

BRITISH PHILATELIC

The ROYAL MAIL magazine *for stamp collectors*

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Bulletin

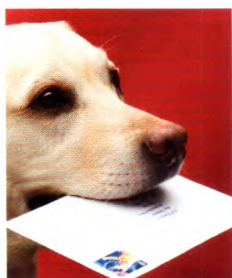
100 years of reply coupons •
James Bond • Working Dogs



Working Dogs: six new stamps
celebrating man's best friend.



Forthcoming issues and withdrawals



Cover One of the Assistance Dogs trained by charity Dogs for the Disabled. Assistance Dogs are featured on the 1st class of the Working Dogs issue, previewed on page 48. Photograph © Geoff Dann. With grateful thanks to Dogs for the Disabled.

Issues All items are available from Royal Mail Tallents House (address below); selected items are available at Post Office branches and Post Office philatelic outlets at main post offices in Bath, Birmingham, Brighton, Bristol, Cambridge, Canterbury, Cardiff, Chester, Colchester, Coventry, Croydon, Durham, Edinburgh, Exeter, Glasgow, Grimsby, Harrogate, Leicester, London (Trafalgar Square & Eastcheap), Newcastle upon Tyne, Norwich, Nottingham, Plymouth, Portsmouth, Southampton, Southend-on-Sea, Stevenage, Stratford-on-Avon, Stroud, Truro, Windsor and York.

Royal Mail Tallents House 21 South Gyle Crescent, Edinburgh EH12 9PB, UK. Telephone order line (08.30-17.00 Monday to Friday): 08457 641 641; from overseas +44 131 316 7483. Minimum handling charge UK £1.45, Europe £1.55, rest of world (airmail) £2.15. Some products can be ordered on Royal Mail's website: www.royalmail.com/shop

30 September	Withdrawal VC miniature sheet press sheet
1 October	Withdrawal 6 × 1st stamp book with Stamp Collecting advert on inside front cover
2 October	Withdrawal Sounds of Britain stamps, presentation pack and stamp cards
9 October	Issue Royal Diamond Wedding stamp cards
16 October	Issue Royal Diamond Wedding Anniversary stamps, miniature sheet, presentation pack, miniature sheet press sheet, souvenir cover, £5 coin
16 October	Withdrawal Smilers 2005 stamp book, Smilers 2006 presentation pack and stamp cards • Extra Special Moments generic sheet
30 October	Issue Christmas stamp cards (9 cards: 8 stamps + miniature sheet)
6 November	Issue 2007 Christmas stamps (Angels & Madonna), miniature sheet (Angels), presentation pack (Angels & Madonna), Generic sheet, three Smilers sheets (Angels), stamp books (Angels); and 2006 airmailers re-issued (national and Welsh)
6 November	Withdrawal 2006 Christmas stamps, miniature sheet presentation pack, stamp books, stamp cards
8 November	Issue Lest We Forget miniature sheet, presentation pack and Generic sheet • 2007 Yearbook (standard and deluxe versions), Yearpack, Miniature Sheet Collection and Presentation Pack Collection
13 November	Withdrawal Belgica Expo generic sheet
20 November	Issue Royal Diamond Wedding Anniversary coin cover and commemorative document, Edward VIII & George VI ingot pack No4
30 November	Issue 'Glorious Scotland' generic sheet (20 × 1st class Scottish country stamp self adhesive). Smilers version with personalised labels also available

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Reply coupons centenary

The system of international reply coupons, inaugurated in October 1907, can offer a rich field for study. Michael St J Wright looks at past and present examples **50**

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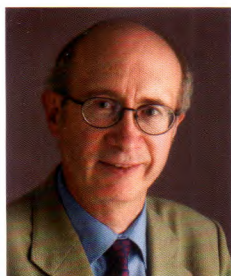
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This month The Editor previews this issue



John Holman, Editor

AFTER COMMEMORATING the 40th anniversary of the Machin definitives earlier this year, this month we mark the centenary of the humble International Reply Coupon. For collectors of this long-running postal item, Michael St J Wright's article will be of special interest. Douglas Myall provides his popular detailed survey of the Machin scene and Ron Negus looks at the UK Philately website. Richard West reports on a visit to the printers De La Rue, and Glenn Morgan keeps you informed on philatelic news and upcoming events.

A number of changes are being made to Royal Mail's Stamps & Philately team in London. As a result, Editorship of the Philatelic and Postmark Bulletins is being incorporated into a new job, with other responsibilities, under the title Manager Philatelic Accessories; thus the title of Editor disappears after 44 years. At time of writing the new Manager has yet to be appointed. Meanwhile I sign off as...JOHN HOLMAN, EDITOR ●

Stamp scene News and upcoming events: Glenn Morgan keeps you posted



Glenn Morgan

Croydon 2007 Readers are reminded that The Fairfield Halls in Croydon, Surrey, will be the venue for the 2007 ABPS Exhibition and National Competitions, to be held next month on Friday and Saturday, 23-24 November. The opening times are 10.00-18.00 on Friday, closing an hour earlier, at 17.00, on the Saturday. A complimentary stock book will be presented to every visitor.

This event will incorporate the 89th annual Philatelic Congress of Great Britain. Tony Walker will present the Congress paper, 'The 40th Anniversary of Machin Stamps', in the Fairfield Halls, and there will also be a presentation by Dr Peter P McCann, one of the new signatories to the Roll of Distinguished Philatelists.

Events on Friday include: Polar Postal History Society of Great Britain meeting at 11.00; Great Britain Philatelic Society meeting and display at 14.00; and GBPS dinner at 19.30. On Saturday at 11am visitors can enjoy the Cinderella Stamp Club Annual General Meeting.

After the exhibition closes on Saturday the focus will shift to Addington Palace, which is set in 163 acres of grounds. Built in the 1770s, the Palace was once a residence of the Archbishops of Canterbury, and later home to the Royal School of Church Music. The signing of the Roll of Distinguished Philatelists, and the presentation of the Congress Medal, will be held here late on Saturday afternoon, followed by the banquet and awards presentation in the Great Hall.

Getting to the show is easy, as the Fairfield Halls are about 500 metres from East Croydon railway station, which is served by frequent trains from London Victoria, Charing Cross, London Bridge, Clapham Junction,

Gatwick Airport, Brighton and Bedford etc, and with services daily from the Midlands and the North. Croydon Tramlink (which has connections from Beckenham Junction, West Croydon and Wimbledon) passes nearby.

Do try to attend if at all possible, as the event promises to offer a great couple of days of philately...not forgetting that Eurothema is also being held that weekend as a part of Thematica II •

Eurothema 07 This seven-nation competitive thematic exhibition will be held in conjunction with Thematica II at Carisbrooke Hall, 63 Seymour Street, London W2 (near Marble Arch), on Saturday and Sunday, 24-25 November 2007. The hours of opening are 10:30-17:30 on Saturday and 10:30-17:00 on Sunday •

Croydon 2007 enquiries www.croydon2007.org.uk

Eurothema enquiries www.brit-thematic-assoc.com/eurothema.htm

Stampa Dublin will be the location for the 36th annual Irish national stamp exhibition at the Royal Dublin Society (RDS), Ballsbridge, Dublin 4, from Friday to Sunday, 12-14 October. This is always an enjoyable and well attended show that is well worth a visit •

Stampa enquiries Stampa, PO Box 2723, Cardiff Lane, Dublin 2, Ireland. Telephone +353 (0)1 454 6675.

Efiro 08 In 2008, there will be celebrations to mark 150 years since the issue of the first Romanian postal stamps, the famous 'Bull Head'. To celebrate this, between 20 and 27 June, Romania will host in Bucharest at Romexpo the EFIRO 2008 World Philatelic Exhibition, followed on 28 June by the 70th FIP Congress.

Efiro 08 enquiries www.efiro2008.ro

The exhibition will be organized by the Romanian Post Office together with the Romanian Philatelic Federation, under the patronage of the Fédération Internationale de Philatélie (FIP), which was granted at the FIP Singapore Congress of 2004, under the patronage of the International Association of Philatelic Journalists (AIJP) and also under the high patronage (expected) of the Romanian Presidency.

The first EFIRO exhibition with international participation was in 1932, under the high patronage of King Carol II, a noted stamp collector, whereas the next two took place in 1998 and 2004 at the Palace of Parliament •

WIPA 08 The best in the world of philately can be seen from 18 to 21 September 2008 where, for the sixth time since 1881, Vienna will be the centre of the world of stamps. In the year 2000 more than 60,000 interested visitors, amateurs and professionals alike, visited the exhibition. 600 exhibitors (postal administrations, stamp dealers and associations) from all over the world presented their treasures and fascinated the visitors. In 2008 world famous specialties will again attract philatelists and non-philatelists alike.

WIPA 08 enquiries www.wipa08.com

On the occasion of WIPA 08, Austria Post will issue three triangular stamps. Together, the three stamps form the symbol of WIPA with three landmarks of Vienna: the Giant Wheel, St Stephen's Cathedral and the Gloriette of the Schönbrunn Castle. The stamps will be issued with a surtax (55 cents plus 20 cents surtax) between 2006 and 2008. The surtax will back up the financing of WIPA. In the year 2008 all three stamps will appear in a new joint print •



SEPAC stamps In March I wrote about the Small European Postal Administrations Cooperation. Their folder containing one stamp from each member country, entitled *Beautiful Corners of Europe*, will be available in October, priced £10.75, from Guernsey Philatelic Bureau, Envoy House, La Vrangue, St Peter Port, Guernsey GY1 1AB (telephone 01481 716486). Guernsey Post will issue six attractive stamps showing island views; the 45p, showing Point Robert Lighthouse, Sark (left), bears the 'sepac' logo and will be included in the folder ●

Enquiries Write to Cyril Parsons, Editor BRPSG, 83 Ingram Avenue, Aylesbury HP21 9DH, or email him at Cyril.abc@btinternet.com

Publications The Newsletter of the British Royal Portraits Stamp Group has now reached issue 132. Ably edited by Cyril Parsons, it is a colour publication I have never seen before, despite having known of its existence for a long time. This does not just cover stamps depicting portraits of British Royalty, as the title might suggest, but relates to the entire world of royals.

This newsletter covers European Royalty with, among other issues, a Danish stamp depicting Crown Prince Frederik and Crown Princess Mary with their baby Prince Christian. Crown Princess Maxima of the Netherlands is shown on stamps of The Gambia and Grenada. Meanwhile, 'Rest of the World Royalty' has a set of stamps depicting Shaikh Muhammad bin Rashid al Maktoum, the ruler of Dubai. This issue is not for the poor collectors among us, for we learn that the purchase price when issued this May was c£300. Mind you, they are described as 'original metal on stamps' and are made of gold, silver and platinum. Closer to home, an interesting Jersey stamp shows a Karsh portrait of HM The Queen. At first glance, it looks to be the 1986 £1 stamp celebrating The Queen's 60th birthday, but is not what it seems: the value is '1 SOVERIEGN' instead of '£1'. Whether it is a printer's proof or a forgery is not clear, so if readers can assist with any information I am sure that Cyril would appreciate hearing from you ●

Enquiries For a full set of the prices realised and for further details of this sale and future auctions, write to: Harmers of London Stamp Auctioneers, 111 Power Road, Chiswick, London W4 5PY, or see www.harmers.com and view the entire sale there.

Auctions Harmers' 1200-lot July sale commenced with the 'Sheffield Find' of GB covers, a solicitor's archive unseen for well over 100 years. A crowded auction room saw many happy buyers, with over 120 lots realising in excess of £65,000. The most surprising of these was lot 90 '1841 1d Red block of ten on cover', described as having faults but nevertheless rare and spectacular: estimated at £250, it realised an amazing £5605. Other vendors' property included lot 154, 'an 1840 Mulready 2d envelope used', sold for £1652 (estimate £1000); and lot 204, 'A remarkable cover bearing seven single 1d Blacks from Plate 1x' (with at least one more missing), sold for £3304 (£2500). The total for the sale was £480,962 (all prices realised include the buyers commission) and they believe that the stamp market remains strong with continued demand for unusual and rare items ●

Enquiries Cavendish Philatelic Auctions, Cavendish House, 153-157 London Road, Derby DE1 2SY, or www.cavendish-auctions.com

Cavendish Auctions 26 July sale of collections offered some 373 interesting lots. Lot 297 was for 1000s of commercial British covers with many useful markings. Estimated at £60, it realised £110. Lot 371, an extensive QV to QEH collection of postal stationery items, including returned letters and newspaper wrappers estimated at £300, sold for £500 ●

Lottery funding Stamp collectors and lovers of the history of the post will have a rare opportunity this December to help secure lottery funding that would enable many artefacts currently held in store by the BPMA to go on permanent display.

Funding is being sought from the Big Lottery Fund, and The National Museum of Science & Industry (NMSI) is bidding for a £50 million grant toward the cost of an exciting development. They will know that this venture is going ahead by this Christmas thanks to a TV programme that will ask the public's opinion as to which of six projects should win a grant – which is where you come in.

The BPMA collection at Debden occupies 1500 square metres of storage and includes about 50 motor vehicles, over 100 letterboxes, sorting equipment and a range of smaller, but no less fascinating, artefacts. The collections cover important areas in the development of postal services including delivery, transport, sorting and mechanical innovation, street furniture and changes in design and brand. These items are not regularly accessible.

The Science Museum is now working on the design and funding for a National Collection Centre for their own material and that of three other national museums, to be located at their 545-acre airfield site at Wroughton near Swindon. This new £64 million world-class museum (to be called 'Inspired') is scheduled to open in 2010. It will be environmentally friendly, with energy provided by renewable sources and a super-insulated structure, and a sympathetic design blending in with the surrounding landscape.

The aim is to provide environmentally sustainable surroundings with low running costs, so if the BPMA joins the NMSI they could store the majority of the museum collection for a guaranteed 125 years, with the only future cost being an annual maintenance fee. This scheme offers the BPMA high profile access alongside the national collection most closely related to it.

The site will have conservation laboratories, learning facilities and events space, allowing the BPMA to meet its access and learning targets for this important area of its work. The collection would still be available for events and exhibitions elsewhere, linking with the BPMA's outreach ambitions.

The aim is still for the BPMA and the National Philatelic Society to relocate its philatelic collections, library and archives from Freeling House to a new London premises, and discussions continue with Royal Mail. The Wroughton project is separate and additional to the plans for London.

It is hoped that you now have enough information to be able to cast your telephone vote and choose 'Inspired' as your preferred recipient of the Big Lottery Fund's £50 million. Details of the TV station, date and time of the programme are not currently available, but it is hoped that the December *Bulletin* will be able to publish this information – if not, be sure to look at your favourite Christmas TV listings paper. The opportunity to be part of helping to secure funding of this huge amount of money will not come again, and I would ask that you give it your support ●



Exterior view of the planned 'Inspired' building.

Enquiries Visit website www.voteinspired.org.uk or text 'SMS Inspired' to 88833 to sign-up for free updates and the latest news as it happens on this exciting project.

Royal Mail news New issues and products



Special issues This month we issue 10 stamps (six in sheets, four in a miniature sheet) to mark the diamond wedding of HM The Queen and HRH The Duke of Edinburgh. They go on sale at Post Office branches and Royal Mail Tallents House on 16 October.

Further Diamond Wedding products will be available from 20 November, including: a coin cover with Diamond Wedding stamps and miniature sheet and £5 crown coin (£24.50), and commemorative document including silver versions of the stamps (£60).

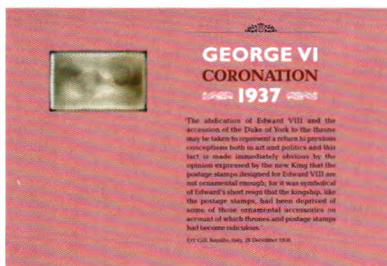
The annual Christmas issue (6 November) comprises six stamps and a miniature sheet, all featuring angels, plus an additional two 'religious' stamps depicting the Madonna and child. The second of the 'Lest We Forget' miniature sheets will be issued on 8 November (£3.46 or £4 in the presentation pack), together with a generic sheet (£7.35) •

2008 issues Details of the first two sets of special stamps for 2008 are given this month – James Bond (8 January) and Working Dogs (5 February), marking the centenary of the first police dogs in the UK. The Houses of Lancaster and York issue (28 February) will mark the start of a new Great British Monarchs series and features Kings Henry IV, V and VI, Edward IV and V, and Richard III.

A Celebrating Northern Ireland miniature sheet will go on sale on 11 March, followed by the Rescue at Sea set on 13 March. This set is to mark the centenary of the adoption of SOS as the signal for distress at sea. The Insects issue (15 April) continues the Endangered/Recovering Species series started with the Birds stamps issued last month.

The Cathedrals stamps (13 May) commemorate the 300th anniversary of the completion of St Paul's Cathedral in London. The set entitled Carry on Hammer (10 June) recalls the popular Hammer horror and Carry On series of films. The Airshows issue (17 July) marks the centenary of the first powered flight in the UK, at Farnborough. The Olympic Handover from Beijing to London will be commemorated on 26 August, and the RAF Uniforms set will be issued on 18 September, continuing the series started by the Army Uniforms issue last month. A miniature sheet will be issued on 29 September marking the 50th anniversary of the country (regional) stamps. The Women of Achievement stamps (14 October) are linked to the 150th anniversary of the birth of Emmeline Pankhurst. The Christmas stamps will go on sale on 4 November, the theme being Traditional Pantomime. Finally, the third and final Lest we Forget miniature sheet will go on sale on 6 November, marking the 90th anniversary of the end of the First World War •

Coming off sale Any remaining stocks of the Sounds of Britain stamps, pack and stamp cards will be taken off sale on 2 October. The 2006 Christmas stamps and related products will be withdrawn on 6 November, although the Christmas airletter will remain on sale •



Ed Gill's antipathy towards ornamental accessories didn't stop him submitting ideas for the design of the 1937 Coronation stamp, but if more regalia were on this occasion, his ideas were not taken up. The Post Office had just five months to select, prepare and print the new definitives and the purple red Coronation issue. Without the King's approval, it had no hope whatsoever of achieving either goal.

Stamp ingots The fourth ingot in the series of the reigns of Edward VIII and George VI will be available from 20 November, price £27.95. This will feature the George VI five shilling stamp of 1939.

The third ingot in the series, featuring the George VI 1½d Coronation stamp of 1937 (as shown above), was issued on 28 June, also priced £27.95. The first two in the series, the Edward VIII 1d and the George VI 1d of 1937, are also still available at the same price.

Handling charge on all ingots is £1.45 UK, £1.55 Europe, £2.15 Rest of World. All Orders and enquiries to Tallents House (address at right) ●

Orders and enquiries Royal Mail Tallents House, 21 South Gyle Crescent, Edinburgh EH12 9PB. Telephone order line: 08457 641 641 (UK), or +44 131 316 7483 (overseas).



For full details of the Smilers service see the leaflet in Post Office branches, phone the Smilers helpline on 0845 074 2000, or visit www.royalmail.com/smilers

Generic and Smilers sheets The Christmas generic sheet (above), on sale 6 November, contains eight 1st class, eight 2nd class and four 78p Angels Christmas stamps, priced £8.30. There will be three Christmas Smilers sheets: 20 × 1st class (£14.95), 20 × 2nd class (£9.95), and 10 × 78p (£14.95).

A 'Glorious Scotland' generic sheet, with 20 Scottish 1st class stamps on self-adhesive paper, goes on sale on 30 November, price £7.35. A Smilers version, with personalised image on the labels, will also be available, price £13.50 plus handling charge for one sheet, or £12.50 each for two or more sheets, plus handling charge ●

Year collections The 2007 Yearbook and Yearpack, containing all the year's special stamps, will go on sale on 8 November and will remain available until the end of 2009. Both contain all the special stamps of 2007 and the Beatles, Machin, Harry Potter, Royal Diamond Wedding, and Lest We Forget miniature sheets. The standard version of the Yearbook is priced £64.95, and the deluxe, leather-bound version is £99.99.

The colourful Yearpack, priced £57.45, includes concise background information on each special issue, with technical details of the stamps and illustrations of the alternative 'First Day' postmarks for each issue.

2007 Miniature Sheet Year Pack and Presentation Pack Collections will also be available from 8 November, price £24.45 and £59.75 respectively •

New stamp book A new book containing four 1st class definitives and two 1st class 'LOVE' stamps is expected in January, anticipating Valentine's Day. Further details to follow •

Definitive withdrawn The 49p definitive was withdrawn from both general sale at PO branches and philatelic sale at Tallents House on 18 August •

BPMA For information write to the BPMA, Freeling House, Phoenix Place, London WC1X 0DL, phone 020 7239 2570, or see www.postalheritage.org.uk

British Postal Museum & Archive Readers are reminded that, in addition to its regular opening times (Monday-Wednesday and Friday 10.00-17.00, Thursday 10.00-19.00), the BPMA is also open on Saturdays 13 October and 8 December (10.00-17.00). Tours of the Archives are held at 14.00 on the last Thursday of each month until November. Currently on show is an exhibition marking the 40th anniversary of the Machin stamp – see the August *Bulletin*, pages 368-69. Details of lectures and film shows are given in our Events listing. The BPMA contains the collections of the former National Postal Museum and Post Office Archives •



Storing the Bulletin Binders and box files are available for storing this and the *Postmark Bulletin*. The sturdy box files, in maroon for the *Philatelic Bulletin* and green for the *Postmark Bulletin* are available from Royal Mail Tallents House, price £9.95 each. Order codes PB349 (Philatelic), PB350 (Postmark). The files will store 30 copies of the Philatelic and about 50 of the Postmark Bulletins. The traditional binders for the Philatelic (BB001) and Postmark (PB322) Bulletins cost £8.50 each •

Special prize draw

ONCE AGAIN we offer our popular Mystery Prize draw, with some excellent prizes! To win one of 10 mystery prizes, send your name and address on a postcard to: Mystery Prize Draw, British Philatelic Bulletin, Royal Mail, 148 Old Street, London EC1V 9HQ, to arrive by 31 October •

Treasures of the BPMA The posters, by Martin Robinson



Mobile Post Office at Henley Royal Regatta c1937: poster by Adrian Hill RBA, reproduced on NPM postcard issued 6 May 1988.

MANY of the British Postal Museum & Archive's visual and media records date from the 19th and 20th centuries but it also has, for example, newspaper cuttings which go back even earlier. From amongst this wealth of material, none is more attractive than the collection of over 6,000 posters, from the 1930s to date. The collection is still growing and new advertising from Royal Mail services arrives regularly. As well as the posters, the BPMA has much original artwork in archive class POST 109. Many of the posters themselves are part of POST 110 Post Office: Printed Publicity Material, and are in the process of being catalogued.

The 1920s saw rapid development in the use of graphic design for advertising purposes. The railways, London Underground and other large businesses commissioned poster designs from the leading graphic artists, who created memorable

and in some cases well-loved images. The man chiefly responsible for the Post Office's adoption of a similar marketing strategy was Stephen (later Sir Stephen) Tallents, in whose honour the Philatelic Bureau in Edinburgh is named. He began a civil service career in the Board of Trade in 1909 and after distinguished service in the First World War, worked in various other government ministries. In 1926 he was appointed the first secretary of the Empire Marketing Board, whose remit was to promote inter-Empire trade and to persuade people to 'Buy Empire'. It organised exhibitions, poster campaigns, 'Empire Shopping Weeks', radio talks, press advertisements, shop window displays and, famously, the EMB film unit led by John Grierson. The Board was wound up in 1933, and Tallents was appointed Public Relations Officer for the Post Office by the Postmaster General. ►

He launched an innovative programme and, with his experience of the Empire Marketing Board, pioneered the use of art and media to advertise and to celebrate the Post Office, commissioning many of the period's best graphic artists, documentary film-makers and composers, who used contemporary and imaginative ways to inspire and inform the nation about the role of the Post Office. He brought with him John Grierson to head the GPO Film Unit, whose film *Night Mail* is probably the best-remembered public information film of all time, with memorable images accompanied by the poet W H Auden's specially-written lines and music by Benjamin Britten.

On the BPMA website (www.postalheritage.org.uk) are some examples of posters from the collection. One, by Eric Fraser, advertising the Post Office Savings Bank, is one of the several issued in 1942-43 reminding the public to use the Post Office's services more efficiently during the Second World War. By investing in the POSB, people could not only build up their savings but also help in funding the war effort. Other wartime posters encouraged people to post early in the day or in lunch breaks, to spread the load of mail sorting. Another, designed by H A Rothholz, was one of a series issued in the 1940s and 1950s to advertise the services of the Post Office, giving information about postal rates and telephone services and reminding people to buy wireless licences.

Other posters were used for the Post Office's own internal communications systems and staff training, and show the influence of the new ideas from the Public Relations Department – where plain posters had told staff about changes and best working practices, now colourful and sometimes comic designs were used, to greater effect. One particular poster called 'The Cycle of a Letter' has been an important educational tool for many years, undergoing many transformations and is still used, under the title 'The Journey of a Letter'. As a teacher I well remember the tremendous value of the schools material available from the Post Office, both posters and booklets. Some related to specific stamp issues and others were on more general topics, like the excellent series of seven posters entitled 'The History of

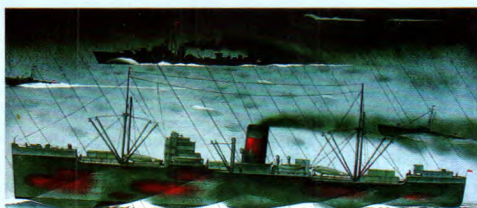
Mail Transport', designed by Michael Heslop, which must have been issued in the late 1960s or early 1970s and always decorated my classroom, with separate posters showing foot messengers, horses, horse-drawn vehicles, trains, miscellaneous conveyors, motors and aircraft, and ships.

Between 1988 and 1994 the National Postal Museum and Post Office Archives issued several sets of picture postcards drawing on the poster and artwork collections. To accompany a 'Railways and the Post Office' exhibition opening on 11 January 1988, there was a set of three cards showing the Post Office Railway, the interior of a Travelling Post Office and mails being loading at Euston Station. Later in that year, on 6 May, another set of three cards showed work commissioned by the Post Office Poster Advisory Group: 'Mails for the Packets arriving at Falmouth 1833' and 'Loading the Mails for the Empire, Croydon 1934', both by H S Williamson, Principal of the Chelsea School of Art, and 'Mobile Post Office at Henley Royal Regatta c1937' by Adrian Hill RBA (shown on the previous page).

On 13 November 1990 came four cards of seasonal relevance under the title of 'GPO Posters of Yesteryear', showing original artwork for 'Post Early for Christmas' designs. For Autumn Stampex 1991 PO Archives issued four cards from the wartime Post Office Savings Bank series already mentioned, with designs by Eric Fraser, Austin Cooper, Robbe and H A Rotholz; and for Spring Stampex 1994 there were a further four Archives cards showing The Counter Clerk, The Postman, The Telegraph Boy and The Mail Van Driver, from original artworks by J Ramsey Wherrett. Finally, on 6 May 1994 five cards were issued to mark the opening of the exhibition 'Addressing Postcodes at the National Postal Museum', which showed 1960s 'Correct Address' posters for Stanton, Worcs; Bassenthwaite, Keswick; Tye Green, Essex; Capel Curig, Caernarvonshire; and Stormont, Belfast, all based on contemporary paintings and drawn from the Post Office Archives' poster collection.

Recommended for further reading is Douglas Muir's article 'Sir Stephen Tallents and the first GPO logo' in the September 2006 *Bulletin* ●

**POST
YOUR CHRISTMAS MAIL
EARLY
FOR
EUROPE**



make your money provide the
driving power · put it into the
POST OFFICE SAVINGS BANK



FOOT MESSENGERS



This is Bassenthwaite in the Lake District

Correct Address:- Bassenthwaite, KESWICK, Cumberland.

PLEASE USE YOUR CORRECT ADDRESS

Left, from top: NPM postcard issued 13 November 1990 (art-work source unknown); and a poster for schools by Michael Heslop c1970. Above, from top: PO Archives card for Autumn Stampex 1991, POSB Merchant Shipping Convoy, April 1943, by Eric Fraser; PO Archives card for Spring Stampex 1994, artwork by J Ramsey Wherrett (1914-60); and NPM postcard issued 6 May 1994, by Anthony Rossiter RA, 1961.

James Bond The first special issue of 2008



THE FIRST SPECIAL ISSUE of 2008 pays homage to the James Bond books, written by Ian Fleming who was born on 28 May 1908. The first Bond book, *Casino Royale* was written in 1952. The first Bond film, *Dr. No*, starring (Sir) Sean Connery, was released in 1962. The books and films remain hugely popular, and this issue will appeal to James Bond fans the world over.

Six stamps, a miniature sheet and a prestige stamp book go on sale at Post Office branches, Tallents House and Post Office philatelic outlets on 8 January. The stamps, printed in separate sheets, feature Bond book covers: *Casino Royale* & *Doctor No*, 2 × 1st class; *Goldfinger* & *Diamonds Are Forever*, 2 × 54p; and *For Your Eyes Only* & *From Russia With Love*, 2 × 78p. The miniature sheet contains one of each stamp. The stamps were designed by A2 of London with photography by Kevin Summers, and printed in lithography by De La Rue. The stamps measure 60 × 21mm. Post office branches will carry sheets of 24; sheets of 48, with gutter margin, will be available from Royal Mail Tallents House and selected Post Office philatelic outlets.

FIRST DAY FACILITIES The FDC, also designed by A2, features a playing card showing Fleming, Bond and a roulette wheel. Orders for serviced FDCs must reach Tallents House (address below) by the date of issue. Collectors may send stamped covers on the day of issue to: Royal Mail Tallents House, 21 South Gyle Crescent, Edinburgh EH12 9PB (Tallents House postmark) or to their nearest Royal Mail Special Handstamp Centre (London SE1 postmark) marking the outer envelope 'FDO801' or 'FDO802'.

For details of sponsored handstamps and addresses of the Handstamp Centres see the *British Postmark Bulletin* – available on subscription from Tallents House. For a sample copy write to: The Editor, British Postmark Bulletin, Royal Mail, 148 Old Street, London EC1V 9HQ.



James Bond prices

Set of stamps	£ 3.32
Miniature sheet	£ 3.32
Miniature sheet press sheet	£36.30
Presentation pack	£ 3.75
Prestige Stamp Book	£ 7.40
First day cover (FDC) envelope	£ 0.30
Serviced FDC stamps/miniature sheet (UK customers)	£ 4.38
Serviced FDC stamps/miniature sheet (overseas)	£ 3.73
Serviced FDC prestige book pane (UK customers)	£ 3.67
Serviced FDC prestige book pane (overseas)	£ 3.13
Stamp cards set (seven cards)	£ 2.10



Ian Fleming's James Bond, a new prestige stamp book, has been written by Kim Newman and printed by De La Rue. The four panes are shown here.

The prestige book FDCs will be serviced with the pane of 1st class definitives and type-writer label, as shown left.

Mrs J Robinson
200 Manorbie Road
Ilkeston
Derbyshire
DE7 4AB



Prestige stamp book This contains stamp panes as follows.

Pane 1 8 x 1st class definitive with central label showing Ian Fleming's typewriter

Pane 2 James Bond stamps: 1st Casino Royale, 54p Gold-finger, 78p For Your Eyes Only

Pane 3 James Bond stamps: 1st Doctor No, 54p Diamonds Are Forever, 78p From Russia With Love

Pane 4 2 x 1st White Ensign flag stamp, 2 x 1st Union Flag (Union Jack) stamp, first issued 2001

PRESENTATION PACK A colourful pack, containing the six stamps, has been written by film critic Kim Newman, and includes time charts of key events in the lives of both James Bond and his creator, Ian Fleming. The pack was designed by GBH design group with illustrations by Mike Bell, and printed by Walsall ●



Working Dogs Honouring man's best friend



WORKING DOGS, the second special issue of 2008, goes on sale at Post Office branches, Tallents House and Post Office philatelic outlets on 5 February. The stamps show: Assistance Dog, 1st class; Mountain Rescue Dog, 46p; Police Dog, 48p; Customs Dog, 54p; Sheepdog, 69p; and Guide Dog, 78p. They are designed by Redpath Design with photography by Tim Flach Ltd, and printed in lithography by Cartor Security Printing of France. The stamps measure 37 × 35mm. Post Office branches will carry sheets of 25; sheets of 50, with gutter margin, will be available from Royal Mail Tallents House and selected Post Office philatelic outlets. The 1st class stamp bears the EUROPA symbol, the Eurropa theme for 2008 being 'The Letter'.

FIRST DAY FACILITIES Orders for serviced FDCs must arrive at Tallents House (address below) by the date of issue. Collectors may send stamped covers on the day of issue to: Royal Mail Tallents House, 21 South Gyle Crescent, Edinburgh EH12 9PB (Tallents House postmark), or to their nearest Royal Mail Special Handstamp Centre (Hound Green, Basingstoke, Hants postmark) marking the outer envelope 'FDO803' or 'FDO804'. For details of sponsored handstamps and for the addresses of the Handstamp Centres see the *British Postmark Bulletin*.

PRESENTATION PACK The colourful pack (shown opposite), containing the six stamps, was written by Jim Davies, and includes details of the work of the six dogs featured on the stamps, and which breeds are the best-suited to each task. We are told that the first dogs used in police service were not a success, one of them biting the Metropolitan Commissioner! Today's several hundred police dogs are better trained and behaved.

IT'S A DOG'S LIFE

MONDAY: DOMESTIC BREAK-IN 3AM: SECURE AREA...999 CALL: ARSON ATTACK ON WAREHOUSE
 TUESDAY: HAWTHORN ESTATE: RIOT...SEARCH BUILDING FOR EXPLOSIVE SUBSTANCES...
 WEDNESDAY: CENTRAL RAILWAY STATION: SUSPECT PACKAGE INSPECTION...HIGH STREET: FRACAS...
 THURSDAY: GREAT NORTHERN CANAL: CADAVER RECOVERY...CITY CENTRE: PROTEST MARCH...
 FRIDAY: AIRPORT BAGGAGE RECLAIM: ILLEGAL SUBSTANCES SEARCH...999 CALL: DOMESTIC DISTURBANCE...
 SATURDAY: CROWD CONTROL: UNITED V ROVERS...

WORKING DOGS

The presentation pack, left, shows working dogs in action during the World Wars, and at the present time. The pack is designed by Redpath, with images from the Imperial War Museum, Metropolitan Police Archive, and other sources.

The first day envelope, below, is also designed by Redpath.



Royal Mail First Day Cover WORKING DOGS



Mrs J Robinson
 200 Manorbie Road
 Ilkeston
 Derbyshire
 DE7 4AB

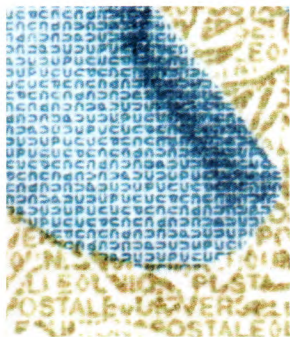
Royal Mail Talents House 21 South Gyle Crescent Edinburgh EH12 9FB

Earlier stamp issues This is the first set of special stamps devoted to working dogs, although an Old English Sheepdog was depicted on the 9p value in the Dogs set of February 1979, and a guide dog on the 14p stamp of the 1981 International Year of the Disabled issue. A Border Collie, a breed which is frequently used as a sheepdog, was featured on one of the 10 Farm Animals stamps issued in January 2005 •

Dogs Prices

Set of stamps	£3.29
Presentation pack	£3.80
FDC envelope	£0.30
Serviced FDC (UK orders)	£4.34
Serviced FDC (overseas orders)	£3.70
Stamp cards set	£1.80

The IRC centenary by Michael St J Wright



A detail of the 2006 coupon shown on the opposite page: this enlargement reveals the micro-printing, with the letters 'UPU', included in the design for security purposes.

EARLY IN THE 20th century there was a demand for a method of allowing people in one country to pay the postage for a reply from another country. There already existed under the Universal Postal Union a system of reply-paid postcards, but these did not allow for any length of correspondence, enclosures, or confidentiality. Reply-paid lettercards, with complicated folds and perforations, existed in some of the Australian states, but at the Congress of the UPU in Rome in 1906 it was agreed to establish a system of international reply coupons, which was inaugurated, as part of the Convention resulting from the Congress, on 1 October 1907. In May 2006 a UPU press release announced that countries issuing coupons could choose to issue a variant of the current coupon; this has now appeared, and bears the additional inscription in two lines '100 ans 1907-2007'. The adopted scheme of IRCs was suggested by the British Post Office – a reply coupon is indeed a very restricted version of a postal order, being postmarked on one side to validate it, and postmarked again on the other side when it is exchanged for the appropriate stamp. Unpostmarked coupons are not really mint, but invalid (except in the period 1991-2000), while a coupon with two postmarks has been exchanged or redeemed, and should have disappeared into postal accounting systems. In spite of devising the IRC 100 years ago, Royal Mail is not selling the commemorative version this year.

The initial scheme to issue and exchange IRCs was optional, but following the next Congress in 1920 in Madrid, all UPU members were obliged to exchange coupons, although it has never been obligatory to issue them. The same Convention introduced a time limit from the date of purchase of their validity, but this limit was withdrawn from 1930. New designs were introduced by the London, Vienna and Lausanne Congresses of 1929, 1964 and 1974. Rather belatedly, the Washington Congress of 1989 raised the exchange value of an IRC to cover airmail rather than surface postage. Each Congress can prescribe a different 'Modèle' in its Convention, and between Congresses minor changes are often made, affecting the printing of the coupon, or its watermark, which collectors have enumerated.

The Beijing Congress of 1999 agreed a much more complex coupon and watermark, introduced on 1 January 2002; it was doubled in size and printed on thicker paper capable of being processed through normal bank accounting machinery (similar to the change to British Postal Orders in 1995). A barcode was also introduced with a legible 'translation': a country code, the printing date (eg 20040525) and the expiry date (20061231 whenever issued) – both in International Standard Dating, ie year, month, day; then the serial number and value (0.74) expressed in the notional currency now used by the UPU of Special Drawing Rights of the International Monetary Fund (the UPU used to use gold francs). A final pair of letters, eg AA, AB etc runs through the alphabet changing after each batch of 10,000. A second design, necessitated by the imminence of the initial expiry date, was scheduled for introduction from 1 July 2006; Royal Mail issued them from 31 July – the expiry date of these new coupons being 31 December 2009. ▶



International reply coupons The three smaller-size designs were issued following the London, Vienna and Lausanne Congresses (from top left), datestamped in 1931, 1967 and 1975. The two larger-size pictorial coupons were issued in 2006 (below) and 2002 (bottom of page) following the 1999 Beijing Congress.



These complications have probably encouraged some countries (eg Ireland, the Netherlands, Sweden) to stop issuing coupons. The UPU says that over two million a year are still issued – in the decade to 1996 it averaged over eight million. On one occasion the USA alone ordered three million. There is also competition from international business reply letters, as well as other means of communication. Coupons are mainly printed in French, initially with one or two other local languages on the front and with German, English, Spanish and Italian on the back (in French alphabetical order). These languages changed over the years. From 1948 onwards the back has shown a translation of the front text into German, English, Arabic, Chinese, Spanish and Russian but, from the Lausanne design, local languages other than these no longer appeared anywhere. Coupons are printed in Switzerland – up to 1993 by the same firm, Benziger & Cie, in Einsiedlen.

Other coupon systems have been set up over the years to take advantage of lower postage rates within a political or geographical ‘restricted’ union. The first, in 1927, was for the French Empire (initially only between France and its three North African territories); in the same year Imperial (later Commonwealth) Reply Coupons were introduced, then coupons for the Postal Union of the Americas and Spain, for Spain and its colonies, for the Arab Postal Union and for CAPTEAO – a grouping of former French West African colonies. There was a bilateral system between Japan and its puppet state of Manchukuo (Manchuria) until the end of the Second World War, and later between Japan and the Ryuku Islands when the latter were still under US occupation. None of these systems has survived, except one linking France (including its overseas departments) and the overseas territories, the French office in Andorra, and Monaco.

One of the most interesting features of reply coupons is where colonies or overseas offices of a country have issued the latter’s coupons, even where its stamp issues were not valid in the colony. In Papua New Guinea and the Cook Islands until independence coupons of Australia and New Zealand respectively were issued being indistinguishable apart from the issuing postmark. The British Post Office in Tientsin once issued GB reply coupons. After the introduction of the Beijing design, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man resumed using coupons inscribed Grande Bretagne.

Changes in the selling price of coupons are sometimes noted in manuscript, but may also be done by handstamping or letterpress printing, or even by addressograph or checkwriter; often it is done by adding one or more adhesive stamps before the validating issuing handstamp is applied.

French philatelists were the first to study and record reply coupons; before and after the Second World War lists appeared in the postal stationery magazine *L’Entier Postal*. In the 1950s to 1970s an American produced some area catalogues in English, and another American holds postal auctions. An IRC study group (FIAS) in Germany has a magazine, has issued fully-illustrated country catalogues, and holds postal auctions – all in German, but the catalogues and auction are fairly easy to follow. A Frenchman is preparing a work covering the world, and the first part, covering the IRC system in detail, and coupons of France in particular, has just appeared ●

Mainly Machins Douglas Myall reports on the latest issues

RANK AND FILE



Easily accessible, the editor is a multi-line, multi-windowed, multi-functioned, menu-driven text editor that can be customized to suit the needs of the individual user. The editor is available in both single and double-byte character sets. It can be used to create and edit text files, and it can be used to create and edit binary files. It can be used to create and edit text files, and it can be used to create and edit binary files. It can be used to create and edit text files, and it can be used to create and edit binary files.



Grenadier, Royal
Regiment of Foot of
Ireland, Battle of

This Redcoat wears a long coat with narrow back cuffs and breeches that mirror the civilian "jumpsuits" of the period. Most infantry wore tricorn hats, but grenadiers—along their *trousers*—slung their *trunkers* across their backs to throw grenades and *hoo-broo* go in the *war*. Their grenadier caps initially *militaristic* but *over-taller* and more *richly embroidered*.

British Scarlet
A new sheet of 1945 said of the *Indianisation* New Model Army, 'the men are Redcoats all, and are only distinguished by the usual badges of their colour'. The *Indianisation* army continued to practice, and red became the main colour of British uniforms. There were exceptions: light coats, as well as supporting arms and services as they came to being, wore blue. Full dress, when it survives (for instance in the Fort Stanwix) and more kit (military evening wear) remains.



Army uniforms prestige book Now that the plethora of Machin anniversary issues has passed we are back to more normal times, although we have a third PSB this year, something which has happened only once before now. That was in 2000, but there was only one the following year to make up for it. An average of two a year is about right. These books are so beautifully produced and their contents are so interesting that we collectors can overlook their purely philatelic nature. The latest book, issued 20 September, is up to the standard of its predecessors. It is the first of three on British military uniforms, and deals with the army.

The text is by the well-known broadcaster and military historian Richard Holmes. His theme is 'from scarlet to camouflage', describing how uniforms have changed over time. Some of the more flamboyant, we are told, became a target for caricaturists – among others. Officers and standard-bearers must have presented easy targets to the enemy. Snipers must have had a 'field day'. Modern armies need something more than the brow of a hill to hide their movements from the enemy.

This contrast between old and new is nicely reflected in the two panes of special stamps. The first has three 78p in a horizontal se-tenant strip showing a liberal use of scarlet (was it to hide the blood?). The second pane has a similar strip with three 1st class NVIs depicting the use of camouflage in different climates. Some official pre-issue publicity shows the stamps of both panes in the reverse order of the actual book with the trooper of 1661 and the observer of 1917 at the right in-

stead of at the left. I think this might have been based on early visuals, as the issued book has the stamps showing the six uniforms in chronological order, which seems more logical. It would be nice to find a book with the 'error' though.

The other two panes in what is now the standard set of four contain definitives. One has three Machin values printed in gravure; the other has four country pictorial NVIs printed in lithography. All seven stamps are new; the previous Northern Ireland Enschedé stamp printed by this method did not have white borders. This stamp is also interesting in having a micro-printed © 2001 in the base of the stem of the figure. I cannot see this in any of the other three stamps. Cartor printings of the England and Wales stamps did not have them and the Scotland one has not been printed by lithography before.

All future definitives in prestige books will be printed in lithography. This is probably because gravure is not necessary for their comparatively short print runs and lithography is a less expensive process. Ironically, the Northern Ireland inland NV1s were issued on the same day, printed in gravure in sheets. This policy change could lead to some interesting Machin singles in future prestige books. For one thing, we are likely to see the phosphor bars also printed by lithography. An important feature of the country pictorial stamps in the uniforms book is that, for the first time, the bars on them are the standard width of 4.5mm, instead of 6.5mm. It will be interesting to see if this is a permanent change. Graded phosphor



DOWN AND DIRTY

The soldiers of history spent much of their time belted to the inhabitants of a hostile zone, or lived in tents or



How long
The study
continued
—including
that with

1. **Left**

Harlingen
1970-2000
Average



Observer,
Artillery, 3
1917
Artillery
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First World
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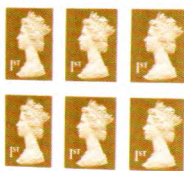
bars have never appeared on stamps printed by lithography. The extra width has been utilised to ensure a less obtrusive phosphor overprint on the printed image of the stamp.

The Machin pane has the usual eight stamps around a central label. This has been the pattern ever since the Scotland book of 21 March 1989. The Country pane has only four stamps, one in each corner, and five labels, the first pane to have more than one. These all feature regimental cap badges. There are people who collect such items, as well as uniform buttons (some are illustrated on the outside back cover of the book) – they are every bit as enthusiastic as stamp collectors, and I am sure they will find this book of great interest. The badges on the book's last pane show, in order of seniority, those of the Grenadier, Coldstream, Scots, Irish and Welsh Guards, representing all of the UK. Among their duties is guarding Royal palaces, hopefully a largely ceremonial one.

This book provides a veritable feast of set-tenant pairs. I don't know if you include labels in your pairs. I do, although it adds to the total and increases the cost of one's collection, but not by

much. In this case, horizontal and vertical pairs involve different labels and the central one, unlike all previous ones, does not form part of a pair. (I exclude pairs consisting only of labels.) Each of the four country stamps is paired, either horizontally or vertically, with a regiment associated with it. Altogether, there are six horizontal Machin pairs, six vertical Machin pairs, four horizontal Country pairs and four vertical Country pairs. To get all of them you will need five books.

Other books The book of six 1st class self-adhesives printed by Walsall that I mentioned last time is from cylinders w4/w1. Stamps are the same as in previous books of six with the pre-PIP design, now restored. Another book of six was issued on 28 August. Books this size normally have a blank inside front cover which is increasingly being used by Royal Mail to inform the public about services and products. This latest one draws attention to Royal Mail's stamps website and the Harry Potter issue (royalmail.com/wizard). This must have been a special printing as there do not appear to be any cylinder numbers on the issued books.



Pane 4 of the British Army Uniforms PSB, above, is the first to have more than one label. Left: the cover and panes 2 and 3. Pane 1 is shown on page 53. Above: the self-adhesives book issued on 28 August, with Harry Potter text on the inside cover.

Counter sheets The Northern Ireland gravure cylinders are: 2nd, D1 magenta D1 yellow D1 cyan (blue) D1 black; 1st, D1 yellow, D1 cyan D1 black; both D1 phosphor. For those who like to keep track of cylinder blocks, two of the colour-tied cylinders recently introduced have appeared with phosphor cylinder D2. These are the 5p from colour cylinder D2, printed on 17 April, and the 48p from colour cylinder D1.

Miniature sheets The next sheet with definitives will be the second in the 'Lest we Forget' series. This one commemorates the battle of Passchendaele, one of the major and most costly battles of the First World War. The sheet will be issued on 8 November, and will contain a special issue 1st class stamp showing a single Flanders poppy and four 78p country pictorial definitives in a block of four. These are in the same sequence as last year's sheet. That was printed in gravure by De La Rue; this year's is printed by the same firm in lithography. If you collect these stamps, make sure you keep track of the various gravure/litho printings. I will return to this subject next time •

Behind the scenes Richard West visits Tallents House

You place your order for a new stamp issue, wait a few days, and the items arrive. It all seems so very straightforward. But what exactly goes on behind the scenes at Tallents House? For over 40 years the handling of philatelic orders by Royal Mail has been undertaken in Edinburgh. A few years ago a move was made to a new building just outside the centre of the city, in the Gyle Centre area. From here are handled not only the philatelic orders, including orders from stamp dealers and the overseas agents for Royal Mail, but also the requirements of non-Post Office outlets selling booklets, and businesses requiring stamps in bulk. For years this operation was known to collectors as the Philatelic Bureau – in fact, most still use this term – but Royal Mail has ceased to refer to the business as such, as it encompasses far more than just philatelic orders.

That is not to say that the needs of collectors are not important. Retail and business requirements are given priority, so that their orders can be dispatched for delivery the next day, but this work is normally cleared by 9am each morning, leaving the rest of the day free to deal with the philatelic community.

Receiving orders The smooth running at Tallents House is ensured by dedicated departments. The first is the Phonebank, dealing with customers placing orders or making enquiries by telephone. This section, with its staff of 23, deals with orders for philatelic products and Customised Smilers sheets. Customers may ring to place an order, or perhaps a re-order in the case of Smilers sheets, or simply have a query about their account, or wish to add funds by telephone using a debit or credit card (all cards, except American Express, are accepted). This section also receives general correspondence, whether making enquiries, seeking refunds or replacement of items, or setting up ways of payment such as direct debit. In addition, and increasingly, enquiries are received by e-mail. ►

When the phone is answered, the caller is asked for the account number if known, or a post code. A further enquiry of the caller's house number or name will bring up the complete address. If the caller is an existing customer, a history of all the transactions over the previous two years will be shown on screen, including a record of any correspondence and previous phone calls.

If the caller is placing an order, the details will be recorded. The paperwork appertaining to all such orders is then processed overnight, so that they can be passed on to the relevant department the next day. Orders are segregated, for example, those for first day covers and coin covers being dealt with separately from stamp requests.

A constant tally is kept of the number of calls received, and how many callers are waiting, so that each call can be answered as swiftly as possible. It takes on average two minutes and 20 seconds to deal with a call, although this time will be increased if the customer is wishing to order a Customised Smilers sheet.

Normally, about 1000 calls are received each day. However, this can easily increase: as soon as the Harry Potter issue was announced, the number of calls immediately doubled.

Orders not placed by phone are dealt with by a separate department. These vary from orders sent by post or fax, to those from the Stock List, using the 'Preview' that precedes every new issue, to internet orders from the Royal Mail website. The latter will be printed, and dealt with alongside all other orders received by post.

Priority is given to the orders for 'open' issues, namely those just announced or issued within the past five weeks. There are naturally times of increased activity, for example just after the latest 'Preview' has been distributed, or when a particularly popular issue is announced, such as a set with a 'Royal' theme. Normally around 10,000 orders will be processed each week, but given a set with mass appeal such as Harry Potter, then the number of orders can increase by 2000 a day. Such occasions are anticipated, and extra staff will be brought in, so that a normal service can be maintained – particularly important for the regular customers.



Tearing up sheets to obtain individual stamps, strips or blocks.

Once opened, mail is divided into sections: orders received for a particular issue; orders received as a result of a Stock List, which might therefore embrace several issues; payments received to 'top up' accounts, which might be as cheques, credit card payments, or possibly cash; and general correspondence. Customers will be advised if their accounts are running low on funds. All correspondence and orders are kept secure, as they may contain confidential information such as credit card details.

All payments are transferred to the relevant section. The orders themselves are keyed in for overnight processing, in the same way as with telephoned orders.

Production As one would expect, the stamps are delivered to Tallents House in sheets. However, the majority of collectors require a single set with possibly a first day cover and presentation pack. For each of these, the sheets of stamps need to be broken down into individual stamps or se-tenant strips or blocks. At one time a 'bursting machine' was used to divide sheets, but it was found that this did not always result in the perfect perforations that collectors expect. It is far better simply to tear a sheet by hand. An experienced person can tear 12 sheets of stamps at a time, and ensure no pulled perfs.



The automatic processing of orders at Tallents House.

Whether they are for presentation packs, FDCs, or simply to place within carriers for customers requiring a single set, the torn stamps are placed in cassettes. Using specially designed equipment, suckers pick up one of each stamp required from the cassettes, and place them in the carrier of a presentation pack, yearbook or yearpack, or for sending as a single set. A similar sucker opens the carrier's plastic cover, and the stamps are placed inside. A cellophane casing, already sealed on one edge, is automatically placed around each presentation pack, the equipment sealing two other edges. The packs are banded into bundles of 10. Production of FDCs is not dissimilar. The stamps are picked up, the backs are moistened, and the stamps are then affixed to the envelope.

Once affixed, the stamps will be cancelled. For each new issue there is usually a choice of either a Tallents House pictorial handstamp, or a pictorial handstamp for a location with a connection to the issue. Most customers opt for the Tallents House postmark. Cancellations are applied using a lithographic printing plate, carefully positioned so as not only to cancel the stamps but also to tie the stamps to the cover; this is particularly important with a cover bearing a miniature sheet. After cancellation, the covers are addressed, and then placed with the filler card into an envelope for onward dispatch.

The Production department also deals with the dispatch of orders that involve standard items, together with the relevant statement for the particular customer, and places all into an envelope for dispatch. Items which can be handled in this way include the more popular formats, such as single sets, pairs, gutter pairs and blocks of four, plus presentation packs, miniature sheets, sets of stamp cards, and prestige stamp books. Equipment is able to 'read' from the customer's statement the precise items required, and so pick up only those items and place them in the envelope.

The same equipment will also handle the dispatch of the 'Preview' and the periodic 'Updates'. These are sent not only to regular customers, but also to those who have recently placed an order for the first time, such as the thousands who have discovered British stamps through The Beatles and Harry Potter issues.

Other requests Any order that cannot be fulfilled in an 'automated' way is passed to our final department. This handles orders placed by dealers (known as the 'Key Account Holders'), the overseas agencies, requests for Customised Smilers sheets, and all other orders. Some items are too large for automatic handling; for example, the packs of stamp cards for the Harry Potter issue involved 13 cards, too much for the equipment. As a result, more than 80,000 packs of cards had to be handled manually. Likewise Generic Smilers sheets are too large for the equipment: again, for Harry Potter, over 10,000 sheets were sent out. Still with Harry Potter, a discount offer was made comprising a FDC, presentation pack, stamp cards and Generic Smilers sheet, all for £19.40. This proved instantly popular with over 7000 ordered.

With every new issue, the aim is to have all pre-ordered items with customers on the day of issue. The target for handling other orders is 10 days, although in fact this is normally six. Once orders are ready to be sent, they are passed to the mail centre for dispatch. To ensure that everything is ready for delivery on the day of issue, work starts on processing each set about six weeks prior to release, although sometimes this is not feasible. Harry Potter, as most will know, was an addition

to the 2007 stamp programme: staff at Tallents House had just three weeks to process the stamps. This is only possible because every member of staff is capable and prepared to take on any task. What needs to be undertaken includes tearing up sheets of stamps for all the popular formats, such as cylinder blocks, or for the recently-introduced colour description strips on Machin definitives. The other tasks undertaken range from inserting the Smilers sheets into their protective carriers, to placing the coins or medals into coin covers.

Sitting at a desk with the full range of current products carefully placed within easy reach, one person can make up around 500 orders in a day. There is one staff member dedicated to the task of making up the orders from dealers and overseas agents, the hope being to supply such orders within five days.

This same department also handles complaints from customers regarding damaged stamps, and will send out bulkier items such as stamp albums. Finally, there is the production of the Customised Smilers sheets. Customers will send in their photographs on a CD, by e-mail, or simply as a photograph. The latter will need to be scanned, and may have to be adjusted to fit the size of the labels. The operator will see on-screen an image of the sheet of the chosen Smilers stamp with the personal photograph in place: occasionally some editing of the image might be needed. Naturally, all photographs submitted need to be checked to ensure no one might be offended by their use in the mail. On average, about 50 orders are handled each day, which might be for just one sheet, but can easily be more. This number will increase about four-fold around the Christmas period.

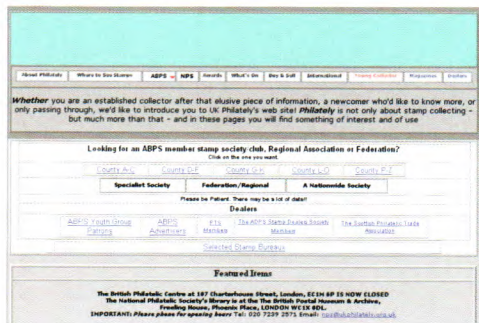
Time and cost Many collectors are under the impression that when they buy stamps from Tallents House, the entire face value represents profit for Royal Mail; this is far from the case. Initially there are of course the costs of researching, designing, printing, storing and distributing the stamps, before they are ready to be sent to collectors. As we have seen, every order takes time to process, and even those dealt with on the automated line have still involved some manual handling, if only to

tear up the sheets of stamps. Royal Mail has to be aware of the time and cost involved in handling each order: the operations at Tallents House must be cost-effective. Of course, not all collectors use Tallents House: a majority still prefer to buy their items over a post office counter, and prepare their own FDCs. Nevertheless, for each new issue, Tallents House sends out about 80,000 orders, and services some 120,000 FDCs.

It's an operation of which Royal Mail can feel proud, for what it undertakes is no mean feat, and while there may be an occasional hiccup, such as a stamp that is not quite as perfect as the collector would wish, for the hundreds of thousands of satisfied customers who rely on Tallents House for their new stamps, it proves a faultless service – one that perhaps is not fully appreciated.

A final, personal, thought Those involved with providing the philatelic services at Royal Mail are always pleased to review what is offered. Here are some personal thoughts, on which readers of the *Bulletin* might like to comment. For example, to keep handling charges at a reasonable level, if instead of sending out each issue on release date, there were just four dispatches a year, would you object? A few years ago, it was decided to offer sheet stamps in only the more popular formats, such as blocks of four, cylinder blocks, and more recently the colour description strips, because the demand for other positional items was simply too low. Because it was not possible to see the cylinder number in stamp books without first opening up the book, it proved impossible to supply blocks with cylinder number panes. However, if Royal Mail were to make available a 'Premium' service, for which an annual subscription would be payable, that would provide information such as new cylinder numbers on sheets and booklets, plus other important technical information, such as a conscious change of paper or adhesive, and that would allow subscribers to order such items, including specific blocks (for example, date and warrant blocks), or particular cylinder numbers from sheets and booklets – always subject to availability – would readers consider it worthwhile subscribing? ●

Philately online Ron Negus on UK Philately's poor website



www.ukphilately.org.uk It was intended originally that this website would serve the needs of organised philately in the UK. It would seem now that distinct sites for the Association of British Philatelic Societies and the National Philatelic Society would be a better approach.

over the screen, apparently at random, and users must read them all in the hope of finding something that is relevant to their enquiry. The screen has to be scrolled to see all the headings.

Part way through this scrolling, the random headings stop, and a two-column arrangement appears. These columns are headed for the ABPS and the NPS. Within each column, the navigation contents now relate exclusively to information from these two organisations. There are minor scattered references to the BPT, but it seems that this body no longer sponsors the main site.

Amongst the random section of the contents listing there are some peculiar headings. One of these simply says 'Why?'. Clicking on this reveals a page simply containing five quotations about stamp collecting as a worthwhile hobby. Another heading is 'Archive'. Selecting this provides links, arranged in monthly date order from July 2005 to May 2006, to various specialised society web sites. The source of this archive is not given, and some of the links are broken. Whilst this is a useful compilation, it would be more user friendly if the websites were arranged in alphabetical order by speciality. More importantly, the entry on the navigation screen should read 'Other specialised society website addresses', rather than 'Archive'. Yet another peculiar entry is called 'Resources'. This provides a collection of website links shown as titles to different sized books on a shelf. This artistic device makes the website names difficult to read, and there seems to be no logical arrangement to the selection.

In each of these cases, I feel that no collector, experienced or novice, would automatically select the headings given as suitable navigational pointers. In general, the site contents need a complete review. In this study all duplication must be removed, and a serious attempt made to make navigating it appropriate for its intended audiences ●

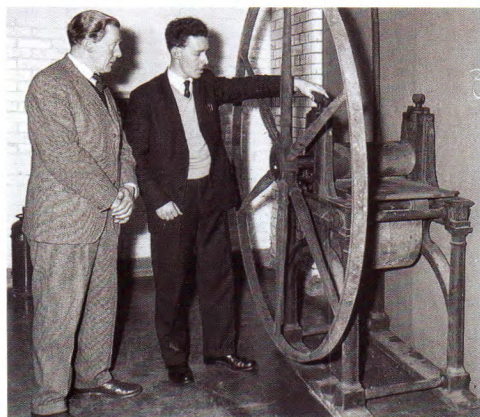
My second column in this series reviewed the UK Philately site (see above), which was sponsored by the Association of British Philatelic Societies (ABPS), the National Philatelic Society (NPS) and the British Philatelic Trust (BPT). At that time, in July 2000, this site was only a few months old. I mentioned the site again, briefly, in July 2004 and noted some changes that had been made.

I have revisited this site, now that it has been operational for seven and a half years, to find it has been redesigned again. Since inception, the site claims it has been visited over half a million times. I wonder how many of these visitors were as disappointed as I was to see that the site is still very difficult to navigate. It holds a vast amount of information, but this is wasted if the detail a user wants cannot be found easily.

The site now has no main heading. The previous version had a title banner that said 'Welcome to UK Philately – Stamp Collecting plus much, much more'. In place of this eye-catching introduction, we now have three lines of closely spaced text that explain the site is aimed at three different audiences: the established collector, the absolute beginner, and people just passing through. It becomes clear later that the third group also covers former collectors who are thinking about returning to the hobby.

These three audience groups have very different requirements. One would expect, therefore, to find a navigation bar arranged in three separate sections, with sub-headings of specific interest to each group. However, no main navigation bar exists. Instead, the topic headings are spread

James Mackay, 1936-2007 An appreciation by the Editor



James Mackay (right) and the late Arthur Blair with the Penny Black press which Jim acquired in 1962 for the British Museum.

LAST November we published an article on James Mackay to celebrate his 70th birthday. Little did I think at the time that, less than a year later, I would be writing his obituary. Jim was then fit and well, and indeed earlier this year had received a clean bill of health following a routine medical examination. His sudden death on 12 August has been a great shock. Jim was almost certainly the most prolific writer on philatelic subjects in the UK, and possibly worldwide; since 1961 he had written some 207 books and an estimated 10,000 articles. The books are not just on stamps and postal history; titles include works on coins, biography, antiques and travel. He completed a book on coins this year and was due to start another.

James Alexander Mackay was born in Inverness in November 1936. In the Second World War his father joined the RNVR and his mother returned to nursing. Jim and his sister were looked after by various relatives, including their grandmother on Skye; he had attended seven different schools by the age of nine. In 1945 the family settled in Glasgow and he attended Hillhead High School, receiving prizes in Greek, Latin, English and History, before going on to study History at the University of Glasgow. Many years later the University awarded him a D Litt degree for his work on Robert Burns.

After University he did national service, assigned to the Royal Artillery Guided Weapons Range in the Outer Hebrides. While waiting at Oban for the steamer to the isles, Jim purchased a copy of Ken Forster's book *The Postmark on a Letter*, and his interest in postmarks and postal history was born. Landing in the Hebrides he went straight to the post office, where the postmaster 'obliged' him with impressions of all his datestamps. He spent part of his military career on the remote island of St Kilda where he studied the island's history, wildlife and geography – all put to good use later in three books about the island. His love of St Kilda remained with him until the end.

After the Army, he spent 10 years as Assistant Keeper in charge of the Philatelic Collections at the British Museum, for which he acquired one of the presses used to print the Penny Black (see *Bulletin* July 2000), but a foolish misdemeanour cost him his job, a youthful indiscretion which he regretted for the rest of his days. He set about restoring his name by becoming a freelance writer, mostly on philatelic subjects, and over the years became a successful writer, journalist, and occasional broadcaster. He had considered a full-time military career and would no doubt have risen to high rank; he could also well have been a distinguished academic or civil servant.

A stamp collector since the age of five, he remained all his life what he described as a 'general collector' – collecting on a worldwide basis not just stamps but postmarks, postal stationery, postal labels, and postal ephemera! This vast collection was in daily use in writing articles and much appreciated by editors needing illustrations for articles. He had impressive specialised collections of Scottish postal history (especially the islands), Camp mail, Vikings (thematic), and was working on a collection of French postmarks shortly before his death. Most of the collections were well-written-up, and even those with just his penciled notes would still put many collectors to shame.

A keen collector of Royal Mail's issues, he purchased cylinder blocks of each new issue, definitives and specials. He advised Royal Mail on the

1996 Burns issue, and opened the National Postal Museum Burns exhibition, which gave him great pleasure. In 1998 he took part in a televised debate on Scottish country stamps, and although not a nationalist I think he would have liked Scotland to have its own stamp programme.

In recent years Jim had become more involved in organized philately in Scotland, serving as the President and Secretary of Glasgow Philatelic Society and President of the Old Eastwood Philatelic Society. His displays of worldwide stamp issues of the previous year were very popular and many members benefited from advice freely given on stamps in their collections. Jim played a part in the successful Glasgow 2000 exhibition, writing the accompanying book *Scotland's Posts*, and staging a fine display of Glasgow postal history at the city's Mitchell Library.

Collectors of British stamps will be aware of his useful books *British Stamps* (1985) and *Under the Gum: Background to British Stamps* (1997) for which he received a Rowland Hill Award. There were numerous books on English, Scottish and Irish postmarks, 12 volumes on Islands postal history, works on Official, Registered and Parcel Post mail, and the popular *Postal History Annual*, published 1981-90. There were books on the stamps and postal history of other countries, and important general works such as *Philatelic Terms Illustrated*, *The International Encyclopedia of Stamps*, and the *World Encyclopedia of Stamps and Stamp Collecting* (see *Bulletin* March 2007).

He wrote for both the *Philatelic* and the *Postmark Bulletin*, including two Bulletin Publications on Victorian Stamps and Burns. He helped me research the life of Sir George Steuart Mackenzie, whose Treasury Competition design may well have been the inspiration for the Penny Black; Jim visited Sir George's former Highland home, and photographed for the *Bulletin* a portrait of him in the Court House in Dingwall (see *Bulletin* August 2001). He was also a regular contributor to *Gibbons Stamp Monthly*, *Stamp Magazine*, *Stamp & Coin Mart*, and to overseas journals.

In addition he wrote well-received biographies – an academic tome on Burns was followed by more popular lives of Andrew Carnegie, Michael

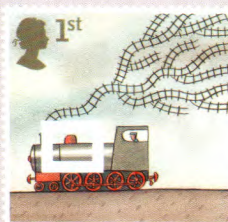
Collins, John Paul Jones, Thomas Lipton, Allan Pinkerton, Robert Service, and William Wallace. There were also books about Scottish towns and cities – Dumfries, Glasgow and Kilmarnock, and titles on antiques and fine arts.

It always amazed me given his workload (he was a workaholic) that he found time for much else, but he enjoyed films (going regularly to the cinema), playing the piano, walking in the countryside, and giving time to his family and friends. He was a good host and guide on Scottish trips, but he was not a keen or good driver and not very tolerant of other road users. I once incurred his wrath when my navigational skills got us lost in the Scottish borders. But normally he was even tempered, had a good sense of humour, and was sympathetic to people in difficulty or down on their luck. He was much concerned by the plight of the victims of the Asian tsunami in 2004.

He lived in modest comfort, but his obsessive workload meant he did not always have time to enjoy the fruits of his labours. He often worked well into the night to e-mail copy to editors whilst they slept, so it was waiting for them when they arrived at work in the morning. He did not seek fame, but was pleased by the recognition he received – two Rowland Hill Awards, signatory to the Book of Scottish Philatelists, and being voted *Bulletin* readers' favourite writer in 1999.

In his three score years and ten, James Mackay certainly packed in more than many people would in two or three lifetimes. His name will live on in his written words and in the memories of numerous philatelists and others who are grateful for his help, advice, and friendship. I will miss him greatly, especially our weekly phone conversations, which ranged widely in their content – one began comparing notes on printings of registration labels and ended with a discussion of the works of Frederick Rolfe (Baron Corvo). He encouraged my love of all things Scottish, and I will remember him whenever I venture north, read books on Scottish history, or see Scotland on television. My sympathy goes out to his wife Renate, his daughter Fiona and his son Alastair, who has inherited Jim's affection for St Kilda ●
John Holman

Competitions Win £100 in two easy-to-enter competitions



July identify The detail was from the Westminster Abbey stamp of 1966. The winner was R Walker, Isle of Wight.

July knowledge Answers: 1) Barnett Freedman; 2) Business Design Centre, Islington; 3) 1969. The winner was T Hindson of Sussex.

Ten runner-up prizes were also sent for each competition. Our thanks to all who entered.

FIRSTLY, identify the stamp from the detail above. Send your answer to October *Identify* Competition. Secondly, test your philatelic knowledge by answering the questions below. Send your answer to October *Knowledge* Competition. The competitions are not open to Royal Mail employees

- 1 Who designed the Duke of Edinburgh Award stamps of 1981?
- 2 How many values are in the 1992 Civil War set?
- 3 What is the British Postal Museum & Archive's address?

Send your answer (addressed to either October *Identify* competition or October *Knowledge* competition), name and address on a postcard or back of a sealed envelope to: British Philatelic Bulletin, Royal Mail, 148 Old Street, London EC1V 9HQ. The senders of the first cards drawn in each competition on 16 November will each receive £50. Runner-up prizes of presentation packs, FDCs or stamp cards will be awarded in each competition. These competitions are not open to Royal Mail employees ●

Events

Until 31 October Vehicles from the 'Moving the Mail' exhibition at Grampian Transport Museum, Alford, Aberdeenshire. **Enquiries** BPMA 020 7239 2570.

Until April/May 2008 'A Timeless Classic – The Evolution of Machin's Icon' exhibition at the BPMA, Freeling House, London. **Enquiries** 020 7239 2570.

29 September Basildon PS Autumn BasPex stamp fair & exhibition. Barstable School, Timberlog Close, Basildon, 10.00-16.00. Admission free. Dealers.

29 September Morecambe & District PS 60th anniversary stamp fair at the Platform, Morecambe. **Enquiries** B Fullick, 01524 409377.

4 October Jeffery Matthews at BPMA. Tickets: 020 7239 2570 or e-mail info@postalheritage.org.uk

13 October Assn of Sussex PSs Convention, South of England Showground, Ardingly, 10.00-16.30.

13 October Thatcham & District PS Stamp Fair, Thatcham. **Enquiries** G Stewart, 01635 866942.

20-21 October Scotex at Dewar's Centre, Perth. **Enquiries** 01698 356337.

26-28 October Dundee Philatelic Weekend, Dundee.

27 October North West Federation Annual Convention, Stamp Fair & Exhibition, Bolton, 10.00-16.00. **Enquiries** H Howard, 01204 526629.

30 October Talk 'A Life in Automation' by Dave Evans, Royal Mail engineer, BPMA, London. Tickets: 020 7239 2570 or info@postalheritage.org.uk ●

Late news

Royal Mail update In January we will be issuing a Valentines Day six 1st class stamps retail book which will contain five gold definitives and one 'Love' Smilers stamp (top right position in book). The Love stamp will have elliptical perfs and solid as opposed to vignette phosphor bands, conforming to the other stamps in the book. The date of issue will be announced shortly.

The cylinders and colours for the forthcoming Christmas stamps are: D1 gold D1 magenta D1 yellow D1 cyan (blue) D1 black and D1 phosphor. Extra D1 dark blue on Large 2nd. The same numbers were used for the books of 2nd and 1st class.

The forthcoming Lest We Forget generic sheet was shown at proof stage in the August *Bulletin*. The issued sheet will be captioned LETTERS FROM THE FRONT, NOT THE LAST POST, at bottom left.

The prices of Smilers sheets will change from 1 November. Sheets containing 1st class stamps will be £13.50 plus handling charge for one sheet; two or more sheets will be £12.50 each plus handling charge •

Auctions Harmers October auction will include 1979 essays by Jennifer Toombs for the Conductors issue, the designs featuring Sir Henry Wood and Sir Thomas Beecham. Enquiries: Harmers, telephone 020 8747 6100, or see www.harmers.com •

STAMPede Over the last 2½ years, Sandie Robb, Edinburgh Zoo's Education Officer, has used the educational value of stamp collecting in various events and in the Zoo's educational programme. With the support of the Association of Scottish Philatelic Societies, Wildlife Stamp Weekend had an exhibition of wildlife displays from collectors throughout Scotland, a stamp-related trail, crafts and workshops. For their annual summer schools, Sandie has provided a display on the country or continent being studied. Themed stamp events for children have raised an awareness of the wide variety of stamp material available and have contributed to learning about the flora, fauna and cultural aspects of the area of interest.

An outreach programme for schools has been developed, called 'Into Africa'. Within one of the activities, both Ugandan and British stamps were used to make comparisons and to learn about the currency, history, geography and wildlife.

The Scotland-China Association runs an annual primary school competition, to stimulate a keen interest and understanding of China. Their 'China' booklet, written by Sandie and published by the ASPs, provides background information, all illustrated through postage stamps. The next Wildlife Weekend is planned for 9-10 February 2008. For details contact: Sandie Robb, Edinburgh Zoo, Edinburgh EH12 6TS, or visit www.edinburghzoo.org.uk •

Lottery Fund aid for Postal History Collection A grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund will aid in the creation of an on-line catalogue of the extensive W V Morten Postal History Collection at the Bruce Castle Museum, in London. The grant of £49,800 is funding the project 'Pistols, Packets and Postmen' to catalogue and digitise the 30,000 items within this nationally-important collection. The project will be delivered by the Museum in partnership with the Communication Workers' Union and the British Postal Museum & Archive. The Morten Collection was saved for the nation by the Communication Workers' Union, when it bought the original 8000 items in a sale. Since 1927, the collection has been on public access at the Museum in the former home of Sir Rowland Hill. The digitisation of the project will create an on-line catalogue of the collection, and will be a valuable educational resource available to an international audience. Once digitised, the collection will be viewable in detail on-screen, without handling the original material, ensuring its long-term preservation for future generations. There will also be opportunities for volunteers to help with this digitisation work, with training sessions to acquire new skills. An article on Bruce Castle Museum was published here in May 1990. For further information about the Museum see www.haringey.gov.uk/brucecastlemuseum •

Celebrating a Royal occasion



1947 2007
THE DIAMOND WEDDING
Anniversary
ROYAL MAIL COMMEMORATIVE COVER



THE DIAMOND WEDDING ANNIVERSARY
1947-2007



To mark the Diamond Wedding of The Queen and The Duke of Edinburgh, 10 special stamps and related products will go on sale on 16 October. The stamps feature photographs of the Royal couple taken over the past 60 years, while the miniature sheet features the Royal family along with a specially commissioned recent study of The Queen and The Duke, taken at Buckingham Palace.

Further products celebrating the Diamond Wedding Anniversary will go on sale on 20 November.

Stamp set (6 stamps)	£ 3.32
Miniature sheet (4 stamps)	£ 2.15
Pack (stamps + min sheet)	£ 6.00
Stamp cards	£ 3.30
Press sheet	£34.85
Souvenir cover	£14.99
Silver proof coin	£34.00
Portrait in Stamps book	£ 9.95

Serviced FDCs: order by 16 October	
Stamps: UK orders	£ 4.38
Stamps: overseas	£ 3.73
Miniature sheet: UK orders	£ 3.00
Miniature sheet: overseas	£ 2.56

State if Tallents House or Windsor postmark required

Handling charges: £1.45 UK, £1.55 Europe, £2.15 elsewhere. There is no charge if ordering FDCs only

Portrait in Stamps book handling charge: £2.95 UK, £5 Europe, £14 elsewhere

Royal Mail

Tallents House, 21 South Gyle Crescent, Edinburgh EH12 9PB
Telephone orders: UK 08457 641 641; overseas +44 131 316 7483. Order online at: www.royalmail.com/shop



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Royal Mail