BRITISH PHILATELIC

Bulletin

The magazine for collectors of UK stamps

VOLUME 51 NUMBER 9 | MAY 2014 | £1.50

Great British Film • Preview: Sustainable Fish • Post & Go

This is the night mail crossing the border
Bringing the cheque and the postal order
Letters for the rich, letters for the poor
The shop at the corner, the girl next door...



***Night Mail*, the influential GPO documentary of 1936, features on the Miniature Sheet of this month's Great British Film issue**

JOHN HOLMAN STAMP SCENE • COLIN BAKER BRITISH EMPIRE EXHIBITION • WIN NEW MINI SHEETS

Issues and withdrawals



Cover image: *Night Mail* film poster designed by Pat Keely in 1939 © Royal Mail Group, courtesy of the British Postal Museum & Archive. Words from *Night Mail*, the poem written for the film by W H Auden. The *Night Mail* stamp is one of four on the new Miniature Sheet celebrating the work of the GPO Film Unit.
Great British Film stamps are issued on 13 May – see page 270. Turn to page 272 for background details of the Miniature Sheet. For philatelic preview details, see page 243 of April *Bulletin*.

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NB: stamps and postmarks are not shown to scale.

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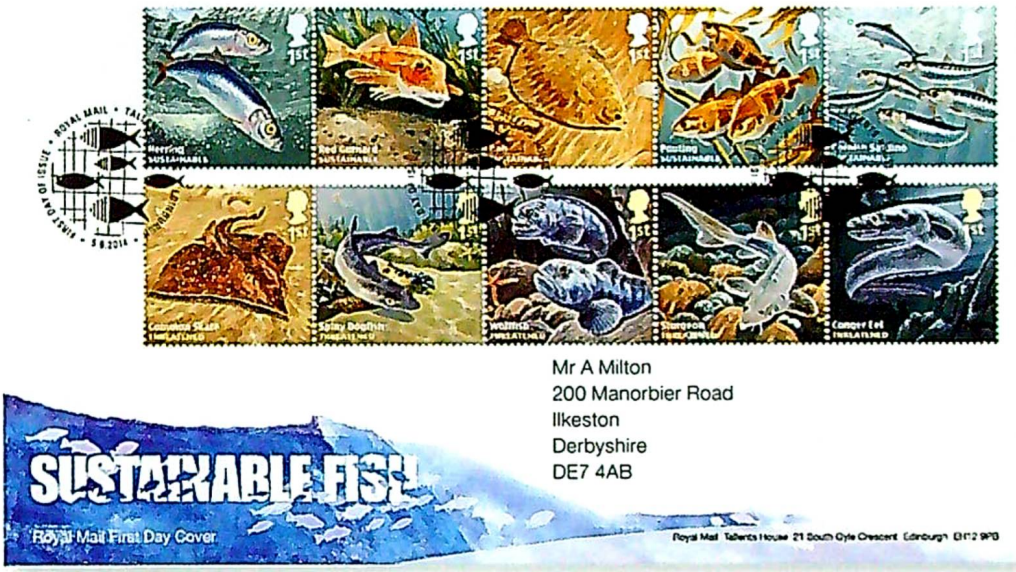
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9 May	**Withdrawal** Football Heroes: Stamps (11 x 1st Class), Miniature Sheet, Prestige Stamp Book, Stamp Book (2 x 1st Class Football Heroes, 4 x 1st Class Machins), Presentation Pack with bespoke poster, Stamp Cards.
10 May	**Withdrawal** Australia 2013 World Stamp Exhibition: Smilers® Exhibition Sheet (20 x 1st Class).
13 May	**Issue** Great British Film: Stamps (3 x 1st Class se-tenant, 3 x £1.28 se-tenant), Miniature Sheet (4 x 1st Class), Presentation Pack, Stamp Cards (11 in set).
30 May	**Withdrawal** Her Majesty The Queen – Six Decades of Royal Portraits: Stamps (1st Class, 2nd Class, 77p, 87p, £1.28, £1.90), Presentation Pack, Stamp Cards, Coin Covers, Commemorative Document.
5 June	**Issue** Sustainable Fish: Stamps (10 x 1st Class in 2 se-tenant strips of 5), Presentation Pack, Stamp Cards (10 in set).

To order philatelic items, including those listed above, contact Royal Mail online at www.royalmail.com/stamps or at Tallents House, 21 South Gyle Crescent, Edinburgh EH12 9PB. Telephone order line (08.30 to 17.00 Monday to Friday): 08457 641 641. From overseas: +44 131 316 7483. Minimum handling charge UK £1.45, Europe £1.55, rest of world (airmail) £2.15.
Selected items are available at Post Office branches and philatelic outlets at main post offices in: Bristol, Cambridge, Chester, Colchester, Croydon, Durham, Edinburgh, Exeter, Glasgow, Grimsby, Harrogate, London (Eastcheap and Trafalgar Square), Norwich, Nottingham, Plymouth, Portsmouth, Southend on Sea, Stevenage, Stroud, Trowbridge, Truro, York and Newport, Isle of Wight.

Information about Royal Mail products is that which is available at time of going to press. Royal Mail is not responsible for opinions and information provided by independent writers in the feature articles of this publication.

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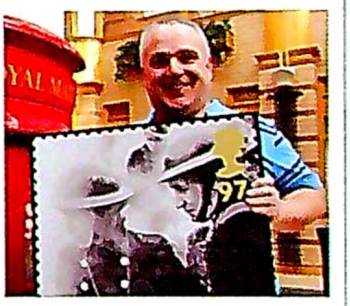
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The *British Philatelic Bulletin* is published monthly by Royal Mail, Tallents House, 21 South Gyle Crescent, Edinburgh EH12 9PB ● Editor: William Doherty ● Price £1.50 from Post Office Ltd philatelic outlets (see opposite) ● **Annual subscription** £12.95 UK & Europe; £17.95 elsewhere. Send subscriptions to Royal Mail Tallents House (address opposite) ● **Binders** (to hold 24 issues) £8.50, storage boxes (about 30 copies) £9.95, available by post from Royal Mail Tallents House ● Royal Mail also publishes the fortnightly *British Postmark Bulletin*, giving details of forthcoming special handstamps – available on annual subscription from Royal Mail Tallents House. £12.25 UK and Europe, £24.95 rest of the world ● Stamp images © Royal Mail. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or parts is prohibited without prior permission of the Editor ● **Printed** in Great Britain by Zenith Print & Packaging Ltd ● **ISSN** 0953 8119 ● Royal Mail is a trading name of Royal Mail Group Ltd. Registered in England and Wales, number 4138203. Registered office: 100 Victoria Embankment, London EC4Y 0HQ.

Correspondence

Remarkable omission

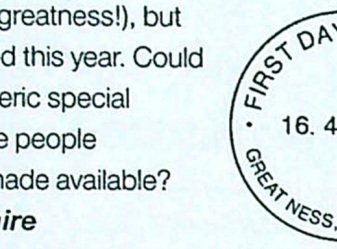
I was disappointed that Royal Mail failed to produce a special first-day handstamp that was relevant to all ten individuals depicted on the stamps in the Remarkable Lives issue released on 25 March. The special handstamps were directly relevant only to Noorunissa Inayat Khan and Dylan Thomas, and were therefore inappropriate for first-day covers or maxicards produced for one or more of the remaining eight Remarkable Lives stamps. This pattern of producing special handstamps specific to only two of the issued stamps has now prevailed for three years in a row: for Britons of Distinction (2012), Great Britons (2013) and this year for the Remarkable Lives issue. At least in 2013, a simple first day of issue circular date stamp was available for Great Ness, Shrewsbury (= greatness!), but nothing similar was produced this year. Could I request that in future a generic special handstamp relevant to all the people depicted on the stamps is made available?

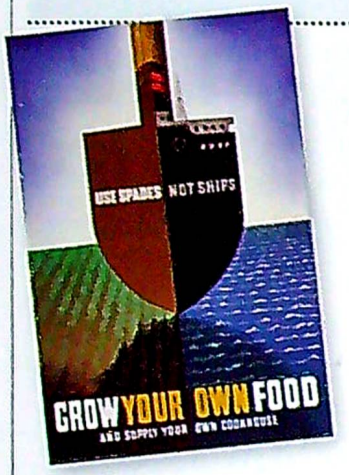
John Gray, Cambridgeshire

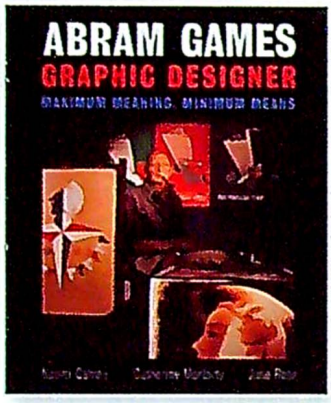


William Doherty has passed on your sound suggestion for consideration by the Royal Mail external Communications Team, which agrees locations for first-day handstamps.

For those luminaries featured on the Remarkable Lives stamps, Royal Mail used ink-jet postmark slogans for Dylan Thomas in Wales, Roy Plomley on mail delivered to KT postcode and Noorunissa Inayat Khan in WC1. Ink-jet postmarks will also be used on the 100th anniversary of the birth of the people featured on the stamps.





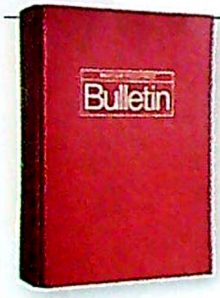


Poster puzzle

In the March issue of the *Bulletin* I was reading the article about the stamp designer and poster artist Abram Games, 'Games For Anything'. On page 210, I noticed that the caption for the wartime poster, 'Use Spades Not Ships', says it was asking troops to grow their own food. Actually, we civilians (I was a boy at that time) were being asked to 'grow our own'. Our troops were too busy fighting for all of us on the Home Front to grow their own spuds!

Bill Trower, Essex

The Editor says: you are right, of course, that in the Second World War British civilians were asked to grow their own food, as part of the Dig For Victory campaign. Abrams's Use Spades Not Ships poster was, however, aimed at troops in barracks, as his daughter Naomi Games points out in her book *Abram Games Graphic Designer.* The poster, issued by the War Office, also bears the line 'supply your own cookhouse'.



Keep the letters coming...

The Editor welcomes your letters and the senders of those published will receive philatelic delights as a thank-you. Send your letters to: William Doherty, *British Philatelic Bulletin*, Tallents House, 21 South Gyle Crescent, Edinburgh EH12 9PB. Remember that you can also send emails to bulletin.enquiries@royalmail.com.

Post & Go update Martyn Fry reports



2014 is turning out to be a great year for Post & Go collectors, with machines for their favourite stamps on site at all the major UK exhibitions. The action started with Machin releases at the York Stamp Show in January, followed by a three-stage roll-out of British Flora, beginning with Spring Blooms at Spring Stampex. Next come the Symbolic Flowers and Winter Greenery sets – all available from Post & Go machines.

Next-generation Post & Go machines The British Postal Museum & Archive's A1 Post & Go machine has retired to the museum's archive, along with the B1 back office unit, after it was replaced by a new Series 2 machine from Intelligent AR Limited. The Series 2 debuted at Spring Stampex in February and has since been further developed to offer the smoothest possible vending experience to self-service customers at Freeling House.

Underprint is over The end-date of the popular Post & Go commemorative printing of 'The BPMA/Postage Due 1914' was extended last month, allowing collectors further opportunities to obtain the special overprint.

Spring Stampex Post & Go review Royal Mail introduced its new Series 2 Post & Go machines at Spring Stampex in February 2014 – three machines for Royal Mail and one for Jersey Post. The introduction had some initial teething problems during the first few hours of Stampex, caused primarily by the lack of time for development and software testing prior to the show. When software development issues cropped up with the Series 1 machines in relation to the new tariff, new machines were required at short notice – in order to offer a full and efficient Post & Go service to collectors attending Stampex.

Royal Mail regrets that there were print errors caused by test software not being removed prior to final software being loaded. Within a few hours of the show opening, the machines were operating very smoothly and there were no further print issues. The overwhelming reaction from collectors was extremely positive. The ease of use of the image-driven software of the Series 2 machines, combined with increased printing speed and delivery, improved the overall customer experience – exactly what Royal Mail had set out to achieve.

Print changes A change to the non-value indicators printed onto Post & Go stamps was introduced to Royal Mail Series 2 machines, along with new self-service kiosks in Post Offices on 28 April. The Europe 20g NVI will change to show Euro 20g/World 10g. The value of the stamp remains 97p •

New Post & Go prices since 31 March	
1st Class	62p
1st Class Large	93p
Europe 20g (Euro 20g/World 10g from 28 April)	97p
Europe 60g	£1.47*
Worldwide 20g	£1.28
Worldwide 60g	£2.15
2nd Class	53p
2nd Class Large	73p
1st Class Collector Strip	£7.42
2nd Class Collector Strip	£1.26
1st Class Collector Set	£45.12

* 40g printing removed

Post & Go Exhibition programme	
York Stamp Fair	18-19 July
Philakorea Seoul Korea	7-12 August
Autumn Stampex	17-20 September
Stafford Stamp Show	7-8 November



Above: the first set of Great War stamps in a series of poignant philatelic tributes issued by Royal Mail in the next five years

We will remember them... Royal Mail is launching its five-year philatelic campaign to commemorate those who served in the Great War. In total 30 stamps will be issued, with a set released each year. The stamps cover a range of themes: the role of the services, non-combatants and civilians, the contribution of women and the Commonwealth, and how artists, including painters and writers, interpreted the conflict. The stamps will show portraits of the participants, paintings of the front line, historical objects and newly commissioned artwork of that icon of remembrance, the poppy. The Royal Mail tribute also covers events around the war memorials in its care.

The first special stamp issue – three First Class and three £1.47 values – comes out on 28 July (see full preview in the June issue of the *Bulletin*). Some of the stamps show the creative response to the conflict. The £1.47 War Art stamp bears the painting *A Star Shell*, a flare eerily lighting up No Man's Land, by CRW Nevinson, one of the leading Great War artists. On the First Class Poppy stamp, major contemporary botanical artist Fiona Strickland has created a fragile-looking yet defiant version of war's poignant symbol.

War Poetry, also a First Class, contains the enduring lines from Lawrence Binyon's poem *For the Fallen*: 'At the going down of the sun and in the morning, we will remember them'. Royal Mail commissioned a stone cutter to engrave the words into stone, which was photographed for the stamp.

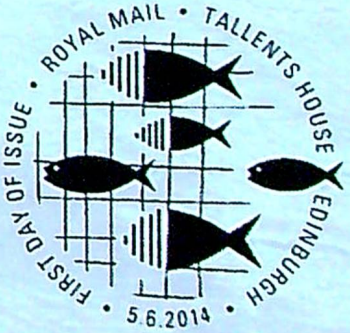
The remaining First Class stamp has a photographic portrait of Private William Tickle, who enlisted at the age of 15 in 1914. Two years later he was dead, killed in the slaughter of the Somme. On the £1.47 Memorial stamp is a sculpture showing men joining up to fight in 1914. The £1.47 Artefact stamp has the Princess Mary Gift Box, sent to serving soldiers at Christmas, 1914 •

Glasgow 2014 XX Commonwealth Games Six special sporting stamps will be issued in the week before the opening ceremony of the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow to celebrate the largest sporting and cultural festival ever hosted in Scotland. More details in your June and July editions of *Bulletin* •



What is on your fish list? A new stamp issue highlights the beauty and fragility of marine life and reminds us to shop responsibly for our fish

THEY MAY LIVE in the sea but they no longer rule the waves. Some of Britain's best-known fish species are under threat due to overfishing and a new Royal Mail issue aims to highlight this challenging problem. Illustrated by leading marine artist David Miller, the ten-stamp Sustainable Fish set features five species at risk and five managing to survive the advance of today's fishing industry. Also available in the issue are a Presentation Pack and Stamp Cards. Sustainable Fish launches on 5 June – World Environment Day.



FD1414-TH

Stamp by stamp All ten stamps are First Class and each is clearly marked 'threatened' or 'sustainable' depending on how its subject is faring in today's hostile marine environment. Sustainable fish are those whose populations are not adversely affected if the species is hunted. Today they are being offered to consumers as viable alternatives to the species under threat.

Sustainable species

Pouting This small, fast-growing relative of the cod likes to lurk on seaweed-swathed reefs and around shipwrecks, and it is sometimes accidentally caught in bottom trawls targeting larger fish. Chefs say the pouting's firm flesh should be enjoyed when very fresh.

Herring The life cycle of the herring once influenced how we lived. Shoals would appear in spring off the coast of Scotland and swim south; the fishermen then followed the herring and their nomadic wives and children followed the fleet, processing the catch onshore. Herring are rich in omega-3 fatty acids (fish oil), proven in clinical studies to be beneficial to health.

Dab Rapid growth and early mating habits protect dabs against overfishing. Though flavoursome, these delicate flatfish were under-appreciated in the ▸

© Alamy



Above: the Presentation Pack, designed by Russell Warren-Fisher, contains a brief history of UK fishing practices and the problems of overfishing, written by Professor Callum Roberts

past, but today you will find them more and more on the supermarket fish counters and on restaurant menus.

Cornish sardine An ancient favourite – the Cornish sardine has been fished off the south west of England for a thousand years, and annual catches once topped 10,000 tonnes. Fewer were caught by the beginning of last century as tastes changed, but happily they are now back in fashion as a health food.

Red gurnard The wily gurnard crawls on finger-like fins across the sea floor, stealthily taking prey such as unwary crabs, fish and worms. It has also done well in today's tough seas, its communities expanding north as waters warm up and flourishing where larger fish have suffered from overfishing.

Sustainable Fish Stamps – Specifications	
Date of issue	5 June
Number of stamps	Ten
Design	Kate Stephens
Stamp format	Landscape
Stamp size	37mm x 35mm
Printer	International Security Printers
Print process	Lithography
Number per sheet	25/50
Perforations	14 x 14.5
Phosphor	All over
Gum	PVA

Sustainable Fish Issue – Prices	
Presentation Pack	£6.70
Stamps	£6.20
First Day Cover/overseas	£7.92/£6.60
Stamp Cards	£4.50

Threatened species

Common skate Unfortunately the skate no longer lives up to its name – it is now very uncommon indeed in the seas around Britain. Once you would have found it everywhere, and it was caught in its thousands. But this huge fish is also a sensitive one, ill-suited to mass exploitation. Today it hides in terrain too rough for bottom trawling.

Wolffish Consumers have been misled by false claims that the fearsome-looking wolffish is a sustainable alternative to cod. In fact it is now much rarer than cod, after the extension of bottom trawling fishing methods across British seabeds caused a surge in wolffish catches.

Conger eel Habitually haunting shipwrecks, conger eels used to be far more abundant and widespread, growing to three metres and weighing in at a robust 150kg thanks to their copious diet of shellfish and fish. But modern commercial fishing has slashed their numbers.

Sturgeon Hunted for thousands of years, the prehistoric-looking sturgeon with its bony scales was an awesome sight, five metres long and often weighing half a tonne. It would seasonally travel from ocean to rivers, but has been a rarity since the Middle Ages when rivers were dammed to power mills, blocking the sturgeon's route to spawning grounds.

Spiny dogfish A small shark that grows over a metre long, the dogfish made for a popular meal in the early 20th century – grilled dogfish fillets and chips. The population has plunged due to overfishing, which has prompted sea anglers to campaign for the dogfish's protection.

Also in this issue The powerfully illustrated Presentation Pack reveals the story of UK fishing, from early methods to the crisis of overfishing and the sustainable solution. The expert behind the words is Professor Callum Roberts, a marine conservation biologist from the Environment Department of the University of York. He has also written the First Day Cover filler card.

Orders for Serviced First Day Covers must reach Royal Mail by 5 June. You can send stamped envelopes on the day of issue to Royal Mail, Tallents House for the Tallents House, Edinburgh postmark. Pictorial and non-pictorial alternative postmarks, shown right, have Fishguard as the location. Unstamped Royal Mail First Day Cover envelopes (30p) are available from main post offices and philatelic outlets approximately one week before the stamps go on sale •



FD1414-PL



FD1414-NP





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

UK diary dates

8 May Royal Philatelic Society London meeting, 41 Devonshire Place, London W1. Great Britain Surface Printed by Bob Galland. Display from 1pm, lecture 5pm. Non-members welcome – call 020 7486 1044 in advance.

8 May Inverness Philatelic Society AGM, Haugh Community Centre, 7pm.

10 May StampEssex 2014, Marconi Social Club, Beehive Lane, Chelmsford CM2 9FH, 10am to 4pm (see '70 years of service', opposite page).

10 May Worpex Stamp & Postcard Fair, Tudor Grange Academy, Bilford Road, Worcester WR3 8HN. 45 dealers, parking. Details: www.worpex.com.

16 May Strand Stamp Fair, Royal National Hotel, Bedford Way, London WC1, 9am to 4pm. Information: 020 8946 4480, www.stampshows.net.

17 May Bexley Philatelic Society 50th Anniversary Stamp Fair, Freemantle Hall, Bexley DA5 1AA. 10 dealers, displays, refreshments. Near Bexley station.

17 May GB Philatelic Society displays George V: Profile Head 1d (Michael Sefi, 11am) and Postal History With A Difference (Don Davies, 2.15pm), RPSL, 41 Devonshire Place, London W1.

17 May Federation of South Wales Philatelic Societies Annual Convention and Stamp & Postcard Fair, Princess Royal Theatre, Civic Centre, Port Talbot SA13 1PJ. Information: Neil Prior, 01656 740520.

13 June Strand Stamp Fair: details as above.

14 June GB Philatelic Society display: On My Honour (Michael Lockton, 11am) and AGM and Members' Displays (2.15pm), RPSL, address as above.

20-21 June Stafford Stamp Fair, Ingestre Suite, Staffordshire County Showground, Weston Road, Stafford ST18 0BD. Friday 10am to 5pm, Saturday 10am to 4pm. Over 50 dealers. Information: 01785 259350 •

Exhibitions

The 2014 Philatelic Congress of GB will be held in Ypres, Belgium, from 11 to 14 July. A further short Congress will be held at The Three Swans Hotel, Market Harborough, from 25 to 27 July – see page 288.

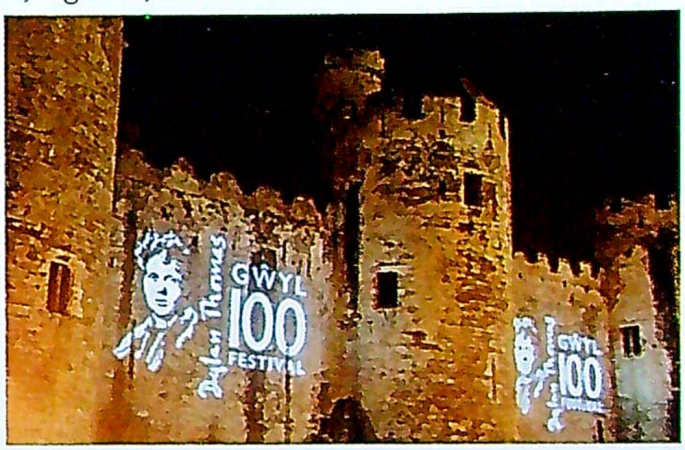
An international stamp exhibition will be held in Seoul (pictured left beneath the Philakorea logo) from 7 to 12 August, and Malaysia 2014 – a joint World Youth Stamp Exhibition and Asian International Exhibition – in Kuala Lumpur, from 1 to 6 December. For details of Malaysia 2014 email Richard West: richjwest@btinternet.com.



There is just one year to go to the next international stamp exhibition in London – Europhilex will be held at the Business Design Centre, London N1 (home of Stampex and the 2010 international) from 13 to 16 May 2015. It marks the 175th anniversary of the Penny Black and Twopence Blue and the 125th anniversary of the first international stamp exhibition in London, in 1890 •

Stamp-related exhibitions

The main philatelic anniversary of 2014 is, of course, the centenary of the start of the First World War, with Royal Mail issuing stamps on 28 July. For an early glimpse, see page 262. And for details of numerous local, regional, national and international events see the Imperial War Museum website – www.iwm.org.uk.



Last year Royal Mail marked the centenary of the birth of Benjamin Britten with a stamp and coin cover. A small display, Benjamin Britten: A life in Pictures, can be seen at the National Portrait Gallery until 30 June.

Royal Mail's Remarkable Lives issue, released on 25 March, includes a stamp commemorating Dylan Thomas. For celebratory events, go to www.dylanthomas100.org •

New catalogues

Stanley Gibbons has published a new (3rd) edition of the Western Pacific catalogue (price £27.95). The recent emergency surcharges of Tonga are listed for the first time. Coming soon is the 7th edition of Part 10 of the standard SG catalogue covering Russia from the earliest issues of Russia, the Soviet Union, and through the 1991 break-up into the Russian Federation and separate countries. Catalogues are available from the SG shop at 399 Strand, London WC2 and by mail order from Stanley Gibbons Publications, 7 Parkside, Ringwood, Hants BH24 3SH, by phone on 0800 611 622 (UK only) or by email at orders@stanleygibbons.com.



Michel catalogues were first published in Germany in 1909 and the range now extends to some 75 titles. In March Michel published new editions of its North Africa and US Specialised catalogues. In the North Africa catalogue the listing of Egypt has been thoroughly revised and the US Specialised extended by 64 pages since the previous edition. Both are now in colour. Michel publishes its Germany Specialised, Gulf States, and Valuable Stamps of the World (Vol. 2) catalogues in English. For more about the full range visit the company's website at www.briefmarken.de or email vertrieb@michel.de for details of your nearest stockist of Michel catalogues •

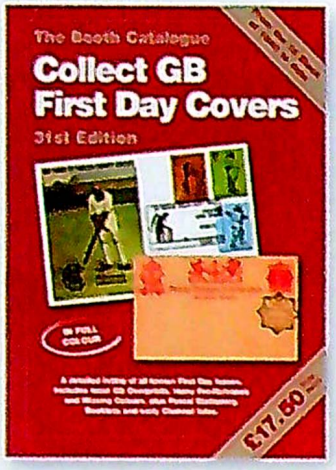
70 years of service

The Association of Essex Philatelic Societies has been serving collectors and societies for 70 years. In June 1944 representatives of the Colchester, Forest, Ilford, Leytonstone and Southend societies met to form an association that would promote philately in Essex by holding a philatelic event at least annually, encouraging the exchange of visits and displays between societies, providing and maintaining a register of judges, assisting in the formation of new societies, and promoting annual competition between member societies. Since 1944 the Association has grown and now encompasses 24 societies in Essex and the surrounding areas of London, Hertfordshire and Suffolk.

To mark the anniversary StampEssex will be held at the Marconi Social Club, Tydemans, off Beehive Lane, Chelmsford CM2 9FH on 10 May (10.30am to 4pm). There will be 13 dealers, stamp displays, refreshments and free parking. For further information contact Peter Denly at peter.denly@uwclub.net • ▸

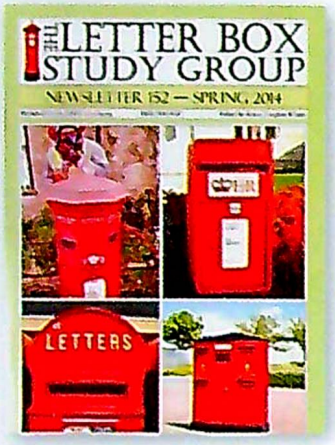
FDC catalogue

The 31st edition of the popular *Collect GB First Day Covers* catalogue (usually known simply as 'The Booth Catalogue') is now available. Compiled and edited by Jeffrey Booth, it provides an easy-to-use yet comprehensive guide to FDCs with sections for each reign (Elizabeth II subdivided into commemoratives and definitives), Channel Islands 1940 to 1948, overprint issues, pre-release covers, missing colours, and postal stationery 1972 to 1982. It would be impossible to illustrate all the different postmarks found on FDCs, but a nice selection is included for each stamp issue and until 1990 each is listed. Such has been the number of special postmarks in recent years that from 1990 a single price is given for 'additional relevant commemorative handstamps' stating the number of these handstamps, usually over ten and sometimes more than 20.



The 496-page paperback catalogue is enhanced by colour illustrations of selected covers and 'gems', some rare and unusual. There is a useful list of important dates in Post Office history from 1482 to 1927 and all users are recommended to read the introductory pages to maximise their enjoyment of the catalogue and really benefit from it. If you collect FDCs, old or new, you will find much of interest in this work – and may well be surprised at some of the prices of covers in your collection. It costs £17.50 (UK postage £3.20) and is available from First Day Publishing Company, PO Box 11, Arundel BN18 9SS. See www.collectgbfirstdaycovers.com to order online •

Letter boxes



The Spring 2014 issue of the *Letter Box Study Group Newsletter* is, as always, packed full of interesting news and feature articles, all superbly illustrated. The 52-page *Newsletter* (more accurately a fully fledged magazine) contains articles on Barnes Cross box restoration, lamp boxes, and boxes in Leicester, Derby, North Berwick, Easter Compton, Aberdeen and elsewhere. The contents are not restricted to the UK: there is a review of a new book on New South Wales boxes, and features on boxes in Brazil, Sweden and Turkey.

For those interested in collecting miniature boxes, rather than visiting actual ones, there is a fascinating article on models produced by Jeremy Crooks. The Group will hold a meeting at the Phoenix Centre, London WC1X 0DL (alongside the BPMA) on 7 June, from 10am to 4pm. For details of LBSG membership contact Val Scott – 38 Leopold Avenue, Birmingham B20 1ES or membership@lbsg.org •

BPMA

The British Postal Museum & Archive, located at Freeling House, Phoenix Place, London WC1, near the famous Mount Pleasant sorting office, is open Monday to Friday 10am to 5pm (Thursdays until 7pm) and on Saturdays 10 May and 14 June, 10am to 5pm (but closed Mondays 12 May and 16 June). On show at Freeling House is a display of photographs of Mail Rail, the famous Post Office Underground Railway built in the 1920s. The Post Office in the Community display can be seen at Blists Hill Victorian Town, Ironbridge, Shropshire, and 25 online exhibitions on the BPMA website include Aerial Post, regional stamps, Machins, David Gentleman, postal vehicles and letter boxes.

BPMA exhibitions on show elsewhere are: Great Train Robbery of August 1963 at Grampian Transport Museum, Alford, Aberdeenshire, until October 2014, Last Post: Remembering the First World War at Mansfield Museum until

11 June and at Guildford Museum from 16 June to 13 September. An extended version of the Last Post exhibition can be seen at the Coalbrookdale Museum of Iron until 27 March 2015. A weekend of events, entitled The Curious Culture of Letter-Writing, takes place at the BPMA Museum Store at Debden, Essex on 10 and 11 May, and 'Museums at Night' evening events from 15 to 17 May.

For details of all BPMA events, talks, tours of its archive and walking tours, visit www.postalheritage.org.uk or phone 020 7239 2570 •

Railway letter stamps

Three preserved railways – Festiniog (including Welsh Highland), Nene Valley and Talyllyn – issue colourful railway letter stamps popular with visitors and railway stamp philatelists.



A new Festiniog Railway 25p stamp was issued on 1 February 2014 reproducing a painting by Edward Paget-Tomlinson entitled *Steam Tug Wave of Life Leaving Portmadoc Harbour about 1890*. The railway was built in the 1830s to carry slate from Blaneau Ffestiniog to the quays at Portmadoc (now called Porthmadog). It is available in sheets of nine for £2.50, or on FDC with Royal Mail stamp cancelled by a '150 Years of Steam' special handstamp for £5. Covers were carried on 7 January bearing a Festiniog Railway stamp and Royal Mail's Ivor the Engine stamp (price £5), and on 20 February with the new Festiniog Railway stamp and Royal Mail's Classic Locomotives of Wales miniature sheet (£9.50). The miniature sheet 78p value depicts a Festiniog Railway locomotive. Orders and enquiries to: Festiniog Railway Letter Service, Rosebank, 1 Kepax Gardens, Barbourne, Worcester WR3 7LB, or railwaypost@festrail.co.uk.

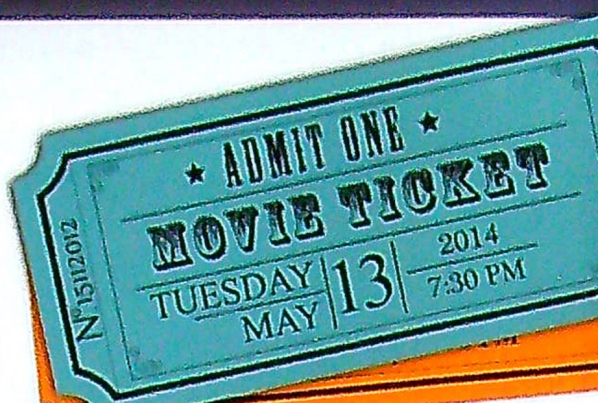


The Nene Valley Railway (NVR) near Peterborough plans to issue up to six new stamps during 2014. The first, issued on 20 February, features LMS Black Five locomotive No 45337. A sheet of nine costs £2.25, proof sheet (limited edition of 25) £24, and FDC with Royal Mail Classic Locomotives of Wales miniature sheet £7.50. The second stamp, released on 9 March, features the Old Station Building at Wansford and costs 75p – 25p railway letter fee and 50p surcharge to raise funds for the renovation of the building. A sheet of ten costs £7.50 (£24 proof sheet). Two covers are available at £5 each, one serviced on the first day with 'First Day' cachet, and without the cachet on sale throughout the year. The NVR plans new stamps to coincide with Royal Mail's Great British Film and Christmas issues (13 May and 4 November), for the railway's 40th anniversary and for an event involving the locomotive Tornado which was shown on a stamp last November. A number of special event covers are being serviced: Queen (the pop group) Tribute Weekend in June, Classic Sunday in July, Class 14s at 50 in August, and the Steam Gala in September. For details of these events visit www.nvr.org.uk. The first cover, 'Fives Winter', is now available for £5 in a limited edition of 100. Orders and enquiries: Nene Valley Railway, Wansford Station, Stibbington, Peterborough PE8 6LR. The minimum order should be £5, plus £1 post and packing.

The Talyllyn Railway, the first of the preserved railways to issue stamps, will issue a new stamp in 2015 to mark the 150th anniversary of the Act of Parliament authorising the building of the railway. Enquiries to Postmaster, Talyllyn Railway, Wharf Station, Tywyn, Gwynedd, LL36 9EY •

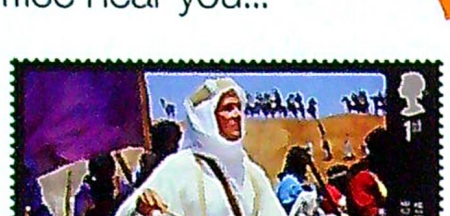
Great British Film – released 13 May

Book now for six great movie triumphs of the last 60 years, celebrated in a must-see stamp issue coming to a Post Office near you...





A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH (1946)
Directors Michael Powell, Emeric Pressburger.
Starring David Niven, Raymond Massey, Roger Livesey.
Plot Second World War pilot David Niven cheats death when he plunges from his stricken plane without a parachute – then must argue his case in a heavenly court for the right to live.
Inside story The huge escalator taking Niven to heaven featured 106 steps, weighed 85 tons, cost over £100,000 to make and was nicknamed Ethel by the engineers who constructed it.
Expert verdict 'Gripping stuff, beautifully made and played.'
Barry Norman / Radio Times



LAWRENCE OF ARABIA (1962)
Director David Lean.
Starring Peter O'Toole, Omar Sharif, Anthony Quinn.
Plot Biopic of T E Lawrence with epic scenes of the brave Brit's bridge-blowing derring-do and action-packed First World War guerrilla struggle against the Turks.
Inside story O'Toole was almost killed during a battle scene when he was thrown from his camel in front of hundreds of extras charging on horseback. Luckily the camel stood over O'Toole, preventing him from being trampled.
Expert verdict 'What red-blooded passion this film has and what formal brilliance. This is a movie with the excitement of a cavalry charge. They don't make them like this any more.'
Film critic Peter Bradshaw / Guardian



2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY (1968)
Director Stanley Kubrick.
Starring Keir Dullea, Gary Lockwood, William Sylvester.
Plot The subject of debate for decades. It is (probably) the story of human evolution kick-started by an alien intelligence sending that famous black monolith to Earth. In the opening sequence the monolith teaches our ape ancestors to use tools.
Fast-forward to a future where humans discover an alien monolith on the Moon and realise their limitations in the face of superior technology, in the form of murderous computer HAL.
Inside story Kubrick tried to get insurance with Lloyd's of London against any box office losses incurred if alien life was discovered before the film was released. Lloyd's declined.
Expert verdict 'The film set the standard for science fiction and that standard hasn't changed since.'
Cloud Atlas director Tom Tykwer / Telegraph

Six stamps, 60mm x 30mm, designed by Johnson Banks, printed by International Security Printers.
For further philatelic details, see page 243 of April *Bulletin*.
Acknowledgements: *A Matter of Life and Death* © Carlton Film Distributors 1946, courtesy of ITV; *Lawrence of Arabia* © 1962, renewed 1990 Columbia Pictures Industries, Inc., all rights reserved, courtesy of Columbia Pictures;



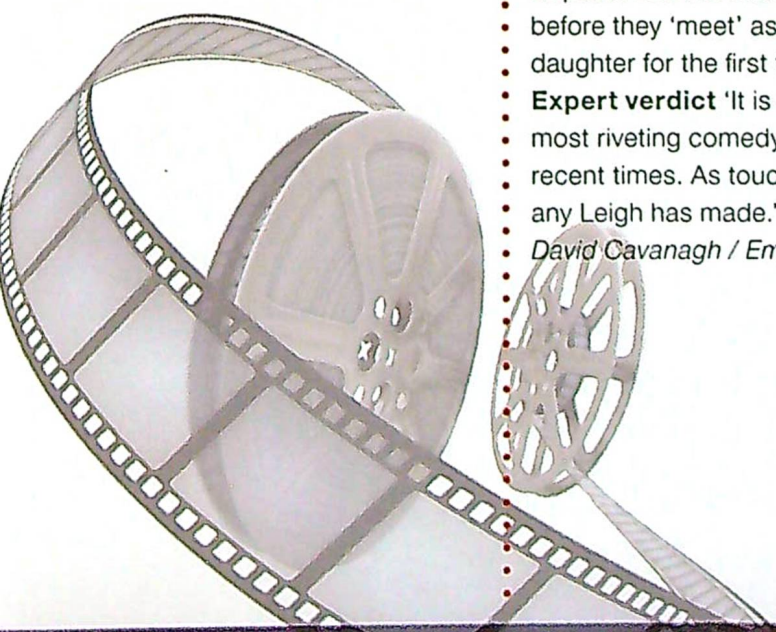
CHARIOTS OF FIRE (1981)
Director Hugh Hudson.
Starring Ian Charleson, Ben Cross, Nigel Havers.
Plot The stirring story of Scottish Protestant runner Eric Liddell and his Jewish rival for Olympic glory, Harold Abrahams, is also a stab at the British class system and its treatment of outsiders. Beautifully photographed to the rousing peals of that iconic Vangelis score.
Inside story Screenwriter Colin Welland was inspired to give the film its name after hearing 'Jerusalem' being sung on *Songs of Praise*.
Expert verdict 'A bold, intelligent, romantic film with all the lineaments of a classic.' *Film critic Peter Bradshaw / Guardian*



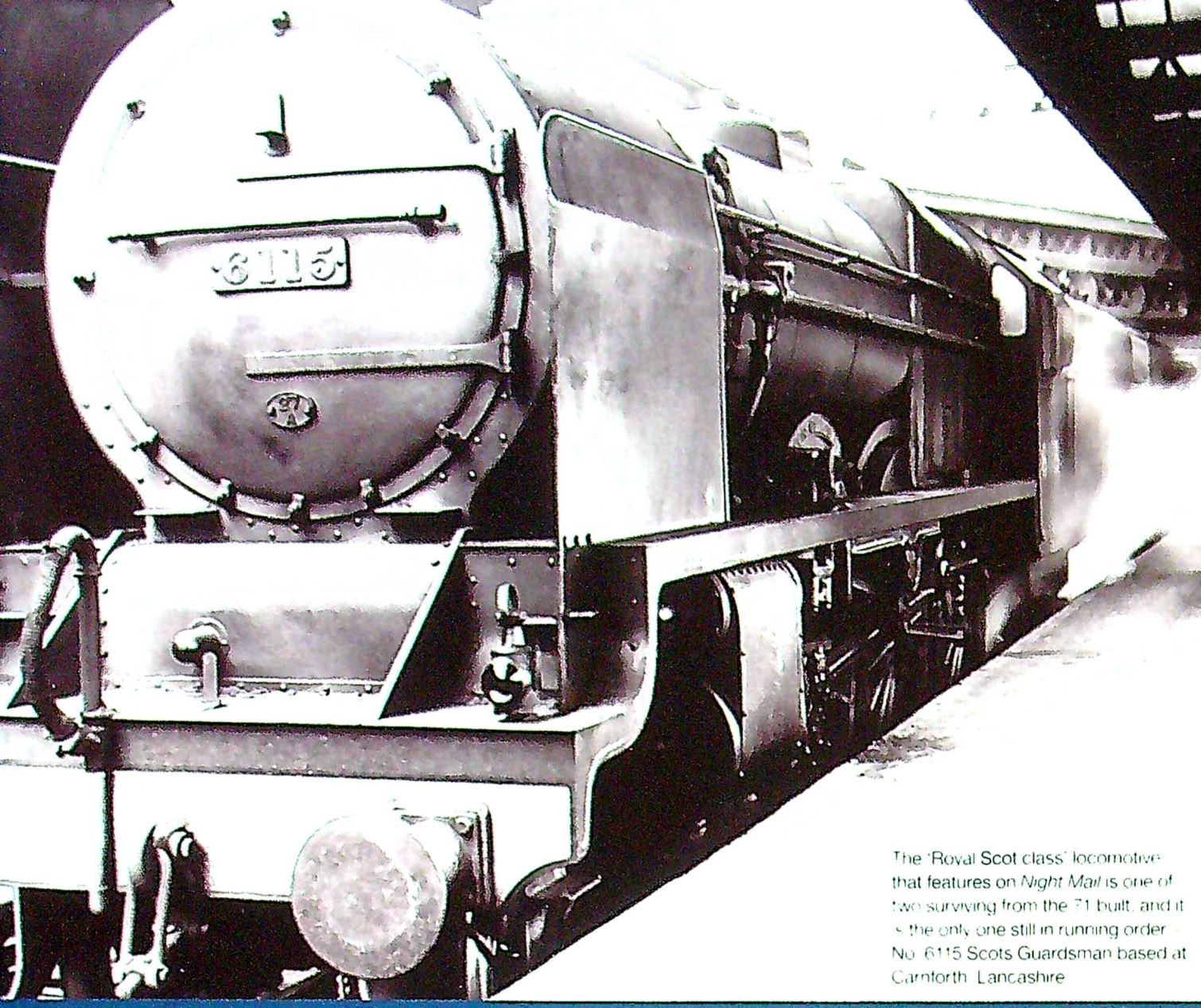
SECRETS & LIES (1996)
Director Mike Leigh.
Starring Brenda Blethyn, Marianne Jean-Baptiste, Timothy Spall.
Plot Hortense (Marianne Jean-Baptiste), a black girl adopted at birth, now grown-up and a successful optometrist, tracks down her natural mother Cynthia (Brenda Blethyn), who is white, working-class, and down on her luck with a grotty council house and dysfunctional family. Hortense's arrival has far-reaching consequences for her family, already damaged by secrets and lies...
Inside story Most of the performances in *Secrets & Lies* were improvised and for extra spontaneity, Blethyn and Jean-Baptiste had not met each other before they 'meet' as mother and daughter for the first time in the film.
Expert verdict 'It is one of the most riveting comedy-dramas of recent times. As touching a film as any Leigh has made.' *Film critic David Cavanagh / Empire magazine*



BEND IT LIKE BECKHAM (2002)
Director Gurinder Chadha.
Starring Parminder Nagra, Keira Knightley, Jonathan Rhys Meyers.
Plot Hounslow teenager Jesminder Bhamra's mum wants her to learn to cook the perfect Indian meal, then marry the perfect Indian boy. Jesminder wants to be a football star just like her hero David Beckham. Whoops. This generation-clash comedy, co-starring Knightley as Jesminder's soccer soulmate, is also rather poignant.
Inside story Twentieth Century Fox executives were worried about the title *Bend It Like Beckham*, as they thought the Englishman was not well-known enough in the States – so considered calling it *Move It Like Mia* after the US female football star Mia Hamm.
Expert verdict 'Gurinder Chadha turns this film about a clash between traditional values and the modern world into a fantastic feel-good movie, chock full of wonderful characters. Mr Beckham ought to be proud to have his name on such a great film.' *Jamie Russell / BBC*

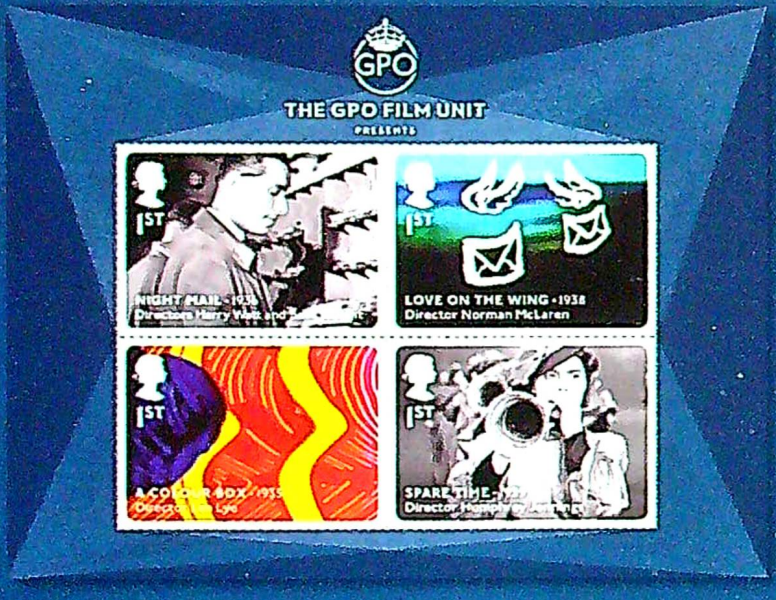


2001: A Space Odyssey TM & © Turner Entertainment Co. (s14); *Chariots of Fire*, for the United States, Canada, the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico only ™ & © Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc. (s14). © 1981 Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation in all other territories; all rights reserved; *Secrets & Lies* photograph by Simon Mein © Thin Man Films Ltd; *Bend It Like Beckham* © Kintop Pictures, Bend It Films and Roc Media.



The 'Royal Scot class' locomotive that features on *Night Mail* is one of two surviving from the 71 built, and it is the only one still in running order – No. 6115 Scots Guardsman based at Carnforth, Lancashire

Sound tracks of Britain



From mail trains to modern love and Britons at work and play – the GPO Film Unit told a fascinating story of our 1930s nation in sound and vision, says Dane Garrod

THIS IS THE NIGHT
BRINGING THE CH

VAST, MODERN, PIONEERING. That was the General Post Office in the 1930s. So naturally the GPO embraced the latest way of talking to the nation – via the compelling new force that was the public information film. As Britain's largest employer, the GPO was at the cutting edge of business organisation and technological research. With this in mind, as part of its new public relations department, it established the GPO Film Unit in 1933, headed by documentary film-maker John Grierson.

The Film Unit was the brainchild of GPO PR chief Stephen Tallents (after whom Tallents House is named). Indeed, it was responsible for promoting the reputation of the GPO and for emphasising its technological achievements and ambitions. As the writer J B Priestley said of the era: 'If you wanted to see what camera and sound could really do, you had to see some little film sponsored by the Post Office or the Gas, Light and Coke Company.'

Innovative the GPO films certainly were, in terms of image, sound and the early colour, using Dufaycolor. Happily, they have been preserved, including versions of some films using the later, more advanced Eastman colour. And they can readily be seen today on the internet. On 13 May, as part of the Great British Film issue, Royal Mail releases a Miniature Sheet featuring four of these films: *Spare Time*, *Love On The Wing*, *A Colour Box* and the classic *Night Mail*.

Night Mail Of all the films produced by the GPO Film Unit, none has stood the test of time better than this 1936 documentary production. Is that because the film features the stirring music of Benjamin Britten, W H Auden's evocative poetry, the compelling movement and excitement of travel by train at night, the realism of life on the railway, and the emotions we all share about the letters

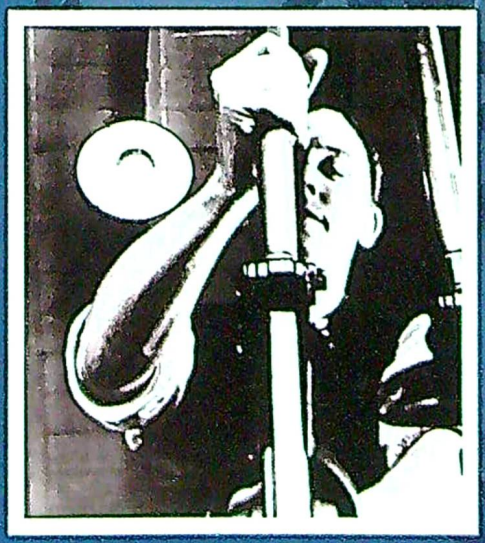
'NIGHT MAIL' CREATIVES





Above: directors Harry Watt and Basil Wright, first recruits to join film-maker John Grierson at the GPO Film Unit







Above: memorable stills from *Night Mail*, the documentary made by the GPO Film Unit in 1936, which so far has been watched more than 300,000 times in its online version at www.youtube.com

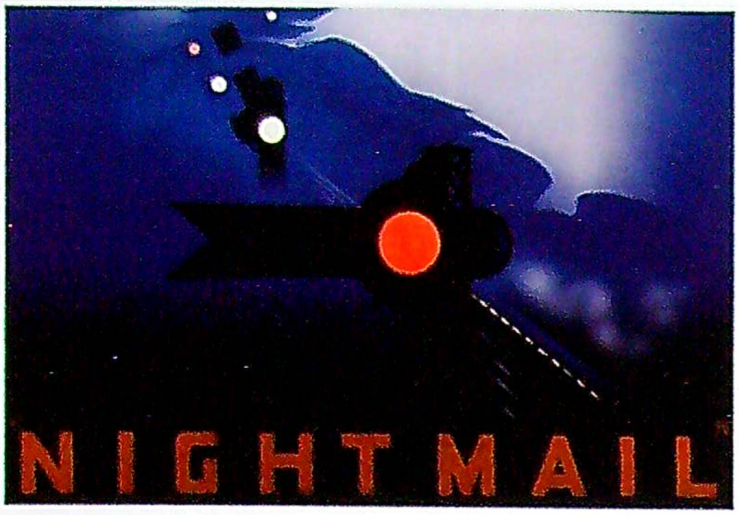




Above: Benjamin Britten, who composed the music for *Night Mail*, with Auden, one of *Night Mail*'s poets, and (centre) conductor Reginald Goodall

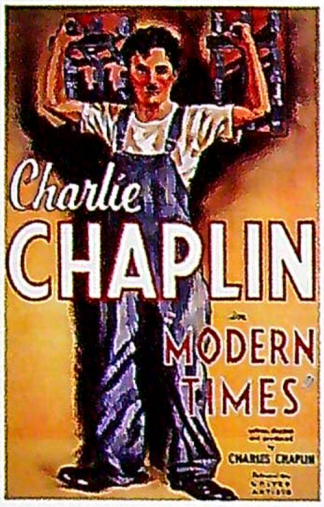
Images © GPO Film Unit/The Kobal Collection

MAIL CROSSING THE BORDER, QUE AND THE POSTAL ORDER...



to and from loved ones? Yes, for all those reasons. And with the train passing coalfields and factories, steelworks and farms, *Night Mail* tells us almost as much about everyday life in 1936 Britain as it does about the postal service. Running for nearly 23 minutes, the film's black and white format is well-suited to the story of a night mail train that runs from dusk to dawn, carrying only postal workers, sorting and despatching mail.

This account of the GPO train delivery service begins with a voiceover commentary describing how mail is collected for transit. As the train of locomotive and GPO sorting carriages proceeds on its nightly run from London to Glasgow, we are shown various regional railway stations, the offloading and onloading of mailbags, sorting within the train and conversation between the workers – and all to the constant motion of the 365-ton train and the pounding of the locomotive exhaust and wheels.



Above: *Night Mail* was released by the GPO Film Unit in the same year as United Artists made Charlie Chaplin classic *Modern Times* – the impact of industrialisation was an thrilling topic in 1936

When the train nears its destination, there is the best-known sequence of the film, in which Auden's spoken rhyming verse and Britten's music, both specifically written for the film, combine over images of the racing locomotive's wheels. *Night Mail*, one of the most critically acclaimed British documentaries ever, was ambitious at the time of production, experimenting with the use of visuals, sound, narrative and editing technique.

For many, the 1930s was the heyday of steam railways in this country. As well as fast schedules, there was the drive towards speed which included the capture of the world steam railway speed record in 1938 – still held today. The *Night Mail* stamp from the new Great British Film issue (see previous page) shows a postal worker in the midst of a hive of activity, with pencil behind the ear to add place names to incorrectly addressed mail, and a bundle of letters to sort into his own postal slots in front of him. During the film, we are told that 500 million letters are collected, sorted and delivered each year. This is an astounding total, especially as we are looking at an operation from a less-mechanised pre-computer age.

On this down postal service (down from London, that is), 40 night mail workers sort throughout the night, to the accompaniment of Auden's lines such as 'letters with faces scrawled in the margin'. We see the lineside automated despatch and collection of mailbags at speed, and who will forget the heavy thud as the mailbag is scooped up and thrown into the carriage at some 70 miles per hour! One has to admire the work of the cameraman – the aircraft that flew alongside the train had a door removed so that he could perch precariously on the edge in the darkness with his filming gear.

And no stamp collector could disagree with the sentiments of the closing lines: '*None will hear the postman's knock without a quickening of the heart, for who can bear to feel himself forgotten.*'

LETTERS FOR THE RICH, LETTERS FOR THE POOR...

Love on the Wing At just over four minutes, *Love on the Wing* from 1938 was a breakthrough in animated film, where hand-drawn animations overlay coloured backgrounds. It contains an element of surrealism, with a multitude of moving images that run so fast as to leave the viewer always wondering what the image will so quickly change into next.

There is no commentary as the galloping pace with rousing music does not require it. Director Norman McLaren was obliged to include an advertising message about postal services. But in this modern, surrealist story of romance, McLaren managed to incorporate it seamlessly into the action about two lovers who write to each other, presenting the 'sell' entirely visually with a weight, some coins and an Empire Mail envelope.

The music was a pre-existing piece by French composer Jacques Ibert and its flow is a perfect match for the ever-changing pictures. We see lovers meeting and a bended-knee proposal that moves for just a few seconds, a key and a lock, a dancing woman, a moth and a flame, and each of these change into the next. There is also an envelope that opens and seals itself before morphing into an umbrella. The visuals were hand-drawn onto the celluloid image with pen and black Indian ink, and when laid over the negative of the background the final result took the form of thick white lines.

On the First Class Miniature Sheet stamp for *Love on the Wing* are two pairs of wings and envelopes, surely a reminder that the GPO has an active air mail service around the world. In the film, the lovers transform into these winged letters, which adds a human touch.

BEHIND THE SCENES





Above: Norman McLaren was a Scottish-born Canadian animator and film director, known as a pioneer in many areas of film-making – he was one of the first to draw directly onto film, as featured on the *Love On The Wing* stamp

A Colour Box Originally produced in the new colour medium of Dufaycolor, *A Colour Box* can now be seen in enhanced and restored Eastman colour. Perhaps the title says it all, as it is composed of many irregular shapes and patterns that are vibrant, quivering and dancing in their presentation to the eye. Again, there is no spoken commentary, but a jazz band of the period gives a lively performance that is commentary in itself, reflecting changes and shifts in mood that are mirrored by the visual moving colours. At just under four minutes of time, the film's vibrant mix of energy and modernity caught the eye of artists such as Paul Nash and the Surrealists, who rated the film highly.



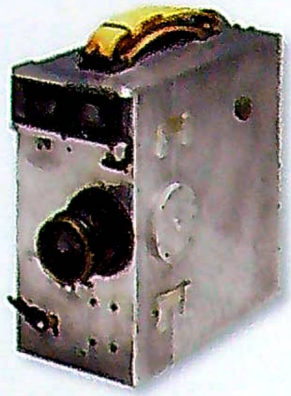


In order to turn an abstract film into a GPO advert, director Len Lye came up with the idea of inscribing a few words at the end to promote the use of the postal service. 'GPO' and 'cheaper parcel post' ▸



Above: New Zealander Len Lye was a sought-after experimental film-maker in the 1930s. He also worked as a 'kinetic sculptor'

Stamp images © Royal Mail Group Ltd. Photography: Kobal, iStock, Royal Mail



Above: a state-of-the-art handheld camera of the type popular with 1930s directors

jitter on the screen as if animated by the musical score, together with three price and weight steps to inform people that using the GPO parcel post system cost less than they might have thought.

The stamp (see previous page) portrays some of the red and yellow rivers of colour which were created by painting bright, abstract shapes directly onto celluloid, and then combing and texturing the paint so that it appears to dance along with the soundtrack. *A Colour Box* was notable for being a colour film at a time when this format was experimental, and it secured a wide theatrical release, becoming popular with audience and critics alike.

CLASSIC VIEW OF THE ERA





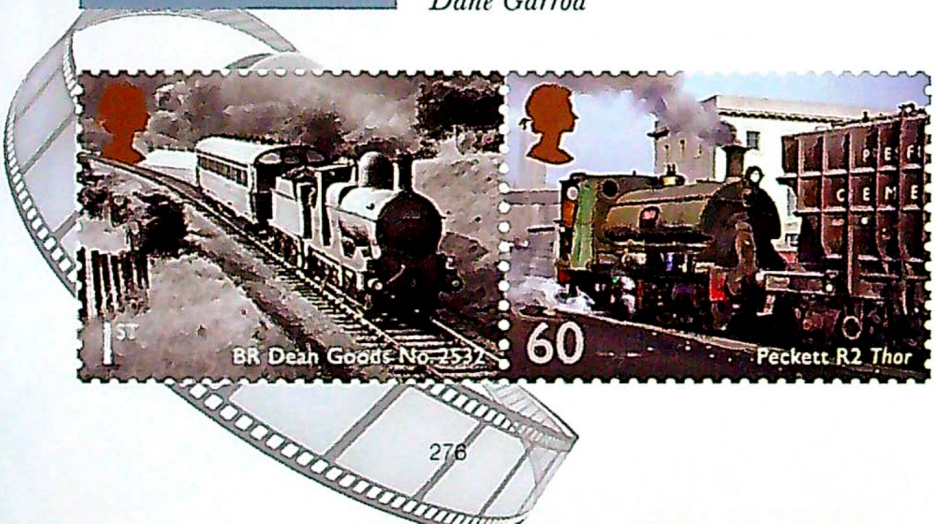
Above: Humphrey Jennings was the director of *Spare Time*. His work subsequently became acknowledged as the finest cinema of the Second World War period

Spare Time Produced in 1939, *Spare Time* is a 14-minute survey of the ways in which working people in Britain spent their leisure moments, including hobbies, dancing, card-playing and participation in group activities. It does not expound on social and economic problems, but relies on images showing how people enjoyed their free time strung together in startling combinations to the sounds of choirs, carnival and brass bands and jazz music. The film achieves a sense and measure of life's fulfilment with the view of a pre-war society where happiness could be found after a day's work in steel, cotton or coal (these being the three industries particularly portrayed).

Most moving was the informality of a Welsh choir singing around a piano. Most interesting was the realism in the 1930s working-class home: the father reading the *Daily Herald* newspaper, the son with his comic, and the mother bringing the dinner to the table – a pie to die for. In one scene, the sign on the bar of a public house advised: 'A meal for sixpence'. One wonders exactly what kind of feast a customer would get for sixpence in 1939.

The commentary is limited. Instead the film successfully relies on the visual storyline augmented by what we, the viewers, add in our own imaginations. The *Spare Time* First Class stamp shows a young woman in a brass band, in monochrome, as this is how the film is shot. And for the better: black and white accentuates the realism. The GPO Film Unit moved swiftly and successfully with the times when it was established as part of an ambitious plan to communicate directly with the public – the films were shown in schools, workplaces, exhibitions and cinemas. Today we recognise the significance of the Film Unit in British culture, so it is fitting that Royal Mail acknowledges its importance by creating this Miniature Sheet •

Dane Garrod



Talking stamps...

Left: you can hear W H Auden's *Night Mail* via the world's first 'intelligent' stamps, issued in September 2010. The first stamps of Royal Mail's Classic Locomotives series work with image recognition by means of an embedded QR code – just download the Junaio app, hold a smart phone over the stamp and watch Bernard Cribbins reading the iconic Auden poem. Try it on this page!

B is for the British Empire Exhibition





How the spirit of the British Empire Exhibition was defined by the stamp designs of Harold Nelson

ST. GEORGE'S DAY, 23 April 1924, saw the grand opening of the British Empire Exhibition. Its purpose was to stimulate trade around the world, in particular between British Empire countries, and to bind together all those countries that owed allegiance to the Union Flag. It was held at Wembley Park in north London and covered 216 acres, with pavilions provided by most countries of the Empire to promote their exports.

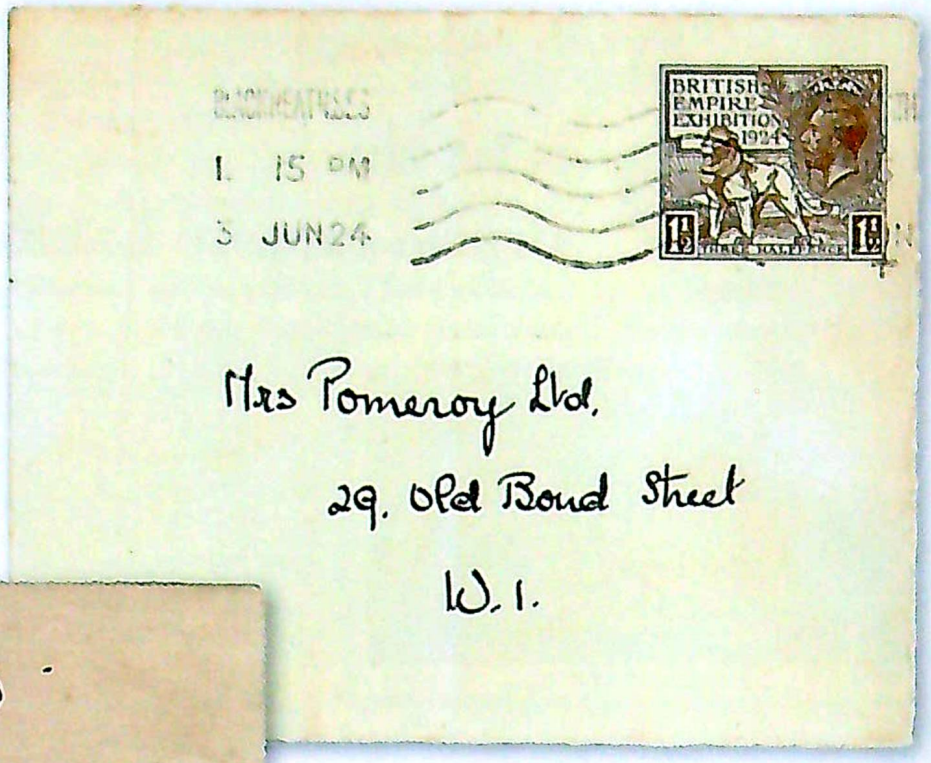
Two new stamps, designed by Harold Nelson, were put on sale the same day. They were Britain's first commemorative issues. The designs included the Wembley Lion, the exhibition symbol also designed by Nelson, which stood astride the world with the sun shining gloriously in the background.

These powerful stamps were issued in values of 1d printed in red (the inland postcard rate) and 1½d printed in brown (the inland letter rate). The same Nelson stamp designs were used for four new items of postal stationery, which were also issued on 23 April: the 1d stamp was used for the inland postcard, while the 1½d stamp appeared on inland envelopes and lettercards, as well as postcards for foreign destinations. At first glance both the adhesive and postal stationery stamps appear to be the same, but due to the differences in ▸

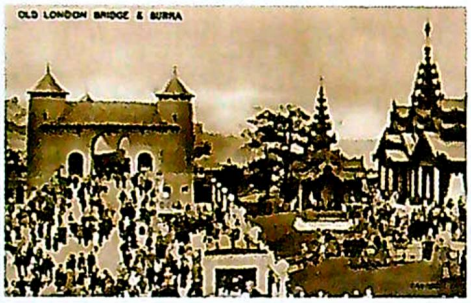
Above: designed by Harold Nelson, these two stamps went on sale for the opening of the British Empire Exhibtion in 1924

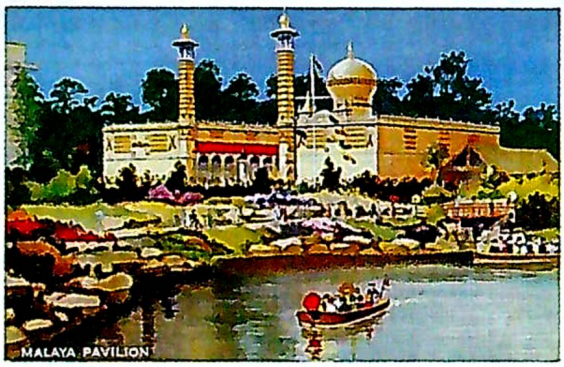
Top left: souvenir postcard showing crowds at the entrance to the British Government Pavilion

Right: Pomeroy Ltd of Old Bond Street received this 1924 inland envelope with the brown 1½d stamp









Above: 1924 lettercard '... for transmission to any place abroad to which the 1½d rate letter postage does not apply' Centre: souvenir postcards of the British Empire Exhibition showing the Old London Bridge and Burma exhibtion and the Malaya Pavilion

printing methods and materials used, the latter had to be re-engraved. The adhesive stamps were recess printed, but the postal stationery was printed by the letterpress process on paper and card that had a coarser surface. This meant that the gaps between the lines of the sun's rays and the shading behind The King's head had to be widened and in addition the stamp's border also needed to be reworked.

At first both the stamps and the postal stationery were only available from the two post offices set up in the exhibition grounds, but later a mail order service was instituted for those unable to get to Wembley Park. The exhibition









was such a success that having closed its doors on 1 November 1924, it then reopened on 9 May 1925. Both the stamps and the postal stationery were reissued for the second season, but to differentiate them from the previous year, the date incorporated into the design was changed from 1924 to 1925.

The postal stationery for the second year was not nearly as popular as the first time around and sales of the 1925 issue were much lower than in the previous year. Despite the success of this commemorative stationery, the public would wait nearly 25 years for another commemorative issue, when a special air letter was produced to celebrate the 1948 Olympic Games ●

Above: 1924 1p Post Card and a 1925 Letter Card

Three picture postcards give an idea of the huge scale of the Exhibition, showing the Canadian and Australian Pavilions and the Palace of Engineering

Meet our prizewinner!

Bulletin's 50th anniversary competition was won by Gary Levitt who enjoyed an exclusive tour of Royal Mail Stamps & Collectibles HQ at Tallents House



Above: Gary and Sandra Levitt stayed at the smart Scotsman hotel in historic Edinburgh as part of their competition prize

Below: the Levitts receive a Stanley Gibbons voucher from Royal Mail Stamps and Collectibles Managing Director Andrew Hammond

GARY LEVITT has discovered the secrets of Tallents House after winning an insider's tour – the prize in our 50th anniversary competition that ran in the *Bulletin* and at Stampex last September. His expert 'tour guide' was Head of Customer Service and Fulfilment Neil Waggott, who explained the fascinating story of how Stamps and Collectibles creates philatelic products.

Touring the Edinburgh centre with Gary was wife Sandra, Stamps and Collectibles Managing Director Andrew Hammond, Head of Marketing Julie Murray, and *Bulletin* Royal Mail Editor William Doherty.

'This was a visit of a lifetime because going round Tallents House, where it all happens, is something you just can't do normally,' said Gary, 49, a collector for 40 years. 'To see how it's run and get all my questions answered was brilliant.'

Gary was shown how first day covers, presentation packs and Post & Go issues are assembled and despatched to customers. The Levitts were also presented with a Stanley Gibbons gift voucher by Andrew Hammond.

As part of the prize Sandra and Gary, a firefighter from Kippax, West Yorkshire, enjoyed a two-night stay at the prestigious five-star Scotsman Hotel in Edinburgh. Over the following pages join Gary for the full story of his VIP tour – and your own look behind the scenes at Tallents House...



Photography: Ian Jacobs

The tour



Blaze of glory Firefighter Gary finds the perfect stamp in the Tallents House lobby – a facsimile of the Fire Service 97p value from the 2010 Britain Alone issue.



Present and correct Head of Customer Service and Fulfilment Neil Waggott explains how the machines in the background insert stamps into the presentation pack carriers.



Full steam ahead In the presentation pack manufacturing area Gary and Sandra get a sneak preview of the Classic Locomotives of Wales FDC and the Classic Locomotives of the United Kingdom Prestige Stamp Book before their release on 20 February.



Famous faces In the first day cover room Sandra poses with a selection of stamps from the Remarkable Lives issue – stacked and ready to be mounted on their envelopes. →

The operation

A team of many Tallents

Advanced technology, manual skill, deep knowledge of stamps and a passion for philately are absolutely key to the production operation at Tallents House

TALLENTS HOUSE IS A TRUE TREASURE HOUSE. From its top-secret production facilities flows a torrent of philatelic gems: 900,000 first day covers, 1.3 million presentation packs and 50,000 Post & Go sets every year. Then add to these the special products: all sorts of sheets – commemorative, souvenir and miniature. Stamp books, stamp cards, framed stamps and facsimile packs. Medal covers, coin covers, albums and accessories. No wonder the 92-strong Tallents team are constantly busy. They work three months ahead in the special stamp programme to hit demanding issue release deadlines.

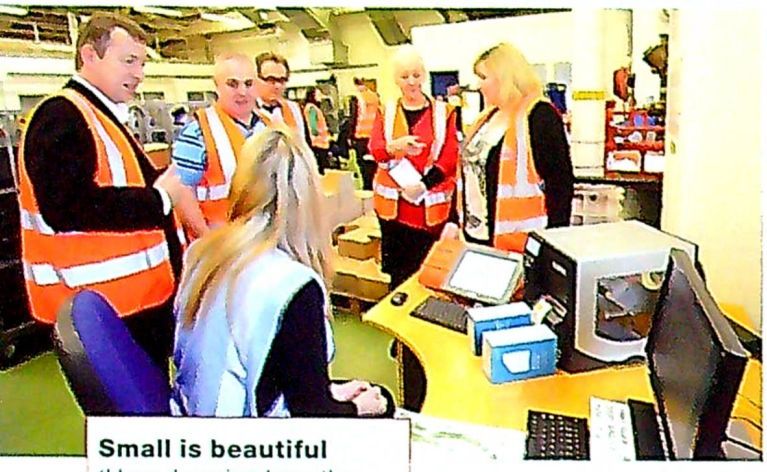
Beyond a lobby decked out with giant facsimiles of classic issues is, in Tallents House parlance, 'Upstairs', the contact centre handling your orders, and 'Downstairs', the production facility. Production is a mix of smart technology, a sharp eye for detail, and manual dexterity. Clattering machines create FDCs and presentation packs with robotic precision. Slick conveyor ▸



Getting it covered Neil Waggott and his VIP visitors discuss the details of the first day cover production process. Creating successful FDCs is all down to smart machines and the expert eye of their human operators.



Something exciting in store On the triple-decker shelving in the Tallents House storage area thousands of stamp books await delivery to retail customers, including the major supermarkets.



Small is beautiful 'I loved seeing how the Post & Gos were made,' says Gary. 'I thought it would be a massive process, so I was really surprised to see the stamps come out of a tiny computer and printer. Tiny but very powerful, obviously, as the quality is so good, really beautiful.'

systems whizz assembled products along for the Tallents House cancellation. The printing of customers' addresses on orders is computer-controlled. Yet the tearing of stamps into individual units, from vast printers' sheets, is done by good old-fashioned humans. A Tallents House tearer expertly hand-tears up to 25 sheets at a time into thousands of stamps (there are between 25 and 200 stamps per sheet). The ink, if it runs across perforations, influences how many stamps can be torn, undamaged, at the same time.

Human tearers achieve perfect perforations, unlike machines. Tallents House did trial two machines: one guillotined across perforations, making them too regular and obviously cut by a machine blade, which collectors do not like. The other inserted prongs between perforations and pulled the stamps apart, making the perforations too irregular. Hand-tearing won.

'Hand-tearing leaves the perforations in place, which might not happen if you pull them apart on a machine, but it looks like the stamps have been torn "properly" as a collector would say, rather than being machined,' says Head of Customer Service and Fulfilment Neil Waggott. 'Tearing is a real skill. Some are naturally good at it and others like me are hopeless!'

Excellent presentation A walk through the series of connecting rooms in this two-storey brick block on the outskirts of Edinburgh takes you through the entire process. In the first room, where presentation packs are made, machine operators do a 100 per cent check to make sure everything has





In good order Neil explains to the Levitts how computer-controlled machinery matches customers' orders with their address, prints it on the envelope, and issues a cancellation.



All in hand In the final part of their tour Gary and Sandra visit the area where special product packages are assembled by hand – these include 'awkward' three-dimensional items such as framed stamp displays that cannot go through machines.

been inserted correctly into the packs. Some 3,000 packs are produced every hour. Post & Go sheets for bespoke orders from individual collectors are also printed out here from a small but powerful printer. The area features an internal first day covers room where machines make 2,500 covers every hour. Here temperature and humidity are strictly controlled, as of course stamps can be damaged by changes in both, but stay flat if levels are stable. 'The operators carry out a visual check to see that the stamps are aligned properly and the space between rows of stamps and between individual stamps is correct,' explains Neil. 'They can do this to within a few millimetres.'

Dedicated passion On past the customer order and cancellation set-up, you arrive at the area for hand-packed orders, put together with the care that is a hallmark of the Tallents House team. 'The team are experienced, dedicated to what they do, and have a real passion for it,' says Neil. 'Their attention to the quality is remarkable. They share collectors' attention to detail and their desire to have things done just right.'

Finally, your order is ready. Stamp products are locked down in Tallents House amid high security until they are ready to leave the building the afternoon before the first day of issue. Then it is action stations. Between 4pm and 6pm they are driven to the Edinburgh Mail Centre for overnight despatch. With service levels topping 99 per cent for next day delivery, you should then be waking up to the excitement of a brand new issue •

The numbers

2.5 million
Number of customer orders fulfilled annually

135,000
The number of customers served by the Tallents House team every year

100,000
The average total of first day covers made for a special stamp issue

10 weeks
Average time taken to produce and prepare each stamp issue for despatch to customers

The collector



Winning story Our prizewinner reveals how he got into collecting and what his dream stamp is...

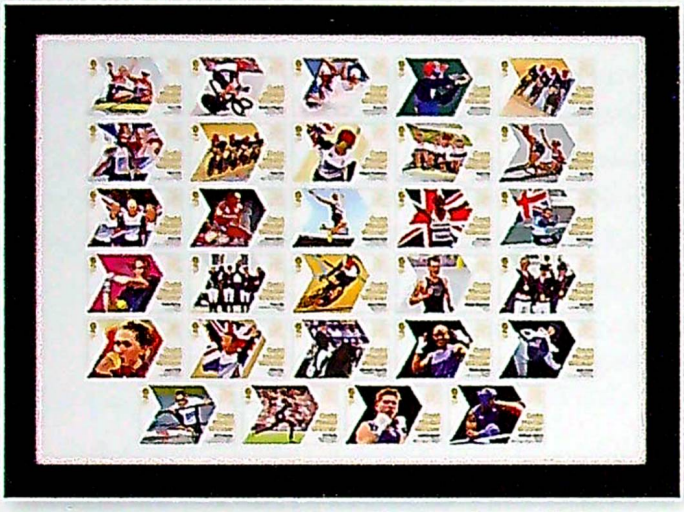
Name **Gary Levitt**
Age **49**
From **Kippax, West Yorkshire**

How I started 'My first buy was a 1966 British Birds first day cover from a local market when I was nine. Like any young lad I was into bird egg collecting – I saw this issue of birds and I just wanted it because it had all the birds I was interested in.'

Why I collect 'I'm a firefighter, which can be a full-on, stressful job – coming home and unwinding with my collection is so relaxing, a real chill-out.'

My stamp den 'All my stamps are in albums that are stored in the spare bedroom. It's quite full in there!'

Collection 'I collect GB stamps – I've got every commemorative issue mint since they began – and of course collect every Royal Mail issue that comes out. I am keen on the Post & Gos, especially with the different types of overprint you can get. I also collect world and have around 10,000 stamps in my collection in total.'



Above: Gary's favourite is the Olympics and Paralympics set
Below: Gary's dream stamp is the valuable 1882 £5 Orange

Special interest 'I looked through the Stanley Gibbons catalogue for something to collect other than my GBs and came upon Namibia. It was such a new country, as it only became independent in 1990, so it was interesting and unusual. I've got all the Namibia and also collect stamps under the country's old name of South West Africa, and have 30 stamps to go to complete the lot.'

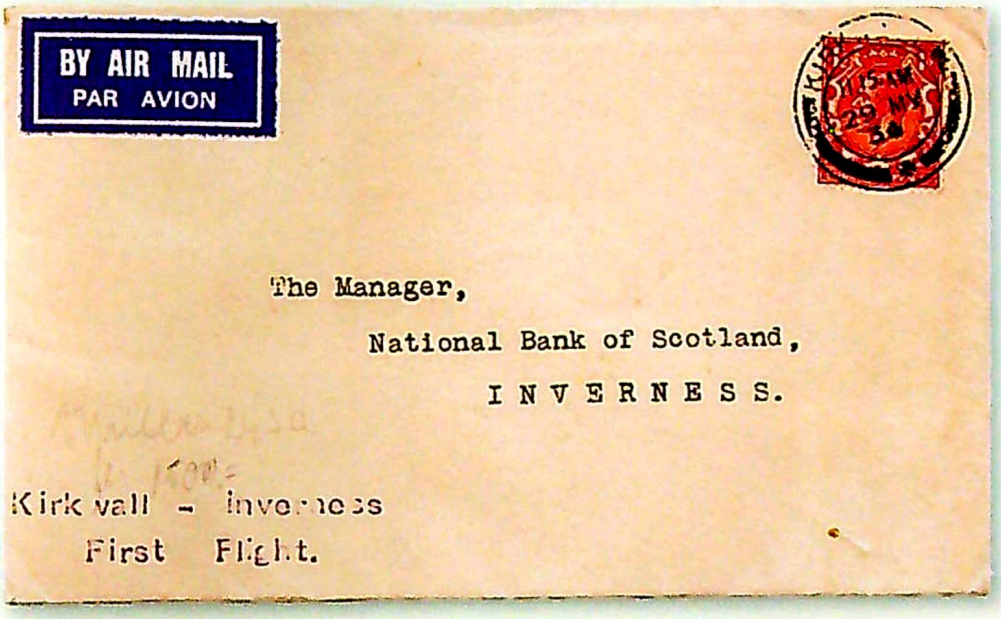
Favourite issue 'The Olympics and Paralympics Gold Medal stamps. I admired the dedication of Royal Mail staff bringing them out in just 24 hours after each medal was won. Getting those stamps done and rushing them out to the collectors was very exciting. Normally of course you know in advance what's coming up, but with these you never knew what was coming until someone won a gold medal.'



Treasured possession 'My PUC £1 stamp dating from 1929. It took me a long time to save up for the stamp, and I bought it for about £650, a good deal. I got a discount because I bought quite a few other things with it.'

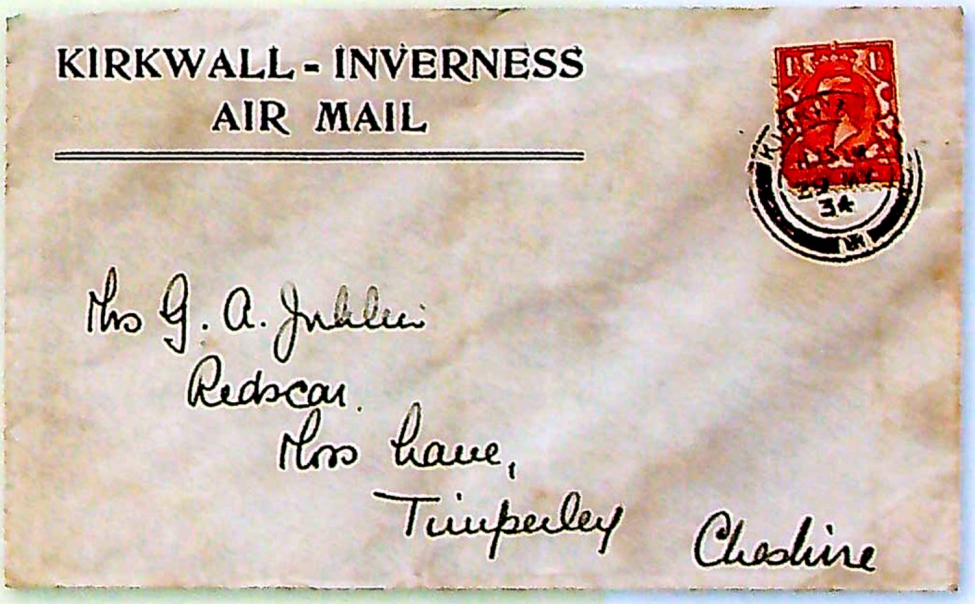
Dream stamp 'I think it would have to be the 1882 £5 Orange – it's worth a fortune of course.' •

Photography: Ian Jacobs. Image: BPMA



Left and below: covers of May 1934.
Bottom: 'A Flying Start to the Day' painted by Edmund Miller in 1986, showing Edmund Fresson in 1934

This Month in History In May 1934 souvenir covers marked Britain's first scheduled internal airmail service, inspired and piloted by Edmund Fresson



In the early 1930s Edmund Fresson, piloting a DH Gypsy Moth or Avro biplane, gave joy-rides to the public in Kirkwall, Orkney. In May 1933 he established Highland Airways operating a passenger service between Inverness and Kirkwall and later that year obtained a contract to convey newspapers to Orkney. In 1934 he was awarded a contract to operate the first regular internal airmail service in Britain using a De Havilland Dragon G-ACIT aircraft. The service started on 29 May 1934 when souvenir covers produced by *The Orcadian* newspaper plus many others were flown. Some mail received a two-line cachet 'Kirkwall-Inverness/ First Flight'. Covers were flown in both directions, those from Inverness to Kirkwall said to be six times scarcer than those travelling southwards. From 1 December 1934 mail to and from Wick was included in the service and again many covers were carried on the first flight.

Special postmarks and covers were produced to mark the 40th, 50th and 75th anniversaries of the Kirkwall to Inverness service in 1974, 1984 and 2009 and a commemorative Scottish aerogramme was issued in 1984. Also that year a fine painting showing the historic arrival of the first mail plane was unveiled in the Inverness Museum.

For more about this service see Richard Beith's book *Scottish Air Mails 1919-79* (1981) and articles by Mr Beith and James Mackay in the *Bulletin* of May 1994 and May 2004 •



© Inverness Museum & Art Gallery

Screen test Try this blockbuster of a quiz...



1



2



3

Answer the following questions about these movie-themed stamps and postmark for your chance to win this month's Great British Film issue. The images are from the issue and earlier cinematically inspired sets.



4



5

1 David Niven was a downed pilot on his way to heaven in *A Matter of Life and Death* – who played his earth-bound girlfriend?
a) Kim Novak b) Kim Hunter c) Kim Philby

2 Peter O'Toole mesmerises as T E Lawrence in *Lawrence of Arabia*. What did 'T E' stand for?
a) Timothy Edmund b) Terrible Ending
c) Thomas Edward

3 The two alternative postmarks for the Great British Film issue feature the location of the GPO Film Unit's studios. Where was it?
a) Blackheath b) Blackfriars c) Blackpool

4 Peter Cushing starred in the Great Britons issue in his role as which famous detective?
a) Hercule Poirot b) Sherlock Holmes
c) Miss Marple

5 The 2008 Carry On Hammer issue included this stamp showing *Carry On Screaming*. What was Harry H Corbett's character called?
a) Bing b) Bong c) Bung

Name That Stamp

From the detail of the stamp shown under the magnifying glass (right), can you identify the screen star, the name of the stamp set and its year of issue?



How to enter Send your answers, marked May Quiz and/or May Name That Stamp to: Bulletin Prize Draws, Tallents House, 21 South Gyle Crescent, Edinburgh EH12 9PB.
Closing date 18 June 2014. The first three correct entries drawn in each section after the closing date win the Great British Films issue.
February Solutions and Winners *Hearts and Heroes Solution* 1a, 2b, 3b. *Winners* Anthony Laxon, Wiltshire; J D Sparham, Kent.
Name That Stamp Solution The Kiss, 1995.
Winners C T van Gennep, Netherlands; Elke Andersen, Leicestershire.

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

High lives Three smart new covers celebrate the lives and achievements of brilliant Britons

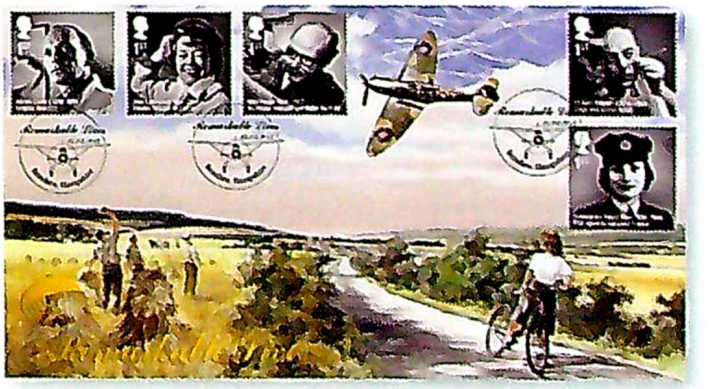


These two colourful covers celebrate great Britons from the Remarkable Lives issue. The beach cover pays tribute to *Desert Island Discs* creator Roy Plomley whose stamp appears with those of actor Kenneth More, poet Dylan Thomas, football star Joe Mercer and the economist Barbara Ward. It has a palm tree postmark for Plomley Close, Gillingham. £15.90 inc p&p (BC505).

The second cover's wartime image honours SOE agent Noor Inayat Khan. She features with Sir Alec Guinness, theatre legend Joan Littlewood, designer Abram Games and scientist Max Perutz. The Beaulieu postmark refers to the site of the SOE training school and shows a Lysander, the plane that dropped agents into occupied France. £15.90 inc p&p (BC505A.)

Orders and enquiries

Buckingham Covers
Warren House
Shearway Road
Folkestone
Kent CT19 4BF
www.buckinghamcovers.com
Phone 01303 278 137



In the first of a poignant series about First World War frontline artists, this cover tells the story of Captain Bruce Bairnsfather – who created the legendary Old Bill cartoons about a soldier's lot in the mud and blood of the trenches. This limited edition of 100 features the Isle of Man WWI Life In The Trenches issue and a filler card with a short biography of Bairnsfather by author Lucinda Gosling. The cover is cancelled with a bespoke postmark. £14.95 plus £2 p&p •



Orders and enquiries

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Congress is calling!







Above: the Grand Place and Cloth Hall, First World War museum at Ypres, where this year's commemorative Congress event is to be held 11 to 14 July. Above left: the Three Swans Hotel, Market Harborough. Left: dating from 1614, the Old Grammar School has become a symbol of Market Harborough.

25 to 27 July 2014

This year's Philatelic Congress is twice as good with not one but two get-togethers – in Britain as well as Belgium. The main 96th Philatelic Congress of Great Britain, organised by the Association of British Philatelic Societies, is at Ypres for the First World War anniversary. If you fancy staying closer to home, from 23 to 27 July the ABPS hosts the UK Philatelic Congress at the Three Swans Hotel in Market Harborough. The UK Congress includes:

• Static display • Expert talks with philatelic themes ranging from astronomy to the postal history of Preston • Four-sheet stories • Kay Goodman lecture on The Future of Philately – Youth and Philately Today • Congress Medal presentation.

Whether you go to Market Harborough or to Ypres the Congress is a great chance to meet fellow collectors in an informal atmosphere.

To book For the Market Harborough event, call Paul Gaywood on 01772 713917 or email him at gaywood@hotmail.co.uk. For Ypres, on from 11 to 14 July, book online at www.abps.org.uk/ Events ●

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