

BRITISH PHILATELIC

The ROYAL MAIL magazine *for stamp collectors*

Bulletin

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Millennium Fire and Light •
Previewing a year of poetry



‘Forest of beacons
let your branches flame
across the nightscape...’

From John Agard's poem *The Gift of Flame*, in the
Fire and Light presentation pack.

Forthcoming issues and withdrawals



Cover On new year's eve, the bonfires of Beacon Millennium were lit around the nation, as depicted on the new 19p Fire and Light stamp. Royal Mail's second set of 12 Millennium issues for 2000 is previewed on page 144.

Beacon photograph courtesy Beacon Millennium Ltd

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

6 January

Issue Millennium definitive 1st class NVI stamp, issued in sheets of 200 printed by De La Rue and books of 10 printed by Walsall and Questa. Also available in presentation pack.

11 January

Issue Millennium Above and Beyond stamp cards

18 January

Issue Millennium Above and Beyond stamps and presentation pack

25 January

Issue Millennium Fire and Light stamp cards

28 January

Withdrawal To Pay labels and presentation pack. Withdrawal from Post Office Counters philatelic outlets; will remain on sale at British Philatelic Bureau until 28 May 2000.

1 February

Issue Millennium Fire and Light stamps and presentation pack

15 February

Issue Special by Design prestige stamp book (£7.50)

29 February

Issue Millennium Water and Coast stamp cards

Millennium stamps awarded Millennium Products status Millennium Products is the scheme launched by the Design Council in 1997 to 'highlight creativity and innovation in business and to change the way Britain is perceived both at home and overseas'. The idea is to highlight up to 1000 state-of-the-art British products. Previously awarded products include the Dyson vacuum cleaner, recycled pencils, electric violins, and lightweight water carriers devised by Oxfam for use in famine relief. Royal Mail's 1999 Millennium stamps have been awarded this status, announced on 14 December at an event attended by the Prime Minister, Mr Tony Blair. Being awarded Millennium Products status is highly prestigious and means that the 'product name' will automatically have a presence in a special structure called the 'Spiral of Innovation' near the Millennium Dome at Greenwich.

Contents



The millennium A look at stamps issued all around the world to mark a momentous occasion in the calendar, by James Mackay 140

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Issues and withdrawals
January and February 130

This month The Editor previews this issue 132

Stamp scene Societies and exhibitions news; Stuart Rossiter lecture; Auction news 132

Royal Mail news New prestige stamp book; Collector's Club; Aerogramme quantities 136



Post Office Heritage Collections Frank Staff Collection postcards 139

Poetry in the post Philip Parker previews a year of poetry 143

Millennium stamps A preview of the second of Royal Mail's 12 sets of stamps for 2000 144



Checklist of definitives for 1999 148

Off the Royal Mile The Scottish Parliament PO, by the Editor 150

Bring back excitement A look back over 1999, by Richard West 152

Book reviews 153

Postbag Letters to the Editor 155

Greetings labels 1994 Messages, described by Lionel Jones 157

Cover corner A 1969 cover commemorates a gooth anniversary 157



Competitions £200 to be won in two easy-to-enter competitions 158

Events 158

Centenary of the NPS Celebrated at Phillips 159

Late news 159

This month The Editor previews this issue

THE WINTER months in the UK are traditionally the busiest for collectors. Unable to do much in the garden and the weather often too bad for trips out, it is a good time to sort out one's stamp collection, mount up issues acquired and plan for the future philatelic year. If you like attending stamp exhibitions and fairs there is a good choice in the early months of the year, also a number of major internationals – detailed below. One I am looking forward to particularly will be held towards the end of the year – Glasgow 2000 – in November. This will be the third exhibition organised by the Association of British Philatelic Societies and promises to be as good as those in Newcastle and Hove in 1996 and 1998. Both included some wonderful exhibits – truly exhibitions run by collectors for collectors, real exhibition-goers' exhibitions. Details of Glasgow 2000 will be published here in the months ahead.

Many readers will know of Richard West, a prominent figure in the philatelic world in the UK for nearly 30 years. I am pleased this month to welcome Richard as a regular contributor to the *Bulletin* – in his first article he looks back over 1999 and sets out his philatelic challenge for the new Millennium. Other countries' Millennium stamps are the subject of an interesting review by James Mackay, a follow-up to his article here in November 1998.

Finally we now have two competitions a month. One requires visual expertise in identifying part of a stamp shown in full elsewhere in the *Bulletin*; the other tests your general knowledge of British stamps and philately. Now you have two chances of a top prize each month. JOHN HOLMAN •

Stamp scene Exhibitions • Societies news • Auctions • Stuart Rossiter lecture

Exhibitions The winning entries in a competition for young collectors to design a stamp on the Millennium theme were on show at the Thematica 11 exhibition in London, 24-25 November. Judged by stamp designers Clive Abbott and Jeffery Matthews, the first prize winners in the four age groups were: Sherayne Scott (5-7 years), K Aishwarya (8-9), Sara Ann Mondey (10-13), and Allan Mbale (14-16). The School Prize for the Highest Number of Entries went to Courtland JMI School, of Mill Hill, London NW7.

The top awards at Stampa 99 (Irish national stamp exhibition) went to Ronny Vogt for his 'Irish Transatlantic Pioneer Airmail'. Lady Mairi Bury received a gold for her Queen Victoria Jubilee exhibit and *Bulletin* contributor Brian Warren a vermeil for his Carrickfergus Castle exhibit featuring the 2s6d and £1 and £3 stamps showing the castle.

Spring Stampex, organised by the Philatelic Traders' Society, takes place in March. The theme of this year's exhibition will be the 150th anniversary of the first Spanish stamps •

Spring Stampex 1-5 March at the Business Design Centre, Upper Street, London N1.

International exhibitions Bangkok 2000 – World Youth Stamp Exhibition & 13th Asian International Stamp Exhibition – will be held at the Queen Sirikit National Convention Centre, Bangkok on 25 March-3 April 2000. Each day has been allocated a theme (see right). The exhibition is being organised by the Communications Authority of Thailand in collaboration with the Philatelists Association of Thailand. In addition to about 2400 frames, there will be over 100 postal administration and dealers' stands, and a philatelic passport will be available. The British Commissioner is Richard West of 39 Waverley Avenue, Sutton SM1 3JX.

The organisers of the WIPA 2000 exhibition in Vienna, 30 May-4 June 2000, have announced that amongst the rarities on show will be the famous first Mauritius issue and the Swedish 3-skilling yellow – the most expensive stamp in the world. The three stamps issued by the Austrian PO to promote the exhibition are now being issued as a miniature sheet and the 10s definitive (Basilisk) is also being produced as a WIPA 2000 miniature sheet ●

Astro Space Stamp Society At the China 99 exhibition members won a gold and two large silver medals for displays entitled Pioneer rocket mail; Apollo Soyuz Test Project of 1975; and From the first rockets of China to Chinese space mail.

For details of the Society send a large SAE (UK readers) or three IRCs (overseas) for an information pack. All enquirers will be sent a mint Crown Agents stamp set as a gift, and details of how to obtain the Tuvalu miniature sheet which features Yuri Gagarin, the first man in space (right).

The winner of the Apollo XI contest announced here in August was Miss MJ Phillips, Wiltshire ●



For details of the Astro Space Stamp Society send a large SAE (UK readers) or three IRCs (overseas) for an information pack. Astro Space Stamp Society, 21 Exford Close, Weston-super-Mare BS23 4RE.

Technology aids stamp expertisation RSPL Ltd, the Expert Committee for the Royal Philatelic Society London, has installed a Foster & Freeman vsc2000 video spectral comparator. This follows some five years investigation of forensic equipment suitable for philatelic use. The vsc2000 is the latest version of the equipment used by the Manuscript Dept of the British Library and by police forces to prevent passport and currency fraud. It will provide full colour and infra-red imagery, image mixing and spectral description and has computer facilities where images of genuine stamps can be stored for retrieval and comparison with submissions. It is planned to offer a forensic report on significant items upon request in addition to the certificate stating the official opinion of the Committee ●

New literature list James Bendon's new list of philatelic literature covers acrophilately, bibliography, forgeries, general works, maritime, military, philatelic history, postal stationery, revenue stamps, and philately & postal history by country. The free 92-page list gives useful descriptions of the books, date of publication, ISBN and price ●

Bangkok 2000 Each day has a theme: 25 March Bangkok 2000 Day ● 26th Amazing Thailand ● 27th Environment ● 28th Youth ● 29th FIP ● 30th Palmares ● 31st FIAP ● 1 April Philatelic Museum ● 2nd HRH Princess ● 3rd Philately.

WIPA 2000 For further details of this exhibition and international exhibitions in Jakarta & Budapest (in August), and Madrid (in October) see October *Bulletin*, page 37.

Application for expertisation of stamps and covers should be addressed to: Mrs O'Hara, RSPL Ltd, 41 Devonshire Place, London W1N 1PE.

For a literature list, write to James Bendon Ltd, PO Box 56484, 3307 Limassol, Cyprus.

This occasion saw the launch of Charles Goodwyn's book *Royal Reform*, subtitled *Postal Reform 1837-1841* as reflected in The Royal Philatelic Collection, published by the Stuart Rossiter Trust Fund.

Royal Reform is available, price £35, from the Trust, c/o Osborne Clarke, 50 Queen Charlotte Street, Bristol BS99 7QQ.

The next Stuart Rossiter lecture, by David Beech of the British Library, will be held at the Library on 4 November 2000.

Postal Reform lecture well attended The fifth Stuart Rossiter memorial lecture held at the British Library on 6 November was well supported by collectors eager to hear Charles Goodwyn, Keeper of the Royal Philatelic Collection, talk on British Postal Reforms of 1837-41, including the introduction of the Penny Black. Mr Goodwyn began with a short history of the Royal Collection and a brief sketch of Rowland Hill's career, emphasising the targets he set himself in terms of postal reform – the issue of the Mulready, envelopes with embossed stamps, adhesive stamps for use on customers' own envelopes, and the facility for the public to have their own paper impressed with a prepaid stamp. The Mulready design failed, embossed stamp envelopes were introduced in 1841, the adhesives were a great success, but the stamped to order service was not introduced until 1855. The Royal Collection is rich in examples of the Treasury Competition essays for means of prepaying postage. About 50 of the 2600 entries were designs for adhesive stamps or labels. One, J Little proposed books of stamps – over 60 years before they were introduced, and the design by Sir G S Mackenzie was very close to the Penny Black although he was not one of the competition winners, so, said Mr Goodwyn, 'the poor chap didn't get a prize'. Mackenzie's design is shown on page 199 of Douglas Muir's book *Postal Reform & The Penny Black* published by the National Postal Museum in 1990. A case could be made for crediting Mackenzie with the design of the first stamp. The original sketch for the stamp (shown on page 146 of Mr Muir's book) is normally credited to William Wyon but Mr Goodwyn suggested it was more likely by Henry Corbould.

Mr Goodwyn quoted from contemporary comments on the designs of the Mulready and the Penny Black – some feeling that the portrait of Victoria made her look like a podgy ploughboy rather than a very feminine young lady. He warned that many of the Treasury essays outside the Royal and Post Office Heritage Collections are in fact reprints, some of the entrants making copies for publicity purposes. Charles Whiting in particular made examples of his embossed head of Victoria, some of which were affixed to mail. Goodwyn suggested that Rowland Hill was not well pleased with some of Whiting's activities ●

Harmers enquiries Harmers of London, 91 New Bond Street, London W1A 4EH.

Stanley Gibbons enquiries David Crocker or Colin Avery, Stanley Gibbons Ltd, 399 Strand, London WC2R 0LX.

GB at auction Harmers auction on 12 October included a block of eight 1d blacks used on a cover dated 14 May 1840. This realised £32,200 against an estimate of £25,000. There was strong bidding for a collection of postal stationery reply cards and misdirected mail. A Mulready 1d with MISSENT /TO BIRMINGHAM fetched £1495 and a 1911 *Windsor Chronicle* newspaper with violet wrapper sent by the London-Windsor flight mail went for £1955 (est £1250).

A first day cover of the Penny Black, addressed to Burnley, realised £17,000 in the Stanley Gibbons auction of 13-15 October. An 1840 Mulready 1d lettersheet from Birmingham to Paris with red Maltese Cross, London Paid, P-F in oval and Anglo/Calais transit cds made £2800. Artwork by H Fleury for the 1949 UPU 6d stamp made £2300 (est £1200-1400) and a 1963 Compac 186d with black omitted £1100 (est £500-600) ●

GB Philatelic Societies At the AGM of the GB Decimal Stamp Book Study Circle on 17 October the President, Gerry Fisk, announced that the 7th edition of *'The Bookmark' Catalogue* of British Decimal Postage Stamp Books received a large silver gilt and National Postal Museum medal at Autumn Stampex. The medals were presented to the editor, Hanns Fasching. The catalogue has received universal praise in the philatelic press; it will be entered at Chicagopex, WIPA 2000 and, most probably, for a Rowland Hill Award. The next meeting will be held at 09.00 on 20 February at the Albright & Wilson Recreation Club Hall, Langley, West Midlands, close to Junction 2 of the M5. In addition to buying and selling, there will be displays. Prospective new members are welcome.

The November/December issue of the GB Philatelic Society's *GB Journal* includes good features on Edward VII and George V stamps. It is essential reading for specialist collectors of British stamps from Victoria to George VI, although there is relatively little Elizabeth II coverage.

The October 1999 issue of the Great Britain Collectors Club's *Chronicle* concentrates more on postal history than stamps with some interesting features including a listing of British postal rates to the US, 1968-99. The Club's President, Gordon Milne, interviews James E Kloetzel, Editor of the Scott Catalogue, whose own collecting interests include Machins.

Two recent issues of the quarterly *Rundbrief* show that the German Study Group Forschungsgemeinschaft Grossbritannien continues its good work. Notably well produced, with numerous illustrations, the June 1999 issue (No 116) features an article on the philatelic consequences of the Tay Bridge Disaster of 1879 by Karl Louis, while Theo Brauers continues his series on the rarity of particular Victorian stamps on cover, this time the 1867 5s rose. Rainer Leveringhaus provides his regular detailed descriptions of Machin new issues and booklets and has added a translation of the obituary of Arnold Machin in the April *Bulletin*. A comparable contribution from Bernard Weiss details current Millennium stamps. The same issue chronicles the election of Douglas Myall as a Corresponding (Honorary) Member of the Study Group. It has a concise account of Douglas's outstanding work on decimal stamps and stamp books, his invention of the classification systems now standard for this complex field and his sterling contributions in writing and publishing for the benefit of other collectors. Finally, a 112-page supplement provides a listing of the Group's library – a welcome addition to GB bibliography.

In the September 1999 issue (No 117), the status of the Board of Trade perfin is examined for German readers with Burkhardt Beer's translation of articles published in the *Perfin Society Bulletin* in 1997-98. Leveringhaus and Weiss continue their meticulous detailing of new issues among the Machins, Millennium specials and the Scottish and Welsh pictorial definitives, while Brauers turns his attention to the rarity of the 1883-84 9d and is green on cover. Karl Louis writes on the great British rarity, the 1d red-brown Plate 77 'B blank'. This excellent number is rounded off with a review of the 1999 Michel specialised catalogue for Great Britain. *This review of Rundbrief is by James Negus* •

GB Decimal Stamp Book

Study Circle Contact either Tony Wilkins, 3 Buttermere Close, Brierley Hill, DY5 3SD, telephone 01384 891373, or Roger Knights, 7 Old Farm Close, Needingworth, St Ives, Huntingdon PE17 2SG, telephone 01480 468622.

The Circle's website address is: www.hobbies.privateweb.at/gbdsbsc

The GB Philatelic Society

A Lajer, Old Post Office, Hurst, Reading RG10 0TR.

Great Britain Collectors Club

Contact Secretary/Treasurer Janet Gordon, PO Box 42324, Cincinnati, OH 45242-0324.

Website address: <http://www.gbstamps.com/gbcc>

Royal Mail news New prestige stamp book • Aerogramme quantities • Collectors Club

The Stamp Show 2000 prestige stamp book The third of three special prestige stamp books to promote 'The Stamp Show 2000 (Earl's Court, London 22-28 May 2000)' will be issued on 15 February. Entitled 'Special by Design' it will cost £7.50 and contains a mixture of standard and Millennium definitives and four entirely new stamps unique to this book. It will be of special interest to collectors of the Machin definitive and country stamps.

The book has been printed by Walsall Security Printers. All the stamps are gravure and bear two phosphor bands, except the 19p stamps in pane 3 which have one band at left or right.

The subject of this book is the important stamp work of Jeffery Matthews who first submitted a design to the Post Office in 1959. His first accepted stamp designs were for the United Nations issue of 1965. Since then Jeffery has designed a further 41 special stamps, the decimal country stamps introduced in 1971, and worked on the Machin definitive. His country design for Northern Ireland is still in use although the Scottish and Welsh ones were replaced in June 1999.

The interleaving pages show some of his fine designs and sketches for the 1972 Silver Wedding and 1990 Penny Black anniversary definitives. Matthews put his fascination with the art of heraldry to good use on the 1984 and 1987 Heraldry stamps and the 1998 Queen's Beasts issue. The 1984 stamps, the first Royal Mail issue in square format, embraced a range of heraldic styles, from the simple arms of Richard III to the more ornate arms of the Earl Marshall. Matthews began with stamp-size sketches then painted them four times larger using a mixture of gouache, watercolour and plain pencil for the silver colouring in the swirling mantling surrounding the shield of Richard III.

On the final page of the book is reproduced The Post Office seal. A small version of this appears on the label of pane 1.

For the Penny Black anniversary stamps, Matthews decided to combine Queen Victoria's head from that stamp with the head of The Queen from the current definitives. Using a computer for fine tuning, he spent weeks achieving the perfect balance of size and positioning and recreating the sepia colouring of the original. In 1840 rich blacks were unachievable in printing.

Jeffery Matthews is noted for his meticulous attention to detail; he is quoted in this book as saying 'I am always searching for perfection and seldom satisfied'. Many collectors, however, are more than satisfied with the dignified stamps he has designed over the past 35 years, and will enjoy reading about his work in this prestige book.

'Special by Design' was written by Louise Bishop and designed by Robert Maude, designer of this *Bulletin* and of the 1998 Endangered Species stamps. The images shown in the book were mostly supplied by Jeffery Matthews or from the Post Office Heritage collections.

The book contains four panes

Pane 1 8 × 1st NVI Millennium definitive, with central label showing The Post Office seal. The illustration is a wedding photograph of The Queen and Duke of Edinburgh

Pane 2 9 × 1st class NVI country stamps, 1971 design: top row 3 × Scotland, middle row 3 × Wales, bottom row 3 × Northern Ireland. All are unique to this book. Colour flame (orange). The Welsh stamps bear the bilingual '1AF/ST'. The illustration shows the artwork of the 20½p stamp from the 1984 Heraldry issue.



Pane 3 Definitives: 1st and 2nd rows 2 × 19p, bottom row 2 × 38p. The illustration is of the lion from the Queen's Beasts.

Pane 4 6 × 1st class NVI version of 1990 Penny Black anniversary definitive, showing Queen Victoria and HM The Queen, printed in black. This NVI stamp is unique to this book; the 1990 stamp was of 20p value. The illustration is an enlargement of the heads of the two monarchs.

FIRST DAY FACILITIES Unstamped Royal Mail first day cover envelopes will be available from main post offices, the British Philatelic Bureau, and philatelic outlets about a week before 15 February, price 25p.

Orders for the Royal Mail covers bearing three of the panes cancelled with Bureau or London sw5 pictorial first day postmarks must reach the Bureau by 15 February.

Alternatively, collectors may send their own stamped covers, on the day of issue, for the Bureau or London postmarks to: British Philatelic Bureau, 20 Brandon Street, Edinburgh EH3 5TT, or Special Handstamp Centre, Royal Mail, Mount Pleasant, London EC1A 1BB. Please mark the outer envelope 'FD 0001 PSB' (Bureau), or 'FD 0002 PSB' (London sw5). A non-pictorial London sw5 handstamp will also be available from the London SHC, reference FD 0002 PSB NP. Covers posted in first day boxes at main post offices will be given the pictorial London sw5 handstamp.

Any of the stamps in the book can be used, singly or in combination to qualify for all first day, philatelic and sponsored handstamps in use on 15 February.

First day cover prices

UK prices include VAT

With pane 1: £2.86 UK, £2.44 overseas

With pane 2: £3.17 UK, £2.70 overseas

With pane 4: £2.25 UK, £1.92 overseas

The *British Postmark Bulletin* carries details of sponsored special handstamps.

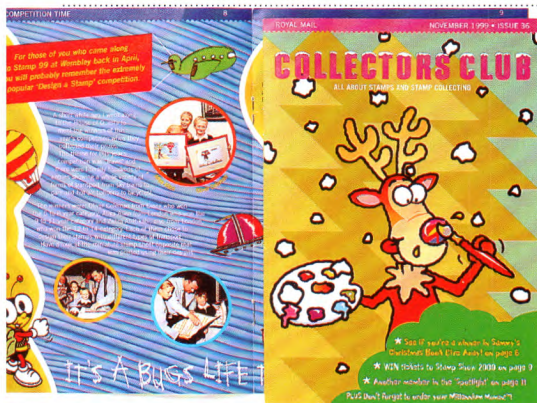
Available on subscription from the Bureau: £10 UK/Europe; £21.75 rest of world.

PREVIOUS PRESTIGE BOOKS The two previous books in this series are still available from the Bureau and philatelic outlets. 'The Definitive Portrait' (March 1998, price £7.49) contains panes of 20p, 26p and 37p stamps in the classic Wilding design. 'Profile on Print' (February 1999, price £7.54) contains two panes of 1st class XVI stamps in standard size printed in flame (orange) in gravure and lithography, and three panes with stamps of larger size printed in black in letterpress and intaglio, and embossed on white self-adhesive paper (with value printed in litho in grey). These large format stamps are unique to this book. For further details of these two books, which remain on sale until after the Stamp Show 2000 exhibition in May, see *Bulletin* February 1998 and January 1999 •

Aerogramme quantities Collectors may be interested in the numbers issued of recent aerogrammes.

1997		1998	
Alexander Graham Bell	54,100	Lighthouses – England	95,875
Nature of Scotland	44,125	Lighthouses – Scotland	49,400
Captain Cook	107,525	Lighthouses – Wales	19,750
Christmas	557,700	Magical Worlds – England	56,760
		Magical Worlds – Scotland	29,400
		Magical Worlds – Wales	17,320
		Christmas	518,470

Bureau phone number Following recent BT number changes, the Bureau's UK telephone order line number is now 08457 641 641 •



Membership £5 for 2 years (£7 overseas) or £9.50 for 5 years (£13.50 overseas).

Application forms or further information Collectors Club, Freepost NEA1431, Dept 2397, Sunderland SR9 9XN.

Royal Mail Collectors Club Do you know someone who enjoys collecting things? Maybe someone who likes learning about other countries, solving puzzles and entering competitions? Yes? Then invite them to join Collectors Club.

This is the only club aimed solely at young collectors and it caters for their every collecting need. On joining, each member receives a fun Starter Pack packed full of great stamp collecting goodies from stamps to tweezers, a badge and membership card, plus information on how to collect in different ways. Members receive a bi-monthly magazine updating them on the Special Stamp issue for the month, free stamp offers, and more.

SPECIAL OFFER: *Bulletin* readers who recruit a new member to the club during January and February will be sent two Victorian Penny Reds. To claim these please send the completed application form and remittance to: Collectors Club, Royal Mail, 2-14 Bunhill Row London EC1Y 8HQ by 28 February. *The Penny Red offer is subject to stock. Royal Mail reserves the right to supply other stamps should stocks of Penny Reds be exhausted* •

Post Office Heritage Collections



Three of the new set of five cards issued 7 December by the Association of Friends of the National Postal Museum. Clockwise from above left: cards 10, 12 and 13.

THE ASSOCIATION OF FRIENDS of the National Postal Museum published a set of five postcards, numbered 10-14 on 7 December. These illustrate items from the Frank Staff Transatlantic Collection in Post Office Heritage at Mount Pleasant. Frank Staff (1908-94) specialised in GB postal history, in particular transatlantic mail, and the history of decorated and propaganda envelopes. His publications include books on transatlantic mail (1956), Penny Post (1964), and picture postcards (1966 and 1979).

Card number 10 features an 1818 cover with LIVERPOOL/SHIP LETTER handstamp – a James Monroe first day of sailing, Black Ball Line, New York to Liverpool. The Black Ball Line pennant is shown alongside. Card 11 shows a print of the steam ship *Great Western* and a cover with paid ship letter rate at Liverpool – 8d, 26 May 1841. The cover is addressed to New York and inscribed 'per Great Western'. A cover carried by Cunard liner from Canada to London is reproduced on card 12. This bears a Niagara datestamp of 18 June 1855, New York and London marks showing 24¢ paid, 19¢ being the British share. Card 13 is of a cover bearing Victorian ½d and 5d stamps cancelled by London & Holyhead United States Mail TPO datestamp. The cover is addressed to Honolulu and endorsed 'via New York & San Francisco'. Finally, card 14 shows a print of the first Cunard steamer *Britannia* and cover sent by that vessel to New York with PAID/AT LIVERPOOL and Boston handstamps •

The cards cost £2 per set unused, or £5 with Artists' Tale issue handstamped first day of issue.

Orders for cards and enquiries about the Friends of the NPM should be addressed to Ray Pottle, PO Box 40, Uckfield TN22 2SP.

Post Office Heritage (Post Office Archives and the former National Postal Museum) is located at Mount Pleasant (Phoenix Place entrance), London EC1A 1BB. Enquiries 0171 239 2570.

The Millennium

James Mackay looks back and forward at issues from around the world



Millennieskiftet
Fredens Går
Islands of Peace



Utgivningsdag 3.1. 2000
Nr 137-2000
Pris: 13,60 mk

In November 1998 I reviewed the issues which had already appeared around the world in the run-up to the Millennium. In the intervening 12 months the momentum has speeded up, and by the end of this year there will have been few countries which have not taken note of this momentous watershed in the history of mankind.

EVEN countries which have their own calendars based on religions other than Christianity have got in on the act. Israel, which has just celebrated the year 5760 in the Jewish calendar, provided an oblique reference to the Millennium in a set of three stamps which depicted historic scenes of

Christian pilgrimage to the Holy Land over the past 2000 years, reminding us that Jesus was Himself on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem at the time of his arrest, trial and crucifixion.

Very few countries have remembered that the Millennium marks the birthday of Jesus Christ, although the Vatican (Popes of the various Jubilees and Holy Years) and San Marino (pilgrimages including Canterbury) vie with Liechtenstein whose miniature sheet, released on 1 January 2000, features Nativity paintings by an Old Master and a contemporary artist.

Indonesia is primarily an Islamic country, but the Christian calendar is used for most practical purposes. Its contribution to the Millennium theme was a se-tenant pair of 500 rupiah stamps, released in May 1999, depicting a fierce monster that looks as if it had escaped from *Star Wars* but is, in fact, designer Adi Es-Be's fanciful rendering of the Millennium Bug. So far, this is the only issue of stamps to warn us all to become Y2K compliant.

SINGAPORE 2000



Hong Kong's Advent of the New Millennium issue on 31 December 1999 consists of a strip of four and matching souvenir sheet embodying the five elements (metal, wood, water, fire and earth), with a miniature sheet of four \$50 stamps the following day. The design, based on the \$1.30 definitive issued on 18 October, shows Victoria Harbour with the Bank of China embossed in 22-carat gold foil. Taiwan's set of four and matching sheet have the numerals 2000 writ large over motifs symbolising information technology, environmental protection, hi-tech industry and world peace.

New Zealand rounded off its two-year Millennium programme with a set of six highlighting the Kiwi contribution to the development of mankind, from votes for women to the conquest of Everest. A purple version of the circular Kiwi \$1 stamp is being offered in connection with a Last Sunset of the Second Millennium cancellation from Invercargill. The following day a 40c map stamp showing the International Dateline is being released with a special postmark at Gisborne, 'first city of the sunrise'.

Norway released four stamps in June with a historical slant (above right), and followed this with eight stamps and matching miniature sheet in September showing pictures of everyday life from 1900 to the 1980s. A booklet containing a pair of stamps, issued on 31 December will be followed by two stamps on 7 April highlighting the New Millennium.

Opposite Top left, one of New Zealand's set of six stamps on the development of mankind, and the 40c 1 January stamp. Below left, one from the set of three issued by Luxembourg in September, peeping into the future conquest of space. Below right, the outstanding issue from Australia includes a hologram: tilt it one way and you see the date 1999; tilted the other way it reads 2000.

Above Singapore's miniature sheet, top, with se-tenant set representing information technology, arts & culture, heritage & globalisation. The lettering at the top is a hologram. The Åland Islands miniature sheet issued on 3 January, below left, features the international peace symbol. Below right, a historical scene from Norway.



Above, Isle of Man's triptych features views at one minute before and one minute after midnight at the Millennium. There will be different postmarks for 31 December 1999 and 1 January 2000.

Near right, two stamps from Guernsey's colourful sheetlet, which shows scenes from the Millennium tapestry woven by craftworkers in each parish. Each weaver was assigned a century from 1000 to today.

Far right, the £10 definitive issued by Jersey on 1 January, printed by Cartor in offset litho combined with 22 carat gold embossing, displays the arms of the bailiwick to great effect.

THE MILLENNIUM TAPESTRIES



Past achievements Elsewhere the Millennium has served as the pretext for a review of past achievements. Contrast the us 'Celebrate the Century' sheets with those from the Marshall Islands. Both concentrate on events and personalities from 1900 to the present day, but while the Marshall Islands has cast the net far and wide, the USA has adopted a rather parochial approach, many of the subjects being unknown outside North America. Canada's blockbuster issue of 68 stamps likewise concentrates on famous (and not-so-famous) Canadians. Originally intended for release in a hard-back book, in an edition of 200,000, these stamps are now being issued in 17 sheetlets of four early in the new year.

Togo, Micronesia and Liberia have joined forces to release sheets of 17 different stamps devoted to the science and technology of China in the periods 2000BC-0 (*sic*), 0-1000 and 1000-2000 respectively. Togo, Micronesia and St Vincent also released sheetlets of eight stamps apiece. The entire sheet forms an instantly recognisable portrait (Abraham Lincoln, the Mona Lisa or Princess Diana) in 'photomosaic' by Robert Silvers, a patchwork quilt of hundreds of tiny images and photographs – respectively scenes from the American Civil War, historic paintings and roses.

Nearer home, the Millennium contribution of the countries of the British Isles provides a contrast in treatment and subject matter, as shown above. ●

James Mackay will review further Millennium issues later in the year.

Poetry in the post Philip Parker previews a year of poetry

*This is the Night Mail crossing the Border,
Bringing the cheque and the postal order.*

IN 1935 W H Auden worked for six months with the GPO Film Unit which was busy inventing the documentary. He composed a song for the film *Coal Face*, as well as the verse commentary for *Night Mail*, both of which featured collaborations with composer Benjamin Britten. *Night Mail*, originally to be entitled *Scottish Mail-bag*, was the famous account of the nightly postal special from Euston to Glasgow. Less well-known is that Auden composed his verse to an edited version of the film, as a composer would, even timing his spoken verse with a stop-watch so it fitted perfectly the shot on which it commented.

Such is the power of *Night Mail* even after several decades, that when Royal Mail commissioned contemporary Yorkshire poet Steve Ellis to compose a piece in response to the Rugby League stamps of 1995, *The Guardian* newspaper responded with a half-page article on The Post Office returning to poetry after 60 years. In recent years poets have made their own special contribution to the stamp programme, including Roger McGough and Benjamin Zephaniah.

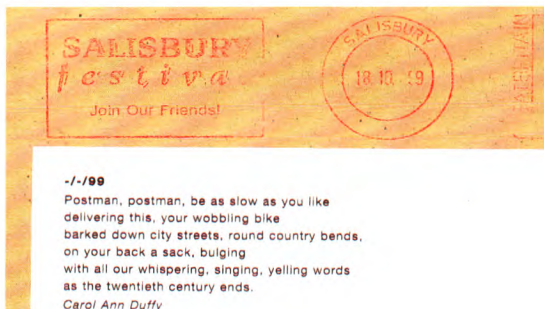
McGough's piece *Timekeeper* accompanied the David Gentleman miniature sheet in last month's Millennium Moment document and was a prelude to a year of 'postal poetry'. Throughout 2000, each presentation pack which accompanies the Millennium stamps features an especially-commissioned piece from a top British poet. Each of the poets has been chosen to match their preoccupations and interests to the theme of the month's stamps. This month, Jo Shapcott's poem *Night Flight from Muncaster* begins the project in the Above and Beyond pack. But why 'poetry'?

Over the last few years, the presentation packs have explored different literary styles – from biography to children's writing. To commemorate the Millennium, poetry was considered as a vibrant way of conveying the essential ideas about a subject in a minimalist format. In this way, poetry and stamp design are natural partners. Since

Royal Mail's business is that of communicating, focusing on the written word in this way is timely.

Arguably, British poetry has a longer continuous history of excellence than any other in the world. British poets have been internationally recognised in a way that is only occasionally true of our painters, sculptors and composers. We are a 'nation of poets'. And with the year 2000 also marking the anniversaries of the deaths of Chaucer (1400), Dryden (1700) and Wordsworth (1850), it is fitting that the packs will feature some of the most stimulating poets at work in Britain today. The 12 packs will build into a contemporary anthology. Additional poetry activities are also planned during the year.

Poetry has been called 'the new rock'n'roll'. Whether or not this is true, it enjoys enormous popularity. Survey results show that at one time or another most people put pen to paper and try their hand at poetry. The Poetry Society's annual National Poetry Day is always well received, with the poll of the Nation's Favourite Poem receiving hundreds of thousands of votes. Today we can come across poetry in almost any location – in underground trains and on buildings, and 'poets in residence' have worked in locations as diverse as London Zoo and Marks & Spencer. Last October, Salisbury became 'poetry city' when the work of almost 100 poets was displayed around the town: in shop windows, on the cathedral and even tattooed on a volunteer. Jo Shapcott was one of the organisers of this project, which included Carol Ann Duffy's musings on the postal millennium which adorned envelopes (below). The tempo may be different from Auden's *Night Mail*, but the idea of the 'mail as messenger' is as relevant, and timeless, as ever ●





Andreas Heumann



A.Z. Marana/Imago Bank



Beacons across the land For many centuries, beacons have been used to communicate urgent news and to herald momentous events, as they were again on new year's eve 1999.

Dynamic Earth Salisbury Crags form a backdrop to this Edinburgh centre, where visitors journey through time to experience the forces that shaped the earth, beginning billions of years ago with the Big Bang.

The Fire and Light issue will go on sale at post offices and philatelic outlets on 1 February.

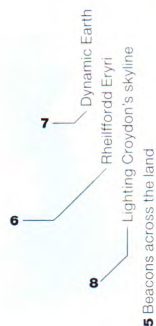


Rheilffordd Eryri Fuelled by red-hot coals and burning oil, locomotives of the Welsh Highland Railway will link Caernarfon with Porthmadog along its rebuilt route through Snowdonia.

Lighting Croydon's skyline By the end of 2000 Croydon will be home to the single largest lighting installation in the world, designed for maximum impact with the minimum of light-spill pollution and energy consumption.

Fire and Light is the second set of 12 Millennium issues for 2000, inspired by Millennium projects throughout the UK. The 19p stamp, *Beacons across the land*, celebrates the many bonfires, braziers and torches lit by Beacon Millennium Ltd on hill tops, church towers and in village greens throughout the country on New Year's Eve, 1999 • The Welsh Highland Railway, Rheilffordd Eryri, is the subject of the 26p stamp. Now, after years of neglect, a section of the railway is being reconstructed. When complete in 2005, it will be a valuable local amenity and a tourist attraction

• Visitors to Dynamic Earth in Edinburgh, the subject of the 44p, are taken on a journey through time, graphically experiencing the forces which shaped the natural world • The 64p stamp, *Lighting Croydon's skyline*, illustrates the innovative lighting scheme which is already revitalising a 20th-century urban centre, creating a colourful night-time environment for the new Millennium •





A well-illustrated presentation pack (above, price £1.90) and stamp cards (price 25p each) will be available at main post offices and philatelic outlets.

Technical details

Printer De La Rue

Process Gravure

Size 37 x 35mm

Sheets 100

Perforation 14 x 14.5

Phosphor One band 19p; two bands others

Gum PVA

Gutter pairs Horizontal



Cylinders and colours

Fire and Light

19p, 26p and 44p 1A silver ● 1B greenish yellow ● 1C bright magenta ● 1D new blue ● 1E black

64p 1A silver ● 1B greenish yellow ● 1C bright magenta ● 1D pale greenish blue ● 1E black

The phosphor cylinder is P92 19p, P93 others

Cylinders and colours

Christians' Tale

Further to the cylinders and colours listed here in October (page 50), the 19p was also printed with 2E cylinder for the deep dull blue colour.

On new year's eve 1999, thousands watched the Beacon Millennium flames illuminate the night sky, raising money for charity. The Beacon Millennium International Trust was formed in 1995 to distribute funds raised. Previous events commemorated by the lighting of beacons include the jubilees of George III and Queen Victoria, and the VE Day celebrations in 1995.

The Welsh Highland Railway, Rheilffordd Eryri, is one of a number of narrow-gauge railways in north Wales, opened in the 1870s to exploit the region's rich mineral resources. When it closed in 1937, most of the track was later dismantled for scrap. The reconstruction now under way involves rebuilding dozens of bridges and erecting fences, as well as track laying.

At Dynamic Earth, lights, wrap-around video screens and dramatic sound effects recreate the meteor storms, clouds of exploding gases, volcanoes, earthquakes and other phenomena that help give our planet its distinctive beauty. Dynamic Earth is open November to March 10.00-17.00 Wednesday-Sunday; April-October 10.00-18.00 daily. A visit lasts about 1½ hours.

By the end of 2000, Croydon will boast the world's largest single lighting installation. Croydon Skyline's images – both public information and artwork by local students, up to 20m (65ft) high – can be projected onto buildings, while multicoloured light shows accompany concerts and other events.

FIRST DAY FACILITIES Unstamped Royal Mail FDC envelopes will be available from main post offices and philatelic outlets about a week before 1 February, price 25p. Orders for FDCs with the stamps cancelled by a pictorial first day postmark of the Bureau or Edinburgh must reach the Bureau by 1 February. Price £2.22 UK (including VAT) or £1.89 overseas (no VAT).

Collectors may send stamped covers on the day of issue to: British Philatelic Bureau, 20 Brandon Street, Edinburgh EH3 5TT, or Special Handstamp Centre, Royal Mail, 57 Queen Street, Glasgow G1 3AZ (Edinburgh postmark), marking the outer envelope 'FD0003' (Bureau), or 'FD0004' (Edinburgh). Covers can be posted or handed in at main post offices for the Edinburgh postmark. A non-pictorial Edinburgh postmark is also available from the Special Handstamp Centre, request 'FD0004 NP'.

Details of sponsored handstamps for 1 February will be announced in the *British Postmark Bulletin* – available on subscription from the Bureau (£10 UK/Europe; £21.75 elsewhere). For a sample copy write to: The Editor, British Postmark Bulletin, Royal Mail, 2-14 Bunhill Row, London EC1Y 8HQ. Covers may bear just the 19p Fire and Light stamp for any philatelic postmark in use on 1 February.



MILLENNIUM PHILATELIC PRODUCTS A Fire and Light pack and stamp cards will be available. Each of the Millennium packs this year includes a specially commissioned poem. The Fire and Light poem is by John Agard, poet, playwright, performer and anthologist. Born in Guyana, he came to Britain in 1977 and soon established a reputation as a performer and writer of often piercingly satirical poems. From 1978 to 1985 he worked as a touring reader for the Commonwealth Institute, visiting some 2000 schools to talk about his Caribbean experiences and organise workshops. His books include *Man to Pan*, *Mangoes and Bullets*, *We Animals Would Like a Word With You*, and *From the Devil's Pulpit*. His poem in the pack, entitled *The Gift of Flame*, comprises six stanzas based on the Fire and Light theme and informed by the four projects on the stamps.

The poem in the Above and Beyond pack is by Jo Shapcott, one of the most respected poets of her generation. Her books include *Electroplating the Baby* and *My Life Asleep*. Her poem, *Night Flight from Muncaster*, was inspired by the stamps and explores the Above and Beyond theme by means of a metaphorical journey of an owl •

Millennium reminders A Millennium definitive stamp will be issued on 6 January – details were published here last month. The sheet stamp, by De La Rue, is from cylinder 1, phosphor 47. Booklet stamps by Questa and Walsall are from cylinders Q1 and W1 respectively. The De La Rue and Walsall stamps are perf 15 × 14, the Questa stamp is perf 14.

The special arrangements for the dual-postmarking of philatelic mail with 31 December 1999 and 1 January 2000 cancellations were published as a supplement to last month's *Bulletin*. Covers cancelled with 31 December postmarks should be submitted for the 1 January cancels not later than 29 January 2000 •

Future Millennium issues

Water and Coast	07.03.00
Life and Earth	04.04.00
Art and Craft	02.05.00
People and Place	06.06.00
Stone and Soil	04.07.00
Tree and Leaf	01.08.00
Mind and Matter	05.09.00
Body and Bone	03.10.00
Spirit and Faith	07.11.00
Sound and Vision	05.12.00



1999 Definitives checklist



Above: large-size 1st NVI stamps printed in embossed, recess (intaglio), and letterpress, from Profile on Print prestige book (16 February) – the only source of these stamps.

Above: New 'E' (Europe) rate stamp issued in books, top (19 January) and sheets (5 October); and new design Scottish country stamps (8 June).

We hope this list will prove helpful to collectors in completing their collections. Please read the following notes carefully.

We quote British Philatelic Bureau order numbers (prefixed TB, DS, etc) as given on Bureau stock lists. Some stamps were issued only in books and can be bought from Royal Mail only in complete books.

Printers DLR, De La Rue Security Print Ltd; E, Joh Enschedé Stamps; H, Harrison & Sons Ltd (part of De La Rue); Q, The House of Questa Ltd; W, Walsall Security Printers Ltd.

Unless otherwise stated stamps are gravure printed, have PVA gum, perforation gauge 15×14 (with ellipses at lower left and right sides) and two phosphor bands. Dates quoted are those the stamps were first available from the Philatelic Bureau; in some cases stamps were reported on sale earlier elsewhere. NVI = Non Value Indicator stamp. Variations in the gum of interest to specialist collectors are noted, but differences in phosphor reaction, visible only under ultraviolet light, are excluded.

Royal Mail thanks D G A Myall for his help with this listing. The Editor regrets that neither Mr Myall nor himself is able to engage in correspondence regarding its contents.

Machin definitives

19 January E (Europe) NVI dark blue W, from books of four stamps (UB173) and DLR sheets (5 October, DS306). Specialist collectors will notice a gum difference between the two printings.

16 February 1st NVI large size stamps: (1) black E recess (intaglio), (2) black H letterpress (typo), (3) grey on white, W embossed, self adhesive. All from panes of four in Profile on Print prestige book (SB002). Perfs: 14 × 14.5 recess; 14 × 15 letterpress and embossed. Phosphor background to embossed stamp.

9 March £1.50 terracotta (FS157), £2 blue (FS026), £3 purple (FS304), £5 brown (FS056), E recess (intaglio), non-phosphor.

20 April 7p light grey (DS070); 19p olive green, centre band (DS196); 20p light green (DS204); 38p ultramarine (DS383); 44p stone (DS440); 64p sea green (DS640), DLR. Note: The 19p is a reissue of the 1993 stamp but now printed using computer etched cylinders. The 20p is a re-issue of the 1997 stamp but now with two phosphor bands instead of centre band.

26 April New stamp books contain existing stamps but by different printers: 2p green Q (£1 book, TB064), 19p olive-green Q (£1 and £2 books, TB064).



Mixed pane from the Changing Worlds prestige book (21 September), and new Welsh country stamps (8 June).

and TB065), 38p ultramarine and 64p sea green W (£1.52 and £2.56 books, UB177 and UB178). These printings will be of interest to specialist collectors; there are differences in the gum between the 38p and 64p stamps by DLR and W.

21 September The World Changers prestige book (YB014) contains existing 1p, 19p centre band, and 26p stamps printed by Q. Phosphor bands slightly wider than in previously issued £1 or £2 books (TB064/5).

Country stamps

8 June N Ireland 19p olive green, centre band (IS193), 38p ultramarine (IS3800), 64p sea green (IS640), W. Note: 19p is re-issue of 1993 stamp now printed in gravure rather than litho.

8 June Scotland new designs 2nd NVI new blue, blue and silver, centre band (SS194), 1st NVI greenish yellow, deep rose-red, rose-red and silver (SS266), E (Europe rate) bright lilac, deep lilac and silver (SS301), 64p greenish yellow, bright magenta, new blue, grey-black and silver (SS640) W.

8 June Wales new designs 2ail/nd orange-brown, yellow-orange and black, centre band (WS194), 1af/st NVI blue-green, greenish yellow, silver and black

(WS265), E (Europe rate) greenish blue, deep greenish blue and grey-black (WS301), 64p violet, gold, silver and black (WS640), W.

Mixed value and pictorial label stamp panes

16 February Pane of eight 1st NVI flame with central pictorial label featuring markings found in the margins of sheets of stamps, DLR. From Profile on Print prestige book (SB002).

26 April Pane of 1 × 1p, 1 × 2p, 1 × 19p centre band and 3 × 26p Q from £1 book (TB064); Pane of 1 × 19p centre band and 7 × 26p Q from £2 book (TB065).

12 May Pane of four 1st NVI flame with pictorial label commemorating Berlin Airlift W from £1.04 book (UL007). Also available, from Bureau only, as unfolded pane (UC010).

21 September Pane of 4 × 1p, 3 × 19p centre band and 1 × 26p with central pictorial label Q from World Changers prestige book (YB014).

1 October Pane of four 1st NVI flame with pictorial label commemorating Rugby World Cup W from £1.04 book (UL008). Also available, from Bureau only, as unfolded pane (UC013).

Stamp books

19 January 4 × E (Europe rate) NVI, W (UB173).

16 February Profile on Print prestige book containing five panes of 1st NVI stamps printed in gravure DLR and litho Q in flame, standard size, and embossed W, letterpress H, and recess E in larger size (SB002).

16 March 10 × 1st NVI W (UB174); 10 × 1st NVI Q (UB175); 4 × 1st NVI W (UB176). These books contain existing stamps, changes made to text on inside covers.

26 April £1 and £2 machine books containing 1p, 2p, 19p and 26p stamps, Q (TB064, TB065) ● 4 × 38p and 4 × 64p, W (UB177, UB178).

12 May 4 × 1st NVI with Berlin Airlift label, W (UL007) ● 8 × 1st NVI W, plus pane of two Millennium special stamps (UB179).

21 September World Changers prestige book containing mixed pane of 1p, 19p and 26p stamps Q, also four panes of Millennium special stamps (YB014) ● 8 × 1st NVI W, plus pane of two Millennium special stamps (UB180).

1 October 4 × 1st NVI with Rugby World Cup label, W (UL008).

Presentation packs

9 March Machin definitives, £1.50, £2, £3, £5 (£11.85, FP012).

20 April Machin definitives, 7p, 19p centre band, 38p, 44p and 64p (£2.10, DP022).

8 June N Ireland country stamps 19p centre band, 26p existing 1997 stamp, 38p and 64p (£1.80, IP014).

8 June Scotland new design country stamps 2nd, 1st, E (Europe rate) and 64p (£1.75, SP014).

8 June Wales new design country stamps 2ail/nd, 1af/nd, E (Europe rate) and 64p (£1.75, WP014) ●

Off the Royal Mile A visit to

JUST OFF Edinburgh's 'Royal Mile' (linking the Palace of Holyroodhouse to the Castle), lies the Parliamentary Headquarters (PHQ) building of the new Scottish Parliament. It is one of seven buildings that make up the Parliamentary campus. The debating chamber itself is in the Church of Scotland Assembly Hall until the new Parliament building near Holyrood is ready in 2002. The PHQ building houses Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs) and it is in this building that the Parliament's mailroom (supported by Royal Mail) and Post Office counter are located. The mailroom and post office counter were opened on 12 April 1999 with 10 staff, headed by Helen Stocks as Postmaster. During my holiday in Scotland I called in to meet Helen to find out about her office. Royal Mail, I was told, had to tender, with other businesses, to operate the Parliament's postroom and mail service, collecting from and sorting and delivering mail to the various buildings. Once Royal Mail won the contract it was agreed that there would also be a post office counter for the use of the MSPs, staff, and official visitors to the PHQ. The provision of a counter was regarded as important so that the MSPs and the permanent staff had access to the full range of Post Office services. The counter is open Monday-Friday, 10.00-14.00. There is no public access to the building, other than on pre-arranged official business.

The Royal Mail screen incoming mail for security reasons and collect outgoing mail from trays positioned in the offices. There are no posting boxes as at the Houses of Parliament in London (*Bulletin* May 1997). The postroom handles about 25,000 incoming letters a week, and collects about 9000 from the various offices. The numbers may increase once the Parliament gets better established and more constituents write to their MSP.

For letters, MSPs and staff use plain envelopes with 'The Scottish Parliament' printed on the reverse. These letters are given a rubber-stamped printed postage impression (PPI) before despatch, the postage being charged to the Parliament. Pre-paid envelopes, as used by MPs in London, may

the Scottish Parliament Post Office, Edinburgh, by the Editor

Edinburgh Photographic Library



Princes Street Gardens and the Mound, Edinburgh. The debating chamber of the Scottish Parliament is temporarily in the Church of Scotland Assembly Hall, at far right, until the new Parliament building near Holyrood is ready in 2002.

be introduced at some future time. Mail bearing postage stamps sent by Special Delivery at the PO counter is cancelled with a Scottish Parliament counter datestamp, also used on certificates of posting, postal orders and other documents – as at any other post office counter. MSPs are supplied with rolls of 1st and 2nd class definitives for use on mail posted in their constituencies: such mail receives normal treatment, most going through the main sorting offices in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen and Inverness.

Incoming mail is redirected, on request, from the postroom to members at their constituency offices. Inward mail is delivered to the postroom from the Royal Mail Delivery Office in Brunswick Road, Edinburgh, outward mail goes to the Edinburgh Mail Centre in Cultins Road.

One of the important differences between the Parliament in Edinburgh and that in London is the relative informality of the former and its insistence on working social hours rather than the late-night sittings characteristic of Westminster. Thus the Scottish Parliament postroom closes at 19.30 in the evening, whereas the House of Commons PO often operates into the early hours.

Also in George IV Bridge, opposite the PHQ, is another Scottish Parliament building, housing the Parliament's Visitor Centre. There one can watch debates on a television screen, learn from touch-button displays, see a model of the new Parliament building and a display about the pre-1707 Scottish Parliament, and leave via a small but interesting souvenir shop.

Between 1639 and its dissolution in 1707 the Scottish Parliament met at Parliament House near St Giles Cathedral in the centre of Edinburgh. Thereafter it became the seat of Scottish law and the home of the Courts of Session. In the Parliament Hall, once the Parliament's debating chamber, Scottish advocates now gather with colleagues or clients to discuss cases. For the convenience of lawyers and their staff, a branch post office called Parliament House was established in the building in August 1917. It offered the full range of postal and telegraphic facilities and used the telegraphic call sign EHA. Various single-circle datestamps were in use from 1917 until 2 July 1976 when the office closed •

I am grateful to James Mackay for information on the Parliament House Post Office. ED

Bring back the excitement Richard West, Editor at large, Stamp Magazine, looks back over 1999

IT'S BEEN a fascinating year: but for what will it be best remembered? From Royal Mail, the Millennium series will for a long time come to mind. Not only for the change to a new issue each month, but also for the innovative approach to the designs. Stamp design has always been controversial, but seldom more so than in 1999. Many collectors have been very vocal in their condemnation of many of the results. However, we are told, and there is no reason to disbelieve, that the public at large has been more appreciative. Certainly I have never before received so much comment about new stamps from 'lay' people. So, love them or loathe them, they clearly have made their mark and stimulated comment.

It was a very brave step to invite 48 mainly disparate image makers to design stamps, most of whom had not worked with the medium before. Logistically this must have been a nightmare for the design team at Royal Mail.

If you have not visited the Post Impressions exhibition at the British Library (open until 18 January 2000), I urge you to do so. Delving into the background to both the themes and designs of the Millennium stamps gives them far greater depth. I for one was able to appreciate them far more. Indeed, I even wondered whether they should have been issued in sheetlets of ten, with an explanation to their background appearing in the sheet margin. Now there would have been an idea to stimulate the pundits. That, of course, could also be taken as a criticism: that the designs are often not immediately fully appreciated.

There is a strong argument that stamps should be designed by those who are proficient in this very specialised medium. It is not easy to convey on a small piece of paper a message which should be instantly recognisable, not only to those who are familiar with the subject, but also to those less informed.

In complete contrast, the year has brought the 'personalised' stamp. Launched at the world stamp exhibition in Melbourne, the idea is for a

self-portrait to appear on a label set-tenant with a conventional stamp. This novelty certainly attracted the crowds in Australia, and is likely to do so at other stamp exhibitions, including our own The Stamp Show 2000 in May. Perhaps the 'personalised' stamp will take the place of the passport as the essential exhibition souvenir for the casual visitor to international exhibitions.

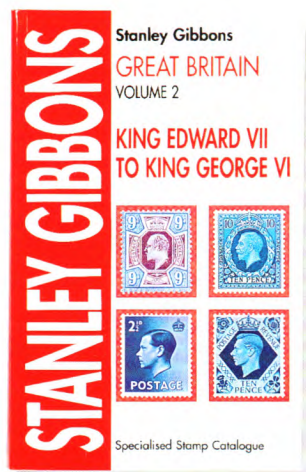
1999 was certainly a busy one as far as world stamp exhibitions were concerned, with major events in Australia, Germany, France and China. Despite such a full diary, all were well attended, and seem to have been highly successful. There is always talk of too many stamp exhibitions, both internationally and nationally. At one time two 'internationals' a year were considered sufficient, but having more is clearly not detrimental. There is often talk that there are now too many national exhibitions, and yet the attendance at each seems to be holding its own. Indeed, many considered that two separate events in London last Spring (and again in March this year) proved beneficial in giving collectors good reason to visit London for a day or two.

Most collectors enjoy browsing, an opportunity now sadly lacking with so few stamp shops around. The stamp fair does, of course, help, but an exhibition provides a large range of dealers under one roof. There are drawbacks. For the dealer it means facing more travel and accommodation costs, and frequent absences from home. The collector probably does not attend every event, simply because the chance of finding something new every time is fairly remote.

As a result, exhibitions become less of an 'event', no longer something quite as special to look forward to. But that can be said of so much in life these days. Gone are the days when each new British stamp issue was something special, automatically attracting national media attention and general excitement.

Perhaps that is the challenge of the new Millennium: to try to recover that excitement ●

Books Stanley Gibbons • Ffestiniog Railway • *May Dates*



Great Britain Specialised Stamp Catalogue 504 pages, card covers. Price £24.95 from Stanley Gibbons Strand shop or by post from Stanley Gibbons Publications, Parkside, Ringwood BH24 3SH. Postage £1.50 UK, £8 overseas.

Stanley Gibbons Great Britain Specialised Stamp Catalogue: Volume 2

The 11th edition of this catalogue, covering the issues of Edward VII and VIII and George V and VI was published at the end of October. The entire work has been reset in a new typeface since the last edition (1996) and all the illustrations re-scanned, mostly going back to original stamps and artwork. The clarity of the illustrations is noticeably improved, vital when studying different dies, varieties, etc. The opportunity has been taken to improve the page layout, so that the unmounted mint prices for Edward VII and George V stamps appear in the main listing instead of in separate tables. Booklet panes now appear in separate sections with improved listings, following the style which has been adopted for the later volumes. Prices are now quoted here for Edward VIII and George VI FDCs as well as in the GB Concise catalogue. Improvements have been made to the listings of Downey proofs, George V varieties and Seahorses and the Empire Exhibition stamps thanks to the help of specialist collectors Michael Sefi, Leslie Wilkinson, Graeme Webster and Alan Sabey.

Prices have been revised, demonstrating, say Editors David Aggersberg and Robert Oliver, 'a continual demand for much of the material from this period'. Proof and Specimen items are becoming difficult to find, especially Cancelled or Specimen overprints on booklet panes – most prices are up by approximately one-third. Similar rises apply to George VI booklet material, especially cylinder number panes. Interest in 'something slightly different' has generated demand for postage due stamps, reflected in the prices with some controls increased by 300%.

One of the main attractions of the GB Specialised series for this reviewer is the listing, pricing and illustrating of constant varieties particularly on the commemorative issues. These are only priced mint and would normally be collected in positional blocks. However used examples can often be found in kiloware and mixtures and add interest to a more basic collection. The 1937 Coronation stamp is rich in varieties – 19 are listed although many more minor ones also exist. Also worth watching for are the different types of the ½d, 1d and 1½d Silver Jubilee stamps of 1935 – all clearly illustrated here but not mentioned in other SG catalogues. There are marked differences in price between the different types, for example Type III of the ½d is £15 unmounted mint compared to just 75p for Type I. Also the rose-red shade of the 1948 Channel Islands Liberation 2½d – £5 mint against 20p for the common scarlet shade.

The Edward VII 9d shown on the front cover of the previous edition is now joined by George V 10d, Edward VIII 2½d and George VI 10d to grace the cover of the new. Pure nostalgia! ●

The Ffestiniog Railway Company Railway Letter

Service 1969-1997 In 1891 an agreement between the Post Office and British railway companies led to the setting up of the Railway Letter service and the introduction of 2d railway letter stamps – now keenly sought by a growing band of railway philatelists. Whilst the narrow-gauge Ffestiniog Railway in north Wales were party to

the agreement they did not issue stamps. However in the 1960s the company approached the PO to see if the agreement was still in force and finding it was introduced their first railway letter stamps in May 1969. (The Tallylyn, another narrow-gauge line introduced stamps in 1957.) The organiser of the Ffestiniog railway letter service from 1969 until he retired at the end of 1997 was Harold Creamer who tells the story of the service in this book. His introduction includes some amusing stories and outlines some of the problems as well as the pleasures of running such a service. He pays tribute to the late Michael Seymour the railway's archivist who designed all the Ffestiniog stamps to a high standard.

The bulk of this book is a listing of the 56 stamps issued to the end of 1997 and no fewer than several hundred first day and commemorative covers serviced with a variety of Royal Mail and Ffestiniog stamps and cancellations. The numbers of stamps printed and covers serviced are given, the print quantities of stamps ranging from just 1400 to 48,000. Only a handful of some covers were serviced, others were produced in editions of over 3000. In total Mr Creamer serviced a grand total of 103,738 covers during his term of office – no mean feat in affixing and cancelling stamps. This book is not only a useful reference for all collectors of Ffestiniog issues but will hopefully persuade the operators of other railway letter services to keep an equally meticulous record of their activities ●

The Ffestiniog Railway Company Railway Letter Service

1969-1997 68 pages, card covers, spiral bound. £10 plus £1 postage from Ffestiniog Railway Letter Service, Harbour Station, Porthmadog LL49 9NF. Annual updates are promised, that for 1998 is already available.

May Dates: A survey of Penny Blacks, Twopenny Blues, Mulreadys and Caricatures used during May 1840. By Mike Jackson, FRPSL. What's in a date? Well, rather a lot it would seem – when it comes to the world's first stamp, the 1d Black (and the 2d Blue and Mulready postal stationery); some 334 pages to be exact. When and where were they used initially? Mike Jackson's exhaustively researched book sets out to show this from examples extant.

There is no doubt that the 1d Black label and 1d Mulready lettersheets and envelopes went on sale on 1 May 1840 in London at Somerset House, the head office of the Stamps and Taxes Office; the Sea Policy Office in the City of London; and the Chief Post Office in St Martin's-le-Grand. They were not valid for postage, however, until 6 May, which has to be the important date for postal historians. Any prior use is, of course, of interest but no valid prepayment was effected. Given the delivery schedule from the printers, the earliest possible use of the 2d Blue label would have been 6 May (in London).

This book lists and describes (nearly always with illustrations) every known example of the 1d Black and 1d Mulready used up to Sunday 10 May 1840, and for the others (including caricatures of the Mulready) up to the end of May. It includes items which are the subject of dispute and provides an auction record of each, quotes content where relevant and sometimes adds comment, all in easy, tabular format. A remarkable number has been amassed with no fewer than 73 first day covers (6 May) known of the 1d Black, 139 of the 1d Mulreadys and four of the two used in combination. Earlier examples include three Penny Blacks, 34 1d Mulreadys (including four on 1 May) and one famous combination Mulready and Penny Black where the original letter sheet had been turned and re-used. The 2d Mulready is first known used on 6 May (eight examples).

The use of the 1d Black on 1 May and the first use of the 2d Blue have been the subjects of various controversies. These are described, but not commented on. For example, in the case of the 1d black apparently used on 1 May from London to Mauchline, Ayrshire – various aspects of which are disputed – Jackson gives the careful conclusions of a 1991 forensic report but then explains that remedial work had recently been undertaken prior to sale at auction. This work included re-affixing the label, cleaning, strengthening and (quoting the auctioneer David Feldman) 'The deepening in places of the original pen inking on the frontside of the cover'. I doubt that such restoration would meet conservation Professional Guidelines and Ethics. Worse is the case of two

2d Blues used on 6 May on a 1d Mulready envelope. This is illustrated intact as it was up to at least 1940. However, by 1992 it was being sold without the adhesives! Such sacrilege, apart from anything else, deprives us of undoubted 6 May usage of the 2d blue.

This survey of extant copies is intrinsically extremely valuable. But it is really base material for a future study on the vexed question of the distribution of 'stamps', as all items were then called. Here no conclusions are provided. There is no discussion as to who actually sold the 'stamps' nor when they received them for sale. In those days the Post Office did not sell items in the way we are accustomed to today. Thus, it did not automatically have the sole right to sell the new labels and stationery. Production of these was under the auspices of the Board of Stamps and Taxes, a forerunner of the Inland Revenue. Sales were thus by persons duly licensed by the Stamp Office, not the Post Office. This included all distributors and sub-distributors who already sold stamped paper for other duties in almost all market towns throughout the country. But an arrangement was made for all Deputy Postmasters and Receiving House keepers to be licensed. The result was haphazard distribution. There were par-

ticular problems with the London Receivers. While licensed vendors in shops in the Strand had the 'stamps' (probably the Mulready stationery) on sale, selling them at a premium. Rowland Hill recorded on 7 May that the London Receivers had still not been supplied. They did not obtain them until 13 May at the earliest. Equally, supplies were only due to be despatched to Manchester 'if possible' on Tuesday, 12 May. Examination of the details recorded in this book should provide a better understanding of when the labels came into use around the country.

I have only two slight niggles. In a book of this price the illustrations, though very plentiful, are only good enough 'to enable the item to be identified, and *should not be taken to be a true representation*' (the author's italics). Surprisingly, also, some 20 pages of advertisements are included at the back. No doubt both of these are to help reduce and offset the cost of production. Nevertheless, it is a remarkable work of research and compilation and worthy of continued study by all students of the period. DOUGLAS N MUIR, CURATOR, PHILATELY, POST OFFICE HERITAGE ●

May Dates From Mike Jackson Publications, 3 Cottesmore Avenue, Melton Mowbray LE13 0HY. £40, postage £4 UK; £5 Europe and rest of world surface mail.

Postbag Letters to the Editor

Millennium articles and stamps I have enjoyed James Mackay's Millennium articles in the *Bulletin* during 1999 – a good mix of historical and philatelic information. You have a good team of contributors to the magazine – their writings are a pleasure to read each month.

I thought the Millennium issues got better as the year went on, after a poor start – David Gentleman's insipid Timekeeper, the gloomy factory worker by Peter Howson, the unintelligible red splurge by the Barans, and the bizarre 'thinking machine' of Paolozzi. Contrast these to the colourful and interesting Christians' Tale and Artists' Tale sets. I especially like Catherine Yass's 44p of St Andrew's Cathedral. G GREENFIELD, LEEDS ●

Millennium designs Thank you for publishing the letter from S Strettle (November). I agree very much with the points made. Having read the letter, I looked carefully at the Artists' Tale stamps because they illustrate the problem perfectly. They are awful! There is no inspiration to my mind in any of them. How does a series of vertical lines illustrate the world of music, for goodness sake! You may wish to give some explanation about music technicalities – but even if you did, this would miss the point. Stamps need to excite the purchasers, be they stamp collectors or not, and whether they know anything about the subject of the stamp or not. I don't think anyone buying this 1st class stamp would feel anything but annoyance or confusion. I'm particularly distressed

when I compare the current trends in British stamps with almost any issues from other authorities. Where has the British PO gone wrong? Certainly, I shall not allow more than one year for some sense of improvement before I stop collecting. I hope the 2000 stamps will not be like those of 1999 – a disastrous implementation of an interesting idea. TIM WELLS, SWINDON ●

Dating the Millennium I must take issue with both Philip Parker and J Bowman (November *Bulletin*) regarding the end of the second millennium. When a baby is born, measurement of its age starts at zero and after one year it is aged 1. If he or she survives that long, his/her 100th birthday marks the end of 100 years of life (not 99 as Parker and Bowman imply), and the beginning not only of his or her 101st year, but also his or her second century. Similarly, the Christian era is assumed to start with the birth of Christ, an event which would coincide with the start of year ADO – although the start date (chosen centuries later) is probably in error if other historical data are considered. So the year AD2000 marks the end of 2000 years since His birth and the start of both the 2001st year and the third Millennium. P H WARNE, NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE ●

De La Rue I just want to express my appreciation for the yearbook that you sent me. I consider myself very lucky to have been one of the winners of the yearbook draw (September *Bulletin*). Your office move from Finsbury Square to Bunhill Row is of great interest to me. Nearly 60 years ago, I started work at Thomas De La Rue & Co Ltd, which was then at its original site of 110 Bunhill Row. I worked for that company for 49 years. DONALD A BAGLEY, SHANKILL, CO DUBLIN ●

Stamp shades I have examined the 1p, 19p and 26p Machin stamps in the latest prestige book (21 September) printed by Questa. The colours are a pretty good match to those in their £1 and £2 books issued in April, although the new 26p is rather more chestnut brown than the April printing. The Questa 19p stamps appear quite gold compared to the sheet stamps printed by De La

Rue. The prominent Queen's jawline which I noted in my letter in the July *Bulletin* is quite pronounced on all three stamps in the World Changers book.

The E stamp in sheets printed by De La Rue is noticeably different in shade to that produced by Walsall in books – a duller more indigo blue with rather more 'speckled' Queen's head. The Walsall stamp has more the appearance of a two-colour printing although cannot be so as there is just one cylinder number. The Walsall paper appears slightly more shiny

In terms of shades, the 19p and 26p Christians' Tale stamps from books appear identical to those from sheets – not surprising as they were all printed by De La Rue. In the books of 26p stamps I have seen, the 'blush' on King James's left cheek (his right) appears as two diagonal lines on eight stamps but as an orange blob on two (row 1 stamp 4, row 2 stamp 2). It appears as diagonal lines on the sheet stamps I have examined.

I hope these comments are of interest to fellow collectors. KEN MARKS, PORTSMOUTH ●

Millennium commemoration I rather like David Gentleman's designs used on the Millennium miniature sheet (14 December) but much regret that Royal Mail did not issue a single 1st class Millennium stamp at the same time which could be used on Millennium greetings cards sent to friends in the UK. Such a stamp could have featured the Millennium Dome – I am not enthusiastic about this building but it will be the abiding image of the Millennium for many people. I will be using the 20p David Gentleman stamp from the Inventors' Tale set for my Millennium greetings mail. Overall I think this year's Millennium stamps have been quite good with a few howlers such as the awful 64p Christians' and Artists' Tale stamps, but perhaps I dislike them as I rarely understand modern art. MAUREEN JACKSON, LINCOLN ●

The Editor is always pleased to receive contributions for Postbag, especially letters adding information to that already published, so benefiting fellow philatelists. He regrets he is unable to reply personally to letters ●

Greetings stamps labels 1994 Messages, by Lionel Jones

THE 1994 GREETINGS stamps featured popular characters from children's literature, including Rupert Bear, Alice, Peter Rabbit, and Biggles. Accompanying the 10 stamps were 20 colourful labels attached by an inter-panneau gutter. These included messages such as Happy Birthday, Good Luck for the Future, Many Happy Returns, be good!, Chocks away, and With love. Like the stamps, the labels were designed by Newell and Sorrell, all printed on the reel-fed Jumelle press

at Harrison & Sons Ltd. The APS perforator was employed, the resulting perforations measuring 14.75×14 . As well as being sold in books at post offices and some retail outlets, the stamps and labels were also issued, for collectors, in a presentation pack •



Cover corner

THIS MONTH'S COVER was produced 30 years ago to commemorate the 900th anniversary of the landing of Margaret the Saxon, Princess of Hungary, on the northern shore of the Sea of Bodotria, in the Thanedom of Fife. The Princess married King Malcolm at Dunfermline in 1070. The pious Queen Margaret, in her reforming zeal, reshaped the secular and religious life of Scotland, and was a wise counsellor and helper of Malcolm.

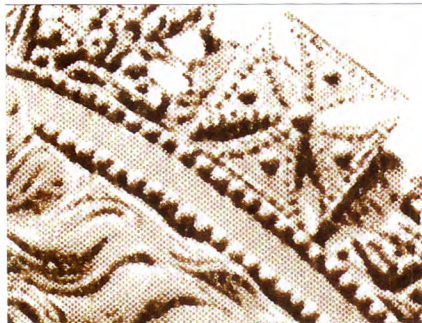
The special cover bears one of the 1969 Christmas stamps cancelled by a special handstamp used at Dunfermline – No 1201 in the British Postmark Society's listing of special event postmarks. The cover also bears a boxed cachet.

In 1993 a Scottish aerogramme was issued to mark the 900th anniversary of the death of Queen Margaret •



The cover bears the boxed cachet: 'LANDED BY SEA AT NORTH/QUEENSFERRY AND TRANSPORTED/TO MALCOLM CANMORE'S TOWER/N DUNFERMLINE'.

Competitions Win £200 in two easy-to-enter competitions



The October detail was from the 19p Christians' Tale. First prize was won by Keith Bowler of British Columbia, 20 runner-up prizes were also sent. Our thanks to all who entered.

FIRSTLY, identify the special stamp from the detail above. Send your answer to *January Identify* Competition. Secondly, test your philatelic knowledge by answering the questions below. Send your answer to *January Knowledge* Competition.

- 1 Which firm printed the Penny Black?
- 2 In which city is the British Philatelic Bureau located?
- 3 A painting by which famous artist was shown on the 26p Workers' Tale stamp?

Send your answer (addressed to either *January Identify* Competition or *January Knowledge* Competition), name and address on a postcard or back of a sealed envelope to: British Philatelic Bulletin, Royal Mail, 2-14 Bunhill Row, London EC1Y 8HQ.

The senders of the first cards drawn in each competition on 18 February will each receive £100. Ten runner-up prizes will also be awarded in each competition. The competitions are not open to Royal Mail employees ●

Events

Until further notice Postal Memorabilia displays at Museum of Lincolnshire Life, Burton Road, Lincoln; Manchester Postal Museum, Wythenshaw Park, Manchester; and Oldham Post Office. **Enquiries** D Harrop, 15 Hawthorn Road, Stockport SK4 3DQ.

Until 18 January 2000 'Post Impressions' display of Millennium stamps and related artefacts, books, etc, sponsored by Royal Mail, at British Library, Euston Road, London NW1. **Enquiries** 0171 412 7332.

Until 30 January Post Haste exhibition of postcards and postal history at Bradford Industrial Museum, Moorside Road, Eccleshill, Bradford. Open Tues-Sat 10.00-17.00; Sun 12.00-17.00. Closed 1 & 3 January. **Enquiries** 01274 631756.

15 January GB Philatelic Society meeting, 11.00 King George V (Alan Moorcroft), 14.30 Council Entertains.

At British Philatelic Centre, 107 Charterhouse Street, London EC1. **Enquiries** A Lajer, 01491 579662.

January Exhibition by Anglo-Boer War Philatelic Society at Bath Postal Museum, 8 Broad Street, Bath BA1 5LJ. **Enquiries** 01225 460333

1 February North of Ireland Phil Soc auction at Hunterhouse College, Upper Lisburn Road, Finaghy, Belfast, 19.30 (viewing from 17.30). **Enquiries** N Scott 028 90 795530.

26 February Welsh Philatelic Society meeting at Southgate Hotel, Penparcau, Aberystwyth. **Enquiries** Peter Brindley 01248 352682.

1-5 March Spring Stampex, Business Design Centre, London N1. **Enquiries** Stampex 0171 490 1005 ●

Centenary of the National Philatelic Society

IN NOVEMBER we published an account of the life of Fred Melville (1882-1940), who founded the National Philatelic Society in November 1899. To mark the centenary, the Society arranged an evening reception at Phillips's Bond Street auction rooms, a dinner, and a lecture. Given by Stephen Holder, this was a well-researched and witty appraisal of Melville's life and role in the Society. He told us of Melville's early interests in the stamps of GB, Haiti and the Netherlands and his first excursion into philatelic literature at the tender age of eight. At Westminster School he edited a school journal and so it was not surprising that journalism became his career. The Junior Philatelic Society (renamed NPS in 1965), which he set up aged just 17, was well received in the philatelic press at the time. Its meetings, initially in a sweet shop in Clapham, were far from dull; one on chemistry in the philatelic world was enlivened by the ignition of gun cotton! Melville's own lectures were reported in the national press, he had a way of enticing people to collect stamps. Mr Holder outlined Melville's important work in organising stamp exhibitions, that in 1912 attracting 40,000. If only today's exhibitions could draw such crowds! Relatively little is known of Melville's private life – Holder believes he was a 'distant, perhaps rather stilted' character who 'only became a whole man when writing about stamps'. Most of his adult life he was editing at least two

stamp magazines as well as writing numerous books and pamphlets. In all he edited 10 different philatelic journals. When he died he was hailed as 'the creator of popular philately'.

At the reception at Phillips, the Society launched its *Centenary Handbook*, ably edited by Michael Furnell, Editor of the NPS journal *The Stamp Lover*. This handsome 64 page commemorative book contains a number of special articles on the Society including biographies, by Michael Goodman, of Melville and H F Johnson who is credited with being 'as much a driving force behind the JPS as Melville'. Reminiscences of the JPS offices in Fleet Street are provided by Norman Williams, and Glenn Morgan (NPS Librarian) examines Melville's philatelic works and describes the Library today. Robert Jack looks at the first issue of *Stamp Lover* and James Negus recalls his days as Editor. There are a number of articles on NPS exhibitions by Mr Jack, NPS President Frank Jones, and Michael Furnell.

Many of the period pictures in this book are a delight – reminding us of a gentler age when stamp collecting was a more prominent activity in the social life of the country. This book is recommended to all interested in the history of our wonderful hobby.

Centenary Handbook is available from: National Philatelic Society, 107 Charterhouse Street, London EC1M 6PT. Price £10, plus postage £1 •

Late news

Post Haste This exhibition at the Bradford Industrial Museum includes seven frames relating to the city's postal history showing letters and postal markings from c1720 to the present, with a wide range of letters and envelopes from the Victorian era. The main part of the exhibition relates to the social history, topography, buildings and industrial history of Bradford and its hinterland.

Open Tuesday-Saturday 10.00-17.00, Sunday 12.00-17.00 until 30 January (closed 1 and 3 January). Enquiries 01274 631756 •

Obituary Two former members of Royal Mail's Stamp Advisory Committee died in November. Lady Casson, aged 86, served on the SAC 1981-95. Her husband, Sir Hugh, who died last August, designed the 1980 London Landmarks stamps. Lady Casson also sat on the Council of the Royal College of Art and the Arts Council.

Mrs Gabrielle Pike CBE, aged 83, served on the SAC from 1971 to 1989. She was Chairman of the National Federation of Women's Institutes and served on several government committees •

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