

November 1994



British Philatelic Bulletin

Volume 32, No: 3 The Royal Mail Magazine for Stamp Collectors Price 75p



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Royal Mail

British Philatelic Bulletin

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Main Feature

35 Years of St Kilda Drop Mail: 1959-1994 **82**

Richard Beith looks at ways of getting mail to and from what is probably the most remote inhabited outpost of the British Isles



Royal Mail News

Dates of Issue to go in Sheet Margin

With effect from the Cats stamps (17 January 1995), the date of issue will be printed in the sheet margin of special stamps. One of the reasons for this is to try to reduce the number of instances of early release at post offices. This innovation will be of interest to collectors and we envisage some collecting singles or blocks of stamps with the adjoining sheet margin showing the issue date.

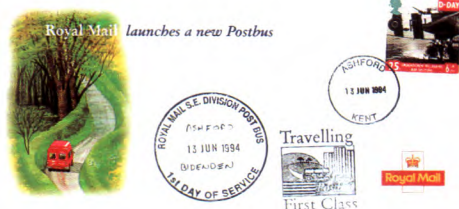
Postbus News

Five new postbus routes are being introduced in Wales, bringing the total in the Principality to 17. The new services are: Aberystwyth to Cymerfyn and Aberffwyd; Pembroke Dock to Angle; Pembroke Dock to Bosherton; Narberth to Lawrenny; and Narberth to Landshipping, all in Dyfed.

Other newly introduced postbus routes are: Kirkintilloch to Lennoxton, Strathclyde, Scotland; Foxhalls to Malton, North Yorkshire; Langley to Saffron Walden, Essex; and Ashford to Biddenden, Kent. Royal Mail and Humberside County Council are currently discussing the introduction of a postbus to serve the farming communities of Skipsea, Ulrome, Low Skirlington, Atwick, Bewholme, Brandesburton, Beeford, North Frodingham, Wansford and Skerne.

The new routes bring the total to over 220 services. An article on postbus material, popular with some collectors, was published here in June 1993 (pages 236-8).

Shown here is the special first day of service cover for the Ashford-Biddenden postbus, mentioned in last month's "Royal Mail News".



Christmas Stamps & Products

This year's Christmas stamps will be available from post offices, the British Philatelic Bureau and Post Office philatelic outlets from 1 November. The five stamps, – 19p, 25p, 30p, 35p and 41p – feature children in Nativity plays and are the third set of stamps designed by Yvonne Gilbert who has supplied the following biographical details:

Anne Yvonne Gilbert was born at Wallsend, near Newcastle upon Tyne, in 1951 and received her artistic education at Newcastle and Liverpool Colleges of Art (1969-72) where she specialised in illustration. Her work has been primarily in publishing, illustrating books for children and adults. A particular interest in costume requires a considerable amount of research work which is put to good use in her designs. Amongst recently published works are *A Baby's Book of Lullabies and Cradle Songs* and a childrens' *Bible* for the USA. Yvonne is currently at work on illustrations for two more books.

Her first stamp designs were issued in 1984, the year her son Tom was born, and were appropriately Nativity scenes. The issue won two stamp design awards in Italy. The second set, *Arthunan Legends*, followed in 1985. Both sets reflected her interest in drawing people and researching costumes.

The 1994 Christmas set, she tells us, was meant to relate to the 1984 set "but less serious, more fun being children... I would have made them less cute, and more naughty, but I know they must appeal to all the mums and dads, grannies and grandads." The costumes were a source of delight, "especially because of the multi-ethnic requirement".

Over the next few weeks collectors and millions of Christmas card senders will have the opportunity of using and enjoying Yvonne's work.

Readers are reminded that several Christmas products will go on sale on 1 November, along with the Christmas stamps. As usual Christmas stamps will be available in books, containing 10 x 1st class and 20 x 2nd class Christmas stamps, price £2.50 and £3.80 respectively. Stamp cards cost 25p each, and the presentation pack £1.85. A Christmas aerogramme was released on 4 October (45p).

Christmas greetings cards, reproducing the designs of the Christmas stamps, are being produced – available from the Bureau and selected retailers, in packs of 10 cards and

envelopes. Price £3.99 per pack from retailers. Bureau customers may purchase packs from the Bureau at the special price of £3.75 per pack.

A "Gift Pack" containing a first day cover, set of postcards and a presentation pack will make a good present for a young collector. The pack is available from the Bureau, Post Office philatelic outlets and self-service display units in selected W H Smith, Martins, and Tesco shops, price £6.50.

The 1994 Royal Mail Yearbook and Yearpack (formerly known as Collectors' Pack) will be available from the Bureau, Post Office philatelic outlets, and main post offices, from 14 November. Prices: Yearbook - standard version £22.50; leatherbound version £75; Yearpack - £15.95. The Yearbook is reviewed elsewhere in this magazine.

The Christmas stamps will also be available encapsulated in glass pyramids which make unusual Christmas gifts. Price £24.95 each. Pyramids should be ordered from: British Philatelic Bureau, 20 Brandon Street, EDINBURGH EH3 5TT.

Bulletin Back Numbers

Back issues are available for one year from the British Philatelic Bureau, 20 Brandon Street, EDINBURGH EH3 5TT, price 75p per copy. Some back issues are also available to callers at the shop at the National Postal Museum, King Edward Street, LONDON EC1A 1LP.

For earlier issues a back number service is operated by Mr Maynard Davies of Bristol. He has for sale bound reprints of Vols 1 and 2. Photocopies can be supplied to order of issues from Vols 3-6. Original copies of many issues from Vol 7 onwards are available. A limited supply of used binders is held. Mr Davies is interested in purchasing issues from Vols 3-6, but has adequate stocks of later issues. He regrets he is not able to undertake the time-consuming task of searching and copying specific articles. All enquiries, accompanied by stamped addressed envelope or international reply coupon, should be sent to: Maynard Davies, Hall Floor Flat, 4 Cecil Road, Clifton, BRISTOL BS8 3HR

Medical Discoveries

The stamps in this set are of perforation gauge 14 x 14½, not 15 x 14 as stated in the presentation pack and in Royal Mail News in the August *Bulletin*. We regret any confusion caused.

Royal Mail Management Changes

Three senior appointments have recently been made to the Royal Mail Executive Committee. Mr Ken Wright is appointed Assistant Managing Director, Mr Stuart Sweetman Operations Policy Director, and Mr Jim Cotton-Betteridge Marketing Director.

Leaving the business are Mr Paul Hopper, Marketing & Sales Director, and Mr Kevin Doherty, Consumer Services Director, Royal Mail National. Mr Hopper joined Royal Mail in 1991 and was, from April 1993, Chairman of the Stamp Advisory Committee. The new SAC Chairman is Mr John Tew, Director & General Manager of Royal Mail National.

Mr Doherty, who joined in April 1992, had overall responsibility for the marketing of stamps, both for social mail use and philately. His directorate included the National Postal Museum in which he took a keen interest, wanting to see it develop its displays and services to encourage more family visits. He was instrumental in the Museum's acquisition of the Freddie Mercury stamp collection which has proved a major attraction. In September he gave a talk on Royal Mail and Philately to the Philatelic Congress of Great Britain at Chelmsford. Mr Doherty took over as Secretary of the Stamp Advisory Committee in April 1994. We wish him well for the future.

Changes in Perforation Patterns

Information was published in July (page 343-5) concerning modification of the perforation in sheet margins of definitive stamps. This does not affect the perforation of the individual stamps and so will be of interest only to specialist collectors. Sheets of 4p, 5p, 6p, 19p, 20p, 25p, 38p, 41p and 50p stamps have now been produced with the new perforation arrangement and some will already have gone into general distribution. Sheets of 1p and 30p stamps with the revised perforation layout are expected to be delivered to Royal Mail early in November and will go into distribution as needed. No first day facilities are being provided for these perforation changes.

Post Office Philatelic Outlets

Post Office philatelic outlets are listed below. A mail order service is run by Royal Mail from: British Philatelic Bureau, 20 Brandon Street, EDINBURGH EH3 5TT.

Retail outlets are run by Post Office Counters Ltd at 36 main post offices; these outlets stock the majority of items available from the Bureau.

These Post Office outlets are variously called Collections, Philatelic Counters or Post Shops Plus. Most are open normal Post Office hours, Monday-Friday and Saturday morning. Post Shops Plus should not be confused with ordinary Postshops which stock a limited range of philatelic products.

New Bond Street PO, BATH BA1 1AJ
 25 Castle Place PO, BELFAST BT1 1BB
 51 Ship Street PO, BRIGHTON BN1 1AA
 1 Pinfold Street PO, BIRMINGHAM B2 4AA
 The Galleries PO, Castle Galleries, BRISTOL BS1 3XX
 9 St Andrews Street PO, CAMBRIDGE CB2 3AA
 28 High Street PO, CANTERBURY CT1 2BA
 2 Hills Street PO, CARDIFF CF1 2ST
 2 St John Street PO, CHESTER CH1 1AA
 19 Head Street PO, COLCHESTER CO1 1AA
 Hertford Street PO, COVENTRY CV1 1AD
 10 High Street PO, CROYDON CR9 1HT
 33 Silver Street PO, DURHAM DH1 3RE
 Waterloo Place PO, EDINBURGH EH1 1AL
 Bedford Street PO, EXETER EX1 1AH
 George Square PO, GLASGOW G2 1AA
 Kings Square PO, GLOUCESTER GL1 1AD
 North Street PO, GUILDFORD GU1 4BB
 City Square PO, LEEDS LS1 2UH
 4 Bishops Street PO, LEICESTER LE1 6AJ
 Whitechapel PO, LIVERPOOL L1 1AA
 Lombard Street PO, LONDON EC3V 9EB
 Trafalgar Square PO, William IV Street, LONDON WC2N 4DL
 26 Spring Gardens PO, MANCHESTER M2 1BB
 24 Sidgate PO, Eldon Square, NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE NE1 7AB
 Queen Street PO, NOTTINGHAM NG1 2BN
 St Aldgates PO, OXFORD OX1 1ZZ
 5 St Andrews Cross PO, PLYMOUTH PL1 1AB
 Slindon Street PO, PORTSMOUTH PO1 1AB
 64 South Street PO, ROMFORD RM1 1RL
 12 High Street PO, SOUTHAMPTON SO14 2PH
 199 High Street PO, SOUTHEEND ON SEA SS1 1LL
 2 Henley Street PO, STRATFORD UPON AVON CV37 6PU
 High Cross PO, TRURO TR1 2AP
 Peascod Street PO, WINDSOR SL4 1AA
 22 Lendal PO, YORK YO1 2DA

A limited range of Royal Mail philatelic products is on sale at the National Postal Museum, King Edward Street, LONDON EC1A 1LP, open Monday-Friday, 9.30am to 4.30pm. The Museum also sells a range of books, postcards, models and other items of interest to philatelists, postal historians and the general

visitor. Postcards, models and other items are on sale at Post Office Archives, Freeling House Mount Pleasant (Phoenix Place Entrance), LONDON EC1A 1BB, open Monday-Friday, 9am-4.15pm.

New Priority Service Envelope

A new envelope for the International Recorded service will be available from the British Philatelic Bureau from early November. This will be produced in a "plastic" material, of C5 size, price £5. There will be no first day of issue or availability.

Readers should note that trial Special Delivery, Registered, and Registered Plus envelopes will not be available from the Bureau from early November as announced in the Stop Press to the October *Bulletin*. We regret any disappointment or inconvenience caused.



Autumn Stampex/BPE Awards

Our congratulations to Dr Iain Stevenson on the award of the Royal Mail Trophy for his exhibit "Great Britain Stamped Telegraph Stationery", and to Anoop Odedra winner of the National Postal Museum Medal in the Melville (Youth) Class for an exhibit entitled "History of the Car". Dr Stevenson and Anoop received small silver gilt and bronze medals in the BPE/Melville competitions.

The dates for the Spring and Autumn Stampex exhibitions next year are 28 February-5 March and 10-15 October respectively.

Out of the Arc...

Curiosities from the Post Office Archives

7. Forged £5 Note

This month we feature a forged £5 note which was received as passage money for travelling in a mail coach from Liverpool in 1829. The clerk stated that because of the hurry and darkness at the time it was not discovered to be a bad note.

Also shown is a hand-coloured copper engraved print of a Royal Mail coach "Coming Down Hill", dated London, 1 March 1837. This fine print was acquired by the Archives in 1991.

Post Office Archives is open to the public Monday-Friday, 09.00-16.15. A leaflet giving details of the services can be obtained by sending a DL size stamped addressed envelope to: Post

Office Archives, Freeling House, Mount Pleasant (Phoenix Place Entrance), LONDON EC1A 1BB.



Postal Memorabilia Displays

David Harrop will be providing a display of postal memorabilia, from his extensive collection, at the Leeds Philatelic Society exhibition at Pudsey Civic Hall, Dawsons Corner, Pudsey, Leeds on 25-26 November. Open 25th 11.00-19.00, 26th 10.00-17.00. A

number of specialist societies, including the GB Philatelic Society will be holding meetings at this event. Enquiries about the event to D Eliot, Tel. 0532 455404. Enquiries about this and other of Mr Harrop's postal memorabilia display to D Harrop, 15 Hawthorne Road, Heaton Mersey, STOCKPORT SK4 3DQ.

Stamp Scene

Postcard Centenary celebrated in style

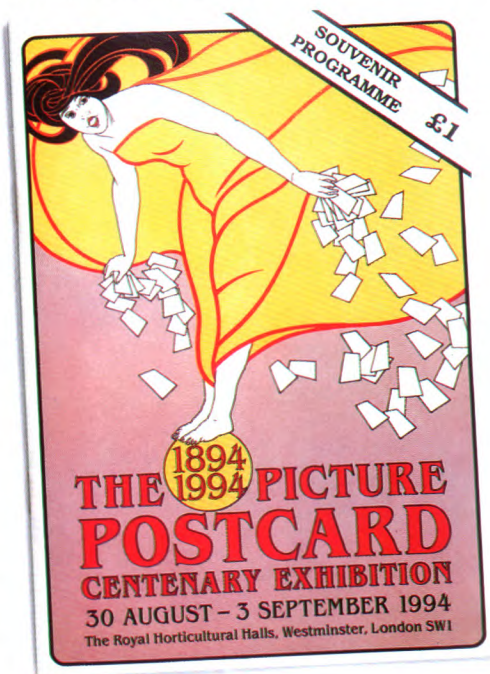
The exhibition marking the centenary of picture postcards, held at the Royal Horticultural Halls, Westminster, from 30 August to 3 September attracted some 6400 visitors – more than double the attendance at the annual BIPEX postcard exhibition. The organisers are to be congratulated on a well-laid out event – much less congested than Stampex. It was quite pleasant to wander around, enjoying the displays and browsing at the dealers' tables. The displays, which were spaciouly arranged, in both Old and New Halls (including the stage in New Hall, as at Stampex), were eye-catching and of interest to visitors, whether or not they were specialist postcard collectors. Could the same be said of stamp exhibitions? The subjects ranged over a wide area – everything from Animals to Royalty, Railways to Celebrities, from Bicycles to Hebridean crofters.

Most of the main postcard dealers were present and the majority of stands were busy on the day of the Bulletin editor's visit (1 September). The "stands" were really tables, with boxes of postcards laid out for collectors to go through the stocks which are arranged by theme or country/county/town. At some stands collectors could sit on chairs to examine the cards in comfort. Perhaps some consideration could be given to a better lay-out of Stampex in future. This exhibition was enjoyable, had a relaxed atmosphere, and to use a ghastly piece of marketing jargon, was "user friendly". There were several good features on the postcard centenary and exhibition in the national as well as the philatelic press and during the exhibition some of the stand-holders were interviewed for radio and television programmes.

A number of postcard artists were on hand to discuss their work and to sign cards for collectors. A special posting box was provided on 1 September for visitors to post cards to receive the Centenary of Picture postcards special handstamp (the actual anniversary day) – about 3000 items were posted to receive this cancellation.

A well-produced Souvenir Programme was available giving details of the displays and the dealers present as well as a number of interesting feature articles. Tonic & Valmai Holt write on the development of postcards and the hobby over the past century, John H D Smith looks back on 25 years of postcard dealing. The

organisation of the hobby and trade has changed dramatically during that period. Michael Goldsmith explains the benefits of collectors joining a local postcard club and Andrew Faulds, MP writes on his collection of Stratford-upon-Avon postcards. The programme is well-illustrated. A limited number of copies are still available, price £2 postpaid, from: *Picture Postcard Monthly*, 15 Debdale Lane, Keyworth, NOTTINGHAM NG12 5HT.



The September issue of that magazine includes an article, by Editor Brian Lund, on the cards of E T W Dennis of Scarborough a company which "were in on cards from the start". Dennis published the first British picture postcards, and their range of coloured viewcards and thematics, along with the Bamforth comics, is still among the best in Britain. George Webber charts the early years of British picture postcards, Rick Hogben records Tower Bridge cards (the Tower also celebrates its centenary this year), and Gillian Jackson and Brian Lund provide an impressive pictorial record of picture postcards over the past 100 years – from an 1896 card showing St Paul's to a recent card commemorating the opening of the Channel Tunnel. Pete Davies writes on modern cards and there are all the usual features on postcard fairs, clubs, and classified advertising. Price £1.70,

postage 50p UK Annual subscription to this magazine is £20 UK, £25 Europe, £36 Canada/USA, £40 Rest of World Airmail, and £24 surface mail outside Europe.

Special stamps commemorating the centenary of picture postcards were issued by Royal Mail on 12 April 1994 and are still available from the British Philatelic Bureau and Post Office philatelic outlets – £1.50 set of five stamps, £1.85 presentation pack, and £1.25 set of five stamp cards.

The narrow-gauge Tallyllyn Railway in Wales marked the postcard centenary by issuing a postcard reproducing a Valentine postcard of c.1900 showing the "Toy Railway, Towyn". Cards bearing Tallyllyn railway letter stamp and Royal Mail 25p Pictorial postcards stamp were carried on the railway on 1 September (centenary day). The railway stamp received a special Centenary datestamp, the Royal Mail stamp the Tywyn Gwynedd packet handstamp.



POSTCARD



Reproduced from a Valentine postcard c.1900

The Fair 1 collection

The Fafnir Railway celebrates the centenary of the British Picture Postcard (1894-1994)



Mr E E Eade
1 Dyssyni Walk
Gron-y-mor
TYWYN
LL26 005

To be posted on arrival at Abergyniowy

Collect Post Office Cards

A new, 1994/95, edition of this popular catalogue is shortly to be published. Out of print for a number of years, this new edition, from a new publisher, is sure to be welcomed by collectors of Royal Mail stamp cards (PHQ cards), National Postal Museum and Post Office Regional cards. The catalogue has been updated to mid-1994 and includes new sections on British maximum cards, British exhibition cards, PHQ card errors, airmailers & stationery cards, British Telecom cards, and British phone cards (BT, Mercury, Paytelco). The book will be available from stamp dealers or direct from the publisher: Rosendale Stamps, 41 Queen Victoria Street, LONDON EC4N 4SA, Tel. 071-236 8729. Price £4.95, postage £1.

Use of Victorian Stamps

In "Cover Corner" in the September *Bulletin* (page 11) we featured a cover submitted by F Buerdell bearing a Victorian 1d stamp with George V Silver Jubilee 1/2d used in June 1935. The cover passed through the post without comment although the Victorian stamp was no longer valid for postage by that time. Gerald Davis, FRPSL commented: "I wonder if Mr Buerdell realises that it must have been a philatelic stunt, as the penny lilac had been officially demonetized many years before. At the time (1935) they were so common that collectors were often dreaming up ideas to put them into use – but now it is an attractive curio."

Peter Moorey of Surrey has sent in a photocopy of a similar item, bearing the Penny Lilac with George VI 1/2d Coronation stamp both machine-cancelled at Haslemere, Surrey on 10 May 1951. Again the cover passed through without comment. Mr Moorey has asked for a mention of the Surrey Postal History Group, of which he is a member. Readers interested in the postal history of this county should write to the Hon Secretary: Roger C Vaughan, 13 Copse Side, GODALMING, Surrey, GU7 3RU.

Johannes Fritzsche of Leipzig, Germany sent in a photocopy of a cover he posted home whilst on business in London in 1955. The cover bears a George V 1d "Downey Head" definitive, 1d Silver Jubilee commemorative, George VI 1d Channel Islands Liberation commemorative and Elizabeth II 1d Wilding definitive. The last two were machine cancelled London, 12 July 1955 but the two George V stamps missed cancellation in the UK. Somewhat unusually

Available as a pair of cards, one mint, one used on 1 September, price £2.35 postpaid, from: Sara Eade, Postmaster, Tallyllyn Railway, Wharf Station, TYWYN, Gwynedd, LL36 9EY.

The dates for the next BIPEX (British International Postcard Exhibition) are 12-16 September 1995, at the usual venue – Kensington Town Hall.

they were cancelled on arrival in Germany with a Leipzig handstamp. As Herr Fritzsche points out a "cover curiosity" indeed.

Mr A Barwick of Norwich sent in photos of covers he posted in 1937 bearing the Penny lilac



with Edward VIII 1/2d and "Jubilee" 1/2d with George V and Edward VIII 1/2d stamps to make up the 1 1/2d rate. The stamps were machine cancelled at Norwich and delivered unsurcharged.

1995 Trade Directory in Preparation

Philatelic Exporter, publisher of the monthly international stamp trade magazine, *The Philatelic Exporter*, has announced that a new edition of the *International Stamp Dealers' Directory* will be published in April 1995.

Inclusion in the directory is free to genuine stamp dealers and others professionally involved in the philatelic industry. Postcard, phonecard, coin, and other small collectables dealers are also welcomed. For further details and an application form contact: Philatelic Exporter, PO Box 137, HATFIELD, Herts, AL10 9DB, Tel. 01707-266331, Fax 01707-274782 (international +44 1707 266331 or 274782).

Publications List

A new (September 1994) listing of Philatelic Publications held in stock by James Bendon Ltd is now available. This lists and describes over 100 titles – including Bendon's own publications, all Robson Lowe handbooks and other selected books. Prices, all including postage, are quoted in US dollars and pounds sterling.

Titles of particular interest to collectors of British stamps and postal history are: *Index to The Philatelist* (& PJGB), 1974-90; *The Die proofs of Waterlow & Sons – Part 1 Britain & the Empire to 1960* (Fraser & Lowe); *Herewith My Frank...* (Lovegrove); *The Inland Posts (1392-1672)*; *A Calendar of Historical Documents* (Stone);

Guide Lines to the Penny Black (Litchfield); *British Line Engraved Stamps: Repaired Impressions 1855-1879* (Wiggins); *Scots Local Cancellations Illustrated 1854-1860* (Alcock); *The Posts in Sevenoaks in Kent* (Donald); *Specimen Stamps and Stationery of Great Britain* (Samuel & Huggins); *A History of Ship Letters of the British Isles* (Robertson).

For a free copy of this useful listing write to: James Bendon Ltd, Philatelic Publications, PO Box 6484, Limassol, Cyprus.

Railway Letter Stamps

Shown here are 25p railway letter stamps issued by the Mid-Hants Railway on 6 June and 3 September 1994. The June stamp commemorates the 50th anniversary of D-Day; the September stamp is the fifth in the MHR's "Locomotives" series and features Standard Class 5 No. 73080 "Merlin". Both stamps were produced in sheets of six. Available at face value. On 10 September a special "War of the Line" event took place and a special railway cancel was used. This is available on postcards, carried from Alton to Alresford or Alresford to Alton, price £1 each. Postage 50p. Orders/enquiries: Postal Co-ordinator, Mid-Hants Rly, ALRESFORD, Hants, SO24 9JG.



Robert Stolz Trophy for Music Philately

The Robert Stolz trophy is awarded annually by the Philatelic Music Circle to the designer of the best Music stamp, set or miniature sheet of the

previous year. The silver trophy is sponsored by Einzi Stolz in memory of her late husband Robert (1880-1975), the famous Viennese composer of operettas, songs and film music.

The winner for 1994 was Sverre Morken for his two Norwegian stamps issued in March 1993 (SG.1158/9) to mark the 150th anniversary of the birth of Edvard Grieg. Second place went to Albuissou, designer of the Monaco stamp of November 1993 (SG.2149) also commemorating Grieg's sesquicentenary. In third place was Pirkko Vahtero for the Finland miniature sheet of October 1993 (SG.MS1339) marking the inauguration of the new Opera House for the Finnish National Opera.

Last year Lynda Gray was awarded second place for her British Gilbert & Sullivan stamps, issued July 1992 (SG.1624-8).

For details of the Philatelic Music Circle write to: Mrs Irene Lawford, 22 Bouverie Gardens, KENTON, Middx, HA3 0RQ, or Mrs Cathleen Osborne, PO Box 1781, Sequim, Washington 98382, USA.

Do You Know Your British Stamps? Book

This first-ever quiz book on British stamps, packed with valuable philatelic data, continues to achieve wider recognition. Selling at a brisk pace in Britain and throughout Europe, it has now received a Silver Bronze Award at the Cardinal Spellman Philatelic Museum's Philatelic Literature Exhibition in Weston, Massachusetts, USA.

Do You Know Your British Stamps? will shortly become even more accessible to GB collectors through the forthcoming inclusion of some of the quizzes with the G B StampMaster computer programme, produced by Philatelic Software Ltd and marketed by Royal Mail. The Macintosh version of StampMaster, with the quiz module, was launched at Autumn Stampex, while the DOS Version 2 and Windows will become available in early 1995.

Meanwhile, the book is still available from philatelic literature dealers, or directly from the publisher: Brenda Goodwin, 90 Clifden Road, Clapton, LONDON E5 0LN. Price £9.50 UK, overseas £10.50, both postpaid. The book was reviewed here in October 1993, page 53.

National Postal Museum News

Until the introduction of Uniform Penny Postage in 1840 the Post Office had operated primarily in raising revenue for the Treasury.

The Museum's major exhibition for 1995 will show how, during Queen Victoria's reign, the PO began to move away from this approach to become a more "service" based organisation with a growing social conscience. For example the setting up of the PO Savings Bank introduced a nation-wide means of saving for the poorer classes. The postal order meant that for the first time those without bank accounts, could order material through the post. The introduction of postcards, parcel post, book post, pattern post, registration and express services will also be covered.

Most of the ground floor will be given over to what was probably the most far reaching change in postal operations during Victoria's reign, The Rural Post Revision. Surveyors and their clerks visited every village in the country setting up new services and bringing many rural communities into the postal network for the first time. This eventually led to the delivery of letters to every house in the kingdom. The introduction and development of pillar and wall boxes (the latter being part of the Rural Reform) will also be featured. The exhibition will also show how the PO used new technology throughout the period.

The Museum's Main Gallery will feature the development and use of postage stamps during Victoria's reign. The unique Penny Black proof sheet will be on show for one month at the beginning of the exhibition, and there will be a display on the life and work of Rowland Hill. "The Victorian Post Office" will follow the current exhibition "Addressing Postcodes" next May.



Orkney Airmails – Correction

We regret the top illustration on page 42 of Mr Beith's article in the October *Bulletin* was printed the wrong way round. The correct view is now shown.

Check your Post

MATTHEW P HINTON

There are three things, in my opinion, which make the collecting and studying of modern postal history stand out from other forms of philately. Firstly, it is free. Of course, it needn't be – but if you do not wish to purchase items of this nature, you can simply retain interesting covers as they hit your doormat with a satisfying thud. With so many millions of letters being processed by Royal Mail every day, is it any wonder that a reasonable quantity bear a feature worth noting and keeping in the collection? Just as there are so many television programmes featuring Terry Wogan, some are bound to be worth watching – aren't they? The second reason is that the items are usually unique and, thus, make a special and personal addition to a collection of this kind. Thirdly, I believe that this form of collecting distinguishes philatelists from stamp collectors. In this article I refer to some of the items which I have seen fit to place in my own collection.

Firstly, undelivered letters make an interesting topic in several ways. In some areas a sticker is affixed to undelivered mail with one of a number of boxes ticked to indicate exactly why the letter or package never reached its intended destination. This sticker used to be printed in red on yellow, but has recently been changed for one in blue on white. I have been trying to obtain a number of covers each bearing one of the stickers, with different boxes ticked. I also wanted an example returned because the address written on the front did not exist. In this case the details are filled in on a line on the label. More about that little venture later.

Surcharged Mail

Another reason for undelivery of mail is often underpayment or unpayment. I like to think that I am not often guilty of this, but when posting large quantities of mail, it can be difficult to ensure that all have been pre-paid correctly. In my home area in Cheshire letters are rarely treated to "To Pay" labels; and I have never been awakened by a postman requiring the relevant fee. Instead, a rubber stamp is applied and filled in as appropriate. Other areas use a self-adhesive

label instead of the rubber stamp. This is used, for example, in Swansea, and has the information regarding the fee pre-printed. Whilst on the subject of To Pay labels, I have noticed that the striking ones issued in February did not take long to filter into the system. I have a cover bearing examples used in April. This cover is also interesting because it clearly illustrates the transition between the 1982 and 1994 designs because it bears examples of each of the two issues. A completely different system is used in Southampton. A rubber handstamp is used where items bearing no stamps, or stamps which have already been used, are attached to



Surcharged Mail – cover bearing 1982 and 1994 *To Pay* labels; Southampton *Surcharge Duty* handstamp letters. This handstamp is worded "SURCHARGE DUTY/DATE/SOUTHAMPTON". Similar handstamps are no doubt in use elsewhere. The fee for underpaid or unpaid letters is calculated as follows; the offending letter is treated as a second class item and the fee is the amount unpaid plus 15p surcharge. For example, a letter sent with no stamps affixed, weighing less than 60g, is charged the postage (19p) plus 15p (Total 34p).

An uncommon use of the postal service is that of electronic post. This is a system whereby the customer transfers the details of the letter he or she wishes to send, electronically, to Royal Mail who then produce, package and deliver the letter. It is delivered in a distinctive bright

Electronic Post cover



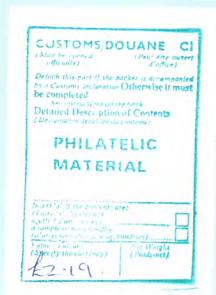
1993 Greetings stamp slogan



Queen Elizabeth 2 "Paquebot" handstamp



Klussendorf machine cancel;



Customs Declaration – rubber-stamped "label"

Rubber-stamped Printed Postage Impressions

yellow envelope and one of these makes a colourful and interesting addition to a collection.

Interesting Postmarks

Postmarks are an immensely interesting subject – far to much so for me to do them justice in this short space. One interesting variety occurs when a postmark die is left in use beyond the date upon which it should have been withdrawn. It is particularly interesting when Christmas slogans fall victim to this. I have an example of the slogan used at the beginning of 1993 to advertise the forthcoming Greetings stamps. This should have only been in use until the first few days of February, but was left in this particular machine (Reading) until at least July.

Mail posted on board a ship is sometimes treated with a "paquebot" postmark or ship's cachet. Most ferry companies and cruise operators have cachets which can be applied to mail on request. If you do not like sailing all that much, a polite letter to the company in question will usually suffice, if you enclose a stamped

addressed envelope with your request. The Queen Elizabeth 2 has a cachet irregularly worded "Paquebot" and is known cancelling stamps.

An interesting postmark of recent time is the machine cancellation applied by a Klussendorf machine at Liverpool; my example is dated 25 June 1992.

PPIs and Customs Declaration

"Postage Paid" markings come in many guises: those shown here were rubber-stamped although more are printed onto envelopes. These markings, known as Printed Postage Impressions, were first introduced in the mid-1960s. A few collectors make a study of them and information is published in the *British Postmark Society Quarterly Bulletin*.

Another interesting feature to keep an eye out for is the Customs Declaration – either affixed as a label, or rubber-stamped on incoming foreign mail with a market value. These are easy to obtain – simply order something from an overseas stamp dealer!

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Christmas in the Stamp Album

JAMES MACKAY

At this season one looks forward to the Christmas festivities which, in the Northern Hemisphere, mark the turning point of winter. Those of us who are philatelists have the added pleasure of looking out for the latest crop of Christmas stamps depicting Old Master paintings, churches, stained glass windows, Christmas customs and Santa Claus (and his counterparts in many lands). When Britain inaugurated its Christmas issues almost 30 years ago (albeit only in the form of stamped air letter sheets), the number of countries which had issued special Christmas stamps was few and far between. Yet, in just four years time, we will actually be celebrating their centenary.

The very first stamp in this theme, although inscribed "XMAS 1898", was not intended primarily for seasonal usage. This was the Canadian 2 cent stamp released to coincide with Canada's adoption of Imperial Penny Postage.



The first Christmas stamp – Canada, 1898; and Nativity scene, Hungary, 1943

The stamp featured a map of the world with the British Commonwealth coloured red and bore the somewhat bombastic slogan "We hold a vaster Empire than has been" – actually a quotation from "A Song of Empire" by Sir Lewis

Morris, who had composed it in honour of Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee in 1887 – the next line reads "Nigh half the race of man is subject to our Queen!"

Actually, this stamp is surrounded by more half-truths than most. The Gibbons catalogue, for example, gives credit for designing it to Postmaster General William Mulock, whom it must be presumed had better things to do with his time. Actually Mulock probably did no more than give instructions as to what he had in mind, but the actual design was executed by R Weir Crouch, Gustave Hahn, A H Howard and R Holmes. The stamp was engraved for intaglio printing but the blue (oceans) and red (British Empire) colours were added by the letterpress process.

Which Prince?

The story goes that the stamp was originally planned for release on 9 November, the birthday of the Prince of Wales (later King Edward VII). When a postal official informed Queen Victoria that the stamp would be issued on the Prince's birthday, she is said to have asked jealously "Which Prince?" To which the courtier tactfully replied "Why, Madam, the Prince of Peace of course." And so "XMAS 1898" came to be inscribed on the stamp. In actual fact, however, the Imperial penny postage rate came into effect on Christmas Day and the stamp was released 18 days earlier in order that stocks were well distributed in good time.

Austria, as much as any other country, has paid tribute to the greatest festival in the Christian calendar, with stamps and the distinctive Christkindl postmarks for the occasion. The first postage stamps issued specifically for the Christmas season were released by Austria in 1937 and consisted of two values depicting a vase of roses and the signs of the Zodiac. This is one of these "ghost" designs where, if you use your imagination a little, you can see something which the artist never intended – Hitler's portrait in the petals of the rose in the centre. This was an ill omen for scarcely three months later Hitler seized Austria

and she entered political and philatelic oblivion for seven years.

In 1948, Austria produced a stamp to mark the 130th anniversary of "Silent Night, Holy Night" and portrayed Father Joseph Mohr and his organist Franz Gruber who, on Christmas Eve 1818, composed the simple but moving carol which has delighted the world ever since. The Austrian Christmas stamps of 1953 and 1954 showed a little girl gazing up at a Christmas tree and we are reminded that the decoration of fir trees for this occasion was a Germanic custom which the Prince Consort is said to have introduced into England.

showing flowers, birds, butterflies, mammals and insects with holly and Christmas bells on decorative se-tenant labels.

Commonwealth Issues

After Canada's false start of 1898 it was not until 1957 that a country of the Commonwealth entered the scene. In that year Australia issued two Christmas stamps depicting the Child Samuel from Sir Joshua Reynolds painting in the National Gallery, London. The following year the Christmas pair featured the Nativity and in 1959 the approach of the Magi to Bethlehem was shown. To mark the 350th



Austrian stamps of 1937, 1948 and 1953/4

Among the earliest issues one must not overlook the set of three, featuring the shepherds and angels, the Nativity scene and the Magi, which Hungary issued in 1943. A year later the country was under Soviet domination and it was not until December 1981 that Christmas stamps were resumed.

Delightful Designs

The vogue for Christmas stamps developed hesitantly in the 1950s. South Korea produced some delightful designs in that decade, showing Christmas trees, toy mice and children, but as an economy measure the government which overthrew Syngman Rhee tried to discourage the sending of Christmas and New Year cards as an unnecessary frivolity and therefore discontinued these stamps.

Cuba began issuing a pair of Christmas stamps in 1954, portraying Santa Claus. The following year a turkey, traditional Christmas fare, was depicted, and in 1956 the Magi on camels gazing at the Star of Bethlehem were shown. From 1960, Cuba embarked on ambitious sets, comprising sheets of 25 stamps

anniversary of the Authorised Version of 1611 the Christmas stamps of 1960 and 1961 took as their theme a *Bible* (inscribed with the text from St Luke 2: "Behold I bring you good tidings of great joy") and a medieval *Book of Hours* respectively. In the latter year Australia's dependency Norfolk Island began issuing a Christmas stamp in the same design and Australia also produced a Christmas air letter sheet. In 1962 a Madonna and Child, based on a 16th century Spanish wood-carving, was the subject. A Star with the caption "Peace on Earth" was used in 1963.

These early Australian stamps were printed in monochrome intaglio but in 1964 a switch was made to multicolour photogravure, with a little girl gazing at a Nativity scene. Liechtenstein (1957) was another early issuer of Christmas stamps, but in 1959 four other countries jumped on the bandwagon. The Belgian Congo's set of three depicted the Madonna and Child, the Vatican featured "Christ adored by the Magi" after Rafael, Spain reproduced Goya's "Holy Family" and Costa Rica issued four stamps, three of which showed famous paintings by Modigliani, Rubens and El Greco.



Commonwealth Issues

Gesture of Goodwill

Thus, by the beginning of the 1960s the trend towards multicolour photogravure and a penchant for reproductions of Old Master paintings, was already established. New Zealand issued its first Christmas stamp in 1960 and featured the rather sombre "Adoration of the Shepherds" by Rembrandt. For a number of years New Zealand clung to this well-tried formula, departing from Old Masters only briefly in 1964 when a stamp commemorated the 150th anniversary of the first Christmas celebrated in that country. Incidentally, New Zealand's postal rates were raised on 1 October that year but rather than spoil such a fine stamp with a provisional surcharge, and as "a gesture of goodwill", the Post Office permitted unsealed greetings cards to go through the mail at the old 2/d rate. This established a precedent which has developed in other parts of the world in much more recent times, of issuing Christmas stamps for domestic transmission at a discount or a special rate.

El Salvador began Christmas stamps in 1960, with a set of eight. Mercifully, issues have been much more restrained in recent years. The USA introduced Christmas stamps in 1962, immediately falling foul of many Jewish leaders. In subsequent years Christmas stamps tended to keep to fairly uncontroversial, secular motifs, and when the USPS dared to produce a stamp with a frankly religious theme, it offered the alternative of a secular design at the same time.

Canada, Malawi and Malta joined the fray in 1964, and the following year Britain released two pictorial air letter sheets with Christmas motifs, a practice which has continued ever since, although in most subsequent years confined to a single aerogramme. Adhesive stamps did not make their debut in this country till 1 December 1966 and a survey of the Christmas stamps from that time to the present day will be published next month.

Today there are hardly any countries which do not issue Christmas stamps. The wheel came full circle, in fact, when Israel itself issued a special Christmas automatic vending machine stamp last December, for use on Christmas mail posted at Bethlehem. © James Mackay 1994

Christmas stamps of Costa Rica, Cuba, and USA



Varieties of Yesteryear

2. The First GB Photogravure Stamps: Three Different Size Formats

FRED GEE

In the previous article I recommended, for perusal of the 1935 Silver Jubilee stamps, the use of a magnifying glass. The additional accessory needed for the varieties which are the subject of this article is a ruler with a millimetre scale – because here I want to introduce the reader to the reductions in size undergone by Great Britain's first photogravure stamps, the 1934-35 definitives.



1d and 1½d in original large format; ½d and 2d in eventual small format. Note the greater extent of the white space around the small format stamps.

The event which led to the introduction of these stamps was the expiry, on 31 December 1933, of the contracts for the printing of the GB low-value definitives. Since 1924 this had been entrusted to Waterlow & Sons (apart from the 6d, which since 1911 had been printed at Somerset House). In tendering for the new contract, Harrison & Sons had proposed that the photogravure process be adopted: this had

already been used successfully by several postal administrations, but never before for GB postage stamps.

When the contract was awarded to them, Harrisons were not fully prepared and for several months they were obliged to continue producing the existing designs by typography (with assistance from Waterlows, which must have been somewhat embarrassing!).

But at last, on 20 August 1934, the first photogravure GB stamp was issued – the 1½d red-brown – followed five weeks later by the 1d scarlet. However, all was not well. Harrisons were having difficulty in persuading the perforating pins to punch their holes along the spaces between the stamps; there were too many reject sheets in which the perforations were (literally) cutting into the stamp design. The quickest and easiest answer was to give the perforating pins a bigger target to aim at – so the dimensions of the printed area of the stamps was reduced from 18.7mm x 22.5mm to 18.4mm x 22.2mm. This reduction in size took place towards the end of 1934, and when the ½d and 2d values appeared (on 19 November 1934 and 21 January 1935 respectively) these two stamps were also 18.4mm x 22.2mm. This became known as the Intermediate Format, with the original size of the 1½d and 1d being referred to as the Large Format.

Unfortunately this first size reduction did not solve the problem, and there were still too many badly perforated sheets. So the size of the printed area was reduced yet again, to 17.9mm x 21.7mm (known as the Small Format) – although for some reason the small format for the 2d value was slightly different: 18.15mm x 21.7mm.

This means that there were three different sizes of the 1½d and 1d values, and two sizes of the ½d and 2d. All the other values of this first GB photogravure set, issued from 18 March 1935 onwards, were in the Small Format. (Incidentally, Harrison & Sons never did print a 6d value in this set – but that is another story!)

So, out with the magnifying glass and the ruler. Even though they were on sale in the Post Offices for only a few months, examples of the Large and Intermediate Format stamps are still not too difficult to find. One warning note, though: the dimensions as given above are all general approximations, as there were always slight deviations from standard sizes in these early photogravure printings.

© Fred Gee 1994

The Development of Victorian Postal Stationery

COLIN BAKER

3. Inland Postcards

The postcard was originally suggested by Dr Heinrich von Stephan, Postmaster General of Prussia, in 1865, but not implemented at that time. However, when it was independently proposed by Dr Emanuel Herrmann of Austria in January 1869 it was speedily taken up, by them with the result that the world's first postcard was issued in Austria on 1 October of the same year and it is Herrmann who is given most of the credit for its invention.

In Great Britain there was ever-growing pressure on the Post Office to reduce postal rates and they quickly seized upon the postcard as an opportunity to appease these demands, while at the same time maintaining the basic letter rate at 1d. In any case the PO believed few people would be prepared to send open correspondence through the post for all to read. How wrong they were, for on the first day of issue, 1 October 1870, over ½ million cards passed through London alone and stocks which were meant to last years had to be quickly replaced.

The introduction of the postcard saw a change in policy and for the first time since 1840 stationery carried a non-embossed stamp. The front of the new postcard included instructions that only the address was to be written on that side, reinforced by the word "To", with the coat of arms placed centrally on the card to show they were official issues. Finally, a border was placed round the whole of the front to assist both the printing of the cards and sorting them in the post.

Competition by the Stationery Trade

When they were first issued, inland postcards were sold at ½d each, so that unlike all previous stationery they were sold at their face value and there was no extra charge made for the cost of the card itself. They were made available in two sizes, but the larger of these, being taller than most other postal items, suffered damage to the top and bottom edges when bundles of mail were tied with string and this larger size of card was soon discontinued.



The larger of the two sizes of the first issue of the postcard (back stamped contrary to Post Office instructions)



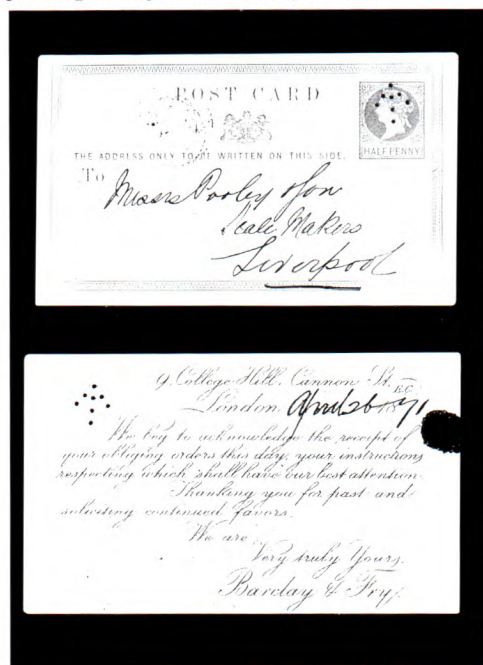
The revised layout of postcards first released in 1878, with a new stamp design

The sale of cards at face value lasted only a few years. As soon as privately printed cards were sanctioned in 1872 complaints were made by the stationery trade of unfair competition, since private cards stamped for ½d each could not possibly be sold at face value without the manufacturer making a loss. In October 1872 revised charges came into effect to include a premium varying from about ⅓d to 1d a dozen for all PO cards. With the introduction of these charges, cards were only sold in packets of 12, although later this regulation was relaxed and packets could be split, with single cards then being charged ⅓d. Despite the fact that the costs of printing both private and PO cards were passed to the user, sales of PO cards far

exceeded those of their private counterparts, the latter mainly being used by businesses rather than private individuals.

The introduction of the postcard greatly increased the volume of mail which the PO handled each day, and during the first few years of their use attempts were made to cancel bundles of postcards in one single operation by punching holes through the area of the stamp. Groups of holes shaped into arrows and orbs, and single holes and side clips were experimented with. However, the system attracted numerous complaints about the loss of part of the message area where the card was punched away. In addition, the PO was also concerned that this method gave no indication of the date that the cards passed through the post. In the end the experiment was gradually abandoned, being superseded by other more reliable cancellation methods.

In Liverpool and London holes in the shape of an arrow were punched through several cards at once in an attempt to speed the cancelling of post cards. Following complaints that parts of messages were being lost the practice gradually declined, ending in 1876.



Reverse of card

PO regulations at the time of the introduction of the postcard were strict. Only the reverse of the card could carry a message, the whole of the

front being reserved for the address and stamp. In order to pass at the $\frac{1}{2}$ d rate, only stationery cards were allowed. Blank cards with adhesive stamps were not permitted, although adhesives could be used as make-up values on cards where a higher rate prevailed, for example in later years where inland cards were used to overseas destinations. In addition, cards had to be printed on their front with the words "Post Card/The Address Only To Be Written On This Side". This last regulation was strictly adhered to when the PO issued a card celebrating the jubilee of the Uniform Penny Post in 1890. The wording on the front did not conform to their own regulations and the card had to be printed with a 1d stamp for the inland letter rate. Of course at the time the PO was celebrating 50 years of the penny post and not the $\frac{1}{2}$ d postcard rate.

By 1875 the PO concluded there had been sufficient time for the public to learn how to use postcards and the word "To" was removed from the front, giving a little more space for the address. They also introduced cards printed on a heavier, better quality cardboard, a suggestion made by Mr Gladstone, the Liberal Prime Minister, who was a prolific user of postcards. These cards were printed in a light brown colour, the forerunner to a later colour change, which also helped to distinguish them from the normal thin cards. Many people felt that these higher quality cards reflected the social standing of the writer far more than the earlier thin cards had done and these were used in great numbers, despite the higher premium of 2d a dozen which they carried.

The Redesigned Card

In 1878 the whole of the front of the postcard, including the stamp, was completely redesigned and a new coat of arms was prepared. The border was removed and instructions were moved up, once again giving more space for the written address. A change was made to the colour used to print all postcards from then on, the PO selecting a reddish brown in lieu of the original purple. The new stamp used the same engraving of the Queen as before, but the value was transferred from the bottom of the design to a curved band above the Queen's head. Other minor changes were later made to the inland cards including yet another change to the coat of arms in 1888.

In 1897, due mainly to the growing popularity of the picture postcard, the PO agreed that any postcard could carry a message on its front face,

providing this did not interfere in any way with the address. This required an amendment to the wording on the front face of cards deleting "only" but still instructing the address to be written on that side. Finally, in 1901 the colour of the stamp was changed to green to accord with the Universal Postal Union's policy of stamp colouring. (See part 2 of this series for further details of this arrangement.)

In 1895 a new size of postcard was issued, following a trend set by the sale of similarly sized private cards over the previous few years. These new cards, known as court cards, were printed on thick card and were $3\frac{1}{2} \times 4\frac{1}{4}$ ins in size, which was slightly larger than the previous issues of $2\frac{7}{8} \times 4\frac{1}{4}$ ins. In 1899 the size of normal postcards was increased to $3\frac{1}{2} \times 5\frac{1}{4}$ ins following pressure on the PO to accept picture postcards of a similar size to those used on the Continent.

The Reply Card

It was not until 1882 that Britain produced an inland reply card, these having been first introduced in Germany in 1872, quickly followed by a number of other countries in the intervening 10 years before they were finally made available in this country.

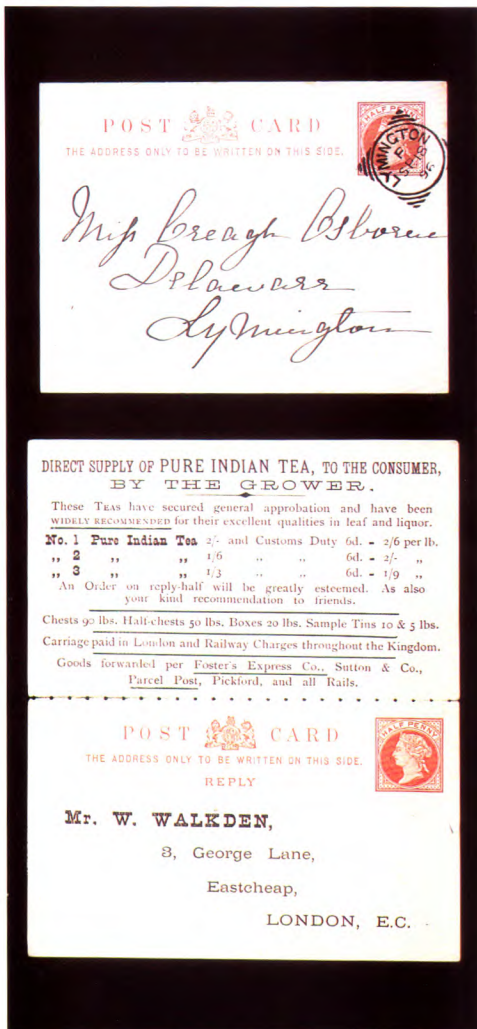
The delay in preparing these cards resulted from lengthy discussions between officials of various Government Departments about how the reply cards should be constructed. In the early years discussions centred upon a single card with the front divided into two. It was proposed that the upper half would be written with the forwarding address which would then be crossed out and the lower half filled in for the return. Both top and bottom halves were each to carry a $\frac{1}{2}$ d stamp. This idea was considered for a number of years, but it was eventually abandoned in favour of a folded double card.

When finally this configuration was considered, based upon the Italian design then in use, legal objections were raised on two counts. Firstly, the stamp on the reply half would have already passed through the post and even though it was not cancelled the PO felt it might be considered invalid. Secondly, the regulations relating to postcards clearly stated that nothing could be attached to them, nor could they be folded. The PO was concerned that the reply half could fall foul of this regulation which the British postal authorities had vigorously enforced in the past to the extent that even address labels were not allowed. Therefore a supplementary act had to be

introduced in 1882 changing these regulations before reply cards could finally be issued.

In the beginning both thin and stout reply cards were perforated and folded between the two halves, but problems arose with the stout cards and this method of separation was abandoned in favour of joining the two separate cards with thin linen strips, which still enabled the recipient to easily divide the cards for his reply. Some problems were also noticed with the thin cards, these occasionally becoming separated in the post. This was overcome by

Top: The 1875 court card



Bottom: The reply card, popular with the business community

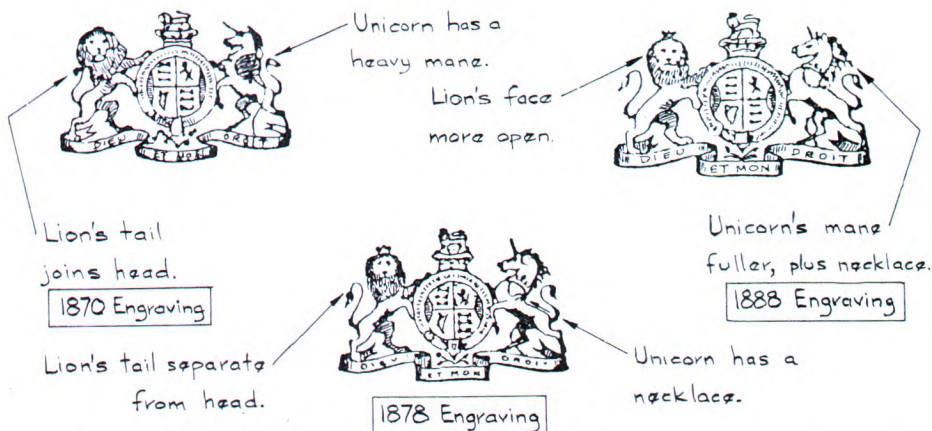
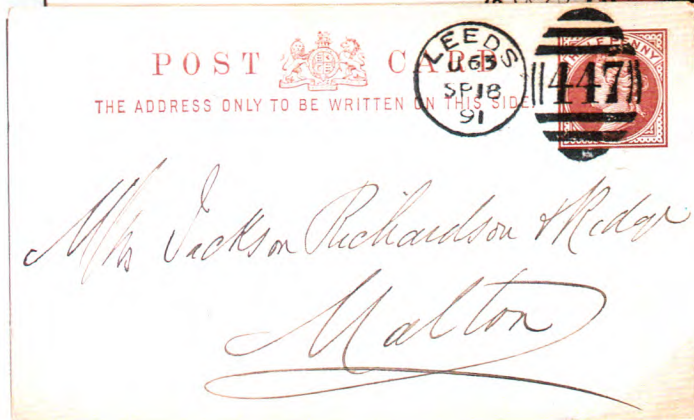
1870
issue



1878
issue



1888
issue



The three different engravings of the coat of arms used on Victorian postcards using less holes per inch and thin cards continued to be perforated until the end of the century.

Once again a fee was imposed for the cost of printing reply cards to allow the stationery trade fair competition, this varying between 1d and 2d per half dozen. Despite the extra cost, reply

cards were very popular items. Many were overprinted by businesses and other organisations who found that when return postage was prepaid a reply was more readily forthcoming. These cards remained popular with commercial organisations until the introduction of the business reply service in the 20th century.

© Colin Baker 1994

35 years of St Kilda Drop Mail: 1959-1994

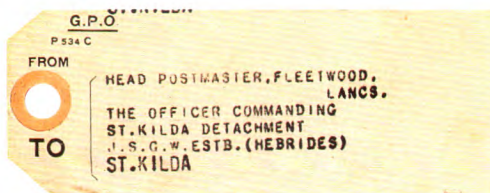
RICHARD BEITH

Many collectors are interested in the postal and philatelic history of the St Kilda Group. This remote collection of islands situated more than 50 miles west of the island of Harris in the Outer Hebrides can be seen on the 25p stamp from the 1981 National Trusts issue of Great Britain (SG 1159). Hirta, the main island, was the only one ever to support a permanent population, but with their way of life barely reaching subsistence level, the last 34 islanders were evacuated to the mainland of Scotland on 28 August 1930. During the 1930s and up to the outbreak of the Second World War the islands continued to be visited by steamers in the summer months, a number of former inhabitants returning during the tourist season to greet visitors and sell postcards.

In 1955 the island group was acquired by the National Trust for Scotland and in 1957, the Ministry of Defence obtained a sub-lease to enable a missile tracking station to be built as part of the South Uist rocket range. This unusual mixture of military out-station and NTS landscape has continued to the present day. It had been assumed that this way of life would continue past the year 2000, but the continued existence of the rocket range is one of many issues being considered during the current debate on defence cuts.

Whilst a St Kilda Post Office (a sub-office under Lochmaddy) serviced the needs of tourists for 30 years prior to the 1930 evacuation, the modern military inhabitants are not directly served by the Royal Mail, but by an Army Post Office. This facility also handles any mail from civilian visitors, NTS working parties, etc. Most outgoing mail was despatched by sea but today helicopters are also used. Whatever the mode of transport, outgoing mail will bear a postmark relating to the port of receipt where the mail has been handed over to a local post office, eg Balivanich, Isle of Benbecula or Stornoway, Isle of Lewis. However, since the first military personnel arrived in 1957, it is the incoming mail which has been the problem. One of the first laws of military morale building is, of course, to ensure that your troops get

regular mail from home. This was a serious problem on St Kilda from day one, especially during the winter months when weather conditions were poor. In the first years of the garrison, winter time mail services to the military often involved the use of the trawlers of the Boston Deep Sea Fishing & Ice Co. operating out of the Lancashire port of Fleetwood. Figure 1 shows a bag label from the 1957-58 period, indicating direct delivery from Fleetwood to St Kilda. As can be imagined this was a very erratic service and the servicemen were often without mail from home for a considerable period. In the first summer seasons tank landing craft (LCTs) would carry the mail to St Kilda from ports such as Cairnryan.



1 GPO bag label showing direct route (by trawler) from Fleetwood to St Kilda, c 1958.

No doubt the use of air communication was considered early on, but the steep hills of Hirta create severe air currents which, together with cloud over the hills, make flying in the area hazardous. In addition, the uneven nature of the ground initially made even helicopter operations a matter of some difficulty and ruled out any chance of a fixed-wing aeroplane being able to land. However, in the summer of 1959, the *Airspeed Consul*, G-AJNE, was chartered from Airwork Services of Perth to fly air co-operation exercises between St Kilda and South Uist and it was realised that these flights could also be utilised to drop mail and urgent supplies from the air.

The First Drop Mails

The first experimental free-fall airdrop of mail took place on 3 September 1959 when 280 letters were dropped from G-AJNE which had

2 Cover from Rochester & Chatham, 15 AUG 1960, to St. Kilda with oval air mail cachet and three line cachet for first official drop.



Received by Air Drop on

29/5/79

signed

A.G.H. Cameron

OC. ST. KILDA DETACHMENT,
ROYAL ARTILLERY RANGES, HEBRIDES.

Mr R.Beith
c/o Capt. A.G.H.Cameron
St. Kilda Detachment
R.A.Range, Hebrides

ISLE OF BENBECULA PA88 5LN

3 Cover from Stirling, 14 MAY 1979, to St Kilda with Officer Commanding's cachet.

called at Balivanich Airport, on the Isle of Benbecula to collect the accumulated mail. This present article commemorates the fact that this drop mail service has survived for 35 years, helping the residents of the St Kilda garrison to feel a little less cut-off from the rest of the world. A further 23 experimental mail drops were made by the *Consul* over the next 11 months. From 19 August 1960, this drop mail service was described as "official" rather than "experimental". For many years the service continued to operate on a roughly once a fortnight basis, subject to weather conditions. In addition, helicopters would occasionally visit the island, usually on medical evacuation missions. Mail was generally carried in both directions on these helicopter flights.

Air Mail Cachets:

During the period 1959-1961, air drop mail was usually struck on arrival with an oval cachet inscribed: BENBECULA-ST. KILDA AIR MAIL - DATE. On 19 August 1960 an additional three line cachet: FIRST OFFICIAL AIRDROP/BENBECULA - ST. KILDA/AIRWORK SERVICES, PERTH was applied to the letters carried on this drop, less than 40 in number. A 19 August 1960 cover is shown as figure 2, bearing both cachets - the addressee, the Headmaster of the Village Bay 4 *A Piper Aztec of Edinburgh Flying Services dropping a mail bag over St. Kilda c. 1978.*

School would, of course, have left in 1930! (A similar oval cachet lettered for the reverse direction: ST. KILDA - BENBECULA has appeared on much more recent mail, but more information is needed on the use of this mark. Presumably this is intended for use on helicopter mails flown to Benbecula.) Figure 3 shows a drop mail cover from May 1979 bearing the official cachet of the Officer Commanding confirming arrival by air.

Drop Mail Contractors:

A variety of small airlines and air taxi companies have operated the drop mail service since 1959. They include Airwork Services, Loganair, Strathair, Peregrine Air Services, Edinburgh Flying Services and Air Service Training. The current operator is the Inverness based company Air Alba who have flown a Cessna on the route for five years and now also use a BN Islander, G-BNXX. Figure 4 shows a Piper *Aztec* of Edinburgh Flying Services dropping a mail bag over St Kilda c.1978 and figure 5 shows a recent view of Air Alba's Islander operation.

St Kilda Mail Arrangements Today:

Mail, essential food and other materials are despatched on re-supply trips from Benbecula every two weeks, transported by a military Landing Craft Logistic (LCL) during the summer months (April to October) and by





helicopter during the winter months. Helicopters can be substituted for the LCL during bad summer weather. This transport also takes mail from St Kilda for transfer into the Royal Mail system at Benbecula. During the intervening weeks between the re-supply trips, accumulated mail is still delivered to the island by means of a light fixed wing aircraft which drops the weighted mail sack on the top of *Mullagh Sgar*. This is one of the few relatively flat areas on Hirta and, at 240m above sea level, offers a reasonably level approach for aircraft. A windsock is placed on the ground and the aircraft drops the mail from a height of 15-20m above ground.

Thus, although mail received at St Kilda today may have come by a variety of means, it is only fair to acknowledge the efforts of all those pilots and crew members who have kept the mail bags dropping for the last 35 years.

5 Recent photograph of St. Kilda viewed through despatch door of Air Alba BN Islander G-BNXA

Acknowledgements:

My thanks to A Mossman Esq, Director and Chief Pilot, Air Alba Limited, Inverness, for the photograph shown as figure 5, and to WO2 G Harris, St Kilda Detachment, Royal Engineers for notes on current postal arrangements.

References:

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Philatelic Terms Explained

KENNETH F CHAPMAN

No 48: Testing Labels

Referred to officially as “dummy stamps”, testing labels are stamp-sized, perforated labels used in making up experimental booklets and to test booklet vending machines.

The best known testing label is the green “poached egg” which sprang into fame in 1937. It was alleged that coils of these labels had been left inadvertently in $\frac{1}{2}$ d stamp-vending machines by Post Office engineers and were subsequently served to members of the public as $\frac{1}{2}$ d stamps when they bought from the machines concerned and were accepted, therefore, by the Post Office as valid $\frac{1}{2}$ d stamps.

The Post Office denied that they ever

authorised the use of “poached eggs” as stamps and claimed that examples which passed unchallenged through the post receiving normal cancellations were accepted accidentally.

Whatever the truth, there is no doubt that for a few months in 1937, several of these labels reached the philatelic market in mint condition and were put to postal use by enthusiastic collectors.

An editorial in the *Philatelic Magazine* of 30 April 1937 illustrates a cover with a strip of three (representing the $1\frac{1}{2}$ d letter rate of the period) which was delivered unchallenged. The same article illustrates a registered cover, posted in London, on which an offending “poached egg” was blotted out, a postage due charge of 1d raised and a Post Office sticker asking for the return of the cover “for the purpose of an Official enquiry”. Illustrated here is a registered cover posted at Hellingly, Sussex, on 13 May 1937 with a poached egg making up the 4d in stamps to $4\frac{1}{2}$ d. ($1\frac{1}{2}$ d postage, 3d registration). The cover is correctly backstamped at the local post-town (Hailsham) on 14 May 1937 and was delivered without comment.

H P Cooke, writing in *Gibbons Stamp Monthly* in March 1937 described three testing labels:

- 1) an entirely blank stamp sized fully perforated label on unwatermarked paper;
- 2) a similar (unwatermarked) label with a thin rectangular frame just within the perforations and with a plain “X” extending to all four corners;
- 3) the “poached egg” label on contemporary block GvR watermark.

The *Stamp Review* of December 1937 carried an article by Berry Wood who quoted a PO spokesman to the effect that plain, unwatermarked labels were replaced by the watermarked green “poached egg” because the latter resembled more closely an actual watermarked stamp, even to the amount of printing ink each label carried. These features enabled more accurate tests of the very delicately constructed vending machines.

To combat the nuisance of further “poached eggs” falling into philatelic hands, a new label



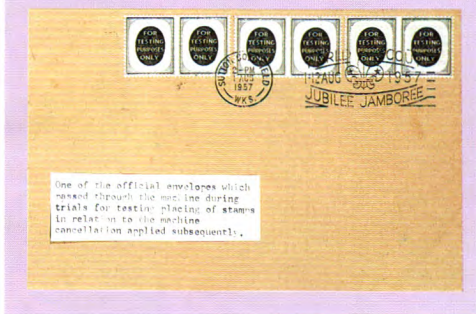
Top: The original green “Poached Egg” and grey Testing labels. Middle: Double-size Testing label, 1957 Scout Jamboree. Bottom: Double-size Testing label, 1963 *Philatelic Bulletin*.

was designed. Normally printed in dark and light grey, the new label was inscribed in white with the words, "FOR TESTING PURPOSES ONLY". These were printed in sheets for breaking up into booklet panes and in coils, for testing vending machines. These are known without watermark and with the E2R Tudor watermark.

World Scout Jamboree Stamps

When, for the first time in its history, the Post Office, offered to accept addressed envelopes to which they would affix commemorative stamps in preparation for first day cancelling, a new type of testing label was introduced.

Top: "Poached Egg" used on cover, 1937



Bottom: 1957 Testing labels on rare trial cover

The occasion was the issue of the three World Scout Jamboree stamps in 1957. An optimistic dealer who had contracted with Boy Scouts Association to service first day covers for the event, informed the Post Office that he expected minimum orders for 1 million covers for each scouting category at the Jamboree – cubs, scouts and rovers – for which he had prepared individually designed envelopes. To service these covers he would need 3 million sets of the Jamboree stamps and would have to stick these on the covers in time to receive the day of issue cancellation. The Post Office would not release

the stamps in advance of 1 August and were forced, therefore, to undertake the attachment of the stamps to the covers.

A special "lick and stick" machine, commissioned from Vacuumatic Ltd of Harwich, Essex (at a cost of £2000) was designed to dampen envelopes at the point where stamps from three coils (one for each value in the set) were pressed on to the envelopes. A special coil printing of the Jamboree stamps was produced for use in the machine but, to avoid wastage of these, coils of testing labels were used. To simulate the double size of the commemorative stamps the labels consisted of vertically imperforate between pairs of the normal label. The watermark on this printing was the E2R St Edward's Crown.

An official cover used during the test trials is illustrated. Although plain on the face, the back shows that pay packet envelopes were used for this trial. It is worth noting that, far from 3 million plus covers, only approximately 65,000 envelopes passed through the machine. Since the service charge on each cover was only 2½d, the machine did not recover its cost, quite apart from the other expenses of the service (printing the coils of test labels and stamps and labour costs).

There was a curious sequel to this pioneer Post Office servicing of covers. The September/October 1964 issue of the *Philatelic Bulletin* (then just seven pages, largely devoted to slogan postmarks) included reference to the World Jamboree issue and the philatelic service it generated. It referred to the "normal" testing label (with a sample of the grey label attached) and to the "label produced specially...in connection with the World Scout Jamboree first day cover service. These labels are printed in red, to identify them, and are perforated as for special issues". A sample of this red label was also attached to the *Bulletin*.

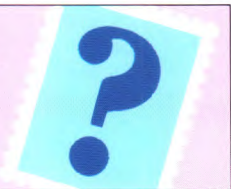
The strange thing is that all the known 1957 printings of the special double label were in grey (and I saw many of them when invited to see the "lick and stick" machine in action) and on E2R St Edward's Crown watermarked paper. The watermark on the sample red label was the Multiple Crown type which was not in use at the time (1957), being introduced in 1958.

Can anyone confirm or deny that the red testing label was ever used during the 1957 trials? – Or was the red label produced specially for distribution with the *Bulletin*?

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Competition

SPONSORED BY:
ONE COUNTRY BAG
APPROVALS



Win a Canada 1897 \$2 Jubilee

This month's competition is sponsored by the Country Bags Department of AVON MIXTURES, specialising in supplying one country bags for collectors to pick from at low unit prices. The prizes on offer are:

* 1st prize: Canada the scarce 1897 \$2 Jubilee, SG 137 catalogued £300, a sound nicely used example of fine colour.

* 2nd prize: Germany – Berlin – the difficult 1929 2m dove, red overprint, SG B34, catalogued £160, with circular postmark.

* Two 3rd prizes: Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) - scarce dual currency 2s6d/25c Fish, SG 412, catalogued £40 each, unmounted mint.

* 4th prize: Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) the Mardon printing of the 1966 10s Guinea Fowl, SG 406 catalogued £30, unmounted mint.



Introducing One Country Bags

Several years ago AVON MIXTURES introduced their picking from ONE COUNTRY BAGS SYSTEM; which has proved enormously successful, allowing collectors to enhance their collections at low unit prices regardless of catalogue value. Collectors now have the choice not to purchase complete country packets of stamps, thus eliminating countless duplicates they may already have.

Unfortunately some countries' stamps, particularly elusive British Commonwealth countries, are too expensive to be offered in this way. They can, however, be purchased individually through approvals in the usual way.

But Avon Mixtures One Country Bags

Department now has a range of over 100 different country bags which collectors can pick from, with unit prices generally falling between 14p down to as little as 4p each stamp.

The first 50 requests to view will receive absolutely FREE the GB 1992 £5 Windsor Castle circular used, elliptical perf, SG 1614 catalogued £7.50. The next 200 replies will receive another free gift.

If you would like to view a bag or two without obligation please write now. Remember to list ALL the countries you collect so Avon Mixtures can send suitable country bags, and don't forget (if a new client) to mention if you would also like one of their famous BUY ONE YOU TAKE ONE FREE World mixtures bags on approval. Write now to:

**Avon One Country
Bulletin Castle Offer
PO Box 23**

RUGBY

Warwickshire CV22 6SQ

To enter the competition answer the questions below and send, with your name and address, on a postcard to: November Bulletin Competition, Room G06, Royal Mail, 22 Finsbury Square, LONDON EC2A 1NL to arrive by 30 December.

1. Where was stamp designer Yvonne Gilbert born?
2. Who composed "A Song of Empire"?
3. Where will the BIPEX exhibition be held in 1995?
4. Who is the Stanley Gibbons Catalogue Editor?
5. Which island group was acquired by the National Trust for Scotland in 1955?

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

The winners of the August competition were: R J Milner of Cornwall (Perforation); S Wooldridge of W Midlands, P Williams of Essex, D Taylor of Inverness, Dr M Williamson of Zimbabwe, and P Baker of Berkshire (Bulletin binders).

The answers were: 1. Pierre Vermier; 2. Orange; 3. Simon Bates; 4. Peter Bartlett; 5. Signoscope.

Our thanks to all who entered.



The 1994 (97th) edition of **Part 1** (British Commonwealth) of the 22-part **Stanley Gibbons Stamp Catalogue** is now available – published in two volumes, Vol 1 covering Great Britain and countries from Abu Dhabi to Ireland, Vol 2 Jamaica to Zimbabwe.

The GB section amounts to 107 of the 768 pages in Vol 1 and includes the issues of Guernsey, Jersey and the Isle of Man, postal fiscals, postage dues and GB stamps used abroad.

Some prices have been revised since the *GB Concise* catalogue was published in May. The George VI 1937-47 definitive set (SG 462/75) is reduced mint by £4, but remains the same used. The 1958 De La Rue High Values (536a/9a) go up by £25 mint; the Phosphor-Graphite 2d watermark error (605a) is increased by £10 both mint and used. There are increases, in mint condition, for the 1963 Freedom from Hunger, Lifeboat and Red Cross phosphor sets.

In the extensive Machin section the 1980 50p ochre-brown on ordinary paper (X992) is halved in price mint to 75p, but up used from 45p to 80p. The 1990 50p ochre (X994) goes up from 75p to £1.50; the used price still 45p. The Questa 75p bicoloured (X1024) is up 50p mint, whereas the 14p Walsall (X1051) is down by the same amount, both mint and used. On the other hand the 19p Walsall (X1052) is raised 25p mint and used. The 1988 Castles (1410/3) are all increased unused. The 1990 Stamp World miniature sheet (MS1501) is raised 50p unused, also the 1991 "Good Luck" Greetings stamps (1536/45).

Price movements, in both directions, are noted for the 18p, 24p, 28p and 39p Country (Regional) issues with perf 14 (NI47a, S60a, S70a, S75a, S80a, W48b, W59b).

Of major importance is the listing, except for GB, of stamp booklets. The new listings have "SB" prefix catalogue numbers and illustrations of the covers are provided where appropriate. The two volumes provide substantial booklet sections for, amongst others, Australia, Canada, Hong Kong, India, Ireland, Malaysia, New Zealand, South Africa, and Sri Lanka. Under Ireland, the Dollard "Provisional Government"

overprints in red or carmine are now shown as "a" numbers of the issue with black overprint. Editorial revisions, often resulting from consultation with specialist collectors, have been made to the listings for several countries. In the Preface, SG Catalogue Editor, David Aggersberg, records his thanks to the many readers whose help enable him to ensure the Part 1 catalogue retains its high reputation as the major reference work on Commonwealth issues.

Price £24.95 per volume, postage £3 UK (post free over £30), £6 overseas. Available from Stanley Gibbons Strand shop, or by post from Stanley Gibbons Publications, Parkside, RINGWOOD, Hants, BH24 3SH.

The 1994 edition of the Stanley Gibbons **Collect British Stamps** checklist will be published on 25 November.

The **Royal Mail Special Stamps** yearbook was first produced in 1984 and was highly acclaimed for text and design. It has also proved a good investment, sold at £12.95 and now catalogued by Stanley Gibbons at £70. The 1994 Yearbook, published on 14 November, continues the traditional approach and standard of its 10 predecessors. A chapter is devoted to each of the nine special issues of 1994.

In the chapter on the Age of Steam stamps, we learn of the work of Colin Gifford in photographing steam railways in the last decade of their regular use on British Railways, 1958-68. Designer Brian Delaney praises Gifford's work thus: "Although I must have looked at thousands of railway photographs, Colin's were the only ones that I thought would have the remotest appeal to people who weren't particularly interested in railway history." Collectors will be interested in the design concepts for these stamps, Mr Delaney writes: "For variety we print each image in a different shade of black, which takes on the colour of the Queen's head. I had the values set in a version of Gill which is very close to the typeface British Railways used for its station signs and engine numbers. The idea for the oval panel was taken from the cast-iron plates that steam engines used to carry to show the shed where they were allocated."

The Prince of Wales is recognised as a keen and talented amateur artist and the stamps issued to mark the 25th anniversary of his investiture reproduced five of his paintings showing his deep affection for the British

countryside. The view of Dersingham looking out towards the Wash on the 35p value represents one of The Prince's favourite prospects at Sandringham.

The Pictorial Postcards set commemorated the centenary of the change in Post Office regulations allowing the sending of picture postcards through the post. The public response was immediate and the number of cards posted increased from 123 million in 1880/1 to 926 million in 1913/14. The pictorial postcard is synonymous to many people with summer holidays and the sending of the "seaside comic" postcard. Mike Dempsey's designs for these stamps were inspired by the work of Donald McGill who designed over 9000 such cards, but, as Mr Dempsey points out, "the illustrations aren't pure McGill and we didn't want them to be. But they're very much in the spirit of his work, and of others like him. The bright colours are certainly in his style and the decorative borders are exactly as he did them but he didn't really go for fat jolly people as much as other artists did." Mr Dempsey sketched out basic themes for each stamp before handing his roughs over to Bill Dare to "translate them into something more finished." Captions and punch lines would have cluttered the image so Mr Dempsey devised visual jokes that stand alone.

The Channel Tunnel stamps were, as the Tunnel itself, a joint Anglo-French effort. One design is the creation of British illustrator George Hardie, the other by artist Jean-Paul Cousin, commissioned by La Poste. Mr Hardie's idea was of "a kind of symbolic bridge". His son, William, suggested he make the bridge out of heraldic animals, but as the design progressed "it became less of a bridge and more a piece of heraldry." M. Cousin's design is very French, very graphic in the tradition of poster designer Cassandre in the immediate post-war years.

The Anglo-French connection continued in the next issue, celebrating the 50th anniversary of D-Day. The five stamps, printed se-tenant, are the *Picture Post* tradition and pay tribute to the various branches of the Armed Services involved in the landings. Designer Keith Bassford sifted through thousands of D-Day images before selecting those used on the stamps. Details of each photograph are given in the Yearbook. For example on the final stamp depicts troops of 4 Commando advancing inland from the beach-head after landing on Sword Beach. Mr Bassford tells us that this was taken from movie footage, it being "common practice

to have an Army film unit operating right alongside the official photographers."

In 1744 the Gentleman Golfers of Leith formed themselves into a club and drew up the first written rules of the game. The Golf stamps, issued in July, feature five of Scotland's best-known courses. The designs were the work of Paul Hogarth, artist, writer and traveller, who designed the 1985 Post Office issue. He packed his bags and headed north, visiting each of the courses, "speaking to people who knew them well" and gathering all the information he could. The most celebrated hole at Royal Troon is aptly known as the "Postage Stamp". The tiny green is a mere 126 yards from the tee and difficult to play.

The third set with a Summer or holiday theme was issued in August and designated "Summertime". The designs, by Matthew Cook, featured some of the most popular summer events and Mr Cook visited each to sketch and take notes. "Because I was going as a kind of Royal Mail emissary", he writes, "I felt I ought to look a bit smarter than usual. So I bought myself a green blazer to help me blend in better in the members' enclosure. The trouble was that, at most of these events, the stewards were wearing identical green blazers." As a result, assuming Mr Cook to be an official, many spectators asked him "where the toilets were and why England weren't putting the spin bowlers on..."

The four Medical Discoveries stamps were designed by Pierre Vermeir who found the linking factor between the four marvels of technology shown is the way that their information is presented on a screen. This gave him the basis of his design strategy. A measuring scale is featured on the left-hand side of each image. This would usually be seen on the hospital's computer display as part of the information derived from the scan. On the stamps it has been separated out and turned into a key design element.

The final set, for Christmas, takes as its theme the story of the Nativity and is delightfully shown, by Yvonne Gilbert, through children. Ms Gilbert prefers to work from photographs rather than draw from life. The stamps were loosely based on pictures of children from a local primary school, although they are not intended to be portraits of individual children. Each child was photographed separately, not in a group. The story of the "photo shoot" makes interesting reading. "I wanted to show these kids

as they really are", comments Yvonne, "...That's why we've got such a pugnacious looking Mary."

The Yearbook – to be published on 14 November – will be available from the British Philatelic Bureau, PO philatelic outlets and most main post offices, price £22.50. A special leather-bound version will be available from the Bureau, price £75. Both versions supplied in slip-case.

Postbuses were introduced in England and Wales in 1967 and in Scotland the following year. They have proved their worth, both delivering and collecting mail and providing a much-needed passenger services in remote areas, often devoid of other public transport. Not just local people that use them; they are well used by tourists, holidaymakers and postbus enthusiasts. Many of the postbus routes travel through areas of great beauty, especially the Scottish routes. Anyone with an interest in postbuses will enjoy a new book **Postbus Country: Glimpses of Rural Scotland**, written by Joan Burnie with many fine colour photographs by Douglas Corrance, and published by Royal Mail in association with Canongate Press of Edinburgh.

In Chapter 1, Ms Burnie sets the scene, telling us that there are now over 140 postbus services in Scotland, travelling some 2.8 million miles each year and carrying some 80,000 passengers, not to mention morning milk, newspapers, prescriptions from doctors and vets, animals and vegetables! Aboard the very first service, between Dunbar and Innerwick in June 1968, was Molly Lafferty – still a regular passenger and pictured in the book. The early services, both north and south of the border, were judged uneconomic but thankfully their importance was recognised; most services have survived and many new ones added.

Chapter 2 describes some of the drivers and their routes. Robin Laing, noted for the immaculate way he maintains his bus, has "castles at both ends" of his route – the House of Binns, home of the Dalryell family where peacocks squeal and preen on the lawns, and Blackness, steeped in history, where Zefferelli filmed Hamlet. In chapter 3 Ms Burnie looks at the "White Settlers" – incomers who have moved in increasing numbers into Scotland's rural communities – quoting from some of the conversations heard on the buses. One long-term resident commented: "They soon slow down to our pace of things...there's nothing

like a bit of damp, I always say to slow a person down." In the next chapter we are introduced to Cameron McGhie, described as "the perfect island gentleman, good humoured and droll, a postbus Para Handy if ever there was one", who drives back and forth between Port Ellen and Portnahaven on the beautiful Isle of Islay. When Ms Burnie travelled with him, Cameron was posting notices of a funeral of a local farmer – the whole island was invited to attend, for "death is still a social as well as sad business in the Hebrides". The postbuses on Islay have been named – "Miles of Mail", "Minnie Bus", and "Red Roddie" by local children and each carries an identifying plaque.



Postbus driver Evelyn Taylor and Molly Lafferty, first passenger to travel on a Scottish postbus, examine Postbus Country

Animals play a vital part in the life of the Highlands – "Kamikaze Collies and Other Animals" being the subject of chapter 5. The multifarious cargoes carried are recorded in chapter 6. Coffins used to be transported to an undertaker on one of the Skye routes; the current driver, relieved this was before his time, wonders what charge was made and whether extra would have been paid "on the way back when it was...well, occupied, like?"

Many of the regular passengers are elderly and in chapter 8 Ms Burnie records some of their recollections and local gossip – "postbuses are fuelled at least as much by rumour and hearsay as by diesel and engines and at every stop they are tanked up with yet more tales, true and very possibly untrue but whoever lets anything as irrelevant as the truth get in the way of a good story?"

This delightful book ends with a list of the Scottish postbus routes and dates of their introduction. *Postbus Country* is available from good bookshops. Price £12.99, 112 pages, hardbound, dust jacket. ISBN 0 86241484 9.

November/December Digest

Issued in November/December

1 November: Christmas stamps – 19p, 25p, 30p, 35p, 41p; presentation pack.

1 November: Christmas stamp books – 20 x 19p (£3.80); 10 x 25p (£2.50).

1 November: National Postal Museum Christmas postcards (£1 set of 4).

1 November: Christmas Gift Pack (contains FDC, presentation pack, stamp cards)

1 November: Royal Mail Christmas cards (pack of 10) – available from Bureau and selected retailers

14 November: 1994 Royal Mail Special Stamps Yearbook (standard and leatherbound versions); 1994 Yearpack.

Note: Some items are available only from the British Philatelic Bureau, 20 Brandon Street, EDINBURGH EH3 5TT and from Post Office philatelic outlets (Collections, Post Shops Plus, Philatelic Counters) at main post offices in: Bath, Belfast, Birmingham, Brighton, Bristol, Cambridge, Canterbury, Cardiff, Chester, Colchester, Coventry, Croydon, Durham, Edinburgh, Exeter, Glasgow, Gloucester, Guildford, Leeds, Leicester, Liverpool, London (Lombard Street & Trafalgar Square), Manchester, Newcastle upon Tyne, Nottingham, Oxford, Plymouth, Portsmouth, Romford, Southampton, Southend on Sea, Stratford upon Avon, Truro, Windsor, and York.

Withdrawn in November/December

8 November: 1993 Christmas stamps, presentation pack, stamp cards & stamp books.

8 November: 1993 Collectors' Pack and Yearbook.

6 December: Country stamps (N Ireland, Scotland, Wales) 18p, 24p, 28p, 39p.

6 December: Country Pack No. 26 (December 1991) containing 18p, 24p, 28p & 39p stamps.

13 December: Definitives 4p, 20p, and 50p printed by Harrisons.

Events – November/December 1994

until April 1995: "Addressing Postcodes" exhibition at National Postal Museum, King Edward Street, London EC1. Open Mon-Fri 09.30-16.30. Enquiries: 071-239 5420.

until 26 November: Exhibition of Postcards, marking the centenary of picture postcards, at Manchester Central Library (1st Floor), St Peters Square, Manchester. Enquiries: D Harrop, 15 Hawthorne Road, Heaton Mersey, STOCKPORT SK4 3DQ.

12 November: Morecambe Phil Soc Stamp & Postcard Fair at Memorial Hall, Poulton Square, Morecambe, 10.00-16.00. Admission free. Enquiries: T Culshaw, Tel. 0695 423623.

12 November: Midland Phil Fed Autumn Assembly at King Edward VI College, Lower High Street, Stourbridge, 10.00-16.30. Admission 30p (concessions 15p). Hosted by Dudley Phil Soc. Competitions, displays, young collectors' stall, dealers, free car parking, refreshments. Enquiries: P Barnett, 5 Paul Purchase Road, Coseley, BILSTON, W Midlands, WV14 0SE.

12 November: Wakefield Phil Soc Stamp Fayre and Auction at Wesley Methodist Hall, Thornes Road, Lupset Bar, Wakefield, 09.30-16.30. Auction at 14.00. Enquiries: W Smith, Rune House, New Road, Woolley, WAKEFIELD, W Yorkshire, WF4 2JH.

19 November: Birmingham Philatelic Annual Fair at Royal British Legion Hall, Masons Way, off Warwick Road, Olton, Birmingham, 10.00-17.00. Admission free. 12 dealers in stamps, covers, postal history and postcards. Enquiries: Mrs E Lewis, Tel. 021-429 1222.

26 November: Association of Friends of the National Postal Museum annual general meeting at KEB Hall, London EC1. Enquiries: R Pottle, Tel. 0825 766546.

6 December: Talk on "GB Philatelic Exhibitions and Events" by James Negus, FRPSL at Milford-on-Sea Stamp Club, Guide Hut, Sea Road, Milford-on-Sea, Hants, 19.30. Enquiries: Miss J Patchett, Tel. 0590 643734.

