy at the new definitive size, shown left, in sheets of 50 self-adhesive stamps. On the same date, as has become customary, the Madonna and Child first- and second-class stamps will be re-issued to provide a Bible-based alternative to this years' secular Christmas stamps.

On 8 November the Royal Mail annual collection go on sale: the 2012 Yearbook, Yearpack, Miniature Sheet Pack, and Presentation Pack Collection. Watch out for more details in a future issue of *Bulletin*. All the annual collections are beautifully produced with unique text and images. They make a fitting finale and contribution to this, a particularly fascinating philatelic year, with The Queen's Diamond Jubilee, London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, the Dickens bicentennial and further developments in Post & Go stamps as stand-out issues.

The King James Bible stamps of Christmas 2011 will be taken off sale on 8 November. This year's Christmas stamps are previewed on page 46 •

Stop press: a framed collection of all the ParalympicGB Gold Medal Winners stamps will be available this month •

Stamp Scene John Holman keeps you posted on news and activities in the philatelic world

It is 40 years since the first Stampa exhibition was held to mark the 50th anniversary of the issue of the first Irish definitive stamps. Since then Stampa has become a popular Irish event and this year is held from 12 to 14 October at the Royal Dublin Society, Ballsbridge, Dublin.

On 19 and 20 October, the tenth National Exhibition, under the auspices of the Association of British Philatelic Societies, will held at the Dewars Centre in Perth and followed by the 94th Philatelic Congress of Great Britain at the Queen's Hotel, Perth on 20 to 22 October. The exhibition, at the Dewars Centre, ten minutes from the city centre, will be open Friday 10am to 5pm and Saturday 9am to 4pm. It will include a range of dealers, a display from the Royal Philatelic Collection and a BPMA exhibit entitled 'Off with Her Head' (see page 12 September *Bulletin* for more details). There will be some 400 frames of entries by collectors in the National and Interfederation Competitions, and an Open Competition for young collectors will be on the theme of Olympic sports.



Above: Stampex heralds the start of the exhibition season. Below: a special cover for the the 94th Philatelic Congress, held in Perth this month

Congress will include the usual mix of discussions, displays, visiting speakers, and the ceremony of signing the Roll of Distinguished Philatelists at St John's Kirk on 21 October. This year's signatories are Jamie Gough (USA), Robin Gwynn (New Zealand), Patrick Maselis (Belgium) and Michael Sefi (UK).

Special handstamps will be used on 19 and 21 October for the exhibition and Congress. The design of the postmarks reproduces the famous Perth 'Lamb' fancy postmark used in 1750. A special cover for the Philatelic Congress shows St John's Kirk in Perth with the historic 'Lamb' postmark. Covers, franked with a Scottish first-class stamp tied by the Congress handstamp (pictured right) can be ordered from Colin G Campbell, 11 Denoon Terrace, Dundee DD2 2EL, price £2.50 plus postage (£1.50 UK and Europe, £2.50 elsewhere). Remittances should be made by sterling cheque or postal order. For full details of the event, including speakers and displays, visit www.perth2012.com.



As this issue goes to press Autumn Stampex is about to begin at the Business Centre in Islington. Watch out for a report in your November *Bulletin* •

Stamp fairs The next Strand Stamp Fairs will be held at the Royal National Hotel, Russell Square, London WC1, on 10 October and 23 November. Opening hours are from 9am to 4pm. Some 20 or 30 dealers will attend. For enquiries, call 020 8946 4489 or go to www.stampshows.net. ▸

Hampex, organised by the Hampshire Philatelic Federation, is on at Wickham Community Centre, Mill Lane, Wickham, Fareham, Hampshire on 20 October, from 10am to 4.30pm. Some 25 dealers will be present and there will be specialist stamp society meetings, competitive displays and a junior workshop (10am to 1pm). Admission £1, accompanied children free. For more information see www.hpf.hampshire.org.uk/hpfhpx.htm.

The popular Stafford Stamp Show will take place at the Showground, Stafford, on 9 and 10 November, and the Leeds Philatelic Society Annual Stamp Fair at Pudsey Civic Hall, Leeds on 16 to 17 November •





Above: Cornish tin mine from the 1989 Industrial Archaeology issue of 1989; Buttermere from the British Journey stamps of 2006. Below right: addition to the inkjet postmark used on Downstream Access mail

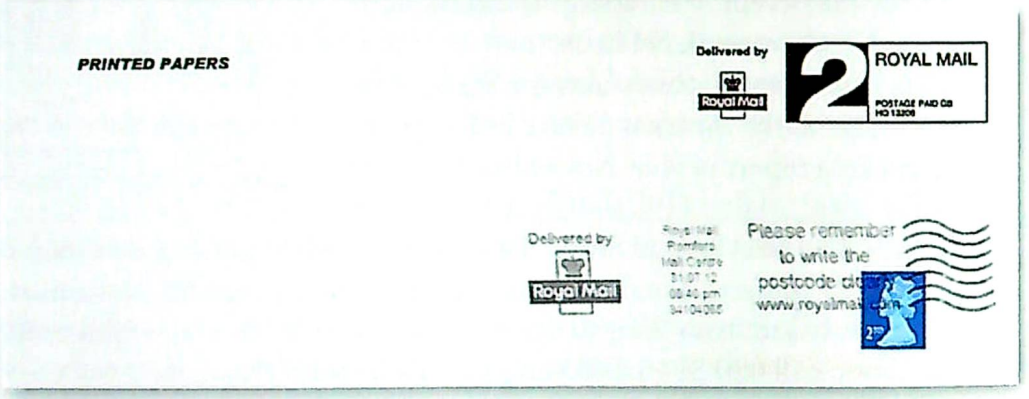
As seen on stamps... Cornwall's ruined tin mines have been named among the world's 27 must-see places by US broadcaster CNN.

Tin mines featured on the 19p Industrial Archaeology stamp of 1989 (left). Others in the same league include the Taj Mahal, Sydney Harbour and our lovely Lake District. Remember that beautiful image of Buttermere (below left) by Mark Pearce in the England set of 2006? •

First Day Covers Fair The Association of Great Britain First Day Cover Collectors is holding a GB First Day Cover Fair at the Collingwood Centre, Great Barr, Birmingham B43 7NF, on 7 October. It is open to members and non-members from 10am to 4pm, admission free. The Association holds pub meetings at The Ship & Shovel, Craven Passage, London WC2, and The Bowling Green, Shaw Lane, Stoke Prior, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire. For details contact Richard Park on 07747 803220, or Joseph Bevan on 07969 311003 or 0121 477 9924 (weekdays 7pm to 10pm). Benefits of membership include a useful newsletter *First Day Coverage*, the Association's own limited-edition FDCs.

For further information contact Terry Barnett, at 7 Mackets Lane, Hunts Cross, Liverpool L25 0QA, call 0151 486 2610, or visit www.gbfdc.co.uk •

Postmark changes As many readers will know, companies, other than Royal Mail, can now provide postal services for businesses in the UK. Most use Royal Mail to finally deliver mail to the addressees, a service known as 'Downstream Access' (DSA). Glenn Morgan and John Enfield wrote about indicators seen on DSA mail in the *Bulletin* in July 2008 and December 2010. Now to indicate that mail is being delivered by Royal Mail, this wording has been added to most postmarks applied by ink-jet printing. This started in



Bristol in June. The 'Delivered by Royal Mail' message is also being added to mail bearing printed postage impressions. An examples of the addition to the ink-jet postmark and PPI are shown on the previous page •

Early cancellations The June 2012 issue of the *Concorde Study Circle Newsletter* contains an interesting feature on the use of the 1969 Concorde stamps. The stamps went on sale on 3 March, the day after the first flight of the French prototype 001.

Covers are known with the Leicester and Peterborough 'First Day of Issue' postmarks wrongly dated 1 and 2 March respectively. Covers are also shown with a 2 March machine cancel of Cowes, Isle of Wight, packet-style handstamp of Hanwell SDO, London W7, and 2 March counter datestamps of Floating Bridge Road, Southampton, and South Tottenham, London N15. A Charlotte Street, Harlow, for 2 March is also recorded.

The *CSC* Editor asks if any other 1 or 2 March cancels are known? If you have one, please contact brianasquith@talktalk.net. Pages from Mr Asquith's Concorde collection were shown in the *Bulletin* in August to October 2003 •

Forthcoming auctions Spink will auction collections of Victoria 'Half Lengths', Falkland Islands, Gibraltar, Malta and Queensland on 23 to 24 October, followed by a Collector's Series sale on 14 November, and more GB material from the 'Chartwell Collection' of Sir Humphrey Cripps on 12 December. For details, call 020 7563 4000, e-mail info@spink.com or see www.spink.com •

Future events at the BPMA Two British Postal Museum and Archive exhibitions are currently on view: 2012 Diamond Jubilee display at the BPMA's headquarters at Freeling House, Phoenix Place, London WC1, and 'Post Office in the Community' at Blists Hill Victorian Town, Ironbridge, Shropshire (daily, 10am to 5pm). Among some 25 online exhibitions on the BPMA website are: Aerial Post, regional stamps, Machins, David Gentleman, postal vehicles and letter boxes

The Friends of the BPMA are organising a talk on British Greetings Telegrams by Brian Sole at the Phoenix Centre on 6 November, followed by the Friends AGM and evening talk on 4 December. A visit to Walsall Security Printers is being arranged for Spring 2013. Email friends@postalheritage.org.uk for further details.

The BPMA, located near the famous Mount Pleasant sorting office, is open Monday to Friday 10am to 5pm (Thursdays until 7pm). It will also be open on Saturday 13 October and 10 November (10am to 5pm), but closed on the Monday of 15 October and 12 November. For full information on BPMA services and events phone 020 7239 2570, e-mail info@postalheritage.org.uk, or visit the BPMA's website •

October anniversaries This month marks the 50th anniversary of the death of Donald McGill, famous for his saucy postcards, which were particularly popular with holidaymakers in the 1940s and 1950s. They typically featured voluptuous young women, fat old ladies, drunken men and vicars. Some of ▸

October 2012 diary dates

9 GB First Day Covers Fair, Collingwood Centre, Great Barr, Birmingham. See page 15 for details.

10 Strand Stamp Fair. See page 41

11 Barry Scott on Imperial Airways, at the RPSL. See page 45.

12-14 Stampa, Royal Dublin Society, Ballsbridge, Dublin

13 Trevor Harris displays Edward VII Varieties and Curiosities at the Welsh Centre, 157 Gray's Inn Road, London WC1.

19 and 20 National Exhibition, ABPS, Dewars Centre, Perth.

20-22 94th Philatelic Congress of Great Britain, Queen's Hotel, Perth.

20 Hampex. See page 42



Above: one of the 1994 series celebrating the work of Donald McGill, who produced 12,000 postcard designs.
Above right:the special postmark celebrating the raising of the *Mary Rose*



the designs, tame by modern day standards, were considered very risqué at the time and banned by local watch committees. They were especially prone to censorship on the Isle of Man.

McGill produced an estimated 12,000 designs, from which some 200 million cards were printed. They remain popular with many postcard collectors and film director Michael Winner is a devotee of McGill's work. Images, highly reminiscent of McGill's postcards, were used on the five stamps marking the centenary of picture postcards issued in 1994.

This month also marks the 30th anniversary of the raising of the Tudor warship *Mary Rose* from Portsmouth Harbour. A special postmark was used to commemorate the event; most covers and cards bearing the Mary Rose stamp from the Maritime Heritage set – see 'This Month in History' in June *Bulletin* •

Island issue Jersey Post introduced personalised stamps with its 'Jersey Moments' stamps on 2 August. The stamps have been produced attached to stamp labels which can be personalised by adding a photograph, logo or message. The four stamps for Local Letters show glasses of champagne, flower, twirly ribbons, and a teddy bear. Those for UK mail feature balloons, candles, a gift ribbon rosette, and a ribbon in the shape of a heart. The stamps were designed by Andrew Fothergill and printed by Cartor. Price £4 the set, £5.10 in presentation pack. Jersey Post's next stamps feature Coastal Towers (12 October), followed by Dolmens (2 November) and

Right: Jersey Moments stamps are attached to labels that can be personalised



Charles Dickens – A Christmas Carol (15 November). Orders and enquiries Jersey Philatelic Bureau, Freepost JE793, Jersey Post, Jersey JE1 1AF, website: www.jerseystamps.com

Guernsey Post will issue Christmas stamps for both Guernsey and Alderney on 31 October together with a Shipping set for Alderney. Orders and enquiries: Guernsey Philatelic Bureau, Freepost, Envoy House, La Vrangue, St Peter Port, Guernsey GY1 5SS or visit www.guernseystamps.com •

Society meetings At the Royal Philatelic Society London meeting at 41 Devonshire Place, London W1 on 11 October, Barry Scott will display 'Imperial Airways'. Non-members are welcome at RPSL meetings by prior arrangement with the Admin Office. For full details of the Society visit www.rpsl.org.uk •

This month in history John Holman recalls three Christmas angels of four decades ago

The Christmas issue of 1972, issued on 18 October, comprised three stamps, their bold and colourful designs based on early Italian paintings of angels. The images were created by Sally Stiff using pieces of fabric and other materials, built into a set of reliefs which were then photographed for the stamps. 'Angels', she said, 'are themselves symbols of happiness and beauty.' Sally also designed the 1970 Christmas stamps and wrote about her work in *Bulletin* in November 1970.







The 1972 stamps covered UK first- and second-class rates (3p and 2½p) and one for overseas (7½p), respectively showing angels with lute, trumpet and harp. The 2½p and 3p stamps were printed in eight colours, two golds being used on the 3p and seven golds on the 7½p. Gold figured prominently in the three angels with that part of the design embossed. The Queen's silhouette and value, at top right, were printed in pink, blue and brown, the colours of the definitive stamps of those denominations.

Many errors of printing are recorded – missing gold on the 2½p and 3p, and missing embossing,. phosphor and individual colours on all three values. Catalogue valuations of these errors range from £6 for phosphor omitted on the 3p to £3,000 for deep grey colour missing on the 2½p. Two missing colour errors (lavender on 3p and blackish-violet on 7½p) are unpriced, indicating considerably rarity. There was one significant constant variety – the eighth 2½p stamp from row seven of sheets with dot cylinder numbers has a broken ribbon, detaching it from The Queen's hair, and also a marked scratch across her head, distorting the lip.

A first-day handstamp was, as is traditional, provided for the Welsh hamlet of Bethlehem, as well as the Philatelic Bureau. The presentation pack can be found with insert cards with text in German or Japanese. The 1972 Christmas aerogramme, with imprinted 5p stamp, featured Christmas tree decorations, designed by Laurence Scarfe.

The number of stamps sold ranged from just over 17 million of the 7½p to over 323 million of the second-class stamp. Over 105,000 packs were sold •

Christmas 2012 Children's book illustrator Alex Scheffler has created the distinctive images that feature on this year's festive stamp issue



Christmas Smilers® Personalised Sheets	
2nd Class Personalised Sheet – 20 x 2nd, Set within a frame featuring reindeer	£13.99
1st Class Personalised Sheets – 10 x 1st	£9.99
1st Class Personalised Sheets – 20 x 1st Set within a frame featuring robins	£18.25
87p Personalised Sheet – 10 x 87p, Set within a frame featuring snowman with a snowcat and a snowmouse	£13.55
£1.28 Personalised Sheet – 10 x £1.28, Set within a frame showing penguin on ice skates	£18.50

Christmas Stamps – Specifications	
Date of issue	6 November
Number of stamps	Seven
Illustration	Alex Scheffler
Stamp design	Webb & Webb Design Ltd
Stamp format	Standard: portrait Large: landscape
Stamp size	Standard: 20mm x 24mm Large: 30mm x 24mm
Printer	De la Rue Security Print
Print process	Gravure
Number per sheet	50
Perforations	Kiss die-cut simulated
Phosphor	Bars as appropriate
Gum	Self adhesive

Here comes Santa Claus – along with a friendly reindeer, a snowman with his penguin chum, a robin perched on a holly branch and a tree with all the trimmings. These traditional Christmas favourites all get their very own stamp for Christmas 2012, released on 6 November. The special issue comprises a Miniature Sheet, seven stamps (including Large First Class and Large Second Class versions), Presentation Pack, Stamp Cards, First Class and Second Class Stamp Books, a generic sheet, a Smilers® Sheet and First Day Covers for both stamps and Miniature Sheet.

The distinctive images were created by German-born illustrator Axel Scheffler, who now lives in Blackheath, southeast London. His best-known illustrations are probaby those in Julia Donaldson's *The Gruffalo*. Scheffler has drawn for many other authors of books in Britain, Germany and the Netherlands, including Jon Blake, Paul Shipton, David Henry Wilson, Uwe Timm, Paul van Loon and Toon Tellegen.

Designer Brian Webb of Webb & Webb translated Scheffler's work into the stamp format. By the way, there is a little intrigue too: in one of the stamps, a curious cat and mouse are decorating a Christmas tree. To explain how they fit into a storyline that links the stamps, children's author and poet Tony Mitton has written a poem for the First Day Cover insert.

As an alternative to the Tallents House, Edinburgh postmark, pictorial and non-pictorial (plain design) BETHLEHEM, LLANDEILO postmarks will be available for this issue. All first-day-of-issue postmarking offices will be supplied with the alternative pictorial first-day-of-issue postmark. This means that all First Day Covers posted at a post office counter will be cancelled with the same pictorial postmark, regardless of where they are posted. Unstamped Royal Mail First Day Cover envelopes are available from main post offices and philatelic outlets about a week before the stamps go on sale. Serviced Royal Mail First Day Covers are available by mail order from Tallents House (address on page 35). Orders for Serviced First Day Covers must reach Royal Mail by 6 November 2012. Customers may also send stamped envelopes on the day of issue to Royal Mail, Tallents House for the Tallents House, Edinburgh postmark •











Christmas Stamps – Prices	
Stamps	£6.74
Presentation Pack	£7.25
First Day Cover UK	£8.56
First Day Cover overseas	£7.86
Miniature Sheet	£6.74
First Day Cover Miniature Sheet UK	£8.56
First Day Cover Miniature Sheet overseas	£7.86
Stamp Cards, set of eight	£3.60
Stamp Book, 12 x 1st Class	£7.20
Stamp Book, 12 x 2nd Class	£6
Christmas Generic Sheet 8 x 2nd Class, 8 x 1st Class, 2 x 87p and 2 x £1.28 stamps with labels illustrated with presents and set within a decorative frame featuring Santa on his sleigh	£13.10





Left: Large First Class and Second Class stamps.
Above: five more stamps in the set.
Facing page: the Christmas 2012 Miniature Sheet is gummed and contains all seven stamps within a border designed by Alex Scheffler

Our journeys into space

The contribution of British scientists to space probes and our knowledge of the solar system is celebrated in this month's new issue

THE GALAXY is not owned by the USA, despite what many schoolboy sci-fi fans may think. Our boffins are part of the cosmic charge too. The UK has helped to propel probes into space since the launch of Ariel I from Cape Canaveral on 26 April 1962.

Ariel I carried six scientific experiments that were designed by British space experts. This was the UK's first foray into space, but we have been exploring it ever since as a member of the European Space Agency (ESA). Today British expertise is still vital to ESA missions. Our contribution to space exploration, and the Ariel mission's fiftieth anniversary, is marked by Royal Mail's Space Science stamps, the special issue launching (sorry, we could not resist that) on 16 October.

The new stamps feature the journeys of ESA satellites and probes – Mars Express, Venus Express, Cassini, Huygens, Rosetta and SOHO (the Solar and Heliospheric Observatory) – and some of the amazing secrets they have revealed about the Solar System. These ESA vehicles have discovered, for example, thousands of comets, studied the deadly acid clouds of Venus,



Above: Ariel I's 62kg fibreglass and aluminium body was built by NASA and carried British hardware to conduct its experiments

Ariel I – the first British spacecraft

When Ariel I zoomed into space on a Thor-Delta rocket one spring day in 1962, it was a cosmic milestone in more ways than one.

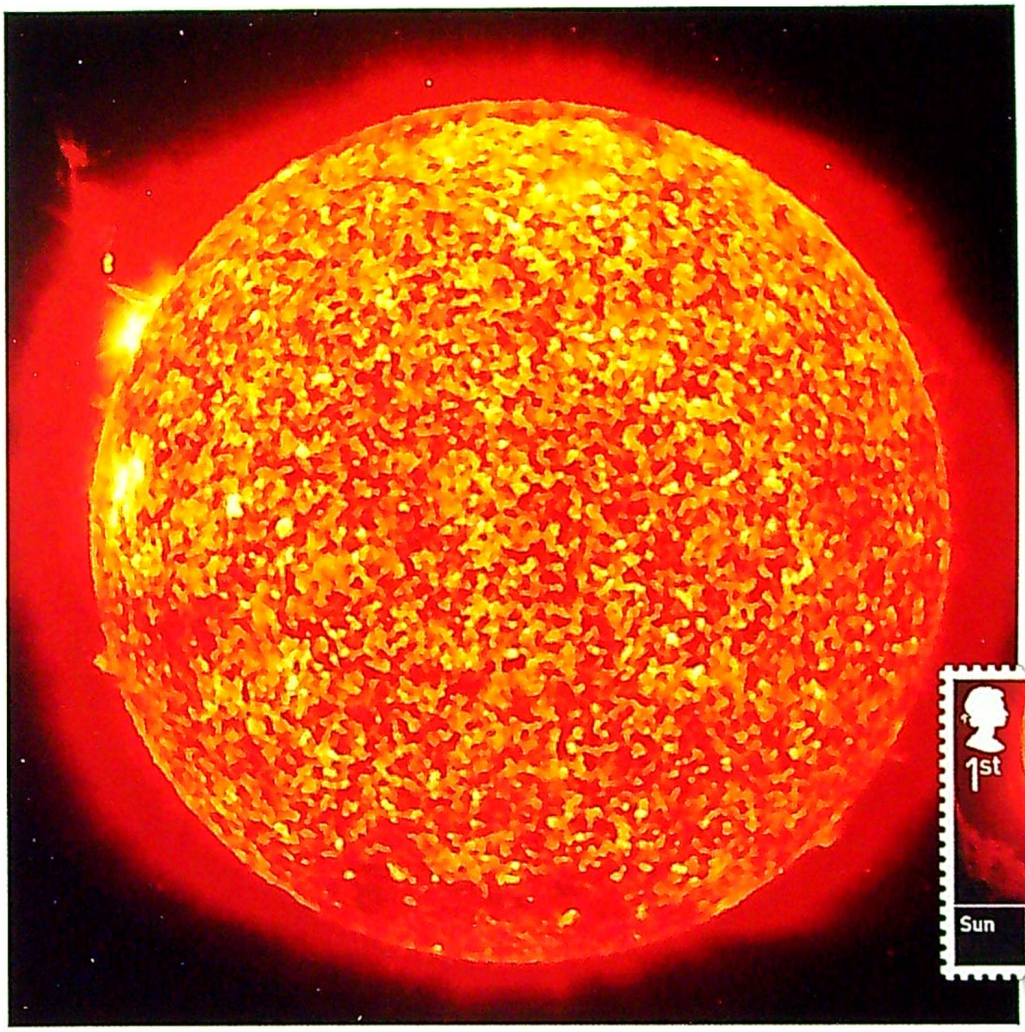
Ariel I was the first British satellite and made Britain only the third country in the world to launch a spacecraft, behind the USA and the Soviet Union. It was also the world's first international satellite. That maiden launch from Cape Canaveral up through the blue skies of Florida followed an offer from the US in 1959 to launch its Western allies' satellites for free. Britain enthusiastically took up the proposal for cooperation in space and the Ariel programme was born.

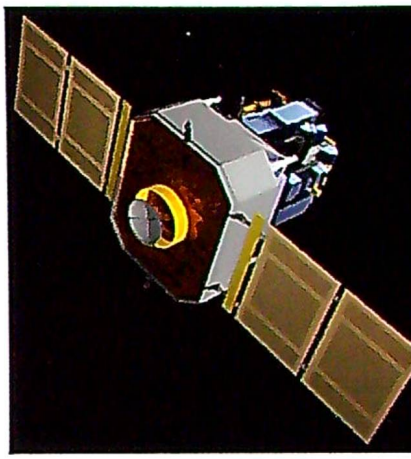
In total six Ariel satellites would be launched, with the final Ariel 6 craft leaving Earth on 2 June 1979. NASA built Ariel I (and Ariel II), but British space scientists designed the six experiments on board and analysed the data. Among other studies, the experiments measured solar radiation and gauged the temperature of electrons and ions in the atmosphere.

These studies were the first of many that established Britain as a great innovator in space science. It is ironic, though, that American technology allowed Britain to launch its space programme but also caused the destruction of its very first space vehicle. A US high-altitude hydrogen bomb test in July 1962, codenamed Starfish, damaged the solar panels on Ariel I, making it malfunction.

The satellite was shut down in 1964, and it eventually burned up on re-entering the Earth's atmosphere in 1976.

Photographs: Science Photo Library





Left: ultraviolet image of part of the Sun's atmosphere, taken by SOHO (above). The Sun's surface appears granulated because of turbulence in the rising stream of particles

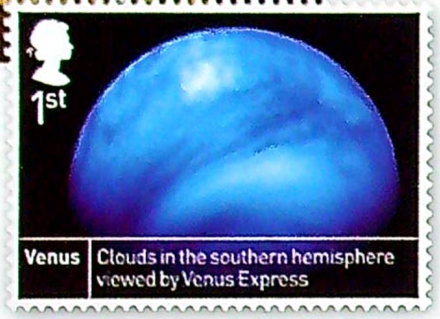


probed a Martian mountain over 20km high, and found a landscape on one of Saturn's moons that looks like England. It has been quite an adventure, so join us now for our own ESA mini-mission round the Solar System...

SOHO and the Sun Our journey begins with the hottest adventure of them all: SOHO sits 1.5 million kilometres from the Earth in the direction of the Sun and co-orbits with the Earth on a mission to find out more about the Sun, from its deep interior to its outer corona. SOHO has observed explosions, enormous shock waves and tornadoes in the solar atmosphere and discovered complex currents of gas flowing beneath the Sun's visible surface. One of the key scientific objectives of SOHO is to observe and keep a near real-time track of the solar wind – the stream of charged particles that are ejected from the star's upper atmosphere. These particles cause geomagnetic storms that can disable satellites or knock out power grids here on Earth. SOHO also happens to have discovered 2,200 comets.

And all this from little old Britain. SOHO was built in Portsmouth before being taken to the States for launch, and UK scientists led the design of the probe's Coronal Diagnostic Spectrometer instrumentation. A joint ESA/NASA mission, SOHO was launched in 1995 and was only intended to operate for three years, but its tour of duty has been extended because of the value of the data gathered. Observations from some of the instruments can be made into images and you can see them at sohowww.nascom.nasa.gov. ▸





Above: Venus Express rocket before the launch and the new stamp showing Venus, named after the ancient Roman goddess of love and beauty

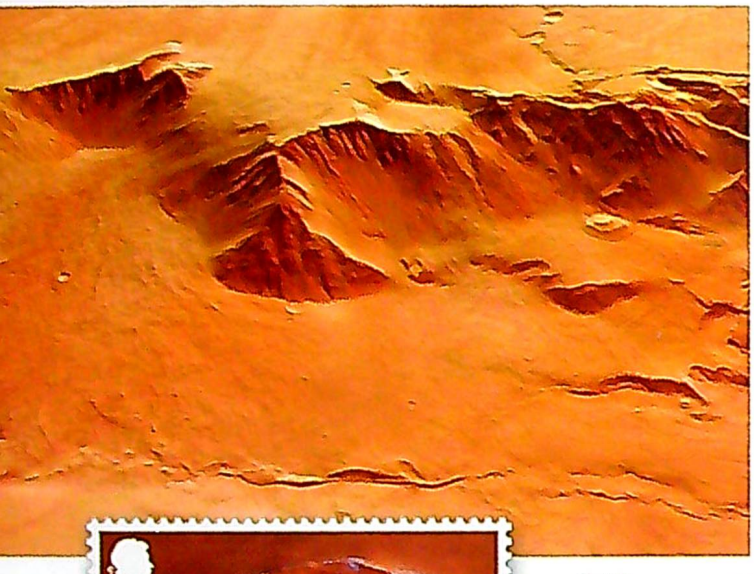
Venus Express From the Sun we pass barren Mercury on our 174 million km journey to the hellish world of Venus. Enveloped in cloud so thick that it masks the planetary surface, Venus is similar in size to Earth (Venus is slightly smaller), but any resemblance, thank goodness, ends there.

The cloud layer blankets a harsh rocky world periodically torn apart by volcanism, where the surface temperature can be far hotter than a kitchen oven – reaching up to 465°C (870°F). The clouds themselves are lethal, consisting of sulphur dioxide and sulphuric acid droplets. Surface pressure is 92 times higher than Earth's and the atmosphere is mostly carbon dioxide.

Venus Express was proposed by Oxford University's Professor Fred Taylor, a leading space physicist. The mission's aim was to better understand the behaviour of the planet's toxic atmosphere and weather systems, and how these interact with the solar wind.

The Venus Express probe was launched in November 2005, reaching Venus the following April. So far it has gathered data on the sulphuric acid clouds, along with atmospheric information at different altitudes. It has also made temperature maps of Venus's surface and confirmed the presence of a huge atmospheric vortex that looks like a two-eyed hurricane.

Mysterious 'UV absorbers' that suck in much of the planet's received ultraviolet radiation have also been detected, though it is not yet known what causes this phenomenon. The Venus adventure clearly is not over.





Above: the camera on Mars Express uses British know-how to capture amazing images like these

The Red Planet And on now to Mars, the stuff of legends. The Red Planet, which has generated a galaxy's worth of science fiction fables, has raised hopes that intelligent life will be found there. Alas (so far), there is no proof.

Yet Mars is tantalising. Methane was discovered on Mars in 2003 and is probably volcanic in origin, but there is a chance that it could come from microbial life. In addition, Mars is the most Earth-like planet in the Solar System. Like the Earth, Mars has seasons, where the polar ice caps advance and retreat. It is, however, very much smaller, only 15 per cent the size of our planet, and the thin atmosphere is oxygen-poor.

Still, we cannot help but be fascinated by Mars. Its surface features, for one, are truly epic in scale. Olympus Mons, the highest volcano in the solar system, is three times the height of Everest, rising to 26 km above the surrounding plain. Valles Marineris is a 4,000 km-long, 7 km-deep canyon.

In the mountains, canyons and endless red sand deserts of Mars lies the thrilling potential for a future manned landing and exploration. And once again, in the vanguard of such ambitions are British space scientists. The Mars Express probe launched in June 2003 to study the planet's climate and volcanic and geological activity. British know-how has

been used in three of Mars Express's instruments, including the camera that has captured astonishing views of Mars. Importantly, the mission has discovered that Martian volcanoes are dormant rather than extinct.

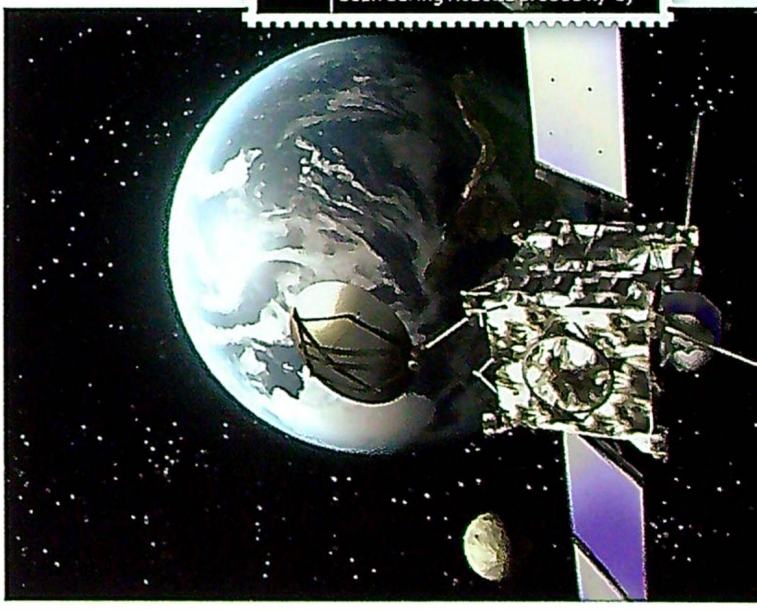
Mars has two moons, Phobos and Deimos. The moons are believed to have been 'captured' from the area known as the Asteroid Belt, between Mars and Jupiter. The Asteroid Belt is home to many irregularly shaped rocky objects ranging in size from particles of dust to the 950 km-diameter dwarf planet Ceres. These asteroids are the remains of planetesimals, objects that in normal circumstances would have fused together to form a larger planet. However, Jupiter's massive gravity is believed to have prevented this from happening.



Lutetia encounter In 2010 the ESA probe Rosetta passed one such asteroid, Lutetia, on its way to a projected rendezvous with Comet 67P/Churumov-Gerasimenko. Rosetta's 15 km-a-second flypast captured almost 500 images of Lutetia.

The striking pictures have revealed a 130 km-long irregularly shaped rock with a surface pock-marked by impact craters. From the pictures, ESA scientists have determined that parts of Lutetia are over 3.6 billion years old. They have confirmed the theory that Lutetia is an ancient mini-world, a failed planet that was once round but battered into its diamond shape by cosmic collisions – and not a fragment broken off from a larger body.

As part of Rosetta's international team, British space scientists have worked on ten of the 21 experiments the mission will deploy when Rosetta's Philae probe separates for landing on Comet 67P/Churumov-Gerasimenko in 2014. Studying the comet will help deepen our understanding of planet formation.



Above: the picture of Lutetia shown on the new stamp is one of hundreds of images captured by the ESA probe Rosetta

To Saturn and Titan Our journey concludes with Cassini-Huygens, a joint mission of the ESA, NASA and the Italian Space Agency. When it launched in 1997 Cassini-Huygens was, at 5.6 tonnes, the largest and most expensive interplanetary vehicle ever built. The probe's destination was the ringed planet ▸

Mission destination	Mass measured Earth masses	Distance from sun in km	Day length in Earth days	When discovered
Sun	333,000	not applicable	24.5	Familiar to ancients
Venus	0.8	107-108 million	243	Familiar to ancients
Mars	0.1	206-249 million	1.03	Familiar to ancients
Lutetia	0.0000003	300-400 million	0.34	15 November 1852 by Hermann Goldschmidt
Saturn	95	1.4-1.5 billion	0.44	Familiar to ancients
Titan	0.02	1.5 billion	16	On 25 March 1655 by Christiaan Huygens



> The UK has made an enormous contribution to space science and the economic exploitation of space, and I am very pleased to see our high profile and achievements acknowledged through this stamp issue
>
> **Alan Smith, Professor of Detector Physics, Department of Space & Climate Physics, the Mullard Space Science Laboratory, UCL**



Main picture: this close-up of Saturn's inner rings was obtained by the wide-angle camera on the orbiting Cassini spacecraft on 28 February 2009. It shows the shadow of the rings on the planet's clouds and the inner rings at the top

of Saturn and its giant moon, Titan, almost 1.5 billion km from the Sun. Saturn is the second largest planet in the Solar System after Jupiter, with a diameter of 120,536 km. Despite being 95 times bigger than the Earth it has only one eighth of Earth's density. This is because Saturn is composed mostly of hydrogen. There is no sharp distinction between Saturn's atmosphere and surface, but a gradual transition from gas to liquid as pressure increases towards the centre.

The 'weather' on Saturn is cataclysmic to say the least. Winds blast along at up to 1,800 kms per hour. Huge storms of white crystals erupt into the upper atmosphere, and the crystals are spread around the planet by those powerful winds. The most striking feature of Saturn is of course the ring system and, as we will see, the Cassini-Huygens mission has made some interesting discoveries in this respect. The rings extend from 6,630 km to 120,700 km above Saturn's equator, but in places they are only 20 metres thick. Composed mostly of ice particles, rocks and dust, the rings are thought to be either the remains of the nebular material that Saturn was originally formed from or the remnants of a destroyed moon. Some of Saturn's 60 moons act as 'shepherd' moons, their gravitational fields holding the rings in place.

Cassini-Huygens consisted of two parts. The Cassini module, which is still operational, is named after the 17th century Italian astronomer Giovanni

Domenico Cassini (known as Jean-Dominique Cassini when he became a French citizen), who discovered several of Saturn's moons. Since reaching Saturn in 2004, Cassini has transformed our understanding of the planet, its rings and satellites.

The Huygens Probe is the lander element in the Cassini-Huygens partnership. It is named after Christiaan Huygens, the Dutch scientist who originally described Saturn's rings and in 1655 discovered Titan. Fittingly, Titan was the craft's destination on Christmas Day 2004, when Huygens separated from Cassini to begin its journey towards the moon.

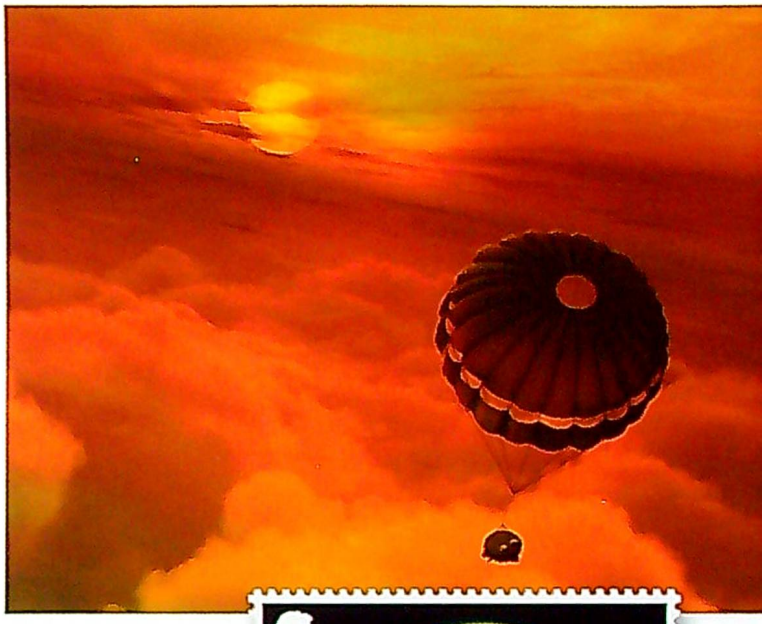
Several new moons and rings have been discovered, and ice erupting from volcanoes on the moon of Enceledus has been analysed. Observations have also been made of a massive hurricane-like storm that raged in the planet's atmosphere for several months.

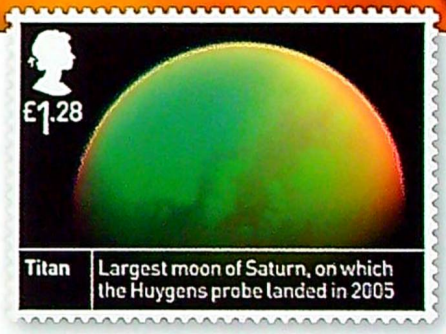
British scientists were involved in the design of some of Cassini's and Huygens' instruments and are still working on the data received from them. A British-built sensor was the first part of Huygens to touch the surface of Titan – the first ever landing in the outer Solar System. Titan is the second largest moon in the Solar System after Jupiter's Ganymede. What makes Titan so interesting to astronomers is that it is the only moon known to have a dense atmosphere and the only body other than the Earth to have stable bodies of surface liquid. In many ways it is thought to resemble Earth before the dawn of life.

There was a substantial British contribution to Huygens. The surface science package of instruments was developed initially by the University of Kent, before transferring to the Open University, while the parachute and descent control systems were developed by Britain's Martin-Baker Space Systems.

Titan remains the most distant body from our home planet on which the human race has effected a landing. It is a remarkable milestone in space exploration. And it is also where our stamp adventure ends – for now.

British scientists continue to make a notable contribution to planned space missions. The Rosetta is on its way to a comet as you read this article and there are four other interplanetary probes with UK hardware currently under construction: Bepi Columbo being prepared for a voyage to Mercury, Exo-Mars soon to visit Mars, Solar Orbiter will observe the Sun and JUICE is destined to explore Jupiter. Who knows what Space Science stamps of the future will reveal! •





Top: computer artwork of the Huygens probe descending through the atmosphere of Titan. Instruments confirmed that the atmosphere is mainly nitrogen with clouds of methane and ethane

Other Royal Mail stamps to feature Space Science

1966 British Technology (Jodrell Bank Radio Telescope 4d)
1970 Anniversaries (150 years of the Royal Astronomical Society, 1/9)
1982 Information Technology (Communications Satellite 26p)
1985 Safety at Sea (Communications Satellite 31p)
1990 Astronomy
1991 Europe in Space
1999 Millennium Series The Scientist's Tale (Newton/Hubble Telescope 64p)
1999 Solar Eclipse Miniature Sheet
2002 Astronomy Miniature Sheet
2007 The Sky at Night
2007 World of Invention (Space Travel 72p)
2009 Eminent Britons (Sir Martin Ryle 1st Class)
2011 UK A to Z part 1 (Jodrell Bank 1st Class)

Stamps, the universe and me Collector, writer, alternative comedian and Robot Woman of Tomorrow, Helen Keen welcomes Space Science



Above: the best of some 500 portraits of Lutetia, taken in 2009 by the Rosetta probe. Below: Poster from Helen Keen's highly acclaimed performance at this year's Edinburgh Fringe Festival

I HAVE ALWAYS loved stamps about space travel, and have collected them since I was a child. So I'm going to enjoy the new Space Science stamps – I particularly like the image of the crusty asteroid, graciously named Lutetia. Screw up your eyes and you can see her nose. Space stamps are significant for me as they capture the biggest hugest wonders of science, the universe and everything on the smallest of canvases. If I had to pick one single favourite from my collection, then it would have to be the stamp shown far right, from former French colony Niger, which celebrates the voyage of the first cat in space.

As part of an always faintly implausible bid to become a space-faring superpower in the 1960s, the French planned to put 'chat Felix' (of course) into low earth orbit in 1963. Conspiracy theories swirl around this feline adventure. It is a story that captured my imagination and began a lifelong fascination with space travel. Apparently Felix got wind of the unhappy fate of his Russian canine predecessor Laika (who, in 1957, was the first living creature to orbit the earth and sadly died a few hours into the Sputnik 2 mission). Felix was unwilling to risk it, even with his eight extra lives, and escaped the day before the launch.

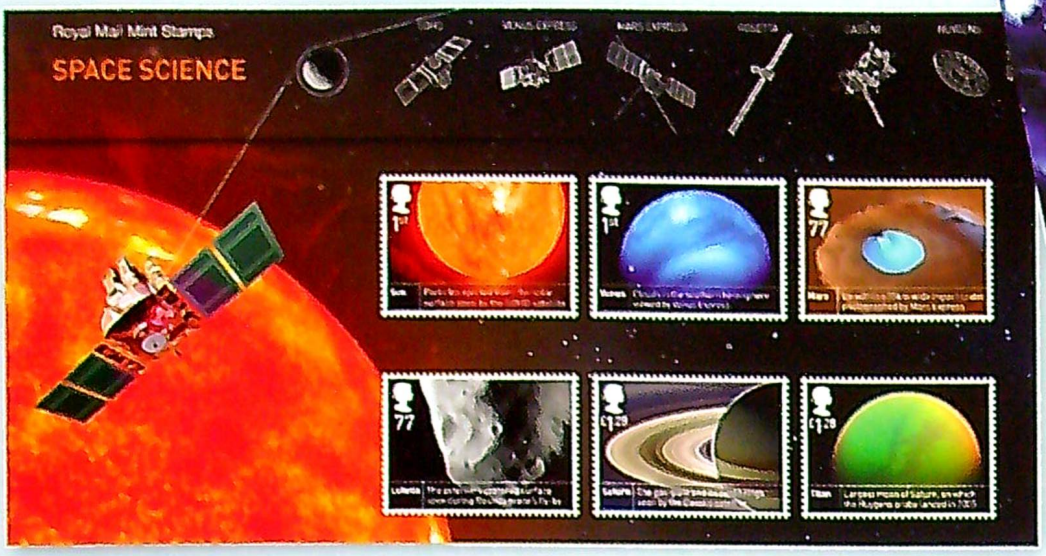
A female cat, imaginatively named Felicette, made the journey instead and returned safely. But the brave last-minute substitute stepped in too late for philatelic recognition and postage stamps and other official portraits commemorating the event still feature Felix's noble, canny countenance. I gather that the picture on the Niger stamps was by J L Puvilland, an illustrator who seems for a while to have been the go-to stamp artist for French-speaking African countries. And I can't help but wonder what the Niger postal service privately thought when he presented them with his finished work. Puvilland seems to have focused on capturing the essence of Felix, some might say at the expense of his rocket. And, in case you're wondering, that is not a jaunty little hat on Felix's head, but a box of electrodes wired (I very much hope painlessly) into his brain. Looking at the stamp, I can imagine Felix is using his 'commanding cat' intellect to control the rocket with The Power Of The Cat Mind. The portrait is perhaps suited less to a stamp and more to a chilling B-movie poster!

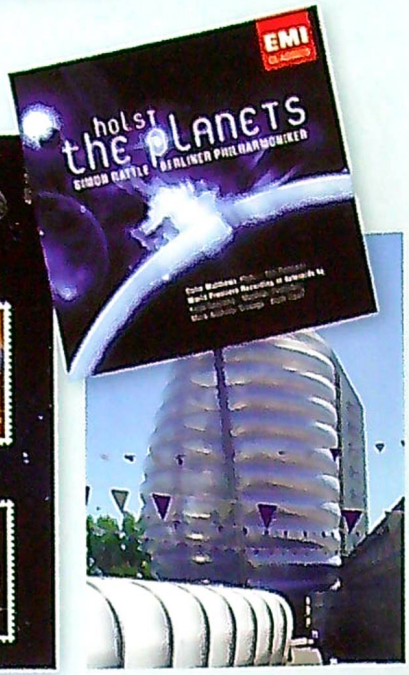


Another favourite stamp of mine is the Jodrell Bank 4d stamp. It came out in September 1966. I loved it because it was yellow and somebody told me it had three phosphor bands! And to think that telescope has been humming away in Cheshire since 1957, quietly spying on space.

I have my father to thank for inspiring my

Photograph: Claes Gellerbrink





Win: Space Science Special

All prizes this month are on an interplanetary theme – as well as the stunning Space Science Presentation Pack, two first prize winners will receive Gustav Holst's 'The Planets Suite' EMI Classics CD and a free admission to the National Space Centre, Leicester

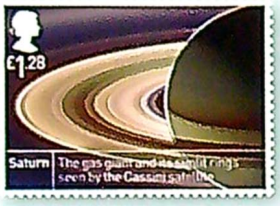
We celebrate the Space Science issue with a special quiz on space exploration. The following six questions relate to the images 'a' to 'e' shown below. Readers should find the answers at their fingertips



a



b



c



d



e

Space quiz

a) The SOHO probe's mission to the Sun is celebrated in the new Space Science issue. What does SOHO stand for?

b) In this detail from a 2009 Eminent Britons stamp, the penetrating eyes belong to a leading British astronomer. Who?

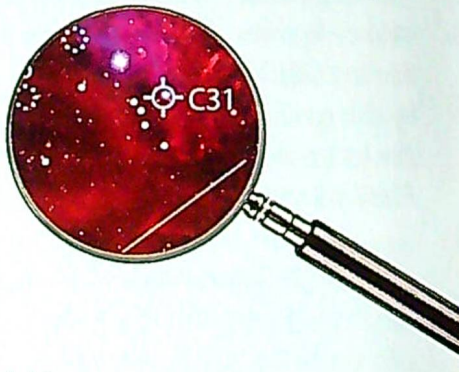
c) Saturn's famous rings of ice and dust provide a beautiful stamp design. Name the design studio that created the Space Science stamp set.

d) In what year was the UK's first astronomy-related stamp issued, showing the Jodrell Bank radio telescope?

e) On Mars, studied by the Mars Express mission in 2003, towers the tallest volcano in the Solar System. How high is it?

Name that stamp

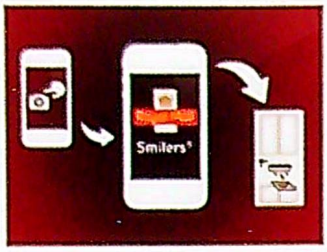
Identify and date the stamp shown right.



How to enter Send your answers, marked 'October Space Quiz' and/or 'October Name that Stamp' to: *Bulletin* Prize Draws, Tallents House, 21 South Gyle Crescent, Edinburgh EH12 9PB. Closing date: 1 November 2012. Senders of the first correct entries drawn for each puzzle after the closing date win the Presentation Pack, CD and National Space Centre admission as described. There will be two runners-up prizes in each section. Terms and conditions apply: see page 61.

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Smilers® get even smarter The clever way to create personalised stamps on your smartphone



You can find Royal Mail Smilers® app online at iTunes



Press 'Play' to start creating your personal Smiler stamps



Position the stamp and adjust the size with your fingertips



Choose from a wide range of stamps to go with your image



Select the quantity you require and pay at the online checkout

THIS FUN app will make you grin – now you can create personal Smilers® sheets on your mobile or tablet. Royal Mail Smilers® lets you upload photos into an on-screen stamp design and just days later you receive your unique stamp sheet through the letterbox.

Packed full of the latest technology it may be, but this latest incarnation of the app is easy to use. In fact, Smilers® 'Version 1.1' is a completely new rewrite of the previous one, making the design process more simple with fuss-free icons and minimum text. The free app pairs your uploaded image with a first-class stamp of your choice – select from a wide range, from cuddly teddy bears to the Olympics. New ones have been added with Version 1.1.

The Smilers® app is proving popular since its recent launch on Apple App Store. There have been more than 1,000 downloads, with users creating stamps to mark special events, from births and birthdays to weddings and anniversaries. It is hitting the headlines, too, making a 'top ten apps' list in *The Guardian* and ranking well in other media reviews.

You can use it on iPhone 3GS, 4 and 4S, all iPads and iPod Touch. The Android version, which supports most Android phones and tablets, has just been unveiled at Autumn Stampex. Being largely icon-driven and relying less on language, Version 1.1 also looks set to succeed in growing overseas markets, such as China. Even as this latest version makes its debut, new features are being worked on for future incarnations of Smilers®.

The design process only takes minutes – it simply depends how long you spend being creative. That is easy as Smilers® is touch-operated: manipulate the image with your fingertips, cropping, enlarging and reducing it.

To create a Smilers® stamp click the 'Play' icon on the home screen. Take a photo with your device's camera or choose one from your camera roll. Select the frame style (round or rectangular). Your photo is dropped into the frame to position and design. Choose a stamp to go with the image, then pay at the improved checkout. Your design is pinged to Tallents House, where the photo is vetted to avoid, ahem, inappropriate images. The design goes to the printers, and you get your personal stamp sheet within five working days.

If you have a QR code/barcode scanner on your phone, why not scan the code below and get cracking now? •

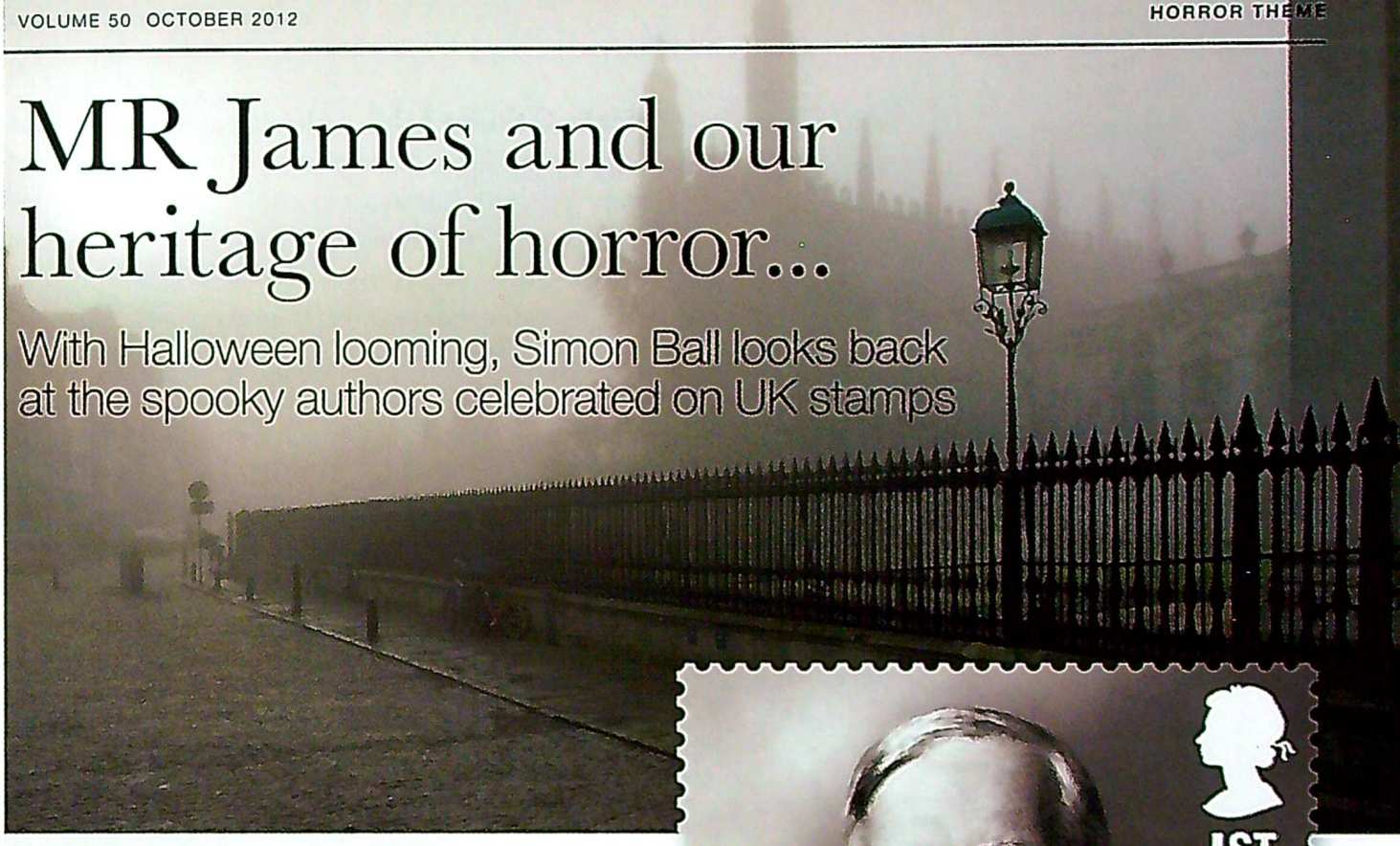
Bob Fothergill, Intelligent AR Limited





MR James and our heritage of horror...

With Halloween looming, Simon Ball looks back at the spooky authors celebrated on UK stamps





Above: master of horror and an academic, MR James terrified students with ghost stories when they gathered in his chambers at King's

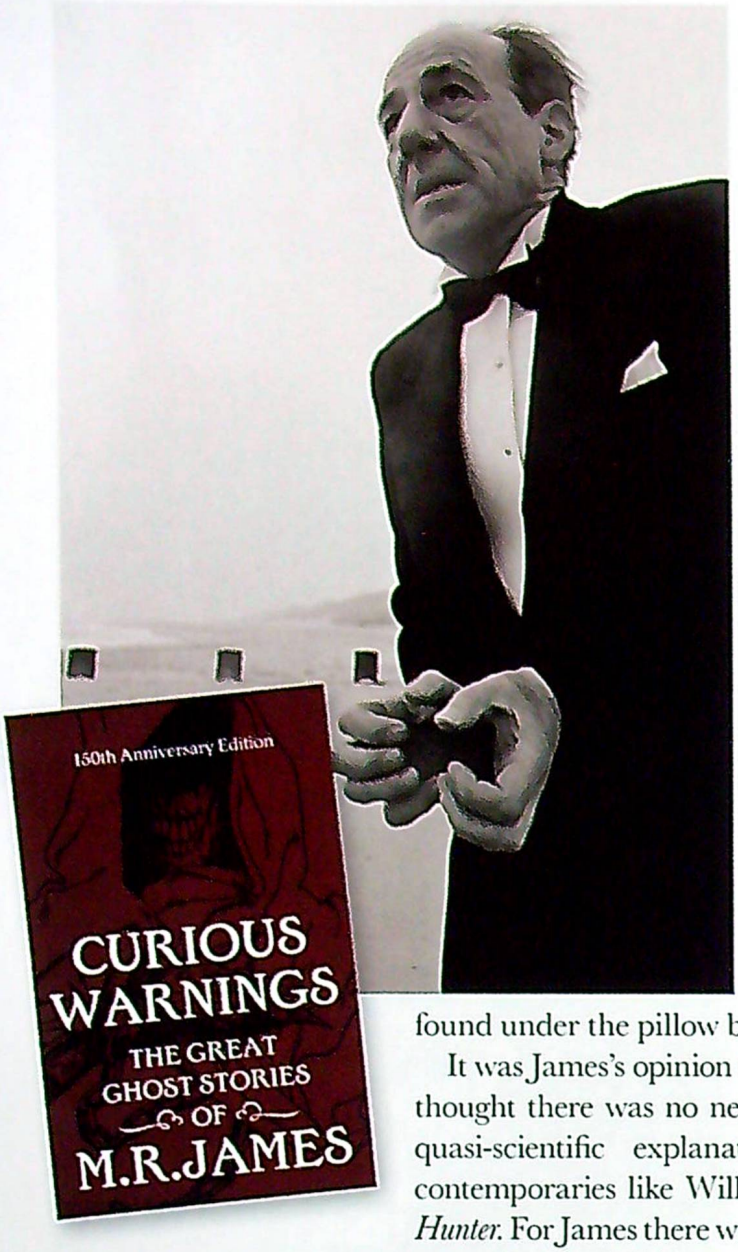
IT'S A WINTER'S EVENING IN 1908 and the day at Cambridge's King's College is drawing to a close. In the flickering light of the open fire a group of undergraduates huddle for warmth in the Provost's chambers. Whether perched on the edge of an overstuffed armchair or sitting cross-legged upon the floor they are entranced by the respected medievalist's words. Ice glazes the windows that look out onto the Quad, but it is not the winter cold that chills their spines, rather a feeling of dread as the Provost's ghostly tale reaches its disturbing climax.

Montague Rhodes James, whose 150th birthday was celebrated in February's Britons of Distinction issue, was a noted medievalist holding prestigious posts at Cambridge's Fitzwilliam Museum, King's College and later Eton College. His ghost stories were initially written as festive entertainments for students and friends, and it would not be unusual for there to be a special tale at King's on Christmas Eve, but their legacy was to set the template for 20th-century supernatural literature. Indeed, MR James might not be well-known in the way of, say, Poe or Lovecraft or Stoker, yet his influence on the greats of supernatural fiction has been enormous.

The big daddy of horror, Stephen King, author of *The Shining*, *Salem's Lot* and many other gruesome classics, is just one of the modern masters who freely admits to being influenced by James.

The editor Stephen Jones, whose MR James collection *Curious Warnings: The Great Ghost Stories of M.R. James*, has just been published to mark James' 150th birthday, explains: 'MR James remains the most influential ghost writer in ▸

Photograph of Cambridge © Alamy



James' work has inspired TV adaptations starring the likes of Michael Hordern and even one-man performances of his stories by actor Robert Lloyd Parry – below is a detail from a DVD of his theatre show



the English language. Although many of his best-known stories were written around a century ago now, his work continues to inspire new authors and film-makers, and his stories are just as relevant and as powerful today as when they were first published.'

The great strength of James's storytelling was his power of implication and suggestion. As his American counterpart, HP Lovecraft, put it, James was 'gifted with an almost diabolic power of calling horror by gentle steps'. Typically a James ghost story eschewed the Gothic castles and stately homes of its Victorian predecessors and began in the most ordinary and innocuous circumstances. For example, the reserved academic taking a golfing holiday in *Oh, Whistle and I'll Come to You, My Lad* comes to mind.

James was convinced that one of the most essential ghost story ingredients was the gradual layering of malevolent atmosphere over this mundanity – to 'let the ominous thing put out its head', as he put it. So peculiar things start to intrude into the narrative. A cathedral stall carving turns to living furry flesh (*The Stalls of Barchester Cathedral*) or a mouth full of teeth is found under the pillow by a man searching for his watch (*Casting the Runes*).

It was James's opinion that ghosts should be 'malevolent and odious'. He also thought there was no need for the narrative to become bogged down by the quasi-scientific explanations of spectral phenomena so loved by his contemporaries like William Hope Hodgson in his tales of *Carnaki the Ghost Hunter*. For James there was no place for the denouement of the popular detective story when the full force of the malevolent presence was unleashed in the lead-up to the second important ghost story ingredient, the 'managed crescendo' of fear.

Influential James may be, but he is not unique by any means for, of course, ghosts and ghouls are nothing new in English literature. These islands are rich in the tales of disembodied spirits, enchanters and mythical beasts. Phantoms made dire predictions in Shakespeare's plays and in Gothic novels the haunted, decaying castles scared the living daylights out of the readers of Victorian periodicals. Scrooge's spectral visitors from Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* were just the tip of an iceberg of chilling apparitions scratching at windows and rattling chains. And many made such a mark that their influence has been celebrated by an appearance on British stamps. For example, four seminal works of British horror with their origins in the 19th century – Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, Robert Louis Stevenson's *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* and *The Hound of the Baskervilles* by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle – were marked in the 1997s Europa issue, Tales and Legends.

The roots of two of these tales can be found at a house party at the Villa

Photograph © BBC; illustration © Paul Lowe



Above: Royal Mail chose four characters from classic horror stories for the Europa issue of 1997 on the theme of Tales and Legends.
Below: this year's An Post stamps commemorate the centenary of the death of *Dracula* author Bra Stoker

Diodati on the banks of Lake Geneva in Switzerland in the summer of 1816. This was no ordinary gathering of travellers on the European Grand Tour. Within Villa Diodati's walls were the poet Lord Byron, his personal physician Dr John Polidori, Percy Byshe Shelley and his lover Mary Wollstonecraft (soon to be Mary Shelley). It was wet that summer, the weather was dreadful. Confined within the villa, the party had grown bored with reading German ghost stories so Byron proposed that they should each write their own. The results were Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Polidori's *The Vampyre.*



Published in 1818, Shelley's tale of the scientist who brings life to a creature stitched together from parts scavenged from the gibbet and graveyard was an immediate sensation. Shelley took inspiration from 18th century Italian anatomist Luigi Galvani's experiments making dissected frog's legs jump with electricity, and the intrusion of new-fangled science into this Gothic horror story prompted Brian Aldiss to describe *Frankenstein* as the first true science fiction novel in his history of the genre, *Billion Year Spree.*

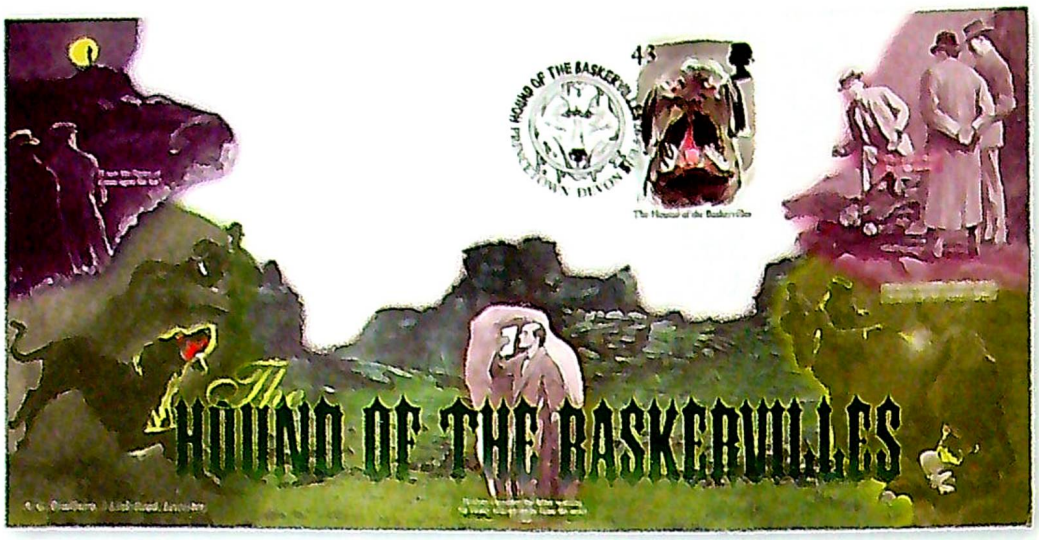
Certainly Baron Frankenstein was the archetype of every fictional mad scientist since, while the footprints of the monster can be tracked directly to Arnold Schwarzenegger's killer cyborg in *The Terminator.*

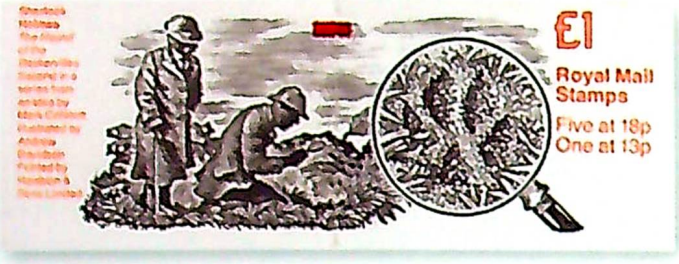
However, the ultimate undead blue-blood, Count Dracula, was created by the Dublin-born Bram Stoker. While researching and writing *Dracula*, Stoker's day job was managing London's Lyceum Theatre, where he became a close friend of Sir Henry Irving, an actor. Irving's stately presence became the model for Stoker's vampire count, but the name Dracula was derived from the 15th century Wallachian warrior prince Vlad III Dracula ('son of the dragon'). Regarded as a hero in modern Romania for fighting the Ottoman Turks, Vlad was also famed for his bloodthirsty cruelty, his favoured form of punishment earning him the title Vlad the Impaler.

First published in 1897, *Dracula* was an instant hit and has stood the test of time well. Filmed, adapted and borrowed by numerous authors and film-makers, the bloodthirsty nobleman has made at least 217 film appearances and even turned up in an episode of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer.*

Another 19th-century classic tale of horror, Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* was first published in 1886. The story of the mild-mannered doctor whose potion releases the dark side of his character as the evil Mr Hyde, was based upon the real-life case of William 'Deacon' Brodie. A respected Edinburgh cabinet-maker and city councillor by day, Brodie lived a double life as a burglar, robbing his clients after dark. ▸







Stevenson's father owned a number of pieces of furniture made by Brodie, including a cabinet that was in the young Robert's bedroom (and now in the The Writers' Museum in Edinburgh). Brodie's carpentry skills were to come in useful at the end of his life. He was hanged on a gallows of his own construction in 1788.



Above: Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's legendary devil dog from *The Hound of the Baskervilles* has haunted British stamp design

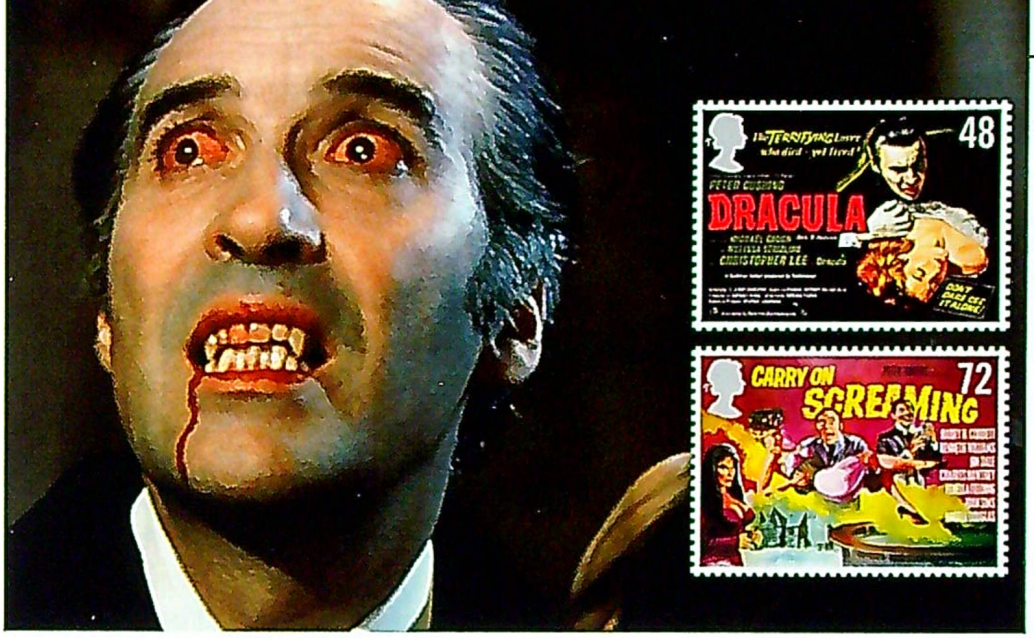
The world-famous spectral beast in Sherlock Holmes's encounter with *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (featured in 1993's Sherlock Holmes issue) was a large phosphorous-daubed dog, rather than a supernatural being. Although Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's detective never encountered any phenomena he could not rationally explain, Doyle (one of 2009's Eminent Britons) was also a prolific author of supernatural spine-chillers and in later life developed a keen interest in spiritualism and the paranormal.

Doyle took the legend of the notorious Squire Cabell, who sold his soul to the Devil to forever ride Dartmoor with his pack of black hounds, as the inspiration for the wicked Sir Hugo Baskerville. But the idea for the hound deception came from Doyle's friend and fellow author Bertram Fletcher Robinson, who was later to utilise a similar ploy in his story *The Terror of the Snow*.

All the books in the 1997 Tales and Legends issue crossed the Atlantic to Hollywood for film adaptations, but in the 1950s a small British studio brought horror home to the UK. Introducing the classic pairing of Peter Cushing and Christopher Lee, Hammer Films took the stories back to their period roots, but introduced vibrant colour cinematography in all its gory glory.

Panned by the critics but loved by the audience, Hammer horrors kept bums on cinema seats throughout the 1950s and 1960s. Three stamps featuring movie posters for *The Curse of Frankenstein, Dracula* and *The Mummy* were issued in 2008, marking the 50th anniversary of the premier of Hammer Films' *Dracula* in 1958.

The author and film critic Kim Newman wrote the presentation pack that supported the Hammer stamps. An expert in all things that go bump in the night, Newman has also continued the adventures of Dracula and many







Above: Hammy horror from Hammer films to Carry On has made perfect material for wonderfully lurid stamps. Above left: Christopher Lee in the 1958 Rank/Hammer film, *Dracula*

other iconic British horror characters in his *Anno Dracula* series. So why have the British Isles produced so many great supernatural writers?

'The easy answer I suspect,' Kim says, 'is the weather: rain, mist - all good, anxiety-producing atmosphere, and it's an obsession which easily translates into horror. Many of our best writers, like Blackwood or Hodgson, love writing about winds and water.

'I also think that a lot of it comes from our general scepticism – we have all sorts of folklore that we don't really believe in, centuries of blood-soaked history we rather like to chuckle at, and an established church that is a lot more tolerant of weirdness than most continental varieties of religion. This means we're freer to make up stories about spooks, monsters and spiritual issues than places where they might have to take them seriously, and we like the game-playing aspect of tale-telling as much as the artistry.

'And, thanks to Boris Karloff, Peter Cushing, Christopher Lee and a few others, horror will always have a British accent.'

Although today's market for supernatural fiction may appear to be dominated by comic book adaptations and the angst-ridden American teen vampires of Stephanie Mayer's *Twilight* series, the British accent still dominates. Authors such as Kim Newman, Mick Farren, Neil Gaiman and Clive Barker continue to push the boundaries of the weird and wonderful, but the idea of spending Christmas without an MR James chiller on the box remains quite unthinkable •

'Curious Warnings: the great Ghost stories of MR James', edited by Stephen Jones is published by Jo Fletcher Books.

'Dracula Cha Cha Cha', the third instalment of Kim Newman's Anno Dracula series is published on 26 October by Titan Books Ltd.

Photograph © Alamy

Prize draw rules and regulations 1 Promotions are open to all readers aged 18 and over, except employees of Royal Mail Group Ltd, their business associates and immediate families. 2 Responsibility cannot be accepted for entries which are incomplete, damaged or not received for any reason. Proof of posting is not proof of receipt. 3 Prizes must be accepted as offered, they are not transferable and there are no cash alternatives. The cost of transport to and from a prize venue, where applicable, is not included. 4 Winners are notified within 28 days of closing date stated. 5 For prize draws where readers must answer a question, winners will be the senders of the first correct entries drawn at random by an independent person after the closing date. 6 Promoter's decision on any aspect of the promotions is final. No correspondence will be entered into. 7 Entry implies acceptance of these rules. 8 Prizes are subject to suitability and availability. The promoter reserves the right to a) substitute a prize of equal or greater value if circumstances so demand and b) to suspend or cancel or hold void any of the competitions or prize draws at any time without notice. 9 Winners' names are available 28 days after closing date, send an SAE to The Editor, British Philatelic Bulletin, Royal Mail, Tallents House, 21 South Gyle Crescent, Edinburgh EH12 9PB.

August solutions and winners Seaside Quiz: a) 1977 Beside the Seaside. b) A-Z UK Part 2 10 April, Portmeirion. c) County Antrim. d) Bognor Regis. Winner: J Blackledge, Birmingham. Name that stamp: 2007 Rescue at Sea – Appledore. Winner: Wim Dols, The Netherlands

Letter box jubilee Martin Robinson continues our survey letter boxes with the EIIR cipher



1

WALL LETTER BOXES OF THE PRESENT REIGN originally had an eight-inch posting aperture, as did the pillar boxes described in the previous article in this series (Volume 49, June, page 314). But from 1957, ten-inch apertures became standard. Earlier wall letter boxes had apertures of eight inches or less, and by 1956 thousands of these were still in use.

Many wall boxes were replaced in the early 1960s, with the idea of providing each village with at least one modern box. To complete the programme, Post Office engineers devised a way of modifying letter boxes in situ and a contractor was employed to cut out the existing aperture and fix a new casting with a ten-inch aperture over the top. This work was carried out between 1959 and 1965.

Up to the reign of George V wall boxes were made in large, medium and small sizes, but from 1937 only the large and medium sizes were made, and this continued until 1965, after which no more wall boxes were produced. Apart from the size of the aperture and the use of the royal cipher or the Scottish crown, there are other differences to be seen. Wall boxes situated at post offices do not have the plate with details of collection times or the tablet showing the next collection, as these are shown elsewhere in the post office window. But boxes away from post offices display the collection plate and tablet (1).

There are other small differences in detail. For example, the size of the hood or position of the royal cipher and doorpull and different manufacturers: McDowall, Steven & Co, Allied Iron Founders, Lion Foundry, Carron Co, and WT Allen & Co.

Special wall boxes for use at sub post offices had been manufactured since 1885 and were still available in Queen Elizabeth II's time. They are referred to as 'Ludlows' after their manufacturer, James Ludlow & Co of Birmingham; production ceased in 1965. They came about because until 1910 sub-postmasters were responsible for providing their own letter boxes, and those made by Ludlow of wood with a sheet steel front were cheaper and lighter than cast iron boxes. They were made in two sizes and are distinguished by a large white enamel plate with black lettering: 'POST OFFICE/LETTER BOX'. In the larger size (38 × 14 inches) this is above the door and has the posting aperture within it (2), while the smaller size (29×14 inches) has the plate at the bottom of the door (3).





2, 3

Elizabeth II boxes with the enamel plates are rare because the plates were discontinued in 1954 in favour of plain doors below a casting containing the aperture and royal cipher. The words







4, 5, 6

'POST OFFICE' appeared on a raised block at the bottom of the door. Ludlows can be found with or without the collection plate and time tablet, and with the royal cipher or Scottish crown (4).

Lamp boxes are the smallest of our letter boxes and are mounted on poles or sometimes built into walls. They have been made in various designs since 1896 and those of the present reign are still commonly seen, but surprisingly complex to study with small variations of design and fitting, and a number of different manufacturers' names (5).

From 1994 the 'POST OFFICE' inscription at the top was replaced by 'ROYAL MAIL'. A new design was introduced in 1999, which has the royal crown and cipher cast on its curved top (6), though some examples have been found with the crown and cipher missing. For the first time, boxes of this type were made with the inscription 'POST BRENHINOL' for use in Wales.

New boxes standing on a metal pedestal were introduced in 1995, designated by Royal Mail as L (large) and M (small) (7). These are bigger than lamp boxes and fill the gap left by the demise of wall boxes.

I hope that this two-part survey of letter boxes bearing the EIIR cipher makes it clear that just because 20th century post boxes are common, they are certainly not dull! In the next article in this series we shall be returning to the early pillar boxes of 1853 to 1863 •

For more information, contact the Letter Box Study Group at 38 Leopold Avenue, Handsworth Wood, Birmingham B20 1ES or via www.lbsg.org

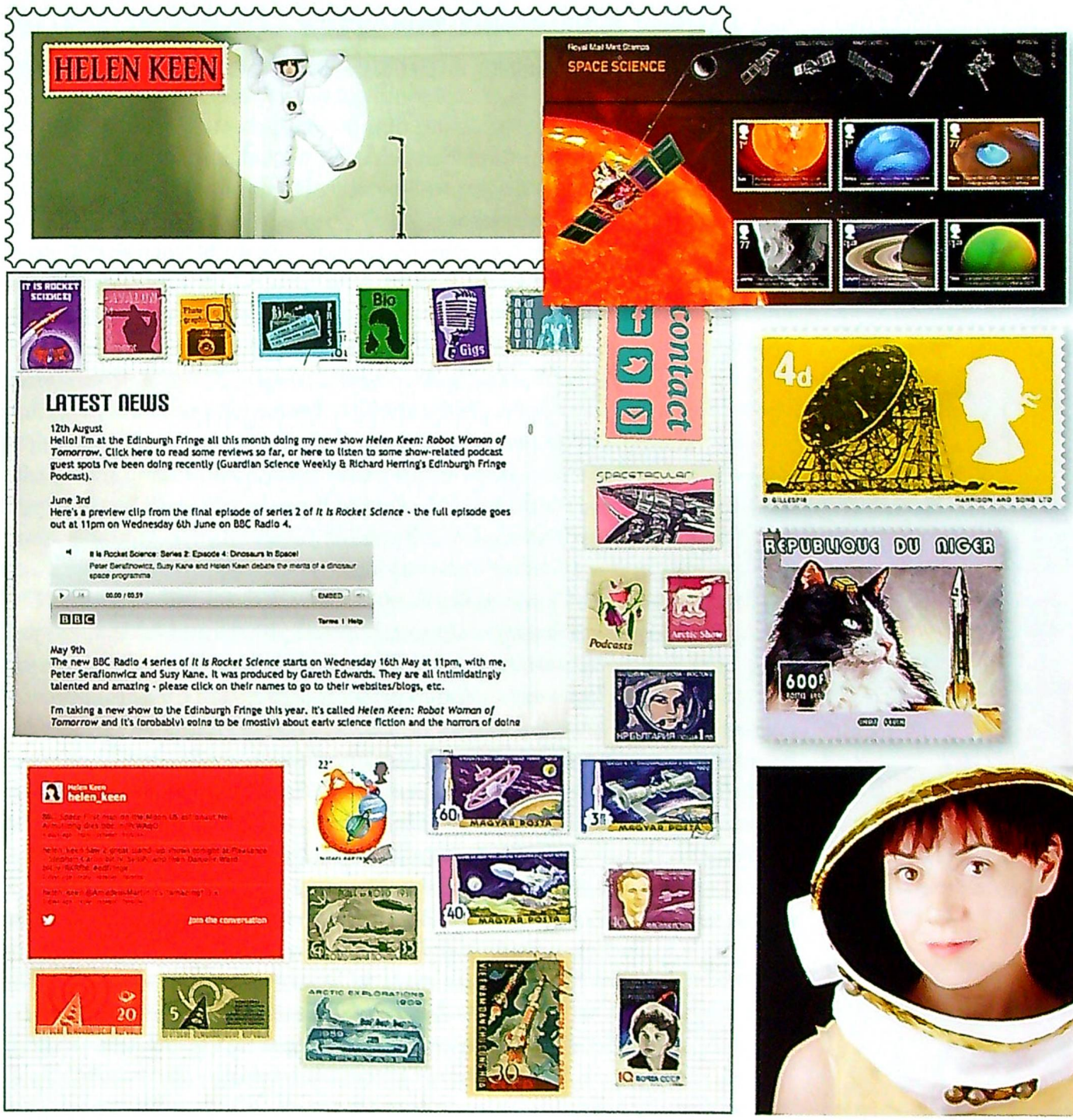


7



Reader's letter: As we said in the previous article, British pillar boxes can be found overseas and often make a welcoming sight for British tourists. James Khoo sends a picture of a modern pillar box taken at The Peak in the former British territory of Hong Kong in April 2011. When the territory was handed back to the Chinese in 1997, post boxes were painted in a new green livery. At the end of 2011 some 59 boxes bearing the royal cipher were still in use.

Please send your photographs to The Editor at the address on page 36. We regret that we cannot promise to return photographs.



stamp-themed career*. Dad was a postman pretty much all his working life, and he first got me interested in stamps during my early childhood. I struggled to make friends at school and as an only child spent a lot of time alone, so I relished amassing stamps. For me they were like so many intriguingly well travelled companions. Dad would bring me home stamps that, he said, he had found in his bag because they had 'fallen off' letters. It only occurred to me when I grew up that this was not all that plausible an explanation for the steady stream of stamps. He was almost certainly getting some of them from kindly colleagues at the sorting office and the householders who he liked to chat with on his rounds •

** Comic Helen Keen's space stamp collection inspires her website and a lot of her work, including the recent BBC Radio 4 series 'It's Rocket Science'*

Clockwise from top: this month's new Stamp Science Presentation Pack, 4d Jodrell Bank from the 1966 British Technology set; Felix stamp from Niger; Helen Keen in costume, space-inspired website including an ego-cinderella that Helen made earlier – at www.helenkeen.com